

West Ongar Concept Framework (ONG R1 and ONG R2) and ONG R4

I am writing on behalf of CPRE Essex to raise concerns about the soundness of the proposed Draft Local Plan in respect of the West Essex Concept Framework ONGR1 and ONGR

In its Vision for Ongar EFDC sets out the following:

Ongar will continue to thrive as a settlement, and its existing local and independent character will be retained and strengthened. Development in Ongar will contribute towards the settlement's self-sufficiency aspirations, particularly through the provision of additional local services and infrastructure. This will include measures that support alternative, sustainable modes of travel to reduce congestion and reliance on car-based transport modes. The provision of approximately 590 homes has been informed by the aspiration for Ongar to remain self-sustaining, to ensure that sufficient homes are built to support existing services and to maximise the opportunities provided by the new secondary academy and capacity in the two primary schools.

Development beyond the current urban footprint of the town is constrained as the town is surrounded Metropolitan Green Belt. Whilst the Review of the Green Belt has identified some acceptable areas adjacent to larger settlements where a boundary revision provides for the District's projected growth in sustainable locations, CPRE Essex is opposed to this in principle as CPRE is keen to advocate the development of brownfield sites first and seeks assurance that an adequate survey and register of suitable brownfield sites has been prepared.

The proposed developments are ONG.R1 Land west of Ongar with approximately 99 homes, ONG.R2 Land at Bowes Field, approximately 135 homes, which together make up the West Essex Concept. ONG.R4 Land North of Chelmsford Road, with approximately 163 homes. This totals 397homes located on either side of the busy A414 and appears to lack any concept of good urban design and place shaping principles and fails the sustainability aspects of the NPPF. It is therefore unsound.

The east west route of the A414 links the M11 at Harlow to Chelmsford and further east towards the east coast ports. The main road through Ongar town links to the M25 which is often used by lorries when the M25/M11 interchange is blocked. Traffic modellers at Essex County Council raised safety concerns about housing around the 4 Wantz intersection and with the current volume of traffic movements air quality is poor. Essex Highways report of 2017 shows the traffic at the roundabout almost at capacity during peak periods now. With the expected huge growth in economic activity around Harlow due to the London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor, traffic on this section of the A414 will increase significantly, with commercial vehicles and private cars with the workers commuting from the Chelmsford direction.

Any children resident in the 234 homes proposed for the West Concept Framework would have to cross the A414 to access the primary and secondary schools during the morning rush hour and later in the day when traffic will still be heavy. This is a major health and safety issue that has not been flagged up anywhere in the Local Plan.

Should ONG R1 and ONG R2 the retention of the 'open space' of Bowes Field is a must. This space has been enjoyed by Ongar residents for over a century as an informal 'village green'. It was the school playing fields and Ongar residents were also permitted its use including for annual

community fetes. Its loss following its sale to developers has impacted on the local community who now have to travel further to access similar recreational space.

Although it may be possible to increase the number of employment opportunities within the town, the majority of those occupying any new houses will be commuters travelling to work elsewhere. Public transport or the use of private cars will be the main methods of travel to work. This will increase the volume of traffic on the main routes in and out of the town, adding to congestion and increasing levels of pollution.

Whilst it is appreciated that Ongar residents might be able to capitalise upon its heritage and leisure assets, such as the Epping Ongar Heritage Railway, it is unlikely that any viable commuter link with Epping can be readily established. The station car park has been built on and any commuters from outside the town will not find parking spaces within the town.

It is hard to imagine that the picturesque Essex Way will attract others than exceptionally hardy ramblers to access employment opportunities along its route!

Cycling along the A414 is hazardous and the minor cross-country routes are far from ideal for cyclists riding to work with many bends and steep hills.

It is imperative that the Sports Centre is retained as a valuable part of the local infrastructure. The suggestion of providing such facilities either Epping or North Weald would not reduce the number of vehicle movements. With concerns over lack of fitness within the UK population, every opportunity to encourage local use of swimming pools and gyms as well maintain local open spaces and a good network of rural footpaths should be encouraged.

The recent modest increase in dwelling units has placed considerable strain on the current sewage system. The Draft Local Plan is vague about the provision of this vital element of infrastructure.

Ongar does have a new health centre, but the overall provision for hospital care is overstretched especially if patients are referred to Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow.

Various organisations objected at Draft Local Plan stage on the grounds of the potential loss of biodiversity on these sites, including several protected species. Their protection has not been mentioned Appendix 6: Site specific requirements for Site Allocation.

Overall the above points make this proposed Draft Local Plan unsound.