



Thame Green Living Plan

Short Version

A plan to protect and improve the environment of Thame for the long-term health and vitality of the town and its community



This Green Living Plan was prepared on a voluntary basis by the RSA Thame Group.

Note: This short version and the full version of the Green Living Plan have been developed by and are the copyright of members of the RSA Thame Group acting as honorary consultants to Thame Town Council. The full version of the Green Living Plan is available on www.thametowncouncil.gov.uk/GLP

What is a Green Living Plan and why do we need it?

The Thame Neighbourhood Plan of 2013 (TNP), approved by Thame residents, allocated sites for the further housing then required by government and planning authorities. The content of Neighbourhood Plans is, however, strictly limited by law. TNP accordingly recommended that there be a Green Living Plan for Thame (GLP) to follow up on issues of quality of life and sustainability in the town. As there is no clear precedent for a Green Living Plan, Thame is pioneering in producing one, which gives it the opportunity to think holistically for the broader environment and vitality of the town and its community. In development for some time, the GLP is now offered for full community consultation.

In accepting that we will have many more homes in our area, this plan is a call to act to protect and enhance the quality of life in the things that really matter - the air we breathe, the green spaces we use, the water that is essential to all life, our handling of waste, overall wellbeing, and the natural world that we live in.

This plan is itself intended to be green and living, suitable for our changing environment and ready to be revisited and adapted as appropriate. It opens with the objectives, approach and processes involved (Part 1) and continues with an analysis of the five main focus areas covered (Part 2). The plan concludes with what is currently only a framework (Part 3) which will be developed after consultation with specific proposals and a progressive delivery strategy.

The RSA Thame Group¹ acknowledges and thanks those who have worked with us or contributed to this plan. Please see Appendix 1 for further details. After consultation, the revised Green Living Plan will be submitted for final approval to the Thame Town Council in a process intended to run alongside development of the proposed new Thame Neighbourhood Plan, for which it is intended to be a key evidence base.

This GLP is focused on Thame, but we hope that it will provide a basis and stimulus to encourage other communities to develop similar plans adapted to their own local issues.

The full plan discusses the relevant issues and information sources in much greater detail. References in brackets are to paragraph numbers of the relevant part in the full plan.

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I Introduction (part 1)

Thame is an attractive, historic market town set within farming country in South Oxfordshire, recognised as a desirable place to live. The town faces the challenge of retaining its environment and vitality while accommodating substantial additional housing and employment. Its commuter links also place increased strain on its infrastructure.

The Thame Town Council (**TTC**), acting through its Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee (**NPCC**) has commissioned the RSA Thame Group (**RSATG**) to act as honorary consultants to the Council to prepare and develop the Green Living Plan for Thame².

Why A Green Living Plan For Thame? (2)

The objective of the Green Living Plan for Thame

The objective is a plan to protect and improve the environment of Thame for the long-term health and vitality of the town and its community.

How can this objective be achieved?

- By establishing a set of clear green living principles of general acceptance
- By using the GLP as a key evidence base for the revised Neighbourhood Plan
- By promoting these principles to all local planning authorities - and beyond
- By reviewing planning proposals against the plan's recommendations
- By building a databank of local information and expertise
- By assessing priorities and resources for further research and action
- By town-led initiatives
- By individual and collective actions of those in Thame supporting the plan.

Green Living Principles and Approach (3)

The meaning of 'environment' and 'sustainability' (3.1)

Environment = external influences on how people, animals, plants grow and develop³.

Sustainability = Using our resources without harming wildlife, plants or people.

'Sustainability' means different things to different people, especially in planning terminology. We use it here to indicate living full lives without damaging our natural resources - green spaces, natural habitats, biodiversity or wildlife. This means that a plan for a sustainable future must a) avoid unnecessary waste; b) recognise that natural resources are sensitive and limited; and c) use them in a way that avoids damage to us, animals, plant life and future generations.

National planning policy (3.3)

Driven by government policies to have more houses built, the current position is that for planning purposes there is a presumption in favour of development - provided that development is sustainable. Nationally there is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - 2012, which seeks to maintain a viable balance between more homes and the environment. (Note: The NPPF is being updated as this edition of the GLP is being prepared. Future editions will reflect the NPPF changes when applicable and practicable.) We need to do whatever we can to ensure that those rules are supported by practice.

Limitations (3.4)

Planning - Planning authorities have limited ability to refuse planning applications compliant with the Local Plan and any valid Neighbourhood Plan. The community's best approach therefore is to press for the recommendations of this plan to be followed in the next neighbourhood plan as far as possible, and to encourage would-be developers to take in account the objectives of this plan.

Highways - Roads and road crossings are the responsibility of the Highways Department of Oxfordshire County Council, not of Thame TC or SODC. Therefore while the GLP seeks improved footpaths and cycleways in safe, clean places, it does not cover roads, parking and transport, which are to be covered in a separate Thame Transport Plan.



Analysis and Focus Areas (part 2)

1 Open Spaces, Green Routes & Our Natural World (Green)

Objectives of this part: To protect, enhance and connect our open green spaces and the habitats of our natural world; to improve and extend footpaths and cycleways to give us pleasant and healthy ways to move around and maintain our well-being.

