

CONSULTATION DRAFT

HALLS GAP VILLAGE CENTRE

ACTION PLAN: STAGE ONE

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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.

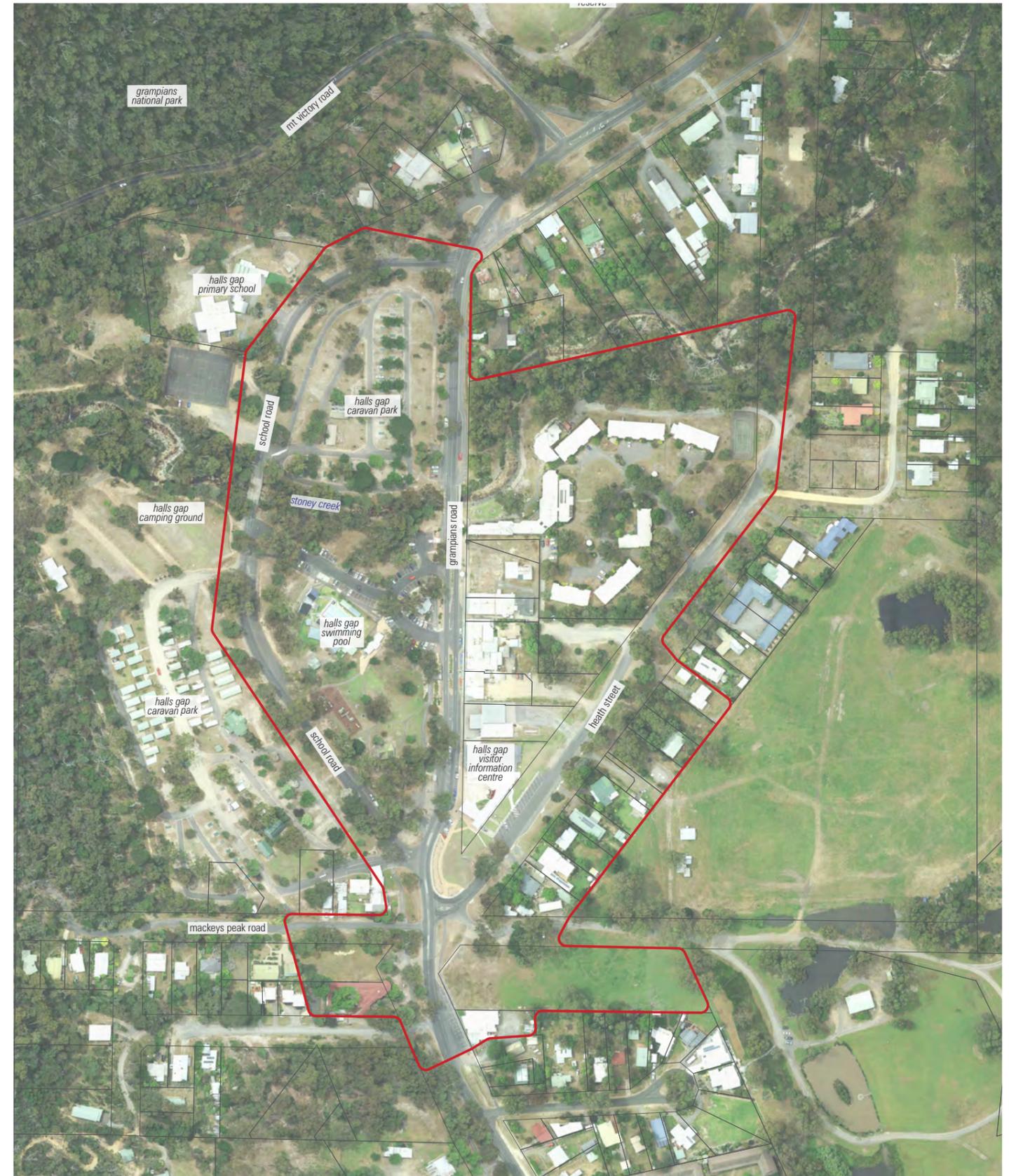


Figure 1. Study Area



PART A
BACKGROUND

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Background analysis of the existing conditions within the Study Area, in addition to a review of existing strategic work and stakeholder consultation, has informed the Vision and Sketch Framework contained within this document.

These observations have been categorised into Zoning and Overlays (the planning controls), Land Use, Built Form, Landscape and Access & Movement, and are shown in the following pages. Accompanying the spatial analysis of access & movement conditions is an assessment of current car parking conditions within the Village Centre undertaken by SALT (traffic consultants).

ZONING & OVERLAYS

- The west side of Grampians Road is primarily publicly zoned land.
- The east side of Grampians Road is commercially zoned (Commercial 1 Zone), apart from the east side of Heath Street which is split between residential and commercial.
- Two sites at the south-west gateway are also zoned for residential use.
- The whole area is subject to a Bushfire Management Overlay.
- Private land has both a Vegetation Protection Overlay and a Design & Development Overlay which triggers a permit for any building over 5m without muted materials and finishes.

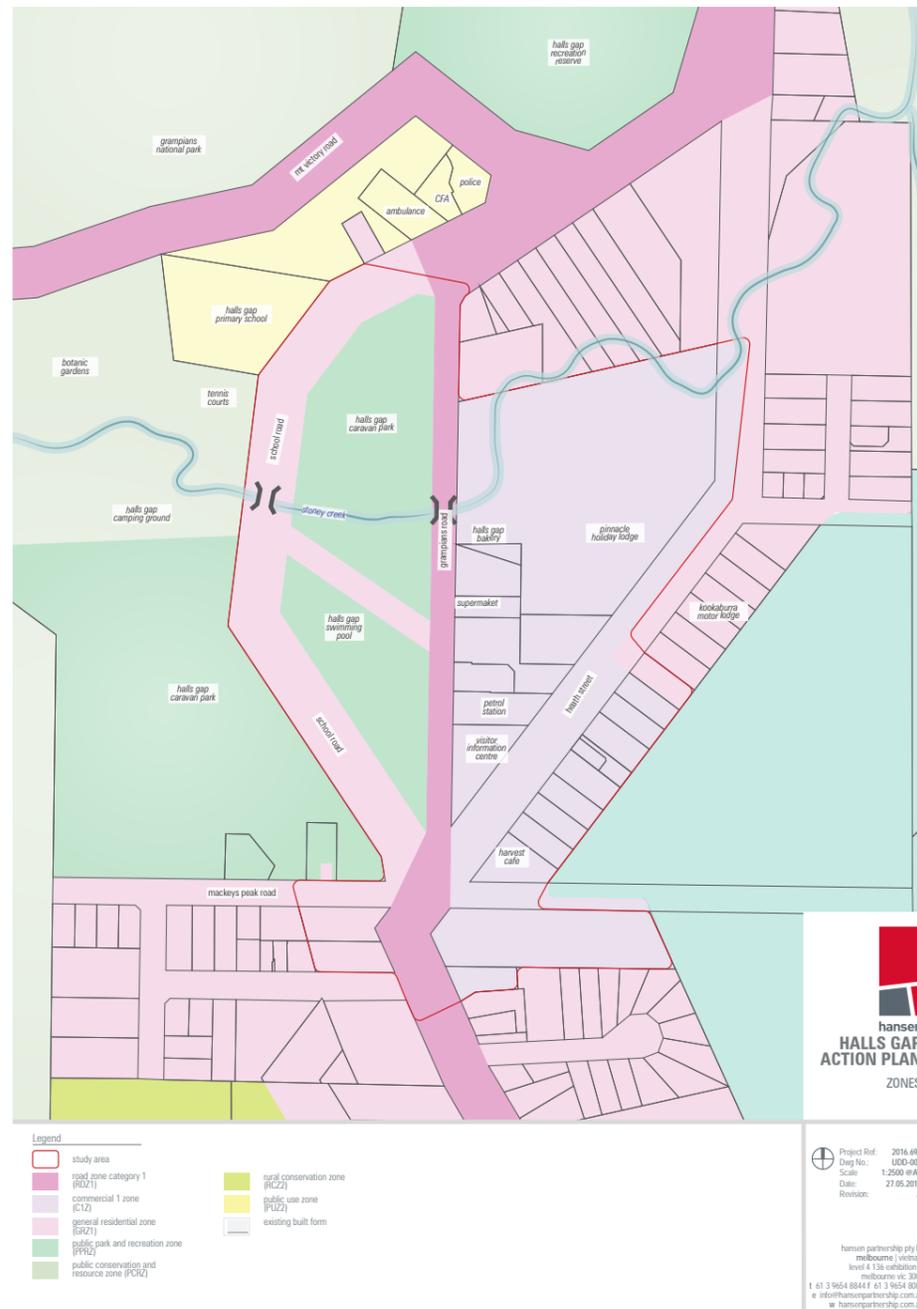


Figure 2. Zoning Map

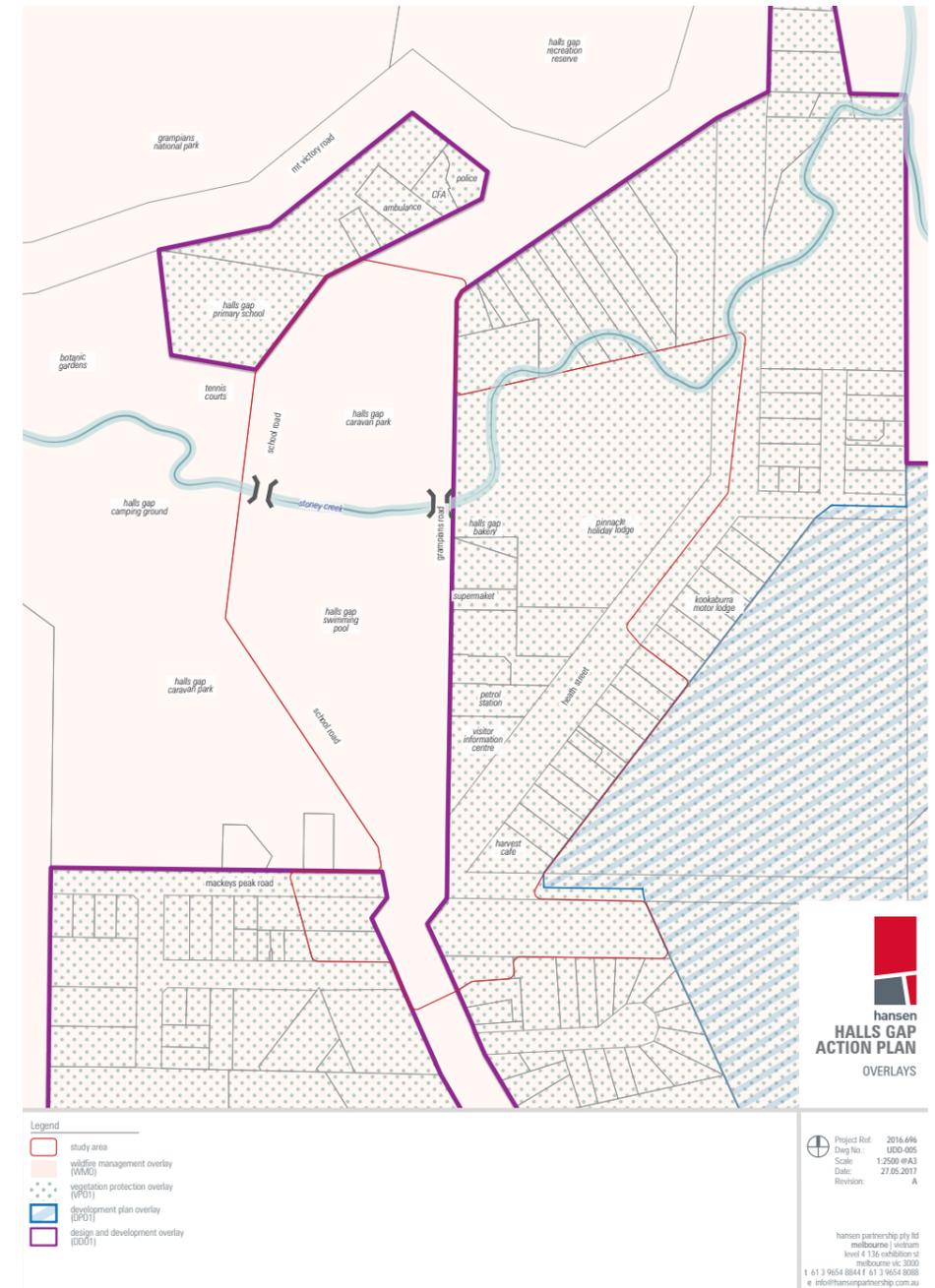


Figure 3. Overlay Map

LAND USE

- Halls Gap Caravan Park wraps the Recreation Reserve to the north and west.
- The Reserve contains a mix of uses including the community pool, aging playground and large number of car parks.
- The mix of commercial uses within the Village Centre are not as diverse as may be expected to service tourism.
- Commercial land to east of Heath Street remains largely residential despite zoning.
- The Visitor Information Centre and community centre mark the southern gateway.
- Accommodation uses are provided to the rear of the main spine but are limited.
- A number of key sites within the Village Centre remain undeveloped.
- A cluster of community uses including the primary school are accessed to the north along School Road.

