

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council

Swansea Structure Plan

Final | August 2024



Acknowledgement of Country

ERA Planning and Environment acknowledges palawa as the Traditional Owners of lutruwita (Tasmania).

They are the original custodians of our land, sky and waters. We respect their unique ability to care for country and deep spiritual connection to it.

We honour and pay our respect to Elders past and present, whose knowledge and wisdom has and will ensure the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We acknowledge that their sovereignty has never been ceded.

Always was, always will be.

ERA Planning Pty Ltd trading as ERA Planning and Environment

Cover image credit: Samuel Shelley

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The Bend Vineyard, Swansea
Source: Jasper Da Seymour





Section 1: Introduction

About the project

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council engaged ERA Planning and Environment (ERA) to review and prepare updated structure plans for the main towns in the local government area. Existing structure plans were prepared between 8 and 10 years ago. Therefore there was a need to ensure that the planning and development direction for each town is based on contemporary circumstances.

In the period since the previous structure plans were prepared, Glamorgan Spring Bay has not only seen population growth but demographic change. With an ongoing increase in average age, and decrease in residents per household, the types of housing and services provided in the future will need to respond to support a thriving community.

At the same time, the importance of the area to the Tasmanian visitor economy and its popularity as a holiday home location have increased. During the summer period there are noticeable seasonal population pressures being experienced in the Glamorgan Spring Bay area with some town services struggling to meet demand.

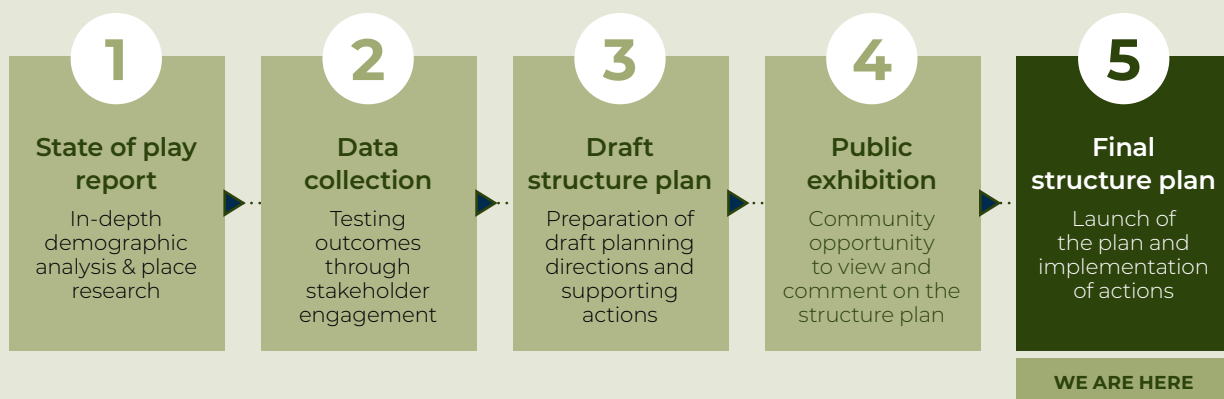
A separate structure plan has been prepared for each of the main towns. Each structure plan aims to:

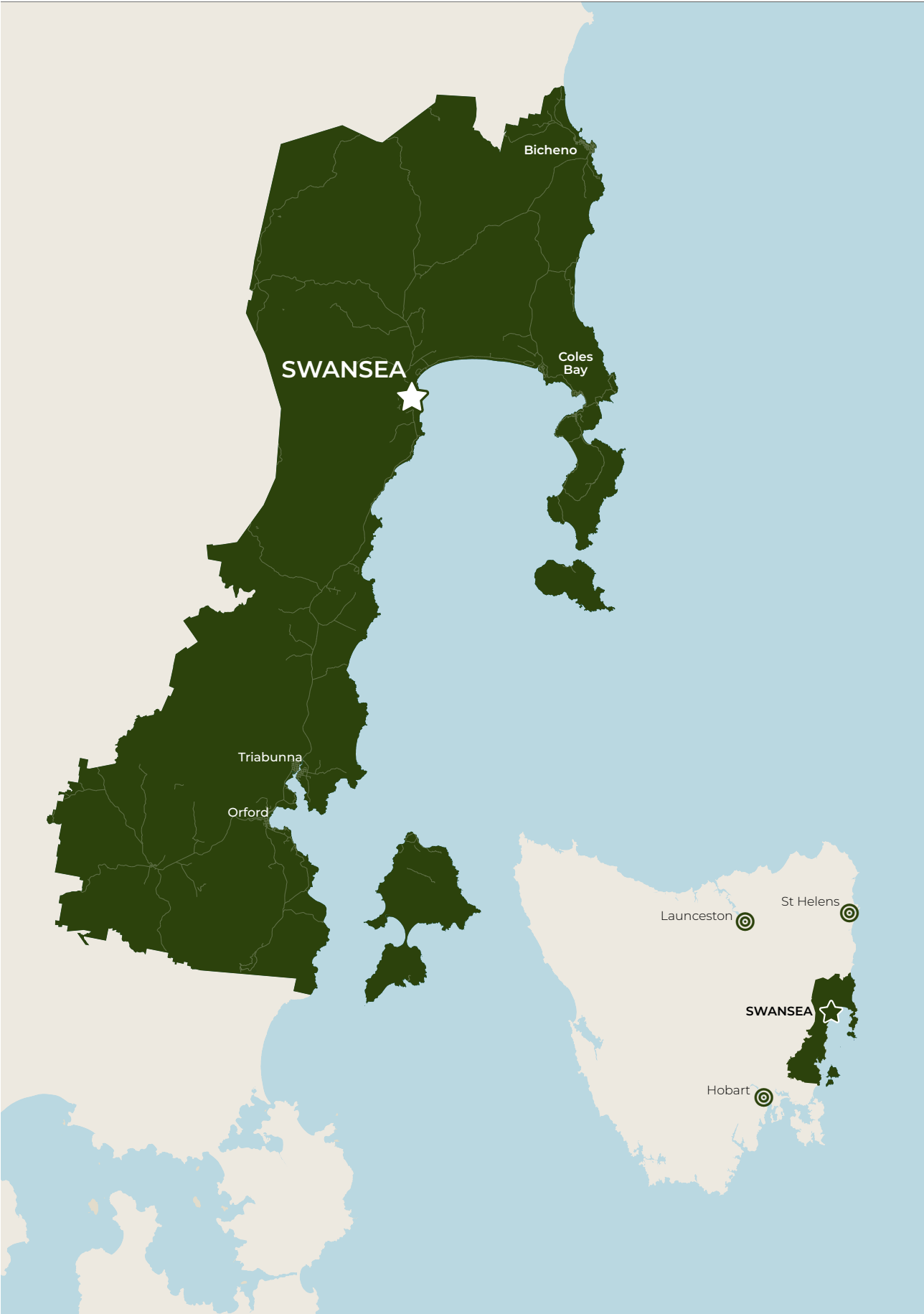
- Establish a planning framework to guide sustainable growth and economic resilience.
- Deliver growth in a way that reflects community values, enhances the qualities of the town, and creates affordable and diverse housing opportunities.
- Guide the development of a high-quality, accessible open space network that connects the community to their natural surroundings and each other.
- Create a prosperous and vibrant town centre that supports the local community and attracts greater visitation.
- Protect environmental assets and agricultural land that support key industries.

This structure plan presents a strategic planning framework to guide growth and change in Swansea over the next 10 years to 2034.

