
MEMORANDUM

TO: Paul Buxton - Plan2Place Consulting
FROM: Aaron Tepe, Lachlan Burke, Knowles Tivendale - Movement & Place Consulting (MP&C)
DATE: 27/09/2021

Re: Romsey Structure Plan – Issues & Opportunities

I refer to the above project and provide transport issues and opportunities text for the Romsey Structure Plan.

Transport Context

The *Romsey Issues and Opportunities Paper* (2018) highlights that Romsey will experience significant growth over the next 15 years. The population is forecasted to increase by about 50% from 6,135 (2016) to 9,084 (2036). Romsey is transforming from a district town to a large district town within Macedon Ranges' settlement hierarchy.

Should the town's geographic area continue to expand as the population increases at low density, the viability of new services will be limited, and they will be difficult to access by walking or riding. This will exacerbate existing levels of auto-dependency and entrench high cost of living for current and future residents. The *Romsey Outline Development Plan* (2009), identifies Romsey's low level of job containment. As the population grows, there should be greater opportunity to localise additional services within the existing town, including:

- Regular shopping (such as groceries & supermarkets)
- Schools (primary, secondary and tertiary)
- Community services and social services including childcare
- Eateries and other social places
- Health facilities (medical centres and pharmacies)
- Recreation facilities (such as gyms and open spaces).

Most people travel regionally to access essential services. Amenities and services such as large supermarkets are located in Woodend (20.8 km) and Kilmore (30.4 km), secondary schools in Woodend (18.2 km) and Wallan (28.4 km), and hospitals are located in nearby towns, Kilmore (30.3 km) and Kyneton (32.1 km).

The Romsey Town Centre provides a small number of essential services including:

- Groceries - SUPA IGA
- Health Facilities - Parkwood Green Medical Centre, Lifeline Medical Centre, Connect Hearing (hearing aid shop)
- Eateries – some small restaurants and cafes
- Romsey Primary School



- Recreation facilities – Romsey Recreation Centre, Reserve and Golf Club, Romsey Ecotherapy Park, Deep Creek and Five Mile Creek Reserve Playground
- Community services and social services – Romsey Library and Community Hub, Romsey Kindergarten, Romsey Early Education Centre, Romsey Occasional Care, Kidzone childcare and Romsey Maternal & Child Health Centre.

These are mostly located along Main Street within walking distance of the majority of Romsey residents. Maintaining the proximity of residential growth within 400m of Main Street is an important way to increase viability of these and additional future businesses.

The *Issues and Opportunities Paper* identifies that there is a significant lack of eateries and meeting places for social activities. This can have significant impacts on social engagement and a sense of community within Romsey. The viability of eateries (restaurants, cafes, pubs) relies heavily on a catchment of local residents within walking distance.

For the 2,815 households (50% of total households in Romsey) who live within 1km, this means that errands to Main Street can be easily undertaken on foot. This area has a 'walk score' of 51 out of 100. As a result, these households can minimise their cost of living related to transport and gain incidental exercise that is critical to long-term health, longevity and quality of life in older age.

For the small number of households located further than 2km from Main Street, walking to any service is relatively unattractive, particularly compared to driving. The spread-out nature of the urban area, and lack of compact business intensity in Main Street force many residents to rely on private vehicle transport and services in other towns such as Lancefield, Kilmore, Kyneton, Wallan, Woodend and Sunbury. With the exception of Lancefield which is a 5-10 minute drive to the north, all these other towns require a 20 minute drive to reach. This travel time impacts directly on household cost of living, and quality of life.

Almost three quarters (72%) of Romsey residents work outside of the town, with large proportions travelling to City of Hume (16.45%), City of Melbourne (9.34%), Mitchell Shire (5.14%) and the City of Brimbank (4.04%). Of employed persons in Romsey who travelled to work in 2016, the majority of trips to were made by car only (81%). About 6% of commuters use the train to get to work, 1% walk (well below the 3.9% regional Victoria average) and no-one rode a bicycle to work. The long travel distances and spread-out nature of the Romsey area make public transport (even to key destinations like the Melbourne CBD) difficult to provide in a way that is useful to all.

