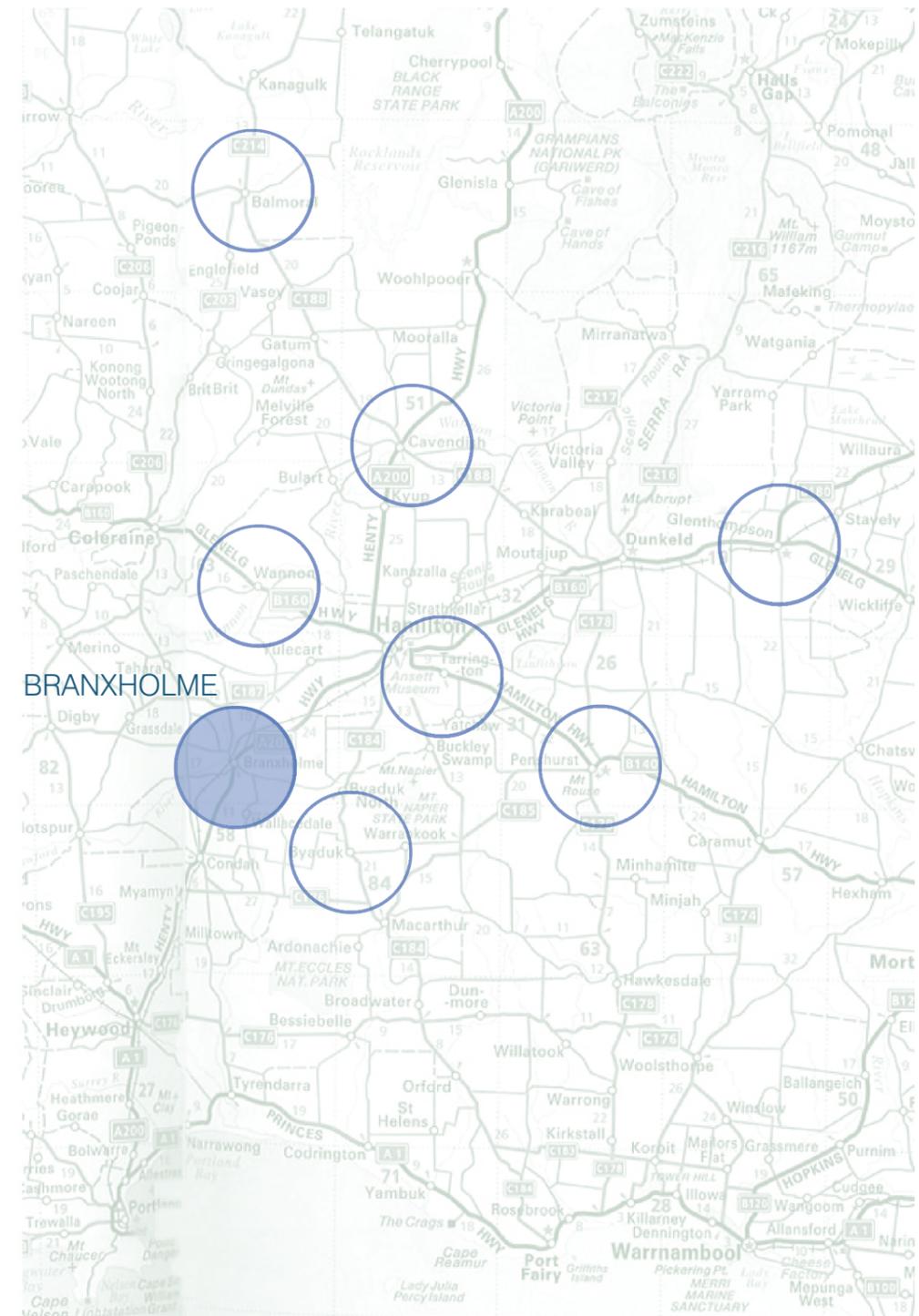


A DRAFT URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK FOR **BRANXHOLME**

