

ST LEONARDS FORESHORE SITE PLAN

What We Heard



During January - February 2023, Bellarine Bayside and the City of Greater Geelong held the first public consultation phase to develop a plan for approximately 2.9 hectares of coastal Crown land at St Leonards.

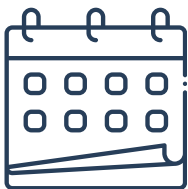
We invited people to tell us how they use the area, what they love about the area, and what would encourage or improve use. This feedback report provides context about what was heard for the land that Bellarine Bayside manages, the foreshore car park site.

Along with considering the feedback received, the following will help inform plans:

CORE DESIGN FACTORS	DESIGN OBJECTIVES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmentally sustainable design.• Universal design.• The Siting and Design Guidelines for Structures on the Victorian Coast (see www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/marine-coastal-management/guidelines).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect and enhance cultural and environmental values.• Improve the safety and connectivity of parking and trails.• Enhance visitor facilities.• Maintain the coastal character.

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The first phase of community engagement commenced on 21 January, 2023, and ran for three weeks, collecting feedback via an online survey (available in hard-copy paper format upon request). The survey focussed on understanding how people currently use the area and what they value about the area. The survey also explored ideas around known priorities for resolution, such as re-routing the Bellarine Coastal Trail around the foreshore car park, and gathered community aspirations for the area.



