BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL **DECISION NO. 1892 _____**

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY THE MAYOR/PORTFOLIO HOLDER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

(a) That under Section 34A (4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review be 'made' with immediate effect.

(b) That the Council congratulates the neighbourhood plan group and the local community on their work to develop the Plan.

(c) That the Head of Planning and Building Control, be authorised in conjunction with the Parish Council to make minor editorial textual changes to the neighbourhood plan prior to publication if required.

2. Date of decision

21 October 2026

3. Reasons for decision

The purpose of this report is to formally 'make' the neighbourhood plan review to confirm it as part of the development plan covering the Thurleigh neighbourhood area (Thurleigh Parish) and to recognise the significant amount of work undertaken by the neighbourhood plan group and local community in preparing the neighbourhood plan review.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The Regulations require that the plan must be made within 5 weeks following the receipt of the Examiner's report unless:

- the local planning authority considers that the making of the plan would breach, or otherwise be compatible with, any EU or human rights obligations, or
- a legal challenge has been brought in relation to the decision to hold a referendum or around the conduct of the referendum.

Neither circumstance exists in relation to the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan Review so it must be 'made' by the Council.

5. How decision is to be funded

Costs associated with assisting the neighbourhood plan group to prepare their plan review are funded from the Plans and Strategies Reserve.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision | Not Applicable

Signed ..... Date: **21 October 2026** Name of Decision Taker: **Mayor Tom Wootton**

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: 22 October 2026 .....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 30 October 2026 .....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

For publication

Bedford Borough Council – Report to Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Planning and Prosperity

Date of Meeting: 21 October 2026

Report by: Head of Planning and Building Control

Subject: THURLEIGH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Neighbourhood plans are statutory development plans produced by parish / town councils or neighbourhood forums. Thurleigh Parish Council has produced a review of their neighbourhood plan for the Thurleigh parish area (Appendix A to this report).

1.2 The Plan was submitted to Bedford Borough Council on 7 May 2026 and, in line with regulatory requirements, was subject to a six-week consultation (8 June – 20 July 2026). It has since been formally examined by Andrew Freeman who is an independent examiner. The examiner produced a report, which recommended that the Plan be modified in order to meet legal requirements. As the modification plan did not require a referendum, it must now be formally 'made' by Bedford Borough Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Executive is asked to consider this report and, if satisfied, agree:

(a) That under Section 34A (4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review be 'made' with immediate effect.

(b) That the Council congratulates the neighbourhood plan group on their work to develop the review Plan.

(c) That the Head of Planning and Building Control be authorised in conjunction with the Parish Council to make minor editorial textual changes to the neighbourhood plan.

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To formally 'make' the neighbourhood plan to confirm it as part of the development plan covering the Thurleigh neighbourhood area (Thurleigh Parish) and to recognise the significant amount of work undertaken by the neighbourhood plan group in preparing the neighbourhood plan review.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

4.1 The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan review has undergone examination by an independent examiner and the report recommended that the plan is now made.

5. DETAILS

5.1 Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011. New powers allow qualifying bodies (parish or town councils, or neighbourhood forums in areas without parish or town councils) to produce neighbourhood plans which enable communities to set planning policies for their area. Once part of the Council's statutory development plan they must be taken into account alongside Bedford Borough Council's local plans and national policy when planning applications are determined.

5.2 The stages of preparation of a neighbourhood plan review are similar to those for the preparation of a local plan. They are summarised in the following table.

Neighbourhood plan review		
Stage	**Responsibility**	**Thurleigh parish progress**
Prepare neighbourhood plan review	NP group / parish council with assistance from others	Complete
Pre submission consultation (Regulation 14)	NP group / parish council (6 weeks minimum)	Complete (9 February – 24 March 2026)
Finalise plan in light of comments made	NP group / parish council	Complete
Submit plan to the local planning authority	NP group / parish council	Complete
Pre-examination consultation (Regulation 16)	BBC (6 weeks minimum)	Complete (8 June - 20 July 2026)
Examination	Examiner appointed by BBC (agreed by NP group/ PC)	Complete (received 14 September 2026)

Consider examiner's recommendations and Plan 'made' (part of the development plan)	**BBC and NP group / parish council**	**We are here**

5.3 As this is a modification to the Neighbourhood Plan and it did not require a referendum as the proposed changes were not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan.

5.4 Following Executive's decision to 'make' the Plan, the Parish Council and others who asked to be kept informed will be formally notified. The Plan and supporting documents, including a decision statement, will be published on the Council's web site and made available in line with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

6. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6.1 The Regulations require that the plan must be made within 5 weeks following the receipt of the Examiner's report unless:

- the local planning authority considers that the making of the plan would breach, or otherwise be compatible with, any EU or human rights obligations, or
- a legal challenge has been brought in relation to the decision to hold a referendum or around the conduct of the referendum.

Neither circumstance exists in relation to the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan review so it must be 'made' by the Council.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Legal Issues – relevant legal power

S18A (3) of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 states that the date for which a decision is to be made is 5 weeks following the day immediately after the receipt of the examiner's report. In such circumstances the making of a neighbourhood plan is therefore a legal requirement except in narrow circumstances where adoption of the plan would breach or otherwise be incompatible with EU or human rights obligations. In respect of this plan no such circumstances exist, therefore the Council is under a statutory duty to make the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan and has five weeks from the receipt of the Examiner's report.

Decisions to 'make' a neighbourhood plan are taken by Bedford Borough Council's Executive rather than Full Council[1].

Bedford Borough Council can be challenged on the making of a plan by way of judicial review. Challenges must normally be made within six weeks of the making of the plan.

Once 'made' the Council must publicise its decision in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

7.2 Policy Issues

Neighbourhood plans are examined to ensure that they meet the 'Basic Conditions' which are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The 'Basic Conditions' ensure, amongst other things, that appropriate regard has been had for local and national policies. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area (in this case saved policies in the Local Plan 2002, policies in the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 and Local Plan 2030);
- Be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

Regulation 32 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

7.3 Resource Issues

No additional funding is required as a result of the recommendations in this report. Funding is available for modifications to Neighbourhood Plans from MHCLG and this can be claimed in the next round of funding.

[1] Section 9D of the Local Government Act 2000

7.4 Risks

The making of a neighbourhood plan review following the receipt of the examiner's report is a statutory duty under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. There is a risk that the making of the plan could be challenged in the courts.

7.5 Environmental Implications

The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan review was screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) by Thurleigh Parish Council. The SEA screening concluded that it was unnecessary to undertake SEA. The examiner supported this conclusion.

7.6 Equalities Impact

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

The development of the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan review is relevant to Thurleigh Parish Council's General Equality Duty. The Parish Council is responsible for discharging their duty. An equality analysis has been carried out by the Parish Council. The findings can be found on the in the basic conditions statement.

7.7 Impact on Families

The proposed Neighbourhood Plan will not have an impact on family formation.

7.8 Community Safety and Resilience

The proposed Neighbourhood Plan review will not have an impact on community safety.

7.9 Impact on Health and Wellbeing

The proposed NP review does not include any additional allocations for development.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The Plan has been the subject of two statutory consultations. The neighbourhood plan group carried out pre-submission consultation on a draft plan, known as Regulation 14 stage, and the Council undertook post-submission consultation; the Regulation 16 stage. Details of the Regulation 14 responses are included in the Consultation Statement. The Regulation 16 responses were provided to the examiner of the Plan who considered them during the examination. They can be found on Bedford Borough Council's web-site on the neighbourhood planning pages.

9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

9.1 Not applicable for this report.

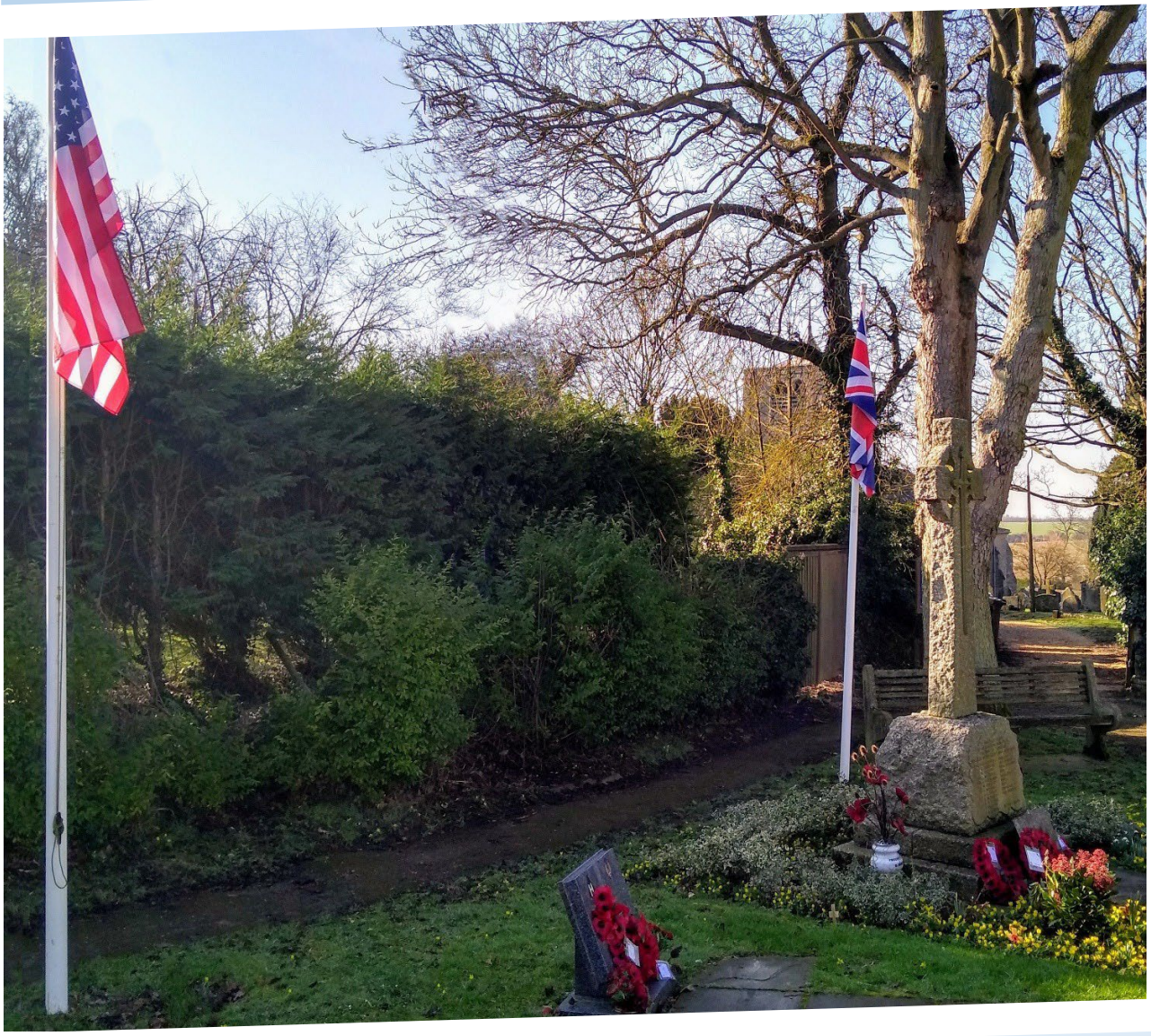
10. CONTACTS AND REFERENCES

Report Contact Officer:	Philip Wadsworth, Manager for Planning Policy and Strategy
Declarations of Interest by the Report Author:	None
File Reference:	Neighbourhood Plans
Previous Relevant Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix A - Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan with examiner's changes Appendix B – Examiner's report

Thurleigh

Neighbourhood Development Plan

2026 to 2040



Review May 2026

Version showing Examiner's changes. New text in yellow and deletions strikethrough.

