

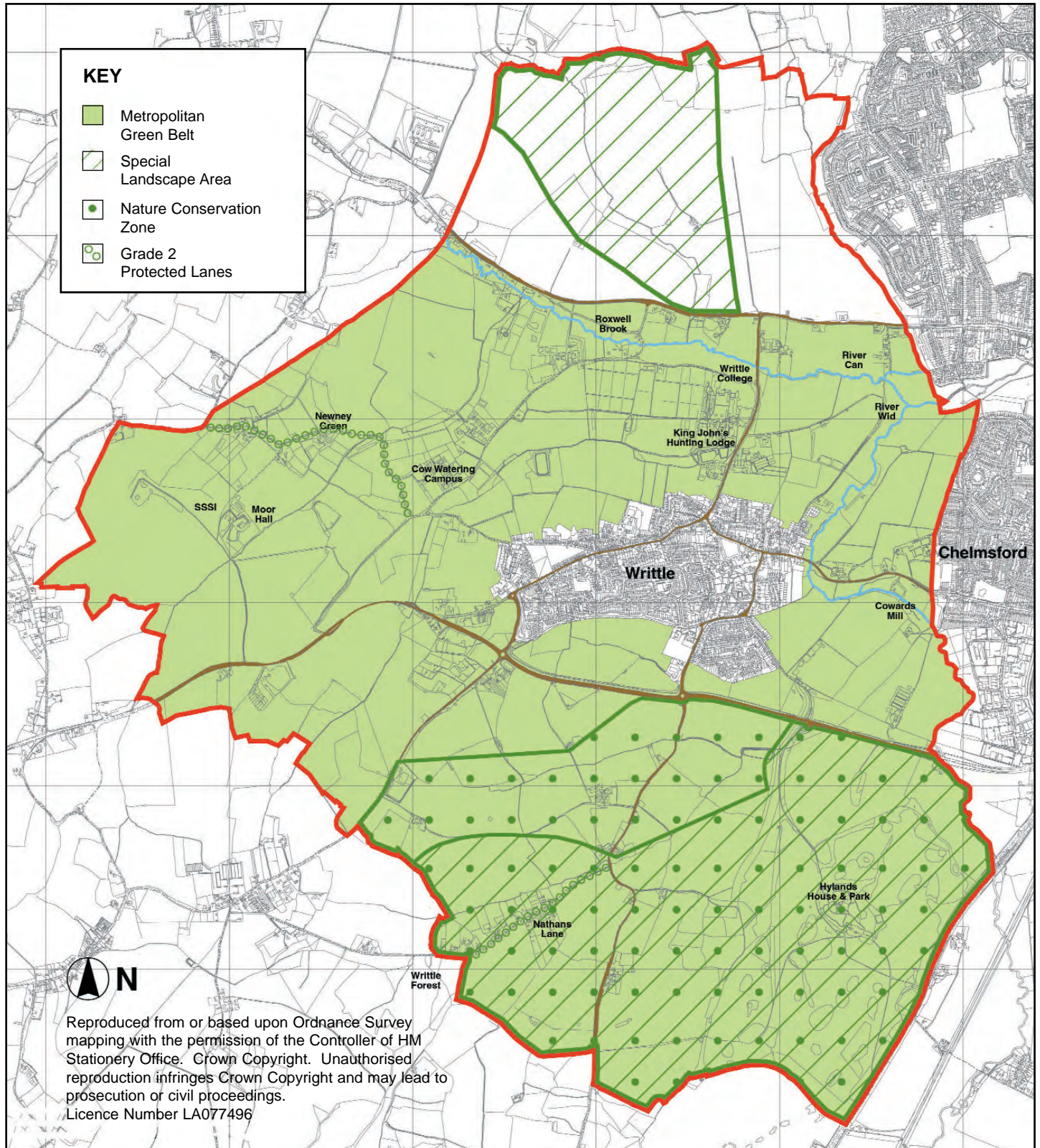


Contents

section	page	section	page
Plan of the Parish	1	6 Sports, Community Facilities and Churches	16 - 17
1 Introduction	2-3	Churches	
Background		Sports and Recreation	
Scope and Purpose of the VDS		Shopping Facilities	
Consultation Process		Primary Care Health Facilities	
Status of the Document		Community and Social Facilities	
Essex Design Guide			
2 Historical context	4	7 Writtle College	18
3 Geographical context	5	8 The Rural Environment	18 - 21
4 General guidelines for development	5 - 8	Physical Description	
Buildings		New Agricultural Buildings	
Doors and Windows		Farm Diversification	
Roofs		New Large Country Houses	
Boundary Treatments		Public Rights of Way and Permissive Footpaths	
Driveways and Garages		Extension of Gardens	
5 The Village Defined Settlement Areas		Garden Centres	
1. The Conservation Area	9-10	Protected Hedgerows	
The BT Depot	10	Woodland and Forests	
2. Lawford Lane and St. Johns Road	11	9 Entrances to the Village	21
3. Lodge Road East Area	11	10 Hylands House and Park	22
Plan of Writtle Village Defined Settlement Area	12 - 13	11 Highways and Infrastructure	23 - 24
4. Rollestons Area	14	Street Furniture	
5. Ongar Road Area	14	Transport	
6. Victoria Road Area	15	Surface Treatments	
7. Mayfield Road Area	15	Parking	
8. Paradise Road Area	15	Pedestrians and Cycling	
		12 Cowards Mill Site	24
		13 Future development	25



Writtle Parish



1. Introduction

"Writtle possesses one of the most attractive village greens in Essex"
'The Buildings of England' Nicholas Pevsner 1954



The Green

Background

The Writtle Village Design Statement (VDS) was developed by a small nucleus of residents who formed a steering group. The group sought the views of the community in order to identify the local character of the parish and to make a record of it for the year 2002 and to develop recommendations to guide the design and character of future development proposals.



Scope and Purpose of the VDS

The VDS is intended to:

- * manage change but not prevent it;
- * assist property owners and developers in adopting designs which are acceptable to the local community;
- * help protect visually important buildings and their settings and promote the use of appropriate building materials;
- * improve and protect the local character and appearance particularly the use of open spaces and the street scene;
- * enhance development in rural areas;
- * ensure that the valued physical qualities and characteristics of the village and its surroundings are conserved and protected;
- * assist the local planning authority in their determination of planning applications;



All Saints Church

Consultation Process



Emphasis was put on consulting with the whole community through articles in the parish magazine, a questionnaire (circulated to over 2000 homes), an

enjoyable junior school workshop, a successful all day family workshop and at exhibitions at the village Jubilee Celebrations, the Christmas Fayre and on completion of the draft report. At each stage of consultation, feedback received was input and the report developed accordingly.

The document has been subject to consultation with Writtle Parish Council and Chelmsford Borough Council and updated taking on board comments received after final agreement with the Parish and Borough Councils.

Status of the Document:

The aim is for the VDS to be adopted by Chelmsford Borough Council as Interim Planning Guidance.

The VDS will help ensure local involvement in the determination of planning applications.

The VDS builds upon the objectives of and the built and rural environment policies of the development plan for the Borough (Chelmsford Borough Local Plan, Essex & Southend Replacement Structure Plan) and also takes account of The Essex Design Guide.



The Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Use Development 1997.

