

# Toppesfield & Gainsford End **Neighbourhood Plan**





<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Toppesfield &amp; Gainsford End Today and in the Future</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1	Toppesfield & Gainsford End Today	14
<b>3</b>	<b>The Future of Toppesfield &amp; Gainsford End</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1	Heritage	20
3.2	Natural Environment	22
3.3	Climate change & Energy	23
3.4	Housing	23
3.5	Community and Leisure Facilities	24
3.6	The Rural Economy	34
3.7	The Design Character of Toppesfield & Gainsford End	34
<b>4</b>	<b>Land Use Planning Policies</b>	<b>36</b>
	Introduction	38
TOP 1	Housing	38
TOP 2	Affordable Housing – Meeting Local Needs	38
TOP 3	Development Principles and Design of New Development	39
TOP 4	Design Principles	40
TOP 5	Materials	41
TOP 6	New Extensions	41
TOP 7	Heritage	42
TOP 8	Leisure, Community, Welfare and Health	42
TOP 9	Employment	43
TOP 10	Recreational Open Space	43
TOP 11	Front Gardens	43
TOP 12	Landscape and Key Ecological Features	44
TOP 13	Key Views and Connectivity with the Countryside	44
TOP 14	Wethersfield Airbase	45
<b>5</b>	<b>Community Actions to Achieve Toppesfield &amp; Gainsford End Neighbourhood Plan Vision</b>	<b>46</b>
5.1	Community and Leisure Facilities	48
5.2	Transport, Road Safety, Highways and Parking	49
5.3	Footpaths and Public Access to the Countryside	49
5.4	Environment, Energy and Carbon Footprint	50
5.5	Housing	50
<b>6</b>	<b>Appendices</b>	<b>50</b>









# Introduction



# 1 Introduction

- 1.1** Neighbourhood Planning was introduced in 2011 under the Localism Act. It is designed to give communities power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.
- 1.2** This Plan covers the area of Toppesfield Parish which includes the hamlet of Gainsford End. The neighbourhood plan area was designated by Braintree District Council on 7th August 2019. It covers the period 2023 to 2038. The Plan area is shown on the map below and includes that part of the parish located within the boundary of the former Wethersfield USAF air base..
- 1.3** A Neighbourhood Plan Group has been set up by the Parish Council to oversee the preparation of the Plan. Background evidence relating to housing needs, landscape, character and design has been prepared. Consultation with the local community has also been carried out, including a questionnaire survey. This is the first draft of the Plan (known as the Regulation 14 Plan) on which public consultation is being carried out. The Parish Council will consider the comments made and decide what changes need to be made to the Plan. A second draft of the Plan will then be prepared (known as the Regulation 16 Plan) which will be submitted to Braintree District Council. The Council will appoint an independent Inspector to examine the Plan. The Inspector will assess whether the Plan meets basic conditions and may recommend modifications to the Plan. The Plan will then be subject to a local referendum. If successful at referendum the Plan will then be “made” (i.e. adopted) by Braintree District Council. It then becomes part of the Development Plan for the area and will be used by the District Council to help make decisions on planning applications in the area.
- 1.4** As indicated above a neighbourhood plan must meet several basic conditions if it is to pass examination and proceed to referendum and adoption. Generally, these are:
- The Plan must have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
  - The Plan must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development:
  - The Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area
  - The Plan does not breach and is otherwise compatible with regulations designed to protect the environment and habitats
  - The Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (these relate to the impact of the Plan on designated habitat sites).
- 1.5** This Draft Plan has been prepared in the light of these basic conditions to ensure that it progresses successfully through the different stages of plan making. The Plan covers the 15-year period from 2023 to 2038. It is anticipated that it will be reviewed periodically. Further details of the national and local planning framework are set out below.  
National and Local Planning Policies
- 1.6** As indicated above the Plan must have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The principal national planning policy document is the National Planning Policy Framework, the latest version of which was published in July 2021.



Toppesfield Neighborhood Plan Area



**1.7** The Plan must also be in conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area. The main development plan document of relevance to this neighbourhood plan is the Braintree Local Plan 2033. This sets out how Braintree District will develop and grow between now and 2033. It identifies the most sustainable locations to deliver local housing needs and supporting infrastructure, such as employment, community facilities, retail, leisure and transport. Preserving and enhancing our treasured heritage and character, the local environment, green spaces and tackling climate change is central to the plan. It allocates land for appropriate development, sets out strategic planning policies and an overall strategy to guide decisions on the location, pattern, scale, and quality of development and/or changes in the way land and buildings are used.

**1.8** The Local Plan 2033 is in 2 sections. Section 1 was adopted on 22nd February 2021. Section 2 was adopted on 25th July 2022. The Local Plan covers the period to 2033 and supersedes the Local Plan Review (2005) and the Core Strategy (2011).

**1.9** The Local Plan classifies Toppesfield as a third-tier village. These are described in the Plan as:

“These are the smallest villages in the District and lack most of the facilities required to meet day to day needs. They often have very poor public transport links and travel by private vehicle is usually required. When considering the tests of sustainable development, these will not normally be met by development within a third-tier village.”

The Local Plan includes an Inset Map for Toppesfield, which, among other things, defines a development boundary for the village. This is included at Appendix ..

**1.10** The Local Plan does not define a development boundary or include an Inset Map for Gainsford End. Instead, it is regarded as part of the Countryside. The Plan states:

“All other areas of the District, including hamlets and small groups of homes, which are outside development boundaries are considered to be within the countryside. In order to protect the intrinsic beauty of the countryside, development here is normally restricted to that which supports countryside use”

**1.11** The Essex Waste and Minerals Local Plans also form part of the Development Plan for the area. The Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan (WLP) was adopted in July 2017. It covers the period from 2017 to 2032. It sets out where and how waste management developments can occur and contains the policies against which waste management applications are assessed. The Essex Minerals Local Plan 2014 sets out proposals and policies for the extraction of minerals in Essex. A small area to the east of the Parish is shown as being within a minerals safeguarding area in the Minerals Local Plan. Otherwise, neither the Waste Local Plan nor the Minerals Local Plan include specific policies or proposals relating to Toppesfield.

## **1.12 Background to Plan**

A decision to prepare a neighbourhood plan was taken by the Parish Council in January 2019. The Parish Council was concerned to ensure that the village continues to be a viable and sustainable community in future whilst being cognisant of the local environment. There was also a desire to continue a modest level of housing growth to meet local needs and to sustain the population of the village. The Council was also concerned that the Plan should respond to current issues relating to energy and climate change.





### 1.13 Public Engagement

Community engagement in the preparation of this Plan so far has included an initial launch of the plan with an outline of what it entails. A landscape character assessment and housing needs survey was commissioned. The results were presented at a meeting which was attended by approximately 50 households in the neighbourhood. The numbers were somewhat limited by COVID. A questionnaire was prepared and distributed to the neighbourhood and 40? Responses were received. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in appendix xx with a tabulation of the results. The questionnaire asked residents about their view on the following issues.

- Housing
- The environment
- The visual character of the village
- Sustainable developments
- Village amenities
- Transport and Traffic management
- Local Businesses
- Changing Working habits
- Community Infrastructure

The results from each of the topics have been incorporated into the following plan.

The key take way from the consultation was the that the villages should continue to retain and build on the community spirit that has helped to develop a number of valuable community projects in the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood has expressed considerable appetite for new community driven initiatives

## 1.14 Evidence Base

We have commissioned specialist reports to ensure a sound evidence base for the Plan as follows:

- Toppesfield and Gainsford End Housing Needs Survey – Rural Community Council of Essex – July 2020
- Toppesfield Landscape Character Assessment – Wynne Williams Associates – April 2020
- Toppesfield Design Guidelines and Codes – Aecom/Locality August 2021

## 1.15 Structure of Plan

The structure of the rest of this document is as follows:

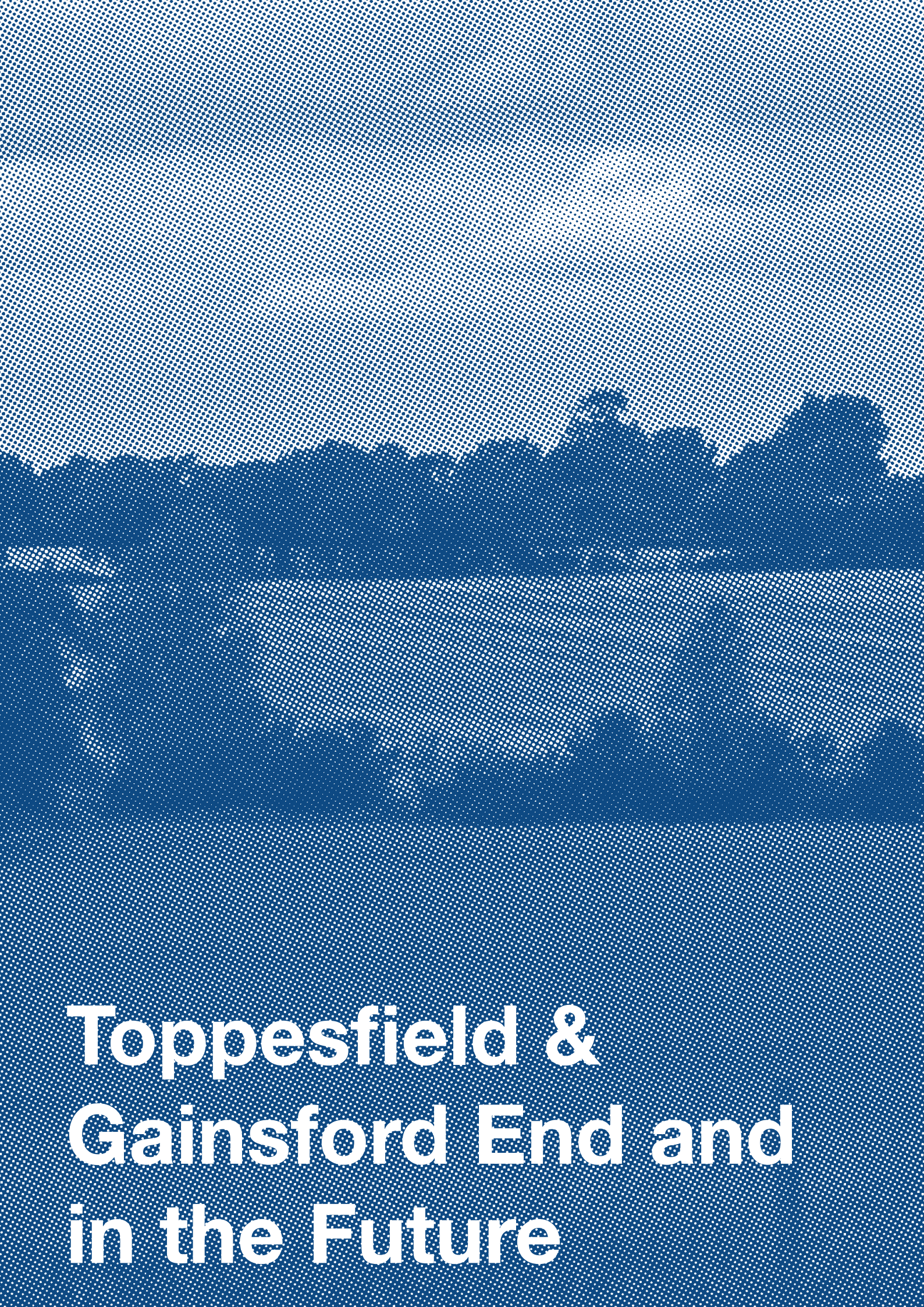
- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Section 2 | gives an overview of Toppesfield and Gainsford End to-day, our vision for the area and the objectives for the different policy areas listed below                     |
| Section 3 | provides a stocktake of the issues facing us in key areas   |
| Section 4 | sets out the land use policies we are proposing for each of these areas   |
| Section 5 | sets out other actions to take in the local community to achieve objectives not directly relating to land use which have emerged during the preparation of this Plan. |











