



# **ARDLEIGH VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT:**

**Annex 2 of the Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan**



**Updated January 2022**

## **THANKS**

Thank you to all who have contributed to the creation of this document.

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## SECTION 1: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENTS



*Introducing the VDS concept and promoting discussion*

The key functions of this Village Design Statement (VDS) are to:

- **identify and analyse the current character, both visual and experiential, of the village and wider parish; and**
- **describe and define how future development in the village and wider parish should be designed to harmonise with this character.**

The Ardleigh VDS is intended to provide practical guidance that will be of use to a wide variety of people involved in development and decisions affecting the built environment of Ardleigh. This includes developers, architects, builders, planners, existing or prospective householders and parish councillors.

It is essential that a VDS should be the product of a democratic research and consultation process. The Ardleigh VDS was originally prepared in December 2011 using a staged approach recommended by the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE).

In January 2022, an update of the VDS was conducted to support work on the emerging Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan. The 2022 updates identify those ways in which the character of the parish has changed and evolved since 2011. It also identifies both positive and negative features of residential developments undertaken in the parish since 2011.

## How a VDS fits into the Planning Process

The Local Plan for Tendring is in two parts:

1. Tendring District Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond: North Essex Authorities' Shared Strategic Section 1; and
2. Tendring District Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond: Section 2.

These documents contain policies and strategies for the use and development of land throughout Tendring District.

Sitting alongside the Local Plan is the Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan which contains policies specific to development in Ardleigh parish. The Neighbourhood Plan has the same legal status as the Local Plan.

Applications for planning permission in Ardleigh parish must be determined in accordance with the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.

The Ardleigh Village Design Statement is an annex to the Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan. This means it forms an integral part of the Neighbourhood Plan and - as required by Neighbourhood Plan policy EP - all new development in Ardleigh parish must pay due regard to its contents and design requirements.

## The Ardleigh VDS

The Ardleigh VDS is organised as follows:

**Section 1** explains what a VDS is and how it fits into the local development framework;

**Section 2** provides a general description of the parish, including its geographical location, land uses and predominant settlement patterns;

**Section 3** broadly sets out how new growth and development in the parish should be approached, managed and delivered;

**Section 4** provides an overview of Ardleigh's character, key features and issues, including its history of development, common design pitfalls encountered by modern development, appropriate use of space and parking pressures;

**Section 5** contains character appraisals of the different parts of Ardleigh, including the main village and various outlying hamlets;

**Section 6** provides guidance on the design of new development throughout Ardleigh, including desirable and undesirable architectural features and materials; and

**Section 7** provides a summary of the consultation that took place during the preparation of the VDS.



## SECTION 2: A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PARISH OF ARDLEIGH

Ardleigh stands on a flat gravel plain in open countryside between Colchester and Manningtree. The parish measures some 6 kilometres east to west and about 5½ kilometres north to south. It consists principally of good quality agricultural land. Ardleigh village comprises a small nucleated settlement that has grown around the A137/B1029 crossroads. It is tucked into the landscape and both its form and setting are representative of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths National Character Area in which it resides. Dispersed throughout the remainder of the parish are a range of rural hamlets, many of which have an individual character of their own.

To the west and south of the village centre, there is a valley system which may no longer be very apparent to the casual passer-by. Ardleigh reservoir fills a large part of one of these valleys and the only obvious sign of that valley's existence is at John de Bois Hill. There is also a hilly, sunken lane leading down into the wooded area of Spring Valley which possesses a strikingly different character than the essentially flat land on which most of Ardleigh lies.

The character of the parish is also influenced by its proximity to the urban settlement of Colchester. The A12 and A120 in the south and west are notable urban intrusions into the parish's otherwise well-preserved rural environment.

# Map of Ardleigh parish



## Relationship of Buildings to the Landscape

Probably every house in Ardleigh, even in the village centre, is less than 150 metres from the nearest agricultural field.



*View across Ardleigh Heath to Dedham Road*

Overall, the parish shows a pattern of ribbon development along the roads and lanes, with no development of street networks in the hamlets or in the centre. The village itself has a nucleated form, having grown around the A137/B1029 crossroads. The main body of the village remains tightly centred around this historic focal point.

This development pattern is largely the result of unplanned organic growth, with individual houses being built from time to time, as the need arose.

Views between houses from the roads commonly give some indication that there is open countryside located just beyond, rather than more housing.



*View of open countryside between houses on Colchester Road*

In the lanes and hamlets, houses are mostly set well back from the carriageway, sheltering behind vegetation and hedges. Many of them are relatively low structures, often bungalows.

In spite of their more imposing scale, the parish's farmhouses and other larger houses are typically well settled in the landscape, avoiding any dominating effect.



*Larger farmhouse well set back from the carriageway & sheltered by mature vegetation*

In the village centre, most of the older houses have frontages built right up to the edge of the street, with little or no front garden. Here, views are not generally available from the roads of the surrounding farmland in which the village is situated.



*Khartoum Villas, The Street featuring small front gardens*



*Dundas Place, Colchester Road (Grade II listed) built up against the street*

## **Ardleigh as a Residential & Historic Area**

Ardleigh is a village with just over 2000 residents and has long been a desirable location for house buyers.

It offers village living, yet retains easy access to local towns such as Colchester and Ipswich and easy access by train to London.

The sensitive conversion of otherwise defunct, high quality commercial properties is one way in which new houses can be delivered in the village centre without harm being caused to its built character.



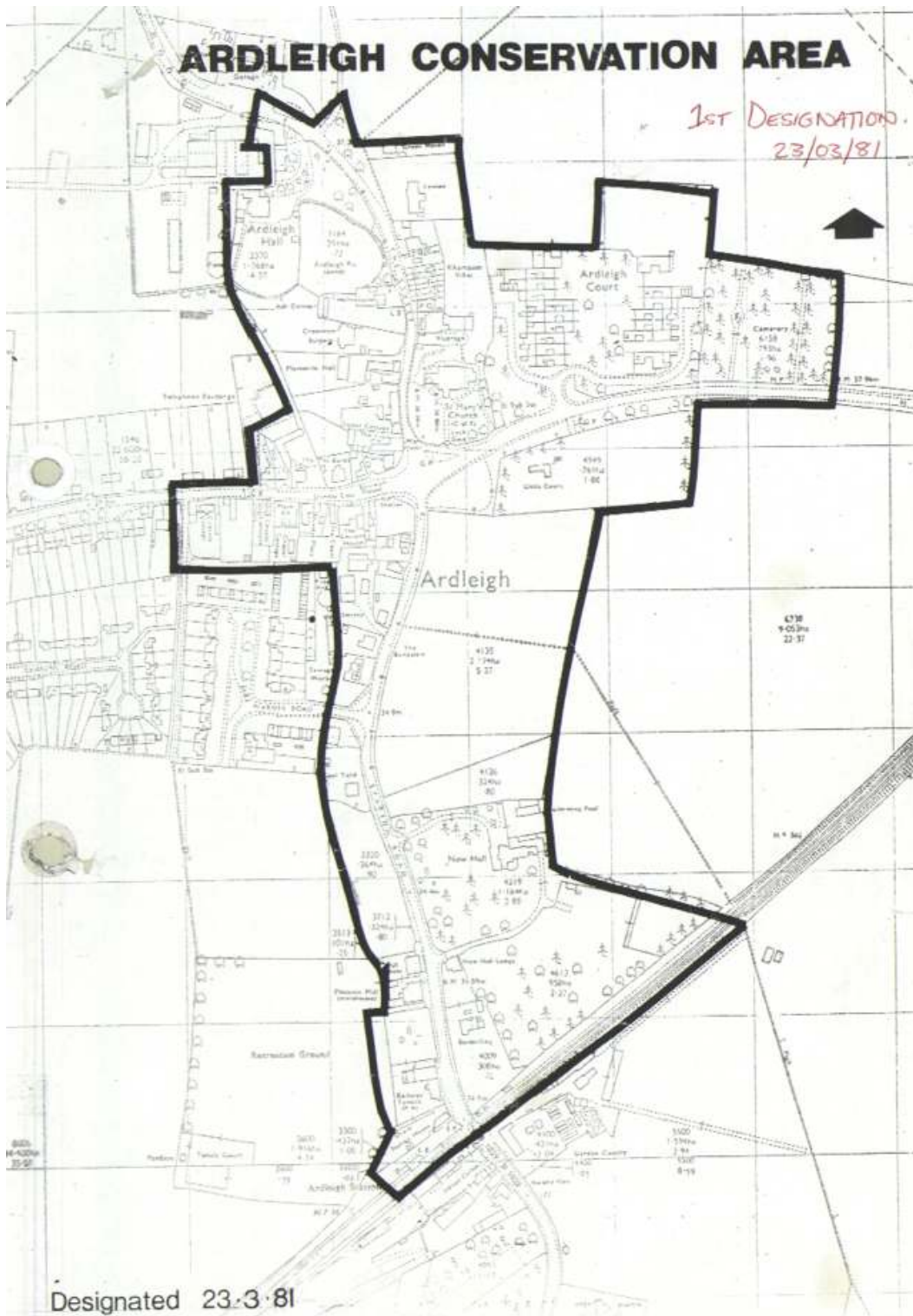
***Ancient House, Colchester Road (Grade II listed)  
successfully converted from a restaurant to a house c. 2007***



***Former Ardleigh Village Hall now converted to a house***

The parish boasts over 70 Grade II listed buildings, 2 Grade II\* listed buildings and 1 Scheduled Ancient Monument ([historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk))

Ardleigh also contains a Conservation Area which was first designated in 1981. The Conservation Area encompasses the heart of the village, including the Grade II\* listed St Mary's Church. It then extends south, terminating just beyond the railway line.



## Commerce & Industry

Due to the limited availability of employment opportunities within the parish, the majority of its working residents must commute outside of its confines for work.

In spite of this, Ardleigh does retain its character as a working, farmland village. In fact, most of the land in the parish is subject to productive agricultural use. Based on the most recent census data (2011), it appears that around 4.3% of parish residents are employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing industries, compared to just 0.8% nationwide.



Ardleigh is also home to a number of small and medium sized businesses, related to a wide range of predominantly rural land-based activities including farming and market gardening, engineering, technology, the timber trade and leisure pursuits. Few of these have an adverse visual impact. Some of the smaller businesses are based unobtrusively in redundant farm buildings.

Crown Business Park, located on the Old Ipswich Road, is undergoing significant expansion following the receipt of planning consents c. 2017 - 2019. Once complete, the site will offer an additional 90 small B1 and B8 commercial units.

