



SOUTH-WEST GEELONG INVESTIGATION AREA PRELIMINARY REPORT

June 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City intends to prepare planning scheme amendment C468ggee to implement strategic directions relating to the South-West Geelong Investigation Area (SWGIA). The amendment seeks to implement the recommendations of the *South-West Employment Land Review, April 2023*, and is the second phase of the project.

The *South-West Employment Land Review, April 2023* made recommendations regarding the future strategic work necessary to establish the feasible delivery of the required 170ha of employment land within the investigation area. Initial studies conducted by relevant landowners and agencies (see Table 1 in Section 6 for detail) are summarised in this report.

Figure 1. Project Phases



Figure 2. Summary of Recommendations



Amendment C468ggee is limited in scope. It proposes to amend relevant strategic directions to guide the further investigative work needed to determine best use of the land within the investigation area.

Further work is needed to establish the best location for the needed 170ha of employment land and to establish the best uses of the remaining land, including exploring the possibility of residential or tourism uses.

Future work subsequent to this amendment would include the preparation of relevant technical reports.

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Attachment 1. Feature, Opportunities and Constraints Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

The City instructed HillPDA to prepare the *South-West Employment Land Review, April 2023* (the Review) in response to recommendations in Amendment C395 Settlement Strategy Panel Report (2020) in relation to the future use and development of the former Boral quarry at Waurm Ponds and the Western Industrial Precinct (WIP) in the Armstrong Creek Urban Growth Area (ACUGA).

On 12 December 2023, Council adopted the Review and resolved to prepare a planning scheme amendment to implement the Review's recommendations. The Review recommends the Boral and WIP sites form a single investigation area to deliver approximately 170 hectares of employment land (net developable area), provides options on how the employment land could be delivered and that any land surplus to the employment needs can be considered for other strategic uses such as residential or tourism.

The purpose of this preliminary report is to provide an overview of the strategic work to date, including studies commissioned and provided by landowners, and identify items for further work as part of subsequent planning scheme amendments.

1.1 Recommendations of the South-West Employment Land Review, April 2023

- ◆ The Western Industrial Precinct and Boral land be defined as one 'investigation precinct'.
- ◆ The City of Greater Geelong work with land stakeholders to explore and test an employment land option that delivers approximately 170 hectares of employment land (net developable area). Activation of the additional employment land is recommended for approximately 2027.
- ◆ An aspirational job target of up to 60 jobs per hectare overall be proposed for the 'investigation precinct', noting the original employment target for Armstrong Creek was one job per household.
- ◆ The 'investigation precinct' should focus on meeting local and sub-regional needs.
 - A range of lot sizes is needed to meet demand from 250 sqm up to 1 ha and consideration should be given to large format manufacturing with needs of 4,000 sqm to five hectares.
 - The 'investigation precinct' should meet existing market demand for warehousing, large format retail and trade supplies and growth sectors such as social service and caring economy activities, sustainable growth and environment sectors and advanced manufacturing.
- ◆ Once short-medium term employment land is catered for, and Council is satisfied it can realistically be delivered to the market in a timely manner, other land uses can be considered.
- ◆ To determine appropriate land uses across the precinct, considerations should include:
 - Connections back to the existing or planned urban areas
 - Maximise proximity to arterial roads
 - Maximise proximity to the train station and rail corridor
 - Opportunities to enhance the Armstrong Creek open space corridor
 - Optimise access to regional open space
 - Provision of an attractive western entrance to Geelong
 - Opportunities to build on the existence and history of the quarry site including any limitations posed by site remediation
 - Maximise elevated positions and attractive view lines
 - Have regard to Wadawurrung living cultural heritage
 - Consider interfaces with existing and planned uses
 - Address site remediation and contaminated land issues
 - Consider a 'value capture' contribution if land is rezoned to a higher value in the investigation area. The contribution could be calculated as a share of the land value uplift generated by a planning change, with the proceeds invested in local community facilities and / or open space.

1.2 South-West Geelong Investigation Area

The Review identified five potential development cells or sub-precincts (see Figure 3) which are outlined below and frame the discussions in this report.

