

BOXTED PARISH PLAN
Incorporating
The
VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT



St Peters Church was completed sometime between 1090 and 1130.



Boxted Hall, 11th Century - Domesday



Rivers Hall, 11th century

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Introduction

1.0 Scope

This Village Design Statement covers the Parish of Boxted, an area of 3177 acres, the second largest parish in Essex. The population at the 2001 census was 1361.

1.1 The Statement's purpose is to:

Represent the views of the villagers.

Influence, but not prevent development.

Provide guidance to developers and property owners.

Protect rural locations, foot paths and bridle ways.

Protect and improve open spaces and the street scene.

Promote the use of sympathetic building designs and appropriate materials.

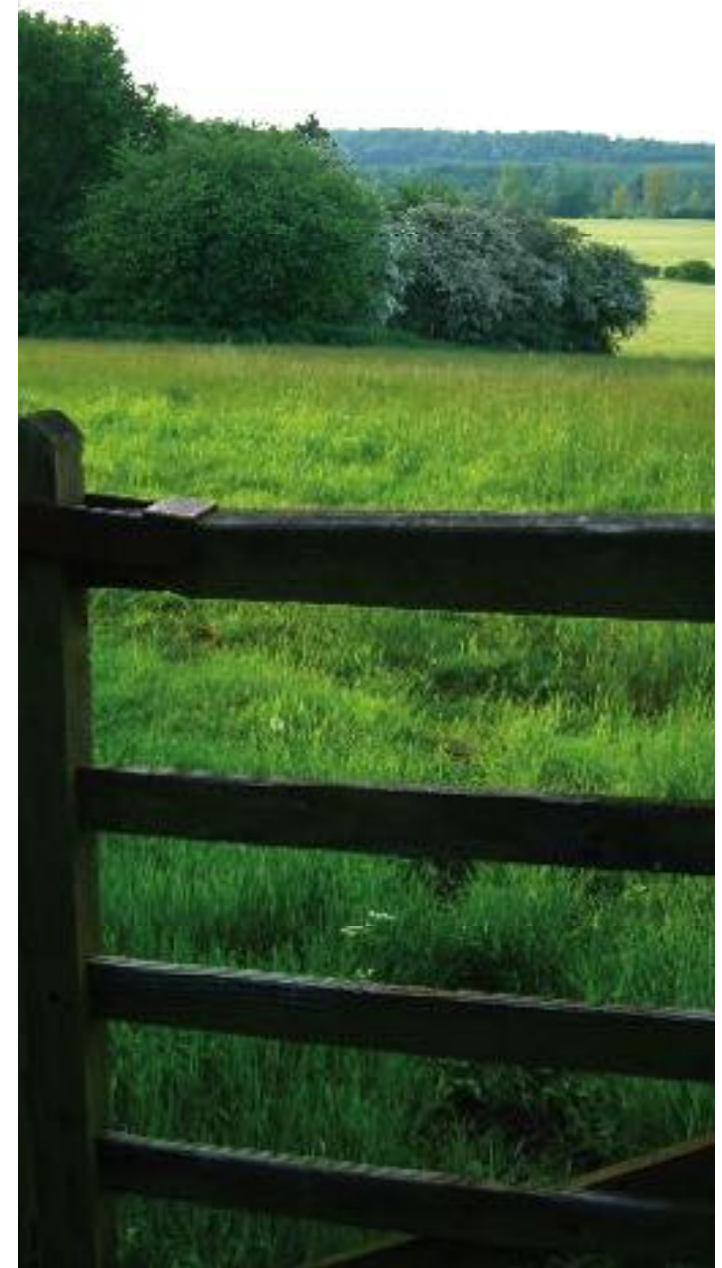
Ensure the preservation of what the villagers consider to be the valued qualities and character of the Parish.

To add to the quality of life of villagers.

Form part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework for Colchester.

Finally, give guidance to Colchester Borough Council in the determination of planning applications in Boxted.

The authors of this Plan feel strongly that once the community has adopted this plan, CBC should formally adopt it as a planning Guidance Note. Once adopted, the VDS, reflecting Boxted residents' views, will be a material consideration when determining planning applications in the parish.



Much of Boxted still remains farm land.

1.2 What residents told us about Boxted

The VDS Committee organised a questionnaire, public information meetings and informal discussions. The most frequent “best” and “worst” comments are set out below.

WHAT RESIDENTS WANTED:

Traditional two storey housing in keeping with surroundings

Traffic calming by means of “Slow Down” signs

Further improvements to footpaths along Straight Road

Off street parking

A shop/post office and a pub

Effective controls on existing industry

WHAT RESIDENTS DID NOT WANT:

Apartments and flats

Social housing of any significance

New build housing in the Workhouse Hill and Boxted Church areas

Any more industry

Intrusive signage, lighting, gates and fences

Creeping urbanisation



Residents would like a shop/post office and a pub (The Wig & Fidgett closed in 2007).

1.3 Consultation

The initial meeting instigated by the Parish Council was held in August 2006 and a committee to act as the Steering Group was subsequently elected.

Regular meetings were held, and villagers advised of progress in the Village News section of the Essex County Standard.

A photographic survey and publicity display was held at the village Fete in July 2007 and the Village Design Questionnaire was distributed and collected by volunteers in late 2007. The response of over 60% was analysed, and this is the basis of the villagers' views represented in this document.

The first draft of the Statement was presented at the AGM in May 2008 and the draft circulated to Boxted Parish Council and Colchester Borough Council in November 2008, and again in March 2009. Comments were incorporated in the final report.

1.4 Planning Policy highlights

We have reviewed the following Colchester Borough Council (CBC) documents for policy details that have importance to Boxted.

There are a number of saved Local Plan policies that are relevant to the Boxted integrated Parish Plan and Village Design Statement. These include policies CO2 Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, C05 Habitats, CO7 Protected Lanes, EMP5 Isolated Industrial Complexes (Hill Farm Rural Business Site), EMP6 Boxted Straight Road Special Policy Area and UEA1 Character of Conservation Areas. Full details of these policies are set out in Appendix A

Over time Colchester's Adopted Local Plan (2004) will be replaced with a suite of new documents that will make up the Local Development Framework. The first of these, the Core Strategy has already been adopted following a public examination in 2008. The Core Strategy (CS) sets the strategic policy framework up to 2021 (2023 for housing) and the main policy areas in the CS of interest to Boxted are:

H1 – Housing Deliver & H2 Housing Density

Policy H1 states that the majority of the 19,000 new homes will be delivered in the 5 main Regeneration and Growth Areas identified around urban Colchester by 2023. Table H1 accompanying Policy H1 sets out housing provision for Colchester and the surrounding towns and villages and indicates that all the small villages and hamlets such as Boxted collectively will have to accommodate limited growth i.e. 435 homes by 2021.

