Update on Green Wedges Projec t

Introduction

This paper updates the progress of the Green Wedges Planning Framework project (green wedges project), and seeks endorsement from RLOSAC of the proposed project approach and advice on a number of planning issues.

For the purposes of the green wedges project, the term 'green wedges' is interchangeable with 'inter-urban breaks'.

Purpose

In keeping with the regional policy framework, the Premier's 'Green Wedges' Ministerial Statement of 26 May 2010 (**Attachment A**) identified the value of green wedges to 'buffer urban sprawl' and the need for more detailed land use planning in green wedges.

As subsequently stated in the Government's response to the Queensland Growth Management Summit – (the *'Shaping Tomorrow's Queensland* report'), the green wedges project will deliver on the Summit theme of '*protecting our environment and lifestyles'* by developing long term strategies to '*transform key inter-urban breaks into major new outdoor recreation and greenspace opportunities'*.

The two key elements of the green wedges project are therefore:

1. To identify the options to protect, maintain and enhance the functions of SEQ's green wedges (inter-urban breaks);

2. To develop long term strategies to activate major new greenspace and outdoor recreation opportunities in SEQ's green wedges.

Project structure

The green wedges project is divided into two stages.

- Stage 1 is the production of a Scoping Report to test the proposed approach with stakeholders and to confirm key issues and options to be addressed in the Planning Framework.

- Stage 2 is the development of the Planning Framework itself.

This paper outlines the intent, content and issues to be addressed in the Stage 1: Scoping Report.

Background

Inter-urban breaks are currently defined in the SEQ Regional Plan as 'non-urban land areas that separate or surround urban villages, towns and metropolitan areas[1].

The 'green wedge' concept is not new – it was introduced into land use planning contexts over a period of years (Department of Primary Industries, 2009; Frey, 2000). Green wedges in Australia and overseas are commonly seen as a means to address urban sprawl. Melbourne and Sydney green wedges planning models highlight the functions of green wedges as: separation of urban areas, inter-urban breaks, visual breaks and buffers,

[1] Department of Infrastructure and Planning (2009). South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031:155.

separation of incompatible land uses, and sense of local place and identity (Department of Infrastructure, Victoria, 2002). Green wedges also help in maintaining quality of life in cities and ensure the social, aesthetic, environmental and economic benefits they provide for the community (Caspersen, Konijnendijk, and Olafsson, 2006).

The 'separation of urban areas' concept has been recognised by RLOSAC as a distinct regional landscape value informing SEQ regional landscape planning frameworks.

This approach was adopted in the first statutory SEQ Regional Plan by reference to 'inter-urban breaks'. In a real sense, the concept of 'green wedges' was a driving force behind the adoption of multiple Urban Footprints separated by regional open space – a 'region of cities, not a regional city' was the headline.

SEQ Regional Plan policy framework

The Regional Plan includes various principles, policies and programs directly addressing the concept of green wedges.

Principles and policies

- Principle 3.2 – Focus coordinated planning, management and investment in priority regional landscape areas to optimise multiple community benefits.
- Principle 5.2 – Conserve and manage rural areas to enhance their contribution to the regional economy, rural industries and regional landscape values.
- Policy 3.2.4 - Protect, maintain and enhance the function of interurban breaks.
- Policy 5.2.2 – Ensure the consolidation of future rural population growth within existing towns and villages does not fragment productive rural land.
- Policy 5.2.3 – Encourage the development of sustainable rural areas by supporting innovative planning approaches consistent with the Rural Precinct Planning Guidelines.

Programs

- 3.2.9 Investigate the existing and potential contributions of regional inter-urban breaks to defining regional communities, supporting ecosystem services and regional landscape values and providing land for public recreation.
- 3.2.10 Research, design and develop alternative peri-urban land use models that achieve a mutual benefit for stakeholders and landowners.
- 3.3.7 Investigate planning tools, incentives and other mechanisms to address the region's peri-urban areas.
- 5.3.3 – Assist rural communities to identify strategies for economic development and growth that capitalise on their rural character, local attributes and cultural heritage values.

Regional Plan Notes also mention the need for further investigations focussing on:

- the identification of the essential landscape planning and management functions of inter-urban breaks;
- the importance of agricultural land and industries near major population centres as a key determinant of future food costs and liveability.

The Regional Plan likewise includes various other statements addressing the concept of green wedges e.g. - The RLRPA identifies land with regional landscape, rural production or other non-urban values, and includes land that forms strategic and regionally significant inter-urban breaks.

