

BUSINESS CASE FOR THAME COMMUNITY & YOUTH & CENTRE

October 2024

1) Introduction

Thame Town Council (TTC) undertook a feasibility study in 2021 looking at the need for a youth and community space in Thame, which included a consultation exercise and spatial scoping.

TTC formed a Project Group which included Councillors, Council Officers and representatives of Thame Youth Projects with the aim to develop of a new multi-use community space on a Recreation Ground in Thame which would include youth space, community space and sports changing facilities.

The vision of the project was to provide a permanent space for young people and a large community space for use by the residents of Thame. Whilst providing a home for the Thame Youth Project Group.

Subsequently design work was commissioned and delivered by Clews Architects Ltd. Planning permission was secured in July 2023.

Co-operative Futures were commissioned to undertake further feasibility to prepare the business case for the project. This report was prepared by Alice Hemming, Co-operative Development Worker at Co-operative Futures.

2) Executive Summary & Recommendations

- **Capital Budget:** The total capital project is: **£4,394,000**. For the purpose of this costing exercise the fit out of the changing rooms is not included (which is a cost of £496,100). Negotiations are ongoing with Sport England, FA and SODC.
- **VAT Impact:** There is a current assumption that VAT will not be incurred on the capital project. However, further qualified advice should be obtained by TTC.
- **Loan finance is required:** It is not feasible to fund the capital project entirely from grant funding. Therefore, TTC would need to raise finance from the Government Public Works Loan Board. Depending on the Scenario chosen, the loan would be approximately between £1,569,000 and £3,019,000. TTC would be liable for repayments of between £92,910 and £178,771 per year. If the Council Tax precept is raised to cover this, it would entail an indicative raise of between 10 and 18%.

	Scenario 1 a/b: TTC only (Minimum investment from TTC)	Scenario 1 a/b: TTC only (£800K top-up investment from TTC)	Scenario 2 a/b: Partnership approach (Minimum investment from TTC)	Scenario 2 a/b: Partnership approach (Maximum investment from TTC)
NON-REPAYABLE FUNDING				
Thame Town Council investments	£300,000	£1,100,000	£300,000	£1,100,000
Other funding & donations	£1,075,000	£1,075,000	£1,725,000	£1,725,000
Total to be secured from non-repayable funding	£1,375,000	£2,175,000	£2,025,000	£2,825,000
FINANCE				
Remaining to be secured as Public Works Loan	£3,019,000	£2,219,000	£2,369,000	£1,569,000
Estimated annual loan repayments	£178,771	£131,400	£140,282	£92,910
Percentage increase on annual precept	17.7%			10%

- **There are several scenarios** for how the building could be managed, as described in this report the preferred option/s outlined in the table below are 1a subject to VAT advice or 2a if the VAT advice does not support 1a.
- **There is evidence of need but the picture is complex:** The consultation did identify potential users for the space, which would be sufficient to generate income from hire. However, there is a risk that opening a new centre may undermine the finances of other hire spaces in the Town.
- **Anchor tenants should be found:** As well as the “ad hoc hire”, some longer-term tenants should be found to rent the kiosk and potentially the space that could be repurposed from the changing rooms, thus providing more secure income.
- **The operation of the building is likely to break even or make a modest surplus:** Based on a third party management organisation running the building, it is projected to make a surplus of circa £62,707K annually.
- **Accommodating Thame Youth Project Group:** The need for TYPG to have a permanent space for free should be balanced with the need to generate a sustainable income and the space needs of the management organisation.
- **Balancing risk:** The risk of delays in developing the management capacity and securing fundraising might lead to increased costs. This should also be balanced with the need to pause any tender process until funds are secured.

Recommended Scenarios:

The following Scenarios are recommended in order of preference:

Scenario	Description	Pros	Cons
1a) TTC Build & Manage in house	TTC raise all capital funds and retain the building. Facilities management is done in-house.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gives TTC an opportunity to explore a coordinated management & occupation plan for other assets in Thame - Provide opportunity for economies of scale for management and potential for generating surpluses that could be used to repay the loan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highest finance liability of ~£3m - There may be an increased risk that VAT will be incurred.
2a) Partnership with existing organisation to become management organisation	TTC raises funds for shell build. Management organisation fundraise for fit-out cost alongside TTC capital fundraising. Building leased to an existing org,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - By splitting the capital budget through a partnership approach, it increases the ability to raise more funds through grants. - This in turn reduces the loan liability for TTC to ~£1.5-£2.3m - Working with an existing organisations rather than setting up a new one is easier to fund raise for and will need less capacity building & lead in time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TTC will lose some control over the management of the centre. - TTC will not get any surplus from the building operation directly to repay the loan but could charge a lease fee if this is viable for the management organisation.
2b) Partnership with newly formed organisation to become the management organisation	TTC raises funds for shell build. A new management organisation e.g. CIO, will raise funds for fit-out and take on lease and manage the centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting up a new organisation would mean that it could be established with the specific purpose of managing the building (as opposed to existing orgs which may have conflicting priorities). - Could bring a more community-led ethos to the centre - VAT is less likely to be incurred if the organisation is a charity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As above and... - Most grant funders won't accept new organisations and so it may delay accessing funding - Resources will be needed to set up a new organisation and currently no individuals have been identified to do this.

Scenario	Description	Pros	Cons
1b) TTC build and sub-contract management	TTC raise funds and retain the building. The facilities management is contracted to a professional company.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This would bring in a professional service and so might be easier than finding this capacity in TTC or charitable organisation as with the other scenarios. This may help it to get started quicker. There could be an option to transition into more community-led management over time. - VAT less likely to be incurred if the organisation is a charity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Depending on the cost of a service agreement it may reduce the surplus to TTC that could be used to repay the loan. - Depending on the ethos of the contractor it may be less responsive to community need. - There is an increased risk that VAT will be incurred.
Alternative Options			
Reduce the cost of the capital project	The design is subject to significant reductions in size and/or scope to bring the capital cost down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A less expensive project (ideally under £2m) will be significantly easier to fundraise for. - This in turn may reduce the size of the loan for TTC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A redesign will incur more costs. It would need to be assessed if increased design costs could be offset significantly through a reduction in the overall budget. This would also require a new planning application

3) Options appraisal

There are two main options for how TTC could bring forward the project. These choices have an impact on the funding and finance for the capital project and the on-going management of the centre.

3.1 Scenario 1 - Thame Town Council build & manage:

- TTC has full fundraising responsibility for the capital budget.
- TTC would maintain ownership of the completed building and have long-term financial liability for overheads and maintenance of the building.
- TTC could then either manage the centre in-house or via a management contract with a third party. Ad hoc hires would be managed either in-house or via the management contract and revenue may be passed on to TTC based on the service agreement (see below).
- TTC might also directly grant “licences to occupy” for “anchor” or longer-term tenants or concession spaces i.e. the kiosk provider. TTC would receive income from licence fees.
- This approach would give TTC the potential for uniform approach across the town including the 7 other buildings owned by the Council if current leases can be ended or renegotiated (i.e. the Town Hall, the Museum, Cricket Club, The Barns Centre, The Guide Headquarters, Scout Building & depot). This would provide economies of scale for management and licensing and opportunities to use more coordinated facilities management, booking systems and occupation management. This has the

potential to deliver costs savings for the centre. This would ease some of the pressure on volunteers and volunteer organisations in Thame.

- Due to Local Authorities being ineligible for many grant funds, this Scenario would rely on TTC taking out considerable loan finance. However, this option would also enable TTC to maintain any surplus generated which would support the repayment of finance (see Section 5 below for more detail on financing).

Scenario 1 - Management options:

Scenario 1a) In-house:

TTC would manage the building by extending the resourcing of existing facilities management. Depending on the current capacity this would include increasing the hours of existing staff or hiring new member/s of staff to manage the building including facilities management, marketing, administrative, cleaning and maintenance/care-taking roles.

Anchor tenant support: To create more of a community feel in the building, would be to work with an “anchor” tenant to support the management of the space in return for subsidised rent. [Makespace Oxford](#), who manage several community workspaces across Oxfordshire operate this model, whereby a regular tenant performs some basic duties such as locking/unlocking, ad hoc front of house or arranging refreshments for meeting bookings.

Scenario 1b) Management contract:

TTC could contract a third party to manage the building maintenance and its occupancy as a service agreement. TTC could make stipulations for how the centre is run as part of the contract. This is similar to how some local authority owned leisure centres are run. The management fee could either be a flat contract fee or a profit share agreement based on revenue from hires. This could either be a more professional management contractor or a community-based organisation, who has experience in this area.

A short-term lease with an organisation could also be considered but TTC would lose more control under this option compared with a management contract. Although a “profit-share” lease could be negotiated, it would be more usual under this kind of arrangement for the organisation leasing from TTC to keep any surplus generated through their operation of the space. However, TTC would ideally charge a lease fee which would enable them to cover their retained liability for long-term structural maintenance and repayments of finance.

It is recommended that TTC obtain several quotes from a professional facilities management contractor to compare costs and have scoping conversations with any appropriate local community-based organisations.

3.2 Scenario 2: Partnership Approach

This approach involves TTC working in partnership with a third-party organisation that this report will refer to as the “management organisation”.

- In this scenario, the capital budget is split into the core/shell build and the fit-out but would be tendered and completed in one contract.
- TTC has responsibility for fundraising for a portion of the capital budget i.e. the core/shell build. TTC retains freehold of the completed building.
- A long-term lease is provided to the “management organisation”. This would need to be for the security of at least 10-15 years but ideally 25 years to be eligible for some funding/finance. The “management organisation” will fundraise for the fit-out portion of the capital budget but the building work would take place concurrently.
- The lease would be expected to be a full repairing lease and the “management organisation’s” responsibility for fit-out will be written into the lease agreement. The lease would need to allow sub-letting/licencing.

- The management organisation would need a robust business plan for the operation and maintenance of the building and would have financial responsibility for ongoing maintenance.
- The lease fee payable to TTC could either be a peppercorn or a smaller nominal amount. A balance would need to be made between the ongoing financial viability of the management organisation vs the need that TTC might have to charge a lease fee to cover any finance repayments.
- There is a considerable benefit to splitting the capital budget as two different organisations will have access to different types of grant funding and so would reduce the amount of loan finance that TTC would need.
- The project will also need to factor in additional costs for the legal fees associated with the arrangement of the lease. Unless pro-bono support can be secured, this might cost up to £10K for each party.

Scenario 2 – Management options:

This outlines the two main choices for the “management organisation” that TTC could work in partnership with.

Scenario 2a) Working with an existing organisation

There is considerable benefit to working with an existing organisation to become the “management organisation”. This is because an existing organisation will have a track record with funders and can evidence previous years of accounts (most funders will not give large grants to completely new organisations). An existing organisation will also have developed more internal capacity and will have an existing governance structure.

There are a few charitable organisations in Thame that have the financial track record and may well be interested. It is recommended that further scoping work is done by TTC.

It is also important to acknowledge that taking on a large-scale project of this kind is a major liability for a community organisation, which will already have needs for fundraising itself to sustain its existing activities. An existing organisation would need to have aspiration and appetite to take on both the opportunities and risk that this project presents. TTC would need to work closely with the management organisation to ensure that the project is de-risked for them as much as possible. TTC could also support the management organisation over an interim period through mentoring or contracting administrative/management services. There is also the possibility that if an existing management organisation took the building on, they could contract in a professional facilities management company to perform the facilities management, but this is likely to cost more than managing in house.

Scenario 2b) Setting up a new organisation

If an existing organisation cannot be found, a new organisation will need to be established. There are several essential considerations affecting the feasibility of setting up a new organisation and the kind of legal structure to choose:

- **Leadership & Capacity:** It will be essential to find a group of experienced individuals who would be willing, skilled and have capacity to form a board of Trustees to steward the process in an unpaid/voluntary capacity. TTC could provide staff support with this process and may ideally have representative/s on the Board.
- **Lead in time & delays:** Setting up a new organisation would be likely to delay the project. It can take up to 3 months to register plus additional time to establish compliance and processes (i.e. recruit Trustees, open bank accounts, create policies etc). Some funders may require at least 1 year of operation before being eligible. Ideally this organisation would try and build a track record by applying for smaller amounts of funding and running pop-up activities or events etc in the meantime.

