HIGHFIELDS, MERINGANDAN & MERINGANDAN WEST
LOCAL PLAN REPORT

FOR TOOWOOMBA REGIONAL COUNCIL
11 JULY 2013 / ISSUE G
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1. INTRODUCTION

Process & Project Background
Toowoomba Regional Council (TRC) is a large amalgamated local government area on the eastern Darling Downs region of Queensland. Comprising some 12,973 km² it contains a majority of rural land uses and provides services for 153,931 (ERP 2011, ABS) people spread across 33 towns and communities and the City of Toowoomba.

In December 2008, TRC resolved to prepare a new planning scheme using the statutory framework established by the Sustainable Planning Act 2009. The new Toowoomba Regional Planning Scheme was officially adopted on 20 March 2012 and implemented on 1 July 2012. It replaces the eight planning schemes previously administered by TRC post-amalgamation.

As part of its local planning process in 2009, TRC undertook a scoping exercise and identified 28 Local Plan (LP) areas within the TRC area. LPs were produced for seven identified priority areas of which one was Highfields. The Highfields District Local Plan forms part of the current Toowoomba Regional Planning Scheme and focuses predominantly on development within the town centre.

The current round of local planning work identified a need to further develop this LP to include Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West. This larger area was identified as it is a key growth front in the short to medium term and contains large tracts of future urban land. There is a need to create a strategic vision for these areas which guides sustainable future urban development and facilitates more compact urban forms. There is also a need to consider interface issues and connectivity to existing urban areas, as well as clearly articulated desired urban design outcomes.

The LP for Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West will explore:
- How neighbourhoods are structured and connected
- The type and location of housing
- Public facilities (i.e. parks, pools, sporting fields)
- Demands on infrastructure such as roads, drainage, and water and sewerage mains
- Employment needs of current and future residents
- Connecting residential and commercial areas, open space and recreation facilities.

Project Objectives & Key Planning Principles
The main objectives of the Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West local planning process is to:
- Develop a vision for this LP area that is consistent with the Toowoomba Regional Community Plan themes and associated planning principles as well as the strategic framework of the Toowoomba Regional Planning Scheme
- Identify preferred development patterns and forms in line with the vision and planning principles
- Identify other non-land use strategies that are critical to achieving the vision and planning principles.

The Toowoomba Regional Community Plan themes are:
- Settlement pattern
- Movement
- Open space and public realm
- Built form
- Staging and growth
- Implementation

Purpose of this Report
The purpose of this LP report is to document the overall structure for Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West. It describes the background to the project, the current nature of these areas including an analysis of the existing constraints and opportunities. It also documents key strategies for:
- Neighbourhood structure
- Movement
- Open space and public realm
- Built form
- Staging and growth
- Implementation.

Project Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>November—December 2012</th>
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<tr>
<td>Project preparation and early community consultation</td>
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<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>January—February 2013</th>
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<td>Stakeholder consultation and development of local plan options</td>
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<th>February—April 2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation of Local Plan and consultation period</td>
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<th>Stage 4</th>
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<td>May—July 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation of Final Local Plan</td>
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Figure 1. Project Timeline
2. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

The Study Area

The study area is located approximately 13.6km north-east of Toowoomba. It encompasses approximately 63km² and includes the townships of Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West as well as some of the surrounding rural area (see Figure 2).

Highfields is an urban community, however the area surrounding is largely rural in character with pockets of rural residential development, mainly to the south. The Meringandan township is a small rural residential community to the west of Highfields. Meringandan West is a rural residential community, primarily consisting of 4000m² blocks.

History

Settlement of the area dates from the 1860s with land used mainly for pastoral purposes. Growth took place from the late 1800s into the early 1900s aided by the opening of the railway line from Murphy’s Creek to Highfields in 1867. From this point, timber production became an important industry. Highfields became part of Crow’s Nest Shire in March 1949 and was amalgamated into Toowoomba Regional Council in 2008. The population of the area has quadrupled after the 1990s until now.
Drivers of Change
There are a number of drivers of change affecting Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West and this LP. Some of the key drivers are as follows:

Population Growth
According to projections by the Office of Economic and Statistical Research (OESR), the total population of the Toowoomba Region is expected to grow by approximately 79,839 people between 2011 and 2031. This equates to an annual average growth rate of 1.6% per annum. The estimated population growth within the Toowoomba Statistical District (TSD) is estimated at 66,084 people between 2011 and 2031. Highfields has been identified as a key growth area along with Westbrook and Toowoomba South-East. These areas are expecting large population increases of over 10,000 people each over the next 20 years.
The 2011 Highfields population is 8350 people with 2282 people in Meringandan and Meringandan West. Given Highfields has been identified for an additional 10,000 people, the LP aims to help determine how these people can be accommodated in a sustainable way.

Demographic Change
In addition to population growth, the 2012 Population and Dwelling Profile by OESR projects there will be a significant change in the demographics of the region over the next twenty years.
The proportion of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase from 13.5% in 2006 to 20.5% in 2031 and the median age will also increase by 4.5 years from 35.8 in 2006 to 40.3 years by 2031. The 25-44 year age group will remain the dominant age group - accounting for 24% of the total population, closely followed by the 45-64 year age group (23.5% of the total population).
This has implications for the provision, and type, of housing being planned and developed in Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West and has implications for movement and transport.

Housing Diversity & Affordability
There is currently limited housing diversity in the LP area. The low density residential and rural residential precincts that have evolved are characterised by 1000-4000m² lots with high quality, large single storey dwellings.
The majority of residential land is zoned Residential Choice (Regional Residential) or Residential Living. Whilst the Residential Choice zoning allows for smaller, and possibly attached, dwelling types, Census information indicates 97.7% of the dwellings in Highfields are separate houses. This figure is even higher in Meringandan and Meringandan West.
The new planning scheme policy direction is to increase housing diversity, and there are infill opportunities to increase urban densities in some of the existing residential areas. Remaining greenfield sites, currently zoned Residential Choice, also offer opportunities for future development to incorporate greater housing diversity and affordability.
The lack of housing choice within the LP area impacts on affordability. The median sales prices of housing in the area is already significantly higher than those across the TRC area. Providing a more diverse range of dwelling types, including smaller lots, may reduce the cost of housing but also cater for the changing and ageing population.

