

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council

Bicheno 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: Waubs Bay Beach, Bicheno. Source: Tourism Tasmania and Rob Burnett

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Lobster Shack
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.

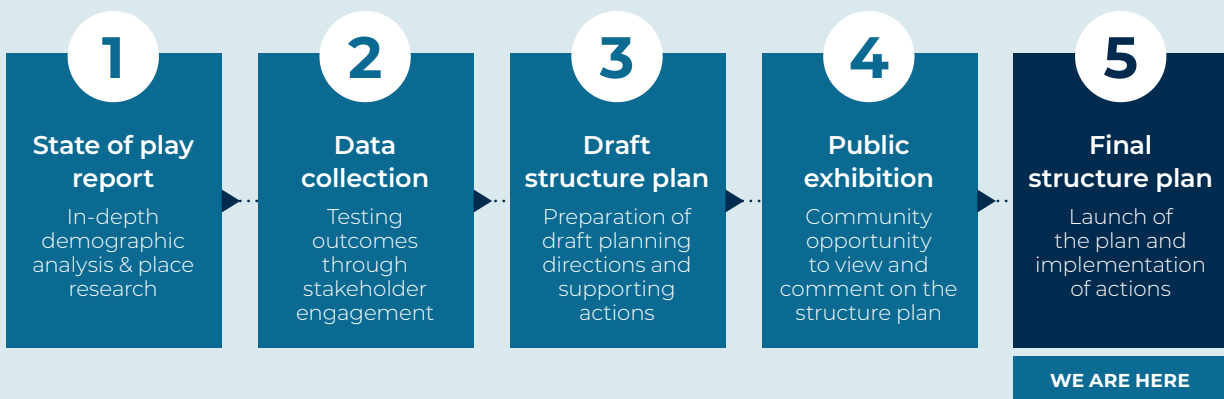
A separate structure plan has been prepared for each of the main towns. Each structure plan aims to:

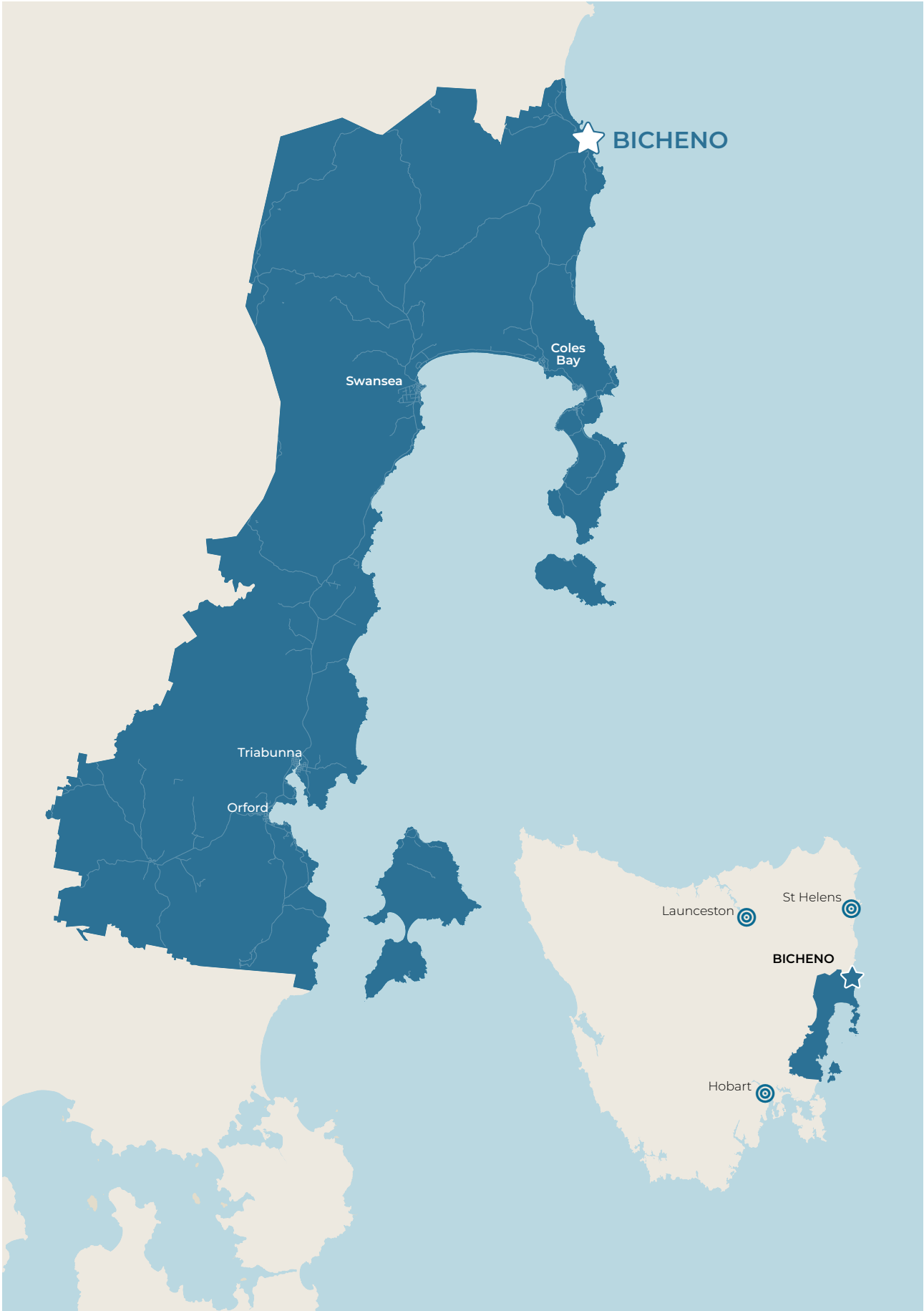
- Establish a planning framework to guide sustainable growth and economic resilience.
- Deliver growth in a way that reflects community values, enhances the qualities of the town, and creates affordable and diverse housing opportunities.
- Guide the development of a high-quality, accessible open space 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 Bicheno over the next 10 years to 2034.

The process

The project methodology follows five key stages:





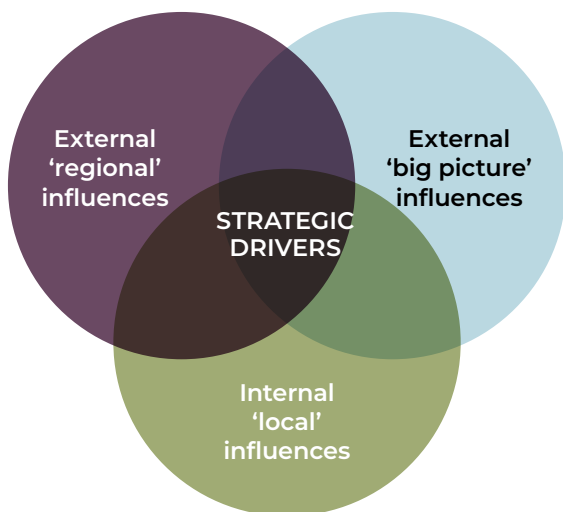


Bicheno streetscape
Source: Adam Gibson

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.