The Essex Design Guide was first published in 1973, by Essex County Council, and has been influential in the planning of new housing, encouraging the use of vernacular design and local materials to create good design in varying situations throughout the County. The Guide was revised in 1997 by the Essex Planning Officers Association and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Local Authorities. The Guide aims to encourage all new developments to respect and be in keeping with the traditional housing in towns and villages and addresses such considerations as spatial organization (layout), height of buildings, distances between dwellings, roof styles, window patterns, materials, treatment of ground surfaces and the use of landscaping. All these elements should reflect the context of existing development, creating housing of distinctive character and identity.

** The text highlighted on a green background throughout this document is intended to be used as Planning Guidance.*

GUIDANCE

- * This Village Design Statement focuses on both the village of Writtle and the wider rural area covered by the parish and is intended to:*
 - * Assist designers and developers with future development proposals pertaining specifically to the Parish of Writtle on acceptable design from the community's point of view, so helping to avoid conflict either later or in the planning negotiations.*
 - * Help protect visually important buildings and open spaces.*
- * Adherence to 'The Essex Design Guide' is strongly recommended.*
- * It is essential that the Green Belt area between Writtle and Chelmsford is not eroded.*



Houses and shops facing the Green

2. Historical Context

Writtle, which for hundreds of years was the largest parish in Essex, remains one of the largest, covering 1,806 hectares (4,463 acres). It once included the villages of Roxwell, Highwood and parts of Chignal. When the Domesday Book was written in 1086 the population of Writtle was 945 compared with 20 in Chelmsford. In 1961 the population was 3,392. The fastest increase took place in the 1960s when the Rollestons Estate was built and by 1971 the population had risen to 5,749.



Aubyns (Grade I listed) & All Saints Church

The earliest evidence for settlement activity in Writtle dates to the pre-historic period.

Writtle is said to have derived its name from the Anglo Saxon "Writolaburna" meaning bubbling purling stream, describing the River Wid. Another school of thought suggests that the Celts named the village 'Rhy'd' meaning ford and 'Dol' meaning valley, thus 'Rhyddol'.

Writtle was certainly in existence in Roman times, as Roman bricks were used in the outer walls of the church and two Roman burial urns were found buried in the garden of the old vicarage, now the site of the Writtle Bowling Green.

At the time of the Domesday Survey, Writtle was an important Royal Manor sitting on the main route between London and East Anglia; Chelmsford being undeveloped and its Roman bridges across the Can and Chelmer having collapsed, forcing London to Colchester traffic to detour through Writtle to cross the River Wid. Part of this route can still be seen at Lawford Lane (Lollefordstraet). There is evidence that a large market and fair were held regularly behind St. Johns Green. An old barrier forming part of the 'barras', a defensive ditch and bank around the Green to keep wild animals away from the livestock, is still visible at the top of St. Johns Road and in Lodge Road opposite the junction with Paradise Road.

By 1100 fortunes changed and Chelmsford became important due to the building of a bridge over the River Chelmer.

In 1211 King John built a moated hunting lodge beside Lordship Road, the remains of which are within the grounds of Writtle College. The site was excavated from 1955 to 1957.

Vestiges of the Royal Forest of Writtle can be found in the surrounding woodlands and it is designated as ancient landscape.



Moat surrounding the Site of King Johns Hunting Lodge

In 1728 Sir John Comyns, MP, built himself a new country seat on Highlands Field called 'Hylands'. Over the years there have been many owners of 'Hylands' and the mansion and park, now owned by Chelmsford Borough Council, are currently the subject of a phased restoration programme.

The Writtle Brewery was developed during the 19th century and was a significant employer. As a result, numerous cottages were built for the workers.

More recently in 1922, Marconi started the first regular radio broadcasts from a hut on the Marconi research site in Lawford Lane, and a plaque commemorating this can be found at the entrance to the Melba Court apartments.



Melba Court Apartments

3. Geographical Context

Writtle Village is located about 1km from the edge of the built up area of Chelmsford, the County Town of Essex and is separated from it by open land and surrounded by the Metropolitan Green Belt. The part of the parish, to the north of Roxwell Road, lies outside the Metropolitan Green Belt.



The Village rising above the floodplain of the Can and the Wid

The main focus of the late Saxon settlement was centred on the Greens and Common land of Greenbury, Oxney, Newney, Edney and Radley.

In its picturesque setting, the village rises from the floodplain at the confluence of two rivers, the Can and the Wid. The feeding streams for these rivers along with the numerous small ponds and wells provided an ideal settlement area.

The village is surrounded by a patchwork of fields with ancient and traditional hedgerows, interspersed

with small groups of trees. The parish comprises mainly fertile agricultural land, supporting the local farms. Much of the subsoil in the area comprises moraine deposits of sand, gravel and chalky bolder clay, resulting in the traditional use of a variety of locally sourced building materials such as wattle and daub and brick, and from the trees, timber for frames and cladding.

This landscape setting, separated as it is from Chelmsford, is of great importance and should be protected as it sets the context of the Village and the Parish.

4. General Guidelines for Development

One of the features which makes the village unique is the diversity of its many buildings - styles and types - creating a harmonious blend with their surroundings.

Buildings

The older timber framed buildings around the village have lime washed walls in a variety of traditional colours, some having been clad with brickwork in Georgian times. There are also examples of pargetting such as the Cricketers.

Those built in the Georgian and Victorian periods were mainly constructed in traditional red brick and lime mortar, although on St. Johns Green, the predominant brick is yellow stock. There are also some examples of white gault bricks, tile hanging and weatherboarding.



18th Century brick faced timber framed house

Newer developments are constructed in a variety of bricks and/or rendering, the more recent developments following the



Example of pargetting

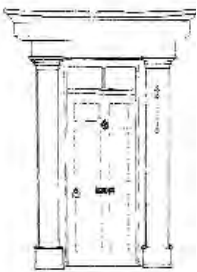
principles of the Essex Design Guide by employing different materials within each building or group.

GUIDANCE

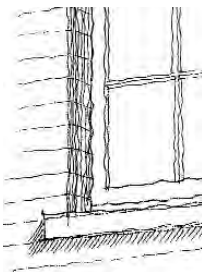
- * **New buildings should respect the scale, form and design of the adjacent properties.**
- * **New houses should respect the use of a variety of traditional building materials and the scale, form and design of the surrounding properties.**
- * **Matching bricks, render or appropriate materials should be employed for extensions.**



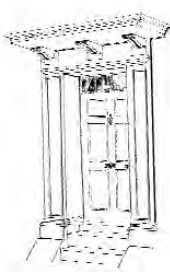
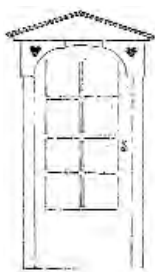
18th Century door & window



19th Century doors



Replacement window set back 100mm



Victorian & Edwardian doors



18th Century door & fanlights

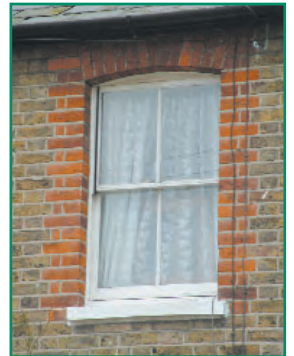
Doors and Windows

Doors and windows are critical in determining the appearance and character of a building. With the exception of listed buildings, generally changes to windows and doors are not controlled by planning legislation. However, it is essential that, wherever it is located, the style of the host dwelling and its setting are respected.

Many properties have had replacement UPVC double glazed windows and doors installed in the last decade, which in the estate developments has added individual character to the properties, as the range of window styles has increased to include 'leaded lights' and coloured glazing etc.

