

Committee Report

Committee Date: 12th July 2017

Item No:

Reference: 4942/16

Case Officer: Dylan Jones

Description of Development: Residential development consisting of 64 dwellings and associated highway, car parking and public open space

Location: Land at Meadow Lane, Thurston IP31 3QG

Parish: Thurston

Ward: Thurston & Hesselthorpe

Ward Members: Councillors Esther Jewson & Derrick Haley

Site Area: 3.03

Conservation Area: No

Listed Building: Manor Farm which is Grade 2* listed and Grange Farmhouse, Grade 2 Listed.

Received: 12/12/2016

Expiry Date: 30/06/2017

Application Type: Full Planning Permission

Development Type: Smallscale Major Dwellings

Environmental Impact Assessment: Schedule 2 development – EIA not required.

Applicant: Laurence Homes (Eastern) Ltd

Agent: BDG Design (South) Ltd

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR CONSIDERATION

The defined Red Line Plan for this application is drawing number 15.033/100 received on the 12th December 2016. This drawing is the red line plan that shall be referred to as the defined application site. Any other drawings approved or refused that may show any alternative red line plan separately or as part of any other submitted document have not been accepted on the basis of defining the application site.

Submitted Documents:

Layout plan reference number 15.033/101C received on the 9th May 2017.

Plans & elevations plan reference number 15.033/102 received on the 13th December 2016.

Plans & elevations plan reference number 15.033/103 received on the 13th December 2016.

Plans & elevations plan reference number 15.033/104 received on the 13th December 2016.

Plans & elevations plan reference number 15.033/105 received on the 13th December 2016.
Plans & elevations plan reference number 15.033/106 received on the 13th December 2016.
Plans & elevations plan reference number 15.033/107A received on the 9th May 2017
Plans & elevations plan reference number 15.033/108 received on the 13th December 2016.
Plans & elevations plan reference number 15.033/109 received on the 13th December 2016.
House type plan reference number 15.033/110 received on the 13th December 2016.
House type plan reference number 15.033/111 received on the 13th December 2016.
House type plan reference number 15.033/112 received on the 13th December 2016.
House type plan reference number 15.033/113 received on the 13th December 2016.
House type plan reference number 15.033/114 received on the 13th December 2016.
House type plan reference number 15.033/115 received on the 13th December 2016.
Garage & car port plan reference number 15.033/116 received on the 13th December 2016.
Garage & car port plan reference number 15.033/117 received on the 13th December 2016.
Foul pump station plan reference number 15.033/118 received on the 13th December 2016.
Street elevation plan reference number 15.033/200A received on the 9th May 2017
Street elevation plan reference number 15.033/201A received on the 9th May 2017
Strategic landscaping plan reference number 15.033/300A received on the 9th May 2017
Landscape and visual assessment plan reference number 17.2088.01 received on the 9th May 2017.
Arboricultural Planning Statement received on the 12th December 2016
Revised Design and Access Statement received on the 9th May 2017
Ecological scoping survey received on the 13th December 2016
Flood risk assessment received on the 13th December 2016
Ground investigation report received on the 13th December 2016
Planning statement received on the 13th December 2016
Land contamination phase 1 desk study received on 9th March 2017
Sustainable Urban Drainage maintenance plan received on 13th June 2017
Soakaways drainage plan received on 13th June 2017
Exceedance Flood Plan received on 13th June 2017
Drainage strategy construction details plan reference number 15-050/DSD-01 Rev P1 received on 13th June 2017

The application, plans and documents submitted by the Applicant can be viewed online at www.midsuffolk.gov.uk via the following link:

<http://planningpages.midsuffolk.gov.uk/online-applications/simpleSearchResults.do;jsessionid=3C8D88B2598E491D44193C51A243937C?action=firstPage>

Alternatively, a copy is available to view at the Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Council Offices.

SUMMARY

The proposal has been assessed with regard to adopted development plan policies, the National Planning Policy Framework and all other material considerations. The scheme is contrary to the adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy; however, the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing and the scheme falls to be considered under paragraph 14 of the NPPF where the adverse impacts of the scheme have to be balanced against the benefits of

the scheme to demonstrate that it constitutes sustainable development. Officers are recommending a minded approval of this application as it is considered to be sustainable development as the public benefits that the scheme will deliver (contributions towards a new school, pre-school, highway improvements, health provision, affordable housing and library facilities amongst others) are considered to outweigh the negative aspects of the proposal.

PART ONE – REASON FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

The application is referred to committee for the following reason/s:

- It is a “Major” application for residential land allocation for 15 or over dwellings.

PART TWO – APPLICATION BACKGROUND

1. This section details history, policies, advice provided, other legalisation and events that forms the background in terms of both material considerations and procedural background.

History

2. The planning history relevant to the application site is listed below. A detailed assessment of the planning history including any material Planning Appeals will be carried out as needed in Part Three:

There is no planning history for this site.

3. The following applications are also considered to be relevant to the consideration of this proposal as they represent the other major applications for residential development in Thurston that are currently with the Council for consideration:

2797/16 Application for Outline Planning Permission (with all matters other than means of access reserved) for residential development of up to 175 dwellings with associated car parking, landscaping, public open space areas, allotments, and vehicular access from Sandpit Lane. The applicant is Hopkins Homes and this proposal is identical to appeal 5010/16.

4386/16 Full planning application for the erection of 138 dwellings on land on the west side of Barton Road, Thurston. The applicant is Bovis Homes.

4963/16 Outline application for the erection of up to 250 dwellings and associated infrastructure including the provision of up to 2.4ha of land for use by the Thurston Community College and the provision of land for a new primary school on land west of Ixworth Road, Thurston. The

applicant is Persimmon Homes.

5010/16 Outline Planning Application (with all matters other than means of access reserved) for residential development of up to 175 dwellings with associated car parking, landscaping, public open space areas, allotments, and vehicular access from Sandpit Lane and Norton Road. The applicant is Hopkins Homes and this proposal is identical to application 2797/16. (This case is at appeal for the non-determination of the proposal in the statutory period of 13 weeks for a major application).

5070/16 Outline Planning Permission sought for the erection of up to 200 homes (including 9 self-build plots), primary school site together with associated access, infrastructure, landscaping and amenity space (all matters reserved except for access) on land at Norton Road, Thurston – The applicant is Pigeon Capital Management.

The consideration of the cumulative infrastructure issues that this group of applications present has been explored in a collaborative, but without prejudice, working group including County and District Council Officers with the five respective applicants and their technical advisers. This has enabled a constructive and timetabled analysis of the proposals and their cumulative impact.

Details of Previous Committee / Resolutions

4. None

Details of Member site visit

5. Members visited Thurston on the 13th June to look at this site and the four other residential development schemes that are currently with the Council for consideration.

Details of any Pre Application Advice

6. The applicant engaged with the Council and received pre-application advice on the principle of the development and its acceptability having regards to the fact that the Council does not have a 5 year supply of housing.

PART THREE – ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

7. Summary of Consultations

Thurston Parish Council (which includes the comments of the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan Team which is listed separately below)

The Neighbourhood Plans Team has stated that it wishes to provide the following comments on this proposal:

- Thurston is to face an unprecedented level of growth due to the submission of 6 planning applications proposing over 800 houses between them.
- The 6 applications need to be considered on a cumulative basis as failure by the District Council to do so would result in the individual schemes having a significant impact on the local community and it wouldn't meet the requirements of the NPPF.
- Consider that the Neighbourhood Plan should be given some weight in the consideration of this proposal as it has been the subject of public consultation despite not allocating sites or proposing planning policies.
- The speed of the submission of the applications in Thurston and the amount of dwellings proposed between the five undetermined applications and the Granary site will result in Thurston losing its 'village feel' and for it to become 'a small dormitory town'.
- The cumulative impact of the scheme needs to be considered in the light of the 101 residences (92 dwellings and one block of flats incorporating 9 units) already granted at the Granary site.
- The current primary school is at capacity and it is landlocked and cannot be extended. Any additional houses would need additional primary school places. Agree with the County Council's stance that a new primary school is required and it should be provided before the dwellings are occupied. However, a new school causes its own infrastructure issues and there is nowhere in Thurston that has current adequate provision to assimilate the pedestrian and vehicle movements particularly at the beginning and at the end of the day in school term.
- Development is proposed on the best and most versatile agricultural land on the northern part of the village.
- The density of all of the schemes is too high and they reflect urban type development rather than what you would expect in a village.
- The local community would prefer to see schemes of no greater than 50 dwellings being built with more open space around them. They would also like to see more bungalow developments which the developers are not providing. There should also be more one and two bedroom flats/apartments and houses in the schemes.
- Thurston is accessed by a network of A roads and country lanes which are not well maintained by the County Council and are not of a design or standard to accommodate increased growth in Thurston and also that planned in the surrounding villages and in Bury St Edmunds.
- Congestion of the local highway network already exists and these schemes will make the situation worse and will cause more accidents to occur at key sites which already experience accidents in the village.
- There are no plans by network rail to improve the station at Thurston and this will cause capacity, parking and safety issues.
- There shouldn't be any more than 50 dwellings proposed per site at any one time.
- The number of dwellings proposed cumulatively will cause social impacts for the local community. These have been split in a pros and cons list as below:

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New purpose built school more attuned to 21st Century needs. • Improved facilities and to allow more clubs and organisations to increase will increase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new school would potentially trigger more new houses in the future which would change the social dynamics of the village. • New cycle and walking routes to the new school would have to be created as they don't exist at

<p>their sustainability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More residents in the locality would help to support a greater variety of leisure facilities in the village. 	<p>present.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newcomers to the village will put pressure on current organisations in the village will not be able to expand to meet this increased demand.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A greater variety of shops and facilities would be supported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More shops and facilities will change the character of the village into a small town and local residents will resent this change and the new developments that have caused this change to happen.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More residents will sustain bus and train services in the locality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More residents will increase pressure on the network which cannot be met unless improvements are made to the railway station car park.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More pressure for a medical surgery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nearest practice doesn't have capacity and all that is being asked through this and the other schemes is a contribution towards health care which will make the service unsustainable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional footpaths and cycle ways will offer a variety of routes for walkers and cyclists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new residents using the paths will not be familiar with the way that local residents look after their valued paths and this could result in bad feeling against them. There may also be more dogs off leads which could cause problems.

Specifically in relation to the Laurence scheme, the Neighbourhood Plans team raise the following points:

- The site on Norton Road has only one vehicular entrance to potentially 64 dwellings with a footpath to Meadow Lane.
- Road safety with emphasis on the junctions of Norton Road and Ixworth Road which is very close to the Community College at the AM and PM peak times.
- Road safety issues with emphasis on those accessing the A14 via the pinch point at the railway bridge on Sandpit Lane – Thedwastre Road and onto Pokeridge Corner.
- Pedestrian safety along Norton Road for accessing village facilities as there are no safe crossing points
- Impact of the vehicular movements from a single point of entry onto Norton Road. It is also on the same side and near to the entrance to Rylands Close with also generates traffic
- Development inappropriate to that of land abutting the countryside
- Impact on village infrastructure particularly education and health provision
- Type and density of housing mix not in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan findings of the Ipswich Housing Market Area, Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the 2014 Suffolk Housing Needs Survey, all of which indicate that there is a high demand for smaller homes across all tenures both for younger people and for older people.
- Cost of affordable homes for local residents – the application fails to take into account the District Wide need on the housing register for 1 and 2 bedrooms with a

smaller element requiring 3+ bedroom properties.

