

Divisions affected: *Thame & Chinnor*

## **DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT**

**27 MARCH 2025**

### **THAME – PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF ZONAL CAR CLUB PERMITS**

**Report by Director of Environment & Highways**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

**The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:**

- a) Approve the introduction of hybrid Car Club vehicles in the central area of Thame for use within bays displaying a 'TH' prefix.**

#### **Executive Summary**

1. The purpose of this order is to introduce a zonal based `Car Club` for the central area of Thame. Under the provisions of the order, users would be able to access the use of a hybrid car club vehicle which will be available via geo-located in bays with a 'TH' prefix.
2. The proposals are being funded through a S.106 agreement paid for by a nearby development and the justification of the proposed car club is as follows:
  - To provide local residents in Thame access to a low emission hybrid car club vehicle, presenting an alternative to private car ownership (or second car ownership) and therefore make it possible for local residents to make lower carbon transport choices (including more active and public transport choices) rather than relying on individual private car ownership.
  - To provide local residents without their own private transport affordable access to a low emission shared vehicle, without the cost and hassle of ownership or conventional car rental.
  - To provide local businesses and other organisations with an opportunity to access a shared low emissions car club vehicle for work use as an alternative to current higher emissions fleet/grey fleet vehicles.

3. Enforcement of the restrictions would be undertaken by the County Council's enforcement contractor Trellint, as the village falls within the Civil Enforcement Area for South Oxfordshire.
4. The report presents responses to the statutory consultation on the proposed parking controls as shown in **Annex 1**.

## **Sustainability Implications**

5. The proposals would help facilitate the safe movement of traffic and alleviate parking stress in the area and also help encourage the use of sustainable transport modes and help support the delivery of wider transport initiatives.

## **Financial Implications**

6. The proposed introduction of a hybrid car club vehicle in Thame is being funded through a section 106 agreement with a nearby development and as such, there are no risks or funding required from existing council budgets.

## **Legal Implications**

7. The consultation that has been undertaken complies with the consultation requirements for the various elements as required by law including under the Highways Act 1980, the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and any other relevant legislation.
8. The scheme has been promoted by Oxfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority under the Highways Act 1980. and the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.

*Comments checked by:*

*Jennifer Crouch (Head of Law - Environmental)*

[Jennifer.Crouch@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jennifer.Crouch@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## **Equalities and Inclusion Implications**

9. No negative implications in respect of equalities on inclusion have been identified in respect of the proposals. The scheme will be available to all users who register for an account with the car club provider.

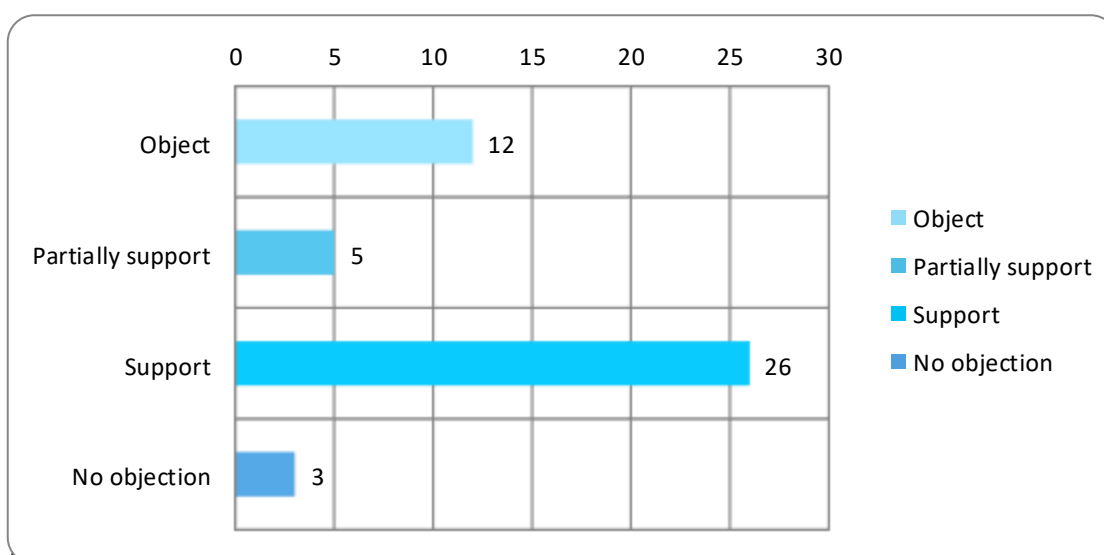
## **Formal Consultation**

10. Formal consultation was carried out between 16<sup>th</sup> January and 14<sup>th</sup> February 2025. A notice was published in the Oxford Times newspaper, and an email

