

THAME

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (TNP2)

2020 – 2035

DRAFT VERSION

June 2022



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Thame Town Council

Town Hall

High Street

Thame, OX9 3DP

www.thametowncouncil.gov.uk

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TABLE TO BE UPDATED

Foreword

Dear Residents,

Insert text

Name

Position

1. Introduction

The Neighbourhood Plan Review

- 1.1 This is the draft of the new Neighbourhood Plan for Thame. It represents the first review and update of the Neighbourhood Plan that was 'made' as planning policy in 2013. It is henceforth referred to as 'TNP2'.
- 1.2 TNP2 covers the entire area within the boundaries of the Town Council (Figure 1), setting out the community's aspirations for the area over the period to 2035¹ and establishes policies relating to land use and development. These are policies that will influence future planning applications and decisions in the area. But the Neighbourhood Plan is much more than this. It represents the community's manifesto for Thame, bringing together more than just traditional planning matters.
- 1.3 The purpose of neighbourhood planning is to give local people and businesses a much greater say in how the places they live and work should change and develop over time. Neighbourhood planning is designed to give local people a very real voice in shaping the look and feel of an area.
- 1.4 Thame was formally designated as an area for neighbourhood planning purposes in April 2012. It was one of the first areas in the country to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan and was a great success. It has helped to shape and influence:
 - Areas for new employment development and provision of job opportunities.
 - Delivery of new, well designed areas of housing.
 - Provision of new open spaces, walking and cycle routes.
 - Where money sourced from developers through the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements should be directed (for example, towards new and improved sports and leisure facilities).

¹ This aligns with the period covered by the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

- 1.5 However, in the nine years since the first Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' there have been numerous changes that now require the Plan to be reviewed and updated. These include:
- Adoption of a new Local Plan by South Oxfordshire District Council that establishes the requirement for new housing, employment and retail growth in Thame.
 - Rising house prices and affordability issues, particularly for local people wishing to remain in Thame but whom struggle to rent or buy a home.
 - Changes, at the national level, to planning and development rights, and an increasing awareness of the importance of good design and the impact on shaping attractive, liveable places.
- 1.6 At the same time, wider challenges have arisen that must also be considered. South Oxfordshire District Council, along with most other authorities across the country, has declared a 'Climate and Ecological Emergency'. In Thame, a 'Green Living Plan' has been prepared, establishing a series of objectives and actions intended to help shape a 'greener' future. This is the first such community-led plan to have been adopted in the country. Ideas and principles from this need to be embedded into TNP2.
- 1.7 The Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing precautions put in place in response to that had a major impact on the way that people work, travel and make use of outdoor space. The lasting effects of the pandemic are not yet known, but do highlight the importance of cohesive communities well served by the 'shopping basket' of services and facilities required to support day-to-day life, which are accessible and available to all.
- 1.8 Equally, the impact of Covid-19, coupled with wider economic challenges, including the availability of labour and movement of goods raises questions as to the sustainability of working and living patterns.

Insert plan of neighbourhood area



Figure 1: Designated Neighbourhood Plan area

Structure of TNP2

- 1.9 Following this introduction the draft Neighbourhood Plan comprises eight further sections. These are:
- Section 2: This establishes the context for TNP2, the relationship with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and requirements established within that for Thame.
 - Section 3: This presents the vision and objectives for Thame, and the spatial interpretation of these.
 - Sections 4 – 8: These sections present the policies and associated projects for Thame.
 - Section 9: This section outlines the opportunities to influence delivery of infrastructure in the Plan area, the current stage in the plan making process, how to respond, and what the future steps in the process are.
- 1.10 For the avoidance of doubt, within sections 4 – 8, each topic area includes some introductory and explanatory text, followed by one or both of the following:

Policy Box

TNP2 establishes land use and development management policies for Thame. These are contained in green shaded policy boxes, like this one, and will be used to help determine planning applications.

Project Box

TNP2 covers more than just traditional planning matters as it presents the community's vision for the area. Items that the community are seeking, but that cannot be delivered through planning policy, are identified and contained in blue shaded project boxes, like this one. These are included within the body of the report, rather than being presented in a separate chapter or appendix, because they relate to the objectives and form a clear and important part of the story.

2. Context for TNP2

The Local Plan

- 2.1 Neighbourhood Plans must be prepared in line with national guidance and legislation including the Localism Act (2011), the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012)², the Neighbourhood Planning Act, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).
- 2.2 Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan³. The development plan for Thame is the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, which was adopted by the District Council in December 2020. Of particular importance for Thame is Policy TH1 ('The Strategy for Thame'). The text of this policy is copied below:

South Oxfordshire Local Plan, 2020 – 2035:

Policy TH1: The Strategy for Thame

1. Neighbourhood Development Plans are expected to, and the Council will support development proposals that:
 - i. deliver homes in accordance with Policy H3;
 - ii. strengthen the retail offer within Thame Town Centre;
 - iii. improve the attraction of Thame for visitors and businesses;
 - iv. improve accessibility, car and cycle parking, pedestrian and cycle links;
 - v. support schemes that enhance the quality of the town's environment and conserve and enhance the town's heritage assets;
 - vi. provide new employment opportunities and improve the stock of existing employment areas; and
 - vii. provide new, or enhanced community facilities that meet an identified need.

² Updated in 2015 and 2016

³ See Para 29 / Footnote 16, MHCLG, February 2019, NPPF

- 2.3 The scale of new growth to be accommodated in Thame is established in Local Plan Policies H3 (and associated table 4d), EMP1 and 6, and TC4. These require:
- A minimum of 339 new homes to be accommodated in Thame over the Plan period;
 - A minimum of 3.5 hectares of land for employment purposes (to provide office, manufacturing and distribution jobs) to be accommodated over the Plan period; and
 - An additional 1,500sqm of convenience retail floorspace (shops selling everyday essential items) to be accommodated over the Plan period, taking a 'town centre first approach' to provision.
- 2.4 Crucially, the Local Plan states that land for this growth should be identified and allocated through the review of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, if the Neighbourhood Plan has not been submitted for Examination within twelve months of the Local Plan being adopted (i.e.: December 2021), then planning applications submitted after this date will be considered on their merits against the policies in the Local Plan.
- 2.5 This has represented a significant challenge for Thame, not least in terms of the timeframe.
- 2.6 In addition to the above, the District adopted a Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document in 2016. This is in the process of being updated and, once adopted, will replace the current Design Guide. The Design Guide (current version and subsequent update) acts as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and to which all applicants should refer.
- 2.7 Furthermore, the County Council is publishing a new Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The current plan was adopted in 1996 and will be replaced by a two part Plan. The first (The 'Core Strategy') was adopted in September 2017. The second (Site Allocations) is currently in production and will identify sites for minerals and waste management over the period to 2031. The Core Strategy does not identify any minerals safeguarding nor strategic resource areas within the Thame Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 2.8 As far as appropriate, TNP2 has been informed by the Local Plan documents and the suite of supporting material providing evidence to this, all of which can be accessed via the South Oxfordshire District Council website⁴.

⁴ See: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/local-plan-2035/>

Climate Change and Thame Green Living Plan

- 2.9 This Neighbourhood Plan is also set in the context of the 'Climate Emergency' declared by South Oxfordshire District Council in February 2019 and, subsequently, the 'Ecological Emergency' declared in February 2021. As part of this, the District has pledged to become a carbon neutral council (within its own operations) by 2025 and a carbon neutral district by 2030. A Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee (CEEAC) has been established, recommending actions, policies and practices that should be taken to reduce damage to the environment. A Climate Action Plan is currently being prepared.
- 2.10 Alongside this, the Environment Act reflects actions set out in the Government's 25-year Environment Plan and establishes a commitment to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Act introduces a number of legally binding targets, including those related to the protection of species and achievement of biodiversity net-gain through development. Jointly, Natural England and Defra have prepared a biodiversity metric (current version 3.0)⁵ which should be used to quantify net-gain and which is applicable to all sizes of development.
- 2.11 Policies, projects and aspirations are included in the Neighbourhood Plan that seek to deliver a more environmentally responsible future. These build upon the ideas and actions established through the Thame Green Living Plan.

Thame Green Living Plan (GLP)

The GLP, adopted in July 2020, is a ten-year plan for a cleaner, greener Thame. It seeks to protect and enhance quality of life in Thame, as well as the natural environment. It is a response to the climate emergency and sets out a range of actions that can be taken by individuals, community groups and other organisations, including suggestions as to infrastructure changes that might be delivered. Actions are presented around a series of themes which, together, are intended to result in a resilient, sustainable and community-led town. It is hoped this will result in healthier lifestyles, lower energy costs and a more cohesive and connected community, as well as the delivery of more green space, better connections with the countryside, and protection of natural resources.

Where appropriate, some ideas and actions from the GLP are incorporated within policies within the TNP2. Other ideas and actions are included as projects towards which funding, such as that payable through the Community Infrastructure Levy, may be directed.

⁵ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6049804846366720>

Wider Strategic Drivers

2.12 The wider strategic context for Thame is being developed through a combination of the:

- Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal⁶
- Oxfordshire Plan 2050⁷
- Oxford-Cambridge Arc⁸

Housing and Growth Deal

2.13 The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal ('the Deal') was signed in 2018 and sets out expectations and planning flexibilities in the context of an ambitious plan for growth.

2.14 Through the Deal, Oxfordshire has committed to:

- Plan for and support the delivery of 100,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031.
- The submission and adoption, subject to the inspection process, of a joint statutory spatial plan covering all five district councils in Oxfordshire (see the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, below).

2.15 Through the Deal, Government has committed to:

- Providing Oxfordshire with up to £215m funding
- Explore options to grant Oxfordshire certain time-limited planning flexibilities, subject to consultation where appropriate.

Oxfordshire Plan 2050

2.16 The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 seeks to provide an integrated strategic planning framework and evidence base to support sustainable growth across the county until 2050. It will plan for the delivery of new homes and economic development, as well as the anticipated supporting infrastructure required. Production of the Plan is an output of the Housing and Growth Deal. It builds upon the work of existing adopted Local Plans and seeks to establish the framework for future growth.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxfordshire-housing-deal>

⁷ <https://oxfordshireplan.inconsult.uk/>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxford-cambridge-arc>

- 2.18 The most recent version of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 developed a series of aspirations for the county which focused on the following:
- Protecting environmental quality.
 - Promoting strong and healthy communities.
 - Supporting economic growth.
 - Improving housing availability and affordability.
 - Improving connectivity and movement.
- 2.19 The Plan notes that the successful development of housing and economic growth will require a strategic approach to infrastructure delivery, in particular around transport and the environment. In order to develop a successful transport network, the Plan will look to improve connectivity, digital access, public transport networks, high quality walking and cycling access to transport hubs and reducing congestion. It also acknowledges the importance of wider community infrastructure including schools, health and leisure facilities and basic utilities including water, sewerage and energy.
- 2.20 The Plan was subject to consultation between July and October 2021. It is anticipated that, following submission and examination, it will be adopted in May / June 2023.

Oxford-Cambridge Arc

- 2.21 Thame is situated within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc (Figure 2). This is a globally significant area between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. It supports over two million jobs, adds over £110 billion to the economy every year and houses one of the fastest growing economies in England.
- 2.22 There are five areas of focus for the Arc:
- Economy
 - Place-making
 - Connectivity and infrastructure
 - Environment
- 2.23 The ambition for the Arc is to 'build a better economic, social and environmental future for the area. With high-quality, well-connected and sustainable communities making the Arc an even more beautiful place to live, work and visit.'
- 2.24 A vision for the Arc was consulted upon between July and October 2021. The outcomes and review of this will help inform the production of a spatial framework for the area.

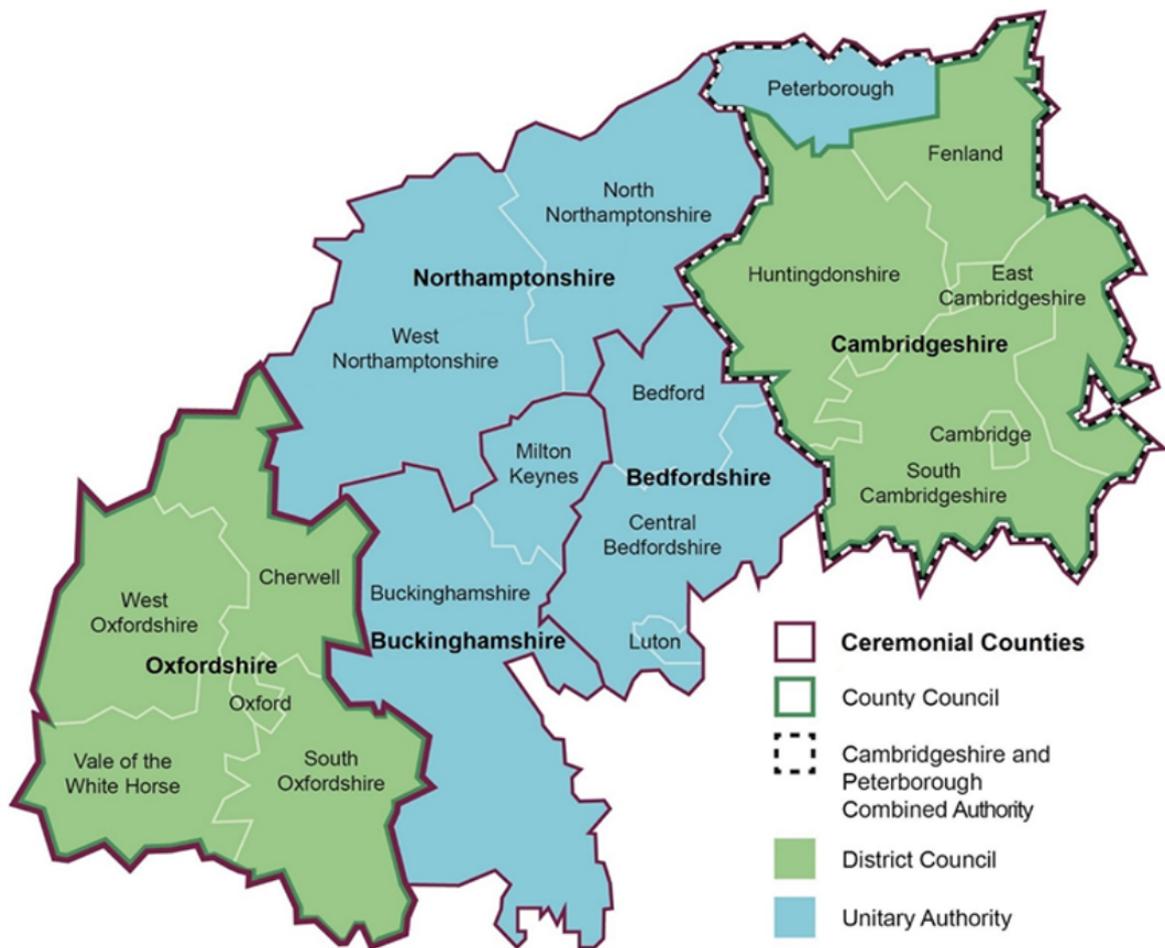


Figure 2: Oxford-Cambridge Arc (source: DLUHC)

3. Vision and Objectives

Vision

- 3.1 Extensive engagement exercises were undertaken in the making of the first Thame Neighbourhood Plan. These were used to develop a vision for the Plan and formed the basis of policies within that. The vision was subsequently reviewed and agreed by the Town Council through its Annual Town Meeting and through consultation on TNP2. The vision is:

'Thame must maintain its character as a real market town'.

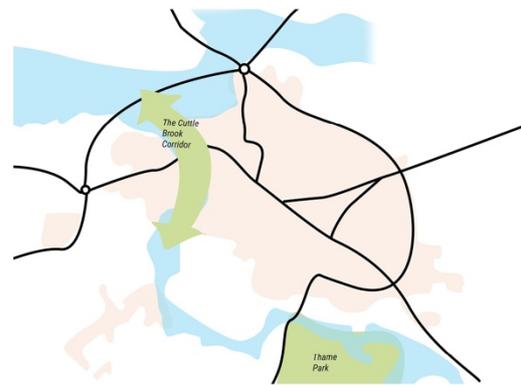
- 3.2 The first Neighbourhood Plan explains that this means:
- Thame must continue to feel compact.
 - Thame must continue to have a close relationship with the open countryside around it.
 - Thame must maintain its markets, festivals and events.
 - Thame must continue to act as a centre for the surrounding area not just its residents.

Objectives

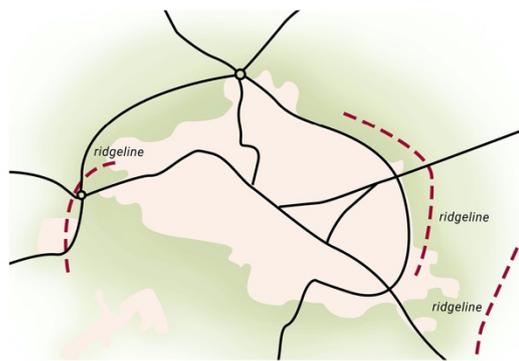
- 3.3 The vision for Thame has been developed into a set of objectives which are presented spatially (Figure 3) and which are intended to help inform preferred directions of future growth and other interventions. These are:
1. The compactness and walkability of Thame should be retained, with new homes within comfortable travel distance, by foot and by bike, from the town centre and other social and community facilities located around the town.
 2. The sensitive environment around Thame should be respected, with areas of new growth avoiding areas of nature conservation and flood risk.
 3. Growth should avoid impacting on the landscape setting of Thame, retaining proximity to the surrounding countryside.
 4. The separate identity of Thame and outlying villages, including Moreton, to the south, and Towersey, to the east, should be retained.
 5. New development should be well integrated with the existing built form, contributing to the achievement of integrated communities.
 6. New development should respect the historic growth and evolution of Thame.



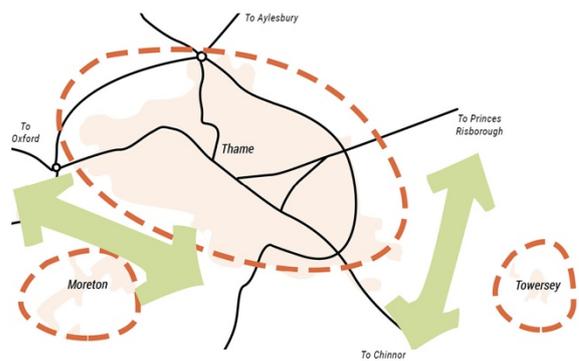
1) The compactness and walkability of Thame should be retained, with new homes within comfortable travel distance, by foot and by bike, from the town centre and other social and community facilities located around the town.



2) The sensitive environment around Thame should be respected, with areas of new growth avoiding areas of nature conservation and flood risk.



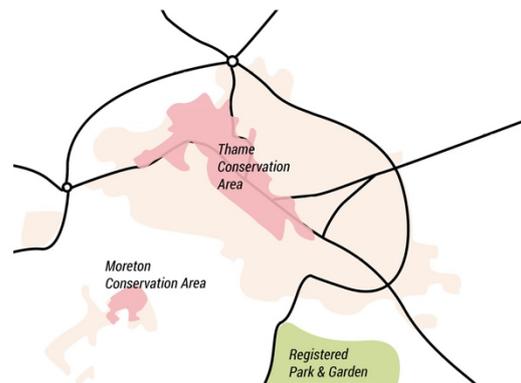
3) The landscape setting, quality of this and access to the green spaces and open countryside around Thame should be retained.