A PTV bus service from Lancefield to Sunbury includes thirteen services on weekdays (roughly every hour from 6:30am to 7:30pm). There are three services on Saturday.

Another V/Line coach service operates between Lancefield and Gisborne twice each weekday and Saturday in the mid-morning and early afternoon. This service would not cater for work trips, and is best suited to shopping, health or recreational journeys.

A second V/line coach service operates from Barham, NSW to Melbourne via Romsey and Melbourne Airport every day of the week. The services arrival at Melbourne Airport are relatively random, and the single service each day is unlikely to meet any journey to work needs.

Focussing residential growth within walking distance of the Main Street corridor will help make public transport viable in future.

The nearest V/Line train station is 15km away in Clarkefield. Alternatively, people can access Metro Trains at Sunbury a further 15km away.



Improving people’s choices to walk and ride will rely on growth occurring in the core of Romsey’s town centre and improving active transport networks to be useful, safe, comfortable and interesting. The community have identified the need for a more complete footpath network, and a utilisation of main roads and open space to improve linkages between neighbourhoods and destinations.

A lack of walking and cycling infrastructure beyond Main Street discourages people from travelling around Romsey by foot or bike due to safety concerns. The Outline Development Plan similarly states that poor footpath provisions means that residents are forced to walk on the road, particularly those with prams, pushchairs or mobility scooters. Based around a linear, grid network with a tree-lined main street, Romsey has the potential for a very walkable township. Walkability is currently hampered by the low intensity built form and vacant land which reduces pedestrian amenity and attraction along Main Street. A lack of priority pedestrian crossing locations further inhibits walkability around the town.

New services become viable when a certain threshold of new residents (potential customers/clients) locate nearby. As more residences locate within 400m, footfall increases significantly, given that more trips can be made within a five to ten-minute walk.

A recent Monash study shows that planning for a 20-minute neighbourhood not only requires a threshold of residents to make the services viable, but also, that new residences are located in critical walking distance thresholds (400m – five-minute walk; 800m – ten-minute walk; 1.2km – 15-minute walk). Studies show that 85% of walking trips are made within 15 minutes.

The research calculates the number of dwellings needed to support services such as local shops and sports facilities in a 20-minute neighbourhood. Many of the services that could become viable require new dwellings to be located within 400m of new services located along Main Street. This is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Dwelling density required for essential services

Service	Residents	Dwellings	Catchment
Local shops	3,500	~1,700	within 400m
Sports Facility	3,500	~1,700	within 400m
Post Office	3,500	~1,700	within 400m
Primary School	7,100	~3,400	within 800m
Community Health Centre	7,100	~3,400	within 800m
Secondary School	28,000	~13,600	within 1.2km

Source: Grodach, C., Kamruzzaman, L., Harper, L. (2020). 20-minute Neighbourhood - Living local research project. Monash University

Optimising this must be a critical consideration in planning for this growth. If growth continues to expand Romsey’s geographic boundary it will result in:

- Higher levels of traffic congestion than would be typical in a rural township



- Erosion of township character and rural feel
- Transport-related financial burdens on households
- Significant losses of economic activity
- Adverse health impacts as a result of sedentary lifestyles.

Issues & opportunities

Public transport

Public transport services in Romsey are insufficient to meet many of the needs of existing and future residents. The weekday hourly services from Lancefield to Sunbury cater for some needs, such as connection to Melbourne via Metro Train services (although these operate every 40 minutes, so they will not align with the bus services), shopping and some job opportunities. Key public transport issues and opportunities are outlined below.