22 days of
engagement



Initiated with an
on-site info stall



Promoted via a
range of methods



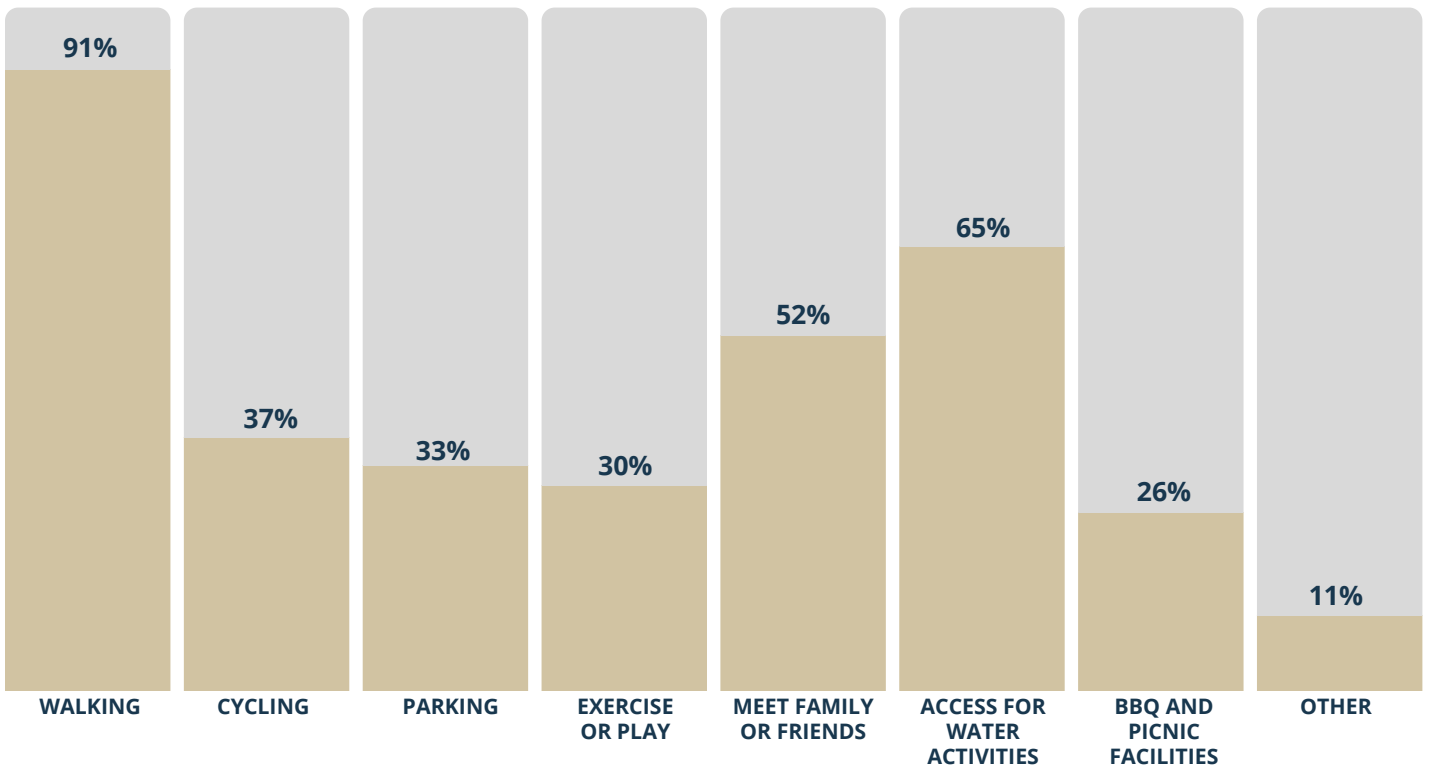
153 survey
contributions

The feedback opportunity was promoted via a range of methods, including newspaper articles, social media, Bellarine Bayside's website and contact with local stakeholders. The consultation period was initiated with an on-site info stall at the St Leonards Foreshore Market where representatives from Bellarine Bayside and the City of