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#### Acknowledgements.

Our thanks must go to the very large body of people — named at the end of this document — who helped with the production of this plan. In particular we would like to thank Zoe Ashby of the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity for her constant, courteous and good-humoured input through the long process of writing.

## Your Local MP





#### **Alistair Burt**

Member of Parliament for North East Bedfordshire House of Commons, London SW1A OAA London office: Tel: 020 7219 8132 Fax: 020 7219 1740 Bedfordshire office: Tel: 01234 314491 Fax: 01234 314691 Website: www.alistair-burt.co.uk Email: burta@parliament.uk

#### THURLEIGH PARISH PLAN

I am delighted to welcome this parish plan put together by the community in Thurleigh.

The process itself is far from easy. It involves painstaking work in gauging the many views of those who live in the area, then distilling them into a readable record of where a community stands, and where it wishes to go. Then it must reach a further point, by deciding upon the actions needed to take the village forward, and what its priorities should be. All who take part in such a process deserve our thanks, because I imagine the plan has not reached this stage without a few drops of blood, sweat and tears along the way!

This plan blends very well the history of Thurleigh with its intended future. That most people wish to see continuity is unsurprising; we live in a lovely part of the country, and would wish it to stay that way. But there is no sense of preserving a village in some form of aspic, for there is an understanding of the type and size of new housing needed, and a call for more business and enterprise to be located here, replacing the agricultural jobs of years ago. There is recognition too that some things of the past should not simply be consigned to history, and I hope that plans to re-instate hedgerows, with their abundance of wildlife, are successful.

I was pleased also to note the participation of young people. Their most plaintive cry is for more adults to volunteer to help with organised activity, truly the best answer to concerns about having 'nothing to do', and again I hope the village can find those who will guide a new generation, who will make their own contribution to the life of a flourishing village.

I note all the action points, and I trust, like all the elected representatives I work with, and who are so proud to serve Thurleigh at all levels, you will call upon me for help in terms of anything I can do to help reach the aims set. The hard work undertaken by so many on behalf of Thurleigh demands no less, and I look forward to seeing the proposals successfully taken forward in the years to come.

Alistair Burt MP Westminster, December 2007

'Serving the people of North East Bedfordshire'

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#### **Parish Plan Steering Committee**

#### Thurleigh, Bedfordshire

Chairman - Damon Goodyear

Chair Thurleigh Parish Council The Vicarage Thurleigh

Madam Chair

The predecessors to the current Parish Council initiated a consultation process in 2005 in which the residents of Thurleigh were to be asked what developments they would like to see over the next 5 to 10 years. The consultation was to be compiled into a Parish Plan. We present here the results of that consultation and planning process.

A Steering Group, together with Working Parties, whose brief was to look at specific aspects of such a plan, carried out the work. As well as the original 5 working parties on Planning, Environment, Business, Traffic and Youth, contributions have been sought from other centres of interest in the village – the Village Hall, the Playing Field and associated Social Club, the Cricket Club and the School. Most of the consultation was conducted by means of a survey distributed and collected in the summer of 2006. However, other means have also been used to determine the opinions of villagers – namely barbeques, a consultation evening with the youth and contributions from the governing bodies of the above mentioned centres of interest. The working parties and Steering Group were also able to elicit further assistance from the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity on various aspects of the planning.

We have laid out the principal findings of each working group with a narrative describing the conclusions drawn from the questionnaire and other input. At the end of each section is a summary of actions.

The process has not been without controversy. Most particularly, many comments were received that made reference to a desire to put the land occupied by the Officers' Mess to better use, regarding the suitability of flats to a village location and the provision of affordable housing to those with connections to the village. Whilst we would urge the Parish Council to press for resolution of these matters, it is recognised that they are outside the power of the Parish Council alone to resolve. It is hoped that as opportunities present themselves the Parish Council will act in accordance with our findings consulting further as necessary.

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It is further hoped that that many of the good ideas that came out as a result of the planning process, for example the many environmental projects that have been proposed, can be implemented by interested groups with the support of the Parish Council.

Thurleigh is a thriving agricultural and business community set in the heart of rural England. A common theme amongst those who took part in the consultation exercise and preparation of this plan is that we live here because we value village life. But we recognise that a rural community must adapt to the demands of modern life whilst striving to maintain the distinct character of the village.

Yours sincerely

Damon Goodyear

Chairman, Environment

Linda Hadfield Environment

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Peter Jackson Business

Toni Smith Youth Clarissa Caröe

Treasurer, Planning and Development

Simon Hubbard

5 (Hutrard

Traffic and Transport

Martin Towler

Business

# About Thurleigh

The village of Thurleigh stands on a 250ft high plateau, said to be the largest in England. In size the parish consists of about 3,400 acres of fertile clay soil, and because of its height has clear air and occasional bracing winds.

About 750 people live in the village in about 250 dwellings. Apart from the main village hub, the village is spread across 5 ends

– Church End, Cross End, Scald End, Backnoe
End and Park End– that cover an area of about 6 square miles.



Community life continues to thrive with regular events held at the Village Hall, the Church, the Playing Field Club and the Jackal.

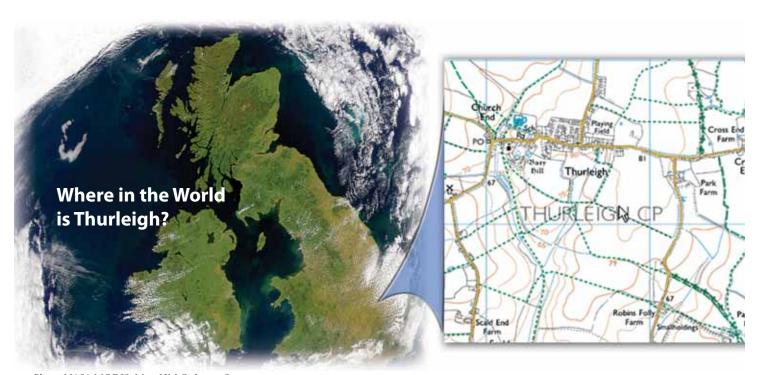


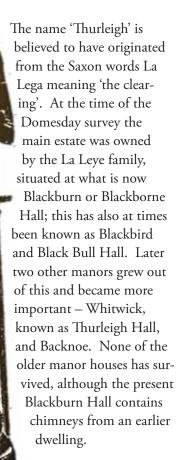
Photo: NASA MODIS, Map: HM Ordnance Survey

52°12′53″N 0°27′37″W Bedford 8 miles, Rushden 10 miles and St Neots 10 miles. 65 miles north of London.

30 miles west of Cambridge.

Thurleigh Parish Plan

### **Our Roots**



Evidence that

Thurleigh had been inhabited from an early date was uncovered during a 1976 excavation of the grounds of the Old Vicarage before they were redeveloped.

