

## **Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan**

### **Site Assessments**

**November 2016**

**Updated November 2018**

## **Introduction**

In preparation of the proposed Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan, Matodesign was instructed to carry out residential site assessments on behalf of Thurleigh Parish Council in October 2016. The sites considered are those put forward to the Borough Council as part of their proposed new Local Plan. The Local Plan will set out how much growth there should be in the borough in coming years (housing, jobs and associated infrastructure) and where it should take place. The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan will enable residents of Thurleigh Parish to have their say about where they believe development should be located in their village.

The assessment of sites is intended to assist parishioners understand each proposed site option and identify any issues that may prevent or limit the extent of development.

This is a revised version of the original site assessment report originally prepared in November 2016. This was amended to include an additional site put forward during the Local Plan 2030 consultation period from 2018.

## **The National Planning Policy Framework**

This document sets out the Government's nationwide planning policies and objectives. The following paragraphs are taken from the NPPF and are provided to give some general context to the neighbourhood plan process -

*1. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do so. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities.*

*6. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The policies in paragraphs 18 to 219, taken as a whole, constitute the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.*

*7. There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:*

- an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*
- a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and*

- *an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.*

14. *At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.*

16. *The application of the presumption will have implications for how communities engage in neighbourhood planning. Critically, it will mean that neighbourhoods should:*

- *develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development;*
- *plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan; and*
- *identify opportunities to use Neighbourhood Development Orders to enable developments that are consistent with their neighbourhood plan to proceed.*

### **Housing numbers**

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) undertaken by the Borough Council in December 2015 in preparation for the new Local Plan 2032 identified a need for 17,672 additional dwellings over the plan period 2012-32. The Development Strategy and Site Selection Methodology Background Paper subsequently published by the Borough Council in September 2015 confirmed that Group 3 villages (including Thurleigh) should each expect land allocations to accommodate between 10 and 20 additional dwellings (an average of 15 units). Since then, the Borough Council decided to reduce the Local Plan period to 2030 and this resulted in a further call for sites and a review of the SHLAA. The change to the local plan period means that at the time of writing there will be no need for Group 3 villages to accommodate any of the planned housing growth. It should be noted that the Local Plan is currently in consultation. Further details about the Local Plan 2030 can be found on the Borough Council's website here -

[http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment\\_and\\_planning/planning\\_town\\_and\\_country/planning\\_policy\\_its\\_purpose/local\\_plan\\_2030.aspx](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning_town_and_country/planning_policy_its_purpose/local_plan_2030.aspx)

### **The sites**

The two initial 'call for sites' processes undertaken by the Borough Council in 2014 and 2015, resulted in a total of 12 housing sites being put forward for consideration in Thurleigh. A further two sites were put forward as part of the additional consultation carried out by the Borough Council in 2018. You can find details of each proposed site including a location plan on the Bedford Borough website here -

<http://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/PlanningBrowse.aspx?id=BphXYJbTRw%2bpA6SfGDeTeQ%3d%3d>

The sites are as follows –

Site no.	Address	Housing nos.
274	The Beeches	18
276	Hayle Field High Street	Up to 90
402*	High Street	15
461*	Land North of High Street	35
444	Land at High Street (Cross End)	Up to 53
403	The Windmill, Milton Road	9
443	Land at Mill Hill	21
538	Land at Greensbury Cottage, Thurleigh Road	25-30
629	The Officers Mess, Keysoe Road	Up to 40
688	Thurleigh Farm Centre	7-9
445	High Street (East)	Up to 65
550	The Jackal	10-16
695	Land west of Keysoe Rd	80-140
696*	Land north of High St	35

\*Variations of the same site

### **The method of assessment**

This was a desk top assessment only. Each site has been assessed against its suitability, availability and achievability, and acceptability as required by paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. A standard method of assessment known as RAG (Red, Amber, Green) has been used to score site constraints, local or national land designations, and other planning policies, history and criteria to ascertain each sites suitability for development. If a constraint is identified and is considered to be a fundamental and unresolvable, then it is scored 1 (Red). Where there is a constraint which may affect the development of a site or part of a site, it is scored 2 (Amber). In instances where no constraint is identified, then it is scored 3 (Green).

The RAG results should be used as a guide only. Each site assessment contains a 'Concluding recommendation' which attempts to weigh up all of the planning constraints and considerations identified and draw out the key and sometimes minor differences between the sites (i.e. the distance from or accessibility to a site the village centre, its sustainability or problematical and fundamental technical issues such as absence of safe highway access or an Important Open Space designation). It is suggested therefore that the Steering Group considers both the RAG score and 'Concluding recommendation' together.

## Findings

From the table below you will see that the RAG site scores are quite close. The scoring process undertaken was quite ridged and there should be a correlation between any identified site constraint, comments and the score given (see above). The majority of assessments related to 'green field' sites, which rarely have many, if any, complex constraints. As some of the sites were relatively large, constraints on small parts of a site would not necessarily preclude its development as a whole (i.e. parts of the site might need to be omitted). Of course, the findings are recommendations only and are not binding on the Parish.

