

St Arnaud Structure Plan

"What We Heard"

July 2022



Why the St Arnaud Structure Plan is needed

The St Arnaud Structure Plan will guide land use in St Arnaud for the next 20 years. The plan will reflect the needs of the town and enable appropriate development.

Northern Grampians Shire Council, along with Mesh Planning Consultants, undertook community engagement from February 2022 to April 2022. Residents, business owners, local workers and students were asked what their vision for the town was and what changes they would like to see.

Community Engagement Phase 1

Council engaged widely and broadly on the St Arnaud Structure Plan and received detailed feedback through surveys, workshops and face-to-face conversations.

This report reflects what we heard from our community based on the key themes outlined in the '**St Arnaud Structure Plan Emerging Themes Report, March 2022**'. The report also outlines the next steps in response to what we heard.

Who we spoke to

Council engaged widely with the St Arnaud community, targeting **residents, business owners, landowners, workers, service users and students**.

Government agencies and technical experts were also engaged from a range of relevant fields.

Face-to-Face

Community workshops
Flyer drops
Drop in Centre conversations
Expo at Market Square
Youth Workshop
Technical Working Group
Phone conversations
190+ conversations

Online, social and print

Double page spread in local newspapers
(4000 copies distributed)
Hard copy survey
Social media posts on Facebook
(3756 followers)
Online survey
Letterbox drops of brochure
Over 7000 people reached



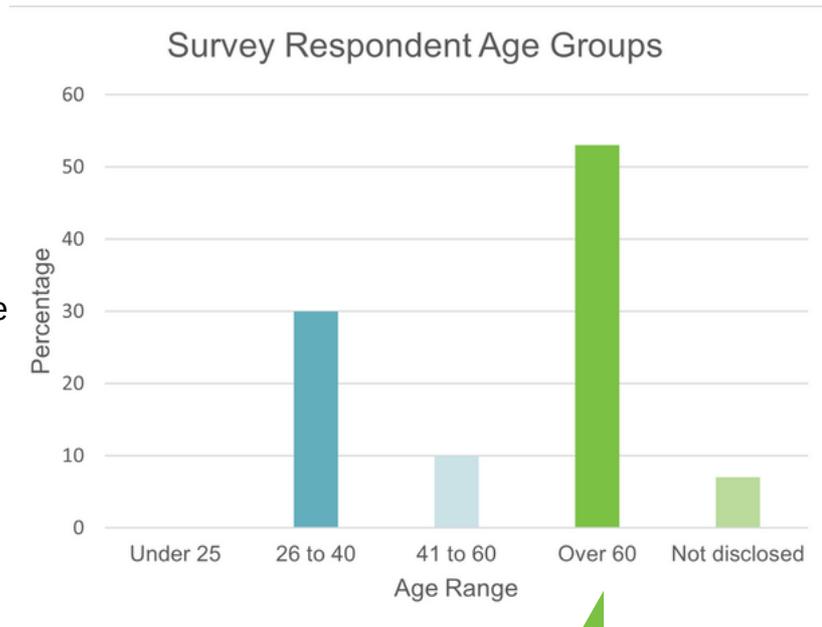
Survey

Council developed a survey that asked the community for their feedback on a series of issues and opportunities for St Arnaud. These included:

- housing
- agriculture
- open space
- services
- industry

Surveys were available as a hard copy, were published in a newspaper spread in North Central News and The Weekly Advertiser, and were available online via council's website.

There were 32 surveys returned, with each one giving us a great insight into the community's vision for St Arnaud, and what issues they would like to see addressed in the Structure Plan.



More than half of respondents were over 60, which corresponds with 2016 census data that over 33% of total St Arnaud residents are in that age demographic (Profile.id). The second largest age group was 26-40, with no respondents under the age of 25.





Theme 1: Establish St Arnaud's township boundary and protect its rural surrounds for agricultural uses.

What you told us:

- Agriculture is a very important economic asset to St Arnaud, and should be expanded and invested in.
- Some property owners who wish to subdivide unproductive land, have encountered barriers due to zoning regulations.
- St Arnaud should diversify its industry.
- The natural boundary of town where the national park is, should be reserved for rural living and industrial uses should not impede on this bushland.

Next Steps

Council has engaged a specialist to assess the agricultural value of the land surrounding St Arnaud. This work will help determine appropriate land use surrounding the township.





Theme 2: Support and expand St Arnaud's existing industries and enhance the town's role as a Regional Centre.

