

Thorverton Parish Council

March 2026 Extraordinary Meeting 2026 5 The Development of the Diocese Field

Cllr Wilson Paper

Below was a facebook post in my private name.

"Up to 120 new homes in Thorverton.

Are you happy with this? The vast majority either on the Lynch road or Berrys Bridge road.

Come and fill the Parish Council meeting on Tuesday to air your opinions. There will be representatives of the developer and agents there.

It is important that they are aware of Thorvertonians opinions. Good or Bad!
7.00 at the Thorverton memorial hall 10/03/2026.

I post this as a private individual and not in the name of Thorverton Parish Council.

Please spare the time to attend and air your opinions. It is most important."

Questions

- 1) Does the representative from the Diocese know how many houses are currently for sale in Thorverton? A, 15 ranging from circa £200k upwards to £1.25 Mil, 6 under £300k, 5 between £375 and £685k and 5 over £685K Good cross spread.
- 2) Could you explain please, what is the definition of a low-cost house to the Diocese? Does the representative from the Diocese know how many low-cost houses are already in Thorverton? Including houses for sale with a market value of less than £300K. How many are in the village?
- 3) Does the Representative from Diocese know when Thorverton last had a housing needs survey? (approx. 2.5 Years ago.) Are the representatives aware of the surveys results?
- 4) The TCLT carried out a housing needs survey recently. 2.5 Yrs ago Has the Diocese considered that the housing needs of the Village of Thorverton have been covered by TCLT development? If that is so, why do we need more development outside the development boundary?
- 5) Does the Diocese consider that this meeting will tick boxes for public consultation for development, combined with the meeting at Exeter Inn? Both meetings have not been widely publicised within the village. Past experiences with TCLT have shown that around 10% of the village have become members and around 5% of the village have supported this scheme! Not enough for a reasonable village feeling of acceptance or anti.
- 6) Lastly, prior to any agreement to sell to a developer, will the Diocese please commit to giving us some time, wait a few weeks to enable TPC to send out a survey to all villagers with prudent questions to see if there is a genuine want/need or not for future development in the village? This is likely to bring up issues such as infrastructure, such as the school already being full, the very

Thorverton Parish Council

narrow road access through Bullen St with over 100 extra journeys per day, sewerage outlets, land drainage/Suds, Shop, doctors surgery at saturation, bus routes etc etc.

Also attached, housing needs survey/Tahg notes.

Note, all from TCLT survey “All of the sites were chosen because they are adjacent to, but outside of the development boundary of the village. This is because there is provision within the MDDC Local Plan to allow development in such locations as an “exception” to normal Local Plan policy in the case of **affordable housing.**”

Questions to TCLT

- 1) Is your scheme likely to go ahead in Silver Street?
- 2) Why has TCLT attended meetings with the Diocese? What are the implications and what was TCLT trying to achieve?
- 3) Is it fair to say that the whole reason the Diocese is looking to sell the Glebe field to a developer is that the TCLT have been involved and tipped them off?

Executive Summary of the Housing Needs Report for Thorverton by Devon Communities Together, Spring 2023

Principal Conclusions

The survey identified a need for at least 19 affordable homes within the next 5 years.

Key findings

Affordability

· The survey found 20 households in housing need who could not afford to buy or rent in the open market. There are 4 affordable homes being provided in the village in November 2023 (2 rented and 2 shared equity). 2 have already been allocated. Of the remaining 2 homes being provided for affordable rent in the Parish, one meets the size profile of the households that have been identified as needing affordable housing which have been factored in to the recommendation.

Tenure

There is a need identified for 9 social rented properties

- A need has been identified for a minimum of 1 unit of affordable rented housing.
- There is a need for 9 low cost home ownership homes (Shared Ownership, Rent to Mortgage or Discount Market Ownership.)

Size of Property Required. A need has been identified for:-

- 8 one or two bedroom properties for singles / couples.
- 4 two bedroom properties for families
- 7 three bedroom properties for families

Other Findings

· 479 surveys were delivered and 146 survey forms were returned initially. In addition there were a further 9 surveys that were received after the closing date,

Thorverton Parish Council

following a reminder being sent to the households on the housing register. These late surveys have also been included in the body of the report. This made a total of 155 responses. The response rate was 32 %.

· 84% (120 responses) of those who answered the question said they would be in favour of a small development of affordable housing for local people and 16% (23 respondents) were against. 12 households did not answer this question.

TAHG

Technical and Site Procurement Group

Draft Script intended for the Public Meeting to be held on 11th April for prior approval by the Steering Group at their meeting on 22 March.

An initial TAHG group commissioned by the Parish Council comprised five people. Four were on the Parish Council plus a village resident, who was involved in the successful affordable housing scheme at Upton Pyne.

