

Thornton

Description of the Town

LOCATION & LANDSCAPE SETTING

Thornton is a small town located on the Goulburn Valley Highway approximately 13 kilometres east of Alexandra. The town is located in the floodplain of the Goulburn River, which runs to the north of the town. The hills and peaks of the Eildon National Park and Cathedral Range provide a scenic backdrop to the town to the east and south.

HISTORY

The town was settled as a town servicing the timber industry in the surrounding ranges, including the Rubicon State Forest and the Black and Blue Ranges. One important community facility, the Thornton Primary School, is over 130 years old.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

The town has developed around the intersection of the Goulburn Valley Highway and the Taggerty-Thornton Road / Eildon Back Road. The town has a Recreation Reserve, hotel, several retail businesses and a caravan park that is popular with visitors.

ROLE & LOCAL ECONOMY

The role of the town is as a service centre for the local residents and the surrounding rural district. The town is also a stopping point for people touring in the region. High volumes of traffic pass through the town on the way to Lake Eildon and the recreational attractions in the area, particularly during the summer months. This includes large numbers of school groups who use the school camps that are located throughout the district.

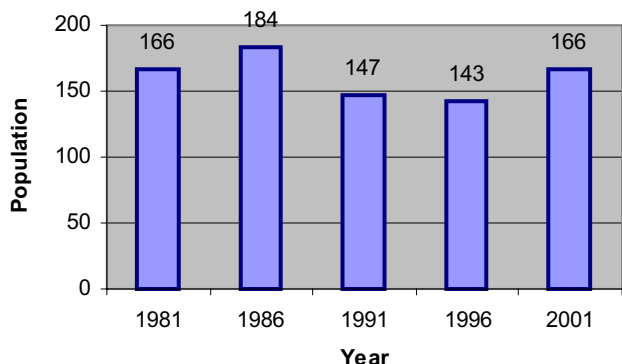
Thornton is an important centre for the trout industry and is known for fly-fishing. It has an internationally renowned fly-fishing school and the district is home to several fish farms and hatcheries, including the Snobs Creek hatchery and Goulburn Trout Farm. There is an emerging food industry in the district, which includes green tea, venison and olives.

POPULATION & COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

At the 2001 Census, the town had a population of 166 people living in 69 households for an average of 2.4 people per household. This is below the average of 2.8 people per household in Australia (2001 Census). There are 28 students enrolled at the Primary School.

The graph below shows population change in Thornton from 1981 to 2001. It shows that the population of the town has fluctuated over the past 20 years to a low of 143 in 1986. In recent times, the population of the town has grown, but it has only just reached its 1981 level.

Table 1. Thornton – Population Change 1981-2001



Source: DSE, Know Your Area

The town has a number of active community groups including the Recreation Reserve Committee, CFA, RSL group and Memorial Hall Committee.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

The annual Trout Rivers Opening festival is held in the Thornton, which includes a fish symposium and attracts people from across Australia.

The Thornton Primary School holds an annual market and fireworks display, which attract large numbers of people from the district. There is a football and netball club in the town, which attract large numbers of people from the region.

SERVICES

There is no reticulated sewerage in the town, however the town has reticulated water supply. Water is supplied via a pipeline from the Rubicon area.

Policy & Strategy Context

The Urban Design Framework for Thornton needs to be consistent with existing Council policies and strategies that relate to the town. The key strategies and policies have been identified below.

RECREATION, RESERVES & PLAY STRATEGY

Key Issues

- *The Recreation Reserve playing field is well maintained and very central to a number of schools and therefore is well used.*
- *The playground at Thornton Recreation Reserve is in a poor state*
- *The condition of the pavilion could also be improved.*
- *The netball courts may be better relocated onto the reserve.*
- *If the standard of the kitchen were higher the hall would get more use.*
- *Need for toilets and a boat ramp on the Goulburn River.*

Priorities

- *Undertake works to the playground recommended in the Play Strategy.*
- *Council should co-ordinate the maintenance & redevelopment of the playground.*
- *In conjunction with user groups, consider relocating the netball courts onto the reserve.*

This report also makes the following general recommendations in relation playground provision:

- The town has one playground, located at the Recreation Reserve, which is outdated and should be removed.
- If a new playground is to be provided, it should have a reasonable range of equipment for both pre-school and primary school aged children, and that the Shire should take over management of the new playground.