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Forward

Five years ago, residents came together to set out a vision for the future of Thurleigh with the adoption of our Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Since then, we have seen real progress, new homes built at Hayle Field, protection of valued green spaces, and the planned future investment in community facilities via Community Infrastructure Levy. These achievements reflect the strength of our shared commitment. Yet, we recognise that pressures remain, particularly within Bedford Borough, where housing demand continues to grow and the Local Planning Authority does not currently have a five-year housing supply or a recent Local Plan. This situation creates uncertainty, and under national planning rules it risks triggering the "tilted balance" in favour of speculative development. Our neighbourhood plan must therefore adapt to ensure it remains fit for the future, providing a strong layer of protection and a clear framework for our residents.

This review is not simply a look back but is a renewal of our commitment. By updating our policies and confirming our priorities, we aim to safeguard Thurleigh residents while responding to new challenges.

I'd like to thank our Parish Councillors, our Parish Clerk, our Planning Consultant and all residents who contributed to this process, and we invite everyone to remain engaged as we shape the next chapter together.

Michael Thompson
Chairman Thurleigh Parish Council
January 2026

1. VILLAGE HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Thurleigh is an ancient parish, about 6 miles north of Bedford and covers an area of about 3400 acres. The land is undulating boulder clay, ranging in height from 200 ft. to 275 ft. above sea level. The countryside around is in the main used for arable farming. There are only minor roads in the parish, though the A6 is just a few miles away to the west.

1.2 The name 'Thurleigh' is believed to have originated from the Saxon words La Lega meaning 'the clearing'.

1.3 The village has a population of approximately 800 people with about 320 dwellings spread over 5 'ends'- Church End, Cross End, Scald End, Backnoe End and Park End. The village has a strong rural character and is surrounded by working farms and open countryside with about 30 miles of footpaths and bridleways.

1.4 The Parish Church of St Peter is a grade II* listed building, dating from approximately 1130, probably built on the site of a Saxon church and with 14th and 15th century additions and restored in the 1880s. Thurleigh Castle, a designated Scheduled Monument, was a medieval timber, motte and bailey, castle but only earthworks survive today. Other listed buildings include a windmill tower, built c 1890, and dwellings dating mainly from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The Baptist Church was built in 1888 although this has subsequently been decommissioned as a chapel and has been developed.



1.5 To the north of the village lies a former airfield and defence establishment (RAE Thurleigh), which now accommodates Thurleigh Business Park and Bedford Aerodrome, a motor sport venue and hospitality centre. The business park is progressively being developed for mixed industrial usage. Development of the airfield site in general is subject to policies directly under the control of Bedford Borough Council and as such is not covered in this Neighbourhood Development Plan.

1.6 The airfield was constructed in 1941 and, after a short tenure by the RAF, the base became home to USAAF 8th Airforce 306th Bombardment Group from 1942 to December 1945. A memorial to the 306th that originally stood in the village has since moved to the 306th Museum in 2011 with an additional small memorial installed next to the village War memorial on the High Street. Both memorials are situated near the church in the village conservation area.

1.7 The Old 'Officers' Club on Keysoe Road is a further reminder of the former airfield. This brownfield site is now owned by the Indurent Group.

1.8 There is a real commitment to ensure that local facilities and services are available to ensure a high quality of life for both current and future residents. Thurleigh Primary School and Pre-School offer excellent provision for the village's children. Older children are served by Sharnbrook Academy.

2. VISION

2.1 It is essential that any further development in the village maintains the special characteristics of the village and the following Vision Statement has been agreed for the Neighbourhood Development Plan:

"We passionately believe that Thurleigh is a special, quiet village with a real sense of community. Any future development should, therefore, be sustainable and sensitive, respecting the character of our Village and protecting its beauty, vitality and the natural environment. Thurleigh must retain its distinctive characteristics and continue to grow as a strong, thriving and vibrant place in which to live, work and visit".

3. NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS

What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

3.1 Communities now have new powers to shape development through neighbourhood planning, a new right introduced through the Localism Act 2011.

3.2 A Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) can set out a vision for an area with planning policies for the use and development of land. A NDP will form part of the statutory planning framework for the area, and the policies and proposals contained within it will be used in the determination of planning applications.

3.3 In January 2013, Thurleigh Parish Council applied for the designation of the whole of the Thurleigh Parish as a Neighbourhood area and this was approved 1st July 2013. A Neighbourhood Plan Working Group was set up comprising Parish Councillors and interested local residents to take forward the development of the Plan and the Working Group has been committed to effective community engagement at all stages of the process.

The Plan Period

3.4 The ~~NDP~~ Review Plan ~~will~~ covers the period ~~up~~ 2026 to 2040.



4. NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The Basic Conditions

4.1 The Localism Act 2011 stipulates that a Neighbourhood Development Plan must meet certain basic conditions before it can come into force. Since then, some amendments have been made and the most recent basic conditions are set out below. After being submitted to the relevant local planning authority an independent examiner will be appointed to assess whether the plan has met these basic conditions. If the examiner concludes the basic conditions have not been met, the plan will not go forward to referendum.

4.2 The basic conditions state that the plan:

- must have regard to national policies and advice, such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- the making of the order would not have the effect of preventing development from taking place which - (i) is proposed in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area), and (ii) if it took place, would provide housing. (This replaces the former Basic Condition that the making of the order is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area));
- should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- should be compatible with European obligations and human rights requirements, and
- must ensure that prescribed conditions are met in relation to the plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the Neighbourhood Plan[1]

National Planning Policies

4.3 The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan has been developed with regard to national policy, especially the National Planning Policy Framework. The Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England, the most recent version published in February 2025. It contains core planning principles which must underpin all plan-making. It provides the basis for local planning authorities to prepare their Local Plans and for communities producing Neighbourhood Plans.

4.4 The Framework states that Neighbourhood Plans should support the strategic development needs of the wider area set out in the Local Plan. They should not promote less development or undermine Local Plan strategic policies. It adds that Neighbourhood Plans should plan positively to shape and direct development that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan.

4.5 There is a new NPPF expected to be published in 2026, however the elements relating to Neighbourhood Plans are likely to remain. The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan must also be mindful of Planning Practice Guidance, which was published by the Government in 2014. The Guidance explains how national policy should be applied.

[1] The prescribed condition is that the 'making' of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c,) Regulations 2009) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects)

The Development Plan

4.6 The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan must also be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

4.7 The main Bedford Borough Development Plan documents at the time of writing the Neighbourhood Plan comprise of:

- Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013
- Saved policies in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2005
- Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Strategic Sites and Policies 2014
- Policies Map
- Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030

4.8 The Bedford Borough Local Plan Policies Map (OpenDocument.aspx) illustrates the spatial policies of the Development Plan. Part of the historic core of the village is designated a conservation area. The other key designations and constraints include Village Open Spaces, Local Green Spaces and land which falls within a designated flood zone. It also defines the Settlement Policy Area for the village.

4.9 The existing settlement is defined by the designated Settlement Policy Area (SPA). SPA boundaries were first defined in the Bedford Borough Local Plan (2002) for villages with a built up character to identify the main built up part of the settlement; undeveloped areas or more loosely knit development were excluded from the SPA but the fact that they are outside the SPA is not to imply that they are not part of the village, merely that they are not within the main built-up area.

4.10 The SPA boundary has been amended through the making of the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan in 2021 to include the two housing allocations and is shown in the Policies Map at Appendix A.

4.11 The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan 2021 was drafted concurrently with the preparation of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030, which was adopted in January 2020. The Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 did not require land allocation from villages such as Thurleigh to meet the development strategy but permitted local areas to bring forward development through the neighbourhood planning process. The parish of Thurleigh through the Neighbourhood Plan allocated land for up to 30 new homes to help sustain local services.

Sustainable Development

4.12 The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 8) states that:
"*Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has 3 overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*

4.13 **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure

4.14 **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

4.15 **an environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy"

EU Obligations

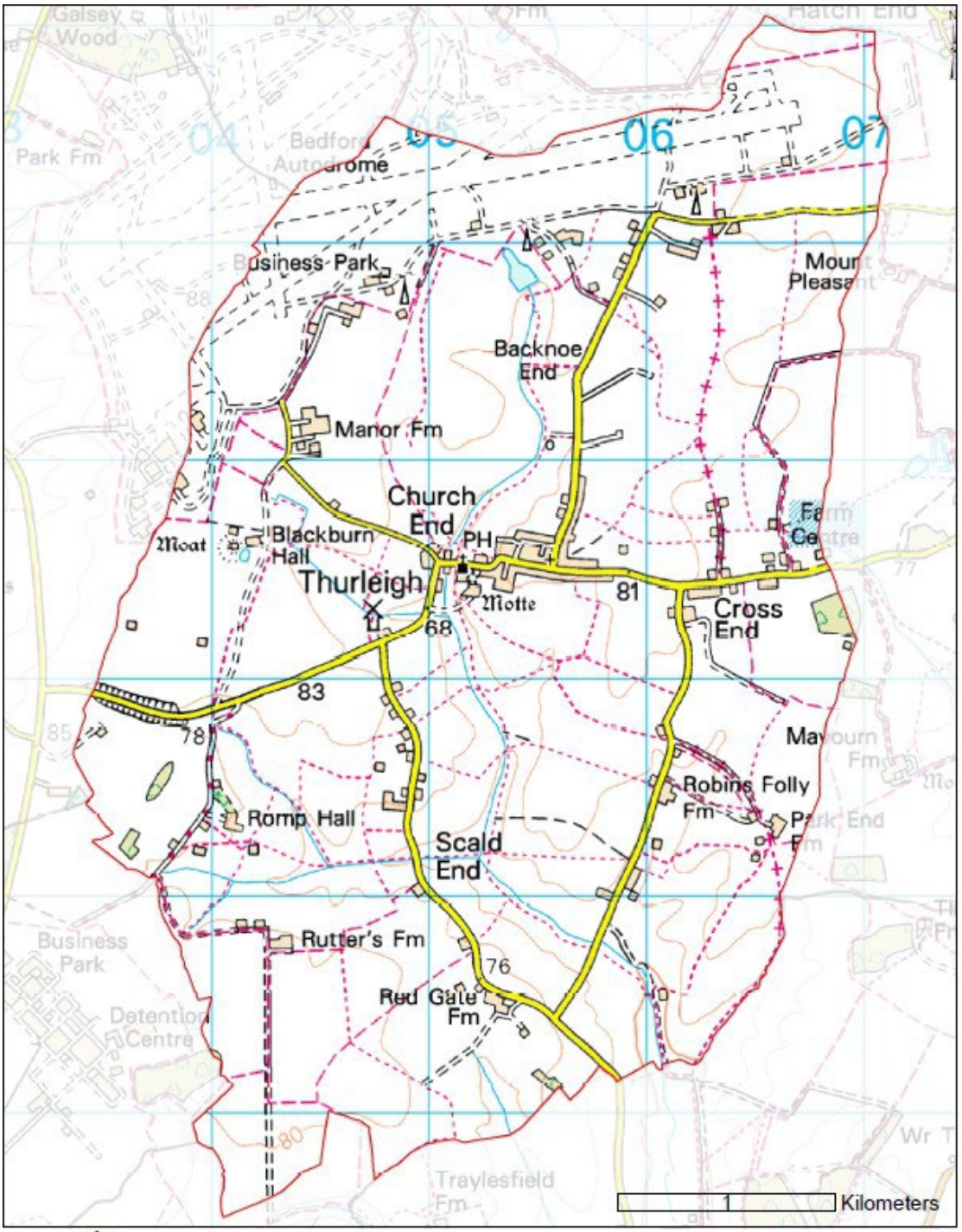
4.16 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations (Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, 2004) and the Habitats Regulations (Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017) previously implemented the requirements of the SEA and Habitats Directives in England. These Regulations continue to apply and have been transposed into English law. The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan was screened in 2019 and full Assessment was not required. The Review Neighbourhood Plan has been screened and again, full Assessment was not required.

