



ESSENTIAL ECONOMICS

# **Rockbank Major Town Centre Urban Design Framework**

## **Economic Input**

Prepared for

Melton City Council

by

Essential Economics Pty Ltd

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# INTRODUCTION

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## Background

Significant urban growth has taken place in Melbourne's western growth corridor over the past decade, leading to the preparation of several Precinct Structure Plans (PSPs) to guide the planning and development of these emerging localities.

In regard to the City of Melton, a number of PSPs have been prepared, including Rockbank North, Plumpton, Kororoit, Toolern, Paynes Road and several other localities.

The subject of this report is the Rockbank PSP, gazetted in November 2016, which requires the development of an Urban Design Framework (UDF). Economic input is required to ensure that the UDF is based on a sound understanding of the economic and commercial issues and opportunities of relevance to the future development of the Rockbank Major Town Centre (MTC). This report provides a review of existing economic research relating to the MTC, with commentary provided on the future land uses and their preferred locations, having regard for the economic principles that support viable and vibrant activity centres.

Essential Economics has been subcontracted by Tract (lead consultant) to prepare the economic input to the Rockbank UDF as part of a team that also comprises GTA Consultants and Clarke Hopkins Clarke Architects.

## Objective

To provide economic input to the Rockbank UDF to ensure the project is based on a sound understanding of economic and commercial considerations associated with the Rockbank MTC.

## This Report

This report contains the following chapters:

- 1 Context
- 2 Assessment of Rockbank Major Town Centre
- 3 Planning and Development Considerations
- 4 Conclusions.

# 1 CONTEXT

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This Chapter provides an overview of the planning context within which the economics assessment has been prepared as input to the Rockbank UDF review. A brief outline of the background reports is provided, including the West Corridor Growth Plan, and the Rockbank PSP and the Rockbank Major Town Centre plan provided within the PSP.

## 1.1 West Growth Corridor Plan

The West Growth Corridor Plan (WGC Plan) was prepared by the Growth Areas Authority (now VPA) in June 2012, outlining the present and future urban structure of the corridor (and which includes the area designated for the Rockbank Major Town Centre).

The Vision for the WGC Plan indicates that the corridor “will play a significant role in the diversification of the broader western region over time”, with the Principal and Major Town Centres providing “significant new opportunities for living, jobs, investment and services within the region” (p41).

In regard to Rockbank, the WGC Plan notes that the existing low density township has the opportunity to redevelop to a more transit-oriented form of development over time (p47) and that significant levels of employment will be provided, including job creation in existing and planned town centres, and in business precincts and industrial areas. The Plan also notes that the Major Town Centres are well connected to the Principal Town Centres, including Toolern, Sunshine and Sydenham via the main rail line and the Principal Public Transport Network (p49).

PSPs have largely influenced the form and layout of emerging suburbs in the WGC. Many PSPs have either recently been completed (nine PSPs), or are at various stages of planning (seven PSPs) in accordance with the WGC Plan.

Several major infrastructure projects are planned for the WGC or completed, and comprise the following:

- **Regional Rail Link:** A joint Commonwealth and State government project which created a new dedicated rail line for regional trains, and upgraded several train stations. This project was completed in June 2015 at a cost of \$3.65 billion.
- **Outer Metropolitan Ring Road:** Land has been placed under a PAO to be reserved for the construction of this project. The OMR will create room for new road and rail transport linkages. Planning for the project is underway.
- **Ballarat Line Upgrade:** Construction for the Ballarat Line Upgrade will commence in late 2017 and is expected to be completed by 2019. The project will duplicate tracks, provide additional platforms, upgrade stations, install new stabling facilities, and construct passing loops in selected areas.

Overall, the WGC Plan indicates that the corridor will accommodate at least 377,000 residents and have the capacity to accommodate at least 164,000 jobs (p40). The importance of the WGC is reflected in the forecast that this corridor will account for 40% of all population capacity and 48% of all jobs capacity planned for the four metropolitan growth corridors (p8).

## **1.2 Rockbank Precinct Structure Plan**

The Rockbank PSP (VPA, August 2016) is located in the general environs of the Melton Train Line and south of the Western Freeway in the Melbourne-Ballarat transport corridor, as shown in Figure 1.1.

The PSP indicates that Rockbank will accommodate 8,140 dwellings and a resident population of 22,800 persons. The PSP includes plans to service the resident population with one Major Town Centre, two local convenience centres, a Commercial hub and several Community hubs, as well as identifying areas for conventional and medium and higher-density residential development.

Education in the PSP is planned to comprise four schools and at least one kindergarten and one childcare centre, while plans for green space include conservation areas, landscaping, sports reserves, parks, and urban plazas. The PSP also includes plans for vegetation, biodiversity, water management, utilities, road network, and transport and movement plans for the future development of Rockbank.

Employment creation in the area is anticipated to be in the order of 2,170 jobs, including an estimated 1,375 jobs (or 63% of all jobs in the PSP) located around the MTC and Commercial hubs (p25).

Figure 1.1: Rockbank Precinct Structure Plan – Future Urban Structure



Source: Victorian Planning Authority; Rockbank PSP pg8

### 1.3 Rockbank Major Town Centre

The Rockbank MTC, with a gross land area of 26.7ha, is planned for development in the environs of Rockbank railway station and centred on Leakes Road. As described in the PSP, the Rockbank MTC “is part of a network of town centres within the City of Melton that will support the Toolern Principal Town Centre”, with the MTC also “supported by local town centres and local convenience centres in the surrounding area” (p21).

As indicated in Figure 1.2, the Rockbank MTC will comprise the following main components:

- Rockbank railway station, forming the northern boundary of the MTC;
- Anchor retail and specialty retail, large-format retail, mixed-use, community and medical facilities, open space and landscaping;

- Rockbank Road bridge over the rail line to the north-west, and pedestrian bridges across the rail line at the station and to the north-east of the MTC; and
- Medium and higher-density residential development within and surrounding the town centre.