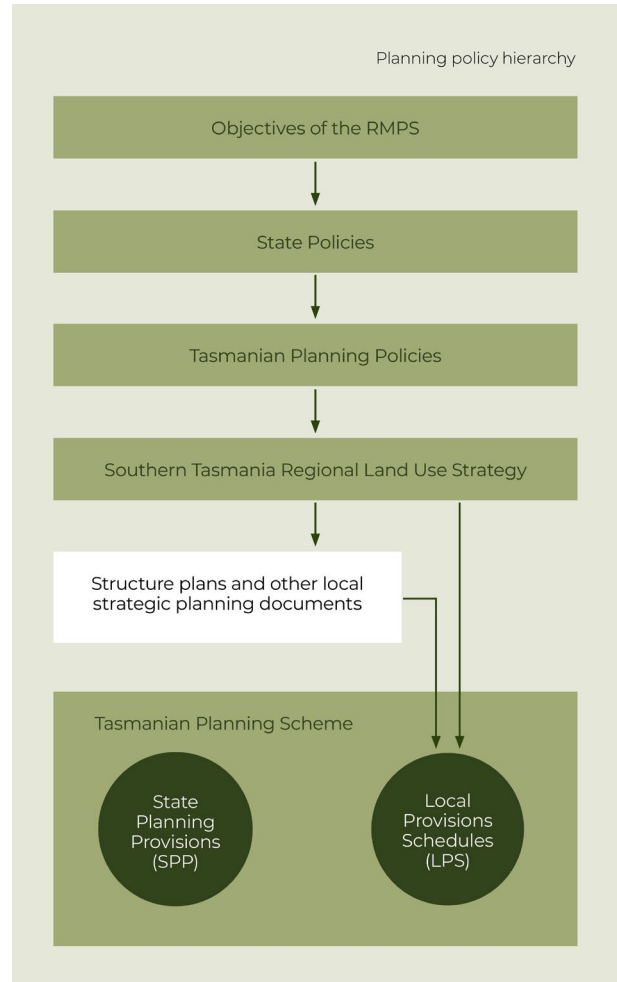
Policy context

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. Bicheno 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 review.

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 Bicheno'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:

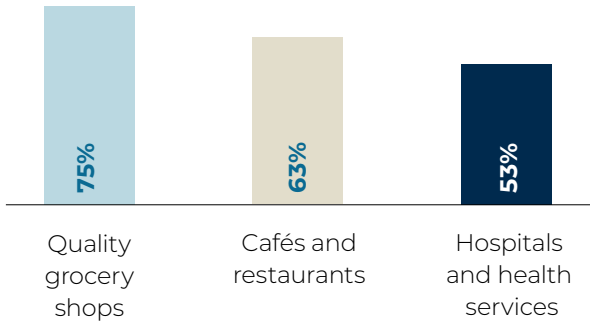


Survey results

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

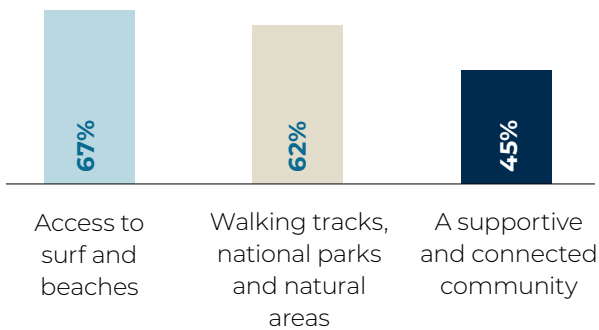
Important facilities and services

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



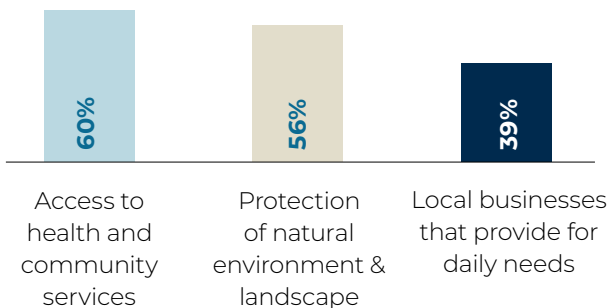
What do you value?

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 Bicheno?

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

“

More housing and childcare options to promote younger folk to our town

Relaxed, safe, seaside environment with sympathetic development

Preserve the environment that makes Bicheno the uncut gem it is but enhance the basics like town centre appeal and walking paths

A strong community environment with housing for short term workers

”



Bicheno
Source: Pete Harmsen

Section 3: About Bicheno

Bicheno 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, Swansea, Orford and Triabunna, and it had a long history of Aboriginal occupation prior to colonisation.

Bicheno is shaped by a sloping backdrop of vegetated hills, prominent scenic lookouts, and a coastline which provides waterfront access from beaches and rocky outcrops. The landscape surrounding Bicheno is characterised by the ocean to the east, including the sandy Waubs Bay and Redbill Beach and the unique boulder formations of Diamond Island, Peggy's Point and the Governor Island Marine Reserve.

To the east lies the Gulch, which hosts a local port facility that supports both commercial and recreational fishing. To the north and south, the town is bordered by rural use, heavily vegetated areas and agricultural land used primarily for grazing. To the west, Apsley Conservation Area borders the town and extends to the Douglas–Apsley National Park and adjoining forest reserves.

The town centre features a range of commercial, residential and community uses, primarily located along Burgess and Foster streets. Triangle Park, which is planned for upgrade works, is the logical junction for activity in Bicheno. However, important corner sites remain vacant and other business zoned sites remain underutilised, limiting activation opportunities.

Similarly, the alignment of the Tasman Highway through the town, combined with a lack of clear wayfinding and cohesive urban design, limits the role of this location as Bicheno's central hub and hinders connections to the surrounding beaches and bays, particularly for visitors unfamiliar with the area.

Bicheno's strengths lie in its unique landscape character, pleasant living environment, and natural beauty, all of which contribute to its liveability, resident wellbeing and visitor appeal. The town includes well-preserved heritage buildings that serve as a visual reminder of its history and enrich its overall built character.



Bicheno is shaped by a sloping backdrop of vegetated hills, prominent scenic lookouts, and a coastline which provides waterfront access to beaches and rocky outcrops.