4.17 The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan is drafted to embrace these principles of sustainable development and the core planning principles set out in the NPPF, in so far as they can be applied to the Parish. In summary, these core principles applied to plan making a decision taking are defined as –

- Being a genuinely plan-led system.
- Being a creative exercise, not just one of scrutiny.
- Being proactive in driving and supporting sustainable development
- Seeking and securing high quality housing design
- Taking account of the diverse character of different areas
- Supporting the transition to a climate-resilient, low –carbon economy.
- Contributing to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.
- Encouraging the use of brownfield land.
- Encouraging mixed use development.
- Conserving heritage.
- Maximising the use of public transport, walking and cycling.
- Supporting health, social and cultural wellbeing.

5. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

5.1 The Boundary of the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan Area corresponds to the Parish Boundary as identified in the map below:



Thurleigh Neighbourhood Area

BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

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6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Consultation has been undertaken in a variety of formats to inform the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and the policies it provides. The Working Group agreed a Community Consultation Strategy in November 2014, a copy of which can be found at Thurleigh Parish Council. Whilst reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan, further consultation took place.

6.2 Consultation was undertaken using a variety of methods including:

- A "Launch Event" to promote local awareness about the Neighbourhood Plan was held on 1 December 2014 at Thurleigh Village Hall.
- During July and June 2015 a community questionnaire was distributed to all housing (including a draft Vision and Objectives).
- In May 2016 a Community Consultation Event to promote the findings of the questionnaire.
- In November and December 2016 a community consultation was held to obtain feedback on options and initial ideas for inclusion in the draft plan.
- Consultation October 2018 via Facebook to regenerate interest in the plan.

6.3 Issues that were raised at the various early consultations were used to inform the vision and objectives for the NDP. The Vision and Objectives remain the same for the Review.

6.4 Publicity for events was undertaken in the Parish newsletter, social media and websites with leaflets and questionnaires also delivered to all residents and businesses.

6.3 The Thurleigh NDP aims to identify the challenges and changes that face all parts of the Parish, for whilst the community embraces new initiatives and welcomes innovation, it is fiercely protective of its unique culture and heritage and the community spirit that it generates.

6.4 The initial consultation processes provided vital information to identify to understand the key issues of residents and what the community thinks about the local area. The feedback provided, coupled with other evidence gathered through the process, enabled options to be identified and proposals formulated to respond to the key issues, including ideas on locations for growth.

6.5 A further consultation was held on issues and options arising from the initial consultation, and these further helped form the NDP. Details can be found at Thurleigh Parish Council.

6.6 Engagement on the Review of the Neighbourhood Plan included a Regulation 14 Consultation for 6 weeks from the 9th February to 24th March 2026 with emails to statutory consultees and stakeholders. Publicity was carried out through social media, posters and newsletters with the documentation available on the Parish Council website and at the Thurleigh Sports Club. A drop in session was held on the 28th February 2026. Full details are available in the Consultation Statement.

6.7 It is accepted that development and change is necessary if the village is to remain a vital and attractive place in which to live and work. The Neighbourhood Plan also provides an opportunity to address some of the future needs of the Parish and includes a range of Non Land Policy Actions that have been identified through the neighbourhood planning process.

7. CORE OBJECTIVES

7.1 The core objectives of the NDP are based on the key issues raised by local people and were established as follows:

	Title	Objectives
1	Housing	delivering housing which both sustains the current and meets the future needs of the community;
2	Infrastructure needs	managing both existing and future infrastructure requirements; encouraging safe and sustainable movement;
3	Green spaces	protecting and enhancing our existing and future open spaces;
4	Village facilities	ensuring that the village benefits from sufficient facilities and services;
5	Business & employment	identifying development opportunities to provide further employment within the village whilst safeguarding existing employment provision for the community;
6	Young people	ensuring that the village benefits from sufficient facilities and services for young people;
7	Local distinctiveness	encouraging and supporting our distinctive landscape which contributes to a sense of place and community, including natural features such as small woodlands, in-field trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams which distinguish the parish;
8	Heritage	Preserving the special interest of our listed buildings and their settings; preserve or enhance the special interest of the conservation area and protecting the scheduled (ancient) Monument of Bury Hill Camp as well as other archaeological sites within the Parish.
9	Wider Environment	The plan will ensure that there are no negative likely significant effects relating to the Water Framework Directive nor to European sites designated under European Directive (92/43/EEC)

8. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

HOUSING POLICIES

Delivering Housing Growth

8.1 Thurleigh has a range of housing types and sizes. One of the NDP core objectives is the delivery of housing which both sustains the current and meets the future needs of the community.

8.2 A number of options were consulted on during early consultations to respond to the following key issues that had been highlighted:

- The need for a better mix of housing (tenure and price);
- No major growth due to the impact on the infrastructure;
- Small and medium scale housing developments to meet identified need, growth targets and help sustain local services and facilities;
- Some provision of affordable homes for existing and future residents;
- The need to ensure that the village retains its character, rural atmosphere and, in particular, respect environmental and heritage features;
- Any new housing should help to broaden the range of stock available in the Parish;
- The type, tenure and cost of new housing should meet the housing needs of the local area.

8.3 In general terms the Neighbourhood Plan aims to deliver a housing growth strategy tailored to the needs and context of Thurleigh, ensuring that a mix of housing types is delivered across all tenures.

8.4 The provision of a range of property types, sizes and tenure in new build development would provide all households in need, and in particular younger and older people, the opportunity to move to more appropriate properties. This would create secondary gains through making best use of the existing housing stock by addressing under-occupation and promoting improvements in the rate of turnover of existing family units. This would be further enhanced if specialist accommodation to meet the changing requirements of the increasing older population was provided.

8.5 The provision of a mix of housing size and type to meet local need is further supported by the Borough Council Local Plan 2030 (policy 4S).

8.6 In addition, Policy 58S confirms that on sites of 10 or more residential units or 0.5 hectares or more will provide 30% affordable housing with 78% of the dwellings as social or affordable rented properties and the remainder (22%) as other forms of affordable housing. The preamble text to this policy confirms that there is a significant need for affordable housing in the borough and the fact that the Plan makes no allocations for villages below the level of group 2 villages in the settlement hierarchy (such as Thurleigh) it is important that where small scale development is proposed in the these smaller settlements that some affordable housing is provided. This is supported by the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 viability work which confirmed that *'in general terms there is no barrier in viability terms to the provision of affordable housing'*

8.7 The Neighbourhood Plan recognises, that all new housing should help to broaden the range of stock available in the Parish. There was support for 3 or more bedroom detached housing, 2/3 bedroom semi-detached or terraced housing and the provision of bungalows to meet the identified current and future needs of existing owner occupiers wishing to stay in the village. The provision of flats/apartments and

three storey housing as part of new developments was not supported.

8.8 House prices continue to be high in the area reflecting the location and attractiveness of the village and Parish. This further highlights the need for a mix of housing, some of which should be smaller and therefore more affordable and some of which should be suited to people with accessibility/mobility issues. From February 2020 through to August 2025, 46 properties were sold in Thurleigh, ranging from £165,000 for a 1 bed apartment to £940,000 for a large family home.33% of the properties sold were 4 bedroom houses with an average sales price of £438,450 and 26% were 3 bedroom properties, the average sales price being £371,080. Half the properties sold were detached homes, the remainder being semi-detached or terraced properties.

Policy HS1 - Housing

Policy HS1 - Housing

a) New housing should complement and add to the existing stock, broaden choice and extend the opportunity to own a house or live in the village to a wide range of people;
b) There will be a presumption in favour of a mix of 3 or more bedroom detached housing, 2/3 bedroom semi-detached or terraced housing and the provision of bungalows;
c) At least 30% of dwellings should be 2/3 bedroom;
d) The height of new buildings shall respect the character and appearance of adjacent properties and the setting of the site.
e) The density of new development shall reflect that of existing housing within the village and its rural location.

Compliance NP Objective 1: Delivering Housing which both sustains the current and meets the future needs of the community

Location and Scale of Development

8.9 The NPPF makes it clear that Local Planning Authorities should plan to meet housing needs based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community.

8.10 Bedford Borough Council Settlement Hierarchy identified Thurleigh as a Group 3 village and, whilst the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 does not specifically require land allocations to meet Borough wide needs, it does enable local areas to bring forward development through the neighbourhood planning process. The parish of Thurleigh decided, based upon community feedback, to allocate land for up to 30 new homes to help sustain local services. This includes a local need identified by a Housing Needs Survey, commissioned by the Parish Council and undertaken by Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity in 2016, for 7 units of affordable housing and 4 units of market housing.

8.11 Thurleigh is located on the edge of open countryside and has several areas of open space. The majority of the village is designated as a conservation area and any development within it should preserve and enhance the conservation area, as should any development forming part of its setting. A key consideration is the need to ensure that the village retains its character and rural nature and the emerging preference is for a small number of low density, small or medium size, developments. Also, it should be noted that although there are no European sites designated under European Directive (92/43/EEC) within the Parish or within Bedford Borough there are European sites downstream on the River Great Ouse (Portholme SAC, The Ouse Washes SAC/SPA/Ramsar) that are vulnerable and these sites should not be compromised.

8.12 It is accepted that some forms of new housing development are acceptable in a rural location outside of the defined Settlement Policy Area, where there is explicit compliance with the relevant NPPF and as set out in policy 7S of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 – i.e. reuse of rural buildings, replacement of dwellings, affordable housing for local need and accommodation for rural workers. This type of development would need to be supported with robust evidence as part of the planning application.

8.13 A key purpose of the consultations undertaken during the neighbourhood planning process was to obtain views on the acceptability of the sites put forward for development in the Borough Council's Local Plan 'call for sites' in 2014. The evidence collected indicated that development to meet identified need in the village should take place on a number of small sites with access to local amenities, and that it should be delivered in a way that ensures that the right type of housing is built in the right locations, and that protects the village from uncontrolled, large scale, or poorly placed development. In terms of locations for growth (and in the context an acceptable level of growth), in both the original consultation June/July 2015 and the Issues and Options consultation undertaken in November/December 2016 the following sites were considered as acceptable for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan to meet housing needs:

(1) Land known as The Beeches, High Street, Thurleigh (Call for Site reference 274) for a small to medium size development of up to 10 dwellings.

(2) Land known as Hayle Field, High Street, Thurleigh (Call for Site reference 276) for a medium to large development of up to 20 dwellings.

8.14 The site assessment process identified, in terms of suitability, availability and achievability, these two sites as having residential development potential.

8.15 The full Site Assessment Report is available at Thurleigh Parish Council and a summary of the assessments relevant to the preferred sites is set out below:

Site ref	Site name	RAG score	Recom-menda-tion	Comments
274	The Beeches	52	GREEN	No constraints that cannot be mitigated. A new footpath fronting the site and a road crossing point to link with the existing foot- path on the north side of High Street should be delivered if this site is supported.
276	Hayle Field High Street	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.