The PSP indicates that the Rockbank MTC will have 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail floorspace (without a permit), and will be supported in the centre hierarchy by two local convenience centres situated, respectively, in the south-eastern and south-western parts of the PSP as shown in Figure 2.1. By comparison, the Toolern Major Activity Centre is planned to support 70,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail floorspace, including three to four supermarkets.

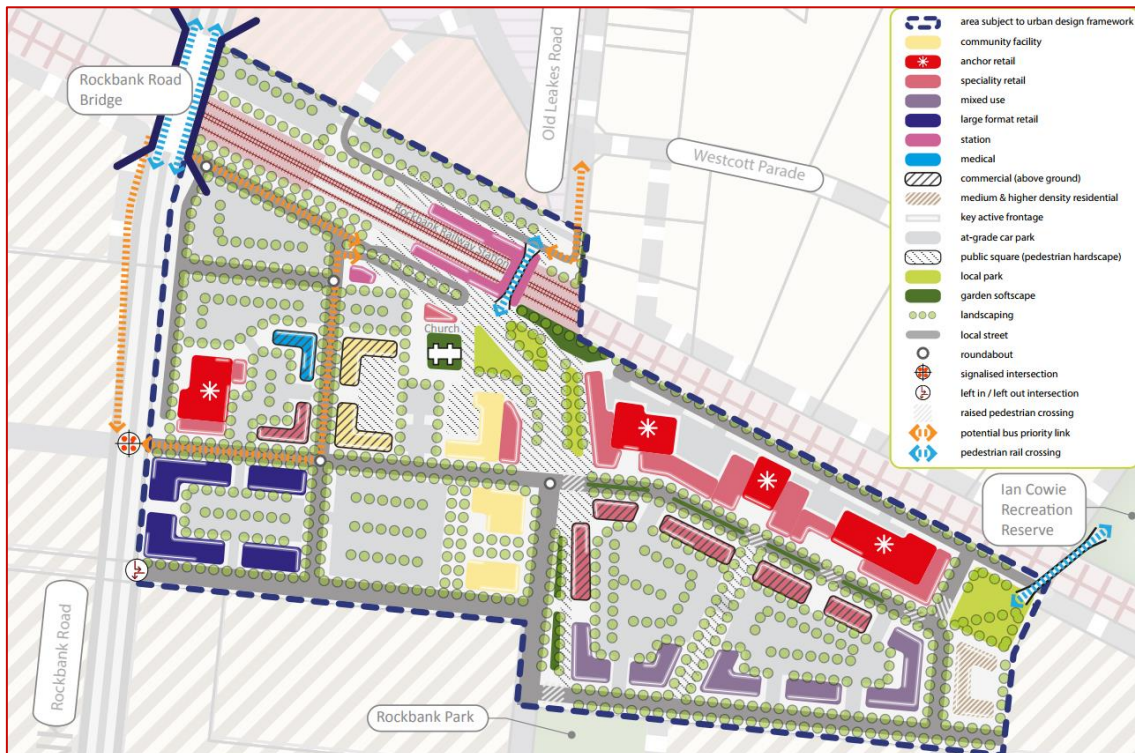
Development of the Rockbank MTC is highlighted in the PSP as being undertaken in three main stages (p23).

- Stage 1: Early development of the town centre using the existing Leakes Road as a north-south arterial route. The first stage of development will be the Retail (High Street) precinct which will connect directly to the Rockbank Train Station.
- Stage 2: Construction of Rockbank Road at-grade with the town centre. Continued development of the station precinct and early development of the Civic and Commercial precincts.
- Stage 3: Rockbank Road rail flyover and Western Freeway interchange realignment constructed, while the Leakes Road level crossing is removed to create a pedestrian-friendly town centre. Full realisation of the Civic and Commercial precincts.

The PSP indicates that the MTC will comprise four areas for anchor retailers, as well as areas identified for specialty and large-format retail types. Medical uses are planned for a small section of the commercial precinct to the west of the MTC. The MTC will also contain mixed-use development and above-ground commercial uses, according to the PSP.



Figure 1.2: Rockbank Major Town Centre



Source: VPA, Rockbank PSP, Major Town Centre, Urban Design Framework Concept Plan, August 2016, p20

## 1.4 Other Relevant Reports

A summary of main findings from planning reports associated with the Rockbank PSP and the West Growth Corridor is provided below.

### ***Melton Activity Centre Strategy, 2014***

The Melton Activity Centre Strategy (MACS) was prepared prior to the planning process for the Rockbank PSP. The MACS highlighted that Rockbank would require new neighbourhood centres to service its expanding resident population. This expectation is now reflected in the Rockbank PSP and in several other planning documents prepared by the City of Melton.

### ***Rockbank PSP Activity Centres Report, 2012 (Draft)***

This report was prepared by Urbis in December 2012 when only limited information was available concerning the likely future urban structure of Rockbank and surrounding PSP areas. While the *draft* report was comprehensive, it was also incomplete at the time of this review. The report analyses the preliminary details of the Rockbank PSP activity centres, and the main findings are as follows:

- A trade area population at capacity of 62,000 residents, and noting that residential population totalled some 1,700 persons at the time the report was prepared. Net

developable area was determined using a benchmark of 65% of gross land area, and this was coupled with a 15 dwellings per hectare dwelling density benchmark and an average household size of 2.8 persons per dwelling.

- Forecast resident retail expenditure was modelled using MarketInfo. Findings indicated that food retail and bulky goods were the categories to which residents direct the majority of their household expenditures.
- Approximately 7,000m<sup>2</sup> of DDS floorspace is supportable in the Rockbank MTC at development capacity.
- Approximately 9,500m<sup>2</sup> of supermarket floorspace is supportable in the Rockbank MTC at development capacity. This would likely comprise two full-line supermarkets and one smaller supermarket offering.
- Mini-majors and specialty retail would have a supportable combined floorspace of approximately 11,500m<sup>2</sup> in the Rockbank MTC at development capacity.
- A total retail floorspace of 29,000m<sup>2</sup> is supportable in the Rockbank MTC at development capacity, possibly around the year 2051.