- **Ability to raise finance:** Different avenues of funding and finance are available to each type of legal structure.
- **Additional costs:** Setting up a new organisation may involve more costs to register, recruit staff and pay for systems and subscriptions (as opposed to working with an existing organisation).

As part of this feasibility three potential not-for-profit legal structures were identified. A comparison table for these three legal structures can be found in Appendix 1. Following is a summary of the options and recommendations:

- A Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO):** It is recommended that a CIO structure is used if a new management organisation is set up. This is mainly because it provides good access to grant funding, due to many eligibility criteria stipulating registered charities, as well as VAT considerations (see section 3.3). A caveat on the CIO structure is that although CIOs are entitled to trade, there are limits on trading activities that do not relate to the primary charitable purpose; anything above this will be subject to tax. Therefore, when setting up the CIO, the wording of the charitable purpose must be chosen carefully to ensure that the core revenue activities of the provision of community space are covered.
- A Community Benefit Society (CBS):** This would be a secondary option if it is uncertain that enough grant funding can be secured. This is because a CBS structure would provide an additional finance option as societies can raise investment from the community through community shares (see funding sources table in Appendix 2 for more information). A feasible amount that could be expected through community shares would be between £200-600K. It is possible to apply “exempt” charitable status which entitles a CBS to similar financial and tax benefits as a charity. This does not make the organisation a charity and so there will be some grant funds, that are open exclusively to charities, that it is unable to access. However, the society structure has become well recognised by most mainstream funders.
- A Community Interest Company (CIC):** A CIC structure has been ruled out as any surplus generated is tax deductible, it is ineligible for some grant funding and the organisation would not be able to zero-rate VAT incurred on the capital costs for the build.

3.3 VAT Implications

Disclaimer – Co-operative Futures is not a qualified tax advisor and so we offer this guidance based on compilation and interpretation of publicly available information. We recommend seeking professional tax advice.

The feasibility is currently based on the VAT on the capital costs not being incurred. Following is how this might be possible under each scenario.

Scenario 1: If the Town Council does not lease it to a third party but manages it directly, VAT might be able to be recovered (according to [Government guidance note here](#)) if:

- It’s deemed an insignificant proportion:** “Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994 refunds to (mainly) local government bodies the VAT attributable to their: exempt business activities (i.e. renting space) providing we consider it an insignificant proportion of the total tax they have incurred.” This is defined as less than 5% of the total VAT incurred on all purchases in a year. TTC would need to seek advice from their accountant if this would be the case.
- Opt to charge VAT on hire:** “There are some goods and services on which VAT is not charged, including: selling, leasing and letting of commercial land and buildings — this exemption can be waived.” As space rental is an exempt activity no VAT would be charged. Therefore, VAT incurred on

the capital project which could be attributable to this exempt activity, could not be reclaimed. However, if TTC waived this exemption and charged VAT on hire fees, VAT could potentially be reclaimed. TTC should seek further advice on how much could be reclaimed through this method.

- c) **Reclaiming from revenue on other “business” activities:** Advice should be sought to understand if TTC will have revenue from other attributable “business” activities on which VAT is charged.

Scenario 2:

Where the budget is split either:

- TTC might be able to reclaim VAT on their portion of the capital costs if the lease to the management organisation is counted as “non-business” i.e. *“activities you carry out for no charge and no other form of consideration, including leases you grant, or the freehold sale of land and buildings, for the nominal payment of a peppercorn or a pound and where no other form of payment is involved.”*

OR

- The VAT on: *“the construction of a new community hall by a parish, town or district council or a developer is not eligible for zero-rating unless the council or developer is merely taking responsibility for the construction and either handing the completed building to a qualifying charity which will own the freehold on completion, or leasing it to a qualifying charity on a long lease”* - In this case the management organisation must be a charity. (See [ACRE’s guidance here](#)).

AND

- For the management organisation’s portion of the capital costs, it may be possible to be zero rated if it “will be used solely for a relevant charitable purpose (for non-business use or as a village hall)”. (See the [guidance here](#)).

4) CAPITAL PROJECT

The total capital project is: **£4,394,000** (as of September 2024). This excludes the fit-out of the changing room. This is currently assuming that no VAT is incurred.

4.1 Scenario 1 budget

Thame Town Council assume full responsibility for the capital budget.

4.2 Scenario 2 Budget split

Under scenario 2, it is proposed that the budget is split into “core/shell” and “fit-out” costs. TTC would be responsible for fundraising for the shell costs and the management organisation fundraising towards the fit-out costs.

Budget split summary:

Shell cost: £2,986,047

Fit-out cost: £1,407,953

See table below for full budget split:

Item		Shell	Fit-out	Amount (£)
CAPITAL COSTS				
Existing				
	1.1	Demolition of existing changing block	27,500	27,500
		<i>Total Demolition</i>		27,500
Community Centre & Changing room core				
	1.1	Substructure	264,376	264,376
<i>Superstructure</i>				-
	2.1	Frame	245,088	245,088
	2.2	Upper floors	24,865	24,865
	2.3	Roof	470,533	470,533
	2.4	Stairs and ramps	16,087	16,087
	2.5	External walls	158,623	158,623
	2.6	Windows and external doors	176,268	176,268
	2.7	Internal walls and partitions	171,749	171,749
	2.8	Internal doors		48,485
<i>Internal finishes</i>				-
	3.1	Wall finishes		53,233
	3.2	Floor finishes		45,698
	3.3	Ceiling finishes		82,083
<i>Fittings & Fixtures</i>				-
	4.1	Fittings, furnishings and equipment		77,911
<i>Services</i>				-
	5.1	Sanitary installations		16,256
	5.2	Disposal installations		9,094
	5.3	Water installations		36,378
	5.4	Heat Source		73,913
	5.5	Space heating and air conditioning		49,934
	5.6	Ventilation		90,944
	5.7	Electrical installations		181,161

Item	Shell	Fit-out	Amount (£)
5.8 Communication, security and control systems		140,895	140,895
5.9 Builders' work in connection with services		65,934	65,934
<i>Total Centre & Changing Room Core</i>			2,499,500
Changing Room Fit-out			
Excluded			-
External works			
1.1 Site preparation works	52,517		52,517
1.2 Roads, paths, pavings and surfacings	511,578		511,578
1.3 Soft landscaping, planting and irrigation systems		53,220	53,220
1.4 Fencing, railings and walls		26,078	26,078
1.5 External fixtures		31,413	31,413
1.6 Drainage	107,513		107,513
1.7 External Services	67,994		67,994
<i>Total external works</i>			850,300
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST			3,377,300
Inflation adjustment			165,542
Other Project Costs			
<i>Associated with construction</i>			
1.1 Core Professional Fees	289,092	136,044	425,136
1.2 Surveys and Other Specialist Services	18,068	8,503	26,571
1.3 Loose Furniture			-
1.4 Contingency	271,627	127,824	399,451
TOTAL OTHER COSTS			851,158
TOTAL PROJECT COST			4,394,000

5) FUNDING & FINANCE OVERVIEW

A headline review of funding and finance sources was conducted by Co-operative Futures as part of the initial options appraisal. This can be found in Appendix 2.

5.1 Grant & Donations:

The aim has been to fund as much of the capital budget through non-repayable options. In depth scoping for grants and donations options has been conducted by consultant fundraiser, Claire Styles. The maximum expected grants and donation amounts have been listed by source in the following tables for each scenario. Further information about the rationale and details on the identified funding can be found in the Fundraising Strategy prepared by Claire Styles, which has been included with this report.

Additionally, it has been assumed that the £300K already committed to project fees by TTC would be written off as a contribution to the centre from investments. An option is also shown whereby TTC are able to commit an additional £800K, on top of the £300k already committed, from their investments making a total donation of £1100K.

Scenario 1: Grant & Donations

In this option TTC will fundraise for the full capital costs. Funds will be sought from a mixture of Section 106, local authority grants, the National Lottery and internal investment. Due to eligibility, we do not expect TTC to be able to fundraise through other trusts and donations.

Scenario 1: Thame Town Council only	Raised by TTC	
	Minimum investment from TTC	With £800K top-up investment from TTC
Section 106 Funding	£750,000	£750,000
Thame Town Council investments	£300,000	£1,100,000
South Oxfordshire District Council Capital Fund	£75,000	£75,000
National Lottery	£250,000	£250,000
Other trusts & foundations	£0	£0
Donations from high-net-worth individuals	£0	£0
Donations from community crowdfunding	£0	£0
TOTAL FROM NON-REPAYABLE FUNDING	£1,375,000	£2,175,000
REMAINING TO BE SECURED IN FINANCE	£3,019,000	£2,219,000

Scenario 2: Grants & Donations

In this scenario Thame Town Council fundraise for the “shell costs” and the management organisation fundraises for the “fit-out” costs. This assumes that the management organisation will be able to secured a proportion of the Section 106 funding with support from TTC in order to raise the full fit-out costs.

This shows two sub options, one where TCC provides the baseline/minimum investment and the second where TTC provides an additional £800K.

Scenario 2: Partnership Approach (Minimum investment from TTC)	TTC	Management Org	OVERALL TOTAL
	Minimum Investment		
Section 106 Funding	£317,047	£432,953	£750,000
Thame Town Council investments	£300,000		£300,000
South Oxfordshire District Council Capital Fund		£75,000	£75,000
National Lottery		£250,000	£250,000
Other trusts & foundations		£400,000	£400,000
Donations from high-net-worth individuals		£200,000	£200,000
Donations from community crowdfunding		£50,000	£50,000
TOTAL FROM NON-REPAYABLE FUNDING	£617,047	£1,407,953	£2,025,000
REMAINING TO BE SECURED IN FINANCE			£2,369,000

Scenario 2: Partnership Approach (Top-up investment from TTC)	TTC	Management Org	OVERALL TOTAL
	With £800K top-up investment		
Section 106 Funding	£317,047	£432,953	£750,000
Thame Town Council investments	£1,100,00		£1,100,00
South Oxfordshire District Council Capital Fund		£75,000	£75,000
National Lottery		£250,000	£250,000
Other trusts & foundations		£400,000	£400,000
Donations from high-net-worth individuals		£200,000	£200,000
Donations from community crowdfunding		£50,000	£50,000
TOTAL FROM NON-REPAYABLE FUNDING	£1,417,047	£1,407,953	£2,825,000
REMAINING TO BE SECURED IN FINANCE			£1,569,000

5.2 Finance

As not all the capital budget will be secured through non-repayable sources, finance must be considered. On review of the available sources of loan finance, it is likely that the cheapest interest rates will be available through the Public Works Loan Board (see table in Appendix 2).

Below is a calculation of the amount that would be needed and the expected terms and repayment liability from the Public Works Loan Board. The calculations have been made based on the maximum length of 50 years.

Public Works Loan Board calculations (over 50 years)					
Approach	Amount	Interest rate*	Annual repayments	Additional annual precept increase per household based on 24/25 tax base	Percentage increase on 24/25 precept
Scenario 1: TTC (Minimum TTC investment)	£3,019,000	5.55%	£178,771	£35.29	17.7%
Scenario 1: TTC (Top-up investment from TTC)	£2,219,000	5.55%	£131,400		
Scenario 2: Partnership (Minimum TTC investment)	£2,369,000	5.55%	£140,282		
Scenario 2: Partnership (Top-up investment from TTC)	£1,569,000	5.55%	£92,910	£18.34	10%

*These rates are subject to change – please refer back to get the most up to date rates.

The centre itself is expected to make a small surplus (see section 8 below), however, if TTC were keeping any surpluses made under Scenario 1, this money could be used towards loan repayments.

Under scenario 2, TTC could choose to charge a lease fee to the management organisation which could be used towards the repayments of the loan. However, this may have an impact on whether VAT can be reclaimed on the capital costs and may make the business case unviable for the management organisation.

Unless TTC can cover these repayments from existing revenue and any potential revenue from the building then the Council will need to raise their council tax precepts to cover these repayments. To increase the precept for a Public Works Loan Board loan, councils are required to show evidence of public consultation and support.