4) The separate identity of Thame and outlying villages, including Moreton, to the south, and Towersey, to the east, should be retained.



5) New housing development should help support social inclusion, being well integrated with the existing built-up area of Thame and avoiding barriers to movement.



6) New development should respect Thame's historic areas and past growth.

Figure 3: Spatial representation of the Neighbourhood Plan objectives

Compact, walkable and ‘complete’ communities

- 3.4 The vision and objectives outlined above seek to strengthen the role and function of Thame as a market town. They also seek to accommodate growth in a way that responds to the challenges of climate change and the impact of the Covid pandemic on the way we plan for and interact with the built and natural environment.
- 3.5 Over the past few years there has been a growing awareness of the importance of ‘complete communities’ as evidenced, for example, through publication of the guide to ‘20-minute neighbourhoods’ by the Town and Country Planning Association⁹. Although going by different names, the terms ‘complete community’ and ‘20-minute neighbourhood’ are interchangeable. These are places where the shopping basket of services and facilities for everyday life can be found and accessed within a twenty-minute round trip of the home (i.e.: ten minutes there and ten minutes back), preferably by foot or by bike, and which support initiatives to help create socially cohesive and inclusive communities. The key features of such places are illustrated in Figure 4, with Table 1 indicating how the policies and projects contained within the Neighbourhood Plan contribute towards meeting these.
- 3.6 This concept builds upon practice emerging globally, in places such as Melbourne and Paris for example. It also looks to guidance contained within the New Urban Agenda prepared by the United Nations, which builds upon the Sustainable Development Goals¹⁰ that establish a list of ‘transformative commitments for sustainable development’.
- 3.7 Such an approach is also championed by Sustrans, who advocate a mode shift away from private vehicles as the default mode of transport to walking, cycling and public transport.
- 3.8 Their 2019 manifesto¹¹ included the promotion of ‘20-minute neighbourhoods’, with the key principle being that everyone in towns and cities can walk and cycle for everyday services and needs.’ It is envisaged that this concept would support¹²:
- Vibrant, healthy and prosperous communities that engage citizens.
 - More journeys by foot, cycle and public transport because they are the most obvious and convenient option.

⁹ Town and Country Planning Association, March 2021, 20-Minute Neighbourhoods: Creating healthier, active, prosperous communities.

¹⁰ The UN Sustainable Development Goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, forming part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All seventeen goals are relevant to the way we plan for and think about the future of our towns and cities.

¹¹ Sustrans, 2019, Sustrans’ Manifesto for UK Government

¹² Page 14, *ibid.*

- People living close to their place of work, shops and recreation; and children within walking, cycling or scooting distance of their school.
- The most vulnerable members of society are easily accessible to vital services, medical care and social sports.



Figure 4: The features of a twenty-minute neighbourhood (source: TCPA, March 2021)

Features of 20-minute neighbourhoods	Policies and projects in the Neighbourhood Plan that help achieve this
Diverse and affordable homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy GDH2 establishes an appropriate housing mix and tenure types for Thame responding to local needs, including the provision of specialist housing for an ageing population. • Policy CPQ3: Self and Custom-Build Housing supports the delivery of self and custom build housing
Well-connected paths, streets, and spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy GDH1 encourages new housing development to be connected into the existing network of walking and cycling routes • Policy GAAT1 supports the provision of new and improved active travel opportunities as part of any major residential and commercial development • Project GAAT(a) helps identify potential locations for new and improved walking and cycling routes • Policy GAP1 seeks to incorporate new links to and from the Phoenix trail for pedestrians and cyclists, integrating with an enhanced walking and cycling network across Thame.
Schools at the heart of communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy SF01: Community Facilities and Services supports improved access to facilities by foot and bicycle.
Good green spaces in the right places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy SFO3 establishes principles for well-designed new green spaces, and Policy SFO2 designates local green spaces for long term protection • Policy NEB1 supports a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain through development proposals, and requiring for this to be provided on site, or as close to the site as possible. • Policy GAC1 seeks to protect the Cuttle Brook corridor, and ensure that any development maintains the north -south green corridor through Thame • Project NESG(a): 'Street Greening' supports the delivery of greener streets throughout Thame, including the exploration of how to re-use underused green space and roadside verges in order to increase biodiversity value.
Local food production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy SFO3 and NESG(a) both support the provision of new spaces suitable for growing food.

Table 1: The features of a 20-minute neighbourhood (based upon TCPA guidance) and how the policies and projects in TNP2 respond to these

Features of 20-minute neighbourhoods	Policies and projects in the Neighbourhood Plan that help achieve this
Keeping jobs and money local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy GDH1 ensures that new residential development is located within walking distance of essential services and amenities • Policy GDE1 allocates land for new employment development, while Policy GDE2 ensures the design of new employment development creates attractive spaces for new businesses to move into. • Policy GDR2 supports the delivery of town centres uses which are appropriate for the area.
Community health and wellbeing facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy SF01 seeks to retain important local services and facilities, as well as supporting provision of new facilities currently lacking in Thame, which should be accessible to all and designed with flexibility in mind to adapt to changing needs over time
A place for all ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy GDH2 plans for a mix of housing types and tenures, including specialist homes for an ageing population • Policy GAAT1 seeks to provide new walking and cycling routes which are designed for use by people of all ages and abilities

Table 1 continued

3.9 The policies, and projects, within this Neighbourhood Plan intend to deliver on the vision and objectives. The following sections of the Neighbourhood Plan present these, ordered in response to the objectives.

3.10 It is important that the Neighbourhood Plan is read as a whole. All policies should be viewed together in the preparation and consideration of planning applications.

4. Growth and development

Context

- 4.1 Policies and associated projects within this section of the Neighbourhood Plan respond to the growth requirements established for Thame in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, specifically, those established in Policies H3 (and associated Table 4d), EMP1 and 6, and TC4.
- 4.2 In considering the most appropriate locations for future growth and development the Town Council assessed all sites that were submitted for consideration through the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) prepared by South Oxfordshire as well as all sites submitted directly to the Town Council through a separate 'Call for Sites'.
- 4.3 In considering whether a site might be suitable for development guidance established by central Government¹³ and in supporting material prepared for Neighbourhood Planning groups by Locality¹⁴ has been followed.
- 4.4 The guidance includes a range of criteria to help assess whether a site might represent a suitable location for development. These include, but are not limited to, matters such as environmental constraints, areas of biodiversity and nature conservation, accessibility, landscape impacts, proximity and access to important services and facilities.
- 4.5 Following assessment of all sites against the criteria outlined above consideration was then given to how well the sites relate to the vision for Thame and the associated objectives (as presented spatially in Figure 3). Consultation on the process and recommendations from the site assessment exercise was undertaken, with the outcomes of that informing the policies in this section.

¹³ MHCLG, 2014, Updated 2019, Planning Practice Guidance: Housing and economic land availability assessment

¹⁴ Locality, How to assess and allocate sites for development: A toolkit for neighbourhood planners

Housing Sites

- 4.6 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan establishes a requirement for 1,518 new homes to be accommodated in Thame over the period 2011 – 2035, of which it states that there is an outstanding minimum requirement of 339 new homes as of April 2020. Further monitoring undertaken for the period since 2011, taking account of completions and committed development schemes, indicates that the outstanding balance is for a minimum of 256 homes in Thame as of April 2022. These are provided for in TNP2 by way of the following allocations:
- Land south of Wenman Road (formerly known as 'Reserve Site C' in TNP1): Approximately 60 homes.
 - Diagnostics Reagents, Wenman Road: Approximately 25 homes.
 - Land at Windmill Road: Approximately 30 homes.
 - Land at Oxford Road (including part of former 'Reserve Site F' in TNP1): Approximately 180 homes.
 - The Cattle Market: Approximately 15 homes.
- 4.7 Since commencing work on TNP2 the land south of Wenman Road as well as that at Windmill Road have been subject to planning applications and both benefit from a resolution to grant permission. Part of the land allocated at Oxford Road is currently subject to pre-application discussions, with the remainder of the allocation area to come forward during the Plan period.
- 4.8 The sites are allocated in Policy GDH1 below, with specific guidance established for each allocation in subsequent policies.
- 4.9 In order to contribute towards the delivery of land for housing in Thame and rolling five-year land supply targets for South Oxfordshire, it is important that sites submitted for planning permission are deliverable at the time of the application and are not dependent upon provision of off-site infrastructure beyond the control of the applicant and which would delay the completion of new homes.

Policy GDH1: Housing allocations

1. The following sites are allocated for housing development in the Thame Neighbourhood Area:

TNP2 Policy Reference	Site Name	Development Potential (approx.)
GDH1a	Land south of Wenman Road	60 homes
GDH1b	Diagnostics Reagents	25 homes
GDH1c	Land at Windmill Road	30 homes
GDH1d	Land at Oxford Road	180 homes
GDR1	Cattle Market	15 homes (as part of a wider mixed-use development)

2. The overall quantum and timing of development will be subject to the design and masterplanning process for each site, the availability and capacity of infrastructure to support development.
3. All applications for development will need to be accompanied by a programme of archaeological evaluation to be agreed with Oxfordshire County Council and undertaken in advance of any proposals being determined. Subject to the findings of any evaluation, mitigation measures may be required that preserve features of archaeological interest on site.

Land south of Wenman Road

4.10 Text to follow upon receipt of Design support package

Policy GDH1a: Land south of Wenman Road

1. Land south of Wenman Road, as indicated in Figure 5, is allocated for approximately 60 homes. The following criteria apply:
 - a) Insert list of criteria to be informed by site design work through technical support programme

INSERT PLAN OF SITE / DESIGN PRINCIPLES

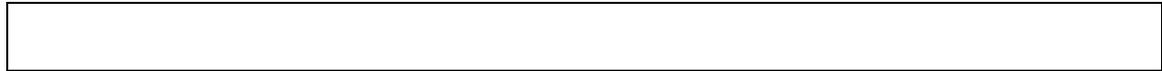


Figure 5: Site allocation area and design principles, Land south of Wenman Road

Diagnostics Reagents

4.11 Text to follow upon receipt of Design support package

Policy GDH1b: Diagnostics Reagents

1. The Diagnostics Reagents site, as indicated in *Figure 6*, is allocated for approximately 25 homes. The following criteria apply:
 - a) Insert list of criteria to be informed by site design work through technical support programme

INSERT PLAN OF SITE / DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Figure 6: Site allocation and design principles, Diagnostics Reagents

Land at Windmill Road

4.12 Text to follow upon receipt of Design support package

Policy GDH1c: Land at Windmill Road

1. Land at Windmill Road, as indicated in Figure 7, is allocated for approximately 30 homes. The following criteria apply:
 - a) Insert list of criteria to be informed by site design work through technical support programme
2. All homes provided on this site will comprise affordable housing.

INSERT PLAN OF SITE / DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Figure 7: Site allocation and design principles, Land at Windmill Road

Land at Oxford Road

4.13 Text to follow upon receipt of Design support package

Policy GDH1d: Land at Oxford Road

1. Land at Oxford Road, as indicated in *Figure 8*, is allocated for approximately 150 homes. The following criteria apply:
 - a) Insert list of criteria to be informed by site design work through technical support programme

INSERT PLAN OF SITE / DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Figure 8: Site allocation and design principles, Land at Oxford Road

Windfall and speculative development

- 4.14 The interest in land for development in and around Thame is significant. Land allocated within the first Neighbourhood Plan represented the preferred sites for growth in and around Thame, reflecting constraints and the vision and objectives for the town. With the preferred sites having now being developed, but with continued growth pressures in Thame, additional land has been allocated in TNP2.
- 4.15 It is recognised that, over time, additional sites may be subject to development interest. Where future applications do come forward these will need to be judged against the outstanding housing requirement for Thame, particularly in respect of affordability and specialist accommodation for the elderly, and their compatibility with the vision and objectives for Thame.
- 4.16 A set of criteria have been established and presented in policy below to help inform and direct future growth in the longer term. The criteria respond to the vision and objectives for Thame, its character and landscape setting. Sites should be well integrated with the existing built form of Thame, being contiguous with the urban area and helping to create connected, cohesive communities. They should be in close proximity to services and facilities required for day-to-day life, with access to these ideally being within accepted walking or cycling distances, providing for the needs of all. As far as possible, they should contribute towards meeting local housing needs, particularly in respect of affordability and specialist housing for older people (see Policy GDH3 and supporting text for more information).
- 4.17 This policy applies to major sites for housing. These are sites accommodating ten or more homes.

Policy GDH2: Windfall housing criteria

1. Proposals for major development on windfall sites will only be considered where:
 - a) Three years from the point that TNP2 is made, progress has not been made on the sites allocated in TNP2.
 - b) The proposal will help contribute towards meeting local housing needs.
2. Where proposals for major development on windfall sites come forward, the following locational criteria will be used to inform the appropriateness of sites for development:
 - a) Land proposed for development should in whole or in part be contiguous with the existing built-up area of Thame, with a preference for reuse of previously developed land.
 - b) Sites should be within recognised walking distance of essential services and amenities (see Table 2). This should be based upon actual journey routes as opposed to application of 'as the crow flies' distances.
 - c) Sites that are separated from the built-up area by the presence of major roads will need to demonstrate that the site can support safe access by foot and by bike to the built-up area.
 - d) Sites should be able to connect into the existing network of walking and cycling routes, and either be within walking distance of a bus service or provide scope to route new or extended bus services through the development site.
 - e) Proposed sites do not, individually or cumulatively, result in the actual or perceived coalescence of (i) Thame and Towersey, or (ii) Thame and Moreton.
 - f) Proposals should demonstrate that they do not have an adverse impact on townscape nor landscape character.
 - g) Sites should avoid areas of flood risk and avoid increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere.
 - h) Sites should not reduce the width nor continuity of the Cuttle Brook Corridor.
 - i) Sites should not limit connectivity with the surrounding countryside.
 - j) Vehicular access to the site from the highway must be achievable and acceptable to the Highways Authority.
 - k) Sites must be deliverable at the time of submitting a planning application, including the ability to deliver the requirement for any on-site infrastructure triggered by the scale of the proposed development.
 - l) Applications will need to be accompanied by a programme of archaeological evaluation to be agreed with Oxfordshire County Council and undertaken in advance of any proposals being determined.
3. All proposals for development will be required to provide the maximum level of affordable housing and include provision of specialist housing for older people.
4. All proposals must also satisfy the wider policies set out in the development plan.

Catchment distances for essential services

It is generally acknowledged that able-bodied people are happy to walk between five or ten minutes to access different facilities. This equates to a distance of around 400m – 800m from the home¹⁵. However, distances vary depending on the type of facility and how far people are willing to travel by foot to these.

Reasonable walking catchment distances for everyday services and facilities are:

Primary School	800m
Secondary School	1,600m
Healthcare	1,600m
Community Centres and Halls	800m
Places of Worship	800m
Playing Pitches	800m
Amenity Green Space	400m
Local Shops	400m
Local / Neighbourhood Centres	800m
District / Town Centre	1,600m
Bus stop on a frequent route (4+ buses p/hr)	400m

Reasonable catchments must be measured based on the actual movement network (presence of streets and footpaths) as opposed to an 'as the crow flies distance' which does not account for barriers to movement or incomplete movement networks.

The provision of cycle infrastructure may extend the catchment around a facility. Based on average cycle journey times¹⁶, it is assumed that the average distance that an able-bodied person might comfortably cycle in five minutes is 1,150m and, in ten minutes, 2,300m (at a speed of approximately 13.8km/h or 8.5mph). This is of course dependent upon the provision of good cycling infrastructure that makes this an attractive enough proposition for people to use.

Table 2: Recognised catchment distances for essential services, supporting travel by foot or by bike.

¹⁵ This draws on research undertaken in different countries, including that prepared by The Institution of Highways & Transportation, 2000, Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot

¹⁶ Including those used by the GLA and TfL for example

Housing Type and Mix

4.18 The SODC Local Plan establishes a preferred mix of housing to be delivered, in terms of size and tenure. This mix is based on district-wide data. It is important to recognise local dynamics and pressures within the housing market. To this extent a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for the Thame Neighbourhood Plan area has been undertaken¹⁷. Findings and recommendations are summarised below:

Tenure and Affordability

4.19 The HNA found that Thame has a relatively high proportion of ownership tenures when compared to the national and district average. The high proportion of ownership tenures come at the expense of a lower proportion of social and private rent tenures when making the same comparisons. Overall, the high rate of ownership tenures, in combination with a high average house price (which has risen on average 62% since 2011) has resulted in Thame becoming a challenging area to get onto the ownership property ladder.

4.20 A mix of affordable housing types is required in Thame to bring housing within attainable prices for many households.

4.21 The HNA recommends that, in Thame, the delivery of affordable rent and social rent should be maximised. It is suggested that 65% of Affordable Housing should take the form of rented tenures such as social and affordable rent, with the remaining 35% as affordable routes to home ownership. It is also suggested that during the early years of the NP, priority should be given to building affordable homes for rent and consequently building the majority of its ownership allocation towards the later years of the NP period.

4.22 The HNA also suggests that First Homes at 50% is the only way that full home ownership can be brought to within the affordability threshold for average earners.

Type and Size

4.23 The HNA reveals that Thame's current housing type mix is well balanced, with detached, semi-detached, and terrace all accounting for between 20% and 30% of the total mix. The proportion of flats and bungalows are relatively lower (at around 17% and 7%, respectively), although broadly in line the district.

4.24 It also reveals that Thame's current size mix is well-balanced in relation to its population's needs, with 3-bedroom dwellings dominating the mix, followed by 2-beds and 4+beds. Thame's size mix is very similar to the district size mix, and is mostly similar to the national mix too, although Thame has a slightly higher

¹⁷ AECOM, for Thame Town Council, March 2022, Thame Housing Needs Assessment

proportion of 4+ bedroom dwellings in place of a slightly lower percentage of 1-bedroom dwellings.

- 4.25 The HNA calculations suggest that housing sizes are already within 2% of the ideal estimated future mix. To achieve an optimum mix of housing it is recommended that delivery of 3-bed homes is prioritised, as well as an increase in the proportion of 5+ bedroom homes.
- 4.26 The HNA finds much the same for housing type, which should also be preserved in similar proportions to the current mix, with the only recommended change being a slight increase in the proportion of flats in the area.

Specialist Housing for Older People

- 4.27 As with most areas in the UK, Thame's population has aged over time, but remains balanced in the present. The older population is, however, expected to increase in numbers into the future, with Thame's household age bands at 55-64 expected to grow 10% by 2037 (above 2011 figures), and the 65+ age band expected to grow 61%..
- 4.28 Planning Practice Guidance¹⁸ notes that there are a variety of specialist housing types that can meet the needs of older people. This includes, but is not limited to, (1) age-restricted general market housing, (2) retirement living or sheltered housing, (3) extra care housing or housing-with care, and (4) residential care homes and nursing homes.
- 4.29 The HNA found that the future development of specialist units will be needed in Thame to account for demographic change and associated housing requirements. The tenure split of new specialist housing units should align with the requirements established in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, being a 60% market to 40% affordable split.
- 4.30 Where specialist housing is to be provided it should meet the design criteria contained in this Neighbourhood Plan, such that the homes are attractive and comfortable to live in as private homes, similar to those which people may be moving from. In addition to design criteria in the Plan which is applicable to all new development, applicants will be expected to refer to specific guidance in respect of specialist housing. This includes the principles of inclusive design outlined in Planning Practice Guidance¹⁹, as well as those principles set out in the HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation) report²⁰ which are applicable to housing for elderly people and age-friendly places. Planning Practice Guidance notes that:

'accessible and adaptable housing enables people to live more independently, while also saving on health and social costs in the future. It is better to build accessible housing from

¹⁸ MHCLG, June 2019, PPG: Housing for older and disabled people <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people>

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-for-older-and-disabled-people>

²⁰ <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/>

the outset rather than have to make adaptations at a later stage – both in terms of cost and with regard to people being able to remain safe and independent in their homes.'

