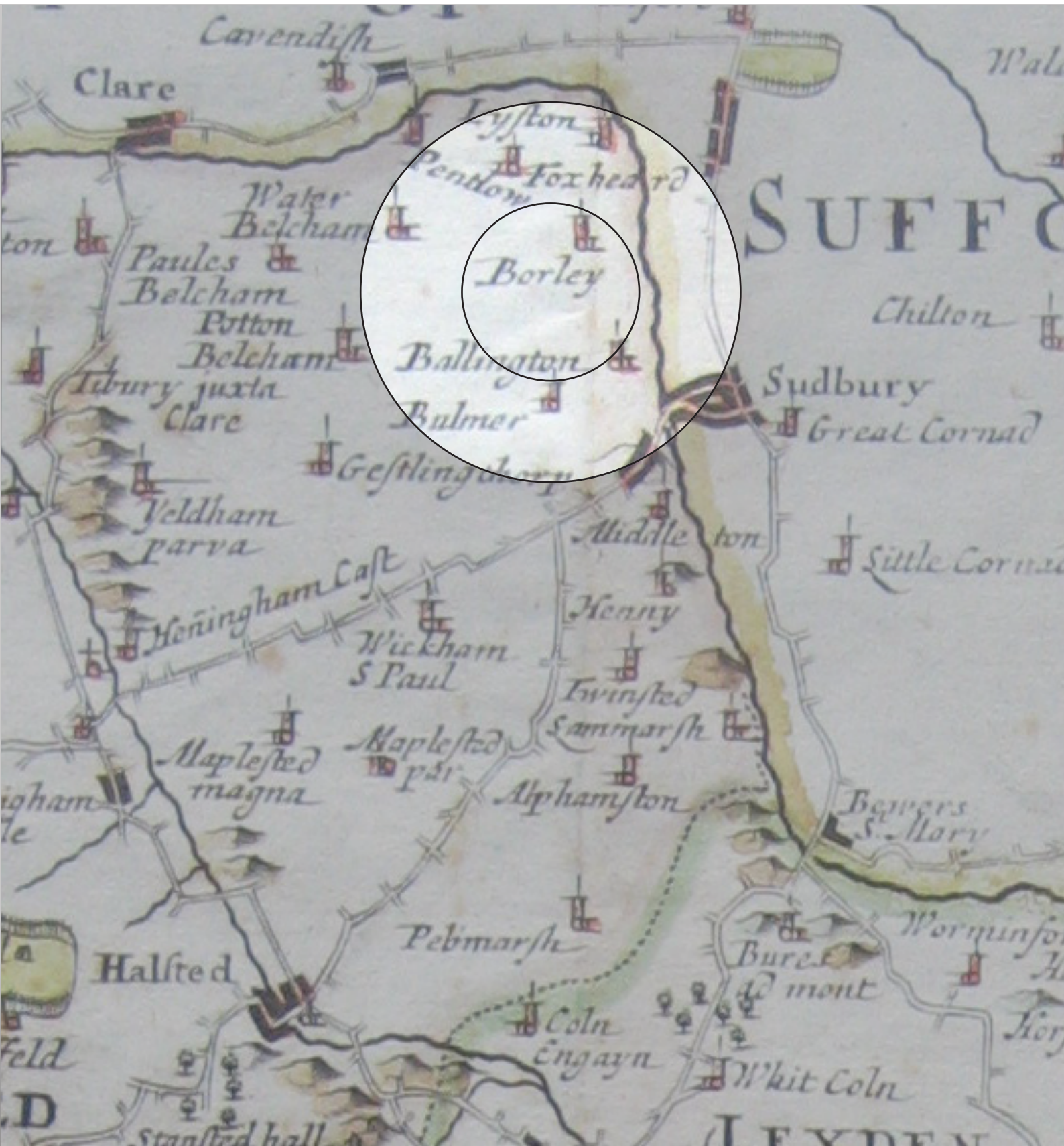


Borley

Village Design Statement





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1 The Purpose of The Village Design Statement (VDS)

1.1 Borley is a small ancient settlement in the valley of the river Stour. In planning terms it is a hamlet with no defined village envelope or development boundaries within which development would normally be permitted. The absence of this boundary means that all proposed development is subject to the constraints of 'open countryside policies' as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and Braintree District Council's local development plan.

1.2 The purpose of this document is to express clearly to decision-makers the views and desires of our community, explaining what is unique about the character of Borley. By presenting this document to the district council for approval, it can be regarded as a material consideration for use in the deliberations of both planning officers and elected members when considering applications for building developments within the parish.

