

# THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

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## Thurston Open Letter to the Editor

### **A failed Planning System in Mid Suffolk puts people's safety at risk**

This Wednesday (29<sup>th</sup> January 2020), Mid Suffolk District Council Planning Officers will recommend to Councillors that two housing developments are given permission for building up to 420 houses in Thurston on top of the 818 plus currently being built on large sites within the village - which will effectively double in size.

These developments go against the development principles detailed in the recently adopted Neighbourhood Plan (October 2019) with the emphasis of the Council Planning Officers opinions relying on the "emerging" Joint Local Plan which has only just gone through consultation stage.

Thurston is a rural village which has grown organically over the years but still has a legacy road system consisting of narrow bridges, winding roads and junctions which are at or close to capacity. Thurston does not have a Doctors Surgery and only has infrequent bus services to neighbouring facilities. No significant investment in infrastructure has or will occur as a result of these developments despite a doubling in the size of the village.

A recent report published by University College London (UCL)<sup>1</sup> highlights the fact that many new developments are getting planning approval even though they are car-dependent – a fifth of schemes should have been rejected outright and more than half should have been amended to improve sense of place and help cyclists and pedestrians.

Thurston exemplifies the issues perfectly. Planning is "All about the car"

And roads for cars are the one big issue for the District Council. They are relying on developers to provide road improvements as cheaply as possible that can be maintained cheaply – but do not address the environmental and safety requirements on a rapidly expanding village.

The number of cars will double, and we will be left with many issues, for example:

- The bridge by the station under the railway putting the safety of pedestrians at risk, particularly children.
- No solution for cyclists at this point – the Officer's report merely states "the situation for cyclists is unchanged from the existing situation" - hardly acceptable given the vast increase in population and the current

- push to move to greener modes of transport!
- The narrow single-track bridge over the railway line at Thedwastre Road with no pavement for children which will become the main route from one of the new developments to the proposed new primary school.

If ever there was an exemplification of the contents of the UCL report:-

“It’s all about making sure cars don’t need to slow down. Pedestrians and cyclists just have to get out of the way.”

“It’s an approach from the 1960s. We should be allowing people to walk and cycle to get to local facilities instead of having to get out the car every time. But car-dominated developments are still going up.”

Thurston is it!

Add in carbon emissions from cars and the impact on local health, the fueling of global warming, no regard for environmental heating systems and no viable solution to an inadequate railway platform layout, unacceptably low levels of parking at the rail station.

<sup>1</sup>The UCL report is the one featured by BBC on its website:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-51179688>