As the region grows, there are opportunities to enhance liveability by fostering connections across all age groups through the development of walking paths, enhanced visitor experiences, investment in social infrastructure and support for local businesses. Future planning aims to prioritise social wellbeing for the ageing population, foster a more connected and vibrant town centre, improve access to the waterfront and deliver enhanced community facilities.

Population profile

- Bicheno is the most populous single town in the municipality, recording 1,049 residents at the 2021 Census.
- In 2046, an additional 363 permanent residents are projected to live in Bicheno, a 34% increase in total population.
- Bicheno has a median age of 54, compared to 39 for Greater Hobart and 57 for the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council area.
- According to the 2021 Census, just over half of Bicheno's working-age residents participate in the workforce, and 22% partake in volunteer groups or organisations.



**Most populous
single town in
the municipality**



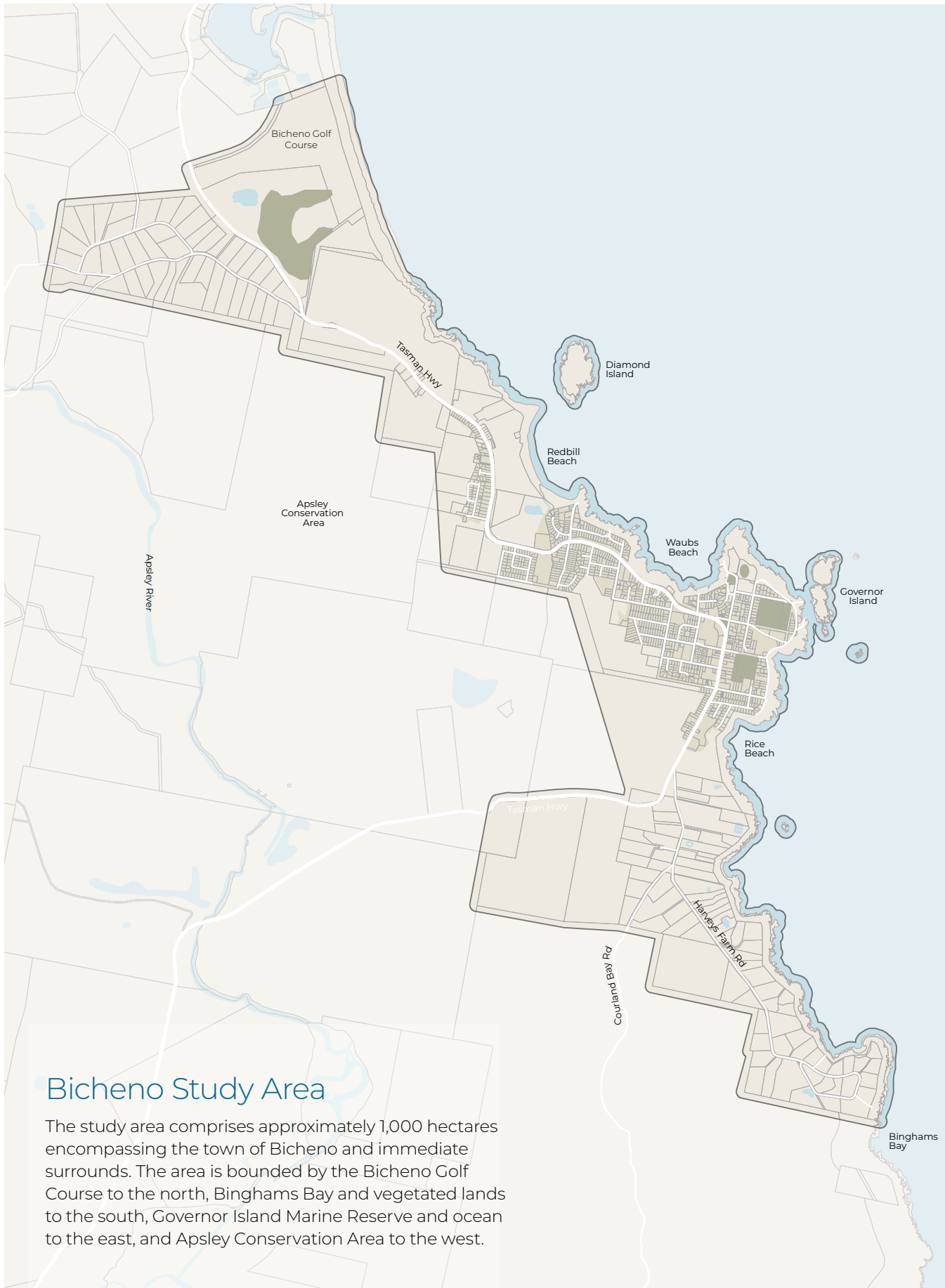
+34%
increase in
residents
by 2046



**Around 2/3 of
households are
couples without
children**



Bicheno Coffee Club - Ocean swimming group
Source: Tourism Tasmania and Rob Burnett



Bicheno Study Area

The study area comprises approximately 1,000 hectares encompassing the town of Bicheno and immediate surrounds. The area is bounded by the Bicheno Golf Course to the north, Bingham's Bay and vegetated lands to the south, Governor Island Marine Reserve and ocean to the east, and Apsley Conservation Area to the west.

Section 4: Planning for the future

Housing and accommodation

The population of Bicheno, which is growing yet ageing, coupled with smaller household sizes and a need for varied housing choices will shape the town's future residential development. Bicheno's coastal lifestyle is increasingly appealing, driving demand for both permanent homes and holiday getaways. Meeting the diverse needs of residents and visitors while preserving the town's character and attractiveness will require thoughtful planning and consideration.

Residential development in Bicheno spans the length of the coast, in a linear arrangement that predominantly follows the Tasman Highway. Housing is broadly characterised by low density development in the town's core, and rural residential

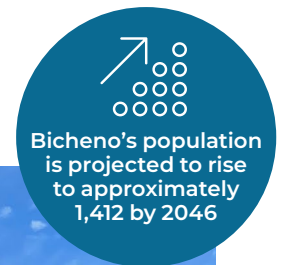
development at the outer town area, although newer residential subdivisions with increased density are emerging.

Bicheno is set to see its population rise from 1,049 residents at the 2021 Census to approximately 1,412 by 2046. This growth will coincide with a significant increase in overnight visitors to the area. On census night in August 2021, around 50% of dwellings in Bicheno were recorded as unoccupied, pointing to a sizeable number of seasonal or occasional residents who either own a second property for holiday purposes or rent out their homes through online platforms.



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 Bicheno, dwelling demand forecasts should be revisited when new Census data becomes available in 2026.



