

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (TNP2)

CONSULTATION STATEMENT

FEBRUARY 2024

VOLUME 1: OVERVIEW



THAME
Town Council

Thame Town Council
Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP2)
Consultation Statement: February 2024
Volume 1: Overview



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document comprises Volume 1 of the Consultation Statement prepared in support of and submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council for the examination of the review of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP2).
- 1.2 This Volume acts as an introduction to the Consultation Statement which is then presented across the following documents:
- Volume 2a: This presents a summary of the consultation undertaken on the vision and objectives for TNP2, as well as sites identified as potential allocations for inclusion in TNP2. This consultation took place in Summer 2021.
 - Volume 2b: This presents a summary of the consultation undertaken on the Character Area study. Consultation on the Character Area study took place in Summer 2021 as part of the wider consultation on the vision, objectives and potential allocations.
 - Volume 3a: This presents a summary of the consultation undertaken on a wider selection of sites for potential allocation in TNP2 as well as emerging policy ideas. This consultation took place between December 2021 and February 2022.
 - Volume 3b: This is a supplement to Volume 3a and presents a summary of headline messages and next steps arising from the consultation on possible site allocations.
 - Volume 4: This presents a summary of the consultation undertaken at the Regulation 14 stage of the plan-making process and which took place between June and August 2023.

2. Background

- 2.1 The process of preparing TNP2 does not sit in isolation but forms part of the wider journey undertaken since Thame was originally designated for plan-making purposes in April 2012.
- 2.2 The first Neighbourhood Plan (TNP1) was subject to extensive consultation with the messages from that forming the basis of work on TNP2.
- 2.3 Work on TNP1 commenced ahead of designation in 2011, with a series of open events held at the Town Hall in 2011 and attended by more than 800 people. Following from this a set of working groups were established to investigate different themes. The groups included local residents and volunteers. Alongside these a series of meetings were held with various stakeholders, interest groups and service providers. This led to

production of a 'preferred options report' delivered to all households and inviting responses. The outcomes of this were used to prepare the draft of TNP1 that was subject to Regulation 14 consultation between August and September 2012.

- 2.4 The Examiner's Report of TNP1 stated that it has 'undergone an exemplary public consultation process and set out a clear and deliverable vision for the Neighbourhood area'. TNP1 was subject to referendum in May 2013, with 76% of all people who voted expressing support for it.

3. Reviewing TNP1

- 3.1 A Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee was established by Thame Town Council and met for the first time in October 2015. Other than through the period of lockdown associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, the Committee has met on a regular basis and continues to do so. All agendas and minutes are available on the Town Council website. All meetings are open to the public, with an opportunity for questions from the public to be heard and discussed at the meetings.
- 3.2 One of the key actions emerging from TNP1 was the production of the Thame Green Living Plan (TGLP). 'The Green Living' was established in 2014 by local volunteers who led production of the TGLP with the support of the Town Council. TGLP establishes a set of objectives and actions that are intended to help shape a 'greener' future. It is the first such community-led plan to have been adopted in the country. It was informed by a series of consultation events, including consultation on a draft in 2018, and was published in July 2020.
- 3.3 The TGLP has been reviewed as part of work associated with production of TNP2 and key recommendations from this embedded in TNP2 as appropriate. Meetings were held with representatives of TGLP in developing TNP2.
- 3.4 TNP2 thus benefits from and is informed by consultation that took place as part of both TNP1 and the TGLP.
- 3.5 In 2018, and in light of a new Local Plan being prepared by SODC, the Committee agreed to commence a review of TNP1. Neighbouring parishes were contacted to invite them to declare any matters of concern that might require attention in the review of TNP1. Meetings were held in January and February of 2019.
- 3.6 A 'Call for Sites' was then launched by the Town Council in March 2019 in the knowledge that the new SODC Local Plan would be requiring sites to be identified and allocated in an update of TNP1 to meet the housing requirements for Thame. Work on assessing the sites and commencing the formal review of TNP2 was delayed until 2021 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Overview of consultation on TNP2

4.1 Throughout the preparation of TNP2 the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (the Continuity Committee) sought to ensure that local residents, their representatives, local businesses, interest groups and wider interested parties, including statutory and regulatory bodies, were actively consulted and their views sought. Various communication channels were used to keep residents informed, invite participation and share views. These included:

- Regular updates on the Neighbourhood Planning page of the Thame Town Council website, including links to all reports and consultation material.
- Regular meetings of the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee, with the agendas and minutes available for all to access via the Neighbourhood Planning page of the Thame Town Council website. All meetings were open to the public.
- Reporting on progress of the Neighbourhood Plan to Full Council and Annual Meeting of the Town Council. As above, all meetings were open to the public and minutes available to view on the Town Council website.
- Updates posted on social media channels and in the weekly newsletter prepared by the Town Council available on the Town Council website but also sent direct to subscribers.
- Direct mailshots to those who had registered for updates on the Neighbourhood Plan to advise on upcoming consultation events.
- Displaying of banners and posters around Thame leading up to and during consultation to help raise awareness of events and opportunities for people to respond.
- Creation of videos alongside the consultation events to help communicate the status of the Plan, how it has evolved, and how people could respond to the consultation. These were made available via the Town Council website and accompanied by a series of FAQs.

4.2 In addition to the above there has been regular communication with SODC throughout the process as well as dialogue with site promoters, agents and applicants bringing forward sites and development proposals in Thame.

‘Consultation 1’

- 4.3 This consultation took place in Summer 2021 and explored people’s views on potential sites to be allocated for development and the vision and objectives for Thame, as well as their views on the character of the area within which they live: what they considered to be positive features and qualities of the area, and what concerns they had, if any, about the impact of new development. Over 500 individuals, businesses and organisations submitted comments in response to the consultation.
- 4.4 Responses to this consultation showed strong support for the vision and objectives established in TNP1 and for these to continue to be used and form the basis of TNP2. There was also broad support for and agreement to the character areas and qualities of these. In terms of possible development sites, the consultation responses indicating some support for smaller sites, but concern with the larger sites put forward and that there should be an opportunity for consideration to be given to a wider range of potential development sites.
- 4.5 More information on this round of consultation can be found in Volumes 2a and 2b of the Consultation Statement.

‘Consultation 2’

- 4.6 In response to the feedback from the first consultation a second round of consultation was undertaken and which presented a wider range of potential development sites for feedback. This consultation took place over Winter 2021 / 2022 and, in addition to exhibitions and drop-in events, meetings were held with site promoters. The consultation also presented a set of wider ideas for policies in TNP2. Around 900 comments were made in response to the consultation.
- 4.7 The feedback indicated preference for sites to be taken forward in TNP2 as well as broad support for wider ideas presented.
- 4.8 More information on this round of consultation can be found in Volumes 3a and 3b of the Consultation Statement.

‘Consultation 3’

- 4.9 The third round of consultation comprised the formal Regulation 14 period. This took place in Summer 2023. Exhibitions and drop-in events were held with material presented that summarised the policies in TNP2 and the sites proposed for allocation within it. Statutory consultees and others were contacted directly about the consultation and comments invited. Around 700 people were contacted directly about the consultation, with close to 200 comments received.
- 4.10 Broad support was expressed for many of the policies and ideas in TNP2, although concern was expressed in respect of some of the policies and sites work has been

undertaken to respond to these, with changes made as appropriate within the submission version.

- 4.11 More information on this round of consultation can be found in Volume 4 of the Consultation Statement.

5. Summary statement

- 5.1 Work on the TNP2 commenced in 2018 / 2019 with the decision by the Continuity Committee to launch a review of TNP1 and begin the Call for Sites process, although, because of Covid-19, work did not commence in full until 2021. A series of consultation events were held between 2021 and 2023, culminating in the submission version of TNP2. However, work on the Neighbourhood Plan commenced as far back as 2011 and is informed by that.
- 5.2 The Town Council has endeavoured to seek the views of the local community throughout the plan-making process, organising various engagement activities and surveys. Efforts have been made to keep people informed of progress through circulation of regular newsletters, posters and leaflets, and updates made to the Town Council website and through social-media channels. Around 1,600 comments were received to TNP2 through the consultation process.
- 5.3 The Plan seeks to reflect the key messages raised through the consultation process and, so far as they are neighbourhood level matters, seeks to put in place policies (and projects) that respond to these.

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