

Item No.	03
REPORT TITLE	<b>Central Highfields - Direction for design of the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection and related road links</b>
AUTHOR	Manager, Transport and Drainage Planning (Rod Betts) and Senior Transport Planner (Brian McKay)

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

To request Council's support of the concept for the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection and related road links at Central Highfields.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Highfields area has experienced significant growth over the years, from 3,600 residents in the 2001 Census increasing to 9,500 residents in the 2016 Census. The Central Highfields area has gained an increasing range of services along with significant changes in land use planning and developments over this time.

The role of Highfields Road is progressively changing, from a traditional sub-arterial through route for traffic to and from Toowoomba, to a road that motorists use to travel to the local destinations now available within Central Highfields. This changing role has presented the challenge of how to provide the appropriate transport infrastructure on Highfields Road to service the local function of a town centre, whilst maintaining the through function of distributing traffic to and from Toowoomba.

Council's purchase of land in 2018 and the subsequent development of the Central Highfields Master Plan (Master Plan) and Central Highfields Structure Plan (Structure Plan), have presented the opportunity to address this changing role of Highfields Road and the adjoining road links to holistically integrate urban planning, infrastructure planning and Council's and the community's aspirations for a modern, accessible, connected and safe town centre.

Traffic studies undertaken in the development of the Structure Plan and subsequent enquiries and analyses have strongly concluded that consideration be given to implementing new generation roundabouts and vulnerable user connections for the Central Highfields movement network, with roundabouts performing better than traffic signals under the peak traffic conditions predicted from future growth, and inherently safer through lower vehicle speeds and reduction in the number and nature of conflict points.

In addition to the realignment and proposed new generation roundabout upgrade of the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection, the project scope also needs to include the related road links of O'Brien Road (to Balmoral Street) and Highfields Road (to Rogers Drive) to achieve the movement network outcomes envisaged in the Structure Plan.

At this early stage of conceptual design, the project has a projected budget of \$8.59M currently allocated over the four (4) years from 2020/21 to 2023/24. Considering the range of underground services' relocations and other stakeholder negotiations, this four (4) year timeframe will likely present a number of design and construction challenges and budgets may need to be revised as the project progresses over time.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. Proceed with the detailed design and construction of the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection and the related sections of O'Brien Road (to Balmoral Street) and Highfields Road (to Rogers Drive) including new generation roundabouts and vulnerable user connections (as per **Attachment 6**); and
2. Support the necessary land dedication for new road reserves, service relocations and early works that can proceed in parallel with the design phase.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

In more recent years, transport planning practices and road safety strategies in Australia have moved towards the Safe System approach which has been adopted in many countries across the world from the 1990s onwards.

Council's purchase of land at Central Highfields, along with the development of the subsequent Master Plan and Structure Plan for this area, has presented the opportunity to revisit and update the transport planning approach previously under consideration for Highfields Road and the adjoining road network, to better align and integrate with Council's urban planning outcomes and the community's aspirations for Central Highfields.

**Declaration of Declarable Conflict of Interest - Councillor W.W. Cahill**

The Chair referred to Councillor W.W. Cahill's Declaration of Declarable Conflict of Interest made in Item 02 "Attendance including Apologies, Leave of Absence and Declarations of Conflict of Interest" and of Council's decision to allow him to participate in the decision and vote on the matter. See below:

I inform this Meeting that I have a Declarable Conflict of Interest in this matter (as defined in Section 150EN of the *Local Government Act 2009*). The nature of my interest is as follows:

This Declarable Conflict of Interest arises because I am a resident in proximity to the works proposed for the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection and related road links.

I wish to participate in the decision in relation to this matter. I acknowledge that eligible Councillors must now determine, pursuant to Section 150ES of the *Local Government Act 2009*, whether I:

- (1) May participate in the decision about the matter, including by voting on the matter;
- (2) Must leave the Meeting, including any area set aside for the public, and stay away from the Meeting while the eligible Councillors discuss and vote on the matter; or
- (3) May participate in the decision about the matter subject to conditions.

**MOTION**

Moved by Cr. R.L. Vonhoff, seconded by Cr. N.M. Sommerfield

That Councillor W.W. Cahill may participate in a decision about the matter at the Meeting, including by voting on the matter.

**CARRIED**

**FOR:** Councillors R.P. Antonio, G.C. McDonald, T.P. McMahon, M. O'Hara Sullivan, J.J. O'Shea, K.G. Shine, N.M. Sommerfield, C.E. Taylor, M.M. Taylor and R.L. Vonhoff

**AGAINST:** Nil.

**DID NOT VOTE** - Councillor W.W. Cahill

**REASON FOR DECISION**

Councillor W.W. Cahill may participate because he does not stand to gain any more than any other resident of Highfields.

*Councillor K.G. Shine returned from temporary absence at 2.13 p.m.*

*Councillor R.P. Antonio temporarily retired from the Meeting at 2.15 p.m. and returned from temporary absence at 2.19 p.m.*

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

1. Proceed with the detailed design and construction of the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection and the related sections of O'Brien Road (to Balmoral Street) and Highfields Road (to Rogers Drive) including new generation roundabouts and vulnerable user connections (as per **Attachment 6**); and
2. Support the necessary land dedication for new road reserves, service relocations and early works that can proceed in parallel with the design phase.

**CARRIED**

**FOR:** Councillors R.P. Antonio, W.W. Cahill, G.C. McDonald, T.P. McMahon, M. O'Hara Sullivan, J.J. O'Shea, K.G. Shine, N.M. Sommerfield, C.E. Taylor, M.M. Taylor and R.L. Vonhoff

**AGAINST:** Nil.

**COUNCIL DECISION - 15 DECEMBER 2020**

**(Infrastructure Committee - 8 December 2020 - Item No. 03)**

The Chair referred to the Declarations of Declarable Conflicts of Interest made in Item 2.0 "Attendance including Apologies, Leave of Absence and Declarations of Conflict of Interest" and of Council's decision to allow Councillors W.W. Cahill and T.P. McMahon to participate in the decision and vote on the matter. See below.

**Councillor W.W. Cahill**

I inform this Meeting that I have a Declarable Conflict of Interest in this matter (as defined in Section 150EN of the *Local Government Act 2009*). The nature of my interest is as follows:

This Declarable Conflict of Interest arises because a person who is a related party of mine has an interest in this matter. The Particulars:

- (a) The name of the related party is Kim Cahill;

- (b) The nature of my relationship with the related party is she is my wife; and
- (c) The nature of the related party's interest in this matter is Kim Cahill's business contracts services to a tenant of Highfields Village Shopping Centre. Highfields Village Shopping Centre is in close proximity to the roundabout.

I wish to participate in the decision in relation to this matter. I acknowledge that eligible Councillors must now determine, pursuant to Section 150ES of the *Local Government Act 2009*, whether I:

- (1) May participate in the decision about the matter, including by voting on the matter;
- (2) Must leave the Meeting, including any area set aside for the public, and stay away from the Meeting while the eligible Councillors discuss and vote on the matter; or
- (3) May participate in the decision about the matter subject to conditions.

**Councillor T.P. McMahon**

I inform this Meeting that I have a Declarable Conflict of Interest in this matter (as defined in Section 150EN of the *Local Government Act 2009*). The nature of my interest is as follows:

This Declarable Conflict of Interest arises because a person who is a related party of mine has an interest in this matter. The Particulars:

- (a) The nature of my relationship with the related party is he is my brother;
- (b) The nature of the related party's interest in this matter is he is an adjoining landowner to the Highfields Master Plan Centre.

I wish to participate in the decision in relation to this matter. I acknowledge that eligible Councillors must now determine, pursuant to Section 150ES of the *Local Government Act 2009*, whether I:

- (1) May participate in the decision about the matter, including by voting on the matter;
- (2) Must leave the Meeting, including any area set aside for the public, and stay away from the Meeting while the eligible Councillors discuss and vote on the matter; or
- (3) May participate in the decision about the matter subject to conditions.

Committee Recommendation adopted by Council at its Ordinary Meeting of 15 December 2020.



**CORPORATE PLAN REFERENCE**

- 2.2.1 Plan and implement urban improvement works which enhance local character and identity, conserve and improve the region's streetscapes and provide iconic parkland.
- 1.1.4 Build social capital through the provision of accessible community infrastructure and programs.
- 2.3.1 Undertake integrated strategic land use, infrastructure planning and urban design to manage growth in a financially sustainable manner that enhances liveability.
- 2.3.3 Ensure development aligns with community sentiment, through effective and efficient assessment, with the planning scheme, planning instruments, codes and legislation.
- 3.3.3 Implement the Sustainable Transport Strategy including a safe walking, cycling and public transport network.
- 3.3.2 Improve safety, serviceability and efficiency of the region's road network and integrated transport system.

**BACKGROUND****1. Decades of Growth**

The Highfields area has experienced significant growth over the last two (2) decades and longer, with 3,600 residents recorded in the 2001 Census increasing to 9,500 residents in the 2016 Census. The Highfields population is characterised by a young demographic with 30% under the age of 20, while the median age is 42.

The Central Highfields area has gained an increasing range of services along with significant changes in land use planning over this time (refer **Attachment 1**).

Key developments have included:

- Highfields Village Shopping Centre around 2002;
  - Mary MacKillop Primary School in 2003;
  - Highfields State Secondary College in 2015;
  - Mary MacKillop College in 2016;
  - Childcare centre in 2017; and
  - Medical centre in 2020,
- with an Aldi supermarket and Council's new Highfields Library project also currently under construction.