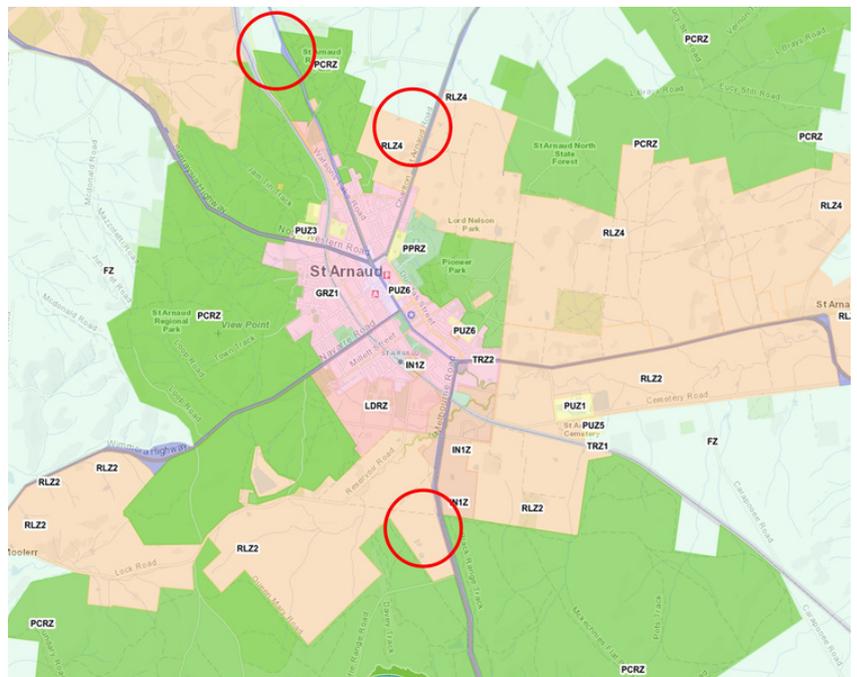
What you told us:

- There is potential for industrial land expansion, including along Melbourne Road, Charlton Road and Wycheproof Road. (These are areas on the outskirts of town shown on the map below).
- There is a need for diversity in lot sizes to allow and attract different kinds of industrial uses and areas where existing businesses can expand or value-add when needed.
- There is a massive skills shortage that is putting immense strain on businesses.
- In addition, young people are leaving town when they finish school to pursue further education or training elsewhere.
- Access to sufficient power and energy is a barrier to expansion and new development.

Next Steps

Council has engaged a specialist to undertake an industrial land supply and demand study. The study will help inform the amount of industrial land supply St Arnaud will need to meet future demand.

The project team will also undertake analysis to identify any development constraints on existing industrial land.





Theme 3: Provide a range of housing for St Arnaud's changing community and to attract new residents and tourists.

What you told us:

- There is a severe lack of worker accommodation to service businesses causing a number of industry sectors to suffer.
- Some existing planning scheme controls cause difficulty when applying for a permit to support housing or business expansion.
- Current rentals, when they do become available, are unaffordable, snapped up quickly and may not be suitable to worker's needs.
- There is limited land for people to build new houses, with infill opportunities being constrained by absent ownership and deteriorating quality of housing.
- Smaller, low maintenance housing is needed for downsizers, which would then free up larger homes for families.
- Land should be unlocked for new development and should cater for a range of lot sizes.

Next Steps

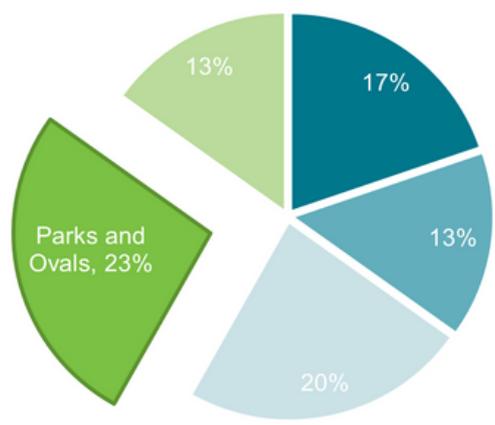
We are undertaking a Bushfire Risk Analysis to determine possible locations for a potential future urban growth area. Existing housing supply and demand data shows that there is opportunity for infill housing development. This will be investigated through an action in the Structure Plan.



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

Favourite Features of St Arnaud

The community's favourite features of St Arnaud were the beautiful streetscapes and parklands.



- Mainstreet and Heritage
- Streetscapes
- Quiet Country Feel
- Parks and Ovals
- Community

Key Services Missing



The community feel that there is are key service gaps in St Arnaud. Almost half of survey respondents felt specialist medical services were scarce and inaccessible.