Thurston Parish Council has objected to this proposal on the following grounds:

- This proposal is outside the development boundary for Thurston, albeit adjacent to it but it is considered that the scheme would bring forwards dwellings that would be visually, physically and functionally isolated from the facilities and services offered by Thurston.
- This is overdevelopment of the site and it should be limited to 50 dwellings in line with the requirements of the local residents.
- The two storey dwellings that are proposed along the western and southern part of the site is no a feature of the surrounding area and as such, the scheme will fail to complement the character of the existing area. These properties should be replaced by single storey properties which would minimise the impact.
- There are privacy issues in terms of loss of daylight and overlooking between some of the proposed dwellings where they face existing properties.
- The proposal fails to protect the intrinsic character of the surrounding countryside. This is contrary to policy CS5 of the Core Strategy and policy FC1.1 of the Core Strategy Focused Review and policies H13 and H16 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan.
- The density and mix of the housing as proposed fails to take into account the accommodation needs of the area.
- Supports the comments of the police in that the hedging in and around the site could provide a fear of crime for the local residents.
- The proposal is not considered to provide safe access for all as required in paragraph 32 of the NPPF. There are particular concerns with pedestrian and cycle facilities and the ability to integrate the scheme with local public transport.
- Is particularly concerned at the location of the access point into the site so close to Rylands Close and Sandpit Lane. If a second access point is provided, this will cause further problems in the locality.
- Due to the location of the site and in particular its access point, this will encourage the residents to use their car rather than walk.
- All proposals in Thurston should be considered on a cumulative basis and at the same time as a full review of the local infrastructure is carried out.

MSDC - Environmental Health – Contaminated land – Does not object to the scheme on contamination grounds subject to the imposition of planning conditions.

MSDC - Environmental Health – Public Protection – Does not raise any objections to this scheme on air quality grounds.

MSDC Heritage Officer – The site lies on agricultural land which is within the setting of Manor Farm which is Grade 2* listed and also Grange Farmhouse.

The Historic Buildings Officer advises that due to the location of the site which when developed will read as an extension to the existing residential part of the village would cause no harm to the setting of the listed buildings referred to above. As such, he has no objections to this proposal.

MSDC - Strategic Housing (Summary) – Advises that no objections are raised to the scheme as submitted as 35% affordable housing is proposed in line with the Council's requirements. The strategic Housing Officer advises that the affordable housing requirement for the site is 22 affordable units. These are broken down as follows:

General needs affordable dwellings:

- 2 x 1 bed 2 person flats @ 48m²
- 2 x 2 bed 3 person bungalows @ 63m²
- 9 x 2 bed 4 person houses @ 76m²
- 2 x 3 bed 5 person houses @ 85m²

Total: 15 units

Shared Ownership:

- 2 x 1 bed 2 person flats @ 48m²
- 4 x 2 bed 4 person houses @ 76m²
- 1 x 3 bed 5 person houses @ 86m²

Total: 7 units

MSDC Sustainability Officer – Objects to the scheme as it was considered that insufficient information has been submitted in terms of the sustainability of this scheme.

MSDC Tree Officer – Does not object to this proposal subject to the imposition of a condition requiring details of tree protection measures during the build process for this proposal.

SCC Archaeology – Does not raise any objections to this scheme subject to the imposition of conditions to record any archaeological artefacts that may be found during the building out of the site.

SCC Flood and water management – Initially objected to the scheme. The applicant has subsequently been in negotiation with the Flood and Water Management team over the objections and following the submission of additional information the Flood and Water Management team no longer object to this proposal subject to the imposition of suitable planning conditions.

The SCC Flood Management Team has been asked to comment on the cumulative impact of 827 houses being proposed in Thurston and they have commented that they would expect all of the developers to design suitable sustainable drainage systems (which they all have). All of the 5 sites are in a flood zone 1 so they comply with national policy requirements. However, surface water drainage has historically been an issue in Thurston with soil conditions not being viable for water to drain away easily. Most of the surface water from the village is drained into the foul sewer system with the east part of the village having a surface water drainage system. It is understood that Anglian Water are considering options to improve capacity in the locality to help to prevent the flood events that have happened in the centre of the village in recent years.

SCC Highways – The Local Highway Authority has provided two responses on this proposal. One deals with the cumulative impact of this scheme and the four others that have all been submitted in Thurston on the local highway infrastructure. The second response deals with the highway issues that are specific to this proposal.

Cumulative impact - The Transport Assessments provided for the individual proposed developments show varying degrees of impact on the highway infrastructure. To date none have shown the cumulative impact of all five developments but at some locations the Local

Highway Authority considers this may be severe, particularly where the network is already close to or exceeding capacity. Paragraph 21 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies should recognise and seek to address potential barriers to investment, including any lack of infrastructure and identify priority areas for infrastructure provision. Both SCC and MSDC are aware that paragraph 32 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented on transport grounds where residual impacts of development as severe. The same statement allows decisions to be made taking account of whether improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limits the significant impacts of development.

On this occasion, we consider that by taking a co-operative approach for all five developments there is an opportunity that the planning process can provide improvements to both mitigate against any severe impacts and any lack of transport infrastructure.

Highway Infrastructure (Congestion)

The initial data and modelling provided in Transport Assessments indicates that the road network will experience additional traffic through growth and development and at some locations this will exceed the theoretical junction capacity. Those junctions that are or may exceed capacity are discussed below.

A143 Bury Road / C691 Thurston Road/ C649 Brand Road

Modelling shows that this junction is already close to theoretical capacity in the AM peak with northbound traffic waiting to turn onto the A143 queueing on Barton Road and at capacity in the PM peak with Thurston bound traffic waiting right from the A143 into Barton Road. The additional traffic from the proposed developments in Thurston will exacerbate these problems; in particular, modelling shows the queueing traffic on Barton Road will exceed capacity in the AM peak.

C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road (Fishwick Corner)

Modelling indicates that the southbound approach to the junction is currently close to capacity in the morning peak and that its capacity will be exceeded before all five developments could be delivered. However, in the PM peak the junction has the capacity for the predicted traffic for all developments.

C560 Beyton Road / C592 Thurston Road / U4920 Thedwastre Road

The modelling of this junction shows some inconsistencies with one study indicating it will be close to capacity southbound on Thedwastre Road in the AM peak due to traffic from one specific development but other modelling showing it would have capacity for the traffic generated by the developments.

Highway Infrastructure (Road Safety)

A143 Bury Road / C691 Thurston Road/ C649 Brand Road

There have been three recorded crashes resulting in slight injuries and one involving serious injury at this junction in the last 5 years for which data is available (2012-2016).

C560 Beyton Road / C592 Thurston Road / U4920 Thedwastre Road

There have been two crashes resulting in slight injuries at this junction in the past 5 years.

C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road (Fishwick Corner)

At this junction there have been 9 crashes resulting in slight injuries and one resulting in a serious injury in the past 5 years.

The frequency of injury related crashes at the C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road (Fishwick Corner) junction would, in the opinion of SCC, necessitate some work to improve road safety. Although the frequency of crashes at the A143 Bury Road / C691 Thurston Road/ C649 Brand Road does not justify significant road safety improvements it is a factor that should be considered in any future mitigation measures.

Suggested Mitigation Measures

A143 Bury Road / C691 Thurston Road/ C649 Brand Road

An assumption has been made that the junction can be signalised and that this will reduce congestion and improve road safety. Although there is a generous width of highway verge in the vicinity of the junction the geography of the site may place constraints on the design and further work is required to confirm that a solution is possible or beneficial. The proposed junction improvements would be delivered through a jointly funded S106 contribution.

C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road (Fishwick Corner)

The issue of congestion on the southbound approach is difficult to mitigate as there is insufficient land within the highway boundary to provide a meaningful solution. It is noted that the road network around Thurston is relatively permeable and an option exists for traffic to avoid this by diverting onto Beyton Road and then turning right to approach this junction from the east.

Several minor traffic management features such as improved signing, marker posts and high friction surfacing have been used at this junction in the past as crash reduction measures. Despite this, crashes causing injury continue to occur. To reduce the severity of these crashes it is proposed to restrict the road to 40mph and undertake local safety improvements such as enhanced road signs and markings. This would be delivered through a jointly funded S106 contribution.

A longer term solution would be to remodel the junction or drastically remodel the road network. It is recommended these matters should be addressed in any future revisions to the Local Plan.

C560 Beyton Road / C592 Thurston Road / U4920 Thedwastre Road

The highway boundary constrains any improvements in this location and thus there does not appear to be any viable mitigation to increase capacity on the southbound Thedwastre Road approach. The relatively low number of crashes suggests that the issue of road safety is not as important as it is for the other two junctions and mitigation measures would only comprise low cost work, such as road signs and markings.

Speed Limits

It is noted that a number of proposed access roads are located close to or beyond the existing 30mph speed limit in Thurston. In some cases, assumptions have been made when determining visibility for these junctions that the 85%ile speed limits are or will be close to 30mph. Developers are advised that the visibility requirements shall be designed for the measured 85%ile speed adjacent to the junction and not the posted or proposed future speed limit. A legal process must be followed to change or extend a speed limit and during this process objections can be made which can delay or stop creation of the necessary legal order. For this reason, Suffolk County Council cannot accept visibility splays based on changes to speed limits unless there is confidence that no significant objections to the traffic regulation order are likely.

Based on the available details of the five proposed developments the following changes to speed limits are suggested;

- Extend the 30mph speed limit north on Ixworth Road to Thurston Rugby Club
- Extend the 30mph speed limit on Norton Road towards and beyond Church Road
- Extend of 30mph speed limit on Barton Road west of Mill Lane
- Create a new 40mph speed limit between and including the C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road and the C560 Beyton Road / C592 Thurston Road / U4920 Thedwastre Road for road safety reasons.

The necessary Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) could be raised individually or preferably as a single order. The latter is preferred as it reduces cost and administration. This can be delivered through site specific or joint S106 contributions. As stated above implementation of an order cannot be guaranteed and if a TRO is required to justify reduced visibility splay lengths then the order would need to be substantially complete before such a reduction would be accepted. If a process can be agreed between the parties' initial consultation can be undertaken in advance of determination of the planning applications.

Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure

The benefit of considering all five applications together is that a coherent system of footways and pedestrian crossings can be delivered in Thurston. The proposed footways are intended to provide good, direct pedestrian access both to the main village and schools. The proposed improvements, most of which have already been proposed by individual applications, are listed below:

- An uncontrolled pedestrian crossing on Norton Road between Meadow Lane and Station Hill / Ixworth Road.
- A footway on west side of Ixworth Road between Norton Road and the entrance to Persimmon's site
- A footway link on Ixworth Road between the entrance to the Persimmon development and the entrance to the Thurston Rugby Club.
- A controlled pedestrian crossing facility (e.g. a raised table junction with zebra crossing) if practicable at or adjacent to the Norton Road / Station Hill / Ixworth Road junction. Pooled contributions from all 5 developments are required for the County Council to deliver this.
- A footway on the north side of Norton Road from Meadow Lane east towards Church Lane as far as the site boundary allows. This could be within the development and or on the highway verge.
- An uncontrolled pedestrian on Norton Road crossing linking the Hopkins Homes and Pigeon sites
- Meadow Lane resurfaced to improve cycle / pedestrian facilities (and maintain access to properties)
- Provide a metalled footway on Church Road between Footpath 006 and the footpath link to School Lane. This will include provision of street lighting along this short section of footpath.

