

# The Chignal Villages Design Statement



Approved Guidance September 2009



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# 1 | Introduction

## The VDS and its purpose

This Village Design Statement (VDS) describes the special features and characteristics of the buildings and rural setting of the Chignal villages that the community believe are important and should be respected whenever any changes, such as new development, alterations to buildings, boundaries or green spaces, roads and verges, or changes of use, are considered. Each section provides easily identifiable guidance for local people and property owners, developers, utility companies, the highway authority, planners and the parish council. If followed, any alteration or development will enhance and protect the unique characteristics of the villages and the countryside that links and surrounds them.

## Scope of the VDS

The scope of this Village Design Statement includes the whole of the parish of Chignal, covering 912 hectares, as shown by the area defined on the coverage map. The area between Hollow Lane and the southern boundary with the existing urban area plus a potential new junction on Chignal Road is part of the North Chelmsford Area Action Plan (NCAAP). The area is shown on the VDS Coverage Area map, and also in the NCAAP Preferred Options Document. This area is not subject to the area covered by the VDS; the next round of consultation on the final version of NCAAP will be later on this year.

The Chignals lie approximately two miles north west of Chelmsford railway station and are bounded by the River Can to the south west, Mashbury to the north west, Pleshey to the north, Great Waltham to the north east, Broomfield to the east and Chelmsford to the south east.

There are 121 households in the Chignals, which generally comprise small, scattered hamlets of three to



Hands-on public consultation exercise

fourteen properties dotted around narrow and winding country lanes. There are a few individual properties between the housing clusters. There has been no urbanisation in any of the populated areas.

## Development of the VDS

A team of thirteen residents led the process, which included a character photographic event, a questionnaire sent to every household, which resulted in a 74% response, and feedback from a display of the questionnaire responses. The final public consultation period gave the community the opportunity to influence the final draft.

## Consultation

The guidance that you see throughout the VDS was developed from community consultation during the VDS process. This guidance contains clear statements about the kind of changes that residents believe will help to prevent insensitive and detrimental development. The key elements of the process were the setting up of a constituted group of volunteers, the use of village events and media as a way of keeping people informed and involved, a photographic character assessment workshop and other exhibitions and village character analyses, a questionnaire, and submitting several drafts to the borough council to receive feedback (See Appendix 4). During the five-year process practical, technical and financial assistance



was provided by the parish, borough and rural community councils.

### Status of the document

The Chignals VDS was approved in September 2009 as planning guidance by Chelmsford Borough Council and has been made available to every resident. At borough council level it will be taken into account when determining planning applications. This means that planning officers can make use of specific guidance in the VDS when dealing with cases and planning inspectors can refer to it for planning appeals.

It will support and encourage the kind of change that will take into account the most valued aspects of the villages and their environment. However it is not a statutory planning policy document and will not replace any part of the planning process or law.

It cannot take away people's rights to improve their property and it will not dictate what changes may or may not take place.

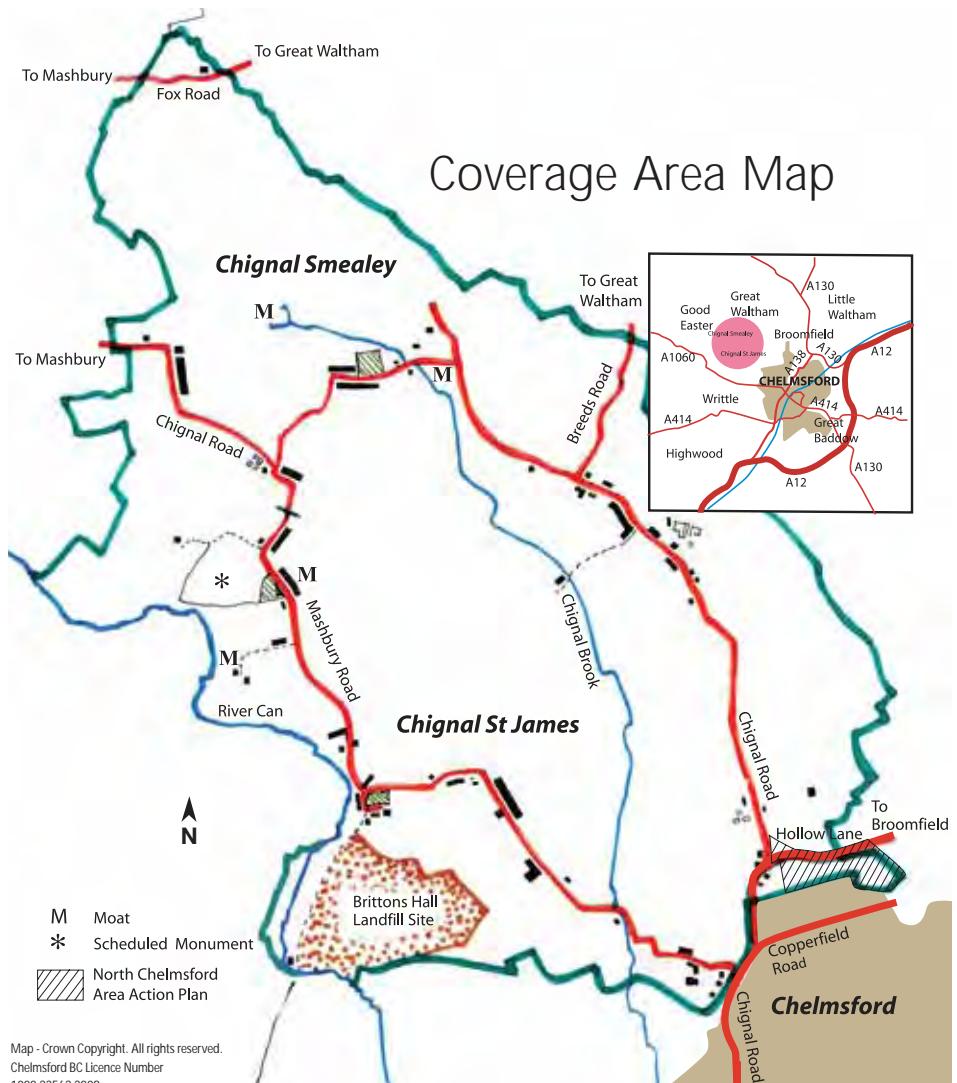
It will influence members of the community when making changes to buildings and spaces that do not need planning permission.

### Planning Policy Context

Planning policy affecting the Chignals is contained in the Chelmsford Borough Local Development Framework (LDF) the Essex County Council Waste Local Plan 2001, and government planning policy guidance (PPG and PPS).

Borough planning policies direct development and change across the borough and the countryside. The below mentioned policies are from the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies, a key LDF document.

- The Chignals have 17 listed buildings and structures, a Scheduled Monument, and woodland, group and individual tree preservation orders, covered by specific policies CP9, DC18 and DC19.



- The Chignal Villages do not form a defined settlement in line with the Adopted Core Strategy. The Borough Council is preparing its Site Allocations Document (part of the LDF), which continues to support this.
- The Chignals are surrounded by countryside. Planning policy (DC2) seeks to protect the countryside from undesirable development.
- The design of development is covered by core policies CP20 and CP21 and development control policies DC42 and DC45.
- Agricultural change is covered by DC56 farm diversification and DC57 re-use of rural buildings.
- Core Policy CP14 provides a direct link between VDS and local planning policy. The policy also sets the scene

for the visual impact of all development proposals on the landscape.

- Land at Brittons Hall is identified in the Waste Local Plan as a preferred site for non-inert waste.
- The VDS will also complement the Borough Council's Supplementary Planning Documents and the residential design guidance on roof and side extensions which are also taken into account during the determination of planning applications.