The full implications of development are not always immediately apparent. But when we lose open space or hedgerows we also lose the connections on which plants, shrubs, animals, insects, birds and other forms of natural life rely to get from one part of their world to another. More houses need not squeeze out the space and connections that we and the creatures around us need to remain healthy. We need to find a balance. We also need pleasant and safe places to walk and cycle if we are to leave our cars at home and reduce the pollution and major environmental damage they cause.



1.1 Open and Green Spaces

- **Thame already below average** - Even before the latest new houses, Thame had less green space than the average in South Oxfordshire. Apart from areas in developments, the only extra TNP designated green space is on Lord Williams's Lower School site (if developed).
- **The 'soft edges' and key edge features of Thame** - The TNP emphasised the importance of a 'soft edge' to the town, minimising the visual impact of development on views from the countryside.
- **Woodland, orchards and gardens** - Thame is surrounded by farmland but short of trees, giving great opportunities for trees, orchards, and other community schemes.



1.2 Walking Routes in and Around Thame (1.2-1.3)

- The TNP recommended a) enhancing pedestrian and cycling links to the town centre; and b) riverside walks adjacent to new housing sites.
- **GLP Vision** - NHS statistics show that walking is good for health (and the NHS!) The GLP seeks to enable more people to access good quality, attractive paths with a choice of routes, destinations and connections, including walking routes through and adjacent to the local countryside.
- **Footpaths** - As a growing centre, Thame needs more and better footpaths. Much of the surrounding farmland is private with few public footpaths, and where these exist, many become rutted, muddy or have livestock, all being a deterrent to walkers. Our countryside then acts as another barrier, forcing us into cars to drive elsewhere.
- **New developments** - New developments often lack clear signposting for pedestrians or safe walking and cycling connections with other parts of the town.
- **Long Crendon** - The lack of a safe foot/ cycle crossing of the A418 by-pass is an increasing barrier to the north side of Thame.
- **River Thame** - There is concessionary access to the meadow by the River Thame (when not flooded) but no other easy access from town to its namesake river.

1.3 Cycle Routes (1.4)

- **Cycle routes principles** - The TNP identifies the need for more dedicated cycle routes, but little has happened. Different groups of cyclists have common cause but often different priorities. The GLP emphasis is on leisure and current/ potential commuter cyclists and school children, where the greatest increase in cycle use might be made. Barriers against cycling should also be addressed.
- **Haddenham & Thame Cycleway** - The plan is very long-standing and a prime TNP objective. The concentration now is on the feasibility of a 'road route' alongside the busy A418 and fast Thame Road to the station. The charity Sustrans has produced a feasibility study for OCC and BCC but the project is moving very slowly, partly because of the logistics of seeking rights over adjacent land, partly around the A418 roundabout issue, and partly because of likely high costs.

- **Oxford-Cambridge Expressway Project** - The southern of the three proposed corridors would pass just north of Thame, adding extra uncertainty.

1.4 Green Infrastructure and the Natural World (Biodiversity) (1.5)

- **What is biodiversity?** - Biodiversity means the variety of natural living things in our world. That diversity depends on retaining suitable spaces for plants and creatures and on connections between them. Each hedgerow uprooted, or copse removed, destroys not just the homes but also the pathways for most plants and creatures that live, feed or breed there.

- **Why does biodiversity matter?** - Our insect, animal and plant life is declining faster than ever in recorded memory. This is not just through climate change but because of what we humans are doing to our natural world. The lack of insects will damage our trees and birds, the absence of bees seeking pollen will lead to the loss of apples on our trees, crops in our fields or flowers in our gardens. Uprooted hedgerows and grassland will lose us our wonderful mammal life and butterflies. Without fish and aquatic animals, our rivers will be little more than drainage ditches.

- **Air, environment and pollination** - Trees, plants and grassland help remove greenhouse gases to keep our air and water clean and our climate moderate; they rely on birds and insects to convey and continue the natural life cycle. And many plants have still-used medicinal properties.

- **Government and national policies** - Government policy has long recognised concerns and the need to help reverse the damaging trends⁴. The NPPF requires 'Local planning authorities to plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.' We need to find ways to give meaningful expression to these principles in scrutinising further development proposals and action.

- **Local action** - Voluntary bodies locally do great work in strategic locations, but need ongoing support. The first step is to build up a detailed picture of the current position, to establish benchmarks, and to develop priorities for action. This should include wildlife corridors and vegetation, larger and more resilient wildlife areas and connections between them.

- **Dogs** - As the town's population increases, greater efforts will be needed to find the right balance between pets and the needs of the natural world.

1.5 Some Practical Ideas for Action (1.6)

■ Open space

- Identify and create - new parks/ communal open space to meet shortfall
- Protect - existing accessible open spaces against development
- Promote - TNP 'spatial vision' and 'soft edges' concepts/ protection against erosion (e.g. the ridge line to the east of Thame⁵ as an edge to development and the critical green boundary between Thame and Moreton);

- Plant - more trees, woodlands, orchards, wildflower and public gardens⁶.
- Create - Community-led gardens, orchards and similar schemes, set up in many towns, which are known to be highly therapeutic and beneficial to health⁷.

