HS062

Chelmsford Local Plan Review 2022 – 2041 Examination

MATTERS, ISSUES AND QUESTIONS (MIQs)

Hearing Statement: Chignal Parish Council, 20th October 2026

Representor: Chignal Parish Council (308535)

Comment ID: AS-964 Consultation Point: Site 18a

MATTER 6: SITE SELECTION

Growth Area 1 – Central and Urban Chelmsford

Location 18 – North West Chelmsford - Strategic Growth Site Policy 18a.

f. What is the likely impact of the proposed allocation on the following factors:

• Rural landscape character, agricultural land and heritage assets

Despite its location on the edge of Chelmsford's urban area, Chignal Parish has managed to retain its unique rural character, identity and traditions. Agriculture is still the main economic activity and there is a strong sense of community. In its Regulation 19 representations, the Parish Council challenged the assessment of Location 18a in the IIA as suitable for a further housing allocation. It is open countryside in the Rural Area, not in the Chelmsford City Centre or Urban Area; on productive food growing Grade 2 agricultural land, the loss of which is contrary to national policy; it will damage the setting of several listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets; and will harm the rural landscape character of the parish.

The Council's response to the representations on Site 18a in the Regulation 22 Statement of Consultation is that the "suite of policies in the Plan seek to protect the character of landscapes". However, the visual impact of an urban development of 100 houses on site 18a, which is currently open countryside, would be contrary to Policy DM8 New buildings and structures in the rural area. **"**Planning permission will be granted for new buildings and structures in the Rural Area where the development will not adversely impact on the identified intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside".

The Council's Regulation 22 response to the loss of Grade 2, best and most versatile farmland is that "to meet our development needs it is inevitable that some agricultural land will be used for development". This is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF) Dec 2023, Chapter 15, Conserving and enhancing the natural environment para. 180 which states, "Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and

other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland".

Site 18a is within the wider setting of a number of listed buildings, including the Grade II* Chobbings Farmhouse (LEN 1306286), and Grade II listed Barn at Chobbings Farmhouse (LEN 1237444), Granary at Chobbings Farm (LEN 1237445), and Priors (LEN 1338427). Historic England (1249901) Comment ID: AS-1001 concedes that **"**The rural setting makes an important contribution to the setting of these buildings - development of the site would impact on how the group of listed buildings are experienced within a rural landscape and therefore result in a level of harm to their significance". The Parish Council does not agree that the proposed mitigation measures to retain views from the proposed development and to protect the backdrop of views to the west will be sufficient to mitigate the harm to the rural setting of these listed buildings.

The proposed development on farmland at Site 18a is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF) Dec 2023, Chapter 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, para 206. "Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of: a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional".

• Biodiversity and green infrastructure

Under the Environment Act, 2021, local planning authorities have a legal duty to have regard to the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy for their area. They should consider the priorities set out in the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy when determining how their local plan should contribute to and enhance the local and natural environment. The Essex LNRS aims to have green and blue habitats covering 25% of the county by 2030, with an ambition to achieve 30%, compared to 14% coverage today.

On the northern edge of Site 18a, Broomwood Manor, which includes Broomwood and a wildlife pond, and the immediate surrounding rural area, has an abundance of green and blue wildlife habitats. An Essex Wildlife Trust report in July 2020 on Broomwood Manor, notes the presence of Great Crested Newts, birds of prey, badger sets, a variety of deer, wildflower meadow and large lentic water moat supporting invertebrates, as well as hedgerows supporting owls, bats and birds. Extensive badger setts are active between these three what3words locations: ///buckets.haven.indicates; ///scooters.reclined.boat; ///choppers.pronouns.princely, the latter site is at the wildlife pond.

The proposed intrusive construction activity and housing development immediately adjacent to this historic property would cause significant disturbance and harm to such an important wildlife habitat.

The Parish Council Policy agrees with Essex County Council's comments (AS-1067) that strong green buffers and PRoW enhancements would be required to protect the biodiversity of the area around Broomwood Manor and that reference should be made to the opportunities for connectivity beyond the site by having regard to the LNRS. However, these proposed extensive green buffers around Broomwood Manor and along the other edges of the site 18a would have to be properly planted and maintained and protected on a long-term basis. The Parish Council has reservations that without effective enforcement this planting would fail to thrive. Ideally, the City Council should take on the management of the green buffers to ensure their success.