Urban Design Frameworks for 8 Small Towns of the Southern Grampians Shire

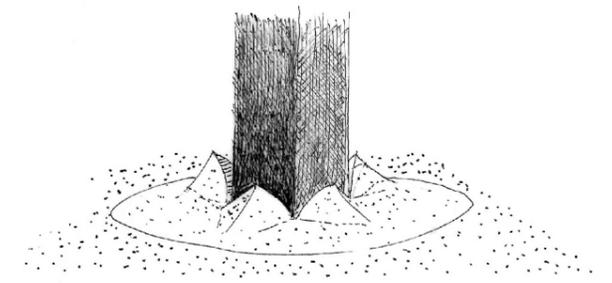
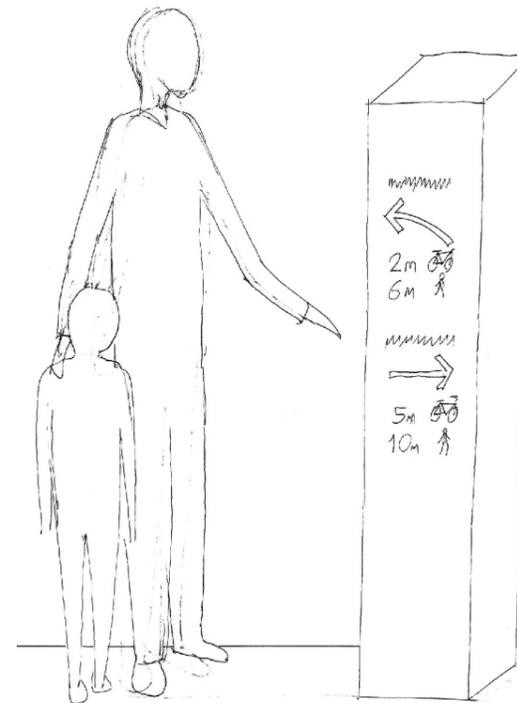
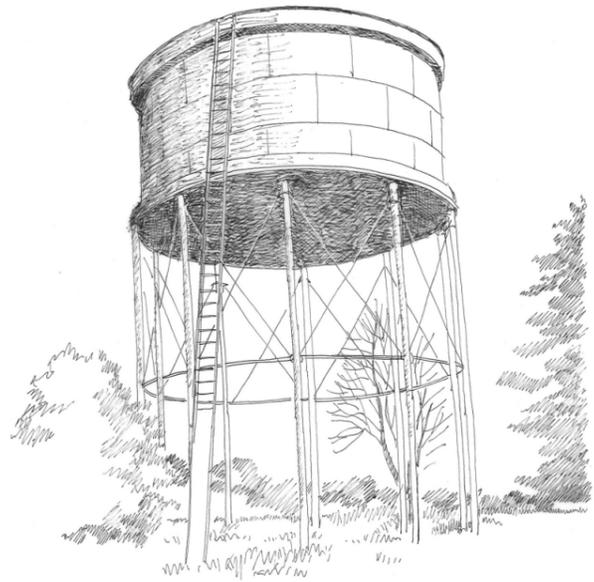


INTRODUCTION

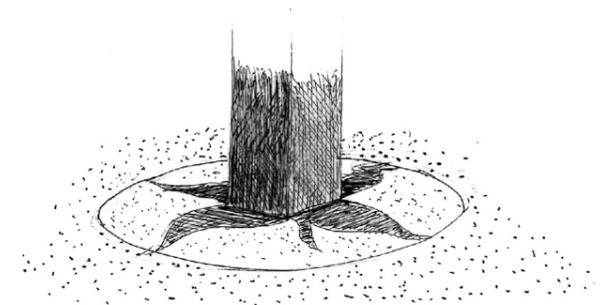
An urban design framework is a strategic plan for the town that draws together input from the Community, Council, and Consultants to identify the best ways of enhancing Branxholme's liveability. It does this by identifying, as far as possible, how the towns assets can be protected and enhanced, its problems overcome and valued new qualities and characteristics introduced.

This booklet describes what should happen in Branxholme and can be achieved within the available resources as well as identifying what might be possible in the future as other resources become available. These conclusions are based on previous consultation and analysis exercises that establish the problems to be addressed, the assets to be protected and enhanced and are based on a shared vision for the township.

In addition to identifying the issues important to the community, the consultation process also revealed a wide range of suggestions from the community as to what physical changes should be pursued. Whilst all suggestions were valuable and have been considered the plan focuses on those actions that are likely to be broadly supported, made greatest contribution for the available resources and will work well with other strategies. The plan also incorporates proposals that weren't identified by the community but in our view better achieve community objectives.



Footing Option A



Footing Option B

Milestone 'grounded' by sculptural footings as shown here to articulate how the milestone is 'of that place'



STRATEGIC PROPOSAL 4 DEFINING TOURIST TRAILS

This strategy builds on strategies 1-3 and provides a way of enabling interested people to engage in the town and the qualities it offers. This strategy incorporates additional signage to enable people to find their way and reassure visitors they are going the right way. Although this adds yet more signage into the public realm, it is considered necessary to coax visitors to experience the areas drawcards and because the features are designed are designed to be attractive pieces of street furniture in their own right.

A variety of town trails should be defined that allow people to experience sequentially the features that interest them and build on insights from previous places they might have seen. The trails are to be advertised on the town map described in strategy 2, available on the Shires website, include distances and times between key features and incidental features that are on the way such as shops, rest stops, etc.

By colour coding the different features (e.g. European history, Indigenous history, Flora and Fauna or geology trail) on the town map visitors to the town are able to choose to walk or cycle by those features which interest them most and plan their journey accordingly (e.g. following the 'green' nature trail, or 'purple' fauna trail).

The tourist trails are marked at each point of interest or change in direction using a milestone that reflects the areas rural character and incorporates the town logo, information on distance and time to destination to enable people to see both how far they have gone and also how far they have to go.

