

# **THIRSTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**2020 - 2036**



**Made Version – 12 October 2021**

**Thirston Parish Council**

# **Thirston Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020 - 2036 Made Plan**

## **FOREWORD**

In 2011 the government passed the Localism Act which allowed all parishes across England to produce their own neighbourhood plans, plans for their neighbourhood on what developments they wanted in their area. Thirston Parish Council decided they wanted to influence this process and in 2018 the Neighbourhood Plan Group was setup. It is made up of local people who were interested in helping to write policies which would affect the development in the parish from 2019-2036. These people include the chair of the Parish Council, the Parish Clerk and six residents.

We were initially guided by Northumberland County Council as to the steps we needed to complete and have been helped immensely throughout the process by a consultant on neighbourhood plans, Jenny Ludman, as well as a lot of note taking at our meetings by Lisa Hamlin (Parish Clerk).

The aim of the planning policies is not to prevent development but to ensure that any building in the future is not at the detriment of the local people. Moreover, any policies produced must ensure that the rural environment is preserved and the communities in all localities within the parish are protected.

We have given the people in Thirston Parish the opportunity to tell us what they would like in their neighbourhood plan as regards planning, as well as consulting local businesses. Some suggestions (not applicable to planning) will be achieved through community projects overseen by Thirston Parish Council. These are listed as an appendix to the Plan.

The Plan was submitted to the County Council, followed by examination by an independent examiner. A successful referendum was held in the parish on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and the Plan was 'made' by Northumberland County Council on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021. In the future, the plan can be reviewed to reflect any changing circumstances and views..

Drew Johnson

Simon Allan

Chairman, Neighbourhood Plan Committee

Chairman, Thirston Parish Council

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# **Thirston Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020 - 2036 Made Plan**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced new powers to allow local communities to shape development in their areas by preparing a neighbourhood development plan. This Neighbourhood Plan is the Thirston Neighbourhood Plan and policies in this Plan will be used to determine planning applications in the Parish of Thirston [the Neighbourhood Area] alongside other policies in the Development Plan.
- 1.2 The Thirston Neighbourhood Area, designated for the purposes of 61G(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, comprises the Parish of Thirston and includes the settlements of West Thirston, East Thirston, Eshott and Burgham.
- 1.3 Northumberland County Council formally designated the Parish as a Neighbourhood Area on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 2018. The Neighbourhood Plan relates only to the Parish of Thirston.
- 1.4 The Thirston Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by a steering group comprising members of Thirston Parish Council and other residents in the Neighbourhood Area. Consultation has taken place with local residents and businesses. More detail about the consultation undertaken in the preparation of the Thirston Neighbourhood Plan is contained in the Consultation Statement which was submitted alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Plan Preparation Process**

- 1.5 The community have been consulted about what issues are important to them. Open days have taken place in the Village Hall in Felton, at Burgham Golf Club and at The Gallery in July 2018. These consultation events were held in relation to a draft 'vision' and a set of objectives for the Plan. In addition, the Parish Newsletter has been circulating to residents to get feedback. This feedback has been used to establish what the priorities are for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.6 A further consultation was held in July 2019 to consult specifically on settlement boundaries proposed in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.7 A questionnaire was sent out to local businesses to get an understanding of what matters affect them and their future.
- 1.8 Evidence produced by Northumberland County Council to support their emerging Local Plan has also been used. A list of this evidence is included in Appendix B. All of these documents, as well as the results of the public consultation, form the Evidence Base for the Plan.

### **Community Engagement**

- 1.9 The Steering Group has engaged throughout the process with the local community, through consultation events, questionnaires and newsletters, and have consulted with both local residents and local businesses and other local groups and organisations. The results of that consultation have led the Steering Group to produce a Neighbourhood Plan that contains policies that effectively respond to the needs of the community and local businesses.



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## **What happens next?**

- 1.10 Following the Regulation 14 consultation, which took place in October and November 2020, the Regulation 15 version of the Plan was submitted to Northumberland County Council who publicised the Plan for not less than 6 weeks. Following this, an independent examiner was appointed, and the Plan underwent the examination process. Following recommendations from the examiner, the Plan was modified before proceeding to referendum.
- 1.11 A successful referendum was held in the Parish of Thirston on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The Plan was subsequently 'made' by Northumberland County Council at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021.
- 1.12 This is the Made Version of the Plan, which has been brought into legal force.

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## **2 PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Neighbourhood Plans must pass a series of tests prescribed in legislation through the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. These tests are collectively known as 'The Basic Conditions'. The Basic Conditions are:
- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan;
  - the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
  - the making of the neighbourhood plan 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);
  - the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations; and
  - 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. The following prescribed condition relates to neighbourhood plans:
  - Regulation 32 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets out a further Basic Condition in addition to those set out in the primary legislation. 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 2007) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects). (See Schedule 2 to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 2.2 How the Plan meets these requirements are set out in detail in the Basic Conditions Statement which was submitted with the Plan to Northumberland County Council at the Submission (Regulation 15) stage.

### **Castle Morpeth Local Plan (2003)**

- 2.3 One of the Basic Conditions is that the Plan must be in general conformity with strategic policies contained in the development plan. The current development plan for this neighbourhood area consists of 'saved' policies in the Castle Morpeth Local Plan (2003).
- 2.4 The saved strategic policies in this plan are the policies with which the Thirston Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity. The Basic Conditions Statement provides an assessment of the extent to which the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with those policies. Appendix A lists the strategic policies which have been identified by Northumberland County Council insofar as they apply to this Neighbourhood Plan.

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## **Northumberland County Council Local Plan (emerging)**

- 2.5 The Northumberland Local Plan is likely to be adopted later in 2021. The Thirston Neighbourhood Plan seeks to align with policies in this emerging Local Plan, to ensure consistency in policy making throughout the process and to ensure that when adopted, the Northumberland Local Plan and the Thirston Neighbourhood Plan are not in conflict.
- 2.6 The emerging Northumberland Local Plan identifies settlement boundaries for settlements in parishes that are not in the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan. However, the emerging Northumberland Local Plan also proposes a settlement boundary for West Thirston which aligns with the existing settlement boundary defined in the Castle Morpeth Local Plan. The proposed settlement boundary defined in the Thirston Neighbourhood Plan for West Thirston aligns with the boundary identified in the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.
- 2.7 In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan identifies a settlement boundary for Eshott (which is not identified in the Northumberland Local Plan).
- 2.8 A number of evidence base reports have been commissioned to assist with the production of the Northumberland Local Plan. Some of these evidence base reports have also been used to inform the Thirston Neighbourhood Plan and are listed in Appendix A.

## **National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019)**

- 2.9 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance provide the most up to date planning policy and advice from central government. Some policies contained in the Castle Morpeth Local Plan (2003) may be in conflict with this more recent national policy and guidance. In such circumstances, the more recent national policy and guidance will take precedence in plan making and decision taking. This will be explained further in the Basic Conditions Statement.

## **Sustainable Development**

- 2.10 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. How sustainable development can be achieved for planning purposes is contained in the NPPF.
- 2.11 Chapter 2 identifies economic, social and environmental objectives as being equally important in delivering sustainable development. The promotion of, and support for, sustainable development is at the heart of the community aspirations in Thirston. This is reflected in planning policies where relevant and in the Community Projects which have been identified.
- 2.12 Support for sustainable development is also reflected in the vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Area. The vision and objectives for the area are set out later in the Plan.

