



## Vibrancy and Vitality Study of Thame Town Centre

Thame Town Council

April 2016



In partnership with:



**Authors:**

Sam White

Chris Jones

Susie Stevenson

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# 1 Introduction

Miller Research and Chris Jones Regeneration were commissioned by Thame Town Council (TTC) to carry out a study to establish an action plan that suggests how the council's available funding should be used to maximise the vibrancy and vitality of Thame Town Centre. This report documents the findings of the study.

## 1.1.1 Aims of the Study

The primary aim of the study was to obtain an independent perspective on the options available to TTC, to make best use of their available funding for 2016/2017 - that would maximise the vibrancy and vitality of Thame Town Centre. The study also sought to identify other areas for development in the town centre that would require further funding.

## 1.1.2 Background

Thame Town Council received a £14,000 economic development funding from South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) for the 2016/2017 financial year<sup>1</sup> to spend on services and facilities that benefit the town. TTC were able to match this funding from the precept providing an initial pot of £28,000. Subsequently, a further £1,000 has been made available to TTC by the district council, proving a total amount of £29,000. Furthermore, additional funds of up to £5,000 has been set aside for maintenance / equipment / marketing initiatives for the Thame Charter Market. This study set out to identify activities and initiatives that could be supported by these funds to maximise the vibrancy and vitality of Thame Town Centre.

## 1.1.3 Approach

The study adopted a four stage approach:

- **Stage one:** Re-familiarisation / Review – a desk based review of studies conducted in the past five years relating to Thame Town Centre.<sup>2</sup>
- **Stage two:** Stakeholder Engagement – a series of four separate engagement activities including: in-depth stakeholder interviews<sup>3</sup>, an online survey<sup>4</sup> a site-visit to assess the town centre<sup>5</sup>, and a workshop with approximately 60 attendees from the local community<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> April 2016 to April 2017.

<sup>2</sup> The review included the following: Lockwood Report, Cartar Jonas study, Jake Collinge Planning Consultancy Report, Thame Market Survey, Neighbourhood Plan, Thame Market Action Plan, SODC Economic Development Action Plan for Thame 2015/2016 and 21st Century Thame Project list.

<sup>3</sup> The stakeholder interviews included representatives from the following: SODC, 21st Century Thame, local residents, local businesses, Thame Town Council, Thame Co-operative market and Thame Centre First. In total, approximately 15 interviews were conducted.

<sup>4</sup> Which was publicised through existing TTC communication and networks including social media. The survey attracted 235 responses.

<sup>5</sup> Three consultants from the research team carried out a visual assessment of the town centre which included a guided tour from TTC and SODC staff to understand what initiatives and activities had been implemented in the town, and more generally to understand the town's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

<sup>6</sup> The workshop took place after TTC's annual general meeting at the Town Hall. The presentation used at the workshop can be viewed online at [<https://youtu.be/p0vDZD3b6jk>]

- **Stage three:** Synthesis and Options Development – a desk-based analysis of the research findings to develop a suite of options.
- **Stage four:** Options Review and Recommendations – a review session with TTC and the finalisation of the action plan.

#### 1.1.4 Report Structure

The remainder of the report is structured with Chapter 2 which provides the key findings from the study (detailed findings can be found in Chapter 4) and thus which provides the rationale and evidence for the action plan. Chapter 3 draws on the evidence to provide a series of recommended actions that TTC can consider to spend the funds available to them. Chapter 4 documents the detailed findings of the town centre assessment, survey results and feedback from the stakeholder interviews and workshop (the key findings of which are summarised in Chapter 2).

## 2 Town Centre Assessment: Key Findings

This chapter documents the key findings from the report. The detailed findings from which this summary is informed is documented in Chapter 4.

Strengths	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Real' and historic Market Town in an attractive setting</li> <li>• Well connected location, attractive to live in, good road and train connectivity</li> <li>• Compact town centre- with shops, services and attractions in close proximity</li> <li>• Good convenience retail offer with food stores, butchers and local produce</li> <li>• Strong independent retail and business sector</li> <li>• Clusters of destination retailers – fashion, hairdressers, coffee shops</li> <li>• Notable food and drink destinations e.g. The Thatch</li> <li>• Becoming known as an 'events' town e.g. Food Festival, Arts &amp; Literature Festival</li> <li>• Very low vacancy rate</li> <li>• Strong weekly and farmers' market</li> <li>• Award winning town centre initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on the success of Great British High Street award in raising awareness and promotion</li> <li>• Extend reputation of Food Festival and other events across the year in terms fringe activity</li> <li>• Maximise Midsomer Murders Experience opportunity and embed it with business sector</li> <li>• Proposed redevelopment of cattle market site to meet gaps in town centre offer</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility and promotion of parking provision - needs co-ordination and management of both on and off-street parking</li> <li>• Low vacancy rate means there is a lack of premises for new business so offer could become stale</li> <li>• Comparison offer has gaps esp. clothing, footwear</li> <li>• Food and drink offer lacks diversity and choice e.g. family market restaurant</li> <li>• Lack of dynamic and accessible street level information that signs activities in the town centre</li> <li>• No sense of street theatre, music and activity that adds to experience</li> <li>• Lack of an integrated digital platform for the town</li> <li>• Capacity of local organisations and individuals to continue delivering with diminishing resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the town doesn't connect with new residents, there is an opportunity lost for custom and relationship building</li> <li>• Potential shoppers in outer catchments shopping in Aylesbury, High Wycombe, and other destinations - not in Thame</li> <li>• Tesco planning application seen by some as having a negative impact on town centre vitality and viability</li> </ul>

## 2.1 Existing Studies

A review of existing studies relating to Thame Town Centre was undertaken. The following provides a summary of the key findings. The full review can be found in Chapter 4.

- Residents and visitors value Thame's 'real' and historic market town appeal, strong independent businesses, and compact town centre.
- Thame's Neighbourhood Plan identifies the need to align housing (775 homes) and employment (3 hectares) developments with town centre opportunities to safeguard local assets and to accommodate new retail development opportunities (4,000 sq. m).
- Thame Town Council's retail impact assessment study (prepared partly in response to an out of town Tesco planning application), identifies that the in-town Waitrose food store plays an important role in getting people into the town centre through linked trips. It suggests that the out of town Tesco proposal was contrary to National Planning Policy Framework and expresses concern that such a supermarket might have a negative effect on existing convenience stores and would threaten the linked trip activity currently taking place with the in-town supermarkets.
- The retail study also notes the draw of Aylesbury's retail offer within the secondary catchment area as a threat to the town centre's retail offer. Finally, the study suggests that Thame is underperforming as an attractor for comparison goods - specifically clothing and footwear. And that there are gaps in leisure / social activities, highlighting a need for a wider range of cafes, restaurants and bars.
- The weekly and farmers' markets are well established and diverse which attract a strong and loyal customer base. The weekly market attracts around 1,000 visitors per day, 50 per cent of which are thought to be regulars who spend a reasonable sum on market products.
- The lack of car park information and signage are frequently mentioned in existing studies as being an issue for the town centre. The increased traffic on market days' causes additional pressure on the supply of spaces and subsequent car park management.
- Existing studies have offered a number of suggested areas for improvement in the town centre. They include establishing a town square or focal point in the centre of the town, upgrades to shop fronts, improving cycling facilities, coordinating marketing and promotion, investment in the market, and enhancing the town's on-line presence to ensure that it appeals to both local residents and visitors.

## 2.2 Town Centre Today – Current Perceptions

This section documents the key findings of the survey and on-site assessment of the town centre environment and retail offer<sup>7</sup>. Site visits were carried out on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> March and Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 to provide an independent view of the current performance of the town centre – which could be used to inform the development of an action plan. The survey, which attracted 235 responses was circulated through TTC communication channels and town networks including

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<sup>7</sup> Further details of the review can be found in Chapter 6.

social media. It should be noted that 91% of survey respondents came from the OX9 postcode and thus the views presented in the report from the survey sample may over represent local residents. It is recommended that a separate analysis be undertaken in the future to access visitor / tourist needs as they may differ from the views of local residents.

## 2.2.1 Arrival and Parking

### Key Findings

- Along the main roads into Thame there are brown road signs indicating that it is an historic market town but there are no other promotional information signs celebrating Thame's offer.
- The town centre and car parks are relatively well signed on main road routes, but once in the town centre the car parks can be difficult to find for first time visitors. The town centre would benefit from more effective signage and information about the car parks to create clear awareness that they are available and located close to the town centre. Clear and effective signage along the roads to the car parks and, once in the car parks, for pedestrians to the town centre would be beneficial.
- The need to ensure parking is available and accessible to all town centre users was the second highest priority for Thame Town Centre in the near future (reported by 64 per cent of survey respondents).
- There is one large long stay pay and display car park (Cattle Market car park) within five-minute walk from the town centre and two short to medium (3 hours<sup>8</sup>) pay and display / free car parks also within minutes walking of the town centre. Southern Road car park is pay and display, managed by the district council whilst Upper High Street is free and managed by the Town Council. There is a free short stay (1-hour) car park in front of the town hall also managed by the District Council. There are also three other sizeable private car parks intended for the use of customers.
- Although the town centre is fairly well supplied with public car parks, – more than two fifths (44 per cent) of survey respondents expressed that the availability and ease of free parking across the town centre was a problem; the third highest ranked problem<sup>9</sup>.
- The entrance to the long stay car park can be confusing for first time visitors as signage at the entrance is not highly visible and navigation through the entrance is confusing as the site is shared with the cattle market and the leisure club. The Southern Road car park can also be difficult to find and the very short and direct pedestrian link to the town centre could be better quality.
- The Upper High Street car park site is used for the weekly and farmers' markets which can put pressure on parking elsewhere in the town on those days.
- Car parking facilities and their management need to be considered as part of an overarching destination plan. Car parking facilities need advanced directional signage from key gateways and arrival points to maximise their effectiveness and to reduce leakage of visitors to other retail destinations offering free on-site parking such as out of town supermarkets. The existing

<sup>8</sup> Upper High Street car park allows only 1-hour parking on market days.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that this is the perception of survey respondents.

out of town supermarket planning application could have a negative impact on the use of town centre car parks and this needs to be taken into consideration in future plans.

### 2.2.2 Getting Around and Civic Space

#### Key Findings

- Thame is known for being compact and easy to get around (75% of survey respondent said getting around the town was either good or very good).
- The streets are wide and inviting but pedestrian movement must compete with traffic and parking.
- There are no dedicated civic spaces in the town centre large enough to host events and other town centre activities. Both the Upper High Street and Cornmarket car parks are currently used occasionally as event space, which of course reduces parking during events.
- The future redevelopment of the cattle market site was the second biggest problem for Thame Town Centre and half of respondents (49.5%) indicated that they felt it was the main priority for the future of the town centre.
- Key walking routes in and around the town centre could be improved – specifically linkages between car parks and the town centre.
- Thame's infrastructure development was seen as the top priority by over three quarters of survey respondents (78%) to cope with the growing population.
- Co-ordination of how spaces and streets are managed and maintained is a key focus so that the market town character of the town centre is maintained and enhanced. Liaison with South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council would develop a more proactive and planned way of working for planned maintenance and future capital programmes.
- There are opportunities within Montesson Square to rearrange street furniture and information display cases so that the space is made more flexible

### 2.2.3 Shops, Services and other Attractors

#### Key Findings

- Thame has a strong convenience goods retail offer – with three food stores in the town centre and several small independent food outlets.
- The town has a very low vacancy rate which suggests a strong retail market, but which could also inhibit new entrants into the town.
- Town centre users are satisfied with the quality of services with 84 per cent rating services as being good quality.
- The town is well served for hairdressing / beauty & health outlets, charity shops, estate agents, gift shops and café's / coffee shops.

- There are notable gaps in the retail offer. Survey respondents felt that gaps in the retail offer / missing shops or products was the biggest problem that Thame faced.
  - Similarly, the need to fill gaps in town centre shops, food and drink and other services was the third most important priority for Thame town centre
- Gaps in the retail offer include: fashion / clothing (specifically menswear and younger fashion), homeware / electricals etc.
- The evening time offer in Thame could be improved - one third of survey respondents (33 per cent) reported a need to broaden the evening time offer.
- A key challenge for the town will be to align any future investment to target specific gaps in the retail offer.

## 2.2.4 Town Centre Information

### Key Findings

- Current town centre information is provided through a series of Victorian style wayfinding systems, shopping guide maps and information display cases – some of which is outdated and requires more regular maintenance.
- The availability and quality of information on the town centre was reported as good / very good by 71 per cent of the respondents to the survey – although 91% of respondents were from the local area and thus are not the target audience for the information.
- There is a heritage trail in the town centre which links places of interest and a Midsomer Murders trail.
- This review suggests that the type and location of existing information could be enhanced so that they promote the unique selling points of Thame.