The process

The project methodology follows five key stages:





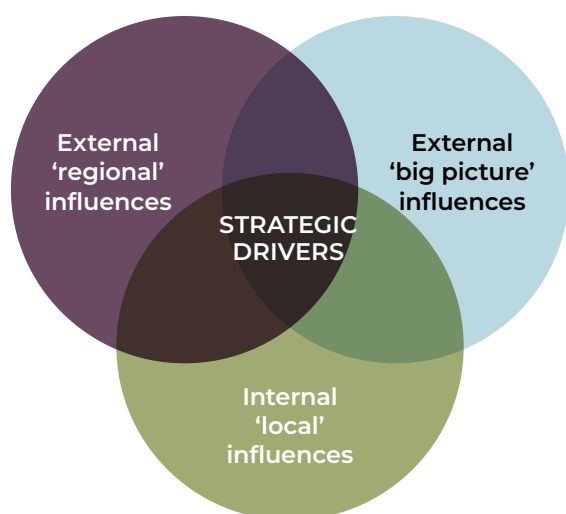


Spikey Bridge, Swansea
Source: Tourism Tasmania & Rob Burnett

What is a structure plan?

A structure plan is a strategic document used by a local Council as a framework for land use and development decisions in a local area. It identifies and prioritises growth opportunities and guides the application of zoning, overlays and local provisions in the planning scheme.

A structure plan applies higher order planning policies, such as State Policies or the Southern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy to a local area. The scope of a structure plan can also include urban design outcomes specific to the area, supporting the desired built character.



The planning environment strategic drivers

A structure plan, while expressing aspirations about what the future will look like in a local place, is not a population or economic strategy. Rather, it relies on data and projections to understand future growth scenarios so that it can manage predicted growth and change in an area.

As part of understanding future scenarios, a structure plan will analyse the planning environment, which comprises three components:

- **The macro, external 'big picture' environment** – which comprises the broader economic, social, technological, environmental, legislative and policy factors that influence where people want to live, work and invest. They include policy settings at the state and federal level as well as macro-economic, environment and social trends.
- **The micro, external 'regional picture' environment** – which are external factors that Council has capacity to influence or shape through active intervention. These will include community perspectives, population projections, and regional industry and economic drivers.
- **The internal 'local' environment** – which comprises local factors like land characteristics, the presence of natural hazards or values, infrastructure capacity and Council's strategic plan. Council may or may not have the ability to influence or shape these.

These elements of the planning environment are explored in sections 4 and 5 of the report.

Policy context

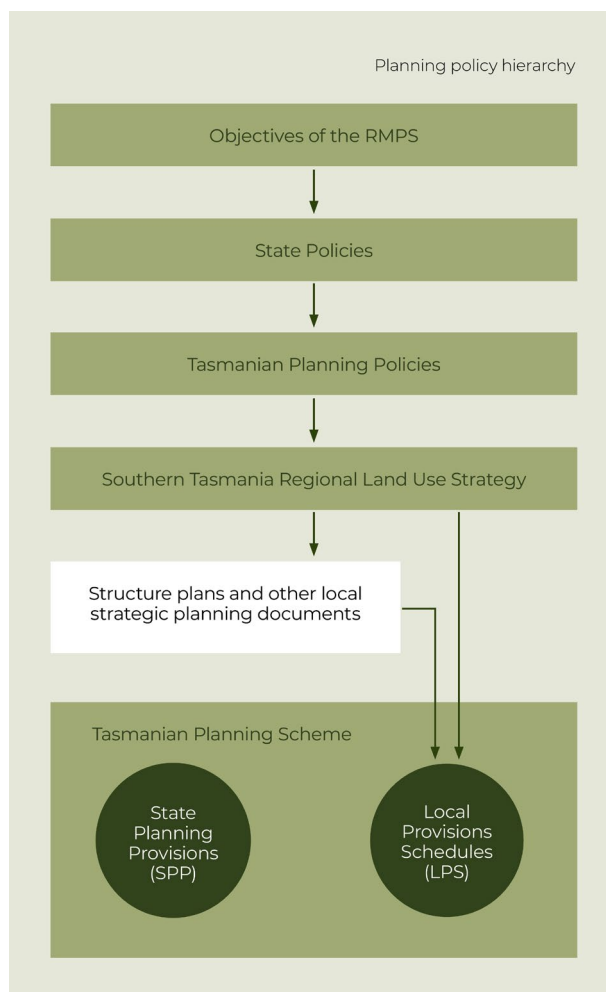
Land use and development in Tasmania is undertaken within the framework of a planning system known as the Resource Management and Planning System (RMPS).

The RMPS comprises a suite of legislation, supported by a network of planning schemes, policies and strategies. The RMPS provides a legislative framework for decision-making to ensure the sustainable use and development of Tasmania's natural and physical resources.

Key elements of the RMPS that have been considered in this structure plan include:

- **State Policies** – which are made under the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993* and articulate the State's position on significant matters relating to the sustainable development of land. All decisions under the RMPS are required to be consistent with relevant State Policies. The principles and requirements of the *State Coastal Policy 1996* and the *State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land 2009* have been particularly relevant to this structure plan.
- **Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs)** – which provide strategic direction on land use planning matters relevant to decisions under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*. Draft TPPs have been prepared and are currently being reviewed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. The Draft TPPs have been broadly considered in this structure plan.
- **The Southern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy (STRLUS)** – which establishes the medium- to long-term strategic direction for Southern Tasmania. The STRLUS assigns settlement strategies to towns in Southern Tasmania to prioritise growth. Under the STRLUS, Swansea is currently considered a township with a moderate growth strategy and is assigned a consolidation growth scenario that primarily focuses on infill development. The STRLUS is currently under review and this structure plan will inform that process.

Structure plans are not statutory documents in the RMPS. The State Planning Office has prepared structure plan guidelines which have been considered when developing this document.



Policy framework for Glamorgan Spring Bay

Section 2: Community engagement

What makes Glamorgan Spring Bay a great place to live, work and visit?

That's what we asked the community when we commenced engagement for the project. Across the two engagement periods we heard from more than 470 people who told us what they value about the area and what they feel is important to a bright future for Glamorgan Spring Bay. Draft Structure Plans were publicly exhibited in May-June 2024. Feedback received from the community was used to inform this final structure plan to ensure the directions and actions best benefit the local community.

Key themes

Five themes were identified from engagement feedback and have been used to guide the contents of this structure plan, including how we plan for the future of the town (Section 4).

These themes also guide how we consider Swansea's strengths and weaknesses, and look ahead to potential opportunities and challenges (Section 5).

Housing and accommodation

This theme relates to housing provision, diversity and affordability, as well as home ownership and rental availability. It also considers visitor accommodation and short-term holiday rentals.

Industry and employment

This theme considers existing and emerging industries, and future job opportunities. It also relates to commercial and retail offerings.

Infrastructure and connectivity

This theme relates to utility infrastructure provision and maintenance and infrastructure planning for growth. It also considers transport connections (private, public and active transport modes).

Social infrastructure and services

This theme considers healthcare and community services, education and arts opportunities, and recreation and sporting facilities.

Environment and landscape

This theme relates to climate change resilience and the protection of environmental values. It also considers landscape and connection to place.

Engagement methods

The process included a number of face-to-face and online engagement methods. They included:

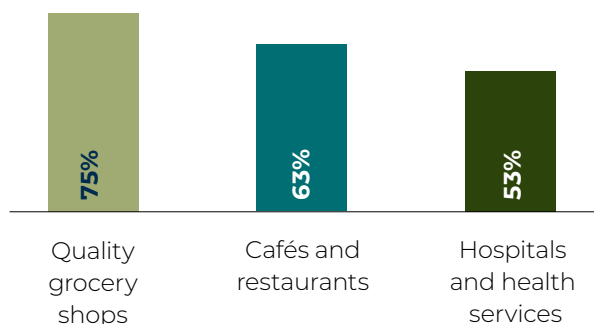


Survey results

A summary of results from the online survey is provided below. These responses are municipality-wide, rather than specific to a single town.

