

THURSTON'S NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

BACKGROUND

- **Changes to the planning system set out in the Localism Act have given us new rights to shape the future of our village.**
- **Neighbourhood planning allows our community to come together to say where we think new houses and business should go, what they should look like, and what needs protecting.**
- **The plan cannot be used to prevent development.**
- **Once adopted, it is recognised as part of the planning framework of Mid-Suffolk District Council.**
- **It cannot, therefore, be ignored by prospective developers or landowners.**
- **In creating a Neighbourhood Plan we have the power to influence planning, to ensure that Thurston has appropriate development for our community.**

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

- A Neighbourhood Plan is primarily about the use and development of land and buildings in a parish or town.
- It is not a plan to stop development, but to give communities more say in the future growth of their village or town. The Government wants to unlock more support for house building to meet the housing shortage.
- Too little growth would be in conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the policies in MSDC's Core Strategy/Local Plan, and would also undermine important social goals. The NPPF states that 'Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than that set out in the Local Plan'.
- Too much growth would have a significant impact on the local highway network, social, environmental, commercial and utility infrastructure and would not win the support from the majority of our community.
- Decisions on planning applications will be made using both the District's Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan and any other material considerations.
- If we don't have a plan, developers can submit planning applications and argue that any site of their choosing is sustainable and provides the housing we need.

What is the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan?

- Examples of this are listed below (this is not an exhaustive list and the areas covered by our plan must be justified by evidence from our consultations).
- Housing – types, sizes, density, affordable housing (based on need) and bringing vacant or derelict land/homes back into use.
- Businesses – new sites and opportunities to expand their premises.
- New housing – the relationship between existing and new development, services and facilities.
- Connectivity – sustainable travel and access.
- Development of schools, places of worship, health, leisure and entertainment facilities, community and youth centres and village halls.
- Ensuring a variety of development (not too much of one type), and restricting change of use.
- The creation and protection of open spaces, nature reserves, allotments, sports pitches, play areas, parks and gardens and the planting of trees.
- The protection of important buildings and historic assets.
- Other locally determined issues involving the use of land and buildings.
- A Neighbourhood Plan is led by the Parish Council, but it must represent the community.

A Neighbourhood Plan cannot:

- Prevent or block any development from ever taking place in the area.
- Propose less growth than Mid Suffolk's planning policies for the area.
- Be prepared with no input or support from the community.
- Deal with county matters such as minerals, waste or major infrastructure.
- Make policies beyond the plan area, or be prepared in isolation of neighbouring parishes/districts.
- Neighbourhood planning is not a legal requirement but a community right. Once a Neighbourhood Plan has successfully passed an independent examination, a public referendum (residents vote at a polling station) and it is 'adopted' by Mid Suffolk it becomes a legal document.
- The National Planning Practise Guidance states that 'a thriving rural community in a living, working countryside depends, in part, on retaining local services and community facilities such as schools, local shops, public houses and places of worship. Affordable and accessible rural housing is essential to ensure viable use of these local facilities'.

WHY THURSTON?

Thurston is a village with excellent facilities and services which lends itself to sustaining additional development. There is a housing shortage at the national level due to the rise in single occupancy households, longer life expectancy, the take up of second homes, immigration and investment properties in the buy-to-let market.

The consequence of a housing market that hasn't reacted to these issues has led to:

- Rapidly increasing house prices.
- Insufficient affordable housing for people who cannot afford the 7.1 average house price to average annual salary ratio
- Increased skills shortages as potential employees move away.
- Over-crowded houses as young people live with their parents for longer.
- Homes that do not meet people's needs.
- Greater social inequality and exclusion leading to demographically and socially less well balanced and unsustainable communities.

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Want to know more?

- Please contact the Thurston Neighbourhood Planning Team, via email:
thurstonnpsg@hotmail.com
- @Twitter
- The Parish council office at the New Green Centre (Tel: 01359 232854)
- Visit the Neighbourhood plan webpages at the village website:
<http://thurston.onesuffolk.net/parish-council/neighbourhood-plan/>