## 2.2.5 Environmental Quality

### Key Findings

- The market town character of Thame is a key aspect of its appeal.
- Most shop frontages contribute to the character although there are some exceptions.
- Supplementary planning guidance on shop front designs and working with occupiers to improve signage, fenestration and other details.

## 2.2.6 Markets and Events

### Key Findings

- Thame Market is one of the town's key attractors. Survey respondents agreed strongly with the statement that Thame has a strong market identity.
- Overall the weekly market scored second highest when asked to rate various services / activities in Thame Town Centre - 83 per cent of survey respondents reported a good / very good market within Thame.
- There is a need for capital investment in the market as it is one of the town's key attractors.
- Other entertainment such as on-street music, tasters, food festival fringe activity could be provided – perhaps through engagement with Love Your Local Market, to connect the market with the rest of the town centre, creating a unique atmosphere across the town on market days.

## 2.2.7 Current Activity and Organisational Set-Up

### Key Findings

- There are several active local government and voluntary organisations in Thame but there does not appear to be an overarching coordination / structure to the delivery of activities, events and other initiatives.
- Half of the survey respondents felt that the need to ensure that town centre groups work together towards a common vision was a main priority for the town centre.
- The need to coordinate the willingness and enthusiasm of town centre groups to ensure they complement each other and to minimise duplication should be a key priority for the town.
- An overarching common vision that all groups could 'buy into' would be beneficial.

## 3 Action Plan

### 3.1 Context

This action plan aims to build on the success of Thame by suggesting areas for improvements that can be considered by TTC to spend the funding available to them in 2016/2017. The evidence collected through this review has suggested that the following objectives should be addressed:

- To **strategically coordinate** activity of local volunteer groups to maximise the effect they can have on Thame Town Centre;
- To make Thame town centre **convenient and appealing**, and continue to maintain and build relationships with current and future residents;
- To be **proactive in directing new investment** that complements and meets current and future customer needs;
- To **maximise existing car parking** by improving signage and information and to improve **on-street parking** enforcement to build relationships between local businesses and the District and Town Councils;
- To install **more effective signage and information** to 'sell' Thame's offer to visitors and shoppers
- To **maintain and develop Thame's key attractions** by investing in existing successful initiatives such as the weekly market and various successful events – and to continue to support new events;
- To consider **providing digital information** to residents and visitors to widen its reach and to enable dynamic information that ensures the town keeps pace with technological change and continues to attract visitors and shoppers.

#### Strategic co-ordination

There is a need for a strategic coordinating role which develops, directs and monitors the delivery of town centre activity and investment. Such an entity could meet regularly but not necessarily frequently e.g. quarterly / twice yearly to oversee and receive progress reports on items that have been identified as priorities in this report. They include:

- Thames offer and its **strategic communication** – digital, off-line and on-street
- **Parking and access** across the town centre – usage, community route development
- **Event programming** – calendar, shared resources, cross-marketing, volunteers
- **Town investment/site development** progress e.g. cattle market site – its relocation and redevelopment

## Project delivery areas

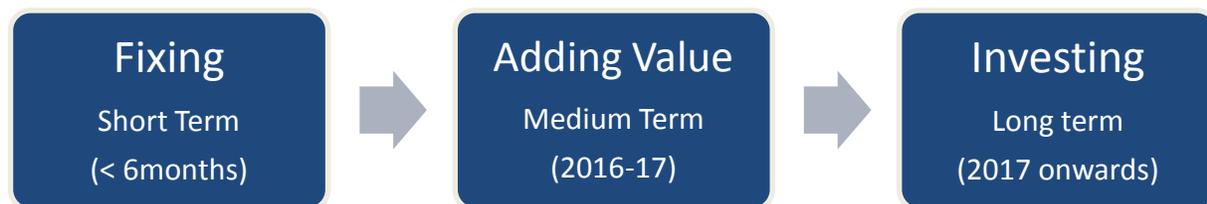
Based on the evidence collected as part of this study, the following themes for project delivery are proposed:



## Project Sequencing

To deliver the action plan the following sequence of investment and priorities are suggested<sup>10</sup>. Detailed actions are suggested for each time period. The full action plan is detailed in Section 3.3.

Figure 1 Sequence and Priorities for Thame Town Centre



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd

## 3.2 Options for Delivery: Review & Recommendation

### 3.2.1 Review

The primary aim of the study was to obtain an independent perspective on the options available to TTC, to make best use of their available funding for 2016/2017 - that would maximise the vibrancy and vitality of Thame Town Centre. Evidence from interviews, the town workshop, the on-line survey and our physical assessment of the town centre point to the need for continued support and investment. Following the review, it is felt that there are two possible options for delivery in Thame:

<sup>10</sup> Proposal and ideas from the SODC Economic Development Action Plan for Thame and from organisations such as 21st Century Thame are identified in italics.

## **1. Distribute Funding Amongst Town Centre Working Group**

This option would centre on the formation of the town centre working group as proposed by the Town Council with them acting as secretariat and co-ordinator, within existing resources. Specific town centre actions and funding would be assigned to individual organisations including some cross-cutting and strategic items, with their responsibility to develop and deliver actions within budget, quality and timetable. Progress reports would be made to this group at key milestones.

## **2. Appoint a Market Town Co-ordinator and Establish a Town Team**

This option would involve the appointment of a Market Town Co-ordinator that would be hosted by Thame Town Council and part funded by South Oxfordshire District Council. In assessing the current ways of working and successes to date in Thame, the postholder would need to be focussed on the following areas, tasks and responsibilities:

1. To help with the co-delivery of the action plan, specifically on items that are strategic and cross-cutting and which maximise the delivery of tangible benefits for Thame town centre e.g. communication, digital media, event integration, buy local, parking and access.
2. To work with existing organisations that have had a direct role in town centre projects and initiatives to develop a “town team” type structure and to support this transition (i) Business engagement and support (ii) Customer Experience (iii) Events and Town Activity and (iv) Environment.
3. To lead on project development areas such as signage and parking reviews as well as developing business cases for larger capital projects e.g. Montesson Square and Upper High Street car park area.
4. To help groups such as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Thame through the proposed town team structure that fosters relationships with the town centre business community and associated ownership of support and activity.
5. To monitor progress and to help the Town Team communicate activity and success stories to town centre stakeholders – business, community groups and local residents.
6. To help in leveraging additional resources for future project activity that sustains Town Team activity.

The following table details an appraisal of the two options, considering resources and capacity, value for money, coordination, risks, and impact.

	<b>Option 1</b>	<b>Option 2</b>
	<b>Distribute Funding Amongst Town Centre Working Group</b>	<b>Appoint Town Centre Co-ordinator &amp; Establish a Town Team</b>
<b>Resources and Capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordination and resources would be met by existing Town Council staff who have existing work commitments</li> <li>• Need for local organisations to take a lead on specific themes of projects and deliver these reporting back to the working group</li> <li>• Wholly voluntary based time and effort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Co-ordinator that is the glue to the action plan and drives integrated delivery</li> <li>• Support for town centre organisations in making things happen at a project/campaign level</li> <li>• Mix of paid and voluntary time</li> <li>• Co-ordinator would be tasked with leveraging in additional funding and investment</li> </ul>
<b>Value for Money</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst there is a saving on not having a Market Town Co-ordinator, there would be hidden costs for the Town Council as well as resource implications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of co-ordinator would be met by TTC/SODC budget therefore reducing project delivery budget</li> <li>• Added value of leveraging in funds that matches the Co-ordinator's salary and on-costs</li> </ul>
<b>Co-ordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There would no lead role that drives strategic delivery and project integration, unless this was something for the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordination from within a Town Team type approach – not “top-down”</li> <li>• Delivery of strategic projects that demonstrates a joined up approach</li> </ul>
<b>Risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same groups and people continue to invest time with limited capacity with a need for succession in the future</li> <li>• Lack of integration and risk of fragmentation</li> <li>• Group looks at short to medium projects and not long term planning and delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinator needs to be a doer not an administrator</li> <li>• Need to watch spirit of working and how Co-ordinator works alongside other organisations and people</li> <li>• Only a fixed term period and part-time – need to ensure visibility, impact and succession planning</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual outputs but no sense of a total outcome in terms of vitality and vibrancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct role to monitor progress and impact and show value of approach</li> </ul>

### 3.2.1 Recommendation

**Based on the available evidence presented in this review, it is recommended that TTC pursues option 2: the appointment of a market town co-ordinator to deliver town centre actions and to support existing organisations thereby building a sustainable model of future delivery.**

We acknowledge that resources are finite and that such a resource needs to have a clear focus on delivery and demonstrating impact, so that local groups, businesses and the community see tangible benefits. Thus, the type of person appointed needs to have excellent inter-personal skills, have knowledge of Thame, and is focussed on delivery through a partnership type approach. A recommended job description is found in appendix 3.

To provide an estimate of a suitable salary for a market town coordinator role, a review of similar posts has been undertaken. Typically, salaries range from £20,000 to £30,000 per annum, with additional on-costs for office, ICT and general day to day running costs. The typical contract length is between one and three years, with many being part-time positions.

It is recommended that the post is part-time which will therefore still require the input and contribution from other existing delivery partners and town centre organisations and individuals (i.e. that the role does not replace the need for volunteers etc.). The salary would therefore be approximately £13,000 per year (3 days per week).

#### Recommended Actions

The following table shows the recommended town centre actions over the 2016-2018 period.

	2016-17	2017-18
<b>Market Town Co-ordinator</b>		
Salary	8,750.80	£13,136.20
Operating Costs (ICT, stationary, etc)	£750.00	£750.00
<b>Action Plan Projects</b>		
Update Thame Shopping guide	£1,000.00	£0.00
Signage: Feather Flags and A Boards	£2,000.00	£3,000.00
Street theatre/music/activity	£0.00	£2,000.00
Simple events calendar	£750.00	£0.00
Website (costs met by TTC)	£0.00	£0.00
Review I Thame App	£0.00	£5,000.00
Support Buy Local Scheme - Campaign Material	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
Extend Business Support Programme	£1,000.00	£1,000.00
Open Doors event/Small Business Saturday	£1,300.00	£0.00
Support town centre events	£3,000.00	£1,500.00
Midsomer Murders Campaign	£2,500.00	£500.00
<b>Thame Market</b>		
Taster stalls at Town Hall and market signage	£5,000.00	£0.00
Available Budget (TTC; SODC)	£29,000.00	£29,000.00
Available Budget (TTC; Thame Charter Market)	£5,000.00	£0.00
<b>Balance</b>	<b>£949.20</b>	<b>£113.80</b>

### 3.3 Detailed Action Plan

#### 3.3.1 Fixing (< 6 months)

Theme	Action	Costs (R <sup>11</sup> )	Costs (C <sup>12</sup> )
<b>Strategic Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree and adopt Thame town brand – develop a simple brand manual and distribute amongst organisations that have a role to play in town centre delivery.</li> </ul>	Minimal	£1-£2k
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake an audit of how Thame Town Centre is promoted in terms of identity, medium, current content, lead delivery partner, print/on-line/street level and agree key messages, ways of integration and resourcing.</li> </ul>		
<b>Business Engagement &amp; Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Update Thame shopping guide, considering its use in a digital format for web and app download purposes.</i></li> </ul>	£1k	-
<b>Customer Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree a way forward with respective authorities for managing on-street parking, specifically consistency on length of stay and enforcement across the town centre; explore role of warden as a town ambassador linking into visitor management activities.</li> </ul>	Minimal	-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate options for provision of edge of centre workers' car park off Southern Road in terms of site capacity, planning, services, costs and feasibility.</li> </ul>	Minimal	-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review off-street parking in relation to advanced / directional signage, environmental quality, visitor information and linkages to town centre</li> </ul>	Minimal	-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review suite of town signage: gateway, advanced visitor information, parking, visitor information points, pedestrian way-marking, trails. Assess condition, content, linkages and consider digital interface (see later).</li> </ul>	Minimal	-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree a suite of street level signage that is co-ordinated, compliant and which sells the town such as proposed use of <i>feather flags/poles/bases</i>, chalkboards on lampposts, "A" boards at Market and outside Town Hall.</li> </ul>	Minimal	£5k <sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Denotes revenue funding.

<sup>12</sup> Denotes capital funding.

<sup>13</sup> Based on 10 feather flags @ £200 per unit and £3,000 for street and column mounted 'A' boards and kits.