Infrastructure & Compact Urban Form
The provision of infrastructure directly impacts the LP. One key issue is the provision of reticulated sewerage.
The existing sewerage infrastructure availability is limited within the LP area and the lack of housing choice means the area does not make efficient use of the existing infrastructure. Currently only certain areas of Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West are provided with sewer. These locations include the newer areas of these townships, including the Highfields Town Centre. The remaining development has individual on-site sewerage treatment systems.
The Priority Infrastructure Plan (PIP) seeks to provide coordinated infrastructure delivery to service the anticipated growth in the study area up until 2031.
Greater urban densities and a more compact urban form in currently underdeveloped areas will help improve the efficiency of the infrastructure. The majority of the community of Meringandan and Meringandan West will remain unserved which will limit the increase of density within the areas. The Residential Choice zone in Highfields north of the existing town centre however does have the capacity to support significant growth with smaller lot houses as this area will be serviced with reticulated sewer.
Analysis of the Local Plan Area
Analysis of the LP area was undertaken in conjunction with TRC. A summary is outlined below and shown graphically in Figure 3.

Settlement Pattern
The existing settlement pattern is largely made up of rural residential and low density residential uses. These are complemented by commercial, community purposes and low to medium impact industrial land uses.

There are significant opportunities to make more efficient use of undeveloped land that is currently included in the urban footprint.

A sustainable settlement pattern will encourage opportunities for higher density developments to be, ideally, located in close proximity to the current town centre, local centres and open space areas of higher amenity. The design of these areas needs to be sympathetic to the existing local character and create a distinct sense of place.

Transport & Mobility
The existing transport system is not integrated between the various modes of transport. This is due to the fragmented, low density development typical in the study area and the lack of infrastructure. There are minimal ‘attractors’ such as significant commercial nodes and higher density residential areas that would facilitate an improved public transport system.

The study area is largely dependent on Toowoomba for many services (health, education, retail, etc) and for access to most employment opportunities. This will continue to be the case into the foreseeable future until more non-residential land uses begin to develop to accommodate local needs. Until then, private transport will be favoured over the public transport options that currently exist.

The rate of residential growth and the reliance on private transport means that the existing road network is sufficient to cater for the current population but will continue to be the case into the foreseeable future until more non-residential land uses begin to develop to accommodate local needs.

Road Network
The existing road network is sufficient to cater for the current population but will struggle to accommodate the projected population growth. The resulting traffic volumes will likely exceed the capacity of the existing major roads network, including the New England Highway which was widened to a dual carriageway over the last 2 years.

The New England Highway through Highfields is under pressure to accommodate more commercial development as the population of the area increases. This is a concern for maintaining the safety and functionality of this stretch of highway.

Consideration should be given to creating seamless linkages between the existing road network and the network of future residential developments. The most desirable outcome would be a grid network, where topography and constraints permit.

Active Transport
Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West do not currently facilitate or encourage the use of active transport through its built environment.

Viable active transport requires safe, generous footpaths or bike lanes that are physically defined from the roads, and form a connected network that start at a destination and end at a destination. With such vast amounts of undeveloped land and a master planned town centre, the Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West LP should place high priority on coordinating an integrated network that permeates development boundaries.

Bus Services
Effective and efficient bus services are limited given the fragmented and low density residential areas and the dispersed commercial and community uses. A bus service is provided to link Highfields to Crowns Nest and Toowoomba, as well as providing an internal service within Highfields.

Highfields will, in future, have the critical mass to support a public transport system that operates more effectively and efficiently. Therefore the local planning process should designate a public transport system including mode and route network in support of the long term population. This may include the possibility of a park’n’ride connection directly to Toowoomba.

Natural Ecosystems
The protection of ecosystem services is not specifically addressed via this project. However, significant biodiversity has been identified (as per Planning Scheme overlaps) and these areas should be protected from inappropriate development.

Biodiversity & Natural Areas
The LP area contains a number of areas that are considered of High Ecological Significance (HES) by the State Government, along with several areas considered as General Ecological Significance (GES), all of which form part of the Biodiversity Areas Overray in the Toowoomba Regional Planning Scheme. These areas are predominately located on the rural fringes of the study area, particularly along the eastern escarpment.

The areas of ecological significance have been identified predominantly because they are important areas of remnant vegetation (see Figure 3). The study area contains significant large tracts of Endangered remnant vegetation, particularly along the eastern side of the residential area with good connectivity to areas Of Least Concern and Of Concern remnant vegetation along the escarpment. Also enhancing connectivity and resilience of the remnant vegetation are the connectedness to smaller areas of mapped regrowth vegetation along the escarpment and western fringes.

The eastern escarpment contains areas of vegetation that are large, intact, connected and perform an important buffer between the more built up residential areas. To the western side of the study area, there are still areas of intact vegetation with some connectivity but are more fragmented than the east likely due to encroaching residential uses and past farming practices. There is also significant connectivity with vegetation further east in the neighbouring Local Government areas.

While there are no mapped areas of ecological significance in the built up urban areas of the Highfields township, this area does contain many large habitat trees and very small patches of vegetation (particularly along local creeks) that could be considered important at a local scale.

Waterways, Wetlands & Aquifers
The LP area contains a number of small creeks and waterways (see Figure 3). Generally, waterways east of the New England Highway flow into the Lockyer Valley whilst waterways to the west of the highway will flow into the Murray-Darling catchment.

Approximately half of the Highfields urban area (northern section) is in the catchment area for Cooby Dam, which supplies water to the greater Toowoomba urban area.

Development in proximity to these waterways must not compromise the quality of these waterways.

Waterways and waterways buffers have been identified and the LP could explore opportunities to connect different parts of the area with shared pedestrian and cycle pathways along these waterways to promote walkability and cycling.

Meringandan and Meringandan West are dissected by Meringandan Creek. The Toowoomba Regional Planning Scheme imposes a 50m buffer for all adjoining lots to any waterway.

Scenic Amenity & Greenspaces
The LP area is characterised by rolling hills set amongst good quality agricultural land. Highfields is located on the top of a plateau, whilst the smaller townships of Meringandan and Meringandan West are located on the gentle slopes of hills.

In some instances, elevated land has been developed for residential purposes to achieve views.

The LP area contains significant scenic amenity with rural uses and views in the west and greenspace views in the east. It also contains some regional greenspace in TRC ownership, with several large blocks along the eastern escarpment containing important biodiversity values.

Development in greenfield areas must ensure that views and vistas are maintained to protect the scenic values of the locality. The preservation of existing and planned biodiversity corridors will contribute to maintaining the scenic amenity within the area.
Identity & Character

Highfields is more an urban community than a rural community however it does have a strong identity and areas of distinctly different character. These are distinguished by topography, vegetation and the nature of the residential development in the area.

This differs from the township of Meringandan which is a small rural community to the west of Highfields. In addition, Meringandan West is a rural residential community, primarily consisting of 4000m² blocks. Undulating land in this area provides scenic rural views.

A large existing drainage corridor currently provides a degree of separation between Meringandan and Meringandan West. This corridor, along with the topography, help define and the extent of each of the townships.

There is a strong community desire for the townships of Meringandan and Meringandan West to remain somewhat separate from Highfields. This can also be said of the relationship between Highfields and Toowoomba. There has been a long-standing policy that Highfields remain physically separate from Toowoomba. This has been maintained through an ‘undeveloped’ area between the two and continues to be raised as an issue by the community.