UPPER GOULBURN RECREATIONAL WATERWAY STRATEGY

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) has undertaken an analysis of the Goulburn River at Thornton as part of the Upper Goulburn Recreational and Waterway Strategy. The following actions are identified in the study:

Action G.1 – Fence and revegetate crown water frontages where damage to high frontages (few weeds, overstorey and understorey) are degraded by recreational activity (Lead agency – GBCMA, high priority).

Action G.2 – Concentrate high impact recreation activity in zones where the quality of the vegetation is low (no understorey) and not a high priority for protection (Lead agency – GBCMA, high priority).

Action G.5 – Revise Frontage Licenses to enable compatible recreation usage (Lead agency – DNRE, high priority).

Action G.6 – Identify two (max) additional entry and exit points for canoeists to part, launch and camp. The provision of toilets, showers and change facilities should be investigated at these points (Lead agency – local government, medium priority).

Action G.9 – Provide signs advising users of their legal responsibility to take rubbish with them (Lead agency - Local Government, high priority).

Action G.10 – Erect signage advising of land status, conduct educational campaigns to improve user behaviour (Lead agency Landholders/GBCMA, User groups, ongoing priority).

Action G.11 – Create and manage fishing zones using partnership agreements between landholders, angling clubs and GBCMA. Promote and sign these fishing areas (Lead agency – DNRE (Fisheries) VR Fish, medium priority).

Action G.12 – Identify and erect signage identifying crown water frontages and access points to them. Prepare maps identifying access points (Lead agency – DNRE, medium priority).

Action G.13 – Investigate feasibility of an access trail along the Goulburn River between Thornton and Alexandra (Lead agency – GBCMA, low priority).

