

# THURSTON PARISH COUNCIL

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SENT AS AN E-MAIL

Mr. P Isbell  
Chief Planning Officer –Sustainable Communities  
Mid Suffolk District Council  
Endeavour House  
8 Russell Road  
Ipswich IP1 2BX

27<sup>th</sup> January 2020

Dear Mr. Isbell,

**Re: DC/19/02090 - Proposal: Outline Planning Application (some matters reserved)- Erection of up to 210 dwellings and new vehicular access to include planting and landscaping, natural and semi-natural green space including community growing space(s), children's play area and sustainable drainage system (SuDS), to include 35% affordable dwellings. Location: Land East Of Ixworth Road, Thurston.**

**Case Officer: Vincent Pearce**

The Parish Council is writing further to request that the following matters, relating to the documents being presented to the Referrals Committee, be brought to the attention of the case officer and be added to the pack of papers being presented to members of the committee determining the applications on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

Thurston Parish Council continues to object to this application on grounds that are common to application DC/19/03486 as detailed below:

Thurston's Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

Thurston NDP was adopted unanimously by members of Mid Suffolk's District Council (MSDC) in October 2019 and as has been stated has statutory weight which alongside the rest of the development plan must be the starting point for decision making.

However, given that the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy and Core Strategy Focused Review has policies which are deemed to be 'out-of-date' and inconsistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), the balance in favour of granting planning permission as identified by paragraph 11 of the NPPF must tip the balance the other way as the adverse impacts of doing so will significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the most relevant adopted plan.

The Thurston Neighbourhood Plan prevails the publication of the Joint Local Plan Consultation Document which has just completed Regulation 18 phase. Whilst the site has been included as a proposed site allocation within the Joint Local Plan, limited weight should be given to proposals for its development until all objections to this policy have been fully determined.

The Parish Council draws reference to paragraph 14 of the NPPF which requires applications to be refused where it can be demonstrated that the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, and maintains that the conditions prescribed under 14 apply in the determination of these applications:

- a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan two years or less before the date on which the decision is made;
- b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement;
- c) the local planning authority has at least a three-year supply of deliverable housing sites (against its five-year housing supply requirement, including the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 73); and
- d) the local planning authority's housing delivery was at least 45% of that required over the previous three years.

MSDC has, within its Mid Suffolk District Council Housing Land Supply Position Statement 2019/20 – 2023/24 (September 2019) confirmed (Paragraph 10.4 and 10.5) that, as required by the Framework (Paragraph 73 and Glossary in Annex 2) and in accordance with the guidance set out in the Framework and accompanying Guidance, demonstrated that it has a 5.66 years housing land supply.

- Climate impact – Mid Suffolk District Council, at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> July, voted on motions to support Suffolk's county-wide aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. It was claimed that this would give (MSDC) the mandate we need help the Government to deliver its 25-year Environment Plan and increase the powers and resources available to local authorities to address climate change.

This proposal demonstrates no measures to discourage the use of cars for residents to travel to work. The use of vehicles to access areas of employment outside of the village – as this proposal fails to offer any employment opportunities - will increase congestion and carbon emissions.

The Parish Council questions the desire to respond positively to the climate change challenge as this proposal fails to encourage residents out of their cars.

- Barrow Foot Crossing at Thurston Railway Station – in November 2017, in response to the cumulative impact from the "Thurston Five", Mid Suffolk was tasked with finding a solution to the Barrow Foot Crossing which Network Rail had stated that it would recommend closure unless mitigation and measures were introduced to counter additional usage. To date no solution has been found apart from the requirement for new residents to be issued with advice on how to cross the foot crossing. On similar crossings with identical safety measures, businessmen have been seen crossing the lines even with alarms and horns sounding.

Network Rail has a standard Risk Assessment tool caked ALCRM (All Level Crossing Risk Model) which determined the predictive level of risk at a level crossing. In 2015, the ALCRM for the crossing in Thurston was D4, in 2017 200 pedestrians were predicted to take the level to a risk factor of D3.

In a recent census carried out by Network Rail (October 2019) of the numbers using the Barrow Foot Crossing, the numbers using the crossing actually placed it into the High-Risk Category on 2 out of the 9 days where data was recorded and almost touched 200 on 3 further days.

A response submitted on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2019 to the MSDC Planning Team for Application DC/19/03486 by Mr Donaghue stated that this proposal will have a "negative impact on Thurston Level Crossing" and that Network Rail believe that as this proposal is contributing to the risk, the applicant should contribute to the new access.

The Case Officer for the above application in his Officer Report to the Committee report states that Network Rail is actively engaging with the Council and the Applicants to explore potential solutions to enhancing rail user safety at the station and that it is expected that Network Rail will support the proposed improvements under the rail bridge and that it is currently being explored as to whether a ramp/lift can be installed on the south side of the station as a future access enhancement using contributions from CIL funding.

The Parish Council is obviously concerned that this application is coming before a committee for determination with no concrete proposals on the table to support any measures to enhance rail user safety at the station despite Network Rail's own Town Planning Technician having stated that this proposal will have a negative impact and the Case Officer for the application merely recommending a contribution from the applicant themselves to contribute a sum of money towards commissioning a feasibility/design study to achieve a non-costed and (to date) non identifiable solution.

The Parish Council questions whether the money being offered by the applicant - £30,000 - is sufficient to fund a feasibility / design study and why Mid Suffolk Planners have not sought to ensure that a fully costed and achievable solution is in place prior to the approval of not only this application but also the one for land to the east of Ixworth Road.