1.3 We trust that it will help to ensure that planning applications in Borley are judged by the highest design and quality standards consonant with this historic community.

1.4 This Village Design Statement (VDS) represents the views of the people in Borley and was produced through a consultation process details of which are given in Section 9.

2 Introduction

2.1 Borley consists of a loose string of dwellings running from the high ground at Borley Green down to the banks of the River Stour. This small rural community at the north west Essex / Suffolk border can be said to comprise three clusters of dwellings surrounded by farmland, one alongside the River Stour and including the village hall, one at the top of hall road around the church and the third at Borley Green. The village is in Essex and is within the Braintree Council District alongside the Stour valley conservation area. To the north it adjoins the parish of Foxearth, to the west it adjoins Belchamp Walter, to the south it adjoins Bulmer and to the east the towns of Sudbury and Long Melford in Suffolk.

2.2 In 2012 there were 89 voting residents in a total population of around 110 occupying 49 dwellings. Owing to its small size, the smallest parish in the Braintree District, Borley has a parish meeting to oversee local administration rather than a parish council.

2.3 The Braintree District local plan of 2005 designated the countryside around Borley as being part of a special landscape area and protected by countryside policy RLP78 and the special landscape area policy RLP79. Adopted Core Strategy policies CS5 The Countryside and CS8 Natural Environment and Biodiversity have superseded these two policies respectively. In addition, policies RLP80 and 81 sought to retain and maintain landscape features and habitats as well as trees, woodlands, grasslands and hedgerows. There are two protected lanes at Borley Green covered by policy RLP87 and there is also a stretch of roadside nature reserve leading down Rough Lane towards Bardfield Bridge and Finch Hill. These policies were in the process of being replaced by the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. In 2013 as a result of new evidence gathered, Braintree Council ceased work on the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan that was to replace the Local Plan Review and Core Strategy documents, and work started on the production of a new Local Plan. The New Local Plan will include all major planning policy for the District in a single document and will need to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Once complete it will replace both the Core Strategy (2011) and the Local Plan Review (2005).

2.4 At its Full Council meeting on 15th September 2014, Councillors agreed that the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan as amended by Further Changes (ADMP) be adopted for use within development management decision making. The Council's view is that the document should be given appropriate weight in all

matters under consideration and that these are material considerations for the Council. A number of ADMP policies are therefore relevant, in addition to the aforementioned Local Plan Review and Core Strategy policies; particularly ADM50 Landscape Character and ADM54 Protected Lanes.

2.5 The (NPPF) overarches local planning strategies and places an emphasis on the importance of recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of different areas and of securing high quality design and good standards of amenity. Paragraph 58 states 'planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments respond to local character and history, and reflect the local surroundings and materials, whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation'.

2.6 In September 2011 the council had developed a strategy to include site allocations for the period 2009 to 2026, which included planning for a minimum of 4,637 new dwellings in the district. Most of these were allocated to Witham and Braintree with a lesser amount at Halstead and some others at 6 of the larger 'key service villages'. Other villages could have had additional development within their village envelopes. Borley has no envelope and the strategy therefore did not provide for any additional housing in the parish. However, as a result of NPPF requirements to meet housing need, and further evidence gathering, a step-change in housing numbers will need to be reflected in the new Local Plan. The NPPF also contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

2.7 Given that there are inclinations at the national level to remove restrictions on developers, it is important that there is a clear record of those features and characteristics of the built environment and rural setting that the community values and wishes to retain into the future. It is noted that the planning process now seeks to provide for community led planning and to involve communities in forming local development framework documents. This village design statement provides the current view of the community and aspirations for the future as to the important characteristics of the natural and built environment of the Borley hamlets in the context of their setting in the rural surroundings.



Braintree local government district has a population (2011 census) of 147,084. The district was formed on 1 April 1974 by the merger of the urban districts of Braintree and Bocking, Halstead, and Witham and (for list of parishes) Braintree Rural District and Halstead Rural District



3.0 The History of Borley

3.1 Human settlement at Borley is thought to date back to Neolithic times. The geographical spread of Borley represents an early pattern of settlement in which dwellings were attached to pieces of productive land rather than clustered together in a centralised village which was a later type of development.

