

---

RURAL - RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE PERTH METROPOLITAN REGION

---

GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES

---



**GUIDELINES FOR  
RURAL-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE  
PERTH METROPOLITAN REGION**



**State Planning Commission  
July 1992**

# **GUIDELINES FOR RURAL-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PERTH METROPOLITAN REGION**

## **CONTENTS:**

1. Introduction
  2. Existing Policy for Rural-Residential Development
  3. Metropolitan Rural Policy Objectives
  4. Current Matters of Concern with Rural-Residential Development
  5. Guidelines for Rural-Residential Development
  6. Conclusions
- Appendix 1: Rural-Residential Lot Approvals  
in the Perth Metropolitan Region

## 1. Introduction

These guidelines have been prepared to assist local authorities preparing local rural strategies and rezonings for rural-residential development in the Perth metropolitan region.

For the purpose of these guidelines, rural-residential development includes hobby farms, rural homesites and rural retreats generally on lots of 1ha - 4ha. Since the adoption of the Rural Smallholdings Policy Study (1980) most rural-residential development has taken place on land specifically zoned for Special Rural. In some cases, rural-residential lots have been created on land zoned for General Rural purposes often as a result of appeals.

The Commission is currently preparing a regional rural policy for the Perth metropolitan region. These guidelines will form part of that policy. The guidelines have been released prior to the policy following concerns regarding the scale of rural-residential development proposed in a number of local rural strategies and town planning schemes currently being prepared.

The Commission is concerned that excessive subdivision and development of land for rural-residential purposes in the metropolitan region will prejudice future urban options and run counter to broader metropolitan objectives expressed in the government's metropolitan strategy. The Commission, therefore, considers there is an immediate priority to provide a regional policy framework for rural-residential development.

The Commission will have regard to these guidelines in considering local rural strategies and rezonings for rural-residential purposes. The Commission also invites comment on the guidelines for consideration as part of the metropolitan rural policy.

## 2. Existing Policy for Rural-Residential Development

Existing statewide rural policy is set out in the Commission's *Rural Land Use Planning Policy* (DC 3.4) adopted in July 1989. This requires all metropolitan local authorities (with rural land in their boundaries) to prepare a local rural strategy as a basis for the zoning, subdivision and development of land. As an interim measure, local authorities could prepare a limited rural strategy to meet immediate short-term demand for rural-residential development (2-3 years) following introduction of the policy.

The Commission also issued *Guidelines for the Preparation of a Local Rural Strategy* on the form, content and process for preparing a local rural strategy and *Guidelines on Land Capability Assessment* to identify land with the ability to sustain particular types of land use and development.

The policy requires proposals for rural-residential development to be identified in a local rural strategy (or limited rural strategy) based upon analysis of land suitability and other relevant factors.

Among these is the need for rural-residential development to be justified on the basis of legitimate estimates of demand to avoid the premature and sporadic subdivision of rural land.

The Government's metropolitan strategy *METROPLAN*, was released in December 1990 and establishes the broad framework for planning and development of rural land in the metropolitan region. *METROPLAN* replaced the Corridor Plan for Perth (1973) which introduced the concept of urban development channelled into metropolitan growth corridors separated from each other by green wedges of open country protected from urban and other more intensive development.

The overall aim of *METROPLAN* is to continue the corridor policy adopted by the government in 1973 but to restrain outward suburban expansion of the urban area in favour of urban containment. The strategy seeks to achieve a more sustainable pattern of metropolitan development with an emphasis on the better use of land, more efficient provision of services, and improved accessibility to jobs and services. An improved public transport system and reduced dependence on private cars is seen as a key element in encouraging a more contained pattern of development, limiting the harmful greenhouse gases contributed by cars and generally promoting a more energy-efficient community.

## 3. Metropolitan Rural Policy Objectives

The rural lands of the metropolitan region are of considerable strategic importance, giving definition to the built up area and containing the outward sprawl of the city. They provide opportunities for rural uses requiring a location near the city, and a land bank for future urban uses and other special activities.

Policies need to be directed towards protecting rural areas, facilitating continued production on agricultural land, protecting water catchments and other natural resources, and conserving landscape and conservation values.

