

Committee Report

Committee Date: 12th July 2017

Item No:

Reference: 4963/16

Case Officer: Dylan Jones

Description of Development: Outline Planning Application sought for up to 250 new dwellings, open space and associated infrastructure, and up to 4.4 ha of land for educational uses for Thurston Community College and a new Primary School site, including details of access on land west of Ixworth Road

Location: Land west of Ixworth Road, Thurston IP31 3PB

Parish: Thurston

Ward: Thurston & Hessett

Ward Member/s: Councillors Esther Jewson & Derrick Haley

Site Area: 13.6

Conservation Area: No

Listed Building: Manor Farm – Grade 2*, converted Manor Farm Barns - Grade 2, Church of St Peter Grade 2 – These are all buildings in the surrounding locality.

Received: 14/12/2016

Expiry Date: 30/06/2017

Application Type: Outline Planning Permission

Development Type: Largescale Major Dwellings

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

Applicant: Persimmon Homes Limited

Agent: Bidwells

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR CONSIDERATION

The defined Red Line Plan for this application is drawing number THUR-SLP01B received on the 22nd 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:

Sketch block plan received on 14th December 2016.

Ecological constraints and opportunities plan reference number ENO97-01 received on the 22nd December 2016.

Indicative Landscape Master Plan reference number JBA16-053 REV A received on the 22nd December 2016

Proposed footpath plan reference number OAS 16-088-TPP01 received on the 22nd December 2016.

Proposed footpath plan reference number OAS 16-088-TPP02 received on the 22nd December 2016.

Proposed footpath plan reference number OAS 16-088-TPP03 received on the 22nd December 2016.

Western boundary cross section reference number THUR received on the 22nd December 2016.

Opportunities and constraints map reference number THUR-01B received on the 22nd December 2016.

Concept block plan reference number 02 received on the 11th May 2017.

Sketch block plan reference number 03 received on the 11th May 2017.

Building height plan reference number 04 received on the 11th May 2017..

Character areas plan reference number 05 received on the 11th May 2017.

Street scene 1A drawing number Thur-Streetscene 1A received on the 22nd December 2016.

Street scene 2B drawing number Thur-Streetscene 2B received on the 22nd December 2016.

Proposed access strategy drawing number 1041 06/011F received on 6th June 2017

Proposed access strategy drawing number 1041 06/012A received on 2nd May 2017

Proposed access strategy – emergency access - drawing number 1041 06/013 received on 2nd May 2017

Transport assessment received on the 4th December 2016

Agricultural assessment received on the 22nd December 2016.

Arboricultural implications assessment received on the 22nd December 2016.

Arboricultural report received on the 22nd December 2016.

Archaeological desk based assessment received on the 22nd December 2016.

Contaminated land report received on the 22nd December 2016.

Design and access statement received on the 22nd December 2016.

Final infiltration results received on the 22nd December 2016.

Flood risk assessment received on the 22nd December 2016.

Geophysical survey received on the 22nd December 2016.

Landscape and visual assessment report received on the 22nd December 2016.

Planning statement received on the 22nd December 2016.

Preliminary ecological appraisal received on the 22nd December 2016.

Tree schedule survey received on the 22nd December 2016.

Residential travel plan received on the 22nd December 2016.

Transport assessment part 1 received on the 4th January 2017

Transport assessment part 2 received on the 18th January 2017

Flood risk assessment received on the 15th March 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=BE8747788A80F3ECADE308F46AB6D1C3?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. As such, 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 whether it constitutes sustainable development. Officers are recommending a minded approval of this application as it is considered to be sustainable development where the significant public benefits that the scheme will deliver (contributions towards a new school, pre-school, additional land for the community college, 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:

- 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.
- 4942/16 Full planning application for the erection of 64 dwellings on land at Meadow Lane, Thurston. The applicant is Laurence 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 (This case is at appeal for non-determination 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.

4. **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

5. None

Details of Member site visit

6. 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

7. 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

Consultations

8. The following consultation responses have been received:

Great Barton Parish Council – Raises the following comments in relation to this scheme:

- Great Barton uses the services and facilities in Thurston and will feel the pressure on local services and facilities as a result of this development.
- Raise concerns about the impact of extra traffic at the Bunbury crossroads. This junction is already at capacity and needs work done to it to make it safe as part of this and the other schemes in Thurston.
- There is education provision in the scheme but there is no agreement or commitment by the education authority to take this forward.
- The Council needs to make sure that it gets the necessary structure under its CIL scheme, or failing that through necessary S106 agreements.

Thurston Parish Council (which includes the comments of the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan Team) – Objects to the scheme on the following grounds:

The following points which have been raised by the Neighbourhood Plans team relate to the impact of all 5 applications (and appeal) currently with the Council for residential development in Thurston:

- 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.
- 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 their sustainability. • More residents in the locality would help to support a greater variety of leisure facilities in the village. 	<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 present. • 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 Persimmon scheme, the Neighbourhood Plans team raise the

following points:

- The site only has one access point from Ixworth Road to serve 250 dwellings and this road is narrow and at points unsuitable to provide the main access point into the site.
- Ixworth Road has a poor line of vision for vehicles coming up towards Thurston which is dangerous and the access point into the site is in this location.
- Parking provision is poor for both primary and secondary school and this scheme will fail to alleviate that problem.
- Road safety at peak times in close proximity to the community college is an issue.
- Road safety concerns at Pokeridge Corner and accessing the A14.
- Impact of increased traffic levels on other nearby parishes.
- Location of the proposed primary school and the proximity of its entrance to the commencement of the 30mph speed limit.
- No safe crossing points for pedestrians to access this site. Acknowledge that new paths are to be put in to reach this site from the edge of the village.
- The development is inappropriate to the abutting surrounding countryside.
- Impact on health and education in the village.
- The types and densities of the dwellings proposed do not match the local needs for smaller properties and bungalows.
- The affordable homes will be too expensive for local residents as they do not cater for the need for 1 and 2 bedrooms.

Thurston Parish Council has raised the following additional comments not previously referred to above in relation to this scheme:

- Doesn't support this scheme for 250 dwellings despite a primary school being proposed.
- The site and surrounding area are within the countryside and therefore outside of any settlement boundary for Thurston as defined by Mid Suffolk's Local Plan and would result in the development of new dwellings that would be visually, physically and functionally isolated from the facilities and services offered by Thurston as a Key Service Centre. The proposal is contrary to policy GP1, H13 and H16 of the local plan, policies FC1.1 and FC2 of the Core Strategy Focused Review and policy CS5 of the Core Strategy.
- This proposal is not sympathetic to the countryside that it will be sited in and it fails to protect the intrinsic character of the countryside by the density and mix of properties proposed.
- Wish to echo the comments made by the Ramblers in that the public footpath that runs through the site will be significantly affected by this proposal.
- The density, tenure and mix including the height of some of properties do not reflect that currently in Thurston.
- Raise highway and pedestrian safety concerns in terms of the access point into the site. Of particular concern is that only 1 access is proposed into the site and the emergency access proposed is also unacceptable as it is onto a narrow country road. Would like the fire service to be consulted on this scheme to make sure that they can get their emergency vehicles into the site through the emergency access point.
- Consider that the access point into the school should be separate and not from the single access point into the site. This arrangement will cause a conflict between users, could be dangerous and would not be sustainable.
- It is noted that the applicant states that they intend to reduce the speed limit along Norton Road to 30mph along the road frontage of the site. This cannot be guaranteed as it is a separate process carried out by the Highway Authority and is not something that can be done under the remit of this planning application.

