

# 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 Peter Ward, Commercial Director of Port of Tilbury 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:



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- Open 7 days a week including evenings, weekends and school holidays.
- Over 20 activities on offer each session, including sports, music, media, dance, drama and much more.
- 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. The site identified for Thurrock's Youth Zone is 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. The park will also be upgraded along with other local parks like Daisy Fields and Koala Park.

### 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 Bolton, Blackburn, Carlisle, Chorley, Manchester (Gorton, Harpurhey and Salford), Oldham, Warrington, Wigan, Wirral, Wolverhampton and four in London (Barnet, Croydon, Hammersmith and Fulham and Barking and Dagenham).

In addition to Thurrock Youth Zone, OnSide is opening Youth Zones in Barnsley, Bristol, Crewe, Grimsby and Preston in the 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 [enquiries@onsideyouthzones.org](mailto:enquiries@onsideyouthzones.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 Youth Zone model is based on the successful Bolton Lads and Girls Club, where a combination of revenue streams, including private and public sector funding, ensures its sustainability and over time allows the income streams to grow and diversify steadily, increasing the Youth Zone offer. OnSide ensures that at the time of opening, each Youth Zone has three years revenue funding in place and this will be the case for the Youth Zone in Thurrock. This allows the charity time to establish the Youth Zone as a key part of the local youth offer and demonstrate the huge value it can provide to the lives of many of the area's young people. Over the first three years, the Youth Zone, supported by its Board, will develop new income sources and partnerships to allow its income to grow, in the same way that all OnSide Youth Zones have grown.



### 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@futureyouthzone.org](mailto:Elizabeth.Leke@futureyouthzone.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 16 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 50,000 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.

PCSO Rob Smith, a local police officer in Greater Manchester commented: *“We have come across residents that were against the opening of the Youth Zone stating that it would cause more problems than it would solve. Since the opening, we have had further comments from those residents who are now happy and grateful that Manchester Youth Zone has given the young people a place to go rather than cause problems by hanging around on their streets.”* This direct feedback from Police and Residents is consistent across the Youth Zone Network.

### 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, 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 (e.g. Calcutta Rd).

### **Q26. Will there be disabled parking on site?**

A26. Yes. A transport statement will be carried out to support our planning application. 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 Management Plan to confirm the delivery strategy will be agreed with Thurrock Council Highways teams.

### **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. Are you employing local builders, contractors and staff from Thurrock and surrounding local areas?

A32. We always aspire to employ local people in the building of our facilities and the appointed main contractor will be encouraged to involve local people but ultimately it will decide on which sub-contractors to use.

The majority of the full and part time staff team once the Youth Zone opens will be from the local area.

### Q33. Will there be employment opportunities for members?

A33. 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.

### Q34. How much of the Anchor Fields park will be taken up by the Youth Zone? Will there still be space for picnics and events?

A34. 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. This will leave plenty of space for other activities in the park like picnics and many events like Picnic in the Park and Summer Fair. Depending on other improvements to the park (see Q36), larger events may be better suited to other nearby parks like Daisy Fields.

### Q36. How can you be sure the Youth Zone won't run out of money and then be used for commercial leisure or housing?

A36. Experience from Bolton Lads and Girls club (135 years old) and our 15 other Youth Zones is the funding model is sustainable and robust even through 'austerity', the financial crash of 2008 and the Covid pandemic. The funding is a diverse mix of public sector, philanthropic and business donations, grants and income generation. 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. If the Youth Zone charity



struggles, the national charity OnSide would have step in rights to run it from national funds, but this has never come close to happening. Both OnSide and Thurrock Council will have a seat on the Board and will get early indications of any changes that need to be made to ensure the Youth Zone performs. Minimum performance standards will be written into the lease agreement to ensure it can only be used to benefit young people.

### Q38. What will happen to the building or site if the Youth Zone fails for any reason??

A38. 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.

### Q39. What other sites have been considered for the Youth Zone?

A39. The Towns Fund and OnSide have 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).

### Q40. What consultation has taken place for the Youth Zone?

A40. The Towns Fund Board ran an initial public engagement in 2020 which demonstrated strong support for the goals of the Youth Zone in Tilbury with '97% of survey respondents saying dedicated facilities for Tilbury's Youth was a key requirement' (Tilbury TIP section 1.93 Jan 2021).

In July 2021, OnSide surveyed 1,014 young people across Thurrock (age 7-19) and 81% said they would use a Youth Zone in Tilbury. Another 446 were surveyed from schools in Stanford le Hope and Corringham in May 2022 and 67% said they would use a Youth Zone in Tilbury. 73% of respondents said there was not enough to do for young people in Thurrock.

OnSide carried out a consultation in 2022 to gain views on the specific designs for the proposed Youth Zone as part of its planning application which was approved on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

For more information visit: [www.onsideyouthzones.org](http://www.onsideyouthzones.org)