- Provide two uncontrolled pedestrian crossings on Sandpit Lane to link the Hopkins Homes development to the main village

With the exception of the pedestrian crossing facility at the junction of Ixworth Road, Station Hill and Norton Road, the above are expected to be secured by conditions or S106 obligations as appropriate and delivered by the relevant development with S278 (improvements to existing highway) or S38 agreements (if adoption as highway maintainable at public expense is desired) as appropriate. All the footways are expected to be metalled and where verge space allows provision for cyclists should also be considered.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

It is proposed that a small number of PRoW are improved to provide alternative pedestrian links between the proposed developments and current and future school sites. These are improvements to:

- Thurston Footpath 001 between Ixworth Road and Meadow Lane. It is proposed that this is to an all-weather standard, preferably a bituminous surface.
- Thurston Footpath 018 between Ixworth Road and Mill Lane. This lies within the development site and the works can be secured by condition.
- Thurston Footpath 006 between Norton Road and Church Road. This lies within the development site and the works can be secured by condition. It is proposed that this is to an all-weather standard; preferably a bituminous surface as far as it is a safe pedestrian route to the site north of Norton Road.
- New PROW link along southern boundary of the Bovis Homes site to join Barton Road
- New PROW link from the site west of Barton Road to Heath Road, linking with Cycle Route 51.
- Improve PROW 007 North of Meadow Lane (un-metalled).

If diversion of a PRoW is likely it is recommended that discussions are held with the relevant SCC officer at an early state.

Public Transport

Improvements to public transport infrastructure will be limited to any site-specific works necessary as a result of each development through S106. All other public transport improvements are included in the CIL.

The specific highway comments relating to this scheme only are as follows:

Site Access

- Visibility splays of 4.5m x 60m are proposed and the access is within of the 30mph speed limit. This would be acceptable.
- No swept path analysis has been provided for the entrance or within site. This will be required to show that the junction design is acceptable.

Highway Drainage

- The applicant's attention is drawn to the issue of potential adoption and future maintenance of the highway drainage system. SCC is reluctant to adopt permeable paving, lagoons and most Suds systems. Early discussion with SCC Development Management officers is recommended.

Footway and cycle connectivity (inc Public Rights of Way)

- The footway link to Meadow Lane should allow use by cycles in addition to pedestrians.

Internal Highway Layout

- The 5.5m width carriageway and 2m wide verges would be acceptable for the principal access road. Details of the shared surfaces has not been supplied.

Car Parking

- In the Design and Access Statement it is proposed that on-site parking and sizes of garages will comply with the current SCC guidance

Landscaping

- On the plans supplied it is noted that trees are shown in indicative positions. These are close to and overhanging the highway. Planting of vegetation that will or may in the future overhang the road should be restricted. Before the Highway Authority would consider a layout for an adopted road the applicant will need to agree details of such planting including how these would facilitate adequate street lighting and the risk of root damage mitigated.

Proposed S278 works

- Pedestrian crossing on Norton Road between Meadow Lane and Station Hill / Ixworth Road (uncontrolled)
- Improvements to surface of Meadow Lane to promote cycle / pedestrian facilities (and maintain access to properties)

Proposed S106 Heads of Terms

- Contribution towards improvements at the A143 Bury Road / C691 Thurston Road/ C649 Brand Road, junction at Great Barton. A contribution of £22,249 is required on commencement of construction work on site.
- Contribution towards safety improvements at the C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road. A contribution of £4040 is required on commencement of the first dwelling.
- Contribution towards provision of pedestrian crossing facilities at the junction of Norton Road / Station Hill / Ixworth Road. A contribution of £6988 is required on commencement of the first dwelling.
- Contribution towards bus stops on Norton Road. A contribution of £4000 is required on commencement of the first dwelling.

The Local Highway Authority advises that the matters raised above and the reminder of the issues that are relevant to this proposal can be covered by planning conditions and within the S106 agreement for the scheme. The County has indicated that the cost of this will be £37,277 for the works required under S106 of the act and £23,879 for works under section 278 of the Highways Act.

SCC - Obligations Manager: Comments that 64 new houses proposed in the scheme will have an impact on local infrastructure particularly in terms of education.

Primary Provision

The residents of the scheme will generate the need for 15 new primary school places and it has been advised that there is no capacity in the local Primary School which is the Thurston Church of England Primary Academy to accommodate this development and as such a contribution is requested towards a new primary school. As new schools cannot be provided through the Council's CIL scheme (the 123 list only allows for extensions to schools and not new schools) a request is made for a contribution towards a new school under S106 of the planning act.

A contribution for £246,435 as broken down below is required to meet education needs which will arise from this development:

School level	Minimum pupil yield:	Required:	Cost per place £ (2016/17):
Primary school age range, 5-11*:	15	15	16,429

Land for new school

A contribution for a further £19,410 is also requested to contribute towards the cost of the land to provide the school. This is worked out on a maximum cost of £100,000 per acre (£247,100 per hectare, which will be £543,620 for a 2.2 hectare site and equates to £1,294 per pupil place. For the proposed development, this equates to a proportionate land contribution of 29 places x £1,294 per place = **£19,410**

Temporary classroom

The Obligations Manager has also advised that there will be a need for temporary classroom arrangements to accommodate the needs of the children that arise from this development. The existing primary school is on a very constrained site and an extension to the facility is not possible under Department for Education guidelines. However, it is advised that where extra pupils either through a spike in local population or from housing development cause a 'bulge' in the admission numbers, this can be accommodated by providing temporary classrooms.

A double temporary mobile classroom providing 60 places could be located within the hard surfaced play and car park areas within the school for a period of no longer than 3 years to meet the admissions 'bulge' which would be caused by this and other large housing developments in Thurston. As the primary school is an academy whereby the County Council has limited control over its operation, agreement to the provision of the temporary building has had to be sought from the Academy board that runs the school and it is understood from the Obligations Manager, that agreement has now been given by them for this to go ahead.

The temporary classroom will be facilitated via a CIL bid as it is classified as being an extension to an existing school in the Council's 123 list.

Secondary School and 6th form provision

The Obligations Manager has commented that secondary and 6th form provision in the area is currently sufficient to accommodate the additional pupils which will be generated from this proposal as shown in the table below.

Total primary education contributions: £265,845

Restriction on occupation

The Obligations Manager has also commented that as there are two residential sites in Thurston proposing a primary school site (application 5070/16 – Land on land at Norton Road, Thurston for Pigeon Capital and 4963/16 – Land west of Ixworth Road – Persimmon Homes) but neither application is approved yet, that the district council should consider imposing a planning condition restricting occupation of any dwellings once the capacity of the existing primary school with additional temporary classroom are full. This condition could then be discharged once the construction of the new primary school on whichever site has been chosen has commenced.

Pre-school

The Obligations Manager has also noted that there are currently 4 pre-school establishments in the locality (2 childminders, Thurston pre-school and Tinkerbells Day Nursery) and that spare capacity between them is only 10 spaces. Based on the scale of development currently being assessed in Thurston, the proposed legislative changes and the intention to establish a new primary school (with nursery provision), the most practical approach is to establish a new early education setting on the site of the new primary school which would be a 30 place setting, providing sufficient capacity for 60 children in total. Our latest estimates are that a 30 place early education setting costs £500,000 to construct on a site of approximately 630m² (note: this includes outdoor play and parking).

The Mid Suffolk Regulation 123 List indicates that new early years settings are not identified for funding through CIL. A proportionate contribution for this scheme would be based on 14 children of the total 60 who would be accommodated within the new setting, could be calculated as follows (revised costs from a similar scheme in Suffolk):

- £500,000 construction cost (including land as collocated with the new primary school) for a new 60 place setting
- £500,000/60 early years pupils = £8,333 per place From 137 dwellings there is the need for 14 additional places
- Therefore 6 pupils x £8,333 per place = **£49,998 (2016/17 costs)**

Total contribution for all education provision - £315,843

Other infrastructure contributions

Requests a contribution of £13,824 towards library provision. This is requested under the Council's CIL 123 list.

Landscape Officer – Essex Place Services: Does not raise any objections to this proposal and requests that the specific detailing of the landscaping can be controlled by a planning condition.

SCC Public Rights of Way – Does not raise any objections to this proposal as they comment that it does not directly affect public footpath no.1 which runs nearby.

Ecology Officer, Essex Place Services – Advises that the mitigation measures outlined in the applicant's ecology report should be implemented in full. The ecologist has not objected to this proposal subject to the imposition of conditions to achieve the above and to control lighting on site.

Environment Agency – Does not object to this scheme on flood risk or on foul water grounds.

They have also considered the cumulative impact of all 5 schemes together and they advise that none of the sites are in an area at risk of fluvial flooding. They also confirm that from their records there will be sufficient capacity in the Thurston Water Recycling Centre to accommodate all 827 dwellings. They have advised that Thurston lies in an area of 'water supply stress' by Anglian Water which has a duty under their own legislation to provide a water supply to new houses when they are built.

Highways England: Does not raise any objection in relation to this proposal.

Natural England – They do not have any comments to make on this proposal.

Network Rail – They have been consulted on the cumulative impact of building 827 new dwellings in Thurston on the railway station and the local railway network as requested by the local community. They state that the main issue is the Barrow Level Crossing at Thurston station which has historically seen a number of safety issues associated with it and the level of usage which would arise from the erection of the number of dwellings proposed would have a severe impact on safety unless mitigation measures are introduced. They indicate that their preferred option is to close the level crossing and replace it with a new pedestrian ramp from platform 1 (upside) down the embankment leading onto Beyton Road. This design will also need to include a drop off point/layby for vehicles along Beyton Road. They have advised that the cost of the works amount to £1million and should be shared proportionally amongst the developers. They are seeking this through a S106 agreement.

When questioned, Network Rail has made it clear that the works that they propose to the crossing point at Thurston Station are directly related to the impact of the 5 planning applications and the 827 houses that would be built. They have advised that the other works that they propose to close crossing points elsewhere on the same line are minor in nature and cannot be compared to this site as the other crossing points are not facing unprecedented levels of pedestrian use which would be generated from the proposed housing in Thurston.

NHS/Primary Care Trust – The proposal will have an impact on the Woolpit Health Centre and there will be a need to either extend or reconfigure the building to meet the additional capacity requirements that will be generated if this proposal is approved. The PCT have not specified an amount that they require, but they have confirmed that they will be making a bid under the Council's CIL scheme for the funding that they require to carry out the works they deem necessary to ensure that the facilities can meet the need that arises from this development.

