



POSITION STATEMENT - DEVELOPMENT OF NEW HOMES IN THE DISTRICT OF ONGAR

Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) are responsible for assessing and deciding on planning applications for new developments. **Ongar Town Council (OTC) has no power over which applications are approved and which are rejected.** EFDC must consult with OTC, as a statutory consultee, on applications within our district, but it has no obligation to agree with our analysis.

The adoption of the Local Plan by EFDC in 2023 allocated 590 new homes within our district across 8 allocated sites. In the past 18 months there have also been a further three applications for major developments (ten houses or more) comprising 104 dwellings on land not identified within the Local Plan. All three sites have been refused by EFDC or withdrawn, although for two sites there is still scope for an appeal. Community engagement has also commenced for a site comprising around 250 homes.

OTC has engaged with Residents, Resident Associations, Community Groups, District and County Councillors, relevant EFDC and ECC (Essex County Council) officials and developers on these applications and will continue to do so.

Through this engagement, we hear that residents are concerned about

- the loss of green belt land,
- the risk of increased traffic and congestion from new developments and
- the pressure these developments will place on our local infrastructure including GPs, schools, community & sports facilities, drainage systems and sewage capacity.

OTC frequently references these concerns in our submissions to EFDC. Most recently, three applications have cited 'grey belt' policy as justification for development. In all three applications, OTC successfully defended the site's green belt status, showing these sites did not meet 'grey belt' criteria.

During our experience with the planning process, it has become apparent that there are multiple deficiencies which include:

- Misunderstanding and misapplying policies contained within the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan
- An inability for the public to engage meaningfully on highways issues
- Infrastructure funding based on costs set in 2018 rather than today's costs
- Infrastructure considerations being based on the development in isolation, rather than considering the collective impact of multiple planned developments.

As a result of our experiences, OTC has agreed the following position statement:

"OTC shares resident concerns about the impact of new development on our green belt and on our local infrastructure. OTC is not confident that infrastructure funding for approved major developments is sufficient to mitigate the impact of new developments on residents. We commit to working with local resident and community groups to prevent inappropriate development on the Green Belt (as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework). We also commit to working with all stakeholders to ensure that:

- ***Agreed infrastructure funding is sufficient to mitigate the impact of development on the community***
- ***Developers do not renege on infrastructure funding agreements***
- ***Section 106 Funding is spent on local, high-quality projects that benefit Ongar residents***
- ***Submitted plans are improved during the consultation process"***

May 2026

Statement from Ongar Town Council

We will continue to work tirelessly on your behalf and remain grateful for your ongoing support.