



Thurston Parish Council

Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018-2036

Adopted October 2019

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1 INTRODUCTION

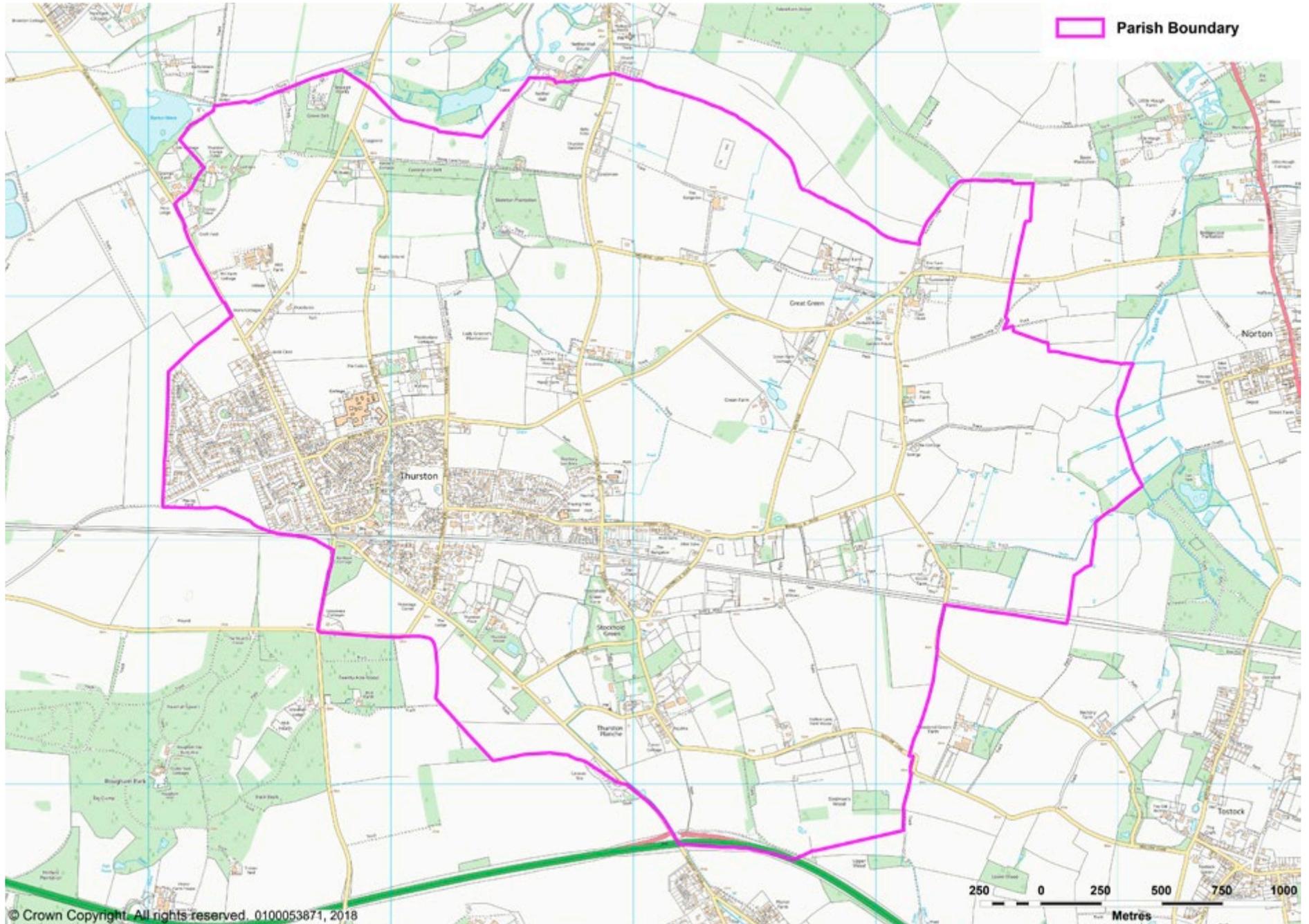
Purpose of the Plan

- 1.1 This document forms the Neighbourhood Plan for Thurston parish for the period 2018 to 2036. The Plan contains a vision for the future of Thurston and sets out clear planning policies to realise this vision.
- 1.2 The principal purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development within the parish. It also provides guidance to anyone wishing to submit a planning application for development within the parish. The process of producing a plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible. The different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to Thurston, its residents, businesses and community groups.
- 1.3 Some of the Neighbourhood Plan policies are general and apply throughout the Plan Area, whilst others are site – or area-specific and apply only to the appropriate areas illustrated on the relevant maps. Nevertheless, in considering proposals for development, Mid Suffolk District Council will apply all relevant policies of the Plan. It is therefore assumed that the Plan will be read as a whole, although some cross-referencing between Plan policies has been provided.
- 1.4 The process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan has identified a number of actions which have not been included in the policies' sections. This is because these are not specifically related to land use matters and therefore sit outside the jurisdiction of a Neighbourhood Plan. These actions will be addressed by the Parish Council outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Policy context

- 1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan represents one part of the development plan for the neighbourhood area over the period 2018 to 2036, the other parts being the Mid Suffolk District Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008), the Mid Suffolk District Core Strategy Focused Review (2012), the saved policies of the Mid Suffolk District Local Plan (1998) and the saved policies of the First Alteration to the Mid Suffolk Local Plan (2006).
- 1.6 Mid Suffolk District Council, along with Babergh District Council, is currently preparing a Joint Local Plan to cover the area of the two authorities. The first consultation on options for this Plan (Regulation 18) was held in late 2017 with the second due December 2018 to January 2019. A Publication Draft of the Plan (Regulation 19) is due in Spring 2019 with an anticipated adoption date of Winter 2019/2020. The Thurston Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan has sought to reflect as far as possible the emerging Joint Local Plan but, given its early stage of preparation, this has been limited.
- 1.7 Mid Suffolk District Council, as the local planning authority, designated the Thurston Neighbourhood Area in September 2013 to enable Thurston Parish Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been prepared by the community through the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) Steering Group.
- 1.8 The TNP has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). The TNP Steering Group has prepared the Neighbourhood Plan to establish a vision for the future of the parish and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning and controlling land use and development change over the Plan period.

Figure 1: Thurston Neighbourhood Plan Area/Parish Boundary



Background to the preparation of the Plan

- 1.9 The Parish Council leads the development of Thurston's Neighbourhood Plan. Following 100% support at a public meeting held in May 2013, the Parish Council submitted the Neighbourhood Plan Area to Mid Suffolk District Council for designation on 11th June 2013. Following a period of consultation, the District Council designated the whole of the parish as a Neighbourhood Area on 2nd September 2013.
- 1.10 The map in Figure 1 shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, which is the same as the administrative boundary of Thurston parish.
- 1.11 After the designation of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the Parish Council established a Steering Group (the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group) to work on the Plan.
- 1.12 Members of the Steering Group included elected members of the Parish Council and local people with particular knowledge of the issues likely to be raised. Representatives of community organisations, local landowners/developers and other stakeholders (amenity/environmental groups) have also been consulted during the process.
- 1.13 Members and businesses of the community have been involved in the preparation of the plan through seven whole parish questionnaires; open public meetings; open Neighbourhood Plan meetings; drop-in surgeries; engagement surgeries; updates in the Thurston Newsletter; whole parish postcard deliveries and dedicated pages on the Thurston website. (<https://thurstonparishcouncil.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>).

Key stages in the preparation of the Plan

September 2013	Neighbourhood Plan Area designated
April 2014	Questionnaire (household survey)
June 2014	1st Village Forum in Village Hall
November 2014	Detailed Household, Business & Young Person (11-16) Questionnaire
February 2015	Public Meeting
May 2015	Housing Needs Questionnaire
November 2015	Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('the SEA Regulations 2004') Consultation
July 2015	Public Meeting
December 2015	Call for Expression of Interest in Sites for Development
March 2016	Public Meeting
April 2016	Consultation on Site Assessment Criteria
April 2016	Consultation on Site Assessments
August 2016 – May 2018	Consultations with service providers over constraints to growth
Summer 2017	Character Assessment Appraisals
November 2017	Character Assessment Consultation
June 2018	Pre-submission document approved by Parish Council for consultation

July – August 2018	Regulation 14 Consultation
September – October 2018	Consideration of representations/ amendments/additions to the Plan
December 2018	Submission of Plan to Local Planning
January– March 2019	Regulation 16 Consultation
March 2019	Consideration of representations made
April 2019	Regulation 17 Examination & issuing of final report
September 2019	Regulation 18 Referendum on the Plan (12 September 2019)
October 2019	Formal Adoption by Mid Suffolk District Council of the Thurston Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Consultation

- 1.14 Over the course of the Plan, discussions took place with service providers – health, highways, education, transport and Infrastructure Officers at Suffolk County Council and Mid Suffolk District Council – over key infrastructure needed for the future of Thurston and in particular in the light of the five significant planning applications submitted during 2016/2017 for 818 dwellings in Thurston.

Monitoring the Plan

- 1.15 Thurston Parish Council, as the Neighbourhood Plan authority, will be responsible for maintaining and periodically revisiting the Plan to ensure relevance and to monitor delivery. The ongoing development of the Joint Local Plan means that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be reviewed within five years of being 'made'.

2 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Challenges for Thurston

- 2.1 Overall, the key challenge facing Thurston is to provide appropriate sustainable development and an infrastructure that supports it while retaining the quality of current village life. Thurston is under continuing pressure that may result in the residents of Thurston living in a non-sustainable community with severe consequences for their wellbeing, safety and lifestyle.
- 2.2 More specifically, the individual challenges which are part of this are:
- There is a shortage of certain types of housing in Thurston, particularly for young people (who currently often move out of the village to find suitable provision) and older people (who need bungalows, houses designed for and suited to their needs, sheltered housing and care provision).
 - Railway station safety – passengers have to cross the tracks to access the westbound platform. The growth in the population will increase passenger numbers and therefore increase the risks. There appears to be no ready solution to the problem that is acceptable.
 - A lack of parking serving users of the railway station.
 - Roads leading to surrounding villages (in particular Ixworth Road and Norton Road), and Bury St Edmunds (Mount Road) are winding and narrow for the traffic carried.

- The narrow road underneath the rail bridge between New Road and Barton Road has inadequate pavements, yet is a main route used in the village.
- Various road junctions either have a significant number of accidents and/or are at capacity.
- Thurston Primary Academy requires expansion to accommodate the planned growth. SCC Education Team has identified this as a priority. A preferred site, following the submission of two planning applications for a new primary school, has been identified on land north of Norton Road (Site A – Figure 13 page 76).
- Thurston Community College serves a wide area, with many children being brought to school either by coach or car. This puts additional pressure on the local roads.
- The leisure facilities in Thurston are well used but further provision is needed to support growth.

Vision for Thurston 2036

- 2.3 In consultation with the community, the established vision for Thurston 2036 is as follows:

A period of rapid expansion in the early part of the Plan period has now seen Thurston transition to a slow growth in population supported by well-planned, high quality housing, business, health, education and recreation provision. Infrastructure has been improved and future growth will be planned to ensure a safe and sustainable community. Whilst the village has grown a lot, it has not embarked on a slow and steady sprawl towards the edge of Bury St Edmunds. New developments have been integrated into the existing fabric of Thurston, rather than feeling like 'bolt-ons' which are not part of the village. They have been sympathetically designed, are of high quality, and are linked to the village by safe roads, cycle routes and footpaths, thereby strengthening the appeal of the village and quality of life of its residents. Thurston is a Key Service Centre (Core Village) where people can access facilities to meet their daily needs without having to travel outside the village. Thurston is a place that sustains the vitality, health and wellbeing of the community and permits young people, families, disabled, elderly and infirm residents the opportunity of remaining part of it.

New quality and sympathetic housing development has addressed the needs of the local community and Thurston remains a popular place in which to live. Small-scale developments, including affordable and self-build housing, have continued over the years. In particular, groups of new starter homes, family homes and bungalows at various sites have been built, enabling young families to find affordable housing locally and older people to down-size. This in turn has freed up larger family properties for local families as their needs grow. Thurston housing now caters for the full range of needs, allowing people to move homes within the village throughout their lives. Sufficient parking and landscaping have been designed-in from the outset.

The growth of Thurston has enabled improvements to education and health provision. The primary school is on a new, larger site. A well-used and greatly appreciated health centre includes GP and dental services, a pharmacy and social care support. Small developments for over 50s, where residents benefit from purpose-built housing, sheltered accommodation, a well-run nursing home, and social and healthcare services, have proved a great success. Superfast broadband is available to all users.

The growth of Thurston village has allowed it to retain a good range of shops and services, unlike many other villages. New retail outlets, including eating-places and shops selling everyday items, have been located within both existing buildings and on a new development on the site of The Granary by the Railway Station. New small-scale commercial units have helped to nurture a thriving small business community. New businesses, many of which provide local services of value to the community, have steadily sprung up. In general, Thurston is seen as a place where small and medium-sized companies can 'do business'. The presence of the railway station and the proximity to Bury St Edmunds have helped to nurture this progress.

The safety issues associated with the railway station have been addressed, thus better facilitating public transport access to and from the village. The improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes have meant that parking is no longer a significant issue for the station because most people walk and cycle. Improvements have been made to key road junctions and pinch points around the village and measures have been implemented to deter speeding traffic.

New sports and leisure facilities and a skate park have been provided mainly through financial contributions from development. These provide a wide range of activities that have been particularly popular with children and young people: teenagers no longer say, "There's nothing to do in Thurston". Residents have access to community facilities including a central

community hub, library, and a variety of local clubs. The health and wellbeing of all residents has been enhanced.

With retention of central open spaces, access to the countryside has been improved and the village has retained a 'green' feel despite the new development. The additional area for burials, created in 2017, located near the existing churchyard, is a peaceful place and is managed to encourage wildlife. Green spaces and trees have been designed into each development scheme. Thurston feels like a village knitted together with a network of high-quality open spaces and connecting cycleways/pathways.

The best of Thurston's historical buildings and spaces of value to the community, along with the surrounding countryside, have been protected and enhanced, recognising they are an important part of what makes Thurston a special place in which to live.

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

2.4 The objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan as identified through engagement with the community are as follows:

Spatial Strategy

S1. To develop and sustain the key service centre status of Thurston by ensuring any future development is sustainable and supports a range of employment, services and housing.

Housing and Design

H1. To ensure housing is designed that retains Thurston as a place with a village feel rather than that of a town.

H2. To address the specific housing needs of older people.

H3. To address the specific housing needs of younger people.

H4. To provide the infrastructure necessary to ensure that growth is sustainable.

Community Infrastructure

I1. To ensure adequate provision of community, retail, education and leisure facilities, telephony, sewage, and services such as doctors, dentist and family services to support the needs of existing and future populations.

I2. To encourage the uptake of sports/fitness/leisure/wellbeing activities in the village by providing facilities that are open for all to use, including those living and working in the wider area.

Movement

M1. To ensure the road and rail infrastructure serving Thurston is safe and meets the needs of the growing population.

M2. To maximise the potential for the use of sustainable modes of transport, including cycling and walking.

M3. To plan for and adequately mitigate the impact of new development on traffic congestion and pedestrian/cyclist safety.

Environment

E1. To protect and enhance the village character and its environment, together with its relationship with the surrounding countryside.

E2. To protect green spaces of value in and around the village.

E3. To enhance green space and wildlife provision and minimise light pollution in new development.

3 LOCAL CONTEXT

History of Thurston

- 3.1 Thurston, like most settlements in England, has grown and changed greatly since its mention in the Domesday Book of 1086. It was part of the Thedwastre Hundred which consisted of 24 parishes in Suffolk. In 1660, the Thedwastre Hundred Court met once a year at Easter on Thurston Plains or on Thedwastre Hill.

Archaeology

- 3.2 The County Historic Environment Record captures information relating to the earlier history of the parish, with approximately 40 entries relating to all periods of human history. A watercourse runs northwards through the parish into Pakenham Fen, and its valley sides were topographically favourable for early activity, with a Bronze Age burial recorded in Skeleton Plantation. Part of the Nether Hall estate lies in the north of the parish, and the early hall site is not known. In the west of the parish, a Roman road runs on a north-north-east to south-south-west alignment across the former Thurston Heath, and there are Roman finds recorded in the vicinity, as well as Iron Age and Neolithic occupation and activity.

Fluvial flooding

- 3.3 The majority of the parish is in flood zone 1, the lowest level of flood risk. There are areas of flood zone 2 and flood zone 3 (the highest level of flood risk) associated with a water course to the east of the village. There are areas of surface water (pluvial) flood risk within the village, mainly along the length of Barton road and some of the surrounding streets.

A farming parish

- 3.4 For many centuries Thurston must have existed as a small scattered parish supporting a population of about 300. Most of the inhabitants lived in the eastern half of the parish, in the Great Green, Church Road and Stockhold Green areas. The western half was more sparsely populated and partly consisted of an expanse of heath land.



