

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-030-2024/25

Date of meeting: 11 November 2024



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Cllr. K Williamson

Subject: West Ongar Concept Framework

Responsible Officer: Nigel Richardson/ Peter van der Zwan

Democratic Services Officer: V Messenger (democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To note the process undertaken and the outputs from the public consultation on the Draft West Ongar Concept Framework Plan (CFP) in September and October 2024.**
- (2) To agree that the West Ongar Concept Framework Plan (CFP) be formally endorsed in order for it to be taken into account as an important material consideration in the determination of future planning applications, and to inform pre-application advice, assessing planning and any other development management and implementation related purposes relating to the site.**
- (3) To agree that the Planning Services Director, in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make minor amendments to the CFP, including any document accessibility requirements, prior to publication.**

Executive Summary:

The development of the West Ongar Concept Framework Plan (CFP) responds to the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 and Policy P4 'Ongar'. The West Ongar CFP area is formed by the combination of two allocated sites identified in the Local Plan. Following the requirements in policies SP2 a CFP has been developed for the West Ongar Concept Framework Plan Area. This area is identified in blue hatched line in Local Plan mapping.

The CFP area is split between two different land ownerships ONG.R1 and ONG.R2. These sites are being developed by the following parties: City and Country Ltd (Developer) for ONG.R2 and This Land Ltd (acting as Land Promotor) for ONG.R1. Both parties have been engaged with the Council and ECC Highways in a Planning Performance Agreement since winter 2023 to develop the Concept Framework Plan in accordance with the Concept Framework Briefing Note 2018. The Council's briefing note, which covers the requirements for Concept Framework Plans was agreed by the Council's Cabinet in September 2018. The Briefing Note sets out the detailed approach to Concept Framework Plan development to support the requirement of SP2 of the Local Plan which states that a Concept Framework Plan is required for West Ongar. Relevant adopted policy is also in force through the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan.

Local Plan Policy P4 Ongar states:

'In order to ensure that a comprehensive and cohesive approach is taken to the planning and delivery of certain sites and associated infrastructure, planning applications in relation to sites ONG.R1 and ONG.R2 should be accompanied by and have regard to a Concept Framework Plan, as defined in Policy SP2 which has been endorsed by the Council. The endorsed Concept

Framework Plan will be taken into account as an important material consideration in the determination of any planning applications. The Concept Framework Plan relates to two site allocations. It should be produced jointly between all applicants of the site allocations subject to the Concept Framework Plan. Details of the specific requirements of the Concept Framework Plan can be found within the site-specific requirements set out in Part Two of this Plan.

The Concept Framework Plan and the planning applications for each site located within it should be considered and informed by the Quality Review Panel and be subject to public consultation, including in respect of the Concept Framework Plan, consultation with all those with a development interest in the defined area.'

The Concept Framework Plan has been subject to review and scrutiny by the applicant team, EFDC Council officers, and Essex County Council's Highways Engineer through the Planning Performance Agreement process. The proposals have been reviewed by the Quality Review Panel in May 2024.

In addition to the above policy requiring a CFP for the site, the Local Plan outlines also in the site-specific policy for the CFP, a requirement for a Movement Strategy to accompany planning applications that should be developed by developers/promoters of the CFP site and ONG.R4 to the northeast of the Four Wantz roundabout. In this instance, as ONG.R4 is at Planning Application stage, the three developers have agreed to produce the Movement Strategy concurrently with the development of the Concept Framework Plan and application for ONG.R4. For the CFP this has provided the benefit of a more cohesive approach due to the greater knowledge of the CFP entry points, internal street arrangements and interaction with the public highway. This has aided early consideration of proposals by Essex County Council (ECC) as the Highway Authority. Highway proposals, in particular regarding site entrances will need to be fully tested and details included with forthcoming planning applications to the satisfaction of ECC however these have been agreed in principle with ECC.

Following the above scrutiny processes, a four-week public consultation on the Draft West Ongar Concept Framework commenced on 10th September and ran until 8th October 2024 in line with the requirements of the Council's Concept Framework Briefing Note. Prior to consultation going live, local Councillors were invited to meet for an early discussion on the scheme on 28th August and it was agreed to meet again following the consultation to discuss outcomes. Developers also met with the Town Council on 19th September. Since then, the CFP has been reviewed and amended to incorporate and respond to, where necessary and appropriate, the consultation responses. Key points raised during the consultation, are outlined in this report and set out in more detail in the Engagement Report (Appendix C).

Following review and amendments to the CFP, officers are of the view that meaningful public engagement has been undertaken, and the Concept Framework Plans can now be formally endorsed to support high quality development proposals to come forward.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The CFP has undergone extensive scrutiny and where necessary and appropriate, changes have been undertaken in accordance with the Concept Framework process set out in the Council's Concept Framework Briefing Note which was endorsed by the Council's Cabinet in September 2018. This has included review of the emerging Concept Framework Plan by EFDC officers, ECC as Highways Authority and EFDC's Quality Review Panel (QRP) and responses to public consultation. The Concept Framework Plan is considered capable of endorsement as an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications and should be considered as such. It will also be used to inform the provision of pre-application advice and other development related purposes.