Key changes in land use planning and ownership over this time have included:

- a small area of commercial land with adjoining rural land parcels noted as "Future Investigation" in the former Crows Nest Shire Council Planning Scheme;
- a quadrupling of the commercial land with adjoining higher density residential land zonings adopted in the 2012 Council's Planning Scheme;
- Council's purchase of the remaining large parcel of undeveloped land at Central Highfields in 2018; and
- development of the Master Plan in 2018 and Structure Plan in 2019.

## **2. Changing role of Highfields Road**

Highfields Road is a regional sub-arterial road linking the New England Highway through Highfields to Meringandan and other regional townships to the north and west of Highfields. The road has traditionally acted as a through route collecting residential and commuter traffic from Highfields, to and from the major employment and services destination of Toowoomba.

Transport planning in the early to mid 2000s envisaged the ultimate widening of Highfields Road to four (4) lanes. A four (4) lane boulevard concept was investigated around 2008/09 but did not proceed due to cost and impacts on the existing treescape. An initial concept for realigning Kratzke Road and O'Brien Road and signalling this intersection on Highfields Road was also prepared. Land was acquired from development on one (1) corner of the intersection to support this.

With the advent of further commercial developments around 2015/16, land was acquired from those properties along Highfields Road to support future widening to four (4) lanes with turning lanes for development access. It was envisaged by transport planning at that time to maintain the through road function of Highfields Road with the future signalisation of the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection in mind. Matters of land resumption and services relocation to support future roadworks were identified but not progressed.

However, with the growth and development in the Central Highfields area over the past two (2) decades, Highfields Road is transitioning from a road that motorists use to travel through to more distant destinations (longer distance trips), to a road that motorists use to travel to local destinations (shorter distance trips).

This changing role has presented the challenge of how to provide appropriate transport infrastructure on Highfields Road to service the local function of a town centre, whilst maintaining the through function of distributing traffic to and from Toowoomba.

## **3. Master Plan and Structure Plan**

Council's purchase of land in 2018 and subsequent development of the Central Highfields Master Plan and Structure Plan have presented the opportunity to address this changing role of Highfields Road and adjoining road links.

The Structure Plan in particular, aims to holistically integrate town planning and infrastructure planning to achieve not only Council's outcomes but also community aspirations as reported below.

In terms of transport planning for roads, intersections and active transport, the Structure Plan is based on the modern Safe Systems design philosophy.

This approach is considered critical to serving all the various local transport functions of a town centre including making adequate provision for vulnerable users, whilst continuing to accommodate through traffic on Highfields Road.

### **CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

The Master Plan entailed three (3) rounds of community engagement, as reported and considered at the time of Council's endorsement of the Master Plan at its Ordinary Meeting of 17 July 2018 (Planning and Development Committee - 10 July 2018 - Item No. 03).

Extensive community engagement was undertaken throughout the development of the Master Plan, the outcomes of which have been acknowledged and carried forward in the development of the Structure Plan which identifies the vision for Central Highfields as follows:

*“to create a distinct centre destination which provides local and regional residents a convenient alternative to the Toowoomba CBD”*

The Community Engagement Report for the Master Plan (refer **Attachment 2**) identified that the community wanted a more connected centre in terms of walking and cycling, and one where pedestrian safety was paramount.

Community desires were reported as including:

- Distinct identity, to be provided by a family friendly environment with low speed streets and street layout;
- Accessibility and connectivity, to be provided by dedicated pedestrian and cycle facilities; and
- Safety and security.

In line with the expressed vision and community desires for Central Highfields, a movement network was developed as part of the Structure Plan (refer **Attachment 3**). This movement network identifies the proposed road and street typologies and intersection treatments for Central Highfields.

A Councillors Information Session on the Draft Structure Plan was held on 19 November 2019, prior to Council's endorsement at its Ordinary Meeting on 17 December 2019 (Planning and Development Committee - 10 December 2019 - Item No. 16). A Councillors Information Session was held on 27 October 2020 regarding Highfields Road Transport Planning.

## **ISSUES AND RESPONSES**

### **1. Traditional traffic engineering moving to Safe System approach**

For most of the past two (2) decades, transport planning for Highfields Road has been based on the traditional engineering approach of giving traffic movements priority and using temporal (time) separation between vehicles and vulnerable road users. This physical separation of movement modes using traffic signals has been traditionally seen as the safest form of intersection control.

Elsewhere in the world, this approach has been supplemented over time by the Safe System approach to road safety and transport infrastructure design. Originally developed in Scandinavia during the 1990s, this new approach is premised on two (2) basic factors:

- People make mistakes and will make mistakes when on roads; and
- People are vulnerable to being killed or seriously injured if involved in a crash.

The Safe System approach was adopted nationally by the Australian Transport Council in 2004 and is embedded in the National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020, Queensland's Road Safety Strategy 2015-2021 and Council's Road Safety Strategy 2019-2023.

Consistent with the long-term road safety vision of these strategies, the Safe System approach recognises that people will always make mistakes and may have road crashes - but the system should be forgiving, and those crashes should not result in death or serious injury.

This more modern approach is changing the traditional way that transport planners look at infrastructure design, with consideration now being given to concepts such as Movement and Place, and intersection treatments such as new generation roundabouts potentially replacing signalised intersection treatments.

Movement and Place brings traffic engineers and urban planners together through a shared systems understanding and common language approach. Fundamental to Movement and Place thinking is

the recognition that roads and streets perform multiple functions. A transport link not only moves people from A to B, it can also serve as a key place and a destination. This is very much the outcome that the Structure Plan movement network aspires to achieve for Central Highfields.

Given these approaches are relatively new to Australia, consultation has also been undertaken with professional bodies and specialists in this field, to better understand their suitability in the context of the Central Highfields movement network. This consultation has provided further support for the Safe Systems approach including the provision of new generation roundabouts at key intersections within Central Highfields (refer **Attachment 4**).

A new generation roundabout (refer artist's impression **Attachment 5**) differs in design from traditional roundabouts in a number of ways including:

- Road geometry is designed to slow vehicle speeds;
- Vulnerable users are catered for by raised crossings on all legs of the roundabout; and
- Design reinforces the shared responsibility of all users to use the facility safely, in line with the Safe System approach.

While relatively new to Australia, this form of roundabout treatment is supported in the latest design guidelines produced by the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads and has recently been successfully implemented in a number of locations within Melbourne.

## **2. Structure Plan and new generation roundabout investigations**

RMA Engineers (RMA) were commissioned to undertake the transport planning component of the infrastructure studies supporting the Structure Plan.

As part of this work, RMA used SIDRA analysis to assess the operational efficiencies of a signalised intersection compared to a roundabout treatment for the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection, using the estimated future traffic for a ten (10) year time horizon (2031).

A roundabout configuration was found to perform operationally better than a signalised intersection in terms of the degree of intersection and movement saturation, queuing and delay. RMA also identified that a roundabout configuration would be safer than traffic signals due to lower speeds and the reduction in the number and nature of potential conflict points.

Subsequent to RMA's work, Council officers developed a micro-simulation model of the Central Highfields area in order to evaluate and compare the operational impact of the two (2) types of intersection on the adjoining road network.

This modelling assessment supported the findings of RMA's SIDRA analysis work, with a roundabout performing considerably better than traffic signals in terms of vehicle queue propagation and operational performance. Compared to the long static queues associated with traffic signals at peak times, the roundabout queues were shorter and moving.

## **3. Scope of Works**

In working through the above analyses and assessments, it has been identified that in addition to the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection, two (2) further road links need to be delivered in conjunction with or closely following this intersection upgrade:

- O'Brien Road - To link the intersection upgrade up to the roundabout currently being constructed at the O'Brien Road/(new) Balmoral Street intersection; and

- Highfields Road - Extending the Safe System and Movement and Place approach to and through the Aldi/Lauder Drive roundabout and to Rogers Drive, potentially with the existing 40km/h school zone being converted to a 40km/h speed zone.

A layout diagram illustrating the approximate extent of the intersection upgrade [1] and these two (2) road links [2 and 3] is attached (refer **Attachment 6**).

## **RISK MANAGEMENT MATTERS**

### **1. Road Dedication**

The Structure Plan movement network identifies that O'Brien Road is to be realigned to achieve a cross-intersection layout with the existing Highfields/Kratzke Roads intersection.

This will require a new road reserve to be dedicated from the land now owned by Council, as illustrated on the layout diagram (refer **Attachment 6**). It would be desirable for this dedication to be achieved early in the detailed design process, to support negotiations with service utility authorities regarding relocation of underground and overhead services.

### **2. Underground Services**

There is a range of existing underground and overhead services that will require relocation to support the project, including:

- Ergon - High voltage and low voltage power (potentially including discussions to underground the current overhead supply);
- Telecommunications - Fibre optic, multiple providers;
- Water - Existing water mains plus new trunk water main planning and delivery; and
- Drainage - Conveying major storm flows from Highfields Road, and Council's land through an underground system down Kratzke Road.

Council's current Ten (10) Year Capital Works Program envisages services would be relocated during the 2021/22/23 financial years. Services relocation will be one of the major cost components of this project, and an allowance has been used in the current cost estimates to cater for this risk, pending negotiations commencing with the service utility providers.

### **3. Community awareness, understanding and acceptance**

The proposed new generation roundabout treatment of the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection will be the first of its kind for the Toowoomba region, and it would be appropriate to undertake a community education exercise to inform the local Highfields community, if not the broader region in general, of how to safely use the intersection.