A castle mound, known as Bury Hill, behind St Peter's church is scheduled as an Ancient Monument. It is thought that it was erected, without planning permission – an 'adulterine' building, in about 1140. It is possible that the church is built from stone originally used in the construction of the castle.

The Enclosure Acts of the early 19th century saw great changes in the landscape around Thurleigh. The Great Field, Church Field and South Field were divided up into smaller holdings and allocated to different owners. Another change from around the same time was the disappearance of the village greens. Although some common land still exists within the village it was mostly allocated to ownership during enclosure.

A number of roads have fallen into disuse over the centuries. A road from Thurleigh to Wilden used to go through Park End but is now just a bridleway. Another from Whitwick Green to Riseley was eventually built over with the advent of Thurleigh airfield, as was part of Keysoe Road.

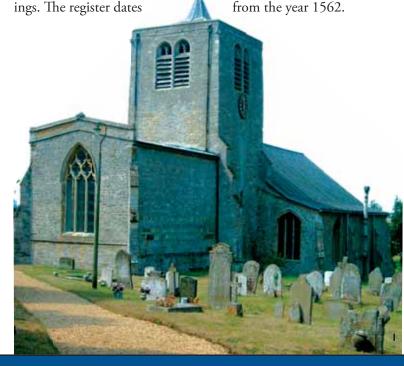
Thurleigh boasts a church – dating back to Saxon times, but whose earliest surviving part is a Norman tower and doorway built around 1150 – and a Baptist Chapel, built in 1827. The church has been rebuilt on a number of occasions and underwent extensive restoration during the 1950s to make good damage done by a landmine dropped on Mill Hill by enemy aircraft during the war.

On land just outside the church stands a War Memorial to men of the village who gave their lives in two world wars. Outside the village on land outside what used to be the Officers' Mess of the Royal Aircraft Establishment stands another Memorial – to those American airmen who made the ultimate sacrifice in the Second World War.

#### St Peter's, Thurleigh

on the south side with

The church of St. Peter, on a rise in the village, is a fine and ancient building of stone, consisting of chancel, nave, aisles and a central tower, containing a clock and 6 bells, the 6th bell and a clock dial being added in 1897, in commemoration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The 'Adam and Eve' door dates back to Norman times. In the nave is a brass to John Harvey, supposed to be of the 13th century, and in the chancel is a marble slab to John Harvey or Hervey, the last of the family, who died in 1715. The church was thoroughly restored in 1882, at a cost of about £700, and the bells in 1889, at a cost of £150. In 1887 a beautiful stained window was inserted at the east end of the chancel by Mr. and Mrs. Feazey in memory of their children. During the restoration of the chancel, a low-side



traces of ancient fasten-

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# **Thurleigh To Date**

The aftermath of the Second World War brought about enormous change to Thurleigh. Previously the village had been an agricultural backwater but the construction of the airfield and the threat from the Soviet Union kept the aircraft industry in the area.

By the early 1950's the Royal Aircraft Establishment had been created on the airfield site and adjacent land, necessitating the cutting of the Thurleigh-Keysoe Road and the demolition of the hamlet of Backnoe End. This coincided with a decline in the demand for agricultural workers as the small, hedged fields of the Enclosure used for mixed farming were amalgamated to form wide open areas to facilitate the use of new machinery, spurred on by generous government subsidies. Meadowland was ploughed up and animal husbandry largely ceased. This had its effect on the landscape and wild life.

When completed the RAE provided considerable alternative employment in the area, over 100 Thurleigh people working there at one stage, and first-class engineering apprenticeships were available for local youth. For over forty years the RAE was at the forefront of valuable research for both military and commercial aeronautics. Vertical take-off was pioneered here – the first such flights taking place at Thurleigh – as well as much work on Flight Simulation, Blind Landing, aircraft-carrier catapults and radar development. The facility finally closed in 1994 and is now used by Palmer Sport as a corporate hospitality centre and for car refurbishment and storage.

Thurleigh continues to be a thriving business community with major employers including Jackson Demolition, Monster Events, Star Hire and a number of agricultural holdings. Amongst the latter, Thurleigh Farm Centre attracts visitors from a wide area.

The village itself has escaped the large-scale development of others in the area. The first stage of The Close in the 1950's met the needs of local families in over-crowded cottages (most of which were then sold on and improved by newcomers), and was later extended. The Keysoe Road site re-housed people displaced from Backnoe End. Further developments of infill in the High Street, at Vicarage Green and on the former garage site at Chapelfields have provided extra accommodation. The Playing Field was opened in 1962 and includes a Sports and Social Club. The original pre-war wooden Village Hall was renovated in the 1970's and then replaced by a new and larger building. Only one public house, The Jackal, remains of the original four, and unfortunately the Post Office/shop has recently closed on the retirement of its owners, although there are plans afoot to reopen the post office in a new location.

#### The 306th

Thurleigh as an airfield dates back to July 1940 when work began to build a Bomber Command Base as part of a massive nationwide building programme. An R.A.F. party arrived in July 1941 to open the far from complete airfield. The early days of 1942 saw a major influx of personnel to Thurleigh with the formation of 160 Squadron R.A.F. Their stay was brief; they left for the Middle East in February. At about the same time 18 Operational Training Unit arrived with its Wellington Bombers and Polish crews who left in early June. The airfield then underwent a considerable expansion of facilities to accommodate an American Heavy Bomber Group. In September 1942 the 306th Bombardment Group arrived.

On 9th October 1942 a formation of B17 Flying Fortress left Thurleigh on the first of what was to be 341 daylight-bombing missions over



occupied Europe. The 19th April 1945 saw the Group return to their wartime home after what was to be their final combat mission of the war. Thurleigh airfield became the first base in England to be handed over completely to the Americans, giving them full sovereignty and control of these few acres.

The 306th stayed longer than any other Eighth Air Force combat unit at a single base and longer in England than any other Eighth Air Force bomber or fighter unit. The building itself is of interest being one of the few remaining on the original airfield built during World War 2.A large collection of artifacts has been assembled to re-create the activities and atmosphere of the airfield and surrounding area during the war years. Dr Jonathan Palmer of Bedford Aerodrome who donated the building opened Thurleigh Museum on the 27th July 2002. The museum's opening was a great occasion for all involved and the many guests that attended. To complete the event Sally B, the only airworthy B-17 in the UK performed a 20-minute air show above the museum to the amazement of the emotional observers.

# **Environment**

The environment section of the questionnaire covered a wide brief, ranging from pollution and waste disposal to wildlife, footpaths, trees, hedges and green spaces. Suggestions were put forward concerning the setting up of working groups to maintain areas in the village such as the Village Garden, churchyard and network of walks around the village. 42 respondents would like to become involved with projects to improve access to the countryside and the environment in the village and 28 respondents would be prepared to help maintain the Village Garden. It is proposed that an Environmental Improvement Network will be set up to co-ordinate such activity.