# **Toppesfield & Gainsford End and in the Future**



## 2 Toppesfield & Gainsford End

### 2.1 Toppesfield & Gainsford End Today

In this section we describe Toppesfield and Gainsford End as they are today and the vision that we have for the future based upon the:

- Toppesfield and Gainsford End Housing Needs Survey – Rural Community Council of Essex – July 2020
- Toppesfield Landscape Character Assessment – Wynne Williams Associates – April 2020
- Toppesfield Design Guidelines and Codes – Aecom/Locality August 2021
- The Toppesfield and Gainsford End Survey

Toppesfield and Gainsford End are a village and hamlet respectively in the North Essex Countryside between Braintree to the south and Haverhill to the north. Historically they were agricultural settlements, with the main employment opportunities being in farming or associated activities. A small part of the parish incorporates a part of the Wethersfield airfield site.

Historically the villages were primarily farming communities with the usual rural enterprises clustered round the village centre. They included several public houses and a village shop plus a smithy and a number of windmills.





### 2.1.1

Most of the parish is within the Stambourne Farmland Plateau which is bisected by Toppesfield Brook, a tributary of the River Colne which joins the main river to the east at Great Yeldham. The main characteristics of the landscape are:

- Relatively open and gently undulating arable land
- Predominantly agricultural land bounded by species rich hedgerows with trees and ditches
- Narrow country lanes bounded by grass verges and ditches

Berwick Hall Woods are classified as ancient woodland. Wethersfield Airfield is to the south of the area and dominates views here. A network of pylons dissects the landscape of the Colne Valley. The Parish contains two local wildlife sites: Berwick Hall Woods and Yeldham Station Marsh.



### 2.1.2

Toppesfield has developed in a cruciform shape centred around the junction of the Street and Church Lane with linear development spreading north along Stambourne Road, west along Park Lane, south along the Street and the Causeway and east along Church Lane. Gainsford End is a hamlet to the south of the Parish

Toppesfield and Gainsford End have retained their historical village integrity as development in recent years has been modest and fortunately has predominantly worked with integrating itself in to the existing village structure.



- 2.1.3** The population of Toppesfield Parish at the time of the 2021 Census was 490. This is a reduction from 507 in 2011 and 533 in 2001. The Parish has a more elderly population than the UK and Braintree District with 20% of the population aged 65 and over at the time of the 2011 Census compared with 17% in the District as a whole. In 2011 85% of houses were owner occupied with 8% social rented and 6% privately rented. As at March 2022 there were 20 housing association homes to rent in Toppesfield.



- 2.1.4** There has been a very low level of housing growth over the last ten years with 4 dwellings completed in the Parish between 2012 and 2022. There are a further 4 dwellings with planning permission expected to be constructed between 2022 and 2028.
- 2.1.5** Toppesfield has a conservation area centred at the crossroads of Park Lane, The Street and Church Lane. There are 40 listed buildings in the Parish with 14 in the village itself, with 3 more at Gainsford End and others scattered around the Parish. The Parish Church of St. Margaret of Antioch is Grade 1 listed.
- 2.1.6** For a village of its size Toppesfield has a good range of local services and facilities which the local community has protected and nurtured. These include the village shop and pub which are community run and the Pumphouse brewery. The village also has a village hall and playing field. The village also has a successful primary school and a thriving nursery, which operates out of the village hall.













# The Future of Toppesfield & Gainsford End



### 3.1 Heritage

The pattern of the villages was established by the time of that the Chapman and Andre Map of Essex was drawn up in 1777. Many of the scattered farmsteads which are in the parish today have their origins from manors dating from 1066 onwards. Sidney G Read's 'Glimpses of the Past of the Village of Toppesfield, North Essex' (1990) identifies that there were several manors established in the parish between 1066 and the 13th century. Camoys (no longer in existence), Berwick (now Berwick Hall), Husses (now Hoses), Cust Hall and Gainsford Hall were recorded in the parish. The existing houses at Berwick Hall, Bradfields, Cust Hall and Hoses mostly date from 16th century, as do many other dwellings and buildings in the parish. Sidney G Read identifies Meads, Olivers, Quys, Elms, Mill House, Hurst, Hill Farm, Hurrels and many other properties outside of the settlements which date from this period, as well as buildings within Toppesfield and Gainsford End.

There is a long history of education in the village dating back to 1700. The current school was built in 1857 by land given by the Lord of the Manor of Berwick and Scotneys.





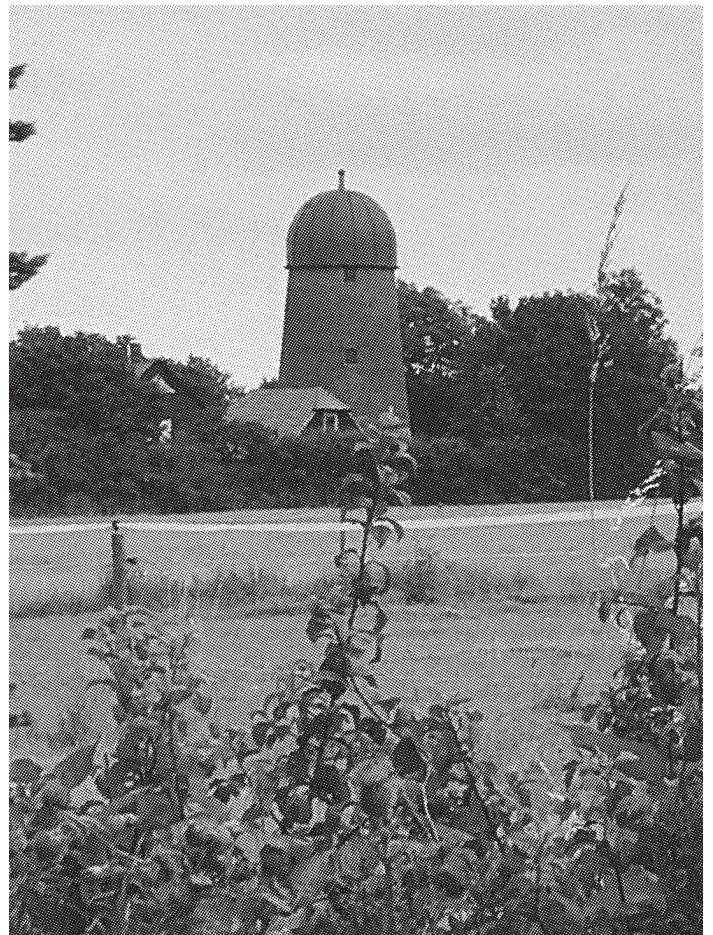
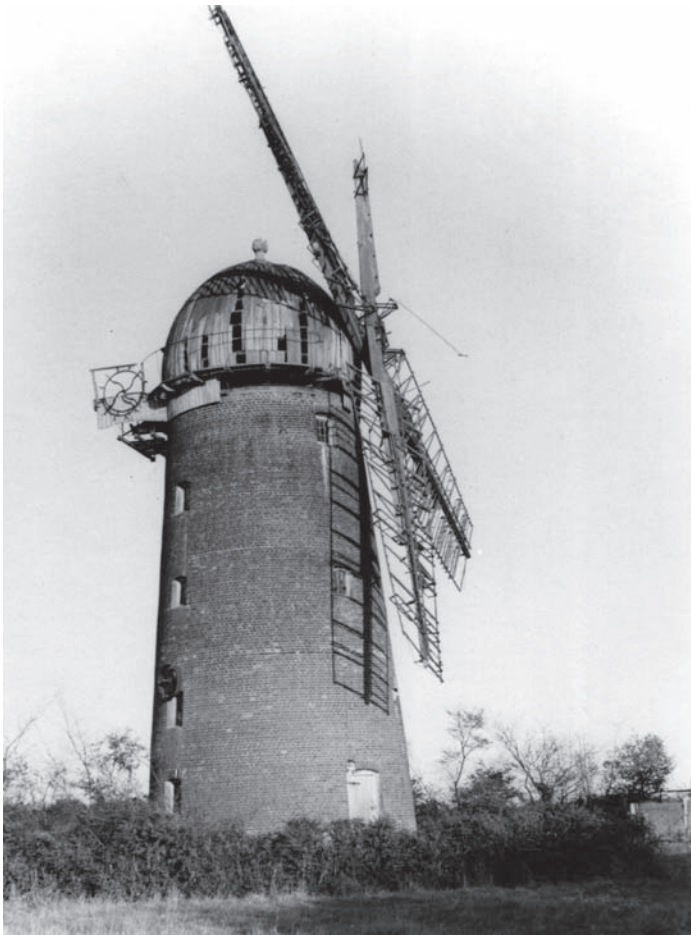
The first reference to a windmill in Toppesfield was in 1252 where it was recorded that a yearly rent of 20 shillings was paid to the Prior of Stoke. It is believed that the it was demolished circa 1880's. The windmill in Gainsford End was built in 1869 and is one of the last windmills to be built in Essex. It was unusual in that milling could be powered by a steam engine on windless days. It is believed that it was 'retired' from service in the 1920's and in more recent times has been developed into a rather interesting home.