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## **Environmental Impact and EU Obligations**

- 2.13 Directive 2001/42/EC relates to the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. This is often referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. This directive is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the 'SEA Regulations') and it is these regulations that the plan must be compatible with to meet the Basic Conditions.
- 2.14 A request for a screening opinion to determine whether the Plan required SEA has been submitted to Northumberland County Council. The County Council confirmed that an Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations will be required and that this triggered the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Plan.
- 2.15 Northumberland County Council carried out a Strategic Environmental Assessment of this Plan and have produced an Environmental Report which was consulted on alongside the Plan in accordance with Regulation 13 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

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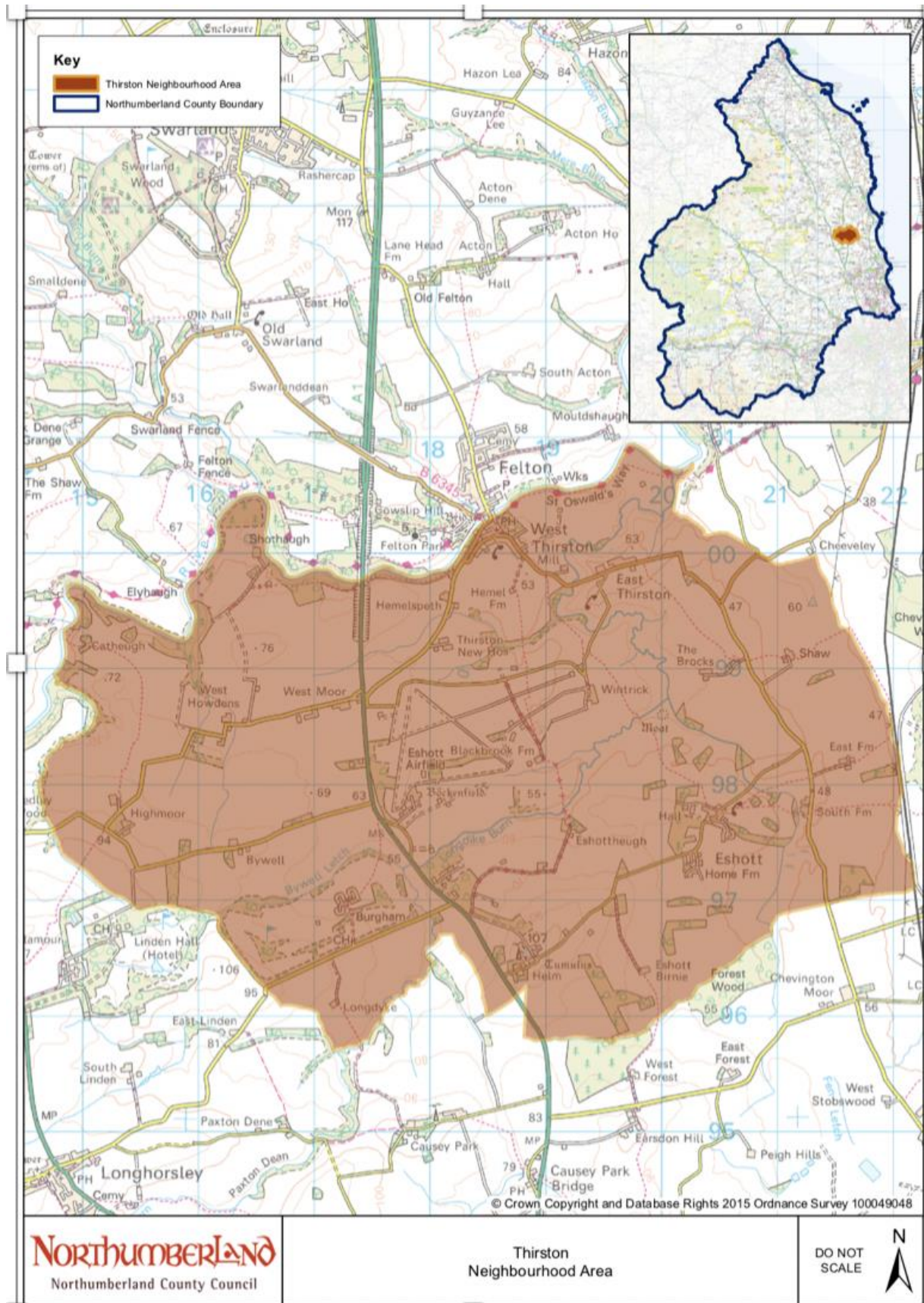


Figure 1: The Thirston Neighbourhood Area



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### 3 THIRSTON PARISH: PAST AND PRESENT

#### A Brief History of Thirston Parish

- 3.1 Thirston Parish has a long and rich history. The first documents relating to Thirston come from the 1100s but its earliest recorded name of Thraesfriston, meaning Thraesfrith's settlement, shows that it was the site of an earlier Anglo-Saxon settlement. However, finds of Stone Age tools in the area suggest that people have been living in the area for thousands of years.
- 3.2 In the early 1110s, when the manor of Thirston formed part of the greater manor of Felton and the barony of Mitford, it was granted by the king to a Norman knight by the name of Bertram. By the early 1300s the barony was fragmented and the ownership of the land at Thirston was disputed in the courts. Some of the land was retained by the lords of the manor of Felton, a few parcels of land came to a handful of small landowners, and the remainder came into the hands of the Earls of Northumberland.
- 3.3 In the 1560s the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Northumberland, Thomas Percy, built Thirston Mill to grind his tenants' grain and established a second small settlement further to the east of the original. The new settlement became East Thirston and the original West Thirston. When the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl was executed in 1572 about a third of his Thirston lands were retained by the crown. These crown lands were later sold to the Fenwicks of Brinkburn who in turn sold them, in 1706, to Thomas Smith, a prosperous farmer of Togston. In the 1820s Thomas Smith's great grandson, also Thomas Smith, commissioned the leading northern architect of the period, John Dobson, to design a new house on his Thirston land. It was completed in 1826 and became known as Thirston House. It was surrounded by eight acres of pleasure gardens, orchards and woodland. Opposite the entrance to Thirston House Thomas built two houses, one for his coachman and the other for his gardener.



*Figure 2: Thirston House, West Thirston*

- 3.4 In 1617 the retired vicar of Felton acquired a strip of land on the south of the River Coquet near the bridge and built Pethfoot House which incorporated an earlier structure, possibly a Pele Tower. In the 1770s the house and land were sold to Thomas Riddell, of Felton Park and Swinburne Castle, who by this time was the lord

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of the manor of Felton. He established it as a home and surgery for a village doctor. It remained the home and surgery for a succession of village doctors until the 1960s.

