

St Arnaud Structure Plan

Draft Emerging Themes

March 2022



mesh

NORTHERN
Grampians
SHIRE COUNCIL

Prepared by Mesh in conjunction with Northern Grampians Shire Council

1

Establish St Arnaud's township boundary and protect its rural surrounds for agricultural uses.

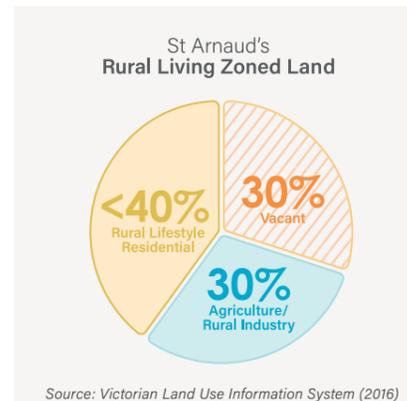
Issues

St Arnaud has an established urban area bordered by the St Arnaud Regional Park to the west, St Arnaud State Forest to the south and expansive rural land to the north and east. However, a township boundary that defines the extent of the town's growth has never been clearly identified.

There is a disconnect between the planning controls and the actual land use, particularly in the expansive Rural Living Zoned (RLZ) areas. Based on a desktop analysis, less than 40% of the RLZ land is being used for rural lifestyle purposes. This is largely a result of outdated planning controls, with historical zoning needing comprehensive review.

Around 30% of the RLZ land is being used for agricultural purposes / rural industry. The St Arnaud area is historically known for its broadacre cropping and other productive agricultural outputs. However an agricultural feasibility assessment is necessary to identify productive agricultural land around St Arnaud that requires protection from any future urban growth.

The RLZ to the northeast is left vacant due to biodiversity constraints, particularly parcels abutting the St Arnaud North State Forest. Protecting these areas for their valuable contribution to the landscape character of St Arnaud, and to mitigate bushfire risk will be a priority.



Opportunities

1

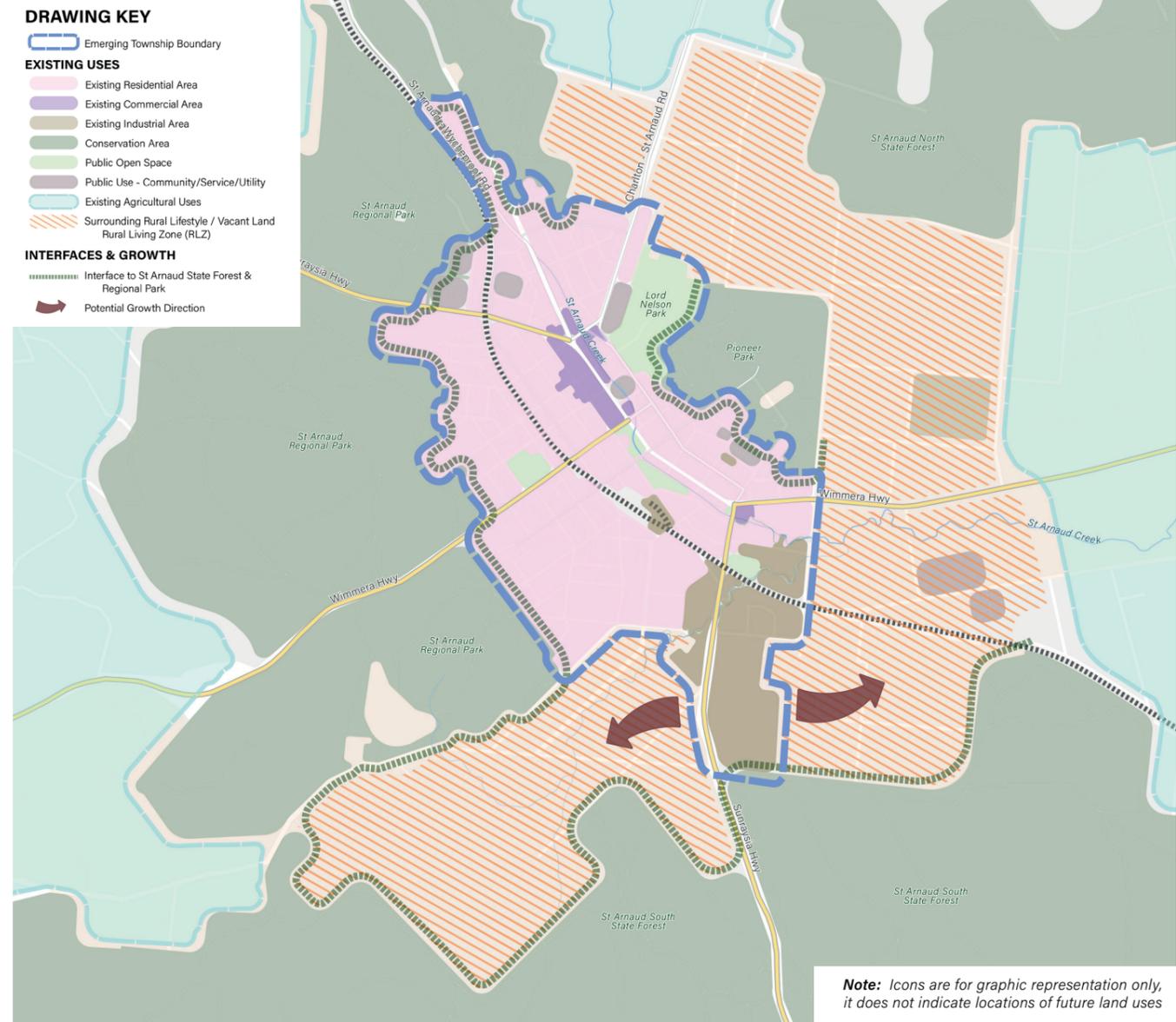
Establish a township boundary to define the extent of urban growth and also ensures sufficient land for residential, commercial, industrial and public use.