3.2 Recent local research suggests that the name Borley may be derived from the Celtic 'borle', meaning 'summer meadows' which are still a prominent feature of the area. Other references suggest derivation from 'barlea' meaning a woodland clearing frequented by boars.

3.3 Borley was an established community in the Anglo-Saxon period and part of the Hinckford Hundred. The Domesday Book records that before the conquest the land was held by Saxon freemen but that by 1086 they had been replaced by the Norman, Ansketil, a name meaning 'vessel of God'. The manor was held by Adelaide, Countess of Aumale the half-sister of William the Conqueror.

3.4 Borley Church is of Saxon origins and pre-conquest fabric remains in the nave. The original name of the church is unknown, this is unusual but not unique in England. It was substantially enlarged in the 15th and 16th centuries and in the 19th century external rendering was applied to the nave and chancel. Borley Church is Grade 1 listed.

3.5 A detailed picture of the medieval community is given in The Extent of the Manor of Borley, a survey carried out in 1308 in the reign of Edward II, a document regarded by historians as crucial to the understanding of the medieval period in England. It describes a manor house 'well and suitably built', a water mill with a 'fishpond in the mill dam, with the catch of eels from the race, worth yearly, without waste, 5 shillings, 300 acres of arable land, 29 acres of mowing meadow and 28 acres of pasture where cows and oxen grazed'. Significantly, the population of Borley in 1308 can be estimated at about two hundred and thirty people compared with the two hundred and ten inhabitants registered in the census of 1831, and a population of around 110 currently.

3.6 Another vivid fragment of Borley's history is the arrest at Borley Hall in 1561 of Sir Edward Waldegrave who was accused of holding an illegal Catholic Mass. A search of the Hall and other premises revealed, a priest, a nun and 'popish books and superstitious ornaments'. Sir Edward was incarcerated in the Tower of London where he died later that year. On the death of his wife, Frances, in 1599 the splendid 14 foot high monument which includes full length recumbent figures of the couple was erected in the village church.



4.0 Location and infrastructure

3.7 Later, in the mid 1600s, Borley was caught up in the English Civil War and was amongst the first to declare for the parliamentarians. Some of the first disturbances took place in nearby Sudbury and the Hall, along with several other local houses judged to belong to royalist sympathisers, was attacked by a Parliamentary mob.

3.8 More recently, Borley has achieved unwelcome renown through the work of the pre-war ghost-hunter and fantasist, Harry Price. Price succeeded in convincing credulous followers that the rambling Victorian rectory, which previously occupied a site opposite the church was one of the most haunted buildings in England. The rectory was for a time the scene of seances and 'investigations' and its later destruction by fire in 1937 did nothing to diminish its reputation. Curious visitors still beset the village church in the hope of seeing the 'ghost' which local residents insist does not exist.