However, within the Conservation Area, where even a minor alteration can affect the appearance and balance of the property and the street scene, it is crucial that consideration is given to ensure that the materials and design of windows and doors accord with the type in the area.

An 'Article 4 Direction' can be issued by the local planning authority to control a specific threat where permitted development (planning consent not required) is likely to take place which could damage the character of a particular area.



Original Victorian Sash window



An appropriate replacement window in an existing opening



Replacement window, keeping the original opening and reveal

GUIDANCE

- * **The pattern and style of windows and doors should be replicated in extensions to properties.**
- * **In semi-detached and terraced houses, windows and doors should aim to achieve unity in the design of the whole building.**

Conservation Area

- * **In areas such as the Conservation Area, an Article 4 Direction should be sought where there is a specific threat to the character of the area.**
- * **Timber doors, frames and windows are essential in such areas to preserve the historic core of the village.**
- * **New and replacement windows to brick faced properties built after the early 18th Century, should be set back from the external face of the wall to provide a 100mm reveal.**
- * **Traditionally windows to older properties had substantial timber or stone cills and this is to be encouraged with replacement and new build.**

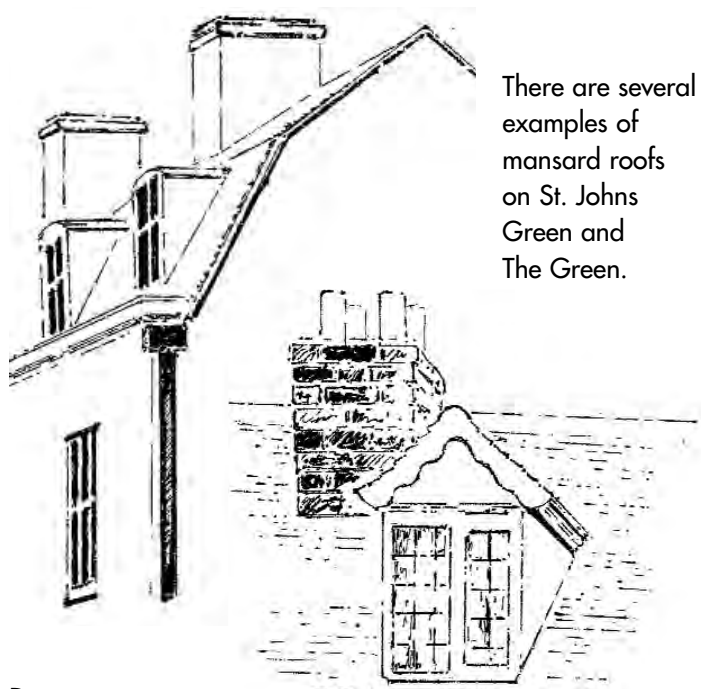
Roofs

Many of the buildings facing onto The Green and St. Johns Green have hand made clay pegged tiled roofs, with the later Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian properties having slate roofs.



There are a number of slate roofs with matching features to the Victorian and Edwardian housing in Ongar Road, Victoria Road and Back Road.

Chimneys add interest and contribute to the skyline.



There are several examples of mansard roofs on St. Johns Green and The Green.

Dormers are a frequent feature in the village.

The estates built in the 1960s used a mixture of tiles, although sensitive areas of newer development such as Comyns Place and Maltings Court were constructed with plain tiles.



Guys Farm with an example of a half hipped roof

Guys Farm employed a mixture of slates and plain tiles conforming to the recommendations of the Essex Design Guide.



Examples of Pantiles and Plain tiles

GUIDANCE

- * *It is important, in the Conservation Area and other areas where there are older buildings (such as the Victorian buildings in Ongar Road) that roofs are retained in their current form. Any alterations or repairs should use second hand or compatible materials, as modern alternatives look out of place.*
- * *Chimney stacks should be retained wherever possible.*
- * *Wherever possible new roofs should be pitched.*
- * *Matching materials in terms of colour, texture and style for new roofs must be employed.*
- * *It is important that rainwater goods reflect the colour, shape and form of the original, and where new, respect those of the surrounding materials.*
- * *New dormers should generally be above the gutter line and to the same pitch as the main roof.*
- * *Dormers of traditional style construction should be encouraged particularly to the front elevation.*
- * *Modern alternatives for slate, particularly concrete tiles, are to be discouraged, not only can they damage buildings in overloading the rafters, but they are also often inappropriate for the pitch.*



Boundary Treatments:

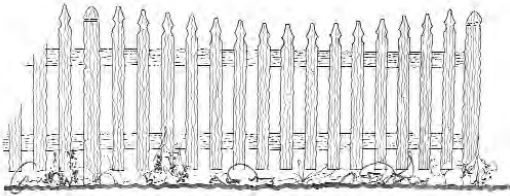
Around The Green and St. Johns Green the front gardens are enclosed by a combination of walls, picket fences or iron railings with decorative finials. There are very few examples of hedging such as Motts on The Green with a traditional yew hedge.

Rollestons Estate has open plan front gardens and the established areas such as Victoria Road and



Rollestons Estate with open plan gardens

Ongar Road have a variety of types of enclosure. Many front gardens of newer developments are open plan and are subject to restrictive covenants to preserve the open aspect.



Ongar Road street scene

Along Ongar Road many of the old and newer properties are fronted by ancient hedgerows of both single and dual types.



Ancient hedgerow in Ongar Road

GUIDANCE

- * **Traditional low fencing and railings are appropriate within areas such as The Greens.**
- * **Open plan fronts should be retained.**
- * **Where there are hedges, these should be retained as far as practicable. Planting of hedges of indigenous species should be encouraged.**
- * **Conifers and particularly Leyland cypress are not suitable for boundary treatment and should be discouraged.**
- * **Where new walls are constructed their size, materials and design should accord with the surrounding built environment. Particular care should be taken over bonding, corners, joints and capping.**
- * **Where boundaries constitute an important part of the street scene, the removal of such boundaries for the purpose of allowing off-street parking should be discouraged.**

Driveways and Garages

There are a variety of materials available for garages, hard standings and drives which can improve or detract from the appearance of the dwelling and the street scene. In domestic driveways consideration should be given to the use of alternative materials (e.g. block paving or shingle instead of concrete or tarmac)

Security and convenience lights can be very intrusive to neighbours and should be of an appropriate strength and size and considerably located so as not to create a nuisance.



GUIDANCE

- * **Drives or hard standing should be in materials which accord with that of the dwelling and neighbouring drives.**
- * **Large areas of uniform hard standing in front of dwellings should be avoided or at least interspersed with planting.**
- * **New garages should match the materials of the host dwelling and surroundings and as a general rule should not be built in front of the building line.**
- * **The choice of materials should be influenced by the local environment.**

5. The Village's Defined Settlement Area

Writtle is a large, but compact village with the Defined Settlement Boundary, as shown in the Local Plan, tightly drawn around the village.



Village sign illustrating links with Agriculture and Radio

The most significant change in the Village was the development of the Rollestons Estate on former farm land in the 1960s, which linked Writtle with the former villages of Great and Little Oxney Green.

Recent developments since then have been limited to infilling, back land development and redevelopment of brownfield sites.



War Memorial

In addition to the general guidelines for development, the village can be reviewed in distinct areas partly based on their character and partly on the growth of the village and are shown on the map of the Defined Settlement Area (pages 12-13).