sent to statutory consultees & key-stakeholders, including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, Bus operators, countywide transport/access & disabled peoples user groups, Thame Town Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, the local District Councillors, and the County Councillors representing the Thame & Chinnor division.

11. A total of 46 responses were received via the online survey during the course of the formal consultation, with 43 identifying as residents, one responding as part of a business, one as a local councillor and one as a general member of the public.
12. The chart shown below presents the general position of the respondent to the proposal for the introduction of a zonal car club permit. This is based on the option chosen by the respondent (Object, support etc.) but it should be noted that on reviewing the detail of the responses, in a number of cases a respondent expressing support for the proposal had some qualifications / concerns, and similarly some of the objections related to specific details of the scheme.

chart 1. Responses to the proposed introduction of a 'Zonal Car Club' utilising existing parking bays, within central Thame.



13. Thames Valley Police responded to confirm that they have no objection to the proposal.

## Officer Response to Objections/Concerns

### a) Responses in support of the proposals

14. In response to the proposals there were a high level of support with over 56% of the on-line responses welcoming the changes being put forward.
15. Residents who responded commented (21) that car clubs are a good idea, as they reduce the number of cars sitting idle for the majority of the day. Also,

club initiatives provide a low cost option for occasional journeys without the costs of car ownership.

16. The environmental benefits was mentioned in 6 responses, where residents felt that reducing the need for car ownership would be better for the environment both in terms of reducing our carbon footprint, but also locally through better air quality and changing user behaviours.

#### Officer response

17. It's brilliant to hear such a positive response from the Thame community to this proposal and that so many people immediately grasp the benefits of a car club. As respondents rightly point out, this car club will offer a convenient and affordable alternative to private car ownership and the opportunity for people to potentially give up their cars (or second cars) that might be sat idle on the drive a lot of the time. This will hopefully be a useful way to encourage residents to adopt more sustainable travel behaviours.

#### **b) Responses in objection to the proposals**

18. In opposition to the proposals 12 residents (26% on-line responses) chose to raise objection to the changes. The main reason given was that the proposal was not needed and that money would be better spent on ideas that would benefit all the residents of Thame, not just a select few. Some (3) questioned that the car club would only be accessible to part of Thame and as such, it wouldn't change user behaviours.
19. A small number of respondents (3) raised concerns that the car club vehicle would take up a space for visitors to Thame, which would impact on local businesses.
20. Other comments included questions about the cost to the tax payer for the proposal and the council should be focusing on other ideas like providing road links to the A40 park and ride plus increasing the number of parking spaces.

#### Officer response

21. The new car club vehicle will be available to anyone in the local area to use – residents and also businesses. Car club operators usually see the potential user base for any vehicle as being primarily those within a 10 minute walk, which means the Thame car club has the potential to meet the needs of a large number of residents. Hopefully if this scheme proves popular, there will be the opportunity to introduce more car club vehicles in Thame in the future, to meet the needs of even more residents.
22. Note that this particular allocation of S106 funding was very specifically for 'the provision of a car club in Thame', and therefore this funding allocation could not have been spent on other initiatives outside of this description.

### **c) Other general comments received**

23. In response to the proposals a number of general comments were made which included points made about a car club being tried before in Thame which wasn't successful. Suggestions were made that officers of the council should contact Thame Green Living who trialled the previous initiative for their input and advice.
24. The supporting documents for the proposals mentioned that the initiative was being promoted as part of a development in the area of Wenman Road. This seemed to have caused confusion as some respondents questioned why the scheme was only available for residents of the new housing site.
25. A small number of respondents felt that they couldn't fully comment on the proposals as details of how the car club would work have not been provided.
26. One resident commented that the scheme should use a fully electric vehicle and not a hybrid to ensure the full benefits to the environment are realised.

