



REFERENDUM THAME NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (TNP2) 2020-2041

THE FACTS

In light of recent misinformation being posted on social media and circulated throughout the community, Thame Town Council would like to present the facts about the new Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP2) and the upcoming referendum.

About the Flood Plain...

FACT: None of the homes proposed in TNP2 will be built on the flood plain.

The most up-to-date information available was used in developing the TNP2 Plan. The Environment Agency releases new flood risk maps roughly every 5 years, with improvements made as technology improves and information is received. The new maps have yet to be published.

However, the Plan is future-proof in this matter and any current or future planning application would have to take account of the latest information and advice. This means that while the sites chosen in the Plan have been considered capable of being used by the Environment Agency and other flood specialists, the very latest information will be used to check there will be no new or altered risk.

As it stands, all of the homes proposed in TNP2 would be built away from the flood plain. As part of the planning process the developers will have to prove the homes will not be at risk of flooding from any water source between now and the next 100 years, even after taking into account the much higher rainfall events expected due to climate change.

TNP2 recognises that new roofs, roads and patios add hard surfaces and will shed rainwater. Any development will have to have means of capturing and storing this water on site and slowly release it at a rate that would not be greater than if it the development had not happened.

Developers will need to provide sufficient storage for an extreme 1-in-100 year rainfall event, with a large allowance added (typically 30-40%) to cope for increased rainfall due to climate change. This should ensure neighbouring houses and communities downstream of Thame will not see any change to their flood risk.



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About the Consultation

TNP2 has been subject to 4 rounds of public consultation each held over many weeks. Only 2 consultations are required by law. When evaluating this work, an independent Examiner praised Thame's efforts to ensure that the opinions of all with a connection to Thame were sought.

Approach

Like the first Thame Neighbourhood Plan, **TNP2 aims to keep Thame as a compact market town with a close relationship with the open countryside around it.** The Plan has been written to keep Thame as an attractive place and service centre for both Thame residents and those visiting from the surrounding area, or further afield.

TNP2 aims to place new housing in places where its connections to the town centre and other facilities can be comfortably accessed by foot or bicycle. Development will be required to blend well with the existing areas of the Town, respecting Thame's historic growth and evolution. Development must work towards integrating new communities.

TNP2 recognises and protects the separation between Thame and Moreton and Towersey. **It has been written to keep growth away from areas of nature conservation and flood risk and to avoid harm to Thame's landscape setting.**

The Plan recognises that access to and through older parts of the Town need improving. This includes improving the existing network of walking routes and alleyways.

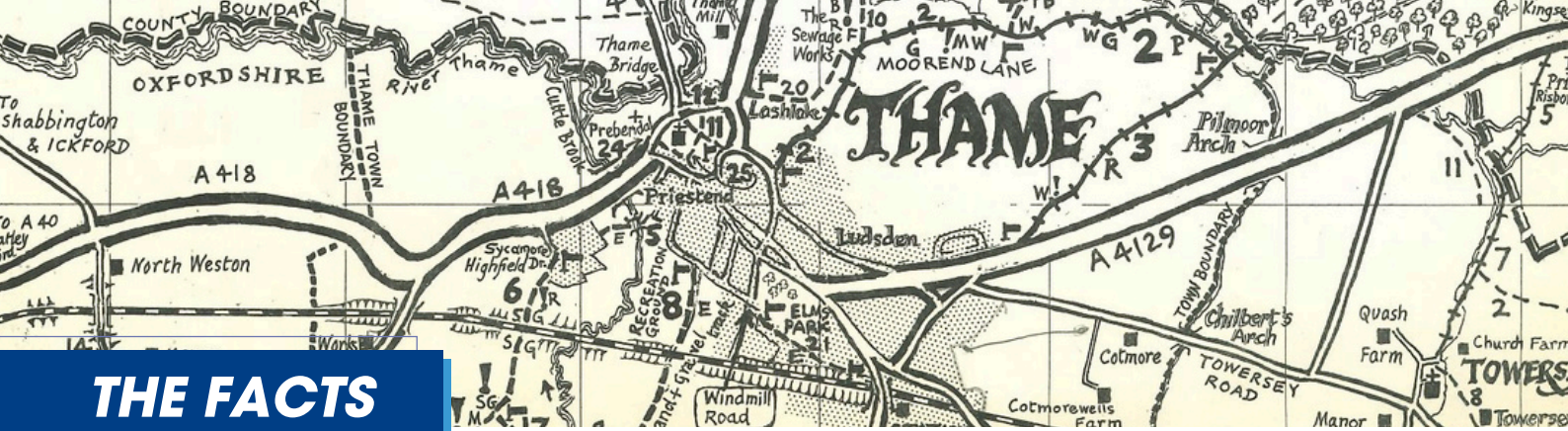
The Plan aims to maximise the potential of the Phoenix Trail by identifying opportunities to improve connections to it and the environment along it. Its extension west to Rycote Lane is also sought. TNP2 has incorporated many of the ideas and actions from the Thame Green Living Plan into policies and projects to help Thame move to a more sustainable future.

Mobility hubs such as that proposed in the Cattle Market will help residents' find travel information and move around more efficiently. These sites may, therefore, have facilities such as Electric Vehicle and e-bike charging, bicycle repair stations and parcel delivery lockers.

Thame needs new and improved community facilities such as meeting halls and child nurseries. The Plan provides a framework to encourage their provision and make sure that any proposed facility provides flexible space to ensure wider use by residents and visitors.