Greater Geelong were available to respond to queries about the project. Flyers with a link to the online survey were distributed at the on-site info stall, increasing awareness of the consultation opportunity.

USER PROFILE

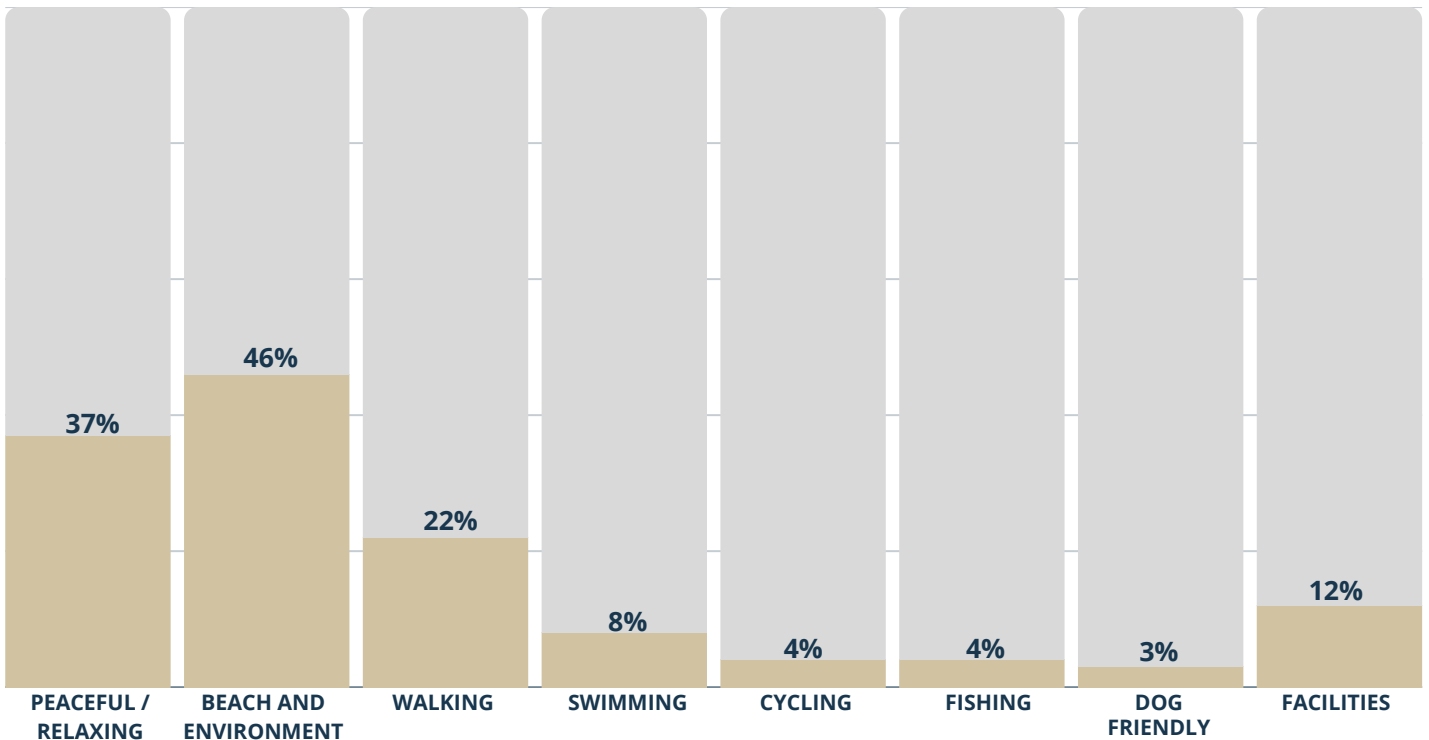
Of the 153 survey respondents, almost 80% described their connection to the area as being a local resident, with the remaining 20% identified as holiday house owners, visitors, and 'other' which included people who work in St Leonards.