#### ***Rockbank PSP Activity Centres Review, 2014***

A peer review of the Urbis 2012 report on Rockbank Activity Centres was undertaken by Essential Economics. At the time of review, Essential Economics were supplied with an incomplete draft of the Urbis report; however, the report was reviewed in its then present state and the main findings of the review were as follows:

- The proposed Rockbank MTC is appropriately located adjacent to the Rockbank railway station and centrally to the future urban area located south of the Western Freeway.
- The trade area for the Rockbank MTC as identified by Urbis is supported.
- A total shop floorspace allowance of approximately 30,000m<sup>2</sup> is appropriate for the Rockbank MTC at full development.
- The status of the Toolern Principal Town Centre (former terminology) had been enhanced by the time the Urbis report was reviewed, thus changing the overall activity centres hierarchy context. Toolern will now capture a greater market share of revenue from the trade area.
- The review concurs that a DDS is supportable in the Rockbank MTC.
- The review concludes that in addition to the Rockbank MTC, two neighbourhood centres with full-line supermarkets could be supported.

#### ***Rockbank Major Town Centre – Retail Development Potential, 2016***

The consultant team was provided with a report titled 'Rockbank Major Town Centre – Retail Development Potential' prepared by MacroPlan Dimasi for GIDA ROCKBNK Pty Ltd, the owner

of 12ha of land identified for the eastern portion of the Rockbank MTC. This report was provided to the consultant team during consultation with major land owners.

The MacroPlan Dimasi report assessed the retail development potential for the Rockbank MTC and identifies the following potential stages of retail development:

- The initial development of the MTC would consist of a supermarket-based centre containing approximately 6,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail floorspace and anchored by a full-line supermarket .
- When demand warrants, potential will exist for the attraction of a Discount Department Store (DDS) to the centre, at which time approximately of 22,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail floorspace could be supported.
- When the trade area is fully developed, the Rockbank MTC could support approximately 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of traditional retail floorspace, including DDS, three supermarkets, a range of mini-majors and a large number of speciality stores.

In addition to the above, the MacroPlan Dimasi Report forecast demand for a small bulky goods centre of approximately 10,000m<sup>2</sup> once the trade area is fully developed.

## 1.5 Implications

The Rockbank MTC is an important component in the Rockbank PSP and in the wider West Growth Corridor plan. The PSP indicates that the MTC will have a total of 30,000m<sup>2</sup> in shop floorspace (without a permit). While the planning for the Rockbank MTC appears to be comprehensive in terms of components, location and layout, it will be important to assess the type and extent of the retail components that will comprise the centre. This assessment is provided in the following chapter.

It is noted that the opportunity for approximately 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of traditional (or 'shop') floorspace in the Rockbank MTC is supported by three different assessments of retail development potential. In addition, the opportunity for a small bulky goods centre of 10,00m<sup>2</sup> has also identified.

## 2 ASSESSMENT OF ROCKBANK MAJOR TOWN CENTRE

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This Chapter provides an assessment of the Rockbank Major Town Centre, taking into account the location of the MTC in the Rockbank PSP and the location of other centres in surrounding PSPs, identification of the likely trade area that would be served by the Rockbank MTC, and the types of retail and other tenancies that would be supported in the MTC.

### 2.1 Existing and Planned Town Centres

The Rockbank MTC is located in relatively close proximity to two MTCs, each of which is planned to be larger in terms of retail floorspace than the Rockbank MTC: these centres are the Rockbank North MTC (3km distant and 36,500m<sup>2</sup> in retail floorspace) and the Toolern MTC (4.5km distant and 70,000m<sup>2</sup> in retail floorspace).

Two Local Town Centres (LTC) and three Local Convenience Centres are also planned within a 3km radius of the Rockbank MTC.

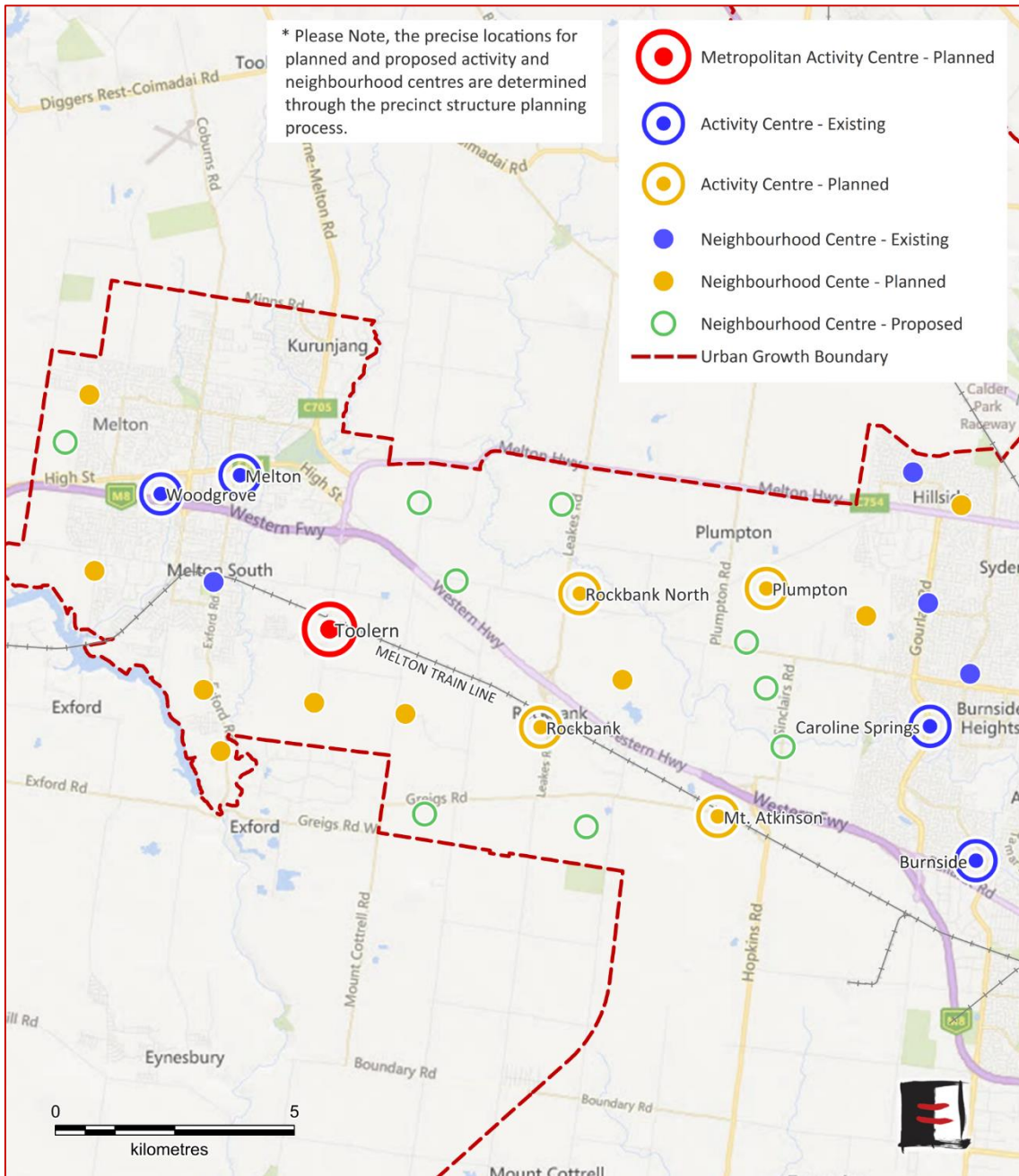
The location of the proposed activity centres is indicated in Figure 2.1.

