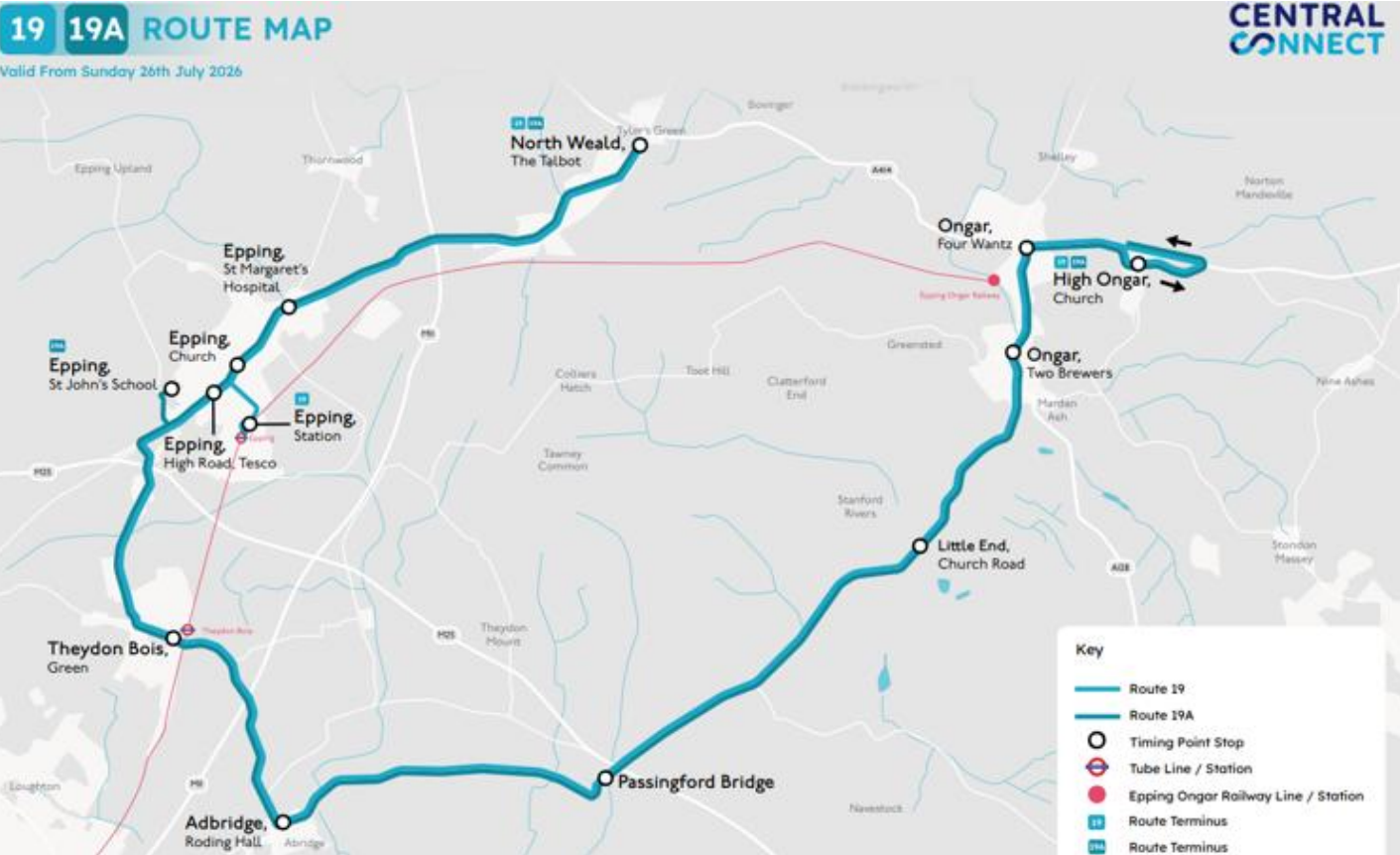


News & Views

New Bus Service Connecting Stanford Rivers

Residents of Stanford Rivers now have access to a new public transport connection thanks to the introduction of the new **Connect 19** bus service, operated by Central Connect. The service runs between High Ongar and North Weald, passing through Little End, Passingford Bridge, Abridge, Theydon Bois, Epping, Epping Underground Station and St Margaret's Hospital. This provides local residents with a convenient and affordable way to access shopping facilities, healthcare services, employment opportunities and onward transport connections. The service operates Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) with four return journeys each day. From the Stanford Rivers area, buses depart from Little End and Passingford Bridge throughout the morning and early afternoon, making it easier for residents to travel into

