

APPENDIX K: NEED AND DESIRABILITY OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF AN ADDITIONAL POULTRY REARING FACILITY ON THE REMAINDER OF FARM GROOTVLEI NO. 225, CALEDON

This document focuses on the application for the establishment of a new poultry rearing facility on the remainder of Farm Grootvlei No. 225, located near Caledon, and evaluates the proposed development in the context of relevant spatial planning tools and policy frameworks applicable to the area.

The property currently supports an operational poultry rearing facility, established in 2005 and expanded between 2006 and 2011, comprising 10 chicken houses situated in the southwestern portion of the site. At the time of its development, the need for environmental authorisation was not known to the landowner, resulting in the establishment of the existing facility without the required approvals. A separate retrospective environmental authorisation process is currently underway to regularise the existing facility and is nearing completion.

In response to the growing demand for affordable protein and the need to support a stable food supply, the applicant proposes the development of a second poultry rearing facility on the same property to expand onsite production capacity. The facility will be located 2km northeast from the existing operation for biosecurity reasons.

The proposed development footprint is approximately 5,12ha in extent and is located within an old agricultural field that has been under cultivation since before 1983. Proposed development includes ten new chicken houses with free range grazing between houses, staff housing and ablution facilities with a septic tank system, an office, a loading bay, a shaving shed, a water treatment facility, a generator room, internal access routes <8m wide, a biosecurity access control point. The new chicken houses will accommodate a maximum of 16 500 chickens per house and each house will be 1000 m² in extent. The chicken pens will be fenced off from the surrounding area for biosecurity purposes. The location and layout of the preferred development alternative has been developed based on existing access routes, service availability, prevailing wind directions, environmental sensitivities and biosecurity requirements.

The proposed development site is zoned Agriculture 1. The application is for agricultural purposes and is therefore in line with current land use zoning for the site. In terms of the Theewaterskloof Municipality Zoning Scheme By-Law, a Consent Use on Agriculture for 'Intensive Animal farming', is required. Approval for consent use (intensive feed farming) is still to be obtained.

The “need and desirability” will be evaluated by considering the broader community’s needs and interests as reflected in a credible Integrated Development Plan (IDP), Spatial Development Framework (SDF) and Environmental Management Framework (EMF) for the area, and as determined by the Basic Assessment process.

The following policies were considered:

- Theewaterskloof Municipality IDP 2022 – 2027
- Theewaterskloof Municipality SDF 2020
- Western Cape Provincial Spatial Development Framework (PSDF) (2014)
- Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan (2017)
- Environmental Management Policy for the Overberg District Municipality

The **Western Cape PSDF** is a planning document that guides district and local spatial initiatives such as IDP’s and SDF’s. It aims to create a coherent framework for the province’s urban and rural areas. The PSDF aims to guide the location and form of public investment in the western cape’s urban and rural areas. Whilst it cannot influence private sector investment patterns, it has an important contribution in terms of reducing business risk by providing clarity and certainty on where public Infrastructure investment will be targeted, thereby opening new economic opportunities in these areas. The current economic state with increasing levels of unemployment, and recent job losses in agriculture, all add to the high levels of rural poverty and unemployment. The provincial SDF emphasizes the importance and need for economic growth, job creation and poverty alleviation. The proposed development will create new direct and indirect job opportunities during the construction and operational phase of the development.

Agricultural output is foundational to the rural economy in the Western Cape. However, there is limited suitable land available for the expansion of agricultural activities and using these land areas without compromising biodiversity, heritage, and scenic resources, remains a key challenge. The property on which the development activities are proposed, is a working farm located in a broader agricultural landscape. The location of the proposed new development is on old agricultural fields, set back from public roads, does not coincide with archaeological and cultural heritage resources and given the development location, it is unlikely that any palaeontological resources will be impacted. There are existing water use rights for the property and sufficient water is available to support the proposed development. The development activity is thus in line with the PSDF in that it will allow feasible expansion of agriculture within the Western Cape and facilitate job creation within this sector.

Furthermore, the PSDF promotes sustainable development which requires that economic, social, and environmental aspects relating to a development proposal are considered. The development will play an important role in increasing the agricultural potential of the property and the long-term economic viability of the existing farming operation – which will help to sustain existing and future employment opportunities. Through implementation of suitable mitigation and management measures, the establishment and operation of the proposed development will also not negatively impact the natural environment or surrounding land users. As such, all three pillars of sustainability can be promoted within the development proposal.

The **Theewaterskloof municipality IDP** encourages local economic development with a focus on creating employment opportunities for residents. Agricultural development is one of the 4 strategic pillars that has been outlined to support local economic development. The objective for agriculture within the region is to improve agricultural diversity, including participants and offerings. The IDP recognises that employment within the agricultural sector is largely seasonal and recently, the sector has been affected by drought (& at a macro level, climate change). The main commodities in the region include fruit (apples, pears & grapes), vegetables and grains.