- The site is in a remote location and this raises concerns that the development of the site will not be able to allow for the convenient integration of public transport within the site and that the traffic that will be generated will not be able to be accommodated on the existing road network.
- It is also felt that the development would not support the transition to a low carbon future and is unable to meet the environmental dimension of sustainable development and would be contrary to paragraph 17, 30, 35 and 55 of the NPPF and Policies FC1 and FC1.1 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review.
- The Parish Council considers that the development fails to demonstrate that it has considered safe and suitable access points for all people and as such is contrary to paragraph 32 of the NPPF. As the development fails to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and given the location of the site, it would not support the transition to a low carbon future and is therefore unable to meet the environmental dimension of sustainable development and would be contrary to paragraph 17, 30, 35 and 55 of the NPPF and Policies FC1 and FC1.1 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review.
- The Parish Council is concerned at the impact that will be had by the location of a site for 250 houses and a 420+ pupil primary school on road safety. The Parish Council is concerned that very little assessment has been carried out on the impact of vehicular movements on Norton Road and that consideration should be given to the dangers associated with vehicular and pedestrian movements at the single entrance to the proposed primary school.
- There are drainage issues at Ixworth Road and Old Norton Road. Whilst this is acknowledged in the planning application, it is considered that no solution has been found to resolve the problems identified and large areas of hardstandings will make matters worse.

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 object to this scheme. Points out that there are residential properties in the locality and their residents need to be protected during the construction of this scheme by a construction management plan which can be secured by a planning condition.

MSDC Heritage Officer – The site lies on agricultural land which is within the setting of Manor Farm which is Grade 2* listed and also the barn to the north of it which is Grade II listed in its own right.

The Historic Buildings Officer advises that the significance of Manor Farm is that it was designed by Philip Webb who was an influential architect and designer. He was also responsible for contemporary alterations at Nether Hall. The spacious rural setting of Manor Farm and its former farm buildings makes a positive contribution to their significance. However, Manor Farmhouse does not seem to succeed an earlier building, but is associated historically with Nether Hall to the north. As a later building, its agricultural surroundings make a less important contribution to its significance than would be the case for a traditional farmhouse. Since conversion of the barn complex, the introduction of residential development and activity in the curtilage of the barn dwellings has eroded the agricultural character of the land between them and the application site. Similarly development associated with the keeping of horses has changed the character of land belonging to Manor Farm.

The site lies on agricultural land and building on it would extend development further along Mill Lane, although in a limited degree of arc in relation to remaining farmland. In this

sense the proposal would represent some degree of harm to the setting of the listed farmhouse. However, in the light of the existing compromises to the building's setting, and the remaining extent of farmland around the farmhouse, the level of harm is considered low.

He advises in accordance with NPPF paragraphs 129, 132 and 134 that the Council in determining this proposal needs to consider whether this harm can be avoided or minimised, and whether it is justified in terms of public benefits.

As there are now 5 separate housing proposals in Thurston which together total 872 houses, with the potential for the cumulative impact of two or more of the schemes to have an impact on the heritage assets listed above, the Council's Heritage Officer has been asked for his comments. He considers that in terms of the assets listed above, that this proposal has a limited impact on Manor Farm when considered cumulatively with the other sites that are currently under consideration by the Council. He considers that the cumulative impact of the Hopkins site (2797/16 & 5010/16) and the Pigeon site (5070/16) will have the greatest effect and the cumulative impacts of these proposals are considered in the two reports for those proposals.

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 87 affordable units. These are broken down as follows:

Affordable Rent Tenancy = 53 units broken down as follows:

General Needs Affordable Dwellings:

- 6 x 1B 2P houses @ 58 sqm
- 6 x 1B 2P flats @ 50 sqm
- 6 x 2B 4P flats @ 70 sqm
- 4 x 2B 3P Bungalows @ 63 sqm
- 22 x 2B 4P Houses @ 79 sqm
- 7 x 3B 5P Houses @ 93 sqm
- 2 x 3B6P Houses @ 102 sqm

Total = 53

General Needs Shared Ownership dwellings:

- 4 x 2B 4P flats @ 70 sqm
- 14 x 2B 4P Houses @ 79 sqm
- 6 x 3B 5P Houses @ 93 sqm

Total = 24

Starter Home Dwellings: -

- 4 x 2B4P flats @ 70sqm
- 9 x 2B4P houses @ 76 sqm

MSDC Sustainability Officer – Initially objected to this scheme on the grounds that there is insufficient information about the environmental and sustainability measures which will be used throughout the scheme. However, the applicant has subsequently provided this information and it is considered that this has addressed the concerns raised by the Sustainability Officer.

MSDC Tree Officer – Does not object to this proposal. He comments that a small number of trees are proposed for removal and these are generally of limited amenity value and should not be considered as a constraint. Advises that tree matters such as root protection during construction can be controlled by planning conditions.

SCC Archaeology – Does not raise any objections to this scheme subject to the imposition of conditions.

SCC Flood and Water Team – Initially objected to the scheme, but following the submission of additional information from the applicant, no longer object to the application subject to the imposition of conditions dealing with flood risk matters.

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 Highways 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 SCC 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 are 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, necessitates 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 crossing on Norton Road 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:

Speed limit – The developer is proposing to reduce the speed limit to 30mph limit from its existing position down to the Rugby Club. However, this change cannot be guaranteed as it is a separate legal process under the highway act and as such, the scheme needs to be designed to the current speed limit of the road.

Emergency access – This is considered to be acceptable via Mill Lane provided the following occurs:

- The length of the main access between Ixworth Road and the beginning of the loop road is kept to a minimum.
- Details of the junction layout including swept path analysis show that this access is practical with regard to the narrow width of Mill lane.
- The emergency access is designed to be of a suitable width with features to effectively deter use by non-authorized vehicles while allowing pedestrian and cycle use.

Internal Highway layout – A carriageway width of 5.5m would be acceptable for the main access road. Details of the footway layout and shared space design will be required.

Car parking - To be agreed at Reserved Matters stage having regards to the Council's standards.

Footway and cycle connectivity - The proposal of a footway along the western side of Ixworth Road between Norton Road and the Rugby Club is welcomed. However, the provision of a footway must not reduce the carriageway width on Ixworth Road to an unacceptable width.

To improve pedestrian connectivity a pedestrian crossing should be provided at the junction of Ixworth Road, Station Hill and Norton Road.

An uncontrolled crossing to should be provided to link the new footway alongside Ixworth Road to the PRow Thurston 001 opposite.

The proposed footway as detailed includes provision of root barriers and 'no dig' construction. These are regarded as indicative and details will be agreed as part of the S278 approval process.

Public Rights of Way (PRow) – Changes or additions to the existing PRow network (eg spurs to the proposed school site) must be agreed with the relevant SCC PRow Officer. Care should be taken not to create a canyon effect by confining footpaths between linear features such as walls, high hedges and fences. Some of the footways shown on drawing 03 Sketch Block Plan are within the existing or proposed adoptable highway and as such do not require PRow status.

Road Safety - The Transport Assessment does not refer to the cluster of crashed at the junction of C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road. However, this

has been addressed in the letter regarding the cumulative effects of the developments in Thurston.