Bicheno town
source: ERA Planning and Environment

Supply and demand

There have been around 730 dwellings approved across Glamorgan Spring Bay since 2012, including around 130 dwellings in the General Residential zone in Bicheno. While the number of dwellings approved in Bicheno decreased in recent years, subdivision approvals are facilitating new residential land with additional potential yield in locations across the town.

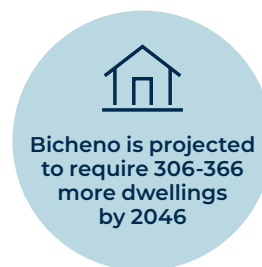
Estimates of housing demand in Bicheno to 2046 are based on population projections for permanent residents and the need to provide for seasonal visitation and worker accommodation. Population projections in Tasmania can often be conservative due to the force of aging in the population. Housing supply 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 Bicheno attract a higher growth rate than expected.

Based on population projections, it is predicted that an additional 306-366 dwellings will be required in Bicheno 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.

Analysis undertaken for this structure plan indicates that the current supply of suitably zoned and serviced residential land is insufficient to meet future demand. Under the conservative yield scenario current supply amounts to less than a third of the zoned land required to meet demand.



Notably, large parcels of undeveloped residential land remain within Bicheno's growth boundary, in addition to significant parcels of land zoned Future Urban and Particular Purpose (North Bicheno Future Urban), both presenting opportunities to facilitate growth in residential development.

It is also important to acknowledge Bicheno's ageing population to ensure that available land caters to the community's housing needs, including easily accessible, well-connected housing for elderly residents, and affordable accommodation for workers.

Vacant land and potential dwelling yield in Bicheno

Zoning	Vacant area (ha)	Potential yield ²	Conservative yield ³	Dwelling demand to 2046 (REMPAN ¹)	Dwelling demand to 2046 (historical)
General Residential	11.58	225	82		
Rural Living	64.61	56	16		
Subtotal	76.19	281	98		
Future Urban	7.92	154	57		
Particular Purpose (North Bicheno Future Urban)	33.38	649	238		
Total	117.49	1,084	393	366	306

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.



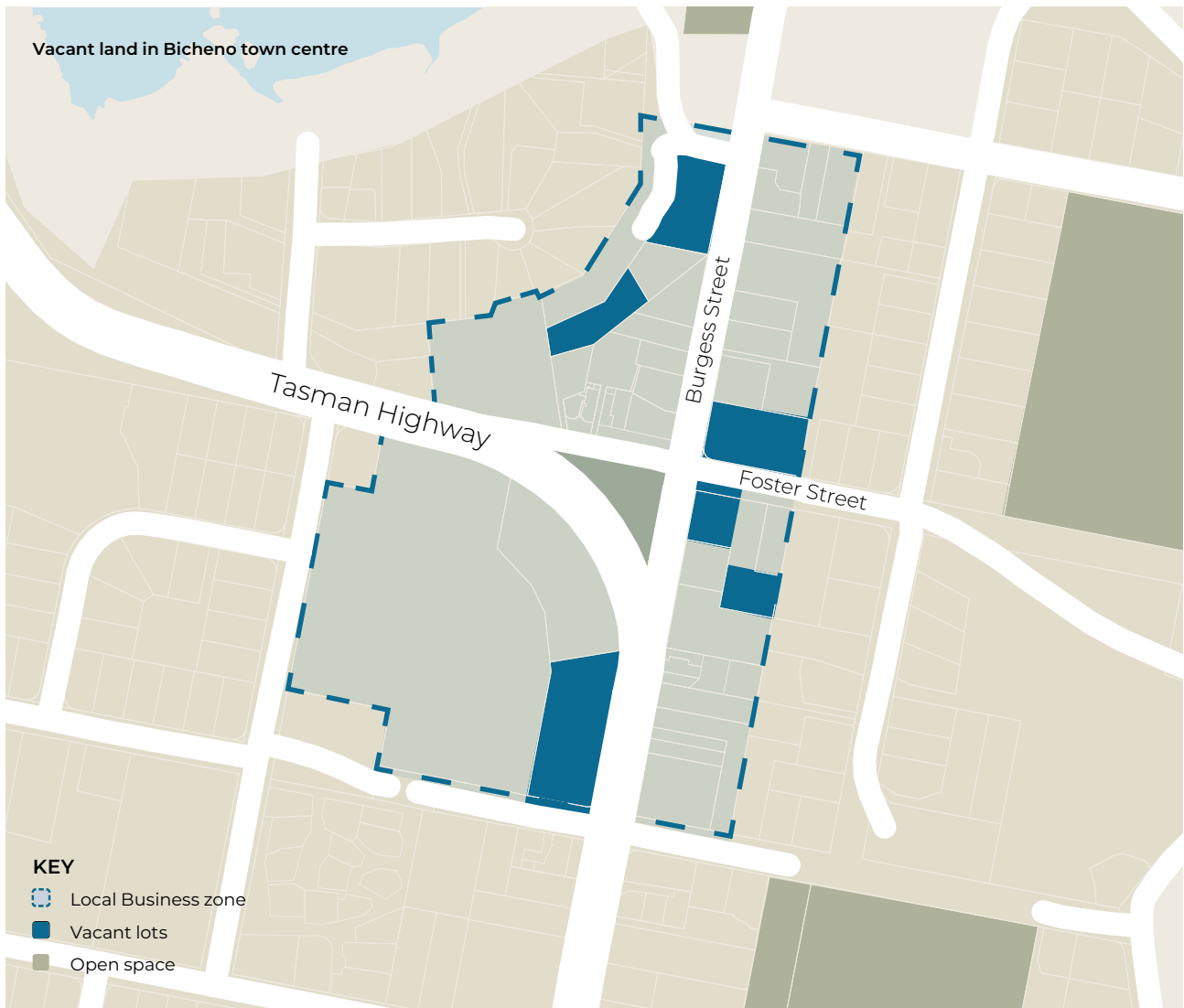
Bicheno streetscape
Source: Adam Gibson

Industry and employment

As Bicheno 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. Feedback received through the community engagement process indicated that local businesses were struggling to fill job vacancies. Additionally, the community raised concerns about the layout of the town and its functionality, affecting traffic and pedestrian flows, and how this impacts business viability.

Bicheno has a range of commercial and residential developments currently being considered. It is important that future commercial and retail development in the town contributes to the growth and activity of the commercial area, reducing its fragmentation, by filling the gaps of currently vacant land, particularly on key corner sites.

Development should advance viability, providing residents with improved liveability and access to everyday needs, while also attracting visitors. Improving the streetscape and urban design appeal of Bicheno's commercial and retail core (centred around Triangle Park) is critical to the success and viability of the local business economy, and in turn, the community.