Community Facilities

The study area is served by a range of community facilities and services, including:

- Two primary schools (state and private) in Highfields
- Meringandan State School (P-7)
- Council service centre / cultural centre
- Library (generally recognised as inadequate to meet the needs of the growing community)
- Swimming pool
- Sporting fields (mainly at Kratzke Road).

There are also a number of local and regional sports and recreation facilities within the LP area:

- Kratzke Road Sports Reserve, Highfields
- Kuhls Road Sports Reserve, Highfields
- Nicka Park
- Liyvale Sports Park, Meringandan West
- Tom Volp Sports Park, Meringandan
- Highfields Aquatic Centre.

As the population continues to grow there will be a need for additional sports and recreation facilities that cater for the broader area. These are planned through the PIP. Land bounded by Cabarlah Park, Cronin and Barrackes Roads has been confirmed as the location for a 27ha regional sports facility.

Activity Centres & Employment

The Highfields Town Centre, located at the intersection of Highfields, Kratzke and O’Brien Roads is a ‘major centre’ in the regional activity centres hierarchy, servicing Highfields and the surrounding area. The centre includes a variety of activities including retail, the cultural centre, library, gymnasium, school, childcare centre, medical services and sporting fields. Expansion of this centre has been planned for, primarily on the south-eastern side of O’Brien Road. Two proposed high schools are also within this precinct. The previous LP focused on the town centre area and this structure planning process does not seek to amend the current development direction for this area.

Highfields Plaza, located on Plaza Circle, is a ‘district centre’ also offering a variety of activities including retail, childcare, medical and other professional services. This centre has limited potential to expand.

Additional local centres within the LP area can provide focus for higher density development and additional residential neighbourhoods. These may include limited retail but could also include community facilities or open space as their focus.

A number of non-residential activities are located along the section of the New England Highway that passes through Highfields. The former Crow’s Nest Shire Council and the current TRC have to date, applied a policy of limiting activities along the highway to those that have a tourism focus. The purpose of that policy is to maintain the town centre as the focus for business activities in Highfields. It was seen as important to not undermine the development of the town centre by allowing commercial development to locate on the highway.

In their current form, the commercial/tourist activities along the highway are fragmented. Given the intention to focus tourism activity along the highway remains, there is a need for consolidation in order to help strengthen these uses in clusters and allow their co-location to drive better economic value from their location.

Industrial activities in Highfields are located within the industrial area on Highfields Road at the northern end of Highfields. This area has the potential to accommodate substantially more development with only 2.8ha of the total area of 28ha having been developed. Given the current take up rate and the potential additional regional focussed industrial development at nearby Charlton-Wellcamp, it is not anticipated that the current zoned industrial area be expanded. It will remain in its current form to service the needs of the Local Plan area.
Drainage corridors as part of local park system in Highfields
Community Forum 1
Consultation and engagement with the community of Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West is a key component of the local planning process. Community engagement undertaken in preparing the LP has been in the form of two evening community forums, both held at the Highfields Cultural Centre and the exhibition of the draft LP report.

Community Forum 1 was held on 3 December 2012. The purpose of this event was to introduce the community to the local planning process and gather their views about the current issues and priorities in the area. In addition to this, the community was also asked to provide their ideas in terms of a vision for the future of Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West.

In order to achieve this a series of questions were asked:
1. What are the key issues confronting the local area?
   - What’s good – what do you want to keep?
   - What could be improved, what’s missing?
2. What are your ideas for a preferred future?
   - Where to in 50 years?
   - Describe a vision ideas/values, what the area will look like?

The attendees were split into groups with a Council representative at each table to facilitate the discussion and note the community responses. At the end of the evening, each group reported back with their 3 key outcomes. Following this, responses for Highfields and Meringandan, Meringandan West were collated and summarised by Council. These are shown in the tables opposite. This information was also on display in the Highfields Town Centre and was available on Council’s website.

1. Key Issues

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<th>Highfields</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public transport (park and ride) to Toowoomba</td>
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<tr>
<td>More alternative transport options within Highfields: bike, bus, taxi, light rail between Highfields/Toowoomba/Meringandan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Road improvements and road safety</td>
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<td>Alternate route to Toowoomba from Highfields and future bypass.</td>
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<th>Meringandan &amp; Meringandan West</th>
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<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roads and drainage - linkages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved access from Meringandan through Toowoomba – more direct route (e.g. Old Goombungee Road to Boundary Road). Need route for trucks away from townships – poor road condition.</td>
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<td>Improvements and further development for Lilyvale Oval Park and Cooby Dam Picnic Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve facilities for older people (e.g. bus service and retirement village)</td>
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<td>Recycling services for townships.</td>
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<td>Green corridors define neighbourhoods</td>
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<td>Linking passive recreation corridors.</td>
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<th>Economic development</th>
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<td>Improve opportunities for small businesses</td>
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<td>More business/Industrial land.</td>
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Ideas from Community Forum 1

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2. Vision – Ideas for a Preferred Future

Highfields

Better transport & roads
- Efficient and regular public transport
- Designated bike/walk ways
- Better connections to Toowoomba and the region – road and rail.

Better services & facilities
- Medical centre and hospital
- Education – high schools, TAFE & university
- Community facilities – community hall, youth centre, art gallery, etc.
- Police station
- Aged care facilities (low to high care).

Distinct identity & character
- Unique and separate identity
- Attractive to visitors
- Country atmosphere with city facilities
- Strong culture
- Relaxed lifestyle.

Diverse greenspaces
- Protected escarpment accessible to the community
- Clean, green and lots of open space
- ‘Green belt’ between Toowoomba and Highfields
- Natural bushland and wildlife
- Street trees.

Business & employment
- Healthy tourism precinct
- High-speed internet supporting local business including home businesses
- Retail/commercial/industrial centres provide opportunities for local employment
- Thriving rural industry – no mining
- More low impact industries.

Housing choice
- Greater choice of different houses (small, medium, large and retirement)
- Housing is diverse and caters for all demographics
- Lifelong living plans – allowing people to age in local community
- Smaller, more affordable housing.

Meringandan & Meringandan West

Better transport
- Regular public transport – links to Highfields and Toowoomba
- Designated pathways linking local facilities and the townships of Meringandan, Meringandan West, Gowrie Junction and Highfields
- Strategic road links able to carry high traffic volumes.

Better services & facilities
- Aged care
- Medical centre and chemist
- Community hall and youth centre
- Toowoomba bypass will provide direct access to Toowoomba.

Identity
- Village identity separate from Highfields
- Meringandan Creek as green zone with recreation facilities
- More community areas
- Character of Meringandan to remain the same – semi-rural with larger blocks.
Stakeholder Engagement
In addition to the community, the local planning process also engaged with representatives of Council’s internal staff, state agencies, major landholders and the local business community.

