

THORNBURY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

INVITATION TO TENDER: NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

CONSULTANT SPECIFICATION

1. Introduction

Thornbury Town Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) under the powers granted by the Localism Act 2011. The Town was formally designated as a Neighbourhood Area in April 2017. The Neighbourhood Area defined by the Town Council is the whole of the Civil Parish of Thornbury. A copy of the Parish Boundary Map is included in the tender pack with the invitation to tender.

Thornbury has been identified as a location that can support sustainable development and is shown as a growth area in the emerging West of England Joint Spatial Plan and South Gloucestershire Core Strategy. South Gloucestershire currently cannot demonstrate a 5 year land supply and as a consequence Thornbury has been subjected to significant speculative planning applications, far beyond the planned housing allocation identified for the town. There is frustration about the lack of community influence on the planning process to date and concern about the pace of development and the ability of the town to absorb this level of growth within such a short period and in the absence of a development plan for the town that guides this development. There is a pressing need to ensure that new development is influenced by the local community, reflects its character, is well designed and integrated and meets the needs of the local area.

A number of community events have already been held to engage with the community about how they want to see Thornbury develop. Initial work has started on research and evidence gathering and a steering group has been formed made up of councillors and volunteers and supported by staff at Thornbury Town Council. The Steering Group (SG) has formed quickly and includes residents and stakeholders from a good cross section of the town. It has formed several working groups and developed an engagement plan to ensure that residents, local groups, businesses and organisations are fully consulted throughout.

2. Scope of the Role

We are seeking to appoint a suitably qualified planning consultant/consultancy (hereafter referred to as 'Consultant') with knowledge, skills and experience in neighbourhood planning to support the Steering Group through the life of this project, from its initial development, through evidence gathering, policy development and other technical support and to guide us all the way through to the inspection and referendum process and final adoption.

The Consultant is required to:

1. Provide the SG with a clear route map identifying key processes, activities and timescales to enable production of an award-winning NP.
2. Provide targeted support to the Steering Group on NP issues and emerging themes and provide call off advice when requested
3. Support and advise the SG on gathering and interpreting data and assessing the robustness of the evidence base to develop policies
4. Draft tender specifications for specialist and technical external appointments and create finalised briefs following engagement with working groups. Tender specifications are likely to include but not be limited to:

- Housing needs surveys
 - Street audits
 - Transport studies including crossings and traffic flows, movement & access studies
 - Parking behaviour and community requirements
 - Strategic Environment Assessment or screening if required
 - Documents in support of Habitat Assessment Regulations if required
 - Landscape character assessment
 - Heritage and character assessment
 - Thornbury character and design framework
5. Support the SG in the development and the drafting of policies and of the NP through the provision of advice and guidance and examples of good practice, ensuring these meet the required standards and conform with NP requirements.
 6. Provide continuity of support throughout the NP development process including the statutory process.
 7. Guide the SG through the detailed assessments process for assessing potential development sites and allocations within and around Thornbury to ensure that the outcome meets the required evidence standards.

The Consultant will also be required to:

- Act as a core member of the project team, reporting progress to the Steering Committee and attending meetings as required
- Be proactive in assessing risks to the NP and report potential areas of conflict to the project team
- Assist in resolving problems and issues in a creative and positive manner
- Work with other agencies and organisations as required to support the development of the NP
- Analyse resources and make recommendations about requirements
- Confirm that they have no conflict of interest in relation to the development of the Thornbury Neighbourhood Plan including involvement in the local area, any local developments, sites or developers. This should be confirmed in the tender response.

3. Requirements of the role

3.1 Knowledge and experience

- Significant demonstrable knowledge and experience of neighbourhood plans and how they are developed
- Recent and current knowledge of planning legislation and legislative frameworks in relation to neighbourhood plans
- Experience of supporting and guiding communities in the development of NPs
- Detailed understanding of success criteria for achieving an NP that is in conformity with legislation
- Clear understanding of the route map to develop a coherent and successful NP

3.2 Skills

- Ability to meet the requirements set out in section 2
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- Ability to work positively with a broad range of volunteers and stakeholders

- Clarity of thought and expression, enabling SG members to understand the core elements of the task at hand
- Excellent facilitation skills
- Data analysis and interpretation
- Strong report writing and policy development skills

4. Emerging Issues and Themes

At this early stage, we are considering the following policy areas (this could be subject to change as the project and research progresses):

- Economy and town centre
- Environment and Sustainability
- Housing
- Infrastructure and Services
- Design and character
- Transport, traffic and access

It is envisaged that the NP will address issues which have emerged through consultations as important to local people such as: location and type of housing, employment opportunities, infrastructure requirements (facilities and services), sustainable development, viability of the town centre and the need to retain Thornbury's community feel and a transport infrastructure to meet the future needs of the community. Design and character of development and its relationship to the town and with its landscape character and setting have also been found to be important to local residents. It is vital that all of these feature in the NP.

