

Thurston Parish Council



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN TEAM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Amended October 2014

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Neighbourhood Plan Team has developed a community engagement and involvement policy with the aim of fully involving its residents, partners and stakeholders in the creation and development of the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan to create a well-informed plan and a sense of ownership. All processes will be in accordance with the NPSC terms of reference.

2. **AIMS**

The aim of the policy is to fully engage with Thurston residents, partners and stakeholders on the important issue of creating a Neighbourhood Plan through an on-going two-way process of:

- informing, consulting and involving all Thurston residents, partners and stakeholders
- engaging with external stakeholders to shape their thinking and determine what lies within the “art of the possible”
- being inclusive and engaging across the whole of the Thurston community
- ensuring views are listened to and used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan such that it reflects the wishes, needs and ambitions of the residents.

3. **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives are to:

- inclusively involve residents, partners and stakeholders in planning, shaping and enhancing the development of the Neighbourhood Plan
- enhance the quality of the Neighbourhood Plan by incorporating a broad range of views
- use engagement to inform decision making, ensuring decisions reflect the views of the community
- create a Neighbourhood Plan that is accepted and embraced by the community.

4. **HOW THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED**

The Neighbourhood Plan Team, adopting best practice, will engage with the Thurston community and partners through:

- **Communication**

Communicating with residents, partners and stakeholders will be achieved through the following vehicles to ensure all sections of the community are reached:

- Thurston Newsletter delivered free to all homes
- Delivery of specific items to every house (e.g. a survey of village assets)
- Village website
- Parish noticeboards
- Noticeboards in prominent local places inc. Thurston Community Library
- School communication
- Social media including such as Twitter

- Partners and their networks
- Open meetings
- Village Forums
- Individual, specific needs, once identified, will be met as far as is possible

- **Consultation**

Consulting all parishioners on important issues will be key to the success of the Neighbourhood Plan. Consultation will ensure residents, partners and stakeholders are able to voice their opinions and given an opportunity to influence the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Consultation will target the widest range of people, including men and women, and particularly hard-to-reach groups such as young people, the elderly, the housebound, the disabled, and ethnic minorities. Thurston-based businesses and wider stakeholders will also be consulted. A variety of appropriate, effective engagement channels will be needed and developed out of discussion with minority groups. Such methods might include, for example, the offer of drop-in sessions offering assistance with the completion of forms or a 'buddying' up service. The Neighbourhood Draft plan might include, for example braille or recorded sound.

Involvement might be through

- invitation to particular meetings
- meetings to elicit and discuss views
- contributing and analysing the evidence base
- contributing to the development and writing of the plan
- particular consultations, for example by questionnaire
- using the residents, partners and stakeholders as a source of professional advice and support.

The Team will engage effectively to all participants through appropriate means.

- **Support**

The Neighbourhood Plan Team will support individuals and groups seeking help in engaging with the Neighbourhood Plan.

- **Acting Together**

Acting together with residents, partners and stakeholders in developing the Neighbourhood Plan will:

- ensure it is accepted and fit for purpose
- enhance the environment and the quality of life within Thurston
- ensure the residents, partners and stakeholders have a voice and can make a difference.

5. **MEASURING SUCCESS**

Success will be measured by predefined targets, including:

- reviews of consultation outcomes
- monitoring residents', partners' and stakeholders' participation in consultation processes
- the outcome of the referendum.

6. PROCESS REVIEWS

Regular review of the consultation processes and their results will take place; amendments will be made to facilitate effective development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

7. PROCESS COMMENTARY

PROCESS COMMENTARY		
Activity	Action	Statement
Raise awareness of consultation processes	Promote consultation processes through Thurston Voice, Thurston Newsletter and other identified media	Engaging the community will be an ongoing priority
Work with partners	Strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones	Working with partners will produce a robust Neighbourhood Plan
Work with stakeholders	Identify those external stakeholders who may have an influence on Thurston's future. For example: BT, Anglia Water, local government offices etc	Early engagement will help shape stakeholder thinking while giving the NPT a reality check regarding the "art of the possible".
Identify minority/hard to reach groups	Identify these groups and identify channels of contact and consultation	These groups are often the forgotten few. Identifying them will ensure they are included in consultation processes
Identify consultation/focus groups	Identify members of the parish with specific skills who can be consulted on specialist subjects	This will enable smaller consultations to be initiated where specialist advice is required to inform decision-making
Identify consultation needs, priorities and importance	Establish need, priorities and importance of consultation	This will ensure there is no overkill, overlap or misuse of the consultation process

Identify benefits of consultation	Identify particular points at which there is a real opportunity for people to influence decisions	Consultation will be undertaken where the outcome can be influenced
Feedback on consultations	Agree methods of feedback to residents, partners and stakeholders; ensure methods are adhered to, and include details of the use of information gained	This will keep all parties involved in the process and updated in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan
Ensure outcomes of consultations are used to inform decisions and the development of the Neighbourhood Plan	Use the outcome of consultations to inform decision-making and shape outcomes	All consultations will be undertaken to ensure the best possible outcome for the content of the Neighbourhood Plan
Review outcome of key consultations	Review consultation outcomes to highlight any process failings	Review will enable identification of any changes and amendments required in the consultation processes

8. EVALUATION

Evaluation of previous village consultations and team skills will support consultation processes during the production of the Plan.

Responses made (whether or not included in the Neighbourhood Plan) will assist the Team in assessing the strength of the views expressed.

The Plan will be evaluated by Mid Suffolk District Council and an independent examiner prior to the referendum.