To ensure that members are kept fully up to date on the progress of Masterplans and Concept Frameworks and other major proposals being promoted within the district.

To comply with the Council's general obligations as a local planning authority and the requirements set out in national planning guidance.

Other Options for Action:

To not endorse the West Ongar Concept Framework Plan as an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

This could result in a delay in planning applications coming forward for the allocated sites and the delivery of new high-quality neighbourhood homes in the district. If housing delivery is delayed or quantum insufficient, this could result in an increase in applications being submitted in less appropriate, unallocated locations in Ongar for which the Council has less traction to prevent coming forward.

Report:

Introduction

1. The West Ongar allocated Concept Framework Plan Area is located southwest of the Four Wantz roundabout with the A414 bounding its northern edge and Ongar High Street to the east. To the east also sits the residential areas 'Great Lawn' and 'The Pavilions' and to the northeast corner is 'Bowes House'. To the west of the site is agricultural fields and along this boundary runs a Public Right of Way. The site sits within Ongar Parish, and it is within the administrative area of EFDC.
2. The site is allocated as part of the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 and Policy P4 'Ongar'.
3. The masterplan area is made up of two separate site allocations which reflect separate site ownerships as follows:
 - ONG.R1 Land West of Ongar (approximately 99 homes),
 - ONG.R2 Land at Bowes Field (approximately 135 homes)
4. The two sites add up to 5.91Ha out of which 5.8Ha is deemed to be developable. The approximate allocation is for a minimum of 234 dwellings.
5. The Ongar Neighbourhood Plan provides policy for the site and the plan is accompanied by the Ongar Design Guide.
6. To the northeast of the site sits Grade II listed Bowes Farm Lodge and outbuilding and Locally Listed Bowes House. On the opposite side of the High Street is the Great Stony School Conservation Area.
7. The site is rich in green infrastructure, including established planted edges and trees and the remnants of previous boundary enclosures identified in maps from 1873 remain on the site. These form the site ownership boundary running through the centre of the Concept Framework Plan Area and substantially influence the layout of the masterplan proposals.
8. The CFP is split into three main sections; A. Context; B. Framework and C. Implementation. Within A 'Context' the site context, townscape, landscape character, opportunities and

constraints and connections are covered. With B. 'Framework' the document addresses; site vision; design evolution; framework masterplan; movement; green and blue infrastructure; SuDS; biodiversity enhancement; character areas and sustainability. Section C of the document covers; consultation and engagement; phasing and infrastructure and stewardship. The CFP is enclosed in Appendix B.

9. The CFP is accompanied by an Engagement Report which sits in Appendix C

Programme

10. From commencement of engagement with the developer group, the programme towards the endorsement of the CFP has been as follows:
 - November 2023 – PPA meetings commence with EFDC and ECC officers
 - May 24th 2024 – Review of the CFP by the Council's Quality Review Panel
 - August 28th – Local Councillor meeting
 - September 10th – October 8th 2024 – 4 week public consultation
 - September 10th – [Website](#) goes live for public consultation
 - September 11th – Public exhibition at the Kings Head
 - September 19th – Town Council meeting
 - October 2024 – Post consultation revision/ finalisation of CFP and Engagement Report.
 - November 11th 2024 – EFDC Cabinet for endorsement of CFP

Masterplanning and Engagement process

11. During 2023-2024 meetings and workshops (in line with the endorsed Masterplanning Briefing Note 2018) have been held between key stakeholders including EFDC, the developers and ECC (Highways infrastructure).
12. Engagement has taken place throughout the project by the Developers and District and County officers and this is detailed in the accompanying Engagement Report (Appendix C). A summary of the engagement is below:
 - Meetings held in summer 2023 to agree the formation of a PPA to produce the CFP between the Council and land agents/ developers
 - Between November 2023 and May 2024 the site developers/promoters and officers from EFDC and ECC took part in the following Topic Based Meetings:
 - Meeting 1: Baseline introduction, Content and structure of the CFP, Access and Movement
 - Meeting 2: Green and blue infrastructure, urban design and sustainability
 - Meeting 3: Housing need and mix, phasing, delivery, infrastructure, stewardship.
 - Meeting 4: Communication and engagement strategy
 - Meeting 5: Review of QRP feedback and associated amendments
 - Public consultation commenced on September 10th and a [website](#) was established for residents to view a draft CFP document and leave online feedback
 - A public consultation event was held on September 11th from 2 to 7pm at the King's Head on the High Street. The exhibition was very well attended and included local Councillors, members of the Town Council and surrounding residents including those from Great Lawn, The Pavilions, Bowes House and north of the A414. Hard copy feedback forms were available for residents to leave feedback and many exhibition boards were available for residents to review proposals. A large contingent from the developers/promoters were on hand along with Council officers to answer questions. Flyers were issued for a wide area to publicise the event.
 - A meeting inviting Local Councillors was held on August 28th prior to the public engagement and a meeting was held on September 19th with the Town Council.