A half-day stakeholder briefing session was held 11 February 2013 at the Highfields Cultural Centre. The purpose of this was to introduce the local planning process and draw on the expertise of attendees to better understand the opportunities and constraints for Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West.

Attendees were given the opportunity to present their top key issues, ideas or constraints for the LP area and these were openly discussed and debated. The topics of discussion related to:
- Traffic and transport
- Drainage
- Community facilities – schools, education facilities, sports fields etc.
- Biodiversity & Natural Areas
- Sewer
- Town centre development
- Residential demand and population projections.

This information, as well as that contained within the background briefing document, fed directly into the local planning workshop.

Local Planning Workshop
The local planning workshop for Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West was held over 1.5 days on the 11 – 12 February 2013 in Toowoomba. Council staff, the design team and a selected number of stakeholders attended.

The purpose of the workshop was to test ideas and options about the growth and development of Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West and consider a range of issues including, open space, movement and connection, urban form, density and identity. The process was guided by the outcomes of the Community Forum 1 and information discussed at the stakeholder engagement session.

Local Plan options were developed as part of the workshop. Examples of the options explored in the workshop are shown in Figures 4 – 6. A number of elements of each plan aligned and as such, a single LP was agreed as the future direction for Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West. The LP is shown and described in Section 5.
Community Forum 2

A second Community Forum was held on 11 March 2013. The purpose of this evening was to recap on the process to date and present the outcomes of Community Forum 1, as well as the outcomes of the local planning workshop. The LP and its supporting strategies and principles were outlined and the community was given an opportunity to ask Council questions relating to the proposed future for Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West.

As part of the forum, the community was also asked to vote on the 3 ideas they liked best from those presented that evening. The outcomes of these votes highlighted community support for the direction of the LP. A summary of the outcomes of the vote is shown in Table 1.

There was strong support for the following three elements of the plan:
1. Strengthening and provision of additional road connections internally and externally to provide better access to local and regional destinations.
2. Greater housing diversity and choice including the provision of small lot housing
3. Maintaining vegetated buffers and green corridors.

Exhibition of Draft Local Plan

The Draft LP was on public exhibition from 29 April – 17 May 2013 during which public comment was sought. The Draft LP was made available on Council’s website and was on display at the Highfields Cultural Centre, Highfields Village and Highfields Plaza shopping centres.

The comments received during the exhibition period were considered by Council in finalising the Local Plan. Some minor changes were made to the draft plan as a result of these comments, for example:

- A third tourist node was added on the New England Highway;
- The LP boundary was amended to include a section of creek corridor on the western side of Highway; and
- Amendments were made to the staging section of the LP report.

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<th>Plan elements (on posters)</th>
<th>Votes received</th>
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<td>Housing Diversity – Small Lot Housing</td>
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<td>Local Plan Options – Road Connections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Plan – Key Element 2 (new road connections)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Plan Options – Meringandan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies &amp; Principles – Cradled by green</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Diversity – Row Houses</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategies &amp; Principles – Green Fingers</td>
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<td>Local Plan – Key Element 5 (unsewered areas remain as is)</td>
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<td>Strategies &amp; Principles – Country Streets</td>
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<td>Strategies &amp; Principles - Neighbourhoods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Plan – Key Element 1 (green fingers/drainage corridors)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Plan – Key Element 6 (tourist activity node)</td>
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<td>Local Plan Options – New District Sporting Fields</td>
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<td>Local Plan – Vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Plan – Key Element 3 (additional sports/rec facilities)</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 1.
4. VISION & PRINCIPLES

The following section details the vision and principles that were developed and explored through the community consultation events and local planning workshop.

Vision
The issues raised and visions and ideas shared were used and referred to throughout the local planning workshop. As part of this workshop a draft vision for the LP area was also developed using the information from the initial Community Forum.

“Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West have a unique character and identity showcasing the natural beauty of bushland and gardens against a rural backdrop. These areas will continue to grow into a well connected town. A series of local neighbourhoods will support a strong civic heart with facilities and services well utilised and enjoyed by the community. The combination of these qualities makes Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West attractive to visitors and community members alike.”

Design Strategies & Principles
A series of overarching design strategies and principles were developed as part of the local planning process. The 5 elements can be used to describe the LP and are detailed and illustrated on the following pages.

1. A Connected Community
New road connections are created both internally and externally to improve access both locally and regionally. At a regional scale connections to the west of Highfields provide alternate routes to Toowoomba. Internally new road connections facilitate access within Highfields providing a range of alternatives to access the various activity nodes and places. Improved access and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists includes connections along green corridors.

2. Cradled By Green
The identity and character of Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West is reinforced by maintaining rural and vegetated buffers between these existing communities. Maintaining a separate identity was identified as important to both communities. Creek corridors, rural landscape, natural areas with significant vegetation and other green links are used to define these localities by providing physical separation. The escarpment is an important natural area of the Highfields and Greater Toowoomba locality. Proposed bridle and walking trails capitalise on the natural beauty of the area and enable both regional and local connection.
3. Green Fingers
A network of parks and open spaces are created through Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West. This includes a range of spaces from local and regional parks to multipurpose vegetation, drainage corridors, and protected natural areas. These parks and open spaces promote an active lifestyle and contribute to scenic amenity.

4. Neighbourhoods
A number of neighbourhoods promote an urban structure that provides a variety of housing types and densities. A range of small local centres that provide community focal points support the town centre and offer opportunities to create a number of neighbourhoods helping to generate a compact and walkable community.

5. Country Boulevards
Street trees and public realm landscape works reinforce the character of the place and provide a gateway to the locality. Important gateways and entries are reinforced through enhanced signage and landscape treatments. Key streets in the local plan area act as boulevards with enhanced street tree planting reinforcing the rural aesthetic of the locality.
A LP for Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West has been developed to illustrate the overall vision and development structure proposed for the study area.

Rationale
The creation of the LP has been strongly influenced by the feedback and vision provided by the community. This feedback was used throughout the plan's development to ensure ideas and options remain consistent with community’s vision for the locality.

One of the prime concerns of the community was the issue of maintenance of character and identity of Highfields – and indeed the Meringandan communities – as separate physically identifiable places. Avoiding a single sprawl of urban development north of Toowoomba was seen as detrimental to the identity of the community.

To address this, the LP recognises the character and identity of the existing settlements and builds a stronger neighbourhood structure around those areas able to be serviced with reticulated water and sewer. This creates a more robust framework to deliver a pattern of housing diversity that is logical and reflects the physical constraints and movement patterns of the locality.