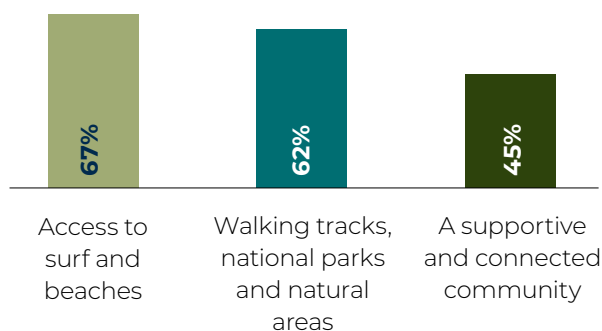
Important facilities and services

What are the most important facilities and services that you currently use in Glamorgan Spring Bay?



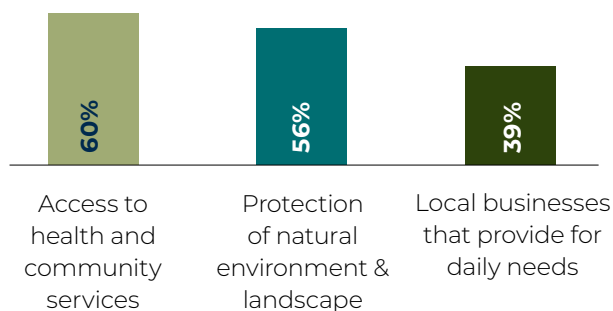
What do you value?

What do you value the most about living in or visiting the Glamorgan Spring Bay area?



Shaping a positive future

What will shape a positive future in the Glamorgan Spring Bay area?



In one sentence, what are your aspirations for the community and local character of Swansea?

The quotes below are from community members who took the online survey.

“

A connected and welcoming community that enables people to remain in place from birth to old age.

To be a great place to live and stay by the bay, where the pace is a bit slower and I have what I need nearby.

A progressive community which invites new ideas and welcomes visitors to share the natural beauty of the area.

A community destination with enhanced tree lined streets that will encourage people to stop and explore.

”

Swansea Aerial
Source: Rachael Bowes



Section 3: About Swansea

Swansea is a coastal town located on Paredarerme pungenna country, on Tasmania's East Coast. It is one of the main towns located in Glamorgan Spring Bay, along with Coles Bay, Bicheno, Orford and Triabunna, and it had a long history of Aboriginal occupation prior to colonisation.

A historical Aboriginal walk (Loontitetermairlehoiner Track) has been developed around Waterloo Point, providing education and insights into the Aboriginal culture of the area. Other potential Aboriginal features have been identified around Swansea, and future development must respond to and respect these places.

Swansea follows a generally linear pattern shaped by the prevailing road network and the coastline, providing waterfront access throughout its length, and creating visual and physical links to the water. The landscape surrounding Swansea is characterised by Great Oyster Bay to the east, offering views to Freycinet National Park. To the north, west and south, the town is bordered by agricultural land used for viticulture and grazing. Smaller communities near Swansea include Dolphin Sands to the north-east, a low-density residential area spanning Nine Mile Beach, and Cranbrook, a rural village to the north of Swansea servicing local agriculture.

The town centre features a range of commercial, residential and community uses, primarily located along Franklin Street, creating a somewhat fragmented town layout that lacks a clear commercial core. Although the junction of Franklin Street and Victoria Street naturally serves as a focal point, it is currently restricted due to traffic associated with the Tasman Highway passing through the town and by built form that does little to appropriately anchor key corner sites.

Swansea's strengths lie in its distinctive landscape character, comfortable living environment and natural beauty. All of these contribute to Swansea's liveability, to the wellbeing of its residents and to its visitor attraction. There are some key heritage buildings in and around the town which provide a visual connection to its history. As the region continues to grow, there are opportunities to further enhance liveability by connecting all ages of the community through the development of walking paths, visitor experiences, strengthening the commercial core, further investment in social infrastructure and support for local business.



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All of these contribute to Swansea's liveability, to the wellbeing of its residents and to its visitor attraction.

Future planning is focused on driving social wellbeing for an ageing population, creating a more connected and active town centre, supporting better access to the waterfront and delivering improved community facilities.

Population profile

- Swansea recorded a total 997 permanent residents at the 2021 Census.
- Swansea had a median age of 62 at the 2021 Census, compared to 39 for Greater Hobart and 57 for the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council area.
- Over two-thirds of households in Swansea are occupied by couples without children.
- According to the 2021 Census, just under half of Swansea's working-age residents participate in the workforce, and 24% partake in volunteer groups or organisations.
- By 2046, 225 additional permanent residents are projected to live in Swansea, a 23% increase in total population.

+23%
increase in
residents
by 2046

62 ↑
median
age 
\$929 ↓
median
household
weekly income 

Compared with Council average



Swansea Foreshore playground
Source: Connie Steers



Swansea Study Area

The study area comprises approximately 1,270 hectares encompassing the town of Swansea and immediate surrounds. The area is bounded by the Meredith River to the north, Great Oyster Bay to the east, and agriculture and bushland to the south and west. It contains rural residential allotments located west and south of the Tasman Highway, extending southwards to the Piermont Retreat site.



Population data

Best practice strategic planning is based on robust data. To ensure this structure plan responds to the future growth and change patterns experienced in Swansea, dwelling demand forecasts should be revisited when new Census data becomes available in 2026.



Wild Hives Honey
Source: Jasper Da Seymour

Section 4: Planning for the future

Housing and accommodation

A growing, yet ageing, population with smaller household sizes have broad implications for how Swansea will look and function into the future. This includes demand for smaller accessible dwellings as well as health and community facilities. In addition, a desire for regional and rural lifestyle opportunities, the coastal setting's holiday appeal, and an increasing ability to work from home will see permanent housing and visitor accommodation demand across Tasmania's East Coast continue to grow.

Swansea is set to see its population rise from 997 residents at the 2021 Census to approximately 1,222 by 2046¹. The number of overnight visitors to the area is also expected to increase significantly. On census night in August 2021, around 37% of dwellings in Swansea were unoccupied, indicating a high rate of seasonal or intermittent residents who own a second home used as a holiday home or leased via online short-term rental platforms including Stayz and Airbnb.

Supply and demand

There have been around 730 dwellings approved across Glamorgan Spring Bay since 2012, including around 80 dwellings in the General Residential zone in Swansea. While the number of dwellings approved in Swansea decreased in recent years, subdivision approvals are facilitating new residential land with additional potential yield in locations across the town.

Estimates of housing demand in Swansea to 2046 are based on population projections for permanent residents and the need to provide for seasonal visitation and worker accommodation. Population

projections in Tasmania can often be conservative due to the force of aging in the population. Housing supply is based on the availability of vacant land in zones appropriate for residential development, relevant land or environmental constraints, and the minimum lot size permitted in each zone.

It is important to highlight that projecting population growth is not an exact science. This structure plan has relied on population data provided by REMPLAN and the ABS to provide a population forecast range. They do not however consider population growth arising from additional employment generating activities such as increased tourism visitation which may attract new residents to the area. Nor do they consider external factors such as state or federal economic and development drivers which may mean that towns such as Swansea attract a higher growth rate than expected.

Based on population projections, it is predicted that an additional 232-284 dwellings will be required in Swansea to cater for additional residents and seasonal and visitor demand by 2046.

Best practice strategic planning suggests that a rolling 5-to-10-year supply of zoned residential land should be maintained, with strategic documents such as this structure plan ensuring that up to 15 years growth is identified.

