

# BROOMFIELD

## COMMUNITY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STATEMENT

### Acknowledgements

This Community Landscape Character Assessment has been produced by the Broomfield Village Design Statement (VDS) Association. All Broomfield residents are members. The Committee members are:

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The Committee would like to thank:

- Ken Newman for contributing the geology section in this booklet
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October 2010



The Landscape is the most popular reason for living in Broomfield. It defines the village, supporting its sense of identity as a village community.

Produced by Broomfield Village Design Statement Association  
October 2010

Through our Parish Plan questionnaire in 2004/5, we learned that:

- **98%** of residents liked/liked a lot the closeness to open countryside
- **98%** thought it was important/very important that Broomfield is surrounded by countryside
- **94%** liked/like a lot living in a village
- **90%** valued the countryside because it provides a natural break between Broomfield and other settlements
- **84%** liked/liked a lot the separate feeling and identity from Chelmsford.

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## Introduction

### What is a Community Landscape Character Statement?

A community landscape character statement sets out what local people think about the landscape around their village or town. Although it brings in some technical information, the main purpose is for local people to say how they feel – which features or areas they particularly value and why.

### Why write a Statement for Broomfield?

In 2003, the Parish Council recruited a group of volunteers to draw up a parish plan. This was based on a wide consultation with local residents, including a questionnaire which achieved over a 31% response rate and an open day that attracted over 350 people. One of the key findings was just how important local people think their local landscape is – see the page opposite for some of the statistics. As a parish plan covers a wide range of topics, the space for any one of them is limited. Since it is so important to local people, we felt that the landscape deserved a separate booklet that can go into more detail about why it is so important to the local community.

Also since 2003, the planning authority Chelmsford Borough Council has been consulting about where new housing and other development should be located up to 2021. It has now been decided that most of the 'greenfield' development will take place to the north of Chelmsford, in Springfield and Broomfield. This means there will be significant changes to some parts of the landscape around Broomfield. It is even more important therefore that the local community is clear about which areas of the surrounding countryside should be protected and where development can be accommodated.

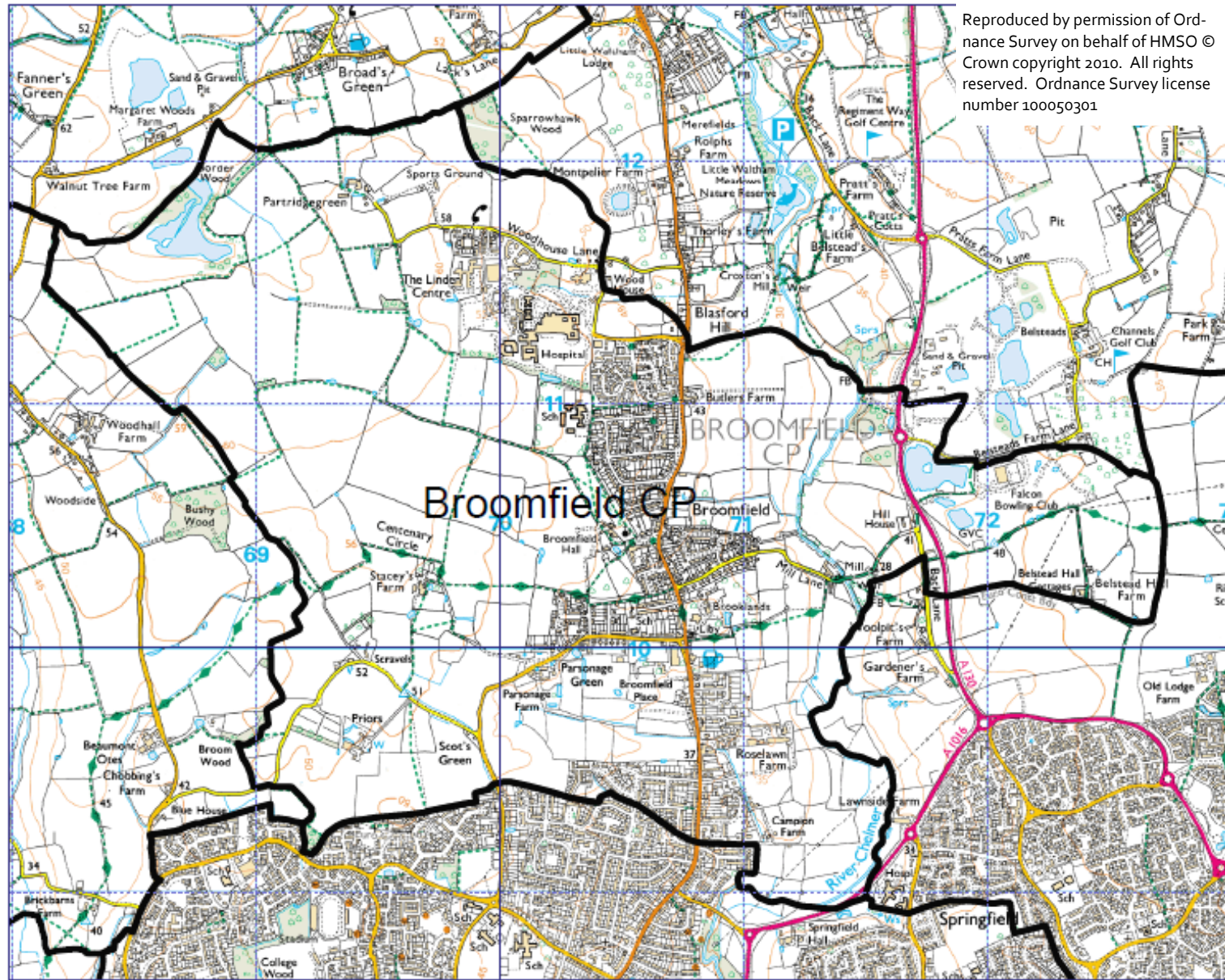
### Other Community Plans for Broomfield