- 4.31 In line with this, opportunities to provide flexible housing types that can be adapted over time in response to changing lifestyles will be supported.

Policy GDH3: Housing type, tenure and mix

1. On developments of ten or more homes, 40% of those homes must comprise affordable housing.
2. Provision of affordable homes should be split such that 65% takes the form of rented tenures, including social and affordable rent, while the remaining 35% comprises affordable routes to home ownership. Priority is to be given to the delivery of affordable rented tenures in the early years of the Plan period.
3. All qualifying developments in Thame are required, where viable, to provide First Homes at a discount of 50%.
4. Shared Ownership schemes at a discount of between 10% - 25% are also considered appropriate.
5. All affordable homes, including First Homes, should be designed such that they are tenure-blind (i.e.: they should be integrated into the design of the overall proposed development and be of an equal quality in terms of design and use of materials compared to the market housing element).
6. Subject to viability, new development should contribute towards delivery of the following mix of housing sizes:
 - 1-bedroom homes: approx. 2%
 - 2-bedroom homes: approx. 10%
 - 3-bedroom homes: approx. 53%
 - 4-bedroom homes: approx. 13%
 - 5 or more bedroom homes: approx. 22%
7. Proposals for development that meets the need of the ageing population (specialist housing) will be supported. The tenure split of specialist housing developments should align with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (a 60% market to 40% affordable split).
8. Where specialist housing is proposed it should be located within easy access of shops, facilities and public transport services. Housing should be well integrated within the wider neighbourhood and be designed in accordance with the HAPPI principles.
9. Support will be given to proposals for new homes that are designed to be adaptable to meet the future accommodation needs of occupiers at different stages of their life.

Employment Sites

- 4.32 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan, at Policy EMP1 ('The Amount and Distribution of New Employment Land') and at EMP6 ('New Employment Land at Thame') establishes a net requirement for a minimum of 3.5 hectares of employment land to be provided in Thame over the period 2011 – 2035. The Local Plan (at Policy EMP2: 'Range, Size and Mix of Employment Premises') also supports provision of flexible employment floorspace for small and medium business, including start-ups and those looking to expand.
- 4.33 Since 2011 there has been a loss of employment floorspace in Thame, including that at Goodsons Mews, the DAF site and at Jane Morbey Road. At the same time, new employment floorspace has come forward to the east of Thame (at The Windles and the Grove buildings). This, coupled with permission granted for development of land north of Rycote Lane for employment purposes would offset these losses and contribute towards meeting the requirements established in the Local Plan. The land north of Rycote Lane covers a net area of 5.35 hectares, including off-site highway works and although not within the Neighbourhood Plan area (it is immediately adjacent to the parish boundary) the requirements for Thame assessed through the Employment Land review underpinning the Local Plan are based on assessment of the Thame 'employment cluster' as opposed to the Neighbourhood Plan area. Land north of Rycote Lane, which is part of the functional economic area around Thame - and thus part of the cluster - effectively contributes towards the requirement for employment land in Thame.
- 4.34 The spread of Covid-19 early in 2020 has impacted upon working practices and, as a consequence, employment floorspace. However, Thame has continued to perform well in comparison to competing towns and has been fairly resilient to the effects of the pandemic. Indeed, the Oxfordshire Economic Recovery Plan²¹ notes that while there is likely to be a comparatively short though still unprecedented impact on economic activity across Oxfordshire, the impacts are expected to be less severe in South Oxfordshire, with manufacturing, professional, scientific and technical activities forecast to see continued growth up to 2029.
- 4.35 To accommodate future growth in Thame, the Neighbourhood Plan allocates **3.5 hectares (TBC)** of land at Rycote Lane for employment purposes (Figure 9). This is adjacent to existing employment uses and in close proximity to the permitted employment scheme further along Rycote Lane, and has good access to the strategic highway network. The allocation is at the western gateway to Thame and where the scale and layout of development will need to respond positively to the landscape setting of Thame. Improved foot and cycle links to the allocation site will be required

²¹ OxLEP, December 2020, Oxfordshire's Economic Recovery Plan: The Economic Baseline Assessment

as part of any development, linking this to the network of foot and cycle paths within Thame, including upgrades to the western end of the Phoenix Trail.

INSERT ALLOCATION PLAN

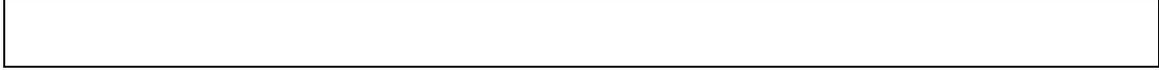


Figure 9: Site allocation and design principles, Land at Rycote Lane

Policy GDE1: Land at Rycote Lane

1. The Neighbourhood Plan allocates 3.5 hectares (CHECK) of land to at Rycote Lane for employment purposes, comprising B2 – B8 and E(g)(i)-(iii) uses, as illustrated on Figure 9. Proposals for this site will be supported where:
 - a) Insert important principles here to be informed by site design work
2. An application for development will need to be accompanied by a programme of archaeological evaluation to be agreed with Oxfordshire County Council and undertaken in advance of any proposals being determined. Subject to the findings of any evaluation, mitigation measures may be required that preserve features of archaeological interest on site.

4.36 Given the unparalleled nature of the Covid-19 pandemic and the changes this has brought to working practices, including the durability of home working, it is considered appropriate to monitor trends and reflect this in a more flexible and responsive approach to planning for future employment floorspace.

4.37 Indicators point to a continued need for employment land in Thame. The local market is relatively strong, with consistent demand from existing occupiers and new entrants to the market, evidenced by low vacancy rates yet increasing rents. However, limited provision of new employment floorspace in Thame has seen some prospective tenants locate to accommodation in competing towns. When premises do become available, it is the smaller units that are often leased after only a very short time. However, given the strategic location of Thame and its proximity to the highway network, it is also an attractive location for larger units, including the logistics sector.

4.38 INSERT HEADLINES FROM LOCALITY / AECOM EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW

4.39 It is recognised that over time, additional sites may come forward for employment purposes. In this event, proposals should be accompanied by supporting evidence of the demand being met and that the proposals are appropriate and responsive to their location and setting.

Policy GDE2: Windfall employment proposals

1. Proposals for additional employment development in Thame outwith the allocation area will be considered where:
 - a) Three years from the point that TNP2 is made, progress has not been made on the sites allocated in TNP2.
 - b) The application is accompanied by supporting information to demonstrate that the proposal is meeting a clear and evidenced demand for the proposed floorspace in terms of employment requirements.
2. All proposals for such development will need to satisfy appropriate policies in the Development Plan in respect of location and impact on landscape, the setting of Thame and natural environment. Proposals will be supported where:
 - a) their size, materials and design respects the immediate surroundings which they are to be located whilst enhancing the location to make it attractive for new businesses;
 - b) they are well integrated with and complement existing businesses;
 - c) they do not have significant impact on the local environment and the amenities of adjacent residential properties or other land uses;
 - d) they do not result in a material increase in large and heavy vehicle traffic on non-strategic routes; and
 - e) where appropriate, they enable active travel through delivery of new walking and cycling routes.
 - f) Proposed sites do not, individually or cumulatively, result in the actual or perceived coalescence of (i) Thame and Towersey, or (ii) Thame and Moreton.
3. Applications will need to be accompanied by a programme of archaeological evaluation to be agreed with Oxfordshire County Council and undertaken in advance of any proposals being determined.

Retail and other uses

- 4.40 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan, at Policy TC2 ('Town Centre Hierarchy'), states that Thame is a 'Town Centre', which places it on the second tier in the hierarchy of centres across the District. The Local Plan notes, at paragraph 9.9, that that centres in this tier should be the 'focus of more localised town centre retail, commercial and community uses, leisure and services that reduce the need to travel'.
- 4.41 The Local Plan notes that there is no further need for comparison goods floorspace in Thame, but that provision should be made for 1,500sqm of net retail floorspace for convenience shopping. It is expected that a 'town centre first' approach is taken to the provision of this floorspace.
- 4.42 The first Neighbourhood Plan prepared for Thame allocated land at the Cattle Market for mixed-use development, including a mix of retail floorspace, residential units, offices, car parking and community facilities.
- 4.43 The site remains suitable and, subject to the relocation of current activities, is available for development: planning permission was granted in February 2020 for the relocation of the Cattle Market from its current site to new premises on Rycote Lane.
- 4.44 The site has the potential to accommodate a range of uses, meeting the requirements for convenience retail floorspace as well as other uses that support the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre. In addition to those uses outlined in the first Neighbourhood Plan, the site could also present opportunities for other complementary uses, including hotel accommodation.
- 4.45 Development of the site should be retail-led but should include a range of uses that support town centre activity. The mix is to be determined through the planning application process, although design principles established in the first Neighbourhood Plan remain relevant and should be followed in the development of proposals for the site. These are illustrated in *Figure 10*. The Cattle Market currently provides an important role in supporting the town centre through provision of parking spaces available to the public. These should be retained within proposals for redevelopment of the site (To be updated following receipt of Design Support package).

Insert red line site plan / design principles drawing



Figure 10: Site allocation and design principles, Cattle Market

Policy GDR1: Cattle Market site

1. Land at the Cattle Market, North Street, Thame (*Figure 10*) is allocated for mixed-use development.
2. The mix of uses will be determined through the planning application process but must include provision of 1,500sqm net convenience retail floorspace. Other complementary uses that might be appropriate include:
 - Civic or Community facilities (Use Class F1 and F2).
 - Residential (Use Class C3)
 - Office floorspace (Use Class E).
 - Hotel accommodation (Use Class C1).
3. Proposals for development which reflect the design principles illustrated in *Figure 10* will be supported. These are:
 - a) Development must create a positive building frontage onto North Street that respects the character and scale of the surrounding area, including the Conservation Area.
 - b) Development must be designed to respond to views northwards along North Street, so creating a visual link between it and the High Street.
 - c) Development must be located to define and overlook the pedestrian link next to Barley Hill Primary School.
 - d) Pedestrian routes through the Cattle Market site must be designed to provide a direct and attractive link to the existing pedestrian routes next to Barley Hill Primary School.
 - e) Existing residential dwellings overlooking the northern boundary of the site must be positively integrated into the proposals.
 - f) Public car parking, including long-term parking, must be provided on site, and must be overlooked by active building frontages. Development must maintain the same number of public car parking spaces as currently provided on site. **(CHECK - OR REPLACE WITH MOBILITY HUB)**
 - g) A 'civic' open space is encouraged within the development, overlooked by active building frontages.
 - h) Residential uses proposed as part of the development should be provided on upper storeys.

- 4.46 Beyond the defined requirement for convenience floorspace as set out in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan it is recognised that other proposals for change and development are likely to come forward in the centre of Thame over the life of the Plan.
- 4.47 With the changing nature of the 'High Street', competition from other centres and from internet-based shopping, uses that provide for a mix of activities, including services, are encouraged. Use of such services will help support retail activities, by bringing customers into the centre, including local and independent retailers, servicing local residents as well as those in the rural hinterland.
- 4.48 New retail uses are encouraged to locate within primary retail areas (Figure 11), including the High Street and the Butter Market. Other supporting uses within the town centre that would be considered appropriate include leisure and entertainment, office floorspace, cultural activities, community uses and residential development.
- 4.49 The Town Centre is a vibrant place with a wide retail offer. There are few vacancies. In the event that premises do become vacant, temporary re-use of these, through 'pop-up' and 'meanwhile uses'²² is encouraged, providing life and activity in the short-term whilst opportunities for longer-term re-use and marketing of the units is undertaken. Pop-up units could cover a range of activities compatible with the function of the town centre, including retail and places to eat.
- 4.50 Proposals for mixed use development including residential are encouraged, as this will increase the resident catchment of the centre and provide movement and activity throughout the day, helping to sustain and support town centre businesses.
- 4.51 Where development does come forward, it should be designed to allow for change over time, breaking development blocks down into individual plots, facilitating incremental change and adaptation on a plot by plot basis, rather than block by block, allowing for organic growth and minimising the impact on the wider area.

²² A 'pop-up' shop or other similar activity is one that opens for a short period of time on a temporary basis, taking advantage of an empty retail space. Equally, a 'meanwhile use' refers to the short-term use of temporarily empty buildings, such as retail units, until they can be brought back into commercial use. Both provide an opportunity to maintain the vibrancy of an area.

Insert plan defining the town centre boundary and main retail areas



Figure 11: Thame town centre and primary retail areas

Policy GDR2: Town Centre Uses

1. Proposals for development in the town centre (as defined on Figure 11) should, where appropriate, incorporate a mix of complementary uses consistent with the role, function and character of the centre:
 - a) Suitable town centre uses include those in Class E and Class F of the Use Classes order, as well as residential (use class C3).
 - b) Where residential uses are proposed within the main retail areas in the town centre (as defined on Figure 11) these should be on the upper floors of a mixed-use scheme, with ground floors comprising retail or other complementary uses. Outside of the main retail areas, but still within the town centre, residential may be appropriate at ground floor level.
 - c) Mixed use schemes should be carefully designed to avoid noise and odour conflicts between uses.
 - d) Temporary proposals for the use of vacant buildings within Use Classes E and F, including 'pop-up's, are encouraged.

The visitor economy

- 4.52 Thame is an attractive destination for visitors. It is a gateway to the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and benefits from an award winning High Street, historic market and attractive countryside. The Phoenix Trail, which starts in Thame, forms part of the national cycle network. It is one of the most frequently used filming locations in the TV series Midsomer Murders, with guided tours regularly taking place and supplementing wider town trails which offer an insight into the town's rich and eventful history. Oxfordshire Arts Week, the Thame Arts & literature Week and Thame Town Music Festival are all big cultural draws for the town. Waterperry Gardens is also within reach of Thame.
- 4.53 Applications for uses and interventions that seek to strengthen the role of Thame as a centre for visitors and the tourism industry are welcome. This includes promoting leisure and cultural uses within the town, strengthening the retail offer, and enhancing the quality of the public realm and visitor experience. Applications for visitor accommodation will also be supported, with evidence to the South Oxfordshire Local Plan²³ noting the need for additional hotel space in Thame (see paragraph 5.36 of the Local Plan).

Policy GDV1: Visitor economy

1. Sustainable development that improves the quality and diversity of existing tourist facilities, attractions, accommodation and infrastructure, including green infrastructure, will be viewed favourably. Applicants for new build development will be required to demonstrate that:
 - a) the siting, scale and design has strong regard to the local character, historic and natural assets of the surrounding area; and
 - b) the design and materials are in keeping with the local style and reinforce local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place.
2. The loss of tourist facilities to other uses will not be permitted unless:
 - a) it can be demonstrated that the tourist facility is no longer viable, having being actively marketed for a period of twelve months; or
 - b) the proposed alternative use would provide equal or greater benefits for the local economy and community.
3. Where appropriate, tourist development outside the built-up area will be assessed in terms of its visual, landscape and transport impacts. Long term measures to encourage sustainable travel, environmental stewardship and overall good site management may be required.

²³ Hotel Solutions for South Oxfordshire DC and Vale of White Horse DC, July 2014, Hotel Needs Assessment

5. Character & Place Quality

Context

- 5.1 Policies DES1 – DES10 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan establish the requirements for high quality and sustainable design in new development. These set out the principles for good design and the requirement for major development proposals to include masterplans at the application stage. The policies also seek to ensure that proposals respond to the character and qualities of existing places, and embed sustainable approaches to design and construction.
- 5.2 Good design is essential in producing attractive, high quality, sustainable places which people want to live, work and relax in. Good design is not just about the way that buildings look, it also considers factors such as the mix of uses and activities that help create lively and interesting places that foster a sense of community through well designed, functional and attractive public spaces; and enhancing the quality of environment.
- 5.3 Furthermore, achieving good design requires consideration for the local character and distinctiveness of a place. The vision of this plan (Thame must maintain its character as a real market town) means that this consideration is of particular importance. It is important that new development, particularly of new housing, responds to the distinctive positive character features and qualities of the town.
- 5.4 The achievement of well-designed places is a core principle of the NPPF²⁴. It states, at paragraph 126, that *'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities'*. It goes on to note the importance of local communities in developing design policies so that 'they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics' (paragraph 127). Neighbourhood Plans are crucial in identifying the special qualities of an area and explaining how they should be reflected in development.
- 5.5 The National Design Guide²⁵ presents ten characteristics which help to create high quality, safe and successful places where people enjoy living, working and visiting. The ten characteristics are as follows:

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

- 1) Context – enhances the surroundings.
- 2) Identity – attractive and distinctive.
- 3) Built form – a coherent pattern of development.
- 4) Movement – accessible and easy to move around.
- 5) Nature – enhanced and optimised.
- 6) Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive.
- 7) Uses – mixed and integrated.
- 8) Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable.
- 9) Resources – efficient and resilient.
- 10) Lifespan – made to last.

5.6 The South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) Design Guide²⁶ is a comprehensive document and provides in-depth guidance for several design and placemaking issues. The SODC Design Guide provides further evidence of the importance of development in responding to the character or the local area. It states that:

‘rather than erode or dilute local character, new development should celebrate and complement the local character of the area and contribute to a desirable place to live, providing choice (including self-build) within inclusive, cohesive and stable communities’.

5.7 The Thame Conservation Area makes the most significant contribution to the character of Thame as a whole. The Thame Conservation Area Appraisal²⁷ was prepared in 2006. It is important that development within the boundary of the conservation area reflects and responds to the findings and recommendations within the appraisal, as well as other relevant material. The Conservation Area retains much of the original twelfth century planned form in Thame, with a broad main street that widens out into a long marketplace and is lined with burgage plots. Thame has over 200 listed buildings, and most of them are within the Conservation Area. Moreton, to the south of the main built-up area of Thame, also benefits from Conservation Area status. Understanding the characteristics of Thame is important in designing new development. New development within or next to either of the Conservation Areas or listed buildings must make sure it preserves and enhances the character of the area.

²⁶ <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/urban-design/develop-your-planning-proposals/>. This is currently in the process of being reviewed and updated.

²⁷ https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/Thame_CACA.pdf

Character

- 5.8 Policy DES2 ('Enhancing Local Character') of the Local Plan states, at Clause 2, that:
- 'Where a Character Assessment has been prepared as part of a made Neighbourhood Development Plan, a proposal must demonstrate that the positive features identified in the Assessment have been incorporated into the design of the development'.*
- 5.9 A Character Area Assessment has been prepared as part of TNP2 (see Appendix 1). This identifies distinctive areas of character within Thame and draws out the defining features, positive character features, opportunities and risk to character of each of them. The character areas identified are summarised below (and mapped on Figure 12):
- 1) **Historic Core** (i.e.: The Town Centre and conservation area): This character area makes the most significant contribution to the character of Thame as a whole. It covers the Town Centre and retains much of the original twelfth century planned form, with a broad main street that widens out into a long marketplace and is lined with burgage plots. Thame has over 200 listed buildings, and most of them are within the Conservation Area.
 - 2) **Lea Park**: This is a large residential area to the north of the historic core. It was developed rapidly, mainly in the 1970s, and is characterised by a cul-de-sac layout with pockets of green space. Dwellings are two storeys, and mainly semi-detached or terraced.
 - 3) **Southern Thame**: This is a residential area comprising homes that have been built over the last seventy years. The southern boundary of the area is formed by the Phoenix Way: a footpath and cycle route that follows the alignment of the former railway.
 - 4) **Chiltern Vale**: A residential area, on land rising up to the west side of the Cuttle Brook valley, which separates it from the rest of the town. It was developed between the 1960s and the 1990s.
 - 5) **Moreton Village**: A small, historic hamlet to the south of Thame, much of which is designated as a Conservation Area and where there are eleven listed buildings. Moreton retains its separate identity as a place distinct from the main built-up area of Thame.

