

**Northern Grampians Shire Council**

**Halls Gap Township  
Urban Design Framework**

**A Pride of Place Project**

**FINAL DOCUMENT**

**Prepared by  
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**May 2001**

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## **Disclaimer**

THA Landscape Architects has based this Framework Study on reports prepared by others, observations, previous experience and feedback from the Working Group and the community consultation process. No guarantees are made as to the accuracy of this information and no liability is accepted for any losses or damage incurred from the recommendations made in this report.

The Report has been prepared in the best interests of Halls Gap and the local community and is intended to guide the physical development of the township into the future.

It is recommended that anyone wishing to make use of this report for financial gain or development opportunities seek independent advice before proceeding.

## **Acknowledgements**

THA Landscape Architects would like to thank the working group for their assistance during the formation of this document. In particular we would like to thank the following for their interest and input:

David Witham, Halls Gap Recreation Committee

Graham Parkes, Parks Victoria

Cr Graeme Trickey, Northern Grampians Shire Council

Rod Cooper, Engineer, Northern Grampians shire Council

Michelle Grainger, Planner, Northern Grampians Shire Council

Angie Lush, Manager Tourism, Northern Grampians Shire Council

Margot Seitsma, Sec. Friends of the Grampians

Margot Woodcock, Sec. Ratepayers Association

Renata Weinert, resident

Sgt. Craig Gillard, Halls Gap Police

Ross Gillett, Department of Infrastructure

Bob Bevern, Department of Infrastructure

Additionally THA Landscape Architects would like to thank the residents of Halls Gap who gave of their time and opinions so freely.

## Executive Summary

Halls Gap is a unique township within a National Park setting of world renown. Tourists from all over the world are attracted to the Grampians and seek accommodation and services within the township. The rate of visitation is likely to increase given the relatively unspoilt nature of the National Park, the range of high quality walking trails and the grandeur of the setting. These elements are being sought by tourists seeking nature-based holiday experiences.

The Northern Grampians Shire Council and the residents of Halls Gap are aware of the need to protect the township against development that is poorly planned and which might compromise the quality of the living environment and undermine the natural qualities that surround Halls Gap.

These pressures have given rise to the need for a planned approach to further development in and around Halls Gap. The Urban Design Framework is an outcome of this realisation.

The Urban Design Framework identified that Halls Gap has an aesthetic appeal of high quality which is linked by a continuum of mature over story trees. The building stock within the town was not identified as having a significant impact on this aesthetic except where the overstorey had been removed. In the case of the commercial centre no overstorey existed which fully exposed urban elements that degraded the visitor experience.

The trees helped to screen and soften buildings and create an interesting driving experience for visitors on arrival and departure from Halls Gap. The study proposes that the over storey of Eucalypts be protected and extended to ensure that the overriding natural quality of the township is preserved and enhanced where possible.

Given the township's location within a National park setting of world standard it is recommended that the standard of development and works within the township be of a high standard. It is proposed that The Northern Grampians Shire Council promote developments that are designed to a high standard with an emphasis on environmental and site responsive outcomes. Likewise the Urban Design Framework recommends that works such as development of the Main Road streetscape be of high quality and include materials and elements of local origin or representative of the local textures, colours and characteristics of the Grampians environment.

The Urban Design Framework identified a number of distinct precincts that make up the approaches to Halls Gap, the town centre, residential areas and other areas within the study area. The study extended from the Pomonal turn-off to Lake Bellfield and included all the private land; road reserves and public open space along Grampians Road. The study area did not include the Grampians National Park.

The precincts were used to identify specific issues and make recommendations relevant to each entity. The recommendations included physical improvements, vegetation protection and enhancement, and amendments to the Northern Grampians Shire Council Planning Scheme.

### Bypass Route

There has been a long held view that Halls Gap is in need of a by-pass route to ease traffic flow along Main Road. The Urban Design Framework did not identify traffic volumes warranted the need for such a route given that Halls Gap is a destination for visitors not a through town. It would appear that most of the traffic travelling "through" Halls Gap is residential traffic or tourists moving around the township.

The Urban Design Framework did identify conflict between vehicles and pedestrians along Main Road, especially in the area of the Pool Road car park. It was proposed that Main Road be "pedestrianised" to allow residents and visitors to Halls Gap to walk freely throughout this area. It was also proposed that reduced traffic activity in Main Road would create opportunities to soften the harsh urban image of buildings and roadway. Proposed improvements to Main Road included reduced road width, 45 degree parking, a wider pedestrian pathway along the eastern side of Main Road for casual walking, sitting and outdoor dining and opportunities for tree planting.

The Urban Design Framework considers that there are three options for an alternate route through Halls Gap. These include:

1. Retain Main Road as the main thoroughfare.
2. Use School Road to carry some additional traffic.
3. Construct Heath Street and a new bridge to provide a direct route for vehicles travelling through Halls Gap.

These options are discussed separately below.

### **Main Road**

It is possible to retain Main Road as the primary through route and identify ways to reduce the conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. The Urban Design Framework considers that this option will not enable the proper development of the commercial area to provide a visitor experience of high quality. If Main Road is maintained as the primary route it will be difficult to integrate the urban elements into the Grampians landscape because the roadway and footpath configurations do not allow for tree planting and site responsive streetscape solutions as proposed in the concept plans for the town centre. The community accepted the proposed concept for Main Road which included rerouting the road at the southern end to connect with School Road on the understanding that Heath Street be developed as the primary route. Therefore Main Road will remain the primary route until Heath Street is developed assuming it can be funded.

### **School Road**

The Urban Design Framework proposed to define an alternate route for traffic flow along the tree lined School Road which would have given drivers the option of choosing Main Road or School Road and would have reduced the pressure on Main Road from vehicles moving through this area. This route was proposed because the School Road bridge is to be refurbished to enable two way traffic and heavy vehicles to cross. It was felt that School Road will carry increased traffic flows by default and that it provided an opportunity to capitalise on existing road and car park infrastructure and create a visitor experience of high quality. The local community rejected this proposal because of concerns about increased traffic flows past the school and the camping area.

### **Heath Street**

The community of Halls Gap rejected the School Road option as a primary route in favour of connecting Heath Street through to Grampians Road, just north of Mount Victory Road. The Heath Street project will include a long bridge, or other structure, to cross Stony Creek and will require significant funds. It is assumed that Heath Street is required to accommodate through traffic and to support a redevelopment of the commercial strip. It is proposed that businesses will then develop in the suitably zoned land along Heath Street. It is difficult to determine what form development along Heath Street will ultimately take and whether the mix of development types will add to the township qualities of Halls Gap.

Heath Street must be developed sensitively to maximise tree retention and new planting opportunities to create a visitation experience that is at least equal to that experienced along the township approaches. The proposed bridge must be designed site responsively and located to maximise vegetation retention and minimise visual and physical impacts on the site topography and hydrology.

It is the consultant's view that any redevelopment of Heath Street be constructed in co-operation with the developers who are likely to gain a commercial benefit from the project. Landholders with frontage to Heath Street should be required to make a contribution based on the value of the land abutting the roadway or commensurate with the size of the allotment and its redevelopment potential. An appropriate formulae needs to be devised that is fair to all with Council likely to be required to contribute a significant portion of the funds needed.

### **Established Overstorey**

The dominant and consistent landscape element that was identified within the study area was the overstorey of established Eucalypts. Where the over storey was weak it was recommended that tree planting be undertaken to strengthen roadside planting. In the case of the central commercial area it was recommended to underground the powerlines and create 45 degree parking along the eastern side of the roadway to create more opportunities for street tree planting.

The over storey also provides a continuum to the Halls Gap landscape, helps to integrate and screen buildings and roadways and gives an overriding bushland quality to the township. The Urban Design Framework recommends that this element be preserved and enhanced because it is integral to ensuring that the township remains visually and environmentally alluring under continued developmental pressure.

### **Precincts**

The township framework is made up of distinct precincts that have developed during different phases. Some of these precincts are close to the town centre. Other areas such as the developments along Grampians Road toward the Pomonal turnoff and the Bellfield settlement are remote but have basic facilities such as a service station and canteen. These remote precincts have a level of sufficiency that should be developed further in order to reduce the vehicle pressures on the Halls Gap central area.

### **Town Centre**

The central area of Halls Gap was identified as an area that could be developed at higher levels based on the premise that visitors holidaying in Halls Gap love to walk (general anecdotal evidence) and that they would not require their vehicles to go shopping, dining etc. A 1000m radius was proposed in which higher levels of development could be tolerated on land with slopes less than 15%. This radius generally encompassed the area from Delleys Bridge to Tandara Road including the valley floor.

### **Tourist Information Centre**

The study determined that the location for the Tourist Information Centre proposed by the Niemann Study 1997 was inappropriate because it would add significantly to the parking pressure in the commercial centre and increase the conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. It would also add building bulk to a highly modified shopping area that exhibits a strong hard-edged character. It was proposed to locate the Tourist Information Centre adjoining the pool building, near School Road, but the community generally favoured locating the centre near the Community Hall on the corner of Grampians Road and Heath Street. It is proposed that the centre will have dual road frontage when Heath Street is developed. The Community Hall and Tourist Information Centre will include a town square, which has been a long held wish of the community and was proposed in the Niemann Study (1997).

### **The Valley Floor**

The valley floor has been keenly protected against development for many years by residents of Halls Gap who value it as an open area frequented by kangaroos and other animals. Likewise it is an area that has been the subject of unsuccessful permit applications for development projects. The Urban Design Framework has identified that this site is suitable for development because of its proximity to the town centre, it has very few trees that will be affected by development, it is flat and is considered to be of low to medium fire risk. The Urban Design Framework also notes that it is probable that continued pressure to develop this area may lead to outcomes that are undesirable for the community and proposes that the community consider a compromise arrangement that will see the development of a community wetland which is subject to negotiation and agreement with the landholders affected by the proposal. Northern Grampians Shire Council propose to use the wetland as part of an integrated storm water management plan based on environmental principles. The community wish to have access to the wetland and preserve it as habitat.

Negotiation between the landholders, the shire and the community is urgently required to determine the realities of this project. If agreement can be reached a development plan for the affected area is required incorporating development envelopes, traffic, services, revegetation and the community wetland.

### **Concepts**

Concepts have been proposed for the Town Centre, including Main Road, School Road, Heath Street, Delley's Bridge Picnic Area and the two options for locating the Tourist Information Centre. Refer to the body of the report for specific information and plans.

### **Streetscape Detailing**

The Urban Design Framework recommends that streetscape elements within the town centre be modelled on the philosophy adopted by Parks Victoria throughout the Grampians. Materials should preferably be local and derived from environmentally stable resources. Use of local sandstone is

recommended as the primary element for kerbing and feature paving. Local gravels are recommended for secondary pathways and steel and timber for bollards and streetscape furniture.

### **Recommendations**

Specific recommendations have been prepared for each precinct defined in the study. For summary of these refer to Section 10 – Summary Recommendations / Strategic Actions for further detail.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

THA Landscape Architects was engaged by Northern Grampians Shire Council to prepare an Urban Design Framework for the township of Halls Gap. Design proposals and development strategies are based on the design brief prepared by the Northern Grampians Shire Council, community and steering committee meetings, discussions with key community members combined with site analysis, review of available literature, analysis of aerial photography and our professional response to the township.

The Steering Committee was comprised of the following representatives:

David Sears, Halls Gap Tourist & Business Association  
 Janine McDonald, Halls Gap Tourist & Business Association  
 Angie Lush, Tourism Manager  
 Rod Cooper, Infrastructure Services Manager, Northern Grampians Shire Council  
 Graham Parkes, Parks Victoria – Grampians National Park  
 Graeme Trickey, Councillor Northern Grampians Shire Council  
 David Witham, Halls Gap Progress Association, Halls Gap Public, Hall Committee, Halls Gap Caravan Park Committee  
 Bob Bevern, Department of Infrastructure, Ballarat  
 Ross Gillett, Department of Infrastructure, Ballarat  
 and others as required.

This report and associated plans have been prepared as a basis for:

- ?? identifying the existing character of the township;
- ?? identifying problems within the structure of the township;
- ?? establishing a framework for the future direction of urban design development in the township incorporating the Halls Gap Townscape Plan (1997);
- ?? recommended design concepts and actions to be taken in the short, medium and long term;

The Urban Design Framework will be an important tool for sourcing funds for implementation of specific actions. Further detailing of design concepts is required to accurately estimate the cost of works and enable tendering and appropriate construction. The study has been prepared with reference to the *Urban Design Planning Note 3 – Urban Design Frameworks*, published by the Victorian Government's Department of Infrastructure.

Other consultants assisting with the study included:

Paul McCuskey, Planning Consultant, Ballarat  
 Morton Dunn Architects, Ballarat

## 2.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The following lists the project objectives as described in the brief prepared by the Northern Grampians Shire Council in association with the Department of Infrastructure for the preparation of 'An Urban Design Framework for Halls Gap'.

### 2.1 Project Outline

This project involves the preparation of an Urban Design Framework for the Halls Gap Township including the Grampians Road from the Pomonal turn off to Lake Bellfield, the public park areas and the residential areas. Northern Grampians Shire Council has received funding from the Victorian Government's "Pride of Place Program" to undertake the project.

### 2.2 Project Objectives

1. Develop an integrated framework for the implementation of urban design programs within the speed restriction signs, the Urban Areas and recreation precincts of Halls Gap including Crown Land, having regard to concept plans and designs already completed or in development plus Council's Municipal Strategic Statement.

2. Review relevant existing key policies, strategies, plans and studies and their implications for Halls Gap future direction, noting that the Halls Gap Townscape Plan is the base document to be built on. Council generally supports this report however; the traffic treatment may need changing after the movement study (see below).
3. Identify future directions in the economic and demographic development of Halls Gap and its environs with particular reference to tourism. This will involve liaison with Tourism Victoria, Parks Victoria and Brambuk in order to be informed of their future directions and state their implications for future urban design planning and works in the town. Recommend appropriate strategies eg Retail/Marketing Study.
4. Analyse current traffic movements and identify future traffic system requirements in the light of developments in Halls Gap (having regard to vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic).
5. Identify issues, evaluate their relevance and integrate the priorities of all stakeholders into the short, medium and long-term urban design development strategies for Halls Gap.
6. Propose creative and viable concepts for urban design development options, providing some preliminary cost estimates for any public works.
7. Outline strategies for an implementation process.

### 2.3 Project Outputs

The project brief indicated that the Urban Design Framework Report should include:

1. A review of existing State and local plans, policies, strategies and infrastructure programs relevant to Halls Gap and its environs. Consideration of local strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, with specific reference to Halls Gap tourism, residential development, commercial development and recreation.
2. Detailed study of the Commercial Centre in addition to that covered in the Townscape Plan.
3. Consideration of alternatives for the proposed Tourist Centre.
4. Movement study – indicating patterns of use by pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. This study will be based on site observations. No traffic counts are proposed.
5. The movement study should lead to recommendations for development of bicycle and walking paths in consideration of the Northern Grampians Shire Bicycle Strategy and the Grampians National Park pathway network.
6. Re-assess the Townscape Plan recommendations in regard to Heath Street, proposed traffic management recommendations, one way streets etc.
7. Concept developments that will ensure that the Main Street becomes a focus for visitors and provides memorable images on arrival and departure.
8. Recommendations in regard to an events area for local festivals etc.
9. Estimates of probable cost as unit rates for items identified in concept plans. Council to use these rates to generating budgets for capital works.
10. Implications for Councils MSS and new format Planning Scheme and recommendations for amendments to the Planning Scheme (if applicable)
11. Assessment of the valley floor with regard to:
  - ?? *Flora & Fauna*
  - ?? *Habitat Linkages*
  - ?? *Development proposals*
  - ?? *Vegetation controls*
  - ?? *Integrated wetland concept*
  - ?? *Drainage & flooding*
  - ?? *Fire hazard*
12. Determination of public infrastructure needs and make appropriate recommendations. Preliminary assessment of the existing playground facilities in terms of relevance and capacity.
13. Establish environmentally based guidelines and themes for developments and infrastructure projects within Halls Gap.

14. Consideration of linkages within the township and strategic linkages to Stawell.
15. Develop broad scale concepts for wetland developments on private land in the valley floor. Council to liaise with landholders and identify private and public land affected.
16. Define recommended stages for implementations of the concepts.
17. Identify directions in the economic and demographic development of Halls Gap with reference to tourism, Parks Victoria and Brambuk.
18. Architectural input in the study of the commercial section (School Road and Commercial Section).
19. Consideration (broad scale concepts) of existing and proposed residential and tourist developments in Halls Gap and framework recommendations.
20. Strategic actions including concept plans, schematic details and recommendations for the four main sections:
  - ?? Ararat Road to Delley's Bridge
  - ?? Delley's Bridge to the start of School Road (Police Station)
  - ?? School Road and main commercial area
  - ?? School Road South (Mackey's Peak Road) to Bellfield.
21. Signage concept to comply with Highway 8 Signage Strategy.
22. Concept plans for the Commercial Area and Village Green will be generally based on the Townscape Plan recommendations. The plans will be detailed concepts with annotated sketch details. These drawings will not be suitable for construction purposes. Documentation drawings will need to be prepared prior to any construction works.

## 2.4 Community Consultation

The project brief specified that the preparation of the Urban Design Framework should include a process of key consultations with the Halls Gap community, including identification of key user groups and stakeholders and meetings to report and review progress.

## 2.5 Community Consultation Process

In order to complete the study in accordance with the project brief, the following community consultation process was undertaken:

- ?? Meet Council officers to become acquainted, refine project parameters, collect base data, reports, aerial photograph etc.
- ?? Preliminary site analysis.
- ?? Review existing policies, strategies, plans and studies that are relevant to the Halls Gap project.
- ?? Meeting with the Working group (as nominated by Council) to gain community input, refine project objectives and to determine opportunities and constraints. Working Group to include member of the key stakeholders including but not limited to traders, residents, tourist operators, Brambuk and Parks Victoria
- ?? Site analysis. Including study of movement patterns during the Christmas holiday period. The movement study will be based on observations during site analysis.
- ?? Prepare draft report/plans.
- ?? Present to Working Group.
- ?? Revise documents as required to reflect Working Group input
- ?? Public exhibition and 'open house' consultation. Consultants to be available for discussion and questions from the community during a specified afternoon session preferably in the Community Hall.
- ?? Amend following public consultation.
- ?? Finalise documentation for submission to Council.

### 3.0 PROJECT SCOPE

The study area is generally described as the area between Lake Bellfield and the Pomonal turn off. We have limited the study area to generally 100-200m either side of the Main Road along this 8km stretch.

### 4.0 GENERAL DISCUSSION

#### Geology

Freshwater sedimentary sandstone strata laid down 400 million years ago in the Siluro-Devonian times (Costerman 1987, p.36) have been folded, tilted and faulted to form steep cliffs and ranges. Minor granitic outcrops occur throughout the Grampians. The ranges represent the south eastern end of the Great Dividing Ranges and dominate the generally flat landscape surrounding the region.

This topography has given rise to the linear road network that runs generally along the valley which is restricted by Fyans Creek on the east and the Wonderland Range on the west (Bennet, 1990 p34). The flatter creek flats along Fyans Creek (mainly less than 5% gradient) suffer from poor drainage. The steep slopes along the eastern face of the Wonderland Range are vulnerable to erosion problems (Bennett, 1990 p20).

#### Archaeology

Estimates suggest at least 24,000 years of continued occupation by Aboriginal People. The Grampians has the largest concentration of rock art sites in Victoria. It is traditionally known as Gariwerd. Myrnyongs (earthen mounds) occur on the plains around the Grampians (LCC, 1978).

