



ARAPUNI
our VILLAGE
our WHĀNAU
our HOME

The South Waikato connection
CONCEPT PLAN

Message from Community

Arapuni Village is a vibrant and connected community with a deep history and exciting future. The Arapuni Village Community Association (AVCA) was formed specifically to promote a closer more connected community, and to ensure that the villages needs were actively communicated to Council and other stakeholders.

Ultimately, it's Arapuni village residents that determine Arapuni village's future. This concept plan is critical in informing the framework that the future of Arapuni village is built on.

Everyone who lives here, or visits, quickly understands what a unique and special place Arapuni village is. From our historic Hydro Dam, our rivers and lakes, through to the amazing bird life that results from Maungatautari Ecological Reserve, it's crucial that we guide our village's future.

Arapuni village is a place that our people are proud to call their home. A sustainable, diverse, and inclusive community which embraces technology to achieve a balance between the fast pace of modern life and the relaxed lifestyle of a small rural village. A community that values connection, friendship, and support and recognises the impact that our activities have on the natural environment.



Message from the Mayor

Council is pleased to present the Arapuni village community with a revised (2024) Arapuni village Concept Plan for further feedback. This Plan – the vision, direction and actions - was developed in 2020 in collaboration with the Arapuni village community through a series of meetings. In early 2024, a community meeting was held to further review and update the 2020 direction.

Council would like to acknowledge everyone who has provided ideas and feedback, with special thanks to the Arapuni village Community Association (AVCA).

The Arapuni village Concept Plan, once finalised through this feedback process, will sit alongside the other Town Concept Plans for the South Waikato District. Council will be developing a comprehensive funding and partnership implementation plan for all its concept plans over the next few years.

Concept Plans capture the shared vision of local communities to enable integrated planning for the District as a whole and provide a blueprint for growth and development for the future. These plans are aspirational and provide guidance for future investment by Council, community organisations, philanthropic funders, central government and the private sector. The draft actions in this plan are a collaboration between Council and the community, with some activities proposed to be Council led and funded and others led by the community and funded by grants or other sources of income.

The revised plan taps into Arapuni's rural lifestyles, the Waikato River, a suspension bridge that provides breath-taking views of the Waikato, and vacation getaway opportunities.



What is concept planning | He aha tenei mea te mahere aria?

Concept planning is about Council and local people working together with public, private and voluntary organisations to shape the future of a district so that it is a great place to live, work and play. The Concept Plans provide a more detailed response to the strategic direction for growth in the South Waikato Growth Plan. Each town centre and settlement has a unique role and identity within the District, providing different benefits, opportunities and amenities to both local communities and visitors. This Village Concept Plan should be read in conjunction with the Town Concept Plans for Tokoroa, Putaruru and Tirau. The Town Concept Plans are based upon best practice urban design outcomes to support growth and vibrancy. The actions and projects align with the South Waikato Growth Plan and will require additional investigation and to further engage with mana whenua as partners in the future.

How is concept planning used | Kei hea te mahere aria e noho ana?

- Helps inform and guide priority projects that the community want to lead and progress.
- Signals opportunities for collaboration and partnerships between iwi, community organisations and businesses.
- Can be used for submissions into Annual Plans, Long Term Plans, Reserve Management Plans and District Plans.
- Helps inform new residents of the key projects the community is working on.
- Helps give guidance and clarity to funding and grant applications.