As well as this Landscape Character Statement, there are other plans that have been developed at Parish level after consultation with the local community:

- the Parish Plan (published in 2005). As indicated above, this covers a wide range of topics, for instance shops and services, leisure activities, crime and anti-social behaviour, traffic and encouraging local community spirit.
- the Village Design Statement (VDS). This concentrates on the built environment – buildings, architecture and street furniture. It emphasises features that should be retained or developed further in new development to make sure the village keeps the characteristics that make it distinctive. The VDS is being produced alongside this Landscape Character Statement.

Please contact the Parish Council office (broomfieldparishcouncil@hotmail.com or 01245 441660) for copies of these community plans.





## How the Landscape has Developed

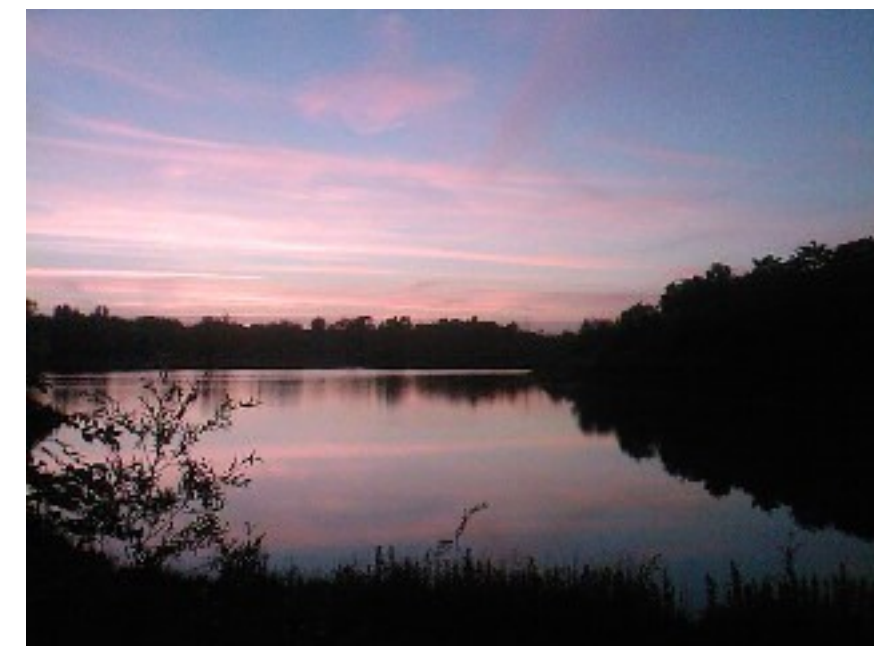
Broomfield has always been in close association with its landscape setting, extending along shallow upper slopes of the Chelmer valley on land farmed from the earliest times. This landscape of small, irregular fields enclosed by ancient hedges, ditches (some deep) and scattered small woods & ponds was here at least a thousand years ago. Its texture remains, even in areas now within Broomfield village where old field boundaries can still be detected. The sequence of farmsteads, running along the road north out of Chelmsford, below the Pleshey Farmland plateau edge and above the meadows of the Chelmer valley, defined the village outline as it grew around its manor house and church. Principal features are Church Green, Angel Green and Parsonage Green uniting the heart of Broomfield with open countryside surrounding it. Church Green finds its link via the ancient pasture land of Broom Pightle and Night Pasture. Angel Green connects down into the Chelmer Valley. Parsonage Green looks out to the plateau. The open background is still farmed well in a landscape very like Roman villa countryside would have been. Looking outward in almost any direction, the distant horizon seems to be woodland; an illusion created by convergence of the many small woods, copses and trees in view. Although the prospect into the valley from south of the village was lost when building extended out of Chelmsford along Gutters Hill, those significant views remain expansive from the north. The river is lined with willows and has alder too. There are many fine field trees. Numerous hedgerows have been conserved but others lost and some are in need of restoration, particularly along surviving lanes which are all important in this delicate North Essex landscape. From outside, especially from the plateau, Broomfield is marked by the spire of its church and tall trees in private grounds but is otherwise largely unseen, except in the tranquil valley itself from which buildings are seen running along its western rim. It is a settlement still in harmony with its surroundings.

## Relief

The parish sits unequally astride the Chelmer valley as the river flows south from the great East Anglian Boulder Clay plateau.

The Chelmer falls from 30 metres height near Croxton's Mill to 25 metres at Valley Bridge, the flood plain widening from less than 100 metres in the north to almost 300 metres in the south. Four-fifths of Broomfield lies to the west of the river, rising gently, but in a somewhat step-like manner, to 60 metres between the Linden Centre and Woodhall Farm, then falling away northwards past Border Wood. To the east the parish rises more steeply at first (emphasized by river cliffs north and south of Mill Lane), then gently to just over 50 metres around Belstead Hall Cottages.

See pages 18 and 19 for the Geology of Broomfield.