The proposed development site is a working farm located within an agriculturally dominated landscape. The location of the property is thus suitable for the expansion of agricultural activities that will support local economic development and generate employment opportunities within the agricultural sector. Furthermore, the proposed agricultural activities (poultry production) are not currently a main commodity in the region and will assist in diversification of the local agricultural sector. The proposed agricultural development will also run year-round and provide more permanent job opportunities compared to the traditional forms of agriculture in the region. Lastly, poultry rearing facilities produce a valuable byproduct in the form of nutrient rich manure which can be used in the existing vegetable and grain farming on the property thereby facilitating sustainable, circular agricultural practices. The proposed activities are thus well aligned with the IDP of the local municipality.

The **Theewaterskloof SDF** states that the agricultural sector is the largest source of employment in the Theewaterskloof municipality, and this sector has traditionally been the basis of economic development within the region. Objectives of the SDF therefore include the following as is relevant to the proposed development:

- protect agriculture as the primary land use in the rural landscape,
- protect, maintain, and enhance viable agricultural units and encourage sustainable farming practices,

- improve the economic viability of farms through the intensification and diversification of agricultural production and improve enterprise opportunities within the food system.

From the SDF it is clear that agricultural development is encouraged. However, it is also clear that the development should be both economically viable and environmentally sustainable. The development site is already a working farm and the addition of poultry rearing facilities on non-productive land within the farm will maintain, enhance, and diversify, sustainable onsite agricultural activities. The proposed development thus aligns well with the objectives outlined in the Theewaterskloof SDF.

While no specific **Environmental Management Framework (EMF)** has been outlined for the region, several strategic documents for the area include environmental management aspects. The Theewaterskloof IDP outlines sustainable environmental management as an important planning objective. The proposed development allows for intensification of agricultural practices on non-productive land within an existing farm and thus minimises the transformation of additional land, whilst protecting and promoting food production.

The Theewaterskloof IDP also highlights the importance of alien invasive vegetation clearing. The owner of the property contributes substantially to clearing efforts and has carried out numerous alien vegetation clearing operations within the mountainous terrain to the west of the development site. Systematic clearing from upper catchment areas is essential to ensure sustainable removal of alien invasive vegetation.

The Environmental Management Policy for the Overberg District Municipality also highlights the importance of Alien Invasive Species Monitoring, Control and Eradication to which the property owner is already contributing. This policy also highlights the importance of addressing waste management challenges in the district. Given the onsite presence of a registered composting facility that can accept and process the waste generated by the proposed development in an environmentally sustainable manner, no additional pressure will be placed on the public waste management facilities.

The **Western Cape Biodiversity Spatial Plan (WCBSP) (2017)** aims to guide sustainable development by providing a synthesis of biodiversity information to decision-makers. The main map categories are Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBAs - Terrestrial and Aquatic), Ecological Support Areas (ESAs - Critical and Other), Other Natural Remaining Areas and No Natural Remaining Areas. The first two mentioned categories represent the biodiversity priority areas which should be maintained in a natural to near-natural state. The last two mentioned categories are not considered as priority areas and a loss of biodiversity within these areas may be acceptable.

The WCBSP does not indicate any aquatic or terrestrial CBAs or ESAs within the proposed development footprint. A terrestrial CBA is indicated to the southwest of the proposed development site. This land area was confirmed to coincide with a farm dam and is therefore likely incorrectly mapped.

In terms of the Basic Assessment process the following was found:

The proposed development is situated on land that has been under cultivation since before 1983, with the current footprint lying fallow. The site contains no natural vegetation or sensitive environmental features, ensuring no direct ecological impacts from the development. The proposed development footprint is located more than 32m away from the nearest watercourse. A channelled valley bottom wetland was delineated approximately 80m southeast of the proposed development site. To safeguard this feature, focused mitigation measures, such as suitable stormwater management, will be implemented to prevent potential impacts.

The ecological impacts of the proposed project do not infringe on individuals' environmental rights concerning resource access, as there are no perceived opportunity costs. The development does not result in a loss of amenity, air quality degradation, or significant visual intrusion. Potential water quality impacts are manageable and unlikely to extend beyond the immediate site. Any nuisance factors such as dust and noise will be localized with no anticipated health impacts.

Visually, the development will integrate into the landscape, being minimally intrusive. Although visible from an internal access road, this road primarily serves as secondary access to a neighbouring farm, limiting the visual impact. The project does not alter the area's character or landscape.

The landowner is dedicated to managing the property responsibly to ensure sustained agricultural productivity while preventing environmental impacts from ongoing operations.