<b>Events &amp; Town Centre Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore with local music and arts groups ways of animating the streets through street music, theatre and informal events; agree a summer/autumn programme that targets key town centre spaces that links with street level signage and signs key attractions e.g. market, museum, trails.</li> </ul>	£2k <sup>14</sup>	-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop simple events calendar that can work in various formats. Costs shown are for design and print costs.</li> </ul>	£750	-
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and discuss with landowners the Southern Road car park link and Greyhound Walk pedestrian link: enclosure of commercial recycling bins, boundary enhancements, community mural on co-operative wall, paving condition.</li> </ul>	Minimal	-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review user experience in Montesson Square: information case, seating, cycle stands, waste bins – relationship to CAB building and car park.</li> </ul>	Minimal	-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To identify quick fixes for the weekly market such as windscreen notification to car park users on Monday eve of Tuesday market operation, “A” boards or feather flag signage outside Town Hall and discussions with market co-operative group on ideas to add value.</li> </ul>	Minimal	£1k <sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> 10 activities estimated @ £200 per event.

<sup>15</sup> Estimated as 2 flags/bases @£200 plus A boards

Figure 2 Examples of Best Practice: Business Engagement and Buy Local



Source: Various

## 3.3.2 Adding Value (2016-17)

Theme	Action	Cost (R)	Cost (C)
Strategic Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission and manage a new integrated website that promotes Thame town centre:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work with town brand guidelines – visual appearance</li> <li>○ Design and future proof functionality of website:                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promotion of town centre – businesses, services, attractions, etc</li> <li>▪ Download apps and visitor information e.g. maps, guides, etc</li> <li>▪ Events calendar</li> <li>▪ Discussion forums</li> <li>▪ News and social media feeds</li> <li>▪ Links with local business and other organisations</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	£5k <sup>16</sup>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review I Thame App and fit with wider communication, information and promotion, specifically               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Local information including maps</li> <li>○ Parking app – integration with SODC</li> <li>○ Town trail downloads</li> <li>○ Business promotion and incentives</li> <li>○ Events, festivals and town centre activities</li> <li>○ Loyalty points scheme through app</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	£5k	-

<sup>16</sup> Design and build of website only; no costs included for hosting and ongoing management.

<b>Business Engagement &amp; Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Great British High Street application and build on 2015 success</li> <li>• Develop a buy local scheme:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Agree campaign and material                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with town identity and fit with buy local</li> <li>▪ Influence existing marketing and promotion material with “buy local” message</li> <li>▪ Discuss and agree awareness raising: shopping guide, stickers, welcome packs for new residents, shopping bags, local gift voucher scheme</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	£4k <sup>17</sup>	-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop business engagement programme               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Simple business diagnostic – what are your needs?</li> <li>▪ Sense of place/retail ambassadors scheme – training on key stories and attractions in Thame links into Midsomer Murders theme</li> <li>▪ <i>Digital High Street training extension</i></li> <li>▪ Communication plan – via new town website, email and social media and bi-annual meetings</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <i>Events:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Open Doors event in town centre</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Small Business Saturday</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	£2k <sup>18</sup>	-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Engage town centre business with town centre events</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Event calendar promotion in business</li> <li>○ Develop fringe business activity and engage with trails</li> <li>○ Develop promotions/incentives/tasters during events and festivals</li> <li>○ Develop a “Friends of...” scheme</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	£1.3k <sup>19</sup>	-
		£500 <sup>20</sup>	-

<sup>17</sup> Design and print costs for a suite of 'buy local' promotional material.

<sup>18</sup> Costs for 8 training courses @ £250 per session.

<sup>19</sup> Cost provided by Thame Town Council.

<sup>20</sup> Estimation of running costs linked to 'buy local' campaign material and business engagement.



<b>Customer Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement proposals for on and off-street parking improvements, feeding these into strategic, communication, business engagement and environment proposals. These costs are indicative and relate to suggested use of recreation site as a workers' car park.</li> </ul>		£250 – 400 k <sup>21</sup>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement improvements to existing signage, and consider these in digital communication plan for the town centre. Monitor usage and visitor experience through town centre survey.</li> </ul>		£5k <sup>22</sup>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop thinking on Thame trails – heritage, Midsomer Murders, proposed arts/pop up art event, photography – resources, timing,</li> </ul>	Minimal	Minimal
<b>Events &amp; Town Centre Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Midsomer Murders Campaign</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install Causton Town Hall sign</li> <li>Provide quality coach-friendly infrastructure</li> <li>Engage with local business on benefits of exposure e.g. Rumseys and Barnaby Buns – link in with sense of place/story telling training</li> <li>Link trail with new town website and social media</li> <li>Promote trail and introduce fun photo opportunities e.g. crime scene chalk outlines</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	£2.5k <sup>23</sup>	£500
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Thame market promotion and taster stalls</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Showcase the Upper High Street weekly market within the centre of town, around the Town Hall:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a strong cluster of stalls that signposts the main market and supports town identity</li> <li>Business of the week – showcase market or town centre business</li> <li>Promote buy local campaign</li> <li>Co-ordinate feather flags and street music/theatre activity</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	-	£5k <sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Costs are indicative estimations only and will be subject to ground conditions, servicing, access, specification and consents.

<sup>22</sup> Refurbish and repaint street signage, case and furniture; agree co-ordinated material across information sites

<sup>23</sup> Capital costs for signage and infrastructure; marketing budget for direct campaigns

<sup>24</sup> Purchase of additional stalls, awnings, side skirts and associated signage

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop a night market that supports evening time economy – street food, arts and crafts, music; this could be an extension of the Food Festival in partnership with the weekly market co-operative group; night market would link marketing to food and drink businesses</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support Events and Festivals in the town centre                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Integrate event promotion into new town website and social media campaigns</li> <li>○ Identify opportunities to promote events and festivals through shopping and visitor guides</li> <li>○ Support events that showcase and link in town centre businesses – explore ways of increasing visibility of events through business – shop windows, point of sale, dressing, etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	£3k <sup>25</sup>	
<b>Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement improvements for key pedestrian links</li> </ul>		£10k <sup>26</sup>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop design proposals for Montesson Square that link with CAB building and enhanced Upper High Street/Market car park</li> </ul>	£5k <sup>27</sup>	

<sup>25</sup> Events budget that supports business led initiatives e.g. fringe or promotion within shops.

<sup>26</sup> Southern Road pedestrian link: tidy up, boundary treatment, community mural.

<sup>27</sup> Initial concept design study: appointment of urban designer/landscape architect.

Figure 4 Examples of Best Practice: Events & Town Centre Activity



Source: Various

### 3.3.3 Investing (2018 onwards)

Theme	Action	Cost (R)	Cost (C)
Strategic Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor performance of new town centre website: no of visits, unique visitors, click rate, etc.</li> </ul>	Minimal	Minimal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor performance of social media activity.</li> </ul>	Minimal	Minimal
Business Engagement & Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue and monitor business engagement and promotion activity.</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To develop ideas that grow the visibility and infrastructure around buy local:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thame “Click and Bricks” – aggregated shopping scheme with local businesses that provides order and pick up from central town centre location – linked to secondary shopping activity and expenditure. Also see Food Assembly initiative (<a href="https://thefoodassembly.com/en">https://thefoodassembly.com/en</a>) which is similar to Click and Bricks but local produce based. This could operate outside of weekly market trading and could work with local market gardens and organic growers such as Sandy Lane Farm in Tiddington</li> <li>Thame First Home Delivery service – as Thame grows look into community run delivery service that could be LPG van or freight bike system of delivery and pick up for local residents and businesses</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	For development	For development

<b>Customer Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Free town centre Wi-Fi</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review digital use through new website, social media and assess need for town Wi-Fi with business community</li> <li>○ Understand whether free town Wi-Fi would drive more footfall and covert sales in town centre businesses as well as enhance visitor experience.</li> <li>○ If favourable, procure, install and monitor system.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	£2.5k <sup>28</sup>	£10k <sup>29</sup>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dedicated electronic information board for town bus shelter that promotes events, town maps and guides, vouchers</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review digital use through new website, social media and assess need for electronic information board in terms of integration with other town information.</li> <li>○ Consider information, integration, updating and how it can fit with visitor information, trails, apps, downloads and printable vouchers.</li> <li>○ Review and if approved – procure, commission and install.</li> <li>○ Monitor use and visitor experience, and resultant benefits for town centre businesses and organisations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	£1k <sup>30</sup>	£5k to £30k <sup>31</sup>
<b>Events &amp; Town Centre Activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working towards an integrated and sustainable events programme that is delivered through public, community and private sector resources, which leads to:                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Secondary events developed across the year e.g. Food Festival organises seasonal events, e.g. Christmas Fayre</li> <li>○ Events become embedded in town experience: trails, cookery schools, arts/writing courses held in town centre</li> <li>○ Explore other events that link residents to the town centre and evening time activity e.g. outdoor cinema powered by bicycles;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	£4k <sup>32</sup>	£0.00

<sup>28</sup> Estimated cost for service level agreement with provider.

<sup>29</sup> Estimated cost for 5 transmitter units and cabling.

<sup>30</sup> Estimated cost for maintenance contract

<sup>31</sup> Costs will vary significantly, depending on number of units, size, functionality, ground fixing, cabling and associated software etc.

<sup>32</sup> Secondary events budget that builds on key events programme.

	<p>held in front of Town Hall, this would showcase evening time offer and promote use of cycling in the town.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New private sector investment in food and drink, accommodation, training venues</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Environment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Thame market                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide electric plug in facilities within market area</li> <li>○ Develop youth market idea with local schools and youth services – e.g. dragons den competition, pitch to local businesses</li> <li>○ Develop a shop and drop scheme that allows market users to leave produce related purchases chilled or secure whilst making other town centre purchases</li> <li>○ Develop design for car park and market area that encompasses Montesson Square that provides a destination space</li> <li>○ Resurface car park in line with the overall design scheme for the area.</li> <li>○ Explore relationship of CAB building to car park (see below)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>£100<sup>33</sup></p> <p>£40k<sup>34</sup></p>	<p>£20k to £30k<sup>35</sup></p> <p>£1k<sup>36</sup></p> <p>-</p> <p>£400-600k<sup>37</sup></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Lea Park Signage Project</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop community arts led project that encourages local residents to walk to the town centre that links into cycling and other walking promotion initiatives</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		<p>£150k<sup>38</sup></p>
<p><b>Town investment /site development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Redevelopment of cattle market site                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Liaise with SODC on proposed redevelopment of site, planning brief, developer response and ensuring final scheme meets needs of town centre in terms of uses, parking, linkages and complementary activity</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>For development</p>	<p>For development</p>

<sup>33</sup> Electricity bill for refrigeration unit

<sup>34</sup> Cost of detailed design level (RIBA level 4)

<sup>35</sup> Dependent on location, ground conditions, services, power consumption and if work is linked to general improvements to car park

<sup>36</sup> Cost of refrigeration unit

<sup>37</sup> Indicative costs; Due to scope of study, no design/cost consultant on team; costs subject to ground conditions, specification detail and extent of work; conservation materials preferred

<sup>38</sup> Indicative costs; Due to scope of study, no design/cost consultant on team; signage and community art installations and targeted landscaping

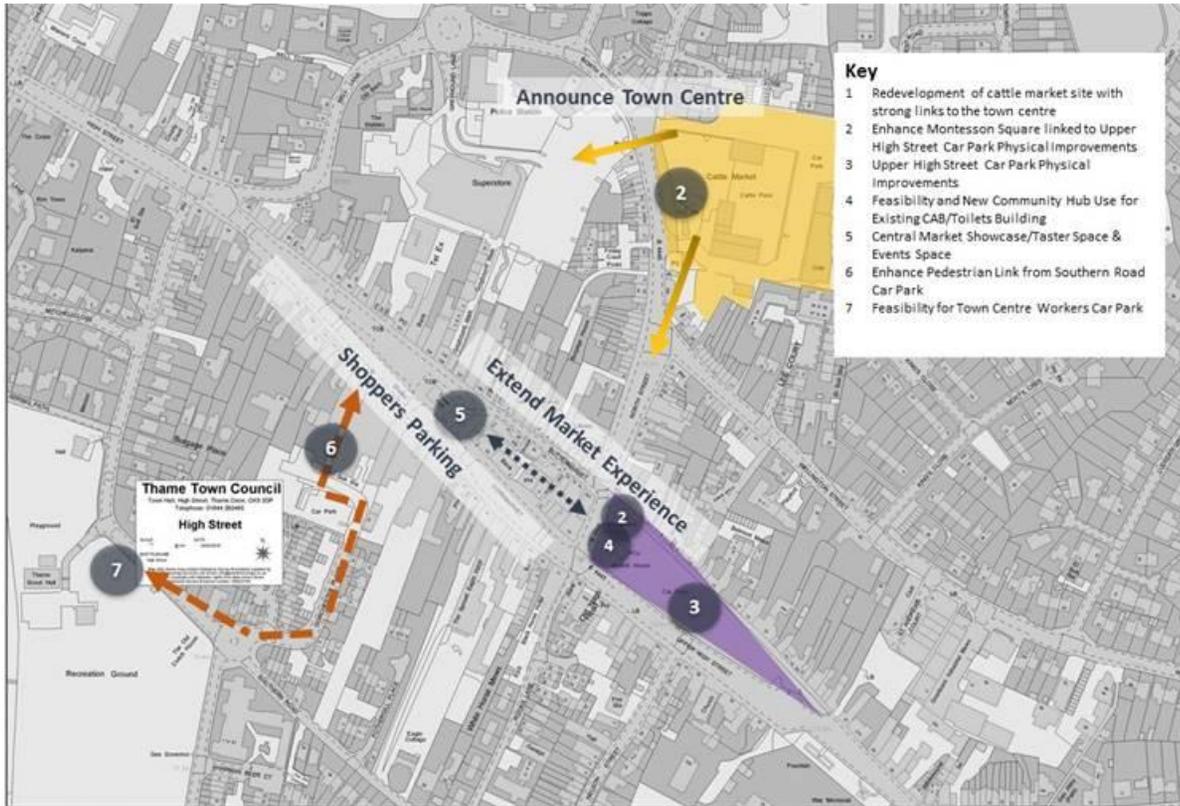
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAB Building             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Appraise current use with SODC on current use and whether more optimum uses for the building could be considered. Study would need to consider relocation of CAB within the town centre or retention within a modified building. Ideas to include:                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Taste of Thame centre – food, arts and crafts, signposting to town centre businesses – link to Food Festival – chef demo space and arts/craft demonstrations</li> <li>▪ Community Hub/Social Space – wine bar</li> <li>▪ Pop up space – local enterprise opportunities</li> <li>▪ Shared office space/storage for Thame Market</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">For development</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">For development</p>

Figure 5 Examples of Best Practice: Environment



Source: Various

Map to show locations of proposed physical projects.



