

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 topics within each category (you can click on a topic to go directly to it).

 Finances	 Need for the Building	 Location
 Consultations & Community Engagement	 Sustainability & Planning	 Operations
 Traffic & Parking	 Play Area	 Scout Building
 Changing Rooms <small>(external weblink)</small>	 Lime Tree <small>(external weblink)</small>	 Got a question not listed? <u>Email us</u>



Have you visited the [dedicated Project Link webpage](#) on the Town Council’s website? This is the best place to find latest project updates, plans and documents.

➔ thametowncouncil.gov.uk/communityandyouthcentre



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Finances

Funding & Budgeting

Building & Construction Figures

The total project cost is estimated to be £4.5m of which around £3.6m is for the construction. A budget is included for the kitchen fit out. The costs are in line with similar, recent projects of this scale in Didcot and near Reading.

Funding

The project will be funded by Public Works Loan, Developer S106 funds, Fundraising and Grants and Thame Town Council Investment. The S106 funds (£779,246) must be used on a community facility and must be used at Southern Road Recreation Ground.



Building Cost Increases

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. The household contribution is capped at £35 per year for Band D properties

Contingency

In the latest cost plan, there is a contingency of 9% of the project cost.

Quantity Surveyor

An independent quantity surveyor (QS) (Greenwood Projects) is working on the project.

Project Management

A Project Team, including the Clerk, is managing the project. Once the construction tender is awarded a professional project manager will support the project team. Stage payments will be managed with the contractor's QS and our QS before being signed off by the Clerk. Financial decisions beyond the Clerk's delegation are brought to a Full Council meeting for approval.

Impact on TTC's Finances

The budget for this project allows for the council to retain some investments for emergencies or future projects. The Town Council is reviewing its emergency plans to support the community, and this project will not affect those plans.

First Year Running Costs

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

Future Running Costs

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. Any money generated by the Centre, will stay in the Centre.

Construction Costs

Breakdown of Construction Costs	
Demolition	1%
Build of Community & Youth Centre	72%
Car Parking and Roadways	10%
Hard Landscaping	4%
Soft Landscaping	5%
Drainage	3%
External Services	2%
Inflation to mid point	4%
	100%

As we have not yet (February 2026) gone out to tender, the Quantity Surveyor's figures are commercially sensitive.



VAT

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.

Public Works Loan

Public Works Loan Board

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

Loan Amount

The Town Council applied for a public works loan of up to £3,019,000. The interest rate changes daily and is confirmed/applied at the point of drawdown. 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](#).

Council Tax Impact

To cover the loan repayments, residents' council tax will increase by a maximum of £35/year per band D Household (or £0.68 per week) 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.

The Precept, which is Thame Town Council's proportion of the Council Tax, is calculated separately to the proportion calculated for the other authorities (SODC, OCC and the Police) and is not restricted to a 5% increase. The precept is charged together within the full council tax bill.

For example, the Council Tax for a Band D household for the year in 2025 / 26 was split:

Thame Town Council Precept	£213.86	8.35%
SODC	£151.24	5.91%
OCC	£1,911.40	74.67%
Thames Valley Police	£283.28	11.07%
Total	£2,559.78	100%

£35 would be **0.02%** of the annual council tax bill for a Band D property in Thame.



The aim is to fundraise, as the more successful we are with our fundraising the more we will be able to reduce the £35.

Public Works Loan term

The term length is 49.5 years.

Evidence of public support

This will be a council owned building but community led and run; providing a safe space for the whole community to come together, it will regenerate the area of Southern Road to deliver a safe, inclusive centre of wellbeing for the whole Community.

The project is the result of many years of consultations including the consultation in 2024/25 when a leaflet was delivered to every home in Thame asking their opinion on the Council applying for a public works loan. In addition to the leaflet, this was publicised through social media. We received 499 responses – 88.8% of which were in favour of applying for the loan to deliver the community project.

The feedback from the Public Works Loan administration team was that this was a higher-than-average response for similar surveys.

There are various legal powers the Council has to provide a community centre, and the project also falls within the General Power of Competence - Localism Act 2011 s1-8.

Based on all of the above, the council feels that the increase of £35 per year, or **£2.92 per month** (per household living in a band D property) is reasonable to provide a facility which will be of value to the whole community for years to come.

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Need for the Building

Reasons

- Thame has growing youth and elderly populations – as do local villages which Thame is a 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.



Size

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.

Evidence

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

Impact

At 200-capacity, this new building will support a wide range of activities and events which other halls and venues are too small for. This will enhance, not take away from other venues in Thame. Whilst we do want to attract paying users, this building will provide an opportunity for the community to run events linked to other partner organisations.