## The Chignals Then and Now

The history of human occupation in the Chignals can be traced back to the Middle Stone Age, through to the Iron Age and to the Roman occupation, by which time much woodland had been cleared to support agriculture and livestock.

The site of a Romano British villa, farmstead and cemeteries in Chignal St James has been identified and partly excavated and is protected as a Scheduled Monument. Many relics of the Stone Age and Roman settlements are with the Essex County Council Archaeology Department or are displayed at Chelmsford Museum.

The name 'Chignal' is of Saxon origin, the national system of parishes and their boundaries predating the Norman Conquest by a considerable period. Chignal, along with nearby Roxwell and Highwood, was created from the once-enormous royal parish of Writtle.

### Settlement pattern

The first actual documentation of the villages occurs in the Great Survey of 1086 (the Domesday Book), under the single name Cinguehala. This may be derived from the old English Cicca's Health meaning Cicca's nook or sheltered valley, perfectly describing its setting. The survey listed the village as having 23 households, plus a small area of woodland capable of feeding 52 pigs, which suggests that



A Roman glass vase (above) and decorative bone pin (below) on display at Chelmsford Museum. Both were excavated from the villa at Chignal St James. Top left: Chignal village school circa 1910

most of the land was still being used agriculturally.

The medieval settlement pattern that emerged in Chignal St James showed a distinct shift away from the original site beside the river to building along the roadsides around a church. Even with this notable change neither of the villages developed a nucleus and even today the pattern of dispersed sites clinging to the roadsides near manors (farms) and churches remains intact.

There was little building or population growth; the 1671 Hearth Tax records 26 households in the two villages and there were still only 31 in 1768 according to Morant's *The History and Antiquities of the County of Essex*.

Some further expansion of the villages took place in the 19th century with 346 people recorded as living here in 1848 in White's *Directory of Essex*. The Chapman and Andre map of 1777 shows the village roads – the same then as now – liberally sprinkled with cottages that housed the many farm workers and trades people who lived here. The mechanisation of the farms and the consequent demolition of old unwanted and tumbledown cottages means that many fewer people now live in our villages than did a century ago, when every farm

had a cluster of cottages around it.

Three substantial houses with large gardens were built for the clergy. When the two Chignal parishes were combined in 1888 the system of outlying areas buried in neighbouring parishes was rationalised and the boundaries generally tidied up, and by the time of the 1891 census there were 426 people living in the parish.

The roads were even narrower then and were often made impassable by snowdrifts and floods, a state of affairs that continued well into the 20th century and which helped to keep the parish a 'backwater', safe from over occupation and developers.

### Rural character

In the mid 20th century the school, shop and post office closed in the wake of government policy and changing lifestyle, a newly mobile and educated population going outside the villages for work and shopping. At the present time Chelmsford Borough Council records 308 people (254 over the age of eighteen) living here. It has taken over 900 years for the number of households to multiply to roughly only five and a half times the number in the Domesday Book.

Planning policies respect the history and landscape value of the villages and severely restrict planning permissions, helping the Chignals to retain their tranquil rural character.

Key issues of the value and sensitivity of the historic landscape character - pre 18th century field boundaries, the settlement pattern and some ancient woodland and meadow pasture - and archaeological character of the Chignals along with recommendations that they are conserved and enhanced are set out in The Chelmsford Borough Historic Environment Characterisation Project.



# 3 | Landscape setting



Above: south westerly view from Woodside, Chignal Smealey; top right: Grays Farm from the south.

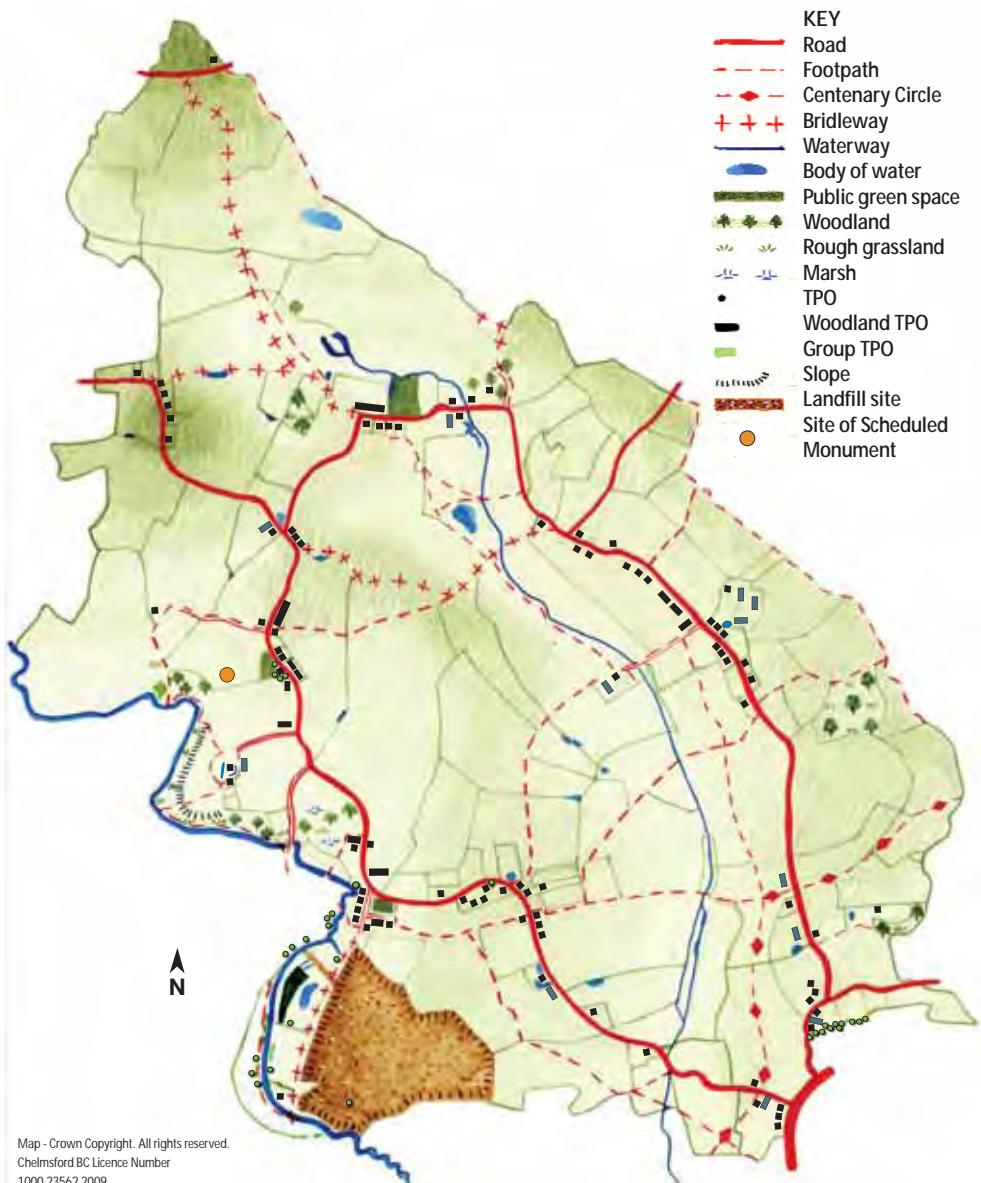
"The rural landscape is an irreplaceable, priceless asset. It underpins every aspect of the quality of life in rural areas." *English Heritage in the East of England*.

## The village setting

The Chignals are rural villages set in an arable agricultural landscape. They lie on higher ground than most of Chelmsford, on a chalky boulder clay plateau, the soil of which is heavy but fertile, overlaying glacial gravel deposits. The climate is normally dry, mid-Essex being one of the driest areas of the whole country.