Epping or Ongar for shopping, appointments or rail connections to London via the Central Line. A copy of the route map is reproduced below. A separate 19A school journey also operates during term time, providing additional transport for students travelling to and from Epping. The introduction of the route comes after years without any public transport services, creating improved connectivity for rural communities across the area. The Parish Council is keen to encourage residents to make use of the service wherever possible, helping to demonstrate demand for local bus services and support their long-term viability. After all, if it's not used, it will be lost. Full timetable information and route details can be found at <https://www.central-connect.co.uk/services/TMSB/19>



TRAVEL TOWARDS ONGAR

Church Road	09:27	11:27	13:27	15:32
Coopers Hill	09:29	11:29	13:29	15:34
Long Fields	09:30	11:30	13:30	15:35
Two Brewers	09:31	11:31	13:31	15:36
Stanley Place	09:31	11:31	13:31	15:36
Basons Ln	09:32	11:32	13:32	15:37
Ongar Station	09:33	11:33	13:33	15:38
Great Lawn	09:34	11:34	13:34	15:39
Four Wantz	09:35	11:35	13:35	15:40

TRAVEL TOWARDS EPPING

Church Road	07:47	09:54	11:54	13:54
Passingford Bridge	07:51	09:57	11:57	13:57
Theydon Bois Green	08:03	10:08	12:08	14:08
Village Hall	08:04	10:09	12:09	14:09
Epping Station	-	10:22	12:22	14:22
Epping, St Margaret's Hospi...	08:32	10:32	12:32	14:32
North Weald, The Talbot	08:40	10:40	12:40	14:40

⌚ = Set down only

For the most up to date information, download the Central Connect App, or visit their website

Community Spirit Shines Through Parish Maintenance Effort

A small group of dedicated local volunteers recently gave their time and skills to carry out much-needed improvements to several valued parish assets, helping to keep them looking their best for residents and visitors alike. The work included repainting the bench on Sharps Green and restoring the Toot Hill Village sign. Although modest in scale, these improvements have made a noticeable difference and demonstrate the positive impact that community involvement can have on our local environment. It is particularly heartening to see such a strong community spirit continuing to thrive within the parish. The refurbishment of the Sharps Green bench was undertaken by Patrick Griggs, 87 years of age and having been a resident of Toot Hill for 62 years, along with invaluable assistance from Eddie Warren, also 87 years of age and topping Patrick's residency having lived in Toot Hill all his life. Both remain active and enthusiastic supporters of the community. The restoration of the Toot Hill Village sign was carried out by Bill Heffernan. Bill's contribution was especially appreciated given that he

recently suffered the loss of his wife, Linda, who was a much-loved and respected member of the community. His willingness to devote time to improving the village during such a difficult period is a testament to his commitment to the place both Linda and Bill both cared so deeply about. In an increasingly busy world, the readiness of residents to step forward, lend a hand, and help maintain shared community assets is something that deserves recognition and celebration. These acts of volunteerism not only improve the appearance of the parish, but also strengthen the sense of pride and belonging that makes our community special. The Parish Council would like to extend its sincere thanks to Patrick, Eddie, Bill, and everyone else who volunteers their time for the benefit of the parish. Their hard work, generosity, and community spirit are greatly appreciated. Through efforts such as these, Stanford Rivers and Toot Hill continue to be welcoming and well-cared-for places that we can all be proud to call home.



Image of Eddie Warren after painting bench



Image of Toot Hill Village Sign after repaint, being erected

150th Anniversary Of The Epping Forest Act 1878

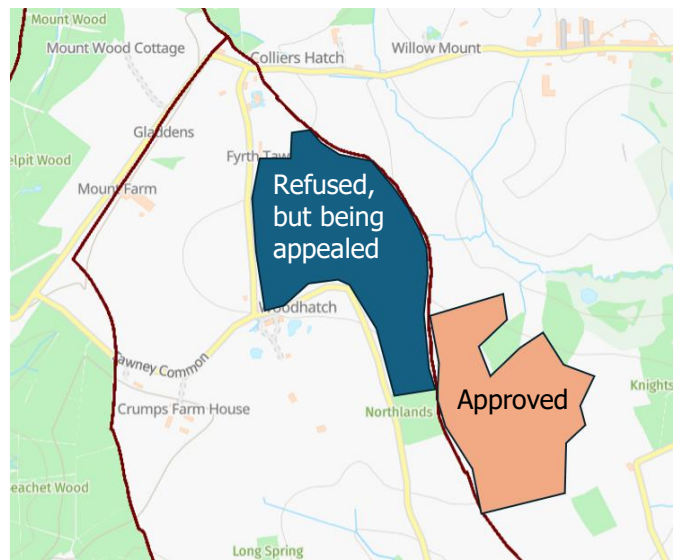
2028 marks the 150th anniversary of the creation of the Epping Forest Act 1878, a landmark piece of legislation passed to preserve Epping Forest as an open space "for the recreation and enjoyment of the public" and remains the foundation of its protection today. The importance of the Act cannot be overstated. Without its protection, much of the Forest that we know and enjoy today could have been lost. Instead, Epping Forest remains a remarkable area of ancient woodland, heathland and grassland, providing a haven for wildlife and a valued green space for millions of visitors every year. Whilst there are no areas of Epping Forest within our Parish, it reminded me of yet another example of community spirit. Towards the end of the 20th century, Toot Hill was home to two much-valued local residents, Rae Baille-Smith and her husband, Ray. The couple lived in their cottage on Epping Road for around ten years and became well known within the community. Ray was a retired warden for the City of London Corporation, working in Epping Forest and based at The Warren in Loughton. Rae was a keen horticulturist, exceptionally well read, and a fascinating conversationalist with a wide range of interests. Their front garden was filled with countless tree saplings growing in a variety of containers. In 1996, Rae generously donated one of these saplings, a mulberry tree, to the local

