



## 5. LANDSCAPE SETTING

### Landscape Setting Objectives

- to ensure that valued and sensitive landscapes are conserved and enhanced
- to ensure that the village of Broomfield remains a distinct settlement, separate from the Chelmsford urban settlement area.

### Current Position

5.1 Most of Broomfield Parish is undeveloped. It contains arable fields, meadows, hedges, specimen trees, woods, the River Chelmer, several lakes and ponds and a nature reserve. The Parish is crisscrossed by a network of footpaths, bridleways and other rights of way, some of these many centuries old. These natural features and access points combine to offer pleasant walking with views across the open countryside – an aspect much valued by local residents. It is mostly a working landscape, without the city-wide pull of a country park or similar, so the qualities of the landscape are perhaps not as widely appreciated outside Broomfield and adjoining parishes as they could be.

5.2 The rural area also helps to define the main village of Broomfield. The southern parts of the Parish fall within the Chelmsford Urban Area, but the village – the historic core around Angel Green and Church Green – remains a distinct settlement, separate from Chelmsford. The countryside around Broomfield plays a vital role in maintaining this degree of separation and, with it, Broomfield’s sense of place and identity.

### Public Perceptions of the Rural Area

5.3 Broomfield’s status as a separate community and its closeness to open countryside are highly significant within the residents’ questionnaire data, with 100% of responses saying they liked/liked a lot that Broomfield is close to open countryside. This headline statistic was explored further in Section 4 of the questionnaire. The following aspects of the countryside were considered important or very important by residents as indicated:

Tranquillity	99%
Opportunity for recreation (eg walking, jogging)	96%
Openness	99%
Natural break between Broomfield and other settlements	93%
Wildlife	96%
Views	96%

52% of responses said they used Broomfield’s network of footpaths often; with a further 40% saying they used footpaths occasionally.

### A Landscape-Led Plan

5.4 After analysis of the residents’ questionnaire data, the importance placed on conserving and enhancing the landscape and rural area became very clear. In contrast, there remains a longstanding interest from developers in land in the Parish, seen for instance in the City Council’s ‘Call for Sites’ process.

5.5 Local Plan policies controlling the Green Wedge and the Rural Area outside the Green Belt and Green Wedge (Policies DM7 and DM8) offer some protection against inappropriate development. However not all development is necessarily covered by the relevant Local Plan policies, and, with regular reviews of local plans, it is important to have a clear understanding of the relative sensitivities of different landscapes within Broomfield to development.

5.6 The Neighbourhood Plan therefore focuses on the importance of the Parish's landscape and the considerations that need to be taken into account when proposals that could impact it are considered. This approach has been informed through:

- the content of the Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (Chris Blandford Associates, September 2006), referred to below as the Blandford Landscape Character Assessment. The Assessment indicated the presence of sensitive features within the Broomfield landscape, for instance, the noted tranquillity of rural areas away from main roads
- more detailed studies commissioned by the Parish Council from Alison Farmer Associates, namely the Broomfield Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal (February 2019) and the Review of Local Green Space, Valued Landscape and Key Views (September 2021).

5.7 The themes of openness, the natural break between settlements and views are addressed in this section of the Plan, with the remainder considered in the Natural Environment Section which follows.