Thurston – a farming parish

- 3.5 The 1841 Tithe Map paints a picture of the farming community. With its chalky soil and rich boulder clays, together with its low rainfall, it is an ideal location for growing cereals. Being primarily an arable farming area requiring a large labour force, the majority of the population depended upon agriculture for a living. This would include blacksmiths, wheelwrights and other trades. The 1905 Ordnance Survey map of Thurston shows, in the Great Green area, the smaller, independent farms, clustered around a central green which, before the Enclosure Act, was common land. Thurston Heath in the western half of the parish was also common land prior to enclosure. Most of the land in the centre of the

parish was owned by the large estates of Nether Hall and Thurston House.

Some interesting original village properties

- 3.6 Thurston has lost many of its old thatched cottages. During the mid-1800s, when agriculture was enjoying a period of prosperity, small cottages for agricultural labourers were built on Meadow Lane, Church Road and in the Great Green area.
- 3.7 There are currently 23 listed buildings in Thurston. The more significant buildings in the parish include: Thurston House, Nether Hall, Manor Farm, Thurston Place, The Planche, The Methodist chapel, The Victoria public house, Grove Farm, St Peter's Church, Cavendish Hall, Thurston Railway Station and The Fox and Hounds public house.

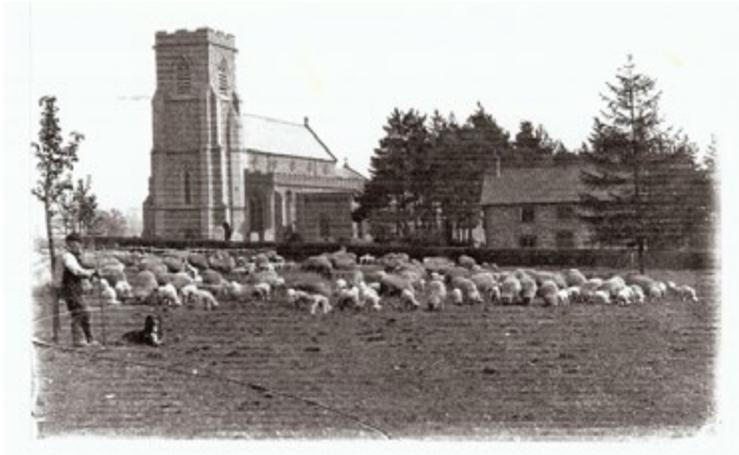
The village centre

- 3.8 There is no main village street in Thurston. Up until the middle of the 1900s the 'centre' of the village was to be found in the Church Road area of the parish. The church, primary school, Cavendish Hall, recreation field, post office, blacksmith and carpenter/undertaker were to be found there. The building of council houses began in the early 1900s and continued with bungalows for the elderly in 1970 in this area.

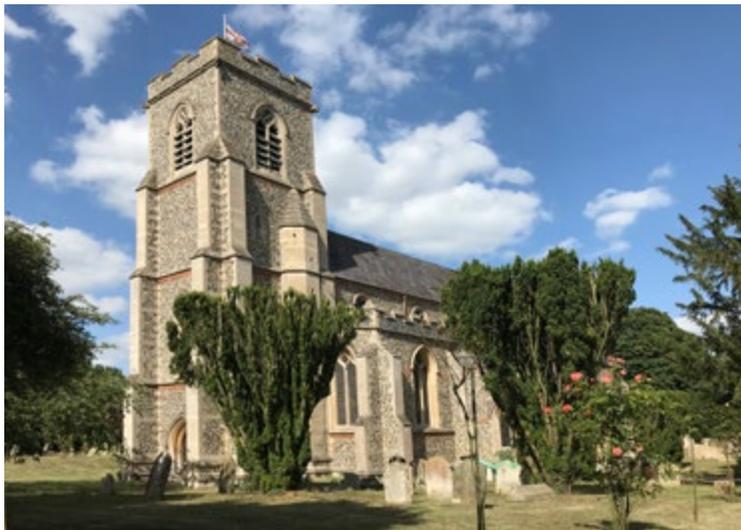


Thurston postcard, c1950. St Peter's Church is towards the centre of the photograph

3.9 From as early as the 14th Century St Peter's Church has been the main religious building in the village. The present chancel dates from the early 15th Century replacing an earlier structure and was the only part to survive when the tower collapsed in March 1860.



By permission of Bury St Edmunds Past & Present Society



St. Peter's Church 1861 and today

3.10 Thurston Primary School opened in 1869 but was replaced with a new building in the early 1960s. Since school system changes in 2015, two extra years have been accommodated on site, taking it to capacity. With the increase in Thurston's population, a new, larger primary school is required as the current school site is constrained by size. A preferred site, following the submission of two planning applications for a new primary school, has been identified on land north of Norton Road (Site A - Figure 13 page 73).

3.11 The original Church Room was replaced with the Cavendish Hall in 1914/15 in memory of Tyrell William Cavendish. This continues as a very popular venue and is used by the local Scouting Movement and the Thurston Women's Institute as well as for various events.

3.12 Football and cricket have been played on the Recreation Field since the 1920s, and it was used for the annual flower show and village fete. The local rugby club have their own facilities on Ixworth Road.

The coming of the Railway

- 3.13 The construction of the railway in the early 1800s led to a major change in the landscape of the village, dividing it north and south of the rail line and resulting in the development of the western part of the parish.

Thurston Railway Station

- 3.14 The railway was built primarily to carry freight, for example, agricultural produce farmed in Thurston. The first passenger train ran between Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds on the 7th December 1846. This made travelling to and from the village much easier and brought new people to the village. With the opening of the railway and the construction of the Granary the station yards became very busy with coal and other goods arriving, and grain, sugar beet and horticultural produce being dispatched. Although Thurston Station survived the 'Beeching Axe', it became an 'unmanned halt' in 1967. Today there are hourly trains to Ipswich and Cambridge with connections to London stations and Peterborough.



Thurston Station – a construction gang at work



Thurston Station – the present unmanned halt

Agricultural change

- 3.15 During the agricultural depression, which began in the late 1870s and which was to last until the First World War, a number of fit young men from East Anglia, including Thurston, travelled to Burton-on-Trent to work as maltsters. This work made up for the lack of work on farms after harvest.
- 3.16 Barley was the main cereal crop grown, much of it being malting barley which would have been sent to Greene King in Bury St Edmunds or further afield to the Bass Charrington Brewery in Burton-on-Trent. A large acreage of wheat was also grown and oats too were grown for horses as well as human consumption. In 1941, 435 acres of sugar beet were grown in Thurston, which had increased with the building of the sugar beet factory in Bury St Edmunds. Also, over 55 acres of vegetables were grown.
- 3.17 Following the death in 1920 of Sir Walter Greene, the Nether Hall estate was sold. Nether Hall Estate had approximately sixty horses at this time but gradually the tractor and other machinery took their place.

Expansion of the village

- 3.18 The building of the railway station did not result in a sudden change, but it did provide a new focal point in the west of the village. The village has developed over the years on the area to the north of the railway, within easy reach of the station.
- 3.19 Development on Thurston Heath began in a small way in the mid-1930s. A number of new businesses were also established in the village. These included a timber yard, a plant nursery, a top fruit orchard and a garage.

- 3.20 In World War II there was a considerable effect from the nearby American Air Force base at Rougham airfield. Local grassland, including the Recreation Field, was ploughed up and the Women's Land Army provided labour on the farms. Thurston War Memorial was erected to remember villagers lost in the wars.



Expansion of the village – Barton Road bungalows, mid 1900s, and recent development, Station Hill

Post-War development

- 3.21 Development began in earnest in the 1950s-60s in the Barton Road and Heath Road area with the final phase, Maltings Garth and the Hambros, completed in the 1970s. A certain amount of infill has taken place in more recent years. A new Post Office on Barton Road and Genesta Stores were also established in this area. Land was utilised for the new Upper School which now, as Thurston Community College, has 1,600 students and accommodates Thurston Library and the Thurston Sports Education Centre. Maltings Farm on Barton Road was demolished, and the land used for a new housing development, Howes Avenue, increasing the population of the western side of the village.
- 3.22 New enterprises also became established and took over areas of farm land. These included Matthews Fruit Trees, Highmead Nurseries, Manor Farm Creamery, Bayer Agrochemicals, Elm Farm Park and the Grove Farm Wildlife area.



New Green Centre and open space 2018

- 3.23 New Green development: In 1991, as part of a large housing development, 4.9 hectares were given to the village, of which 3.3 hectares were set aside as permanent green space and 0.8 hectares sold for sheltered housing, Field View, which enabled the building of the New Green Centre, together with car parks. Today it is a busy facility offering a good mixture of accommodation for functions and a Communtiy Café. Many clubs use the New Green Centre as a venue including bridge, U3A, keep fit classes, gardening club, indoor bowls, the lunch club and the afternoon Women's Institute group. Fetes, local circuses, fun fairs, croquet and the fun run use the open space area.
- 3.24 The dualling of the A14 in Suffolk in the 1970s and the completion of National Cycle Route 51 have added connectivity to the village.
- 3.25 Other local businesses: There were a number of small businesses established including hairdressers, a butcher's shop, a sandwich shop, a fish and chip shop, an estate agent and motor engineers which continue to operate within the village.

Thurston today

- 3.26 Today Thurston is a village with excellent facilities, services and schools as well as being ideally situated in the A14 corridor which has led to its growth as a key service centre for the area. In 1931 there were approximately 200 houses and a population of 584; the 1991 Census shows a population of 2,612 and 900 houses. The development of the New Green area had a major impact and succeeded in joining the two halves of the village together. The 2011 Census shows a population change to 3,232 with 1,327 houses.
- 3.27 Within the main part of the village and at Great Green there has been an increase in the number and types of small businesses but not in sufficient numbers to support

the growth in population. There is also a wide range of social and recreational activities but the increase in home entertainment and easy access to neighbouring towns and facilities have resulted in a lower proportion of the residents participating in village activities.

3.28 Most of the agricultural land in Thurston is now managed by farmers who do not live in Thurston and very few village residents have any involvement in agriculture or horticulture. Thurston has moved on from being an almost self-sufficient village, where many people lived off the land. Work has to be found elsewhere and the car provides easy transport, thus it has 'ceased to become their working place but chiefly a place where they slept'¹.

¹ George Ewart Evans: *The Farm and the Village: Aspects of the Folk Life of East Anglia*, Faber and Faber, Main Edition, 10 May 2011.

3.29 In late 2017, a number of significant developments in Thurston were granted planning permission (Figure 13 page 76). These permissions would provide, amongst other things, 818 new dwellings. When added to earlier planning permissions yet to be completed, this brings the total to more than 1,000 dwellings.

Profile of the community

3.30 All data comes from the 2011 Census. In 2011, the population of Thurston parish was 3,232. Whilst there was a relatively modest increase over the 10-year period since 2001 (66 people), there were significant changes by age group. Figure 2 shows that there was a significant decline in those aged 25 to 44 – those of 'young family age' – and equivalent declines in the population of young people. This was balanced by strong growth particularly in the 45 to 64 age group – 'older

Figure 2: Change in population, 2001-2011

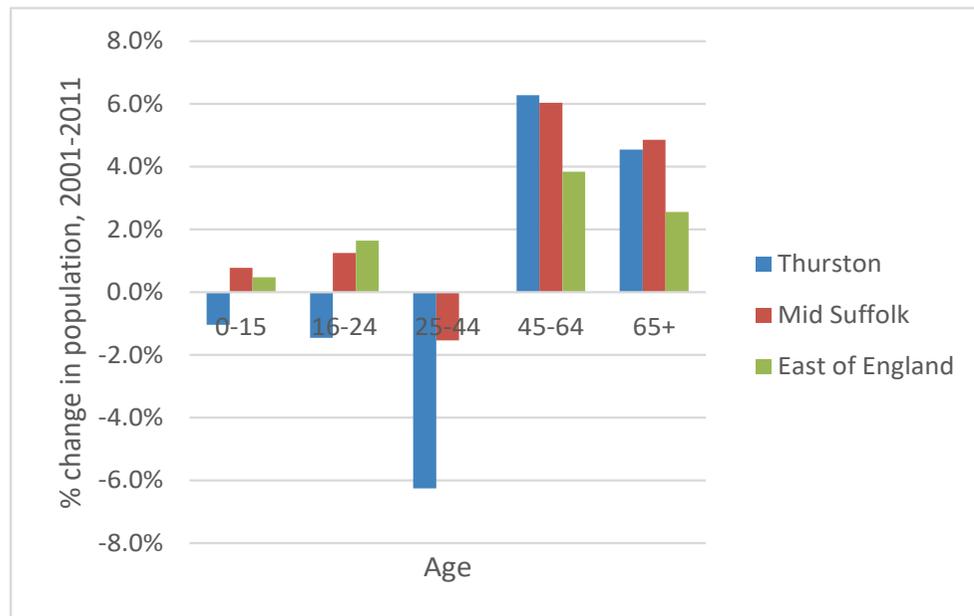
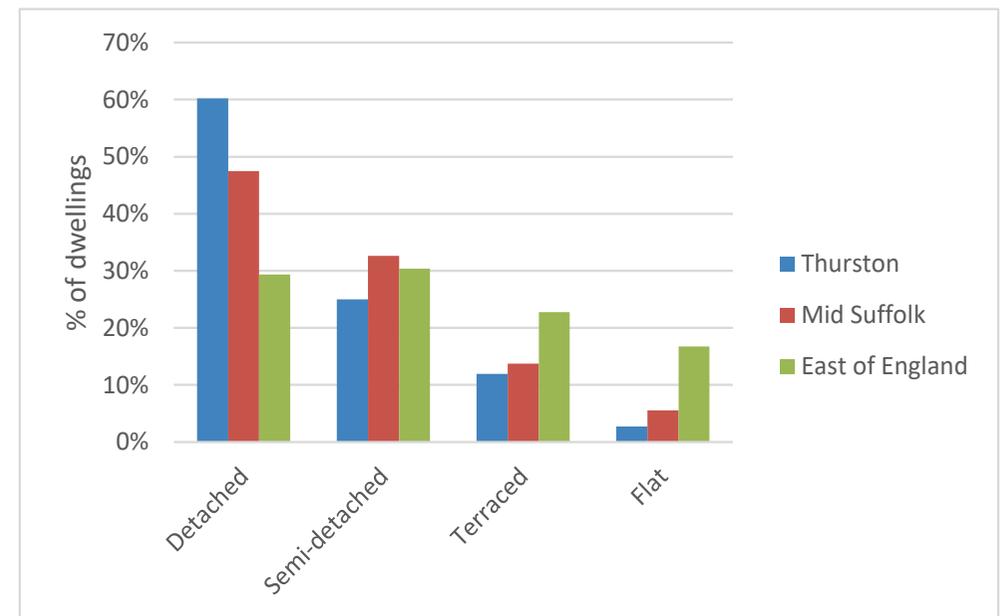


Figure 3: Type of dwelling



working people’ – and also in those of retirement age. This shows that whilst the population didn’t grow much, it aged quite significantly.

- 3.31 The 1,355 households in Thurston in 2011 lived predominantly in detached houses. There are very few flats in the parish (Figure 3).
- 3.32 The large number of detached properties is also reflected in the size of houses, with nearly one third of properties having at least four bedrooms. This is well above the district average of just over 20%.
- 3.33 Car ownership is high, with approximately 55% of households owning at least two cars. This is reflected in how people travel to work, with those travelling by car or motorbike well above the district and county averages (Figure 4). The number commuting by train is a much lower figure.

- 3.34 Thurston’s working population is strongly represented in full-time and part-time employment (Figure 5). Unemployment is low and economic activity, at 76%, is high (the district and county average is 72%). This is particularly significant given that the figures are for those aged between 16 and 74 and Thurston has a high proportion of retirees.
- 3.35 Approximately 30% of Thurston’s population aged 16 and over have the highest level of qualifications – to degree level or above – which is well above the district and county average. It also has very low levels of people with no qualifications.
- 3.36 Despite this, Thurston is not strongly represented in the highest value industrial sectors, e.g. professional and scientific, IT services and financial services. In fact it is proportionately over-represented in the retail and repair sector, with nearly 20% of residents aged 16 to 74 working in this sector.