There is also interest in promoting and extending the use of the network of footpaths around the village. This could be undertaken by a separate group, or a subset of the Environmental Improvement Network.

#### Public Gardens, Allotments, Churchyard and Communal Green Spaces

The land known as the "Village Garden" is situated in the High Street. It was sold in July 1990 to the Parish Council, for a peppercorn amount, by developers who were unable to obtain planning permission to build on it. The area is laid to grass and planted with shrubs. Contractors employed by the Parish Council mow the grass regularly. It is a quiet place intended for the village people to enjoy the peace of a garden. 70% of respondents to the question on public gardens expressed a desire to see bulbs planted in the village garden. 41% would like to see more seating. 25% said they would be willing to help maintain the garden. At

present the village garden is not much used. A respondent suggested that it could be used as the start/finish of a circular walk around the footpaths of the village.

67% of respondents were interested in seeing the provision of allotments in Thurleigh and 34 respondents would be



keen to participate in such a scheme. One respondent suggested the possibility of sharing large gardens or gardens where the owners are not able to look after them.

A contractor employed by the Parish Council cuts the communal green spaces in the village regularly, and the verges less frequently. 65% of respondents felt the village would be improved by landscaping (planting trees, shrubs/flowers/flower beds), with 63% citing grass maintenance as being of most importance. A smaller number of respondents favoured the sowing of wild flowers and 31% would like more benches. Suggestions of locations included spring-flowering bulbs on roadsides on the outskirts of the village and landscaping in The Close.

The horse chestnut trees in the churchyard were singled out by respondents as being of particular significance to the village. 89% of respondents said they were happy with the appearance of the churchyard. 11% felt it could be improved with more grass cutting, tree pruning and general tidying.

A further and much anticipated improvement to the Churchyard is the proposed new memorial garden in the far left hand bottom corner (opposite side from the Church

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House). The memorial garden has been designed as a quiet, contemplative area for the interment of ashes. There will be benches provided in the garden and parishioners will be able to enjoy both the peaceful location and the view across the countryside.

#### **Hedges and Trees**

Thurleigh has many miles of hedging. Most of the hedges are well-kept and trimmed, but there are also many examples where the hedges are over-grown, spreading

over ditches and verges. In some places hedgerows consist of sporadic bushes and trees and there are many areas where the hedging has been removed

completely. 90% of respondents would support efforts to re-establish hedgerows that have been removed over the past few years.

Some specific locations, where hedges extend well over the pavement or verges forcing pedestrians to walk on the road, were mentioned as needing attention. Specific mention was made regarding hedges at the playground and village garden and also regarding trimming and lowering of hedges along footpaths around the airfield, at Church End, Whitwick Green Road, the sewage works and Keysoe Road.

30% of respondents considered some trees in the parish to be special. Specific mention was made of large trees in general and trees at the churchyard, near the Jackal, bordering far side of the playing field, along Keysoe Road, at Robin's Folly and Cross End, The Close, High Street, Whitwick Green Road, Windmill, Officers' Mess, Village Garden and War Memorial.

#### **Wildlife and Nature Reserves**

Spencer's Wood, opposite Thurleigh Farm Centre, is listed by English Nature as a Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat (wet woodland). There are no other specific nature reserves or wildlife areas in Thurleigh. 85% of respondents would actively support enhancement of farmland by siting nest boxes, planting trees, maintaining paths etc and 65% of respondents thought there were sites in the parish that could be improved to help the environment. Specific comments were made that such sites would need to be

controlled or they would become untidy and also that farmers already encourage wildlife havens. Many locations were suggested as suitable sites, including along

the walks in the leaflet, village garden, officers' mess site, reservoir, farms etc. 71% of respondents would like to see information boards put up in the village eg at castle mound, reservoir, officers' mess site.

#### **Footpaths and Bridleways**

Thurleigh has about 30 miles (48 km) of footpaths and bridleways within the parish, with many more in the

surrounding countryside. 59 % of respondents made regular use of the footpaths/bridleways, with 28% using them daily. 75% of respondents were aware of the publication 'Treks around Thurleigh'. Over 50% of respondents felt

"I think the village garden is lovely.

I have been in there a few times

sorry that it isn't used more."



that the signposting and condition of the paths needed to be improved. 15% wanted the accessibility to be improved eg for pushchairs and children's bikes, while 28% wanted the network of routes to be extended.

Comments were made regarding diverting footpaths around field boundaries, so that the paths would not get ploughed and also that people could enjoy the wildlife.

#### Bins

It was felt by 41% of respondents that it would be appropriate to locate new litter bins in Thurleigh, the most popular locations being at the bus stops, the High Street, the village hall and the playing field. 52% of respondents would like to see the installation of additional dog fouling

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bins. The most popular location was the High Street, particularly the junction with the Close, Keysoe Road and the playing field. Problems with dog fouling were also mentioned by respondents to the youth survey as a major problem with the playing field.

# Noise, air quality and lighting

It is generally felt that noise and lighting in Thurleigh are not too intrusive, and air quality is not a major issue. The majority of respondents felt levels of background noise were not intrusive (64%). The cause of any background noise was mainly attributed to the car racing on the

Business Park (23 responses), the next most cited cause being 'traffic' (12), specifically 'lorries' (7).

A high proportion of respondents (88%) were also satisfied with the air quality.

The overall view of existing street lighting appears to be that respondents do not consider it a problem, with 126 (90%) responding to the question, of which 59 (47%) found it 'not intrusive'. The introduction of time-controlled street lighting was favoured by 34% of respondents.

Although relatively little concern was expressed about existing levels of pollution, respondents felt more strongly

about the possibility of increased pollution if the village

about the possibility of increased pollution if the village grows, with 61 respondents worried about light pollution, 93 about noise, and 111 about increased traffic levels.

The general conclusion seems to be that although present levels of light, noise and air pollution are tolerable, most respondents are anxious that it will not stay this way.

#### Recycling and bulk waste

Out of 130 respondents answering the question 'would you like to see more recycling?', 105 offered their preferences regarding the items they would like to see recycled. Most respondents (102) wanted recycling of bottles, followed by cans (63), paper (63) and clothing (57), although

one respondent commented: 'Already collect clothing for school', and another observed that 'Cans and paper are already collected'.

Bulk waste collections are held in Thurleigh every 6 months, 45% of respondents felt this was adequate, while 55% would like to see an increase in the number of collections. A number of respondents asked for better information to be provided about the dates.

87% of the 125 respondents thought that the restrictions on the use of the Tidy Tip were linked to the amount of fly tipping in the area.