- 6) **East Thame:** A largely residential area located to the east of the town centre. The area is bordered by East Street and Chinnor Road, with a network of streets forming a thoroughfare between them. Plots here are larger than most in Thame, with several properties featuring extensive back gardens. Notably, the area also features a secondary school, tennis club, and community hospital.
 - 7) **Post 2013 residential development** (i.e.: those areas allocated for development in and built-out since the first Thame Neighbourhood Plan was made in 2013): There are two 'post 2013' development areas in Thame. One site extends southwards from the existing town, bordering employment areas and Southern Thame. The other extends North West, bordering the historic core and Chiltern vale. They share common characteristics in terms of use, building style, layout and relationship with green space.
 - 8) **Employment Areas:** Generally industrial areas containing a variety of units of different sizes and types including some office and light industrial use. Principally characterised by large 'shed' like buildings with few windows.
- 5.10 The Character Area Assessment is an important point of reference for design standards in the Neighbourhood Plan area. It is expected that all new developments will reflect the qualities of each area identified in the Assessment and that applicants will demonstrate how they have taken account of them.
- 5.11 Within the framework of the Character Area Assessment innovative design, which delivers high quality new development, but which also promotes and reinforces local distinctiveness, is welcome. This includes the use of contemporary design approaches where they respond positively to context. Good practice principles, including those established in Building for a Healthy Life²⁸, should also be utilised by applicants.

²⁸ Design for Homes, June 2020, Building for a Healthy Life: A Design Toolkit for neighbourhoods, streets, homes and public spaces

Insert plan of character areas



Figure 12: Character areas in Thame

Policy CPQ1: Design in Response to Local Character

1. Proposals for new development in the Neighbourhood Plan area which satisfy wider policies in the Development Plan and which respond positively to the setting and character of the area within which it is located, will be supported.
2. Proposals for new development shall demonstrate how they have met the following criteria:
 - a) Design-led approach: All development should take a design-led approach underpinned by good design principles and reflecting a thorough site appraisal.
 - b) Context: Development should create a positive relationship between the site and the existing built-up area, including use of materials and architectural details.
 - c) Plot width: Plots should be of sufficient width so as not to cause overlooking and to allow for the separation between dwellings to a scale that reflects the positive character of the immediate vicinity and setting of the Plan area.
 - d) Building Line: Where the set-back from the road or pavement of existing buildings is a feature of the area, new development should respect that building line.
 - e) Visual separation: New buildings must have similar spacing between buildings to that commonly found on the street frontage.
 - f) Building height: New buildings should reflect the height of existing buildings in the immediate vicinity.
 - g) Daylight and sunlight: New buildings should not adversely affect neighbouring properties by seriously reducing the amount of daylight available.
 - h) Boundary treatment: Boundary treatments along the frontage of the scheme should reflect the immediate area.
 - i) Access: Applications for infill developments must have direct access to the highway.
 - j) Waste and bin storage: If placed on the property boundary, waste and bin storage must be integrated with the overall design of the boundary design (Appendix 2).
 - k) Density: The density of development should respond to the immediate context as expressed through plot ratios, the scale and massing of development.
 - l) Cycle parking: Where provided, this should be in line with Policy GAAT1 of TNP2
3. Applicants are required to demonstrate how proposals for development have been informed by and respond to the qualities identified in the Thame Character Area Assessment (Appendix 1) and which reflect good practice principles established in Building for a Healthy Life. Support will be given to those proposals which help contribute towards opportunities for enhancing the character of each area as identified in the Character Area Assessment.
4. Development proposals that establish bespoke design solutions and residential typologies that demonstrate an imaginative sense of place whilst respecting the local context are actively encouraged.

Design Principles for employment sites

- 5.12 Proposals for new employment development should reflect good practice design principles with regard to access, frontages, general arrangement of uses and relationship with surrounding uses.

Policy CPQ2: Design Principles for Employment Development

1. Where appropriate, proposals for B2-B8 led employment schemes should reflect the following principles:
 - a) Buildings should have an active front to the edge of the development plot.
 - b) The most active uses should be located on the ground floor, fronting the street.
 - c) Service yards and loading spaces should be located to the rear of buildings. Such areas should be shared, making more efficient use of space, particularly on smaller sites.
 - d) Multiple points of access should be provided to service yards to support operational needs and provide flexibility for future change.
 - e) Vehicular routes to and through employment areas should be designed to minimise HGV movements, connecting with the strategic road network in as efficient away as possible.
 - f) Public spaces and meeting places for employees should be well integrated into the development, including useable and attractive green spaces that are accessible by foot and well overlooked.
2. Landscaping should provide a buffer to industrial uses which might impact on the surrounding landscape or adjacent development.

Town Centre design principles

- 5.13 Thame Town centre has been shaped by the historic evolution of the town. It features a broad main street which widens out into long marketplace, and is also where the Town Hall sits as a proud landmark for the town. The dominant character of the main High St. is its broad, open aspect with the facades of buildings forming an unbroken front uniformly on both sides
- 5.14 Growth and development of the town centre should help strengthen the role of the Thame town centre as the civic and commercial hub for Thame and surrounding rural communities who will use the town as their main leisure and retail centre. Good design must be reflected in the layout and distribution of buildings and uses, the spaces between them, the scale and architecture of buildings. Efforts to revitalise the centre should make it an attractive place to visit and spend time in.
- 5.15 Proposals for change and development in the centre should reflect the growth and evolution of Thame, supporting the main spine of activity along the High Street. Proposals should also allow for buildings to be changed and adapted over time, responding to changing circumstances, retail, working and living habits. Where development or interventions are suggested, such as the creation of a new town square, this will need developing in partnership with landowners.
- 5.16 Development should respond to good urban design principles, responding both to the character and setting of the town centre, but also allowing for change and flexibility over time. Important design principles for Thame town centre are set out in Policy GDR3.

Policy CPQ3: Town Centre Design Principles

1. Proposals for new development in Thame Town Centre should complement the special character of the centre, reflected in the height and massing of buildings, as well as the materials used, building styles and roof heights, as set out in the Character Area Assessment that accompanies TNP2.
2. Development proposals which meet the following criteria will be supported:
 - a) Create clear and consistent building lines with active frontages at ground floor level, following established building lines where they exist.
 - b) Provide the principal points of access to buildings on the main street or public space onto which it fronts.
 - c) Uses on upper floors should include windows and, where appropriate, balconies, that look out across the street and create variety and interest in building form.
 - d) Provide for clear, direct and well-overlooked pedestrian routes through or around the development site, connecting with the existing route network.
 - e) Clearly define areas of public and private realm through well-defined building lines and enclosure of private space. Blank walls and exposed back land areas, including car parking and servicing areas, should be screened from view, preferably through the wrapping of these with active development edges, or with other solutions such as provision of green walls that improve the quality of the townscape.
 - f) Avoid the creation of 'superblocks', allowing for the subdivision of land into different parcels which can come forward for change and development over time.
 - g) Corner buildings should be well articulated and blank gable ends avoided.
 - h) Respect the prevailing building height. Where building heights vary this change should be subtle and step up or down by no more than half to one storey between buildings.
 - i) Incorporate generous floor to ceiling heights, particularly at ground floor level, to allow for flexibility and change of use over time.
 - j) Support improvements to the quality of the public realm in the town centre.
3. Where relevant, applications for new development will be required to respect the ability for markets and other outdoor events to operate in the town centre.

Self and Custom-Build Housing

- 5.17 Policy H12 (Self-Build and Custom-Build Housing) of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan supports proposals for delivery of self and custom-build housing, requiring 3% of development plots on strategic allocations to be made available for such housing. There are no strategic allocations in Thame. However, diversification of the housing offer in Thame is supported, providing new routes to home ownership. In Thame, proposals for major developments are encouraged to include plots for self and custom-build housing.
- 5.18 Where self or custom build plots are to be made available a set of plot passports should be produced. These will provide a summary of the design parameters for any given plot and help private housebuilders understand what they are allowed to build on the plot. They capture key information from the planning permission or the site, design constraints and procedural requirements. The passports clearly show permissible building lines within which the new dwelling can be built as well as height restrictions and other details such as parking requirements. Aspects such as materials, roof styles and fenestration are usually left for the plot owner to decide.
- 5.19 Where plots are made available for self and custom-build housing they must be 'oven-ready' to facilitate development, with connections to utilities provided direct to the plot.

Policy CPQ4: Self and Custom-Build Housing

1. Proposals for major development that include provision of plots for self and custom-build housing, and which meet the following criteria, will be supported:
 - a) Plot passports shall be prepared by the applicant for approval by South Oxfordshire District Council, preferably at outline planning application stage. These will establish the form of development and building parameters for each plot, including building heights, footprint, frontages, density and parking requirements.
 - b) The location of plots for self and custom build on major development schemes will be identified through the masterplan for the overall scheme with the parameters for the plots informed by the overall masterplan and design guidance established in Policy CPQ1 of TNP2.
 - c) All plots for self and custom build housing shall be provided with connections to utilities (electricity, water and waste water) and communication infrastructure at the boundary of the plot.
 - d) All plots must have access to the public highway.

Sustainable Design and Construction

- 5.20 Most carbon dioxide emissions come from heating, cooling and powering buildings. Reducing carbon dioxide emissions and other air pollutants will contribute to efforts aimed at tackling the effects of man-made climate change. This is recognised by the declaration of the Climate Emergency by South Oxfordshire District Council in February 2019²⁹ and the declaration of an ecological emergency in February 2021³⁰. At the same time, the Government is planning to introduce a 'Future Homes Standard', requiring new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and energy efficiencies. It is anticipated that the Future Homes Standards will be implemented in 2025 (within the period covered by this Neighbourhood Plan).
- 5.21 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan strongly supports the promotion of sustainable design and construction. At paragraph 8.27, it acknowledges that "the design and construction of new developments and refurbishments to existing buildings can have a significant role in helping to reduce carbon emissions, which can be supported by improving the energy efficiency of new and existing buildings."
- 5.22 Furthermore, it provides a series of policies that build upon this statement by delivering a set of criteria for new developments to follow. They are summarised as:
- Policy DES8: Promoting Sustainable Design – All new development should be built to minimise carbon and energy impacts and be designed to improve resilience to the anticipated effects of climate change.
 - Policy DES9: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy – Encouragement for renewable and low carbon energy generation schemes.
 - Policy DES10: Carbon Reduction – Residential development proposals are expected to achieve at least a 40% reduction (rising to 50% in 2026, and 100% in 2030) in carbon emissions compared with a 2013 Building Regulations compliant base case. Meanwhile, non-residential proposals are required to meet the BREAMM excellent standard, and larger sites are required to achieve 40% reduction (rising to 50% in 2026) in the carbon emissions compared with a 2013 Building Regulations compliant base case. The policy also requires new build proposals to submit an Energy Statement, detailing how the policy will be complied with and monitored.

²⁹ <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/tackling-the-climate-emergency/>

³⁰ <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/climate-emergency/ecological-emergency-declared-by-south-oxfordshire-district-council/>

- 5.23 Future growth and development in Thame represents an opportunity to secure reduced emissions, potentially through the construction of highly energy efficient homes, the provision of decentralised energy networks and the retrofitting of existing homes to reduce their energy use and fuel bills. Buildings should be designed to maximise solar gain and incorporate technologies that maximise the use of energy from renewable sources.
- 5.24 All development in Thame will be expected to make use of the best available sustainable design and technology. Proposals for development are expected to minimise the use of resources, mitigate against and be resilient to the impact of climate change.
- 5.25 Current sustainability standards for new construction will be used for assessing the sustainability of new, non-residential buildings. This includes those established by BREEAM³¹. For new homes, the Home Quality Mark³² developed by BREEAM is intended to provide an indication of the quality and environmental performance of those homes. Housebuilders are encouraged to use this assessment method.
- 5.26 The Town Council will particularly support proposals for new buildings that are 'Future Homes standard' ready and or which achieve zero or near zero net energy consumption in line with the Passivhaus Standard³³. The Net Zero Toolkit³⁴ is a good practice guide that presents a set of key design features that should be reflected in new developments and include but are not limited to:
- Using simple and compact building forms, avoiding or limiting features such as stepped roofs, terraces, overhangs and balconies, all of which increase the surface area of the building and decrease the energy efficiency of the building.
 - Orientating buildings to optimise solar gain and prevent overshadowing. Elevations facing +/-300 south will benefit from solar gains all year round. Vertical and horizontal shading, such as brise-soleil, should be used to help control solar shading and gains at different times of the year.
 - Minimising heat loss from north facing facades through the use of smaller windows, offset by larger windows on south facing facades to allow for solar heat gain. This should be reflected in the internal layout of the building and location of habitable rooms.

³¹ BREEAM UK, 2014, Non-domestic Buildings (United Kingdom), Technical Manual SD5076 4.1

³² See: <http://www.homequalitymark.com>

³³ Passivhaus is the world's leading fabric first approach to low energy buildings. The core focus of the Passivhaus standard is to dramatically reduce the requirements for space heating and cooling, whilst also creating excellent indoor air quality and comfort levels. See: <http://www.passivhaus.org.uk>

³⁴ Net Zero Toolkit, October 2021, prepared by Levitt Bernstein, Elementa, Passivhaus Trust and Etude on behalf of West Oxfordshire, Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils, funded by the LGA Housing Advisers Programme. <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/2ddb125k/net-zero-carbon-toolkit.pdf>

- Designing airtight buildings and ventilation systems that maintain good air quality whilst reducing heat loss. Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery units should be installed in new buildings. Dual aspect buildings are favoured, allowing for cross ventilation.
- Install and use heat pumps as a low carbon way of heating the property. Solar Photovoltaic panels can also be utilised. Roof tiles and panels should be designed such that they are sensitive to the setting and views across the valued Spencer landscape.

5.27 The Net Zero Toolkit also makes clear that the embodied carbon of existing buildings also requires awareness and good design, with the refurbishment and retrofit of existing buildings preferred over demolition and redevelopment. The Publicly Available Specification (PAS) 2035 is the UK's first retrofit standard. This favours a 'fabric first' approach to reduce heat demand, ensure homes are well ventilated and issues in respect of damp and humidity are avoided. To support the transition to low carbon, low energy buildings, the refurbishment of existing buildings should involve replacing gas or electric boilers with heat pumps. Where the retrofit or refurbishment involves historic buildings, guidance published by Historic England must be referred to³⁵.

³⁵ See Historic England Advice Note 14: Energy Efficiency and Traditional Homes.

Policy CPQ5: Sustainable Design and Construction

1. The design and standard of any new development should aim to meet a high level of sustainable design and construction and be optimised for water and energy efficiency, targeting zero carbon emissions and, as far as possible, being 'Future Homes Standard ready'. New developments will be supported where they make optimal use of land through good design and:
 - a) Subject to topography, layout and good urban design principles, buildings should be orientated to maximise solar gain where appropriate to site topography and creating a consistent building frontage to the street.
 - b) Ensure that solar access along the south facade of the building is maximized, with appropriate shading elements and cross ventilation employed in new and existing buildings.
 - c) Demonstrate that renewable energy technologies are integrated within the development, including, as appropriate, ground source and air source heat pumps, photovoltaics, solar panels and other technologies. Wherever used, such technology should be designed to reflect the character and materials present with the immediate area.
 - d) The use of low embodied carbon materials, assessed through a Life Cycle Assessment, should be prioritised.
2. Innovative approaches to the construction of low carbon homes, including construction to Passivhaus standards, is strongly encouraged where development also complies with other policies of the Development Plan.
3. New developments which incorporate renewable energy sources and EV-charging points are also strongly encouraged. Wherever EV charging points are provided these should be designed to minimise visual clutter, hindrance and hazard to pedestrians and other street users.
4. Where appropriate, proposals for refurbishments and or the retrofitting of existing buildings are encouraged to optimise the energy efficiency of the building, reduce heat loss and install energy saving measures and renewable energy sources. Any alteration to an existing building must be carefully considered to ensure that potential adverse impacts are adequately mitigated.
5. Large employment and industrial buildings are encouraged to maximise the renewable energy potential of their site by utilizing their roof space for solar panels. Buildings should, where it is possible, viable and in line with good design principles, be orientated to optimise passive solar gain, and be designed such that they can accommodate photovoltaic panels or materials on roofs, either at the point of construction or at a future date. Alterations to existing buildings should also be designed with energy reduction in mind.

Street types and hierarchy

- 5.28 Across Thame new streets should be designed, or existing streets redesigned, to enable safe travel by all, making walking and cycling more attractive propositions.
- 5.29 Proposals for development within Thame should, where appropriate, be accompanied by information establishing the street hierarchy in the area and supplemented by a set of illustrative cross-sections through different street typologies. These should reflect best practice guidance established in Manual for Streets and the forthcoming update of that.
- 5.30 Proposals for large developments which result in the growth and expansion beyond the current extent of the built-up area should be designed with bus access in mind, with a central street running through these, connecting residents with new local centres, social and community facilities, and employment opportunities. Such streets should be designed to accommodate buses but at the same time balancing the movement function of the street with its place-making role.
- 5.31 Design features should be incorporated that discourage speeding and give space to pedestrians and cyclists, supporting active and healthy lifestyles. In particular, residential streets within new growth areas should, first and foremost, be places for people. Streets that take the form of 'HomeZones' and 'Play Streets' are actively encouraged. Such streets are intended to create greener, safer streets for residents while also creating connections with the surrounding natural environment. The concept derives from The Netherlands, where such streets are known as 'Woonerfs'. These streets typically include shared spaces, greening, traffic calming and low speed limits. A central goal of the concept is to remove the traditional segregation of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians in public spaces and encourage natural human interaction.
- 5.32 The network of streets in new major developments should also integrate 'filtered mobility'. Such an approach allows direct access between streets and spaces for pedestrians and cyclists, but limits access for those travelling by car, directing vehicles onto the main road network, limiting through traffic and, by making these journeys longer, encourages travel by foot or by bike for shorter journeys.
- 5.33 Equally, and across Thame as a whole, safer routes to school are encouraged, minimising the impact of the school run. The introduction of the 'Sustainable Travel Recognition and Accreditation for Schools (STARS)' scheme is supported. This seeks to change the way that children travel to school, promoting a shift towards walking and cycling.

Policy CPQ6: Street Hierarchy

1. Proposals for major development on the outskirts of Thame must be based around a permeable street network that is safe for people to travel around by foot and by bicycle.
2. A hierarchy of streets shall be integrated within the development areas and details of these should accompany planning application material.
3. Street design shall respond to guidance illustrated in the South Oxfordshire Design Guide. In particular developments should:
 - a) Connect to existing streets and paths and create direct, safe and attractive links for all users whilst avoiding 'cul-de-sac' layouts;
 - b) Have streets where buildings rather than the highway are visually dominant, and the impact of parked cars is minimal.
 - c) Include trees and soft landscaping that create a distinction in street types/ areas.
 - d) SUDs and raingardens should be incorporated into the street wherever possible.
 - e) Consider shared surfaces/homezones on lower order streets and/or local centres, next to public spaces, or other appropriate locations.