#### Officer response

27. The Officer involved in this project has been in contact with Thame Town Council and with the Thame Green Living group who are supportive of the re-introduction of a car club in Thame, in spite of the fact that the previous car club – provided by Thame EV Hire Club – was discontinued after not being financially viable. It is hoped that this new car club vehicle – being based at this much more visible location off Thame's High Street – will potentially attract more users. It is also hoped that being a hybrid car for the time being will mean some drivers who are not confident with EV (through e.g. concerns about range or new technology for example) will find the car club more accessible, and hopefully there will be enough committed usage in the future for Co Wheels to afford to swap this for an EV.
28. The S106 funding allocation for this project is associated with the Wenman Road development, and being within a 10-minute walk of this new development it will indeed be accessible to its residents. However, the car club facility is not restricted to these users and is accessible to anyone who is eligible to be a Co Wheels member.
29. With reference to the choice of a hybrid vehicle over a fully Battery Electric Vehicle (EV), it is certainly the intention once public EV chargers are installed on Upper High Street to ask Co Wheels to switch this vehicle to an EV, in order to offer greater environmental benefits and increase the accessibility of EV to local residents. However, with the cost of provision of EV car club services being significantly more expensive, and with EV car clubs needed to be based at a dedicated EV charger in most cases, it was seen as better value for money and a more sensible choice at this stage to spend the S106 funding on a hybrid vehicle in a highly visible location for two years than to offer an EV car club

vehicle in for one year only and in a less visible location (such as Southern Road car park).

## Monitoring & Evaluation

30.It is suggested that a review of the scheme is carried out approximately 12 months after implementation should it be approved.

**Paul Fermer**  
**Director of Environment and Highways**

Annexes:                      Annex 1: Consultation responses

Contact Officers: James Whiting (Team Leader – TRO & Schemes)  
Jenny Figueiredo (Lead Technologist EV Integration)

March 2025

## ANNEX 1

RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	<b>No objection</b>
(2) Local resident, (Thame, Cavendish Walk)	<b>Object</b> – It will only serve a very small number of Thame residents. I think there are better ways the money could be spent to benefit the wider community
(3) Local resident, (Thame, Chinnor Road)	<b>Object</b> – Can not remove private car ownership
(4) Local resident, (Thame, Croft Road)	<b>Object</b> – Loss of car parking
(5) Local resident, (Thame, Dormer)	<b>Object</b> – Not enough demand to justify set up and running costs. Further burden on council tax payers. Reducing car parking spaces.
(6) Local resident, (Thame, Marston Road)	<b>Object</b> – When are you people going to get it in to your heads that this is yet another stupid idea that no one has any interest in other than the usual Green freaks. It will flop just the same as wasting parking places in Southern Rd car park for stupid EV charging which next to no one uses.
(7) Local resident, (Thame, Roman Way)	<b>Object</b> – Another ridiculous idea !!  Who on earth comes up with this ... everytime there is S106 money locally to spend it is spent on the most ludicrous shite !! Another lot was spent on totem poles/statues that goes from the Thame Meadows to the town centre - what's

	<p>happened with those, two have been vandalised and no one does that walk, so what point was there spending all those 10's of thousands on that !</p> <p>For goodness sake, use the money on something that can benefit WHOLE communities, not just the few !  As for taking up parking spaces in town centre for this - no, we don't have enough parking left as it is and the sodding taxi's often take up the entire layby outside Sainsbury. So do not go giving up more of our parking for this scheme, you are drying up who uses the town centre shops, more are closing by the month as trade drops off and by limiting more parking it will have a further impact on our small retailers in the town.</p>
(8) Local resident, (Thame, Seven Acres)	<b>Object</b> – Unnecessary expense unlikely to be available for those that might conceivably need to 'borrow' a vehicle for a short time. Seems like yet another example of virtue signalling with other peoples' money by the usual suspects.
(9) Local resident, (Thame)	<b>Object</b> – How much is this going to cost the taxpayer? More idiotic ideas, why not build an access road to the A40 park and ride
(10) Local resident, (Thame)	<b>Object</b> – This is yet another attack on car ownership, on freedom of car ownership to be precise, under the guise of offering "choice". If you want to start this scheme, let's have MORE car parking spaces, not less as will be the case should this scheme be accepted.
(11) Local resident, (Thame, Thame Meadows)	<b>Object</b> – It looks as if it's only that part of Thame that's going to benefit?and people will still drive their own car's, so don't see a point
(12) Local resident, (Towersey, Chinnor Road)	<p><b>Object</b> – There was a car club before but it proved to be unsustainable. I considered using this vehicle but it was to drive to a workplace and it would have been parked for most of the day. The cost would have been prohibitive. The charges were per hour and it would wipe out my earnings for that day.</p> <p>Thame is served by buses and we need to improve the bus services with better connections to villages and also the hospitals. We now have electric buses to Oxford but the ones to Aylesbury are diesel. This money would be better spent on buses and a greenway to Haddenham for rail connections.</p>