### Thurleigh Site Assessments – initial RAG scores and comments

Site reference	Site name	No. of dwellings	RAG score	Recommendation	Comments
274	The Beeches	18	52	GREEN	No constraints that cannot be mitigated. A new footpath fronting the site and a road crossing point to link with the existing footpath on the north side of High Street should be delivered if this site is supported.
276	Hayle Field High Street	Up to 90	52	GREEN	The site as proposed would have medium to high visual and landscape impacts as the land is flat and open with views from the open countryside. A smaller area of land that better relates to the frontage style of development that predominates in the High Street would more likely create low visual and landscape impacts. A new footpath as illustrated on the concept plan should be delivered if this site is supported to link with the existing footpath fronting 67 High Street.
402	High Street	15	49	AMBER	This site is, at least in part, designated as an Important Open Space (IOS). The splayed nature of the IOS boundary on the Borough Council's inset

					map and the absence of a development moratorium in the related policy (AD40) mean that there may be scope to develop this centrally located site. However, to enable this to be considered further details (including a schematic layout) are likely to be required to demonstrate that the IOS policy will not be compromised and that suitable highway access can be provided to the site.
461	Land North of High Street	35	49	RED	This site is a similar one to 402 above and further details would need to be provided to enable this site to be considered further. However, scale of the proposed development, the inclusion of the school playing field for access purposes (also an Important Open Space) and the location of this in the conservation area would make it an unsatisfactory site for development and a far less preferable site than 402.
444	Land at High Street (Cross End)	Up to 53	52	AMBER	Although no point of access is illustrated the site abuts the public highway, Cross End. There do not appear to be any issues with achieving safe visibility although this should be clarified. The site is sustainably located being approximately 0.6 km from village hall. However, there is no footpath linking it to the village and there is no existing footpath on the southern side of the High Street fronting existing properties. If the Hayle Field site is supported and developed and includes the recommended public footpath,

					it may be possible to provide a footpath and crossing point to link footpaths from both sites. These requirements would appear to deliverable. If the site is supported, the policy should set out specific requirements in the formal neighbourhood plan.
403	The Windmill, Milton Road	9	46	RED	Concerns about whether suitable access can be delivered. Also, the site does not abut the village SPA boundary and is detached from the village (approximately 0.8km from village hall). There are no formal footpaths linking the site to the village. There appears little scope to provide adequate footpath access to the core village.
443	Land at Mill Hill	21	47	RED	The majority of the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Bury Hill Camp). It also lies within the Conservation Area. There are a number of listed buildings to the north and west of the site. The information provided has not proven that safe highway access can be delivered. There are concerns also about delivering a development that is in character with the immediate area.
538	Land at Greensbury Cottage, Thurleigh Road	25-30	48	RED	This site is isolated away from the village centre (2.5km from village hall) and 2km from the village SPA. It has no footpath links to the village.
629	The Officers Mess, Keysoe Road	Up to 40	50	RED	The site is isolated although the fact it is previously developed land means that it should be considered for some sort of development. However, due to its distance from the

					village (0.9km) and the absence of any footpath links it would be a poor choice for a housing site. Some sort of commercial use should be considered here.
688	Thurleigh Farm Centre	7-9	51	RED	Although the site would make use of previously developed land, similar to Greensbury Cottages, this site is isolated away from the village centre (2.5km from village hall) and 2km from the village SPA. It has no footpath links to the village.
445	High Street (East)	Up to 65	50	RED	The site is approximately 0.7 km from village hall. There is no footpath fronting site and unless the adjoining site at Hayle Field were developed, the site would be isolated. The site as proposed would have medium to high visual and landscape impacts as the land is flat, open and isolated with views from the open countryside. The depth of the site would result in development out of character with the immediate built form. Notwithstanding the possibility that the adjoining site at Hayle Field might be supported, the site is likely to give the impression of sprawling development which would be inappropriate in character terms.
550	The Jackal	10-16	51	RED	Although this site scores highly in the RAG assessment, there is strong likelihood that the development of the site would affect the viability of the public house which is protected under development plan policy CP18. This is also the last commercial service premises

					for the village and therefore its retention is likely to be essential to the future vibrancy and vitality of the village. No details have been provided as to the future of the public house, garden and car park or how the technical requirements of the two uses (public house and residential) would be integrated. There is also a concern about the compatibility of a residential use of the land in juxtaposition to the public house (noise and disturbance). Given these technical and policy issues, the most appropriate way to consider this site for residential use would be through the submission of a formal planning application.
695	Land west of Keysoe Road	80-140	50	AMBER	The site is located adjoins the built up area of the village and SPA in the south. The fact the site is grade 2 agricultural land is not an obstacle to development. Access to the site is not shown and should be clarified in terms of visibility and safety before the site is considered further. The site is located within in close proximity to Palmer Sports racing facility and it would be prudent to understand whether an acceptable noise environment for occupiers of properties on this site would be possible before considering it further. Also, the scale of the development is in excess of what is identified as being needed to accommodate the expected growth for Thurleigh and in the event the aforementioned access and

					noise issues were clarified, support for the site should be subject to the development of an area along the southern boundary of the site to minimise the landscape and visual impact of the development and the provision of a footpath, then this site could be a suitable development site.
696	High Street	35	49	RED	The site has a splayed Important Open Space (IOS) designation and boundary on the Borough Council's inset map and the absence of a development moratorium in the related policy (AD40) would in theory mean that there may be scope to develop this centrally located site. However, the scale of the development and the absence of any viable and acceptable highway access would make this site unsuitable for development as proposed. This recommendation could be reviewed along the lines of 402 (AMBER) if these two technical issues were satisfactorily addressed.