■ Green routes

- Encourage - all opportunities to make the cycle path to Haddenham a reality
- Footpaths - protect existing paths through use and action; seek new connections
- Improve - pedestrian and cycling routes through town and around for leisure and to encourage alternatives to car use
- Develop - other cycling routes and 'Thame-ring' walking route with connections*
- Maximise - opportunities to extend riverside walks
- Emphasise - inter-connections of routes in all future development
- Seek - safer routes to school and encourage cycling by all

■ The natural world

- Protect - and take practical steps to encourage plant, insect and animal life
- Maintain and re-introduce - green biodiversity corridors and habitats
- Develop - a closer relationship with and access to the River Thame

■ Further thoughts

- green information panels and linked online resources
- the green gym concept, i.e. keeping fit through environmental work
- a community orchard with related seasonal events
- schools, families and others to support nature-friendly zones
- countryside 'how to' sessions for residents and volunteers
- closer relationship with local landowners and farmers to help the natural world

*Notes

Footpaths - To avoid prejudging existing uses or possible development, it is suggested that a study of existing footpaths hedgerows, streams and other natural features could indicate where a footpath ring and connections might be possible.

Cycle routes - Ideas and possible routes could be considered by a working party reviewing this section of the GLP. These ideas might also be fed back into the Oxfordshire Cycling Network proposals and/or into future editions of the TNP.

2 Water and Drainage (Blue)

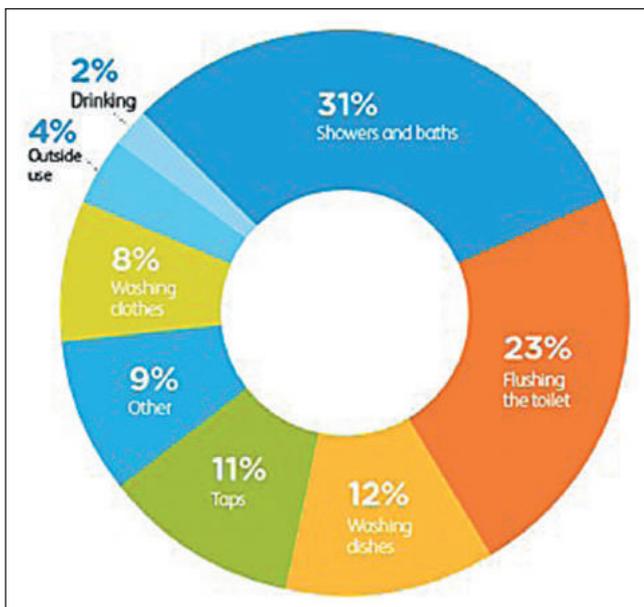
Objectives of this part: *To regard water as an essential resource for human, animal and other natural life; to accept that we should use less of it and plan ahead to conserve it; to take action to ensure that water in our taps and rivers is clean and safe for consumption; to learn from experience elsewhere in effective flood management. (2.1 - Green Living Principles.)*

2.1 The Need for Water (2.3)

■ **Outline** - Increasing population, greater general demand and climate change will put increasing demands on our water supplies, especially in the rural areas of Oxfordshire, which is one of the driest counties in the country. In 2016 the Environment Agency (EA) identified the Oxford area, including Thame, as already 'seriously water stressed' - even before the scheduled number of new homes and commercial development.

■ **Thames Water (TW)** - Thames Water has identified a major shortfall of water supply for the Thames region in the coming decades, which it proposes to tackle by reducing water leakage and increasing water efficiency and, if necessary, by providing a huge reservoir at Abingdon.

■ **Water consumption** - Water consumption in South Oxfordshire in 2016 was above 140 litres per head per day. With new homes and higher use, this is expected to rise by a considerable factor. The Thames Water target, however, is to reduce consumption to 100 litres per head per day by 2030 by increasing metering, pressure reduction, improved leakage control, increasing water charges and continuing publicity campaigns. In practice the only proven method of getting people to use less is to charge more. And in periods of prolonged drought, more drastic measures may be required. It thus seems inevitable that water will become ever more expensive, both for supply and for waste water removal. People will reduce costs by consuming less - or go without!



Typical household water use (from TW website)

■ Typical water use and water saving measures

- Turn off water while brushing teeth
- Take shorter showers/ smaller baths
- Use low flush or composting toilets
- Run the dishwasher only when full
- Use an eco-dishwasher/washing machine or program
- Collect and use water from a rain barrel.
- Use grey water for indoor plants as well as gardens and planters.
- Rinse dishes in a basin rather than under running water - reuse as grey water
- Avoid buying bottled water
- Car washes use less water than hoses
- Mulch garden beds.
- Use a soaker hose instead of a sprinkler.
- Get an aerator for your tap.
- Overall - make a real effort to conserve water.

2.2 The Thame Valley (2.2)

■ **The Thame Valley** drains rainwater from the area via a series of Thame tributaries. While largely outside the TNP Thame area, the River Thame forms a significant part of the town's boundary and is a largely unused but potentially valuable amenity for the town. At the margins for Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, it may be neglected by both.