Landscaping - When considering the masterplan for full planning application the developer should note the Highway Authority's preference for trees to be planted in public open space rather than adjacent to adoptable highways (including footways).

Transport Assessment and Local Highway Infrastructure

The trip rates calculated for this development are 0.568 (am peak) and 0.528 (pm peak). These are lower than adjacent developments in Thurston and surrounding villages but considered acceptable due to the proportion of affordable houses.

The TA does not address cumulative impact of other sites and does not include A143 Gt Barton and C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road junction, which have been identified in other Transport Assessments as junctions that will receive additional traffic from this development and will then exceed theoretical capacity.

Proposed S278 works

- Footway on west side between Norton Road and Persimmon site and beyond to the Thurston Rugby Club

Proposed S106 Heads of Terms

- Improvements to PRoW Thurston 001 between Meadow Lane and Ixworth Road. A contribution of £8889 is required on completion of 50% of the total number of dwellings.
- Contribution towards provision of pedestrian crossing facilities at Norton Road / Station Hill / Ixworth Road junction. A contribution of £27297 is required on occupation of the first dwelling.
- Contribution towards improvements at the A143 Bury Road / C691 Thurston Road/ C649 Brand Road, junction at Great Barton. A contribution of £86911 is required on commencement of construction work on site.
- Contribution towards safety improvements at the C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road including a 40mph speed limit on the C692 Thurston Road. A contribution of £15780 is required on commencement of the first dwelling.
- Extension of the 30mph speed limit to Thurston Rugby Club. A contribution of £8000 is required on commencement of work on site.
- Travel Plan Travel Plan Evaluation and Support Contribution - £1,000 per annum from occupation of the 100th dwelling for a minimum of five years, or one year after occupation of the final dwelling, whichever is longest. This is to cover Suffolk County Council officer time working with the Travel Plan Coordinator and agreeing new targets and objectives throughout the full duration of the travel plan. If the contribution is not paid Suffolk County Council may not be able to provide sufficient resource to assisting the ongoing implementation and monitoring of the travel plan, which may result in the failure of the Travel Plan to mitigate the highway impact of this development.
- Travel Plan Implementation Bond, or cash deposit - £127,975 (£512 per dwelling – based on the estimated cost calculated by Suffolk County Council of fully implementing the travel plan). This is to cover the cost of implementing the travel plan on behalf of the developer if they fail to deliver it themselves.

The S106 proposals are based on the assumption of a collaborative approach as outlined

in our letter of the 10th March 2017. If this site is determined as a stand-alone application these conditions and contributions would be re-assessed.

Advises that the remainder 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 £176,877 for the works required under S106 of the act (excluding costs for the travel plan which are shown separately above) and £130,000 for works under section 278 of the Highways Act.

SCC - Obligations Manager: Comments that 250 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 62 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 £1,018,598 as broken down below is require 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*:	62	62	16,429

Land for new school

A contribution for a further £80,228 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 62 places x £1,294 per place = **£80,228**

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: £1,098,826

Restriction on occupation

The Obligations Manager has also commented that as there is another application in Thurston that is proposing a primary school site (application 5070/16 – Land on land at Norton Road, Thurston for Pigeon Capital) but neither this or that 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 25 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 250 dwellings there is the need for 25 additional places
- Therefore 25 pupils x £8,333 per place = **£208,325 (2016/17 costs)**

Total contribution for all education provision - £1,307,151

Other infrastructure contributions

Requests a contribution of £54,000 towards library provision. This is requested under the Council's CIL 123 list.

SCC Public Rights of Way – Notes that public footpath number 18 runs through the site, but they do not raise any objections to this scheme subject to the imposition of a condition to ensure that foliage along the site is cut back so that it stays at its legal width of 1m.

Anglian Water – They have been consulted but have not responded to this proposal.

Ecology Officer, Essex Place Services— The Council's Ecologist originally objected to the scheme on the basis that the site could support Skylarks which are a UK and European Priority Species and that there was insufficient information in the applicant's ecological report to assess and mitigate against the loss of habitat. Following additional discussions with the Ecologist, the applicant has now agreed to provide Skylark nesting plots on land within their ownership (and included as a blue line in the site location plan for this application) and the Ecologist has now withdrawn their objection to the scheme . She is now satisfied that all matters can be satisfactorily controlled by conditions. __

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.

Fire Service - County Fire Officer – They have been consulted but have not responded to this proposal.

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

Historic England – They do not wish to make any comments on this scheme.

Landscape Officer – Essex Place Services: Does not object to the proposal but comments that it will significantly change the visual character of the site which will change from agriculture to residential and that it will take a number of years for the landscaping as suggested to screen the site to develop and grow.

In their response they provide key details which the applicant will need to explore should this scheme be approved in formulating their layout for their reserved matters application.

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 Surgery 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.

Ramblers Association – Objects to this scheme as the public right of way that links Ixworth Road to the east and Mill Lane to the west across the site and to the site will be adversely affected by loss of open space and amenity currently enjoyed by local walkers and residents. This development will alter the character of the north side of the village and diminish the enjoyment of a walk in the countryside. Also states that the character of Ixworth Road will change from a rural highway to a busy urban character and this is likely to make it dangerous for walkers to cross the road safely. They have also stated that they are concerned at the closure of the public footpath during the build process for the scheme and also would not be happy if the footpath was to be diverted away from its existing route.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust – Raise the following points:

- Note the comments of the ecologist who surveyed the site but whilst no evidence of Skylarks was found on site it was early in the season when the survey was done. It is considered that this site would be suitable for Skylark habitat and a compensation scheme needs to be provided with this proposal as Skylarks are a UK and Suffolk Priority Species.
- It is also noted that a sympathetic lighting scheme should be provided at the site to mitigate its impact on ecology in the area.
- Query how the landscaped and Suds areas will be maintained in the interest of protecting and improving ecology in the area.
- If approved, there needs to be a condition on the planning permission to ensure that the scheme is developed in accordance with the recommendations of the ecological report.
- The scheme should also provide environmental/ecological enhancements.

Representations

9. 25 letters in total have been received objecting to this proposal on the following grounds:

Highway safety

- The proposed cycle way and footpath does not extend to the full extent of the site. It should do.
- The road approaching the school should be widened with parking facilities on it to address potential future traffic issues.
- The applicant's transport statement makes unrealistic assumptions about how traffic will flow into and out of this site.
- There needs to be a combined traffic management plan for the area to accommodate the needs of all development in Thurston.
- The crash data for Fishwick Corner as submitted by the applicant does not seem to be correct. More accidents than is listed in the report have been

witnessed on site by local people.

- The additional land proposed for the College is of concern as this is likely to in the future facilitate an extension to the school which will further increase congestion and traffic issues in the locality.
- 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.
- Additional vehicles on the road network will cause congestion and chaos at peak times.
- The railway station has poor parking. Additional residents from this site using the railway station to access places such as Bury St Edmunds will increase the parking issues experienced.
- Increased users of the railway line will result in more users having to walk across the railway tracks to access trains. These lines are shared with fast moving and non-stopping express and freight trains. This is unsafe and there will be accidents and possible fatalities.
- There is no turning head or anything shown for buses or cars using the new school to turn around on so traffic twice a day will be parked on the highway which is not wide enough to accommodate it.
- Drainage of water on Ixworth road is a problem and this scheme will make the situation worse.
- The applicant's trip generation figures aren't believable and traffic impact will be greater than suggested.
- There is poor visibility from Cedars Close. The additional volume of traffic on the highway will make the situation worse.
- Saw a traffic survey being carried out earlier this year in Thurston. This proposal must be considered having regards to its findings. Any future traffic surveys should be done at peak times during the day to be accurate.