The LP promotes the idea of compactness containing development for the most part within the existing urban footprint. This creates a more compact and walkable urban form allowing rural landscapes, drainage corridors and vegetated areas to visually and physically define Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West. The key elements of the LP are described as follows and in Figure 7, 8 and 9.

1. **Highfields Town Centre**
   The Highfields Town Centre will remain the focal point for retail development and community facilities within the Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West LP area. Residential development within the remaining LP area will continue to support this function and work within the current planning framework for this specific precinct. Higher density residential development around this node is important to provide housing diversity and add activity and life to the centre.

2. **New Neighbourhoods**
   New neighbourhoods in the north and west have been nominated in the LP. These centres provide for community focal points with opportunities for denser development in the form of retirement villages, low-rise apartments, duplexes, townhouses, row houses and small lots. These neighbourhoods should facilitate ease of access to local convenience and community facilities promoting walkable healthy communities.

3. **Tourist Activity Nodes**
   The concept of creating an entry statement to Highfields was raised by the community, as was the idea of recognising and strengthening the tourist nodes along the New England Highway. Tourist development also includes further residential development. Given the fragmented nature of tourist activities along the highway, the LP proposes they be consolidated around three nodes as indicated. The existing centre located on the corner of Highfields Road and the southern end of the New England Highway and the Danish Flower Art Complex on the New England Highway which will continue, in its current form as another tourist node and information centre. Tourist activity is to be discouraged outside of these nodes.

   The LP also proposes the creation of an entry statement to Highfields at the intersection of the New England Highway and Highfields Road which will be reinforced by the tourist activity along the highway at this point.

4. **Meringandan & Meringandan West**
   The drainage corridor which currently separates the communities of Meringandan and Meringandan West is seen as an important component of the drainage and open space network for the locality. The LP proposes additional residential development of a similar nature around this corridor. This area can be serviced and development will assist in securing this corridor for open space, pedestrian linkages and drainage. The extent of the proposed additional development would be subject to detailed hydraulic analysis and only those areas with appropriate flood immunity will be included in the Township zone.

   The proposed township extension is seen as a long term extension and it is recognised that it is outside the urban footprint within the South East Queensland and impacts on SCL areas and will require justification in accordance with the requirements of SPP1/12.

   The long term intent is to sewer the proposed township expansion. However, current network plans do not allow for additional capacity.

5. **Meringandan & Meringandan West Community Centre**
   A new community centre is proposed along Oakey-Meringandan Road to the west of the existing centre located on the corner of Highfields Road and the southern end of the New England Highway. Tourist development also includes further residential development around this node is important to provide housing diversity and add activity and life to the centre.

6. **New & Strengthened Road Connections**
   The LP recognises and maintains these corridors for open space and park as well as drainage areas to treat urban stormwater runoff. In addition to these functions, the corridors are also utilised to create a network of pedestrian and bicycle paths linking neighbourhoods throughout the broader urban area.

   The concept of creating an entry statement to Highfields was raised by the community, as was the idea of recognising and strengthening the tourist nodes along the New England Highway. Tourist development also includes further residential development. Given the fragmented nature of tourist activities along the highway, the LP proposes they be consolidated around three nodes as indicated.

   The existing centre located on the corner of Highfields Road and the southern end of the New England Highway and the Danish Flower Art Complex on the New England Highway which will continue, in its current form as another tourist node and information centre. Tourist activity is to be discouraged outside of these nodes.

   The LP also proposes the creation of an entry statement to Highfields at the intersection of the New England Highway and Highfields Road which will be reinforced by the tourist activity along the highway at this point.

7. **Green Fingers & Drainage Corridors**
   A number of green fingers and drainage corridors currently penetrate the urban areas of Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West. The LP recognises and maintains these corridors for open space and park as well as drainage areas to treat urban stormwater runoff. In addition to these functions, the corridors are also utilised to create a network of pedestrian and bicycle paths linking neighbourhoods throughout the broader urban area.

   The concept of creating an entry statement to Highfields was raised by the community, as was the idea of recognising and strengthening the tourist nodes along the New England Highway. Tourist development also includes further residential development. Given the fragmented nature of tourist activities along the highway, the LP proposes they be consolidated around three nodes as indicated.

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   The LP also proposes the creation of an entry statement to Highfields at the intersection of the New England Highway and Highfields Road which will be reinforced by the tourist activity along the highway at this point.

8. **Key Natural Areas**
   The LP area contains regionally and locally significant natural areas and biodiversity. The escarpment is a key natural area for this LP area. Access — pedestrian, cycle and possibly bridle trail — to and along this green spine will be strengthened with a series of recreation and open space nodes proposed along this edge taking advantage of the views and amenity.

   Other locally significant natural areas are:
   - Franke Scrub
   - Willam Park and the drainage corridor to the north
   - The treed area behind the Highfields Recreation Centre

9. **Unsereved Areas**
   Large areas of Highfields are currently unsewered. These areas remain largely unaffected by the proposed LP as there are no immediate plans to provide a reticulated sewer to these areas.

Further detail on each of the LP elements is outlined in Section 6.
Major Centre
District Centre
Local Centre
Specialist Centre
Residential Choice
15 – 25 du/ha
Residential Choice
(higher density) 25 – 40 du/ha
Residential Living
5 – 15 du/ha
Rural Residential
Township
Rural
Community
Industry
Sport & Recreation
Open Space
Drainage Corridor
Tourist Activity Node
Biodiversity & Natural Areas
Local Plan Boundary
Proposed New Street Connections
Walkable Catchment
(400m/5min, 800m/10min.)
Proposed Strengthened Street Connections
Proposed Pedestrian and Cycle Paths (off-road)
Proposed High Schools

Scale / 1:50,000 @ A3

Figure 7, Local Plan
Highfields North West Extension

- Major Centre
- District Centre
- Local Centre
- Specialist Centre
- Residential Choice 75 – 25 du/ha
- Residential Choice (higher density) 25 – 40 du/ha
- Residential Living 5 – 15 du/ha
- Rural Residential
- Township
- Rural
- Community
- Industry
- Sport & Recreation
- Open Space
- Drainage Corridor
- Tourist Activity Node
- Biodiversity & Natural Areas
- Local Plan Boundary
- Proposed New Street Connections
- Walkable Catchment (400m/5min, 800m/10min)
- Proposed Strengthened Street Connections
- Proposed Pedestrian and Cycle Paths (off-road)
- Proposed Highfields Residential Extension

Scale / 1:25,000 @ A3

Figure 8. Highfields North West Extension
Meringandan Extension

- Local Centre
- Residential Choice: 15 – 25 du/ha
- Rural Residential
- Township
- Rural
- Community
- Industry
- Drainage Corridor
- Proposed New Street Connections
- Walkable Catchment (400m/5min, 800m/10min)
- Proposed Strengthened Street Connections
- Proposed Pedestrian and Cycle Paths (off-road)
- Proposed Meringandan Township Extension

Figure 9. Meringandan Extension
6. LOCAL PLAN ELEMENTS

Movement

One common issue to arise for both the Meringandan and Highfields communities was the issue of access. This includes both local and regional connections. Whilst all communities wish to remain as separate identifiable settlements there is a strong desire to be better connected in a physical sense.

