

ONGAR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REFERENDUM

INFORMATION FOR VOTERS Referendum Date: 8 September 2022

About this booklet

On 8 September 2022, there will be a referendum on a neighbourhood development plan for your area. This booklet explains more about the referendum that is going to take place and how you can take part in it. In this booklet you can find out about the neighbourhood planning process, and the referendum and how you can take part.

What is Neighbourhood Planning?

Neighbourhood planning aims to help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work. This plan can show how the community wants land to be used and developed in its area.

Who can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?

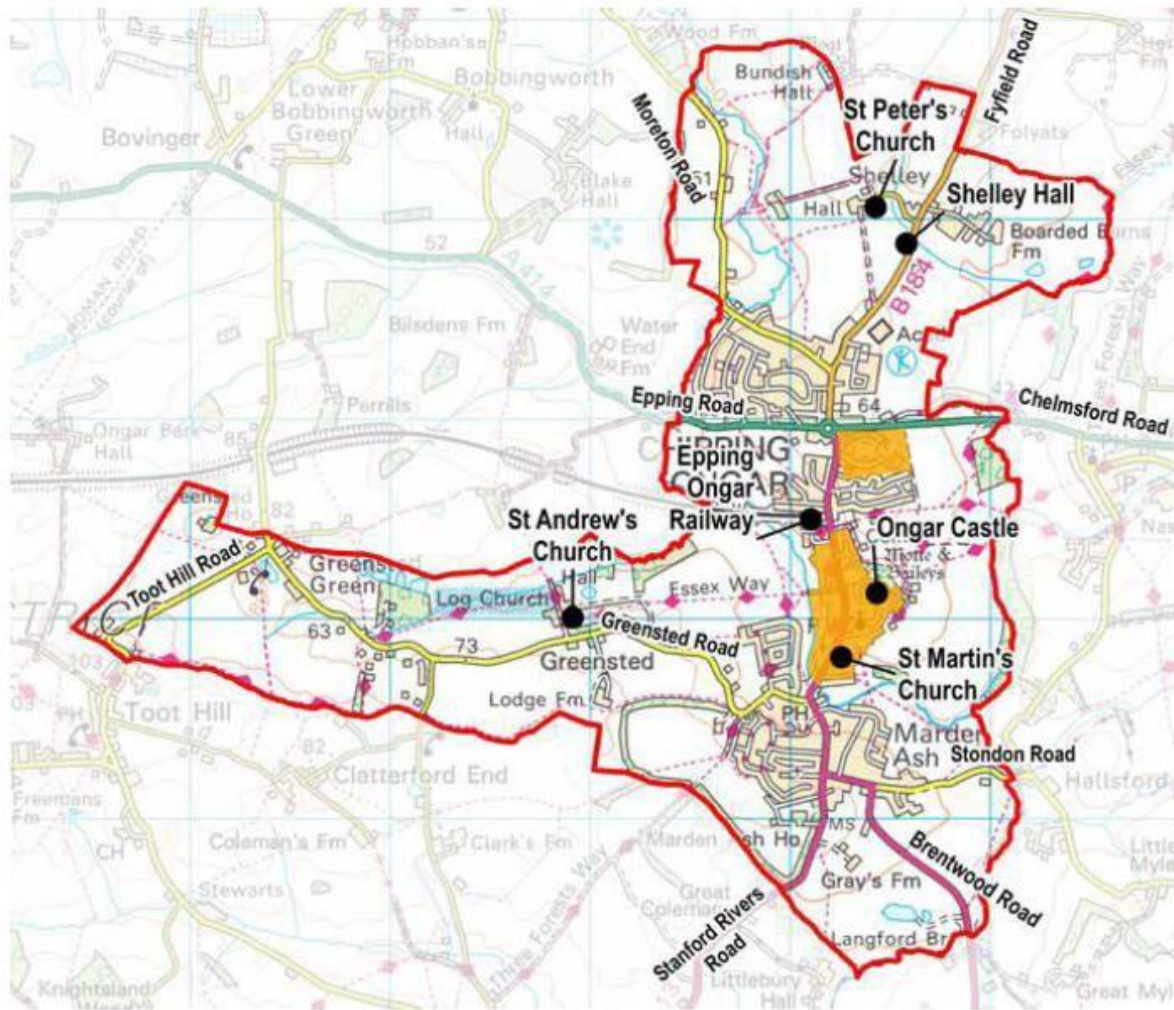
Neighbourhood plans are prepared by town or parish councils, or neighbourhood forums. In this case, the Ongar Development Plan was prepared by Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Community Group on behalf of Ongar Town Council.

What is a neighbourhood area?

A neighbourhood area can cover single streets or large urban or rural areas. The boundaries of a neighbourhood area are put forward by:

- Town or parish councils; or
- A neighbourhood forum (a group of at least 21 people in areas without town or parish councils)

In Ongar, the boundary of the neighbourhood area was determined by the District Council and is identical to the town council area of Ongar, as shown on the map overleaf.



What is a Development Plan?

In England, planning applications are determined by local planning authorities in accordance with the Development Plan. A Development Plan is a set of documents that set out the policies for the development and use of land across the entire local authority area.

For the Epping Forest District, the development plan currently consists of the adopted Local Plan (1998) and adopted Alterations (2006), the Essex Minerals Local Plan, the Essex Waste Local Plan and any 'made' Neighbourhood Development Plans or Orders.

Once a neighbourhood plan is 'made' i.e., formally adopted, it will become part of the District's Development Plan.