Policy H2 states that the Council will seek housing densities that enhance local character and optimise the capacity of accessible locations. A context appraisal will identify the accessibility of an area and its local character which will help inform an appropriate density Table H2a shows that the indicative housing density for villages across the Borough which tend to be less accessible should be between 30 - 40 dwellings/hectare.

H3 – Housing Diversity

This policy's aim is to ensure that a range of housing types and

tenures are delivered to create inclusive and sustainable communities. Policy H3 states that the mix of housing should be informed by an appraisal of community context and housing need. Table H3a identifies the mix of housing types to be delivered relative to accessibility. This suggests that areas such as Boxted where access is generally lower than urban Colchester is generally more suitable for houses rather than flats

H4 –Affordable Housing.

This states that the Council will be seeking to secure 35% of all new development as affordable housing. In villages affordable housing will be required to be delivered as part of housing developments of 3 or more dwellings. Developments below these



The fields of Old Farm, part of the "green break" between Boxted and Colchester.

thresholds will be expected to provide a financial contribution. In villages, affordable housing developments will be supported on rural exception sites adjacent to village settlement boundaries where a local need is demonstrated.

CE1 Centres & Employment Classification and Hierarchy;
CE2a Local Centres & CE3 Employment Zones
The Core Strategy sets out a Centres & Employment Classification and Hierarchy. Policy CE1 supports the provision of small scale developments such as small shops, recreation and or tourism businesses in countryside locations which have low travel needs and low impacts and which support rural economies. Policy CE2c encourages the provision of local shops to meet local needs. A number of Local Employment Sites will be identified to support small and medium local and rural businesses that promote and provide rural enterprise and local employment as highlighted in Policy CE3.

Colchester Core Strategy Policy ENV1 states that
“The Borough Council will conserve and enhance Colchester’s natural and historic environment, countryside ...Developments that have an adverse impact on Dedham Vale AONB will not be supported. Unallocated green field land outside of settlement boundaries will be protected... development will be strictly controlled to conserve the environmental assets and open character”.

Policy TA1 - Transport and Accessibility – the key aims are “to improve accessibility by enhancing sustainable transport links and encouraging development that reduces the need for travel.”

Policy TA2 - Walking and Cycling - The key aims are “to promote walking and cycling ... and make them more attractive, direct and safe.”

Policy TA 3 - Public Transport - “Demand responsive (bus) services will also be promoted to help rural communities access their needs.”

Rural Communities- the Core Strategy PDP makes it clear that the villages in the Borough are unlikely to experience significant development during the Plan period.



Open stretches of countryside should be protected

Of major importance to our document is the restriction of unsuitable development beyond settlement boundaries to protect open stretches of countryside around and between settlements, prevent coalescence, retain settlement identity, and protect landscape character.

The Planning Policy highlights above are considered essential if Boxted is to be kept separate from Colchester, and village life preserved and enhanced. These principles as set out in the CS have been accepted as working assumptions through this document, and we hope that these aims will be kept at the forefront of CBC planning for the future of Boxted.

Colchester Borough Council is also currently preparing a new suite of Development Policies and Site Allocations Development

Plan Documents as part of the LDF along with a new Proposals Map. The Development Policies will eventually replace the saved Local Plan policies once they have undergone an Examination in Public in the spring 2010 and formally adopted. The Council is also preparing new Supplementary Planning Documents for the Provision of Communities Facilities, Backland and Infill Development and Affordable Housing. Essex County Council is also revising the Car Parking standards. All these documents once formally adopted will make up the new LDF following formal adoption and will be relevant when determining planning applications affecting Boxted in the future. Appendix B sets out the Development Policies and shows which Saved Local Plan Policy they will replace.



Boxted is within the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

1.5 Major Design Guidance

VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT.

The application of Local Plan Policies should not be relaxed. Any new development needs to be in accordance with Local Plan and Core Strategy (refer to table 1).

The A12 should be regarded as the barrier to development from Colchester, and only exceptional infill should be allowed, as outlined in the Core Strategy.

Any new build should be confined to the village envelope, but not within the conservation area surrounding the church, but possibly along Straight Road.

All new build should be in keeping with the immediate neighbourhood.

Housing should be a mix of detached or semi-detached and should not exceed 2 storeys. New build housing should be in keeping with their surroundings and use traditional high quality materials such as brick, tiles, and where appropriate, timber framing and cladding, but only where it is in keeping.

Off street parking should be provided.

Any development of the old school site adjacent to Boxted Church must be in keeping with the surroundings, be low density, not overlook or detract from the church and the area used for car parking for church users should be retained.

Any affordable housing should be limited in numbers and developed in keeping with surrounding properties.

Existing and new planning policies should be maintained and enforced to protect village life. Retrospective planning permissions should not be granted unless there is sufficient reason, and that reason is acceptable to Boxted Parish Council.

No expansion of existing businesses should be permitted unless there is a case for increased employment for villagers, some other community benefit is provided to the village and the business

carries out an environmental impact assessment, which would be available to the public.

The Borough should ensure that Planning, Health and Safety and Environmental controls are enforced by them or other Agencies.

Agricultural land surrounding the village should be conserved from inappropriate development, or development that impacts negatively on the character and the local environment, in accordance with Policy ENV2.

Traffic calming should be improved along Straight Road and at the entrance to the village on Dedham Road by means of more prominent “Slow Down” signs, and a speed operated flashing sign at the Mill Road entry on Straight Road.

PARISH PLAN

A 7.5 tonne weight limit, except for access, should be imposed at the Straight Road/Queen’s Head Road junction and at the Gun Hill, Langham entry towards Boxted. The Parish Council, CBC and other bodies should work together to see if the Sports and Social Club could be redeveloped so as to incorporate an extended indoor and outdoor sports centre, the Pre-School and a licensed bar open and welcoming to all.

Encouragement should be given to anyone who wishes to open a village shop and/or post office, and also a pub, if they could be run as going concerns.

As set out in the Core Strategy, any new development within the village should contribute to the provision of community facilities, where a local need has been identified in the VDS/Parish Plan.



The rural tranquility of Boxted is much appreciated by villagers.

2. The Village

A BRIEF HISTORY

Boxted was and remains an agricultural area, and dates from pre-historic times. Over the millennia it has been settled by the Romans, Jutes, Saxons and Normans. Some evidence remains.

Agriculture continues to be an important part of Boxted life with fewer but larger farms. Arable and fruit farming predominates. Going back to the eleventh century, cultivation was centred to the northwest and north-east of the parish where the Boxted Hall and Rivers Hall estates came to exist. Clearing of woodland had begun by then and the area converted to heath by 1325 such that most of the area was available for farming. Mixed farming was carried out for the following few hundred years, much of it by tenanted farmers.