The LP explored these issues with new road connections internally and externally proposed, providing better access to local and regional destinations. A number of these connections have already been identified in the Draft Road Network Priority Infrastructure Plan (IPR) for the Highfields area.

Regional road connections west of Highfields connect all communities in the area to Toowoomba. Most of these roads exist in some respect so issues of securing corridors and road resumptions should be minimal. These corridors also link other pieces of future infrastructure such as the proposed Toowoomba bypass providing an additional level of connectivity.

Road design in terms of width, capacity and geometry will need further resolution in order to cater for more regional traffic flows.

Key road and intersection upgrades, which may require road reserve widening, will be necessary to adequately service future development. The timing and nature of these road network upgrades will be subject to further traffic modelling work. This needs to be undertaken with some urgency in order to secure corridors and funding.

The new and upgraded road connections (shown in Figure 10) are detailed below.

1. Upgraded regional connections are proposed for Old Homebush Road, Shirley Road and Old Goombungee Road. These provide alternative and more direct connections to Toowoomba from the LP area. They also help distribute traffic from Highfields and Cawdor Roads and the New England Highway for travel to Toowoomba.

2. New road connections allow for greater internal traffic movement between activity nodes and movement paths. These include:
   - Connection from Kleinton Road (new local centre) west to Kingfisher Drive (via Galah Street) and again from Kleinton Road to Polzin Road which provides better accessibility into the town centre for those living to the north.
   - Connection from Barracks Road to Reis Road again improves connectivity in the north-east section of Highfields.

The movement network promotes permeable neighbourhoods. Cul-de-sacs should be discouraged. These new local road connections facilitate the distribution of traffic throughout the broader urban area by providing greater route choice. This allows traffic volumes to be spread more evenly across the urban area helping to reduce the concentration of vehicle traffic on a smaller number of routes.

The new road connection from Polzin Road to Woolmer and Franke Road is not complete, and will require land acquisition or dedication. This connection, when in place, will allow access from the northern areas of Highfields to the western access road to Toowoomba, which should help distribute traffic flows.

3. Park 'n' Ride

Another issue raised during the consultation process was the possibility of a Park 'n' Ride facility being located in Highfields to facilitate movement between Highfields and the Toowoomba City Centre. This item is being further investigated by both Transport and Main Roads (TMR) and Toowoomba Regional Council.

Pedestrian & Cyclists

Walking or cycling through either Highfields, Meringandan or Meringandan West should be comfortable and indeed the preferred method. Street design should promote an active lifestyle.

The design of higher order roads should provide a comfortable pedestrian realm as well as cater for cyclists through the provision of dedicated cycle lanes. Most of the major roads within Highfields have a road reserve of 20 metres. The configuration and design of individual roads will be subject to further traffic analysis and road design work to explore how movement lanes, bike lanes, footpaths and street trees may be accommodated. These major roads have been conceived as Country Boulevards where significant street tree planting complements the rural character of the locality. The preferred location for this road treatment is shown in Figure 10. These streets will complement the character of the locality as well as providing on-road cycle lanes.

Where dedicated cycle lanes are not shown it will be assumed cyclists will share the carriageway with other road users.

Another aspiration that came through from the visioning session with the community were broader pedestrian and cycle connections. Where drainage corridors have been secured in public ownership these should be included as part of the broader cycle and pedestrian network and should contain pedestrian and cycle facilities that create a movement network. Parts of this network are shown in Figure 10. As further areas within Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West develop these can be added to the network. It is intended that this network operates not just within Highfields but regionally as well.

The SEQ Principal Cycle Network Plan (PCNP) identifies an intent to develop a future strategic cycle route along the New England Highway form Toowoomba to Highfields. Preliminary design work was undertaken by TMR for this cycleway which included on-road bike lanes and off-road shared paths. The project was placed on hold and the current status of the project is uncertain.
The connection has already been identified in the Draft Road Network PIP for the Highfields area.

Boulevard treatment along New England Highway to be negotiated with DTMR.
Neighbourhood Structure

Urban structure is the provision of a rigorous, well considered, forward looking planning structure over emerging areas of urban development.

In order to achieve more sustainable urban outcomes, all residential developments are formed as part of neighbourhoods or create new neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods are scaled upon a walkable catchment, generally a five minute walk or 400 metres as shown figuratively in Figure 11.

The neighbourhood is characterised by a centre as an identifiable and vibrant community heart. The centre may contain a mix of uses which includes retail, commercial, employment, community facilities and parks surrounded by housing within easy walking distance. A vibrant neighbourhood centre encourages (and justifies) the incorporation of a greater variety of housing types and densities close to the centre, for enhanced housing choice and a broader social mix.

Highfields

The LP locates a number of neighbourhoods over the growth areas within Highfields. This structure provides a logical basis for the provision of housing diversity, an element the community identified as being important to the needs of both existing and future residents. It also provides a way to describe and define neighbourhoods within the growth areas.

1. The Highfields town centre provides the focal point for the Highfields District and focuses on the establishment of a ‘Main Street’ with ‘sleeved’ anchor stores provided in key locations, active street frontages along key streets, and a ‘Town Square’ which will function as a key civic node for Highfields. It provides a focus for the primary retailing, commercial, administrative, and civic-based activities.

   The local plan acknowledges and does not seek to alter previous planning work undertaken for the Highfields town centre. New neighbourhood centres are proposed at a variety of locations in the north and north west of the Highfields growth areas. These centres will support the Highfields Town Centre and contain less than 1000m² of retail/business/commercial uses. Centres are to provide for the local need only. New centres are proposed at the following locations as shown on Figure 12.

2. Corner of Reis Road and Kuhls Road – this local centre provides for the additional residential community in this area with strong links from Kuhls Road and Cabarlah Park Road up to Oakey Meringandan Road.

3. Kleinton Road – this centre provides a focus for the proposed high school and associated higher density residential in this location. It has close proximity to the town centre and additional street connections improve accessibility around this area.

4. Oakey Meringandan Road west of Kleinton School Road – this centre acknowledges as part of an existing development application.

5. Polzin Road (proposed extension to Woolmer Road) – a new neighbourhood for this part of the study area emerged as a strong idea. This area can be connected to reticulated sewer in the mid-term and its development facilitates a strong desire line connection across this part of Highfields from Polzin Road to Woolmer Road. A new neighbourhood centre capitalises on the amenity offered by large areas of existing vegetation to deliver smaller lot and retirement village housing options in this location.