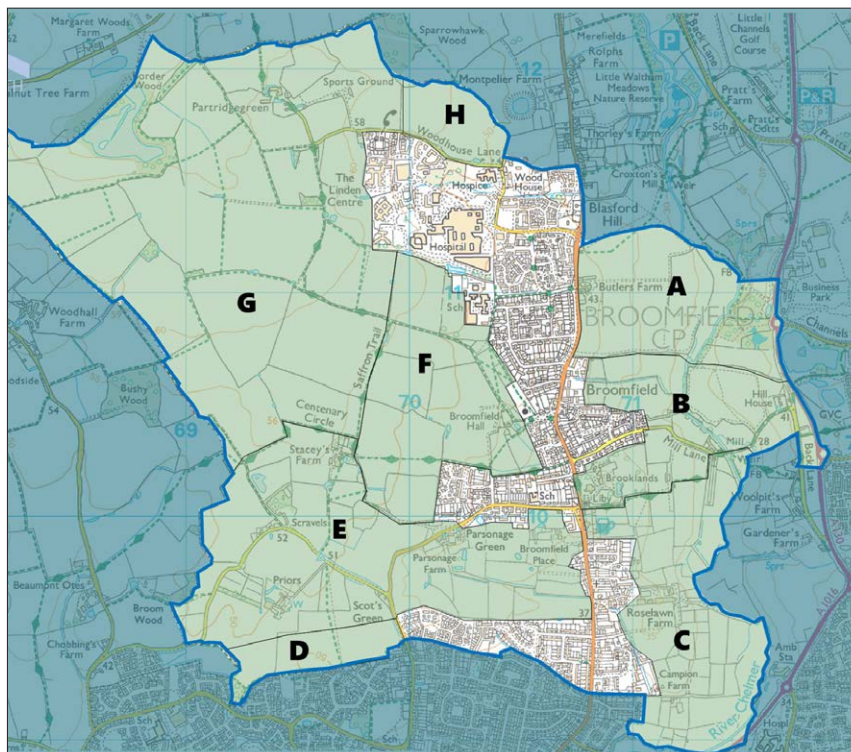
### The Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments

5.8 This was prepared by Chris Blandford Associates for the named local authorities in September 2006 and

divides the Parish into two landscape character areas: the Pleshey Farmland Plateau and the Upper Chelmer River Valley. Both extend into other parishes and districts. While still relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the detail of the character areas, which is reproduced in Appendix 1, is supplemented by the detailed studies prepared by Alison Farmer Associates referred to below.

### Broomfield Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal

5.9 Given the high-level nature of the 2006 wider Blandford Landscape Character Assessment, the opportunity was taken to prepare a more detailed local assessment for the Neighbourhood Plan Area. This would enable a more granular approach to examining the sensitivity of the landscape and its capacity for absorbing development. The objective of the Broomfield Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal was to provide a robust understanding of the character and qualities of the Neighbourhood Plan Area and to make sound judgements as to the sensitivity and capacity of land to accommodate development. It was carried out in accordance with Guidelines on Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines in Assessing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments. For this purpose, the rural area within the Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA) was divided into eight local landscape areas as shown on Map 3.



Map 3 - Broomfield Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal Character Areas

5.10 The following tables set out the function and sensitivity/capacity of each local landscape area. Please refer to the full document for other aspects of each area.

Area A: Chelmer Valley at Butler's Farm

Function	This area is valued for its setting to the village and as part of the gateway to the settlement. This area forms an important role in connecting people with the wider landscape via existing public rights of way which run across and adjacent to the area and reinforces the location of Broomfield on the upper valley slopes of the River Chelmer Valley.
Sensitivity/ Capacity	The sensitivity of this site relates to its position at the gateway between the existing urban edge and the wider landscape. The valley slopes are visually sensitive in views across the valley. While the eastern slopes are less visible they nonetheless form a rural wooded setting to Broomfield village and the hedgerow along the B1008 reinforces rural character. Overall this area is not considered to have capacity for residential development. Development on the upper slopes would be highly visible and would have an urbanising influence on the otherwise rural character of this part of the valley.

Area B: Chelmer Valley at Mill Lane

Function	This area forms an accessible part of the Upper Chelmer Valley via Mill Lane and long-distance footpath of Centenary Circle. These routes create east west connections from the existing urban area, offering a high-quality landscape setting to the settlement and easily accessible natural green space which bolsters the sense of place and local distinctiveness. The area is also important for outdoor recreation with concentration of sports pitches forming a transitional landscape between river valley and urban form.
Sensitivity/ Capacity	This area is highly sensitive due to its rural unspoilt character and accessibility from the existing urban edge. It is also sensitive because of its role in reinforcing the historical association of the settlement of Broomfield with the Chelmer Valley and for the collection of historic features which remain legible and give rise to a strong time depth. The area is also valued for its outdoor recreation in terms of formal recreation and informal countryside access. Development in this area would risk the undermining and integrity of these qualities. As a result, this landscape is not considered suitable for residential or commercial development.