The unique geological formations and biological diversity create an "ecological island" (Costerman 1987, p.37) quite separate from the surrounding landscape which is made up of sedimentary and volcanic formations of more recent periods. Varied plant communities have developed across the ranges in response to the variations in rainfall, exposure, climate, soil types etc. The Grampians is renowned for its springtime native flower displays and is reputed to house approximately one third of Victoria's indigenous plant species (Costerman 1987, p.36).

#### Local Climate

Halls gap is subject to extremes in weather from cold, wet winters including snow to extremely hot summers. Rainfall in Halls Gap varies from 700-900mm with a mean annual rainfall of 916mm, which is relatively high for this region (LCC, 1978 p62).

Run-off is high because of the rocky slopes. Water quantity, run-off velocity and the erodable sand base along the western slopes of the Wonderland Ranges create difficulty with siting and construction of buildings and roadways. Deterioration of gravel roads, trails, and graded edges can be controlled by good design and proper maintenance (LCC, 1978 p138). Appropriate siting and construction of roads and buildings plus the maintenance of the native vegetation cover is the best way to control erosion.

#### Vegetation

Halls Gap is characterised predominantly by indigenous vegetation, which is consistent with the valley floor ecosystem of the Grampians valley floor area. The dominant tree species throughout the Halls Gap township is Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*). Many of the dominant over storey trees remain to maintain a strong native tree landscape in the Halls Gap township. Bennett (1990 p18) defined remnant vegetation is as a constraint on development. Careful development controls and supervision are required to ensure the over storey of remnant trees is preserved and regenerated.

The surrounding native vegetation and steep sided terrain can create an extreme fire hazard. The high numbers of visitors complicates the management of the fire risk during the fire danger period in summer (Bennett 1990p18). Halls Gap is developing a Fire Risk Management Plan (not yet available) as a co-operative project between Dept Natural Resources and Environment, Parks Victoria, Northern Grampians Shire Council and Country Fire Authority.

Cinnamon Fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamoni*) is widespread in the Grampians. It spreads primarily through root contact and is usually associated with poorly drained soils. Spread of the fungus increases during periods of high rainfall in Spring and Summer (LCC, 1978 p145). Development works within Halls Gap need to be aware of the risk of transporting the fungi in soils and on vehicles. Projects should be designed and managed to minimise the spread of the fungus.

The local environment is under some threat by the inadvertent introduction of pest plants and animals and associated pests and diseases. In order to preserve the natural qualities of the local environment residents and visitors must be made aware of their responsibilities in this regard.

Northern Grampians Shire Council should consider a co-ordinated local promotion in partnership with the local community and Parks Victoria to encourage an awareness of pest plants and animals to ensure the future development of Halls Gap does not threaten the condition of the indigenous flora and fauna and degrade the overall quality of the township and its setting. The opportunity to interact closely with the wildlife is an important drawcard for tourist to the Grampians.

### **Post European History**

Halls Gap was named after C.B. Hall a pioneering pastoralist who come from Monara, in New South Wales, in 1839. Sheep and cattle were grazed throughout the Grampians from the 1840's onwards. Timber cutters collected wood for the mining industry for underground workings, surface construction, and fuel in the latter half of the century. Wattlebark was another important forest product. Fires were frequently lit for clearing land, promoting new growth for forage, and improving access (LCC, 1978 p28).

Victoria's last gold rush occurred at Mafeking, Grampians at the foot of the Major Mitchell Plateau in 1900. In 1908 the upper sections of Stoney Creek were dredged with little success (LCC, 1978 p23). Lake Fyans was established in 1916 for water harvesting for agricultural irrigation. There was a much earlier connection with the Victorian Gold rush in the 1850's when a police post was located in the Grampians at Rose Gap to protect travellers, to deter horse thieves (for a flourishing traffic in stolen horses operated between south-western Victoria and the far west of New South Wales), and to collect the poll tax from Chinese using the "Chinese Track" between Guichen Bay (Robe) and the diggings in Victoria (LCC, 1978 p28).

The Mount Difficult sandstone quarry provided the freestone used in the construction of Melbourne buildings such as Parliament House, the G.P.O., and the Melbourne Town Hall, as well as the Stawell Court House and Post Office. A broad-gauge tramway constructed in 1882 transported loads of stone from the quarry to Stawell, until the railway was closed in 1949 (LCC, 1978 p28). The railway line forms part of the parks trail network.

Reservations of State Forest were made in the Grampians between 1872 and 1884. Following the creation of the Forests Department in 1907, a large portion of the public land was designated as reserved forest. Most of the Grampians was declared a sanctuary in February 1914. (LCC, 1978 p28). The Grampians National Park was proclaimed in 1984 (Bennett, 1990 p5).

By the 1920's tourism had become important, especially through the efforts of the Victorian Railways. Halls Gap flourished because of its accessibility to the railway. The popularity of Halls Gap increased when it was linked by road with both Dunkeld and Zumsteins (LCC, 1978 p28). Tourism has remained the one consistent theme and now forms the dominant industry within Halls Gap with expectations that it will expand.

### **Setting**

Halls Gap is located at the foot of the Grampians Ranges and surrounded by remnant forests and some cleared farmland previously used for grazing. The landscape is dissected by a myriad of perennial streams, which are subject to stormwater flows which sheet off the rocky slopes that surround Halls Gap. Halls Gap can get very hot and dry in the summer whilst snowfalls are common on the ranges. Bush fire is characteristic of the Australian bushland and it presents an ever-present threat to the local community and the public authorities responsible for managing the land and providing emergency services.

All the land with Halls Gap has very high landscape value because it is part of a significant National Park environment. "[Every] development within [Halls Gap needs] to be evaluated in terms of its impact on the landscape" to ensure that the high landscape values are retained and enhanced Bennett, 1990 p22).

### **Future**

Given its prominence as Victoria's second most favoured natural tourist destination next to Wilson's Promontory it is likely that tourism will grow and provide the foundation for future development in and around Halls Gap. The environmental qualities of the Grampians and its status as a premier National Park demand that future development be of a high standard reflective of the environmental qualities and needs of this region. Quality of design has been a concern to the Shire and State Government Agencies for several years (Bennett, 1990 p5). There is a definite need to provide site responsive design that reflects the environment and landscape of the Grampians.

## Tourism

An increase in tourism is predicted for Hall's Gap because of the solid growth of visitation exhibited through the 1990's in the Grampians. This consistent growth in tourism has been higher than any other regional area in Australia (Data, 1995 p16). Tourism in Halls Gap is characterised by periods of short intense visitation that tests the limited resources of the township. The busiest times are New Year, Easter and during the festival periods and long weekends. In fact any weekend when the weather is fine large numbers of tourist will descend on Halls Gap.

The breakdown of peak visitation periods according to Datab (1995 p24) was:

% visitor nights	Time of year
20.6%	January
19.8%	March/April (Easter)
11.0%	September holidays
6.7%	June

Low periods of visitation occur in February, July and May. These levels of visitation (overnight stays) do not correlate with vehicle counts that were made in 1996 and 1997 (refer Niemann 1997 App. 4), which showed peak vehicle movements during May, September, October, November and June. These traffic studies measured vehicle flow primarily on Sundays and showed responsiveness to local festivals, public holidays and weather conditions.

Interestingly the peak visitation periods described by Datab (1995) showed mid level vehicle activity according to the traffic counts. April and September showed higher levels of vehicle activity generally consistent with the visitation trends described by Datab (1995). It is probable that high levels of vehicle activity on a Sunday is a measure of day visitation rather than over night stays. The source of these traffic counts is unknown and their reliability as a measure of activity within the area is questionable.

Indeed DNRE estimates in the early 1990's was that 725,000 visitors used the Grampians each year, more recent surveys suggests that current visitor numbers are nearer 1,500,000 visitors per annum. Refer to the table below (source unknown) which indicates an increasing trend in visitor numbers. ABS data records that Australians make 414,000 visits to the Grampians region (Datab, 1995 p23). Therefore differences between day visitation and overnight stays is significant although local survey data indicates that day visitation represents only 7-9% of total visitor numbers to the Grampians area.

**Table: Grampians National Park Visitor Numbers (1990 to part of 1999)**

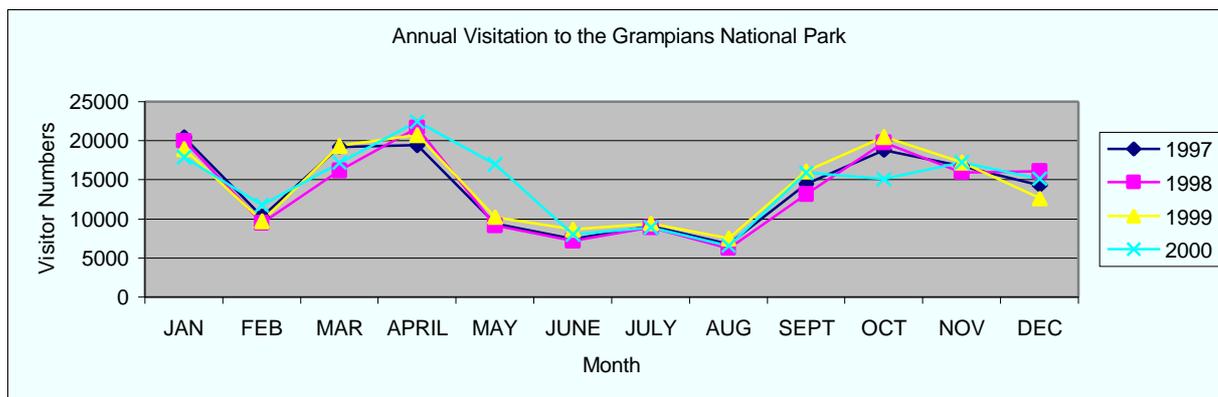
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>January</b>	171444	180821	222571	156625	253890	216862	186386	211424	237455	214633
<b>February</b>	99400	76212	93666	104077	100642	98490	114362	134701	89926	121955
<b>March</b>	134450	131685	111234	167132	163092	115150	143926	185507	102887	201982
<b>April</b>	177818	151505	168988	204001	167588	178478	163542	190881	142561	219925
<b>May</b>	86055	108315	121033	88654	95990	127121	125693	115767	100930	150776
<b>June</b>	105241	77940	86923	82484	104100	73298	76146	73718	62903	
<b>July</b>	82258	91652	107513	110902	79991	73281	79115	68459	100136	
<b>August</b>	88647	83972	74581	82898	63948	64470	75520	86074	88397	
<b>September</b>	117529	100803	100473	155301	124950	117318	103514	145127	73370	
<b>October</b>	125098	150938	188319	138241	118593	128041	87723	134087	154111	
<b>November</b>	139290	145943	119583	152387	124516	150276	134660	114898	142199	
<b>December</b>	115726	99261	109064	154029	98137	121996	131339	138894	128667	
<b>TOTAL</b>	1442956	1399047	1458943	1596101	1495437	1464781	1421926	1599537	1423542	

*Note: One visitor day equals one person visiting the Park for one day.*

*Source: Grampians National Parks.*

The following graph is understood to be a measure of visitors to the Parks Victoria Visitor Centre. It clearly shows peak visitation in January, April and October. Importantly it illustrates flows of people and vehicles through, or around, Halls Gap that range in volume from 20,000 per month to 7,000 per month.

If it were assumed that the average car contained 2.5 people these figures would equate to vehicle activity levels of 8000 to 2800 per month. This is a reasonable assumption given that vehicle counts (Niemann 1997) showed peaks of 1500 cars per Sunday (ie 6000 cars per month of Sundays) and lows of 500 cars per Sunday (ie 2000 cars per month of Sundays).



This whole question of day visitation and overnight stays needs to be resolved in order to properly estimate demand on local resources and facilities. For example the management of car parking within Halls Gap may differ depending on whether visitors are coming for a Sunday drive or whether they are staying in local accommodation facilities and are able to walk to the commercial centre without placing additional demand on vehicle parking. Likewise many of the day visitors may come as part of a bus tour and therefore a different type of vehicle accommodation is required.

The day visitor/overnight visitor also raises the question from a tourist operator point of view whether day visitors can be attracted to stay within the region. It is also reasonable to determine how many visitors can Halls Gap comfortably accommodate before it becomes over saturated and loses its appeal as a tourist destination. Further research needs to be undertaken in this area but for the sake of this argument we will assume that Halls Gap at its peak can accommodate 10,000 people. Anecdotal evidence suggests that accommodation levels are saturated on 20 nights during the year (pers. comm. Margot Woodcock).

If it were to expand to a capacity of 15,000 what level of service and facility would need to be provided? Anecdotal evidence clearly illustrates that car park facilities cannot cope with peak demand (pers. com. Sgt. Graig Gillard) and vehicles are often found parked on the side of roads and in ditches etc. This is not to say that the solution is to provide more car parking to accommodate peak numbers. This solution would despoil many of the natural qualities of Halls Gap and impart a dominant urban characteristic to the township with vast areas of unoccupied asphalt during off-peak periods.

The solution to accommodating visitor numbers is management of people and vehicles. Tourist operators need to organise themselves on a regional basis to co-ordinate accommodation options and facilitate tourist events and local festivals evenly across the calendar. Datab (1995 p2) recommends spreading the peaks over a larger time frame as a means of managing the large visitation numbers, maximising returns from tourist related businesses and efficiently using the limited resources and facilities. Angie Lush (pers. comm.) recommends that regional co-ordination of tourist events and festivals is necessary for the proper management of tourism in the Grampians region but local co-ordination between businesses, providers and suppliers to the tourist industry in Halls Gap is imperative.

It is also necessary to consider the development of the township framework to concentrate visitor numbers within comfortable walking distance of the commercial centre to reduce the need for vehicle use and therefore reduce the pressure on parking in and around the commercial centre. This will lead to higher levels of development within an approximate radius of 1000m from the centre which is generally considered to be a comfortable walking distance for people enjoying a relaxed holiday.

Community concern regarding the impact of spreading the tourist peaks over larger time frames needs to be gauged also because the community generates the heart and soul of the township and they contribute significantly toward the running of events such as the Film Festival, Jazz Festival and the Wildflower Show. This precious resource (the community) must be managed carefully so as not to place undue demand on volunteer resources and so as not to undermine the quality of life enjoyed by the residents of Halls Gap. The community also needs to be fully aware of the impacts of higher levels of development within a 1000m radius of the town centre.

**Visitor types**

The breakdown of visitor types according to Datab (1995 p25) was:

% groups	Visitor types
38.0%	<i>Families</i>
16.0%	<i>Solo</i>
14.0%	<i>Older couples</i>

This information can be used as a basis for determining the type of facilities required by visitors to Halls Gap and whether they exist. For example the high proportion of family groups that visit Halls Gap may indicate that the provision of adventure playground type facilities might be well patronised by this group. Likewise older couples need to be provided for in terms of pathways, restaurants etc.

The current trend in visitor type is the demand for more sophisticated needs in terms of restaurants, accommodation and retail outlets (pers. comm. Angie Lush). Half of the visitors to the Grampians region are retirees, students and person employed in home duties with disposable incomes of less than \$10,000 per annum. Therefore visitor facilities and services need to cater for a range of visitor types with varying budgets, expectations and needs.

Tourism has many flow-on effects which include the purchase of local goods and services by tour operators; increased local investment in tourism and other supporting industries; increased employment opportunities, increased demand for housing for employees and increased revenue opportunities for business and community-run events. Because of the exposure generated through tourism it also brings people who may find Halls Gap attractive for investment, a retirement destination or a lifestyle change.

Most visitors tend to stay overnight and arrive by private vehicle (Datab 1995 p23). ABS data indicated a growth rate of 5% from 1992-1994 for visitors staying overnight in commercial type accommodation (i.e. not B&B or host farm types of accommodation). Datab predicts that an increase in self contained, non-commercial, accommodation types such as B&B and host farm is likely. The Grampians is seen as a “drop off” point as part of a wider holiday for many tourists (Datab, 1995 p27).

The breakdown of visitor nights according to Datab (1995 p24) was:

% visitor nights	Accommodation Type	Average length of stay (nights)
25.0%	<i>spent in camping areas</i>	<i>3.0 nights</i>
23.5%	<i>were spent with relatives/friends</i>	<i>3.7 nights</i>
19.0%	<i>spent in hotels/motels</i>	<i>2.0 nights</i>
15.0%	<i>spent in caravan parks</i>	<i>6.0 nights</i>
11.0%	<i>spent on farms</i>	<i>6.0 nights</i>

**Recommendations -tourism**

- ?? Undertake monitoring of visitation types and vehicle movements to enable responsive planning for vehicle management within Halls Gap.
- ?? Determine an upper limit for visitor capacity to enable future planning of resource and facility needs.

**Social Issues**

Halls Gap is a unique community given its location within a National Park. This has attracted residents who are very conscious of changes that may be detrimental to their township. The community of Halls Gap is small (approximately 300 people), many of these people have chosen Halls Gap for retirement whilst others find employment in tourist related industries and services. Permanent resident population increased by an average of 3.6% per annum from 1976-1986 (Bennett, 1990 p5). The household occupancy rate of 2.7persons in Halls Gap is low compared with a Shire-wide figure of 3.7 persons (Bennett, 1990 p6).

According to Bennett (1990, p5) development types, and numbers of, increased dramatically following proclamation of the National Park in 1984. Types of development included:

- ?? Including Residential subdivision
- ?? Hotel and accommodation complex
- ?? Shopping centres
- ?? Police station
- ?? Brambuk
- ?? Grampians National Park Information Centre.

Interestingly the prime commercial areas in Halls Gap are in the ownership of a small number of residents. Bennett (1990 p22) suggested that this status of land ownership should give rise to the potential for well planned, orderly development. There is no suggestion that this is the case. In fact it may well have the opposite effect because there is a lack of diversity and competition. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this lack of co-operation engenders a low level of service provision. This creates opportunities for motivated, innovative business to supply high quality service and goods to the Halls Gap tourist market that is becoming more sophisticated and particular.

Employment during this time also grew significantly particularly in the area of service provision for the tourist industry. No other significant industry capable of offering employment to large numbers of local residents exists, or is likely to develop within or near to the township. These factors will always have a limiting effect on the numbers of people who permanently reside in Halls Gap. If the local tourist industry develops significantly it is likely that some new employees will reside permanently or seasonally within the township, but this is unlikely to significantly affect the size of the local community.

Halls Gap's holiday population is reputed to increase to 10,000 visitors during peak seasons. This dramatic change has obvious implications for local service providers, local infrastructure and the capacity of the local environment to absorb these pressures. There is a strong belief that demand for visitation to Halls Gap will increase as the uniqueness of the natural qualities of the Grampians National park become more sought after. The dilemma faced by the local community is how best they can accommodate the inevitable pressures from tourist and accommodation related development. The difficulty faced by the Northern Grampians Shire Council and Parks Victoria is how to facilitate future development whilst maintaining the unique qualities of the Grampians.

Whilst assessing the impact of development on the framework of Halls Gap it is imperative that the needs of the residents are given priority because they are the core community of Halls Gap. It is through the actions of community members that many of the natural qualities of Halls Gap are preserved and that it remains a desirable place to live. The local community gives life to Halls Gap all year round and they initiate local festivals and run facilities that bring visitors to Halls Gap and provide them with accommodation and recreation opportunities (eg the caravan park and swimming pool). The need for balance between the interests of the Halls Gap community and the pressures from development are critical to the success or failure of a functional township framework.

Halls Gap is well serviced by the standard conveniences including: supermarket, licensed grocer, restaurants, motels, guesthouses, caravan park / camping. Community facilities include: a redeveloped community hall, a primary school, recreational reserve and pavilion, picnic facilities, swimming pool, tennis courts and a private golf course. It would appear that the majority of needs are catered for.