The plateau is intersected from north to south by the little Chignal Brook in its shallow valley, with the River Can, the valley of which is designated a Special Landscape Area, forming part of the western boundary. There are Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) on various individual and groups of trees and woodland within this designated area, and some other individual TPOs in the villages.

Most people think that the hedgerows, trees, verges and open spaces are important to the appearance of the villages and should be preserved wherever possible and that both the villages should retain substantial green areas around them to keep them as a separate entity. The majority of questionnaire respondents thought that the planting of trees along hedgerows and in village open spaces should be encouraged.



North westerly view from Brick Barns Farm, Chignal St James.

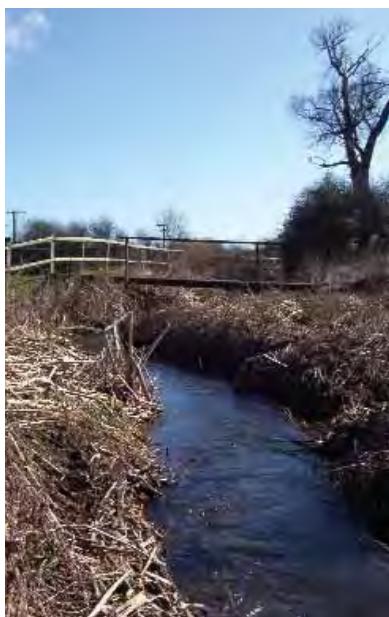
The farmland that surrounds and extends between many of the buildings is a major characteristic of the villages. There are also numerous natural small ponds, and the remains of medieval moats and woodlands.

There is no naturally occurring rock, except for some flint. Brick earth overlays the boulder clay in

some places, bricks having been made for hundreds of years at the brickfield, long since gone, that was situated in Beremans Lane near St Nicholas' church. The village was once known as Brick Chignal for this reason. These local bricks can be seen in several houses throughout both of the villages as well as in St Nicholas' church.



# Features, Footpaths & Bridleways



## Footpaths and bridleways

The Chignals are particularly well served by bridleways and footpaths, which make a considerable contribution towards the enjoyment of living in the area and link well with those of the neighbouring parishes.

The footpath running northeast from the southern tip of Chignal St James across open countryside into Chignal Smealey and the Broomfield boundary forms part of the Chelmsford Centenary Circle, a designated recreational route. This route also incorporates part of the long distance Saffron Trail.

On some bridleways walkers and riders would benefit from improved drainage and surfaces, and also from more comprehensive and

informative signage on footpaths and bridleways.

We welcome the existing design of the timber finger posts and any change should respect the rural setting.



## Guidance

**1** Ancient features such as the remains of medieval moats and woodlands should be preserved

**2** Hedgerows, trees, verges and open spaces are important to the appearance of the villages and should be preserved wherever possible

**3** Chignal St James and Chignal Smealey main grouping of buildings as indicated on the VDS Coverage Area map should continue to be surrounded by green areas in line with Policy DC2 of the adopted Development Control Policies document.

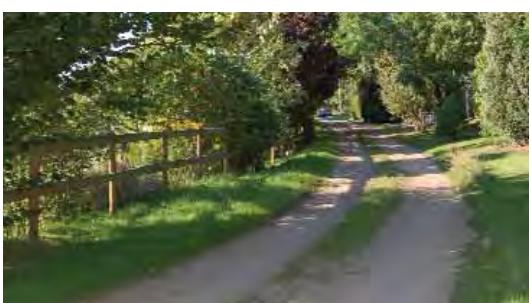
**4** The planting of trees along hedgerows and in village open spaces should be encouraged. Native species would be preferred.

**5** Improve signposting on bridleways and footpaths, including adding foot path numbers to finger posts. A community led project to create a heritage trail to enhance the villages' amenity value could be considered; the route might be displayed on an information board designed to be robust and to fit appropriately into its sensitive setting.

**6** Signage should be harmonious, appropriate and unobtrusive.

**7** Concrete footpath signs should be discouraged and, when they become dilapidated, should be replaced with material more sympathetic to the rural surroundings.

**8** When any new development is proposed, the definitive line of rights of way should be respected and the improvement or creation of links taken where the opportunity arises.



Clockwise, from top, far left: view south from footpath 27; part of the Chelmsford Centenary Circle at Chignal Smealey; River Can; footbridge over Chignal Brook; timber footpath signs are appropriate for their rural setting; bridleway and track at the green; pond at Langley's Corner; Melbourne flats to the south.

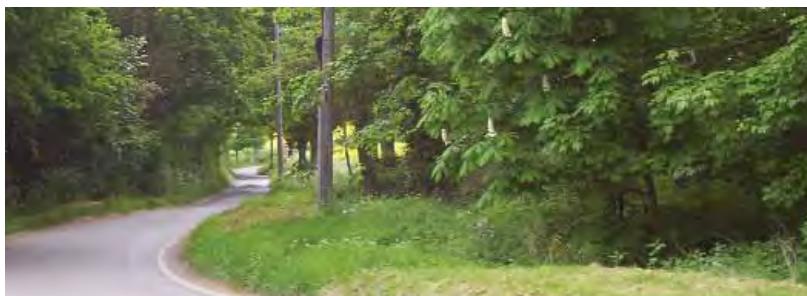
# 4 | Access, Highways & Infrastructure



## Roads, lanes and verges

The roads within Chignal are narrow country lanes generally less than 4m wide, with grass verges and no made up footways, with the exception of the southeastern extremity near Bethel Chapel at the junction of Mashbury Road with Chignal Road and at the junction of Chignal Road with Copperfield Road. Ditches, native hedges, bushes and trees generally define the field and highway boundaries. The planting of spring bulbs on some grass verges and parts of the village green has enhanced their appearance.

Open to two-way traffic the roads are only capable of accommodating single lane traffic in places.



An increase over the last few years in the volume, size and weight of cars, delivery vehicles and farm traffic on these narrow and winding roads has resulted in the grass verges being badly damaged and eroded resulting in property owners installing various protective measures such as concrete bollards or small boulders. Rather than this ad hoc approach perhaps a design with a common theme, approved by the Highways Authority, might be introduced, for example small wooden posts of varying shape and dimensions for different houses would be in keeping with the rural feel and avoid a regimented appearance.

People want to see more identified passing places; currently some unofficial ones – generally field

entrances or where the verge widens – are being used but passing places, properly surfaced but avoiding concrete kerbing at their edges, would reduce the damage and improve road safety.

Clockwise, from above right: Severe verge damage; protective measures installed on verges by property owners; spring bulbs enhance the Green; Chignal Smealey; informal passing place; two road users finding it difficult to pass; Mashbury Road, Chignal St James.



- Guidance**
- 1 Footways or hard kerbing should not be introduced; the rural character of soft green verges and hedges is preferred.
  - 2 The Parish Council are encouraged to pursue in conjunction with the Highway Authority a design solution to prevent traffic damage to the grass verges in front of people's properties. Physical barriers could be designed with a common theme, seeking approval of the Highway Authority.
  - 3 Provide passing places, which should be kept informal on narrow lanes. Developers and the Highway Authority do not have to compromise style and ambience for safety. It is possible to preserve rural styling if care is taken over materials and design. Roadside verges and ditches without kerbs or pavements contribute to the rural ambience.
  - 4 When considering any physical change including development the protection and enhancement of grass verges should be encouraged.
  - 5 Lanes should not be widened, as this would diminish the rural character of the villages..





### Road signs and markings

Road markings are generally restricted to white lines at the edges of the carriageways and at road junctions; some central white lining and warning markings exist, mainly in Chignal Smealey. Signage mainly comprises village and road names, warning and compulsory signs, brown tourist information signs and black and white chevrons. Occasionally two or three signs are accommodated on one post to minimise clutter and some telegraph poles have road signs attached. Direction signs are usually small finger posts that are in keeping with their rural setting. The highway authority has agreed to install replacement and extra warning signs denoting horse riders and wild animals. Both the Three Elms and the Pig and Whistle public houses have their own roadside signs.