Infrastructure

- This proposal will have a negative impact on water pressure in the locality.
- The infrastructure for this proposal is limited and as such it should be refused planning permission.
- This development will create excessive pressure on the local GP surgery as well as other NHS infrastructure in this part of Suffolk.
- If this is approved, a supermarket will be needed locally to meet the needs of the residents.
- The local primary school cannot accommodate the children from this development. If this is approved, what is going to happen if the houses are built before the new school and how is the existing school supposed to cope in that situation? Would children need to be bused to other schools in the locality?

Impact on the character and amenity of the area

- People use the public right of way regularly to enjoy peace, open air and views. This scheme will destroy that as the path will become an urban route right next to the new houses.
- The proposal is urban in character and will have a negative impact on the surrounding open countryside.
- Increasing the width and 'urbanising' Ixworth Road to provide access into the

site is unacceptable and will have a harmful impact on the rural setting of this part of Thurston.

- Would like to see more landscaping if this scheme is approved.
- This proposal does not maintain or enhance the amenity of the area as the Council's local plan requires schemes to do.

Impact on residential amenity

- The dwellings will be too close to existing properties. We enjoy an area of tranquillity undisturbed by noise to the rear of us and a separation distance of 20 – 30m between us and the new dwellings will completely destroy this.
- Our property is on a slope and having a two storey house facing us will impact negatively on our privacy.
- The proposed buffer zone will impact on the amount of light received by some of the existing properties adjacent which will affect the amenities of the occupiers.

Impact on wildlife in the locality

- It says in the applicant's documentation that the proposal will result in the existing landscape quality of the area being retained. How can this be when a green field is being built on?
- The hedge between the college and the land earmarked for the college is a major feeding area for bats and should not be removed without substantial consideration.

Policy issues

- The development is outside the settlement limits for Thurston and that part is being glossed over by the applicant.
- This proposal ignores the 50 limit per housing site as suggested by the Parish Council in their neighbourhood plan.
- This proposal is not sustainable as it will provide dwellings for people commuting to Ipswich or towards Cambridge.
- When will Mid Suffolk tell us the maximum number of new houses Thurston should take in the new Local Plan for the district?
- This proposal should not go ahead until the Council works collaboratively with the local community and prepares its new local plan for the district and the new Neighbourhood plan is issued.

Other issues

- This proposal is not sustainable.
- There are not enough bungalows as part of this scheme.
- If the scheme is approved, it is important that the housing numbers are reduced, with no units near the western boundary of the site, or if these are essential then they must be single storey properties. There also needs to be an improved buffer zone on the northern boundary of the site and an improvement to the connectivity between the lagoon/open space area and the northern end of the site.
- The developer has ignored the local need for more bungalows in his proposal.
- The field which is the subject of this proposal has been used to grow crops over the years. It is designated as Grade 2 agricultural land and has significant economic benefit for food production in Suffolk. This proposal is therefore

contrary to the requirements of the NPPF.

- There are other sites in the village that should come first before this one does.
- Significant weight should not be put on the fact that the applicant is proposing a new school and land for the primary school when considering this proposal as the negatives of the scheme outweigh the positives.
- If the school and land for the college was taken out, would this proposal then stand on its merits?
- The energy efficiency merits of this scheme need to be excellent to make them sustainable.
- This proposal will make Thurston a town and not the current village that it is.

Cumulative Impacts

- The 5 sites in Thurston should be considered cumulatively and not singularly due to their linked impacts and they should also be considered having regards to the Granary site which already has permission.
- There are too many houses proposed particularly when you take into account all of those in Bury St Edmunds which is only a short distance away from Thurston.

Following the submission of revised plans in May 2017, further letters from two of the original objectors have been received. They state that they continue to object to this scheme on the following grounds:

- We do not understand what the significance is of the changes that the applicant has made to the application plan. It does not address any of our previous objections to this scheme.
- We want to see bungalows along the whole length of the western boundary.
- A significant buffer zone is needed along the western boundary.
- There is a need for more 2 bedroom houses and bungalows on site.
- This scheme should be rejected unless the number of houses and the density of the development can be reduced.

The Site and Surroundings

10. The application site lies in the village of Thurston which has a population of approximately 3200 people (2011 census). The site extends to an area of 13.7 hectares of grade 2 agricultural land which is generally flat but falls away gently towards its northern point and towards the dwellings that lie on Barton Road and Mill Lane. Ixworth Road is a typical country road without pavements and street lighting as it extends out into the countryside. Barton Road to the west of the site is bordered by existing residential properties, with Mill Lane which directly borders the site being a narrow country lane with limited and low density residential development on it.
11. As the site is currently in agricultural use, tree cover is limited to sporadic trees on the Ixworth Road boundary, dense hedging between the site and the school playing fields of the College, and a line of sporadic trees between the site and the properties on Barton Road. The tree/hedge cover becomes denser between the site and Mill Lane, but it does not completely screen it.
12. Adjacent to the most northern part of the site in the east lies the Thurston Rugby club, but otherwise the land is open countryside characterised by agricultural practices. A public footpath also crosses the field running west/east directly through the middle of the site.

13. Directly to the south of the site lies the school playing fields belonging to the college and this parcel of land is designated as a visually important open space in the Mid Suffolk Local Plan. The settlement boundary for Thurston runs between the school playing field and the designated land and, as such, this proposal does not abut the settlement boundary for Thurston and remains as countryside for planning purposes.

The Proposal

14. Please note details of the proposed development including plans and application documents can be found online.
15. Proposed is an outline planning application for the erection of up to 250 dwellings, open space and infrastructure up to 4.4ha of land for education uses for Thurston Community College and a new primary school site. Details of access is included with this proposal with all other matters reserved for future consideration if this scheme is approved
16. The applicant has submitted an indicative masterplan with the proposal showing a single access point from Ixworth Road into the site and a suggested layout utilising a single spine road through the site, with various secondary streets leading through to the dwellings.
17. The layout shows a separate access point off Ixworth Road into the land set aside for education purposes which will lie on the south east corner of the site. The school land can also be reached from a link within the site. To the west lies a drainage lagoon which will be landscaped and enhanced to provide part of the public realm for the scheme. The public footpath running from Mill Lane to Ixworth Road crosses the site above the lagoon and runs on its current line through the site. Directly on the southern part of the site, and to the north of the existing college playing fields, a parcel of land will be provided to the college to purchase to allow it to improve its facilities on site should it wish to do so.
18. The indicative layout for the site shows substantial landscaping along the southern boundary and significantly increased landscaping/tree planting along the Mill Lane and Ixworth Road frontages compared to what exists at present. A band of trees is proposed along the northern boundary of the site to help to soften the impact of the scheme on the surrounding open countryside. The layout provides an indicative density of 31 dwellings per hectare (this figures excludes the 4.4ha set aside for education purposes and the land for the drainage lagoon).

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

19. 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.
20. 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
 Para 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.
 Para 55: To promote sustainable development in rural areas.
 Para 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.
 Para 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

21. 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.

