

Thurrock's Youth Zone

Frequently Asked Questions

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Q1. Who are OnSide?

A1. OnSide is a national charity determined to make sure that all young people have the opportunity to shine. The chance to discover their passion and their purpose.

OnSide fund, build, launch and support a network of state-of-the-art, multimillion-pound Youth Zones in the UK's most disadvantaged areas. These are incredible spaces filled with energy, inspiration and highly skilled youth workers who truly believe in young people.

This is passionate, properly funded youth provision. A unique partnership between young people and their community, local authorities and private business leadership, and a growing movement of supporters. Together, we believe that all young people need is a chance to discover what they've got and where it could take them.

OnSide is working in partnership with Thurrock Council and The Towns Fund Board to develop a new Youth Zone in Thurrock.

Q2. Who are the Towns Fund Board?

A2. The Government identified 101 towns across the country in need of £25m investment and [Tilbury Towns Fund Board](#) was set up in 2020 to develop a bid in consultation with the local community, businesses and Thurrock Council. The Board is Chaired by Kevin Sadler, ex-CEO of Gateway Learning Community and includes representatives of local Thurrock business, Council and community. There was overwhelming demand for improved facilities for young people (93% of residents consulted) along with building on Tilbury's heritage, improving accessibility (station and port), parks and medical facilities. The bid was approved by Thurrock Council in July 2021 and Government in November 2021 and detailed plans and business cases were approved by the Council and Government in 2022.

Q3. What is a Youth Zone?

A3. Every OnSide Youth Zone is a safe and inspiring place for thousands of young people to enjoy a wide range of activities and support. Here's what makes an OnSide Youth Zone unique:

- Open all year-round including evenings, weekends and school holidays.
- Over 20 activities on offer each session, including sports, music, media, dance, drama and much more.



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- Kitted out with state-of-the-art facilities including an indoor climbing wall, 3G kick pitch, large sports hall, music room with recording studio, dance and drama studio, training kitchen, arts and crafts room, enterprise and employability suite, fully equipped fitness and martial arts/boxing gym, sensory room, well-being salon, café and social area and more.
- Staffed by skilled and dedicated youth workers who really care, supported by a team of committed volunteers.
- Open to all young people with a typical membership of 3,000 young people aged 8 to 19 (up to 25 for those with additional needs) with 100 to 250 young people attending every session.
- Delicious hot meals available from £1 at the café.
- Entry is just 50p per visit.
- Provide targeted support both in house and through partnerships with specialist services, creating a seamless link between the Youth Zone and local services.

Q4. Where will Thurrock's Youth Zone be located?

- A4. Thurrock's Youth Zone is in Anchor Fields Park on the corner of London Road and Hume Avenue. The building will be designed to fit well with the park and increase activity and safety there for all residents.

Q5. How much will it cost to attend?

- A5. An annual membership to the Youth Zone is £5, with each visit costing young people just 50p. All the activities (over 20 per session) are included for this entry fee.

Q6. When will it open?

- A6. The plan is for Thurrock's Youth Zone to open in Autumn/Winter 2027.

Q7. How did it come about?

- A7. After residents put a high priority on improved youth facilities during Towns Fund consultation, Towns Fund Board members researched the options and learnt how OnSide Youth Zone's were bringing benefits to young people and the whole community in other towns and cities. Board members, Thurrock Councillors and officers visited Youth Zones in London and were keen to bring the model to Thurrock. In the summer 2021 OnSide and some schools did a survey of over 1,000 young people in Thurrock. 84% of young people who lived in Tilbury said they would come to a Youth Zone and 74% of those outside Tilbury said they would attend.

Once Thurrock's Youth Zone opens, it will join the OnSide Network of Youth Zones across the country with others in Barnsley, Bolton, Blackburn, Carlisle, Chorley, Grimsby, Manchester (Gorton, Harpurhey and Salford), Oldham, Warrington, Wigan, Wirral, Wolverhampton and four in London (Barnet, Croydon, Hammersmith and Fulham and Barking and Dagenham) and Preston.