Issues

- There are no east-west public transport services to Wallan or Woodend, thereby reducing choice for local residents about how they get to those destinations.
- There are no connections to the Craigieburn railway corridor and limited connections to Melbourne Airport, despite a high proportion of residents working in the City of Hume.
- Bus routes between Kyneton and Lancefield sometimes connect with services between Lancefield and Sunbury via Romsey but the timetable is confusing because there are two separate routes, when they could easily be combined into one.
- The current coach service times do not align with employee needs for those working at Melbourne Airport.
- The current scheduling does not align with the recent V/Line train timetable changes, nor does it suit the needs of people travelling for shopping or social activities in other nearby areas, particularly due to the infrequent services to any destination.
- In the case of buses connecting at Clarkefield Station, the wait time between the train and bus services departing for Romsey is longer than the time required to drive to Romsey (even in the bus). This significantly diminishes the service, because the wait time is valued more highly than the in-vehicle travel time.
- Limited destinations and service levels result in high prevalence of car ownership and use resulting in high cost of living.

Opportunities

- Request that DoT combine the Kyneton-Lancefield and Lancefield-Sunbury bus routes into a single route.
- Request DoT to urgently review the timing of bus services on the Lancefield-Sunbury route to minimise transfer time to and from Melbourne bound train services.
- Explore ways to better meet journey to work needs including connections to the Craigieburn and Seymour railway corridors.



- Work with DoT to investigate an additional daily V/Line return service around midday to suit shopping and social trip needs.
- Request that DoT commit to providing services between Lancefield and Sunbury on Main Street every 30 minutes, once an additional 2,500 residents and employees are located within 400m of the Main Street corridor.
- Work with DoT to improve the shuttle bus service to Clarkefield Station with a mixture of public bus and volunteer car drivers to provide services which align with the V/Line train timetable.
- Consider working with non-profit Community Transport service providers such as Link Community Transport to expand the availability of peri-public transport services in Romsey.

Pedestrian network

The pedestrian network is fragmented and limits accessibility, particularly for those without a car. This disproportionately affects younger, elderly and low-income residents. Main Street in particular, has high volumes of traffic, fewer breaks in traffic and limited priority for pedestrians to cross the road. Current and future businesses and dwellings will benefit from slower speeds and priority pedestrian facilities. Key pedestrian network issues and opportunities are outlined below.

Issues

- Pedestrians feel unsafe due to road design and traffic volume through both Main Street and side streets used to avoid town centre.
- The footpath network in Romsey is severely limited. The segments of paved footpaths are located on:
 - The Barry Street & Main Street roundabout intersection (where paths extend about 500m in each direction and are discontinued)
 - Stawell Street between Main Street and Roger Street on the southside
 - Murphy Street between Main Street and Roger Street on the southside
 - White Avenue between Main Street and Park Lane on the northside
 - Along Roger Street where there have been recent developments
 - Railway Crescent on the southside
 - Kathryn Street on the northside
 - Along Shaw Drive where there have been recent developments on one side of the street (on the right-hand side as the street winds from north to west)
 - Between Main Street and Station Street near the Romsey Primary School.
- Council should prioritise new footpaths along both sides of Main Street and along one side of intersecting streets within 400m of Main Street.
- At intersections the footpaths adopt a traditional kerb-cut, pram crossing that forces pedestrians onto the roadway. This design specification might not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), depending on the road surface and any need to re-construct the



roadway. To be DDA compliant the pedestrian access of new crossings should remain level, and the traffic lane should rise up and over the footpath like a speed hump. These are typically known as raised threshold treatments, and are the DDA compliant standard that needs to be applied in any location where the roadway is to be rebuilt.