- 3.5 In the early 1600s the only industry to have been carried out in Thirston was established when a seam of clay, of a quality suitable for use in the making of glass, was discovered in West Thirston. The clay was mined and sold to glassmakers in Newcastle until 1772, when the glassmakers were able to buy much cheaper clay brought into the Tyne as ballast of ships, and Thirston clay became too expensive.
- 3.6 One parcel of land held by the lords of the manor of Felton lay to the west of West Thirston along the banks of the Coquet. Here, in about 1780, Thomas Riddell built (or rebuilt) Hemelspeth Farm to the newly introduced 'planned farm' design. The farm buildings were built around a rectangular yard and a gin-gang allowed several ponies to drive a threshing machine. Hemelspeth is still a working farm.
- 3.7 Up to the late 1700s East and West Thirston were almost entirely composed of small farms with scattered farmhouses and clusters of workers' cottages. But in the early 1800s a small village developed in West Thirston with craftsmen, such as blacksmiths, joiners, carpenters and stone masons occupying many of the cottages.
- 3.8 In 1812 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Northumberland, began enlarging his Thirston estate by buying up some of the small parcels of land. One such was at the bottom of the Peth and on it he built a coaching inn, the Northumberland Arms, so that he, and his visitors to Alnwick Castle, would have somewhere to stop and refresh themselves on their journey.



Figure 3:

*The Northumberland Arms in West Thirston*

- 3.9 Alongside he also built cottages for his employees needed at the inn. In 1823 a post office was established in the inn, when Felton became a post town, and it became the daily stopping place of the Royal Mail coach. It remained the post office until the 1880s when a new post office was established in Felton village. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke also built (or rebuilt) new farmhouses and worker's cottages at Waterside Farm, Castle

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Farm and Fox Hemmels Farm.

- 3.10 As Thirston had always been part of the ecclesiastical parish of Felton it had never had a church but in 1820 a Presbyterian Chapel was built in West Thirston. It had an adjacent manse and schoolrooms. It was built by the Felton Presbyterian congregation which had been unable to secure any land in Felton village but in 1819 had been leased a small parcel of land on the south bank of the Coquet by Alexander Davison of Swarland Hall, a government contractor and Nelson's prize agent. In 1873 Davison's heirs took possession of the manse and schoolrooms and a new manse was built. In 1923 a new Presbyterian Chapel was built alongside the manse.
- 3.11 Also, in the early 1800s the vicar of Felton parish was looking for land to build a parochial school and, unable to find anything in Felton village, he was offered a lease on a small plot in West Thirston by the Duke. The school, and an adjacent schoolhouse for the schoolmaster, opened in 1830. The school had only one classroom, but a second classroom and adjacent playground were added in 1874. This remained the school of the whole of Felton parish until 1973 when a new school was built in Felton village.
- 3.12 In 1922 the Duke of Northumberland sold off much of his property, and land, in East and West Thirston including the Northumberland Arms. Some of the land was used for new houses. One of the houses near the Northumberland Arms, at the bottom of the Peth, was bought by Mrs Kate Bainbridge and given to the Felton & District Nursing Association as a home for one or more nurses. Mrs Bainbridge had lost two sons and a son-in-law in WW1 and she saw this as a fitting memorial to them. A plaque above the door reads 'Nurses Home in Memory of the Unreturned Brave 1914-1918'.
- 3.13 Around the same time the Central Bus Company took over the, now derelict, stables of the Northumberland Arms and converted them into garages. They also erected petrol pumps across the road near the old bridge. Later a garage and car repair shop opened at the top of the Peth, but it closed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when a house was built on the site along with a number of other houses built in the same period.
- 3.14 Gradually over the 20<sup>th</sup> century more houses were erected in both East and West Thirston. Thirston Mill and the parochial school were converted into houses and the schoolhouse and the Presbyterian Manse were sold. The Presbyterian (later United Reformed) Chapel closed in January 2016.



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### **Thirston Parish Today**

- 3.15 The Parish of Thirston includes a number of settlements. The main settlement is West Thirston, which has a number of services and facilities. The smaller settlements of Eshott, East Thirston and Burgham are also within the Neighbourhood Area.
- 3.16 The Parish as a whole has a population of 513 people (at 2011 census). 29% of the population in this area are over the age of 65 (compared to a County wide average of 23.1%), with just over 13% being between the ages of 0 – 15. Most of the population is concentrated in West Thirston.
- 3.17 Today, West Thirston is a thriving village which functions in close association with the adjoining village of Felton (in the adjoining parish) on the other side of the River Coquet. Many of the services and facilities used by residents of West Thirston are in Felton. Likewise, services and facilities in West Thirston are used by residents in Felton.
- 3.18 West Thirston has a number of listed buildings. These buildings are all within the core of the village of West Thirston which has a designated conservation area which reflects the importance of its history. Although a conservation area has been defined for West Thirston, there is at present, no detailed appraisal document to define the significance of the conservation Area. The bridge crossing the River Coquet is a Scheduled Monument and leads into Felton, a village in the adjoining parish.
- 3.19 Burgham is a relatively new development which was built around the golf course as part of an enabling development to finance the golf course business. Houses have been built at various stages to create what is now a low-density development of large executive style houses along with a number of other developments for holiday let cottages and chalets.
- 3.20 Burgham has no services and facilities other than the golf club house which has a bar and restaurant. There are no bus services. Burgham is located within the proposed Northumberland Green Belt and is 'washed over' for planning purposes.
- 3.21 Thirston Parish has a rich natural environment; the River Coquet and Woodlands SSSI runs along the northern boundary of the Neighbourhood Area. The Parish boundary extends to the middle of the river. The woodland areas that adjoin the river are within the SSSI designation. Some of the areas are in a favourable condition, and some are in an 'unfavourable recovering' condition. These areas are also designated as ancient and ancient semi-natural woodland.
- 3.22 These woodland areas are highly valued by the local community and visitors to the area, for walking and recreation. St. Oswald's way winds along the river to the east of West Thirston, through this woodland. At West Thirston, the route crosses over the bridge into Felton (the adjoining Parish).
- 3.23 The landscape in the Neighbourhood Area is identified in the Castle Morpeth Local Plan as being an 'Intermediate Area of Landscape Value', being located between the Northumberland Coast AONB to the east, and the Kyoie Hills and Glendale to the west.
- 3.24 The landscape is of significance to people living locally, and the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to conserve the highly valued local landscape through the definition of settlement boundaries to contain development within existing defined built-up areas.

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- 3.25 Tourism is a mainstay of the local economy, due to the proximity of the beaches and beautiful landscapes of the Northumberland Coast, as well as the easy access to the Neighbourhood Area from the A1. There are a number of holiday homes, caravan parks and local businesses which rely on tourism.
- 3.26 Many of the local businesses rely to a large extent on tourism related income and employment; in many cases this results in lower paid and part-time and/or short-term work.
- 3.27 There are two large-scale holiday parks in the parish: Bockenfield Caravan Park (which has permission for 200 plots some of which are occupied on a permanent basis) and Felmoor Caravan Park which has over 70 plots and also anecdotally has a number of permanent residents. Recent planning approvals to extend the period during which lodges and caravans can be occupied has made them more likely to be used for permanent occupation.