## 4 Detailed Review of Town Centre Performance

### 4.1 Review of Existing Studies

#### Lockwood Report

This report was commissioned in July 2005 for South Oxfordshire District Council. The Action Plan element of the work was split into three themes, being

1. Creating a more competitive place;
2. Creating a higher quality place; and
3. Creating a more customer friendly place.

Key issues that the report identified included poor quality toilets, traffic issues, narrow footways, general maintenance of street furniture, accessibility for pedestrians, shortage of parking on market days and declining standards in the quality of shop fronts.

The report also analysed the findings of a Lockwood survey questionnaire which was completed by a broad based panel of local business people, which sought views on the quality of town centre provision and other facilities. The Lockwood survey looks at the headings of Capturing, Catering and Caring. Some of the key messages included toilet provision needing attention, lack of CCTV results in a low security score, car parking provision is an issue especially on market day, as cars are displaced from Upper High Street and a general lack of marketing and promotion.

Key recommendations included:

- Installing advance electronic signage for car parks at key entry points;
- Establishing additional car parking by utilising privileged parking and by linking the Co-operative and Woolworths car parks;
- Creating a paved square within the Cornmarket that provides a focal point;
- Excluding cars from the Cornmarket area on market days so that the market can be relocated.
- Upgrading shop-fronts;
- Making the town centre more attractive to 'grey shoppers' and families by improving toilet provision and undertaking DDA2 appraisals and improvements specifically in the Buttermarket area;
- Developing high quality access routes into the centre; and improving provision for cyclists.

#### Developing a Unique Selling Point for Thame

In June 2009, Miller Research were commissioned by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) to develop a series of action plans for the market towns of Henley-on-Thames, Thame and Wallingford. The overarching strategy adopted as its vision: *"To introduce measures which improve the economic vitality and viability of South Oxfordshire's market town centres and which*

*will encourage more visits to be made to the towns by both local residents and visitors from a wider area.”*

In compiling the strategy for developing distinctiveness within Thame, key assets of the town were identified as being its market town character and strategic location, a real and approachable experience that has a village atmosphere and a compact town centre that is a good base for the Chilterns.

Suggested strategy for achieving the vision was summarised as to:

- Create a town and country experience to increase exploration, dwell times and visitor spend
- Promote the town as a place to relax, explore and indulge through strong positioning of the town’s brand and rural market town offer
- Build on the current independent offer to meet and exceed expectations

The following action plan was developed in partnership with local town centre groups and organisations:

<b>Increasing quality and spend in retail, tourism and hospitality</b>	<b>Coordinating and developing local arts, culture and events</b>
R1 – Thame First Development R2 – Shop Front Improvements R3 – Build on Thame Food Festival R4 – Provision for Market Enhancements	A1– Develop Annual Programme A2 – Feasibility Study into Community Building A3 – Town Centre Events Space Strategy and Plan
<b>Investing in the town centre environment and sustainable ways of travel</b>	<b>Increasing awareness of Thame as a destination</b>
IF1 – Better Cycling Facilities IF2 – Develop Local Trails IF3 – Traffic Management	M1 – To develop a marketing strategy M2 – To provide an Online Eating & Shopping Guide M3 – To provide a Welcome Pack M4 – Undertake a PR campaign to promote the brand

### Thame Neighbourhood Plan

The development of Thame’s Neighbourhood Plan commenced in September 2011 with Thame Town Council having the objective of managing change, specifically new housing allocations within the town. This approach complemented the Government’s “Localism Act” which came into force in April 2012.

The Plan therefore provides a vision for the future of the town, and sets out clear planning policies to realise this vision. These policies accord with higher level planning policy, as required by the Localism Act. Neighbourhood Plans also need to be in accordance with higher level planning policy such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local policy, in particular South Oxfordshire District Council’s Core Strategy. The Core Strategy requires Thame to provide by 2027, 775 new homes, a minimum of 2 hectares of employment land, and additional retail floor space.

In considering additional housing and employment, Thame’s Neighbourhood Plan took a holistic approach, considering a wide range of issues, which included:

- how new retail should support the town centre
- whether a new community facility is needed and where it should go
- how walking and cycling around the town should be improved
- how the Cattle Market site should be developed?
- what open space new housing should contribute to the town
- encouraging Thame to become a 'greener' town.

In assessing the main economic sectors of the town, the Neighbourhood Plan identifies Thame as having a strong independent retail offer and an attractive historic town centre. There is a lively weekly market. These are frequently cited by local people as the town's major assets. A key area for consideration within the Plan was the need to respond to South Oxfordshire District Council's retail needs assessment which identified a need for an additional 5,700 sqm of 'comparison' retail (non-food) in Thame and a much smaller need of 600 sqm for 'convenience' retail (food) to 2027. Whilst industry in the form of warehousing and distribution sits on the outlying industrial estates, the office sector is noted to be accommodated in converted buildings in the town centre. Local intelligence has pointed to a shortage of good quality offices which is reflected by South Oxfordshire District Council's studies showing there is a need for modern office accommodation, with demand for small flexible units.

The Plan overleaf provides the overall future vision for Thame which is "*Thame must maintain its character as a real market town*". The underpinning principles of the Vision are to i) Continue to feel compact ii) Continue to have a close relationship with the open countryside around it iii) Retain its markets iv) Continue to act as a centre for the surrounding area, not just residents and v) Remain attractive to residents and visitors. The overall Vision plans for:

- an additional 775 homes
- three hectares of new employment land
- new retail within the town centre
- potential locations for a new community facility
- new and improved connections in and around the town
- new and improved open spaces.

The Neighbourhood Plan document is divided into sections: i) Vision ii) Neighbourhood Plan Policies and iii) Housing Allocation Policies. The Plan has looked at an integrated approach to managing change with themes of Housing, Working and shopping, Getting around, Leisure and wellbeing and Environment, sustainability and design quality. In looking at Shopping and the town centre, some key objectives from the Plan's consultation process included i) Support Thame's shops ii) Make sure the Cattle Market site supports Thame town centre iii) ensure car parking within the town supports the viability of the town centre. A key area of focus for the Plan (Policy WS2) is where to accommodate new retail with 3,400 sqm of comparison and 600 sqm of convenience retail to be met on the main town centres sites of the cattle market, No. 10 High Street and the Fire Station site. Other policies that are relevant to this vitality and vibrancy study include:

- WS2 – Retain and enhance primary and secondary frontages;
- WS3 – Redevelop the postal sorting office and/or telephone exchange for retail;
- WS4 – Develop the Fire Station site for a use that supports the town centre;

- WS5 – Develop land at 10 High Street for a use that supports the town centre;
- WS6 – Permit small shops on allocated residential sites;
- WS7 – Retain small scale employment in the town centre;
- WS8 – Encourage a diverse range of uses in the town centre by supporting new residential use on upper floors;
- WS9 – Encourage a diverse range of uses in the town centre by avoiding loss of residential uses;
- WS10 - Encourage a diverse range of uses in the town centre by supporting new office and retail uses on upper floors;
- WS14 – Redevelop the cattle market site and
- WS15 – Ensure that redevelopment of the Cattle Market site incorporates key principles to relate it positively to the wider town

### Thame Retail Capacity & Impact Study, Carter Jonas

This retail impact assessment study was undertaken for Thame Town Council in November 2015 as an independent piece of research to understand current retail needs and how to accommodate new retail floor space in Thame Town Centre, specifically convenience and comparison between the 2015 and 2031 period. The study was commissioned against the backdrop of Tesco registering interest in an out of town site for a large supermarket on the south eastern edge of the town.

In looking at the current convenience market share in the primary catchment of Thame, Waitrose town centre stores takes up 40.9% of trade with the Asda store in Wheatley taking 10.9% of food based shopping. This Asda stores has an 80:20 split between food and non-food with a petrol filling station and a regular bus service. Stores further afield in Aylesbury provide a draw with secondary catchment leakage from the town centre probably as a result of travel to work, leisure patterns. The study indicates that there is a potential to increase retention of local convenience spend through greater choice and offers in existing provision in town centre without providing new floor space provision. The review of comparison (non-food) shopping identifies that 33% of shoppers visit Thame for this form of shopping with the larger centres of Aylesbury Shopping Centre (21.2%) and Oxford City Centre (10.4%) being key draws. Reasons for this shopping behaviour include free parking and accessibility of Aylesbury and the regional draw of Oxford, with notable gaps in clothing and footwear in Thame town centre.

In assessing the health of Thame town centre was seen as positive in relation to retail context with it being compact, attractive and historic in character supported by a contained primary shopping areas, wide streets and central car parks. Competition from Aylesbury and High Wycombe is seen as being some of Thame's key threats to its shopping offer. Its retail composition and diversity is seen to be good for convenience with Waitrose as a main anchor supported by smaller format supermarkets such as the Co-operative and Sainsbury's. The town's strong weekly market and monthly farmers' market is seen to support the convenience nature of the town centre. Whilst comparison and service provision is well above the UK average there are some notable gaps in clothing and footwear. The study does however note that the leisure offer could be improved with a better range of cafes, restaurants and bars, although there is a good accommodation and cultural offer such as the Spread Eagle hotel and Thame theatre respectively.

In reviewing town centre health check data<sup>39</sup> the town centre has a vacancy rate of 5.34% compared to a UK average of 11.46% with the survey showing 4 vacant units spread out across the town centre with no hotspot. Opportunities for supply of retail accommodation need attention with new investment and development in the town centre. The study outlines the redevelopment opportunities for the cattle market site with this site being a prime place to accommodate larger comparison retail units, in addition to a specialist food and drink quarter plus residential, office. Accessibility and pedestrian flows highlight the out of town rail station at Haddenham which has regular services, four town centre bus stops, over 500 parking spaces (230 at Waitrose) and good connectivity across the town centre. The environmental quality is seen to be high with attractive and historic with the street layout presenting a mix of experience and a traditional market town experience. No notable congestion was observed with the town centre perceived to be well maintained.

The study undertook a phone survey on customer views and perceptions, with 62% of respondents shopping in Thame for food, with the town centre being “close to home” and is seen as “local”. The main positives are the attractive environment and the market are attractors with no significant dislikes. A business survey noted presence of niche and boutique occupiers as a positive but parking availability being poor. Commentary on the weekly and farmers’ market is made further on in terms of impact of a Tesco.

In looking at the impact of new food store specifically the floor space requirements the study highlights that size and types matters in terms of impact on the existing town centre offer. The larger supermarket format would have an impact on the existing Waitrose anchor store performance and on linked trips and secondary shopping spend. At the other end of store size, small and discounted format would be seen to support existing town centre activity with the right location generating linked trips. Location of any new provision is key and the type of store also needs to be considered in looking at current convenience gaps and community needs.