The existing finger posts and timber non-reflective sign plates help to add to the character of the villages.

There is a plethora of road signs on and near the grass triangle at the junction of Chignal Road and Hollow Lane, which looks messy and confusing, detracting from the rustic charm of this area.

#### Guidance

- 1 Avoid clutter of road signs; remove unnecessary or redundant signs and their poles.
- 2 Any road signs should be harmonious to the rural character.



### Traffic calming

The Chignal Road in Chignal Smealey between Breeds Road and Copperfield Road is used as an alternative route to the main roads in northwest Chelmsford in the rush hour and the volume of traffic has created a problem from this junction through to Woodside. Although speeding traffic is a matter of concern, residents would like any measures taken to restrict speed not to detract from the rural character of the villages. Any road widening would be unfortunate, as this would have the effect of increasing the speed of traffic. Speed humps, build-outs or other such measures, with their associated signage, would similarly be regarded as inappropriate.

#### Guidance

Speeding traffic remains a problem but any measures taken should be appropriate for the rural context.

### Utilities

There is no mains drainage in the Chignals and, as a result, most of the sewage is discharged into cesspools, or into septic tanks of various ages and effectiveness, before flowing into the soil and eventually, to the ditches and watercourses. Some properties have more sophisticated systems, particularly those more recently built.

Most, if not all, dwellings in the villages are connected to mains water, telephone and electricity services, the latter two mostly by overhead cables. Wooden poles generally support the cables although a few concrete ones remain.

Two large gas mains pass through the Chignals. They do not provide a supply to any of the properties.

Rainwater generally discharges into field and roadside ditches but these are inadequate during periods of heavy or prolonged rainfall, resulting in excessive water flow along the roads.

There are no streetlights in the Chignals and the residents support this.



#### Guidance

- 1 New electricity and telephone services should be installed below ground whenever the opportunity arises. When replacement becomes necessary and if this is unavoidably above ground, uprights should be of a material more sympathetic to the existing surroundings, such as timber.

- 2 Street lighting should not be introduced to the Chignals.

# 5 | Built environment

## Settlement description

Two major factors characterise the Chignal villages - its farms and small clusters of houses that still largely occupy the original medieval settlement pattern on narrow and winding roads, and their verdant rural landscape setting of fields, hedgerows, trees, ancient woodland and open spaces. There are a few remote outlying properties that are only accessible by unmade tracks.

There is no village centre, but the church and chapel, two pubs, village hall and public green spaces provide important areas of social focus.

New developments have been extensions, changes of use, and a few new builds replacing existing properties.

The residential properties are mainly two storey detached or semi detached in a variety of sizes and period styles. There are a few bungalows, one small development of three storey houses built on a former commercial use site, and only one example of terraced housing. Almost without exception the residential properties have chimneys, which are an important feature of the roofscape.

Those houses not built entirely from brick employ other materials typical of the area such as timber (weather boarding), and render that is sometimes decorated with pargetting, with tiles and slate for the roofs. Only two thatched buildings remain.

Most houses are set back from the road in large gardens with drives and garages and are separated from the verges and very narrow roads by a mixture of boundary treatments mainly comprising low brick or rendered walls, a variety of wooden fencing styles, some railings, and hedges that are either neatly trimmed or of native trees left to grow to their full height. Wide spaces where fields extend between many of the individual or groups of



houses are a key characteristic of the Chignals, providing good views of the surrounding countryside, emphasising the rural nature of the villages.

There are two traditional K6 telephone kiosks, one of which is listed. There is a desire that both these items of street furniture should be retained in their present style for visual character and heritage reasons. Similarly small red post boxes within the villages should be retained.

Top to bottom: Chignal St James; Chignal Smealey; view of farmland at Chobbings Farmhouse; view from St Nicholas' church tower; the post boxes and K6 telephone kiosks have heritage value and add to the character of the villages.

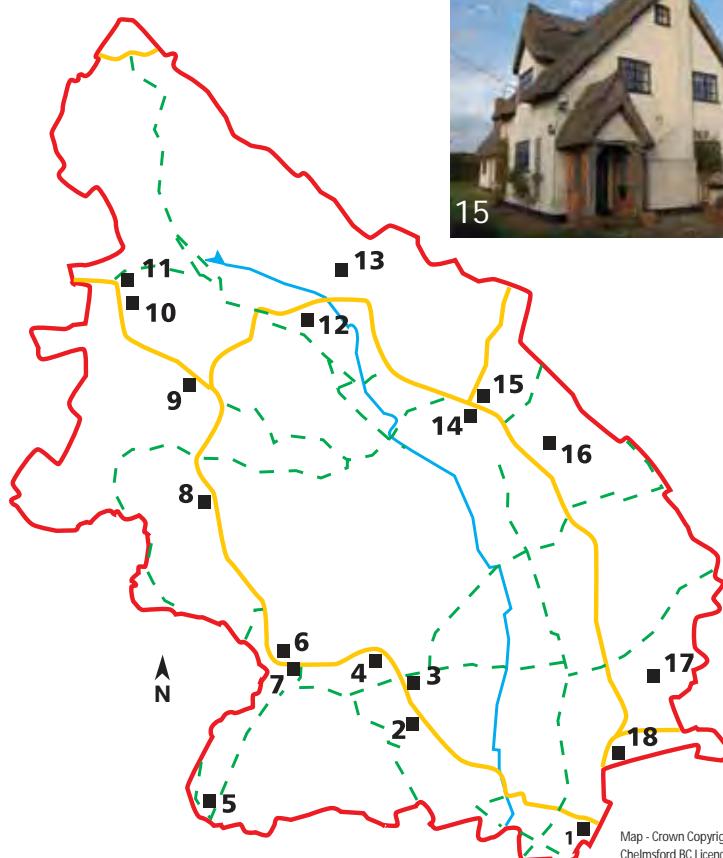




# Listed Buildings & Buildings of Local Value

## Buildings of local value

Many buildings within the parish do not meet the national criteria for listing but are of local importance by virtue of their positive contribution to the architectural or historic character of the locality. Policy CP9 of the LDF Core Strategy provides the policy context for identifying buildings of local value.



### Chelmsford Borough Council Register of buildings of local value in Chignal

- 1 Bethel Baptist Chapel
- 2 Brittons Hall Farmhouse
- 3 Three Elms
- 4 The Old Rectory
- 5 Pengy Mill
- 6 Pitt Cottages
- 7 K6 Telephone kiosk (at The Green)
- 8 Old School & School House
- 9 Langleys Farm
- 10 The Bells
- 11 United Reform Church (Chignal Chapel)
- 12 Chignal Grange
- 13 Beadles Hall
- 14 Pig & Whistle
- 15 Thatched Cottage
- 16 Wood Hall Farmhouse and Barn
- 17 Broomwood Manor
- 18 Blue House and Barn



## Guidance

Any physical change to listed buildings and buildings of local value (on the register) along with their setting should ensure that their special character and features are protected.





## Listed buildings and sites

### Scheduled Monument

Roman Villa, Chignal St James

### Listed buildings

Grade II\*

Chobbings Farmhouse (d)

St James Church (b)

St Nicholas' Church (j)

Grade II

Barn with gable dovecots

at Brickbarns Farm

Brickbarns Farmhouse (a)

Chancellor's Barns and range  
of farm buildings (i)

Chignal Hall (c)

Chopyns Barn (k)

Church Cottage (e)

Church End

Church House (i)

Granary at Chignal Hall (g)

Granary, Chobbings Farm

Gray's Farmhouse (h)

Jacobs Cottage (f)

Stevens Farmhouse

Type K6 Telephone kiosk,  
Chignal Smealey





**Character Areas:** There are nine main areas within the village which have been set out as numbered character areas with accompanying maps and photographs showing their special features and individual characteristics. Buildings and structures on the maps are colour coded as follows:



Map - Crown Copyright. All rights reserved.  
Chelmsford BC Licence Number  
1000 23562 2009.