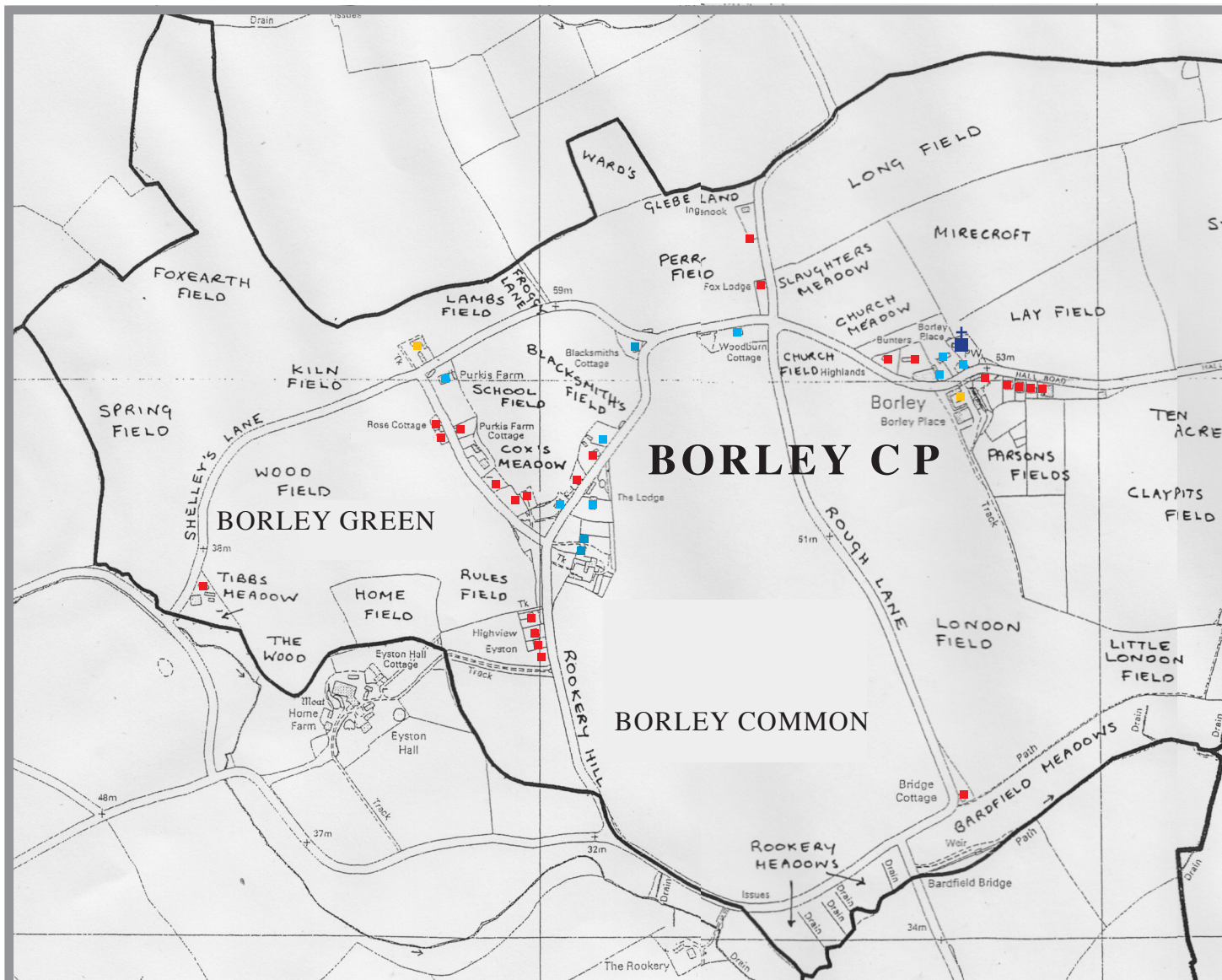
4.1 The parish is at the outer edge of Essex with few amenities and little infrastructure. The roads are narrow country lanes often only wide enough for one car with occasional wider passing points. There are several blind corners and a restriction limiting the weight of vehicles at Bardfield bridge owing to the unsuitability of the lanes for large vehicles. There is a speed limit of 30mph on the section of road around the church and associated housing and an illuminated warning sign seeks to reinforce that limit. The highways authority has considered access for commercial development to be difficult in Borley.

4.2 There are no shops, schools, doctors and dentists surgeries or pubs within the village. It is also noted that the parish has no mains gas supply and is not connected to a mains sewerage system. Public transport through the parish is limited to a single bus service to Sudbury on Thursdays and Saturdays, a bus shelter is located on the green. Broadband, via the telephone network, is slow although the county broadband service provides an alternative. An Essex County Council library service operates with a mobile library scheduled to visit on a fortnightly basis. The village hall serves to provide a focus for activities and the green is a significant open area accessible to all in the community. The village boasts a listed red telephone box on the green. The telephone box no longer takes coins but calls (not just 999) can be made with a credit card.

5.0 Characteristics of the Parish

5.1 As a consequence of the widely spread distribution of the Parish, Borley encompasses a variety of landscapes and different views including magnificent vistas over open fields and the undulating countryside, stretches of the River Stour and water meadows and cameos of ancient trees and buildings. Trees and hedgerows along routes throughout the area coalesce with those of the agricultural field boundaries forming a network where wildlife can prosper and flora and fauna proliferate. Many mature and specimen trees are found within the parish as well as a number of ponds. Borley is in close proximity to the Stour Valley Area of outstanding natural beauty and a case clearly exists for incorporating the village within it.

5.2 There are several attractive public footpaths and bridleways. These include the Valley Trail, the former railway line from Sudbury to Cambridge, which is mainly on the Essex side of the river Stour at Borley although co-opted by Suffolk for administrative purposes. From there walkers can reach the riverbank as it meanders south-east behind Borley Hall allowing public access to this scenic area. In addition, there is a path leading from the central area of the village down and across fields to Lower Road and Rodbridge on the edge of Long Melford. The map shows the parish boundaries and the rights of way within. In some cases the network may benefit from alterations to routes and/or improved links.