In a response as to whether Network Rail was aware that a further planning application for 210 houses to the north of Thurston has also been submitted (as there is no response on file for application DC/19/02090, the Route Level Crossing Manager for Network Rail Anglia confirmed that he would speak with his planning department to check if we (Network Rail) have objected to any forthcoming applications, as they would cause Network Rail concerns.

The Parish Council contends that the District Council should be aware that infrastructure, such as rail, needs to be addressed in Thurston prior to the approval of further planning applications and requires collaborative working with infrastructure providers to ensure fully costed solutions are capable of being delivered.

With particular reference to this application, the Council's additional comments are as follows:

- A143 / Bunbury Arms Junction – the Parish Council accepts the assumption made by Suffolk County Council (SCC) Highways Department that, due to its location north of the railway line, the impact from this development on this junction will present an unacceptable strain on the highway network.

It should be noted in the response submitted by the Highways Department that after traffic flows have been generated from the committed sites (2017); growth patterns and new trips from the proposed developments, this junction, with the proposed mitigation scheme, is still predicted to be over capacity.

The Parish Council believes that the comment from SCC Highways Department which states that there is only a possibility of scope to improve the proposed preliminary design of the signals using better software and monitoring systems to improve capacity, demonstrates sufficiently that this development will result in a severe impact in terms of highway capacity. Additionally, SCC Highways Department states that there is no further mitigation, in terms of highway layout, considered possible within the highway boundary.

The impact of this development as well as the one on Beyton Road will be to create a knock-on effect in Thurston for traffic being held up at this junction. Locally there is evidence that traffic is attempting to avoid this junction by accessing Thurston from Ixworth along Ixworth and Norton Road.

- Impact on the following junctions: the Parish Council is concerned at the Officer Statement at 3.48 of his report which challenges the reasoning as to why this application should be granted permission with no mitigation measures proposed for:

Barton Road Mini Roundabout and Rail Bridge/Beyton Road Junction Rail Bridge  
Thurston Road/Thurston Road Junction (Fishwick Corner)  
Beyton Road/Thurston Road/The wastre Road Crossroads (Pokeriage Corner)

and draws reference to the arguments that have been previously rehearsed about traffic flows within the village.

The Parish Council challenges the reasoning behind the lack of mitigation measures for the traffic impact at all junctions to the south of the railway line as it cannot be assumed that traffic at these junctions will not increase due to residents from this development accessing the A14 for trips to Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and further afield for work, facilities, leisure and services.

This assessment should be carried out and should, in light of the changes in SCC's School Transport Policy given that Thurston Community College's large predominately rural catchment area will generate extra trips, particularly to and from the north of the village, take into account traffic flows around, in and out of Thurston.

- Pakenham Crossroads – given the location of this development, the Parish Council is concerned as to why Suffolk County Council has not sought to look at the cumulative impact on this crossroads given the location of not only this site but also the one to the west of Ixworth Road.

Concerns have been raised by not only the Parish Council but also Pakenham Parish Council, the District Councillor for Pakenham and the County Councillor for the Ward in which Pakenham sits as to the impact further growth will have on this junction in terms of capacity and visibility.

- Norton Road/Ixworth Road – again the Parish Council is concerned to note that there has been no assessment of the impact that this development will have on these crossroads.
- Access and visibility – MSDC Planning Department has, based on comments received from SCC Highways Department, previously refused applications at Cedars Close along Ixworth Road, on grounds of poor visibility. The Parish Council has seen no evidence that suggests that better visibility splays can be achieved

and challenges the assumption that safe access can be achieved for all users of the highway at this point in the village.

- Open Space – given the location of the open space to the northern edge of the site where it adjoins the open countryside, there will be limited community value to the residents of Thurston and as such the development will be disconnected from the village and fail to adhere to the objectives and policies of the Thurston NDP.
- Travel Plan – whilst the Parish Council notes that there is to be Travel Plan monitoring sum, it questions why no travel plan has been submitted.

The Parish Council is aware that any travel plan will only diminish the number of vehicles using the highway network by a limited amount – the Framework Travel Plan produced by Cannon Consulting Engineers for Bloor for example states that if all its recommendations are implemented there will be a slight reduction in the travel plans of 10%.

- SCC Highways Department Conclusion – the Parish Council concurs with the conclusion as written by SCC Highways Department (letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020) that there will be a cumulative severe impact from this proposal and that there are unacceptable impacts on road safety for all users.
- Precedent - as has been stated previously this application is outside of the settlement boundary of the Thurston adopted NDP and as such in conflict with the Thurston NDP. The precedent for refusal as contrary to Thurston's adopted NDP has been established with refusal of planning applications DC/19/05513 and DC/19/05465.

The Parish Council maintains that as this development will lead to more vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists using the highway, insufficient evidence has been produced to show that mitigation measures will be able to reduce the severe impact and that it fails to adhere to the key objectives in Thurston's NDP.

Given the further evidence identified above, the Parish Council contends that the minor benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the significant adverse economic, social and environments impacts that will be had and that insufficient measures have been identified to reduce or eliminate these impacts and that this application should be refused.

Yours faithfully,

*Victoria S Waples*

V S Waples, BA (Hons), CiLCA

Copies to:

Members of the Mid Suffolk Planning Referrals Committee:

Councillors Terence Carter; James Caston; Rachel Eburne; John Field; Peter Gould; Kathie Guthrie; Lavinia Hadingham; Matthew Hicks; Barry Humphreys, MBE; Sarah Mansel; John Matthissen; Richard Meyer; Dave Muller; Mike Norris; Wendy Turner; Rowland Warboys  
County Councillor Penny Otton

District Councillors Harry Richardson and Wendy Turner