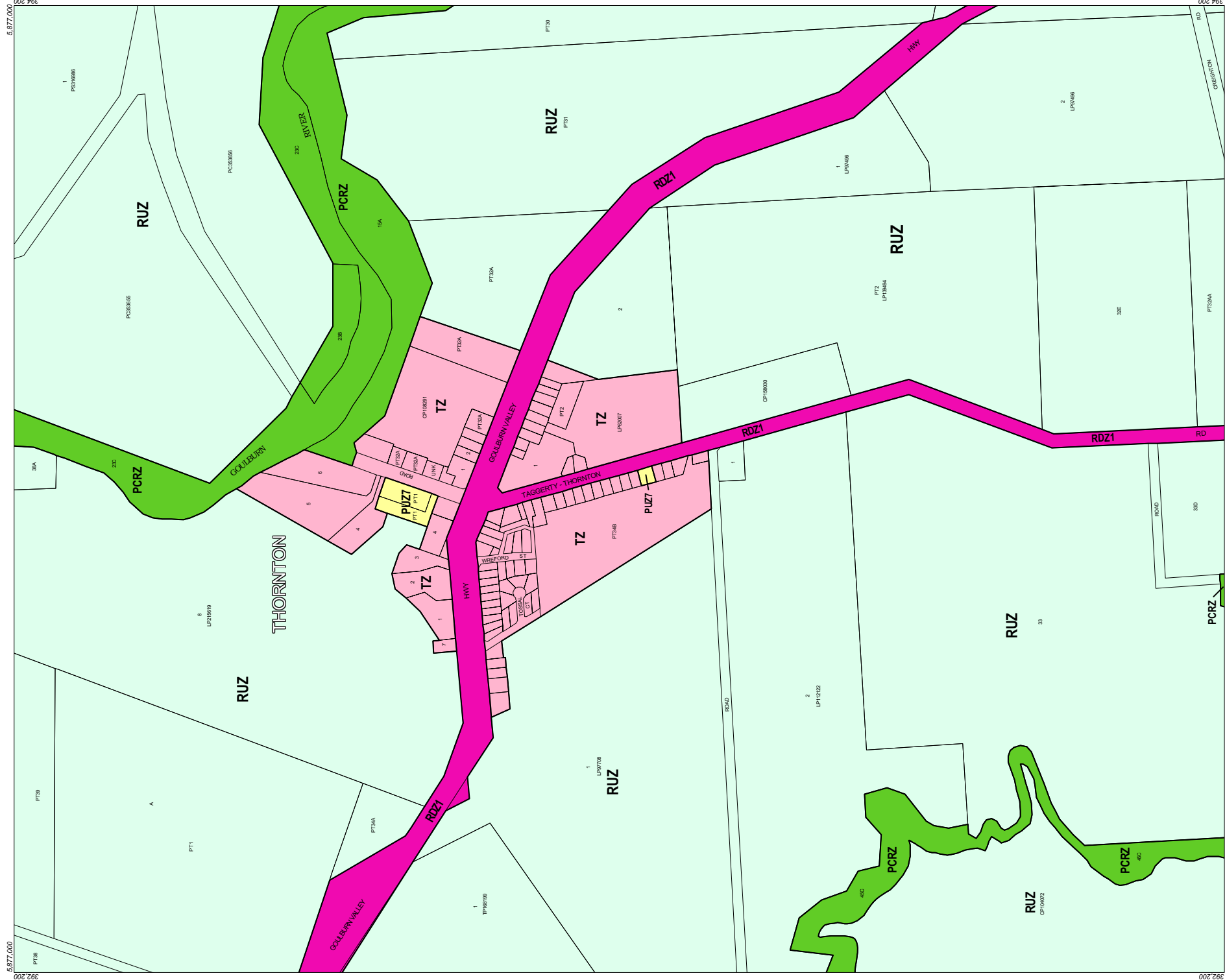
ZONING & OVERLAYS

The entire township area is contained within the Township Zone, apart from the Memorial Hall and Primary School, which are located in the Public Use Zone (Education).

The Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO1) applies to entire township. The purpose of this Overlay is to identify and protect high quality agricultural land. The Floodway Overlay (FO) also applies to the entire township.

Zone and overlay maps of Thornton are displayed on the following pages.

MURRINDINDI PLANNING SCHEME - LOCAL PROVISION



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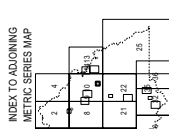
This map should be read in conjunction with additional Planning Overlay Maps. If applicable as indicated on the INDEX TO MAPS.

- Public Land**
- Public Conservation Area Reserve
- Public Use Zone Other Public Use
- Public Use Zone Category 1
- Road Zone Category 1
- Residential
- Rural Zone
- Township Zone
- Rural Zone

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AUSTRALIAN MAP GRID ZONE 55



Amendment C11
Printed: 8/1/2003



ZONES

MAP No 12

Issues & Opportunities

VISION FOR THE TOWN

An Urban Design Framework can play an important role in defining the future vision for a town. Once a preferred vision for a town has been established, the Urban Design Framework can help set directions for particular sites and the town as a whole. These directions influence capital budgets and town planning guidelines and controls.

ENTRANCES

The western entrance to the township is marked by a sweeping bend where the first residential properties are visible on the south side of the Highway. The sense of having fully entered the township occurs at the 60km/h speed restriction signs. At this point, the wide, grassy road reserve and large native and deciduous trees give the impression of an attractive rural town. This impression is diminished somewhat upon arriving at the main intersection to the town, which comprises a network of turning lanes separated by old style traffic islands and the unattractive hotel/motel complex in the southeast corner of the intersection.

The northern entrance to the town is marked by the bridge over the Goulburn River that marks the commencement of attractive residential development along the east side of the road with the school being located along the north side.

The eastern entrance to the town is marked by a dense planting of Cypress trees on the north side of the Highway, as the Highway bends.

MAIN ACTIVITY AREA

The Main Activity Area in Thornton is clustered around the intersection of the Goulburn Valley Highway and Taggerty Road. There is a general store, and a hotel as well as a small number of other local businesses. The main intersection covers a large area, which gives the town an open feel. This sense of space is reinforced by the low density, low rise form of the commercial buildings in the town and the wide road reservation of the Goulburn Valley Highway which allows for service roads along both sides separated from the highway carriageway by well maintained outer separators.

There are two vacant properties on the north side of the intersection that could be developed in the future. The use and development of these and other properties adjoining the intersection should enhance, not detract, from this gateway through the use of appropriate building forms, materials and colours. Development guidelines could be considered for the properties adjoining the intersection.

The hotel is in an important business in the town and meeting point for local residents. It occupies a prominent position on the main intersection and is therefore a highly visible landmark. The existing paint scheme and advertising signage are unsightly and do not make a positive contribution to the streetscape. The introduction of signage guidelines could be considered for the properties adjoining the intersection. Signage guidelines should be included in any design and development controls for the properties adjoining the intersection.

It is noted that there is currently no petrol sales outlet in Thornton, the nearest being at Alexandra 13 km to the northwest or Eildon 13 km to the east.