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#### **Action Plan**

Action	Leader	Partners	Priority	Resources
Setting up and recruitment of Environmental Improvement Network/walks group	PP	PC	High	
Continue working towards the building of the memorial garden.	PCC	EIN	Ongoing	n/a
Set up supervised working parties to undertake additional tidying work in the churchyard leaving any tree or shrub pruning to experts.	EIN	PC, PCC	Medium	n/a
Set up working party to look into planting in Village Garden and green spaces	EIN	PC	Medium	n/a
Look into demand/supply for sharing of garden space, and set up logging system	EIN	PC	Medium	n/a
Look into procedure for obtaining allotments.	EIN	PC	Medium	Availability of land?
Continue to maintain hedges, grass and trees, paying special attention to certain areas specified in responses.	PC	EIN, contractors	ongoing	n/a
Commence planting of bulbs on verges and hedgerows.	EIN	PC	High	Funds required for purchase of bulbs – PC?
List and photograph 'special' trees.	EIN	PC	Medium	
Monitor hedges which are overhanging footpaths and causing a safety issue, owners to be requested by Parish Council to trim them back.	PC	EIN	Ongoing	
Get further information regarding re-establishing hedgerows	EIN	PC	High	n/a
Set up group to discuss ways of enhancing the environment for wildlife	EIN	Wildlife Trust, landowners	Medium	May be funds required in longer term.
Walk the footpaths and bridleways to assess condition, accessibility etc	EIN	Landowners	High	n/a
Decide on plan for improvement/ extension of walks	EIN	Landowners	High	P3?
Look into provision of noticeboards, decide on locations and information to be displayed.	EIN	PC,P3	Medium	P3
Look into feasibility/cost of providing more bins in the High Street and playing field.	PC		Medium /Low	PC
Improve publicity to encourage use of bins.	PC		Medium /Low	n/a
Look into feasibility of time-controlled lighting.	PC	CC	Low	PC
Approach Palmers re installing noise deflectors (if geographical breakdown of attitudes to noise warrants it)	PC	Palmers	Low	n/a
Look into provision of a recycling bin for glass	PC		High	Could be a revenue generator in the long term
Improve publicity of dates for bulk waste collection	PC		High	n/a
Find out what restrictions are on Tidy Tip, lobby for further deregulation if possible.	PC	BC	Medium	n/a
BC – Borough Council				

BC – Borough Council

CC – County Council

EIN – Environmental Improvement Network

P3 – Parish Paths Partnership

PC – Parish Council

PCC – Parochial Church Council

PP – Existing Parish Plan group

# Housing Development in Thurleigh

Thurleigh developed steadily throughout the twentieth century. Looking around the village, nearly every decade is represented architecturally by developments of four or more dwellings as well as by single houses. More recently there have been two larger developments, the Flats in The Close (1960s) and Vicarage Green (1980s).



Many people think flats are not suitable for a village, and if refurbishment becomes uneconomic in future few tears would be shed if the site were completely re-developed. More positive comments came from those who say that they are no longer used for their original purpose of providing low cost housing for local people. There is strong feeling that the Bedford Pilgrims Housing Association should be asked to consider more carefully the tenants placed there. If this were done it would begin to address the perceived needs for future housing development.



#### **The Way Forward**

Looking to the future if Thurleigh was to receive any development 54% of respondents would like to see low cost shared ownership housing and 38% of respondents would like to see privately owned housing. There was little support for additional flats or rental properties. 47% of respondents were in favour of bungalows, 23% of respondents would like to see retirement homes and 24% nursing homes/ sheltered housing. A more detailed housing needs survey could be carried out in the parish to establish what the current and future demand for affordable housing and sheltered housing is.

The message to the planners is clear – no large estates and no more flats! Glebe Close was built in the last decade in response to a previous housing survey. The survey has shown a fairly even split of preference for new development between bungalows (49), sheltered/retirement homes (49) and private affordable housing (40). On this basis Glebe Close could usefully be expanded to two or three times its present size. If space permits, parking areas could also be included for nearby housing in The Close.

When asked where future development should take place, the most popular option was the conversion of farm buildings to residential (51%), "infilling", small scale development of "The Ends" and conversion of redundant farm buildings were also popular choices. There are very few of such farm buildings, and "The Ends" have, with the exception of Backnoe End, the problem of access to the main drains. While individual houses in the outskirts of the village would be acceptable to most people these would not be suitable for older residents nor would they be low cost.

The Windmill in 1995, now redeveloped as a guest house

#### The Officers Mess

The owners, St Modwen Plc, are cooperating fully with the Parish Council in finding an acceptable



future role for this sensitive site. They should be made aware of the village preferences for certain types of housing and for sporting facilities together with one or more retail outlets. The Officers Mess has recently been demolished and the site cleared in anticipation of redevelopment in the near future. The questionnaire was produced before the announcement that the village post office was to shut late in 2007. Retail sites are limited in the village and most people think that almost any retail businesses who think that they can make it pay should be encouraged.

It may be useful to approach a professional provider of retirement homes (such as McCarthy and Stone) to see if they could provide a small scale development as a core use for the site. The remainder could be left to the Parish Council to develop, as funds became available, for sporting facilities and future needs of the village.

The American Memorial at the site is maintained and supported by volunteers. 63% of respondents felt the Parish Council should consult with the volunteers regarding assuming responsibility for maintenance.

# Commercial Development

The overwhelming response to these questions was "we are lucky to live in a village because it IS a village" and no change is wanted or needed. The only options which would be widely supported are broadly farming based i.e. alternative crops (43%) and livestock (39%) and tourism/

recreational use of land (34%). As mentioned previously, there are few farm buildings available for conversion.

Future development of the Airfield and Tunnel sites caused strong feeling, principally concerned both with the additional noise (93) and light (61) pollution and with the additional traffic it would cause in the village. 24% felt there should be no further development while 55% would like to see more sport and leisure facilities. Could St Modwen be approached about the possibility of timers being used on some of the airfield lights? This option for the village centre is widely supported by 47 of answers in that section and should be readily achievable by lobbying the Borough Council.

#### Leisure

It seems relatively few people pursue any leisure activities within the village, the most popular ones being cricket and darts. Many more (26) do keep fit outside the village and 35 would like this to be available in Thurleigh. The Village Hall cries out to be used and the Playing Field could be available when not in other use. The same comments apply to dance where 16 would like to see it made possible within the village. 11 would like to see more football and there is support for other outdoor sports. One comment from young people concerning the Playing Field which has



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come through strongly is that the lack of outdoor lighting there causes feelings of insecurity. Could the Borough Council be approached to provide additional lighting in the car park area? Young people should be encouraged to use sports facilities.

#### Infrastructure

77 of 125 replies (61%) would like to see mains gas available in Thurleigh. In response to how likely the respondent would be to connect to mains gas if it was available in Thurleigh the answers were divided, 49 said 'very likely', 40 'very unlikely', with the remaining 38 distributed in the middle.