• The strategic and local highway network

Essex County Council's traffic speed and volume data from automatic traffic counts in November 2018 and March 2026 on Hollow Lane and Chignal Road, Chignal Smealey show a marked increase in traffic since the building of the Little Hollows and Copperfield Place housing estates, south of Site 18a.

The 2018 survey of Chignal road north of Hollow Lane recorded a combined average weekday volume of 2,577, (south bound 1,322; northbound 1,255). The March 2026 survey of Chignal Road, north of Hollow Lane shows a slight increase since 2018 in average weekday traffic volume: 2,794, (southbound 1,479; northbound 1,315).

However, the traffic counter south of the Hollow Lane junction demonstrates the impact of the new housing at Little Hollows and Copperfield Place on Chignal Road, with average weekday traffic volume of 4,048, (southbound 2,141; northbound 1,907). The additional traffic generated by another 100 houses at site 18a entering Chignal Road close to the already inadequate junction with Hollow Lane would result in unacceptable congestion and road safety issues on this narrow rural road.

Given this evidence, the Parish Council does not agree with the Council's response in the Regulation 22 Statement of Consultation that "the latest highway modelling does not consider the overall impact on the local or strategic highway network will be severe". In addition to congestion on Chignal Road and the junction with the A1060, there would be a knock-effect for other local roads, particularly if there are another 200 houses on site 19.

The access to site18a on Chignal Road adjoins the entrance to Broomwood Manor and is close to the PRoW. The Parish Council considers that this will create a road safety hazard for drivers and pedestrians.

• Other infrastructure including public transport, education, health, utilities and recreation

Site 18a would not contribute to the provision of additional services and facilities and would increase pressure on existing services and facilities.

Paragraph 95 of the NPPF requires local authorities to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach in meeting education requirements – and allowing development that will widen choice in education. There are no plans for education provision as part of the development on site 18a.

The Essex Education website shows only two schools listed for children who live in the CM1 catchment area, in which site 18a is located: Newlands Spring Primary & Infant School, (1.1 KM from the development) and Chelmer Valley High School, (5.3 KM from the development). Evidence from the schools' websites in October 2026 show that both are full with an outstanding waiting list. This situation was verified by residents from Little Hollows, immediately adjacent to site 18a, who cannot get a place locally for their children.

The Council responded in the Regulation 22 Statement of Consultation that "Any expansion of Schools will need to comply with relevant open space/sports pitch requirements for Schools". This statement assumes that local schools would have sufficient land for expansion without sacrificing school playing fields. The Parish Council understands that this would not be possible at Newlands Spring Primary & Infant School.

The situation for local health provision is even worse. The only GP surgery that would serve site 18a is Melbourne House Surgery, Parkside, 2.4 KM from the development. The website indicates that you are "likely" to be accepted as a patient if you register, but with the possibility of another 100 new homes, equating to some 300 people, it is unknown whether new patient places would continue to be available, especially given the proposed 200 homes at site 19 whose residents would also have to access this surgery.

• Air quality, light and noise pollution

SEND and autistic children from the local Hawthorn school visit Broomwood Manor every week, to enable them to enjoy the quiet, secure, private setting of the meadow and wood. It offers them a unique quiet and safe local environment customised to their needs and designed in partnership with the school. Noise and related sensory issues can be very disruptive and impact negatively on the children's welfare and enjoyment of such settings. The development of 100 houses would be within 20m of Broomwood Manor and have a significant impact on these children, during the construction period and after the houses have been occupied.

The Parish Council is not satisfied by the assurances provided by the Council in the Regulation 22 Statement of Consultation that "Any impact on amenities from construction activity is a relative short term impact which can be managed by appropriate planning conditions as part of any future planning application".

Light pollution from homes, streetlights and car headlights is another concern for both adjoining residents and wildlife. The Chignal Villages Design Statement reflects the views of its residents that streetlights are inappropriate in their rural community.

There are also concerns that surface water from the development at site18a could run into the ditch by Broomwood Manor and cause the pond to overflow and become polluted.

g. What mitigation measures would be necessary to ensure a sustainable form of development, and are they clearly set out?

The Parish Council is not persuaded that any of the mitigation measures proposed to ensure a sustainable form of development at site 18a would be effective in countering the damage to this area of our rural parish.