APPENDIX A

THE GREAT TOTHAM VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT 2020

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1. Introduction

The Great Totham Village Design Statement (VDS) has been developed by a Sub-Group of the village's Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NSPG) as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process. It seeks to support the Plan and to identify and record the major characteristics of Great Totham and its appearance. The VDS has been presented to villagers who have had the opportunity to comment and input at the drafting stage. The VDS should now become a working tool to guide the character and appearance of development in the future.

Purpose of the VDS
The Great Totham VDS will:

- Actively influence change and development in Great Totham to meet our future needs.
- Assist those who bring forward proposals for development to ensure they are acceptable to the expressed wishes of the community and in keeping with the village character.
- Identify and help to protect key buildings, settings and views and promote the use of appropriate designs and materials.
- Improve and protect the village character with particular reference to views and open spaces.
- Support modest and appropriate development in the village's rural surroundings.
- Assist Maldon District Council, as planning authority, in their determination of planning applications.

Consultation Process
The Great Totham Village Design Statement has been produced by a Sub-Group of the Great Totham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The Group consists of interested Parishioners with a strong representation from the Parish Council. The VDS and the Neighbourhood Plan have been developed in parallel. A full village survey has been undertaken along with a weekend exhibition at the Village Hall. The results of both survey and event have been fed back into the Plan and VDS. Consultation has also been undertaken with Maldon District Council and the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE).

Status of the Village Design Statement and Relation to Relevant Planning Documents
The intention is for the VDS (presented as Appendix A of the Great Totham Neighbourhood Plan) to be endorsed by Maldon District Council and used as material consideration and a key document of standing in determining planning applications for Great Totham.

In this way the VDS will ensure informed local involvement in planning applications for the village.

The VDS supports, and builds upon, the objectives of the building and environmental policies for the Maldon District, as expressed in the Maldon District Local Development Plan (2014-2029) and the Essex Design Guide 1997 in offering guidance to ensure that new developments respect their local environment and are in keeping with traditional housing in towns and villages.

The Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Use Development 1997

The Design Guide was first published by Essex County Council in 1973 and has been influential in the planning of new housing, encouraging the use of vernacular design and local materials to create good design in varying locations throughout the county. The Guide was revised in 1997 by the Essex Planning Officers Association and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by local authorities. The Guide aims to encourage all new developments to respect, and be in keeping with, traditional housing in towns and villages and addresses such considerations as spatial organisation (layout), building heights, distances between dwellings, roof styles, window patterns, materials, treatment of ground surfaces and use of landscaping. All these elements should reflect the context of existing development, creating housing of distinctive character and identity.

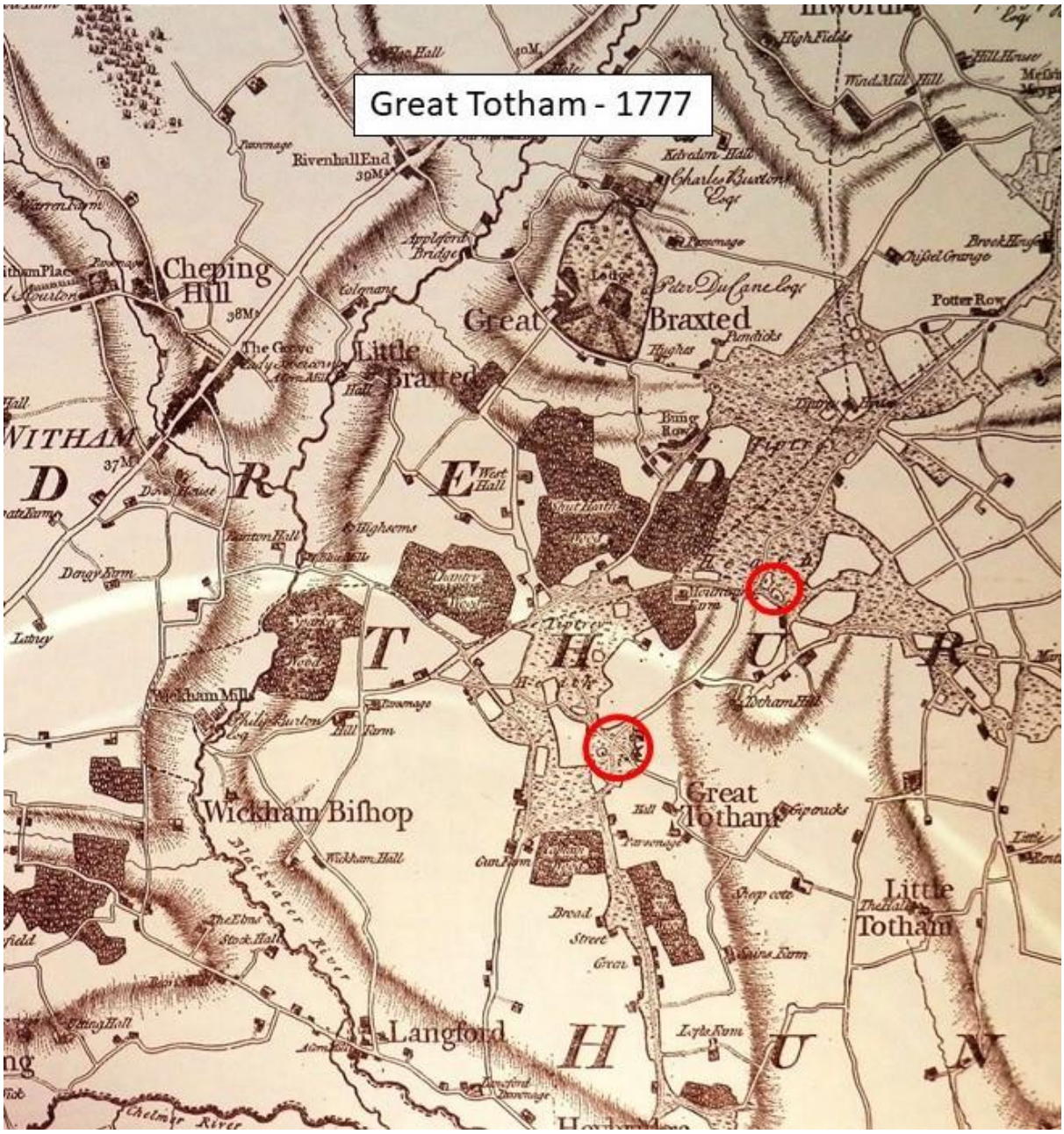
Summary

The Great Totham Design Guide covers the main Settlement Areas of the village and the rural hinterland of the parish.

Its aims are:

- To assist and guide the initiators of future development proposals in Great Totham as to what is acceptable to the local community. This should assist such proposals and avoid conflict during the planning process.
- To demonstrate clearly which buildings, open spaces and views are of major importance to the community and should be protected.
- To give local insight into conformance with the principles of the Essex Design Guide

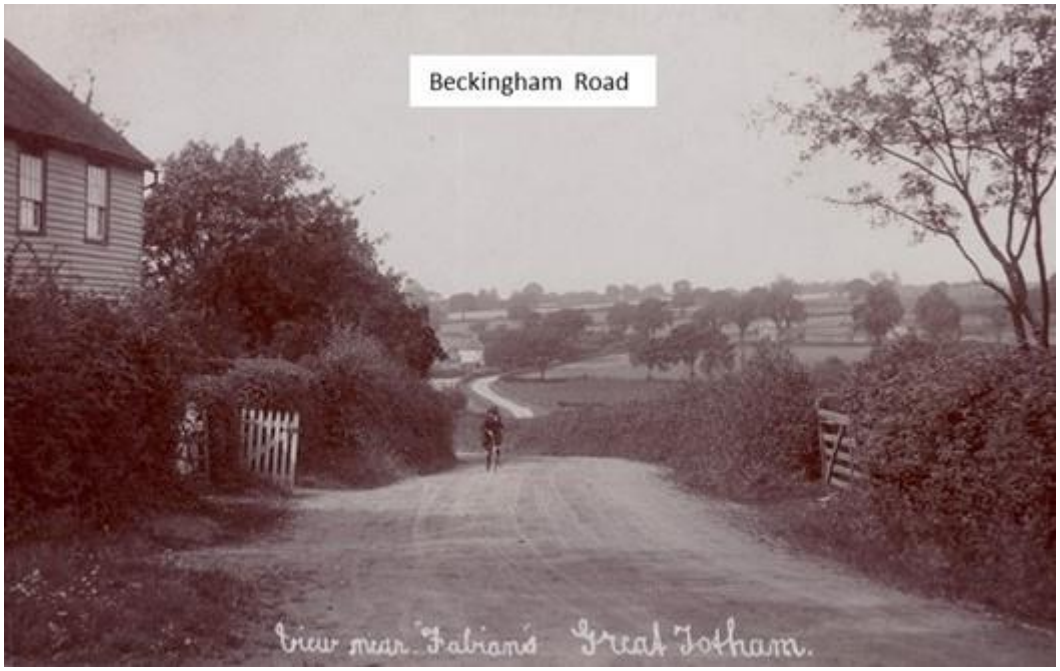
2. Great Totham Village



Historical Context

Archaeological investigation has revealed human activity from Prehistoric and Early Medieval times in the extreme south-east of the parish. This consisted of animal husbandry and arable farming. There is evidence of Bronze Age metalworking. The population at Domesday, 1086, is estimated at around 150. At the Norman Conquest Great Totham was awarded to three Norman supporters of King William the First.

The early village of Great Totham was a collection of dispersed farmhouses and buildings such as Lofts. There was no central core of church, village green and dwellings, generally seen as the typical English village. Instead there were isolated farms with small settlements developing on heathland near to services. The largest settlements were around the Parish Pits (one of which is now the Jubilee Recreation Ground), near the windmill, wheelwright, blacksmith and saddler, school and shop; the second at Totham Hill also had a mill and blacksmith as well as its brickworks.



