



To: appcomment@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

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Dear Muhammad and Planning Team

Joint objection from Ongar Town Council and Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Community Group to EPF/2787/23 Land North of Chelmsford Road, Ongar

Ongar Town Council (OTC) and Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Community Group (ONPCG) raise 3 major concerns and therefore objections, as a result of the submitted detailed planning application EPF/2787/23 Land North of Chelmsford Rd, Ongar:

1. The layout and detail of the design is out of character, not compliant with a number of Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies and design guides, and does not equate with the type of Area as denoted in National Design Code i.e. village /outer suburb.
2. Infrastructure requirements relating to
 - a. The proposed road upgrade is insufficient relating to the safety of road users turning right onto the MRN road A414.
 - b. The calculations for the SuDS requirements for a Greenfield site is incorrect and the siting (position) of the ponds within the design is poor.
3. There are no LEAPs proposed within the development (as per S106 contributions) nor contributions for community amenities in the wider civil parish.

Although points 2 and 3 are usually decided in Conditions of an approval, we contest that our justified concerns will involve changes to the layout within the built form to rectify, and therefore change the application substantially. We strongly request that detailed planning application EPF/2787/23 is **not decided on until** :

- Essex Highways has agreed road upgrades etc. (including the Four Wantz in conjunction with developers of ONG.R1 and ONG.R2- West Ongar Concept) This to include the “shape of the roads within the development” as specified in emails from Persimmon to ONPCG.
- LLFA (and EFDC) have agreed the siting (position) and calculations of SuDS requirements including attenuation ponds for this greenfield site, to include the exceedance route.

ONPCG and OTC also have supporting hard evidence in addition to local knowledge to assist in making appropriate changes that should suit all parties.

With regard to Point 1, some relevant detail within the application is missing, e.g. materials & finishes of homes, and landscaping, thus making it impossible to assess compliance with some Policies and contrary to new paragraph of NPPF 140. NPPF now suggests that permission should be refused if detail such as materials and finishes is missing (as is the case of EPF/2787/23) in order to ensure that no changes take place between permission and completion of the build.



OTC and ONPCG therefore strongly object to detailed application EPF/2787/23 Land North of Chelmsford Rd, Ongar on the following grounds:

1. The layout and designs are **fundamentally** incorrect for this edge of settlement location. EPF/2787/23 proposal is very urban and enclosed, with the parallel streets in a grid pattern being more typical of central parts of an urban town. The National Design Code would regard this site as Area Type Village or Outer Suburb. Confirming this, Ongar Neighbourhood Plan (ONP) states in policy ONG-ED1 Local Character and Design
"1. New-build development, including extensions, and alterations to existing dwellings must complement the rural character of the Ongar Parish and the specific character of the immediate context as outlined in Ongar Design Guide, creating a locally distinctive sense of place. This includes:
 - a) *Complementing the existing rural 'townscape' character in terms of height, scale, massing, and degree of set-back of building frontages from the road in accordance as to whether the development is[at] edge of settlement of the surrounding rural villages and hamlets of Shelley..."*As a result other sections within ONG-ED1 and a number of other policies are also not complied with and Ongar Design Guide (AECOM 2019) is ignored.
 - a. The street layout, with rigid grid pattern, minimal setback, uniform built form and designs are out of character with the 'area type' and specific location, and is not in context with the immediate surroundings. This also effects/influences other aspects such as street lighting, open space, private amenity, vegetation, wildlife protection etc.
 - b. Private amenity of a number of existing properties is adversely and unnecessarily compromised through lack of adequate landscaping and buffer zones etc.
 - c. There is insufficient open space within the built form and no children's play areas. The opportunity to position one of the SuDS attenuation ponds in the centre enabling multipurpose function has been ignored (and calculations contested as incorrect).
 - d. There has been no realistic attempt to provide wildlife corridors for the abundant existing wildlife being displaced and little protection of habitats of protected or endangered species.
 - e. Parking for the 28 4-bedroomed homes is insufficient, based on statistics of car ownership in the civil parish, but space should be available in many if not all within their curtilage. This shortfall will lead to indiscriminate on-street parking on site and overspill onto High Ongar Road. There is insufficient funding to encourage or effect a modal shift from car use for commuters.
2. a Whilst not yet agreed with Essex Highways, the developer's proposals to upgrade the A414 have not addressed the 90% of traffic that will be turning right onto A414 from High Ongar Rd. In fact the proposal will make that journey more hazardous. This could have been addressed with a roundabout (as land is already available at that junction) and the 30mph sign moved further east along the A414. It is also important to note that this road is now a Major Road