The Rockbank North MTC is planned as one of the Major Activity Centres in the Melton section of the WGC. This centre is expected to comprise supermarkets, a discount department store, mini-major stores, showrooms, specialty shops, cafes, restaurants, bars and clubs, hotels, places of assembly, offices, medium- to high-density residential dwellings, short-stay accommodation, car parking and a bus interchange.

The Toolern MAC is planned for a location that is to the west of the Rockbank PSP and is classified as a Metropolitan Activity Centre. The centre will be the largest in Melton at full development and contain a full range of supermarkets, discount department stores, mini-major stores, showrooms, specialty shops, cafes, restaurants, bars, clubs and hotels. The Toolern MAC will be located along the Ballarat train line and have its own train station in the near future.

In addition, the Mt Atkinson Specialised Centre is located to the east and is planned to accommodate approximately 26,000m<sup>2</sup> of shop floorspace without a permit. The centre and surrounding area is also planned to accommodate a significant homemaker retail and showroom area of approximately 40,000m<sup>2</sup>.

Figure 2.1: Activity Centre Hierarchy



Source: Essential Economics using MapInfo, Bing Maps and information contained in Melton Planning

## 2.2 Trade Area Analysis

### *Trade Area Definition*

A 'trade area' is defined as that area from which a centre draws most of its retail trade.

The Rockbank MTC, with a 'shop' provision of up to 30,000m<sup>2</sup> (without a permit) would be expected to serve a trade area located generally within a 3km radius of the MTC, as shown in Figure 2.2. As noted below, it is important to consider the competitive influence of other MTCs, which would also serve residential areas located within a 3km radius of the Rockbank MTC.

Configuration of the Rockbank MTC trade area takes into account the following factors:

- The location and size of competing centres at Rockbank North MTC (36,500m<sup>2</sup> in retail floorspace) and Toolern MTC (70,000m<sup>2</sup> in retail floorspace). Other important centres planned for the surrounding area include Plumpton (45,000m<sup>2</sup> of 'shop' floorspace) to the north-east and Mt Atkinson (26,000m<sup>2</sup>) to the south-east;
- Accessibility to the Rockbank MTC via Rockbank Road and Leakes Road (noting that once the Rockbank Road overpass is completed, Leakes Road will no longer provide access across the rail line, although two pedestrian overpasses are planned – one at the station and one further east);
- Public transport access to the MTC, including bus and regional train services; and
- Physical barriers to movement, principally the Melbourne-Ballarat railway and the Western Freeway, although direct road access to the MTC will be available with the proposed Rockbank Road overpass.

Two trade areas are identified for the Rockbank MTC:

- A Primary Trade Area (PTA) which is located to the south of the Melbourne-Ballarat rail line, and comprises the Rockbank PSP and part of the Rockbank South PSP; and
- A Secondary Trade Area (STA) that comprises parts of the 3km radius from the Rockbank MTC – the MTC would be expected to draw only a small share of its trade from the STA as residents in the STA will most likely visit the nearby and larger centres at Toolern MTC to the east and Rockbank North MTC to the north.

Most of the Rockbank MTC's trade would be drawn from the PTA (say, 75%), while a smaller share would be drawn from the STA (say, 15%), and with the balance (say, 10%) drawn from beyond the PTA/STA (ie, passing trade or visitors to the MTC for business or some other reason). More precise estimates of the likely source of trade at the Rockbank MTC would be possible once further planning, accessibility and other factors associated with competing centres is finalised.