### Key Issues

- 3.28 Consultation events have been held by the Parish Council with local residents. In addition, a website has been set up which includes evidence base documents and information about the Thirston Neighbourhood Plan. A number of key issues were identified in the Neighbourhood Area which are summarised below:
- Impact of **conflicting business uses** in the Parish and the impact of some businesses on residential amenity for example, Bockenfield Aerodrome and Bywell Shoot;
  - The value of **tranquillity, wildlife and the rural nature** of the area;
  - A desire to **conserve the character and rural setting of the villages of West Thirston and Eshott**.
  - A desire to protect the **natural environment** in the Neighbourhood Area with the **River Coquet corridor** and other green spaces being highly valued for recreation and biodiversity;
  - A desire to support the needs of the local community by **supporting community facilities**, whilst recognising that many of the community facilities are in Felton (directly adjacent to Thirston);
  - A strong desire to ensure that new development is of **high-quality design** and **sympathetic to the local environment** and of a scale that results in incremental growth;
  - A desire to **support local businesses** and home-working; whilst recognising that sometimes there is a **conflict between different business uses** for example, the Woodland Burial site and the airfield; the Northumberland Zoo and the Bywell Shoot;
  - The large number of **caravan and chalets** that now have consent in the Parish, that exceed the number of dwellings. There are an increasing number of applications for these to become permanent residences, with a potential impact on local facilities;



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- Concern about additional pressure for development which may affect the Neighbourhood Area in the future when the A1 is dualled (due to take place within the next 5 years).

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### 4 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The identification of these key issues led to the creation of a vision for Thirston Parish. The vision, which was consulted on with the local community is as follows and forms the core intention of this Neighbourhood Plan.

**“Our vision for Thirston Parish is that we maintain the tranquil, rural nature of our diverse small rural communities, recognising the historic and natural environmental heritage that we enjoy, whilst embracing change that will enhance the lives of all parishioners.”**

- 4.2 To deliver this vision, and as a result of the issues raised by residents, two core objectives have been identified:

#### **OBJECTIVE 1: The built and natural environment**

To value the peaceful, beautiful nature and the rural setting of the parish, our objective is to ensure that:

- New development conserves and respects the special character of buildings and places and enhances wildlife across the parish;
- Settlement boundaries are defined to ensure the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside in the Parish is recognised in decision-making;
- Local Green Spaces are identified and protected; and
- The natural environment is preserved and where possible enhanced.

- 4.3 This objective encompasses some of the key issues raised by the local community and is realised through planning policies contained in the Plan. The community place a particularly high value on the beauty and intrinsic character of the countryside, and it was clear that a key objective would be to make sure that any new development in this Neighbourhood Area conserves the special feel of both the built and historic environment and of the countryside around the settlements.
- 4.4 In order to retain this special feel, settlement boundaries have been identified for the two main settlements of West Thirston and Eshott. East Thirston is a hamlet and as such is not considered to be a ‘settlement’ for the purposes of planning decision-making; therefore, a settlement boundary is not proposed. Burgham is in the proposed Northumberland Green Belt, and development here will be determined in accordance with Green Belt policy.
- 4.5 Local Green Spaces have been identified in West Thirston and Eshott; there are a limited number of them in the Neighbourhood Area, which is another reason why the countryside is valued so highly by residents.

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- 4.6 Community projects will help deliver some of the nature conservation objectives identified, and these are listed at the end of the Plan. The Plan seeks to give clarity about contributions that will be required to support the provision of the County Council's Coastal Mitigation Service and also identifies some of the most important nature conservation areas in the Neighbourhood Area.

### **OBJECTIVE 2: The economy, employment and the community**

'To build on the strong sense of community across the Parish our objective is to:

- Retain and support our facilities, local services and employment generating businesses providing they respect the special rural and tranquil character of the area and the amenity of residents;
- Support tourism in the Parish but ensure that new development is at an appropriate scale; and
- Support the provision of a new crematorium and protect the Woodland Burial Site.

- 4.7 The economy is an important part of the Neighbourhood Plan; in particular, the tourism economy, and some of the key businesses that operate in the area. Some parts of the economy benefit our visitors, such as the caravan parks and facilities associated with them, the golf club, local pubs and facilities in the villages and other visitor attractions. Many of the local services and facilities are located outside the Neighbourhood Area, in the neighbouring parish of Felton. The provision of a new cemetery is supported by many residents as a much needed facility which will reduce the need to travel during difficult times, to the nearest cemetery which is now in Alnwick.
- 4.8 Although businesses in the Neighbourhood Area will be supported, it is important to support them within the context of achieving sustainable development and conserving the special character of the Neighbourhood Area in line with meeting Objective 1. It is recognised that some businesses inevitably conflict with each other; for example, the airfield business is not always compatible with the tranquillity and contemplation of the Woodland Burial Site or the Northumberland Zoo. The Parish Council want to support all local businesses in a way that allows them to operate in a way which is compatible with each other. The policies seek to ensure that this is a key consideration.
- 4.9 The woodland burial site provides an important local facility, as well as a nature conservation space. There are no crematoriums in the vicinity (the nearest are either in Newcastle or up in the Borders), so the provision of one in this central location between Newcastle and the Borders will meet a significant local demand and is supported in the Neighbourhood Plan.

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### Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan to deliver these objectives:

- 4.10 **Policy 1** sets out a set of design and development principles that should apply to all development in the Parish. This will ensure that new development is of a high-quality design and considers carefully a range of matters that are considered to be important in the Parish.
- 4.11 **Policy 2** defines a settlement boundary for West Thirston and for Eshott. This will ensure that new residential development in the Neighbourhood Area will be brought forward within these settlement boundaries as they are considered to be the most sustainable locations for new development. Residential development that can be supported outside the settlement boundaries is included in the policy.
- 4.12 **Policy 3** refers to Wildlife Corridors; two are identified: The River Coquet wildlife corridor and the Longdyke Burn Wildlife Corridor. The policy also refers to the SSSI in the Neighbourhood Area and reinforces the protection that these special places should have.
- 4.13 **Policy 4** is required in order to ensure that new development contributes to the County Council's Coastal Mitigation Service where required. This was a requirement for this policy in an early pre-screening for Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.14 **Policy 5** lists the Local Green Spaces which are proposed for protection in the Parish. These have been identified by the local community as special places that they would like to see protected.
- 4.15 **Policy 6** seeks to support existing businesses in the Parish but sets a specific set of criteria that should be considered when determining a proposal. In particular, whether the proposal will impact negatively on other neighbouring land uses, local businesses and the amenity of residents. This policy will particularly apply to noise generating businesses in the Neighbourhood Area.
- 4.16 **Policy 7** seeks to support tourism development which is of an appropriate scale. It does not support the further expansion of the two large holiday parks in the Parish which, it is considered, are now at capacity. Proposals for new tourism developments as part of farm diversification will be supported, as well as other schemes that do not have a significant impact on landscape and the intrinsic character of the countryside due to their small scale.
- 4.17 **Policy 8** supports the provision of a crematorium and facilities that may be required associated with that crematorium. This will provide a much needed community facility in the Neighbourhood Area. The Woodland Burial site is both a business and a community facility as well as a local employer and there is a strong desire in the community to support this business.

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### 5 PLANNING POLICIES

#### READING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 5.1 It is essential that this Neighbourhood Plan is read as a whole document. All policies should be read alongside all other relevant policies in the Plan. **This means that any proposal should be assessed and considered in accordance with the Plan as a whole.**
- 5.2 Before each policy, under the policy title, is a section of explanatory text. This text consists of descriptive and explanatory matter in respect of the policies. The text is relevant to the interpretation of each policy to which it relates. Although the supporting text is not policy, it does assist with clarifying what the policy is trying to achieve, and the intention of that policy.