The current supply of suitably zoned and serviced residential land indicates there is sufficient land supply in Swansea. It is, however, important to recognise that Swansea is a strongly ageing population. Therefore, it is critical that available land will be suitable to cater for the community's housing needs, including easily accessible housing for ageing residents and affordable housing for workers.

Vacant land and potential dwelling yield in Swansea

Zoning	Vacant area (ha)	Potential yield ²	Conservative yield ³	Dwelling demand to 2046 (REMPAN ¹)	Dwelling demand to 2046 (historical)
General Residential	42.76	831	305		
Rural Living	108.98	95	27		
Total	151.74	926	332	284	232

¹ REMPLAN was engaged by regional organisations, with funding from the State Planning Office, to undertake a housing market assessment, a whole of region residential land supply audit, and population and housing forecasts to understand the demand for residential housing. The population predictions prepared by REMPLAN for Glamorgan Spring Bay are based on data from the ABS.

² Based on minimum lot size permitted in zone, where the area developable is at a rate of 87.5% to account for access and land development constraints.

³ Based on average lot size, where the area developable is at a rate of 50% to account for access and land development constraints.

Industry and employment

As Swansea grows and residential land is further developed, business and employment opportunities are needed to support the population and increase the viability and vibrancy of the town centre. Through the community engagement process, the need to ensure the long-term viability of local industries and the establishment of new opportunities was identified as important to the local community, particularly in respect to attracting a younger demographic through strong employment and career opportunities.

Swansea has multiple commercial and residential developments currently being considered. Future commercial and retail development in the right location will provide residents with more options for leisure activities in the town while also supporting the visitor experience. Improving the commercial and retail offerings is also likely to attract new residents to purchase land in the area.

Commercial and industrial land

Swansea provides retail and commercial services, primarily in the town centre area on Franklin and Victoria streets. This includes Mitre 10 hardware, IGA supermarket, professional services, and a small number of cafés and restaurants. New hospitality venues including The Branch Wine Bar, Cakes & Honey café, and The Waterloo restaurant complement long-established venues providing locals and visitors with a range of options. It is also noted that seasonal visitation patterns experienced on the East Coast result in business opening periods often being tailored to tourism activity rather than meeting the needs of the permanent population.

Swansea currently has 7,645 m² of vacant commercial and retail land, all of which is zoned Local Business. The seasonality of Swansea's population (and broader East Coast visitation trends) impacts the feasibility of commercial and retail development to a greater degree than in areas with a more stable population. There are several retail and commercial developments planned in the area, including the redevelopment of the Morris Store and commercial and retail development on Franklin Street.

The small industrial area located on Maria Street contains limited industrial development and is in proximity to the existing waste transfer station and water treatment plant. Much of the land is prone to flooding and is unsuitable for many industrial activities. Potential industrial growth in Swansea will likely be small-scale service industries, serving residents and surrounding agricultural and marine ventures.

While industrial activity in the town is limited, three existing industrial businesses are situated near the town centre at 70 Franklin Street, 10 Maria Street, and 54 Tasman Highway. These present conflicts with the surrounding commercial and residential areas, detract from Swansea's visual appeal and create an unattractive entrance to the town.

Tourism

Tasmania had 1.26 million visitors in the year to December 2023. The East Coast region had 432,000 visitors, 58,000 of whom stayed overnight in Swansea. The average visitor spend for an overnight stay in Tasmania is \$297 per night. This represents a potential \$37 million in expenditure in Swansea over 123,000 visitor nights. Furthermore, in the year to December 2023, visitation to the East Coast region increased by 20% on 2019 levels (pre-COVID) and by a huge 70% since 2022. This trend has been seen across many regions of Tasmania and is likely a factor of the tourism market returning to, and exceeding, pre-COVID levels.

Tourism plays a key role in Swansea's economy, leveraging panoramic lookouts, stunning beaches and unique coastal landforms, and its position along the Great Eastern Drive touring route. Accommodation options for tourists range from caravan parks to motels, villas, and bed and breakfasts, most situated in comfortable walking distance to the town centre. However, some tourist facilities are ageing, and Swansea lacks a distinctive 'anchor' to attract visitation.

East Coast Tourism, the region's tourism organisation, have recently introduced the East Coast Positive Impact Plan, aimed at fostering sustainable tourism growth while preserving the region's natural and cultural assets. \$300,000 in funding has been awarded over three years to support the implementation of the plan.

The funds will be used for research, community consultation and engagement, a place making strategy, and infrastructure projects to align with broader sustainability and regenerative tourism goals.

East Coast Tourism are also looking at creative solutions to re-establish visitor information services

in the region noting some local centres have closed in recent years. Restoring visitor information services will greatly improve the visitor experience and ensure that tourists have access to accurate, up-to-date information.



Caravan and camping sector

The Australian caravan and camping industry experienced a record year in 2022, exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Tasmania is not immune to this strong performance, where the local caravan and motorhome market recorded 1.6 million visitor nights across 400,000 trips, covering both interstate visitors and Tasmanians holidaying within the state. During 2022, caravan and camping visitors to Tasmania spent an average of \$683 per trip and \$167 per night, with caravan parks recording a total of \$61 million in revenue – a 26% increase on 2021.

According to TT-Line, the new Spirit of Tasmania vessels are due to arrive in 2024-25. The new vessels will increase total passenger capacity from 1,400 to 1,800 and provide additional cabin and seating facilities. The new vessels provide for an approximately 60% increase in vehicle lanes that can accommodate caravans and motorhomes.

The East Coast is home to iconic visitor attractions that feature strongly on itineraries in this market, with the likes of Freycinet National Park and Maria Island deemed 'unmissable' to many caravan and motorhome travellers. In the summer months, this has resulted in capacity pressures in the region relating to accommodation, roads and key infrastructure.

In 2022, ERA undertook an audit of camping accommodation and infrastructure across Tasmania on behalf of Tourism Tasmania. The audit revealed that the East Coast region also has the fewest commercial caravan parks in the state, and some have recently closed, even though areas like the East Coast are overcapacity in peak periods. Caravan and motorhome visitors are important for dispersing the benefits of the visitor economy to regional communities.

20%↑

increase in visitors
to East Coast
region since 2019
(pre-COVID)



Kelvedon Beach
Source: Jasper Da Seymour



Fishing at Dolphin Sands
Source: Samuel Shelley

Infrastructure and connectivity

The planning, provision and management of infrastructure are essential considerations in land use planning, and important factors in supporting a liveable and accessible community. Infrastructure includes systems for drainage and disposal of sewage and stormwater; water storage, treatment and supply; waste management; energy generation, transmission and supply; communication and digital information; passenger and freight transport and transit; and associated control facilities.

Strategic land use planning and infrastructure planning must be coordinated and concurrent to ensure reliable services are available at appropriate capacity and function to meet the current needs of a community and can also meet future growth targets.

Water and sewer

Swansea water is sourced from the Meredith River and Swan River via Meredith dam off-stream storage. There are no current supply concerns and future growth can be accommodated. Swansea is serviced by a gravity network and sewage treatment plant with a capacity of 430 kL per day. Upgrades will be required to accommodate future growth.

The Maria Street sewage pump station is being upgraded to accommodate current and future loading requirements. A new sewage pump station is being constructed by a private developer to accommodate the Shaw Street loading, removing Shaw Street catchment from the Maria Street sewage pump station. Existing deficiencies in the sewerage system are being resolved via planned capital works and investigations into infiltration and inflow issues.

Transport

Road infrastructure is key to the effective management of this region. Several road studies and upgrades completed in recent years have resulted in a more strategic regional approach to investment that has a tourism focus on routes including the Great Eastern Drive.