Suffolk Constabulary – Initially raised a few concerns in terms of potential site security and advised how these could be resolved.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust – Raise the following points:

- The site is bordered by hedgerow which is a Suffolk Priority species. The plans are unclear in that they show the hedgerow being incorporated into domestic gardens

which will cause issues. As the hedgerow is species rich it should be retained outside of the gardens of the dwellings.

- The hedgerow on Norton Road is to be removed. It is unclear in the application if this is going to be replaced elsewhere in the site as an ecological compensation measure.
- The scheme should be lit sympathetically to ensure that it does not have a negative impact on ecology.
- There are hedgehogs in the locality which are a UK and Suffolk Priority species. We recommend that gaps are maintained in the hedgerows and boundaries within the site so that the hedgehogs can permeate through it.
- The applicant's ecology report was done late in the season for Skylarks and it could be the case that the site currently offers potential nesting for Skylarks and a compensation scheme would be required for this loss if planning permission is given.
- The scheme should provide environmental/ecological enhancements in the locality.

Representations

11 letters have been received objecting to this proposal on the following grounds:

Highway safety

- A single access point into the site is unacceptable as this will impact greatly on the known pinch points on the highway network in the village.
- Norton Road is dangerous along the stretch of highway where the access to the site will be located.
- The local roads are inadequate and dangerous to cope with so many new dwellings and they are always in a poor state of repair which will be made worse by this proposal.
- There are a number of dangerous junctions and pinch points in the area which will become more dangerous with the number of vehicles which will be generated by this development.
- There are congestion and safety concerns with the junction in the village particularly at Thedwastre Corner and Fishwick Corner.
- The Community College is already a traffic hazard. The increased number of residents will make this situation worse.
- Parking at the railway station is an issue and this will make the situation worse.
- The railway station has poor parking. Additional residents from this site using the railway station will increase the parking issues experienced.

Infrastructure

- This proposal will have a negative impact on water pressure in the locality.
- This development will create excessive additional pressure on the local GP surgeries.
- The local primary school can accommodate the children from this development as it is at capacity. Children may have to be bussed elsewhere which is not acceptable.
- A new primary school should be built before the dwellings are built and occupied.

Impact on the character and amenity of the area

- The proposal will result in urban sprawl into the surrounding open countryside and does not respect the rural building patterns and styles in this part of Thurston.
- The proposal does not respect the style or the density of any of the neighbouring properties. It is an urban style scheme in a village environment and totally out of

keeping.

- The applicant's landscaping scheme lacks detail and has not been designed with the existing surrounding dwellings in mind.
- The surrounding area is currently dark and this proposal will significantly alter that to an unacceptable level.
- There are too many 4 and 5 bedroom properties in this scheme.

Impact on residential amenity

- The proposal would severely affect the amenity and the privacy of the objector by changing the character of this part of the village from agricultural to residential.
- The proposed flats on site would provide views into the objector's garden which is unacceptable.
- Consider if the layout was changed, that the scheme could be made acceptable so it does not affect the objector's living conditions.
- It is surprising that two storey properties are being erected next to bungalows. This is unacceptable as it will impact on the amenities of the bungalow owner.

Impact on wildlife/trees in the locality

- The proposal will impact on the root zones of trees in the objector's garden.
- The extent of the Ecological report for the site is not clear from the documents submitted. It needs to be clarified.

Flood risk

- Drainage is an issue in the locality. The development can only make matters worse particularly for the properties that are not on mains drainage.

Policy issues

- The proposal does not reflect the housing needs in the locality as identified in the emerging neighbourhood plan.
- All existing houses in the area should be occupied before new ones are built. When this happens development should be on brownfield land only.
- All development in Thurston should be put on hold until the neighbourhood plan and the new style local plan is in place. A limited number of developers should then be invited to apply for planning permission for residential development in Thurston.
- The site is in the Greenbelt and national policy is for that to be developed only in exceptional circumstances.
- The development is outside the settlement limits for Thurston and as such it cannot be considered to be sustainable.

Ecology

- The proposal will result in the loss of valuable ecology through the development of the field. There are bats, amphibians, Owls and Swallows, hedgehogs and mice on this site amongst many other species.

Other issues

- This field is agricultural land and it will be lost forever if this scheme is approved and built.

- This proposal will make Thurston a town and not the current village that it is.
- This proposal will add to the current safety concerns at the railway station where pedestrians have to cross over the railway line to access trains.
- The applicant has not considered archaeology or anything in relation to buildings of historic interest in his application. It is likely that there may be items of importance within the ground and the proposal would end up destroying them.
- The view across Meadow Lane which is currently enjoyed by residents will be lost.
- There would be increase pollution in the village from all of the vehicles belonging to the occupiers of the new properties.
- Why has the council allowed this developer to submit this application? Doesn't the council have any control to stop things like this from being submitted?
- The land the other side of the railway line should be developed first before this parcel.

Cumulative Impacts

- The 5 sites in Thurston should be considered cumulatively and not singularly due to their linked impacts and the effect they will have on the infrastructure of the area.
- The quantity of houses in this application is more reasonable than in the other schemes proposed. However cumulatively with the others and if approved, this scheme is considered to be unacceptable as the total housing numbers between all schemes is too high.

A single letter has been received in support of this scheme raising the following point:

- 64 dwellings are more in keeping with Thurston than the other schemes proposed.

The Site and Surroundings

8. The application site lies in the village of Thurston which has a population of approximately 3200 people (2011 census) and is on the land of a former nursery business. The land contains in part a number of disused glasshouses and poly tunnels with the remainder of the land being used as open grassland for the grazing of sheep. The land is classified as grade 3b agricultural land for the part used to graze sheep and grade 5 for the part that contains the glasshouses and the polytunnels and is just over 3 hectares in area.
9. The site lies to the west of Meadow Lane, to the north of Norton Road and stretches towards Ryland Close to the west. The site extends as far north as Meadow Lodge Cottage and to the south of Cedars Close.
10. The field subject of this application is predominantly flat and is subdivided into two parts by a hedge due to its existing agricultural and former plant nursery use. The Norton Road frontage of the site is bordered by a mixture of trees and hedging with only limited views possible into the site. Meadow Lane is to the east and is a single car width dead end road, and is bordered from the site by a hedge with sporadic trees within it. There are gaps in this hedge and views are possible into the site from Meadow Lane.
11. The dormer bungalow known as Meadow Lodge Cottage has its frontage facing into the site and is only divided from the field by a post and rail fence. Ryland Close is a housing estate to the south west corner of the site and it is separated from the field by hedging. Two further properties border the site and are accessed off Ixworth Road

and these properties have substantial rear gardens that butt up to a hedge and trees which divide them from the site. Further to the north lies the most southern property on Cedar's Close which again is divided from the site by the belt of trees and hedging that runs from the western boundary of the site along the northern boundary.

12. The properties in the surrounding area include large modern detached houses to the south of Norton Road, on the road known as Cloverfields with properties of similar proportion within Rylands Close, although these are semi-detached houses as opposed to detached. The two properties on Ixworth Road are different to each other with one being a bungalow and the other a detached house. The properties on Cedar's Close to the North are all large detached houses.

The Proposal

13. Please note details of the proposed development including plans and application documents can be found online.
14. The applicant is proposed a full planning application for the erection of 64 dwellings on the application site. Vehicular access to the site will be solely from Norton Road almost at the central point of the frontage of the site. It is laid out with an estate road running though from the access point running in a squared off loop. There are private driveways at various points in the layout providing access to the various dwellings and there is a footpath link from Meadow Lane into the site to provide an alternative pedestrian access point. A large communal open space/Suds drainage area is shown as a focal point within the site and lies towards the north of the estate with a number of properties enjoying a view onto it.
15. The proposed layout for the site shows that the majority of the dwellings are two storeys. There is a bungalow proposed on site and there are also flats, but the flats are within properties that have the appearances of a detached house rather than being in a larger taller block. The applicant comments in his design and access statement that the properties are of a design and style that reflects the surrounding locality as does the suggested palette of materials. They also comment that the roofing style and the roofing materials of the proposed dwellings also match the local vernacular. The scheme as submitted has a density of 21 dwellings per hectare.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

16. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains the Government's planning policies for England and sets out how these are expected to be applied. Planning law continues to require that applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The policies contained within the NPPF are a material consideration and should be taken into account for decision-making purposes.
17. The following parts of the NPPF are considered to be applicable to this scheme:
 - Para 6: Achieving sustainable development
 - Para 7: Three dimensions to sustainable development
 - Para 11 – 15: The presumption in favour of sustainable development
 - Para 17: Core planning principles
 - Paras 32 and 34: Transport movements
 - Para 47: Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes (including the need to have a 5 year deliverable supply of housing)

Para 49: All housing proposals should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 55: To promote sustainable development in rural areas.

Paras 56 & 60: Requiring good design

Para 64: Development of poor design must not be supported.

Para 69: Promoting healthy communities

Para 70: Delivery of social, recreational and cultural facilities that the community needs.

Para 72: Provision of school places.

Para 73: Access to high quality open space.

Para 75: Protection and enhancement of public rights of way.

Para 100: Development and flood risk

Para 103: Development and increasing flood risk elsewhere

Para 109: Planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

Paras 112 & 117–119: Development affecting protected wildlife

Para 123: Planning and noise.

Para 125: Planning and darker skies.

Paras 128 & 129: Describing the significance of a designated heritage asset.

Para 131: Determining planning applications that affect heritage assets.

Para 132: Significance of heritage assets.

Para 134: Development and less than substantial harm

Para 186: Approaching decision taking in a positive way.

Para 187: Local Planning Authorities should find solutions rather than problems in decision taking.

Para 196: Plan led planning system.

Para 197: Assessing and determining application applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paras 203 -206 – Planning conditions and obligations.

Paras 211 - 212: Using development plans and the NPPF in decision making.

Paras 214 – 215: The weight attached to development plan policies having regards to their consistency with the NPPF.

Para 216 – Weight given to policies in emerging plans

CORE STRATEGY

18. Core Strategy Focused Review

FC1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

FC1.1 – Mid Suffolk's approach to delivering sustainable development

FC2 – Provision and distribution of housing.

19. Core Strategy

CS1 – Settlement hierarchy

CS2 – Development in the countryside & countryside villages

CS4 – Adapting to climate change.

CS5 – Mid Suffolk's environment

CS6 – Services and infrastructure

CS9 – Density and mix

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN / SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS /AREA ACTION PLAN

20. In 2013 Thurston received a neighbourhood plan designation and the settlement is

currently working on its new neighbourhood plan. The plan is however at an early stage and as yet does not have any policies which could be used in the assessment and consideration of this proposal

SAVED POLICIES IN THE LOCAL PLAN

21. GP1 – Design and layout of new developments
HB1 – Protection of historic buildings
HB13 – Protecting ancient monuments
HB14 – Ensuring that Archaeological remains are not destroyed
H3 – Housing developments in villages
H13 – Design and layout of development
H15 – Development to reflect local characteristics.
H16 – Protecting existing residential amenity
H17 – Keeping new development away from pollution
CL8 – Protecting wildlife
CL11 – Retaining high quality agricultural land
T9 – Parking standards
T10 – Highway consideration in developments
RT4 – Amenity open space and play areas within residential development
RT12 – Footpaths and bridleways
SB3 – Retaining visually import landscapes (with the land to the south of this site between it and the college being designated)

Main Considerations

22. From an assessment of relevant planning policy and guidance, representations received, the planning designations and other material issues the main planning considerations considered relevant to this case are set out including the reason/s for the decision, any alternative options considered and rejected. Where a decision is taken under a specific express authorisation, the names of any Member of the Council or local government body who has declared a conflict of interest are recorded.
23. The following are identified as the main considerations in assessing this application:

The Principle Of Development

24. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Councils to identify and update, on an annual basis, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide for five years worth of housing provision against identified requirements (paragraph 47). For sites to be considered deliverable they have to be available, suitable, achievable and viable.
25. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (as stated in paragraph 49 of the NPPF). Where policies cannot be considered up-to-date, the NPPF (paragraph 14) cites the presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that planning permission should be granted unless i) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole; or ii) specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted. The presumption in paragraph 14 also applies where a proposal is in accordance with the development plan, where it should be granted without delay (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).

