

Ongar Neighbourhood Plan

‘State of the Parish’ report

Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Community Group

Draft Report

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info@navigusplanning.co.uk
www.navigusplanning.co.uk

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Socio-economic baseline.....	4
3. Retail and the High Street	11
4. Environmental baseline	13
5. Leisure and community.....	13
Education.....	16
6. Heritage.....	17
7. Local Plan context and visioning.....	18
Local Plan	18
Neighbourhood Plan visioning	18

Appendix A

Appendix B

1. Introduction

1.1. To be completed.

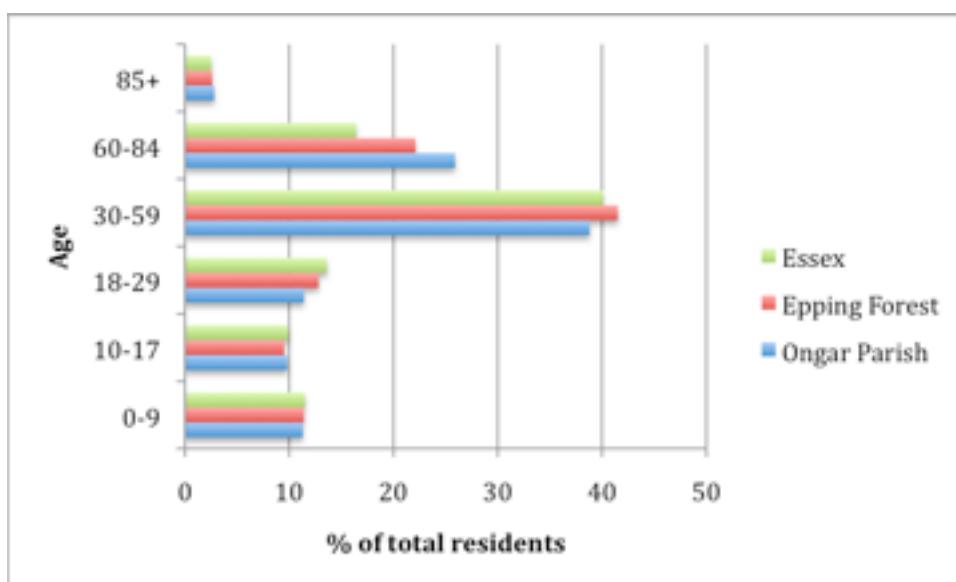
2. Socio-economic baseline

- 2.1. Unless stated otherwise, the profile data of the community has come from the 2011 Census. The data for Ongar is at parish level, which is compared with Epping Forest district and Essex county.

Population

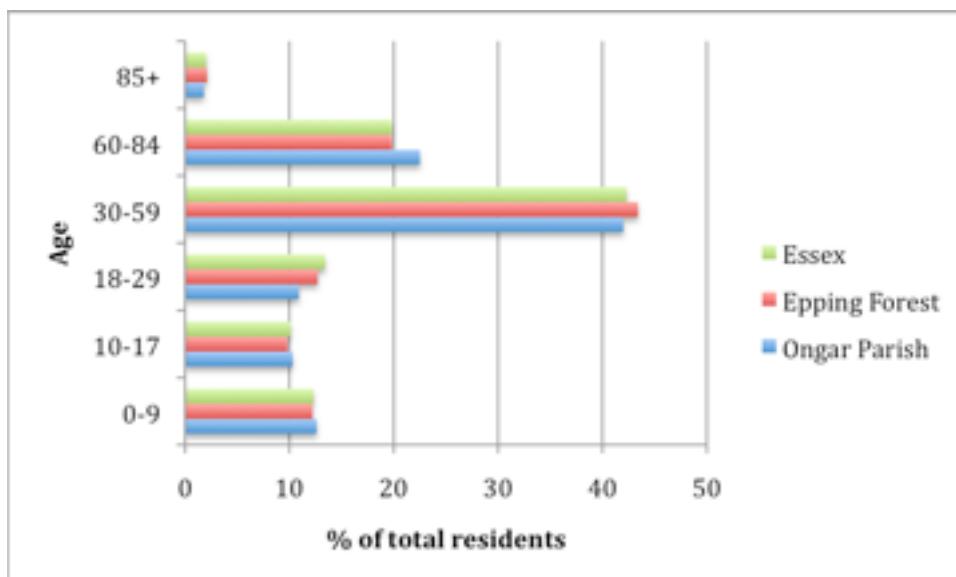
- 2.2. In 2011, the population of Ongar was 6,251. The age distribution is broadly similar to the district and county, however there are slightly more older residents (aged 60+). The average age in the parish is approximately 43 years, which is lower than the Epping Forest district average age of 46 years, but higher than the county level of 41 years.

Figure 1: Population profile, 2011



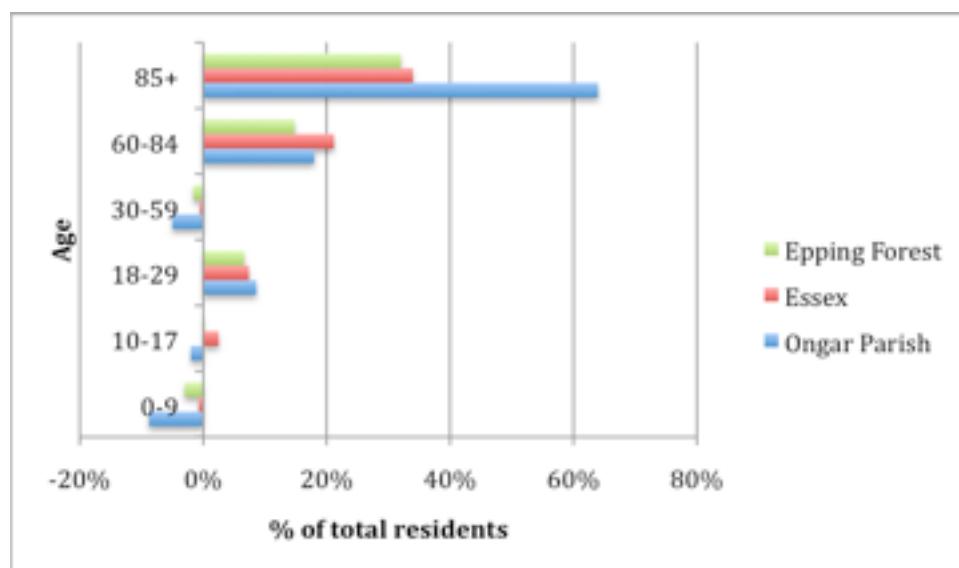
- 2.3. Between 2001 and 2011 the population grew by 182 people (2.9%) but did not change significantly in terms of the overall age profile. This is shown in Figure 2. Ongar still had a relatively high percentage compared to district and county levels of those aged above 60, at 22%.