Until the arrival of surfaced roads in the 19th century the horse was king for transport. As few people could afford a horse, travel outside of the local communities was rare. A significant development was the arrival of the Colne Valley Railway with a station in Great Yeldham which was only 2 miles away. It was suddenly possible to make a day trip to London.

The importance of this for the landscape character of the parish is that the presence of the historical manor houses, scattered dwellings and core buildings within the settlements which date from more than 500 years ago provide a sense of history and depth of time to the landscape. Many of the buildings remain unchanged in appearance and have been listed to protect them as heritage assets. This distribution of listed buildings indicates that they are an influence on the character across the whole of the parish

Heritage assets including 41 listed building and the conservation area in the centre of Toppesfield The church, St Margret's, is listed Grade 1. The majority of the listed buildings are maintained to a very reasonable standard

The conservation area in the centre of Toppesfield village has maintained it historical integrity and links to the past. Very little of recent developments detract from the inherent cohesion of the village.



## 3.2 Natural Environment

The Parish is surrounded by open countryside in a largely rural landscape. It is located within National Character Area (NCA) 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (NE515).

Due to the small size of the settlements the Parish does not have many formal open and green spaces, although the main village has a church yard and school grounds and a playing field. Various housing have views over open fields particularly neighbouring Berwick Hall. Access to open countryside is easily available from any point in both villages

The majority of the land in the parish is in arable agricultural use with fields enclosed by low hedges, some of which are ancient and pre-modern hedgerows (*Source: [magic.defra.gov.uk](http://magic.defra.gov.uk)*). There are scattered areas of woodland, the largest of which, Berwick Hall Wood, is classified as an ancient woodland. A vineyard has been established on Harrow Hill since 2012. Wethersfield Airfield is located to the south of Gainsford End. The airfield is partly within the parish boundary and is an exception in terms of land use, bringing 20th century land uses into the parish. The parish is bisected by two overhead power lines running east-west across the landscape to the south of Toppesfield. There is little development which is larger than the domestic properties which make up the villages and scattered farmsteads and cottages (aside from the airfield and a few larger agricultural and workshop buildings).

### 3.2.1 Assessment of the parish – Landscape sensitivity

A full sensitivity assessment of the four identified landscape character types can be found in the character assessment document. Each area was assessed for its sensitivity to potential future small-scale residential development, with varying levels of sensitivity identified. Each character area is summarised below.

### 3.2.2 Stambourne Farmland Plateau

The landscape character of the Stambourne Farmland Plateau is discernibly intact with relatively few intrusions. There are strong existing patterns for land use, vegetation, and settlement, making it a landscape with high sensitivity to change. There may be scope for limited small-scale housing or individual farmstead development. The location and appearance of such development would need very careful consideration.

### 3.2.3 The Colne River Valley

The open nature of the sloping valley sides of this character area make it very sensitive to future development. To integrate with existing settlement character, any proposed development would need to be limited to single farmstead-style dwellings. Even with this in mind, there are limited locations suitable for such a development without causing unacceptable visual effects.

### 3.2.4 Ancient Woodland

Development within the ancient woodland would cause irreversible visual and character harm. It is the most sensitive landscape within the parish and should be conserved and enhanced. It is also important to consider the potential detrimental effects that development within the vicinity of the woodland would cause.

There are 2 designated Essex wildlife sites in the Parish - the Berwick Hall Woodland and the Yeldham Station Marsh which is partly in Toppesfield and partly in Great Yeldham.



### 3.3 Climate Change and Energy

Fortunately, as the name implies Toppesfield is predominantly on a hill as is Gainsford End which means that although we have local flooding most of this is in the surrounding valleys rather than in the village properties themselves. This does not mean that we can be complacent in relation to climate change but the predominant impact is primarily on transport infrastructure due to flooding.

The majority of houses in both villages are heated by oil although there has been a steady adoption of air sourced heat pumps by a number of residents. The parish is aware that, as is the case with the rest of the UK, should we have a wholesale switch to heat pumps there could be a considerable impact on the grids ability to supply and upgrade. A number of local initiatives are being investigated for the future.

### 3.4 Housing

#### **An analysis of type of housing for the community**

A housing needs survey was undertaken in 2020 with the aim of determining the existing and future levels of housing need for local people. All households in the Parish received a survey form to complete and return together with an option to complete and return the survey online. The key findings of the survey were:

- The survey had a response rate of 35% (above the average for Essex which is 25%)
- There was good support for a small development, with 76% stating they would be supportive of a small development (4-8 homes) of primarily affordable housing for local people
- There was general support for housing for the local community, more particularly the younger generation and their families, whilst hoping that any development would not be too large and unsympathetic to its surroundings
- In Part 1 of the survey, 17 respondents (23%) indicated that they had a need to move to alternative accommodation. The main reason respondents had a desire to move to alternative accommodation was to set up their first/independent home
- Two-bedroomed dwellings were the most preferred property size.

- 3.4.1** There is therefore evidence to support small-scale housing development in the village to meet local need and to help to address the declining and ageing population.

#### What type of housing do you believe the parish would benefit from ?



The full analysis can be found in Housing need survey.

- 3.4.2** As indicated in the introduction there has been a low level of new development in Toppesfield Parish over the last ten years. The historic low levels of growth have impacted on the local population which has fallen from 533 in 2001 to 490 in 2021. The low levels of development and falling population means that it is more difficult to sustain local services and facilities. It is also more difficult to meet local housing needs and results in an ageing population.

- 3.4.3** As a very rural village with the associated limited transport infrastructure there is a limit to the level of development that could be supported by the village

The key ‘takeaway’ from the consultation was that there was support for small new developments which respected the character and integrity of the villages as against any larger scale housing estate. There was also recognition that it was important that any development was cognisant of the needs of accommodation for younger people which will protect the viability of the village and the local school.

### 3.5 Community and Leisure Facilities

The neighbourhood has thriving community led businesses which creates significant engagement for residents in the villages. These businesses create a significant level of social cohesion within the community and every attempt will be made to continue to maintain their value and success.



### 3.5.1 The School

The school occupies an almost idyllic location at the end of a dead-end road. The buildings comprise of the original old school and a new hall which was built in the last ten years.

St Margaret's Primary School is a Voluntary Controlled Church of England school, founded in 1857. It has close links with St. Margaret's Church, which is next door to the school.



It is mainly built of Victorian red brick, with a modern dining and sports hall attached at the rear of the main building, including a purpose-built kitchen. There is a separate Reception Class and play area, also to the rear of the main building. Within the main building there are 3 classrooms, a nurture room, resource area and library, offices and staff room. The school has a small playing field for sports activities. This is also available for use by village groups for a hiring fee. For example, the village picnic to celebrate the King's coronation was held here in May 2023.

Currently the number of children attending the school is approximately 70 and there is capacity for about 90 children, which would be a sustainable number. Historically pupils came only from Toppesfield village, then from the late 1950s and early 60s from Stambourne as well, following the closure of their school. Pupils now come from a variety of villages around Toppesfield, mostly by car. This causes some congestion for a short period at the beginning and end of the school day and the lack of parking is particularly noticeable at those times.

St Margaret's Primary, Toppesfield, rated good by Ofsted. The school has been described as a “calm and happy place” which children are “proud to attend” in a report from Ofsted. The education watchdog inspected St Margaret's Primary School, in Toppesfield, where it was given a good rating in every sector.

Challenges which the school faces include

- Diminishing support from local and national Government for small schools;
- Insufficient numbers of local primary age children;
- Lack of suitable housing for staff;
- Car parking availability;
- Lack of toilets in the school hall, which makes it more difficult to let to outside groups on a regular basis.

In order to maintain and develop this vital part of village life, the school plans to make the hall accessible for sports and outside groups (e.g. fitness, dance etc) and increase marketing activities to attract increased pupil numbers.

Having a good Primary School is an essential component of village life. It both attracts and maintains young families living in the village, thus ensuring a healthy mix of ages and support for other facilities.





### 3.5.2 The village shop

In past years there were three shops, one of which included post office but gradually over time these closed, the final one in mid-2001. When this shut, it was decided to build a purpose-designed shop attached to the village hall. Funds were raised, grants procured and parishioners invited to become members of the Industrial & Provident Society (now a Community Benefit Society) established to run the project. To keep some basic facilities in the village while the funds were raised and the new shop built a portacabin was placed in the centre of the village. This was originally to be for six months but in the end it was there for sixteen months!

In October 2002 the new shop, with full time post office, was opened. The shop was run by a committee and staffed by others all of whom were volunteers. This is so to this day.

The aim of the shop was to provide a wide range of goods at competitive prices and to source as much as we could from local suppliers. As time has gone on, new lines have been introduced, and most recently a café has been established in the garden area and a licence was obtained to sell alcohol – including the beers and wines produced in the parish.

When the new shop first opened, the post office was operated full time by a sub-postmaster or postmistress. As time went the Post Office reduced the hours to mornings only and eventually an outreach post office was set up and we now have a Post Office facility only on Wednesday morning.

During Covid lock downs, the shop became lifeline for the village. As well as personal service at the shop door we set up a delivery service to people who were house bound. All through lock down our post office facility was available.

