

Glamorgan Spring Bay Council

Coles Bay 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: Tourism Tasmania and Rob Burnett

ABN 67 141 991 004

This document may only be used for the purposes for which it was commissioned and in accordance with the Terms of Engagement for the commission. Unauthorised use of this document in any form whatsoever is prohibited.

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	2	Section 5: Strategic context	24
Section 1: Introduction	6	Drivers of change	24
About the project	6	Pronounced seasonal peaks and troughs	24
The process	6	Unprecedented tourism growth	24
What is a structure plan?	8	A changing and unpredictable climate	25
Policy context	9	Land availability and development constraints	25
Section 2: Community engagement	10	Opportunities and challenges	26
Engagement methods	10	Section 6: The Coles Bay structure plan	29
Engagement results	10	What is the plan?	29
Key themes	11	Planning principles	29
Section 3: About Coles Bay	13	Land use directions	30
Population profile	14	Supporting actions – Coles Bay	32
Study area	15	Supporting actions – Swanwick	34
Section 4: Planning for the future of Coles Bay	17	Next steps and implementation	36
Housing and accommodation	17		
Supply and demand	17		
Industry and employment	18		
Commercial and industrial land	18		
Tourism	18		
Infrastructure and connectivity	20		
Transport	20		
Water and sewer	21		
Social infrastructure and services	22		
Environment and landscape	22		

Bike ride below The Hazards
Source: Tourism Tasmania and Dan Fellow





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.

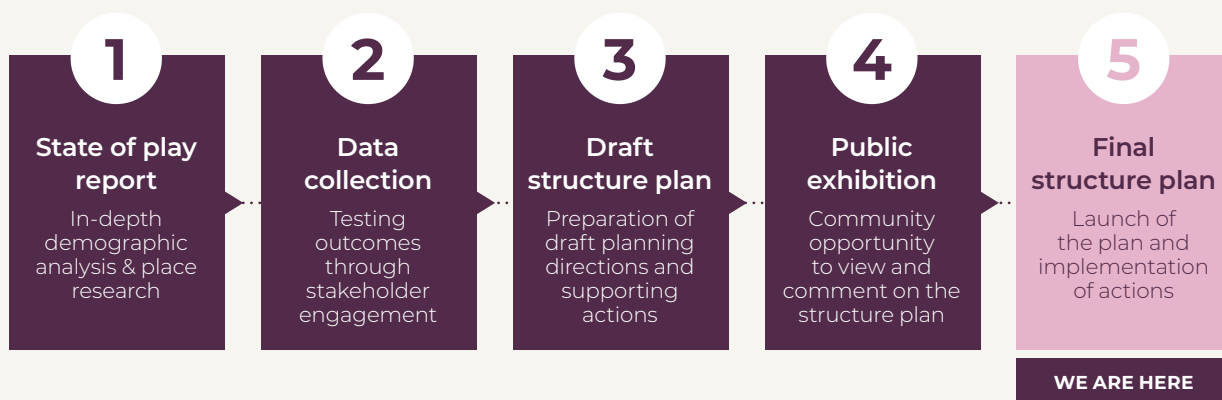
A separate structure plan has been prepared for each of the main towns. Each structure plan aims to:

- 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 Coles Bay and nearby Swanwick over the next 10 years to 2034.

The process

The project methodology follows five key stages:





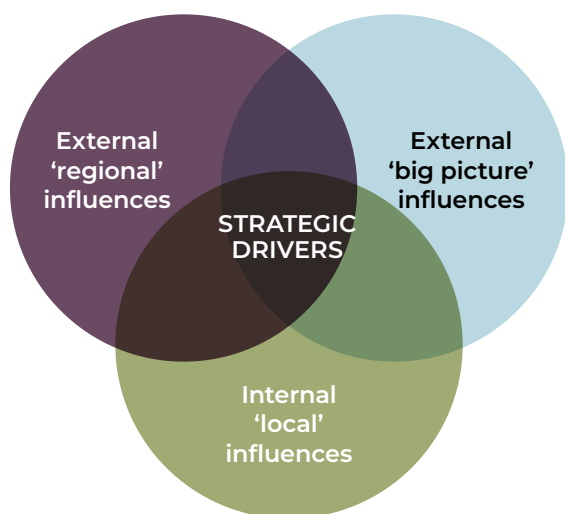


Boat below The Hazards
Source: Moon Cheese Studio

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.

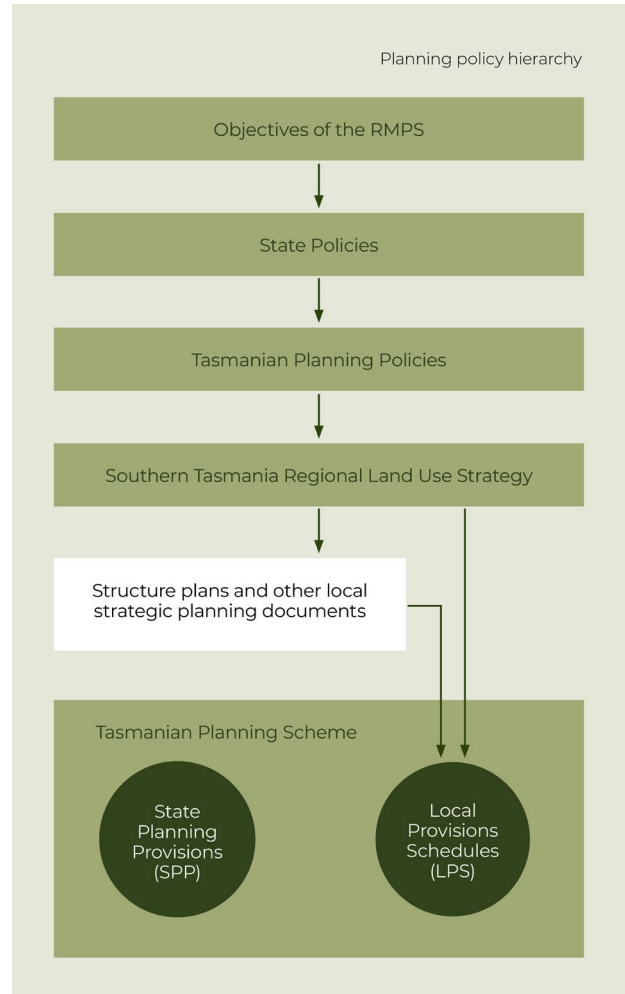
Policy context

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, Coles Bay is currently considered a village with a low growth strategy and is assigned a mixed growth scenario (greenfield and 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 Coles Bay'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:

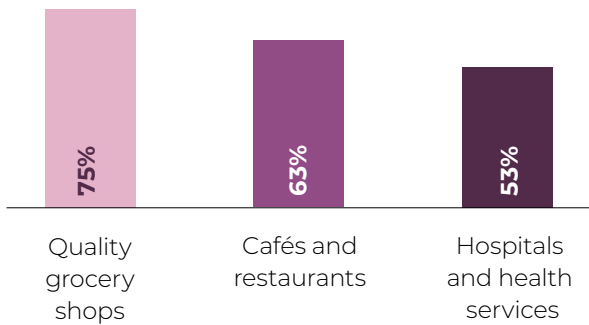


Survey results

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

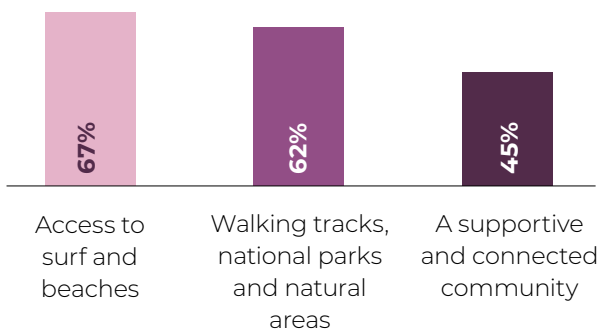
Important facilities and services

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



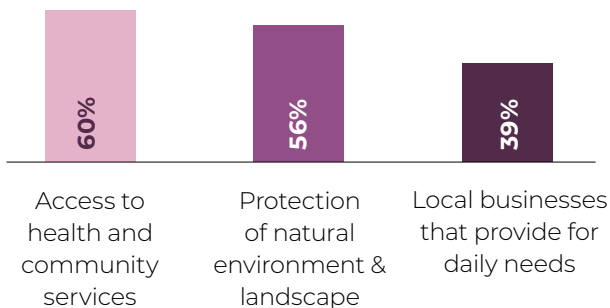
What do you value?

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 Coles Bay and Swanwick?

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

“

To keep a unique township with a good community base with facilities for community and tourists

To provide healthy recreational activities at Swanwick that bring all members of the community together, in particular our young people

A united goal where both the economical and natural world are considered as important

A well connected community with sustainable activities to attract and retain permanent residents

”

Wineglass Bay, Freycinet National Park
Source: Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service



Section 3: About Coles Bay

Coles Bay and the neighbouring town of Swanwick are located on Paredarerme pungenna country, on Tasmania's East Coast. They are some of the main town areas located in the Glamorgan Spring Bay municipality, along with Swansea, Bicheno, Orford and Triabunna.

Coles Bay is a major holiday destination for Tasmanians and visitors. It is characterised by its coastal location and proximity to Freycinet National Park – a nationally significant natural area and tourism attraction. Positioned on the north-eastern edge of Great Oyster Bay, the town extends from a headland into the bay and caters to tourists and a small permanent population.

Coles Bay Road is the only road into the area, connecting the town to the Tasman Highway which extends north to Launceston and south to Hobart. The Esplanade and Jetty Road function as a loop around the town, while Freycinet Drive connects to the National Park and local streets serve the community. Boat access is available via the formal jetty located at Esplanade East, which accommodates fishing and recreational vessels, and via a smaller boat ramp at Muirs Beach.

Coles Bay features two clusters of commercial development that comprise local convenience stores, cafés and tourist amenities, including petrol supplies. Adjacent to the eastern border of the town is Freycinet National Park, home to several renowned natural attractions including Wineglass Bay and The Hazards. The park houses the Freycinet Visitor Centre, which offers tourist services, campgrounds, hiking trails and parking facilities.

Swanwick is located 3.5 kilometres north-west of Coles Bay. Defined by Swanwick Drive and Hazards View Drive it is located between Coles Bay Road and the Swan River inlet. Swanwick is a residential area with limited non residential uses, being the Freycinet Golf Course and storage facilities. It is separated from Coles Bay by coastal bushland and visitor accommodation sites including Saffire Resort and Edge of the Bay.



Coles Bay is a major holiday destination for Tasmanians and visitors. It is characterised by its coastal location and proximity to Freycinet National Park – a nationally significant natural area and tourism attraction

Population profile

- The population of Coles Bay and Swanwick grew by around 45% between 2016 and 2021.
- Coles Bay and Swanwick have a median age of 38 which is significantly younger than the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council area average of 57.
- 74% of dwellings in Coles Bay and Swanwick were unoccupied on the last census night, indicating a very high proportion of holiday homes in the town.
- Almost half of Coles Bay and Swanwick's workforce are employed in the accommodation industry, reflecting the area's role as a key tourist destination.
- In the year to December 2023, there were a total of 263,000 visitors to Coles Bay with 107,000 of them staying overnight.