- A meeting is planned following public engagement to review the outcomes with Local Councillors.
- Meetings outside the PPA and subject to a separate process between developers/promoters of the CFP sites and ONG.R4 were also held to draw up the Ongar Movement Strategy. These meetings were attended by EFDC officers representing the CFP site, case officer for ONG.R4, ECC Highways lead officer and the three developers and their associated consultant teams. This strategy has been submitted with the planning application for ONG.R4 in line with Local Plan requirements. The strategy was available for comment to local residents until October 21st 2024. A summary was also presented at the CFP public exhibition and within the CFP document. The Ongar Movement Strategy proposed public highway improvements in the vicinity of the three allocated sites to enhance pedestrian safety. It proposes direct delivery (by the site developers) of improvement works in three phases relevant to each site. This approach avoids the need to await the delivery of the last site to amass the required funding – a situation which could add substantial delay to the works and relies on Essex County Council for delivery.

Concept Framework Plan Summary

Placemaking,

13. The CFP has been developed observing EFDC's adopted Local Plan Policy SP2 Place Shaping, where emphasis has been given to ensure generous, well connected and biodiverse rich green space provision with a strong sense of place/identity is proposed. The CFP has paid particular attention to the green infrastructure and heritage conditions of the site, townscape of Chipping Ongar and the edge condition to the countryside. The central concept of the masterplan is to use the existing green infrastructure and historic boundary conditions to define public open spaces. Chipping Ongar's townscape is considered in the way street enclosures vary between tighter, more intimate streets at the centre of the site and wider more rural inspired streets and landscape spaces towards the western edge of the site.
14. Height is proposed carefully, predominantly two storeys across the site and three storeys in specific places to bolster placemaking such as around the two main internal garden squares and facing the A414 behind an enhanced existing green buffer.
15. Design principles employed closer to the High Street refer to the existing site field patterns and character of Chipping Ongar High Street. However at the western edge where the site addresses the countryside - proposals open up to form a lower density more dispersed layout around areas of publicly accessible green space, SuDS attenuation, play and biodiversity enhancements. This presents an open green frontage to the countryside and an enhanced connection to the PRoW. This approach is atypical for Chipping Ongar settlement edge conditions where housing traditionally turns its back to the countryside to prioritise overlooking internal street layouts and where no usable shared green space is provided. The masterplan design approach presents a positive transition from urban to rural and responds to Local Plan site specific policy for a new defensible boundary to the Green Belt.

Transport and movement

16. In line with Local Plan site specific policy, developers/promoters of the CFP sites have collaborated with the applicants of ONG.R4 to the northeast of the Four Wantz roundabout on the production of the Ongar Movement Strategy. This strategy plans to improve the safety of movement and access to all three sites for new and existing residents. A particular focus has been placed on pedestrian safety by enhancing pavement widths and condition, proposing new or enhanced crossing points and prioritising routes to key destinations such

as the school and other key facilities north of the site such as the medical centre, academy and leisure centre.

17. It is noted that Central Connect (previously named Vectare) have commenced operation of the 18 and 20 bus routes adjacent the CFP site providing enhancement of public transport. This includes the upgrading of the 20/21 route (Harlow/Ongar/Epping triangle, previously the 420 route) to double the frequency from hourly to half hourly for the full timetable and extending that higher frequency to 9:30pm affording trips from Epping tube station on to Ongar later into the evening. Also introduced is a new fleet of double decker buses which can be tracked in real time online and will expand until all old single deck buses are phased out by end of 2024. The new operators plan to continuously improve the key no. 20 route as allocated sites in Ongar and HGGT sites come on stream. For forthcoming planning applications, ECC will seek contributions to enhance public transport provision further.
18. It has been agreed through the CFP and Movement Strategy processes that access should also be provided to the site from the A414 to the north of the masterplan to reduce movement through the roundabout and High Street access. This approach has been agreed with ECC Highways. Further detailed proposals will need to be provided by developers at planning application stage to demonstrate proposals meet full compliance with ECC Highways requirements. No through movement is permitted for vehicles but there are two points of connection through the site for pedestrians along with the enhanced PRoW adjacent the site which is planned to be upgraded to make it suitable for walking year-round.
19. Parking will be detailed at planning application stage, but the masterplan has been based on broad alignment with EPOA parking standards.