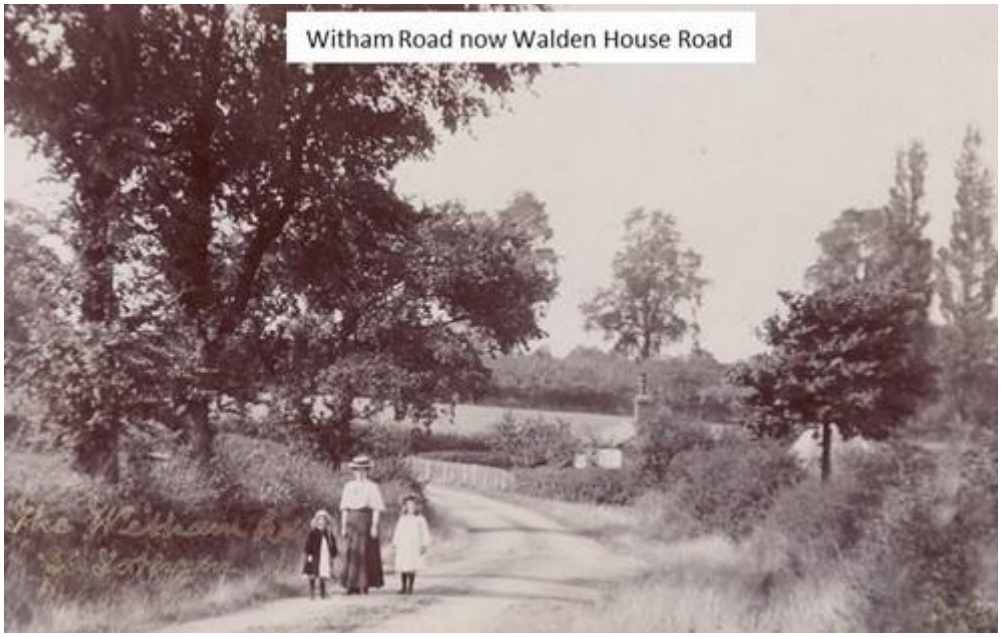
The first census in 1801 showed a population of 528, by 1851 it had reached 840. The latter half of the nineteenth century saw a steady decline, due mainly to changes in agricultural methods and the beginning of industry in neighbouring towns. In 1901 Totham was home to 589 souls. In the first half of the twentieth century, population again rose as travel to neighbouring centres became cheaper and easier. By 1931 population was 982 and by 1951 it had reached 1,221.

Housing was needed to meet the rise in population. 18 houses were built from 1895 to 1913. The large houses, Beacons and Great Ruffins date from this period but most properties were much smaller and to rent. The period after the First World War saw the beginning of local authority housing; Maldon RDC erected 26 dwellings in the 1920s and 1230s, 12 in Spring Lane and Colchester Road, 8 facing Bull Green and 6 in Goat Lodge Road.

From 1950 onwards Great Totham saw consistent major growth so that by 2011 the population was 2930. There was further new local authority housing, notably at Staplers Heath and Mill Road but the market now began to provide housing by private developers with a sequence of developments from Kings Road and Eaton Way to Chasefields, Seagers, Heriot Way and Beadle Place. In addition there was a good deal of infill and some smaller developments around the village. The Willie Almshouses, dating from 1855 provided housing for three widows and three couples who had resided in the village for 20 years; the Village Workhouse was at what is now the Prince of Wales pub from 1805 to 1830.

Employment up to the mid nineteenth century was in agriculture and related industries. There were two windmills, remembered by Millways and Mill Road and a tide mill at the very south of the village near the jetty at Saltcote. A major industry, now totally extinct, was brick, tile and pottery making. This was mainly in the north of the parish and is remembered in names such as Brick Spring Lane, Brick Hall and Brick Kiln Farm. The soft red bricks from local pits can be seen in many older village buildings.

Schooling took place at the Congregational (United Reform) Church and for Anglicans at the Honywood School. A Board School was built in the 1870s and the present school dates from a century later. Religious life centred on the Parish Church but Non-conformists built the chapels at Mill Road (Wesleyan, now demolished) and Chapel Road (Congregational) in the nineteenth century. The use of a barn as an Evangelical Church in Prince of Wales Road is a very early example of such conversions. The Village Hall (1929-30) is one of a number designed by resident architect, A H Mackmurdo, under the aegis of Rural Community Council of Essex.



The number of pubs in the village has varied over the years. Of the survivors, the Compasses at Totham North and the Bull both date from the early eighteenth century, and are conversions from houses. The Prince of Wales was a conversion of the old Workhouse c1860; it was rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1990. For the rest The Star and Blacksmiths Arms are now houses on Compasses Green and Totham Hill Green; there were also beer houses at Slough House and the Post Office. The Bird in Hand, near Myrtle Villas, and the Crown at Broad Street Green have been demolished.

The current parish boundary dates from a 1934 Review. At this time the land between Maypole Road and Broad Street Green Road, a narrow strip to the east of the latter and Captain's Wood were transferred from Heybridge to Great Totham. An area at the south of the parish near the river, and Osea Island were transferred to Maldon but are now in Heybridge. The ecclesiastical parish was unaffected.

Today Great Totham is generally referred to as Great Totham North and Great Totham South. This derives from the titles of the two electoral registers which cover the whole parish and the labels

given to the two largest settlement areas, whose cores have defined development limits. Sadly for travellers this distinction is not recognised by the Ordnance Survey.

There are in fact four recognised settlements, as well as outlying farms and small hamlets. The largest is Great Totham South (formerly just Great Totham) with the School, Village Hall and Shop, while Great Totham North (formerly Totham Hill) is smaller; Beacon Hill where the parish meets Wickham Bishops and the Braxteds, and Broad Street Green which sits mainly on the east of the road with the same name. Smaller settlements are at Maypole and Beckingham Roads with one at Sheepcoates Lane overlapping with Little Totham.

Landscape Character

The natural landscape helps form the character of Great Totham and is a key influence on the village's social and economic development. The Parish sits at the western edge of a band of Essex landscape stretching from the Suffolk border to the River Thames. This contains former heathland and wooded hills, overlapping with the low-lying coastal zone of the River Blackwater. The village lies on a generally south-east facing slope from Beacon Hill (at 292 feet, the highest point in Maldon District and third highest in Essex), to near sea level at Chigborough Farm. From Beacon Hill views stretch to Southend on Sea, Mersea Island and the coast of North Kent. This viewpoint has been used for defence and early warning purposes from the Armada to the Cold War. Crowds from the parish and neighbouring parishes still gather here when the reproduction beacon is lit on significant anniversaries.

Much of the land is gravel bearing with clay veins and a brickearth layer. The centre and south of the parish has evidence of gravel workings over a considerable period. Several are now lakes for fishing and wildlife conservation as at Totham Hall and Chigborough. Modern developments such as Seagers, Beadle Place and Heriot Way sit partly on old workings. Workings at Lofts Farm have been restored to farm land and two old workings, owned by the Parish Council, are used as recreation grounds at Maldon Road and Braxted Lane, with a third at Maldon Road, used informally for leisure.

There is significant woodland landscape with Captains, Heybridge, Middle, South and Spickets Woods in the South with Strowling Wood and Mountains Grove in the North. Most are ancient and appear on Chapman and Andre's County Map of 1777. There are a number of smaller copses.

The 1777 map shows a significant original landscape feature of Great Totham – the central belt of sandy heath and wasteland, which, varying in width, stretches from the Suffolk Sandlings to Southend on Sea. Part of this, Tiptree Heath, ran from Messing to Heybridge spanning a mile wide at Great Totham to 100 yards at Broad Street Green. This formed the central belt of Great Totham with only small areas being enclosed prior to the nineteenth century.

This Heath was open waste, of use only for common grazing and collecting firewood but a growing population and demand for food, together with farm mechanisation and growing techniques, eyes turned to this hitherto unviable land. Enclosure began in 1805 and totally changed the landscape, leaving only the present Tiptree Heath conserved for nature. In Great Totham remnants of the old waste survive as wide road verges and two Greens of common grazing land in the north of the Parish.

Three distinct landscape character areas have been identified in the parish which all contribute to its unique atmosphere. The enclosed Totham Wooded Farmland extends from Beacon Hill and

Mountains Road through the settlements to the open arable dominated Tolleshunt Coastal and Maldon Drained Estuarine Farmlands to the south.

The natural features and resources of the land had an important influence on the way the Parish developed and was shaped by people and their activities satisfying economic and social needs over the centuries. All this led to changes in the visual landscape.

An 'Arcadian' Landscape

Great Totham, North and South is regarded as an Arcadian settlement and is defined as such in the *Maldon District Characterisation Assessment* of June 2012, an evidence base document to the LDP. The main characteristics of such settlements are that they are dispersed and not nucleated with a main street or green at their centre. The church and hall are remote from the growth concentrations of the 19th and 20th centuries and there are dispersed groupings each with its own small historic core. There is no scale or sense of enclosure or anything approaching an urban configuration. Trees and soft landscaping mean that houses sit within a planted setting. New developments have in the main respected this overall appearance though there has been some loss of trees and soft landscape.

The Characterisation Assessment details 'Threats to this character' as including 'the infilling of gaps between houses, the rebuilding of houses with a larger footprint than their predecessors and the addition of large groups or small estates to the edge of villages'. Care should be taken to retain trees and planting and with the impact of new vehicular accesses, footways and parking areas, all of which can jeopardise the sense of soft enclosure and seclusion.

Environment and Habitats

The landscape and natural environment of Great Totham is varied and diverse; ranging from intimate wooded farmland around Beacon Hill to lower lying arable countryside on the eastern boundaries. Just as our settlements are well defined with a diversity of street patterns and buildings which reflect our historical development, so too are our habitats, which include ancient remnant woodland, scrub, gardens, churchyards, hedgerows and fishing ponds. These support a variety of flora and fauna from orchids to humble grasses and buzzards to butterflies.

Although a full biological survey has not been undertaken, local knowledge has identified a good range of habitats and species. The only habitat lacking in the parish is species rich grassland but roadside verges and field margins could be more diverse. Scrubland is an undervalued habitat which takes time to develop its richness but responds to sympathetic if minimal management. There is no co-ordinated planning to replace existing tree stock although some active projects have been undertaken by landowners.

Wildlife

The rural environment of the parish provides a sustainable habitat for a range of species.