22. 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

23. 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

- 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

24. 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.
25. The following are identified as the main considerations in assessing this application:

The Principle Of Development

26. 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.
27. 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).

28. 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.
29. 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...'*
30. 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.
31. 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
32. 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.
33. 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."

34. 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)

35. The NPPF provides (para 187) that *"Local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Local planning authorities should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area."*
36. The Parish Council and some of the objectors have commented that this scheme should be refused as this proposal is outside and does not even abut the development limits for Thurston, in line with the policies contained in the adopted Core Strategy and Local Plan. Further, comments also suggest that housing numbers should be limited in Thurston. However, it is clear on reviewing the guidance in the NPPF that, as the Council does not have a five year supply of housing land, the housing delivery policies CS1 and CS2 of the core strategy, along with policy H7 of the Local Plan, should not be considered to be up-to-date. In this respect, refusing the application solely on the basis of the development being outside the development limits of Thurston, or seeking to cap the development that can be considered, would not sit comfortably with the requirements of the NPPF that look to consider the sustainability of the development in relation to the environmental, social and economic strands of sustainability. 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.
37. 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 the 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.

38. 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, and the scheme will bring with it a new primary school, land for the secondary school as well as other 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 or not will be given in the conclusion to this report.
39. 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 a new style local plan and has established 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 and in accordance with the development plan. Whilst weight can be given to emerging policy in certain circumstances, the extent to which weight can be given to the emerging neighbourhood plan will be considered later in this report.
40. 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.
41. Since the submission of this application, four other developers have also submitted applications for residential development in Thurston. Bovis Homes have applied for 138 dwellings on land on the west side of Barton Road (4386/16); Laurence Homes have applied for 64 dwellings on land at Meadow Lane (4942/16); 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) 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.
42. 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.

43. Policy FC1 of the Mid Suffolk District Core Strategy Focused Review states that it takes a positive approach to sustainable development and, as with the NPPF requirements, 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.
44. 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. 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.
45. 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 the Mendlesham to Bury St Edmunds bus route with a number of designated stops within the village.
46. 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 up to 250 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.
47. 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 250 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 following the granting of their reserved matters application. To speed this up, they have agreed to have a shorter period than is usual to submit their reserved matters application (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.

48. 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

49. 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.
50. A number of objections have been received to the scheme on the grounds that the single access points point to serve the proposed dwellings from Ixworth Road would be detrimental to highway safety; the separate access point into the school is on a busy and potentially dangerous part of Ixworth Road and that the local road network as a whole is unsuitable and badly maintained for a development of a further 250+ dwellings. Mention has specifically been made that some local junctions are unsafe at present (see Parish Council objection for details as well as the Local Highway Authority consultation response), 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.
51. The site is located to the north west of the village with Ixworth Road, Barton Road and Mill Lane bordering the site to the east and west respectively. Proposed is a single access point from Ixworth Road into the site with a separate access point from the same road to serve the proposed primary school. This is to help to split traffic accessing the dwellings from traffic accessing the new school at peak times in the interest of safety and traffic flow. An emergency access point into the site is proposed from Mill Lane which will only be available for use by the emergency services. The emergency access point will also double up as a pedestrian and cycle access into and out of the site outside emergency situations. Objections have been received on the grounds that the access points into the site are unsuitable for the volume of traffic that will use them and, as such, they will cause highway safety and congestion issues in the locality.
52. The LHA has not objected to the access points into the site from Ixworth Road and has confirmed that the emergency access layout as suggested by the applicant can be supported on highway grounds. They do not consider that the scheme as proposed is unsafe, nor do they consider that the transport statement provided by the applicant is unrealistic in its assumptions as referred to by the objectors. They identify that, subject to the necessary works being carried out as advised in the Highway Officer's consultation response, the scheme is considered to meet the requirements of paragraph 32 of the NPPF in that safe access can be provided for all. It must be remembered that the internal layout of the site is currently indicative only, and the opportunity would exist at reserved matters stage to design the layout to meet the

necessary highways standards. It should be noted that the Manual for Streets does allow 250 dwellings to be accessed with a single access point, and your Officers consider that to consider refusing this scheme on those grounds alone would be difficult to defend at appeal. Drainage deficiencies on the highway network, as referred to by one of the objectors, is something that the highway authority will need to assess and deal with under their own legislation, but in the absence of any objection from the LHA on this point, it is not considered that there are grounds to consider refusing the application on this basis.

53. The Local Highway Authority has considered the cumulative impact of this proposal along with the other 4 schemes currently before the Council both in terms of safety and congestion on the highway network in Thurston. They have come to the conclusion that the impact of the 5 schemes, if they are all delivered, will be severe. However, the LHA have made it clear that the NPPF requires all public bodies to try and resolve problems and they are confident that with a collective approach between all 5 developers, suitable and cost effective alterations can be made to the highway network to ensure that the impact is not severe. The highway officer has assessed the road network and has suggested alterations and improvements to key areas of it (see the LHA's consultation response earlier in this report for more information) and all 5 developers have been asked to contribute towards through either a section 106 agreement or through a Section 278 agreement under the Highways Act. All 5 developers, which include the applicant in this case, have agreed to contribute towards the works as requested by the Highway Authority. For this specific proposal, the Highway Authority is requesting £142,965 via a S106 agreement, and a further £130,000 under section 278 of the Highway Act.
54. As such, the LHA no longer considers that this proposal fails the requirements of paragraph 32 of the NPPF when considered cumulatively with the other 4 residential schemes, as the impact following the alterations carried out to the highway network will no longer be severe in terms of safety. For the avoidance of doubt, the LHA 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 such as to sustain a refusal of planning permission.
55. The LHA identify that the scheme will offer sustainable travel options to local residents as additional pavements and improvements to the public right of way are proposed and these will link up the whole site to both existing facilities and those proposed on neighbouring sites proposed for development. This will help to improve accessibility on foot, cycling 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 is obligated via a S106 agreement to provide 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.
56. Having regards to the specific and cumulative highway impacts of the scheme, when considered in line with the requirements of paragraphs 21 and 32 of the NPPF, the LHA has had regard to the fact that, in some locations, the impact of the granting of 827 dwellings will be severe on the highway network. However, these impacts can successfully be mitigated by the works to the network as suggested. Having regards to the above, it is considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of policy T10 of the local plan and paragraph 32 of the NPPF, in that safe and suitable access for all people can be achieved and that cost effective improvements can be undertaken to the transport network to ensure that non-motorised modes of transport can be used to access local facilities.

57. An objector has commented that the applicant is suggesting in his documentation that the speed limit adjacent to the site should be reduced from its current limit to 30mph and that this is a separate legal process that is outside this planning application. The LHA have confirmed that this scheme and the 4 others have been designed and considered at the existing speed limit and that their comments are given on that basis. They have advised that it would be in the public interest to alter the speed limit as suggested by the applicant and that this alteration is to be taken on under the relevant highway legislation.
58. 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.