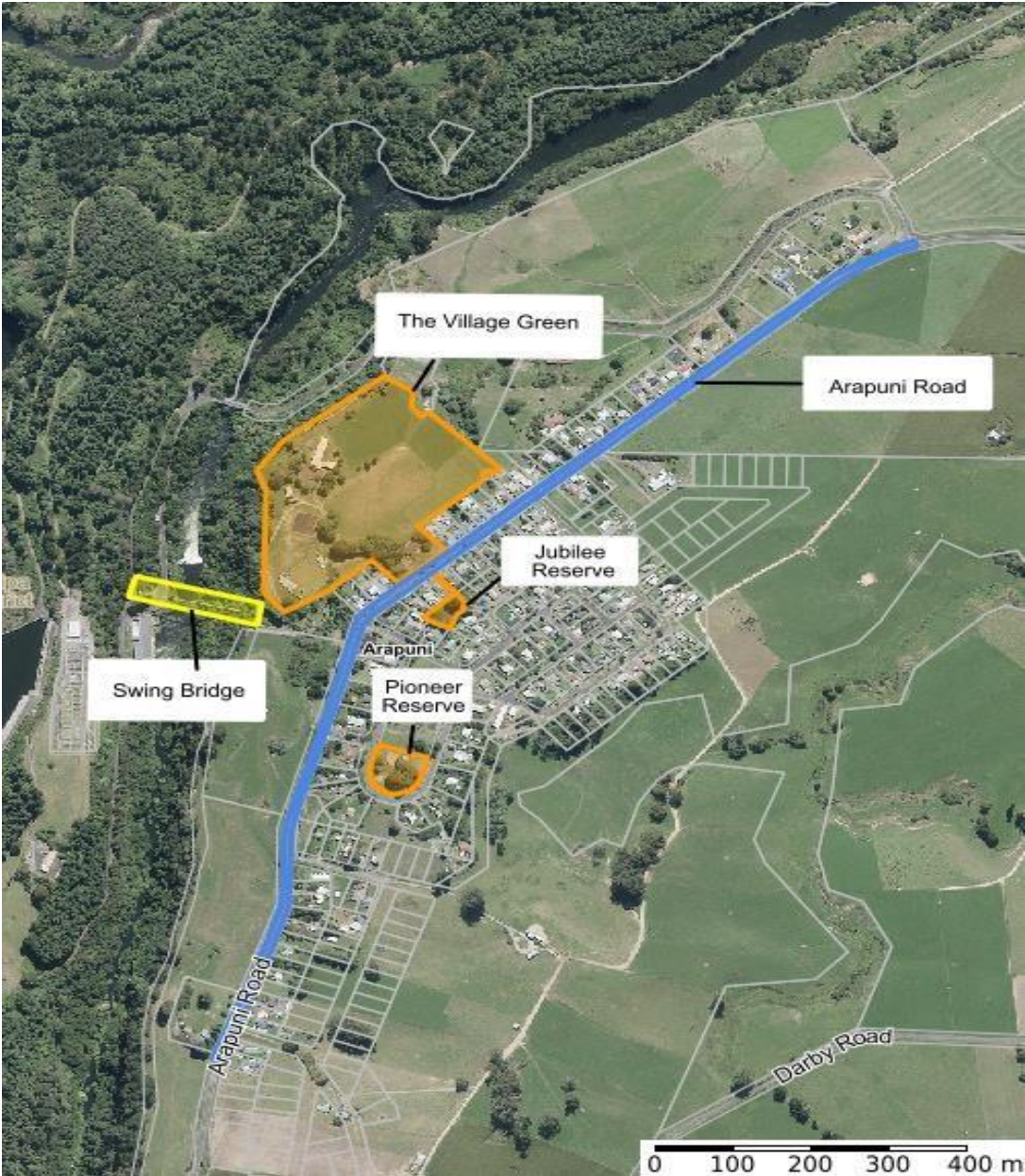


Why do a plan for Arapuni?

Arapuni village is the South Waikato’s western entrance linking Waitomo and Rotorua. With its popular Rhubarb café and Swing Bridge, Arapuni village is a natural place to rest and provides an invaluable opportunity to showcase the South Waikato’s tourism offerings. The natural environment and proximity to Maungatautari, and position on the northern section of the Waikato river Trail make Arapuni village an attractive destination for both domestic and international visitors. We have an opportunity to further highlight Arapuni village’s cultural and historic heritage features to encourage visitors to stay and play. This could be in partnership with local historical groups, tangata whenua, and existing partnerships such as Waikato River Trails and Mercury. Arapuni village residents enjoy the peaceful lifestyle that the village provides but recognise that tourism creates opportunities that benefit both the village and greater Waikato. The core objective is to ensure that economic development protects the village feel and is undertaken in a way that is sustainable and complementary to the environment and cultural values.



What area does the plan cover | Te rohe takiwa o Arapuni?



What has already been done | Te anga whakamuri?