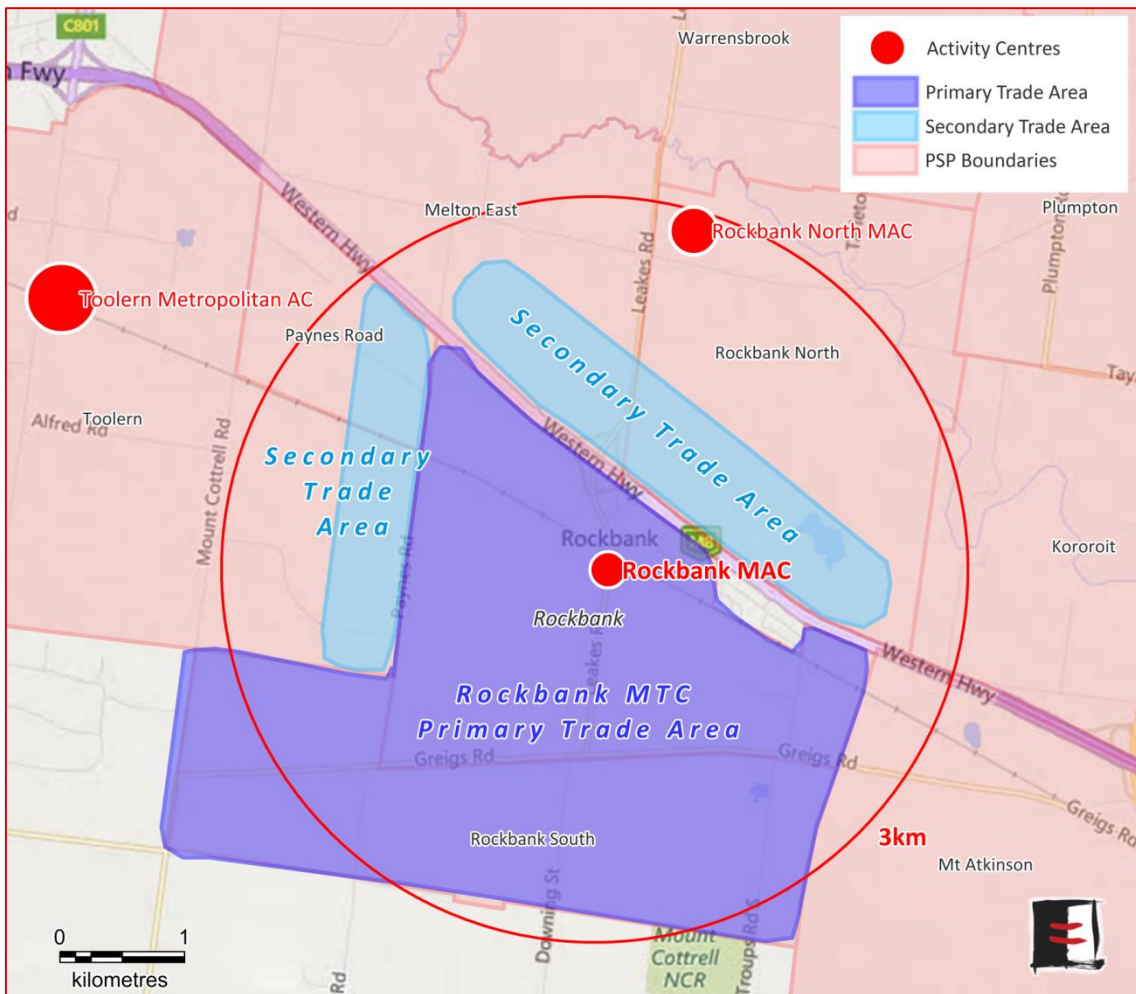
### Trade Area Population Estimates

The PTA population at capacity is estimated to be approximately 43,000 persons (rounded). This figure has been derived from the completed Rockbank PSP (22,800 persons) and broad estimates for the incomplete Rockbank South PSP (20,600 persons, based on a potential for 7,370 dwellings and an average of 2.8 persons per dwelling).

Population estimates for Rockbank MTC's STA are based on broad figures for the area, estimated to be in the order of some 15,000 residents (noting that these parts of STA for the Rockbank MTC actually form part of the trade areas for Toolern MTC and Rockbank North MTC).

Together, the total trade area would have an estimated 58,000 persons at full development, noting that 43,000 residents would be in the PTA, with a further 15,000 persons in the STA (and these STA residents would also be incorporated into the PTAs of the Toolern and Rockbank North MTCs).

**Figure 2.2: Rockbank MTC Trade Area**



Source: Essential Economics using MapInfo and Bing Maps

## 2.3 Review of Retail Tenant Potential

### *Review of 'shop' Floorspace Allocation*

As indicated earlier, the Toolern PSP allows for 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of 'shop' floorspace without a permit, and a *draft* report prepared by Urbis and a review by Essential Economics, along with a report prepared by MacroPlan Dimasi, considered this to be appropriate.

A review undertaken as part of this report also confirms planning for 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of traditional retail floorspace is appropriate. For instance, the average retail provision throughout Australia is currently estimated at approximately 2.1m<sup>2</sup> per person. Applying this figure to the trade area population of 58,000 persons equates to total demand for retail floorspace of approximately 122,000m<sup>2</sup> which would be supported in centres throughout the broader region including Rockbank, Rockbank North, Toolern, Melton, Caroline Springs etc.

An allocation of 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail floorspace equates to approximately 25% of total retail floorspace demand, which is within the market share expectations for a centre of size and location of Rockbank MTC.

### *Overview of Main Retail Components in Rockbank MTC*

The Rockbank MTC identifies locations for three types of retail activity: anchor retail (such as supermarkets and discount department stores), specialty retail, and large format retail.

As shown earlier in Figure 2.1, the Rockbank PSP identifies four parcels of land in the MTC as suitable for 'anchor retailers'. Three of the four areas for anchor tenants are planned for locations in the MTC's Main Street Precinct to the east, while the fourth anchor retail area is planned for the western part of the MTC which has frontage to the proposed Rockbank Road alignment.

'Specialty retail' is identified in the Rockbank PSP for locations that are mainly in the eastern part of the MTC, and with 'mixed use' located in the south-eastern part of the MTC. In addition, the PSP reserves a portion of land in the south-western corner of the MTC for 'large format retail'.

In regard to large format retail, the Rockbank MTC (at Figure 2, p20) has provision for only a small (and unspecified) area to accommodate this retail component.

Overall, the PSP does not indicate the percentage allocation of the 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail floorspace that may be dedicated to any of these retail formats.

Provision is also made in the MTC for health, community and other uses. Commercial uses are also identified for locations above ground level in the retail and other areas identified in the plan.



### ***Discount Department Store Potential***

A Discount Department Store (DDS) is regarded as an anchor tenant.

The Rockbank MTC services a (future) PTA that would be sufficiently large at full development (43,000 persons, plus the STA of some 15,000 persons) to support a DDS, noting that the benchmark for a DDS in the Greater Melbourne area is approximately 45,000 persons per store.