Figure 4: Mode of travel to work

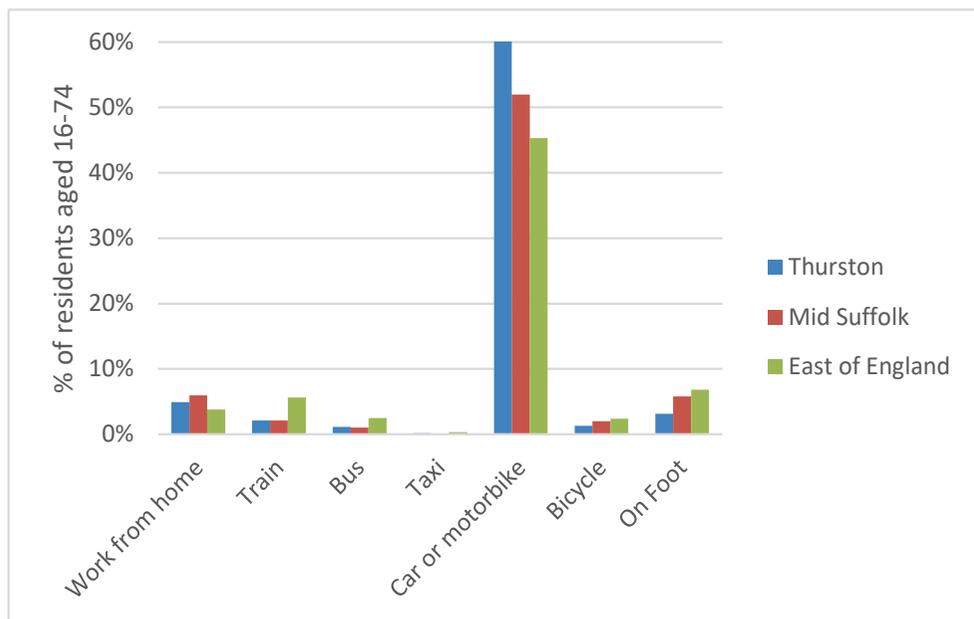
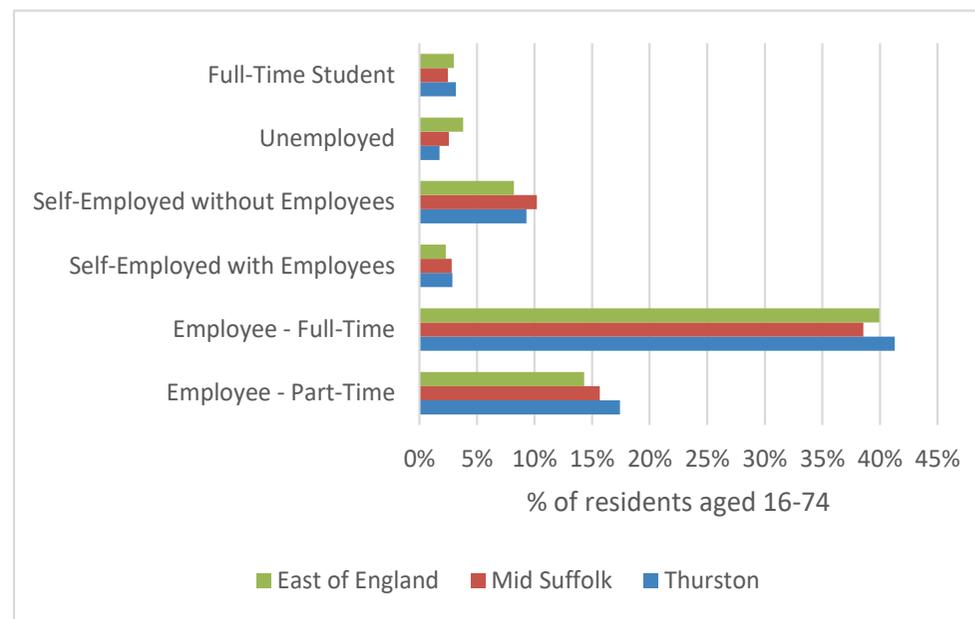


Figure 5: Economic activity



Local infrastructure

Growth in the planning pipeline

- 3.37 With over 1,000 dwellings in the planning pipeline, the provision of the necessary infrastructure to support these developments is a significant issue.
- 3.38 National and local planning policy directs development in respect of flooding issues as does the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Strategy (SFRMS) (<http://www.greensuffolk.org/about/SFRMP/>). The SFRMS also contains guidance on how sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) measure should be designed.
- 3.39 Attached to the planning permissions granted in late 2017 are planning conditions aimed at mitigating some of the problems associated with what would otherwise be serious highway and rail infrastructure safety and capacity issues.
- Suffolk County Council (SCC) Highways Team has identified that, following mitigation measures being implemented, the roads in and around Thurston will be operating at capacity if all the approved developments go ahead. It has specifically identified the following locations where, unless further mitigation measures are identified, there is a significant possibility that the severe cumulative impact on the road network and on highway safety would mean that further development may not be able to proceed:
 - ◇ The C692/C693 Thurston Road (Fishwick Corner) cannot be improved further in terms of either road safety or capacity due to the highway boundary constraints.
 - ◇ No further capacity can be provided at the A143 Bury Road/Thurston junction within the existing highway boundary for traffic traveling to/from the Thurston area



Thurston Library

- ◇ The C560 Beyton Road/C692 Thurston Road/U4920 Thedwastre Road (Pokeriage Corner) – any future development is considered likely to result in this junction reaching its theoretical capacity and will need to demonstrate that the impacts are not severe in planning terms.
 - ◇ The C291 Barton Road under the rail bridge, which SCC has stated is at capacity and, without mitigation, may restrict future development in the area.
- 3.40 These significant substantial limitations within the highway network must be addressed in order to ensure that any future development is sustainable on highway grounds.

Transport and movement

- 3.41 Alongside the highways issues identified above, there are a number of other issues that affect movement around Thurston.
- 3.42 Parking on some village roads disrupts traffic flows and is at times a safety hazard.
- 3.43 The current network of footpaths/walkways and cycleways within the village (Figure 6) is limited and does not cater well for the needs of those on mobility scooters.
- 3.44 Currently there are inadequate cycleways linking areas of the village. National Cycle Route 51 runs through the village and is a link with Bury St Edmunds and locations to the east of the village. There are a number of key destinations in the village including Thurston Primary Academy, Thurston

Community College, the library, sports centre, shops, pharmacy, station and pubs. None of these destinations is adequately linked by cycleways within the village.

- 3.45 Bus services into Thurston village are limited. The 384 and 385 services to Bury St Edmunds run approximately every hour and a half during the day but do not run during the morning peak. They do not operate on Sundays.
- 3.46 Particular provision is made for students at the Community College. In total, 28 bus services bring children to the College each day and these vehicles impact on the highways infrastructure at the start and end of the College day.
- 3.47 Thurston railway station provides access to the Norwich-London, Midlands and East Coast lines and to places immediately to the east and west. The growth of rail usage has already impacted on the village infrastructure.

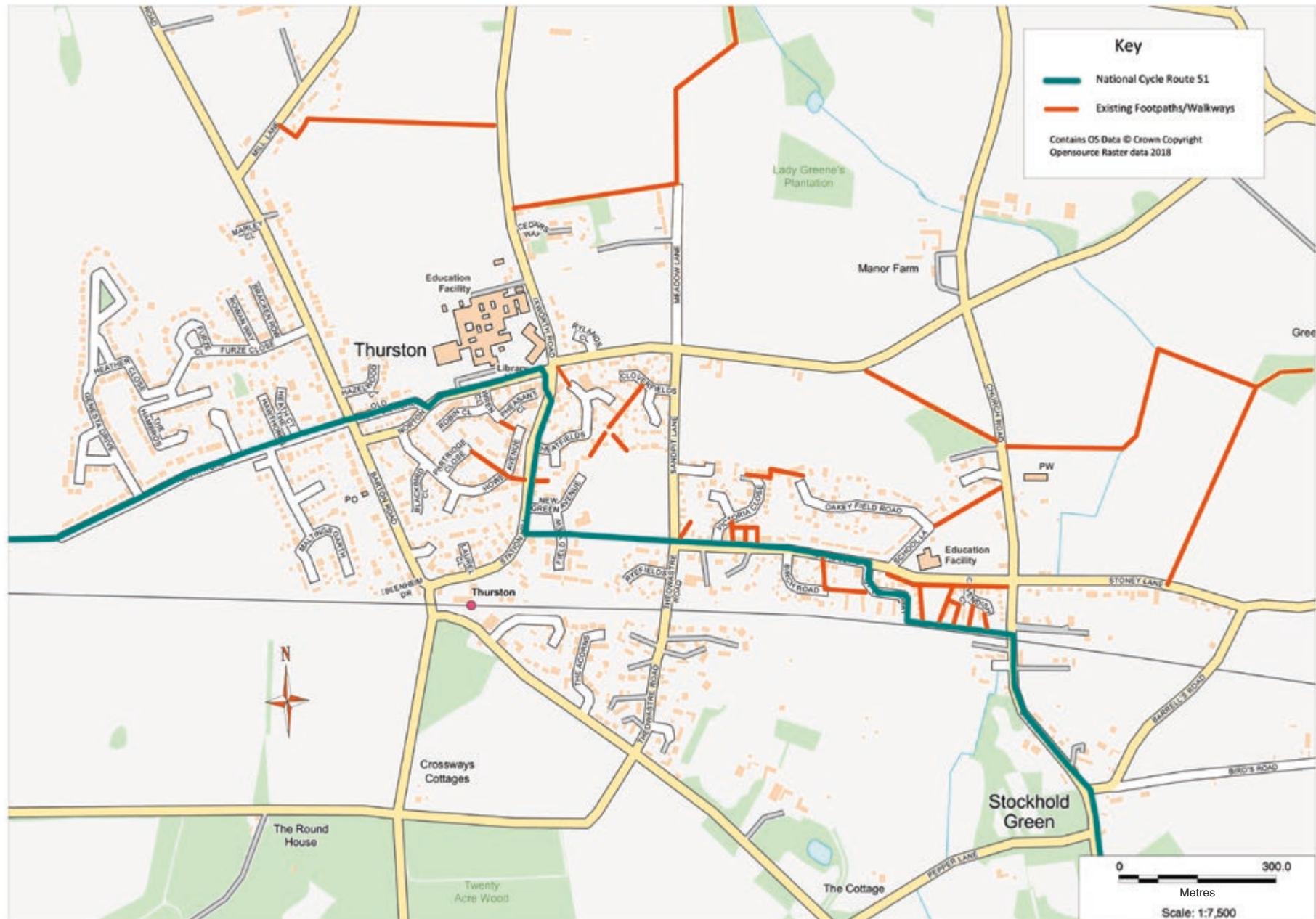


Local bus service



Train services at Thurston Station

Figure 6: Existing footpaths/walkways and cycleways in Thurston



Source: Thurston Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

3.48 Access to the westbound platform is via the Barrow Foot Crossing over the two rail lines. Network Rail acknowledges that there is a need to mitigate passenger risk but to date a solution has not been found. The approved development in late 2017 will move the cumulative passenger risk into a higher category and the Parish Council is of the view that mitigation measures should be in place prior to any further development, above that already permitted, being allowed. However, in recognising that the crossing needs improvement and that the calculation of risk at the railway crossing is not simple, MSDC has taken the view that there is not sufficient justification at present for this being used as a reason for refusing planning applications.



The Barrow Foot Crossing at Thurston Station

3.49 Car parking at the station is inadequate and is impacting increasingly on the village.

Education

- 3.50 Thurston has a primary school (Thurston Primary Academy) and a secondary school (Thurston Community College).
- 3.51 The primary school is largely at capacity and Suffolk County Council Education Team is seeking to expand provision. This is not possible on the current site, therefore any increase in the size of the school would require relocation. As part of the development of a number of large sites granted planning permission in late 2017, new primary school provision will be made. A preferred site, following the submission of two planning applications for a new primary school, has been identified on land north of Norton Road (Site A – Figure 13 page 76).
- 3.52 Thurston Community College serves a wide catchment area for secondary education and this has created issues with vehicle movements during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up. The College has capacity to support the growth in the planning pipeline.

Health

- 3.53 There is no doctors' service in Thurston; the only village-based access to health provision is from the pharmacy. The village is currently the second largest in Suffolk without specific provision of a doctors' surgery. The TNP Steering Group has engaged with the Clinical Commissioning Group and long-term solutions are still being considered. However, it is unlikely that a new doctors' surgery will be provided in the village as the focus is increasingly towards larger 'hubs' in locations such as Bury St Edmunds. If provision of a doctors' surgery is not attainable then specific services such as podiatry, chiropody, paediatrics, elderly care, pharmacy services and the presence of health visitors will continue to be sought.



Thurston Primary Academy



Thurston Community College



Thurston Pharmacy

Community facilities

3.54 There are two main built facilities used for community activity: New Green Community Centre and the Cavendish Hall. Other facilities include the Library, The Rock (a social facility at St Peter's Church for church-related activities), the Sports Pavilion on the Cavendish Field, and facilities at Thurston Community College and Thurston Primary Academy.



New Green Centre

3.55 **The New Green Community Centre** was built in 1991 and sits in 3.2 hectares of parkland. The centre has a variety of facilities including a large hall able to accommodate 200 people seated, a meeting room and conservatory (both for 50 seated) and a community café. Lower numbers apply for such activities as tabled meetings or dancing. There are some 40 groups using the indoor and outdoor facilities ranging from a boot camp to a knitting group, Lunch Club to Zumba, slimming clubs to Tiny Toes, a mother and toddler club. The NHS uses the Centre three times a year for blood donation

sessions. The Centre hosts conferences, fairs, parties and wakes. Its fully-equipped kitchen is well used. The quality of the accommodation is good. The Centre is open seven days a week.

3.56 A survey of New Green Community Centre user groups about the impact of village population increase highlighted the following concerns:

- The need for flexibility within entrance ways and lobbies which are used by both an ageing population with walking frames, wheel chairs and mobility scooters and by mothers and carers with pushchairs.
- Storage space is preventing expansion of some activities; in 2017 some groups had to be turned away because of storage issues. The Table Tennis Club is unable to expand because there is nowhere to store another table. The Club's current tables are described as being 'crushed into the store room' with other groups' equipment.
- Some groups have had at times to restrict their number of sessions because of other bookings. There are a limited number of rooms available to facilitate expansion and the present anterooms are too small to accommodate most groups.
- The main hall does not have the capacity to accommodate all current demand and potential increase in numbers with significant population growth.

3.57 The Centre is meeting the needs of the community for about 80% of the time. A possible doubling in size of the population over the Plan period would mean that the Centre would not be able to meet such a substantial increase in demand.



The Cavendish Hall

- 3.58 **The Cavendish Hall** was built in the early 20th century and underwent a major refurbishment in 2001. The Hall can seat 103 people and is used regularly by a wide variety of groups including 1st Thurston Scout Group, the Women's Institute, the Brownies, the Bridge Club and French classes. It is also hired for music rehearsals and one-off booking for events like birthdays and christening parties. The Cavendish Hall has a number of weekday sessions not taken up. Ambitions are to refurbish the kitchen and provide additional storage.
- 3.59 **Thurston Community College** has facilities that can be hired out of school time, including an auditorium, dance studio and drama studios and classrooms. A commercial provider runs the sports education centre; membership is available to Thurston residents and those from the surrounding area. A gym and sports hall are available

inside. Thurston Badminton Club and two netball clubs use the sports hall. Families and individuals also use the facilities.

- 3.60 Some organisations use **Thurston Primary Academy** e.g. Rainbows (Guiding for girls aged 5-7), a yoga class and an exercise group.
- 3.61 **Thurston Library** is able to seat 50 (when not open to the public) and, in the adjacent White Room, 15 people. The facility is modern and of good quality. Groups meet during both library opening times and when closed to the public. The Friends of Thurston Library run a wide range of activities for adults and children. The New Green Centre and Cavendish Hall are used when running events for large groups.
- 3.62 **The Rock**, a room located near the church, is available for users linked to St Peter's Church and can accommodate 20 people. It is a modern facility.
- 3.63 **The Sports Pavilion** can accommodate groups of up to 20 people when not in use by sports clubs. It is a modern facility.

Outdoor leisure facilities

3.64 Outdoor sports space is found at various locations within the village:



The Recreation Ground

- The Recreation Ground has a Sports Pavilion, football pitch (used by Thurston Football Club) and cricket square (used by Thurston Cricket Club). There is also space for informal games. The Recreation Ground also has play equipment – a slide and swings. The Heath Road Play area has swings, a rocker and multi-play and slide. There is space for informal games.
- New Green Community Centre has 3.2 hectares of open space for informal use. The play area has an agility set, spinner bowl, rotor play supanova swing sets, a multi play and slides, spring wobble board and rocket-blazer. There is also a basketball hoop within the open space.

- Thurston Community College has football pitches and tennis courts, Astroturf pitches, and a multi-use games area (managed by a commercial provider). The sports pitches are hired by Thurston Football Club for matches.
- Thurston Rugby Club has pitches and a clubhouse on Ixworth Road.

3.65 Most public open spaces are well used for informal play. The New Green parkland is used informally by residents and as a base of some classes and events such as hosting a travelling fair. The car park has been used as a base for a pop-up skate park in the summer (see 2.22 above).