Residential parking provision

- 5.34 The SODC Local Plan, at paragraph 6.25, recognises the potential negative impact parking can have on the character of residential areas and any development where parking is provided to take account of the relevant urban design principles set out in Policies DES1 – DES10 of the Local Plan. These seek to ensure a sufficient level of parking is provided and that it is well-integrated with the development. These also seek to ensure that the quality of outdoor space, including garden space, is not compromised by areas of parking.
- 5.35 The Local Plan also requires parking in residential areas to be provided in line with standards established by Oxfordshire County Council, as set out in 'Parking Standards for New Residential Developments' (2011)³⁶. This does not express a preference for the provision of car parking in residential areas, but does not the importance of good design, stating that 'poor urban design of parking spaces can lead to indiscriminate parking but good design will result in reducing indiscriminate parking and a better living environment'. This is particularly important for Thame given the risks to character as identified in the Character Area Assessment which include the impact of parking on the quality of the street scene, particularly where front gardens have been converted into areas of hard standing.
- 5.36 The quality and provision of car parking can be a major determinant on the quality of place, particularly in residential areas. If it is not provided in the right place, it is unlikely to be used properly³⁷. The location and provision of parking should respond to good urban design and placemaking principles, with on-plot and on--street parking provided in close proximity to the home.
- 5.37 It is recommended that parking be provided on plot, either in garages, car ports, or on the plot to the side. This is in order to minimise the presence of cars on the street. If driveway parking at the front of the building is the only option, it should be combined with high quality soft landscaping to minimize impact on the streetscape.
- 5.38 Rear courtyards should be avoided where possible. Equally, alternatives to garage courts should be explored, as these are not often used for parking and occupy valuable space that might be used more effectively for other uses, including living space.

³⁶

<https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/roadsandtransport/transportpoliciesandplans/newdevelopments/parkingstandardsfornewresidentialdevelopments.pdf>

³⁷ URBED, University of Edinburgh and Design for Homes, 2013, Space to Park, and online resource: <http://www.spacetopark.org>

Policy CPQ7: Parking in residential areas

1. Parking within proposed new development shall be designed such that it reduces informal parking that undermines the quality of the street environment. Parking should be unobtrusive and in locations that benefit from natural surveillance. Proposals for rear or separate parking courts are not encouraged and should only be proposed unless alternative provision is impracticable. Key principles for integrating parking include:
 - a) On-plot parking is preferred for new development. This should be set back from the main building line and of a sufficient size to accommodate a parked car. Where more than two spaces are provided these should be separated by areas of soft landscaping, including raised edges that protect them from over hanging vehicles.
 - b) Where garages are provided on-plot these should reflect the architectural style of the house and, preferably, be set back from the main building line so as not to dominate the street.
 - c) Where it can be shown that on-plot parking is not achievable, formal parking spaces, including unallocated visitor parking, can be planned into the street where forming a comprehensive public realm strategy, including tree planting and use of materials to define parking spaces and soften the visual impact of parked cars. Such spaces should be perpendicular to the street. No more than four on-street parking spaces should be provided in a row, with trees or other forms of soft landscaping at the end of each row. Raised edges must be provided around these to protect them from over hanging vehicles.
 - d) Rear garage and parking courts should only be provided where they benefit from natural surveillance, are directly accessed from the front of properties, and are designed as attractive, functional spaces, incorporating tree planting. Narrow vehicular accessways should be avoided.
 - e) Undercroft and decked parking may be appropriate but should in all instances be wrapped with active development frontages, particularly at ground floor level. Opportunities should be taken to utilise the roof area of any parking as functional green space.
2. Proposals for homeowner extensions or the conversion of buildings should not result in parking being displaced on to the street.

- 5.39 Under Permitted Development Rights, homeowners are allowed to pave over a certain amount of their front garden (up to five sqm), without needing to apply for planning permission. Under these rights, planning permission is not needed if a new or replacement driveway (of any size) uses permeable (or porous) surfacing, or if the rainwater is directed to a lawn or border to drain naturally. If, however, the surface to be covered is more than five square metres, planning permission will be needed for the laying out of traditional, impermeable driveways that do not provide for the water to run to a permeable area.
- 5.40 The OCC Parking Standards notes that conversion of gardens into areas of parking may be appropriate in some places, where houses have been sub-divided into flats and additional parking is required. However, it notes that the cumulative impact of multiple hard-surfaced parking areas can change the character of an area and also significantly increase surface water run-off, which can, in turn, increase local flood risk. It also notes that the provision of new front garden parking will need to be weighed against the loss of existing on-street capacity as a result of new or extended drop-kerb access.
- 5.41 In residential areas, the conversion of gardens into areas of hardstanding for car parking has an impact on the suburban verdancy of the area and biodiversity value, as well consequences for surface water flooding. One of the main features of Thame's character is its connection to nature and green spaces. The lack of greenery associated with hard surfacing of parking areas in front gardens promotes the need to reintroduce greenery into the street.
- 5.42 Within the Neighbourhood Plan, homeowners are encouraged to 'depave' areas of hard surfacing within their front gardens. This is an initiative that originated in Portland, Oregon. The concept is to work with the local community to return paved surfaces to permeable surfaces. The initiative was set up as a response to the growing problems created by the increasing area of land covered by paved surfaces, resulting in stormwater pollution, the degradation of water quality and riparian habitats, as well as the disconnection with the natural environment³⁸. In the UK, 'depave' has been trialled in Lambeth, with funding and support from the Council³⁹.

³⁸ To find out more, visit the Depave website: <http://depave.org/>

³⁹ More information on the trial in Lambeth can be found here: <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/depaving-a-guide>

Policy CPQ8: Paving of front gardens

1. Where it is proposed to pave over front gardens, and where planning permission is required, all new areas of hard standing must help reinforce the positive character features of Thame as set out in the Character Area Assessment and should:
 - a) Incorporating natural permeable or porous materials that reflect the character of the area.
 - b) Seek to maximise the retained area of lawn and vegetation.
 - c) Incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SuDS).
 - d) Not direct run-off straight into the drainage system (both to avoid adding to flood risk and to ensure pollutants do not enter the main river system).
 - e) Include new planting of non-invasive tree and shrub species.
2. Where necessary to gain vehicular access to allow off-street parking, planning permission must be sought for the installation of dropped kerbs and cross-overs. These will only be supported where appropriate on-site drainage is provided, using permeable surfaces, and where surface run-off rates do not increase those currently experienced.

Project CPQ(a): Reinstating front gardens

1. Encouragement is given to homeowners to 'depave' areas of hardstanding and impermeable surfaces in front gardens, preferably reinstating natural materials, or replacing impermeable surfaces with porous material.
2. Guidance published by The Royal Horticultural Society (e.g.: Front Garden Guide)⁴⁰ should be referred to when considering how best to redesign front gardens, particularly those incorporating parking provision.
3. The Town Council is keen to work with the County Council to explore whether an approach to 'depaving' might be included in future updates of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and whether opportunities might exist to help fund and deliver such change in order to positively influence the resilience and character of the area.

⁴⁰ <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/pdf/climate-and-sustainability/urban-greening/gardening-matters-front-gardens-urban-greening.pdf>

Design Review

- 5.43 Paragraph 133 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should have access to and make use of tools and processes to assess and improve the design quality of development, including making use of design review arrangements.
- 5.44 Design review is a way of assessing the design quality of new developments by an independent panel of experts to support high standards of design. Guidance on the Design Review process can be found via the Design South East website⁴¹. The requirement for design review shall be determined by South Oxfordshire District Council.
- 5.45 In Thame, it is envisaged that major applications for development, as well as smaller schemes in sensitive or important locations, such as within conservation areas or adjacent to rivers, should be subject to design review. This might include residential, commercial and mixed-use development proposals, infrastructure, community facilities, public realm and open space proposals.
- 5.46 Design review should take place at the pre-application stage to inform the design process and again following submission of the application, helping to inform officer recommendations. The final proposals submitted should show how comments made during the design review have influenced the proposed development.

Project CPQ(b): Design Review

1. Emerging schemes for major development should be assessed through design review. Design review of smaller schemes is also encouraged, including those in sensitive or important locations.
2. It is envisaged that schemes will be referred to Design South East until such a time that, and if, South Oxfordshire District Council runs and operates a Design Review Panel.
3. Encouragement is given to early engagement with the Design Review panel, allowing scope for input into emerging designs. The final schemes submitted to the District Council should include a report on the design review process and show how the scheme has responded to this.
4. Design Review of live applications is also encouraged.

⁴¹ <https://designsoutheast.org/services/review/>

6. Services and Facilities

Context

- 6.1 The SODC Local Plan is clear in its commitment to support local communities in protecting, enhancing and delivering community facilities in their area. Through Policies CF1 - CF5, the Plan establishes a set of policies which seek to deliver community and recreational facilities, by establishing a set of criteria for the protection of existing assets, as well as for the provision of new.
- 6.2 Furthermore the Local Plan, through paragraph 10.9, highlights how the Council will support the community in identifying the needs for new local facilities through a Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 6.3 One of the core principles of the NPPF is the promotion of healthy and safe communities⁴². It states, at paragraph 93, that planning policies and decision should 'plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments' and 'guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs'.

Community Facilities

- 6.4 The presence and provision of social and community infrastructure is critical to sustaining and meeting the day-to-day needs of local residents in Thame, providing access to essential services and facilities, and helping to maintain a high quality of life. Such facilities, which include schools, healthcare, churches, sports and community centres, also have an important role to play in strengthening social networks, sense of community and identity. Thame currently thrives socially because of its range of community facilities and services, which should be preserved.
- 6.5 The SODC Local Plan, through CF1, recognises the important of safeguarding existing community facilities, while Policy CF2 supports the provision of new community facilities and services. Where appropriate, the portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy payable to the Town Council may be used to support the ongoing maintenance and improvement of community facilities in Thame.
- 6.6 An assessment of existing community facilities was carried out by The Community Topic Group to inform TNP1. This found that most of Thame's existing community

⁴² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

facilities are of small to medium capacity, and that there is no adequate large venue for groups of more than 200 people other than St Mary's Church. TNP1 therefore, through Policy CLW1, sought to allocate land for a new large community facility. The Policy identified the following sites as having potential for accommodating a community facility:

- The Cattle Market site as part of a mixed-use development.
- Lord Williams's Lower School, as long as the school is consolidated onto the Upper School site and the Lower School site developed for residential. The existing Sports Hall and Phoenix Centre, along with the associated car parking area, could be refurbished as community facilities. The Lower School was allocated for development in TNP1 but that has not come forward.
- A new facility on the northern end of the Southern Road Recreation Area.

6.7 This Plan recognises that there is still a need for a larger community facility within Thame, and therefore supports the provision of any sites which can act as such a space. Equally, through consultation, the community has indicated support for a new youth centre.

6.8 With over 100 community groups within Thame, there is and will continue to be strong demand for facilities to accommodate them. Where facilities are to be provided, or improvements made, they should be accessible to all, with an emphasis placed on good walking and cycling links to these, as well as provision of secure, and dry, cycle parking provision. All facilities should be designed to reflect the character and qualities of the site and local setting.

6.9 Oxfordshire County Council, through the latest version of its Pupil Place Plan⁴³, confirms that there is potential to be pressure on both primary and secondary school places in Thame. However, in terms of primary school places, GP data used by OCC indicates that since 2019 births have fallen in the town, which has reduced the pressure on primary schools.

6.10 In terms of secondary school places, the report suggests that it is not expected that Lord Williams's would expand further than already planned (up to a permanent annual intake of 350 pupils, and a total capacity of 2,250). It is intended that the planned expansion of Lord Williams's will ensure sufficient school choice for families within the catchment area, but there is likely to be a reduction in choice for families outside the catchment area.

6.11 Therefore, based on predicted trends, OCC do not feel it necessary to provide an additional school, or further expansion to the existing schools, within Thame. The

⁴³ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/our-work-schools/planning-enough-school-places#:~:text=The%20Pupil%20Place%20Plan%20sets,%2F22%20%2D%202031%2F32.>

Town Council expects consistent monitoring of the pressure, and predicted pressure, on school places in Thame throughout the Neighbourhood Plan period.

- 6.12 Developer contributions towards education facilities are calculated on a site specific basis. Where a site is due to make an education contribution through S106, a calculation of expected pupil numbers will be made by OCC so that S106 contributions towards nursery, primary, secondary (including sixth form) and special educational needs can be sought.
- 6.13 In assessing and determining any needs the net increase in homes at a development site (and consequent change in population) is considered. The assessment will address the whole proposal (including both market and affordable housing) and will calculate the expected pupil place demands generated by the housing. The assessment, based upon a population assessment carried out when a planning application/proposal is submitted, is undertaken using the County Council's PopCal forecasting tool.
- 6.14 Where it can be demonstrated that the number of pupils generated by a development is greater than the expected surplus capacity in the local schools the County Council will require planning obligations to ensure the provision of sufficient capacity to meet future needs. This will normally be in the form of a financial contribution, but it may also require the transfer of land or the direct delivery of infrastructure.

Policy SF01: Community Facilities and Services

1. Proposals for new or improved community facilities, including nursery provision, a community hall or centre, and a youth centre, will be supported and should:
 - a) include provision of flexible space, where appropriate, that can be used for a variety of community uses;
 - b) be provided in locations that capitalise on opportunities to promote walking, cycling and use of public transport;
 - c) be easily accessible to all;
 - d) respond to local character, design policies and guidance set out in the Neighbourhood Plan; and
 - e) where possible, provide a large community space which can act as an alternative to St. Mary's Church
2. Where social and community facilities are to be provided as part of any major development proposal the Local Planning Authority will need to be satisfied with regard to the phasing and delivery of these uses. Wherever possible, new community uses should be delivered during the early phases of development to help build a sense of community and integration with existing surrounding communities.
3. Proposals that involve the loss of any space or buildings used for community purposes will only be supported where an equivalent replacement for alternative provision is made for that use, and or where the application is supported by material which demonstrates the benefits to the community which outweigh the harm created by loss of that facility.

Existing Open Space

- 6.15 The SODC Local Plan, through Policy CF4, seeks to protect open spaces to ensure continue to contribute towards improving the health and wellbeing of visitors and residents. The policy recognises the importance of retaining open spaces in urban areas, as once land is lost to development it cannot be brought back or shifted to a similarly convenient location. Urban open spaces are rare, valuable, and need to be protected.
- 6.16 The Green Living Plan suggests that Thame has a shortage of parks, woods and orchards, and as a result residents are restricted in the variety of green spaces available. Therefore, the protection of Thame’s existing open spaces is crucial.
- 6.17 The following sites (Figure 13) were identified as important to Thame through the previous neighbourhood plan:
- Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve
 - Southern Road Recreation Ground
 - Elms Park
 - Stones Close Allotments
 - Queen Elizabeth Circle
 - Thame Cricket Ground
 - The Moats
 - Thame Park (Historic Park and County Wildlife Site)
 - The Phoenix Trail and verges
- 6.18 These locations remain important and are carried forward into the new neighbourhood plan as important open spaces.
- 6.19 In addition to the list of importance open spaces in Thame outlined above, the Kingsey Road allotments are also to be protected. Located on the eastern edge of Thame, between Kingsey Road and the Chinnor RFC, these allotments provide important opportunities for local food growing, as well as delivering a wide range of mental and physical benefits⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ <https://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/benefits-of-allotment-gardening/>

Insert plan of green spaces



Figure 13: Plan of important open spaces in Thame to be protected and retained

Policy SFO2: Existing Open Spaces

1. The following are defined as 'open spaces' (See Figure 13) and should be protected and retained in line with the NPPF:
 - a) Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve
 - b) Southern Road Recreation Ground
 - c) Elms Park
 - d) Stones Close Allotments
 - e) Queen Elizabeth Circle
 - f) Thame Cricket Ground
 - g) The Moats
 - h) Thame Park (Historic Park and County Wildlife Site)
 - i) The Phoenix Trail and verges
 - j) Kinsey Road Allotments
2. The sites listed above are locations where opportunities for biodiversity net gain are welcomed, this includes via proposals for offsite delivery in circumstances where it is not practical to deliver net gain on site. This is subject to maintenance and management regimes which would need agreeing with the owner, as well as consideration for any impacts on the wider use and enjoyment of that space.

New Green Space

- 6.20 Where new development is proposed it shall provide green space in line with standards established by South Oxfordshire District Council. The provision of such space is important in helping to create an environment that supports community cohesion, health and wellbeing. Indeed, the Covid-19 pandemic emphasised the importance of having a network of local and accessible green spaces for leisure and recreation.
- 6.21 Where new green spaces are to be provided as part of development they should be safe, accessible and usable for all, and provide a range of open space types and play facilities that cater for all ages. Green spaces should be connected by a network of green infrastructure, including public rights of way, tree-lined and landscaped streets. This network of spaces should incorporate measures that help manage surface water run-off and include wildflowers enabling insect pollinators to extend their range.
- 6.22 Where play spaces are to be provided, these should be inclusive and designed to cater for play for all ages, and linked to other leisure and communal activities, including provision of outdoor gym equipment and allotment gardens. As far as possible, such spaces should be overlooked by new development, providing natural surveillance of that space.

Policy SFO3: New green spaces

1. Development of a scale that triggers provision of new green space should be provided in line with standards established by South Oxfordshire District Council. The design of this space should reflect the good design principles. Development should:
 - a) Avoid creation of left over space that lacks purpose.
 - b) Integrate open space within the development rather than pushing this to the periphery.
 - c) Locate new green space within walking distance of as many residents as possible.
 - d) Link green spaces through a network of green routes wherever possible, including public rights of way and tree-lined or landscaped streets.
 - e) Provide a range of open space types, including areas of play, opportunities for growing food, and quieter areas for relaxation.
 - f) Ensure that play areas and public spaces are well overlooked wherever possible, providing natural surveillance of the space. Hidden spots must be avoided.
 - g) Enable play spaces to be accessible for all children and incorporate elements relating to nature and landscape as well as play equipment.
 - h) A connected network of green spaces that incorporates measures that minimise surface water run-off and which help extend the range of insect pollinators is supported.