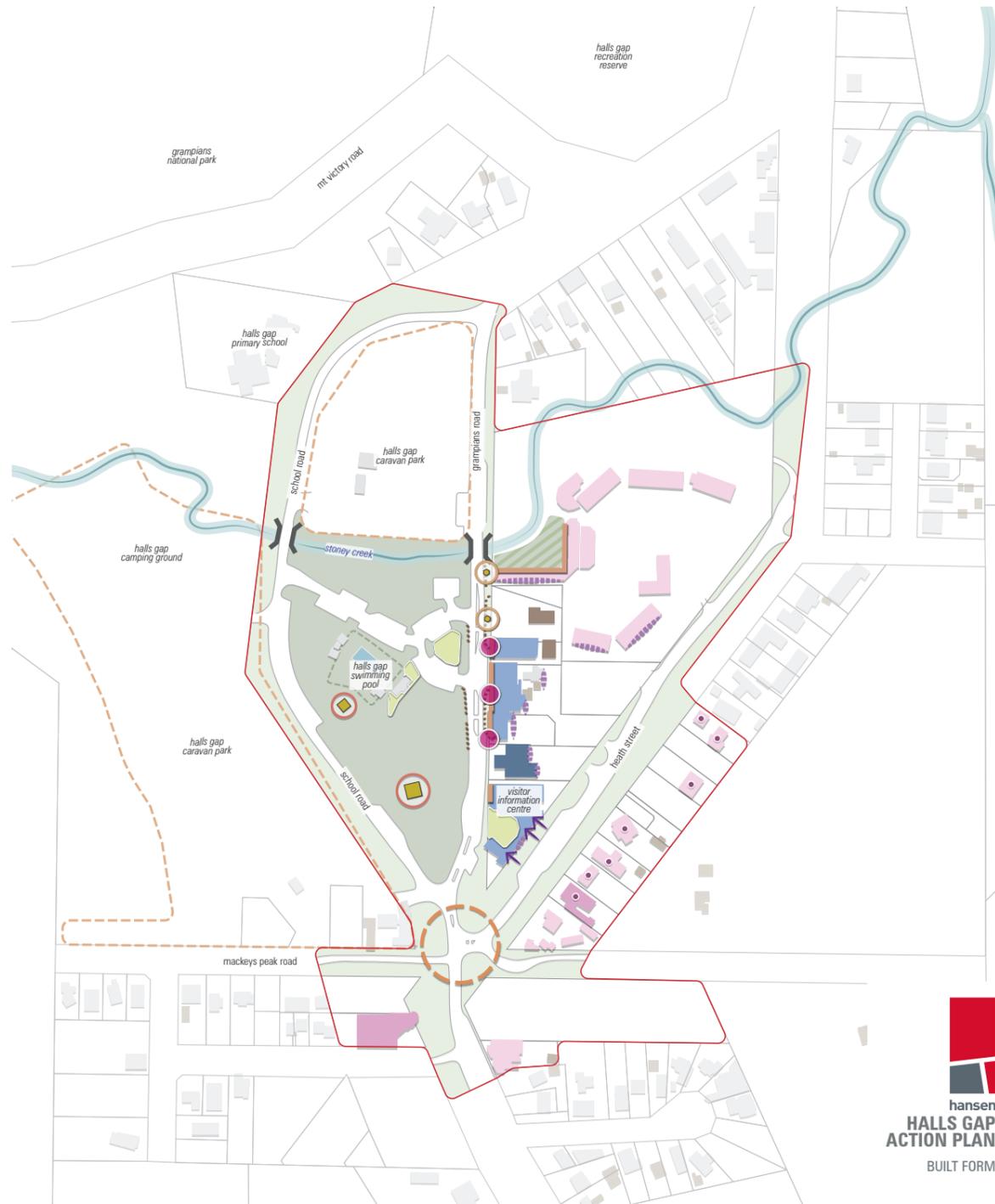


Figure 4. Land Use Map

EXISTING CONDITIONS

HALLS GAP VILLAGE CENTRE ACTION PLAN: STAGE ONE

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hansen
HALLS GAP
ACTION PLAN
 BUILT FORM

Project Ref: 2016.696
 Dwg No.: UDD-003
 Scale: 1:2500 @A3
 Date: 27.05.2017
 Revision: A

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BUILT FORM

- Commercial buildings are exclusively single storey and generally simple in form, but dated and do not reflect contemporary practice in contextual response.
- Roof forms are mixed, with parapets prevalent along Grampians Road.
- Red brick is the predominant material for commercial forms along the main street, with greater use of timber along the Stoney Creek interface.
- Commercial forms to Grampians Road and Stoney Creek generally have verandahs.
- Residential buildings are generally set within landscaping and are a mix of single and double storey forms.
- The Stoney Creek Shops and the Pinnacle Motel are both set within landscapes, with the shops fronting open space along Stoney Creek and the motel buildings in a 'campus' setting.
- Buildings are orientated to Grampians Road and Stoney Creek resulting in a 'back of house' presentation to Heath Street.



Figure 5. Built form Map

LANDSCAPE

- There are incredible views to both the east, and particularly the west, of the surrounding ranges within which the Village Centre ‘nestles’.
- The landscape character of the Village Centre is also strongly influenced by the vegetated nature of the reserve on the western side of Grampians Road which forms a ‘foreground’ to these views.
- Extensive and significant canopy vegetation within the Village Centre is also critical to the ‘sense of place’ and notable along Heath Street.
- The Stoney Creek corridor forms an important northern boundary to the Village Centre.
- An existing drainage line cuts diagonally across Heath Street and connects to wetlands located on Valley Drive.

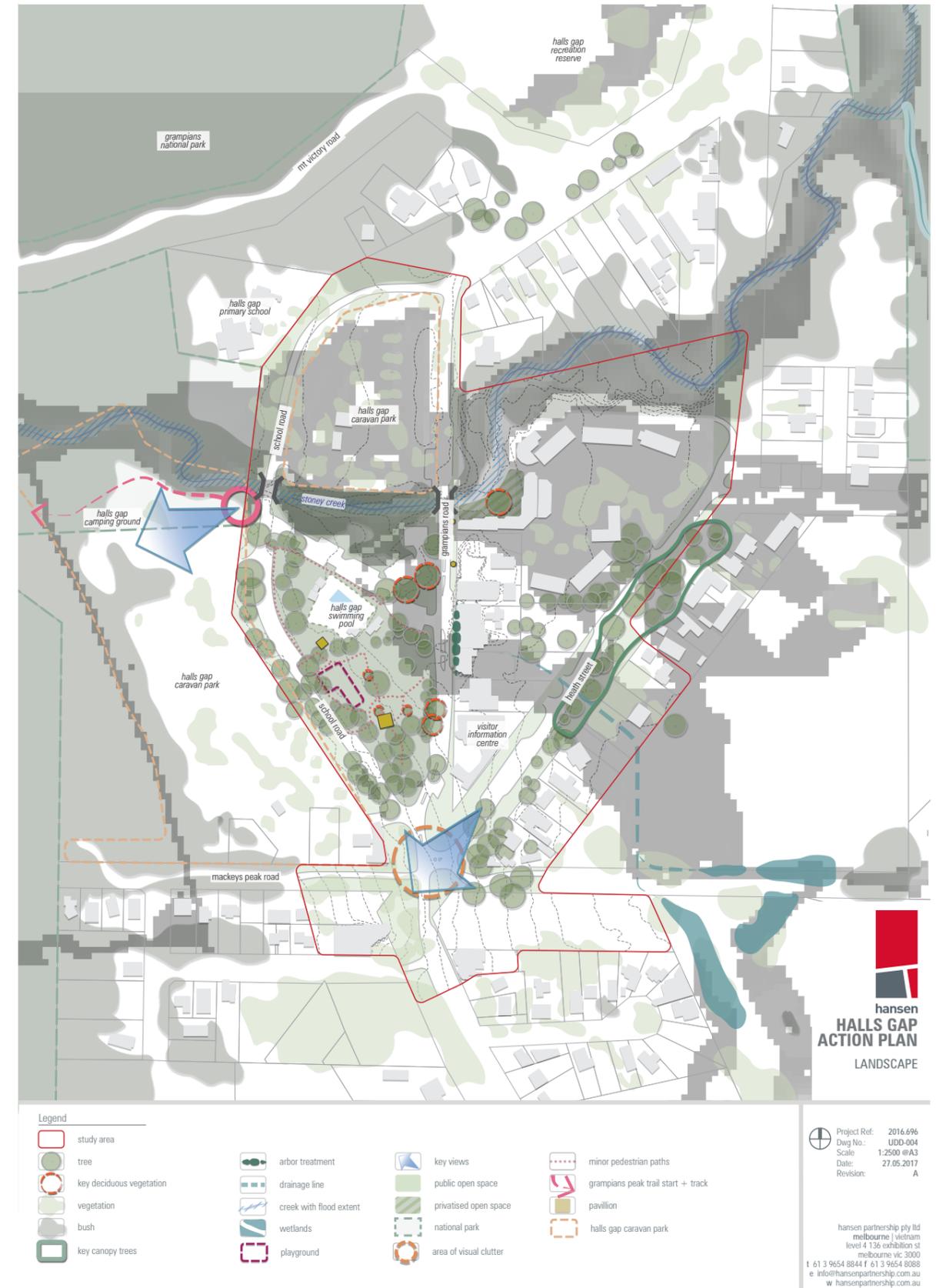
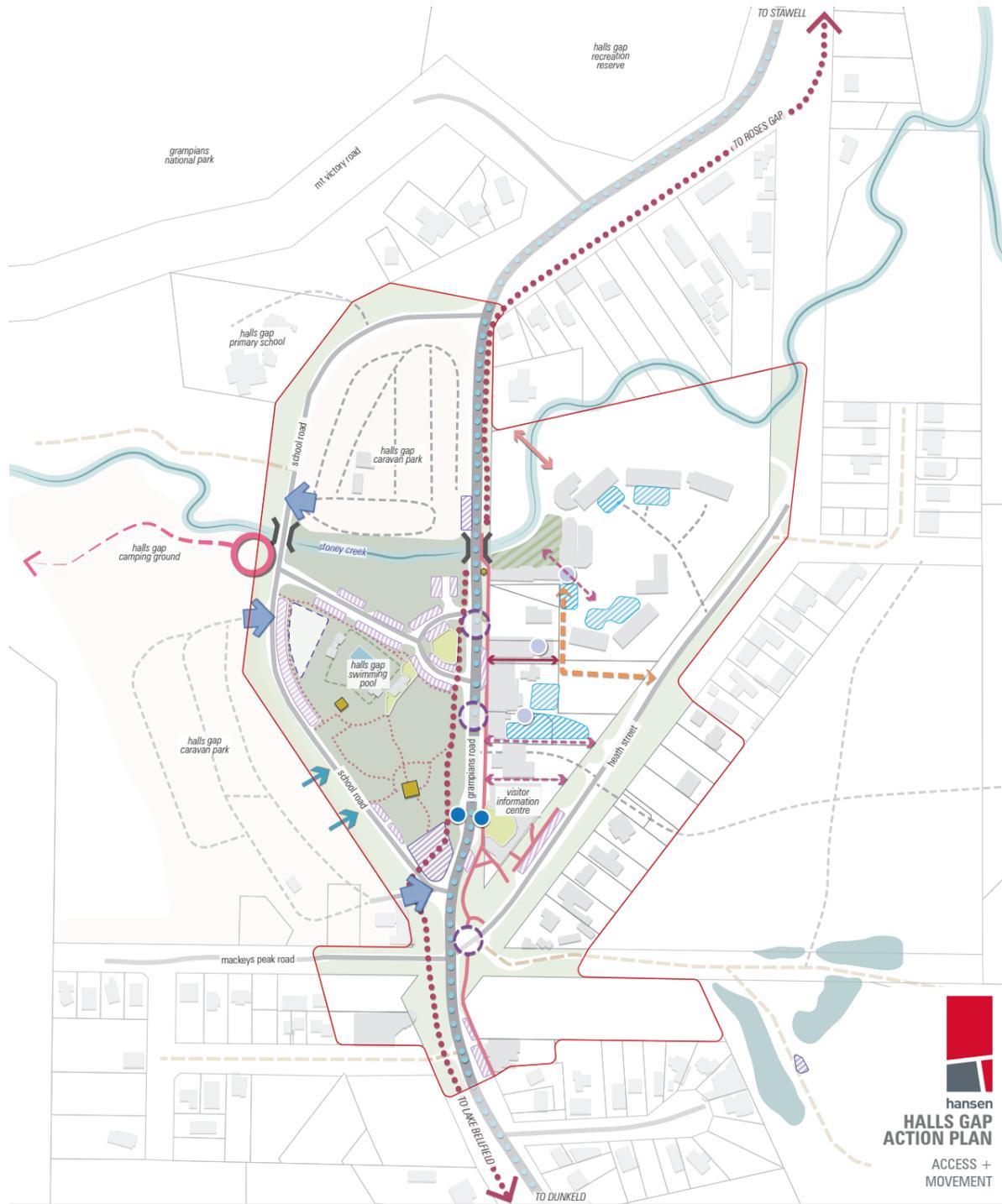


Figure 6. Landscape Map

EXISTING CONDITIONS

HALLS GAP VILLAGE CENTRE ACTION PLAN: STAGE ONE CONSULTATION DRAFT



Legend		
	study area	
	side access way	
	informal pedestrian access	
	grampians peak trail start + track	
	loading zones	
	bus stop	
	bus route	
	central pedestrian point	
	public plaza	
	main road	
	sealed road	
	unsealed road	
	private track/road	
	caravan park extent	
	public open space	

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ACCESS & MOVEMENT

- Grampians Road is the main movement corridor, and includes bus access and a shared trail. Conflicts exist between the shared trail and car parking areas and road crossing points are not clear.
- While some car parking is provided along Grampians Road, most car parking is in a convoluted arrangement within public reserve land.
- Connectivity to Health Street is very limited with some informal pedestrian desire lines but no formal linkages.
- Informal loading and access arrangements to the rear of the commercial strip rely on Council land.
- There is poor pedestrian connectivity to the existing 'Trailhead' location on School Road.