1. The Conservation Area

Greenbury Green (known as The Green) - all within the Conservation Area, with its pond and white posts, The Green remains the traditional focus of the village and is surrounded by some of the oldest buildings in the village (many being listed), including shops and public houses. The oldest building in the village is All Saints Church, which dates mainly from 1230 and constructed from an amalgam of flint, rubble stone and pieces of Roman brick and tile.

The buildings display a variety of architectural styles, some of timber framed construction with timbers exposed or plaster rendered in a variety of colours and others with brick facades. All reflect the historical growth of the heart of the village. Most are either two or three storey with dormer windows in the roof, and often linked to one another.

Aubyns, on the approach to the church, is the only Grade I listed building in the village and is a former hall house with cross wings that has now lost its hall. The remains include a fine timber frame, and a medieval shop front.

There are examples of ancient barns in the village. The Veterinary Surgery has a restored timber barn, however the brick built barn at the rear of The Inn on the Green is dilapidated and roofless.



Early timber framed buildings altered in the 18th & 19th Century



Restored Barn at the Veterinary Surgery

St. Johns Green - all within the Conservation Area, is a smaller version of the main green with a similar variety of styles and materials.

The skyline, throughout the village, is considered a significant visual feature, this particularly applies in the Conservation Area and around the Greens. Removal of overhead telephone lines where they are visually intrusive should be a priority.



Unightly telephone lines on St Johns Green

Lawford Lane - the part within the Conservation Area; comprises a row of Victorian cottages.

St. Johns Road - the part within the Conservation Area; comprises a number of fully timber framed rendered cottages dating back to the early 17th Century, opposite Rumsey Row which links it with The Green.



Early timber framed cottages in St. Johns Road

Rumsey Row is a good example of how former derelict outbuildings have been developed to provide a useful retail facility.

In the older parts of the village, several example of hand pumps for drawing water from the numerous underground water courses can be found.



Rumsey Row

Lodge Road - the part within the Conservation Area; comprises older houses and cottages

Romans Place - all within the Conservation Area; comprising a single terrace of 18th Century brick clad timber framed houses with the Bowls Club opposite.



The Hand pump on Pump Green

GUIDANCE - the Conservation Area

- * *Layout, design and materials need to be sympathetic to the surrounding built environment.*
- * *The restoration of buildings in poor repair, such as dilapidated barns, should be actively encouraged and if appropriate, suitable change of use considered.*
- * *The street scene on both Greens is of paramount importance and front extensions should not be permitted where they detract from the character of the property itself, or with neighbouring properties or with the street scene.*
- * *Infilling and backland development should be resisted as the open character would be lost.*
- * *UPVC or aluminium windows and doors are not appropriate and traditional materials and designs should be employed.*
- * *It is essential to the village heritage that the Conservation Area is not blighted by the proliferation of aerials, utility cables, inappropriate signs, street furniture and the like.*
- * *External satellite dishes should be unobtrusive and where possible not visible from the street.*
- * *Reduction of overhead utility services and environmental clutter must be given priority.*
- * *Removal or alteration to chimneys in the area must be resisted.*
- * *Skylights other than traditional dormers, should not alter the appearance of the roofline.*
- * *It is important that rainwater goods reflect the colour, shape and form of the original.*
- * *Important features such as pumps should be retained.*
- * *The area of historic cottages and premises opposite Rumsey Row should be retained and not redeveloped.*

The BT Depot

The area to the west of The Green, just outside the Conservation Area, which is currently occupied by the BT Depot, could become vacant at sometime and be considered for redevelopment. Although there is no known proposal in existence for this important site, any planning would require careful consideration.



The BT Depot

- * *Any redevelopment of the BT Depot must be strictly in accordance with an approved development brief to take account of its location abutting the Conservation Area.*

2. Lawford Lane and St. Johns Road, Outside the Conservation Area

Lawford Lane leads to more modern houses and bungalows and the Melba Court apartments.

The lane then becomes an unmetalled bridleway, which formed part of the main link between London and Colchester before the beginning of the 12th century.



Wykeham Road



St. Johns Road including Wykeham Road and Bruce Road, comprises some of the earliest local authority housing, having varying colour washed, rendered elevations with slate roofs or

pantiles. Some have been altered or extended but many are in their original state.

Opposite these is a more modern linear development.



Whitehead Close



Lodge Road with the remains of the ancient 'barras'

3. Lodge Road East Outside the Conservation area

The road has a mixture of mid twentieth century and modern housing.

The mature trees opposite the junction with Paradise Road are an important feature and must be retained at all costs as they formed part of the old 'barras'. An ancient defensive ditch and bank around the Green ('infra barras') to keep wild animals away from the livestock.

Many of the trees have Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) which should be enforced.

The on-street parking causes safety and traffic hazards.

For much of its length, Lodge Road borders the Rollestons Estate with its open plan gardens, protected by existing covenants, which overlook open countryside.

The Priory - is a mixed development of modern housing and maisonettes.

Romans Way - comprises a modern development of mainly bungalows and chalet bungalows.

Whitehead Close off Lodge Road is a recent small development of new homes comprising a mixture of "traditional building styles".

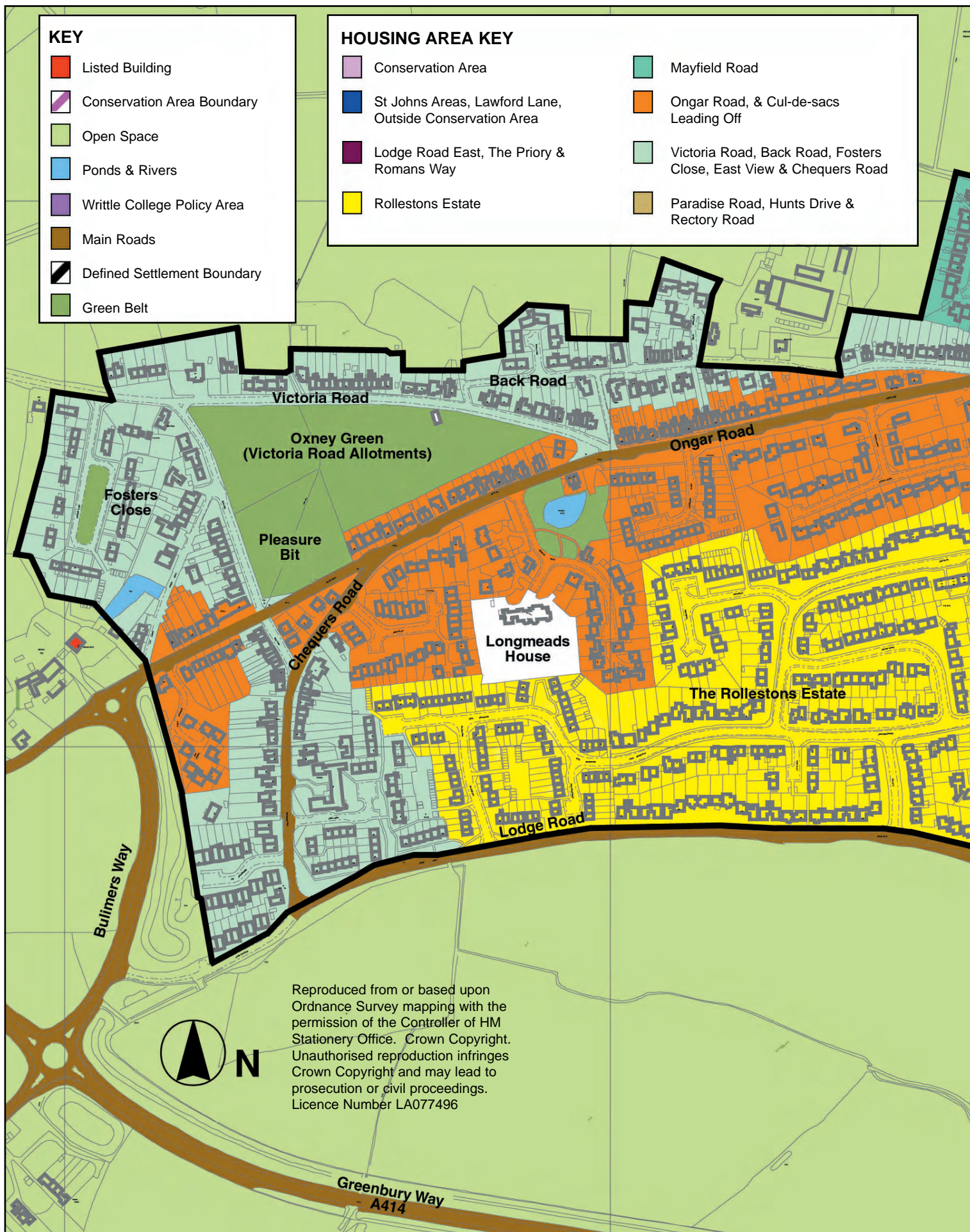
Whitehead Close was named after Herbert George Whitehead, a well respected former Headmaster of Writtle Boys School from 1926 - 1958.