The DDS, while a long-standing popular retail format, is experiencing a slight decline in terms of popularity compared with certain other retail formats that have developed in the Australian retail scene in recent years. Examples of these newer formats range from individual retailers such as ALDI and Costco, to homewares stores and the popularity of contemporary specialty store precincts in retail centres. While some DDS brands are performing better than others, the overall size of the DDS retail format is undergoing a decline in floorspace due to competitive influences. The typical DDS now has floorspace in the range of 4,000m<sup>2</sup> to 6,000m<sup>2</sup>.

A DDS could be supported in the Rockbank MTC, but only when the trade area population is sufficiently large to ensure the DDS operates as a viable retail format. The residential capacity population is not expected to be reached for some time around (say) 2040 or even later. Furthermore, a DDS is likely to operate in a relatively competitive environment noting the planned provision of Major and Metropolitan Activity Centres in the region.

### ***Supermarket Potential***

The typical population benchmark for a full-line supermarket is 10,000 persons. As the estimated PTA population is expected to reach approximately 43,000 residents at capacity, it would be reasonable to assume that four full-line supermarkets could be located within the PTA.

The number of supermarkets will depend on the provision of Local Town Centres in the yet to be completed Rockbank South PSP. Having regard for the potential population of 20,000 or more residents in Rockbank South, it would be reasonable to expect at least one Local Town Centre would be provided.

Therefore, it would be considered prudent to plan for at least two full-line supermarkets in the order of 4,000m<sup>2</sup> each, plus potential for another full-line supermarket or smaller format and/or discount supermarkets such as ALDI or IGA.

In total, planning for 10,000m<sup>2</sup> to 12,000m<sup>2</sup> of supermarket floorspace would be reasonable, depending the future planning outcomes provided in the yet to be completed Rockbank South PSP.

Development of the supermarkets should be staged over time in order to maintain viability of supermarket operations as it will take time for the resident population to reach its capacity. A range of supermarket brands should be attracted to the MTC in order to ensure a wide range of product offerings and ensure competitive supermarket prices.

### ***Mini-Major Retail Potential***

Mini-major tenants are large specialised retailers, typically having retail floorspace of between 400m<sup>2</sup> and 2,500m<sup>2</sup>. These retailers are an increasingly important part of the retail mix in centres, nationally. In some centres, a strong mix of three or four mini-majors are effectively operating in combination as a major tenant, attracting high levels of patronage from across a wide geographic area.

Current examples of mini-major tenants include Dan Murphy's (take home liquor), Reject Shop (discount variety), Best & Less (apparel), JB Hi Fi (entertainment), and Rebel Sports (sporting goods).

Potential may exist for 2-4 mini major retailers.

### ***Speciality Retail Potential***

Centres such as the Rockbank MTC with an overall 'shop' floorspace of 30,000m<sup>2</sup> (without permit) would typically contain approximately 10,000-14,000m<sup>2</sup> of specialty retail floorspace or between 80-95 retail tenancies (assuming average tenancy size is generally between 125m<sup>2</sup> and 145m<sup>2</sup>).

Specialty retail outlets are typically of a finer grain with smaller floorspace per tenancy than other retail types, and can comprise chain brands (such as well-known national fashion retailers and jewellery stores) and local businesses that capture a niche market.

The share of specialty retail in the Rockbank MTC would likely be in the order of 10,000m<sup>2</sup> and 14,000m<sup>2</sup>, although this may alter depending on the share of floorspace dedicated to other retail formats in the centre.

### ***Indicative Distribution of Retail Floorspace by Type***

Table 2.1 provides an indication of the potential distribution of traditional retail floorspace that would be expected to locate within the core retail areas of the MTC.

Supermarkets would perform the role anchor retail tenants, together with a DDS if this was accommodated in the centre. These anchor tenants would support the smaller specialty retail tenants.

Variation around these floorspace estimates by retail type may apply, depending on the type of retailers attracted to the MTC and allowing for changes to retail formats over time to (say) 2040 and beyond.

**Table 2.1: 'Indicative' Distribution of Traditional Retail Floorspace in Rockbank MTC**

Retail Type	Floorspace	Share
Supermarket	10,000m <sup>2</sup>	33%
Specialty Retail and Mini-majors	14,000m <sup>2</sup>	47%
Discount Department Store	6,000m <sup>2</sup>	20%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30,000m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Essential Economics

Note: Variation around these floorspace estimates by retail type may apply, depending on the type of retailers attracted to the MTC and allowing for changes to retail formats over time.

### ***Large Format Retail Potential***

The analysis outlined above, along with the findings of assessments on retail demand undertaken previously for the Rockbank MTC, indicates that it is reasonable to plan for approximately 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of traditional retail floorspace, excluding large format or bulky goods retailing.

The Rockbank PSP shows an area in the south-western portion of the MTC reserved for large format retail. While having a wide offering of retail formats in the MTC is important in attracting and retaining shopper patronage, other larger MTCs planned for the nearby suburbs of Toolern, Mt Atkinson and Melton West (Mega Centre comprising 50,000m<sup>2</sup> of bulky goods floorspace) can be expected to have significant floorspace areas dedicated to large format retail.

In this context, the Rockbank MTC is likely to play only a supporting role to other locations in the wider region that are planned for more extensive large format retail offerings. As the Rockbank MTC can likely only support a limited product range in large format retail, it would be difficult for such retailers to compete with similar retail formats in these larger centres.

The MacroPlan Dimasi report indicates potential for a small bulky goods precinct of 10,000m<sup>2</sup> in the longer-term when the trade area is nearing full development. Allowing flexibility within the UDF to accommodate up to 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of bulky goods or restricted retail floorspace, should demand warrant such provision in the longer-term, is unlikely to have a significant influence on the broader hierarchy of centres in the region. A bulky goods precinct of this size is considered to be only a small precinct and would sit below other planned bulky goods precincts in the region. Potential may exist for the precinct to accommodate a small range of retail and non-retail uses that would complement the role of the MTC.

