



Historic England

By e-mail to:
Michael Letch,
Ongar Town Council

Our ref: PL00739062

Your ref:

Date: 18/03/2021

Direct Dial: 01223 582746

Mobile: 07833 718273

Dear Mr Letch,

Ref: Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 Consultation

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Draft of the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans are an important opportunity for local communities to set the agenda for their places, setting out what is important and why about different aspects of their parish or other area within the neighbourhood area boundary, and providing clear policy and guidance to readers – be they interested members of the public, planners or developers – regarding how the place should develop over the course of the plan period.

Paragraph 185 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out that Plans, including Neighbourhood Plans, should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In particular, this strategy needs to take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of all types of heritage asset where possible, the need for new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and ensure that it considers opportunities to use the existing historic environment to help reinforce this character of a place.

It is important that, as a minimum, the strategy you put together for your area safeguards those elements of your neighbourhood area that contribute to the significance of those assets. This will ensure that they can be enjoyed by future generations of the area and make sure your plan is in line with the requirements of national planning policy, as found in the National Planning Policy Framework.

We welcome the production of this neighbourhood plan, and are pleased to see that the historic environment of your parish features throughout this draft. In particular we welcome the emphasis on conserving and enhancing Ongar's historic town centre and High Street. We are pleased to see that policies supporting the economic vitality



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of this key street are included, alongside a policy relating to the design of any new development as well as new shopfronts. Ongar is an attractive, pleasant town to visit, and these policies should help maintain this. We would suggest that the wording of Policy ED2 is amended slightly, because at present although it insists modern shopfronts should be 'very high quality' this implies that the reinstatement of more traditional forms of shopfront might not be. We would recommend that a requirement for very high quality design and materials be present throughout.

We welcome the production of a Design Guide in support of your neighbourhood plan. With regard to its recommendations for works to the highway and public realm, we would recommend that both the government's best practice guidance 'Manual for Streets (1 and 2)', as well as our own advice 'Streets for All' document are referred to, to provide further information for any new development or works to the public realm in the conservation areas.

The government's [National Planning Practice Guidance](#) on neighbourhood planning is clear that, where relevant, Neighbourhood Plans need to include enough information about local heritage to guide local authority planning decisions and to put broader strategic heritage policies from the local authority's local plan into action but at a *neighbourhood* scale. Your Neighbourhood Plan is therefore an important opportunity for a community to develop a positive strategy for the area's locally important heritage assets that aren't recognised at a national level through listing or scheduling. If appropriate this should include enough information about local non-designated heritage assets, including sites of archaeological interest, locally listed buildings, or identified areas of historic landscape character. Your plan could, for instance, include a list of locally important neighbourhood heritage assets, (e.g. historic buildings, sites, views or places of importance to the local community) setting out what factors make them special. These elements can then be afforded a level of protection from inappropriate change through an appropriately worded policy in the plan. We refer you to our guidance on local heritage listing for further information: HE Advice Note 7 - local listing: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7>

The plan could also include consideration of any Grade II listed buildings or locally-designated heritage assets which are at risk or in poor condition, and which could then be the focus of specific policies aimed at facilitating their enhancement. We would refer you to our guidance on writing effective neighbourhood plan policies, which can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/plan-making/improve-your-neighbourhood/policy-writing/>

Communities that have a neighbourhood plan in force are entitled to claim 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds raised from development in their area. The Localism Act 2011 allows this CIL money to be used for the maintenance and on-going costs associated with a range of heritage assets including, for example, transport infrastructure such as historic bridges, green and social infrastructure such as historic parks and gardens, civic spaces, and public places. As a Qualifying Body, your neighbourhood forum can either have access to this money or influence how it is spent through the neighbourhood plan process, setting out a schedule of appropriate works for the money to be spent on. Historic England strongly



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recommends that the community therefore identifies the ways in which CIL can be used to facilitate the conservation of the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting, and sets this out in the neighbourhood plan. More information and guidance on this is available from Locality, here:

<https://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/community-infrastructure-levy-neighbourhood-planning-toolkit/>

If you are concerned about the impact of high levels of traffic through your area, particularly in rural areas, the “Traffic in Villages” toolkit developed by Hamilton-Baillie Associates in conjunction with Dorset AONB Partnership may be a useful resource to you.

Further information and guidance on how heritage can best be incorporated into Neighbourhood Plans has been produced by Historic England, including on evidence gathering, design advice and policy writing. Our webpage contains links to a number of other documents which your forum might find useful. These can help you to identify what it is about your area which makes it distinctive, and how you might go about ensuring that the character of the area is protected or improved through appropriate policy wording and a robust evidence base. This can be found here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/plan-making/improve-your-neighbourhood/>.

Historic England Advice Note 11- Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment, which is freely available to download, also provides useful links to exemplar neighbourhood plans that may provide you with inspiration and assistance for your own. This can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/neighbourhood-planning-and-the-historic-environment/>

The following general guidance also published by Historic England may also be useful to the plan forum in preparing the neighbourhood plan, or considering how best to develop a strategy for the conservation and management of heritage assets in the area. It may also be useful to provide links to some of these documents in the plan:

HE Advice Note 2 - making changes to heritage assets:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/making-changes-heritage-assets-advice-note-2/>

HE Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 - the setting of heritage assets:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/>

If you are considering including Site Allocations for housing or other land use purposes in your neighbourhood plan, we would recommend you review the following two guidance documents, which may be of use:

HE Advice Note 3 - site allocations in local plans:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans>



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HE Advice Note 8 - Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment
: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

We recommend the inclusion of a glossary containing relevant historic environment terminology contained in the NPPF, in addition to details about the additional legislative and policy protections that heritage assets and the historic environment in general enjoys.

Finally, we should like to stress that this advice is based on the information provided by Ongar Town Council in your correspondence. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on or, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise as a result of the proposed neighbourhood plan, where we consider these would have an adverse effect on the historic environment.

Please do contact me, either via email or the number above, if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. James". The signature is written in a cursive style. The background of the signature area has a faint, repeating pattern of the word "electronic" in a light blue color.

Edward James
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