Median age significantly lower than average

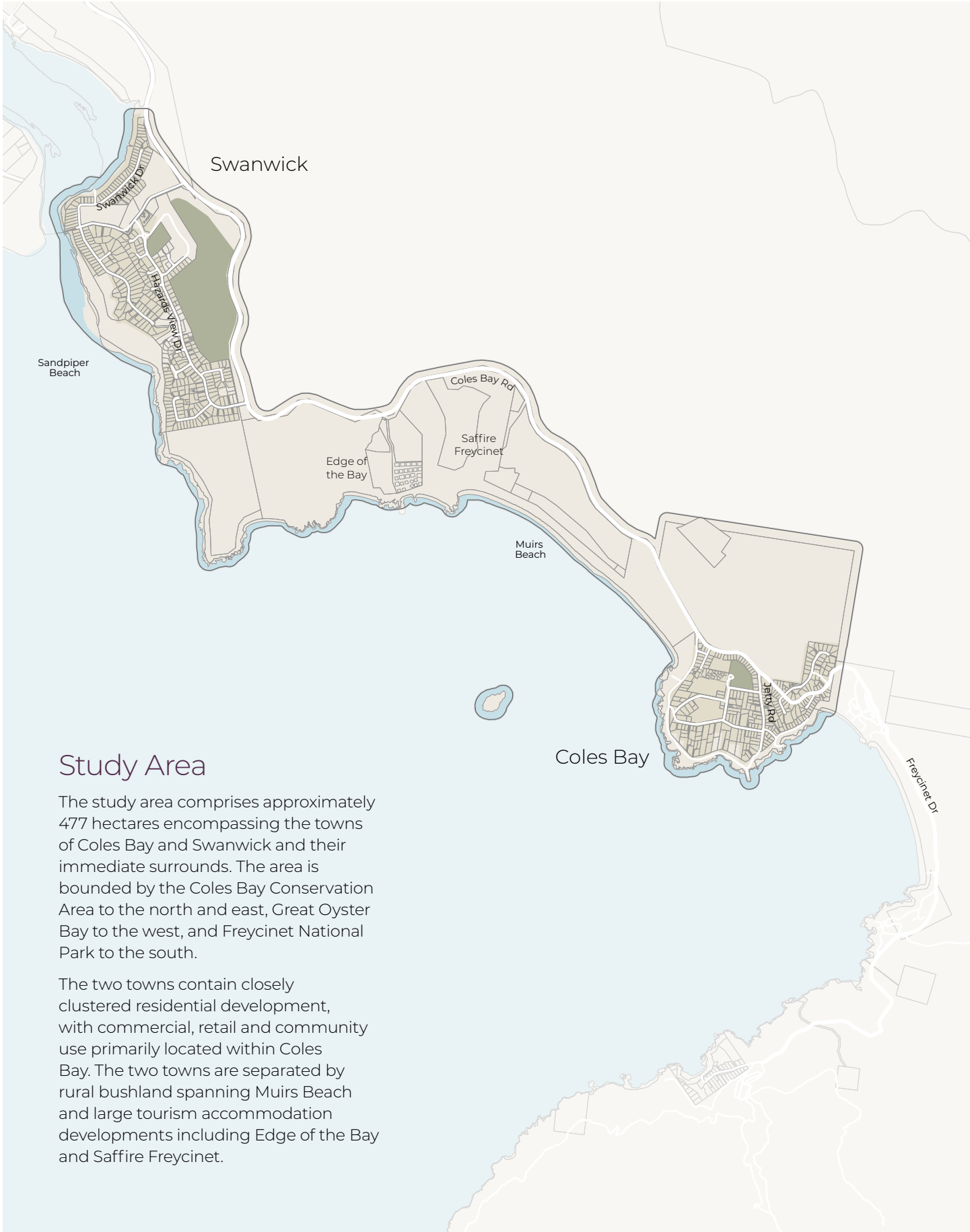
74% of dwellings were unoccupied on census night



Almost 50% of workforce in accommodation industry



The Hazards from Coles Bay
Source: Discover Tasmania and Stu Gibson



Study Area

The study area comprises approximately 477 hectares encompassing the towns of Coles Bay and Swanwick and their immediate surrounds. The area is bounded by the Coles Bay Conservation Area to the north and east, Great Oyster Bay to the west, and Freycinet National Park to the south.

The two towns contain closely clustered residential development, with commercial, retail and community use primarily located within Coles Bay. The two towns are separated by rural bushland spanning Muirs Beach and large tourism accommodation developments including Edge of the Bay and Saffire Freycinet.



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



Aerial view of Swanwick and Coles Bay
Source: Mieke Campbell

Section 4: Planning for the future

Housing and accommodation

The collective population of Coles Bay and Swanwick was 515 at the 2021 census. The number of overnight visitors to the area is expected to increase significantly, with annual visitation to Freycinet National Park predicted to reach 600,000 people by 2039.

On census night in August 2021, around 74% of dwellings in the towns 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 such as Airbnb.

Coles Bay's location, village character and iconic landscape setting will continue to drive demand for housing and holiday accommodation in the area. However, for both Coles Bay and Swanwick, limited land availability, environmental preservation priorities and infrastructure constraints all indicate that any growth must be limited to minor infill or consolidation, and that no further growth through change in zoning should occur.

Supply and demand

There have been around 730 dwellings approved across Glamorgan Spring Bay since 2012, including approximately 77 dwellings in the Low Density Residential zone in Coles Bay (7) and Swanwick (70). The number of dwellings approved in the two towns decreased in recent years, and the availability of new residential land is highly constrained, which limits future growth.

Estimates of housing demand in Coles Bay to 2046 are based on historical dwelling demand. Unlike the other towns, projection data was not provided by REMPLAN³ due to Coles Bay and Swanwick's smaller 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.