Green and blue infrastructure

20. Green infrastructure is a key influence for the masterplan layout in accordance with Local Plan Policy SP6. Remnants of boundary enclosures identified in maps from 1873, remain on the site and their squared off geometry substantially influences the masterplan layout, in particular the garden square within ONG.R2. Historic boundaries also generate the site ownership boundary which runs through the centre of the Concept Framework Plan Area. The large orchard enclosure generates the layout for the main public open orchard space at ONG.R1. Well established green boundary edges are present adjacent the High Street, the western boundary to the countryside and fronting the A414 and these will be retained and enhanced.
21. Along the eastern boundary of the site the existing established tree belt will remain intact, and an entrance formed between the trees having regard to Tree Protection Orders. Upon entering the site a view is set up to an existing tall mature tree sitting centrally in this triangular shaped part of the site. This unusual site geometry naturally compresses the site entrance view which leads to a tighter street configuration influenced by existing streets branching off the High Street in Chipping Ongar. A drop in site levels, along with an opening up of the street widths to a looser western edge create a more open and expansive view to the countryside beyond.
22. The central boundary dissecting the site with its established green vegetation is retained and proposed as an ecology corridor joining the two allocations and will feature homes overlooking this linear green space.
23. ONG.R1 will retain and enhance the established green boundary fronting the A414 and install a new pedestrian path behind for pedestrian safety.

24. Along the western edge of the site a green, publicly accessible landscape edge is proposed, featuring play, Biodiversity enhancement, SuDS elements and this forms a new defensible boundary to the Green Belt.
25. It is planned to accommodate the statutory required minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain enhancements on site.

Housing Numbers and tenure

26. The CFP area has a minimum approximate allocation net capacity of 234 homes and the Local Plan gives approximates of 99 homes for ONG.R1 and 135 homes for ONG.R2. However through the CFP process, the nature of established green infrastructure, proposals for new green spaces, area required for biodiversity enhancement and SuDS provision has been more fully understood. This creates restrictions on the amount of land that can be used for development. This constraint is coupled with height and density restrictions considered appropriate for the site and the high proportion of family homes set out in the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan. These factors combined have resulted in an approximate capacity for the site of 180 homes. Although this is a 33% reduction on the Local Plan approximate allocation, it is considered justifiable such that the proposals are in line with Local Plan policy DM9 and Ongar Neighbourhood Plan policy ONG-RR3 and ONG-ED1.
27. The CFP reinforces the EFDC Local Plan requirement of 40% affordable housing sought with the right type of housing to assist the delivery of the Council's specific housing need. Housing mix and affordable housing details must be agreed through the planning application process.

Environmental Sustainability

28. A significant aspect of the CFP is that it sets Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the allocated sites that are a significant improvement on the forthcoming revised 2025 building regulations. The proposed fabric-first approach, where buildings are constructed efficiently to use less energy has significant benefits for occupants' health and wellbeing as well as having the obvious impact on reduction or elimination of utility bills associated with heating. This contrasts with the forthcoming building regulations where building fabric performance will not significantly improve, with the focus instead on decarbonising energy supply.

Socio-economic Sustainability

29. Homes are planned around pedestrian prioritised streets arranged around accessible green space dispersed through the site. Productive landscapes are proposed for both the Orchard space at R1 and at the garden square at R2 to encourage community participation. Less priority afforded to car movement/ storage enables a 'play on the way' strategy to be proposed along with more regular play features in line with the Council's Green and Blue strategy. These elements should also be integrated with above ground SuDS features as planning applications come forward.
30. The EFDC Local Plan requires all new homes in the district must meet Part M Cat 2 requirements and this sets a positive standard for accessibility above building regulation requirements and ensures that homes above ground floor will not limit residents' quality of life in future.
31. EFDC Local Plan also requires that homes must meet/ exceed the Nationally Defined Space Standards meaning that new homes will typically be larger than homes built since the 1980s when space standards were removed. In tandem with enhanced

accessibility requirements to limits the need to move due to compressed space standards. Homes are planned to be tenure blind.

32. People walking is given priority over vehicle movement and this, when combined with frequently dispersed public green space enables a walkable neighbourhood with the associated health and wellbeing benefits as outlined in Essex Design Guide principles.

Policy Context

33. The development of the West Ongar Concept Framework Plan has been progressed in consultation with officers from EFDC and ECC. Officers are confident that at this masterplanning stage, the CFP is acceptable with regard to policy outlined in the EFDC Adopted Local Plan and the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan. A list of key relevant policy and guidance is listed below.

EFDC Local Plan policy:

- Policy SP1 – Spatial Development Strategy 2011-2033
- Policy SP2 – Place Shaping
- Policy SP6 – The Natural Environment, Landscape Character and Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Policy H1 – Housing Mix and Accommodation Types
- Policy H2 – Affordable Homes
- Policy P4 – Ongar
- Policy DM9 – High Quality Design
- EFDC Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Ongar Neighbourhood Plan (ONP) policy:

- Policy ONG-RR3: Housing Mix and Standards
- ONG-ED1: Local Character and Design
- ONG-ED3: Historic Buildings
- ONG-ED4: Sustainable Design
- ONG-ED5: Natural Environment
- ONG-ED6: Landscape and Amenity Buffer Zones
- ONG-CT1: Local Green Space
- ONG-CT2: Community, Cultural, Leisure and Sports Facilities
- ONG-CT3: Transport and Movement
- ONG-CT4: Infrastructure Priorities
- ONG-CT5: Footpaths and Cycle Route

Further guidance documents referred to:

- Ongar Design Guide
- EFDC Green Infrastructure Strategy
- EFDC Endorsed Concept Framework Briefing Note
- EFDC Statement of Community Involvement
- EPOA Parking Standards
- Essex Design Guide, A new development model for Essex

Concept Framework Plan response to policy

34. Ongar has an abundant policy context given the existence of the adopted EFDC Local Plan and Ongar Neighbourhood Plan (ONP). This report summarises the proposals and indicates the response to key Local Plan policy in sections 13 to 32. Local Plan site specific policy is also included below in item 35. More detailed notes on how the masterplan responds to Ongar Neighbourhood Plan policy and guidance contained in the ODG and other guidance documents is detailed in Appendix A of this report.

