

**PROJECT 2:
PEAKS TRAILHEAD CONNECTION**

Project Description

The optimal location for the Peaks Trailhead within Halls Gap has been one of the key questions the development of the sketch framework has contemplated. There are various thoughts, issues, and requirements around the identification of a trailhead and Parks Victoria have undertaken background work which sets some of these parameters, however the final ‘form’ of the trailhead remains flexible. The main Peaks Trailhead is recommended to be near the intersection of Stoney Creek and School Road. The location adjacent to School Road (Option 4 in the Halls Gap Masterplan) at the end of the reserve parking provides clear benefits over other locations. Firstly, it is considered crucial that the trailhead is located within the Village Centre to ensure economic spin-offs are maximised. The proposed location also allows for any infrastructure delivered through this project, particularly to pathways and connections, to benefit multiple users. While the Visitor Information Centre has been raised as a possible location, and has an important role to play, the selected site for the trailhead provides a better ‘fit’ for the anticipated role. The proposed approach to the delivery of the trailhead within Halls Gap seeks to conceptualise the trailhead as not just a singular static space, but as a series of activities and sites along a ‘journey’. The enactment of this journey within visually prominent areas of the Village Centre has the potential to add vibrancy and excitement to the area – for all users of the centre to be conscious of the ‘theatre of departure’.

The key objectives of the proposed Peaks Trailhead Connection Project include:

- Deliver a major tourist drawcard within the Village Centre;
- Ensure that economic development benefits possible through the siting of the Trailhead are maximized;
- Celebrate the role of ‘walkers’ within the Village Centre, in line with objectives to transform Halls Gap to a ‘walkable’ town;
- Improve pedestrian safety and amenity between the commercial centre and the Grampians Peaks Trail;
- Activate and celebrate the Stoney Creek corridor; and
- Provide additional areas for informal gathering within the Village Centre.

The key elements of this concept are outlined below and shown graphically in the diagram on page 25, and it will be important that the design of these spaces occurs in a cohesive manner.

PARK

While the number of long term carparking spaces required are relatively modest, the delivery of these spaces at the periphery of the Village Centre allows the exposure of trail users to the activities and facilities of the Village Centre to be maximised. Car parking areas are identified both along Heath Street and on a key private land parcel. Shuttle drop-off areas could also be facilitated in these locations if required.

INFORM

Access to information about the trail and registration (if required) should be delivered in conjunction with the new Visitor Information Centre. This is likely to require a rearrangement of existing uses within the building to ensure that access to relevant facilities such as toilets, showers and lockers (currently unable to be accessed) is available.

SHOP

The next stage of this journey provides the opportunity to ‘stock up’ on last minute supplies or refreshments within the Village Centre, though the facilitation of pedestrian movement along the Grampians Road frontages, or through the proposed network of pedestrian connections which form part of this Action Plan.

GATHER

This concept sees a significant upgrade to the existing area of covered plaza area on Grampians Road, and the closure of one car parking access and the introduction of raised pedestrian threshold on Grampians Road. This area then becomes where walkers can gather, socialise, and prepare for their journey alongside other visitors to the Village Centre, in a highly visible location – the ‘departure lounge’ for the trail. Proximity to another public toilet facility is also important. Key signage and information boards relating to the trail could be incorporated into this space.

EXPERIENCE

The concept sees the delivery of a raised boardwalk connecting this new street front plaza through a relatively underutilised parcel of land managed by Council. A raised boardwalk enables a path to not only overcome practical considerations, such as the existing rock groynes, but also adds to the sense of occasion and theatre in setting off on the trail. This arrangement also provides opportunities to more actively engage with the currently underutilised creek frontage within this portion of the reserve, and the boardwalk could accommodate step seating to allow for informal seating with attractive creek outlooks, complementary to the proposed Stoney Creek Bridge & Boardwalk (Initiative 1).

CAPTURE

The ability to ‘capture’ events, moments and key activities is a critical part of today’s experiences and the Peaks Trailhead should be responsive to this. Providing a key element, sculpture or framed view which allows people to document the beginning of their journey on the Trail is considered extremely important. As such, the trailhead is seen as a relatively low key and small space (for instance a gravel plaza with informal seating) with the delivery of a ‘selfie spot’ being the key feature of this site. The identified location offers a spectacular view up to one of the rock faces of the Peaks, allowing for the ‘framing’ of a key landscape feature relevant to the broader trail experience.



Figure 25. Current trail departure point



Precedent Images

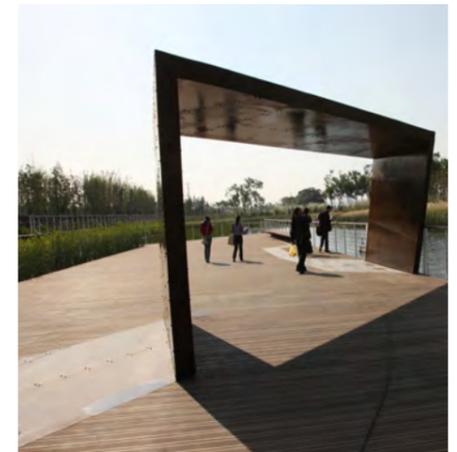


Figure 26. The Grampians Peaks Trail 'journey of departure' concept (inset - rock face view from proposed trailhead location)