- Listed buildings and structures
- Buildings of local value
- Barns/Outbuildings
- Houses and community buildings

- 1 Brickbarns  
2 The Three Elms  
3 The Green  
4 Brittons Hall Farm landfill site  
5 Village Hall  
6 Chignal Chapel  
7 St Nicholas' Church  
8 Woodhall

- 9 Beaumont Otes  
NCAAP

### Area 1: Brickbarns, Chignal St James

On turning in to Mashbury Road from the built up outskirts of Chelmsford and the parish of St Andrews in the southwest, one is instantly in the countryside. The road has no footpaths and is generally flanked by high grass banks.

Bethel Chapel, a local landmark, stands on one corner of the junction with open fields behind and opposite. These "tin tabernacles" are fast disappearing even though they are of historical interest. (See Appendix 1)

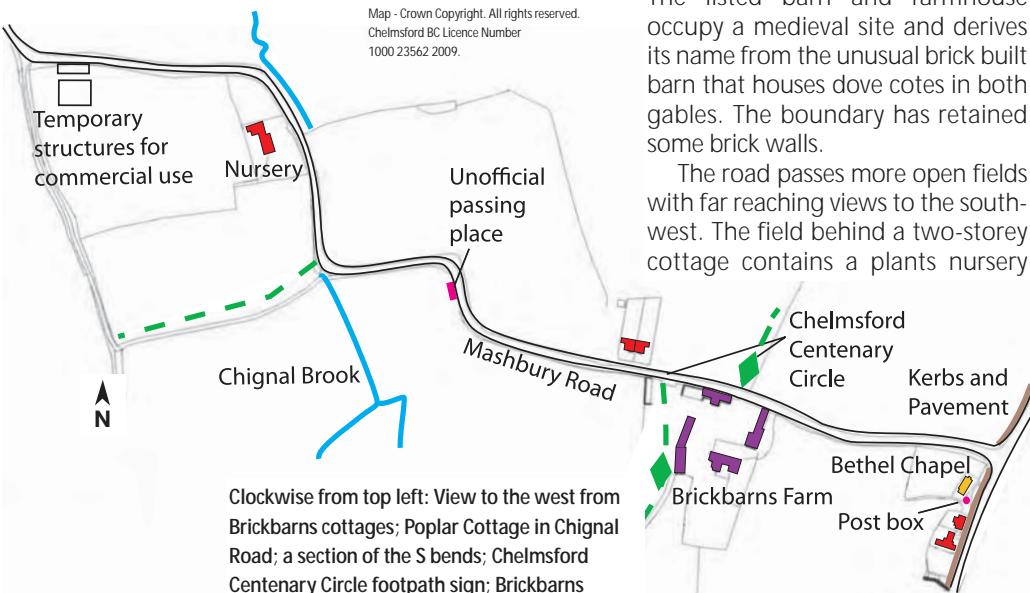
Brickbarns farm sits on the brow of a small hill past the chapel and can be seen clearly from Copperfield Road and Chignal Road in the east. The listed barn and farmhouse occupy a medieval site and derives its name from the unusual brick built barn that houses dove cotes in both gables. The boundary has retained some brick walls.

The road passes more open fields with far reaching views to the southwest. The field behind a two-storey cottage contains a plants nursery



selling through the Internet. The gateway to this field is on a corner and is currently the only delivery access.

Tall wooden footpath signs are used generally in this area and display the Queen's head Centenary Circle symbol and/or the yellow butterfly symbol.



Clockwise from top left: View to the west from Brickbarns cottages; Poplar Cottage in Chignal Road; a section of the S bends; Chelmsford Centenary Circle footpath sign; Brickbarns farmhouse and barns.





## Area 2: The Three Elms, Chignal St James

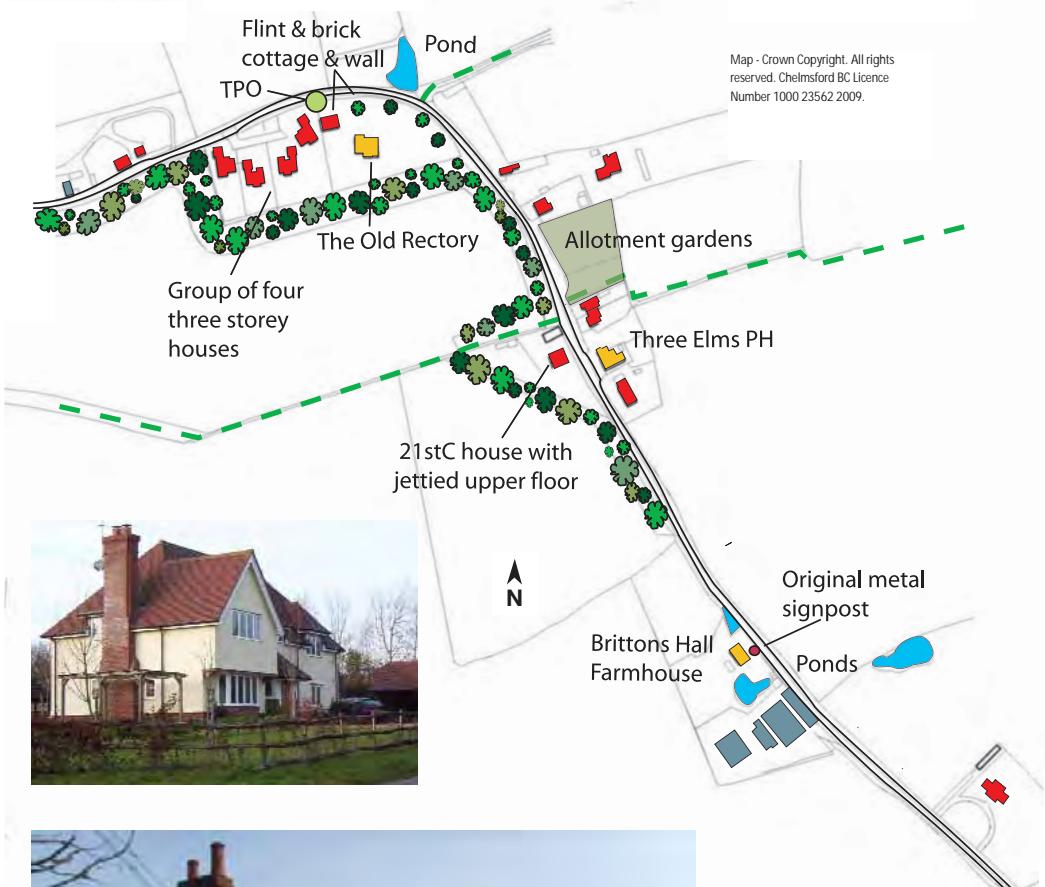
Centred round the Three Elms public house which has its origins in the 17th century, this area has a broad mix of buildings including the timber agricultural barns at Brittons Hall Farm, where one has permission for change of use to residential. Opposite the Three Elms is a relatively new house similar in design to the listed 16th century Gray's Farmhouse in Chignal Smealey that has a jettied upper floor, and is a good example of how new buildings can reflect local historic building style. Similarly, a cottage has been part weather boarded reflecting the style of some of the older buildings in the villages. This is the only area with three storey houses.

Notable features of the street scene are the number of boundaries comprising tall native trees, bushes and shrubs, and an original white painted metal finger post in the garden at Brittons Hall farmhouse.