Neighbourhood Planning in Ongar

The Ongar Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by the town council in accordance with relevant regulation and guidance. The plan has undergone an examination by an independent examiner. The District Council has also agreed that the draft plan, taking into

account recommendations from the examiner, is compliant with all the relevant regulation and guidance. The final step in the process is for the Council to undertake a local referendum which will decide whether the plan should be formally adopted.

Specified documents

The specified documents are the:

- Ongar Neighbourhood Development Plan (referendum version)
- Report of the independent examiner
- Representations submitted to the independent examiner
- Statement by the local planning authority that the draft plan meets the basic conditions (Decision Statement)
- Statement that sets out general information as to town and country planning including neighbourhood planning and the referendum (Information for Voters)

These documents can be viewed at:

- The Council's website at is <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/ongar-town-council-neighbourhood-plan/ongar-neighbourhood-plan-referendum/>
- Epping Forest Council Civic Offices, High Street, Epping CM16 4BZ between the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday
- Chipping Ongar Library, The Pleasance, High St, Chipping Ongar, Ongar CM5 9AB, during Library opening hours

Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan

A referendum asks you to vote 'yes' or 'no' to a question. For this referendum you will receive a ballot paper with this question:

“Do you want Epping Forest District Council to use the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the Ongar Neighbourhood Area?”

Referendum area is identified on the map above as the parish area of Ongar Town Council and is identical to the area which has been designated as the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan area as shown above.

Can I vote?

You can vote in the referendum if you live in the Ongar Town Council area and:

- you are registered to vote in local council elections; and
- you are 18 years of age or over on 8 September 2022

You have to be registered to vote by 22 August to vote in the referendum.

You can check if you are registered to vote by calling our helpline on 01992 564411. The referendum will be conducted based on procedures which are similar to those used at local government elections.

Am I registered to vote?

If you are not registered, you will not be able to vote. You can check if you are registered by calling our helpline on 01992 564411. If you are not registered to vote, you can go online to www.gov.uk/registertovote with your date of birth and national insurance number by midnight on Monday 22 August 2022. If you do not have access to the internet, please call our helpline on 01992 564411 or email elections@eppingforestdc.gov.uk to give your details to staff.

Ways of voting?

There are three ways of voting:

In person on 8 September 2022 at your local polling station

It is easy and a member of staff will always help if you are not sure what to do. The polling stations are:

- Budworth Hall
- St James' Church Hall; and
- Ongar Leisure Centre

You will receive a poll card confirming your polling station for this referendum. If you do not receive your poll card, you can contact our helpline on 01992 564411 or email us on elections@eppingforestdc.gov.uk to find out where your polling station is. Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm

By post:

If you have a postal vote already, you will receive a poll card confirming this. If not, to vote by post you will need to complete an application form and either send it to Electoral Services to arrive by 5pm on Tuesday 23 August at this address:

Electoral Services, EFDC, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping CM16 4BZ

or you can scan your completed application and send it as an attachment to an email to elections@eppingforestdc.gov.uk (the same deadline applies as for applications sent by post)

Postal votes can be sent overseas but you need to think about whether you will have time to receive and return your completed postal vote by 8 September 2022. You should receive your postal vote about a week before polling day. If it does not arrive in time, you can ask for a replacement from 2 September until 5pm on 8 September by contacting our helpline on 01992 564411.

By proxy:

If you cannot get to the polling station and do not wish to vote by post, you may be able to vote by proxy. This means allowing somebody that you trust to vote on your behalf. To vote by proxy, you will need to complete an application form and send it to Electoral Services to arrive by 5pm on Wednesday 31 August at this address:

Electoral Services, EFDC, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping CM16 4BZ

or you can scan your completed application and send it as an attachment to an email to elections@eppingforestdc.gov.uk (the same deadline applies as for applications sent by post). When you apply for a proxy vote, you must say why you cannot vote in person. Anyone can be your proxy as long as they are eligible to vote and are willing to vote on your behalf. You will have to tell them how you want to vote.

Postal and proxy vote application forms are available from our helpline on 01992 564411 or by emailing elections@eppingforestdc.gov.uk. You can also download forms from the Electoral Commission website at www.electoralcommission.org.uk

If you have a proxy vote already, you do not need to do anything further. About a week before polling day, your proxy will receive a letter of authority to take to your polling station when they go to vote on your behalf.

How do I vote in the referendum?

You vote by putting a cross (X) in the 'Yes' or 'No' box on your ballot paper. Put a cross in only one box or your vote will not be counted. If more people vote 'yes' than 'no' in this referendum, then Epping Forest District Council will use the Neighbourhood Development Plan to help it decide planning applications in Ongar neighbourhood plan area.

If more people vote 'no' than 'yes,' then planning applications will be decided without using the Neighbourhood Development Plan as part of the Development Plan for the local area.

Referendum expenses

The Referendum expenses limit that will apply in relation to the Referendum is £2362 plus 0.059p per registered elector. The number of people entitled to vote in the Referendum is 5265 (as of 21 July 2022). The Referendum will be conducted in accordance with procedures which are similar to those used at local government elections.

Expenses can be incurred by an individual or body during the period of the Referendum for referendum purposes. It is an offence for a campaign organiser to exceed the referendum expenses limits and if found guilty would be liable to a fine of up to £5000 and/or imprisonment of up to 12 months.

How to find out more:

Further general information on neighbourhood planning is available at:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/>

You can find specific documents on the Ongar Neighbourhood Development Plan at:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/ongar-town-council-neighbourhood-plan/>

For queries about planning issues and neighbourhood planning in general, please contact the Planning Policy Team on:

Tel: 01992 564547

Email: ldfconsult@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

For more information about voting and the arrangements for this referendum, please contact our helpline on 01992 564411 or email: elections@eppingforestdc.gov.uk