### **Future Development – An assumption**

The main focus of this Urban Design Framework is to guide the physical development of Halls Gap under the assumption that the local tourist industry is likely to expand as visitation increases. This assumption is founded on the steady growth of tourism in and around Halls Gap and the perception that the unique environs of the Grampians will remain alluring to tourists who seek natural environments that provide varied experiences for a range of abilities and age groups.

It is imperative that the Framework Study makes provision for development in suitable areas under strict control and it is essential that the local community accommodate these provisions. The pressure for development will increase as new projects test the statutory planning process until loopholes are found. It is our recommendation that adequate provision is made now for sensible and desirable development to occur where it is least destructive to the physical and social fabric of Halls Gap and the natural environment of the Grampians. It is reasonable to assume that a 5 star type of development might find the semi eco-tourism qualities of Halls Gap within the National Park surrounds as an appealing location for a resort type centre with golf course, pools, tennis courts etc.

Bennett (1990p10) proposed that development would need to be accommodated in Halls Gap where views, vegetation, slope, drainage etc. are not affected detrimentally. He also recommended that the

commercial area be extended eastwards to Heath Street (Bennett, 1990 p38) and that commercial developments provide suitable loading facilities and parking facilities in addition to public parking being provided along Heath Street presumably by Northern Grampians Shire Council. The current zoning allows for such development.

The Heath Street proposal raises the question of whether market forces should drive the development which will require the construction of a new bridge over Stony Creek or whether Northern Grampians Shire Council construct the road and bridge to the benefit of future commercial developments. The Halls Gap community showed a strong preference for the development of Heath Street as a priority over other infrastructure development proposals within the township. The Northern Grampians Shire Council needs to resolve an economically viable way of construction Heath Street and the bridge over Stony creek and share the cost equitably amongst those who will gain financial benefit from the project.

### Infrastructure

The existing sewer reticulation system covers most of the developed areas in Halls Gap. The sewerage treatment plant has the capacity to accommodate 10,000 people (pers. comm. Michelle Grainger NGSC). Peak holiday demand uses approximately 60% of the system's capacity (Bennett, 1990 p16). Therefore the system does not present immediate limitations to development within the township. It is probable that future large developments will be required to treat and dispose of their own effluent without relying on the town system.

Bennett (1990 p17) states that telephone and electricity are not constraints on development in Halls Gap although Niemann (1997 p64) identified that the power supply is inadequate and often fails during peak periods which effects local businesses and diminishes the town's reputation. The power supply issue needs to be addressed by the appropriate authority to determine demand and capacity. Niemann (1997 p64) suggests that consideration of the supply issue should be assessed as part of the proposals to underground the overhead power lines in Main Road.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the mobile network is ineffective in Halls Gap. Unless the provider technology changes or Parks Victoria allows the construction of a mobile tower in the National Park it is unlikely that the mobile phone problem will be resolved. This problem may be seen as desirable by many people who live in Halls Gap and an opportunity to promote the quietness and solitude of Halls Gap as a holiday destination.

Suitable vacant land is also another limiting factor. Bennett (1990 p34) suggested that Halls Gap lacks suitably zoned residential land to accommodate anticipated growth rates. The Urban Design Framework is not required to make detailed assessment of the growth rates in residential and commercial developments but there is obviously a need to monitor demand and supply so that the responsible authority can make regular assessments and checks.

### The Halls Gap Townscape Plan

Niemann and Partners in 1997 on behalf of the community and Northern Grampians Shire Council prepared the Halls Gap Townscape Plan. It is generally accepted that this document represents the wishes of the community and the Shire and provides a blueprint for the general development of the township centre. The following represents a discussion of the key elements of the Townscape Plan that are relevant to this study. Refer Appendix 1 for the full *Summary of Final Recommendations* and comments by THA Landscape Architects.

The Niemann study developed an implementation programme (Refer Appendix 2). We generally agree with the order of priorities proposed. Given the proposed capital works project adjoining the swimming pool and the other changes recommended by this report there may be some change in the order of priority of works.

The main features of the Niemann Study that relate to Halls Gap Framework are summarised below:

- ?? *Improve the appearance and functioning of the picnic area adjacent to Delley's Bridge.*
- ?? *Create a comprehensive path network for shared use by cyclists and pedestrians, to be constructed in stages according to these priorities.*
- ?? *Short term and long term development of parking along Heath Street.*
- ?? *Consider siting of the Tourist Information Centre near Stony Creek.*
- ?? *Consideration of a location and concept for a town square.*
- ?? *Streetscape improvements to Grampians Road.*
- ?? *Improvements to the area adjoining the swimming pool.*

Many other issues and recommendations were made in the Niemann Study. Many of these have not been considered in detail because it is not within the scope of this study. Each of the recommendations made in the Niemann study should be assessed on their merits and implemented generally in association with the recommendations made and the concept plans developed in this report.

### **Recommendations - Development**

- ?? Assess water supply needs and capacity and determine infrastructure upgrade requirements.
- ?? Assess power supply needs and capacity and determine infrastructure upgrade requirements.
- ?? Heath Street should be constructed by developers in partnership with Northern Grampians Shire Council so that valuable financial resources can be spent on other community projects. Northern Grampians Shire Council to consider developing design options in the short term to enable unimpeded design development when a suitable commercial partner comes to the fore.
- ?? Development works within Halls Gap need to be aware of the risk of transporting the fungi in soils and on vehicles.
- ?? Consideration of local promotion to encourage an awareness of pest plants and animals is necessary to ensure future development of Halls Gap does not threaten conditions of indigenous flora and fauna and degrade the overall quality of the township and its setting.
- ?? Each of the recommendations made in the Niemann study should be assessed on its merits and implemented generally in association with the recommendations made and the concept plans developed in this report.
- ?? Ensure adequate provision is made for sensible and desirable development to occur where it is least destructive to the physical and social fabric of Halls Gap and the natural environment of the Grampians.

## **5.0 Site analysis** (Refer Maps 1, 2 & 3)

### **Map 1 Landscape Types**

Landscape types were identified based on a visual analysis of the linear study area. The study identified a number of subtle distinctions between different areas that occurred along Grampians Road from the Pomonal turn-off to Lake Belfield and including all the streets within the township. This analysis of landscape types provided the basis for identifying the different precincts within the study area.

The common element along Grampians Road, from a landscape perspective, was native vegetation. Depending on the level of vegetation retained or removed determined the overriding characteristic of each landscape type. For example areas where the remnant vegetation had been removed and replaced with buildings or other structures generally created a landscape experience that was not entirely consistent with the townships location within the National Park. Likewise where vegetation was generally intact on both sides of the roadway this created a high quality landscape type that would engender a high desirable experience for the viewer. On the whole the mix of landscape types creates throughout the study area creates a landscape of great interest with many levels of visual stimulation. The overriding views of the Grampians Ranges will always dominate the visual experiences of visitors to Halls Gap and it is these memories that they will probably recall. As landscape modifiers and managers of the land the Northern Grampians Shire Council needs to be conscious of the need to preserve and enhance the roadside vegetation within the study area to ensure a pleasurable experience for visitors and residents of Halls Gap and a stable network of roadside vegetation.

#### *Description of Landscape Types*

##### **L1. Pomonal Road to the Halls Gap Hotel**

*Treed entry with closed views merging to open views of new development. Signage and services dominant.*

##### **L2. Halls Gap Hotel to Delley's Bridge**

*Bushy vegetation screening low-level development with bush land and open parkland characteristics.*

- L3. Delley's Bridge to School Road  
*Open woodland with minimal under storey and framed views to residential areas and low-level development.*
- L4. Commercial area – Main Road from School Road to Heath Street  
*Open hard-edged landscape with minimal tree cover, poor relationship with surrounding landscape, power lines and straight roadway dominant.*
- L5. School Road  
*Open woodland character along meandering roadway with views to commercial area. Camping areas add to openness.*
- L6. Valley Floor  
*Open paddocks, few trees, limited views into valley floor from Grampians Road. Some views from side streets.*
- L7. East side - Grampians Road from Heath Street to Tandara Road  
*Motels and restaurants, low level mixed exotic dominant planting scheme, lack of over storey trees creates an open and exposed characteristic, eroded road verge is an eyesore, power lines dominant.*
- L8. West side - Grampians Road from Heath Street to Tandara Road  
*Poorly defined gravel roads straight and meandering with mixed exotic / native vegetation, treed to bushy landscape, more bushy in areas further away from the commercial precinct.*
- L9. Tandara Road to Pinnacle Road  
*Steep, bushy, residential, heavily treed along gravel meandering roads, some interesting building types, erosion and fire risk high.*
- L10. Pinnacle Road to Lake Bellfield  
*Remnant roadside trees create a bush-like feel to this area. Residential and accommodation developments are generally well scaled and of low to medium visual impact.*
- L11. Lake Bellfield southwards  
*Remnant middle and upper storey vegetation along the roadside forms closed views for travelers and creates a bush land character along the roadway. Lake Bellfield is the dominant non-natural feature in this precinct*

## Map 2 Vegetation

Map 2 shows the extent of natural vegetation across the study area. This study serves to assist in identifying precincts that may need to be treated differently to ensure the retention of bushland areas and the protection and enhancement of the over storey of indigenous trees. It also assists with the identification of high-risk fire areas.

## Map 3 Slope

Map 3 identifies areas of different slope along the study area. The Fyans Creek flood plain is generally flat with slope varying from 5-10%. This area of flat land extends along Grampians Road to the Pomonal turn off and beyond. Areas within this slope range are generally suitable for traditional housing and development types of medium level density.

Along the west side of Grampians Road from Lake Bellfield to Delley's Bridge the land rises steeply to the Wonderland Ranges. Slopes of 10-20% and 20% plus are shown. It is generally considered possible to build dwellings on slopes of 15% maximum without causing undue disturbance to the natural ground contour and therefore achieving reasonable levels of tree retention. Fire risk increases relative to the slope of the land and its aspect toward the prevailing winds.

Therefore 15% is considered the maximum slope for medium density development. Developments on slopes greater than this will need to show a high level of responsiveness to the ground slope and methods of managing the construction of the building to minimise tree loss and damage to retained trees, minimal earthworks and site disturbance, erosion control, responsible vehicle access, fire risk management etc.

## **Site Analysis Maps**

**Map 1 Landscape Types**

**Map 2 Vegetation**

**Map 3 Slope**

## 6.0 Planning Controls

### Discussion

An Urban Design Framework assists in achieving the objectives and vision of the Municipal Strategic Statement and the Local Policies of the Planning Scheme. The new urban framework will attempt to resolve issues and link the hierarchy of planning controls from the MSS to specific zoning, overlay controls and action plans.

An Urban Design Framework may ultimately identify particular issues that require changes to the Planning Scheme in the form of zoning or overlay changes in order to achieve the desired outcomes of the Urban Design Framework. Indeed further study may be identified to clarify major issues of urban consolidation or major infrastructure etc.

An Urban Design Framework is generally referenced into the planning scheme via an amendment which enables it to play an important role in the decision making process of the Council and the Community generally. The referencing of this document in the planning scheme will give it significant weight at a local level and at other forums if required.

The study has conducted a general review of the effectiveness of the planning controls as it relates to the Urban Design Framework and made series of recommendations generally and more specifically under each particular precinct.

Whilst the intention of the Urban Framework Plan was not to study the supply and demand for infrastructure, services and land it is none the less important to consider basic data and recent trends to establish the requirement for action (if any) in specific precincts.

### Development Statistics

Period 1994 – 2000

Building Permit issued for Commercial Projects	17
Building Permits issued for Industrial Projects	2
Building Permits issued for Accommodation Projects	24
Building Permits issued for single detached dwellings	49

*(Source Michelle Grainger NGSC, 2001)*

These figures show a consistent demand for residential and tourist accommodation allotments in Halls Gap. The demand for industrial type development is negligible whilst commercial type projects shows and average approval rate of nearly three per annum. The demand for single detached dwellings is high given that permits area issued at the rate of approximately 9 per year and Halls Gap has a limited supply of suitable, serviced allotments. These statistics illustrate that consolidation of development within close proximity to the town centre and on suitable land is necessary to ensure proper consolidation and control of development projects.

### Previous Strategic Studies

The last land use framework for Halls Gap was prepared by John Bennett and Associates in 1990.

A planning strategy was prepared for the whole of the Northern Grampians Shire in 1997 by Tract consultants for the new format planning scheme.

The current MSS identifies that the land use this needs reviewed. The Bennett study identified that existing serviced residential land would provide land until 1997 and the Tract report suggested that existing zoned land can accommodate development for the next 30 years. The inconsistency in these statements needs to be explored through a more comprehensive study.

A review of data supplied by the Northern Grampians Shire reveals that the availability of vacant residential land is low and the demand for land is high (pers. com. Michelle Grainger). This data also needs to be expanded to explore demand in the commercial precinct.

## Local Planning Policy Framework

The Local Planning Policy Framework sets the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and Local Policies affecting the Municipality. This document provides Council with direction with its decision making in regards to the Municipality.

It is pivotal in the implementation of strategy or policy for a particular locality. It “*enables a planning authority to give local expression to the wide discretion provided in many zones and overlays.*” (Department of Infrastructure Practise Notes)

## Municipal Strategic Statement

The Municipal Strategic Statement must be read in conjunction with the local policy for Halls Gap (Clause 22.04 refer appendix 3). These clauses outline the planning objectives, strategies and implementation strategies for land use and development in Halls Gap.

Halls Gap is identified as having a vibrant and expanding tourism industry based on the Grampians National Park. The Urban Design Framework seeks to build on this by protecting the main thoroughfare through Halls Gap. The Urban Design Framework recognises the importance of the Grampians being the main theme within the study area and seeks to enhance this experience.

## Strategic Directions

The Urban Design Framework recognises the need to review the land use framework. This requirement forms one of the recommendations in the Planning Controls section of the report.

## Local Policy

(22.04 refer appendix 3)

The Urban Design Framework generally supports the policy objectives of clause 22.04, however the Urban Design Framework recommends the review of these objectives further to the review of the land use framework. Particularly with regard to the preferred areas for short, medium and long term development given that the Urban Design Framework highlights concern for ribbon development between Halls Gap and Bellfield.

The local policy may need to be strengthening in relation to support for higher densities within the identified areas. (Refer planning controls map).

## Zone Controls

### *Residential 1 Zone (R1Z)*

Halls Gap is well serviced in terms of infrastructure for a small town. It has reticulated water, sewer and power. Development has essentially been contained along Grampians Road, not only for convenience but also due to the problems associated with development on the upper slopes in terms of construction and servicing and the restriction of development on the valley floor. This essentially promoted growth along the Grampians Road toward Bellfield.

The unavailability of suitably zoned residential land, has gradually forced development not only lineally along Grampians Road but in areas of the valley that are considered to have the highest fire danger. The slopes to the west and north west of the town centre are heavily treed, with no buffer between the residential areas and the National Park. The construction of dwellings on slopes usually necessitates the removal of native vegetation and excavation works that inevitably lead to erosion and this is evident particularly south of Silver Springs Road.

This Urban Design Framework recognises that this spread of development is undesirable as it promotes car dependence and increased parking pressure on the commercial district. It is considered that the land from Tandara Road Mackeys Peak Road to Delley's Bridge could support higher densities provided that land with slopes in excess of 15% was disregarded due to the associated environmental and fire considerations. This area is within 1 kilometre of the town centre and promotes the ‘walkability’ nature of the town and is located with excellent access to the National Park and numerous walks through the park. Higher levels of development need to consider the movement of wild life from the slopes onto the Valley Floor and throughout the Valley Floor.

High densities on land less than 15% should be encouraged through the Local Policy Section of the Planning Scheme.

#### *Low Density Residential (LDRZ)*

This zone is used in areas in Bellfield and north of the study area, these areas are generally developed and should not be encouraged to support higher densities unless fully serviced.

#### *Rural Zone (RUZ)*

The use of the rural zoning within the study area has been an effective way of placing the land within a holding pattern, to discourage or prevent intense development on the upper slopes or the valley floor. The land is not used for rural purposes apart from some grazing by conventional farm animals and wildlife. The land is in some cases serviced and in others unable to be serviced due to the slope. The land close to the town centre on the valley floor is dealt with in more detail in the precinct part of this report.

#### *Business 1 Zone (B1Z)*

The Business 1 zone covers the Town Centre and allows for future expansion of Heath Street to the east. To determine whether the pressure for additional land to be zoned B1Z additional study would need to be undertaken. There is no evidence to suggest that development pressure for commercial property in this zone is of such a level that justifies the extension of Heath Street across Stony Creek and connecting with Grampians Road. The construction of Heath Street including a bridge will provide opportunities for business expansion. The land is well placed to provide an expansion of the Town Centre and should remain zoned as such to cater for demand should it arise.

Careful planning of this area should be carried out to ensure that the main focus of the entry into Town is the National Park and that main shopping strip along Grampians Road remains as the township focus. Care needs also to be taken to ensure that Heath Street does not become a back street with the rear of the shops and the hall creating the main focus of the streetscape.

#### *Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ)*

No recommended changes as a result of the Urban Design Framework.

## **Overlay Controls**

#### *Wildfire Management Overlay (WMO)*

The Wildfire Management Overlay (WMO) in Halls Gap is extensive. The controls are enforced through a wide range of standard site management and construction conditions that effect the siting, physical construction and water supply criteria for new development within Halls Gap. Where possible the general requirements of this overlay should be applied more specifically to each application due to the great variety in topographical and vegetation within Halls Gap.

In a broader context the controls should reflect the introduction of the controls pursuant to the Building Act and the Municipal Fire Prevention Plan. This is particularly relevant in Halls Gap where the fire danger is very high. These controls must be coordinated so that development and use applications are reviewed with regard to requirements of all documents to ensure consistency.

#### *Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO)*

The Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO) controls in Halls Gap are also extensive. The controls refer to a schedule, which is specific to the characteristics and environment of Halls Gap and the National Park. They are a very important component in the future development of Halls Gap

As mentioned above these controls need to be examined in a broader context with the WMO controls so that consistency is achieved. It is conceivable that a site management plan relative to WMO and VPO controls may become a mandatory requirement for any development and use applications within Halls Gap.

#### *Design and Development Overlay Controls (DDO)*

Again this particular overlay control covers the entire study area, which and consistent with the objectives of the Local Policy. The schedule DDO1 to the overlay control is not particularly strong as most buildings are exempt, being below 5 metres in height or built of certain materials.

The design and development overlay controls need to be reviewed and extended this will provide an opportunity for a more performance oriented approach rather than applying prescriptive materials and heights. Given that Halls Gap has no predominate architectural style, the preference for contemporary design that respects the surrounding environment should be paramount.

The Urban Design Framework also recognises the need to further protect the entry points to and from Halls Gap, which may be achieved by introducing an additional Design and Development Overlay control (DDO2). These controls will address issues such as setbacks, signage, native vegetation, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity to enhance the visitor experience to the Grampians and Halls Gap. It is critical that the entry to and journey through Halls Gap enhance the visitor experience. The development pressure in Halls Gap must be controlled so that it does not become a blight to the Grampians and therefore Halls Gap.