The Rules by which the shop operates require that trading surpluses can be used for only two purposes – reinvestment in the shop (new equipment, maintenance etc) and for the support of not-for-profit organisations in the parish. Over the years grants have been awarded to the following village organisations: Toppesfield Primary School for leavers event, the sensory garden and providing milk for reception class; the Cricket club for equipment; Toppesfield Community Pub for garden play equipment and cooking equipment; St Margaret's parish church for new ropes for the bells and grass cutting; Pumphouse Community Brewery, for equipment; Toppesfield Village Hall for redecoration; and a contribution to Toppesfield Parish Council for a tree planting programme.

Toppesfield Community Shop aims to keep providing more facilities and products for sale to improve the service to and the wellbeing of the community. It truly is the village hub providing most importantly a listening ear, as well as goods and services. Turnover of the shop has increased by more than 50% since pre-covid times, an indication of its importance to the village and its sustainability.



### 3.5.3 The Village Hall

The Hall opened in 1961 and was leased by the Parish Council (the freeholder) to the Village Hall (a registered Charity) for 99 years. A management committee oversees the upkeep of the building and it's grounds. The building incorporates the main hall area plus a stage, kitchen, toilets, storage rooms plus storage space in the loft. There is a fair size garden at the rear and car parking in the front of the building. The kitchen is fully equipped and can cater for most functions and has done over many years. The RCCE oversees the Village Hall Committee, who are the Trustees, to make sure the Committee do the job they are elected to do.

The hall is available for hire for all sorts of events and over the years everything from dances to funeral wakes have been held. Any enquiries made to the Village Hall Committee will be considered and, if possible, hired out. A charge is made to hirers in order to maintain the hall. At the moment each weekday the hall is hired out to the Pre-school children many of whom will in turn attend the Village CofE Voluntary Controlled primary school.

Covid had a large impact on the clubs and organisations that used to hire the hall in the evenings. However many events are now being held again, e.g. the Flower Show and the Church Supper Auction plus a monthly market. Meetings of the parish council and committees of village organisations, AGMs and elections are also held.

Recent improvements such as updating the chair and table storage, instant hot water, decoration and maintenance plus regular deep cleaning as well as weekly cleaning. The heating and lighting systems have been updated giving the hall a warm and comfortable atmosphere. Recently the Village Hall Committee have held three Warm Hub coffee mornings where food and drinks were provided free of charge. The VHC also provided a Platinum Jubilee Lunch to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the late Queen's reign, once again free to the villagers.

Looking to the future, the Village Hall will be a safe haven if needed in any emergency and we are hoping that the clubs will continue to return and new ones start up.





#### 3.5.4 The village pub

Toppesfield's only remaining village pub is the Green Man in Church Lane. Over the last thirty years there has been a steady decline in the number of pubs, especially in more remote rural areas. The Green Man had been owned by Greene King but was sold to Admiral Taverns, who put it on the market in 2011. There was a serious risk that it might be closed, so a group of residents put together a plan for the village to buy it as a community asset. Over 150 villagers, friends and family subscribed to a new social enterprise company, Toppesfield Community Pub Limited (TCP), and on 7th December 2012 enough money had been raised to purchase the Green Man. This was covered live by BBC's Look East the same evening. It was one of the first community owned pubs in England, helping to set a trend which has continued ever since.

TCP leases the pub to a tenant who is responsible for day to day business, according to the terms of the lease which specifies an obligation to provide community focussed activities. It is also the prime outlet for the beer produced by its sister community asset Pumphouse, which rents part of the Green Man barn.

In the ten years since its acquisition there have been a number of tenants, some better than others, and the Covid pandemic had a serious effect on trade because of lockdowns and customers' wariness of crowded spaces. Although TCP's finances have been sorely tested at times the Green Man has remained open, thus achieving the original primary objective in creating this community asset.

Our present tenants are now in their second year and the pub is seen as a popular, well-run business, which attracts customers of all ages from the village and surrounding areas, and is the invaluable hub of Toppesfield social life.

### 3.5.5 The Brewery

#### Our story

Pumphouse was created by a group of Toppesfield & Gainsford End residents in 2015, to support the future of the community owned Green Man, by providing high quality traditional real ales at competitive prices. That was the first objective. In addition Pumphouse aimed to provide rural employment, ample volunteering opportunities and to help improve social cohesion. Working to keep the countryside alive, bringing communities together and producing great beer remain our priorities today. Pumphouse is owned by over 100 (predominantly local) shareholders. It is a Community Benefit Society and is not-for-profit. Any surpluses can only be reinvested in the brewery or distributed to the wider community.



#### Our partners

We have been supported by many partners including Braintree District Council, Essex County Council, the Plunkett Foundation and the Prince's Countryside Fund. Pumphouse has featured on BBC's 'Look East', ITV Anglia News, Radio 4's 'Open Country', in Waitrose Weekend magazine and many times in the local media. Pumphouse beers are available from a select range of pubs, clubs and venues, including of course our very own Green Man in Toppesfield. The Essex Pub of the Year, the Railway Arms at Saffron Walden, has chosen Pumphouse to brew its bespoke house bitter Railway Ale. We can proudly say 'We brew the beer for the Pub of the Year'. Pumphouse also supplies many events, including weddings, throughout the year.

#### Our beers

We regularly brew a full range of real ales, from light and refreshing Pale Ockober to dark and complex 19 Elms, and everything else in between. In addition our Head Brewer, Aaron Osborne, produces seasonal specials, for example at Christmas and for the Coronation.

#### Our neighbourhood

Pumphouse is one third of Toppesfield's unique community triumvirate - shop, pub and brewery. While we need to market our beers widely in order to be successful, we will always try to give special assistance to our neighbours and local organisations. Draught and bottled beers can be purchased direct from the brewery at trade prices. As at March 2023 that means as little as £1.16 for a pint of artisan, traditional real ale!



### **Our future**

We will continue to need committee members, volunteers (especially volunteers!) and shareholders to help ensure the future of Pumphouse Community Brewery. We will aim to grow our reputation and sales and for more and more people to enjoy our beers. Pumphouse is at the very heart of Toppesfield's community activities. It is an intrinsic part of what makes our neighbourhood so special.

### **3.5.6 The nursery Little Chestnuts**

Little Chestnuts Pre-school has been established in Toppesfield since 1974 when it first opened as a playgroup. It then developed into the Pre-school we are now for children aged 2-5 years. We are based in Toppesfield Village Hall and are open Monday to Friday 8.30am-3pm, term time only. Recently we have been providing child care during the August holidays to help working parents and children with additional needs to provide continuity in their care. We are a registered charity, who's trustees are parents and careers of the children that are registered to the setting. The trustees or committee are responsible for the recruitment of staff, and ensuring all policies, procedures, and regulations are adhered to by the Manager and all staff. They are also responsible for organising fundraising events to raise money for new toys, equipment, and outings.

We are registered and regulated by Ofsted which means we are able to accept funding for 2, 3 and 4 year olds, including 30 hours funding for 3-4 year olds. We can have up to 24 children in a session and at the moment we employ 6 members of staff, 4 of these being local people. We provide care for children from Toppesfield and the surrounding area, as far as Halstead and Sturmer. At Little Chestnuts the children learn and develop through play and forming friendships. We pride ourselves in developing our practice to not only support our children but also their families. This could be by offering flexible hours or arranging additional support for any areas of learning and development. We also aim to introduce those new to the area or to parenthood to other families and groups to provide support and friendships. We also enjoy lots of walks around the village, visits to our allotment, yoga, cooking and outside discovery activities.

### **3.5.7 The Church**

#### **St Margaret of Antioch Parish Church**

St Margaret's was probably founded in Saxon or early Norman times, but much of the building dates from the 14th century and is listed Grade 1. The present tower was constructed in 1699. Although changes to the interior took place in the 19th and 20th centuries the church is simply appointed in keeping with its style of worship.

The church is in fairly good condition. Its upkeep is the responsibility of the Parochial Church Council, who have to find the funds necessary to maintain it. Expenditure on the fabric has been limited since the lockdown in 2020. There was a new Quinquennial inspection in Nov 2022, and plans are beginning to be made to carry out required work as finances allow.

The churchyard contains a stone War Memorial in honour of those who lost their lives in the two World Wars of the twentieth century. It is also a formal War Graves location.

A major project in recent years has been the restoration of St Margaret's bells. There is now a peal of eight bells with a dedicated ringing chamber, all completed in 2008 at a cost of £185,000. The church attracts ringers from around the country.

For church administration the parish of Toppesfield is part of the Hedinghams and Upper Colne Benefice, along with Great and Little Yeldham, Stambourne, Tilbury-Juxta-Clare, Castle and Sible Hedingham.

The church is open to visitors every day, and services are held almost every week. The congregation at weekly services is small and aging, but seasonal and festival services are well attended and there are occasional funerals and weddings. The churchyard is still open for burials. A team of volunteers do an excellent job keeping the churchyard tidy.

The church maintains close links with the school. There is a church representative on the Board of Governors, the school holds services in church at the end of each term and at the leavers service in July each leaver is presented with a bible.

In the last two years Rev Caroline Brown has been assigned to the parish as curate, concentrating on family activities through Messy Church, liaison with the school, and pastoral work. We now have a register of over 20 families who we contact about Messy Church and other events.

Many of the church's activities apart from Sunday worship revolve around fundraising. As well as raising much needed money, these events provide a focus for community life and foster good relationships between the church and the village community, as almost all villagers are involved as helpers or customers.

### **3.5.8 The Playing Fields**

- The parish has two playing fields available to residents – one in Toppesfield village, behind the school and the other in Gainsford End. The field in Toppesfield was gifted to the parish by a local landowner in the late 1940s. It is bounded by trees on the eastern and western boundaries and the school to the north. Southwards there is a largely open and extensive view over the valley created by Toppesfield Brook, a feeder to the River Colne.
- For many years there was an active football club using the field and some traditional play equipment in the north-western corner. Adjacent to the school boundary was a remaining war-time bomb shelter, subsequently used as changing facilities for the football club until it was converted into a smarter pavilion.
- The football club ceased running more than 20 years ago but one set of full-size posts and a pair of portable 5-a-side goals are on the field.
- Over the past 10 years a cricket club has been in existence and a cricket square has been marked out and maintained by the cricket club. A small number of games have been played each summer in recent years. The future of the cricket team is uncertain at the current time. The club has used the pavilion for storing equipment and as changing rooms. A practice cricket net is located at the north-eastern corner
- Over the years the play equipment has been periodically repaired and/or replaced and currently comprises a set of swings, a slide and some climbing frames.
- To the eastern side of the pavilion, a pétanque court was constructed and is open to all. It is used mainly in the summer months and for social rather than competitive playing.
- The playing field is occasionally used for larger events; for example, in 2022 it hosted a 'big-tent' circus as a fundraising exercise by the Little Chestnuts Pre-school.
- The parish council is currently undertaking an exercise to determine what could be done to enhance the playing field and its equipment for all sections of the community. As ever, funding for such plans will be critical; play equipment and is very expensive.