- Detached & semi-detached houses
- Detached houses listed Grade II
- Listed building non-residential
- Borley Church listed Grade I
- Borley Village Hall

5.3 Brook Hall Farm is the predominant land holding in the parish and extends to Foxearth northwards. The land is classified as Grade II agricultural and is mainly used to grow crops, a commercial shoot has been developed over recent years and also an environmental stewardship scheme. The farming activities consequently affect the life of the village so that, although the farmhouse and buildings are located in the Foxearth parish, the farm owners are seen as important members of the community.

5.4 The housing stock is varied, ranging from listed timber-framed buildings with their origins in the mediaeval period, such as Borley Lodge, Borley Place and Borley Hall, to the more modern housing close to the Village Hall (formerly the

school), at either side of the church and at the lower end of Borley Green. Even today, traditional, locally sourced building materials are visually predominant with older properties built of lath and plaster or Victorian brick originally fired in local kilns and still available from Minter's Brickworks in Bulmer. Thus, there are buildings throughout the village that show traditional Essex design elements and/or traditional character that demonstrate development of the parish over time. What most of the properties in the village have in common is that they are individual and, in some cases, unique – thus there is no common style that can be said to be vernacular of Borley.

5.5 Travelling along the roads through the village it is noteworthy that there is no line of building from one house to the next which characterises a rustic 'ad hoc' appearance as opposed to an organized urban street scene. Some are well set back from the highway whilst others have very little in the way of a front garden. There are properties that are obscured behind high hedges as well as homes with an open aspect to the road and views beyond. Some properties have walled gardens, most are delineated by hedging of varying planting and heights. The degree of separation between most properties, together with generally larger gardens, has enabled the growth of many substantial trees, shrubs and extensive fauna and with the adjacent countryside and woodland areas the housing is seen to integrate well within the greensward environment of the village.

5.6 There are seven Grade II listed buildings at Borley Green, one between the Green and the Church, 4 around the Church and three around the Hall and Mill off Lower Road. The dwellings map gives the location of these listed buildings in the Parish. The total of 15 Grade II listed buildings out of 49, together with the Grade I listed church, demonstrates the historical and architectural importance of the built environment in the parish. This is illustrated in the locally produced millennium booklet entitled *The Village of Borley 2000 AD* which provides a photographic record of every dwelling in the Parish together with the owners at the time.

5.7 Overall, the existing dwellings with their individual characteristics and disposition in the unique landscape of the area makes up the atmosphere and character of Borley which, despite its scattered geography, retains a strong sense of identity and makes the parish particularly sensitive to change.



The map shows the location of the dwellings, and old field names, within the boundary of Borley C.P.



6.0 Future development within Borley

6.1 Within the national planning policy framework, the government department for communities and local government have put an emphasis on developing 'lifetime neighbourhoods' with the minister stating that our historic development of buildings, landscapes, towns and villages can better be cherished if their spirit of place thrives rather than withers. At the same time there is a clear need to conserve and enhance the historic environment. Whilst much of the planning policy framework is particularly relevant to urban situations, a social role is included which supports strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations.

6.2 The question is what sort of development can Borley accommodate without losing its unique and historic character. Several sensitively conducted projects have shown the way forward.

6.3 Next to the church the tithe barn has been converted into a successful contemporary dwelling and the barn opposite Borley Place has planning permission to transform it and the associated out buildings into one large single residence. At Borley Green two more barns have already been converted to residential use and there are other such

sites awaiting development. Such conversions are viewed sympathetically by local people who see no reason why characterful old buildings which have no other possible use should be allowed to fall into ruin. This is supported by government reforms which promote the re-use of redundant or under-used agricultural buildings for residential purposes.

6.4 In addition to the above, there are one or two sites around the parish that have at an earlier time been the location of buildings, including dwellings, that have long since fallen into ruin or have been demolished and no longer exist. Whilst current district council policy for this locality only allows for replacement of an existing habitable dwelling and under limiting conditions, the location of these sites does not conflict with the distribution of buildings in the village so that these might once again be suitable for single or very small scale development. Other single site situations, as yet unidentified, might be appropriate for building without impacting adversely on the landscape and character of the village built environment. However, it is apparent that, given the size of the community, there is very limited scope for additional housing without adversely affecting the existing low density and largely spread out nature and character of the village.



6.5 Further expansion in keeping with the established nature of the village can be provided by annexes for dependant relatives. A number of existing properties already have such additions and others have ample space around them to this end. This will help families to look after elderly relatives enabling them to stay within the village rather than seek care elsewhere. It would also free housing space for younger generations to ensure Borley's future as an on-going community.