The current supply of suitably zoned and adequately serviced residential land in Coles Bay is highly constrained and to a lesser extent in Swanwick. This structure plan does not propose the rezoning of additional residential land to accommodate growth. Future development is more suited to the neighbouring towns of Swansea and Bicheno, which have more developable land available to accommodate growth in the region and more readily available services.

Vacant land and potential dwelling yield in Coles Bay and Swanwick

Zoning	Vacant area (ha)	Potential yield ¹	Conservative yield ²	Dwelling demand 2046 (REMPLAN ³)	Dwelling demand 2046 (historical)
Low Density Residential	24.24	141	60	N/A	154

¹ 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.

² Based on average lot size, where the area developable is at a rate of 50% to account for access and land development constraints.

³ 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. Projection data was not provided by REMPLAN due to the size of Coles Bay and Swanwick's smaller population.

Industry and employment

Commercial activities and employment opportunities within Coles Bay are generally geared towards the tourism economy, including local cafés, tour operations and accommodation. Coles Bay has a strong village character with two small pockets of local business zoning, one along Garnet Avenue and the other along the Esplanade opposite Muirs Beach. Commercial operations in Swanwick are limited to storage facilities located at the entrance to the town.

Commercial and industrial land

The small shopping strip along Garnet Avenue includes a café, restaurant and ice-creamery, and the Coles Bay convenience store and newsagency which provides Australia Post services. Commercial uses located on the Esplanade centre around the Iluka Tavern and include a combined general store and petrol station, and a café.

Swanwick contains a single area of commercial development, currently serving as a long-term storage facility without retail services. While Swanwick residents are currently serviced by Coles Bay's commercial offering, there may be future opportunities for small-scale retail development to meet the needs of the local community.

Coles Bay and Swanwick currently have 20,764 m² of vacant commercial and retail land, most of which is located in Swanwick and all of which is zoned Local Business. The seasonality of the Coles Bay 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 no industrial premises or industrial zoned land in either Coles Bay or Swanwick, and this structure plan does not recommend the rezoning of land for such purpose given suitable sites are available in surrounding towns, including nearby Bicheno.

Tourism

Tasmania had 1.26 million visitors in the year to December 2023. The East Coast region had 432,000 visitors, 107,000 of whom stayed overnight in Coles Bay. 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.

The East Coast region had 432,000 visitors in the year to December 2023, 107,000 of whom stayed overnight in Coles Bay.

Tourism plays a key role in Coles Bay's economy, leveraging coastal views, its position along the Great Eastern Drive touring route, and its role as the gateway to Freycinet National Park. Economic activity in Coles Bay and Swanwick is primarily driven by the tourism and accommodation industries. Accommodation options span luxury waterfront resorts, numerous holiday homes, and the Iluka BIG4 holiday park in Coles Bay which provides both cabins and campsites.

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.



Freycinet Master Plan and Visitor Gateway Project

The Freycinet National Park is an icon for tourism in Tasmania, and a significant place for the Aboriginal community, residents and many Tasmanians. The Freycinet Peninsula, and Wineglass Bay in particular, is one of the most visited tourist destinations in Tasmania. In addition to the acknowledged natural beauty of the area, the Freycinet Peninsula provides a broad array of recreational opportunities, activities and experiences for both visitors and the community.

The Freycinet Peninsula Master Plan, was developed in 2019 in response to the emerging management challenges and impacts across the Freycinet Peninsula due to the pattern and intensity of visitation. They include overcrowding at key experiences, load on facilities, and vehicle congestion in car parks and on the roads. The primary objective of the master plan was to create a framework that outlines how management measures and infrastructure can be used to deliver a high-quality experience for visitors to the Freycinet Peninsula and immediate surrounds, and at the same time limit the impacts on natural, cultural and social values.

In November 2023, the State Government released a tender to engage a lead design consultant for the 'Freycinet Gateway Project' which will look to implement a number of key elements of the master plan, including a peninsula arrival corridor, visitor gateway site, wayfinding and interpretation signage, shuttle service, infrastructure and improved wastewater management.

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 touring Coles Bay
Source: Tourism Tasmania and Pete Harmsen



Walking the coast, Coles Bay
Source: Tourism Tasmania and Jason Charles Hill

Infrastructure and connectivity

The planning, provision and management of infrastructure is an essential consideration in land use planning, and an important factor 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.

Transport

The entrances to Coles Bay and Swanwick are through natural bushland, and while each town has a small entrance sign, there is further scope to improve the entrance features to each town. There is very limited public transport into Coles Bay or Swanwick, with a single bus service providing trips from Bicheno into the area.

The community consultation highlighted a walking and cycling track connecting the towns of Coles Bay and Swanwick as a priority. The structure plan incorporates this, and other key walking paths and potential shared paths, acknowledging their significance in promoting connectivity within (and between) the towns for both tourists and residents. Their implementation will be carried out through other council plans and works programs, including the Freycinet Visitor Gateway Project. It is also essential to maintain and enhance the existing walking and cycling paths, as they serve as crucial safe links within the communities.

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 strategy 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.

Water and sewer

Residents in Swanwick rely on onsite water tanks, and Council is responsible for the Swanwick sewerage system and one pump station. This system provides 90 connections when fully subscribed but is not capable of being increased in capacity. The system requires additional investment to facilitate TasWater taking ownership. There have been complaints from residents in Swanwick regarding the inability to use toilets during high tides and flooding events. This is believed to be due to waterlogged soils impacting the capacity of septic tank systems.
















Residents in Coles Bay rely on onsite wastewater systems but have access to a reticulated water service. There is concern regarding leachate in Coles

Bay and effluent flowing into the bay from individual onsite wastewater systems, and recognition that Coles Bay is very constrained in terms of suitable land to place new infrastructure.

