

5.10 MERWEVILLE (population: \pm 1 500)

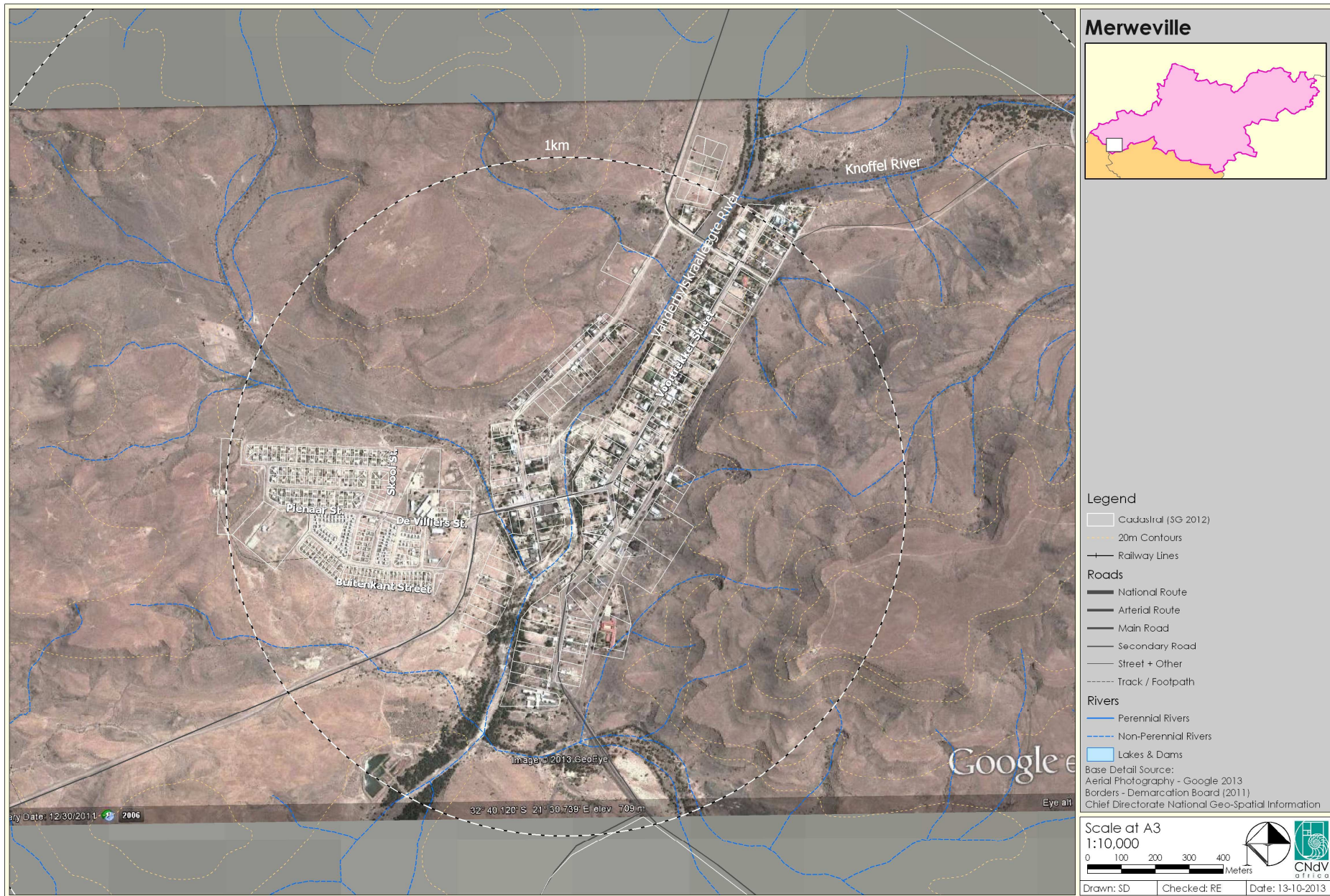


Figure 5.10.1.1 Merweville: Aerial photograph

5.10.1 SPATIAL ANALYSIS, see Figures 5.10.1.2

Sub-regional location

- Situated 46kms north of the N1 (Prince Albert Road) on a tar/gravel road in an arid sub-region known as the Koup;
- "Koup" refers to the fat and blood pattern around a sheep's liver which the vegetation resembles in winter;
- Prince Albert road is another 116kms from Beaufort west so Merweville is isolated from its nearest large town;
- Originally developed as a local agriculture (livestock grazing) service and religious centre as Beaufort West was too far to provide adequate services;
- Merweville continues to fulfill this role although the economic base of the sub-region has declined; and,
- Probably one of the most isolated locations of a small village of this size in the Cape. Most others are on at least a completely tarred regional road.