Commercial and industrial land

Bicheno provides retail and commercial services, primarily in the town centre area on Foster and Burgess streets. This includes IGA Everyday supermarket, the Log Cabin General Store, fashion retail and homewares stores, professional services, and several cafés and restaurants. It is also noted that seasonal visitation patterns experienced on the East Coast contribute to business opening periods often being tailored to tourism activity or lifestyle choices, rather than meeting the needs of the permanent population.

Several large landholdings in Bicheno zoned Local Business contain existing visitor accommodation uses, including motels, holiday parks and resorts, some of which have recently been redeveloped to accommodate residential uses, presenting an issue with legacy zoning in the town.

Bicheno currently has approximately 11,000 m² of vacant commercial and retail land, all of which is zoned Local Business. A number of these sites are located on key corners within the commercial core, and their ongoing vacancy is a concern for the future of the town centre.


Industrial activity is located in a new, dedicated subdivision at the southern entrance to the town and currently has approval for 35 lots. While the consolidated approach to industrial development is well regarded, landscape screening to the Tasman Highway would improve the approach to the town.



Tourism

Tasmania had 1.26 million visitors in the year to December 2023. The East Coast region had 432,000 visitors, 97,000 of whom stayed overnight in Bicheno. The average visitor spend for an overnight stay in Tasmania is \$297 per night. This represents a potential \$55 million in expenditure in Bicheno over 185,000 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.

In the year to December 2023, visitation to the East Coast region increased by 20% on 2019 levels (pre-COVID)



Tourism plays a key role in Bicheno'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 Bicheno's accommodation profile is shifting towards Airbnb style accommodation to provide more modern options.

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.

Campervan at sunrise
Source: Kristaps Ungurs



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

The Bicheno water supply is reliant on the Apsley River. Low flows during drought periods can be managed using existing off-stream storage in the network. TasWater is planning to build additional high-level storage in the network to alleviate the low pressure currently experienced by some residents.

Bicheno is serviced by a sewage treatment plant with a capacity of 450 kL per day. There are no concerns regarding capacity for existing and future growth unless significant rezoning occurs. Replacement of the rising main in Murray Street is currently planned to alleviate the loading on the Gordon Street sewage pump station.



Bicheno
Source: Jasper Da Seymour

Infrastructure provision

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



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.

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, which 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 project 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 northern and southern approaches to Bicheno on the Tasman Highway serve as the initial impressions of the town. Both pass through vegetated areas, strengthening the town's landscape setting, with the northern approach also affording ocean views.

Limited public transport is provided via the Tasman Highway connecting Bicheno with Swansea, Coles Bay, St Helens 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 Bicheno's coastline, which borders much of the town. Additionally, the Whale Trail and Foreshore Walking Track, which starts from Peggy's Point and runs along the edge of the coast to the Gulch, offer panoramic views of Governor Island to the east and Diamond Island to the north. These trails, while picturesque, lack true connectivity for the length of the route, and also lack strong connections to the town's commercial area. Improvements to linkages and wayfinding, along with accessibility considerations, would provide improved walkability and amenity for visitors and residents.

Social infrastructure and services

Community and recreational facilities are essential to supporting the health, enjoyment and wellbeing of residents. Bicheno is home to a range of community services and facilities, and it is likely 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 space and health facilities.

Health and emergency services

Bicheno has general practitioner and nursing services at the cohealth medical practice, and police and fire services located within the town. A new ambulance station is proposed. These services provide critical support to the residents of Bicheno and the broader municipality.

Education and recreation

Bicheno Primary School has a current enrolment of approximately 90 students; the Bicheno public library is located opposite on Burgess Street. High school education requires students to travel to regional options in St Marys, Triabunna or St Helens, or to major centres for boarding. Little Penguins Early Learning Service located on Burgess 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 Bicheno Bowls and RSL Club and the Bicheno Golf Club, located north of the town. Water-based recreation is supported by a small boat ramp at Waubs Bay for light vessels only. Commercial and recreational fishing is otherwise catered for at the Gulch. The Bicheno skate park, located between the town and Redbill Beach, was completed in late 2023.

There are several developments planned in the area, including the redevelopment of the Gulch which includes upgrades to footpaths, parking areas and the wharf area providing access to the foreshore and marine reserves off Waubs Bay. The Bicheno Triangle Project will redevelop underutilised public space at the junction of Foster and Burgess streets to improve the useability and amenity of the area and support beautification efforts in the town centre.

Environment and landscape

The community of Bicheno places a high value on the local environment, with the beaches, headlands and surrounding escarpment all contributing to why people love living in Bicheno. The natural environment provides important habitat for native wildlife and is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna.

The Governor Island Marine Reserve, with its spectacular underwater scenery and abundant marine life, is recognised as one of the best temperate diving locations in Australia. Above water, visitors can observe Tasmania's largest colony of crested terns, alongside sooty oystercatchers, kelp and silver gulls, and gannets, with occasional sightings of Australian fur seals resting on Alligator Rock.



The Bicheno area includes significant natural features that attract both residents and visitors.

The Bicheno area includes significant natural features that attract both residents and visitors. The study area is bordered by the Apsley Conservation Area, which connects to the Apsley River and Douglas-Apsley National Park. Whalers Lookout State Reserve and Lookout Rock State Reserve define Bicheno's topography and serve as important geographic landmarks for the town. Both reserves feature significant native vegetation, with walking tracks that lead to the lookouts offering panoramic views in all directions.

Bicheno pier
Source: Adam Gibson



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 Bicheno.

Significant growth in the visitor economy

The 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy, commissioned by Tourism Tasmania, predicts that Tasmania will host 1.6 million interstate visitors and 400,000 international visitors annually by 2030. This forecast reflects an average annual growth rate of 2.6% from 2025 to 2030, with an expected annual visitor expenditure of up to \$5.6 billion by 2030 – more than double the value recorded in 2019.

This influx of visitors contributes directly to the economy by supporting local businesses and creating employment opportunities. It influences the demographic composition of Tasmanian towns, affecting the proportion of permanent residents, and necessitates ongoing provision of services to meet the demand for accommodation, food services and activities. Moreover, tourism introduces a significant number of individuals who are unfamiliar with the area and may be less capable of responding to emergencies, posing additional challenges for local authorities and emergency responders.

There is clear evidence of localised and seasonal pressures on services and infrastructure in towns such as Bicheno. The predicted tourism growth represents an opportunity to strengthen the town's commercial vitality and range of activities, providing there is adequate provision of suitably located visitor accommodation that does not affect housing supply.

The need for housing diversity and supply

Limited housing diversity is evident in Bicheno today, with detached dwellings comprising 94% of the total housing stock, two-thirds of which feature three or more bedrooms. Although historically in high demand, this residential development model results in a homogenous housing profile, lacking in variety and potentially exacerbating affordability challenges in both housing and rentals.