There is a tree preservation order in place near the Old Rectory where there is also one of the few remaining examples of a flint wall. There is a 1.21 hectare parcel of private land, part of which is currently being used as allotment gardens.



Clockwise, from top right:  
brick and timber barns edge  
the road; approaching the  
Three Elms; Brittons Hall  
farmhouse has retained its  
original metal signpost;  
Braddocks; the Three Elms;  
houses are hidden from the  
road by tall hedging and  
trees.



### Guidance

- Materials and decorative finishes should be selected from the traditional range already in use.
- Original street furniture of heritage value adds character to the area and should be retained wherever possible.





### Area 3: The Green, Chignal St James

A small tree edged open space bequeathed by a local farmer is a valued tranquil open space.

Flanked by a mixed group of two storey houses, a pair of small, Essex clap boarded cottages and the former 13th/early 14th century St James Church which has some Roman brick and tile in the fabric.

A red K6 telephone kiosk sits at the entrance to the Green

A bridleway leads from the Green past the Lafarge gravel workings to a 17th century mill that sits on the banks of the river Can.

There is a small meadow used for grazing horses opposite the Green with a row of small 19th century cottages behind it.

Beyond the meadow on the west side of the road an early Victorian farmhouse has 19th century barns that were converted into dwellings in the latter part of the 20th century. Both the house and barns are listed.



This page, top and above: general views; below left: architectural and street furniture details. Opposite page, clockwise from top: general views show the clap board cottages, church and timber seating; Stevens Farm; with original metal signpost; view towards Stevens Farm; timber signage; architectural detail; K6 telephone kiosk and water pump at the entrance to The Green; looking towards the bridle path.

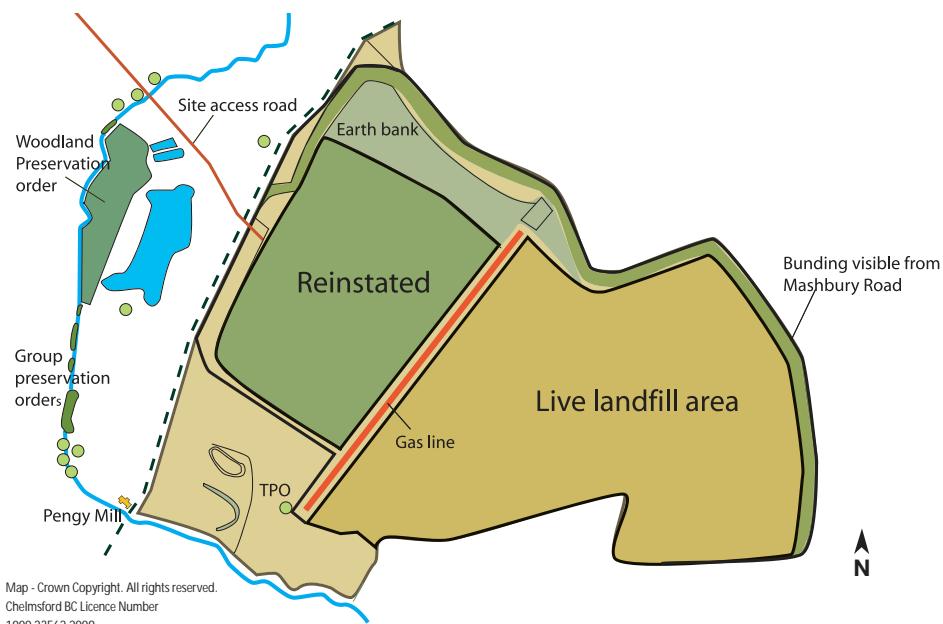


#### Guidance

- 1 The Green should be retained as an open space for use by villagers and visitors alike
- 2 Since a recent application to English Heritage to list the telephone kiosk was refused, the Parish Council is to 'adopt' the kiosk, enabling the structure to be retained; the Parish Council is encouraged to retain ownership of the kiosk and to keep it in a good state of repair.







#### Area 4: Brittons Hall Farm landfill site, Chignal St James

A gravel pit that has been worked out continues to be used as a landfill site. There is bunding and some tree planting to screen it from view in parts of the village but from the entrance and along the track all the signage, relocatable offices, surveillance equipment and vehicles are highly visible.

There are several individual and groups of trees that are protected by preservation orders as well as an area of protected woodland that flanks an agricultural reservoir.

There are other sand and gravel deposits within the parish boundaries for which extraction planning consent could be applied, with the

resulting void again being considered for agricultural reservoir, waste disposal or processing. There is genuine concern that any extension of gravel working will continue to be detrimental to the landscape value of Chignal St James and the quality of life of the residents. The community and Parish Council should be encouraged to actively participate in the consultation of the ECC waste plan in terms of waste use and after-use.

Clockwise, from above: an agricultural reservoir created on the site of old workings; approach to the site; protected woodland behind the reservoir; site entrance.

#### Area 5: Village Hall, Chignal St James

Enjoying a slightly elevated position this area contains agricultural and community buildings, medieval moated sites, residential properties and the site of an important Roman villa and farmstead, which is a Scheduled Monument. The village hall, the old school and the playing field are at its hub and make it an area of important social focus. Several properties were built as social housing. The old school has been converted for residential use and both it and the schoolhouse retain their original facades and brick boundary walls and railings. Large, modern agricultural barns and a listed house and granary of medieval origin can also be found here.

The playing field is the only large, level grassed amenity space of its type in either village and is an essential element of the landscape character.

The last known use of the parcel of land opposite Howletts Corner and owned by Chelmsford Borough Council was for grazing. It is currently underused and offers opportunities for higher levels of community use, perhaps as allotments, a community fruit orchard, or a wild garden area with seating for residents and walkers.

Clockwise from top right: View west from Langley's Corner; playing field; Chignal Hall Chase cottages; Chignal Hall; School View; Langley's Farm; village hall; the old school with its original brick wall.

#### Guidance

**1** The playing field should be retained in its present form as level open green space as part of the essential physical character of this place and as amenity space for residents.

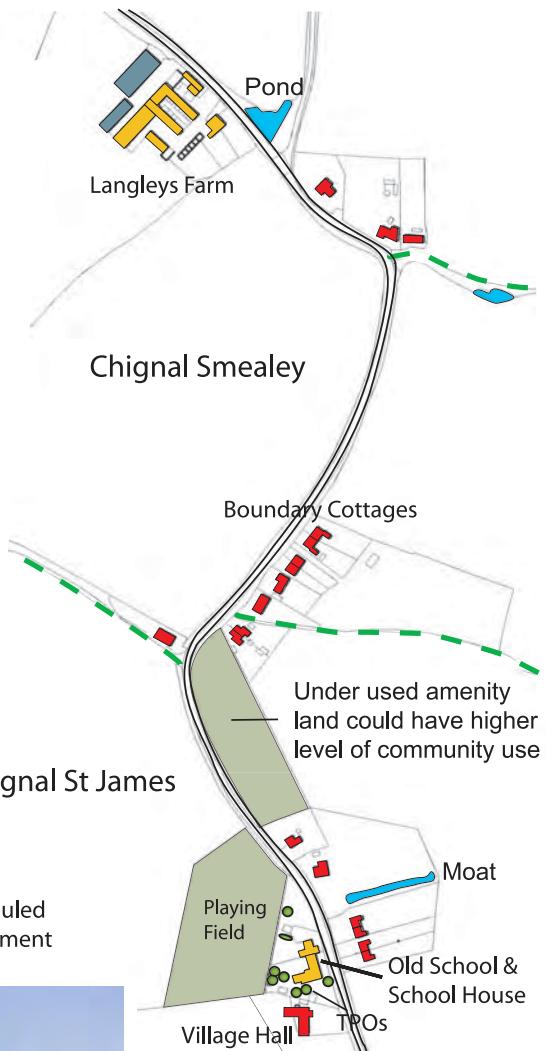
**2** If the opportunity arises Chelmsford Borough Council (parks) are encouraged to work with the Parish Council to promote a higher level of recreational use of land opposite Howletts Corner as indicated on the character area plan.

