

Thornbury Town Centre Strategy



2009 – 2019

FOREWORD

This ten year Strategy is a visionary document reflecting the aspirations of local residents and businesses. It aims to address the issues of priority to the centre of Thornbury on an economic, social and environmental level over the next ten years.

Following extensive consultations with the local community a Town Centre Strategy Group was formed to produce a strategy consultation.

The original consultation highlighted a number of issues that local residents and businesses felt could be addressed to improve the vitality and vibrancy of the centre of Thornbury.

The consultation document generated a lot of interest and was supported by many local people. Feedback received from the respondents has informed this strategy.

Thornbury Town Centre Strategy Group consists of representatives from the Town Council, Chamber of Commerce, South Gloucestershire Council and St Mary Centre.



JEWEL OF THE SEVERN VALE

Thornbury is a traditional market town just four miles from the banks of the River Severn in South Gloucestershire. It is situated 10 miles north of Bristol close to the M4 and M5 motorway links as well as the old and new Severn bridges giving easy access to the countryside, seaside, major cities near by and Bristol Airport.

The town provides an ideal base for tourists to explore the villages and towns of the Severn Vale including the Cotswolds, Bristol, Bath and Gloucester, the Wye Valley, The Forest of Dean and South Wales.

Development in the last forty years has prompted a rise in population from 3,000 to 13,000. Nonetheless, the town has not lost any of its original character or charm which is safeguarded by sensitive and closely monitored conservation. Thornbury boasts the only remaining Tudor Castle in England which is now a prestigious hotel. Facilities and amenities of the town have kept pace with its growth combining attractive historic buildings with modern developments.

There are many attractions and events in the centre of Thornbury including a Farmers' Market that takes place on the first and



third Thursday of every month, Arts Festival, seasonal food fairs, Britain in Bloom displays and Christmas lights. The St Mary Centre leads onto the High Street where old houses and shops can be found, some dating back to the 15th century. Thornbury has Fairtrade status supported by many shops and cafes. The town has the benefit of free car parking.



STRATEGIC VISION

To build upon the natural, historic and cultural assets of the centre of Thornbury in order to maintain and further develop social, economic and environmental prosperity

The vision for this strategy reflects the aspirations of local residents and businesses based on feedback from the consultation. It aims to address issues of priority to the centre of Thornbury on an economic, social and environmental level.

ECONOMIC

To ensure the centre of Thornbury thrives by attracting quality and specialist retailers in order to encourage more customers.

SOCIAL

To ensure the centre of Thornbury continues to be a safe, inclusive and accessible place for people to live, work, shop and visit.

ENVIRONMENTAL

To ensure the centre of Thornbury becomes widely known as a well maintained and eco-friendly market town.

The partners are working together using resources available to them to achieve the aims of this strategy. A detailed action plan has been developed which will be regularly updated throughout the life of this strategy.

The strategy consultation document was distributed to a wide variety of local outlets around the centre of Thornbury including the Town Hall and Library. This was also supported by a South Gloucestershire Council website with an online survey as well as an electronic version available to download from the 'My Thornbury' website (www.mythornbury.co.uk).

Consultation strategies were distributed to local groups and handed out at two consultation events where members of the strategy group answered questions and listened to local opinion. The consultation received local media coverage which helped raise its profile.

KEY FINDINGS

Issues from the 3,670 individual comments received include:

- It is important to provide a good mix of shops (both small independent and larger national retailers) that meet the requirements of local people and minimise the need for them to travel outside Thornbury for shopping.
- Concerns regarding the number of empty retail units in the High Street and St Mary Centre. This is felt to have a negative impact on the overall appearance and reputation of the centre of Thornbury.
- Support for the promotion of Thornbury to a wider audience to encourage more visitors, shoppers and tourists. Many felt that it is necessary to first enhance the town before promoting it and that promotional material needs to be realistic and give a true representation of the town.
- The architecture and history of Thornbury are important elements of the town centre's distinctiveness and character and should be protected and maintained where possible.
- The need for greater consideration for residents who live in the centre of Thornbury due to the impact of increasing traffic.
- Strong support for the continuation of free parking. It is felt that its removal would have a detrimental impact on the centre of Thornbury and drive away customers to neighbouring towns. There is a general perception that parking is enforced overzealously.
- Thornbury is seen as an historical market town and should therefore have regular markets. It is felt that the markets should complement rather than compete with the existing shops. The variety and quality of products available is seen as essential to their success. There is support for a Farmers' Market on Saturdays.
- A need for improved public transport links to Bristol, Cribbs Causeway, Parkway Station, local hospitals and outlying villages. Frequency, reliability and cost of public transport are all seen as barriers to an increased use of public transport.
- It is essential to promote and attract businesses and local employment to Thornbury but this may be challenging in the current economic climate. It is important to make sure that local people have a varied and appropriate range of skills to take up any local jobs.
- Some of the pubs could do more to improve their appearance; they are not attractive or inviting. They need to cater for a wider customer base.
- Some shops could do more to improve their general maintenance and presentation.