To the west of the village, an extension to Ardleigh Reservoir is still underway. Because of screening, this has limited visual impact on the wider landscape.





***Construction underway at Crown Business Park, Old Ipswich Road***

South of the village, there is a long established quarry extracting sand and gravel and manufacturing associated products. There is also a recycling and landfill business. Good effort has been made to mitigate the environmental impacts.



***Quarry restoration***

In the village centre, there are now two shops of which one is also the village Post Office. One shop has closed since 2011. The two shops perform a very important community function, however the garish and cluttered appearance of their shopfronts is unfortunate and detracts from the unassuming, rural built character of the village. The parish council would support opportunities to improve these prominent commercial frontages.



*The two village shops*

A public house and a Chinese takeaway (formerly a fish-and-chip shop) are also located here, both housed in impressive Grade II listed buildings. Unfortunately, the village pub closed during the COVID-19 pandemic and it is not known whether it will reopen again.

There are three other public houses in the parish, including The Crown Inn (near the A12) which is a successful rebuild of a fire damaged mediaeval inn. There are also a couple of cafes, a fast food outlet, an Indian restaurant and an English restaurant.

## Open Spaces

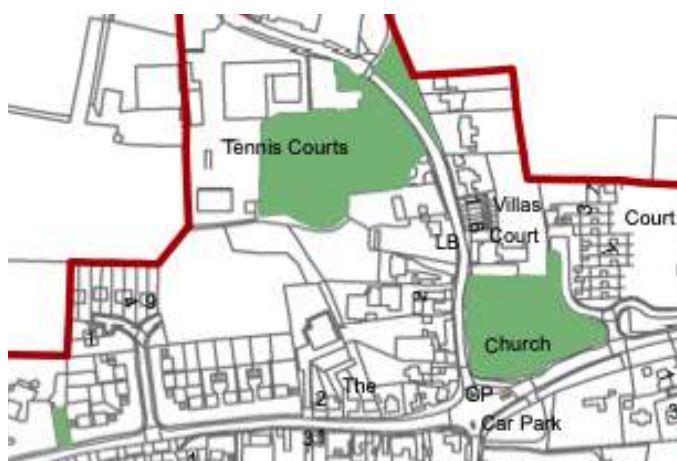
Although it is not seen as a tourist destination, Ardleigh contains a wide variety of tranquil, green and open spaces that contribute materially towards its landscape and recreational value. It possesses a quiet beauty that its residents cherish.



*Ardleigh reservoir*

A number of the parish's most valuable green spaces are formally designated as Safeguarded Local Green Spaces in the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan where they are provided additional protections.

Unfortunately, one of the village's most significant green spaces - Tennis Courts - was lost to a new housing development c. 2017 prior to its formal adoption as a Safeguarded Local Green Space in the Local Plan.



*Extract of the Local Plan's Map of Ardleigh - Tennis Courts given over to housing c. 2017*

The village itself is surrounded on all sides by agricultural land, with public access supported by a number of connecting footpaths which are typically located on the village edges.



*Public footpath and bridleway located in view of the Church, near the village's northernmost boundary*

Within or close to the village centre, there are several green spaces which contribute materially to its visual character and recreational qualities. These include St Mary's churchyard, the village cemetery, the village allotments, the open space within Church View/Chapel Croft, the recreation grounds and the Millennium Green. All of these are formally designated in the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan.



*Village allotments*

It is a characteristic of the village that most of its green spaces sit adjacent to open countryside, separated from it only by hedges. These hedges provide natural shelter and enclosure, whilst ensuring that the green spaces remain integrally connected to the wider open countryside.



*The Millennium Green*



*The recreation ground*

Away from the village, other parts of the parish contain their own green spaces that provide meaningful contributions towards the landscape and settlement character. Those green spaces with particularly significant community value are subject to formal designation in the Neighbourhood Plan, including the woodlands attached to Birch Wood on Hart's Lane and Green Island Gardens on Park Road.



*Woodlands attached to Birch Wood, Hart's Lane*



*Green Island Gardens*

## SECTION 3: MANAGING GROWTH AND NEW DEVELOPMENT IN ARDLEIGH

Planning law requires that planning decisions are made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In Ardleigh, the current development plan includes the following key documents:

- Tendring District Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond: North Essex Authorities' Shared Strategic Section 1;
- Tendring District Local Plan 2013-2033 and Beyond: Section 2;
- Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan; and
- Essex Mineral Local Plan.

Section 1 of the Local Plan contains strategic policies relevant to the various North Essex Authorities, Tendring included. Section 1 also sets the housing and employment requirements for each of the districts over the plan period to 2033.

Section 2 of the Local Plan contains strategic policies relevant to Tendring. It also contains a range of development management policies concerned with the design, form and details that new development in Tendring should adopt.

The Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan provides more detailed policies concerning the design, form and details that new development in the parish should adopt. These policies have been informed, in part, by the contents of this updated VDS.

The current Local Plan replaced the 2007 Local Plan. In the 2007 Local Plan, Ardleigh was designated as a Secondary Defined Village, sitting ahead of Other Rural Settlements in the Settlement Hierarchy.

The current Local Plan repositions Ardleigh at the lowest rung of the Settlement Hierarchy, where it is defined as a Smaller Rural Settlement.

Smaller Rural Settlements are identified in the Local Plan as those settlements with much less in the way of job opportunities, local services, facilities and other infrastructure. Residents of these smaller villages are often reliant on neighbouring towns and villages for work, shopping and other services and frequently need to travel distances by private car.

Consequently, Smaller Rural Settlements are considered the least sustainable locations for growth where the District Council is conscious that too much development is likely to increase villagers' daily reliance on private cars.

The principal strategy for Smaller Rural Settlements is to permit small-scale development that is sympathetic to a settlement's rural and historic character, helps younger people to remain in the area and keeps local shops and services viable.

It is anticipated that each Smaller Rural Settlement will achieve only a small scale increase in housing stock over the plan period to 2033.

The District's current projections anticipate that at least 122 new houses will be granted permission throughout the 18 Smaller Rural Settlements between the years 2021/22 and 2032/33. This equates to approximately 0.6 new houses per Smaller Rural Settlement per year.

Unless the development comprises a Rural Exception Site (affordable housing), new housing growth in Ardleigh should be provided within its defined Settlement Development Boundaries (see Section 4 of the VDS for a map of Ardleigh's Settlement Development Boundaries).

Any Rural Exception Sites must adjoin Ardleigh's defined Settlement Development Boundaries and should be supported by evidence that there is a need within the parish for the affordable housing proposed.

In terms of new employment growth, the Local Plan is supportive of proposals to convert or redevelop rural buildings for employment uses provided, amongst other criteria, that:

- The building is structurally sound and does not require significant expansion or alteration;
- The rural character of the building and its setting would be preserved; and
- The new use would not give rise to significant levels of traffic or cause harm to the character or safety of roads.

The Local Plan is also generally supportive of tourism and leisure-related developments. In particular, the diversification of farms to provide leisure and tourism facilities is encouraged, as are new and extended campsites.

The Local Plan also seeks to preserve and strengthen the rural economy. This includes support for the construction of new buildings in the open countryside where they are essential to support agricultural, aqua-cultural, horticultural and forestry-related businesses.

The various Local Plan design policies require, amongst other provisions, that all new development:

- Makes a positive contribution to the quality of the local environment and either protects or enhances local character;
- Relates well to its site and surroundings particularly in terms of its siting, height, scale, massing, form, design and materials; and
- Respects or enhances views, skylines, existing street patterns, open spaces, heritage features, landscape features and other locally important features.

The overriding purpose of this VDS is to inform and supplement the design policies of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan - see, in particular, policy EP of the Neighbourhood Plan. The VDS aims to:

1. Broadly identify those positive key features that define the established character of the various parts of Ardleigh parish and which should therefore be protected or enhanced by new development; and
2. Broadly identify those design features - including building forms, materials and scales - that are appropriate in Ardleigh (normally belonging to the traditional local vernacular) and which will therefore be expected and encouraged in new development.

The VDS also aims to appraise recent developments in the parish - including identification of their positive and negative design features - in order to better guide and inform the design of future developments.



## **SECTION 4: AN OVERVIEW OF ARDLEIGH**

This section begins by giving a general overview of the growth and development of Ardleigh throughout the ages. It also provides brief descriptions of the different eras of architecture on display in the parish.

It proceeds to identify some of the most common design pitfalls that Ardleigh's modern housing developments frequently encounter and offers solutions to overcome them.

It then addresses two of the key challenges and opportunities that new development in Ardleigh must address; the use of open space and the issue of parked cars.

### **Ardleigh's History of Development: An Overview**

All eras of building are represented in the parish. It is neither possible nor advisable to sum up the character or value of any part of the parish simply in terms of the age of its buildings. Even in the Conservation Area, older buildings are generally outnumbered by modern buildings.

