



# Low Impact Rural Tourism Local Planning Policy

Version 2

## Scheme Provisions:

TPS #9

3.1 Zoning and Development Table

LPS #10

4.1 Zoning and Development Table

## Other References:

Shire of Northampton Local  
Planning Scheme No. 10

Shire of Northampton Town  
Planning Scheme No. 9

Planning and Development Act  
2005

## Special procedural considerations:

All applications for low impact tourist development will require consultation with affected landowners and/or occupants and neighbour consent should preferably be given.

## 1.0 PURPOSE

Local Planning Policies are guidelines used to assist the local government in making decisions under the Scheme. The Scheme prevails should there be any conflict between this Policy and the Scheme.

It is not intended that a policy be applied rigidly, but each application be examined on its merits, with the objectives and intent of the policy the key for assessment. However, it should not be assumed that the local government, in exercising its planning discretion, be limited to the policy provisions and that mere compliance will result in an approval. This approach has produced many examples of inappropriate built form that has a long-term impact on the amenity and sustainability of the locality.

The Shire encourages applicants to produce innovative ways of achieving the stated objectives and acknowledges that these may sit outside the more traditional planning and architectural approaches. In these instances the local government is open to considering (and encourages) well-presented cases, during pre-application consultation, having due regard to the outcome of any public consultation undertaken and the orderly and proper planning of the locality.

## 2.0 SCOPE

A Local Planning Policy is not part of the Scheme and does not bind the local government in respect of any application for planning approval but the local government is to have due regard to the provisions of the Policy and the objectives which the Policy is designed to achieve before making its determination.

## 3.0 OBJECTIVE

- 3.1 To pursue the principle that commercial tourist development should generally occur within the urban areas and that opportunities should be provided for small-scale and low impact tourist accommodation and related activities in rural areas.
- 3.2 To promote orderly and proper planning for, and in rural localities, having regard to the provisions of the Town Planning Schemes.
- 3.3 To emphasise the primacy of the use of rural land as an agricultural resource that should be

preserved and protected against any forms of development, including low-impact tourist development that would adversely affect its continued use for agricultural purposes.

- 3.4 Provide for tourist accommodation in the rural areas in a manner that does not conflict with existing or potential agricultural pursuits.
- 3.5 To establish criteria for low impact tourist development in rural areas to ensure that the environmental attributes, landscape values and the visual and rural character and amenity of the municipality is not compromised.
- 3.6 Optimise both the agricultural and tourism potential of the rural areas without detrimental impact on the inherent natural beauty and value of those areas.
- 3.7 To set out the circumstances under which the local government may approve low impact tourist development in rural areas of the municipality as provided in the Town Planning Schemes.
- 3.8 To set out the procedures to be observed where low impact tourist development is not incidental or ancillary to the primary rural use of the land.

#### **4.0 POLICY STATEMENT**

##### **4.1 Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy:

**“Agricultural”** encompasses purposes/pursuits associated with agriculture, horticulture and viticulture.

**“Low Impact Rural Tourism”** means the use and development of land, principally for tourist purposes, in such a manner that does not detract from the rural and natural amenity of the locality, and includes the following criteria:

- located to avoid ridge lines, escarpments or visually exposed sites and situate where vegetation or land form can be utilised for screening;
- sensitively located and designed to promote positive outcomes and positive environmental outcomes and minimise impact on vegetation, water courses, soil quality and existing land uses;
- will not cause a net loss of vegetation;
- scale and nature to be self sustaining on the land, or demonstrate the ability to provide servicing without significant modifications to existing infrastructure;
- the nature of its scale, design, colours, materials, landscaping and use has minimal visual impact on the site and surrounding areas; and
- minimal off-site environmental or social adverse impacts.

**“Low Impact Tourist Developments”** includes farmstay accommodation that encompasses chalets, cabins, guesthouse and bed & breakfast accommodation where occupation by any person is limited to a maximum of 3 months in any 12 month period. Development is generally single storey or split level construction and has a character not dissimilar to farm dwellings.

**“Chalet”** means self-contained premises usually comprising cooking facilities, ensuite, living area and 1 or 2 bedrooms.

**“Cabin”** means self-contained premises similar to a chalet but may lack ensuite facilities and may comprise only one room.

**“Guesthouse”** means integrated premises comprising serviced accommodation units and centralised facilities such as dining (not being a public restaurant) and other facilities.

**“Eco-Tourism”** means ecologically sustainable tourism, which has a primary focus on experiencing natural areas and fosters environmental protection and restoration and cultural understanding and appreciation of the natural environment.

## **4.2 General Planning Considerations**

4.2.1 Land within the rural areas generally has agricultural value worthy of conservation for agricultural purposes. Land uses and developments, including tourism development, which detract from its agricultural productivity must be resisted.

4.2.2 The region has high natural amenity values resulting in strong demands for tourist accommodation not only in established settlements but also in the rural areas. Any development not required for agricultural purposes risks erosion of the environmental and landscape qualities tourists wish to visit and enjoy.

4.2.3 In terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability, it is vital that the overall qualities, amenity and character of the municipality be preserved. The risks for sustainable development from approving numerous low impact tourist developments (above the maximum scale of development) are that there will not only be an incremental diminution in the rural character and amenity of the areas in which they are to be established, but also a reduction in the primary agricultural production capability of the land.

4.2.4 While low impact tourist developments individually may detract little from rural values, the cumulative effect of proliferation will seriously erode the rural ambience they are designed to reference.

