A. STUDY AREA

Hervey Bay was settled in the late 1800s. It is 32km north of Maryborough and is the nearest centre to Fraser Island. The city can be generally described as a linear city, ultimately emerging as an amalgamation of the main centres along the city’s extensive coastline.

As recently as the 1970s Pialba, Scarness, Torquay, and Urangan were discrete towns. Soon after, these centres merged into continuous urban settlement and Hervey Bay was proclaimed a city in 1984.

From early on in the city’s evolution Pialba was regarded as the commercial centre of Fraser Coast, with a rail line providing direct connection to Maryborough since 1896.

Enjoying a favourable subtropical climate, world class beaches, proximity to Fraser Island, and significant marine-based tourism, Hervey Bay is one of Queensland’s and Australia’s true coastal cities.

The current population of Hervey Bay is 46,980, of which 3,700 live in Pialba. The Hervey Bay population is expected to grow to 65,940 by 2036 (an increase of over 40%).

The city has relatively high proportion of aged residents - the median age is 45 years old compared to 37 years old for Australia; and 33.4% of the population are older than 60 years old, compared to 19.36% for Australia.

The city enjoys national recognition for is expansive beaches, proximity to Fraser Island, relaxed lifestyle, and its whale-watching tourism industry.

The study area is gently undulating, sitting behind a coastal dune defined by Hillyard Street. Set back from the Esplanade and the foreshore, the study area is geographically close to, but does not have a strong association with its coastal setting.

Presently the developed parts of the study area include a mix of shops and shopping centres, professional offices, showrooms, fast food outlets, service stations and other activities that are typical of a town centre environment. Pialba Place is a major shopping centre within the local plan area.

The study area also takes in a number of cultural, community, and education facilities, set within expansive open space to the west of Main Street.

The principal roads in the local plan area include Main Street, Torquay Road, Old Maryborough Road and Boat Harbour Drive. The Hervey Bay links mobility corridor (former alignment of the Urangan railway line) traverses the local plan area in a north-south direction to the west of Main Street and in an east-west direction from Hunter Street.

As explained in the Local Plan for the area, the geographically large size of the centre, the low intensity and dispersed pattern of land use and the dominance of roads and car parking areas mean that lingering and experiencing the centre as a pedestrian has limited appeal.

Recent efforts to improve the vibrancy of Main Street, establish major community, cultural and education facilities close to the town centre core, and further develop the links mobility corridor as an attractive and safe active transport route have contributed to an improvement in this situation.

These efforts provide the building blocks for the further development and revitalisation of the CBD area as a place for people and the city heart of Hervey Bay.
Main Street, Torquay Road, Boat Harbour Drive, and Old Maryborough Road are major armatures. Boat Harbour Drive is a Dept Transport and Main Roads (DTMR) asset. There is a varied grain of built form with high levels of fragmentation and vacant lots, interspersed with the substantial Pialba Place and RSL buildings. The built form is also interrupted by substantial areas of off-road carparking, resulting in a fairly low-density fabric.

Land uses to the east of Main Street are regularly ordered, defined by a typical orthogonal grid. Land to the west of Main Street is more irregularly arranged, with built form set in expansive open space.

The upper part of Main Street generally maintains a fine grain commercial environment, with the overwhelming exception of Pialba Place which presents an extensive and inactive edge to Main Street.

The study area is defined by large block sizes (the distance between main roads). This promotes development of large floorplate tenancies which can obstruct the pedestrian permeability and connectivity through the area, consequently discouraging pedestrian and active transport options. Large format buildings also typically have more extensive lengths of inactive facades, eroding the visual interest and casual surveillance of streets and pedestrian connections.

There are a number of unrealised approvals throughout the study area.

Pialba Place, whilst an important retail anchor in the study area, is also an obstruction in terms of connectivity.

Council have indicated an intention to locate a new administration centre within the study area.

The recent expansion of the Stockland shopping centre has effectively established a centre of gravity for retail activity beyond the CBD area. The proximity of the Stockland shopping centre and the direct connection achieved by the mobility corridor will affect the viability of similar retail offerings within the study area. There is a need to distinguish the commercial/retail identity of the study area from that offered by the Stockland Shopping Centre – this can be done both in terms of the type of uses encouraged, but also by differentiating the user experience through different service offerings, different levels of amenity and experience.

The co-location of the university campus, the library, and the cultural centre forms an interesting knowledge/cultural cluster that is recognised in planning documents and studies, including the Education City Business Case. This would include the relocation of the existing TAFE/vocational learning facility near to the university.

There is an extensive green space network through the western part of the study area and along the foreshore. This green space is a defining quality of the CBD. Land to the west of the north-south mobility corridor (the area accommodating the cultural centre, community centre, lakes and open space) is an important green space resource for the study area. It does however lack definition (in terms of edges and spatial hierarchy) and would benefit from interventions that reinforce the structure of the area.