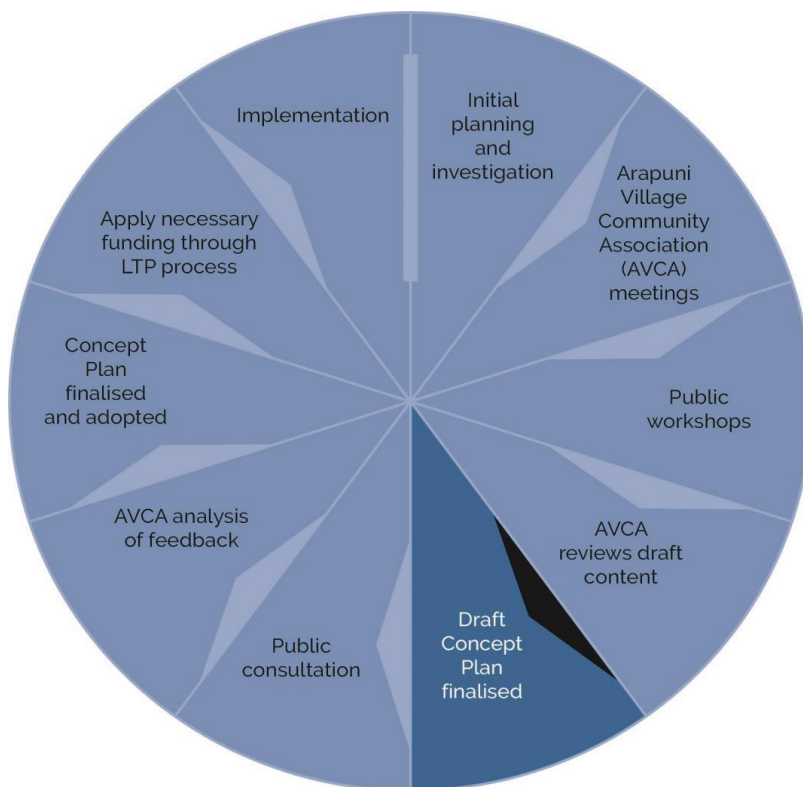
The previous Concept Plan was completed in 2020 and some of the actions have been completed while a few have been revised.

Now, three years later, it is time to revisit the plan and to chart – Our Village, Our Whānau, Our Home 2024-2034.

How was the plan developed | I pehea te waihanga o te mahere?

The initial drafting of the Concept Plan has been an Arapuni Village Community Association led and South Waikato District Council support which started in October 2019 and included a series of conversations, meetings and public workshops in February 2020. Key points include:

- The 2020 consultation was led by village residents so that people felt comfortable to participate and contribute.
- Drafting of the 2020 plan included a review of existing reports and research available.



Update to the plan 2024

Council invited the Arapuni community to a public meeting on Wednesday 24 January 2024 to discuss a review of the 2020 Arapuni Village Concept Plan. Work done by consultants on the South Waikato Growth Plan and Town Concept Plans for other parts of the District was presented and summarised. The community was then invited to discuss and review the 2020 priorities and outcomes within the Arapuni Village Concept Plan. The suggestions from that public meeting and information from the work done by consultants have all fed into this revised Plan.

Arapuni village profile | Te Kotaha Arapuni

Arapuni village is a small rural village of around 260 residents, located 10 kilometres west of Putaruru on the road to Waitomo. It is home to a hydro-electric power station and dam which were among the first to be built on the Waikato River. It is also the home of many artists and crafts people.

Waikato|Tainui is the main iwi in the area. The local Pohara Marae is a meeting ground with Ngāti Koroki-Kahukura and Ngāti Mahuta hapu. It features the Rangiatea meeting house.

The New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage gives a translation of *blocked path* for *Arapuni*. The name Arapuni derives from *Ara*, meaning path and *puni*, meaning blocked or covered, and translates as blocked or covered path.

The village sits next to the Arapuni Dam, a hydroelectric dam at Lake Arapuni commissioned in 1929. The Arapuni Power Station consists of eight turbines which give a total output of 196 MW, the largest of the power stations on the Waikato river. A *drowned forest* was revealed after water was diverted in 1929. The Arapuni hydro station is now owned and operated by Mercury.

Local attractions include the Arapuni Swing Bridge, Rhubarb Cafe, Lakes Arapuni and Karapiro, the Waikato River Trails which provide spectacular views of Lake Arapuni including its unique pink cliffs. Maungatautari Ecological Island showcases the restoration of pristine native flora.

The Arapuni Suspension Bridge Walkway is a key access point for the Waikato River Trails to ride, Trail run, or walk the length of the South Waikato District and beyond to the other hydro lakes along the Waikato River.

Edged by Lakes Arapuni and Karapiro, the Western side of the South Waikato is renowned for recreational activities like water-skiing, Jet Skiing and boating, Fly fishing from Jones's or Bulmers Landings. Lake District Adventures provides night-time kayak tours from Karapiro Lake up the Pokaiwhenua stream to showcase the brilliant display of glow-worms on the canyon walls.



Our economic profile | Tatou kotaha ohaoha

Arapuni village has experienced significant increases in the value of residential property since 2015, though still offers great value for families seeking village and executive living at an affordable price point relative to other locations within the Hamilton commuter catchment.