- In Gainsford End, there is a small playing field which was also donated to the parish many years ago by another local landowner. The field is bounded by trees and hedgerows and is in a secluded location. There is only a swing in the park which is otherwise laid to grass. Three disease-resistant elm trees, part of the WWI 19 Elms Commemoration Project are planted in the field. Consideration is being given by the parish council as to what, if any, improvements should be made in the playing field.

## 3.6 The Rural Economy

Historically a significant number of the working population from Toppesfield and Gainsford End would have been involved in farming and, during the Victorian era, straw plaiting. As with all farming in the UK, this has dropped dramatically because of mechanisation, a drive to greater efficiencies and changing fashions. By far the largest part of the parish area is still intensively farmed across three farming businesses, of which only one is farmed by local farmers. A recent addition to the parish is the successful Bradfields Vineyard, which has won several awards for its wines and is in the process of increasing its production.

The vineyard is also a tourist destination providing luxury accommodation overlooking the vines. New accommodation possibilities have recently opened at Toppesfield Hall, where City to Country Retreat offers cabins, glamping and a holiday house for rent. Tourism is a growing business throughout the Braintree district and it is likely this will increase and bring greater business and employment opportunities to the village in the future.

The local villages support a number of small, frequently one-person, local enterprises and a number of people commute to the local towns for work. It has become noticeable since the pandemic that there has been an increase of people working from home and the parish council is cognisant of this issue when planning for future facilities in the villages.

Gainsford End has the Gainsford End Workshop for car maintenance which has grown significantly over recent years. Barnard Farms also supports a thriving community of workshops which primarily operate in the auto trade.

In Toppesfield, as well as the social enterprises already identified, there is Lifestyles, a roofing supplies company and a number of other enterprises are also based adjacent to Toppesfield Hall.

An agriculture contractor and support business is located next to Meads Farmhouse, on the Great Yeldham Road.

## 3.7 Design Character of Toppesfield and Gainsford End

### 3.7.1 Toppesfield Historic Core

The Toppesfield village core has a strong and intact historic character. This makes it highly sensitive to proposed development. Proposals are likely to be limited to internal renovations or conversions of existing buildings. There may, however, be opportunities for small-scale residential development on the outskirts of the village away from the historic core.



### **3.7.2 Toppesfield Outer Village**

There has been more recent development within the outer portions of Toppesfield Village, making it slightly less sensitive to proposed development than the historic core. Within this character area there are possible locations for small scale housing or individual plot developments. Locations for development are restricted due to proximity to the historic core and therefore the potential for adverse visual and character effects. Any such development would need to maintain the established pattern of building and scale of properties, with careful consideration given to views in and out of the village. Material selection would need to be appropriate to the local vernacular in terms of finish, colour, and quality.

### **3.7.3 Gainsford End Village**

Gainsford End Village has a dispersed linear character with dwellings being added over time during multiple phases of development. It certainly still maintains the feel of a small rural village and this character should be maintained and enhanced through any future development. Sensitivity to development is moderate. With this in mind, there may be opportunities to develop areas of the large gaps that exist between existing linear stretches of houses. Any proposals would need to be appropriate to the setting in both scale and location. Careful thought will need to be given to material palette and design quality.

4







# **Land use Planning Policies**



# Introduction

- 4.0.1** In this section we set out the land use planning policies the Toppesfield & Gainsford End Parish Council ('we' in the paragraphs that follow) will pursue to achieve the vision and objectives set out in this section.
- 4.0.2** Policies are in bold and are referred to as POLICY TOP1 etc; supporting text has a subheading ('Background' or 'Justification') before it.

## *Housing and Spatial Strategy for Development*

*As indicated in paragraph 1.9 above Toppesfield is classified as a third-tier village in the Braintree Local Plan 2033. This precludes any large-scale development in the village. The Housing Needs Survey carried out to provide evidence for this Neighbourhood Plan has identified support from the local community for a small development of primarily affordable housing for the local community. The main need is for housing suitable for people to set up their first/independent home with 2-bedroomed dwellings being the most preferred property size.*

*Policy TOP 1 therefore provides a basis on which small-scale development can be permitted, consistent with the village's classification in the Braintree Local Plan. It is envisaged that there is scope to deliver the desired affordable housing on exception sites outside the development boundary and proposals will be considered on the basis of Policy TOP 2.*

## **TOP 1     Housing**

### **Spatial Strategy for Housing Development**

This Plan provides for the provision of around 10 dwellings in the neighbourhood plan area between 2023 and 2038. This figure includes those where planning permission has already been granted and an additional 3 dwellings for affordable and social housing needs. The latter need to be met through the development of sites within the Toppesfield Settlement Boundary as defined on the Policies Map (Appendix . Map.), on rural exception sites that comply with the definition set out in the Glossary of the NPPF and on other isolated sites that comply with paragraph 80 of the NPPF.

## **TOP 2     Affordable Housing – Meeting Local Needs**

The development of new affordable housing in the plan area will be supported where such proposals are in accordance with other policies contained in this Plan and the adopted Braintree Local Plan. Proposals should take account of the housing needs survey (2020) or any other subsequent updated housing needs survey.

### **Design Principles and Design of New Development**

As indicated above any development that is permitted in Toppesfield in future is likely to be small-scale. Nevertheless, it is important that new development is well designed and respects the character of the existing village. To support the Neighbourhood Plan Aecom were commissioned to prepare Design Guidelines and Codes. This provides an analysis of the existing character of the village and guidance on the design and layout of new development. It provides the detailed justification for Policies TOP3, 4 and 5.

TOP 3 & 4 set out the general principles for development and design principles to ensure that new development reflects the existing character of the village. TOP 5 sets out the policy requirements for materials, massing, open space and landscaping.



### **TOP 3      Development Principles and Design of New Development**

#### **General Principles for Development**

Properties should be clustered in small pockets showing a variety of housing types. In new developments, the use of a repeating type of dwelling within the same cluster or along the same street frontage should be avoided; instead, variations in building heights, widths, and/or depths should be sought to create variety and interest in the streetscape. Renovations or infill housing along a row of terraced or semi-detached houses, however, should respect the greater uniformity of the existing street frontage.

Boundaries such as walls or hedges, whichever is most appropriate to the street, should enclose and define each street along the back edge of the pavement.

The placement and orientation of buildings should form an identifiable building line for each development group. The extent and depth of building setbacks must be sympathetic to the immediate context, however subtle variations are encouraged to respect the Parish's informal character and to add visual interest.

The one-plot deep development pattern of the settlements in the Parish must be retained and continued wherever possible to preserve its proximity to the open countryside. Where this is not possible, back gardens must be deep enough and adequately screened to avoid direct overlooking into the backs of houses.

Properties should aim to provide rear and front gardens, where appropriate, or at least a small buffer to the public sphere, for example, in the form of planting strips for cases where the provision of a front garden is not possible.

The layout of new development should optimise the benefit of daylight and passive solar gains

Interfaces between the existing settlement edges and any new development must be carefully designed to integrate new and existing communities.

#### **Character of New Development**

Toppesfield is a parish with low-lying settlements that contain a variety of housing types that offer a rich array of examples of the local Essex vernacular. The existing character must be appreciated when considering potential new development, whatever its size or purpose.

New development should have regard to the Toppesfield Design Guidelines and Codes dated August 2021.

New development in the Toppesfield Neighbourhood Plan area should:

- Respect the existing settlement pattern to preserve the character. Development that will result in coalescence will not be permitted;
- Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks;
- Reinforce or enhance the established character of streets, greens, and other spaces;
- Harmonise and enhance the existing settlement in terms of physical form, architecture and land use;
- Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development;
- Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, roofline, height, form, and density;
- Enhance and reinforce the property boundary treatments;
- Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details;
- Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality;
- Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features;
- Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other; and
- Incorporate innovative design, sustainable construction and eco-friendly features while respecting the architectural heritage and tradition of the area whilst also integrating them with future development.



## TOP 5 Materials

In new developments and renovations, locally sourced bricks or bricks that match the buildings in the surrounding area should be used. Particular attention should be given to the bonding pattern, size, colour, and texture of bricks.

### Massing

Most buildings in Toppesfield do not exceed two storeys in height. Any new buildings in Toppesfield should be sympathetic in mass, height, and scale to the existing context.

The massing of new buildings should ensure a sufficient level of privacy and access to natural light for their occupants and avoid overshadowing existing buildings.

### Open Space and Landscaping

Development adjoining public open spaces and important gaps should enhance the character of these spaces by either providing a positive interface (i.e. properties facing onto them to improve natural surveillance) or a soft landscaped edge.

New developments should incorporate existing native trees and shrubs and avoid unnecessary loss of flora. Any trees or woodland lost to new development must be replaced. Native trees and shrubs should be used to reinforce the more rural character of the area.

The layout and spacing of new buildings should reflect the rural character of Toppesfield and allow as much as possible for long-distance views of the countryside while creating opportunities for new trees and greenery where appropriate.

### New Extensions

Given that only a small number of new dwellings are likely be built in the village in the plan period, it is probable that extensions to existing dwellings will be the most common type of development. It is important therefore that these are well designed and in keeping with the character of the existing building and the village context. Policy TOP 6 therefore sets out the criteria that new extensions should meet.

## TOP 6 New Extensions

Extensions should be appropriate to the scale, massing, and design of the main building, and complement the streetscape. In general, they should be designed to look subservient to the original building.