Figure 3. South-West Geelong Investigation Area - Potential Development Cells (reproduced from the South-West Employment Land Review (HillPDA, April 2023))



Boral North

The land zoned Special Use Zone (Schedule 7 - Earth and Energy Resources Industry) and bounded by Waurm Ponds Drive (north-west), McPherson Road (north), Geelong Ring Road (east and south).

Boral Central

The land zoned Special Use Zone (Schedule 7 - Earth and Energy Resources Industry) and bounded by the Geelong-Warrnambool railway line (north-west), Reservoir Road (south), and Anglesea Road (east). It is zoned Special Use Zone (Schedule 7 - Earth and Energy Resources Industry).

Boral West

The land bounded by the Geelong Ring Road (north), Geelong-Warrnambool railway line (south-east), Reservoir Road (south), and Drayton Road (west). It includes the land zoned Special Use Zone (Schedule 7 - Earth and Energy Resources Industry) and the land in the south-west corner of the sub-precinct zoned Public Use Zone.

Boral East

The land zoned Special Use Zone (Schedule 7 - Earth and Energy Resources Industry) and bounded by the Geelong-Warrnambool railway line and Baanip Boulevard (north), Ghazeepore Road (east), Whites Road (south), and Anglesea Road (west). It is currently zoned Special Use Zone (Schedule 7 - Earth and Energy Resources Industry).

WIP (including WIP South West)

The land zoned Urban Growth Zone and bounded by Marshall Creek (north), Airport Road (east), Whites Road (south), and Ghazeepore Rd (west). The extent of this sub-precinct is equivalent to that of the Western Industrial Precinct identified in the Armstrong Creek Urban Growth Area Framework Plan.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Settlement Strategy

The Boral and WIP land were subject to discussions at the Amendment C395 Settlement Strategy Panel prior to Council adoption in 2020. The WIP proponents sought to have the land designated for residential rather than employment purposes and Boral sought to have their land rezoned to Urban Growth Zone and included within the settlement boundary.

Based on submissions the panel concluded:

- ◆ Any redesignation of the WIP for residential use would be premature and without sufficient certainty of the adjacent land use and employment land requirements in Greater Geelong.
- ◆ Any review of the WIP should not be considered in isolation of the Boral land, and the broader ACUGA [Armstrong Creek Urban Growth Area].
- ◆ There is insufficient strategic justification for the Boral land to be identified as a growth area or rezoned to Urban Growth Zone as part of this amendment.
- ◆ The Boral land could be designated in the Settlement Strategy for further investigation to meet the municipality's future housing needs at the end of its extractive use and resolution of the DAL process.

The comments which came out of the C395 panel hearing and report were the impetus for the preparation of the Review.

2.2 Long-term Boundary Review

The current Geelong settlement boundary does not include the section of the investigation area west of Ghazeepore Road. The City is currently preparing a review of the settlement boundary however it is not proposed to include the full extent of the SWGIA inside the settlement boundary as a part of that review. There is insufficient strategic justification to include the whole of the investigation area inside the settlement boundary at this stage. It would be logical to review the settlement boundary extent only once the use and development feasibility of the investigation area has been established.

2.3 Armstrong Creek Urban Growth Area (ACUGA)

Any development within the SWGIA must be planned wholistically with regards to the broader Armstrong Creek growth corridor which adjoins in, including the regional employment land needs. The WIP was originally identified as the west-most precinct of the ACUGA, and was rezoned to Urban Growth Zone via Amendment C170ggee. The WIP was flagged for employment purposes however, a PSP has not yet been prepared for this precinct. Subject to the cessation of extractive industry uses in the adjoining Boral-owned land to the west,

3. EXISTING CONDITIONS

3.1 Land Use

The four Boral precincts are zoned Special Use Zone (SUZ1). Historical aerial images of area equivalent to the Boral North, Boral South, and Boral Central precincts were provided to support the review of land use and associated potential contamination issues etc which may apply in the area. Evidence from aerial imagery and testimonial of landowners confirms that three of those sub-precincts – Boral North, Boral West, and Boral Central – have been used extensively for quarrying as part of the normal operations of Boral Quarries. This work includes extensive open-pit quarrying of limestone. There is no evidence from a desk-top review of extractive uses occurring in the Boral East sub-precinct.