#### POLICY 1: DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

- 5.3 There is a strong desire to see well designed and more sustainable building taking place in the Neighbourhood Area. Each of the settlements in the Parish has a distinctive local character, as do the farmsteads and hamlets.
- 5.4 Policy 1 sets out key considerations which will be used to determine the acceptability of proposals. The policy focuses on ensuring that new development proposals are carefully designed to fit in with surrounding environment and reflect local character. It seeks to provide a list of criteria against which all new development will be determined. Not all the criteria will apply to all development.
- 5.5 What types of design are appropriate will vary in different parts of the Neighbourhood Area; West Thirston Conservation Area has its own character, as do Eshott, East Thirston and Burgham.
- 5.6 West Thirston has a designated conservation area, but, unlike many Conservation Areas in the County, it does not have a Character Appraisal; so, each application there will be considered in terms of the impact of the development on the character and setting of the village, and on the character and appearance of the West Thirston Conservation Area having careful regard to what that character is. When a Conservation Area Character Appraisal is published (and this will be sought through Community Project point CP1), this should be used as a basis for determining whether a proposal preserves or enhances the character of the Conservation Area. In the meantime, a summary of immediately obvious traditional materials and design in **West Thirston** are typified by:
- a mix of traditional dressed stone and some rendered buildings;
  - traditional roofing materials comprising slate roofs with water tables;
  - occasional pantile roofs;
  - Important features including brick or stone chimneys;
  - low stone walls to the frontage of properties and along the roadside;
  - extensive landscaping by way of trees and hedgerows giving a feel of privacy between dwellings;
  - access onto the road through front gardens (where such gardens exist);
  - dwellings with frontages onto the main highway;



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- Traditional features including dormer windows.



*Figure 4: Chimneys, materials, window styles and roofscapes all contribute to quality of design – Roofscape in West Thirston*

5.7 In **Eshott**, there is a clear design that has been adopted in all the dwellings there. The village is characterised by:

- low picket fences, hedges and stone walls;
- large amounts of greenery providing a pleasant rural setting throughout the village;
- a backdrop of mature trees throughout the village;
- a number of trees protected with Tree Preservation Orders;
- a clear palette of materials used in the village, and the existing houses; comprising a mix of stone and brick, with slate and pantile roofing materials;
- dormer windows and porches with pitched roofs and matching materials are also typical;
- detached and semi-detached houses with a clear and locally distinctive style.

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*Figure 5: Typical design of dwellings in Eshott*

- 5.8 Burgham is characterised by low density developments of detached houses, with a high level of landscaping. Burgham is within the proposed Northumberland Green Belt and in the open countryside.
- 5.9 There are a number of designated heritage assets in the Neighbourhood Area. There are also a number of non-designated heritage assets, although these have not been specifically defined in this Plan. The policy seeks to ensure (consistent with national guidance) that heritage assets are conserved in accordance with their significance.
- 5.10 Other considerations set out in the policy seek to ensure that new development considers all the factors that are considered to be important when assessing a planning application in the Neighbourhood Area.

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### **POLICY 1: DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES**

Proposals for new development, including extensions and conversions, must, where relevant, demonstrate how:

- a) local context and character are reflected in scale, density, height, massing, layout, use of materials, hard and soft landscaping and means of enclosure; and
- b) features including windows, doors, roof lights, chimneys, flues, roofs, and boundary treatments have regard to surrounding character and materials used locally; and
- c) opportunities to incorporate sustainable drainage have been taken; and
- d) landscaping has been incorporated into the scheme including the retention of trees and hedgerows wherever possible; and
- e) external lighting is limited to that which is essential and includes measures to avoid light spillage beyond the application site; and
- f) in terms of the massing, height, scale and proximity, the proposed development does not result in an unacceptable loss of light, overshadowing, significant adverse noise impacts or other significant adverse amenity impacts on existing or future residents and businesses; and
- g) a measurable biodiversity net gain will be achieved including by incorporating native species in landscaping schemes to enhance biodiversity; and
- h) safe access can be achieved for all users to and from the highway; and
- i) heritage assets and their settings are conserved in a manner consistent with their significance which should be identified in any planning application through the submission of a Heritage Statement; and
- j) within the West Thirston Conservation Area, development demonstrates, through the submission of a Heritage Statement, how it will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting; and
- k) within the village of Eshott, the development will reflect the special character of the village in terms of materials, design, density and boundary treatments consistent with neighbouring properties.

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### **POLICY 2: NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

- 5.11 This policy sets out where new housing development is likely to be appropriate in the Neighbourhood Area. Settlement boundaries for West Thirston and Eshott have been defined on the Policies Maps having particular regard to the need to ensure recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside in the Neighbourhood Area. The settlement boundaries are not intended to stifle development which could still make a positive contribution to sustainable communities in the Neighbourhood Area.
- 5.12 There are no specific housing allocations proposed within the settlements and settlement boundaries are drawn relatively tightly, acknowledging that the housing requirement identified by Northumberland County Council for the Neighbourhood Area has been met. This Plan does support small-scale housing development within the settlement boundaries where it complies with policies elsewhere in the development plan.
- 5.13 The settlement boundary currently identified in the Castle Morpeth Local Plan for West Thirston includes the built-up area of the village and is the same as that proposed in the emerging Northumberland Local Plan and in this Neighbourhood Plan. A recently decided appeal in West Thirston re-enforces the importance of the setting and character of West Thirston and in particular the western boundary. A settlement boundary has been relatively easy to define as there are clear boundaries along which development has evolved over time. The settlement boundary methodology report is contained in the supporting documents.
- 5.14 Eshott has no services or community facilities other than the identified Local Green Space. Although not a conservation area, Eshott does have a high number of listed buildings and a well-defined character as a purpose-built estate village with 30 large houses designed and built around Eshott Hall in among trees. Eshott has its own water supply (from two boreholes adjacent to the village) and a private sewerage network which is run and maintained by a shared services company. Due to the limited opportunities for expansion, Eshott has a settlement boundary drawn tightly around it with the principal objective of preserving the special character of the village as an estate village.
- 5.15 East Thirston does not have a settlement boundary and is located in the countryside for planning purposes. Residential development here, and elsewhere in the Parish will be allowed where it meets any of the criteria set out in Policy 2 and the development plan.
- 5.16 Burgham is within the proposed Northumberland Green Belt and the open countryside and does not have a settlement boundary as its openness is considered to be an important part of its character; instead, it is a 'washed over' settlement within the green belt.
- 5.17 New housing development is generally not appropriate in the countryside unless it meets criteria outlined in Policy 2 which reflects national planning policy set out in the NPPF. There are particular opportunities in the Neighbourhood Area to re-use redundant buildings and disused buildings in the Parish; for example, there are a number of old farmsteads that could be re-developed for housing, subject to protecting their historic significance.



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### **POLICY 2: NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

Settlement boundaries for West Thirston and Eshott are defined on the Policies Maps. Residential development within the settlement boundaries will be supported subject to compliance with relevant policies elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan and the Development Plan.

Land outside the defined settlement boundaries will be treated as countryside whose intrinsic character and beauty must be recognised in all decision making on development proposals. Outside defined settlement boundaries, residential development will be limited to proposals that are in accordance with national policies, or strategic planning policies or allocations, and which comply with the other policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Isolated homes in the countryside will not be supported unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- a) housing where there is an essential need for a rural worker, including those taking majority control of a farm business, to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;
- b) housing that represents the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or that which would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets;
- c) additional housing created through the sub-division of an existing residential dwelling;
- d) housing whose design is of exceptional quality in that it is truly outstanding or innovative, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area;
- e) the re-use of redundant and disused buildings to provide new housing where this would enhance their immediate setting.

