


<b>Report of</b>	<b>Head of Commercial Services</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Beverley McClean</b> 
<b>Title</b>	<b>Adoption of the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan</b>		
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>Rural North</b>		

**The Local Plan Committee is asked to recommend that Full Council makes (adopts) the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan, incorporating the Planning Inspector's Main Modifications**

## 1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To recommend to Full Council that it makes (adopts) the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan (attached as Appendix A), following its approval at examination and referendum. Once adopted, the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan will become part of Colchester Borough Council's Local Development Plan.

## 2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To ensure the Council's planning policies provide a robust basis for decisions on future planning applications in the Borough.

## 3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The alternative would be to recommend to Full Council that it does not adopt the Neighbourhood Plan. This alternative, however, would be contrary to the positive approach to Neighbourhood Plans found in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paras 184-185).

## 4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 On 8 October 2012, Colchester Borough Council designated the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan Area for the purpose of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (in accordance with Part Two of the Town and Country Planning (England), Neighbourhood Planning (General) regulations 2012). The plan area includes the whole of Boxted Parish.
- 4.2 The Boxted Neighbourhood Plan Working Group carried out extensive consultation to support the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. This included a drop in event early in July 2012, attended by 250 people which generated 350 responses and the distribution of a household survey during

October - December 2012 which received 226 responses. The questionnaire informed the following aspects of the plan;

- Housing development at Hill Farm, Boxted Cross
- Support for appropriate small scale employment in Boxted, including smallholdings.
- Environment should be protected and enhanced through the provision of a new Village Green.
- Improvements to community infrastructure including sports & leisure facilities, open space, a village shop and broadband
- Highway improvements
- A Travel Plan to manage traffic issues at the village school.

4.3 Further consultation was carried out including a pre-submission consultation in September 2014, and an initial Submission consultation in November 2014. Following this consultation the developer/owner of Hill Farm, lodged an appeal against the Council's decision to refuse planning permission to develop the only site being proposed for housing in the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan. This delayed the Neighbourhood Plan and required changes to be made to the document. As a result of these changes, it was necessary to undertake a 2<sup>nd</sup> Submission consultation during February-March 2016. In total 24 responses were received to both Submission consultations.

4.4 Colchester Borough Council appointed an independent examiner, Mr Richard Hill, to examine the Neighbourhood Plan in April 2016. The Inspector concluded that subject to minor amendments the plan satisfied all the Basic Conditions i.e. it promoted Sustainable Development, was in general conformity with national Planning Policy & Guidance and with strategic policies in Colchester's adopted Local Plan and complied with EU Regulations. The Inspector also recommended that the draft plan could proceed to Referendum.

4.5 The Referendum on the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan was held on 15 September 2016 with the following results: 305 in favour of the plan and 69 against, or 81.5% in favour.

4.6 Information gathered by Planning magazine indicates that 199 Neighbourhood Plans had been adopted nationwide as of September 2016. The adoption of the Myland/Braiswick and Boxted Neighbourhood Plans will add to this total and make Colchester the first Essex authority to adopt Neighbourhood Plans.

## **5. Proposals**

5.1 It is proposed that the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan is made (adopted) to form part of the Council's Adopted Local Plan in accordance with Section 19 of the Town and Country Planning (England), Neighbourhood Planning (General) regulations 2012).

## **6. Strategic Plan References**

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan Action Plan includes a commitment to regenerating the Borough through buildings, employment, leisure and infrastructure. There are also commitments to attract investment and provide more affordable homes. The Boxted Neighbourhood Plan will contribute towards achieving these objectives.

## **7. Consultation**

- 7.1 The preparation of the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan was underpinned by extensive public consultation. The consultation process was documented in a Consultation Statement submitted along with the Neighbourhood Plan document as part of the examination process. On adoption, the document will be made available on the Colchester Borough Council and Boxted Parish Council websites, and stakeholders will be notified, in accordance with Section 20 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **8. Publicity Considerations**

- 8.1 Both Boxted Parish Council and Colchester Borough Council have publicised the Neighbourhood Plan on their respective websites. News of the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan will also be published.

## **9. Financial Implications**

- 9.1 Colchester Borough Council is financially responsible for organising the examination and referendum for Neighbourhood Plans in their areas. The Council however, can reclaim £20,000 from DCLG for all Neighbourhood Plans once a date is set for a referendum following a successful examination. These payments have been made by Central Government to Local Authorities to reflect the additional financial burdens associated with supporting Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Plan Forums prepare Neighbourhood Plans. The Government has recently announced that only the first 5 Neighbourhood Plans Area Designations in any LPA area will receive a grant £5000. This has financial implications for planning authorities like Colchester where more than 5 Neighbourhood Plans are being progressed.

## **10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Development Framework and is available to view on the Colchester Borough Council website by following this pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Commercial Services > Local Plan.
- 10.2 There are no particular Human Rights implications.

## **11. Community Safety Implications**

11.1 None identified.

## **12. Health and Safety Implications**

12.1 None identified.

## **13. Risk Management Implications**

13.1 The adoption of the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan will help ensure that the Council's planning policies are robust and up-to-date and help to reduce the risk of inappropriate development being permitted.

## **14. Disclaimer**

14.1 The information in this report was, as far as is known, correct at the date of publication. Colchester Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any error or omissions.

# **Boxted Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029**



**Referendum Version**

**July 2016**

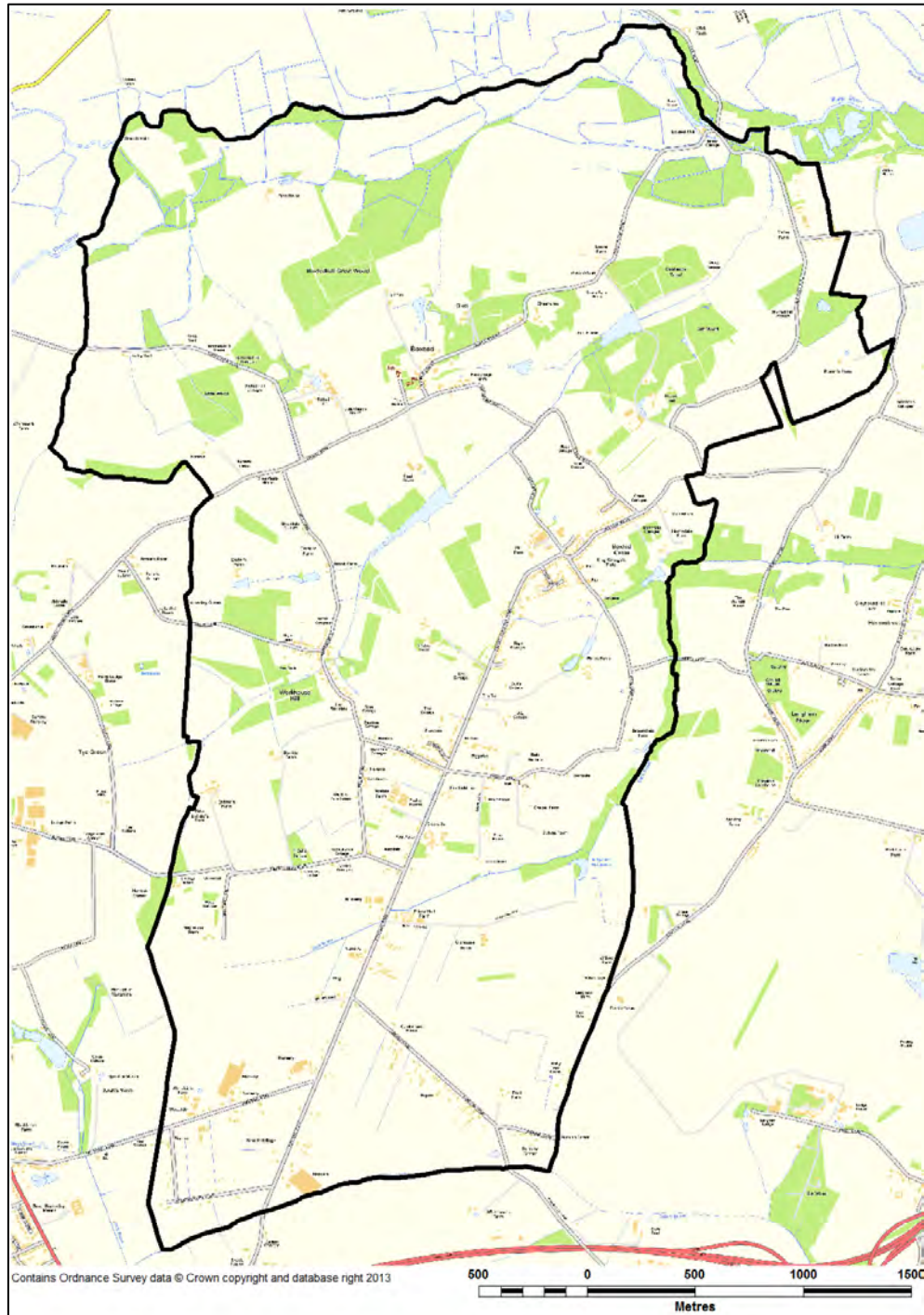
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is the Neighbourhood Plan for Boxted Parish. It seeks to represent one part of the development plan for the parish over the period 2014 to 2029. For clarity, the development plan consists of any planning policies currently adopted by the local planning authority, Colchester Borough Council, and this Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 The map in Figure 1.1 below shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area, which is the same as the administrative boundary of Boxted Parish.

**Figure 1.1: Boxted Neighbourhood Plan boundary**



- 1.3 The principal purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development within the parish and enable planning applications to be determined through a clear policy framework. The process of producing a plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible. In particular there has been considerable consultation and a Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire that has provided a substantial amount of evidence. The different topic areas addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to Boxted, its residents, businesses and community groups.
- 1.4 This submission version of the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan is accompanied by a Basic Conditions Statement and a Consultation Statement. The Basic Conditions Statement includes a short appraisal of the sustainability of the site proposed for allocation at Hill Farm. It also confirms that a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan was not required.

### **How to read this document**

Each section of the plan covers a different topic. Under each heading there is the justification for the policies presented which provides the necessary understanding of the policy and what it is seeking to achieve. There is also a summary of how each policy contributes towards the objectives of the plan. The policies themselves are presented in the blue boxes. It is these policies against which planning applications will be assessed by Colchester Borough Council in its role as local planning authority. It is advisable that, in order to understand the full context for any individual policy, it is read in conjunction with the supporting text.

conjunction with the supporting text.