8.16 The land at The Beeches, High Street, Thurleigh is located partly outside of the defined Settlement Policy Area but adjoining its boundary and existing development. It is centrally located in the village, close to local amenities, and accessed from the High Street. There are no known major constraints which could affect development of this site. It scored well in the Site Assessment process and the feedback from the consultations in both June/July 2015 and November/December 2016 consultation which identified the site as a preferred location for development.

8.17 Planning permission was granted for 11 dwellings in November 2023, reference 23/00386/M73. The scheme met all of the criteria in Policy HS2 and at the time of writing, (April 2026) is under construction and not yet complete. The approved scheme provides the following house types: 1 x 5 bed detached, 4 x 4 bed detached, 3 x 3 bed detached, 2 x 2 bedroom bungalows detached (affordable homes), 1 x 1 bedroom bungalow detached (affordable home),

8.18 The Policy is therefore retained in the Neighbourhood Plan until the scheme is registered as complete.

Policy HS2 -The Beeches, High Street, Thurleigh

Policy HS2 - Land at The Beeches, High Street, Thurleigh

A residential development of approximately 10 dwellings on the land at The Beeches, High Street, as identified on the Policies Map (**Appendix A**), will be supported subject to the following criteria:

a) The design and layout respects and enhances the built, historic, local and wider natural environment;
b) It can be demonstrated the mix and tenure proposed meets the local identified need;
c) Onsite parking provision is provided in accordance with Policy HS4, Village Design Statement, unless it can be demonstrated that a reduction would not result in a significant increase in on street parking.
d) Private amenity space is provided in accordance with Policy HS4, Village Design Statement, unless it can be demonstrated that a reduction would not result in substandard amenity standards for future occupiers;
e) It can be demonstrated that an appropriate standard of access can be achieved for both vehicles and pedestrians;
f) A landscaping plan needs to be provided that will retain as many trees and environmental features as possible;
g) Where the development includes 10 or more dwellings, 30% of the new homes shall be provided as 1 and 2 bedroomed bungalows as affordable housing (rent and shared ownership).
h) Pre-determination archaeological evaluation is undertaken and the results submitted alongside any planning application.

Compliance: NP Objective 1; Delivering housing which both sustains the current and meets the future needs of the community. NP objective 7- encouraging and supporting our distinctive landscape which contributes to a sense of placed and community, including natural features such as small woodlands, in-field trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams which distinguish the Parish.

Land at Hayle Field

8.19 A residential development on the land at Hayle Field, High Street, Thurleigh , located just outside of the defined Settlement Policy Area but adjoining its boundary and existing development was allocated in the Neighbourhood Development Plan under Policy HS3 for 20 dwellings. The housing site has now been completed under planning application reference 22/00370/MAR, November 2022. The housing types are: 4 x 4 bed detached, 4 x 3 bed detached, 4 x 3 bed chalet- all detached, 2 x 3 bed semi detached. The affordable homes are 2 x 2 bed flats, 1 x 1 bedroom coach house, 2 x 3 bed and 1 x 2 bed terraced homes.

8.20 Accordingly, Policy HS3 has been deleted from this Review version of the Neighbourhood Plan and now forms Appendix B for reference purposes.

Achieving High Quality Design and Local Distinctiveness

8.21 Thurleigh has experienced some limited post war growth, but some properties do little to reflect local design and materials and the character of the settlement.

8.22 Following consultation, residents stated a preference for new housing to complement the village style and character. There is a wide range of styles, sizes of homes and materials used in the Parish and new buildings should respect established local vernacular and contribute to local distinctiveness. Whilst thatch is a roofing material on some of the older buildings in the village, experience has shown that it is difficult to achieve due to the lack of available craftspeople.

8.23 There is a strong desire to ensure that all new development is sensitively designed so as to respect the local landscape, and take into account the need to provide sufficient parking, appropriate levels of amenity space and also facilitate the retention and/or addition of tree, hedge and other planting. Where appropriate, development should seek to integrate with the surrounding landscape and countryside and, therefore, avoid being designed with hard edges, particularly when exposed to the countryside beyond. When preparing proposals for new development consideration should, therefore, be given not only to individual house design, but also the provision of landscaping and street layout including accessibility and appearance.

8.24 The following policy has been developed to ensure that all development is provided to a high quality standard, contributing to the creation of a locally distinctive village. Proposals for new development will provide a written statement demonstrating that the principles of the Policy HS3 have been met.

Policy HS3 - Thurleigh Village Design

Policy HS3 - Thurleigh Village Design

Proposals for high quality new development will be supported, where they are in accordance with the guidelines and design principles set out below.

All proposals for new development, including extensions to existing dwellings where appropriate will be expected to meet the following criteria:

a) **Design and layout** will be appropriate to the location and in keeping with the scale and character of the immediate surroundings particularly in terms of:
- Ridge and eaves height and massing;
- Architectural features and decoration which should be consistent with neighbouring properties;
- New houses should be brick face or rendered block walls, with plain tile, slate or pantile roofs, and brick and tile colour should be consistent with adjacent housing;
- To avoid an urban appearance, individual houses should use a mix of materials to provide visual variation in aspect and grouped buildings should provide variation on style and building materials between units;
- Paving, hardstanding and hard landscaping should reflect the character of the area. Extensive black top surfaces are to be avoided, and bricks or setts should be used as demarcation where needed;
- Property frontages should retain the current characteristic of open fencing, low hedges and open gardens. Close boarded fencing, iron railings and brick walls hiding building frontages should be avoided.

b) Buildings should be no more than two storeys high, however new housing fronting the High Street and the principal roads through the village should be no more than one and a half storeys high;

c) New development on the edge of the village and which adjoins open countryside should seek to avoid an abrupt transition. Layout and design is to mitigate the visual transition and present a sympathetic vista on approach to the village;

d) **Heritage and Conservation Area**: Proposals for new development within the Conservation Area or which would affect its setting must make a positive contribution to local heritage character and distinctiveness;

e) **Parking:** new housing must
- provide sufficient on plot parking in accordance with Bedford Borough Council adopted parking standards as a minimum and must ensure there is no unacceptable increase in on street parking. Provision of parking which exceeds these standards is favoured in principle.
- New residential development schemes where there are more than 2 new homes must provide additional visitor parking of 1 space per two dwellings;
- Extensions or conversion of existing buildings which increase the potential occupancy should seek to provide additional on plot parking to accommodate the increase;

Continued

f) **Garden Space:** Design of amenity space should take into account the need to provide adequate spacing between new and existing developments and conform, as a minimum, to Bedford Borough Council standards for garden size. Exceptions can be made to these standards where it can be demonstrated that the garden size is inappropriate for the size and occupants of the dwelling;

g) **Landscaping**: New development must:
- Provide hard and soft landscaping appropriate to the scale, location and design of the development;
- Existing planting that contributes to the street scene or supports the rural character should be retained, or replaced like for like if removal is necessary.

h) **Amenity:** There is no unacceptable loss of amenity to neighbouring developments through loss of privacy, loss of light, noise and pollution and visual bulk and/or the development would be overbearing;

Compliance: NP Objective 1; Delivering housing which both sustains the current and meets the future needs of the community. NP objective 7- encouraging and supporting our distinctive landscape which contributes to a sense of placed and community, including natural features such as small woodlands, in-field trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams which distinguish the Parish.

INFRASTRUCTURE POLICIES

8.25 The planned new developments for Thurleigh village over the plan period will place additional demands on community facilities and infrastructure. The Parish's core objective in relation to infrastructure is to manage both existing and future infrastructure requirements and encourage safe and sustainable movement.

8.26 A number of key infrastructure issues were identified during the neighbourhood planning process:

(i) Parking issues in the village, particularly on The Close and Glebe Close.
(ii) Traffic issues, in particular, speeding through the village.
(iii) Growth will impact on infrastructure and, as such, capacity issues must be addressed with careful integrated planning.
(iv) The impact of new development on traffic movement.

8.27 A number of sub-objectives were identified and first of these sought to ensure that any proposal for development ensures adequate and enhanced physical and communications infrastructure.

Policy IF1- The Provision of Services

Policy IF1 - The Provision of Services

Development proposals should provide services to meet expectations for modern living to include sewerage, water supply, electricity, and broadband service.

Compliance: NP Objective 2 Managing both existing and future infrastructure and encouraging safe and sustainable movement

8.28 It is acknowledged that there are problems of traffic congestion on village roads and the lack of parking in some areas. New development should seek to improve the management of traffic in the village where appropriate.

Policy IF2- Traffic Management

Policy IF2 - Traffic Management

a) Applications for development in Thurleigh shall identify and demonstrate the additional level of traffic that they are likely to generate.
b) They shall assess the potential impact of this traffic on pedestrians, cyclists, road safety, parking and congestion within the Parish and, where necessary, include within their proposals measures to mitigate the impact.
c) Proposals which are likely to increase the impact of traffic on road users shall need to demonstrate how that traffic will be managed.
d) There will be a presumption against development which would impact detrimentally on road safety.

Compliance: NP Objective 2; managing both existing and future infrastructure and encouraging safe and sustainable movement.

GREEN SPACE POLICIES

8.29 Green space is vital in creating and maintaining a balanced community providing an important 'quality of life' resource.

8.30 The core objective in relation to green space is the protection and enhancement of the existing and future open spaces.

8.31 A number of sub-objectives were identified by the Parish –

(i) To protect, improve and enhance community open spaces.
(ii) To maintain the distinct character of the village by preserving, protecting and enhancing the green and rural identify of our surroundings
(iii) To sustain the vitality, health and safety of the community by ensuring that all residents have easy access to community facilities and community green, open spaces for leisure, recreation and enjoyment
(iv) To ensure that any new development includes new appropriate and proportionate green spaces for leisure, recreation and enjoyment

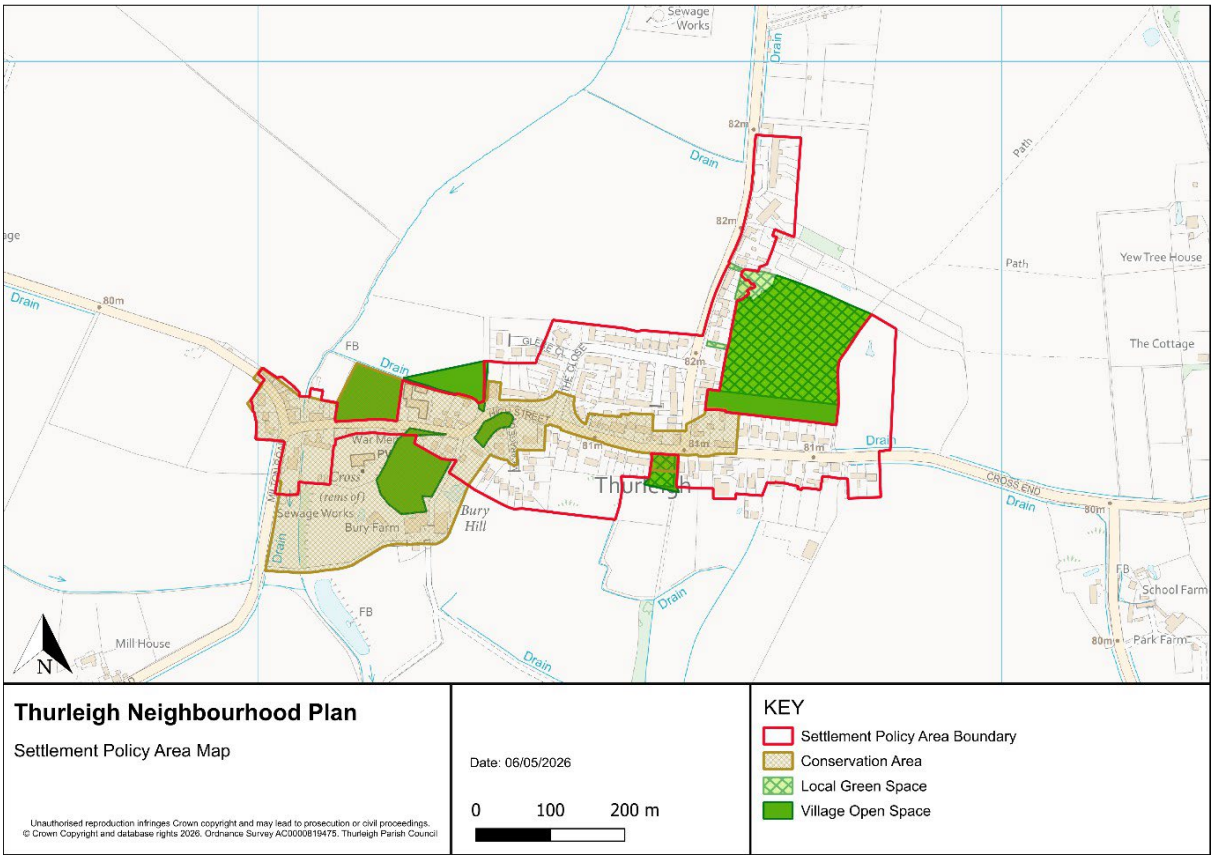
8.32 Policy AD40 in the Bedford Borough Allocation and Designations Plan 2013 affords protection to specific Village Open Spaces within Thurleigh. These protected spaces are identified in green on the map below. The policy states –
"Open spaces which have particular importance in maintaining the function, character and identity of villages are identified on the Policies Map as Village Open Spaces. Open spaces have been identified as Village Open Spaces / Views where they meet one or more of the following criteria:

A. They are publicly accessible and valuable to the local community for sport, recreation or as amenity space.
B. They give identity to a settlement or village by helping to retain its form and reflect past history (examples include village greens).
C. They provide a gap or break in the frontage which contributes to the character of a settlement for example by providing a view into a village which forms part of the village setting, or a view into open countryside establishing the relationship between the form of the village and the countryside beyond.
D. The gap provides visual relief in an otherwise built up area punctuating the street scene.
E. The open space assists the transition between village and countryside providing a soft edge to the village which is pleasing visually.

Development will not be permitted on land designated as a village open space or view unless it can be demonstrated that the reasons for designation are not compromised or that other material considerations outweigh the need to retain the Village Open Space or View undeveloped."

8.33 In addition to these specific already protected village open spaces, policy 45 of the Borough Council's Local Plan 2030 provides protection to Local Green Spaces. These are designations which fulfill the criteria set out in the NPPF. Protection afforded to these spaces is high. Two spaces designated by Bedford Borough Council's Local Plan 2030 in Thurleigh village are the Village Garden and the majority of the Recreation Ground.

8.34 The designated Village Open Spaces and Local Green Spaces identified in the map below and at Appendix A will be protected from inappropriate new development.



8.35 Thurleigh has approximately thirty miles of public rights of way across the surrounding countryside. There is a local volunteer group who, in conjunction with the Borough Council, help maintain these paths and way markers and also prepare local circular walks. Just a few minutes, walking to the north of the village, lie two Reservoirs.

8.36 The twin reservoir area has been identified by the community for special protection. There is a permissive footpath around the site and it is within close proximity to the village and well used by local people. It is important for wildlife. It is on land owned by Indurent and not designated as either a Village Open Space or a Local Green Space. As at 2026, the Parish Council continue to liaise with the site owner to ensure that this area is protected and enhanced.

Policy GS1 - Local Green Spaces & Village Open Spaces

Policy GS1 - Local Green Spaces & Village Open Spaces

Local Green Spaces at the Village Garden and Recreation Ground are ~~designated and~~ designated under this neighbourhood plan as shown on the Policies Map at Appendix A. Proposed development within the Local Green Spaces will be treated consistently with those for the Green Belt. Development will be resisted on the identified Village Open Spaces, unless the special character and contribution to the Parish is unaffected or the advantages of the development outweighs the need to retain the Village Open Space.

Policy GS2- Renewable Energy

8.37 Large scale Renewable Energy installations are generally wind turbines or solar farms. Smaller scale include solar panels, photo-voltaic panels and ground or air-source heat pumps. Such sources are becoming more widespread as traditional energy sources are depleted and becoming more expensive. Technology is advancing all the time and alternative energy sources should be supported although a range of considerations must be taken into account.

Policy GS2 - Renewable Energy

Renewable energy development will be supported where it does not compromise matters relating to heritage assets, residential amenity, landscape character, visual amenity, highway safety, wildlife and habitats, environmental assets and any other relevant material considerations.

Compliance: NP Objective 3- protecting and enhancing our existing and future open spaces. Objective 5 – protecting and enhancing our listed buildings and the ancient monument (bury hill camp) &Objective 7 – encouraging and supporting our distinctive landscape which contributes to a sense of place and community, including natural features such as small woodlands, in-field trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams which distinguish the parish;

RECREATION, YOUNG PEOPLE, SPORT AND VILLAGE FACILITIES

8.38 Sport and recreation helps communities in many ways and can provide innumerable benefits including:

- ✓ Bringing people together, providing opportunities for social interaction
- ✓ Empowers, inspires and motivates individuals.
- ✓ Creates opportunity for work/life balance.
- ✓ Helps protect open space and natural areas.
- ✓ Provides an opportunity for social inclusion
- ✓ Promotes the use of healthy modes of transport like walking and cycling.
- ✓ Creates positive opportunities for all of the community particularly the young.
- ✓ Eases pressure on the health system.
- ✓ Improves mental health.
- ✓ Binds families and communities through shared experiences.
- ✓ Great opportunities for networking.
- ✓ Contributes to lifelong learning.
- ✓ Fosters community pride.
- ✓ Promotes a healthy, active lifestyle.

8.39 If a community is to be truly sustainable, vibrant and equitable, it needs to offer, as far is practically possible, opportunities for all - the opportunity to learn, play, socialise and enjoy rural life. These should be one of the focus points for communities when devising policies for the future of rural communities such as Thurleigh.

8.40 The feedback from the consultation confirms that there was positive support for the protection and improvement of local facilities and services, including the promotion of the Village Hall, and for the allocation of developer contributions through the Community Infrastructure Levy to enable such improvements to be realised. The support for the provision of recreational facilities is, however, dependent on the design and scale being in keeping with the local character and not adversely impacting on the amenity of surrounding residential properties.

8.41 One of the core objectives is to ensure that the village benefits from sufficient facilities and services for all. The first sub objective identified in this topic area during community consultation, was to protect and enhance local amenities which provide a community focus. The community identified other sub-objectives in this topic area as the need to encourage opportunities for all generations to participate in a range of educational, sporting and leisure activities; to sustain the vitality, health and safety of the community by ensuring that all residents have easy access to community facilities, community green, open spaces for leisure, recreation and enjoyment and to ensure that any new development includes new appropriate and proportionate green spaces for leisure and enjoyment.

8.42 There is a presumption against development which would detrimentally affect community assets such as the Village Hall, Sports and Social Club, Playing Fields, the Church, the War Memorial, Memorial Garden, Bus stops, post box and benches. There was a high level of support for the provision of a village shop, medical provision and dental care facility.

8.43 Thurleigh Parish Council recognises the impact felt by the parishioners following the closure of The Jackal Public House. The Parish Council would continue to be willing to work with and where possible offer our endorsement to parties who have the financial means to reopen the Jackal back as a public house.

Policy RYS1- Local Facilities and Services

Policy RYS1 - Local Facilities and Services

a) Local facilities and services will be protected and supported by the Parish Council in accordance with other policies in the Development Plan that seek to ensure the continued viability of the rural economy and support the sustainability of local services.

b) Any unnecessary loss of the following village assets will be resisted:
(i) The Village Hall
(ii) Sports and Social Club
(iii) Playing Fields,
(iv) The Church,
(v) The War Memorial
(vi) Memorial Garden,
(vii) Village Garden

Compliance: NP Objective: 3 – protecting and enhancing our existing and future open spaces & Objective 4 – ensuring that the village benefits from sufficient facilities and service

Policy RYS2- New Local Services

Policy RYS2- New Local Services

The Parish Council will support proposals for new local services including a village shop, medical and dental care facility where they are appropriately located and do not cause harm or where the harm caused is outweighed by other benefits.

Compliance: NP Objective 4 – ensuring that the village benefits from sufficient facilities and service

Policy RYS3 - New and Improvements to Recreation Facilities

Policy RYS3 - New and Improvements to Recreation Facilities

The Parish Council will support the provision of new or improved recreational facilities provided that their design and scale are in keeping with the local character and that there is no adverse impact on the amenity of surrounding residential properties.

Compliance: NP Objective 4 – ensuring that the village benefits from sufficient facilities and services & Objective 6 – ensuring that the village benefits from sufficient facilities and services for young people:

EMPLOYMENT

8.44 The provision of local employment opportunities help support a thriving and sustainable community. Whilst commuting from rural to urban areas to work is still common for many people, technology is creating opportunities for more flexible working arrangements. Redundant farm buildings are also providing new opportunities for land owners to introduce new employment uses which can support help and sustain rural areas.

8.45 Thurleigh's main employment consists of a number of farms, equestrian centres, and local haulage firms, as well as home based workers such as builders, accountants etc. To the north west of the village, just outside the parish is the Thurleigh Business Park.

8.46 The Parish Council will continue to liaise with owners of the former 'Officers Mess' site on Keysoe Road to understand plans they may have. The Parish Council would consider that allocating the site for additional employment growth (with employment uses restricted to those classes that do not rely on the regular use of commercial traffic movement) would be the best use of the site, although have been informed that there are no plans for development at this site currently.

LANDSCAPE AND PUBLIC ACCESS

8.47 The landscapes within and around Thurleigh village have a rich and varied built, cultural and natural environment.

8.48 There is positive support for environmental improvements and that new developments in excess of five dwellings should produce a green infrastructure plan to show how the development can improve green spaces and corridors for people and nature and how wildlife can be protected and enhanced. There is support for the protection and enhancement of the biodiversity of the area, local wildlife and its habitat and trees and for the preservation of ecological corridors and sites of special interest, along with the maintaining of the distinct character of the village by preserving, protecting and enhancing the green and rural identify of the surroundings.

8.49 The following were identified as Sub-Objectives in this topic area:

(i) To protect and enhance the high quality and distinctive rural landscape for
(ii) present and future generations;
(iii) To minimise the impact of new development on the local area and, in doing so, to protect the distinctive views and visual connectivity with the surrounding countryside, landscape and heritage assets;
(iv) To protect and enhance the biodiversity of our area, our local wildlife and its habitat and trees and preserve ecological corridors and sites of special interest, and

(v) To maintain the distinct character of the village by preserving, protecting and enhancing the green and rural identify of our surroundings

Policy LPA1- Public Rights of Way and Accessibility

Policy LPA1 - Public Rights of Way and Accessibility

Where development is proposed there will be a presumption in favour of the preservation and enhancement of the existing network of Public Rights of Way. These will be protected, promoted and enhanced through signage and environmental improvements including seating and dropped kerbs to improve accessibility for all.

Compliance: NP Objective 2 – managing both existing and future infrastructure requirements and encouraging safe and sustainable movement & Objective 7 – encouraging and supporting our distinctive landscape which contributes to a sense of place and community, including natural features such as small woodlands, in-field trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams which distinguish the parish

Policy LPA2- Public Rights of Way Improvements

Policy LPA2 - Public Rights of Way Improvements

The Parish Council will, where appropriate, work to develop improved access and linkages for Public Rights of Way connecting to neighbouring parishes in order to support and enhance health and wellbeing beyond Thurleigh Parish.