Thurston Rugby Club

3.66 Open spaces are well used by clubs:

- The Rugby Club ground has sufficient space to accommodate need, although there is concern about the lack of safe pedestrian access from the village, traffic speed and water supply issues.
- The Recreation Ground is used to maximum effect by Thurston Football Club and the cricket square is used intensively in the summer.
- New Green parkland is used for a boot camp and circuit training, and the Croquet Club uses the lawn adjacent to New Green Centre.
- Thurston Community College pitches are used by the Thurston Football Club, and two netball clubs play there.

3.67 All but one of the clubs organising outdoors team sports report pressure on facilities and an inability to respond to increased demand with current pitch/lawn provision.

3.68 There is continuing demand for allotments.

What makes Thurston an enjoyable place in which to live?

3.69 Thurston is a growing settlement. It is a popular place in which to live. People's perceptions of what is valuable naturally vary from person to person. As a service centre, Thurston serves both its residents and those in the surrounding area.

3.70 Some people live and work in Thurston; many live in Thurston and work elsewhere, from Bury St Edmunds, Stowmarket and other nearby places to Cambridge, Ipswich and London, for example. There is a growing retired community (see 3.30).

3.71 There are many organisations, services, clubs and societies with only one of each (or in a few cases two or three). That there is largely one of each means that everyone interested in using or joining goes to that club or uses that shop, which helps to build a community feel: in some cases the services, such as the shops, provide a social role, for example where people meet.

3.72 Examples of services, facilities and organisations include:

- One parish church, day nursery, pre-school, primary school, community college and library.
- One estate agent, butcher's shop, fish and chip shop, pharmacy, post office with shop and services, and garage with fuel, shop and services.
- One scout group, club for quilting, croquet, cricket, football, gardening, rugby, seniors' lunch club, Mothers' Union, afternoon and evening Women's Institute, toddler group, and sewing bee.

- Two pubs, hairdressers, and locations (Cavendish Hall and New Green Community Centre) as places for people to meet.
- Three places to service cars.

3.73 Housing and roads:

- A variety of housing (design, finish, size) laid out with cul-de-sacs and winding roads, rather than similar housing designed as linear developments along major roads.
- Roads that reflect the original network developed historically rather than wide single-carriageway or dual carriageway sweeping roads.

3.74 The settlement and countryside:

- There is a distinct boundary between housing and countryside.
- There are views of open countryside from houses and paths.
- There is access to countryside by public footpaths.

3.75 Connectivity:

- Buses serve Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket.
- There are rail links to Ipswich, Cambridge, Peterborough and London.

3.76 The environment:

- Large trees within housing areas and along many roads.
- Dark skies with discreet street lighting to minimise light pollution in housing areas.
- Open spaces of a variety of sizes with larger multiple use areas within the settlement.
- A variety of children's play areas quickly accessible from housing areas.
- Hedges as road boundaries leading to and within Thurston.

3.77 What is wanted in addition:

- Health care services within the village.
- The ability to stay in Thurston in appropriate housing/ accommodation throughout all of life.
- Social and sporting facilities that accommodate the larger size of Thurston.
- Employment in small scale shops, offices, and industry rather than large-scale development.
- Shops that provide additional services located near existing retail provision rather than located within housing areas.

- Development of sustainable means of communication: a network of cycleways and paths that links housing with facilities, suitable for all, including those pushing buggies and riding powered wheelchairs and mobility scooters.
- Physical traffic calming and appropriate speed limits that are adhered to within the built-up area.
- Safe road crossing points.
- A recycling facility and the facility to store refuse and recycling bins out of sight.

3.78 Retaining the friendliness of Thurston is often quoted by residents as important.

4 SPATIAL STRATEGY

Objectives

S1. *To develop and sustain the key service centre status of Thurston by ensuring any future development is sustainable and supports a range of employment, services and housing.*

- 4.1 The Babergh and Mid Suffolk emerging Joint Local Plan is required to provide for significant levels of housing growth in order to address the identified needs of the two districts over the Plan period to 2036. Whilst the spatial distribution of this growth will be determined through the development of the Joint Local Plan, Thurston's status as a proposed 'core village'² means that it will play a key role in addressing that need.
- 4.2 The granting of planning permission for a series of large sites in late 2017 has meant that there are over 1,000 dwellings in the planning pipeline for Thurston, i.e. with planning permission but not yet built or occupied. It is for the Joint Local Plan to ultimately address the objectively assessed housing need of the two districts over the period to 2036 and also to determine Thurston's contribution to that. Given (i) the levels of growth in the planning pipeline; (ii) the fundamental concerns of the Suffolk County Council Highways Team about highway capacity; and (iii) the need to deliver major new education infrastructure in the form of a larger primary school on a new site, it is not expected that significant additional growth will need to be planned for in Thurston to support the emerging Joint Local Plan. In light of this, the spatial strategy seeks to be more restrictive as to the types of development which can be brought forward outside the settlement boundary, in line with Mid Suffolk

Core Strategy Policies CS1 and CS2. In order to reflect a positive approach however, it is considered appropriate to provide some flexibility to address particularly significant needs identified in Thurston. Specifically, this relates to the needs of the ageing population which is discussed in more detail in Section 5 and reflected in Policy 2(B) and Policy 3. The provision of bungalows, sheltered housing and care facilities outside the settlement boundary will be viewed favourably (with more weight being given to proposals that are adjacent to the boundary as opposed to being clearly separate from it). Such proposals would have to demonstrate that there are no other suitable sites within the settlement boundary that are available or deliverable.

- 4.3 Indeed, the value of the agricultural land in the parish means that its protection is important; once lost, the ability to produce crops is gone forever. Development of some parts of the agricultural fields has ultimately meant that it is no longer economically viable to farm the remainder of the fields. As a result, a wider area is lost to agricultural production. It is therefore a requirement of Policy 1 that, if a site is brought forward which results in the loss of part of a field, then it must clearly be demonstrated that this will not make it uneconomic to farm the remainder of the field once the development has been delivered.
- 4.4 What is important is that all growth is supported by the infrastructure that is most needed in Thurston and will provide the greatest benefit to the wider community.
- 4.5 Therefore, the general approach in the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan is that growth will be focused on the sites with planning permission (which are located within the amended settlement boundary) and on small scale infill sites within the settlement boundary.

² As proposed in the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Consultation document, August 2017

- 4.6 The Neighbourhood Plan (pages 75-76) identifies the sites in the planning pipeline which are expected to deliver housing along with a range of specific infrastructure and community facilities. More generally, these sites and other developments are expected to provide high quality schemes which generally enhance the public realm and improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

POLICY 1: THURSTON SPATIAL STRATEGY

- A. New development in Thurston parish shall be focused within the settlement boundary of Thurston village as defined on the Policies Maps (pages 75-76).**
- B. Development proposals within the settlement boundary (as defined on the Policies Maps pages 75-76) will be supported subject to compliance with the other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.**
- C. All new housing proposals will be expected to address the following key matters:**
 - a. Ensure they address the evidence-based needs of the Thurston Neighbourhood area in accordance with Policy 2; and**
 - b. In accordance with the statutory tests in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, contribute towards education infrastructure and other key infrastructure which shall include health, transport and movement, community facilities, utilities and public realm improvements, through direct provision and/or developer contributions (including Community Infrastructure Levy and/or Section 106).**
 - c. Design high quality buildings and deliver them in layouts with high quality natural landscaping in order to retain the rural character and physical structure of Thurston.**
- D. Development proposals to meet specialist housing and care needs on sites that are outside the settlement boundary will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that no available and deliverable site exists within the settlement boundary.**
- E. Where development uses best and most versatile agricultural land, it must be clearly demonstrated that the remaining parts of any fields remain economically viable for commercial farming.**

5 HOUSING AND DESIGN

Objectives

- H1.** *To ensure housing is designed that retains Thurston as a place with a village feel rather than that of a town.*
- H2.** *To address the specific housing needs of older people.*
- H3.** *To address the specific housing needs of younger people.*
- H4.** *To provide the infrastructure necessary to ensure that growth is sustainable.*

Background

- 5.1 As one of the larger villages in Mid Suffolk district, the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy (2008) defines Thurston as a Key Service Centre with potential to accommodate development which is sympathetic to local character and of an appropriate scale and nature in relation to local housing and employment needs. Whilst the Core Strategy is under review, its principles hold. The Babergh and Mid Suffolk (BMSDC) emerging Joint Local Plan (which will ultimately replace the Core Strategy) proposes defining Thurston as a Core Village. However, Thurston's role in addressing not only its own needs but also the needs of its hinterland villages will continue. In this regard, Thurston is a focus for growth over the period of the Plan.
- 5.2 In late 2017, a number of large-scale developments in Thurston were granted planning permission as defined in the Policies Maps on pages 75-76. The provision of the necessary infrastructure to support these developments is a significant issue. The 2017 permissions came with planning conditions aimed at mitigating some of the problems

associated with what would otherwise be serious highways and rail infrastructure safety and capacity issues.

- 5.3 As explained in the Infrastructure section, Suffolk County Council (SCC) Highways Team has identified that, following the implementation of mitigation measures, the roads in and around Thurston will be operating at, or close to, capacity if all the developments go ahead. The SCC Highways Team has specifically identified locations where, unless further mitigations can be found (if indeed this is possible), additional development should not proceed. These substantial limitations within the highways network must be addressed in order to ensure that any future development is sustainable.
- 5.4 The Neighbourhood Plan recognises the national need for additional housing and the needs identified in BMSDC's emerging Joint Local Plan towards which its proposed Core Villages, including Thurston, are expected to contribute. Due weight has been afforded to the views gleaned from residents during the various stages of consultation that future development should be carefully managed in terms of scale, location, design and infrastructure limitations.
- 5.5 The aim of the policies in this section is to ensure that development enhances what makes Thurston a great place to live, is sensitive to the character of its surroundings and contributes towards meeting the housing needs of all sections of the community.
- 5.6 The significant number of large developments granted planning permission in late 2017 are likely to come forward early in the Neighbourhood Plan period. It is considered that this scale of development is likely to adequately address the requirements of Thurston to support growth as a Key Service Centre/Core Village. It will be important that these developments are allowed to 'bed in' to the community.

Any further development should be sustainable and be relatively limited in scale. Therefore it is not considered appropriate or necessary to identify any additional sites in the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 5.7 Rather, the Neighbourhood Plan's policies identify the issues that future development should address and provide criteria to ensure these are achieved. These policies shall also apply, where relevant, to the sites recently granted outline planning permission but without reserved matters approval. Over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan, and providing infrastructure limitations can be overcome, housing growth could potentially be accommodated in a sensitive way within the parish. Such development would be tailored to address the housing needs of each sector of the population and would help meet the housing objectives identified in the BMSDC's Joint Local Plan.

Local context

- 5.8 The population of Thurston parish as at the 2011 Census was 3,232 persons, living in 1,327 dwellings. Historically, Thurston expanded incrementally but it has recently experienced a very significant increase in the number of dwellings in the planning pipeline. Some 1,000 dwellings will have been granted planning permission or built over a two-year period since 2015/16 and this will inevitably have a significant effect on the infrastructure and character of the village. With the granting of planning permission in 2017 for 818 new dwellings, along with previously granted but as yet uncompleted permissions, the population of Thurston is expected to rise to 6,000 which equates to an 86% increase since the 2011 Census. Furthermore, from 2011 the number of dwellings will have risen to over 2,330, an increase of 76%.

- 5.9 Most of the house sales in Thurston during 2017 were detached properties (which fits the profile presented in Section 2) which had an average sale price of £431,521. Semi-detached properties sold for an average of £290,609 and terraced properties, £213,107. The overall average price of £366,512 is well above the Suffolk county average of £266,217, making it difficult for first-time buyers, amongst others, to find accommodation they can afford in the village³.

- 5.10 As shown in Section 3, Thurston has a predominance of older people, similar to other villages in Mid Suffolk, with 20.1% of the population aged 65 and over. This reflects a wider trend across the district and county. Population projections forecast that this trend is set to continue. There is therefore a need to recognise this trend and provide for it and to also seek to provide for other groups in order to encourage them to settle in the village in greater numbers. Feedback from the village questionnaire identified this, indicating the need to provide accommodation for two key groups:

- Young people who wish to remain in the village but are being priced out of the market. Currently there is a net outflow of younger people from the village; encouraging young families to both move into and remain in the village is important.
- People in or close to retirement. Of the people who have lived in the village for many years, a majority anticipate remaining for the foreseeable future. This trend will increase the demand for housing that meets their needs; otherwise, they will remain in houses more suited to family needs. It is also likely to result in an increased need for care provision.

3 Source of house prices – <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/>

5.11 The BMSDC emerging Joint Local Plan has identified demand for a range of housing to meet Mid Suffolk's needs which includes catering for older people and for those with specialist requirements, e.g. sheltered housing and extra care units. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)⁴ demonstrates that, across Mid Suffolk district, there is a need for a range of unit sizes.

5.12 Development within Thurston should therefore cater, in particular, for the needs of first-time buyers, those wishing to downsize and those needing care. To support the delivery of the wider needs of Thurston and its hinterland villages, residential development should provide a mix of house types, tenures and sizes. Affordable housing should also be provided in accordance with Mid Suffolk's affordable housing policies.

5.13 As at 2017, nearly 250 current residents expected to seek alternative accommodation within Thurston over the period of the Neighbourhood Plan. Of these, approximately 85% would be looking to the owner-occupier sector, 3% privately rented, 7% rented from local authority/housing association and 4% part-ownership. The time period over which these people anticipate requiring housing is spread fairly evenly over the next 15 years.

Supporting younger people

5.14 The evidence from the questionnaire, Housing Needs Survey and demographic data demonstrates a requirement for new housing to meet the needs of younger people and their families. Currently there is a net outflow of younger people and, if the trend towards an increasingly aging population within the village is to be balanced, young people should be

⁴ HDH Planning and Development (2017) *Ipswich and Waveney Strategic Housing Market Assessment*.

incentivised to move, or remain, in Thurston by providing housing at the more affordable end of the spectrum. Policies within the Neighbourhood Plan seek to encourage younger families either to stay or move into the village.

Supporting older people

5.15 The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address the needs of the ageing population who wish to remain in the village. The village questionnaire identified nearly 200 residents that over the lifetime of the Plan anticipated requiring:

- Independent accommodation that better meets their needs.
- Access to residential care facilities.

5.16 The aim of the Plan is to help people stay in the village, so meeting two objectives:

- Residents will remain close to their local support networks which should reduce the cost to social care and the health services and reduce isolation.
- Release larger, under-occupied homes onto the market.

5.17 Housing suitable for older people could be provided in a range of forms, for example level-access bungalows, purpose-built houses or apartments, sheltered accommodation, very sheltered accommodation, a 'retirement village' or assisted living schemes.⁵

⁵ The requirement for Assisted Living Schemes came from the Housing Needs Survey of 2015 – 153 people out of 1,292 that responded indicated that they would like this type of alternative accommodation in the coming years.

Care home/assisted living

- 5.18 Feedback from questionnaires shows a clear need for housing that can cope with the various needs of an ageing population. The TNP Steering Group has engaged with a care provider that showed initial interest if a potential site could be made available. Given the nature of the occupiers, the provision of a care home would not expect to significantly increase the traffic pressures on the road system.
- 5.19 The types of housing envisaged under this policy have been informed by the 'Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation' (HAPPI) report⁶ which defines suitable homes for older people. The report states that, "good retirement housing involves plenty of space and natural light, accessibility, bathrooms with walk-in showers, the highest level of energy efficiency and good ventilation, a pleasing natural environment outside, balconies/outside space".
- 5.20 The development of homes suitable for older people, including affordable and market housing of a type and size that meet local need, will be supported on sites that satisfy the policies in this Plan.

Supporting the needs of all the community

- 5.21 The TNP Steering Group gathered evidence from a variety of sources to assess the expressed need for smaller houses, both for older people wishing to downsize and for younger families requiring homes that they can afford.

- 5.22 In order of need, the housing needs of existing residents are:

- Assisted living/sheltered accommodation.
- One- or two-bedroom bungalows.
- Three- or four-bedroom houses.
- Three- or four-bedroom bungalows.
- One- or two-bedroom houses.
- Larger family houses.
- Flats.

- 5.23 There is also some demand from:

- Family members living within households in Thurston who are unable to afford to move within the village; and
- Young people and close relatives of current residents wishing to move to Thurston.

- 5.24 In summary, over the next 15 years Thurston will need:

- A range of future-proofed bungalows and houses suitable for those wishing to downsize, thereby releasing larger family homes onto the market.
- A residential care home to enable residents to remain close to friends, families and support structures.
- Small, comparatively cheaper housing suitable for rent or purchase by young/first-time buyers.
- Starter homes (which represent one type of affordable housing).

