



Thame Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Planning Regulations
2012 (Part 5 s15)

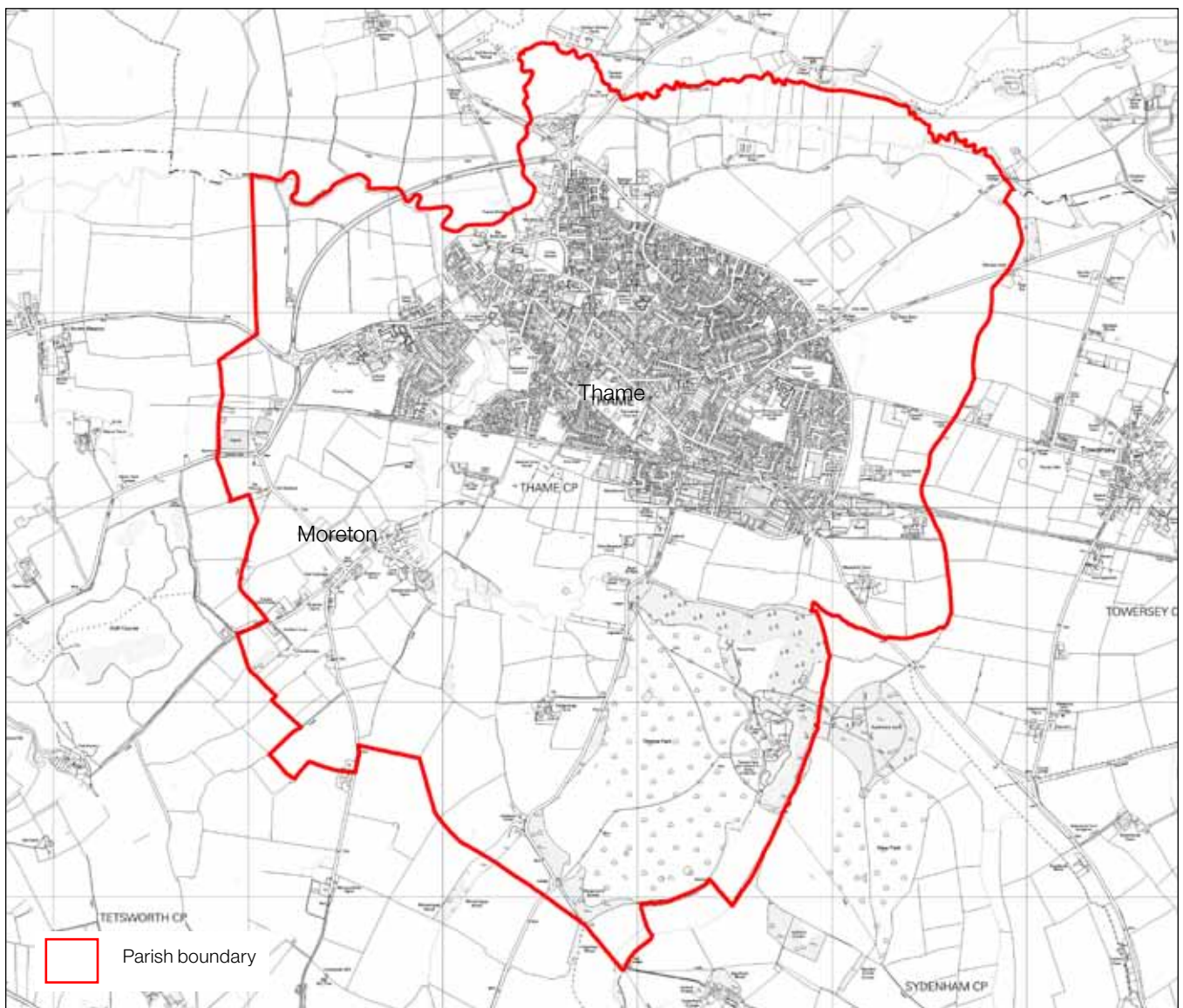
Neighbourhood Development Plan
Proposal: Consultation Statement

To: South Oxfordshire District Council Local Planning Authority)

By: Thame Town Council (Qualifying Body)

Neighbourhood Development Plan Title: Thame
Neighbourhood Development Plan

This application relates to the following parish: Thame Town
Council



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Consultation Statement has been prepared to fulfil the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. Section 15(2) of Part 5 of the Regulations sets out what a Consultation Statement should contain:
- (a) *contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;*
 - (b) *explains how they were consulted;*
 - (c) *summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted;*
 - (d) *describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.*
- 1.2 A much greater level of consultation has been undertaken than the legislation requires, and this is set out in detail in the reports that are submitted in support of this Consultation Statement. It is not the intention of this Consultation Statement to replicate what is in these detailed reports.
- 1.3 The aims of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan consultation process were:
- to 'front-load' consultation, so that the Plan was informed by the views of local people and other stakeholders from the start of the neighbourhood planning process;
 - to ensure that consultation events took place at critical points in the process where decisions needed to be taken;
 - to engage with as wide a range of people as possible, using a variety of events and communication techniques; and
 - to ensure that results of consultation were fed back to local people and available to read (in both hard copy and via the Town Council's website) as soon as possible after the consultation events.
- 1.4 Consultation was undertaken by Thame Town Council in partnership with its consultants, Tibbalds Planning & Urban Design and Jeff Bishop of BDOR. Consultation events took place at the following stages in the neighbourhood planning process:
- an initial consultation weekend in October 2011 at the very start of the process;
 - a second consultation weekend in November 2011 around objectives and initial approaches;
 - option development and testing from February to April 2012;
 - consultation on the preferred option in between 28th May and 22nd June 2012; and
 - the statutory consultation stage in accordance with Regulation 14 from 21st August to 3rd October 2012.
- 1.5 This Consultation Statement provides an overview of each of the above stages of consultation in accordance with Section 15(2) of Part 5 of the Regulations. Full details are provided in the reports that support the Consultation Statement.