Figure 2: Population profile, 2001



- 2.4. Those above the age of 85 have seen the fastest percentage change in population, 64% over the ten-year period. This is much higher than district and county levels, which were around 33%. This further evidences Ongar's increasing ageing population.
- 2.5. Middle-aged groups between 30-59 years of age have decreased as a percentage of total residents by 5%. In addition, children of below 10 years of age have seen the largest proportionate decline, at 9% over the ten-year period, compared to district and county levels.

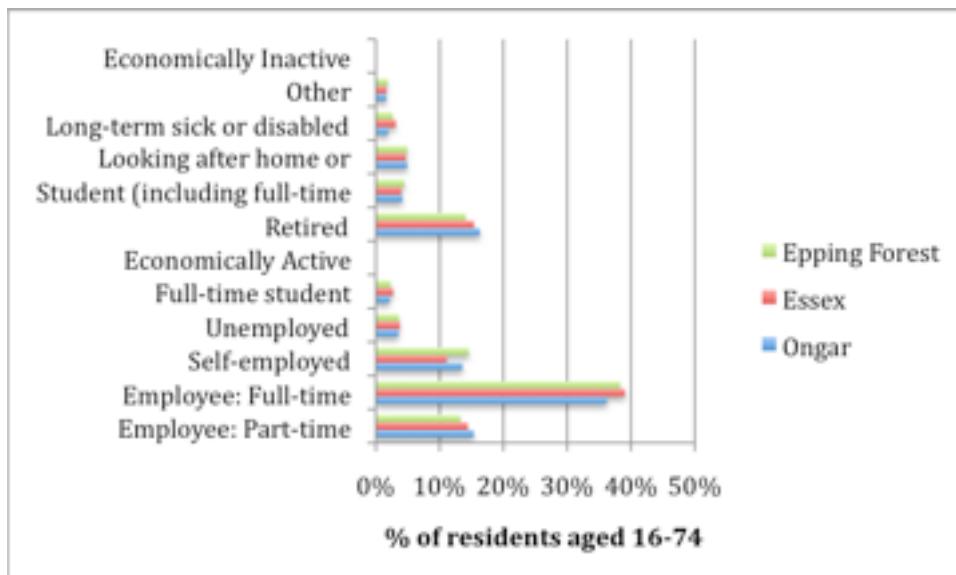
Figure 3: Percentage change in population, 2001-2011



Economic Activity and Education

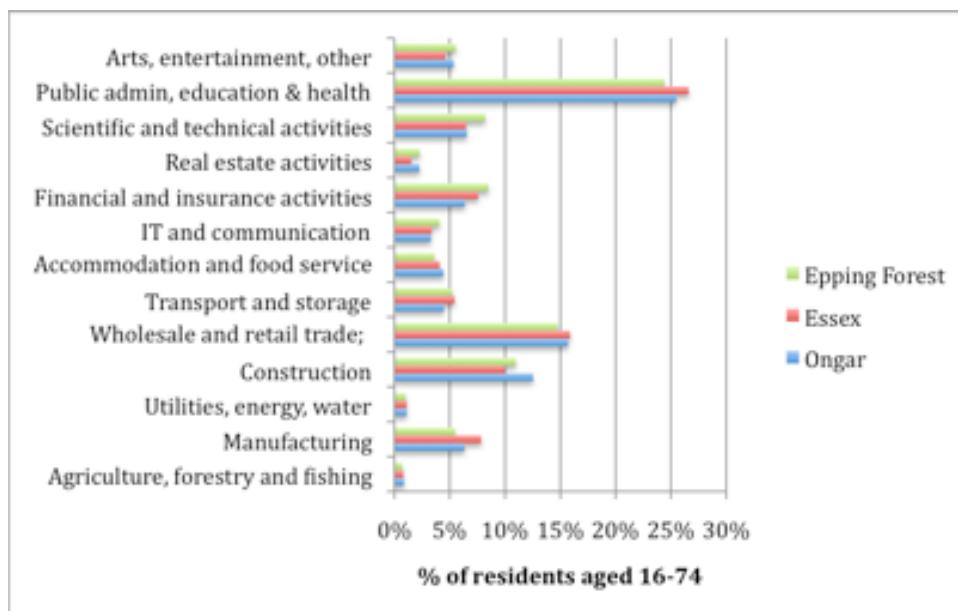
- 2.6. The proportion of working age residents (16-74 years) in Ongar parish that are economically active is in line with the district and county average, at around 71%. This is shown in Figure 4.
- 2.7. The highest percentage of working age residents in Ongar are those in full time employment, at 36%; however this is below the district (38%) and county (39%) levels.
- 2.8. In terms of the economically inactive, Ongar has a high proportion of retirees, at 16%.