6) MARKET RESEARCH

6.1 Evidence of need

Review of previous consultations

Around 6 consultations have been conducted in Thame between 2012 and 2021 about the needs for community space. The consultations identified the Southern Road Recreation Ground (SRRG) as a suitable location for a community facility due to its potential to address anti-social behaviour, improve safety and regenerate by providing in-demand facilities like a café and public toilets. Respondents in community and youth surveys expressed a strong need for **a youth centre and a safe space** in Thame, with preferences for chill-out spaces, socialising areas, and activities. Despite evidence to suggest that existing venues offer some capacity, there is demand for flexible spaces and large hall facilities. Proposals also highlighted the need for mixed-use developments, including leisure and arts spaces.

See Appendix 3 for the full summary.

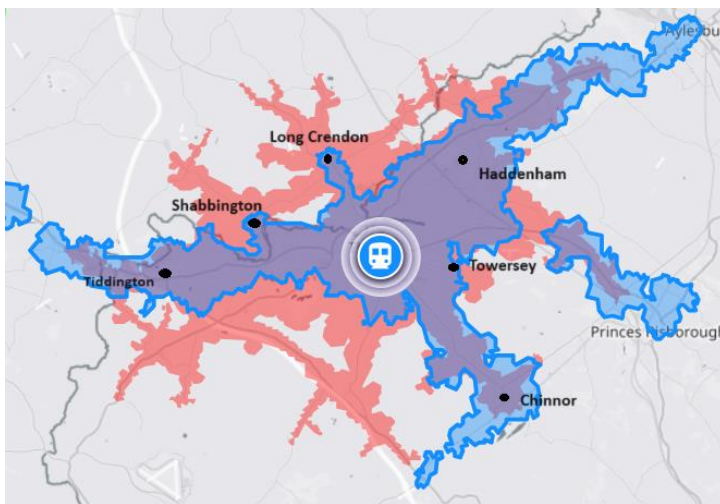
Local information

Thame is a town undergoing significant development with the secondary school population now standing at 2,250. It has been indicated that demand for community and youth space will be likely to grow with more housing being built in and around the town.

The most recent [Neighbourhood Plan](#) highlighted that “there is no adequate large venue for groups of more than 200 people other than St Mary’s Church” and it recognises that “there remains a need for a larger community facility within Thame, and therefore supports the provision of any sites which can act as such a space”.

Thame Youth Project Group report that the lack of a permanent site for hosting youth provision limits what services can be provided.

The school catchment includes surrounding villages and rural areas which have no dedicated youth provision. The transport map below shows that a flagship centre could attract young people and other users from the wider local area.



*Transport Map (Distance able to travel)
Red = by up to 15 mins by car
Blue = by up to 30 mins by Public Transport (at 4pm)*

6.2 Review of existing spaces & facilities

The review of existing spaces in Thame and the surrounding area was compiled through 7 organisations filling out the survey either online or through phone calls to the venue. Additional information was gathered through desk-top research. See the full comparison table in Appendix 4.

The review revealed a range of facilities with varying capacities, hire rates, and usage patterns. Popular venues include **Barns Centre**, which offers several spaces (capacity: 4 to 80) with hire rates ranging from £11 to £28 per hour. It is well-used (50-75% of the time) but struggles to accommodate larger events and specific booking times. Similarly, the **Town Hall** has a room for up to 80 people, but is under-used, with less than 50% occupancy. **Scout and Guide HQs** provide affordable spaces, though the Scout Building is under-utilised, while the Guide HQ is used by various community groups.

Sporting venues like the **Leisure Centre** and **Cricket Club** provide larger halls and meeting rooms, but availability is limited due to regular sport bookings, school contracts, or seasonal restrictions. Privately owned spaces like the **Football Club**, and **Rugby Club** offer large function rooms but do not disclose hire rates. The **Cricket Club**, is well-used (75-100% of the time) but constrained by space and scheduling.

Local schools, including **Lord Williams's School**, offer a range of large halls, studios, and function rooms, though they are mostly available during evenings and school holidays. Churches such as **St Mary's** and

Christchurch provide additional options, they are limited by catering facilities and the church's own scheduling needs.

Other available spaces include **pub function rooms** and community buildings like the **Thame Museum**, which is rarely hired out and the **Players Theatre**, well-used for performances but unsuitable for general meetings.

Conclusions:

- From the data gathered the following spaces have been identified:
 - 3 venues providing rooms of under 10 capacity
 - 7 venues providing rooms of 10-20 capacity
 - 7 venues providing rooms of 21-40 capacity
 - 9 venues providing rooms of 41-100 capacity
 - 7 venues providing rooms of over 100 capacity
 - 5 venues providing rooms of over 200 capacity
- There are fewer venues providing medium sized space (between 21-40 capacity) which is an advantage to the community & youth centre as it will provide 2 spaces of this capacity.
- There appears to be a number of venues of a larger capacity, with some of these being available in the evenings when this kind of space might be more required (e.g. Lord Williams's School). More consultation with larger venues such as the school is needed to understand how regular bookings might affect this capacity to host bigger events in future. Although there are other large spaces available, because of their normal use as a church or school hall, they lack community feel that a new centre would provide.
- Weddings and corporate events that might need a larger venue are more likely to use other facilities than the new community centre due to needing larger catering facilities or a more corporate set-up. However, more research is needed to clarify this.
- Consultation with some venues suggested that there are high occupancy levels at "peak" times in the evenings, particularly with users running fitness classes. One respondent said "everyone wants a space at 6pm!".
- Most spaces have reasonably similar hire charges and offer discounts of between 25-45% off for local or charitable/community bookings.
- Some of the spaces are under-used or not operating at full capacity. Responses suggest that this might be due to lack of capacity of the community organisation managing the spaces to adequately promote and solicit bookings. TTC could play a role in coordinating these spaces through a shared booking system for example. There is also a potential to review the capacity of other spaces to see if regular users might be willing to move to other suitable venues to ensure that all venues are used effectively.
- A key consideration is that the new centre does not create competition for these existing spaces, undercut them or make their own business models unsustainable through taking custom. Most other venues rely on regular block bookings. TTC should do further consultation with the existing spaces, particularly those owned by them to continue to assess the impact.

6.3 Case studies

These case studies were specifically chosen as they offer examples of other community centres in similar sized market towns in Oxfordshire (Wantage's The Beacon & Carterton Community Centre), as well as another local community centre (Benson Village Hall). They also demonstrate the two potential scenarios – either owned and managed by a local authority or a partnership approach with a charity. The full case studies are provided in Appendix 5.

The three case studies provide several key insights into community centre management:

- **Financial support & an ongoing relationship with the local authority:** All three centres were initially funded by the local authorities through S106, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), land sale revenue and the precept. Although, Carterton & Benson now are financial sustainable, The Beacon has required ongoing financial support from the District Council.
- **Expect a break even model or small surplus:** Benson and Carterton made losses or struggled to break even initially but now break even after being established several years.
- **Anchor tenants provide financial security:** Carterton Community Centre, used an anchor tenant model through having more established organisations sub-letting space and offices on a more permanent basis to provide more secure revenue.
- **Occupancy rates are lower than expected:** Benson and The Beacon operate at between 10-30% occupancy.
- **Flexibility is key:** Flexible, multi-use spaces mean that occupancy can be more efficient but also being flexible about pricing and terms on a case by case basis means that more spaces can be filled, for example giving discounts for new start-up businesses.
- **Community involvement enhances the offer:** Carterton, in particular, involves representatives from user groups, the council, and the local community in its management committee. The Beacon, though council-owned, also heavily relies on community programming, such as open mic nights and cinema events.
- **Staff and on-site management are critical for building relationships and success:** Carterton has a part-time centre manager and other staff who provide services like refreshments and meet-and-greet to create a welcoming atmosphere.
- **Community subsidies:** All spaces offer subsidised rates for community use. Carterton in particular decided to always offer one space which is reserved for free community use all the time. This could be a model for how free space could be provided to the Youth Project for example.

6.4 User consultation

34 respondents replied to the expression of interest consultation survey. The full write-up of the survey results is in Appendix 6. A summary of the key findings are:

- The potential users can be grouped into the following types: 9 fitness groups, 5 youth organizations, 5 arts and culture groups, 5 hobby clubs, 5 charitable/social causes, 4 children’s groups, and 1 religious group.
- **62% were not-for-profit organisations** offering community or charitable activities. Also 41% were more established organisations or businesses that in some cases had staff. The remaining were voluntary-run or smaller scale operations. This is a positive sign as this may tend to result in more stable or regular income.
- Some respondents said they worked with groups with **protected characteristics** including: young people (39% of respondents).
- **62% of respondents said they were currently restricted** in offering their services by the availability of space to hire. The main reasons for wanting to change venues were the need for a larger space (11 respondents), equipment storage (5), price and availability (3 each), access to a kitchen (3), with additional factors including the need for a stage, regular space, office space, better facilities, central location, parking, and accessibility.
- However, **74% said they already rented space** elsewhere in Thame with a good number of users using the Barns Centre and the Guide HQ. Therefore, there is a concern that the centre may have an impact on other spaces’ revenue.
- Most interest was in space for events and classes, as well as some for indoor sport/fitness and meetings. The “bread and butter” bookings for the space will probably be for the **medium to large spaces** (30-100 cap).
- There is **little evidence of demand for the kiosk, dedicated music room or changing rooms**. Those indicating they’d like to use the kiosk were not proposing to run a kiosk business but it is assumed

they would be interested in buying refreshments from the kiosk. Of the 9 interested in music practice space, 5 of these would need a larger space than the “music/games room” as they have large groups. Those saying they would use the changing rooms were running exercise classes so it is unclear if they would book the changing rooms on-top of the hall hire. Therefore there is the potential to make the changing rooms and music room more flexible spaces that could be used for other types of activities and bookings.

- There was **lower interest in hiring the smaller rooms or the very large capacity space** on a regular basis. 2 respondents said they’d want a space over 200 capacity, which was for large music events. Of those needing a larger space of 100+ capacity, 3 of these would only need that space annually and another 5 would want it for occasional bigger activities.
- There are 6 established organisations that would be interested in using the space on a daily or weekly basis for longer periods of time (Senior Friendship Centre, Thame Youth Projects, Cornerstone Church, U3A, a pre-school, The Red Kite Centre) – these could become the core bookers or “**anchor**” tenants. These users potentially have complementary availability needs with the Youth Project as most need time in the day.
- There are 10 potential users that would provide other **regular weekly bookings** of a few hours, mostly for fitness activities – these would need mostly afternoon and evening slots. Then there are 14 potential users who might provide less frequent bookings on a monthly or ad hoc basis. Interestingly there is a **high level of interest** in booking the space in the day-times given that the consultation of existing venues found that there was availability during the day time.
- Most of the respondents either didn’t know what their budget was or had a lower budget for venue hire. Around **70% would probably need a subsidised “community rate”**. Whilst the resourcing for most of the respondents was reasonably secure coming from sales income or membership fees, around 10 respondents didn’t have any secured funding or income to cover their rental fees and a further 6 would rely on ongoing grant funding. At least two organisations receive funding from Thame Town Council.
- There was **little interest expressed for corporate or business bookings** for events / meetings except from SOHA (housing association) and Lightfoot’s. This might be because there are other existing venues in Thame and surrounding area offering corporate bookings. This could be something that could be developed but the package and refreshment offer would need to be considered.

7) BUSINESS CASE ANALYSIS

Based on Scenario 2b: The assumptions and financial forecasts are based on Scenario 2b in which a new management organisation manages the building. It has been based on this scenario as this is likely to be the highest “cost” option. With the Scenario 1a where TTC manage in house or Scenario 2a where an existing management organisation run the building as in these cases the costs for setting up new infrastructure and organizational resources might be reduced and there would be economies of scale.