Network (MRN) road linking M11 with A12, and recorded collisions are of concern to Essex Police.

b ONPCG and OTC contest that calculations for SuDS requirements must be based on 100% of the greenfield site area in accordance with Essex SuDS guide. It is not. The underlying geology is poor draining clay, with existing surface water flooding issues nearby (see EA mapping). Furthermore, it is not clear where the exceedance route will be, or how the existing ditch/drainage to the river Roding will accommodate excess water, due to existing flood risk.

3. This site must include children's play areas including a LEAP. This will require a change in the layout of the site, to provide a suitable position with natural surveillance, thus negating the present application EPF/2787/23. In addition, a detailed application should include details of contributions to community amenities. ONP Policy JNG-CT4 Infrastructure Priorities expects *"meaningful engagement with local stakeholders and community groups at pre-application stage. Ongar Town Council will therefore be expected to be involved in decision making for s106 contribution (or equivalent) from developers."* No such approaches or meaningful engagement has been forthcoming.

Justification for our objections are included in detail below, in order to be perfectly clear where EPF/2787/23 does not comply with planning policy and design guides.

1. **The layout and designs are fundamentally incorrect for this edge of settlement location.**
 - a. **The street layout, with rigid grid pattern, minimal setback, uniform built form and designs are out of character with the 'area type' and specific location, and is not in context with the immediate surroundings.**
 - i. Shelley's character and context of edge of settlement and rural surroundings area of Shelley is depicted in Ongar Design Guide (AECOM 2019) as a "street layout of a network of looping streets and cul-de-sacs off a central road through the village.... trees and hedgerows planted throughout Shelley result in a green leafy character with strong visual links to the surrounding countryside." i.e. Village/Outer Suburb 'Area Type'.
 - ii. By contrast, EPF/2787/23 proposes an 'urban' layout and design with symmetrical linear blocks of parallel streets in a grid pattern, fairly uniform building line with minimal setback, few street trees or grass verges, and only minimal glimpses to the countryside. The central small area alongside a cycle/pedestrian walk is very enclosed, reinforcing the urban grain. The overlarge massing of Flats Block C is in front of the building line in Chelmsford road with out of character and overbearing 2 ½ storeys adversely impacts amenity of existing neighbours (see below) and the new road along the southern boundary also adversely affects existing neighbouring properties (see below). The layout could be revised to avoid these issues and also include more open space (see below) and reduce the number of street lights affecting wildlife and existing properties (see below).
 - iii. The exterior design of the proposed houses are very similar, so will not provide the variety of styles, roof orientation etc. that exists locally (and contrary to ODG). The exterior **materials and finishes to be used are not defined**, which is important in



assessing whether the designs are visually in character and uses 'local materials'. **Neither are the internal spaces measurements for each type of house given, nor the depth of the back gardens.** Similarly with the flats. **None show heights to eaves or ridge tiles of roofs, but we estimate the latter to be around 10m.** The requirement for balconies and private outside space for each flat does not appear to have been met.

- iv. There is no indication or detail of street lighting. However, the latest report relating to Biodiversity Net Gain advises lights being switched off at night. The out of character grid street pattern has two long streets running W-E and one S-N, which only have homes on one side of the street, increasing the overall number of street lights required compared to developments on both sides of each street. The southern most road running W-E also negatively impacts private amenity of existing properties in Chelmsford Rd and High Ongar Road, to cause unacceptable light and noise 24/7. (Arguably this will also unnecessarily increase the area of Impermeable surfaces on the estate).
- v. The DAS infers a pedestrian or cycle shortcuts to the community amenities via The Gables public greenspace. However, that land is privately owned and there is a Restrictive Covenant on that greenspace, preventing access onto adjoining land, including to this site.
- vi. Environmental considerations are mentioned vaguely without detailed specification e.g. solar panels...but not show on house plans; and heat pumps, but not shown on the Masterplan.

b. Private amenity of a number of existing properties is adversely and unnecessarily compromised through lack of adequate landscaping and buffer zones etc.