Figure 7. Access & Movement Map

CAR PARKING

Northern Grampians Shire Council commissioned SALT to undertake an assessment of car parking within the Village Centre to ensure that the Action Plan was underpinned by an evidence based understanding of existing conditions relating to car parking. Car parking occupancy, duration of stay surveys and user intercepts were undertaken on a typical weekday, a typical Saturday and an anticipated peak period (during an event) in May / June 2017. On all three survey days, the car parking surveys were undertaken hourly from 9am to 5pm.

The survey captured all publicly accessible car parking spaces within the survey area, including an informal car park located on the corner of Valley Drive and Grampians Road (private land used for overflow car parking during events). Weather conditions on all survey days were generally considered fine. In addition to the parking surveys above, user intercept surveys were also undertaken on the same days. These were conducted in order to gain an understanding of the parking experience for motorists, and whether or not there are differences in the experience between traders and visitors. An occupancy of 85% was adopted as a common point at which parking occupancy should be targeted at typical peak times.

A review of the survey data indicates that there are currently 599 car parking spaces available for public use within the survey area. These spaces are comprised of the following:

- Unrestricted x 286 spaces;
- Approximately 300 spaces in the overflow parking area;
- Disabled spaces x 8 spaces;
- P 30min x 4 spaces; and
- Mail Zone x 1 space.



Key findings from an analysis of the above are as follows:

The surveys found that in general, there was sufficient supply of car parking within the survey area to meet the demands generated on all of the survey days. However, parking along Grampians Road and adjacent to the Halls Gap Pool tended to have high occupancy rates during peak periods, which may cause drivers to circulate these areas or park elsewhere.

On an event day, the peak car parking demand (including the overflow car park) occurred at 3pm, where 153 car parking spaces were occupied of a total 599, equivalent to a car parking occupancy rate of 26%.

However, based on anecdotal information and on-site observations, it is understood that car parking along Grampians Road and adjacent to the Halls Gap Pool tend to be the most popular locations for car parking. As such, a targeted survey of these areas on the peak day was also undertaken. The peak parking demand within this area occurred at 1pm, where 100 of the 117 available spaces were occupied. This is equivalent to a car parking rate of 85%, which suggests that drivers may feel some frustration when searching for a parking space in these areas. On a weekday, the peak car parking demand (excluding the overflow car park) occurred at 2pm, with 154 of 299 car parking spaces occupied. This is equivalent to a rate of 52%. On a Saturday, the peak car parking demand (excluding the overflow car park) occurred at 12pm, where 189 of 299 car parking spaces were occupied. This equates to a car parking rate of 63%.

Although the majority of car parking spaces within the area are unrestricted, duration of stay surveys were also undertaken. These surveys found that generally, over half of all drivers tended to park for up to 2 hours. On the 'peak' day, over 50% of vehicles were observed to have parked for 2 hours or less. On the weekday exactly half of all vehicles stayed for no longer than 2 hours, while on the weekend only 40% were less than 2 hours, indicating that on the weekend people tended to stay for longer.

The visitor intercept surveys found the majority of vehicles parked in the area are private cars, with caravans being the next most popular vehicle. Most visitors parked along Grampians Road or next to the Halls Gap Pool, consistent with findings of the occupancy surveys.

The time required to find a space varied across survey days. On the 'peak' day respondents took between 5 and 10 minutes to find a park. However, the majority of respondents considered the convenience of parking in Halls Gap comparable to parking in similar town centres, with the remainder indicating they thought parking was better in Halls Gap. On weekdays, most respondents took less than 2 minutes to find a car parking spot and parked in the reserve. On the weekend the majority of respondents were from out of town and found a car park in less than 2 minutes. As with weekdays, the majority parked within the reserve. The average intended duration of stay in Halls Gap was 3 hours, with the highest indicated being 10 hours. Visitors unanimously considered the convenience of parking in Halls Gap to be similar or better than other town centres.

The employee intercept surveys found that most staff felt that there was sufficient parking in the area to cater for both staff and customers. All staff generally park for at least 3 hours at a time. The findings of the Destination Survey undertaken by SALT, were confirmed in consultation with local traders as employees utilised parking in the Village Centre.

Matters to consider in relation to car parking include the following:

- In considering how the delivery of a 'walkable town' can occur, the relationship with and location of car parking need to be evaluated. Understanding how people are likely to access the trailhead, as well as the number of car parks required is critical, particularly given the current dominance of car parking areas within the landscape setting of the Village Centre. The Action Plan will need to ensure that this balance between car parking and the pedestrian environment is addressed. The area of car parking in the reserve is clearly the most popular area for car parking across visitors, shoppers, local residents using facilities and employees.
- There is some evidence of excessive demand on car parking within the Reserve during peak periods, leading to circulation by cars as people try to find a space.
- However, the parking in this area is by far the most obvious and is clearly accessed by visitors entering the Village Centre along Grampians Road.
- There is no signage or direct pedestrian connections to any other car parking areas which may be contributing to lower levels of usage compared to the reserve spaces (i.e. most visitors may not be aware that parking is available on Health Street).
- Given the use of the reserve spaces by employees, potential may exist to place time restrictions on these spaces to encourage employees to use alternative spaces, freeing up additional spaces for visitors.

PLEASE NOTE: It is acknowledged that car parking numbers may be higher over the summer / school holidays and that additional actions to manage car parking at these times may be required. This will need to be addressed in the following stage of this project to ensure an appropriate balance between meeting this overflow demand and delivering objectives around pedestrian priority and amenity in the Village Centre is achieved.



GRAMPIANS PEAKS TRAIL

BACKGROUND

As noted in the Introduction to this document, the identification of a preferred location for the Peaks Trailhead was a key deliverable of this project.

It is therefore important for any Action Plan to be based on a solid understanding of just what the 'Peaks Trailhead' will comprise of to ensure that recommendations about the optimal location are sound. The majority of direction around the trailhead is included in the *Grampians Peaks Trail: Trailhead Report (2017)* prepared for Parks Victoria which built on the 2014 *Grampians Peaks Trail Master Plan*.

The Peaks Trail currently starts from the car park in Halls Gap, where walkers are directed to walk past the swimming pool, cross the road and follow signs to Venus Baths (see Figure 8).

Regarding aspirations associated with the delivery of the trailhead, perhaps most critical for this Action Plan is the intention to transform Halls Gap into an internationally recognised 'walking town' that will support the development of businesses that provide world class products and services for the Grampians Peaks Trail. The Action Plan for the Village Centre needs to consider this primacy of the walker / pedestrian in considering how the Centre may evolve over the coming years. For the most part this will relate to improvements in the 'public spaces' of the centre, but development on private land can, and will, exert a strong influence on the amenity and functionality of the pedestrian environment. Clear and legible linkages to the trailhead, wherever it is located, are clearly required. The *Trailhead Report* also clearly identifies the need to improve the presentation of the township and capitalise on the "stunning" landscape setting.

The Trailhead Report identifies that the Grampians is predominantly a self-drive destination with over 97% of visitors being self-drive tourists. Consequently, adequate car parking at trailheads should be provided, as many groups of independent walkers will car pool shuttle, dropping a car at either end of a walk segment. Because public transport around the Grampians is limited, the Trailhead Report identifies that the establishment of a regular and convenient shuttle service may be needed to assist the movement of walkers to and from different sections of their walk.

Major trailheads such as Halls Gap are identified as potentially including a range of facilities where appropriate and feasible, including shelter, seating, toilets, signage and track information, tank water and car parking (understood to be about 15 long term spaces in Halls Gap) and the Action Plan will need to consider the benefits of delivering / consolidating these requirements with existing facilities. It is understood that signage is the key priority for trailhead locations but the starting point of the actual walk may also comprise a visual marker, such as a small plaza or sculptural element. Previous discussions have identified the potential for the Brambuk Centre to function as the Halls Gap Trailhead. This is potentially problematic in terms of the delivery of the anticipated benefits to the Halls Gap Village Centre and is discussed further in the following sections.

Matters to consider in relation to the Peaks Trailhead include the following:

- There is a clear need for the priority of pedestrian movement to drive the delivery of public realm investment.
- Locating the trailhead some distance from the Village Centre may discourage walkers from accessing and interacting with services and facilities in the Village Centre and may compromise the aspirations to deliver a 'walkable town'.
- Improvements to the quality of design outcomes and protection of the landscape setting will be important to the tourism offer.
- The delivery of complementary car parking spaces will also need to be considered, but will need to be delivered in a way which has regard to the matters outlined above.
- In addition, an area which either provides or has easy access to shelter, seating, toilets, signage and track information and tank water will need to be provided. Public toilets are perhaps the 'big ticket' item here, and within the Village Centre are available in the reserve and at the Visitor Information Centre.
- Locating the Trailhead at the Brambuk Centre, while it would provide convenient car parking, would likely compromise the delivery of spin off economic benefits to Halls Gap.
- The *Halls Gap Masterplan* (see following section), puts forward a number of potential trailhead locations and provides a brief summary of advantages and disadvantages. Option 4 which adjoins the School Road bridge, responds most appropriately to the above considerations.

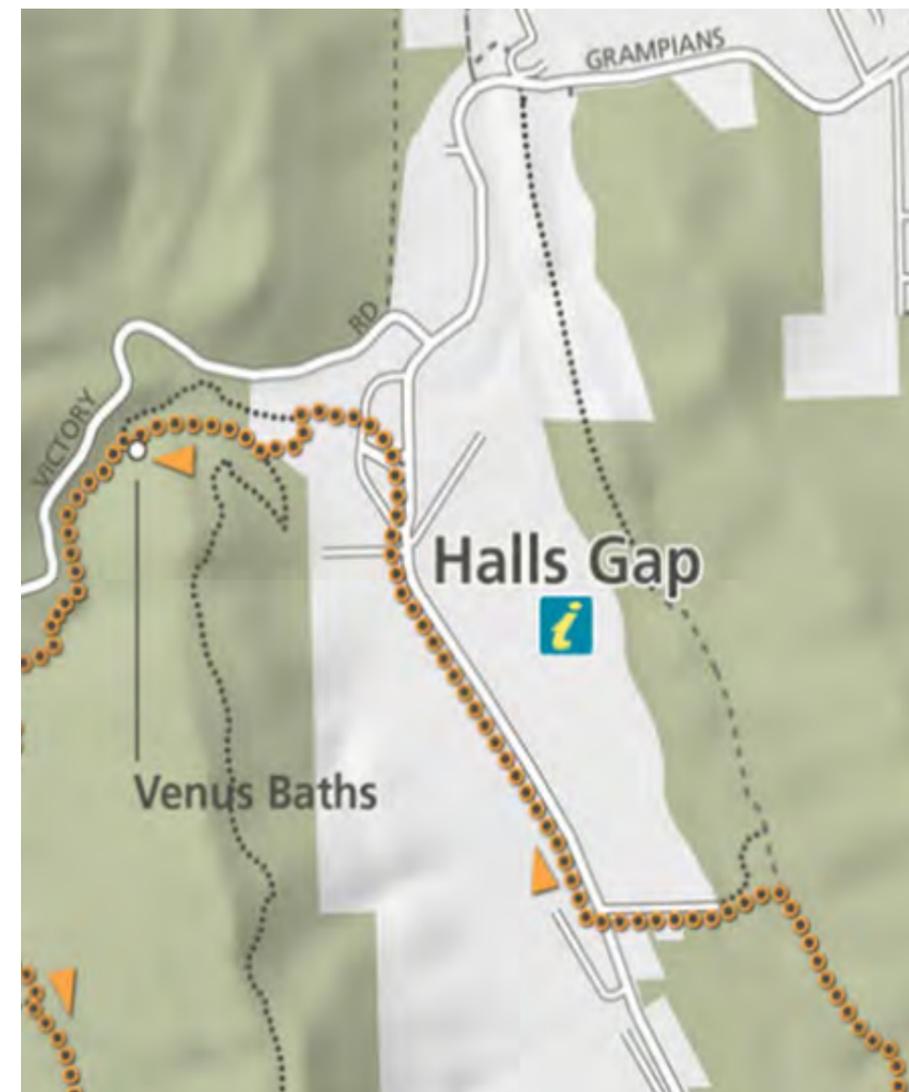


Figure 8. Existing Grampians Peaks Trail circuit (source: Parks Victoria website)

DOCUMENT REVIEW

Planning for Halls Gaps Village Centre over the last 17 years has largely been driven by three key documents; an urban design framework, a community plan and the masterplan which are discussed in the following section of this document.

