

HIGH ONGAR - OPEN SPACE AUDIT**MAY 2009****CONTENTS**

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CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

1.0 The audit process, described in this report, is designed to generate comparative information on different sites across the district for the following purposes:

- to provide an overview of the quality and value of spaces and facilities within each of the district's parishes;
- to influence the production of new planning policies essential in determining planning applications, guiding new development and resolving conflicts of demand or use; and
- to enable the Council to demonstrate a continuous improvement in the quality of open spaces, sport and recreational facilities in its district.

1.1 It is believed that all areas of open space, formal recreational space, and sports facilities have been identified by the audit. These have been surveyed and assessed, and conclusions reached on their value to the local community and the environment of the district.

1.2 For convenience the audit is split into the following categories, although it is recognised that some of these allow for a range of uses:

- allotments (AT);
- cemeteries and graveyards (CG);
- formal playing pitches (FP);
- alternative sites for sport (AS) ;
- informal recreation grounds (RG);
- children's playgrounds (CY);
- indoor facilities for high levels of use (IF);
- community centres and village halls (CV);
- managed open space with public access (MO);
- semi-natural open space and woodland with public access (SO);

CHAPTER 2 – ALLOTMENTS

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
AT1	King Street Allotment	King Street, High Ongar	0.27	Privately Owned



King Street Allotment, Site AT1

KING STREET ALLOTMENT (AT1)

- 2.0** Located along King Street, just north of the Wheatsheaf Pub, this is a very small allotment containing no more than two plots. It is largely hidden from the road by the tall dense hedgerows which surround it completely. Locating the allotment is made even more difficult by the lack of any signs marking the entrance. The site is particularly difficult to access, especially for disabled people, as visitors have to navigate a narrow, sloped plank of wood which crosses a small ditch running along the roadside.
- 2.1** Whilst this entrance is not gated, it is still awkward to negotiate, and especially when the weather is poor and the wooden board and muddy slopes are wet and slippery. A few parking spaces are available along the road, opposite the site, although users parking here must be wary of the relatively fast moving traffic here.
- 2.2** Once inside the site, it is apparent that the site is in use, although some areas appear to have been allowed to grow wild. A variety of horticultural waste, as

well as other rubbish, has been dumped around the site, which significantly detracts from the overall amenity value. Access within the allotment is not ideal, with only narrow grass pathways to move around the allotment plots. Given its small size and relatively low use, however, it does not appear there has been pressure to address these issues.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- Whilst it is pleasing to see that such a rural parish has an allotment, it is unlikely that the site is used by more than one household.
- The dense hedgerows around the site act as excellent natural defences however the entrance way into the allotment is unusually not gated. This leaves the allotment open to potential compromise.
- The allotment is very difficult to spot from the roadside, and no signs have been installed to make this any easier. This does however provide the site with some natural security which helps the counter the lack of a gate at its entrance.
- The site is very awkward to access, and virtually impossible for those with wheelchairs.
- Inside, the allotment appears overgrown in places, and is marred by a significant amount of horticultural waste and other rubbish.
- The site offers some parking facilities along the opposite side of the road.
- Given the rural nature of the parish and hence its small population, it would appear that as of May 2009, there is currently no demand in the parish for any further allotment provision.
- This point is emphasised by the fact that there is no parish council waiting list for allotment plots whilst the former allotment to the north of High Ongar Campsite has fallen into disuse within the last 5-10 years.

CHAPTER 3 - CEMETERIES AND GRAVEYARDS

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
CG1	St Mary's Church	The Street, High Ongar	0.77	Diocese of Chelmsford



St Mary's Church, Site CG1

ST MARY'S CHURCH (CG1)