In addition to Thurrock Youth Zone, OnSide is opening Youth Zones in Bristol and Crewe in mid - late 2026 next couple of years.

Thurrock's Youth Zone is being delivered in partnership with OnSide, Thurrock Council, Tilbury Towns Fund Board and a variety of private philanthropists and organisations who wish to support the social development of young people in Thurrock.



Q8. Why did you choose the site?

- A8. Our aim was to find a suitable, Council-owned site for the Youth Zone that was accessible to young people in Tilbury and across Thurrock and which would complement existing provision locally and around the borough. The chosen location is accessible by foot or by bus and is prominent so to make a statement about the value Thurrock places on its young people.

Q9. Who will run Thurrock's Youth Zone?

- A9. Thurrock's Youth Zone will be a local independent charity led by its own Board of Trustees all of whom will have a passion for increasing the opportunities for young people in Thurrock. They will ensure the new charity delivers for the young people of Tilbury and Thurrock. The day-to-day management of the Youth Zone will be the responsibility of a dedicated team of paid staff supported by an army of volunteers.

Q10. What will happen to all the existing Youth Provision?

- A10. Thurrock's Youth Zone will complement the borough's existing youth provision, acting as a platform to help grow the offer for young people. Youth Zones deliver the best service when they work in partnership with local voluntary and statutory organisations. In other towns and cities, the Youth Zones provide a new physical space for other organisations to deliver their activities or services to young people. Other local organisations find they can reach more young people and new young people through partnerships and the Youth Zone is keen to work in partnership with as many existing youth groups as possible. To find out more about working in partnership please contact info@onsideyouthzonethamesgateway.org.

Q11. How much will it cost to run?

- A11. The annual running costs for the Youth Zone will be approximately £1.4 million. This includes for example: staffing costs, equipment, support of volunteers (including DBS checks), insurance, maintenance and utilities. The annual running costs are met through local private sector supporters, charitable trusts and grants, Thurrock Council's support, and young people's membership and entry fees.

Q12. How do we know the Youth Zone will be sustainable in the future?

- A12. The funding model is based on the success of the 18 Youth Zones already in operation around the country (21 Youth Zones by the end of 2026), many of which have been running for 10+ years. All their accounts can be seen on the Charity Commission website. Each Youth Zone is built for its local community, but it is also part of a national network of OnSide Youth Zones, in which each supports and learns from one another.

Money to run the Youth Zone comes from different places. This includes local businesses, public funding, community fundraising, and support from national and network-wide partners. This means OnSide Youth Zone Thames Gateway does not rely on just one source of money and can maintain long term sustainability. The majority of revenue funding comes from the private sector who get very involved in the Youth Zone, also offering employment and work experience opportunities to young people.



Before a Youth Zone opens, OnSide ensures three years of running costs are already in place. This will also be true for OnSide Youth Zone Thames Gateway. Having this funding secured from the start gives the Youth Zone time to settle in, get to know local young people and families, and become a trusted and well-used part of the community. During this time, it will also be establishing a local fundraising team who will be committed to securing the long-term funding required to run a Youth Zone. During the first three years of opening, the fundraising team, supported by the charity's Board, will develop new income sources and partnerships to allow its income to grow, while maintaining the relationships with the Youth Zone's founder donors. The Board will include a representative from Thurrock Council and the national charity, OnSide, who would get early indications of any changes that need to be made to ensure the Youth Zone performs. If the Youth Zone charity struggles, OnSide would have step in rights to run it from national funds, but this has never come close to happening.

The strength of a Youth Zone operating model with a peppercorn lease, no rent or mortgage and low fixed costs, means the biggest expenditure area is staffing, which can be flexed if needed. This makes the model resilient in hard times, and able to seize larger funding opportunities when they come.

At the same time, it will be supported by national partners through the OnSide Network. This creates a Youth Zone with a strong local heartbeat, backed by national support and wider impact, helping it to grow and succeed for many years to come.