Trees

Most native species are to be found, including:

Ash, Beech, Birch, Blackthorn, Buckthorn, Hazel, Hawthorn, Holly Hornbeam, Horse Chestnut, Oak, Rowan, Spruce, Sycamore, Walnut, Willow and Yew. In gardens are more exotic species such as the Monkey Puzzle; there is also a variety of fruit trees – Apple, Plum, Pear, Greengage, Damson & Cherry.

Mammal: Fox, Badger, Bats, Hare, Rabbit, Hedgehog, Muntjac Deer, Grey Squirrel.

Avian: House Sparrow, Blackbird, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Long Tailed Tit, Robin, Dunnock, Thrush, Collared Dove, Wood Pigeon, Pheasant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Siskin, Wren, Pied Wagtail, Redpoll, Nuthatch, Green Woodpecker, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Tree Sparrow, Sparrowhawk, Cuckoo, Black Cap, Willow Warbler, Chiff Chaff.

Corvids: Jackdaw, Magpie, Crow, Jay

Raptor: Buzzard, Kestrel, Little Owl, Tawny Owl, Barn Owl

Reptile/Amphibian: Adder, Grass Snake, Slow Worm, Pond Frog, Newt, Toad

Mustelid: Stoat, Weasel

Otters have been observed in adjoining local waterways and Red Kites are sometimes seen overhead.

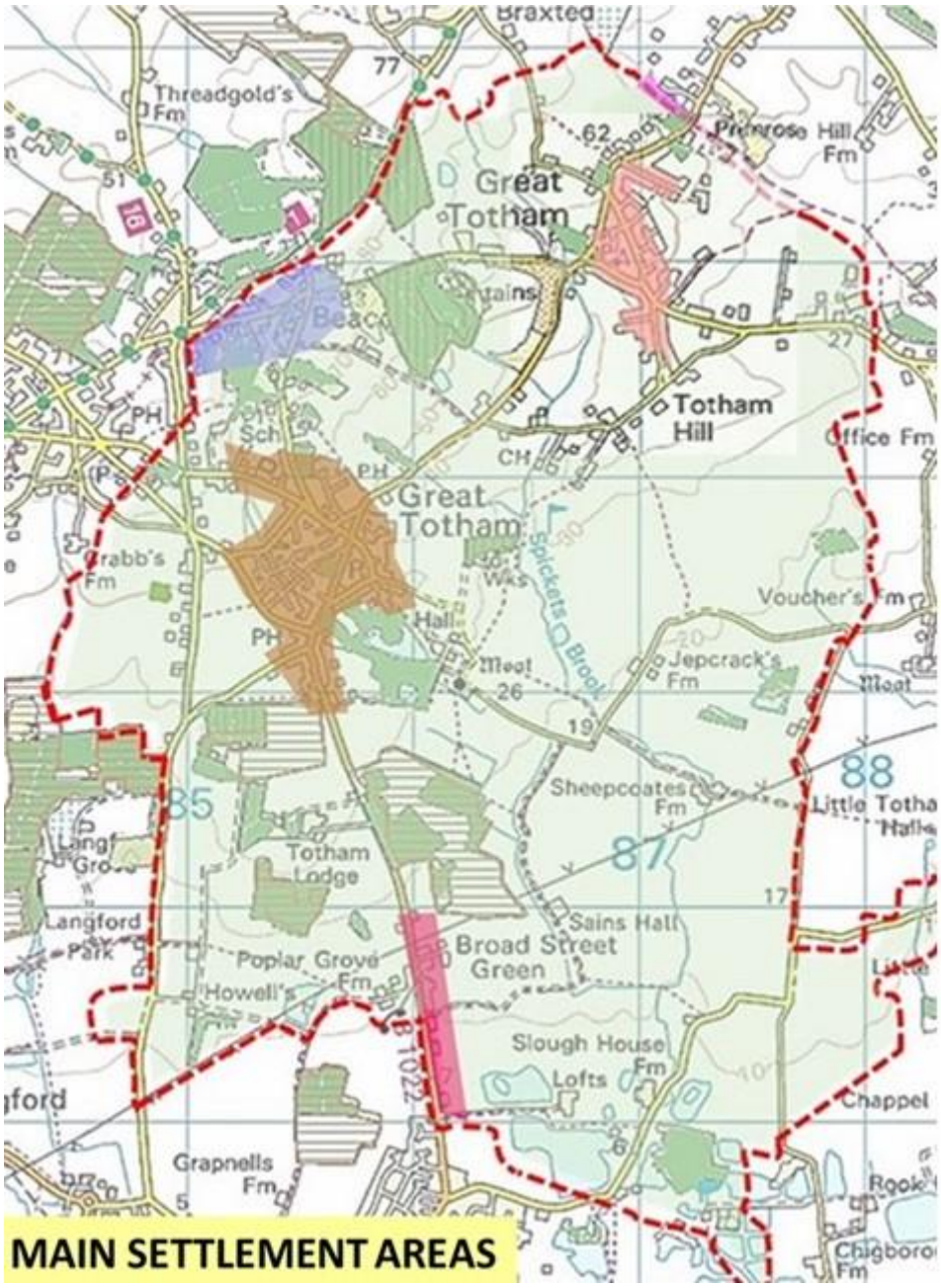
Our Landscape Vision

- To conserve the parish's essentially rural character
- Retain the three character areas of Great Totham
- Maintain views to adjacent character areas and east and south to the Blackwater Estuary
- Ensure new development respects the landscape in scale, pattern and materials
- Ensure new and replacement farm buildings are sensitively designed and located

Our Vision for Habitats and Biodiversity

- Natural habitats to be conserved, protected and managed as part of the Essex Biodiversity Plan
- Woodland and hedgerows to be maintained and enhanced as wildlife corridors
- Degraded areas such as roadside verges and field margins to be proactively restored
- Seek to identify and develop new habitat areas on suitable sites
- Monitor protected and unprotected species
- Develop plans and take actions to maintain and increase variety of flora and fauna

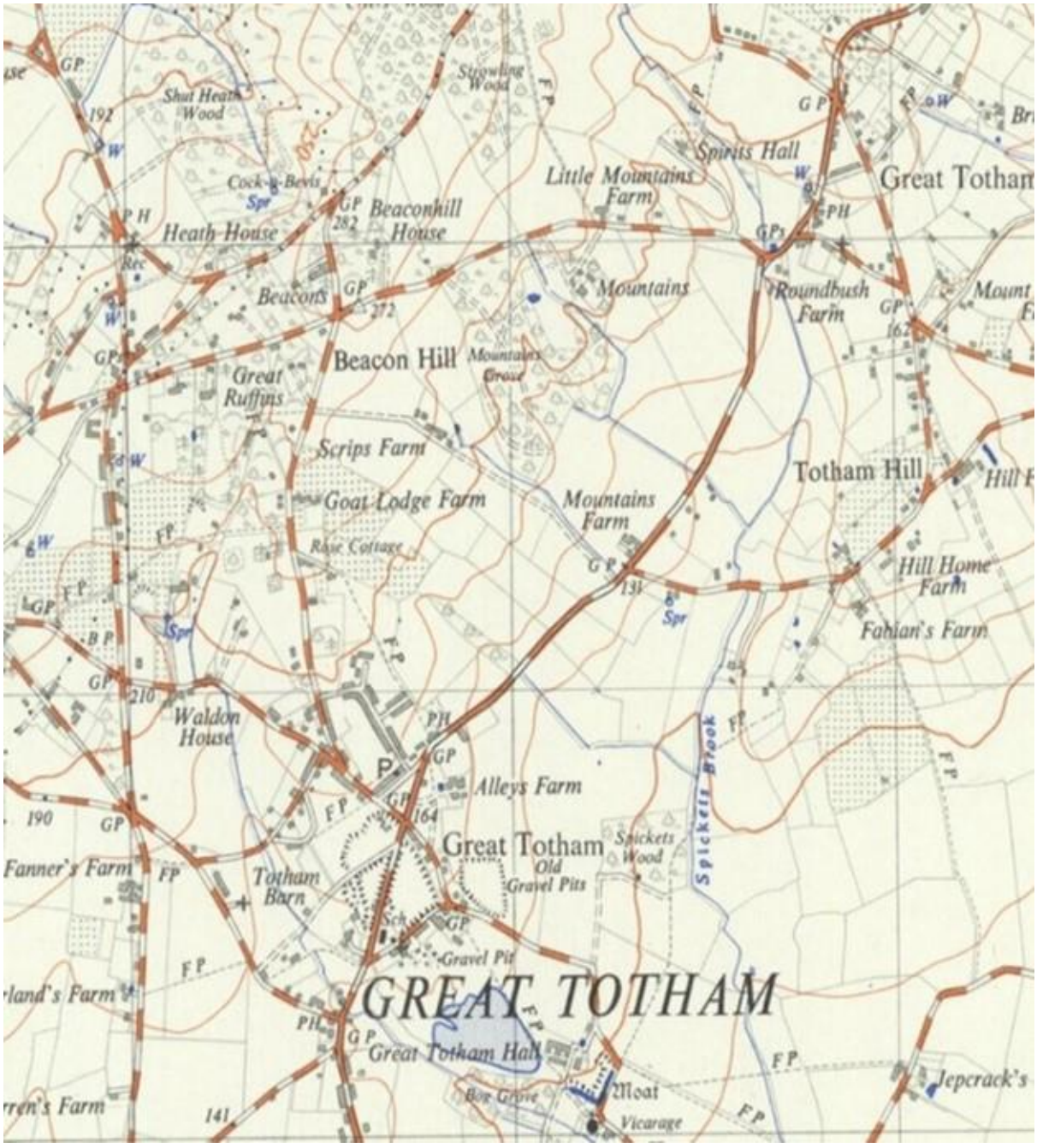
3. The Settlement Areas



KEY

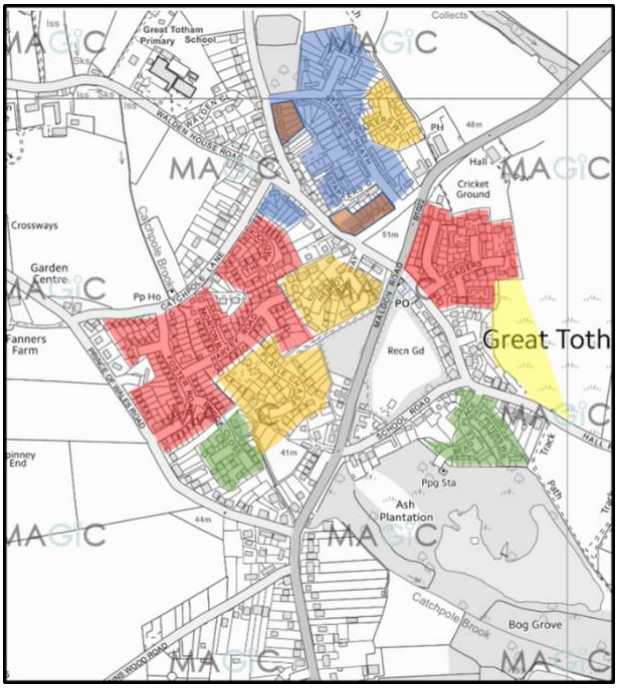
- GREAT TOTHAM NORTH
- GREAT TOTHAM SOUTH
- BEACON HILL
- BROAD STREET GREEN
- OUTLYING AREAS

