

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME**

March 2025



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# 1. Introduction

## Purpose

- 1.1 The preparation of a Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a statutory requirement under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).
- 1.2 The LDS has two principal purposes:
  - To set out the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and other planning documents that the Council intends to produce to form the planning policy framework for Thurrock; and
  - To set out the timetable for the preparation or review of these documents.
- 1.3 This LDS sets out the timetable for the Councils DPD work for the next three years. It explains when the Council intends to reach key stages in the preparation of its Local Plan and other planning documents. It is intended to help the local community and all stakeholders interested in development and the use of land and buildings in Thurrock, to understand what the Council is proposing to do and when, and at what stage they can expect to be involved in the planning process.
- 1.4 This LDS supersedes the earlier versions (dated December 2015, September 2022 and September 2023) and will be subject to regular review to ensure that it continues to be a realistic and achievable programme for the preparation of the Council's planning policy documents.

## Progress to Date

- 1.5 The Council published its first LDS in December 2015. The key reason for the delay in the preparation of the Local Plan against the timetable set out in the LDS December 2015 was the need to consider the interrelationship between the Thurrock Local Plan and the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Development Consent Order (DCO) process. Given the need for the Local Plan to safeguard the alignment of the route and to consider the detailed design work and environmental impact assessment work associated with the proposed crossing when reaching decisions on the allocation of sites for development in the Local Plan, the Local Plan timetable was delayed so that it aligned more closely with that of the LTC DCO process.
- 1.6 In the intervening period, the Council worked on developing key parts of the Local Plan evidence base and undertook two 'Issues and Options' public consultations to ensure that the emerging Local Plan meets the needs and wants of both new and existing communities. In addition, numerous informal community engagement sessions were held to encourage greater community participation in the Local Plan process.

- 1.7 The Council published an updated LDS in September 2022. There was a slight delay in the preparation of the Local Plan against the timetable set out in the LDS September 2022 which has led to the publication of the 2023 updated version. The key reason for the slight delay in the timetable is due to the change of leadership of the Council following the recent local elections in May 2023 and the need for additional internal briefing sessions.
- 1.8 There has been some more slippage in progress achieved against the timetable set out in the 2023 LDS and it is important that Thurrock publishes an up-to-date LDS to accurately reflect the current progress and to remain in conformity with legislation and guidance. Delays have occurred to several changes in administration both at local and national level. There has also been a continuing uncertainty over the Lower Thames Crossing which is not due to be determined until 23 May 2025 and therefore the impacts of uncertainty over routing will remain in place until the Development Consent Order is determined.
- 1.9 The previous Government announced some changes to the NPPF in December 2023 but these are largely either not being carried forward by the current government or have over written by the current proposed changes. Among these changes were a different approach to using the standard methodology to calculate housing need which has resulted in Thurrock's need decreasing by 8% to 1,066 dwellings per annum. Housing targets are proposed to be mandatory.
- 1.10 One change which could result in Thurrock having to revisit any Green Belt assessments is the introduction of 'Grey Belt' or previously developed land in the green belt that is considered to make a limited contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt. Thurrock is 70% Green Belt and given that the housing land supply has been assessed to be 0.91 years it is likely that the Council will need to look at whether any of the sites in the Borough would qualify as Grey Belt. This assessment must be done comprehensively, and this will take some months to complete.
- 1.11 Given the fundamental nature of some of the changes proposed this has resulted in a delay to the production of the Local Plan. As Thurrock has not yet reached Regulation 19 Draft Submission Stage any new Local Plan will need to be produced under the new system considering any of the changes to national policy, guidance and legislation.
- 1.12 The Local Plan team are continuing to work on the various documents that comprise the evidence base that sits behind the new Local Plan. Some of this evidence will need to be reviewed to ensure that it remains up to date and relevant to the plan process and this takes some time.