### **Recommendations – Planning Controls**

The general recommendations in a planning context are as follows: *(Refer Map 4 Proposed Planning Scheme Amendments and see Township Precincts for more specific recommendations).*

- ?? Undertake a land use study to identify the actual supply and demand for residential and commercial land. This may inturn result in changes to the MSS and Local Policy
- ?? Review current Design & Development Overlay Control (DDO1) with a view to broaden controls. The schedule to DDO 1 requires review to increase the controls over development and works within these areas. The current controls only extend to buildings over 5 metres and buildings using reflective materials, this will still allow inappropriate designs. The controls should encourage contemporary architecture using traditional materials.
- ?? Prepare a new Design and Development Control (DDO2) for the Grampians Road to provide additional controls on the main road through Halls Gap. These controls are to protect the entry points and “village feel” through township by introducing controls on issues such as setbacks, signage, native vegetation, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.
- ?? Review Wildfire Management Overlay Controls with a view to coordinating relevant statutory documents such as Designated Bushfire Areas (Building Act 1993) and the Municipal Fire Prevention Plan. This review should also co ordinate potential overlapping issues created by the Vegetation Protection Overlay Controls. The use of land management plans to accompany applications should be encouraged. Council should develop guidelines to assist with the preparation of Site Management Plans in regard to vegetation protection, fire risk management, erosion control, earthworks, machinery hygiene etc.
- ?? Review the application of density controls through Local Planning Policy. The density of the area-surrounding township, particularly within 1 kilometre and under 15% can support higher densities. The controls should encourage higher densities through appropriate design whilst discouraging high densities on the upper slopes (i.e. more than 15% slope). This can be achieved through changes to the Local Policy Framework.
- ?? Review current planning controls on the Valley Floor through the incorporation of a master development plan into the planning scheme, via a Development Plan Overlay (DPO) with an appropriate underlying zoning. This will allow the broader issues of the valley floor to be protected rather than a site by site approach.

## Map 4 Proposed Planning Scheme Amendments

## 7.0 Township Precincts

The following section provides a description, analysis and recommendations for each of the precincts identified within the Halls Gap study area. These precincts were developed in consultation with the Steering Committee. Each precinct is discussed separately and depicted on the precinct map (see at the end of this section).

The precincts are organised under the following headings:

### 1 Northern Approaches (Stawell Rd & Ararat-Halls Gap Rd)

#### *Description*

- ?? Indigenous roadside vegetation and established canopy trees over roadway opening to cleared farmland behind.
- ?? Low-level roadside signage.
- ?? Appealing rural approaches to the Grampians and Halls Gap.
- ?? The landscape type reinforces the distinction between the flat undulating farmland and the uplifted Grampians Ranges.

#### *Discussion*

These approaches are seen as ancillary to the main Grampians experience but because they have great landscape appeal they can provide valuable support roles in accommodating visitors to the Grampians region. Datab (1995 p24) noted that 11% of overnight stays in the Grampians were in farm style accommodation. The report noted that there was significant growth in demand for this type of accommodation as well as self-catered bed and breakfast type facilities. The remnant trees and undulating landforms of this landscape type give ample opportunity to develop low-key accommodation facilities that are not visually dominant and will not degrade the landscape experience of visitors using the approaches. Care needs to be taken to ensure these developments are site responsive and sensitive to the surroundings. It is assumed that the land is capable of supporting low-level development and all proposals should be subject to the appropriate environmental assessments.

This precinct is not within walking distance of Halls Gap therefore visitors staying in this area will need to drive to Halls Gap which will add some pressure on the in-town parking areas. It is probable that the people using accommodation in the northern approaches precincts will tour the region and the Grampians National Park without being totally reliant on the facilities and services on offer in Halls Gap. The net result of increased accommodation facilities in the northern approaches precincts is less pressure on Halls Gap for similar types of development.

#### **Recommendations – Northern Approaches**

- ?? Maintain the open rural landscape of the northern approaches precinct by preserving rural land where possible.
- ?? Protect and enhance the roadside vegetation.
- ?? Facilitate the development of low-key, self-accommodating, farm style accommodation in the northern approaches precinct. Modify the Northern Grampians Shire Council Planning Scheme as required to allow for such developments.
- ?? Review the controls on signage and their effectiveness to prevent the proliferation of roadside signage along Grampians Road particularly entrances and areas special interest.
- ?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay for Grampians Road to control setbacks, signage, native vegetation removal, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.
- ?? Maintain Rural Zonings where applicable.
- ?? Review Local Policy as it relates to low-level farm–stay type accommodation to identify opportunities and constraints.

## 2 Service Precinct

### *Description*

- ?? BP Service Station corner of Stawell Road and Pomonal Road
- ?? Accommodation style developments south side, medium levels of exposure, semi cleared vegetation.
- ?? Open paddocks north side, minimal development.
- ?? Roadside vegetation intermittent both sides.
- ?? Roadside sign clutter especially at Stawell Rd and Pomonal Road intersection.
- ?? Suggestion of a self-sufficient centre remote from Halls Gap.
- ?? Halls Gap Hotel in large cleared area on flat land to the north side.
- ?? New subdivision (probably holiday houses) on flat ground in cleared area near the Hotel on the north side of Grampians Road.

### *Discussion*

The service precinct represents a modified environment that is in need of some immediate attention before it degrades further. The clutter of advertising signs and information signs and road signs along Grampians Road significantly alters the landscape experience of drivers visiting the Grampians. There needs to be a rationalisation of road-side signs in terms of colour, size, quantity and location.

The noticeable change in character type is the effect created by increased development and reduced vegetation cover (especially mid-storey vegetation) in a predominantly native setting. Where over-storey vegetation is well established and has been retained developments are less visible if the materials and colours are well integrated with the surroundings. At the moment the BP service station dominates this section of the roadway purely because of its prominent colour scheme. Future commercial developments using corporate colour schemes should be made to modify their standard format given the special environment of the Grampians and the strong desire by the community and the Northern Grampians Shire Council to preserve and enhance this unique place.

It is worthy to note that first impressions are very significant and given that the majority of visitors come to the Grampians from Melbourne via Stawell and Ararat (Datab 1995 p56) it is imperative that this service precinct creates a positive impression.

### **Recommendations – Service Precinct**

- ?? Consolidate development in areas that do not detrimentally affect the landscape experience for visitors to the Grampians.
- ?? Avoid developments that create a linear effect along Grampians Road. Developments should be well separated by trees.
- ?? Encourage node type projects (or other) where factors such as slope, vegetation retention, landscape amenity, visual prominence etc allow developments to occur without detrimentally affecting the entry experience for visitors to the Grampians.
- ?? Where new development projects occur within open cleared areas that are visually prominent (eg The Halls Gap Hotel and adjoining residential development) ensure that adequate tree planting occurs along Grampians Road and internal roadways. Use indigenous trees from local seed source to compliment adjoining bushland areas and promote the environmental qualities of the Grampians. Ensure planting is undertaken with due consideration for fire risk and damage to structures.
- ?? Avoid regular subdivision patterns and new developments that mimic standard suburban practice.
- ?? Project designs should be sympathetic to the Grampians environment and endeavour to achieve a high-level design outcome complimentary of the surroundings and consistent with the intent of the Urban Design Framework to promote high quality, environmentally sensitive developments.

- ?? Maintain the existing tree cover and where possible retain mid storey vegetation as screening where this does not create a fire hazard.
- ?? Improve pathway to provide alternative access to Halls Gap centre.
- ?? Ensure all vegetation retention and regeneration complies with fire risk management guidelines and promote an awareness of fire risk and sensible risk management amongst the new and existing residents and landlords in Halls Gap.
- ?? Review the controls on signage and their effectiveness to prevent the proliferation of roadside signage along Grampians Road particularly entrances and areas of special interest.
- ?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay for Grampians Road to control setbacks, signage, native vegetation removal, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.

### 3 Northern Entry

#### *Description*

- ?? Bushland both sides of roadway.
- ?? Road meanders as it enters the gap between the ranges, which creates a sense of anticipation.
- ?? Limited signs along the roadway give the impression that it is part of the Grampians National Park. Some low-key Parks Victoria signage verifies this.
- ?? Large accommodation complex on the south side of the road just prior to Delleys Bridge is expansive. A lack of remnant over story trees accentuates its prominence. It is fortunate that the development is a reasonable distance from the roadway and that there is some roadside vegetation to provide dappled screening.
- ?? There are some good walkways that lead from the hotel into Halls Gap. These are poorly signposted for the new visitor.

#### *Discussion*

The northern entry precinct creates the primary natural experience for visitors to Halls Gap. For many visitors it may be their first experience of the ranges to the west and therefore it is important that it is maintained in its current condition and enhanced where possible. It is important that the majority of the southern edge of this precinct forms the border of the Grampians National Park because it ensures a high level of preservation. The difficulty will be to maintain the northern edge of this precinct in a desirable state under pressure from future development projects. The Northern Grampians Shire Council can at least ensure that the roadside vegetation is maintained and protected. It is imperative that road opening permits, service installation etc is done with due care and respect for the remnant vegetation. The Northern Grampians Shire Council might consider development of roadside vegetation preservation and management guidelines developed in conjunction with Parks Victoria for the whole of the Grampians. This would ensure consistency and allow the roadsides to be upgraded to a high level of environmental excellence.

#### **Recommendations – Northern Entry**

- ?? Preserve roadside vegetation. Develop roadside vegetation guidelines for preservation, restoration and new planting works in conjunction with Northern Grampians Shire Council and Parks Victoria, Grampians National Park.
- ?? Limit development on the north side of the roadway to avoid dilution of this landscape experience.
- ?? Improve signage and path networks between this precinct and Halls Gap so that visitors who reside in this precinct or the service/accommodation precinct have a robust connection for walking and riding. Promotion of this connection may support the development of facilities along the road toward the Pomonal turn-off, which will assist by reducing development pressures on Halls Gap proper.

- ?? Retain the meandering roadway in its current form and width because this will diminish the entry experience. If alterations are required for traffic safety or other be sure that design outcomes are sensitive to the recommendations of the northern entry precinct.
- ?? Review the controls on signage and their effectiveness to prevent the proliferation of roadside signage along Grampians Road particularly entrances and areas special interest.
- ?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay for Grampians Road to control setbacks, signage, native vegetation removal, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.

#### 4 Transition Precinct (Delley's Bridge to School Road and Heath Street to Tandara Road)

##### *Description*

- ?? Delley's Bridge creates an interesting architectural and historical element
- ?? Meandering road through mature over-storey of Eucalypts and some exotic species creates a pleasant experience for locals and visitors.
- ?? Understorey and mid-storey vegetation replaced by houses, accommodation units, gardens and open recreational areas.
- ?? Large areas of bare ground under trees between the roadway and Fyans Creek probably caused by informal parking.
- ?? Some old style holiday cottages and some contemporary architecture (i.e. YMCA building).
- ?? Limited signs along roadway.
- ?? Some areas constitute a highly modified landscape with motels and exotic gardens.

##### *Discussion*

The transition precinct represents a modified environment but creates a subtle transition between the bushland environment of the entry precinct and the urbanised commercial area. This landscape type repeats itself at the southern end of the commercial area from Heath Street to Tandara Road. This precinct still maintains enough natural qualities (i.e. overstorey trees) to give the visitor the impression that they are in the Grampians National Park. The meandering roadway helps to reinforce this driving experience.

The buildings consist of old cottages and churches set well back from the roadway. Some developments and buildings throughout the precinct are prominent because of their close proximity to the roadway and because they have limited tree cover. The YHA building is innovative and imparts a character that is consistent with the natural surroundings. The YHA car park is too close to the roadway and the glary quartz topping adds to its prominence.

The large areas of bare ground under the trees between the roadway and Fyans Creek has probably been caused by informal parking. These areas contain large established trees that form a significant part of the over storey that characterises this precinct. Continued uncontrolled use of this area by vehicles will undermine the health of these trees as the ground becomes compacted and exposed to erosion. It is necessary to preserve these trees by identifying suitable areas for parking and installing suitable barriers to control vehicle access and movements.

In recent years the parkland area between Delleys Bridge and the Police Station has been opened visually with the progressive and incremental removal of indigenous shrubs and ground cover. This has created an open woodland effect with a mown grass understorey, which is easier to maintain by slashing. This change may be visually appealing to many people but it undermines the ecological balances that maintain biodiversity and tree health. The removal of the understorey can lead to the decline of the established overstorey trees. There is a concern that this is happening to the trees surrounding the recreation reserve and throughout other areas around the township (*pers. com. Graham Parkes*). There is a need to encourage the re-establishment of understorey species by natural regeneration and planting. Altered mowing regimes and education of maintenance staff can assist with the natural regeneration of the roadside areas and reserves. Public awareness campaigns can help to enlighten residents to the benefits of replanting and preserving small plants and trees. Due regard for fire risk management needs also to be considered.

In the section from Heath Street to Tandara Road the remnant over storey along the east side of Grampians Road is weak and powerlines dominate this side of the roadscape. It is understood that other

services exist along this part of the roadway. It is unfortunate that the trees along this side of the roadway have been lost and every effort should be made to restore some roadside over storey.

The Parks Victoria depot is an eyesore so close to the town centre. Consideration to its location should be made and better use made of this land for community benefit or other suitable development.

### **Recommendations – Transition Precinct**

- ?? Preserve Delley's Bridge because it creates a gateway between the entry and transition precincts and because it creates an interesting architectural element.
- ?? Encourage the planting of over storey indigenous trees on private property and as part of new development proposals.
- ?? Northern Grampians Shire Council to undertake roadside tree planting and to reinforce over storey canopy.
- ?? Revise maintenance practices on public land, especially in regard to mowing regimes, to ensure the preservation and regeneration of indigenous ground storey.
- ?? Northern Grampians Shire Council to develop a proactive policy to seek funding for the retrofitting of powerlines throughout Halls Gap to preserve existing trees; reduce pruning needs and tree damage caused by continued heavy pruning; reduce fire risk from over head wires; improve the visual amenity of the township; and provide unencumbered air space for the full and proper development of new roadside trees.
- ?? Rationalise roadside areas that are used for picnicking and parking along Fyans Creek to reduce areas of eroded and bare ground. Define parking areas and vehicle access points to improve vehicle safety and protect trees from incremental degradation. Consider the use of simple shelters and seating combinations for walkers and drivers to rest or picnic (Refer Map 12 Delley's Bridge Picnic Ground Concept). Develop a master plan for the long term development of the roadside between Grampians Road and Fyans Creek.
- ?? New developments should be required to protect existing trees and plant new indigenous over storey trees to integrate the development and compliment the streetscape.
- ?? New developments should be set back from the roadway. Car parking should be located to the side or the rear of the building.
- ?? Where possible encourage the preservation and restoration of the existing cottages and old style buildings.
- ?? New buildings should be reflective of the natural surroundings. For example materials should preferably be of local origin, include local colours and textures. Materials should be of a type and sourced from locations that are not environmentally destructive and do not require high resource and energy inputs to manufacture or procure them. Materials and construction methods should be environmentally sustainable. Building design should be site responsive and reflect high levels of environmental responsibility. New buildings should endeavour to set Halls Gap apart as a centre of environmental excellence.
- ?? Consider a design development overlay for all land abutting Grampians Road in the transition precinct to encourage creative architectural outcomes and landscape treatments.
- ?? Relocate the Parks Victoria depot away from the centre of Halls Gap to a position less prominent location. Consider developing a storage / manufacturing / industrial precinct and consolidating like activities in the precinct. This was proposed by Bennett (1990 p23).
- ?? Give consideration to the future use of the Parks Victoria depot site.
- ?? Review the controls on signage and their effectiveness to prevent the proliferation of roadside signage along Grampians Road particularly entrances and areas special interest.
- ?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay for Grampians Road to control setbacks, signage, native vegetation removal, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.
- ?? Review density controls to allow for higher densities in this precinct.
- ?? Possible rezoning of land on the north west corner of Silver Springs Road and Grampians Road to (R1Z)

## 5 Open Space Precinct

### *Description*

- ?? Consists of the town park and Recreation Reserve.
- ?? Pleasant open green-grassed areas amidst Grampians forest surrounds and towering ranges.
- ?? Opportunities for families and children to play, walk, picnic, enjoy the views, relax etc.
- ?? Opportunities for community festivals in a central location well located in regard to services and facilitates.

### *Discussion*

The open space areas offer valuable opportunity for families to recreate and for visitors to relax and enjoy green, open areas unencumbered by bush land, masses of trees and buildings whilst still have full view of the ranges. These areas also provide opportunity for buses to off load their passengers and allow them to stretch their legs in passive areas clear of the busy commercial area. The remnant trees are aging and there is concern for public safety because of the increased likelihood that the senescing trees may shed limbs. Management of these trees is very important for public safety and to ensure that aging trees are replaced gradually to avoid mass replacement of aged and decrepit trees.

The Town Park offers a large expanse of open area that is well suited for use as a festival arena. Given recommendations in this report to redevelop the streetscape and redirect traffic along School Road it may be possible to supplement the festival area by closing Main Road from Delley's Bridge to Heath Street temporarily during festivals.

### **Recommendations – Open Space Precinct**

- ?? Reinforce peripheral areas of the open space precinct to support roadside tree planting programs and to preserve large open grassed areas internally.
- ?? Tree planting programs should be undertaken now to enable successional replacement of mature trees before they enter a senescent phase. Ensure new trees are planted continuously to ensure they reach a semi-mature size so that removal of senescent trees does not create holes in the over storey.
- ?? Prepare a master plan for the development of the Town Park that incorporates proposed playground redevelopments, new tree planting and opportunities for park based festivals.
- ?? Review the controls on signage and their effectiveness to prevent the proliferation of roadside signage along Grampians Road particularly entrances and areas special interest.
- ?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay for Grampians Road to control setbacks, signage, native vegetation removal, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.
- ?? Reference the Urban Design Framework into the planning scheme to provide for civil works.
- ?? Review Rural Zoning (RUZ) and Local Policy on valley floor in relation to wetland proposal in consultation with landowners and general community.

## 6 Commercial Precinct

### *Description*

- ?? The steel structure of the Stony Creek bridge, the straight roadway, traffic islands, paved areas, overhead powerlines and the agglomeration of signage engender a hard- edged urban character to this precinct.
- ?? Architecture is plain and commercially focused, little streetscape aesthetic.
- ?? Roadway is straight and wide with parallel parking on east side, traffic islands add to the hard-edged character.
- ?? Busy pedestrian and vehicle area with lack of clarity for turning and entering parking area creates confusion.

- ?? Footpath narrow relative to the high use and the expansive open space in the park opposite.
- ?? Lack of established trees close to roadway creates a stark contrast with the established over storey of the transition precinct.

### *Discussion*

The commercial centre of Halls Gap has grown as an adhoc arrangement of simple buildings that have been designed to maximise alignment with the street frontage but with little regard for the streetscape aesthetic. The Stony Creek development takes the shop front focus away from Main Road to create a grassed, open, creek-side park that is well patronised by visitors for sitting and eating. Opportunity exists to develop a walking trail along this section of Stony Creek and connected with Heath Street (subject to owner agreement).

Future redevelopment opportunities along Main Road should be assessed according to their streetscape merit. Developers should be encouraged to be innovative in the way they orientate buildings and how they provide adequate space for visitors who wish to walk along the footpath as well as those who wish to sit and enjoy the view of the parkland opposite and the Wonderland Ranges to the west.

It is felt that the verandah along the Newsagency provides cover from the elements but it also obstructs views to the Wonderland Ranges. The pathway needs to be widened to afford the opportunity for el fresco dining whilst still maintaining generous width for people to walk along the footpath unobstructed.

The commercial area appears to offer services and goods in excess of the demand. There also appears to be similar services and goods offered by different suppliers. Whilst this offers more choice for the consumer it engenders some confusion and indicates a lack of co-ordination and planning between the business operators.

The architecture of the commercial precinct needs to be more responsive to the surroundings and reflect the local environment and textures through the selection of materials, shapes and colours. Buildings should offer visitors diversity of experience and visual stimulus to improve the streetscape amenity and help to establish Halls Gap as an environmentally responsive, high quality tourist destination.