Against this background, the Commission's metropolitan rural policy is geared to the following objectives:

- to preserve the open landscape character of the rural areas of Perth as a means of giving definition to the built up area, preventing urban sprawl and providing accessible open land;
- to conserve the productive potential of agricultural land where compatible with the environmental capabilities of the land and with other regional planning objectives;
- to provide opportunities for compatible rural uses which benefit from a location in the metropolitan region and close to the city;
- to protect and facilitate the extraction of valuable deposits of basic raw materials required to serve the future needs of metropolitan Perth;

- to protect options for future urban development and safeguard the operations of existing and future special uses and public facilities;
- to conserve and enhance land having conservation value because of its vegetation, wildlife habitat and landscape qualities;
- to ensure land use and development is compatible with safeguarding designated and proposed surface and groundwater catchments, water courses and wetlands.

These policy objectives require strict monitoring of subdivision and development within the rural wedge. In the past, the Commission has sought to carefully control subdivision in order to prevent the incremental fragmentation of land on an uneven, unplanned basis which would result in the breakdown of rural character and the costly provision of services and facilities. Rural-residential subdivision has been mainly limited to Special Rural or similar zonings which are subject to land use and management controls to ensure retention of the rural character. The Commission believes the present policy of restraint assumes even greater significance in the context of *METROPLAN* and the over-riding aims of achieving a more contained and sustainable pattern of metropolitan development.

#### 4. **Current Matters of Concern With Rural-Residential Development**

Rural-residential development fulfils a lifestyle choice and it is accepted that options should be provided for this type of development. It is important, however, to ensure that the scale and location of rural-residential subdivision is consistent with broader metropolitan policy objectives.

Local rural strategies are intended to determine the opportunities for rural-residential development. Planning requirements and controls to ensure there is minimal conflict with other forms of development and the natural environment will be contained in local planning schemes through the designation of Special Rural and similar zonings. Such forms of development should be located away from land with agricultural potential, water catchments and other natural resources, scenic landscapes, other environmentally sensitive areas, and future urban areas.

After taking into account these considerations, there are still quite extensive areas of the metropolitan region which could be considered for rural-residential purposes. The selection of the most favoured areas should then be based on the physical characteristics of land and its suitability for this type of development. The availability of services is also particularly important. Community costs can be minimised if subdivision is concentrated in areas where services can be efficiently provided.

Another important question is to determine how much land should be released to meet rural-residential demand without compromising the character of rural areas and the objectives of containing metropolitan development.

It is not possible to estimate the level of demand for rural-residential properties with any degree of accuracy. If land is well presented and priced competitively then it will sell quickly. Moreover, there will always be underlying suggestions of demand for rural-residential development because rural land is attractive for the speculative purchaser hoping to subdivide land for sale on the real estate market. However, rural policy needs to make a distinction between "genuine" demand and demand for speculative purposes. As a general principle, Councils should be satisfied there is a genuine demand for rural-residential development before releasing additional land for this purpose.

In the metropolitan region, the major concerns are that:

- progress on the preparation of local rural strategies has been slow and, at this stage, there are no approved local rural strategies in place;
- it is evident from some strategies being prepared that exaggerated notions of demand for rural-residential development exists;
- areas are being selected for rural-residential development based on the intentions of landowners wishing to subdivide rather than the land most suitable and favoured for this type of development or which can be serviced most cost-effectively;
- the tendency in some local rural strategies to allocate extensive areas for rural-residential development left over after land with physical or other constraints has been excluded which can encourage speculative development unrelated to genuine demand;
- the high costs to state and local government in providing infrastructure and services to a relatively small dispersed population particularly where residents become dissatisfied with a lack of urban amenities.

The slow progress of local rural strategies may in part be due to the rigorous analysis required in their preparation and delays in completing the metropolitan rural policy. In this respect, it is anticipated that the metropolitan rural policy will be released in the near future.

In preparing local rural strategies it is important to recognise that the rural-residential land market is not limitless and it cannot be flooded with large numbers of small lots without adverse consequences on other matters of regional concern. The Commission considers that more attention needs to be given particularly to questions of rural-residential demand and broader metropolitan strategy objectives in the preparation of local rural strategies and rural-residential rezonings.

The following guidelines address these concerns.



## 5. **Guidelines for Rural-Residential Development**

In preparing local rural strategies and town planning schemes proposing rural-residential development local authorities should take into account the following guidelines. These are largely a restatement of the current *Rural Land Use Planning Policy* (DC 3.4) and the metropolitan strategy, *METROPLAN*, with specific reference to rural-residential development.