- i. The landscaping is minimal and not specified in detail, including what the 'enhancements' of existing hedgerows means, although a map is supplied. Suggestions for non-indigenous planting in some places and scrubland to be introduced, is of dubious merit ecologically.
- ii. There are not enough street trees to comply with policy ONG-ED1 and are all uniformly laid out rather than some informal grouping.
- iii. Existing residents' private and visual amenity has been unduly impacted where existing homes in The Gables, Fyfield Rd, Chelmsford Rd and High Ongar Rd with short back gardens, directly back onto the new development. There is insufficient "landscape or garden separation" as required in ONG-ED6. There is no angling of the orientation of the new homes to avoid overlooking as suggested is the case in DAS. In addition, the position of a new road directly behind the south boundary of the site will result in lights, noise and dust from the road and its users at all hours, as well as the increase in traffic from the road to the front of these existing homes in Chelmsford Rd and High Ongar Rd.
- iv. Block C flats are too bulky and out of character (2 ½ storey), resulting in being overbearing (approx. height at ridge is over 11m) to its existing neighbours. It is positioned in front of the building line of the existing Chelmsford Road which will adversely affect immediate neighbours' amenity. White Gates to the east, will also be overlooked into their main



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- habitable rooms (which face west) by 11 habitable rooms in the flats. [i.e. its amenity is compromised on 3 sides by the proposed development].
- c. **There is insufficient open space within the built form and no children's play areas. The opportunity to position one of the SuDS attenuation ponds in the centre enabling multipurpose function has been ignored (and calculations contested as incorrect).**
- i. Open spaces are minimal in number and size. In addition it counts otherwise unusable corners of the estate where there is no active surveillance. The planting suggested may be visually pleasing, but these are not usable amenity spaces.
 - ii. The central 'pocket park' is clearly too small for a LEAP alongside the walkway and cycle route, and is enclosed with buildings on all sides, reinforcing an 'urban grain'. This is out of character with the more informal spaces of a more rural or suburban design typical of elsewhere in the civil parish.
 - iii. The proposed SuDS areas of 2 ponds are outside the built up form. The DAS calls it 'undeveloped land'. It has insufficient active surveillance from just 3 houses and is not integral to the development, so cannot function as multiuse for the community. [Instead, there could technically have been 2 separate areas for SuDS, each draining half of the estate, enabling one in a central position providing multipurpose open space, with homes benefiting from looking onto open space, instead of other properties. Any SuDS pond to the east requires much more surveillance than the existing, to safeguard against drownings etc.]
 - iv. There are no LEAPs or other children's playing areas indicated in the Masterplan, or other areas for social interaction. This is a requirements in the Local Plan which has adopted Fields in Trust standards for open space provision.
- d. **There has been no realistic attempt to provide wildlife corridors for the abundant existing wildlife being displaced and little protection of habitats of protected or endangered species.**
- i. There is no clear indication that any trees being removed from the site will be replaced.
 - ii. There are no wildlife corridors or indication of how existing animals, birds and reptiles (including protected species) and their habitats will be protected.
 - iii. There are known and recorded evidence of diverse existing wildlife on the site and neighbouring land, which can be made available in improving this aspect of the design.
- e. **Parking for the 28 4-bedroomed homes is insufficient, based on statistics of car ownership in the civil parish, but space should be available in many if not all within their curtilage. This shortfall will lead to indiscriminate on-street parking on site and overspill onto High Ongar Road. There is insufficient funding to encourage or effect a modal shift from car use for commuters.**
- i. EPF/2787/23 does not provide sufficient car parking space to prevent on street parking – which mars the street scene, damages kerbs and impedes emergency vehicles and refuse collections. It does not reflect the existing ownership of cars and vans. On street car parking in Ongar on newish estates blights the town and causes neighbour tensions etc.
 - ii. Essex Highways has stated that it “does not consider Ongar to be an accessible location in terms of good access to other modes of sustainable travel and consequently a reduction



in the parking provision would not be supported..." [ONP 6.4 Rationale: Transport and Movement relating to Policy ONG-CT3]

