

THAME TOWN COUNCIL

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (TNP2)**

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2020 – 2041

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
(EqIA)

MARCH 2024



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Town Council

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Town Hall

High Street

Thame, OX9 3DP

[www.thametowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.thametowncouncil.gov.uk)

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document is the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) that has been prepared to accompany the submission version of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP2).
- 1.2 The Equalities Act places a duty on public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between persons who have a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not. 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 1.3 This report assesses the submission version of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP2) to ensure that Thame Town Council (as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the Neighbourhood Plan) is satisfying its statutory duties in this regard.
- 1.4 EqIA is a systematic analysis of a policy or policies, in order to explore the potential for an adverse impact on a particular group or community. It is a method of assessing and recording the likely differential and/or adverse impact of a policy on people from different groups. If a policy results in unfairness or discrimination, then changes to eliminate or lessen the impact should be considered.
- 1.5 The purpose of the analysis is to increase participation and inclusion, to change the culture of public decision-making and to place a more proactive approach to the promotion of equality and fairness at the heart of public policy. The processes involved in conducting the analysis should not be looked on as an end in themselves. Instead, it should be borne in mind that the aim is the promotion of fairness and equality of opportunity and thus it is the outcomes that are of primary concern. In undertaking the EqIA, it is important to keep in mind why the Thame Neighbourhood Plan is needed, what the intended outcomes are, and how it will be ensured that the policies will work as intended.
- 1.6 For this purposes of this EqIA an assessment has been made on whether the Thame Neighbourhood Plan has a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics (in so far as data is available).

## 2. Baseline Data

2.1 Data for the Thame Neighbourhood Plan area is available from the 2021 Census for the following protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race and religious belief. These are summarised in the box below and Illustrated overleaf (Figure 1).

No data is available for the following protected characteristics: gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation.

### **Thame Neighbourhood Area – Population Characteristics**

**Total Population: 13,300**

**Age:** 23.4% of the population are aged 19 or less, 55.1% are in the working age groups (ages 20-64), with 21.5% in the older age groups (over 64).

**Sex:** 6,490 (48.8%) males; 6,810 (51.2%) females.

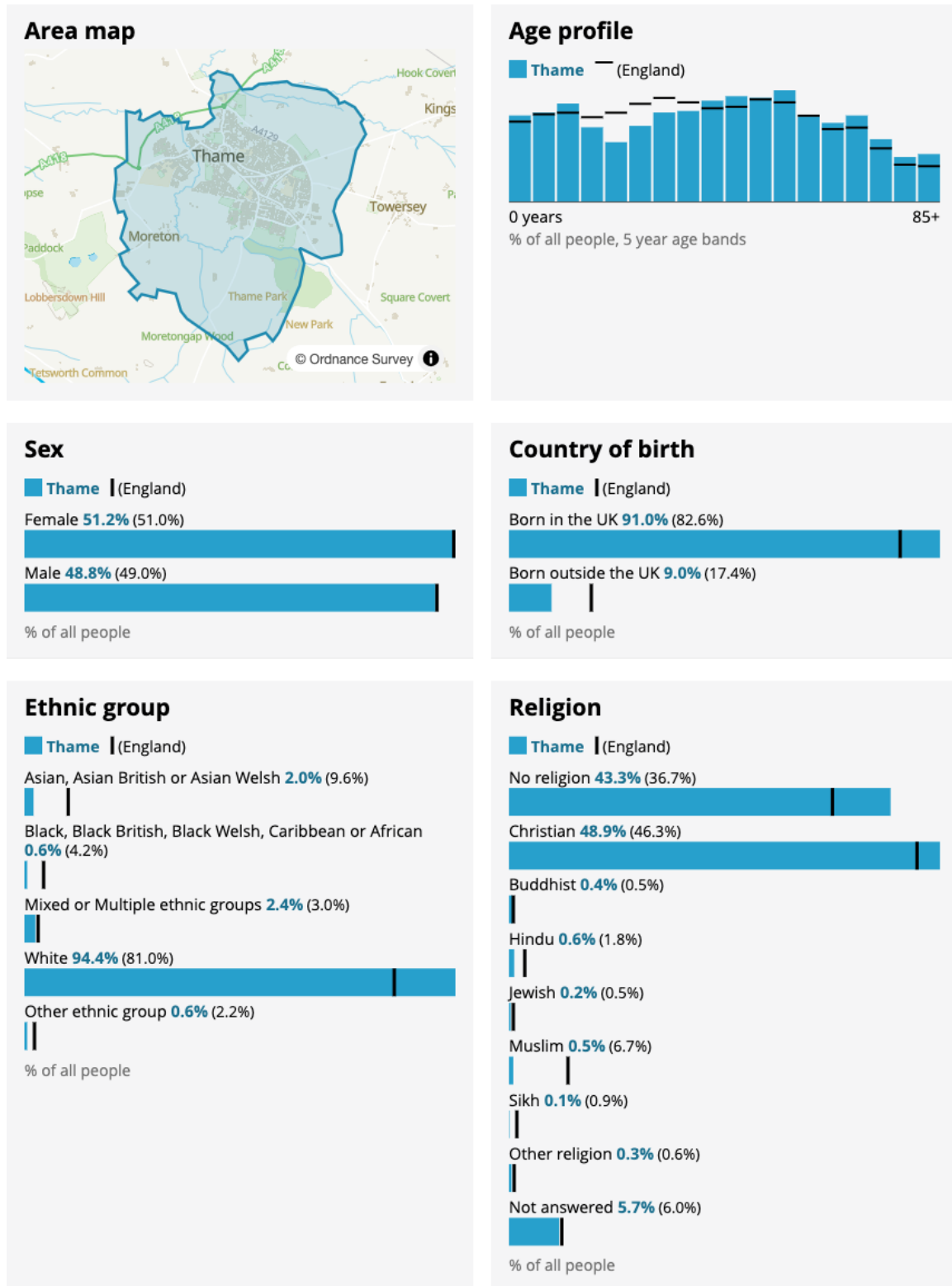
**Country of Birth:** 91.0% of residents were born in the UK; 9.0% were born in other countries.

