

Thimphu Structure Plan

Natural Landscape Protection

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“Protect and celebrate the natural habitat”

The Plan aims to **preserve existing natural landscapes**, habitats, places, and assets of ecological and natural heritage and value, as well as agriculture wetlands. This relates primarily to riparian zones (i.e., the areas between land and water), pockets of pristine natural forest and areas at risk from natural hazards.

The Plan seeks to protect people from hazard and climate risks, celebrate Bhutanese culture and identity, support livelihoods, health, and wellbeing; provide access to nature and educational opportunities for communities; and preserve existing valuable habitats and biodiversity.



Key proposals

1. Define a **limit** to the extent of **developable urban areas** through creation of a green belt. This includes definition of satellite neighbourhoods outside of the city limits.
2. Defines areas within the city **limits** where **development** is to be limited. This includes Kabessa to **protect its special rural character**, and neighbourhoods that have emerged through sprawl including upper Motithang and near Simtokha.
3. Extend **protections to heritage structures** including those of local value or vernacular architecture. Explore how to enhance these through regulations relating to their setting and integrate these through a network of routes.

LEGEND

KEY

- Thromde Boundary
- Southern Extension Boundary
- Neighbourhood Boundary
- Project Area Boundary

Land Use

- Agriculture
- Urban Areas
- Residential Rural

Protections

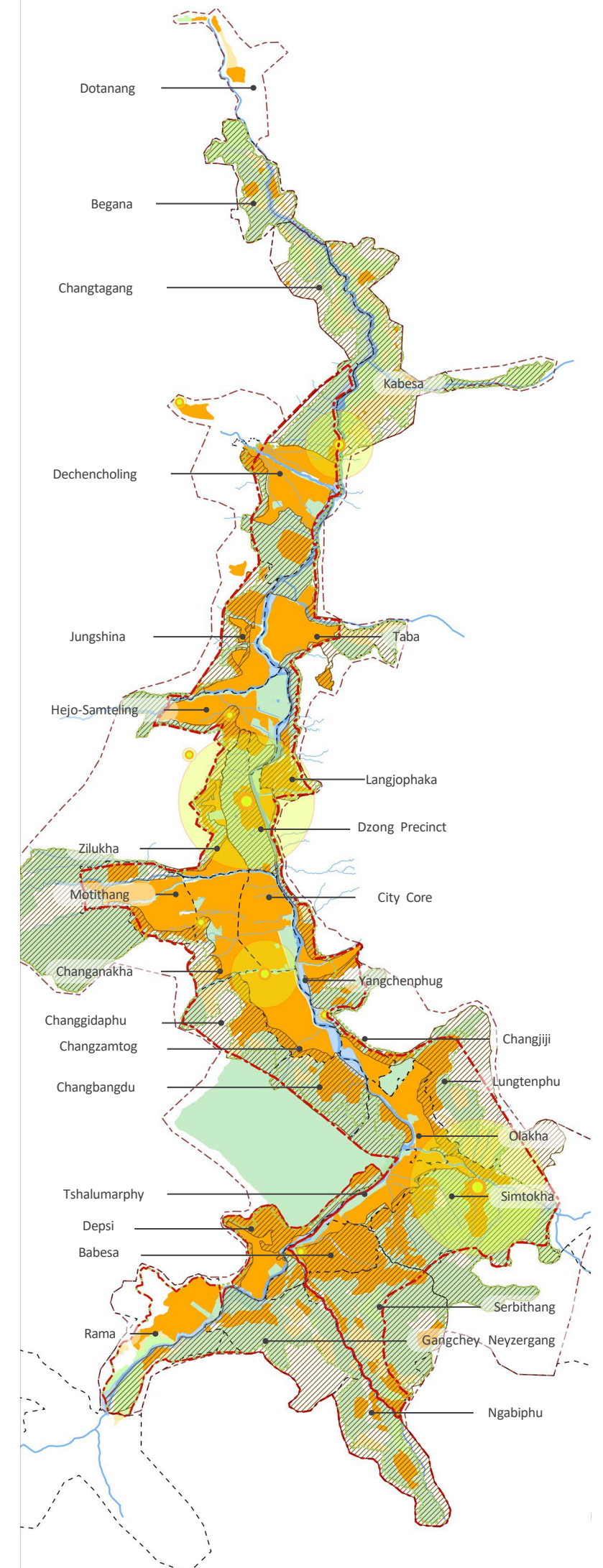
- Restricted Development zone
- Inner Green Belt Boundary