- 3.0** Situated to the east of High Ongar Primary School, within the village of High Ongar, this is a pleasant and well kept site set within mostly grassy grounds. Its boundary comprises a stone wall to the south, and dense hedgerows and medium sized trees to the other three sides. A number of attractive, large trees are spread throughout the churchyard, which add to its overall visual amenity. The site also appears very clean and tidy, with no sign of vandalism or graffiti.
- 3.1** The churchyard's main entrance, which has a gate and is well signposted, opens onto a gravel path. This leads to the entrance of the church itself, towards the centre of the site. This path, although only surfaced with gravel, appears solid enough for both pushchairs and wheelchairs. Visitors who travel here by car can park along the road, as well as within the small residential car park which faces the churchyard to the south. Potential users should be cautious when crossing the road to reach the church, as the entrance lies on a tight bend which vehicles travel around at relatively high speeds.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- This is a pleasant site, which is tidy, neat, well marked, and maintained to a high standard.
- A variety of large, attractive trees significantly add to the overall visual amenity.
- The churchyard is accessible, and has ample parking spaces nearby.
- Visitors should remain vigilant when crossing the road, as the site is positioned on a tight bend.
- There is no further demand for churches and churchyards within the parish given its rural location and small population coupled with the fact that further facilities can be found in Ongar parish.

CHAPTER 4 - FORMAL PLAYING PITCHES

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- There are no formal playing pitches within High Ongar.
- The local parish council has not observed any demand for the provision of such a facility in the parish.
- Given the very rural nature of the parish, and its small residential population, this lack of demand is not surprising.
- Those who seek to engage in pitch sports will therefore need to travel to neighbouring parishes such as Ongar and North Weald.

CHAPTER 5 – ALTERNATIVE SITES FOR SPORT AND RECREATION

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
AS1	Clatterford End Campsite	Mill Lane, High Ongar	2.71	Privately owned



Clatterford End Campsite, Site AS1

CLATTERFORD END CAMPSITE (AS1)

- 5.0** Situated directly opposite Clatterford Bridge to the south of the village of High Ongar, this campsite is open in nature, and is largely well kept grassland. It is surrounded by a perimeter of tall trees and bushes, which effectively screen it from external view. It is dominated by caravans and camper vans spread around the perimeter, whilst to the north, a number of buildings provide facilities for campers. Overall, this campsite appears tidy, clean, well kept and fully capable of providing a pleasant area for locals and tourists to camp at and visit.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- Alternative sites for sport provision within the parish is minimal, owing to its predominantly rural nature, small local population and hence low demand levels.

- This single site which does exist in the parish appears to be accessible, well maintained and is relatively attractive in appearance.
- Despite the lack of sporting facilities in the parish, there is no demand for further outdoor sports facilities given the parish's close proximity to further facilities in Chipping Ongar.

CHAPTER 6 – INFORMAL RECREATION GROUNDS

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- There are no informal recreation grounds within the parish.
- Given the location of the parish, neighbouring parishes with adequate amounts of provision such as Ongar, there does not appear to be a demand for further informal areas of recreational space within High Ongar.
- Residents of the parish therefore need their own vehicles or to have access to public transport in order to use these facilities.
- Given the very rural nature of the parish, the few houses which have been built here are usually accompanied by large plots of land therefore providing most locals with adequate amounts of private amenity space.

CHAPTER 7 – CHILDREN’S PLAYGROUNDS

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- There are no children’s playgrounds within the parish.
- This is unsurprising given its rural location and small population coupled with the fact that further facilities can be found close by in Ongar parish.
- In conjunction with this, the parish council has indicated that it has not noted a demand for the provision of this type of facility within the parish.

CHAPTER 8 - INDOOR FACILITIES FOR HIGH LEVELS OF USE

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- There are no indoor facilities for high levels of use within High Ongar.
- The local parish council has indicated that there is no demand for a facility of this type within the parish given its small population.
- Such a facility would require large turnover in terms of use in order for it to be sustainable and given the very rural nature of this parish it is highly unlikely that such a facility would achieve this if located in this parish.
- Those locals wishing to access indoor facilities for high levels of use will need access to personal transportation or local public transport to reach neighbouring parishes such as Chipping Ongar and Epping where such facilities are provided.