2. INITIAL CONSULTATION WEEKEND: OCTOBER 2011

- 2.1 This was the first public consultation event on the Neighbourhood Plan for Thame. The aim was to identify issues, concerns and hopes for the future, which could go on to form the basis of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.2 A meeting with an invited Working Group took place on the evening of Thursday 6th October. The main 'Drop-in' sessions took place at the Town Hall between 11am and 9pm on Friday 7th and 10am and 4pm on Saturday 8th. There was also a feedback session on Sunday 9th from 11am to 1pm.

WHO WAS CONSULTED

- 2.3 The aim of this initial consultation stage was to consult with as many local people as possible. The weekend was publicised in the following ways:
- regular articles and updates on the Thame Town Council website;
 - press releases to the Thame Gazette;
 - three radio interview with the Town Clerk on BBC Radio Oxford, Heart FM and Mix 96;
 - a large banner in the High Street;
 - 50 A3 posters at a variety of locations around the Town, including the Town Centre, residential areas and the entrances to the Town;
 - a Thame Neighbourhood Plan Facebook page; and
 - a Thame Neighbourhood Plan twitter feed.
- 2.4 Thame Town Council invited a range of representative of local groups to a Working Group meeting on the evening of 6th October. These included representatives of the police force, rambler's association, girl guides and scouts, places of worship, schools and residents' associations. Full details are provided in the report of the meeting.
- 2.5 Almost 400 people signed in to the two day drop-in session (though others no doubt slipped through). Many people spent a remarkable amount of time – often over an hour – writing comments and getting involved. The enormous number of comments ranged from the very broad down to highly specific details. The majority of people were residents of Thame, although some landowners / developers attended.

HOW PEOPLE WERE CONSULTED

- 2.6 The main way for people to contribute was by ticking, crossing and writing on wallsheets seeking local people's issues and ideas around a series of five topics (with space for anything else that did not fit these topics).
- 2.7 There was another way to do this on a form called 'The good, the bad and the ugly' as well as a sheet specifically on issues around new housing for the town. There were also some 90 minute sign-up workshops on Housing and the Town Centre. The consultant team and some Town Councillors were present at all times to help and advise.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONCERNS RAISED

- 2.8 **Movement and Transport:** There was clear support for the key issues raised:
- too much through traffic, including HGVs, going into town;
 - bus services poor;
 - access to the rail station not easy;
 - not enough cycle paths; and
 - no Shopmobility scheme for the disabled.
- 2.9 The highest single score was for 'keep parking free'. There were split views on town centre parking; some said there's too much, some too little. There was concern about general congestion in and around the town exacerbated by apparently widespread problems of speeding.
- 2.10 Traffic problems today were often used as an argument against more development in the future.
- 2.11 **Environment:** One of the biggest and clearest responses was about the need to avoid any decline in the individuality of Thame's town centre shops, and to avoid threats to the town's historic character.
- 2.12 There was clear support on other issues: flooding problems, some antisocial behaviour and not enough green spaces. The latter was added to with comments about the poor quality of some open spaces (though Cuttle Brook is widely valued), about maintenance and about the need for new housing to have its own decent sized areas of open green space.

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- 2.13 Some expressed concern about unsympathetic (i.e. 'modern') new designs but others disagreed.
- 2.14 There was a good level of interest in aspects of recycling, and lots of specific ideas, whereas there was support for more renewable energy initiatives but few solutions were offered.
- 2.15 **Housing:** The team deliberately left out the issue of new house numbers just to see what would happen. The result was well over 100 comments saying no more new houses at all in Thame (with some suggestions for putting them in nearby villages). When these comments were elaborated, the arguments against new housing were mainly about the strain on roads, services, facilities and the environment.
- 2.16 However, another really strong result was in favour of spreading new housing over several sites, not just one. There were split views about using in-town sites, notably about whether or not to move Lord Williams's school onto a single site and build on the Lower School site.
- 2.17 There was clear support about needing more smaller homes, more affordable/cheaper homes (to buy or rent), more delivery choices (eg. self-build) and generally a better overall mix.
- 2.18 **Economy:** There was very strong support for retaining/enhancing the number of independent shops. There were strong feelings against more supermarkets, including Sainsbury's on the Cattle Market.
- 2.19 There was strong support also in terms of keeping the Thame Show and the market, doing something about the Cattle Market site, creating new employment space and the lack of apprenticeships and training.
- 2.20 **Community:** Although not attracting so many comments, responses were very varied, reflecting the topic. One key issue was the need to get more people living and working in Thame, to reduce commuting and support local facilities.
- 2.21 There was clear support for more primary schools if more housing comes, more riverside walks and better leisure and recreational facilities (especially a large meeting space).
- 2.22 Most people who commented did not feel that the split site for the secondary school causes problems but several added that, if a one-site option proceeds, any current facilities on the lower school should be kept for community use.
- 2.23 The Sunday feedback session was attended by around 25 people. At this session the consultant team fed back a very quick analysis of all the varying results and, in general, those present felt that the key issues had been well highlighted.

HOW THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED

- 2.24 The issues and concerns were collated in a detailed report of the consultation event. These were then used by the consultant team to develop an overall Vision and set of 'Core Objectives' for the Neighbourhood Plan. This vision and objectives have formed the heart of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan, and can still be clearly seen in the final Plan.

3. OBJECTIVES AND INITIAL APPROACHES: NOVEMBER 2011

- 3.1 There were two aims of this stage of the consultation:
- to feedback the Vision and Core Objectives that were derived from the initial consultation weekend, and ask people whether they agreed with them; and
 - to explore initial approaches to where new housing development may go in Thame, and see how well different approaches met the Vision and Core Objectives.
- 3.2 As before, a meeting with the Working Group was held prior to the public session, taking place on Tuesday 15th November. This was followed by an open drop-in session at the Town Hall between 11am and 8pm on Friday 18th November and 10am to 6pm on Saturday 19th November.

WHO WAS CONSULTED

- 3.3 The event was promoted in a similar way to the October weekend. However, some of the less effective ways of promoting the event (radio in particular) were not used for this weekend. Most people heard about the event through the Thame Gazette or the banner outside the Town hall. Word of mouth and posters at key locations around the town also worked well.
- 3.4 479 people signed in across the two days, with more attending on Saturday than Friday. Most people were local residents, and most were newcomers with just 79 people also having attended the October event. Some landowners / developers – they were asked to make themselves known to councilors or the consultant team, and requests were made for them to avoid joining the discussion groups.