ECONOMIC

To ensure the centre of Thornbury thrives by attracting quality and specialist retailers in order to encourage more customers

The architecture and history of Thornbury are important elements in giving it its character and making it distinctive from other towns in South Gloucestershire. To attract more people to the centre of Thornbury, independent specialist retailers should be encouraged rather than an increasing number of national chains. To encourage shopping in the town centre consideration should be given to increasing the time limit in the short stay car parks.

Landlords of empty shops in the High Street and St Mary Centre are encouraged to provide display space for local groups and individuals to contribute to the positive appearance of the town.

Thornbury Chamber of Commerce provides support to local businesses. Their Christmas brochure acts as a useful marketing tool in promoting the town to the surrounding area. They will continue to promote the town with further initiatives in addition to their successful Food fairs.



PRIORITY 1

The town centre continues to be distinctive from other town centres in South Gloucestershire and becomes a national and international heritage tourist attraction.

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- Produce promotional literature to highlight Thornbury as a historical market town which provides a specialist shopping experience
- Articles and publicity material to be distributed to targeted audiences, nationally and internationally

PRIORITY 2

Maintain quality cafés, restaurants and food pubs in the centre of Thornbury to make it a destination town for people who enjoy good food and drink whilst at work or play

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- Develop and publish marketing material to promote the town centre's quality cafés, restaurants and food pubs

ECONOMIC cont.

- ➔ Discuss with landlords ways in which their present premises can be upgraded

PRIORITY 3

Attract new and innovative high-tech Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to take-up the use of town centre offices, to create an environment which provides modern resources in an historic setting.

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- ➔ Lobby providers and investigate avenues for the introduction of high-speed data access and area-wide networks to facilitate the requirements of Small to Medium-sized Enterprises
- ➔ Conduct a needs analysis of available office space and infrastructure to facilitate new and growing businesses
- ➔ Encourage businesses to introduce wireless web-access to the town centre, allowing them and individuals to communicate with each other more efficiently, saving travel time and energy resources

PRIORITY 4

Increase town centre footfall and turnover by achieving a better balance between independent local shops and national chains, to meet the needs and aspirations of the local community. Increase the number and variety of stalls that participate regularly at the farmers and open air markets. Consider revising retail hours to reflect modern lifestyles.

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- ➔ Continue to provide free-parking facilities within close proximity to the town centre
- ➔ Consider pedestrian-friendly measures for the town centre
- ➔ Create greater awareness and encourage more use of Thornbury based marketing media such as websites, community radio stations, town and parish magazines and other local media to promote businesses, special events and attractions in the town centre
- ➔ Develop and implement a marketing strategy to influence a wider range of independent retailers to the town centre and try to avoid saturation by one particular type of business
- ➔ Publicise the farmers and open air markets both locally and across South Gloucestershire using Thornbury based media
- ➔ Increase the number and variety of stalls by inviting new traders
- ➔ Work with local businesses to investigate the benefits of changing their opening hours to reflect modern lifestyles

To ensure the centre of Thornbury continues to be a safe, inclusive and accessible place for people to live, work, shop and visit



The feel safe factor in Thornbury ensures the town centre remains a welcoming and vibrant place for all. Encouraging people to get involved in activities taking place at community facilities and at public events is one way of making residents and visitors feel included. The arts festival, food fairs and annual carnival creates a good opportunity for people to get together and visit the centre of Thornbury.

The accessibility in and to Thornbury affects how easily people can visit the town centre. Though Community Transport exists, there is scope to extend its services and increase its take-up by re-promotion to relevant user groups.

There is a good working relationship between the police, Town Council, South Gloucestershire Council and St Mary Centre. Unlike other market towns, there is a very low level of Anti-Social behaviour (ASB), which is constantly being monitored and addressed. The installation of the new CCTV system in the High Street is an additional tool which will be used to tackle ASB and crime.