■ **Voluntary bodies** - The River Thame Conservation Trust (RTCT) works with local volunteers, farmers and landowners to improve biodiversity of the watercourses and public appreciation and enjoyment of the river and its wildlife. Improving water quality is the cornerstone of the RTCT's work - on which virtually every aspect of wildlife success and biodiversity depends. The Cuttlebrook Conservation Volunteers (CBCV) manage the Cuttlebrook Nature Reserve on behalf of TTC and do invaluable work in maintaining the water flows and biodiversity of the area.

■ **Sewage treatment works** - The River Thame has one of the highest concentrations of STWs (sewage treatment works) in the River Thames catchment area. The Thame is still recovering after previous heavy pollution incidents but concern remains about how TW will cope with the effect of ever-increasing demand from further new building in the area.

■ **Access to the River Thame** - Access for residents, walkers etc is limited, as much of the surrounding farmland is private with very few public footpaths. There does seem to be opportunity now for valuable increased access to the Cuttlebrook near where it meets with the River Thame at the edge of the new Thame Meadow (site F).

■ **Water storage** - Given the likelihood of future water shortage efforts should be, working with the EA and TW, to consider ways to slow the flow of water and increase the storage capacity of the network, possibly linked with valuable biodiversity corridors and recreational opportunities.

2.3 The Risk of Flooding (2.4)

- **Rainfall and flooding** - Whatever the cause, Britain is experiencing extremes of weather; higher intensity rainfall can be expected in the future. In the winter this increases local river flows, soil water contents and ground water levels. In the summer, storms can cause flooding where soil is dry and rain runs off before it soaks through. These all call for effective maintenance of ditches and streams to prevent water running over roads, paths and elsewhere. Flooding can be reduced by slowing down flood water by more sinuous channels, and by recreating wetlands; over-dredging and straightening water courses can have the opposite effect.
- **The effect of development** - Increased development, residential and commercial, reduces the ability of the earth to absorb rainfall. Roofs and downspouts channel the rain into ever-smaller areas, and filled-in paved areas, such as garden patios and front drives (on previous open farmland), magnify the problem. All can encourage flash floods as excessive rainfall seeks a new course. It is essential therefore that planners ensure compliance by developers with suitable sustainable urban drainage measures (SUDS) and that these are maintained by homeowners.

2.4 Some Practical Ideas for Action (2.9)

- **Planning** - in all planning applications for new homes or commercial premises:
- Resist - applications in floodplain areas or likely to increase flooding risks
- Insist - on effective urban drainage systems and follow through
- Encourage - water saving measures (e.g. water harvesting, low water appliances)
- **Water quality and saving**
- Raise awareness - of ways and encourage individual action to promote water quality and reduce water consumption (see panel above)
- Promote - better information and Yellow Fish campaign ('only rain down the drain')
- Investigate - availability of public water fountains to reduce bottled water demand
- **Flooding, rivers and streams**
- Discourage - paving of garden and driveways without effective drainage
- Seek to improve - water conservation and amenity use along the Thames
- Continue to support - through TTC and residents - the work of the Cuttlebrook Conservation Volunteers and River Thames Conservation Trust.

3 Air & Environment - Avoiding Pollution (Grey)

Objectives of this part: *To recall that clean, safe air is essential to our health and way of life; to recognize the danger of pollution, especially unseen but toxic fumes; to pursue healthy alternatives to vehicle use; to manage our vehicle engines better when we do need to use them; to respect the need of all for an environment unpolluted by unnecessary noise or light.*

3.1 Air Quality and Pollution (3.1)

- **What is air pollution and why has it become an issue?** - Air pollution is contamination of the air that is offensive or harmful to humans, animal or plant life. But unlike potholes in roads or plastic in oceans, much air pollution is now invisible. Yet every day we breathe particles we cannot see, touch or feel but which progressively poison us.

3.2 Why Does Air Pollution Matter? (3.2, 3.3)

- **Particulates from diesel engines** - With lower CO2 emissions, reduced road tax and greater fuel economy, diesel engines became more popular. But they have also led to a major increase in dangerous particulates, most notably microscopic airborne particles, known as black carbon or particulate matter (PM), and a gas, nitrogen dioxide (NO2). Black carbon 'penetrate[s] deep into the lungs and into the cardiovascular system, posing the greatest risks to human health' (World Health Organisation -WHO.) Some pollution measurements can indicate 'safe' levels, but with particulates there is no 'safe' level at all.
- **Traffic calming** - Traffic calming measures like raised road sections can create more pollution from vehicles changing speeds and from brake lining shards. Traffic moving steadily at 20 mph is significantly less polluting.
- **Schools** - School sites attract the build-up of damaging air pollution from waiting vehicles with engines running at peak drop-off and pick-up times.
- **Who is at risk?** - Air pollution can harm anyone; it is especially problematic for groups such as: a) children generally, as their respiratory organs are still developing; b) those prone to asthma; and c) older people living near heavy traffic (some tests have indicated a possible link to dementia).
- **Car drivers** - should not believe that air pollution affects only pedestrians. **Drivers in heavy traffic can suffer much greater levels of pollution than pedestrians walking nearby.**
- **NICE guidelines⁸** - recommend the siting of buildings away from busy roads, notably for 'vulnerable groups such as schools and elderly persons'.
- **Local planning guidance** - In some cases an Air Quality Assessment will be required and, in special circumstances, an Air Quality Management Area (**AQMA**) may be designated.

