

Policy Number:	8.5
Policy Name:	Rural Green Belt Policy
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Responsible Officer(s):	Manager Economic Development Regulatory Services and Communications
Policy and Code of Practice Manual File Ref:	CC10/2601
Council File Reference:	CR14/18852
Legislation Authority:	N/A
Related Policies and Codes:	N/A
Related Procedures:	N/A

1. DEFINITION

- 1.1 The vast majority of residents and the Town of Gawler Council support a policy to deliberately create a zone to preserve and maintain a landscape surrounding Gawler that is characterised by open space and rural features. This zone helps maintain Gawler's identity as a country town. The Rural Green Belt is the term used to describe this area.
- 1.2 Currently, Gawler's Rural Green Belt consists of land outside the boundaries of urban Gawler that is defined as 'Rural Zone' in the Gawler Development Plan. The Urban Boundary, the Hills Face Zone and rural zones in adjoining councils also assist in maintaining Gawler as a separate and unique urban area.

2. HISTORIC BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The concept of metropolitan green belts separating a series of identifiable metropolitan districts emerged from the metropolitan development plan prepared over the duration of the Playford/Dunstan State Governments. It is a concept that has been carried forward and still continues in a modified form and now spans a timeframe of nearly 50 years. As it applies to Gawler, and the other five northern metropolitan districts, it was intended that there be land for public purposes of one mile wide (1,600 metres) between and to define each district. In Gawler's case that meant 800 metres either side of a line defined by Dalkeith/Smith Roads at Kudla/Evanston South.
- 2.2 Whilst not apparent to the State planner at the time, a substantial part of the northern side of Dalkeith Road (adjoining Main North Road) was already divided and in private ownership. Hence, to implement the metropolitan scheme, would require substantial land acquisition and land banking.
- 2.3 Weaknesses in the concept as it applied to Gawler and described above have remained relatively undiscovered for a substantial period largely because the projected development pressure for high growth development forecasts of the 1960's and 70's were not realized. Another issue was that Gawler, being South Australia's first Country Town did not fit the metropolitan districts model that was proposed to apply to Enfield/Salisbury/Elizabeth/Munno Para.
- 2.4 A more appropriate structure for preserving and strengthening Gawler's identity was to capture the prevailing existing land use and space qualities that have prevailed for the majority of Adelaide's development between Smithfield and Gawler. These have variously been identified as:
- 2.4.1 long vistas to the east (Mt Lofty Ranges) and west (Lower Mid North);
 - 2.4.2 rural land use;
 - 2.4.3 sparsely scattered built form; and
 - 2.4.4 retention of large mature trees.
- 2.5 Potential risks to the Green Belt have been promoted since 1995 in various investigation reports. This later coincided with the State Government's interest in the additional concept of an Urban Growth Boundary to prevent and contain outward urban sprawl.
- 2.6 The first review of the development policy as it applied to the Green Belt/urban growth boundary occurred by the former State Government in 2002, but without public announcement or involvement. Whilst this change reduced Gawler's southern urban footprint (and consequently widened the Green Belt), it was not considered by the community and Council to be sufficient. Following an extensive campaign the Council took legal action to challenge the State's plan and was successful. This resulted in a 2002 Memorandum of Understanding with the State Government which agreed to:
- 2.6.1 Relocate the urban boundary further north; and
 - 2.6.2 Prepare rural development polices for the Green Belt.

- 2.7 The first action was dealt with in the November 2006 changes to the Gawler Development Plan and included changes in the locality of Kudla.
- 2.8 Presently, the State Government intends to advance the second MOU outcome via a broader assessment of Gawler's urban form via a spatial study of Gawler.

3. GAWLER'S IDENTITY AND RURAL GREEN BELT

- 3.1 Gawler wishes to maintain its identity as a provincial town and not be regarded as a northern suburb of Adelaide. Residents, businesses and community groups take pride in Gawler being "The Best of Town and Country". The Town has an exceptionally rich and colourful history. Gawler was planned by William Light, and established in 1839 as South Australia's first country town. It is set on the beautiful confluence of the North Para, South Para and Gawler rivers, with hills escarpment to the east. This history and setting are features which make Gawler unique. The Town has a strong sense of independence and individuality. The distinctive Rural Green Belt surrounding the town constitutes the major physical way in which Gawler preserves its unique identity and prevents its absorption into the suburban sprawl of Adelaide.
- 3.2 Gawler's Rural Green Belt is zoned Rural and is not part of any deferred urban area. However, some landowners and State Government agencies continue to promote plans for future urban growth opportunities within the Rural Green Belt.
- 3.3 Gawler Council believes it is unacceptable for State Government agencies and others to anticipate new growth areas in localities other than the town's Deferred Urban Zone. This speculation conflicts with the Urban Boundary and the State Government's Planning Strategy. The Town of Gawler will strenuously defend the integrity of the Gawler Rural Green Belt and act swiftly to prevent any attempts to erode it.