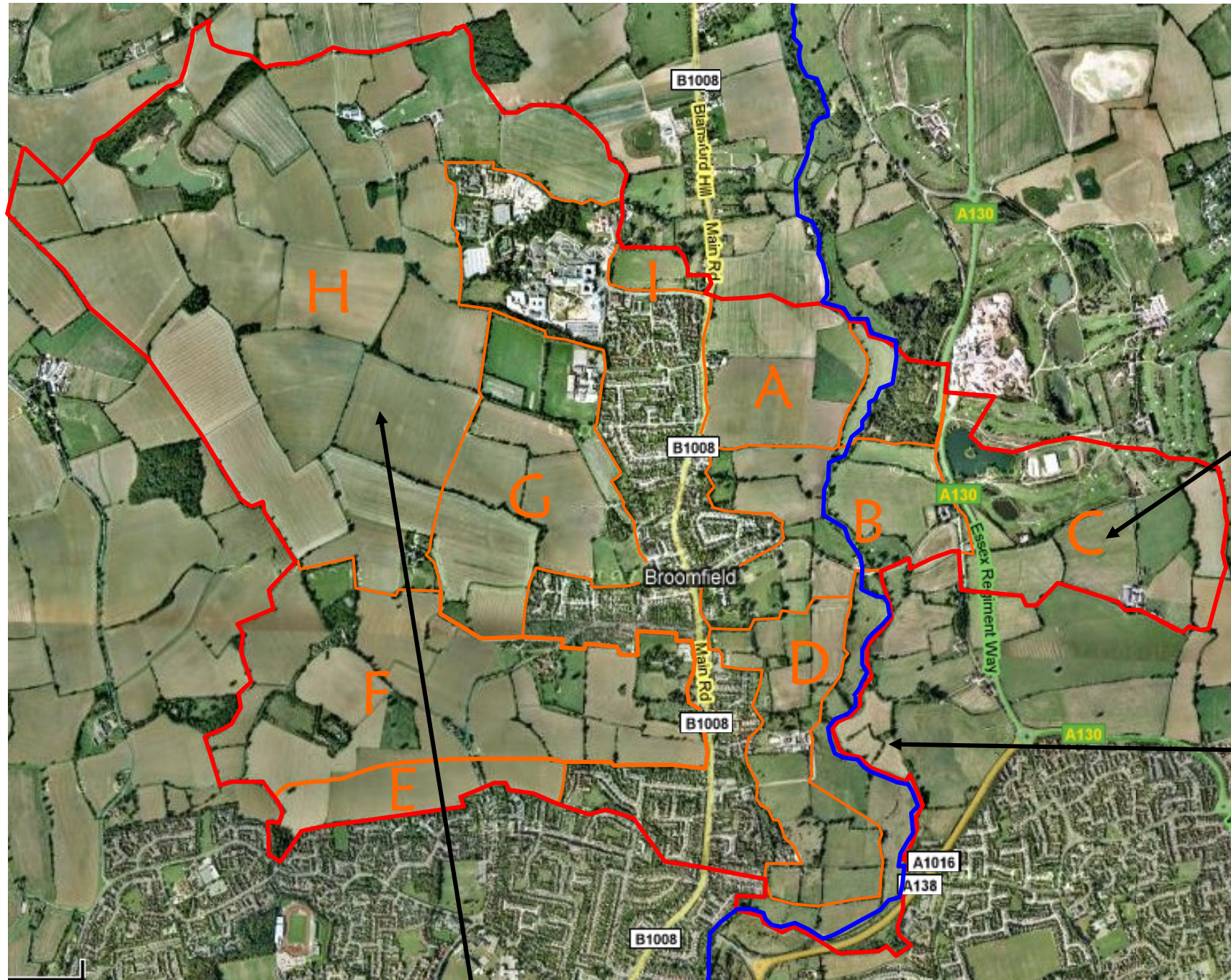


Changing landscape: former gravel workings now returned to the wild



## Broomfield and the Wider Landscape

In the Chelmsford Landscape Character Assessment, Broomfield is made up of three landscape areas, Pleshey Farmland Plateau, the Upper Chelmer River Valley and Boreham Farmland Plateau. All three extend beyond the Parish into the surrounding parishes.



The text on this page gives a very brief summary of the key characteristics of each type of landscape. The full document gives much more information, for instance on, historic land use, ecological features and sensitivities to change. It can be found on the Chelmsford Borough Council website at planning and building control/ LDF/LDF evidence base (item 28).

### Boreham Farmland Plateau

- Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable and pastoral fields, marked by hedgerows, banks and ditches
- Small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape
- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets
- A concentration of isolated farmsteads
- Network of narrow winding lanes
- Sense of tranquillity reduced by traffic noise.

### Upper Chelmer River Valley

- Narrow valley, with a restricted valley floor
- Small meandering river channel
- Dense riverside trees
- Arable valley sides with a fairly open character
- Small linear settlements occupy the upper valley sides or straggle down to a few bridging points
- Historic watermills and Second World War pillboxes are distinctive features
- Mostly tranquil away from Chelmsford
- Introduces an important green corridor into Chelmsford

### Pleshey Farmland Plateau

- Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size fields, marked by sinuous hedgerows and ditches
- Small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape
- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, typically with greens and occasionally ponds
- Comprehensive network of narrow winding lanes
- Strong sense of tranquillity

### What the letters mean

The Broomfield Parish Plan questionnaire asked local people to say which areas of countryside should be protected from large scale development. For this purpose, the Parish was divided into 9 areas (A to I), as shown on the map above

The maps and text on the following pages sets out the local community's views, as revealed through the Parish Plan questionnaire, on the priority for protecting each area (1<sup>st</sup> = should be most protected, 9<sup>th</sup> = least protected). It also includes:

- a short description of the land and why it is distinctive or significant
- any special features, for instance archaeological sites
- how the area could be improved.