⁶ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378171/happi_final_report_-_031209.pdf

POLICY 2: MEETING THURSTON'S HOUSING NEEDS

- A. Proposals for new residential development must contribute towards Thurston's role as a Key Service Centre/Core Village. This means addressing both the needs of the wider Housing Market Area and the needs of Thurston as a rural community.**
- B. Within the context of Thurston's needs, all housing proposals of five or more units must reflect the need across all tenures for smaller units specifically designed to address the need of older people (for downsizing) and younger people (first-time buyers).**
- C. An alternative dwelling mix will only be permitted where evidence is brought forward with an application that clearly demonstrates the need for a different mix.**
- D. In order to address the needs of younger people in Thurston, development that provides housing specifically designed to address their needs will be supported.**
- E. In order to address the needs of older people in Thurston, development that provides housing specifically designed to address their needs will be supported. This includes the provision of sheltered housing.**

POLICY 3: MEETING SPECIALIST CARE NEEDS

In order to address the care needs of older people in Thurston, the provision of specialist care facilities (Class C2) is supported. This includes the provision of a residential care home.

Residential design

- 5.25 As a fundamental principle, all housing development should be of good quality, sustainable design and should seek to reflect the positive aspects of the character of the area. New development should encourage integration into village life by providing good connectivity to services and amenities without reliance solely on cars. The Character Assessment work undertaken to support the Neighbourhood Plan highlighted some features which should be avoided in the design of development. These included boundary fences and walls of properties facing onto roads and narrow, high-fenced walkways.
- 5.26 Feedback from the Character Assessment work also highlighted specific factors that were considered to enhance the character of Thurston village. These attributes should inform future design in order to retain Thurston as a place where people want to live. These centre on housing design that fits in with the surrounding area and is in character with that of a rural village rather than urban scene. Specific aspects of this are described below:
- Larger residential schemes should seek to include a variety of design features to enhance the character of the overall development. This could include a variety of brick, flint and render finishes, a mix of roof tile colours, differing window styles or decorative brickwork.

Figure 7: Examples of street layouts

SPATIAL ORGANISATION – how not to!

Open plan front gardens frequently result in the unco-ordinated provision of sundry walls & fences by individual owners

No thought given to visual linkage of dwellings or enclosure of space

Little space for landscaping in front gardens

Unnecessarily dominant road/footpath system which allows the vehicle to dictate the layout

Buildings set to a rigid building line. Space between dwellings dictated by driveways

Token landscaping – no thought given to appearance of the development from the 'outside'

Standard "go anywhere" house types regardless of location

Garages frequently of poor design, particularly if erected by owners as permitted development

'Tunnel' effect layout – no variety of width, no sense of place – "it's all the same"

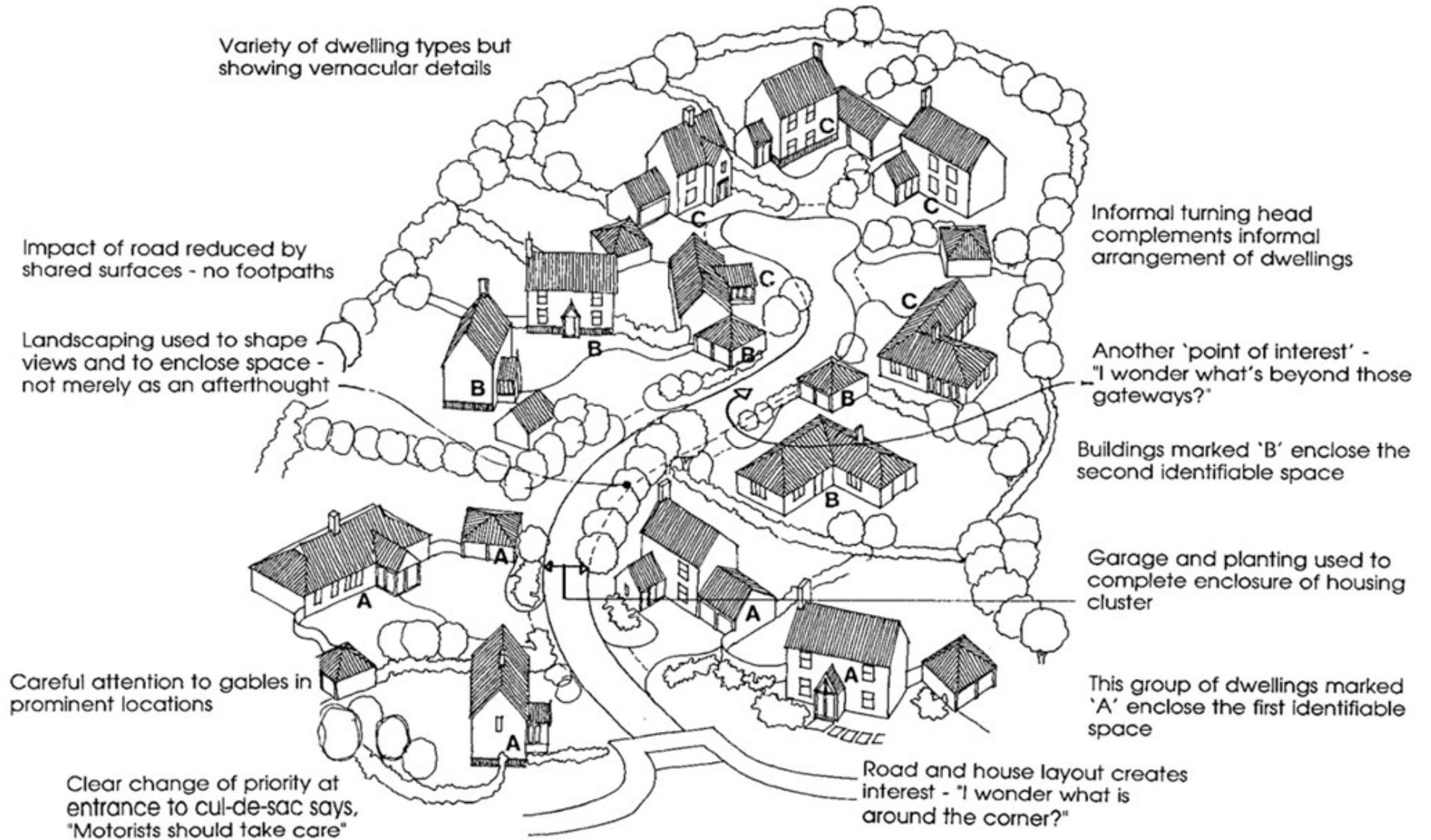
Blank gable ends to suit standard house types – no regard to effect on streetscene

No change of level or surface to indicate that pedestrians have priority

Front fences and paths set mechanically to visibly splay

No interest – one glance reveals all

▲
Why design a road like this



....when it could be like this?

SPATIAL ORGANISATION



Old cottage opposite new bungalow built in the same style



New flats built in similar style to adjacent station building (listed)

- Siting taller buildings close to areas of similar height structures, e.g. around the new developments on Station Hill.
- Site layouts that provide short, winding streets and roads that promote an intimacy to development enhanced by a variety of dwelling styles and designs. The Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas⁷ illustrates the concept well (see Figure 7).
- Development is encouraged to provide areas of green space, new trees of a reasonable size for immediate impact and retention of existing trees such as the distinctive Scots pines and oaks, hedges and shrubs.
- Public open space should seek to front onto dwellings, with development built around tree and grass areas.

⁷ Suffolk County Council (2000 revised) Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas.

- Properties should be aligned to face onto existing roads wherever possible or screened by vegetation to prevent an array of mixed fencing directly abutting roads and pavements.
- Provision of a network of wide walkways and cycleways linking roads and cul-de-sacs thereby allowing short, pleasant and safe connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists, buggies and mobility scooters. Thurston currently has many of these in existing developments, although some are narrow and high fenced, causing some people to feel unsafe.

- Retaining views of open farmland from development boundaries to create the general feel of open space.
- Developers are encouraged to provide as many energy-saving features in their design as possible. The provision of electric car charging points will be supported.



Good examples of high-quality green environment created by mature trees and hedges



Good examples of green open space fronting on to development



Wide walkways (far left photograph is also a cycleway, National Cycle Route 51)

Narrow, high fenced walkway



Properties facing the existing road with a front hedging boundary

Mixed fencing directly abutting roads and pavements



Typical views of open farmland in Thurston

POLICY 4: RETAINING AND ENHANCING THURSTON CHARACTER THROUGH RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

- A. Development proposals must demonstrate how they contribute to the features which positively define Thurston's character, taking into consideration the Thurston Character Assessment 2017 – revised 2018. All development shall protect the amenity of neighbours, and reflect the scale, mass, height and form of neighbouring properties.**
- B. In particular, development proposals are encouraged to:**
 - a. Provide short, winding streets/closes (excluding main access roads) that promote an intimacy to development with a variety of styles and designs; and**
 - b. Retain historic buildings that contribute to the distinctive character and historic and architectural interest of the village; and**
 - c. Not lead to over-development of a site and avoid the appearance of cramming; and**
 - d. Ensure provision is made to store refuse and recycling bins out of sight; and**
 - e. Promote 'active travel' – walking and cycling; and**
 - f. Use boundary treatments which, where possible, provide a soft feel to the boundary; and**
 - g. Retain distinctive trees such as Scots Pines and oaks and mixed hedging and provide similar as part of new development.**
- C. New dwellings that incorporate electric charging points for vehicles will be supported.**

6 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Objectives

- 11.** *To ensure adequate provision of community, retail, education and leisure facilities, telephony, sewage, and services such as doctors, dentist and family services to support the needs of existing and future populations.*
- 12.** *To encourage the uptake of sports/fitness/leisure/wellbeing activities in the village by providing facilities that are open for all to use, including those living and working in the wider area.*

Background

- 6.1 As the commentary in Section 3 demonstrated, Thurston has a range of facilities that provide many of the community activities that the population of the village wants and needs.
- 6.2 However, there is evidence of pressure on current facilities, in terms of both the available and appropriate space, and the supporting infrastructure of storage facilities, equipment and access. Improvements to existing accommodation would help to provide better provision for existing users and help to cope with future pressures.
- 6.3 The village is not going to expand incrementally; major housing developments are to be built leading to an imminent near doubling of the size of the village. Incremental, small changes to existing community facilities will not be adequate to fulfil demand.

Community facilities

- 6.4 Predicting likely future numbers for groups and societies is not straightforward, other than that all can expect growth with the planned substantial population increase. Additionally, with Thurston acting as a Key Service Centre/ Core Village, community activities and groups often draw members from the surrounding villages as well as from Thurston. Population increase is not confined to the village. Further appropriately designed accommodation will be needed as population in the village and its hinterland expands.
- 6.5 Based on the current use of existing facilities, at least one hall larger than currently located in the village will be needed for multi-purpose use, with appropriate supporting storage and access. The key will be to provide additional flexible accommodation with the capacity to serve the needs of groups, societies and the wider community.
- 6.6 An aspiration is to create a new community hub housing a library, citizens' advice, health and council services. Engagement with the health sector (see Section 3) will continue to be welcomed and encouraged to enhance the health provision in Thurston. Ideally, a doctors' surgery will be provided. If that were not attainable, then specific services such as podiatry, chiropody, paediatrics, elderly care, pharmacy services and the presence of health visitors will continue to be sought.

Outdoor community infrastructure

6.7 Outdoor sports space is found at various locations within the village.

- The Recreation Ground has a Sports Pavilion, football pitch (used by Thurston Football Club) and cricket square (used by Thurston Cricket Club). There is also space for informal games. The Recreation Ground also has play equipment – a slide and swings.
- The Heath Road Play area has swings, a rocker and multi-play and slide. There is space for informal games.
- New Green Community Centre has 3.2 hectares of open space for informal use. The play area has an agility set, spinner bowl, rotor play – supanova, swing sets, a multi-play and slides, spring wobble board and rocket-blazer. There is also a basketball hoop within the open space.
- Thurston Community College has football pitches and tennis courts, Astroturf pitches, and a multi-use games area (managed by a commercial provider). The sports pitches are hired by Thurston Football Club for matches.
- Thurston Rugby Club has pitches and a clubhouse on Ixworth Road.

6.8 Most public open spaces are well used for informal play. The New Green parkland is used informally by residents and as a base of some classes and events such as hosting a travelling fair. The car park has been used as a base for a pop-up skate park in the summer.



New Green Play Area

6.9 Open spaces are well used by clubs:

- The Rugby Club ground has sufficient space to accommodate need, though there is concern about lack of safe pedestrian access from the village, traffic speed and water supply issues.
- The Recreation Ground is used to the maximum by Thurston Football Club and the cricket square is used intensively in the summer.
- New Green parkland is used for a boot camp and the Croquet Club uses the lawn adjacent to New Green Centre.
- Thurston Community College pitches are used by the Thurston Football Club, and two netball clubs play there.

- 6.10 All but one of the clubs organising outdoors team sports in Thurston reported pressure on facilities and an inability to respond to increased demand with current pitch/lawn availability.
- 6.11 A new facility bringing together disparate provision is therefore desirable. This must be capable of providing appropriate access links to residential areas in the village and the existing road network.
- 6.12 There is aspirational support for a site which could provide pitches and facilities for Thurston Football Club, a skate park (depending on whether provision is made elsewhere) and play facilities in the same area.

Play facilities

- 6.13 Mid Suffolk District Council has surveyed parishes in the District to establish details of current provision in relation to current population levels. Thurston is deemed to have sufficient park and recreation space, but in some respects, play area provision is deficient.
- 6.14 There is a need for the following play facilities:
- A dedicated site for an adventurous type play area for children 14+ to young adults, properly landscaped and accessible to all for community use, which could include a skatepark.
 - A dedicated/regularised football area with the possibility of associated play facilities in the same area. This could be provided as a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA).

- A Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP), which is mainly for older children but with play possibilities for younger children as well.

- 6.15 The developments in the planning pipeline are already expected to provide the following play facilities in addition to those currently in the village:

- A junior play area for under-12s on the land off Barton Road.
- An informal open area – natural and welcoming to families – on the land to the west of Meadow Lane.
- Outdoor fitness equipment and landscaped, family-oriented open space with a play area for under-12s on the land to the south of Norton Road.

Allotments

- 6.16 Demand for allotments has been established through the Neighbourhood Plan consultation with Thurston residents and there is ongoing pressure on the Parish Council to make appropriate provision. Currently the only provision are some privately-owned allotments to the west of Barrell's Road and north of the railway line.
- 6.17 Allotments should be provided in groups that have appropriate car, cycle and foot access, and land designated for allotment parking. Such areas should ideally be on the periphery of housing development.

Dog exercise areas

- 6.18 Demand for dog exercise areas has been established through the Neighbourhood Plan consultation with Thurston residents. There is currently no such provision with the parish although many dog owners use the existing network of footpaths in and around the village to exercise their pets.
- 6.19 Although such areas might not be an adequate substitute for the countryside and open green space for some residents, it is acknowledged that it is important to manage dogs in public spaces for the best outcomes for all users of the parish and that the walking of pets is recognised for its physical and mental health benefits.

POLICY 5: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

A. Proposals that would result in the loss of existing community facilities will not be supported unless appropriate re-provision is made. Such re-provision will be required to demonstrate that the replacement facility is:

- a. At least of an equivalent scale to the existing facility; and**
- b. In a generally accessible location to the community of Thurston within the neighbourhood plan area; and**
- c. Made available before the closure of the existing facility; and**
- d. Of a quality fit for modern use.**
- e. Schemes that are adjacent to the existing settlement boundary may be supported in order to deliver new or improved facilities.**

B. Proposals for new and/or improved community facilities will be supported subject to the following criteria:

- a. The proposal would not have significant harmful impacts on the amenities of surrounding residents and other activities; and**
- b. The proposal would not have significant harmful impacts on the surrounding local environment;**

and

- c. The proposal would not have unacceptable impacts on the local road network; and**
- d. The proposal would provide appropriate car parking facilities; and**
- e. The proposal is located within or immediately adjacent to the current settlement boundaries as defined in Policy 1. New provision or improvements to existing community facilities that are clearly separate from the settlement boundary will only be supported if it is demonstrated that new or improved provision of community facilities is not required or achievable within the settlement boundary.**

C. The provision of the following community facilities will be strongly supported:

- a. A neighbourhood equipped area for play (NEAP)**
- b. A multi-use games area (MUGA)**
- c. Allotments or community growing spaces**
- d. An adventurous type play area designed for use by older, 14+ children/young adults and a skate park.**

7 MOVEMENT

Objectives

- M1.** *To ensure the road and rail infrastructure serving Thurston is safe and meets the needs of the growing population.*
- M2.** *To maximise the potential for the use of sustainable modes of transport, including cycling and walking.*
- M3.** *To plan for and adequately mitigate the impact of new development on traffic congestion and pedestrian safety.*

Background

- 7.1 Thurston is situated inside a triangle of A roads, the base of which is the A14, a dual carriageway which carries a high volume of traffic including container lorries to and from the port of Felixstowe.
- 7.2 To the east is the A1088 (which routes from Woolpit to Thetford) and to the west is the A143 which connects Bury St Edmunds to Great Yarmouth. The apex of the triangle is just north of Pakenham where the A1088 crosses the A143.
- 7.3 There are no B roads inside this triangle and all the interior roads are either by-roads or for local access.
- 7.4 Access to the A14 is only a few minutes by car providing a route to London via the A12 from Ipswich or the A11/M11 from Cambridge (Figure 8). The A14 north from Huntingdon connects with the M1 and the A1(M).
- 7.5 The main roads in the village are: Beyton Road from Beyton to the junction with Barton Road, and Barton Road which runs from Thurston to the A143. These roads are reasonably straight and wide enough for two vehicles to pass comfortably. Norton Road from Thurston to the A1088 is narrow and winding in parts and passing a bus, coach or agricultural vehicle is difficult; Ixworth Road, leading to Pakenham, has sections that are both narrow and winding with blind corners, adding to local safety issues.
- 7.6 Traffic volume in and around Thurston varies enormously depending on the time of day. A large number of Thurston Community College students travel to and from the school in coaches and cars twice a day from a large catchment area, an important element of peak traffic flow.
- 7.7 Whilst Thurston has a railway station, the hourly weekday service to Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge is considered insufficiently frequent as a commuter service. There is serious concern regarding the safety of the Barrow Foot Crossing used to access the westbound platform. The projected increase in non-stopping freight and extra passenger numbers associated with the new developments will exacerbate the risks. As of early 2018, work is being undertaken by Network Rail, SCC Highways, the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to identify ways to mitigate the dangers for all users of the railway which will include current and future residents of Thurston and the surrounding area.
- 7.8 National Cycle Route 51 passes through the village providing a popular and easily accessible travel route for commuting, education and recreation.