The issues that engagement with local people on the NP has so far revealed as important to the local community can be summarised as:

- To value and conserve the beautiful countryside surrounding Thornbury
- To support development in the right place that meets the needs of the local community
- To maintain a mix of housing development styles and range of different tenures types appropriate to the needs of the population
- To ensure the provision of sufficient community facilities and infrastructure which meet the needs of the growing population
- To ensure there is ample and well-located parking for residents and visitors using local shops and facilities
- To support the existing local economy particularly focusing on the town centre and retail businesses and other small businesses and creating local employment opportunities to encourage people to stay in Thornbury
- To help sustain local tourism activity and capitalise on the town's historic assets
- To value, protect and enhance green spaces, play spaces and network of pathways that weave through Thornbury as core elements of the character of the town
- To ensure accessibility of and connecting new developments with the town, services and facilities located in the town centre.

5. Developing the evidence base

We are currently gathering and reviewing a range of key local strategies and plans and information which will support the evidence base, to date these include:

- The National Planning Policy Framework
- The South Gloucestershire Local Plan
- Emerging West of England Spatial Plan
- SGC & WofE Call for sites
- Strategic , Housing and Employment Land Availability
- Town centre strategy (currently at the end of its period, likely to be refreshed and incorporated into the NDP)
- Community Profile for Thornbury

The full evidence base will be available to the successful Consultant.

6. Policy and Plan Development

Draft policies will need to draw upon the key findings from the evidence base which have helped to shape and inform future development issues which are important to local people and businesses. The policies will also need to demonstrate how they will help to achieve the draft vision and objectives.

There is likely to be varying degrees of overlap and connection between topic areas within the NDP which will need to be taken into account when drafting policies to ensure that the overall NDP is both consistent and joined up.

The drafting of policies is an iterative process so opportunities for the Steering Group to comment on draft policies will form part of this initial activity and the Consultant will be expected to play a key role in this process. Wider consultation on draft policies with the local residents, community organisations and businesses is built into the timetable later this year.

7. Project Timetable

A project timetable is included in the tender pack .

We have set ourselves the ambitious task of achieving an approved NP by spring 2019. To achieve our deadline of submitting a draft NP to South Gloucestershire Council in Autumn 2018 we will need professional support to guide us efficiently and effectively through the process, advising us from these early formative stages through to completion.

8. Tender Submission

Your tender submission should be submitted by **12 noon on Friday 15 September 2017** and include the following:

- Your response evidencing how you meet the requirements of this specification including:
 - Your understanding of the scope of the role and your planned approach including how you will work with the project team and the Steering Group
 - Knowledge and experience relevant to the role including:

- An outline of your previous experience including details of other NP projects you have worked on
 - a description of your suitability for the commission
 - Names and contact details of two referees from recent and relevant projects who can be contacted
- Technical expertise (including relevant qualifications and membership of relevant professional bodies)
- Confirmation that you can meet the timescales set out in this specification
- Confirmation that you have no conflict of interest in relation to this commission
- A project plan for providing overall project support and advice throughout the life of the project including key milestone and timescales with delivery dates
- A cost plan separately identifying costs associated with the requirements set out in section 2. This should outline the resources to be used including staff costs and other resources. For individual members of staff, the rate per day should be specified, split by type/level of role. An estimate for travel expenses and other likely expenses should also be provided.
- A costed menu for undertaking directly specific technical and specialist commissions as set out in section 2, item 4. Depending on the circumstances and funding we may choose to commission some of this work directly as part of this commission or separately to this brief and/or by other consultants.

Your tender will be evaluated on the following basis:

- Planned approach demonstrating clear understanding of scope of role
- Knowledge, experience and technical expertise including evidence of successful track record
- Quality of the project plan
- Cost and value for money

Any tender received after the submission date may be rejected. The acceptance of the lowest price cannot be assumed. A qualified tender may be rejected.

You are required to abide by your tender submission and leave it open for acceptance for the validity period of 8 weeks

Your tender submission should be returned by email to Clare Nelmes, Clerk at Thornbury Town Council using the following email address: clerk@Thornburytowncouncil.gov.uk or by post to:

Clare Nelmes, Town Clerk
 Thornbury Town Council
 Town Hall, 35 High St
 Thornbury
 Bristol
 BS35 2AR