Tourist trails would work on many levels, both geographically and in terms of visitor interest;

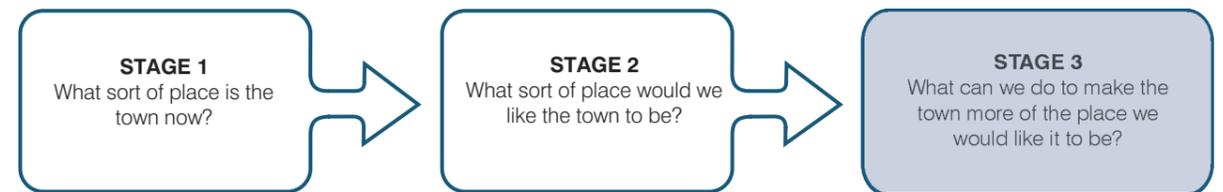
- i) Strategic trails that make use of the railway to link towns for long distance walkers;
- ii) Local trails within towns that link interesting features within towns and are designed to provide people with opportunities to stretch their legs and engage people rather than provide a challenge which would be more of the role of the strategic trails;
- iii) Vehicular based regional detours focussing on a particular theme or experience (eg. volcanoes, railways or wildlife watching);
- iv) Destinations in their own right and detours from another destination for a wide range of visitor experiences.



Indicative milestone directional signage on tourist trail.

THE PROCESS

The study consisted of three principal stages, each of which can be summarised by the question shown in the diagram below. Finding answers to these questions drew on many inputs from the Council, the consultants and the community. This booklet outlines the conclusions of Stage 3 of the study.



A VISION FOR BRANXHOLME

The first two stages of the project reveal that the people of Branxholme have a vision for their town as being one that:

- Provides a safer pedestrian link across the Henty Highway between the school, community hall and pub/service centre on the western side, and the sports precinct, new picnic area and residences' on the eastern side;
- Protects and enhances the strong sense of community and lifestyle affordability of the Town;
- Improves the safety issues associated with poor drainage;
- Finds an innovative and attractive use for the commercial buildings;
- Make better use of existing sporting facilities and improve existing swimming sites within the Town;
- Celebrates the history of Branxholme;
- Develops the economic potential for the local production of olive oil and quail eggs; and
- Faces the challenges and opportunities raised by the Iluka mine.

The key strategies that achieve these goals are described in this leaflet, other strategies have been identified that might be considered and these are included in a separate table.

The emphasis placed on these or other strategies you may wish us to consider is something we will require your feedback on and your participation in this process is appreciated.

BRANXHOLME TOWN PLAN STRATEGIC PROPOSALS

These are proposals that are common to all towns in the study area. They are aimed at making the overall region a more attractive area and ensure that the towns are seen as complementary rather than competing. They are intended to ensure the area has an appeal and identity that is not just about individual towns but also about a region, and in this way encourage visitors who have been to one town to go to another. These strategies are covered in more detail on the following pages and are;

-  **Strategy 1**
Co-ordinated signage and icons for the towns
-  **Strategy 2**
Promotional maps for each town
-  **Strategy 3**
Recording and telling the towns stories
-  **Strategy 4**
Proposed walking trails

SITE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

These are proposals that are tailored to the circumstances of Branxholme

-  **Strategy 5**
Explore how the local swimming reservoir can be improved for locals by including a picnic area and indigenous tree planting for shade. *This improves the recreational facilities available to both children and adults.*
-  **Strategy 6**
Provide opportunities to re-open the former bakery as a rural living museum to the public/regional tourist market to educate people about the lifestyle and products (such as baking) of past times and the relationship of the town to the railway. *This provides opportunities for visitors to interact with the historical buildings, settlement and interesting former uses, as well as develop an enhanced 'pride of place' within Branxholme.*

-  **Strategy 7**
Provide an additional BBQ area at the 'Hook, Line & Sinker' Community Hall on the western side of the Henty Highway to complement the BBQ on the east side. *This enhances the already strong social 'glue' in Branxholme, as well as provides a perceived 'social centre' of the town as an identifiable space for informal gatherings and chance meetings.*

-  **Strategy 8**
Prioritise the paving of Best and Wyndham Streets so that they grade out to the table drains. *This ensures a safe walking environment throughout Branxholme and presents a significant and highly visible investment in infrastructure in the town.*

-  **Strategy 9**
Enhance usability of toilets at sporting facilities. This can be achieved either by repairing existing water tank which presently leaks or investigate the installation of composting toilets within the sports club precinct. *This improvement to the sports facilities will encourage more increased utilisation of the footy oval and newly sealed netball courts in particular, as well as opportunities to host regional competitions.*

-  **Strategy 10**
Create a 'bush boulevard' outside town limits along this section of the Henty Highway, using indigenous canopy trees and shrubs. *This provides a definable gateway and entrance to the town as well as the development of a 'sustainable' identity for Branxholme.*

-  **Strategy 11**
Remove the large Cypress trees and revegetate the area using indigenous planting species in keeping with those of the adjacent wetlands. *This will open up the views to the recreation reserve as well as provide sunlight to the scenic former swimming hole area.*

Proposal	Rationale
An action that we believe would benefit the town	Why that proposal would benefit the town

This strategy has two parts

Part 1: researching the stories. Council to invite the local community to share their stories and insights about the town and its history with an appointed historian or local historical societies. The invitation should stress it is not big history that is wanted but personal experiences and historical events such as wartime privations and VE and VJ day celebrations.