## **2.4 Overview of Opportunities for Non-retail Uses**

### ***Commercial Office***

Approximately 7,500m<sup>2</sup> of commercial office space is planned for the Rockbank MTC in the PSP (Table 4, p25). Nearby competing centres such as Mt Atkinson and Toolern have commercial

office hubs planned which may undermine the viability of the commercial space in the Rockbank MTC.

In the MTC concept plan, commercial areas are shown as:

- above-ground development (ie, above specialty retail, medical and community activities); and
- to the north-west of the railway station, with frontage to both Rockbank Road and the Western Freeway (thereby benefitting from commercial exposure to passing trade) and also adjoining existing commercial activities to the immediate east of this area.

Typically, commercial office floorspace would account for between 10-30% of total retail and commercial floorspace. In this context, the allocation of 7,500m<sup>2</sup> accounts for 20% and is considered reasonable for the purpose of preparing the UDF.

### ***Mixed Use***

Areas identified for Mixed Use activities are located in the plan as follows:

- to the south-eastern part of the MTC (Figure 2, p20); and
- to the immediate north-west of the railway station (Figure 4, p26) where the designated area has frontage to Rockbank Road – this area is suitable for residential development as part of the Mixed Use area in view of its proximity to the station.

### ***Medical***

Medical uses would be required in the Rockbank MTC; however, the range and scale of the medical land uses would be subject to market forces and availability of medical professionals to service the area's residential population. Medical facilities would be expected to include general practitioners, dentists, allied health practitioners, and the like.

### ***Community Facility***

This form of land use is not specified in the PSP but, for example, would likely relate to the provision of community meeting/function centre, child care facilities, and a community library.

### ***Medium and Higher-Density Residential***

Provision is made for a small area of medium and higher-density residential in the south-eastern part of the Rockbank MTC and this is supported by local and state planning policy that encourages higher density housing in close proximity to train stations and activity centres.

## 2.5 Summary

The Rockbank MTC has the potential to accommodate a variety of uses considered essential for its role as a MTC including retail, commercial, mixed-use, community, health and higher-density residential, combined with open space and at-ground parking.

In regard to retail opportunities, at full-development the Rockbank MTC has the potential to accommodate to approximately 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of core retailing floorspace, including a DDS, 3-4 supermarkets, mini-major retailers and speciality shops. In addition, potential may also exist for a small restricted retail/bulky goods precinct of up to 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace that would complement the centre's role as a MTC.

Commentary of the MTC plan from a planning and development perspective is provided in the following Chapter.

## 3 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

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This Chapter provides commentary on the Rockbank MTC Urban Design Framework Concept Plan (UDF), focusing on the proposed location of the various components (eg, retail and commercial, etc) and overall MTC design and accessibility considerations.

### 3.1 Summary of Main Land Use Components

The overview of the principal components planned for the Rockbank MTC, presented in Chapter 2, indicates that:

- The planned provision of 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail (shop) floorspace is adequate for the centre's anticipated role in the retail centres hierarchy.
- This retail floorspace provision is sufficient to cater for the main types of retail tenancies, namely anchor tenants (supermarkets and a DDS); specialty retail.
- In addition, an opportunity for a small component of large format retail may eventuate in the future.
- Provision is made for commercial (office) floorspace and this also includes commercial floorspace provided above specialty retail and above community facilities.
- Provision is made for areas where mixed-use activities can develop, including components of commercial, retail and residential activity.
- Provision is made for community and health facilities.

### 3.2 Overall Locational Considerations for Main Component

Comments on particular uses/facilities and design elements are summarised as follows:

- **'Public Square'**: A public square situated in the central part of the MTC, and with immediate access to the proposed railway station, is the focal point for the plan. This development pattern facilitates pedestrian access between the 'public square', railway station, shopping and community facilities, carparking and areas of open space. The Serbian Orthodox Church is located central to the public square; it is understood the Church is likely to remain in this location.
- **Removal of the Leakes Road railway crossing**: This is a strong advantage of the concept plan, with road-over-rail vehicular access to be provided at Rockbank Road located to the immediate west of the MTC. Pedestrian access over-rail is provided at the railway station and further to the east at the edge of the MTC.
- **Large Format Retail / Anchor Retail**: These uses are located with frontage to Rockbank Road which is a positive feature in terms of accessibility and exposure to passing trade

travelling along Rockbank Road. However, it may be more appropriate for all of the Anchor Retail and Specialty Retail to be co-located in order to ensure a consolidated retail presentation to centre visitors – in the present plan, these components are separated, with one Anchor Retail area located with frontage to Rockbank Road to the west and the other three Anchor Retail components located to the north-east of the MTC. In essence, these Anchor Retail areas are dis-located, with community facilities and commercial development (above ground) separating these important retail elements where retail interaction and support is otherwise to be encouraged.

- **Other Anchor Retail:** Other areas identified as Anchor retail locations are situated to the north-eastern part of the MTC, with frontage to a local street serving the locality. It appears from the concept plan that these areas do not have a 'bus priority link' along the High Street, which is possibly a short-coming, having regard for those visitors to the centre who are moving in and through the centre as pedestrians. This is particularly the case for those visitors to the MTC who have to carry their shopping from the Anchor Retail areas in the east to the bus parking and bus priority link located in the western part of the MTC and at the railway station.
- **Mixed-Use:** The eastern part of the MTC also contains specialty retail with commercial above, as well as areas set aside for mixed-use activities (likely to comprise retail, office and residential uses) and for medium and higher-density residential in the far eastern edge of the MTC.
- **Community, Medical and Other Uses:** These uses are situated in the 'central' part of the MTC, accessible to pedestrians and bus services.
- **Public Open Spaces:** These open spaces, both small and large, allow for a range of passive and event activities throughout the MTC, and also facilitate pedestrian and cycling movement within and through around the town centre (p22). Links to residential areas surrounding the town centre are also provided.
- **Road Network:** The plan aims to "establish a road network that provides good access to the town centre without compromising the quality of the pedestrian-focused streets and spaces" (p22).
- **Scale and Mass of Built Form:** The concept plan aims to "ensure that the scale and mass of the built form is appropriate to the width of the street or public space", thus creating comfortable spaces and streetscapes that have a sense of enclosure (p22).
- **Development Timing Considerations:** The concept plan does not provide a development timing schedule, although this would likely be provided when the detailed plan is prepared.