26. The precise meaning of 'relevant policies for the supply of housing' has been the subject of much case law, with inconsistent results. However last month, the Supreme Court gave judgment in a case involving Suffolk Coastal District Council which has clarified the position. The Supreme Court overruled earlier decisions of the High Court and the Court of appeal in this and other cases, ruling that a "narrow" interpretation of this expression is correct; i.e. it means policies identifying the numbers and location of housing, rather than the "wider" definition which adds policies which have the indirect effect of inhibiting the supply of housing, for example, countryside protection policies. However, the Supreme Court made it clear that the argument over the meaning of this expression is not the real issue. The absence of a five year housing land supply triggers the application of paragraph 14 of the NPPF. In applying the 'tilted balance' required by this paragraph, the Council must decide what weight to attach to all of the relevant development plan policies, whether they are policies for the supply of housing or restrictive 'counterpart' policies such as countryside protection policies.
27. In accordance with National Planning Policy Guidance paragraph 030 (Reference ID: 3-030-20140306) the starting point for calculating the 5 year land supply should be the housing requirement figures in up-to-date adopted Local Plans. It goes on to state that *'...considerable weight should be given to the housing requirement figures in adopted Local Plans, which have successfully passed through the examination process, unless significant new evidence comes to light....Where evidence in Local Plans has become outdated and policies in emerging plans are not yet capable of carrying sufficient weight, information provided in the latest full assessment of housing needs should be considered. But the weight given to these assessments should take account of the fact they have not been tested or moderated against relevant constraints...'*
28. The Council published the Ipswich and Waveney Housing Market Areas Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in May 2017 which is significant new evidence for the emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan. Therefore, the 5 year land supply has been calculated for both the adopted Core Strategy based figures and the new SHMA based figures. For determining relevant planning applications, it will be for the decision taker to consider appropriate weight to be given to these assessments and the relevant policies of the development plan.
29. A summary of the MSDC 5 year land supply position is:
- Core Strategy based supply for 2017 to 2022 = 3.9 years
 - SHMA based supply for 2017 to 2022 = 3.9 years
30. The NPPF requires that development be sustainable, and paragraph 6 of the NPPF sets out guidance on what this means in practice by drawing attention to all of the policies from paragraph 18 to 219 of the NPPF. In some circumstances there is also a presumption in favour of sustainable development which is to be applied as set out in paragraph 14 of the NPPF. This has been discussed above.
31. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF sets out three dimensions for sustainable development, economic, social and environmental:
- "an economic role - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure:*

a social role - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental role - contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy."

32. In light of all of the above, this report will consider the proposal against the policies of the development plan to determine if the development is in accordance with the development plan as a whole. If it is not, and there are policy conflicts, they will need to be weighed against other material considerations to see whether a decision which does not accord with the development plan is warranted, in the light of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and in the context of the authority not being able to demonstrate a 5 year land supply.

Sustainability of the Proposal (including assessment against the development plan and the NPPF)

33. The Parish Council and some of the objectors have commented that this scheme should be refused as this proposal is outside the development limits for Thurston and is contrary to the policies as contained in the adopted Core Strategy and Local Plan. They also comment that housing numbers should be limited in Thurston to no more than 50 per site. However, it is clear on reviewing the guidance in the NPPF as outlined above that this cannot be done as the Council does not have a 5 year supply of housing as required by the NPPF. Other comments have been received stating that the Council should not consider this application and the others in the Thurston area until the Council determine in a new style local plan its stance on the location of new housing in the district. Comments have also been made that the Council should not determine this application until the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan has received its referendum vote. However, national policy as contained in the NPPF does not give the Council either of these options and requires all applications to be determined promptly. Furthermore, as the Council has a deficit of housing completions with the result that it is significantly short of reaching its 5 year supply target, a limit on new housing in any part of the district cannot be given until the deficit in completions is made up to the 5 year level. This is why the housing figures in policy FC2 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy is considered to be out of date and cannot be used to limit housing as suggested we do by an objector.
34. In reaching a decision, paragraph 47 of the NPPF is a material consideration and requires Local Planning Authorities to boost significantly the supply of housing, by identifying and updating annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. As stated above, the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing and as such paragraph 49 of the NPPF applies and states that in this situation, the relevant policies for the supply of housing in the Council's adopted plan should not be considered to be up to date and that the scheme remains to be considered under the requirements of paragraphs 7 and 14 of the NPPF which defines what sustainable development is and how decisions should be made.

35. The contents of paragraph 55 of the NPPF are also considered to be material in the making of a decision on this case. Objections have been received stating that this proposal should not be allowed as it is outside the settlement limit for Thurston and that the site should be considered as countryside. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF makes it clear that Councils can no longer consider sites that are adjacent or near to a settlement limit to be unacceptable simply because they are the wrong side of a line. It now makes it clear that 'new isolated homes in the countryside will not be supported and that Councils are encouraged to promote sustainable development in rural areas by considering housing development in locations where they could enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. It gives an example in paragraph 55 that new housing could provide increased facilities in one settlement which would be of benefit to it and the other surrounding settlements.
36. Having regards to the above, it is considered that the application site is not in an isolated location as it is adjacent to the built up part of the village with dwellings to its west, south and north east elevations, and the scheme will bring with it contributions which will be of benefit to the residents of Thurston and the surrounding villages. Therefore, in terms of paragraph 55 of the NPPF, this proposal could be considered to promote sustainable development in a rural area. However, having regards to the fact that the Council does not have a 5 year supply of housing and has to balance the negatives of the scheme against the positives that it brings in line with the requirements of the NPPF, consideration of whether the scheme will be supported as sustainable development will be given in the conclusion to this report.
37. Since the submission of this application, four other developers have also submitted application for residential development in Thurston. Hopkins Homes have applied for 175 dwellings (2797/16 and an identical proposal under reference number 5010/16 which they have appealed for non-determination); Bovis Homes has applied for 138 dwellings on land to the west side of Barton Road under reference number 4386/16; Persimmon has applied for up to 250 dwellings and land for a new school on land off Ixworth Road (4963/16) and Pigeon Capital for up to 200 homes and also a new primary school (5070/16). Including this application, 827 new homes are currently proposed in Thurston. There are also a further 92 dwellings which have planning permission at the Granary where works are commencing on site at present.
38. Following receipt of these applications an approach of joint working to explore cumulative infrastructure issues has been agreed between the respective applicants and the District and County Council. This has enabled the constructive exploration of significant infrastructure issues on a collaborative but without prejudice basis to a consensual timetable. Therefore, as there are unprecedented numbers of new dwellings proposed it is considered that all schemes must be considered both on their own merits and in combination with each other to assess if they meet the tests for sustainable development as outlined in the NPPF. The assessment of whether this proposal is considered to constitute sustainable development is given in the conclusion.
39. Policy FC1 of the Mid Suffolk District Core Strategy Focused Review states that it takes a positive approach to sustainable development and like in the NPPF, the Council will work proactively with developers to resolve issues that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Related policy FC1.1 makes it clear that for development to be considered sustainable it must be demonstrated against the principles of sustainable development. The policy goes on to say that proposals for development must conserve and enhance the local character of the different parts of the district and how it addresses the key issues of the district.

40. The settlement of Thurston is one of the two largest villages in the district of Mid Suffolk (with the other being nearby Elmswell) where a wide range of local services and local infrastructure is provided. Thurston has both a primary and a secondary school, and a number of other local facilities which act as a service to the inhabitants of the village as well as providing employment opportunities to the wider area. Whilst Thurston does not have a doctor's surgery, there is one in Woolpit and another in Moreton Hall which is a reasonably short journey away either by car or via public transport.
41. Thurston is also unusual in that it has a railway station which provides access for the residents to be able to commute to Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and further afield without having to use their cars. Thurston is also on a bus route with a number of designated stops within the village.
42. In relation to paragraph 7 of the NPPF, the proposals would contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy through the creation of construction and related jobs and the on-going contribution to the local economy from the creation of 64 additional households in the area. The proposals would also contribute towards providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations and by having the potential to create a high quality built environment, as well as contributions towards affordable housing, the highway network and other social infrastructure (public open space, education, health care) through a CIL contribution, or where appropriate, a section 106 agreement.
43. It must also be remembered that paragraph 49 of the NPPF makes it clear that housing applications should be considered in the context of sustainable development. The applicant is proposing up to 138 dwellings in this instance and they have confirmed that it is their intention if they get planning permission to commence with work on site as soon as possible. To speed this up, they have agreed to have a shorter period than is usual to commence with works on site (2 rather than 3 years) which helps to justify that as a developer, they are serious about delivering the houses. They have also signed an agreement with Mid Suffolk and Suffolk County Council to work as a group with the other 4 other developers in Thurston to contribute to and work together to achieve the necessary infrastructure within the area to make this and the other 4 schemes sustainable.
44. The Council's Sustainability Officer has objected to the scheme on the grounds that insufficient detail in terms of the build specification and the energy efficiency of the dwellings has been submitted to the Council. The applicant has subsequently submitted this information and it is considered to be sufficient to address the issues raised by the Sustainability Officer.
45. Consideration of whether this proposal is considered to constitute sustainable development, having regard to the contents of policies FC1 and FC1.2 of the Adopted Core Strategy Focused Review and the contents of the NPPF will be reached in the conclusion to this report.

Site Access, Parking And Highway Safety Considerations

46. Policy T10 of the Mid Suffolk District Local Plan provides criteria on highway considerations when assessing planning applications. This policy requires access points into and out of the site to be safe and an assessment made as to whether the existing local roads can suitably accommodate the impact of the proposal, whether adequate parking and turning spaces exist within the site and that the needs of

pedestrians and cyclists have been met. This policy is considered to carry significant weight in the determination of this application as it is in compliance with paragraph 32 of the NPPF which requires all schemes to provide safe access for all.