Q13. How can young people get involved?

A13. OnSide will be working with young people from Tilbury and across Thurrock and establishing the Young People's Development Group in 2025. This is a group of local young people who meet regularly and will be key in shaping the Youth Zone. Members have opportunities to meet new people locally and nationally, express their views and opinions, visit other Youth Zones, become an ambassador for the Youth Zone and play a key role in bringing the Youth Zone to life.

If you'd like to find out more about joining the Young People's Development Group, please email Elizabeth.Leke@onsideyouthzones.org.

Q14. Will young people from outside Tilbury travel to the Youth Zone?

A14. Our experience from other Youth Zones is if the offer at the Youth Zone is strong enough, young people will travel significant distances to get there. The accessible location of the Youth Zone and its proximity to the train station and a number of bus routes will help to ensure all young people from across Thurrock can access it via various means of travel. From experience, 85% of young people get to the Youth Zone under their own steam, be that on foot, skateboard, bike or public transport. Before and after opening we will also explore how we can best support young people to travel to and from the Youth Zone from across Thurrock.

Q15. How will you engage young people from different cultural backgrounds, including the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community?

A15. Our experience from our other 18 Youth Zones is they are popular with young people from all walks of life and one of their strengths is bringing young people together to build friendships, cohesion and community across cultures, ages and areas. We will build early contact through Council liaison officers, voluntary organisations and community representatives to ensure



communities from across Thurrock will feel welcome and supported to come and enjoy the benefits of the Youth Zone together in this neutral space.

Q16. How do I know my child will be safe when using the Youth Zone?

A16. Thurrock's Youth Zone will be run by suitably trained and qualified members of staff that are vetted in line with current legislation (including DBS checks). Their focus will be to ensure all young people are safe when accessing the services offered by the Youth Zone.

Youth Zone sessions are split between Junior (8-12yrs) and Senior (13-19yrs) sessions. In the junior sessions all young people must be collected from the Youth Zones by their parents, carers or guardians. Members must stay inside the Youth Zone in what we call a closed session. Senior sessions are open sessions where they can come and go as they please due to their age and level of responsibility.

Q17. What impact have Youth Zones made?

Q17. Currently, more than 60,000 young people are members of OnSide's Youth Zones across the UK, with over half a million visits being made a year. During a recent survey amongst Youth Zone members, 77% said they felt more self-confident as a result of attending, with 70% saying they believe they are physically healthier as a result. More than 750 jobs have been created, with around 500 volunteering opportunities across the Youth Zones.

Q18. Will the central location of the Youth Zone increase anti-social behaviour?

A18. The impact of other Youth Zones in their local areas has been extremely positive with statistics showing that the Youth Zones contribute towards decreasing anti-social behaviour.

Local police in some areas across the country have reported up to a 30-70% reduction in anti-social behaviour (ASB) as a direct result of strategic and continued partnership work between Youth Zones and local police.

Q19. Will there be visible security outside the Youth Zone?

A19. The Youth Zone youth work team will actively manage the area around the Youth Zone, but this is done in a positive way using youth work skills to engage young people whether inside or outside the building. There is a team dedicated to welcoming young people as they arrive and leave, and this extends through the entrance and further afield with outreach work for example in the park and other areas of Tilbury and Thurrock as resources allow. The Youth Zone team will use their local knowledge to assess the security arrangements needed in Thurrock. In some Youth Zones young people have asked all those who enter the Youth Zone whether young people or adults, to be wanded and pocket/bag searched so everyone feels safe coming into the Youth Zone.

Q20. Will the Youth Zone be available for other groups when not in use by young people?

A20. The Youth Zone is dedicated to young people whenever schools are closed. But during school hours there is flexibility for other groups to hire space in the building, although preference is given to those working with children and young people. This helps to generate income for the youth work.

Q21. What time will the Youth Zone be open until?



A21. The Youth Zone will be open until up to 8pm for Junior sessions and up to 9pm or 10pm for Senior sessions.

Q22. How will the Youth Zone provide services to young people with additional needs?