7.1 Spatial strategy

The following is the overview of the hireable space and estimated capacity:

Space	Size (sqm)	Capacity (no. people seated)
Hall	135.9	200 (250 for Hall & Common Rm combined)
Common Room 1	79.1	50
Common Room 2	35.2	34

Space	Size (sqm)	Capacity (no. people seated)
Office	17.7	N/A
Kitchen	19	N/A
Function Room	35.9	34
Small Room	19.8	19
Servery	17.4	N/A
Changing Rooms (if converted into hireable space)	171	40
Mezzanine	15.1	13

Assumptions:

- The office space is not hired out but used by the management facilities.
- The servery/kiosk is hired on an annual license to occupy a catering/cafe provider. Alternatively, the space could be provided as a more community offering run by an anchor user.
- The changing room is not fitted out as a changing room and is provided on an annual licence to occupy to an anchor tenant to provide secure income. However, there would be a need for more design work to add skylights if this was the case as it currently does not have any windows or natural light.
- The small (music/games) room lacks natural light and this will limit potential bookings/users. There might be a potential for this to be used for 1:1 health consultation or treatments where natural light is less of an issue and privacy is valued. Adding skylights/windows would make this room more functional and less likely to become void in future.
- The Mezzanine space has limitations due to being open to the main hall with no sound proofing or visual barrier. This means it could only be booked separately when the hall is not in use. However, it could provide a good breakout space for larger meetings or conferences that use the main hall.
- If the partnership approach is chosen with an existing organisation as the management organisation, then their own use would need to be factored into the spatial strategy with the potential loss of revenue accounted for.
- There is an expectation that the Youth Projects Group will have a dedicated space. However, any free use would need to be balanced with the need for the centre to cover its costs. Alternatively, grant funding would need to be secured by Thame Youth Projects to cover their bookings.
- One potential option would be for one space, such as the Common Room 2 being made available for “free” community use as the Carterton Community Centre does. Enough income would need to be made from the other spaces to cross subsidise.

7.2 Income assumptions & estimates

The assumptions for the income projections have been made based on reviewing and averaging the rates and usage capacity of other spaces mentioned in the market research. There was an aim to ensure that the rates were comparable locally as not to undercut other spaces.

Ad hoc hire:

- It is assumed that the maximum available time for bookings would be 12 hours p/day over 7 days p/week over 48 weeks p/year.
- Standard hire rates have been set at between £18-54 p/hour depending on the size of the space. The subsidised rate is 20% off.

- The ratio of normal vs subsidised hire (20% off) has been set at 70%:30% as around 70% of the respondents to the survey were not-for-profit/community organisations. This gives an average weighted rate.
- The void rates (i.e. the time unoccupied) have been set reasonably conservatively based on reports from other spaces at between 70-95%. The higher void rate applies to spaces where there are limitations on bookings such as the kitchen and Mezzanine.

An estimated annual income from ad hoc based on these assumptions is: **£187,348**

Ad Hoc Hire Calculations			SUBSIDISED (20% off)		NORMAL		WEIGHTED CHARGE	VOID RATE ASSUMP- TIONS
		RATE ASSUMP- TIONS	Rate (£)	% of hires	Rate (£)	% of hires	Rate p/hour (£)	
Opening hours p/day	12	Large space	43	70%	54	30%	46.66	70%
No. days p/week	7	Medium space	23	70%	29	30%	24.84	75%
No. week p/year	48	Small Space	14	70%	18	30%	16.50	85%
		Mezzanine	14	70%	18	30%	20.57	95%
		Kitchen	16	70%	21	30%	17.69	95%
			Estimated charging hrs p/ week (based on void rate)		Income p/week (£)		Annual income (£)	
		Size (sqm)						
		Hall (Large)	136		25		1,176	56,434
		Common Room 1 (Large)	79		25		£1,176	56,434
		Common Room 2 (Medium)	35		21		522	25,043
		Kitchen	19		4		104	5,009
		Function Room (Medium)	36		21		522	25,043
		Music Room (Small)	20		13		208	9,979
		Mezzanine	15		4		196	9,406
							TOTAL ANNUAL HIRE INCOME	187,348

Anchor tenants:

- **The kiosk:** Market research of high-street retail/commercial lettings in Thame found that the cost per square metre was between £22 - £44. Given the non-central location of the kiosk and the potential more community focused clientele, the monthly rental rate for the kiosk has been set at a market rate of £24 per square metre minus 20% discount. This would bring an annual income of **£4,176**. This is a conservative figure but the expectation that when it was contracted, we would revisit the market value and could increase revenue.
- **The space formerly designated as “changing rooms”:** Market research of two office/meeting space properties currently for rent in Thame found that the average cost per square metre was £11.80. Therefore, if the changing room was rented out to an anchor tenant for permanent use to a community or charitable organisation at 50% of market rate, it would generate around **£12,107** per year. Three established organisations that expressed an interest in more permanent space are currently paying between £7,000 and £20,000, therefore this seems to be a realistic level.

EXCLUSIVE HIRE INCOME

	Size (sqm)	Monthly Rate (p/sq metre)	Annual Income (£)
Changing Room	171	6	12,107
Servery/Kiosk	17	20	4,176
TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME			16,283

This is an overall income potential of **£203,630 p/year**.

Adjustments in the first year: Given that it may take a while for the bookings to build up, the financial forecasts have accounted for some losses in the first year. The income from bookings has been calculated at 20% of the total in Quarter 1, 40% in Q2, 60% in Q3 and 80% in Q4. From Year 2 the revenue projections are showing 100% of the total estimated income i.e. £163,829.

7.3 Overhead assumptions & estimates

Running costs

The overheads of the venue have been calculated based on comparison with three other community centres of a similar size, as well as through using some industry standard pricing. Utility pricing and some maintenance costs were provided by the M&E consultant working on the capital project.

Please note: These calculations are based on Scenario 2 where the building is run by an independent charitable management organisation. If Scenario 1a was chosen where TTC manage the building in-house you would expect these running costs to be reduced and thus more surplus to be generated.

The overall estimated running costs: £81,435.

Item	Average cost p/sq metre	Amount p/year (£)
GENERAL		
Rent / service charge		
Insurance (buildings & public liability)		5,000
Business rates		8,746
Electricity		16,748
Water & wastewater		1,488
Refuse collection	5	3,225
Cleaning & cleaning products	21	13,545
General repairs, maintenance & equipment	20	12,900
Wifi & telephone	2.5	1,613
Annual servicing of heating & ventilation systems		750
Site security		2,500
Website		240
Online booking system		1,080
Book-keeping software subscription		300
Bank charges		100
Online subscriptions		

Item	Average cost p/sq metre	Amount p/year (£)
Membership fees		
Book-keeping & accountancy services		4,500
IT equipment		500
Equipment, Stationary & printing		3,000
Marketing		1,200
Recruitment & Training		2,000
Safeguarding, food hygiene & fire safety certificates, training & equipment		2,000
TOTAL ANNUAL OVERHEADS		81,435

Planned maintenance costs

In Year 5, £2,500 of planned servicing and maintenance costs have been projected based on the M&E consultations recommendations. In Year 10 this would be £2,750.

In Year 25 there would be an expectation to spend £56,000 as follows:

- Heating = £35,000 (estimated end of life of heat pumps)
- Ventilation = £10,000 (estimated end of life of ventilation parts)
- Controls = £5,000 (estimated end of life of controls parts)
- Electrical = £1,000 (replacement of components)
- Lighting = £5,000 (estimated end of life of lighting components)

Staffing costs

The salaries used are based on the salary bands used by Thame Town Council and have been pitched in the middle of the band. However, if the management organisation was a smaller charity, you might expect slightly lower salaries. The staffing levels/capacity have been based on what other centres have. The following staff have been accounted for in the financial projections on a full cost basis (inc. National insurance, pensions etc.):

- Centre Manager: £40,221 p.a. pro-rata for 3 days p/week = £26,780
- Administrator: £27,803 p.a pro-rata for 3 days p/week = £18,077
- Caretaker / maintenance operative: £25,545 p.a pro-rata over 2 days p/week = £10,528

Overall estimated staffing costs: £55,384

Salaried Staff								
Position	Annual Salary FT	Day p/week worked	Yearly Wage (£) Pro rata.	Number Of Staff	Total Pay (£)	Employers NI (£)	Employers Pension (£)	Total Costs (£)
Administrator	£27,803.00	3	£16,682	1	16,682	1,082	313	18,077
Manager	£40,221.00	3	£24,133	1	24,133	2,110	537	26,780
Caretaker	£25,545.00	2	£10,218	1	10,218	190	119	10,528
TOTALS					51,032	3,383	969	55,384

8) FINANCIAL FORECASTS

Based on the estimated income and expenditure a modest surplus of around **£62,707** projected in Year 2.

With the right management, there is a potential for the centre to “wash its own face”. However, as this surplus might be affected by any significant changes in the usage strategy.

Because of the projected operational loss of £35,004 in the first year, a small bridging loan or additional fundraising may be needed to cover the cashflow. Currently this has been forecast as a grant in the cashflow forecast of £42K.

Please note: that these projections do not include the capital project costs or the financing of the capital project i.e. any Public Works Board Loan repayments.

See below for Profit & Loss and Cashflow projections.

8.1 Profit & Loss Forecast

PROFIT & LOSS (£)	YEAR 1				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTALS
Income					
Staged income in first year (as % of total normal operation)	20%	40%	60%	80%	
Income from ad hoc hire	9,367	18,735	28,102	37,470	93,674
Income from exclusive hire	814	1,628	2,442	3,257	8,141
	-	-	-	-	-
Income total	10,181.52	20,363.05	30,544.57	40,726.09	101,815
Fixed Expenditure					
Staff Costs					
Salaried & Casual Staff Pay & on costs	(13,846.12)	(13,846.12)	(13,846.12)	(13,846.12)	(55,384)
Contractors	-	-	-	-	-
Employers NI allowance (rebate)	-	-	-	-	-
Staff costs subtotal	(13,846.12)	(13,846.12)	(13,846.12)	(13,846.12)	(55,384)
Overheads					
Annual overheads	(20,358.72)	(20,358.72)	(20,358.72)	(20,358.72)	(81,435)
Planned capital maintenance costs	-	-	-	-	-
Overheads subtotal	(20,358.72)	(20,358.72)	(20,358.72)	(20,358.72)	(81,435)
TOTAL FIXED EXPENDITURE	(34,204.84)	(34,204.84)	(34,204.84)	(34,204.84)	(136,819)
EBITDA (Earnings before Interest, Tax, Depreciation & Amortisation)	(24,023.32)	(13,841.79)	(3,660.27)	6,521.25	(35,004)
Less Capital Project Budget	-	-	-	-	-
Loan arrangement fees	-	-	-	-	-
Less Depreciation	-	-	-	-	-
Less Community Shares interest	-	-	-	-	-
Less Loan Interest	-	-	-	-	-
Less Tax	-	-	-	-	-
NET PROFIT	(24,023.32)	(13,841.79)	(3,660.27)	6,521.25	(35,004)

PROFIT & LOSS (£) - 3 % inflation applied										
	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	
Income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Income from ad hoc hire	187,348	192,968	198,757	204,720	210,861	217,187	223,703	230,414	237,326	
Income from exclusive hire	16,283	16,771	17,274	17,793	18,326	18,876	19,443	20,026	20,627	
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Income total	203,630	209,739	216,032	222,513	229,188	236,064	243,145	250,440	257,953	
Fixed Expenditure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Staff Costs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Salaried & Casual Staff Pay & on costs	(57,046)	(58,757)	(60,520)	(62,336)	(64,206)	(66,132)	(68,116)	(70,159)	(72,264)	
Contractors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Employers NI allowance (rebate)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Staff costs subtotal	(57,046)	(58,757)	(60,520)	(62,336)	(64,206)	(66,132)	(68,116)	(70,159)	(72,264)	
Overheads	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Annual overheads	(83,877.92)	(86,394.26)	(88,986.09)	(91,655.67)	(94,405.34)	(97,237.50)	(100,154.62)	(103,159.26)	(106,254.04)	
Planned capital maintenance costs	-	-	-	(2,500)	-	-	-	-	(2,750)	
Overheads subtotal	(83,878)	(86,394)	(88,986)	(94,156)	(94,405)	(97,237)	(100,155)	(103,159)	(109,004)	
TOTAL FIXED EXPENDITURE	(140,924)	(145,152)	(149,506)	(156,491)	(158,611)	(163,369)	(168,271)	(173,319)	(181,268)	
EBITDA (Earnings before Interest, Tax, Depreciation & Amortisation)	62,707	64,588	66,525	66,021	70,577	72,694	74,875	77,121	76,685	
Less Capital Project Budget	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Loan arrangement fees	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Less Depreciation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Less Loan Interest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Less Tax	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
NET PROFIT	62,707	64,588	66,525	66,021	70,577	72,694	74,875	77,121	76,685	