6.6 Additions to existing homes by householders should have regard to the impact that they make in the immediate locality. Whilst there can be no overarching policy in a village where there is such diversity of housing stock both in style and positioning one to the next, due note should be taken of the way in which such developments might change adversely the proportions and appearance of the building involved and how that sits with adjacent properties.

6.7 Support for the green agenda and environmental protection in the parish is in evidence with individual households utilizing:-

- Improved insulation, fenestration and draught proofing against heat loss
- Energy generation via voltaic cells
- Direct solar water heating arrangements and heat pumps for primary heating
- Coppicing to provide sustainable fuel supplies for wood burners

And other such measures including the planting of trees and shrubs.

These are seen as an on-going process of reducing the 'carbon footprint' in Borley whilst maintaining the important characteristics in and around the parish.

However, there are concerns that industrial-scale energy generation, such as solar arrays and large wind turbines, would not be appropriate given the likely impact on the sensitive landscape and environment of the parish. Furthermore, there would be inevitable loss of the local high grade farmland in the event of such developments.

7.0 Policies

7.1 The separation between the three distinct clusters of dwellings that form Borley (around the green, around the church and alongside the Stour) should be maintained

7.2 The open and natural character of Borley and its setting and relationship with the wider landscape should be maintained

7.3 The broken building line should not be in-filled to such an extent that the character of the settlement is fundamentally altered

7.4 Development should not be approved that would prejudice the incorporation of the village into the Stour Valley area of outstanding natural beauty

7.5 Development must not encroach on the village green

7.6 Extensions, outbuildings and annexes should be well related and subordinate to existing buildings and compatible with the scale and style of the host dwelling

7.7 The conversion of redundant timber framed barns into single residential dwellings is supported

7.8 Where a new property is approved, the siting, design and materials must be in harmony with the countryside setting and sympathetic in scale and ridge heights to nearby properties

7.9 The use of local materials should be encouraged in the construction of additional buildings together with the use of indigenous hedging for boundaries

7.10 The network of public footpaths and bridleways must be retained, maintained and improved where possible

7.11 Use of the narrow roads and lanes by heavy goods vehicles will be discouraged

7.12 Small scale energy generation is generally supported

7.13 The village hall must be safeguarded as a focus for social and community activities

7.14 The listed telephone box on the green must be retained

8.0 Conclusion

Unlike many places in modern Britain, Borley has a genuine sense of community and a core of residents willing to share responsibility for steering their village in a positive direction. Nimbyism has no place here but nor has broad-brush, remotely-inspired 'development' which can only destroy what is precious in this tiny corner of north Essex.

9.0 The consultation process.

16 Feb 2012 Braintree District Council training session for parish representatives.

18 April 2012 Parish Meeting agreed to the need for a VDS and to a small core team to draft an initial outline.

June 2012 Core team begins work on a first draft for discussion with a view to producing an outline by 1 September 2012.

November 2012 First outline draft document circulated to all in the parish for comment/input to be discussed at the Parish Meeting.

21 Nov 2012 Parish Meeting considered the draft document, views of the RCCE representative and parishioners were expressed and noted for amendment of / inclusion in the document.

24 January 2013 The core team met to progress the draft plan. February and March 2013 Further detail and alterations are made to the draft document to reflect the views expressed.

April 2013 A second draft document circulated to all in the parish for comment/input and for discussion at the Parish Meeting.

29 April 2013 Parish Meeting considered the second draft with open discussion agreeing the revisions to the first draft.

5 November 2013 Parish Meeting considered the illustrated second draft and agreed revisions including the addition of a statement on the green agenda.

February, March 2014 The updated document is shared with Braintree District Council who feed-back their views. Amendments are made according to feedback.

3 November 2014 The Parish Meeting considered the latest version, which had been sent to all in the parish, and it was adopted unanimously without amendment.

December 2014 The latest version was submitted to Braintree District Council for comments and feedback.

January, February 2015 Final amendments were made according to the feed-back and the Statement re-submitted to the Parish.

10.0 Acknowledgements

Appreciation for the production of this design statement goes to:-

The core writing team –

Douglas New, Julian Manyon and David Finch.

The graphic design and layout – Rupert Brown.

The support of and input from the parishioners of Borley.

Early advice and guidance – Jan Cole of the RCCE;

Feedback and guidance from Braintree District Council.