In Bicheno, the local implications are twofold. Firstly, as the population ages, there is an urgent need for appropriately located housing designed to meet the needs of older generations. Ensuring that older residents can maintain their connection to the community requires housing options that support independence and accommodate evolving care needs, while also being close to essential health and community services.

Secondly, sustaining a robust workforce to support an ageing and growing population and the regional economy is essential. Current property prices and low rental availability hinder access to secure, affordable housing for health and community sector workers, tourism and hospitality workers, and young people. While this issue is not unique to Bicheno or Tasmania, it demands attention in future growth strategies to facilitate inclusive planning and development.

In terms of local housing supply, future development in Bicheno is influenced by two factors: an undersupply of residential land, and large areas of suitably zoned, yet vacant, land not being developed. These factors are exacerbated by strong population projections and continued growth in local demand for permanent and holiday homes.

To ensure Bicheno can meet its projected housing demand, Council must work with landowners to ensure they contribute to making the suitably zoned residential land available. Additionally, landowners should be encouraged to proactively seek rezoning of appropriate land that supports a pattern of consolidation and efficient infrastructure use.



An ageing population desiring to age in place

The demographic landscape of Glamorgan Spring Bay, particularly in Bicheno, is undergoing significant changes, characterised by an increasingly older population, with nearly 50% of residents aged over 60 years. This ageing profile necessitates a re-evaluation of the services required to support the community, as there is likely to be a heightened demand for specialised healthcare services, retirement facilities and community support systems.

Strategic planning is essential to address the needs of older residents while also attracting younger individuals to foster community diversity and ensure Bicheno has an underlying working population to support resident and visitor needs. Community engagement findings underscore the residents' desire to 'age in place' and maintain physical and social ties to the community and its amenities. New developments tailored to the ageing population must be strategically located to facilitate accessibility for those with limited mobility and to cultivate a vibrant town conducive to diverse social interactions.

Furthermore, an ageing population will inevitably impact the local economy. Retirees typically exhibit different spending patterns and are likely to contribute less to the workforce, yet they create demand for additional workers in healthcare and community support services. This demographic shift also presents opportunities for businesses catering to the needs of seniors, including healthcare providers, recreational facilities and senior-friendly amenities.

A changing and unpredictable climate






Coastal towns like Bicheno face significant challenges from the effects of climate change, impacting community resilience and strategic planning. Rising sea levels and more frequent extreme weather events, such as storms and floods, increasingly jeopardise coastal infrastructure and properties. Bushfire also poses a risk given the town's proximity to significant areas of vegetation. To address these threats, future planning efforts must prioritise strategies to adapt to climate change impacts, including implementing coastal defences and developing resilient infrastructure.

Furthermore, changes in temperature and rainfall patterns can have far-reaching effects on agriculture, water resources and natural ecosystems, impacting the town's economy and biodiversity. It is imperative to 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 planning and development processes, as well as community-building initiatives, Bicheno can better prepare for and mitigate the impacts of climate change, ensuring a safer and more sustainable future for its residents.

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 Bicheno have been determined.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Housing and accommodation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-located and serviced residential land supply to foster sustainable population growth. Well-situated key sites with strong redevelopment potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undersupply of residential zoned land. Limited housing diversity to cater to ageing population. Lack of housing affordability and rental availability, and large land parcels in limited ownership. Subdivision reliance on cul-de-sac development limits broader connectivity and permeability. High proportion of vacant residential lots which have not been developed.
<p>Industry and employment</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing role as a semi-established hub providing subregional services and facilities. Strong commercial entities (Farm Shed, Bakery, IGA) to build from and enhance the activation of Burgess Street and surrounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasingly ageing population with limited future workforce capacity. Seasonal fluctuations in workforce need and capacity. Vacant key sites limiting town centre activation. Inconsistent signage and wayfinding presence in town centre.
<p>Infrastructure and connectivity</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key destination on the East Coast visitor journey via the Great Eastern Drive. Beachfront access points along Redbill Beach, Waubs Beach, Peggy's Point and the Gulch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car-centric town centre resulting in user conflicts and circulation issues. Poor pedestrian safety and permeability with fragmented footpath and trail network. Lack of cycling infrastructure. Lack of town wayfinding or resolved urban design presence. Lack of clearly defined entry points to the urban area from Tasman Highway. Congestion and road use conflict along the Esplanade, particularly at the Gulch.
<p>Social infrastructure and services</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open spaces well situated to benefit from upgrades and amenity improvements. Strong community cohesion and existing resilience. Good provision of existing recreation spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dated sporting and recreation facilities. Limited service provision requires regional travel.
<p>Environment and landscape</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal outlook and views to the east, and mountain views to the west and hilly backdrop forming the urban fringe of the town. Ecological value of coastal areas and reserves. Walking tracks and prominent lookouts. Scenic outlooks to Diamond Island and Governor Island. Proximity to Freycinet and Douglas–Apsley national parks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 of vegetated areas increases bushfire risk and threatens homes. As a consequence of the existing growth pattern, a significant portion of the town is exposed to bushfire risk.

Future opportunities	Potential challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a mixed-use town centre that provides access to facilities and services. Leverage proximity to tourist attractions to capture overnight visitation spend. Make more efficient use of well-connected, centrally located land to provide housing. Guide future development to prioritise infill locations and consolidate the town rather than encourage further expansion into bushfire-prone landscapes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing affordability impacting housing opportunities for young families and key workers. Developer commitment to delivering improved design and subdivision layout quality. Further development into natural areas and agricultural land impacting ecosystems and resulting in tree removal. Continued ribbon-style residential development along the coast.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the commercial core to create improved cohesion, including consolidating key retail uses and visitor information. Leverage the landscape features through urban design and streetscape improvements. Capitalise on seasonal population dynamic during summer period. Collaborate with East Coast Tourism on the East Coast Positive Impact Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmented commercial uses that lack critical mass for activation, particularly through prolonged vacancy of corner sites. Seasonal implications of tourism peaks and troughs for commercial and retail activity. Balancing pressures from both permanent and seasonal populations on town services. Balancing tourism growth and maintaining the coastal character qualities of Bicheno.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the gateway treatments at the arrival points into the town. Explore opportunities to improve open space linkages between the urban areas and the coast. Improve connections in the existing network of scenic walking paths, including the Foreshore Walking Track along the coastline and Whalers Lookout. Maintain boating and maritime focus, primarily at the Gulch. Ensure that additional walking, wheeling and riding connections are planned, designed and implemented to connect residential areas with key centres, services and destinations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential growth exceeds infrastructure planning and provision. Ribbon development reduces the efficiency of land use and puts stress on infrastructure and transport. Commercial uses at the Gulch exacerbate congestion and impact maritime uses. The ever-changing needs of a growing population and a changing climate may challenge the efficacy of emergency management and evacuation procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the health services required to enable ageing in place and health services for an ageing population. 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing requirements for additional health services and community facilities, together with tourism and visitor use. Diminishing volunteer base for community and emergency services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen tourism opportunities in relation to the coastal and landscape setting. Promote Bicheno's connection into Douglas-Apsley National Park for hiking and bushwalks. Protect key views and vistas along the coast and from lookout points. Retain key views from the Tasman Highway to the coast, including on approach to the town. Ensure bushfire risk is managed on a whole of town basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with TFS to ensure the relevant community bushfire protection plan is kept up to date. Residential subdivisions encroaching into vegetated hilly areas, resulting in further clearing of vegetation. Conflict between natural ecological areas of significance and development pressures.