Area C: Chelmer Valley at Roselawn and Campion Farms

Function	Important setting to Broomfield and significant role in reinforcing perceived separation from Chelmsford especially following development east of the A130.
Sensitivity/ Capacity	The sensitivity of this area lies in its elevated slopes and views across the valley and its role in reinforcing the rural character and separation between Broomfield and Chelmsford. Nevertheless, the nature of the valley topography and gentle knoll of higher land south of Roselawn Farm presents some opportunities for a carefully thought through extension of the urban edge, ensuring that new development does not extend onto the higher land and that from the elevated knoll opportunities for viewing the wider valley are embraced. The collection of buildings at Roselawn Farm also offer opportunities for reorganisation and redevelopment although in all scenarios access restrictions from the existing urban edge may present significant constraints. Care would need to be taken to ensure the outer edge of any new development is rural in character and possibly adopts a farm courtyard arrangement. A modest small-scale development in this area of the valley may also present opportunities for improved access and changes to land management which restores the quality and condition of the landscape, strengthening its character and its valued role adjacent to urban areas.

#### Area D: Northwest Chelmsford Between Patching Hall Lane and Hollow Lane

Function	Important landscape in ensuring Chelmsford appears to sit comfortably in the landscape and does not appear to advance onto the elevated Pleshey Farmland Plateau.
Sensitivity/ Capacity	The sensitivity of this landscape lies in its contribution to the perceived sense of separation between Chelmsford and Broomfield and its role in containing the growth of Chelmsford. This landscape has some capacity for residential development associated with Chelmsford where the character of development can reflect the rural fringe location ie lower density housing and rural vernacular styles.

#### Area E: Broomfield Place to Broom Wood

Function	Important physical landscape gap and valued as an area which helps retain a sense of separation between Chelmsford and Broomfield and in forming a rural setting to the settlements and reinforcing sense of place. The arable fields west of the B1008 are especially important in articulating the gateway between Chelmsford and Broomfield although this is currently impinged on by adjoining land uses and character along Main Road.
Sensitivity/ Capacity	The sensitivity of this area lies in its role as a setting to adjacent settlement and in retaining a sense of local and individual identity. This area has little capacity for development in terms of further growth as an extension to the existing urban edges where it may undermine perceptions of separation between Chelmsford and Broomfield as a result of loss of open space and rural character. There may be some capacity for limited small-scale development in the area between Broomfield Place and the allotments although it will be important for any new development to conserve and enhance parkland character and the setting of Broomfield Place (Grade II listed building) ie the area may be able to accommodate a limited low-rise/low-density bespoke development or single building set within parkland. There is also some scope for the redevelopment or expansion of one of the farm complexes which sit within this area for small-scale employment use. Care would need to be taken to minimise visual intrusion and avoid the urbanisation of rural lanes.

#### Area F: West Broomfield Plateau Farmland

Function	This landscape is highly valued as a setting to the Conservation Area and historic assets and offers easy access from existing urban areas to open countryside.
Sensitivity/ Capacity	This landscape is highly sensitive to change and development. Although its topography and partial enclosure by existing urban development including the hospital to the north and Parsonage Green to the south suggests that it may be suitable for residential development, its unique juxtaposition with the historic core of Broomfield and its role in providing a distinctive high-quality setting to the settlement and easy access to countryside outweigh this. On this basis, this area is considered unsuitable for residential and commercial development. Furthermore, consideration should be given to the designation of Night Pasture and Broom Pightle as areas of Local Green Space in light of their importance historically and in association with the Conservation Area.

#### Area G: West of Broomfield

Function	Forms a wider landscape setting to Broomfield and Broomfield Hospital and contains a network of public rights of way offering access into the wider countryside.
Sensitivity/ Capacity	This landscape is highly sensitive to change and development due to its rural characteristics and elevation. It is therefore considered unsuitable for residential and commercial development.



## Area H: North Broomfield

Function	This landscape forms a setting to Blasford Hill and Little Waltham and reinforces the sense of separation between these settlements and Broomfield. The area also forms the upper valley slopes of the Chelmer Valley.
Sensitivity/ Capacity	The sensitivities of this area include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The physical and perceived gap between Little Waltham and Blasford Hill which is sensitive to urbanisation of the road corridor, loss of rural views and perceived merging of the two settlements.</li> <li>• Existing vegetation and landscape features which make a positive contribution to landscape character and are of historic value including woodland, parish boundary hedgerows and mature/veteran trees.</li> <li>• Rural valley landscape which is visually sensitive to development on the upper valley sides. Development here may intensify the depth and extent of development visible from within the valley.</li> <li>• Rural character of the Pleshey Plateau which is sensitive to visual intrusion from development including night lighting.</li> </ul>