Extensions should not exceed the height of the original or adjacent buildings. Two-storey extensions should be constructed with the same angle of pitch as the existing roof. The design, materials and architectural detailing of extensions should be of high quality and respond to the host building and the local character of the neighbourhood plan area. The impact on the space around the building should consider overlooking, overshadowing and overbearing.

### Heritage

*The history of the development of Toppesfield is set out in section 3 above. Its heritage includes some 41 listed buildings, a conservation area and an historic landscape. Policy TOP 7 therefore sets out the criteria that new proposals should meet to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the village's heritage assets.*

## TOP 7 Heritage

To ensure the conservation and enhancement of Toppesfield's heritage assets, proposals should:

- a. preserve or enhance the significance of the heritage assets of the village;
- b. demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the asset and of the wider context in which the heritage asset sits, alongside an assessment of the potential impact of the development on the heritage asset and its context; and
- c. provide clear justification, through the submission of a heritage statement, for any works that would lead to harm or substantial harm to a heritage asset yet be of wider substantial public benefit, through detailed analysis of the asset and the proposal.

Where the harm caused as a result of the impact of a proposed scheme is not justified by the public benefits that would be provided, it will not be supported.

Alterations and extensions of historic buildings should respect the host building. Replacement of historic and traditional features, such as timber windows and doors with uPVC and other non-traditional materials will not be permitted.

Leisure, Community, Welfare and Health

*As set out in section 3 above Toppesfield has a good range of services and facilities for a village of its size. This is due, in no small part, due to the initiative and support of the local community. These include the village school and pre-school nursery, the village shop, the village hall, the pub and brewery and St. Margaret's Church. It is essential that these services and facilities are not lost to development proposals. Policy TOP 8 therefore seeks to ensure that an equivalent or better facility is provided if an existing facility is redeveloped.*

## TOP 8 Leisure, Community, Welfare and Health

Development that will result in the loss of leisure and community facilities will not be permitted unless an alternative equivalent or improved facility is provided.

*Local employment has a key role to play in maintaining the sustainability of the village. Existing employment is described in section 3 above. As a result of the pandemic and with improvements to technology working from home is more common. It is important that the Neighbourhood Plan encourages new employment whilst protecting the environment and character of the village. Proposals will therefore be considered against Policy TOP 9 below.*



## **TOP 9      Employment**

Proposals for new and existing businesses and employment which are appropriate in scale and environmental impact (including noise, light, flooding and waste emissions) to a countryside setting will be permitted provided that:

- There is adequate access, off-road areas for loading and unloading, and adequate off-street parking
- Existing trees and hedgerows are maintained and any additional planting and landscaping is compatible with the existing environment, particularly where the buildings can be viewed from the roads and footpath network or affect important views

### **Recreational Open Space**

*The main recreational open space in the village is the playing field. Because of its countryside location residents also enjoy access the surrounding are through the local network of footpaths and bridleways. It is important that the existing open space is retained or replaced by an equal or improved facility if it is lost. Policy TOP 10 therefore provides protection for existing open space and encourages the provision of new sports and recreation facilities in appropriate locations. Improvements to the existing footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes will also be encouraged.*

## **TOP 10      Recreational Open Space**

Proposals for development which would result in the loss of any recreational facilities will be permitted only in circumstances where a replacement facility of equal or enhanced quality will be provided. The provision of additional sports and recreation facilities will be encouraged in appropriate locations. Support will be given to proposals that improve and extend the existing footpath network and create a cycle path and bridleway network, allowing greater access to housing, village centres, green spaces and the open countryside.

### **Front Gardens**

*The Design Guidelines and Codes prepared by Aecom highlights the importance of the front gardens particularly in the area of the Causeway to the character and openness of this part of the village. It is therefore considered that a policy is necessary to prevent their loss or reduction in size and to protect this character. This is set out in Policy TOP 11.*

## **TOP 11      Front Gardens**

Proposals that will result in the loss of or reduction in size of the front gardens in the area of The Causeway shown on the Policies Map will not be permitted

### **Landscape and Key Ecological Features**

*A Landscape Character Assessment of the Parish prepared by Wynne Williams Associates forms part of the evidence base for the Neighbourhood Plan. This identifies landscape character areas, their features and their sensitivity to development. This is summarised in section 3 above. Policy TOP 12 therefore provides for development proposals to conserve and enhance the rural character and appearance of the landscape.*

*Although there are only two designated wildlife sites in the Parish it is important that the biodiversity of the Parish as a whole is protected and enhanced. Policy TOP 12 therefore also provides for the safeguarding and improvement of existing wildlife habitats and for net environmental and biodiversity gains.*

## TOP 12 Landscape and Key Ecological Features

Within the plan area development proposals should demonstrate how they will:

- Conserve and where appropriate enhance the rural character and appearance of the landscape;
- Conserve and enhance historic field patterns and existing hedgerows

Within the local landscape character areas identified on the Policies Map and described in the Landscape Character Assessment development proposals in areas of high, medium and low sensitivity will be supported where they will not lead to coalescence or the loss of local green spaces and/or key views as identified on the Policies Map

Development proposals within areas of high sensitivity must ensure that existing positive landscape features are protected and enhanced.

All development proposals should include measures to safeguard existing wildlife habitats, increase the connectivity for wildlife and mitigate any impacts on key ecological features.

All proposals should seek to achieve net environmental and biodiversity gains in addition to protecting existing habitats and species.

*A survey of the Parish has been carried out to identify key views in and around the village. Those that are valued by the community are shown on the Policies Map. It is important that these views can continue to be enjoyed by visitors and residents and Policy TOP 13 therefore seeks to ensure that these are safeguarded.*

## TOP 13 Key Views and Connectivity with the Countryside

New development should be designed to have a positive and distinctive character by designing the development to respond to site features such as views into and out of the area, trees, landscapes and existing buildings. Key views valued by the community are shown on the Policies Map. Development which affects these views must ensure that key features of the view can continue to be enjoyed including distant buildings, areas of landscape and the boundaries between the village edge and the countryside.

### Wethersfield Airbase

*As indicated above the part of the former Wethersfield Airbase is within the southern part of Toppesfield Parish. The remainder of the former airbase is within Wethersfield and Finchingfield parishes. At present the site has no individual policy designation and is outside village development boundaries where countryside policies apply. Since the USAF base closed the area has had a number of uses, including the headquarters of the Ministry of Defence Police Force. It is currently being used as temporary accommodation for asylum seekers. Proposals have also been put forward for its future use as a prison. The Parish Council is concerned to ensure that any future proposals for the airfield do not have any detrimental impact on the environment or amenity of the village. Policy TOP 14 therefore defines that part of the airfield within the parish as a special policy area and sets out the criteria against which proposals for the airfield will be judged.*

*A neighbourhood plan is also being prepared jointly for Wethersfield and Finchingfield. The Parish Council will work closely with them to ensure consistency of approach between the three parishes.*



## **TOP 14    Wethersfield Airbase**

We would encourage the following future developments on the air base.

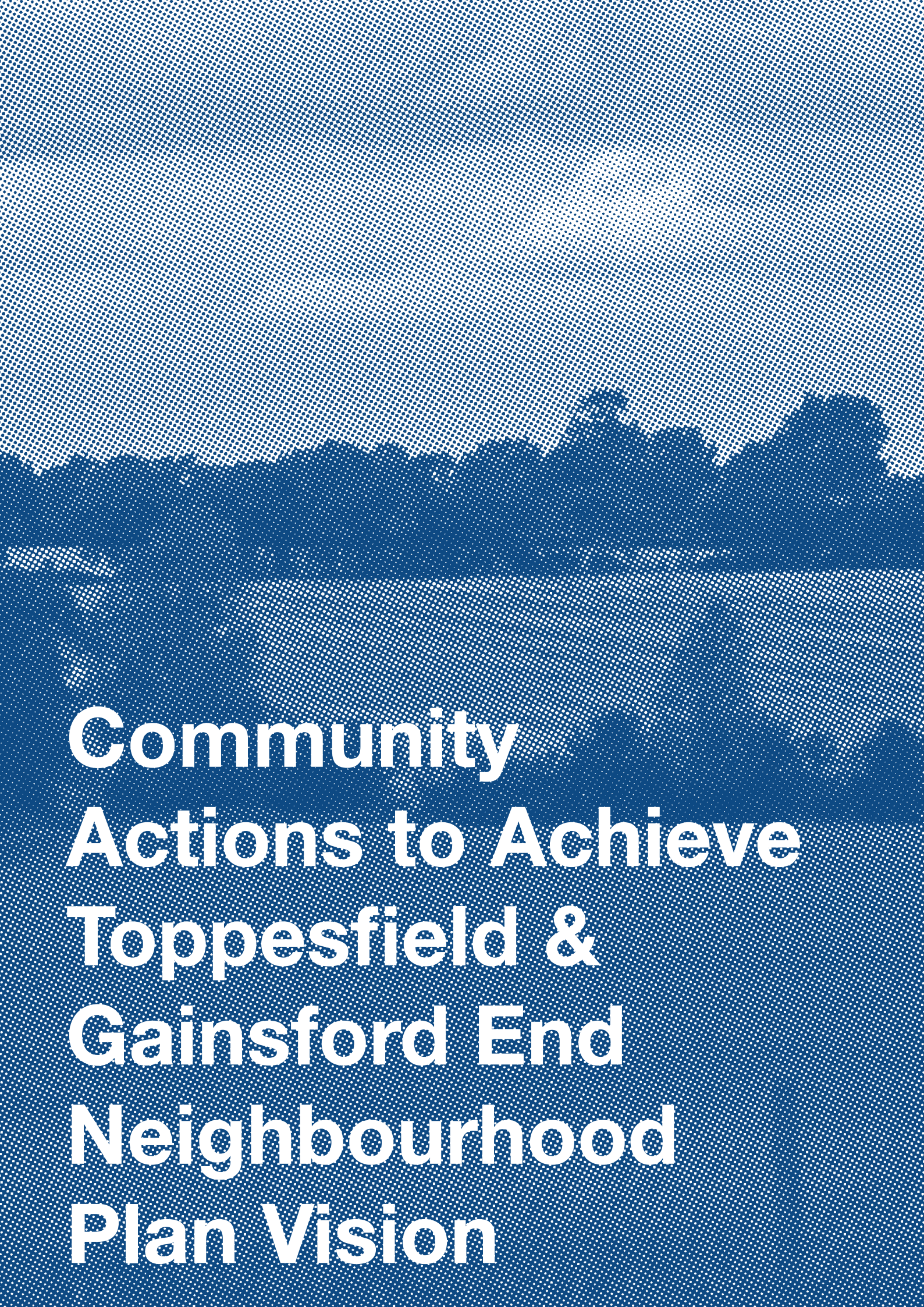
- Climate related projects for example solar and potentially wind power due to the sites geographical location.
- Limited mixed development housing coordinated in a coherent way with the other parishes who have an interest in the site.
- Nature related projects which would be of interest to local educational establishments and the wider community.