#### [Jake Collinge Planning Consultancy Report – Tesco Planning Application](#)

This report was issued to Thame Town Council in August 2015 to help Town Councillors in their consideration of the outline planning application submitted by Tesco for the ‘*Demolition of all existing buildings and erection of a food store (A1 Food), Car Parking, Petrol Filling Station and Employment Development (B1)*’ at Kingsmead Business Park, Howland Road, Thame. The report set out the physical and planning context for the proposed development having regard to Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act<sup>1</sup>, before reviewing the scheme against a series of defined planning issues, outlining the key factors to be considered in each regard, with recommendations set out in each respect. The report reviewed the i) The Site and Surrounding Area ii) The Proposals iii) Policy Context iv) Key Planning Considerations and v) Conclusions.

The 4.3 hectare Kingsmead Business Park is 1.4 km outside town centre on the south eastern edge of the town, with the planning application seeking 4,765 sqm of A1 food store, 5,627sqm employment development (DAF), Petrol Filling Station, car parking and access.

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<sup>39</sup> 2013 data from SODC

The planning consultant refers to the adopted Core Strategy and Neighbourhood Plan for Thame that sets out a need for an additional 600sqm of additional convenience, thereby the Tesco planning application is contrary to policy. Tesco, as applicant challenges floor space need figures but the Town Council's planning consultant states that "*they have disregard for NPPF policy on role of town centres and ensuring their vitality and viability*". The need for applying the sequential test and impact on vitality and viability on the existing town centre is seen as significant although it is noted that the cattle market town centre site has been discounted due to former supermarket refusal with the Neighbourhood Plan having no specific allocation for the 600 square metres. The key issue is therefore the impact of Tesco proposal on vitality and viability of town centre and its severity, specifically the diversion from existing convenience provision and on comparison goods. Tesco indicates a 6.8% impact which is not perceived as harmful by them but the Town Council's planning consultant does note that they have not considered the impact on other convenience businesses such as butchers. It is also highlighted that applicant does not see linked trips between Waitrose and the town centre and this needs to be factored into impact assumptions. In addition to retail impact considerations, there are design and site matters need to be considered for the proposed site.

### Market Survey

As part of the Tesco planning application situation, Thame Town Council undertook a study and survey of Thames' markets in August 2015, specifically to:

- To determine the annual turnover of the Farmer's and weekly Tuesday markets
- To obtain an assessment of the impact on the market if the Tesco planning application is approved.
- To obtain an assessment of the growth or decline in sales over the last five years

The market has some established and known traders ranging from Fruit & Veg (3), meat (2), fish (2), eggs, olives, cheese, cards, watch repair, household goods, clothing, phone accessories, cleaning products, florists, pet supplies, bread/cakes, bric-a-brac, underwear, bedding, hats, jewellery, foam, shoes, clothes, refreshments, luggage, picture framing, haberdashery.

From the survey results there has been a marginal increase in market turnover between 2010-2015; average of £840 per stallholder. When asked what would happen to average turnover if Tesco was granted planning permission, traders projected a 29% drop.

In looking at the type of people that use the market 78% live or work in Thame or a local village with the average age being 56. 49% of visitors attend every week with an average spend of £15. The market attracts approximately 1,000 visitors, generating a turnover of £15,000 and £750,000 per annum. Visitors express a complete loyalty with 94% expected to not change their shopping habits if Tesco was granted planning permission.

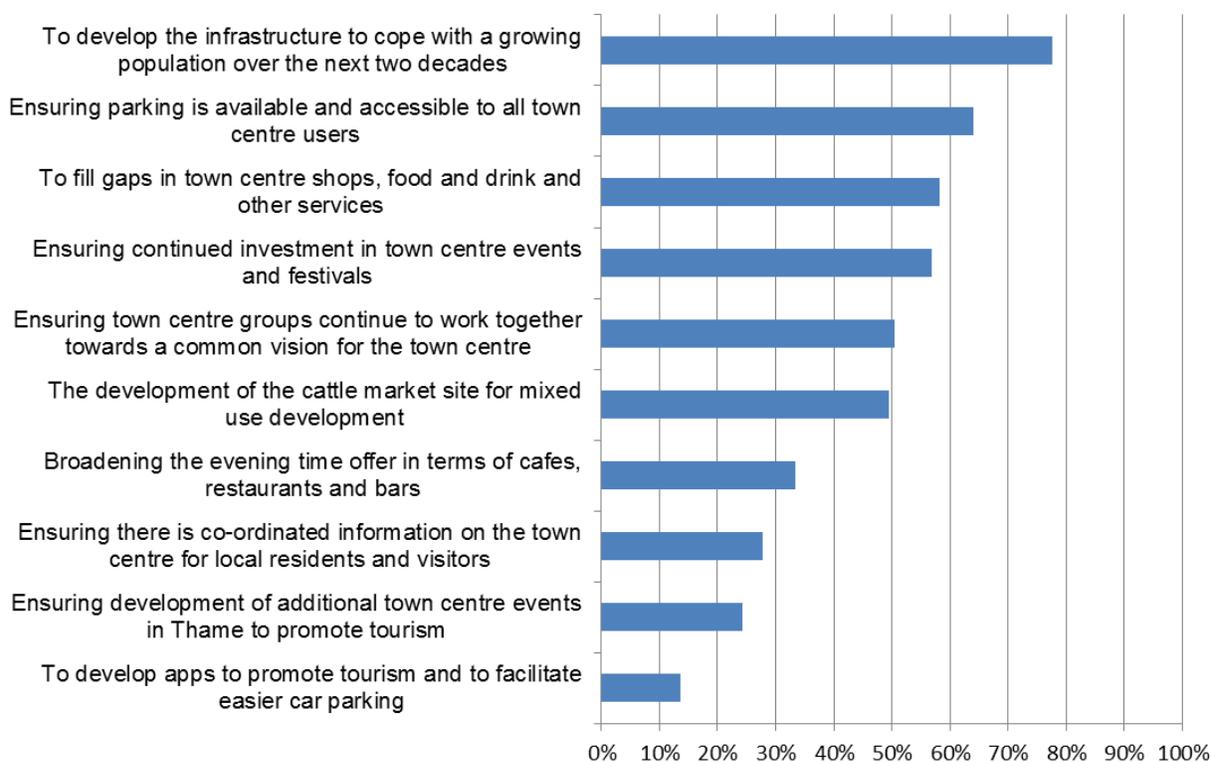
## 4.2 Town Centre Assessment

The following section details the findings of the town centre assessment carried out as part of this study. The analysis included a visual on-site assessment, stakeholder interviews, an online survey and sentiments from the workshop.

### 4.2.1 Arrival and Parking

Car parking facilities are an important factor in attracting visitors and shoppers to a town centre. It is essential that town centre users have the confidence that they will be able to find conveniently located, available and low cost / good value for money parking, otherwise they may choose to visit elsewhere. Most out-of-town shopping centres provide free car parking within close proximity to the shopping attractions therefore, town centre parking needs to also be able to provide such facilities if they are to compete effectively. This sentiment is reinforced by the survey findings which showed that the need to ensure parking is available and accessible to all town centre users was the second highest priority for Thame Town Centre (Figure 6) in the near future (reported by 64 per cent of survey respondents).

Figure 6 Main Priorities for Thame Town Centre



Source: Miller Research UK (Ltd) Online Survey

Furthermore, over two fifths (44 per cent) of survey respondents expressed that the availability and ease of free parking across the town centre was a problem – the third highest ranked problem in Thame. Respondents expressed concern about this problem worsening with the planned housing developments.

*“Parking is slowly but surely becoming more of a problem. With the additional houses being built this is only going to continue to worsen”*

In addition to concern around free parking, the availability and cost of other parking was seen by over a third (35 per cent) as a problem. With issues reported about the lack of traffic warden to enforce parking restrictions across the town and the availability of parking for individuals who commute to work in the town centre.

Tesco’s planning application for an out of town supermarket and the proposed redevelopment of the existing cattle market site (including car park) needs to be carefully considered in the context of parking within Thame. Firstly, parking in Thame needs to be presented as being accessible and easy in terms of getting to off-street car parks, use of on-street parking and the length of stay they offer. It is also important that whilst parking is convenient for current users, Thame needs to enhance its comparison (non-food) offer as well as its leisure and food/drink, and in doing so future parking behaviour would change in terms of longer dwell and resultant length of stay. This will have implications for the existing regimes on length of stay and management across the various off street car parks.

Advanced and directional signage also needs addressing that starts from gateway and arrival signage, to directional and to integrated payment/town centre information at charging stations or visitor information points. As referred to elsewhere, digital information platforms could be developed that provide parking payment information as well as other town centre information e.g. events on that day, promotions, town trails, etc.

***All of the above needs consideration in relation to town centre management and co-ordination with respective car park owners/managers and needs to link in with the destination management of the town centre.***

There are a number of gateway signs along the main road routes into the town centre which state that Thame is an historic market town and that it is twinned with Montesson in France. There are road signs to the town centre and car parks but there is no further information about the town’s attractions or events etc.

For visitors arriving by car, the following observations we made regarding car park provision (Figure 11 provides a map with annotations that are referred to in the following text).



- The Waitrose store car park ❶ is accessed from the B4445 and is signed for Waitrose customers’ use, for a maximum 2-hour stay. The car park is well linked to the town centre via Greyhound Walk.
- Thame has one long stay car park ❷, which is owned and managed by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC). Signage to the car park along the B4445 route is clear and effective, although the car park sign at the entrance to the car park is not highly visible and the entrance to the car park itself can be confusing to first time users given that the site is shared with the cattle market and leisure club. Furthermore, navigation through the entrance to the main spaces is not clearly marked / signed. On arrival at the car park,

walking routes to the town centre are not immediately obvious - even though there is a small sign pointing the direction of the town centre near the pay and display point, and there is a town map at the main entrance.

- The Upper High Street car park ③, also accessed from the B4445 - provides central and free 3-hour parking for town centre users on a Monday and Wednesday to Saturday, with 1-hour on a Tuesday due to the weekly market covering the majority of the car park. The car park's central location and thus its proximity to the town centre as well as access to public toilets makes it a very convenient short to medium stay car park. There are some issues related to the use of the car park on market days, which is discussed later in this report.
- There are two privately managed car parks which can be accessed off Southern Road. They are the Spread Eagle Hotel ④ and Sainsbury's car parks ⑤ which are intended solely for the use of their customers.
- The Southern Road public car park ⑥ owned and managed by SODC is a short stay (3 hours maximum) car park located behind the Co-operative food store. There is a short and direct pedestrian link to the heart of the town centre from this car park however the route is poor quality with commercial recycling bins visible and boundary walls/paving also requiring attention. Despite its excellent location, the car park can be difficult to find – especially for first time visitors.
- A short stay, 1-hour free (no return within an hour) car park is situated outside the Town Hall off Cornmarket.
- There is on-street parking along Upper High Street (2 hours return free – no return within an hour), Cornmarket and High Street (2 hours free - no return with an hour)
- There is evidence of town centre users' parking their cars during the daytime on neighbouring residential streets such as Priests End.
- All SODC managed car parks offer payment by coin or payment by phone (Ringo phone payment which requires a debit / credit card) but no on-site payment by debit/credit card.

#### 4.2.2 Getting Around & Civic Space / Key Sites

As identified in the literature review of previous studies, Thame is known for being compact and easy to get around. This sentiment is supported by the survey findings which revealed that three quarters (75 per cent) of respondents reported that getting around the town centre was good or very good.

The town centre comprises a number of key streets (Upper High Street, Cornmarket, Buttermarket, North Street and High Street) which make up the main shopping area. The parking assessment identified that there is a need to enhance key linkages from a number of off street car parks to ensure consistency in quality of paving material and associated street furniture. Whilst the town



centre is visibly within the reach of its users, its wide streets do present limited opportunities to cross especially when traffic is busy through the Cornmarket and High Street area of the town. Whilst a light controlled crossing is provided, town centre users still cross the road at uncontrolled points. Another hotspot for accessibility is at the mini roundabout junction of North Street, Upper High Street, Cornmarket and Rooks Lane, where pedestrians meet cars manoeuvring around this junction. Whilst there is a zebra crossing at the junction with Buttermarket, there is a natural desire line that directs people onto the upper side of Cornmarket.

The Buttermarket contributes to the historical character of the town centre with its narrow street framed by single and double frontage independent businesses. Nevertheless, the cobbled nature of the carriageway and narrow footways presents challenges for some town centre users.

The main shopping streets are wide and inviting with the Town Hall acting as a fulcrum to the town centre. However, there is a lack of civic space where people can dwell / congregate, as well as a space to enable regular events and town centre activities. The only two central areas that provide some space to meet and sit in are within Montesson Square and around the Town Hall building. The size of these areas is however, relatively small and they are not suitable for large events and activities – especially as they compete with traffic and parking. It is noted that when the town does have significant events e.g. Thame Food Festival, street closures are implemented to provide safe, pedestrian areas and for stalls, staging and pedestrian circulation.