The impact of summer tourism and periods of drought present challenges to providing a reliable water supply to the East Coast. TasWater is carrying out master planning to investigate issues and opportunities for water and sewerage systems on a regional scale. This process will influence investment decisions across the state. Water in Coles Bay is supplied by a tributary of Saltwater Creek via Coles Bay dam. A backup water supply transfers water from Northern Tin Mines and Federals dam. TasWater is undertaking investigations to improve the reliability of the water supply.

Infrastructure provision in Coles Bay and Swanwick

The table below provides an overview of infrastructure provision in the Coles Bay and Swanwick growth boundaries. Refer to the State of Play report for mapping of water and sewer services areas in Coles Bay and Swanwick.

	Coles Bay	Swanwick
	 <p>Reticulated water services are provided in the growth boundary.</p>	 <p>Reticulated water services are not provided in the growth boundary.</p>
	 Sewer Reticulated sewer services are not provided in the growth boundary.	 Sewer Limited reticulated sewer services are provided in the growth boundary.
	 <p>Reticulated stormwater services are provided in the growth boundary.</p>	 <p>Reticulated stormwater services are provided in the growth boundary.</p>
	 Electricity Electricity 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.	 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. Coles Bay and Swanwick have limited localised services and rely on the surrounding towns for a range of services and facilities.

A local ambulance and fire emergency services unit is located within Coles Bay; however, the other closest emergency services are in Swansea and Bicheno. Coles Bay currently has community sporting and recreation facilities within the town open space reserve, comprising tennis courts, a local hall, other recreational spaces and public toilets. The Freycinet Golf Club is located within Swanwick. Water-based recreation is supported by the boat ramps at Esplanade East and Muirs Beach.

Environment and landscape

The Great Oyster Bay area is renowned for its diverse natural features, serving as a sanctuary for local wildlife including dolphins, whales, little penguins, mutton birds and various shellfish. Local waterways support marine farms producing oysters, abalone, scallops and mussels to cater to commercial and tourist interests.

Two significant wetlands, the Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve and Apsley Marshes, are designated Ramsar sites, highlighting their ecological importance. Recreational, research and tourism uses within these waters must manage any potential impacts carefully. Surrounding land use and development must be meticulously planned to avoid harming these delicate ecosystems.

Moving eastward from Coles Bay lies the iconic Freycinet National Park, a significant place for the Aboriginal community, residents and many Tasmanians. Visitors enjoy various nature-based activities such as boat tours of Wineglass Bay, kayaking, mountain biking and climbing. Adjacent to the national park is the Coles Bay Conservation Area, encompassing Coles Bay and Swanwick.

While the tourism triggered by the national park presents significant employment opportunities and economic growth for the region, increased visitation has resulted in a range of challenges, including overcrowding at key experiences, load on facilities and vehicle congestion in car parks and on the roads.



Coles Bay coastal landscape
Source: Moon Cheese Studio

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 Coles Bay.

Pronounced seasonal peaks and troughs

Addressing seasonal peaks in visitation is crucial for Coles Bay, as these directly impact permanent residents, the viability of local businesses and the availability of key workers. During peak tourist seasons, the influx of visitors strains the town's infrastructure and resources, leading to overcrowding, traffic congestion and increased demand for services, and puts pressure on Freycinet National Park.

While this trend is experienced across Tasmania's East Coast, it is pronounced in Coles Bay where just 25% of dwellings are occupied permanently and tourism visitation spikes in the summer months. Alongside the seasonal peak, the area encounters a daytime surge, with an influx of visitors mid to late morning and departures around mid-afternoon, reflecting travel patterns from Hobart and Launceston. This concentration of activity within a few hours exacerbates impacts.

Implementing strategies to mitigate seasonal peaks in visitation is essential for ensuring the sustainability and wellbeing of the town, local businesses and the surrounding natural areas.

Unprecedented 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



Coles Bay is the gateway to Freycinet National Park, one of the top-five tourist destinations in Tasmania and a bucket list item for many visitors to the state. This means the town of Coles Bay will receive unprecedented and exponential tourism growth in the coming years.

While critical to the state's economy and brand, tourism growth also impacts service and infrastructure provision in regional areas, including the East Coast which receives a significant volume of intrastate and interstate visitors. Such growth must be managed sustainably and infrastructure upgraded accordingly. It is also critical to ensure the desired future character of the towns is facilitated and protected while encouraging tourism that supports local businesses and livelihoods.



Kayaking, Coles Bay
Source: Poon Wai Nang

A changing and unpredictable climate

The effects of climate change on coastal towns pose challenges for community resilience and strategic planning. Bushfire poses an increasing risk to Coles Bay given the town's existing access constraints and proximity to significant areas of vegetation. Rising sea levels and increased frequency of extreme weather events like storms and floods increasingly threaten coastal infrastructure and properties. 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 service infrastructure, 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, Coles Bay can better prepare for and mitigate the impacts of climate change, ensuring a safer and more sustainable future for its residents.






Land availability and development constraints

There is no doubt that Coles Bay's location, village character and iconic landscape setting will continue to drive demand for housing and holiday accommodation. However, for both Coles Bay and Swanwick, a range of environmental, land availability and infrastructure constraints are present, which limit the potential for supply to meet demand. Significant expansion of the town would also be undesirable from a bushfire risk perspective.

These factors, in conjunction with the importance of promoting sustainable tourism and retaining the location's revered character, mean that significant growth is neither practical, nor appropriate. Instead, future planning for Coles Bay and Swanwick must be limited to minor infill or consolidation in appropriately serviced towns in the municipality.