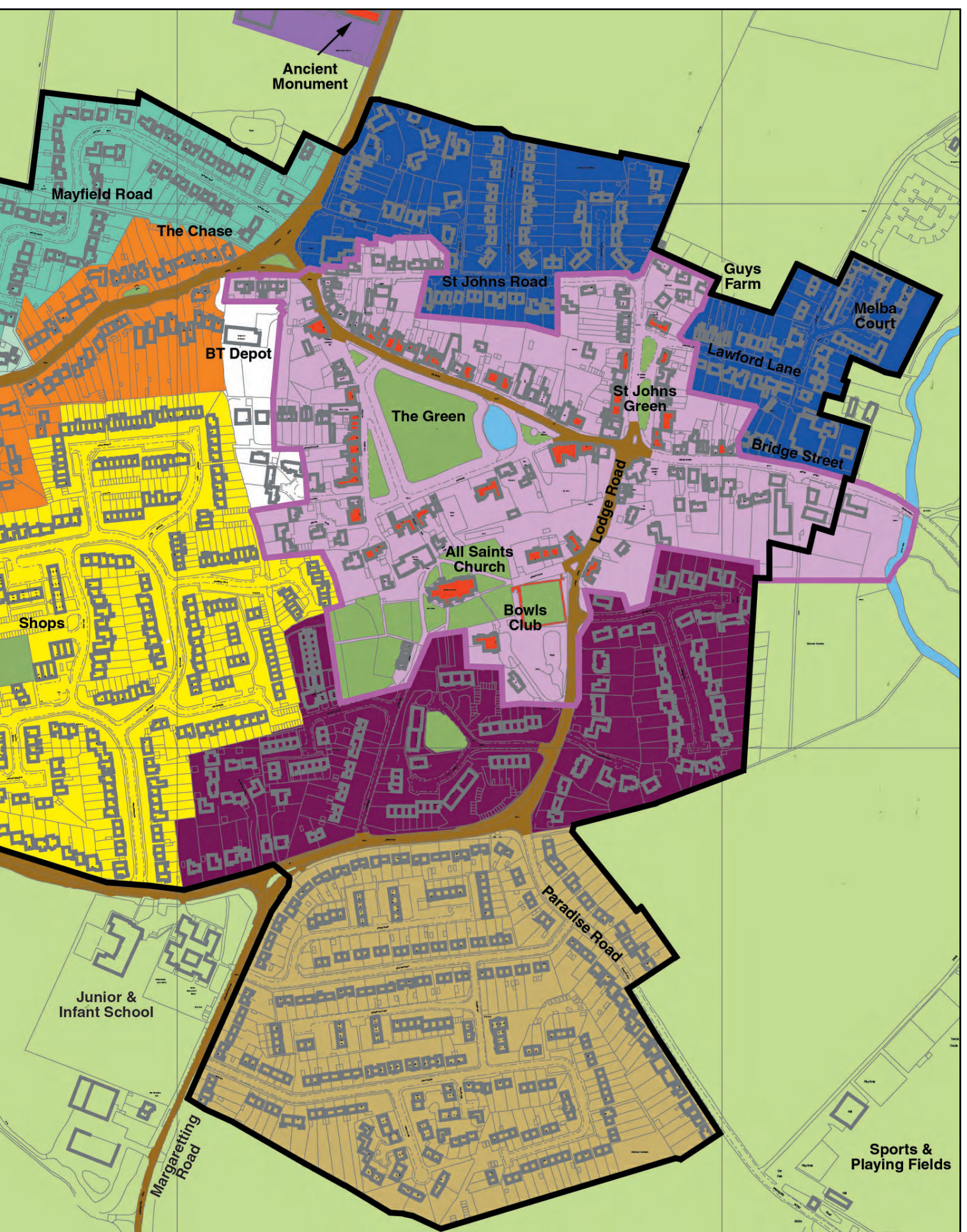
Conditions of the planning consent included the installation of traffic calming measures in Lodge Road.

GUIDANCE -

- * Any development should respect the surrounding trees and new planting should be encouraged.

Writtle Defined Settlement Area





4. Rollestons Estate Including Part of Lodge Road

The estate was constructed in the 1960s and is a development of family housing and flats served by a central shopping area.



Lodge Road where forming part of Rollestons



common areas and some of the garages are in need of repair.

The recently improved small play area adjacent to Alldays and owned by Chelmsford Borough Council must continue to be adequately maintained.

The style of the housing is a combination of detached, semi-detached, terraced and three storey town houses and flats. Front gardens are open plan.

Some of these houses have integral garages, some have an allocated parking area, and others have garaging in separate blocks.

Due to the multi-ownership of those garages in separate blocks many of the



Extensions with front building line set back



GUIDANCE

- * *The open plan front gardens add to the open aspect of the estate. These should be retained and enclosure discouraged.*
- * *The design of side extensions should be subservient to the host property and staggered or set back to avoid a terracing effect.*
- * *If the opportunity arises, the improvement of the garage blocks should be encouraged.*
- * *The continued improvement of play areas, planting and amenity areas is essential and should be considered under any planning agreements relating to enhanced community facilities.*

5. Ongar Road

The houses vary greatly in age and type with Victorian, pre-war and post war housing as well as newer infill. Many of the properties lack off-street parking facilities resulting in a safety hazard on both the road and footpath.

An unmade track, known as The Chase, leads from Ongar Road to Mayfield Road and the Chase Allotments.

Purcell Cole, Redwood Drive and Mansfields are newer developments off the Ongar Road.