One of the members of the group took on the task of identifying potential locations for a scheme for Affordable Housing, and the ones suggested were agreed by the other members of the Group.

This is the Map of the Eleven possible Sites that was sent to MDDC

Housing Enabling and Forward Planning Officer [Slide 1: Map with Spots]

All of the sites were chosen because they are adjacent to, but outside of the development boundary of the village. This is because there is provision within the MDDC Local Plan to allow development in such locations as an “exception” to normal Local Plan policy in the case of affordable housing.

The initial group of five contacted Geoff Pook who had been involved in two completed affordable housing projects in Beer. The group gave Mr Pook a tour of the eleven possible sites, in order to obtain his opinion of them.

Following this, two members of the group did the same tour of the sites with the MDDC Housing Enabling Officer and the Conservation Officer, and informal advice on each of the sites was subsequently given to the group.

A “Steering Group” was then set up.

This group comprised the initial group of five, plus a further seven local residents, who wished to become involved, making a total of twelve. Mr Pook would also be involved, at least for the initial meetings of the group.

Members of the Steering group were also formed into four sub groups which would concentrate on various aspects of the project. One of these groups was the “Technical and Site Procurement” group. [TSP]

The TSP Group carried out an evaluation of all of the eleven sites, and produced a “Site Evaluation Matrix”. The Matrix scored each site [like Amazon, between 1 for poor and 5 for excellent] on the basis of the following aspects

Owner Agreement

Size

Access

Utilities

Thorverton Parish Council

Environment

Planning Positivity

[Slide 2: Site Evaluation Matrix]

The Matrix identifies two sites, which face opposite each other in Silver Street, in the eastern part of the village, as clearly having the highest scores. They also happen to be the only two of the eleven where the site owners [The Church Commissioners] are willing to consider selling the land.

[Slide 3: The Red Line map of the sites prepared by the Church Commissioners]

Initial discussions have been held with the Church Commissioners [CC] by the Steering Group. There is to be a Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] to be signed by both parties, which will give the Steering Group a period of exclusivity for six months to collaborate and agree terms for the sale and purchase of the land. As an integral part of the MoU, there is a plan which shows the extent of the land that the CCs are prepared to release.

The wording of the MoU has already been negotiated and agreed with the CCs, but we are still in the course of agreeing the precise extent of the land that will be on offer on the south side of Silver Street. Depending on the outcome of this, a decision on the land to acquire can be made.

The next step for the TSP Group is to fully investigate the viability of the two sites and, based on the results of this, to agree terms with the CCs.

We have therefore obtained quotations for Topographical and Infrastructure / Services Surveys of both sites and these can be triggered once the Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by both parties.

Outline layouts of the housing for either one, or both, of the sites can then be produced on the basis of this detailed factual information.

Alongside this the TSP Group is also considering how to make provision for all of the various tenures of housing that were identified in the Housing Needs Survey including Discounted Market Sale and Self-Build Homes

Thorverton Parish Council

Resident's Objection Letter

13/3/2006

Re Proposals for a residential development in Thorverton.

I am a resident of Thorverton and will be formally objecting the proposed development of approximately 30 new dwellings in this location.

I would like to start with the fact we are currently working with TCLT to create a development that is considered appropriate to the needs of the residents of Thorverton.

While the need for housing is recognised, this proposal is not sustainable, due to the clear limitations of the local infrastructure and the adverse impacts that it is likely to create, long after Summerfield have collected their money and disappeared into the sunset.

The development appears contrary to the key principles of sustainable development set out in the **UK National Planning Policy Framework**, particularly those in relation to infrastructure capacity, flood risk and highway safety.

Flood Risk and Drainage

Thorverton already experiences poor drainage and difficulties managing surface water, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall.

The introduction of a development of this scale will inevitably increase impermeable surfaces, leading to greater surface water run-off.

Even with the proposed attenuation feature, there is a significant risk that the development will exacerbate localised flooding and serious doubt that this requirement can be satisfied.

In accordance with the principles of the **NPPF**, development should not increase flood risk elsewhere and should ensure that drainage systems are adequate to manage additional runoff. Given the known drainage challenges in Thorverton, there is a serious concern that this requirement cannot be adequately met.

Highway Safety and Traffic Impact

The **NPPF** states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds where there would be an "unacceptable impact on highway safety" or where the **residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe**.

The roads serving Thorverton are narrow and were not designed to accommodate significant increases in traffic and there is a lack of pedestrian infrastructure.

The proposed development of 30 houses could reasonably generate between 60 and 90 additional vehicles, and a severe cumulative impact. This would lead to increased congestion, reduced visibility and heightened risks for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users.

The forecast peak traffic expectation being one vehicle movement every 3-4 minutes is unrealistic.

There is nowhere to put a "potential improved pedestrian and cycle link into the village connecting to local facilities and bus stops" as every road in Thorverton is single lane traffic until you reach Silver St.