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 Coles Bay have been determined.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Housing and accommodation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal village feel of the towns providing a sense of pride in residents and a key attractor for the region. Strong coastal shack character of existing housing stock. Broad tourist accommodation offering from resorts to campgrounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited motorhome or caravan sites available in relation to visitor numbers and expected growth in this market sector. Highly seasonal population creating a changing dynamic for permanent residents. Limited land availability for residential growth. Limited housing availability or affordability for renters and local workers.
<p>Industry and employment</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beachfront connections from commercial areas of Coles Bay enhance attractiveness of offering. Tourism and accommodation operations provide strong job opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business zoned land in Swanwick primarily used as storage with large shed-like development impacting the town arrival.
<p>Infrastructure and connectivity</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to iconic hiking trails including Wineglass Bay Lookout and Mt Amos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town entrances do not provide sufficient arrival or wayfinding opportunities. Limited areas for safe cycling and associated infrastructure. Vehicle and pedestrian conflicts and limited dedicated pedestrian paths. Single access road presents emergency management and evacuation issues e.g. bushfire events. Existing water and sewerage facilities in both Coles Bay and Swanwick are limited and need upgrading to sustain existing and future development.
<p>Social infrastructure and services</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of open space and recreation areas in each town. Strong sense of community within the permanent resident population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited community services with access to schools and health facilities, requiring travel to Swansea or Bicheno. A lack of emergency services and potentially hazardous natural surroundings. Lack of suitable community evacuation centre in the town.
<p>Environment and landscape</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gateway to Freycinet National Park. Connections to regionally significant natural features including Moulting Lagoon. Proximity to beaches, estuaries and foreshore areas that support a range of important ecosystems. Impressive views across Great Oyster Bay to the Freycinet Peninsula and Nine Mile Beach. Strong beachfront connections with both towns having boat ramps and picnic facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetated areas adjoin residential development and access roads present a bushfire hazard. Lack of management measures in place to mitigate impacts from high visitation. Iconic landscapes attract significant visitation which can impede the visitor experience and resident amenity.

Future opportunities	Potential challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus new development on efficient use of existing residential zoned land. Ensure tourism activity provides shared benefit to residents and the town. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further urban development into natural areas should be avoided. Growth in tourism may stretch local workforce who struggle to find appropriately located housing. Significant tourism growth and pronounced seasonality may detract from the village character.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen tourism focus on natural features and sustainable visitor management. Activate shop frontages and public realm interface to provide a more liveable and attractive commercial streetscape in both Coles Bay and Swanwick. Ensure commercial areas on Garnet Avenue and the Esplanade contribute to the village character. Collaborate with East Coast Tourism on the East Coast Positive Impact Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong seasonal activity trends may limit workforce attraction and business viability. Ensuring affordable long-term rental accommodation is available for workforce.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access walkways around the coastline and between the towns. Enhance wayfinding and entrance features to both towns to create a sense of arrival. Improve car parking in village centres to enable access for all mobilities. Reduce reliance on cars via more bike routes and shared/public transport services. 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"> Limited land availability and environmental constraints restrict infrastructure provision and upgrades. Infrastructure capacity may be limited for long-term development without large upgrade investments. Increased tourism activity without sufficient transport management. Increased climate hazards and major weather events impacting infrastructure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance open space facilities in Swanwick to serve the local community. Improve the recreation area on Harold Street, Coles Bay, to better service the community. Investigate mobile health facilities for local residents. Investigate the requirements to enable the Coles Bay Community Hall to be used as an evacuation centre. Guide social infrastructure to locations where exposure to natural hazards is reduced to the extent practicable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small permanent resident population to support facilities and services. Reduction in availability of local volunteer base.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain and enhance view corridors towards Freycinet Peninsula, and across Great Oyster Bay. Establish better connections with beaches and foreshore areas through paths and wayfinding. Investigate visitor education initiatives to enhance environmental appreciation and sustainable tourism. Ensure bushfire hazard management is undertaken 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. The ever-changing needs of a changing climate may challenge the efficacy of emergency management and evacuation procedures. Rising visitation rates, if not managed appropriately, are likely to amplify conflicts with the natural and social environment, leading to issues like littering, waste pollution, noise, and light pollution. Additional vehicle and boat traffic may disrupt and pose



Looking across Coles Bay
Source: Tourism Tasmania and Rob Burnett

Section 6: The Coles Bay structure plan

What is the plan?

Coles Bay's focus for the future is to add value to the existing town, prioritise protection of waterfront connections, and enhance its existing cultural and environmental context.

The structure plan provides a framework for future development and investment in Coles Bay 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 this structure plan.

Prioritise and protect natural assets

Ensure visual and physical connections to iconic natural assets are protected and managed in a manner that supports sustainable tourism.

Maintain village character and identity

Ensure new development and redevelopment of existing assets is aligned with the towns' established coastal village character.

Enhance climate resilience and risk mitigation

Limit the encroachment of development into natural or vegetated areas to protect landscape and biodiversity values and limit exposure to climate hazards.

Prioritise community connections and wellbeing

Create accessible, active connections within and between towns to connect people to the landscape and to each other.