Compliance: NP Objective 2 – managing both existing and future infrastructure requirements and encouraging safe and sustainable movement & Objective 7 – encouraging and supporting our distinctive landscape which contributes to a sense of place and community, including natural features such as small woodlands, in-field trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams which distinguish the parish

Policy LPA3- New Development and Connectivity

Policy LPA3 - New Development and Connectivity

New developments will be expected to demonstrate connectivity to existing Public Rights of Way network and provide new footpaths and cycle paths (where appropriate), allowing improved access to the local amenities and services, to green spaces and to the open countryside.
New housing development will also be expected to demonstrate appropriate connectivity to provide for safe walking and cycling of children to the school.

Compliance: NP Objective 2 – managing both existing and future infrastructure requirements and encouraging safe and sustainable movement & Objective 7 – encouraging and supporting our distinctive landscape which contributes to a sense of place and community, including natural features such as small woodlands, in-field trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams which distinguish the parish

Policy LPA4- Protection and Replacement of Existing Trees and Hedgerows

Policy LPA4 - Protection and Replacement of Existing Trees and Hedgerows

Development proposals must be designed to retain wherever possible established healthy trees and hedgerows, trees of good arboricultural and amenity value and hedgerows. Proposals which either result in the loss of or affect existing trees or hedgerows should be accompanied by the relevant supporting surveys and replacements provided wherever possible.

Compliance: NP Objective 7 – encouraging and supporting our distinctive landscape which contributes to a sense of place and community, including natural features such as small woodlands, in-field trees, hedgerows, ponds and streams which distinguish the parish

HERITAGE ASSETS

8.50 The National Planning Policy Framework states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Designated heritage assets include listed buildings and structures, parks and gardens, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas.

8.51 Significance of a heritage asset derives not only from the asset's physical presence but also from its setting. Section 1 of the Plan gives a brief overview of Thurleigh and its history. The village boasts a number of designated heritage assets as well as undesignated assets of historic and archaeological importance including historic characterful buildings and monuments, ancient green amenity spaces and farmland which all add significantly to the historic character of the village.

8.52 Thurleigh experienced great change following the end of the Second World War. The previous agricultural character was altered by the creation of the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) to the north west of the village which was created on the airfield site; this brought new job opportunities to the area. The facility closed in 1994 and is now a business park.

8.53 The Neighbourhood Plan expects special care to be given to all historic buildings and any proposed works that affect these buildings and their setting should be carefully considered so that new development does not result in any undue harm to their heritage and community value.The core objective is to preserve the special architectural or historic significance of listed buildings, to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and preserve the significance of the Scheduled Monuments and other archaeological sites.

8.54 Through its consultation process the Parish Council identified a number of sub-objectives.

- To support sensitive development which is sympathetic to the area, protects and enriches the look and feel of the village and that minimises the impact of such development on the natural and built environment (including protected assets).
- To conserve the historic environment and our heritage assets.

9. NON LAND USE ACTIONS

9.1 Some issues have been raised whilst preparing the NDP that are not directly related to land use matters (although they might indirectly relate to the use of land in some form). As such they are not matters that can be addressed directly by the provision of a planning policy within the NDP, but they are important to residents of the Parish. These matters are detailed below.

9.2 Parts of the village are currently poorly connected to the main part of the village due to the absence of footpaths and cycle-paths. Road safety could be improved for the benefit of both residents and visitors.

Non-Land Use Action 1 - Traffic, Transportation and Accessibility

The Parish Council will work with Bedford Borough Council to improve awareness of local traffic issues and, by supporting the provision of regulation compliant locally designed signs, road improvements and the use of technology, to improve road safety for all and to create a safer environment for all particularly pedestrians and cyclists.

9.3 The twin reservoir area has been identified by the community for special protection. It is currently on land owned by Indurent ~~and is designated as Local Green Space~~. The Parish Council continue to liaise with the site owner to ensure that this area is protected and enhanced.

Non Land Use Action 2 –Twin Reservoirs

Protection of the open countryside of the area comprising the two reservoirs and the immediately adjacent area. The Parish Council will work with the landowner to develop a management plan for the area.

9.4 There is some support for the provision of allotments and, as such, the potential scope to allocate land in the village to encourage the use of allotments could be considered. The Parish Council have undergone consultation and there is no demand currently.

Non Land Use Action 3 - Allotment Provision

The Parish Council will continue to work with the local community to confirm whether interest exists for the provision of allotments and, if so, look to identify land within Thurleigh Parish for the provision of such amenity.

9.5 There is positive support for environmental improvements including tree planting. .. The Parish Council has recently worked with landowners to encourage tree planting and will continue to do so.

Non Land Use Action 4 - Thurleigh Tree Planting Plan

The Parish Council will continue to work with land owners to support local tree planting using Government incentives and charities.

9.6 The respondents recognised that there are several buildings and features of historical interest within Thurleigh as well as locally important heritage assets, which should be protected.

Non-Land Use Action 5 - Protection for Buildings of Local Interest

The Parish Council and its community will work with Bedford Borough Council to explore the development of a Local List for the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan area to include buildings noted as historically important in the Neighbourhood Plan engagement process.

9.7 There was support for the Parish Council to promote dialogue with English Heritage with a view to opening up access to Bury Hill Ancient Monument for visitors and, as part of this, to ensure that a Monument Management Plan is prepared to ensure that the heritage asset is protected and maintained. This should include information boards and heritage trail leaflets.

Non-Land Use Action 6 - Public Access to Bury Hill Ancient Monument

The Parish Council will promote dialogue with the landowner, Historic England and other appropriate interested parties to explore whether public access to Bury Hill Ancient Monument can be provided. As part of this, the Parish Council will seek to promote the preparation of a Monument Management Plan to ensure that the heritage asset is protected and maintained.

Non-Land Use Action 7 - Developer Contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy

The following projects have been identified as priorities for investment in local community infrastructure (in no particular order), and monies from the local element of the Community Infrastructure Levy will be applied to these various priority projects:

a) Enhancement to Community facilities
b) Improvements to facilities at the Sports Field
c) Contribution to traffic surveys and implementation of improved traffic management in the village
d) Enhancement of footways within the Parish with improved surfaces and lighting
e) Improvements to parking facilities
f) Improvements to communication infrastructure
g) The promotion and improvement of the Public Rights of Way across the Parish
h) Improvements to existing open views, Local Green Spaces and ecological sites

10. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE PLAN

10.1 The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it addresses any changes in both national and local planning policies.

10.2 Each Annual Parish Council meeting, after implementation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan, will include a detailed update report. This will monitor the progress of the plan for the previous year and identify the likely implications and impact for the forthcoming year.

10.3 In 2025 there was a thorough five year review of progress, resulting in this Review.

10.4 In 2028 the Parish Council will recruit a new working party to undertake a review and decide on the need for a subsequent Neighbourhood Plan. If a new plan is required the Working Group will develop it,,aiming for it to be made in 2030.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

11.1 Thurleigh Parish Council would like to thank all those who have been involved in reviewing our Mid-term Neighbourhood Development Plan:

- Residents, businesses, local groups and organisations providing feedback during the Regulation 14 consultation.
- Mandy Wilson, Thurleigh Parish Clerk for her dedication and support during the review process.
- Thurleigh Parish Councillors who supported this review.
- Planning consultant, Sally Chapman of Chapman Planning for her valued contribution and continued support.
- Officers of Bedford Borough Council for their co-operation and advice through the neighbourhood plan process.

12. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Affordable Housing. Social rented, affordable rented and shared ownership housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the current market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provision to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

Archaeological interest. There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Conservation Area. An area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Consultation Statement. Consultation statements explain and demonstrate how engagement took place with the community and others to shape the development of the neighbourhood plan. The consultation statement will include and summarise all the statutory (i.e. the pre-submission consultation) and non-statutory consultation that has taken place with the community, organisations and other relevant bodies to develop the plan.

Designated heritage asset. A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

Development Plans. This includes adopted Local Plans, neighbourhood plans and is defined in Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Green Infrastructure. A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Heritage Asset. A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

Highway Authority. Highways authorities are responsible for producing the local transport plan and for managing existing or proposed new local roads in the area. Bedford Borough Council is the local highway authority.

Historic environment. All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places though time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

Infrastructure. Basic services necessary for development to take place: for example roads, electricity, sewerage, water, education and health facilities.

Listed Building. A building of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are graded I, II* or II with Grade I being the highest. Listing includes the interior as well the exterior

of the building and any buildings or permanent structures within the curtilage of that listed building.

Local Green Spaces: Local Green space designation allows local communities to protect green spaces of local importance for reasons including setting and nature conservation. Local communities can identify green spaces through their neighbourhood plans which will then receive protection equivalent to green belt land.

Local Planning Authority. The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for an area. The Local Planning Authority is Bedford Borough Council.

Local Plan. A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.

Localism Act. The Localism Act has devolved greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods and given local communities more control over housing and planning decisions.

Material Consideration. A matter that should be taken into account in deciding a planning application or an appeal against a planning decision.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF 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 can produce their own Neighbourhood Development Plans.

Neighbourhood Plan. A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular Neighbourhood (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Open Space. All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

Parish Council. Parish Councils are the first tier of Local governance, and the closest to the community. Parish Councils are elected bodies and have the power to raise taxes via the precept. Their responsibilities vary.

Planning Condition. A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Planning Obligation. A legal agreement entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

Planning Permission. Formal approval sought from a local planning authority allowing a proposed development to proceed. Permission may be sought for in principle through outline planning applications, or sought in detail through full planning applications.

Rural Exception Site. Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seeks to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on

the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where residential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

Saved Policies/Saved Plan. Policies within unitary development plans, local plans and structure plans that are saved for a time period during replacement production of Local Development Documents.

Section 106 Agreement. A legal agreement under section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertaking offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development are undertaken.

Setting of a heritage asset. The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the Development plan.