Meanwhile most of the southern area of the parish remained heath (Boxted Heath) but there was usage for pasturing sheep and cattle and for obtaining turf and clay for cottage maintenance.

A significant development that continues to influence the agricultural structure of the village was the purchase in 1906 by the Salvation Army of Priory Farm and 400 acres of land, much of it former heath-land, for a land settlement scheme. These holdings had between 4½ and 7 acres of land and each was provided with a new (usually semi-detached) cottage. From the 1950's onwards, holdings were largely sold to the sitting tenants.

Meanwhile the mixed farming continued elsewhere and from the mid 1920's onwards, market gardening and fruit farming became established. Poultry houses were established and one such business continues in Straight Road. Hill House Farm specialised in fruit but the extensive orchards in the parish were largely replaced as a consequence of the Common Agricultural Policy.

An orchard mainly of walnut continues to exist between Straight Road and Wet Lane and the packing sheds associated with the



Most of the arable land in Boxted is listed grade 2.

Hill Farm operation now form the basis for the Boxted industrial area next to Hill House.

Village facilities are limited today; although there were 7 pubs the last, The Wig and Fidgett, closed in 2007. There is no shop or post office, the last having closed at the end of the 20th century.

Some commercial ventures have developed, mainly along Straight Road and at Boxted Cross industrial area. Most of the village is now housing, with a significant proportion of older residents.

2.1 Geography

The Village of Boxted lies 5 miles north of Colchester. The Parish covers 3177 acres and is bounded on the north by the River Stour, and to the south by Salary Brook, a tributary of the River Colne. The west and east boundaries lie against the parishes of Great Horkesley and Langham respectively. The overall key landscape characteristics of the area are:

- Sloping side to the Stour valley
- Farmland plateau
- Small Farmsteads and Halls
- Minor roads and narrow lanes

-Sense of tranquility away from road network
There are also Local Wildlife Sites (formally SINCS) of which the relevant are Boxted Great wood and Black Brook, between Boxted and Langham.

The entire land area within the parish boundary to the north of Mill Road and Chapel Road was within the now superceded Countryside Conservation area, including the area north of Church Road/Cooks Hill which comes within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Countryside around villages is now protected by policy ENV1. There are relatively small but



Fig 1. Boxted lies about five miles north of Colchester.

important areas set aside for nature conservation, and Cage Lane is a Protected Lane of historic and/or landscape value.

The area close to Boxted Church overlooks the Stour Valley, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is an area that should be preserved.

The A12 dual carriageway forms a barrier to future expansion from Colchester towards Boxted, and this document will make clear our agreement with the Local Development Framework (LDF) that this barrier to large scale development should be maintained.

No major roads pass through the village. However the narrow roads, particularly Langham Road, Langham Lane, Straight Road and Queen's Head Road have become commuter "rat runs", and these routes are being increasingly used by HGVs which are too big for these old and narrow lanes.



The village Primary School at Boxted Cross.

The LDF makes a comment in the section titled "Road Network Improvements" concerning "right vehicles for the right roads", which is not the case at present. Currently we have "the wrong vehicles for the wrong roads"

2.2 Population centres

Boxted has two recognised village centres, Church Street and The Cross, in effect a crossroads. At The Cross or close by there is the school, Village Hall and Sports and Social Club, the last two located on King George's playing field.



Boxted Cross.

The areas along Straight Road, Dedham Road and near The Cross have significant housing, but little space remains for future development apart from infilling, unless agricultural land is developed or brown field sites redeveloped.

The area known as Boxted Church Street has limited housing stock and little prospect for development, apart from the limited disused primary school site. The Grade 1 Norman Church will impose restrictions on any development.

The areas comprising Wet Lane, Green Lane and Workhouse Hill have had some infill development, but there is again little room for more housing.

The remainder of the housing stock is spread across the village, and again there seems little space for future development unless brown field sites are used, or planning restrictions relaxed.

It is important that any future and very limited development be allowed only within the existing village envelope.



Boxted Church Street.

