

2025

Thurston Area Transport Plan





KEY

- Area boundary
- Built up areas
- Railway station

The geographic area has been selected because it provides more opportunities for short trips to key destinations via active travel modes, therefore, balancing the demand on the transport network in the area.

Introduction

The three villages of Thurston, Woolpit and Elmswell are located in the west of the district of Mid Suffolk. The plan area shown on page 2 has a total population of 9,365 residents¹.

This area has seen a lot of growth over the last decade, particularly in Thurston. Growth is expected to continue in this area in the coming years with further large-scale developments planned to the southeast near Woolpit.

The area includes a variable network of walking, wheeling and cycling routes. The provision is to a higher standard in the more modern parts of the villages such as the connections to new housing developments and where National Cycle Routes 51 and 13 pass through. However, separation and accessibility issues exist in parts to key services and facilities, particularly to the railway stations in Elmswell and Thurston, the doctors' surgery in Woolpit and the education provision in Thurston.

There is a limited bus service provision connecting surrounding communities and other urban areas to Bury St Edmunds, often only hourly services. There are fewer bus services connecting the communities of Thurston, Elmswell and Woolpit to each other. The railway stations at Elmswell and Thurston are on the Ipswich-Ely line with regular connectivity to Ipswich, Peterborough, Ely, Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge with hourly / two hourly services.



Statistics for the Thurston transport plan area

Thurston
population

9,365

residents



16%

of people
are 15 years old
or younger

26%

of people
are over the
age of 65



46%

of households are
deprived in one or
more dimensions



Travel patterns

9%

of households
don't own a
vehicle



38%

of people travel
less than 5km
to work



5%

of people
walk, wheel or
cycle to work



30%

of people
work mainly
from home



School
travel



13%

In Thurston 13%
of school children
cycle to school.

Less than

5%

Less than 5% of
school children
cycle to school
in Elmswell and
Woolpit.²

Less than

1%



take the bus

Less than

2%



take the train



59%



drive a car or van to work

Reasons for change



Decarbonisation of Transport

In the Thurston area, 8% of commuters travel to work by walking, wheeling and cycling or take the bus or train. In order to meet Suffolk's pathway to net zero, the proportion of commuter trips across Suffolk undertaken by these modes should rise to 35%³. Furthermore, the government targets half of all journeys to be undertaken by active travel modes in towns across the country⁴. Existing infrastructure and sustainable transport services in the Thurston area restrict people's sustainable travel options.



Health, Wellbeing and Social Inclusion

In the Thurston area lack of good quality public transport services and infrastructure to support walking, wheeling and cycling hinders residents access to services and facilities and can cause social exclusion⁵. Also, increasing physical activity is linked to improved mental and physical health outcomes at all stages of life and prevention of chronic and acute health conditions.





A Strong, Sustainable and Fair Economy

Further growth in the area is unlikely to be sustainable unless issues on the transport network can be mitigated. The emphasis will be on a reduction in demand through a shift to sustainable and high-occupancy modes, though capacity improvements may be acceptable if no alternatives provide sufficient mitigation.



Creating Better Places

There are opportunities to enhance how people interact with the villages of Thurston, Elmswell and Woolpit. Improved provision for walking, wheeling and cycling in each village to key services and facilities as well as connections between the villages. This will help to create healthier, more attractive and more accessible streets. The villages existing public rights of way network can help to provide access to green space.



Enable active travel to be the default choice for shorter trips

Improve bus punctuality and reliability

Improve the integration of modes

Promote transport infrastructure that unlocks inclusive economic growth

Summary of objectives

The Thurston Area Transport Plan will support the development of sustainable travel options for the area's residents and visitors, so they become more attractive and realistic choices for everyone.



OBJECTIVE

Enable active travel to be the default choice for shorter trips

In the Thurston area more than 90% of households have access to a motor vehicle and 38% of residents commute less than 5km to work. Of those commuters, only 12% travel by walking, wheeling or cycling¹. The evidence suggests that there is potential to increase the number of commuters travelling actively or sustainably to their workplace.

