

INTRODUCTION

In December 2016 Council adopted the *Halls Gap Master-Plan for Commercial Investment and Public Land Development* (MvS Architects). The Master Plan identifies a number of initiatives for the town under four categories including: Events and Attractions, Services and Development, Halls Gap Village, Village Amenity and Grampians Peaks Trailhead (GPT).

The Master Plan identified a number of opportunities that are important for Halls Gap in order to capitalise on the Grampians Peaks Trail, including: public use facilities, services improvements and community amenity infrastructure. *The Grampians Tourism Destination Plan & Investment Roadmap* (AEC Group, 2014) identified a pressing need to 'improve the basics' (AEC Group, 2014). This includes improving services and amenities available as well as improving their quality and offer.

The *Halls Gap Village Centre Action Plan* is being prepared to implement elements of the Master Plan associated with amenity, pedestrian access, intensification of commercial land and the identification of Grampians Peaks Trailhead location and departure experience.

PROJECT DRIVERS

As the access point for the first completed section of Grampians Peak Trail (GPT), Halls Gap is on the cusp of becoming a major tourism and economic powerhouse for the region. The completion of each stage of the GPT will drive growth in tourism and visitors to the Grampians, as has been observed with the completion of stage one in May 2015. Construction of the entire GPT is expected to be finished in late 2019. Since the official opening of stage one of the GPT in May 2015, domestic and international overnight visitors to the Grampians have already increased by 79,000 in the Year Ending (YE) March 2016 (vs YE Mar 2015). The YE March 2017 also saw 78,000 more visitors compared to YE March 2015. These visitors contributed a cumulative total of 265,000 more visitor nights in the Grampians. With an estimated average spend of \$119 per night per domestic visitor and \$53 per night per international visitor, this equates to more than \$30 million more spending in the region since March 2015 (data from Grampians Tourism research for YE March 2017).

The *Halls Gap Village Centre Action Plan* is needed to ensure Halls Gap is able to capitalise on increased visitor numbers. Investment in the public realm is seen as critical to attracting new commercial investment, providing an exceptional visitor experience and to fully utilise the upcoming opportunities presented by the GPT. The project is needed in order to:

- Identify a vision for the future of Halls Gap Village Centre
- Enhance the function and amenity of the Halls Gap Village Centre as a means of meeting consumer expectations, enhancing dispersal of the overall tourism offering and capturing visitor spend associated with the GPT
- Intensify the use of commercial land in Halls Gap by upgrading and enhancing public space required in order to attract investment to the Village Centre
- Unlock and facilitate practical development opportunities for strategically important parcels of commercial land by improving access and movement outcomes
- Ensure that the Village Centre remains the retail and commercial heart of Halls Gap

The preparation of the Action Plan is intended to generate ideas and include the preparation of realistic design concepts based on consultation, research and analysis to implement key initiatives identified in the Master Plan. It will allow for solutions to be identified for urban problems in Halls Gap. The Action Plan is also intended to ensure that the best location for the Grampians Peak Trailhead and National Park walks and infrastructure associated with the 'departure experience' is chosen and that car parking issues and solutions are identified.

Although the Action Plan will be delivered as a specific project, its implementation will involve a series of infrastructure and landscaping projects and planning scheme amendments.

The Objectives of Stage 1 are to:

- Engage with key stakeholders.
- Develop a vision statement and visioning plan for the Halls Gap Village Centre.
- Understand existing conditions, current urban design constraints and opportunities for the connectivity of the Village Centre and the Grampians Peaks Trailhead and associated parking arrangements and pedestrian connectivity.
- Provide strategic responses to the identified constraints and opportunities

The project will be undertaken in three stages:

- Stage 1 – Background, context analysis, vision statement, framework and priority projects
- Stage 2 – Design specifications for high priority projects, identification of medium and long term projects and Implementation Plan
- Stage 3 – Implementation.

This document, *Action Plan: Stage One* comprises two sections:

- Part A: Provides some background and contextual information; and
- Part B: Outlines the vision for the Halls Gap Village Centre and actions and initiatives proposed to deliver that vision.



STUDY AREA

The study area is shown on the aerial (Figure 1) and consists primarily of commercially zoned land and associated public spaces. Specifically, the Study Area is bounded by School Road to the west and north-west, Stoney Creek in the north-east, Heath Street and the rear boundary of commercially zoned land to the east and south-west. This area forms a critical part of the township's fabric, not only as a connective space but also through its contribution to the township's character and identity and the key driver of the town's economy.

Halls Gap Village Centre has approximately eight hectares of Commercial 1 zoned land across 31 lots. However the township currently comprises of approximately 11,263m² of retail floor space, suggesting that much of the Commercial 1 zoned land is underutilised.