John and Sue Barton, recently retired after 23 years as Thurleigh Postmasters

27% of respondents (37 people) are not currently connected to a main sewer, Again when asked about whether they would connect if the infrastructure became available the answers were evenly divided.

When asked about problems with the water supply, 37 said that pressure is sometimes low and 12 that pressure is always low, while 5 said supply fails. Individual respondents said that the water was of poor quality, often very cloudy/chalky,

dirty and with too much lime. When the geographical distribution of respondents was checked, it was found that 38% of respondents in the High Street /Close/Keysoe Road area thought pressure was sometimes or always low, 38% of respondents in the Robins Folly/Cross End area and 40% at the Cross End end of the High Street, but only 17% in the Mill Road/Milton Road area.



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#### **Action Plan**

Action	Leader	Partner	Priority	Resources
Engage with the Council and St Modwen to agree the future of the officers mess site	PC	St Modwen	High	May require PC expenditure in future
Increase use of Village Hall	PC	Village Hall Committee	High	Successful use will be self funding
Encourage BPHA to expand Glebe Close	PC	ВРНА	Medium	Planning permission
Install time controls on village lights and more lights in playing field area	PC	BC	Medium	Council funding restraints
Open a Community Shop	PC	Volunteers	Ongoing	Funds may be available
Encourage retail outlets and small rural business	PC	BC	Ongoing	n/a
Raise problem of low pressure in the main part of the village with Anglian Water.	PC	Anglian Water	Low	n/a

BPHA = Bedford Pilgrims Housing Association

PC = Parish Council

BC = Borough Council



**Thurleigh Parish Plan** 



Traffic is a major concern of almost all villagers. Thurleigh has problems with the volume and speed of traffic on its roads. It is especially a problem along the High Street which is frequently used as a cross-country link between the A6 and the A1. Mill Road, particularly in the morning and evening rush-hours (up to 600 vehicles per hour), is used as a "rat run" for traffic looking to join, and coming from, the Great Barford and Bedford Southern bypasses.

The Parish Plan Questionnaire included several important questions about traffic and transport issues. A vast number of comments were received from villagers, the most obvious

concerns were to do with speed and volume of vehicles, state of the highways, difficulties with parking, road safety and the poor bus service.

Max speed 20

#### **Speeding / Traffic Calming Measures**

The topic that prompted most response from residents was the breaking of the 30mph speed limit in the village. This received the highest response rate of all questions (135 out of the 141 questionnaires returned), of which over 80% agreed that speeding was a serious problem

(43% agreeing strongly). The introduction of flashing signs is the preferred traffic calming measure (64% of the 123 replies), less favoured are road humps, speed cameras and more policing (all around 30%). When asked where traffic calming should be sited, around half mentioned either end of the High Street, especially linked to speed cameras or flashing signs.

Generally respondents felt that the speed limits already in place in the village are acceptable although 50 of the 69 respondents (72%) would like the 40mph restriction in Cross End reduced



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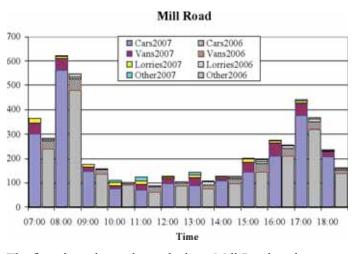
to 30mph. 31 respondents also suggested a 20mph limit in the High Street. Some residents expressed a desire to reduce the overall volume of through traffic in the High Street.

#### **HGVs**

Around half (66 of 126) agreed (although only 22 strongly agreed) that HGVs and commercial vehicles passing through the village caused a significant problem, although several commented that these heavy vehicles do damage the pavements and kerbstones and also repeatedly cut up the roadside grass verges.

The Parish Plan Traffic Group have now carried out two surveys of the number and types of vehicles using our village roads between the hours of 7am and 7pm. The first was in June 2006, the second in June 2007.

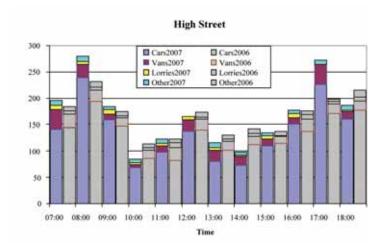
In recent years, we have seen an increasing number of new businesses in the area and a proliferation of nearby storage depots (Thurleigh Airfield and Twinwoods Business Parks) and distribution centres. Because of these, there is a perception that a high number of HGVs pass through the village. The results show that heavy vehicles make up less than 4% of the total traffic on our village roads. However, it should not be forgotten that the impact of each lorry on our roads is far greater than many cars.



The first chart shows the peak along Mill Road in the morning and evening rush hours as people use the route as a "rat run" around Bedford. There are similar peaks along the High Street, but to a lesser extent, and much of this is probably due to villagers commuting to and from work. The solid colours represent the 2007 results, the hatched colours show corresponding results from the 2006 survey.

The total number of vehicles counted using Mill Road on

the survey day in 2007 was 17% higher than in 2006, with the number of HGVs up nearly 40% from 87 to 121. By contrast the number counted along the High Street was practically identical between the two years, with 3 fewer HGVs in 2007.



Some residents are in favour of a total ban on HGVs using the High Street but many more would like to see the introduction of some form of traffic calming. Width and/or weight restrictions were mentioned by several respondents.

In order to continue to monitor longer term trends, the Traffic Group intends to repeat this survey on an annual basis, and to make the results of these surveys publicly available.

#### **Parking**

The lack of parking provision in the Close was of concern to many village residents. Parking on the hill outside the school at opening and closing times promoted a wealth of responses from villagers who felt it was dangerous for both drivers and pedestrians, 96 out of the 113 respondents (85%) would like to see parking restrictions installed.



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#### **Road Safety**

The S bend at the top of the hill and the road junction at the Chapel were identified as potential village "black spots". 80% of the 128 replies stated that safety would not be improved by removal of the central island from the dual carriageway in Milton Road. Most villagers feel that the present road signage is satisfactory although better directions to the Airfield and the Farm Centre would be welcome.

#### **Road Conditions**

42 of the 90 replies (47%) indicated concern about the poor state of repair to the village roads, with Milton Road being mentioned repeatedly. 59% of the same number of replies saw fly tipping as a problem, this time with Whitwick Green Road and Robins Folly being the places most often cited. 111 of the 124 responses received (90%) feel that more development in the village would lead to an unwelcome increase in the number of vehicles.

