



## FAQs Community & Youth Centre – Project Link

**How to use this document:** The frequently asked questions have been separated into categories – you can click on a box below to go to that category, or you can scroll down to see the Contents table which lists all the questions within each category (you can click on a question to go directly to it).

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## Finances

### *What is a Public Works Loan?*

The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) is a lending facility that provides loans to local authorities from the National Loans Fund. The PWLB's lending is mainly for capital projects.

### *What loan amount was applied for?*

The Town Council applied for a public works loan of up to £3,019,000. A loan of this amount required evidence of public support as part of the loan application, as well as evidence of need, a business case and budget forecast. A consultation was held in December 2024 which showed 82% of responses from OX9 postcodes to be in favour of the loan application. In January 2026, the [loan application was approved](#).

### *What will be the impact of the Public Works Loan on residents' council tax?*

To cover the loan repayments, residents' council tax will increase by a maximum of £35/year from 2027/28, on the basis the project proceeds in 2026. Please note this does not cover any increase to council tax arising from other town council projects or services. The amount may be less depending on amount raised through fundraising. This will be communicated to residents.

### *How long is the Public Works Loan term?*

49.5 years.

### *What will happen if building costs rise?*

The project will only progress if it can be delivered within a budget that can be afforded with the investment from TTC, developer money, the public works loan and fundraising. If costs exceed this it will have to be value engineered or stopped.

### *How will VAT work?*

Advice was taken from DCK Accountants, who have many years' experience in local authority and with similar projects. In both of the following options, VAT can be reclaimed during the build phase:

- The council runs the building and charges VAT on the hire rates.
- A CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) is created to run the building, so that VAT is not charged to hirers.

The council is exploring both options at present.

### *How will this project affect TTC's finances for other projects / emergencies?*

The budget for this project allows for the council to retain some investments for emergencies or future projects. Regarding flooding, the funds for flood defences and drain cleaning currently sit with the District and County Councils. The Town Council is reviewing its emergency plans to support the community, and this project will not affect those plans.

### *Where will the money come from to cover the losses predicted in the first year?*

The losses in the first year will come from TTC investments, this will then be repaid from future surpluses.



## *What will happen if running costs cannot be covered?*

The [Business Case](#) has determined this risk to be low. The building should cover its own costs and fundraise from a variety of sources. Evidence so far suggests there is sufficient demand for venue space from existing groups and a growing population in Thame and surrounding areas. As with any council-owned building, the council may need to provide financial support in the future. A budget forecast was included with the loan application.

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## **Need for the Building**

### *Why does Thame need a new Community & Youth Centre?*

- Thame has growing youth and elderly populations – as do local villages which Thame is service centre for.
- Thame’s amenities are not keeping pace with growth, or towns of a similar size – Thame is also one of the only towns in Oxfordshire that does not have a dedicated community centre or tailored spaces for its youth.
- For over a decade, residents have been calling for a community centre in Thame.
- Our youth desperately need a facility where they feel safe, can come together, obtain advice and support from youth workers and volunteers, learn new skills, interact, and be active.
- Our senior residents tell us they want more community & intergenerational engagement and interaction.
- The Centre’s facilities will help improve mental health, increase physical activity, encourage human interaction, and promote outdoor activity and wellbeing.
- It is included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

### *Why is a 200-capacity venue being proposed?*

The design of the building came about due to earlier surveys including the one carried out by LEAP Design Consultants in 2017. This included responses from 41 clubs and businesses that were in support of the community facility. For over 10 years, requests from the community and evidence gathered has demonstrated a need for a 200-capacity venue, whilst also creating a specific youth space. A flexibly designed space will enable greater income generation and accommodate large and small meetings.

### *What is the evidence for the building?*

The [Needs Assessment](#) and [Business Case](#) give greater detail around the needs of the building.

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## Justification for the site

### *Were other sites considered?*

Yes. A feasibility study was conducted in 2021 which considered the following sites: Southern Road Recreation Ground, Cattle Market, Town Hall, Elms Park, Queen Elizabeth Circle and Land off Moorend Lane. Numerous other sites had been appraised and discounted prior to the feasibility study mainly due to being privately owned or leased and as such TTC have insufficient leeway regarding their development.