2

Maximize the effective use of land around St. Arnaud by defining land use (including agricultural uses) and development outcomes for surrounding Rural Lifestyle/Vacant land.

3

Manage the interface treatment to St Arnaud State Forest, Regional Park areas and areas with dense native vegetation from urban growth to safeguard a growing community from bushfire threat.



2

Support and expand St Arnaud's existing industries, and enhance the town's role as a regional centre.

Issues

St Arnaud is known as the Shire's Rural Industrial Hub thanks to its cluster of agribusinesses which consist of animal feeds factories, farm machineries production, broiler farms and piggeries which are generally located on the fringe of the town. The Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Growth Plan identifies St Arnaud as a regional centre which is to provide important sub-regional goods and services to the smaller rural settlements, particularly the recently commenced mineral sands mine in Donald.

St Arnaud's rural industries are generally well-established, however there are some land use conflicts emerging with heavy industrial located in close proximity to sensitive uses such as residential. There is also an industrial precinct located just south of the St Arnaud urban area along Sunraysia Hwy consisting of smaller agribusinesses and conventional industrial uses. Because of its proximity to the urban area, interfaces to sensitive uses might need to be investigated and addressed in the short term.

Due to the town's role as a Rural Industrial Hub, there is a strong demand for rural industrial uses to locate closer to the town. This is demonstrated by the approximately 30% of Rural Living zoned land close to town being utilised for medium to large scale agricultural purposes. While there is vacant land in the established industrial precinct, it is constrained by flooding or lot sizes deemed inappropriate for certain types of rural industrial uses. Expansion of the industrial area is also constrained by the lack of access to utilities, particularly power to meet rural industries' high energy requirements.

The existing services and retail in St Arnaud is considered appropriate for a small rural town (Retail Gaps Analysis, 2018), however it is insufficient to function as a Regional Centre and provide services to its surrounding rural settlements. St Arnaud has an employment sector based on servicing its local rural industry and this could potentially expand to servicing the industries in the surrounding rural settlements (particularly the mineral sands mine in Donald), and potentially expanding its tourism industry.

St Arnaud's Top 5 Industries



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016)



Opportunities

- 1 Facilitate ongoing development of the existing industrial precinct while minimising the impacts to the existing community.
- 2 Explore different types of conventional and rural industry in St Arnaud, in order to identify possible industrial uses and suitable locations.
- 3 Enhance interface treatments between sensitive and industrial uses, and investigate transitioning industrial uses within the urban area to more appropriate locations.
- 4 Investigate the use and production of renewable energy to support the changing needs of rural industry within St Arnaud.
- 5 Improve current services in St Arnaud to fulfill its role as a Regional Centre and help boost the local economy.