Emergency and service vehicle access is already challenged, and increased traffic movements will increase the likelihood of difficulty for these vehicles.

Thorverton Parish Council

The development therefore raises clear concerns regarding highway safety and the suitability of the road network to accommodate the increased demand.

Local Infrastructure and Services

Thorverton Primary School is already at capacity. There are residents who are already required to take their children to another school due to lack of space. The proposed development will inevitably increase the demand for school places, yet there is no space to accommodate additional pupils.

Sustainable development requires that new housing be located where residents have reasonable access to services, facilities and public transport. Thorverton lacks basic supporting infrastructure. There is no local shop, and public transport options are extremely limited. As a result, future residents will be highly dependent on private vehicles for daily needs such as shopping, schooling and commuting, which conflicts with the principles of sustainable development and will further increase traffic pressures.

Precedent for Further Development

Approval of this proposal may also set a precedent for further development in the surrounding area. Once development of this scale is permitted, it may become increasingly difficult to resist additional applications.

Lack of Sustainable Infrastructure

The cumulative effect of inadequate draining, narrow roads, limited public transport and the absence of local amenities clearly indicates that Thorverton lacks the infrastructure necessary to support a development of this scale.

The proposal therefore appears inconsistent with the NFFP's objectives of ensuring developments are located where adequate infrastructure exists or can be provided, and where safe and suitable access can be achieved for all users.

For the reasons outlined – Particularly regarding concerns relating to flood risk, highway safety, inadequate infrastructure and the potential precedent for further development, the proposed development would place an unsustainable burden on the existing infrastructure and community. With a new development already in planning on the North and South side of Silver Street and the high number of properties within the village for sale and not moving. This project is purely for financial gain; it will have a lasting negative effect on the rural landscape of the village and alter the established character of the area.

We therefore oppose this development.

Resident's Suggestion

My attention has just been drawn to an additional meeting of the Parish Council primarily, it seems, to consider the best way to ascertain the views of villagers on the likely proposal for a housing development on the land south of The Glebe. It would seem that this is not a public meeting to discuss the proposal, so my recommendation would be that the Council should first arrange a formal public meeting, advertised with adequate time for people to be aware of it and to come

Thorverton Parish Council

ready with comments. What would be helpful to make this most constructive would be an overview of other plans in development for more housing in the village. Looking at just one plan, however large that might be, might well not give a very good picture of the potential overall impact of expansion of housing in the village.

I could make comments on the proposal now, although I do not get the impression from the agenda item that these are being sought and discussed by Council just yet.

Developer's Email after the Council meeting

Thank you for welcoming us to last night's meeting and please thank the Chair and the rest of the Council too.

I had originally intended it to be about us addressing the Parish Council with the opportunity for wider consultation at the organised event tomorrow. It obviously didn't turn out that way, but I am more than happy to maintain the dialogue with the Parish Council if you think that this is something that might be welcomed. I am happy to drop in to give an update on a semi regular basis or, alternatively, never darken your door again.

Our choice of venue for tomorrow's event was criticised and my offer to hold another event in the Memorial Hall was a genuine one. I think that the Exeter Inn will be fine though and the criticism a little unfair. We are trying to engage positively and accept that people may be unhappy about the proposal, but at present it is no more than a proposal. We will submit an application to Mid Devon District Council and there will be an opportunity for the Parish Council and community to make their views known formally. If the feeling is that another event setting out exactly the same information as was presented last night and on Thursday is useful, then I am happy to consider something. I would argue that there is ample opportunity for residents to make their views known through the consultation tomorrow, the website that will be live from tomorrow and the formal planning application process.

The underlying context for our proposal is a shortfall in both market and affordable housing nationally and locally. There is no moratorium on housing beyond what the recent housing needs survey stated as seemed to be the inference from one parish councillor. The local housing needs survey highlighted one aspect of housing requirement. As set out last night, the housing requirement within Mid Devon (for market and affordable homes) is currently nowhere near being met. Our proposal is also guided by national and local planning policy which is supportive; this is backed up by the pre-application advice that we have received from Mid Devon District Council. Overwhelmingly though the proposal is guided by providing homes for people to live in as being generally 'a good thing'. Whilst we are a private business, housing being provided by developers acting in the market seeking to make a profit is how the majority of homes in this country are delivered. I make no apology for this.

Thorverton Parish Council

I would urge the Parish Council and the committee to use at least some of their energy on engaging with the proposal, putting any in principle objections to one side and imagining where they might be able to influence the development (importantly in terms of local infrastructure perhaps I would argue) on a hypothetical 'what if' basis.