HOW PEOPLE WERE CONSULTED

- 3.5 The Vision and Objectives were displayed on exhibition boards, and a handout was provided for people to take away. Blank sheets were pinned on the walls next to the exhibition boards for people to comment on the Vision and Objectives.
- 3.6 Exhibition boards explaining the technical and planning issues that influence where new development may go in Thame were displayed. This led onto an exhibition of four initial approaches exploring where development may go. A form was provided listing some of the key core objectives, and people were invited to 'score' each of the initial approaches against these objectives and provide any additional comments that may wish to make.
- 3.7 As before, people were asked to sign in on arrival. Those who had not attended the previous event placed a dot on a map to show where they live. Almost all attendees were also given a verbal briefing by a team member or a Town Councillor and, wherever possible or wanted, helped through completing the form.
- 3.8 Having been welcomed, people were invited to look at what was on the exhibition boards, take a pen and comment, either directly on blank sheets on screens (e.g. for the Objectives) or on the prepared form (for 'Where Should Thame Grow?').
- 3.9 There were also blank sheets on which people could comment on Employment issues and the Cattle Market site (both also with exhibition boards) and on other, miscellaneous points ('Have we missed anything?').
- 3.10 There were opportunities for small ad hoc groups to sit with a team member to talk through the 'Where Should Thame Grow?' exercise.
- 3.11 As at the October weekend, the remarkable thing was how long people stayed, many for well over an hour as they filled in all or most sheets and forms. It was impossible to check, but very few people did not make at least some comment or put up at least a few ticks on the main sheets.
- 3.12 Not everybody filled in the 'Where Should Thame Grow?' form. There appeared to be several explanations for this:
- the type and nature of the information was quite challenging;
 - it was also challenging because what was shown was now getting site-specific;
 - some were reluctant to consider all possible choices, focusing solely on the one nearest to them;
 - some still resisted any notion of large scale development anywhere;
 - the addition of approaches that excluded the in-town sites made the form quite difficult to complete without help; and
 - the questions asked led a good number to take the form away, check the material on-line and to take more time to respond

MAIN ISSUES AND CONCERNS RAISED

- 3.13 **The Vision:** What was shown was a draft, using a standard definition of a market town: “a small town in the countryside which has a regular market and acts as a centre for surrounding farms and villages”.
- 3.14 Although this was not adapted to be specific to Thame, it attracted 163 ticks (support) and just a few crosses (not support). Very few comments were made about how to develop this statement or make it specific to Thame. However, some people didn't like the word 'small' and a suggestion was made that 'compact' would be a better term.
- 3.15 **The Objectives:** These covered objectives about Housing, Movement and Transport, Environment, Community and Economy. Each went down a level from the overall Vision into some more specific points, eg. “Objective M2: Improve existing pedestrian and cycle connections within Thame” or “Objective C1: Ensure that new housing contributes to social and community facilities that support the town as a whole”. These were expressed as objectives not solutions, i.e. what should be achieved, not how, what or where, though many comments were about specific ideas and suggestions.
- 3.16 There was strong majority support for the whole group of Objectives – 154 ticks this time.
- 3.17 The only real query, where different views were expressed was in relation to objective H2: “Locate some new housing within the existing built up area of Thame”.
- 3.18 The exhibition material also asked whether new development should be located within 20 minutes' walking distance of the Town Centre. There were a variety of comments, with most being supportive of keeping Thame as a 'walkable town'. However, there was some scepticism and suggestions that people would use their cars regardless.
- 3.19 Where Should Thame Grow: This section of the exhibition started with a series of diagrams that explained how different factors – flooding, visual impact, 20 minutes walking etc. – could be overlaid on each other to 'sieve' out some possible sites for new development, mainly but not solely for housing. The analysis generated several possible sites with a potential total capacity of well over the housing figure of 775 new homes likely to be decided for Thame, so this offered real choices as to where Thame could grow.
- 3.20 The plans also identified three potential sites within the town – the Cattle Market, the land at the Elms private house next to Elms Park and Lord Williams's Lower School. The team then displayed four different 'Approaches' to the growth of Thame by 775 new homes. Approaches 1 and 2 were based on the strong views expressed by local people at October's consultation that any new development should not be on one large site but spread around the Town. Approaches 3 and 4 were based on two possible 'strategic allocations' of 600 new homes that would be made through South Oxfordshire District Council's Core Strategy, along with 175 new homes on other sites. (N.B. This consultation event took place before the Inspector of SODC's Core Strategy decided to hand control for the allocation of all 775 new homes to the Thame Neighbourhood Plan. We therefore needed to 'twin track' two very different approaches at this stage).
- 3.21 Each of the approaches had two plans: one with new housing on in-town sites and one without (and so the edge of town sites were larger). A form asked people to comment on the four 'Approaches'. Although – as set out above – this form was difficult to use, a total of 139 forms were handed in. The results were often contradictory, suggesting some quite different views about where to develop. Key results:
- One clear(ish) result was a general feeling against using in-town sites, though this was complicated by the fact that all three shown had particular reasons for querying them – for example, the Lord Williams's Lower School is tied up with whether or not the school can be consolidated onto a single site.
 - The other slightly less clear result was that Approach 4 – a single large site south of the town – was least popular. This seemed to be mainly due to concerns about vehicular access, and the potential to create more traffic through the Town Centre.
 - Beyond that, views were very middling between the other approaches, all scoring overall an average of close to 3 out of 5 (though Approach 3 – the original single large site F - attracted lots of scores of 1 and lots of 5s!).

- Overall, however, strong support remained for dispersing new housing around the town.
- 3.22 The consultation report made two observations on the results: First that it is often the case that people favour several sites rather than one until they see the implications of using several. Secondly, that had the sites to the south extended east to allow an access from Wenman Road, that option may well have been viewed differently.