The WIP sub-precinct is zoned Urban Growth Zone. Aerial imagery shows likely cropping and other farming activities throughout the precinct. Planning permit records and aerial imagery shows evidence of continuous vehicle (boat and caravan) storage at 250 Whites Road from 2016, intensifying from mid-2017. A blue-gum and pine plantation at 280-290 Whites Road has since been removed.

3.2 Land Capability

Detailed technical reports to establish the capability of the land within the investigation area will be conducted in the process of the further work enabled by Amendment C468ggee. The extent of general constraints are identified in the map in Attachment 1. Where initial reports have been conducted on the land within the WIP sub-precinct, their findings are outlined below.

DRC Environmental prepared the *Environmental Hazards Assessment, Western Employment Precinct, Whites Road, Armstrong Creek, Victoria* (6 March 2018). The assessment found evidence of commercial rose gardens and burning areas at 280-290 Whites Road, and imported fill materials at 250 Whites Road. While this assessment concluded medium potential for contamination at 280-290 Whites Road and low potential for contamination for the remaining properties within the WIP sub-precinct, further technical work will be needed to satisfy the potential contamination of this land in accordance with Planning Practice Note 30.

Intrax prepared the *West Employment Precinct, Armstrong Creek Geotechnical/Environmental Hazards Assessment: Desktop Study & Discussion, Mapping* (2018). The assessment recommended further investigation of the WIP sub-precinct to validate the extent of basalt indicated, conduct field inspection by a suitable qualified person to confirm the vegetation classes, and salinity testing of local soils to confirm impacts to proposed development.

SOMe Engineering Consultants prepared the *Armstrong Creek Western Industrial Precinct Servicing Infrastructure Assessment* (17 April 2018). The assessment found trunk infrastructure to the WIP sub-precinct is deliverable subject to addressing staging constraints identified by Barwon Water and potential substation capacity constraints identified by PowerCor. A comprehensive and up-to-date servicing infrastructure assessment would likely need to be conducted as part of any further works in the investigation area.

3.3 Biodiversity

3.3.1 Flora and Fauna

Ecology & Heritage Partners on behalf of Boral Property Group Pty Ltd prepared the *Ecological Characterisation Report: Waurm Ponds Quarry, Reservoir Road, Waurm Ponds, Victoria, January 2018*. This report covered the area equivalent to the Boral North and Boral South Precincts as outline in Figure 3. Specifically, the study area was approximately 296.5 ha bounded to the north by Waurm Ponds Drive and McPhersons Road, to the east by road reserves managed by VicRoads, to the south by the Geelong-Warrnambool railway line and Reservoir Road, and to the west by Drayton Road.

The assessment comprised of a desktop and field assessment. No nationally significant flora or fauna was recorded, however potential habitat for the Growling Grass Frog *Litoria raniformis* was identified. Two state-significant fauna were observed: Hardhead *Aythya australis* and Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax varius*. The report also identified potential habitat for a number of state-significant fauna and the presence of state-significant flora Melbourne Yellow-gum *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* (subsp. *Connata*).

The report stated that measures must be incorporated to ensure that there is no increase to stormwater run-off (surface flows) and/or sedimentation into the Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar site or its subsidiaries as a result of an increase in the extent of impermeable surfaces due to residential and/or commercial development.

A *Biodiversity Assessment Western Industrial Precinct* (March 2018) prepared by Mark Shepherd Ecological Consulting included a review of the flora and fauna observed within the WIP sub-precinct.

One flora species of state and national significance; River Swamp Wallaby-grass *Amphibromus fluitans* was recorded within a small depression adjacent to the Armstrong Creek in the north-east of the study area. The Grey-headed Flying-fox *Pteropus poliocephalus*, a significant fauna species, was recorded in the area although no observable evidence of flying-fox camp within the study area suggests it is likely the specimens spotted do not reside within the study area. It was also noted that wetland birds using Reedy Lake and Lake Coonawarre may occasionally utilise farm dams and other wetlands at the study area as stepping stone habitat between areas of core habitat in the region.

The report recommends the retention of native vegetation and habitats where feasible and to enhance and create new habitats as part of a PSP (or similar) process.