In the case of the Urban Design Framework (which was undertaken in 2001) and the Community Plan (undertaken in 2011), the review has highlighted only those matters which are of continuing relevance to the Village Centre, and provided an assessment of whether there are outstanding matters which could be addressed by the Action Plan. In relation to the Masterplan, which addressed the full extent of Halls Gap, matters which are relevant to he Village Centre are highlighted, again, with comments on their continued relevance to the current project.

Where a matter may be relevant for consideration in later stages of this project, this is clearly highlighted (STAGE TWO).



Figure 9. 2001 Urban Design Framework

HALLS GAP URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

The Urban Design Framework was developed in 2001. This comprehensive document outlined numerous actions to guide development in the centre, primarily focused around the public realm. While many of these actions have been implemented, others remain incomplete or no longer align with best practice.

Matters to consider in relation to aspirations expressed by the Urban Design Framework include:

1. Streetscape upgrades along Grampians Road proposed including greater pedestrianisation though reduced road width, 45 degree parking and a wider eastern side
While some upgrades have been undertaken, the Action Plan should establish whether further works may be needed. STAGE TWO
2. Heath Street developed as the main vehicular route with a bridge over Stoney Creek providing a connection to the north
Further investigations may be needed to establish if this option is feasible, having regard to the cost and other relevant environmental matters such as the removal of vegetation and the impact on existing residents.
3. High design standards and the use of local materials (such as sandstone, timber, gravel) should be applied
For this aspiration to be realised, expectations and preferred materials need to be clearly defined and changes to the planning scheme undertaken to ensure their statutory weight. STAGE TWO
4. Planting of additional vegetation, in particular canopy trees (Manna Gums identified) with a focus on open space areas where many trees are getting older and along Heath Street.
Opportunities for the protection of existing canopy trees and the planting of new vegetation to ensure the landscape character is enhanced should be pursued, as well as how this can be managed within the constraints of the Bushfire Management Overlay.
5. Paths should be granitic sand
This may be appropriate in some areas but maintenance and accessibility issues will also need to be considered. STAGE TWO
6. An informal green link along Stoney Creek to Heath Street
This could be pursued but would need the consent of private land owners given this parcel is privately owned.
7. Car parking access in Heath Street
While some car parking has been added since the UDF, there are further opportunities that could be explored through the Action Plan.

HALLS GAP COMMUNITY PLAN (2011)

In addition to the formal 'planning' of the Village Centre through the 2001 Urban Design Framework, a Community Plan largely driven by local residents, also identified a number of actions relevant to the Village Centre which may influence this Action Plan.

Matters to consider in relation to aspirations expressed by the Community Plan include:

1. The undergrounding of powerlines
While the undergrounding of powerlines is not a Council responsibility, opportunities exist for Council to identify priority locations and consider where undergrounding or bundling of powerlines may be possible, particularly in association with any future public works projects. STAGE TWO
2. Decluttering of signage
The decluttering or rationalisation of signage along key corridor such as Grampians Road could be pursued through any proposed public realm works. STAGE TWO
3. Increased commercial floorspace
This is one of the drivers of this project and opportunities to unlock underutilised commercial land and to stimulate private investment in the Village Centre should be pursued.
4. Sustainability initiatives, particularly around active transport and water sensitive urban design (WSUD)
As with the decluttering of signage, opportunities for the integration of WSUD can be delivered through any subsequent public realm upgrades. STAGE TWO
Improvements to pedestrian and cycle connections, both in terms of safety and amenity will increase the likelihood of residents making active transport choices and should be pursued through the Action Plan
5. Improved and extended pedestrian paths
As noted above, improvements to the pedestrian network will need to be addressed through the Action Plan.
6. Public gathering spaces and seating
Gathering spaces to complement the 'focal' space delivered through the Visitor Information Centre development will be identified in the Action Plan, with subsequent 'concept plans' to provide further design details around specific seating locations etc.

HALLS GAP MASTERPLAN (2015)

Perhaps the most relevant document, and the one which this Action Plan is intended to implement, is the *Halls Gap Master-Plan for Commercial Investment and Public Land Development* (the Masterplan), prepared by MvS Architects and adopted by Council in December 2016. The key focus of this document was the activation and further development of the tourism industry within Halls Gap, with particular reference to the delivery of the Grampians Peaks Long Distance Walk which will see further emphasis on Halls Gap as one of the Major Trailheads for this iconic walk. The Masterplan identifies a very broad range of actions and initiatives. The focus within this Action Plan is on those elements of the Masterplan which are relevant to the Village Centre area, noting many of these initiatives will be delivered by the private sector rather than Council. These relevant actions are identified to the right, along with some additional comments on their relevance to the Action Plan.

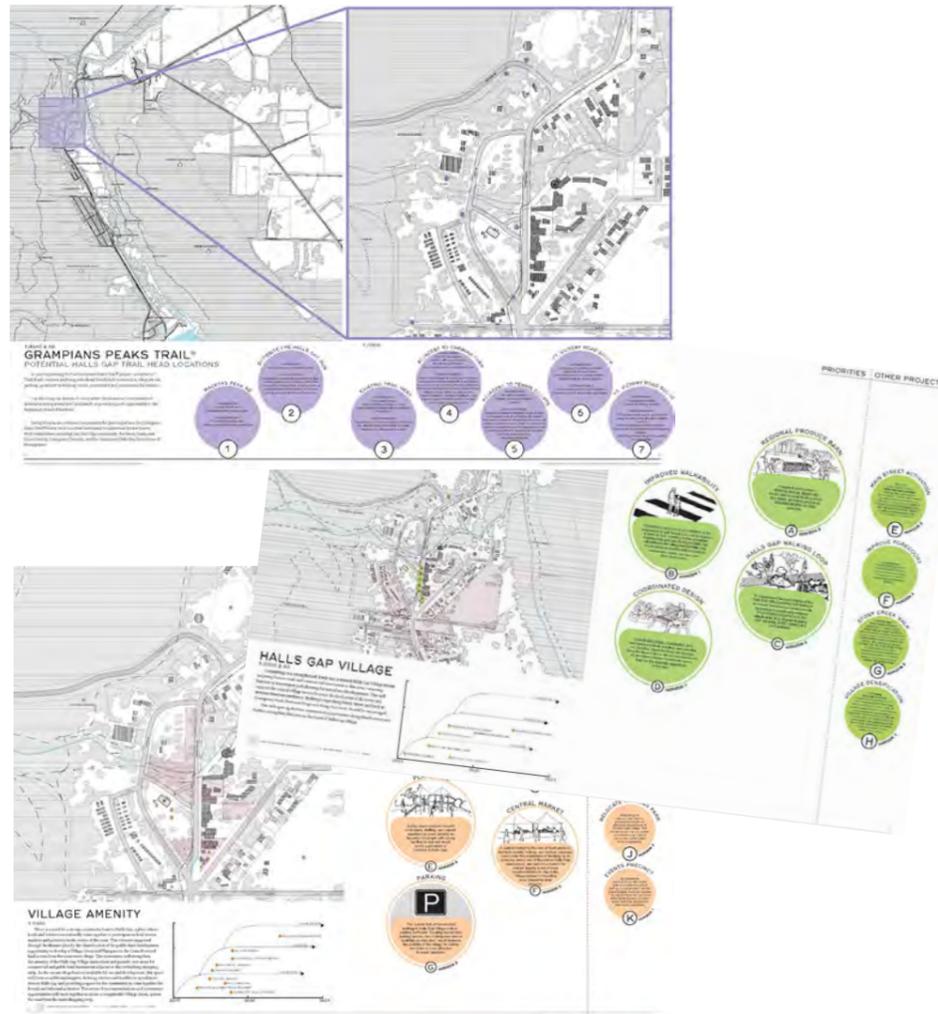


Figure 10. Pages from the Halls Gap Masterplan

Matters to consider in relation to aspirations expressed by the Masterplan include:

1. Transition Halls Gap to a 'walking town' with a connected network of walking and bicycle trails, including a Heath Street and Stoney Creek loop.
As above, the Action Plan should consider projects to deliver these aspirations.
2. Need for a strong community 'heart' / event space
The existing Community Hall contains a space for gathering, although this could be complemented by other spaces within the Village Centre.
3. Develop a Village Green and playspace on Council owned land across from main street shops
This land is, in fact, owned by the State Government and managed by a Committee of Management. The development of a Village Green and playspace would need to be facilitated through that group, although if wider benefits to the Village Centre are determined, there may be opportunities for both parties to work together towards complementary outcomes through the Action Plan.
4. Commercial expansion on western side of Grampians Road opposite community hall
The expansion of commercial uses into the green reserve is problematic and would require the transition of public open space to private ownership which is unlikely to be supported. It would also potentially compromise the critical 'landscape setting' of the Village Centre.
5. Heath Street further commercial opportunities
As above, the Action Plan should consider projects to deliver these aspirations.
6. Main Street activation
As above, the Action Plan should consider projects to deliver these aspirations.
7. 'Densify the Village'
While additional infilling of underutilised land is one of the objectives of this Action Plan, this will need to be managed carefully having consideration for critical parameters such as contextual responses.
8. Protect the feel of the Village Centre, including views and set parameters for private design to ensure centre is attractive to the 'inspired by nature' tourists
Following stages of the Action Plan could set these parameters and establish a rationale for an updated Design & Development Overlay. STAGE TWO
9. Establish a coordinated design approach of the public realm, including removal of overhead wires.
Any streetscape upgrade proposed as part of the Action Plan should include development of a preferred palette of materials and finishes to ensure a cohesive centre. Ideally these would also be implemented within other public spaces such as the reserve. STAGE TWO

10. Seven options for the location of Grampians Peaks Trailhead identified
The preferred Option (Option 4) is identified in this Action Plan.
11. The establishment of a brewery / distillery / deli / restaurant / lifestyle day spa targeted at walkers / regional produce barn / central market
The delivery of these private initiatives will rely on private interest, facilitated by Council through improving access to currently underutilised areas of commercial land.
12. Wayfinding and signage within the centre should be improved
This could be pursued though the second phase of the Action Plan. STAGE TWO
13. Create demarcated parking spaces
Parking spaces have progressively been linemarked but further areas could be identified through the Action Plan as relevant.
14. Additional landscaping throughout the centre
As above, the Action Plan should consider projects to deliver these aspirations.
15. Pool shading, minor renovations to the Community Hall and a sculpture for the forecourt, as well as free wifi within the Village Centre.
These minor works are likely to be pursued separately, noting free wifi has already been established at the Community Hall.
16. Recommendations around relocating the Caravan Park and removing sections of track to increase caravan park privacy
These are matters for the Committee of Management to determine.

REVIEW FINDINGS

There are a number of matters which need to be highlighted in relation to the document review which are relevant to Stage One of the Action Plan, as follows:

- The Plan will need to focus on the delivery of improved pedestrian safety and amenity and enhance the path network
- Opportunities to deliver increased commercial floorspace should be pursued.
- The Plan should consider creatively how a range of public spaces can be delivered to facilitate informal gathering within the Village Centre.
- Further opportunities for streetscape improvements to Grampians Road should be explored, particularly in relation to how additional space for pedestrian movement and outdoor dining could be delivered, through increased footpath width or 'decluttering' of street furniture.
- Opportunities to deliver new vegetation and protect existing canopy trees should be pursued.
- Consideration should be given to how linkages along Stoney Creek and additional car parking in Heath Street could be delivered.
- The costs and benefits of delivering a 'through' link along Heath Street by constructing a new road and bridge should be considered carefully to ensure that this is appropriately balanced with the broader vision and aspirations for the Village Centre and does not negatively impact on existing businesses.
- Opportunities to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes within the Recreation Reserve space should be considered, as with other land managers but projects which Council is able to deliver on land they manage should be prioritised.
- Option 4 from the Masterplan should be confirmed as the preferred location for the Grampians Peaks Trailhead.



