



Environment, Landscape, Green and Open Spaces Thurston Parish

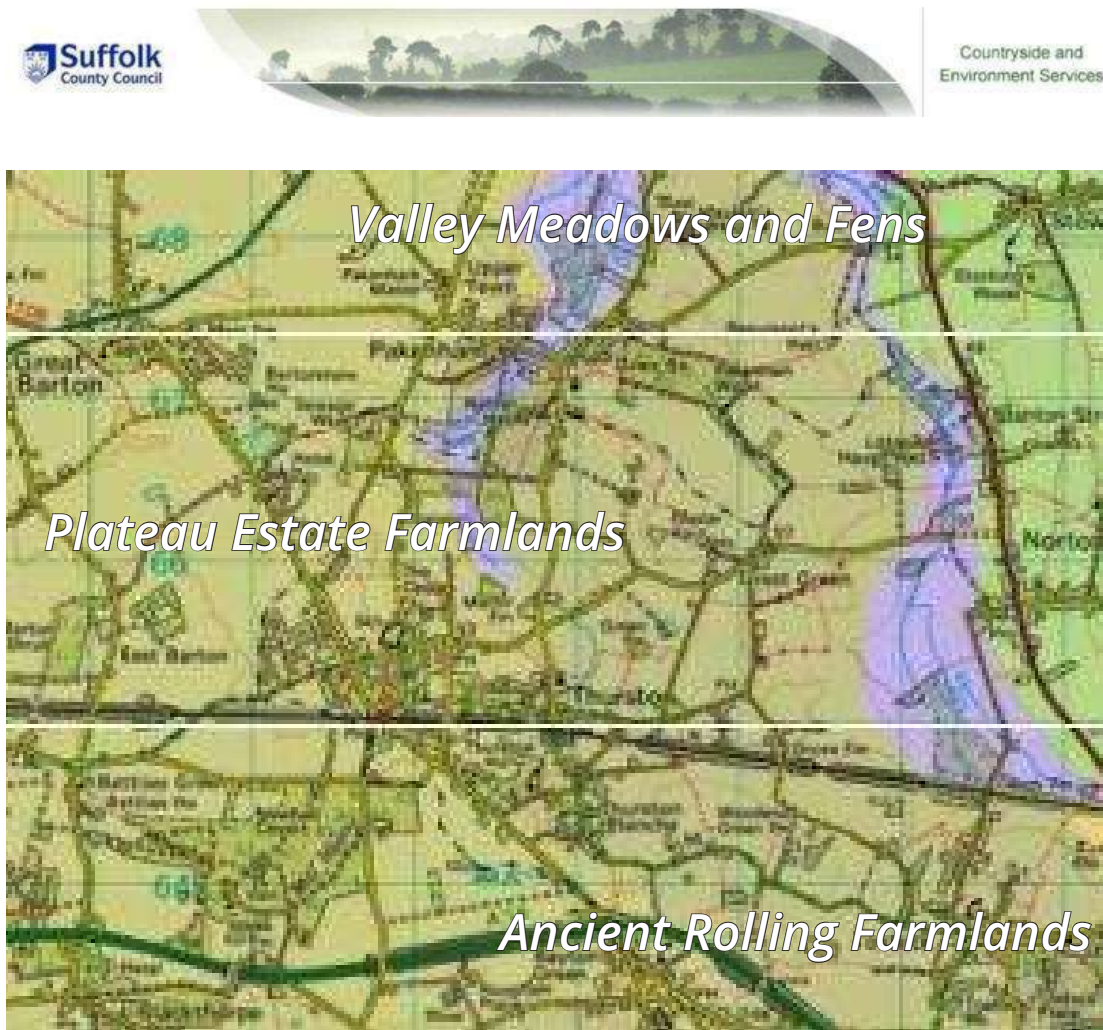
OBJECTIVES

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

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

Landscape

Thurston Parish covers a large area, 861 hectares (the detailed Ordnance Survey map shows the parish boundary and the key features of the area – Appendix 1). The landscape is gently undulating. The Suffolk landscape typology produced by Suffolk County Council Countryside and Landscape Services divides the Thurston area into three landscape typologies: Plateau Estate Farmlands, Ancient Rolling Farmlands and Valley Meadows, and Fens. The map extract below shows the approximate location of the landscape typology areas and a brief description of each is included in Appendix 2. The centre of the village boundary is located on an 'island' of higher ground extending from Thedwastre Hill, Station Hill, Jack Knotts Hill, Mill Road Hill, Millfields, Meadow Lane, St Peter's Church through to School Road.



Thurston Landscape Typology Areas

Views of the Village from Within and Around the Parish Boundary:

The settlement area of the village, for the most part, nestles unseen in the landscape. Areas of trees are prominent and are a valuable feature of the land/topography. Hedgerows, hedgerow trees and scattered woodlands are notable elements of the landscape.



View NE from Fishwick Corner



View N from Mount Road



View NE from Heath Road west end



View SW from Barton Road / Mill Lane



View SE from Mill Lane



View SW from Meadow Lane



View SW from Pakenham Road



View S from Orchard Lane

St Peter's Church is a focal point of the landscape and is situated in the centre of the parish. Although not standing on the highest position in the village, it can be viewed within the landscape throughout the eastern side.



View NW from Barrells Road



View W from Oak Road



View SE from lower churchyard corner



View NW from the top of Birds Road

Views of the Countryside from Within and Around the Parish Boundary:

The village is surrounded by agricultural land with uninterrupted views of the countryside. Their importance to the character of the village should not be overlooked when further development is considered.



View S from the Planche

Close to the A14, on its southern boundary there is a belt of farmland and woodland separating the southern area of the village from this busy, important road.



View SW from Pokeridge corner



View SW from Thurston station bridge corner

Looking towards the west the British Sugar factory at Bury St Edmunds can be seen.



View NW from Heath Road

An expanse of heath land was to be found along the western boundary up until the 1950/60s when several housing developments took place on the area. The estate names reflect the past, Heather, Furze, Genesta and Heath Road. Scots pine trees are typically found here together with a line of mature oak trees on the field and St Edmundsbury boundary edge of Heather Close. Perhaps these are boundary oaks.



View N from Barton Road / Mill Lane

On the heavier land, on the eastern area of the village, field boundaries are formed by deep ditches, most also have hedgerows. Game shoots are popular with the local land owners and pockets of game copses are to be found. Remnants of trees and shelter belts stand where once there was a large commercial orchard on the northern edge of the village and a commercial tree nursery which was located throughout the parish during the second half of the 20th century.



View N from Norton Road / Victoria pub



View NE from the churchyard corner



View N from Orchard Road

To the north of the village is the Nether Hall Estate, part of which lies in the parish of Thurston and part in the parish of Pakenham. A number of wooded areas were planted during the 19th century and some of these, now mature woods, are to be found in Thurston.



View NW from old orchard footpath



View E from the top of Birds Road



View NE from Hollow Lane

Views from the top of St Peter's Church tower:

The church is situated on the eastern side of the main area of housing within the village development boundary and the views from the top of the tower give a perspective of the village from the highest point in the parish.



View S from the church tower

The view south from the church tower shows the number of trees surrounding small paddocks and less dense housing.



View W from the church tower

The view west overlooks the larger area of housing in the centre of the main village, with the steam plume from the sugar factory in Bury St Edmunds visible in the centre distance.



View N from the church tower

To the north can be seen Pakenham church and woods beyond arable fields.

To the east large arable fields are seen from the church tower with Norton visible beyond.



View E from the church tower

Views in the Great Green area:

The hamlet of Great Green on the east of the Parish was once, together with the Church Road area, the heart of the village. During the 11th and 12th centuries and into the 13th and 14th centuries settlements were gathered around edges of commons or greens. Great Green reflects this style with a number of old farmhouses dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries. The far eastern side of the parish is quite separate and not visible from the current main village housing areas.



View N from Barrells Road / Black Fox



View NW from Packway Lane



View E from Tostock Road



View SW from Tostock Road



View NE from Tostock Road

The Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) reserve, Grove Farm, now part of the Black Bourn Valley Reserve is on the eastern edge of the parish. To quote the SWT 'the flowery riverside meadows are already one of the largest in central Suffolk.' The river Black Bourn meanders through the Reserve and forms part of the parish boundary with the villages of Norton and Tostock.



View E from the Black Bourn water meadows

Thurston has been identified as a 'Key Service Centre' in Mid Suffolk Core Strategy and as such considerable development of the village settlement is planned. This will involve redefining the settlement development boundary with its inevitable impact on the surrounding environment. It is important that this is done sensitively to maintain the integrity of the village with minimal effect on the character of the village and the surrounding rural countryside.