8.2 Cashflow Forecast

CASHFLOW FORECAST (£)														
YEAR 1	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	
Opening cash balance	-	17,977	4,135	475	6,996	69,702	134,290	200,815	266,837	337,413	410,107	484,982	562,103	
Operating cashflow														
Net Profit	(24,023)	(13,842)	(3,660)	6,521	62,707	64,588	66,525	66,021	70,577	72,694	74,875	77,121	76,685	
Net operating cashflow	(24,023)	(13,842)	(3,660)	6,521	62,707	64,588	66,525	66,021	70,577	72,694	74,875	77,121	76,685	
Financing cashflow														
Loans received	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
(Loan repayments)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Grants	42,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Net financing cashflow	42,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Closing cash balance	17,977	4,135	475	6,996	69,702	134,290	200,815	266,837	337,413	410,107	484,982	562,103	638,788	

9) RISK REGISTER

A full risk register has been provided to TTC. Some key risks to highlight are:

- **VAT liability:** At the moment it is assumed that VAT won't be incurred. However, if it is not possible this would load an additional £878,800 onto an already significant fundraising challenge.
- **Essential omitted items:** There is a total of £86,100 not including fees or inflation that has been omitted from the budget through value engineering for Solar PV, EV charging, power assisted doors and vinyl flooring as it has been assumed that these items could be obtained for free. If they can't, this would add more to the fundraising target as they are essential items that need to be in place on completion for regulation & BREEAM status.
- **Other omitted items:** Budget has also been omitted for the soft landscaping and the loose equipment / furniture costs. Although these can be added later and the specifications can be at the discretion of the TTC/management organisation, this will still be an additional cost to fundraise for.
- **The changing room might incur more costs to make it usable:** Currently the fit-out costs for the changing room have been omitted and it has been assumed that this space could be converted into a more useable / hireable space. The current changing rooms haven't been used for 20 years and there is no evidence that additional changing facilities are needed. However, if it is a requirement to keep them in, it will add a further approx. £400K plus fees and inflation back into the budget. As they are not currently designed with any natural light, significant redesign would be needed to add skylights, which will incur more design costs.
- **Costs may further increase due to delays:** Given that the lead in time for many large grant funding programmes can be around 3-6 months it is very unlikely that the capital project will start as expected in Spring 2025. This may mean that costs will go up in this time. However, this report makes a strong recommendation that the tender process is not started until all funding and finance is secured, to prevent further costs that may not result in proceeding with the project.
- **Assumptions about TTC use of Council funds and adjustment of precept:** TTC may face public scrutiny about the potential sum of the loan and the increase of the precepts to meet these repayments. A public consultation is a requirement of the Public Works Loan Board application. Additionally, the funding model assumes that TTC will write off the £300K already committed to the project fees as part of the overall funding mix and potential contribute up to £800K more investment. These decisions would need Council approval.
- **Available "management" organisation would need to be established:** There is not a clear existing organisation who is at this stage signed up to become the management organisation and partnership negotiations may take some time. If a new organisation must be set up this is also likely to cause delays.
- **Eligibility for funding:** Although the estimates for the funding that could be secured are based on research and comparison with other awards, given how scarce and competitive grant funding is currently, TTC and possible management organisations not hitting ideal eligibility criteria and the relative affluence of Thame, there is a chance that the target won't be met. This would further increase the amount that TTC would need to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board.
- **Impact on other local venues:** Some local venues are not operating at full capacity and there is a chance that existing users may move their custom to the new centre. TTC will need to ensure that the new centre does not create competition that would put the sustainability of other venues at risk. There is also the consideration of best value for money, whereby funding could be used to extend and improve existing venues to generate more use.

10) APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Legal Structure Comparison table

Legal Structure	Community Benefit Society (CBS)	Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO)	Community Interest Company (CIC) Limited by Guarantee - Large Membership type	Community Interest Company (CIC) Limited by Guarantee - Small Membership type
Overview	The CBS legal form is a “society” structure designed for community organisations and enterprises where the emphasis is to benefit a wider community rather than the society’s membership. It is particularly suited to the purpose of “community-ownership” of an asset, service or business.	The CIO legal form is a “charity” structure suited for organisations with a “philanthropic” purpose. Being a charity offers a well-recognised status and makes the organisation eligible for all grant and trust funding. The CIO is a corporate structure designed for charities to give limited liability to trustees.	The CIC is a “company” structure with additional features designed for use by social enterprises. It is primarily a trading model. The social objective may be integral to the trading activity or the CIC may use its profits for a particular social cause.	
Legal Status and Regulator	Registered under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.	Registered under the Charities Act 2011 and regulated by the Charity Commission.	Registered under the Companies Act 2006 and regulated by the CIC Regulator and also reporting to Companies House.	
Purpose & profit distribution	Trading for the benefit of a community, with surplus/profits reinvested in accordance with the community purpose of the organisation.	Operating for the benefit of a charitable cause or purpose.	Trading for a social purpose, with profits reinvested into the company and to further the stated social purpose. They are required to pass a “community interest test”.	
Trading limits	Designed as a trading model. If charitable status is applied there will be limits on trading that doesn’t meet its charitable objects- more info on charities and trading	Income is expected to come through primarily through grants and some trading activities. Limits on trading that doesn’t meet its charitable objects apply - more info on charities and trading	Designed as a trading model – no limits applied.	
Eligibility for Charitable Status	CBS’s that have exclusively charitable purposes can be awarded Exempt Charity Status from HMRC. This doesn’t make the CBS a “charity” but grants similar financial benefits as charities (see below).	Automatic recognition as a charity.	Not eligible for charitable status.	

Legal Structure	Community Benefit Society (CBS)	Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO)	Community Interest Company (CIC) Limited by Guarantee - Large Membership type	Community Interest Company (CIC) Limited by Guarantee - Small Membership type
Membership	<p>Controlled by members, with one member one vote.</p> <p>Membership purchase a share, which is usually a “nominal” i.e. £1</p> <p>Members are drawn from the community of benefit outlined in the organisation’s governing document. You can set criteria for membership. Members can be individuals or organisations, or both.</p>	<p>There are two types of CIO: Association Model and Foundation Model.</p> <p>Association Model CIOs are membership organisations, whereas Foundation CIOs are not.</p> <p>Limited to individuals over 16 who support the charity's aims.</p>	<p>With a “large membership” type, membership is open to anyone with an interest in the company.</p> <p>Non-Director members usually have the right to vote on important decisions related to the company.</p>	<p>With a “small membership” type, there are no members other than the Directors themselves.</p>
Governance	<p>Members elect a board of Directors who manage the society.</p> <p>The Directors can also co-opt some Directors from outside the membership base to bring in people with particular skills and experience.</p> <p>Directors cannot receive remuneration for their duties as a Director of the CBS but in the case of a non-charitable CBS, Directors are able to enter into contracts with the CBS to deliver specific work or services if a conflict of interest is declared.</p>	<p>Managed by Trustees.</p> <p>In an Association CIO Trustees are elected. In a Foundation CIO, Trustees are self-appointed.</p> <p>Trustees cannot receive remuneration for their services to the CIO.</p>	<p>Managed by a board of Directors.</p> <p>Directors are either appointed by other Directors or by a resolution at a members meeting. It is possible to amend the rules in order to hold elections for Directors.</p> <p>Directors may receive remuneration (which includes a salary) for their services to a CIC</p>	<p>Managed by a board of Directors.</p> <p>Directors are appointed by other Directors or are self-appointed.</p> <p>Directors may receive remuneration (which includes a salary) for their services to a CIC.</p>
Liability	<p>Liability limited to share holding for Directors and members</p>	<p>Limited liability for trustees and members</p>	<p>Liability limited to shareholding for members and Directors</p>	

Legal Structure	Community Benefit Society (CBS)	Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO)	Community Interest Company (CIC) Limited by Guarantee - Large Membership type	Community Interest Company (CIC) Limited by Guarantee - Small Membership type
Financial Benefits / Status	<p>Liable to pay corporation tax unless charitable status is applied.</p> <p>A CBS with Exempt Charity Status is eligible for all the same financial exemptions as charities; e.g. corporation tax exemption on some activities, mandatory 80% relief on business rates, etc.</p> <p>Can apply for discretionary business rates relief.</p> <p>Loans and equity investment to the CBS are eligible for Social Investment Tax Relief for the investor. Can pay interest on community shares but these are not considered dividends legally as so don't compromise its "not-for-profit" status.</p>	<p>CIOs are exempt from corporation tax on charitable trading activities, capital gains, and investment income.</p> <p>CIOs received mandatory business rates relief of 80%.</p>	<p>CICs are liable for corporation tax. They can apply for discretionary business rates relief.</p> <p>Loans to the CIC are eligible for Social Investment Tax Relief for the investor.</p>	
Asset Lock*	<p>Voluntary statutory asset lock (i.e. can choose to apply it but once applied it cannot be removed).</p> <p>If applying for charitable status, a compulsory charitable asset lock is applied.</p> <p><i>*An asset lock is a way of ensuring that the assets of a company or society can never be cashed in by private individuals (including members) or companies for their own gain. In the organisations' governing document it will outline what happens to surplus/gains the organisation generates and what happens to any assets if the organisation dissolves. Having an asset lock is helpful for obtaining grant funding or for securing transfer of assets i.e. buildings</i></p>	Compulsory charitable asset lock	Compulsory statutory asset lock	

Legal Structure	Community Benefit Society (CBS)	Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO)	Community Interest Company (CIC) Limited by Guarantee - Large Membership type	Community Interest Company (CIC) Limited by Guarantee - Small Membership type
Conversion to another legal structure	Can convert to a company limited by guarantee (not if it has an asset lock or is a charitable community benefit society) Cannot convert to a CIO	Can convert to a charitable community benefit society	Can convert to a company limited by guarantee or a society (co-operative society or community benefit society).	
Registration	Registration via Co-op UK for a small fee (£150+VAT). See here. Usually takes 4-6 weeks to process.	Register via the Charity Commission. No cost to register. See here. The Charity Commission says they aim to respond within 45 days but in practice it can take several months.	Register via Companies House for a nominal fee (£27). See here. Usually takes several working days.	

Appendix 2: Funding & Finance Sources Table

Source	Type	Provider/s	Amount	Terms	Eligibility				Timeline	Likelihood of accessing	Security / Risk
					TTC	CBS	CIO	CIC			
Section 106	Grant (non-repayable)	Via South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC)	~£780K has been identified	The recipient must be the freeholder or if leaseholder, the lease must have a min of 10 years and outline its responsibility to deliver the capital works. *Can be accessed by organisations with Town Council's support	✓	✓*	✓*	✓*	Application & release of funds can take several months	Medium to high	If draw down of funds is delayed, there may be a risk of claw back depending on the S106 repayment terms.
Trusts & Foundations	Grant (non-repayable)	Various local, regional and national bodies i.e. National Lottery, Sports England, Landfill Communities Fund providers, Community Ownership Fund	From £5K up to £5m (average £50-300K)	Town Council's will not be eligible for some grant funds. The majority of fund will be open to a CBS or CIC. All funds would be open for a CIO. Criteria will vary from fund to fund.	?	✓	✓	✓	Application & release of funds can take from several to 6 months or more depending on how many stages.	Likelihood of accessing large funds are low to medium. The average award tends to be lower as many traditional grant funders & trusts have less funds to distribute and more demand currently.	Grant funds offer the lowest risk option. However if the project does not complete there may be claw back or need to be a variation on the grant agreement.
Local Authority	Grant (non-repayable)	SODC Capital Grant and/or UKSPF grant/s	Capital grant - max £75K		✓	✓	✓	✓	Currently closed for applications	Low likelihood that the funds will reopen within current timeline.	