#### **Pavements**

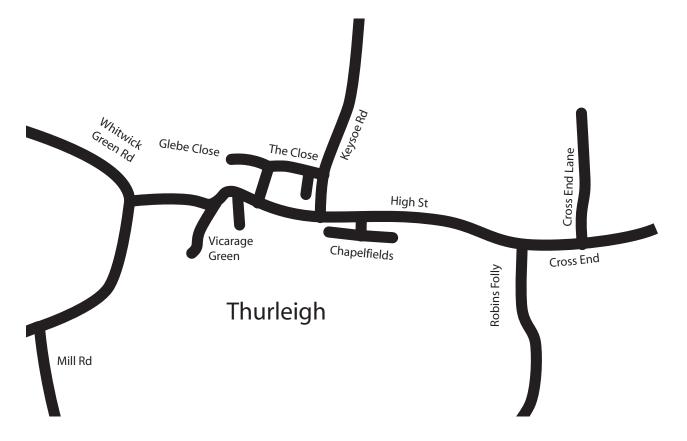
A number of comments about pavements were received: common complaints being that "The Ends", especially Cross End, were not connected to the centre of the village, and that parts of the pavement along the High Street were very narrow and sometimes overgrown.

#### **Public Transport**

Most residents rely on their own vehicles to travel outside the village. 132 replies were received on the question of public transport. 82% of residents said they never use the bus service but 50 people said they would be encouraged to use the bus more often if a better service was provided. They feel the effectiveness of the service could be improved with more regular and direct routes to and from places like Sharnbrook, Rushden and Bedford. Other improvements that would encourage individuals to use the bus service more often included better advertised timetables (29 respondents) and provision of a bus shelter (23 respondents). Many villagers are unaware that the "Harvey Trust" kindly provides free car transport to the Sharnbrook Practice and Bedford Hospital.

#### **Good Neighbour Scheme?**

27 people indicated that they would be willing to participate in a scheme that offers lifts to those who do not have access to their own mode of transport. A small number of individuals indicated that they had difficulty reaching services, for example the doctors, dentist, collecting prescriptions. It may be beneficial to look into the possibility of setting up a Good Neighbour Scheme to complement the service offered by the Harvey Trust.



### **Action Plan**

Action	Leader	Partners	Priority	Resources
Continue dialogue with County Highways Department on possible siting and installation of flashing signs. Investigate sources of funding	PC	CC	Ongoing	Funds will need to be secured and permission granted to install
Carry out annual traffic survey to monitor long term trends	Traffic Group		Medium	Volunteers for a day
Monitor proposed future development around Thurleigh for impact on traffic through the village	PC		Ongoing	n/a
Lobby for a review of patchwork road repairs in favour of more permanent repairs	PC	CC	Ongoing	Funding constraints in council budget
Request the zig-zags are reinstated outside the school.	PC	School	High	Modest cost from Highways budget
Encourage use of rear footpath when taking children to/from school	School	School	Parents	n/a
Search for suitable land to provide additional off-road parking around the Close	ВРНА	BC	Medium	Dependent on land being available, planning permission, purchase cost and surfacing
Survey residents on detailed public transport needs and use results to request improvements to bus service	PC	Bus company	Medium	Commercial viability
Publicise bus timetables in parish magazine and check timetables available at bus stops	PC	Bus company	Medium	Low cost
Investigate the need for a bus shelter	PC	BC	Low	Funds will need to be secured to erect shelter
Publicise the service provided by the Harvey Trust	Harvey Trust	PC	Low	n/a
Investigate the need for a Good Neighbour Scheme to complement the Harvey Trust	PC	Harvey Trust	Low	n/a

PC – Parish Council, BC - Borough Council, CC - County Council



**Thurleigh Parish Plan** 

# Youth

In Thurleigh, there is currently a youth club held in the Village Hall bimonthly that is attended by 12 children. The village has a play area at the Club House which is suitable for Pre School and Early Years children. There is no organised sport in the village apart from one adult cricket team.

The views of young people living in Thurleigh were sought through a youth questionnaire and an organised event.

20 responses to the youth questionnaire were received, 11 from girls and 9 from boys. 80% of the returned questionnaires were from individuals who attended Sharnbrook Upper School aged 12 years and upwards.

Several weeks after the youth questionnaire had been circulated an indoor barbeque was held in the Village Hall for the young people of the village who were asked to write down their 'wishes' for Thurleigh. 15 young people attended.

All respondents use the playing field for either sport or socialising. Those attending the barbeque suggested CCTV and lighting at the playing field.

There was a desire to see a number of organised outdoor activities including football, cricket, basketball, netball and volleyball. Respondents would also like marked pitches for football, rugby and tennis as well as a lined running track.



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16 respondents indicated that they would use the leisure facilities in the Clubhouse if they were made available. 10 responses expressed a desire for indoor games including snooker, table tennis and tag design. There was also a lot of interest in organised group activities, suggestions included camping, swimming, ten pin bowling and ice skating.

The general opinion expressed at the barbeque was there is currently little to do in Thurleigh. As well as suggestions for additional activities, the following ideas were put forward: a warm shelter with lighting, especially in the winter, better bus services with access to other villages, a bus shelter, discos, and a graffiti wall.

There were also concerns expressed by the young people that are reflected in the views gathered by the general questionnaire. These included the appearance of the Officers' Mess site, litter at the playing field, dog mess and need for more bins, speeding through the village, and lack of use of the village garden.

#### **Action Plan**

Action	Leader	Partner	Priority	Resources
Set up a Youth Action Group	Youth Action Group	Older village youth	High	Dependent on funds being made available.
Look into possibility of Youth activities at the Clubhouse	Youth Action Group	Sports and Social Club	Medium	Funds will need to be found for the Sports and Social Club.
Look into possibility of providing pitches/playing surfaces for sports	Youth Action Group	Playing Field Association	Medium	Funds will need to be found for the Playing Field Association.
Assess the demand for organised team sports	Youth Action Group	Survey the youth	Medium	Not applicable.
Investigate the possibility of a shelter	Youth Action Group	Approach the Parish Council	Medium	If provision agreed seek funds from the Parish and County Councils (estimate of £15,000 + VAT has been received)
Support the Youth Club  – look into indoor games/ organised activities	Youth Action Group	Youth Club	High	If Youth Club increase its membership additional funds will be required.

**Thurleigh Parish Plan** 

# Village Hall

The first Thurleigh Village Hall was opened in 1927. Thurleigh was the first village in North Bedfordshire to have its own hall. The wooden structure was refurbished in the 1970's, but following the condemning of the kitchen in the 1980's, it was necessary to design and build a new hall. The brick structure was constructed by a local builder, and apart from some minor internal alterations, is unchanged since its opening.

This potentially invaluable centre of village life is woefully under used. 79% of respondents said they would use retail facilities if available. How do we reconcile these two facts?

Many villages around the county have community shops run by the people for the people. This will not happen overnight but we should investigate the experiences of other villages and try to structure a medium term plan to achieve this. In the meantime could "travelling" shops be invited to the village hall on one or more designated days? The main need is for local produce and food in general and this will be even more acute since the post office has closed, and if a replacement is not forthcoming. Could there be a post office counter within the Village Hall? Other villages have one in their pub, so this is another possibility.