- iii. Parking provision for new homes in this location *must* reflect the needs of the people most likely to live in the new homes. i.e.: young working couples and growing families. *The developer has not done so*, but also erroneously used statistics NOT relevant to the particular civil parish of Ongar. ONS statistics 2021 and ONP, state that approx. 50% of Ongar households have 2 or more cars or vans and 14.8% have 3 or more. (ONS statistics for 2011 are similar). The above England's average of reliance on cars is due to a lack local employment, no underground station and poor commuter based public transport. This pattern is expected to continue well after these homes and built and occupied.
 - iv. ECC is due to raise the minimum Parking Standards requirement for Ongar (and other areas in Essex with poor connectivity) to 3 spaces minimum for 4 bed homes, and of course a visitor provision, and, come in force before these new homes are occupied. The developer should, and could, include the 28 extra spaces within the curtilage of the 4 bed homes affected by new Minimum Standards.
 - v. Concluding, whilst Parking Space provision in application EPF/2787/23 complies with the existing **minimum** provision as per Essex Parking Standards 2009, it will not comply when the new standard is introduced shortly.
 - vi. Furthermore many workers drive or own vans, which take up more space. This is not accounted for in what appears to be minimum sized car spaces provided.
 - vii. The travel plan of £30 per household is inadequate to encourage new residents to use the infrequent public transport. Improved frequency of commuter services would be required. and 5 journeys per household which the travel plan would fund (i.e. a single to Epping Station after Government subsidy finishes is £6), will not encourage a new habit.
 - viii. "secure and screened cycle storage for each new house"[ONG-CT3] is not provided, and neither are additional cycle racks proposed for destination places within the parish.
 - ix. A modal shift to cycling in and around Ongar is unlikely at present, on safety grounds, due to the narrow local streets/lanes, and excessive through traffic including HGVs, in the High Street, A414 and at several junctions. This can only be addressed with transport infrastructure improvements, rather than a cycle lane for part of the A414 as proposed. Until that is achieved, additional car parking space must be provided.
 - x. Although most of the provided Minimum Parking spaces are well located, the visitor spaces are on street, which will encourage more on street parking, marring street scenes.
 - xi. EV charging points are not shown, but are needed, especially in locations where tandem parking provision is not adjacent to the house (which may be mid-terrace). Some spaces do not have natural surveillance, including visitor spaces.
2. **Infrastructure upgrades re roads and surface water drainage are not yet agreed by Essex Highways or LLFA**
- a. The developer has underestimated the traffic movement expected from the new estate, which should have been based on ONS 2021 figures for Ongar or ONS 2011 which are similar, and which confirms Ongar residents' high reliance on cars to travel to work and high actual ownership, which is significantly higher than the wider area used for their calculations.



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- b. Suggested improvements of a right turning filter lane in the A414, for traffic travelling from Chelmsford into High Ongar Road and the new estate, will make turning right onto A414 from High Ongar Rd (as about 90% are expected to do) more dangerous. Essex Police has already commented on the existing issues and collisions in the locality. Another type of upgrade such as a roundabout (or traffic lights) must be introduced. This would also still be effective when increased traffic occurs due to upgrading of A414 as a MRN road and economic and residential growth west of Ongar.
 - c. The calculations for SuDS requirements for run off on this Greenfield site is based on incorrect figures. ECC the LLFA clearly states that greenfield sites should use 100% area of the site for calculations and not just the impermeable built areas (foundations, main estate road etc.) which are used instead by Persimmon. It was also not clear what the exceedance route would be. On the calculations as used, it is likely that the SuDS attenuation ponds will be too low a capacity to adequately deal with surface water from the site, resulting in flooding, in some conditions in the future, to the existing homes to the east of the site in High Ongar Rd, which is on lower ground.
 - d. There is already surface water flooding along the area of High Ongar Road and in the gardens of houses backing on to the site. Arguably this has got worse since The Gables were developed twenty years ago. These figures need double checking with safeguards put in place to prevent the LPA (EFDC) and the LLFA (ECC) and the developer being liable for flooding compensation of existing homes, should this arise in the future.
 - e. There is serious concerns about two attenuation ponds(see 2c above) as regards the position of the site and it not being WITHIN the built form of the development. Although the land slopes gently from west to east, one attenuation pond could be in the centre of the site enabling a multifunction as open and amenity space.
 - f. Infrastructure upgrades relating to roads and surface water drainage are not yet agreed by Essex Highways or LLFA. Whilst this is normally covered in Conditions of planning permission, OTC and ONPCG consider that the statutory Consultee' requirements could involve changes to the existing layout of the site. (That is in addition to planning policy compliance, which is also likely to include changes to the layout).
3. **There are no LEAPs proposed within the development (as per S106 contributions) nor contributions for community amenities in the wider civil parish.**
- a. For this sized site a LEAP would be required on site with natural surveillance, as well as contributions towards a whole community amenity.
 - b. OTC and ONPCG have not been approached to discuss contributions to infrastructure provisions for the community within s106 or similar developer contributions in accordance with ONG-CT4 Infrastructure Priorities.