### Preventing Settlement Coalescence

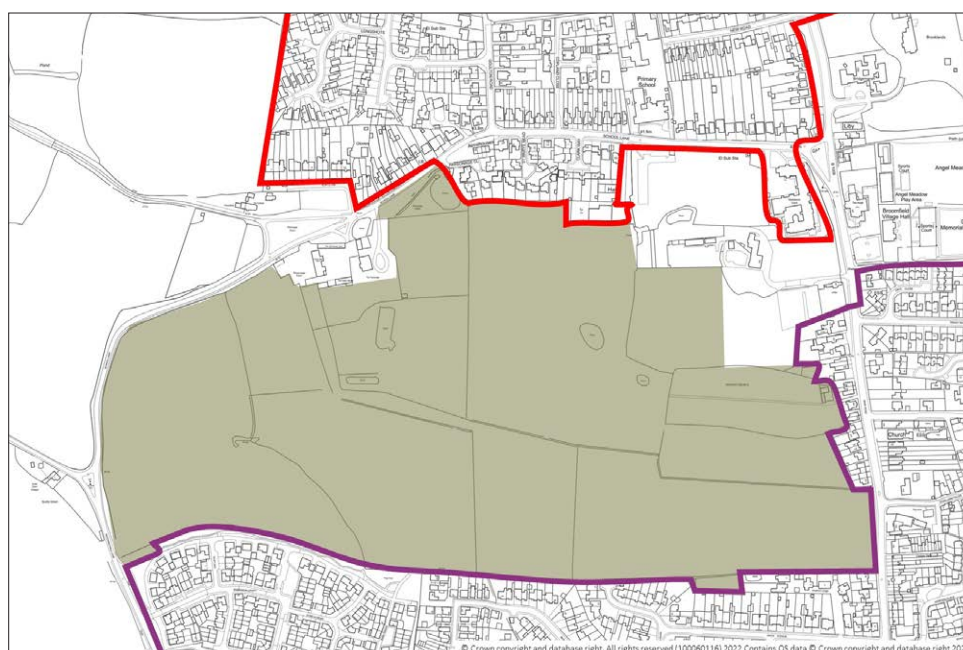
- 5.11 The first theme to consider is the role of the landscape in providing a natural break between Broomfield and neighbouring settlements, which helps to define Broomfield's identity. Strategic Policy S7 of the Local Plan states that:

'All development allocations will be located to ensure existing settlements maintain their distinctive character and to avoid coalescence between them'

- 5.12 To the east a natural break between Broomfield and Springfield, Beaulieu Park and Channels is provided by the flood plain of the River Chelmer. Avoiding settlement coalescence is one of the functions of the Green Wedge policy which applies to it.

- 5.13 To the north, the need to avoid coalescence between the north of Broomfield and Little Waltham will become important once the strategic site SGS8, 'North of Broomfield' has been fully built out. However, the undeveloped area that might be identified as a settlement buffer lies in the Parish of Little Waltham, so it cannot be designated as such in the Broomfield Neighbourhood Plan.

- 5.14 In the southern part of the Parish, there is a small but very important undeveloped area, between Main Road and Patching Hall Lane, that separates the urban area of the City from the village of Broomfield. It forms a significant part of Area E in the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal. The area has continued to be eroded over time as new housing allocations have been made over time along the northern edge of the Chelmsford Urban Area.



Map 4 - Settlement Buffer (shaded area)

5.15 Having regard to this, the Neighbourhood Plan defines a Settlement Buffer, as illustrated in Map 4, and known locally as the Felsted Field Gap. The Settlement Buffer aims to maintain the separate identity of Broomfield and development in the Buffer will only be supported in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the openness of the landscape.

## POLICY BFD1 – PREVENTING COALESCENCE

Land between Main Road and Patching Hall Lane, as shown in **Map 4** is identified as a Settlement Buffer to maintain the separation between the urban area of Chelmsford and Broomfield village.