Informational videos such as for the new Moray Street roundabout in Melbourne would assist with this process, as would frequently asked questions and information sheets explaining key points and relevant statistics for all users (for example, raised crossings promote a slower speed environment and studies show are 60% safer than a traditional zebra crossing).

## **LEGAL ISSUES**

Not applicable.

**Human Rights Act 2019 Considerations**

The *Human Rights Act 2019* provides that it is unlawful for a public agency to act or make a decision in a way that is not compatible with human rights, or to fail to give proper consideration to a human right. This necessitates understanding the human rights that are protected. When making decisions or taking actions, consideration needs to be given to how that may impact on a person's human rights. Where there is a restriction on a person's human rights the restriction must be no greater than is justifiable to protect the rights of others or the community at large.

Section 15 - Recognition and equality before the law

It is considered that as a result of the extensive community engagement undertaken as part of the Master Plan, and the further engagement to be undertaken with all stakeholders during the detailed design process, human rights have been and will be properly considered as these works proceed.

**DELEGATION**

Not applicable.

**FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The concept design undertaken to inform this report is of a high level. Accordingly, the following Estimates of Cost for Areas 1, 2 and 3 (**Attachment 6**) include allowances for various cost elements such as underground services, earthworks and pavement design that are yet to be fully investigated, currently only leaving a small contingency within the future budget provisions as noted below:

SCOPE AREA	ESTIMATES OF COST
Area 1 - Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection	\$4,700,000
Area 2 - O'Brien Road link	\$2,000,000
Area 3 - Highfields Road link *	*\$1,500,000
<b>Contingencies</b>	<b>\$390,000</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8,590,000</b>

\* not including Aldi roundabout

Council's Ten (10) Year Capital Works Program currently includes the following budget provision for the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection project:

FINANCIAL YEAR	PROJECT PHASE	BUDGET PROVISION
2020/21	Commence Detailed Design	\$190,000
2021/22	Complete Detailed Design and commence Service Main Relocations	\$1,500,000
2022/23	Start Construction	\$3,000,000
2023/24	Finish Construction	\$3,900,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$8,590,000</b>

Budget provisions may need to be adjusted over the next three (3) financial years if required as detailed design and negotiations with service utility providers and other stakeholders are progressed and costs confirmed.

At this stage, the project will be fully capitalised and delivered through Council's Construction and Maintenance teams with the use of local sub-contractors and suppliers as required.

## **CONCLUSION**

Transport planning for Highfields Road over time has been based on a traditional traffic engineering approach, with traffic signals having been proposed at the intersection of Highfields, Kratzke and O'Brien Roads for many years.

In more recent years, transport planning practices and road safety strategies in Australia have moved towards the Safe System approach which has been adopted in many countries across the world from the 1990s onwards.

Council's purchase of land at Central Highfields, along with the development of the subsequent Master Plan and Structure Plan for this area, have presented the opportunity to revisit and update the transport planning approach previously under consideration for Highfields Road and the adjoining road network.

Traffic studies have demonstrated that roundabouts will have the capacity to cater for the predicted traffic growth on Highfields Road and the adjoining road network within Central Highfields, and together with the new generation approach to catering for vulnerable users, will be the safest form of intersection treatment for all users.

The extensive community engagement undertaken in developing the Master Plan further supports the adoption of a Safe System and Movement and Place approach to enhancing the road network within the Central Highfields area, with significant community sentiment having been expressed in relation to accessibility, connectivity and safety.

Accordingly, Council's endorsement is sought to proceed with detailed design of the upgrade of the Highfields/Kratzke/O'Brien Roads intersection and the related sections of O'Brien Road (to Balmoral Street) and Highfields Road (to Rogers Drive) based on a Safe System approach, including new generation roundabouts and vulnerable user connections.

Matters of land dedication, services relocations and identification of early works will need to proceed in parallel with detailed design, as the currently envisaged four (4) year timeframe for delivery of this project will present a number of design and construction challenges.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- |            |   |    |   |   |
|------------|---|----|---|---|
| Attachment | 1 | of | 6 | <a href="#"><u>Central Highfields - Chronology of Growth</u></a>                    |
| Attachment | 2 | of | 6 | <a href="#"><u>Central Highfields Master Plan - Engagement Report</u></a>           |
| Attachment | 3 | of | 6 | <a href="#"><u>Central Highfields Structure Plan - Traffic Movement Network</u></a> |
| Attachment | 4 | of | 6 | <a href="#"><u>Specialist consultation</u></a>                                      |
| Attachment | 5 | of | 6 | <a href="#"><u>New Generation Roundabout - Artist's impression</u></a>              |
| Attachment | 6 | of | 6 | <a href="#"><u>Scope of Works</u></a>   |

# Chronology of Growth

Attachment 1

Mary MacKillop Primary School



Village Shopping Centre



Kratzke/O'Brien early concept



1:100 flood event



Highfields Road options



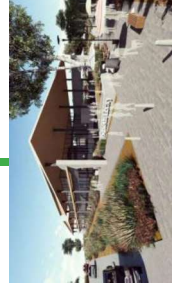
Aldi Roundabout Conditioned



Childcare Centre Opens



Library approved and Structure Plan adopted



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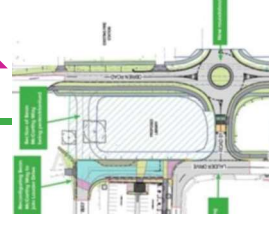
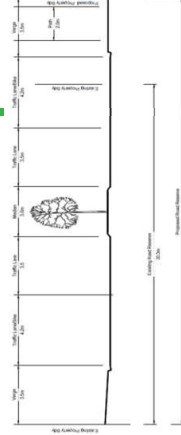
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19 2020



2012 Planning Scheme (expanded commercial Centre)

State Secondary College

Mary MacKillop College

Library Precinct Roadworks

Council purchases Land & Central Highfields Master Planning



Boulevard Planning Highfields Road





# Central Highfields Master Plan

## Stage 1 Community Engagement Report

Prepared for Toowoomba Regional Council by  
Carey Crimmins & Kate Tully, Primus  
*December 2017*



**PRIMUS Pty Ltd**

PEOPLE CENTRED, RESULTS FOCUSSED

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## Executive summary

**Between October 2017 and July 2018, Toowoomba Regional Council (Council) will develop a Master Plan for Central Highfields which will ultimately inform an amendment to the Planning Scheme.**

The area to be covered by this Plan is shown on the map below.



Stage 1 of this process – Community Engagement – was successfully completed during October-November 2017. During this stage, Council engaged with more than 200 people to elicit their views on two key considerations:

- Values, and
- Vision for the future of Central Highfields.

This report presents the findings of this engagement stage, grouped according to seven identified Value themes:

1. Belonging, Family, Community and Neighbours
2. Distinct Identity
3. Space
4. Trees and Nature
5. Accessibility and Connectivity
6. Safety and Security
7. Economy and Growth

The report delivers on Council's commitment to provide feedback to those who participated in the engagement process, as well as other interested stakeholders.

The information in this report will now be used by Council to develop options, which will be presented back to the community and other stakeholders for further input during February-March 2018, as part of Stage 2 Engagement.

## Intent of the engagement process

**The intent of this process is to ensure that all stakeholders have an opportunity to influence the direction of the Central Highfields Master Plan and derive a sense of ownership from the experience.**

Community engagement can and should be an exercise in social capital-building. The current project provides an important opportunity for the Highfields community to connect, reflect, influence and celebrate.

During Stage 1 Engagement on the development of the Central Highfields Master Plan, the Project Team has taken pains to ensure that participants know that their input can genuinely shape the outcomes.

This engagement has taken a 'clean slate' approach; facilitators at workshops and targeted consultations have not provided input in the form of ideas, suggestions or options, but rather have focused on listening.

Participants have learned more about their community and its projected future, building their individual and collective capacity.

Importantly, Council now has the consolidated input of more than 200 individuals to help shape its initial options for the Master Plan.

Engagement has been consistent with Council's Community Engagement Policy, with the Queensland Government's 'Community Engagement Toolkit for Planning', and with the Community Engagement Plan developed by the Project Team.

## The Project Team

The Project Team comprised these Toowoomba Regional Council officers:

- Mr Heath Martin, Principal Planner Land Use & Community
- Ms Jade Bebbington, Principal Regional Design and Development
- Mr Rodney Betts, Manager Transport and Drainage Planning
- Mr David Krumins, Manager Regional Architecture and Heritage
- Mr Trevor Mitchell, Coordinator Stakeholder Engagement
- Ms Ann Whitton, Principal Urban Designer

as well as these external consultants with specific expertise in various aspects of community engagement:

- Ms Carey Crimmins, Project Lead
- Ms Kate Tully, Senior Consultant
- Dr Barbara Ryan, Communications Advisor
- Mr Glen Crimmins, Project Coordinator
- Ms Phoebe Tully, Social Media Strategist

The work was also guided by a Steering Group comprising:

- Cr Anne Glasheen
- Mr Stewart Somers, General Manager Planning and Development
- Ms Paula Grant, Manager Strategic Planning and Economic Development
- Mr Daniel Loader, Acting Manager Stakeholder Engagement and Communications
- and members of the Project Team.

## Whom we engaged and how

One of the first tasks of the project team was to identify relevant stakeholders – those who will be impacted by the Master Plan and who wish to contribute to its development. Eight major stakeholder groups were identified, and the project team planned forms of engagement appropriate to each group; these are summarised in the table below.