### **Recommendations – Commercial Precinct** (Refer to Concept Plans also)

- ?? Consider a design development overlay for the commercial precinct that encourages creative architectural outcomes and landscape treatments. Developers should be required to submit site analysis plans and reports prior to submission of any concept development and prepared by architects fully conversant with the requirements of the Urban Design Framework. The analysis should exhibit a full understanding of the role of Halls gap as a premier tourist destination and show a full understanding of pedestrian and vehicular movement patterns.
- ?? Northern Grampians Shire Council must make submission to the power authority for assistance to underground the powerlines from School Road to Heath Street (and beyond) as a matter of priority. The criteria for funding application include, environmental, fire risk, heritage, community benefit etc. It is reasonable to assume that Halls gap would score highly in all areas of assessment.
- ?? Northern Grampians Shire Council to consider upgrading the streetscape by removing the traffic islands to narrow the effective width of the roadway and increase the footpath width on the east side of the roadway to create opportunities for el fresco dining and unimpeded walking and bike riding.
- ?? Consider streetscape detailing that capitalises on the use of local materials and textures. For example use sandstone kerb in preference to concrete and timber. Consider using Grampians sandstone for paving or as feature paving panels in conjunction with super fine asphalt paving. Street furniture should be steel framed with timber slats. Street lighting should be of a style that is reflective of the Grampians environment. The use of heritage style lantern lights is not recommended.
- ?? Establish informal arrangements of street trees along both sides of Main Road to reinforce the over storey of indigenous trees throughout Halls Gap.
- ?? Northern Grampians Shire Council in conjunction with the land owner to develop a pedestrian and cycle connection along Stony Creek between Main Road and Heath Street.
- ?? Review the demand and supply for commercially zoned land within the Commercial Precinct. Northern Grampians Shire Council to monitor, growth and demand for different types of services to determine realistic needs and likely growth areas.

- ?? Review the controls on signage and their effectiveness to prevent the proliferation of roadside signage along Grampians Road particularly entrances and areas special interest.
- ?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay for Grampians Road to control setbacks, signage, native vegetation removal, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.

## 7 Camping Precinct

### *Description*

- ?? Consists of the caravan park, camping area and Lake Bellfield campground.
- ?? Generally modified environments with some over-storey remaining.
- ?? Sea of canvas during holiday periods.
- ?? The caravan park attracts large numbers of visitors and concentrates them in central Halls Gap.
- ?? During off-peak periods these spaces become part of the visual open space.

### *Discussion*

The camping precincts in Halls Gap are well located in terms of proximity to the services and facilities available in the commercial area and town centre. Large numbers of people are accommodated during peak periods in these concentrated areas. This brings colour, activity and noise to the centre of Halls gap. Visitors using the camping areas are within easy walking distance to all services and therefore it can be assumed that they place limited pressure on town centre parking areas.

### **Recommendations – Camping Precinct**

- ?? Minimise the use of fences to maintain visual permeability and through access, these are important characteristics of Halls Gap and accord with the high level of 'walk-ability'.
- ?? Encourage the use of local/vernacular materials for kerbs, driveways, buildings etc.
- ?? Need to maintain tree cover, where safe to do so and develop ongoing tree replacement programs.
- ?? Minimise buildings and structures that are visually prominent. Buildings should be designed as site responsive structures using local materials and textures where possible.
- ?? Permanent vans and cabins should be located so that they are sympathetic to the off-season landscape of large open spaces and established tree cover. Additional screen planting may be required to blend these elements into the landscape.
- ?? Reference the Urban Design Framework into the planning scheme to provide for civil works.

## 8 Residential Precinct

### *Description*

- ?? Traditional/conventional homes in standard subdivisions, generally on flat land.
- ?? Accommodation facilities mixed throughout in the form of motels and cottages.
- ?? Modified landscapes, mostly exotic gardens.
- ?? Conveniently located for access to commercial area and other services.
- ?? Provides good accommodation opportunities.

### *Discussion*

The residential precinct is the area along Heath Street, Allison Street and Fyans Street. It occupies the flat land in the northern section of the valley floor. The area represents an established residential area in Halls Gap in close proximity to services and facilities. Some motel and accommodation facilities

occur through this area. There are some remnant over storey trees but the majority have been previously cleared for farming and housing. There are also exotic species that combine with the native trees to form an appealing living environment.

It may be possible to increase the density of development in this precinct without destroying its inherent qualities. Because it is in close proximity to all services and facilities in Halls Gap it is reasonable to assume that visitors staying in this precinct will be less vehicle-reliant and therefore will not place significant pressure on parking areas in the centre of Halls Gap. Bennett (1990 p27) suggested that infill development in suitable areas will absorb some of the pressure placed on the limited vacant land resources in Halls Gap and does not require the same level of infrastructure upgrade to service them.

### **Recommendations – Residential Precinct**

- ?? Infill development of these areas will help maximise the use of existing infrastructure within comfortable walking distance.
- ?? Northern Grampians Shire Council to establish an up to date checking system to monitor supply and demand issue relating to residential and commercial developments. This will ensure that implementation of the framework recommendations can be made and assessed against demand.
- ?? New developments should consider pedestrian access to Stony Creek and Fyans Creek to maximise walking and riding opportunities for residents and visitors to Halls Gap. Northern Grampians Shire Council to incorporate as part of assessment of planning applications.
- ?? Minimise the use of fences to maintain visual permeability and through access.
- ?? Creative architectural solutions are required to maintain a high quality visitor experience.
- ?? Review the controls on signage and their effectiveness to prevent the proliferation of roadside signage along Heath Street particularly entrances and areas special interest.
- ?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay for Heath Street to control setbacks, signage, native vegetation removal, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.
- ?? Review density controls to allow for higher densities in sections of this precinct.
- ?? Review zoning of land in this area that is less than 15% slope for additional land to be zoned R1Z.

## **9 Valley Floor**

### *Description*

- ?? Fyans Creek runs along the eastern edge of the Valley Floor.
- ?? Modified pasture grasses is the dominant vegetation.
- ?? Bordered by established residences and some commercial developments.
- ?? Highly valued open space for viewing of animals by adjoining residences.
- ?? Visible from surrounding lookouts.
- ?? Local views into the Valley Floor are restricted to some of the adjoining roadways and the adjoining private property.
- ?? Large areas are poorly drained land by virtue of its flatness.

### *Discussion*

The valley floor is generally defined as the cleared paddocks between Heath Street and Tandara Road. It provides a contrast of landscape type from the bushland and sandstone cliffs that typify the Grampians setting. The valley floor is viewed from limited areas within the town but is visible from many of the look outs throughout the Grampians and helps visitors to orientate themselves relative to the township.

Local sentiment is strongly opposed to development in this area because of its value for local views and as a wildlife corridor. The area is close to the centre of Halls Gap and is relatively flat. It is not serviced

by roadways and has limited access, primarily through private property. It is believed that sewerage is located near-by. The areas of land that are well drained and clear of flooding may be suitable for some low level, environmentally sound developments for housing or accommodation. These developments should be responsive to the characteristics of the Grampians and be designed to have minimal impact on the natural and aesthetic environment of the valley floor.

Because the valley floor is in a central location; is close to services; has flat topography; is generally cleared of trees and has a relative low fire risk it is preferable to promote development of appropriate type in this area in preference to other areas in and around Halls Gap. There is some concern that a development that is undesirable will be the outcome of the continued pressure being applied to have this land developed. It may therefore be reasonable for the community to consider low-level developments that allow for retention of part of the valley floor as open space and wetland. In this way the community has some input into the outcome and gains some use and benefit from the land.

### *Planning Controls*

Potential development of the valley floor area has been a sensitive issue for the Halls Gap community for many years. Development and rezoning applications for the valley floor have been met with differing opinions within the community and the Council.

In planning terms it is zoned rural, this zoning along with the Local Policy Framework has protected the valley floor from development in recent determinations. The land further south on the valley floor has either been returned to native bushland by various committees of management or regenerated on its own. The remainder of the valley floor is also showing signs of degradation (eg vermin, gully erosion, weed infestation etc) in areas and regeneration in other areas.

The opportunity to develop parts of the valley floor into a community wetland has been tabled and is generally supported by the community. This proposal enables the community to examine the valley floor in detail to determine its values in terms of visual amenity, wildlife corridors etc, whilst recognizing its proximity to town, existing infrastructure, low fire risk etc.

This opportunity may be explored through the introduction of appropriate controls that require the development of an incorporated plan through community input which will ensure that the existing values of the valley floor are maintained whilst providing some areas set aside for appropriately designed accommodation or residential development. The development of the valley floor will be contested until a plan can be incorporated into the planning scheme to protect the interests of the whole community. Should the land owners be willing, this opportunity should not be lost.

The incorporated development plan should at least include the following:

- |                                   |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ?? Building/development envelopes | ?? Tree planting areas   |
| ?? Public access/open space       | ?? Wetland areas         |
| ?? Habitat areas/corridors        | ?? Vehicle access points |
| ?? Creek side buffer              | ?? Traffic management    |

### *Habitat*

While the valley floor attracts some grazing animals (mostly Grey Kangaroos), it is limited in its habitat value because it is an open modified grassland. It is difficult to determine what the vegetation would have been like pre-European settlement but it was probably wet heath land (pers. comm. Graham Parkes PV). The deep erosion of Fyans Creek has altered the hydrology of valley dramatically by lowering the water table and changing the dynamics of the valley floor from a wet ecosystem to one which is primarily dry with localised wetting in low lying areas during winter. From an environmental and aesthetic perspective it is desirable to create an open grassy woodland across the valley to improve its habitat quality and provide screening for future development which is likely to occur. The form and extent of this planting would be determined as part of an overall development plan prepared by the owners of the land preferably in conjunction with Northern Grampians Shire Council and the Halls Gap community.

### *Community Wetlands*

The concept of a community wetland was developed by local resident, Renata Weinert, and has generally received widespread support from the local community. The Northern Grampians Shire Council sees the wetland concept as an opportunity to develop a comprehensive storm water management system to treat the town's storm water in a responsible and environmentally sustainable way before it enters Fyans Creek. This proposal will need considerable negotiation with the landholders and assessment in terms of its value and function as a community facility.

Issues that need to be resolved in order to develop the wetland concept further include:

- |                                       |                          |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| ?? Landholder agreement and ownership | ?? ground water effects  |
| ?? Management responsibilities        | ?? water quality         |
| ?? Public access and safety           | ?? litter interception   |
| ?? Public liability issues            | ?? project cost          |
| ?? Public access                      | ?? habitat values        |
| ?? water storage capacity             | ?? economic benefits etc |

A wetland along the Valley Floor could be used to maximise the natural drainage system and capture the storm water run-off from surrounding developed areas for filtration and storage before entering Fyans Creek. A local storm water management plan would need to be developed and assessed to determine the catchment opportunities and the capacity to capture enough water to maintain reasonable water levels within the proposed community wetland. It would be undesirable to develop a community wetland which was dry for significant periods of the year. The assessment of the proposal would need to consider the water retentive capacity of the local soils to ensure that the wetland will not drain too quickly through the soil profile. The valley soils are sandy and do not generally hold water unless clay lining is used therefore the cost effectiveness of lining the wetland, if required, needs to be assessed early in the development of this concept.

It is likely that an effective wetland will include areas of deep water connected by intermittent channels lined with reeds and other suitable riparian species to maximise filtration of sediment and nutrients and provide varied habitats.

Long water bodies need to be aligned to maximise flight paths and landing areas for aquatic birds and to maximise the visual benefits of the wetland. Therefore a detailed master plan needs to be developed for the wetland as part of the proposed development plan for the whole valley floor. This plan will represent full agreement between the land owners, Council and the community. It will also provide a basis for determining cost and assessing site difficulties and opportunities.

It is possible that the wetland concept will include some peripheral planting of trees, edge planting of riparian species and open grassed areas to maintain some visual permeability. Management of this system will be specialised and will require an understanding of wetland ecology, storm water management, fire risk management, habitat requirements and visitor control

Public access to the wetland will expose people to a different experience not typically associated with the Grampians National Park. But when it is viewed as an environmentally responsible way of managing the towns storm water it is consistent with the intent of the Urban Design Framework which is to achieve high standards in all forms of design and development.

The experience of visitors to the wetland will be greatly enhanced by the use of well placed paths and boardwalks and sensitively located viewing areas and hides to observe birds and animals.

### *Ownership*

The land in the Valley Floor is privately owned and the wetland concept will only work with the co-operation and consent of these land owners. It is unlikely that the owners will hand over portions of their land without some level of compensation or compromise. A reasonable outcome might be that the poorly drained areas of the land are developed as a community wetland and defined as a drainage reserve or easement and defined accordingly as public use in return for the owners right to develop the balance of the site for environmentally sensitive, low density housing or accommodation facilities. This process would require the preparation of a co-ordinated development plan for all the effected land that determined building envelopes, vehicle access, fire risk management, emergency access and egress, service installation, roadways, building types and heights, landscape treatments, tree planting, screening, habitat corridors and animal movement opportunities, environmental design and construction methods, buffers along Fyans Creek and the proposed wetland and other issues that may be deemed necessary.

### Conclusion

The wetland concept does have significant appeal if it is to be developed as an environmentally sound and sustainable way of treating the townships run-off water. This concept would go hand in hand with the notion of Halls Gap as an eco-centre. If permanent water could be stored in the wetland system then the addition of walkways and boardwalks will provide an interesting destination for the residents and visitors who walk around Halls Gap. It will also provide the basis for a wetland ecosystem in the centre of the township and help preserve part of the Valley Floor as a habitat area with open views.

### Recommendations – Valley Floor

- ?? Negotiate with the Valley Floor landholders to develop a community wetland and storm water treatment system on the poorly drained areas of the Valley Floor.
- ?? Assess the probable cost of implementation and the economic benefits of the wetland.
- ?? Determine the capacity of the soils to retain water and the treatment necessary to improve this if required.
- ?? If agreement is reached develop a master plan for the wetland in consultation with the community. The master plan is to be used to for seeking funding assistance and design development.
- ?? Any development must allow for public access and animal movement through the Valley Floor.
- ?? Establish a suitable buffer along Fyans Creek to improve habitat and protect the riparian qualities of the creek and stabilise the creek bank against erosion.
- ?? Minimise the use of fences to maintain visual permeability and habitat passage through the area.
- ?? Buildings should be site responsive, unobtrusive and environmentally sound in their construction and operation. Roadways should be limited in their size and extent and they should be generally aligned across the significant lines of sight.
- ?? Prepare a development plan for all the effected private and public land in the Valley Floor that determines development envelopes, traffic management, wetland areas, public access, tree planting, service alignment etc.
- ?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay Controls for building type, revegetation and preservation of views.
- ?? Review density controls to allow for higher densities in suitable sections of this precinct (ie where vegetation will not be significantly effected and in well drained areas)
- ?? Review current planning controls on the Valley Floor through the incorporation of a master development plan into the planning scheme, via a Development Plan Overlay (DPO) with an appropriate underlying zoning. This will allow the broader issues of the valley floor to be protected rather than a site by site approach.

## 10 Southern Entry

### Description

- ?? Bushland both sides of roadway.
- ?? Some clearing to the east and regenerating bushland.
- ?? Large accommodation complex on west side set back well from roadway. Large open grassed areas and exotic planting not to be encouraged.

### Discussion

This entry precinct creates a natural experience for visitors entering and departing Halls Gap on their way to Dunkeld. It is important that the western edge of the road reserve is maintained as remnant

vegetation and that a buffer of vegetation is maintained in the private property adjoining it to ensure a continuity of landscape type and animal habitat.

The eastern edge is protected by default by virtue of the fact that it is crown land. Works by Parks Victoria for a proposed depot is the only sign of recent development works in this precinct. The Parks Victoria interpretation centre and the Brambuk centre form the northern end of the precinct. Regeneration works by Parks Victoria will improve the landscape amenity of this precinct.

#### **Recommendations – Southern Entry**

- ?? Preserve roadside vegetation. Develop roadside vegetation guidelines for preservation, restoration and new planting works in conjunction with Northern Grampians Shire Council and Parks Victoria, Grampians National Park.
- ?? Limit development on the west side of the roadway to avoid fragmentation of the remnant vegetation.
- ?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay for Grampians Road to control setbacks, signage, native vegetation removal, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.

### **11 Residential Bush Precinct**

#### *Description*

- ?? New and old homes in bushland setting.
- ?? Eucalyptus over-storey still mostly intact.
- ?? Large rock outcrops make interesting landscape features within road reserves and private properties. Encourage the retention of these features (i.e. meander roadways past rocks and trees).
- ?? Many gullies take water from Wonderland Ranges, need for sensitive crossing treatments (eg ridges, fords etc) for roadways and driveways.
- ?? The precinct is outside the 1km walking radius.
- ?? Access roads predominantly not sealed, maintenance and erosion problems.
- ?? High levels of indigenous vegetation on the steep slopes.

#### *Discussion*

The natural bushland and sloping terrain create an attractive place to live. But these qualities can also create a high fire risk and difficulties with the installation and management of roads and services. Development of these areas is not desirable because of the steep slopes require extensive earthworks and this has a detrimental effect on the remnant vegetation. This area is poorly serviced with roads, sewerage and storm water reticulation. It is therefore not desirable to encourage high levels of development in this precinct.

#### **Recommendations – Residential Bush Precinct**

- ?? Encouraged creativity and innovation in architecture.
- ?? Creative house design solutions should be encouraged that reduce the impact on the indigenous vegetation, minimise earthworks and respond sensitively to the surroundings.
- ?? Seal roadways to reduce erosion.
- ?? Consider collection and management of neighbourhood storm water in environmentally stable ways.
- ?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay for Grampians Road to control setbacks, signage, native vegetation removal, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.
- ?? Review density controls to encourage lower densities in this precinct.

## 12 Southern Approach

### *Description*

- ?? Bushland along both sides of Grampians Road, opening to the vast expanse of Lake Bellfield on the east side of the roadway.
- ?? The stone-faced dam embankment is imposing. The current low water level of the dam accentuates the visual impact of the dam wall.
- ?? The visitor car park is very large and appears to be in excess of the demand for parking at the look out.
- ?? 1950's-1960's style stone look out represents a design style that is relevant today and the use of vernacular building materials provide inspiration for the type of building outcomes that should be encouraged in Halls Gap.

### *Discussion*

This approach creates a bushland experience for visitors to Halls Gap. This approach is not considered to be the main vehicle route for visitors to Halls Gap (Datab, 1995 p56) therefore aesthetic changes to the roadside environment should not be given priority over other approaches and entry points. It is not likely that there will be significant pressure for development in this area because it is predominantly crown land, steep terrain, and water catchment area and because it is not on the main visitor access.

Some improvements to the car park area to reduce the area of asphalt are desirable in the long term. It is important to maximise tree cover for shade and aesthetic to continue the bushland character of this southern approach along the roadway and to blend the information shelter into the natural surroundings. There are some who believe that the dam wall, car park and other engineered structures are characteristic of an era when consideration of the valley ecosystem was not regarded as a priority. When the notion that '*nature had to be harnessed to serve man*' was the predominant view. Therefore by leaving it as it is serves as a reminder of what not to do and helps us to understand the past and appreciate the benefits of a holistic approach to design.

<b>Recommendations- Southern Approach</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? Maintain the bushland character of southern approach by preserving all existing vegetation and encouraging natural regeneration where possible.</li> <li>?? Plant locally indigenous trees throughout the Lake Bellfield car park and along the roadsides where vegetation is sparse to reinforce the roadside vegetation and soften the engineered views of the dam wall. Consult Wimmera Mallee Water for approval and assistance.</li> <li>?? Review the controls on signage and their effectiveness to prevent the proliferation of roadside signage along Grampians Road particularly entrances and areas special interest.</li> <li>?? Introduce new Design and Development Overlay for Grampians Road to control setbacks, signage, native vegetation removal, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.</li> </ul>

## Map 5 Precincts

## 8.0 Movement Patterns

### Discussion

Movement studies were undertaken on February 7, 2001 and March 14, 2001. The studies involved observation and mapping of vehicle and pedestrian movement patterns during a one hour period at, or about, midday. It was felt that this time of day was best to observe local residents and visitors and how they used the commercial centre. For the purpose of this report Main Road is used to define the section of Grampians Road from Delley's Bridge to Heath Street and Pool Road defines the road that runs between Main Road and School Road adjoining the pool.