3.3 The Challenges for Thame (3.4, 3.5)

- **Changing traffic patterns** - Town growth, with more buildings in outlying areas, will drive more cars and more traffic. As traffic builds up on perimeter roundabouts, more people 'cut through' the centre, to which more visitors to shop, eat and drink will only add. And while Thame has less current traffic pollution than some other local towns, recent measurements show pollution levels close to safety limits at certain periods in locations such as Park Street, the High Street by the Town Hall and the Lower High Street.
- **Traffic management** - Engine pollution is reduced at lower and steady speeds, helped by 20 mph zones and a steady traffic flow, with stops and starts away from main shopping and leisure areas. Pollution is increased by slow-moving, stop-start and queuing traffic at peak periods along busy and narrow streets and some roundabout approaches.
- **No idling zones** - Engines left running while car wait are major polluters - and largely unnecessary. Unnecessary stationary 'idling' is an offence under s 42 of the Road Traffic Act 1988. Deterring this might require a vigorous community-supported campaign as part of a coordinated campaign in the town encouraging motorists to turn off their idling engines.
- **Measuring pollution** - It is important to have statistical surveys, not just 24-hour spreads but the impact of peak periods, such as rush hour and school gates drop-off and pick-up times.



- **Parking** - balancing the needs - Town centre parking is essential but itself generates many small vehicle movements which create pollution by holding up passing traffic during parking and engine idling while waiting. Parking is better placed off, but close to, the High Street.
- **Buses** - Buses are also essential but many serving Thame still appear to be highly polluting.
- **Shared space streets/ car-free areas/ pedestrianisation** - Thame could opt for shared space streets⁹ or even pedestrianizing the central High Street during all or part of the day. This could dramatically reduce air pollution, but would need viable alternative traffic flows and accessible parking close to the High Street. Electrically-powered buses could be an exception, with commercial vehicle deliveries carried out between limited hours.

- **Safe pavements and pedestrian priority** - The safety and well-being of pedestrians should be privileged, an essential requirement in encouraging people to walk more and drive less.
- **Electric cars** - Electric engines are less polluting, but still have issues as to affordability, limited range and the need for fast charging. Careful planning and balance is required between more charging points and limited parking space. (see also Energy section below.)
- **Residences and care homes** - As far as practicable these should be sited away from roads with heavy or queuing traffic. Planning authorities should be encouraged to take proper recognition of guidance in this respect by refusing applications for unsuitable locations.
- **Tree and vegetation planting** - Suitable planting alongside congested roads is known to reduce pollution by leaf growth absorbing pollutants.

3.4 Other Forms of Pollution (3.7, 3.8)

- **Light pollution** - 'Light blight' is increasingly recognised for its detrimental impact on wildlife and humans. Typical sources are road and domestic security lighting, street lights over five years old, businesses, sports grounds and supermarkets. One remedy is better lighting design, reducing unnecessary energy use and cost as well as the irritation it causes.
- **Noise pollution** - Noise pollution is an undesired level of noise that can cause harm or distress to people, animals or other natural life. The community can respond in identifying unacceptable levels and, where appropriate, applying pressure to control these. Planning policy also recognises that there should be 'quiet zones' outdoors where we can be confident that peace and serenity will be available within our broader urban landscape¹⁰.

3.5 Some Practical Ideas for Action (3.9)

The first step for everyone is to consider reducing their own car use. Can I walk, cycle, catch the bus or even car share (for which specialist websites/ contacts exist)? The choice will be helped by safe and attractive walking and cycling alternatives.

- **NPPF and new Local Plan** - review new plan (when available) - seek change where necessary
- **Pollution monitoring** - monitor and model pollution levels at key places, areas and times
- **Information** - provide impartial and updated information on local air quality and options
- **Awareness** - set up events with appropriate experts to develop understanding
- **Stimulate debate** - over air quality and options - involve local health care professionals
- **Thame Travel/Transport Plan** - engage with discussions/importance of air quality
- **High Street** - balance wish for High Street vitality against well-being of users - consider safer pavements, shared streets and potential benefits

- **Buses** - engage with OCC and Arriva/ others to reduce bus pollution
- **Campaign** - develop consistent clean air campaign around High Street, including e.g.:
 - One or more clean air days in (and around) Thame
 - Fact sheets, stickers and leaflets to raise awareness of issue and consequences
 - Switch off/ no-idling - ideally with viable options for motorists
 - Reduce speeds to 20 mph limits in key areas and the benefits
 - Promote electric vehicle use (see next section)
 - Off-street parking
 - Alternative non-vehicle means of accessing town centre (see also Green area)
- **Schools** - Working directly and via school management and governing bodies
 - More pollution monitoring at school gates
 - Raise awareness among parents and pupils
 - Promote 'turn off your engine' advice / alternatives for busy parents
 - Designate drop-off / pick-up points away from main collection areas
 - Designate waiting space for parents to encourage them to leave their cars
 - Improve walking and cycling possibilities, safe routes to school, 'bikeability' training¹¹
- **Trees** - Increase tree planting to absorb pollution
- **Support** - wider study of air quality, electric vehicle use, and asthma research
- **Car use** - reduce own car use where possible, and moderate driving style.
- **Redress** - identify and publicise action that can be taken (and liaise with CAB etc.)
- **Light pollution** - promote awareness/ CPRE guidance and relevance to planning decisions
- **Noise pollution** - develop policy and approach to minimising and seeking redress