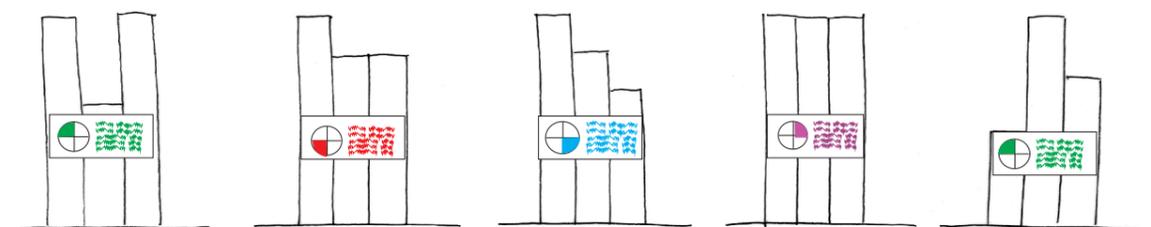
The stories could be submitted in the form of words or artwork.

Part 2: telling the stories. Council to install interpretive features at the points revealed by the research in addition to those described in the town plan and where they can direct people to existing and valued community services such as shops and hotels. Milestones shall incorporate the town icon (see strategy 1) and incorporate a panel that reflects the 4 layers of history of the town as described here colour which is coded to link the story to the particular layer it relates to.



Interpretive features to be consistent throughout each town, building on existing interpretive signage where it exists. Elsewhere suggested "default" indicative design is that interpretive features are constructed out of reclaimed timber, preferably railway sleepers to reflect the areas rural character. By using sleepers set at different heights as the setting for the panel described here each composition would be different and reinforce the areas uniqueness.

Council to investigate telling the story not just through the written word but also by sound recordings that enable visitors to hear the story as well as read about it.



STRATEGIC PROPOSAL 3 RECORDING AND TELLING THE TOWN'S STORIES

The people of this town are a wonderful repository of stories for illustrating the way people used to live and work in small rural communities as well as the contributions made by individuals to those towns. Recording those stories and incorporating them into interpretive features at points shown on the "town plan" in this report preserves them for posterity and gives visitors a fascinating insight into the challenges and lifestyles of rural communities at different times. Collectively undertaken with other towns in the region the ability of the area to yield insights about not just what the place is like now, but also how it came to be like that and what it was like in the past, will provide another dimension to the attractions of the area.

The interpretive features as described here are an effective way of communicating how the town has many interlinking layers of European and indigenous heritage, ecology and geology.

European History

The local historical societies can provide historical details and photographs that can illustrate personal stories and anecdotes. Telling the town's history through personal accounts and anecdotes is a particularly effective, accessible and interesting method of engaging with the wider community. This can help to bring a place to life. (See Elsternwick Example below).



The Elsternwick Canal in Melbourne features short quips inset into the paved pathway to capture the essence of ordinary stories about the place as told by local residents - the example above says 'Whenever the kids come in the door with wet shoes and school bags, "I say "What happened?" and they say "The Canal"'