Source	Type	Provider/s	Amount	Terms	Eligibility				Timeline	Likelihood of accessing	Security / Risk
					TTC	CBS	CIO	CIC			
Crowd-funding	Donations (non-repayable)	Raise donations from the community / donors through a crowd-funding campaign / platform	No maximum target. Average raise is £20-30K Sport England offering up to £10K match funding for crowdfunding campaigns	There are various platforms – each have their own terms but some take a % fee of the total raised (0-2%). A CIO and Charitable CBS will be able to claim gift aid.	✓	✓	✓	✓	May take several months to plan, launch and run a campaign	Medium to high if there is a supportive local community	Need personnel capacity and some marketing resourcing/costs to run the campaign
Sponsorship (corporate)	Donation (non-repayable)	Approach local corporates or high net worth individuals for donations	No maximum target	Some donors may wish to be named or have their branding displayed. A CIO and Charitable CBS will be able to claim gift aid.	✓	✓	✓	✓	May take time to build relationships and negotiate	Low to medium if no warm links exist currently	

Source	Type	Provider/s	Amount	Terms	Eligibility				Timeline	Likelihood of accessing	Security / Risk
					TTC	CBS	CIO	CIC			
Community Shares	Equity investment (repayable)	Raising investment through members purchasing " community shares "	<p>Average raise is £230K</p> <p>Co-operatives UK Booster programme offers match equity investment of up to £100K (average £25-50K). They also offer up to £10K to help organisations prepare a share offer and get the standard mark.</p>	<p>Shares are withdrawable but the society can place restrictions on withdrawals. Interest on shares is usually between 2-6%.</p> <p>Max shareholding from any members is £100K.</p> <p>Anyone purchasing community shares becomes a member of the CBS but all members have an equal vote despite their level of shareholding.</p>		✓			<p>It is good practice to apply for the standards mark which may take several months to obtain prior to launching. A share offer campaign is usually open for 6 weeks – 6 months (av. 3 months).</p>	<p>Medium to high if a supportive community exists.</p> <p>Community Shares tend to work better in areas with a higher average income</p>	<p>Community shares is considered "patient" capital as many investors invest on the basis on social good rather than financial return and so may keep their shares for many years or even decades and expect only a nominal return.</p> <p>Community share investment is at the risk of the investor. Usually community shares investors will be considered "junior" to other lenders (i.e. mortgage providers) who will assume the primary charge. This might mean that in the case of winding up, primary lenders need to be repaid before.</p> <p>Need personnel capacity and some marketing resourcing/costs to run the campaign</p>

Source	Type	Provider/s	Amount	Terms	Eligibility				Timeline	Likelihood of accessing	Security / Risk
					TTC	CBS	CIO	CIC			
Public Works Loan Board	Debt finance (repayable)	HM Treasury	Maximum will be restricted by TTC ability to repay (minimum revenue position)	<p>Current 3.8-6.3% interest depending on the terms.</p> <p>Periods up to and over 50 years.</p> <p>Must obtain approval from DLUHC.</p> <p>Must only be used to purchase a capital asset; and/or grant the loan proceeds to a community organisation. It cannot be "loaned" on.</p>	✓				In theory applications take 15 working days.	High with a strong business case. This would depend on the security of the income from the building and also the security of the agreement with the management organisation.	<p>Loan is secured against TTC's revenue rather than linked to the revenue of a specific asset i.e. if the business failed and no longer contributed to TTC then TTC would still be liable for repayment. In this scenario TTC absorbs significant risk.</p> <p>The interest rate is better than commercial loans/mortgages but not considerably – less favourable than potential rate on community shares.</p>
Mortgage	Debt finance (repayable)	Various providers including Triodos, Ecology, Unity.	Maximum based on loan to value ratio	Usually offer 70-80% loan to value over 10-40 years at a rate of 6-8%. Arrangement fee 0.75-1.5%.	✓	✓	✓	✓	Application and draw down of funds may take several months.	High with strong application. May be less likely to lend to new organisations.	Secured against building and/or other assets so would need to be taken out by freeholder. If TTC lease the building they still would have liability for repayment of mortgage if management organisation fails.
Commercial Loan	Debt finance (repayable)	Co-operative & Community Finance, Social Investment Business (SIB)	Maximum £150K	<p>6% - 7.5% over 10 – 25 years</p> <p>SIB converts 25% of the loan value to grant</p>	?	✓	✓	✓	Application and draw down of funds may take several months.	High with strong application. May be less likely to lend to new organisations.	Can be secured against building and/or other assets if taken out by TTC OR unsecured based on projected revenue so would be possible for the management organisation to take out.

Source	Type	Provider/s	Amount	Terms	Eligibility				Timeline	Likelihood of accessing	Security / Risk
					TTC	CBS	CIO	CIC			
Other small loans	Debt finance (repayable)	Blenheim Green Loan	Blenheim - Up to £10K	Blenheim - Terms non disclosed	✓	✓	✓	✓	Blenheim - Applications open all year round	Medium	Usually unsecured so at the risk of the lender. Would need to ensure a strong business case to make repayments. Private loans might usually be made as a short term bridging loan until larger finance is secured.
		Private loans from individual lenders	Private loan – No maximum	Private loans – terms to be negotiated with the lender. Agreement to be drawn up.							
Soft Loan / Internal investment	Debt finance (repayable)	TTC borrowing from reserves or from revenue of assets	Dependent on reserve levels and ability to repay	TTC could either use the monies against the capital project or loan to the management organisation. Terms to be negotiated internally but could be a 0% interest or pay a nominal interest rate.	✓						Uncertainty over loss of interest as it may not be possible to match rates where reserves are invested. Depends on getting agreement from Full Council.

Appendix 3: Review of previous consultations:

Below is summary previous consultations about the need for a youth and/or community space.

a) Feasibility Study by Acanthus Clews (September 2021)

The Southern Road Recreation Ground was identified as a suitable location based on the following criteria:

- Potential to solve the issue of anti-social behaviour on the SRRG site with the reorganisation of facilities.
- Potential to improve the safety and design of the existing facilities of the site, such as the playground, car access, parking provision, changing rooms and scout building.
- Potential to provide in-demand facilities such as a Café, outside seating, and public toilets.
- The location is on the Young People Trail.
- The site is away from major roads and on a cycle route.
- There is the potential to break out of a new facility onto green open space.
- The site is adjacent to Cuttle Brook Nature reserve, one of the most picturesque settings in Thame.
- SRRG is the only potential site that will be able to utilise developer funding for community facilities

b) Thame Youth Projects Residents Feedback Survey (April 2021)

208 respondents – majority in the 25-54 age bracket but over half having children or young people in their household.

In answer to the question “young people need a youth centre in Thame” (with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree), the majority of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.

The majority of people also responded mostly positively to the statement “young people need a safe place in Thame”.

People felt that “a place to socialise” and a “place to get help” would be “most beneficial for the young people of Thame”, as well as provision of activities, workshops & sports.

In answer to the question how would you like the community space to be used, people said (in order of preference): multi-use hall to hire, adult learning classes and community kitchen, with the provision of small meetings rooms being much less popular.

c) Thame Youth Projects Young People’s Feedback Survey (April 2021)

This was conducted via the Lord William’s School and received 794 responses from young people aged 11-18 (with the majority being between 12-14 years old). 58% of respondents lived outside of Thame.

The majority of respondents would like to see chill out space (71.5%) and refreshments (70.7%), followed by games consoles (54.4%) and music (49.6%).

d) LEAP Design Group Masterplan (November 2017)

The survey conducted as part of this piece of work reached 103 respondents. The majority of the respondents (75%) either agreed or strongly agreed that Thame needed a new community building. Respondents thought that the facility should provide accommodation for health & well-being, learning, charities & social concerns and arts & leisure. Thame Youth Projects was not involved in this.

41 organisations or groups providing services and activities responded to the survey. The following findings:

- The most demand was for rooms for group sizes of <20 and between 20-50.
- However, there was interest in a large hall space. There was also high demand for catering and refreshments facilities.

- The majority of groups were already hiring in Thame and said their existing facilities were suited to their needs (49% agree or strongly agree).
- Although 68% said they expect to expand their activities in the coming years, only 31% felt their numbers were limited by space currently.

e) Thame Cattle Market Action Group (July 2015)

The action group, which was made up of 26 local organisations, proposed the development of the cattle market site into a “mixed use scheme (with appropriate car parking) that “establishes community”, provides visitor attraction and a presence within the heart of the town centre. The plans included leisure & arts centre, library and workshop space.

f) Review of Community Centres (2012)

This identified 20 existing venues with over 40 individual spaces for hire. Most venues have capacity for between 80-150 people. Only two venues had capacity of more than 200 (Leisure centre at 500 and St Mary’s Church at 300).

No venue was operating at full capacity at that time but some achieving high usage at peak times. Most were voluntary / charitable so are dependent on bookings for financial stability.

Surveyed 70 community groups who all used current venues and identified issues of capacity or quality of venues.

Appendix 4: Summary of existing spaces

*Capacity is seated capacity

Name of space	Facilities & Capacity with Hire rates (£ p/hr) (discounted rate presented first)*	Availability, occupancy & Bookings	Limitations
Halls & Meeting space			
Barns Centre (Thame Town Council & Church)	Large barn (80 cap) - £28, Small barn (30 cap) - £23, Meeting room (14 cap) -£18, Quiet room (4 cap) - £11.	Indicated they are “well-used” between 50-75% of available time. Mostly have regular bookings for fitness classes and community groups with ad hoc bookings for parties and events.	Said that they often can’t offer the time slots bookers need or a big enough space as they aren’t suitable for large events. They don’t hire for parties for those aged under 21 or have extensive catering facilities.
Town Hall	Upper Chamber (80 cap) - £16/£27, Small meeting room (10 cap) - £16 p/hr	Indicated they are “under-used” for less than 50% of the available time	
Scout Building	Unknown	Used by the Scouts Monday – Friday in the evenings (approx. 2 groups per eve). Currently under-used.	
Guide HQ	Large hall (50 seated / 100 standing cap) - £17/23, Small hall (25 seated / 40 standing) - £13/17	Currently used for bookings other than the Guides including the Church on Sundays, yoga, a nursery and U3A.	
Sporting facilities			
Leisure Centre (SODC managed by)	Small hall (100 cap) - £90.75, Meeting room (12 cap) - £47 Large sports Hall (700 cap) - Not disclosed		Currently contracted to Lord Williams’s School 8am-6pm on weekdays and 8-12pm on Saturdays.
Racquets	Function room (70 seated / 150 standing cap) - £24 Courts - £15 2 X clinic rooms Bar facilities	Currently have capacity for dance and martial arts.	Privately run space rather than specifically for the community although the repair café is run there.
Golf club	Conference facilities (up to 250 cap) Not disclosed		Not accessible from Thame except by car.
Football Club	Large room (150 cap) – not disclosed		
Rugby Club	Two function rooms (up to 120 cap)		

	Not disclosed		
Cricket club	Ground Floor (80 sqm/70 cap) – £25 First Floor (100 sqm/60 cap) – £29 (with access to catering facilities). Discount to £20 for regular bookers.	Mostly regular bookings and parties. Cricket clubroom hired out to regular booking only. Indicated “well used” (between 75-100% of available time).	They say if they turn away bookers it's because they can't offer bookers big enough space or the time slots they need. Also limited by the cricket season.
Snooker club	Function room (up to 150 seated cap) - £25 p/hr during the day, £190 evening		Hosts regular booking for Slimming World.
Schools			
Lord Williams's School	Theatre (475m2 – 146 seated, 362 standing) - £44.50 Studios (150 sqm) - £24 Hall x 2 (250 seated cap) - £35 Sports Hall Lower Site £40 Various function rooms (30-80 cap) - £16.50-£20 Various meeting rooms (10 – 60 cap) - £16-26.50		Assumed limited to evening and school holidays
John Hampden School	Hall - £20		Assumed limited to evening and school holidays
Barley Hill School	Hall - £15.50-28.50		Assumed limited to evening and school holidays
Churches			
Christchurch	Large room £14-21 Small room £10-15		
St Mary's	Large space (200 cap) - £41 / £75	Indicate limited use (50-75% of available time). Mostly regular bookings.	Limited by catering facilities and being able to offer time slots the bookers need due to church's own use.
Pub function rooms			
Fothergill Hall @ The Spread Eagle	Hall (200 cap)		Privately owned. Only suitable for certain community groups.
The Black Horse	Large barn (100 cap seated/150 cap standing)		Privately owned. Only suitable for certain community groups.