3.3.2 Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon

Both flora and fauna reports concerning the partial study area were conducted prior to the rediscovery of the Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon (VGED). Prior to development, a technical study would need to be conducted. However following discussions between Department of Transport and Planning representatives and Council officers, it is considered reasonable that this work does not need to be completed as a part of Amendment C468ggee which focuses solely on policy.

3.4 Heritage

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment have been conducted for three of the five precincts – Boral North, Boral South, and WIP.

3.4.1 Aboriginal and Historical Heritage Assessment – Boral North and Boral South

Ecology & Heritage Partners on behalf of Boral Property Group Pty Ltd prepared the *Waurrn Ponds Quarry Rezoning, Task 1, Reservoir Road, Waurrn Ponds, Victoria: Aboriginal and Historical Heritage Assessment (10 November 2017)*. This report covered the area equivalent to the Boral North and Boral South Precincts as outline in Figure 3. Specifically, the study area was approximately 296.5 ha bounded to the north by Waurrn Ponds Drive and McPhersons Road, to the east by road reserves managed by VicRoads, to the south by the Geelong-Warrnambool railway line and Reservoir Road, and to the west by Drayton Road. The Geelong Ring Road road reserve, which divides the study area, was excluded. The assessment comprised of a desktop assessment and field survey. No historical heritage sites or areas were identified. One previously unknown Aboriginal site was identified during the survey, taking the total identified Aboriginal sites in the study area to five.

The assessment makes five recommendations:

1. *Mandatory CHMP*

Mandatory requirement for a CHMP if area treated as single activity area, or, if proposed subdivision and development is staged, mandatory only if activity area is within an area of cultural heritage sensitivity identified in the assessment.

2. *Further Archaeological Investigation - Aboriginal Archaeological Likelihood*

A voluntary CHMP should be prepared for subdivision or development in the five areas of Aboriginal archaeological likelihood identified in the study area.

3. *Contingency for Aboriginal Heritage*

If any Aboriginal cultural heritage issues are encountered during the course of construction then works should cease within 10 m of the area of concern and a qualified Heritage Advisor (or Aboriginal Victoria) should be contacted to investigate.

4. *No Requirement for Further Archaeological Investigation of Historical Heritage*

5. *Contingency for Historical Heritage*

If any historical heritage issues are encountered during the course of construction then works should cease within 10 m of the area of concern and a qualified Heritage Advisor (or Heritage Victoria) should be contacted to investigate.

3.4.2 Cultural Heritage Assessment - WIP

A desktop-only *Cultural Heritage Assessment* was conducted by Ochre Imprints (16 February 2018). This assessment covered the area equivalent to the WIP sub-precinct identified in Figure 3. Further work (archaeological and in consultation with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Corporation) is needed to verify the cultural heritage sensitivity of the areas identified in this report. Where CHMPs are not mandatory, the City should encourage developers to undertake them voluntarily. Consultation with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Corporation is needed regarding the appropriate management and development of the entire Armstrong Creek corridor, including the position of drainage basins, creek crossings etc.

3.5 Connectivity

The investigation area sits at the south-western gateway to Geelong. Bounded by the Geelong Ring Road and crossed by the Geelong-Warrnambool Railway line, the area has strong potential for good transport access, including public transport access. Existing active transport networks in the adjacent suburban areas might be extended, subject to further feasibility studies, into the investigation area.

A traffic expert witness statement commissioned as part of the landowner's submission to the planning panel for Amendment C395ggee offers a preliminary overview of the transport and connectivity possibilities of the four Boral sub-precincts identified in figure 3. The statement indicates that there is good road and rail connectivity, and good potential for active transport infrastructure to link into the existing and developing networks in the adjacent ACUGA.

Connectivity within the WIP, and to residential areas to the north and east, have been considered in the lifespan of the ACUGA. GTA Consultants prepared a *Preliminary Transport & Traffic Assessment* which found no apparent constraints to the provision of an appropriate transport network. It noted the need for three connector roads within the precinct, and the need for a bridge or bridges across Armstrong Creek.

3.6 Bushfire Risk

The SWGIA is within a designated bushfire prone area and as such is subject to the requirements of Clause 13.02-1S (Bushfire planning) of the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme. A Bushfire Risk Assessment would be required during the detailed planning phase, subsequent to this amendment.