2.3 Boxted Parish with Village envelopes.

Colchester Local Plan 2004

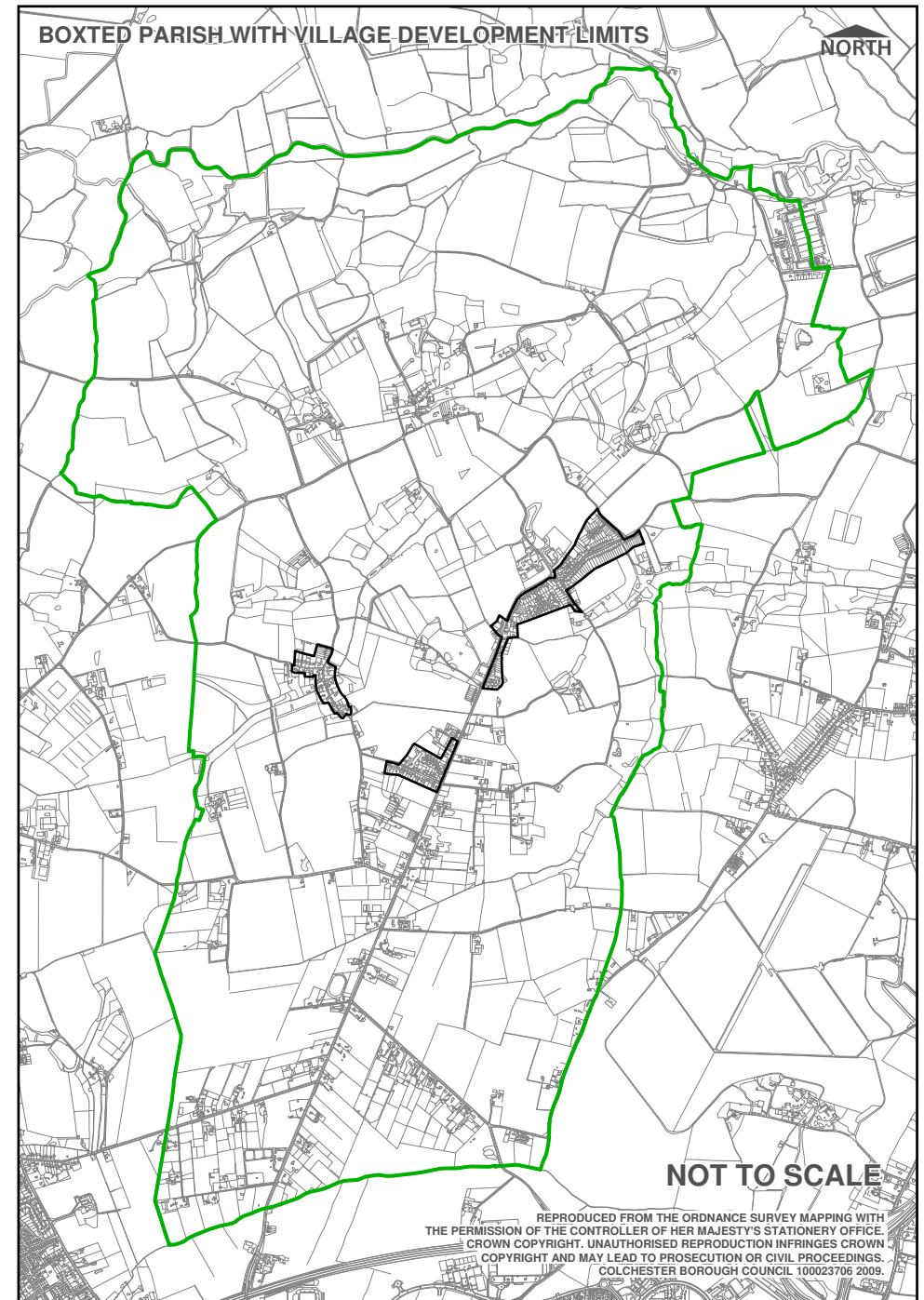


Fig. 2, Map of Village envelope

2.4 Colchester Planning Policy

Until recently the Adopted Review Colchester Local Plan 2004 set the Planning Policy framework to guide development across the Borough. Policies in the Adopted Local Plan affecting Boxted Parish were displayed to parish residents in the village hall at the 2007 summer fete and for several weeks after. Since 2004 following a national review of planning and the introduction of new legislation Colchester Borough Council started work on the development of a new Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy has been published following 3 stages of public consultation and was subject to an Examination in Public in 2008. It was adopted in December 2008 and sets the strategic planning framework for the Borough up to 2021. The Core Strategy contains a number of policies that relate particularly to rural communities and villages such as Boxted. In addition, a number of Adopted Local Plan policies have been saved and together these will be used in conjunction with new Core Strategy policies to determine planning applications in the future.

In outline the parish is split into three strictly defined envelopes (figure 2);

- 1) Properties having access from Workhouse Hill, Wet Lane and part of Green Lane;
- 2) Properties to the north and south of Boxted Cross with access from Straight Road and Dedham Road (two non-contiguous areas);
- 3) Properties surrounding St Peter's Church within the "Boxted Conservation Area".

The majority of properties with access from Straight Road south of Mill road/Chapel Road, plus those in Old House Lane, Queen's Head Road and Horkesley Road falls within the area currently classed as the Straight Road 'Special Policy Area.' The Hill Farm Business site also has a separate Rural Business Site Zoning. As discussed in section 1.4 these designations will be superseded by adopted Core Strategy policies and new

Development Policies once these are also adopted.

Extracts from the above policies are set out in Appendix 1.

Colchester Borough Council is producing their new Local Development Policy. The Core Strategy has already been adopted following extensive public consultation and independent scrutiny at an Examination in Public in 2008. The LDF will plan, manage and monitor change future growth in the Borough up to 2021 (2023 for housing). The Core Strategy is available on the Council's website at www.colchester.gov.uk and contains proposals relating particularly to rural communities which include villages in the Borough like Boxted.

The Core Strategy document does contain specific references to development within the villages in policy ENV2 – Rural Communities as follows:

"The Borough Council will enhance the vitality of rural communities by supporting appropriate development of infill sites and previously developed land (PDL) within the settlement development boundaries of villages. The design and construction of new village development must be high quality in all respects, including design, sustainability and compatibility with the distinctive character of the locality. Development should also contribute to the local community through the provision of relevant community needs such as affordable housing, open space, local employment, and community facilities. Outside village boundaries, the Council will favourably consider small-scale rural business schemes that are appropriate to local employment needs, minimise negative environmental impacts, and harmonise with the local character and surrounding natural environment. Development outside but contiguous to village envelope boundaries may be supported where it constitutes an exception to meet identified local affordable housing needs. Towns and villages are encouraged to plan for the specific needs of their communities by developing Parish Plans and Village Design Statements for adoption as guidance."

Under the “Management Growth Pressures” section, the Core Strategy on Page 23 identifies the need to preserve countryside areas with strategic green gaps between settlements. Under

“Improving Accessibility” it recognises the shortage of local shops etc. and the need for improved access via transport services.



Single track roads abound in Boxted

2.5 Building Styles and Designs

The village has no common architectural style or theme and has a wide variety of styles and designs of house building. These reflect the historical span of construction from Sangers which originally dates from 1280 to current builds. Additionally there is considerable variety of size extending from the 3 storey flats as at White Arch Place to large manor houses such as Boxted Hall and Rivers Hall. Most housing is privately owned although there is social housing such as that in Straight Road and a few remaining properties in council ownership.

Most housing whether new or historic is of two storeys although



Songers Cottage (1280): the oldest timber-framed building in Essex.

in particular there are bungalows in Dedham Road (of council origin) and in Hobbs Drive. The character of the village is enhanced by a series of thatched cottages dotted around the village such as Songers in Cage Lane, also Medlars and Holly Cottage in Straight Road, a number of thatched cottages in Ellis Road and others along Church Street.

A number of historic houses such as Aubrey's Cottages are centred on the church in Church Street. The Wheelwright's House and the old bakery exist close to Boxted Cross and represent the second original focal area of the village. There are



The four cottages of Aubrey's are formed from 15th Century houses.

other interesting old properties scattered around the village such as Harbutts and Wenlocks in Cage Lane dating from Tudor times, Thatchers and Went (now the Thatched Cottage) in Mill Road, and Oak Cottage in Chapel Road. There are a number of large distinctive properties within the village boundary such as Cheshunts at the end of Church Street, Hill House on Carter's Hill, Boxted House and Pond House, all with their distinctive styles.

What was originally council housing was built post war near Boxted Cross and private housing was built such as in Hobbs Drive and East Side. These are typical urban-type twentieth century housing. More recently, building has been mainly in-fill such as on the car-park area of Boxted Cross Inn (now a private house) and along Straight Road.



Parsonage Farm on Carters Hill

2.6 Roads and ancillary furniture

The road network around and through Boxted is formed by the old country lanes which have changed little since being established for farm traffic.

The heavily used roads are Straight Road, Langham Road, Langham Lane and Queen's Head Road which form the access routes to Colchester, Dedham and to the A12 and A134 roads. As private car usage is so prevalent, due in part to the restricted bus service (see later), road usage is heavy at rush hour times. The roads are increasingly used as commuter routes to Severalls Business Park and to the Hospital.

Of further concern is the increasing use of the village's



Boxted Straight Road connects Boxted Cross to Myland, Colchester.

unsuitable roads by HGVs taking short cuts to and from the A12 to the A134. The re-development of the Hill Farm industrial area at The Cross will lead to further problems with access to the site via a difficult junction. The proximity of the primary school which at the start and finish of the school day has its own traffic and parking problems will be compounded by HGVs accessing the Hill Farm industrial site. Indeed the illuminated bollards in the middle of Carter's Hill at the junction with Straight Road have been regularly knocked over in recent months.