CHAPTER 9 – COMMUNITY CENTRES AND VILLAGE HALLS

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
CV1	High Ongar Village Hall	Mill Lane, High Ongar	0.55	High Ongar Parish Council

HIGH ONGAR VILLAGE HALL (CV1)

9.0 Located along Mill Lane just to the north of Clatterford Bridge, this hall was opened in March 2008 to replace the previous village hall located on the street which was sold and has since been converted into two new houses. The site is extremely popular with locals and is also frequently used by people from further outside the parish. The hall hosts a wide range of events including private and public meetings, weddings, children's parties and charity events. The hall is also used for a variety of activities including craft clubs, bingo, Ju-Jitsu and dance classes as well as number of local society groups such as the local Weight Watchers group, Old Peoples' Lunch Club and Tumble Tots.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- This is the only facility of its type within the parish and it is clearly very heavily used.
- The site is in excellent condition and is extremely well maintained by the locals who look after it.
- Despite its high level of use, there does not appear to be a demand for a further facility of this type within the parish given that it is still a very rural area with a limited local population.
- Further similar facilities of this type are located close by anyway in the neighbouring parish of Chipping Ongar.

CHAPTER 10 - MANAGED OPEN SPACE WITH PUBLIC ACCESS

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
MO1	Paslow Wood Common	Nine Ashes Road	0.60	Epping Forest District Council
MO2	Land to the north of Millfield	Millfield, High Ongar	0.26	Epping Forest District Council



Paslow Wood Common, Site MO1

PASLOW WOOD COMMON (MO1)

- 10.0** Situated to the west of Paslow Common Farm, this is a triangular shaped area of amenity green space. The common is open in nature, and appears in good order, being both clean and neat. It is bordered to by Nine Ashes Road and the access road to Paslow Common Farm to the east. To the south, it borders a number of residential houses which overlook it.
- 10.1** The most dominant feature of the common, however, is the group of large trees towards the east, which significantly add to the overall charm. There are a few seats on site, although no litter bins or dog waste bins appear to have been installed. Given that a fairly bust road runs past the common, it is advisable that the site is only used for informal activities.



Land to the North of Millfield, Site MO2

LAND TO THE NORTH OF MILLFIELD (MO2)

- 10.2** Found between Millfield and Clatterford End Campsite, this site is a relatively small area of amenity green space. It is largely well presented grassland, with a small wooded area to the west. To the north, it is bordered by the dense bushes and medium sized trees that surround the neighbouring campsite.
- 10.3** Significant amounts of litter can be found on the site, including, in some cases, incidences of fly tipping. Furthermore, given the proximity of the site to the road, younger children who may potentially use the site may be placed in danger from passing motor vehicles.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- Both of these sites are agreeable in appearance, although the Land to the North of Millfield (MO2) appears to have issues with litter and fly tipping.
- Whilst Paslow Wood Common (MO1) does not appear to have a litter problem, the provision of litter bins on both sites would help to ensure that neither has any problems with littering in the future.
- Both sites are bordered by roads, making them potentially unsuitable for children to use without adult supervision dependent on local traffic levels.
- The local Parish Council has indicated as of May 2009, that there is no demand for further managed open space with public access provision within the parish.

CHAPTER 11- WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL OPEN SPACE WITH PUBLIC ACCESS

Site Number	Site Name	Address	Area (Hectares)	Ownership
SO1	Norton Heath Common	Willingale Road, High Ongar	4.02	Epping Forest District Council