Note: Icons are for graphic representation only, it does not indicate locations of future land uses

3

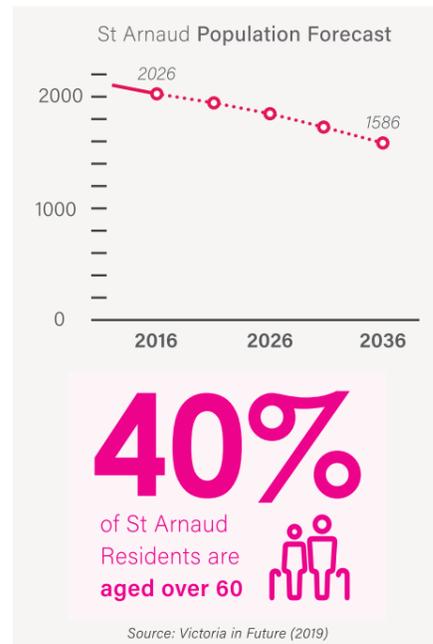
Provide a range of housing for St Arnaud's changing community and to attract new residents and tourists.

Issues

St Arnaud is experiencing a steady decline in population since the early 2000's, with the majority of its residents aged 60 and over. This trend is expected to continue until at least 2036 in pre-pandemic projections (VIF 2019). During the 2020-2021 pandemic, council data for St Arnaud showed a slight increase in building approvals brought about by city dwellers moving to regional areas.

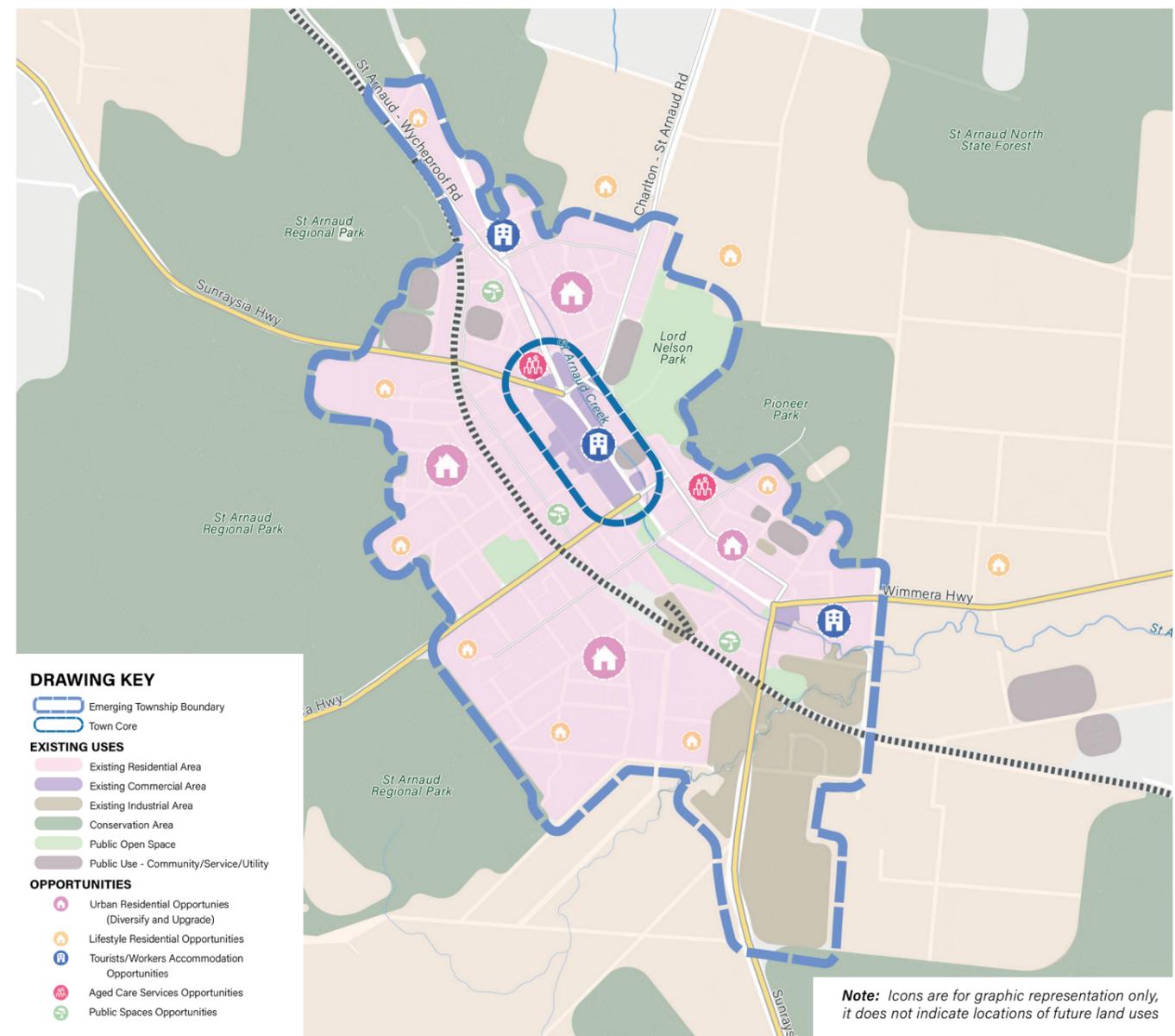
There are very limited services and public spaces accessible for the ageing population within St Arnaud, requiring them to travel outside of the town to access basic health services. The St Arnaud urban area is characterised by an older stock of predominantly single detached dwellings with a handful of them in poor quality (OPAN Housing Demand: Market Performance Report 2021).

