



Ongar Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2033

Appendix- Projects and Actions August 2021



Chipping Ongar Town Centre

photo by J Merrett

Prepared on behalf of Ongar Town Council by
Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Community Group

Projects and Actions to enhance the Civil Parish of Ongar

These proposed Actions or Projects are not part of the Neighbourhood Plan but are complementary to the Neighbourhood Plan Policies and help to achieve the Aims of Ongar's Neighbourhood Plan. The Actions are also supported by evidence and public opinion gathered during the process of producing Ongar Neighbourhood plan

Therefore, this document does not form part of the Statutory Neighbourhood Plan. It sets out and includes actions that fall outside of the scope of planning policy

The actions will be addressed by the Town Council- working with a range of partners and other local organisations .

1. Town Centre, Tourism and Local Economy

Results of the Residents Surveys¹ support action to regenerate the historic Chipping Ongar town centre to become a vibrant destination place in an attractive historic setting, close by recreational and leisure amenities and accessible countryside. Alongside the planning policies there are a number of specific Actions and Projects that would help achieve these aims. These involve improving the attractiveness of the public realm; diversifying from mainly retail to include other services but also having a variety of recreational cultural and leisure facilities within the wider centre; and promoting our visitor attractions.

1.1. Public realm enhancement

- **Installation of heritage street furniture and signage**
- **use of trees, hedging and floral planters to screen less attractive areas**
- **Modified layouts of pavements in the centre to provide seating space with trees for street cafes, a market or entertainment**

1.2 Visitor attraction promotion

To maximise the impact of the physical improvements to the town centre there will be a need to promote the destination more widely:

- **Set up a Tourist Information Centre to promote existing attractions such as EOR and Greensted Church, Museum that lie within the Civil Parish but also to include places to eat, and other attractions nearby such as Secret Nuclear Bunker and High Ropes so as to ensure that Ongar is the main destination for the area rather than just a signpost.**
- **Set up and promote Ongar Castle Inner Bailey as occasional venue for cultural and community events and concerts**

¹ Residents Survey 2018 *see* evidence file

- **Promote the river walks, castle park and other connected green space in and around Chipping Ongar and linking with long distance footpaths – *see also Environment Project 1 below***
- **Provide a town Wi-Fi and 5G offering interactive Apps for town trails and other content**
- **Install plaques to display historic information at a number of key sites to bring the history to life**
- **Promote the Epping Ongar Railway and Greensted Church**

1.3 Opportunities and benefits that come from the Town Centre, Tourism and Local Economy Projects/Actions

These projects are expected to lead to Increased footfall in the High Street and thereby supporting local businesses, encourage others to take on vacant units and promote the development of other tourism-related businesses in the area. These support the development of the local economy and provide local employment opportunities.

1.4 Possible Partners for Town Centre, Tourism and Local Economy projects/actions

This will typically be achieved by a number of organisations working together including EFDC, Visit Essex (Destination Management Organisation), local groups such as Ongar Civic Trust, Ongar Forum, and Zinc Arts.

2. Transport

With few employment places in and close to Ongar and a lack of available public transport, residents are more reliant on cars than other parts of EFDC. Ongar also suffers from excessive through traffic harming the local economy which will be exacerbated with the planned development in Ongar and the wider area. Many transport solutions cannot be resolved in a Neighbourhood Plan, the EFDC Infrastructure Delivery programme on highways, is dependent on action and funding from other bodies such as Essex Highways. Despite these constraints there are some actions and projects that would enable the aims of the Neighbourhood Plan to be met. These include:

2.1 Traffic restrictions and improvements to the highway

- **Restricting through traffic from using Chipping Ongar High Street, especially Heavy Goods Vehicles of over 7.5 tonnes². Suitable actions will be pursued.**
- **Investigating improvements to the area round the junction of Chipping Ongar High Street, The Borough (leads to Greensted Road) and Coopers Hill-such as creating a roundabout- in order to accommodate a bus terminus and coach park, improved traffic access onto the main roads from The Borough, and better pedestrian safety³**

2.2 Improved Parking Provision

² Ongar Town Council is already working with ECC and EFDC to provide solutions

³A scheme including a roundabout and also use of former allotments to provide a bus terminus and coach park is proposed

- **Reviewing Parking provision within the Civil Parish of Ongar. Measures will be considered, working with the highways authority. Suitable actions will be pursued, including additional car parks and/or car park spaces in Chipping Ongar, including for coaches.**