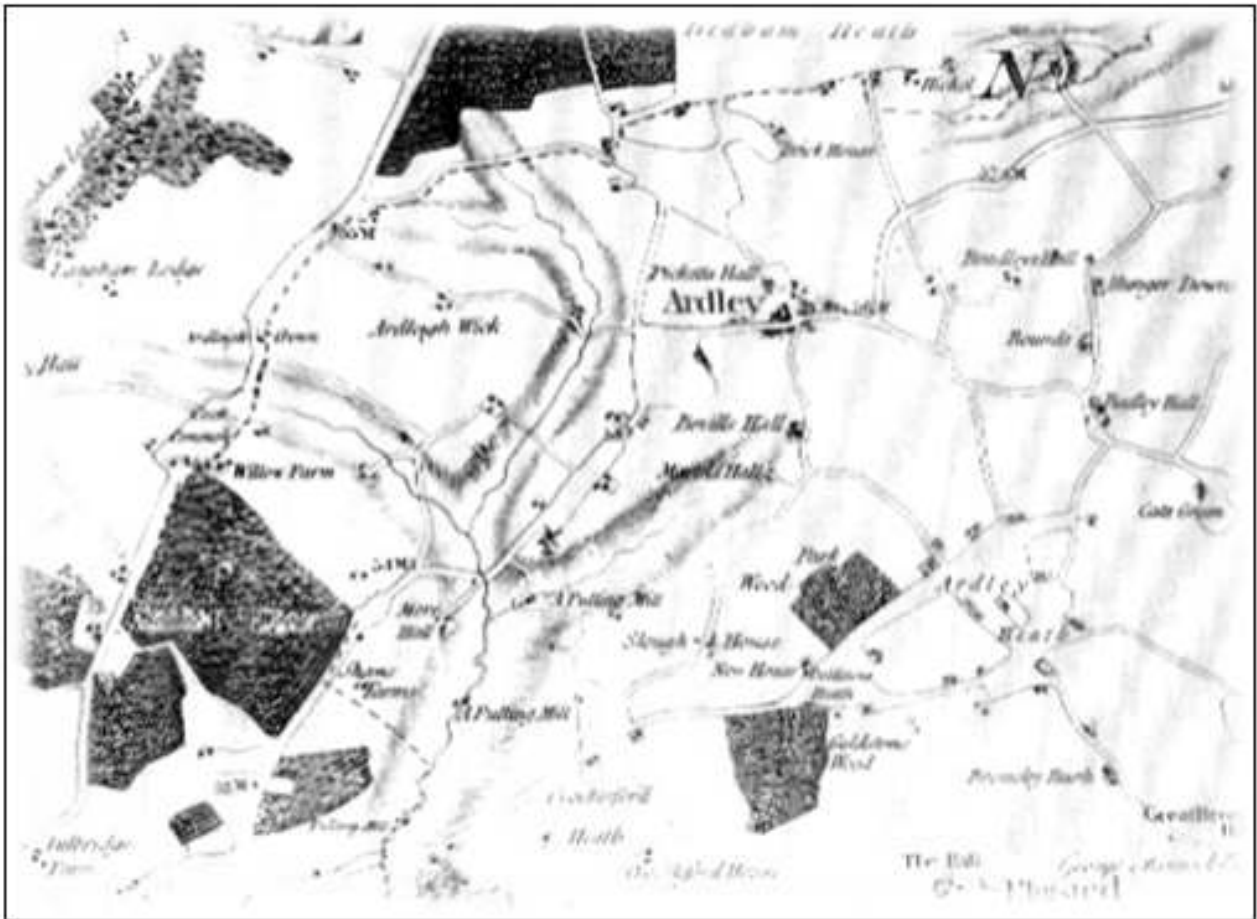
This VDS provides an overview of four main building eras represented in the parish. These are Mediaeval (c. 1066 - 1485), Tudor (c. 1485 - 1603) Georgian & Victorian (c. 1714 - 1914) and Modern (c. 1920 - present).

However, it is believed that the parish has been settled in excess of 3000 years. Ardleigh appeared in the 1086 Domesday Book, with its population of 38 households placing it amongst the largest 20% of all settlements recorded at this time. Ardleigh's only Scheduled Ancient Monument contains a later bronze age cemetery (likely c. 1400 - 1200 B.C.E) comprising both barrows and urnfield.

Ardleigh village as we know it today grew up around the A137/B1029 crossroads in a nucleated fashion. The wider parish was subject to only very sporadic development, typically related to agriculture. For the most part, this is how it remains.

The parish's remaining mediaeval buildings are mainly clustered on the outskirts of the main village. Many of its more impressive and imposing farmhouses were established in the 18th and early 19th centuries. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, more dwellings were added along the roads between farms, likely to house their agricultural workers. Throughout the modern period, additional housebuilding has taken place along the roads and lanes. It is this modern period of

housebuilding that has contributed most to the urbanisation of the parish, in terms of building design, density and pattern.



*Chapman & Andre's 1777 Map of Ardleigh, showing development concentrated around the A137/B1029 crossroads*

## Mediaeval era

The oldest buildings in the village have survived from mediaeval times and were originally built from whatever local natural materials lent themselves to building. Houses were timber framed, filled with mud and sticks and thatched with straw.

Most would have had steeply pitched roofs and whitewashed walls – a pattern that persisted for centuries. After centuries of repair, those timber-framed buildings are now mostly rendered over and have tiled roofs instead of thatch.



*Example of a rendered, timber-framed cottage*



*Thatched cottage, Dead Lane (Grade II listed) featuring thatched roof with eye-brow dormers*

The most notable mediaeval building in Ardleigh is the Grade II\* listed Church of St Mary, parts of which date to the 14th Century. This ecclesiastical building is of considerable architectural interest, both inside and out. It has substantial presence at the heart of the Conservation Area, with its tower rising far above any other built structures.



*St Mary's Church*

## **Tudor era**

The Tudor era saw the introduction of more elaborate and ambitious house types, including the use of jetties (overhangs) to gain extra space on upper floors. Other distinctive features of this building era include exposed timber frames and decorative pargetting/motifs.



*16th Century Tudor cottages (Grade II listed) located opposite the village church, featuring jetty and pargetting*

## **Georgian & Victorian eras**

The Georgian and Victorian periods saw some older buildings “refronted” in accordance with the architectural fashions of the time. This wave of “modernisation” occurred throughout the country.

These eras also saw a significant increase in the number of buildings constructed using materials transported from elsewhere. Red bricks, for example, were imported from Suffolk and other parts of Essex, becoming the predominant building material.



*A handsome red brick Georgian house*

Victorian railways brought materials from all corners of the British Isles, including yellow stock bricks from London and roofing slates from Wales. This led to the

introduction of new building styles made possible by the increasing availability of these new materials. For example, bricks allowed taller, squarer buildings to be built, whilst Welsh slate enabled the construction of lower-pitched roofs.



*Impressive facade, with low-pitched slate roof emblematic of the Victorian era*

From c. 1700 onwards, the vertical sliding sash window was added to many mediaeval and Tudor buildings, disguising their origins.



*Original, small-pane vertical sliding sash windows*

## **Modern era**

From c. 1920 onwards, building materials and components such as windows and doors have been mass-produced and transported across the entire country. Consequently, new houses in rural areas like Ardleigh tend to have less basis in the traditional local vernacular, following national trends instead.

Historically, new houses were added to the settlement organically and gradually, to meet villagers' accommodation needs as and when they arose. The modern era has seen a change to this approach, with larger schemes of multiple houses added to Ardleigh in order to meet the wider accommodation needs of the district and country.

Whilst this change in approach is warranted, it remains of vital importance that all modern houses in Ardleigh show due respect for its character. This includes showing respect for historic and established densities, settlement patterns, building types, landscape features and construction materials.

Whilst there are examples of good quality modern development in Ardleigh, there are also a number of modern housing schemes that fail by some margin to show the necessary regard for its character.



*Good quality modern housing in Ardleigh*

Identified below are some common design pitfalls that a number of Ardleigh's more recent housing developments have fallen into. It is anticipated that the clear identification of these particularly common design pitfalls in this VDS will significantly reduce the risk of their inclusion in any future development in Ardleigh.

**Design pitfall 1:** Parking is an afterthought; streetscenes are inappropriately dominated by urban hardstandings and parked cars; where garages are provided, they are too small to house modern cars.



*Garages built too small for modern vehicles*



*Lack of appropriate parking solutions leads to parked cars dominating the streetscene*

**Solution:** Parking should be considered from the outset of the design process so that it can be unobtrusively integrated into new housing schemes, without dominating the streetscene. All garages should be built to modern standards so that they are suitable for use by modern vehicles. Hardstanding should be kept to a minimum and preference should be shown for sensitive rural materials such as gravel.

**Design pitfall 2:** Local vernacular features (such as dormer windows) are “crammed in” to otherwise generic house designs, appearing awkward and poorly integrated.



*Dormer windows appear “cramped in” and relate poorly to the roof and building form*

**Solution:** Local vernacular materials and details should only be included on local vernacular buildings. Regard should be shown to the traditional form, design, materials and proportions of local vernacular features. For example, dormer windows should be of an appropriate size relative to the roof form and should be positioned spaciously.

**Design pitfall 3:** The external design and appearance of houses is generic (“any time, any place”) and lacks quality and/or architectural interest. For example, houses are built with expansive, blank elevations that present a poor face onto the public realm.



*Expansive and predominantly blank elevations are symptomatic of poor and ill-thought-out design*



***Solution:*** The design of new houses should be influenced as much (if not more) by external considerations (i.e. how it looks from the outside) as by internal requirements (i.e. how the house functions and how its internal spaces relate to one another). Design details should not be an afterthought.

**Design pitfall 4:** Boundary treatments are notably urban and hard-edged, rather than rural and/or soft.



***Traditional iron railing obscured by insensitive close-boarded fencing***



***Close-boarded fencing is obtrusive and incongruent in the context of Ardleigh***

*Solution:* Wherever possible, enclosure should be achieved with soft landscaping. If trees and hedges already exist on the site, great efforts should be made to incorporate these within the residential layout in order to provide enclosure. Where hard treatments such as gates and walls are required, these should be traditional and rural in their form and character. Preference will be shown, for example, to low brick walls, traditional iron railings and timber post-and-rail fences. Close-boarded fencing is rarely, if ever, appropriate in a rural parish such as Ardleigh.

## Settling new development in context: use of space

The older houses in the village centre were typically built close to the street, with little or no front garden. This naturally encouraged a community atmosphere from the outset, as neighbours were close to one another and none of the housing was remote.

Where new houses are introduced in these historic areas (e.g. The Street) that ignore these important spatial principles, the distancing effect can be very noticeable and jarring. Setting modern houses back from the established building line does not make them appear less obtrusive. In fact, the opposite effect is achieved as they tend to stand out like a sore thumb.

The distancing effect can be worsened if other elements of the design are similarly incongruous e.g. urban boundary treatments or generic architecture.



*Phoenix Mill and the Mill House on Station Road, built close to the street*

More recent, self-contained housing schemes (i.e. located on new streets, away from historic streets and lanes) have taken a different approach to creating community atmosphere. The neighbourhood concept has been incorporated in the design of new housing developments such as Church View/Chapel Croft.

In that small estate, community atmosphere is encouraged by the pleasant open green space located at its centre which the surrounding houses overlook. The estate has also been sensitively laid out so that the houses themselves provide enclosure

from the wider environment, avoiding any over-reliance on stark and obtrusive boundary treatments such as close-boarded fences.



*Pleasant green space at the centre of Church View/Chapel Croft*

Some of the village's other modern developments (including Ardleigh Court, The Limes and Forge Court) exhibit similar, community-focused spatial qualities.

Most modern developments in Ardleigh include at least some green, open spaces and soft landscaping features. Where existing, good quality trees and vegetation are incorporated into new housing schemes, the positive effect on the perceived maturity and local sensitivity of that scheme is substantial.