We will encourage walking and cycling trips between key services and facilities such as the railway stations, schools, doctors' surgery, residential areas and employment areas through improvements to routes such as the cycle link from Elmswell to Woolpit.


We will support improvements to the National Cycle Network 51 and 13 connecting to Bury St Edmunds and other nearby settlements.


We also support improvements to routes to schools so that children are able to walk, wheel and cycle safely.







KEY

Area boundary

Built up areas

Railway station

Active travel routes

OBJECTIVE

Improve bus punctuality and reliability

A range of bus services operate in the Thurston area including connections to surrounding villages and the urban areas of Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket. The services connect local communities, however, the frequency of the service is limited and tied to school hours. A demand responsive service also links passengers in the Thurston area to surrounding urban areas.

We will support opportunities to enhance bus service provision where long-term viability can be identified such as outside of school hours and in the school holidays.

We will continue to promote bus travel as a more sustainable way of connecting local communities as we transition away from diesel buses to our Zero Emissions Bus Plan. This move will help alleviate local air quality issues, particularly around schools at drop off and pick up times.



OBJECTIVE

Improve the integration of modes

We will explore opportunities to combine different modes of transport in and around the Thurston area. We will look to maximise ease and efficiency for users in terms of comfort, safety, accessibility and convenience.

The majority of households in Thurston and Elmswell are within a mile of a railway station which supports active travel links to the stations.

We will continue to work with Mid Suffolk District Council and Network Rail to deliver step free access to reach platform two (to Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge) at Thurston railway station.

At both stations we support the need for electric vehicle charging facilities as well as more covered and secure cycling parking.

There is also a need to review car parking at the railway stations as overflow parking is happening on village / residential roads.



OBJECTIVE

Promote transport infrastructure that unlocks inclusive economic growth

The Thurston area has seen considerable growth in recent years as a result of the area having good transport links, with access to the A14 and railway stations in Thurston and Elmswell on the Ipswich to Cambridge / Peterborough line.

Through the Local Transport Plan, the priority is to mitigate the impact of new developments through careful consideration with the Local Planning Authority over spatial planning and a shift to active and sustainable modes. Analysis of forecast growth on the transport network indicates that the following junctions are likely to require additional capacity as a result of new developments:

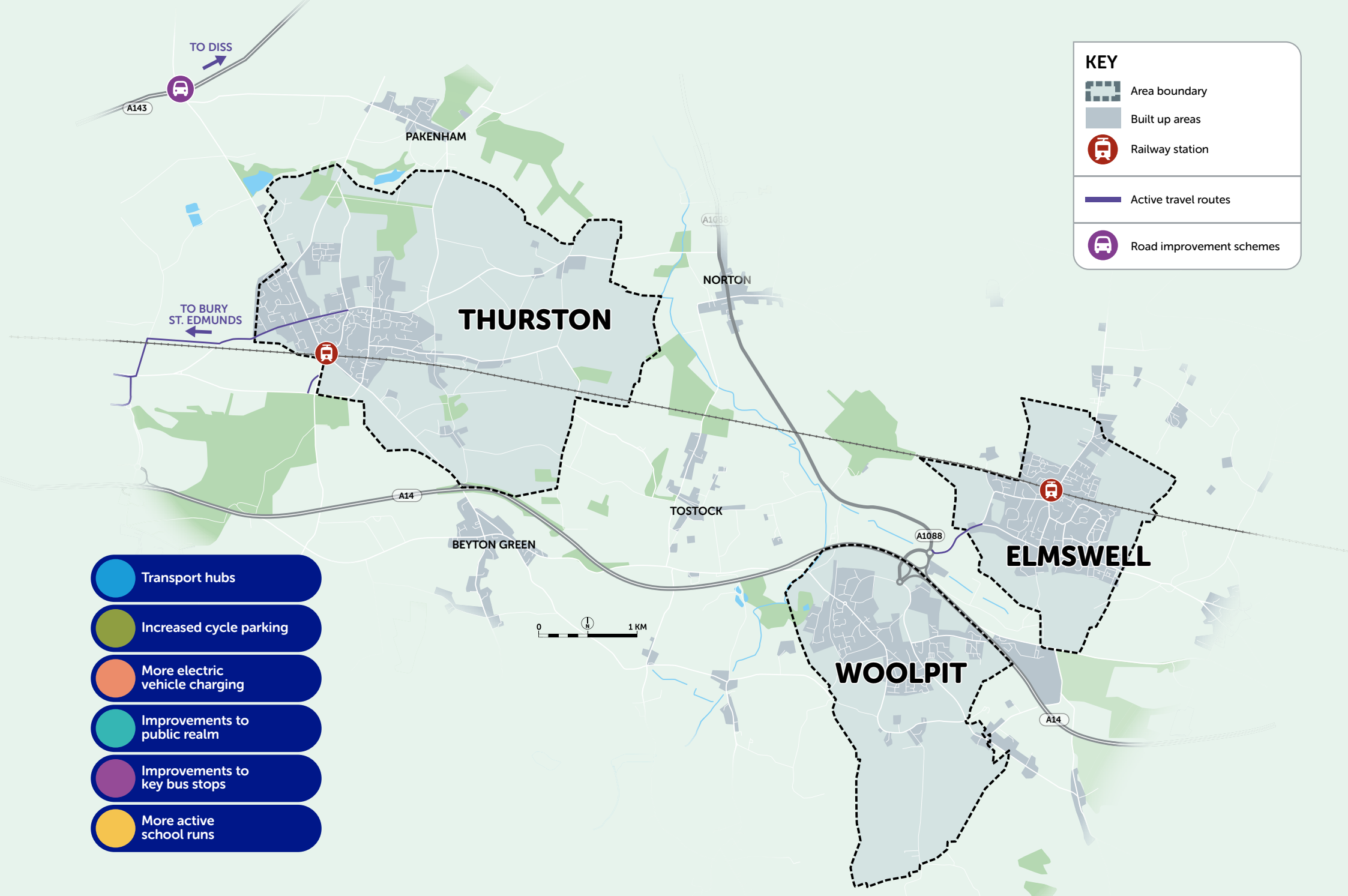
- A143 Bunbury Arms junction
- New Road/Beyton Road junction, Fishwick Corner junction



Our plans for the Thurston area

The development of the Area Transport Plan has identified a number of areas to improve sustainable travel movements. These areas, together with improvements to the wider public realm, offer the opportunity for Thurston to meet the ongoing and future needs of its population, and those who visit and work in the area.





KEY

- Area boundary
- Built up areas
- Railway station
- Active travel routes
- Road improvement schemes

- Transport hubs
- Increased cycle parking
- More electric vehicle charging
- Improvements to public realm
- Improvements to key bus stops
- More active school runs

Implementation plan

The table below indicates the county council's priorities for investment over the next five years including schemes funded through the county council's budgets, government funding and developer funding. The table does not include schemes delivered by 3rd parties:

Location	Description	Indicative Capital Investment
Thurston	A143 Bunbury Arms capacity improvements	£700,000

References

1. Office for National Statistics, Census Data (2021)
www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/build/
2. Office for National Statistics, Census Data (2011)
[Propensity to Cycle Tool - Suffolk \(pct.bike\)](#)
3. Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan
<https://www.greensuffolk.org/>
4. Gear Change. A bold vision for cycling and walking
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/>
5. Transport Related Social Exclusion in England
www.transportforthenorth.com

Thank you to Suffolk's District and Borough Councils and Town and Parish Councils who have provided photos for the Area Transport Plans.

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