Across the Chelmer towards Croxton's Mill

### Area A

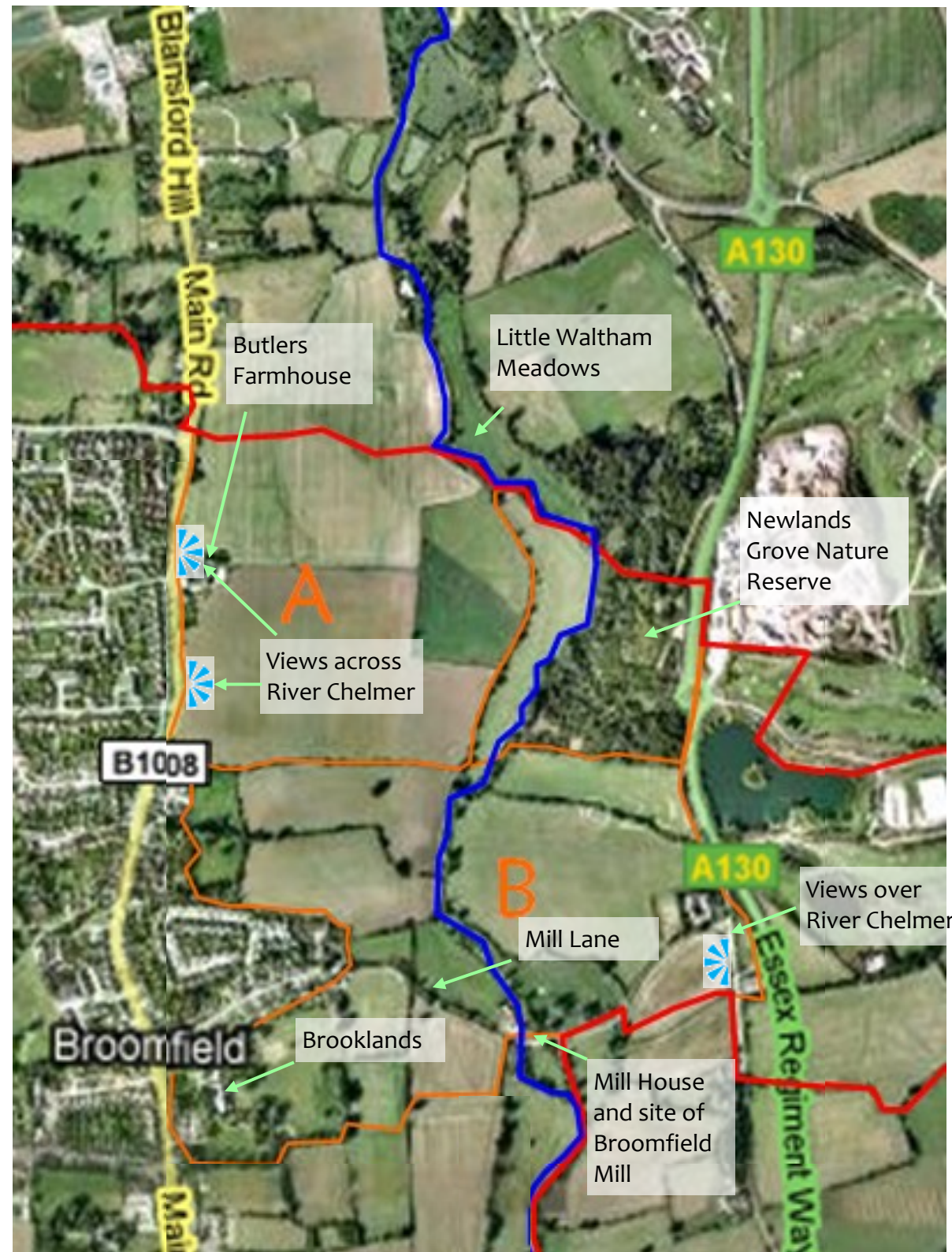
Priority for Protection - 4th (out of 9)

**Description:** This area is based on Butlers Farm, the fields which stretch from Main Road down to the Chelmer flood plain. The land slopes gently towards the river, giving good views across the Chelmer valley to the A130 Essex Regiment Way and beyond.

**Significance:** As you drive northwards along the B1008 through Broomfield, this area marks the end of the built up area of Chelmsford and Broomfield with the extended views of countryside to the East.

**Special features:** In Area A itself, the farmhouse of Butlers Farm is the only special feature. However it adjoins (across the Chelmer) Little Waltham Meadows and Newlands Grove nature reserve.

**Possible improvements:** improved footpath access. There is a footpath from Butlers Farmhouse towards the River Chelmer, but there is no access along this side of the river itself. Also, the Little Waltham meadows could be extended across the river into this part of Broomfield.



### Area B

Priority for Protection - 2nd (out of 9)

**Description:** This area is based on Mill Lane, stretching from Main Road, around the built-up area of Glebe Crescent and Mill Lane, down to the river and up the hill opposite to the A130. To the south of Mill Lane lie the cricket field and football pitches. To the north is the large garden of Butlers, some smaller arable fields and attractive meadowland adjacent to the river.

**Significance:** Since Mill Lane was closed to traffic in 1989, it has become a quiet and well used footpath with vehicle access only to 2 or 3 properties. As it traverses the river valley, it offers the walker a cross section of the best landscape within the Chelmer Valley. It is also acts a cycle path, linking Broomfield with Springfield. Other leisure activities include angling.

**Special features:** include the impressive Victorian mansion of Brooklands (which is outside the current settlement area) and the garden of Butlers (the house is just within the settlement area). By the river is the Georgian Mill House next to the site of Broomfield Mill, which was demolished in the 1920s. The adjacent bridge and sluice on the Chelmer remain attractive features, with the river itself adding variety through the seasons as it rises and falls.