Understanding the specific growth aspirations of the Arapuni community is critical to ensuring appropriate future development is attracted to Arapuni Village and that timely investments take place in infrastructure, to support the current residential settlement and visitor market. Opportunities exist to leverage the proximity to the Waikato River Trail and the Arapuni Suspension Bridge for visitor experiences/attractions and accommodation, as well as food and beverage providers.

There is limited direct employment within Arapuni village specifically; the main industry nearby is farming. Dairying and dry stock are the main farming activity in the surrounding areas. Arapuni is within reasonable commutable distance to Hamilton, Tokoroa, Rotorua and Tauranga, thus offering village and executive, living at an affordable level. In the near term advocating for improved internet service availability could be the most important action to improve local economic growth, particularly for home-based enterprises.

The population of the South Waikato District is expected to grow to just over 34,000 by 2053 [1] which will require substantial investment in growth related infrastructure. There is a growing requirement for new housing within the district. Council is working with each community to better understand and facilitate its growth aspirations and how best to manage this growth alongside economic, environmental and social aspirations. The South Waikato District Growth Plan and Town Concept Plans for Tokoroa, Putaruru & Tirau discusses how the Council intends to respond to this growth. Settlements like Arapuni and the surrounding rural farms support the economic backbone of the District and efforts are being made to concentrate future residential development within existing urban areas and protect or retain our most productive lands for the primary sector.

[1] Housing and Business Capacity Assessment, Market Economics

What our community have said | Nga korero a ta matou hapori

In 2020, residents identified strengths and assets that make the Arapuni village community unique and a great place to live. In order of response, the top six strengths/assets were identified as:

1. Lakes and river trails
2. Central to major centres such as Hamilton / Tauranga etc
3. Friendly / close community
4. Tranquil, scenery, ambience
5. Small population / village feel
6. Community events

Residents also feedback on areas for improvement. In order of response, our community have asked for improvements in the following areas:

1. Reduced speed of through traffic on Arapuni Road
2. Maintenance of public spaces / services / footpaths / walkways
3. Untrimmed trees and hedges blocking footpaths and verges
4. Slow Internet and near unusable cellular coverage
5. Derelict old school and school grounds
6. Separate dog exercise area from children's playground
7. Disability access and facilities provided at village hall

In terms of the future of Arapuni village, the community were asked how they would like to see Arapuni in ten years' time. Main themes included:

- Digital signs indicating speed of through traffic
- Reasonable designated fenced dog exercise area
- Skate park / pump track
- Improved playground
- Community fruit trees / orchard / gardens
- Old school buildings are removed, and the grounds converted to public park.
- Weekend markets / music / art / festivals
- Village has fibre equivalent high-speed internet and reliable cellular coverage
- Footpaths extended on either end of the village to 80/100kph signs, and on both sides of road

In 2024, residents articulated that their highest priority was to manage issues created by the excessive speed, that there was no longer a requirement or desire for a pump track and reserves/ playgrounds should be a lesser priority than managing the traffic issues. Connectivity also remained a key consideration.

The Partnership Approach – Te huarahi whakahoahoa

This plan cannot be achieved by one organisation or individual working in isolation. Instead a partnership approach will ensure that there is collaboration with relevant agencies and funding partners to get the best possible outcomes. By developing a partnership approach, it puts the community at the heart of the plan.

It is acknowledged that there are already existing partnerships with Maungatautari Ecological Trust, Mercury, Waikato River Trails, and South Waikato District Council. However there needs to be other partnerships so to deliver positive change and fulfilling community objectives. Implementation of this plan must align with partners to add value and to be effective.

South Waikato Investment Fund Trust (SWIFT)

In 2014, the Council established the South Waikato Investment Fund (SWIF) Trust for the purpose of increasing employment and economic growth in the South Waikato District. The Trust manages a fund which is available for economic development projects in the South Waikato. The Trust recognises the importance of Tourism in the South Waikato's economic development and the important role that Arapuni village can play in that tourism offering.

The Waikato River Trails

The Waikato River Trails are a member of the New Zealand Cycle Trails network.

The Waikato River Trails opened officially in November 2011 and are managed by the Waikato River Trails Charitable Trust. The Trust was formed in 2006 to develop a network of trails along the Waikato with the aim of bringing visitors to the beautiful South Waikato.