The lack of housing diversity in St Arnaud, demonstrated by the predominance of a single detached dwellings, limits the housing options for different people in different life stages and is an impediment to residential and population growth. In addition, available services in town may not be suitable to changing lifestyles of residents. The OPAN Housing Demand: Market Performance Report (2021) also highlights an undersupply of tourism and workers accommodation, missing opportunities created by the recent domestic tourism boom and the recent commencement of the mineral sands mine in Donald.



Opportunities

- 1 Allowing St Arnaud's ageing population to 'age in place' by providing appropriate housing, public spaces, services and other infrastructure that supports their needs.
- 2 Attract new residents with diverse and lifestyle housing options within town and on the fringes, to take advantage of the recent tree change boom.
- 3 Facilitate development of workers accommodation to service surrounding rural industries including the Donald Mineral Sands Mine and encourage local employment within St Arnaud.
- 4 Facilitate development of tourist accommodation to leverage the recent domestic tourism boom and help boost St Arnaud's local economy.



4 Enhance the lifestyle, character and heritage features that make St Arnaud special.

Issues

The township of St Arnaud was established as a result of gold discoveries close to the town during the gold rush era in the 1850s. Strong visual connections to that period can be seen in the significant heritage streetscape in Napier St, the town's main commercial street dating back to that era. Despite the lack of appropriate planning controls to protect such important heritage assets, the heritage buildings along Napier Street are considered well preserved and in good condition. This demonstrates the significance of these heritage assets to the local community and the local community's recognition of their ongoing contribution to the local economy.



Aside from the heritage assets, St Arnaud is also characterised by a network of well-established public open spaces concentrated in the centre of the town, and the St Arnaud Regional Park located on the west of the town offering some bushwalking and off-road mountain biking trails.

This will be a challenge for the growing older population in St Arnaud as some areas within the town lack access to public spaces that cater to specific recreational needs.

The St Arnaud Urban Design Framework released in 2006 noted that the gateway entry experience to town is somewhat compromised by the industrial precinct located along Sunraysia Highway. Industrial growth in this location will need to be considered in the context of how to improve the gateway experience.

Opportunities

1

Enhance St Arnaud's heritage assets by applying appropriate planning controls that would seek to protect it.

2

Reinforce the sense of connection between the town and the surrounding agricultural and bushland.

3

Create opportunities to extend the network of high quality public spaces to suit different recreational needs of the existing and future community.