Expanding urban areas will be framed by the RLRPA to preserve key inter-urban breaks which delineate the extent and define the character of regional communities. This approach supports the preferred structure of consolidating growth in rural areas within and adjacent to rural townships.

The SEQ Regional Plan supports a compact urban form that reduces adverse effects on natural resources and environmental values, and minimises private vehicle travel and tempers vulnerability to peak oil.

Related strategies

The SEQ Rural Futures Strategy 2009 supports and promotes innovative planning approaches and community engagement in planning for rural areas, particularly areas close to major centres experiencing 'edge effects' from urbanisation.

The proposed Queensland Greenspace Strategy 2010-2020 recognises that one of the most cost effective and socially and environmentally responsible ways to meet increasing community greenspace demand in the region is to locate new regional outdoor recreation areas in close proximity to urban areas.

The SEQ Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2010 promotes the development of options to assist private landholders to provide outdoor recreation opportunities.

The SEQ NRM Plan 2009-2031 sets regional targets for a series of natural assets, most of which are largely located in the RLRPA, though with major influences stemming from urban areas.

Green Wedges landscape values

The 'green wedge' as a component of the regional landscape is a multidimensional value requiring effective land-use planning and management. The concept cuts across various fields and disciplines, and is linked to global issues including urban sprawl, sustainability and climate change, suburban oil vulnerability, peri-urbanisation, compact settlement, land use conflict, lifestyle quality environmental management and ecosystem services (Department of Primary Industries, New South Wales, 2009; Department of Infrastructure and Planning, 2009; Department of Natural Resources and Mines, and Environmental Protection Agency, 2001; Dodson and Sipe, 2008; Low Choy, Sutherland, Gleeson, Dodson and Sipe, 2008;).

A green wedge is likewise linked to our biophysical environment which involves a symbiotic relationship between the physical environment and the biological life forms within the environment. Such context includes the natural environment and the built environment with some overlap between the two.

Green wedges are a basic element of SEQ greenspace and contribute to the region's liveability and lifestyle. They also support other landscape values such as:

- biodiversity
- rural production (including natural economic resources)
- scenic amenity
- landscape heritage (non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal cultural heritage)
- outdoor recreation.

(See **Attachment B**: Green Wedges Images (Infrastructure and ecosystem services, biodiversity, scenic amenity and landscape heritage, and liveability and outdoor recreation).

Approach

The green wedges project is an opportunity to operationalise the regional landscape planning framework highlighted in DRO3 and DRO5.

The Scoping Report will investigate how the green wedges broadly identified in the Regional Plan can be better defined and evaluated with respect to multiple regional landscape values.

Community greenspace and associated outdoor recreation opportunities sufficient to meet the recreation demands of adjacent and rapidly growing metropolitan areas will be a key issue. These matters will be significantly informed by the findings and strategic direction of the draft SEQ Community Greenspace Network Plan, currently in preparation.

The Scoping Report will outline key findings from previous planning studies and community consultation. National and international experience will also be reviewed and analysed with respect to implications in the SEQ setting.

Key Green Wedges in SEQ

The Report will describe the specific features and values of each green wedge identified in the SEQ Regional Plan (**Attachment C - SEQ Map**)

- Moreton Bay–Sunshine Coast inter-urban break (Caboolture-Caloundra)
- Brisbane-Logan-Ipswich inter-urban break (Flinders-Karawatha-Greenbank Peak Corridor)
- Brisbane-Logan-Redlands inter-urban break (Koala Coast)
- Brisbane-Logan Gold Coast inter-urban break (**Attachment D: North East Gold Coast Green Wedge**)
- Ipswich-Laidley inter-urban break (Rosewood)

Key Issues

Key issues to be investigated through stakeholder consultation include:

- What makes an inter-urban break? Process to identify, designate and plan for green wedges.
- Criteria for identifying hotspots for urban expansion, e.g. identified growth areas (IGAs)
- Drivers and typology of urban sprawl:
  - peri-urbanisation and urbanisation of regional landscapes
  - legacy of fragmentation of small lots
  - infrastructure

Planning and management options for further investigation
The following are some options for consideration in the future SEQ Green Wedges Planning Framework.

Regulatory and Policy Planning Framework
- Statutory vs non-statutory provisions
- State Planning Regulatory Provisions (SPRPs) - What can be done with green wedges? Does regulation operate only by default? Developing planning controls to stop creeping urban strips along areas close to the road network.
- State Planning Policy 1/92 providing policy framework on good quality agricultural land
- Draft State Planning Policy for Strategic Cropping Land
- Local government planning schemes
- Provide protection of green wedges of high environmental, economic and social values

Other issues for consideration
- integration with community greenspace network planning and delivery, and integration with other strategies, policies and plans
- transfer of development rights to address existing fragmented cadastre

- managing community's expectations, i.e. small lots viewed as potential nest egg
- investigate more innovative best practice planning options to better protect green wedges in SEQ from inappropriate development.