The Chase

GUIDANCE

- * *There is limited potential for infill development but any should respect the existing pattern of housing and be in keeping in terms of scale, design and materials.*
- * *It is important that Victorian and Edwardian properties are extended sympathetically to retain their intrinsic character, particular care being taken with roofing materials.*
- * *Care should be taken regarding orientation and scale of extensions to existing properties including conversion of bungalows to houses.*
- * *The Chase should be retained as an unmade track to preserve its natural appearance and the Chase allotments kept as an important social facility.*



6. Victoria Road, Back Road, East View and Chequers Road

Victoria Road Allotments

This area includes the 'Pleasure Bit' recreation area and the Victoria Road allotments. The area has a combination of Victorian linear housing with more modern infill. The properties are mainly small two storey with a few larger family dwellings.

Fosters Close, off Victoria Road, comprises a small development of local authority designed housing around a central green.



The Pleasure Bit

GUIDANCE

- * *The Pleasure Bit and the Victoria Road allotments should be retained as they provide an important social and visual amenity to the area.*
- * *The area of greensward in Back Road adjacent to Daws Farm should be retained.*
- * *The existing pattern of development at Fosters Close with its central green should be retained.*

7. Mayfield Road



Initially comprises 1930s housing leading to a more modern development of chalet bungalows and bungalows in a cul-de-sac arrangement.

Mayfield Road

Rectory Road and Hunts Drive area off Paradise Road comprises mainly early local authority housing with some retirement bungalows and flats. New houses have been built on the site of the allotments and to replace the Airey pre-fabricated housing.



8. Paradise Road Area



An area characterised by 1930s linear housing, mainly semi detached dwellings on the eastern side, with the remainder comprising a variety of house types and materials generally pre-war, being of individual build with a regular building line.

Many of the dwellings are managed by a Housing Association. There is little off street parking resulting in significant on-street parking.

The enclosed front garden hedgerows, the flat or curved roof canopies and the key hole porches are all important characteristics of the area.



Typical canopy

GUIDANCE

- * *Dormer windows to front second storey roof space development should be avoided.*
- * *The retention of front hedgerows in conjunction with on-site parking areas should be encouraged.*
- * *Front porch and side extensions should be in scale with and designed sympathetically with the host dwelling.*
- * *The enclosed front garden hedgerows should be retained.*
- * *The flat or curved roof canopies and the key hole porches and other traditional characteristics of porches and canopies in the area should be retained, wherever possible.*

6. Sports, Shopping, Community Facilities and Churches

The elements that contribute to Writtle as a thriving community are its sports and recreation facilities, its many social amenities, shopping, local employment facilities, medical services and Churches. These provide for the needs of the residents. Visually the shops and All Saints Church form an important part of the heart of the village.



All Saints Church



Sports and Recreation

There are a number of play areas but the general view is that more are required. Brewhouse Hoppitt, adjacent to the Co-op, is an area suggested for improved recreational purposes. Under the ownership of Chelmsford Borough Council it is defined as an informal play area. No building on this site is permitted under an existing planning agreement.



United Reformed Church



Writtle Sports and Social Club

Shopping Facilities

Shopping facilities are catered for in the centre of the village and on the Rollestons Estate and are generally considered to be adequate. Signage should be discreet and the original fenestration maintained.



Some of the useful and essential shops and businesses in the centre of the Village



Primary Care Health Facilities

The Doctors surgery is of innovative design but fits in well with its surroundings.

Such architecture is to be encouraged for any similar community facilities.



Doctors Surgery



Village Hall

Community and Social Facilities

These are well used and additional capacity should be considered and in particular, additional facilities for the youth of the village.



Library



Longmeads Community Centre



Christian Centre

GUIDANCE

- * *Brewhouse Hoppitt is an area for appropriate improvements such as riverside walks and planting, but always retaining its natural appearance.*
- * *It is important that any increased playing field facilities should not detract from the appearance of Paradise Road. Any increased facilities must provide additional parking to ease the congestion in Paradise Road, in a comprehensive and sympathetic manner, using appropriate materials and providing adequate natural screening.*
- * *The conversion of shops to non-retail use should be discouraged as it affects the historic balance.*
- * *The replacement of existing shop fronts with large plate glass windows should be strongly resisted.*
- * *In the Conservation Area, careful consideration must be given to the design of shop fronts and in general, externally illuminated signs are not appropriate.*
- * *Any increase in parking for community facilities, should be sympathetic in terms of siting, materials and landscaping.*

7. Writtle College

Writtle College stands in beautiful landscaped grounds, which are managed to a high standard.

The College was founded in Chelmsford in 1893, and moved to its 200 hectare estate at Writtle in the late 1930s.

Since 1946 the College has continued to develop primarily in the land based industries and related areas.

The College now has 1600 full-time students and 3500 part-time students, currently 420 are resident on campus. A 100 place Children's Nursery was opened at the College in 2002.



Aisled Barn

The College has published a 10 Year Conceptual Development Plan. Included is a plan to develop an irrigation reservoir to the south of the existing fruit area, which will also serve as an amenity and teaching facility.



Writtle College Main Entrance

In addition there are proposals for further accommodation for students to the west and development of more buildings to the east of Lordship Road. The plan also includes the provision of a "gated entrance" along Lordship Road into the village.

On the site stands the "Aisled Barn", a Grade II listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument. King John's Hunting Lodge and the moated royal enclosure, lie within the grounds.

GUIDANCE

- * *The moat of King John's Hunting Lodge has only been partially excavated, and care should be taken to protect this area.*
- * *Development of the College should not be permitted to encroach beyond the development boundaries agreed by Chelmsford Borough Council.*
- * *The scale, design and materials of any new development and associated parking facilities, at the College should accord with the built environment of the village.*
- * *In view of the pressure for further car parking at the College, measures should be taken to minimise car usage.*
- * *Consideration should be given to the impact of car parks on the surrounding sensitive countryside, e.g. type of surface and screening with indigenous species.*
- * *It is important that future developments incorporate traffic calming and appropriate street furniture and lead to a further development of the College's Green Transport Plan.*
- * *Tree screening is essential around all future College developments, particularly on the east side of Lordship Road, between the College and the village.*
- * *It is essential that the gap be maintained between the College and Mayfield Road, and between the College and Melba Court / Kitts Croft.*

8. The Rural Environment

In view of the size of the Parish of Writtle, which contains a large percentage of countryside, the following issues warrant special consideration in the light of changes envisaged in the future.

Physical Description

The rivers Can and Wid have an important part to play in the natural environment and feature on two of the main approaches to the village. Over the centuries, agricultural development has shaped the landscape around Writtle. Almost all the woodland surrounding the village has been cleared creating a landscape of larger fields, with hedgerows.





The village is now surrounded by arable and pasture land, a large area is owned and maintained by Writtle College. The recent decline in agriculture has seen a growth in horse related activities and environmentally orientated rural management. Writtle College is also involved with rare breeds of livestock.

In terms of wildlife, the village has a variety of flora and fauna with dedicated reserves in the Churchyard, on the College Estate and in the Parish Council wildwood land at the entrance to the village. The surrounding woodlands, pastures etc. are also important habitats for wildlife.



Ancient Yew trees in All Saints Churchyard

The wooded area to the south and west, known as Writtle Forest, and the Can River valley to the north of Roxwell Road are two areas, which through their special landscape quality, are of importance locally and countywide. Any development within these areas should be carefully considered in order to retain the natural landscape.

There are 9 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the borough and one of these lies in the north west of the parish near Moor Hall at Newney Green. This naturalised former gravel pit is considered extremely special and English Nature requires that they are notified of any application which affects the SSSI.



Wild flower meadow in Writtle College estate

On the periphery of the village, country lanes such as Cow Watering Lane, Lawford Lane and Victoria Road lead into the rural parts of the parish.