## 2 LOCAL CONTEXT

### History of Boxted

- 2.1 Boxted is a sprawling parish of some 3,177 acres situated on the Essex/Suffolk border, part in Dedham Vale, north of Colchester. Its history stretches from Neolithic and Trinovante tribesman, Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Normans, Plantagenets, Tudors, Stuarts, King William and Queen Anne, The Georges, Victoria, and her descendants to the present day.
- 2.2 The Parish Church of St Peter stands on a ridge to the south of the River Stour. This was a building started by the Saxons and completed by the Normans. It has been greatly altered through the centuries, the Tudors put in the dormer and lattice windows, the porch is 17th century and in the 18/19th century the thatched roof was replaced with tiles. It remains a small compact building made from pudding stone, rubble, and Roman brick

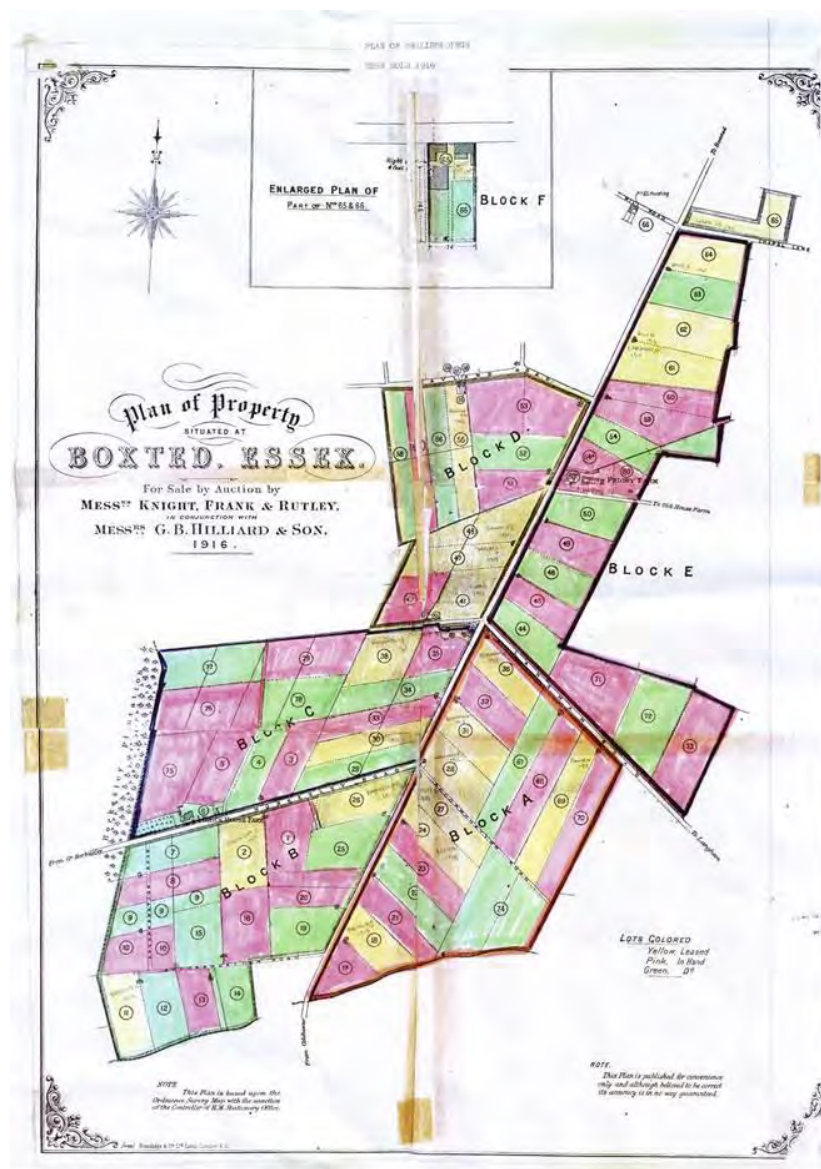


- 2.3 Various manor houses were built; the present Hall and Pond House are by the church, but Rivers Hall, a partly moated dwelling is on the eastern outskirts of the parish, and its lands take in the Cross Area. Rivers Hall was surveyed in 1586 by John Walker and these maps still exist today, giving minute detail of the fields and dwellings on the estate. The oldest thatched cottage in Essex, if not in Europe, was on part of the 1586 Rivers Hall estate – this is Songers dated 1260, situated in Cage Lane. There are many thatched cottages in the village, some at peculiar angles to the road pattern – they were built to an earlier road design . Most of these cottages are 17<sup>th</sup> century.



- 2.4 Prior to the Enclosures Act 1813, a large heath separated Boxted from Myland (Mile End), how Colchester. The heath was crossed by two distinct cart tracks, one going to the east of Colchester, the other linking up with Great Horkesley and on into Myland. After the enclosure of the heath (1815) and the laying out of the Straight Road, which is three miles in length, the character of the village changed. The Straight Road led directly to Myland, which expanded with the coming of the railway to Colchester in 1840.
- 2.5 In 1906 the Salvation Army set up a 'Labour Colony' to put 'landless people on the people less land'. As a result, 67 smallholdings were created and at least 50 were occupied when General Booth visited Boxted in 1910.

### Plan showing the Boxted smallholdings in 1916



- 2.6 Discontent by the smallholders with the administration of the scheme led to tenants being evicted and by 1916 the scheme was wound up and the smallholding sold. Most holdings were bought by Essex County Council to resettle servicemen returning from the Great War 1914-18.



- 2.7 At one time there were seven public houses in the village, but today there are none. The oldest, The Cross Inn, was recently refurbished and sold as a private residence. Whilst restoring, the builders found a priest hole in the roof rafters, where supposedly Lord Goring was hidden whilst escaping from Colchester in 1648, the time of the Civil War. A battle was fought near the Cross and Hill Farm and in 1925 when Hill Farm House was being renovated, a skeleton in 17th century armour was found in a rooftop hideaway. It is thought to be the remains of Colonel Farr, a double agent. Boxted now has a new primary school built near the Cross site the original school was built near the church in 1837. There is also a Methodist Church in Chapel Road dating back to 1852, and in 1910 the Methodists opened a schoolroom near their church. There is also a silver band, one of the oldest Methodist bands in Essex.
- 2.8 Just before the Second World War the King George V Jubilee Trust enabled the villagers to create a Sports Field in Cage Lane. Alongside the sports field is the village hall. There are also well defined footpaths across the village. Today the village no longer has a post office or any shops and, in fact, only a limited number of businesses of any sort. Once a vibrant agricultural community, and for 200 years a prosperous weaving 'Towne', it now largely functions as a commuter dormitory.
- 2.9 Today, the historic legacy still remains, with two Grade I listed buildings (the Parish Church and Songers') and several Grade II listed buildings dispersed across the parish. In the north there is also the conservation area.

## Character of Boxted

- 2.10 The village has no common architectural style or theme and has a wide variety of styles and designs of house building. These reflect the historical span of construction which started in the thirteenth century. Additionally there is considerable variety of size extending from the three-storey flats as at White Arch Place to large manor houses such as Boxted Hall and Rivers Hall. The character of the village is enhanced by a series of

thatched cottages dotted around the village such as Songers in Cage Lane, also Medlars and Holly Cottage in Straight Road, a number of thatched cottages in Ellis Road and others along Church Street.

**Songers Cottage (1280)**



- 2.11 A number of historic houses such as Aubrey's Cottages are centred on the church in Church Street. The Wheelwright's House and the old bakery exist close to Boxted Cross and represent the second original focal area of the village. There are other interesting old properties scattered around the village such as Harbutts and Wenlocks in Cage Lane dating from Tudor times, Thatchers and Went (now the Thatched Cottage) in Mill Road, and Oak Cottage in Chapel Road. There are a number of large distinctive properties within the village boundary such as Cheshunts at the end of Church Street, Hill House on Carter's Hill, Boxted House and Pond House, all with their distinctive styles.
- 2.12 What was originally council housing was built post war near Boxted Cross and private housing was built such as in Hobbs Drive and East Side. These are typical urban-type twentieth century housing. More recently, building has been mainly in-fill such as on the car-park area of Boxted Cross Inn (now a private house) and along Straight Road.

**Key facilities**

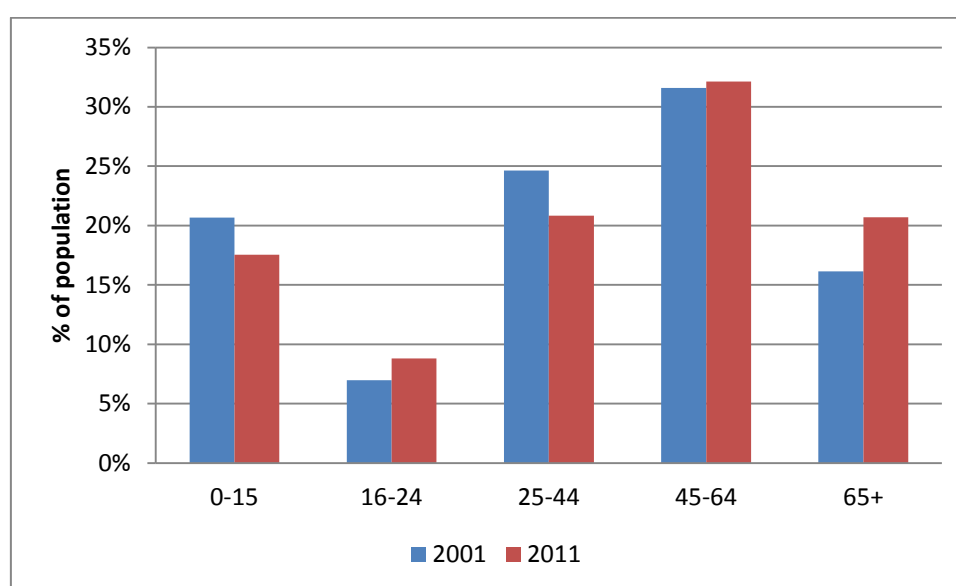
- 2.13 Boxted has a primary school – Boxted Primary School – that caters for the education needs of the community between the ages of 4 and 11. The school has recently expanded to take up to approximately 30 pupils per year. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught in a mixed-age class. The February 2014 Ofsted Inspection showed that, at that time, there were 144 children on the school roll, with a theoretical capacity to accommodate 210 pupils. It is understood that a number of the children at the school come from outside its catchment area.
- 2.14 The expansion of the school was against the wishes of the Parish Council, which was concerned about the impact that additional traffic would have on child safety.

## Socio-economic profile

### Population

- 2.15 In 2011, the population of Boxted parish was 1,363 people. Over the decade since 2001, the population remained static, whilst the population of Colchester Borough increased by 10%.
- 2.16 However, as Figure 2.1 shows, the profile of Boxted parish's population changed quite considerably. The proportion of people of retirement age rose by 5% whereas the proportion of children and adults of traditional 'family' age (25-44) fell by a total of 7%.
- This shows that Boxted has an increasing proportion of older people and is losing younger families from its community.

**Figure 2.1: Population profile change, 2001-2011**



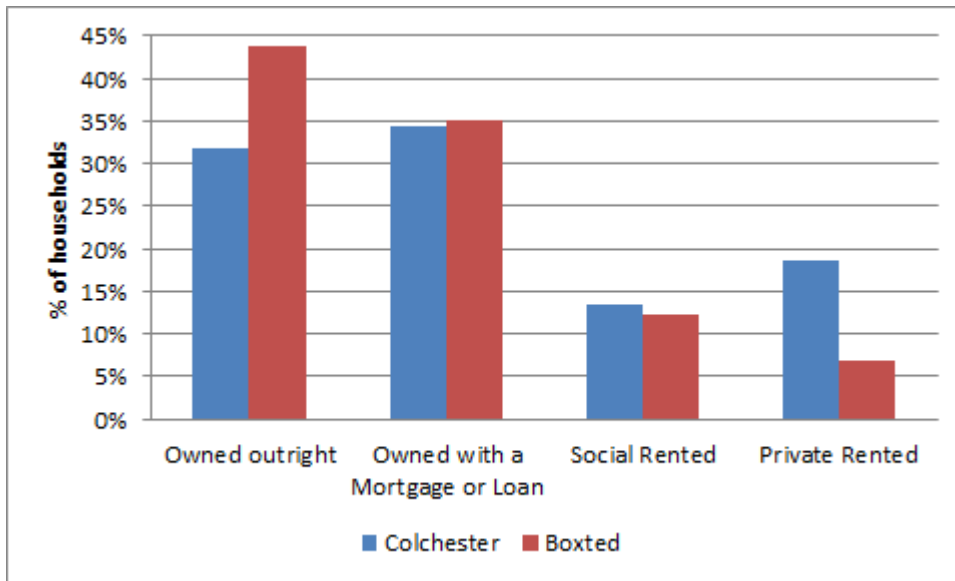
Source: 2001 and 2011 Census

### Dwellings and households

- 2.17 There were a total of 553 households in Boxted parish in 2011 living in 579 dwellings. As is shown in Figure 2.2, the vast majority of these are either owned outright or owned with a mortgage. Boxted parish has a much lower proportion of people living in private rented accommodation. In total, 12% of households are in social rented accommodation.