Figure 4: Economic activity, 2011



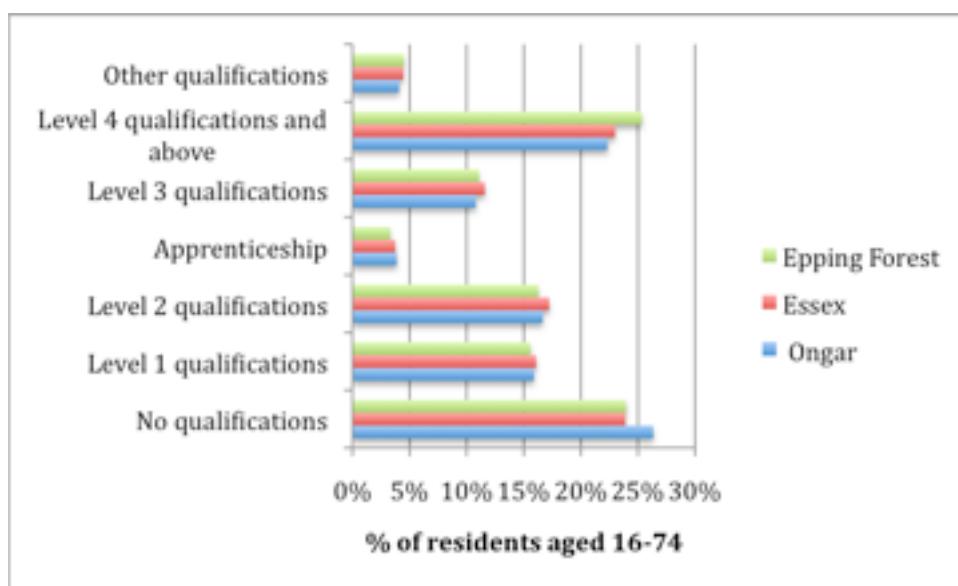
- 2.9. Figure 5 shows economic activity in terms of each industry sector. The largest sector in Ongar is public administration, education and health, which accounts for 25% of the resident population aged 16 to 74. This is similar to district and county levels.
- 2.10. Retail and repair is the second largest sector at 16%.
- 2.11. Ongar has low representation in financial and insurance activities at 6%, compared to 8% in the Epping Forest district and Essex county. Nationally this is a strong and growing sector.

Figure 5: Type of industry, 2011



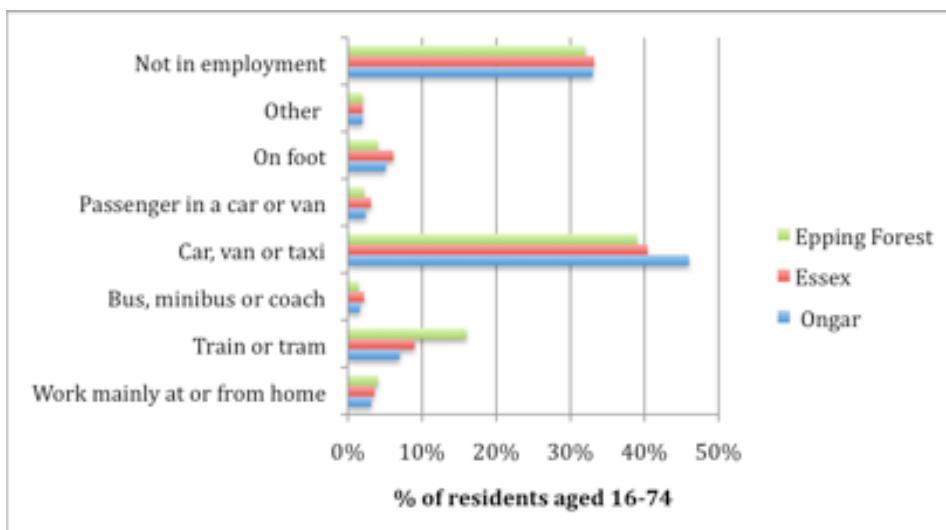
- 2.12. Figure 6 shows the qualifications of the population of Ongar. The highest proportion of residents aged 16-74 have no qualifications at 26%, which is above the district and county average.
- 2.13. Compared to Epping Forest and Essex, Ongar has a slightly lower proportion of those with level 4 qualifications (equivalent to degree level) at 22%. This reflects Figure 5 showing the type of industry, with fewer residents working in higher value sectors that require a higher level of qualifications.

Figure 6: Highest level of qualification gained by residents aged 16-74



- 2.14. The modes of transport that residents of Ongar use to travel to work of those that in employment are generally similar to district and county levels. This is shown in Figure 7.
- 2.15. The majority of those in employment travel to work by car, at 46% of the total population. This is typical in more rural areas such as Ongar where public transport is not as available as it would be in urban areas. 86% of households in Ongar have access to at least one car or van. This is higher than the levels in Epping Forest (85%) and in Essex (82%).