Landscape features

Agricultural Land:

Soil types differ across the parish, ranging from boulder clay soils on top of chalk on the east of the village, the Great Green area, to a much lighter sand soil over chalk on the once heath land situated on the western side. In between the soils vary whilst most soils in the parish fall into the Grade 3 classification. High agricultural grade soils are important for food production. The detailed soil description and maps together with the agricultural land classification grading for the area are included in Appendix 3.

The arable land is dominated by cereals. Some sugar beet and the occasional onions and root vegetables are also grown and increasingly oil seed rape. This crop adds a bright yellow colour and a notable smell to the countryside during May. The pictures show some of crops grown in Thurston.



Some agricultural crops grown in Thurston

There is a reasonable area of permanent pasture but very few animals can be seen. Some small flocks of sheep are kept adjacent to Meadow Lane, Barrells Road, Hollow Lane. Occasionally elsewhere in the parish donkeys are kept at Manor Farm, grazing cattle on the Grove Farm water meadows can be seen in the summer, and a mixture of livestock can be found at the Field of Dreams charity farm on Beyton Road. There used to be a dairy cattle herd located at Manor Farm which was instrumental in the establishment of the creamery which continues to produce ice cream. A suckler herd of cattle are kept in the park land at Nether Hall. Most of Thurston's agricultural land is farmed by farmers who do not live in Thurston.

A map showing the approximate extent and distribution of the arable and pasture land in the Thurston parish is included in Appendix 4.



Permanent pasture and livestock farming in Thurston

Other land uses:

There are a number of horses to be found at Millfields, the Church field, Stockhold Green, Hollow Road, Great Green and at Grove Farm making them the most widespread animals to be seen.



Horse paddocks in Thurston

There are some commercial glasshouses remaining from a former plant, fruit and vegetable nursery in Meadow Lane, a plant nursery, garden centre and café at Great Green and a farm shop stall at the Field of Dreams charity farm. There is also a small area of allotments on Barrells Road which is inadequate to meet the local demand. There are a number of surviving orchard trees of historical interest mainly in private gardens. Throughout the parish there are a number of field areas that are no longer used for agriculture which are kept as grassland or left to become scrub areas making them valuable habitats for wildlife.



Rough ground in the Great Green area



The Field of Dreams Charity Farm



Allotments, Barrells Road

Trees:

Trees are a notable element in the landscape and Thurston has many splendid specimens. Oaks feature throughout the parish with many fine examples to be found. Two exceptional veteran pollard oak trees are found on Pepper Lane and at the entrance to Green Farm on Oak Road. There is a fine row of veteran oak trees along Church Road. The village sign depicts the oak tree and both the Parish Council and the New Green Trust use the oak as a symbol, thus showing the importance of this tree within the Village.



Veteran oaks along Church Road



Veteran pollarded oak, Pepper Lane

Scots pine trees are also found on the lighter soils in the west and southern aspects of the village. St Peter's churchyard has a fine collection of trees.



Scots pine, Beyton Road



A variety of trees near St Peter's Church

There are two Black Poplar trees in the Great Green area, these are on record at Ipswich, as part of the Suffolk Biological Records.



Black Poplar off Oak Road



Smooth Leaf Elm in Great Green

There used to be many large English Elm trees but most were lost in the 1960-70s due to Dutch Elm disease which is spread by the Elm Bark beetle. This had a dramatic effect on the landscape but a related species, the smooth leaved elm also known as East Anglian elm, continues to survive. A group can be found on the northern side of Norton Road as well as single specimens in other parts of Thurston. The beetles that spread Dutch Elm disease have distinct feeding preferences for certain species of elm, so even susceptible elms can sometimes escape the disease if they are not attractive to the beetles. (Forest Research).

There are no major woods in Thurston but there are a number of smaller areas of woodland. These include Stedman's Wood off Hollow Lane, an area of woodland near Planche Hall and several plantations are to be found on the Nether Hall Estate, including Coronation belt, Skeleton plantation and Lady Green plantation.



Stedman's wood from the N



Lady Greene plantation from the NW



Poplars from Hollow Lane

There are a number of lines of Lombardy poplar or alder trees planted as shelter belts throughout the parish, many of which were planted to protect orchard and tree nursery areas.



Myatt's wood from the churchyard

Areas of woodland planted in more recent times are Coopers Wood, on the Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserve, planted in 2001 to celebrate the generosity of Laura Cooper who bequeathed Grove Farm to the SWT. The copse of native trees that is situated on the footpath on the north side of St Peter's Church was planted in the 1980s by the Myatt family. Many trees were planted in 1990 on the open space area of New Green.

A map showing the approximate extent and distribution of the woodland, wood pasture/parkland and rough ground in the Thurston parish is included in Appendix 5. Areas of woodland and parkland identified as Priority Habitats that surround the village development boundary are detailed in Appendix 6.

Hedgerows:

Hedgerows are a key feature in the structural landscape. The extensive removal of the hedgerows that took place in the latter part of the 20th century has now largely ceased and hedgerow planting has increased



A variety of hedgerows in Thurston

Thurston hedgerow survey was started in the year 2000, as part of the Suffolk Hedgerow Survey. Over 300 hedges in Thurston were recorded. Many contained 5-7 different species of shrubs and in a number 8 and more were found. 'Hooper's Rule' is an established way of estimating the age of a hedgerow. By counting the number of species in 30 metre stretches of hedgerow, each species represents 100 years. Some of the hedgerows in Thurston were estimated to be over 800 years old. Elm is prominent with field maple and dogwood more common on the heavier soils to be found to the east and north of the Parish. Hedgerow trees are an important part of a hedge and these too were recorded in the survey. The flora found on the roadside verges was also noted; some of the species recorded included lady's bedstraw, field scabious, common figwort and many more. The over-management of roadside verges should be discouraged as this is an important habitat for wild flowers.



Hedges and ditches on the heavier soils of Great Green

In hedges of the Planche area various types of 'cherry' plum can be found.



Cherry plums

Hedgerows, together with trees and green spaces, provide habitats for insects, birds, mammals, reptiles and also provide connecting links within adjacent countryside. The white-letter hairstreak butterfly has been spotted on a number of occasions on an elm rich hedge which could be at risk if a proposed development takes place. The White-letter Hairstreak butterfly is one of our more elusive butterflies. Elm is its sole food plant. Elm plants survive better in hedges because it is thought the elm bark beetle attacks trees after they have reached a certain height.

Carbon is stored in hedgerows, trees and green spaces. They can also contribute to reducing the levels of chemicals entering water systems. It is important that during any possible development the native hedgerows should be retained to preserve these valuable features.



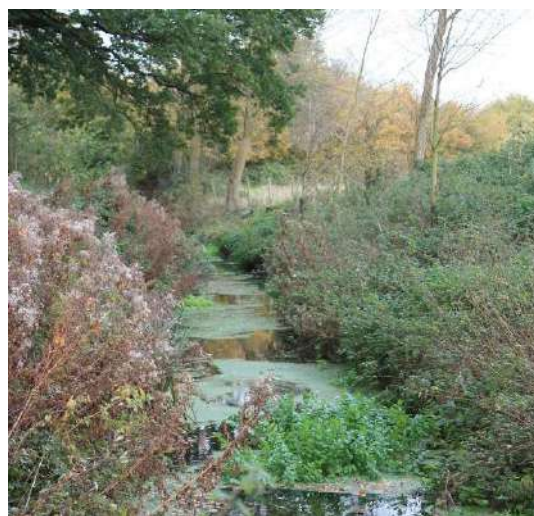
Elm hedges, Sandpit Lane



The White-letter Hairstreak

Rivers, Streams and Ponds:

The River Black Bourn forms the boundary on the east of the parish.



The Black Bourn

An occasional stream runs from Beyton, beside Beyton Road, and crosses under the Planche area of Church Road and Pepper Lane. From here it goes across Thurston House fields to the back of the Firs, under Church Road once again, by Woodlands to the Laurels. It then flows beside Stoney Lane, and across the fields behind St Peter's Church to Norton Road, under the road to Manor Farm, on to Nether Hall and the Pakenham water meadows.



Seasonal stream, Stoney Lane

This stream is governed by the amount of rainfall. At times of high rain fall flooding can occur, particularly in Church Field where it goes under the Norton Road. Barton Mere is said to be a marker for the water table for the surrounding area and when levels are high flooding is also believed to occur at Fishwick corner.