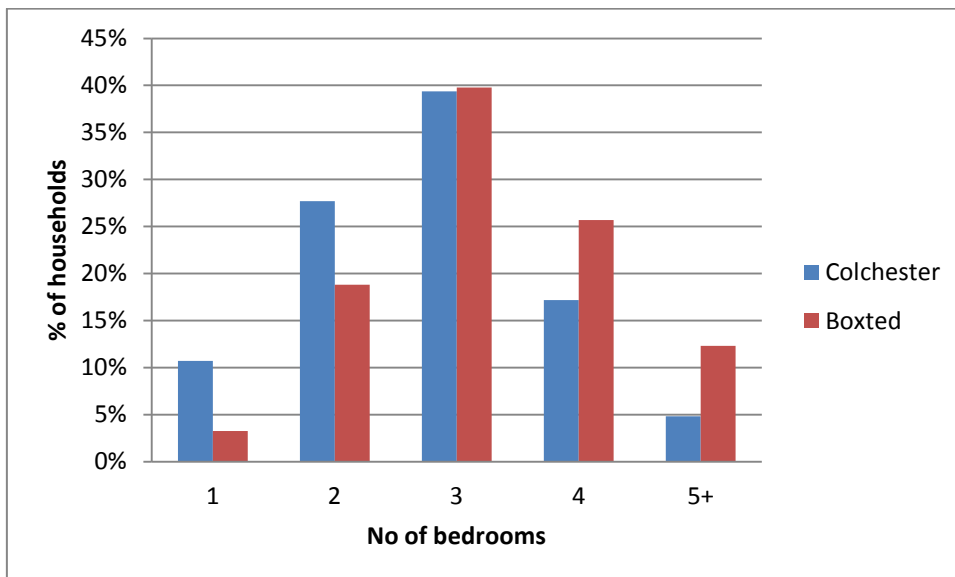
**Figure 2.2: Tenure of households**



Source: 2011 Census

- 2.18 The profile of dwellings shows that there is a greater proportion of larger properties in Boxted than in Colchester Borough. Figure 2.3 shows that Boxted parish has a far higher proportion of 4- and 5+-bed properties than Colchester Borough – 38% compared to 22%. By contrast, it has a much lower proportion of smaller properties – just 22% are 1- or 2-beds compared to 39% across the Borough as a whole.

**Figure 2.3: Number of bedrooms**



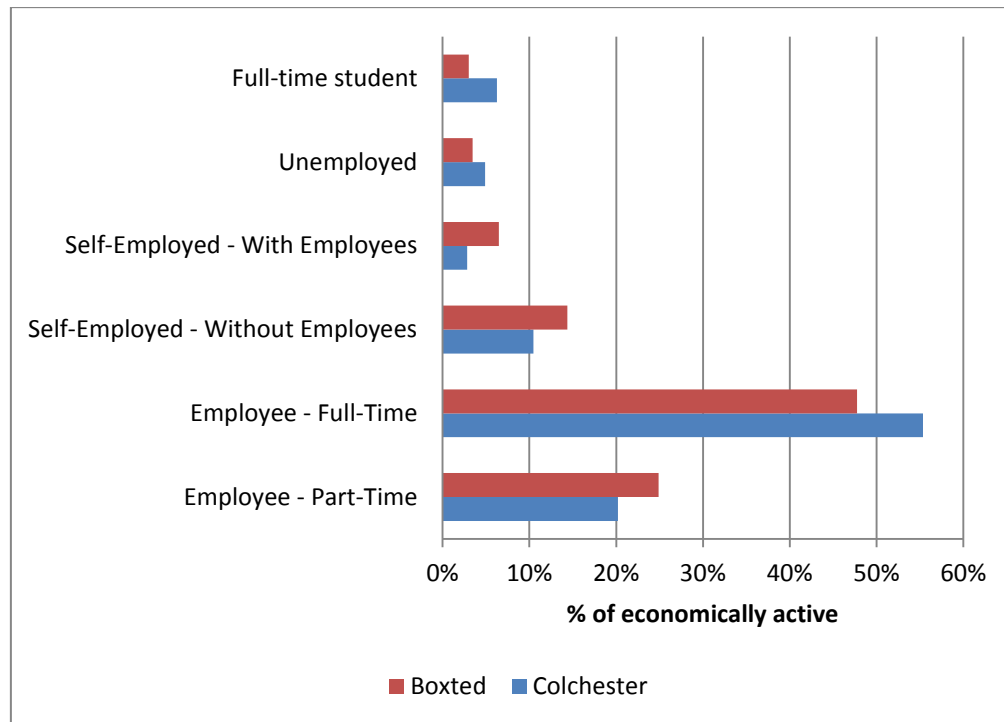
Source: 2011 Census

### ***Economic activity***

- 2.19 Boxted parish does show some differences from the Borough profile in terms of the economic activity of its residents of working age. Figure 2.4 shows that it has a lower proportion of full-time employees but a higher proportion of part-time employees. What is also noticeable is the proportion of people that are self-employed – 21% of the population are self-employed, either with or without employees. This compares to just 13% across

the Borough. In particular, 14% are self-employed but do not have any employees, suggesting that they work on their own. This is supported by the fact that 7% of the parish's population works mainly at or from home, compared to just 3% across the Borough.

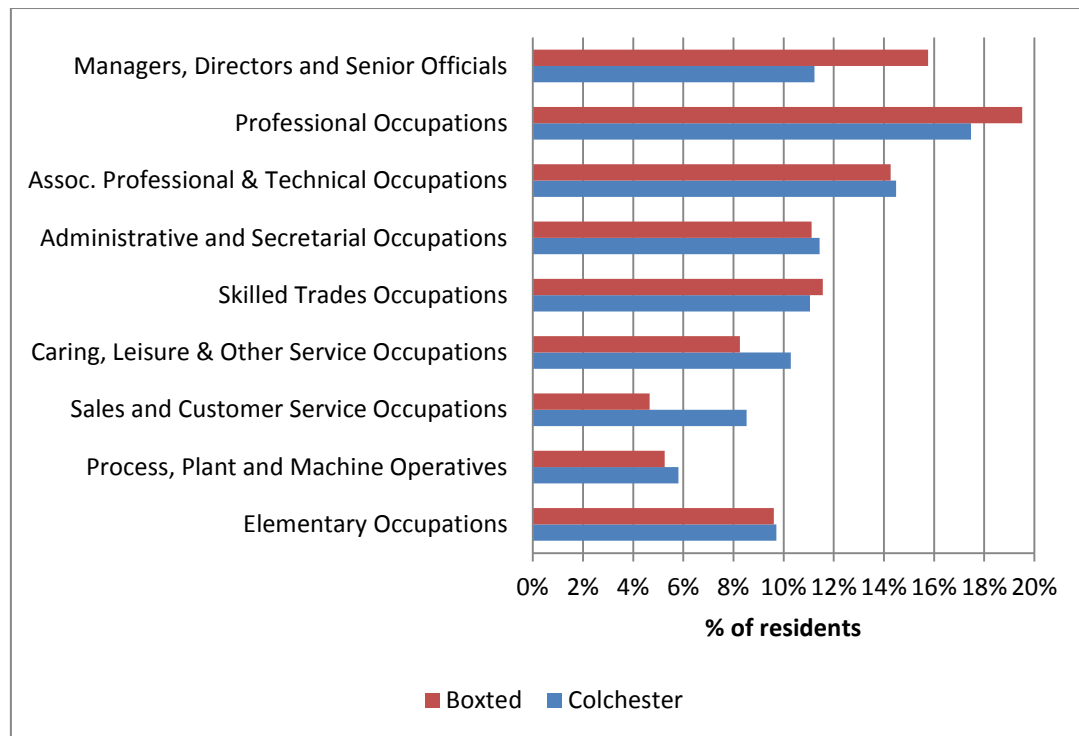
**Figure 2.4: Economic activity**



Source: 2011 Census

- 2.20 What Boxted parish clearly shows is that its workforce works at very senior levels. Table 2.5 shows that 35% of its workers are either at manager/director level or work in professional occupations – this compares to 29% across Colchester Borough. By contrast, Boxted has a very low proportion of people working in the service sector – just 13% working in the care/leisure or sales sectors compared to 19% across the Borough.

**Figure 2.5: Type of occupation**



Source: 2011 Census

### **Summary**

2.21 The socio-economic profile of Boxted parish suggests that the community has the following features:

- It is an increasingly ageing population living predominantly in large houses that are owned.
- It is losing young people and young families.
- It has a significant number of self-employed people, many of whom work from home.
- Its workforce has a significant proportion working in high value occupations which are most likely to be located outside the parish.



### 3 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

#### Planning context

- 3.1 National planning policy is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The ‘golden thread’ running through the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means positively seeking opportunities to meet the development needs of the area. Neighbourhood plans should:
- develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development; and
  - plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan” (paragraph 16).
- 3.2 This and other matters are supported by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which was issued in March 2014.
- 3.3 The NPPF in paragraph 184 states that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan. The Local Plan is prepared by Colchester Borough. The key strategic policies in the Colchester Local Plan of relevance to the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan are as follows:

Topic	Key Local Plan Policies
Sustainable Development	SD1
Housing	H1, H2, H3 & H4
Employment	CE1, DP5, DP8 & DP9
Transport	TA1
Environment	PR1, ENV1

- 3.4 It should also be noted that part of Boxted parish is in the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and therefore subject to the Dedham Vale AONB Management Plan and the NPPF as well as Local Plan policy relating to the AONB.
- 3.5 The Neighbourhood Plan is considered to be in general conformity with these policies and this is articulated in the Basic Conditions Statement which has been submitted along with this document as required at the Submission Stage (Regulation 15).

#### Challenges for Boxted

- 3.6 The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address, as far as is possible, the challenges that face the community of Boxted Parish. The community itself considers these challenges to be:
- **Housing** – ensuring that any new housing recognises the rural setting of Boxted.
  - **Affordable housing** – addressing a shortage of affordable housing required to serve the needs of the parish.
  - **Landscape** – recognising that part of Boxted lies within the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
  - **Coalescence with Colchester** – ensuring that development does not cause the coalescence of the parish with urban Colchester.
  - **Community facilities** – the need to improve the quality and availability of community infrastructure, particularly leisure and local retail facilities.

- **Movement by non-car modes** – the need to protect and enhance the bridleway network for use by cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians in the parish.
- **Traffic and highways** – addressing issues of highway safety, particularly along Boxted Straight Road, movement of non-local HGV traffic through Boxted village and parking associated with Boxted Primary School.
- **Rural character** – the need to balance the vitality of the local economic base with the importance of avoiding industrialisation of rural premises, e.g. smallholdings.
- **Infrastructure** – in particular improved broadband speeds are needed to provide for the growing number of small businesses and levels of working from home that are reflective of the modern economy.

## Vision for Boxted

3.7 The vision for Boxted Parish is as follows:

'In 2029, Boxted Parish will be a thriving rural community. It will have provided for many of the needs of its residents, both in terms of market and affordable housing.

Importantly, development will not have been at the expense of the character of Boxted parish, both of its settlements and its landscape and in particular, the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It will have retained and protected its green and blue spaces of value and created new ones.

This will be complemented by new and improved facilities, both for sports and leisure and for day-to-day shopping needs through the provision of a community shop.'

Rural employment will continue to thrive and the provision of high speed broadband will enable the network of self-employed people to run global businesses from home or from small, local offices.

The road network and its safety for drivers and pedestrians alike will be improved and people will be benefitting from the expanded bridleway network. Congestion at Boxted Primary School has been resolved through a 'Park and Walk' initiative.

## Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan

3.8 The objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan as identified by the community are as follows:

- **Objective One:** Conserve and enhance the character and landscape of the parish and ensure that it does not coalesce with urban Colchester
- **Objective Two:** Provide additional community infrastructure to maintain and improve the sustainability of Boxted as a rural parish
- **Objective Three:** Ensure housing developments meet the needs of the local community, including for affordable housing
- **Objective Four:** Ensure that the rural employment base is, where possible, retained and the supporting infrastructure for rural working is provided
- **Objective Five:** Address highway safety and parking issues and improve the potential for movement by non-car modes

## 4 VILLAGE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES

- 4.1 The Colchester Local Plan, which covers the period to 2021, is clear that rural villages such as those in Boxted parish are not appropriate locations for significant growth. It is therefore important to balance the need for growth that addresses the needs of the community with the necessary protection to ensure that unrestricted growth and sprawl of rural settlements does not occur.