The Tasman Highway is a key transport route owned by the State Government. Upgrades will be carried out by the Department of State Growth along approximately 14 km of the Tasman Highway including a section between the Pontypool junction and Rocky Hills south of Swansea. This work is being funded by state and federal government as part of a tourism initiative.

In addition to already funded projects, the State Government has committed to undertaking a corridor study on the entire Tasman Highway Road corridor, including the highway within the Glamorgan Spring Bay municipal area. This study will look at opportunities and constraints along the corridor and will seek to prioritise projects for future funding. The strategy is expected to be completed in late 2024.

The current road networks serve as the initial impression of the town. However, the entrances to Swansea from both the north and south via the Tasman Highway lack appeal due to neglected fencing, sparse roadside vegetation, and cluttered signage. To enhance the town's beauty and village atmosphere, these issues need urgent attention.

Limited public transport is provided via the Tasman Highway connecting Swansea with Bicheno, Coles Bay and Hobart. While the town's population size doesn't currently justify expanding the bus network, improving the frequency and reliability of the existing route is vital to serving the community.

Walking paths along the foreshore provide views of Swansea's coastline near the town centre. Additionally, Loontitetermairrehoiner Track, which starts from Waterloo Point and runs along the perimeter of the golf course, offers panoramic vistas of Great Oyster Bay and Freycinet National Park.

Infrastructure provision in Swansea

The table below provides an overview of infrastructure provision in Swansea's growth boundary. Refer to the State of Play report for mapping of water and sewer services areas in Swansea.



Reticulated water services are provided in the growth boundary.



Sewer

Reticulated sewer services are provided in the growth boundary.



Reticulated stormwater services are provided in the growth boundary.



Electricity

Electricity services are provided in the growth boundary.



Internet

NBN services are provided in the growth boundary.

Social infrastructure and services

Community and recreational facilities are essential to supporting the health, enjoyment and wellbeing of residents. Swansea is home to a range of community services and facilities, and it is likely that these will need to be well managed and maintained, and in some instances expanded, to cater to a growing and ageing population. This particularly applies to recreation and education facilities, public open spaces and health facilities.

Health and emergency services

May Shaw Swansea is a residential aged care facility providing residential and respite care in a 50-bed purpose-built facility. The services offering also extends to subacute and urgent care, independent living and home care services. The May Shaw facility provides a critical service to the local community along with Swansea's medical centre and community health centre.



As the population ages and grows, it will be important to ensure that suitable land is available close to services, for residential aged care development

As the population ages and grows, it will be important to ensure that suitable land is available close to services, for residential aged care development, for both high-care and independent living, as well as centralised spaces to support the delivery of home care services. Locating these facilities close to the central core of Swansea will help mitigate social isolation, while also contributing to the vitality and viability of the town.

Swansea has local police, ambulance, SES and fire services located within the town. The Freycinet Volunteer Marine Rescue is also located in Swansea, providing marine emergency response services. All these services provide critical support to the town and the broader municipality, with some relying heavily on a volunteer base which may face capacity and personnel challenges as the population ages.

Education and recreation

Swansea Primary School has a current enrollment of 69 students; the Swansea public library is co-located here. High school education requires students to travel to regional options in Triabunna and St Helens, or to major centres for boarding. Lady Gowrie Education and Care located on Arnol Street provides centre-based daycare services for infants. These services may require expansion to attract a younger, family demographic to the area.

Recreation facilities include the Swansea Bowls Club and Swansea Golf Club, located at Waterloo Point, and the adjoining recreation grounds. These facilities are considered underutilised and would benefit from upgrades that can better service the recreation needs of the region. Water-based recreation is supported by the Swansea jetty and boat ramp accessed via Jetty Road.

Environment and landscape

The community of Swansea places a high value on the local environment, with the beaches, bay and native bushland all contributing to why people love living in Swansea. The natural environment provides important habitat for native wildlife and is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna. Nearby wetlands play a key role in supporting healthy waterways and marine industries.

Preserving the natural environment is key to ensuring the long-term productivity of Swansea's waterways and river. When planning for future land use, the protection of these valuable habitats is paramount. As development in a place intensifies, consideration needs to be given to the function and importance of natural areas, including the way in which native fauna access food sources, breeding sites and water.

The Swansea area includes significant natural features that attract both residents and visitors. The study area is bordered by Meredith River to the north, which flows into Great Oyster Bay. Saltwater Creek runs through the study area and provides a natural boundary for the town centre. Waterloo Point forms a central focus for the town centre and the connection to the coast.



Kelvedon Estate
Source: Jasper Da Seymour



East Coast Drive, Mayfield Bay
Source: Pete Harmsen



Section 5: Strategic context

Drivers of change

Following the completion of background research, the state of play report and initial community engagement, we have identified major trends that are influencing the strategic planning approach for Swansea.

A changing and unpredictable climate

The effects of climate change on coastal towns pose challenges for community resilience and strategic planning. Rising sea levels and greater frequency of extreme weather events like storms and floods increasingly threaten coastal infrastructure and properties. Bushfire also poses a risk given the town's proximity to significant areas of vegetation. Future planning must prioritise strategies to adapt to these changes, such as implementing coastal defences, elevating buildings and creating resilient infrastructure.

Additionally, changes in temperature and rainfall patterns can impact agriculture, water resources and natural ecosystems, affecting the town's economy and biodiversity. Efforts should focus on promoting sustainable practices, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and enhancing community resilience to climate-related risks.

By integrating climate adaptation and mitigation measures into the planning and development process, and in community building initiatives, Swansea can better prepare for and mitigate the impacts of climate change, ensuring a safer and more sustainable future for its residents.

A homogenous housing profile

There is limited housing diversity in Swansea, with detached dwellings accounting for 96% of total housing stock, two-thirds of which contain three or more bedrooms. While this housing form has historically been in greatest demand, it creates a homogenous housing profile that does not provide diversity of choice for the population and may exacerbate housing and rental affordability issues.

The local consequences, in Swansea, are twofold. First, as the population ages, the need for appropriately located housing, designed with the needs of older generations in mind, will be the highest housing priority for the town. It is critical to ensure that older residents can remain a part of their local community by having housing that supports independence and evolving care needs and is also close to important health and community services.

Second, a strong workforce is required to support an ageing population and the regional economy. Current property prices and rental availability rates in the region are limiting opportunities for health and community sector workers and young people to access secure, affordable housing. While not an issue isolated to Swansea, or even Tasmania, it is an important matter for future growth strategies to acknowledge and plan for.

Major developments

Swansea has multiple commercial and residential developments currently being considered, many of which are located in, or near to, the town centre. These developments have the potential to shape the future function and character of the town and should be considered with a strategic, forward-focused lens that prioritises strong economic and community-driven outcomes.

This development potential, if realised, will result in population uplift from new residential and strata title lots in the study area, facilitating future population growth in the town. To respond, the current commercial and retail offering in Swansea should be enhanced.

Future development in Swansea should also be designed to provide residents and visitors with more options for leisure activities in the town while also attracting visitors and providing modern accommodation to cater to overnight visitors.



Swansea town centre
Source: Henk Vrieselaar

An increasingly ageing population

The population demographics of Glamorgan Spring Bay are changing to an increasingly older population. Nearly 50% of the municipality's residents are aged over 60 years and Swansea had a median age of 62 at the 2021 census.

The ageing profile of Swansea impacts the types of services needed to support the community and will result in a growing demand for specialised healthcare services, retirement facilities and community support systems. A strategic approach is required to meet the needs of older residents as well as encourage younger people to live in Swansea to support community diversity.