Heritage Assets

- Grade A
- Grade B
- Grade C
- Buffer

Water System

- River
- Riparian Corridor



Key topic 1 / Ecological Landscapes

Despite its richness, Thimphu biodiversity have undergone significant degradation due to rapid expansion of the City. The Plan seeks to protect the city's key ecological landscapes under three biodiversity designations:

- **Forest Pockets** – to preserve and connect forest areas and the provision of public amenity beyond the Green Belt boundary.
- **Riparian Corridors** – to act as a protective buffer along the Wang Chhu and its primary tributaries. Safeguarding the Riparian Zone will be an important contributor to the future climate resilience of Thimphu.
- **Local Nature Reserves** – to protect areas of high biodiversity and provide people with access to nature within the urban environment.
- **Natural Heritage Landscapes and Wetlands** – to preserve and cherish natural heritage areas which should be accessible by the public – ensuring a sensitive approach and be transformed into multifunctional open spaces.



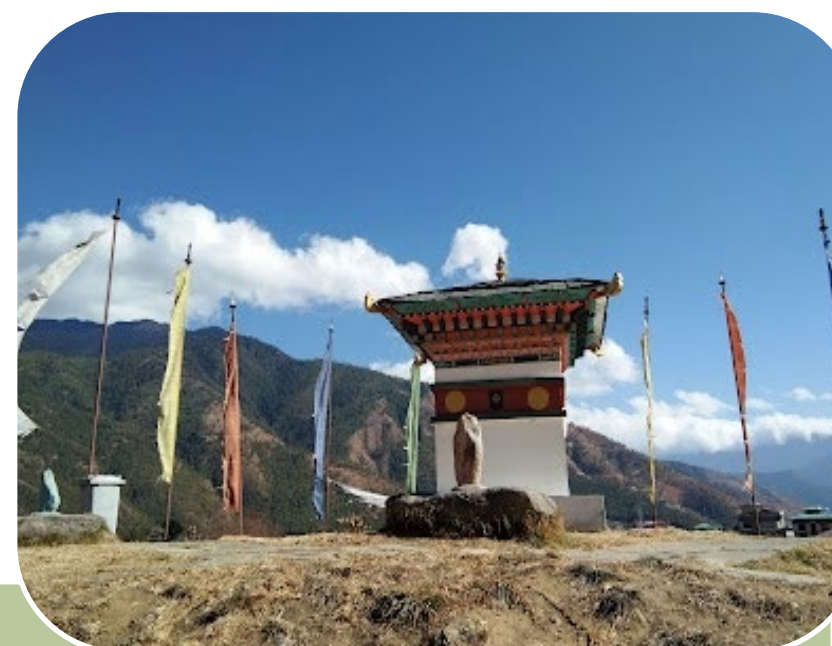
Preserve and connect forest areas



Wang Chhu riparian corridor



Access to nature within the urban environment



Buthan Ecological Park

Key topic 2 / Wang Chhu Corridor

The Wang Chhu River is the ecological, movement and **recreational spine** running through the City. The Plan proposed interventions include the River Corridor project, which is a visionary urban regeneration project that seeks to transform Thimphu by combining **improved flood protection** with the **creation of public spaces and active travel routes** that connect communities. The project will **support community cohesion** and interactivity, economic development, health and wellbeing, a cleaner river and flood resilience.