It is important to acknowledge that within the identified study area, Council is just one of the parties with a responsibility or opportunity to deliver change. The other key parties include:

- The independent Committee of Management which has responsibility for the caravan park and recreation reserve (with the exception of the car parking areas and land to the north adjacent to Stoney Creek);
- Private landowners, who manage the majority of commercial and residentially zoned land within the Study Area; and
- VicRoads which manages the Grampians Road corridor.

PROJECT PROCESS

The process for the development of this draft document to date has been as follows:

- A thorough review of existing planning policies, prior consultation material (including community feedback) and background documentation.
- Site investigations and urban design analysis diagrams of the Study Area illustrating key features and attributes, as well as a car parking assessment undertaken by relevant experts.
- The identification of preliminary Issues & Opportunities and workshops with key stakeholders to confirm these, including a walking tour of the Village Centre.
- A design charrette with key participants to further discuss issues and opportunities and identify preliminary principles that can be a basis for visioning and the development of a concept sketch.
- The drafting of this document, including identification of priority actions and consultation with key stakeholders such as Parks Victoria on the content, a process which is on-going.

Consultation undertaken and the input so far is further detailed on Page 16.

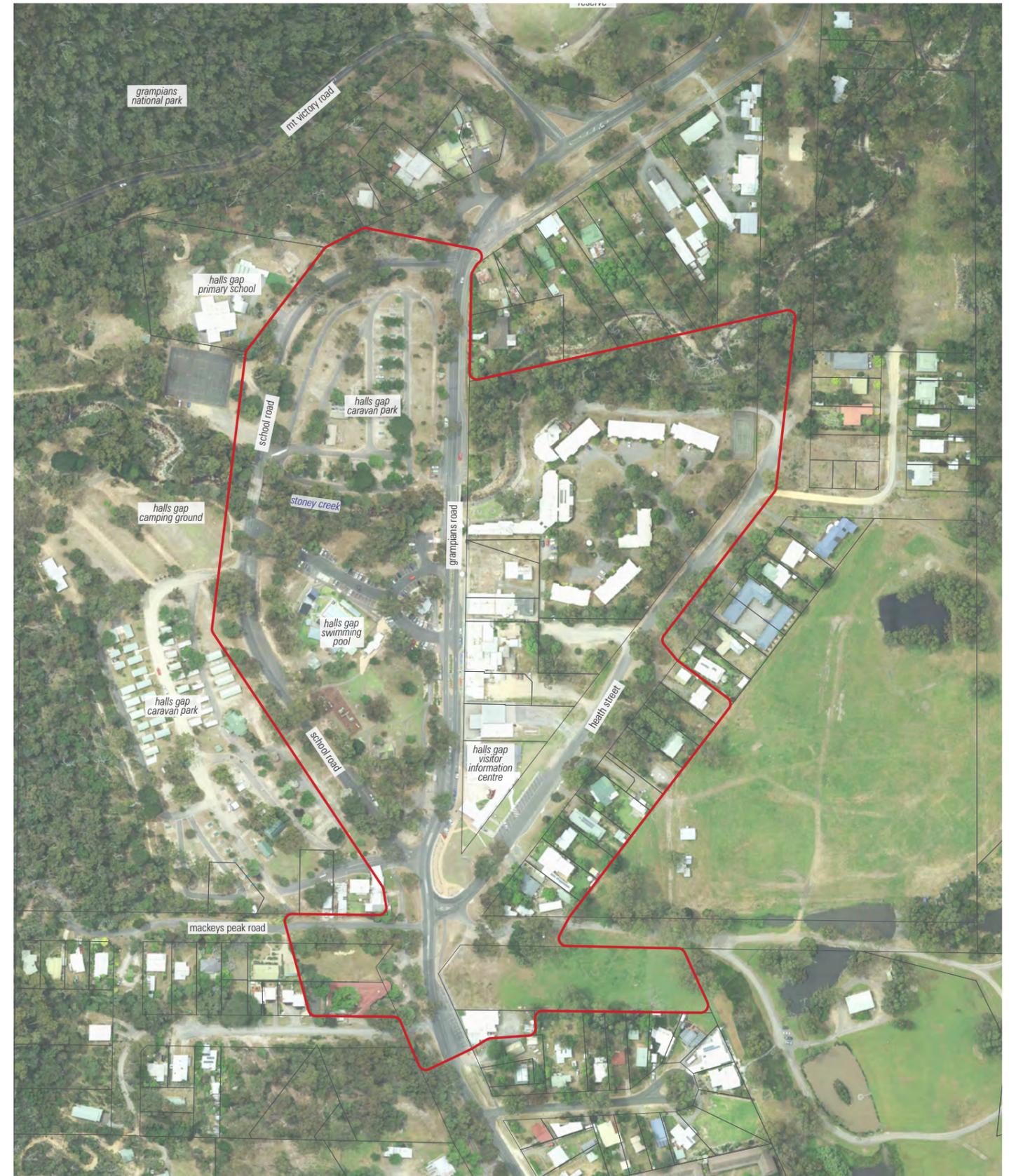


Figure 1. Study Area