Planning applications for development which would have a significant adverse impact which outweighs any community benefits will be refused.

56







# **Community Actions to Achieve Toppesfield & Gainsford End Neighbourhood Plan Vision**



# 5 Community Actions to Achieve Toppesfield & Gainsford End Neighbourhood Plan Vision

## 5.1 Community and Leisure Facilities

### Objectives

**We aim to maintain and enhance the Community and Leisure facilities in Toppesfield and Gainsford End for the benefit of parishioners. We will continue to actively enhance the pub, the shop and brewery whilst investigating future community enterprises. We will work on ensuring that we retain a school within the village.**

Our objective is to create a community that continues to be sustainable whilst protecting its rural character and maintaining its social cohesion. We will address risks of rural isolation through maximising the use of current facilities and by developing new, appropriate amenities whenever possible.

In all of this we will be driven by the need to protect and increase the levels of bio-diversity in our parish and to reduce our carbon footprint.

What we plan to do:

- Maintain and enhance the range of community and leisure facilities in both Toppesfield and Gainsford End. We will work to ensure that the spaces that are enjoyed by residents are kept to a high standard. These include the two playing fields and their play equipment, the churchyard, the allotments and other public spaces.
- Additionally, we believe it is important that the community owned shop, pub and brewery are each supported and encouraged as is the Village Hall. They are a strong mark of a village that understands how to become sustainable.
- Residents are encouraged to support these amenities through their continuing support and care of them.
- We intend to improve the play facilities through the installation over time of new equipment, the nature of which will be determined through consultation with users.
- The pavilion at the playing field in Toppesfield will be improved through the provision of running water and toilet facilities and will provide improved facilities for the cricket and pétanque clubs.
- We will look at improving the street appeal of the water pumps and their housing in the centre of Toppesfield through the provision of more seating and planters.



## 5.2 Transport, Road Safety, Highways and Parking

### Objectives

Our objectives are to address the challenges facing our community from increasing levels of heavy traffic usage (including farm traffic), from speeding through both Toppesfield and Gainsford End, from the shortage of adequate parking and the poor provision of public transport.

We wish to create a safe environment for everyone but one which recognises the importance of private vehicles in our community and the need to restrict carbon emissions.

What we plan to do:

- Car parking in the centre of Toppesfield is limited and we will continue to try and increase the number of places available.
- We will join the '20 is plenty' initiative to restrict vehicle speed in residential areas and encourage all residents to try and adhere to a 20mph limit within Toppesfield and Gainsford End.
- We will liaise with the contract farming companies working in the parish to encourage care in moving their ever larger vehicles through our community.

## 5.3 Footpaths and Public Access to the Countryside

### Objectives

To maintain and improve safe access for the residents of the parish to the surrounding countryside. We wish to encourage use of the parish's extensive footpath network for recreational purposes.

We will seek to increase over time the amount of tree planting undertaken, in order to enhance landscapes, help increase bio-diversity and to capture carbon.

What we plan to do:

- Explore the possibilities of redesignating the 3 byways open to all traffic ('BOATS') in the parish as 'Restricted Byways', thereby prohibiting motorised vehicles from making the paths impassable for much of the year.
- Liaise with both Essex Highways and local landowners to ensure there is safe access to and walking along all rights of way in the parish.
- Produce maps showing recommended 'circular' walks

## 5.4 Environment, Energy and Carbon Footprint

### Objectives

We aim:           to work towards reducing the level of carbon emissions in the parish;  
                          to explore the potential to produce renewable electricity;  
                          to support actions that will sustain and enhance the levels of bio-diversity.

What we plan to do:

- Research will continue on the potential to introduce zero carbon energy for the public buildings in the parish whether individually for specific premises or more extensively through a 'whole village' community energy scheme.
- Undertake the regular planting of native species, both in the villages and, where possible and in conjunction with local landowners, along lanes and footpaths.
- We will seek to provide public EV charging points.

## 5.5 Housing

### Objectives

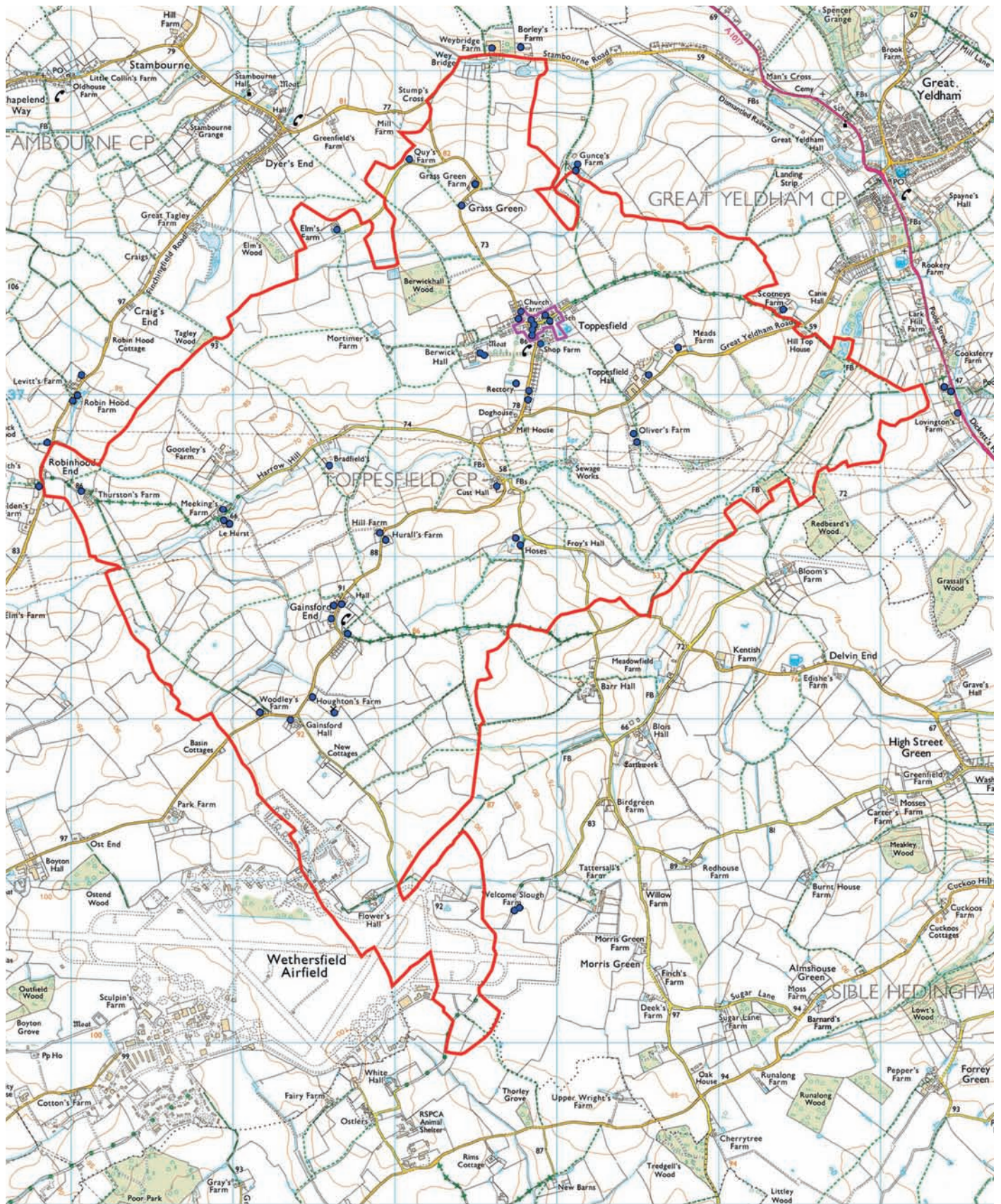
We will aim to explore ways of meeting the new housing needs of the parish as set out in the Housing Needs Assessment that has been carried out.

Our key objectives will be to seek modest housing development that will benefit those with strong links to Toppesfield and will remain available in perpetuity through community control of allocations.