5.1 Local rural strategies and town planning schemes should identify opportunities for rural-residential subdivision taking into account the suitability of land for this purpose and wider regional concerns, in particular the need to protect the character of rural land, maintain future urban options and generally achieve a more contained pattern of metropolitan development. Whilst accepting there is market demand for rural smallholdings for rural-residential and rural retreats, these wider metropolitan concerns dictate that the overriding emphasis should be on a policy of restraint. The provision for rural-residential development should be based on genuine demand for this type of property.

5.2 The following criteria should be addressed in identifying opportunities for rural-residential development:

- accords with land capability assessment and avoids land with slope, stability, soil erosion, or effluent disposal problems or high bush fire risk;
- excludes productive agricultural land, important basic raw material deposits, regionally significant landscapes, other environmentally sensitive areas and future urban areas;
- gives preference to existing settlements which already provide community services and facilities including:-
  - public utility services such as water reticulation, power, telephone and rubbish disposal;
  - community facilities such as shops, schools, public transport, library facilities etc;

or locations where such services can be most efficiently provided and avoiding locations which create unnecessary demands for state and local government services;

- minimises potential for conflict with incompatible activities, for example, by avoiding locations in buffer areas of major public facilities and infrastructure, such as treatment plants, waste disposal sites etc;
- only includes locations which are most suitable for this type of development, for example, topographically varied, visually attractive and with distinct attributes such as creeks or water features, distant views or good stands of trees.

5.3 Local rural strategies should avoid allocating large areas of land for rural-residential development because this can fuel land speculation and create pressures for the provision of services and facilities which are difficult to provide economically. The preferred approach is to identify areas which may be suitable for rural-residential development supported by a rural land release strategy which gives preference to the most suitable locations (for example, areas where services can be most efficiently provided, extensions to existing settlements, the most physically suitable land etc) after taking into account genuine demand for this kind of development.

5.4 Local authorities should be satisfied there is a genuine demand before allocating land in local rural strategies or initiating rezoning amendments for rural-residential development. In this regard:

- genuine demand means demand that is evidenced by the actual use and development of land;
- in preparing local rural strategies demand should be estimated over a timescale not exceeding five years;
- demand should be based on the annual average rate of development of rural-residential lots over the previous five years (or ten years where there has been fluctuations in rural-residential development)<sup>1</sup>;
- evidence of development should be derived from building approvals for houses and other improvements, and the actual use of land;
- local authorities should monitor building approvals and land use in order to determine when additional rural-residential zonings should occur;
- there should be a minimum occupancy rate of 60% in existing rural-residential zones before new zones are created (the occupancy rate is the number of lots which have dwellings constructed or are actively used for rural-residential purposes expressed as a percentage of the total number of lots in approved Special Rural and similar zonings);

5.5 Rural-residential zoning should incorporate the following town planning scheme provisions and general controls:

- controls over land use consistent with the purpose of the subdivision, land capability and environmental effects;
- preparation of a concept plan detailing the subdivision layout, lot sizes, building envelopes, open space, roads, landscape and other features and the proposed staging of development;
- restrictions on the size of lots (based on land capability, environmental effects, access, services etc) with a minimum of 2ha, and 1ha where reticulated water is provided;
- not more than one private dwelling on a lot;

- protection of groundwater, streams and wetlands by restrictions on the density and location of on-site effluent disposal systems (vertical separation from groundwater and horizontal separation from streams) and drainage;
- retention of rural character by controls on removal of trees, replacing natural vegetation, soil conservation and regeneration;
- protection of sites of natural and cultural significance;
- limitations on animal stocking rates to prevent erosion, retain vegetation cover and protect groundwater, water courses and wetlands;
- provision for bush fire protection;
- restrictions on vehicular access to and from main roads or highways;
- provision of public open space where appropriate to protect landscape and conservation features, provide a recreational amenity for residents, achieve open space linkages, and provide facilities integral to the development (such as bridle paths);
- cash-in-lieu contributions for public open space towards the provision of recreation facilities in the locality where required under a local rural strategy or public open space strategy;
- advice to prospective purchasers on special provisions relating to land use and management controls including potable water supply (where reticulated water is not available), waste disposal, groundwater licensing and clearing controls;
- special area controls where relevant (e.g. Peel-Harvey Catchment).

## 6. **Conclusions**

These guidelines are directed primarily at protecting environmental quality, in terms of landscape values and natural resources, preserving options for the future long-term growth of Perth, and avoiding widespread dispersed development which will place growing pressures on the provision of costly services and increase the need to travel.