Settlement history and character

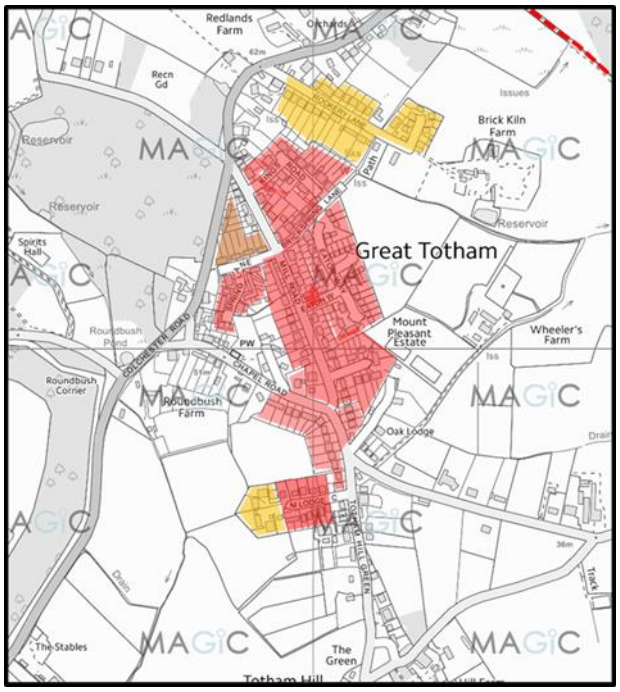


Great Totham - 1958

GREAT TOTHAM – DEVELOPMENT HISTORY



South

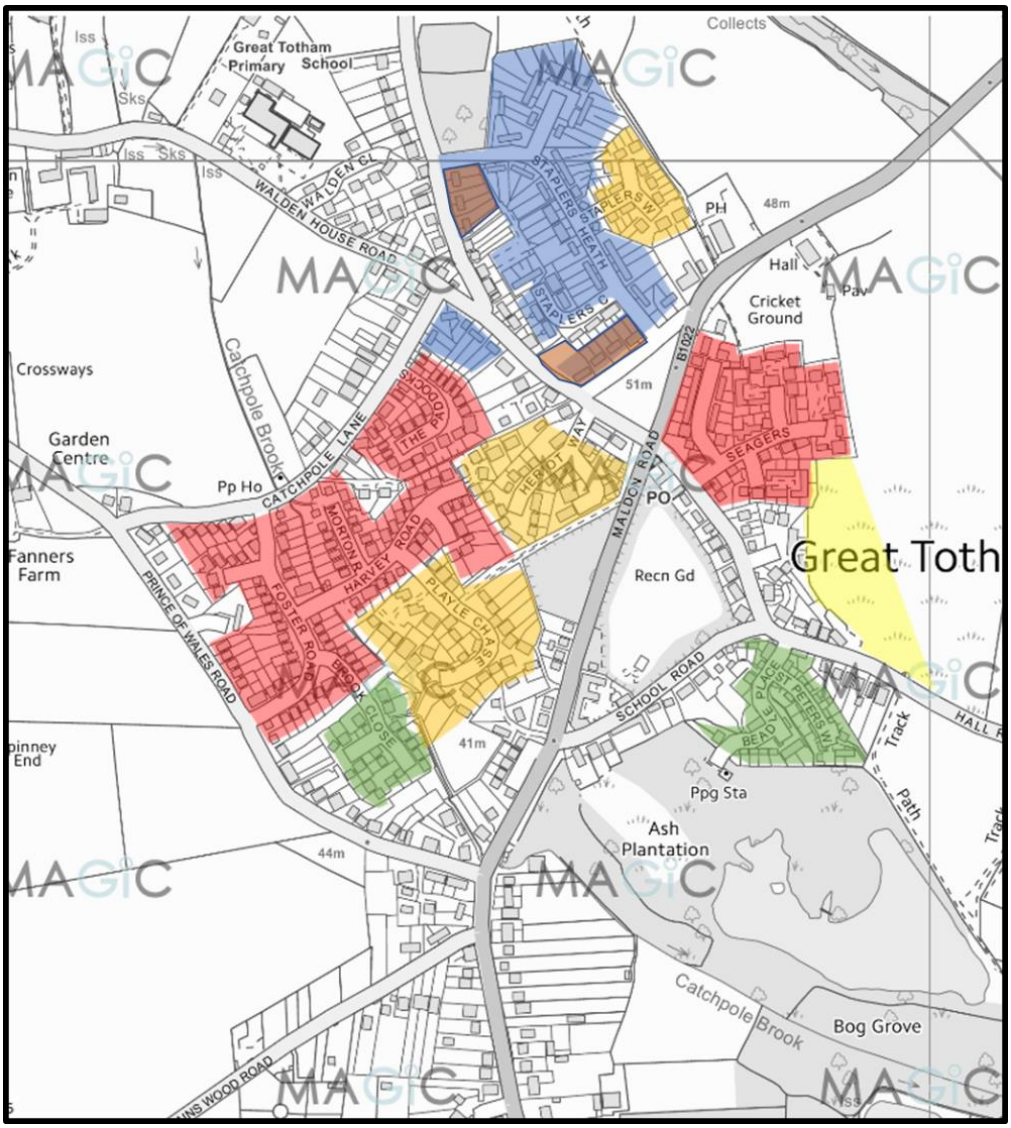


North

KEY:

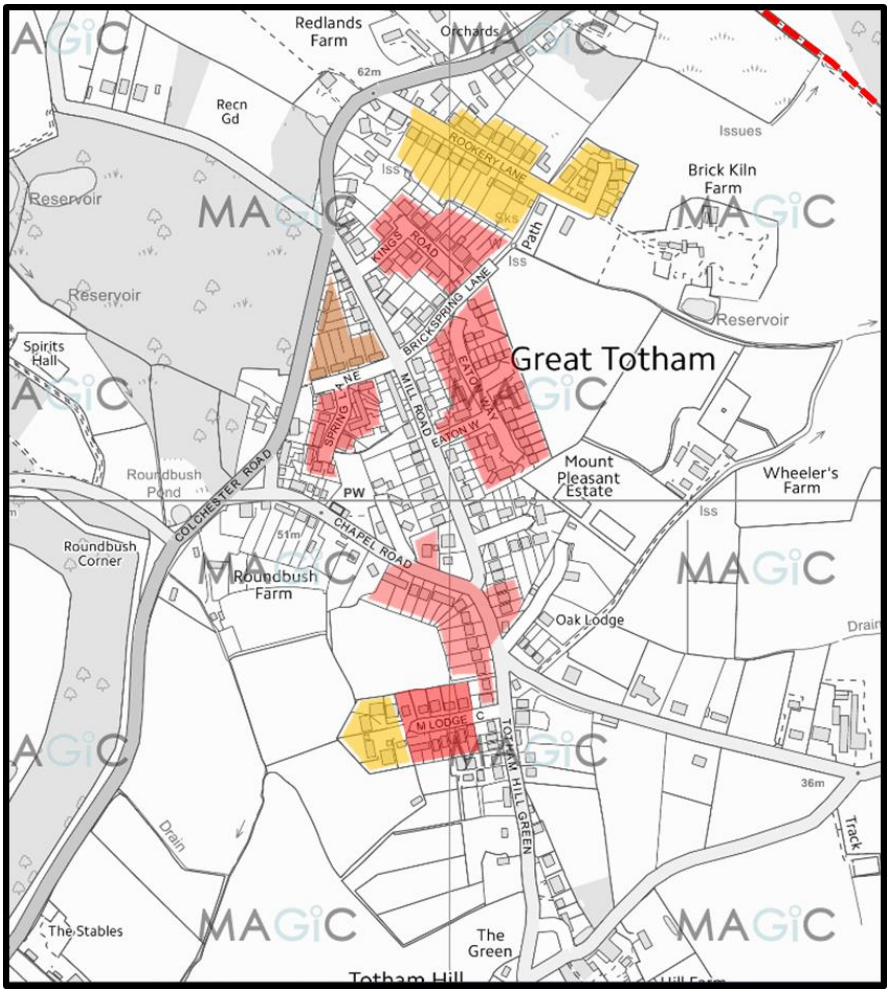
1920s/30s
1950s
1960s/70s
1980s/90s
2000/2010
Outline planning granted 2018