The Stream Valley by Manor Farm

A number of ponds are to be found in Thurston mainly on the heavier land to the north and east of the village.



Pond in copse at Millfields



Pond in the Grove Farm water meadows

Green Farm has a very large pond, home to many frogs, toads, grass snakes etc. The Ordnance Survey has listed 53 ponds in Thurston. On the Suffolk Wildlife Reserve, Grove Farm, the many ponds scattered across the farm have been restored and more have been dug to encourage the local population of great crested newts to increase and spread.

Green and Open Spaces:

Through the Neighbourhood Questionnaire, many people remarked on the appreciation of open spaces and countryside location. There were many comments that these need to be retained for residents and reciprocated in the design of any new developments. Linking open spaces, to make 'green corridors', is beneficial for both of people and wildlife. Heather Close, Genesta Drive and Furze Close, housing developments that took place in the 1950s/1960s have very generous 'greens' planted with trees including Scots pine.



Open spaces in residential areas of Thurston

The New Green Open Space and Conservation Area is an eight-acre site and, together with the Community Centre, is managed by the New Green Trust. The site was landscaped and planted during 1989/1990. It contains many trees, a children's play area and a baseball hoop. The area is used a great deal by people enjoying picnics, playing ball games etc. There are annual visits from a fun fair/circus and it is used for the occasional village function. In the bottom corner of the main car park for the Centre there is a youth shelter which is popular with some younger members of the community.



Annual funfair on Open Space



New Green Wildlife Area

The wildlife area is surrounded by a native species hedge, there is a large shallow pond with a butyl liner, a number of native trees and the grass in this area is cut once a year in the early autumn. This area was designed and developed in 1990. The idea was put forward by the local wildlife WATCH group and together with help from residents and students from both the Upper School and the Primary School the area was made. But to quote from the answers received from residents in response to the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire 'conservation area /wildlife pond on parkland needs completely re-designing and a group set up responsible for its upkeep'.

A map showing the approximate extent and distribution of woodland, parkland green and open spaces in the Thurston parish is included in Appendix 5. Areas designated as Local Green Spaces within the village development boundary are detailed in Appendix 7.

Recreation areas:

The Recreation Field lies between the Primary School and the Church. This area belongs to the residents of Thurston and is managed by the Parish Council. Football and cricket matches take place here and the Primary School Children are also allowed to play there. There is also a children's play area, a sports pavilion and a modern Under Fives building.



The Recreation Field

Whilst there may be good reason for new facilities, it is paramount that heritage areas and green spaces in the village are protected to maintain the village character and continue to provide an environmental benefit for all.

Additional recreation facilities besides the New Green facilities and Community College facilities include an area in Heath Road which is managed by the Parish Council and contains a children's play area.



Children's Play Area, Heath Road



Thurston Rugby Club, Ixworth Road

There is also an area devoted to the rugby club on the north of the village along the Pakenham Road. All but one of the clubs organizing outdoor team sports report pressure on facilities.

The recreational areas are included on the map showing open spaces in the Thurston parish in Addendum 5. Areas designated as Community Open Spaces within the village development boundary are detailed in Appendix 8.

Footpaths:

A few years ago, an excellent footpath map for Thurston was produced by the Thurston Footpath Group in conjunction with the Parish Council. Details of five circular walks are given ranging from one hour to six hours for a walk combining all five. The network of footpaths, together with some walking on minor roads can lead into all the surrounding villages.



Footpath looking north from Stoney Lane

The residents of Thurston value this amenity. To quote from responses to the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire: 'Thurston is surrounded by beautiful, easily accessible countryside – we should encourage its use.' 'With our excellent footpaths and cycle path the nearby countryside is easily accessible.' Few, if any, of the Thurston footpaths that are to be found in the countryside are accessible for people who have physical limitations such as mobility and sight. Future plans should consider improving accessibility at least to some of the most used footpaths. Walking plays a key role in maintaining and improving health and quality of life and is often more sustainable and cost effective than some other initiatives.



Thurston has a variety of footpaths

St Peter's Church and Churchyard:

The churchyard provides a haven for a number of wildflowers, insects and birds. Part of the churchyard is not mown as part of the regular regime but left until late summer when it is cut. Meadow saxifrage, cowslips, and yellow figwort are just a few of the flowers to be found in this habitat. On the gravestones mosses, lichens and liverworts can be seen.



St Peter's Church



St Peter's churchyard has a fine collection of yew trees, some thought to be over 200 year old. There are also a number of horse chestnut trees to be found in the churchyard and along the recreation ground footpath. Unfortunately, all the horse chestnut trees are suffering from the leaf miner moth.

There are two species of bats that roost in the church, the common Pipistrelle and possibly the Natterer's bat. The Bat Conservation Trust states 'the detrimental effect of artificial lighting is most clearly seen in bats.' Thus it is important that developers take in to account all wildlife when installing artificial lighting.



Consecration of the churchyard, 2017

The current churchyard is rapidly running out of space and in 2016 an acre of land was provided to meet this need. There will be a green burial site included in the new churchyard.

Grove Farm Wildlife area:

The land is now part of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust Black Bourn Valley and is situated on the east of Thurston parish. Grove Farm was bequeathed to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust in 1995 by Laura Cooper. Miss Cooper came to Grove Farm as a Land Army girl during WW2 and stayed working on the farm after the war.



A farm of 155 acres it is a mixture of arable farmland, meadows and ponds. A farmer farms the clay-loam arable land and during the summer months the meadows are grazed by cattle. Wide margins of uncultivated land are kept around the arable fields to encourage wildlife. New ponds have recently been created in this clay soil and in 2001, a new woodland of mixed native species, called Cooper's Copse, was planted.





Views of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Black Bourn Valley

Dense hedgerows and scrub provide excellent habitats for many different species of birds including yellowhammers, linnets, song thrushes and blackcaps. Barn owls and buzzards are also to be seen, as well as, during the summer months, skylarks and lapwings. Wild flowers such as marsh marigold, cuckoo flower, ragged robin and early marsh orchid are a few of the plants to be found on this site.



The farmhouse, Grove Farm Cottages and about eleven acres are privately owned. The river Black Bourn meanders along the edge of this Suffolk Wildlife Reserve and forms the boundary with the parish of Norton. The parish boundary for Tostock is also to be found here.

Wildlife:

In addition to the wide range of flora and fauna mentioned previously, many other wild animals can be seen in Thurston. Muntjac are the most common deer, though roe deer are also to be found. Stoats, weasels and foxes although shy animals are present as are hedgehogs, but numbers have declined considerably in recent years. Frogs, toads, grass snakes, slow worms (a legless lizard) are also occasionally seen. There are toad crossing signs on Oak Road. Many different birds, garden birds, farmland birds and birds of prey as well as insects and invertebrates are evidence that Thurston is rich in its diversity of wildlife.



Roe deer at Great Green



Burnet moth on Field Scabious



Grass snake - Stockhold Green



Bullfinch - Stockhold Green



Cowslip & Meadow Saxifraga – Churchyard



Fly Agaric mushroom



Pyramidal orchid by Birds Road

Other Environment features:

Thurston is situated in an agricultural area and alongside rail and major road thoroughfares; consequently, it is affected by noise, smells and disruption that some may consider undesirable.



Rail crossing at Thurston station



View of A14 from Hollow Lane

Agricultural influences include: large farm machinery which can hold up traffic and leave mud on the road, smells from pig husbandry, muck spreading, oilseed rape crops and harvesting operations. The sugar beet factory in Bury St Edmunds opens in September and if the wind is in a certain direction the smell reaches Thurston.



Potato harvesting, Meadow Lane

Horses and wildlife, especially deer, on rural roads can be a hazard which does lead occasionally to accidents.

In many parts of the village a constant drone from traffic on the A14 dual carriageway is an obvious background noise. The railway line cuts through the middle of the village and can be heard and seen. Some freight trains can be more than forty sections long. The frequency and size of the trains is set to significantly increase over the coming years.



A sky picture "painted" by a light aircraft

Private aircraft fly from the Rougham airfield can be seen and heard frequently over Thurston. Additionally, Thurston is on the flight path of large aircraft from USAF and RAF military airfields and occasionally is affected by low flying aircraft and helicopters on training exercises.

Light pollution is an issue particularly in built up areas as it is detrimental to wildlife, specifically bats, in the countryside.

Minor flooding can occur at various areas in the village after heavy rain.

References

A Guide to Thurston - Thurston Parish Council.