In summary, the Rockbank MTC concept plan presents as a comprehensive and integrated plan for the centre. However, several aspects of the concept plan are worth reviewing, as outlined in the following section.

### 3.3 Suggestions for MTC Plan Review

Several aspects of the MTC concept plan may benefit from a review of currently-proposed aspects of the plan. These include the following:

- Plan for the co-location of the four Anchor Retail components, thereby ensuring consolidation (rather than dispersal) of these important components in the MTC. In the current plan, one Anchor Retail component is located to the west on Rockbank Road, while the other three are located to the east of the MTC. Although the MTC is planned as a comprehensive centre with a range of activities – retail, commercial, mixed-use, higher-density residential, etc – the reality is that the retail function is the ‘glue’ that will hold the centre together as a unit in terms of its successful operation as an MTC.
- Where possible, plan for the orientation of Anchor retail in closer proximity to the train station and the major access points to the centre, including Rockbank Road which will eventually be the main north-south connection for the centre.
- The Anchor Retail components located to the east of the MTC do not appear to have ‘priority bus link’, in contrast with the area to the west in immediate proximity to the railway station. It would serve the important retail function of the MTC if this bus services was extended to these other parts of the MTC which include the Anchor Retail as well as Mixed-Use and Commercial (above ground level) activities.
- The schedule for development staging of the overall PSP and the MTC component will be important in terms of ensuring that sufficient retail floorspace and associated retail anchor and specialty retail tenancies in place. This will ensure that residents establishing in the Rockbank PSP area are provided with an appropriate range of retail and other facilities to support their emerging community.



## 4 CONCLUSION

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The main conclusions from this review of the Rockbank MTC are summarised as follows:

### ***Rockbank MTC***

- 1 The Rockbank MTC is an important component in the Rockbank PSP and in the wider West Growth Corridor plan. The PSP indicates that the MTC will have a total of 30,000m<sup>2</sup> in 'shop' floorspace (without a permit). While planning for the Rockbank MTC is comprehensive in terms of components, location and layout, it will be important to assess the type and extent of the retail components that will comprise the centre, as noted below.

### ***MTC Trade Area***

- 2 The Rockbank MTC, with a 'shop' provision of up to 30,000m<sup>2</sup> (without a permit) would be expected to serve a trade area located generally within a 3km radius of the MTC. However, the extent to which the centre captures trade will be influenced by the location and size of competing centres at Rockbank North MTC and Toolern MTC and other centres including Plumpton and Mt Atkinson; accessibility to the Rockbank MTC; public transport access to the MTC, including bus and regional train services; and physical barriers to movement.
- 3 Two trade areas are identified for the Rockbank MTC: a Primary Trade Area (PTA) which is located to the south of the Melbourne-Ballarat rail line, and comprises the Rockbank PSP and part of the Rockbank South PSP; and a Secondary Trade Area (STA) that comprises parts of the 3km radius from the Rockbank MTC. The MTC would be expected to draw only a small share of its trade from the STA as residents in the STA will most likely visit the nearby and larger centres at Toolern MTC to the east and Rockbank North MTC to the north.

### ***Rockbank MTC Trade Area Population***

- 4 The MTC's total trade area would have an estimated 58,000 persons at full development, noting that 43,000 persons would be resident in the PTA, with a further 15,000 persons in the STA (and these STA residents would also be incorporated into the PTAs of the Toolern and Rockbank North MTCs).

### ***Retail Role of Rockbank MTC***

- 5 The Rockbank PSP states that a 'shop' floorspace of 30,000m<sup>2</sup> (without permit) would be appropriate for the Rockbank MTC. In broad terms, the Rockbank MTC would be expected to account for approximately 25% of all retail expenditures by trade area households. The balance in household expenditures would be directed to higher-order centres (sub-regional, regional and CBD) and smaller local centres.

- 6 Planning for up to 30,000m<sup>2</sup> of ‘shop’ or core retailing activities to be located within the MTC is appropriate and this may include anchor retailing (such as supermarkets and discount department stores), mini-majors and specialty retail. The indicative allocation of retail floorspace for the MTC is as follows:

• Supermarkets (3-4):	10,000m <sup>2</sup>
• Specialty retail/mini-major:	14,000m <sup>2</sup>
• <u>Discount Department Store:</u>	<u>6,000m<sup>2</sup></u>
Total:	30,000m <sup>2</sup>

Variation around these floorspace estimates by retail type may apply, depending on the type of retailers attracted to the MTC and allowing for changes to retail formats over time.

### ***Other Activities in the MTC***

- 7 Other activities included in the Rockbank MTC include the following:

- Small bulky goods/restricted retail precinct (<10,000m<sup>2</sup>)
- Commercial (office) activities (7,500m<sup>2</sup>)
- Mixed-Use (eg, office, residential)
- Community (eg, community centre, child care, library)
- Health (eg, doctor, dentist, etc)
- Medium and high-density residential development

### ***Suggested Areas for Review of MTC***

- 8 Plan for the co-location of the four Anchor Retail components, thereby ensuring consolidation (rather than dispersal) of these important components in the MTC.
- 9 Where possible, plan for the orientation of Anchor retail in closer proximity to the train station and the major access points to the centre, including Rockbank Road which will eventually be the main north-south connection for the centre.
- 10 The Anchor Retail components located to the east of the MTC do not appear to have ‘priority bus link’, in contrast with the area to the west in immediate proximity to the railway station. It would serve the important retail function of the MTC if this bus services was extended to these other parts of the MTC which include the Anchor Retail as well as Mixed-Use and Commercial (above ground level) activities.
- 11 The schedule for development staging of the overall PSP and the MTC component will be important in terms of ensuring that sufficient retail floorspace and associated retail anchor and specialty retail tenancies in place. This will ensure that residents establishing in the Rockbank PSP area are provided with an appropriate range of retail and other facilities to support their emerging community.