*Trees on the green space marking the entrance to Ingram's Piece*



*Ardleigh Court (latter 20th Century) incorporates mature trees*

New housing can also take advantage of its proximity to existing green and open spaces. For example, the Wheatlands development on Station Road presents an

open and welcoming face onto the highway at the front whilst, at the rear, gardens back onto the well-landscaped Millennium Green affording them a very high degree of seclusion and maturity.



*Wheatlands development, Station Road*



*Trees and hedges punctuate the built-up Colchester Road*

## Parking problems & pressures

Parked cars are a visual blight and a frequent cause of obstruction, especially in the village centre. It is imperative, therefore, that all new housing developments in the village include garages or other off-road parking facilities.

Where garages are included in new housing schemes, these must be of sufficient size to store larger modern vehicles. Preference will always be shown for off-road parking solutions that limit the presence and/or prominence of parked cars within the streetscene.

There are some areas of the village where parking is of particular concern.

One such area is The Street, especially in the vicinity of the Post Office. This part of the village centre has significant heritage value and contains a concentration of very special listed buildings. Proposals whose primary objective is to reduce parking pressures on The Street will be enthusiastically supported. In particular, the Parish Council would be very supportive of proposals to relocate Royal Mail vans away from The Street. Developments likely to cause any material worsening of the parking situation along The Street will generally be resisted.



*Royal Mail vans are a near-daily visual blight on this most special part of the Conservation Area*

## **SECTION 5: INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER APPRAISALS**

This section contains detailed (but non-exhaustive) character appraisals of the different parts of Ardleigh, including the village (and Conservation Area) and various outlying hamlets and lanes.

Generally speaking, the hamlets and lanes have been subject to only limited change and development over the past hundred or more years. Although their characters vary, they are all deeply rural. Away from the village, the working agricultural landscape is the dominant feature.

It is recognised that there are some houses and developments (normally isolated) in the parish that lie outside of the areas appraised in this section. It is likely, nonetheless, that at least some of the assessments contained within this section will still apply to these areas.

In the case of development proposed outside of an area specifically appraised in this VDS, developers and householders should take a logical and common-sense approach to the application of its guidance.

## **Area 1: Ardleigh Village & Conservation Area**

Ardleigh grew up around the A137/B1029 crossroads and this central part of the village remains the hub of community life and contains some of the parish's oldest and most valuable development.

Settlement is still mainly concentrated around the A137/B1029 crossroads in a nucleated fashion. Moving away from the crossroads, development typically tapers off to meet the village edges.

The clear heritage value of Ardleigh village is recognised by its formal designation as a Conservation Area (see map in Section 2 of the VDS). The Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of the village as well as some areas of modern housing development (including Ardleigh Court, Forge Court and Chapel Croft/Church View).

Some parts of the village are excluded from the Conservation Area. In these areas, there will generally be more scope for alterations and additions to the existing housing stock. It should be noted, however, that the same minimum design requirements (e.g. to make a positive contribution to the quality of the local environment and to protect or enhance local character) will apply throughout the parish, irrespective of Conservation Area status.

As a general principle, the Local Plan expects most new development in the parish to occur within Ardleigh village's defined settlement boundaries. Consequently, this is the area of the parish that is likely to experience the most change over the plan period. Notwithstanding this, it must be acknowledged that there is limited space for additional housebuilding to take place within the village boundaries without risking considerable harm to the settlement character.

Consequently, most new residential development in the village is likely to take one of the following forms:

- i) Alterations and extensions of existing houses;
- ii) Subdivisions of existing houses;
- iii) One-off, infill houses (i.e. located on plots between two existing houses); and
- iv) Conversions of non-residential buildings to houses.

In terms of the village's character, the Conservation Area Character Appraisal adopted by the District Council in 2006 provides a useful starting point. The Ardleigh Conservation Area Character Appraisal (ACACA) remains an active and important



Supplementary Planning Document to which - in addition to this VDS - all developers and residents intending to make changes within the Conservation Area should have regard. The ACACA summarises the village's character as follows:

#### **SUMMARY**

**Ardleigh is a small medieval village at an important road junction, and retains its fine church and sequences of attractive vernacular buildings. The well-treed approaches to the north and the east are essential to the character of the village and are also included in the Area. The village expanded southwards in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in further groups of distinctive buildings, which with their settings are also recognised by Area designation.**

The above character summary appropriately recognises that a large part of the village's special interest derives from the balance it strikes between natural and built features. In most parts of the village (including its very centre), buildings and built features are surrounded or otherwise complemented by a prevalence of green spaces, trees and hedgerows.

The village's central crossroads, with its fine collection of close-knit listed buildings and prominent, generously landscaped churchyard exhibits this characteristic particularly strongly.

Some of the most important of the village's green spaces are now subject to formal designation and protection in the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan.



*A fine collection of listed buildings overlooks the village's central crossroads*



*The churchyard with its generous array of impressive trees*



*St Mary's Church*

The ACACA also identifies a number of positive, neutral and negative features of the Conservation Area which are summarised below (please note that these lists are not intended to be exhaustive).

### **Positive features**

- Despite the general openness of the landscape, the approaches to the older part of the village are relatively well-screened by mature hedgerows and trees;
- The disposition of buildings and arrangement of mature trees and vegetation around the central crossroads;
- The attractive low brick walls associated with the churchyard and Ardleigh Court;
- The church, churchyard and cemetery; and
- The listed buildings facing onto The Street and Colchester Road.



*A combination of traditional boundary treatments on display along The Street*

### **Neutral features**

- Where buildings provide little or no sense of enclosure (including Church View and Chapel Croft);
- Mundane, modern houses that fail to produce interesting and consistent frontages (including those houses at the entrance to Mary Warner Road); and
- The Village Hall and its car park which fail to respond to the character of their distinctive neighbours.

### **Negative features**

- The post-war semi-detached houses opposite the Methodist Church on Colchester Road; and
- The drive to the Telephone Exchange.

Since the VDS was first published in 2011, a fair amount of new development has occurred within both the village and Conservation Area.

One of the most significant instances of new residential development is Picotts Place. This c. 2016 development replaced the former tennis courts (and pleasant green space) located in the north of the village. It was delivered in two phases, with 4 detached houses built first and 7 detached houses added later. It is now complete.

Picotts Place exhibits a number of the design flaws that the Parish Council is keen to see avoided in any future development within the village. These flaws include (but are not limited to):

- Blank and uninspiring building elevations that present a poor face onto the public realm;

- A prevalence of inappropriate and incongruent boundary treatments, in particular close-boarded fences;
- Awkward and ill-thought-out inclusion of local vernacular features (such as dormer windows) within otherwise generic house designs; and
- Lack of appropriate parking solutions (including undersized garages), leading to the dominance of parked cars within the streetscene.



*Picotts Place exhibits a number of undesirable design features*

Other developments undertaken since 2011 include an extensive scheme of repair to the Grade II listed Ancient House on Colchester Road. This scheme of repair has been very sensitively undertaken and the Parish Council is pleased with the outcome. As for most successful repair schemes to historic properties, it is almost impossible to tell that any modern work to the building has occurred.



*Repair work sensitively undertaken at Ancient House, including repair of roof, gutters, flashings and chimneys*



*New housing at Ingrams Piece - greater efforts could have been made to reduce the visual impact of parked cars on the streetscene. The chosen road surface is also incongruously urban.*



*Contemporary dwellings at Ingrams Piece - the porches appear tacked-on rather than an integral part of the design*



*The loss of some of Khartoum Villa's original timber windows (featuring beautiful leaded light transoms) is unfortunate and detracts from the character of the whole terrace*

Since 2011, the village's settlement boundary has been extended southwards to encompass the newly constructed scheme of c. 18 dwellings located just south of the railway line on Kiln Road. The Kiln Road housing scheme is of clearly high quality and is considered to be the most successful new housing development delivered in the parish in recent years. Some of its most successful features include:

- Bold and pleasant mix of contemporary and more traditional materials that have firm local relevance - this adds liveliness and a sense of identity that prevents the scheme from appearing as yet another example of generic, mass housebuilding;
- Attention to detail, including the style/materials of chimneys, light fixtures, hard surfaces and windows;
- A range of house types, sizes, forms and materials provide liveliness and variety to the streetscene;
- Elevations are active and nicely broken up with articulation and contrasts in building materials; and
- The whole scheme has evidently been constructed and finished to a very high standard. For example, road surfaces are appropriate and precise, gutters are well-placed, satellite dishes are located unobtrusively and lead flashings are polite.



*Each house is given its own unique but complementary identity - together, they form a cohesive but pleasantly varied whole*



*This high quality streetscene could be much improved by replacement of the high brick wall and close-boarded fence with a more appropriate boundary treatment (such as a hedge, low railing or low brick wall)*



*The new houses employ a mix of traditional and more contemporary local materials with great success*

## Area 2: Crockleford Heath

The field boundaries as they appear on OS maps hint that this area was once a cluster of smallholdings. There appear to be examples of houses from each general historic period. The by-roads, where there are a few houses located behind well-established hedges and trees, appear relatively quiet. Bromley Road is relatively busy.



*Wivenhoe Road*



*The Crockleford end of Spring Valley Lane*

Although the old roads from Crockleford to Ardeigh (Spring Valley Lane and Bromley Road) are still intact, the cutting of the A120 runs beneath them like a boundary mark. This is partly because the land immediately beyond the A120 looks different, being relatively more open. The area has much in common visually with other out-village areas of Ardeigh.

Since 2011, the area has experienced a fair amount of new housebuilding, including 145 dwellings currently under construction on the south side of Bromley Road, adjacent to Crockleford Heath (and the Salary Brook local nature reserve). Although this new estate currently remains under construction, its dwellings appear to be of generic suburban character, offering little in the way of local vernacular features.



*1 of the 145 dwellings under construction on Bromley Road*



4 detached dwellings have also been constructed in a prominent location on Bromley Road, opposite a group of statutorily listed buildings. These dwellings are very large and feature substantial sections of glazing across their front elevations. The transition of this affected land parcel from open, undulating paddock (affording wide views of the landscape) to housing estate has caused considerable harm to the character and appearance of the lane and the formerly very rural setting and outlook of the listed buildings.