Indigenous History

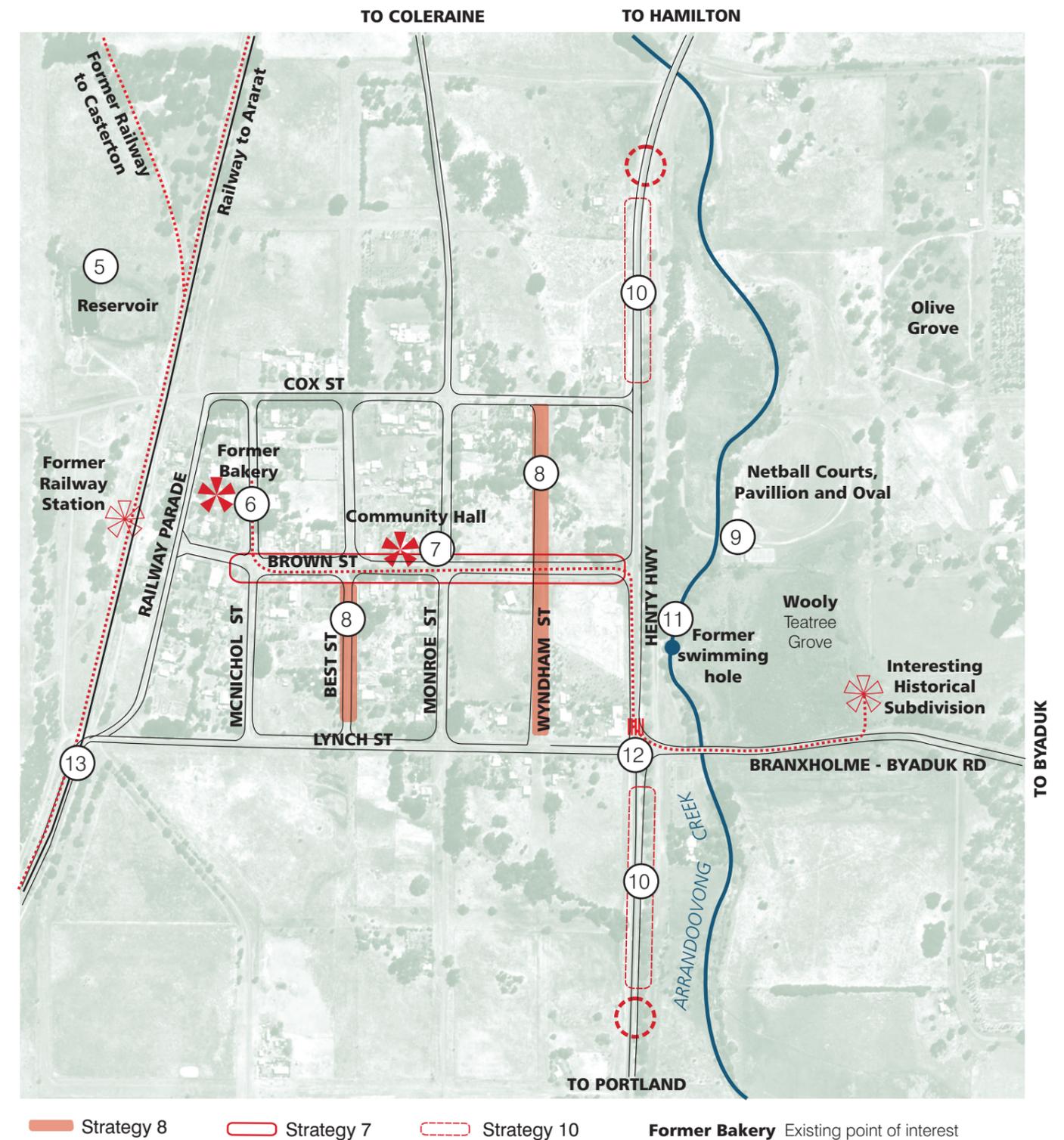
Recounting indigenous stories and historical events must be done in a sensitive manner. Consultation with the local indigenous community is essential. This will help contemporary visitors and locals to understand how indigenous people have interpreted the local area.

Flora and fauna features

Features should be identified in consultation with local Landcare representatives and other relevant natural conservation bodies. In particular, markers with flora information may occur through existing remnant vegetation areas. Consult with Parks Victoria and other relevant experts to determine content of signage.

Geology features

Features should be identified in consultation with a geologist and explained in terms of the landscape features that have resulted and such things as the soil types and consequent farming activity.



- 12 Strategy 12**
 Improve the pedestrian connection across the Henty Highway by providing warning signage for vehicles to slow down and investigate reducing speed limit through the town between Lynch and Cox streets 10 to 70km/hr. In conjunction with the above, install a crossing median to be incorporated as part of a traffic right turn facility. *This will improve the safety for pedestrians crossing over to the sports precinct (east side) at this prominent intersection, as well as the safety of turning trucks.*
- 13 Strategy 13**
 Investigate the development of a parallel bicycle track alongside the railway line. *This provides a wider range of recreational activities for young people in Branxholme and would help bring visitors to the town.*

OTHER THINGS NEEDED TO ACHIEVE THE VISION

It is recognised that the proposals do not address all aspects of the vision. This is because in our view achieving that vision lies outside the scope of an urban design framework or they would preclude achieving other equally important objectives and/or exceed the available resources to implement the study. That is not to say they are not important and by recording them here Council have a useful tool to try and achieve these community objectives through means other than pride of place funding. Key initiatives identified by this study for other funding sources include;

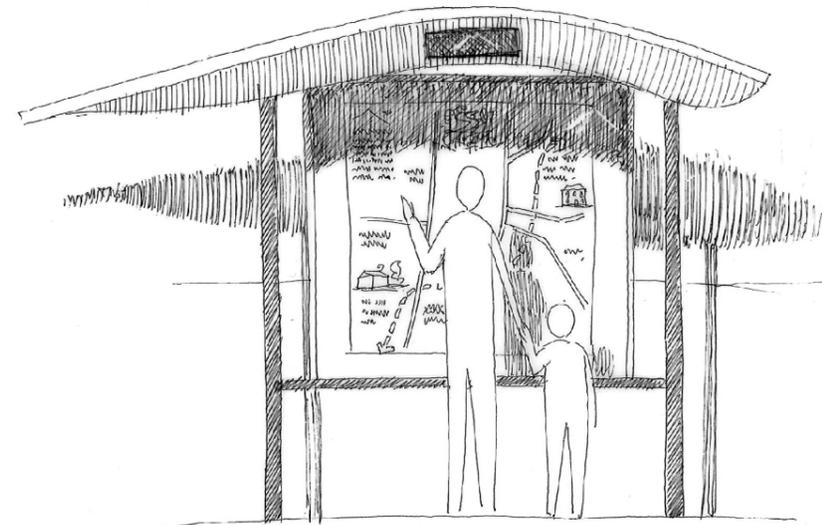
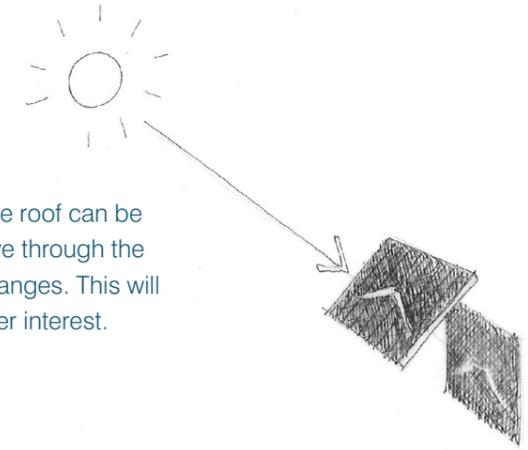
- 14 Establish an educational program to enable people to make better use of their limited water supplies under funding from the Department of Infrastructure's 'Our Water Our Future' program. This program has potential to fund and undertake a co-ordinated drainage and water supply study initiative. This will assess the existing issues and recommend improvements that seek to use the existing supply more effectively and ensure more is available for both fire management and gardening.
- 15 Establish a relationship with potential outlets such as Tarrington's Catalpha café for Branxholme to provide specialty food products such as olives and quail eggs;
- 16 Conduct a series of workshops in the town to facilitate small businesses to start up and utilise the areas potential (eg. olives, quail eggs)