MAIN INTERSECTION

The intersection of the Highway and the Thornton-Taggerty Road is the central point within the town. Unfortunately, it is also the point of lowest visual quality, contrasting sharply with the better defined visual qualities of each of the approaches into town. Consequently, it is in this area where potential exists to improve the general appearance of the town and to make a positive impression on visitors. One simple way that the appearance of the intersection could be enhanced is by replacing the pebbled treatment on traffic island with grass or low shrubs or plantings. This would soften the appearance of the intersection by breaking up the large sections of sealed road. The extension of significant tree planting from each of the three approaches would also be of benefit.

EILDON BACK ROAD & RIVER

The Back Eildon Road passes over the Goulburn River on the northern edge of the town. It is heavily used by local people and tourists travelling to and from Lake Eildon. The main features of this area are the road bridge, river banks and Thornton Beach River Reserve on the north side of the River.

The close proximity of the River is one of the town's strengths, but pedestrian access to the north side of the river is non-existent. There is an opportunity to establish a pedestrian trail from the Main Activity Area to the River, along the Eildon Back Road to provide access to the Thornton Beach River Reserve. As the road bridge is narrow and long, a pedestrian walkway would need to be attached to the side of the existing bridge to achieve this link.

The potential may also exist to develop a walking track along the southern river bank, which could become an important recreational asset for the town. Continuous private land east of the bridge would prevent the establishment of a circuit linking with the Highway, but a one-way path may be an option. Further investigation of the property boundaries is required to determine the constraints and opportunities.

The Thornton Beach River Reserve is under-utilised and has no recreational facilities that would encourage people to use the Reserve. This area could be a popular location for picnics, fishing, swimming and canoeing. There is a need to develop a landscaping and maintenance plan for the area.

There are a number of environmental problems along the River that need to be addressed, including removal of willow trees (already commenced) and erosion of river banks.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The residential land within the Township Zone in Thornton is almost fully developed. An analysis of aerial photography indicates that there are no more than 5-6 vacant lots within the township that could be developed for residential purposes.

There has been little development activity in the town in the past year. One building permit was issued for a new dwelling in the town between May 2003 and May 2004.

Council has indicated that there is a problem with the capacity of small allotments in Thornton to adequately treat wastewater onsite. This issue, together with the low supply of residential land, indicates that a more detailed investigation of servicing issues should be undertaken by Council over the medium to longer term.

ZONING

The land use controls in the Township Zone are reasonably flexible, and allow for motor mechanic, car sales and service stations, subject to a planning permit.

There is a need to restrict non-tourist related commercial uses along the Goulburn Valley Highway and Taggerty-Thornton Road through statutory measures in the planning scheme. There may also be a need to apply overlay controls to the prominent vacant properties fronting the Goulburn Valley Highway to ensure that any development is set back an appropriate distance from the Highway and to require landscaping along the highway frontage to soften visual impact

The Floodway Overlay (FO) applies to the entire township of Thornton. A town planning permit is therefore required to undertake all major buildings and works in the town, including new houses. Planning approval is not required for minor extensions to houses and buildings and small non-habitable buildings (eg sheds). The requirements of the water authorities in relation to the design and siting of buildings may restrict the development of particular sites and uses within the town.

RECREATION RESERVE

The Recreation Reserve on the Taggerty-Thornton Road is a focal point of the town, being home to the local football and netball clubs and CFA. There is a playground at the Reserve that is popular with children, although the equipment was recently dismantled for safety reasons.

There is a need to improve the appearance of the oval through tree plantings and landscaping, and to re-instate the playground equipment.

At present, the netball courts are located on the northern side of the Reserve, abutting residential properties. There is an opportunity for the netball courts to be relocated to the eastern side of the Reserve. The lighting at the football oval also requires improvement.

MEMORIAL HALL

The Memorial Hall is located on the west side of the Taggerty-Thornton Road. It is an important community facility and is used by the local RSL club CFA, and football club for regular meetings. It is also used for social events.

Although the Hall is not particularly old, it requires upgrading to address health and safety issues.

Summary of Issues

Land Use & Development

- Absence of sewerage infrastructure limits the expansion of the town.
- No population growth over the past 20 years.
- Little residential development activity in the township.
- Few vacant allotments available for residential development.
- The Floodway Overlay prevents new subdivisions and restricts more intensive land use and development in the township area.
- Ability of existing allotments to dispose of effluent

Landscape, Views & Vistas

- The landscape character and presentation of the centre of town is poor in comparison with the approaches.

The Built Environment

- Lack of consistency in the structure and appearance of commercial buildings in the town centre.
- Community Hall requires upgrading.

Pedestrian Circulation & Amenity

- No means for pedestrians to safely cross the Goulburn River.
- Lack of walking circuits around the town.
- No convenient pedestrian river access.