A History of Thurston - Anthony M Breen MA 1998, supported by Thurston Parish Council.

Aspects of Village Life, Thurston, Suffolk 1800-1970 - Thurston History Group.
A copy of this book was given to every house in Thurston to mark the year 2000.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Plan (SHELAA) - August 2017.

Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance – August 2015.

National Character Area (NCA) Profile 83, NCA Profiles, Natural England.

Suffolk Landscape Character Typology – Suffolk County Council Countryside and Environmental Services - <http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/default.aspx>

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Suffolk Hedgerow Survey 1998–2012 Guy Ackers – Suffolk Coastal District Council's Greenprint Forum.

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Acknowledgments

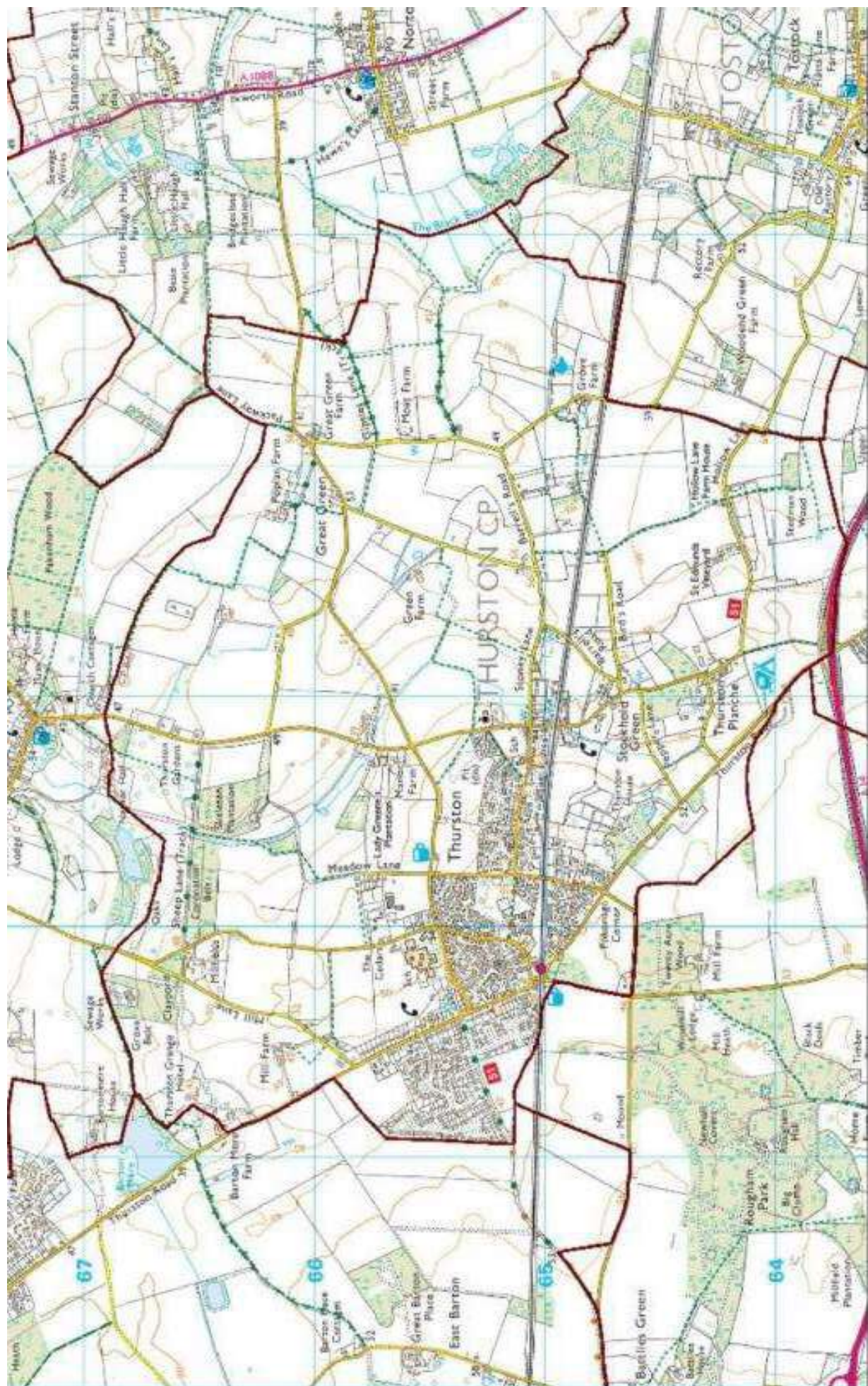
Photograph of the White-letter Hairstreak butterfly is courtesy of Trevor Goodfellow.

Photographs courtesy of Barbara and David Morris, Richard Fawcett and Richard Sadler.

Appendices

- 1. Ordnance Survey map of Thurston Parish.**
- 2. Suffolk Landscape Map – Landscape Character Typology definitions.**
- 3. Thurston Land Classification and Soils – Andrew Adams.**
- 4. Thurston arable and pasture land distribution map.**
- 5. Thurston woodland, parkland, green space and rough land distribution map.**
- 6. Village Priority habitats.**
- 7. Local Green Spaces.**
- 8. Community Open Spaces.**

Appendix 1. Ordnance Survey Map of Thurston Parish



Map produced by MAGIC on 24 October 2017.
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Appendix 2. Suffolk Landscape Map – Landscape Typology definitions:

Plateau estate farmlands

A landscape of large regular fields with small woodlands on light loamy soils.

- Flat landscape of light loams and sandy soils.
- Large scale rectilinear field pattern.
- Network of tree belts and coverts.
- Large areas of enclosed former heathland.
- 18th, 19th & 20th century landscape parks.
- Clustered villages with a scattering of farmsteads around them.
- Former airfields.
- Vernacular architecture is often 19th century estate type of brick and tile.

Ancient rolling farmlands

A rolling landscape of medium clay soils studded with blocks of ancient woodland.

- Rolling arable landscape of chalky clays and loams.
- Dissected widely, and sometimes deeply, by river valleys.
- Field pattern of ancient random enclosure. Regular fields associated with areas of heathland enclosure.
- Hedges of hawthorn and elm with oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees.
- Substantial open areas created for airfields and by post WWII agricultural improvement.
- Scattered with ancient woodland parcels containing a mix of oak, lime, cherry, hazel, hornbeam, ash and holly.
- Network of winding lanes and paths, often associated with hedges, create visual intimacy.
- Dispersed settlement pattern of loosely clustered villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads of mediaeval origin.
- Farmstead buildings are predominantly timber-framed, the houses colour-washed and the barns blackened with tar. Roofs are frequently tiled, though thatched houses can be locally significant.
- Villages often associated with village greens or the remains of greens.

Valley meadows & fens

Flat valley floor grasslands on silty and peat soils with small valley fens.

- Flat, narrow, river valley bottoms.
- Deep peat or mixtures of peat and sandy deposits.
- Ancient meres within the valley bottoms & important fen sites.
- Small grassland fields, bounded by dykes running at right angles to the main river.
- Sparse scattering of small alder carr & plantation woodlands.
- Part of a wider estate type landscape.
- Largely unsettled, except for the occasional farmstead.
- Drier fields turned over to the production of arable crops.
- Cattle grazing now often peripheral to commercial agriculture.
- Loss to scrub encroachment, tree planting and horse paddocks.

For further details see Suffolk Landscape Typology Assessments.

Appendix 3. Thurston Land Classification and Soils:

Thurston parish has an area of 861 hectares with a built up area of around 130 hectares. The difference between these two areas, being 731 hectares, is mainly agricultural with a land use of predominately arable cropping including high value vegetable crops. This land use reflects the agricultural land quality and soils of the area and also the availability of irrigation water to some areas within the parish.

The quality of agricultural land varies from place to place based on a combination of soil, climatic and site conditions. The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) provides a standardised and robust method for assessing the quality of land to enable informed choices to be made about land use priorities and natural resource protection.

The ALC system classifies land into 5 Grades with Grade 1 being the highest. Grade 3 subdivided into Grade 3a and Grade 3b. The best and most versatile land for which planning policy guidance seeks to give protection is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a. This is the land which is most flexible, productive and efficient in response to inputs and which can best deliver future crops for food and non-food uses such as biomass fibres and pharmaceuticals. Estimates are that Grades 1 and 2 together form about 21% of all farmland in England and Subgrade 3a also covers about 21%.