HOW THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED

- 3.23 This was a critical stage in initiating the next stage: the process of developing and testing a range of options for the future of Thame. A key issue that arose in the discussion on the four approaches was that they had been generated by a very 'technical' process of considering issues such as flooding, visual impact and so on. It became clear that – as the team developed options – issues of character, identify and how new development relates to the wider town would need to be carefully considered. The team subsequently undertook an appraisal of Thame's character to help develop this thinking, and this is set out in the Evidence Base Summary that supports the Plan.
- 3.24 It was clear that the issue of where Thame should grow is a complex one, and opinions expressed by local people were influenced by a range of considerations (such as support for or opposition to the amalgamation of the Lord Williams's School onto a single site). As such, it was not surprising that clear-cut views were not obtained from the consultation. However, there was clear support for the Vision and Core Objectives and so these remained as the starting point for generating options in the next stage. Minor amendments were made to the Vision and Core Objectives in response to the comments about H2 and the word 'small'.

4. OPTION DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING

- 4.1 The aim of this stage of the neighbourhood planning process was to use the feedback from November's consultation to develop a series of options for Thame and to test these. Given the complexity of the issues, Thame Town Council decided to focus this consultation stage, involving a core group of representatives from the Town Council and Residents' Associations.

WHO WAS CONSULTED

- 4.2 The Residents' Associations were represented as follows:

Chiltern Vale RA, representing 175 households	Nick Shott Yvonne Hook Barry Yates Jim Hughes
Lea Park RA, representing 1,296 households	Angela Willson
Oxford Road RA	Liz Wiles Ron Swanson
Priest End RA, representing 166 households	David Holme Ray Powell Roger Cooper
Towersey Road RA	Bob Austin Alex Taylor
Southern Thame RA	Andrew Payne

- 4.3 The following Town Councillors attended: David Bretherton, Adam Buckland, Nigel Champken-Woods, David Dodds, Mike Dyer, Helena Fickling, Andy Gunn, Vaughan Humphries, Peter Lambert, David Laver, Jeanette Matelot-Green, Mary Stiles, Michael Welby
- 4.4 In addition, two focus groups were held: one for older people and one for 20-30 year olds. The older people's focus group was arranged through the town's sheltered accommodation, and so was by invitation only. The following attended:
- Pam Lane, Glynis McCaslin – Playford Court
 - Shelia Morgan, Maggie Smart – Croft Court
 - Judith Stephenson, Cynthia Haynes, Rosemary Wilson, Ann Benham – Summersbee Court
 - Frances Bradbrook, Pat Davis, Dot Diamond, Ingrid Dale, Rodney Squires, Doris Squires – Pearce Court
- 4.5 The following attended the younger people's focus group at the James Figg pub: Judith Merry; Jamie Hazeldine; and Laura English. Attendance at this open meeting was disappointing, although the event was advertised on the Town Council website, on the Facebook Page and in the Town Council Newsletter.

HOW PEOPLE WERE CONSULTED

- 4.6 The process of consulting with the core group involved:
- a meeting on 28th February 2012, at which draft spatial options were presented to the core group and discussed with them;
 - liaison amongst the core group to further debate the options, resulting in agreement of the principles of a preferred way forward at a meeting of the core group on 16th April;
 - development and refinement of the preferred approach by Tibbalds to ensure it responded to the various constraints and opportunities identified through the Neighbourhood Planning process; and
 - presentation of the preferred approach (with options for the reserve land) to a meeting of the Core Group on 26th April. The preferred approach was agreed at this meeting.
- 4.7 The focus group meetings took place on 28th March 2012 and involved:
- an introduction to the Thame Neighbourhood Plan by Jeff Bishop;
 - a discussion about likes and dislikes about Thame at present, and hopes for the future; and
 - discussion around blank plans of Thame as to where new housing development could go.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONCERNS RAISED

- 4.8 The Meeting 28th February 2012 was to discuss work in progress (which comprised draft options for the growth of Thame) so that Tibbalds could refine and develop the options for how Thame could grow.
- 4.9 Tibbalds presented three draft options which had been developed with the help of feedback from November's consultation. These were:
- Walkable Thame: all new development is within approximately 20 minutes' walk of the Town Hall;
 - Public Transport Thame: achieves more dispersed development by breaching the 20 minute walking distance. Locates new development close to existing bus routes; and
 - Dispersed Thame: maximises the dispersal of sites around the town.
- 4.10 Key issues arising from the discussions included:
- Dispersal of development sites remained the key aim.

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- There was concern about the range of options shown for Lord Williams's Lower School – some show more open space than others. Given the lack of open space in this part of Thame, the meeting felt that it was essential that a good sized public open space is provided on this site if it comes forward for development.
 - The desire for strong boundaries to development was expressed as a priority. The way that new homes meet the surrounding countryside is very important to the look and feel of Thame – using existing boundaries such as the ring road and the flood plain were viewed as a good way of achieving a high quality 'edge' to the town.
 - There was concern that an opportunity is being missed to the south of Thame. The views of the Wenman Road industrial estate are awful. New development with open space on the south side could really improve this part of town.
 - 20 minutes was seen as a very long time to walk, and the principle of trying to locate all development within this walking distance was questioned.
- 4.11 The main issues raised by the older people's focus group included pride in the town's historic character and its individuality. The wide range of community organisations was appreciated.
- 4.12 A range of problems and opportunities were identified, including:
- Don't like the way Lea Park doesn't connect into the Town – residents have to drive all the way around the ring road to get to the Town Centre. Avoid this with any new development.
 - New housing is too dense
 - Need better buses – what about a loop bus system around the town, running every half an hour? What about a bus only route direct to the town centre from Lea Park?
 - There is nothing for youngsters to do. Need a drop-in centre.
 - Need a large meeting room
 - Need affordable homes, including lower cost sale and rent housing for younger people. Think about house types that might appeal to younger people – do they need gardens?
- 4.13 Where new housing development could go:
- Development should be spread around, not all on one site.
 - Development beyond the 'A' stretch of the ring road would be damaging.
 - Would a Tesco on the DAF site really harm the Town Centre? People already use the free Tesco bus service to shop out of Thame?
 - If the DAF site became a foodstore, then new housing and a primary school could be located in this general area (to the east of Thame) and there would be facilities to serve new and existing residents.
 - Sites to the south were generally supported.
 - This includes the site south of the Industrial Estate.
 - If Lord Williams's Lower School moves, don't fill all of that site with housing.
 - The Cattle Market site to be for community uses and parking, not a supermarket.
- 4.14 The main issues raised at the younger people's focus group were quite similar to the older people's response: Thame is liked because of its historic market town character, with not too many national chain shops. There are lots of clubs and societies, and the town has a good community feel. The countryside, Cuttle Brook and the Phoenix Trail are all valued. However, in contrast to the older people's group, the younger people felt that transport is not bad.
- 4.15 Like the older people's group, this group was concerned that there is nowhere for young people to meet - need a drop-in place, not a 'youth club' and not just for young people, better if mixed ages. There was concern about the cost of housing, especially local first time buyers – maybe more renting could help.
- 4.16 In discussing where new housing development could go, key points included:

- Spread development around, not on a single site (but see below).
- Avoid cramming, high densities.
- Make sure that parking standards are good.
- No development over the ring road.
- Manage the knock-on from the housing with more GPs, school places, maybe supermarket.
- But still a worry that this could spoil the small market town feeling.
- Ensure a wide mix of housing in terms of cost, own/rent, who gets – must be affordable.
- Leave some green gaps between developments.
- Try to make the best use of smaller infill sites in town.
- Good if Lord Williams's School moves – creates another town site.
- With all the above in mind, work out what might sensibly be got on the site opposite Lord Williams's School then maximise infill in town and then look at sites to the south, especially behind the industrial estate (better described as next door to Thame Park!)

HOW THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED

- 4.17 Following on from the meeting of 28 February 2012, the core group met to discuss the options and an alternative approach they had developed that better met the aspiration for dispersed development. This was followed with a meeting with Tibbalds on 16th April 2012. The meeting discussed the alternative option and the feedback provided on the alternative from Tibbalds. It was agreed to ask Tibbalds to draw up the option based on the core group's recommendations. This would become a fourth option (to be added to the three discussed at February's meeting) which could then be tested with the others through public consultation, the sustainability appraisal, and the by appraising against the Neighbourhood Plan's Core Objectives.
- 4.18 A meeting was held with the core group on 26th April 2012. The new Option 4 for the Thame Neighbourhood Plan that has been developed from the two previous meetings of representatives of Thame's Residents' Associations and Town Councillors was discussed. The meeting agreed that Option 4 with the employment land relocated to Site B is its preferred approach. Option 4 was selected as the preferred option because:
- it was seen as the best way of securing development that is widely dispersed around the town;
 - all of the development sites have clearly defined 'edges' beyond which development cannot spread. Thus, development sites will form a permanent relationship with the surrounding countryside - there is an opportunity to make sure this relationship is of high quality design; and
 - new development to the south of Thame makes the most of the opportunity to improve the currently unattractive edge formed by the Wenman Road industrial area.
- 4.19 It was agreed that consultation with everyone within Thame was needed to check whether the preferred approach is supported by local people. The meeting agreed to undertake a public consultation exercise where all four options are explained, with Option 4 recommended to local people as the best way forward.

5. PREFERRED OPTIONS STAGE

- 5.1 Consultation of this preferred spatial option was undertaken between 28 May and 22 June 2012. The consultation involved delivering approximately 5,500 leaflets setting out the preferred option to homes and businesses in Thame, and inviting responses on a feedback form.

WHO WAS CONSULTED

- 5.2 All residents and businesses within the town were consulted through the leaflet. In addition:
- key landowners / developers were contacted and provided with a copy of the leaflet; and
 - the main statutory consultees were contacted. These were Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage, Thames Water, Oxfordshire County Council, and South Oxfordshire District Council.

HOW PEOPLE WERE CONSULTED

- 5.3 As well as posting the leaflet, the consultation was publicised in the following ways:
- an exhibition of the content of the leaflet at the Thame Information Centre;
 - the publication of the leaflet on Thame Town Council's website along with an on-line feedback form;
 - through regular issues of the Thame Town Council newsletter;
 - on the Thame Neighbourhood Plan Facebook Page;
 - via the Thame Neighbourhood Plan Twitter feed; and
 - through 50 A3 posters displayed at a variety of locations around the town.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONCERNS RAISED

- 5.4 835 feedback forms were received from local people, along with written responses from:
- Paul Fincken and Robert Linnell representing Site F;
 - ProVision Consulting representing Site B;
 - Mr and Mrs Vickers, owners of the Elms Estate; and
 - Banner Homes, who have an option on the western part of Site D.
- 5.5 The responses showed:
- There was strong support for the preferred option's approach of locating the majority of homes on Sites C, D and F.
 - There was greater support for reserve housing sites being located on Sites F and C than on F and B.
 - Overall, there was support for the development on land attached to The Elms Estate but there was strong opposition to this at 40% of respondents saying no development should take place.
 - Whilst there was overall support for Lord Williams's School being on one site, there was also some opposition and this issue received a large number of comments.
 - There was strong support for mixed-use development on the Cattle Market site.
 - There was much stronger support for a new community facility on the Cattle Market or Lord Williams's Lower School sites than for a new facility on the Southern Road Recreation Ground.
 - There was concern about Thame having sufficient facilities to support a growing population, ranging from the need for healthcare facilities to schools, from more shops to a new community facility.