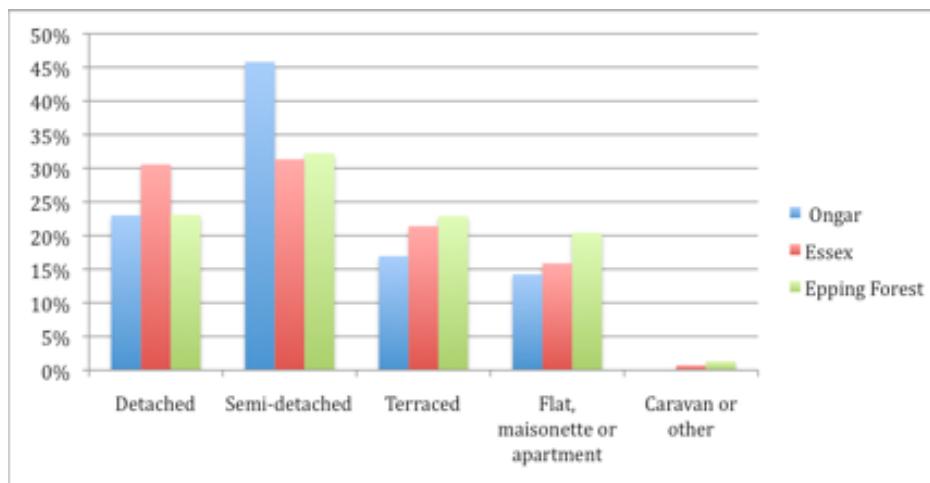
Figure 7: Modes of transport to work



Housing

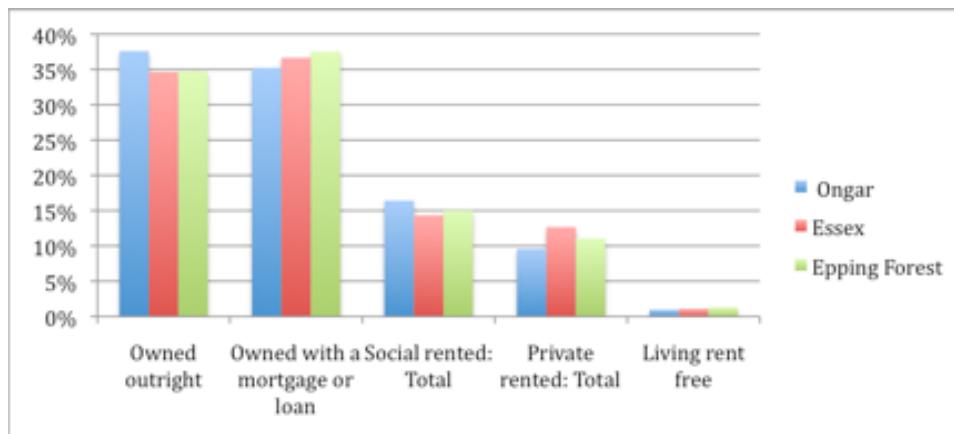
- 2.16. There are approximately 6.9 people per hectare in Ongar. This is a much higher density than Epping Forest (3.7) and Essex (4.0) levels. There are 2,626 dwellings in the parish, which equates to an average household size of approximately 2.38 persons. This compares to an average household size of 2.40 persons in both district and county.
- 2.17. Figure 8 shows the housing stock in terms of type of dwelling. Ongar has a significantly higher proportion of those living in semi-detached homes compared to district and county levels, at 46%.
- 2.18. It also has a below-average proportion of households in detached, terraced and flat properties.

Figure 8: Dwelling type



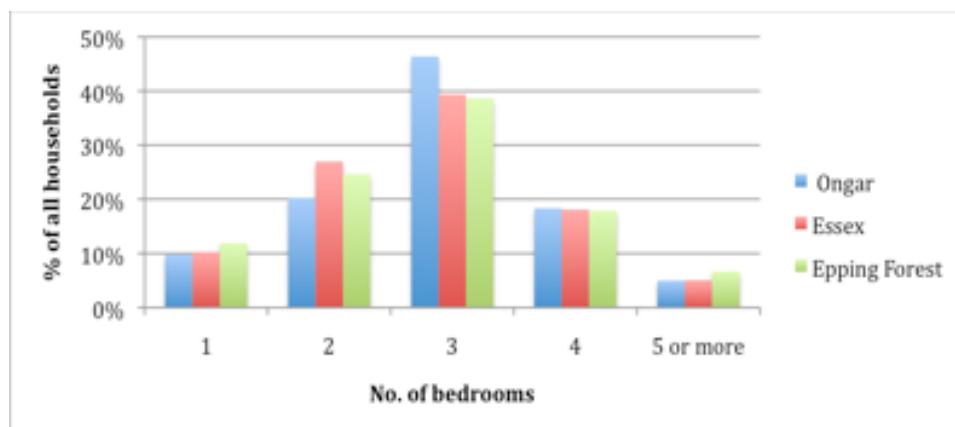
- 2.19. Figure 9 shows the ownership profile of the housing stock in Ongar relative to Epping Forest and Essex. 73% of the population own their properties either outright or with a mortgage. This is similar to district and county levels.
- 2.20. 16% of residents live in social rented housing in Ongar, slightly above the district and county averages.

Figure 9: Ownership profile



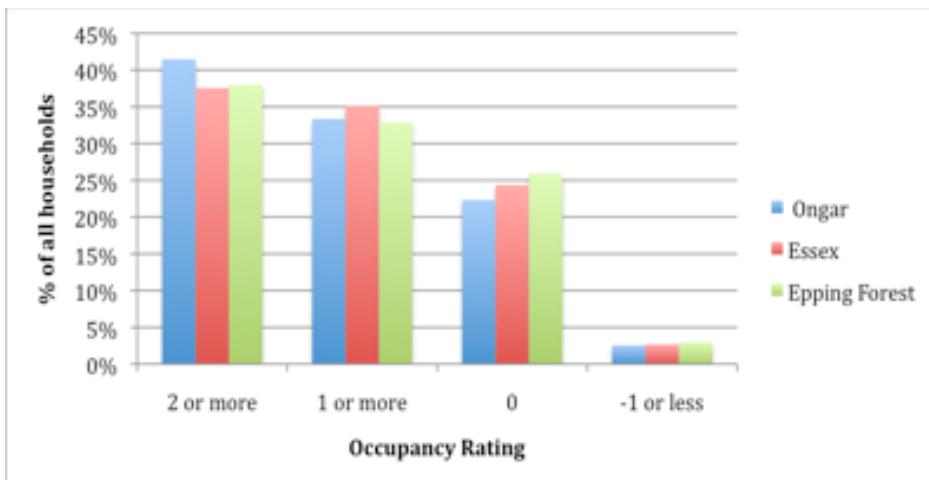
- 2.21. Figure 10 shows number of bedrooms in each dwelling, which reflects the type of dwelling as shown in Figure 9. Unsurprisingly in Ongar, a very high percentage (46%) of the households live in properties with 3 bedrooms, which is slightly higher than Epping Forest and Essex levels (both 39%).