The use of satellite navigation systems is routing HGVs down unsuitable lanes, some of which are very narrow or dead ends. This is causing damage to road surfaces and verges.

It will be interesting to see the effect on local roads of the new football stadium. Some parking restrictions are imposed on match days, but there is no doubt that traffic will increase on the Northern Approach Road and through Boxted until the proposed A 12 junction opens in perhaps 3 years time.

Speed limits, particularly on Straight Road are frequently ignored despite the 30 mph signage. However traffic calming by means of speed humps and significant extra signage is not considered suitable and would be detrimental to the appearance of the village. Of more benefit to the village, both in terms of form and function would be a speed operated warning sign at the entrance to the village on Straight Road, and a more frequent police presence.

Other signage around the village is considered adequate, and additional signage would be considered inappropriate and detract from a rural environment. What would be considered of great benefit are restrictions on vehicles over 7.5 tonnes except for access, and the appropriate signage on access routes.

There is little street lighting in the village, but there is little appetite from the residents for any increase in street lighting. Any suggestion of this nature is likely to be resisted by residents.

Road maintenance could be improved, as potholes and other damage wait for some considerable time after identification until repair.

2.7 Transportation

The bus service serving the village is run by Network Colchester and Hedingham Omnibuses who between them provide 4 weekday services into Colchester, and 3 return services, the last being at 1740. On Saturday there is a service at 1015 and a return at 1135. On Sundays and every evening there are no services. Residents must use cars or taxis.

It is worth noting that few buses have facilities for the disabled or for mothers with prams, nor are there raised kerbs to allow for easier access by the disabled. The bus service does however run to Colchester General Hospital and via Mill Road surgery in Mile End.

It is understood that discussions have taken place within a bus users' forum about how to increase the service frequency, but it is difficult to justify on the grounds of passenger numbers. However, this report considers that it would be worthwhile exploring some increase in frequency by the increased use of ECC subsidy, or re-routing existing services from Dedham or Nayland through Boxted.

So far as private car travel is concerned, it is difficult to see any voluntary reduction in car usage for access to the Town, the train station and for general travel unless public transport is improved. With so much private car usage, it is important that adequate off road car parking facilities are provided in any new housing development.

2.8 Footpath protection

The footpath system within the Parish is adequate, well used by visitors and local people and well maintained on the whole by landowners. Hedge and undergrowth trimming, the marking of paths and signage maintenance are up kept in the main. Local landowners should be encouraged to continue this practise publicising their much needed co-operation in the husbandry of our rural areas for use by the public. The renowned Essex Way

passes through the Boxted Church area and skirts around the Cooks Hill and Rivers Hall areas on its way to Dedham and beyond. The tracery of footpaths takes in varied landscapes including fine rural views, rolling countryside, orchard walks and woodlands. Many paths are within the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and offer both the occasional and serious walker a variety of peaceful walks, many unspoilt by traffic and the noise of suburbia. Any further expansion within the parish should take into account the importance of quiet areas and disruption to the public footpath system should be strongly discouraged.



The Essex Way footpath across Boxted Hall Farm.

The footpaths within the Parish should be promoted as a source of exercise and enjoyment for all who wish to use them. We are lucky to possess within our parish what is becoming a scarcer amenity as communities expand.

Whilst the network of footpaths is thriving and varied there is cause for concern regarding the lack of bridleways. There is a substantial and growing population of private horse owners and livery businesses within the parish. This important and necessary part of the rural community is served by few bridleways within the parish. In effect this means that a large amount of horse movements are carried out on the public highway.

Whilst the conduct of both riders and motorists is generally of a high standard the potential for accidents is always present. Any future development within the parish should include accommodation for equestrian rights of way wherever possible as an increase in local traffic volume by its very nature increases the risk of serious harm to horse, rider and drivers.

2.9 Wild life preservation

The Essex/Suffolk borders are “blessed” with a variety of habitats supporting a varied population of wildlife from reptiles and amphibians to large mammals.

Hares abound in the areas of arable agriculture and muntjac and



Arable agriculture and woodland fringes in Boxted.

roe deer are frequently spotted in the woodland fringes.

Many species of woodland and farmland birds are common throughout the parish from the yellowhammer and skylark to sparrowhawks and buzzards. The many lakes and streams support a healthy mix of waterfowl and aquatic life from frogs and toads to grebes and herons. The increasingly rare and threatened water vole is to be found within the parish.

There are numerous waters that can be fished, both coarse and

fly. There are also well established game shoots operating such as that run by the Rivers Hall estate.

These country sports organisations in combination with the farming and equestrian community and also institutions such as the Dedham Vale Conservation Society maintain a balanced and thriving eco system that is imperative to the well being of the natural wildlife found within Boxted. Any potential development should be in tune with current eco systems and not under any circumstances be permitted to cause any damage or degeneration to our valuable natural resources.

2.10 Business and Industry

Industry in Boxted is focussed along Straight Road where small concerns have a variety of yards and sites. These have long standing temporary planning permissions, but their appearance leaves much to be desired, particularly those with scrap cars, tyres and so forth.

At the Cross, the old produce packing sheds which became a small business centre with a variety of trades has closed for redevelopment as a modern small industrial centre. This site is known as Hill Farm Rural Business site. Most of the old sheds have been demolished, and at the time of writing, there is no news of the type of tenant for the future.

The new units were granted planning permission under planning policy EMP5, part of which says that “the uses and/or development shall be compatible with the character and scale of any nearby settlement and the surrounding rural areas”. We have reservations about the height and scale of the permitted new buildings, and with traffic using the site.

The old units caused problems with access for HGVs as the estate entrance is opposite the primary school, and there are additional access problems and accident hazards at the junction with Straight Road/ Dedham Road.

Small industrial businesses such as skip hire and soil supply are located off Straight Road, and while these have temporary planning consents, the location is unsuitable for what in the main are potentially polluting operations in a rural area. In

addition, following the closure of the old units at Hill Farm, more small businesses have relocated to this site. Indeed, a severe fire occurred in the summer of 2008 in old tyres and LPG cylinders left on land behind the Chapel. It is to the detriment of the village environment if waste materials and scrap vehicles are left to accumulate without appropriate controls being enforced on the operators of the site or the land owners.

Policy EMP6 currently relates to the Straight Road Special Policy Area. This imposes conditions on renewal of temporary permissions and for new permissions - see Appendix for more detail. The villagers wish to see policy EMP6 (while still current) and any new replacement Development Policies covering Rural Employment once adopted, strictly enforced, unless there are significant benefits to the village.