Figure 8: Location of Thurston



- 7.9 The population of Thurston will grow considerably particularly following the approval of five significant housing developments in 2017, mainly around the northern part of the village. Traffic movement around the village will become an even more acute issue for residents.
- 7.10 A new primary school will be provided in Thurston at a new location within the village. This will be a key destination for movement and links should be provided to the surrounding network, allowing safe, direct routes for pedestrians and cyclists.



The Barrow Foot Crossing

- 7.11 The Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure that the supporting infrastructure network is designed and, where necessary, expanded and improved in order to ensure that this growth

is sustainable.

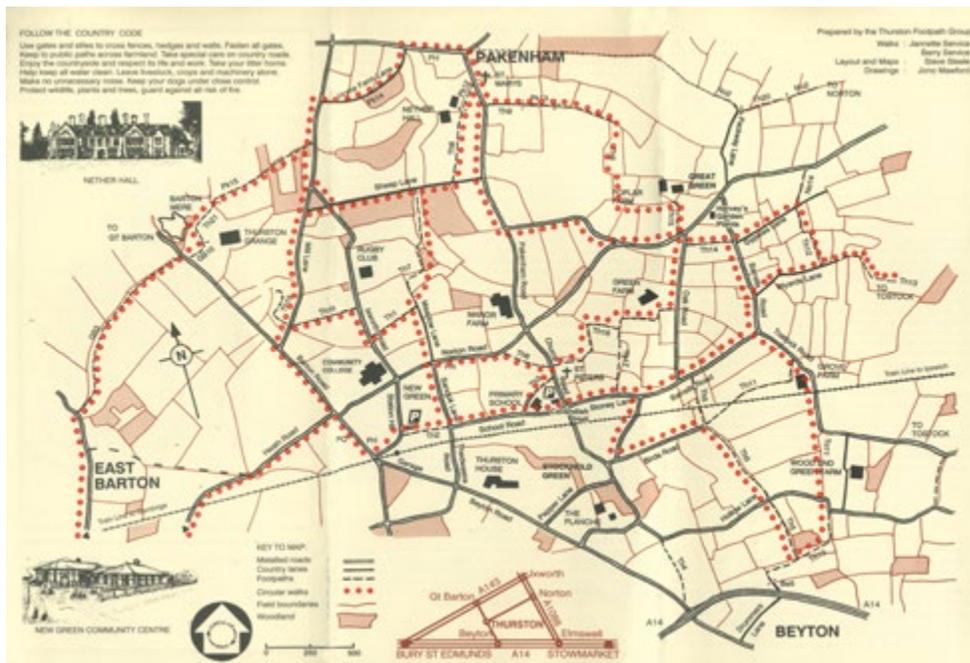
- 7.12 To ensure that residents can walk and cycle safely to the schools, railway station, shops, bus stops and other important facilities serving the community of Thurston, development should seek to protect and enhance the network of Key Movement Routes.
- 7.13 A fundamental principle of growth must be that Thurston remains a high-quality environment where the impact of development on vehicular movement, pedestrian safety, climate change and air pollution are to be mitigated.

Movement routes

Footpaths, pavements and walkways⁸

7.14 There is an extensive network of circular walks (Figure 9) much of which is on Public Rights of Way. The walks are well used with the more central ones being very popular with dog walkers.

Figure 9: Network of circular walks around Thurston



7.15 Most of the pavements are adequate although some are narrow, for example under the rail bridge opposite The Fox and Hounds pub (photographs below), which are not wide enough for use by a mobility scooter or parent with a pram, thereby forcing people into the roadway.



The narrow pavement under the railway bridge on the left. The path on the right narrows and ends at the other side of the bridge



Illustrating the narrowness of the road, and adjacent pavement, under the railway bridge

8 Definitions:
Footpath – a type of thoroughfare that is intended for use only by pedestrians and not other forms of traffic such as motorised vehicles, cycles, and horses.
Pavement – a paved, metalled or asphalted path for pedestrians at the side of a road.
Walkway – a passage or path for walking along which connects different parts of an area.

7.16 Some pavements, such as Station Hill, Beyton Road and Thedwastre Road, run directly adjacent to the road with no verge or green space to separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic which is often travelling in excess of the 30mph speed limit. This discourages people from making local journeys on foot.

7.17 The bridge at Thedwastre Road is narrow, allowing only single-file traffic, and has no pavement (photographs below). This presents a safety hazard to pedestrians and acts as a barrier to making local journeys on foot, with this being a key route into the centre of the village.



Thedwastre Road Bridge showing narrowness of the road

7.18 The Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas – Design Principles (security)⁹ suggests that where walkways and footpaths are separate from the highway they should be kept short, direct and well lit. Thurston has a number of long, dark walkways, particularly to the rear of terraced properties (photographs below). These are poorly used, with many people stating they feel unsafe and intimidated, particularly at night.



Long walkway at Cavendish Close



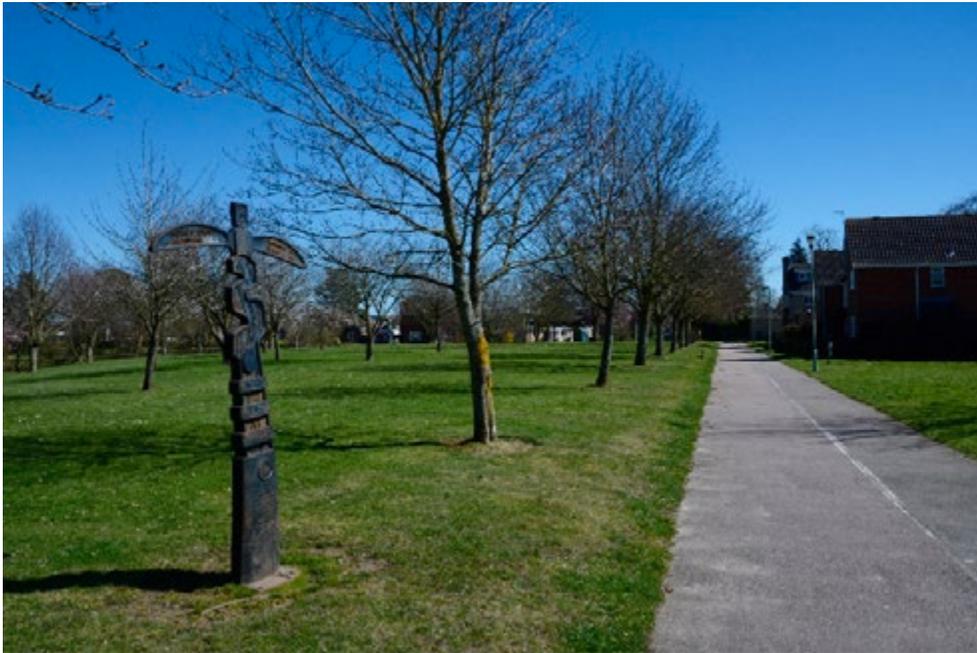
Section of fenced walkway between Victoria Close and Oakeyfield Road

7.19 Few of the footpaths or walkways are well signposted or linked to form a viable network across the village.

9 The Suffolk Design Guide for Residential Areas – advises house builders about the design of residential areas in Suffolk including choice of materials, individual dwellings and roads.
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/planning-and-development-advice/suffolk-design-guide-for-residential-areas/>

Cycling and walking

7.20 Relatively few journeys made in Thurston are by bicycle due to a combination of the traffic density along the winding country roads and the lack of a comprehensive network of designated cycleways through the village. This encourages people to use their cars for short journeys within the village.



National Cycle Route 51 crosses New Green as a shared route

7.21 The only designated cycleway through Thurston is National Cycle Route 51 which provides a well-designed route to Bury St Edmunds without the need to cycle on the busiest main roads. The route runs through the village from Heath Road to Church Road via New Green and is mainly 'on-road' at Heath Road, part of School Road and Church Road with School Road being quite narrow.



National Cycle Route 51 at junction of Church Road and Barrells Road

7.22 In terms of trying to positively influence future patterns of movement into and around Thurston village, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to focus on making improvements for pedestrians and cyclists in order to encourage more walking and cycling. Linking the new housing developments, as well as the existing parts of the village, into the network of walkways is vital to encourage more walking and less use of the car. Such improvements have a range of benefits including:

- Providing genuine alternatives to the private car as a means of accessing key shops and services, the two schools and other community facilities.

- Providing health benefits through increased walking and cycling.
- Facilitating less congestion at busy times by encouraging children to walk to and from school and people to walk to the shops rather than 'jumping in the car' for a short journey.
- Providing a safer environment for the community of Thurston, including vulnerable users.
- Linking the new housing developments, as well as the existing parts of the village, into the network of walkways and the Public Rights of Way network.

7.23 The following shared use routes will need to be addressed as development comes forward

- Mill Lane to Ixworth Road.
- Ixworth Road to Meadow Lane.
- Along Ixworth Road from the crossroads at Ixworth Road/Norton Road to the Rugby Club.
- Within the proposals for development on land to the North and to the South of Norton Road.

7.24 In addition to these infrastructure measures, more cycle parking provision will be needed at the railway station.

7.25 In relation to the provision of cycleways, the developments on Moreton Hall in Bury St Edmunds, could be considered as a model for the way forward in Thurston. The needs of both cyclists and pedestrians were catered for at the planning stage providing high quality links between housing areas, schools, shops and other facilities.

POLICY 6: KEY MOVEMENT ROUTES

- A. Where appropriate, new developments must ensure safe pedestrian and cycle access to link up with existing pavements and cycle infrastructure that directly connect with the Key Movement Routes as identified on the Policies Maps on pages 75-76. Such routes should also ensure that access by disabled users and users of mobility scooters is secured.**
- B. Proposals to enhance the identified Key Movement Routes will be supported. Development that is immediately adjacent to the Key Movement Routes will be expected to:

 - a. Contribute towards the enhancement of the Key Movement Route in accordance with the statutory tests in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2012; and**
 - b. Not have a detrimental impact on the Key Movement Route, and assess and address the impact of the additional traffic movements on the safety and flow of pedestrians and cyclists.****
- C. The Public Rights of Way network should be protected. Where appropriate, in accordance with the statutory tests in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, development should enhance the Public Rights of Way network by improving routes or creating new links. Linking the Public Rights of Way network to the Key Movement Routes is encouraged.**

Road network and parking

Road network

- 7.26 To inform the determination of the series of planning applications for residential development in Thurston which were subsequently granted in late 2017, Suffolk County Council Highways Team, in association with the site promoters, commissioned a transport assessment. This highlighted that some of the road junctions both within the village and leading to it were already close to capacity at peak times.
- 7.27 There has been much concern from members of the community regarding the impact of growth on road congestion and safety. Not only is congestion at peak times a concern, but so is speeding at other times. A Vehicle Activated Sign has given the Parish Council useful information regarding the speed and number of vehicles along Barton and Beyton Roads. The results indicate that speeding, sometimes excessively, is a regular occurrence.
- 7.28 Many of the roads from Thurston leading to the surrounding villages are winding and narrow by-roads. This results in large vehicles being forced to mount the pavement when turning at the New Road/Beyton Road junction and two-way traffic has difficulty passing on the narrower, winding stretches.

7.29 There are pinch points and problematic junctions within the village, all identified by Suffolk County Council Highways Team in its transport work to inform the planning applications in 2017. These are:

- Pokeriage Corner Junction
- Ixworth Road/ Norton Road Crossroads
- Station Hill Bridge
- Beyton Road/New Road Junction

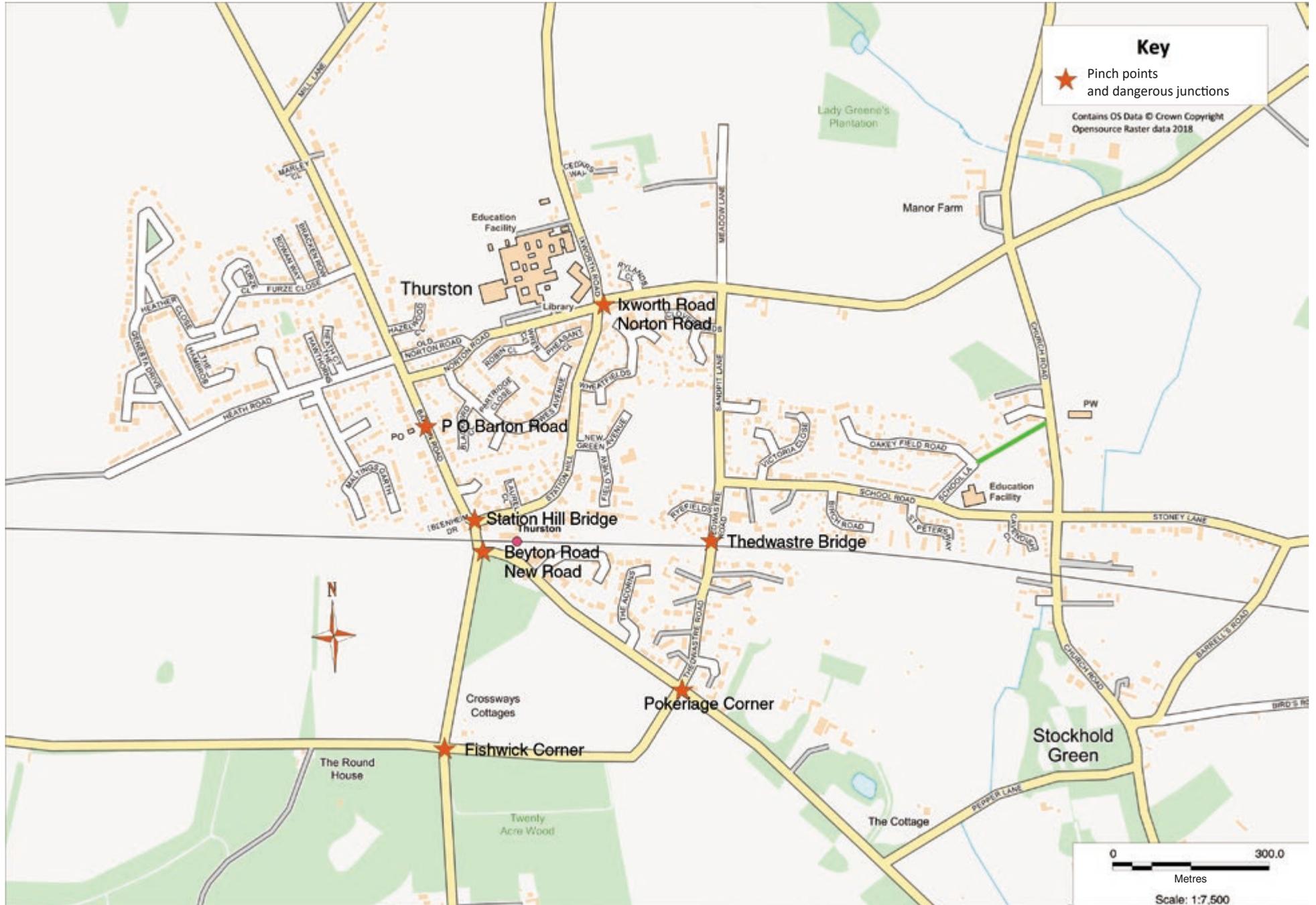
In addition, Barton Road outside the Post Office, Fishwick Corner and Thedwastre Bridge are problematic pinch points.