Parish level information is not available for agricultural land grading but based on the generalised 1:250000 mapping scale Thurston parish comprises around 15% Grade 2 land compared with 18% for mid Suffolk and 27% for Suffolk (29% if Grade 1 land is also included). Thurston and the mid-Suffolk district do not have any Grade 1 land so Grade 2 is the most valuable within the parish. Details of land grading within the county and district are included in the table 1 below and an extract of the 1:250000 scale map is included at Map 1.

The climate of the area does not impose any limitation on the grading of the land although the availability of water through irrigation to some parts of the parish does improve flexibility, consistency of crops grown especially potatoes and onions.

Site factors such as gradient, micro relief are not restricting to agricultural land use for the parish although flood risk will impact on low lying land on the eastern side.

Table 1 – Agricultural Land Grading

	Suffolk		Mid Suffolk	
Grade	Hectares	%	Hectares	%
Grade 1	4,568	1.2	0	0.0
Grade 2	95,686	25.1	15,947	18.3
Grade 3	195,314	51.3	67,931	78.0
Grade 4	47,143	12.4	2,404	2.8
Grade 5	1,164	0.3	0	0.0
Non-Agricultural	25,900	6.8	510	0.6
Urban	4,568	1.2	316	0.4

Within the parish five differing soil types or associations can be identified. These soils are shown on the soils map, Map 2, below with detailed descriptions and other information given in table 2. Broadly the soils can be divided between the clay textured soils located on the higher land to the east of the parish and sandier textured soils on the western side.

The importance of soils is recognised within the planning system and specifically referenced within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The importance is to recognise that soils are a natural resource that perform a range of functions and, therefore, should be used and managed sustainably as part of land use decisions.

A Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils for Construction Sites gives guidance on the identification, planning and use of soils in construction projects. This document is a source of good practice which should be adopted for any developments that might be carried out or projects that involve the use and management of soil resources.

Key Points

- The parish contains areas of high quality land which is a non-renewable natural resource.
- The proportion of high quality land is lower than Mid Suffolk district and Suffolk County.
- High quality agricultural land is most flexible, productive and efficient in response to inputs and can best deliver future crops for food and non-food uses such as biomass fibres and pharmaceuticals.
- The parish contains a range of soil types which define the land use and as a natural resource contribute to a range of functions and sustainable development objectives.

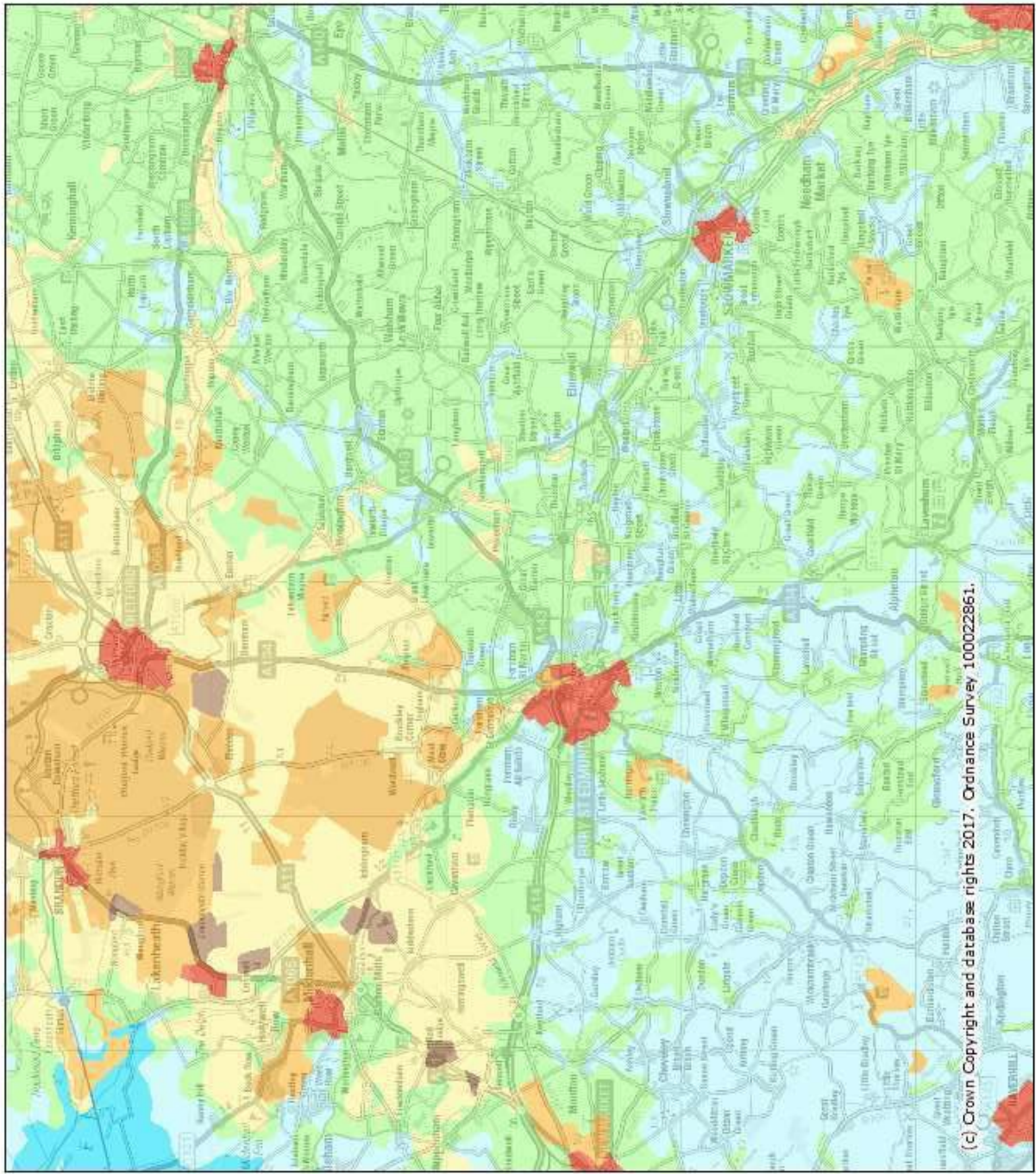
Table 2 - Soil types within Thurston parish

Soil Association	Reference Number	Brief description ¹	Detailed description ²	Land Use	Limitation and risks	Possible ALC
Swafham Prior	5	Freely draining lime-rich loamy soil	Well drained calcareous coarse and fine loamy soils over chalk rubble. Some similar shallow soils. Deep non-calcareous loamy soils in places. Evidence of striped and polygonal patterning locally.	Arable including high value crops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil moisture, droughty. Vulnerable to leaching of nitrate Surface capping and erosion 	2
Worlington	11	Freely draining sandy Breckland soils	Deep well drained sandy soils in places very acid with subsurface hard pan. Widespread small scale polygonal soil patterns	Arable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil moisture, droughty Vulnerable to leaching of nitrate and pesticides. Vulnerable to wind erosion 	3 (a)
Ashley	8	Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage	Fine loamy over clayey soils with slowly permeable sub soils and slight seasonal waterlogging. Some calcareous and non-calcareous slowly permeable soils	Arable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drainage Runoff and surface capping leading to erosion 	3 (a)
Beccles 1	18	Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base rich loamy and clayey soils	Slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loamy over clayey soils associated with similar clay soils.	Arable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drainage Surface capping/compaction leading to overland flows 	3 (a)
Thames	20	Loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater	Stoneless mainly calcareous clayey soils affected by groundwater. Flat land	Grassland with some arable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drainage Flooding Increased risks of pollution with arable cropping 	3b/4

¹ Soilscales 1:250000 scale simplified soils dataset covering England and Wales. Cranfield University sponsored by DEFRA