- Childcare
- Doctors/GP
- Specialist Medical
- Cultural Experiences
- Retail
- Aged Care
- Trains



What you told us:

- The streetscape, parks and recreation areas are key drawcards of the town. All existing open space and parkland should be kept and enhanced.
- The Stadium oval should be kept for public use and open space.
- The skate park and the swimming pool are particularly popular with young people, where they can feel safe and be around their friends.
- Heritage is a special feature of town, and there is a desire for heritage buildings and parklands to be enhanced for tourism purposes and overall neighbourhood character.
- Services are stretched, specialist healthcare is scarce and transport to attend appointments is not adequate.
- Childcare offers a great service but is under-resourced and waiting lists are long, creating barriers for parents re-entering the workforce or moving into town.
- Basic shopping needs are provided, but most must travel out of town for large or specialist shopping and service needs.

Next Steps

Council is currently undertaking a Community and Open Space Analysis to better understand St Arnaud's role as a regional service hub. We will then know what service provision is required to meet the future needs of the local and broader community.





Theme 5: Create a network of pedestrian and cycling paths and enhance road network capacity for industry expansion.

What you told us:

- Some pedestrian paths and roads are not well maintained and not suitable for people with mobility issues.
- Young people move around St Arnaud via bike, walking or skateboard when not driven by their parents.
- Connections to major towns for services such as medical are insufficient, with the desire for an improved bus service to Bendigo.

Council's Response

The Structure Plan will broadly identify pedestrian and vehicle access needs for future development scenarios.

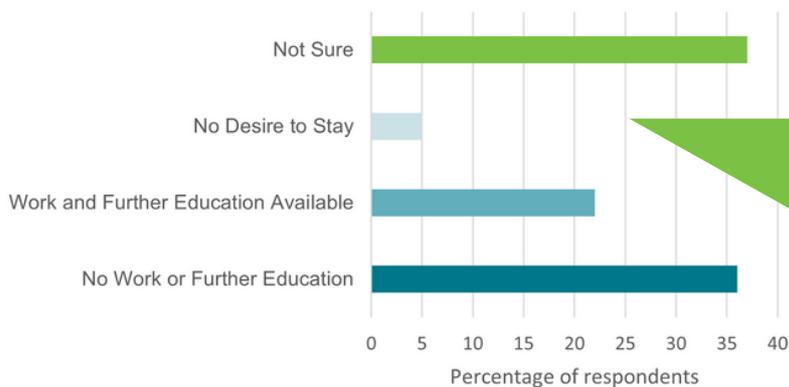




Youth Workshop

In April 2022, as part of Round 1 engagement, Council ran a workshop with 41 Year 7 and Year 8 students from St Arnaud Secondary College. We wanted to see how young people envisaged their town their future. We sought to understand what services and opportunities would be needed to retain young people in St Arnaud after they finish school.

Are there opportunities for you after school?



St Arnaud has an under representation of people aged 18 to 34 (Profile.id).

This tells us that many young people leave St Arnaud when they finish school as there are limited local opportunities for them to pursue desired careers or further education.

This is reflected at the college, with 40% of surveyed students planning on leaving St Arnaud after graduation for work and education.

What did young people tell us?

- St Arnaud is a nice place to live because it is a small and quiet, but future growth is needed and supported.
- Remote areas on the outskirts of town without proper footpaths or sealed roads feel threatening and unsafe.
- Popular destinations are Lord Nelson Park, the 'Duck Park', the skate park and the tennis club.
- Skate boarding, bike riding and walking are the most popular ways to get around.

Next Steps

Council will ensure the needs of young people are prioritised in the development of the Structure Plan. The retention of young people is integral to the sustainability of St Arnaud. We will look at ways the Structure Plan can support their aspirations.



Engagement Next Steps

Council wants to ensure the St Arnaud community continues to be involved in the future planning of the town. The Draft Structure Plan will be based on the feedback and comments we have received through Phase 1 of community engagement. The plan will also be informed by the specialist technical reports that we are currently undertaking.

Once the draft is adopted and released for comment, we will undertake Round 2 of community engagement. You can see what stage we are up to on the diagram below.

We would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to provide feedback, complete the survey or speak to us in person or over the phone. We will notify you of further opportunities to engage via our Have Your Say Webpage, or via the mailing list if you indicated you would like to be kept updated. You can subscribe to updates on our Have Your Say page at www.ngshire.vic.gov.au/StAStructurePlan or email Dana Foenander at dana.foenander@ngshire.vic.gov.au