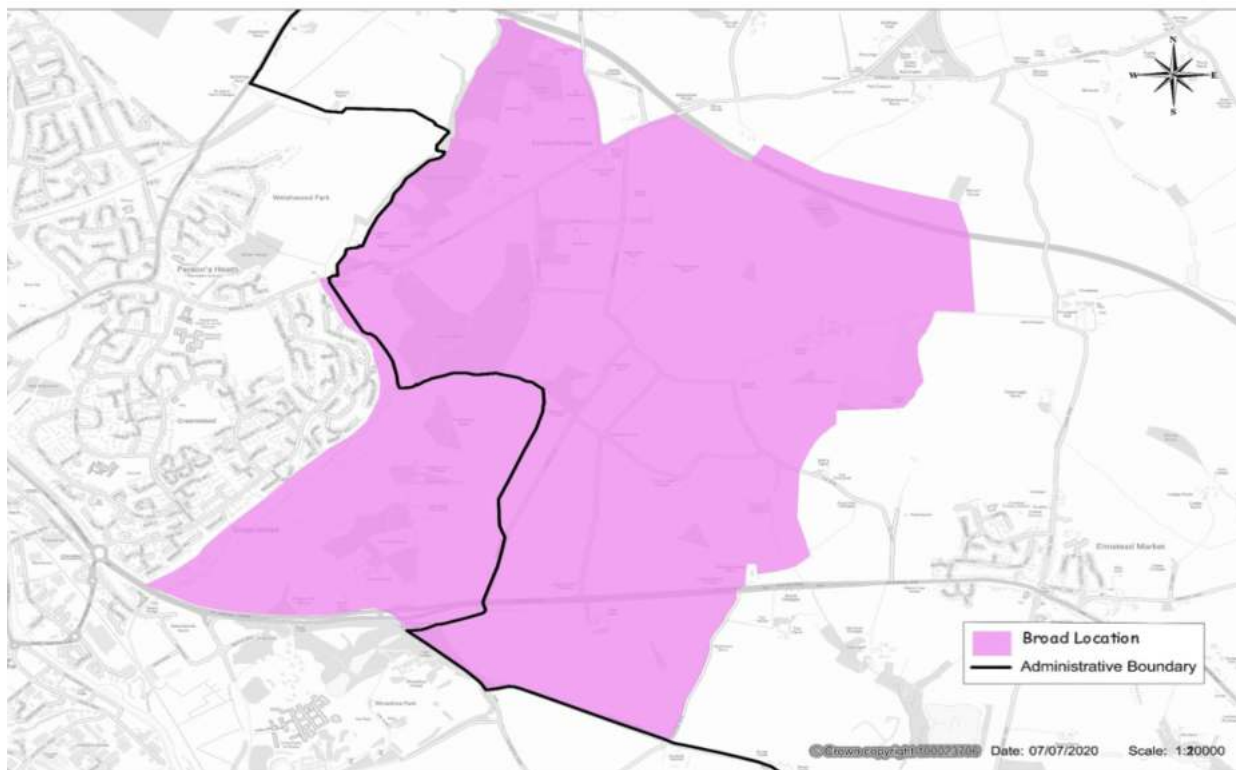
*4 new houses built on Bromley Road*



*The same site, c. 2016*

This is also the area of the parish likely to be most affected by the planned Tendring/ Colchester Borders Garden Community. The detailed form, design and precise

location of the proposed garden community has yet to be established. However, Section 1 of the Local Plan identifies the following broad location:



**Figure 10.2 of the Section 1 Local Plan identifying the Garden Community's broad location**

The broad location of the Garden Community is shown to encompass Crockleford Heath. It also encompasses the following notable nature sites:

- Churn Wood, a large ancient woodland designated a Local Wildlife Site (LoWS). This site has substantial landscape and wildlife value. As ancient woodland, it comprises an irreplaceable habitat. It performs an important landscape function in the terms of preventing the coalescence of Ardleigh and Colchester; and
- Wall's Wood, another designated Local Wildlife Site (LoWS) full of mature trees and wildlife, with Salary Brook passing through and numerous footpaths supporting public access.

It will be important that the design and development of the Garden Community (where it affects Crockleford Heath) maintains the tranquil, rural qualities of this part of the parish. Any development that would cause harm to the value, integrity or capacity for public appreciation of the above nature sites will be staunchly resisted.

### **Area 3: Bromley Road from the A120 to Frating Road**

There are small clusters of houses in the Ardleigh section of this road and larger clusters in the Great Bromley section where (under the name Colchester Road) it approaches Frating Road. Again, there are examples of housing from each period of history. The overall picture is one of a small number of unassuming houses along a partly hedged road which runs through open farmland, passing beside one area of woodland.



*Junction of Bromley Road and Park Road*

## Area 4: Park Road

This is a quieter road, which for part of its length runs between parkland and woodland. For the rest, it runs through farmland, where it is only partly hedged. There is one prominent listed building, Ardleigh Park, an associated lodge, a farmhouse and various cottages. Most of these are on the north side of the road.

Green Island Gardens, located on the south side of Park Road towards its junction with Bromley Road, has a notable positive effect on the character of this rural lane.



*Cottages at east end of Park Road*



*Ardleigh Park*

A solar farm has also been introduced at Chancery Farm, near to the junction with Frating Road. This solar farm occupies prime agricultural land and has some visual prominence from the road.

The parish council believes that vegetative screening of the solar farm site was required as a condition of the planning consent. However, the site appears to be in breach of this condition and the parish council intends to raise this matter with the District Council. The parish council would be supportive of enhanced vegetative screening of the site.

Whilst the parish council is broadly supportive of renewable energy proposals in their area, the benefits of any renewable energy developments should always be carefully weighed against the following matters:

- Effect on local character and appearance;
- Effect on best and most versatile agricultural land (only 3% of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths LCA consists of Grade 1 or Grade 2 Agricultural Land and continued coastal erosion is causing a progressive loss of productive agricultural land in the

coastal areas. Consequently, the retention of highest quality agricultural land in inland areas such as Ardleigh is all the more important).

## Area 5: Slough Lane

There are few buildings along this lane. The most southerly are those associated with Slough Farm. Slough Farm contains a fine collection of historic farm buildings, although they do not appear to be listed. Some of these historic buildings appear to be in need of repair.



*Slough Farm's farmhouse*



*One of Slough Farm's historic farm buildings*

Further north, on the west side of the lane, are two properties and then the buildings of the quarrying operation and associated businesses. Opposite is the entrance to a recycling and landfill site. At the north end of the lane there are two cottages on the west side and a farm building on the east side.



*Distinctive Dutch barns at north end of the lane*

Slough Lane does carry a fair amount of traffic associated with the businesses in the designated employment zone and the farm. Nonetheless, it is not unpleasant and this is largely the result of well-maintained hedging on both sides.

Hedgerow screening of the quarry site could be enhanced in places to reduce the visibility of machinery from the road.

## Area 6: Frating Road & Burnt Heath

Between its junctions with Slough Lane and Park Road, Frating Road has only two dwellings, Vince's Farm and Chancery Farm. This stretch of the road is slightly winding, between low hedges. The stretch between its Park Road junction and its junction with Mill Lane is densely housed on its southwest side, with only two dwellings on its northeast side. The cottages along the southwest side all lie quite close to the busy carriageway.



*Nichols Corner, looking northwest along Frating Road*



*Frating Road, Burnt Heath*

Burnt Heath is sufficiently well built-up to have the character of a village street. It includes a former chapel and, just over the parish boundary, a pub.

There have been multiple applications since 2011 seeking planning consent to construct new houses along the section of Frating Road located between Colchester Road and Park Road. All of these applications have been withdrawn or refused by the District Council. Although this section of Frating Road has a more built-up character, it is one of the least sustainable parts of the parish. All residents of this area are reliant on private vehicles to access even the most basic of services.

## **Area 7: Mill Lane/Back Road/Waterhouse Lane/Morrow Lane**

In more open countryside to the northeast are clusters of small houses which were originally farm workers' cottages. These have been augmented by more modern houses.

This area has a predominantly working agricultural character. Plant nurseries and other similar land-based industries have some prominence in views from the roads.



*Cottages in Waterhouse Lane*



*Modern house provides a successful contemporary twist on the local vernacular*





***Contemporary boundary treatment on Waterhouse Lane is appropriate and enables filtered views of the site***

## **Area 8: Home Farm Lane/Little Bromley Road/Hungerdown Lane**

This area contains a more open weave of lanes skirting large cultivated fields. The lanes are very lightly populated - principally by large farmhouses, several of which are listed buildings.



*Industrial buildings in Home Farm Lane*



*Badley Hall, Little Bromley Road*

A hedge replanting scheme has been carried out along the south side of Little Bromley Road. As of 2021, this appears to be established and growing well.



*Hedge replanting scheme has established well*

There is light industry in the northern part of Home Farm Lane (adjacent to the railway) and the beginnings of the former LSA settlements which stretch out of the parish towards Lawford.

Pleasant views of the open landscape and irrigation lake (which supports an abundance of birdlife) can be experienced along Little Bromley Road.



*Landscape views along Little Bromley Road*

Since 2011, the north end of Home Farm Lane has experienced modest housing growth. The design of these new properties is not wholly successful. In particular, concerns are raised with regard to the chosen boundary treatments. The imposing brick walls and large metal gates are not characteristic of the local vernacular and give the impression of an exclusive gated community which is at odds with the parish's community atmosphere.

In Ardleigh and especially its less built-up rural areas, seclusion and privacy is best achieved with layout and soft vegetation. For example, farmhouses built in the rural area have traditionally been well-set back from carriageways, with mature trees and hedges planted on the site frontages affording additional privacy.



*Inappropriate boundary treatments in new housing on Home Farm Lane*

## **Area 9: Fox Ash Estate (part)/Oak Tree Corner/Harwich Road**

The character of this area results largely from the buildings and land-use established by the inter- and post-war Land Settlement Association (LSA) in Ardleigh and Lawford.



*Dwelling built as part of the Lawford/Ardleigh LSA*

Although some of the honest 1930s-style houses built for the LSA have been extended, they generally retain their original character. Some of these dwellings are still associated with rows of agricultural outbuildings and glasshouses. Although the LSA scheme was wound up in the 1980s, some smallholders remained to form their own co-operative - Foxash Growers Ltd - which continues to produce today.

Ardleigh parish contains only the southern part of this former LSA, with the remainder located in the adjoining parish of Lawford.

This part of the parish has clear heritage significance. Only approximately 20 LSAs were delivered throughout England and these sites continue to provide a valuable insight into the social issues (and solutions) faced by England in the post-war era.

## Area 10: Hunter's Chase

This area runs along the northern boundary of the parish. The western half of the lane is characterised by very open unhedged farmland on its south side and by a line of dwellings, mostly bungalows, set back behind hedges along the north side. Like many lanes in the parish, it contains some buildings which are prominent and others which are not.