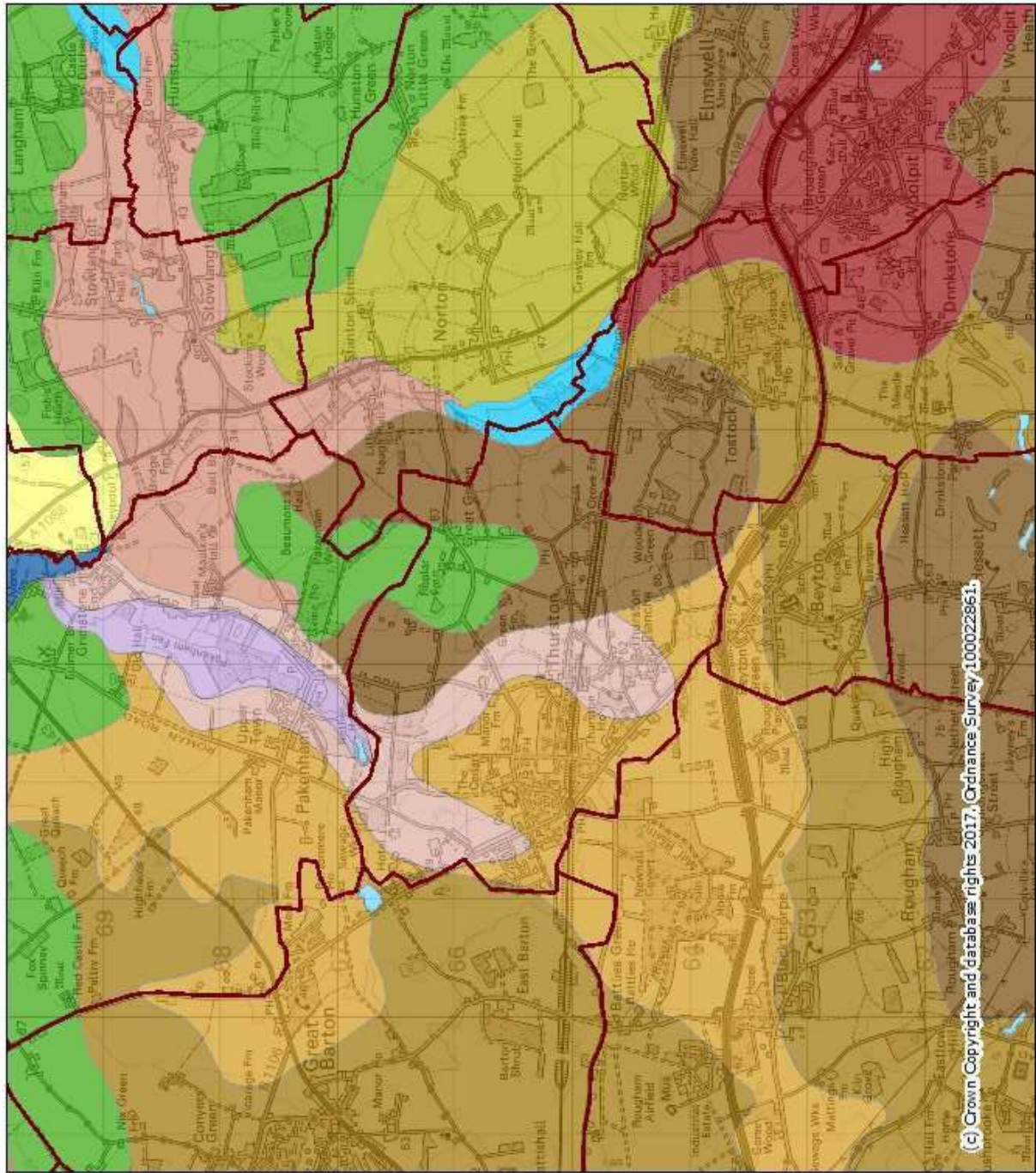
² Soils and their use in Eastern England. 1:250000 scale map and Bulletin. Soil Survey of England and Wales 1984