CONSULTATION

Consultation for the Halls Gap Village Centre Action Plan will comprise two main phases:

- The first phase (which develops this document) will include engagement with key stakeholders and landowners.
- The second phase will focus on inputs from the broader Halls Gap resident and visitor communities.

Consultation in Phase 1 of the project included the following:

- One-on-one meetings with key landowners to identify aspirations for key land parcels and any barriers to development.
- Information Download sessions with key stakeholders to verify background analysis and confirm issues and opportunities, including a Walking Workshop of the Village Centre area with key stakeholders. These were held in June 2017. Attendees included Park Victoria, the Halls Gap Committee of Management, Council officers, local business owners and resident group representatives.
- These initial engagement activities were followed by a Design Charrette in August 2017 where ideas raised in the first sessions were tested and synthesised into a sketch framework for resolution.

Feedback received following the Information Download sessions and Walking Workshops included:

- There is a need to diversify the commercial offer in terms of mix between retail and commercial space available - is the mix of commercial space sizes meeting needs or are there too many small spaces that limit the variety of commercial offering?
- Should look closely at the redevelopment potential of the Pinnacle Motel site - better use of the commercial land - consider suggesting a mix of accommodation and retail/food and drink premises or 'arcade' style layout.
- Deliveries for the supermarket from the rear currently utilise Council land. Plans are in place to improve existing loading facilities to the rear, including possible demolition of the old dwelling on the site.
- Consider identifying a better location for the service station - could the service station in the middle of town be relocated? Look at engaging with the owners about the redevelopment of the site.
- Consideration should be given to widening the Grampians Road street frontage / footpath to allow more function outdoor dining.
- Consider controlling verandah heights, parapet heights, facade controls.
- There is potential to open up the existing access lane adjacent to the supermarket to allow pedestrian access to Heath Street via the Council site.
- Consider the width of the paths to accommodate all forms of traffic - walkers, bikes, prams etc.
- Improve the street lighting around the Visitor Information Centre at corner of Grampians Road and Heath Street.
- Look at opportunity to create designated pedestrian access through or beside the service station.
- Consider incorporating some car parking onto the Council owned site.
- Consider introducing paid and / or time restricted car parking to manage the distribution of car parking.
- Main street parking area (within the reserve) is reported by traders to be mainly used by workers - would providing other car parking with good link or time restrictions assist?
- Need to consider and resolve how to accommodate for waste trucks (skip bins), delivery trucks etc. at the rear of Stoney Creek shops when looking at options for legitimising shared use/access.

This feedback and other information received through the sessions was used to identify a range of issues and opportunities for the Village Centre, which are outlined in the following section.



Figure 11. Walking workshop brochure



ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

A range of issues were identified through analysis of existing conditions and consultation with key stakeholders. These issues and opportunities do not comprise the full range of influences which should inform the Action Plan, but do highlight some of the key considerations. Matters requiring consideration outlined in earlier sections of this document are replicated for ease of use within the adjacent highlight box.

These issues are grouped under the themes of:

Public Spaces + Connections

- Dangerous and / or poorly located road crossings which do not reflect the desire lines of pedestrian movement, particularly across Grampians Road
- Informal parking areas create conflicts with shared path users
- The central public carparking limits pedestrian safety and movement, including connections to the Peaks trail
- Existing laneways lack definition and cohesion and are in private ownership
- Urban structure provides preference to vehicle movement over pedestrian movement

Grampians Scenery

- Apart from a height limit which may be restricting commercial growth there are no development controls to manage impacts on the scenic surrounds
- The reserve space currently lacks 'drawcard' tourism features and does not maximise opportunities to support the Village Centre landscape identity

Retail activities + Desintations

- The range of retail and tourism services do not encourage longer term stays or maximise the economic potential of tourism spending
- Lack of clear identity along Heath Street, including 'back of house' presentation which discourages investment
- Poor permeability through commercial land, in particular a lack of pedestrian connectivity from Grampians Road, through commercial land to Heath Street
- Much of the commercial land within the Village Centre is underutilised

Grampains Trail Links

- The current location of the Peaks trail lacks integration with Village Centre
- Lack of signage from Village Centre to walking trails

Main Street Presentation

- Lack of unity in streetscape and building presentation and wayfinding along Main Street
- Inconsistent built form quality and design response.
- Lack of retail and accommodation diversity along Main and Heath Streets
- Lack of continuous active frontage along Main Street, with large vacant blocks
- Visual clutter along main street detracts from the spectacular surrounds
- Village Centre gateways not defined or celebrated

Reserve Spaces

- Lack of hierarchy within open spaces and underutilisation of some areas
- Consideration of and protection of vegetation needs to be prioritised, having particular regard to long term retention of the town canopy cover which may diminish over time
- There is unlikely to be enough car parking for a Trailhead within the Reserve space, given this area is congested at peak times, and circulation for car parks may impact on the safety and amenity of pedestrians and walkers
- Programming of the reserve is unclear and delivery of street furniture such as bins appears uncoordinated

Environment + Drainage

- Drainage lines within the Village Centre will need to be considered through development
- Flood impacts of Stoney Creek will need to be managed, and consideration given to how water sensitive urban design may reduce impacts
- Opportunities for increased environmental education exist within the Village Centre

Opportunities identified through existing documents which are considered relevant and reflected in the 'key concepts and actions' list include:

- There is no signage or direct pedestrian connections to any other car parking areas which may be contributing to lower levels of usage compared to the reserve spaces (i.e. most visitors may not be aware that parking is available on Heath Street).
- Given the use of the reserve car parking spaces by employees, potential may exist to place time restrictions on these spaces to encourage employees to use alternative spaces, freeing up additional spaces for visitors.
- The Plan will need to focus on the delivery of improved pedestrian safety and amenity and enhance the path network.
- Opportunities to deliver increased commercial floorspace should be pursued.
- The Plan should consider creatively how a range of public spaces can be delivered to facilitate informal gathering within the Village Centre.
- Further opportunities for streetscape improvements to Grampians Road should be explored, particularly in relation to how additional space for pedestrian movement and outdoor dining could be delivered, through increased footpath width or 'decluttering' of street furniture.
- Opportunities to deliver new vegetation and protect existing canopy trees should be pursued.
- Consideration should be given to how linkages along Stoney Creek and additional car parking in Heath Street could be delivered.
- The costs and benefits of delivering a 'through' link along Heath Street by constructing a new road and bridge should be considered carefully to ensure that this is appropriately balanced with the broader vision and aspirations for the Village Centre and does not negatively impact on existing businesses.
- Opportunities to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes within the Recreation Reserve space should be considered (as with other land managers) but projects which Council is able to deliver should be prioritised.
- Option 4 from the Masterplan should be confirmed as the preferred location for the Grampians Peaks Trailhead.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

HALLS GAP VILLAGE CENTRE ACTION PLAN: STAGE ONE

CONSULTATION DRAFT

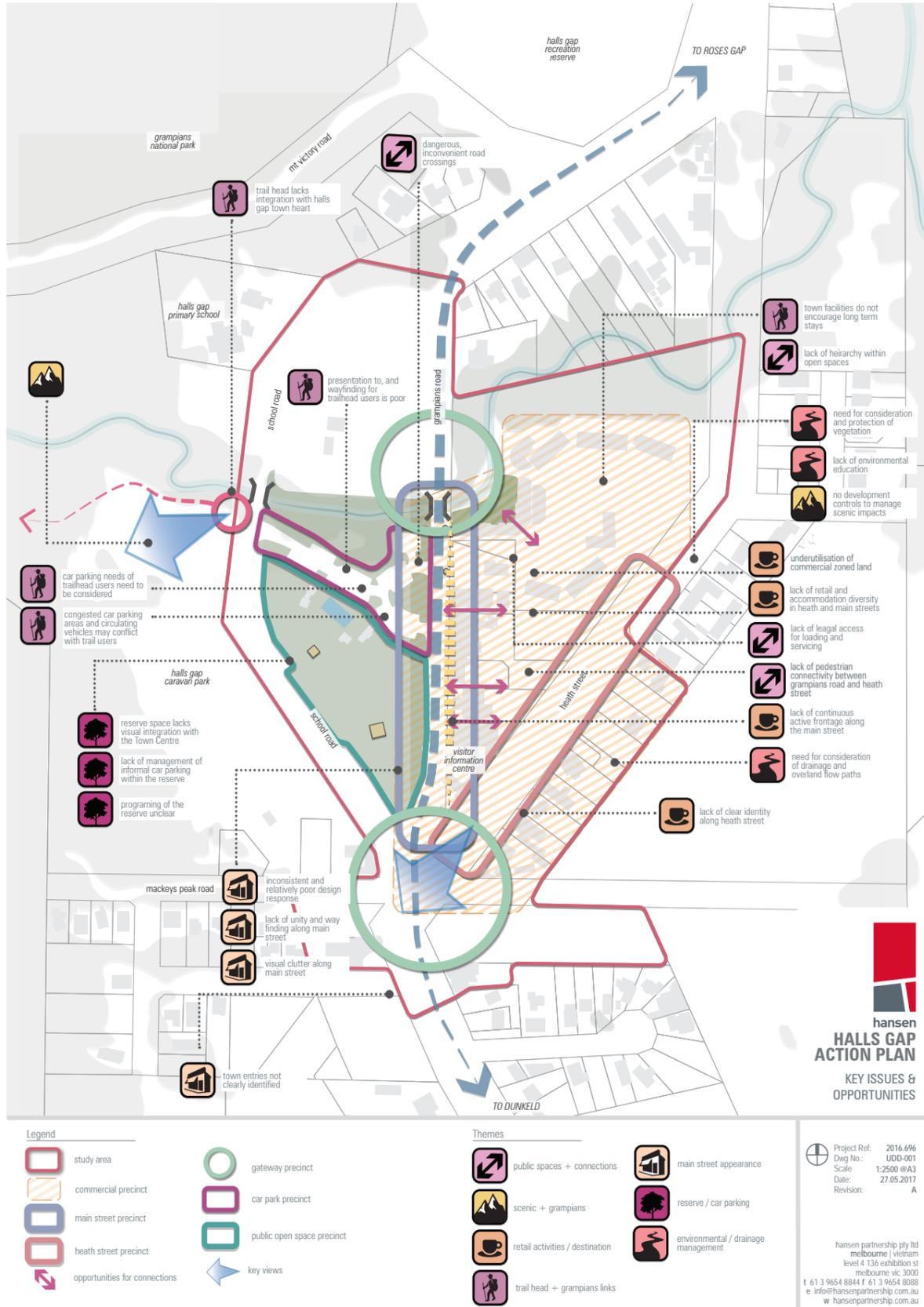


Figure 12. Issues & Opportunities



Figure 13. Undeveloped land along main street



Figure 14. Informal access & loading arrangements



Figure 15. Car parking compromising connections



Figure 16. Visual clutter along Main Street corridor



Figure 17. Disconnected spaces and level changes at Village Centre entry



Figure 19. Underutilised commercial land along Heath Street



Figure 18. Poor gateway presentation and pedestrian / vehicular conflict



PART B ACTION PLAN

VISION & FRAMEWORK

This section (Part B) of the document contains the future directions that should be refined with the community and confirmed through the next stage of this project. It comprises the following:

- A draft vision that has informed the 'sketch framework'
- A 'sketch framework' that provides a broad understanding of how all the 'pieces' of the Village Centre may evolve to deliver the aspiration of the community and to maximise the future benefits of the Peaks Trailhead for the township
- An 'Action Plan' which identifies areas for change which are considered priorities in achieving the objectives of this project
- A series of complementary initiatives which should also be pursued through the following stages of this project
- Further details on how these actions could be implemented.

PRINCIPLES

The 'vision' for Halls Gap Village Centre is centred on the delivery of key principles related to the three themes of activity, access and amenity which have been developed having regard to adopted Council and community aspirations, and having consideration for the identified issues and opportunities:

Increase activity: Increase the level and diversity of activity within the Village Centre, particularly activity which generates economic benefits for the town

Improve access: Improve the safety and amenity of pedestrian connections within the Village Centre and improve permeability, particularly between Grampians Road and Heath Street

Enhance amenity: Ensure that development has regard to the spectacular landscape setting and enhances interest and enjoyment of public spaces in the Village Centre





hansen
HALLS GAP
ACTION PLAN

Framework Plan

Legend

- peak's trail head departure experience 
- entry feature 
- road crossing treatment 
- recreation precincts 
- shared trail 
- new access lane 
- pedestrian path 
- new or improved pedestrian link 
- internal pedestrian link 
- longer term creek connections 
- existing building 
- potential infill development 
- potential upper level development 
- active frontage 
- additional formalised car parking 
- street upgrades to improve pedestrian accessibility and safety 

Project Ref: 2016.696
 Dwg No.: UDD-008
 Scale: 1:1500 @A3
 1:750 @A1
 Date: 22.02.2018
 Revision: A

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Figure 20. Sketch Framework

VISION

The following 'vision' should be considered for the Village Centre:

The Halls Gap Village Centre is a place where people 'stop, stay and spend' within the magnificent backdrop of the Grampians (Gariwerd) Ranges.