**Ethnic group:** 94.4% of residents are White; 2.4% of residents are Mixed/multiple ethnic groups; 2.0% are Asian/Asian British; 0.6% are Black, African, Caribbean or Black British; and 0.6% are of another ethnic group.

**Religion:** 48.9% of residents are Christian; 43.3% of residents do not have a religion; 2.1% of residents are either Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh or of another religious affiliation (The balance, 5.7%, did not answer this question on the Census).

*Source: ONS – 2021 Census*

# Thame



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

Figure 1: Thame Neighbourhood Plan Area: Population Characteristics

## 3. Process of Community Consultation

- 3.1 All written communications were in English. It was not considered necessary to translate them into any other language.
- 3.2 Throughout the Plan preparation process the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (the Continuity Committee) sought to ensure that local residents, their representatives, local businesses, interest groups and wider interested parties, including statutory and regulatory bodies, were actively consulted and their views sought.
- 3.3 The overarching principles of the stakeholder engagement process has been to engage in a manner that is extensive, effective, inclusive, fair, transparent and proportionate. Various communication channels have been used to keep residents informed, invite participation and share views. These included:
- Regular updates on the Neighbourhood Planning page of the Thame Town Council website, including links to all reports and consultation material.
  - Regular meetings of the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee, with the agendas and minutes available for all to access via the Neighbourhood Planning page of the Thame Town Council website. All meetings were open to the public.
  - Reporting on progress of the Neighbourhood Plan to Full Council and Annual Meeting of the Town Council. As above, all meetings were open to the public and minutes available to view on the Town Council website.
  - Updates posted on social media channels and in the weekly newsletter prepared by the Town Council available on the Town Council website but also sent direct to subscribers.
  - Direct mailshots to those who had registered for updates on the Neighbourhood Plan to advise on upcoming consultation events.
  - Displaying of banners and posters around Thame leading up to and during consultation to help raise awareness of events and opportunities for people to respond.
- 3.4 Widespread consultation was carried out during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Continuity Committee made every effort, using a variety of methods, to reach all of the local community. This included the following:

- A 'Call for Sites' asking for suggestions to be put forward as to land that might be allocated for development in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Public consultation on possible sites for allocation following assessment of all sites submitted through the Call for Sites process. This included online material and in-person exhibitions, with members of the Neighbourhood Plan team available to answer questions.
- Alongside the above, public consultation on the vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan, as well as consultation on identified character areas, the defining qualities of these and opportunities for change and enhancement in these.
- A further round of consultation on potential sites for allocation, including further alternative sites, and which also involved separate and ongoing meetings and correspondence with site promoters and promoters of preferred sites for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Alongside the above, consultation also sought responses to emerging ideas for incorporation in the Plan around matters such as active travel and green infrastructure improvements. This included online material and in-person exhibitions.
- Videos were created alongside the consultation events to help communicate the status of the Plan, how it has evolved, and how people could respond to the consultation. These were made available via the Town Council website and accompanied by a series of FAQs.
- Ongoing liaison with South Oxfordshire District Council during production of the Plan to seek input and advice on the emerging Plan.
- The Regulation 14 consultation including an exhibition and surveys, which was undertaken between June and August 2023.