### *Why was Southern Road chosen?*

There are many reasons:

- Located in the centre of youth culture in Thame
- The only site that can utilise developer funding (in the region of £370,000) for community facilities within the allocated timeframe (2026-2030).
- There is site-specific development funding available in the region of £235,000, which must be spent on this site and by 2028.
- Existing facilities on site that can be utilised and/or improved to enhance the conservation area and general environment
- Space to provide access and parking
- Address the current anti-social behaviour on site through design and layout, working in partnership with Thames Valley Police who support the scheme.
- Provide much-needed public toilets, a kiosk and external seating for users of the recreation ground
- Proximity to open spaces and Cuttle Brook Nature Reserve

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## Consultations & Community Engagement

### *What consultations have been undertaken?*

The following consultations were undertaken between 2015 and 2025:

- Thame Cattle Market Action Group Consultation, 2015
- Thame Community Master Plan Consultation on a new Youth and Community Centre, November 2017, carried out by Leap Design Group.
- Thame Residents web-based feedback survey, April 2021. Thame Youth Projects.
- Young People's school survey, April 2021
- Acanthus Clews Feasibility Consultation, September 2021
- Planning Application ([P23/S0644/FUL](#)), 2023
- Organisations consultation survey July 2024. Cooperative People.
- School and Thame Youth Projects co-design workshops and discussions consistently through 2023-2025.

A public consultation regarding the Public Works Loan was held in December 2024. 82.6% of respondents from OX9 postcodes voted in favour of "the Town Council going ahead with the



Community and Youth Centre project if it includes a council tax precept increase of up to £35 a year (Band D) for loan repayments”.

### *Where can I find the results from public consultations?*

The [Evidence Needs Assessment](#) shows results from various consultations and engagement exercises between 2015 and 2024.

The [report to the Town Council meeting on 21 January 2025](#) summarises the results from the public works loan consultation.

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## **Sustainability & Planning**

### *What arrangements have been made for drainage?*

A sustainable drainage system (SuDS) has been developed as part of the proposals.

The main drain in Southern Road has been checked to ensure it can accommodate proposed drainage.

### *What level of sustainability will the building achieve?*

The building is rated ‘Very Good’ by [BREEAM standards](#). Our BREEAM consultants are [Blew Burton](#) who have been involved since the start of the project. The costs have been incorporated by the qualified quantity surveyor – [Greenwood Projects](#).

### *What arrangements have been made regarding the tree root protection zones?*

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment was commissioned and approved as part of the successful planning application.

### *What arrangements have been made for existing wildlife during construction?*

An Ecological Impact Assessment was commissioned and approved as part of the successful planning application.

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## **Operations**

### *How will the youth element within the building be run?*

Thame Youth Projects will manage the staff / volunteers for the youth element of the project. Thame Youth Projects currently employ one full time staff member with all other support from Volunteers. The aspiration will be to grow this service within the new facility for the youth. The opening hours for the youth element will be flexible working around school hours and the needs and resources available. Young people need a space to feel safe, where they can learn new skills, socialise and build relationships. The work will evolve to meet the needs of the young people.



## *Who will manage the day-to-day running of the building?*

A building manager will be recruited to manage the building; they will either report to the Council or the CIO depending on the governance model. HR / Finance support will be available from Council operations as required.

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## **Traffic**

### *Will there be another review of traffic on Southern Road?*

We will confirm what further surveys are required (if any) and establish what additional costs there would be if we were to commission another survey separately.

### *How will the 20mph speed limit and parking restrictions be enforced on Southern Road?*

These will continue to be under the control of the police and Oxfordshire County Council.

### *What will be done about traffic calming measures on Southern Road?*

We have already begun conversations with OCC Highways about what can be done to improve the traffic calming.

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## **Play Area**

### *What will happen to the existing play area?*

The play area will be relocated to enable a new car park to go where the current play area is. Some equipment may be re-used, whilst others will be replaced.

### *How will the relocation of the play area be funded?*

Elements of the relocation are included within the project, there is also contingency within the budget, however the exact cost is subject to the tender exercise which will confirm the total cost and viability of the whole project. There is CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) and grant funding available which should cover the remaining cost.

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## **Changing Rooms**

### *What will happen to the existing changing rooms?*

They will be demolished and the design includes for them to be rebuilt. At this point we will not fit them out. We are in discussions with Sport England about the need for fitted out Changing Rooms given current low demand, cost to fit out, and we feel the space would be of greater community benefit if it was left as meeting rooms, venues or storage with a small area maintained for changing facilities if required.



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