7. Natural Environment

Context

- 7.1 A large part of Thame's identity is its relationship with the natural environment. Having the countryside 'on your doorstep' and having access to peaceful spaces such as the Cuttle Brook Corridor are what makes Thame's character so distinct.
- 7.2 The SODC, through policies ENV1 – ENV5 in its Local Plan, seeks to conserve and enhance the intrinsic character and beauty of the area, ensuring that wherever development is proposed, it protect and where possible enhances South Oxfordshire's landscapes, biodiversity and watercourses.
- 7.3 SODC has also declared a climate emergency in April 2019 and an ecological emergency in April 2021. As a result of these declaration, the District Council set the targets of:
- Be carbon neutral within their own operations by 2025
 - Be a carbon neutral district by 2030
- 7.4 To outline how South Oxfordshire District Council is to meet its target of becoming a carbon neutral council by 2025, a Climate Action Plan has been developed which focuses on the council's own emissions to ensure their operations and service provision are carbon neutral by the target date, before focusing on the district target to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- 7.5 The NPPF, through Chapter 15, recognises the importance of conserving and protecting the natural environment. This importance is also reflected through the passing of the Environment Act (2021) which, coupled with the declaration of the Climate and Ecological Emergency by OCC, has raised awareness of the value and importance of biodiversity and natural habitats. The Thame Green Living Plan has also helped raise awareness of the value of the natural environment at a local context. Published in July 2020, the Green Living Plan sets out major themes, the reasons to act, and the practical choices available for Thame relating to environmental issues. It also sets out a series of recommended actions. These recommended actions span across five focus areas:
- Spaces, Routes & Biodiversity
 - Water & Flood Protection
 - Emissions & Clean Air
 - Energy & Electric Vehicles
 - Waste & Recycling

Biodiversity

- 7.6 Within the SODC Local Plan, Policies ENV2 – ENV4 supports proposals which conserve, restore an enhance biodiversity within the district. Specifically, Policy ENV3 stipulates that all development should provide a net gain in biodiversity where possible, and that as a minimum, there should be no net loss of biodiversity. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to build on this, requiring a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain on all proposals, and seeking to ensure that this is delivered on site unless it is demonstrated that this is not feasible. In this case, provision should be provided as close to the original site as possible.
- 7.7 Applicants are required (under Policy NEB1 of the Neighbourhood Plan) to submit a biodiversity net gain plan as part of development proposals of all sizes. Net gain should be demonstrated through use of the Natural England Biodiversity Metric⁴⁵ (current version 3.0 or any updates to this published at the time an application is made). The greening of development sites can take a variety of forms and include the use of landscaping, green roofs, walls and sustainable urban drainage systems.
- 7.8 In 2018, the Government published ‘A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment’⁴⁶ recognising the importance of improving the environment, tackling climate change and how connecting with it can improve health and wellbeing.
- 7.9 The Environment Act (2021) and declaration of a Climate Emergency have raised the importance of biodiversity and natural habitats. The Wildlife Trusts envisage creation of a Nature Recovery Network⁴⁷ , with greenery integrated into all development and resulting in a net gain for wildlife. It is proposed that nature is brought back into the places where people live their lives, also having a positive impact on health and wellbeing.
- 7.10 Any development should be planned to in such a way that avoids habitat loss and fragmentation, and opportunities should be sought to improve ecological connectivity, including through the creation, restoration and enhancement of linking habitats and ‘stepping stones’ through the landscape. Any development must minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide measurable net gains for nature. This involves safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity already present, providing new areas of habitat appropriate to the ecology of the area and integrating biodiversity within new development.

⁴⁵ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6049804846366720>

⁴⁶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

⁴⁷ The Wildlife Trusts, 2018, Towards a Wilder Britain: Creating a Nature Recovery Network to bring back wildlife to every neighbourhood, A report for the Westminster Government

- 7.11 Lighting within and around development is expected to respect the ecological functionality of movement corridors. Certain species of invertebrate and mammal are highly sensitive to inappropriate lighting. In these circumstances surveys are expected to determine where these movement corridors are and measures put forward that demonstrate how these will be protected and enhanced.
- 7.12 Furthermore, the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) hold over 4 million records of flora and fauna in Berkshire and Oxfordshire plus information about Local Wildlife and Geological Sites, NERC Act S41 Habitats of Principal Importance (previously called UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats) and Ecological Networks (Conservation Target Areas and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas). This data can be used to help make informed decision on the design and location of sustainable development.
- 7.13 TVERC provide a range of valuable services ranging from habitat mapping and green corridor identification to Local Wildlife Site monitoring and tree coverage valuation. Applicants should consult with TVERC to better understand the classification of their proposed site. Where opportunities for development and habitat creation or conservation exist, liaison with TVERC will help indicate appropriate habitat types to be provided for.
- 7.14 In addition, new (and existing) development might help create connected green corridors through:
- Provision of generous front and back gardens, with permeable surfaces and including the planting of locally native trees and shrubs.
 - Alignment of back gardens where possible to provide for continuous wildlife corridors, with bird boxes or bricks in walls installed to enhance biodiversity and wildlife.
 - Protection and enhancement of existing local green spaces, including provision of new spaces in development, and which should be carefully located in order to maximise their potential as a habitat for wildlife.
 - Retention of and planting of new trees and hedgerows, supporting the resilience of green network.
 - Protection and safeguarding of natural open spaces from necessary or potentially damaging human interaction.

Policy NEB1: Biodiversity

1. Development proposals must manage impacts on biodiversity and secure a minimum net biodiversity gain of 10% on-site, as demonstrated through use of the most up-to-date version of the Natural England biodiversity metric (or any successor document to this) and submission of a biodiversity net gain plan submitted as part of planning application material. This will be informed by current site conditions and with any proposed habitat creation being appropriate to local context. This applies to all developments, including smaller sites, which should make use of the Small Sites Toolkit published by Natural England as part of the biodiversity metric. The management plan should show how biodiversity net gains shall be managed in perpetuity.
2. Where measures are proposed off-site these should be located as close as possible to the development site. The applicant will need to demonstrate these are deliverable and is expected to liaise with TVERC to identify suitable locations in close proximity to the proposal site which would benefit from biodiversity net gain. Off-site measures should be in place before construction commences.
3. All applicants will be expected to seek the advice of the TVERC wherever proposals affect or have the potential to affect the natural environment and nature conservation assets, including valued landscapes and habitats.
4. Applicants are encouraged to include existing trees and hedgerows in their layouts, incorporating them within green areas, open spaces and alongside walking and cycling routes.
5. Where green infrastructure is to be provided, it is expected that this will provide permeability for wildlife through and around development. This should be functional as wildlife habitat in its own right not just as a link between habitats. The width of wildlife corridors should be proportionate to the requirements of target species. These should allow for movement of nocturnal wildlife, with the impact of lighting and glare minimised.
6. Where landscaping is to be provided, it is expected that native species appropriate to the area will be used wherever possible.
7. Where there is unavoidable loss or damage to habitats, sites or features because of exceptional circumstances, mitigation and compensation will be required.
8. All applicants will be expected to seek the advice of the ecological advisors to the local planning authority wherever proposals affect or have the potential to affect the natural environment and nature conservation assets, including valued landscapes and habitats.

The Cuttle Brook Corridor

- 7.15 Central to Thame's character is also its connection to the surrounding countryside and green spaces. Of particular importance is the Cuttle Brook nature reserve (Figure 14).
- 7.16 The Cuttle Brook nature reserve is a unique piece of 'semi-wild' countryside in close proximity to the Town Centre. The area offers open river-meadow views and a network of paths through thirty acres of mixed meadows, woodland, sedge and reef beds, hedges, trees, riverbanks and scrub-land.
- 7.17 This forms an important green lung for the town, providing a north south link to countryside either side of the built-up area. As the Thame Green Living Plan⁴⁸ suggests, it is noticeable that many of the new routes planned and even constructed in new residential estates do not coherently link with the main walking routes into town. The importance of Cuttle Brook passageway is therefore even more significant, providing the only true green route into the countryside from the centre of Thame.
- 7.18 New development should facilitate Thame's connection to the countryside by providing further opportunities for movement. Movement should be fluid and natural for those wishing to reach the countryside, even from the Town Centre. This could also encompass improvements to the wider movement network for walking and cycling across Thame as a whole.

Policy NEC1: The Cuttle Brook

1. Any development proposals alongside the Cuttle Brook corridor (as defined on Figure 14) must ensure that the north-south green corridor through Thame is maintained.
2. Extension of the Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve should be incorporated into the master planning principles of any development adjacent to the Reserve.
3. Development should:
 - a) Maintain and enhance the environment and landscape character of the corridor, including water bodies and water quality.
 - b) Conserve and enhance biodiversity, including potential for connecting habitats.
 - c) Contribute towards biodiversity net gain.
 - d) Support appropriate access for leisure and recreation that promotes movement by foot or bicycle.

⁴⁸ <https://www.thamegreenliving.org.uk/glp-2020.pdf>

INSERT CUTTLE BROOK CORRIDOR PLAN



Figure 14: The Cuttle Brook corridor

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.19 Flood risk in Thame is concentrated along the River Thame and Cuttle Brook. The Environment Agency classifies these as ‘main rivers’⁴⁹ and recommends that where development is proposed next to a river it should include a green buffer strip (8 metres for fluvial rivers, 16 metres for tidal rivers) alongside the watercourse. This green buffer can take the form of a sustainable drainage system, which will help reduce the risk of flooding as well as provide recreational and wildlife benefits.
- 7.20 The SODC Local Plan, through Policy EP4 (Flood Risk), requires all development proposals to incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and ensure that run-off rates are similar to those on a natural greenfield site. The policy also suggests that SuDS should seek to enhance water quality and biodiversity in line with the Water Framework Directive⁵⁰.
- 7.21 To help minimise and mitigate the risk of flooding from development a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS)⁵¹ and Local Standards and Guidance for Surface Water Drainage on Major Development in Oxfordshire⁵² have been published by Oxfordshire County Council. These, in combination with the Flood Toolkit⁵³, provide extensive guidance relating to the use of SuDS in developments.
- 7.22 SuDS are an approach to managing surface water run-off which seeks to mimic natural drainage systems and retain water on or near the site as opposed to traditional drainage approaches which involve piping water off site as quickly as possible. SuDS offer significant advantages over conventional piped drainage systems in reducing flood risk by attenuating the rate and quantity of surface water run-off from a site, promoting groundwater recharge and biodiversity benefits, as well as improving water quality and amenity value. As a way of potentially delivering biodiversity net-gain, support is given to the use of SuDS, both as part of new development but also as part of a wider response to climate change and resilience across Thame. This may include the use of SuDS as ‘raingardens’ within the public realm as part of wider highways projects. These are generally low maintenance, wildlife-friendly spaces that manage rainwater runoff from hard surfaces. They are also often referred to as bioretention facilities.

⁴⁹ <https://environment.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=17cd53dfc524433980cc333726a56386>

⁵⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html

⁵¹ <https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/environmentandplanning/flooding/OxfordshireFloodRiskManagementStrategy.pdf>

⁵² <https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/LOCAL-STANDARDS-AND-GUIDANCE-FOR-SURFACE-WATER-DRAINAGE-ON-MAJOR-DEVELOPMENT-IN-OXFORDSHIRE.pdf>

⁵³ <https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/>

- 7.23 The Guidance published by Oxfordshire County Council requires all major developments to use SuDS to manage surface water run-off. Although the use of SuDS is not a requirement for small sites, the Flooding Toolkit acknowledges that SuDS can be valuable for small developments as they incorporate cost-effective techniques and can be retro-fitted into existing developments. Furthermore, applications for such schemes will be required to demonstrate how they are contributing to bio-diversity net gain in any event, utilising the Small Sites Toolkit⁵⁴ developed by Natural England and Defra. The provision of SuDS, including the planting of wildflowers for example, might be a way of helping to achieve this, whilst also managing localised flood risk.
- 7.24 SuDS solutions appropriate to the site and context should be designed and consulted upon with the County Council as the lead local flood authority (LLFA). This is to ensure that new development does not contribute to increased flood risk from surface water and that surface water arising from the development is managed in a sustainable way, prioritising the use of SuDS.
- 7.25 Oxfordshire County Council, in its role as the LLFA, is a 'statutory consultee' and local planning authorities are expected to consult them on surface water management for all major developments. The LLFA will ensure all schemes comply with the NPPF and supporting guidance, as well as seeking to secure SuDS schemes which demonstrate best practice and maximise water quality, amenity, biodiversity and other benefits for the local area. If a traditional (below-ground piped) drainage system is proposed over a sustainable drainage system, the onus is on the applicant to provide evidence to demonstrate to the LLFA that SuDS would be inappropriate for the development.

⁵⁴ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6049804846366720>

Policy NEF1: Flood risk and sustainable drainage

1. Where development is proposed in an area at risk of flooding having first satisfied the sequential and exception tests, mitigation measures giving priority to the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) must be included.
2. Where SuDS are proposed as part of any development:
 - a) The design of SUDS should reflect best practice guidance established in the Local Standards and Guidance for Surface Water Drainage on Major Development in Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit.
 - b) Where practicable, SuDs should be designed to be multi-functional and deliver benefits for wildlife, amenity and landscape.
 - c) Swales and attenuation ponds should be designed so that water features and plants are visible from the surrounding area and avoid unattractive and over-engineered boundary treatments. Attenuation ponds on slopes should be avoided if they need deep embankments or bunding.
 - d) Buffer strips of at least 8m to be provided alongside watercourses in line with guidance from the Environment Agency should be designed to maximise natural flood management and include areas of planting to minimise erosion.
 - e) Where it is proposed to provide SuDS within the public realm these should be designed as an integral part of the green infrastructure and street network, responding positively to the character of the area. Where hard landscaping is needed the use of porous materials should be maximised to enable infiltration.
3. Wherever possible, development should retain, enhance or re-establish watercourses and other surface waterbodies as positive features contributing to the character, sense of place and biodiversity value of development.

Street Greening Initiatives

- 7.26 The existing network of streets within Thame include, in places, mown grass verges. These provide scope to integrate street tree planting and other landscaping, including raingardens and planting of wildflowers. This would transform the nature of the urban environment, providing a link between the built area and surrounding green space, whilst also enhancing biodiversity and flood management. Replanting mown verges with wildflowers would also bring cost benefits, reducing the need for regular maintenance.
- 7.27 The Town centre has been identified as an area currently lacking in green infrastructure and while other areas in Thame, mainly residential, feature amenity spaces such as grass verges which can be used to deliver street greening initiatives, the town centre is not inundated with these. This makes it more difficult to integrate greening measures in the town centre, particularly along the high street.
- 7.28 The Town Council therefore welcomes opportunities to make more effective use of existing highway space and areas of car parking in the Town Centre in an attempt to create new amenity space suitable to accommodate street greening schemes.

- Street tree planting and greening programme along verges or areas of unused space, at large junctions for example. Less parking in the town centre could create new amenity space.
- Introduction of wildflowers that enhance biodiversity.
- Introduction of 'raingardens' that manage surface runoff from heavy rainfall and reduce risk of flooding.



Figure 15: Conceptual map showing a connected network of green streets and spaces

Project NESG(a): Street Greening

1. The Town Council is keen to promote delivery of greener streets throughout Thame and hopes to work with partner organisations, including the District and County Council, to explore how underused green spaces and roadside verges might be better used to increase biodiversity value, provide new wildlife habitats and space for local food production.
2. Reuse of such space for raingardens and wildflower meadows is encouraged, and which would also help manage surface water run-off. These may act as a network of 'B-Lines' allowing bees, butterflies and other insect pollinators to extend their range. The associated management and maintenance regimes would be agreed with the relevant authorities.
3. Streets and spaces that would benefit from new greenery include Oxford Road, Wellington Street and the Cattle Market. Lea Park also benefits from existing areas of greenery although this could be diversified to introduce a range of green space types, including natural and semi-natural areas.
4. The Town Council is also in favour of exploring opportunities to rationalise and reduce the space dedicated to vehicular traffic, including car parking within the town centre, in order to create new amenity space suitable for street greening infrastructure.

8. Getting Around

Context

- 8.1 This section of the Neighbourhood Plan presents policies and projects in relation to access and movement. It reflects the aspiration for Thame to be a compact place, where people of all ages and abilities are within easy reach of everyday services, preferably by foot or by bike, supporting an active and healthy society, as well as supporting a mode shift away from car travel and thus contributing to the climate change agenda.
- 8.2 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan, at Policy TRANS2 ('Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility') supports sustainable modes of travel, making it easier for people to walk and cycle, promoting sites in close proximity to public transport and improving the use of bus and rail services. Of relevance to TNP2, the Local Plan states, at paragraph 6.19, that:
- 'In Neighbourhood Development Plan areas, it will be important to ensure that sustainable transport movements are incorporated into Neighbourhood Development Plans. These improvements will also need to be complemented by relevant and reasonable upgrades to surrounding highway networks to mitigate impacts of development, which should include taking into account air quality considerations where relevant.'*
- 8.3 Policy TRANS5 ('Consideration of Development Proposals') establishes a range of criteria which proposals for new development should meet, including safe and convenient routes and provision of public transport infrastructure.

Active and Healthy Travel

- 8.4 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan acknowledges that due to the rural nature of the district there is a high dependency on the car. The local Plan therefore promotes making sustainable transport, walking and cycling an attractive and viable choice for people. This is reflected in national guidance, with the Government's Cycling and Walking Investment strategy⁵⁵, for example, pointing to the importance of and need for new infrastructure investment to support active travel.
- 8.5 Although travel by car will continue to be important, efforts are required to encourage a shift towards greener and healthier travel choices. Within the neighbourhood plan area, efforts should be made so that walking and cycling become attractive propositions for short, day-to-day trips. This is good for the environment, for health and social well-being⁵⁶, and for the economy⁵⁷.
- 8.6 High quality walking and cycling routes should be integrated within new developments. But the quality and attractiveness of the network is only as good as the missing links or gaps in the routes. The Town Council thus proposes that CIL payments received from development are directed to an improved area wide walking and cycle network for the benefit of existing and new residents. Key routes for improvement are those that make short, everyday journeys easy and enjoyable. This includes improving links to parks, the town centre, schools, healthcare and other community facilities. Good practice principles outlined in Building for a Healthy Life⁵⁸ show how new developments should incorporate walking and cycling networks. Applicants will be expected to refer to these principles.
- 8.7 It is important that pedestrian and cycle routes are designed to be accessible to all, including those with mobility issues. As such, the provision of any new or improved cycle and pedestrian routes must incorporate guidance included within 'Inclusive Mobility: A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure'⁵⁹. This report provides best practice advice on a range of relevant design considerations, including but not limited to advice on footways and pedestrian crossings, how to create safe shared routes, appropriate gradients and how to make cycling infrastructure safe for disabled pedestrians.

⁵⁵ Department for Transport, April 2017, Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy

⁵⁶ See, for example, the Healthy Streets Initiative developed by Living Streets with Transport for London.

⁵⁷ See, for example, the Health Economic Assessment Toolkit developed by the World Health Organisation

⁵⁸ Design for Homes, June 2020, Building for a Healthy Life: A Design Toolkit for neighbourhoods, streets, homes and public spaces

⁵⁹ Department for Transport, December 2021, Inclusive Mobility A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure

- 8.8 There are also opportunities to support a move to walking and cycling over longer distances, linking neighbourhoods and communities together, and maximising the attractiveness of the area's green infrastructure.
- 8.9 Two new walking routes in and around Thame have been developed (see Appendix 3): the shorter route is the 4-mile Thame Inner Circuit and the longer route covers a 20-mile Thame Outer Circuit, connecting villages around Thame with shorter segments linking back into the town. These routes are displayed in Appendix 4.
- 8.10 The circular route takes in the villages of Long Crendon, Shabbington, Tetsworth, Sydenham, Emmington, Towersey, Kingsey and Haddenham, as well as passing through the Rycote Estate and the Oxfordshire Golf Course. The terrain is generally flat and the walk is mainly on public rights of way with a few linking sections on fairly quiet roads.
- 8.11 The Inner Circuit provides a much shorter, less rural alternative, which provides a good overview of the key areas of Thame outside the town centre. The route connects St. Mary's, Lea Park, the Phoenix Trail and the Cuttle Brook area (see Figure 16 which also shows potential routes and connections linking to the surrounding countryside and outer walking route).
- 8.12 The Thame Green Living Plan group aspires to plan a new mid-Thame circuit, but this will mean agreeing new footpath routes and creating new links to form a route of approximately 10 miles around and just outside the town's current built up areas.
- 8.13 This route would provide a mid-length riverside/countryside circuit around Thame's immediate environs, using new estate riverside walks and natural features of the surrounding open land.