I understand that a proposal put forward, when we were there last night, was for the Parish Council to undertake another local survey, I would be very wary of the potential confirmation bias that may result from such an exercise. As I set out last night, when one scratches the surface of any community, a significant proportion actually support the provision of more houses, but do not feel comfortable stating this publicly. Many are also ambivalent. Unfortunately (for us as housebuilders and also for those who might like the homes) those who have the time and inclination to object are not shy in making their views known. Ultimately, there is a planning system in place to arbitrate between our case and the case of those who object. This planning system allows us to make an application and also allows those who wish to comment a platform to make their views known. We will work towards submitting an application within the stated timelines and I would be grateful if you can let me know the Council's thoughts on the above.

Developer's Email after the consultation day

The event went much as expected yesterday. Mostly objection and some support, some resignation/acceptance and some positive comments on what the proposal could help with in terms of local infrastructure.

The pub was a perfect venue in the end. Plenty of room.

Just to let you have the website for people to make comments (comments will be anonymised). The Parish Council may wish to signpost this for people who were unable to make it yesterday.

www.summerfield.co.uk/thorverton

Alternatively, people can email consultation@summerfield.co.uk.

Thorverton School Head's email

Thanks for the invite to the meeting yesterday, it was helpful to get a steer of what the proposed development will look like (and the strength of feeling amongst the local community!). The chap from the developers yesterday suggested that any interested parties should share their feedback with the parish, local and county council. I would really appreciate it if you could share the statement below with the relevant members of the parish, local and county councils, so that stakeholders and decision-makers are aware of the views of the school. Unfortunately, I am unlikely to be able to attend the meeting tomorrow, but I would be happy to meet at an alternative time if it would be helpful.

thorvertonpc@gmail.com

www.thorvertonparishcouncil.org.uk

Thorverton Parish Council

Simon, I hope you do not mind me copying you into this email. The developers advised that we share our views with the local authority too - if there is a more appropriate person for this to be shared with, please can you either pass it onto them, or let me know who I need to send it to and I can do so if easier.

Thorverton C of E Primary School views on proposed housing developments in Thorverton - impact statement

As a school, we are currently significantly oversubscribed. We have a PAN of 15 children per year group, but pupil numbers in most year groups are well above this figure. Our calculated capacity is 105 pupils; however, we currently have 112 pupils on roll. There are two children who currently live in the village who have applied for places at the school but whom we have not been able to accommodate, and a further child who is moving to the area in the summer who has also been unsuccessful. We have also received 16 first-choice applications for the Reception intake in September 2026.

We have been in regular contact with the Local Authority over the last four years to advise that our current building capacity is not sufficient for the number of pupils we already have on roll, let alone the anticipated increase in pupil numbers arising from proposed housing developments. Five years ago, we were a three-class school with around 80 pupils. Since that time, pupil numbers have increased significantly, but no additional capital funding has been provided to expand the school's accommodation. The only reason we currently have a fourth teaching space is because we created a small classroom ourselves using core funding, by combining an intervention space, library area and store cupboard. This room, along with one of the other classrooms in the school, is significantly smaller than Department for Education guidance recommends.

DfE design guidance (BB103) indicates that a typical classroom for 30 pupils should be approximately 55–62 m², equating to around 1.8–2.1 m² per pupil. Two of the school's classrooms measure only 38 m² and 42 m². With in excess of 30 pupils in these rooms, this equates to approximately 1.27 m² and 1.4 m² per pupil respectively, which is substantially below national guidance. Once furniture, teaching resources and circulation space are accounted for, these rooms provide very limited space for movement, group work, practical activities and effective behaviour management. The physical constraints of these classrooms already present challenges in delivering the curriculum effectively.

The school is therefore already operating beyond its intended capacity, with accommodation that falls below recommended space standards in two teaching rooms. Further housing development within the parish will inevitably place additional pressure on an already constrained educational infrastructure unless suitable expansion is provided. It is therefore essential that any Section 106 contribution properly reflects the cumulative impact of both existing and proposed developments on local school capacity and provides sufficient funding to deliver at least one additional full-size classroom.

Thorverton Parish Council

To be clear, we are not opposed to development taking place and fully recognise the need for additional housing within the local area and the benefits this would bring. With appropriate building capacity, we would be more than willing to accommodate additional pupils and support the growth of the community. However, without investment in the school's physical infrastructure, it will simply not be possible to meet the increased demand that would arise from this development alongside the recently approved development of approximately 20 properties within the parish.

The Local Authority has a statutory duty under **Education Act 1996** to ensure that sufficient school places are available for children in its area, and it is therefore important that education infrastructure is properly considered and funded alongside new housing development.

Cllr Crang's email on Survey Methods

I wonder if there is an alternative to paper based survey of Parishioners.

Prior to meeting on Monday, does anyone have experience of Survey Monkey or similar? And, Jim, the Clerk does have the Electoral Roll for the Parish?

On-line would be OK for most people and for us provided we know that no one is making multiple responses.