	<p>Cycling and walking needs to be the easiest choice for short journeys. A lot could be achieved by using the money on safe routes.</p> <p>A car adds to congestion and makes the choice of walking and cycling less attractive.</p> <p>A car would probably be used by only one person. A much better option is a bus that can transport many more people. We should not be encouraging car use in this climate emergency.</p>
(13) Local resident, (Towersey, Windmill Road)	<b>Object</b> – Waste of time, a similar scheme was tried in haddenham and failed due to lack of use. Yet another waste of time and money rather than building better public transport links
(14) Local resident, (Thame, Arnold Way)	<b>Partially support</b> – I don't know enough about scheme to fully support it. In theory, it sounds like a good idea, but is there really a need for such a scheme in Thame? How much of a positive benefit might there be for the carbon neutral campaign? It feels a bit like a tick box exercise for the sake of being seen to be doing something (new), instead of focusing on other (existing) areas/issues which might deliver more benefits to more residents.
(15) Local resident, (Thame, Brook Lane)	<b>Partially support</b> – I support the idea of a car club. I strongly disagree this should be a hybrid vehicle and it should be an EV. Also I believe the previous car club wasn't commercially viable in Thame, so I'm not sure this is a good use of spend or councillors time
(16) As a business, (Thame, Churchill Crescent)	<b>Partially support</b> – I don't quite get it. I think that I am reading that this is only for residents and businesses of Wenman Road - however, marked bays will be made available along Church Road, east St etc within the centre of Thame... Why?
(17) Local Cllr, (Thame, Harrison Place)	<b>Partially support</b> – whilst I support the concept, the consultation suggests it is only for residents in the Wenman Rd area. My question is why? Also the consultation document provides no information on how this would operate or hours of operation. How can people comment with limited information

(18) Local resident, (Thame, Ireton Court)	<b>Partially support</b> – Interested in the proposal
(19) Local resident, (Thame, Angus Court)	<b>Support</b> – Allows use of car on days when it's needed. Saves having to buy a car for infrequent use.
(20) Local resident, (Thame, Aylesbury Road)	<b>Support</b> – Good idea needed by people who only need a car occasionally, takes away the need to own a vehicle and is support for people who cannot afford to run one themselves.
(21) Local resident, (Thame, Bell Close)	<b>Support</b> – Improved air quality and reduction in unused idle vehicles.
(22) Local resident, (Thame, Chinnor Road)	<b>Support</b> – Thame has little allocated parking for many residential houses and roads and side streets are congested day and night with parked cars making visibility poor for pedestrians and drivers alike. It also makes cycle access dangerous and difficult on many roads around Thame. Thame has excellent amenities in town and a good bus service for key links but there are sometimes a private car is needed. Such a scheme if well designed could help remove the need for privately owned cars in Thame reducing pressure and facilitating other modes of active travel which can also improve people's health and wellbeing. A well delivered scheme can also make occasional car use affordable and more equitable for all income levels in town. Finally if cars are high spec EV or hybrid and serviced regularly they may help reduce both GHG emissions and lower levels of air pollution in town. Both of which benefit health. I therefore support the proposal
(23) Local resident, (Thame, East Street)	<p><b>Support</b> – For the sake of the planet it is simply not sustainable for everybody to own a car in the future, and this scheme would be a good way to start giving people the opportunity to have access to a car when necessary, but not to have to own one.</p> <p>We have a small electric car for local journeys but have kept our diesel car for long journeys, because we are not sure of the charging infrastructure at the moment.</p> <p>However, Public Transport needs to improve to work alongside this sort of scheme.</p>