GREAT TOTHAM SOUTH – HOUSING DENSITY



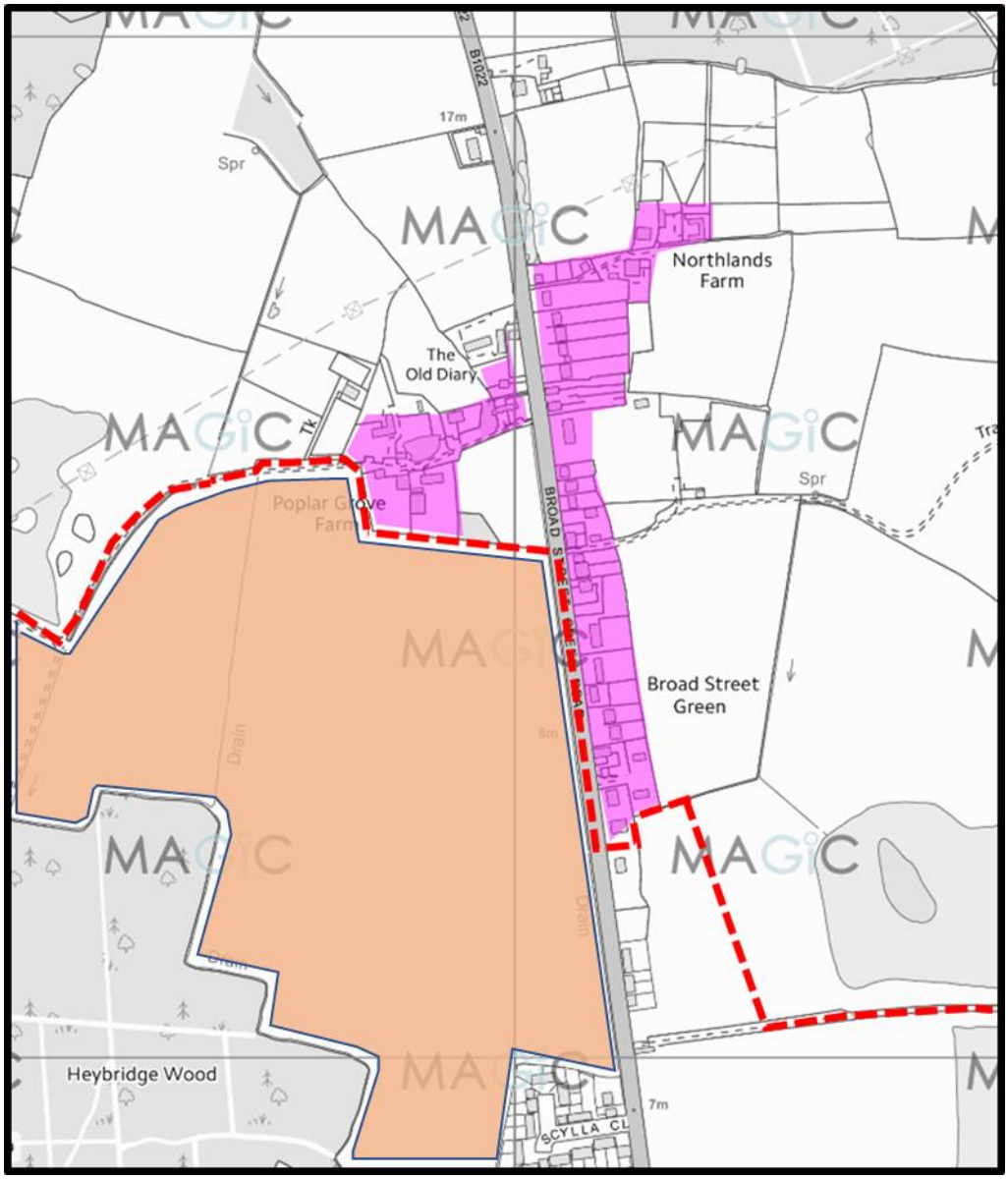
Location	When built	Area (hectares)	Number of homes	Density/ hectare	Comments
Staplers Heath	1920s/30s	0.7	14	20.0	
Staplers Heath	1950/60s	4.1	74	18.0	
Foster Road	1960s/70s	6.0	89	14.8	
Seagers	1960s/70s	2.8	53	18.9	
Heriot Way	1980s/90s	1.2	44	36.6	Includes 18 apartments
Playle Chase	1980s/90s	2.1	31	14.7	
Staplers Walk	1980s/90s	0.9	15	16.6	
Beadle Place	2000-10	1.3	37	28.4	Includes 9 apartments
Brook Close	2000-10	0.9	23	16.4	
Hall Road	2018	1.4	30	21.4	Outline planning granted 2018

GREAT TOTHAM NORTH – HOUSING DENSITY



Location	When built	Area (hectares)	Number of homes	Density/ hectare	Comments
Colchester Road	1920s/30s	0.59	12	20.3	
Eaton Way	1960s/70s	2.1	40	19.0	
Kings Road	1960s/70s	1.19	19	15.9	
Spring Lane	1960s/70s	0.8	17	21.25	15 are semi-detached bungalows
Mount Lodge Chase	1960s/70s	0.7	10	14.2	
Chapel Road	1960s/70s	1.4	19	13.5	
Rookery Lane	1980s/90s	2.14	28	13.1	
Mount Lodge Chase	1980s/90s	0.54	6	11.1	

BROAD STREET GREEN – HOUSING DENSITY

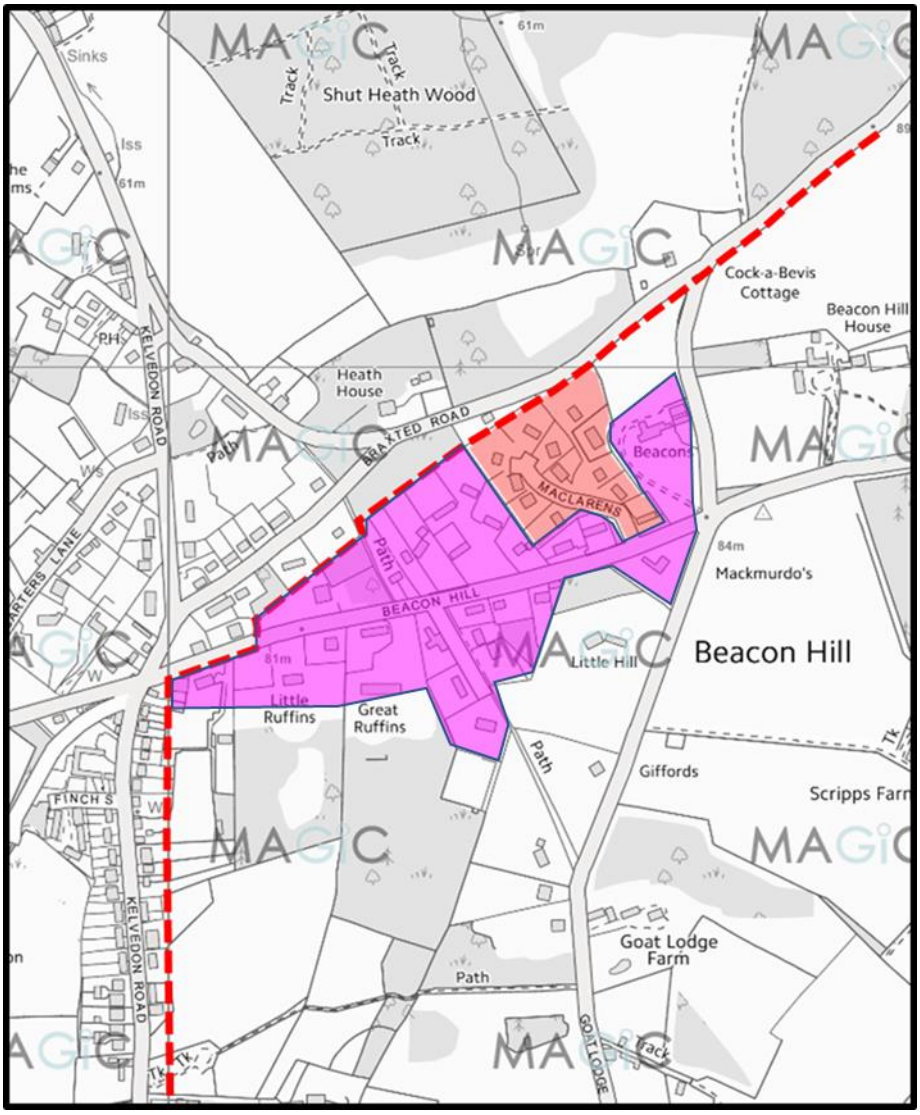


Neighbourhood Plan boundary

Site of the North Heybridge Garden Suburb

This underlying map for Broad Street Green is not current but comparison with other mapping and Google Maps shows the developed area of Broad Street Green covers some 5.9 hectares with 55 houses giving a density of 9.3 houses per hectare. Property ages are from around 1900 to the present day.

BEACON HILL – HOUSING DENSITY



Neighbourhood Plan boundary

Location	When built	Area (hectares)	Number of homes	Density/ hectare	Comments
McLarens	**1970s**	**1.9**	**12**	**6.3**	

Great Totham village a is overwhelmingly a twentieth century construct; before this the area consisted almost entirely of small farms and cottages. Significant development began only from the 1950s and this has led to a village of four settlement areas plus remaining open country. Ours is not an historic village nor does it contain many high quality individual buildings. Buildings are in a mixture of styles and periods with no sense of enclosure. Such villages are described as 'Arcadian'; they are dispersed and do not cluster around a street or green; there is no sense of enclosure or an urban configuration.

Properties of various periods sit in close proximity but do not generally 'jar'. The village's open configuration means that houses sit back from the road with front gardens; hedges and low walls predominate rather than fences. Where there are gates, they tend to be left open. Planned developments are interspersed with trees and are generally laid out to follow and respect the natural lie of the land.

Great Totham has significant numbers of bungalows; houses are largely of two stories, some with dormer windows and others of chalet configuration. Properities are well separated, often by up to two yards. Overall there is a balanced mix of housing with provision for most age groups. The largest current need is starter homes for couples and young families. These have been largely missing from recent developments.

Examples of Chalets with Dormer windows in Mount Lodge Chase,Totham North

In established areas and the more open plan estates, houses look outwards and towards roads. Some recent additions have a more enclosed feel with single road access points, higher densities, smaller plots and taller buildings. This tendency needs to be kept under review and the density of future developments carefully monitored. Consideration for neighbours and the style of their properties – in other words, 'Architectural Good Manners' – should be a guiding principle, with new housing generally in keeping with existing village character. Walking is important to our village and where houses crowd to the road, an open *village* feeling is lost. Generally Great Totham is well served with pavements and footpaths and this amenity should be safeguarded.