Residential development within the Green Belt will be considered in accordance with national planning policy on Green Belts set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.



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## POLICY 3: WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND SSSI



*Figure 6: River Coquet SSSI as seen from the pedestrian bridge (a scheduled monument)*

- 5.18 The River Coquet extends along the northern boundary of the Neighbourhood Area. Proposals which promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI will be supported by the community. This area is shown on the Policies Map as a wildlife corridor.
- 5.19 The Environment Agency have identified the Longdyke Burn as a watercourse with high potential to improve biodiversity in the Neighbourhood Area. The community are supportive of its inclusion as a wildlife corridor, and it is also shown on the Policies Map.
- 5.20 The SSSI area is also designated ancient and semi-natural woodland. The section of SSSI from Swarland Burn to Coquet Mouth is in an unfavourable 'recovering' status.
- 5.21 The community in Thirston Parish were very keen to preserve and enhance wildlife and biodiversity. The River Coquet is highly valued by residents as a place for recreation as well as for its biodiversity value.

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### **POLICY 3: WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSI)**

Proposals that promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of the biodiversity value of the River Coquet Wildlife Corridor, comprising the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI and the areas of broadleaved woodland, ancient and semi-natural woodland identified on the Policies Map will be supported.

Proposals that promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of the biodiversity value of the Longdyke Burn, Eshott Burn and Thirston Burn Wildlife Corridor identified on the Policies Map will be supported.

Development on land within or outside the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments) will not be supported unless the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of SSSIs.

Proposals to improve public access along the River Coquet will be supported where they do not have an adverse effect on the SSSI.

### **POLICY 4: COASTAL MITIGATION SERVICE**

- 5.22 The Northumberland Coast is of national and international importance for its wildlife. This includes a wide range of wading birds and wildfowl (ducks, geese and swans) that pass through on migration each spring or autumn or spend the winter there before returning to arctic breeding grounds; little terns and arctic terns that nest on beaches in the north of the county; and the diverse plant communities found on its sand dunes. Areas of the coast of national importance for their bird populations or plant communities are protected through designation as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), and areas of international importance are also designated as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar Sites). Dune grasslands of international importance are designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
- 5.23 When considering planning applications for new development, Northumberland County Council is obliged to consider impacts on these specially protected areas.
- 5.24 For internationally important sites the Council is obliged to fulfil the strict requirements set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, ensuring that adequate mitigation is provided for any impacts that a development is likely to have on them, alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.
- 5.25 New development can have a range of impacts on these protected areas, but one that is likely to arise from all new housing or tourist accommodation is increased disturbance to the bird species that are their special features, arising from increased recreational activity on the coast. Increased foot passage through the dunes also causes the spread of a non-native invasive species called pirri-pirri bur.
- 5.26 It is the responsibility of the developer to provide the required mitigation for their

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development. However, this can be especially difficult for developers to achieve for impacts arising from recreational activity on sites outside the developer's control and which people have a right to access and an understandably strong desire to access, such as the coast.

- 5.27 Northumberland County Council has been working with Natural England to review its approach to the assessment and management of impacts arising from new development on specially protected sites on the coast, and has determined that the only realistic way to address the impacts of recreational activity on designated sites on the coast is through a strategic scheme funded by developers and implemented by the Council.
- 5.28 This will enable mitigation to be provided within the designated sites themselves, in a consistent manner along the whole of the Northumberland coast. This approach also provides clarity and certainty for developers, as they will make a known financial contribution to the Mitigation Service rather than trying to provide their own bespoke mitigation for each development, and will save them time and money because they will not have to undertake the ecological surveys and assessments required to devise such mitigation.
- 5.29 The contributions from developers will fund a ranger team who will be out on the coast working with visitors and residents, raising awareness and providing wardening.
- 5.30 More detail on the mitigation service can be found at this link:  
<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Local%20Plan/Northumberland-Coastal-Mitigation-Service-Strategy-Document-December-2018.pdf>
- 5.31 The Policies Map defines the 7km zone and the 10km zone which will apply to Coastal Mitigation contributions as identified in Policy 4.

### **POLICY 4: COASTAL MITIGATION SERVICE**

To ensure that the impacts arising from increasing levels of recreational disturbance on coastal Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European Sites can be addressed, all development within 7km of the coast that will result in a net increase in the number of residential units or tourist accommodation will be required to contribute to the Coastal Mitigation Service, or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness. Within a zone, as shown on the policies map, extending between 7km and 10km from the coast, only major development will be required to make a contribution to the Coastal Mitigation Service, or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness.

All financial contributions required in accordance with this policy will be secured by way of a planning obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or any subsequent amending legislation."



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### POLICY 5: LOCAL GREEN SPACES IN WEST THIRSTON AND ESHOTT



*Figure 7: Eshott Village Green Local Green Space*

5.32 Paragraphs 99 and 100 of the NPPF give local communities the opportunity to identify and protect areas of green space which are special to the local community. A number of criteria must be met, and most green spaces will not be suitable for allocation as Local Green Space.

5.33 In order for land to qualify as Local Green Space it must meet the following tests:

- Be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- Be demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- Be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

5.34 The local green spaces identified in Policy 5 are of particular significance to the local community and meet the tests set out above. These spaces are shown on the Policies Maps.

5.35 **Eshott Village Green** provides a valuable contribution to the setting of the village and is used as a gathering place, play area for children, and for other recreational purposes.

5.36 **The Peth** in West Thirston is also identified as a Local Green Space. It is central to the landscape of the village of West Thirston and is the only publicly accessible green space within the West Thirston Conservation Area. It is valued by the local community as a space for biodiversity interest. A set of steps and public footpath run along the edge of the site. It is a Priority Habitat (under the Wildlife Acts) and comprises 0.62 hectares of Deciduous Broadleaved Woodland. Its location directly adjacent to the SSSI means that it has an important function as a link and buffer to the SSSI.

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## **POLICY 5: LOCAL GREEN SPACES**

The following sites are designated as Local Green Spaces and are shown on the Policies Map:

LGS1: Eshott Village Green

LGS2: The Peth, West Thirston

These Local Green Spaces will be protected in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt.

## **POLICY 6: BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

- 5.37 There are a range of local businesses in the Neighbourhood Area. The main businesses in the area are the Bockenfield Airfield which operates private flights as well as some commercial business; the Bywell Shoot, the Northumberland Country Zoo, Burgham Golf Course as well as a significant number of other smaller businesses, some of which provide a community service. A business survey was set to 65 businesses in the Parish; only 4 responses were received.



- 5.38 Bockenfield Airfield has grown over the years and planning permissions have been granted over the years which have gradually resulted in an intensification of use and an increase in operating hours. Further expansion and intensification of use of the airfield risks causing an increasingly negative impact on surrounding businesses and quality of life for residents, due to noise impacts.
- 5.39 Similarly, the Bywell Shoot has grown over the years and now has national and international competition days at weekends, as well as clay pigeon shooting and tuition sessions.
- 5.40 The Northumberland Zoo attracts a significant number of visitors to the area as do other tourist/visitor attractions such as the Burgham Park Golf and Leisure Club,



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Felmoor Park, Bockenfield Holiday Park, Eshott Hall, the Northumberland Arms and the popular walking route of St. Oswald's Way. The Woodland Burial Site is an important local business which is also a community facility. In addition to these businesses, there are a number of farms and a high number of people with small businesses working from home. These differing uses and businesses are not always compatible, and this has, over the years caused some concerns locally.