### Policy justification

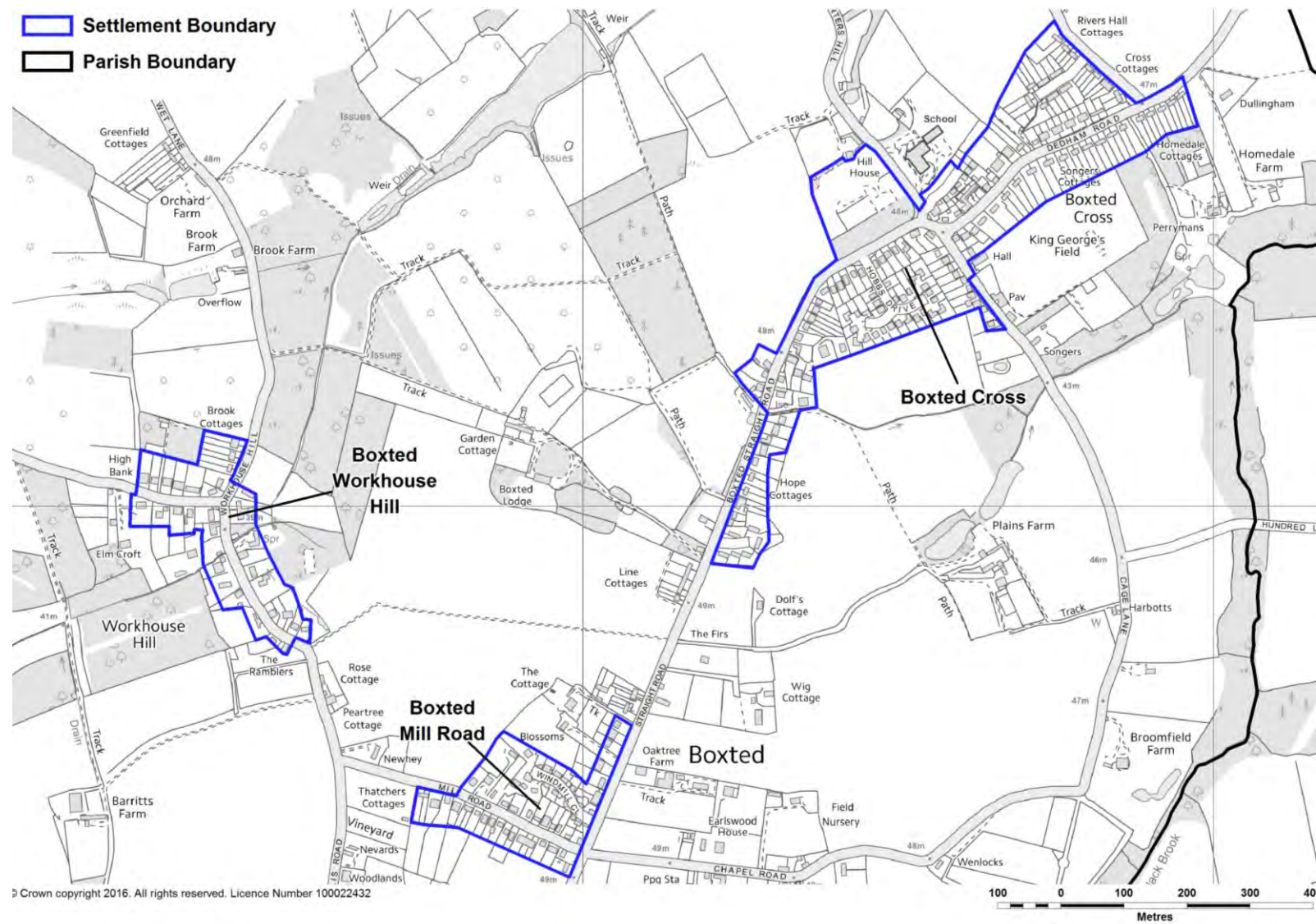
- 4.2 There are four built-up areas within the parish of Boxted. The largest is Boxted Cross. The other built-up areas are Boxted Mill Road, Boxted Workhouse Hill and Boxted Church Hamlet. All of these areas, apart from Boxted Church Hamlet, have defined settlement boundaries in the Colchester Local Plan.
- 4.3 Policy ENV2 of the Colchester Local Plan recognises the importance of appropriate development in rural communities. It states:

*“The Borough Council will enhance the vitality of rural communities by supporting appropriate development of infill sites and previously developed land (PDL) within the settlement development boundaries of villages. The design and construction of new village development must be high quality in all respects, including design, sustainability and compatibility with the distinctive character of the locality. Development should also contribute to the local community through the provision of relevant community needs such as affordable housing, open space, local employment, and community facilities.*

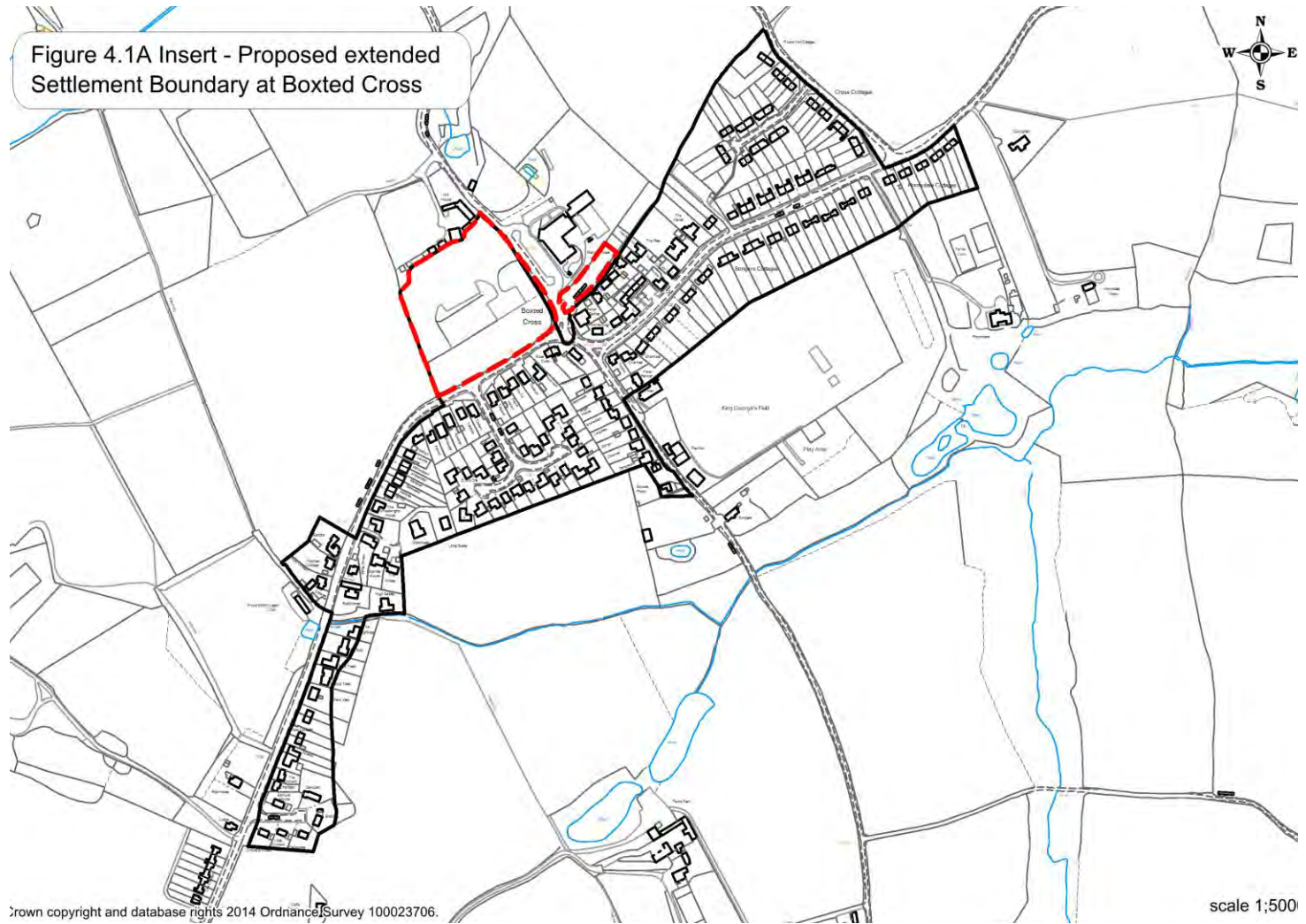
*Outside village boundaries, the Council will favourably consider sustainable small-scale rural business, leisure and tourism schemes that are of an appropriate scale and which help meet appropriate to local employment needs, minimise negative environmental impacts, and harmonise with the local character and surrounding natural environment. Development outside but contiguous to village settlement boundaries may be supported, primarily where it constitutes an exception to meet identified local affordable housing needs.*

*Towns and villages are encouraged to plan for the specific needs of their communities by developing Neighbourhood Plans which provide locally-determined policies on future development needs. Communities are also encouraged to continue to develop other plans, where appropriate, such as Community Led Plans Parish Plans and Village Design Statements, for adoption as guidance.”*

**Figure 4.1: Settlement boundaries in Boxted Parish**







4.4. The Neighbourhood Plan reiterates this policy and Figure 4.1 shows the extent of the settlement boundaries in Boxted parish. This includes the Hill Farm site that is proposed for allocation for residential development in Policy HF1. This would increase the size of the settlement of Boxted Cross so is included within the proposed change to the settlement boundary as shown in Figure 4.1.

## Policy

### POLICY SB1: VILLAGE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES

The settlement boundaries within Boxted parish are shown in Figure 4.1.

The settlement boundary of Boxted Cross shall include the allocation of the Hill Farm site (Policy HF1) and the land between the primary school and Crossfield Way.

Development within the settlement boundaries will be supported in principle where other policy requirements can be satisfied.

Outside of the settlement boundaries in Boxted parish, small-scale rural business, leisure and tourism schemes that are appropriate to local employment needs, minimise negative environmental impacts and harmonise with the local character and surrounding natural environment will be considered favourably. Development outside but contiguous to village settlement boundaries may be supported where it constitutes an exception to meet identified local affordable housing needs.

Policy SB1	
<b>Objective 1:</b> Conserve and enhance the character and landscape of the parish and ensure that it does not coalesce with urban Colchester	YES
<b>Objective 2:</b> Protect and enhance the green spaces within the Parish which are of value to the community	
<b>Objective 3:</b> Ensure housing developments meet the needs of the local community, including for affordable housing	
<b>Objective 4:</b> Ensure that the rural employment base is, where possible, retained and the supporting infrastructure for rural working is provided	
<b>Objective 5:</b> Address highway safety and parking issues and improve the potential for movement by non-car modes	

## 5 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 5.1 As a series of rural settlements, the community of Boxted parish greatly values the benefits that living in such a setting provides. Whilst the landscape is not generally considered to be of the value of the adjacent Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, it is characterised by attractive valleys and woodland. Development that is not carefully considered and which fails to properly mitigate any negative impacts would have a detrimental impact on the quality of this environment.
- 5.2 The policies in this section of the Neighbourhood Plan seek to balance the recognition that growth can bring benefits with the need to ensure that it does not have a detrimental impact on the landscape.