The area is used quite frequently by survey respondents, with 45% using the area daily and 37% several days per week. Reasons for using the area include:



VALUES

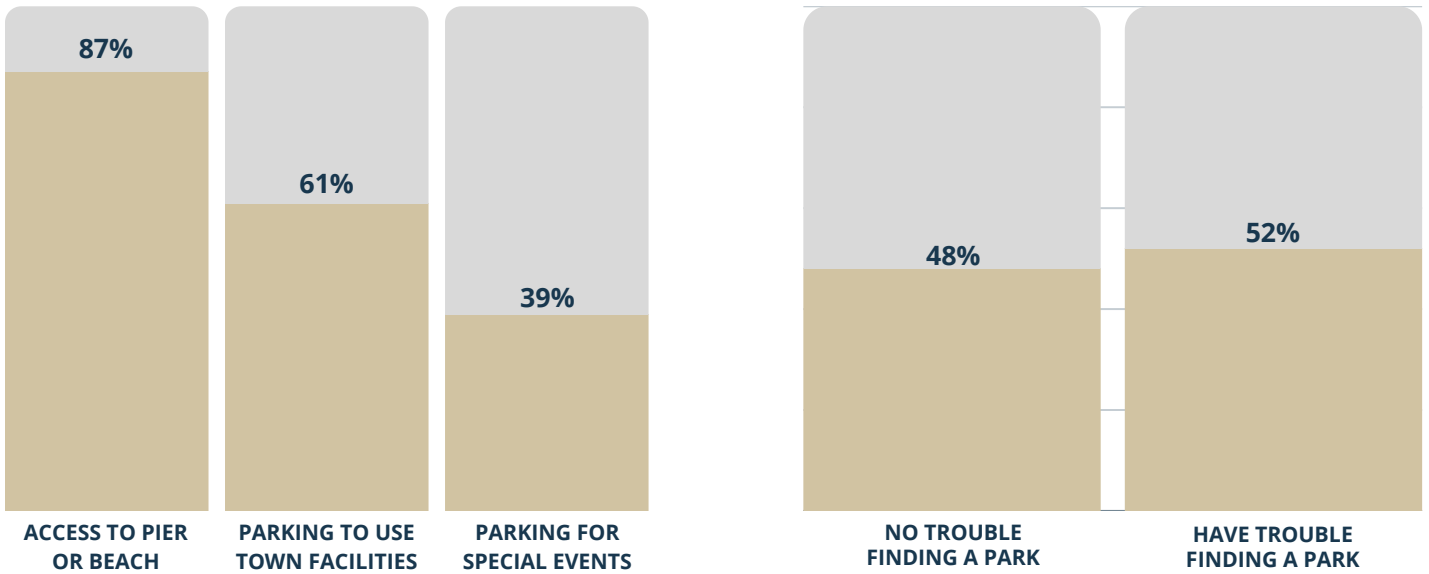
When asked what they love about the area, survey respondents provided a range of answers to inform the following themes:



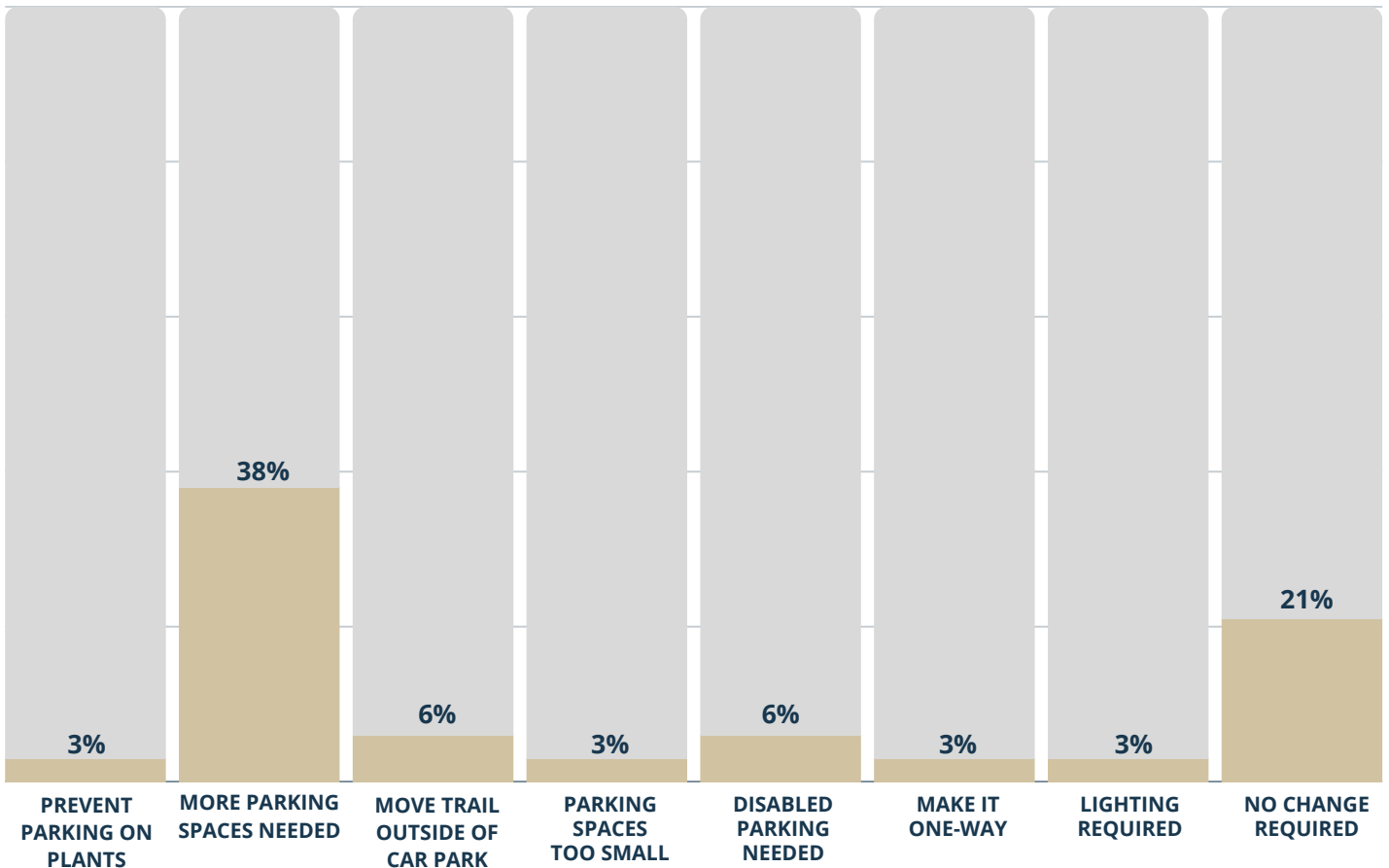
CAR PARKING

The survey sought specific feedback on the large, formalised car park near the St Leonards pier, which is managed by Bellarine Bayside.