47. A number of objections have been received to the scheme on the grounds that a single access point from Norton Road into the site is unacceptable as it is in close proximity to a number of pinch points in the local highway network which will cause safety issues as well as increasing congestion at peak times. Mention has specifically been made that some local junctions are unsafe at present (see Local Highway Authority consultation response for details), particularly those adjacent to the railway bridge to the south of the village and that this scheme will exacerbate this problem as more vehicles will be using these junctions to access local roads, particularly the A14 to reach other destinations such as Bury St Edmunds and further afield. Comments have also been received that this scheme cumulatively with the other 4 schemes that have been submitted in Thurston for residential development will cause a significant and severe impact on the road network in the locality both in terms of congestion and safety.
48. The site is located to the north east of the village with the sole access to it being from Norton Road which lies to the south of the site. Proposed is a single access point which is proposed towards the centre of the boundary of the site with Norton Road with a network of internal estate roads leading off from that.
49. The Local Highway Authority has not objected to the scheme as he is satisfied that the access point into the site can be made safe. Furthermore, he has not raised any issues with the internal layout of the site as proposed and specific matters in relation to the above can be controlled by planning conditions. He has also accepted the applicant's trip data and is satisfied that the site can be linked to the neighbouring Pigeon site and to the village itself by a network of pavements to allow pedestrian access. The scheme is considered to meet the requirements of paragraph 32 of the NPPF in that safe access can be provided for all and the requirements of policy T10 of the Mid Suffolk District Local Plan.
50. In terms of the comments that have been received that a single access point is unacceptable and that a second access point should be provided that the Manual for Streets which the Local Highway Authority works to, allows 250 dwellings to be accessed from a single access point, and to consider refusing this scheme which has significantly less dwellings on it than that on that grounds would be difficult to defend at appeal.
51. The Local Highway Authority has considered the cumulative impact of this proposal and the other 4 schemes currently before the Council both in terms of safety and congestion on the highway network in Thurston and they have come to the conclusion that the impact of the 5 scheme if they all come forwards will be severe. However, the Local Highway Authority made it clear that the NPPF requires all public bodies to try and resolve problems and they are confident that if all 5 developers work together and are brought forwards together, suitable and cost effective alterations can be made to the highway network to ensure that the impact does not become severe. The Local Highway Authority has assessed the road network and has suggested alterations and improvements to key areas of it (see the Local Highway Authority consultation response earlier in this report for more information) which all 5 developers have been asked to contribute towards through either a section 106 agreement or through the Highways Act. All 5 developers which include Laurence Homes have agreed to contribute towards the works as requested by the Highway Authority. For the Laurence proposal, the Local Highway Authority is

requesting £37,277 via a S106 agreement, and a further £23,879 under section 278 of the Highway Act.

52. As such, the Local Highway Authority does not consider that this proposal fails the requirements of paragraph 32 of the NPPF when considered cumulatively with the other 4 residential schemes as the impact with the alterations carried out to the highway network will no longer be severe in terms of safety. For the avoidance of doubt, the Local Highway Authority has not raised any objections to this scheme on congestion grounds and does not consider that additional traffic and queuing as a consequence of this scheme can be considered to be severe to sustain a defensible refusal of planning permission.
53. The Local Highway Authority identify that the scheme will offer sustainable travel options to local residents as additional pavements and bus shelters are proposed and these will link up to both existing facilities and those proposed on neighbouring sites by the other developers seeking at the moment to build houses in Thurston. This will help to improve accessibility on foot and via public transport and will ensure that the site is accessible to the local railway station. The Local Highway Authority is also recommending that the applicant provides a travel plan to ensure that there are sustainable transport options available to the new residents of the scheme rather than just having to rely on their private cars to access local facilities. Due to the size of this scheme, the Local Highway Authority considers that this can be done via a planning condition as opposed to the S106 route which is to be used by the larger proposals.
54. Having regards to the above, it is considered that this proposal is acceptable in terms of highway safety and complies with the requirements of paragraph 32 of the NPPF and paragraph T10 of the local plan as safe access can be provided for all.

Design And Layout [Impact On Street Scene]

55. Section 7 of the NPPF refers to design. Specifically, paragraph 56 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development; it should contribute positively to making places better for people. Decisions should aim to ensure that development will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, establish a strong sense of place, create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit, optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses and support local facilities and transport networks. Furthermore it provides that development should respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. The NPPF goes on to state it is "proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness" (para 60) and permission should be "refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions" (para 64). In addition policy CS5 provides that *"All development will maintain and enhance the environment, including the historic environment, and retain the local distinctiveness of the area"* and echoes the provision of the NPPF.
56. Objections have been received stating that the site is currently an open field and that dwellings of the design, scale and density of the proposal, particularly in reference to the fact that the majority of the properties are two storey dwellings potentially being built on site is considered to be inappropriate and urban in form and not in keeping with the rural design and feel of the locality.

57. The applicant has submitted a full application showing 64 dwellings with the majority of these being houses, although there is a limited supply of bungalows on site. The houses range in size with some of them being semi-detached, others being split into flats and other being single dwelling houses and they are mixed throughout the site. This gives a density of 21 dwellings per hectare. The applicant has shown that 35% of these dwellings are affordable and they are of a specification, location and tenure that is acceptable to the Council's Affordable Housing Officer.
58. The dwellings that surround the site are predominantly of 20th century construction and are in the main modern estate type houses. The dwellings as proposed are not mock traditional Suffolk properties but have been designed using the local Suffolk style in terms of the proportions, roof style and detailing and the finish of the properties and are similar in style and proportion to the existing estate style properties that surround parts of the site. Objectors have asked for the numbers of bungalows proposed to be increased as they consider that this would make the development more in keeping with the locality. They say that this increase would also meet the findings of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. However, as stated above, the residential form of this part of Thurston is modern housing and as such what is proposed by the applicant is in keeping with this and there is no need to redesign the layout to incorporate more bungalows. As stated above, the Neighbourhood Plan is at an early stage and has yet to have any policies for consideration and is some way off from its referendum and as such only limited weight can be apportioned to it as advised by the NPPF. As this is the case, and it has been established that the proposal is in keeping with the house styles in the locality that it would not be a defensible decision to make the applicant alter the scheme to provide more bungalows.
59. In terms of the layout of the site, a single road is proposed through the site with the estate road forming a loop back to the access. These are a mixture of adopted highway and private driveways and in terms of the layout, this is not considered to be dissimilar to what is seen in the modern development in the modern estates that neighbour the site. The site has substantial landscaping and hedging around it and the applicant is using this and supplanting it to ensure that the scheme minimises its impact on the surrounding area and helps it to integrate with the surrounding open countryside to the north. The density of the scheme of the scheme is also considered to be appropriate to its location and it cannot be considered to be a dense form of development as referred to by some of the objectors. The Police initially raised concerns in relation to the amount of hedging and trees proposed within the site as this could provide opportunities for crime. However, it is considered that the specific specification of the applicant's landscaping scheme can be provided via a planning condition if this scheme is approved and this matter can be addressed as part of that scheme.
60. Having regards to the above, it is considered that the scheme in terms of the style, density and layout of the properties as proposed constitutes good design in line with the requirements of the NPPF and local policy CS5 as it proposes a form of development that would reflect the character and appearance of the surrounding settlement.

Parish Plan / Neighbourhood Plan

61. A Neighbourhood Plan designation was confirmed in 2013 and covers the Parish of Thurston. At the time of the consideration of this proposal the parish have set up a neighbourhood Plan Committee to prepare the policies for the new Neighbourhood Plan. Both the Parish Council and their Neighbourhood Plan Committee have

objected to this scheme with the latter raising objections based on some of the early work that they have carried out for the evidence base for the new plan. The objectors to the scheme have gone as far as saying that they think that this scheme should either be refused or held in abeyance until the Neighbourhood Plan comes forward.

62. The Planning Practice Guidance identifies that *“Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out the weight that may be given to relevant policies in emerging plans in decision taking. Factors to consider include the stage of preparation of the plan and the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies. Whilst a referendum ensures that the community has the final say on whether the neighbourhood plan comes into force, decision makers should respect evidence of local support prior to the referendum when seeking to apply weight to an emerging neighbourhood plan. The consultation statement submitted with the draft neighbourhood plan should reveal the quality and effectiveness of the consultation that has informed the plan proposals. And all representations on the proposals should have been submitted to the local planning authority by the close of the local planning authority’s publicity period. It is for the decision maker in each case to determine what is a material consideration and what weight to give to it”*.
63. As such, whilst it is ultimately for Members to determine the weight that should be given to the plan, whilst it is at an early stage in its development, it is the view of Officers that little material weight can be given at this time.

Landscape Impact

64. Paragraph 58 of the NPPF states that proposals should provide appropriate landscaping to ensure that they integrate well into the surrounding locality. This requirement is repeated in one of the requirements of policy H13 of the Mid Suffolk District Local Plan.
65. Objections have also been received on the basis that the proposal will extend the built up footprint of the village into the surrounding open countryside which is unacceptable to the objectors and the parish council and that the applicant’s landscaping scheme is lacking in detail.
66. The field that is the subject of this proposal has residential development to its west and south, two properties on the northern elevation and further properties to the north along Meadow Lane. Whilst the site is a field, it does not enjoy an open aspect on all elevations. Currently, the field to the east is open, but that is the site of the proposed Pigeon Housing development and as such if that site is approved this proposal will have very little countryside aspect. Furthermore, the application site is predominantly enclosed by hedging and trees which further contributes to the feeling that it is enclosed rather than being ‘open countryside’.
67. The Council has sought comments from its Landscape Consultant on the scheme and having regards to the above they have not objected to this proposal. The Landscape Consultant has commented that due to the location of the site and what surrounds it, both built and natural features that the development of this site will not have a negative impact on the surrounding countryside and will not give the feeling that the scheme juts out into the Countryside as referred to by the objectors. The Landscape Consultant has commented that the specific details of the applicant’s landscaping scheme can be successfully controlled by planning conditions.
68. Objectors to this scheme have raised concerns that the development may harm the root zones of some of the trees that lie along the field boundary or within the gardens

of the neighbouring properties. The Council's Tree Officer has been consulted on this scheme and he has not object to it and the trees referred to be the objectors can be protected during construction by suitable fencing which can be controlled by a planning condition.

69. One objector has commented that this land is Greenbelt and land designated as such can only be developed in exceptional circumstances. It must be clarified that there is no Greenbelt land in Mid Suffolk and that the status of the site is as a green field and an assessment of the policy requirements and the physical impact of the scheme on the land is given in this report.
70. Having regards to the requirements of policy H13 of the MSDC Local Plan and paragraph 58 of the NPPF, it is considered that the scheme can use existing and provide suitable new screen landscaping both within and on the boundaries of the site to ensure that it assimilates well into the rural edge of Thurston and provides an attractive environment both for the new residents of the site and those living in the surrounding locality. It is unfortunate that part of an existing hedge from Norton Road has to be removed to facilitate the new access into the site and this dis-benefit will be considered when weighing up at the end of the report as to whether the proposal constitutes sustainable development.