What we plan to do:

- To assist where practical in investigating small scale development in the village particularly focused on housing for local people.
- We will work with organisations involved in rural housing (e.g. Rural Community Council of Essex) to develop a structure that would enable the community to own the houses and control allocations but be managed by a professional organisation.
- Appendices

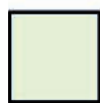
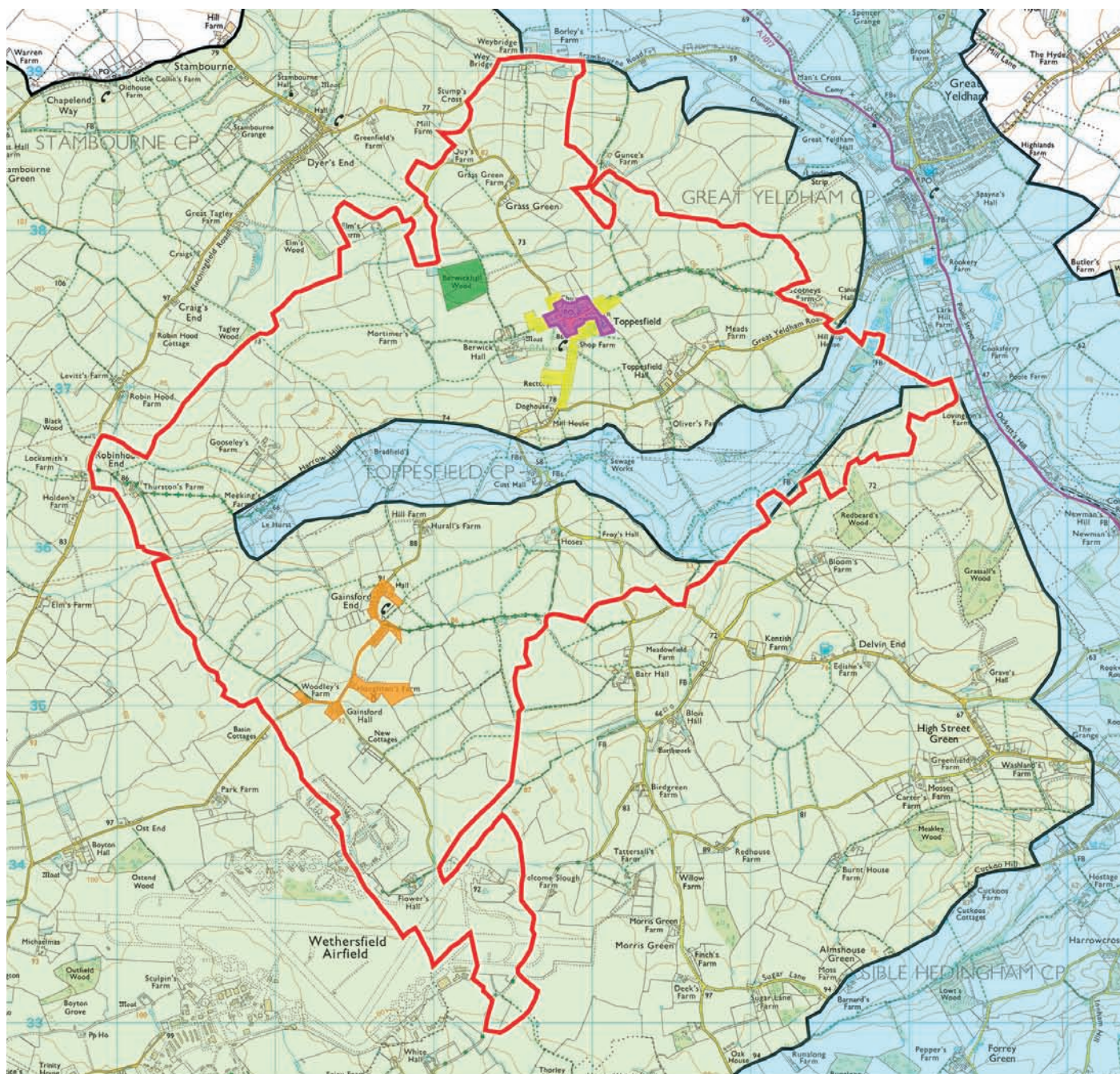




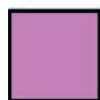
— Toppesfield Conservation Area

• Listed building or feature

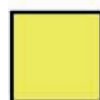




The Stambourne Farmland Plateau



Toppesfield Historic Core



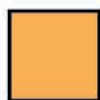
Toppesfield Outer Village



The Colne River Valley



Ancient Woodland

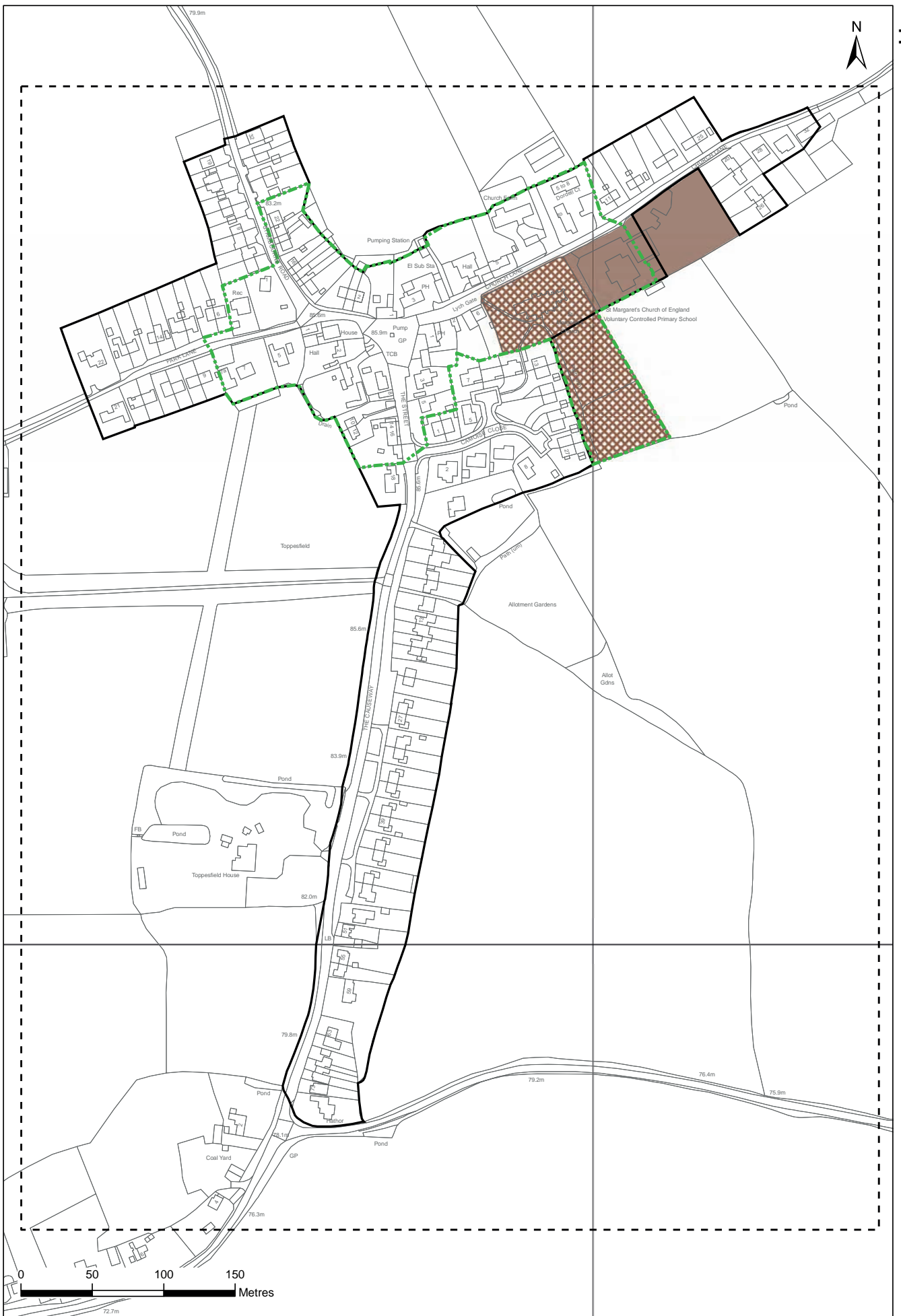


Gainsford End Hamlet





Figure 10: Context map of Toppesfield Parish.



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## Key - Pre Submission Plan

	District Boundary		Primary Shopping Area		Comprehensive Development Area		Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace
	Inset Area		ADM24		ADM34, 35, 36, 37		CS8, 10, ADM73
	Development Boundary		Primary Frontage		Special Employment Area		Structural Landscaping
	CS5, ADM2, 3, 4		ADM24		ADM 18a		ADM2
	Conservation Area		Secondary Frontage		Transport Related Policy Area		Historic Parks and Gardens
	CS9, ADM27, 34, 36, 60		ADM24		ADM48		CS8, 9, ADM60, 66
	63, 64, 65		Retail & Town Centre Uses		Education		Local Wildlife Site
	Core Strategy Growth Location		ADM33		ADM38, 39		CS8, ADM51
	CS1, 2, 7, ADM3, 38		Food Retail		Ancient Monument		Local Nature Reserve
	Regeneration Site		Maltings Lane Masterplan		CS9, ADM69		CS8, ADM51
	CS1, 4		Retail Warehousing		Car Park		Country Park
	Broomhills Regeneration Area		ADM32, 37A		CS7, ADM31, 47		CS10, ADM74
	CS4, ADM37A		Factory Outlet Centre		Community Uses		Community Orchard
	Road Proposal		ADM28		ADM41		ADM44
	ADM49		Residential Site 10 or more dwellings		Leisure and Entertainment		Community Woodland
	Halstead Bypass Corridor		CS2, ADM3		ADM30		ADM44
	ADM49		Care Home		Commercial Leisure		Flood Zone 2
	Protected Lane		ADM6		CS10		CS8
	ADM54		Specialist Housing		Formal Recreation		Flood Zone 3
	Proposed Footpath/Cycleway		ADM5, 6		CS10, ADM14, 75A		CS8
	CS7, ADM46, 73		Proposed Gypsy/Travellers Site		Informal Recreation		
	Environmental Improvements		CS3, ADM7		CS10, ADM14, 75A		
	ADM27		Business Uses		Allotments		
	District Centre		CS4, ADM16, 19		CS10, ADM75A		
	CS6, ADM25, 26, 27, 32		Business and Industrial Uses		Cemetery/Churchyard		
	Local Centre		CS4, ADM17, 19		ADM40		
	CS6, ADM26, 27, 32		Employment Policy Area				
	Town Centre		CS4, ADM15, 19, 21, 32				
	CS6, ADM15, 26, 27, 32, 33, 37A		Industrial Development Limit		Visually Important Space		
			CS4, ADM18		ADM2, 14		
					Site of Special Scientific Interest		
					CS8, ADM51		

### Policy Reference Abbreviations:

CS – Core Strategy  
ADM – Site Allocations and Development Management Plan  
DPD – Development Plan Document

### Site Reference Suffixes:

B - Broomhills Industrial Estate  
C - car park site  
CD - comprehensive development area  
CH - care home site  
E - employment site  
FR - food retail  
H - housing site 10+ dwellings  
RG - Core Strategy Regeneration Site  
RTC - retail & town centre uses  
RW - retail warehousing  
SH - specialist housing site