Stakeholder group	Engagement details	People engaged
Major commercial landowners (e.g. shopping centre, tavern)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone contact from Project Team</li> <li>• Written invitation to 1:1 meetings</li> <li>• Meetings with member/s of Project Team</li> </ul>	4
Business community (Highfields & District Business Connections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone contact from Project Team</li> <li>• Written invitation to 1:1 meeting</li> <li>• Meeting with member/s of Project Team</li> </ul>	3
Community groups (e.g. Highfields Community Heart, Friends of Rogers Reserve, two secondary colleges)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phone contact from Project Team</li> <li>• Written invitation to targeted workshop</li> <li>• Targeted workshop 6/11/17</li> <li>• Facilitated workshop with students from Highfields State Secondary College</li> </ul>	Targeted workshop: 15 HSSC: 22
Community members	<p><u>For affected landowners (in or adjoining Master Plan area):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written invitation to workshop</li> <li>• Targeted workshop 2/11/17</li> </ul> <p><u>For other community members:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community workshops open to the public 13, 21, 22 and 25/11/17</li> <li>• Facebook group, monitored daily</li> </ul>	Targeted workshop: 28 Community workshops: 61 Facebook: 104
Toowoomba Regional Council (Councillors and relevant internal stakeholders )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct consultation</li> <li>• Targeted workshop 8/11/17</li> </ul>	11

MPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter regarding the planning process and an invitation to engage</li> </ul>	2
State Government agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted workshop 8/11/17</li> </ul>	12
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information about the process</li> <li>Invitation to attend media briefing</li> <li>Invitation to attend workshops</li> </ul>	5
	<b>Total no. engagements</b>	<b>267</b>

In addition to these targeted engagements, other activities included:

- Distribution of some 5,000 flyers to every household and business in the Highfields area, letting people know about the process and ways to get involved;
- Distribution of a further 1,000 flyers through Council's Service Centre, Library etc;
- Comprehensive information on Council's 'Your Say' website, including FAQs, engagement principles and workshop details; and
- Advertising in the Highfields and Toowoomba newspapers.

*I felt the Central Highfields engagement process promoted very open discussion and I found that everyone was open to listening to ideas. The way the workshops were facilitated encouraged an awareness about the needs of the broader Highfields demographic by prompting us to think from a range of different perspectives. Being in the group discussion helped me see what the whole community might need in the future.*  
*Natalie Brownlie, Highfields resident and workshop attendee*



*The flyer distributed to more than 5,000 addresses in Highfields*



## What we asked

The engagement process sought to gather data from the Highfields community about their values for Highfields both now and into the future and their vision (and ideas) for the future of the central precinct.

The facilitation of engagement processes was kept as consistent as possible across the range of engagement mechanisms including the one-on-one sessions; larger group workshops and within the online Facebook group.



*Project Team member Jade Bebbington facilitates a group at a community engagement workshop*

The various engagement mechanisms:

- Emphasised that this was a 'clean-slate' approach designed to genuinely hear the views, values and visions of the Highfields community – and that the intent throughout the process would be to listen and collect information; not to provide a Council view;
- Provided an overview of the three stages of the consultation process and an overview about the need for and scope of a Master Plan;
- Explored the Values of community members via facilitated discussion in small groups of 5-8 people;
- Explored people's values from three different perspectives:
  - 1) their own individual perspective;
  - 2) from the perspective of another (eg. a child, a teenager, a person with a disability, an older person, a mother with a pram, a tourist, a business person, someone moving from overseas); and
  - 3) a whole of community perspective;
- Worked to understand the community's picture of Highfields in the future and what it might look like in terms of space, urban form and the built

environment. It did this by asking people to imagine they were in a helicopter in 2030 looking down at Central Highfields. What did they see? What were people doing? Where are they going? How did they get there? From both a Helicopter and then a street level view, table facilitators asked questions to understand what the community saw for elements such as building height – density - types of buildings (commercial, residential); cars and parking – location, aesthetic; transport; access and open space;

- Encouraged community members to share images of town centres, streetscapes and parks that have appeal; and
- Emphasised a desire to keep the community involved in all three stages of the Central Highfields Master Plan engagement process.



*Groups at a facilitated workshop, and an example of a group's input to planning.*

It is worth noting that some of the engagements did not seek to collect the values of participants who were not directly associated with or residents of Highfields. For example, meetings with commercial land owners (who own commercial property but who are not residents of Highfields), and State Government Representatives (who are able to identify the State's interests about a Master Planning issue, but who do not hold personal values for living in Highfields).

## What we heard

Data collected throughout the engagement process was first summarised by the facilitator of the session (or the small group facilitator) and then analysed in two ways:

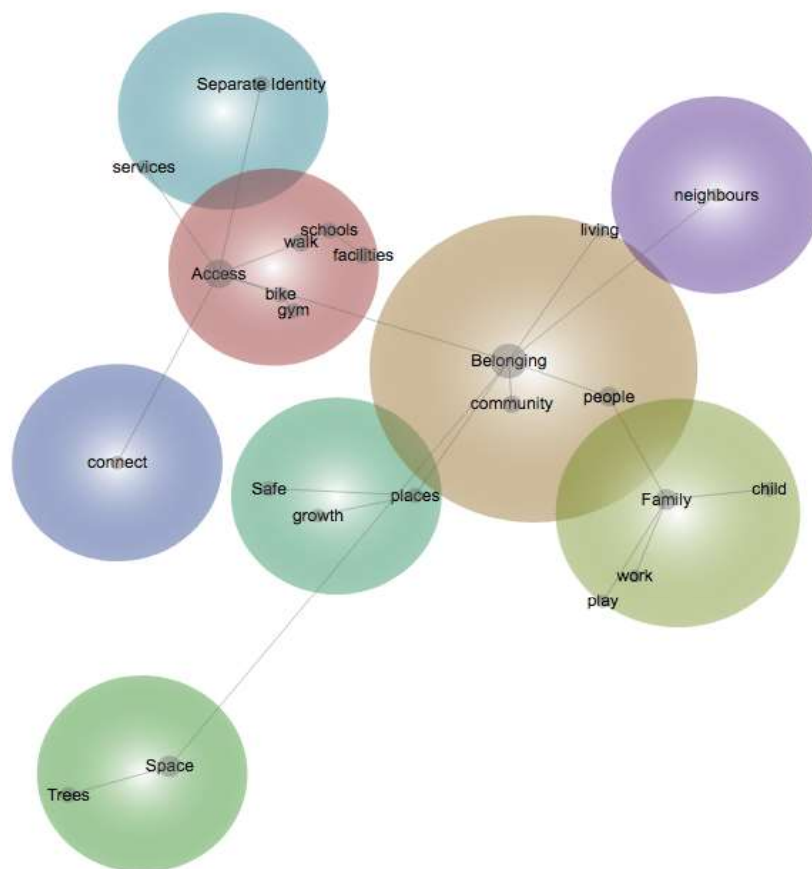
- 1) Via the qualitative analysis tool Leximancer – which was used to theme the key values identified by the community; and
- 2) Via the creation of an Excel database – which was used to explore the relationships between values and the community's future vision for Central Highfields.



## Core values

Seven core values were identified via the qualitative analysis of data (via Leximancer software); these are shown graphically in the 'concept map' below.

- 1) BELONGING, FAMILY, COMMUNITY, NEIGHBOURS
- 2) DISTINCT IDENTITY
- 3) SPACE
- 4) TREES AND NATURE
- 5) ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY
- 6) SAFETY AND SECURITY
- 7) ECONOMY AND GROWTH