Other buildings offering hire			
Thame Museum Community Room	Space inside the museum gallery – Fees not disclosed.	Only available when the museum isn't open. Not hired out regularly – currently just one knitting group.	
Players theatre	Theatre (132 seated cap) – Fees not disclosed.	Indicated as “well-used” – between 75-100% of the time. Used by Thame Players for 5 shows p/year and visiting productions and regular block bookings from Cinema 4 All.	Not suitable for general meetings or other non-seated activities due to raked seating.
Red Kite Family Centre	Main room £15 p/hr	Available evenings and weekends	
Spaces outside of Thame			
Chinnor village hall	Main Hall (150 seated) - Small Hall (60 seat) Large Committee Room (40 cap) Small Committee Room X 2 (6 cap) Fees not disclosed.		
Haddenham Village Hall	Main Hall (242msq) - £23/41 Meeting room (40 cap) - £17.50/24 Conference Room (40 cap) - £19.80/59		

Appendix 5: Write-up of case studies:

Benson Village Hall

Funding and Development: The Benson Parish Council own and manage Benson Village Hall. It underwent a significant upgrade and extension, costing £750,000. The project was fully funded by the Parish council through S106 contributions, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and the parish precept. The hall now includes a large parish hall, offices, improved kitchen facilities, and parking for 52 vehicles. An additional community hall was built on the CALA estate as part of a local development, with the Parish Council contributing £50,000 towards the overall costs. The legal requirements for office spaces were also addressed in the renovation.

Hire Rates and Occupancy: The village hall offers affordable hire rates, especially for community groups. The main hall charges range from £25per/hour on weekdays to £78per/hour on weekend evenings, while the lounge and committee room have lower rates. The community hall is available at £18 to £42 per/hour, depending on the time and day. The spaces have consistent regular booking but the occupancy levels are relatively low, with the main hall booked only 30% of the time, the lounge 18%, and the committee room 10%. The community hall was occupied between 13-17% of the time, and the pavilion changing rooms were used 10%. Occupancy tends to be lower in the day. Conferences have started inquiring about the hall, often requesting catering and audio-visual equipment, which are not yet fully provided. They had some enquiries about booking the kitchen for catering businesses but have not always been able to accommodate these bookings due to other users needing access. Local community groups are the main bookers and receive a 30% discount. Start-up businesses, such as yoga classes, are offered a 20% discount for their first two years, while commercial bookings are charged at higher rates.

Management and Financials: Benson Village Hall is managed in-house by the Parish Council with a facilities manager, cleaner, and a bookings clerk who works part-time managing two venues. In the initial years following the hall's reopening, it operated at a loss but recently turned a slight profit.

Carterton Community Centre

Funding and Development: Carterton Community Centre, was built and opened in late 2008. It has a gross internal area of 550.59 m², offering flexible, partitioned spaces designed to cater to a wide range of community and commercial activities. While the building is owned by the Town Council, it is leased to an independent charity who operate it. The charity pays a peppercorn rent to the Town Council, for the long lease arrangement. The initial funds for the construction came from land sales by the Town Council, with additional contributions from S106 funding linked to nearby developments. While the Town Council maintains the building fabric, the charity handles the internal upkeep. There is no ongoing funding or subsidies from the Town Council. The management committee includes representatives from the council, user groups, and the community.

Hire Rates and Occupancy: In its early years, the Centre also secured a lease with the County Council to rent rooms, providing crucial secure income. Offices were rented to organisations like Mind, ensuring steady revenue. The Centre offers a range of spaces at affordable rates, with a 26-30% discount for local users. The large hall, accommodating up to 200 people, costs £38 per/hour on weekdays and £49 on weekends. The smaller hall (up to 50 people) is available for £22-£28 per/hour, while meeting rooms are £18-£23 per/hour, and an interview room costs £10-£14 per/hour. Occupancy is strong in the evenings, with regular bookings from martial arts and yoga classes. Daytime occupancy remains a challenge, although the Centre regularly hosts craft fairs and business meetings. They have a minimum booking of 2 hours but might waive this at quieter time. The facility also offers space for children's birthday parties, weddings, and baby showers on weekends. Churches rent the entire space every Sunday, providing a guaranteed booking, and storage space is offered at a low cost (£5 per week).

They decided to always offer one space which is reserved for free community use all the time, which is currently used for the food bank.

Management and Financials: Carterton Community Centre is run by passionate community members, with a focus on local governance. The Centre employs a part-time manager (9-1 pm, Monday to Friday), an admin assistant (two days a week), a day cleaner, and additional key holders. Having dedicated staff on-site has proven essential in building relationships with users and offering additional services, such as refreshments. In recent years, the Centre has been operating at break-even or with a small loss but aims to return to a tenant-based model that previously generated profits, which were reinvested into the building or donated to local groups.

Community Engagement and Usage: Carterton Community Centre is committed to serving the local community, with its governance model reflecting strong community involvement. Meeting and greeting users, rather than simply handing over keys, is a key aspect of the Centre's community-driven approach. The Centre also competes with other local venues, such as the WI hall, church halls, and the football club, but aims to differentiate itself by providing superior facilities and a higher level of service and so often attracts those with slightly higher budgets.

Case Study: The Beacon Community Centre

Funding and Development: The Beacon Community Centre, located in Wantage, is owned and managed by South Oxfordshire District Council. The Centre has been funded and supported by the council since its inception, including the original construction.

Hire Rates and Occupancy: The Beacon offers a variety of spaces for hire at competitive rates. The large hall, with seating for up to 348 people, is available for £61 per/hour. There are also meeting rooms of various sizes, including a large meeting room (100 seated/50 boardroom) for £31.50 per/hour, a medium meeting room (40 seated/25 boardroom) for £20.50 p/hour, and a small meeting room (10 people) for £16.50 per/hour. Not-for-profit organisations receive a 10% discount on bookings. Despite its versatile spaces and affordable rates, the average occupancy rate at the Centre is around 25%.

Management and Financials: The Centre employs a venue manager, two duty managers, three assistant duty managers, an admin officer, and a team of casual staff and volunteers who assist with events. Shared roles within the council provide additional support for technical services, programming, and marketing. It continues to be subsidised by the Council, as it currently operates at a financial loss.

Community Engagement and Activities: The Beacon hosts a range of events and activities, both organised internally and by external hirers. The team at The Beacon runs popular community events such as cinema nights, open mic sessions, and wine tasting. These events are funded through a dedicated budget, with ticket sales helping to cover costs. Private hirers also contribute to the programming, with events such as Superstars of Wrestling and The Snowman Live featuring the Wantage Silver Band.

Appendix 6: Summary of User Consultation Survey

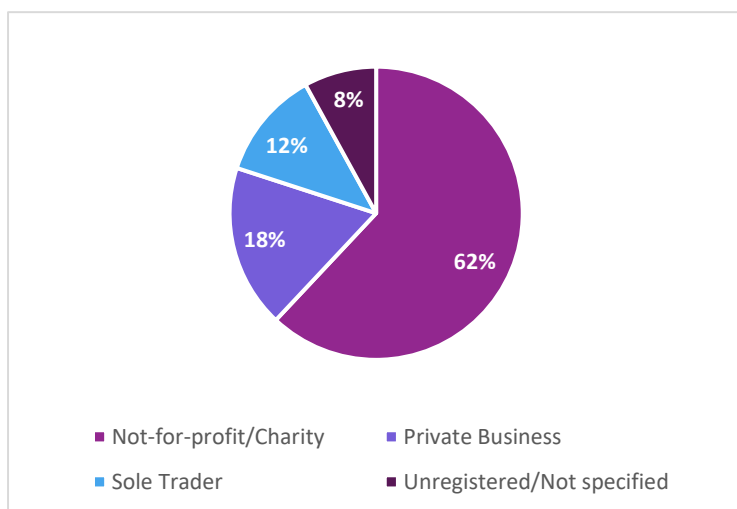
Potential users

Number of respondents: 34

The respondents can be grouped into types:

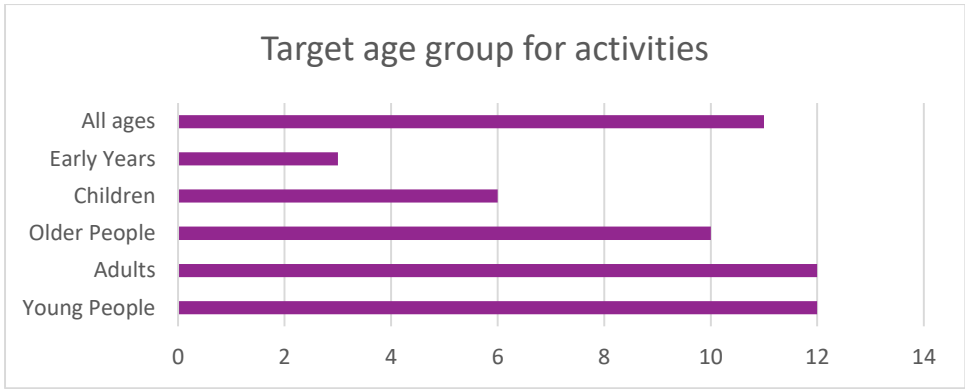
- **9 Fitness:** including 3 martial arts clubs; 2 dance classes/schools; running group; trampolining school; fitness class for older people; and slimming group.
- **5 Youth:** including a youth project; youth theatre group; cooking session; Army Cadets; and a church youth group.
- **5 Arts & Culture:** including a community carnival group; community choir; concert band; and 2 live music organisers.
- **5 Hobbies:** including a flower club; miniaturists group; women's institute group, twinning association; and activity & social group for retired people.
- **5 Charitable/social causes:** including supported reading charity; carers support group; housing association; well-being courses for young people & adults; lunch club / dementia café of older people.
- **4 Children:** including a children's centre, a pre-school, a playgroup and a children's choir.
- **1 Religious:** a church group

Organisation structure:



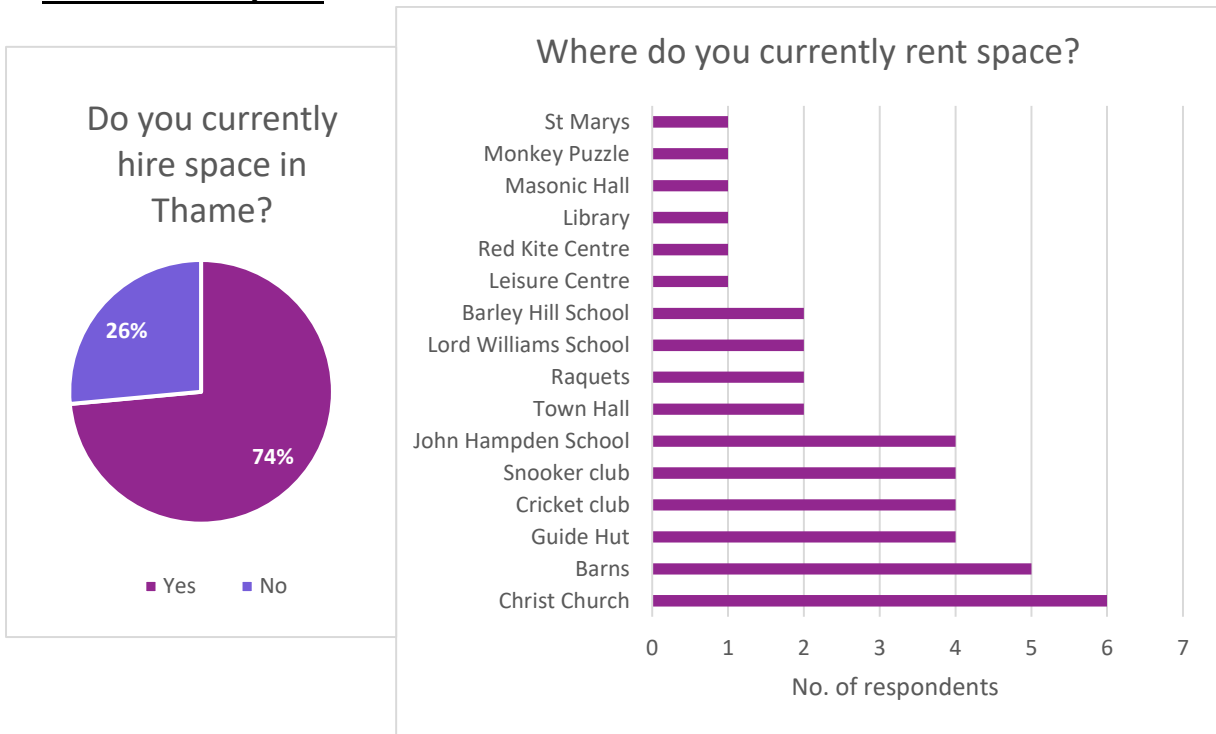
41% were more established organisations or businesses that in some cases had staff. The remaining were voluntary-run or smaller scale operations.