A strong local economy will create work for local people. This will ensure the level of customer service offered by town centre staff highlights Thornbury's community spirit. Working in partnership should be encouraged and promoted to help build a strong and cohesive community.

PRIORITY 5

To ensure that the town centre continues to feel safe, welcoming and comfortable for all residents and visitors and develop better relationships between people in the community.

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- Reassure the community and visitors through promotional events and literature that Thornbury provides a secure and appealing place to visit for shopping, eating and relaxing
- Encourage retailers to develop innovative and effective training programmes to ensure retail staff deliver good customer service

SOCIAL cont.

- ➔ Encourage all shops and businesses to develop and implement child friendly policies and provide special facilities where possible (baby changing rooms, crèche, highchairs, entertainment etc.)
- ➔ Ensure all minority groups feel welcome in the town centre
- ➔ Explore ways of increasing nursery provision to support employment within the town centre

PRIORITY 6

Have more arts, crafts, community and leisure events to encourage more people to visit the centre of Thornbury.

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- ➔ Promote, encourage and support new and existing groups to use the centre of Thornbury for events
- ➔ Promote events and services such as those offered by the Armstrong Hall and Thornbury Library and encourage plans for the upgrading of these facilities

PRIORITY 7

Create opportunities for local people to find work in the centre of Thornbury.

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- ➔ Improve awareness of local employment opportunities by providing information to local job seekers

- ➔ Offer new and improved access to training opportunities for people of all ages who want to find work or progress their career opportunities locally
- ➔ Promote the advantages of partnership working and continue existing town centre networks and initiatives



ENVIRONMENTAL

To ensure the centre of Thornbury becomes widely known as a well maintained and eco-friendly market town



Thornbury's heritage is reflected in the architecture of the High Street. Existing buildings need to be preserved and maintained as well as new builds being sympathetic to Thornbury's traditional market town image.

The town provides a warm and inviting atmosphere for both residents and visitors by attention to the appearance and detail of the street scene, which is enhanced by seasonal displays.

The general maintenance and up-keep of the town centre and promotion of eco-friendly activities will encourage businesses, residents and visitors to preserve the environment. A collective town centre approach to saving energy and resources will complement individual efforts. This will require a coordinated effort and will result in an attractive town centre for all.

PRIORITY 8

Continue to improve the appearance of the centre of Thornbury and the street scene to present a vibrant and positive image to visitors and to reinforce Thornbury's heritage as a traditional market town.

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- Maintain a balance between the construction of new buildings and the maintenance and renovation of old buildings, in and around the town centre
- Create greater awareness of and encourage further community involvement in seasonal activities such as 'Britain in Bloom', Christmas Lights, festivals etc.
- Provide adequate maintenance and refurbishment schedules, sufficient litter bins, appropriate signage and street furniture
- To investigate measures to retain a traditional High Street whilst making it more accessible to all

ENVIRONMENTAL cont.

- Encourage shops and businesses in the centre of Thornbury to maintain an appearance in keeping with a heritage market town, both inside and out

PRIORITY 9

Increased participation by town centre businesses, other organisations and the general public in energy-efficient, recycling and sustainable activities.

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- Town centre businesses and other organisations to lead by example by implementing energy saving practices and other environmentally friendly schemes
- Increase opportunities for members of the public to purchase locally produced and environmentally friendly products

PRIORITY 10

Improve public and community transport within and around Thornbury, the surrounding villages and beyond.

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- Liaise with public bus service providers to improve service delivery and communication
- Promote greater awareness and use of community transport including making better use of Thornbury based media

- Encourage transport providers to produce clear information which is readily available in a variety of media

PRIORITY 11

Improve access to the facilities in the centre of Thornbury to encourage people of all ages and abilities to make full use of them.

TO ACHIEVE THIS:

- Install more dropped kerbs, access ramps, rails and user-friendly signs for people of all ages and abilities
- Improve information signs around the centre of Thornbury
- Upgrade the existing public toilets within the town centre
- Ensure people with mobility problems can move around the centre of Thornbury with ease



DELIVERY PLAN

This strategy will be delivered by the tasks listed in a detailed action plan. This will be supported by a number of local partners and stakeholders. You are invited to contribute to the success of the Thornbury Town Centre Strategy. If you are willing and able to help deliver any of the activities outlined in the "TO ACHIEVE THIS..." sections of this strategy, please contact Thornbury Town Centre Partnership via Thornbury Town Hall.

This document can be downloaded from www.thornburytowncouncil.gov.uk and is also available in large print from Thornbury Town Council.

USEFUL CONTACTS:

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