There are agricultural businesses off Straight Road, where there is a chicken rearing shed, and near the A134 a vegetable packing operation. Small garden centre type businesses are located along Straight Road and Horkesley Road.

It is clear that the centre of industry for North Colchester is on Severalls Park and Axial Way where new development of industrial sheds is taking place. Whilst this report accepts that there is a need for local employment, and it is not possible nor sensible to revoke planning permissions for existing businesses. Any further industrial development in Boxted should be avoided or be in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CE3 and future employment policies that are relevant to rural areas.

Any permitted redevelopment must be carefully designed so as to fit the scale of the village and should not form an overbearing landmark. Existing businesses should be encouraged, or enforcement action should be taken, to ensure that their activities are not in breach of Planning, Health and Safety and Environmental Regulations.

2.11 Agriculture and Horticulture

Today almost all the agricultural land in the Boxted parish is listed in general as grade 2. There is some grade 1 land in the south-west area of the parish and there is a small amount of

grade 3 on the north-east side but the pockets are not easily identifiable. Currently a significant proportion of the agricultural land continues to be planted in rotation. Sugar beet is grown extensively and is cycled in particular with wheat or barley. Potatoes, onions and certain other crops such as kale are also grown. Sheep are fattened seasonally and Pond House Farm has introduced alpaca. There has been a noticeable increase recently in the fencing in of paddocks for horses. A small



The Walnut orchard planted in the 1920's is still harvested annually.

amount of horticulture remains in the Straight Road area, mostly under glass, and there is a certain amount of fruit such as strawberries and raspberries grown in the same general area.

2.12 Community Facilities

Boxted has few facilities and is reliant on Colchester Town, Mile End, Highwoods and neighbouring villages for shopping, medical facilities and so forth. The nearest shop is the community run shop in Langham, at least 2 km walk.

In Boxted there is no pub, no shop and an infrequent bus service to Colchester.

The only village facilities are the church and the chapel; the Village Hall, the Sports and Social Club and the Pre school

which are located on King George's playing field; the Royal British Legion social club; and the primary school at the Cross.

The Village Hall is a facility available to all residents and others for hire for a variety of functions and events. The Hall was upgraded in 2007/8 with help from a grant from the Parish Council and Cory Trust. It is used in the main by older residents who attend a number of clubs.



The Village Hall at Boxted Cross by the playing field.

There are further clubs available in Langham, but these are a car ride distant. It is regrettable that there are no youth or children's clubs in Boxted.

The two churches, St Peter's at Boxted Church Street, and Boxted Methodist Chapel in Chapel Road provide religious services and are well attended. It is the intention that St Peter's with St Mary's Langham will provide a youth worker in 2009. The Church and the Chapel play an important part in village life.

The British Legion occupies an old Nissen hut on Straight Road and membership is available to all. Its future may be in some doubt when the lease expires in 2013

The Pre school acts as a feeder to the Primary school and is located in old worn out huts. Retention of the pre school is considered essential to village development, as is the primary school, so as to encourage young families to come to and live in Boxted.

The Parish Council plays an active part in fostering, so far as it can, community life. It maintains the playing field and is looking to replace the deteriorating Pre school building.

It is also considering the future of the rather tired Sports and Social Club. The aim is to provide a wider range of interests, rather than what is perceived to be a "boys sports club". It would be of great benefit to the village if any redevelopment was to cater for a variety of indoor and outdoor sports and activities, the Pre-school, a youth club (if volunteer helpers could be found) and a more congenial licensed bar. This scheme would broaden the interest and use of the building.

There should be an integrated development to co-ordinate the play school group, pre school and the primary school, perhaps on one site if the Sports and Social Club redevelopment does not proceed on a sufficient scale. The primary school has a new building on a site with room for expansion.

The mobile library calls once every two weeks and is a worthwhile facility, particularly for older residents who find it difficult travelling to the main library in the Town centre.



The Methodist Chapel in Chapel Road.

Sadly there are no other community facilities. There are no medical or dental practises. Residents must travel to Mile End, Dedham or Nayland to see a doctor, so retention and if possible, improvement of the bus service should be seen as a priority for

older residents.

A village shop and a pub would add significantly to village life, but they would have to be run on a going concern basis.



A view of the countryside near Cheshunts.

3. Future Development

3.1 Future Housing Development

Policy H4 in the Core Strategy states that:

"THE BOROUGH COUNCIL is committed to improving housing affordability in Colchester. The Council will be seeking to secure 35% of new dwellings (including conversions) to be provided as affordable housing (normally on site), as follows:

- In Colchester Town and Stanway, Tiptree, Wivenhoe and West Mersea, affordable housing will be required on housing developments for 10 or more dwellings.
- In the other villages, affordable housing will be required on housing developments for 3 or more dwellings.
- An equivalent financial contribution will also be sought for developments below these thresholds.

In exceptional circumstances, where high developments costs undermine the viability of housing delivery on brownfield sites, developers will be expected to demonstrate an alternative affordable housing provision.

Affordable housing development in the villages of rural Colchester Borough will be supported on rural exception sites contiguous with the existing village envelopes, provided a local need is demonstrated by the Parish Council on behalf of their residents.

The Council will require developments to integrate affordable housing and market, with a consistent standard of quality design and public spaces, to create mixed and sustainable communities."

Nevertheless, the Colchester Core Strategy document suggests that villages are not likely to see significant housing development up to 2023. Although 705 homes are likely to be developed in rural communities throughout the Borough, 650 had been completed or approved by 2006 including 150 in the neighbouring village of Great Horkesley. This compares with a projection of 19,000 homes to be built in Colchester between 2001 and 2023. It perhaps should be noted that between 2000 and 2006, 31% of dwellings were bungalows or maisonettes and that permissions and projections are based on the continued demand for high density urban developments. There is little or no support for high density development in Boxted.

The residents of Boxted are anxious that any future housing is in keeping with the surrounding properties, in general reflecting the immediate neighbourhood. Tiled or slate roofs are strongly preferred and there is enthusiasm to preserve the thatched roofing of those thatched cottages in existence. Brick walls are generally preferred, also rendered walls; timber-clad walls are not popular among residents. Nevertheless, an overall mix of styles is acceptable. Residents are particularly reluctant to see any changes or new build in the Conservation Area surrounding the church. Here the old school site is for sale and is next to the Grade 1 listed church. Access to the site is via a narrow lane which runs between the church yard and the grave yard. The site is in the AONB, and close to the Essex Way. The school car park is particularly useful for church services, weddings, funerals etc, as without it, there would be severe parking problems on surrounding roads.

Change of usage is not popular generally anywhere in the village, and particularly any changes from domestic to commercial use should be refused.

The residents wish the building of apartments and flats to be avoided or restricted. There is overwhelming support for any new housing to be detached or semi-detached. Although there is good support for affordable housing, both social housing and a retirement village are not considered desirable.