Design And Layout [Impact On Street Scene]

59. 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.
60. Objections have been received stating that the site is currently an open field and that the scale and density of the proposal, particularly in reference to any 2.5 to 3 storey dwellings on the site, is considered to be inappropriate and not in keeping with the locality. Comments have also been made that the housing numbers should be reduced and there should be no units near the western boundary, or if these are essential they must be single storey. Objectors also wish to see connectivity improved through the site and comments have also been received on the basis that the proposal will extend the built up footprint of the village some way into the surrounding open countryside, which is unacceptable to the objectors and the parish council.
61. The application is in outline form and the plans as submitted provide an indicative layout of how the scheme could potentially look should this outline planning application be approved. This relates to the principle of the development of the site. This site does extend the built footprint of the village into the surrounding open countryside as the fields that surround it are currently undeveloped with residential development limited to only the small amount of dwellings on Barton Road and Mill Land to the west of the site. However, the applicant has taken account of this and is providing additional screening along all boundaries to help the proposal integrate into the countryside. The indicative density of the site at 31 dwellings per hectare is also not considered to be out high as referred to by the objectors and is not considered to be out of keeping with the existing dwellings in the surrounding locality. The points

that have been made by local residents at outline stage are useful for the applicant to formulate their reserved matters scheme where the matters raised above as objections will be considered rather than the principle of the scheme as is the case with an outline planning application.

62. Furthermore, objections have been received to this scheme on the basis that the proposal is lacking in bungalows and smaller house types. It must be emphasised that the proposal is in outline form and full details of the housing specification will only be given at reserved matters stage.
63. The Council's Sustainability Officer has also objected to the scheme on the grounds that insufficient information has been submitted on the environmental and sustainability measures that will be used throughout the scheme. In response, the applicant has submitted a sustainability statement highlighting the key sustainable practices to be incorporated into the design and construction of the development. Having regards to the above, it is considered that sufficient information has been submitted at this outline stage to overcome the concerns of the Sustainability Officer.
64. Having regards to the above, it is considered that the scheme in terms of its suggested layout 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, scale and appearance of the surrounding settlement. It is agreed that the site does project into the surrounding countryside; however this matter needs to be balanced having regards to all of the positive benefits that the scheme brings. As stated in previous topics above, that will be done in concluding this report.

PARISH PLAN / NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

65. 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.
66. 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"*.
67. 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

68. 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.
69. Objections have been received to this proposal on the grounds that the site lies in an exposed location and that the approval of this scheme will erode the intrinsic beauty and the character of the surrounding open countryside. The indicative layout for this proposal shows a thin boundary of landscaping along the northern and eastern boundary of the site. The Council's Landscape Consultant has been consulted on this scheme and he has advised that the proposal will significantly change the visual character of the site from agricultural to residential. However, they have not objected to the scheme and have only raised detailed matters with the landscaping of the scheme which the applicant can address at the reserved matters stage, given the indicative nature of the proposal at this stage. The site will clearly be viewed from points in the surrounding open countryside as identified in the LVIA, but this impact can be mitigated by improvements to the site boundary landscaping. The Council's Arboricultural Officer has also been consulted on the scheme and has not objected to it, advising that the trees that are to be lost are of limited amenity value and that this should not be used as a constraint for the development of this site.
70. To the south of the application site (but not within the application red line) lies the school playing field of Thurston Community College. This land is designated in the Mid Suffolk Local Plan under policy SB3 as a visually important open space. The policy says that land within or abutting settlement boundaries is considered to be designated as visually important open space due to the contribution that it makes to the character and appearance of the surroundings, and also due to the amenity value of the land to the local community. The policy goes on to say that the Council will restrict development that will have a harmful on the designated visually important open space because of the contribution it makes in its undeveloped form to the distinctiveness of its own setting, or the character of a settlement or a nearby landscape.
71. The NPPF talks within its core values of recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside when making planning decisions and, in paragraph 109, it states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.
72. However on examining subsequent paragraphs to 109, the NPPF only places emphasis on the protection of nationally designated landscapes such as the National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or areas where biodiversity could potentially be harmed. Policy SB3 is a local designation and consideration needs to be given as to the weight to be apportioned to it having regards to its degree of consistency with the NPPF (paragraph 215). Policy SB3 is restrictive as it aims to protect views and the amenity of the countryside from the designated site, whilst the NPPF tends to provide advice on nationally designated landscapes and specifically on landscapes where biodiversity impact needs to be considered. However, as the NPPF does state in its core values and in paragraph 109 that planning decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes, it is considered that policy SB3 does merit some weight in the decision making process. It is considered that the weight given is greater than moderate due to compliance with the core values and paragraph 109, but less than significant as the designation is a local designation and not a nationally designated landscape. Therefore, it is considered that policy SB3 should carry medium weight in the determination of this proposal.

73. The visually important open space area is the playing field to the Thurston Community College. The land is separated from the agricultural field to its north by a substantial belt of trees which runs along the boundary from Ixworth Road to Barton Road. The applicant is proposing to develop 250 houses and a new school to the north of this boundary (albeit, separated by a strip of land which will be given over as land to the College for their use) and, as such, the designated open space itself will not be developed on and will remain as envisaged in the local plan. However, the setting of the land, the impact of it on the character of the entrance to the village and the surrounding landscape will change as a consequence of this proposal. When travelling south along Ixworth Road into Thurston, only the belt of trees can be seen between the field boundary and the designated land. The road user is unaware that the land behind the tree cover is designated due to its amenity or the contribution that it makes to the amenity of the area as it is not open and does not feel like part of the agricultural fields that makes up the surrounding open countryside. The tree buffer encloses the land and provides a green but hard edge to the settlement along Ixworth Road and it can be argued that the development of this site will have a limited impact in terms of amenity on the designated land, or on the approach to Thurston which policy SB3 aims to try and protect if the applicant provides a similar level of screening along the eastern and northern site boundary as advised by the Council's Landscape Consultant.
74. Objections have been made to the scheme by both the Ramblers Association and by local residents that this proposal will alter the character of the public footpath that runs through the site and this will limit its enjoyment. It is noted that as part of this scheme a public footpath runs from Barton Road through the site towards Ixworth Road and the applicant is to incorporate it into the layout of the scheme. It is further noted that the Highway Officer requires improvements to this path as part of the connectivity through the site and into the wider area. It is agreed that the small part of the footpath that will run through the site will change in character from a rural path that runs through an open field to one that runs through a landscaped part of a housing estate. This is unfortunately unavoidable, but given the limited length of the path that would be affected, it is considered that this would not unacceptably affect the character of the path to such an extent that would weigh heavily against this proposal.
75. 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 provide suitable 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. The proposal will have an impact on the setting of the visually important open space area which lies to the south, but it is considered that this will not be significant and that it can also be overcome by the provision of suitable landscaping to help screen the site and integrate it into the surrounding open countryside.

Residential Amenity

76. 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.

77. This proposal is in outline form where there are no specific details of the exact location, orientation and types of houses proposed. There have been objections to this proposal on the grounds that it will affect the amenities of the occupiers of the dwellings on Mill Lane. The residents of Mill Lane currently face out on an open field and they are concerned that the development of dwellings on the land adjacent will alter their outlook and negatively affect their residential amenities. It is agreed that the erection of dwellings on land to the east of the properties on Mill Lane will change the outlook experienced by the residents, who currently have a view of a field as opposed to what may be in the future, other residential properties. This change would be unavoidable if planning permission is granted for this scheme, however, it is considered that the applicant can design the layout, house types and landscaping to minimise impact on the existing residents such that the impacts would not give rise to an unacceptable loss of amenity in planning terms. The Council's distance requirements between dwellings would also have to be adhered to, so that loss of daylight and sunlight and overlooking to the existing residents of Mill Lane would be minimised.
78. Whilst the proposal is in outline form, the indicative layout plan as suggested by the applicant does not give rise to any significant concerns in terms of loss of neighbouring amenity. If this proposal is approved, details in relation to form, design, the energy efficiency of the scheme, the distance between the dwellings and landscaping along the periphery of the site can be developed as part of the reserved matters application so as it meets the relevant NPPF core value in paragraph 17 and the requirements of paragraph 123. If permission is to be granted, a condition 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, as requested by the Council's Environmental Health Officer.

