

**Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Examination
Hearing Statement
Matter 4: Settlement Hierarchy, Spatial Distribution of
Housing and Housing Site Selection Process**

Land at Beyton Road, Thurston

Prepared on behalf of Bloor Homes and Sir George A. Agnew

June 2021

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement is submitted on behalf of Bloor Homes and Sir George A. Agnew in relation to their Site, Land at Beyton Road, Thurston.
- 1.2 The Site is proposed to be allocated under Policy LA087 for approximately 200 dwellings with associated infrastructure. It also benefits from an approved planning permission for up to 210 dwellings (reference DC/19/03486), with a subsequent application for Reserved Matters for 210 dwellings (reference DC/20/05894) and numerous discharge of condition applications, including for all pre-commencement conditions.
- 1.3 Bloor Homes and Sir George A. Agnew have previously made representations to the Reg 18 and Reg 19 consultations of the emerging Joint Local Plan (JLP) in 2017, 2019 and 2020 (respondent ID: 65).
- 1.4 In summary, those representations set out various concerns with the Plan that result in it being unsound. Modifications have been suggested to overcome these concerns and make the Plan sound.

2.0 Matter 4: Settlement Hierarchy, Spatial Distribution of Housing and Housing Site Selection Process

Question 4.1 Has the settlement hierarchy set out in Tables 2 and 3 been derived using a robust and objective process?

- 2.1 We fully support the identification of Thurston as a Core Village within Mid Suffolk and its categorisation as such has been derived using a robust and objective process.
- 2.2 Thurston is one of the larger settlements within Mid Suffolk and benefits from a wide range of facilities and services including primary, secondary and sixth-form schools, convenience stores, community facilities, recreational ground, pharmacy, public houses, churches and local businesses.
- 2.3 Furthermore, Thurston benefits from a railway station and numerous footpaths and cycle paths connecting to the wider network.
- 2.4 Reflecting this wide range of services and facilities, we note that Thurston received a total score of 30 as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy Review 2020 (reference EP01). With the threshold for inclusion as a Core Village being 18, Thurston clearly significantly exceeds the requirements. It is also notable that only 2 settlements score higher, with scores of 31. Thurston is therefore identified as one of the most sustainable areas outside of the Ipswich Fringe and Market Towns/Urban Areas.

Question 4.6 Is the proposed distribution of development set out in policy SP04, based on robust and objective evidence and is it justified and consistent with national policy? Does the distribution appropriately reflect the Ipswich Strategic Planning Area-wide growth objectives?

- 2.5 The proposed distribution of housing seeks to respond to the challenge of much the District being rural and to recognise the importance of infrastructure to support housing growth, in accordance with the NPPF.
- 2.6 Utilising settlements that scored highly in the settlement hierarchy assessment and are located along the A14/mainline railway corridor, such as Thurston, is fully justified.

- 2.7 The settlement hierarchy directs 38% of housing growth in Mid Suffolk to the identified Core Villages. With 13 settlements included in the Core Villages category, this will still result in a distribution of housing across the District.
- 2.8 Paragraph 8.04 of the JLP does recognise that not all settlements within each category are equal and there will be some variance in levels of growth depending on the availability of suitable sites, infrastructure capacity and other matters. It is correct that this is therefore recognised in the spatial distribution of housing, with some Core Villages expected to deliver a greater number of homes than others.
- 2.9 Policy SP04 sets out that a minimum of 1,489 homes are to be delivered in Thurston over the JLP period. With the wide range of services and facilities available, including the Railway Station and proximity to the A14, this level of growth in Thurston is entirely justified.
- 2.10 The Site promoted by Bloor Homes, a national house builder, and Sir George A. Agnew in Thurston is deliverable, as evidenced by the approved planning permission for up to 210 dwellings (reference DC/19/03486) as approved on 23rd December 2020 and subsequent submission of Reserved Matters for 210 dwellings (reference DC/20/05894) and numerous discharge of condition applications, including for all pre-commencement conditions.
- 2.11 These applications demonstrate that housing can be delivered and that there is a commitment by a major house builder to deliver such housing in Thurston as set out in Policy SP04, with the level of growth proportionate to the services and facilities available.
- 2.12 Bloor Homes are a national established house builder with a good track record of delivery within Babergh and Mid Suffolk. Bloor Homes are seeking to start delivery in Thurston at the earliest opportunity upon approval of the Reserved Matters and pre-commencement conditions. With commencement anticipated in late 2021, the delivery trajectory for the Site is as follows:

Year	Homes Delivered
2021/22	5
2022/23	60
2023/24	60
2024/25	60
2025/26	25

- 2.13 Furthermore, the adopted Thurston Neighbourhood Plan (NP) identifies that housing is needed to meet the needs of older and younger people and that a range of housing is needed in the area. It also seeks the provision of new open spaces and improvements to the local road network.
- 2.14 Thurston NP does not allocate any sites for housing to meet the identified needs but does recognise that it was produced ahead of the JLP and that the JLP will identify additional sites to meet housing needs, with paragraph 4.1 of the adopted Thurston NP recognising that Thurston's status as a Core Village will play a key role in addressing this need.
- 2.15 The JLP does take the opportunity to direct some growth towards Thurston and allocate sites. Such sites can meet these identified needs as sought by the NP, with the approach of the JLP therefore being supported.
- 2.16 This is particularly pertinent in relation to the Site promoted by Bloor Homes and Sir George A. Agnew, with the approved outline planning permission delivering improvements to all four junctions identified as requiring improvement by Policy 7 of the NP.
- 2.17 The JLP directing growth to Thurston and allocating sites to deliver this is fully justified, effective and consistent with national policy.