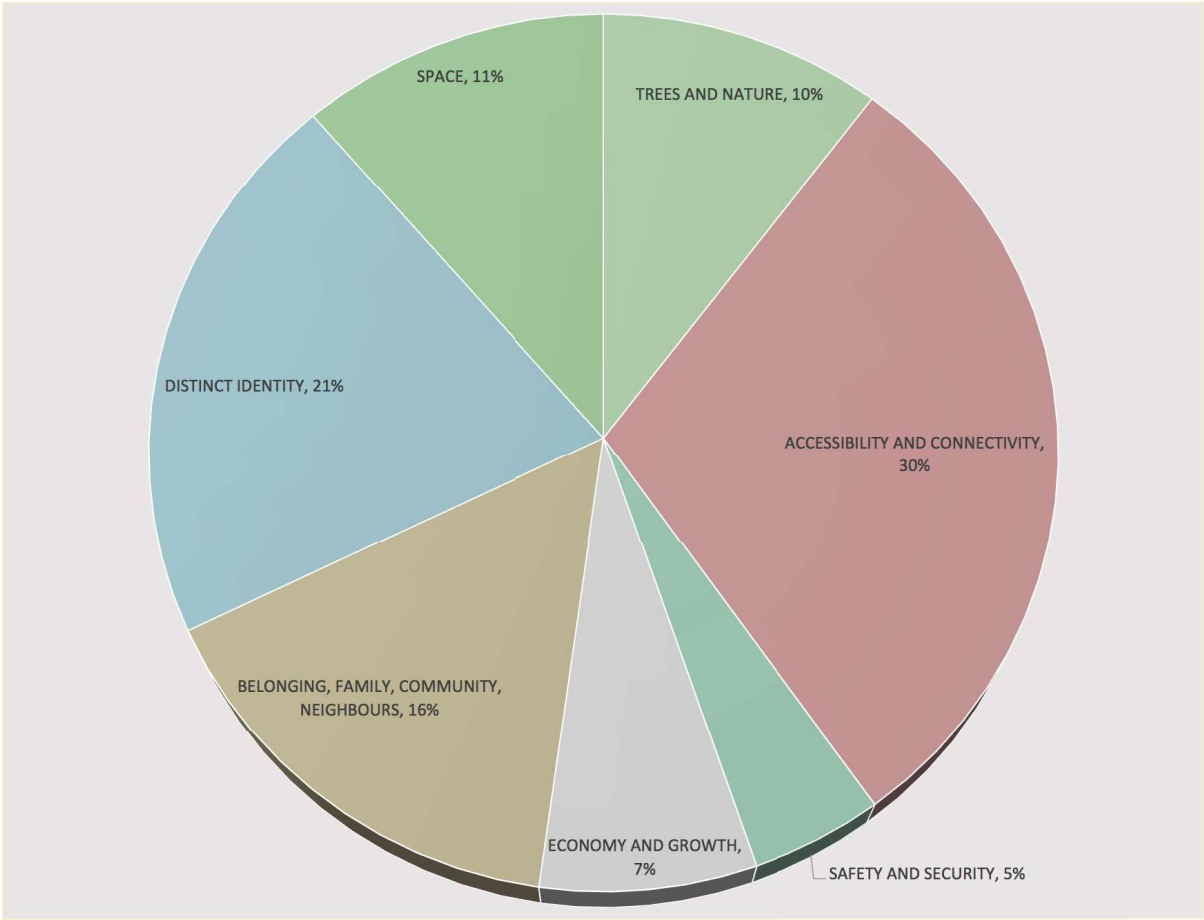
### How to interpret the Concept Map

- Each of the words on the map represents a concept eg. belonging, community, people.
- The size of the dot suggests how strongly that concept was interconnected with other concepts in the data.
- The coloured circles represent thematic groupings of concepts. For example, the concepts of belonging, community and people are surrounded by a brown circle. The brown circle represents a connection between the statements within the data. It tells us that belonging, community and people recurred *together* in the data far more often than a concept like 'space' which is quite separate.

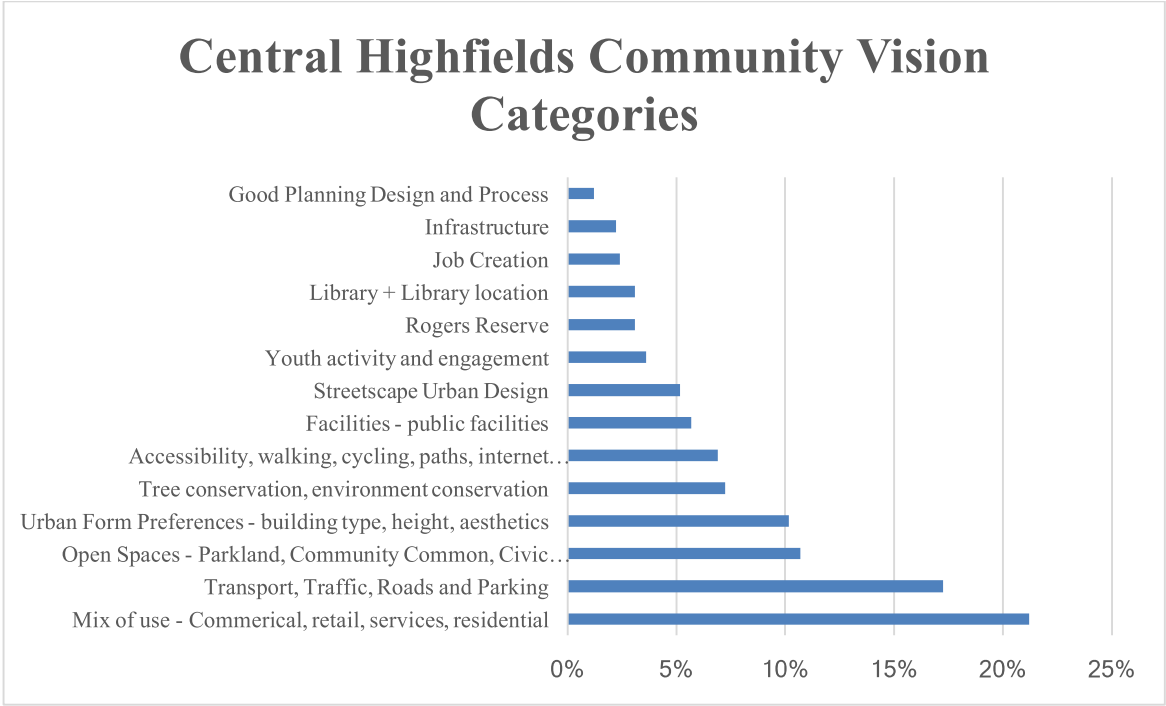
**Community vision (and ideas) for Central Highfields**

The links between the values (above) and the input received from the community about their vision for the area were explored. The chart below provides a graphical representation about the extent to which the values were represented in the overall data. For example, 21% of the ideas put forward during discussions about Vision fell into the Value category of Distinct Identity.

**Values representation by %**



The community vision and ideas for Central Highfields fell broadly into 14 different categories as represented in the following chart. The chart shows what proportion of input relates to each of these categories.



**Consolidated input**

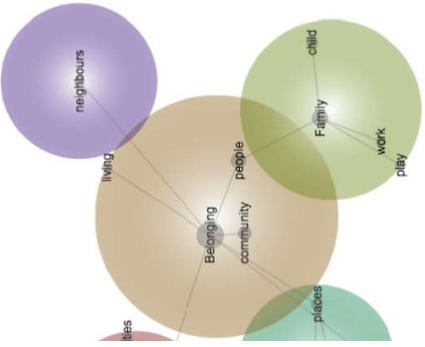
An effort was made to establish whether the data collected from different demographic groups (e.g. school students and the 25-45 year age group) and via other modes (e.g. Facebook) provided alternate insights or differences worthy of note. The finding was that the data from all stakeholder demographic groups collected via the variety of modes was largely consistent and that further study was not warranted.

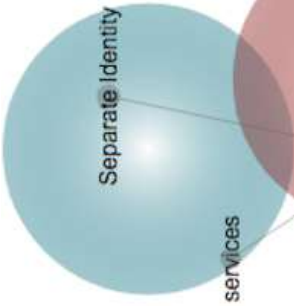
**Consultation summary**

The following pages represent the key output from Stage 1 Engagement: a summary of the consolidated data collected, clearly showing the links between the Values identified and the Vision (and range of ideas) raised by the Highfields community.

The left-hand column shows the Value and provides an explanation of the characteristics of that Value.

The right-hand column shows the Vision, issues and ideas for Central Highfields that are linked to these Values.

Values	Vision/issues/ideas for Central Highfields that are linked to these Values
<p><b>BELONGING, FAMILY, COMMUNITY, NEIGHBOURS</b></p>  <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A strong sense of <b>community</b> and <b>belonging</b> – close knit;</li> <li>■ People know each other (know their <b>neighbours</b>) and have shared experiences and values;</li> <li>■ People look after one another;</li> <li>■ Inclusive, welcoming;</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A place to live, work and play;</li> <li>■ Having places for people to connect and things to do outside of family home – entertainment, parks, shopping, sport, education, health and fitness;</li> <li>■ Easy links for community to connect – cul-de-sacs, bike and walking tracks;</li> <li>■ Family friendly/Family oriented- a place for families to grow up; and a place for extended families to gather;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Highfields is not just a place to live, but a great place to <u>live</u>, <u>work</u> and <u>play</u> with family and friends.</b></p> <p>Participants strongly favoured creation of a town square/village green/piazza – a focal area for people to gather every day as well as for special occasions. They were very keen to retain Highfields’ ‘village atmosphere’. They felt it very important that the centre of Highfields provides places for people to meet/connect; a family-friendly environment, usable by people of all ages/stages of life. Several participants were in favour of relocating the War Memorial to a place where the whole community can gather. Aesthetic appeal was important – the centre needs to be welcoming and inviting. Participants expressed a strong desire that the overall appearance remains green and open, with plenty of trees.</p> <p>There was also high support for facilities that enable community activity e.g. amphitheatre, community garden, children’s playground, café in the park, water play, ropes course, giant chess, men’s shed, expanded pool, recreation centre (not just sport), as well as dining and entertainment (cinema, theatre).</p> <p>Many participants saw the library as a crucial community hub, to include meeting spaces, teen ‘hangout’ or clubhouse; the importance of spaces for young people to ‘hang out’ was a recurring theme. Several participants commented that existing facilities (Cultural Centre etc) are too large/expensive for small community activities – suggesting a need for more modest/affordable places for community members and groups to gather (as now available at Toowoomba City Library, for example).</p> <p>Participants noted the need to include groups such as elderly and those with disability, ensuring they can also connect with community and access an active lifestyle. Integrated spaces were preferred – not separate areas for different cohorts. Participants generally also wanted to be inclusive and supportive of business and its interests, particularly local SMEs, and creating local job opportunities so people can work in their community (from after school jobs to long-term employment opportunities).</p> <p>A common preference was for e.g. local butchers, bakers, small and individual shops rather than more department stores (Kmart etc.), or ‘big box’ type stores in this area (e.g. Pet Barn, auto stores); also markets (in town square or at a school) – keen to support local family business and artisans from local community.</p> <p>Regarding neighbourhoods: there was recognition (sometimes reluctant) that housing diversity is needed to ensure people can stay in Highfields (e.g. downsizers), and to address diverse needs (e.g. singles, couples without children). There were very mixed views on whether more affordable housing is desirable – those who favour diversity vs those with nostalgic attachment to the earlier-style Highfields.</p>