Development proposals in the Settlement Buffer will only be supported where they are in accordance with national and district level policies and they conserve or, where possible, enhance the openness and landscape character of the Settlement Buffer and will not result in an unacceptable reduction in the physical or visual gap between the settlements or otherwise undermine their distinct and separate identities. As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (or other appropriate and proportionate evidence) that demonstrates that there would be no harmful impact on the open character and landscape of the Settlement Buffer.

5.16 In terms of land management, the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal adds that:  
‘Consideration should be given to the creation of a more open edge to the B1008 with views across agricultural land westwards and the creation of a wider grass verge with tree planting along the road in order to reinforce the gateway and break in built form.’

The landowner has given permission to re-design the bank along Main Road adjoining Felsted Field. The scheme may also include a new bus shelter and retaining sleepers to prevent slippage of the existing bank onto the pavement below. Through wildflower planting on the bank, it will enhance sustainable environments and attractive landscapes.

### Valued Landscapes

5.17 Paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) (NPPF) notes that ‘Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ‘protecting and enhancing valued landscapes’.

5.18 It is important to note that in this context ‘Valued Landscapes’ have a particular meaning. This is different to both ‘popular landscapes’ and ‘landscape character’. The range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value is set out in

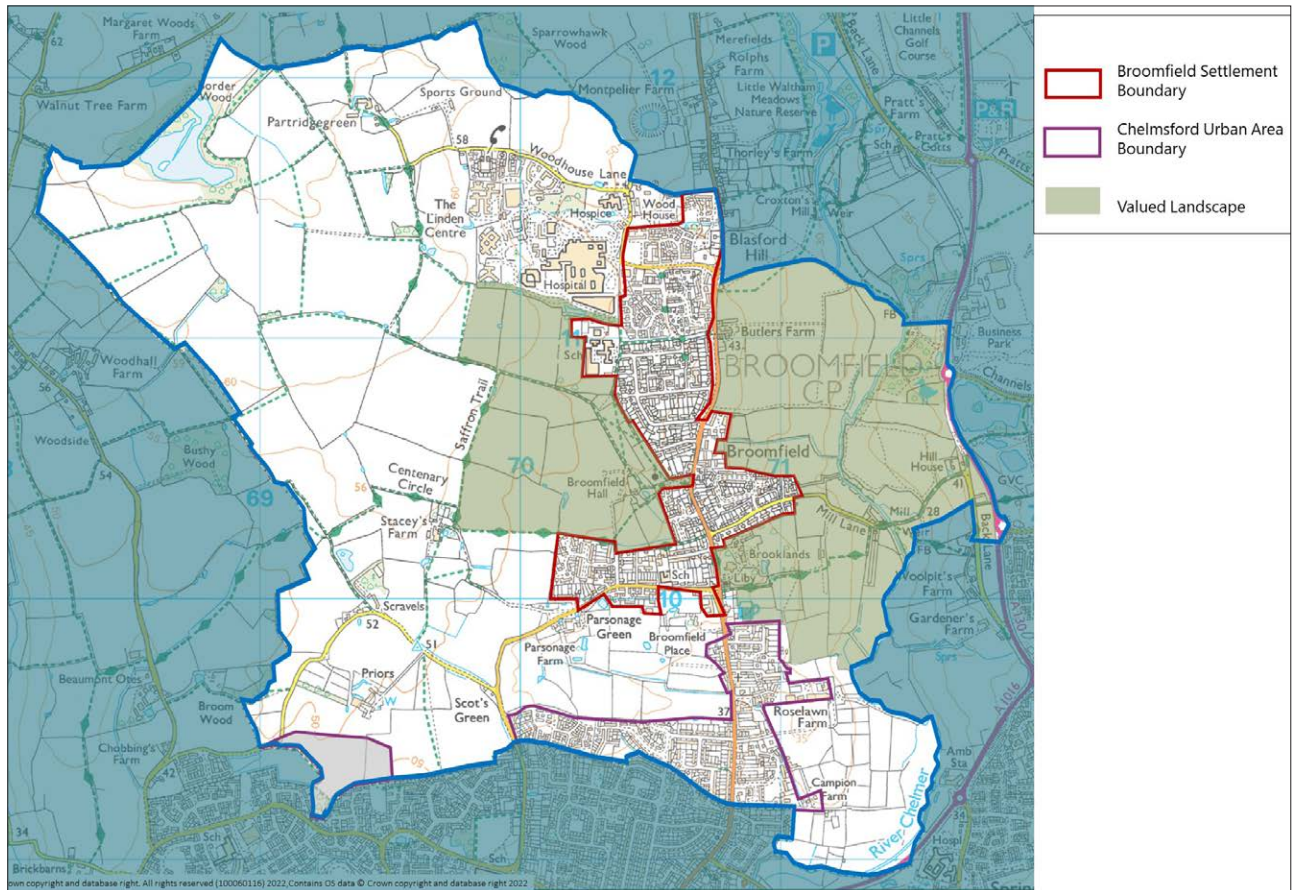
### Community Action CA1 – Enhancing the ‘Felsted Field Gap’