Construction phase.



As this is the largest of Ongar's allocated sites for development, and the likelihood that housing will be completed in more than one phase, OTC and ONPCG would appreciate input into the conditions the developer will be required to adhere to during construction, in order to minimise site specific disruption to existing residents.

Summary

Compliance with Local Plan (LP) and Ongar Neighbourhood Plan (ONP) Policies, relating to Housing Mix and 40% affordable housing is welcomed. However, the designs and layout relates to a central urban location, NOT our rural one. The applicant has completely misunderstood the character of Ongar which is a small rural town, and specifically that this site is at 'edge of settlement'. Neither has it consulted Ongar Design Guide (AECOM 2019) (ODG) or indeed the National Design Code (NDC). Hence the application is completely out of character and context with its immediate surroundings, and with other related aspects such as street layout, massing, degree of enclosure, open spaces etc. which are contrary to a number of Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan Policies.

Detail in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) contradicts various of the applicant's submitted supporting Documents, and in some instances the detail is hard to find as a definite commitment. E.g. quoted plan PH-152-004 Materials is missing from the submission, and Landscaping details are only a suggestion without quantum and commitment.. **Lack of details on exterior Materials and finishes to be used should itself result in refusal of detailed planning application EPF/2787/23 in accordance with NPPF (2023) Paragraph 139 and also Paragraph 140 (which are new Paragraphs).**

ONPCG and OTC presume that further details will be forthcoming from the applicant in due course- hopefully with an amended layout . ONPCG has further hard evidence and local knowledge that would be useful in amending this application to enable it to satisfy the NDC, and ODG and comply with EFDC Local Plan and Ongar Neighbourhood Plan policies, which at present it does not. We reserve the right to make additional comments on a planning application for this site, once we have had time to consider any changes that are submitted.

Policies not complied with or insufficient information to establish whether compliant:

NPPF 2023 Para 140 (and para 139)

EFDC Local Plan: SP2 Place Shaping; SP6 The Natural Environment, Landscape Character and Green and Blue Infrastructure; T1 Sustainable Transport Choices; DM1 Habitat Protection and Improving Biodiversity; DM5 Green and Blue Infrastructure; DM6 Designated and undesignated



open space; DM9 High Quality Design; DM10 Housing Design; DM15 Managing and Reducing Flood Risk; DM16 SuDS; DM21 Local Environmental Impacts, Pollution and Land Contamination; P4 Ongar; D1 Delivery of Infrastructure; D4 Community, Leisure and Cultural Facilities; D5 Communications Infrastructure.

Ongar Neighbourhood Plan : ONG-RR3 Housing Mix and Standards; ONG-ED1 Local Character and Design; ONG-ED4 Sustainable Design; ONG-ED5 Natural Environment; ONG-ED6 Landscape and Bufferzone; ONG-CT3 Transport and Movement; ONG-CT4 Infrastructure Priorities (possibly ONG-CT5 Footpaths and cycle route and)

Ongar Design Guide; Essex Design Guide; National Design Guide and Code

In addition the application has not included some referenced plans e.g.

PH-152-004 Materials
PH-152-004 – Materials Plan
PH-152-005 – Storey Heights Plan
PH-152-006 – Tenure Plan
PH-152-007 – Boundary Treatment Plan
PH-152-008 – Open Space Plan
PH-152-009 – Hard Surfacing Plan

Kind regards
Mary
Mary Dadd
Chairman
Ongar Neighbourhood Plan Community Group

Kind regards
Lawrence Mendoza
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Chairman
Planning Committee, Ongar Town Council