Figure 10: Number of bedrooms



- 2.22. Figure 11 shows that Ongar has similar levels of occupancy ratings to the district and county. Occupancy ratings show the recommended number of bedrooms for the number and composition of people living in the household.
- 2.23. 75% of households have an occupancy rating of 1 or more bedrooms, suggesting that households are under occupied. This compares with 71% in the district and 73% in the county. However, only 3% of the population has an occupancy rating of less than 1 bedroom so overcrowded homes is not a significant problem in Ongar.

Figure 11: Bedroom occupancy rating



Annual Monitoring Reports

- 2.24. There has been a trend towards the loss of bungalow properties in Ongar Parish. In 2012-2013, there was a net loss of 5 bungalows for planning permission and only a net gain of 3 bungalows completed. There was a further net loss of 5 bungalows given permission in 2013-2014 with only 2 bungalows completed; in 2014-2015, there was permission for a net loss of 7 bungalows at High Ongar with only 1 completed.
- 2.25. Ongar has some development pressure but has not seen the completion of much significant development. Notable additions to the town include Weighbridge Court, 60 assisted living apartments at the north end of the High Street. Epping Forest District council has identified three sites for significant residential development to take place, one notably on the site of the Ongar Leisure Centre.
- 2.26. It has seen a notable number of conversions, particularly along the High Street. In 2013-2014, 4 flats were completed on the High Street and the rear of a shop was converted to residential use. In 2014-2015, 14 dwellings were created in a converted at High Laver Hall Farm. A children's home was also converted into 4 residential units in this period, as well as the addition of 5 dwellings at the rear of 103 High Street. In 2016-2017, an office on the high street was converted for residential use.
- 2.27. Other notable changes include the loss of 136 glasshouses at Argosons, Kent Lane¹.

¹ <http://www.efdclocalplan.org/local-plan/evidence-base/>

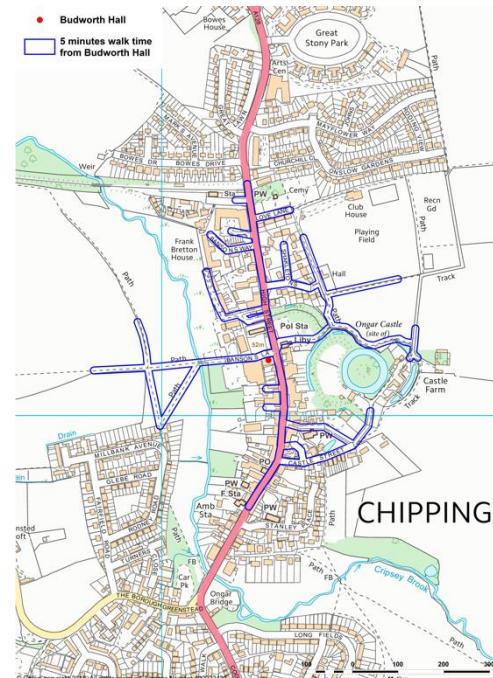
3. Retail and the High Street

High Street Provision

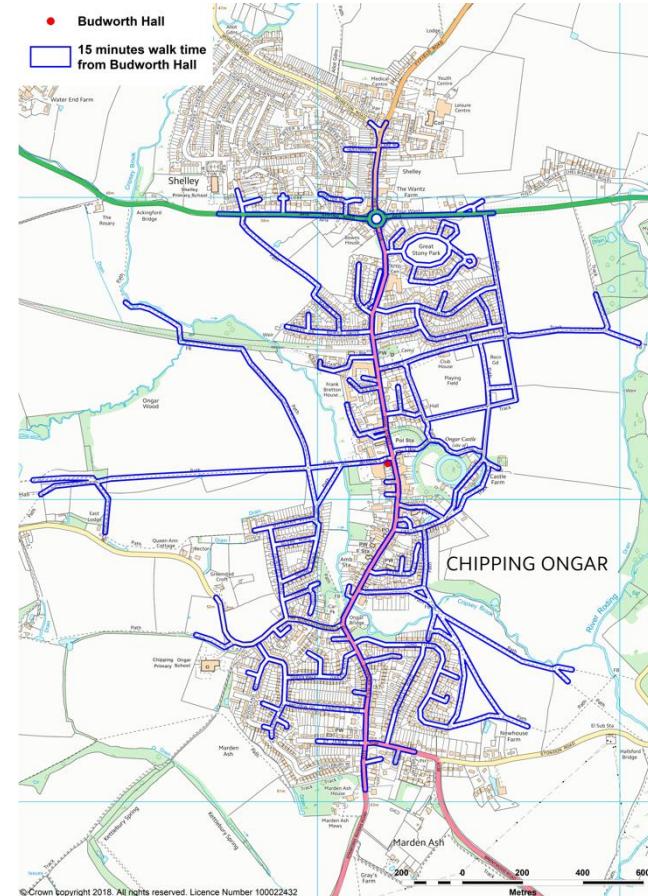
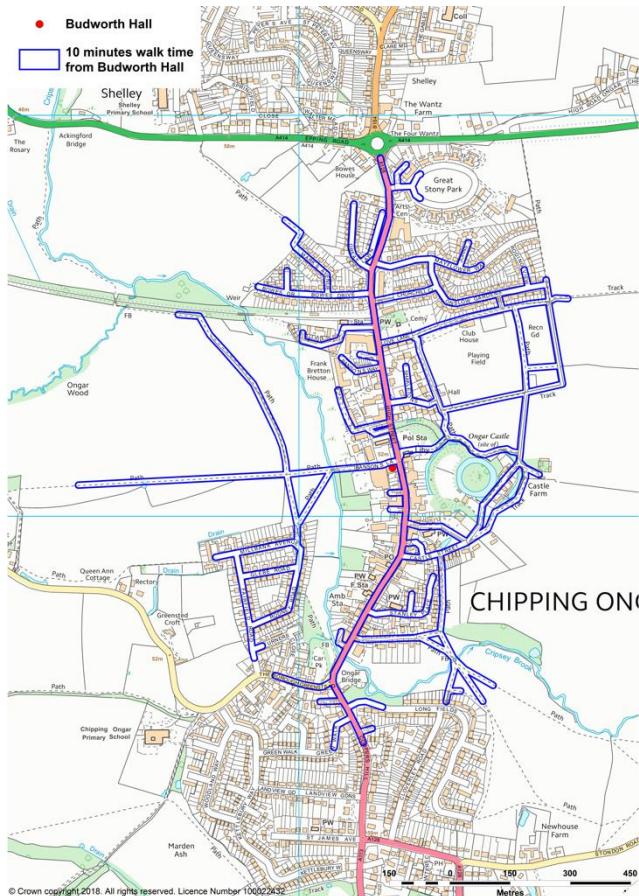
- 3.1. Ongar’s historical High Street is the location of the majority of shops and services in the Parish.
- 3.2. The south of Ongar High Street comprises a mix of use classes; there is a car dealership; a mix of A1 class shops such as a pet store, laundry, drycleaners, off-licence and hair salon; and some C3 residential dwellings. This area meets with the Bushy Lea residential area and includes the historic Livingstone Cottages.
- 3.3. Moving north of Bushy Lea, there are a variety of C3 residential terraced dwellings which display the historic character of Chipping Ongar High Street. The Fire Station and Ongar United Reformed Church are located here. Nearby are: some A1 uses such as a garden shop, two butchers and antiques store; an osteopath; and an A4 pub and A5 fish and chips shop. There are two bus stops in this section of the street. Coming up to the junction with Castle Street, properties display an eclectic historic character.
- 3.4. Past Castle Street to the north are more C3 terraced dwellings, as well as some A1 uses like a flooring store, flower shop, fashion boutique, betting agents, hardware store, charity shop, and barbers, and some A2 estate agencies. There is a central bus stop and street car parking along this area. Moving north, there are several A3 restaurants and A1 takeaways are located in this area of the High Street as well as the post office, Well Pharmacy, and another A4 pub at The Kings Head. Beyond this, there is a Barclays Bank branch, a newsagents, a fishmonger and a pharmacy. Budworth Hall is located in this area in the high street, behind which there is a Sainsburys and Argos.
- 3.5. Beyond Banson’s Lane is another A4 pub (Cock Tavern) and Ongar Public Library. Two car parks and another bus stop are located here. To the north, there is a surgery; some A1 stores; a cheese merchant; Ongar Town Council, and a fuel station. The far north of the High Street is the location of a C2 assisted living centre, beyond which is access to the historic Epping Ongar Railway.