Open Space & Recreation Areas

- Poor quality of environment at the Thornton Beach River Reserve.
- Poor quality of environment at the Recreation Reserve.
- No playground equipment at Recreation Reserve.



KEY LEGEND

- ① Western Entrance
- ② Northern Entrance
- ③ Eastern Entrance
- ④ Main Commercial Precinct
- Poor Presentation and Setting, Compared to Approaches
- ⑤ Potential Development Sites
- ⑥ Existing Hotel
- key use within town, but with poor visual presentation
- ⑦ Thornton Beach River Reserve
- Good Access to River
- Lack of Facilities
- Poor Pedestrian / Cycle Access
- ⑧ Potential Walking Track along Southern Bank of Goulburn River
- ⑨ Poor Pedestrian Access across river on Back Eildon Road
- ⑩ Recreation Reserve
- important community focus with poor landscape image
- ⑪ Memorial Hall
- important community focus
- ⑫ C.F.A. Building/Recreation Reserve & sports club house
- ⑬ Southern Entrance
- ⑭ Caravan Park
- lack of public access through to river
- ⑮ Primary School



URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK Thornton Township DRAFT ISSUES PLAN



Prepared for Murrumbidgee Shire Council by
Land Design Partnership Pty Ltd and Team
July 2004



Urban Design Framework

This section of the report identifies concepts to address issues and to realise opportunities in Thornton over the next 20 years. It outlines the preferred vision and objectives for the town, and provides detail about the recommended strategies and actions that have been identified to achieve the vision and objectives.

Vision

The vision provides a guide for the sort of development that will be encouraged in the future to preserve, enhance and capitalise upon key local characteristics.

Thornton will be recognised for its relationship with the Rubicon Valley and its location on the Goulburn Valley Highway, in close proximity to the major tourism and recreational attractions of Lake Eildon, the Goulburn River and the Lake Eildon National Park.

The town's development will be characterised by low impact and pedestrian friendly infrastructure and urban development that protects the open feel of the township. In particular, the town's relationship to the River will be strengthened.

Tourism development will be the primary focus, capitalising on the high number of tourists who pass through the district. The Recreation Reserve will continue to be a focus of community activity in the town.

Whilst Thornton will not accommodate significant new residential or commercial development because of floodway and servicing issues, the development of existing suitable allotments should be encouraged to sustain the population and economy of the town.

Key Objectives

Landscape, Views & Vistas

- To preserve the elements that contribute to the landscape character of Thornton; its mature native and deciduous trees and views to the distant ranges.
- To improve the appearance and function of key community meeting places.

The Built Environment

- To consolidate community and commercial activities within the existing Main Activity Area of the town.
- To encourage development in the commercial precinct that is consistent in form and appearance.

Tourism & Economic Development

- To encourage more visitors to stop in the town.

Specific Strategies and Actions

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

Strategy U1: Amend the Planning Scheme with policy statements regarding the vision for the town and the preferred type of land use and development.

Action a) Include the following statements in Clause 21 of the MSS relating to Thornton:

- The Vision statement for Thornton.
- Direct all commercial and community land use and development to the Main Activity Area in the town.
- Encourage the establishment of tourist-related uses on the Goulburn Valley Highway and Taggerty-Thornton Road such as restaurants, cafes and accommodation establishments.
- Ensure that use or development adjacent to existing open space links and public parkland does not damage its character or setting.
- Ensure that use or development does not have an adverse impact on existing vistas, views and landmarks including views to the surrounding ranges.
- Ensure that new use and development is able to adequately dispose of effluent

Strategy U2: Ensure that all new development in the town is able to adequately dispose of effluent to minimise the pollution of the environment and the Goulburn Broken catchment.

Action a) Undertake a detailed investigation of land capability issues and prepare a long-term strategy to address servicing issues in the town.

LANDSCAPE, VIEWS & VISTAS

Strategy L1: Improve the visual character of the town centre through the introduction of landscape elements.

Action a) Prepare a detailed landscape plan to identify opportunities to introduce planting and other landscape features into the central town environment.

Strategy L2: Improve the presentation of gateways to the town on the Goulburn Valley Highway and strengthen visual character of landscape within township.

Action a) Prepare streetscape planting strategy to build upon existing plantings. Streetscape planting themes should extend to each gateway, in order to clearly define each gateway.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Strategy B1: Encourage greater consistency of built form within the Main Activity Area. New development should be sited and designed in accordance with the following design principles.