**Possible improvements:** improved public access. The area is well served by east/west footpaths (e.g. Sweeps Walk and Mill Lane) but there is less access north/south along the river. There is now a permissive footpath along the east side of the Chelmer from Mill Lane to the Newlands Grove nature reserve, but it is not a right of way for pedestrians or cyclists.



Towards Newlands Grove Nature reserve



The River Chelmer



The Chelmer and Mill House



### Area C

Priority for Protection - 8th (out of 9)

**Description:** This area forms the most eastern part of the Parish of Broomfield. It is made up of large arable fields that lie to the north of Belstead Hall Farm (which is right on the parish boundary). To the north, the fields give way to Channels Golf Course and the Mid-Essex Gravels site (just across the boundary in Little Waltham). The latter has been identified as an employment area by Chelmsford Borough Council. Around half of area C has also been identified for development as part of the proposed north-east Springfield neighbourhood.

**Significance:** Since 1989 with the construction of the A130 Essex Regiment Way, this part of the Parish has been somewhat cut off from the rest of the Parish. There is footpath access from Mill Lane but no safe crossing point on Essex Regiment Way.

**Special features:** A large lake in one of the old gravel pits

**Possible improvements:** If this part of the Parish is developed, improved cycle access would be needed, including a safe crossing of Essex Regiment Way.



Triangulation Stone

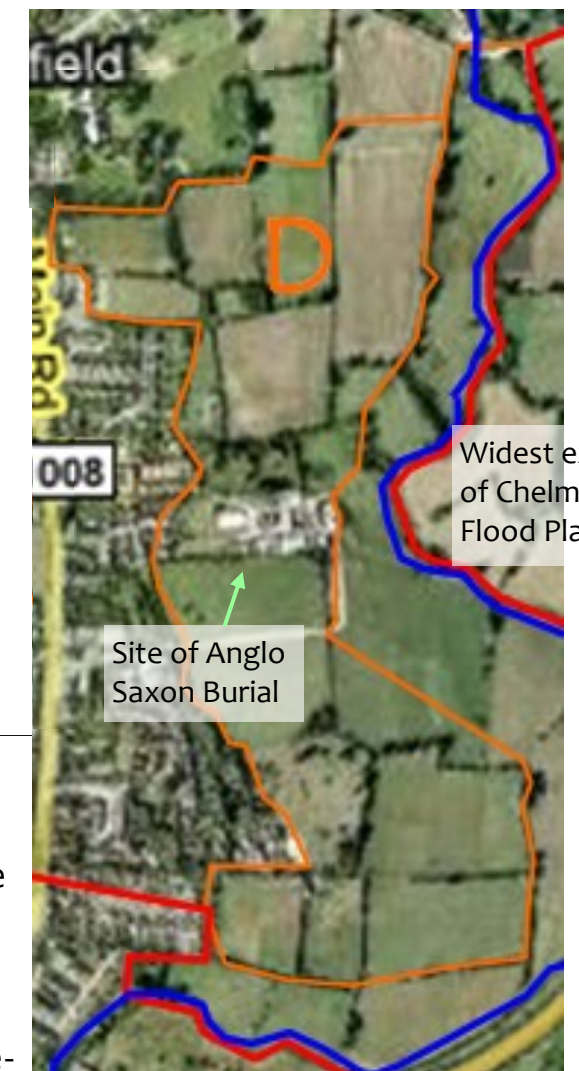


Footpath  
across fields



From Valley  
Bridge Road  
looking  
north

Across the River Chelmer  
towards Roselawn farm



Widest extent  
of Chelmer  
Flood Plain

### Area D

Priority for Protection - 6th (out of 9)

**Description:** This area forms the southern part of the Chelmer Valley in the Parish. Most of the development on the eastern side of Main Road occupies a slight ridge, which then falls away towards the river and its flood plain. Most of the fields are small or medium size.

**Significance:** The adjacent flood plain is attractive (particularly in late spring) and can be seen from the A138 Chelmer Valley Road. However, the overall significance of this area is limited, as there is no public access

**Special features:** the site of the Anglo-Saxon burial, discovered in the 1880s. This was of national significance prior to the discovery of the larger Sutton Hoo burial site in Suffolk.

**Possible improvements:** improved footpath access alongside the river and also to the Anglo-Saxon burial site, which could be commemorated by a monument of some kind. A north/south cycle path could also be included, as the existing cycle path into Chelmsford stops at the Parish



**Area F**  
**Priority for Protection - 5th (out of 9)**

Description: Large arable fields around School Lane and Hollow Lane, with clear uninterrupted views.

Significance: This area forms the strategic gap between Chelmsford and Broomfield, narrow at the eastern Main Road end but widening out to create a significant gap.

Special features: This area contains 2 of Broomfield's 5 greens, Parsonage Green and Scot's Green, with a third (Angel Green) immediately adjacent. It also contains a number of Broomfield's historic buildings and their grounds: Broomfield Place, the Parsonage, Scravels and Priors. Immediately adjacent to the western end lies Broom Wood. Hollow Lane is also an interesting feature which, with lower levels of traffic, is well used for cycling and walking.

Possible improvements: Improved public access at the eastern (Main Road) end



The Gap



Bluebells in Broom Wood



The edge of Newlands Spring



Footpaths off Hollow Lane



**Area E**  
**Priority for Protection - 7th (out of 9)**

Description: This area is a narrow 150 m strip alongside the 1980s Newlands Spring development, comprising parts of several large arable fields. Along with area F, it forms the existing gap between the Broomfield settlement areas. In the parish plan questionnaire, it was included as a separate area to test whether Broomfield residents felt it was as significant in protecting the gap as the adjoining area F.