**3** Any development proposals should respect the historic environment character of the area, especially in those parts that have not been quarried.



**4** The Chignal St James part of the parish has suffered considerably from gravel extraction and backfill of domestic rubbish over an extended period of time and if funding should ever become available for improvements to the villages this is one area which should receive consideration.

**5** If in the longer term the opportunity arises to replace the village hall with a new building, linked to the more recent extensions and complying with current energy conservation requirements, the trustees are encouraged to provide appropriate facilities. The new building should take into account the rural character of the village setting.





## Area 6: Chignal Chapel, Chignal Smealey

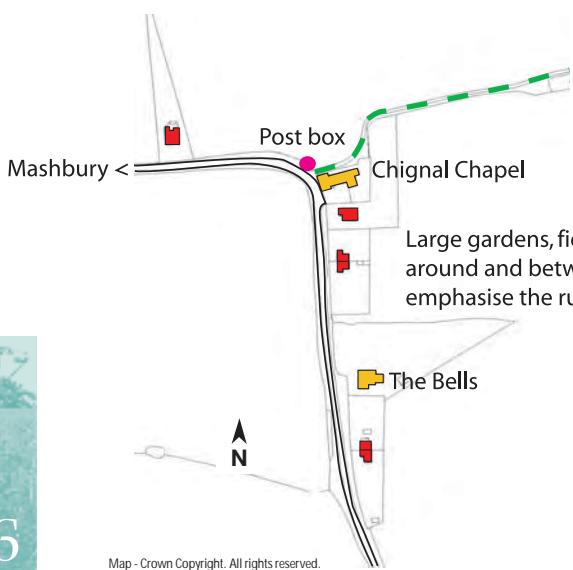
This area is characterised by a row of widely spaced properties of mixed ages and styles and the 19th century chapel along one side of the road, with a high hedge of native species opposite, all in a setting of arable farmland.

The hedges, trees and shrubs in the large gardens help to blend the houses in to the countryside while the wide spaces between the properties allow views through across the fields beyond, emphasising the rural setting.



### Guidance

**The wide spaces between the properties are important to the visual character of this road and should be respected in any new development.**



Clockwise, from top left: view west from the chapel; The Bells; view between two gardens to the surrounding countryside; The Manse; The Tudors; the chapel in its street setting.



## Area 7: St Nicholas' Church, Chignal Smealey

This area owes much of its character to the mature trees studded along the road sides and in gardens and which, in places, form a high arch above the road creating a feeling of enclosure.

The cricket ground is an important amenity space and lends a great deal of visual character to this place.

Twenty five per cent of the buildings and structures here are listed, creating a distinctive period feel with several of the properties owing much to this village's brick making heritage. The cricket ground, a Tudor brick church, two former rectories and a timber framed property with its origins in the 15th century combine to provide this area with an abundance of tranquil rural charm.

Architecturally St Nicholas' Church is a rarity, built entirely of brick (even the font) – a few fitments of the previous structure, the bell and some fragments of medieval glass, all of the thirteenth century, are included in the present church.

Also adding to the character of the area are the remains of two moats, and Hoddock's Wood, a non-coniferous woodland and coppice that helps to preserve the rural character of the area and contributes towards Biodiversity Action Plan and Climate Change objectives.

Traffic damage to the grass verges is of great concern particularly between St Nicholas Church and Beadles Corner.

### Guidance

Care should be taken to preserve the rural ambience if a designated passing place is introduced to protect the grass verges in this very narrow lane.



Clockwise, from top right: listed building set among mature specimen trees; view across the cricket field; Chignal Road from Beadles Corner; Chignal Grange, formerly the rectory; Victorian semis; the much used cricket field; St Nicholas' Church is a gem of Tudor brickwork and is Grade II\* listed.



## Area 8: Woodhall, Chignal Smealey

The period houses near the Pig & Whistle pub form a very appealing group; Thatched Cottage is 18th century or earlier in origin and distinctly sets the character at the entrance to the village from Great Waltham and Broads Green. Properties of varying styles and periods continue mainly along one side of the road to Grays Lodge where the road starts to rise towards Wood Hall; the extensive views of the fields to the west create an impression of spaciousness.

The trees and hedges in and around the good sized housing plots help to maintain the rural feel and the gaps between the properties



emphasise the rural location by showing there are no buildings behind. Bushy Wood, ancient non-coniferous woodland, contributes to the rural character of this area.

Woodhall and Grays Farm are both ancient sites; Grays Farm is a Grade II listed 16th century house. It is one of the village's oldest buildings and is a lived-in working farm.



Clockwise, from top left: View west from Pig & Whistle; the 'new' Woodhall; Pig & Whistle; Grays Lodge Cottages from Woodhall; the small postbox adds character to the street scene; houses in Ash Rise.





## Area 9: Beaumont Otes, Chignal St James

This area is characterised by a group of attractive period properties including farm buildings that have been granted permission for change of use. The period styles here vary but the colours and textures of the natural building materials such as brick, timber, flint, clay pantiles and thatch, and distinctive traditional decorative techniques such as pargetting, create a pleasing visual unity.

The area contains three of the parish's seventeen listed buildings. The fields surrounding Beaumont Otes farm and Broom Wood, a small ancient non-coniferous woodland, were essentially the same in 1599 as they are today.



### Guidance

**1** The Highway Authority is encouraged to give consideration to reducing the number and visual impact of road signs at the junction of Hollow Lane with Chignal Road.



**2** Period farm buildings are an integral part of the Chignals' strong agricultural identity and their retention is considered important for both visual character and heritage reasons.





# Housing & Development



Brick, timber, flint, render and clay pantiles are used in both agricultural and residential properties as they blend well with the local environment and contribute to the character of the Chignals.



Modern brick houses built on a former commercial site have gravel drives and plenty of parking provision.



A redundant timber grain store converted to residential use.



Door on the old school house.

## General guidance

**Change of use** The conversion of redundant buildings to either residential or low key commercial use is preferable to them lapsing into decay. An overwhelming majority of people felt that when agricultural buildings are converted they should retain their original 'barn' character.

**New building** NCAAP covers the southeastern corner of the Parish. Other than this there is little scope for further development within the Chignals and the parish is not considered suitable for any significant changes as shown by the Local Development Framework and the questionnaire respondents.

Consultation on an important policy document, the Site Allocations Document, will be taking place later on this year.

**Materials and techniques** Building materials that blend with the local environment, in particular brick, timber, flint and clay pantiles, should be used. Pargetting gives a regional and local identity to our

buildings and should be respected in any future development. Re-thatching should be encouraged.

**Commercial buildings** From the questionnaire results there was a majority view that the design and character of existing light industry development is acceptable. There was an overwhelming objection to purpose built, new, industrial or commercial developments. The impact of planning proposals on rural roads should be considered. The community encourages the provision of a village farm shop. Most people wanted any further industrial units to be provided from converted agricultural or industrial buildings.

A number of former farm buildings are now being used for other non-agricultural purposes. Semi permanent structures have been erected for commercial use.

**Empty buildings** There are very few unoccupied or disused buildings and if there were any proposals for redevelopment to a more intense form it should only be permitted where it does not have an adverse impact on the character of the area.

**Agricultural buildings** Building owners should be encouraged to take into account the appearance and impact upon the surrounding countryside by using materials, which will blend in to the surroundings and provide adequate screening. New buildings should preferably be sited as part of an existing building group rather than isolated and should be of a scale that does not dominate the adjacent structures. Demolition of redundant agricultural buildings should be avoided whenever possible and comply with Policy DC 56 and 57.