- A leisure and recreation walking route around Thame connecting green spaces and community facilities.
- Connected to routes that extend out into the countryside and link with the villages around Thame.
- Could be expanded to include safe walking and cycling routes to Haddenham & Thame Parkway station.



Figure 16: Conceptual map showing the potential Thame Inner Circuit and connections to wider destinations

Project GAAT(a): Walking and cycling routes

1. The following locations for new or improved walking and cycling routes have been identified which the Town Council is keen to explore further in partnership with the relevant delivery organisations, including the District and County Council:
 - Connection between Thame and Haddenham station.
 - Improved access between Thame and Thame Park.
 - Safer routes between Thame and Long Crendon.
 - Formalising the route of the Phoenix Trail between Maple Road and Rycote Lane.
 - More direct connections between the Sycamore Rise development and the Phoenix Trail.
 - Inner and mid-Thame circular walking routes.
 - Introduction of a one-way system within part of the High Street, between its junctions with North Street and Bell Lane.

Policy GAAT1 – Active Travel

1. Proposals for major residential and commercial development are expected to include plans which make clear how they satisfy the following active travel criteria:
 - a) Provide new walking and cycling routes that are direct, safe and convenient to use and designed for use by people of all ages and abilities.
 - b) Demonstrate how such proposals will integrate satisfactorily into existing adjacent walking and cycling networks, without reduction of capacity or safety of those routes.
 - c) Provide development layouts with active frontages which allow for the natural surveillance of routes through overlooking.
 - d) Reflect best practice principles for active travel design with the design of new cycle routes incorporating the guidance set out in DfT Cycle Infrastructure Design LTN 1/20⁶⁰, or successor guidance, as well as DfT guidance in respect of inclusive mobility⁶¹. The principles established in Building for a Health Life, shall also be utilised by applicants to inform the design of safe, attractive and effective active travel infrastructure and, where possible, improve conditions for all.
2. Proposals for residential development shall provide secure cycle storage assigned to the dwelling and located within or immediately adjacent to the property, fully enclosed and at ground-level. Proposals for flats should include communal areas for cycle storage.
3. Proposals for commercial, leisure and community uses should support and enable active travel through inclusion of safe, secure, dry and convenient cycle parking and changing facilities where appropriate.
4. New streets provided within areas of growth and development must be designed to balance the needs of competing users and avoid conflicts between motor vehicles, bus users, pedestrians and cyclists.

⁶⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

⁶¹ Department for Transport, December 2021, Inclusive Mobility A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure

The Phoenix Trail

- 8.14 Although Thame is relatively compact, and facilities and services are within a reasonable cycle distance of the home, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the town is limited. Thame's most significant asset is the Phoenix Trail. The Phoenix Trail is a flat and surfaced path ideal for cyclists and pedestrians, with seating every 500 metres. In total it stretches 12km between Thame and Princes Risborough.
- 8.15 However, more could be done to improve The Phoenix Trail. In some places it is poorly maintained, as a result the width of the path is inconsistent which can present dangers for its users, especially since it is shared between pedestrians and cyclists. The trail also comprises a series of 30 artworks inspired by the old railway environment and the local landscape of the Chilterns. Unfortunately, much of this artwork has fallen into a state of disrepair.
- 8.16 Furthermore, the Phoenix Trail is poorly connected with the centre of Thame. Although there are several access points to the trail within Thame, these are not signposted and do not have any designated routes connecting them with the town centre. For those not familiar with the area this can be confusing. The Thame Green Living Plan groups advocates for a priority cycle and pedestrian route to be created stretching from the Phoenix Trail in the south, through to Tythrop Way on the northern edge of town. The GLP also proposes further links and extensions to the Phoenix Trail, and the original Thame neighbourhood plan suggests that one of the key issues from the original consultation is the need for more footpaths and cycleways which extend and link into the Phoenix trail. Potential additions include extending the trail to Rycote Lane, Wheatley, and eventually connecting to the Oxford Cycle Route.
- 8.17 The trail is significant in that it makes up an important section of the Thame Inner Circuit, as well as providing a linking route in the Thame Outer Circuit route. Both of these routes are well established routes published by the Green Living Plan team. Although the trail is widely used it can produce issues of safety for its users. Regardless of whether these issues are actual or just perceived, the lack of lighting and natural surveillance from adjacent properties can discourage residents from using the path.

Project/Aspirations GAP(a): Art Trail

1. The Town Council is keen to would work with partners and the community to explore ideas for new and improved public art along the Phoenix Trail. This could be designed in such a way that is also improves the safety of the trail, incorporating new lighting as part of artwork.

- Create new and improved links to the Phoenix Trail, integrated with safer walking and cycling routes for all across Thame.
- Where development opportunities arise, create new active frontages onto the Phoenix Trail, enhancing safety and security through natural surveillance.
- Improve attractiveness of the Phoenix Trail through general maintenance, unobtrusive lighting and new public art.

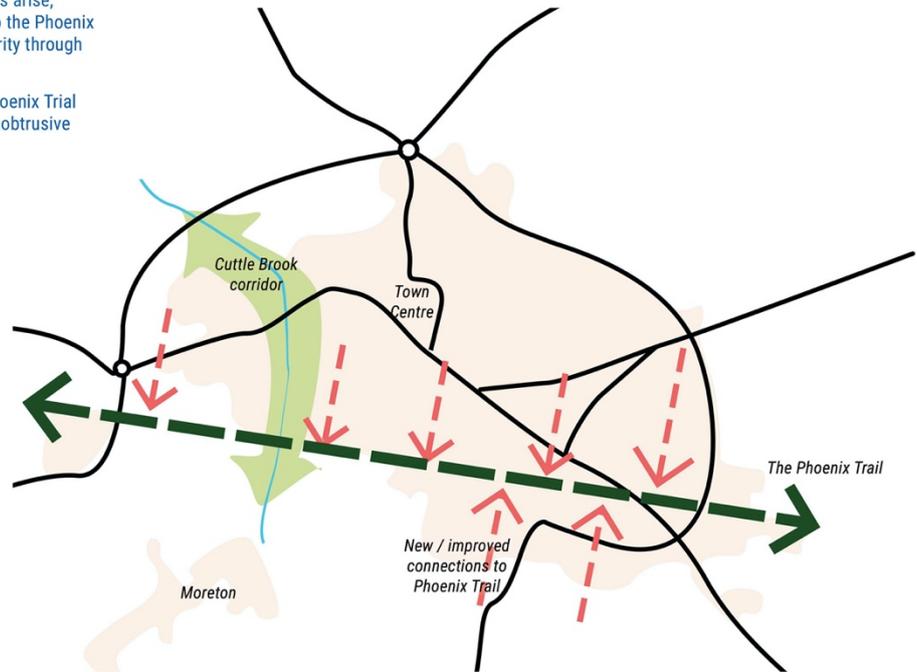


Figure 17: Conceptual map showing improved connections to the Phoenix Trail

Policy GAP1: The Phoenix Trail

1. Where development is proposed adjacent to the Phoenix Trail opportunities should be taken that support improvements to access and use of the Trail. Proposals that incorporate the following will be supported:
 - a) Incorporation of new links to and from the Phoenix Trail for pedestrians and cyclists, integrating with an enhanced walking and cycle network across Thame.
 - b) Creation of new active fronts within development along the route of the Phoenix Trail which enhances safety and security through natural surveillance
 - c) Provision of unobtrusive lighting along the Phoenix Trail.
 - d) Enhancing the environmental quality of the habitat, biodiversity and trees along the Phoenix Trail.

Alleyways

- 8.18 Through consultation on TNP1, Lea Park was identified by local residents as being poorly connected, with indirect and sometimes unattractive pedestrian and cycle routes, and car access only from the ring road.
- 8.19 The design of Lea Park is notable for its inclusion of a network of footpaths and alleyways. These can provide convenient routes by foot (or bike) but have a number of issues associated to them. These include:
- Concerns about personal safety, perceived or otherwise, particularly because in many places they are indirect and do not benefit from entrances or windows overlooking them. They are, in many cases, a route 'around the back' of residential properties.
 - A lack of lighting, particularly after sunset, which compromises their use.
 - Poor maintenance in some places, including overgrown vegetation and the presence of litter and graffiti, reducing the attractiveness of these as routes people will use on a regular basis.
 - Poor legibility, paths can be quite hidden and poorly signposted, for those not familiar with the area it can become confusing.
- 8.20 These factors, accompanied by the indirect road network, can make the use of car a more attractive option than walking or cycling. Most of Lea Park is within a fifteen minute walk of the town centre, but if people are uncertain about the existing routes into town, they will use their car instead.
- 8.21 The Town Council is keen to encourage active travel and recognises the benefits of a well-connected network of walking routes. However, interventions are required to make the existing routes more conducive to use. These might include:
- Opening up routes wherever possible, removing unnecessary walls and fencing between public spaces, creating a sense of space.
 - Encouraging the provision of new frontages onto the routes, either through new development or adaptation and extension of existing development over time.
 - Identifying potential for provision of more direct routes.
 - Re-using redundant or under-utilised space within and along routes for other uses, such as installation of community gardens, increasing community ownership and maintenance of space, whilst also contributing to the greening of the town.
 - Installation of lighting to increase the perception of safety and the use of routes

- 8.22 Where areas of new development are proposed and these are to integrate pedestrian routes, these should, as outlined above, be direct, well overlooked, landscaped and lit. Wherever there are stretches of footpaths without a direct frontage onto them, these stretches should be short. Reference should be made to the principles established in Secured by Design⁶² where relevant.



Figure 18. An example of a new development in Cambridge which was able to successfully incorporate alleyways, making them safe and attractive for use at all time of days, encouraging people to walk and promoting active and healthy lifestyles.

Policy GAA1: Alleyways

1. Development proposals adjacent to an existing alleyway which facilitates passive surveillance by:
 - a) providing new entrances and windows that face onto the footpath;
 - b) demonstrating how the route might be made more direct, with a clear visual link from each end; and
 - c) providing, if relevant, low level lighting designed to respect the amenity of occupants of any neighbouring residential properties, will be supported.

⁶² <https://www.securedbydesign.com/guidance/design-guides>

Project GAA(a): Alleyway transformation projects

1. The Town Council is keen to work with partners to deliver transformational projects that improve the quality and attractiveness of the alleyway network such that they become a more attractive proposition for people to use on a regular basis. Projects include:
 - a) Opening up enclosed spaces wherever possible through removal of walls and fences between public and semi-public spaces.
 - b) Encouraging community use and ownership of the alleyways and spaces through a programme of community gardening initiatives.
 - c) Establishing a regular programme of maintenance.

Public Transport

- 8.23 Alongside the growth of the town there has been a great increase in traffic and parking in and around the town centre over recent years. The high street and many side streets are now lined with parked cars throughout the day.
- 8.24 The growth of parking and congestion in the town centre heavily threatens to detract from the quality and character of the town centre.
- 8.25 Whilst it is accepted that people will continue to travel by car, the Neighbourhood Plan aims to create the conditions that encourage safe, attractive and efficient travel by alternative modes, and which provide people with the choice and opportunity to travel by foot, bike or public transport.
- 8.26 This Plan recognises that people will continue to travel by car, and that parking provision is necessary in allowing Thame to continue its role as a thriving market town. However, it is felt the volume of traffic and amount of space taken up by parking is excessive and could be avoided. In its current format, town centre parking is extremely inefficient, resulting in a traffic dominated space which undermine the pedestrian environment, welcome and visitor experience as well as undermining any aspiration of making Thame an environmentally conscious town.
- 8.27 Public transport, walking and cycling should become attractive propositions for people to use. The quality of infrastructure, as well as routes and services, should be enhanced. This means, for example, wider and better pedestrian crossing facilities, improved street furniture and less street clutter, dedicated cycle lanes, comfortable and informative bus shelters. Indeed, providing for good walking and cycling conditions, and improved public transport services, helps reduce congestion⁶³ and carbon emissions from vehicles, bringing environmental benefits.
- 8.28 The Town Council supports the exploration of opportunities which rationalise car parking space and bring forward new development opportunities that make more efficient use of the land and help bring vitality and life to the town centre. Therefore, support would be given to the development of a new Park and Ride site within Thame, which, subject to further assessment, would form part of a package of sustainable transport measures that aim to reduce the impact of car-based travel and associated congestion in the town centre.

⁶³ See research by Civitas for the European Union: <https://civitas.eu/news/civitas-flow-quick-facts-show-how-walking-and-cycling-help-reduce-traffic-congestion>

Policy GAPT1: Public Transport

1. Proposals that involve improved bus services and or supporting infrastructure will be supported.
2. Major new development will be supported provided it is located within walking distance (400 metres) of a frequent bus service, with the 400 metre distancing referring to the actual walking distance as opposed to as the crow flies. Alternatively, proposals for major development outside of the 400 metre walking distance of a bus stop will be supported where they are able to incorporate new bus routes and services for residents.
3. Where it is proposed that new development incorporates bus routes, the placemaking function of the street must be optimised, allowing for public transport connectivity but without vehicles dominating the street environment.

Project GAPT(a): Park and Ride

1. The Town Council will work closely with the District and County Councils to deliver a high quality park and ride system for visitors of Thame. Extensive research would need to be undertaken in order to determine the most suitable location for a Park and Ride site, and its design would need to be sensitive to its surrounding, for example by incorporating landscape buffers.
2. This will form part of the town-wide package of sustainable travel measures designed to increase accessibility for all and to relieve traffic and parking pressures on Thame town centre. In addition, all bus stops across Thame should also be upgraded, to provide shelter and digital information. The Town Council will also support funding initiatives that support Community Transport services.

Mobility hubs and EVs

- 8.29 SODC Local Plan Policy TRANS5 supports the use of electric and/or low emission vehicles through the provision of appropriate supporting infrastructure.
- 8.30 Technological solutions associated with mobility are evolving at a rapid pace. With the District Council declaring a climate emergency in April 2019, it is important that new development embraces new ideas that provide wider choice and opportunity for people to access a range of greener transport options.
- 8.31 All new homes should be supplied with super-fast charging points, reflecting guidance from the Institute of Air Quality management and as consulted upon by the Government in proposed changes to Building Regulations.
- 8.32 The House of Commons cross-party Science and Technology Select Committee reported⁶⁴ that, if the UK is to meet climate change targets, then transport solutions are required. It reports that ‘in the long-term, widespread personal vehicle ownership does not appear to be compatible with significant decarbonisation’. Improvements in public transport, walking and cycling are supported.
- 8.33 It is recognised that people in Thame will continue to own cars, and that they will continue to be used for some journeys. The provision of new technology and mobility solutions is though intended to provide wider choice and opportunity for all, reducing reliance on private car ownership and use, contributing to an improved environment.
- 8.34 In Thame, support will be given to projects and proposals that embed new technologies, providing a wider range of choice and opportunity for all. Such technology should be designed such that it does not cause obstruction within the public realm (e.g.: e-vehicle charging points and cables placed on the footway which impede pedestrian movement).
- 8.35 The concept of Mobility Hubs is supported in Thame. Mobility hubs are highly visible, safe and accessible spaces where public, shared and active travel modes are co-located alongside improvements to the public realm and, where relevant, enhanced community facilities. The redesign and reallocation of space from the private car is intended to enhance the experience of travellers as well as benefiting local residents and businesses. The concept of the Mobility Hub has been applied to the streetscape in many European and North American cities and is now being replicated in the UK.
- 8.36 These hubs also have the potential, and are encouraged by the Town Council, to be combined with or located near to facilities where residents are able to share goods and equipment used for home maintenance, or which can act as a central point for home deliveries. This adds another dimension to the mobility hub concept, meaning

⁶⁴ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/news-parliament-2017/clean-growth-report-published-17-19/>

they not only serve as useful transport hubs, but also function as a community hub/kiosk. They would represent a socially inclusive space which brings cohesion to the community.

- Hubs providing a range of transport solutions including car share, EV charging points, bike and scooter hire, providing alternatives to the car for short journeys. Could incorporate Park and Ride at appropriate locations.
- Located around Thame at key destinations, such as the town centre, employment areas and community facilities.
- Potentially combined with bus stops and 'community kiosks', providing a point for collection of goods and sharing of equipment used for home maintenance.



Figure 17: Conceptual map displaying potential broad locations for Mobility Hubs across Thame

8.37 CoMoUK are one of the leading organisations pushing for the UK's transition towards integrated mobility solutions designed for the public good and are supporting the implementation of mobility hubs in the UK. They have produced a Mobility Hub Guidance⁶⁵ document which provides an outline of the potential component for mobility hubs in different contexts, case studies from across Europe and advice on implementation. It is recommended that if any Mobility Hubs were to come forward, they must follow this best practice guidance.

8.38 CoMoUK suggest there are three key characteristics of a successful mobility hub:

- Co-location of public and shared mobility modes.
- The redesign of space to reduce private car space and improve the surrounding public realm.
- A pillar or sign which identifies the space as mobility hub which is part of a wider network and ideally provides digital travel information.

⁶⁵ <https://como.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Mobility-Hub-Guide-241019-final.pdf>

- 8.39 This plan actively supports improvements to micro and personal mobility and any other solutions which contribute towards changing transport patterns and technologies, these include introducing shared vehicles hire, hire bikes and scooters, and electric vehicle charging points. Where mobility is provided as service, these should be located within a convenient walk of the home and main destination (such as the town centre, railway station and places of work), encouraging their use, and creating an integrated transport system. However, in order for the shift towards micro and personal mobility to be successful the delivery of new mobility solutions should go hand in hand with the provision of new infrastructure such as bike lanes.

Policy GAM1: Mobility Hubs and EVs

1. Development which incorporates and helps deliver a network of mobility hubs across Thame will be supported.
2. Proposals for mobility hubs in the Neighbourhood area will be supported where they incorporate some or all of the following elements:
 - a) Docking points for bikes and e-scooter hire.
 - b) Secure cycle parking facilities for residents, employees and visitors.
 - c) EV charging points for cars, personal and micro-mobility transport solutions.
 - d) Provide 'community kiosks'.
3. Where proposed, such infrastructure should be located sensitively to ensure that there are no harmful impacts upon pedestrian circulation or the immediate appearance of the street scene and wider townscape, by way of visual clutter, hindrance or hazard.
4. Wherever possible, public EV charging infrastructure, such as cabling, should be provided in such a way that it can be expanded in the future to provide additional charging points and be upgraded to incorporate faster charging technology.
5. Mobility Hubs should be located around Thame at key destinations such as the Town Centre, employment areas and community facilities, and should wherever possible be combined with transport nodes such as bus stops.

Wayfinding

- 8.40 To support initiatives to increase walking and cycling across Thame, both by residents and visitors, delivery of a town-wide wayfinding strategy is supported, and which would help people navigate through the town and the wider area.
- 8.41 The wayfinding strategy would comprise provision of new signage around the town, sensitively designed to reflect the character of the area and reduce visual intrusion and obstruction. These should be of a consistent design to help legibility, but avoid use of excessive illumination.
- 8.42 In addition to maps and directional information, wayfinding information could also be expressed in terms of 'minutes to destination' but foot and by bike, as well as 'calories used', which could encourage people to walk or cycle and supporting wider health initiatives.
- 8.43 Wayfinding should direct people to key locations and facilities, including the town centre, community facilities and walks around the town, connecting with green spaces, schools and the surrounding countryside.