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- 5.6 In addition to 'yes/no' responses, people were invited to make comments. Comments were made in relation to a wide range of topics, and these are reported in detail in the consultation report. The key themes are set out below:
- 5.7 **Housing on Site F:** A total of 60 comments were received in relation to housing on Site F, of which 42 were in support and 18 opposed. There were concerns about the visual impact of development on Site F. Others indicated that most housing should go to Site F – vehicular access often being cited as being good compared to other sites.
- 5.8 **Housing on Sites D and C:** A combined total of 48 comments were made in relation to Sites C and D, of which 24 were in support and 24 opposed. There were concerns that southern Thame is taking more than its fair share of development, and new housing is not really spread around the town as local people want. There was concern about traffic impact from Sites C and D. Site D was viewed as being a walkable distance to town, and therefore a good development site.
- 5.9 **Housing on the Elms:** A total of 38 comments were received in relation to housing on the Elms, of which 7 were in support and 31 opposed. There was concern that development on the Elms would significantly adversely affect the conservation area.
- 5.10 **Supermarket on Cattle Market:** A total of 38 comments were received in relation to a supermarket being developed on the Cattle Market site, with 23 expressing support and 15 being opposed. Many comments identified the need for an affordable food supermarket (such as Sainsbury's) in supporting a supermarket on the Cattle Market site. Some comments related to fears that an out-of-town supermarket (e.g. on the DAF site) could come forward, thus undermining the town centre. People therefore expressed a preference for a supermarket on the Cattle Market site in order to ensure an out-of-town facility does not come forward.
- 5.11 **Community facility need:** A total of 39 comments were received in relation to the need for a community facility (27 in favour, 12 suggesting that there is no need) The need for a large community facility was questioned by some, but supported by more. If a community facility is needed, people suggested that existing options should be explored (such as The Barns Centre and the Town Hall) – can they be used more efficiently? There needs to be a central community facility to which people can walk.
- 5.12 **Moving the Lower School:** A total of 67 comments were received in relation to the consolidation of Lord Williams's Lower School, of which 15 were in favour and 52 against.
- 5.13 There was a concern that a consolidated school would be too large and result in a loss of the school's 'community feel'. There was particular concern about the impact of a large school on younger pupils, who may feel overwhelmed. There was concern about the loss of comparatively new buildings on the Lower School site if it is developed for residential.
- 5.14 **Traffic concerns:** A total 57 comments were received in relation to concerns about traffic. These were principally in relation to general concerns that Thame's infrastructure cannot take the extra traffic and that there is insufficient parking in the town centre. Specific concerns were raised about Sites C and D, with a need for regular public transport to the town centre identified.

HOW THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED

- 5.15 The next steps following the consultation was to decide on the preferred option and develop a draft Thame Neighbourhood Plan that could be formally consulted on. The issues and concerns raised at the Preferred Option Consultation Stage were taken on board as follows:
- The preferred option with reserve land on Sites F and C was agreed to form the basis of the Plan.
 - Detailed information that had been shared by the representatives of the Elms House with Thame Town Council was made available as part of the Evidence Base, so providing the technical heritage appraisal that some consultees requested.
 - The Plan needs to include policies to secure the infrastructure required to support a growing population across a wide range of social, community, retail and employment uses.

- The Plan needs to include policies that relate to securing good pedestrian and cycle links between the town and the development sites, and to mitigating traffic impact.

6. REGULATION 14 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Regulation 14 consultation on the Thame Neighbourhood Plan was carried out between 21 August 2012 and 3 October 2012.

WHO WAS CONSULTED

- 6.2 Thame Town Council developed a consultation strategy that aimed to engage with as wide a cross-section of Thame's population as possible, and provide a wide variety of different ways for people to get involved. The aim was to ensure that all local residents and businesses were aware of the draft Plan and how to comment on it.
- 6.3 In addition all relevant statutory consultees were contacted by e-mail. Key statutory consultees (including adjoining local authorities and parish councils) were also contacted by letter and sent a copy of the draft Thame Neighbourhood Plan.

HOW PEOPLE WERE CONSULTED

- 6.4 Thame Town Council consulted local people by:
- uploading the draft Thame Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents to the Town Council website;
 - providing a hard copy of the Plan and supporting documents in the Town Hall Information Centre and Library;
 - publicising the Plan in a variety of ways and encouraging people to feedback using the standard form via post or by e-mail;
 - holding open topic-based meetings to answer questions about the Plan;
 - holding informal meetings with local interest groups to answer questions and encourage groups to fee back formally; and
 - inviting developers / landowners to hold individual site-specific exhibitions.
- 6.5 Publicising the consultation events involved:
- a residents newsletter delivered by Royal Mail to every household in the Parish;
 - providing information in the Town Council's regular weekly e-mail newsletter;
 - displaying posters at 39 locations around the town, including sports clubs and on streets;
 - holding an exhibition at a market stall at Thame's weekly market;
 - displaying a banner across the High Street;
 - issuing press releases to the local press; and
 - having a prominent 'wrap around' the Thame Gazette newspaper.
- 6.6 The following meetings and events took place:
- 6 September 2012: Environment Topic – attended by 11 members of the public
 - 12 September 2012: Housing Topic – attended by 23 members of the public
 - 19 September 2012: Movement Topic – attended by 17 members of the public
 - 25 September 2012: Market stall from 9am until 2pm
 - 26 September 2012: Economy Topic – attended by 12 members of the public
 - 27 September 2012: Exhibition of Site C and D
 - 28 September 2012: Exhibition of Land at The Elms
 - Exhibition of Site B
 - 1 October 2012: Exhibition of Site F

- 3 October 2012: Community Topic – attended by 22 members of the public

MAIN ISSUES AND CONCERNS RAISED

6.7 A total of 221 formal consultation responses were received. 25 were received after the deadline, but it was decided to consider these.

6.8 A summary of the consultation responses, along with how the Thame Neighbourhood Plan has responded to comments made, is provided in the Regulation 14 Consultation Report. There was a wide range of issues raised. However, the key points were around four main issues:

- Support for the Plan's residential allocations – 31 comments
- Opposition to the distribution of residential allocations – 33 comments
- Opposition to development at Land at The Elms – 32 comments
- Concerns about the process of producing the Plan – 9 comments

Residential allocations: Comments supporting and opposing the distribution of residential allocations were evenly split, with 33 opposing the distribution and 31 supporting the Plan in general and identifying support for the proposed distribution. The majority of those opposing the distribution suggested an alternative allocation of increasing the number of homes on Site F, and reducing the number to the south of Thame on Sites C and D.

Land at The Elms: There was opposition to development on Land at the Elms. This opposition ranged from suggesting that no new housing at all should be allocated on the site to suggestions that the number of dwellings proposed was too many and should be reduced. A range of issues were identified by opponents, including loss of valuable green space within the town, impact on the Thame Conservation Area and listed buildings, proximity to existing dwellings on Nelson Streets, impact on views from Elms Park, and traffic impact on Nelson Street / Elms Road / Southern Road.

The process of producing the Plan: There were some concerns raised about the process of producing the Plan. Specific issues included: the whole exercise is confusing and complex; the preferred option was not developed through a public process; how representative are the Residents' Associations?