Guide Questions for Stakeholder Consultation
Sample guide questions (**Attachment E**) have been drafted to seek stakeholders' views on how to better define green wedges, and proposals conceptualised to prompt further feedback.

Feedback from RLOSAC

- How green wedges planning interacts with peri-urbanisation of the RLRPA.
    - Are there potential conflicts between green wedges and Identified Growth Areas? If so, could RLOSAC identify one and how it might be addressed?
    - Is peri-urbanisation occurring (e.g. see draft North East Gold Coast Green Wedge Map, Attachment D)? Why? How?

- How do green wedges values, (e.g. scenic amenity and landscape heritage) operate in terms of our perception of 'urbanisation of the landscape' e.g. signage, infrastructure, buildings, building density, clearing, lighting? (See night illumination map as **Attachment F**).
    - How could we better manage these potential impacts?

- What are some of the key criteria for better determining the location of green wedges in SEQ?
    - Should green wedges be identified as a 'regional land use planning unit'?

- What types of land uses are appropriate in green wedges?
    - What types are not?

Conclusion and Next Steps

Protecting green wedges requires new ways of land use planning, matching traditional land use management approaches with community support in collaboration with local councils, state government and industry. Integration of land use planning as well as consistency with the overarching legislative and policy planning framework is imperative. More importantly, for appropriate planning policies and programs to work, political commitment is required supported by the necessary financial resources.

- Upon endorsement by RLOSAC of the general approach of the green wedges project, the Scoping Report will be finalised and subsequent approval sought from the Minister to release it for more comprehensive stakeholder consultation.

- Data collected from stakeholders consultation will inform the scoping of the Green Wedges Planning Framework.

- The delivery of the Planning Framework will form Stage 2 of the project. This stage is dependent on adequate project funding being made available.

Recommendations

That the Committee:

(a) endorse the general approach of the green wedges project;

(b) provide feedback on the key issues discussed via:
- email to Evelyn Ybarzabal at evelyn.ybarzabak@dip.qld.gov.au, or
- telephone call on 3247 5431;

(c) note the Committee's critical role in facilitating stakeholder feedback on the Scoping Report; and

(d) note the Planning Framework stage of the project is dependent on the availability of adequate project funding.

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Attachment A

Premier and Minister for the Arts
The Honourable Anna Bligh

Wednesday, May 26, 2010

Growing green wedges to avoid urban sprawl

The State Government plans to transform cane-fields and other land in South East Queensland into "green wedges" to avoid urban sprawl between our cities.

Premier Anna Bligh said that under a new plan some of the farmland and forests between South East Queensland's urban areas would be transformed into major new parks, nature reserves and outdoor recreation areas.

As an outcome of the Queensland Growth Management Summit held in late March,

Ms Bligh said the region's rural inter-urban breaks would be officially protected as buffers against urban sprawl.

"The message from the community is that we must avoid a continuous urban strip from the Gold Coast to the Sunshine Coast at all costs," Ms Bligh said.

"No one wants to see 200 kilometres of wall-to-wall urban development.

"This means inter-urban breaks at places like Woongoolba and Norwell or Beerburrum must be retained.

"At the moment these areas are dominated by rural uses such as sugar cane farming and pine forests.

"By mid 2011 a new 10-year strategy will be developed to ensure that these green lands remain green and will be used for a range of purposes including agriculture, greenspace and outdoor recreation.

"This will ensure that large parts of these green wedges are accessible to the people so families can enjoy walking through these open spaces, kick a football or picnic with their friends."

Premier Bligh said land would be purchased as it came on the market and as budgets became available.

Member for Albert Margaret Keech said she strongly supported the protection of green space between our major cities.

"People are telling me that we have to strike a balance between providing for growing communities and protecting our environment and the lifestyles we've come to enjoy," Mrs Keech said.

"Particularly for an area like the Northern Gold Coast where we have some beautiful rural regions, it is important to protect the character of this land."

Minister for Infrastructure and Planning Stirling Hinchliffe welcomed the initiative.

"We want to engage with local community groups, landholders and local councils to find and develop these areas into accessible green assets for all Queenslanders," he said.

"My department is responsible for the Toward Q2 Green target of delivering 50 percent more land for public recreation by 2020 so this will be a major contribution to that target.

"The region is predicted to grow by around 1.4 million people in the next 21 years so we need more greenspace to maintain South East Queensland's great lifestyle.