A22. All existing Youth Zones provide and cater for young people with a range of additional needs up to the age of 25 through inclusive ability sessions alongside the mainstream offer. The sessions are adapted for young people with additional needs and are open for a wide range of young people to access, including those with mild learning difficulties to more complex needs such as visual impairment and physical disabilities. Young people are given the opportunity to access a range of activities for example boxing, trampolining, karaoke, arts and crafts, cooking, gaming and much more.

Q23. Will the floodlights on the outdoor MUGA be lit until 10pm each evening?

A23. The Youth Zone will have 1 floodlit multi use games area (MUGA) and is for sole use by Youth Zone members and will be fully supervised at all times. Its operation hours are 8.00am - 10pm - with a strict lights-off by 10pm rule. The pitch lighting will be carefully designed by specialist lighting engineers to avoid detrimental impact on local residents i.e. lighting points into the site and only lights the pitch area.

Q24. There's no provision for parking. Why?

A24. Our experience is Youth Zones don't generate much demand for parking. Our plans include a drop-off/ pick-up parking bay close to the Youth Zone entrance for use by the relatively few parents/carers who drop off their children. The vast majority of young people will access the Youth Zone on foot or by public transport. Our strategy is to promote a green travel policy which aligns with most Local Authorities desire to promote public transport and get traffic off the roads.

Q25. What about parking by staff and volunteers when the Youth Zone opens?

A25. Our strategy is to promote a green travel policy which aligns with most Local Authorities desire to promote public transport and get traffic off the roads. All members of staff and volunteers will be encouraged to use public transport and where that is not possible, they will be required to respect the amenity of local residents and park in the public car parks available off the high street.

Q26. Will there be disabled parking on site?

A26. Yes. There will be disabled parking on site for staff and one space for blue badge holders.

Q27. Where will contractors park and receiving construction related deliveries in an already congested area?

A27. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been agreed with Tilbury Council Highways Team which confirms the delivery strategy that will be adopted by the construction company. All deliveries will be managed and it is expected that there will be minimal disruption to local residents.

The CEMP is in place to minimise environmental impact during construction, covering:



- Pollution control
- Waste management
- Noise and dust mitigation
- Traffic movements
- Compliance with environmental legislation

Q28. How to you intend to cut down the noise pollution?

A28. The building is designed to meet all the necessary Building Regulation requirements for noise transfer and a professional acoustician has been involved in the building design. The noise generated by the MUGA being used is not significant. The experience of the Youth Zones that are already operating around the country is that they receive almost no complaints from neighbours. This is, in part, due to the careful design but also because Youth Zones strive to be good neighbours; the relationship between the staff, volunteers and young people is founded on high quality youth work and the members will be asked to respect the amenity of local residents as they make their way to and from the facility.

Q29. Are you planning to have CCTV in the area?

A29. Yes. The Youth Zone will have CCTV. This is to protect the building and its contents as part of the building's insurance requirements. CCTV is employed at all our Youth Zone buildings both on the exterior of the building (as a deterrent against break-ins) and internally for reasons of safeguarding.

Q30. How will you monitor young people hanging around outside the Youth Zone?

A30. Our experience is young people want to be in the building taking advantage of the high-quality facilities and the wide range of activities on offer in the Youth Zone. This means the Youth Zone does not tend to find groups of young people hanging around outside or in the neighbourhood.

Q31. Who will police the members when they leave the facility at night?

A31. From our experience, once the Youth Zone closes young people are collected or make their way home on public transport. The senior members are welcome to come into the Youth Zone for as little or as long as they wish, so there is not a mass exodus as the Youth Zone closes and instead young people tend to arrive and depart in small groups. Due to the strong relationship between the Youth Zone's staff team and the young members there are very rarely complaints at our Youth Zones about nuisance as the young people disperse.

Q32. Will there be employment opportunities for members?