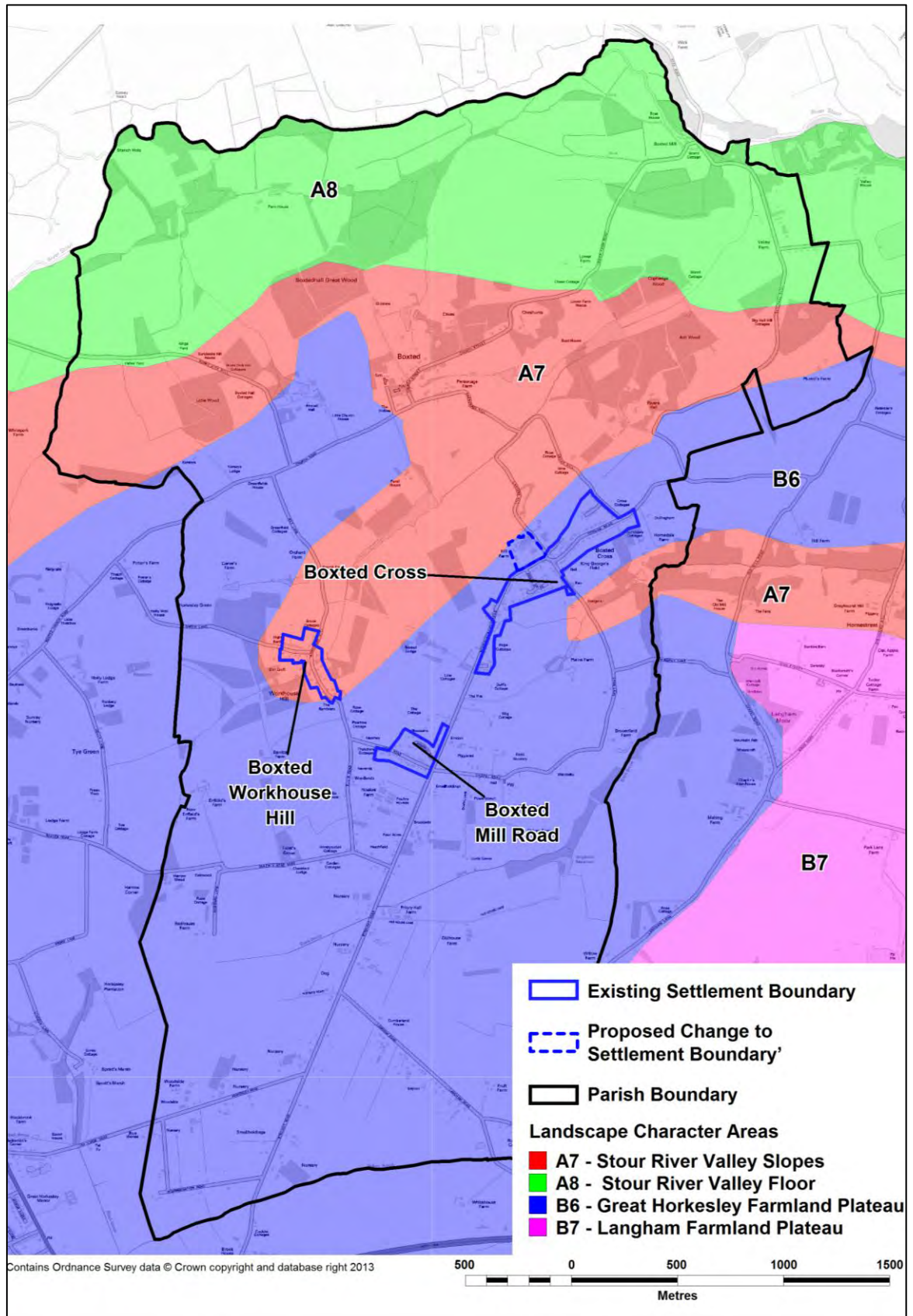
### Policy justification

- 5.3 Boxted parish encompasses three landscape character areas – the Stour River Valley Slopes, the Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau and the Stour River Valley Floor. These are shown in Figure 5.1.
- 5.4 The Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment<sup>1</sup> (LCA) summarised the key characteristics of the relevant parts of the Stour River Valley Slopes as:
- Steep sided river valleys
  - Damp pasture and willows
  - Patches of mixed woodland
  - Small farmsteads and orchards
  - Network of public footpaths
- 5.5 The LCA recommends a landscape strategy objective of preserving and enhancing these areas. The specific planning guidelines provided are to:
- conserve the tranquil undeveloped character of the intimate tributary valley of the River Stour;
  - conserve the landscape setting of historic settlements such as Boxted;
  - maintain cross-valley views and conserve characteristic views along the valley; and
  - ensure any new small-scale development in or on the edges of historic villages of the area is of an appropriate scale, form, design and uses materials which respond to historic settlement character.

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Blandford Associates (2005) *Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment*, for Colchester Borough Council

**Figure 5.1: Landscape character areas in Boxted Parish**



Source: Chris Blandford Associates (2005) Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment, for Colchester Borough Council



5.6 The assessment of the Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau, which covers the majority of the parish, summarised this area as:

- Arable fields with mature trees at field boundaries
- Interesting field pattern consisting of small, regular fields
- Orchards

5.7 The LCA recommends a landscape strategy objective of conserving and enhancing these areas. The specific planning guidelines provide are to:

- ensure that any appropriate new development responds to historic settlement pattern and uses materials, which are appropriate to local landscape character;
- conserve the landscape setting of existing settlements, such as Boxted, ensuring where appropriate that infill development does not cause linkage with the main Colchester settlement; and
- conserve panoramic and framed views into the Stour River Valley corridor to the north of the character area;

5.8 The assessment of the Stour River Valley Floor summarised this area as:

- Wet floodplain consisting of several areas of damp pasture and meadows and ponds;
- Willow and remnant poplar plantations following the alignment of the River Stour;
- Numerous mills, weirs, water works and pumping stations (human influences) associated with the River;
- Large areas of open grazed grassland traversed by a ditch network;
- Intimate small fields enclosed by tall hedges and/or wet ditches.

5.9 The LCA recommends a landscape strategy objective of conserving and enhancing these areas. Planning Practice Guidance on flood zones indicates that only water compatible development and essential infrastructure developments which have passed the necessary exception test should be considered within the functional floodplain. Essential infrastructure that passes the exemption test should:

- remain operational and safe for users in times of flood;
- result in no net loss of floodplain storage; and
- not impede water flows and not increase flood risk elsewhere.

5.10 Colchester Borough Council's 'Assessment of open countryside between settlements in the Borough of Colchester'<sup>2</sup> provides evidence that the character of the landscape between the settlements of Boxted and Colchester (including its Northern Growth Area) makes a high contribution towards the separation of settlements. It summarises at paragraph 9.4.2 as follows:

*"Any new built development, as defined, between Boxted and Colchester is likely to seriously undermine the sense of settlement separation and the rural character of the intervening land, as perceived by people moving along public rights of way between Boxted and Colchester, or along Straight*

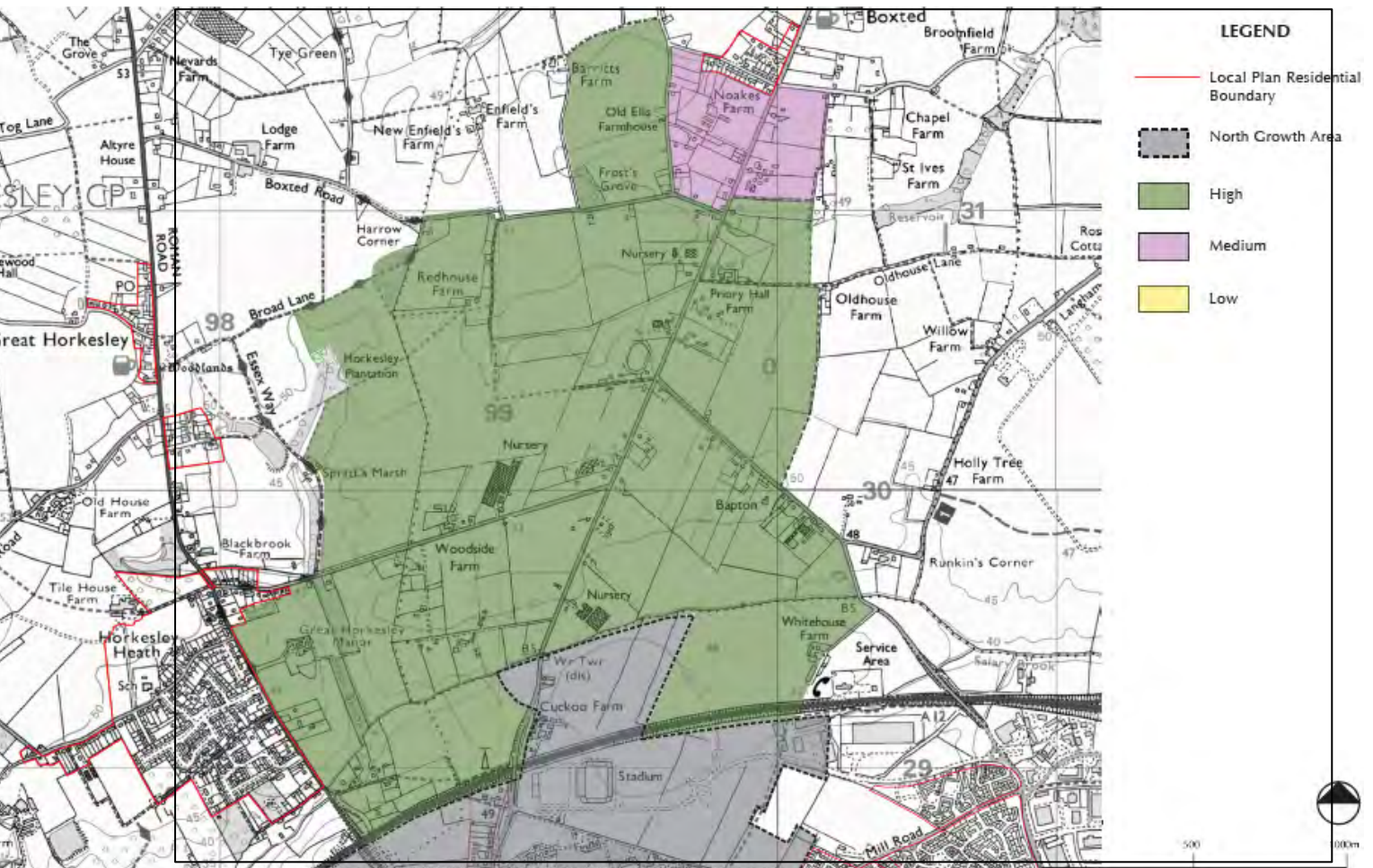
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<sup>2</sup> Colchester Borough Council (2009) *Assessment of open countryside between settlements in the Borough of Colchester*, Final Report

*Road. Any such development is likely to result in visual coalescence with Colchester and/or Boxted and also visual coalescence with existing houses alongside Straight Road, particularly as perceived from the public rights of way across the adjacent farmland. This visual coalescence is likely to seriously undermine the sense of settlement separation and the predominantly rural character of this land. The sense of leaving one settlement and entering another would also be significantly diminished.”*

5.11 This is shown in Figure 5.2.

**Figure 5.2: Contribution to separation of settlements of Boxted and Colchester**



Source: Colchester Borough Council (2009) Assessment of open countryside between settlements in the Borough of Colchester, Final Report, Figure 9.3

- 5.12 The community of Boxted is particularly concerned about encroachment from the Colchester Northern Growth Area. Whilst the A12 forms a robust barrier to prevent further sprawl of Colchester, in recent years there has been the development of a petrol station on the north side of the A12 and planning permission granted for a fast food outlet and the Cuckoo Farm park-and-ride development. The community considers that further development in these locations will serve to have a permanent and detrimental impact on the function of Boxted as a rural parish and settlements.
- 5.13 It is important therefore that development in Boxted parish is provided with an appropriate and clear policy context to ensure that the character of the local landscape is properly respected and that coalescence with the Colchester Northern Growth Area is prevented.

- 5.14 In addition, a further concern of the community is the impact of light pollution from large scale developments. The floodlights from the Weston Homes Community Stadium on the north side of the A12 were altered due to having a detrimental light pollution impact on residents of Boxted (indeed residents still consider that the alteration has not completely addressed the light pollution caused). There is concern that the Cuckoo Farm Park and Ride development, which is closer to residential properties in Boxted than the stadium, will have a similarly unacceptable impact on the amenity of residents. Whilst outside the parish boundary and therefore the influence of this Neighbourhood Plan, the community considers it important that the impacts of light pollution on local residents by major developments such as the Park and Ride and properly mitigated.

## Policy

- 5.15 There are two policies in the Neighbourhood Plan that protect the local landscape character and serve to prevent coalescence.
- 5.16 Policy LC1 seeks to ensure that the ongoing growth of the Colchester urban area does not serve to reduce the gap in any way between Colchester and Boxted, thereby eroding Boxted's function as a rural settlement.
- 5.17 It is important to be clear that, within Policy LC1, there are certain types of development that are generally not considered to be sustainable in this location and are likely to materially reduce the green gap. These are very much guided by the requirements of Policy SB1 in respect of development outside of settlement boundaries and would commonly include residential development or any commercial or leisure development that was not of a small-scale nature appropriate for such a rural setting.

### POLICY LC1: COALESCENCE WITH COLCHESTER URBAN AREA

Developments in Boxted parish which can be demonstrated to be sustainable and which do not materially reduce the green gap between Boxted and urban Colchester will be supported. This must reflect the requirements of Policy SB1 in respect of development outside of settlement boundaries.