The observer, for the movement study, was located within the green triangle of the Pool Road car park because this gave the best vantage point for observation of vehicles entering and leaving the car park and for vehicles travelling along Main Road. The study brief required that the movement study focus on the activity surrounding the proposed location for the information centre which was to be located in the Pool Road car park near the Stony Creek bridge.

The observer believed that it was possible to pick the difference between local residents and visitors by the way they used car parking areas, their familiarity with local traffic movements, and the purposeful way in which they went about their activities.

Local residents driving north generally parked in the northern section of the Pool Road car park because they could then double back through the semi-circular car park and turn south into Main Road. Locals travelling south into the commercial area generally made use of the parallel parking adjoining the shops. The locals then walked deliberately toward the shopping area. Many of these trips included a visit to the post office, the bakery and the supermarket.

Visitors to Halls Gap made seemed unsure as to where they should park. They generally drove slowly and without purpose. It is probable that they found difficulty interpreting access points into the car park.

The fortunate aspect of the observed vehicle movements was that vehicle volumes were low and vehicles generally travelled at low speed, which gave time for new visitors, unfamiliar with the car park, to survey the roadway before making their decision to enter the car park.

The other aspect to this low volume – low speed vehicle environment is that it creates a relatively safe environment for pedestrians. The movement study revealed that the vast majority of pedestrians used the vehicle entries to the Pool Road car park as a pathway and for crossing Main Road to the shopping centre. This was probably because there are few pathways and the gravel pathways that exist are difficult to differentiate from the worn gravel areas surrounding them. But it is also likely that the pedestrians did not feel threatened by walking along the vehicle entries.

It is probable that during peak periods the risk of conflict between pedestrians and vehicles using the same entry points will be high. It is therefore reasonable that consideration of the reduction of this risk and provision of safe crossing areas away from the vehicle entries be made as part of the concept development for this part of the commercial area.

During the movement studies there were a noticeable number of 'U' turns made by cars travelling both directions. This is not to be seen as a problem in a low speed environment (maximum speed 40km) but road design options may need to make allowance for 'U' turns along Main Road. It is not suggested that designated 'U' turn facilities be installed but road width and location of opposing parking areas may need consideration.

### Results of Movement Study

*Movement Study 7/02/01 12:00am – 1:00 noon (refer Map 6 at the end of this section)*

#### Vehicle movements 7/02/01

Vehicles travelling south (cars & minibuses & caravans & transports) = 64.

Of these (8+6+4+2) = 20 (i.e. 31%) turned into the Pool Road car park or undertook 'U' turns. 69% of the vehicles that travelled along Main Road did not stop.

Vehicles travelling north (cars & minibuses & caravans & transports) = 57.

Of these (6+4+10+2) = 22 (i.e. 39%) turned into the Pool Road car park. 61% of the vehicles that travelled along Main Road did not stop.

The majority of traffic leaving the Pool Road car park exited from the southern access and turned south into Main Road. 9 vehicles exited the car park to School Road.

### **Pedestrian Movements 7/02/01**

Pedestrians generally moved across Main Road in a direct line from the Pool Road car park. The majority of pedestrians walked along the asphalt roadway and crossed at the car park access points. Of the 61 crossing movements 75% of people used the vehicle entrances to the Pool Road parking area. People tended to cross the road diagonally. Perpendicular crossings have been shown on the map for clarity.

### Movement Study 14/03/01 11:00am – 12:00 noon (refer Map 7at the end of this section)

*Note: Traffic flows through Pool Road to School Road were closed because of road works.*

### **Vehicle movements 14/03/01**

Vehicles travelling south (cars and minibus and caravans) = 40.

Of these  $(9 + 2 + 8 + 3) = 22$  (i.e. 55%) turned off to park in the parallel spaces alongside the shops or into the Pool Road parking area. 45% of the vehicles that travelled along Main Road did not stop.

Vehicles travelling north = 61.

Of these  $(2 + 12 + 8) = 22$  (i.e. 33%) turned off into the Pool Road parking area. 64% of these vehicles did not stop.

### **Pedestrian movements 14/03/01**

*Note: A large tourist bus was parked in School Road. Lots of passengers were in the park using all the available tables and meandering through out the township.*

Very few people crossed Main Road using the central islands. People generally felt comfortable to wander from the Pool Road car park to the east side of the street using the roadways. Of the 107 crossing movements  $(29+13)= 42$  (i.e. 39%) used the two vehicle entrances to the Pool Road parking area. There were a significant number of older people (27% of pedestrian crossings) crossing in a northeast direction from the car park triangle to the Stony Creek shops. This pattern was attributed to a touring bus being parked to the southwest in School Road. Many of the bus travellers were using the tables in the park.

### *General notes and observations re movement studies:*

- ?? *Rotundas not well patronised – may depend on weather.*
- ?? *El fresco dining in front of the 'Coffee Shop' is not as popular as might be expected given the magnificent views of the Wonderland Ranges. This may be a reflection of the service and quality of food from the 'Coffee Shop'.*
- ?? *2-3 cars parked at most times in front of Information Centre.*

### **Discussion of Pedestrian Movements**

The typical pedestrian movement pattern shows a strong desire to move directly from the car parking area to the shopping precinct via the roadways. This creates a potential for conflict between vehicles and pedestrians at the two entries to the car park. This conflict is easily managed under the existing system during off-peak periods when pedestrians and vehicles are at low numbers. It is appropriate that consideration be made for suitable pedestrian crossing areas that provide refuge and safety during the peak holiday periods. This should be considered as part of any overall revitalisation of the commercial area.

It is worth noting that most of the pedestrian movements were made in groups of 2-4 people. Therefore crossing areas should be designed to accommodate groups of pedestrians.

Once pedestrians crossed Main Road they invariably moved up and down the shopping strip in groups of 2-4. This suggests that widened pathways would be well used. Local patrons made deliberate movements especially from their parked car to the post office. Most of these people made use of the adjoining parallel parking in Main Road.

It was assumed that the majority of people promenading along the footpath were visitors to Halls Gap. It was our observation that the footpath, especially under the verandah in front of the Newsagency and adjoining shops, was dark and narrow. Grand vistas of the Pinnacle Ranges to the west could be afforded if the footpath was widened and seating was positioned clear of the verandah with unimpeded views to the ranges.

Design options for the Commercial area should maximise the opportunity for pedestrians to make choices when crossing the road and create the options for them to cross freely in a relaxed environment. Traffic management devices designed to assist safe pedestrian passage should be low key, subtle elements that do not encumber the streetscape with hard-edged urban characteristics.

### **Discussion of Vehicle Movements**

Interestingly 45-69% of vehicles observed travelling in both directions along Main Road did not stop. Some of these vehicles were on a return visit having been observed driving through the shopping centre previously. This observation, although not conclusive, suggests that there are a significant proportion of vehicles travelling through the centre that do not require parking or do not need to stop at the shops. It is reasonable to assume that this through traffic may use a by-pass route that took them clear of the commercial area. Further research into these traffic movements may be required but if a by-pass route could attract 20% of traffic away from Main Street it would have a significant reduction on the vehicular activity in the central area.

Most vehicle activity occurred at the southern entry/exit to the Pool Road car park probably because vehicles travelling south along Main Road cannot turn into the northern entry/exit because of the central median. Likewise cars cannot exit this access and turn south into Main Road because of the median. Interestingly this did create some confusion and some cars entering the commercial area from the north were observed doing a "U" turn around the median and then entering the car park through the northern entry/exit. One vehicle was observed exiting through the northern entry/exit and travelling northwards on the wrong side of the road before entering the south bound lane.

30 in/out vehicle movements occurred at the southern entry/exit on the 7/02/01 whilst 17 in/out movements occurred at the northern entry/exit. Likewise 31 in/out vehicle movements occurred at the southern entry/exit on the 14/03/01 whilst 14 in/out movements occurred at the northern entry/exit. The direction in which vehicle travelled on exiting the car park was equally divided in both directions. The majority of northbound vehicles exited via the northern entry/exit whilst all southbound vehicles exited from the southern entry/exit. These movement patterns indicate that the primary entry and exit point to the car park is at the southern entry/exit. Any alterations to the roadway and central median would affect these movement patterns.

Likewise the proposal to locate the tourist information centre adjacent Stony Creek in the northern section of the Pool Road car park would increase movement activity in and out of the car park and place significant pressure on the level of pedestrian and vehicle movement at the northern entry/exit point. The location of this centre needs to be reconsidered in relation to its impact on the movement patterns in the central commercial area where traffic and pedestrian movements are at their most active. It is recommended that the tourist information centre be located clear of this central area in a location where it can comfortably accommodate vehicles and visitors without placing undue pressure on the existing movement patterns and increasing the conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.

### *Bus Parking*

Anecdotal evidence suggests that buses need consideration in the development of appropriate traffic management recommendations for Halls Gap. Large touring buses are more likely to visit Halls Gap during the weekend and are not generally considered to be a problem on weekends. Minibuses appear to be active during most times but they are more manoeuvrable and do not require large storage areas for parking. Many of the minibuses observed during the movement study were tour operators that did not park within the commercial area or only parked briefly.

During the course of the movement studies and other visits to Halls Gap buses were rarely sighted although 2 large buses were observed parking in the bus parking area adjoining the Pool Road triangle after completion of the movement study on the 14/03/01. Angie Lush (pers. comm.) suggested that allowance for 5 busses is required to accommodate school groups and visitors to the information centre. It was obvious then that large buses should not be encouraged to park in this location because of visibility issues for pedestrians and vehicles moving in and out of the Pool Road car park. There is also the question of aesthetic and large buses parked on the Main Road are visually intrusive. The option to use School Road for large vehicle parking seems preferable because it eases the vehicle pressure on Main Road and encourages bus travellers and drivers to walk through the park to the shops. School Road parking is within a comfortable walk for most able-bodied travellers. Buses can also be screened by the established trees along School Road.

It is recommended that informal granitic sand type parking areas be provided for buses along School Road between Grampians Road and Stony Creek and that designated bus parking (sealed) be incorporated along School Road adjoining the playground.

### **Motorbikes**

Likewise we were made aware of the need for dedicated motorbike parking because groups of bikers frequented Halls Gap on weekends and park on the grassed triangle. This causes degradation of the grass surface and alienates this area as a people space.

Designated motorbike parking areas and suitable low-key barriers need to be considered to provide bikers with a suitable stopping area and protect the grassed triangle.

### **Cyclists**

Movement patterns by cyclists were not identified by our movement study. For the sake of this report we refer to the bike routes identified in the "Halls Gap Townscape Strategy" prepared by Niemman & Partners in 1997 and the recommendations made in the Northern Grampians Bicycle Strategy prepared by Parklinks in 2000.

Halls Gap is an ideal location for cyclists of all levels. The Northern Grampians Bicycle Strategy makes recommendations as to the types of bike paths that need to be considered. The general preference is for off-road trails in townships. The wide treed verges of Grampians Road afford the opportunity to meander the trail through the roadside vegetation as per the existing pathway between Halls Gap and the Parks Victoria Centre. Issues of surfacing and maintenance responsibilities need to be resolved to ensure that the pathway is comfortable and safe and will attract cyclists and pedestrians away from Grampians Road. Anecdotal evidence from Graham Parkes, Parks Victoria, suggests that elderly walkers prefer to use the shoulder of Grampians Road because they do not feel stable on the gravel walkway. This creates an obvious safety problem. Surfacing of the pathway needs to be considered to improve user comfort. Parklinks (2000, p19) recommended that the Northern Grampians Shire Council, VicRoads, and Parks Victoria develop a 2.5m wide asphalt trail from the Pomonal Road turnoff to Lake Bellfield.

A widened shared pathway constructed of asphalt raises the issues of bike speed and walker safety, aesthetics and maintenance. If it were possible to maintain a well-graded granitic sand type surface this would be preferable because it discourages speeding cyclists, is aesthetically pleasing and feels comfortable for most able-bodied walkers and is flexible.

A survey by Parklink in their 2000 Strategy showed that the majority of recreational riders in the Northern Grampians Shire were 31-60 years of age. 18% of cyclists were under 15 years old, therefore off-road cycling is preferable because it gives families the opportunity to ride in safety.

Parks Victoria have responsibility for the majority of trails in the Grampians and have identified the potential to extend this network to include a trail from Halls Gap to Lake Bellfield and possibly linking with a 200km circuit around the Grampians (Parklink, 2000 p.13).

It is desirable to provide good off-road bicycle facilities in Halls Gap because of the influx of large numbers of tourists at peak holiday times and because of their unfamiliarity with the local roads.

Where roadways carrying low traffic volumes provide alternative routes for shared trails or bike paths (eg. Heath Street) these should be considered. Likewise un-opened road reserves and other parcels of public land should also be assessed for use as off-road trails. The Townscape Strategy (Niemman & Partners 1997) proposes a route along Heath Street and an alternative route along Mount Victory Road and along the un-named road reserve west of the recreation reserve. The only problem with the Heath Street-Fyans Creek routes is the need to cross Grampians Road at Delley's Bridge to join the pathway along the north side of Grampians Road. If this is considered a safe crossing point by VicRoads and the traffic engineers at Northern Grampians Shire Council then suitable signage or designation will be required.

It is worth noting that footpath cycling is only legal for cyclists under the age of 12 except in specially defined areas near shopping centres (Parklinks, 2000 p.29). If the pathway along the commercial area was widened to accommodate walkers, riders and al fresco dining this would be preferable to restricting bike use to the west side of Main Road. Northern Grampians Shire Council needs to ensure appropriate designation of the commercial area for footpath cycling for all ages.

Halls Gap should endeavour to encourage the increased use of bicycles within and around the town to reduce vehicle pressures on roads and car parks. Parklinks (2000, p.3) suggests community bike activities and need to be established to market Halls Gap as a bike friendly and safe township. Development of bike maps is also considered an important promotional tool. The use of bikes can also be promoted as part of the high quality environmental experience in the Grampians.

Parklinks recommends that Northern Grampians Shire Council seek Vicroads funding as a matter of priority to develop an off-road trail through Halls Gap.

**Recommendations - Movement Patterns** (Refer Concept Plans also)

- ?? Develop a Master Plan based generally on the streetscape concept (refer Map 11 Town Square Concept and Map 8 Town Centre Concept) and recommendations in the Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997) for the redevelopment of the Main Road streetscape that gives precedent to pedestrian movement and activity in the commercial area and creates logical and safe options for vehicle movements.
- ?? The Master Plan should provide pedestrians with a number of options to cross the road in safe and relaxed manner in groups of 2-4 people. Pedestrians should not be constrained by conventional crossing points and barriers. The philosophy is to encourage walking in preference to driving. Traffic management devices should be aesthetically pleasing, low-key elements that are consistent with the streetscape themes recommended in this report.
- ?? Widen the pathway along the eastern side of Main Road to accommodate groups of walkers, outdoor seating and eating opportunities.
- ?? Improve the legibility of entry into the Pool Road car park especially for visitors entering the commercial area from the north.
- ?? Consider providing alternative routes for traffic to travel clear of Main Road. It is proposed that Heath Street will be developed to cater for the majority of through traffic. Once Heath Street is established it is recommended that School Road be developed to provide an option for vehicles and to improve access to existing parking
- ?? Consider locating the Tourist Information Centre clear of the busy area of the Pool Road car park and Main Road near Stony Creek Bridge. Two locations are proposed. Option A is adjoining the Community Hall on the corner of Heath Street and Main Road. Option B is west of the Pool building where it is well serviced by School Road and the existing car parking and the newly upgraded section of Pool Road. (Refer Maps 8, 10, 11).

## **Movement Study Maps**

**Map 6 Movement Study 7/2/01**

**Map 7 Movement Study 14/3/01**

## 9.0 Commercial Area

### Commercial Precinct

The Townscape Plan (Niemann 1997) identifies a number of key recommendations in relation to the commercial area -fronting Grampians Road. The recommendations have been reviewed and the consultants generally support these guidelines.

However the recommendation in relation to building setbacks from the title boundary, the consultants believe requires further review particularly in light of existing building alignments and the opportunity for extending the footpath / landscape elements into the existing roadway.

It is proposed that future guidelines should relate specifically to continuity of the existing streetscape.

The recommendation by Niemann (1997) relating to verandah placement and continuity of verandahs is one that may be further defined in accordance with the proposed new street alignment and corresponding design for verandahs at this location.

### Heath Street

It is assumed that construction of Heath Street including a bridge will provide opportunities for business expansion. The land abutting Heath Street is appropriately zoned to accommodate business development and suitably located to capitalise on development opportunities should the demand arise.

Careful planning of this area should be carried out to ensure that the main focus of the entry into Town is the National Park and that main shopping strip along Grampians Road remains as the township focus. Care needs also to be taken to ensure that Heath Street does not become a back street with the rear of the shops and the hall creating the main focus of the streetscape.

### The Town Square

A revised Town Square has been shown to compliment the Community Hall and proposed Tourist Information Centre on the corner of Heath Street and Grampians Road (Refer Map 11 Town Square Concept).

The main features are:

- ?? A formal large paved area that will provide for overflow from the Community Hall and the proposed Tourist Information Centre.
- ?? A formal arrangement of selected trees to denote the space.
- ?? Relocation of the flag pole from the Pool Road car park area.
- ?? Suitable park seating.
- ?? Pathway and step access from Heath Street.
- ?? Development of the adjoining section of roadway as parkland if Main Road is re-routed. This will provide additional open space that could be used for festivals or other outdoor events in conjunction with the Community Hall and the Town Square.

### Assessment of the Tourist Information Centre

Based on the visual analysis of the township and assessment of the movement patterns by vehicles and pedestrians it is proposed that re-consideration of the siting of the Information Centre be made. The current proposal is to locate the centre in the existing car park area adjoining the Stony Creek Bridge (as per the Niemann Study (1997)). It is felt that given the high level of vehicle and pedestrian activity in this area the addition of the centre will add more pressure on parking and increase the potential conflict between pedestrians crossing Main Road to the shops and vehicles turning into the car park.

The existing centre is temporarily located in the Community Hall at the southern end of Main Road. It appears by all accounts to be functioning very successfully. Indeed it appears that by virtue of its prominent streetscape location it is attracting users who would not otherwise seek the service of a business information centre (*pers. comm. Angie Lush*). The expectation of the community is that the centre will be removed from the hall so that it can resume operation as a community facility.

The Urban Design Framework proposes that consideration be given to two possible locations for a regional Tourist Information Centre. An initial proposal to locate the new centre between the swimming pool building and School Road (refer sketch 1, 2 and 3 following this section) was not well received by

the community at the public meeting on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> April. It was generally considered that the centre should be located on the triangular piece of land adjoining the Community Hall at the intersection of Heaths Street and Grampians Road.

Option A. The rationale for locating the Tourist Information Centre on the triangular piece of land adjoining the Community Hall was as follows:

- ?? It was a popular choice by the community.
- ?? It is located on the main thoroughfare and therefore should be easily located by users.
- ?? It has dual frontage to Grampians Road and Heath Street.
- ?? When Heath Street is constructed it will provide roadside parking.
- ?? If Grampians Road is re-routed at this end more public open space will be provided that can be used to improve the setting of this location by the addition of tree planting, grassed areas, paths etc.