**Extensions** Changes in living standards and restrictions on the provision of new housing in rural areas have had the effect of increasing the requirement for extensions to existing properties. Many people prefer to see an increase in size to existing rather than new buildings as long as complying with planning policy (See Development Control Policies DC47). Extensions should be sympathetic to the property and in harmony with the surroundings. Site context will lead in determining what design would be most



These traditional farm buildings have permission for change of use but will retain their original 'barn' character.



Decorative Victorian door.



A listed barn conversion successfully incorporating contemporary design elements.



Original windows in the Victorian former rectory.



An original dormer window and, above right, a dormer installed during the conversion of the former church.



appropriate, this does not mean extensions should always copy the existing structure, although a relationship should exist, this could be rhythm, materials, form.

It is advisable to contact the local planning authority at an early stage when considering any development. In any new development it is important to promote good design. The borough council publishes a number of guidance documents covering side and roof extensions and other forms of development and these are listed on under References and Credits.

Extensions should not unduly affect adjoining residents and should not completely fill the available space, as it is important in a rural community to provide views of the countryside beyond and thus avoid urbanization of the street scene.

**Boundaries and parking** The use of large areas of concrete, tarmac or block paving are not well suited to rural settings where traditional materials such as shingle are more appropriate, and assist with rainwater drainage.

Existing hedges should be

retained wherever possible and new boundary walls or fences should reflect the essentially rural character of the area. High brick boundary walls with metal gates, or high front fences, are generally inappropriate in a rural setting, and should be discouraged.

Adequate provision should remain for off street parking as the ownership and popularity of cars is unlikely to diminish as the services to rural communities continue to decline.

**Roofs and dormers** Conversion of roof spaces frequently results in inappropriate dormer windows. Dormer windows should be of modest proportions, set well clear of the hips or verges, and should not extend above the ridge or hip line.

**Windows** Although there is a preference for the use of traditional timber windows when existing units are replaced the use of modern double glazed upvc units need not have a detrimental effect if they are well designed and proportioned to reflect the age and character of the building.

## 6 | Questionnaire Summary

The rural character of the two Chignal villages, with their narrow and winding country lanes and small scattered hamlets nestled within a verdant agricultural landscape, should be preserved, and it is considered essential that no development in the adjoining parishes of St. Andrews in Chelmsford, Broomfield, Great Waltham, Roxwell and Writtle should encroach on the Chignals. The majority of residents agree that there is a strong community spirit within the Chignals that could be damaged by substantial development. Most residents value the two villages being separate and would like the open farmland in the middle of the road loop formed by Chignal Road and Mashbury Road to be retained for that reason.

It is seen as inevitable that there will be some measure of change within the Chignals. This should be done sensitively and in keeping with local characteristics.

The existing absence of street lighting in the parish is welcome and should continue.

Any traffic calming measures should be appropriate for the rural context.

The existing footpaths and bridleway network are very important to the community and any change should be for the benefit of the network.

The community would welcome any planning application for a shop or farm shop.



## 7 | Appendices, References & Credits

A number of suggestions and comments, made by the community, while interesting and relevant to the community do not belong in a Village Design Statement and are documented below (*Appendices 1 – 3*) for interest to the reader and to draw attention for the parish council to consider.

### APPENDIX 1

Bethel Chapel: ‘Tin tabernacles’ was the subject of a BBC East television programme entitled ‘Inside Out’ Series 9, the script for which can be read at [www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/archive](http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/archive).

### APPENDIX 2:

**A)** Public transport: Buses operating in the morning and evening peak travel times to enable residents to access employment would be welcomed. The parish council could make representation to the service provider to re route one of the services that passes across the south of the village in Chignal Road around at least the village loop of Chignal Road and Mashbury Road.  
**B)** Chignal is in close proximity to Chelmsford railway station, giving regular fast connections to London and East Anglia, although the bus service is poor. Most residents rely on their own transport. However, once away from our narrow and winding lanes, road transport links are excellent.

### APPENDIX 3:

Roadside drainage: Regular clearance of the ditches and watercourses by landowners will maintain proper drainage so that there would be no need to resort to piping. The piping and filling of roadside ditches should be avoided.

### APPENDIX 4:

Consultation: Schedule of Events

**December 2004** The Parish Council arranged for representatives from the Rural Community Council of Essex and

Chelmsford Borough Council to hold a public exhibition about producing a VDS, to which all residents were invited.

**January 2005** A full public meeting chaired by a representative from the RCCE was held when thirteen residents volunteered to form a steering group.

**April 2005** A constituted organisation made up of every resident of both villages was formed and named The Chignal Villages Design Statement Association and the steering group was formally elected.

**Spring 2005** The village newsletter was used twice to extend invitations to all residents to submit designs for a group logo and to attend the Village Character Photographic Event.

**June 2005** An exhibition was set up at the village fete to encourage public participation in the photographic character event.

**October 2005** Every resident was invited to a workshop day and from this a questionnaire was developed and distributed to all households and resulted in a 74% response.

**December 2005** A public exhibition displayed the questionnaire responses and the added comments were used to develop the recommended design guidance.

**March 2006** The newsletter was used to ask if any residents could provide information about Bethel Chapel, which resulted in three responses. The village website carried news of the VDS progress on a dedicated page.

**September 06 – August 08** Several drafts were submitted to the Borough Council with comments received.

**June 2009** The final public consultation was followed by consultation with the Parish Council.

**September 2009** The VDS was adopted as Approved Guidance.

## References

Excavations South of Chignall Roman Villa, Essex 1977-81, Archaeology Section, Essex County Council

The Chignalls 1898-1998, 2nd edition, Tony Wilkins 1998

Chignal Parish Profile, Chelmsford Borough Council. [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/)

English Heritage in the East of England 2003-5

A number of planning and design guidance documents are available on the Chelmsford Borough Council website, and include:

Residential Design Guidance; side extensions and roof extensions, CBC 2004

Planning; a Guide for Householders Making Places SPD, CBC 2008

Sustainable Development (Supplementary Planning Document), June 2008

The Chelmsford Borough Historic Environment Characterisation Project, ECC for CBC 2006

Register of buildings of local value in Chignal, CBC April 2009

Essex Design Guide, ECC 2005

LDF Core Strategy and Development Control policies, CBC, adopted February 2008.

North Chelmsford Area Action Plan Preferred Options Document, CBC December 2008

Essex County Council Waste Local Plan, 2001

CBC Adopted Core Strategy, February 2008

CBC Site Allocations Document, August 2007

Chelmsford Landscape Character Assessment, technical document to LDF, Chris Blandford Associates, for CBC 2006

The Chignals Village Design Statement was produced by:

John Gill, Sandra Bailey, David Fincham, Cherry Scott, Ann Salmon, Spencer Bridge, Kate Middleditch, Julia Smart, Tony Wilkins, Steve Smart, Linda Nelson, Helen Towns, Graham Andrews and the Chignal community with the practical and financial support of the Rural Community Council of Essex, Chignal Parish Council and Chelmsford Borough Council.

### Editorial group:

David Fincham,  
Ann Salmon (photography)  
Kate Middleditch (maps and photography),  
Tony Wilkins.

### Additional photographs by

Gerald Brackpool, Sandra Bailey, Steve Middleditch. Chignal Village School photo, page 2, courtesy of Wendy Steele.

### Document designed by

Steve Middleditch at The Layout Pad

Further copies of this document are available from:

Chelmsford Borough Council,  
Directorate of Sustainable  
Communities,  
Civic Centre,  
Duke Street, Chelmsford,  
Essex CM1 1JE  
(01245) 606826

Chignals Parish Council,  
Mrs P MacDonald, Clerk,  
42 Berwick Avenue, Chelmsford,  
Essex CM1 4AS  
(01245) 440498