Community engagement results highlight the desire for residents to have the opportunity to 'age in place' and maintain connections to the community and the services and facilities it provides. New use and development accommodating the ageing population will need to be well located in order to support these connections, facilitating accessibility for less mobile people as well as a lively town that provides opportunity for diverse social interactions.

An ageing population will also have impacts on the local economy. Retirees typically have different spending patterns and may contribute less to the workforce but generate demand for additional workers in health and community support services – workers that are typically paid less than the median income in Australia. This demographic profile also presents opportunities for businesses catering to senior needs, such as healthcare providers, recreational facilities and senior-friendly amenities.

Exponential tourism growth

The 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy commissioned by Tourism Tasmania suggests that Tasmania is set to welcome 1.6 million interstate visitors and 400,000 international visitors annually by 2030. This represents an average annual growth of 2.6% from 2025 to 2030, and an associated annual visitor spend of up to \$5.6 billion by 2030, more than double the value in 2019.

Tasmania is set to welcome 1.6 million interstate visitors and 400,000 international visitors annually by 2030



This helps the economy through direct contributions to local businesses and the provision of employment. It also impacts the character of Tasmanian towns, influencing the proportion of residents who are permanent, and requires ongoing services to meet demand through accommodation, food services and activities. In addition, tourism introduces a large number of people who are unfamiliar with the area and less able to respond in an emergency.

In other towns in the municipal area, such as Bicheno and Coles Bay, there is clear evidence of localised and seasonal pressures on services and infrastructure. For Swansea, the predicted tourism growth represents an opportunity to strengthen the town's commercial vitality and range of activities, providing that there is adequate provision of suitably located visitor accommodation that does not reduce housing supply. For example, existing local hotels/motels in Swansea have potential for expansion and/or upgrade. Focusing tourism growth in Swansea may also assist in alleviating long-term pressures elsewhere.

Opportunities and challenges

After completing the initial stages of community engagement and undertaking the background analysis, the following strengths, weaknesses, future opportunities and potential challenges of Swansea have been determined.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Housing and accommodation 	- Strong residential land supply to foster sustainable population growth. - Well-situated key sites with strong redevelopment potential.	- Limited housing diversity to cater to ageing population. - Lack of housing affordability and rental availability, and large land parcels in limited ownership. - Small-scale subdivision reliance on cul-de-sac development limits broader connectivity and permeability. - Limited caravan and camping accommodation availability.
Industry and employment 	- Existing role as a semi-established hub providing subregional services and facilities. - Emerging coastal high street character of Franklin Street and surrounds.	- Increasingly ageing population with limited future workforce capacity. - Key sites hosting incongruent land uses. - Inconsistent and spatially fragmented retail offering. - Some commercial and retail frontages are undesirable and underutilised. - Inconsistent signage and wayfinding presence in town centre.
Infrastructure and connectivity 	- Midway point on the East Coast visitor journey via the Great Eastern Drive. - Beachfront connections along the Esplanade, Waterloo Beach and Jubilee Beach.	- Car-centric town centre with poor pedestrian safety and permeability. - Lack of cycling infrastructure. - Lack of town wayfinding or resolved urban design presence. - Poor road connectivity in Rural Living zoned land.
Social infrastructure and services 	- Open spaces well situated to benefit from upgrades and amenity improvements. - Strong community cohesion and existing resilience.	- Insufficient health services for an ageing population. - Dated sporting and recreation facilities. - Limited service provision requires regional travel. - The dimension of the existing oval cannot accommodate a standardised sporting field which limits opportunities for upgrades for grant funding.
Environment and landscape 	- Proximity to internationally recognised natural features including Freycinet National Park, Moulting Lagoon and Wineglass Bay. - Panoramic views across Great Oyster Bay to Nine Mile Beach and the Freycinet Peninsula. - Access to open space and water-based recreation and walking connections to the beach and bay. - Prominent green headland with public-private access and usability. - Established agricultural landscapes with prominent vegetated hills surrounding the town reflective of industry and heritage. - The eastern coastline and rising topography to the west provide natural borders to the town.	- Open space linkages are fragmented and are not accessible to all mobility needs. - Lack of streetscape appeal and consistency in public landscaping and street tree plantings. - Development near vegetated areas increases bushfire risk and threatens homes.

Future opportunities	Potential challenges
• Develop a mixed-use town centre that provides access to facilities and services. • Leverage proximity to tourist attractions to capture overnight visitation spend. • Ensure master plans form part of approvals for new land releases to deliver housing diversity, permeability and design quality. • Make more efficient use of well-connected, centrally located land to provide housing opportunities.	• Housing affordability crisis impacting housing opportunities for young families and key workers. • Securing suitable land to accommodate caravan and camping accommodation. • Developer commitment to delivering improved design quality. • Further development into natural areas and agricultural land impacting ecosystems and resulting in vegetation removal.
• Free up key sites by shifting industrial uses and bulky goods stores to more suitable locations. • Clarify the town's regional role in employment and industry opportunities. • Enhance daytrip offering while positioning Swansea as an accommodation and service base. • Establish clear town gateways to improve the attractiveness and sense of arrival to the town. • Cater to caravan and motorhome sector and thereby increase economic viability of the town. • Collaborate with East Coast Tourism on the East Coast Positive Impact Plan.	• Linear sprawl of commercial uses that lack critical mass for activation, particularly through pedestrian movement. • Seasonal implications of tourism peaks and troughs on commercial and retail activity. • Balancing pressures from both permanent and seasonal populations on town services.
• Improve active connections to the beaches, Meredith River and between parks and open spaces. • Establish infrastructure contributions to assist in strategic planning. • Improve town centre parking and walkable connections to provide economic and access opportunities. • Ensure that additional walking, wheeling and riding connections are planned, designed and implemented to connect residential areas with key centres, services and destinations.	• Residential growth exceeds infrastructure planning and provision. • Ribbon development reduces the efficiency of land use and puts stress on infrastructure and transport. • The ever-changing needs of a growing population and a changing climate may challenge the efficacy of emergency management and evacuation procedures.
• Attract and nurture younger demographic. • Provide community-led opportunities to contribute to developing a clear town identity. • Guide social infrastructure to locations where exposure to natural hazards is reduced to the extent practicable.	• Staffing requirements for additional health services and community facilities. • Land availability for service hubs. • Diminishing volunteer base for community and emergency services.
• Build a defined town identity from its burgeoning coastal character. • Use opportunities for marine transport to connect to other towns and attractions. • Improve public vegetation profile to be more reflective of coastal setting. • Improve vegetation links at town entrances and beachfronts. • Protect and enhance views towards Great Oyster Bay and western hills. • Ensure bushfire risk is managed on a whole of town basis to ensure development reasonably avoids areas of bushfire risk.	• Work with TFS to ensure the relevant community bushfire protection plan is kept up to date. • Susceptibility to climate impacts such as coastal erosion and inundation.



Fishing at Dolphin Sands
Source: Samuel Shelley

Section 6: The Swansea structure plan

What is the plan?

Swansea's focus for the future is identifying a sustainable and beneficial growth pattern to add value to the existing town, prioritising protection of waterfront connections and valuing its existing cultural and environmental context.

The structure plan provides a framework for future development and investment in Swansea for the next 10 years. It provides a strategic lens for land use and planning decisions relevant to the area and will guide the long-term growth of the town. The structure plan comprises three key components:

1. A suite of place-based planning principles underpinned by the existing planning policy framework in Tasmania
2. Land use directions aimed at addressing the drivers of change
3. Supporting actions to provide a holistic framework for future growth.

Planning principles

The following planning principles have been established to guide the suite of land use directions and supporting actions in this structure plan.