4. SCOPE OF AMENDMENT C468GEE

Amendment C438ggee is a policy amendment. The amendment seeks to outline the strategic work needed to assess the SWGIA for future potential development, and to prioritise the identification of 170ha of suitable employment land within the investigation area.

It proposes to include the *South-West Employment Land Review, April 2023* as a background document and make associated changes to policy to direct the future strategic work needed to enable the best and fairest future use of the relevant land. It does not propose to rezone land.

5. FUTURE WORK

Subsequent to Amendment C468ggee, significant future work will be needed to identify the best use of the subject land.

This future work will include:

- ◆ Identifying which sub-precinct or precincts of the investigation area is able to delivery the required 170 ha of employment land.
- ◆ Responding to or mitigating constraints within the investigation area, including the former quarry.
- ◆ Investigating what other uses are possible, including for potential for residential in the area formerly identified in the ACUGA as Western Employment Precinct. With the closure of the quarry, the buffer which made residential in that area not feasible would no longer apply.

The future detailed planning for the area will include environmental considerations such as native vegetation, biodiversity, water, servicing, transport and environmentally sustainable design consistent with precinct structure plan and other legislative requirements.

The preparation of a precinct structure plan (or similar mechanism) will set out the detailed land use and development requirements alongside a development contributions plan.

The preparation of a PSP will need to address the culturally significant 3.6-hectare Duneed Reserve off Ghazeepore Road site owned by the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation. This site abuts the investigation area and an appropriate interface will need to be determined in consultation with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.

6. REFERENCED TECHNICAL REPORTS

The below technical provided to Council inform this report. Table 1 summarises the type of report prepared by sub-precinct.

Table 1. Summary of Technical Reports Conducted on Land Within the SWGIA

Precincts	Report type						Other
	Biodiversity	Bushfire Assessment	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment	Transport Assessment	Environmental Hazards Assessment	Servicing Report	Aerial Images
Boral North	✓		✓	✓			✓
Boral South	✓		✓	✓			✓
Boral Central				✓			✓
Boral East				✓			✓
WIP	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	

Biodiversity

- ◆ *Biodiversity Assessment Western Industrial Precinct.* Mark Shepherd Ecological Consulting (March 2018).
- ◆ *Ecological Characterisation Report: Waurm Ponds Quarry, Reservoir Road, Waurm Ponds, Victoria.* Ecology & Heritage Partners (January 2018).

Connectivity

- ◆ *Armstrong Creek Western Employment Precinct Preliminary Transport & Traffic Assessment.* GTA Consultants (28 February 2018).
- ◆ *130 Reservoir Road, Waurm Ponds Greater Geelong Planning Scheme Amendment C395, Traffic Engineering Evidence Statement to Planning Panels Victoria.* Traffix Group (November 2019).