Car park users predominantly use the parking to access the beach and/or the pier, and it is also popular for access to the town facilities. When asked if they ever have trouble finding a park, responses show the car park is full only approximately 50% of the time.

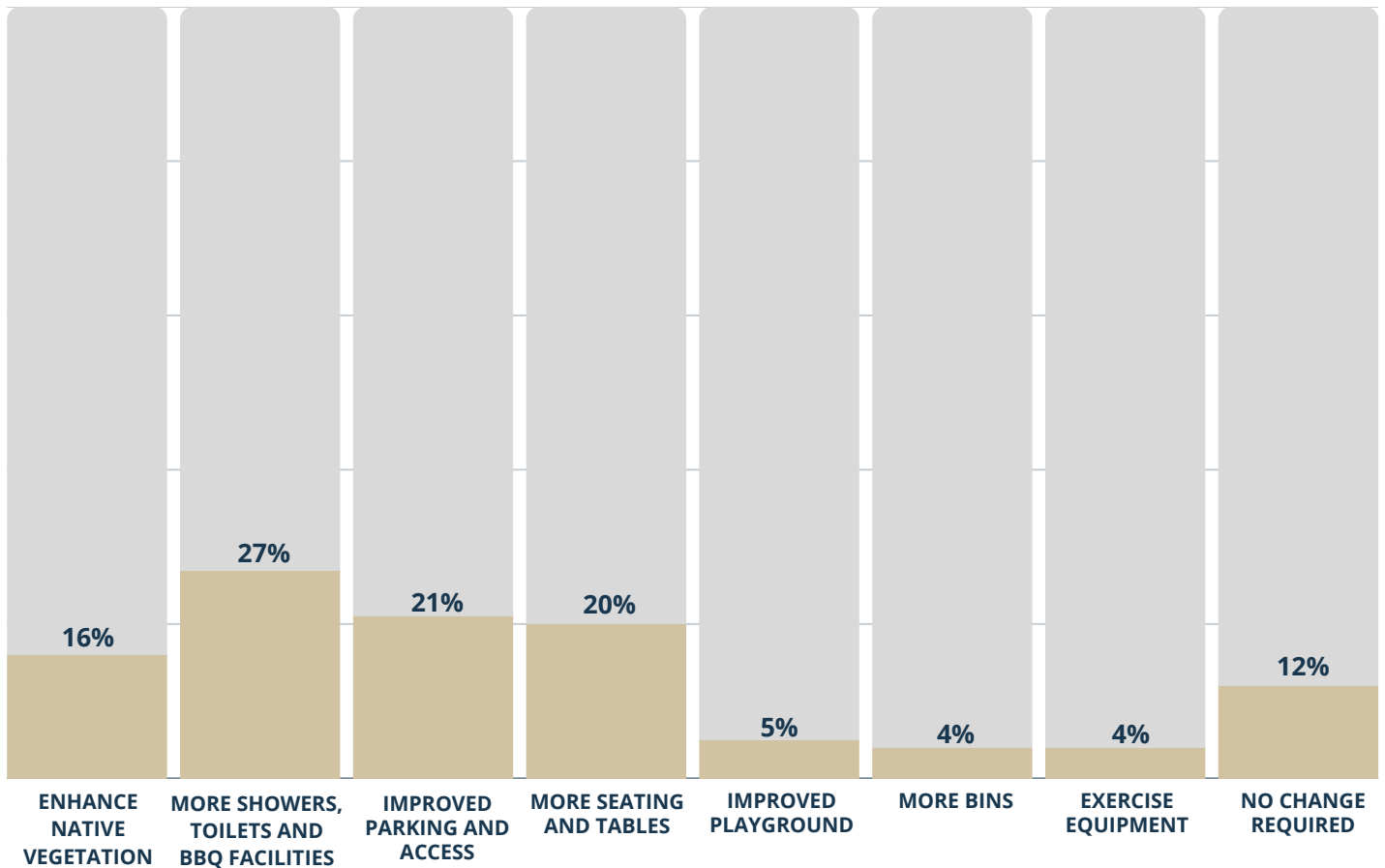


We sought open feedback on the current parking layout, and 34 responses were distilled into the following themes:



COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

With the view to develop a site plan that accommodates the design principles while also creating an attractive public space, we asked for feedback on features that would encourage and improve use of the area. The below were identified for exploration during design:



KEY THEMES RELATING TO THE CAR PARK SITE

Key themes we heard during the consultation that relate to the car park site plan, and our response to these themes are set out below.

Many people expressed that they strongly value the natural environment, the beach, and the peaceful and relaxed atmosphere of the area, with low emphasis placed on infrastructure or hard landscaping.

We are pleased to hear that people value these aspects and we will continue to protect and enhance the natural environment in line with our guiding principals from the Northern Bellarine Coastal and Marine Management Plan 2020-25. Any infrastructure considered for the St Leonards car park site plan will be complementary to the natural coastal environment.

Most people told us that they use the area for walking, beach access, or as a place to meet family/friends.

We will focus on improvements to the Bellarine Coastal Trail in this space, including improving connectivity and access to the beach, as well as minor infrastructure improvements in the form of seating and tables.



We heard the parking is primarily utilised by beach and coastal visitors; however, as it is the main formalised car park for the township, many also use it for access to the main street and the hotel.

A redesign of the car park will be required to provide a dedicated route for the Bellarine Coastal Trail and to improve safety, accessibility and traffic flow while ensuring current Australian standards are met.

We have heard through your feedback that this car park is important to the town and we will ensure a focus is kept on maintaining the existing number of parks as much as possible during a redesign. Site constraints prevent the car park area from being increased.

A few respondents raised the issue of accessibility in some areas, including in the car park, along the trail and when accessing the pier.

During the development of the draft site plan we will consider the levels across the site and where possible adjust them or relocate infrastructure to improve accessibility. Our response to improve accessibility will include adding accessible parking spaces to the foreshore car park.

A balance of views was received about how much to change, but there was a consistent desire not to over-develop and ensure the seaside village character is maintained. Many respondents expressed that the area may be improved with additional built facilities such as showers, toilets, BBQs, tables and chairs; however, many also stated native vegetation should be enhanced as a priority and there should be no changes to the area.

Any infrastructure considered should not impact the natural coastal feel. Given the relatively small area of the car park site and recent upgrades delivered by the City of Greater Geelong in the adjacent Harvey Park, we will consider minor infrastructure improvements such as tables and seating for the car park site.

NEXT STEPS

Following community feedback and consultation with partner agencies, we are currently working with a landscape architect to develop a draft site plan for the car park area near St Leonards pier. This site plan will be released for a second phase of public consultation, expected to occur in May - June 2024.

When the second phase of public consultation commences, we will promote it via our website and social media, as well as in local newspapers. We will also directly contact those who provided their contact details during the first phase of public consultation. During this time, we will also consult with partner agencies.

Following the second phase of consultation, we will review the feedback and finalise a site plan design for approval by the Bellarine Bayside Committee of Management.

How can you have your say?

To find out about future consultation on this project you can:

- Keep an eye on our website: www.bellarinebayside.com.au/have-your-say/st-leonards-master-plan/
- Follow our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/bellarine.bayside
- Register your interest via email: contactus@bellarinebayside.com.au