Enhance town centre activation

Improve the vibrancy and attractiveness of the town centre as a coastal high street by creating a spatially focused, welcoming and walkable spine that caters to local needs and appeals to visitors.

Reinforce connections to natural assets

Improve visual and physical connections that leverage Swansea's beachside location and proximity to iconic assets to broaden the town's tourism appeal and attract overnight visitation and increase spend.

Strengthen local character and identity

Enhance the town's regional role and reflect its heritage and landscape in a clear and communicable identity that long-term residents are proud of and new residents are drawn to.

Prioritise community health and wellbeing

Position Swansea as a key location for regional health and aged care services with a focus on residential opportunities that facilitate ageing in place, and social infrastructure services for all ages and family compositions.

Delivery sustainable housing

Support residents of all ages, at all stages of life, and on a range of incomes to access safe and secure housing that meets their needs.

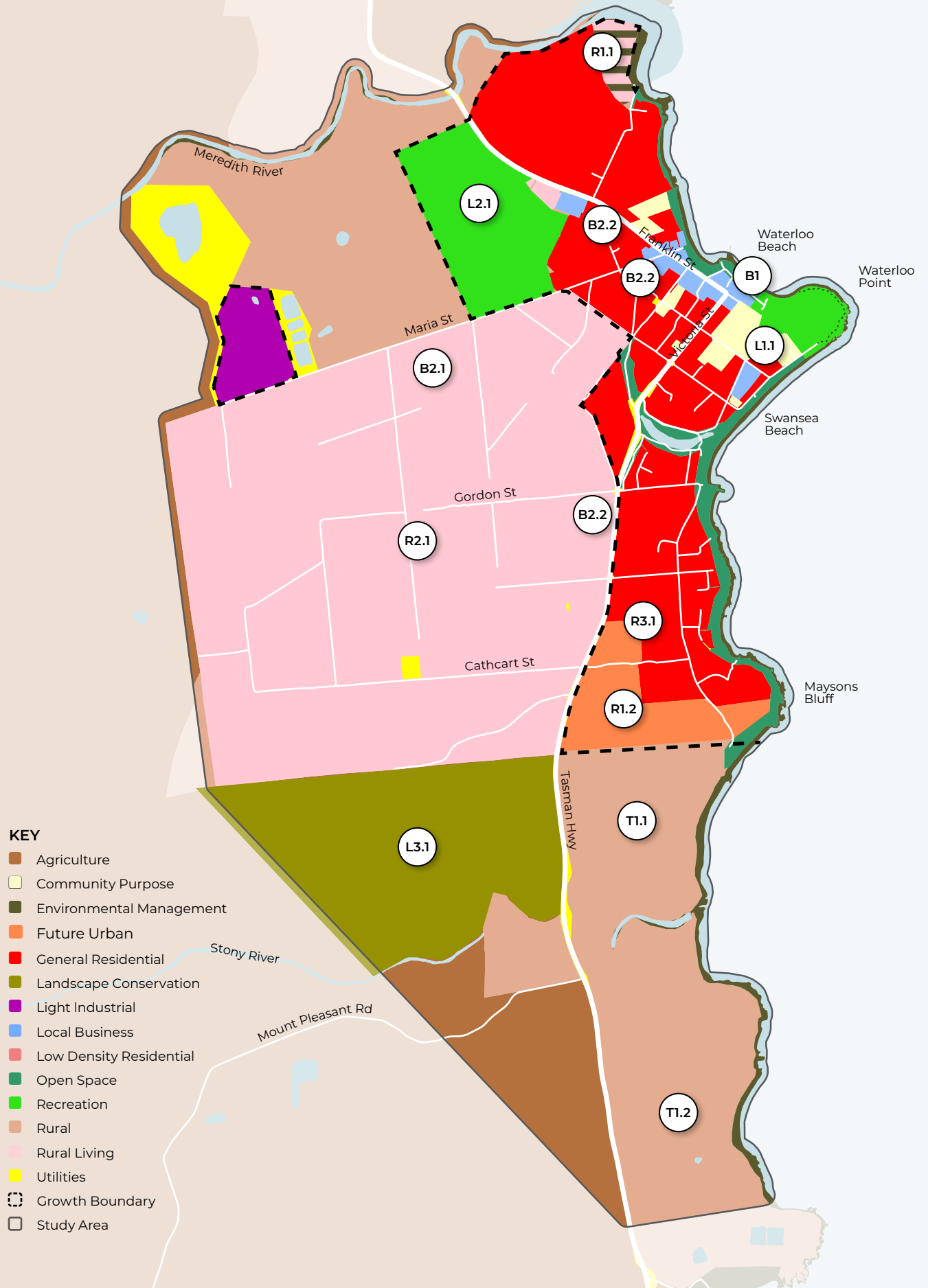
Land use directions

The structure plan is first and foremost a strategic land use document that identifies a clear growth boundary to guide and manage sustainable growth and provides zoning recommendations based on detailed analysis and future community needs.

The following table outlines land use directions to achieve the planning principles above. The actions detail how each direction should be achieved. Locations mentioned are identified on the associated map.

Ref	Direction	Action
Residential		
R1	Identify sites suitable for residential uplift	R1.1 Investigate the opportunity to rezone the environmentally constrained land within 58 Shaw Street (CT 19682/1) to Environmental Management/Landscape Conservation (depending on ownership and natural values), with the balance to be rezoned Rural Living A. These investigations should be informed by a natural values assessment to guide any future zone boundary. R1.2 Investigate the potential to rezone land in the southern most portion of the growth boundary from Rural to Future Urban to facilitate long term residential growth. Note: Future development associated with R1 must be subject to a master planning process to guide sustainable development, including yield, housing mix, lot layout, landscaping and design principles. Development must integrate with existing residential development and provide adequate connections to town centre.
R2	Encourage efficient infill of the rural living zone	R2.1 There is insufficient pressure on land availability within the study area to necessitate a change to the Rural Living zone west of the Tasman Highway. However, infill is encouraged under the current zoning so an efficient use of land can be achieved.
R3	Support the realisation of development potential	R3.1 Council to liaise with landholders to identify opportunities to encourage future subdivision in areas zoned General Residential.
Business and industry		
B1	Reinforce the commercial core	B1.1 Encourage the development of active ground floor tenancies on Franklin Street with residential uses on upper floors that can access views. B1.2 Ensure commercial development in Franklin Street is located to increase activity and vibrancy and reinforce its coastal high street profile. B1.3 Commercial, retail and hospitality-based uses must contribute to the broader tourism appeal and emerging service profile of the town.
B2	Consolidate industrial uses	B2.1 Rezone the industrial land on Maria Street (between Tarleton and Burgess streets) to Rural Living Zone A. B2.2 Council to liaise with 10 Maria St, 70 Franklin St and 54 Tasman Hwy to encourage relocation and to identify opportunities in the short term for improvements to the site and the interface with the public realm, such as landscaping.