Proposals for inappropriate rural-residential subdivision and development incompatible with regional planning objectives or without overriding community benefits will not be supported.

Overall, the guidelines represent little change from the present position but with additional safeguards to ensure rural-residential development does not compromise long-term planning for the region.

## Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> In the absence of past data on building approvals and land use, annual average lot approval rates may be used as a measure of demand for rural-residential development. Appendix 1 contains data on final approvals for rural-residential lots (1-5 ha) over the last five (5) and eleven (11) years respectively. The yearly average number of lots granted final approval in the metropolitan region over the last five (5) years was around 340 per annum with about half of the total in Special Rural zones and the remaining half in the Rural zone. For the eleven (11) year period the average was 390 lots per annum with slightly more than half in Special Rural zones. Data for 1990/91 suggests around 100 (1 ha - 5 ha) rural lots are approved as a result of appeals.

## APPENDIX 1:

### RURAL-RESIDENTIAL LOT APPROVALS IN THE PERTH METROPOLITAN REGION

**TABLE 1: Rural-residential Lot Approvals (Special Rural Zones)  
1987-91. Perth Metropolitan Region**

Local Authority	Lot Sizes		Total	Yearly Average
	1 ha - 2 ha	2 ha - 5 ha		
Armadale	-	15	15	3
Canning	45	4	49	10
Cockburn	1	32	33	7
Gosnells	-	1	1	1
Kalamunda	121	10	131	26
Kwinana	12	58	70	14
Mundaring	61	26	87	17
Rockingham	38	21	59	12
Serp.-Jarrahdale	-	147	147	29
Swan	10	100	110	22
Wanneroo	109	43	152	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Yearly Average</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>171</b>	

Source: Land Analysis & Monitoring Branch

Notes: Based on number of lots given final approval.  
Does not include rural-residential lots approved outside Special Rural zones.

**TABLE 2: Rural-residential Lot Approvals (Rural Zones)  
1987-91. Perth Metropolitan Region**

Local Authority	Lot Sizes		Total	Yearly Average
	1 ha - 2 ha	2 ha - 5 ha		
Armadale	13	81	94	19
Canning	-	-	-	-
Cockburn	4	29	33	7
Gosnells	21	40	61	12
Kalamunda	31	35	66	13
Kwinana	5	58	63	12
Mundaring	38	47	85	17
Rockingham	-	18	18	4
Serp.-Jarrahdale	8	47	55	11
Swan	30	171	201	40
Wanneroo	83	82	165	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>Yearly Average</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>168</b>	

Source: Land Analysis & Monitoring Branch

Notes: Based on number of lots given final approval.  
Does not include rural-residential lots approved outside Special Rural zones.



**TABLE 3: Rural-residential Lot Approvals (Special Rural Zones)  
1981-91. Perth Metropolitan Region**

Local Authority	Lot Sizes		Total	Yearly Average
	1 ha - 2 ha	2 ha - 5 ha		
Armadale	22	104	126	11
Canning	45	4	49	4
Cockburn	33	190	223	20
Gosnells	-	1	1	1
Kalamunda	296	23	319	29
Kwinana	15	130	145	13
Mundaring	115	223	338	31
Rockingham	38	98	136	12
Serp.-Jarrahdale	19	280	299	27
Swan	68	399	467	43
Wanneroo	129	81	210	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>1533</b>	<b>2313</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>Yearly Average</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>210</b>	

Source: Land Analysis & Monitoring Branch

Notes: Based on number of lots given final approval.  
Does not include rural-residential lots approved outside Special Rural zones.

**TABLE 4: Rural-residential Lot Approvals (Rural Zones)  
1981-91. Perth Metropolitan Region**

Local Authority	Lot Sizes		Total	Yearly Average
	1 ha - 2 ha	2 ha - 5 ha		
Armadale	37	136	173	16
Canning	-	-	-	-
Cockburn	16	70	86	8
Gosnells	92	143	235	21
Kalamunda	82	72	154	14
Kwinana	6	147	153	14
Mundaring	84	169	253	23
Rockingham	7	96	103	9
Serp.-Jarrahdale	26	78	104	9
Swan	50	363	413	38
Wanneroo	126	182	308	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>1456</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Yearly Average</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>180</b>	

Source: Land Analysis & Monitoring Branch

Notes: Based on number of lots given final approval.  
Does not include rural-residential lots approved outside Special Rural zones.