6.9 Other issues raised included:

- **Allotments.** There was concern about the pedestrian / cycle link shown between Site D and the Phoenix Trail: would this result in a loss of allotments? There was also concern that the allotments were not identified as open space to be protect in Figure
- **Natural green space / biodiversity:** There were several comments that the Thame Neighbourhood Plan had not considered natural green space and biodiversity sufficiently. Many of these came from people involved in a local group, Wild About Thame. The Town Council held a meeting with Wild About Thame on 11 October to discuss and clarify the issues raised.
- **Misunderstanding of Site B:** There were many comments opposing development on land East of Thame, and there seemed to be some misunderstanding of what is proposed. This misunderstanding may have arisen from the testing of options in the Evidence Base Summary Report and the exhibition held by promoters of land East of Thame, which aimed to convince local people that a large allocation on Site B would be a better approach to the town than the allocations set out in the Thame Neighbourhood Plan. No residential development is proposed on Site B. An employment allocation of three hectares is made on the southern part of Site B, adjacent to existing employment areas.

- **Dwellings behind Griffin Road:** Residents of Griffin Road questioned the location of dwellings to the rear of their gardens, and suggested that the site would work just as well with houses located next to Meadow Croft.
- **Location of burial space:** There were comments that most burials would take place following a service at St Mary's Church. It would therefore make sense for new burial space to be located close to St Mary's (e.g. on Site F) rather than in the more distant location of Site C or D.
- **Affordable housing and dwelling mix strategy:** There were some comments (principally from developers) on the practicality of a single strategy, particularly how developer contributions would be collected in advance of planning applications being progressed. Respondents questioned what would happen if one or more of the allocated sites refused to contribute, thus holding the study up.
- **Southern Road Recreation Area:** There was some confusion as to whether this area had been selected as the preferred location for a new community facility. However, the intent of the policy was to highlight the location as one of a number of *possible* locations and – if it was selected – to ensure that improvements to the existing open space would be secured to offset the small loss of open space.
- **Allotments:** a need for new allotments was raised by several respondents. However, these are required by the site-specific policies and so this issue is already addressed.
- **Lack of specific proposals for walking and cycling:** comments were made that there are not enough specific proposals for improving walking and cycling within the town.
- **Paragraph numbers:** Several respondents commented that it was difficult to reference the Plan, and the introduction of paragraph numbers would be helpful.

HOW THE ISSUES AND CONCERNS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED

6.10 In relation to the main issues, the following has been considered:

Housing allocations: The housing allocations in the Thame Neighbourhood Plan have been developed as a result of a robust process of consulting with local people, appraising technical issues, checking site availability and testing a series of options. With the exception of Land at The Elms (see below), no changes have been made to the housing allocation.

Land at The Elms: English Heritage was concerned about the potential impact of 60 dwellings on the setting of the listed building and the Thame Conservation Area. Some local people had similar concerns. Detailed discussions have been held with English Heritage (EH) and Thame Town Council has decided to reduce the allocation on Land at The Elms to 45 dwellings.

Process: The process of consultation and engagement over the past 13 months has been open and transparent, with many opportunities for local people to express their views. This is set out in the consultation reports of every stage of producing the Thame Neighbourhood Plan. It is accepted, however, that Neighbourhood Planning is by its very nature a complex process that involves different groups of people at different times. Not all decisions can be made collectively by the entire population of the town. However, the process has been designed to ensure that everyone has had the opportunity to have their say at critical points in the process.

As such, the Town Council is satisfied that it is appropriate to continue on with the next stages of producing the Plan: making appropriate changes in response to consultation comments and submitting to SODC to begin the adoption process.

6.11 In relation to other issues, the following changes have been made to the Plan:

- The proposed north-south link through the allotments has been removed.
- The allotments have been identified as open space to be protected in Fig 10.1.
- Natural green spaces have been added to Fig 10.1 so that they are also protected.
- Figs A2, A4, A6 and A14 have been amended to include a clearer requirement for natural green space.
- The allocation for Lord Williams's Lower School has been amended to be more flexible, so that new dwellings on the northern part of the site are either adjacent to Griffin Road OR adjacent to Meadow Croft.
- In locating new burial space to the south of Thame, the Plan has considered the surrounding environment with a view to providing an appropriately tranquil setting. It is felt that land to the south of Thame is better in this regard than land on Site F, which is closer to St Mary's Church but adjacent to the ring road.
- The requirement for a town-wide Affordable Housing and Dwelling Mix Strategy has been amended to require individual developers to produce a Strategy to accompany any planning application for new residential development. This maintains the principle of ensuring housing meets local needs, but is more straightforward to achieve as it avoids the need for all developers to provide financial contributions and also links the Strategy more closely with a planning application, thus making it easier to enforce.
- The policy wording of Policy 11C-P2 has been revised to make the intentions relating to a possible community facility at Southern Road clearer.
- No changes are proposed in relation to proposals for improving walking and cycling. The Neighbourhood Plan is a planning policy document. As such, it does not attempt to provide a detailed plan for all the things that could happen in Thame over the next 15 years. Instead it provides a clear policy context within which detailed proposals to improve the town can be brought forward in partnership with local people.
- Paragraph numbers have been included.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Consultation Statement and the supporting consultation reports are considered to comply with Section 15(2) of part 5 of the 2012 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations.