There are also lanes, which through their historical or nature conservation attributes, have been designated "Protected Lanes" by Essex County Council in conjunction with Chelmsford Borough Council. These are categorised by Grade 1 and 2 and include Nathans Lane and Newney Green.

Several ancient green lanes traverse the parish and these must be protected.



Lawford Lane Bridleway

GUIDANCE

- * ***It is essential that the Green Belt is strictly maintained and not allowed to be eroded.***
- * ***Continued protection of Protected Lanes should be actively encouraged and any change to their character strongly resisted.***



New Agricultural Buildings

There has to be strong agricultural justification for any new buildings and particular care should be taken with the siting, scale, materials, design and screening of such structures.

Barns at Sturgeons Farm are well screened

GUIDANCE

- * *In order to protect the skyline view, particular attention should be paid to siting, scale, design, materials and screening of any new agricultural buildings.*

Farm Diversification

The decline in agriculture has led to buildings and associated land being disused, but it is recognised that it is important for the rural economy that both are put to good use. Some of the surrounding farm buildings have been converted into storage and industrial units, stables, fishing lodges and for residential use. It is important that there are safeguards to ensure that the resultant use does not have an adverse affect on the following:-

- * The buildings (if of historical or architectural merit)
- * The neighbourhood in terms of noise, smell and character
- * The character of country lanes by ensuring that suitable accesses are provided.

GUIDANCE

- * *The reuse of suitable, traditional, agricultural buildings should be encouraged for commercial use.*
- * *Conversion to residential use should generally be resisted.*
- * *Adequate measures should be taken to control the use and to screen ancillary facilities, such as car parks, to protect the visual impact on the countryside.*
- * *The introduction of new stables and equestrian facilities such as arenas or manège should be controlled to ensure that they are in sympathy with the surrounding landscape and buildings, regarding siting, design and materials.*

New Large Country Houses

Such houses and grounds must be of outstanding architectural and landscape quality.

GUIDANCE

- * *It is essential that new country houses are designed to accord with the intrinsic character of the area and that any rural architectural development should be well designed.*
- * *The landscaping should be in harmony with the natural countryside setting.*



Permissive footpaths through Writtle College Estate



Public Rights of Way and Permissive Footpaths

Many of the footpaths and bridleways through the parish not only provide an important recreational facility, but also form an essential part of our historic landscape.

There are a number of permissive footpaths through the Writtle College Estate.

GUIDANCE

- * *Diversion or extinguishment of public rights of way, where it would adversely affect the use and appearance of the countryside, should be strongly discouraged.*
- * *The adopted local plan policy R13 of creating riverside walks along the River Wid should be considered and could be achieved by planning gain.*

Extension of Gardens

There is pressure to extend gardens into the open countryside which alters its appearance in urbanising the land.

GUIDANCE

- * *The extension of gardens into agricultural land should be resisted.*

Garden Centres and Nurseries



Garden Centre on the edge of the Village

The areas surrounding the village have seen the establishment of a number of garden centres and nurseries. The range of goods sold has increased so encouraging larger traffic movements. It is acknowledged that they

provide employment, a useful amenity and a local tourist attraction, but it is important that the countryside is protected.

GUIDANCE

- * **The expansion of nurseries and garden centres must be controlled to avoid inappropriate commercial use and adverse affects on the surrounding countryside and road network.**

Protected Hedgerows

Generally hedgerows surrounding gardens are not protected, unless they have formed part of a condition attached to a planning permission.

Chelmsford Borough Council will protect important hedgerows in the area to encourage wildlife habitats and for landscape amenity value. The hedgerow regulations specify

that permission is required for the removal of a hedgerow along side an agricultural field, common land, local nature reserve, or Sites of Special Scientific Interest, unless it is less than 20m in length or borders a garden.

GUIDANCE

- * **It is important to encourage the retention and management of historic or visually important hedgerows in the parish.**

Woodland and Forests

Within the parish are a number of historic woods, principally Writtle Forest (an important ancient landscape); some are protected by Woodland Preservation Orders. Located within the Writtle College Estate is a plantation of rare Black Poplars. They all provide an important habitat for wildlife and it is essential that they are properly managed.



Plantation of rare Black Poplars on Writtle College Estate

GUIDANCE

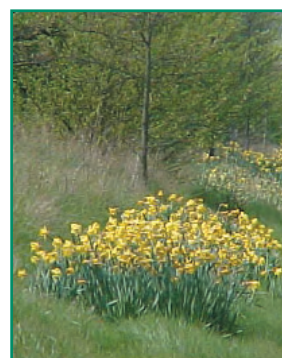
- * **Management and stewardship of existing farmland, woodland and wildlife habitats must be actively encouraged, including the planting of new trees of appropriate species.**

9. Entrances to the Village

The Parish Council and Chelmsford Borough Council have undertaken a number of planting schemes to create avenues along Greenbury Way (A414) and Bulimers Way.



There has been a continuous programme of tree planting, creation of flowerbeds and bulb planting within the village. This encourages wildlife as well as providing an attractive environment.



Most of the available areas within the village have now been planted.

GUIDANCE

- * **The main road entrances to the Village should be carefully designed to make them more distinctive as well as helping to slow traffic; they could incorporate 'gating' using brick plinths, or carved/painted boards, or pargetted scenes of the local features, all with appropriate planting.**

10. Hylands House and Park

Hylands Park to the south east of the village, is a registered English Heritage Park and Garden, occupying in excess of 500 acres. Hylands House is a neo-classical mansion built about 1730 and is the largest remaining historical building in the Parish.



Chelmsford Borough Council bought the Estate in 1966 after the death of Mrs Hanbury, the last private owner, and opened the park to the public. The house was Grade II* listed in 1975 and over the last few years, having survived the threat of demolition, has seen a continuous programme of restoration.



Flint Cottage

Providing an anticipated lottery grant is awarded, all restoration of the park and house will be completed in 2006. Work on the estate is aimed at renovating the Humphry Repton landscape by restoring the Serpentine Lake and paths to their original appearance and laying out the gardens with Regency and Edwardian plantings.

Other work includes restoring the grand staircase, upgrading the stable block as an education and visitors centre, and repairing the old Flint Cottage. It is hoped to bring back Suffolk Punch horses as a visitor attraction. A restored footpath from Widford will be opened and car parking adjacent to the house is being created.

The house and park provide an important facility for public and private functions and informal outdoor activities. The park is also used for an annual major music festival weekend and the Chelmsford Spectacular.

The Hylands House and Park is a very special amenity for the village.



Stable block



GUIDANCE

- * **Support should be given to the continued restoration of Hylands House and parkland.**
- * **Development of facilities, including car parking, should take account of the historic setting of the house, park and vistas in terms of location, materials, design, screening and accessibility.**
- * **All practical measures should be taken to lessen the visual impact of car parking when viewed from the roads and drives approaching the parkland grounds and house, particularly from the A414.**

11. Highways and Infrastructure

Street Furniture



Pedestrianised area by Wear Pond



Street furniture, which is not in keeping with the scale, design and materials or character of a particular part of the village, detracts from the overall visual amenity.

In the Conservation Area, the Parish Council, in partnership with the Borough Council, has erected Victorian style street lights to the inner roads of The Green and changed the lamps on St. Johns Green to white lighting.

The Parish Council has financed bollards and waste bins in keeping with the area.