Bicheno streetscape
Source: Adam Gibson

Section 6: The Bicheno structure plan

What is the plan?

Bicheno's focus for the future is identifying a sustainable and beneficial growth pattern to add value to the existing town, enhancing the commercial core, 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 Bicheno 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 direction 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 the Bicheno structure plan.

Elevate town centre vitality

Enhance the liveliness of the town centre as a vibrant coastal hub by establishing a focal, inviting and pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare that meets local demands and entices visitors.

Enhance ties to natural treasures

Strengthen visual and physical links that leverage Bicheno's beachfront location and unique landscape features to maintain the town's tourism profile and encourage extended visits and increased spending.

Connect place to community

Ensure local character is as much about place, as it is about the people who call Bicheno home. Foster a unique and recognisable identity that is a point of pride for longtime residents, and a point of interest for visitors and new residents.

Foster sustainable housing provision

Facilitate access to secure and affordable housing tailored to residents of all ages and income levels, ensuring safety and comfort at every stage of life.

Enhance resilience to climate change

Limit the encroachment of development into natural or vegetated areas to protect the landscape and mitigate climate hazards.

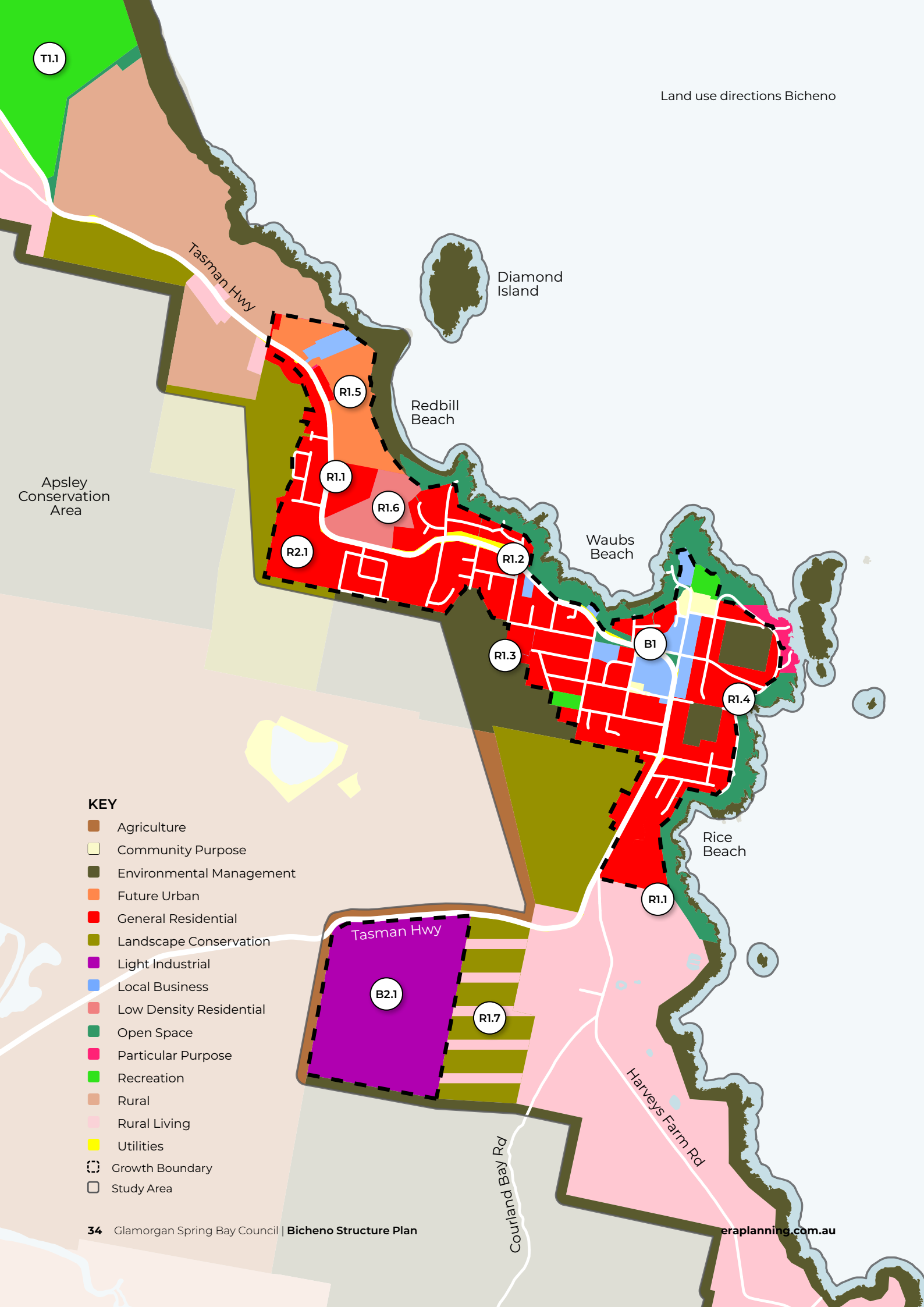
Land use directions

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 that direction should be achieved. Locations mentioned are identified on the associated map.