The centre offers a full array of community and commercial services, and key tourism destination activities supporting both the National Park and Grampians Peaks Trailhead.

The centre has a network of new and improved pedestrian paths and linkages, so that residents and visitors can move easily safely through the town to shops, amenities, open spaces and the National Park beyond.

Public works and new development investment in the town is realised sensitively, with the highest regard for the landscape setting and the natural environment.

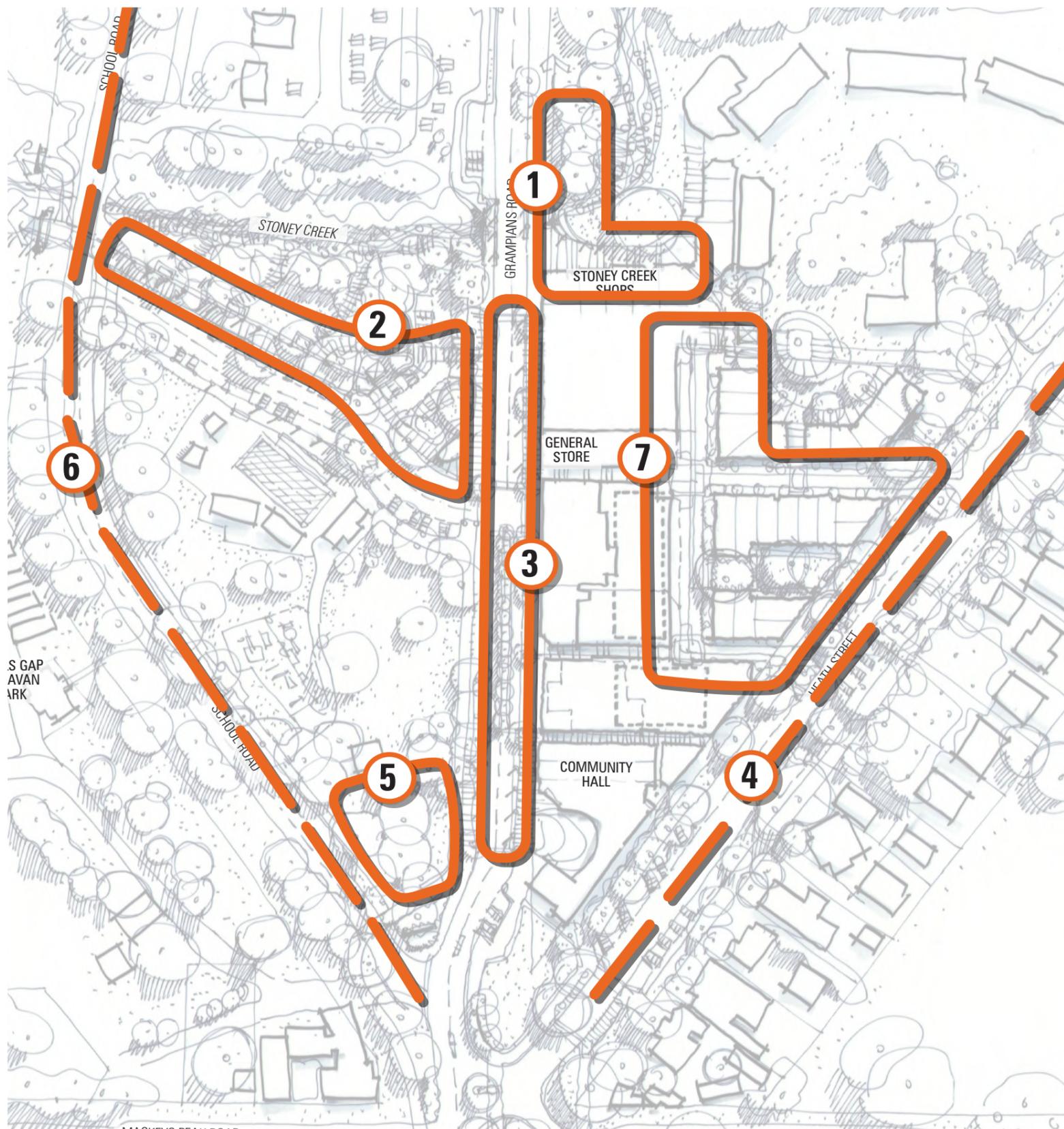
KEY ELEMENTS

Key elements of the Sketch Framework are as follows:

- Upgrades to the three main roads (Heath Street, Grampians Road and School Road) to improve pedestrian amenity and functionality;
- Identification of the location of the Peaks Trailhead and an associated 'Trailhead Connection' experience connecting the Village Centre to maximise benefits of increased tourism for local businesses;
- Delivery of landscape features to mark Village Centre gateways;
- Establishment of a rear lane network and pedestrian connections to improve connections to Heath Street and resolve servicing of commercial development;
- Improvements to the Stoney Creek bridge to both mark the Village Centre gateway and improve integration of the Storey Creek shops;
- Delivery of alternative car parking locations to reduce congestion within the Recreation Reserve; and
- Activation of Heath Street to unlock the potential of underutilised commercially zoned land.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

HALLS GAP VILLAGE CENTRE ACTION PLAN: STAGE ONE CONSULTATION DRAFT



PRIORITY ACTIONS

Complementing the Sketch Framework prepared for Halls Gap is an 'Action Plan' of Priority actions and future initiatives. These are the key concepts which should underpin further planning and design work, changes to the Northern Grampians Shire Planning Scheme and future public works. The Priority Actions represent key initiatives which Council can take an active role in pursuing in the shorter term, and which can deliver on the vision established through the framework. These seven Priority Actions are supported by a further seven initiatives which complement these priority actions.



1 PROJECT 1:
STONEY CREEK BRIDGE & BOARDWALK



2 PROJECT 2:
PEAKS TRAILHEAD CONNECTION



3 PROJECT 3:
RAISED PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS



4 PROJECT 4:
HEATH STREET UPGRADE



5 PROJECT 5:
SOUTHERN GATEWAY



6 PROJECT 6:
SCHOOL ROAD UPGRADE



7 PROJECT 7:
REAR LANEWAY COMMERCIAL EXPANSION

Figure 21. Priority Actions

PROJECT 1:
STONEY CREEK BRIDGE & BOARDWALK

Project Description

This project seeks to establish a wrapping timber boardwalk structure from the existing Stoney Creek bridge to the Stoney Creek shops providing steps from the existing deck toward the lawn area and creek edge. This structure will not only improve pedestrian connectivity from the north to Halls Gap Village Centre, it will also provide much needed seating and informal outdoor dining areas for visitors during peak periods.

In addition to the boardwalk, a new formalised pedestrian crossing is proposed to the south of the bridge, improving connectivity from the on-grade car park to this critical tourism destination.

The key objectives of the proposed Stoney Creek Boardwalk include:

- Provide additional seating along the creek edge and increase the functionality of the open space during peak tourism periods;
- Enhance the function and design of a popular public space within Halls Gap commercial precinct, having regard to the surrounding character;
- Improve east-west pedestrian and cycle connectivity across Grampians Road to key tourism destination; and.
- Unlock development potential within Stoney Creek shops and the adjoining Pinnacle Holiday lodge to enhance key tourism destination.



Figure 22. Existing Stoney Creek bridge

Indicative Material Palette



New public open space (viewing area) opposite Stoney Creek

Wrapping boardwalk structure from Stoney Creek bridge to shops

New pedestrian crossing to south of bridge

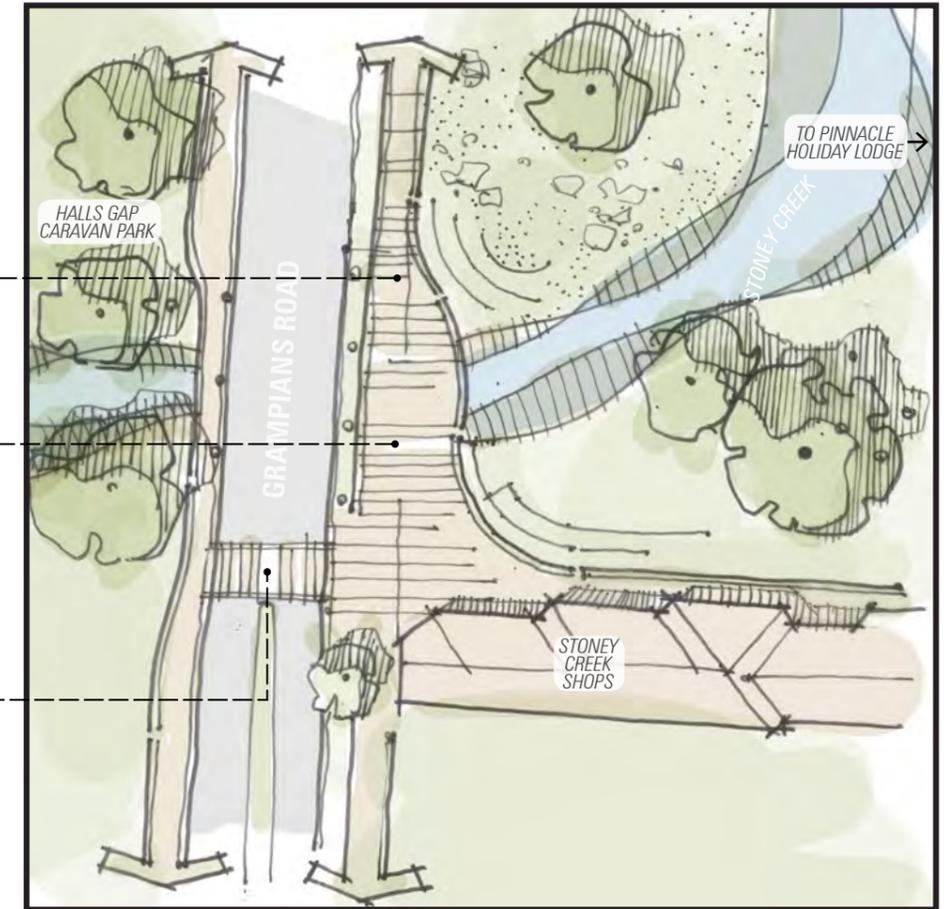


Figure 23. Indicative plan of potential bridge crossing and deck

Stepped seating from boardwalk to lawn area and creek edge

Viewing area accommodated along boardwalk

Expanded pedestrian crossing over Stoney Creek



Figure 24. Indicative perspective illustration of potential bridge crossing and deck

**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)

PROJECT 3: RAISED PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

Project Description

This project seeks to improve east / west pedestrian access from the reserve to the shops. This will be achieved with a raised pedestrian threshold over Grampians Road between the general store and car park, with a second crossing to be investigated between the Visitor Information Centre and the Recreation Reserve. This project will decrease vehicle speeds through the Village Centre and improve pedestrian safety across Grampians Road. The bike path will also be redirected away from vehicle crossovers and car parking, providing improved connectivity to open space and environmental assets. The project will also assist in integrating the 'green' reserve space with the commercial parts of the Village Centre.

The key objectives of the proposed raised pedestrian crossing include:

- Improve pedestrian safety and wayfinding over Grampians Road from the reserve car park and proposed Trailhead Connection to retail and tourism uses, while slowing the movement of vehicles through the Village Centre;
- Improve cycle connectivity along Grampians Road, directing bike movement away from crossovers and car parking; and
- Enhance the legibility and definition of the Village Centre through landscape and hardscape improvements, while framing key views to surrounding natural assets.



Figure 27. Current pedestrian crossing conditions

Indicative Material Palette



Opportunity for improved lighting and signage

Pedestrian crossing comprising new paved surface from footpath to car park

New seating and garden beds to frame pedestrian crossing

Upgraded picnic area incorporating new landscape and seating

Realigned bike path, moving cyclists away from vehicle movement in car park

Raised paved pedestrian crossing at Grampians Road between car park and General Store

Removal of 1 vehicle crossover to enhance pedestrian and cycle safety along Grampians Road.



Figure 28. Indicative plan of raised pedestrian crossing and streetscape improvements at Grampians Road



Figure 29. Indicative perspective illustration raised pedestrian crossing and streetscape improvements at Grampians Road

PROJECT 4:
HEATH STREET UPGRADES

Project Description

This project seeks to transition Heath Street from a 'back of house' area to a vibrant part of the Village Centre. The project includes formalisation of the road space, expansion of car parking along the western street edge, as well as new pedestrian paths and planting of canopy vegetation. Retention of mature canopy vegetation along this corridor (particularly to the eastern edge) will be important in maintaining the amenity and attractiveness of this street in the longer term. This project also considers the further investigation of the bypass route and associated bridge connecting Heath Street through to Grampians Road, just north of Mount Victory Road, as identified in the 2001 Urban Design Framework as providing a direct route for vehicles traveling through Halls Gap. This may contribute to an easing of traffic congestion and conflict between vehicles and pedestrians within the Village Centre.