Walking distances

- 3.6. From Budworth Hall near the centre of the high street, pedestrians can walk to many landmarks within the historic conservation area, including to Castle Street; and to Ongar Station. As Banson’s Lane and The Pleasance car parks are near Budworth Hall, any visitors to the town have a high accessibility to its local landmarks and attractions. They also have quick access to public rights of way via Banson’s Lane into the surrounding countryside, beyond the high street’s border with Cripsey Brook. This path also connects Millbank Avenue with the high street area, making walking to town a feasible and attractive option for pedestrians.
- 3.7. Within a 10-minute walking distance from Budworth Hall, community facilities like Jubilee Sports Pavilion can be easily accessed. The post-war additions to the town north of Ongar Station are near, as well as public footpaths beyond the recreation grounds to the east. This also connects these residences to the town centre via the Castle area, forming another attractive pedestrian option into the town centre. This also connects southern Shelley and northern Marden Ash to the town centre area.



- 3.8. Within 15 minutes from Budworth Hall, pedestrians can walk from southwestern Shelley and the area around the Leisure Centre; most of Marden Ash; east toward Greensted; and west towards High Ongar and River Roding. This demonstrates a good level of walkability to the High Street, important as the primary area for shops and services in the parish.



4. Environmental baseline

- 4.1. SEA Scoping assessment (excluding heritage and community which we will put elsewhere)

Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

- 4.2. Ongar is within Epping Forest District and sits within the Metropolitan Green Belt; therefore it is understood that a redrawing of these boundaries will be essential to some degree due to the general lack of brownfield land on which new development could be situated.
- 4.3. There are no sites of ecological importance in or bordering the town, though the rural setting is generally protected. There are several ecological features forming a part of the character of the local area; these include Ongar Wood, accessible from public footpaths leading out of the town centre. The public footpaths run throughout the open areas of the Green Belt, making the countryside itself an ecological feature of the parish. They also connect Chipping Ongar with Greensted, another site of historical importance.
- 4.4. Cripsey Brook is of particular historical importance to the town due to its past in forming the natural defences of the settlement surrounding Ongar Castle. The original setting of the Castle is somewhat preserved by mature trees planted between the Castle and the High Street to the west, ameliorating the presence of nearby car parks. The river itself can be enjoyed using the public footpaths as it winds north to south through and beyond the town.

Landscape

- 4.5. Essex in general is low-lying and its proximity to the Thames Estuary makes the county vulnerable to natural hazards like flooding and drought. In general, the area surrounding Ongar Parish is Green Belt land with open fields interspersed with woodlands and mature trees, such as surrounding Cripsey Brook.
- 4.6. The settlement pattern of Ongar stems from the historical Chipping Ongar settlement and is characterised by the preservation of open land to the east and west of the High Street. Marden Ash is an urban settlement contiguous to the south of Chipping Ongar, and Shelley is contiguous to the north beyond the A414. The parish also includes Greensted, a separate village settlement. The resulting settlement spreads in noticeably linear fashion, among the open setting of the surrounding fields.