The Plan protects the Cuttle Brook's green corridor through the Town and open spaces valued by residents and visitors. These include long-established areas such as the Showground and allotments as well as the parkland and accessible open spaces brought forward within recent housing developments.

Nature is also protected with presumptions that existing, established trees and hedgerows be kept and incorporated wherever possible. **New build and conversion developments of all scales will be required to deliver a gain in habitats to encourage biodiversity.**



What happens without TNP2?

The District's 2035 Local Plan allocates housing and some employment land to Thame but leaves the detail of where to put the developments and how they should look to the Thame Neighbourhood Plan.

In the absence of TNP2, SODC's Local Plan has a policy clause that would support planning applications for any housing or employment site as long as they comply with SODC's general policies. Without TNP2, it would be up to the District to decide if or how they would apply the masterplan and design guidance written for Thame's neighbourhood plan, which takes account of Thame and Moreton's distinctive local character.

Design

The TNP2 aims to raise the quality of housing and employment development around all of Thame and Moreton, not just on the identified development sites. Together with its accompanying documents it identifies Thame's local character areas, lists what makes them unique, and requires planning applications to fit well into them.

The Plan encourages developers to meet high levels of energy and water efficiency and target zero carbon emissions once their development is in use. Focusing on the quality of build will be the preferred method to reduce energy needs, reduce running costs and help enable self-sufficiency through the use of green technologies. In particular, large employment buildings will be encouraged to provide or enable the fitting of solar panels.

In major new developments (10 or more homes and larger employment areas) the Plan requires good connections to existing foot and bicycle paths with development taking account of the emerging Thame Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Streets and parking areas will be designed to have trees and soft landscaping with sustainable drainage incorporating rain gardens to reduce flood risk and further increase greenery.

Housing

Since 2011, the District have given Thame the task of finding room for 1,518 homes. The majority have been built or have planning permission. TNP2 has found sites for the remainder and these have been supported as preferred sites by local residents.

The Plan contains a policy to steer new housing development towards delivering the types and sizes of homes needed in Thame.



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Employment

TNP2 allocates 5.5 hectares of land for employment uses to help local companies expand while not preventing new companies from moving to the area. It was also seen as needed to help address an imbalance caused by losses of employment land and buildings against an increase in working age population. The site chosen for the new employment land is in Rycote Lane and was supported by local residents.

Parking

The Plan has a policy that requires the existing amount of parking in the Town Centre to be kept. Development that reconfigures existing spaces to bring green space and improves the quality of the environment for residents and visitors will be encouraged. Parking will only be permitted to be lost if robust, up-to-date surveys can show surplus capacity exists on the busiest days and where harm will not be caused to those with mobility issues.

The Town Centre

The policy for the Town Centre looks to keep it as the main focus area for shopping and services. It will encourage the use and reuse of shops, offices and buildings in and around the Town Centre while requiring that this does not impact on the lives of those who live there. The Plan also supports schemes that improve the quality of the public realm and the experience of residents and visitors.

The Cattle Market

The Plan aims to preserve the parking on the Cattle Market. A wide range of town centre uses would be allowed but a “budget” supermarket is expected. Development will maintain and improve the links to Barley Hill Primary School and Lea Park beyond, and will be expected to blend well with the adjacent homes, businesses and Conservation Area.

South of Wenman Road (currently being built)

The Plan carries over and proposes using this “reserve” housing site from the first Thame Neighbourhood Plan. New parkland and agricultural land will be made available for public access as will a tree-lined bicycle and footpath on the frontage, connecting to the existing networks. The site should provide 57 homes at least 22 of which will be affordable.

Diagnostic Reagents

This smaller site will be required to be brought forward with similar principles of connected footpaths and open space to the adjacent, under construction site. The site could yield 25 homes, some 10 of which would be expected to be for affordable tenures.



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Land at Windmill Road (work expected to start in 2025)

This is an identified “exception site” being developed on behalf of Thame’s Community Land Trust. All of the houses will be kept forever for discount rent or sale only by Thame residents or those with a strong local connection. The homes will be built to keep running costs low for the occupants. The Plan has a strong, controlling policy to make sure the site could only ever be developed for affordable housing. The site will contain “pocket parks” for use by any member of the public.

Land at Oxford Road (subject to a planning application)

Part of this site was a reserve site for housing in the first Thame Neighbourhood Plan, which cannot now be developed due to underlying archaeology of national significance. The Plan seeks approximately 100 homes, at least 40 of which would be expected to be for affordable use.

The policy requires the housing to be kept out of the flood plain of the River Thame / Cuttle Brook and for drainage systems to be built that do not increase flood risk downstream. The homes are to be brought forward in a similar way to the existing housing in terms of layout and scale. Control is sought to avoid harm to the Thame Conservation Area, adjacent Listed Buildings and the exceptional archaeology in the western part of the site. Publicly accessible land lost to development will have to be re-provided on other parts of the site and new areas of parkland required, too.

Land at The Elms (under construction)

This site is carried forward from the first Thame Neighbourhood Plan. It requires development to be carried out in line with the existing planning permission for 37 homes, some 14 of which should be for affordable use. An area of parkland in the site will be available for public use.

Land at Rycote Lane

This land has been allocated to host Thame’s employment land needs. Development will have to be carefully designed and landscaped to make sure it fits well into what is currently a relatively open site. Improvements will be provided for pedestrians and cyclists which will help link Thame residents to the site and the footpath and bicycle network beyond.

For further information about the Thame Neighbourhood Plan and upcoming Referendum, including voting requirements, frequently asked questions, myth busters, official documents, please visit thametowncouncil.gov.uk and follow the Referendum links on our home page.



THAME
Town Council