Layout pattern

- The majority of the old town is laid out along the southern bank of the Vanderbylskraalleegte River below its confluence with the Knoffel River;
- It comprised roughly six large blocks whose long streets are parallel to the river and along which water is led;
- There were also some blocks laid out along the northern bank but these are much less developed and there are a large number of approved but undeveloped erven here;
- The large plots in these blocks accommodated market gardening which still occurs, particularly on the lower plots nearest the river; and,
- West of the town, resulting from the Group Areas Act, are some newer extensions containing most of the settlement's poorer residents; The plots here are too small and not designed to be irrigated for food gardening.

Urban quality

- The main part of the settlement comprises old Victorian and Edwardian bungalows and cottages overlooked by a large grey/black stone church. Many of these properties are in original condition and some have been well maintained;
- There are few street trees although there are mature stands of trees on some of the older properties;
- The new extensions have few trees, although residential streets are tarred. Buildings comprise mainly larger subsidy houses from the 1960s and 1970s and more recent smaller BNG houses; and,
- Paved footpaths have been constructed between the newer and older parts of town.

Challenges and potential

- Some challenges are due to the long term decline in the hinterland's major local natural resources, namely extensive agriculture and its carrying capacity, and will be difficult to turn around. However there does seem to be some demand for agriculture from residents, e.g. requests for more space for pig farming;
- Development of the proposed uranium mine along the R353 to Fraserburg is likely to be too far away to benefit the village;
- The town's challenges could also be its potential. For instance, its remote location along gravel roads makes it expensive to travel to but also creates a strong sense of "getting away". This could be extended to the potential to create a self-sufficient settlement for both rich and poor; and,
- Its desert like landscape is apparently similar to that of Nevada and Arizona and it has been used as a film shoot location.