- There have been two crashes involving struck pedestrians within the last five years in Romsey. One incident occurred on the intersection of Barry and Main Streets in 2015 (before the roundabout was installed at the intersection). To a large extent, this intersection lacks adequate pedestrian priority crossing facilities. Council should consider installing wombat or zebra treatments in addition to the existing pedestrian refuge medians.
- Beyond the grid-like road network between Murphy Street to Barry Street, Romsey's footpath network lacks permeability due to a prevalence of dead-end streets and cul-de-sacs. This network forces people to walk longer distances than they should. For example, a walk from the end of Dowie Court to Romsey Primary School (1.07km northeast) takes around 23 minutes, whereas a walk from similarly distanced Greenfields Boulevard (1.05km southwest) takes approximately 16 minutes.
- The street tree canopy is limited, and makes walking uncomfortable in hot or rainy conditions. Council should prioritise tree planting along Main Street (to complement the existing Avenue of Honour) and the first 400m along intersecting streets.
- Main Street prioritises vehicle movements over pedestrians. About 90% of the 60m wide road reserve is allocated for driving, parking and for medians which detract from Main Street as a place for the community to congregate and enjoy.
- The cross-section design of Main Street is highly detrimental to pedestrian activity and safety including the new roundabout at Barry Street which does not have pedestrian priority crossings.
- Other crossings along Main Street do not prioritise pedestrians effectively. Council should consider installing zebra crossings at several points along Main Street.
- Romsey is not as accessible for people with disabilities as it needs to be. The following are key issues:
 - Street furniture on Main Street is not wheelchair accessible
 - The Palmer St/Main St bus stops in both directions are only wheelchair accessible from the road with no connecting path. They do not have seating or shelter
 - Many shopfronts have step-up doorways, and most do not have clear address labels
 - There is no continuous accessible path of travel on many local roads
- The walking trail alongside Deep Creek ends at Main Street and fails to connect through the township.

Opportunities

- Improve safety and completeness of network across the whole town, including along Main Street.
- Ensure essential services such as the supermarket and community hub are easily accessible on foot.
- Improve tree canopy coverage across the whole town.



- Upgrade existing streets to have footpaths and create more and safer east/west connections within 400m of Main Street.

Enabling students to walk Romsey Primary School safely and independently should be a priority outcome for the town as it grows. This has critical benefits for childrens' confidence & resilience, social engagement, health and wellbeing. To achieve this, Council should:

- Prioritise footpath construction and street tree planting (along both sides of the street) along:
 - Kathryn Street
 - Ewing Drive
 - Digby Drive
 - Coleraine Drive
 - Reynolds Grove
 - Newnham Drive
 - Metcalfe Drive
 - Gordon Crescent
 - William Street
 - Roger Street
 - Wrixon Street
 - Pohlman Street
- Prioritise improving the following key crossings along Main Street to include wombat treatments:
 - Stawell Street
 - Murphy Street
- Facilitate 'walk to school' programs and other education programs to encourage a greater number of households to enable their children to independently walk to school.
- Conduct a DDA compliance assessment along Main Street and prioritise actions to address shortfalls.
- There is potential to unlock access to this natural asset and expand the pedestrian network east of Main Street

Bicycle network

Similarly, bicycle network coverage in Romsey is fragmented. The better the bicycle network and safety in the town, the more people will use this mode of transport for daily trips. Mode shift, even modest, from cars to walking and bicycle riding improve the health of residents, reduce the financial burden of cars, and ease traffic congestion, among other benefits. Key bicycle network issues and opportunities are outlined below.

Issues



- Both pedestrians and bicycle riders have cited concerns of Knox Road and Glenfern Road being used to bypass traffic on Main Street, which furthers feelings of being unsafe on the road alongside vehicles.
- In the absence of protected bicycle lanes, narrow footpaths on the above-mentioned roads may prevent children and parents from riding, particularly to school and early education facilities.
- Station Street, on which Romsey Primary School is located, has 45° parking on both sides along most of its length, with two footpaths either side. A lack of bicycle lane limits space for would-be riders, making them feel unsafe at the start and end of the trip to and from school respectively. Similarly, there are no bicycle lanes along Park Lane to access Romsey Recreation Reserve.
- Painted bicycle lanes exist in each direction along the Main Street service roads and the western portion of Barry Street but are otherwise limited.
- Bicycle riders are at high risk travelling through the roundabout at Barry and Main Streets.