4

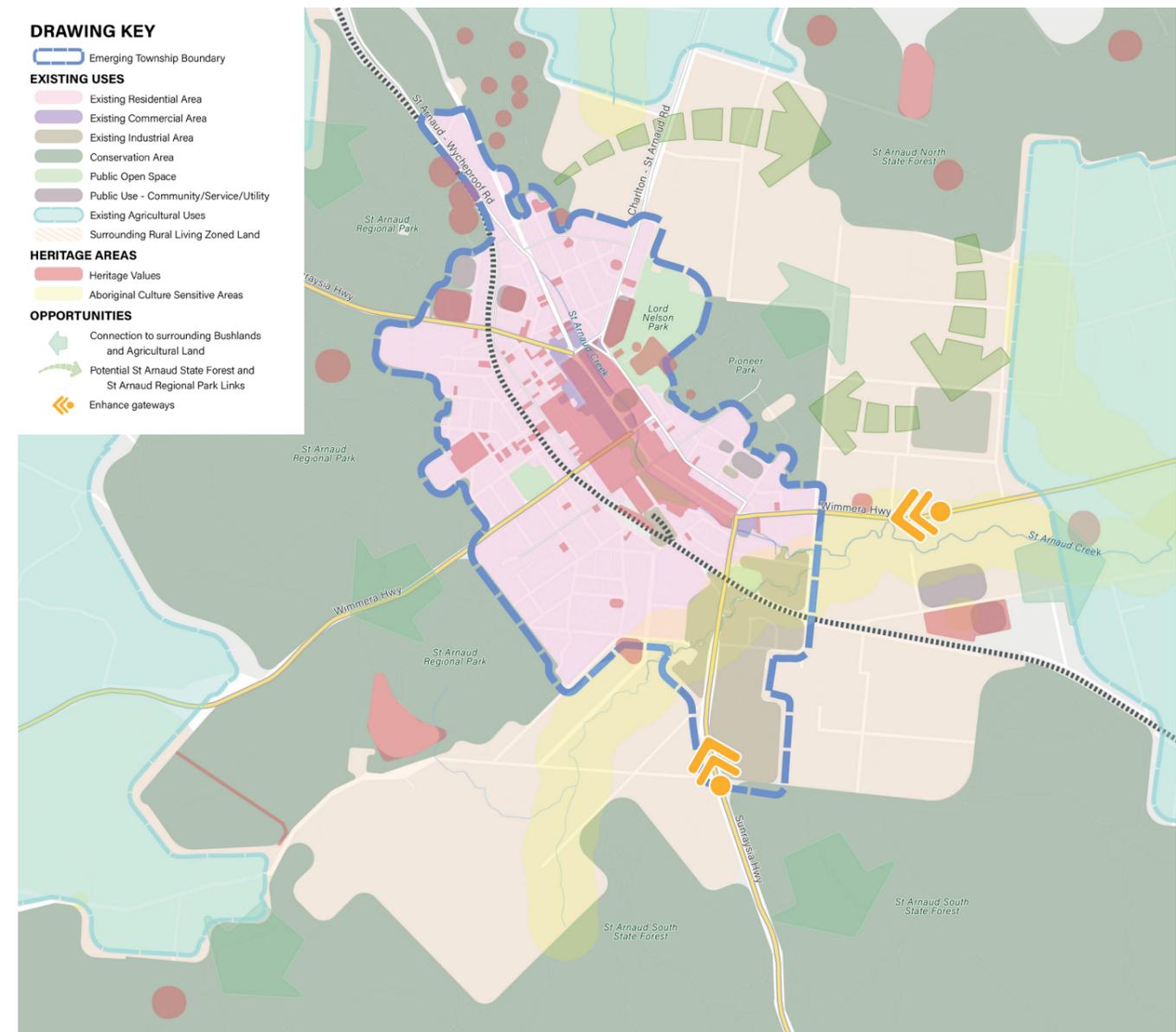
Enhance St Arnaud's unique landscape setting by establishing links between the areas of St Arnaud State Forest and Regional Park and protecting native vegetation from urban growth.

5

Explore opportunities to enhance the gateway experience into town along the Sunraysia Highway.

DRAWING KEY

- Emerging Township Boundary
- EXISTING USES**
- Existing Residential Area
- Existing Commercial Area
- Existing Industrial Area
- Conservation Area
- Public Open Space
- Public Use - Community/Service/Utility
- Existing Agricultural Uses
- Surrounding Rural Living Zoned Land
- HERITAGE AREAS**
- Heritage Values
- Aboriginal Culture Sensitive Areas
- OPPORTUNITIES**
- Connection to surrounding Bushlands and Agricultural Land
- Potential St Arnaud State Forest and St Arnaud Regional Park Links
- Enhance gateways



5

Create a network of pedestrian & cycling paths, and enhance road network capacity for industry expansion.

Issues

St Arnaud is situated at the junction of the Wimmera Highway and Sunraysia Highway. It has good access to a network of regional towns in central-west Victoria and is the midway point between Melbourne and other major regional cities of Ballarat, Bendigo, Horsham and Mildura. It also has the Melbourne-Mildura freight rail traversing through the middle of the town, an attractive feature for industries.



St Arnaud internal road network is characterised by an established modified grid network of mostly sealed roads in the town core with footpaths concentrated around the areas of the main commercial area. There are no pedestrian links connecting services or the main recreational areas such as the Lord Nelson Park and the concentration of well-established public open spaces parks in the town core to St Arnaud Regional Park.

Pedestrian links needs to be extended to cover a wider area of the town to accommodate the changing community of St Arnaud and encourage healthier lifestyles. Cycling links should also be considered within the urban area, to maximise the generally flat topography of the town and to facilitate an additional mode of active transport. There is an opportunity to explore flood mitigation measures within St Arnaud in response to emerging climate change related issues. New drainage solutions could form part of the public realm, with opportunities for pedestrian linkages to these potential natural features in the landscape.