Examples of taller houses with small front gardens in Beadle Place

As the development of the village was incremental, houses with different styles and finishes jostle together. Lately larger twentieth century developments have succeeded, to a greater or lesser degree, in breaking up their impact and softening their appearance through judicious variations in materials and finishes. This should be encouraged as a general policy.

The last decade has seen an increase in large detached properties, individually designed, on large plots with enclosed, gated grounds. Such developments should be regarded as exceptional. Smaller, older properties have been sacrificed for these and others remain vulnerable.

Replacement dwelling with gated entrance

Great Totham South

This is the most populated area of the Parish. It grew up around the crossroads on the B1022 and is surrounded by open countryside. There are significant and far reaching views from many points See Section 2. This part of the village contains several of the significant listed buildings inside the development boundary, notably The Willie Alms Houses, The Honywood School, The Barn Church and 'The Bull' Public House, all Grade II . Some older buildings like the windmill and Alley's Farm have been demolished to make way for more modern schemes. The Parish Church of St Peter, the Old Vicarage and Totham Hall lie a short distance south east of the settlement area.

The Willie Alms Houses in School Road

The Honywood School in Hall Road

The majority of development has taken place since the 1950s starting with Staplers Heath. More development was carried out in the 1970s (Foster Road and Seagers), 1980s (Heriot Way) and the 1990s (St Peter's Walk/Beadle Place).

Heriot Way

Seagers

St Peters Walk

Foster Road

Over this period, developments have tended to become more enclosed, denser and urban in feel. This tendency should be resisted or at least kept in check, as should any unwelcome move to higher and bulkier buildings. There is one group of former municipal housing at Staplers; some have been purchased by tenants, the remainder are run by Moat Housing.

Infilling of sites has been a constant feature in the evolution of the village. Heriot Way and St Peter's Walk were formerly centres of employment – the former a transport yard and the latter a truckbuilders. Such reuse of brownfield sites should be encouraged. In addition to large detached homes, both Heriot Way and Beadle Place contain a number of flats. As a result, at locations within the village, properties from a number of periods and of various types, may be found in close conjunction; in most cases these bring a welcome variety to the streetscape and can still be defined as 'good manners' in architectural terms.

Flats in Beadle Place

Barber Close

The Post Office/general stores and Great Totham Garage are located close to the B1022 and Hall Road junction. Here too is the village green, which with the shop and The Bull forms the closest we have to a village centre in Totham South.

Great Totham South – Village Green

Southwood Timber, suppliers of wood and manufacturers of wooden outbuildings operates from the wood of the same name situated on the B1022 just south of the settlement.

-Great Totham School is deservedly well regarded and popular. It also serves the villages of Wickham Bishops and the Braxteds; this extended catchment area is now causing major traffic and safety issues for Great Totham residents.

The old village school in Maldon Road

GUIDANCE

- **New developments or extensions near old buildings should be designed sympathetically to complement the existing buildings.**
- **The 'Arcadian' nature of Great Totham should be given significant weight in considering development proposals.**
- **Existing open spaces and views should be retained and respected.**

The northern entrance to the village is 'framed' by 'The Bull', the Village Hall and cricket field. 'The Bull' is a listed building and the Village Hall, designed by Arthur Mackmurdo, renowned Arts and Crafts architect and local resident, is a listed Local Heritage Asset.

Mackmurdo was also responsible for the design of Great Ruffins and Beacons on Beacon Hill and several other village halls in Essex. The Village Hall is home to the Great Totham Nursery School and plays host to numerous other clubs and associations. The aspect of this northern entrance is a very important visual feature of Great Totham and has been recognised as such by the Planning Inspectorate.

The Jubilee Recreation Ground was formed on the site of an old gravel working during the 1950s. It contains a football pitch, play equipment and a youth shelter.

The village has a substantial village green, with trees and a bench. This space might benefit from a more active and imaginative conservation approach. A layby has been constructed alongside the green to enable safer parking for customers visiting the Post Office and stores.

Totham Lodge, (Grade II), once the manor house of the De Crespigny family is now a care home.

A second public house, The Prince of Wales is found at the B1022/Prince of Wales Road junction. This is a repacement building – the C18 original was demolished by fire in the 1990s – but is broadly similar in style to the original.

The Prince of Wales

Great Totham North

There is a long standing story to the effect that the settlement of Great Totham North was formed when some residents of the original Great Totham moved away to form a new community as a way of avoiding the plague of the 1600s. It is surrounded by open countryside. Although the population of Great Totham North is significantly smaller than Great Totham South, the Settlement Areas are closer in size, giving Great Totham North a more open aspect.

Village Entrance – Totham North

The first major development took place in the 1920s around Spring Lane and Cochester Road and comprises semi detached houses; this was followed by further developments around Mount Lodge Chase, Mill Road and Eaton Way in the 1970s and 1980s. These later developments contain detached houses, chalets and bungalows. The Eaton Way development has an open feel which is characterised by the lack of defined boundaries at the front of the properties.

Eaton Way

Some of the properties built here in the 1970s are similar in style to their counterparts in Great Totham South. As the planned developments in Totham North are smaller in scale than those to the South, the North has a more rural feel. In general though, the same principles apply as in Totham South and the principles applied to development in the North should be no different from that outined above for Totham South.

Although smaller in size than its neighbour, Great Totham North has a greater number of bungalows, 124 against 67 in Great Totham South. There is a small number of former local authority houses on the B1022 and in Spring Lane.

1920s houses in Spring Lane

Detached bungalows in Mount Lodge Chase

Great Totham North has a recreation ground for public use and there are some allotments within the grounds of the United Reformed Church (URC). The URC hosts a number of clubs and associations and is an attractive structure dating in part from 1831 when it was built as an Evangelical Arminian Chapel.

The recreation ground has a football pitch and some play equipment and there is a small village green

on the B1022. This green, though small in size, is most attractively laid out. It should be regarded as a major village asset; the green and its setting should be rigorously protected. Great Totham North also

has an area of open land, known locally as ‘Donkey Green’ at the junction of Totham Hill Green and Beckingham Road.

Donkey Green viewed from the south

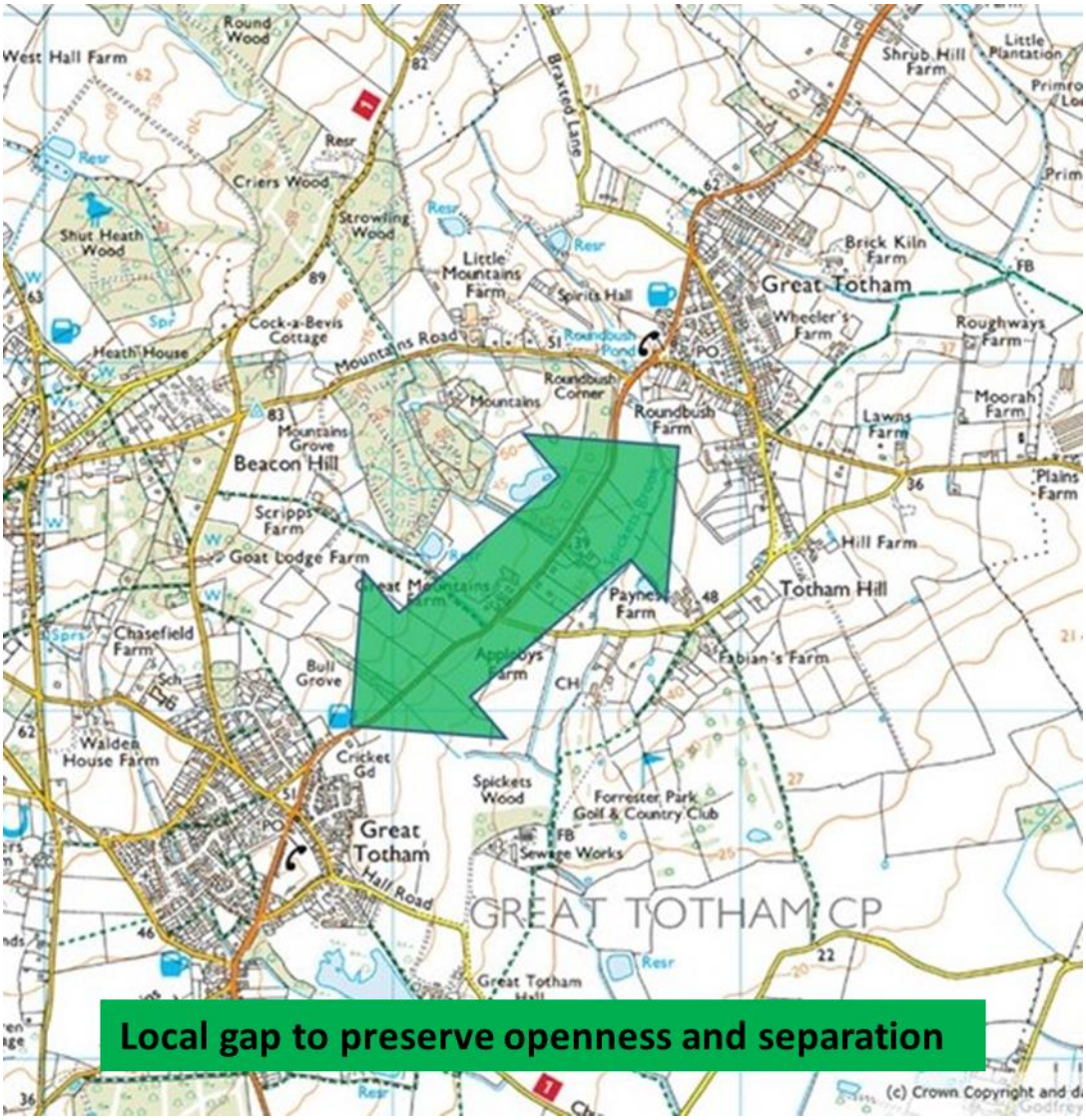
GUIDANCE

- **The context of listed buildings should be considered as a significant influence on design.**
- **Good design to enhance and preserve the Arcadian environment.**
- **It is important that the openness and rural aspect of our village is constantly kept in mind and protected.**

There are limited retail facilities in North Totham; the village contains a Florist and a Public House – The Compasses – which has been listed as an asset of community value.