The trails are in the heart of the South Waikato and extend from Atiamuri village in the south to the southern end of Lake Karapiro in the north. The trail is broken into 5 sections, each section named after the lake that the trail is connected to.

Maungatautari Ecological Trust

The vision for the Trust is *Kaitiakitanga – Protecting our past for the future*. The mission and purpose of the Trust is to *remove forever, or control, introduced mammalian pests and predators from Maungatautari and restore to the forest a healthy diversity of indigenous plants and animals*.

Mercury

The Waikato River and its catchment is Mercury's generation heartland. They share our history here with iwi and stakeholders, including some communities that were originally villages built as part of the construction of the hydro infrastructure. Arapuni is one of the nine hydro power stations that make up Mercury's Waikato Hydro System that generates around 10% of New Zealand's electricity.

They believe that partnerships built on mutual understanding and support create both social and economic benefits.



Our Priorities – A matou kaupapa matua

To realise our vision, we have identified five (5) principles for our community and partners to focus attention on:

1. Road safety on Arapuni Road
2. The utilisation of recreation spaces
3. Digital connectivity
4. Arapuni village's role in South Waikato visitor attraction
5. Being relevant in regional economic development plans and initiatives

1. ROAD SAFETY MAIN ROAD

The residents' major concern was the issue of through traffic significantly exceeding the speed limit through the village with the danger and risk that this will result in a fatal accident. A range of traffic calming measures have been trialled over recent years, however, ongoing discussions with the community demonstrate that excessive speed is still a critical issue.

The outcomes we are seeking:

- To implement the actions in the Speed Management Plan relating to Arapuni as soon as possible.
- To install electronic speed signs at either end of the Village to alert drivers of the speed they are currently travelling at.
- To work alongside Fonterra, logging firms, delivery trucks of large firms to try and initiate a Drive Safety Programme in rural communities.

2. THE UTILISATION OF RECREATION SPACES

In the earlier years, Arapuni village's community had enjoyed a common meeting and play area (including courts and a swimming pool) at the former Arapuni School in the centre of the village, however, this longer exists. Over the many years, spaces have changed, and residents have tried to provide for everyone through other means i.e. community events.

Arapuni village has three official recreational spaces:

- The grassed and wooded space at the western end of Pioneer Crescent. Located amongst residential and adjacent to the old Arapuni School this space has been utilised as a neighbourhood park since the village's inception.
- The village Green area below the Arapuni village Hall provides a playing field and tennis courts and is used for market days and events.
- The bowling club is an historic and thriving community hub, providing a formal playing green for lawn bowls in supportive of an active club
- It's noted that the old school grounds currently provide a fourth unofficial community space for kids to play or dogs to be socialised.

Given that Arapuni village experiences growth during the weekends and holiday period, it is also important to retain adequate open green space for recreational use and not succumb to sacrificing recreational green space for development.

The outcomes we are seeking:

- Good upkeep of recreational spaces to ensure they remain attractive to residents and visitors.
- A review of the current green spaces including current and required amenities within them to best determine location, accessibility and improved usage. This should also include a review of current signage.
- Feasibility study to investigate an upgrade to the Village Hall to support fit for purpose and increased utilisation for recreational, civic and community activities.
- A plan for the current agreements for Mercury owned land to ensure they remain spaces that can be utilised for community purposes once the current lease ends (expires in 2031).

3. DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Fast internet access is becoming increasingly important for everyday life. With the changing demographics of Arapuni village there is significant frustration with the speed of internet and near unusable cell phone reception.

With changes to the way we work and travel following the COVID19 pandemic, Arapuni village presents a fantastic opportunity for work-from-home executives and small businesses, but this is made particularly difficult with the poor communication infrastructure.

Visitors and tourists looking for accommodation to stay in the South Waikato also expect modern levels of connection speed and reliability in communication devices and the current situation is viewed negatively.

The outcomes we are seeking:

- Support from Council to lobby and advocate for improved cellular network connectivity and the installation of fibre or equivalent high-speed broad band service throughout the village.

4. PROMOTION OF ARAPUNI

Arapuni village is the western gateway to the South Waikato District and a key access point to Waikato River Trails. It is situated on one of the East-West routes to and from the Waitomo Caves and Rotorua. It is also centrally located and within proximity to the major urban areas of Tauranga, Rotorua, Cambridge, Hamilton, Putāruru, Tokoroa and Taupō.

The icon is the Arapuni Suspension Bridge, an engineering marvel of its day, and the only bridge of its kind in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This boutique village provides for a relaxed lifestyle in a friendly community, close to a rich natural landscape, dramatic rock formations, lakes and dams and the Waikato River.