(24) Local resident, (Thame, Esingdon Drive)	<b>Support</b> – It seems like a good idea but further details are required describing how the system would work, booking , insurance, any age limitations, etc.
(25) Local resident, (Thame, Goffe Close)	<b>Support</b> – The correct thing o do
(26) Local resident, (Thame, Hampden Avenue)	<b>Support</b> – I think we have to try new approaches to reducing emissions. However it would be worth you contacted Thame green living as they tried a town centre car club previously but it didn't take off. Perhaps they will have some learning to share ?
(27) Local resident, (Thame, Hazel Avenue)	<b>Support</b> – Most of our cars sit idly and unused for 80% of the time. Sharing car resource makes sense for all important reasons: environment; cost-of-living; parking space...
(28) Local resident, (Thame, Lambert Walk)	<b>Support</b> – The town desperately needs access to this sort of scheme as it is not able to adjust (due to historical nature of the town) to accommodate everyone having 2nd/3rd etc cars in their private household. This provides a viable alternative that is also environmentally friendly
(29) Local resident, (Thame, Langdale Road)	<b>Support</b> – Good for the environment, local support and town centre development. Great for local businesses to encourage their employees to consider this rather than their own vehicles.
(30) Local resident, (Thame, Nelson Street)	<b>Support</b> – I think this is a great idea. As a local resident with only one car to share between my wife and I having access to a Zonal Car Club to use a hybrid vehicle instead of purchasing a second car is ideal and good for the environment.
(31) Local resident, (Thame, Nelson Street)	<b>Support</b> – I wish to support the scheme for my own occasional use and for others to make use if the hybrid.

(32) Local resident, (Thame, Queens Close)	<b>Support</b> – A shared car would be beneficial to Thame
(33) Local resident, (Thame, Southern Road)	<b>Support</b> – There has been a similar service in the town which we were using. But the service was stopped last year. An EV parked in the car park to the rear of the old co-op.
(34) Local resident, (Thame, Wellington Street)	<b>Support</b> – I think it's a great idea. We only want 1 car but having the option to occasionally access a 2nd car would be fantastic. Would mean less cars, less traffic and a better Thame
(35) Local resident, (Thame, Wellington Street)	<b>Support</b> – We only have one car and there is the odd occasion where two would help with taking our kids places. This would be a useful service.
(36) Local resident, (Thame, Welply Way)	<b>Support</b> – Car Clubs are useful for occasional journeys and a low cost option as opposed to year round car ownership. If they are part of a car club network such as Zip car and can be left at different locations, so much the better. Van schemes are also useful for the same reasons. The parking locations of such schemes are best created in off road locations rather than created where they impede traffic flow
(37) Local resident, (Thame, Wenman Road)	<b>Support</b> – Reduce carbon footprint
(38) Local resident, (Thame, Willow Road)	<b>Support</b> – It is a way to reduce car ownership/use. Therefore good for the environment
(39) Local resident, (Thame, Seymour Court)	<b>Support</b> – Good idea

(40) Local resident, (Thame, Fanshawe Road)	<b>Support</b> – Would be great to have access to a second car for occasional use without the expense of purchasing it and maintaining it.
(41) Local resident, (Thame, Hawthorn Avenue)	<b>Support</b> – Think it's a positive idea to encourage people to drive low emission cars especially as the cost of electric cars are so high
(42) Local resident, (Thame, Wentworth Road)	<b>Support</b> – In full support! Great idea!
(43) Member of public, (Long Crendon, Thame Road)	<b>Support</b> – An initiative way to reduce traffic & be greener.
(44) Local resident, (Moreton, Judds Lane)	<b>Support</b> – I agree with the shared use of vehicles rather than the waste of resources inherent in lots of cars sitting idle most of the time.
(45) Local resident, (Thame, Blackthorn Grange)	<b>No objection</b> – This is a good idea. We were without transport recently and really could have done with a car to use.
(46) Local resident, (Thame, Fairfax Close)	<b>No objection</b> – May not use it
(47) Local resident, (Thame, Henry Blyth Gardens)	<b>No objection</b> – I'd have to see how it would work