There are opportunities within Montesson Square to rearrange street furniture and information display cases so that the space is made more flexible and if feasible to extend the space towards the car park so that the CAB building has a better setting. Ideas for this space are developed further on in this document.

Thame's infrastructure development was seen as the top priority by over three quarters of survey respondents (78%) to cope with the growing population. The survey also showed that there were concerns that the current car parking provision would not meet the growing population of the town.

Survey respondents ranked the future redevelopment of the cattle market site as the second biggest reported problem for Thame Town Centre<sup>40</sup> (Figure 10) with just less than half (49 per cent) indicating they felt it was as problem. Furthermore, around half of respondents (49.5%) indicated that they felt it was the main priority for the future of the town centre.

<sup>40</sup> Recording a ranking of 3.4 on a 5-point scale where 1 is no problem and 5 is the biggest problem.

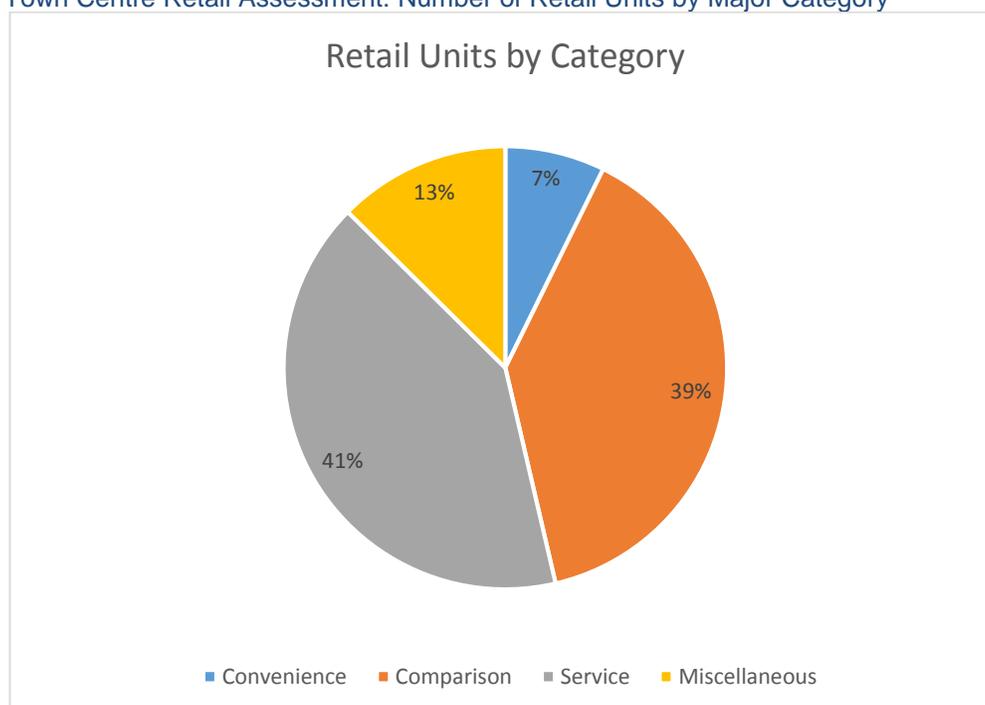
### 4.2.3 Shops, Services and other Attractors

An assessment of the town centre's retail offer was carried out to understand areas of strengths as well as gaps in current provision. The Thame shopping guide produced by 21<sup>st</sup> Century Thame was utilised and a visual assessment during the site visit was also carried out to categorise retail units.

The distribution of retail units by major category is shown in Figure 7. It shows that Thame has a high proportion of service and comparison good outlets but far fewer convenience stores. Around two fifths (41 per cent) of all units (by number of units) are providing a service and a similar proportion (39 per cent) provide comparison goods<sup>41</sup>. Survey results suggest that town centre users are satisfied with the quality of services with 84 per cent rating services as being good quality.



Figure 7 Town Centre Retail Assessment: Number of Retail Units by Major Category



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd, April 2016

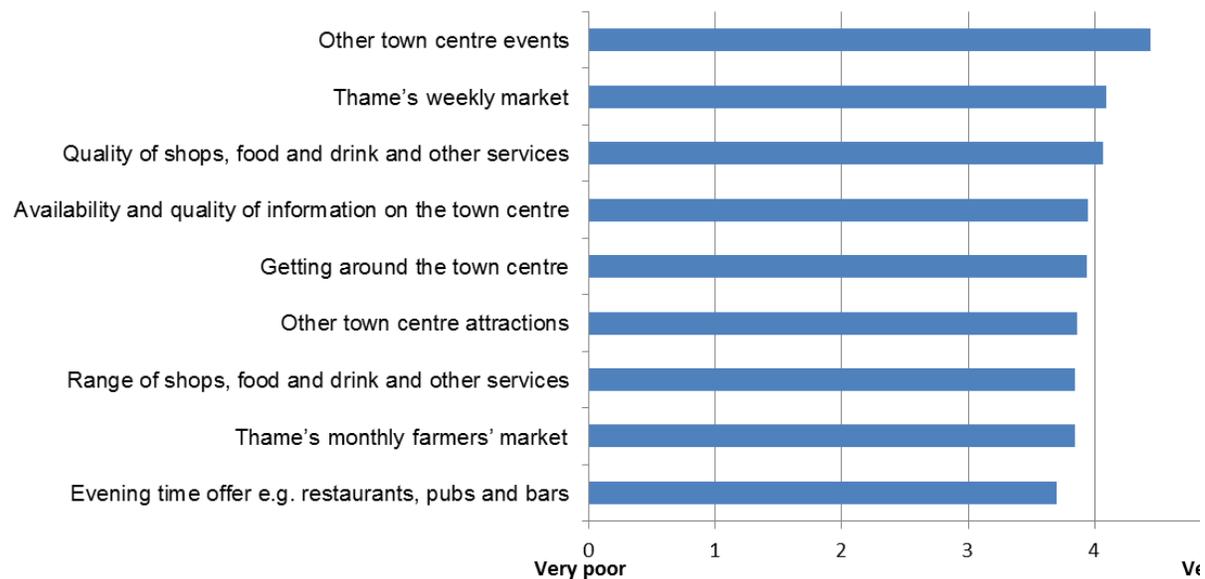
Less than one in ten (7 per cent) of all retail units in Thame offer convenience goods<sup>42</sup> – however, although they are fewer in number, many of the units are large food stores and so the collective floor space of the convenience category would represent a larger proportion of overall retail floor space. Indeed, Thame town centre comprises three food stores located close to the main High Street (Cornmarket, Buttermarket and High Street). There are also two independent butchers in the town centre, and two bakeries - although there are no specialist greengrocers or other fresh

<sup>41</sup> Any non-convenience goods, including clothing, shoes, furniture, household appliances, tools, medical goods, games and toys, books and stationery, jewellery and other personal effects.

<sup>42</sup> Food and beverages (including alcohol), newspapers and periodicals, and non-durable household goods.

produce retailers there are a number of fruit and vegetable stalls at the weekly market. Thus, with the exception of an independent fresh produce outlet on the high street, the town centre is well served for convenience goods. Survey results support this sentiment as the average level of agreement to the statement that Thame has a good range of food shopping was 3.8 on a 5-point scale.

Figure 8 Ranking of Aspects of Thame Town Centre



Source: Miller Research UK (Ltd) Online Survey

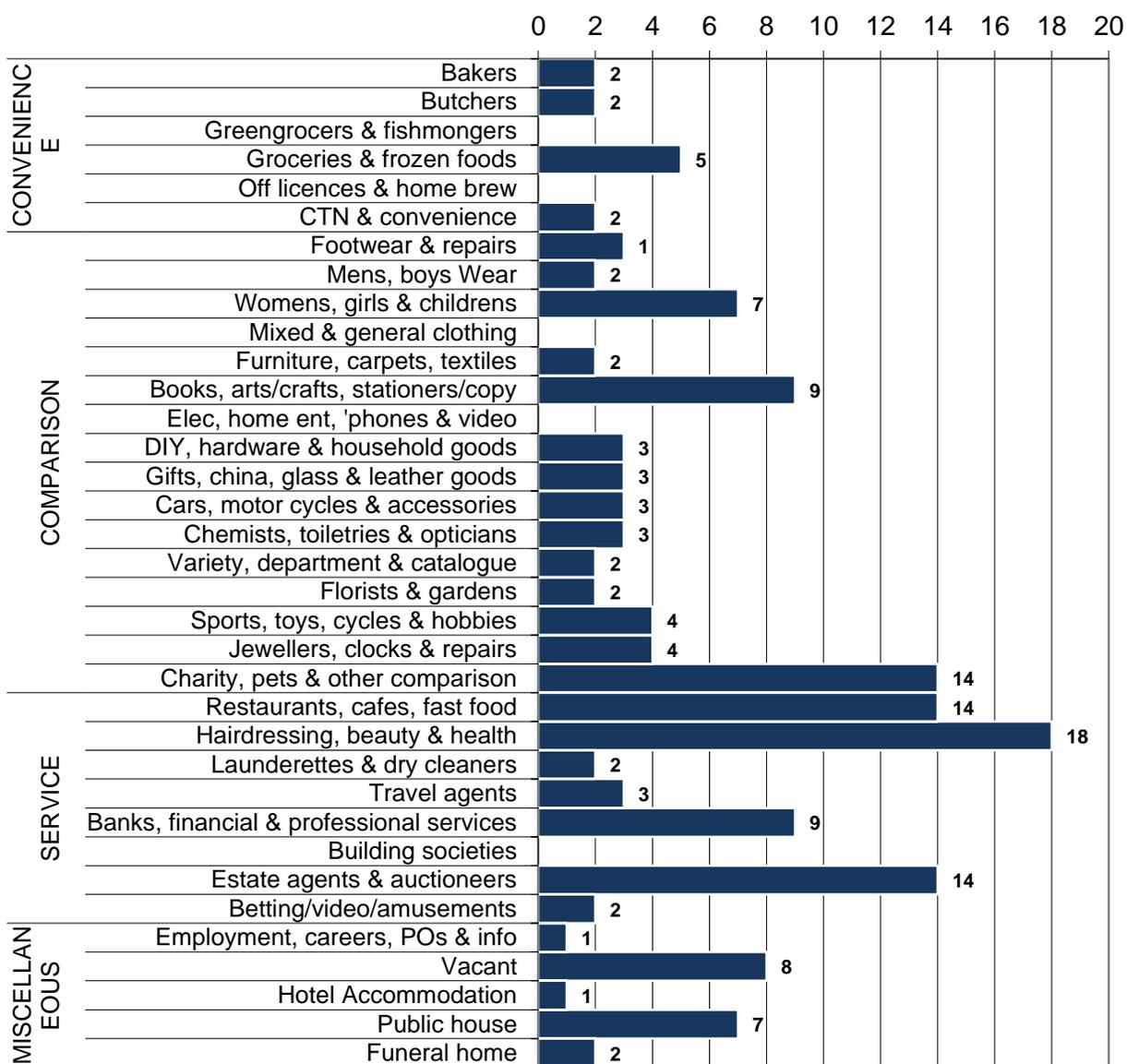
There are a number of notable and distinctive book, arts and crafts shops in the town centre which are destination retailers. Women's fashion retail is well represented with a number of boutiques situated within Buttermarket and North Street. Conversely, menswear is represented by only two and a number of stakeholders and business owners commented on the lack of fashion outlets for youngsters. Furthermore, Figure 9 shows that there are gaps or under-representation in the retail outlet for electrical and home entertainment goods, mixed/general clothing and homeware/furnishings.