GREEN – recommends that site should be supported

AMBER – recommends that the site should be considered further

RED – recommends that the site is unsuitable

**Data sources**

The following websites were used to collect the data for these site assessments –

Borough Maps –

<http://apps.bedford.gov.uk/lvplanning/>

[http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment\\_and\\_planning/countryside/public\\_rights\\_of\\_way/online\\_maps\\_localview\\_fusion.aspx](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/countryside/public_rights_of_way/online_maps_localview_fusion.aspx)

Central Bedfordshire website -

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/planning/minerals-waste/framework/policies.aspx>

Google Maps –

<https://www.google.co.uk/maps>

Old Maps –

<https://www.old-maps.co.uk/#/>

Environment Agency website –

<http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/37837.aspx>

Heritage Gateway –

<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>

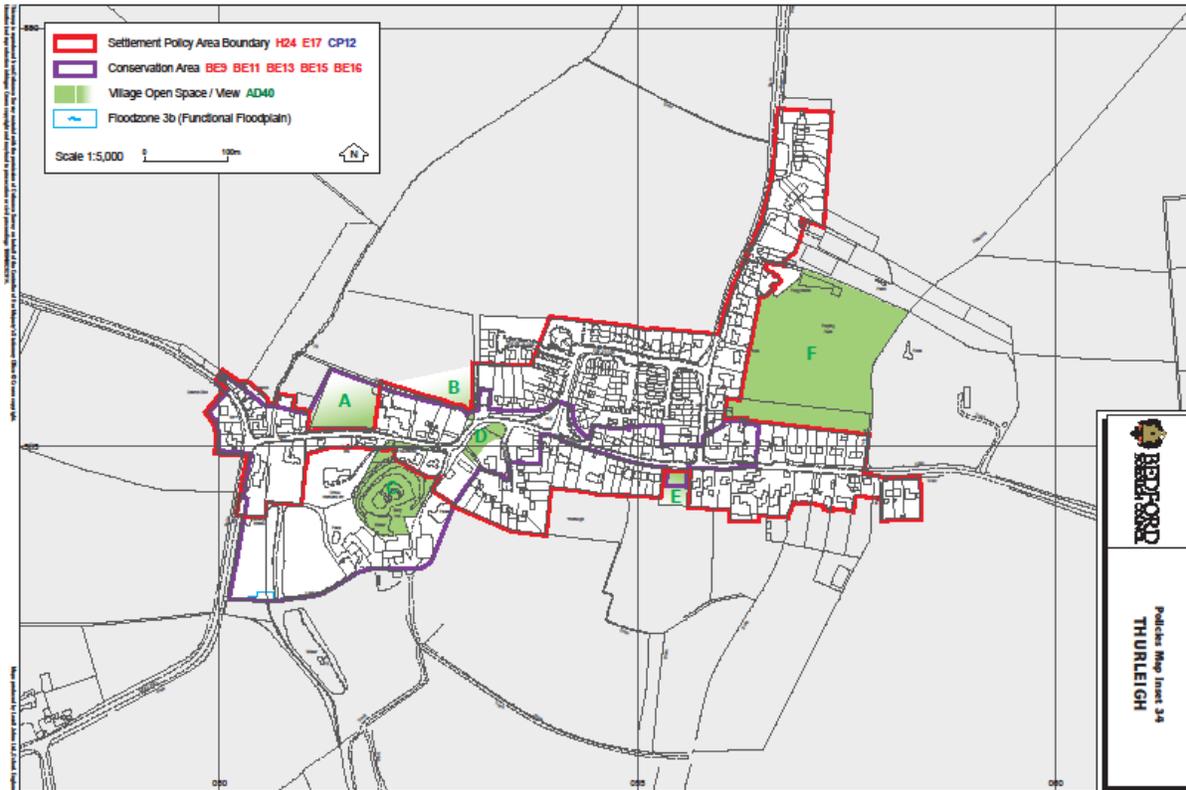
Magic Map Application –

<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

Bedford Borough Council's Important Open Space Review (2009) as part of the Allocations and Designations Plan submission -

<http://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=3Y19D%2fwfzdEmSue5%2bd65lw%3d%3d&name=Harrold.pdf>

**Thurleigh Village Policy Map (as prepared and published by Bedford Borough Council)**



Source - [http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment\\_and\\_planning/planning\\_town\\_and\\_country/planning\\_policy\\_its\\_purpose.aspx](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning_town_and_country/planning_policy_its_purpose.aspx)

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