Policy LC1	
<b>Objective 1:</b> Conserve and enhance the character and landscape of the parish and ensure that it does not coalesce with urban Colchester	YES
<b>Objective 2:</b> Protect and enhance the green spaces within the Parish which are of value to the community	YES
<b>Objective 3:</b> Ensure housing developments meet the needs of the local community, including for affordable housing	
<b>Objective 4:</b> Ensure that the rural employment base is, where possible, retained and the supporting infrastructure for rural working is provided	
<b>Objective 5:</b> Address highway safety and parking issues and improve the potential for movement by non-car modes	

- 5.18 The second policy (Policy LC2) seeks generally to protect the local landscape character of the parish by requiring a landscape assessment to accompany anything but the smallest planning applications where those applications are anywhere other than in the middle of a settlement identified in Policy SB1. This assessment must demonstrate that

the scheme is not going to have a detrimental impact on the landscape or that any such impacts can fully be mitigated.

- 5.19 A threshold of three dwellings has been used to avoid those wishing to deliver small scale development of just one or two dwellings from having an unnecessary burden when they submit a planning application. In most cases, it is not expected that just one or two dwellings could have a significant detrimental impact on landscape character. Equally, a threshold of 500m<sup>2</sup> of commercial floorspace broadly equates to a level of floorspace above which multiple light industrial units are being provided. In other words, below the threshold only a single unit would be provided which, following the same principle as that applied to single dwellings, would be unlikely to have a significant detrimental impact on landscape character.

#### **POLICY LC2: PROTECTION OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

Where a new development of three or more dwellings or 500m<sup>2</sup> or more of floorspace is either outside a settlement boundary or inside a settlement boundary but contiguous to it, it must be accompanied by a landscape assessment. This landscape assessment must consider the impact that development would have on the local landscape character and must demonstrate that any impacts can be appropriately mitigated. Any proposal that is not capable of mitigating the impacts of development will not be permitted.

<b>Policy LC2</b>	
<b>Objective 1:</b> Conserve and enhance the character and landscape of the parish and ensure that it does not coalesce with urban Colchester	<b>YES</b>
<b>Objective 2:</b> Protect and enhance the green spaces within the Parish which are of value to the community	<b>YES</b>
<b>Objective 3:</b> Ensure housing developments meet the needs of the local community, including for affordable housing	
<b>Objective 4:</b> Ensure that the rural employment base is, where possible, retained and the supporting infrastructure for rural working is provided	
<b>Objective 5:</b> Address highway safety and parking issues and improve the potential for movement by non-car modes	

## 6 COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1 One of the predominant and sustained features of Boxted parish is the number of smallholdings. There are approximately sixty smallholdings along Boxted Straight Road alone.
- 6.2 Whilst these smallholdings were traditionally used to grow food for the local and wider community, this has changed significantly over time. Today very few produce food for commercial sale. Most are owned by people who either use the land to grow food for their own personal consumption or for equestrian use. The equestrian use is not insignificant for the local economy as it helps to support employment at Priory Saddlery, as well as at feed and equipment suppliers, farm contractors and blacksmiths.
- 6.3 The reality is that the majority of the smallholdings are now residential properties where the owners make a living elsewhere. However, these uses still, to a certain degree, reflect the rural nature of Boxted and provide for local needs and leisure pursuits, as well as supporting the local economy. It is considered that such uses are in keeping with the rural environment and therefore should not be discouraged.
- 6.4 Yet in recent years there has been constant pressure for some of the smallholdings to be used for businesses or interests ancillary to the construction industry, light industrial or storage areas for plant, machinery, caravans or vehicles. Very often these activities result in piecemeal and untidy developments that individually result in a loss of visual amenity and collectively are prejudicial to the appearance of the locality with a gradual erosion of the rural character of the parish. In addition, some these activities create significant noise which can also have a detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbours.
- 6.5 The historic effectiveness of CBC policies that have sought to protect visual amenity in relation to these smallholdings has been limited. Policy EMP6 in the 2004 Local Plan (now superseded) identified Boxted Straight Road as a special protection area but this did not prevent a loss of visual amenity as a result of development on some of the smallholdings.
- 6.6 Policy DP5 (Appropriate Employment Uses and Protection of Employment Land and Existing Businesses) in the CBC Local Plan seeks to direct appropriate employment uses within designated employment zones and this includes small areas within Boxted parish that contain some smallholdings. However, this is by no means extensive enough to cover all the smallholdings. In the areas outside the employment zones, Policy DP9 (Employment Uses in the Countryside) does provide policy guidance in respect of employment uses having to be appropriate to the countryside.
- 6.7 In addition, Policy DP1(i) and (iii) on Design and Amenity seeks to ensure that the character of the site's surroundings and its design features are respected and that public and residential amenity is protected, particularly with regard to privacy, overlooking, security, noise and disturbance, pollution (including light and odour pollution), daylight and sunlight. However, the community still feels that this is not preventing the loss of visual amenity where such commercial uses are permitted.
- 6.8 It is therefore considered necessary to have a policy in respect of commercial development within the parish that seeks to ensure development:
- protects visual and noise amenity;
  - does not prejudice the appearance of the locality; and
  - protects the rural character of the area.

- 6.9 This may be achieved through actions such as appropriate screening/planting on the border of a commercial area. However, it must be able to demonstrate that the activity will not impact detrimentally on the visual amenity of the surrounding area and the parish in general as well as not creating unacceptable levels of noise.
- 6.10 This policy applies not only to smallholdings but all commercial activity in the parish in order to ensure that the issue is comprehensively addressed.

**POLICY SM1: LOSS OF VISUAL AMENITY/UNACCEPTABLE NOISE IMPACT FROM COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY**

Any unacceptable loss of visual amenity and unacceptable levels of noise impact on the surrounding area and the parish in general arising as a result of commercial development in Boxted parish will not be permitted. Proposals for such commercial activity must demonstrate that any impacts can be properly mitigated through actions such as appropriate visual and noise screening.

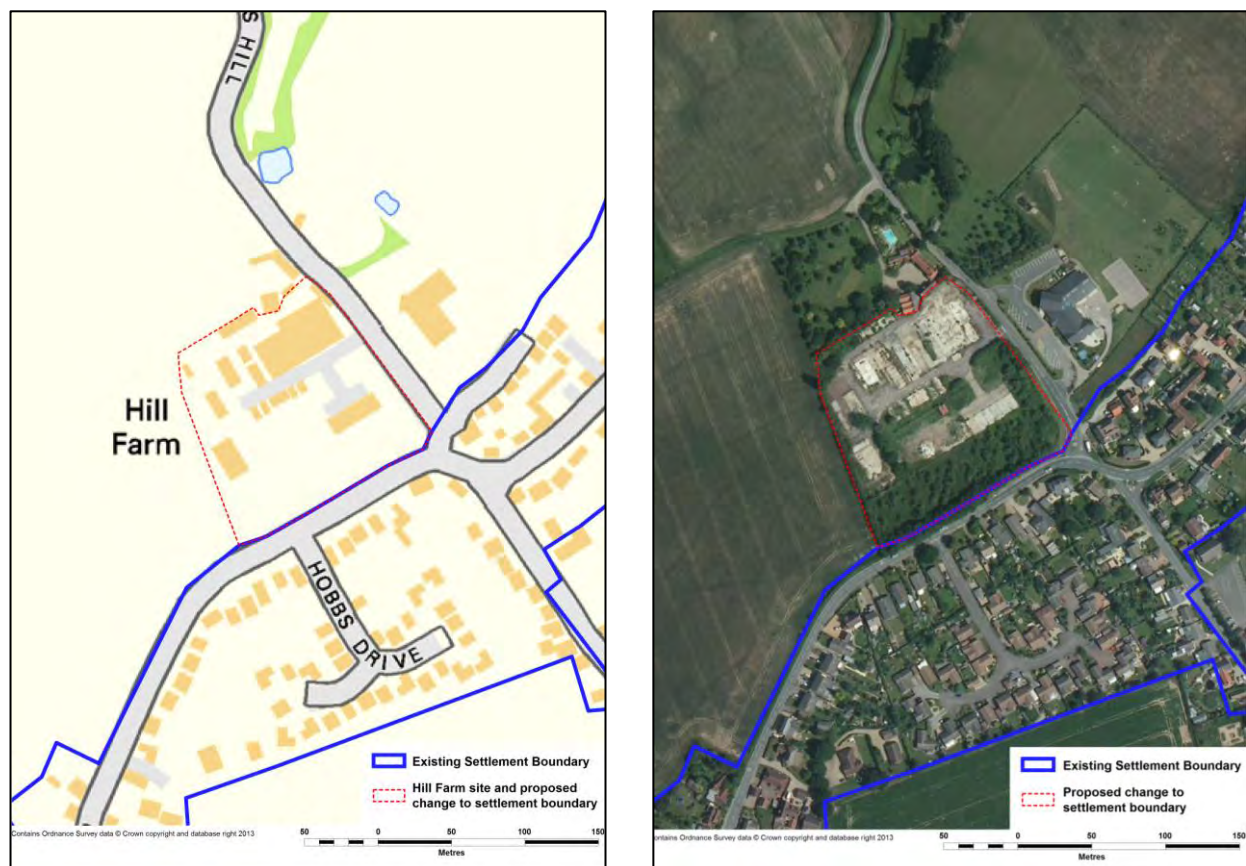
<b>Policy SM1</b>	
<b>Objective 1:</b> Conserve and enhance the character and landscape of the parish and ensure that it does not coalesce with urban Colchester	<b>YES</b>
<b>Objective 2:</b> Protect and enhance the green spaces within the Parish which are of value to the community	
<b>Objective 3:</b> Ensure housing developments meet the needs of the local community, including for affordable housing	
<b>Objective 4:</b> Ensure that the rural employment base is, where possible, retained and the supporting infrastructure for rural working is provided	
<b>Objective 5:</b> Address highway safety and parking issues and improve the potential for movement by non-car modes	



## 7 HILL FARM SITE

- 7.1 As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, the community identified that the Hill Farm site was an appropriate location for development. They were asked to consider what an appropriate future use for the site should be. This is the only brownfield site of significance within the parish. It covers an area of approximately 1.2 hectares and is located on the corner of Boxted Straight Road and Carters Hill, opposite Boxted Primary School. The site is located adjacent to the existing Boxted Cross village envelope as per the current Local Plan Proposals Map and as shown on Figure 7.1.

**Figure 7.1: Boundaries of Hill Farm site**



- 7.2 The most recent active use of the site was as light industrial estate providing basic commercial units for a range of users, such as a joiners and machine repair. Only a small number of these units provided services of direct value to the local community but did provide some employment.
- 7.3 These units were demolished and the site currently lies derelict. In 2007 permission was granted for the development of new commercial units totalling over 2,000m<sup>2</sup>. Of this, just over 600m<sup>2</sup> would be offices, with the remainder light industrial units. Access would be from Carters Hill, opposite the Primary School. This permission has since been renewed twice but development has not commenced. The site owners have not received any interest for industrial or office use, largely because of the significant amount of employment land that is available on the edge of Colchester with good access to the A12.
- 7.4 It is considered that the site represents the best opportunity for development that can meet the needs of the community in a sustainable manner. These needs relate to

affordable and market housing, but also securing contributions that address particular infrastructure issues in the parish. In particular these infrastructure needs relate to improvements to open space, sports and recreation provision at King George Playing Fields, with a specific need for improvements to the Sports and Social Club.