The key objectives of the proposed Heath Street upgrades include:

- Reduce traffic congestion and improve pedestrian connections within the Village Centre;
- Support the redevelopment of underutilised commercial land along Heath Street;
- Facilitate the development of the Valley floor zoned Rural Activity Zone;
- Identify opportunities to direct through traffic around the Village Centre, enhancing the pedestrian focus of the main street spine.



Figure 30. Existing conditions of Heath Street

Precedent Images



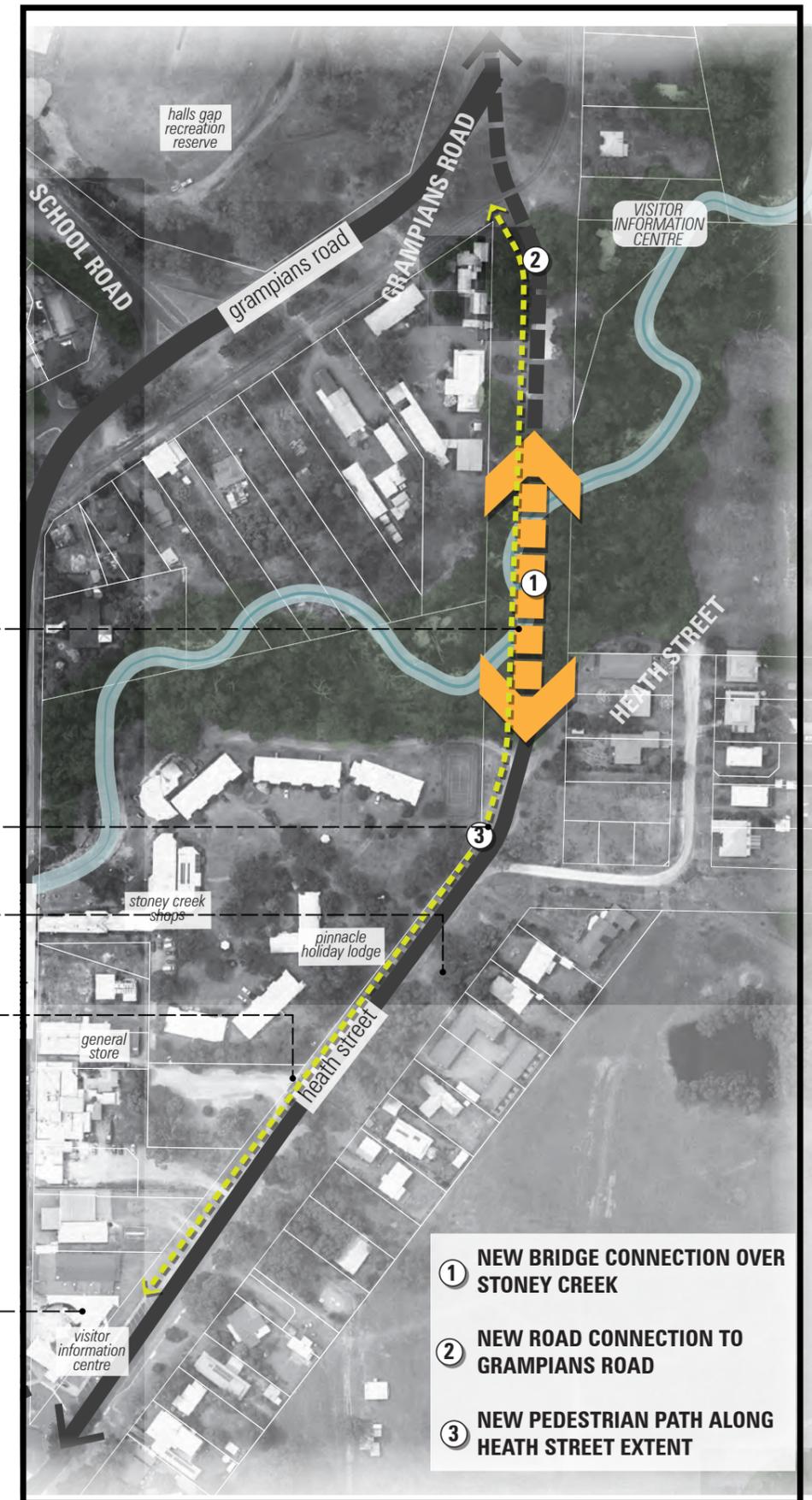
Investigation of bridge feasibility

Road alignment to consider vegetation and other contextual responses

Protection of existing mature canopy vegetation

New car parking, pedestrian path and canopy tree planting along the western edge

Consideration of impacts on residents and business, as well as southern intersection



- ① NEW BRIDGE CONNECTION OVER STONEY CREEK
- ② NEW ROAD CONNECTION TO GRAMPIANS ROAD
- ③ NEW PEDESTRIAN PATH ALONG HEATH STREET EXTENT

**PROJECT 5:
SOUTHERN GATEWAY**

Project Description

The southern corner of the reserve is currently an informal gravel car park transversed by the shared path. This creates both significant potential for modal conflict and impacts on vehicular movements along both School Road and Grampians Road. There are also clear opportunities to provide a more attractive feature at what is the termination of a key view when entering the Village Centre from the south. Linking the shared path and a new area of landscaping to the V.I.C via a raised pedestrian threshold across Grampians Road also improves the setting and outlook from that important asset. This project seeks to enhance the arrival experience to Halls Gap from the south through the implementation of new landscape and signage at the critical junction of Grampians Road, School Road and Heath Street. The relocation of existing informal car parking to Heath Street is also required in an effort to improve pedestrian and cycle safety and enhance the visual experience along Grampians Road to the Village Centre. Landscape treatments should consider the broader intersection, as well as the critical junction space.

The key objectives of the proposed Gateway Enhancement Project include:

- Enhance the sense of arrival along Grampians Road to the Village Centre of Halls Gap.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle safety at a critical vehicle junction.
- Improve pedestrian movement across Grampians Road to the Visitor Information Centre.



Figure 31. Existing conditions of Grampians & School Roads junction

Indicative Material Palette



New pedestrian crossing to Visitor Information Centre frontage

New signage sculpture and landscape at critical Village Centre gateway

Relocation of car parking to Heath Street

New landscape to frame gateway to Village Centre



Figure 32. Indicative plan of gateway signage and landscape upgrades at Grampians & School Roads

Signage sculpture to reference landscape surrounds

New garden beds with native species to complement entry feature

Formalised pedestrian crossing



Figure 33. Indicative perspective illustration of gateway signage and landscape upgrades at Grampians & School Roads

PROJECT 6: SCHOOL ROAD UPGRADES

Project Description

In conjunction with other Priority Actions, upgrades to School Road should be pursued to ensure a clear resolution of existing and potential future pedestrian / vehicular conflict. Further investigations will be required to establish the optimal solutions along this road corridor but ensuring safe passage between the caravan park and the Recreation Reserve and providing safe connections to key destinations such as the School and the Trailhead will be important. While Council can deliver upgrades to the road corridor to implement a pedestrian priority crossing at School Road as part of the Trailhead Connection (Project 2) and can seek to address functional issues affecting the caravan park entry, other actions will require partnership with other groups such as the delivery of a dedicated pedestrian path along the western edge of the Recreation Reserve. This path is important in providing an alternative for pedestrians, in particular school children, to walking along the School Road corridor, where limited room is available to develop a separate pedestrian path. Key conflict points are identified on Figure 35.

The key objectives of the proposed School Road upgrade include:

- Improve pedestrian and cycle safety along a key corridor;
- Anticipate potentially increased vehicular movements over time and ensure these are planned for; and
- Facilitate safe and legible access between the V.I.C. and commercial areas and the Trailhead.



Figure 34. Existing conditions of Grampians & School Roads junction

Precedent Images



Figure 35. Potential path alignments affecting School Road (existing conflict points highlighted by blue circles)

**PROJECT 7:
REAR LANEWAY COMMERCIAL EXPANSION**

Project Description

Council owns a large parcel of land within the Village Centre which represents a unique opportunity to use a landholding in a key strategic location to further influence how the Village Centre evolves. This project seeks to establish a formal rear laneway network between Grampians Road and Heath Street to facilitate the development of underutilised commercial land. Currently, access to existing shops for servicing and staff parking is provided via an informal arrangement across Council land. This project sees this access resolved in a legal manner and establishes the potential for greater pedestrian permeability. The development of this lane, in conjunction with other initiatives outlined in this Action Plan, is intended to act as a catalyst for development of land fronting Heath Street. The Council site provides a key opportunity to diversify the commercial offer within the centre and to demonstrate a new model of mixed use development within the centre. Development on this site could serve as a catalyst for development of surrounding sites, and is critical to the development of a new network of rear access lanes and pedestrian connections. While it is currently used as an informal car park, these informal spaces could be replaced on Heath Street and formalising car parking on this site may be incompatible with the aims of this plan which is to 'activate' delivery of investment in the Village Centre.

The key objectives of the proposed Rear Laneway commercial expansion initiative include:

- Resolve access to commercial development fronting Grampians Road and Stoney Creek and provide security for existing business owners;
- Provide a catalyst for private investment;
- Increase the availability and diversity of commercial floorspace and accommodation within the Village Centre;
- Improve pedestrian permeability between Grampians Road and Heath Street; and
- Facilitate the development of land and increased activity fronting Heath Street.



Figure 36. Existing use of Council site

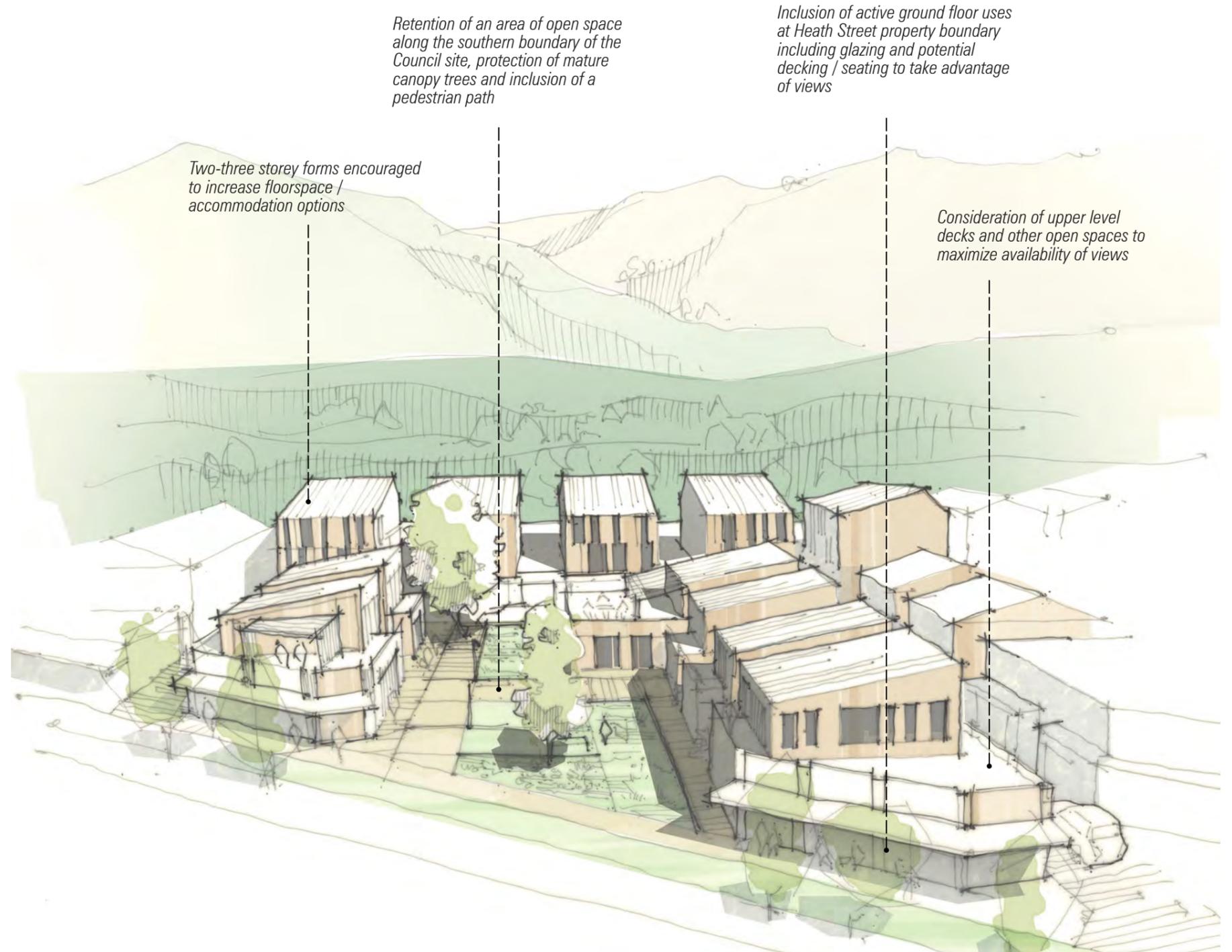


Figure 37. Indicative perspective illustration of potential development of Council land and adjoining landholdings

Precedent Images



Alignment of new formal laneway along northern boundary of Council site including potential removal of paperbark trees

Incorporation of a north-south laneway along the western boundary of the site to provide connectivity with private laneways

New pedestrian connection to be incorporated as private land develops

Development of laneways, in particular the north / south laneway to allow for use by pedestrians

Redevelopment of the southern portion of the Pinnacle Motel site encouraged to take advantage of new laneway and increased connectivity to Grampians Road



Figure 38. Indicative plan of potential development of Council site and adjoining landholdings

OTHER ACTIONS

Alongside the Priority Actions outlined in the previous section of this report, a number of complementary initiatives have been identified to deliver the vision and framework. These are as follows:

INITIATIVE 1: RESOLUTION OF CAR PARKING TO REDUCE CONGESTION AND DELIVER A 'WALKABLE' Village Centre.