4 Energy & Energy Efficiency (Red)

Objectives of this part: *To recognise that we cannot go on burning damaging and irreplaceable fossil fuels without planning for an alternative future without them; to understand options available and the cost and environmental benefits they may be able to bring; to prepare a strategy for the town encompassing these aspects and seeking alternative energy solutions, including electric vehicle use.*



4.1 Why Change? (4.1) - main reasons we need to change our present approach include:

- **Sustainability** - Much of the energy we use today (for transport, heating, lighting, and entertainment) comes from fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas. Burning these fuels produces carbon dioxide and other gases that contribute to climate change.
- **A finite resource** - These fossil fuels were laid down millions of years ago and are irreplaceable. Scarcity will lead to higher prices, driving up costs (or lowering living standards) for everyone.
- **New energy systems** - Renewable energy involves a different approach at personal and community level. As renewable sources only generate power when, e.g. the wind blows or the sun shines, we need to be wiser about how we capture, store and use them, using technology to use energy when it is abundant (and cheap), or to store it when it is scarce (and expensive).
- **How do we approach change?** - As the alternative energy field is evolving quickly, this plan proposes a two-stage approach, 1) developing an energy strategy and 2) proposing local projects in line with that strategy, running in parallel, remaining consistent, and each informing the other.

4.2 Energy - The Overall Position (4.2, 4.3)

- Internationally attention is mainly focused on:
 - the impact on our planet of burning fossil fuels (climate change and air quality).
 - renewable energy (including hydro, tidal, geothermal, solar, wind and hydrogen systems).

- energy storage locally and regionally to help manage supply and demand.
 - the use of 'smart technologies' to manage energy more effectively.
 - keeping energy as reliable and as affordable as possible.
- **Nationally** - Renewables have grown considerably as a proportion of total UK energy sources, near doubling in less than 10 years. Including other low carbon sources such as nuclear power, more than half the national electrical energy in 2017 came from low carbon sources..
 - **Locally** - In Oxfordshire active developments in energy efficiency and renewable energy include the work of Community Action Groups (CAGs), and the Low Carbon Hub in Oxford.

4.3 Developing an Energy Strategy for Thame (4.4)

■ **How does an Energy Strategy link to the Neighbourhood Plan?** The TNP refers to 'encouraging reduction in energy and water use', 'energy efficiency' and 'encouraging sustainable development'. These broad statements need to be developed if meaningful action is to be taken. An Energy Strategy, setting out a long-term direction of thinking, will help provide this.

■ What might an Energy Strategy for Thame include?

- *Increase awareness and community involvement in energy* - giving local people more sense of ownership, understanding, and potential benefits from an energy strategy.
- *Facilitate renewable energy locally* - including electric bicycles, cars, vans and buses.
- *Increase local control over energy costs* - for all, especially those facing fuel poverty.
- *Explore energy investment options* - through local schemes or community-funded projects
- *Retain economic benefits locally* - to keep money and jobs in the area.
- *Partnering schemes* - encourage closer links between local businesses and residents.
- *Raise Thame's 'green' profile in energy* - as a town visibly forward-thinking in energy.

4.4 Creating The Delivery Plan for Community-Scale Projects (4.5)

- **Seeking consensus** - we might develop a substantial local consensus by:
 - Engage and inform: raising awareness, presentations and discussions with local groups.
 - Publish and promote: publicise this plan and relevant material from other communities.
 - Local action group: encourage a Thame energy action group.

■ **Learning by doing.** Ideas will be sparked as people see and hear about practical projects.

- *Promote small-scale action:* such as a 'smart' approach to managing demand.
- *Generate Clean Energy locally:* building a sense of community ownership.
- *Develop flagship projects:* develop visible projects as evidence of Thame's initiative, e.g.:
 - electric vehicle charging points in car parks and, say, in street lamp columns;
 - PV solar panels on high-profile buildings or new developments;
 - 'solar arrays' in nearby fields;
 - a community heating project with surplus energy 'traded' directly between residents.



4.5 Supporting a Delivery Plan (4.6)

- **Nationally** - Renewable energy is now big business, supported by government and technology.
- **Building standards** - Work on new homes standards is ongoing - if variable.
- **Communities and Energy** - Energy increasingly focuses on communities because of scale, value delivered locally, involvement of local and young people and new local markets.

4.6 Maintaining Progress (4.7)

- **Key parties** - The support of TTC plus a committed group of town residents and businesses could facilitate a core group with a media presence, presentations, discussions and events. The RSA national network could help publicise these activities and learn from experiences elsewhere.
- **Vehicle Charging points** - Publicly accessible charging points are essential for the community to support more electric cars. Despite being the EU's biggest, the UK market for plug-in electric cars is still a fraction of total car sales. Car buyers are deterred by purchase cost, the lack of public charging points and problems for home charging for those without off-road parking. There are many charging point options which will need to be analysed as to suitability for the town, its residents and visitors.
- **Community Energy Initiatives.** There are many examples of local energy initiatives across Britain from which Thame might gain useful insights.