35. Local Plan site specific requirements

Site specific requirements highlighted in the EFDC Local Plan in relation to the West Ongar Concept Framework Plan are extracted below.

Officers consider that Local Plan policy requirements are met by the proposals and these aspects are covered in items 13 to 32 of this report.

Design

A. The Concept Framework Plan should address the place shaping issues identified in Policy SP2 and the following requirements: (i) the mix of homes to be provided including tenures, types and sizes;

(ii) the principles of the design including key design features, integration of the development into the wider landscape and materials palette;

(iii) the approach to amenity/greenspace provision and landscaping;

(iv) the approach to minimising the impact on the adjacent and nearby heritage assets;

(v) the Movement Strategy for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. This should include connections within and between the sites as well as linkages with the wider area; and

(vi) the on-site and off-site infrastructure required to support the development proposals and how this will be provided ahead of or in tandem with the development it supports.

B. The Concept Framework Plan and development proposals for the sites located within the Concept Framework Plan Area should be considered and informed by the Quality Review Panel.

Trees

C. There are trees on and adjacent to the site which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. These trees should be incorporated into the development proposals to avoid the loss of, or damage to them. This could include providing an appropriate buffer zone around the trees or incorporating trees within on-site open or amenity space.

Landscape Character

D. The site is located in an area of high landscape sensitivity. Development proposals should be carefully designed to minimise harm to the wider landscape taking into account the development's setting in the landscape and the local landscape character. The design should minimise the impact on landscape character by considering factors including the design, layout, materials and external finishes. The development's landscaping should, as appropriate, seek to incorporate, retain and, where possible, restore/enhance existing field patterns, hedgerows, tree belts and/or ditches, providing additional screening from the wider landscape where relevant.

Heritage

E. Development may impact upon the setting of the Grade II listed Bowes Farm Lodge and outbuilding, and Locally Listed Bowes House, both of which are located to the East of the Area. Proposals that may affect the settings of these heritage assets should preserve or wherever possible, enhance the assets' significance, having regard to their special architectural or historic interest, character, appearance and the contribution made by their settings.

F. The Area is adjacent to the Great Stony School Conservation Area which is located to the East, to the opposite side of High Street. Development proposals relating to the Eastern part of the site should preserve or enhance the setting, including views in and out, of the Conservation Area. In doing so, consideration should be given to layout, development form, density, height, scale, massing and materials, in order to mitigate any impact on the Conservation Area.

On-site Constraints

G. The sites have potential site access constraints due to their proximity to the Four Wantz roundabout. Vehicular access must be limited to a single access point for the two sites to ensure safe access to the sites from the highway network, and to remove the opportunity for rat-running. The Council's preference is for vehicular access to the Area to be from the High Street subject to the Concept Framework Plan, and any development proposals must identify an acceptable solution

in relation to the trees which are located along the Eastern edge of site ONG.R2 which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. Should this not be possible, opportunities to provide vehicular access to the Area from Epping Road (A414) should be explored, including through the potential to upgrade the existing access point.

Infrastructure

H. Any planning application should be accompanied by a Movement Strategy which takes account of the requirements of this Area and residential site allocation ONG.R4. This should address both highways and active travel (walking and cycling) requirements.

I. The Movement Strategy should be developed and agreed with the site promoters of ONG.R4 prior to the submission of any planning application.

J. The Movement Strategy should address the following matters: (i) the need for any highways upgrades to the A414 Four Wantz Junction, which should be agreed with Essex County Council; (ii) pedestrian and cycling routes between sites ONG.R1, ONG.R2 and ONG.R4, Ongar District Centre, and key services and facilities in the Northern part of Ongar; and (iii) how the proposed pedestrian and cycle routes will integrate with the existing pedestrian and cycle networks.

K. Any planning application should make provision for the delivery of any on-site and off-site works identified in the Movement Strategy as part of the development or make contributions to the Council in lieu. The costs borne in implementing the Movement Strategy should be shared by the promoters of these sites and residential allocation ONG.R4 with appropriate measures being put in place to equalise the contributions. Through implementation of the Movement Strategy, the Council, Essex County Council and the site promoters should work collaboratively and proactively to ensure that any on-site and off-site infrastructure is provided ahead of or in tandem with the development it supports. This is to mitigate any impacts of the development proposal, meet the needs of new/existing residents and establish sustainable movement patterns.