NON SITE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

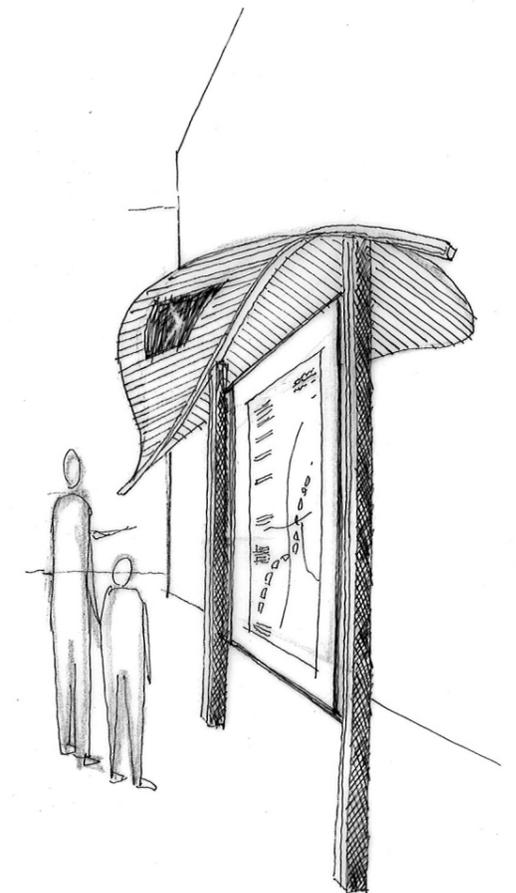
These are proposals that do not result in actual physical changes but instead better equip the community to utilise the qualities and characteristics of their surroundings. In Branxholme they include:

- NS1 Council to follow through with the Glenelg Water Authority to provide a B-grade water supply non potable;
- NS2 Improve the regularity of Council's maintenance of grass verges to every 3 months and more after October and December.

Shadow casting principles illustrating how holes in the roof can be used to reveal the town icon on the plan that will move through the day and be revealed in different strengths as light changes. This will give the signage a dynamic quality that will add further interest.



Illustrative perspective and elevation of a freestanding structure to house the town map where no suitable wall exists. The structure to provide shade to viewers and allow opportunities to cut holes in the roof to reveal the town icon on the map as the sun casts a reverse silhouette of the feature on the map. Such a structure can provide a memorable landmark in its own right that draws people to look at the map. In some places existing maps and/or structures might be used or revised.



STRATEGIC PROPOSAL 2 PUTTING THE TOWN ON THE MAP

There are many interesting features in and around this town that are not immediately apparent to passers by. Such features might include;

- Historic buildings/ buildings of architectural merit
- Heritage/ tourist trails
- History of the town/ information on the people who lived there and insights into their lifestyles
- Ecological features
- Location of toilets
- Location of commercial areas
- Location of festivals/ events
- Location of key landscape assets/ view points

Presenting these features on an artistic and interesting map which is framed within an attractive structure that offers shade and is in a prominent place can become an added feature and landmark in its own right. An example such a structure is shown to the right.

If all the towns in the area were to install such a map in the locations indicated, then a visitor, having seen one and found it to be an interesting and informative object would be more likely to look at other maps he or she recognised as being in a similar style. The map would incorporate a note saying that copies of the map are free and available from the local shop/hotel or petrol station as appropriate. By encouraging people into the shops to pick up a copy of the map they would be more likely to spend money in that town.

The maps can utilise the potential of computer graphics and so be easily frequently updated. These maps should not incorporate advertising other than mentioning where copies are available, to avoid overwhelming the map. Storing the map electronically also enables information about the towns to be communicated to national databases such as National Toilet Database.

Copies of the map should be made available on double sided A4 pads. these may incorporate advertising which can then become a source of revenue to offset the cost of producing the map. The other side of the A4 pad to show a map of the region, centered on the Southern Grampians Shire, annotated to show the areas key tourist assets.