Most of the dwellings at the east end of the lane were smallholders' semi-detached cottages built for the LSA. Some of these have been altered and extended but most retain their original, modest character.



*Dwelling built as part of the Lawford/Ardleigh LSA*

Following the receipt of planning consents in 2019 - 2021, a large dwelling is currently under construction at Pond House, close to the junction with Coggeshall Road. As this dwelling appears to have a greater impact on the character of Coggeshall Road, it is considered in the following section.

## Area 11: Coggeshall Road

Coggeshall Road is a fairly busy through route between Dedham and Ardleigh. Its northern end is in Dedham Heath where there is a large cluster of housing. From where it enters Ardleigh (just north of Hunters Chase) to where it joins the A137, it is well-hedged on both sides and accommodates only about a dozen dwellings. Most of its dwellings originated as LSA properties. Most of the buildings here are set back from the road. A pleasing feature of this stretch of road is a large ditch on the west side, which holds water and aquatic plants for much of the year.

Opposite the junction with Hunter's Chase lies Goodhall, a handsome Gault brick building which is Grade II listed. Further south are Goodhall Farm and Goodhall Cottages.



*LSA dwelling*



*Goodhall*

The large new dwelling under construction at Pond House on Hunter's Chase has considerable presence in the Coggeshall Road streetscene, also affecting the setting of the listed building (Goodhall) located opposite.

Although it remains under construction, the new dwelling looks to be of an imposing scale, exceeding the traditional scale of Ardleigh's larger rural dwellings and farmhouses. Its appearance on this prominent, formerly green and spacious plot of land lends this part of Coggeshall Road a more built-up character which is unfortunate. It also appears that mature hedgerows, which formerly made a firm positive contribution to the character of Coggeshall Road, have been wholly removed from the site's boundaries. Once construction is complete, it would be expected that new planting is installed along the boundary with Coggeshall Road in order to restore some of the lane's lost rural character and soften the appearance of the large new dwelling. Close-boarded fences would be an intrusive and inappropriate feature here.



*Dwelling under construction at Pond House - view from Coggeshall Road c. March 2021*



*The same view c. 2010*



*Stage of construction c. November 2021*

## **Area 12: Ardleigh Heath incl. Dead Lane/Malting Farm Lane/Fen Lane/Dedham Road**

The character of this area (especially Dedham Road) is influenced by its proximity to the village, although it remains clearly distinct and appreciably more rural. It appears to contain some tourist accommodation.

On Dedham Road, the dwellings originally related to the land were situated mainly along the east side, facing open fields to the west.



*One of the older houses in Dedham Road*

These have been supplemented with 20th century houses, of widely varying sizes. Some of the older houses have been seen as candidates for conversion to larger homes. There are obvious clusters of housing at either end of Dead Lane and at the apex of Malting Farm Lane. New houses tend to be sheltered behind hedges and trees.

The two Grade II listed thatched roof cottages marking the entrance to Dead Lane off Dedham Road have considerable presence in the two streetscenes. A row of modern bungalows sits adjacent to the historic properties. Although this modern development is of overall limited architectural quality, it does adopt an appropriately modest scale.





*Thatched cottages on Dead Lane, with modern development adjacent*

## **Area 13: Harts Lane/Wick Lane/Crown Lane North/Old Ipswich Road**

These lanes are grouped together in most villagers' minds as the single-track lanes to the old A12, leading to Colchester and beyond - but they are all different in character.

The historic Wick Lane possesses a predominantly working agricultural character, with only a few houses in addition to the two old farmhouses. It is hedged but has far fewer trees than the other two lanes. At its east end, like much of Crown Lane North, its character is influenced by the broad valley of Salary Brook, now occupied by Ardleigh Reservoir.

The reservoir is much used for angling and dinghy sailing. Crown Lane North and Wick Lane both afford views of the reservoir that are highly regarded by Ardleigh residents.

There is ribbon industrial development along the Old Ipswich Road, making use of the good connections to the national highway network. As of 2021, one of these employment sites is undergoing significant expansion. Once complete, this expansion should provide greater opportunities for residents to be employed within the parish confines. Turnpike Close has a number of neat bungalows.

As a result of its width, markings, industrial traffic and proximity to the A12, the Old Ipswich Road has a notably less rural and tranquil character than the other lanes. That being said, its dense and mature boundary vegetation prevents it from reading as a wholly urban feature whilst equally providing a welcome acoustic and visual buffer against adjacent, intrusive developments (such as the A12).



*One of the older buildings in Harts Lane*



*Wick Lane*



*Industrial buildings on Old Ipswich Road as seen  
from Wick Lane*

Crown Lane North is sufficiently narrow and winding to have avoided much use as a vehicular through-route. It benefits from Protected Lane status. Both Crown Lane North and Hart's Lane contain original farmhouses and outbuildings as well as older smaller dwellings. Both lanes saw a modest amount of one-off housebuilding in the 20th century. Because this modern development is not dense, it seems to be generally well absorbed and screened.

Hart's Lane has an especially verdant character, containing small woodlands and rows of trees that appear to spill over from the adjacent Birch Wood (a Local Wildlife Site). In places, the canopies of these trees reach up and over the lane in arches, providing an idyllic sense of rural enclosure.

In recent years, a number of the veteran fruit orchards on Hart's Lane have been permitted to change to equestrian and residential uses, to the overall detriment of this lane's historic and verdant character.

Turnpike Close also contains housing, including a very recent development of 5 detached houses.

## **Area 14: Colchester Road including John de Bois Hill/Fox Street**

Development along the A137 toward Colchester is varied. The road supports a petrol station, a pub, a restaurant, a little light industry, a car dealership and a bowling club. It also contains many houses of various ages and sizes positioned in interrupted ribbons first on one side of the road, then on the other.

Ardleigh reservoir and its water treatment plant, operated by Anglian Water, is located and accessed off Colchester Road. There is a sailing club located here as well.

The area offers very pleasant views across the reservoir in places.



*View of the reservoir from John de Bois Hill*

The breaks in ribbon development along the main road provide welcome visual relief and prevent this part of the parish from reading as an urban extension to Colchester. For this reason, further ribbon development that would serve to erode these qualities will be discouraged.

There are still big open spaces to be seen on both sides of the road. Many of the buildings are very similar in origin to those found along Dedham Road and Hunter's Chase.

This area contains mostly early to mid-20th century buildings with the occasional more modern landmark, such as the petrol station and the car dealership at Fox Street. There are also older houses, some with an agricultural past.

Clover Way, which branches off Colchester Road and provides vehicular access to Ardleigh Sailing Club, contains a small housing estate of distinctive architectural style that is unique to the parish.



*The Bowls Club*



*Houses near John de Bois Hill*



*De Bois Hall*



*Endeavour Hyundai's Car Dealership, Fox Street*



*Clover Way*

## Area 15: Spring Valley Lane and Jubilee Lane

Spring Valley Lane runs from the A137 to Bromley Road in Crockleford. It crosses the railway about 100 metres east of the A137 then winds and descends steeply between hedges into the bottom of the valley, where it passes Spring Valley Mill and the Mill House, both listed buildings. It benefits from Protected Lane status.

Spring Valley Mill is a late 18th century timber-framed and weatherboarded structure that adopts a prominent position, hard up against the historic lane. The mill is the setting of Malcolm Saville's 1956 children's novel "Treasure at the Mill" and the filming location of its subsequent 1957 adaptation.

Spring Valley Mill is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk (HAR) Register. Its condition is "very bad" and it has priority B status "B - immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; solution agreed but not yet implemented". It is believed that some urgent repair works have already been carried out following the receipt of a Repair Grant for Heritage at Risk. However, as of 2021, the mill remained to be supported by temporary scaffolding.

The parish council is hopeful that the next update of this VDS will be able to report on the total restoration of the asset.



*Spring Valley Mill and Mill House*

This area contains a number of small rural businesses, including engineering, horticultural and arboricultural sites.

This part of Ardleigh has a clearly defined character because of its steep valley. This should be respected. The open spaces are an important feature.



*House set back along Jubilee Lane*

## Area 16: Ipswich Road (including Plains Farm)

The Ipswich Road (including Plains Farm) area marks the south-westernmost section of the parish, adjacent to farmland and the A12/A120 interchange. It is physically attached to the large town of Colchester.

When the VDS was first published, this area contained only a modest array of spacious dwellings. These benefited from generously landscaped rear gardens backing onto farmland.



*Plains Farm Close, c. 2011*



*One of the car showrooms*

However, this area has seen significant housing growth since 2011, with c. 120 houses newly erected on the farmland that previously sat behind the row of dwellings on Plains Farm Close. The layout and density of this new housing cluster takes its design cues primarily from Colchester, rather than Ardleigh. This is mostly appropriate, given its spatial context. Certainly, the scheme reads very much as a physical extension to Colchester and it is likely that its residents look to Colchester, more than Ardleigh, for services and a sense community.

In terms of its detailed design, the recent Plains Farm development exhibits both positive and negative features. A number of these are identified in the below photographs.





***The design quality and Georgian style of this dwelling is undermined by the use of UPVC units (the juxtaposition between Georgian-style decorative stone lintel & plastic window is odd and stark)***



***Despite this scheme having been approved and constructed in the late 2010s, its garages are built too small for modern cars, leading to unsatisfactory parking arrangements***



***Damaged road and over-reliance on on-road parking - it is important that new construction is undertaken to a very high standard so that roads and buildings are long-lasting and the need for premature repairs (which affect residents' quality of life and increase the embodied carbon associated with a scheme) is avoided***



***Boundary treatments are appropriate and highly successful - the combined use of low metal railings and vegetation creates a pleasant and welcoming public realm . The use of a range of house types , styles and sizes also created welcome interest and complementary variety in the streetscene***

The Ipswich Road (including Plains Farm) character area can now be divided into two distinct parts. The first part is built-up suburbia that - for all intents and purposes - belongs and relates itself to the urban sprawl of Colchester. The second part is open countryside (both working agricultural and woodland) that provides an invaluable buffer and irreplaceable sense of separation between urban Colchester and rural Ardleigh parish.

It is noted that an application to erect a further 116 dwellings on the remaining farmland to the rear of Plains Farm Close was refused by the District Council in 2019. It is considered that this refusal was clearly warranted on landscape grounds alone. It remains vital that open countryside is retained in this area to prevent the irreversible coalescence of Colchester and Ardleigh (which would be to the significant detriment of the character of both areas).