- 7.5 A particular issue of importance to the community is the opportunity for the site to provide a 'village green' in the form of green open space which all the community of Boxted can use and enjoy collectively. It is important that this is properly maintained, so if responsibility for this is given to the Parish Council then an appropriate contribution towards its ongoing maintenance should be made.
- 7.6 It is important that development is appropriately screened along its boundary, particularly along Boxted Straight Road where there is existing housing opposite. This will help to minimise the potential for development to have an inappropriate 'urban' feel. This should be done, where possible, by retaining existing trees and hedgerows and through additional planting. There are also trees on the site that have tree preservation orders (TPOs) on them which should be retained as part of any scheme.
- 7.7 Another particular issue is the density and massing<sup>3</sup> of the scheme. Policy H2 of the Colchester Local Plan (Housing Density) considers that the density of new housing schemes at locations such as Boxted which do not have good accessibility to town centres/urban gateways or to public transport should be moderated and reflect the character and density of the surrounding built form.
- 7.8 A mix of dwelling sizes should be provided in line with Policy H3 of the Colchester Local Plan. This policy states that the mix should be informed by 'an appraisal of community context and housing need.'
- 7.9 In order to help retain an element of employment use on the site, a proportion of residential units should be built with an element of 'live-work' in their design. This is distinct from specifically 'live-work' units which are less flexible and are considered unlikely to have a market in this location. Where, for example, it can be incorporated into the design, some units could have out-buildings/sheds built so that they may double up as an office.
- 7.10 The Boxted Housing Needs Survey suggested that all the local need for market housing was for housing of 1-3 bedrooms and the Colchester Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2013 found that 75% of need for market housing is for houses of 3 bedrooms or less. The policy seeks to reflect this need with an element of flexibility to assist the viability of the development and during the plan period more up to date assessments of housing need may identify a need for a different mix of dwellings.
- 7.11 A particular issue of importance to the community is ensuring that affordable housing provided on the site addresses local needs. The Boxted Affordable Housing Needs Survey (undertaken in November 2013) identified a requirement for five units to address the affordable housing needs of local people. These units would need to be a mix of 1- and 2-bed properties. When a scheme goes ahead, the size and tenure of these units should be reviewed in consultation with Boxted Parish Council, the selected housing association and Colchester Borough Council.
- 7.12 It is considered that, because this site represents the only significant opportunity for development within or adjacent to the settlements in the parish, it is imperative that the affordable housing provided addresses the needs of local people or those with a local connection as identified in the Affordable Housing Needs Survey. If it does not then there

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<sup>3</sup> 'Massing' refers to the shape and size of the buildings



will be little if any opportunity for these people to access their needs locally unless an existing affordable property becomes available and they successfully apply for it. It is therefore considered that a 'cascade' system of allocating affordable housing should be adopted for the development, thereby giving local people the first option on the affordable dwellings.

- 7.13 Parking around the adjacent Boxted Primary School is an issue for many in the community. It is therefore important that any development does not result in more on-street parking on the existing highway which would worsen the problems at school drop-off and pick-up times. On a related theme, a travel plan should be prepared in conjunction with Boxted Primary School, which specifically seeks to address parking issues at the school.
- 7.14 The allocation of the site creates an opportunity to provide a community shop. However, this should only be included if there is demonstrable interest from the community. If, at the time of the application, there is no interest, then Policy RE1 in respect of the provision of a community will apply for when, in the future, there is sufficient interest to provide a unit elsewhere in Boxted.
- 7.15 There is a grade II listed building on the land immediately to the north of the site and any redevelopment of the site must respect its setting.
- 7.16 There is the potential issue of archaeological remains on the site. Cannon and musket balls were found when buildings were erected on the site as packing sheds for fruit in 1927/1928. These buildings, which situated mainly near the Hill House side of the site, have subsequently been demolished. In addition, in 1925 Hill House (next to the site) was renovated and a skeleton in armour was found in a hideaway in the roof. It is therefore considered necessary that an archaeological investigation is undertaken before development commences.

**POLICY HF1: HILL FARM SITE, CARTERS HILL/BOXTED STRAIGHT ROAD**

Development of the Hill Farm site, Carters Hill/Boxted Straight Road, will be permitted provided it complies with the following criteria:

- It shall deliver a residential scheme at a density that respects the surrounding built-up area and its rural setting.
- It shall provide the following mix of residential properties:
  - For market housing - at least 25% of the market properties delivered should be 1-2 bed properties and at least 25% should be 3-bed properties unless up-to-date published evidence of housing needs suggests otherwise.
  - For affordable housing – at least three no. 1-bed properties and at least two no. 2-bed properties in line with the Boxted Affordable Housing Needs Survey. This requirement may change if a subsequent Parish Affordable Housing Needs Survey identifies an alternative level and mix of local affordable housing need.
- The total number of affordable housing units delivered must comply with Colchester Borough Council Local Plan Policy H4, with a proportion of these expected to be required specifically to address local needs in line with the most recent Boxted Affordable Housing Needs Survey. It is expected that the applicant will seek to agree with Colchester Borough Council the mechanism for allocating the required number and mix of affordable housing units to local residents in Boxted as a priority.
- Proposals which incorporate an element of 'live-work' into their design will be encouraged.
- It shall provide appropriately located public open space, in the form of a village green or equivalent, which is accessible and available for use by all the community, rather than just the residents of the new development. Contributions towards the ongoing maintenance of this space will be required.
- The boundary of the site shall have effective natural screening, both through retention of existing trees and hedgerows and new planting. Existing trees that are subject to Tree Preservation Orders shall be retained within the development.
- Subject to the statutory requirements for planning obligations, a contribution will be sought through a planning obligation or Community Infrastructure Levy income may be used for improvements to, and expansion of, open space, sports and recreation facilities at King George Playing Fields in Boxted, with a specific need for improvement of the Sports and Social Club.
- It shall include an appropriate scheme of sustainable urban drainage (SUDS).
- It shall be accompanied by a travel plan, prepared in conjunction with Boxted Primary School, which specifically seeks to address parking issues at the school.
- Parking provision needs to adhere to adopted parking standards in order to avoid increasing parking problems in the vicinity of Boxted Cross around Boxted Primary School.
- Subject to the effect on the viability of the development as a whole, if there is demonstrable interest from the community at the time, a community shop shall be provided on site.
- It must ensure that the setting of the Grade II listed building to the north of the site is respected.
- An archaeological investigation shall be undertaken prior to commencement of development.

Policy HF1	
<b>Objective 1:</b> Conserve and enhance the character and landscape of the parish and ensure that it does not coalesce with urban Colchester	YES
<b>Objective 2:</b> Protect and enhance the green spaces within the Parish which are of value to the community	YES
<b>Objective 3:</b> Ensure housing developments meet the needs of the local community, including for affordable housing	YES
<b>Objective 4:</b> Ensure that the rural employment base is, where possible, retained and the supporting infrastructure for rural working is provided	
<b>Objective 5:</b> Address highway safety and parking issues and improve the potential for movement by non-car modes	

## 8 RETAIL

- 8.1 As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, the community was asked to consider if any new retail services were required in the parish. Rural communities such as Boxted need community facilities to act as its lifeblood. However, over recent years such facilities – pubs, post offices, local shops – have been closing in rural communities across the country. This puts the sustainability of small settlements at risk.
- 8.2 The community of Boxted has recognised the value of having a shop serving the community. Currently it does not have any such facility, with the nearest shops selling everyday convenience goods being located in Great Horkesley. In addition, there is Coleman's, a butcher on Langham Road which also sells dairy products, fish, bakery goods and fruit and vegetables. There is also a well-stocked community shop in Langham. For older people and those without access to a car, these retail facilities are difficult to get to on a regular basis.
- 8.3 The principal issue in providing a new retail facility is the commercial viability of such a unit. There is no obvious generic demand for single rural convenience units even in times of economic prosperity, let alone during a prolonged economic downturn. The 'story' for why such units come forward is usually bound up in the individual shop owners' personal circumstances and motivations, or a very specific market niche. Therefore it is recognised that whilst the Neighbourhood Plan could in theory facilitate the delivery of a retail unit, it cannot guarantee that it will be occupied, nor can it guarantee that it will be occupied by a retailer selling the type of goods that the community wishes to see.
- 8.4 It is therefore considered that the most appropriate way of addressing local retail needs in Boxted is to facilitate the provision of a community shop. This is in line with paragraph 28 of the NPPF which promotes the retention and/or development of local services and facilities such as local shops.
- 8.5 Such a shop would be run by the community and would provide a range of goods that the community needs. The most common examples are local convenience goods where such a facility acts as a 'top-up' facility to the weekly grocery shop that is most commonly done in large supermarkets.
- 8.6 The Neighbourhood Plan therefore seeks to facilitate the provision of an appropriate unit from which such a community shop can operate. Whether this is in an existing unit or provided as a new unit has not yet been identified. Certainly it would be preferable to occupy a unit as this would not require funding to cover the cost of a new building to be found.
- 8.7 It will be important that any unit can provide appropriate levels of parking as well as safe access to and from the site.
- 8.8 As at January 2014 there was no available commercial unit appropriate for use as a community shop in Boxted. It may be possible to use other types of existing buildings that do not immediately lend themselves to such a use – examples include garages or derelict buildings on smallholdings – so there is the possibility that this situation will change.
- 8.9 In order to ensure that, if a suitable unit is found, a community shop is ready to be opened, volunteers were invited in January 2014 to come forward and show interest in being part of such an organisation. To date, one volunteer has come forward and Boxted Parish Council is hopeful that further volunteers will come forward in the future.

## Policy

8.10 The following policy provides for the opportunity to deliver a community shop in Boxted:

### POLICY RE1: PROVISION OF A COMMUNITY SHOP

The provision of a community shop (Use Class A1) will be supported. Any planning application to change the use of an existing building to a retail facility that is capable of serving the local community will be strongly supported.

This support will be subject to any application ensuring that sufficient parking and safe access can be provided at the site.

Policy LG1	
<b>Objective 1:</b> Conserve and enhance the character and landscape of the parish and ensure that it does not coalesce with urban Colchester	
<b>Objective 2:</b> Protect and enhance the green spaces within the Parish which are of value to the community	
<b>Objective 3:</b> Ensure housing developments meet the needs of the local community, including for affordable housing	
<b>Objective 4:</b> Ensure that the rural employment base is, where possible, retained and the supporting infrastructure for rural working is provided	YES
<b>Objective 5:</b> Address highway safety and parking issues and improve the potential for movement by non-car modes	

## 9 BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

- 9.1 The modern economy is changing and increasingly needs good communications infrastructure as a basic requirement. The 2011 Census highlights how people are working differently to a generation ago - in Boxted parish, 7% of people work from home and 21% are self-employed. Of these self-employed people, 14% have no employees so effectively work for themselves with no support. Commonly this is in service activities that simply require access to a computer and a broadband connection.
- 9.2 The need for high speed broadband to serve Boxted is therefore paramount. Broadband speeds are reported by residents to be poor and it is therefore a fundamental constraint to the continuing expansion of self-employed activity for those working from home or from a small office.
- 9.3 Government has recognised that there is a significant gap in availability of basic and superfast broadband, particularly in rural areas where British Telecom (BT) and other national providers have not invested in upgrades to the network and have allocated £530m through the Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) programme to deliver superfast broadband to 90% of premises by 2015 and have recently allocated an additional £250m to increase coverage to 95% of premises by 2017 and 99% by 2018.
- 9.4 The Essex County Council Community Broadband scheme has a roll-out programme for the delivery of superfast broadband infrastructure (24mbps+) and for Boxted, as of October 2014, work was in the process of being undertaken. It is also important to note that other broadband providers such as County Broadband Ltd also have roll-out programmes within the county and may include Boxted parish in the future.
- 9.5 Whilst BT has an obligation to provide a landline to every household in the UK and developers are expected to want to facilitate high speed broadband provision otherwise their developments will be substantially less marketable, there have been instances where developers have not contacted BT early enough in the process for fibre and ducting to be laid, or they have a national agreement with a cable provider that is not active in the area, leaving new housing developments with little or no connections.
- 9.6 Policy BE3 seeks to ensure that all new housing, community and commercial development in the parish is connected to superfast broadband. If this is not possible, the developer will be expected to make a contribution via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), if this is in place, or through a Section 106 agreement towards off-site works that would enable those properties to gain access to superfast broadband, either via fibre-optic cable or wireless technology in the future.

# POLICY BI1: HIGH SPEED BROADBAND

On new developments within or adjacent to the settlement boundaries, all new properties where possible must be served by a superfast broadband connection which must be installed on an open access basis. This will need to be directly accessible from the nearest British Telecom exchange and provided in such a way as to enable future repair, replacement or upgrading. If superfast broadband is not available at the time of construction, then the necessary infrastructure must be installed to ensure that superfast broadband can be accessed when it is ready.

Elsewhere, it is expected that all properties will also have access to this standard of connection when available, unless it can be demonstrated, through consultation with British Telecom, that this would not be possible, practical or economically viable - in which case the District or Parish Council may utilise Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies or seek an equivalent developer contribution, toward off-site works that would enable those properties access to super-fast broadband, either via fibre-optic cable or wireless technology, in the future.