Copies of maps should be made available on the web and designed in colour but readable in black and white in order to be photocopied.

Maps to be prepared in two versions, childrens' versions and adults versions to tell the same stories at different levels and provide a way of engaging children that might provide a valuable break for adults from the long journey from population centres.

The childrens' version should invite children to colour it in and return it to the Shire for a "prize" of a poster of the Shire, or similar. In this way making the trip to the Southern Grampians more memorable and engaging for children, and consequently their parents. The map structure to incorporate a place to post community notices to facilitate the sharing of information at these high profile points within the community.

STRATEGIC PROPOSAL 1 SIGNAGE (part 1)

Each town has its own unique character and identity that is often not clearly evident to passers by. By installing distinct, memorable and attractive signage at the entrance to each town, in the locations shown on the town plan, the key features and uniqueness of each town can be more effectively celebrated and emphasised. This also creates a great opportunity to provide the town with an attractive threshold or gateway that tells people they have arrived somewhere special.

It is proposed that each town is given its own icon or logo that expresses something of the core character of the town (subject to the detailed design considerations outlined). Presenting the town's icon and other supporting features as clear, attractively drawn pictograms on the signage will help them stick in peoples minds. They also differentiate towns whilst at the same time relating them to other towns in the region that have a similar sign and graphic style. In this way they will help to tie the diverse towns of the Shire together as a place with a rich diversity of communities and attractions.

The proposed sign is intended to replace the existing signage subject to a review of signage at the entrance to each town. The proposed sign is to incorporate a welcoming message and "please drive carefully" request for people to slow down. The icons as drawn are indicative only and are subject to further work to ensure a sense of community ownership of the icon as being the defining feature of the town. They are deliberately simplistic to provide a "point of difference" with conventional signage which is, by its very nature generic and not unique to that place.

The icon as shown is designed to be simple, memorable, capable of being reproduced on paper in black and white, or laser cut from cor-ten steel which is low maintenance, presents a rustic character and casts shadows on the ground or background walls that reveal the icon in the shadow.

The icons for the town would be further supported for pictograms for the opportunities available in that town. This presents that information to passers by in a clear and memorable way and establishes a consistent, attractive graphic language for the different towns.

<p>Balmoral: <i>River Red Gums</i> These grand trees are considered a suitable icon because of the contribution they make to the character and identity of the towns setting</p> 	<p>Branxholme: <i>Water Tower</i> This landmark is used as an icon because it is considered the most striking feature of the town and is representative of the towns many heritage features and connection to the railway</p> 	<p>Byaduk: <i>A Flower</i> This is used as an icon because the annual Flower Show is an important and defining event for the town with a long tradition.</p> 
<p>Cavendish: <i>The railway bridge, river and trees</i> were considered to encapsulate what is special about Cavendish.</p> 	<p>Tarrington: <i>Landscape and Church Spire</i> This combination of features provide a strong and memorable imagery for the town.</p> 	<p>Glenthompson: <i>The brickworks</i> This icon provides an acknowledgment of the areas living heritage and continuing industry as well as recognising its impact on n the towns skyline</p> 
<p>Wannon: <i>Wannon Falls</i> The falls need no explanation as Wannons most memorable landmark.</p> 	<p>Penshurst: <i>Mount Rouse/Volcanic history</i> This is identified as an icon for the town to provide a strong link between the town and its fascinating geology.</p> 	

part 2 Review of existing signage

Council to review existing signage to establish its effectiveness at communicating information to passers by. This can be assessed by: plotting the location and content of existing signage; identifying overlaps of messages; identifying areas of sensory overload where several signs compete with one another visually, which diminish their effectiveness; identifying signs that cover the messages to be incorporated into the strategic proposal; identifying what signs are obsolete; and identify acceptable locations for signs based on VicRoads guidelines. Based on this analysis, conclusions can be drawn about what signs should be removed (obsolete, overlapping content) and where new signs can be located. This will require significant consultation to achieve consensus.

part 3 Commission and install signs

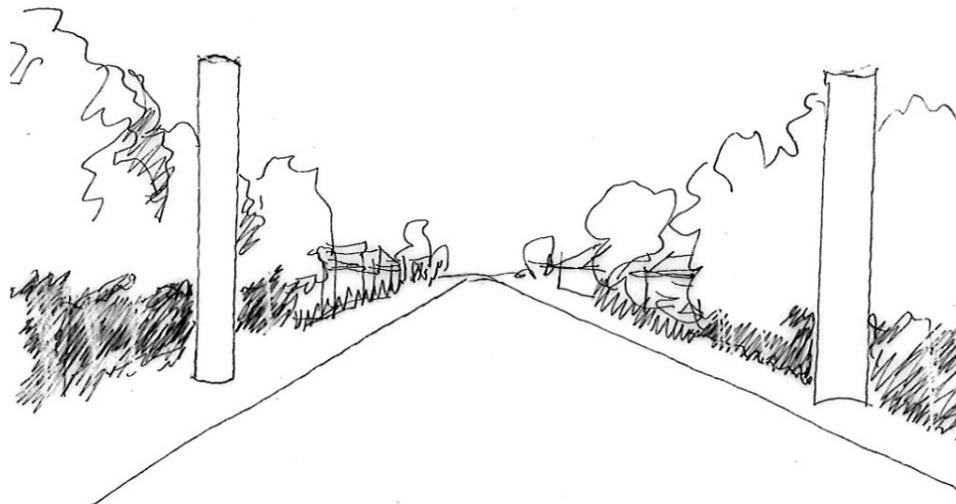
The message about each town is communicated not just through the icon, but also in the way the icon is presented. To this end the icon is designed to be located on a pair of columns on either side of the entrance road to provide a “sense of gateway”.