Air and Climate

- 4.7. There are no designated Air Quality Management Areas in Ongar Parish. The main source of pollution in Epping Forest District is from the nearby M25 and M11 motorways; workers in this area, including Ongar predominately commute out of town for work.
- 4.8. The town has been monitored passively for NO₂ emissions at Marks Avenue. These levels did not exceed limits²; however, the high street represents an area of busy traffic as the main route through the town. Emissions are higher in this area, particularly as the entrances to the High Street create pinch point for residents. There has been an increased presence of lorries in recent years, leading to desires for a bypass around the town centre.
- 4.9. The historic Epping Ongar Railway was monitored for emissions up to 2013 with no major impacts on air quality reported within that time.
- 4.10. The climate of Essex will be more vulnerable to localised climate impacts resulting from global climate change, trending long-term towards wetter winters and drier, hotter summers. Severe weather events will also be more likely, with the Eastern region of England particularly vulnerable to severe cold weather and storms, including strong winds³. Given the development pressures on Essex in general, as well as on Ongar

² http://www.essexair.org.uk/Reports/Epping%20Forest_DC_Air_Quality_Annual_Status_Report_2016.pdf

³ https://www.essex.gov.uk/Environment%20Planning/Strategic-Environment/Documents/Adapting_to_climate_change_Action_Plan.pdf

Parish, consideration of the effects of the climate on new development are particularly important to consider in terms of the mitigation and prevention of impacts.

Water

- 4.11. Ongar Parish is susceptible to fluvial flood risk due to its location near two rivers, Cripsey Brook to the west and River Roding to the east. Cripsey Brook formed part of the historical fortification of the town and lies in close proximity to the High Street, forming a border at its western side. It also borders the northwestern residential area in Shelley beyond the A414.
- 4.12. Flood zones 2 and 3 surround the banks of both rivers, with Cripsey Brook’s banks being of particular concern as they border the high street and residential dwellings. River Roding has similar flood risk but its distance beyond open fields makes it less of a risk to the town.
- 4.13. Issues ascertaining groundwater source protection due to the service on the Environment Agency’s website being discontinued as of April 2018

Soil and Geology

- 4.14. The soil in Epping Forest District is moderately fertile with grasslands and clay-based soils. The parish sits on freely draining loamy soils.
- 4.15. Ongar is on primarily Grade 3 agricultural land, with some Grade 2 land bordering its southern areas towards Greensted.
- 4.16. The surrounding area in the Green Belt comprises moderately fertile, clay-based soils with grasslands⁴ highly suitable for grazing and other agricultural purposes.

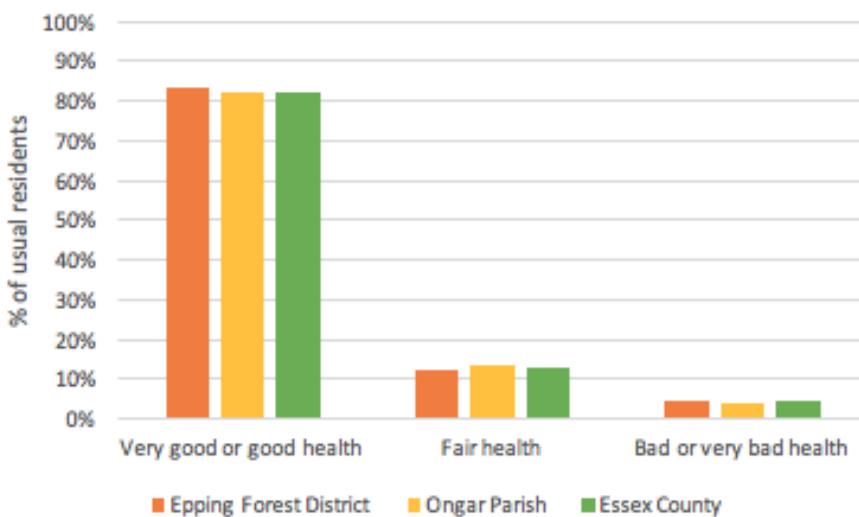
Social and economic indicators

- 4.17. There has been a relatively stable population in Ongar, with some notable growth among working age adults and those aged over 60. However, there has been a loss of bungalow dwellings in recent years.
- 4.18. Most property sales in Ongar were for semi-detached properties as these comprise a relatively higher proportion of the housing stock as compared to Epping Forest District and Essex County. These sold for an average of £425,000⁵.
- 4.19. There have been proposals for large developments in the Epping District Council Draft Local Plan; these sites are located in the northern and southern settlements of the parish. This includes 206 units allocated on the site of the current community centre; 208 units south of Epping Road (A414); and 175 units proposed west of Fairfield Road, at the southwest of the historic town centre area.
- 4.20. There has been some identification in Ongar of a lack of appropriate housing type. This may be reinforced by the pressure on school places (discussed in section 5) as well as by the general difficulty of developing in the Green Belt and near a conservation area.
- 4.21. Ongar reports similar levels of health to Epping Forest District and Essex County. Over 81% of residents are in very good or good health, with around 14% in fair health. Those with bad or very bad health comprise less than 5% of residents.

⁴ <http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/#>

⁵ <http://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/detail.html?country=england&locationIdentifier=REGION%5E1028&searchLocation=Ongar&propertyType=4&referrer=listChangeCriteria>

Figure x: General health



Roads and transport

- 4.22. Ongar is 40km from Central London. It is an important 'mini-regional' hub for nearby small villages and parishes. The M11 and M25 motorways are 10km and 13km away. The A414 runs through the town, connecting it to Chelmsford to the east and Harlow to the west.
- 4.23. Epping Forest Council identifies an overall strain on the existing road network provision in the district, especially when compared to future development demand and needs for expansion. Due to the historic high street and subsequent nature of its development pattern, the town centre experiences pinch points at its northern and southern entrances. As most workers in Ongar and the district commute out-of-town to work by personal car, there is a strategic need for consideration of this issue. This is also important due to Ongar's importance for nearby villages.
- 4.24. Ongar parish has been identified as one of the towns with the largest existing population compared to its limited sustainable transport accessibility. It has no commuter train station. It also has a sparse bus service. The provision of additional sustainable transport is an important consideration for the parish due to current traffic patterns and demand on the High Street.