2.3 Improved public transport

- **Encourage the expansion of transport services⁴, including within the parish to link Chipping Ongar Town Centre with Ongar Health Centre and the potential for additional commuter services to link Ongar to Epping Station by working with bus service providers and other local government authorities.**

2.4 Walking and Cycling route improvements

- **Providing safe cycling routes within the parish, (*see also Environment Action 1 Green space below*); and linking with nearby settlements⁵ and the Sustrans route from Enfield to Chelmsford.**
- **Providing safe walking routes to all schools in Ongar and to school bus stops, with appropriate safety measures outside school entrances and in the proximity of school bus stops⁶**

These projects are expected to lead to reduction on the reliance on cars for local journeys. It will also improve the ambience of the town centre, thus attracting a greater footfall for local businesses. These projects also support the well-being of the residents and the development of the local economy.

2.4 Possible Partners for Town Centre, Tourism and Local Economy projects/actions

This will typically be achieved by a number of organisations working together including EFDC, ECC, local groups such as Ongar Civic Trust and Ongar Forum.

3. Environment

Ongar residents value the countryside surrounding the town, its accessibility and the wealth of varied wildlife it supports. The land is protected in some respects as part of the Metropolitan Green Belt. Whilst neighbourhood planning policies will lessen the effects of new development on Ongar's countryside, more needs to be done to improve the natural environment which has been harmed as a result of industrialisation, overuse of chemicals in farming and so on. Recent Open Space reports⁷ and Green Infrastructure Strategies of government, ECC and EFDC are now promoting the enhancement of the natural

⁴ Ongar Town Council previously approached bus service providers ECC and EFDC to provide solutions

⁵ Collaborating with other parish and Town Councils

⁶ Ongar Town Council has a Working Party to pursue solutions through ECC and EFDC and other bodies

⁷ EB700 EFDC's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment 2012 The Landscape Partnership and EB706 EFDC Open Space Audit 2009

environment for climate change mitigation, increasing biodiversity and improving the well-being of residents.

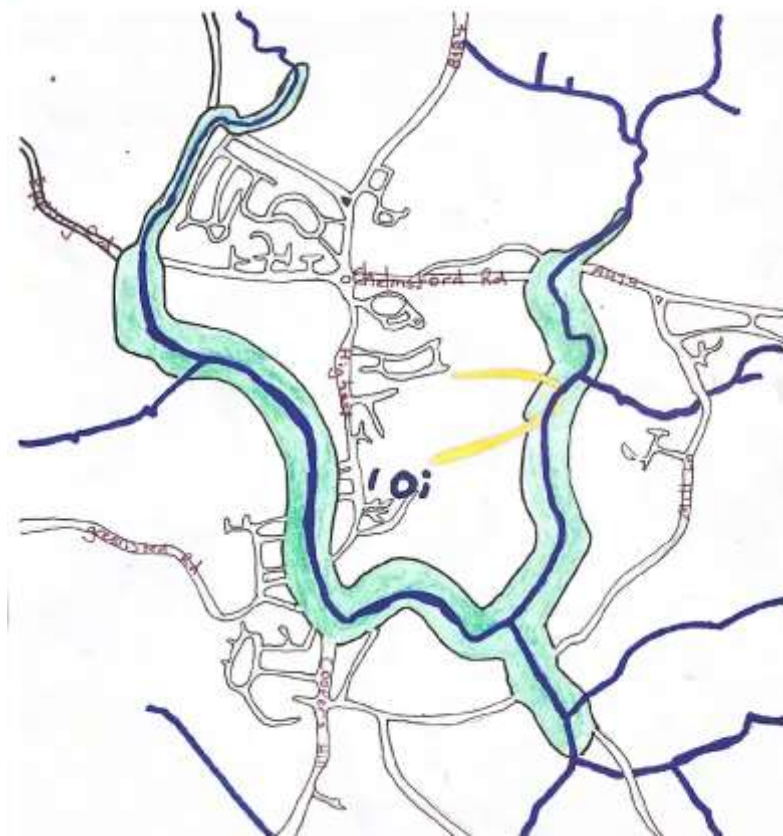
Despite being in a rural area, Ongar has a deficit of green open space in the civil parish⁸ and has less trees than the average for Essex being only 6% coverage⁹. The residents Survey of 2018¹⁰ indicated that an overwhelming majority of local residents supported green corridors, maintenance of natural habitats and retaining and planting hedges and trees.