Ref	Direction	Action
Residential		
R1	Rezone parcels to align with this structure plan	<p>R1.1 Investigate the potential to rezone 39 Tasman Highway (CT 143985/400) and 9 Burgess Street (CT 181223/506) to General Residential to accommodate growth and provide opportunities for diverse housing.</p> <p>R1.2 Rezone the seven (7) parcels of land from 14 to 22 Murray Street from Local Business to General Residential to reflect their current use.</p> <p>R1.3 Rezone 29 Banksia Street (CT 158014/1) from Local Business to General Residential to ensure business activities are focused within the town centre.</p> <p>R1.4 Rezone 30 Foster Street (CT 174504/100) from Local Business to General Residential to ensure business activities are focused within the town centre.</p> <p>R1.5 The permitted uses under the Particular Purpose Zone (North Bicheno Future Urban) have the potential to undermine the commercial viability and successful function of the Bicheno town centre. Rezone land within the Particular Purpose Zone (North Bicheno Future Urban) to the Future Urban zone.</p> <p>R1.6 Investigate the potential to rezone 7 Tasman Highway (CT 143493/1) from Particular Purpose Zone (North Bicheno Future Urban) to Low Density Residential.</p> <p>Note: It is acknowledged that valid planning permits apply to this site for development associated with visitor accommodation, residential, and tourism related uses (most of which are permitted in the Low Density Residential Zone). Any future development must prioritise the retention of vegetation and protect the riparian values of Deep Hollow Creek.</p> <p>R1.7 Investigate the potential to rezone 17498 Tasman Highway, Bicheno (CT 237376/1) from the Rural Zone to a combination of Rural Living and Landscape Conservation. The zone boundaries should be subject to a natural values assessment and sufficient buffering from existing industrial land to ensure industrial uses are unimpeded.</p>
R2	Support the realisation of development potential	<p>R2.1 Council to liaise with landholders to identify opportunities to encourage future subdivision in areas zoned General Residential.</p>

Ref	Direction	Action
Business and industry		
B1	Reinforce the role of the town centre	<p>B1.1 Ensure commercial development is located to increase activity and vibrancy in Burgess Street and land facing Triangle Park to reinforce the role of the town centre.</p> <p>B1.2 Investigate the potential to apply the Urban Mixed Use zone at the edges of a retained local business core to support the development of active ground floor tenancies with residential and accommodation uses above.</p> <p>B1.3 Encourage commercial, retail and hospitality-based uses that contribute to the broader tourism appeal of the town.</p>
B2	Support consolidated industrial uses	<p>B2.1 Focus industrial growth in the emerging industrial park on the Tasman Highway to avoid ad hoc developments in the future that might conflict with sensitive uses.</p> <p>B2.2 Council to liaise with existing industrial operators and emerging industries in the locality to enhance the profile of the industrial park.</p>
B3	Remove Site Specific Qualification GSB-14.1	<p>B3.1 Remove Site Specific Qualification GSB-14.1 from all sites within the study area where it is currently applied. This will encourage development that provides an active use and frontage to the public domain.</p>
Tourism		
T1	Support additional tourism opportunities	<p>T1.1 Retain Bicheno Golf Club Specific Area Plan to allow for sporting and recreation-based tourism opportunities and associated accommodation.</p>



KEY

- Agriculture
- Community Purpose
- Environmental Management
- Future Urban
- General Residential
- Landscape Conservation
- Light Industrial
- Local Business
- Low Density Residential
- Open Space
- Particular Purpose
- 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: 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.



Nick Hansen

Evandale Streetscape Northern Midlands Council

Evandale's Russell Street is a beautiful street with historic buildings, considered streetscape plantings and seating. The commercial and retail offerings are concentrated in a manner that enables walkability and an active street frontage.

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	<p>S1.1 Create a consistent town brand identity that leverages Bicheno's unique natural features and tourism appeal and differentiates it from other towns in the municipality. Collaboration with East Coast Tourism is encouraged to ensure any brand identity is congruent with any regional level branding undertaken as part of the East Coast Positive Impact Plan.</p> <p><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></p>
S2	Enhance town arrival and wayfinding	<p>S2.1 Create strong entrances to Bicheno to greet visitors with a pleasing sense of arrival, and improve wayfinding through the town centre area.</p> <p>S2.2 Prepare a wayfinding and signage strategy for the town to improve navigation and connections. The strategy should prioritise clear directions to landmarks including the Gulch, Whalers Lookout, Lookout Rock and Peggy's Point.</p>
Open space		
S3	Enhance local parks and open spaces	<p>S3.1 Complete the Bicheno Triangle Project in a manner consistent with the streetscape masterplan noted in action 5.1 to provide an integrated, 'whole of town centre' urban design approach.</p> <p>S3.2 Explore opportunities for improvements to Lions Park including connectivity.</p> <p>S3.3 Explore opportunities for additional shade and seating at the carpark terminus of Burgess Street (towards Peggy's Point). Establish landscaping to improve the interface with the adjacent visitor accommodation.</p> <p>S3.4 Investigate opportunities to formalise the Redbill Beach carpark (Gordon Street).</p> <p>S3.5 Investigate opportunities to provide public toilet facilities at the skate park.</p>
Active connections		
S4	Improve active pathways and open space connections	<p>S4.1 Upgrade the pathway connecting the town centre to the skate park and Redbill Beach to accommodate an accessible, sealed shared user path. All road crossings should be upgraded accordingly to prioritise pedestrian safety.</p> <p>S4.2 Commence investigations for the staged upgrade of the Bicheno Foreshore Walking Track. Fully accessible sections should be prioritised where topography allows. Explore opportunities to also embed cultural and historic interpretation and public art features.</p> <p>S4.3 Improve physical and visual connections between the Gulch and Peggy's Point.</p> <p>S4.4 Commence investigations for Foster Street to accommodate an accessible shared user path to improve safe connections between the Gulch and town centre.</p>

Public space and facilities

S5	Prepare a streetscape master plan for Burgess and Foster streets	<p>S5.1 Prepare a streetscape master plan for Burgess and Foster streets to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the visual presence and identity of the town centre area and build upon the current approach to the Triangle Project. • Guide high-quality streetscape treatments and works in the public realm to foster future investment. • Guide high-quality landscaping, footpath upgrades, street furniture and outdoor lighting.
S6	Investigate seasonal place activation in the town centre	<p>S6.1 Investigate seasonal place activation opportunities on vacant land within the town centre, for example at 67 Burgess Street (CT 6728/2) and Lot 1 Foster Street (CT 180131/1).</p> <p>This provides an opportunity to test potential uses and activities in a low-risk environment and support the activation and viability of the town centre. This may include food trucks and pop-up events.</p>
S7	Enhance public facilities and community assets	<p>S7.1 Liaise with Bicheno SLSC to identify storage and clubhouse amenity upgrades or expansion.</p>

Infrastructure

S8	Improve road access and safety	<p>S8.1 Liaise with State Roads to implement traffic calming devices on the Tasman Highway between Burgess and Foster streets to elevate pedestrians in the road user hierarchy and create a safe, walkable town centre.</p> <p>S8.2 Investigate the potential for Waubs Esplanade to function as a clockwise one-way loop to accommodate a separated shared user path.</p> <p>S8.3 Provide a walkable connection between the terminus of James Street and Waubs Esplanade.</p>
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KEY

- Place branding
- Open space
- Active connections
- Public space and facilities
- Infrastructure



Source: Dearna 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.

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.

Bicheno streetscape
Source: Adam Gibson





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