Appendix A: Thame Neighbourhood Plan

Statutory Consultees list

Organisation	Contact	Role	email	Phone number
South Oxfordshire District Council	Beryl Guiver		beryl.guiver@southandvale.gov.uk	
Oxfordshire County Council	Linda Currie		linda.currie@oxfordshire.gov.uk	
HCA	Odele Payne	Transport Planner	odele.payne@oxfordshire.gov.uk	
Natural England	Judith Smallman		judith.smallman@hca.gsx.gov.uk	
Environment Agency	Jack Moeran	Planning Liason Officer Deputy Head of Planning and Local Authority	jack.moeran@environment-agency.gov.uk	01623 637 000 DD 01623 637 383
The Coal Authority	Rachael Bust	Liaison	planningconsultation@coal.gov.uk	
English Heritage	Martin Small	Planning Advisor	Martin.Small@english-heritage.org.uk	
Thames Water	Mark Mathews		mark.mathews@thameswater.co.uk	
National Grid (Entec on behalf of ...)	Carmelle Bell		townplanningpolicy@thameswater.co.uk	
National Grid Plant Protection	Damien Holdstock		damien.holdstock@entecuk.co.uk	0800 688 588
UK Power Networks			plantprotection@uk.ngrid.com	08701 964 599
Southern gas networks			jon.gill@ukpowernetworks.co.uk	0141 418 4093
Mobile Operators Association			plantlocation@scotiagasnetworks.co.uk	1412702736
Thames Valley Strategic Health Authority	Carolyn Wilson		carolyn.wilson@monoconsultants.com	
	N Woods		Jubilee House 5510 John Smith Drive, OX4 2LH	01865 3(37295) or 01865 336736
Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust	David Knight		david.knight@oxfordshirepct.nhs.uk	
Buckinghamshire Primary Care Trust	Katherine Woolley		Katherine.Woolley@buckspt.nhs.uk	
	Teresa Donnelly		Teresa.Donnelly@buckinghamshire.nhs.uk	
Network Rail	Colin Field		townplanningwestern@networkrail.co.uk	
Highways Agency	Anthony Powell		planningse@highways.gsi.gov.uk	01306 878182
Sport England	Victoria Aston		planning_southeast@sportengland.org	020 7273 1904
Buckinghamshire County Council		Environmental Services	strat_planning@buckscc.gov.uk	
Neighbouring parishes				
Great Haseley	Mrs Simcox		janessimcox@tiscali.co.uk	
Tetsworth	Mrs Pullen		clerk@tetsworthparishcouncil.co.uk	
Sydenham	Mrs Mullins		parish.council@sydenhamvillage.net	
Towersey	Mrs Willis		joannewillis@btinternet.com	
Aylesbury Vale District Council	David Bradley		DBroadley@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk ; abarton@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk	01296 585866
Parishes:				
Shabbington	Mrs M Hall		info@long-crendon.com ; grant.stevens@long-crendon.com	01844 201332
Long Crendon	Grant Stevens		clerk@haddenham-bucks-pc.gov.uk	
Haddenham	Mrs G Dudley		Dovehouse Farm, HP17 8LY	
Kingsey	Mr Baker			

Appendix B: List of All Consultees

Name	Organisation
Developers and Landowners	
A Ross	Broadway Malyan (Site C)
Simon Gamage	RPS Group (Site D)
D Crofts	RPS Group (Site D)
A Raven	Savills (Site F)
Jeff Lowe	Jeffery Charles Emmett (Site F)
Steven Smallman	Carter Jonas (Sites A & B)
Mel Clinton	Nash Partnership (The Elms)
Paul Mcann	Banner Homes
D Veasey	Broadway Malyan (Site C)
Jeremy Caulton	I Cube Ltd
David McFarlane	S P Broadway
Paul Fincken	Regeneration Holdings
Giuseppe Zanre	David Wilson Homes Southern
Paul Moran	David Wilson Homes
James Castle	Landowner,
Andy Birch	Hallam Land
Paul Vickery	GKA Group
Simon Vickers	Rectory Homes
Working Group	
Adrian Hutson	
Alan Garratt	
Ali Jinman	
Alun Rowe	
Andrew Godman	
Andy Ford	
Andy Sims	
Angela Willson	
Angus Lachlan, Cricket Club	
Anna Furlonger	
Anne Terry	
Betty Parsley	
Bob Austin	
Catherine Hollingsworth	
Chris Hurdman	
Christopher Williams, BBO Wildlife Trust	
Frank Metcalf	
Frank Thompson, Football Club	
Helena Richards	
Joanna Holopainen	
John Boulton	
Kath Daly	
Liz Wiles	
Mark David	
Mark Hawthorne	
Mark Williams	
Matthew Cundy	

Thame Neighbourhood Plan Consultees

Maurice Kirtland
Michael Clare
Michelle Diffey
Nick Marriner
Paul Earley
Reg Koster
Richard Harrington
Richard Thurbon
Rosalie Gibson
Rugby Club
Ruth Cornish
Shelley Ghazi
Simon Ralphs
Terry Guest
Tom Fox
Tyrell Gillman
Val Jonas
Yvonne Hook

Statutory Consultees

Beryl Guiver	South Oxfordshire District Council
Linda Currie	Oxfordshire County Council
Odele Payne	
Stephanie Ainsworth	Buckinghamshire County Council HCA Natural England
Jack Moeran	Environment Agency
Rachael Bust	The Coal Authority
Martin Small	English Heritage
Mark Mathews	Thames Water
Carmelle Bell	
Damien Holdstock	National Grid (Entec on behalf of ...) National Grid Plant Protection UK Power Networks Southern gas networks
Carolyn Wilson	Mobile Operators Association
David Knight	Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust
Teresa Donnelly	Buckinghamshire Primary Care Trust
Colin Field	Network Rail
Anthony Powell	Highways Agency
Victoria Aston	Sport England
David Broadley	Aylesbury Vale District Council

Neighbouring Parishes

Mrs Simcox	Great Haseley
Mrs Pullen	Tetsworth
Mrs Mullins	Sydenham
Mrs Willis	Towersey
Cathy Taylor	
Grant Stevens	Long Crendon

Thame Neighbourhood Plan Consultees

Mrs G Dudley
Mr Baker

Haddenham
Kingsey

Website Newsletter Mailing List

David
Tim Lancaster
McCann
Davies
Sonja Francis
Helena Richards
Duncan Ives
Justin Nelson
Stella Jackson
Dr P Winson
N Shott
Dave Rushbrook
Park Earley
Katriona Ormiston
Dom V Easey
Paul Vicary
Simon Vickers
Wheatley Parish Council
Katie Sprackman
Adam Ross
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John Rook
Laura Ross
Julia Castle
Samuel Dix
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K Perrin
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Ben Wrighton
Andy Birch
Ross Kilgour
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Ray Brown
Nik Lyzba
Rober
Jean Nunn-Price
Justine Bailey
Bob Williams
Lisa Fowler

Thame Neighbourhood Plan Consultees

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