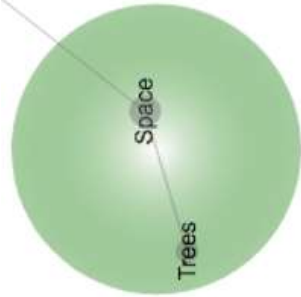
Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p><b>DISTINCT IDENTITY</b></p> <div>  <p>A Venn diagram with two overlapping circles. The left circle is light blue and labeled 'Separate Identity'. The right circle is light red and labeled 'services'. The overlapping area in the center is a darker shade of blue.</p> </div> <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Being <b>separate</b> and <b>independent</b> from Toowoomba;</li> <li>▪ Self-contained and convenient;</li> <li>▪ A hinterland village atmosphere – that is different from Toowoomba;</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More relaxed and peaceful;</li> <li>▪ Slower pace and smaller;</li> <li>▪ More family friendly</li> <li>▪ Greater connection to rural landscape</li> <li>▪ More trees</li> <li>▪ More open</li> <li>▪ Smaller country feel – rural</li> <li>▪ Quieter</li> </ul>	<p><b>Highfields has its own distinct identity, that is different to Toowoomba and any other place.</b></p> <p>Universally, participants had a very keen sense of Highfields’ distinct identity – particularly emphasising its separateness from Toowoomba, but also very keen that any new development would not be re-creating any other location but would remain distinctively ‘Highfields’. Workshop conversations featured many comparatives– ‘more this’ or ‘less that’ than Toowoomba.</p> <p>Participants recognised and valued this opportunity (Master Plan) to help create a well-designed centre that is consistent with Highfields’ distinctive character.</p> <p>Generally, there was a desire to do more in Highfields (recreation, shopping, dining, work), without needing to go into ‘town’ (Toowoomba). Participants were eager to be largely ‘independent’ – i.e. they aspire to access most of their day-to-day needs in Highfields. A few participants disagreed, preferring to keep Highfields as is and prepared to go to Toowoomba as needed.</p> <p>There was much discussion about what would and would not be ‘appropriate’ for Highfields, with firmly held and occasionally conflicting views. Visually, participants generally wanted the built form and overall design to remain ‘country’ – ‘we need to keep the village atmosphere’. In built form, people generally favoured timber, stone, glass, copper – not concrete – and always with trees. They spoke of ‘a mini CBD’.</p> <p>Views on an appropriate building height ranged from single storey to 5+ storeys, with the most common perceptions being a combination of ‘no higher than the trees’ and 2-3 storeys. Keeping the higher buildings to the central part of the new development area was also a commonly held view; participants spoke of not wanting people looking into the back yards of others, and maintaining distance or green ‘buffer zones’ between higher buildings and existing residential areas. Participants spoke favourably of e.g. Southbank Brisbane, Hastings St (Noosa) and Armidale (NSW), but continued to reiterate that ‘it needs to look like Highfields, not like Southbank or Melbourne’. Boulevards of trees and ‘green spines’ were common themes – ‘a central area that blends with the natural environment’.</p> <p>There were strong views on what uses would and would not be consistent with Highfields’ identity, and a feeling for some that this identity would be compromised with more supermarkets, petrol stations, fast food outlets, a department store etc. Participants recognise an opportunity to create something innovative and again distinctive for Highfields, e.g. business incubator/hub.</p>



	<p>A related theme is the need to let tourists and potential tourists know what's great about Highfields – what to see and do. This requires a sense that you have now arrived at the town centre; signage on highway; memorable experiences and settings; an iconic structure ('our Opera House').</p> <p>There was a commonly-held view that Highfields consists of quality housing with nice settings or outlooks, and people were keen to have 'buffers' between existing housing and any new developments.</p>
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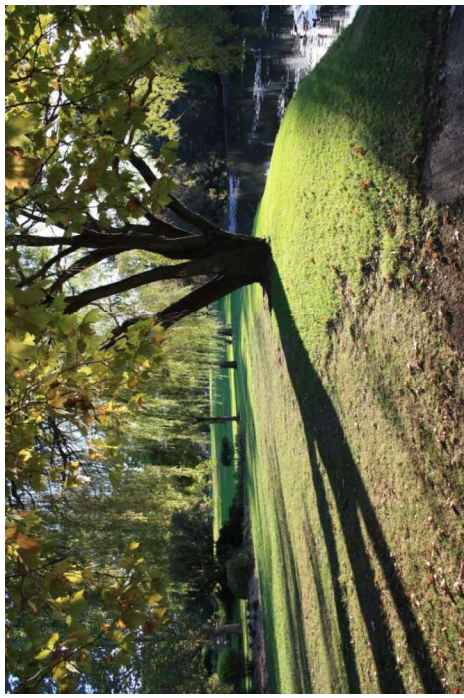


Wagga Wagga Library – images provided by a workshop participant; an example of public spaces that remain distinctive to a semi-rural setting

Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p><b>SPACE</b></p>  <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Highfields physical character being <b>open</b>, <b>spacious</b> and quiet;</li> <li>▪ <b>Green trees</b> and green <b>spaces open</b> grassed areas and parks;</li> <li>▪ Large blocks with big backyards, gardens;</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Privacy – provided by space and low rise - no one able to see into your backyard;</li> <li>▪ Clean air;</li> <li>▪ Natural street scapes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Highfields residents highly value the space and openness of the area.</b></p> <p>Highfields residents' value about SPACE (characterised by the physical characteristics of being open, spacious, green and quiet) is strongly linked with all other values - making it almost a central theme or an over-arching value for the Central Highfields Master Plan.</p> <p>Participants generally recognised that Council made a good strategic decision in purchasing the 'new' land; that there is now a genuine opportunity for the community to shape how that land is used; and participants were keen to ensure the best possible use of this land. There is a strong sense of a 'once in a generation' opportunity to preserve some open space (like New York's Central Park etc), as well as to genuinely participate in shaping plans for other elements within their community nucleus.</p> <p>In envisioning Central Highfields in the future, the concept of space was characterised for participants by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broad support for a village green/piazza/civic square – a 'Highfields version' of an open public space that is still very green and connected to the surrounding environment. This could also entail a community garden or similar, underpinning the high value placed on environment/sustainability;</li> <li>• Importance of the interface of public facilities with open areas – e.g. library connecting with cultural precinct/outdoor space, outdoor cinema; a parkland interfacing with cultural and recreational facilities, an amphitheatre (e.g. Jimbour House) – arrangements such as these facilitate community connection;</li> <li>• Wide boulevard treatments for both existing and any new roads within the area and in particular for the newly realigned O'Brien Road; and an avenue of trees along Highfields Road (part of the Highfields 'entry statement'), again consistent with open space/green aesthetic; and</li> <li>• A growing recognition that greater housing diversity is needed, and some tolerance for medium-high density residential (eg. townhouse development more than high rise) in the Central area (although views were mixed).</li> </ul> <p>It is important to note that those who supported denser housing development generally did so on the proviso that a sense of space was maintained – a 'buffer' between existing houses and any new development - characterising access to open space and privacy as an entitlement of existing residents.</p>



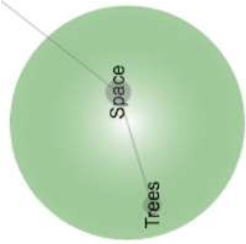
	<p>There was also some acknowledgement that multi-storey development helps to maximise open space (and also that multi-storey apartments with views would be prime real estate).</p> <p>Examples provided (images below) include Gympie, 17 Mile Rocks (water park), Kwinana Adventure Park (WA), green space outside Toowoomba City Library, Crows Nest centre surrounding a park.</p>
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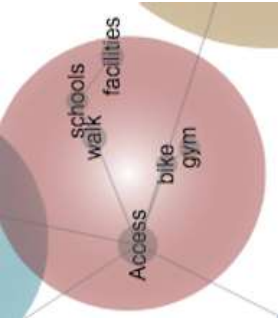


Images provided by Facebook group member and workshop participants





Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p><b>TREES AND NATURE</b></p>  <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Green trees and a tall-timber feel;</li> <li>■ Large established trees;</li> <li>■ Wildlife (birds, koalas);</li> <li>■ Nature is close to homes;</li> <li>■ Complex vegetation;</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Natural corridors;</li> <li>■ Remnant vegetation;</li> <li>■ Habitat preservation;</li> <li>■ Old gums established trees;</li> <li>■ Sustainability of environment;</li> <li>■ Closely related to the concept of Space.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Established trees and the natural environment are highly valued by Highfields residents.</b></p> <p>The overarching vision for trees and nature was about maintaining a sense of greenery, the highly prized ‘tall timber feel’ of Highfields.</p> <p>On the ‘new land’ this included maintaining as many existing trees as possible, throughout the whole new area but in particular the corridor along Clarke Road. Many people saw this as a green wildlife corridor which connects Rogers Reserve with Klein Creek. While a few participants wanted to leave this strip untouched, the majority favoured making it more usable than the Rogers Reserve, e.g. with walking trail/board walk, signage, picnic tables, a treetop walk. Buderim, Peacehaven and Cooby Dam were cited as good examples of using this type of space.</p> <p>Council made a clear commitment at the commencement of this community engagement process that Charles &amp; Motee Rogers Reserve, while included within the CHMP area, would continue as a protected reserve. Notwithstanding this, many residents were keen to discuss its future. Views about the Reserve were fairly evenly divided between ‘don’t touch it’ and ‘it’s scrubby, not very attractive and hardly used, so it should be cleaned up and made much more usable’. Some participants declared the Reserve needs ‘cleaning up’ because it presents a fire hazard; this view was not supported by QFRS. There were multiple comments on the Reserve’s educational value/potential – as an outdoor classroom.</p> <p>More broadly, there was strong interest in embracing the natural environment in any new development (Wagga Wagga Library was cited as an example.) Treed streets and boulevards were also considered to be a Highfields-appropriate design response. Underground power lines were also mentioned.</p> <p>There was wide support for increased walking trails generally, to take advantage of the natural environment – see also ‘Accessibility and Connectivity’.</p> <p>There was also some interest in sustainable developments e.g. solar, wind, water harvesting; recognising increasing power demands, and some discussion of environmentally-sensitive design principles.</p>

Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p><b>ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY</b></p>  <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Easy access to services and facilities using a range of modes – in particular walking access and bikes;</li> <li>▪ Access for all ages and abilities;</li> <li>▪ Connectivity to technology – internet;</li> <li>▪ Public Transport;</li> <li>▪ Traffic – cars;</li> <li>▪ Parking;</li> <li>▪ Walkability ;</li> <li>▪ Cycling tracks and pathways;</li> <li>▪ Connecting through easements and cul-de-sacs;</li> <li>▪ Safe places to connect.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Planning needs to ensure that the Central Highfields of the future will be easy to get around and will offer a comprehensive range of facilities and services.</b></p> <p><u>Ease of access and movement around Central Highfields</u></p> <p>Participants were keen to plan for ease (and safety) of movement around the centre – walking and otherwise. Ideas included wide footpaths, shady places to stop and sit, a boulevard treatment for O'Brien Road. Some suggested a mall with no vehicles, with deliveries made to the rear of shops/businesses. There were many comments regarding the current lack of footpaths.</p> <p>Generally, participants were keen for people to dominate over vehicles, e.g. Lisbon – a wide pedestrian area with cafes etc, with multiple lanes of traffic either side. Participants noted the need for accessibility for all, including the elderly, those with limited mobility, parents with prams. 'It needs to be easy to get to the places where we connect'.</p> <p>There was high interest in active transport – walking and cycling, including for young people. Noted that any new paths need to link with existing paths – and be wide enough to serve a dual purpose –eg. walking and cycling (at least 1500mm). Participants were keen to explore potential for bike paths to be separate from roads where feasible. They were also interested in potential for trails further afield, e.g. to Cooby Dam, Pioneer Village, Creek, Kratze Rd ovals, Peacehaven, possibly young people from Crows Nest, Meringandan getting to Highfields.</p> <p><u>ICT</u></p> <p>There were many comments about improving internet access, and having open public spaces with WiFi available, especially for young people. The library was viewed as an opportunity for best practice in smart technology. The importance of high speed internet for future business growth was also noted.</p> <p><u>Transport hub</u></p> <p>There were quite a few comments about the need for a transport interchange/hub: the Secondary College favours a location not at the school; possibly where current fire station is? Participants spoke of the need for a Park &amp; Ride to Toowoomba (cars &amp; bikes), plus local public transport; also consider tourist coaches.</p> <p><u>Access to services and facilities</u></p> <p>Many participants had views on what uses would and would not be appropriate for a future Central Highfields. Some examples include IT hub, low cost office space, recording studio; no more supermarkets</p>

In workshops and on Facebook, there was a strong preference for the first image over the second one.



or fast food, 'do we need more shops when we have vacant shops now?' There was considerable support for reviewing the library location now that the new land is available.

Other comments included existing facilities being highly-utilised with the growing population – need for expansion, e.g. indoor sports areas (lack of opportunity for new groups due to high utilisation now), pool (50m pool could be shared between schools and wider community); more public toilets.

There was considerable discussion about future access to services not currently available in Highfields, e.g. allied health (physiotherapy, podiatry etc.), medical (including pathology, Xray), TAFE or University sub-campus (possibly related to military), theatre, tourist info centre, public gym/fitness equipment, social services (government). Several participants noted the need to set land aside for a future hospital.

### Roads and traffic

A selection of comments about roads provides an overview of this popular topic:

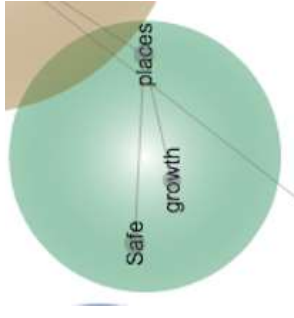
*O'Brien Road realignment:* strong support for progressing realignment as soon as possible – and especially traffic signals for children crossing Highfields Road as a top priority. Participants noted the potential for O'Brien Rd to 'split' the centre, and recognised the need to address this. People will need to cross safely; traffic calming measures were discussed (e.g. speed bumps, tactile indicators), as well as an underground tunnel or a pedestrian overpass. Participants suggested variations on the proposed realignment, including realigning for the full length through to Clarke Rd. Many of the concepts workshopped involved extending Balmoral St to O'Brien Rd and making it wider.

Participants generally acknowledged that O'Brien Road will remain a thoroughfare, and that this will be a challenge given that it runs right through the Central Highfields area. While there was some support for traffic slowing on O'Brien Road through the central precinct, others saw a need to keep speed levels higher (60km) and have pedestrian access underneath or overhead. Others still, envisioned another (perhaps) parallel road to take traffic away from O'Brien Road so that it could be maintained as a pedestrian friendly strip with a village feel.

*Other road considerations/suggestions:* Ensuring access to the cultural precinct for buses and limousines. Suggestions for a new road along the eastern side of the new land (adjacent to Clarke Road) with a tree corridor to buffer existing houses. Any new streets within new land to be pedestrian - and cycle-friendly. Widening Highfields Rd (using some of new land) and make sure other roads can take some of non-centre traffic.

There was a common concern for traffic flow generally as the population grows – Highfields Road is already considered to be 'chaos' at peak times and needing attention. Participants recognised the need for strategic thinking now about how traffic will flow through Central Highfields in the future.

	<p><i>Beyond scope:</i> Widen Reis Road to make it a more viable alternative to Highfields Road; alternative road to Toowoomba (Old Goombungee) to ease congestion, also improve access for Meringandan residents.</p> <p><u>Parking</u></p> <p>Participants generally expressed a desire for any new parking to be discreet. Participants explored various solutions, e.g. nose-in parking along a treed edge on Clarke Road ('parking in among the trees'), parking behind shops and underground parking. Those who were less intent on 'hidden' parking also discussed e.g. parking along sides of wide boulevard, centre strip like Toowoomba CBD, or multi-storey (but generally ugly as well as expensive). There was a clear preference for 'scattering' parking around the area rather than having one big, ugly car park; landscaping was also mentioned as important. Caravan and trailer (including trades people) parking is another aspect that was noted as needing to be considered. A number of participants felt there is already a shortage of parking, especially at peak times.</p>
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Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p><b>SAFETY AND SECURITY</b></p>  <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Being a safe and secure place to live, work and play; low crime;</li> <li>▪ Safe for children to ride bikes and cross roads;</li> <li>▪ Safe to move around for all ages;</li> <li>▪ Safe for walkers/cyclists;</li> <li>▪ Safe to be outside;</li> <li>▪ Lighting and security.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Highfields is a community where people feel safe and secure.</b></p> <p>Many participants noted the urgency about the safety of crossing Highfields Road near Mary MacKillop School – this was a repeated concern.</p> <p>Participants frequently noted that pedestrian safety is paramount – and currently of considerable concern. School students accessing the central area from both secondary schools was a particular safety concern. Participants commented on the need for dedicated walkways and more footpaths, noting that pedestrian crossings need to be conveniently located – 'people will cross wherever it's most convenient, especially teenagers'. An overpass or underpass to traverse O'Brien Road came up in many discussions.</p> <p>Participants reiterated that the central area needs to be easily and safely accessible for children, both those travelling on foot and those riding bikes.</p> <p>Other discussions in relation to safety included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lighting for security; a safe place for young people to hang out; police presence.</li> <li>• Protection from the elements – sun, wind, rain.</li> <li>• Need to plan for safety for major community events – ease of access for emergency services etc.</li> </ul> <p>Relocation and co-location of emergency services was suggested by a number of participants; this was not supported by emergency services personnel when consulted.</p>