The road network on the fringes of the town core becomes less structured and characterised by unsealed roads, if these fringe areas are being considered for future industrial uses, the road would need to be upgraded to accommodate frequent use of heavy vehicles.

Opportunities

1

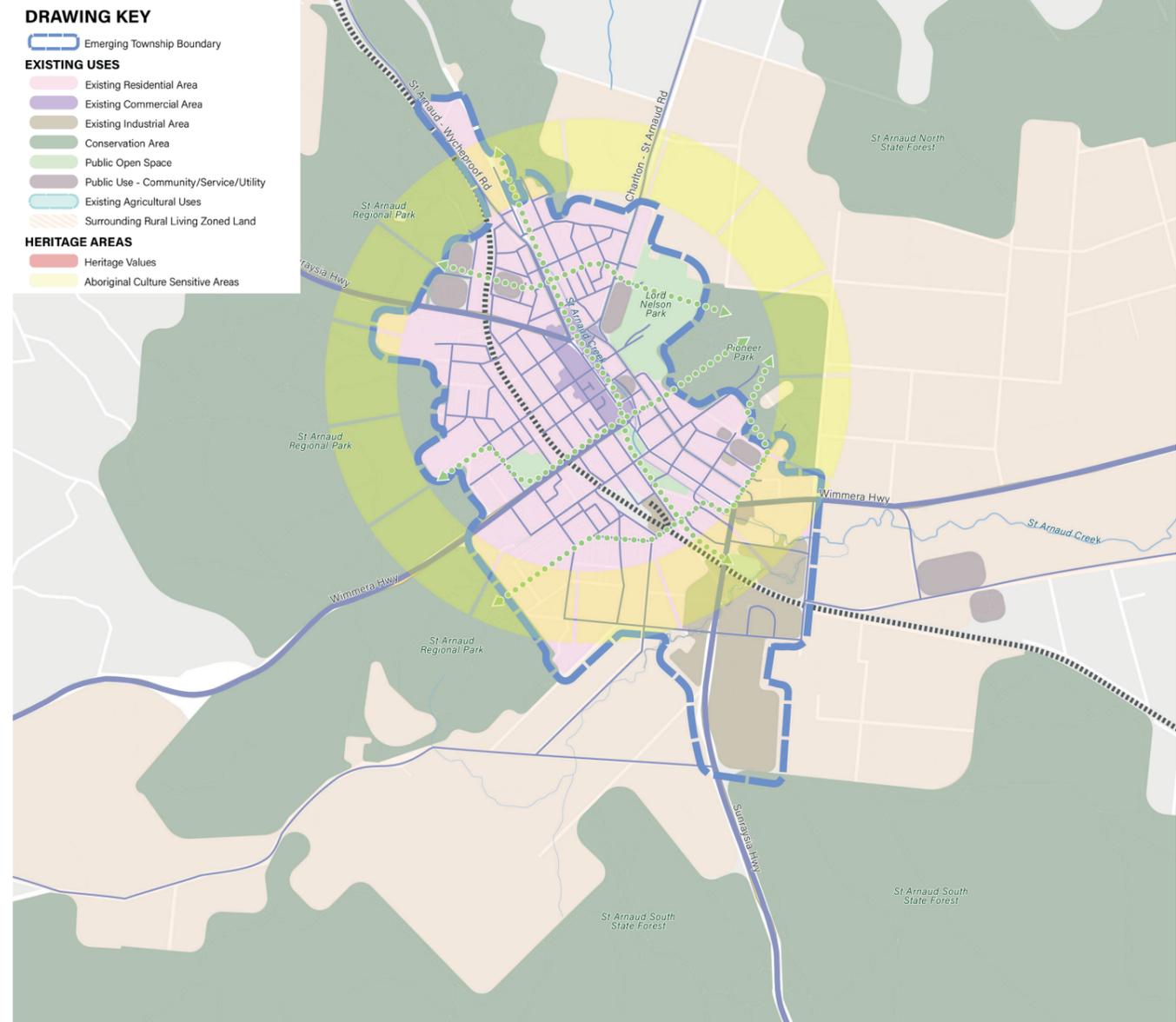
Create pedestrian and cycling links to reduce car dependency and encourage healthier lifestyles.

2

Develop a walkable town core to accommodate St Arnaud's changing community.

3

Ensuring St Arnaud's road network has the capacity to accommodate the needs of its expanding industries.



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