- 5.41 This policy therefore seeks to ensure that when planning applications are submitted for new business developments, or expansions to existing businesses, a thorough assessment is made of amenity impacts (in particular, noise) on residents and other businesses in the Neighbourhood Area.
- 5.42 The community would like to work more closely with businesses, and there is a recognition that some businesses also provide a community benefit. For example, a business that provides local services such as the Northumberland Arms; some of the holiday parks and the golf club also provide facilities that are used by the community as well as visitors. It is not always easy to separate business uses from community uses, so the policy seeks to support new businesses, but particularly welcomes those that will provide a community benefit as well.

### **POLICY 6: BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

The sustainable growth and expansion of the following types of development will be supported subject to compliance with relevant policies elsewhere in the Development Plan:

- a) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural business including the provision of well-designed buildings to support that business;
- b) new sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside and deliver net gains for biodiversity;
- c) the development of local services and community facilities;
- d) the expansion of home-based businesses.

Any planning applications for new and/or expansions to existing businesses will be assessed in accordance with policies elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan and Development Plan in relation to the following:

- e) impacts on the amenity of residents, holiday makers and other businesses and tourist attractions in the Neighbourhood Area;
- f) impacts of noise generating businesses and in particular, their impact on residents and other businesses in the Neighbourhood Area;
- g) hours of operation and impacts on neighbouring businesses and residents;
- h) whether access to the new or extended business can be accommodated without significant impacts on the highway network. This may be assessed through a submitted Transport Statement or Transport Assessment; and
- i) the extent to which the new or extended business development can be made accessible by cycle, walking and/or other sustainable modes of transport.

Proposals that have a significant adverse effect on the peaceful nature of the Woodland Burial Site and Crematorium will not be supported.

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### **POLICY 7: TOURISM ACCOMMODATION**

- 5.43 There are two large-scale holiday parks in the Neighbourhood Area, in addition to the Burgham Golf Course which also has planning permission for a number of holiday chalets:
- Bockenfield Holiday Park has 62 pitches and has planning permission for an additional 145 caravans/chalets. Three of the pitches are permanently occupied (and registered for Council Tax) and a number of other pitches are known to be in permanent occupation.
  - Felmoor Park (adjacent) has planning permission for 162 pitches of which 120 have been built. 18 residents are registered for Council Tax indicating that that some of these units are now permanently occupied.
- 5.44 Once existing planning permissions on the above three sites are implemented, there will be in excess of 269 caravan pitches in the Neighbourhood Area. This figure exceeds the total number of household spaces in the Neighbourhood Area identified in the 2011 census (234).
- 5.45 It is considered that this, combined with the additional impacts of traffic and landscape impacts means that it is necessary to restrict further expansion of these static caravan parks (as well as the provision of new ones) in this Neighbourhood Area at this time. As an increasing number of the units are used for permanent occupation it is likely that this increase in population will place an unplanned for strain on local services and facilities.
- 5.46 Recognising the importance of the area for tourism, partly because of its proximity to the coastal areas, the policy does support the provision of low impact temporary tourism accommodation such as campsites and small-scale proposals for caravans, bunkhouses and chalets where they can be sensitively accommodated into the landscape. These types of development are likely to be related to farm diversification schemes, or other rural schemes which are of a scale that can be accommodated into the landscape without having a significant impact.

### **POLICY 7: TOURISM ACCOMMODATION**

Expansion of existing large-scale holiday parks at Bockenfield Holiday Park, and Felmoor Park, and permitted holiday chalets at Burgham Golf Course will not be supported. Creation of new large-scale holiday parks will not be supported.

Proposals for bunkhouses, chalets, touring caravans and camping accommodation will be supported where they are of a scale that can be sensitively accommodated into the landscape and where they do not have a significant impact on the highway network or the amenity of neighbouring residential properties. The occupation of any buildings or other structures will be limited by condition or planning obligation to prevent their use other than as holiday accommodation.

Visitor accommodation associated with farm diversification schemes will be supported where they comply with policies elsewhere in the Development Plan.

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### POLICY 8: WOODLAND BURIAL SITE AND CREMATORIUM



- 5.47 The land shown on the policies map delineates the area that is a Woodland Burial Site. This site comprises a meadow (Clarefield Meadow) which provides a resting place for traditional burials. Wildflowers, trees and shrubs mark each plot. Merlin Wood is a dedicated woodland for ashes burials and is made of oak trees planted in avenues. Griffon Wood is a pet burial woodland area.
- 5.48 The site has planning permission for the construction of a crematorium. This is a business, but also a community facility, and highly valued by people in the area who have loved ones buried there. The site is adjacent to the airfield; this proximity can result in some conflicts between the peaceful enjoyment of the green space and the activities at the airfield. This policy protects the land for use as a burial site and crematorium and seeks to ensure that development in the vicinity does not impact upon the operation of the site and the peaceful enjoyment of the site to an unacceptable level.
- 5.49 The crematorium already has planning permission. In the event of future permissions being required for a crematorium, attention is drawn to the need to take full account of the 'Environment Agency's Approach to Groundwater Protection' and information on the Natural Death Centre website. The Environment Agency advise that a hydrogeological risk assessment should be undertaken and refer to their published document: 'Assessing the Groundwater Pollution Potential of Cemetery Developments'.

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### **POLICY 8: WOODLAND BURIAL SITE AND CREMATORIUM**

This site is allocated on the Policies map as a Woodland Burial Site and Crematorium. Within the site, development proposals directly related to the use of the site as a burial site and crematorium will be supported where they meet requirements for groundwater protection set out in the most recent Environment Agency guidance documents.



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## **6 MONITORING AND REVIEW**

- 6.1 Effective monitoring by Thirston Parish Council is essential to ensure the neighbourhood Plan is truly achieving sustainable development in the Plan area. It also provides information to establish whether policies are effective, and whether there are changes needed to policies in the longer term.
- 6.2 The Thirston Neighbourhood Plan sets out the long-term spatial vision for the area with objectives and policies to deliver that vision in the period up to 2036.
- 6.3 Decision making on planning applications still rests with Northumberland County Council who have their own monitoring procedures in place. The Parish Council will, however, undertake its own monitoring to evaluate the level of progress being made towards delivering the vision of the Plan.

### **Review**

- 6.4 It may be necessary to review the neighbourhood plan in light of any significant policy shifts in the future.

### **Community Projects**

- 6.5 Proposals that have been identified by the local community that are not covered by planning policies will be taken forward by the Parish Council as a separate matter. These are all matters that were outside the remit of planning policy in a neighbourhood plan.
- 6.6 Monitoring carried out by Thirston Parish Council will also seek to ascertain whether these Community Projects are being implemented.