A32. Thurrock's Youth Zone will have a room dedicated to helping young people with Enterprise and Employability opportunities, with workshops focusing on CV writing, interview techniques etc. as well as OnSide's extremely successful employability programme which has enabled so many young people across the OnSide network to find both part and full-time jobs. Raising aspiration for real local jobs is enhanced by Youth Zone's strong links with the local business community.



Q33. How much of the Anchor Fields park will be taken up by the Youth Zone? Will there still be space for picnics and events?

A33. The site area will cover 2,815sqm, which is 17 % of the area west of Hume/Parkside Ave and 11% of the wider park area. The building footprint will be 1,300sqm which is 5% of the wider park area.

Q34. What will happen to the building or site if the Youth Zone fails for any reason?

A34. The lease will be granted for Thurrock's Youth Zone charity for a term of 125 years (without any break clauses) and the use will be restricted to: "Use on a not for profits basis for the purposes of a charity formed for the provision of facilities for children and young people in the Borough of Thurrock and surrounding areas providing a universal activity based service complemented by a range of targeted support services to help and educate them by promoting their full physical, intellectual and social potential." Thurrock's Youth Zone will be prohibited from transferring the lease except to another charity for similar purposes. Youth Zones have a sustainable financial model (income and cost-wise) with step in rights for OnSide so it's unlikely to be abandoned for financial reasons (see FAQ12). In the final resort, the Youth Zone would return the site to the Council in the condition we received it.

Q35. What other sites were considered for the Youth Zone?

A35. The Towns Fund and OnSide considered the following potential sites: The former Police Station in Civic Square (too small), the former Youth Club in Quebec Road (too small, not accessible), the Children's Centre in Civic Square (too hidden behind residential and too expensive to replace elsewhere), Koala Park (not prominent or accessible), Daisy Fields (required for active sports, less in the heart of Tilbury, further from bus stops and train station), Industrial Land on Dock Rd/Hume Rd (not prominent/central, not accessible by bus, high remediation costs), Industrial Land west of Amazon (not Council-owned, on extremity of town). Other parts of Anchor Fields considered include: Brennan Rd/Parkside Ave triangle (too small, close to housing), London Rd/Parkside Ave triangle (too small, close to housing), the north side of Anchor Fields near Brennan Road (bisected by a large sewer and closer to housing).

Q36. How will young people be involved in the development?

A36. A small, but representative group of young people have joined a Young People's Development Group (YPDG), which is helping shape the Youth Zone in its lead up to opening. They will visit other existing Youth Zones, discussing the key things they want to see in theirs. Their involvement so far has included contributing to the Youth Zone's youth-facing element of the brand which will be part of the Youth Zones interior design and signage. They've also helped to design the hoardings that are outside the construction site. Future involvement includes helping to recruit key staff.

Q37. What are the green credentials of the Youth zone?



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A37. Thurrock's Youth Zone has strong green credentials, including a BREEAM Excellent rating, high-performance energy systems, on-site renewable generation, biodiversity enhancements, and sustainable water management.

Key Green Credentials of Thurrock Youth Zone are:

1. BREEAM Excellent Certification - The project has achieved BREEAM Excellent, demonstrating high performance in energy, water, materials, pollution, and ecology.

2. High-Performance Building Envelope - Designed with high levels of insulation and airtightness to reduce heat loss and improve energy efficiency

This aligns with the project's sustainability targets and the Thurrock Local Plan requirements.

3. On-Site Renewable Energy - Roof-mounted photovoltaic (PV) panels contribute to the building's low-carbon energy strategy.

4. Windcatchers are incorporated to support natural ventilation and reduce mechanical cooling demand.

5. Energy-Efficient Building Systems - We have designed advanced lighting, efficient heating and cooling systems, and optimised water management infrastructure to minimise operational energy use.

6. Biodiversity Enhancements (which improve the ecological value of the site)

The landscape design integrates:

Meadow grass

New tree planting

A new pond for water attenuation and habitat creation

7. Sustainable Drainage & Water Management - The site includes an attenuation basin and sustainable drainage features to manage surface water and reduce flood risk.