Policy BI1	
<b>Objective 1:</b> Conserve and enhance the character and landscape of the parish and ensure that it does not coalesce with urban Colchester	
<b>Objective 2:</b> Protect and enhance the green spaces within the Parish which are of value to the community	
<b>Objective 3:</b> Ensure housing developments meet the needs of the local community, including for affordable housing	
<b>Objective 4:</b> Ensure that the rural employment base is, where possible, retained and the supporting infrastructure for rural working is provided	YES
<b>Objective 5:</b> Address highway safety and parking issues and improve the potential for movement by non-car modes	

## 10 TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

- 10.1 As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, the community was asked to consider if there were any particular issues relating to transport and movement (both by car and non-car modes) in the parish.

### Highway safety and parking

- 10.2 As identified in Section 7 in respect of Hill Farm, one of the biggest pinch-points in the parish is Boxted Cross, where Boxted Primary School is located and where Policy HF1 proposes the allocation of the Hill Farm site for residential development.
- 10.3 It is vital that new development – and in particular any development at Hill Farm – adheres to adopted parking standards, as set by Essex County Council.
- 10.4 In addition, highway safety is a concern in the parish. The particular issues that were raised by the community in consultation were speed and safety along Boxted Straight Road, particularly at junctions, and parking/safety issues in respect of school drop-off and pick-up at Boxted Primary School. Where new development has a direct impact on these issues it may be appropriate to seek a contribution towards measures to improve highway safety. To assess the impact on road safety, a transport assessment or statement proportionate with the scale of development is required but this would not be an onerous requirement for small scale development.
- 10.5 This issue is dealt with in more detail in Section 11 which addresses non-planning matters.

#### POLICY TM1: HIGHWAY SAFETY AND PARKING

All development proposals will be required to meet adopted parking standards to avoid increasing parking issues in the village.

All proposals for new development which impacts on the highway will be accompanied by a transport assessment or transport statement proportionate to the scale of the proposed development.

Where appropriate, developments will be expected to contribute through a planning obligation towards measures to improve road safety, including junction improvements and signage. Community Infrastructure Levy income may also be used for this purpose.

Policy TM1	
<b>Objective 1:</b> Conserve and enhance the character and landscape of the parish and ensure that it does not coalesce with urban Colchester	
<b>Objective 2:</b> Protect and enhance the green spaces within the Parish which are of value to the community	
<b>Objective 3:</b> Ensure housing developments meet the needs of the local community, including for affordable housing	
<b>Objective 4:</b> Ensure that the rural employment base is, where possible, retained and the supporting infrastructure for rural working is provided	
<b>Objective 5:</b> Address highway safety and parking issues and improve the potential for movement by non-car modes	YES



## **11 NON-PLANNING ACTIONS AND DELIVERY OF PLAN PROPOSALS**

### **Action plan for non-planning matters**

- 11.1 The process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan has resulted in the community raising a significant number of actions that are not specifically relevant to a Neighbourhood Plan. However, this is not to say that they are any less important. Indeed, many of these actions will help to address the problems that have been created by development in the past and will be able to mitigate the impacts of future development in the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Traffic and safety**

- 11.2 The particular issues that were raised by the community in consultation were speed and safety along Boxted Straight Road, particularly at junctions, and parking/safety issues in respect of school drop-off and pick-up at Boxted Primary School. A traffic report<sup>4</sup> was commissioned to look at these issues in more detail.
- 11.3 The following recommendations were made to address the highways issues:
- a. A 40mph limit be introduced along Straight Road, Langham Road and Horkesley Road. This has now been implemented.
  - b. The refurbishment and improvement of the Straight Road junctions. Whilst junction solutions such as mini-roundabouts have been raised by members of the community, it is understood that these are unlikely to be feasible, due to space constraints. However, Essex County Council has committed to make highway improvements to address these problems.
  - c. The refurbishment and improvement of the Straight Road signage – certain actions relating to signage have been approved in principle by Essex County Council and require budgets to be secured before they are implemented.
  - d. Once the Northern Approach Link Road to Mill Road is complete, to provide new signage for heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) in order to direct them along the A134 from Severalls Business Park. This will serve to reduce non-local HGV traffic from coming through Boxted village and, in some cases, seeking access along very small country lanes that are inaccessible for such traffic.
  - e. A travel plan be produced jointly by Boxted Primary School, Essex County Council and Boxted Parish Council to identify solutions to parking and safety problems associated with school drop-off and pick-up. In particular, this should identify proposals to ensure parents park in the Village Hall car park in Cage Lane and a 'Park and Walk' initiative is set up to allow parents to then walk their children safely to and from school. This could also consider the use of double yellow lines on Carters Hill to prevent parking adjacent to the school on inappropriate verges.
  - f. Boxted Parish Council to request more use of Essex County Council 'Ranger' resources to carry out minor maintenance on signs, vegetation, etc, in order to ensure that junctions and roadways are maintained to an appropriate standard.

### **Improving bus services**

- 11.4 It is important that the Parish Council continues to push for a bus service to serve Boxted parish.

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<sup>4</sup> Waterman Boreham (2013) *Boxted Traffic Issues: Neighbourhood Development Plan*

## Access and Leisure

- 11.5 The very location of rural communities means that the car is the predominant mode of transport. Certainly the need to access employment, services and, to a lesser extent, leisure opportunities outside of the immediate local area means that a car is the only realistic option, given the lack of public transport services. Also, there are opportunities to address issues of the volume of traffic on the road such as through car sharing<sup>5</sup>.
- 11.6 However, this does not mean that there is no role for access by non-car modes. The continued promotion of public transport is still an important issue for rural communities such as Boxted. Also though there is a role for walking, cycling and horse riding, both for 'necessary' trips (e.g. to employment, education, etc) and for leisure purposes. This often creates a difficulty where non-car travellers and those using vehicles are forced to share road space. In a rural setting, this is particularly dangerous.
- 11.7 It is therefore considered by the community of Boxted that there is a need to improve access by non-car modes on dedicated routes away from traffic. Within the villages, footpaths are generally considered to be sufficient in number and quality.
- 11.8 This local evidence is supported by the fact that less than 10% of Colchester Borough's public rights of way (PROW) are bridleways. Of the thirteen districts in Essex, only Maldon and Tendring have fewer bridleways by percentage. Colchester Borough is therefore seriously lacking in bridleways and this problem must be addressed in accordance with Government requirements.
- 11.9 The Boxted Neighbourhood Plan supports the Essex Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (PROWIP)<sup>6</sup>, which acknowledges that a good public rights of way network promotes health and social benefits to local communities.
- 11.10 Many respondents to the community survey considered that a dedicated cyclepath direct to Colchester would be of benefit, not only to Boxted but also to the surrounding villages. However, such provision is considered to be beyond the scope of what can be achieved through a single Neighbourhood Plan. In particular, there is presently insufficient width along Straight Road to be able to physically accommodate a dedicated cyclepath.
- 11.11 The PROWIP states that there needs to be a particular focus on the provision of bridleways. There is an absence of bridlepaths in Boxted for use by horse riders and cyclists in addition to walkers. At present there is just one relatively short bridleway - One Hundred Lane - connecting Boxted and Langham.
- 11.12 The aspiration is to create an improved network of bridleways that can be used by residents and visitors alike to reduce the risk to cyclists and horses and riders, currently restricted to using the busy roads. In particular, the opportunity to link the parish to the Northern Growth Area would be a significant one because of the benefits that it would bring in improving accessibility for the local community.
- 11.13 In this context, all footpaths in Boxted parish should be considered for upgrade to bridleways. Creating safe, off road circular routes for horse riders and cyclists within Boxted, as well as safely linking Boxted with Great Horkesley, Langham and Myland is the ambition. All development in Boxted should be considered in light of the need to upgrade footpaths to bridleways and developer contributions and grants should be sought to pay for the legal process to upgrade a footpath and/or for fencing, drainage and

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<sup>5</sup> The Essex Care Share scheme is available (see <https://essex.liftshare.com>)

<sup>6</sup> Essex County Council (2009) *Essex Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan*, Research undertaken by Steer Davies Gleave

surfacing. Existing landowners will be encouraged by the Parish Council to upgrade their footpaths.

- 11.14 The development of a more comprehensive bridleway network requires the agreement of the relevant landowners and it will be important that the Parish Council and other interested parties work with Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council to achieve this under the requirements of the relevant legislation.
- 11.15 Funding for this project will come from a variety of sources. There are a number of bodies that provide grants for this, including Entrust, the Environment Agency, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Grant Net and the Charity Commission. More locally, the Essex Bridleways Trust is a grant-giving body for the creation of new bridleways in Essex. This could also be supported by the use of developer contributions (assuming a Community Infrastructure Levy is in place).

### **Walnut Orchard**

- 11.16 The Parish Council is in the process of seeking to list the Walnut Orchard as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). This would mean that, if the Orchard came up for sale, then the community would have time to raise the funds to submit a competitive bid for it. In addition, the ACV listing is also material in the consideration of any planning application for development on the site, should that come forward.
- 11.17 In addition, it is considered that a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) should be sought for the whole of the Orchard. This is to be taken forward by the Parish Council.

### **Broadband**

- 11.18 Alongside the policy to ensure that new developments have access to superfast broadband, there is a general aspiration to improve broadband speeds for all in the parish. The Parish Council is working with Essex County Council to ensure that the roll-out of its broadband upgrades delivers faster broadband for all.

### **Summary**

- 11.19 Table 11.1 shows a summary of the non-planning actions:

**Table 11.1: Non-planning actions**

Theme	Action	Lead partners	Priority
Traffic safety	40mph limit be introduced along Straight Road, Langham Road and Horkesley Road	Essex County Council	High
Traffic safety	Refurbishment and improvement of the Straight Road junctions	Essex County Council	High
Traffic safety	Refurbishment and improvement of the Straight Road signage	Essex County Council	High
Traffic safety	New signage for HGVs	Essex County Council	Low
Traffic and parking	Preparation of a travel plan to identify solutions to parking and safety problems associated with school drop-off and pick-up	Boxted Primary School, Essex County Council, Boxted Parish Council	Medium
Traffic safety	More use of Essex County Council 'Ranger' resources to carry out minor maintenance on signs and vegetation	Boxted Parish Council	Medium
Bus services	Continue to push for a bus service to serve Boxted	Boxted Parish Council	Low
Access and Leisure	Put in place a bridleway network in order to create safe off-road rights of way for vulnerable road users in accordance with relevant legislation.	Boxted Parish Council, Boxted Neighbourhood Development Plan Committee, Colchester Borough Council, Essex County Council	Medium
Walnut Orchard	List as an ACV	Boxted Parish Council	High
Walnut Orchard	Seek a blanket TPO designation	Boxted Parish Council	Medium
Broadband	Improve broadband speeds for residents and businesses	Essex County Council Boxted Parish Council	Medium
Bridleways	Work with landowners to ascertain the feasibility of upgrading all footpaths to bridleways	Boxted Parish Council	Medium

## Delivery of plan proposals

11.20 The Neighbourhood Plan has identified a number of items of community infrastructure and their maintenance which will require funding. For these items it is considered that developer contributions will be an important source of funding, at least for part of the cost. Table 11.2 shows what projects are to be delivered, timescales for delivery where known, and key partners.

**Table 11.2: Delivery of Neighbourhood Plan proposals**

Project	Cost	Timescale	Key partners
Maintenance of public open space at Hill Farm development	Approx. £2,000 per annum	On completion of Hill Farm development	Boxted Parish Council, developer/landowner
Improvements to open space, sports and recreation facilities at King George Playing Fields	Not known	On commencement of development of Hill Farm	Boxted Parish Council, developer/landowner
Improvements to Boxted Sports and Social Club (refurbishment of hall and facilities)	Not known, but assume approx. £200,000	On commencement of development of Hill Farm	Boxted Parish Council, developer/landowner
Improvement of broadband infrastructure	Not known	Ongoing	Boxted Parish Council, developer/landowner/ Essex County Council/ BT Open Reach
Preparation of a travel plan for Boxted Primary School	£3,000	Ongoing	Boxted Parish Council, Boxted Primary School, Essex County Council/ Colchester Borough Council
Identification of bridleway network	Not known	Ongoing	Boxted Parish Council, landowners