The outcomes we are seeking:

- Providing visitors with access to a pristine environment with abundant native flora and fauna through the ongoing focus on sustainability and reduced environmental impact.
- Providing visitors with safe access, open spaces, seating and public conveniences.
- Community led market days and events that share local food, arts and crafts.
- To promote Arapuni village to visitors within New Zealand and overseas through Council's Marketing and Communications Team through a wide range of digital and traditional marketing tools and the SW Space to Grow brand and platform.
- Visitors have clear guidance signage and direction maps to points of interest including relevant information boards communicating local history.

5. BEING RELEVANT IN DISTRICT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND INITIATIVES

South Waikato District Council formally adopted a new Economic Development Plan on XXXX. This sets out the overarching strategy for the district through to 2053. It outlines how Council will support the South Waikato's businesses, communities, and individuals to effectively collaborate and take advantage of the District's position at the southern tip of the North Island's golden diamond to become a thriving, sustainable regional economy. It will be the engine that delivers our Community Outcomes of:

- A robust Economy
- Thriving Communities
- A sustainable Environment

Our Economic Development Vision for the South Waikato is *The space to grow sustainably* and our key priorities are:

- Enabling circular economy clusters to drive industry transformation.
- Thriving South Waikato Communities
- Future-proofed skills development

Council works in partnership with the South Waikato Investment Fund Trust (SWIFT); Te Waka, the Waikato regional economic development agency (REDA); iwi and community organisations, to get things done and to create opportunities that will lead to jobs, prosperity, and sustainable economic growth for everybody.

Council promotes Arapuni village through www.swnz.co, identifying how Arapuni village can leverage this exposure and proactively seize opportunities that arise should be a focus for local community representatives and Council.

The outcomes we are seeking:

- The amenities and interests of Arapuni village are well represented and leveraged through marketing and promotion.
- That Arapuni village has a distinct voice in district Economic Development Action Plans and Workstreams, informed by the vision for Arapuni village.
- Arapuni village is perceived regionally as a great place to visit and live.

Actioning the plan

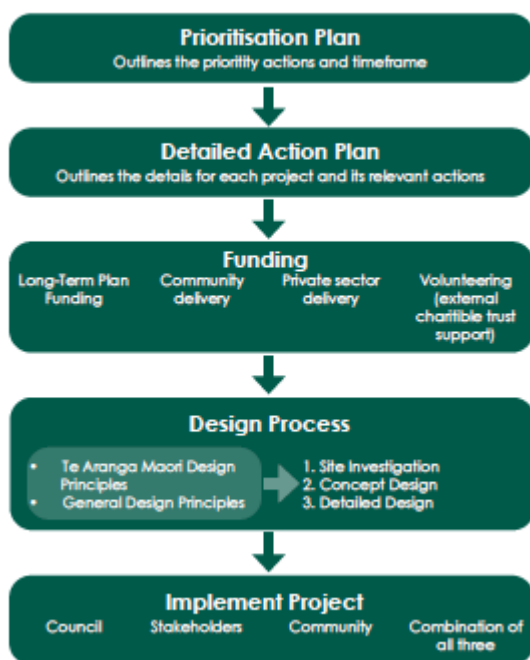
Transformation of the district will take time and the Town Concept Plans set a pathway forward to guide the next 30-years.

The Town Concept Plans and Arapuni Village Plan will not be delivered by Council alone, but will require partnership with mana whenua, Government agencies, other agencies and organisations, local businesses and the community. The projects and actions within the Concept Plans are not static and are intended to be reviewed and updated over time.

Some of the projects and actions are quick wins while others will take time (eg may not occur for 20+ years) and require careful planning. The implementation of the Town Concept Plans requires a detailed action plan to be prepared. The action plan will help ensure that SWDC, other agencies and organisations and the community can allocate appropriate resourcing and funding to undertake the projects in a coordinated and integrated manner.

A detailed action plan will be prepared to support the long-term implementation of the Concept Plans over the next three years. An outline of how the Town Concept Plans will be actioned, including the priority actions for the next three years is set out below.

TOWN CONCEPT PLAN DELIVERY



Priority Actions – Next Three Years	
	Priority Actions
1	Prepare a comprehensive action plan to support the delivery of the Concept Plans, including timing and funding.
2	Identify potential partners to support the delivery of the Concept Plans.
3	Prepare supporting reports and assessments eg transport assessments, CPTED assessments of open spaces/parks/reserves, parking studies.