It is preferred that new housing should be on brown-field sites

and should be within the village envelope. There is least opposition to housing along Straight road.

GUIDANCE

The relevant policies in the Adopted Review Local Plan and the Core Strategy should not be relaxed.

The A12 should be regarded as the barrier to development from Colchester, and only exceptional infill be allowed, as outlined in the CS.

All new build should be in keeping with the immediate neighbourhood and should respect the existing settlement pattern and densities.

Any new build should be confined to the village envelope, not within the conservation area surrounding the church, but possibly along Straight Road.

Housing should be detached or semi-detached and should not exceed 2 storeys. A mix of bungalows, semi-detached and detached housing is preferred. New build housing should be in keeping with surroundings and use traditional high quality materials. Off street parking should be provided

Any development of the old school site adjacent to Boxted Church must be in keeping with the surroundings, be low density, not overlook or detract from the church and the area used for car parking for church users should be retained.

Any affordable housing should be limited in numbers and developed in keeping with surroundings.

High density housing should be avoided.

3.2 Roads, signage and footpaths

Residents have considerable concerns about village roads, particularly traffic densities and speeding. Villagers do not wish to see a plethora of new signs, extra lighting or ostentatious traffic calming measures.

They are appreciative of the new pavement which goes from East Side to the old Wig and Fidgett, but there still remain long stretches of Straight Road which are hazardous to pedestrians. There is a concern regarding the mix of horse and rider with traffic along Straight Road and Langham Road, which are used by rapidly moving traffic. There are few if any bridle ways, and it would provide a safer and more enjoyable route if more bridle ways were available.

GUIDANCE

Traffic calming should be improved along Straight Road and at the entrance to the village on Dedham Road by means of more prominent Slow Down signs, and a speed operated flashing sign at the Mill Road entry on Straight Road.

A 7.5 tonne weight limit, except for access, should be imposed at the Straight Road/Queen's Head Road junction and at the Gun Hill, Langham entry towards Boxted.

A footpath/ pavement should be provided from the Wig and Fidgett to the Mill Road/Chapel Road junction.

All footpaths should be maintained for country walkers. Land owners should continue to be encouraged to keep verges and overhanging vegetation cut back to maintain easy access.

Land owners should be encouraged to provide bridle ways for horse and rider use.

3.3 Business and Industry

It is clear from the questionnaire that there is considerable opposition to expansion of industry within Boxted and opposition to change of use of agricultural land. With the new industrial park at Axial Way there seems a better alternative to any further industrial development in Boxted.

Turning now to existing businesses along Straight Road, some of these present a poor picture with the storage of scrap tyres and cars, and some are waste handling operations.

Whilst it is accepted that the existing planning permissions cannot be withdrawn, we do agree with the Borough policies relating to Hill Farm and the Straight Road Special Policy area. Any future Employment Development Policies should provide a similar level of protection against inappropriate industrial expansion in and around Boxted.

GUIDANCE

Existing planning policies are fully supported by villagers, and should be maintained and enforced to protect village life. Retrospective planning permission should not be granted. In general terms, any new businesses should be directed to the designated employment zone on the Straight Road.

No expansion of existing businesses should be permitted unless there is a case for increased employment for villagers, some other community benefit is provided to the village and the business carries out an environmental impact assessment, which would be available to the public.

The Borough should ensure that Planning, Health and Safety and Environmental controls are enforced by them or other Agencies to avoid any similar repeat of the fire fueled by dumped tyres in Chapel Road.

/...

/...

Hill Farm industrial site should be monitored to ensure that all asbestos materials are safely removed in accordance with the Asbestos Regulations. Traffic flows should be monitored to ensure that the safety of school children, pedestrians etc is not endangered by traffic entering and leaving the site. No hazardous trades such as waste handling should be allowed on the site.

Screening of employment sites using mature trees and hedges should be a condition of any planning approval so as to retain the rural character of Boxted.

3.4 Transportation

A key element of villagers' concerns is the limited bus service in terms of frequency.

In view of what is perceived by villagers as a lack of Council focus on Boxted, it is considered that a more frequent bus service could only be achieved by increased Council subsidy, or by rerouting existing services.

GUIDANCE

An increase in bus frequency should be explored either by re-routing and extending existing services, or by subsidy from the Borough.

Any new development must be accessible by public transport.

It is also important that any new development be accessible by public transport in order to reduce car usage.

3.5 Agriculture and Horticulture

As has been mentioned in section 1.3, areas of Boxted parish have been very specifically delineated and these already considerably define the nature of the countryside area. Perhaps most notable is that a large area of Boxted, an area to the north, falls within the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As indicated in section 1.3, all of Boxted Church Street lies within the area, as also does the area of Boxted Hall farm lying north of Church Road. The southern edge is defined by Cook's Hill and a section of Dedham Road, and then includes all the area of the parish going north to the Stour.

Any development in this area which is likely to have an adverse impact will be subject to special scrutiny by CBC. Development thought to be adverse will be acceptable only where an overriding national need can be demonstrated and there are no acceptable alternative sites.

An area to the south, covering most of the parish, borders the Dedham Vale area. CBC will give special protection from any development likely to be prejudicial to its natural, social or cultural resources.

There is also a Boxted Straight Road Special Policy area designated by the council in terms of employment conditions. This will not allow new permissions but renewal of temporary permissions will usually be allowed. This should preserve the special nature of the area already indicated in its history. In contrast, the original area of buildings once associated with fruit packing at Hill Farm is now designated as an employment zone outside any main urban area, and small scale development may be permitted in accordance with the scale and character of the local area.

There are a number of specified Local Wildlife Sites in the parish. These are usually wooded and are rather scattered.

In general, it is Council policy not to permit loss of the best and most versatile land, defined as grades 1, 2 3a, unless there is an overriding need for development and lower grade land is not available. This covers the remaining areas of the parish.

Villagers strongly believe that protecting the surrounding countryside and landscape from inappropriate development is vital to ensure that the rural character of Boxted is protected, and its bio diversity is not affected.

GUIDELINE

From the responses of the questionnaire it is clear that the agricultural surroundings of the village are appreciated and their general nature should be preserved particularly in accordance with CS Policy ENV1.

3.6 Village Services

Boxted has few services, and some that exist are under pressure, such as the Sports and Social Club, Pre-School and the British Legion. There is no pub, and few places where the villagers can meet.

The Pre-School building and the Sports and Social Club are deteriorating, and the future of the British Legion is in some doubt when its lease expires. It is a worry that some of the few remaining community facilities that Boxted possesses are under some threat.

It would be of considerable benefit to the community if a social centre, attractive to more residents, could be established. Colchester Borough Council should offer all support to Boxted Parish Council.