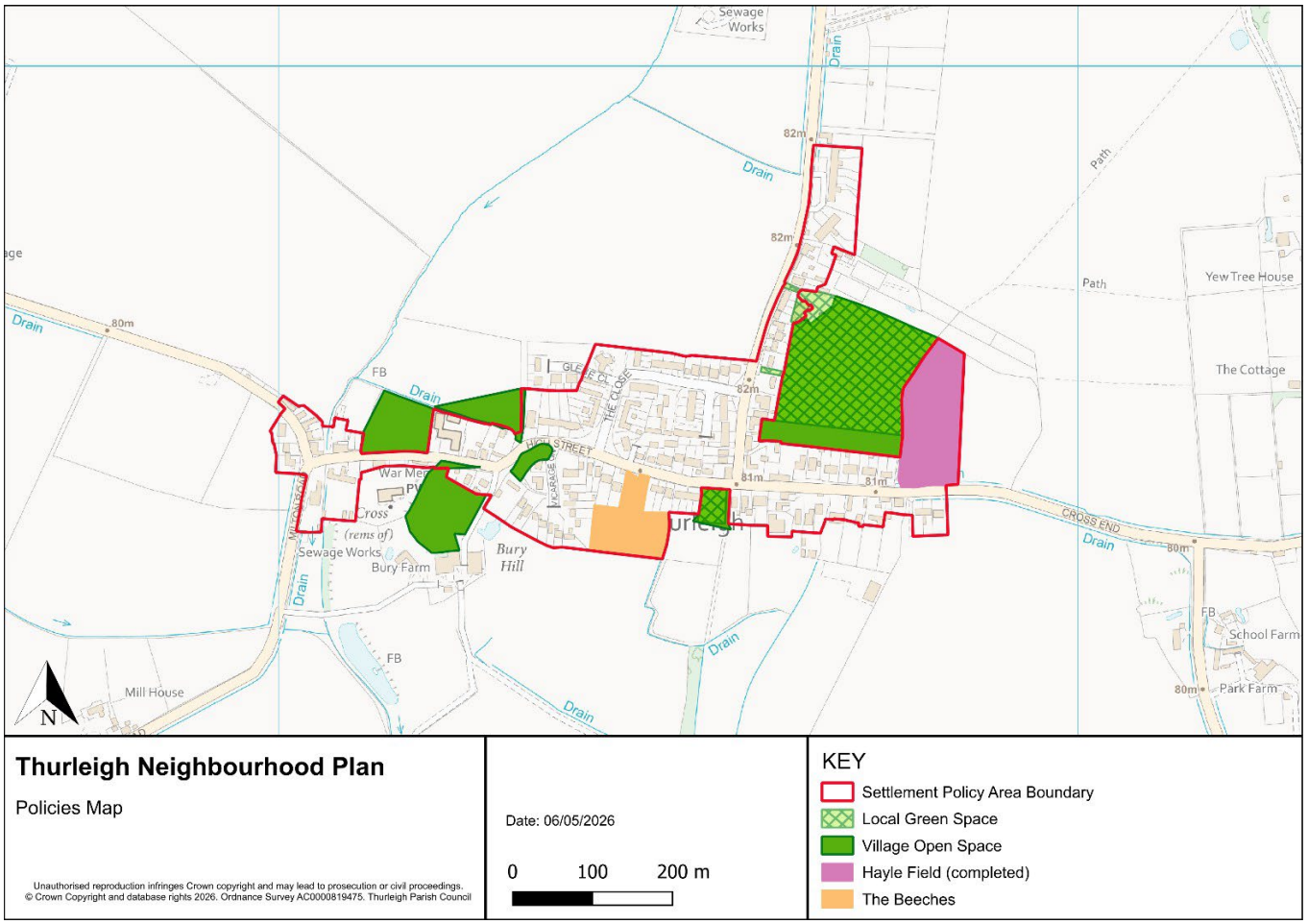
Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). Supplementary Planning Guidance may cover a range of issues, both thematic and site specific and provide further detail of policies and proposals in a development plan.

Sustainability Appraisal. An appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a plan, from the outset of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development.

Village Open Spaces: spaces which are particularly important in maintaining the function, character and identity of villages and meet criteria laid down the Bedford Boroughs Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 policy AD40.

Windfall Site. Sites which have been specifically identifies as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.

APPENDIX A – POLICIES MAP



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APPENDIX B - (Deleted Policy HS3)

Policy HS3 - Land at Hayle Field, High Street, Thurleigh

A residential development of approximately 20 dwellings on the land at Hayle Field, High Street, as identified on the Policies Map (**Appendix A**), will be supported subject to the following criteria:

a) The design and layout respects and enhances the built, historic, local and wider natural environment;
b) It can be demonstrated the mix and tenure proposed meets the local identified need;
c) Onsite parking provision is provided in accordance with Policy HS4, Village Design Statement, unless it can be demonstrated that a reduction would not result in a significant increase in on street parking.
d) Private amenity space is provided in accordance with Policy HS4, Village Design Statement, unless it can be demonstrated that a reduction would not result in substandard amenity standards for future occupiers;
e) It can be demonstrated that an appropriate standard of access can be achieved for both vehicles and pedestrians;
f) Frontage development in this location should be sensitive and sympathetic to ensure that associated accesses and other structures do not radically and adversely affect this pleasant village approach;
g) The entrance to the development must be of an appropriate design to blend in with the village;
h) A landscaping plan is required to provide for the definition of the new SPA boundary to the north and east of the site. This must include significant new planting of appropriate trees and shrubs together with the retention of existing trees and environmental features in order to reflect the location of the site at the edge of the village adjacent the open countryside;
i) Where the development includes 10 or more dwellings, 30% of the new homes shall be provided with 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms as affordable housing (rent and shared ownership).
j) Pre-determination archaeological evaluation is undertaken and the results submitted alongside any planning application.

Report on the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 2026 - 2040

An Examination undertaken for Bedford Borough Council with the support of Thurleigh Parish on the May 2026 submission version of the Review Plan.

Independent Examiner: Andrew S Freeman BSc(Hons) DipTP DipEM FRTPI

Date of Report: 14 September 2026

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

I made an initial determination on 7 August 2026 that the modifications contained in the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review (the Review Plan) are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Neighbourhood Development Plan which the draft Plan would replace.

From my examination of the Review Plan and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the Examiner Modifications (EMs) set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Review Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – Thurleigh Parish Council;
- The Review Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – Thurleigh Neighbourhood Area – Map on Page 9 of the Plan;
- The Review Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – 2026 – 2040 (see Issue 1 below); and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

Therefore, I recommend that Bedford Borough Council should make the Review Plan with the EMs specified in this report (there will be no statutory requirement for a referendum).

1. Introduction and Context

Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan Review 2026 - 2040

1.1 Thurleigh is a rural village and civil parish within the administrative area of Bedford Borough Council, the village being situated about 6 miles north of Bedford itself. The Parish is primarily flat, open arable farmland, criss-crossed by minor C-class roads. There is a former RAF airfield in the north of the Parish, now home to the Thurleigh Business Park and Bedford Autodrome. The Parish has a population of about 750 with some 300 homes.

1.2 Following an application in January 2013, the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Area was approved by Bedford Borough Council on 1 July 2013. The neighbourhood area boundary is coincident with that of the Parish. There followed a process of preparing the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan 2030. Following examination and a successful referendum, the Plan was "made" on 9 June 2021.

1.3 The Parish Council has now decided to carry out a review of the Plan, with an end-date of 2040. Consultation and participation through the Parish

newsletter, social media and websites, together with leaflets and questionnaires delivered to all residences and businesses, has culminated in submission of the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan Review 2040.

The Independent Examiner

1.4 As the Review Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review by Bedford Borough Council, with the agreement of Thurleigh Parish Council.

1.5 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector with over forty years' experience. I have worked in both the public and the private sectors. I am an independent examiner and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the draft Review Plan.

Submitted Documents

1.6 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including:

- the draft Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 2026 - 2040, May 2026;
- a map (Page 9 of the Plan) which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan relates;
- the Consultation Statement, undated;
- the Basic Conditions Statement, May 2026;
- the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) & Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report, May 2026, prepared by consultants acting for Thurleigh Parish Council;
- a copy of the extant Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan, June 2021, as made;
- the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan Modifications Statement, May 2026;
- the statement from Bedford Borough Council on the nature of the proposed modifications, August 2026;
- all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
- the responses to my request for additional clarification, sought in my letter dated 7 August 2026, received from Bedford Borough Council dated 13 August 2026 and from Thurleigh Parish Council dated 18 August 2026.[1]

[1] View at: https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy-and-place-making/neighbourhood-planning/thurleigh-neighbourhood-plan

Planning Policy Context

1.7 The Development Plan for this part of Bedford Borough Council, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, comprises the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030; the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013; and the saved policies from the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002. There is an emerging Local Plan in the form of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2050, but this is at an early stage in its preparation.[2]

1.8 This Review Plan has been prepared in the context of the version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December 2024. A revised NPPF was published during the examination on 17 August 2026. However, the revised version does not apply for the purposes of this examination.[3] Unless otherwise stated, all references in the report are to the December 2024 NPPF and the accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

2. Procedural Considerations

Initial Determination

2.1 As the Review Plan has been submitted as a modifications proposal, I was required to undertake an initial determination under paragraph 10(1) of Schedule A2 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act') as to whether the modifications contained in the draft Plan are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the Neighbourhood Development Plan which the draft Plan would replace.

2.2 The purpose of the determination is to establish whether the modification proposal can be examined under the streamlined process for the making of the draft Plan set out in Schedule A2 of the 2004 Act or, in the event that the proposal contains material modifications which do change the nature of the Plan, it would be examined under process set out in Schedule 4B of the Planning Act 1990 (as amended), requiring an examination and a referendum.

2.3 To inform this determination I considered all the relevant submitted documents, including the written statements on this matter provided by Thurleigh Parish Council and Bedford Borough Council to comply with Regulations 15(1)(f) and 17(e)(ii) respectively of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)('the 2012 Regulations') and the representations.

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[2] View at: https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy-and-place-making/bedford-borough-local-plan-2050 (a previously emerging Bedford Local Plan 2040 was withdrawn from examination in October 2025).

[3] See the transitional arrangements provided by Annex A, Paragraph 6 of the August 2026 NPPF: National Planning Policy Framework - GOV.UK

2.4 In the present case, Thurleigh Parish Council concluded that the proposed modifications are a substantial and significant modification to the made Plan (and would require both examination and a referendum). This is confirmed in the Parish Council's Statement of Modifications of May 2026. The Parish references extension of the Plan period, changes to policy wording or to the accompanying justification and the deletion of policy.

2.5 For its part, Bedford Borough Council has come to a different conclusion. In a statement on the modifications dated 6 August 2026, the Council states, *"It is not considered that these changes would be significant as the changes proposed are minor amendments to policy wording and updating references to dates, references to legislation and additional clarification about existing policies."*

2.6 I have considered the matter in the light of my initial assessment of the Review Plan, its supporting documents and representations made at the Regulation 16 stage. I do not consider that, in the circumstances of this case, the deletion of policy and the extension of the Plan period by 10 years change the nature of the Plan.

2.7 As to changes of policy, these are relatively minor. I appreciate that there is a new policy (Policy GS1 – Local Green Spaces & Village Open Spaces). However, to my mind, this is essentially reflective of circumstances in the Bedford Borough Allocations and Designations Plan 2013 (Policy AD40) and in the Bedford Local Plan 2030 (Policy 45).

2.8 Having assessed all the written documents submitted, including the representations and relevant statements, I am content that the modifications proposed in the draft Plan are material but do not change the nature of the made Plan. Therefore, the examination can proceed under the terms of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act (which I set out below and) and, as a consequence, should I recommend that the draft Plan be made (with or without Examiner Modifications), a referendum stage will not be a necessary part of the statutory process.

2.9 Accordingly, I wrote to Thurleigh Parish Council and Bedford Borough Council on 7 August 2026 with my determination. It is on that basis that I have undertaken my examination of the Review Plan. For clarification, my examination has also considered the entirety of the Review Plan and has not been confined to those parts of the Review Plan which contain modifications to the made Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

2.10 As the independent examiner I am required to produce this report and recommend either:

(a) that the local planning authority should make the draft plan; or

(b) that the local planning authority should make the draft plan with the modifications specified in this report; or

(c) that the local planning authority should not make the draft plan.

2.11 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 11(1) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act. The examiner must consider:

- Whether the draft Plan meets the Basic Conditions;
- Whether the draft Plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the 2004 Act. These are:
  - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
  - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land and does not go beyond the scope of what may be included in a draft plan[4];
  - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
  - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area;
  - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
  - so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, it is designed to secure that the development and use of land in the neighbourhood area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change[5];
  - so far as the qualifying body considers appropriate, and having regard to the subject matter of the plan, it takes account of any local nature recovery strategy, under section 104 of the Environment Act 2021, that relates to all or part of the neighbourhood area.[6]
- Such matters as prescribed in the 2012 Regulations.