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#### **Future Plans**

During the next ten years it is anticipated that the following will require attention:

Action	Leader	Partner	Priority	Resources
Resurfacing of the front and rear car parks	VHC	PC	Medium	Search for funding
New windows.	VHC	PC	Medium	Search for funding
Sanding and re-polishing of the sprung wooden floor.	VHC	PC	Medium	Search for funding
Matching roller shutters for the bar and kitchen hatches	VHC	PC	Medium	Search for funding
Replacement of the electric heaters.	VHC	PC	Medium	Search for funding
New chairs (the existing ones are very heavy and are showing signs of wear).	VHC	PC	Medium	Search for funding
Decorating	VHC	PC	Medium	Search for funding

VHC - Village Hall Committee

PC - Parish Council

# **Thurleigh Lower School**

Thurleigh Lower School and Pre-School offers excellent provision for the village's children. Catering for children aged between 2½ and 9 years old, the School and Pre-School focus on delivering personalised learning implementing the Every Child Matters agenda. With small class-sizes, highly experienced teaching staff and a wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer, Thurleigh has a school to be proud of which was acknowledged as being good with some outstanding features when last inspected by Ofsted in October 2007. In providing

Breakfast Club and After-School facilities, the school extends the care available to the children of working parents between 8.15am and 5.00pm each week

day.

The Village Plan will incorporate consideration of the Lower School and Pre-School's needs in helping to ensure the safety, well-being, education and enjoyment of the village's youngest children and the support that is provided to the families of Thurleigh.



# **Playing Field**

#### **History and Background**

Thurleigh has a large playing field on Keysoe Road which is used for cricket, football and has a small children's play area. The field was purchased as a result of fund raising activities that commenced shortly after the end of the Second World War. The purchase was part funded by £500 offered by the Ministry of Works to encourage the provision of recreational spaces in villages. It took until the early sixties to raise the funds but eventually the land was purchased from Mr Holley. The Playing Field has been a registered charity since this time. More fund raising provided a corrugated iron hut for a pavilion and some playground equipment. The original wooden hut was bought for £30

from the Ministry of Defence. This was eventually replaced by the current brick-built structure, built in the 1970s, that became the Playing Field Club. This continues to provide changing rooms for the sports team and profit to fund the maintenance costs of the Playing Field.

The constitution of the Playing Field Association states that the committee should contain 2 delegates from every organisation in the village. The management committee is always keen to recruit volunteers to assist in the running of the Playing Field.



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#### **Future Plans**

Like all small community ventures funding is always a central concern. However a number of areas have been identified as needing improvement.

The most vital will be replacement of mowing equipment - nothing happens in the field if the grass can't be cut. The Playing Field Association has looked to the Parish Council for help with buying in the past. The current mowers were purchased second hand from DSD and cost £3,500. The Playing Field Association has had them for about 8 years now and they are due for replacement.

In addition to grass cutting the Playing Field Association has to maintain the car park and all fences, gates and hedges. Continuous vandalism to the gates and fences at the Close entrance mean that this is something of a drain on resources.

The Association is about to start fund raising for the second phase of the playground. If room allows, the Association would like to install a roundabout (as phase 3). It was originally envisaged that this equipment would be installed in a single project. The large cash sums involved meant that a more sensible approach to the project was to break it into smaller pieces with fund raising breaks. The second stage will add to the older children's climbing /balance equipment and the Association also hopes to install a teen seating area in another part of the field.

The fence on the south side of the field will have to be replaced either by a new fence or a hedge.

The Playing Field Association would like to improve the safety of the main entrance by increasing the height of the traffic humps and by providing a path for pedestrians (including pushchair, wheelchair access) down one side. Part of the playing field is not used (the southwest corner). The ground is uneven and constantly waterlogged in all but the driest weather. It needs draining somehow. This problem has got worse and is probably due to new houses being built along Keysoe Road, where bungalows set back

from the road have replaced small cottages close to the road. A drainage system of some kind is required and if implemented would give room for a junior size football pitch.

The Playing Field also plays host to a thriving cricket club and they take care of the cricket square. The main football pitch is let to Russell Park United there being no village club at the moment. The Association does have work done on the pitch from time to time – mostly reseeding of bare patches and verti-draining/spiking. A run of drier winters means this hasn't been necessary for a few years. It is thought that there would have to be a village club before we could make a case for funds for the football pitch.



Thurleigh Parish Plan



The Playing Field Association is landlord to the Sports and Social Club in a building on the Playing Field. Although it may contribute financially to the Playing Field Association the Club does not own anything except stock, fixtures and fittings, so any improvements to the field will always come via the Playing Field management committee. The reason for this is that the Playing Field has been a registered charity for over 40 years and must not be seen to profit or benefit from sale of alcohol.

#### **Action Plan**

Action	Leader	Partner	Priority	Resources
Replace mowers	PFA	PC	High	Funding
Second phase of playground	PFA	PC	High	Funding
Improve safety of main entrance by increasing the height of the traffic humps and by providing a path for pedestrians	PFA	PC	High	Funding
Maintenance of car park, fences, gates and hedges	PFA	PC	High/Medium	Funding
New alarm system for clubhouse	PFA	PC	High/Medium	Funding
Refurbishment of clubhouse heating	PFA	PC	High/Medium	Funding
Refurbishment of clubhouse flooring	PFA	PC	High/Medium	Funding
Drainage system for playing field	PFA	PC	Medium	Funding
Establishment of football club and pitch	PFA	PC	Medium	Funding

# **Thurleigh Cricket Club**

Thurleigh Cricket Club has enjoyed a successful season in 2007, having fielded a 1st and 2nd team for the first time in a number of years. The 1st team finished mid table in the Premier division of the Bedford & District Cricket League, while the 2nd team finished 3rd in their division, narrowly missing out on promotion.

Immediate plans for the club include improving the cricket square to add pace and bounce. An expert has advised this can be achieved by vigorous scarification, seeding with rye grass and applying the correct loam soil. Doing this every year over the next 5 - 10 years will improve the playing characteristics of the square.

Future plans include the provision of a practice net for both senior and junior players. The club would like to purchase a mechanical spiker to aerate the square in the winter months to encourage root growth.

More ambitious plans involve the addition of an artificial wicket on the edge of the square. The club would also like an indoor net facility with bowling machines.

#### **Action Plan**

Action	Leader	Partner	Priority	Resources
Improve cricket square	TCC	PFA/PC	High	Funding
Provide practice nets	TCC	PFA/PC	High	Funding
Purchase mechanical spiker	TCC	PFA/PC	High	Funding
Indoor net facilities with bowling machines	TCC	PFA/PC	Medium	Funding
Provision of artificial wicket	TCC	PFA/PC	Medium	Funding

PFA - Playing Field Association

TCC - Thurleigh Cricket Club

PC - Parish Council





### **Business**

Local businesses play an important role in helping to keep the village community alive and thriving by providing employment and offering useful services.