Long-term housing availability

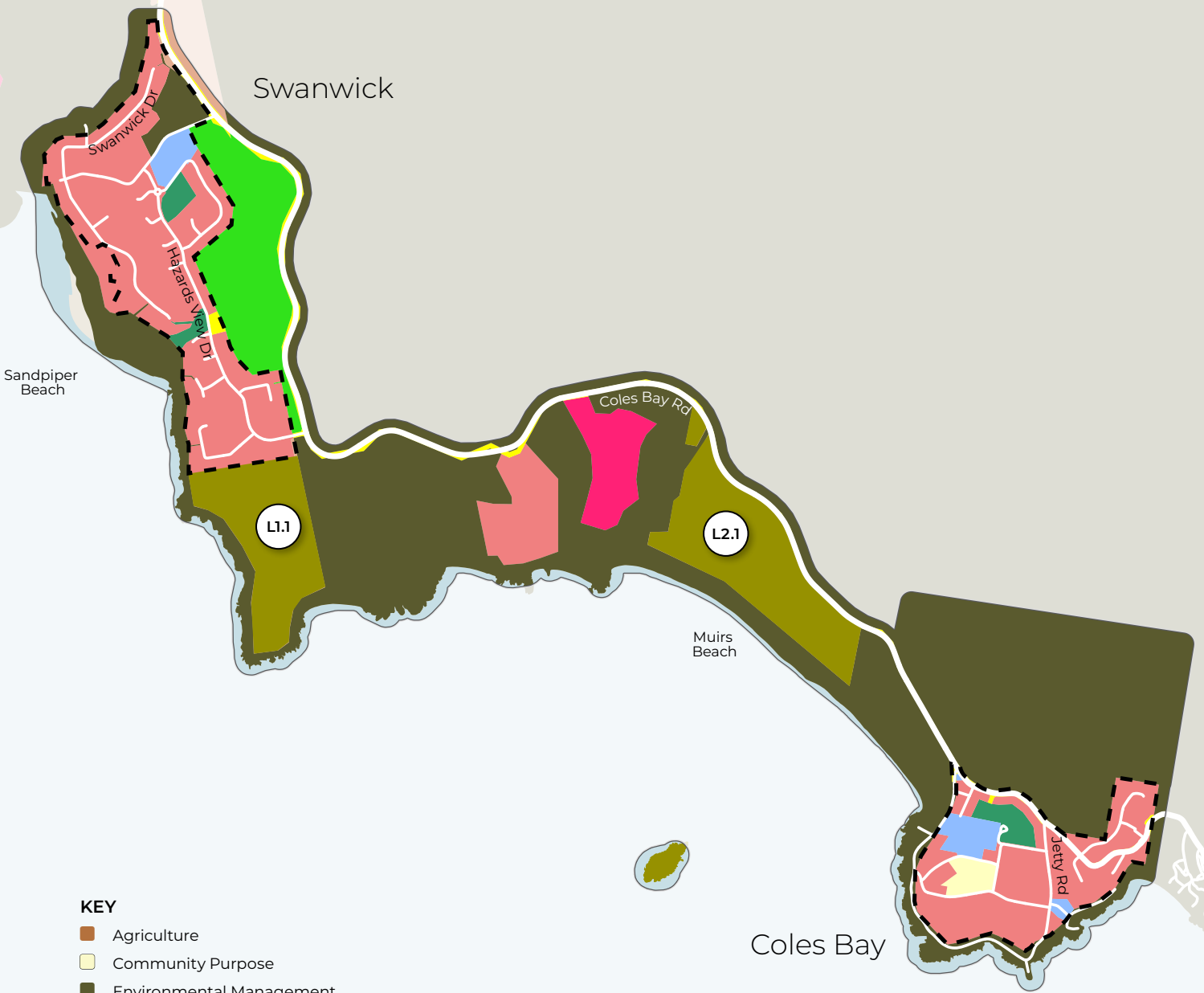
Support residents and key workers to access secure, long-term housing that meets their needs and enhances community resilience, noting the volume of short-term rental accommodation in the area.

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
Landscape and community		
L1	Identify sites suitable for rezoning to better protect landscape values	<p>L1.1 Investigate the potential to rezone 2228 Coles Bay Road (CT 6472/1) from Rural to Landscape Conservation to retain priority vegetation and protect landscape values, ensuring only low intensity use and development that reflects the natural values of the area occurs on the site.</p> <p>L2.1 Investigate the potential to rezone land between Coles Bay Road and Muirs Beach (CT 38296/1, CT 74499/1, CT 74499/2 and CT 74499/3) from Rural to Landscape Conservation to retain priority vegetation and protect landscape values, ensuring only low intensity use and development that reflects the natural values of the area occurs on the site</p>