Values	Vision/issues/ideas linked to these Values
<p><b>ECONOMY AND GROWTH</b></p> <p>Characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A desire to live, WORK and play in Highfields;</li> <li>■ A recognition of the need for a stronger commercial focus to attract investment and jobs;</li> <li>■ A passionate small business community;</li> <li>■ A strong desire to support and encourage local business development;</li> <li>■ A desire to foster Highfields' distinct identity through economic growth</li> </ul> <p>Note: Economic Growth did not appear on its own on the electronically generated maps (in Leximancer), however, the concept of Work appeared in strong connection to Belonging and Family. On further analysis of the vision data strong themes emerged about the importance of growing a strong local economy in Highfields to support jobs growth and the needs of a growing population.</p>	<p><b>The future development of Highfields is underpinned by a diverse and growing economy.</b></p> <p>Participants recognised the importance of growth that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. While a small number of participants would prefer no growth, most recognised that growth is inevitable, and appreciated this opportunity to be involved in planning for it. There was a strong sense that future growth needs to maintain and enhance Highfields' distinct identity.</p> <p>There were multiple comments about the need for more commercial/office space, including space for business start-ups, and for local artisans. There is a commonly held desire to support and encourage local businesspeople, e.g. local boutiques rather than chain stores. Participants noted that there are many home-based businesses in Highfields.</p> <p>Technology/innovation was a repeated theme, with a desire to build knowledge economy based jobs. Suggestions included a technology park, animation studio and a recording studio. This sector was also recognised as a likely source of future jobs. It was noted that communications/IT infrastructure is critical to creating and attracting new jobs - high-speed internet is essential, especially if Highfields is to develop a focus on 'tech' industries.</p> <p>Tourism was identified as another area for growth – there is a desire to make Highfields a 'weekend destination'; a bus interchange including for tourist coaches would assist with this.</p> <p>A mix of use to support job creation and economic development in Central Highfields is considered desirable – offices, knowledge based economy jobs, space for professionals, higher density retail, cafes, restaurants and entertainment.</p> <p>Some measures to help underpin good outcomes that were discussed: engaging a professional 'placemaker', planning covenants, an 'anchor tenant' to stimulate new development; importance of aesthetics in blending commercial/retail/residential – e.g. Southbank. Businesses also need easy access/parking, services.</p> <p>Some input regarding planning for future growth: land for a hospital; water, sewerage and drainage infrastructure; an alternate route to Toowoomba; location and expansion of emergency services; need for the Master Plan to 'future-proof' Highfields – not just address current needs; flexibility to respond to emerging opportunities; charge points for electric cars in near future/provide for solar cars.</p>



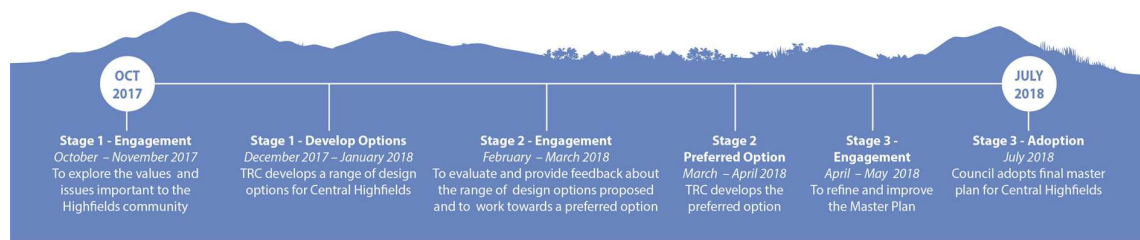
## What's next?

The illustration below depicts the timeline for development of the Central Highfields Master Plan.

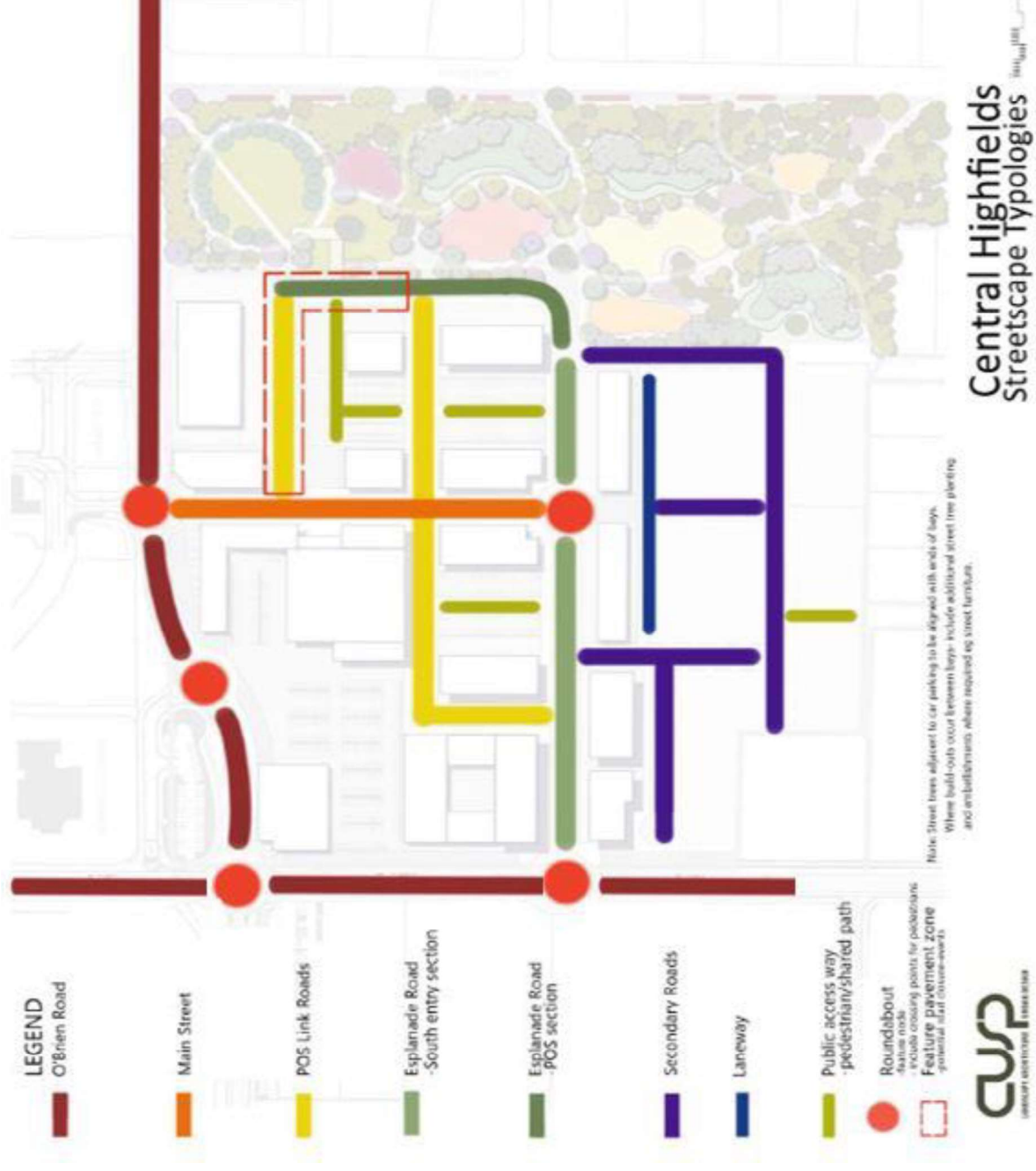
Council will now develop options based on Stage 1 Engagement, and these will be presented back to the community during Stage 2 Engagement in February-March 2018. Participants in Stage 1 were given an opportunity to indicate whether they would like to continue their involvement during Stage 2.

In addition, the Facebook group established for Stage 1 has been kept open; while it will not be regularly monitored by the Project Team until Stage 2, it has been kept open as a forum for Highfields residents and other interested stakeholders to continue to share ideas and views.

Interested stakeholders can also stay up to date via Council's 'Your Say' website <http://yoursay.tr.qld.gov.au/HTC>



## Central Highfields – Movement Network



## Specialist Consultation

In noting that this design will be a first for Toowoomba and has only recently been included in TMR's design guidelines it was felt appropriate to undertake consultation with TMR, council officers spoke to both John Douglas, Director (Traffic Engineering) and Mark McDonald, Principal (Traffic Engineering) for their perspective on the safety aspects of the new roundabout for all users when compared to a set of traditional traffic signals, their comments are summarised below:

- Handbook of road safety (Rune Elvik 2009) – “**Roundabouts are safer than signalised junctions**, the lack of speed control at signals can result in extreme severity of crashes”.
- “Traffic signals have a negligible effect on pedestrian safety”
- “Raised crossings result in a statistically significant decrease in vision impaired pedestrian delay and crossing risk”
- AGRD 4B highlights the issues of vulnerable users at traditional roundabouts, the new generation roundabout overcomes these issues by “taking a safe system approach to roundabout design”.

Additional consultation has been undertaken in order to ascertain the suitability of a new generation roundabout for the vulnerable user (people on foot, cycling or using other personal mobility devices), discussions were held with Anna Campbell – Executive Officer (Queensland Walks) and Dr Rodney Tolley (Walk21)

- Anna Campbell said she would support the delivery of a new generation roundabout and that Queensland walks would be keen to be involved in the user educational aspect of the project and undertaking follow-up studies
- Dr Rodney Tolley, has worked on similar roundabouts in Melbourne and that roundabouts support the delivery of slow speed environments and that traffic signals will always be more dangerous for jaywalker.

Further to these direct consultations a review of the latest professional literature included AUSTROADS “Improving the performance of safe system infrastructure” 2015 and the IPWEAQ's “Street design Manual” 2020 the relevant points are summarised below:

## AUSTROADS AP-R498-15

- Vast majority of severe pedestrian crashes at signals occur on lower and middle order roads
- These statistics especially implicate arterials running through shopping centre
- The most promising areas improvements towards Safe System involve reduction of impact speeds to less than 30 km/h through horizontal and vertical deflections” (new generation roundabout).

## IPWEAQ Street Design Manual 2020

- Research has demonstrated that roundabouts exhibit significantly better overall safety than alternative forms of intersection.
- The lower vehicle speeds and tighter carriageway widths on street roundabouts also make them more conducive for use by pedestrians and cyclists.



## New Generation roundabout – Artists impression



# Scope of Works