Target Groups & Demographics:



Some respondents said they worked with groups with protected characteristics including: young people (39% of respondents); older people (29%); people experiencing ill-health or mental ill-health (29%); NEET young people or adults (26%), people with physical or learning disabilities (26%).

Demand for space:



62% of respondents said they were currently restricted in offering their services by the availability of space to hire.

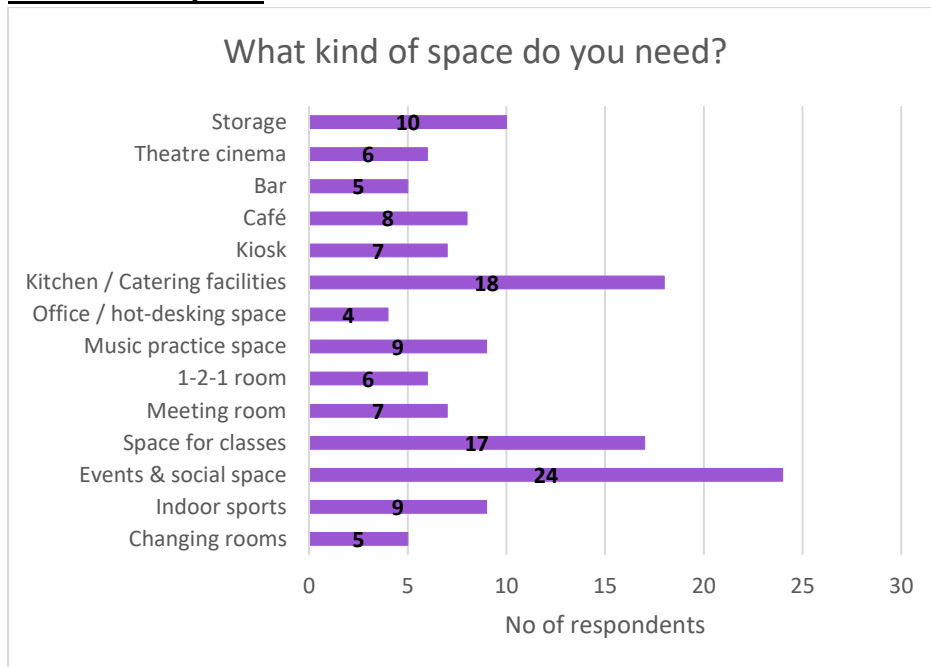
3 were from groups already running activities in the nearby area and could expand provision with a suitable space in Thame. 3 were “start-ups” or new ideas that they would want to start given the right space (although these can not be considered guaranteed users).

The main reasons cited for potential wanting to change venue (by number of respondents) were:

- Needing a larger space (11 respondents)
- Equipment storage (5);
- Price (3) & availability (3);
- Access to a kitchen (3)

- Other things mentioned: having a proper stage/auditorium; having “own/regular space; office space; current facilities were in poor condition; central location and parking; accessibility; more comfortable / community space.

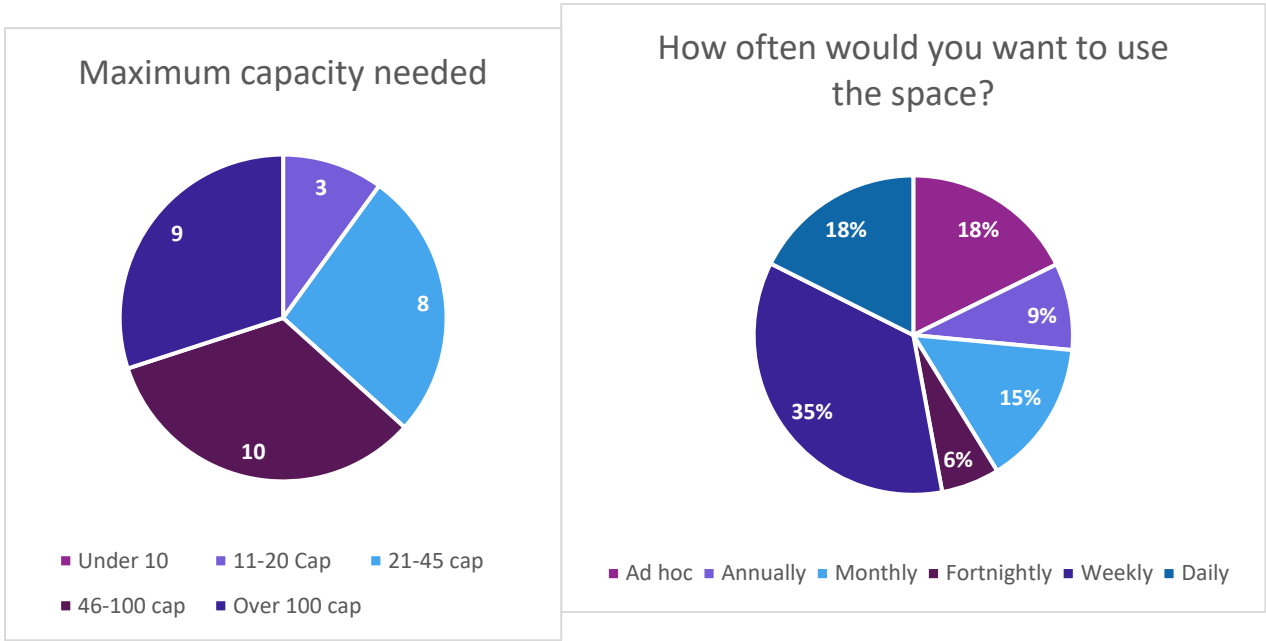
Interest in space



Kitchen facilities: 2 respondents were interested in using the facilities to run cookery session. 5 were interested in using the facilities and venue to run community café or serving food & drinks as part of their activities/events. Those indicating they’d like to use the kiosk were not proposing to run a kiosk business but would be interested in buying refreshments from the kiosk.

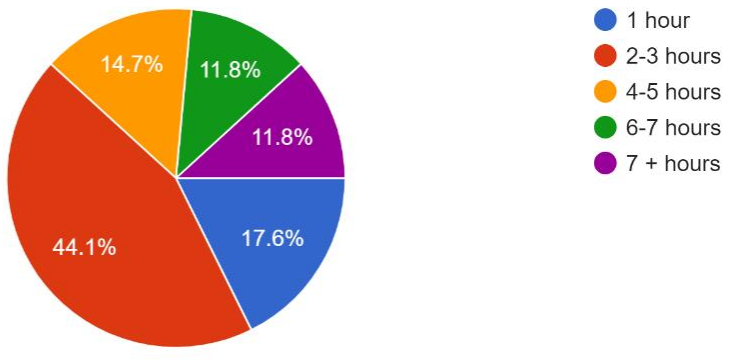
Music practice space: Of the 9 interested in music practice space, 5 of these would need a larger space than the “music/games room” as they have large groups.

Trampoline club has been ruled out as a potential user as the ceilings is not high enough. The Carnival group responded as they were concerned about the impact on the carnival being hosted at the recreation ground and would be interested in using the toilet facilities for the carnival for free.



There was little interest in hiring smaller rooms. 2 respondents said they'd want a space over 200 capacity, which was for large music events. Of those needed a larger space of 100+ capacity, 3 of these would only need that space annually and another 5 would want it for occasional bigger activities.

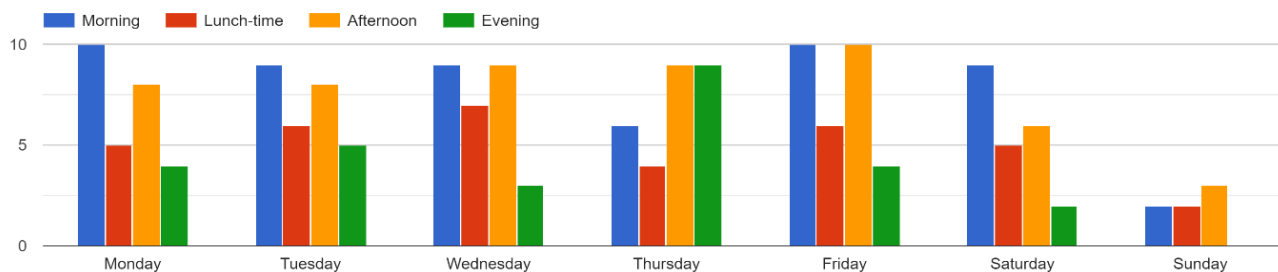
How long would you need to use the space for each time?
34 responses



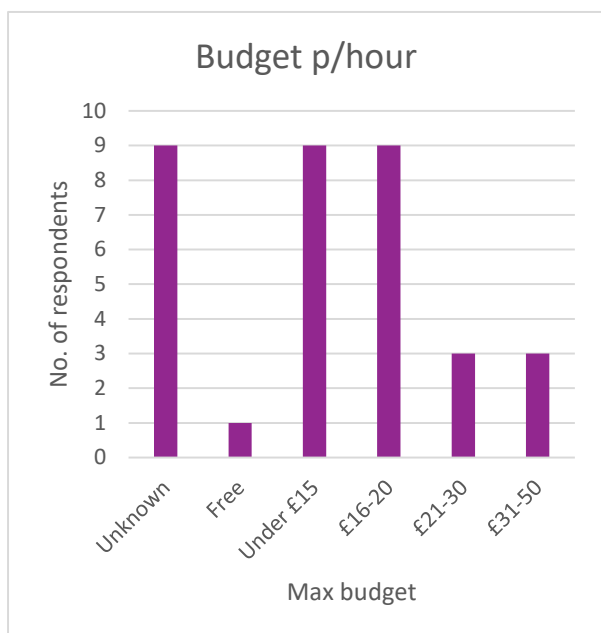
There are 6 established organisations that would be interested in using the space on a daily or weekly basis for longer periods of time (Senior Friendship Centre, Thame Youth Projects, Cornerstone Church, U3A, a pre-school, The Red Kite Centre) – these could become the core bookers or “anchor” tenants. These users potentially have complementary availability needs with the Youth Project as most need time in the day. There are 10 potential users that would provide other regular weekly bookings of a few hours, mostly for fitness activities – these would need mostly afternoon and evening slots. Then there are 14 potential users who might provide less frequent bookings on a monthly or ad hoc basis.

Interestingly there is a high level of interest in booking the space in the day-times given that the consultation of existing venue found that there was availability during the day time.

Please tell us the days / time slots you'd like to use the space



Rental income



Most of the respondents either didn't know what their budget was or had a lower budget for venue hire. Whilst the resourcing for most of the respondents was reasonably secure coming from sales income or membership fees. Around 10 respondents didn't have any secured funding or income to cover their rental fees and a further 6 would rely on ongoing grant funding. At least two organisations receive funding from Thame Town Council.

Other feedback from interviews:

- **Active Thame:** Most existing fitness and sport groups/classes have a location, but it might attract different groups and audiences depending on the marketing. There might be a potential for health & medical practitioners who can share facilities to use the space. Could see the potential for club to work together to put on larger sporting events using the field and the facilities. The town is growing and there may be an increased need for active groups for children and families.
- **Sharing Lives Trust:** Potential to move the food larder to the community centre.