Environmental Impacts - Trees, Ecology And Land Contamination

79. The application site is a grade 2 agricultural parcel of land which is currently in use for agricultural purposes and is adjacent to the built up part of Thurston along Ixworth Road. As the site is in an agricultural use, there is limited tree cover within the site with the majority of the trees running along the highway boundaries of the site.
80. Objections have been received to this scheme from local residents and the Suffolk Wildlife Trust on the basis that the loss of the field and the hedgerows on the boundary of the field to create residential development will have a negative impact on animal species, particularly protected and priority species in the locality. Mention has specifically been made that the Wildlife Trust considers that the site is a prime habitat for Skylarks and that the applicant's survey was done too early in the year hence why Skylarks were not identified to be on the site at that time. Reference has also been made by objectors to the scheme that the proposal will harm bats which feed in the hedge which separates the site from the college playing field.
81. Regulation 9(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (Implemented 1st April 2010) requires 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. 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;

- If significant harm is caused which cannot be avoided or mitigated by conditions then planning permission should be refused.
 - Opportunities to integrate biodiversity in and around developments should be supported.
82. The Council's Consultant Ecologist has been consulted on this application and has not objected to it in terms of its impacts on protected species and has not raised any concerns about loss of hedgerow within the site. For the sake of clarity, the hedgerow that the objector refers to as being the feeding grounds for bats is not being removed, and the land adjacent to it is not being developed as part of this application. Any future applications by the college to expand its land/buildings whereby the hedge would be removed would need to be considered at that time.
83. The Ecologist shares the concerns of the Wildlife Trust with regards to the potential loss of Skylark habitat which is a UK and Suffolk Priority species and has asked the applicant to provide mitigation in the form of two Skylark nest plots at another location away from the application site. The applicant owns land in the adjacent field and the Ecologist agrees that this would provide a suitable area to mitigate for the loss of the existing habitat. As the land is in the ownership of the applicant and is shown with a blue line around it, this matter can be suitably controlled by the use of planning conditions.
84. The Suffolk Wildlife Trust has raised concerns over the management of the open space areas, particularly the sustainable drainage system within the site and what impact this will have on the ecology that establishes within it. The Council is not intending to adopt the landscaped areas within the site, but through a S106 agreement is requesting that the developer sets up a management company who will look after the open spaces and landscaped areas within the site, for the benefit of the new residents of the site and to ensure that its ecological value is retained and enhanced in future years.
85. The Wildlife Trust has also raised concerns about the fact that the lighting from the site could have a negative impact on the landscape and biodiversity, however it is considered that this can be controlled by a suitable condition if planning permission is granted for this proposal.
86. 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 a Grade 2 and as such it is defined as best and most versatile agricultural land and as such the requirements of paragraph 112 of the NPPF apply to the determination of this scheme. Paragraph 112 does not preclude the development of land classified as best and most versatile agricultural land; it requires local authorities in making decisions to take account of the economic and other benefit of the best and most versatile agricultural land. The NPPF states that where significant development is proposed, local authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to the higher quality land.
87. The applicant has submitted an agricultural assessment with his application to allow the council to make the assessment as required in the NPPF. In the assessment the applicant identifies that the parcel of land cannot be considered to be 'significant' as

this is defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 where it states that Natural England should only be consulted on plans involving the loss of 20ha or more of land on grades 1, 2 and 3a. As such, the parcel of land falls below the threshold and, therefore, it is not necessary to sequentially consider other land which is of a poorer quality. It is your officers view that the applicant's position can be supported, and this position has been replicated in other Council's where similar schemes have come forward for consideration. In considering the economic and other benefit of the land, it must be remembered that the parcel of land constitutes only 13ha out of the landowner's total holding of 65ha and as such much of it will remain in production. Having looked at the agricultural land classifications for Mid Suffolk, most of the land within the district is classified as 2, 3a and 3b with very little land in the lower categories. As the district is predominantly rural in character it is not considered that the loss of this parcel of land either on its own, or considered cumulatively with the 4 other sites that have been put forwards for development in Thurston, will have a significantly negative impact on agriculture and specifically food production, or on the local economy.

88. The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has been consulted on this scheme and 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 of 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.
89. 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)

90. Both the NPPF and Core Strategy place significant emphasis on safeguarding heritage as an important component of sustainable development.
91. 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*".
92. 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.
93. 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.

94. 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.*”
95. Objections have been received to this scheme by members of the local community on the basis that the proposal is harmful to the setting of Manor Farm Barn which is grade II* listed, and the converted barns to the north of this building which are also grade II listed. Manor Farm lies a significant distance to the east of this site and is separated from the site by a significant number of fields, one of which forms part of the Pigeon Capital application for 200 dwellings.
96. Historic England and the Council’s Heritage Officer have been consulted on the application. Neither Historic England nor the Council’s Heritage Officer has objected to this scheme. The Heritage Officer considers, by virtue of the distance and the orientation of the application site to Manor Farm, that there would be some harm to its setting, but the effect would be low. This is particularly the case if the Pigeon site is taken into consideration as it in effect lies between the application site and the group of listed buildings.
97. In accordance with NPPF paragraphs 129, 132 and 134 in determining this proposal the Council needs to consider whether the identified harm can be avoided or minimised, and whether that harm is outweighed by the public benefits arising from the proposal. It is considered that as the Council does not have a 5 year supply of housing as required by paragraph 47 of the NPPF (the current supply is 3.9 years) that the proposal will help to contribute towards this deficit by providing up to 250 new dwellings which will provide public benefit. The scheme will also deliver 35% of the dwellings as affordable properties to help to meet the need in the locality, and further contributions which cover matters such as an improvement to the library, a contribution towards a new primary school and pre-school facility, the provision of land for the primary school and additional land for the community college as well as CIL monies to facilitate improvements to the doctor’s surgery. The scheme will also contribute towards improvements to the highway network in and around Thurston to ensure that the road network remains safe for its users. The scheme will bring with it public benefits also in the form of construction related jobs and also additional residents to help sustain and grow local services and businesses.
98. As such, it is considered that the public benefits of this scheme are such that outweigh the less than substantial harm that has been identified to the setting of the listed buildings and, therefore, the scheme can be supported on heritage grounds.

99. 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 and this is assessed more appropriately in the reports for both of those applications.

Environment and Flood Risk

100. 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. To deal with surface water, the applicant is proposing a drainage pond within the south western corner of the site with the surface water flow from the site channelled into it.
101. Objections have been received raising concerns that the development of the site may cause localised floods in the area. Anglian Water and the Flood and Water Team at SCC have been consulted on this proposal. Anglian Water has not responded to the consultation request, but the Flood and Water team has advised that they do not object to the scheme subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the scheme to be built in line with the submitted drainage strategy.
102. Due to unprecedented level of growth currently suggested for Thurston, the Environment Agency, 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 Flood and Water team have advised that an increase of 827 dwellings with the mitigation measures proposed by the applicants will not increase flood risk 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.
103. 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

104. 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, then it will cause significant impact on the existing community of Thurston.
105. The Council has now implemented CIL which accordingly takes on board requirements such as open space contribution, NHS and education contributions.