4.7 Some Practical Ideas for Action

- **Develop an energy strategy for Thame** - to bring coherency to local energy initiatives
- **Energy efficiency** - website information options - including smart meters and energy audit tools
- **Electric Vehicles (EVs)** - promote the use of EVs by considering:
 - wider use of e-bikes, linking with the Transport Plan and Phoenix trail
 - rapid EV charging facilities in Thame car parks
 - EV street charging where off-road parking is limited
 - an EV car-sharing club
- **Renewable energy** - explore a range of initiatives, such as:
 - Raise understanding about the local PV solar facilities and their benefits
 - Encourage PV solar on the roof of larger buildings in Thame, where this is suitable
 - Encourage availability of PV roofs for new housing as an option for home buyers
 - Thame as a location for an energy initiative led by academia or a local business
 - A crowd-funded community energy project.
- **Consider creating a Thame Energy Company** - Learn from other towns who have done this

5 Waste, Recycling & Waste Avoidance (Brown)

Objectives of this part: *To recognise that we throw away a great deal and seek ways to reduce this and ensure that any necessary waste is put to best use and does not add to overloaded landfill; to improve information and understanding so that we can make better choices; and to support moves and outlets using more sustainable methods.*



5.1 Waste and Packaging Generally (5.1, 5.2)

The evidence points to today's society being very wasteful, with reports¹² that a typical family in the UK gets rid annually of the equivalent of six trees, 1,000 cans, 440 plastic bottles, 330 glass bottles and jars, 210Kg. of avoidable food waste and 30 batteries. A pervasive element is packaging, with many objects requiring protection against damage to the contents (stout cardboard, internal gussets, bubble-wrap etc.) or against degradation or contamination (e.g. many foodstuffs and drinks.) Internet shopping often compounds the problem with its need for substantial extra packaging.

5.2 Recycling and Plastic (5.1, 5.2, 5.5)

Recycling reduces waste going to limited landfill sites and provides re-useable materials, further reducing the need to consume finite resources. But uncertainty as to what can be recycled and contamination often creates problems. Plastic causes particular confusion, and we are now much more aware of the problems plastic can cause. Much plastic cannot be recycled; other plastic can be, but only a very low percentage is, recycled. This may be through confusion and because only a limited number of local authorities provide recycling for these materials. Some plastic can however be recycled into other products, such as work surfaces.

5.3 Food Waste (5.3)

Avoiding and dealing with food waste (including food banks) is a major subject on its own, currently outside the scope of this plan. Left-over food is however a special problem in landfill as it produces methane - a potent greenhouse gas. It can contaminate whole loads if put with general rubbish. Food waste goes in the small green food waste-bins, enabling recycling into fertiliser and electricity.

5.4 Some Relevant Local Facilities (5.6)

- **Windles** - a Thame-based print company that majors on sustainable methods.
- **CAGs (Community Action Groups)** - running repair and reuse activities (such as repair cafes).
- **Agrivert** local anaerobic digestion plants breaking down food waste into methane and carbon dioxide for agricultural fertilisers and substantial electricity.
- **Greatmoor Energy** - A local plant generating power from general rubbish.
- **RECOUP (Recycling of Used Plastics Limited)** - a leading authority on plastics recycling.
- **WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme)** reducing waste in food/drink, clothing /textiles and electricals/ electronics.
- **Composting facilities** - e.g. Envar in Cambridgeshire.
- **Smile Plastics** - Commercial producers of recycled plastics, such as worktops

5.5 General Practical Approaches (5.4)

- **Take-away coffee etc cups** - Support for re-useable containers and recycling schemes
- **Deposits** - Deposit return schemes can capture high returns in the recycling economy.
- **Dirty nappies** - Clarity of treatment can avoid these contaminating waste or recycling.
- **Wet wipes** - A current scourge in disposal - to be used sparingly and disposed of properly.
- **Waste electronic & electrical equipment (WEEE)** - Major scope for improvement in this area.
- **Repair and re-use** - CAG networks support local repair cafes and swap shops.
- **White goods (e.g. washing machines)** - New facilities exist to take and re-use these.
- **Better practice** - clear and consistent Information close to the point of decision-making.
- **Encouragement** - positive publicity of the success of recycling to encourage use of the system and overcome urban myths that everything goes into landfill.
- **Sponsorship** - Local companies to sponsor suitable recycling initiatives.

5.6 Other Practical Ideas for Action (5.7)

■ Packaging and plastic

- **Encourage** - consumer resistance to plastic-wrapped or over-packaged goods
- **Discuss** - with local supermarkets about reducing the use of packaging/plastic locally/nationally on own brand and supplier products
- **Reduce** - use of plastic and non-recyclable containers - seek alternatives
- **Support social media** - e.g. Plastic-free Thame

■ Recycling and re-use

- **Explore** - how stronger recycling policies can be adopted by local shops and businesses for discarded packaging/plastic, including by staff training
- **Encourage** - greater provision of clearly placed receptacles for customers to discard recyclables and efficient collections.
- **Consult** - with CAG and others to encourage the repair, re-use, and wise disposal of unwanted white and other more bulky goods

■ Waste disposal

- **Promote** - clearer information about what goes in which receptacle, perhaps initially supported by volunteer assistance.
- **Revise** - how information is made available to the public and how public may be encouraged to collaborate.
- **Review** - waste disposal processes in the town to seek greater efficiency.