Analysis of the breakdown of units within each category (Figure 9) shows that there are more hairdressing, and beauty and health related outlets than any other type of outlet. These type of outlet are typically smaller in size which is part of the reason for their high number. This category includes nail parlours, a skin clinic, holistic therapy practice, dentists as well as numerous hairdressers and a number of barbers. Possibly due to the housing market in the area being more buoyant than the national average, there is a high number of estate agents (14 units) and the same number of 'charity / pet-care and other comparison' shop and 'restaurants, cafes, fast food' units. Further analysis of the latter category suggests that the offer is diverse in the choice of cafes and coffee shops, and takeaway's (notably sandwich bars, pizzerias, and bakeries offering hot food takeaway), however the restaurant scene is only represented by Prezzo and The Thatch<sup>43</sup>. Nonetheless, there are many other places serving food but they are categorised as public houses / hotels which also offer food. Specifically, there are seven public houses which are

<sup>43</sup> Considering outlets which are solely restaurants rather than pubs or hotels also providing food.

reported to provide good quality pub food with a local micro-brewery also operating in the town. The survey results suggest that the range of cafes’ restaurants and bars is not as great a problem for Thame as other things, given that it ranked lowest on the list of ‘problems’ that Thame faced (Figure 10), however there were sentiments that the evening time offer could be improved. The evening time offer was rated as the lowest ranked aspect of Thame by respondents to the survey (rated 3.7, on a 5-point scale where 5 is very good and 1 is very poor) (Figure 8). Although the rating was above average (higher than a rating of 2.5), this highlights that in comparison to other aspects of Thame’s offer this could be area of improvement. Indeed, one third of survey respondents (33 per cent) reported a need to broaden the evening time offer in terms of cafes, restaurants and bars. Allied to this, one respondent reported: “Thame needs more variety of evening restaurants for food, maybe even a cocktail bar”

Figure 9 Town Centre Retail Assessment: Breakdown of Retail Units by Category (no. of units)



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd, April 2016

The survey results support this sentiment. Even though three quarters of respondents felt that there is a good range of shops / food and drink / other services available in town, the results indicate there are gaps in the offer. Gaps in the retail offer / missing shops or products was the biggest problem that Thame faced, according to survey respondents (Figure 10) – attracting more than half of respondents (59 per cent) reporting there were gaps. Similarly, the need to fill gaps in town centre shops, food and drink and other services was the third most important priority for Thame town centre (Figure 6). Discussion around the need for a greater variety of shops including: women’s clothes, shoes, homeware and low to mid-priced clothing.

*“Thames{sic} has plenty of shops but little variety, too many gift shops, charity shops, estate agents and hair dressers.”*

*“Thame needs shops like fat Face {sic}, white stuff {sic}, next {sic}, as the clothing options are appalling. We regularly have to visit Aylesbury or Oxford for better choice“*

There are four vacant units<sup>44</sup> in the town centre which is approximately 2.6% of the total number of town centre units. This is significantly lower than the UK average of 12%<sup>45</sup> indicating that there is a healthy retail market in the town. That being said, the negative aspect of a low vacancy rate is that it means there are few opportunities for new shops to enter the town, which may be part of the reason for there being gaps in the retail offer. It is understood that three of the vacant units will soon be occupied by fashion and kitchen design shops.

In summary, Thame town centre’s retail offer is relatively strong in convenience goods and has a fair range of comparison good outlets although there are notably gaps – which is felt to be an issue. Also, there is a lack of an evening time retail / service offer. A key challenge for the town will be to align any future investment to target specific gaps in the offer and to extend the choice and range of shops, food and drink and other attractors. This will require strategic planning and site delivery.

#### 4.2.4 Town Centre Information

Current town centre information is provided through a series of Victorian style wayfinding systems, shopping guide maps and information display cases managed by the Town Council. They are located in car parks, around public toilet building, in Montesson Square and outside the Town Hall. Some of the information such as the town maps is outdated and there are incidents of stickers obscuring information which a lack of up-keep and maintenance. All signage is black with gold relief details.



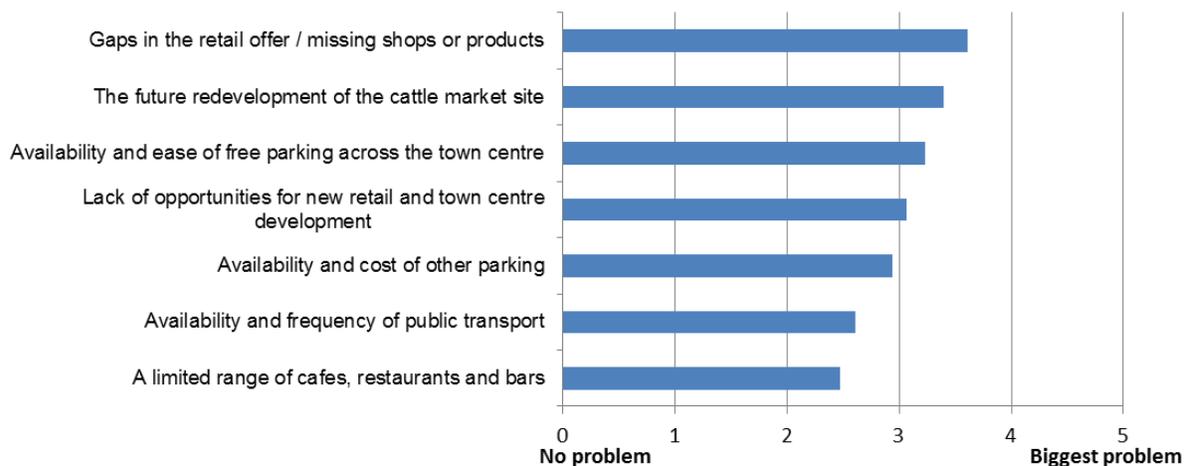
The availability and quality of information on the town centre was reported as good / very good by 71 per cent of the respondents to the survey, but yet the survey predominantly focused on local residents (91 per cent from OX9 postcode) whom are not the primary audience for information on the town centre.

<sup>44</sup> Remaining 3 units are reported to vacant due to redevelopment plans on Park Street

<sup>45</sup> Colliers CRE figure

There is also a heritage trail in the town centre which links places of interest such as the Market, Thame Museum and St Mary the Virgin Church. A trail leaflet can be picked up from the Town Hall with commemorative blue plaques located near historic buildings and in pavement plaques. Trail leaflets can also be downloaded through a number of town websites including Thame Town Council with the District Council also providing a trail app<sup>46</sup>. The promotion of the Midsomer Murders is through a promotional poster outside the Town Hall with a Trail leaflet available in the Town Hall or for download that picks up known filming locations within the town including Rumsey's Chocolate Shop, the Citizens Advice Bureau, The Spread Eagle and Kew Bookbinding, amongst others.

Figure 10 Extent to Which the Following are a 'Problem' for Thame Town Centre



Source: Miller Research UK (Ltd) Online Survey

With the exception of shopping guide map/information cases and a number of promotional banners for the weekly Market placed on key junctions there is no other means of promoting the town. Furthermore, the existing information is relatively static and not subject to regular change in response to changing town centre activities. It is felt therefore, that there is a need to promote the town centre in a dynamic way for example seasonal banners on lamp columns, blackboards, promotional A-boards, that add colour and animation to the town centre.

***This review suggests that the type and location of existing information could be enhanced so that they promote the unique selling points of Thame. Furthermore, this should be dynamic so that it responds to events, 'buy-local' offers, market days, etc. and also connects with web-based apps that links into parking, events and promotions.***

<sup>46</sup> Which can be downloaded at [http://www.southernoxfordshire.com/about\\_oxtrails.php](http://www.southernoxfordshire.com/about_oxtrails.php)

#### 4.2.5 Environmental Quality

The market town character of Thame is a key aspect of its appeal for people that live in the town and visit it. The conservation area status covers the town centre with a significant number of listed buildings that that are medieval, Georgian and Victorian eras with the Town Hall building built in a Jacobean style of architecture.

The Cornmarket and High Street area provides a sweep of closely packed buildings with Figure 11 showing the frontages that contribute well to the townscape of the town centre (green) with a number of minor exceptions marked in red. These tend to be more modern interventions that have taken place e.g. food stores in Cornmarket and a modern four storey development alongside the Post Office depot on Buttermarket.



***Improvements can be made here through supplementary planning guidance on shop front designs and working with occupiers to improve signage, fenestration and other details.***

#### 4.2.6 Market and Events

Thame Market is one of the town's key attractors with a market existing in the town since 1183 with its royal charter granted in 1215. When asked to what extent the survey respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about Thame, they agreed most strongly that Thame has a strong market identity (recording a score of 4.2 on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is totally disagree and 5 is totally agree). With 85 per cent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Thame has a strong market identity.



The weekly market is held on a Tuesday on the Upper High Street car park with the farmers' market held on the second Tuesday of each month at the same location. The weekly Tuesday market fills the majority of the car park area with a mixture of produce, clothing, shoes, household goods, florist, pet supplies, bedding, jewellery amongst others. A number of community stalls are provided for local organisations whether this be for information/raising awareness or fundraising.

Overall the weekly market scored second highest when asked to rate various services / activities in Thame Town Centre with 83 per cent of survey respondents reported a good / very good market within Thame. With almost two thirds (65 per cent) reporting a good / very good monthly farmers market.

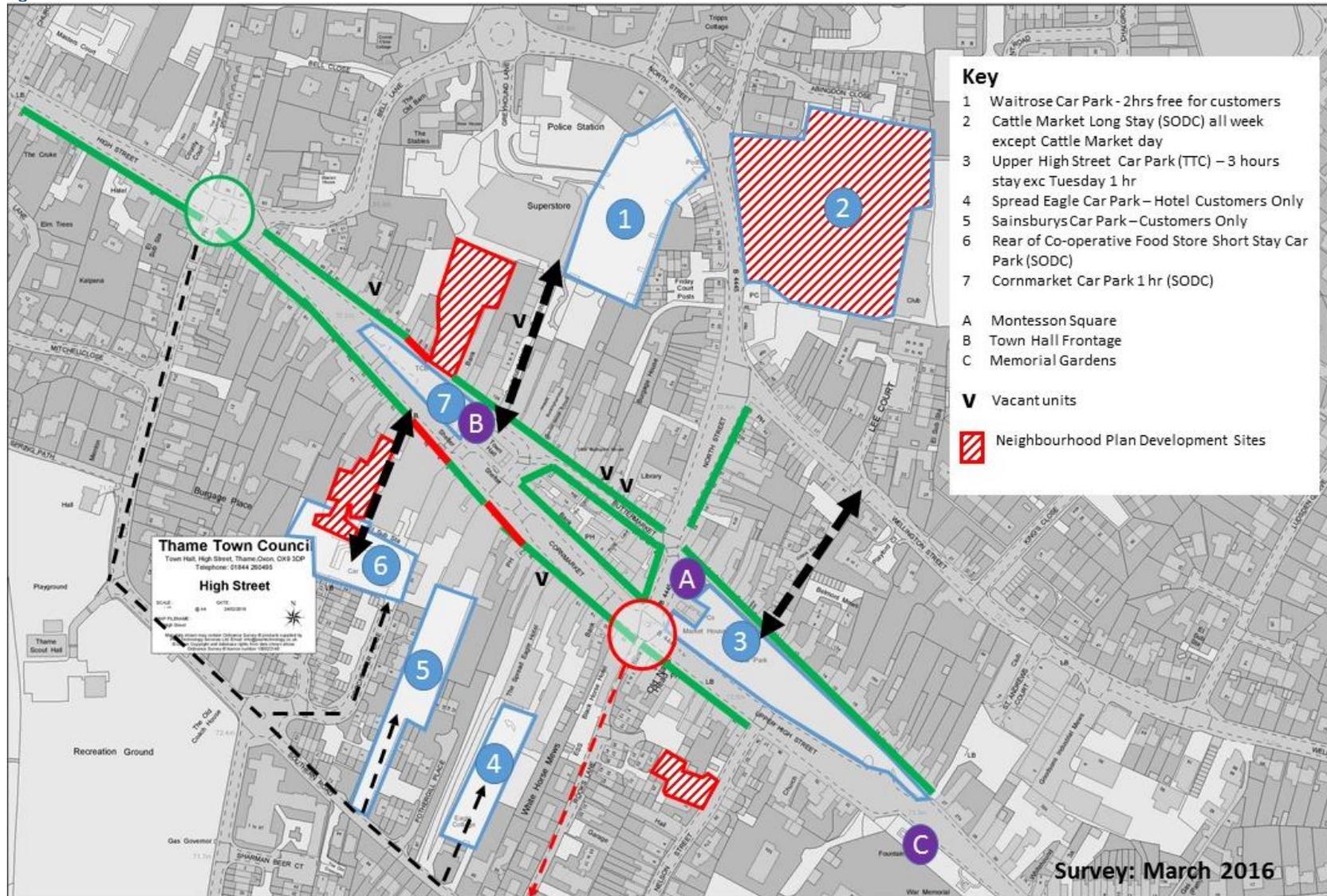
At the time of visiting the market<sup>47</sup> there was good footfall and circulation with traders generating a friendly atmosphere and good displays. The market is promoted through banners and signage on the corner of North Street and Upper High Street with the market visible to town centre visitors as they arrive along the B4445. In talking with a number of market traders, suggestions for improvement included:

<sup>47</sup> 10am to 11am on 22nd March 2016

- the management of parking before market day (Monday eve) as some parking overstay into Tuesday morning and disrupts the set up and layout
- resurfacing of the car park as the ground is uneven for traders and customers
- the provision of a permanent electric hook up supply to replace noisy generators
- opportunity to organise town centre events and activities that complement the market such as music, buskers, town Cryer, taster stalls in the town centre that adds to vibrancy and signposts the market
- provide signage in the town centre that signs the market and vice versa e.g. use of blackboards or A boards