Significance: the response to the questionnaire showed that it was not as significant as area F.

Special features: Daffy Wood, an area of old woodland noted (as the name suggests) for its wild daffodils

Possible improvements: the current suburban/rural boundary here is quite stark (this may be a strength or weakness, depending on one's point of view!). Plans for any development in this area should consider the best form for this boundary to take.





Broom Pightle and Night Pasture



New Barn Lane

## Area H

### Priority for Protection - 3rd (out of 9)

**Description:** This area is classic Pleshey Farmland Plateau (see above), containing medium/large fields with pockets of woodland. As the highest land in the Parish, it offers good views eastwards, towards the village and beyond and it can be seen clearly from the other side of the Chelmer Valley. As the current settlement sits comfortably in the gentle 'dip' of the valley, the views are not obstructed by buildings (although some recent construction on the Broomfield Hospital site is noticeable because of its height and futuristic design).

**Significance:** Rising above the B1008 corridor, it has a strong sense of tranquillity so offers a fairly immediate contrast with settlements around the edge of Chelmsford. The area is well-served by a network of footpaths, with several paths coming out of the village (for instance New Barn Lane).

**Special features:** Stacey's Farmhouse, Partridge Green and the site of Broomfield's Roman villa. Several small pockets of woodland (the largest being Border Wood) help to frame the wide views to the north and west. A large lake in a former gravel pit near Border Wood also provides an interesting feature and is a haven for wildlife and anglers.

**Possible improvements:** although the Hospital buildings are well-screened by trees from the south, greater tree cover could be provided along its western boundary, particularly with the intensification of the site.



The churchyard in all weathers



## Area G

### Priority for Protection - 1st (out of 9)

**Description:** This area mostly contains medium sized arable fields with some meadowland (Night Pasture and Broom Pightle) around Broomfield Hall. It is well-served by footpaths which follow around the edge of this area, making it a popular circular route for walkers.

**Significance:** This area serves as a 'funnel' linking historic Church Green and the Churchyard with wider countryside to the west.

**Special features:** Broomfield's manor house, Broomfield Hall, which sits within the Church Green conservation area. Night Pasture and Broom Pightle, which are still grazed, are the only meadowland on this side of the village and contain several old oaks. They provide an interesting contrast with the otherwise arable character and offer views of the Church from the south and west, particularly attractive in late spring.

**Possible improvements:** The derelict farm building adjoining the churchyard was demolished in 2009 - a definite improvement! The Church Green conservation area could be extended to include Night Pasture and Broom Pightle, as they are an essential part of its setting.



**Area I**

**Priority for Protection - 9th (out of 9)**

Description: a small area between Hospital Approach and the parish boundary with Little Waltham, comprising two or three derelict fields. A more visible boundary is provided by Woodhouse Lane (although this section of the lane lies just within Little Waltham parish).

Significance: this small area feels as if it belongs to the Hospital sphere of influence. A more rural character only seems to develop from Woodhouse Lane northwards.

Special features: Wood House lies just to the north.

Possible improvements: Hospital Approach presents a rather scrappy appearance, largely due to the derelict nature of Area I. This needs to be improved, for instance by tree planting along Hospital Approach.



Views along Hospital Approach, looking towards Broomfield Hospital



Consultation Process

We made sure that this Community Landscape Character Assessment (CLCS) is based on the views of the local community through the following events and activities. This is a summary only - please contact the Committee via the Parish Council if you would like further details.

November 2003  
Public meeting of local residents decides to proceed with a Parish Plan, in the light of great concern locally about large scale development and increased traffic. Parish Plan Steering Group set up.

June 2004  
Detailed questionnaire distributed to every home in the Parish. There were 541 responses (equivalent to over 31% of households). Most responses were joint (i.e. from all the adults in the household) so in total 855 individuals responded. Responses were processed by IDA, an independent data processing company. The questionnaire included questions on the type and general location of any new development and which areas of the Parish should be most protected (areas A - I, see above). The resulting consensus is set out in the Parish Plan and this CLCS.

October 2004  
Parish Plan Open Day, with displays showing results from the questionnaire and inviting residents to make further comment. 353 people attended.

April 2005  
Parish Plan formally launched, after which a copy of the Plan was distributed to every home in the village.

November 2006  
Village Design Statement (VDS) Association and Committee formed. Initial planning for the VDS and CLCS begins.

March 2007  
'Photoshoot Day' - groups of residents tour the Parish taking pictures and then making displays of 'the good, the bad and the ugly!'

May 2007  
Open Day - results of the Photoshoot Day are displayed for residents to comment.

January 2009  
Draft of the CLCS displayed for residents to comment.

April 2010  
Further draft of CLCS displayed at Annual Parish Meeting and then on parish website for final comments.