Utility cables (e.g. telephone and power) create unsightly clutter in a number of locations around the village. In the consultation process many strong views were expressed against the erection of telecom and other masts.

Advertising signs also affect the street scene and so far the introduction of illuminated signs has been resisted, which it is felt would lend an urban appearance to the village.

GUIDANCE

- * *There must be an ongoing scheme for the replacement of the existing street furniture with items more sympathetic to the surroundings.*
- * *The harsh orange street lighting should be replaced where appropriate with either the more subtle orange lighting used on The Green or the white lighting on St Johns Green.*
- * *Developers and utility companies should be encouraged to place all statutory services underground especially within the Conservation Area and beyond where possible.*
- * *The siting and design of telecom masts needs to be very carefully considered and the sharing of facilities by telecoms companies must be encouraged.*
- * *Externally located illuminated signs should be discouraged, particularly in the Conservation Area.*
- * *The proliferation of roadside advertising signs in relation to existing and proposed commercial developments must be resisted and strictly controlled in the countryside.*

Transport

Writtle has progressively become a “rat run” for cars and light vehicles, which detracts from the character and appearance of the village. This combined with the many narrow footways, causes unnecessary hazards and discomfort for villagers. Consequently villagers tend to make journeys by car, which they might otherwise have made on foot or bicycle.



GUIDANCE

- * *Development proposals should take account of the historical context of the village in relation to alterations to the highways.*
- * *To improve the appearance and safety of the roads in the village, in particular The Green, sympathetic surface treatment and traffic calming measures should be encouraged.*

Surface Treatments

The colour and texture of materials on roads and footways has an impact on the appearance of the village and can be used to good effect in “Traffic Calming”. There are surface treatment alternatives to the standard use of tarmac that would be more appropriate in the conservation area, for example the natural colour resin bound surface treatment by Wear Pond.

Highway safety is a consideration in the maintenance and provision of footways; examples of this are the dropped kerbs with dimpled yellow pavers recently installed at junctions throughout the village to aid the disabled and the visually impaired.



Entrance to Whitehead Close and traffic calming outside the schools

GUIDANCE

- * *The type of surface employed for the repair and creation of new footways should be sympathetic, in terms of the colour and texture to the area.*
- * *Within the Conservation Area it is important that more sympathetic road and footway surfacing is employed.*

Parking



The Public car park off the Green

There is a free public car park in the centre of the village, which is well used during the day. However, it is underused at night due to concern over vandalism, which causes those who would otherwise use it, to park round The Green and St. Johns Green.

The parking around The Greens, and along Lodge Road and Ongar Road causes problems in terms of traffic hazards, safety for residents and also creates poor amenity value.

GUIDANCE

- * *In new developments off-street parking that does not adversely affect the appearance of the street scene should be encouraged.*
- * *Within the Conservation Area traffic control measures that are sympathetic to the character of the area should be encouraged.*

Pedestrians and Cycling

There are no dedicated cycle routes through the village and little provision for cycle parking.

The need for an independent cycle path to Chelmsford is well supported. Chelmsford Borough Council, supported by the Parish Council and Writtle College, is about to commence work on the provision of a bridleway/cycle path between St. Johns Green, Fox Burrows Lane, Lawford Lane and Admirals Park. This will link the village with Chelmsford and the Sustrans national cycle network.



GUIDANCE

- * *Cycle parking facilities should be encouraged when upgrading or introducing footways, bridleways and cycle ways.*
- * *Care should be taken with surface treatment, lighting, signage and landscaping to ensure that there are no adverse effects from cycle ways.*

12. Coward's Mill Site formerly Southgate's Mill

The river floodplain between Chelmsford and Writtle represents an historic landscape dating back to medieval times and beyond, as witnessed by some of the artefacts found in the vicinity. The mill site has an almost complete but partly silted up mill water management area encompassing the mill race, overflow and reservoir areas, which are all capable of being restored.



Southgate's Mill, Writtle Road, c1936

A water mill stood on this site from the time of Domesday, the last mill, now demolished was in the ownership of the Southgate family and complemented a windmill; a short distance away on

what is now Skeggs Farm land. These two mills gave the village a continuous supply of flour.



Site of the Old Mill

GUIDANCE

- * *Serious consideration should be given to the restoration of this historic mill water management area.*
- * *Grant money may be available to establish a heritage park, with river walks and perhaps in the long term, a Visitors/Heritage Centre.*
- * *Forming part of the Green Belt, this historic landscape and environment must be an important consideration as the site provides an important undeveloped gap between the village boundary and the urban area of Chelmsford.*

13. Future Development

It is considered essential that the gap between the Parish of Writtle and Chelmsford is maintained.



It is inevitable that the village will have some new development. However there must be a balance achieved between the provision of housing to supply local needs and the preservation and enhancement of our environment.

In terms of the type of new dwellings, although there is currently provision by the Springboard Housing Association and the Chelmer Housing Partnership for the elderly and Chelmer are proposing improvements and modernization to their scheme, Writtle does need additional accommodation

for first time buyers (low cost /affordable housing) and the elderly.

Recent developments within the village have mainly been in the form of family and executive style dwellings, but there has been little new accommodation for first time buyers (apart from Melba Court) or any new development for the elderly. In terms of rented /social landlord housing, the most recent housing has been Buglers Rise (off Hunts Drive) which was built in the mid 1990s.



GUIDANCE

- * **Development should be confined to within the 'Defined Settlement Boundary'.**
- * **PPG3 Housing recommends that densities should be increased. This has to be in balance with the characteristics and the merits of the particular site, the street scene and the natural environment.**
- * **Consideration should be given to the primary health care and other infrastructure requirements (e.g. schools, shopping and community facilities) within the village should any significant housing development be planned for the future.**
- * **All new development should be in keeping in terms of scale, design and materials and respect the integrity of the village.**
- * **Appropriate landscaping and open space will be essential as part of any housing scheme.**
- * **The parish would support some new housing, comprising 2 or 3 bedroom family/starter homes, and would resist large detached dwellings on unsuitable sized plots.**
- * **Village homes need to be provided for village people - limited affordable housing for local needs should be considered where possible, to include rented and shared ownership, to ensure adequate provision of affordable housing and a balanced housing market.**
- * **Affordable housing should be based on needs assessment, particularly if this was to be outside of the village envelope as an exceptional site.**
- * **Whilst it is recognized that transport planning is a matter to be dealt with through the Local Transport Plan, it is imperative that any development undertaken within the parish recognises the historical and route centre aspects of the village and the need to ensure the safety of the villagers and their daily needs.**
- * **The use of S106/S278 Agreements can be pursued in appropriate circumstances in order to improve the village infrastructure and minimize existing and inevitable problems.**
- * **Consideration of large scale schemes outside the Parish boundary must take account of the short and long term impact of traffic through the village.**

WRITTLE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

References:
The Essex Design Guide
Chelmsford Borough Local Plan
Writtle College 10 Year Conceptual Development Plan

With thanks to:
Local Heritage Initiative
The Rural Community Council of Essex
Chelmsford Borough Council
Writtle Parish Council
Writtle Archives
Writtle College

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Further copies of this VDS are available from Writtle Library; The Post Office; Writtle Archives

Members of the VDS Steering Group: -

Ralph Bray (Chairman)	Gordon Ingram
Betty Laflin	John Turner
Jenny Trevor	Jonathan Chrispin
John McLarty	Sue Bell
Tom White	Wendy Hibbitt

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Writtle Village Design Statement