The Parish Council will implement a re-design of the Felsted Field bank on Main Road to:

- further enhance the visual impact of the settlement buffer; and
- improve the appearance of the bank by replacing degraded hedgerow and through wildflower planting; and
- install retaining sleepers to protect the pavement from soil creep; and
- erect a new bus shelter at the southern end of the Gap.

Table 1 of the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21, Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations. This Guidance Note has been used in the assessment of Valued Landscape for the Neighbourhood Plan, which is contained in the separate Review of Local Green Space, Valued Landscape and Key Views, section 3, pages 10 – 12.

5.19 The Review identifies that the northern part of the Upper Chelmer River Valley and an area west of the Church, as identified on the **Map 5**, meet the criteria for designation as Valued Landscapes.



Map 5 - Valued Landscapes in Broomfield

### Protection of Important Views

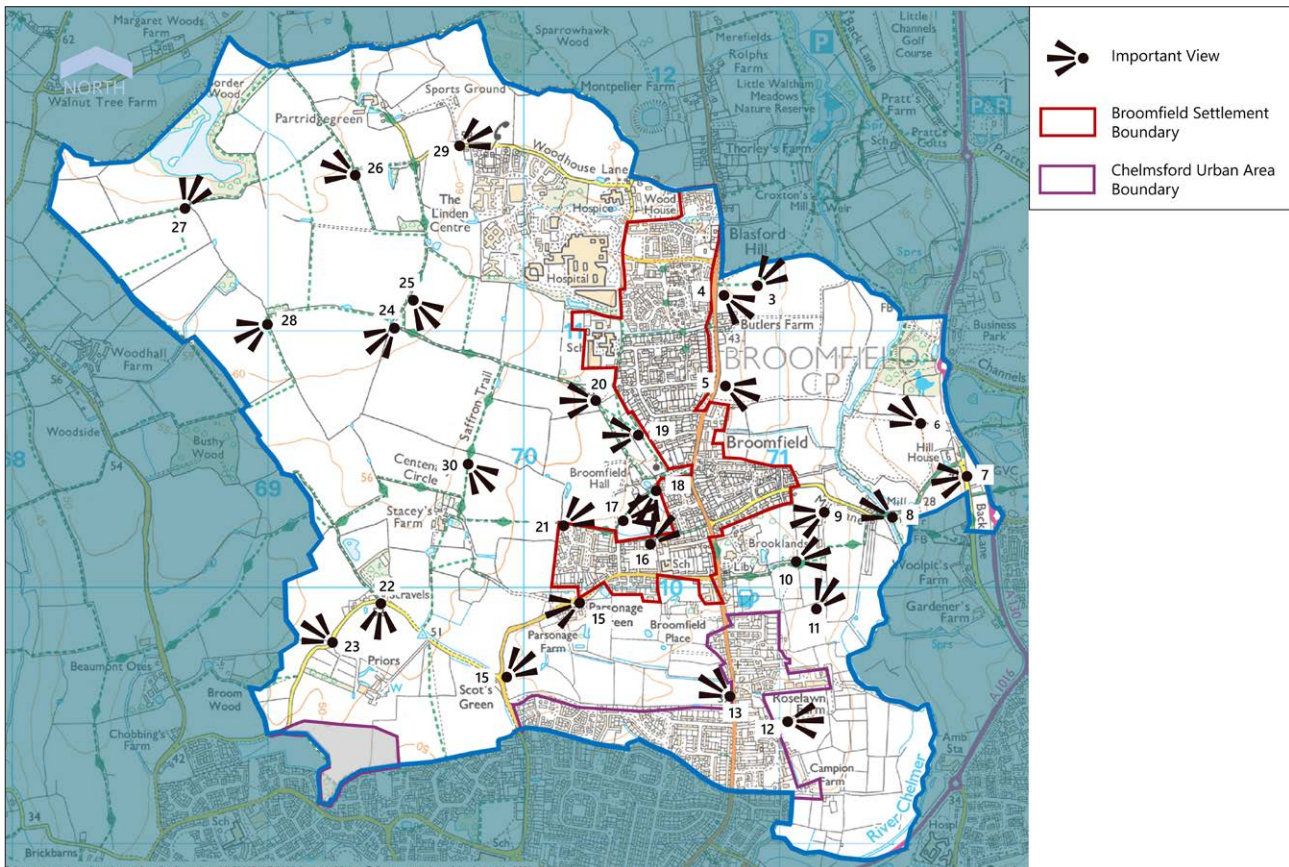
5.20 The Review of Local Green Space, Valued Landscape and Key Views lists and describes 29 important views within the Parish and their degree of sensitivity to development. The majority were initially identified as part of the Landscape Appraisal, with a few others arising from the residents' questionnaire and general work involved in preparing the Plan. These views are shown in **Map 6**.