Infrastructure

- 4.25. Ongar functions as a regional hub for nearby small villages and parishes. It therefore has a relatively robust provision of local services for the local as well as wider area. Along the High Street there is a fire station, post office, doctors surgery, library, opticians and several pharmacies. It also has several nurseries, two primary schools, and The Ongar Academy. The Town Council also provides allotments.
- 4.26. There are various community centres and organisations, including at Jubilee Park Pavilion, Ongar Leisure Centre, Epping Ongar Railway, the Ongar Millennium History Society, and Zinc Arts Centre.

5. Leisure and community

- 5.1. Ongar enjoys a good community spirit and has a variety of community organisations. There are several churches in the town, many contributing to its historic setting. The Epping Ongar Railway serves as a historical community asset. There are various societies, such as Ongar Millennium History Society; the Ongar Wildlife Society; and art societies. However, the Youth Club has had funding withdrawn from Essex County Council. There is demand for youth activities but a lack of outlets has caused issues in the community.
- 5.2. The town is well connected to footpaths and open spaces beyond its borders; there are public rights of way leading out of Bushey Lea to Cripsey Brook and the fields around the southeastern part of the town centre, which also connects to the Marden Ash development. However, the town itself lacks accessible community open spaces in the built up area; those that do exist are isolated, such as seen by the unconnected location of Stony Park in the northern part of the town.
- 5.3. There is a strong sporting presence in Ongar. Jubilee Park Pavilion has sports pitches and fields for sports clubs. Though the Leisure Centre has faced difficulties with its maintenance and operation, there are some pitches here as well.
- 5.4. There has been previous community organisation through efforts to initiate funding for the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan; The Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Community Group (ONPCG) is in motion to commence related activities, such as surveying residents. A website is under construction and social media is being used for communication and updates.
- 5.5. ONPCG and other community members have expressed concern regarding the strategic approach taken to new development by Epping Forest District Council. The Leisure Centre has also recently been the subject of proposals for redevelopment into residential uses and a community group has formed around saving it from redevelopment. Currently, these plans have been withdrawn, but there is still pressure on the centre moving to North Weald. Overall, there is an unmet demand for an expansion of leisure services in Ongar. There is also a need for a wider bus service provision.

Education

- 5.6. Essex has an overall need for 12,201 primary school places and 9,915 secondary school places. Due to its location in the west quadrant of Essex County, Ongar is part of planning group 1 in the Epping Forest District.
- 5.7. Epping Forest District forecasts the need to provide 31 reception places, 217 primary places, 131 year 7 places, and 655 secondary places in total across the district’s schools. Ongar is not listed in any potential school expansions as is projected to have surplus to need until 2027/2028. However, the primary schools have waiting lists causing some students to travel outside the parish in order to attend school.
- 5.8. Epping Forest District does not list a surplus for secondary school places in Ongar; further clarification would be needed to ascertain a surplus or deficit of spaces resulting from Ongar Academy.

6. Heritage

- 6.1. The historic environment of Chipping Ongar is considered to be of significant importance to the character of the village. The Conservation Area, comprising the historical Castle and associated Chipping Ongar settlement, is the location of most of Ongar's listed buildings.
- 6.2. Ongar Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There are 72 listed buildings in the town centre, primarily along the high street; the majority of these are designated as Grade II, including some features like brick walls and iron gating. These also include buildings like the Livingstone Cottages, Budworth Hall, and the local station for Epping Ongar Railway.
- 6.3. The High Street curves as it connects the north to the south of the parish. The varying building heights in this orientation still allows views through the street into the surrounding countryside on either side of the town. Traditional design and materials are prominent and there is an eclectic variety of historic building types. Most post-war development in the parish has taken place north of the historical high street.
- 6.4. There is a notable Victorian influence due to the railway services running from London to the town starting in 1865. Important landmarks like Budworth Hall were established during this century.
- 6.5. Apart from the high street, there are several other distinct areas in the parish due to its settlement pattern over its long history. These include Castle Street and St Martins Church, Bushey Lea, and the Castle itself. The nearby Greensted settlement is the site of another distinct area in the western part of the parish; Greensted Church, the oldest surviving wooden church in the world, is still in use. Marden Ash is a separate settlement forming the south part of the parish.

7. Local Plan context and visioning

Local Plan

7.1. To be completed

Neighbourhood Plan visioning

7.2. A Neighbourhood Plan visioning workshop took place on 19 February 2018. Respondents were asked their opinions on what is good about Ongar today as well as what issues could be resolved.

7.3. Comments for what is good about Ongar included:

- Its community spirit.
- Its accessibility for residential areas, to both the countryside and nearby footpath networks as well as to the village centre, with many facilities located within a 10-minute walking distance.
- Its schools, both secondary and primary.
- That Ongar has an active presence of young people, including young parents.
- Its good sporting, community and leisure facilities and services; these range from a variety of sports clubs to an arts centre.
- Its heritage, with the historic railway being an important asset to the village.

7.4. Comments on issues in Ongar included:

- Its restricted size between a large village and a small town – this creates a sensation of a 'bubble'.
- The limitations on its retail provision; 'everyday' items are the mainstay of retail in the town with higher order facilities less common. The historic shops are inflexible for modern retailers and rents are higher compared to other locations.
- The village has limited secondary school places.
- Public car parking is expensive compared to nearby locations like Epping.
- The housing stock is limited in terms of the type needed.
- There is little to do for the young people in Ongar.
- Safety and pollution are of concern in the village in regards to traffic.
- There is pressure on existing sporting facilities; they don't provide for all clubs and the Leisure Centre is under threat.
- There is an abundance of community spaces but they are small in size.
- Employment spaces are being lost to residential uses.
- The heritage assets in Ongar could be better utilised, especially for tourism purposes.



NAVIGUS PLANNING

Truro, Lushington Road, Manningtree, Essex, CO11 1EF

info@navigusplanning.co.uk

www.navigusplanning.co.uk
• @NavigusTweets