Ref	Strategy	Action
Landscape and community		
L1	Create a community and health services precinct	L1.1 Investigate the potential to rezone the existing oval and facilities to Community Purpose to provide opportunities to expand community health services and aged care facilities. This location leverages its proximity to the town centre and existing May Shaw facility to support a walkable environment for residents and easy access for the broader community. The precinct would be delivered via government land ownership, rather than private enterprise. The precinct should: • Provide a base for regional e-health and mobile health services, community meeting rooms, and a regional library link. • Prioritise spaces with multipurpose flexibility to promote interaction and cohesion for all ages within the community, particularly those ageing in place. • Provide opportunities for ageing in place with transitional seniors housing that ranges from independent living through to low care. Provide infill housing for residents to downsize/rightsize and to support key worker accommodation. • Acknowledge and interpret the historic significance of the site through the design response to ensure it is appropriately reflected. Note: This would follow a relocation of the existing oval and facilities at Waterloo Point (refer to L2).
L2	Create a purpose-built community recreation hub	L2.1 Investigate the potential to rezone a portion of 13509 Tasman Highway, located to the north of the town centre (CT 170094/2) to Recreation to accommodate a community recreation hub appropriate to service the regional community. The hub should: • Provide flexible-use sporting field(s), clubhouse facilities, and amenities. • Integrate space to support caravan and camping visitors (self-contained) to address the regional shortfall in this accommodation type. • Provide space to relocate the dump point currently located on the Esplanade. Note: Refer also to L1 (above). Note that the existing oval encroaches on private land to the west (residences on Victoria Street and cemetery to the east. The dimension of the recreation zoned land cannot accommodate a standardised sporting field which limits opportunities for upgrades for grant funding.
L3	Protect landscape values	L3.1 Investigate the potential to rezone large bushland areas currently zoned Agriculture (including CT 110038/1 and surrounds) to Landscape Conservation to protect natural and landscape values, and to enhance arrival from the south.
Tourism		
T1	Enable tourist accommodation opportunities	T1.1 Retain rural zoning to allow for landscape and heritage based tourism opportunities. T1.2 Existing Piermont tourism and community development scheme to retain a focus on tourism and holiday homes. The community development component is an anomaly in relation to such uses occurring at a distance from the urban growth boundary.



KEY

- Agriculture
- Community Purpose
- Environmental Management
- Future Urban
- General Residential
- Landscape Conservation
- Light Industrial
- Local Business
- Low Density Residential
- Open Space
- Recreation
- Rural
- Rural Living
- Utilities
- Growth Boundary
- Study Area

Tasmanian precedents

The images and descriptions below show Tasmanian development precedents that relate to the proposed land use directions and supporting actions. They serve as a source of information and inspiration for future development.



Source: Peter Bennetts



Kingborough Community Hub Kingborough Council

The Community Hub is a flexible facility for future changing demands. There is a multipurpose community hall, meeting rooms, and covered town square, public amenities and storage. A café space has also been developed. The Hub is able to host a variety of community and cultural activities, events and exhibitions.



Wynyard Sporting Precinct Waratah-Wynyard Council

Waratah-Wynyard Council adopted the Wynyard Sporting Precinct Master Plan in 2022. The master plan proposed a new Wynyard Sporting Precinct, improved facilities and amenities for squash, basketball, netball, tennis, community garden and band rooms. Once complete it will provide variety and safety to multiple clubs, users and the general public.

Supporting actions

In developing this structure plan, a range of other recommendations have been identified which are necessary to the success of implementing the land use directions. These recommendations are also consistent with the planning principles above.

The following table outlines these recommendations. Under each one, specific actions detail how that recommendation should be achieved. Locations mentioned are identified on the associated map.

Ref	Recommendation	Action
Place branding		
S1	Create a clear town identity	S1.1 Create a consistent town brand identity that leverages Swansea's coastal character and differentiates it from other towns in the municipality.* S1.2 Prepare a street tree master plan for the town and encourage frontage plantings in new residential developments to increase canopy cover and climate resilience. <i>* This action will be listed for all towns as it is recommended this work be approached collectively to ensure town identities are not only unique, but also complementary at the municipal scale.</i>
S2	Enhance town arrival and wayfinding	S2.1 Create a strong entrance to Swansea to greet visitors with a pleasing sense of arrival, and improve wayfinding through the town centre area. S2.2 Prepare a wayfinding and signage strategy for the town to improve navigation and connections.
Open space		
S3	Enhance local parks and open spaces	S3.1 Retain the Crown land vegetated corridor between the Meredith River and northern end of Shaw Street. S3.2 Retain and upgrade the Swansea Foreshore playground area near Waterloo Beach to encourage families exploring the East Coast to stop and spend time, and enhance Swansea's daytrip appeal. S3.3 Enhance the foreshore area to have broader visitor appeal and create opportunities for waterfront activation through formalised, accessible pathways, seating areas, improved landscaping and shade. S3.4 Enhance the riparian characteristics of Duck Park and provide additional tree plantings for increased shade.
Active connections		
S4	Improve active pathways and open space connections	S4.1 Create a network of paths to connect local parks and open spaces within the town and leverage the existing asset of Loontitetermairrehoiner Track. The route should connect Saltwater Creek, the Esplanade, Waterloo Point, Waterloo Beach, the community recreation hub and community health services precinct. Explore opportunities for NRM funding to support this. New pathways or upgrades should aim to: • Be fully accessible to safely provide for all ages within the community. • Connect the residents to the town centre and avoid potential road user conflicts. • Embed opportunities to include cultural and historic interpretation and public art features that reinforce the town identity. S4.2 Explore the feasibility of a new footbridge across the Meredith River to Dolphin Sands.

Ref	Recommendation	Action
Public space and facilities		
S5	Prepare a streetscape master plan for Franklin Street	S5.1 Prepare a streetscape master plan for Franklin Street to: • Strengthen Franklin Street's role as a coastal high street with overnight visitation and daytrip appeal. • Prioritise safety features such as crossings and traffic calming devices to elevate role of the pedestrian and improve visitor attraction. • Identify opportunities for pedestrian through-site links and view corridors to guide the redevelopment and renewal of key sites to better connect the town to the bay and iconic views. • Guide high-quality streetscapes and works in the public realm to focus investment on visible public works. • Guide high-quality landscaping, footpath upgrades, street furniture and outdoor lighting throughout Swansea.
S6	Enhance public facilities and community assets	S6.1 Investigate the renovation of the Council-owned assets on Noyes Street to offer a multipurpose function space for the community. Examples include a tourism experience based around East Coast heritage, or a space for community event hire. S6.2 Repurpose the existing scout hall site to also accommodate a surf club. The existing scout hall site is underutilised and Swansea does not presently have a local surf life saving club (Bicheno is the closest). Surf clubs enable learn to swim opportunities, build surf swimming confidence and create a shared space to build community resilience, wellbeing and broader cohesion.
Infrastructure		
S7	Improve stormwater management	S7.1 Develop a stormwater improvement plan to support infill subdivision and the development of new growth areas. S7.2 On land located at the junction of Maria and Wellington streets, investigate the provision of a riparian buffer and walkway along Saltwater Creek, and incorporate a natural detention area to limit downstream flooding risk.





Source: Dearn Bond



takara limuna (Sheoak Walk) Clarence City Council

The takara limuna walking trail features a viewing platform, a central firepit and gathering circle, and five interpretation panels written and researched by Aboriginal cultural practitioners Theresa Sainty and Zoe Rimmer with translations and audio recordings in palawa kani. The trail is illustrated with artworks by Allan Mansell and panels designed by Alex Miles.



Source: Playstreet

Bridgewater Community Parkland Brighton Council

Engaged by Brighton Council, Playstreet master planned a large, vacant parcel of land between Bridgewater and the Derwent River. The area of land was selected due to its potential to connect the Bridgewater commercial zone to the Derwent River foreshore, and unlock the recreational value of the river for the suburb of Bridgewater.

Next steps and implementation

The land use directions are for Glamorgan Spring Bay Council to consider as strategic opportunities for the future that may require amendments to the Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Glamorgan Spring Bay.

The supporting actions require consideration to identify the associated delivery priority as well as available funding and resourcing.

This structure plan is to be monitored internally by Council's Planning and Development team and reviewed as new ABS data becomes available. Data supporting the structure plan, including the population projections and supply and demand analysis, must be kept up to date to support monitoring and future reviews.

Mayfield Estate
Source: Jasper Da Seymour





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