

Thame Town Council – Neighbourhood Plan Review – Consultancy Brief

Background

1. The Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) was adopted in July 2013 and is seen as a front runner in Neighbourhood Planning.
2. A significant part of the TNP has now been delivered (in particular housing allocations) and the Local Plan which it conforms with may be superseded, as its replacement has been submitted for Examination.
3. The implementation of the TNP is being managed by the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee (NPCC) of Thame Town Council, supported by a full time Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer (NPCO).
4. It is now 6 years on and it is clear that a revision of the TNP is required (that revision to be known as TNP2) and an initial launch of that revision was made at the Annual Town Meeting in March 2018, where the Vision and Principles were confirmed.
5. A Call for Sites was carried out in March 2019.
6. There are ever increasing pressures from the community, developers and others on the existing TNP, which although is still the latest local material consideration, is showing its age and omissions.
7. The expectation is that the scope of TNP2 may change to include even more on required Market Town infrastructure, employment provision, elderly provision and the like, rather than being primarily driven by Housing Allocations. The area designation is likely to be changed to include a small part of an adjacent parish, where an employment related planning permission has been granted.
8. The Town Council is now seeking Consultancy Support to work alongside the NPCO in the production of TNP2, in line with latest regulations and best practice.

Consultancy Scope

9. The Town Council expects the chosen consultancy to help define the exact full scope of work required, but it is expected to include:
 - a) Establishing a full understanding of the current status of the existing TNP.
 - b) Overall project planning for TNP2.
 - c) Review of the existing evidence base and establishing what new evidence is required, followed by either establishment of or procurement of the evidence base.
 - d) Independent assessment of sites following the Call for Sites.
 - e) Support for the NPCO who will retain the lead responsibility.
 - f) Maximising the use of support available from elsewhere.
 - g) Effective engagement with the Planning Authority.
 - h) Ongoing advice of the impact of the emerging Local Plan on TNP2.

- i) A watching brief on other impacts such as the emerging Oxfordshire Plan 2050, the Oxfordshire Growth Deal, the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework, emerging adjacent and cross-border plans, and increased environmental awareness.
- j) Production of relevant technical documents, such as the Sustainability Appraisal.
- k) Production of a draft TNP2 including appropriate policies, based on established and programmed evidence. The policies must incorporate where appropriate the proposals and civic projects emerging from the Thame Green Living Plan.
- l) Management of Community Engagement / Consultation events as required.
- m) Reporting of progress to the community and related media management through an effective communication plan.
- n) Reporting of progress to the Town Council, via the 6-weekly NPCC meetings, plus any interim updates as may be required.
- o) Support for any examination / hearings that may be undertaken.
- p) Support for the referendum.

Timescale

- 10. The timescale for TNP2 is being constantly impacted by delays in the Local Plan, with the latest delay through a change in the political make-up of South Oxfordshire District Council.
- 11. It is still expected that the adoption of TNP2 will very shortly follow the adoption of the new Local Plan, but there is an increasing argument that TNP2 should not wait for the Local Plan, but go through an amendment process once the Local Plan is nearing adoption.
- 12. The current aim is to have an emerging TNP2, carrying some weight, by March 2020, if not before.

Expression of Interest / Fee Proposal

- 13. Expressions of Interest / Fee proposals are sought for the work set out above. Such proposals should summarise the methodology/approach to be used, set out all assumptions to be made. Details of similar type of work experience should also be set out.
- 14. The Town Council has set aside a significant budget for the right support, but will constantly ensure that all funds spent will be good value for the community of Thame.
- 15. The deadline for submissions is dd/mmm/yyyy, to be sent by e-mail or post to Graham.Hunt@thametowncouncil.gov.uk or Graham Hunt, Town Clerk, Town Hall, High Street, Thame, Oxon, OX9 3DP clearly marked / titled – TNP2 Consultancy Support.

Decision Making

- 16. The Town Council will establish a short list, based on a scored approach relating to quality of fee proposal, past experience, a demonstration of the understanding of Thame's specific needs and price.
- 17. Those on the shortlist will be invited to a presentation day at Thame Town Council, following which a final selection will be made.

Should you have any queries in relation to the scope of the work please contact:

- Graham Hunt, Town Clerk on 01844 260495 or Graham.Hunt@thametowncouncil.gov.uk or
- Graeme Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer on 01844 212833 or Graeme.Markland@thamtowncouncil.gov.uk