

# THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

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SENT AS AN E-MAIL

Mr. P Isbell  
Corporate Manager – Development Management  
MSDC  
131 High Street  
Needham Market  
Suffolk  
IP6 8DL

November 25<sup>th</sup> 2016

Dear Mr. Isbell,

**Proposal: Re-consultation on the 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**

**Location: Land to the South of Norton Road, Thurston**

**Application Number: 2797/16**

The Parish Council wishes to place on record that it objects to the revised plans as submitted under planning application 2797/16 for the following reasons, the majority of which were submitted in its letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> August 2016 but are repeated below for ease:

The Parish Council, until the Order for the Neighbourhood Plan is laid, is expected to respond to current planning applications in line with policies set out in the Mid Suffolk Local Plan. As defined by Mid Suffolk's Local Plan, Thurston is a Key Service Centre and growth is assumed to be in line with current policy. Policies cor1 (cs1 settlement hierarchy) and cor2 (CS2 development in the countryside and countryside villages) have been taken into account in the Council's response to this application. It cannot be disputed that Thurston has a settlement boundary and as such the location of this site is outside of that boundary.

The Parish Council however has not only looked at current policy, but has also taken on board views of the members of the public who attended the Planning Committee Meeting held to discuss this application as well as those of the Neighbourhood Plan Team who are in the process of undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan for Thurston. The Neighbourhood Plan

Team reports to the Parish Council on a regular basis and all Parish Councillors are fully aware and in agreement with the views of the Neighbourhood Plan Team, some of whom are indeed both Parish Councillors and Neighbourhood Plan members. The Parish Council has received correspondence from the Neighbourhood Plan Team on this application and has agreed that the viewpoints contained within its letter are so relevant to this application that they are to be included within its submission. As such a copy of that letter should be read in conjunction with this response.

Reasons for objection:

1. 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.

It is also felt that the proposal is considered to be an overdevelopment of the site and fails to address the wishes of the views of the residents of Thurston (as expressed in the emerging Thurston Neighbourhood Plan) for all new development to be sited on areas containing no more than 50 dwellings and as such will not incorporate the creation of sufficient open spaces between existing and proposed buildings which will neither maintain nor enhance the character of the village at this particular point. (GP1 – Design and Layout of Development & csfr-fc2 provision and distribution of housing). The Parish Council is also of the view that even a limited number of 2.5/3 storey development is not a feature of the area immediately adjacent to the site and rather than adding “visual interest and aid legibility” the appearance of such dwellings will be an intrusion and will fail to complement the character of the existing area.

2. The proposal is considered not to form a sustainable development within the dimensions set out in the NPPF and that the proposed application risks harm to biodiversity and fails to address adequately the benefits on an economic and social benefit.

The Parish Council does not hold with the views expressed in the documents submitted that the application is sympathetic to the countryside in which it is situated and that it fails to protect the intrinsic character of the countryside by the density and mix of properties being proposed. It is felt that the development of 175 dwellings will intrude into an area of currently open, undeveloped, countryside resulting in an encroachment of built development extending beyond the settlement boundary of Thurston. This will harm the character and appearance of this open area and will be contrary to Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy, Policy FC1.1 of the Core Strategy of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focus Review (2012) and saved Policies H13 and H16 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan. Furthermore it is felt that the development fails to ensure that it reflects the local character and identity of the area immediately surrounding the proposed development and is therefore inconsistent with paragraph 58 of the NPPF.

3. The Parish Council considers that the application fails to take into account the current road infrastructure and the lack of pedestrian route-ways and cycle ways leading from the site to the amenities and both Primary and Secondary Schools within the village and as such would have a negative impact on road safety and therefore a detrimental impact on the amenities enjoyed by the surrounding area vis-à-vis traffic generation (SB2 Development Appropriate to its Setting & T10 Highway Considerations in Development).

There still remains no direct link to National Cycle Route 51, nor adequate pedestrian crossing points at the junction of Norton Road and Ixworth Road for those wishing to access Thurston Community College and the Library. Given the one entrance the application also fails to address the issue of safe crossing points and access out of the development direct onto Sandpit Lane.