Problems with this location include:

- ?? The piece of land is very small.
- ?? The setting is not ideal for a landmark regional centre given the current roadway alignment.
- ?? If Heath Street is not constructed then the centre will not fulfil its potential.
- ?? The streetscape and building facades are not particularly inspiring.
- ?? It will be difficult to design a landmark building in close proximity to the hall and on a site that is so small.

Option B. The rationale for selecting the site adjoining the pool building was as follows:

- ?? The School Road bridge will soon be reconstructed and will be able to accommodate increased traffic flows. It is possible that visitors will use School Road to avoid the commercial area therefore it may become a by-pass route by default.
- ?? Improvements to the Pool Road car parking are underway and will give improved access and increased parking for a new information centre located near the pool.
- ?? Parking for bus groups can be accommodated in School Road. Informal gravel parking is recommended along the east side of the roadway, north of the bridge.
- ?? The site is within easy walking distance of the commercial area. Visitors will be encouraged to park at the centre and walk to the shops or vice versa.
- ?? The centre can be made visible from the commercial area in order to flag its location to new arrivals.
- ?? The site is located to maximise views of the Wonderland Ranges so that visitors to the centre will feel as if they are within the National Park.
- ?? This location is conveniently located at the entrance to the Pinnacle Walk, Venus Baths and others.
- ?? It may be possible to incorporate the pool building and upgrade it as part of the information centre development. Sharing of services and facilities between the two buildings will also be possible.

Problems with this location include:

- ?? It occupies public parkland.
- ?? It may not be close enough to the commercial centre if Heath Street is constructed and therefore difficult to find.
- ?? Concerns about the adequacy of parking for cars and buses during peak times.
- ?? Concerns about additional vehicle activity being encouraged in the vicinity of the school.

The two options for siting the Tourist Information Centre are included in this report because they provide realistic alternatives to siting the centre. The old CRB site was proposed as a possible location for the

centre, at the public meeting, but was later discounted because it has been sold and because its location was not deemed to be conveniently located to the commercial centre.

It is proposed that further investigation into the siting of the centre focusing on these locations be undertaken to determine the most suitable site. Issues that need consideration include:

- ?? the realities of Heath Street being constructed
- ?? the availability of funding for the centre
- ?? the exact size of the centre
- ?? traffic management and parking requirements for cars and buses

### **The Tourist Information Centre Concept** (Refer sketch 1, 2 & 3 by Morton Dunn Architects)

The concept drawings prepared by Morton Dunn Architects were prepared primarily for the site adjoining the pool buildings but the design philosophy, materials etc can be readily adapted for use on the site at the corner of Heath Street and Grampians Road (see Map 11 Town Square Concept).

The key elements of the Tourist Information Centre concept are listed below:

- ?? Design Philosophy - The proposed information centre gathers its inspiration from the majestic environment, earth, water, sky.
- ?? Building Form - The built form is one that draws from the landscape the solid base of stone leads to soaring lines light, space...
- ?? Materials - Materials shall be selected from a rich, environmental palette: stone, timber, steel and glass
- ?? Landscape - It is proposed that the landscape and building become one. Landscape elements form part of the building while the building flows into the landscape....
- ?? Orientation - The building is oriented for northerly aspect and visibility (visibility both in terms of identification and presence from the outside and from the inside looking out)
- ?? Outlook/Views - Roof forms window placement and orientation ensure that the experience of the environment is not diminished on entry to the building

## **Tourist Information Centre Option B**

**Sketch 1**

**Sketch 2**

**Sketch 3**

**Commercial Centre Concepts** (Refer drawings Map 8, Map 9, Sketch 4, Map 10 and Map 11 following this section)

The main features of the recommended changes to the commercial area as follows:

*Main Road (ie the length of Grampians Road adjoining the shopping precinct)*

- ?? Give priority to pedestrians by increasing the walkway width along Main Road.
- ?? Reduce the width of Main Road, create angle parking on the east side and provide opportunities for el fresco dining.
- ?? Create opportunities for street tree planting.
- ?? Underground powerlines along Main Road and Grampians Road to enable street tree planting especially in the Commercial area.
- ?? Endeavour to create a pedestrian link between Main Road and Heath Street along Stony Creek to provide an informal 'green' link between the two areas.
- ?? Upgrade the meeting and starting area in the green triangle of the Pool Road car park for the Parks Victoria walks (see Pool Road Concept Map 10).

*Heath Street*

- ?? Construct Heath Street as a main road connecting with Grampians Road north of the Mt Victory Road intersection to take some of the through traffic now using Main Road. This will involve creating a significant bridge structure, or other, at Stony Creek and will require tree removal along the unopened section of the Heath Street road reserve. (Refer Map 8 Town Centre Concept). The Heath Street project is subject to the approval of Vicroads and the securing of adequate funding.
- ?? Tree planting needs to occur along Heath Street to ensure that the roadside theme of Eucalyptus over storey is maintained for this section of roadway.
- ?? Design detailing of the proposal needs to be undertaken with due care to ensure that the project meets design standards that are reflective of the Grampians environment and commensurate with the quality of detailing achieved throughout the Grampians National Park.
- ?? Proposed car parking in Heath Street to proceed generally as described in the Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997). Ensure adequate tree planting in Heath Street to provide roadside over storey and screen the rear of the commercial buildings.
- ?? Underground power lines where possible as part of the Heath Street road works to improve the visual amenity and provide room for street tree canopies.
- ?? Parking areas should be constructed in discrete blocks to allow for adequate street tree planting between. This will avoid vast areas of the road side being laid out as parking and help to create an aesthetically pleasing roadway in the long term.

*School Road*

- ?? When Heath Street is constructed develop School Road and the re-routing of Main Road generally as depicted in the concepts. Refer Map 9 Town Centre Entry Concept, Map 11 Town Square Concept and Map 8 Town Centre Concept.
- ?? School Road to have a 40km/h speed limit.
- ?? Consider installing a safety crossing for the primary school and a suitable crossing for pedestrians crossing School Road from the caravan park during holiday periods.
- ?? Establish a well defined roadside car park in front of the primary school on School Road.

*Town Square*

- ?? Reclaim the existing roadway between the Community Hall and Heath Street as open space and establish indigenous trees through out this area to create a 'green' vista along Main Road and provide an open parkland area adjoining the proposed Tourist Information Centre.

- ?? Use the additional open space to establish a 'Town Square' between the Community Hall and proposed Tourist Information Centre.
- ?? Provide public toilets to replace the existing amenities which will be consumed if the proposed Tourist Information Centre is developed here. Incorporate public toilets within the building.

### *Streetscape Detailing*

- ?? Streetscape Detailing should be consistent in theme and quality with the treatments used by Parks Victoria in the car parks throughout the Grampians. Detailing should capitalise on the use of local materials and textures. For example use sandstone kerb in preference to concrete and timber. Consider using Grampians sandstone for paving or as feature paving panels in conjunction with super fine asphalt paving. Street furniture should be steel framed with timber slats. Street lighting should be of a style that is reflective of the Grampians environment. The use of heritage style lantern lights is not recommended. Key elements are summarised below:

*Split Grampians sandstone kerbing*

*Sandstone feature paving in selected areas. Asphalt pathways elsewhere where intensive use is likely.*

*Granitic sand paths in parks and informal areas.*

*Timber furniture with steel frames – simple, elegant, natural.*

*Lighting – discrete and compatible with the National Park theme (i.e. heritage style lighting not desirable)*

*Bollards – low key, durable, simple (i.e. steel)*

*Bin hides – upgrade existing bin hides (i.e. timber/steel) and locate them where they are not visually dominant.*

### *General*

- ?? Formalise gravel parking area opposite the Community Hall to create more useable space and protect trees from soil compaction and root damage from vehicle activity.
- ?? Endeavour to protect trees throughout township by careful design and maintenance of roadways. Where required install stone kerbing, bollards, or other suitable barriers, to protect trees from parking vehicles along roadways and in parking areas.
- ?? Identify areas that could accommodate overflow parking during peak use. These areas to be delineated as secondary parking by the use of informal materials such as granitic sand, bollards etc. Consider areas along School Road (northern end) and Main Road (northern end)
- ?? Upgrade the Pool Road car park to formalise parking already practised in this area and to create a stronger vehicle link between Main Road and School Road.
- ?? Establish a suitable entry sign (see sketch 4) at the School Road/Grampians Road intersection to designate Town Centre.
- ?? Plant indigenous over storey trees in the areas of reclaimed land at the new intersection of School Road/Grampians Road.

## **Town Centre Concepts**

**Map 8 Town Centre Concept**

**Map 9 Town Centre Entry Concept**

**(School Rd / Grampians Rd Intersection)**

**Sketch 4 Sketch Concept - Entry Sign**

**Map 10 Pool Road Concept**

**(Option B Tourist Information Centre)**

**Map 11 Town Square Concept**

**(Option A Tourist Information Centre)**

**Map 12 Delley's Bridge Picnic Ground Concept**

## 10.0 Summary Recommendations / Strategic Actions

Collation of all recommendations as a summary list for future action.

### *Environment*

Northern Grampians Shire Council to develop a roadside and tree management plan for the preservation and enhancement of roadside vegetation and the protection and replacement of the tree overstorey on public land.

Northern Grampians Shire Council to develop a program of road sealing works to resolve erosion problems and enable the management of storm water. Roadway designs to be site responsive and reflective of the Grampians setting. Limit the use of too many engineered elements such as kerb etc in preference to centre roadway drainage and grassed verges.

Northern Grampians Shire Council in conjunction with Parks Victoria and NRE to develop a control strategy for all new works in Halls Gap to combat the spread of Cinnamon Fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*).

Northern Grampians Shire Council in conjunction with Parks Victoria and NRE to encourage an awareness of pest plants and animals to ensure the future development of Halls Gap does not threaten natural values and degrade the overall quality of the township and its setting.

Facilitate the development of low-key, self-accommodating, farm style accommodation in the northern approaches precinct. Modify the Northern Grampians Shire Council Planning Scheme as required to allow for such developments. Maintain Rural Zoning's where applicable.

Ensure all vegetation retention and regeneration complies with fire risk management guidelines and promote an awareness of fire risk and sensible risk management amongst the new and existing residents and landlords in Halls Gap.

Establish informal arrangements of street trees along both sides of Main Road to reinforce the overstorey of indigenous trees throughout Halls Gap.

### *Valley Floor*

Negotiate with the Valley Floor landholders to develop a community wetland and storm water treatment system on the poorly drained areas of the Valley Floor. If agreement is reached develop a master plan for the wetland in consultation with the landholders, the shire and the community. The master plan is to be used to for seeking funding assistance and design development.

Things to consider in the development of the master plan are:

- ?? Assess the probable cost of implementation and the economic benefits of the wetland.
- ?? Determine the capacity of the soils to retain water and the treatment necessary to improve this if required.
- ?? Allow for public access and animal movement through the Valley Floor.
- ?? Establish a suitable buffer along Fyans Creek to improve habitat and protect the riparian qualities of the creek and stabilise the creek bank against erosion.
- ?? Minimise the use of fences to maintain visual permeability and habitat passage through the area.
- ?? Buildings should be site responsive, unobtrusive and environmentally sound in their construction and operation.
- ?? Roadways should be limited in their size and extent and they should be generally aligned across the significant lines of sight.

Prepare a development plan for all the effected private and public land in the Valley Floor that determines development envelopes, traffic management, wetland areas, public access, tree planting, service alignment etc.

Review density controls to allow for higher densities in suitable sections of this precinct (ie where vegetation will not be significantly effected and in well drained areas).

Review current planning controls on the Valley Floor through the incorporation of a master development plan into the planning scheme, via a Development Plan Overlay (DPO) with an appropriate underlying zoning. This will allow the broader issues of the valley floor to be protected rather than a site-by-site approach.

#### *Development*

Northern Grampians Shire Council to develop an appropriate assessment mechanism and provide design input for significant developments in Halls Gap to ensure that the high landscape values of Halls Gap are retained and enhanced.

Developments in Halls Gap to be responsive to the site conditions and reflect the natural qualities of the Grampians surrounds and be designed, constructed and managed in an environmentally sustainable manner consistent with its National Park setting.

#### *Tourism*

Northern Grampians Shire Council to undertake monitoring of visitation types and vehicle movements to enable responsive planning for vehicle management within Halls Gap.

Determine an upper limit for visitor capacity to enable future planning of resource and facility needs.

#### *Business*

Motivate local business to maintain high level of service all year round to meet the demands of a varied tourist market. Create opportunities for motivated, innovative business to supply high quality service and goods to the Halls Gap community and tourist market.

#### *Community*

Ensure the needs of the volunteer community in Halls Gap are well catered for to assist them in the valuable contributions they make to the community and township of Halls Gap.

#### *Services*

Assess service needs for the township including:

- ?? Gas
- ?? Electricity
- ?? Telephone etc

#### *Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997)*

Implement the recommendations of the Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997) as described and commented on in the summary of recommendations Appendix 1. Each of the recommendations made in the Niemann study should be assessed on their merits and implemented generally in association with the recommendations made and the concept plans developed in this report.

#### *Statutory Planning*

Undertake a land use study to identify the actual supply and demand for residential and commercial land. This may inturn result in changes to the MSS and Local Policy.

Review current Design & Development Overlay Control (DDO1) with a view to broaden controls. The schedule to DDO 1 requires review to increase the controls over development and works within these areas. The current controls only extend to buildings over 5 metres and buildings using reflective materials, this will still allow inappropriate designs. The controls should encourage contemporary architecture using traditional materials.

Prepare a new Design and Development Control (DDO2) for the Grampians Road to provide additional controls on the main road through Halls Gap. These controls are to protect the entry points and "village feel" through township by introducing controls on issues such as setbacks, signage, native vegetation, landscaping, car parking, fencing and visual amenity.

Review Wildfire Management Overlay Controls with a view to coordinating relevant statutory documents such as Designated Bushfire Areas (Building Act 1993) and the Municipal Fire Prevention Plan. This review should also co ordinate potential overlapping issues created by the Vegetation Protection Overlay Controls. The use of land management plans to accompany applications should be encouraged. Council should develop guidelines to assist with the preparation of Site Management Plans in regard to vegetation protection, fire risk management, erosion control, earthworks, machinery hygiene etc.

Consider a design development overlay for the commercial precinct that encourages creative architectural outcomes and landscape treatments. Developers should be required to submit site analysis plans and reports prior to submission of any concept development and prepared by architects fully conversant with the requirements of the Urban Design Framework. The analysis should exhibit a full understanding of the role of Halls Gap as a premier tourist destination and show a full understanding of pedestrian and vehicular movement patterns.

Reference the Urban Design Framework into the planning scheme.

Where new development projects occur within open cleared areas that are visually ensure that adequate tree planting occurs along Grampians Road and internal roadways. Use indigenous trees to compliment adjoining bushland areas and promote the environmental qualities of the Grampians.

Consolidate development in areas that do not detrimentally affect the landscape experience for visitors to the Grampians. Encourage node type projects (or other) where factors such as slope, vegetation retention, landscape amenity, visual prominence etc allow developments to occur without detrimentally affecting the entry experience for visitors to the Grampians.

New developments should be set back from the roadway. Car parking should be located to the side or the rear of buildings.

Encourage the planting of over storey indigenous trees on private property and as part of new development proposals.

Delley's Bridge has historic qualities and aesthetic appeal. Replacement of the bridge is proposed. If Delley's Bridge cannot be restored the new bridge should be equally appealing in its architecture and responsive to the local environment.

New buildings should be reflective of the natural surroundings. For example materials should preferably be of local origin, include local colours and textures. Materials should be of a type and sourced from locations that are not environmentally destructive and do not require high resource and energy inputs to manufacture or procure them. Materials and construction methods should be environmentally sustainable. Building design should be site responsive and reflect high levels of environmental responsibility. New buildings should endeavour to set Halls Gap apart as a centre of environmental excellence.

Review Rural Zoning (RUZ) and Local Policy on valley floor in relation to wetland proposal in consultation with landowners and general community. Consider a design development overlay that requires an integrated development plan for the whole area.

New developments should consider pedestrian access to Stony Creek and Fyans Creek to maximise walking and riding opportunities for residents and visitors to Halls Gap. Northern Grampians Shire Council to incorporate as part of assessment of planning applications.

### *General*

Relocate the Parks Victoria depot away from the centre of Halls Gap to a position less prominent location. Consider developing a storage / manufacturing / industrial precinct and consolidating like activities in the precinct. This was proposed by Bennett (1990 p23).

Possible rezoning of land on the north west corner of Silver Springs Road and Grampians Road to (R1Z)

Minimise the use of fences to maintain visual permeability and through access, these are important characteristics of Halls Gap and accord with the high level of 'walk-ability'.

Northern Grampians Shire Council to establish an up to date cheeking system to monitor supply and demand issue relating to residential and commercial developments. This will ensure that implementation of the framework recommendations can be made and assessed against demand.

### *Heath Street*

Northern Grampians Shire Council to promote the development of Heath Street as a co-operative project in partnership with interested businesses and seek commitments from developers to assist with the design and development.

Consider providing alternative routes for traffic to travel clear of Main Road. It is proposed that Heath Street will be developed to cater for the majority of through traffic. Once Heath Street is established it is recommended that School Road be developed to provide an option for vehicles and to improve access to existing parking.

Northern Grampians Shire Council to determine an equitable arrangement for apportioning cost fairly to landholders who will gain a direct benefit from the proposed construction of Heath Street.

### *Town Centre*

Develop a Master Plan based generally on the streetscape concept (refer Map 11 Town Square Concept and Map 8 Town Centre Concept) and recommendations in the Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997) for the redevelopment of the Main Road streetscape that gives precedent to pedestrian movement and activity in the commercial area and creates logical and safe options for vehicle movements.

The Master Plan should provide pedestrians with a number of options to cross the road in safe and relaxed manner in groups of 2-4 people. Pedestrians should not be constrained by conventional crossing points and barriers. The philosophy is to encourage walking in preference to driving. Traffic management devices should be aesthetically pleasing, low-key elements that are consistent with the streetscape themes recommended in this report.

Widen the pathway along the eastern side of Main Road to accommodate groups of walkers, outdoor seating and eating opportunities.

Design options for the Commercial area should maximise the opportunity for pedestrians to make choices when crossing the road and create the options for them to cross freely in a relaxed environment. Traffic management devices designed to assist safe pedestrian passage should be low key, subtle elements that do not encumber the streetscape with hard-edged urban characteristics.

Prepare a master plan for the development of the Town Park that incorporates proposed playground redevelopments, new tree planting and opportunities for park based festivals.

Improve the legibility of entry into the Pool Road car park especially for visitors entering the commercial area from the north.

Install a town entry sign at the School Road / Grampians Road intersection. Base the sign on the principles established in the Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997) using Grampians sandstone as the base with the Township logo on a signboard.

The Northern Grampians Shire Council to consider upgrading the streetscape of Main Road by removing the traffic islands to narrow the effective width of the roadway and increase the footpath width on the east side of the roadway.

Consider streetscape detailing that capitalises on the use of local materials and textures. For example use sandstone kerb in preference to concrete and timber. Consider using Grampians sandstone for paving or as feature paving panels in conjunction with super fine asphalt paving. Street furniture should be steel framed with timber slats. Street lighting should be of a style that is reflective of the Grampians environment. The use of heritage style lantern lights is not recommended.

Northern Grampians Shire Council in conjunction with the landowner to develop a pedestrian and cycle connection along Stony Creek between Main Road and Heath Street.

### *Tourist Information Centre*

Consider locating the Tourist Information Centre clear of the busy area of the Pool Road car park and Main Road near Stony Creek Bridge. Two locations are proposed. Option A is adjoining the Community Hall on the corner of Heath Street and Main Road. Option B is west of the Pool building where it is well serviced by School Road and the existing car parking and the newly upgraded section of Pool Road. (Refer Maps 10, 11 & 12).