Great Totham North – Recreation Ground

Development in the ‘green corridor’ between Totham North and South and its associated vistas should be regarded as exceptional to preserve openess and separation.



Beacon Hill

Although not a settlement in its own right, over the years Beacon Hill tends to look towards Wickham Bishops. It is a largely mixed development of individual houses stretching along Mountains Road. There are some older timber framed cottages and more recent, individually designed buildings constructed from the 1960s. Some smaller properties with large plots have been demolished and replaced with larger, more modern homes. Houses at Beacon Hill are hidden away far more than in the rest of Great Totham; there is a preponderance of gated entrances and high thick hedges. The whole aspect is much less open.

There are five listed buildings along Beacon Hill and Mountains Road. Maclarens is a development of large detached homes situated on the North side of Beacon Hill. It has a spacious layout, excellent landscaping and welcome variety in its houses and their treatment. Arthur Mackmurdo lived on Beacon Hill in a bungalow relatively recently demolished.

Great Ruffins, the large house he built for himself, is listed Grade II*. Bettley & Pevsner (Buildings of England: Essex) say that “the comparison of it to a South American railway station is not altogether unfair”.

The village beacon, a look-out since Saxon times and the third highest point in Essex, is situated at the top of Goat Lodge Road and many villagers and visitors enjoy the far reaching views of the Blackwater Estuary and the Dengie Peninsula.

View of the Blackwater from Beacon Hill

The protection of the vistas from the Beacon should be absolutely paramount; their value has also been recognised by the Planning Inspectorate and they are of far more than local significance. On a clear day chimney stacks on the North Kent coast are visible. The beacon is regularly lit for national celebrations or commemorations – the most recent was to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1918 Armistice. 'Beacons' near the junction with Goat Lodge Road is a listed building (Grade II) but this is largely hidden from view**.**

Beacon Lighting
Armistice Day 2018

GUIDANCE

- **Improve access to the beacon viewpoint to attract more visitors.**
- **Proposals to replace older, smaller dwellings with large, modern houses need careful monitoring**

Broad Street Green

This settlement at the south end of Great Totham Parish along the eastern side of the B1022 (an old Roman Road) would historically have been part of Tiptree Heath. The ribbon of houses, built on the heathland, is of mixed dates from C19 to the present, with one or two possibly earlier. Buildings vary from farm cottages to large modern detached houses. Lofts Farm and associated buildings east of the B1022 include listed structures and lakes resulting from gravel workings.

Old gravel workings, Lofts Farm, Broad Street Green

Broad Street Green doesn't benefit from retail or community facilities but does have a chapel, The Searchlight Church.

The parish boundary between Broad Street Green and Heybridge crosses the B1022 by the chapel. At its southern extremity Broad Street Green is already affected by the developing Heybridge Garden Suburb which will continue to expand during the life of the Neighbourhood Plan. In recognition of this uncertainty, a small part of Great Totham Parish, west of the B1022 and containing no dwellings, has been excluded from the Great Totham Neighbourhood Plan.

The main concern here is the long term need to constrain the northward march of Heybridge which takes the form of large suburban estates. The differentiation of these developments from Great Totham South, while not an immediate issue, will require vigilance over the life of the current Neighbourhood Plan and beyond.

The Searchlight Church with newer properties in the background

Older properties in Broad Street Green

The outlying areas

St Peter's Church (Grade II*) is located outside of Great Totham South, it is co-located with the old Vicarage and Totham Hall. Both are listed Grade II. The church lych gate was rebuilt in 2018. The church owns the Honywood School (Grade II) and both buildings are used for many different village activities.

GUIDANCE

- **People in Great Totham value the open landscape and rural views, both in the settlement areas and the outlying landscape context.**
- **Protect and manage woodland effectively.**
- **Protect the green space between Great Totham and Wickham Bishops which is getting smaller.**

Away from the village centres the only real development of note has taken place along Sheepcoats Lane, Plains Road and Beckingham Road. These are mainly detatched homes of varying styles and ages. A number of the older properties along Beckingham Road are listed. Sheepcoats Lane and Plains Road have both seen some infilling and redevelopment/replacement of older properties.

The landscape is mainly arable interspersed with woodland and hedgerows. There are several large farms which produce a range of cereals and Mountains Farm is well known for Turkey rearing.

Development in these areas should be minimal with priority given to cases of clear need. The adaptive re-use of redundant agricutural and industrial buildings should be encouraged.

4. Village Style and Elements Explained

Building Styles

Great Totham consists of predominantly C20 and C21 development, with pockets of earlier houses and scattered farms representing the earlier landscape. There is ribbon development along the B1022 towards Heybridge. Building styles are various but generally sit together comfortably. Recent developments have been of higher densities and properties have tended to be at the large end of the spectrum.

The village has developed with buildings that are predominantly set back from roads with open frontages. Where there are gates, they tend to be low, not solid and often left open. Recent years have seen deviations from this in two respects. Some more recently developed properties are aggressively close to roads and neighbouring properties giving an enclosed, separate and urban feel, while others, particularly larger dwellings, hide behind high hedges and solid gates which does not fit with the open rural aspect and feeling that most residents enjoy.

Material Finishes to Buildings

The predominant material is brick in various shades. Many houses are rendered wholly or in part, predominantly in shades of cream. A number of estates have used render to give welcome variety to identical properties. Timber is also used in this way. A recent fashion for cladding refers to some earlier buildings which are weather boarded in traditional fashion. Similarly, there are examples of pargetting, even on quite recent houses.

Brick

A number of listed structures, for example, The Honywood and the Willie Almshouses are in traditional red brick, as are the few surviving pre C20 buildings. More recent buildings, particularly the estates, use a variety of modern brick colours to introduce variety within streets or closes.

Render

Render is used throughout the village, both on individual properties and in estate locations. This gives welcome variety and contrast to brick and breaks up the look.

Roofs

The village has a great variety of roof styles, pitched roofs of varying angles, hipped roofs and a few mansard roofs; gables from main roofs and dormers are also to be seen.

Roofing Materials

A variety of roof tiles are to be found in Great Totham from traditional peg tiles to all manner of variations. Concrete tiles are also found with some natural slate on older properties.

Dormers

Dormers are to be found on houses of all ages; they provide welcome variety in roof lines and add a degree of individuality to streetscapes.

Doors and Windows

Doors and windows are a major factor in the appearance of buildings and the village as whole. There is large variety in the styles of doors and windows in Great Totham. Many houses – even those of relatively recent construction – are already seeing doors and windows replaced with PVC and double glazing. These are sympathetic in varying degrees but do not require planning consent.

“Good Manners”

In line with village preferences, as expressed in the Neighbourhood Plan and Housing Needs Survey, it is anticipated that most new building in Great Totham will be of infill within the settlement boundaries, and in modest numbers. Such schemes should be rigorously examined for their suitability in relation to existing, neighbouring buildings. In this as elsewhere, the watchword should be “Architectural Good Manners”. Only a few buildings in the village are of the highest quality but their variety should be cherished, and this should not imply that the village heritage can be treated lightly or with contempt.

Boundary Treatments

The great majority of village dwellings sit back from the road with front gardens. Boundaries are defined by low hedges, stone or brick walls, shrubs or even simply the edge of lawns. Where there are gates, these tend to be openwork and are often left open. Low boundaries give large sections of the village an open and welcoming aspect. Some larger properties have high walls of hard landscaping or tall green planting. There is a fashion for severe solid gates, often controlled by the occupant. There is also a tendency for newer properties to sit very close to the road or jut aggressively into sightlines. This tendency should be kept in check.

Guidance Notes

- New buildings should respect neighbouring properties and not impose themselves in their scale, height or close proximity, they should have adequate space around the property to maintain a rural feel and to the side of the property for garages.
- The recent trend towards building urban style houses with three storeys imposing themselves on the street scene and neighbours is not in keeping with the village architecture and should only be approved by exception. Skyline views allowing sunlight through should be protected.
- Property extensions should replicate the details of their parent building e g windows, doors and roofing and not impose on street views or neighbouring properties.
- Pitched roofs should be the norm in new development but exceptions may be made for submissions of high architectural merit.
- Hedge boundaries to be of native species and wildlife friendly.
- Fences, railings and walls should be traditional in design and appearance.
- The open frontages and low boundaries common in large areas of the village should be the norm in any future developments.

Buildings Listed and of Special Interest

Great Totham has 41 Listed Buildings which are scattered across the parish.

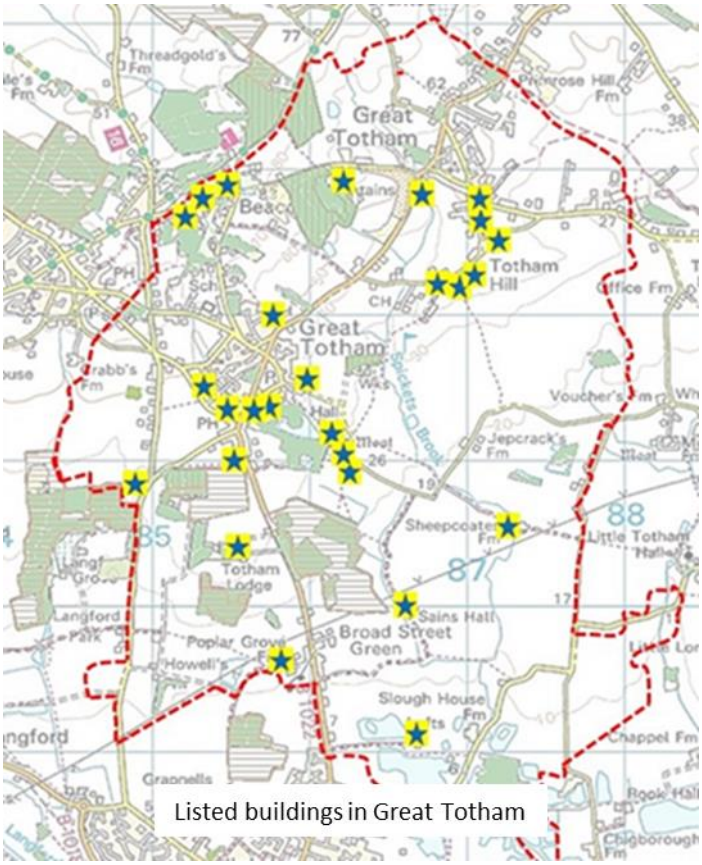
Parish Church of St Peter, II*: C13 and C14 with major C19 alterations. Walls are of flint, puddingstone, freestone and oolite. Also five **Churchyard Monuments**

Old Vicarage II: C18 with later alterations. Group value with Church and Totham Hall.