GUIDANCE

The Parish Council, CBC and other bodies should work together to see if the Sports and Social Club could be redeveloped so as to incorporate an extended indoor and outdoor sports centre, the Pre-School and a licensed bar open and welcoming to all.

Encouragement should be given to anyone who wishes

to open a village shop and/or post office, and also a pub, if they could be run as going concerns.

As set out in the Core Strategy Policies SD2 and SD3, any new development within the village should be required to make a significant contribution to support either the provision of new facilities, or the upgrade of existing facilities to meet local needs.



Villagers strongly believe it is "...vital to ensure the rural character of Boxted is protected"

Extracts from Policies and proposals within the Adopted Review Colchester Borough Local Plan 2004.

Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CO2)
Development in or likely to have an adverse impact on the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be subject to special scrutiny. Where such development could have an adverse impact, directly or indirectly, on the area, it will be acceptable only where an overriding national need for the development in that particular location can be demonstrated and there is a lack of acceptable alternative sites.

Where development proceeds because of an overriding national requirement, removal and restoration of the site will be required in the event of redundancy at a later date.

Habitats for CO5

Development that would adversely affect wildlife habitats of international or national importance will not be permitted unless the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site itself and the international or national policy to safeguard the network of such sites.

Development and land use changes likely to have an adverse effect upon the following sites listed below will not be approved unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal which outweigh the need to safeguard the substantive nature conservation interest in the site. Where development is permitted and is likely to cause damage, such damage will be kept to a minimum. Where this is not possible, appropriate mitigating measures will be sought before planning permission is granted. The creation of new habitats will be required as early as possible in the development process, and in some cases this may be before development commences. Such measures will include the creation of habitats of equal quality elsewhere within the site or the Borough as a whole. Where these measures are not possible, planning permission will be refused.

Local Nature Reserves or potential Local Nature Reserves;
Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation;
Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites;

Existing woodlands and hedgerows, particularly those in the Inventory of Ancient Woodlands;

Habitats identified as declining in the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan;

Important hedgerows;

Wetlands, water meadows and ponds;

Unimproved grasslands.

Cage Lane Protection

(CO7) Protected Lanes of historic and/or landscape value shown on the Proposals Map will be protected from development that would adversely affect their physical appearance or would give rise to a material increase in the amount of traffic using them.

Isolated Industrial Complexes (Hill Farm Rural Business Site)

(EMP5) Development on Existing Free-standing Rural Business Sites. Any expansion and consolidation of appropriate existing authorised uses, and any new uses as may be approved on the Rural Business Sites listed below, will:

(a) only be within the areas defined on the inset maps:

(i) Hill Farm, Boxted;

(b) The use(s) and/or development shall be compatible with the character and scale of any nearby settlement and the surrounding rural areas.

Boxted Straight Road – Special Policy Area

(EMP6) Within the area around Boxted Straight Road, as defined on the Proposals Map, the following principles will apply:

(a) Renewal of temporary permission will be granted subject to: any consent being made personal to the applicant;

there being no current or likely future planning problems; environmental benefits being secured.

(b) Temporary permissions will not be renewed where unacceptable problems exist and where these cannot be overcome by condition and/or planning agreements;

(c) No further permission on new sites or the expansion/consolidation on existing ones will be granted.

Conservation Area (Boxted)

(UEA1) Within Conservation Areas, all those buildings, open spaces, trees, views and other aspects of the environment which go to make up the character or appearance of such places will be protected.

Development considered detrimental to the setting of Conservation Areas will be refused.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Boxted Parish Council and RCCE for their financial help and advice, and Colchester Borough Council for reviewing the draft and accepting the findings for incorporation in the planning process.

We also thank the villagers who have taken the time to participate one way or another in this Plan, without them, there would be no Plan.

Our thanks go to Hugh Large who set and printed the document.

Finally, thanks go to Steve Lawrence, Chairman, Robert Spittal, Treasurer and Chris Tadman, Secretary, and the other Plan members who stayed to the end.

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Boxted – Portrait of an English Village, Douglas Carter, 2006.

TABLE 1 – LOCAL PLAN AND CORE STRATEGY POLICIES RELEVANT TO BOXTED’S VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

<i>Issue:</i>	<i>Local Plan policies:</i>	<i>Core Strategy policies:</i>
Overall Development Control	DC1 Overall Development Control Policy	SD1 Sustainable Development Locations
Built Conservation Areas	UEA1 Character of Conservation Areas UEA11 Design UEA12 Design Character	UR2 Built Design & Character
Countryside/Environment (including landscape, settlement pattern as well as biodiversity, archaeology, ?)	C01 Rural Resources CO5 Nature Conservation (Habitats) CO7 Protected Lanes	Superseded by policy ENV1 (Environment) ENV1 ENV1
Dedham Vale AONB	CO2 Dedham Vale AONB	ENV1
Affordable Housing	H5 Affordable Housing - Rural Exceptions	H4 Affordable Housing
Rural Communities	CF1 Infrastructure and Community Facilities Provision CF4 Retention of key Community Facilities	Superseded by SD2 (Delivering Facilities and Infrastructure) SD3 Community Facilities
Rural Employment	CO10 Agricultural Diversification EMP4 Employment Uses in the Countryside EMP6 Boxted Straight Road EMP7 Development of Existing employment sites in the c/side	CE1 Centres & Employment Classification and Hierarchy CE3 Employment Zones
Transport	T5 Public Transport T7 Traffic Management Schemes	TA1 Accessibility & Changing Travel Behaviour
Parking	Policy T10 obsolete now and covered by T9 Parking outside Colchester	TA5 Parking

Appendix B.

SAVED LOCAL PLAN POLICIES TO BE SUPERCEDED BY THE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES DPD

Saved Local Plan Policy	Development Policy
CO7 Protected Lanes	Superseded by DP21 (Nature Conservation and Protected Lanes).
UEA1 Conservation Areas	Superseded by DP14 (Historic Environment).
CO2 Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Superseded by DP22 (Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).
CO3 Countryside Conservation Areas	The evidence base has been updated by a Landscape Character Assessment which is referred to in Core Strategy Policy ENV1. Policy CO1 is superseded by this updated evidence base, DP21 (Nature Conservation and Protected Lanes) and DP14 (Historic Environment Assets).
CO5 Nature Conservation (Habitats)	Superseded by DP21 (Nature Conservation and Protected Lanes).
CO7 Protected Lanes	Superseded by DP21 (Nature Conservation and Protected Lanes).
EMP5 Rural Business Sites	Superseded by DP5 (Appropriate Employment Uses and Protection of Employment Land and Existing Businesses).
EMP6 Boxted Straight Road	Superseded by DP5 (Appropriate Employment Uses and Protection of Employment Land and Existing Businesses).

** Development Policies will not supercede the saved Local Plan policies until they can be formally adopted following an EIP in 2010*