Results from the questionnaire show that the majority of people who responded believe that local employment opportunities are important for the people in Thurleigh. Out of 121 who answered the question "Would you like to see more local employment opportunities", 64% or 77 people would and 36% or 44 people would not.

Large numbers of people used to work the land employed in agricultural activities. Due to the global economic climate and the development of mechanisation, this is now no longer the case. It would be useful for local employment if the same encouragement were to be shown to agricultural and non-agricultural diversification of land use around Thurleigh as is shown to more industrial type businesses on the Airfield Business Park.

The results of the question "Which of the following uses would you like to see land put to in Thurleigh and the surrounding area" in order of strength of response are:

- a. Existing use (no change)
- b. Alternative crop products (e.g. energy crops, vineyards)
- c. Alternative livestock products (e.g. rare breeds, ostriches)
- d. Alternative use of farm buildings (e.g. offices, craft workshops)
- e. Rural tourism & recreation
- f. Renewable energy (wind farms)
- g. Accommodation (e.g. holiday cottages, campsite)
- h. Other
- i. Industrial

The majority of people also thought a local business directory would be useful. Out of 121 people who answered the question 85 or 77% were in favour, although only 24 of the 58 businesses that responded thought participation would be useful.

Thurleigh Post Office and shop ceased trading and closed in the summer of 2007 due to the owners' retirement.

Should anyone with suitable premises wish to open a Post Office and store in Thurleigh, the business group of the Parish Plan would feel it appropriate to lobby the Parish Council to look favourably on any such planning application.



Julia and Kevin Hanks
"The Jackal"

#### **Action Plan**

Action	Leader	Partner	Priority	Resources
To support suitable planning applications for business.	Parish Council	Borough Council	High	N/A
To promote local businesses and local business use by local community.	Business	Parish Council	Medium	N/A
To support existing and new business ventures in Thurleigh.	Business	Parish Council	Medium	N/A
To compile a local business directory advertising local products and services.	Business	N/A	Medium	N/A



**Thurleigh Parish Plan** 

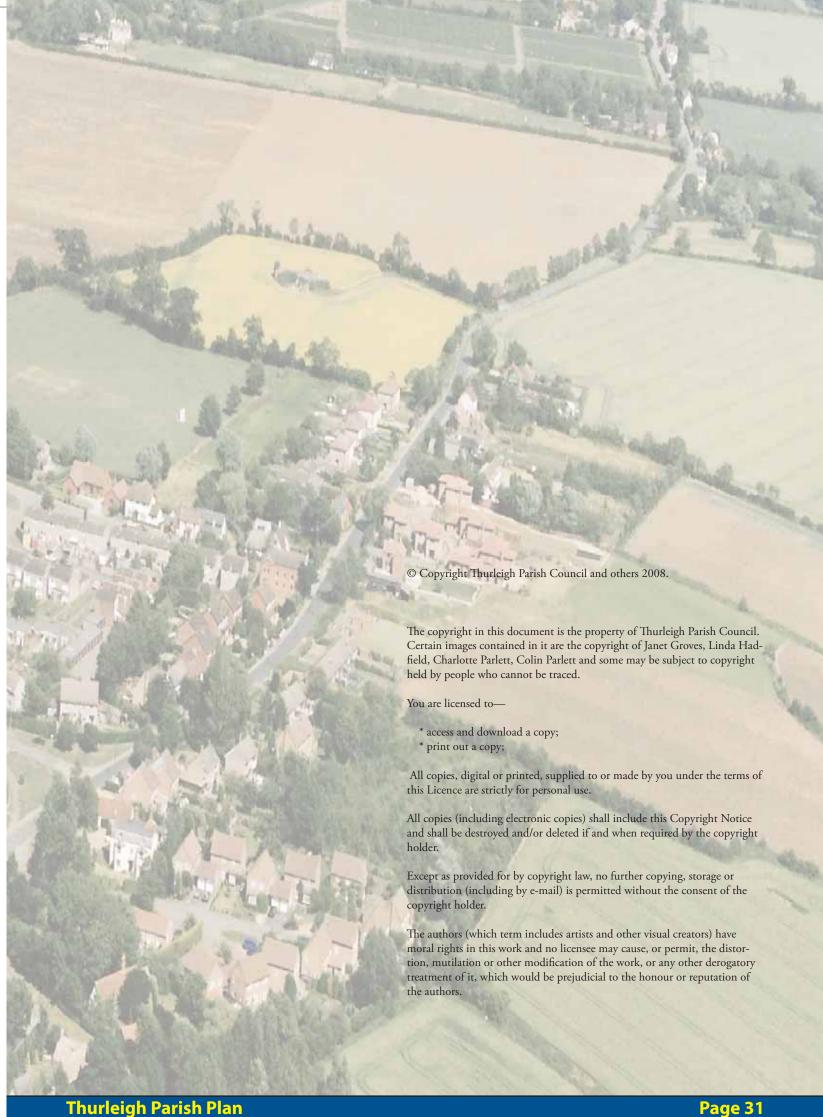
# How to get involved

The Parish Council can carry out some of these wishes and can act as a focal point for others. Still others – for example a Youth Club and the Environmental Improvement Network – need your participation to carry these wishes into effect. We would urge all those who would like to become involved to please contact a member of the Parish Council in the first place. The Parish Council member will be able to put you in contact with a person involved in the plan to enable you to make a contribution to making these plans become a reality.

# **Credits**

Peppe Amodio, Sarah Amodio, Cliff Andrews, Zoe Ashby, Gwyn Austin, John Barton, Sue Barton, Nigel Blackham, Sara Blackham, Bill Boddington, Maggie Boddington, Peter Brown, Clarissa Caröe, Karen Caröe, Alex Coles, Charlotte Coles, Jackie Dempster, Richard Denton, Kath Ellison, Chris Ensor, Marjorie Fitton, Clive Franklin, Ralph Franklyn, Damon Goodyear, Janet Groves, Linda Hadfield, Simon Hubbard, Julia Hanks, Kevin Hanks, Ron Hill, Malcolm Hooley, Pete Jackson, Sharon Jackson, Pearl Kaill, Nicki Killerby, Nigel Killerby, Lindsay Measures, Peter Mc-Clure, Gerry Milne, Irma Mustoe, Bob Nevard, Colin Parlett, Fiona Parlett, Joe Parlett, Eunice Prosser, Carrie-Anne Rowley, Kim Sawyer, Richard Singleton, Cliff Smith, Toni Smith, Judith Thompson, Martin Towler, Cireena Walton, Jane Walker, Shirley Warner, Tig Wasiłewski, Lillian Wildman, David Willis.

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**Thurleigh Parish Plan** 

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