*Aerial view of the Ipswich Road (including Plains Farm) area c. 2009*



*Aerial view of the Ipswich Road (including Plains Farm) area c. 2021*

## **SECTION 6: DESIGN GUIDANCE**

This section is divided into the following three parts:

- A. Design guidance specific to Ardleigh Village & the Conservation Area;
- B. Design guidance specific to the rural area (hamlets and lanes); and
- C. Design guidance relevant to the whole parish.

This guidance is intended for use by all people seeking to undertake development in Ardleigh. This includes new construction and the repair, replacement, extension or alteration of existing properties.

Amongst other provisions, current local planning policies require development to make a positive contribution to the quality of the local environment and either protect or enhance local character. This section provides detailed guidance concerning how this can best be achieved in the context of Ardleigh parish.

## A. Design guidance specific to Ardleigh Village & Conservation Area

Prior to undertaking any works of alteration within or adjacent to the Conservation Area, developers and householders should take account of any relevant heritage guidance, both statutory and otherwise. This guidance should also be applied to works affecting listed buildings throughout the wider parish.

For example, Tendring District Council has published a number of free advisory leaflets, including *Conservation Areas: Advice for property owners and the general public*, which contain valuable advice and information.



*Heritage advice leaflets published by Tendring District Council*

Historic England also frequently publishes new advice and guidance on undertaking work within the historic environment. Their advice notes cover a wide range of broad and technical development issues, including (but by no means limited to):

- adapting traditional farm buildings;
- conserving Georgian and Victorian terraced housing;
- energy efficiency and historic buildings;
- the setting of Heritage Assets; and
- repointing brick and stone walls.

Helpful guidance is also offered by various other heritage-related societies, including the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and the 20th Century Society.

### **Key design principles**

Whether inside or outside of the Conservation Area, all development in the village should have regard to the following key design principles:

1. Development should be confined to land within the boundaries of the village as defined in the Local Plan;
2. The open spaces within the village (especially at its centre) should be preserved or enhanced for their community, landscape, heritage and biodiversity value. As the village continues to grow, new green and open areas should be created to maintain the village's characteristic balance between built and natural features;
3. If multiple new houses are proposed, uniformity in their design, materials, size and type will rarely, if ever, be appropriate. Instead, each house should have its own individual design that is complementary of its neighbours;
4. Trees make a very important contribution to the character of the village and its approaches. The planting of new trees/hedges and maintenance of existing trees/hedges (especially where mature or of particularly high value) should be integral to the design of any new development. All newly planted vegetation should comprise indigenous or locally-relevant species;
5. In the village, enclosure is best achieved by a combination of low brick walls, iron railings, timber post-and-rail/picket fences and hedges. These are the boundary treatments that any new development in the village will be expected to employ;
6. If new building developments take the form of clusters rather than ribbons, efforts should be made to give the scheme an open face to the village;
7. Any new development likely to lead to additional private car use must include adequate provision for off-road car parking. This is especially important in areas already experienced parking problems, such as The Street. In all cases, off-road parking solutions should be fit for use and designed to limit the visual prominence of parked cars in streetscene;
8. All new development, especially residential, should be accessible to all. In particular, account should be taken of the needs of Ardleigh's ageing population. This includes, for example, the provision of level thresholds throughout a site and the inclusion of doorways, corridors and circulation areas in all new dwellings that are suitable for wheelchair users. Where existing commercial businesses seek to enhance the accessibility of their premises (e.g. through the installation of a ramp), they will be supported by the parish council;

9. All new development should make best efforts to enhance biodiversity and incorporate sustainable and eco-friendly design and construction methods, including (but by no means limited to):

- a. Native species trees, hedges and shrubs;
- b. Bat boxes, bird boxes, bee bricks and other habitat creation;
- c. Green and blue roofs<sup>1</sup> (and other means of rainwater harvesting);
- d. Securing sustainable drainage (whilst safeguarding rural character) by minimising areas of hardstanding;
- e. Where hardstanding is appropriate, using a locally relevant permeable surface such as gravel;
- f. Retaining, enhancing, adapting and reusing existing buildings in preference to their demolition and rebuild (embodied carbon);
- g. Adopting a retrofit-first approach;
- h. Improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings and sites with targeted improvements such as new solar panels, insulation, double/triple and secondary glazing (this does not mean UPVC), heat pumps, domestic wind turbines, electric vehicle charging points.

10. New construction and extensions/alterations to existing buildings in the village should be compatible with the character of the building and immediate surroundings. The only exception to this is where the existing character is demonstrably poor and the extension or alteration would lead to its sensitive improvement. For example, the replacement of UPVC windows with timber or aluminium units will generally be supported. Householders and developers should be aware that the character of a building and/or surroundings derives from a variety of factors including (but not limited to) its:

- a. Materials;
- b. Form and scale;
- c. Architectural style;
- d. Architectural details (e.g. lintels above doors/windows);
- e. Relationship to the landscape, natural features and other buildings; and
- f. Use.

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<sup>1</sup> blue roofs are roofs designed to collect rainwater as it falls, they can be very helpful in areas where flooding and excess surface water are an issue. Green roofs are roofs covered with vegetation (often sedum), they can add aesthetic value whilst also providing wildlife habitats and improving air quality

## **B. Design guidance specific to the hamlets and lanes**

All development in the hamlets and lanes should have regard, firstly, to national, local and neighbourhood planning policies concerned with the type, form and location that development in the open countryside should take. It should also take account of the following key design principles:

1. Development should respect the rural qualities and countryside setting of the host lane and wider area. This includes its hedgerows, trees, spatial qualities, views and uses;
2. Development should generally be well set back from the lane or road, affording space for native species planting along the site frontage;
3. Development that would entail substantial harm to the rural character of a lane or road (for example, via its widening, lighting, resurfacing, intensification in use or loss of vegetation) should generally be avoided;
4. Trees, hedges and green verges make a very important contribution to the character of the rural area. The planting of new trees/hedges and maintenance of existing trees/hedges (especially where mature or of particularly high value) should be integral to the design of any new development. All newly planted vegetation should comprise of indigenous or locally-relevant species;
5. In the rural areas, enclosure is best achieved by a combination of low brick walls, low iron railings, timber post-and-rail/picket fences, hedges and trees. These are the boundary treatments that any new development in the village will be expected to employ;
6. Any new development likely to lead to additional private car use must include adequate provision for off-road car parking. This is especially important in areas where lanes are narrow or have clear historic value (as inappropriate parking/turning can lead to their rapid deterioration). In all cases, off-road parking solutions should be fit for use and designed to limit the visual prominence of parked cars in the streetscene; and
7. New construction and extensions/alterations to existing buildings in the rural area should be compatible with the character of the building and immediate surroundings. The only exception to this is where the existing character is demonstrably poor and the extension or alteration would lead to its sensitive improvement. For example, the replacement of UPVC windows with timber or

aluminium units will generally be supported. Householders and developers should be aware that the character of a building and/or surroundings derives from a variety of factors including (but not limited to) its:

- a. Materials;
- b. Form and scale;
- c. Architectural style;
- d. Architectural details (e.g. lintels above doors/windows);
- e. Relationship to the landscape, natural features and other buildings; and
- f. Use.



## C. Design guidance relevant to the whole parish

### Contemporary vs. traditional design & materials

All new development in Ardleigh must have local relevance and should be designed and constructed to a high standard. However, a range of contemporary and traditional designs and materials can be accommodated in the parish.

It is often preferable for newly constructed buildings to display confident (and locally relevant) contemporary design, as opposed to attempting pastiche replication of bygone architectural eras (which is rarely successful). One recent example of confident and locally relevant contemporary design in the parish is the Kiln Road housing development. This scheme complements contemporary materials with traditional materials and building forms to provide a development that is unique and unabashedly modern but nonetheless very well grounded in the local context.



*Good quality contemporary design*



*Poor quality contemporary design*

In all cases, the correct approach will normally be dictated by the existing character, qualities and setting of the site. For example, if the development comprises an extension, alteration or repair of an historic building, great efforts should normally be made to carefully replicate the style, materials and construction techniques of that building. This is especially the case where the alterations would have prominence in the public realm.

Contemporary alterations to historic properties can still be successful. However, they require very thoughtful design and appropriate expertise. Contemporary extensions and alterations should generally only be considered to historic properties where this is the best available means of retaining its heritage value and significance.

### **Existing features of poor design or detracting character**

Where existing features are poor, insensitive or detracting, their improvement or replacement with more locally relevant features will generally be encouraged. For example, the replacement of UPVC windows with timber or aluminium units is broadly supported throughout the parish.

However, the existence of poor quality or detracting features does not provide justification for further, poor quality or detracting development to take place. In fact, where poor or detracting features exist, it is all the more important that new development seizes the opportunity to preserve or enhance positive characteristics of the site or area.

For example, where only some timber windows on a historic property have been replaced with UPVC units, especially great weight will be given to the retention of its remaining timber windows.

### **Preliminary design checklist for new development**

**The below checklist is intended for use by anyone considering new building work in the parish. This includes alterations, extensions, repairs, replacements and new construction.**

**The checklist identifies those primary considerations that should be used to determine the correct approach to the design of any new building work. It is not intended to be exhaustive and other considerations may apply, depending on the site and building work involved.**

**N.B. Where the development comprises new construction, developers should have regard to the design of neighbouring/surrounding buildings.**

**Original design:** What are the key design characteristics of the existing building or area, e.g. period/style, siting, height, scale, relationship to road and landscape?

**Original construction materials:** What are the original construction materials and how much do they contribute to both appearance and character? Are modern alternatives appropriate?

**Existing alterations to original design and/or materials:** Were they well-judged or could they be improved?

*Please note: new developments will not necessarily be expected to undo the harm of previous insensitive alterations. However, previous insensitive alterations to a property do not provide justification for further insensitive alterations. Where new development is proposed that would lead to a net reduction in the overall harm (both existing and proposed) to a building or area, it is likely to be supported.*

**Roofs:** Can repairs or new areas of roofing be carried out using repaired or reclaimed traditional materials? If not, can alternative materials be sourced that closely match the originals in type, size and colour? Can historic roofs be sensitively repaired, rather than replaced?

**Chimneys:** Where existing, can they be retained and incorporated in new building work? Houses built with chimneys that are later removed tend to look odd. In new construction, chimneys should be functional (as is their purpose) or otherwise avoided.