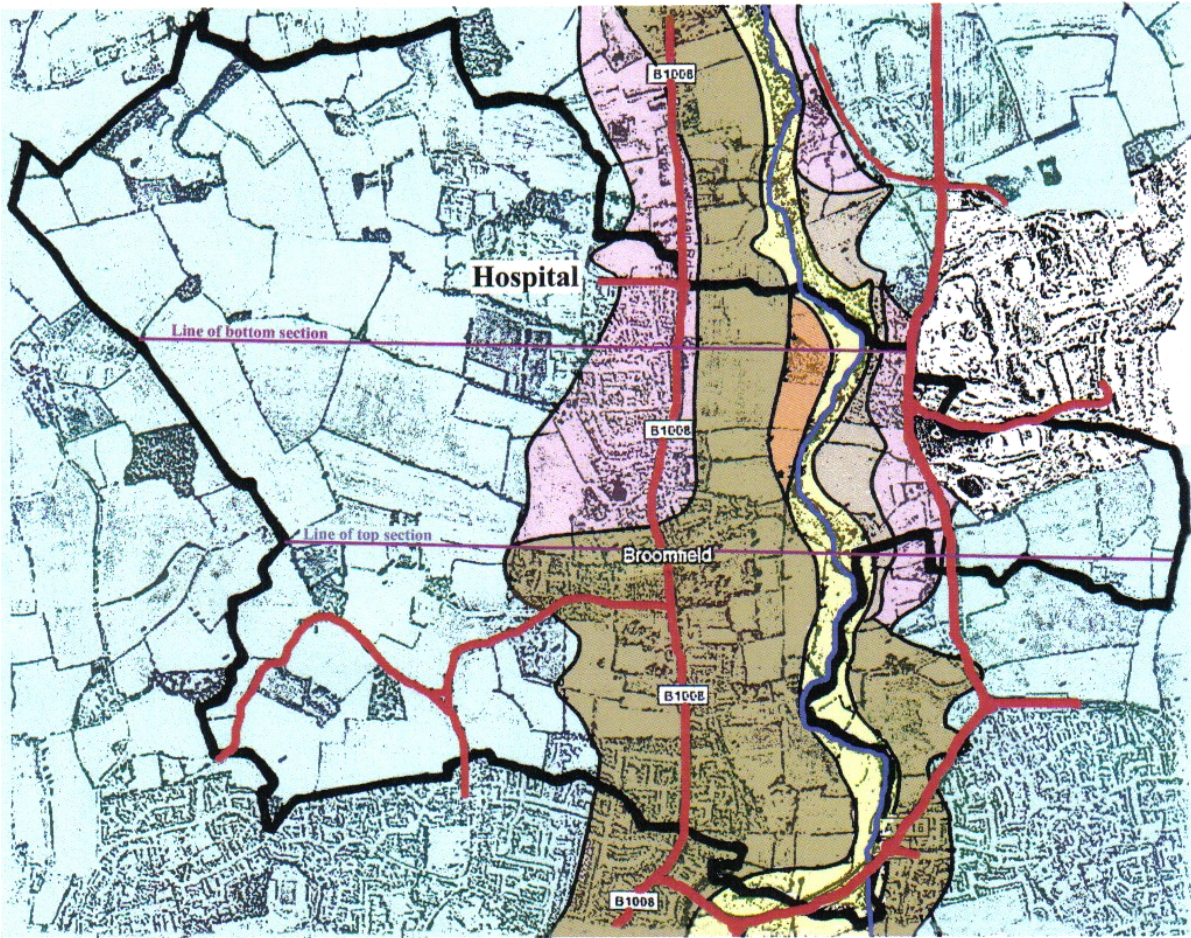
North Chelmsford Area Action Plan (NCAAP)

Since autumn 2007, Chelmsford Borough Council has been consulting on its NCAAP. In line with the earlier Core Strategy, this allocates up to 800 dwellings to North West Chelmsford/Broomfield and 3,200 dwellings to North East Chelmsford (which includes the eastern part of Broomfield Parish). At the time of writing, the NCAAP Submission Document has completed consultation, received final approval by the Borough Council and has been submitted to the Government. It will be examined in public by a government inspector in January 2011.

The VDS Committee is pleased that the NCAAP recognises the great sensitivity of the landscape in NW Chelmsford/Broomfield (as set out in this CLCS) and therefore the need to limit development in this part of north Chelmsford. The Committee is also pleased that by and large the NCAAP protects the areas of countryside that residents are most concerned to protect, as set out in the Parish Plan and in this CLCS. The Committee believes that any further development, or large-scale development in other parts of the Parish, would irreparably damage the sensitive landscape of Broomfield and would go against the local community's views, as expressed in the consultation outlined above.