***There is a need for capital investment in the market as it is one of the town's key attractors. Items suggested would help enhance the experience and sustainability of the market in the long term. The need to link the market into the wider town centre experience with the on-street music, tasters, food festival fringe activity requires co-ordination across the year and integration with marketing and promotion.***

Figure 11 Town Centre Assessment

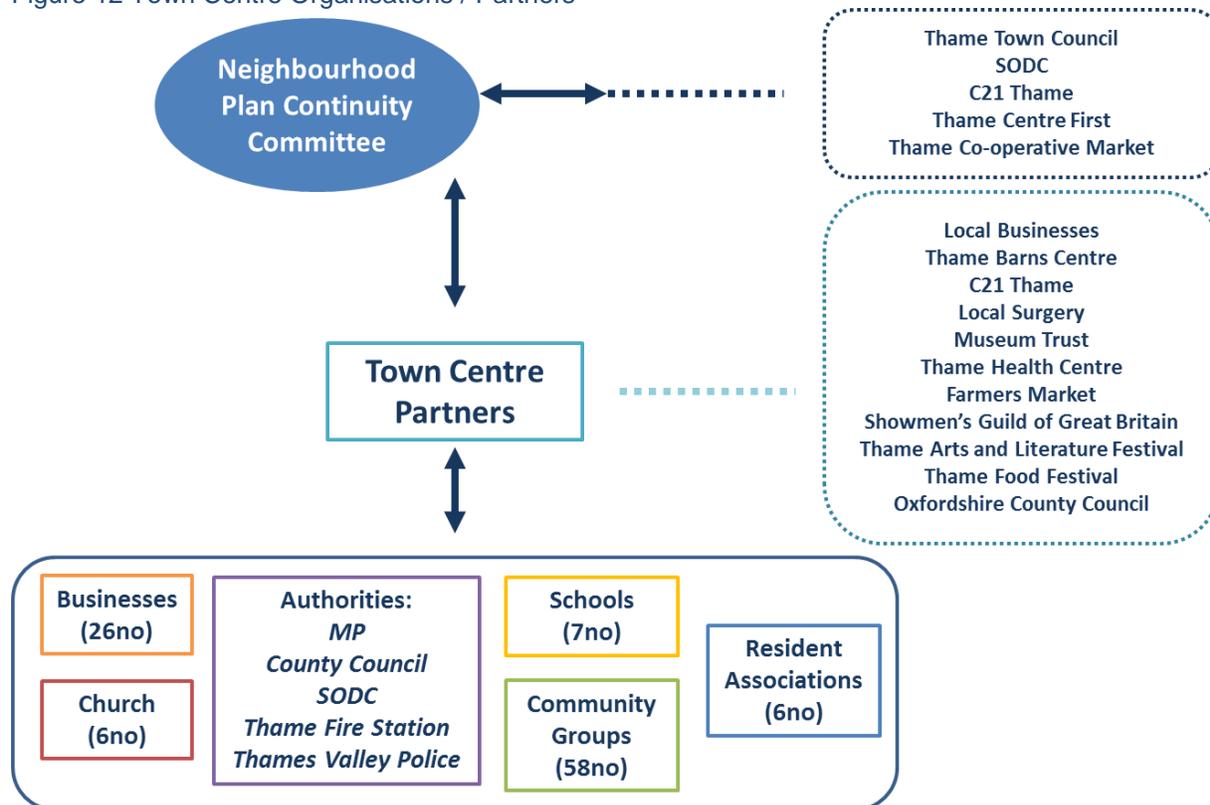


Source: Thame Town Council Map

### 4.2.7 Current Delivery

There are several local and active organisations that carry out activities or initiatives which ultimately serve to benefit Thame Town Centre. Thame Town Council and South Oxfordshire District Council are the local government organisations with a responsibility for the town. C21st Thame is an organisation which relies on volunteers and which was established to facilitate projects which enhance the town for residents, businesses and visitors alike<sup>48</sup>. Thame Centre First is also a voluntary led organisation which is an action group that formed to campaign ‘to keep the high street alive’ and to actively prevent an out-of-town supermarket from locating in the area. Thames Valley Farmers’ Market Co-operative are responsible for delivering markets across the region by connecting food producers with local consumers at markets. In addition to these groups, there are a number of other groups, which exist to deliver a very specific service. For example, there is a separate group who run Thame Food Festival and another which run Thame Arts and Literature Festival. At present, the recently formed neighbourhood plan continuity committee are responsible for ensuring the neighbourhood plan is adhered to. C21st Thame have attempted to coordinate some of the event led group activity by offering collaboration on certain aspects of event delivery such as group insurance.

Figure 12 Town Centre Organisations / Partners



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd. April 2016

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.thame4me.co.uk/community/business-groups/21st-century-thame/#!introducing-21ct>

There is also an active business forum although it mainly comprises businesses located at out of town industrial estates rather than town centre businesses. As such, there is no town centre business group or chamber of commerce. There are also a number of resident associations and community groups active across the town.

Half of the survey respondents felt that the need to ensure that town centre groups work together towards a common vision was a main priority for the town centre. Ensuring all groups are complementing each other's activity and not duplicating efforts – and also ensuring that all groups are working towards a common goal should be a key aim for the town going forward.

## Appendix 1 – Online Survey Questionnaire

\* **1** Have you visited Thame Town Centre in the past 12 months?

Yes

No

Two Routes from Q1:

Yes (Route 1)

**2** Please select the statement(s) which best applies to you.

I live in Thame

I live in a nearby village

I work in Thame

I own a business in Thame Town Centre

I am a member of a local organisation

I am a visitor / tourist

Other (please specify)

3 Please rate the following aspects of Thame Town Centre? (Very good to very poor)

	Very good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor
Range of shops, food and drink and other services	<input type="radio"/>				
Quality of shops, food and drink and other services	<input type="radio"/>				
Getting around the town centre	<input type="radio"/>				
Thame's weekly market	<input type="radio"/>				
Thame's monthly farmers' market	<input type="radio"/>				
Evening time offer e.g. restaurants, pubs and bars	<input type="radio"/>				
Other town centre attractions e.g. Thame Museum, Thame Players Theatre, Library, etc.	<input type="radio"/>				
Other town centre events e.g. Thame Food Festival, TAL -Thame Arts & Literature Festival, Fairs, Carnival, Christmas Light Switch on, etc.	<input type="radio"/>				
Availability and quality of information on the town centre, e.g. map, town guide, etc	<input type="radio"/>				

4 To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Totally agree to totally disagree)

	Totally agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Totally disagree
Thame Town Centre has everything for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thame has a good range of food shopping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thame has a good range of non-food shopping e.g. clothes, shoes, homeware	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is plenty of choice for eating out in Thame	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thame has a strong market town identity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thame is compact and easy to get around	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Signage around Thame makes it easy to navigate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thame's shops are accessible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thame's markets are well run and have a good range of products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a strong cultural offer e.g. Thame Museum, Thame Players Theatre, Library, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know what events and activities are happening in Thame Town Centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Thame feels managed and cared for	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a strong sense of a business community in Thame Town Centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5 To what extent do you think the following are a problem / potential problem for Thame Town Centre? 1 (no problem) to 5 (biggest problem)

	1	2	3	4	5
Gaps in the retail offer / missing shops or products	<input type="radio"/>				
A limited range of cafes, restaurants and bars	<input type="radio"/>				
Lack of opportunities for new retail and town centre development	<input type="radio"/>				
The future redevelopment of the cattle market site	<input type="radio"/>				
Availability and ease of free parking across the town centre	<input type="radio"/>				
Availability and cost of other parking	<input type="radio"/>				
Availability and frequency of public transport	<input type="radio"/>				

If you would like to add any further information about these issues, then please do so below.

6 Are there any other issues that are facing Thame Town Centre not already mentioned?

7 What actions / initiatives have been tried before to improve Thame Town Centre that were particularly successful? And why?

8 What actions / initiatives have been tried before to improve Thame Town Centre that were particularly unsuccessful? And why?

9 What do you see as the main priorities for Thame Town Centre in the near future?

- Ensuring parking is available and accessible to all town centre users
- To fill gaps in town centre shops, food and drink and other services
- The development of the cattle market site for mixed use development
- Ensuring continued investment in town centre events and festivals
- Ensuring town centre groups continue to work together towards a common vision for the town centre
- To develop the infrastructure to cope with a growing population over the next two decades
- Ensuring development of additional town centre events in Thame to promote tourism
- To develop apps to promote tourism and to facilitate easier car parking
- Ensuring there is co-ordinated information on the town centre for local residents and visitors
- Broadening the evening time offer in terms of cafes, restaurants and bars
- Other (please specify)

10 Do you have any creative ideas or suggested areas of improvements that would support the future vitality and viability of Thame Town Centre?

11 Please enter your postcode.

(This is the only personal information we ask for. It is so we can understand where people who use Thame Town Centre come from. The information will not be used for any other purpose)

**Q1: Answer = No (Route 2)**

2 Please indicate why you haven't used Thame in the past 12 months?

- Other towns and shopping centres have more range and quality
- It's easier to get into other town centres
- Other towns / areas have better parking
- I tend to shop on-line and don't visit town centres
- It's too far away
- Other (please specify)

3 What would encourage you to use Thame Town Centre?

- Better range and quality of shops
- Better access to the town centre
- Other (please specify)

4 Please enter your postcode.

(This is the only personal information we ask for. It is so we can understand where people who complete the survey come from. The information will not be used for any other purpose)

Thank you for completing the survey.

## Appendix 2 – Market Town Co-ordinator – Job Description

<b>Post Title</b>	Thame Market Town Co-ordinator
<b>Employer</b>	Thame Town Council
<b>Line Manager</b>	Town Clerk
<b>Salary</b>	Grade 4 salary equivalent £21,877 – actual salary for 2016/17 £8,203.50; £10,938 per full year (2017/18 if extended)
<b>Duration of role</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> July to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2017 (18.5 hours per week)

### Job Purpose

- To provide strategic co-ordination and delivery for Thame town centre action plan
- To support town organisations with their capacity, resources and delivery
- To facilitate the transition to a Town Team delivery vehicle
- To work towards a sustainable way of working

### Main Responsibilities

1. To help with the co-delivery of the action plan, specifically on items that are strategic and cross-cutting and maximises the delivery of tangible benefits for Thame town centre e.g. communication, digital media, event integration, buy local, parking and access.
2. To work with existing organisations that have had a direct role in town centre projects and initiatives, specifically to support them in developing and delivering projects that are identified within the town centre action plan or are to be complementary.
3. To help groups such as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Thame through the proposed town team structure that fosters relationships with the town centre business community and associated ownership of support and activity. To help build these business relationships
4. To lead on project development areas such as signage and parking reviews as well as developing business cases for larger capital projects e.g. Montesson Square and Upper High Street car park area.
5. To assist with the delivery of immediate priorities as specified in the action plan that provide quick wins yet lead to sustainable delivery.
6. To work with existing organisations on the proposal of developing a “town team” type structure and to support this transition (i) Business engagement and support (ii) Customer Experience (iii) Events and Town Activity and (iv) Environment.

7. To help establish the Town Team, and act as a key resource for groups in delivering actions and be a “go to” person for local organisations and the wider business community.
8. To report to Thame Town Council and South Oxfordshire District Council on key progress and outputs.
9. To monitor progress and to help the Town Team communicate its activities and success stories to town centre stakeholders – business, community groups and local residents.
10. To help in leveraging additional resources for future project activity that sustains Town Team activity and other medium to long term projects (capital).

### Person Specification

<b>Qualifications</b>	Educated to at least level 4 in the national qualifications framework (e.g. NVQ4 or HNC).
<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of market towns in relation to current challenges they are facing and how to manage/deliver change in places like Thame</li> <li>• Knowledge of communication, organisational development, marketing and communication</li> <li>• Understanding of the local government environment.</li> </ul>
<b>Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to communicate clearly and concisely in writing and in speech with a range of audiences</li> <li>• Ability to use effectively and proficiently commonly available computer software, including word processing and spreadsheet programs</li> <li>• Ability to use digital and social media to promote town based communication</li> <li>• Ability to generate new ideas and turn them into viable projects</li> <li>• Ability to deliver projects effectively</li> <li>• Ability to manage people effectively</li> <li>• Ability to monitor, analyse and present results</li> <li>• Politically sensitive and able to establish credibility and work effectively with local government officers and councillors.</li> </ul>

<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At least three years' experience in project management with a town or community setting, managing a diverse workload and delivering a variety of tasks, adapting quickly to changing circumstances</li><li>• A track record in the development of marketing plans, delivery of actions, the use of initiative and project management</li></ul>
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