7.30 Figure 10 shows the location of these pinch points and dangerous junctions.

7.31 In particular, Pokeriage Corner and Fishwick Corner junctions have been the sites of accidents, some severe and reported, some not¹⁰. Fishwick Corner has been of particular concern. High traffic volumes are experienced leaving the village in the morning and a combination of poor visibility at the junction, poor signage and the constraints of junction design have contributed to this being the most dangerous junction within the village.

¹⁰ Data from Parish Council records between mid-July and mid-October 2017 records 6 accidents at Fishwick Corner involving a number of serious injuries requiring hospital treatment (with one requiring Air Ambulance assistance) and Police attendance at 5 of them.

Figure 10: Location of pinch points and dangerous junctions in Thurston



- 7.32 A key junction outside the village is that of the Barton Road with the A143 (Bunbury Arms junction). This has been the subject of a Suffolk County Council (SCC) transport assessment which has highlighted it is already operating very close to capacity at peak times. SCC has stated that, "Without any highway improvements and with the proposed development the junction will be operating at considerable over capacity"¹¹.
- 7.33 As a result of recent planning approvals, and recognising that delivery is dependent on the developments coming forth, developers are required to contribute to highway improvements at:
- The A143/Thurston Road (Bunbury Arms) Junction to reduce congestion.
 - C692/C693 Thurston Road (Fishwick Corner) to improve road safety.
 - At the junction of Ixworth Road/Norton Road to improve pedestrian access.
 - Extend the existing 30mph speed limits on Barton Road, Ixworth Road and Norton Road.
 - C692/C693 Thurston Road (Fishwick Corner).
- 7.34 The provision of junction improvements at these points which are intended to reduce vehicle accidents and increase safety of cyclists and pedestrians is critical.
- 7.35 As traffic increases and development is brought forward, there remains a continuing need for monitoring and improvement of the identified pinch points and problematic junctions to ensure that the cumulative impact on the network is addressed.
- 7.36 It is also important that, where demonstrated to be necessary, traffic calming measures are introduced on the main routes, e.g. Barton Road, Beyton Road, and at dangerous junctions, e.g. Fishwick and Pokeriage Corners
- 7.37 Similarly, the roads around Thurston Community College become congested with coaches around school drop off and pick up times (see photographs).
- 7.38 Buses and coaches carry students on a daily basis to and from the College which serves a large catchment of surrounding villages. A total of 28 buses along with taxis and parents' cars drop off and collect students every day. This causes significant congestion on Norton Road between Barton Road and Station Road on a regular basis and has an impact on the traffic flows throughout the rest of the village.
- 7.39 There are public bus services from Thurston to Stowmarket and Bury St Edmunds. These provide an hourly service in each direction throughout most of the day, Monday to Saturday. The bus route through Thurston is via School Road, Church Road, Norton Road, Heath Road, Genesta Drive and Barton Road. Due to the fact that buses travel along these routes, some car owners park on the verges and footpaths which restricts access for both pedestrians and cyclists.

11 Suffolk County Council (SCC) letter to Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC) dated 13 October 2017



POLICY 7: HIGHWAY CAPACITY AT KEY ROAD JUNCTIONS

- A. Where a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement is required, this should address the transport impacts on road junctions, particularly including the following junctions on the Policies Maps:**
- a. Fishwick Corner;**
 - b. Pokeriage Corner;**
 - c. Junction of Beyton Road and New Road;**
 - d. The railway bridge/junction of Barton Road and Station Hill.**



Coaches causing congestion outside Thurston Community College

Parking

7.40 The 2011 Census showed that within the parish, 55% of Thurston households own at least two cars. This is considerably higher than the Mid Suffolk district average. High car dependency coupled with the paucity of dedicated public parking within the core of the village, insufficient off-road residential parking and narrow roads within the village result in vehicles parking on the roads, verges and footpaths. This adds to congestion and safety issues, for example by restricting the use of footways by pedestrians, prams and mobility scooters. In residential areas, vehicles are either parked on drives or on the roadside whilst garages are being used for purposes other than that for which they were designed. Resident street parking not only detracts from the village appearance (See Section 5) but also causes road traffic congestion.



Station car park

- 7.41 Development should seek to maximise the provision of usable off-street parking to minimise the need for residents to park on the roads, acknowledging that garages are rarely used for the purposes for which they were designed.
- 7.42 Parking for users of the railway station is limited to a small area reserved at the Granary site off Station Hill and, with only 14 spaces, is inadequate for the number of vehicles wishing to use it. Overflow parking already occurs on village roads. There is no available land for extra parking close to the station. In addition, cyclists also have only limited racks for bike parking.
- 7.43 Lighting of the station car park is inadequate and after dark it is unsatisfactory in terms of health and safety.
- 7.44 The New Green Community Centre between Sandpit Lane and Station Hill has the best parking facilities which can be extended on to surrounding parkland for large events. The Centre is well used on a daily basis by Thurston residents and people from the hinterland. The Cavendish Hall on Church Road has its own car park but many cars park on the grass banks along Church Road when the playing field is in use and/or the congregation is in attendance at St Peter's Church opposite, which has no car park of its own.
- 7.45 The expected provision of a new primary school during the Neighbourhood Plan period means that parking will remain an issue on the neighbouring roads unless properly addressed.



Examples of long driveways which provide space for more than one car



An example of ample off-road parking



An example of a planned parking bay



Examples of poor-quality parking environment

POLICY 8: PARKING PROVISION

- A. Development proposals that generate an increased need for parking must provide adequate and suitable parking, having regard to the Suffolk County Council Parking Guidance 1 (2015) or any successor document, in order to minimise obstruction of the local road network in the interests of the safety of all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists, unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that an alternative provision would be appropriate on a specific site. Parking spaces must be permanently available for parking use.**
- B. Proposals that would reduce the existing level of off-street parking provision (both public and private) will be resisted unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the amount of overall provision is adequate. This is particularly the case in respect of public car parking serving community facilities.**
- C. The provision of a new primary school in Thurston must be designed to support appropriate levels of off-road parking and drop-off facilities for cars, buses and coaches.**

8 ENVIRONMENT

Objectives

- E1.** *To protect and enhance the village character and its environment, together with its relationship with the surrounding countryside.*
- E2.** *To protect green spaces of value in and around the village.*
- E3.** *To enhance green space and wildlife provision and minimise light pollution in new development.*

Background

- 8.1 Thurston is a large village with good facilities and easy access to major road and rail networks but one of its defining features is that it is situated in a rural environment. The developed area of the village is surrounded by good quality agricultural land mainly containing arable crops, small clusters of rural housing and areas of woodland and natural habitats which together constitute the parish of Thurston.



View south west from Pakenham Road

Protection and enhancement of the village and rural environment

- 8.2 Inevitably, any development will impact on the surrounding landscape and any adjacent farmed land so the way that development is designed where it abuts the open countryside is very important. Buffer zones between built development and the open countryside need to be created and planted appropriately. Landscaping should be an integral part of a new development with the retention of existing trees, shrubs and hedges. New planting should seek to include native trees and shrubs with specimen trees ideally being of a reasonable size.
- 8.3 Trees are a prominent and valuable feature of the land/topography and bring many benefits to the area. Hedgerows, hedgerow trees and scattered woodland are notable elements of the parish landscape. These features along with green spaces and natural areas are important and need to be protected and retained.
- 8.4 Hedgerows are a key feature in the structure of the landscape. Together with trees and green spaces they provide habitats for insects, birds, mammals, reptiles and also provide connecting links with the adjacent countryside. Carbon is stored in hedgerows, trees and green spaces. They can also contribute to reducing the levels of chemicals entering water systems. It is important that during any development the native hedgerows should be retained to preserve these valuable features.
- 8.5 It is paramount that heritage areas and green spaces in the village are protected to maintain the village character and continue to provide an environmental benefit for all.

POLICY 9: LANDSCAPING AND ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

- A. Development must be designed to ensure that its impact on the landscape and the high-quality rural environment of Thurston is minimised.**
- B. Development which abuts open countryside must not create a hard edge. Proposals must demonstrate how the visual impact of buildings on the site has been minimised through their layout, heights and landscaping. In particular, the retention and planting of trees, hedges and vegetation is encouraged to soften the impact of development, retain and improve the street scene and keep the rural village feel of Thurston. A native species landscape buffer is required where a development abuts open countryside.**
- C. Development must ensure that valued features of the local landscape, as identified in the Thurston Parish Environment, Landscape, Green and Open Spaces (2018), including hedgerows, are protected where possible. New development must preserve these features and they should only be lost where it is fundamentally necessary for the delivery of the development, e.g. to provide access to the site.**

Local Green Spaces

8.6 Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), neighbourhood plans have the opportunity to designate Local Green Spaces which are of particular importance to the local community. This will afford protection from development other than in very special circumstances. Paragraph 99 of the NPPF says that Local Green Spaces should only be designated:

- “Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.”

8.7 Figure 12 shows the areas that are considered to meet these criteria and must be protected as Local Green Spaces.



Mature oaks, Church Road



Scots pines, Furze Close

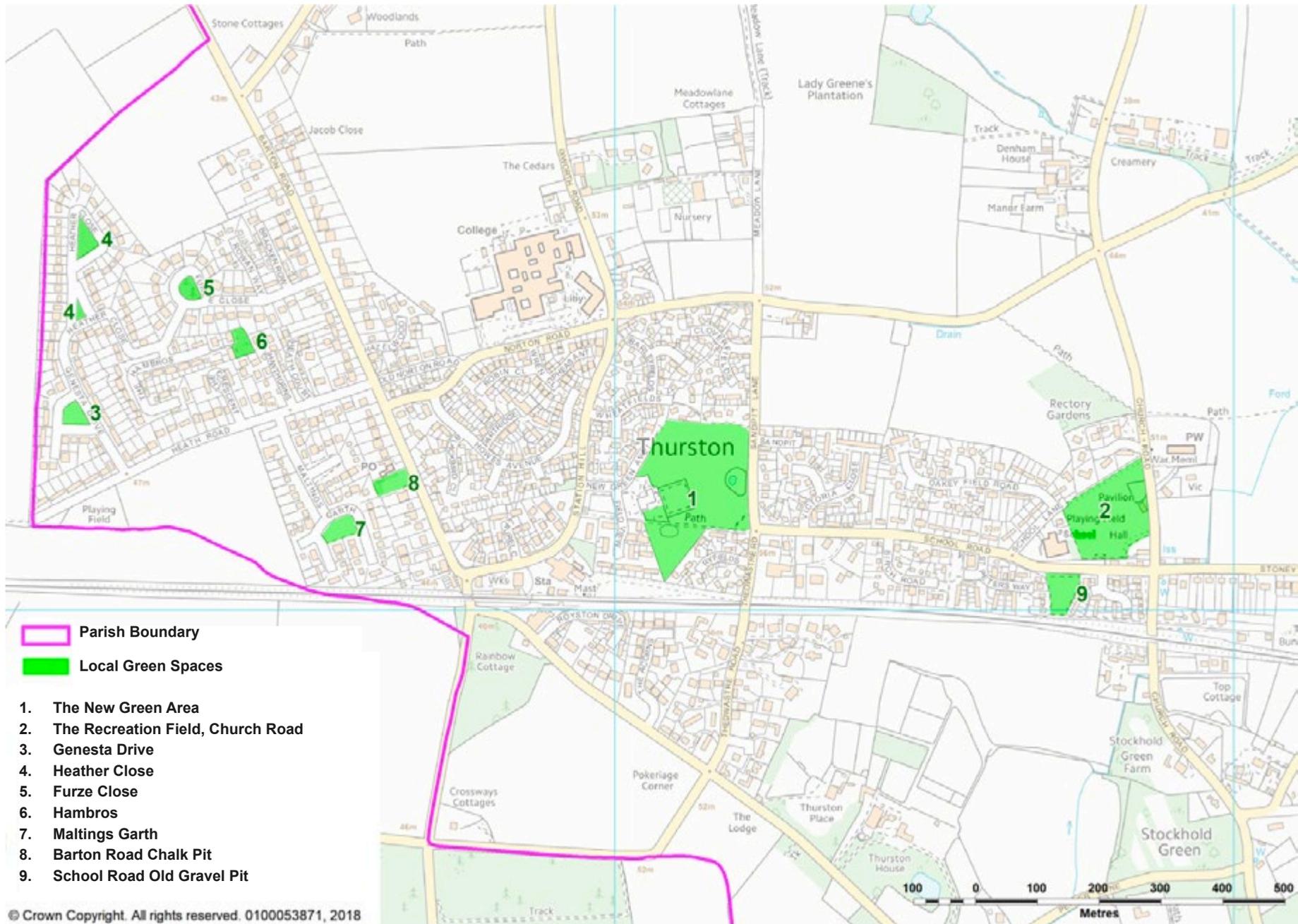


Hedgerows on Pakenham Road



Hedgerows on Sandpit Lane

Figure 11: Location of Local Green Spaces



1. The New Green Open Space Area

8.8 This area of just over 3 hectares was created in the centre of the main settlement area to provide an area for recreation, village fairs and outdoor events in a parkland setting including a wildlife area with pond. Many trees are planted within this area. Created in the 1980s/1990s as part of a large housing development, it is a well-used and important facility for the community. A children's play area is also found here.

The New Green Open Space Area



2. The Recreation Field, Church Road

8.9 This area of about 1.5 hectares situated between the church, the primary school and the Cavendish Hall was, historically, Glebe land. It was given to the village in the 1920s as a communal recreational facility. It is used as a play area for the primary school, as a football and cricket ground and for village events. An attractive Sports Pavilion provides changing facilities. The pre-school committee obtained permission to build a facility on the Church Road side of the field. Two small areas of children's play equipment are found here. A line of magnificent, veteran oak trees borders Church Road, together with horse chestnuts along the public footpath to the north.

The Recreation Field, Church Road



3. Genesta Drive Open Space

8.10 This is a valuable and attractive open space of 0.1 hectares which enables a group of sizable trees to be accommodated and provides an amenity space which creates a pleasant environment within the estate.

Genesta Drive Open Space



4. Heather Close Open Space

8.11 The two areas provide a valuable and attractive open space of about 0.13 hectares and 0.03 hectares respectively, enabling groups of sizable trees to be accommodated and providing an amenity space which creates a pleasant environment within the estate.

Heather Close Open Space



5. Furze Close Open Space

8.12 The group of Scots pine trees on the open space area of about 0.1 hectares in the centre of the Close adds character to the area. This area is privately owned and creates a pleasant environment within the estate.

Furze Close Open Space



6. Hambros Open Space

8.13 The open space area of about 0.1 hectares in the Hambros is a grassed area with a number of small fruit trees and one or two larger trees. The area creates a quiet amenity space hidden away between the surrounding houses.

Hambros Open Space



7. Maltings Garth Open Space

8.14 The green areas within the Maltings Garth area create a spacious feel to the area and provide an attractive facility where larger trees have established. The main green area in the centre is about 0.2 hectares and can be used as a recreational area.

Maltings Garth Open Space



8. Barton Road Chalk Pit

8.15 The chalk pit on Barton Road next to the Post Office Stores is common land of historical interest and occupies an area of about 0.2 hectares. The residents of Thurston have a right to access the area to collect lime.

Barton Road Chalk Pit



9. School Road Old Gravel Pit Open Space

8.16 The old gravel pit on School Road was possibly used for waste disposal and was subsequently landscaped, grassed over and planted with trees. It provides a valuable area of about 0.3 hectares of common land between St Peters Way and Cavendish Close.

School Road Old Gravel Pit Open Space



POLICY 10: LOCAL GREEN SPACES

A. The following areas shown on the Proposals Map are designated as a Local Green Spaces:

1. The New Green Open Space Area
2. The Recreation Field, Church Road
3. Genesta Drive Open Space
4. Heather Close Open Space
5. Furze Close Open Space
6. Hambros Open Space
7. Maltings Garth Open Space
8. Barton Road Chalk Pit
9. School Road Old Gravel Pit Open Space.

B. Proposals for development on the Local Green Spaces will be only be permitted in very special circumstances.

Enhancing green space and wildlife

Green space provision

- 8.17 New developments should include green areas to provide space for people, recreation, landscaping and wildlife and to improve the quality of the environment.
- 8.18 Through the engagement carried out as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, many people remarked on their appreciation of open spaces and countryside location. There were many comments that these need to be retained for residents and replicated in the design of any new developments.
- 8.19 The Accessible Natural Greenspaces Standard (ANGSt)¹² recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have accessible natural green space of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5-minute walk) from home. This is particularly important where substantial new growth is planned.
- 8.20 An assessment of such provision in Suffolk by Natural England¹³ shows that the main areas of deficiency for the combined ANGSt analysis are found in the centre of the County, with Babergh and Mid Suffolk most affected.