Much of the area is flood prone (for 100 year ARI event). There are no areas of particular environmental sensitivity or protected vegetation.

Toovan Creek to the east of study area is channelised and has low environmental and aesthetic qualities. The north-western corner of the master plan area (on the Esplanade) is constrained by the Wetland Management Area Buffer. No vegetation clearing is to occur within the management area or within 50m of a wetland management area.

There is no essential habitat or regional ecosystem map triggers.
Hervey Bay is highly car dependent - 92% of work trips in Hervey Bay are made by private vehicle, with 1% and 7% made by public and active transport modes respectively (2010).

Despite being well serviced by the local bus network, the primary means of access into the study area is by private motorcar. This is in no small part due to the presence of two large format retail centres and the RSL club and extensive offerings of on and off-street parking.

DTMR have identified a number of locations for possible bus transit centres within the study area. The two preferred by Wide Bay Transit and by Council are shown. Parking projections to 2031 indicate likely shortfall of 3,665 car parks. There is an identified need for multi-level carparks. Expansive areas of at grade parking limits appeal for pedestrian use.

The main route into the study area is from Boat Harbour Drive, which currently presents a low quality visual environment dominated by an uncomfortable mix of retail, industrial and food outlets, and dominated by parking areas and signage. The intersection of Main Street and Boat Harbour Drive provides little indication of the link to the commercial core of the PAC.

Main Street is often congested and mid-block areas are identified as key problem areas in terms of traffic.

Recent traffic studies have recommended that Hunter Street be widened to four lanes, and that Taylor Street (east Hunter Street) be promoted as the main traffic connection between Boat Harbour Drive and the foreshore.

Whilst an effective and well realised pedestrian and cycle network through the study area, the mobility corridor is incomplete and in some parts lacks a sense of safety due to low levels of casual surveillance.

Boat Harbour Drive is a high volume State-controlled road. There is a need to consider traffic operations and impact on intersecting streets. Main Street-Hillyard Street intersection geometry requires further investigation.

Due largely to the generally flat topography of the area, there are few views to local landmarks or gateways. This, along with a general lack of visual cues through the area and a lack of streetscape and place hierarchy, diminishes the legibility and memorability of the area. There is a need to establish defining edges, visible landmarks and gateways, and defined spaces to help structure the study area and ensure activity is concentrated in particular areas, rather than diffused (and lost) throughout the entire study area.

Generally, the study area lacks a level of vibrancy and activation that would be expected, and indeed is in many ways necessary, for a successful CBD. This is due to a number of factors, including a lack of economic activities, a dispersed urban fabric, and the sense of emptiness resulting from the substantial open space and at-grade car parking areas.

There is also a general lack of place hierarchy or definition. Throughout the study area, the quality of streetscapes is generally poor and the pedestrian experience generally poor. This is due largely to a lack of continuous quality finishes, lack of street trees and shading structures and extensive lengths of inactive facades and vacant lots.

The southern part of Main Street provides little in the way of identity, amenity, or visual interest. It is not until one continues past Old Maryborough Road that any sense of a commercial/retail core is realised.

Activation of Main Street and Torquay Road is relatively good, except for Pialba Place which presents impermeable and inactive edges to major roads.

In terms of character and sense of place, the built form of the area, being highly varied, contributes little to a cohesive or unique sense of place. Rather, the open space network, including the five mobility corridors, is a key defining element for the character and sense of place.

Although not well connected to the beach, as a coastal centre, the foreshore and associated beach culture prevalent throughout the city is also a key character quality for Pialba.

The cultural centre, with its striking architecture and associated whale sculpture is a prominent landmark and sets a standard for quality placemaking.

The current skate park to the east of study area is well used, but lacks quality casual surveillance.
C. PLANNING CONTEXT

The Wide Bay-Burnett Regional Plan notes the following of relevance to the study area:

- Hervey Bay is capable of supporting further growth in tertiary education, tourism and service related activities - such as aged care and support services.

- One of the key challenges for Hervey Bay in the last two decades has been maintaining centralised retail and commercial development in specific nodes. This is a particular consideration in the protection and primacy of Main Street Pialba and Boat Harbour Drive.

The study area is located within the Pialba Principal Activity Centre Local Plan area. The Fraser Coast Planning Scheme explains that the purpose of the Pialba PAC local plan code is to provide for the development and rejuvenation of the Pialba principal activity centre as the city heart of Hervey Bay with a diverse mix of uses and a form and structure which promotes activity, vibrancy, sophistication and a sub-tropical coastal style.