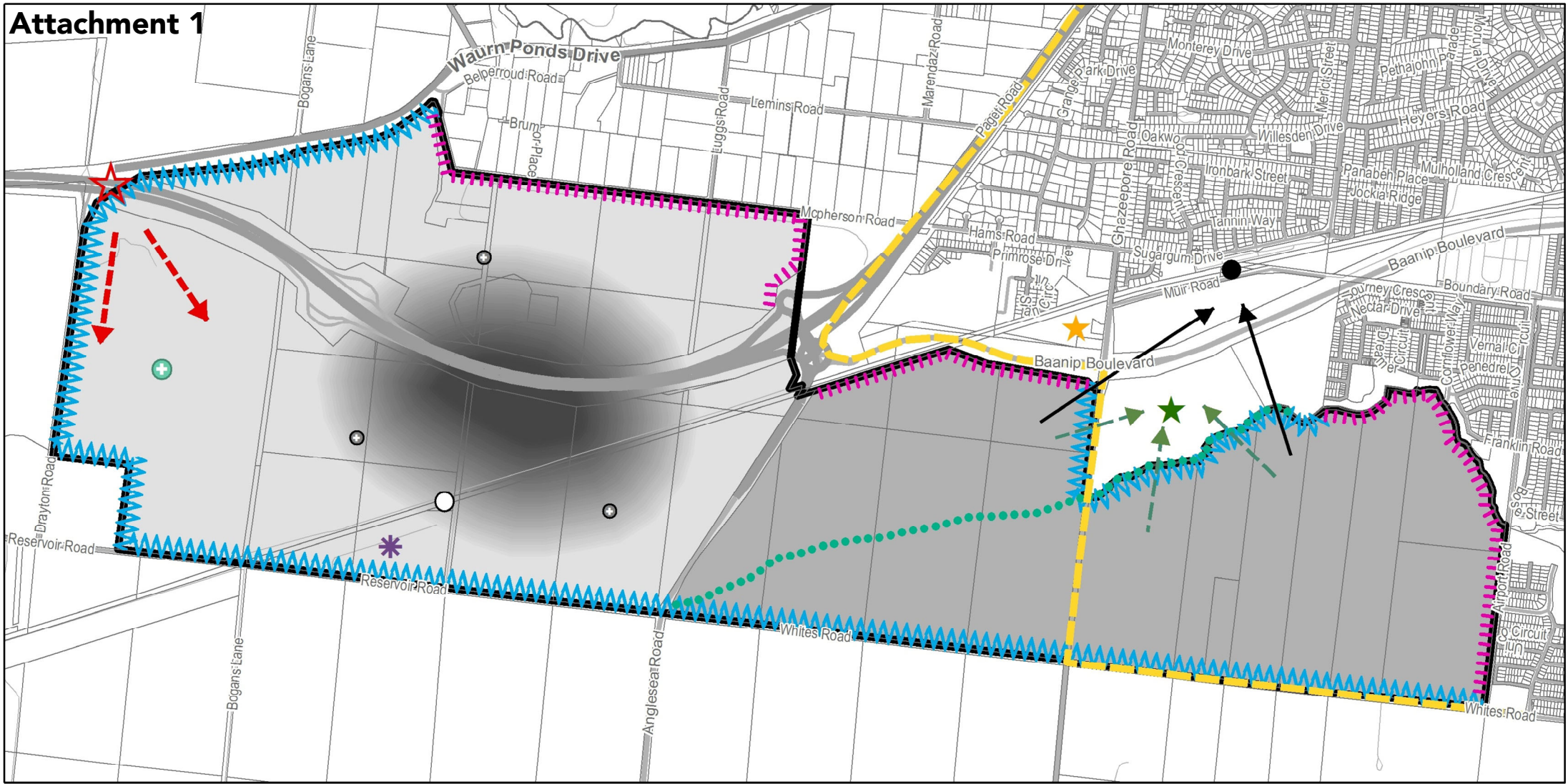
Heritage

- ◆ *Armstrong Creek Western Employment Precinct Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment.* Ochre Imprints Pty Ltd (16 February 2018).
- ◆ *Waurm Ponds Quarry Rezoning, Task 1, Reservoir Road, Waurm Ponds, Victoria: Aboriginal and Historical Heritage Assessment.* Ecology & Heritage Partners (10 November 2017).




















Land Capability

- ◆ *Armstrong Creek Western Industrial Precinct Servicing Infrastructure Assessment*. SOME Engineering Consultants (17 April 2018).
- ◆ *Environmental Hazards Assessment, Western Employment Precinct, Whites Road, Armstrong Creek, Victoria*. DRC Environmental (6 March 2018).
- ◆ *Waurm Ponds - Historical Aerial Imagery (Eastern Lots 1947-2023)*, provided by Boral on 16 February 2024.
- ◆ *West Employment Precinct, Armstrong Creek Geotechnical/Environmental Hazards Assessment: Desktop Study & Discussion, Mapping*. Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty. Ltd (2018).

Attachment 1



Features, Opportunities & Constraints Plan

 Attractive entrance to Geelong	 Potential site history interpretation opportunity	 Connections to regional open space	 Investigation area boundary
 Known site remediation/contamination considerations	 Unique quarry re-use opportunity	 Connections to train station	 Preferred Employment Node Location - Short Term Priority Area
 Planned Regional Open Space	 Wadawarrung cultural heritage site	 Opportunity to continue Armstrong Creek corridor	 Short term precinct
 Potential new train station opportunity	 Waurm Ponds Train Station	 Residential interface treatment	 Medium to long-term precinct
		 Rural/Open Space interface	
		 Scenic view opportunities	
		 Settlement Boundary	