12 Natural England (2010) Nature Nearby – Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (NE265). http://www.ukmaburbanforum.co.uk/documents/other/nature_nearby.pdf

13 Natural England (2010) Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision for Suffolk, p.2 and 9 www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east_of_england/ourwork/gi/accessiblenaturalgreenspacestandardangst.aspx

Wildlife

- 8.21 Various measures can be incorporated as part of new developments to assist wildlife and enhance the natural environment which include provision of green spaces, trees and shrubs, ponds or lagoons and nesting sites.
- 8.22 Wildlife corridors linking areas of wildlife habitats are important. These can be as small as making a gap in a garden fence allowing animals, such as hedgehogs, a way through from one garden to another and possibly into the open countryside.
- 8.23 According to the Wildlife Trusts¹⁴, connectivity between the countryside enables both wildlife and people to move through the landscape and for natural processes to operate effectively.
- 8.24 There are still swifts and sparrows in Thurston though their numbers appear to be declining. Bats too are seen.



A butterfly that is now commonly seen in local gardens, the Comma.

14 The Wildlife Trusts www.wildlifetrusts.org/living-landscape/our-vision

8.25 At the local level, the design of individual buildings and of neighbourhood scale green and open spaces, including private gardens, will help to ensure that many of the species that are in Thurston can not only survive but thrive. This is crucially in line with the national planning guidance for achieving net biodiversity gain through all new development. Examples include:

- Designing houses and neighbourhood scale green and blue features so that there is space for wildlife. For example, at the individual building scale, incorporating integral bird and bat boxes under the eaves of the new houses, or creating artificial nests, sited in places away from windows and doors, can create vital new roosting sites to support populations of birds and bats.
- Integral bird and bat boxes and hedgehog-friendly fencing.
- Boundaries between dwellings can be made hedgehog-friendly by including pre-cut holes for hedgehogs to more effectively move across neighbourhoods to forage.
- New planting schemes can support bees and other pollinators by including nectar-rich plants. Tenants in new housing developments can be encouraged to adopt a wildlife-friendly approach to gardening through inclusion of educational literature in 'home-information' packs.
- Veteran trees should also be incorporated into landscaping in new developments and protected from damage by fencing or provision of circular hedging. This can make a very attractive feature and focal point for a public open space. Even dead trees can be retained safely in this way.

8.26 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)¹⁵ can be designed and managed to include soft, green landscaping features and wetland habitats, providing opportunities to enjoy wildlife close to where people live. Information about the multi-benefits of SuDS can be included in 'home information' packs in new development, or in on-site interpretation in open and green spaces, to encourage understanding and engage community members in supporting their long-term management.

POLICY 11: PROVISION FOR WILDLIFE IN NEW DEVELOPMENT

- A. Development proposals that incorporate into their design features which encourage wildlife to thrive will be strongly supported.**
- B. All new housing proposals shall incorporate provision for local wildlife to thrive. Specific examples of such provision include:**
- a. Bird and bat boxes and hedgehog runs;**
 - b. Measures to support character species of fauna and flora;**
 - c. Planting schemes including native species of trees and shrubs and nectar-rich plants for bees and other pollinators;**
 - d. Veteran tree retention;**
 - e. A sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) approach to natural water management and flood resilience, including soft, green landscaping and wetland habitat close to where people live.**
- C. Planting, landscaping and features which encourage wildlife in new development should connect wider ecological networks where possible.**

15 Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) British Geological Survey National Environment Research Council NERC 2017 <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/suds/>

Light pollution

- 8.27 Light pollution is a serious emerging issue in conservation¹⁶ and has important implications for the planning and design of development.
- 8.28 Bad lighting can impact on ecology and wildlife, the detrimental effect of artificial lighting being most clearly seen with bats. Poor lighting can detract from the architectural appearance of a building and may produce glare which can conceal rather than reveal. Inefficient lighting can be a waste of energy, thus a waste of money and resources.
- 8.29 The British Astronomical Association's Campaign for Dark Skies states that councils and organisations should use 'the right amount of light and only where needed, to help stargazers'¹⁷.

POLICY 12: MINIMISING LIGHT POLLUTION

- A. In recognition of the County Council's standards with regards to public lighting of the adopted highway, new development should be required to demonstrate how it has minimised light pollution created through its proposed use.**
- B. Where lighting of public places is proposed, the use of down lighters will be required.**
- C. New development should have regard to guidance from the Institute of Lighting Professionals ('Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light' (2011) or any successor document) in respect of sites where relevant.**
- D. Sensitive use of lighting shall be used to minimise impact on light sensitive species where relevant.**

¹⁶ Stone, EL, Harris, S & Jones, G, 2015, 'Impacts of artificial lighting on bats: A review of challenges and solutions'. Journal of Mammalogy.

¹⁷ BAA Commission for Dark Skies 2015-2018
www.britastro.org/dark-skies/index.php

9 POLICIES MAPS

Figure 12 Locations within the parish

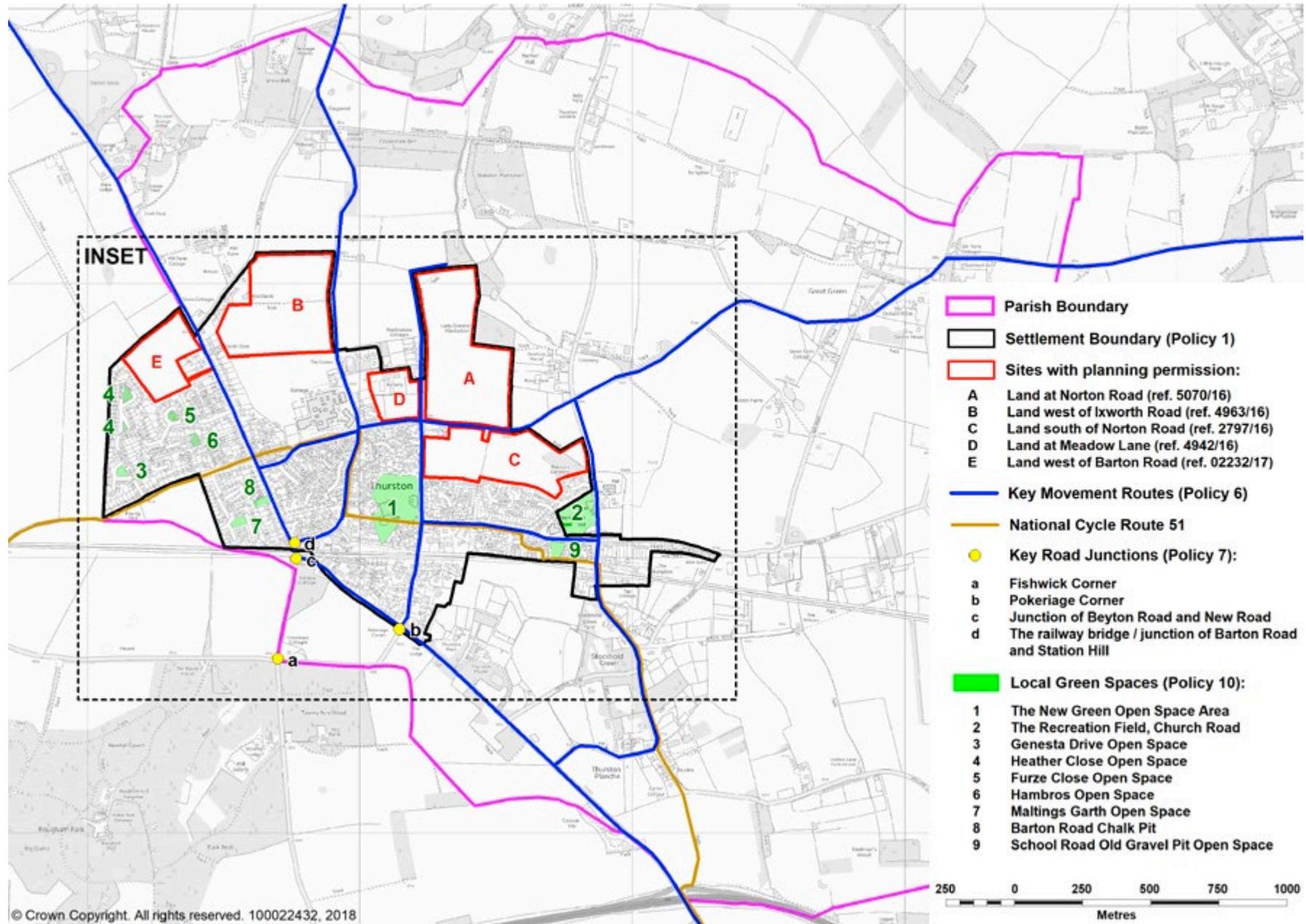
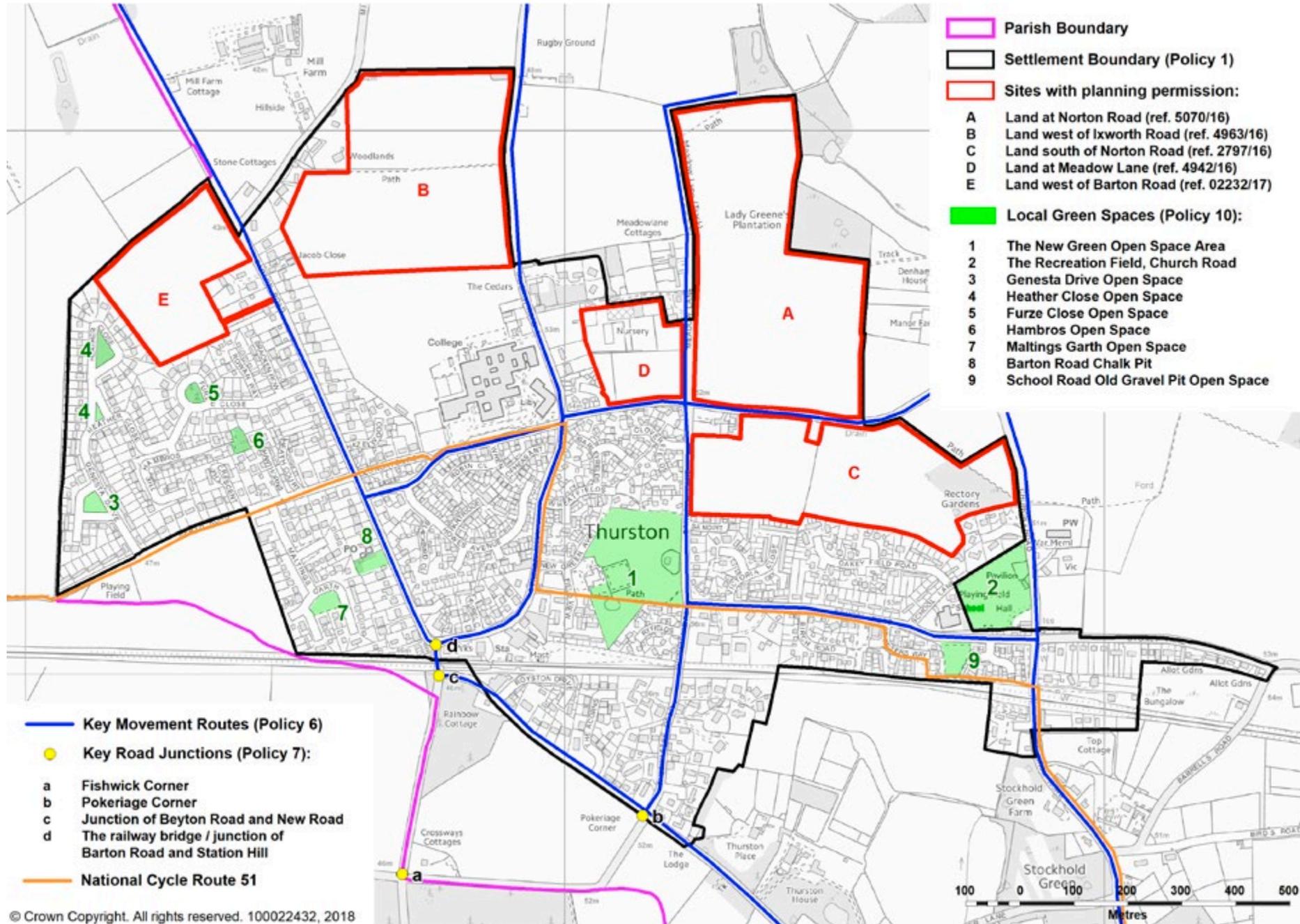


Figure 13 Inset map: Detailed locations



10 NON-POLICY ACTIONS

10.1 Through the development of the Neighbourhood Plan the community raised a number of issues which do not necessarily require planning policies to be addressed. These have been identified below.

Table 10.1: Non-land use issues to be addressed

Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partner
Community Infrastructure		
Provision of a recycling facility	<p>Provision needs to be made for a comprehensive recycling centre that is easily accessible for residents. This would be best situated near the centre of Thurston. It should accommodate containers for a wide range of domestic goods including paper or card, glass, plastic, metal, clothing, footwear and small electrical goods.</p> <p>The site will require regular maintenance, including supervising the emptying of the containers and keeping the site in good order. Design of the site should include good screening and off-road vehicle access including collection lorries.</p>	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council
Library/ Community Hub	<p>Provision needs to be made for a Community Hub which would include the Community Library.</p> <p>Suffolk County Council has indicated that it would be willing to discuss proposals if the Parish were to develop a project and identify funding to enable the library to relocate.</p>	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council
Dog Park	Provision of a Dog Park would give benefit to the large number of residents with dogs and would reduce the opportunity for owners to exercise their animals in inappropriate places.	Thurston Parish Council

More public car parking areas/ space	Could the New Green car parks for example be made Pay and Display and open at all times?	Thurston Parish Council & New Green Trust
Electric Vehicle Charging Points	Consideration should be given to the initiatives in the government's Road to Zero strategy. Electric vehicles are a cleaner, greener alternative to diesel and petrol and at present there are no publicly available electric charging points in the parish of Thurston.	Thurston Parish Council & other stake-holders as part of future infrastructure.
Design		
Railway Station Building	Provision should be made for the exploration of possible further uses, including community uses, for this building which occupies a prominent setting in the village.	Thurston Parish Council
Residential Design	Seek to ensure that a strategy encouraging the provision of filtered permeability is used to provide a network of wide walkway and cycleways at the relevant planning stage coming forth which will favour pedestrians, wheelchairs, pushchairs and cyclists and encourage change of use to active travel.	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council
Movement		
Speeding traffic	Need for traffic calming measures.	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council
Movement and safety at night	Need for improved street lighting and better 'roadside care'.	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council

Bus services	Seek to maintain the existing bus routes with more stops being added. Provide more bus shelters.	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council Bus providers
Hedgerow maintenance	Need for improved hedgerow and verge maintenance to allow adequate passing of motor vehicles along all movement routes.	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council
Road signage	Need for improved signage alerting all to the topography of the roads in and surrounding Thurston. Need for improved signage and mirrors to allow for all road users to be aware of the state of the highway.	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council
Pavements	Need for a review of the camber of existing pavements and whether there are sufficient dropped curbs to make it easier for wheelchair users, carers pushing a wheelchair, and parents and carers of young children in buggies.	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council
Cycling in General	There is a need to consider the production of an Action Strategy which identifies the best routes to cycle and identifies the most appropriate way to invest in the types of traffic calming measures making it easier for cyclists to move around and to access services, facilities, education and employment.	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council
Crossings at grade	Need to ensure that there are adequate crossings at grade which prioritise the flows of those walking, in wheelchairs, pushchairs and cycling.	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council
Travel Plans	The provision of such infrastructure as Key Movement Routes should be supported and promoted by high quality, deliverable travel plans for new developments and other incentives for existing users.	Thurston Parish Council Suffolk County Council Mid Suffolk District Council

<p>Walking and Cycling Proposals</p>	<p>All new development should seek to protect and enhance existing movement routes to enable new development to link shops, station and schools with residential areas.</p> <p>Requirement that all funding sources – including CiL – are fully explored to ensure the proposals identified within the Neighbourhood Plan are delivered.</p> <p>In particular the following should be addressed as development comes forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement and widening of existing pavements as well as provision of some new pavements and pedestrian road crossing points particularly near the new primary school • New pavement along Ixworth Road and Norton Road • Additional pavement along Sandpit Lane linking to existing pavements • A new pavement from the Victoria public house along Norton Road should join the existing public footpaths. • Improvements to existing walkways and well-designed new provision that should be directly routed, well-lit and clearly separated from the highway. • Suitable access should cater for mobility scooters, prams, and wheelchairs. • A shared-use path along Barton Road. • A shared-use path from the Library to the new development along Ixworth Road. • A shared-use path along Sandpit Lane to connect to the Meadow Lane area. • A shared-use path from Heath Road along Barton Road to the Fox and Hounds and up Station Hill. • A new crossing on Barton Road opposite Heath Road. • A new crossing on Station Hill leading to the National Cycle Route 51 across New Green. 	<p>Thurston Parish Council Mid Suffolk District Council Suffolk County Council</p>
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Figure 14: Network of shared-use routes linking key movement routes