Restored Victorian residence with stoep overlooking paved pedestrian foot path



Trees and shop along DS de Villiers Street east



Market/food gardening on plots near river

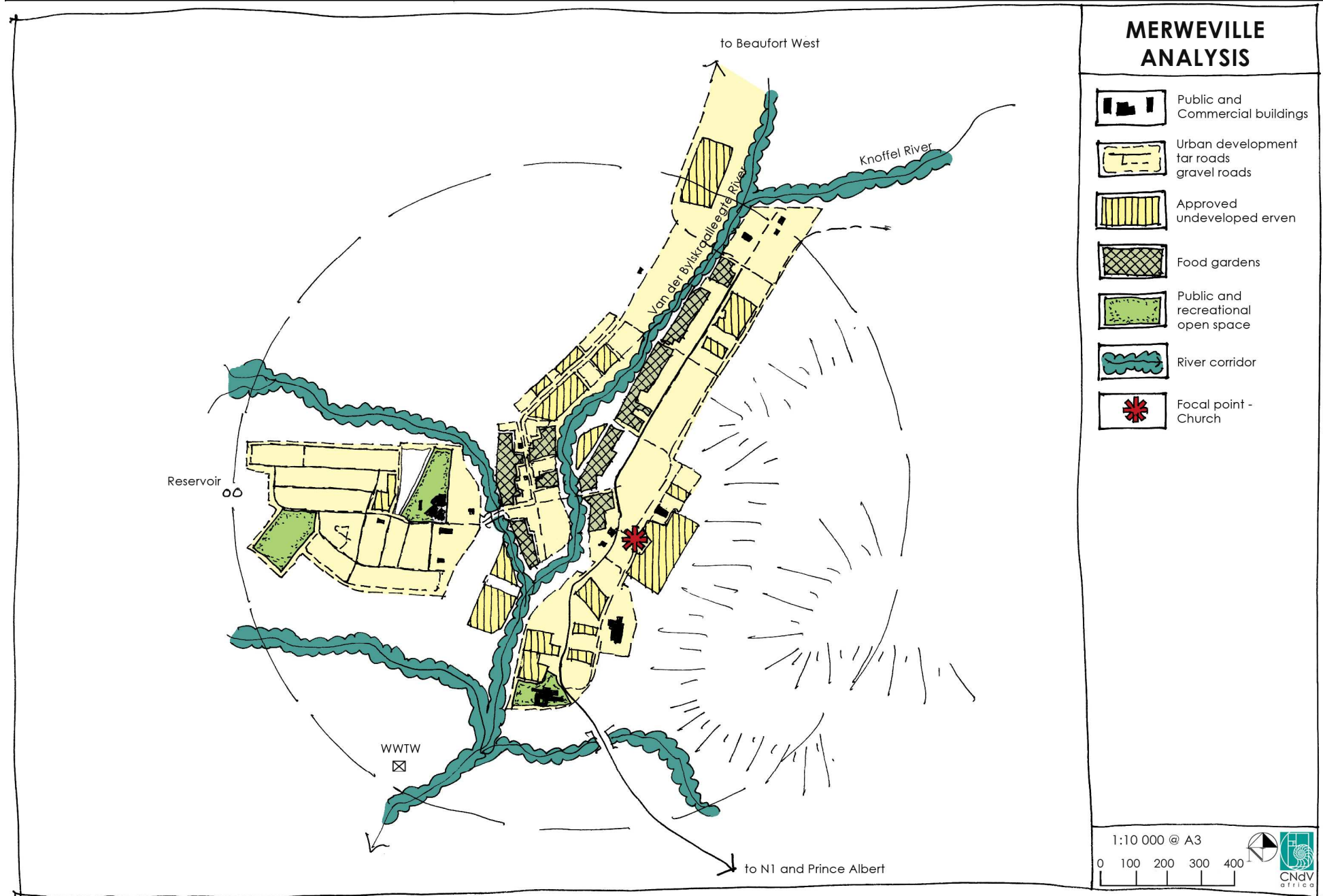


Figure 5.10.1.2 Merweville: Analysis

5.10.2 MERWEVILLE: DRAFT SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK, see Figure 5.10.2.1

General

Merweville probably epitomizes the challenge faced by an isolated small settlement with a declining natural resource base as to what its development future should be. Its low economic growth potential and social needs relative to places like Beaufort West means that it is likely to have far more chance of success if it can develop on its local attributes; e.g. it is likely to be difficult motivating completing tarring the road to Prince Albert Road given other higher priority road tarring project elsewhere in the province. Therefore, attributes to be built on include some land for grazing and food gardening, isolation and wilderness environments and historic very small town atmosphere.

5.10.2.1 Core landscape areas

- Proclaim river corridors, where possible at least 32 m from banks in which no intensive agriculture nor urban development is permitted;
- Support and encourage continued use of current market gardening plots;
- Investigate use of open land or undeveloped areas closest to river corridors for market gardening and livestock farming, (e.g. pigs); and,
- Plant trees along Pienaar and DS de Villiers Streets to create an integrating main street network between all parts of the town, including paving the eastern extremity of these networks.

5.10.2.2 Urban Development

- Incentivise development of existing undeveloped plots furthest from the rivers. Those close to the rivers should be considered for market gardening or stock farming; and,
- Land for further BNG housing should consolidate existing settlement (portions (A), (B) and (C)).

5.10.2.3 Heritage Conservation and Frontage Urban Design Control Areas

- One of Merweville's strongest and few selling points is the historic and original state of many of the buildings;
- The eastern side of the settlement should be declared a heritage precinct with guidelines to which renovations to existing and extensions and new buildings should comply so as to strengthen and not erode this important asset; and,
- Note: there is a comprehensive history of Merweville produced by the Cape Town Heritage Trust which provides a useful resource.

5.10.2.4 Urban Restructuring

- All gateways into town should be enhanced;
- Symbolically integrate the settlement by ensuring a uniform tree planting and road pavement treatment on the main route network linking all the urban areas comprising Pienaar, DS de Villiers west and DS de Villiers east streets; and,
- Land for any new urban development, for instance, BNG housing should be located on the land parcels identified that will consolidate rather than disperse the settlement.