3.1 Green Space

By connecting green corridors, river walks, a new town park and enhanced nature reserve this will provide an enduring resource for the community whilst directly supporting the visitor economy

An overall green corridors map¹¹ includes these features. This major project would certainly be a visitor attraction and supports EFDC Green Infrastructure Strategy 2020 and could draw visitors away from Epping Forest as an alternative natural greenspace (SANG) for the NE of the EFDC district.

Map showing proposed green corridors linking up round Ongar



*Green shading indicates approximate area for green corridors
Yellow indicates PROWS from Chipping Ongar towards the river Roding*

⁸ EB 706 EFDC Open Space Audit 2009 *see evidence file*

⁹ See various EFDC Local Plan evidence files

¹⁰ Residents Survey 2018 *see evidence file*

¹¹ See also evidence file for Green Corridor

The majority of these actions can stand alone but the overall vision is only achieved when they are delivered in full. The range of projects to deliver this vision include:

- **Green corridors with footpaths linked round the west, south and east of Chipping Ongar town centre along the banks of the Cripsey and Roding**
- **Enhanced nature reserve**
- **Newly accessible or designated local green space**
- **Existing and new footpaths and cycleways network to connect parts of Ongar with surrounding settlements**
- **A new town park around Ongar motte and bailey castle**
- **additional playing pitches and informal recreation or play areas**
- **The reinstatement of the 'Long Walk' to Greensted Church**
- **Improved surfacing on some footpaths e.g. the Essex Way which is impassable for many months in the winter**
- **Improved maintenance of other long-distance footpaths' surfaces and overhanging vegetation**
- **More tree planting**
- **Promotion and Provision of Tourist information, signage, trails etc.**

3.2 Grass verges:

Improving the chances of the establishment of different species of wild flowers in the grass verges and areas of green in the countryside or country lanes will increase biodiversity including providing more habitats for bees and other pollinators. This will be achieved at little or no cost by:

- **working with ECC and EFDC in order to agree a revision of their grass cutting timing, level of blades and season to allow wild flowers and spring bulbs to propagate**

3.3 Reduction of Pollution levels in Chipping Ongar High Street and on A414

There is a need to work with ECC and EFDC in order to measure pollution levels from vehicle emissions, examine solutions and work with them to provide solutions to reduce levels of pollution and various pressure groups to support delivery of reduction of pollution

3.4 Encouraging more planting and protection of trees and hedging in Chipping Ongar town centre and on road frontages and gardens

- **Tree planting**
- **More Tree Protection Orders on mature and veteran indigenous species**

3.5 The opportunities and benefits from 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 Environment Projects are significant.

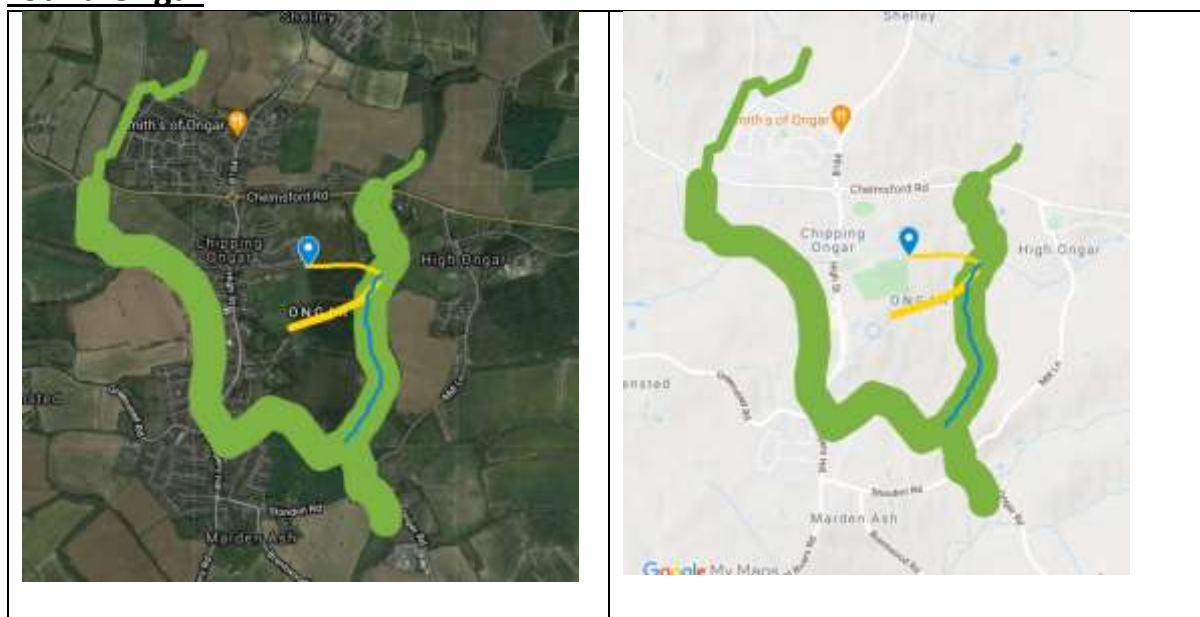
They include Improved recreational facilities/amenities and walks for the local community, increased biodiversity and protection of a variety of species. In relation to climate change there will be Increased carbon capture and provide mitigation against climate change and local flooding. There is the scope for an improvement in mental well-being for the community, improved general ambience and appearance of Ongar and a boost to the local economy from increased visitors.