**Fascia:** If repairs or replacements are required, can these be sensitively undertaken to match the originals? Do any proposed changes preserve the character of the streetscene in addition to the character of the building (especially important for semi-detached and terraced properties)? New buildings should be provided with characterful, lively and individual fascias that draw the eye. In all cases, fascia detail should be inspired by traditional features of the parish's historic buildings, whilst avoiding pastiche replication.

**Dormer windows:** If the house already has dormer windows, any new or replacements dormers should match them. As a general rule, dormer windows should not be introduced into old buildings where none existed before. New dormer windows should be proportionate to the roof they are located on. They should be neither disproportionately large or small and should be comfortably positioned, maintaining space from the eaves, ridge and sides of the roof.

**Wall finishes:** Where they have heritage value, exterior wall finishes should be very carefully maintained and repaired. This includes buildings featuring traditional limewash renders.

**Porches, doors and their decorative surrounds:** New and replacement porches, doors and surrounds can have a significant effect upon the visual character of buildings and places. Anachronistic and stylistic incongruity should be avoided. For example, contemporary houses should not be provided with elaborate Georgian-style porches. Wherever new houses are supplied with porches, these should be an integral element of the design as opposed to a tacked-on feature.

**Windows:** Windows are an important and prominent element of the visual character of any building. Even minor changes to windows are likely to have a pronounced effect, not only on the character of the building but on the character of the whole streetscene (this is especially true of terraces). In most cases, introducing windows that do not match a building's existing units is unlikely to be acceptable. The replacement of UPVC units with timber or aluminium windows will generally be supported.

**Boundary treatments:** Boundary treatments contribute very significantly to the character of the village. Where an existing site is bounded by mature hedges or sensitive/traditional walls or fences, great efforts should be made to retain them in situ. Often, it is the boundary treatments of a new development that have most prominence in the public realm. Consequently, they should never be an afterthought. All new development should prioritise the use of locally relevant boundary treatments, including hedges, low brick walls, low iron railings and timber post-and-rail/picket fences. Consideration should also be given to the intelligent use of layout in new housing schemes in order that the buildings themselves can provide enclosure. In Ardleigh, high brick walls, tall ornamental iron gates, urban-style metal railings, close-boarded fences and Leylandii hedges are typically incongruous features to be avoided.

**All alterations of historic buildings:** It is recommended that all repair or maintenance works to heritage buildings should be undertaken by heritage specialists who are well versed in the correct materials and techniques. Use of the wrong materials or techniques (including those preferred for modern buildings) can cause long-term problems for older buildings and lead to their rapid deterioration (e.g. the use of cement mortars can trap moisture, causing serious damp problems). Both the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and the Listed Properties Owners Club ([www.lpoc.co.uk](http://www.lpoc.co.uk)) have useful databases of specialist contractors.

## Desirable & undesirable design features in Ardleigh

### Roofs

#### Desirable:

- 45 degree pitch;
- “Handmade” plain clay tiles or equivalent modern alternative;
- Natural slate (primarily in the rural areas);
- Traditional, small dormer windows;
- ‘Laced’ (swept) valleys and 'bonneted' hips (as opposed to modern cut valleys or hips covered with ridge-tiles which may be ungainly on smaller buildings); and
- Chimneys;
- Green and blue roofs, where appropriate.

#### Undesirable:

- Shallow pitches;
- Sheet roofing;
- Clay or concrete pantiles (pantiles are not strongly represented in the local vernacular);
- Large, unrelieved expanses of roof;
- Large and flat-topped dormers; and
- Absence of chimneys.



*Natural slate*



*Pantiles not generally appropriate*



*Decorative bargeboard*



*Dormers should generally have pitched roofs*

## **Walls**

### Desirable:

- Red, handmade (or handmade-style) brick walls to match local 'soft' red bricks;
- Any arches or decorative features to use fine joints;
- Rendered walls, ideally finished with traditional limewash or other truly matt finish;
- Sawn weather-boarded walls and simple 'feathered' Essex boards with black stain or matt paint finish;
- Machined weather-boarded walls, flat except for 'bead' moulding to bottom edge, with matt paint finish.
- White "Suffolk" handmade (or handmade-style) bricks (primarily in the rural areas); and
- "Pebbledash" render, ideally finished with traditional limewash or other truly matt finish (primarily in the rural areas).

### Undesirable:

- Large expanses of unrelieved render finished with bland glossy or semi-matt paints; and
- "Shiplap" 1960s weatherboarding (machined with face profiles or bevels).



*Traditional brick wall*



*Inappropriate "Shiplap" weatherboarding*

## Windows

### Desirable:

- Windows in extensions should match the existing building's windows;
- In semi-detached and terraced housing, unity in window style should be achieved throughout the building;
- Honest, simple glazing in wood (or metal) frames based on traditional sizes;
- Glazing bars, if added for effect, to be no wider than 25mm;
- 'Cottage' pattern side-hung, multi-pane windows ('landscape' format) based on traditional sizes, without small fanlights and with glazing bars no wider than 25mm; and
- Where double or secondary glazing is proposed, narrow glazing bars should be added as an applied grid to the exterior and not inserted between double-glazing OR incorporated as a functional part of traditional single-glazed windows alongside internal secondary glazing.

### Undesirable:

- Large unrelieved areas of glazing;
- Obscured glazing featuring large-pattern designs; and
- UPVC windows.



***Modern UPVC windows lack quality and character***



***Metal windows add considerably to the design quality of this modern build***



***UPVC windows are an intrusive addition to this traditionally-styled property***



***Large sections of glazing are inappropriate features***







*Some historic windows make a substantial positive contribution to local character and are irreplaceable*

## **Doors**

### Desirable:

- Doors in extensions should match the existing building's doors;
- In semi-detached and terraced housing, unity in door style should be achieved throughout the building;
- Solid timber;
- Where metal windows are provided (and appropriate), matching metal doors may be considered; and
- Ideally, the door colour should take its cues from the historic local usage of traditional mineral or vegetable paint colours (which characterise many of the houses in the village).

### Undesirable:

- Non-vernacular designs, especially where visible from the public realm; and
- UPVC doors.



*Non-vernacular & UPVC doors*

*Traditional timber doors*



*Traditional door colours*

## Landscaping features & boundary treatments

### Desirable:

- For hardstandings, clay (brick), stone or concrete individual 'setts' of square or rounded non-geometric design (if brick or concrete, batches should be well-mixed to avoid colour patches), gravel;
  - Hedges using native species such as hawthorn, especially in country lanes;
  - Low brick walls as for buildings, with brick copings;
  - Timber picket and post-and-rail fencing (again stained, not painted);
  - Traditional timber joinery gates;
  - Traditional low iron fences and gates in simple styles, without too much ornamentation; and
  - Simple modern or genuinely traditional light fittings.
- 
- New housing developments that include electric vehicle charging points within the residential curtilage(s) will be looked on more favourably than those that do not.

### Undesirable:

- 'Suburbanisation' of country lanes with expansive sections of close-boarded fencing and overly elaborate or ornate tall brick walls and metal fences;
- Hedges of non-native or generic species such as Laurel;
- For hardstandings, large unrelieved areas of tarmac, monolithic concrete, or geometric pavers;
- Patterned concrete (e.g. monolithic concrete with surface designs to mimic real stone finishes); and
- Poorly sited, intrusive or excessive exterior lights.



*Hedges of various styles are a common feature of the parish*



*Timber picket and post-and-rail fences contribute positively to rural character*



*Low iron railings can be a positive feature but high railings (which give the impression of gated communities) should be avoided*



*Tall brick walls are alien and intrusive*

## SECTION 7: VILLAGE CONSULTATION

### Summary of Responses, 2003 - 2011

In 2003, a survey and a number of exhibitions were held to gather the views of the Village.

In 2011, an open day was held to present the draft VDS.



### Building and Architecture

Most respondents believed that:

- first-time visitors to Ardleigh would be likely to find it an attractive village
- the overall mixture of architectural and building styles in the village was pleasing
- in general, they would prefer to live in an old house
- future building should not join up the village centre with the outlying hamlets
- the number of houses in any new estate within Ardleigh should not exceed 6
- houses in new estates should be of varied design and size and should either be detached or in informal groups with some linked
- new housing would blend in best if built with materials traditional for the area
- good modern architecture should be allowed but ultra-modern designs would be inappropriate for the village
- ideally, new houses in the village should not look modern
- an individual new house or extension should not overpower its neighbours
- new housing should be planned to include sufficient car parking, preferably hidden from the street
- within the village, hedges were preferable to high wooden fences

- concern was raised about nuisance, particularly security lighting and shiny chimney cowl.



## Roads, Lanes and other Routes

Most respondents believed that:

- the overall feel of the roads, lanes, hedgerows and any signage was an important impact
- the centre of Ardleigh needed some effective traffic-calming measures
- the old lanes around the village should *not* be developed for the benefit of motor traffic
- rather, they needed to be protected with some appropriate traffic-calming measures
- the roads leading into the village centre should have dedicated ways for pedestrians and cyclists
- the footpaths around the village must be protected
- footpath access to the reservoir would be a great benefit to the village
- within the village centre, street furniture should be appropriate in character.



## Other Aspects

Most respondents believed that:

- appropriate trees should be planted wherever possible in the village centre
- the village outside the centre did not have enough trees or hedgerows
- the finest views within the village centre were those of St Mary's Church from the south and of the mediaeval cottages (and The Lion public house) from the east
- the finest views outside the village centre were views of the reservoir
- thought should be given to recycling provisions.



## Summary of Responses, 2021

The more recent consultation exercises conducted by the parish council (to support preparation of the Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan) also revealed that most respondents:

- would be supportive of enhanced sports and leisure facilities in the parish such as a gym, pool or tennis/squash court;
- would be supportive of an increase in well-located cafes and restaurants;
- would be supportive of enhanced leisure and recreational facilities aimed at younger people;
- do not believe that there is any local need for more housing development in the parish;
- would like to see high levels of sustainability and eco-friendly design included in new housing developments;
- believe that Ardleigh has distinctive rural characteristics - including the visual quality of buildings, open spaces, trees and hedges - that they would like to be retained;
- would strongly object to any loss or harm to Ardleigh's rural footpaths, bridleways and lanes;
- are aware of congestion and parking issues along The Street;
- would be supportive of an increase in cycle paths; and
- would be supportive of an increase in suitable small business premises (non-retail and approx. 1-25 employees) and employment opportunities.

These additional consultation responses have informed the 2022 updates to this document.