Residential Amenity

71. Policies within the adopted development plan require, inter alia, that development does not materially or detrimentally affect the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties. This requirement is emphasised in the NPPF Core Values in paragraph 17 where it states that all schemes should seek a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.
72. A number of points have been raised by the objectors to this scheme in terms of its impact on their residential amenity (or living conditions). In the main, these relate to the fact that in some parts of the site, two storey dwellings will face an existing bungalow, and some of the new properties will overlook existing gardens and street lighting will alter the night time outlook for existing residents. It has also been commented that the change in the land from agriculture to residential will negatively impact on a resident's outlook.
73. The existing properties to the west of the site are screened by existing hedging which is to be retained as part of this proposal. The dwellings that are proposed adjacent to Ryland Close are designed so that they are side on to the garden boundary so that overlooking and loss of privacy is minimised. The existing dwellings that are further north along the western boundary of the site face west/east but are separated from the proposed dwellings by their long rear gardens and the screen landscaping along the current field boundary which is to be retained. The closest dwelling to the site on Cedars Close (no.1) is at an oblique angle to plot 25 and is to be screened by the existing trees and hedging and also there will be a boundary treatment at this point. All of this will minimise the impact of loss of privacy and overlooking to this occupier. Meadow Lodge Cottage currently has an open southern aspect with views directly into the application site. This will change as part of this proposal with a screen hedge/boundary treatment being erected along the current boundary between the field and the site. The dwelling directly to the south of this site is to be orientated west/east whilst Meadow Lodge Cottage is orientated north/south so that there won't be any habitable windows facing each other. Whilst it is regrettable that the open aspect currently enjoyed by Meadow Lodge Cottage is to be lost; however it must be remembered that this aspect is not within the control of the occupier of Meadow

Lodge Cottage and the owner of the application site could have erected a fence or planted tree/hedging along this boundary at any time in the past without the need for planning permission.

74. In terms of loss of daylight and sunlight, the existing properties along the western boundary including the dwellings on Cedars Close are screened by existing trees and landscaping and it is not considered that the site layout or the dwellings as proposed will impact on this significantly greater. Meadow Lodge Cottage will still be open to its east and will enjoy sunlight throughout most of the day. Sunlight is likely to be disturbed in the evening due to the increase landscaping cover that is proposed to the west, but this is not considered to be to a significant enough level which would warrant the refusal of this scheme.
75. Objectors consider that the street lighting associated with the dwellings will be intrusive and have a negative impact on their living conditions. It is clear that allowing permission for this scheme will alter the locality as the field is currently dark and this will change. However, the street lighting will be within the site and not directly adjacent to the existing properties and designed to the requirements of the Highway Authority. As such this should have a minimal impact on the living conditions of the surrounding occupiers.
76. A condition on any permission that the council may grant on this proposal can be imposed requesting that the applicant enters into a construction management agreement with the Council to safeguard the living conditions of the surrounding occupiers during the construction phase of the scheme.
77. The layout and the detailed design of the properties do not give rise to any significant concerns in terms of loss of neighbour amenity, either in terms of privacy; loss of daylight and sunlight and due to the distance and the orientation of the properties there is no need for the applicant to redesign the scheme to incorporate more bungalows. Having regards to the above, the proposal is considered to meet the relevant NPPF core value in paragraph 17 and the requirements of paragraph 123 in terms of providing a suitable level of amenity for all.

Environmental Impacts - Trees, Ecology And Land Contamination

78. The application site is part grade 3b and part grade 5 agricultural land which is currently in use for agricultural purposes. As the site is in an agricultural use, there is limited tree cover within the site, other than a hedge which splits the location of the polytunnels and the glasshouses from the adjacent open field with the majority of the trees running along the site boundary.
79. Objections have been received to this scheme from local residents and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust on the basis that the development of the site will impact on biodiversity and that consideration needs to be given to the mitigation for this harm. Mention has been made that there is concern that either part, or all of the hedge along the Norton Road frontage is to be removed and this will impact on the biodiversity that it holds. The Wildlife Trust also considers that the site would be suitable for Skylark nesting and that a suitable mitigation scheme is required to compensate for this loss.
80. Regulation 9(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (Implemented 1st April 2010) provides that all "competent authorities" (public bodies) to "have regard to the Habitats Directive in the exercise of its functions." In order for a Local Planning Authority to comply with regulation 9(5) it must "engage" with the

provisions of the Habitats Directive.

81. The content of paragraph 118 of the NPPF is also applicable to the consideration of this proposal, as it states that when determining planning applications, consideration must be given to 6 principles. Two of those principles are particularly relevant to the consideration of this proposal, being;
 - a. If significant harm is caused which cannot be avoided or mitigated by conditions then planning permission should be refused.
 - b. Opportunities to integrate biodiversity in and around developments should be supported.
82. The Council's Consultant Ecologist has been consulted on this application and they have confirmed that the site contains priority habitat. They have advised that they are satisfied with the applicant's Ecological Report and requests that conditions are imposed to limit the level of lighting on site and to ensure that the scheme is carried out in accordance with the recommendation of the ecology report. In coming to this conclusion, the Consultant Ecologist is aware of the Local Highway Authority's requirements to remove part of the hedge on Norton Road to facilitate the access visibility splay (it is not proposed to remove it completely), but they are confident that the loss of habitat can be compensated for within the site. In terms of Skylarks, the Consultant Ecologist notes that due to the former use of the site as a commercial nursery and that the remainder of it has been used for pasture for sheep that it would be an unsuitable location for Skylarks to nest. As such, they do not consider it necessary or appropriate in this situation to request a mitigation scheme as suggested by the Wildlife Trust.
83. Paragraph 112 of the NPPF states that local authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land when making planning decisions. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality land. Agricultural land is split into categories with land defined as 3a up to 1 being best and most versatile land and grades 3b down to 5 not being defined as best and most versatile land. The application site is part 3b and part grade 5 and as such it is not defined as best and most versatile agricultural land and its development meets the requirements of paragraph 112 of the NPPF.
84. The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has been consulted on this scheme and he has reviewed the documentation submitted by the applicant (Phase 1 risk assessment). Paragraph 121 of the NPPF makes it clear that planning decisions should make sure that the site is suitable for its new use taking account the hazards of any previous use. The Contaminated Land Officer has not raised any objections to the scheme subject to the imposition of conditions requesting that the works on site be carried in line with the applicant's contamination report.
85. Mention has been made that if this scheme is approved, the increase number of vehicles that will come from the new development will worsen air quality in the locality. This matter has been discussed with the Council's pollution control officer and he does not consider that air borne pollution will increase to a significant enough level from this scheme alone, or where it is considered with the other 4 sites in Thurston to exceed clean air standards. As such, he does not object to this proposal on air quality grounds.

86. Having regards to the above it is considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of paragraph 112 of the NPPF in terms of agricultural land, its effects on Priority Species can be mitigated and the landscaped areas within the site can be adequately maintained in the future to protect their biodiversity value.

Heritage Issues (The Setting Of Neighbouring Listed Buildings)

87. Both the NPPF and Core Strategy place significant emphasis on safeguarding heritage as an important component of sustainable development.
88. With reference to the treatment of the submitted application, the Council embraces its statutory duties and responsibilities in relation to listed buildings, notably the general duties under sections 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which requires the local planning authority to have *“special regard to the desirability of preserving [a] building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”*.
89. Recent case law on the application of the statutory duty acknowledges that the consideration of the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset is a matter for its own planning judgement, but that the Local Planning Authority is required to give any such harm considerable importance and weight. However, where special regard to the desirability of preserving heritage assets has been paid and no harm is considered to be posed, the ‘balancing’ of harm (which should be given considerable weight as above) against public benefits as required by the NPPF, is not engaged.
90. Policy HB1 (Protection of Historic Buildings) places a high priority on the protection of the character and appearance of historic buildings, particularly the setting of Listed Buildings.
91. In paragraph 17 of the NPPF it makes it clear that development should *“conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations”*. Para 131 goes on to state that *“In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of; the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”* Furthermore Para 132 states *“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.”*
92. An objector has commented that they are concerned that the applicant has not mentioned archaeology or heritage matters in his supporting statement and this scheme is likely to impact on both. However, no objections have been made to this scheme on Heritage grounds by the Council’s Heritage Officer and they have confirmed that due to the location of the site and the surrounding residential land uses that it will not affect the setting of any listed buildings in the locality. The proposal therefore complies with paragraph 132 of the NPPF.

93. As there are 5 different applications for major housing development in the northern part of Thurston, the Council's Heritage Officer has been asked to consider the cumulative impact of this scheme in relation to the others. Of the 5 applications, the application by Hopkins Homes for 175 homes (application 2798/16 and appeal 5010/16) and the one by Pigeon Capital (5070/16) are the only two out of the 5 that are considered to cumulatively have an impact on the settings of the listed buildings in the locality and this is assessed more appropriately in the reports for both of those applications.
94. The County Archaeologist has also been consulted on this scheme and they have not raised any objections to it. They are confident that should any remains be unearthed during the build process for the site that they could be recorded in line with County Council's requirements. This can be facilitated via a planning condition appended to the scheme.

Environment And Flood Risk

95. Paragraph 100 of the NPPF makes it clear that inappropriate development in areas of flood risk should be avoided by directing development away from areas of highest risk. The contents of policy CS4 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy is in line with the requirements of the NPPF in terms of flood risk and carries significant weight in the determination of this application. In terms of flooding from rivers, the site complies with local and national policy as it lies in a flood zone 1 area which is land at least risk of flooding.
96. Objections have been received raising concerns that the development of the site may cause localised floods in the area. Anglian Water and the County Flood and Water team have been consulted on this proposal. Neither Anglian Water, the Environment Agency or the County Flood and Water team have objected to this proposal. They have advised that permission can be granted subject to the imposition of conditions requiring the scheme to be built in line with the submitted drainage strategy and details.
97. Due to unprecedented level of growth currently suggested for Thurston, the Environment Agency, County Flood and Water team and Anglian Water have been specifically asked to consider the cumulative impact of this proposal on drainage, flood risk and water supply grounds. The Environment Agency and the County Suds team have advised that an increase of 827 dwellings with the mitigation measures proposed by the applicants will not increase flood risk in terms of surface water drainage in the locality to an unacceptable level. Confirmation has also been received that there is capacity in the local pumping station to serve 827 new dwellings in terms of sewage needs. Thurston lies in an area where water supply can be an issue, however Anglian Water has a duty by law to supply new houses with a water supply and this is a matter for them to resolve under their legislation.
98. Having regards to the above, it is considered in terms of flood risk, water supply and drainage that the scheme when either considered singularly or cumulatively can be made acceptable subject to the imposition of a suitably worded condition to meet the requirements of paragraph 100 of the NPPF and policy CS4 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy.

Infrastructure - Planning Obligations / CIL contributions

99. Objections have been received to this scheme on the grounds that the local infrastructure, which includes the local schools and health care, is insufficient to meet

the need of the residents of this proposal. Comment has been made that if the scheme is approved without suitable provision, it will cause significant impact on the existing community of Thurston.