4.2.5 Low impact tourist developments must therefore:

- a. not produce any poorly understood risks of serious or irreversible environmental damage;
- b. not introduce land use incompatibilities with established or potential agricultural activities on adjoining or nearby land in the locality;
- c. not generate further traffic or require road improvements or signage likely to adversely affect the rural character of the road(s) serving the localities;
- d. not lead to the consolidation of such activities to the point where the rural character or amenity of the locality is seriously compromised;
- e. economically assist, and promote, and form part of the productive agricultural enterprise to avoid potential land use incompatibilities;
- f. utilise noise reduction techniques, filter systems and similar methods of construction to mitigate the affects of agricultural activity on the residents and patrons of the low impact tourist development; and

- g. be appropriately screened from view especially from neighbours, public vantage points such as roads, public reserves and the like by existing vegetation or by effective new landscaping using species indigenous to the area.

4.2.6 Preference will be given to development proposals, that show sensitivity to the local, natural and cultural environment and are ancillary to the agricultural land use, thereby adding to the sustainability of the agricultural industry on that land.

4.2.7 The local government will actively discourage development that:

- a. is situated in visually significant locations, such as on ridges or along unscreened sections of regional or tourist roads;
- b. involves major disturbance of remnant bushland or natural areas;
- c. is located on land of no particular topographical or landscape interest or value; and
- d. is of a development form that resembles urban based tourism such as motels, resorts and the like.

#### **4.3 Maximum Scale of Development**

4.3.1 The maximum scale of development that can be accommodated on lots within the rural area is no more than 3 chalets/cabins or a bed & breakfast facility or a 4 bedroom guest house which accommodates no more than 8 people (or other tourist facilities of similar land use intensity).

4.3.2 Larger scaled developments and land uses will not be approved under this Policy and will require, if found to be justified, an Amendment to the Town Planning Scheme to incorporate a site-specific zoning for the development proposed.

#### **4.3 Eco-Tourism**

4.3.1 The use of “eco” (or similar), as a descriptor of a particular low impact tourist development proposal, will not be approved by the local government unless the development provides an eco opportunity. Where this term is arbitrarily used to describe a low impact tourism development it thereby exhibits the risk of misleading or deceiving tourism consumers and creating a false impression that the natural environment is protected from adverse impact by a particular development.

4.3.2 This definition of eco tourism is expanded into a set of core principles, which the local government will use to ascertain whether or not the development proposal deserves a designation of eco (or similar description):

- There will be a focus on giving visitors the opportunity to personally and directly experience nature;
- It will provide opportunities that lead to greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the natural environment;
- It will incorporate best practice for environmentally sustainable tourism;
- It will contribute directly to the conservation of natural areas;

- It will provide ongoing contributions to the local community;
- It will be sensitive to, interpret and involve the culture(s) existing in the area consistently;
- It will be marketed and promoted honestly and accurately so that realistic expectations are formed.

#### **4.4 Water Supply**

4.4.1 A potable water supply of minimum 92,000 litres per annum must be available to the development. Acceptable means of water supply include collection of roof water into holding tanks (subject to minimum roof areas and annual rainfall calculations) or a roof water supply augmented by a suitably treated and sustainable supply of groundwater or springwater.

4.4.2 The use of existing dams for the provision of potable water supply is not generally acceptable and will only be considered if the dam has a proven supply of water of appropriate quality and quantity. In these cases, stringent controls will apply to the area of the dam catchment within the development site but the local government cannot take responsibility for ongoing quality and quantity of water, due to possible use of the area within the catchment outside of the development site which could impact the water supply.

#### **4.5 Application Requirements**

4.5.1 A written report of how the proposal can fit in with the locality. This means showing a sympathetic and well-mannered design without unreasonable impacts either on the agricultural, natural or cultural environment and that any impacts will be contained within the site.

4.5.2 A written report stating how the proposal will satisfy the tourist occupants. The development must be shown to be safe from fire and other hazards (internal and external) and provides a high level of amenity and services to the tourist occupants.

4.5.3 A written report demonstrating how the operation of the development will continue to attend to matters of environmental concern, rural amenity and the well being and safety of the tourist occupants (once the development is established).

4.5.4 A comprehensive site analysis plan will be required to assist staff to understand the constraints and opportunities on the lot on which the development is proposed. The site analysis should:

a. Clearly identify the proposed development site in relation to the naturally and built existing features both on the subject land and on the adjoining land.

b. Should demonstrate that the development concept can fit in with the existing settlement.

c. The following information must be included on the site analysis plan:

- North point;
- Property boundaries and key dimensions;
- Contours and major physical features;
- Existing vegetation;
- Creek lines and wetlands;
- Distances and any sightlines to adjoining dwellings;
- Views; and

- Location of existing services.

#### 4.6 Consultation

4.6.1 Unless otherwise specifically provided for in the Town Planning Scheme, all applications for low impact tourist development will require consultation with affected landowners and/or occupants and neighbour consent should preferably be given.

<b>5.0 RESPONSIBILITY</b>	The Principal Planner/Chief Executive Officer as per the Delegations Policy and Register		
<b>6.0 ADOPTION</b>	21 September 2007	Advertising	Minute 9.6.1
	16 November 2007	Final Approval	Minute 11.6.2
	V2 16 June 2014	Advertising / Final Approval	(Minutes 6.8.1)