## 2. Adopted Development Plan Documents

- 2.1 Development Plan Documents (DPDs) are planning documents that contain policies for the use, protection and/or development of land, typically including the allocation of land for development. DPDs are used to determine planning applications and must be in general conformity with government guidance, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023.
- 2.2 The statutory development plan for Thurrock comprises the following documents:
- Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development (Core Strategy), Jan 2015
  - Schedule of saved policies of the Borough Local Plan, Sep 1997
  - Essex Minerals Local Plan – Adopted First Review, Jan 1997
- 2.3 The Council originally adopted its Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development in December 2011. The Core Strategy sets out the Council's vision, spatial strategy, and core policies for the development of Thurrock.
- 2.4 Following the publication of the first version of the NPPF in 2012, the Council identified several policies in the Core Strategy which required updating to ensure that they were in full compliance with the NPPF.
- 2.5 Subsequently, in January 2015, the Council adopted a Focused Review of the Core Strategy. The effect of the Focused Review was to replace policies CSSP5, CSTP8, CSTP23, CSTP25, CSTP26, CSTP27, CSTP28, CSTP31, PMD1, PMD2, PMD4, PMD6, PMD7, PMD10, PMD12, PMD15, PMD16, and to introduce one new policy, OSPD1. Some paragraphs of supporting text were also deleted. All other policies remain unchanged.
- 2.6 In addition, some saved policies from the Borough Local Plan, Sep 1997 and Essex Minerals Local Plan, Jan 1997, which have not yet been replaced by up-to-date policies in a more recent DPD are still material considerations in the determination of planning applications.
- 2.7 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are non-statutory documents that give further guidance on the policies and proposals set out in Development Plan Documents. Whilst SPDs must be in conformity with DPDs and subject to public consultation, they do not have to go through the process of independent examination.
- 2.8 The Council has adopted a couple of such guidance documents including:
- Thurrock Design Guide – Design Strategy SPD (March 2017)
  - Thurrock Design Guide – Residential Alterations & Extensions SPD (July 2017)

### 3. Proposed Development Plan Documents

#### Thurrock Local Plan

- 3.1 The Council is preparing a single Local Plan document which will become the principal Development Plan Document for Thurrock, setting out the overall planning framework to support growth and development across the whole borough. The Local Plan will identify the strategic priorities and long-term vision for the area, ensuring that the development needs of the borough are met over the next twenty years.
- 3.2 The Local Plan will contain a spatial strategy which identifies specific locations for delivering development needs such as housing, employment, retail, leisure, and infrastructure. Strategic policies, site allocation policies, and development management policies will be used in the determination of planning applications which will help to realise the overall strategy.
- 3.3 The timetable for the emerging Local Plan is set out below:

Scoping	COMPLETED
Issues and Options (Stage 1)	COMPLETED
Issues and Options (Stage 2)	COMPLETED
Local Plan: Initial Proposals Consultation (Regulation 18)	COMPLETED
Local Plan: Publication Draft Consultation (Regulation 19)	Spring 2026 (circa Jan – Mar 2026)
Submission to Secretary of State for examination in public (Regulation 22)	Summer 2026 (circa Jul – Sep 2026)
Commencement of Examination hearings	Spring 2027 (circa Jan – Mar 2027)
Inspector's Report expected	Autumn 2027 (circa Sep – Nov 2027)
Adoption of the Local Plan by Council	Spring 2028 (circa Jan – Mar 2028)

- 3.4 The timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan will be refined further as the Council meets set milestones. Any changes to the timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan will be set out in a future LDS update once agreed.

### Neighbourhood Development Plans

- 3.5 Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) are community-led plans for guiding the future development and growth of a local area introduced by the Localism Act (2011). Such plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan. They are subject to independent examination and referendum, and once adopted will form part of the statutory local development plan for the area.
- 3.6 NDPs can be prepared by town, village, or parish councils or by 'neighbourhood forums' in unparished areas. As of September 2023, the Council has not received any formal applications for the designation of a neighbourhood forum which is the first formal step in the process. However, some communities have expressed an initial interest in community-led planning and the Council will assist these communities through the process if, and when, required.

### Minerals & Waste Local Plan

- 3.7 The purpose of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP) is to implement the strategic vision and policies for minerals and waste. This will be achieved through the use of several criteria based and land-use based policies.
- 3.8 The scope and timetable for the preparation of the MWLP is currently under review and an up-to-date timetable will be provided once agreed.

## 4. Other Planning Documents

- 4.1 To support the preparation of the Local Plan, some adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) may be required to be updated, or additional SPDs may be required. The scope for this work will become clearer once the Regulation 19 Local Plan is published in Spring 2026. A timetable for the preparation of any SPDs will be provided in a future LDS update once agreed.
- 4.2 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule is not a Local Plan document or SPD, but it is a planning document that sits alongside the Local Plan that is subject to an independent examination. The CIL is a planning charge levied on certain types of new development and will be used by the Council to fund and deliver infrastructure needed to support new development. Thurrock has currently chosen not to pursue a CIL but this is kept under constant review.

- 4.3 Therefore, at this stage it is unclear whether the Council will be seeking to adopt a CIL or an IL as the mechanism for funding infrastructure in the borough. Work on the Local Plan is required to be at a more advanced stage to fully consider the viability implications on development of a CIL charge at various levels. The CIL or any future replacement will be prepared as a separate document, having regard to the Local Plan and its associated infrastructure requirements. A timetable for the preparation of this document will be provided in a future LDS update once agreed.

#### Policies Map

- 4.4 The policies map covers the whole of the Thurrock borough area, and its purpose is to illustrate sites allocated for development or protection within the Local Plan. The policies map is updated as new Development Plan Documents are prepared or revised to provide a clear visual illustration of the application of policies across the borough.