■ Information and support

- **Explore** - means of sharing best practices in local shops and businesses
- **Support** - businesses showing a lead in reducing or better managing waste.



Delivery Strategy and Action Summary (part 3)

This part of the Green Living Plan summarises the key action points arising from Part 2. It notes the main implications arising and various specific proposals for delivering progress. The intention is that this Part 3 is adapted to reflect developments as the plan develops and becomes a full scale and detailed Delivery Strategy for the Thame Green Living Plan. It includes a simple traffic light indicator to show progress on each item.

Numbered references are to issues in Part 2.

Please note: this page is a sample only - to be developed after consultation.

A GREEN LIVING PLAN for THAME

(Part 3 of the Full Plan)

1 GREEN – Open Spaces + Green Routes

2

EXAMPLE of the reporting format that Part 3 will include

Cross-reference to Part 2

The thematic topic area

The actions being taken

Traffic Light indicators showing progress to the intended timescale

EXAMPLE ONLY

Action Ref	Issue and [Part 2 ref]	Vision / aim	Proposal - Options	Timescale- priority	Progress - traffic light indicators
	[1-1]	Topic: New Open Space in Thame			
	Local Plan (LP)	a) check draft LP covers new open space b) check GLP consistent with LP	a) Collate comments in b) Review GLP against next LP	Awaits next draft LP	
	Lord Williams's Lower School	Any redevelopment of lower school	NP2 include	Awaits merger progress	
		Include suitable Green Infrastructure and biodiversity proposals	Increase SODC awareness/compliance with new NPPF requirements and precedents	Check next draft LP and SODC commitment	

Appendix - The RSA and RSA Thame Group

The RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) was founded in 1754. It is a registered charity committed to finding innovative, creative and practical solutions to today's social challenges with some 29,000 Fellows (members), worldwide (www.thersa.org).

The RSA Thame Group was established by locally-based RSA Members to contribute to local issues of environment and sustainability, offering support to the Thame Town Council in creating and supporting a Green Living Plan for Thame. The current members are:

Colin Bloxham, Charles Boundy (chairman), Anna Comino-James, John Scott, George Westropp. For further information see <https://www.thersa.org/action-and-research/fellowship-projects/fellowship/rsa-thame-group>



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- Lea Park Residents' Association
- Liftshare (Ali Clayburn)
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- TTC Green Living Plan Working Group (Helena Fickling)
- Wild Oxfordshire (Roselle Chapman)
- Windles Limited (Sue Leigh)
- Wylie, Lin



End Notes, References and a Request

¹ See appendix 1 for further information on The RSA and the RSA Thame Group. In accordance with RSA principles, this GLP is intended to be non-political and its preparation does not owe any allegiance to any political or similar party or group.

² The RSA Thame Group and its members act on an honorary basis and cannot accept any responsibility or liability for the Plan or any of its contents.

³ Based on the Chambers dictionary (12th edition) primary definition

⁴ The Lawton Report of 2010, Making Space for Nature, was followed by the Natural Environment White Paper in 2011 and the 2011 UK National Ecosystem Assessment produced by the Living with Environmental Change Partnership (LWEC). There is also the DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services which encourages a strategic approach to planning for nature within and across local areas...to guide development to the best locations, encourage greener design and enable development to enhance natural networks.' This is expected to lead to reforms of the planning system.

⁵ See 'Constraints and Opportunities' and the plan on pp 10,11 of the TNP.

⁶ As an example, the Woodland Trust commissioned Ham Wood off Moorend Lane, with a good mix of trees and grassland, as publicly accessible woodland, albeit outside the main town boundary.

⁷ It is believed Thame has many good examples to follow and it is to be hoped that the community orchard planned for site D will be followed elsewhere. See also, for example, the Green Gym projects, including schemes already developed in Bicester, Abingdon, Wallingford and Chipping Norton: http://www2.tcv.org.uk/cgi-bin/greengym/green_gyms?region=se

⁸ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng70/chapter/Recommendations#planning>

⁹ See for example the detailed notes at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/3873/ltn-1-11.pdf

¹⁰ Paragraph 123 of the NPPF will permit protection of areas of tranquillity 'which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.'

¹¹ Bikeability is a national scheme supported by the Department for Transport

¹² FoE report on a visit to the Milton Keynes Materials Recycling Facility (MK-MRF) in early 2018.

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Charles Boundy, RSA Thame,
Deborah Read

Thame Town Council



The GLP as a 'Green-print' - A request

This plan has been developed by and is the copyright of members of the RSA Thame Group acting as honorary consultants to Thame Town Council. Although this plan is developed for and targeted at Thame we propose to adapt it as a 'green-print' to be made available for others for the benefit of their communities, whether towns, villages or rural. We would however request that for the GLP format to retain its force and focus wherever it is used:

a) the overall shape, scope, thrust and values of this GLP are retained; and

b) the contribution of Thame and the work of the RSA Thame Group (and those who have supported it) in producing this GLP is fairly acknowledged.