Opportunities

- Establishing an off-road shared path network, particularly linking the Town Centre with the Recreation Reserve, Primary School, childcare facilities and Deep Creek will allow for safe bicycle travel both for transit and recreationally
 - Explore the option of a bicycle lane on Station Street and the connecting streets to enable safe access to the Primary School.
- Design and construct a shared path connection south to Monegetta and Riddells Creek Station, similar to the Lancefield-Romsey inter-town path.
- Design and construct a shared user path along Deep Creek.

Local road network, traffic and parking

Romsey's road network is highly car dominant. It is highly likely that regardless of the level of growth in Romsey, there will be an oversupply of parking due to planning provisions. Clause 52.06 requires a minimum of parking which is designed to exceed foreseeable demand. It applies state-wide and does not account for differences in context (i.e. Between a small rural town and Chadstone Shopping Centre). Excessive parking has a range of negative impacts, including:

- Opportunity cost of other uses due to the large amount of space cars occupy
- Induced car trips that might otherwise be undertaken on foot or by bicycle
- High costs to implement and maintain, funds that could be better spent for greater public benefit.

We need to be careful of following the standards without considering the local context. Because we are not yet sure of what parking will be needed in the future, Council should consider its economic, social and environmental objectives for the Romsey town centre in administering Clause 52.06 and considering parking waivers.



Issues

- There are many cul-de-sacs, which are not conducive to future local public transport provision. The Outline Development Plan's recognition of 'future-proofing' new residential areas means that the road network should have the ability to accommodate bus services on more than just the two main roads.
- There have been eleven crashes in the last five years along Main Street between Gordon Crescent and Hutchinsons Lane, meaning on average there are two crashes every year.
 - Nine of these were collisions with other vehicles.
 - Eight of these resulted in serious injury.
 - Most crashes occurred in higher speed areas (70km/hour zones), though four occurred in 50km/h zones and one in a 60km/h zone.

The design of the road reserve often has a more significant impact on vehicle speeds than the signalled limit, particularly in areas where the limit is less likely to be enforced. Streets which prioritise vehicles (wide lanes, free-flowing conditions, maximal vision owing to low levels of street tree canopy) give drivers a higher degree of confidence in making decisions to speed or focus on other things beside activity on the street

- Vehicle priority along Main Street erodes pedestrian amenity and safety (particularly when crossing), hindering economic activity in the town centre
 - Intersecting side streets interrupt pedestrian movement due to lack of crossings
 - Tree coverage in between Main Street and service roads provides little shade of footpath and mainly covers car parks
 - There is little shop front activity at the footpath. This could be due in part to high number of retail vacancies.
 - Future businesses (cafes, restaurants) are likely to be smaller than their potential due to a need to meet the current parking provisions in the Planning Scheme
- There are no dedicated crossings on Barry Street, causing residents to reduce walking and use cars more, thus adding to traffic congestion at key intersections.
- The number of intersections and service road access locations reduces safety of the road network particularly in Main Street.

Opportunities

- Slowing traffic on Main Street and providing pedestrian priority crossings in the main strip of shops would improve safety for both drivers and pedestrians as the area becomes busier.
- Investigate locations for wombat or zebra crossings across Barry Street and Main Street.
- Consider the need for a signalised pedestrian crossing near bus stops in Main Street.
- Renew awareness of the Avenue of Honour with signage and additional canopy trees.
- Consider restricting access to Stawell Street to be from the service lanes only, removing the intersections with Main Street through lanes.
- Investigate parking provision on Main Street and outside Romsey Primary School on Station Street to determine the best use of road space for the community.



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Please contact Lachlan on 04 24 636 844 or by email to discuss any aspect of the above.

—ENDS—