2.12 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 11(1) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the draft Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

[4] See s.38B(A1) and s.38B(2C)(a) of the 2004 Act.
[5] This additional requirement was commenced on 25 March 2026 by virtue of *The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026*, which brought into force section 98 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
[6] See footnote above.

The Basic Conditions

2.13 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 11(2) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the draft plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Not result in the development plan for the area of the authority proposing that less housing is provided by means of development taking place in that area than if the draft plan were not to be made;[7]
- Be compatible with, and not breach, assimilated obligations[8]; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

2.14 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Neighbourhood Development Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.[9]

Site Visit

2.15 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 26 August 2026 to familiarise myself with it, and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

2.16 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. Sufficient written evidence has been provided which I have supplemented by my site visit. In all respects, the representations clearly articulate the objections to the Review Plan. There are no exceptional reasons to justify convening a public hearing.

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[7] This Basic Condition applies from 25 March 2026 by virtue of *The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026*, which brought into force section 99 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. This replaces the former Basic Condition which required a neighbourhood plan to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

[8] See: The Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023, which replaced the previous reference to 'EU' obligations.

[9] This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

Examiner Modifications

2.17 Where necessary, I have specified Examiner Modifications (**EMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have included this modification separately in an Appendix.

3. Compliance Matters and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

3.1 The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review has been prepared and submitted for examination by Thurleigh Parish Council which is a qualifying body for an area that was designated by Bedford Borough Council on 1 July 2013.

3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan area and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Plan Period

3.3 The Review Plan period is from 2026 to 2040. This is clarified under the 'Main Issues' section of my report (see paragraphs 4.8 - 4.9 and **EM1** below)

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

3.4 Application for the designation of the whole of the Parish of Thurleigh was sought from Bedford Borough Council in January 2013 and approved by the Borough Council on 1 July 2013. Following plan preparation, examination and a referendum, the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan to 2030 was "made" (i.e. adopted) on 9 June 2021.

3.5 Details of preparation of the Review Plan, and consultation, are set out in the Parish Council's Consultation Statement (undated). The consultation included use of the Parish newsletter, social media, websites, leaflets and questionnaires delivered to all residences and businesses.

3.6 Statutory consultation under Regulation 14 took place between 9 February 2026 and 24 March 2026.

3.7 Details of persons and bodies consulted are set out in Section 4 and Appendix 4 of the Consultation Statement, together with an explanation of how they were consulted in Section 3 and Appendices 1 to 3. There is a summary of the main issues and concerns raised and a description of how these were considered and addressed in Section 5 and Appendix 5 of the Consultation Statement.

3.8 Statutory consultation under Regulation 16 was held between 8 June 2026 and 20 July 2026. Some nine separate representations have been recorded. These were submitted by various public bodies, consultants, community campaigners and individuals.

3.9 I am satisfied that, at both the Regulation 14 and the Regulation 16 stages, the consultation process met the legal requirements and there has been procedural compliance. Regard has been paid to the advice on plan preparation and engagement in the PPG.

Development and Use of Land

3.10 The Review Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with Section 38A of the 2004 Act and does not exceed the appropriate scope of a neighbourhood plan.[10]

Excluded Development

3.11 The Review Plan does not include provisions and policies for "excluded development".[11]

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

3.12 Thurleigh Parish Council has advised that a nature recovery strategy (the Bedfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy[12]) is in place in relation to the Thurleigh Neighbourhood area. In my assessment, I consider that none of the Review Plan's policies are in direct conflict with the strategy.

Climate Change

3.13 I am satisfied that overall the Review Plan policies do not conflict with the aims of securing development which contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change.

Human Rights

3.14 Thurleigh Parish Council is satisfied that the Review Plan does not breach Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998). From my independent assessment, I see no reason to disagree.

[10] See s.38B(A1) and s.38B(2C)(a) of the 2004 Act.
[11] The meaning of 'excluded development' is set out in s.61K of the 1990 Act.
[12] View at: https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/environmental-issues/natural-environment/local-nature-recovery-strategy

4. Assessment of the Basic Conditions

Assimilated Obligations

4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan Review was screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on behalf of Thurleigh Parish Council, which found that it was unnecessary to undertake SEA. Having read the Screening Report, I support this conclusion.

4.2 The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review was further screened for Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), which also was not triggered. Natural England agreed with this conclusion.[13] From my independent assessment of this matter, I have no reason to disagree.

Main Issues

4.3 Having regard for the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review, the consultation responses and other evidence, and the site visit, I consider that there are two main issues relating to the Basic Conditions for this examination. These concern:

- Procedural Compliance; and
- Local Green Spaces and Village Open Spaces.

4.4 Before I deal with the main issues, I have a few observations to make with regard to the representations. First, the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review should be seen in the context of the wider planning system. This includes the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 as well as the NPPF and PPG. It is not necessary to repeat in the Neighbourhood Plan matters that are quite adequately dealt with elsewhere.[14] Having said that, there may be scope to give emphasis to matters particularly relevant in the context of Thurleigh.

4.5 Secondly, the Neighbourhood Plan does not have to deal with each and every topic raised through the consultation. In this regard, the content of the Neighbourhood Plan and the scope of the policies is largely at the discretion of the qualifying body, albeit informed by the consultation process and the requirements set by the Basic Conditions.

4.6 Thirdly, my central task is to judge whether the Neighbourhood Plan satisfies the Basic Conditions. Many of the representations do not demonstrate or indicate a failure to meet those conditions or other legal requirements. Similarly, many of the suggested additions and improvements are not necessary when judged against the Basic Conditions.

4.7 The following section of my report sets out modifications that are necessary in order to meet the Basic Conditions. Some of the proposed

[13] See email dated 27 April 2026 in Annex C of the Screening Report.
[14] See NPPF Paragraph 16 f).

modifications are factual corrections.[15] Others are necessary in order to have closer regard to national policies and advice. In particular, plans should be succinct and contain policies that are clearly written and unambiguous.[16] In addition, the policies should be supported by appropriate evidence.[17]

Issue 1 – Procedural Compliance

4.8 Section 38B(1)(a) of the 2004 Act provides that *"a neighbourhood development plan must specify the period for which it is to have effect."*

4.9 In this regard, the Review Plan states that, *"The NDP will cover the period up to 2040."* The date 2040 is also shown on the front cover of the Review Plan. In its answers to my questions,[18] the Parish Council has confirmed that it regards the Plan period as being from 2026 to 2040. For clarity, this date should be added to the cover of the Review Plan and confirmed in Paragraph 3.4. Modification **EM1** refers.

Issue 2 – Local Green Spaces and Village Open Spaces

4.10 Policy GS1 of the Review Plan states, *"Local Green Spaces at the Village Garden and Recreation Ground are designated and shown on the Policies Map at Appendix A. Proposed development within the Local Green Spaces will be treated consistently with those for Green Belt. Development will be resisted on Village Open Spaces unless the special character and contribution to the Parish is unaffected or the advantages of the development outweighs the need to retain the Village Open Space."*

4.11 By way of background, there was a similar policy in the submission version of the Thurleigh Neighbourhood Plan to 2030. However, following a recommendation from the Examiner with a view to avoiding duplication, the policy was not carried forward into the made version of the Plan. As such, the policy in the Review Plan is effectively a new policy.

4.12 From the wording of the draft policy, it is not clear whether the Villages Open Spaces and Local Green Spaces are intended to be identified/ designated through the Review Plan, given the provisions of the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 and the Borough Local Plan 2030. An explanation has been provided by the Parish Council in its answers to my questions:[19]

"… Bedford Borough Council recently indicated informally that they were not sure that the Village Green Spaces would be carried forward into the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2050. The Parish Council would not wish to

[15] Modifications for the purpose of correcting errors is provided for in Paragraph 13(1)(e) of Schedule A2 to the 2004 Act.
[16] NPPF, Paragraphs 15 and 16 d).
[17] PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.
[18] See Parish Council's answers received on 18 August 2026 to my questions.
[19] See Parish Council's answers received on 18 August 2026 to my questions.

see these Village Green Spaces lost, so the policy has been reinserted with up to date wording."

4.13 I am supportive of decisions made through the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 and the Borough Local Plan 2030 regarding the identification and designation of the Village Green Spaces and Local Green Spaces in Thurleigh. I can see that they are valued amenity areas of special importance to the local community. With regard to the Local Green Spaces, they would satisfy the requirements set out in Paragraphs 106 and 107 of the NPPF, December 2024.[20]

4.14 I would not normally agree to the duplication of provisions that are already contained in the Allocations and Designations Local Plan and the Borough Local Plan. However, I am satisfied that both the Villages Open Spaces and Local Green Spaces should enjoy on-going protection. This can be secured by making provision in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, amended wording of the policy is needed for clarity.

4.15 I am also aware that the made Plan contains inaccuracies with regard to the notation used for Local Green Space and Village Open Space (for example, Village garden, High Street is shown as Village Open Space, not as Local Green Space). This inaccuracy can be corrected through the Review Plan where the correct situation can be seen in the plan on Page 21 and in Appendix A – Policies Map.

4.16 A further error is to be found in Paragraph 9.3 of the Review Plan. This should indicate that the *"twin reservoir area"* is not designated as a Local Green Space.[21]

4.17 Appropriate amendments in regard to the above matters are set out in modification **EM2**.

Other Policies

4.18 There remain a number of policies in the Review Plan that have not been the subject of commentary in the above report. These are Policies HS1 – Housing; HS2 – Land at The Beeches, High Street, Thurleigh; HS3 – Thurleigh Village Design; IF1 – The Provision of Services; IF2 – Traffic Management; GS2 – Renewable Energy; RYS1 – Local Facilities and Services; RYS2 – New Local Services; RYS3 – New and Improvements to Recreational Facilities; LPA1 – Public Rights of Way and Accessibility; LPA2 – Public Rights of Way Improvements; LPA3 – New Development and Connectivity; and LPA4 – Protection and Replacement of Existing Trees and Hedgerows.

4.19 To a greater or lesser extent, these topics are covered in NPPF Sections 5 (Delivering a sufficient supply of homes); 8 (Promoting healthy and safe

[20] These tests are carried forward into Policy HC2 of the NPPF, August 2026.
[21] See Parish Council's answers received on 18 August 2026 to my questions.

communities); 9 (Promoting sustainable transport); 12 (Achieving well-designed places); and 15 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment). I find that there has been regard for national policy and that the Basic Conditions have been met.

Minor Amendments and Updates

4.20 Minor amendments such as minor non-material changes or updates can be made in agreement between Bedford Borough Council and Thurleigh Parish Council.[22]

5. Conclusions

Summary

5.1 The Thurleigh Neighbourhood Development Plan Review has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard for all the responses made following consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan Review, and the evidence documents submitted with it.

5.2 I have set out two modifications to ensure the Review Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements.

Examiner Recommendation

5.3 I recommend that Bedford Borough Council should make the Review Plan with the modifications specified in the Appendix to this report.

Overview

5.4 It is evident that a considerable amount of time and effort has been devoted to the development and production of this Plan and I congratulate those who have been involved. The Plan should prove to be a useful tool for future planning and change in Thurleigh over the coming years.

Andrew S Freeman

Examiner

[22] PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.

Appendix: Examiner Modifications

Examiner modification number (EM)	Page no / other reference	Modification
EM1	Front cover and Page 5	On the front cover, replace "2040" with "2026 to 2040". Change Paragraph 3.4 so that it reads, "The Review Plan covers the period 2026 to 2040".
EM2	Pages 21 and 27	In the first line of Policy GS1, replace "designated and" with "designated under this neighbourhood plan as". In the third line, after "resisted on" add "the identified". In Paragraph 9.3, delete "and is designated as Local Green Space".