5.21 When development proposals are being prepared, it will be necessary to take account of the potential impact that the development could have on views and demonstrate how the development can be satisfactorily accommodated within the landscape. Applicants must demonstrate how the visual impact of the development has been considered, along with measures for any mitigation where necessary. Depending on the scale of the proposed development, proposals could be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). An LVIA is a recognised tool that specifically aims

to ensure that all possible effects of change and development both on the landscape itself and on views and visual amenity, are considered in decision-making. Policy BFD2 has been designed to add value to national and local planning policies in relation to development proposals outside the Settlement Boundary. The Chelmsford Local Plan provides an important local planning context and Policy Map 10 covers Broomfield. Policies S7, DM2, DM8, DM11 and DM12 comment about development outside Settlement Boundaries.







Map 6 - Important views (numbered), listed and described in the Review of Local Green Space, Valued Landscape and Key Views

## POLICY BFD2- PROTECTING BROOMFIELD'S LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Proposals for development outside the Settlement Boundary should to be accompanied by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment or other appropriate evidence proportionate to the scale of the proposal, that demonstrates how the proposal:

- i. can be accommodated in the countryside without having a significant detrimental impact, by reason of the development's scale, materials and location, on the character and appearance of the countryside and its tranquillity and distinction from the main built-up areas; and
- ii. conserves and enhances the unique landscape and scenic beauty within the Parish, having regard to the Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal and Neighbourhood Plan Review of Local Green Space, Valued Landscape and Key Views and the Valued Landscape identified on Map 5 and Important Views on Map 6.

### Enhancing the Landscape

5.22 Landscape studies for the Neighbourhood Plan contain considerable guidance about how the various landscape character areas around Broomfield can be well-managed and enhanced as well as conserved. The Parish Council would like to encourage interested community groups to get involved in landscape enhancement, either working with landowners or even through buying land, where feasible opportunities arise.

5.23 Centenary Wood is an example of how the process can work very successfully. This piece of land was purchased by the Parish Council in 1994 to mark its centenary and has led to the creation of a small community woodland, involving the Primary School and local residents as volunteers, creating a valued spot for leisure, tranquillity and outdoor activity.



5.24 Applications for grant funding will be considered for landscape enhancement projects, whilst recognising that this will inevitably be limited by the availability of funding and finding volunteers with relevant skills and experience.

### Community Action CA2 - Conserving and Enhancing the Landscape

As resources allow over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council will consider grant applications from local voluntary groups for landscape conservation and enhancement. Criteria for awarding funding will include the following:

- Bids must explain by reference to the Landscape Appraisal or the Review how they will lead to landscape enhancement
- The purpose must be to conserve and enhance land as a natural environment, so this particular funding stream would not be appropriate for converting land to sports pitches, playgrounds or constructing buildings
- Where significant funding is requested (eg for land purchase), grants must be match funded; and a management group must be formally constituted, with evidence of strong community support, a clear plan and sustainable management arrangements.