- Generally new development should be single storey in height and of a scale consistent with adjoining properties.
- Require larger developments to integrate with the modest scale and form of the existing streetscape in the retail strip along the west side of the Taggerty-Thornton Road.
- Require developments on street frontages to provide a continuous built edge.
- Place business identification and advertising signage on buildings or within built elements to reduce visual clutter. Freestanding signage should be discouraged and sandwich board signage should be restricted to footpath areas.
- Encourage retail shop frontages to provide a greater percentage of window area, promoting window displays that add variety and interest to the street environment and interaction with passers-by.
- Require corner blocks to provide two street addresses and “turn the corner” in terms of their frontages and active building edges.

- Generally encourage on-street car parking. When off-street car parking is provided, the sharing of car parking with community and recreation uses is encouraged.

Strategy B2: Upgrade key community facilities in the town.

- Action a) Undertake a review of the facilities at the Thornton Memorial Hall to identify upgrade requirements (in consultation with key user groups and the community).
- Action b) Carry out upgrades as identified in action B2a.

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION & AMENITY

Strategy P1: Provide pedestrian facilities at the road bridge over the Goulburn River on Back Eildon Road.

- Action a) Plan to construct a cantilever pedestrian footway along the east side of the bridge as part of future refurbishment of the existing timber railing that is in poor condition.
- Action b) Construct a footpath along the east side of Back Eildon Road to link the Goulburn River Bridge with the centre of Thornton.

Strategy P2: Plan for the creation of new pedestrian connections at the eastern edge of the town between the river and the sporting oval.

- Action a) Investigate the acquisition of an access easement between the Highway and the river through the fly fishing development.

- Action b) Investigate the provision of a right-of-way immediately east of the present limit of residential development to form a pedestrian connection between the Highway and the Recreation Reserve.

Strategy P3: Provide improved river access for pedestrians

- Action a) Construct walking paths along the north and south banks of the river radiating out from the Back Eildon Road crossing.
- Action b) Allow for a future connection of the southern path to the proposed circuit link to the sporting oval at the east end of town (refer to Strategy P2).

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION AREAS

Strategy O1: Improve presentation of and access to Thornton Beach River Reserve.

- Action a) Liaise with the local CMA in relation to any future works or controls on works in this area.
- Action b) Undertake planting and low level public amenities to improve environmental quality and presentation.

Strategy O2: Improve presentation and amenity at Recreation Reserve.

- Action a) Prepare detailed landscape plan to guide future works.
- Action b) Install new playground equipment.
- Action c) Provide new planting to create stronger landscape setting for reserve.
- Action d) Provide low-key public amenities, such as seating and shelters.



KEY LEGEND

- L1. Improve visual character of town center through introduction of plants and other landscape elements.
- P1. Provide dedicated pedestrian facilities across Goulburn River at Back Eildon Road.
- P2. Plan for future pedestrian/cycle connection between reserve and river trail.
- P3. Provide improved pedestrian access along southern river bank.
- O1. Improve presentation of and access to Thornton Beach River Reserve.
- O2. Improve presentation and amenity of recreation reserve (including new playground and tree plantings).
- L2. Improve presentation of Gateways and tree planting in Goulburn Valley Highway, leading to central area.
- L2. Improve presentation of Gateways and strengthen existing avenue planting on Taggerty/Thornton Road.
- U1. Direct all commercial and community land use and development to the main activity area in the town

NOTE: Plan must be read in conjunction with detailed strategies and actions outlined in the Urban Design Framework report.



Urban Design Framework Plan

Priorities for Implementation

Based on consultation with the community, the following priority strategies and actions have been identified for Thornton. Implementation may not necessarily take place in this order and timing will be usually be determined by the availability of funding. Strategies and actions that do not appear in this list may become priority actions if circumstances change or funding becomes available.

Strategy / Action	Estimated Cost	Timeframe
Action U1a): Update Clause 21 of the MSS relating to Thornton.	N/a	Year 1
Action P1a) Plan to construct a cantilevered pedestrian footway along the east side of the bridge on the Back Eildon Road.	\$ 200,000	Year 5
Action P1b) Construct a footpath along the east side of Back Eildon Road to link the Goulburn River Bridge with the centre of Thornton.	\$ 30,000	Year 1
Strategy O1: Improve presentation of and access to Thornton Beach River Reserve.	\$ 50,000	Year 1
Action O2a) Prepare detailed landscape plan to guide future works at the Recreation Reserve.	\$ 10,000	Year 2