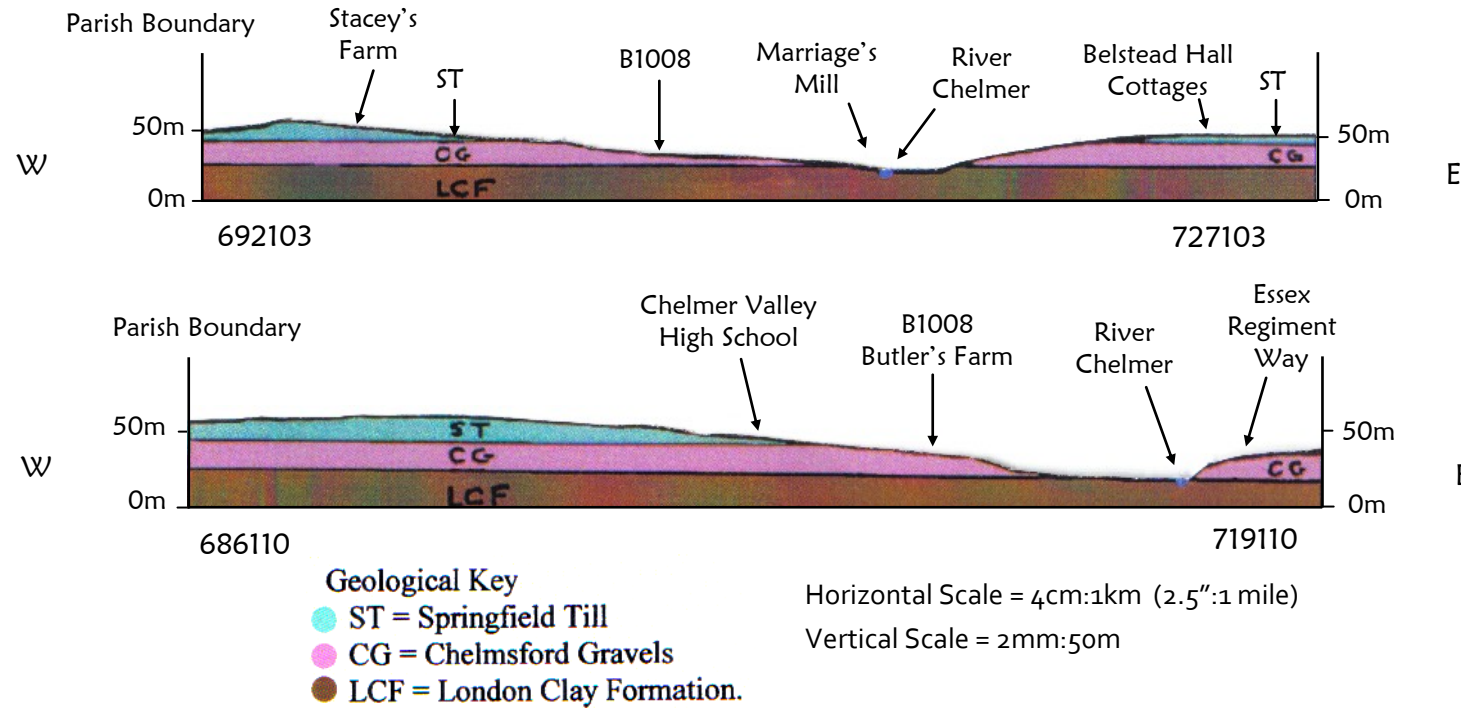


# Broomfield Geological Map



- London Clay formation
- Chelmsford Gravels
- Springfield Till
- Head
- First Terrace Gravel
- Alluvium

**Broomfield**  
Relief and Geology Cross-Sections West to East through;  
Top - Stacy's Farm to Belstead Hall Cottages  
Bottom - Chelmer Valley High School to Essex Regiment  
Way



# The Geology of Broomfield

The course of the Chelmer and the nearly horizontal geological sequence ensure that the physical geography and geology of Broomfield are arranged in a series of north-south bands. London Clay, by far the oldest formation, is exposed in the valley floor, various gravels on the slopes and Chalky Boulder Clay (Springfield Till), deposited by the Anglian Ice Sheet between 470,000 and 425,000 years ago, covers the western and eastern flanks of the parish above 45 metres. The local succession is:-

- 1. London Clay Formation** (unit C) - put down between 58-52 million years ago (lower Eocene), a sub-tropical marine clay. Yields a great variety of fossil land plants and vertebrates, fish, reptiles, birds and calcareous micro-organisms. A blue, brown, grey colour with variable amounts of sand and silt. Weathers to dark brown. Contains bands and nodules of buff calcareous concretions (cement stones) often septarian in character. There is no evidence locally of Oligocene, Miocene or Pliocene deposits.
- 2. Chelmsford Gravels** (Pleistocene) - up to 8 metres thick, almost equal portions of sub-angular or rounded, pebbles/cobbles of flint, quartzite plus vein quartz and fine to coarse sand of a sharp texture. Occasionally cemented by calcite (calcrete) and by iron (ferricrete). There are two units:-a) Barham Sands & Gravels, up to 1 metre thick in Broomfield. Considered to be ice and melt water deposits (outwash). Rather dirty - hoggin; and b) Kesgrave Sands & Gravels, 5-7 metres thick, now accepted as pre-Anglian proto-Thames deposits. Cleaner, where iron-free, called Essex White Ballast. Springs issue at intervals from near the top and bottom of the Gravels, and also from the base of the Springfield Till where the Gravels are absent. These were probably a major consideration in the siting of the early farmsteads and villages along the whole Chelmer valley - Broomfield being a classic example. They give rise to tiny rivulets, their courses being marked by the five dips in the B1008 between Blasford Hill and Fifth Avenue.
- 3. Springfield Till** (Pleistocene) - averages 8 metres thick, a grey or buff clay plus chalk pellets, many flints and a great variety of pebbles, cobbles and boulders of sandstone, quartzite, dark ironstone and limestone from the Midlands and more rarely, volcanic and metamorphic rocks from North Wales, northern England and Scotland. Numerous 'derived' or 'rolled' fossil sponges, sea urchins, belemnites, ammonites and bivalves prove the northern origin of the Till.

- 4. Head** - post-Anglian, cold phase periglacial down-slope (solifluction) deposit. Clay, sand and gravel.
- 5. First Terrace (Gravel)** - 1.5 metres above present flood plain. West bank only, clayey sand and gravel.
- 6. Alluvium** (Holocene) - flood plain adjacent Chelmer, soft brown silty clay plus peat. Gravel below.

Only the small exposure of London Clay, the local bedrock is 'solid geology', the rest is largely Pleistocene pre-Anglian or Anglian glacial drift deposits. All have been 'worked' for building material - bricks from the London Clay, Springfield Till and Head; septaria from the London Clay; sand and gravel from the Chelmsford Gravels and Head; puddingstone (ferricrete) from the Chelmsford Gravels, and flints, sandstones, quartzites, ironstones and limestones from the Springfield Till. Every episode of Broomfield's geological past outlined above, is however represented by the bricks and stones easily observed in the colourful and distinctive south wall of St.Mary's Church.