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Location

Site Location

The building will be sited on the existing car park that serves the Scouts Building (the car park will be relocated and expanded). The [proposed site plan can be viewed on SODC's planning portal website here](#).

Other Options

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.

Site Justification

There are many reasons why Southern Road was chosen:

- 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

Consultations

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
- Public consultation / exhibition on draft designs/plans, November 2022
- 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”.

Consultation results

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

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.



Sustainability

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](#).

Tree Root Protection Zones

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

Existing Wildlife

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

Changes to the Approved Plans

The detailed specification has been developed in line with the approved planning documents. Minor alterations to windows are planned to give more natural light, as well as providing Air Source Heat Pumps to provide a low carbon heating system instead of Ground Source Heat Pumps.

Lighting

Full lighting design which considers ecology to Cuttle Brook so lighting will be directional lighting.

Neighbouring Amenity

Submitted acoustic results demonstrate the building has high acoustic absorption, and has been designed to accommodate concerts and performances whilst minimising the impact on residents. The design seeks to replace secluded areas associated with anti-social behaviour by locating activity and parking within visible, well-used spaces. Increased natural surveillance is expected to improve safety in the area.

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Operations

Uses

The building has been designed with flexible partitions within for future flexibility as well as current needs and use. There is a huge range of options:

- connectivity to combat loneliness
- wellbeing and wellness
- a safe space for young people to relax, take part in activities, and learn new skills
- support 1:1 conversations, when needed
- using the open space of the recreational ground and running track for activities
- use of music equipment, providing space for band practice
- expansion of the Red Kite Family Centre
- blood donation point



Youth

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 (Youth Worker) with all other support from Volunteers. The aspiration will be to grow the youth service within the new facility. 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, including those from deprived areas to improve their lives such as through providing computers in the centre for writing CVs and doing training. Evidence from other centres shows that the youth need to mix with the community and not be separated out.

Day-to-day Management

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

Weddings

We do not expect to license the building at this time,.

Access

The building has been designed to be fully inclusive and is all on one floor. The entrance and toilets are accessible.

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Traffic & Parking

Southern Road Traffic Review

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

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

The Transport Statement¹ determines that the current speed bumps located on Southern Road are sufficient. There have not been any Personal Injury Collisions on Southern Road in the 5-year period to 2021. It is determined that there will be no specific accident issues or blackspots as a result of the development.

Speed Limit and Parking Restrictions

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

¹ Available via [Planning Application P23/S0644/FUL on SODC's website](#) under 'Documents', then 'Supporting Documents'



Parking

The Transport Statement² includes details of a parking survey that showed there is spare capacity in existing car parks. The close proximity to the town centre allows for travel via public transport, cycle or foot. The development removes 26 spaces from the recreation ground but adds 40 new spaces including 3 disabled spaces and ducting for 4 EV charging spaces. This amounts to 14 additional spaces. The proposed number of spaces is considered appropriate in the report. There will be a total of 118 spaces within 200m of the centre and for very large events the recreation ground can be used for overflow parking as it is when the Town Fair is in the town centre.

Traffic

An assessment of traffic data/surveys has been interrogated, and the development proposals are considered to generate very modest vehicle movements during the morning and evening peak.

The transport statement concludes that the development is fully in accordance with local and national policy and that the impact of the development is not severe. Local Highways department has approved the proposals as part of the planning permission.

Traffic management plan to be submitted and approved for construction.

The development removes the road that currently splits the playground and playing fields that is a current safety issue.

Construction Hours and Deliveries

The safety of pedestrians at school drop-off/pick-up times will be considered as part of the construction traffic management plan to be submitted and approved by the local planning authority.

Construction Vehicles

The Construction Management Plan is to be developed.

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Play Area

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.

Play Area Relocation

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.

² Available via [Planning Application P23/S0644/FUL on SODC's website](#) under 'Documents', then 'Supporting Documents'



Sport England Playing Field

It is planned for the playing field to remain accessible during the build.

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Scout Building

Existing Scout Building

We are pleased that the Scout HQ has a full weekly timetable of activities with the scouts themselves using the facility at least 5 days a week. It would not fit the scope required for this project or the usage that we expect.

Construction Impact

Thame Town Council have undertaken numerous conversations with Scout leaders regarding the project. Keeping the Scout HQ open if possible and working around users will form part of the tender. This is a challenge which the appointed contractor will need to suggest solutions.

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[Changing Rooms](#) (external weblink)

[Lime Tree](#) (external weblink)

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