106. As part of this proposal the contributions will be sought under the Council's CIL Scheme for improvements to the following:
- 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.
107. Local residents have made comment 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 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, a new doctor's surgery will not be achieved 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.
108. An objection has also been received on the basis that the scheme will put more pressure on the emergency services in the area. However, it must be remembered when additional dwellings are built, these become the subject of Council Tax. The emergency services levy precepts as part of the Council Tax and these will be used towards providing a level of service that is needed to cater for the needs of the residents of the new housing developments.
109. It has been identified following discussion with the County Infrastructure Officer that there is no capacity in the local primary school to expand and, as such, a contribution of £1,018,598 is required towards the building of a new 420 place two form primary school either on this site or the Pigeon Capital site elsewhere in the village. It has also been suggested that a further £208,325 is required for the provision of a new pre-school, which will be accommodated at the new school to help meet the demand generated by this development. As the Council's 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. This application is one of two in Thurston at present which is proposing to include land for a new school as part of its proposal for residential development, and the County Council is working with both developers to secure both sites. The County Council will decide which of the two sites it prefers in terms of accessibility and has confirmed that it will return the site that it doesn't want to the developer for them to consider in discussion with the Council what alternative use this land may be put to.
110. Objections have been made to this scheme as to what will happen if the new houses are built and occupied before the new school is finished. The County Council has confirmed that whilst the new school is being built, it has been suggested that the existing school 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. 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 using 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.

111. 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.
112. 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. The applicant has, as part of this application, been in discussion with the College and the County Education Authority and is proposing to provide land immediately to the north of the existing playing field to the college to purchase for their use. The County Council has confirmed that there is a need for this land as the college has extended within its existing site over the years onto the external play areas which have resulted in a deficiency. They have confirmed that the parcel of land put forwards by the applicant would help to resolve this issue.
113. As is the case for new education buildings, affordable housing is not part of CIL and members should note that the policy which seeks 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. On this basis, the Council's Strategic Housing Officer has not objected to this proposal.
114. 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.
115. The Local Highway Authority has, as stated earlier in the report, asked for £176,877 as a section 106 contribution to contribute to the applicant's part of the contribution for works to the highway infrastructure. This is sought 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.
116. It is noted that within the application site there is a pond, open space and landscaped areas and concerns have been received from Suffolk Wildlife Trust over how these will be maintained. This will be done via a S106 agreement whereby the developer has to employ a management company to look after this land. There is no proposal for this to be transferred to the Council or the Parish Council as part of this or any of the other 4 schemes.

117. 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.

Other Issues

118. Objections have been made to this scheme on the grounds that there are other more suitable sites elsewhere and that these should be considered first. It must be remembered that each planning application must be considered on its own planning merits and there is no national requirement for a sequential test for preferred housing sites within an area.
119. 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. At face value, this objection is not considered to be material in the consideration of this proposal, although Members are advised that consideration of the scale of development relevant to the existing settlement is something that requires consideration.

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:

- £1,018,598 is required towards the building of a new primary school in Thurston.
- £80,228 towards the cost of the land to provide the new primary school.
- £208,325 is required for the provision of new pre-school facility in Thurston
- £176,877 is required for highway infrastructure works
- Travel Plan Travel Plan Evaluation and Support Contribution - £1,000 per annum from occupation of the 100th dwelling for a minimum of five years.
- Travel Plan Implementation Bond, or cash deposit - £127,975 (£512 per dwelling).
- CIL payments per dwelling built on site.

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

Planning Balance

120. The proposal for residential development on land between Ixworth Road, Barton Road and Mill Lane 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 open agricultural land.
121. 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.

122. 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 in isolation or when considered cumulatively with the 4 other schemes under consideration in the village) does give rise to negative impacts which weigh against the proposal, such as the adverse impact on the quality of the landscape character of the area, the irreplaceable loss of countryside and grade 2 agricultural land, the impact on an area designated as land that is visually important, the less than substantial harm on the setting of listed buildings in the locality and the potentially severe impact on parts of the highway network if not mitigated, it is considered that the benefits that the scheme brings through the provision of 250 new housing, the securing of 35% of which would be affordable properties, contributions towards local infrastructure such as the highways improvements, provision of open space and the new school and land for the secondary school to expand on that the appellant has agreed to contribute, outweighs the negative issues.
123. Significant weight must also be given to the fact that there are no 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.
124. 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.
125. 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 authorities 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.
126. Therefore, it is considered having regards to paragraph 14 of the NPPF that the benefits the proposal would deliver outweigh the negative elements of the scheme. Furthermore, when assessing the proposal against the NPPF as a whole, it is not contrary to its requirements 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 granted planning permission in line with the requirements of paragraph 14.

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

127. 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.

128. 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 the impact on listed buildings.

Identification of any Legal Implications of the decision

129. There are no known legal implications derived from the determination of this application.
130. The application has been considered in respect of the current development plan policies and relevant planning legalisation. Other legislation including the following has 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:

- £1,018,598 is required towards the building of a new primary school in Thurston.
- £80,228 towards the cost of the land to provide the new primary school.
- £208,325 is required for the provision of new pre-school facility in Thurston
- 35% Affordable Housing to be transferred over to a Registered Provider
- To secure the provision of public open space to be managed by a dedicated management company
- £176,877 to secure off site highway improvement works as listed below:
 - Improvements to PRow Thurston 001 between Meadow Lane and Ixworth Road. A contribution of £8889 is required on completion of 50% of the total number of dwellings.
 - Contribution towards provision of pedestrian crossing facilities at Norton Road / Station Hill / Ixworth Road junction. A contribution of £27297 is required on occupation of the first dwelling.

- Contribution towards improvements at the A143 Bury Road / C691 Thurston Road/ C649 Brand Road, junction at Great Barton. A contribution of £86155 is required on commencement of construction work on site.
- Contribution towards safety improvements at the C693 Thurston Road / C692 Thurston Road / C693 New Road including a 40mph speed limit on the C692 Thurston Road. A contribution of £15780 is required on commencement of the first dwelling.
- Extension of the 30mph speed limit to Thurston Rugby Club. A contribution of £8000 is required on commencement of work on site.
- To secure a travel plan in connection with the scheme detailed as follows:
 - Travel Plan Travel Plan Evaluation and Support Contribution - £1,000 per annum from occupation of the 100th dwelling for a minimum of five years, or one year after occupation of the final dwelling, whichever is longest.
 - Travel Plan Implementation Bond, or cash deposit - £127,975 (£512 per dwelling).

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

- 1) Two year time limit for submission of reserved matters (As opposed to the usual 3)
- 2) Reserved matters (outline)
- 3) Existing tree protection
- 4) Construction management agreement
- 5) External lighting
- 6) Commencement period for landscaping
- 7) Protection of birds during construction period
- 8) Works to be carried out in line with the ecological report.
- 9) Archaeology
- 10) Highway Conditions
- 11) Surface water drainage
- 12) Implementation in line with recommendations of the ecological report.
- 13) Fire Hydrant requirements
- 14) Skylark mitigation