It is furthermore held that as the development fails to demonstrate that it has considered safe and suitable access points for all people it is contrary to paragraph 32 of the NPPF. As the development fails to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and, with reference to the siting of this application, would not support the transition to a low carbon future, it 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 feels 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 (CS6 – services and infrastructure). The revised plans make no acknowledgement that the natural route for travelling to and from the new development to the A14 will be down Sandpit Lane onto the narrow Thedwastre Road Priority Scheme over the railway bridge and the stop sign/line at the junction of Thurston Road (Pokeriage Corner). The Parish Council is concerned at the impact that this will have on this junction and is also mindful that Suffolk Constabulary have also expressed reservations at the capability of Sandpit Lane / Thedwastre Road Priority System and the inevitable increase in traffic volume.

Furthermore, the Parish Council raises concerns that there is no provision of pedestrian access from the development to the remainder of the footways within Thurston and concern has been raised that a number of residents will access the Primary School via Sandpit Lane. The Parish Council endorses the recommendation made by Suffolk County Council that pedestrian ramps are proposed to give access to Sandpit Road from which pedestrian access to the rest of Thurston may be gained. If further agrees that whilst a pedestrian access can be gained from Church Road via a public footpath which would give access to the primary school, the route along Church Road, should be lit with street lighting to link to the footpath leading to the primary school and open space.

4. The Parish Council has concerns over the single access now being proposed from Sandpit Lane. It feels that the risk of obstruction of a single access in times of emergencies makes the proposal unsustainable and fails to follow Planning Guidance which states that streets should be designed to support safe behaviours, efficient interchange between travel modes and the smooth and efficient flow of traffic. The transport user hierarchy should be applied within all aspects of street design – and should consider the needs of the most vulnerable users first: pedestrians, then cyclists, then public transport users, specialist vehicles like ambulances and finally other motor vehicles. The Parish Council concurs with the concerns raised by the Neighbourhood Plan Team over the plans to have a single entrance road to/from the development directly onto Sandpit Lane with no pedestrian footpath.
5. The Parish Council feels that given the location of the site, a reliance on the private motor car will be generated in order to access amenities and services within both the village and further afield which will also be contrary to the sustainability objectives of

Policies FC1 and FC1.1 of the Mid Suffolk Core Strategy Focused Review (2012) and the NPPF paragraphs 14, 17, 55 and 56 and will place a further burden on the current road network at (but not confined to) points such as Fishwick Corner, Pockeridge Corner, the narrow railway bridge crossings on Barton Road and Thedwastre Road and entry and exit points onto the A14.

Whilst the Parish Council acknowledges that there are bus stops located along Sandpit Lane and the Interim Residential Travel Plan supplied by the applicant shows that there will be improvements to bus stops in Sandpit Lane to enhance the public transport experience (6.2.10), there is a concern that there is currently little capability of Sandpit Lane to have sufficient width to allow the passing of buses and that this will further exacerbate issues with the flow of traffic in both directions. The Parish Council would like to see localised widening at points along Sandpit Lane to accommodate this.

6. The Parish Council would also like to recommend that Suffolk County Council be involved in the discussion of future growth in Thurston with reference to the impact that this will have on the provision of education. As mentioned within the letter from Thurston's Neighbourhood Plan Team, both the Thurston Primary Academy School and Thurston Community College are at capacity (taking into account existing planning approvals) and as such this application will ensure that the educational infrastructure is unlikely to meet the demand placed on it by 175 dwellings. The Parish Council is aware that the application is for phased development but feels that from the outset the total provision should be understood and capacity explored. As such the Parish Council feels that this application will put a negative strain on the existing infrastructure and as such would be contrary to Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy.

The Parish Council would also like to reiterate the concerns of the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan Team with regards to the speed at which this and potentially other applications have been/are in the process of being submitted for new housing in the village. It is recognised within the village that as a Key Service Centre the village of Thurston will appeal to developers and that a certain amount of growth is desirable and non-objectionable, however the Parish Council is concerned that piecemeal development will have a negative impact on the current infrastructure and that there should be a strict control over new housing proposals and the associated numbers until the general infrastructure of Thurston and the surrounding areas has been given time to absorb new residents and the impacts that this associated growth will have on a rural village.

Yours sincerely,

*Victoria S Waples*

V. S. Waples, BA(Hons), CiLCA  
Clerk to the Council