These centres will become the focal points for emerging neighbourhoods and are positioned to take advantage of local and regional movement. A greater diversity of housing types is encouraged around them. In general residential densities around centres should decrease with distance from the centre with the greatest density – in the form of low-rise apartments, duplexes, townhouses, row houses and small lots – occurring adjoining the centre.

Meringandan & Meringandan West

Both these communities are linked to Highfields, but have shown a desire to remain distinct communities. Both are rural residential communities and will continue to be so under the LP. In this respect they offer a different housing and lifestyle choice from Highfields.

It is intended to strengthen these communities by recognising each has their own local centre which forms a central part of their community. Further strengthening is through public realm improvements to connecting streets and provision of entry statements.

The LP also contemplates further consolidation through rural residential development around the intersection of Oakey-Meringandan and Meringandan-Shirley Roads. The intention is to secure the associated drainage corridors.

Neighbourhood Network

Area of greatest housing diversity and density (25 – 40 du/ha around the centre)

Area of housing choice at lower densities (15 – 25 du/ha)

400m / 5 minute walkable catchment

Local centre

Figure 11. Neighbourhood Network
Figure 12. Neighbourhood Structure
Open Space

The community visioning session revealed a desire to have both better programmed open spaces and a variety of open spaces and corridors that provide connectivity between communities and encourage a more active lifestyle. The LP is intended to capture these aspirations for a better connected locality through its open space network.

It is acknowledged that open spaces in both Meringandan and Highfields generally lacked a focus and role within each community. This should be the issue of a separate study that examines the role and function of existing open space areas provided in each community and how these spaces can be developed programmed in order to satisfy community expectations.

Drainage Corridors

The LP retains current drainage corridors as multi-function open space linkages. These functions include:

- Active open space connections, bike paths etc
- Passive open space opportunities – BBQ spaces, kick and throw etc
- Flooding mitigation and overland flow
- Water Sensitive Urban Design
- Water quality.

The LP identifies those corridors that should be retained (see Figure 13). Trunk corridors have a nominal width of 200m (100m from centreline) while branch corridors have a nominal width of 100m (50m from waterway centreline). Ideally streets should align with these corridors promoting overlooking of these spaces. Those areas closest to creek centre lines should be used for flood mitigation, water quality and re-vegetation with outer edges used for bike paths and other recreational purposes. Development within drainage corridors should be avoided but may be supported where it is demonstrated the function of the corridor is not diminished.

It is recognised that some drainage corridors contain natural areas with significant biodiversity. These areas may require specific management regimes and may not be suitable for multifunction use.

Dedication of land to Council will occur where public access is required.

Regional Sports Facilities

Land bounded by Cabaarah Park, Cronin and Barracks Roads has been identified as the location of additional sporting fields servicing Highfields and the surrounding district. Development of these sporting fields will proceed in stages commencing in 2014.

Escarpe Trail

The eastern edge of the study area is defined by an escarpment which affords magnificent views from the Toowoomba ranges to the east across the Lockyer Valley. Part of the open space strategy is to develop an escarpment trail which takes advantage of this natural feature. The long-term intention is to join these walks to a larger escarpment trail linking Toowoomba and Highfields.

The intention would be to create a series of nodes along this walk which would bolster tourism in the locality. Suggested activity nodes are shown in Figure 13.

Entry Statements

The study area is characterised by its openness and combination of gardens and rural settings. This theme should be used to reinforce gateways and entries into the study area in locations shown in Figure 13. These gateways relate to key intersections and nodes and reinforce their visual appeal working hand in hand with other initiatives such as the Country Boulevards.

Entry statements should be constructed simply, using vegetation and pavement and incorporate elements such as lighting and signage.

Country Boulevards

As mentioned in the movement section the Highfields, Meringandan and Meringandan West LP nominates a number of streets which may have this proposed treatment. Increased street tree planting will complement the rural character of the area providing high amenity lower speed connecting roads. These streets generally run the full length of the LP area and are important to the legibility, character and identity of the area.

Key Natural Areas

There are several key natural areas that have been identified as locally significant biodiversity.
Figure 13. Open Space Plan

Boulevard treatment along New England Highway to be negotiated with DTMR

Scale / 1:50,000 @ A3

Open fields, Meringandan & Meringandan West Local Plan Report
Built Form

With a growing and ageing population, a variety of housing types will be required to provide for a range of household types. Greater housing choice provides alternatives for people who do not wish to live in detached houses on large blocks. It also ensures those who live in Highfields, now can continue to do so in the future. These housing types include lower maintenance smaller homes and townhouses which may be located close to local centres and open space areas creating walkable compact neighbourhoods.

Built form, except for areas around the town centre, will generally maintain a 2-storey height limit with the predominate form of housing being single detached dwellings.

A large amount of the residential area shown on the LP is zoned Residential Choice. In accordance with the Toowoomba Regional Planning Scheme, the purpose of the Residential Choice zone is to provide for a range and mix of dwelling types including dwelling houses and multiple dwellings supported by community uses and small-scale services and facilities that cater for local residents. The planning scheme notes that broadhectare subdivision within new urban areas such as, Highfields will contribute to the creation of new communities by providing a mix of lot sizes that facilitates a range of residential dwelling choices achieving a minimum net density of 15 dwellings or more per hectare for dwelling houses. Around local centres increased development yields of 30 dwellings per hectare or more are intended.

This means there will be an increasing number and variety of housing types possible in the neighbourhoods created in the LP. A number of built form responses are possible in order to achieve the required densities as set out in the planning scheme. These are shown in Figures 14 – 15.

In general the following design principles shall apply to all buildings created within the study area:

- Buildings face and overlook all types of streets including higher order through streets (collectors and sub-arterials) with entrances to buildings accessible and visible from the street
- Car access and garages do not dominate the streetscape
- Higher density housing forms are developed with rear vehicle access to achieve high quality streetscapes
- The scale of townhouse and other forms of multiple dwellings is broken down through the gaps between collections of buildings for ventilation and light which enhances the landscape setting of buildings.

It is recommended that as part of any subsequent work for the LP that building control guidelines for small lot and detached houses be developed for Highfields which also deal with the character elements for building form and detail.
Small Lot Housing / Duplexes
Freehold dwellings / Lots up to 400m² / 1-2 storeys / 15 du/ha

This form of detached housing enables growing communities to achieve increases in density within existing areas and street network patterns where laneways are not provided. The existing scale of the neighbourhood and the street layout is maintained. To achieve a safe and attractive street presence, restrictions are placed on the proportion of site coverage and the location of driveways and garages in relation to orientation.