MAGiC Thurston Agricultural Land Classification

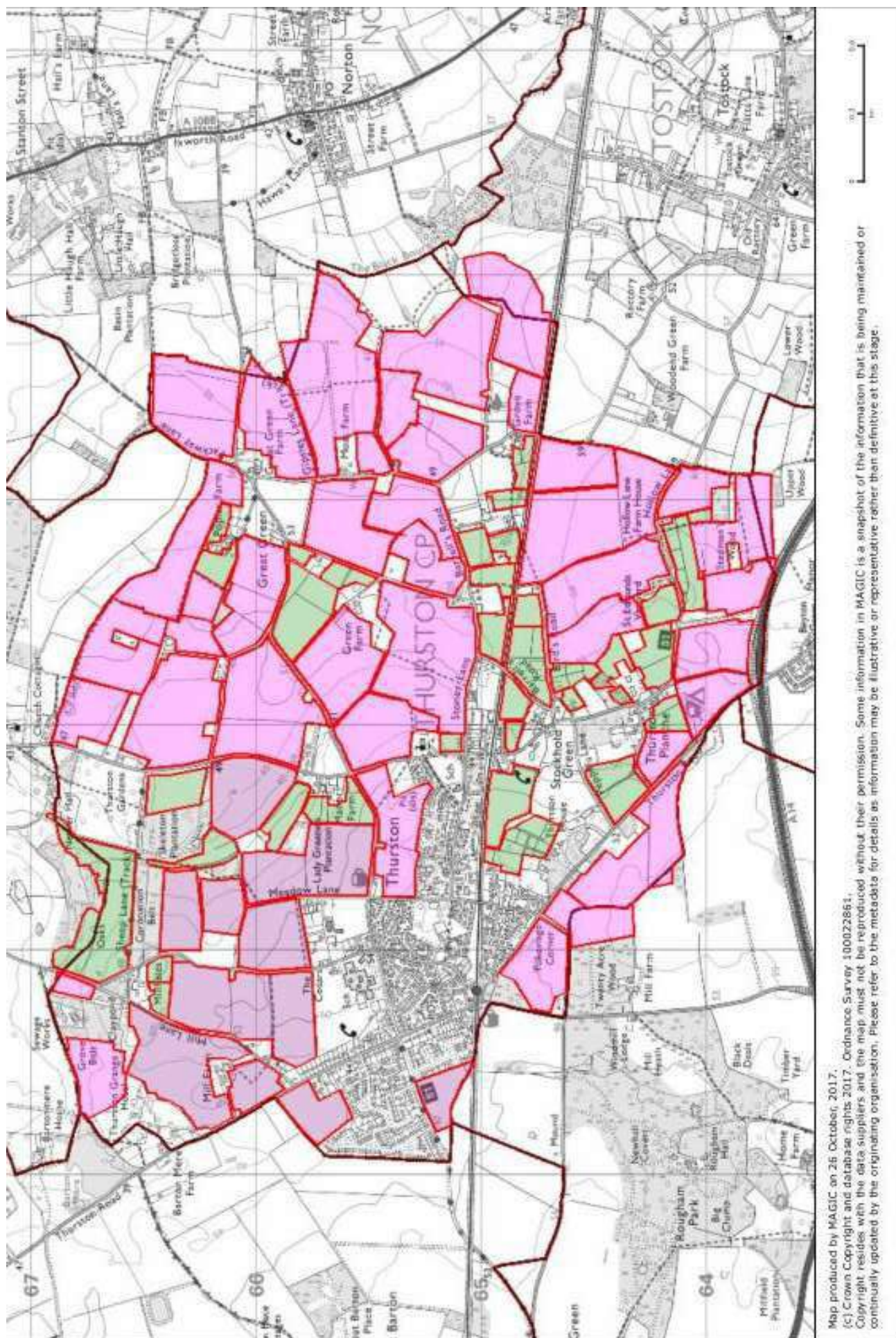


MAGiC

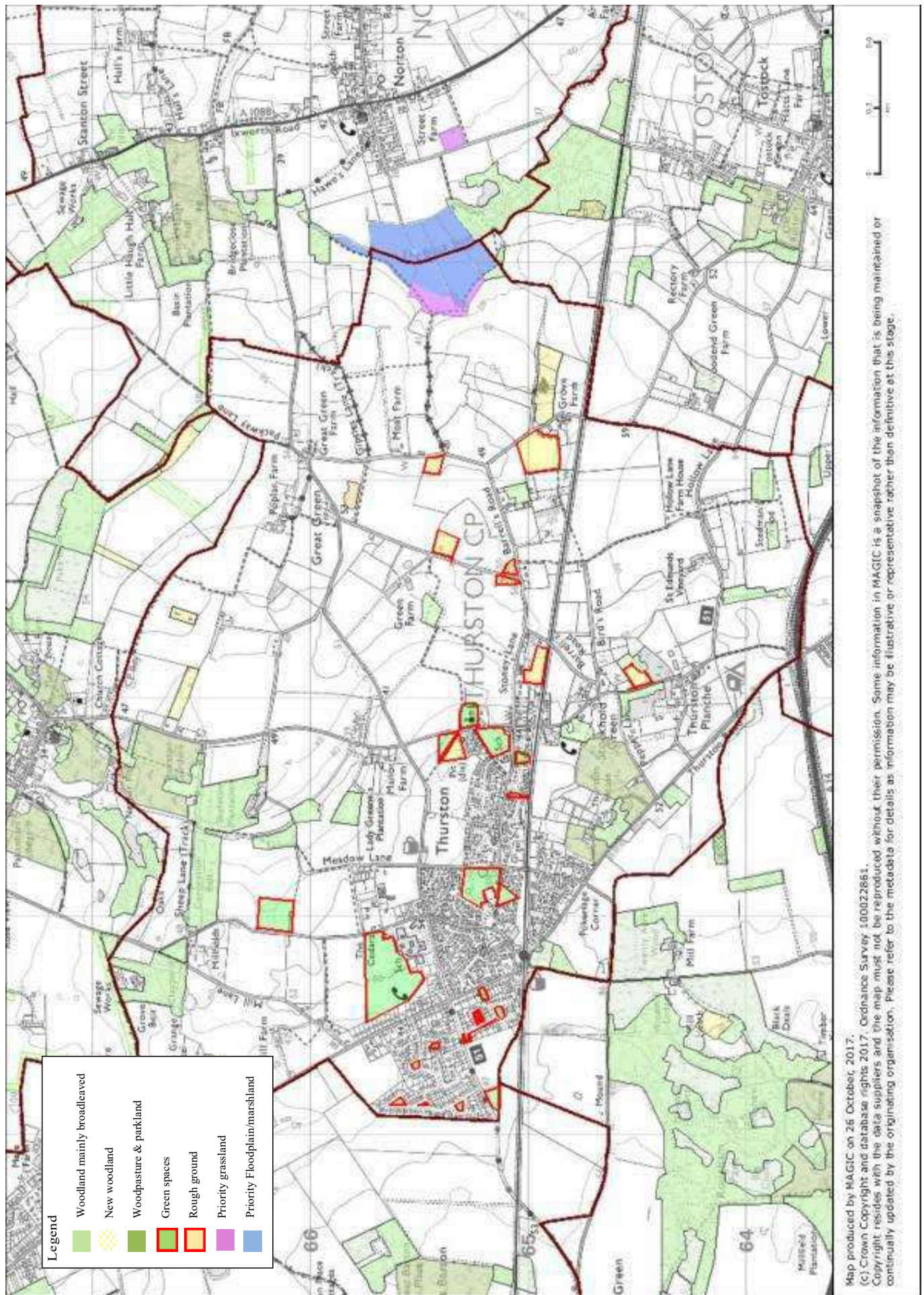
Soil Types



Appendix 4. Thurston arable and pasture land distribution map



Appendix 5. Thurston woodland, parkland, green space and rough land distribution map



Appendix 6. Village Priority Habitats

The following areas are village priority habitats surrounding the Thurston development boundary:

- 1. Thurston Place Gardens**
- 2. Thurston House Parkland**
- 3. Rainbow Cottage Wood**
- 4. Beyton Road Wood**
- 5. Planche Wood**
- 6. Masons Field**
- 7. Lady Greene's Plantation**
- 8. Meadow Lane Footpath Copse**
- 9. Thurston Stream Valley Copse**
- 10. Ixworth Road Copse**
- 11. Coronation Belt Woodland**
- 12. Skeleton Plantation Woodland**
- 13. Myatt's Wood**
- 14. Norton Road Elm Tree Copse**

1. Thurston Place Gardens

These gardens and parkland that surround Thurston Place on Beyton Road were possibly designed by the well-known botanist, Nathaniel Shirley Hodson, who established the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds. Mr Hodson is shown, in the 1841 Tithe Map, as owning the property and several plots of land nearby but did not live in the house. The area of about 25,740 sq. metres is listed as Priority Habitat part of which is deciduous woodland and the remainder wood pasture and parkland.



2. Thurston House Parkland

This extensive, mainly parkland, area surrounding the Grade II listed Thurston House on the Beyton Road extends to about 88,130 sq. metres. It is listed as Priority Habitat but also contains an area of deciduous woodland. In the area there are a number of veteran oak trees with one being recorded as the oldest oak tree in the district. The Thurston stream valley which runs from Beyton to Pakenham Fen also goes through the grounds.



3. "Rainbow Cottage" Wood

Owned by Rougham Estate, this is an important wooded area, containing many mature conifers, on the southern edge of the village situated opposite the Railway station and Petrol Station/Convenience Store. This area of about 17,700 sq. metres provides a wildlife habitat and contains a sunken area. It is a key feature in the landscape.



4. Beyton Road Wood

This is an area of mature woodland of about 7,780 sq. metres situated alongside the Beyton Road on the southern edge of the village. It contains some mature broadleaved trees and coppiced hazel trees. It is listed as a Priority Habitat.



5. Planche Wood

Originally Glebe land this area on the north side of Planche Hall contains some mature woodland, listed as a Priority Habitat, as well as a cleared area that is used as a horse paddock. The area is about 18,070 sq. metres and contains mainly broadleaved trees which are home to a rookery. The grounds of Planche Hall also contain some fine specimen trees.



6. Masons Field

There is an area, once Glebe land, of mature woodland listed as Priority Habitat but the bulk of the field was planted in the 1980s with specimen broadleaved trees and conifers. Also a dense, mature conifer plantation can be seen in the western corner and other areas of silver birch. The whole area of about 12,630 sq. metres has been left wild and as such is a wildlife haven.



7. Lady Greene's Plantation

This is an area of mature woodland of about 14,980 sq. metres situated adjacent to a development area on the north of the settlement boundary. Two generations of the Greene family lived at Nether Hall during the latter part of the 1800s and into the early 1900s. A number of woods were planted by the occupiers of Nether Hall.



8. Meadow Lane Footpath Copse

This area of woodland which contains both conifer and mixed broadleaved trees extents to about 13,870 sq. metres. The well-used footpath that leads to Sheep Lane and Pakenham from Meadow Lane winds through this wood into the stream valley that forms a green corridor which cuts through Thurston from Beyton to Pakenham Fen.



9. Thurston Stream Valley Copse

Adjacent to the Meadow Lane footpath copse is an area of woodland listed as Priority Habitat woodland through which the Thurston stream runs. The area contains mainly mixed broadleaved trees, includes a pool area to the southern end and extents to about 11,290 sq. metres. This is an isolated area and as such a valuable wildlife habitat.



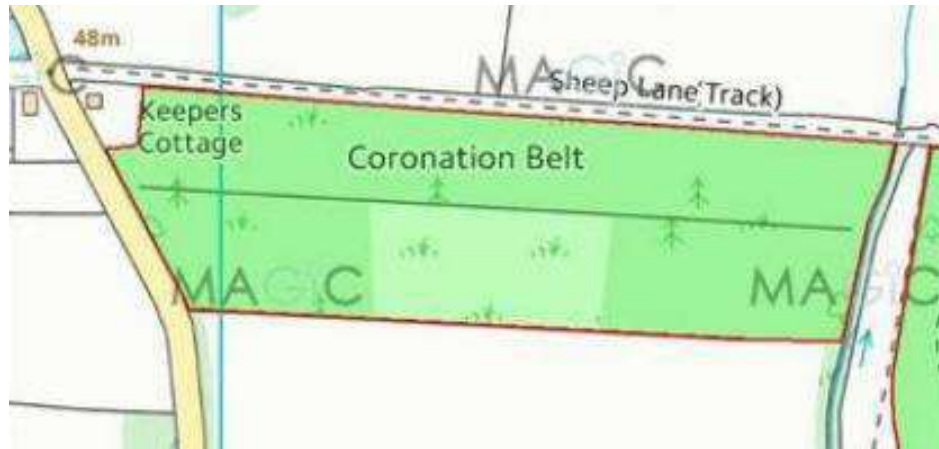
10. Ixworth Road Copse

A small area of woodland of about 950 sq. metres contains a dry pond area, borders land for housing and is adjacent to the rugby club ground. This natural area needs to be retained to provide a screen and buffer to any new development.



11. Coronation Belt Woodland

This area of woodland bounds the village on the north side and provides an important separation, south of the western half of Sheep Lane, from the Nether Hall estate and Pakenham. It is primarily a broadleaved plantation which stretches from the Ixworth Road to the Thurston stream valley and covers an area of about 52,140 sq. metres.



12. Skeleton Plantation Woodland

This area of woodland bounds the village on the north side and provides an important separation south of the eastern half of Sheep Lane from the Nether Hall estate and Pakenham. It is primarily a broadleaved plantation which stretches from west of the Pakenham Road to the Thurston stream valley and covers an area of about 66,320 sq. metres.