Well located serviced undeveloped land corner of Pienaar and Skool Street



Upgraded sidewalk along DS de Villiers required tree planting



Heritage and tourism resources: water furrow, original Victorian/Edwardian style house, stone church

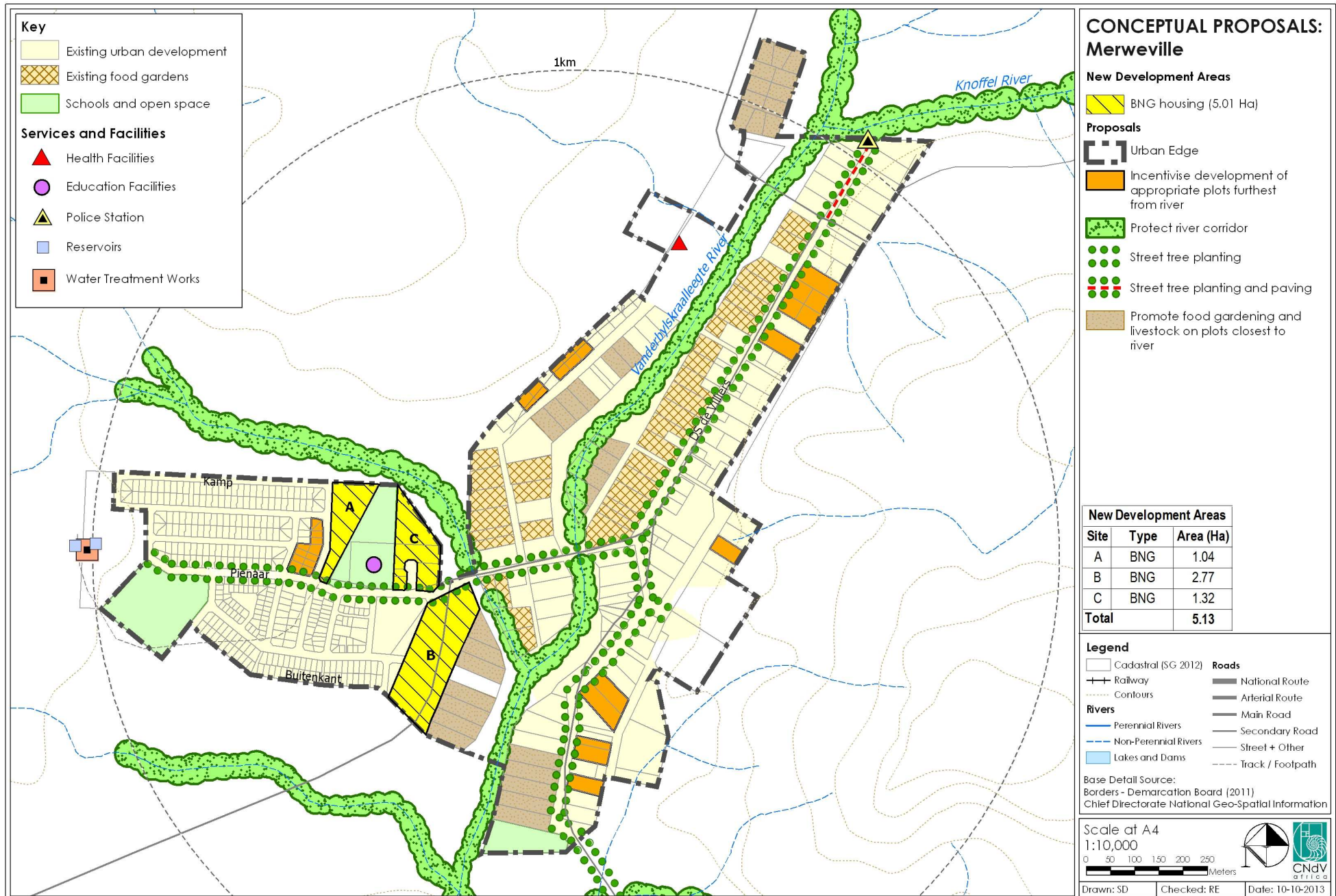


Figure 5.10.2.1 Merweville: Spatial Development Framework