The column also provides opportunities to utilise the graphic language developed in the icons to tell something about the town through a series of secondary icons.

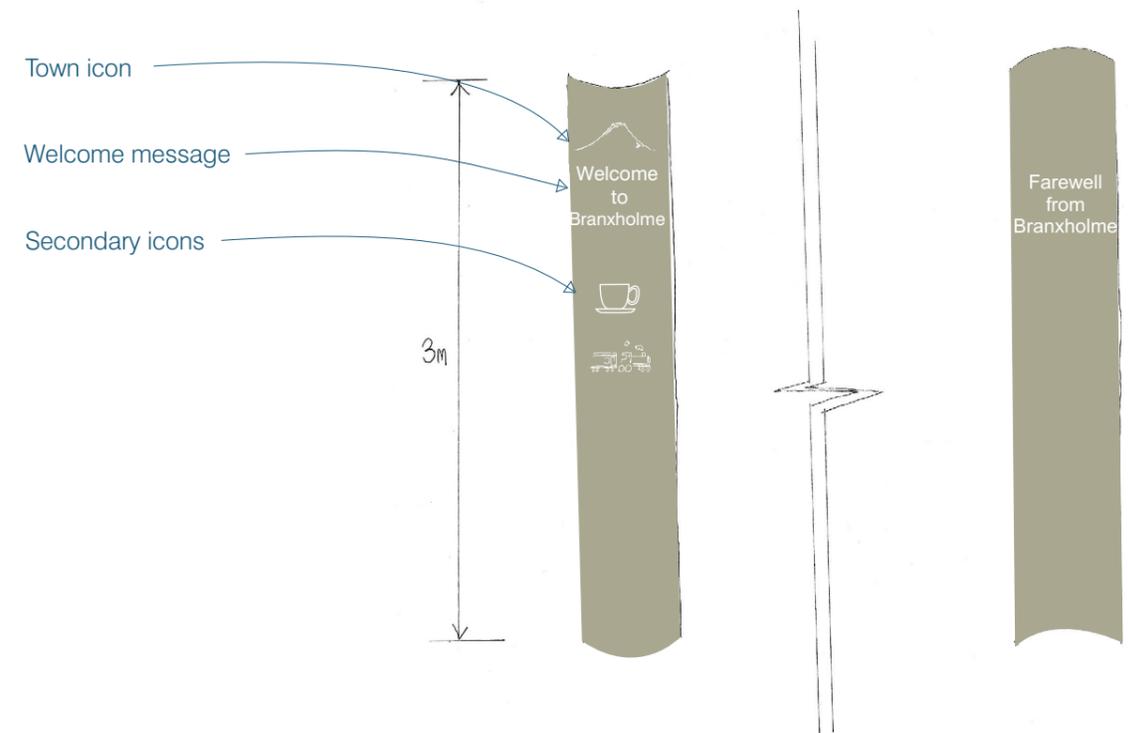
These secondary icons can be used in different combinations on a number of towns as it is the different combination of secondary icons that make the town unique.

The secondary icons represent intrinsic features of the towns- such as rivers, trees, railway heritage and services and do not advertise specific commercial company names or products due to the frequency with which these might change and so make the signs obsolete.

The exact location is subject to the review of existing signage described in part 2 of this strategic proposal and consultation with VicRoads. Key considerations are that they are not hazardous to traffic, do not cause danger by blocking sight lines or create an obstruction to pedestrians or cyclists using the verge or footpaths. Ideally they are located at the point where the road is perceived to enter into the town (subject to VicRoads requirements outlined below). The threshold to town is usually marked by a change in character adjacent to the road. Such changes might be in landscape character, buildings and or a creek crossing. Guidance on locating such signs is given in AUSTRROAD Guide to Traffic Engineering Practice - Part 8 and the Australian Standards.



Indicative perspective of how the signage can be used to provide a memorable and distinctive gateway to the town



Indicative axonometric of the signage column, illustrating how the signage can be designed to provide a strong sense of gateway that uses a simple technique- a slight curvature of the column to relate one side of the road to the other (as well as providing structural integrity).

Detailed design of vehicle guide signs is given in AUSTRROADS Guide to Traffic Engineering Practice Part 8, and the relevant Australian standards.

The column incorporates the town's main icon, secondary icons and a welcoming message that defines the towns uniqueness whilst placing it in a larger region that would be instantly recognisable to visitors having seen other towns treated the same way.