Row Houses (rear access layout) / 2-Storey Apartments
Community title or freehold dwellings / Lots 120-300m² / 1-2 storeys / 25-30 du/ha

This form of attached housing provides sustainable and economical medium density housing with attractive individual street addresses. It also allows opportunities for home offices. Vehicle access and car accommodation is from a rear lane so the streetscape is not dominated by garages and driveways. Their compatibility with other lower density housing in terms of height and scale makes them ideal for integration into new residential areas.

Figure 14. Small Lot Housing / Duplexes
Figure 15. Row Houses (rear access layout) / 2-Storey Apartments
7. STAGING & IMPLEMENTATION

Staging
The growth of the LP area is divided into three areas for purposes of staging as shown in Figure 16. Development is proceeding in parts of Highfields already, although this is mainly in the north. As the sewer runs from the south-west of Highfields, it is likely that once this front has been built out, the north-eastern and central parts of Highfields will proceed including the Polzin Road extension which is an important part of the local road network. After this the balance of the northern-western area of Highfields is expected to proceed which will build out the remainder of the urban footprint.

It is expected Meringandan will proceed relatively independent of the Highfields area but will be dependent upon sewer and further hydraulic investigation.

This simple approach to staging reflects current development fronts and infrastructure delivery.

Development Yields
Council have identified a need to provide for an estimated additional 10,000 people in the Highfields area over the next 20 years. The following analysis of land available for development in the staging areas set out above demonstrates there is generally an adequate supply of zoned land (with the inclusion of the north-west neighbourhoods within the LP area).

Small areas of additional urban land have been identified in the north-west of Highfields, as shown in Figure 8 and adjoining Meringandan as shown in Figure 9.

There is no need to identify other additional urban land in the foreseeable future.

Some preliminary yield estimates for the Highfields area are provided below in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Developable Area</th>
<th>Target Dwellings / Density</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Northern Development Area</td>
<td>113.2 ha</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>4,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. North Eastern and Central</td>
<td>196.1 ha</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A. North Western Development Area</td>
<td>95.4 ha</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>3,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B. Meringandan Development Area</td>
<td>119.4 ha</td>
<td>600**</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>524.1 ha</td>
<td>6,600</td>
<td>17,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
*Note: Includes a discount of the total developable land area of 30% which makes provision for parks, roads, etc.
^Note: Assumes a net development yield of approximately 15 dwellings per hectare.
*Note: Assumes an average household size of 2.6 persons per dwelling.
**Note: Assumes a net development yield of approximately 5 dwellings per hectare.

Implementation
Not all recommendations and information contained within this document can be implemented through the planning scheme. The strategies contained in this document affect a number of program and service providers at the state and local level.

Table 3 sets out a range of strategies to be pursued and provides some indicative timing and priority of strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explore potential sites for a community hall for Meringandan</td>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare concepts for Country Boulevards in Local Plan area</td>
<td>TRC/TMR</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Park and Open Space areas within Local Plan area</td>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify locations and prepare concepts for Entry Statements</td>
<td>TRC/TMR</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate alignment of Escarpment Trail</td>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate alignments for off road bike paths</td>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare Built Form Guidelines</td>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate Regional Road Corridors in conjunction with DTMR</td>
<td>TRC/DTMR</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate the feasibility and location for a possible Highfields Park ‘n’ Ride facility</td>
<td>TRC/TMR</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore Public Realm Guidelines for the entire Local Plan area, including Highfields Town Centre</td>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake transport planning to identify key road corridors, road upgrades and possible acquisitions</td>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stage 1
Stage 2
Stage 3A
Stage 3B
Local Plan Boundary

Figure 16. Staging Plan
Planning Scheme

Note that detailed planning scheme amendments are not part of this brief. However the following are recommended to be investigated as part of any future planning scheme amendments.

The current Local Plan for Highfields does not include the communities of Meringandan and Meringandan West. The first step in this regard is to include these communities and acknowledge they are inextricably linked to the Highfields community.

Table 4 sets out a number of suggestions for implementing the LP through the Local Plan and the broader planning scheme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amendments / Additions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7.2.1</td>
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<td>7.2.1 (1)</td>
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<td>7.2.1 (3) (b)</td>
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<td>7.2.1 (3) (i)</td>
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<td>7.2.1 (3) (k)</td>
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<td>7.2.1 (3) (l)</td>
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<td>Highway Precinct</td>
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<td>Public Realm</td>
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Table 4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Text/Figure</th>
<th>Amendment</th>
<th>Proposed Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority Infrastructure Plan</td>
<td>Text and Figures</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Incorporate open space / drainage corridors in PIP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Diversity</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>The Local Plan does not provide direction on housing density and diversity. In order to ensure that density is achieved around proposed centres and maintain the neighbourhood structure proposed, the Local Plan should consider creating a Highfields Neighbourhood Precinct in the Residential Choice Zone to the extent defined by the Local Plan. This Precinct should nominate a minimum density target to be achieved around centres. That density should be at least 25-40 dwellings per hectare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Centres</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>The Local Plan does not deal with other centres apart from the Highfields Town Centre except by exclusion (see Acceptable Outcome AO1.1). Given this the Local Plan needs to make provision for local centres to be located as shown on the Local Plan. These centres should be limited in size to allow no more than 1000m² of retail GFA. Centres are shown indicatively in size on the Local Plan but are located in the most preferred location physically. These new local centres should be zoned Local Centre in the Local Plan. Site area should not generally exceed 2500m² – 3000m². Design guidance regarding the interface of these centres with adjoining residential areas should be included in the local plan or any guideline that accompanies the local plan. Ideally these centres should express themselves to the street creating landmarks on key corners, relying on on-street parking for high turnover car parking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meringandan Communities</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Presently there is no recognition of the Meringandan communities. The Local Plan will need to incorporate these communities reinforcing the current neighbourhood structure and the nature of residential development. Given the extension areas in the Local Plan are able to be severed, it would appear that smaller lots would be able to be accommodated in these areas. However, the character of the area is larger lots and therefore in keeping with the nature of the area a minimum lot size of 2000m² is recommended for severed areas. Expansion of unsewered areas is not recommended and therefore a minimum lot size in the order of 4000m² is suggested.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Built Form</td>
<td>Text and Figures</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Some of the tension around the issue of housing diversity and density is generated through a lack of understanding of built form outcome. Although not able to be dealt with through the Local Plan the preparation of built form guidelines should accompany the Local Plan. These guidelines (non statutory) should set out Council's desired outcomes for higher density areas around centres for areas where densities of 25-30 dwelling per h/ha are required. These guidelines need to address form, scale, typology, car parking, character, outlook, open space and privacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Framework</td>
<td>Figures</td>
<td>Additions</td>
<td>The Strategic Framework will need to be amended with at least the following detail: New urban areas for north-western development area in Highfields Rural residential expansion area for Meringandan Nomination of major roads west of the LP area Nomination of local centres</td>
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Table 4 (Cont’d)