Green Belt Boundary

L. An existing feature in the landscape should be used as the new defensible boundary to the Green Belt. As part of the development proposals the existing feature along the South Western edge of the site will need to be strengthened.'

Consultation / Scrutiny Undertaken:

36. Quality Review Panel

The proposals have been reviewed by the district's Quality Review Panel (QRP) on May 24th. A pre-submission package of information was issued to the expert panel two weeks prior to the review and on the day a site visit was arranged to ensure the panel had a thorough knowledge of the site.

The panel supported the masterplan vision and landscape-led approach to the design while also calling for a number of issues to be further developed and considered as the proposals move forward. The panel recognised that the Concept Framework Plan is a concise document and some of the recommendations are to be considered for the development of the document and others with regard to forthcoming planning applications. The Council will seek the panels views again once planning applications come forward.

Proposals were amended in response to the Quality Review Panel as follows:

1. Key performance indicators have been added to the submission to cover energy efficiency and other measures.
2. The scheme will be developed to provide a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain, as well as specific ecological habitat (such as slow worms), with the inclusion of SWALES to manage rainwater and also increase the biodiversity.

3. Although in separate ownership, the scheme has been enhanced to respond to their own unique character, such as the green square in ONG.R2 and the orchard in ONG.R1, with improved connections between the two sites for pedestrians and cyclists. Street hierarchy has been developed and clarified for both sites.
4. Affordable housing will be provided to meet the local need and space making priorities of the site. The quantum of development has been reduced from that in the local plan, to one that reflects the housing need, urban character, and the sustainable location.
5. To respond to the character of the local streets and architecture, pitch roofs remain the dominate roof profile in the proposals. A pitched roof allows the solar panels to be orientated towards the sun. The orientation of the different roofs will vary to maximise the solar opportunity and to also provide an interesting roof scape.
6. The layout for ONG.R1 has been enhanced to better respond to the local character:
 - a. Key view of orchard space when entering site
 - b. Narrowing of roads and surface finishes at key junctions
 - c. Stepped frontages introduced to building lines
 - d. Better defined courtyards
 - e. Turning heads reduced and pulled away from the southern edge
7. The layout for ONG.R2 was largely well received, and minor alterations have been made to the north and south to respond to the review panel comments.

37. Public Engagement

Items 11 and 12 of this report highlight details of the public engagement undertaken. The engagement aligns with the requirements of the EFDC endorsed Concept Framework Masterplanning Briefing Note.

The Engagement Report (Appendix C) presents a detailed overview of the public engagement conducted by EFDC, this Land and City & Country regarding the West Ongar Concept Framework Plan. The engagement process involved multiple methods, including a letter drop, public exhibition, and online engagement, allowing residents, stakeholders, and the public to provide valuable feedback on key development issues such as infrastructure, housing design, environmental impacts, and community involvement. The report details engagement in separate sections with regard to feedback from the public, the Town Council and the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Community Group Committee.

Key issues raised include existing traffic congestion, the need for affordable housing, infrastructure limitations, and the desire to preserve the rural character of Ongar. Concerns were raised with regards to neighbouring amenity and loss of privacy, outlook and light. The community also voiced strong support for enhanced public services, sustainable transport options, and meaningful community involvement in the planning process.

The Town Council and a key District Councillor, having met with Ceres Property, City & Country and EFDC, reinforced the need for alignment with the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan, with a focus on traffic safety, site surveys and appropriate design.

Conclusion

The Concept Framework Plan has been developed in a comprehensive manner to include the whole allocation area spanning different land ownerships. The developer/promotor's have responded positively to Quality Review Panel comments, a Movement Strategy has been worked up collaboratively with another strategic site to plan improvements to off-site infrastructure. Public engagement has been carried out in alignment with the requirements stipulated in the Council's

Endorsed Masterplanning Briefing note and the proposals have been altered to respond to comments where appropriate. The design team have provided the Council with satisfactory information to ensure that the masterplan can be delivered at these landholdings when planning applications come forward for the two allocated sites. With the above in mind it is recommended that the Concept Framework Plan is endorsed by Cabinet as an important material consideration in the determination of forthcoming planning applications.

Resource Implications:

The successful delivery of the strategic sites within Epping Forest District will require considerable commitment of officer time from EFDC. The developer of ONG.R2 anticipates drafting a planning application following the endorsement of the masterplan. The land promoter for ONG.R1 has not yet indicated its intentions. The noting of the contents of this report do not give rise to additional resource implications. PPA agreements will need to be drawn up between officers from the Council's Development Management team and developers/promoters in due course.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The work on Concept Framework Plans has been developed in accordance with Government policy (NPPF and NPPG) and Planning Law.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The Local Plan contains a policy designed to promote the notion of making good places to live, work and visit. This will include safer by design principles, sustainable development, the provision of alternatives to the car, energy efficiency and environmental considerations as well as sustainable drainage systems and quality green infrastructure. Strategic Masterplans and Concept Framework Plans will be the mechanism for these place-making measures to be delivered in identified Masterplan Areas.