KEY

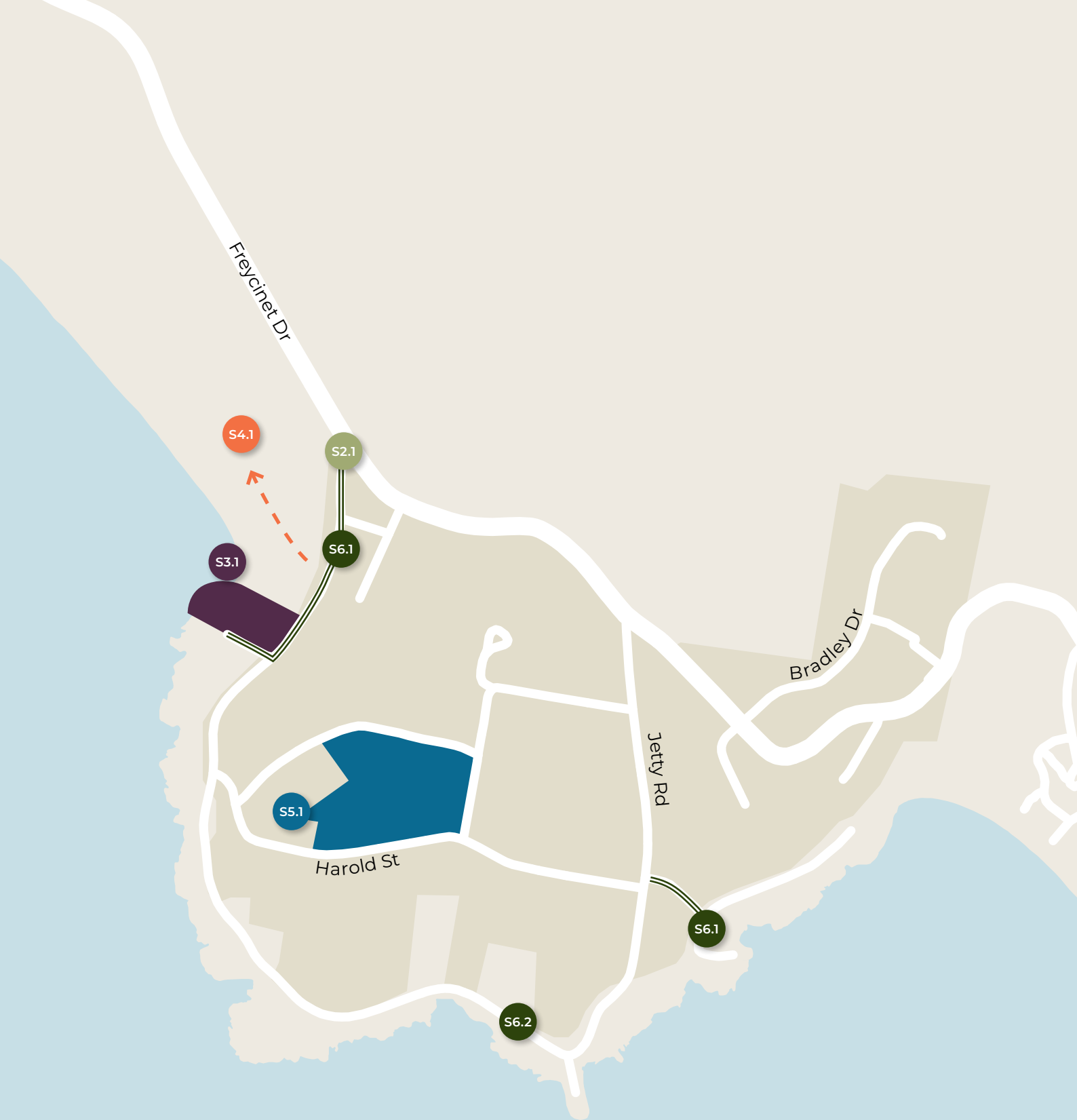
- Agriculture
- Community Purpose
- Environmental Management
- General Residential
- Landscape Conservation
- Light Industrial
- Local Business
- Low Density Residential
- Open Space
- Recreation
- Rural
- Rural Living
- Utilities
- Growth Boundary
- Study Area

Supporting actions – Coles Bay

In developing this structure plan, a range of recommendations have also been identified. 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 Coles Bay's environmental significance and role as gateway to Freycinet National Park to differentiate 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 Identify locations to mark arrival to the town and initiate the town's wayfinding narrative.</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 key destinations including Freycinet National Park, BIG4 Iluka caravan park, and local shops and facilities.</p>
Open space		
S3	Enhance local parks and open spaces	<p>S3.1 Investigate opportunities to sensitively formalise the Muirs Beach carpark and open space area. Such works should include car parking line markings (including accessible car parking) and additional seating areas. Design processes must prioritise the retention of native vegetation.</p>
Active connections		
S4	Improve active pathways and open space connections	<p>S4.1 Commence investigations for the construction of a shared user path connecting Coles Bay to Swanwick. The path should be separated from the road and be fully accessible to safely provide for all ages and abilities within the community.</p>
Public space and facilities		
S5	Enhance public facilities and community assets	<p>S5.1 Ensure the facilities and services provided at the Coles Bay Community Hall adequately provide for the local community. For example, investigate the feasibility of community childcare, or consult with TFS to investigate the requirements to enable the hall to be used as an evacuation centre, if required during a bushfire emergency.</p>
Infrastructure		
S6	Improve road access and safety	<p>S6.1 Implement traffic calming devices on Garnet Avenue and the Esplanade adjacent to Iluka Tavern and Muirs Beach to elevate pedestrians in the road user hierarchy and create safe, walkable spaces.</p> <p>S6.2 Investigate opportunities for improved day visitor parking management, primarily on The Esplanade.</p> <p>S6.3 Investigate locations to provide accessible parking spaces in Coles Bay.</p>



KEY

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

Supporting actions – Swanwick

In developing this structure plan, a range of recommendations have also been identified. 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	Enhance town arrival	<p>S1.1 Identify locations to mark arrival to the town and initiate the town's wayfinding narrative.</p> <p>S1.2 Implement landscape screening to storage shed development within the local business zone to improve street appeal and town entry.</p>
Open space		
S2	Enhance local parks and open spaces	S2.1 Investigate opportunities to enhance the appeal and usability of centrally located open space to encourage community use and connections. This may include opportunities for seating, sporting equipment, tree planting and landscaping, dog facilities, and a community garden.
Active connections		
S3	Improve active pathways and open space connections	<p>S3.1 Commence investigations for the construction of a shared user path connecting Coles Bay to Swanwick.</p> <p>S3.2 All new or upgraded pathways should be separated from the road and aim to be fully accessible to safely provide for all ages within the community.</p>
Public space and facilities		
S4	Enhance community assets	S4.1 Explore opportunities for the Freycinet Golf Club to provide space for community groups to build connections between permanent residents.
Infrastructure		
S5	Improve road access and safety	S5.1 Complete footpath networks, prioritising Hazards View Drive and connections to school bus stops.



Swanwick Dr

Coles Bay Rd

Hazards View Dr

Sandpiper Beach

S1.2

S1.1

S2.1

S4.1

S5.1

S3.1

KEY

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

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.

Fishing from the jetty, Esplanade
Source: East Coast Tasmania





Contact us

ERA Planning and Environment
Level 1, 125A Elizabeth St, nipaluna (Hobart) 7000

☎ (03) 6165 0443

✉ enquiries@eraplanning.com.au

eraplanning.com.au