Project GAPW(a): Wayfinding

1. When places are legible and well signposted they are easier to navigate, function better and more pleasant to spend time in.
2. Opportunities to implement a wayfinding strategy across Thame will be explored, working with partner organisations as appropriate to devise a clear and concise strategy.
3. New signage should be consistent in design, reflect local character and identity, and be visible for all street uses. Support will be given for innovative wayfinding strategies that encourage active travel.

Town Centre parking

- 8.44 Consultation undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan indicated that whilst the Town centre is a vibrant place that supports a range of services and activities for residents and visitors alike, the quality and enjoyment of the centre is somewhat undermined by the presence of extensive areas of parking along the historic High Street.
- 8.45 A parking survey undertaken by the Thame Town Centre Working Group in 2016⁶⁶ found that there are 952 car parking spaces in the Town Centre, reducing to 836 spaces on market day. A review of car park utilisation is presented in the report and indicates there to be surplus capacity across the Town Centre, including market days (although the surplus is reduced on those days).
- 8.46 Whilst parking is needed in the Town Centre so that it can retain its role as a market town, particularly for those who live in surrounding villages, the potential may exist to review the quantum and provision of parking in the town centre, rationalising the amount of space used for parking and making more effective use of land. This would allow for the introduction of new areas of landscaping and green space in the town centre, making this a more attractive place for people to spend time in.
- 8.47 However, any parking interventions need to go hand in hand with town wide strategies that support active and sustainable travel measures, such that these become safe, easy and attractive to use. This means more direct walking and cycling routes to the centre, as well as initiatives that support micro-mobility solutions and park and ride.

Policy GATCP1: Town centre parking

1. Development proposals that reconfigure parking provision and the layout of spaces will be supported, subject to evidence of use, which complement initiatives to improve the experience of the town centre.
2. Proposals for the rationalisation or reconfiguration of car parking should be associated with proposals that support active travel measures (non-car modes of travel) across Thame, including new and improved walking and cycling connections to the town centre.
3. Proposals that involve the loss of on-street parking within the town centre will be supported where adequate alternative provision is shown to be available within the existing car parks, and where the space lost is replaced with public realm improvements, including landscaping, walking and cycling provision, as well as catering for the transport needs of those who use a mobility aid, including public transport services.

⁶⁶ Town Centre Working Group, July 2016, Final Report, Thame Town Centre: Car Parking Survey & the Impact of Future Population Growth over the Next Decade

9. Projects and Next Steps

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 9.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge levied on development which is payable to the local authority and is intended to be spent on infrastructure projects across the South Oxfordshire District Council administrative area that help address the demands placed on it resulting from growth. This might include, for example, spending on new transport infrastructure, health and educational facilities, open spaces and sports facilities.
- 9.2 A portion of CIL is payable to Thame Town Council for spending on local projects in the Neighbourhood Plan area. When the Neighbourhood Plan is made the Town Council will receive 25% of all CIL monies paid to South Oxfordshire District Council in respect of qualifying development within the Neighbourhood Plan area. In regard to what this money can be spent on, advice suggests⁶⁷:
- “The neighbourhood portion of CIL can be used for a wider range of planning issues than infrastructure as long as they are concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.”*
- 9.3 The South Oxfordshire District Council CIL Charging Schedule was approved in February 2016 and took effect on 1 April 2016. All applications for development that are above the necessary thresholds will be subject to this charging schedule, or any subsequent updates to it. Payment is linked to an instalments policy, related to the scale and commencement of development. From December 2020, CIL Charging Authorities have to publish Annual Infrastructure Funding Statements which will set out the infrastructure projects or types of infrastructure which the District Council intends to wholly or partly fund by CIL.
- 9.4 Through work on the Neighbourhood Plan a series of projects have been identified which the Town Council suggest might be appropriate to direct the neighbourhood portion of CIL towards. These are referred to through the Neighbourhood Plan. These projects will be kept under review by the Town Council.
- 9.5 The payment of CIL should also be read alongside the South Oxfordshire Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document, providing guidance on how CIL works alongside Section 106 and Section 278 agreements.

⁶⁷ My Community / Locality, 2017, Community Infrastructure Levy; Neighbourhood Planning toolkit

Next Steps

- 9.6 This is the draft version of the revised Neighbourhood Plan for Thame. It will be subject to a period of formal consultation lasting for six-weeks (known as ‘Regulation 14’ consultation) and any necessary amendment made following review of feedback before it is submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council who will start the ‘examination process’.
- 9.7 The District Council will formally consult on the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan and appoint an independent examiner to review the Plan and any comments made in response to it. Following this, the examiner will issue a report to the local authority advising whether:
- The Plan should proceed to referendum.
 - The Plan should proceed to referendum subject to modification.
 - The Plan should not proceed to referendum.
- 9.8 For the examiner to advise that the Plan proceed to referendum it will need to be demonstrated that the Plan meets what are called the ‘Basic Conditions’. These include showing that the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic objectives of the Local Development Plan (i.e.: the South Oxfordshire Local Plan).
- 9.9 The District Council will organise the referendum. All people of voting age in the Parish are eligible to vote on whether the Plan should be brought into force (‘made’) or not. If more than 50% of all people who turnout vote in favour of making the Plan, then it will become part of the suite of planning policies used by the District Council to help shape and determine planning applications in Thame.

Reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan

- 9.10 Notwithstanding the defined period of the Neighbourhood Plan to 2035, it is recognised that, with further changes to and review of the Local Plan and national guidance likely, the Neighbourhood Plan will need to be reviewed periodically. This will enable the Neighbourhood Plan to remain ‘current’ and in conformity with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework. Following the making of the first Neighbourhood Plan the Town Council established a ‘Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee’. The Committee will continue to meet on a regular basis and review both development proposals and project delivery against the policies and aspirations established within TNP2.

Appendix 1: Character Area Assessment

TNP2 is supported by a Character Area Assessment which is presented as a free-standing appendix to the Plan. All applicants for development are required to refer to this and demonstrate how proposals respond to the qualities identified.

Appendix 2: Waste and Bin Storage

With modern requirements for waste separation and recycling, the number and size of household bins has increased. This poses a design challenge in relation to the aesthetics of the property and overall street scene if bins are left without a design solution.

Evidence suggests that finding a suitable space for domestic waste and recycling storage is a common problem for many households. Whereas there may be limited opportunity for addressing this issue for existing houses, in the case of new build there is scope to design to accommodate bin storage and collection from the outset. Successful design brings benefits both in terms of reducing visual impacts but also of improving convenience for the people living in new homes.

Some guidelines for future development are:

- When dealing with waste storage and servicing arrangements site conditions should be taken into account. In some examples waste management should be from the front of buildings, and in some others from the rear.
- It is recommended that bins are located away from areas used as amenity spaces. Development should be placed within easy access from the street and wherever possible open on the pavement side to ease retrieval
- Development that provide enclosures for bin storage should be combined with cycle storage and provide green roofs.
- A range of hard and soft landscaping treatments such as hedges, trees, flower beds, low walls, and high quality paving materials could be used to minimise the visual impact of bins and recycling containers.
- Bins should be placed as close to the dwelling's boundary to the public highway, such as against wall, fence, hedge but not in a way as to obstruct the shared surface pedestrian and vehicle movements.
- The materials palette should be referred in order to select suitable materials for enclosures.

Appendix 3: Proposed Circular Walking Routes

The maps presented below display the two circular walking routes proposed by the Thame Green Living Plan group. The maps, along with further information about the routes, can be accessed via the Thame Town Council Website at <https://www.thametowncouncil.gov.uk/visit-thame/town-trails/>

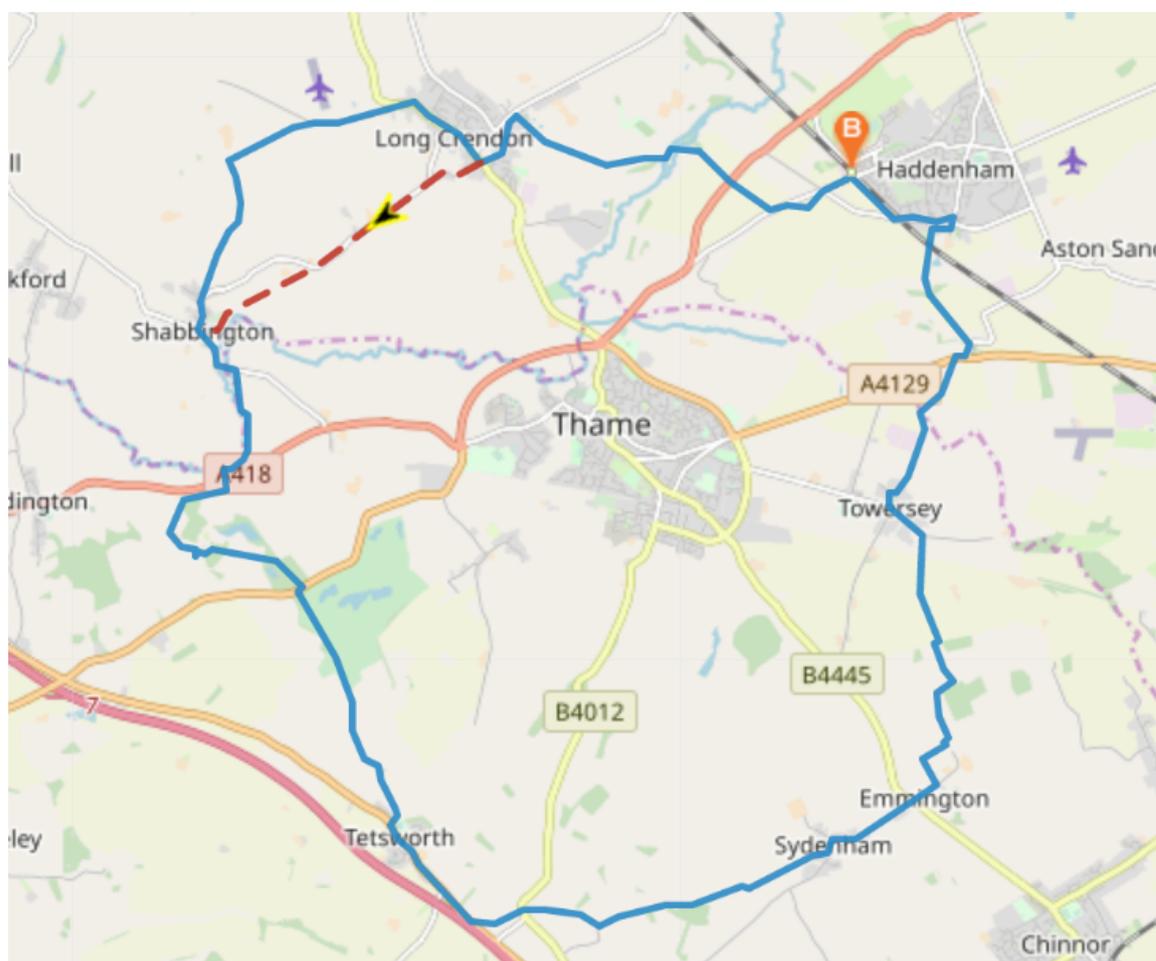


Figure 20. Thame Outer Circuit Route (Source: Thame Town Council)

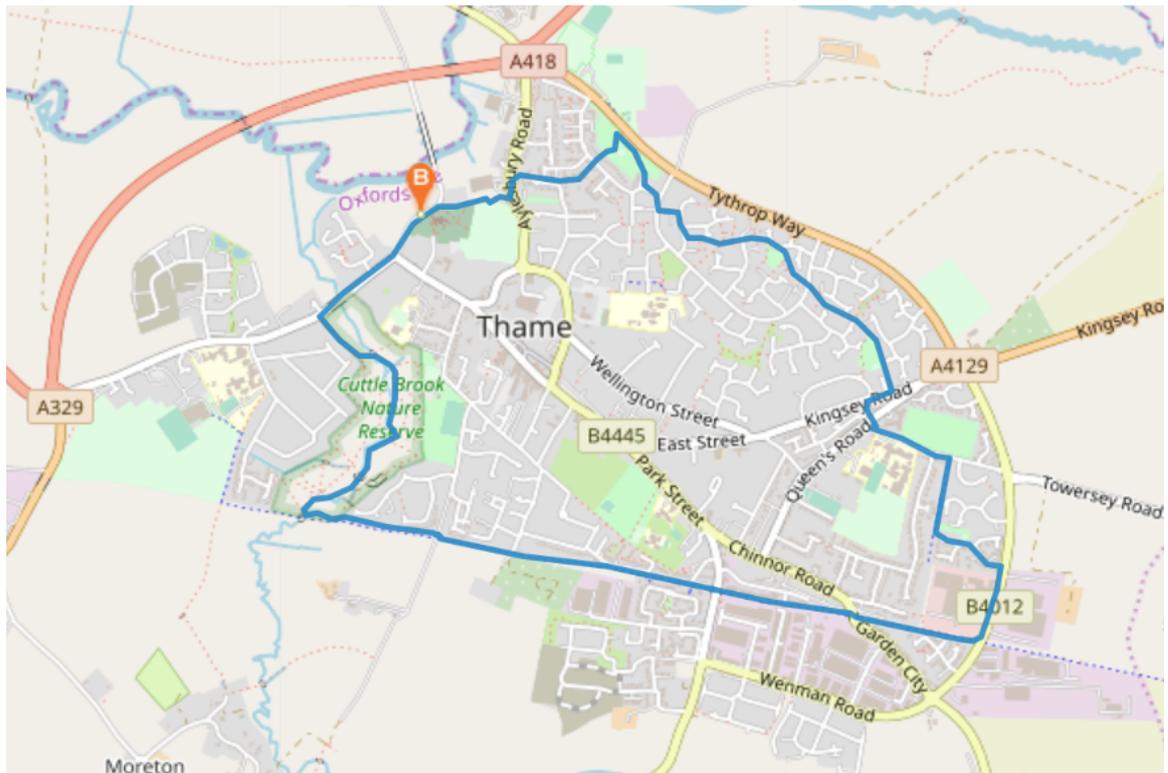


Figure 21. Thame Inner Circuit Route (Source: Thame Town Council)

Glossary of Terms

Adoption – The final confirmation of a development plan by a local planning authority.

Affordable housing – Housing for sale or rent, or for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers), and which may comprise one or more of the following: (a) affordable housing for rent; (b) starter homes; (c) discounted market sales housing; or (d) other affordable routes to home ownership (e.g.: shared ownership and rent to buy etc). A full definition is available in the NPPF (2021).

Brownfield Site – see Previously Developed Land (PDL).

Conservation Area - An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is preserved by local planning policies and guidance.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) - is the Government department with responsibility for planning, housing, urban regeneration and local government. Previously known as the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Development Plan - Includes the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan and any future adopted Local Plan which may replace it, and Neighbourhood Development Plans which are used to determine planning applications.

Evidence base - The background information that any Development Plan Document is based on and is made up of studies on specific issues, such as housing need for example.

Greenfield site - Land where there has been no previous development, often in agricultural use

Green-space - Those parts of an area which are occupied by natural open space, parkland, woodland, sports fields, gardens, allotments and the like.

Heritage Asset – A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated assets (e.g.: listed buildings) and assets identified by the local planning authority, which may include a local list of assets.

Housing Associations / Registered Social Landlords / Registered Providers – Not-for-profit organisations providing homes mainly to those in housing need

Independent Examination - An assessment of a proposed Neighbourhood Plan carried out by an independent person to consider whether a Neighbourhood Development Plan conforms with the relevant legal requirements.

Infill Development - Small scale development filling a gap within an otherwise built up frontage.

Infrastructure - Basic services necessary for development to take place, for example, roads, electricity, sewerage, water, education and health facilities.

Listed Building - Building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II or II*, with grade I being the highest. Listing includes the interior as well as the exterior of the building.

Local Plan - The Plan for future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority. This forms part of the Development Plan.

Local Planning Authority (LPA) - Local government body responsible for formulating planning policies and controlling development; a district council, metropolitan council, county council, a unitary authority or national park authority. For Thame this is South Oxfordshire District Council.

Made - Terminology used in neighbourhood planning to indicate a Plan has been adopted.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - Sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The current version of the NPPF was published in July 2021.

Neighbourhood Development Plan - A development plan prepared by a Parish Council for a particular Neighbourhood Area, which includes land use topics. Once made this forms part of the Development Plan.

Outline Application - A general application for planning permission to establish that a development is acceptable in principle, subject to subsequent approval of detailed matters. Does not apply to changes of use.

Passivhaus development - Passivhaus is the world's leading fabric first approach to low energy buildings. The core focus of the Passivhaus standard is to dramatically reduce the requirements for space heating and cooling, whilst also creating excellent indoor air quality and comfort levels. See <http://www.passivhaus.org.uk> for more information.

Permitted Development - Comprises certain categories of minor development as specified in the General Permitted Development Order, which can be carried out without having first to obtain specific planning permission.

Planning Permission - Formal approval granted by a council (e.g. South Oxfordshire District Council) in allowing a proposed development to proceed.

Previously Developed Land (PDL) - Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

Public Open Space - Open space to which the public has free access and which fulfils, or can fulfil, a recreational or non-recreational role (for example, amenity, ecological, educational, social or cultural uses).

Public Realm – Those parts of a city, town or village, whether publicly or privately owned, which are available for everyone to use. This includes streets, square and parks.

Public Right of Way (PRoW) – Paths on which the public has a legally protected right to pass and re-pass.

Registered Social Landlords (RSL) – See Housing Associations

Section 106 Agreement – Planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, secured by a local planning authority through negotiations with a developer to offset the public cost of permitting a development proposal.

Settlement Development Limits Boundary – Settlement or development boundaries (village envelopes) seek to set clear limits to towns and villages. They are designed to define the existing settlement and to identify areas of land where development may be acceptable in principle, subject to other policies and material planning considerations.

Soundness – The soundness of a statutory local planning document is determined by the planning inspector against three criteria: whether the plan is justified (founded on robust and credible evidence and be the most appropriate strategy), whether the plan is effective (deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored), and whether it is consistent with national and local planning policy.

Stakeholder – People who have an interest in an organisation or process including residents, business owners and national organisations and government departments

Sustainable Development – An approach to development that aims to allow economic growth without damaging the environment or natural resources. Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Sustainability Appraisal – An appraisal of the economic, environment and social effects of a Plan to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) – Sustainable drainage systems slow the rate of surface water run-off and improve infiltration, by mimicking natural drainage in both rural and urban areas. This reduces the risk of “flash-flooding” which occurs when rainwater rapidly flows into the public sewerage and drainage systems

Urban Design – The art of making places. It involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, to create successful development.

Use Classes Order – The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) regulations 2020 puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as ‘Use Classes’. These regulations came into force on 1st September 2020 and effectively nullify the former use class definitions used within the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

It is generally the case that you will need planning permission to change from one use class to another, although there are exceptions where the legislation does allow some changes between uses. It should be noted that the recent regulation changes led to former Use Class A (shops, financial and professional services and food and drink establishments) becoming part of the new Use Class E.

B2 use class: Refers to general industry

B8 use class: Refers to storage and distribution

C1, 2, 2A, 3, 4 use class: Refers to hotels and residential institutions, secure residential institutions, dwellings and House in Multiple Occupations (HMOs)

E use class: Refers to shops, restaurants, financial and professional services, indoor sport, recreation or fitness (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms, health or medical services, creche, nursery or day centre principally to visiting members of the public, an office, research and development, or any industrial process that can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to amenity.

Acknowledgements

Insert Text

Thame Town Council

Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP2), 2020-2035

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