13. Myatt's Wood

A new copse of about 9,310 sq. metres was planted with mixed species broadleaved trees in the 1980s. It is situated above Church field and next to Green Farm, an important wildlife area because of the diverse habitat. A popular footpath, No. Th16, from St Peter's Church goes through this copse to Oak Road and gives access to Great Green.



14. Norton Road Elm Tree Copse

A group of smooth leaved elm trees on the north side of Norton Road, just beyond the Barton Place Farm onion store, provides a wildlife habitat. With the loss of English elm trees, it is important that sites like this should be retained. The smooth leaved elm or East Anglian elm is more resistant to Dutch elm disease. The area contains an old lime pit, dense undergrowth and ivy-covered trees and extends to about 2,980 sq. metres.



Appendix 7. Local Green Spaces

The following areas are designated as Local Green Spaces:

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

1. The New Green Open Space Area

This area of about 30,880 sq. metres was created in the centre of the main settlement area to provide an area for recreation, village fairs and outdoor events in a parkland setting including a wildlife area with pond. Many trees are planted within this area. Created in the 1980s/1990s as part of a large housing development, it is a well-used and important facility for the community. A children's play area is also found here.



2. The Recreation Field, Church Road

This area of about 14,830 sq. metres situated between the church, the primary school and the Cavendish Hall was historically, Glebe land. It was given to the village in the 1920s as a communal recreational facility. It is used as a play area for the primary school, as a football and cricket ground and for village events. A sports pavilion provides changing facilities. The preschool committee obtained permission to build a facility on the Church Road side of the field. Two small areas of children's play equipment are found here.

A line of magnificent, veteran oak trees borders Church Road, together with horse chestnuts along the public footpath to the north.



3. Genesta Drive Open Space

This is a valuable and attractive open space of 1,180 sq. metres enabling a group of sizable trees to be accommodated and providing an amenity which creates a pleasant environment within the estate.



4. Heather Close Open Spaces

The two areas provide a valuable and attractive open space of about 1,300 sq. metres and 260 sq. metres enabling groups of sizable trees to be accommodated and providing an amenity which creates a pleasant environment within the estate.



5. Furze Close Open Space

The group of Scots pine trees on the open space area of about 950 sq. metres in the centre of the close adds character to the area. This area is privately owned and creates a pleasant environment within the estate.



6. Hambros Open Space

The open space area of about 990 sq. metres in the Hambros is a grassed area with a number of small fruit trees and one or two larger trees. The area creates a quite amenity hidden away between the surrounding houses.



7. Maltings Garth Open Space

The green areas within the Malting Garth estate create a spacious feel to the area and provide an attractive facility where larger trees have established. The main green area in the centre is about 1670 sq. metres and can be used as a recreational area.



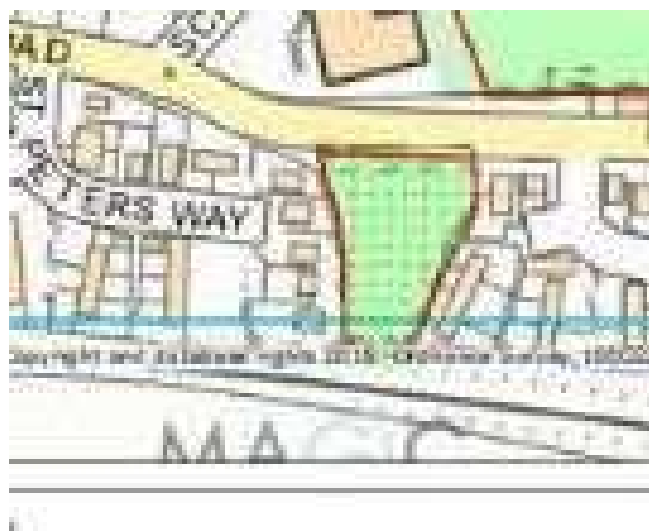
8. Barton Road Chalk Pit

The chalk pit on Barton Road next to the Post Office Stores is common land of historical interest and occupies an area of about 1,810 sq. metres. The residents of Thurston have a right to access the area to collect lime.



9. School Road Old Gravel Pit Open Space

The old gravel pit on School Road was possibly used for waste disposal and was subsequently landscaped, grassed over and planted with trees. It provides a valuable area of about 2,760 sq. metres of common land between St Peters Way and Cavendish Close.



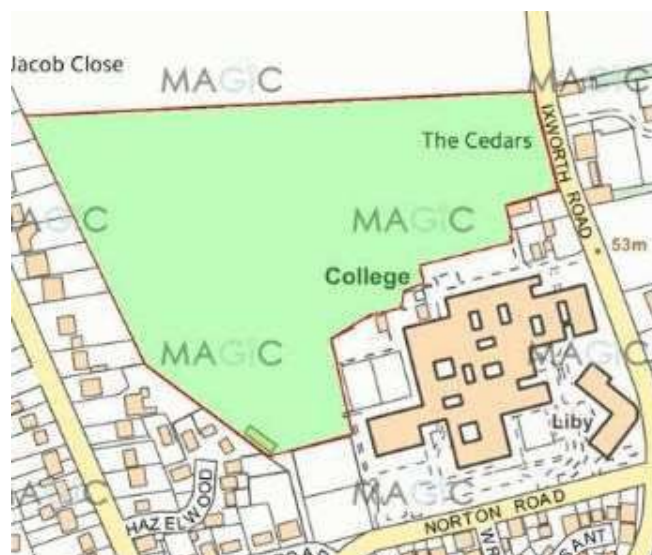
Appendix 8: Community Open Spaces

The following areas are village community open spaces:

- 1. Thurston Community College Playing Field.**
- 2. Thurston Rugby Club Field, Ixworth Road.**
- 3. The Children's Play Area, Heath Road.**
- 4. Barrell's Road Allotment Field.**
- 5. Church Road Old Pit Wildlife Area.**

1. Thurston Community College Playing Field

This area of about 67,080 sq. metres on the north side of the college is used as a sports ground for Thurston Community College and occasionally for various other events.



2. Thurston Rugby Club Field, Ixworth Road

This area of about 23,550 sq. metres is used as the home ground for Thurston rugby football club which also houses a large club building and parking and, as such, is an important village facility.



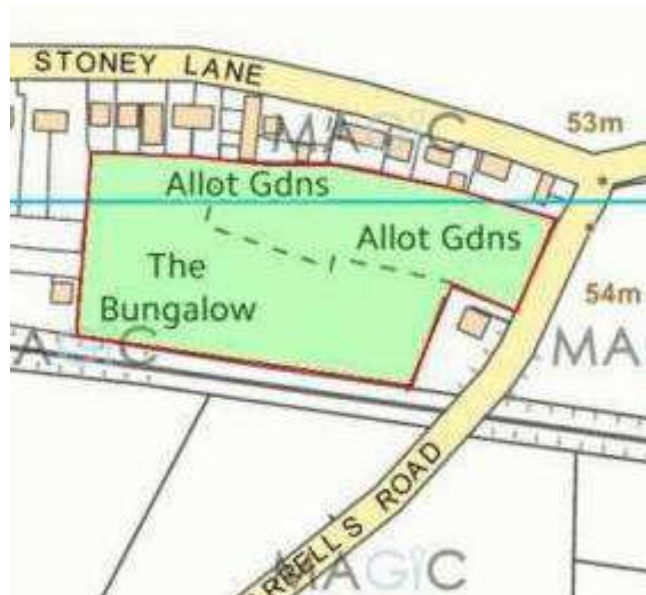
3. The Children's Play Area, Heath Road

This area of about 4,800 sq. metres is a mown grass field with play equipment in the far corner. The area is rented by the Parish Council from the Thurston Relief in Need Charity, a practise that has existed since the 1960s. Situated on the west of the village it is close to the housing developments that were built during the 1950s and 1960s. The field also was used for the village Guy Fawkes bonfire for a number of years.



4. Barrell's Road Allotment Field

This field of about 17,620 sq. metres was originally part of the Nether Hall estate and continues to be privately owned. Allotment gardens have existed in this area since at least the early 1800s, as shown on the 1841 Tithe Map. Part of the field continues to be used as allotments by village residents although the area available fails to meet local demand for plots.



5. Church Road Old Pit Wildlife Area

To the north of Rectory Gardens, adjacent to the new churchyard, there was an old pit which after filling and landscaping became waste land. A variety of vegetation and small trees have established in the area, of about 6,520 sq. metres, attracting a number of birds and other wildlife. Consequently, it should be retained as a wild green space since there are few such areas within the built-up area of the village.