Background Papers:

The Ongar Movement Strategy, out for public consultation as part of the ONG.R4 planning application.

Risk Management:

If the Council was not to take a pro-active stance on the delivery of Masterplans and major applications arising from the Local Plan, there is a real risk of development occurring of a type that does not extract maximum value for the provision of social infrastructure and poor-quality development may occur.

Equality:

An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out and there was xx / no significant impact. (Please amend as required - Note the EIA must be carried out and retained but is not required to be submitted)

Appendix A Concept Framework Plan response to Ongar Neighbourhood Plan (ONP) and Ongar Design Guide (OSG)

Appendix B Concept Framework Plan

Appendix C Engagement Report (which also contains appendices)

Appendix A Concept Framework Plan response to Ongar Neighbourhood Plan (ONP) and Ongar Design Guide (ODG)

This appendix provides notes on how the Concept Framework Plan (CFP) responds to policy in the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan (ONP) 2020-2033 and notes how it responds to guidance in the Ongar Design Guide (ODG) 2019. It is noted that the ONP acknowledges and refers to the Concept Framework Plan site and the ODG does not.

Policy ONG-RR3: sets out the requirements for Ongar on Housing Mix and Standards. While the exact number and mix should be determined for this site through the planning application process, regard has been given to the Neighbourhood Plan requirement for a larger provision of family sized homes within the mix and a smaller proportion of one and two bedroom homes. Following public engagement, the assumed quantum of family sized homes has increased further and has resulted in a reduction in the overall number of homes proposed. There is an approximate 33% reduction in the number of homes called for in the Local Plan allocation and this is considered justifiable on the basis of this housing mix policy requirement along with other site-specific considerations.

Policy ONG-ED1: Local Character and Design.

The key entrance to the site is formed through a retained and enhanced green buffer off the High Street and designed to align views to an existing mature tree set in a green space proposed at the pinch point in the site. Homes are not proposed at the pinch point to avoid overlooking and encroachment on existing homes. To the north of this space a garden square is proposed responding to the established squared off geometry of existing field patterns and retained mature trees form the centrepiece to the square which is enclosed on four sides. At this point, the masterplan proposes a tight-knit street leading to the southwest which frames a view to the countryside beyond. This view is aided by the site sloping considerably and at the end of the street and development becoming more dispersed with views opening up around public green landscape, play, biodiversity enhancement and SuDS attenuation to respond to the Green Belt boundary. The northwestern part of the site is set out to relate to an existing orchard enclosure. Green infrastructure in this space is retained to form a central orchard space and this acts as the spatial organiser for this part of the site. At the boundary between the two allocations, established vegetation is again retained and enhanced as a green corridor running through the site with overlooking provided either side. Buildings along the A414 are set back behind an enhanced green buffer with a pathway on the inside edge. Homes here are taller, up to three storeys and face the street providing overlooking and active frontage to the pavement and linear green space.

While the overall structure of the masterplan has been heavily influenced by the site's existing green infrastructure, field patterns, sloping nature and unusual shape, the masterplan design has also sought influence from a townscape analysis of Chipping Ongar - in particular for the parts of the masterplan closer to the High Street. The layout of the High Street of a well enclosed wider linear central space compressed by narrower parts either end and with glimpse views to narrow streets, rear courts and mews spaces has been used as an inspiration to provide a mix of wider and tighter spaces within the masterplan. In both the historic and proposed, parking is often accommodated to the rear to enable the distinct character of the street.

The ODG describes this key essence of Chipping Ongar under Pattern and Layout of Buildings as 'Dominant building lines enclose the gently curving High Street creating a sense of enclosure that is interrupted by a few car parks and the north-eastern extent of the Ongar Castle'. The ODG also notes in its single reference to masterplans that 'they should reference elements such as materials, layouts, massings, forms, details, or colour palettes of heritage assets to reinforce a strong sense of place'.

Alongside this key influence of tighter and wider streets, typical groupings/ terracing of buildings, a casual building line, subservient parking configuration, varied threshold spaces, narrower side streets and application of materials have been observed and used as pointers for the proposals.

While the above design references are employed away from the rural edge to refer to the existing site field patterns and Chipping Ongar High Street character, at the western edge where the site addresses the countryside - proposals open up to form a lower density more dispersed layout around areas of publicly accessible green space and SuDS attenuation. This presents an open green frontage to the countryside and an enhanced connection to the PRoW. This approach is atypical for Chipping Ongar settlement edge conditions, where housing traditionally turns its back to the countryside to prioritise frontage overlooking internal streets and where no usable shared green space is provided. The masterplan approach is supported as it presents a positive transition from urban to rural and responds to the ONPs rationale text around a more open character at 'edge of settlement' locations.

While much detail must be provided to demonstrate compliance with the ONP through forthcoming planning applications, the masterplan provides a positive framework for alignment with ONG-ED1.