In addition, this will provide relief for higher summer temperatures from shading, lessening flooding from both climate change and increased development up river and soften the hard lines of residential development

3.6 Partners for Environment Projects : Actions

Partners and support for all environment Projects or Actions (3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4) could include EFDC, ECC, wildlife and environmental organisations and Trusts as well as local organisations and societies, local landowners, and developers.

Additional maps from Google showing proposed green corridors linking up round Ongar



4. Historic Environment

Because small extensions and alterations do not necessarily require Planning Permission and may be acceptable under Permitted Development Rights, our Designated Heritage Assets, also known as listed buildings, will need extra protection from 'Harm'. Furthermore, it is over 20 years since there has been a review of the Conservation areas in the civil parish of Ongar.

4.1 Protecting our heritage

- **Introduce Article 4 to prevent permitted development in Conservation Areas where this would harm the character of the building or Conservation Area**
- **Designate Greensted Church and Manorial Hall complex and environs as a new Conservation Area**
- **Carry out a revised Appraisal of the two Conservation Areas in Ongar Civil Parish**
- **Review the designation of further assets as Local Listed Buildings**

4.2 The opportunities and benefits from protecting our heritage are significant.

These actions are needed to ensure the integrity and settings of our built heritage are not compromised to leave to future generations, whilst still enabling enhancement and 21st century appropriate uses.

4.2 Partners for the Historic Environment actions

Partners to protect our heritage will typically be the Conservation Officer of EFDC, Historic Environment Officer of ECC, the Local Planning Authority and local history groups in the civil parish of Ongar.

5 Assets of Community Value

This can be places or spaces important to local people. Many valued assets in Ongar may be under threat of closure in the future. If so, a change of use or redevelopment may be proposed. These include public houses, police station, fire station, Ongar library, Budworth Hall or green spaces. If this is against a community's wishes, there is a mechanism to enable the community to own and/or run such assets for the community

- **Review and register all community facilities or amenities which may benefit from this status with EFDC.**

5.1 Opportunities and benefits of registering valued community assets.

This could protect Ongar from the loss of valued assets including public houses, and other community facilities or enable a community group or the town council to purchase the land and buildings. The register enables time for the community to raise funds to purchase the asset in order to prevent change of use or redevelopment. It becomes a 'material planning concern' and gives the Planning Authority the means of rejecting proposals

5.2 Partners for Assets of Community Value

Local community groups and residents' groups.,

6 Youth Facilities

Ongar has fewer facilities for our youth than larger towns. The Youth Survey¹² indicated that although many youngsters enjoyed sports and walking, they would like other facilities such as a Youth café with Wi-Fi and pool table / table tennis; a climbing/bouldering wall; off road cycling tracks; more outdoor obstacle courses/ monkey bars (for older youngsters); and an improved skate park

- **Provide more facilities for 11+ age group of youngsters, based on Survey results**

6.1 Partners for Youth Facilities

EFDC, ECC, 'Stay well' working party, community groups, charities

Conclusion

For more evidence and justification please see the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan policy documents and detail accompanying this document including Historic England bid to regenerate Chipping Ongar High Street and the environmental documentation¹³.

¹² ONPCG Youth Survey 2019 *see* Evidence File

¹³See Evidence File in the ONP documentation