There are a number of complementary actions around car parking which are recommended to deliver the vision for the Village Centre. In order to ensure the aspiration of the Halls Gap Masterplan and Grampians Peaks Masterplan and deliver a walkable town, the balance between pedestrian priority and car parking areas needs to be addressed. These will require careful consideration and appropriate staging to ensure that existing congestion, particularly in peak periods, is not exacerbated. Overflow car parking sufficient to appropriately address holiday volumes will be required.

- Relocate some reserve car parking: With the proposed trailhead and the introduction of the idea of the 'theatre of departure' comes a need to provide a clear connection between the Grampians Road spine and the trailhead location. Given the current pressures for parking in this area, opportunities which utilise existing 'leftover spaces' to provide a clear physical and visual connections have been proposed. It will be critical to 'clear out' sightlines, and delineated pedestrian crossings and boardwalks can deliver this. In the longer term, if car parking pressures are reduced or redistributed, opportunities would exist to remove the two northernmost car parking cells, reducing the visual prominence of car parking.
- Institute time limits in reserve: While some reduction in car parking within the reserve space is proposed once alternative convenient locations are available, this area will remain a critical area for car parking, not only for visitors but also locals accessing the swimming pool. However there is some evidence that this area is being used for longer term car parking (for example by employees). Introducing time limits such as 2 or 3hrs may reduce the pressure and congestion on this area by diverting longer term car parking to alternate locations within the Village Centre.
- Delivery of clear directional signage for car parking: One observation from the car parking background investigations was that, without clear signage indicating the location of alternate car parking locations (for example on Heath Street) all visitors would seek to park within the reserve space as a first priority. As such as alternative locations for car parking are delivered it will be critical that visitors are directed to these areas.

- Additional spaces on Heath Street: In supporting further intensification of development on Heath Street's western edge, the delivery of additional car parking spaces along Heath Street can serve to provide an alternative to the popular reserve car parking spaces. This delivery of car parking needs to be coordinated with the delivery of clear pedestrian pathways through to Grampians Road, which in turn will support further activation and exposure of development sites fronting Heath Street. In delivering attractive commercial frontage to Heath Street it will be important that car parking areas retain and incorporate additional canopy tree planting and pedestrian paths as they are developed. Signage to this car parking area on Grampians Road is also critical.
- Longer term consolidated car parking at Village Centre edges: Council should also investigate potential sites, both private and public, which have the potential to provide long term / all day car parking areas on the periphery of the Village Centre. The delivery of a consolidated body of car parking in a convenient location, with good pedestrian connectivity on the Village Centre periphery will allow the town to provide convenient parking which does not compromise the aspirations for a 'walking town' established through the Masterplan and will allow the Village Centre to manage the long term requirements of car parking associated with the Grampians Peaks Trail in a coordinated manner. Options for investigation include private land to the south and east of the Village Centre, both of which would encourage walkers to traverse the Village Centre enroute to the Trailhead, increasing exposure for local businesses.



Figure 39. Consolidated car parking on Village Centre periphery

INITIATIVE 2: GRAMPIANS ROAD PUBLIC REALM UPGRADES

Use landscape and road treatments to link the eastern and western sides of Grampians Road - The Sketch Framework seeks to provide a clear distinction between the eastern side of Grampians Road which accommodates consolidated development, and the west, which retains a dominant 'landscape' character, providing the foreground for the mountains beyond. Closer linkages between these two areas are envisaged through the expansion of the footpath on the east side, to allow more on-street activity, and the introduction of raised pedestrian crossings at key points along the road (see Project 2). The use of a common material palette across both sides of the road will further link the two precincts.

INITIATIVE 3: URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES AND PLANNING CONTROLS

Develop Urban Design Guidelines and associated planning controls to ensure that the design of new built form within the Village Centre responds to the spectacular landscape setting and improves overall design quality. As new development occurs in Halls Gap, there are a number of important considerations which should drive built form proposals. Firstly, forms should be simple and material natural, with a particular focus on wood as the dominant material. Secondly, building siting should consider firstly how it can be broken up or arranged where relevant to preserve notable mature vegetation, but also how forms can be orientated and arranged to maximise the opportunities, particularly at upper levels, to engage with the landscape beyond.



Figure 40. Site responsive design

INITIATIVE 4: SUPPORT PREFERRED OUTCOMES THROUGH PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

A number of initiatives within the Village Centre rely on the development aspirations of individual landowners within the Village Centre. Council can play a role in the delivery of these initiatives by ensuring these outcomes are identified within the Northern Grampians Planning Scheme and requiring or advocating for delivery of these as part of any development applications. Council can also play a role through facilitation or brokering of appropriate outcomes. Key private development initiatives include

- Focus new commercial development to the western side of Heath Street to activate this street edge. While the redevelopment of Grampians Road is strongly encouraged, new opportunities are to be focused along Heath Street. While commercial zoning extends along part of the eastern edge of the street, the Action Plan seeks to focus more intensive development to the west where consolidation activities and investment in public works can be maximised. It is also where connections to Grampians Road can be maximised. While potential 'spill over' of commercial activity to the commercially zoned land on the eastern side of Heath Street is encouraged, the shift from residential to commercial uses is likely to occur subsequent to development on the western side.
- Encourage the careful development southern gateway sites, including potential for the inclusion of future public car parking areas. The southern gateway to the Village Centre currently contains two vacant sites. The western site is residential in character and should respond to the landscape character of that side of the road, noting Initiative 5 which seeks to deliver improvements within the public realm. More substantial development opportunities exist on the eastern site. The western portion should be focussed on commercial opportunities which increase the delivery of floorspace and link to the V.I.C. However, the scale of the site means that there are also longer term opportunities to accommodate some additional public car parking on the site, servicing long term walkers for the Peaks Trail, as well as accommodation which maximises the rural and mountain outlook of the eastern portion of the site.
- Encourage the relocation of the service station out of the town centre. While the role of this Action Plan is not to provide specific direction as to how individual landowners within the Centre should use their land, the presence of a service station in the main street, particularly between a key destination such as the Visitor Information Centre / Community hall and the remainder of the commercial area is unusual. Most service stations are located outside of core commercial areas or at their periphery. The opportunities afforded to improve the pedestrian amenity and enhance the delivery of commercial floorspace through the relocation of the service station mean this should be encouraged.



Figure 43. Existing vacant gateway sites



Figure 42. Nature based play



Figure 41. Vibrant pedestrian connections

INITIATIVE 5: NEW NATURE BASED PLAYSPACE

This initiative seeks to encourage the development of a high quality nature based playspace as a replacement for aging traditional playground. While development on the reserve land is generally a matter for the Committee of Management, the delivery of a very high quality nature based playspace in lieu of the aging equipment on site has broader ramifications for the Village Centre and, as such, is considered through this Action Plan. Halls Gap is a premier nature based tourism location and attracts a significant number of family groups. The opportunity to establish a nature based playspace with a heavy focus on landscape elements is not only a great 'fit' for the location but would also serve to enhance the tourism offer of the Village Centre. Council's role will be to advocate and assist the Committee in the planning and delivery of this facility, rather than as the lead proponent.

INITIATIVE 6: EXPLORE OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE A NETWORK OF CREEKSIDE TRACKS.

This initiative seeks to connect the Fyans Creek Trail to Heath Street and Grampians Road, utilising private land along this important waterway. The first stage of this initiative is for the section between the Stoney Creek Shops and Heath Street which will need to be developed in partnership with the relevant landowners. However, the Fyans Creek Trail, which is one of the key paths within the township and which links the Village Centre to Brambuk, currently lacks a connection through to the Village Centre. In considering longer term connections, a pedestrian bridge across Fyans Creek and connection through to Heath Street from that trail should be explored. This would further diversify the access and exposure of the Heath Street area.

INITIATIVE 7: NEW PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

This initiative seeks to encourage the inclusion of new pedestrian connections between Grampians Road and Heath Street as part of any redevelopment and to assist landowners in upgrading existing connections. One of the critical aspects of the activation of the Heath Street precinct is the connectivity to Grampians Road and the Stoney Creek shops. The area currently feels disconnected from the 'activity' of the Village Centre. Establishing and formalising a range of opportunities for pedestrians to filter through this area will not only increase the attractiveness of this area for development but may also reduce the pressure on parking within the reserve, offering a viable alternative. As such, existing connections next to the service station, supermarket and through the Stoney Creek shops should be formalised and clear pedestrian connections should be integrated into any major redevelopment initiatives.

INITIATIVE 8: VEGETATION RETENTION AND ENHANCEMENT

Canopy vegetation within the Village Centre makes a critical contribution to the town's identity and the amenity and attractiveness of the Village Centre, both of which are particularly important given the tourism role. However, the management of vegetation within both the private and public realm will require careful consideration, particularly how the retention and enhancement of vegetation relates to the bushfire risk which affects the town. In addition, Heath Street is currently an informal roadway and as development intensifies along this street, upgrades are likely to be needed. There is a significant area of canopy vegetation on the eastern side of the road reserve which acts as a foreground to the longer range mountain views. Any upgrades to the roadway in this area should be designed to ensure that these trees are retained to preserve the important integration of landscape into the Village Centre itself, as this close sense of connection between the landscape within and surrounding the Village Centre is a notable asset.



Figure 44. Existing vegetation on Heath Street to be protected

INITIATIVE 9: UNDERGROUNDING OF POWERLINES

The undergrounding of powerlines within the Village Centre is an important step in improving the visual qualities of the centre and enhancing views of the landscape beyond. It has long been a community aspiration, and the removal of these powerlines is also in keeping with the broader vision for the centre outlined in this document. This undergrounding is likely to be an expensive process but opportunities for advocacy by Council and consideration of opportunities for the undergrounding of powerlines as part of any future public realm upgrades should be noted.

INITIATIVE 10: SIGNAGE CONSOLIDATION AND WAYFINDING IMPROVEMENTS

As with powerlines, the current distribution of signage affects the visual amenity of the Village Centre, with the Community Plan identifying this 'visual clutter' as a key issue. While many of these signs are required by statutory law, there are opportunities for the distribution of these to be consolidated. An audit could be undertaken to document existing signage in the Centre, and to clarify the relevant requirements in order to establish opportunities for consolidation. In addition, there is a clear need for a co-ordinated and carefully designed program of wayfinding signage within the Centre, particularly given its tourism role. This program should be co-ordinated with any consolidation or removal of existing signage.

INITIATIVE 11: LARGE SCALE EVENT SPACE

Halls Gap has a long and continuing history of hosting large scale events. These have traditionally been held at the reserve space to the north of the Village Centre, but some events are growing too large for this space. Council will need to look more broadly as to where larger events can be sustainably delivered within the wider township area. Relevant to the Village Centre Action Plan however, is that these decisions should have clear regard to the relationship of this event space to the Village Centre and the need for clear pedestrian connections between the two areas.

FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS

The first key stage of implementing the identified sketch framework and concepts outlined in this document will be a program of engagement with the local community and traders to seek feedback as to whether they feel the proposed concepts deliver an appropriate outcome for the Village Centre. This feedback should be considered as the Action Plan is progressed into its next phase.

A series of further actions will also be needed to underpin Stage 2 of this project and the project's eventual implementation. These actions include:

- Further work with identified key stakeholders to test and develop concepts for identified Priority Actions.
- The confirmation of proposed pedestrian path alignments and the allocation of responsibilities for delivery.
- The development of an agreed palette of materials and finishes to inform works within the public realm across the different management areas of the Village Centre.
- The identification and testing of any design controls which may be needed to achieve preferred built form outcomes.
- Further consideration of flood impacts within the Village Centre including potential depth of inundation to ensure appropriate design responses are considered.
- Discussion with the CFA around ways of appropriately balancing the retention and enhancement of canopy vegetation within the Village Centre with bushfire risk.
- Confirmation with Parks Victoria as to the 'theatre of departure' concept and the Peaks Trailhead location.