### *Power Lines*

Northern Grampians Shire Council to develop a proactive policy to seek funding for the retrofitting of powerlines throughout Halls Gap to preserve existing trees; reduce pruning needs and tree damage caused by continued heavy pruning; reduce fire risk from over head wires; improve the visual amenity of the township; and provide unencumbered air space for the full and proper development of new roadside trees.

The priority areas are the main streets in the town centre. The criteria for funding retrofitting of powerlines include, environmental, fire risk, heritage, community benefit etc. It is reasonable to assume that Halls gap would score highly in all areas of assessment

### *Bicycles*

Develop shared pathways generally in accordance with the Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997) recommendations and the guidelines established by Parklink (2000) throughout the township and connecting the service precinct with the Halls Gap centre and Parks Victoria, Brambuk and Lake Bellfield to the south. The pathway to be constructed of a sealed surface at suitable gradients for uses of all ages and abilities. Where the pathway runs along Grampians Road it must be off-road. For secondary and tertiary roadways, road shoulder or on road cycling is acceptable. The pathway should be aligned to maximise the users bushland experience (i.e. retain and protect bushland). Where the path network meets the commercial area provision for bike storage is considered necessary. Pathways along the commercial frontage should be wide enough to accommodate walkers and riders less than 12 years of age.

## 11.0 Program of Implementation

The following is a recommended program of implementation for the recommendations proposed in the Urban Design Framework and the Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997). They are generally arranged in order of priority but this may change according to community preference, funding opportunities and other influences.

Note: All estimates are preliminary only. Every attempt has been to make allowance for associated costs within each project. It is recommended that the estimates of probable cost be refined as each project is developed and designed to ensure accuracy.

<b>Short term projects (1-2 years)</b>			
	<b>Project</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Estimate of probable cost</b>
1	Parks Victoria information meeting area in the Pool Road car park triangle.	PV / NGSC	\$3,000
2	Address the Planning Scheme issues raised in this report and incorporate reference to the Urban Design Framework.	NGSC / community	\$3000
3	Tourist information centre – finalise location, design development, funding, building construction, car parking, etc.	NGSC / PV / Tourism Assoc. / community	\$2,000,000
4	Develop detailed designs for Heath Street generally as per the recommendations in the Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997) for the development of car and bus parking, street tree planting, bus access and turning, vehicle bridge, through road etc.	NGSC / traders / developers / community	\$2,500,000
5	Install the proposed township entry sign at the proposed Heath Road / Grampians Road intersection.	NGSC / community	\$5000
6	Refine design for Town Square and the reclaimed open space between the re-routed Main Road and Heath Street, public access, paving, seating, pathways etc and then undertake implementation.	NGSC / community	\$100,000
7	Develop a program of street tree planting and replacement for immediate implementation.	PV / NGSC / community	\$100,000
8	Develop a program of pest plant and animal control in Halls Gap.	PV / NGSC / community	\$20,000
9	Reform the Townscape Committee to assist with the development of design development of township projects.	NGSC / community	N/a

<b>Medium term projects (2-4 years)</b>			
	<b>Project</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Estimate of probable cost</b>
1	Develop detailed design for the commercial area in consultation with the community and the traders. Works to include widened pathways, angle parking, seating, feature paving, stone kerbing, bike storage, etc for staged implementation.	NGSC / community / traders	\$500,000
2	Upgrade the pathway network from the Halls Gap Hotel to the National Park Visitor Centre to accommodate shared use for cyclists and walkers. The pathway is to be off-road where it runs along Grampians Road for user safety and roadside aesthetic. The pathway is to be sealed with asphalt, aligned to maximise tree retention and constructed at gradients that are suitable for use by people of all abilities. Other pathways and recommendations as per Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997) and the Northern Grampians Bicycle Strategy (Parklinks, 2000).	PV / NGSC / community	\$300,000
3	Underground powerlines throughout along Grampians Road from Delley's Bridge to the Parks Victoria information Centre.	NGSC / Powercor	\$3,000,000
4	Northern Grampians Shire Council to prepare a policy for the rationalisation of roadside signage within the township and along the approach roads to reduce the signage clutter and minimise the visual intrusion.	NGSC	\$15,000

<b>Long term projects (ongoing)</b>			
	<b>Project</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Estimate of probable cost</b>
1	School Road upgrade to include school crossing, Caravan Park pedestrian crossing, intersection treatments at Grampians Road and opposite Caravan Park.	NGSC / community / traders	\$200,000
2	Prepare a landscape plan for the Recreation Reserve. Refer Townscape Plan (Niemann, 1997).	NGSC / community	\$10,000
3	Review service infrastructure capacity and needs.	NGSC	\$10,000
4	Monitor development pressures on Halls Gap in regard to supply and demand.	NGSC	N/a
5	Continued monitoring of visitor needs and assessment of service provision in terms of quality and type.	NGSC	N/a

## **Appendices**

Summary of Final Recommendations – Halls Gap Townscape Plan

Implementation of Final Recommendations – Halls Gap Townscape Plan

Local Provision 22.04, Northern Grampians Shire Council Planning Scheme – Halls Gap / Lake Bellfield

Vehicle counts – Halls Gap Townscape Plan

## Appendix 1

### Assessment of the Final Recommendations made by Niemann & Partners in the Halls Gap Townscape Plan prepared in 1997.

The following is a consideration of the final recommendations of the Halls Gap Townscape Plan, prepared by Niemann & Partners in 1997, in regard to the Urban Design Framework Study. The Niemann recommendations provide a sound basis for development of the Framework study because they are reflective of the outcomes of a well-developed process of community consultation. It is generally understood that the Halls Gap community has accepted the Townscape Plan.

The Niemann recommendations are taken from the section of the report titled "Summary of Final Recommendations" (p.67). These recommendations are shown in italics and are followed by a brief assessment prepared for discussion purposes.

#### Town Approaches / Gateways

1. *Replace and rationalise gateway signage with an attractive sign containing "Halls Gap", "Heart of the Grampians" and the Shire logo. Materials should be stone and timber.*
2. *Establish a new gateway on Mount Victory Road adjacent to the Recreation Reserve.*

**THA comments:** General agreement with gateway concept in terms of materials but details and locations need to be refined. Gateway concept can be over done. Awesome ranges provide the real sense of entry to Halls Gap.

#### Delley's Bridge

1. *Construct ford crossing on Fyans Creek downstream from Delley's Bridge.*
2. *Improve the appearance and functioning of the picnic area adjacent to Delley's Bridge.*

**THA comments:** There is a need to improve the picnic area adjoining the bridge. Refer concept plan Map 12, Delleys Bridge Picnic Ground Concept by THA. No comment re ford crossing.

#### Path Network

1. *Create a comprehensive path network for shared use by cyclists and pedestrians, to be constructed in stages according to these priorities:*
  - Short term:*
    - (1) *upgrade existing paths between Delley's Bridge and National Park Information Centre, including relocation of crossing of Grampians Road near the bridge.*
    - (2) *install bicycle racks in the town centre.*
  - Medium term:* *new path between Delley's Bridge and Stony Creek bridge via the Recreation reserve.*
  - Medium/long term:* (1) *(subject to feasibility) new path and creek crossing along Heath Street from Grampians Road to Allison Street.*  
(2) *extend existing path from Delley's Bridge to intersection of Grampians Road and Ararat-Pomonal Road.*
  - Long term:*
    - (1) *new path along School Road*
    - (2) *new path in Heath Street between Allison Street and Grampians Road/Mackey's Peak Road*
    - (3) *extend paths along Grampians Road to Stawell and along Ararat/Pomonal Road*
    - (4) *extend path from National Park Information Centre/Brambuk to Lake Bellfield.*
2. *Install barriers between paths and roadway edges for greater safety and delineation of edge.*

**THA comments:** Agree with extensions and upgrades of path network. Care re alignments, effect on vegetation, user safety, vehicle conflict etc is necessary. Bike racks OK but create walkway obstruction need to locate clear of pedestrian areas, perhaps shelter type structure or connected with tourist centre. Separation between roadway and pathways is preferable to barriers.

**Recreation Reserve**

1. *Maintain the picnic area adjacent to Grampians Road at the Recreation Reserve as a "natural" area, which capitalises on the treed environment. Allow major building development within the reserve to occur only in association with the existing change rooms.*
2. *Investigate the potential for incorporating a sound stage within a new multi-purpose building facing the oval.*
3. *Construct a minor path linking the Reserve and Warren Road.*
4. *Increase tree planting along the Mount Victory Road frontage and consider landscaping the area around the memorial gates.*
5. *Prepare a master plan for the future development of the Reserve in conjunction with the community.*

**THA comments:** General agreement. Further analysis required.

**Street Trees**

1. *Maintain and enhance roadside planting along Grampians Road, School Road, Heath Street and Mount Victory Road with specific additional planting:*
  - (a) *to screen the Telstra building near Delley's Bridge.*
  - (b) *to the traffic islands at the intersection of Grampians Road and Mount Victory Road.*
  - (c) *in Heath Street at Stony Creek near Allison Street.*

**THA comments:** General agreement. Further analysis required.

**Heath Street**

1. *Increase the size of the turning bowl in Heath Street to allow buses to complete U-turns without reversing.*

**THA comments:** Subject to final outcome, Heath Street may go right through.

**Commercial Centre**

1. *Maintain a physical and visual distinction between the primary and secondary commercial areas by adopting a different set of building guidelines for each area, both to be incorporated in the Planning Scheme.*

**THA comments:** Further research required MDA, Paul McCuskey.

**Planning Scheme Provisions**

1. *Prepare a set of design guidelines based on the recommended guidelines in this report for incorporation into the Schedule to the Design Development Overlay Local provisions of the Planning Scheme. Produce the adopted guidelines in pamphlet form for distribution to intending applicants for development approvals.*
2. *Consider the extension of the DDO, SBO and VPO overlays, where possible, to the PPRZ, PCRZ and PUZ zones,*
3. *Encourage the authorities responsible for key pieces of public land within or adjacent to Halls Gap to prepare master plans for these sites, which can then be adopted as Incorporated Plans in the Planning Scheme, or integrated into existing Management plans.*
4. *Give a high priority to the preparation of a Heritage Study for the Shire, including guidelines for works to significant sites.*
5. *Amend the DDO provisions of the Planning Scheme to extend the requirements for preparation of a site analysis for all development applications in the area protected by the VPO.*
6. *Amend the Planning Scheme VPO to afford greater protection to indigenous vegetation and significant trees.*

**THA comments:** Further research required MDA, Paul McCuskey, THA.

### **Carparking**

1. *Develop the Council-owned land in Heath Street for off-street car parking with a pedestrian access pathway to Grampians Road subject to agreement with the owners of the privately owned land.*
2. *Construct a new parking area in Heath Street at rear of Hall, including provision for large vehicles.*
3. *Restructure the carpark in the southern corner of park.*
4. *Provide additional right-angled and parallel spaces in School Road.*
5. *Restructure car parking in the park in conjunction with Tourist Information Centre.*
6. *Provide additional spaces in Grampians Road (both sides) north of Stony Creek Bridge.*

**THA comments:** Heath Street carparking on private land subject to agreement with landholder for pedestrian link. Vehicle access is from Heath Street only and the future of Heath Street dependent on final outcomes re through-access or dead-end. Restructure southern car park dependent on intersection treatment. Agree with need to improve parking in vicinity of proposed tourist centre. Concerned about more parking both sides of Grampians Road north of bridge because it is already congested and creates an unappealing entrance to commercial area entry – need to consider with care. Ideally the bridge should be the entrance to this precinct and the proposed roundabout, or other traffic treatment, to define the other entry.

### **Community Hall**

1. *Upgrade the Community Hall in stages. The first stage will include the addition of a supper room, kitchen, internal toilets, a street verandah with a new facade and entry, facilities for the Historical Society and a temporary Tourist Information Centre.*
2. *Later stages will include general renovations, addition of cooling, acoustic treatments, blackout facilities and dedicated rooms for the Historical Society's Museum collection.*
3. *Develop a Town Square in conjunction with the Hall upgrade and renovate the existing public toilets*

**THA comments:** Hall renovations complete. Town square needs to be considered in terms of available land size, best position etc. If no parking along Heath Street then this open space would be better devoted to Town Square or open parkland. Consider ABC/UG powerlines to enable tree planting in wide median. Need to attend to rear of hall re aesthetics especially if Heath Street is to become a through road. THA to consider as part of actions/concept.

### **Traffic Management**

1. *Construct a roundabout at the Grampians Road/Heath Street/School Road intersection.*
2. *Install three crossing points on Grampians Road in the town centre to improve safety for pedestrian crossing between the park and the shops:*
  - (a) *opposite the post office and bottle shop (to be a signed formal pedestrian crossing)*
  - (b) *opposite Ralph's Restaurant*
  - (c) *slightly south of the Hall.*
3. *Alter the traffic flow at the entry and exit for the car park in the Park to promote one-way movements, including minor changes to the medians in Grampians Road.*

**THA comments:** Further research required. It is noted that roundabouts do assist with 'U'-turns but logic would suggest that an additional 'U'-turn facility is required at the other end of town. Explore other options that provide this facility given that roundabouts are expensive to construct and take up large areas. Raised crossings not popular with Vic roads.

### **School Road Bridge**

1. *Upgrade the structure and widen the School Road bridge over Stony Creek to allow 2-way traffic.*

**THA comments:** Project in progress Northern Grampians Shire Council.

### **Tourist Information Centre**

1. *Provide a temporary Tourist Information Centre in the Community Hall.*
2. *Construct a permanent stand-alone Tourist Information Centre on public land adjacent to Stony Creek, in the longer term. Consider holding an architectural design competition for the permanent Centre as a means of selecting an architect.*

**THA comments:** Subject to further analysis. Design competition might be a good idea but should be undertaken in accordance with AIA Competition Guidelines. Who would run it? Can tie up significant resources. Does cost money to run competitions. May be better to invite ideas from a select group of designers.

### **Park And Picnic Area**

1. *Provide toilets for the public and park users adjacent to the swimming pool.*
2. *Consider further improvements such as development of the area adjacent to Stony Creek, replacement of park furniture, improved signage, path lighting.*
3. *Give the park a new name.*

**THA comments:** All of the above can be developed in conjunction with the proposed car park redevelopment adjoining the swimming pool scheduled for construction this financial year. THA to provide conceptual design input with Northern Grampians Shire Council Engineers re layout, tree protection and retention and detailing consistent with township themes. Additional work proposed includes a pathway commencing in the vicinity of the proposed tourist centre and linking to the Venus Baths walk and other local trails emanating from the centre. Parks Vic to provide assistance with layout, signage and funding.

### **National Parks Information Shelter**

1. *Relocate the National Parks Information Shelter to the Tourist Information Centre, and redevelop the "island" with a landmark feature designed by an artist in collaboration with a Landscape Architect.*

**THA comments:** Dependent on final road design. Landmark feature may be located elsewhere eg as part of proposed Tourist Centre.

### **Sullivan's Seat**

1. *Renovate Sullivan's Seat.*

**THA comments:** Unknown

### **Main Street Improvements**

1. *Install low-growing planting to median strips and other roadside areas to beautify and encourage pedestrians to use defined routes.*
2. *Install new streetlights, including at the entrance to the Recreation Reserve.*
3. *Install new kerb extensions.*
4. *Extend use of street furniture with a consistent theme for the full length of the commercial area and also to the west side (park and Tourist Information Centre).*
5. *Place power lines underground from Mount Victory Road to Heath Street.*

**THA comments:** Planting is often not enough on its own to direct traffic movement. Given that people generally move at random across Grampians Road and that many visitors are relaxed and in holiday mode (i.e. less likely to cross at designated points) it is probable that more subtle forms of control and

definition will be required. New lighting should be reflective of themes for the township and streetscape. Consider local sandstone kerb as a streetscape element (consistent with Niemann recommendations, Community Hall, Parks Vic etc). Streetscape furniture should establish a quality and theme that can be replicated in future buildings and developments (eg local materials, local craftsmen). Undergrounding of powerlines is to be supported especially in a location that is dominated by a beautiful natural environment and all structured intrusions should be minimised. Undergrounding allows for more tree planting along road reserves and reduces risk of electrically ignited fires.

### **Views**

1. *Maintain key views from within the township towards the surrounding ranges and along the Fyans Creek Valley. These views should be taken into account when assessing applications for development approvals and also when planting trees within the township area.*

**THA comments:** Valley floor views are mainly from Heath Street, Allison Street, Tandarra Road and glimpses into the valley from the Grampians Road. The valley floor is an altered landscape not consistent with the Grampians forests but it provides visual relief, variation of views, Kangaroo grazing etc. The view of the valley floor from the Wonderland Ranges is one of a man-made clearing used for agriculture. The dominant views from Halls Gap are the Wonderland Ranges and Victoria Ranges.

### **Caravan Park**

1. *Plant additional trees on the perimeter to Grampians Road.*

**THA comments:** Agree.

### **Tennis Courts And School**

1. *Upgrade the roadside area outside the tennis courts and the school by installing bollards to define car parking car-parking bays and restore the native landscape around existing trees.*
2. *Construct a car park adjacent to the Tennis Courts for access to the courts and the Botanical Gardens.*

**THA comments:** Not assessed.

### **Signage**

1. *Introduce a Halls Gap logo to town signage.*
2. *Install a system of directional signage in the town centre and along the path network.*
3. *Reduce and coordinate roadside signage, including combining blue information signs, and adopting a common size for all blue signs.*
4. *Reduce the number of A' boards*

**THA comments:** General agreement with above. Has logo been developed? Rationalisation of signage is very important. Need to balance competing interests – commercial/directional/information. Signage pollution starts at the Pomonal turn-off. Less of a problem on the Grampians Road toward Lake Bellfield. Develop consistent signage b/w Parks and the township.

### **Infrastructure**

1. *Develop a Strategy for stormwater runoff for the whole town but especially the town centre.*
2. *Negotiate with Powercor for upgrading of the electricity supply to cope with peak demand.*
3. *Consider the introduction of a household refuse collection and recycling service.*

**THA comments:** Infrastructure proposals should be environmentally sound and consistent with a set of environmental standards that should be developed for developments in Halls Gap. Storm water

collection and discharge to be developed as an environmental system. Proposed community wetlands to utilise storm water. Recycling should be introduced to complement environmental qualities of the locale. Most visitors to Halls Gap will be accustomed to separating rubbish for recycling and would expect to do that here. Powercor upgrade - by others.

### **Environmental Issues**

1. *That the programme of educating the public with regard to the risks of damage to the sensitive indigenous environment surrounding Halls Gap from domestic and feral animals and invasive plant stock be maintained and expanded if necessary.*

**THA comments:** Incorporate as part of signage and interpretative information. Co-ordinate with Parks Vic and develop consistent signage b/w Parks and the township. Promote through tourist centre. Local law re control of domestic animals and pest plants.

### **Land Tenure**

1. *Carry out a study of discrepancies between land title and land use in Halls Gap with a view to resolving major issues that could frustrate future planning.*

**THA comments:** Needs more consideration.

### **Future Of The Townscape Committee**

1. *Retain the services of the Townscape Committee to assist the Council in forward planning for Halls Gap, and the implementation of the Townscape Plan.*

**THA comments:** Status unknown. Recommend reformation of the Committee to oversee implementation of the Niemann recommendations and the Urban Design Framework.

**Appendix 2 –  
Implementation of Final Recommendations**

**Appendix 3 –**

**Local Provision 22.04, Northern Grampians Shire Council Planning Scheme**

**Halls Gap / Lake Bellfield**

**Appendix 4 –  
Vehicle Counts, Niemann Study, 1997**

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John Bennett & Associates (October 1990) A land-use planning framework for Halls Gap & Lake Bellfield.

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