

Background

The Thame Neighbourhood Plan was soft-launched at the Annual Town Meeting of 27 March 2018. Following this meeting, a workshop was held with members of the public who showed continued support for the existing vision statement of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan. It was agreed employment matters should be added to the vision.

The various alterations to the District's Local Plan has continually led to further work being placed on hold. With the Local Plan 2034 submitted for Examination and local elections held, it is recommended that a full work programme now be drawn up. The overall administration of the NP will be through oversight by the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee. Progress will be undertaken by Officers and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee Co-ordination Working Group (NPCCCWG), volunteers from the community and consultants.

NPCCCWG

Progress on evidence gathering, community engagement, policy formation and site assessment, etc., will be undertaken by a series of working groups of the NPCCCWG. The NPCCCWG will draw up the Terms of Reference for the working groups, co-ordinate their activities and allocate resources. It is expected the working groups will be staffed by members, staff and community volunteers.

Work Schedule

The full work schedule will be agreed with NPCCCWG members and the wider NPCC. In order to expedite work it is proposed that two NPCCCWG meetings are held in quick succession in order to inform and coordinate the working of the working groups:

- 1) A current position meeting to bring members up to date on the latest developments, locally and nationally. Matters to be discussed will include:
 - a. Current state, including SWOT analysis – Local Plan future, infrastructure, windfall, etc.
 - b. Evidence review – stock items, known gaps and new local needs
 - c. Support available – Locality, AECOM, etc.
 - d. Timetable – LP2034, employment, school and health hub pressure
 - e. Working groups – TOR, numbers, initial membership, reporting structure
 - f. Community assistance

2) Approach meeting:

- a. Principles of the NP review e.g. walkable service centre Thame, Cllr. Bob Austin's Principles, sustainability, do we contest the 363 dwellings or find our own figure.
- b. Consultancy – when / how much / engagement process
- c. Consultation strategy, including a review of recommended and best practice
- d. Branding and communication
- e. Grant funding

Subsequently, it is proposed that meetings of the NPCCCWG will take place every 3 weeks in order to ensure momentum is maintained. Once established, each working group will meet as required and report progress to the NPCCCWG and NPCC.

NPCCCWG sub-working groups

It is proposed that working groups are established as soon as they are identified as needed. Suggested working groups include:

- Communication and consultation
- Site assessments – suggest core NPCCCWG group
- Demographics – suggest core NPCCCWG group
- Housing policy - including local housing needs
- Employment & retail policy – including local needs
- Travel management and access – including footpaths, cycleways, parking
- GLP – integration and interpretation
- Leisure and community facilities
- Design codes

A provisional schedule of meetings, with provisional topics for the earliest meetings suggested. The working groups will meet as necessary and to coordinate with the NPCCCWG / NPCC meetings. Given the importance of maintaining progress it is recommended a delegation of some duties is passed to the Chair of the NPCCCWG, for example in the commissioning of studies and evidence documents:

Date	Meeting
28 May 18:30 (Tue)	NPCCCWG initial meeting – current planning environment, evidence review, working groups, timetable etc.
6 June 18:30 (Thur)	NPCCCWG initial meeting – principles, consultancy, consultation strategy etc.
11 June 19:30 (Tue, following P&E)	NPCCCWG – consultancy engagement and working group progress
27 June 18:30 (Thur)	NPCCCWG – consultation and consultancy engagement
2 July 19:30 (Tue)	NPCC – NPCCCWG Chair to report progress
18 July 18:30 (Thur)	NPCCCWG
8 August 18:30 (Thur)	NPCCCWG
13 August 19:30	NPCC – NPCCCWG Chair to report progress

27 August 18:30	NPCCCWG
17 September 18:30 (Tues)	NPCCCWG
24 September 19:30 (Tues)	NPCC – NPCCCWG Chair to report progress

Timetable

During the development of the current Thame Neighbourhood Plan five major rounds of public consultation were held by the Town Council. This was in addition to the District's duties to consult on the area the neighbourhood plan is intended to cover. This approach ensured the widest possible involvement for what was then a wholly novel part of the development plan process.

Consultation should not be perceived as a formality but an opportunity to improve the Plan's soundness and effectiveness, and the level of understanding for the community it will act for. Thame's Market Town role and its location on the border of two Counties will require wide-reaching engagement with distant bodies and private individuals. Opportunities should still be sought, however, to combine matters into as few consultations as possible as each event has the potential to add weeks to the Plan's timetable.

It is suggested that the NPCCCWG consider outlining an approach for consultation that complements thoughts on the review's timetable.

The timetable itself will be influenced by progress on the Local Plan 2034 which the Thame NP should be in conformity with. The District's latest March 2019 Local Development Scheme gives the following dates for the remaining stages:

Examination in Public (Regulation 24*)	March 2019 – September 2019
Inspector's Report (Regulation 25*)	September 2019
Adoption (Regulation 26*)	November 2019
*The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012	

The above timetable is reasonable but presents a best-case scenario. Two Inspectors have been appointed to the Examination, perhaps reflecting its complexity. If significant modifications are required to the Local Plan then the District Council will have to make amendments, and subject those to a further round of public consultation. It is assumed that the adoption date given is inclusive of the six weeks' notice period during which legal challenges can be made to the Plan's adoption.

Currently, the Local Plan has policies that require Neighbourhood Plans to be at Submission stage with sites identified and allocated for housing and employment uses within 12 months of the adoption of the Local Plan 2034. This will be challenged at Examination but in any case, the NP would closely follow the adoption of the Local Plan in order to manage development in line with local expectations.

Some matters are already known to need greater, or perhaps lesser attention than during preparation of the last NP:

Additional tasks	Comments	Impact on timetable
Designate NP area	Requires legal agreement with Great Haseley Parish Council	Minor negative effect. It is assumed mutual agreement can be reached. We would proceed at low risk as Thame can fall back to its existing NP boundary.
Vision and Objectives	The refresh and minor modification to cover employment matters has already received community support	Positive effect. These can be tested during the first consultation.
Evidence gathering	Required as likely new local items are: a) Thame demographics b) Thame housing needs c) Thame employment needs d) Townscape character assessment	Moderate negative effect. More precise demographic data is required for employment analysis and housing needs analysis, thus mitigating some delay. Use of local survey of new residents is essential. Consultants required for specialist work areas (see below).
Cross-border cooperation	With neighbouring parishes, District and County Councils.	Minor negative effect. Views have already been sought from neighbouring parishes on matters of common ground and no major issues have arisen. District and County have a duty to engage positively with us.
Design codes	Inspectors are now only supporting very specific design policies and codes at the neighbourhood level	Minor / moderate negative. A design board or panel may need establishing, working alongside volunteers from each character area.

Briefing notes will be presented for the first two NPCCCWG meetings. This will include a summary of the key stages of the NP review; an updated task and activity schedule, and detailed lists of existing and required evidence. Updates will also be provided on the latest Government-sponsored support package from Locality, which has just been announced.