While the masterplan seeks to align with the guidance in the ODG for general design principles, it also seeks to accord with the specific requirements for Chipping Ongar which are:

- Improved connections between residential areas and the High Street - proposed in the masterplan
- The ODG requires that speed and volume of traffic along the High Street should be reduced through introduction of measures to interrupt flow and create a pedestrian friendly environment. In this regard the Ongar Movement Strategy should be referred to which provides a combined approach for the CFP sites and ONG.R4.
- Varied skyline and building height - proposed in the masterplan
- Diversity in built form, materials and architectural details, avoiding uniformity - proposed by the masterplan and must be continued through planning applications.
- Views from the High Street to the countryside - will be established in the masterplan by the direct diagonal link from the High Street through the site pinch point to frame views to the countryside.

Where proposals cannot or do not accord with ODG specific guidance the following is noted:

- Since the publication of the Ongar Design Guide (ODG) in 2019, the adoption of the EFDC Local Plan has led to the removal of the CFP allocated sites and ONG.R4 from the Green Belt. This change, which affects the relationship between Chipping Ongar and Shelley, has diminished the strategic gaps and urban transition spaces that once served to prevent settlement coalescence. While this change influences the context in which the site is considered, it is important to recognise that the site is not directly adjacent to the central conservation area. So with this in mind, the design strategy has been carefully crafted to respect and respond to the High Street's unique character, ensuring a sensitive integration of built form near this key thoroughfare. As the development transitions towards the rural edge, the proposal incorporates a reduction in housing density and an increase in open spaces, thereby creating a gradual but distinct progression from urban to rural settings. This approach seeks to harmonise urban integration with the preservation of the surrounding countryside, fostering a balanced relationship between the two environments. Further enhancing this design, the proposal carefully considers the site's interface with the amended Green Belt. The southwestern edge, which is particularly sensitive due to its proximity to open countryside, has been treated with a "looser" and more dispersed arrangement of homes, complemented by generous areas of public green space. These open spaces not only respect the rural edge but also enhance the visual and environmental quality of the development.

- In line with the above transition response, a more varied approach to front boundary treatments, responding to the character of Chipping Ongar is proposed rather than a homogenous approach. This is to provide a distinct character to certain streets and key green spaces. At the edge of the site however, where the more dispersed approach is proposed - front gardens are more generous to respond to the rural edge. Where larger front gardens are proposed, parking spaces must be dimensioned adequately in forthcoming planning applications to allow sufficient access and avoid front garden loss to hard surface parking, an issue that degrades ecology, drainage and street scene quality. The above approach largely accords with the policy in the ODG, whose singular reference to masterplans notes that they should reference elements such as layouts and details of heritage assets to reinforce a strong sense of place.

ONG-ED3: Historic Buildings. The site sits across from the Great Stony Conservation Area and there are two listed buildings adjacent the site, once within the curtilage of Bowes House. Bowes House (or the old headmasters house) is also listed as a building of Local Architectural or Historic Interest. ONG-ED3 outlines policy on the setting of listed buildings. The following points are noted in this regard:

- To address the Great Stony Conservation area, the masterplan proposes to retain and enhance the substantial green established planted buffer facing the high street which sits across from the green buffer surrounding the old school. This does not impinge on the reading of the central circular green space or symmetrical organisation of the school buildings cited as the primary quality to protect in the Conservation area.
- Listed buildings adjacent, Bowes Farm Lodge and associated outbuildings are concealed within grounds of private homes within the setting of Bowes House and these are separated from the masterplan area by established green buffers, private gardens and a shared resident garden. While homes are planned to rise to three storeys in some places along the A414, they step down to address the listed lodge setting.
- A three-storey building proposed at the site entrance is located away from the boundary to locally listed Bowes House and has rear parking arrangements to form a gap. Rear parking will be mostly shielded from view of Bowes house by the recently constructed garage structure and resident car park on that site. Proposed building frontage is set back significantly from the front elevation of Bowes House, behind the established green buffer to preserve the prominence of the locally listed building as it addresses the corner.

ONG-ED4 outlines policy on Sustainable Design. Matters relating to Environment and Social Sustainability are covered in the main report in items 28 to 32. It is noted that the CFP documents commits developers to environmental sustainability standards that are higher than forthcoming improved building regulations.

ONG-ED5: Natural Environment. The site proposes the retention of existing green infrastructure save for the minimal impact on trees required to form an entrance to the High Street. In line with policy, a proportional replacement of felled trees is proposed. It is now a statutory requirement that the allocated sites must provide Biodiversity Net Gain of a minimum of 10% and it is intended that this gain will occur on site.

ONG-ED6 provides policy on Landscape and Amenity Buffer Zones. Generous buffers are proposed all around the side perimeter. A primary outcome of public engagement has been to reduce the height, increase the distance, reduce the quantum and alter homes from flats to houses for proposed buildings adjacent existing homes at Great Lawn, The Pavilions and Marks Avenue to provide more comfortable buffer zones.

Policies that relate to S106 contributions must be considered as part of forthcoming planning applications.