

Skip Catley, response to CCC Issues & Options Consultation

1. The majority of Broomfield's folk do not want to lose the village identity to become part of Chelmsford's suburbia, or disappear like the town of Moulsham and Rainsford Village

Since the 1930s the then quite small Chelmsford appropriated for itself large areas of Broomfield, a village which in earlier times was considered important. There was a Roman Villa here and it is understood that pagan ceremonies took place where the Norman Church now stands. When the Saxons arrived they named the area Broomfelda (fields of Broom – the emblem of the village).

Whereas most Saxon Villages had three manors, Broomfield had four (Broomfield Hall, Patching Hall, Wood Hall and Belsteads) as stated in the Domesday Book, and a Saxon Chieftain was buried here in Broomfield. (Two of the four manors have been surrendered to Chelmsford).

Some of Broomfield's population are descended from families who have lived here for generations, whilst others have moved here to get away from suburbia elsewhere, or just because they wanted to live here – considering it a pretty, close-knit place.

2. At the time of the Little Ice Age (in the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First) it stopped short of Chelmsford, the huge ice glacier flow causing the River Thames and surrounding landscape to be pushed downwards. On melting, the glacier discharged large flint stones, gravel and sand where the River Thames had been (roughly where the River Chelmer now lies) mostly on the Eastern side of the Chelmer, with much less to the West (as proven by exploratory digs in the 1920s and early 1930s on the West side, including what is now my back garden and where Broomhall Road stands) hence the better agricultural land in Broomfield compared with Boreham where there has been much sand, gravel and stone extraction.

3. Pre 2011 North Chelmsford Area Action Plan (NCAAP) there were approximately 1800 houses in Broomfield. Aside from odd infilling, there are now 130 more at Saxon Gate with 670 to be built. There are or is to be 350 at Broomfield Hospital (mostly for nursing staff) and the Beaulieu spillover into Broomfield is to be 800, totalling 3750.

Thus, this increase of 1950 new homes more than doubles the 1800 above.

This situation cannot go on indefinitely. Common sense dictates that there should be no more houses built in Broomfield within the next 30 years.

4. During World War 2, thousands of merchant seamen and naval personnel were lost at sea whilst attempting to provide foodstuffs etc for the three military services and the population of the UK. Because, in spite of tremendous efforts by British farmers and old chaps & boys 'Digging For Victory' there was often not enough. At that time we had an empire too.

Now we have an increased population. The UK is struggling to come out of a depression and a good part of Europe and elsewhere is in a muddle. Currently we eat much food that comes from elsewhere. There are all sorts of reasons as to why we should not build reasonable land; and what is currently grassland too should the need arise (for this can readily be ploughed in and cropped).

If there's a need for more houses in the future then disused quarry areas and Boreham Airfield should be used. Some of the Airfield could be used immediately. By giving the gravel extracting companies 10 years to get out what they can then there will be plenty of space there to build houses which will be near the proposed new railway station

5. As a boy in World War 2 I saw and learned a lot in a short time. I would help Will Hall at Broomfield hall to hoe the weeds in the pea fields so as to guarantee the crop; or spreading manure; or taking a Suffolk Punch horse and cart to the top of New Barn lane to be loaded by the men with pitchforks with sheaves of corn, and bring the loaded cart down to the farmyard for stacking; or potato picking; et cetera during the holidays.

My father was in the Royal Air Force and my mother managed Butlers, this big house which was requisitioned to be a Womens Land Army hostel with 36 girls. They came from the North of England and Scotland. MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) expected the Land Army girls to go back to their parents' homes at the weekends but there were no rail passes or ration coupons for them (and of course with the best of intentions, the railways found it somewhat difficult to run to schedule) so they couldn't go. Will Day allowed me set my homemade snares in his fields and I would inspect these before going off to school in the morning, and again in the evening. I'd skin and gut the rabbits caught and take them to my mother who found all sorts of ways to feed them to the Land Army girls. If there were plenty I'd be sent round the village to donate pieces of rabbit to the old widows and single ladies. (After the Great War Broomfield was called the 'Village of Widows' In 1914 the population was 104. The brass plaque in Broomfield Church commemorates the death of 56 men who had lost their lives in that war from the village, leaving wives, fiances and sweethearts to fend for themselves alone) The streams in the village were clean in those days. I knew where fine watercress rich in iron) grew, so on Saturday mornings for as long as the watercress flourished I'd take Mother's large trug and come back with it full. Mother then tied the watercress into bunches using elastic bands and I'd deliver it to the old ladies.

Everyone looked after everyone then, with everyone knowing one another. There is still some of this attitude in the village now.

I care for Broomfield Village very much, hence my attempt, at age 82, to complete at least part of the paper comments form.

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