"This strategy of protecting green wedges is just one way to deliver on that green ambition."

Mr Hinchliffe said the new initiative would support the intent of the recently released draft Greenspace Strategy.

Media contact: 07 3224 4500

Source:
http://statements.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=69854

Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services





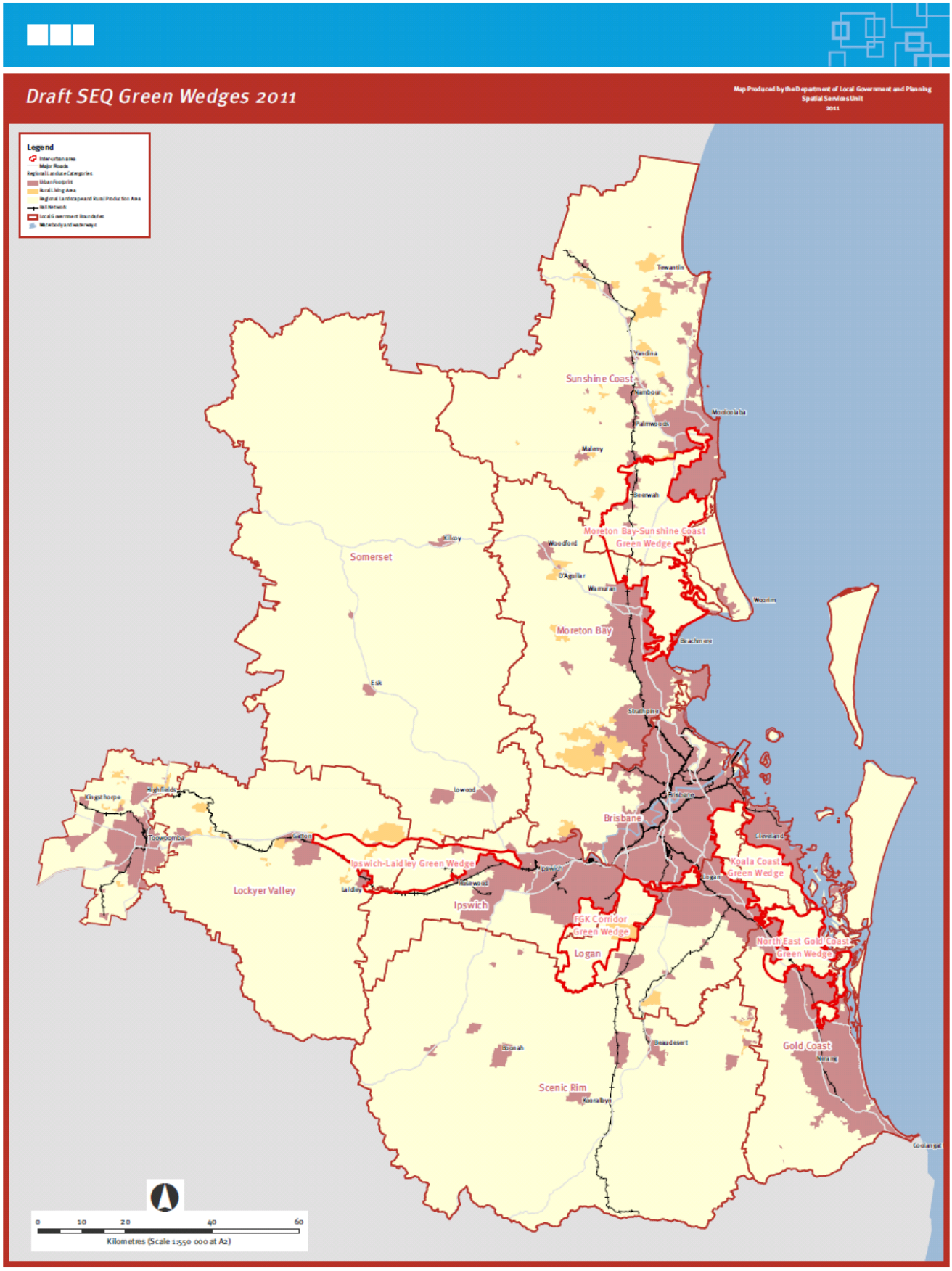


Biodiversity, Scenic Amenity and Landscape Heritage

Liveability and Outdoor Recreation

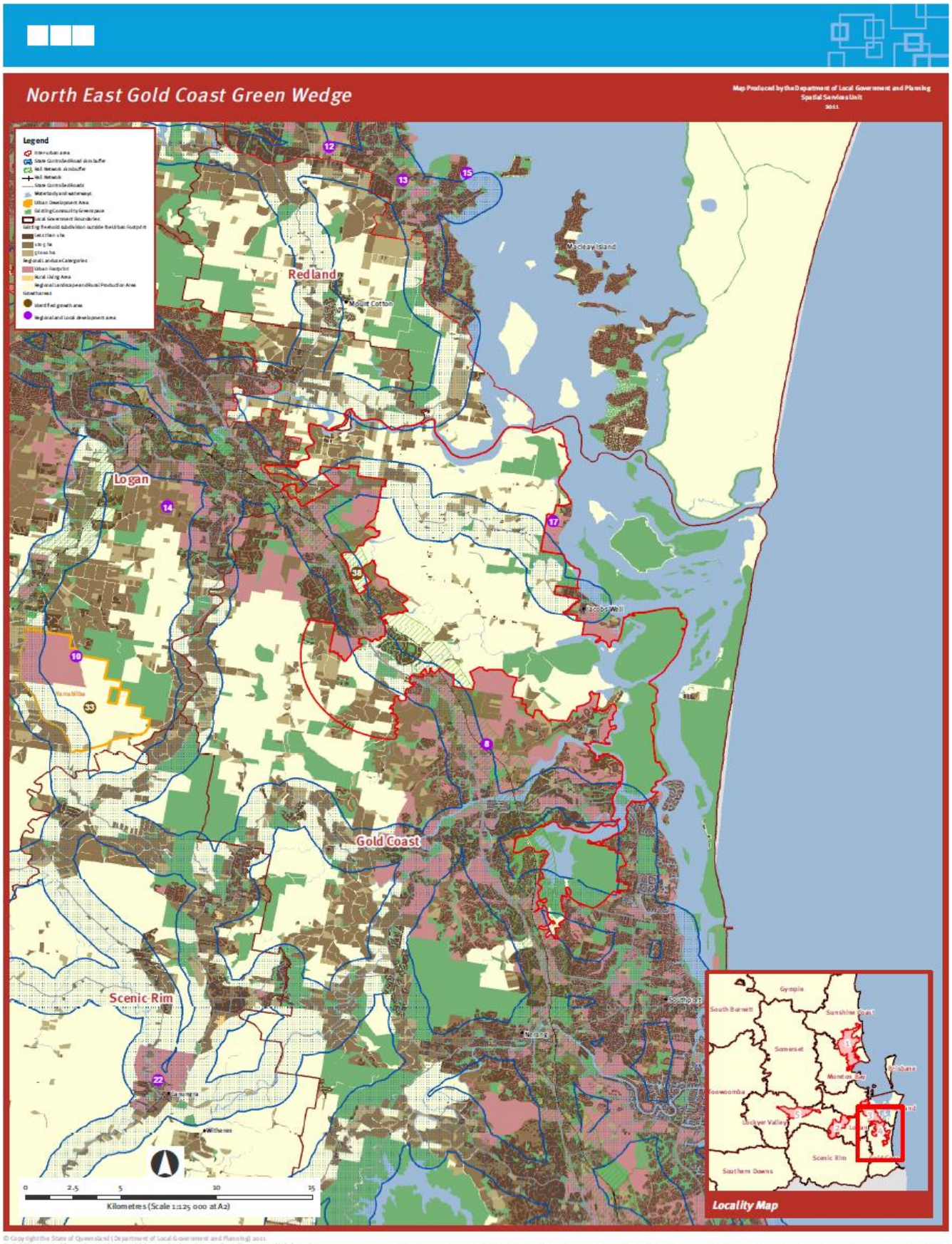




Attachment D

North East Gold Coast Green Wedge



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Department of Local Government and Planning

Queensland Government

Attachment E

Draft Sample Guide Questions

Draft Sample Guide Questions - Green Wedges Stakeholder Consultation

- Describe how green wedges values can be maximised / optimised.
- Is geographic location (i.e. proximity to major transport route) a factor in urban sprawl? If yes, how does it influence further urbanisation?
- Could you please outline your views regarding diversification of rural industry or optimising agricultural land use, i.e. dormant canefields.
- Is there any value in protecting such inter-urban breaks? For instance, do you believe it is important to preserve the 'rural landscape character' and scenic amenity values of inter-urban breaks? Why, or why not?
- Describe your thoughts about the likely reaction of people living or driving along Warrego Highway with further view of built-up structures. How does human intervention (e.g. signage) impact on people's perception / appreciation of open space or sense of place?
- What do you think are appropriate / inappropriate uses of land within SEQ green wedges? Why?

Attachment F

Night Illumination Map