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## **7 COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

7.1 A list of community projects that have emerged through consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan are contained below:

**CP1:** Work with Northumberland County Council to secure the production of a Conservation Area Character Appraisal for West Thirston

**CP2:** Continue to work with residents to reduce litter in the Parish

**CP3:** Consider measures for promoting nature conservation in the Parish

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## **APPENDIX A: LIST OF STRATEGIC POLICIES**

### Thirston Neighbourhood Plan

The current statutory development plan for the Thirston Neighbourhood Area is the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (2003) and Policy S5 of the Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan (2005). The saved strategic policies from the Local Plan and Structure Plan are listed below. The policies in the Thirston Neighbourhood Plan must be assessed for general conformity with these saved strategic policies. The findings of this assessment should be presented in the basic conditions statement. The saved strategic policies for the Thirston Neighbourhood Area are as follows:

#### Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (2003)

Policy RE2: Renewable Energy

Policy RE3: Wind Power Areas of Search

Policy RE4: Water Quality

Policy RE5: Surface water run-off and flood defences

Policy RE6: Service Infrastructure

Policy RE8: Contaminated Land

Policy RE9: Ground Stability

Policy C1: Settlement Boundaries

Policy C3: Areas of High Landscape Value

Policy C4: Landscape corridors

Policy C9: Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves and Regionally Important Geological or Geomorphological Sites

PolicyC11: Protected Species

PolicyC12: Wildlife Corridors

PolicyC13: Wildlife Corridors

PolicyC16: Green Belt

PolicyC17: Green Belt

PolicyC26: Conservation Areas

Policy C45: Network Communications

Policy H1: Housing land supply

Policy H2: Phasing

PolicyH16: Housing in the countryside

Policy E1: Employment Land Supply

Policy S2: Out of town retail development

PolicyS12: Protection of Services

Policy T1: Major road improvements

Policy T2: Major road improvements

Policy T6: Provision for cyclists – cycle routes

Policy WTC1: Settlement Boundary

Policy WTC2: Areas of High Landscape Value

Policy WTC3: Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Wildlife Corridors

Policy WTC4: Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Wildlife Corridors

Policy WTC5: Conservation Area

Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan (2005) Policy S5: Extension to the Green Belt

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## **APPENDIX B: EVIDENCE DOCUMENTS**

National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019)  
National Planning Practice Guidance (as updated)  
Castle Morpeth Local Plan (2003)  
Northumberland County Council Landscape Character Assessment August 2010  
Northumberland County Council Strategic Housing Availability Land Assessment (2019)  
Northumberland County Wide Housing Needs Survey Final Report (updated 2015)  
Environmental Report 2020 (NCC)  
Local Green Space evidence base (Parish Council report)  
Settlement Boundaries Methodology (Parish Council report)  
Summary of consultation events and consultation responses (Parish Council report)

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### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Affordable housing:** Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

a) Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

b) Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.

c) Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

**Amenity:** A positive element or elements that contribute to the positive character of an area, such as lack of noise and disturbance, openness, landscape, townscape, opportunities for recreation etc.

**Basic Conditions:** The Localism Act (the Act) sets basic conditions that neighbourhood development plans or orders must meet. These are that the plan or order must: a) have appropriate regard to national policy and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, b) must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development c) must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area and d) must not breach, and be otherwise compatible with, EU and Human Rights obligations

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**Biodiversity:** The whole variety of life encompassing all genetics, species and ecosystem variations, including plants and animals.

**Bunkhouse:** A bunkhouse provides self-catering accommodation where the sleeping quarters and other facilities are often shared. They may occupy an existing building, such as a barn. If newly proposed, they should be corresponding in scale and form to the definition of a chalet.

**Chalet:** A chalet provides self-catering accommodation in a non-permanent structure constructed from wood and/or other lightweight material. Chalets could include structures that would meet the definition of "Caravan" at S29 of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 - i.e. a single storey unit capable of being moved from one place to another (whether by being towed or by being transported on a motor vehicle or trailer) not more than 60ft (18.288m) length, 20ft (6.096m) width and internal height of 10ft (3.048m) - around 340 cubic metres. Chalets may also include structures, such as log cabins, that are partially constructed onsite but are not on permanent foundations, and that would be of a similar scale to a caravan, and not of substantially greater total volume.

**Community Facilities:** Local services and facilities that benefit the community, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

**Density (of development):** The amount of building within an area of land. For housing it is expressed as the number of dwellings per hectare.

**Designated Site:** In this document, reference to Designated Sites should be taken to include any Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

**Development:** Defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as 'the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land.'

**Development Plan:** The complete set of statutory land use policies and proposals for an area, used in making planning decisions. It includes adopted council development plan documents such as Local Plans, Core Strategies and neighbourhood Plans. In this Neighbourhood Area the Development Plan consists of the Castle Morpeth Local Plan (2003) until it is superseded by the Northumberland Local Plan (due to be adopted in 2021) and the Neighbourhood Plan when 'made'.

**Environmental report:** The report that documents the assessment of the draft Plan and accompanies the draft Plan for pre-submission consultation. The environmental report needs to contain certain information as set out in Schedule 2 to the SEA Regulations 2004.

**Evidence base:** The information and data gathered by local authorities and used to inform policy development. Evidence base data is also gathered to prepare a neighbourhood Plan and is submitted to the Examiner along with the other Examination Documents.



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**Habitat:** An area or natural environment in which an organism, species or population normally lives. Habitats take many forms and should not be considered in isolation as they are linked and overlap with each other.

**Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA):** This is a general term which describes the full step-wise process required in making assessments of the impacts on European sites under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, including the steps of screening for likely significant effects and making appropriate assessments.

**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)

**Independent Examination:** The process by which an independent person examines a plan document to ensure that it is 'sound' (in the case of a Local Plan) or meets Basic Conditions (in the case of a neighbourhood Plan).

**Infrastructure:** The physical entities (for example roads, railways, sewers, pipes, telecommunications lines) that are necessary for communities to function and move around.

**Landscape Character:** The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.

**Large-scale holiday parks:** The two large-scale holiday parks in the Neighbourhood Area are Bockenfield Holiday Park and Felmoor Holiday Park

**Local Green Space:** A designation that provides special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. They can be identified through Local Plans or by communities in Neighbourhood Plans.

**Local Plan:** The documents and maps that make up the plan for the future development of a local area.

**Material consideration:** A matter that should be taken into account in making a planning decision.

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** A Government document that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

**National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG):** The Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2018 and the National Planning Practice Guidance is regularly updated. Together, the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance set out what the Government expects of local authorities.

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**Neighbourhood Plan:** A Plan by a Parish or Town Council - the 'qualifying body' - for a particular neighbourhood area. Once it has been accepted by the local community through a Referendum, the neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Development Plan.

**Northumberland County Council:** The unitary authority for Northumberland as of 1st April 2009.

**Northumberland Local Plan (emerging):** The Northumberland Local Plan is in production and is due to be adopted in 2021. Once in place, it will be the Development Plan for this area alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.

**Previously Developed Land (PDL) or Brownfield Land:** Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

**Rural exception site:** Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek 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 essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

**Significance (for heritage policy):** The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

**Site of Special Scientific Interest:** Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

**SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems):** A sequence of water management practices and facilities designed to drain surface water in a manner that will provide a more sustainable approach than more conventional practices, such as routing runoff through a pipe to a watercourse.

**Sustainable development:** Defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Also defined in the NPPF states in paragraph 7 that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

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**Sustainable transport modes:** Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.