100. The Council has now implemented CIL which accordingly takes on board requirements such as open space contribution, NHS and education contributions.
101. As part of this proposal the contributions will be sought under the Council's CIL Scheme for improvements to the following:
102. For the future expansion of the doctor's surgery in Moreton Hall which the residents of this scheme would use.
 - For improvements to the local library provision.
 - Safety improvements to the Thurston Railway station.
103. Objections have been received to this scheme on the grounds that a new doctor's surgery will not be provided and that the proposal will cause capacity issues at the local surgeries. It should be noted that the Primary Care Trust (PCT) has made it clear that due to the existing situation with doctors, their salaries and contracts and the government's policy in terms of the NHS that a new doctor's surgery will not happen in Thurston as part of any of the 5 schemes. The PCT will be requesting contributions through CIL in relation to all 5 schemes and the monies will be used to improve the service offered and/or improve the facilities at either the Woolpit Surgery or at the Park Farm Surgery in Moreton Hall to meet the expected needs of the additional residents of the new dwellings in Thurston. They have specified that they will seek a contribution towards improvements at the Woolpit Surgery in relation to this proposal.
104. It has been identified following discussion with the County Infrastructure Officer that as suggested by the objectors and the Parish Council, there is no capacity in the local primary school to expand and as such a contribution of £246,435 is required towards the building of a new 420 place two form primary school either on the Persimmon or the Pigeon site elsewhere in the village. It has also been suggested that a further £49,998 is required for the provision of new pre-school, which will be accommodated at the new school to help meet the demand generated by this development. As the CIL 123 list does not include the provision of new pre-school or primary school facilities (it only covers extensions to existing establishments) these contributions will have to be sought under S106 of the Planning Act and the applicant has agreed to the above payments.
105. The County Council has also clarified that whilst the new school is being built, the existing primary school in Thurston will be provided with two temporary classrooms funded via CIL to cope on a 2 to 3 year period with the increase in pupils generated from the first phase of new housebuilding in Thurston (from any of the 5 sites currently under consideration) until the new school is built. Once that happens, the existing school will be closed and the existing pupils moved over to the new school and the new school will be extended as appropriate up to a capacity of 420 pupils to accommodate the primary school age children arising from any of the proposed housing sites in Thurston. It is understood that the Diocese who own the primary school have committed to ploughing the capital receipt that they receive for the development of the existing school site into the new school which is also to be funded by a joint contribution by all 5 of the developers proposing major housing schemes currently in Thurston.

106. Following further dialogue with the County Obligations Manager it is understood that progress is being made to secure options on the potential school sites proposed in other applications. The delivery of a new primary school is a necessary pre-requisite to mitigate the potential pressure on education infrastructure from the development and it has been agreed that a restrictive phasing condition is not necessary given the progress that has been made on options. Nevertheless the securing of a primary school site is a material consideration upon which the delivery of this development is predicated.
107. The County Council has confirmed that there is capacity at all of the catchment secondary schools in the locality and as such a financial contribution towards new facilities is not warranted in that instance.
108. As is the case for new education buildings, affordable Housing is not part of CIL and members should note that policy to seek up to a 35% provision remains in effect. The applicant has confirmed that they are agreeable to provide a policy compliant scheme for affordable housing and that this will be achieved via a Section 106 contribution and the Council's Strategic Housing Officer has not objected to this proposal.
109. Network Rail has been consulted on this scheme and has asked for a contribution of £1million through a S106 agreement between all five developers to close the existing level crossing and to provide safer and improved facilities at Thurston Railway Station having regards to the increased use of the facilities that will occur from the residents of the proposed 827 dwellings. The Council's CIL 123 list includes provision for improvements to transport infrastructure. As such it is considered that it would be appropriate for Network Rail to bid for the specified amount to make the improvements they have requested to improve pedestrian safety at the station under the CIL scheme.
110. The Highway Authority has, as stated earlier in the report, asked for £37,277 under section 106 of the Planning act to pay for Laurence Homes' part of the contribution for works to the highway infrastructure to ensure that the impact of approving all 5 housing schemes totalling 872 houses in Thurston is not severe on the highway network as referred to in paragraph 32 of the NPPF.
111. It is noted that within the application site there is an open space and landscaped areas and this will be maintained by a management company and delivered via a S106 agreement. None of it is to be transferred to the Council or the Parish Council as part of this or any of the other 4 schemes.
112. Having regards to the above, in accordance with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations, 2010, the obligations recommended to be secured above by way of a planning obligation deed are (a) necessary to make the Development acceptable in planning terms (b) directly related to the Development and (c) fairly and reasonably relate in scale and kind to the Development.
113. An objector has commented that Thurston is already an area of low water pressure and that additional houses on the water network will make the situation even worse. Anglian Water has a duty under the water regulations to supply new dwellings and they have legal powers to put measures in place to resolve this matter.
114. In response to an objector comments, it would be unreasonable to expect the developer of this or any other application to not build the properties and wait for all of the necessary infrastructure to be in place first. It would also be unreasonable to

refuse planning permission for this and the other schemes where the developers have agreed to fund works to resolve the infrastructure issues identified. To ensure that the correct level of infrastructure appears at the correct time, the Council and its partners will work with the developers so that appropriate triggers are in the S106 legal agreements to ensure this happens.

Other Issues

115. Objections have been made to this scheme on the grounds that there are other more suitable sites elsewhere (sites towards the south of the railway line have been mentioned) and these should come first. It must be remembered that each planning application must be considered under its own planning merits and specifically in terms of housing; there is no national requirement for a sequential test for preferred housing sites within an area.
116. An objection has been received on the basis that the proposal will turn Thurston from a village into a town. Whilst Thurston will get larger as a consequence of additional housing growth, its status will remain as a village and it does not automatically turn into a town. This objection is not considered to be material in the consideration of this proposal.
117. An objector has stated that this proposal should be refused until all existing houses that are in for sale in Thurston are occupied and as such a housing deficit is created. National housing policy is not based on this scenario and to follow the requirements of the objector would result in a decision that would be contrary to both local and national policy and it would not be defensible at appeal.

Details Of Financial Benefits / Implications (S155 Housing and Planning Act 2016)

- Council Tax payments from the dwellings when built
- Planning Delivery Grant from Central Government for delivering the dwellings
- S106 Agreement:
 - £246,435 is required towards the building of a new primary school in Thurston.
 - £19,410 towards the cost of the land to provide the new primary school.
 - £49,998 is required for the provision of new pre-school facility in Thurston
 - £37,277 is required for highway infrastructure works
- CIL payments per dwelling built on site.

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

Planning Balance

118. The proposal for residential development off Norton Road in Thurston is considered to be contrary to the adopted Mid Suffolk Core Strategy as the application site lies within the countryside outside the built framework of the settlement of Thurston on what is agricultural land.

119. However, as the housing policies in the Core Strategy are out of date due to the Council not having a deliverable five year supply of housing, this scheme falls to be considered in relation to paragraph 14 and 49 of the NPPF which relate to residential development and sustainable development.
120. Paragraph 14 states that where the development plan for the area is out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole or specific policies in the NPPF which indicate that the development should be restricted. Whilst it has been identified that the proposal either when considered on its own or in combination with the four other residential schemes that are with the Council for consideration will have an adverse impact on the quality of the landscape character of the area, and that it will result in the irreplaceable loss of countryside and the loss of grade 3b and grade 5 agricultural land, will result in the loss of part of a hedge which provides habitat to protected and priority species and has a potentially severe impact on parts of the highway network if not mitigated, it is considered that the benefits that the scheme brings such as the provision of 64 new houses of which 35% of them will be affordable, contributions towards local infrastructure such as the highways improvements, and a new primary school outweighs the negative issues.
121. Significant weight must also be given to the fact that there are no unresolved objections from the Council's consultees to the scheme. There are no objections in terms of design; crime prevention; amenity; pollution; contamination; ecology; landscape; flood risk and drainage. The proposal will also help to deliver construction jobs and will also provide more residents who will help to sustain and potentially grow the local economy.
122. In relation to highways impacts there are road safety impacts which can be addressed through mitigation at Fishwick Corner and other highways infrastructure improvements which weigh in favour of the scheme by providing enhanced sustainable links.
123. There remains a road safety and capacity issue at the A143 Thurston Road junction (adjacent to The Bunbury Arms). A number of solutions have been investigated and the current preferred solution is traffic signals. The highway authority consider that the effects of the development can be mitigated but further detailed work needs to be undertaken to obtain the most practicable and viable solution to address the risks. For this reason Committee is asked to reach a "minded to" resolution which reserves the local planning authority's position pending the outcome of that detailed further investigation and junction design. Once the outcome of this investigation is known the application can be reported with a substantive recommendation to Committee.
124. Therefore, it is considered having regards to paragraph 14 of the NPPF that the benefit the proposal brings outweighs the negatives. Furthermore, when assessing the proposal against the NPPF it is not contrary to its requirements as a whole and there are no specific policies within it that would restrict this development and as such it is considered that it constitutes sustainable development which should be approved planning permission without delay in line with the requirements of paragraph 14.

Statement Required By Article 35 Of The Town And Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015.

125. When determining planning applications The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 requires Local Planning Authorities to explain how, in dealing with the application they have worked with the applicant to resolve any problems or issues arising.
126. In this case the planning authority has worked with the applicant to overcome highway objections to the scheme and to clarify issues relating to drainage and impact on listed buildings.

Identification of any Legal Implications of the decision

127. There are no known legal implications derived from the determination of this application.
128. The application has been considered in respect of the current development plan policies and relevant planning legalisation. Other legislation including the following have been considered in respect of the proposed development.
- Human Rights Act 1998
 - The Equalities Act 2012
 - Town & Country Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990
 - Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (any rural site)
 - The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010
 - Localism Act
 - Consideration has been given to the provisions of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998, in the assessment of this application but the proposal does not raise any significant issues.

RECOMMENDATION

That Committee express a “minded to” resolution, subject to the further investigation and reporting back of highway matters in relation to the A143 Thurston Road junction, on the following basis:

That the authority would be minded to delegate to the Corporate Manager - Growth & Sustainable Planning to grant full planning permission subject to the prior completion of a Section 106 or Undertaking on terms to his satisfaction to secure the following heads of terms:

- £246,435 is required towards the building of a new primary school in Thurston.
- £19,410 towards the cost of the land to provide the new primary school.
- £49,998 is required for the provision of new pre-school facility in Thurston
- 35% Affordable Housing to be transferred over to a Registered Provider
- £37,277 to secure off site highway improvement works as listed below:
 - Contribution towards improvements at the A143 Bury Road / C691 Thurston Road/ C649 Brand Road, junction at Great Barton. A contribution of £22249 is required on commencement of construction work on site.
 - Contribution towards safety improvements at the C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road. A contribution of £4040 is required on commencement of the first dwelling.

- Contribution towards provision of pedestrian crossing facilities at the junction of Norton Road / Station Hill / Ixworth Road. A contribution of £6988 is required on commencement of the first dwelling.
- Contribution towards bus stops on Norton Road. A contribution of £4000 is required on commencement of the first dwelling.
- Setting up of a management company to look after the open space and Sustainable Drainage parts of the scheme.

and that such permission be subject to the conditions as set out below:

- 1) Two year time start time (as opposed to the usual 3)
- 2) Existing tree protection
- 3) Construction management agreement
- 4) External lighting
- 5) Commencement period for landscaping
- 6) Protection of birds during construction period
- 7) Works to be carried out in line with the ecological report.
- 8) Materials
- 9) Landscaping
- 10) Residential boundary treatment
- 11) Highway Conditions (site access, estate road layout, refuse bins & highway drainage & residential travel plan)
- 12) Surface water drainage
- 13) Foul water drainage
- 14) Fire Hydrant requirements
- 15) Archaeology