The Local Plan of the Fraser Coast Planning Scheme details development criteria for four precincts identified in the Principal Activity Centre. Of note:

- The Mixed Use Core Precinct is to accommodate a range of higher order retail, office, entertainment, government and community service functions and is a preferred location for the provision of a department store within the principal activity centre. It is to also accommodate multi-unit residential activities to enhance activity levels.

- The traditional main street character of Main Street and Torquay Road is to be maintained and enhanced with fine landscaping and which do not dominate street frontages.

- Pialba Place (as a Significant Development Site) is to:
  - offer highly developed retail facilities including supermarkets, discount department stores and a department store in conjunction with specialty shops and other activities appropriate in the mixed use core.
  - have consolidated car parking areas and multi-deck structures that are sleeved behind buildings and/or landscaping and which do not dominate street frontages.
  - enhance the links mobility corridor by re-establishing the corridor from Hunter Street along Old Maryborough Road to Main Street.
  - create a coherent streetscape and active and vibrant streets and public places with specialty retail shops and other active or semi-active uses provided adjacent to Torquay Road, Main Street, Old Maryborough Road and Hunter Street.

- The Knowledge, Community and Culture Precinct is to accommodate higher order civic and cultural facilities, as well as tertiary and other educational facilities, a Council administration building, high quality civic plazas and high quality open space to form a “green heart”.

Additionally, the Plan notes the following:

- The study area is an established activity centre with typical street frontages and a mixed use core with residential, retail, commercial, civic and entertainment uses in a pedestrian friendly environment.

- Mixed use nodes are to be appropriate for higher order uses and underwrite the development of the Mixed Use Core Precinct.

- The Mixed Use Core Precinct is to accommodate a range of higher order retail, office, entertainment, government and community service functions and is a preferred location for the provision of a department store within the principal activity centre. It is to also accommodate multi-unit residential activities to enhance activity levels.

- The traditional main street character of Main Street and Torquay Road is to be maintained and enhanced with fine landscaping and which do not dominate street frontages.
A number of background documents have informed this master plan process. These pages provide an overview of key documents.

**Fraser Coast 2031 Sustainable Growth Strategy 2011 (various)**

The report outlines opportunities and challenges and preferred settlement patterns for the region. Key observations relating to Hervey Bay and Pialba include:

- A lack of a defined central city focus at Pialba; rather, the centre has a spread out separation of uses.
- Limited sense of “green” and general absence of trees within many streetscapes.
- There are many underutilised and undeveloped parcels within the urban area.
- No obvious gateway experience or entrance to the area with poor navigation once within the urban area.
- The retail precincts of Boat Harbour Drive and Pialba Place operate as two dominant and distinct retail centres.
- The Pialba Precinct is constrained by difficulties in amalgamating a large enough site to accommodate a higher order department store.
- Identified opportunities include:
  - Unified gateways and entrances can be established for residents and visitors.
  - Infrastructure along the foreshore should be rationalised to provide better streetscape amenity for pedestrian environments.
  - The character of the area should be enhanced through capitalisation of the natural beauty.

**Conceptual Local Plan 2012 (Deicke Richards)**

This report outlines a conceptual Local Area Plan (LAP) for the Pialba Principal Activity Centre and was intended as a conceptual exercise to inform the drafting of the new FCRC Planning Scheme.

The report documents a series of observations about Pialba and some of the conceptual issues that must be addressed in a future LAP. A conceptual vision for the PAC is identified and a series of land use and urban design recommendations are made to implement this vision. This includes recommendations in relation to streetscapes, focal points, built form and character, building height and use, character, car parking, gateways and nodes.

The report identifies Pialba Place Shopping Centre, Stockland Shopping Centre, and the Knowledge Precinct as key development areas.

**Fraser Coast Regional Council Land Use Strategy – Built Form and Urban Design Report 2011 (AECOM)**

This report was part of the Sustainable Growth Strategy. It establishes a built form and urban design strategy for key localities in the region, including recommendations for Pialba. Strategies are organised under key themes of environment; wayfinding, legibility, and mobility; place-making; and urban form & development potential. For consistency, these themes will be employed to categorise analysis and strategies in this master plan.

The study recognises Pialba as the primary activity centre, with a full range of commercial and community services, civic facilities, housing and recreational amenities, reinforcing the idea of a walkable core.

The study also recommends (for the city): increasing residential densities; introducing measures to address potential climate change impacts (such as WSUD initiatives); increased use of street trees to enhance character and comfort; and establishing green streets, green spines, and green linkages.