4. THE VALUE OF THE RURAL GREEN BELT

- 4.1 In addition to its essential role for the people of Gawler of protecting the town's identity, Gawler's Rural Green Belt also provides distinct economic, social and environmental benefits to the Town.
- 4.2 Gawler has cohesive urban planning within Gawler's existing Urban Growth Boundary, set within easy distance of the town centre. This encourages people to shop in Gawler to support local business, and allows people to walk and cycle to local shops and community venues. The town's physical layout builds a strong sense of community and assists the global environment.
- 4.3 The distant fringe of Gawler, if developed, could increase the numbers of people conducting most of their economic and social activities outside of Gawler. This could weaken the bonds that make Gawler a strong community.
- 4.4 Agricultural and horticultural production in the Rural Green Belt currently includes fruit, vegetables, olives, vines, eggs, grazing and cropping. This primary production helps maintain Gawler as a diverse economy, with a distinctive way of life. It also increases the town's valuable tourism potential.

- 4.5 The Council believes that resources need to be directed to increasing the diversity and sustainability of primary production activities, for example, through capture and reuse of storm water and other “waste” water lost through sewer systems.
- 4.6 Fringe urban development can lead to social isolation. Restricting urban sprawl and maintaining our well-planned community allows us to enhance social cohesion and the Council’s ability to provide services and include residents in initiatives, such as the community bus, mobile library services and the unique ‘dial-a-ride’ taxi service. Promotion of walkways, cycle paths and public transport in a compact urban form assist in building community cohesion and security, and to meet other goals such as reducing greenhouse gases and increasing fitness and health.
- 4.7 The Rural Green Belt contains remnant, mature farmland plantings and native vegetation, including a wide variety of native grasses and herbs typical of the indigenous vegetation that once covered most of the area. Maintaining South Australia’s unique biodiversity, and enhancing wildlife corridors is a valuable contribution made by the Rural Green Belt to preserving what remains of threatened natural landscape and fauna.
- 4.8 The Rural Green Belt can also provide other potential benefits for the environment, with carefully sited wetland development, stormwater recycling and aquifer recharge, bike tracks, recreation areas, carbon sinks, and natural gardens. Urban development of the Rural Green Belt will end any prospect of these important contributions to sustainability and community development.

5. PLANNING POWERS AND STRATEGY

- 5.1 Gawler Council has the duty to prepare development policy in accordance with the Planning Strategy and following the procedures laid down in the Development Act and Development Regulations. The Planning Strategy has identified the extent of the Urban Boundary and supports only rural and open space use outside of that Urban Boundary. A variety of rural, conservation and recreational land uses, of a non-intrusive nature, are appropriate and are occurring in the Rural Green Belt/Rural Zone.
- 5.2 Land use, landscape development, and the placement and design of buildings and structures in the Rural Green Belt should reinforce the qualities of the existing landscape and assist in reviving those qualities where previous unsuitable development has harmed the area.

6. RURAL GREEN BELT POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 A Plan Amendment Report should be prepared as soon as possible to improve the current Rural Zone development policies to ensure they are based on the land use and landscape outcomes outlined in this policy.

7. REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The effectiveness of this Policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis.

The Chief Executive Officer will report to Council on the outcome of the evaluation and if relevant make recommendations for amendments, alteration or substitution of a new Policy.

The Policy will not be altered or substituted so as to affect a process already commenced.

8. FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about this Policy can be obtained by:-

Telephone: 8522 9211
Fax: 8522 9212
Email: council@gawler.sa.gov.au
Appointment: Town Hall, 89 – 91 Murray Street, Gawler
Letter: PO Box 130, Gawler SA 5118

9. AVAILABILITY OF POLICY

The Policy is available for inspection during ordinary business hours at the Council principal office, Gawler Town Hall or Library Council Offices, 89 – 91 Murray Street, Gawler or is available on the Council website at www.gawler.sa.gov.au.

A copy of this Policy will be provided to interested parties upon request, for a fee as contained in the Register of Fees and Charges.