Norton Heath Common, Site SO1

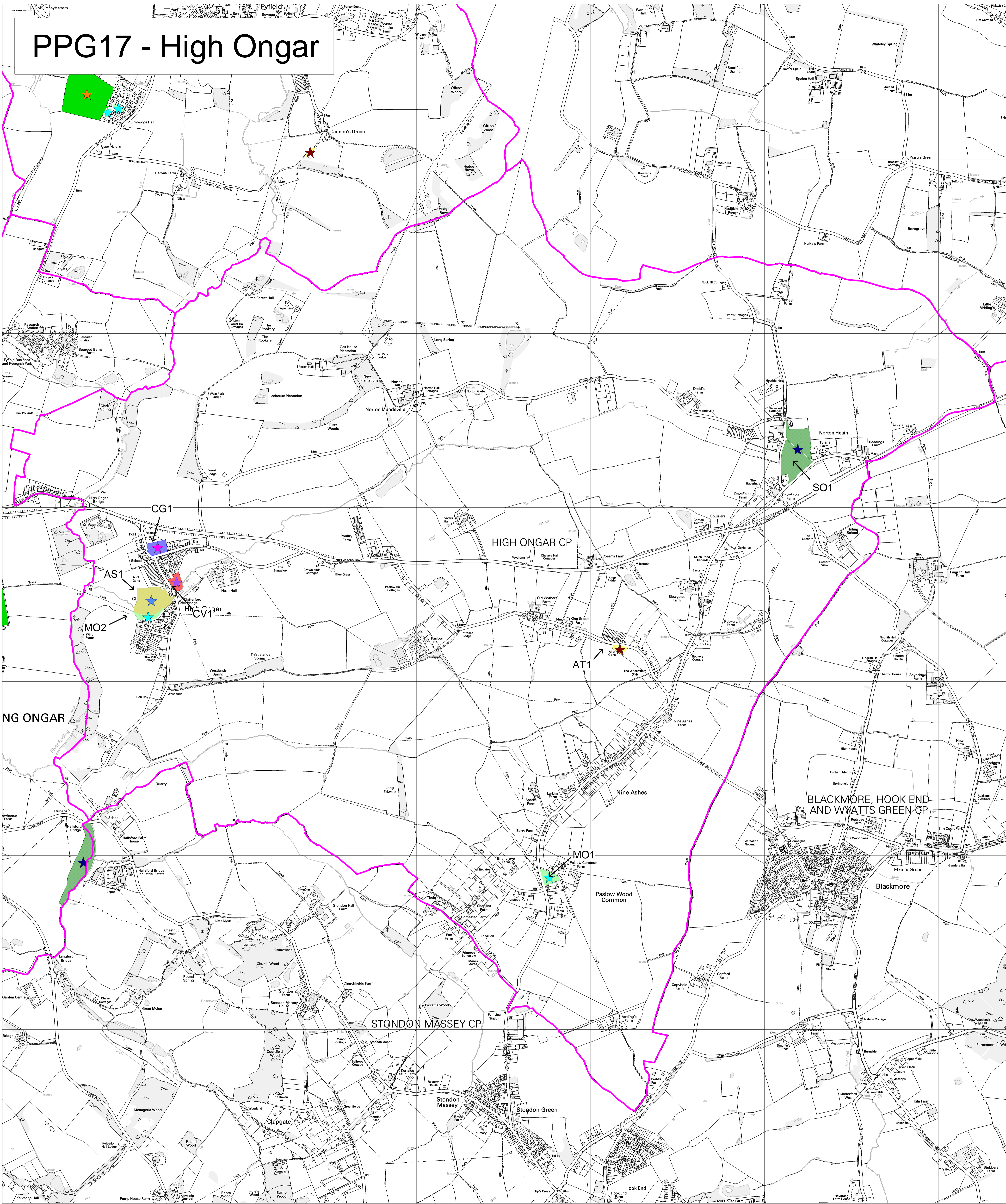
NORTON HEATH COMMON (SO1)

- 11.0** This forested site, is wild in nature and extremely attractive to look at. It is entirely surrounded by a network of roads, including Willingale Road, from which another unnamed road divides the common in two. To the east, a lay-by allows visitors to park their vehicles and then access the public footpath opposite, which travels through the area.
- 11.1** The start of this footpath is well sign-posted however at the time of the audit there was a small amount of rubbish throughout the common. This could be addressed, at least partially, through the provision of litter bins, particularly at the start of the public footpath by the lay-by to the east.

ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

- This site allows visitors to explore an important habitat for local species of flora and fauna.
- There is a small amount of visible litter scattered around the site which could perhaps be removed through the provision of litter bins.
- This is the only area of woodland or semi-natural open space with public access within the parish.

PPG17 - High Ongar



Parish: High Ongar

Area: 1580 Hectares Scale: 1:70,000 @ A0

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Key	
★	Allotments (AT)
★	Cemeteries and Graveyards (CG)
★	Formal Playing Pitches (FP)
★	Alternative Sites For Sport (AS)
★	Informal Recreation Grounds (RG)
★	Children's Playgrounds (CY)
★	Indoor Facilities For High Levels of Use (IF1)
★	Community Centres and Village Halls (CV)
★	Woodland and Semi-Natural Open Space with Public Access (SO)
★	Managed Open Space with Public Access (MO)
★	Epping Forest
★	Parish Boundary
★	Denotes Membership Only Facilities

Date: 4th January 2010