**Fraser Coast Regional Council Urban Open Space Strategy 2011 (JWP)**

An open space gap analysis was undertaken as part its Council’s Sustainable Growth Strategy project. The analysis was intended to assist and inform in the development of the new planning scheme. Of note for the Pialba area, in 2011 there was a surplus of +8.76 ha of recreational parkland. However this becomes a deficit in 2031 of -43.49 ha. The foreshore reserves comprise a large component of this parkland. Similarly, by 2031 there will be a deficit in sporting parkland in the area of -91.23ha and a deficit of linear parkland of -84.99 ha.

The following recommendations from the study are particularly noteworthy:

- Create additional linear parks and circuits (many of these can be through existing reserves and waterways or along park streets).
- Continue to improve existing local parks particularly with addition of shade structures and facilities.
- Urgent identification and establishment of 2 new district sporting facilities to service the expanding Pialba population. Investigate all possible locations including the multi-use of educational facilities.
- Establish “park streets” connecting with foreshore path to provide safe pedestrian/cycle access and circuits particularly in the Point Vernon and Pialba localities.
Parking Strategy 2031 (FCRC)

This strategy explains that parking surveys were conducted in 2001, 2002 and 2007 to determine the supply of, and demand for, parking in the Hervey Bay Tourist Precincts. Within Pialba, the existing car parking demand is accommodated by both on and off-street parking arrangements.

At the time of the 2007 survey, car parks within the Pialba precinct were operating at a total occupancy rate of 55%. According to development projections and subsequent estimations of car parking demand, the existing car parking supply (554 car parks as of 2007) is expected to be exceeded within the longer term (i.e. >20 years from 2007).

A range of strategies are proposed to improve parking within Pialba. These include:
- the conversion of parallel parking to angle parking
- the addition and/or amendment of timed parking limits
- the provision of additional on-street parking opportunities
- encouraging the use of active and public transport modes
- the implementation of paid parking
- decentralisation of Central Business Districts
- encouraging the adoption of shared parking arrangements

In support of these strategies, additional off-street parking areas have been identified for construction within Pialba.

Education City Business Case 2012 (Education City Project Committee)

The Business Case proposes the creation of an education precinct (Education City) that brings together the four levels of education in the region. Three of the facilities - the Pialba Primary School, the Hervey Bay State High School, and the University of Southern Queensland (USQ Fraser Coast Campus) - are all co-located to the immediate west of the study area. The Business Case proposes the relocation of the fourth facility - the TAFE Hervey Bay campus - into the area. The Business Case also contemplates expansion of the existing library facilities.

The innovative concept would see the establishment of a substantial education precinct adjacent to the study area - this would be a unique opportunity and could provide substantial benefit to the CBD, in terms of cultural and social activation, commercial investment, and access to significant education facilities and research programs.

Whilst the precinct would likely be subject of a separate master planning process, key principles around integration of the facilities with the CBD, and provision of complimentary services and facilities should be explored in this master planning process.

Hervey Bay Bus Facility Planning 2014 (Jacobs)

A strategic planning assessment was undertaken to identify a suitable site for a bus interchange facility in the Pialba CBD. The existing bus interchange facility is located at Stocklands Shopping Centre and caters for urban buses, school buses and regional coaches. As part of the expansion of the shopping centre, facilities for urban and school bus services are to be relocated on-street along nearby Central Avenue while long distance coaches are to continue to operate from the shopping centre. The need for a more permanent, longer term bus interchange facility for urban and school bus services has been identified.

The following strategic objectives for the bus facility were proposed and agreed by the stakeholder group:
- Urban and school bus facility
- Integrated with Hervey Bay CBD
- Aligned with the Pialba Master Plan
- Facilitates bus passenger transfers
- Provides safe and efficient access for passengers, drivers and vehicles
- Future proofed to accommodate regional coach services.

Twelve preliminary sites were identified by the stakeholder group as having the most potential. These sites were then refined as information was gathered regarding stakeholder preferences and the suitability of each site. The study concluded that a definitive preferred site could not be identified at the time of report compilation due to Council’s current preparation of the Pialba CBD Urban Renewal Master Plan and TransLink’s current preparation of a Passenger Transport Service Plan for Hervey Bay. Both Council’s and Wide Bay Transit’s preferred options have been considered in this master plan.

Fraser Coast Community Plan (FCRC)

The Community Plan is intended to inform Council’s five year corporate plan, long term financial plan, asset management plan and operational plans. The Community Plan outlines the region’s desired future and sets goals for the Fraser Coast Local Government Area. It is a high level, aspirational plan. The vision for the region encourages a diverse, strong and well governed region of vibrant places connected as a whole by community spirit, respect for the natural environment and an innovative and diverse economy.

Key themes of the Community Plan include: governance, community, economy, environment, movement and access and places and spaces. Out of these themes, aims and objectives are listed, focusing on sustainable growth, community engagement, strengthening local business and industry, promoting tourism and protecting the natural environment.

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