Great Totham Hall II: C17 with alterations and additions. Timber framed and plastered. Also **Barn II**.

Totham Barn Chapel, Evangelical Free Church II: C17 Timber framed, weather-boarded with thatched roof. Listed as remarkably early barn conversion, 1822

Totham Lodge II: 1880. Red brick home of the De Crespigny family. Now a Care Home.



Honywood School II: 1857 Former village school, red brick. Gift of former lay rector.

Willie Almshouses II: 1855 Two rows with chapel in brick. Modern extensions.

The Bull Public House II: C17 or earlier. Timber frame and brick, plastered. **Stables II** adjacent.

Mountains II*: House C15/16 with C18/20 extensions. Listing includes garden wall.

Beacons II: 1902, Mackmurdo house. Red brick and render, with observation tower. Listing notes group value with 1903 Beacons Cottage for gardener.

Great Ruffins II; 1904 Mackmurdo house. Italianate with tower and lantern. Also **Gates II**.

Farmhouses in outlying area listed Grade II, most of C16/17 origins. **Fabians** C17: **Gun**, formerly the Shoulder of Mutton Inn, C15: **Hill** c1500 and **Barn**: **Lofts** C16 with **Granary** and **Cart Lodge**: **Paynes** 1777: **Poplar Grove** C17 with **Cart Lodge**, **Stable** and **Wheel Pump**: **Roundbush** C17 or earlier and two **Barns**: **Sheepcoates** C16 or earlier.

Cottages listed Grade II: **76-78 Oak Cottages, Maldon Road** C18/19 with 'Royal Insurance' plaque: **8, Prince of Wales Road** C18: **16 School Road** C17 or earlier: **Bean and Walnut Tree Cottages, Totham Hill Green** C18: **Croft Cottage** Totham Hill Green C16: **1 and 2 Beacon Cottages, Beacon Hill** C18, extended C20 now two dwellings.

Maldon District Council's **List of Heritage Assets** has the following entries for Great Totham Parish

Listed as part of a group of Mackmurdo buildings are **Little Ruffins**, 1901, much altered, **Ruffins Lodge** (to Great Ruffins), 1903, and **Great Totham Village Hall, 1929-30**. **Mackmurdos**, a 1920 bungalow was also included in this group but demolished in 2014. The **K6 Telephone Box** on Totham North village green is also listed for landscape value.

Also of significance locally is the Bus Shelter adjacent to Toham South Post Office which houses the village War Memorial.

Village Facilities, Community and Leisure

Great Totham is a rural community whose population is a mix of established village families and incomers who have chosen to move into the village. Residents made clear in our survey that they value the open rural aspects of the village, its setting in open country and its views across neighbouring countryside (88%). They also felt that the looks and appearance of the village were a major contribution to its character (95%) The population of the parish is 2930 (Source 2011 Census). The majority of residents are retired (xx%) or in full time employment (xx%). Of the latter our survey showed that most commute to work with journeys of over 20 minutes.

The facilities which make Great Totham a thriving and desirable place to live are its churches, shops and Post Office as well as a range of social, sports and recreation facilities.

- St Peter's Church, Barn Evangelical Church, United Reform Church
- Village Hall
- The Honywood
- Village Stores and Post Office, Florist's Shop
- Recreation Grounds, North and South
- Village Greens, North and South
- Totham Garage
- Totham School
- The Bull, Prince of Wales and Compasses Public Houses

  Forrester Park Golf and Country Club
- Cricket Pitch
- Marven's Riding School
- Network of footpaths and views
- Clubs such as Carpet Bowls, Art Club, Knit and natter, The Lunch Club and The Garden Society

Guidance

Broader communication of all the facilities and activities available in the village to all age groups would improve their accessibility, encourage greater use and strengthen community spirit.

Commerce, Industry and Employment

There are relatively few employers within the parish. Two shops, one including the Post office, three public houses, the garage, the riding school, a garden centre and some of the farms. A nursery school uses the village hall. Some farm premises have seen adaptive reuse for small businesses, and one has converted properties for holiday rental. This is a welcome trend. Great Totham has mercifully not seen the level of local business closures of some neighbouring settlements.

Some of the businesses in Great Totham

Crisell Internet Consultancy	Essex Wedding Discos
The Florist on the Green	Worldwood Products
The Compasses	Marlin Components Online
Soundmagic Studios	11 Plus Swot
Upson Mowers	Totham Lodge Care Home
Southwood Timber	R A Lee
Forrester Park	Great Totham Garage
The Bull	B P A Kennedy
The Prince of Wales	Sigma Electrical
Bourne Engineering	Joe Murrell
Little Mountains Farm	Hughes and Son Landscapes
Delta Performance	Maypole Health
Stan's Coaches	Hayward and Barratt Holdings
Naio Environmental	Carports, Canopies and Verandas in UK
Quadbikes R Us	PC Doctor Operations Ltd
Car Masts UK	Maypole Pet and Garden Centre
Kit Car Electronics	Hawkes Plastering
Landscape Photography	Innov8 Driving School
Great Totham Post Office and Stores	Jepcracks Barn Self Catering
Marvens Riding Stables	

Guidance

- Local commerce and employment are important to the village. Existing services and facilities should be supported.
- Small scale commercial activity should be welcomed as long as it does not conflict with the village's rural character.
- Sensitive reuse of redundant premises should be encouraged and welcomed.

5. Highways and Infrastructure

Transport and Roads

Guidance

- Continue to press for rationalisation of speed limits particularly on the B1022.
- Seek to enhance the village footpath network and secure a safe pedestrian route for all between Totham North and South.
- Work with all involved to reduce traffic related to Totham School.
- Ensure new developments provide sufficient off-street parking which does not adversely affect street scenes or look urban in character.
- Resist any increase in street lighting.

The two main settlement areas, North and South are bisected by the B1022 main distributor road. This is very busy during travel to work times morning and evening and steady all day. Speeding is an issue, as is the variety of limits on the road during its traverse of the parish. Proposed developments at Heybridge will substantially increase traffic on the B1022. The junction of Walden House Road and the B1022 is busy with traffic from Witham Station and the A12 accessing routes to Maldon and Tiptree. Totham School, serving as it does, neighbouring villages, generates significant congestion morning and evening.

Pedestrians and Cycling

National Cycle Route 1 passes through the parish. There are no dedicated cycle routes but our quiet roads are popular with residents and visitors.

Pedestrian routes are generally good throughout settlement areas, with minor gaps. The absence of a metalled path between North and South Totham, suitable for families including push chairs is a source of discontent. Our network of footpaths is well used but could be significantly improved with a small number of new links.

Parking

Most properties in the village have a degree of off street parking. However, developments built as recently as the 1980s are now seeing significant amounts of street, and even pavement, parking. This seems to be due to increased number of vehicles per household and young people remaining longer at home with parents. Future developments should be scrutinised carefully for levels of off street parking.

Street Furniture

Although it would not be practicable to carry out major retrospective work, when signage is being replaced it is recommended that signage should, wherever possible, be combined, and its need be closely questioned.

Street name combined with 'cul de sac' signage.

Verges and Ditches

Verges:

Although not privately owned by either the property owner or Essex Highways, many householders voluntarily maintain the verges outside their homes. Indeed, many take the trouble to look after considerable distances of grass verge which is highly commendable.

Ditches:

Many ditches are well maintained and consequently drain efficiently but there are also instances where landowners do very little maintenance. Consequently, some ditches around the village are becoming silted up and hedges overgrown which impairs maintenance of the ditch. At the open weekend, 2 residents expressed concern that their gardens were in danger of becoming waterlogged due to an absentee landowner neglecting the ditches adjacent to their property.

Utilities

There is a strong majority feeling in our village which does not wish to see any extension of street lighting.

6. Protection, Enhancement and Development

Protection, Enhancement & Development

Great Totham is a village surrounded by larger settlements in an area where there is continuing demand for housing. The Survey undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process showed that residents cherish its rural character, open landscape and views. There was an acceptance of modest developments within settlement boundaries with an emphasis on housing for young families and older residents.

The aim must be to provide housing for expressed local needs while retaining the character which brings people to live here. All age groups need to be catered for if our village is to thrive. Our public consultation has given a clear steer on this.

Great Totham is not a conventionally pretty village. Its growth has been haphazard and as a result buildings of various periods and styles jostle together. But that does not mean it is without character and, even if that character is hard to define, it is precious to those who live here and it needs to be cared for. This requires interest and vigilance on the part of planners, elected representatives and residents.

Guidance to Residents

- When thinking of changes to property exteriors and details – building, garden or frontage – consider their visual impact.
- Consider the scale, character of changes, how they may affect neighbours and the immediate vicinity.

New Development

- Should respect the natural and historic environment, village character and landscape in its scale, design and materials.
- 'In fill' should be appropriate in scale and appearance and show 'Good Manners' to existing neighbours.
- Existing properties should be considered for sympathetic restoration or adaptive re-use.
- Landscaping and open space for new schemes should be as important as building finishes.
- Impact of development on identified and valued views must be considered.
- Development should be designed so that lighting minimises the impact on the 'dark skies' of Great Totham
- Vehicle and pedestrian access should be open and linked carefully to existing networks.
- Development should avoid worsening traffic issues in problem areas such as that adjacent to the village school and on the B1022.
- Consideration of the effect on wildlife and the natural environment of all development should be automatic with particular reference to green spaces, woodland and wildlife corridors.

7. Thanks and acknowledgments

This Village Design Statement has been produced by a Sub-Group of the Great Totham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, Kevin Bennett, Andrew Boorman, Martin Flook, Roy McPherson, Paul Mutton & Graham Thorne. Thanks also to Chris Bowden, Navigus Planning for advice and support, Clive Potter, Parish Clerk, for advice and information and Philip Smith for historic photographs.