3.5 More on the above can be found in the Consultation Statement prepared and submitted alongside the Neighbourhood Plan. Information is also available online via the Thame Town Council website. It is also to be noted that work on the Neighbourhood Plan builds upon that undertaken to inform the made Neighbourhood Plan, during which extensive workshops and drop-in sessions helped shape the visions and direction of the Plan, and which were ratified during the early consultation stages of the Plan review process.

3.6 Consideration has been given to all comments and responses made in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. In particular, the responses to events and surveys in the early stages of the plan-making process were used to shape the direction of the Neighbourhood Plan, the vision and objectives within it.



## 4. Likely Impact on Groups with Protected Characteristics

4.1 The Thame Neighbourhood Plan Vision states that:

***“Thame must maintain its character as a real market town”***

4.2 The Neighbourhood Plan explain that this means:

- Thame must continue to feel compact.
- Thame must continue to have a close relationship with the open countryside around it.
- Thame must maintain its markets, festivals and events.
- Thame must continue to act as a centre for the surrounding area not just its residents.

4.3 The vision of the Neighbourhood Plan is expected to have a positive likely impact on groups with protected characteristics. It recognises and supports access for the whole community to local social, employment, leisure and environmental amenities.

4.4 The Neighbourhood Plan contains a series of objectives that interpret this vision spatially and set out how the Town Council proposes to deliver the vision for Thame up to 2041. Delivery of the objectives will be through a combination of planning policies, projects and community action. Each objective is reviewed in the table below to assess whether it is likely to have an impact on groups within Thame with protected characteristics.

Objective	Likely Impact	Commentary
1. The compactness and walkability of Thame should be retained, with new homes within comfortable travel distance, by foot and by bike, from the town centre and other social and community facilities located around the town.	Positive	This objective seeks to make it safer and easier for people of all ages and abilities to move about Thame, and to be able to easily access the services and facilities they need for their everyday lives. It also support provision of new homes that are well located in relation to services and facilities. It doesn't have

		a specific focus on people with protected characteristics, but does seek to improve conditions for all. It is thus deemed to have a positive impact.
<b>2.</b> The sensitive environment around Thame should be respected, with areas of new growth avoiding areas of nature conservation and flood risk.	Neutral	The purpose of this objective is to preserve environmentally sensitive areas and avoid impacts on these arising from development. Although helping to minimise environmental impacts and flooding risks will ultimately improve quality of life for residents, the objective has no direct impact on people with protected characteristics .
<b>3.</b> Growth should avoid impacting on the landscape setting of Thame, retaining proximity to the surrounding countryside.	Neutral	This objective seeks to retain the quality of and access to the surrounding countryside, such that it strengthens the character of Thame as well as the potential for people to enjoy being in close proximity to and benefitting from informal recreational use of the countryside area. There is no direct impact on people with protected characteristics.
<b>4.</b> The separate identity of Thame and outlying villages, including Moreton, to the south, and Towersey, to the east, should be retained.	Neutral	The purpose of this objective is to reinforce the separate identity and character of Thame from surrounding villages, and thus the attachment and sense of belonging that people have to the place they live in. This objective is intended to strengthen the identity of these areas, minimise impacts on the environment and support growth in more sustainable locations. There may be indirect benefits on people with protected characteristics in terms of social inclusion, but there are no direct impacts.

<p><b>5.</b> New development should be well integrated with the existing built form, contributing to the achievement of integrated communities.</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>This objective supports well designed places that support accessibility, safe movement, active and sustainable travel, provision of facilities close to home and, by virtue of being well integrated with the urban fabric, community cohesion and social inclusion. The objective doesn't have a specific focus on people with protected characteristics, but does seek to improve conditions for all. It is thus deemed to have a positive impact.</p>
<p><b>6.</b> New development should respect the historic growth and evolution of Thame.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>The purpose of Objective is to ensure that new development responds to and strengthens the qualities that characterise Thame, its evolution and growth over time, and thus peoples connection with the town. Through policies in the Neighbourhood Plan important design principles are also established to ensure that new development is well designed and responds appropriately to site and context, strengthening the sense of place. There is no specific impact on residents with protected characteristics.</p>

4.5 All of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan objectives are considered to have a **positive or neutral impact** on those with protected characteristics. There are no individual objectives that are considered likely to have a negative impact.

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Thame Neighbourhood Plan provides a suite of objectives and policies to respond to the vision for the benefit of the local community as a whole including those with protected characteristics.
- 5.2 In preparing the Thame Neighbourhood Plan, Thame Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have sought to engage widely with all of the local community. They have gone beyond minimum consultation requirements to gather the views of the community.
- 5.3 In conclusion, the assessment finds the Thame Neighbourhood Plan to be appropriate and that the duty of care prescribed by the Equalities Act (2010) is met.

Thame Town Council

# Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP2): 2020 - 2041

Equalities Impact Assessment

(EqIA)

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