community. As mulberry trees are relatively uncommon in this area, it was a particularly special gift. The tree was planted opposite Sharps Green in Toot Hill, where it continues to thrive today. With the ability to produce edible fruit and developing a beautiful form as it matures, it was once a distinctive feature of the village landscape. For more than 30 years, Bill Heffernan has carefully managed and maintained the tree, pruning and shaping it and ensuring that the area around it remains free from weeds each season. His dedication has helped preserve both the health of the tree and the legacy of Rae's generous contribution. However, many remain unaware of the tree. The Parish Council will be considering options for the future care of the tree and its commemorative plaque as part of the celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the Epping Forest Act. The mulberry tree stands as a lasting reminder of the contribution made by local residents and the strong community spirit that continues to shape the parish today.



Solar Farms

Many of you will be aware that the 26-hectare Nickerlands Solar Farm, just off Berwick Lane, was granted permission in February 2025, and that following this approval a further planning application for a 38-acre solar farm located directly adjacent to the site (but in the Parish of Stapleford Tawney) was refused permission in January of this year. The refused site, which comprises two large fields to the east of Tawney Common totalling approximately 38 hectares, was refused permission by Epping Forest District Council for two reasons. First was 'Inappropriate development in the Green Belt'. The second, that 'due to its extensive scale, layout, and prominent siting, it would result in significant adverse effects on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape, and when considered cumulatively with the adjacent consented solar farm at Nickerlands Farm, the scheme would give rise to an unacceptable concentration of large-scale solar infrastructure, leading to a substantial erosion of the area's open, rural qualities.' Whilst everybody has different views and opinions about solar farms, what is clear is that timing played an important role in the determination of these applications. The Nickerlands site coming first and being approved, and the cumulative impacts of the second application deemed to represent too much solar farm development. The applicants of the second site, known as 'Thrift Solar Farm', have written to the Planning Inspectorate and will be appealing the decision to refuse. Local residents of Tawney Common have sent out a 'call to action', as they



intend on robustly challenging the decision to appeal at an Inquiry starting 2nd March 2027. As with many forms of infrastructure, solar farms bring both opportunities and challenges. Decisions on individual proposals require careful consideration of their impact on the landscape, agriculture, biodiversity, local communities and the wider need for renewable energy. If you want to find out more, contact Stapleford Tawney Parish Council who can put you in touch with the residents group - <https://e-voice.org.uk/staplefordtawneypc/>

Parish Council Requests Action to Protect Our Protected Lanes

The Parish Council has formally written to Essex County Council (ECC) requesting traffic restrictions on a number of rural roads that are designated as Protected Lanes. Specifically, the Council has asked ECC to consider measures such as a 7.5-tonne weight limit, "Except for Access" exemptions and additional signage to discourage unnecessary Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) traffic. The request relates specifically to Toot Hill Road, Old Rectory Road, Berwick Lane and Mutton Row, all of which are classified as Protected Lanes. But what are Protected Lanes? They are rural roads recognised for their historic, environmental and landscape importance. They are often characterised by narrow carriageways, ancient hedgerows, banks, mature trees, grass verges and a distinctive rural appearance. These lanes contribute significantly to the unique countryside character of our parish and provide valuable habitats for wildlife. Most importantly, they really are not suitable for HGVs that are using them. The Parish Council believes they should be protected from traffic that is unsuitable for their size, design and rural setting. Why is their protection important? The Parish Council is aware of growing concerns about the increasing number of HGVs using not only these lanes, but all our rural roads, despite their narrow and winding nature. Numerous reports from residents have been received regarding damage to verges, hedgerows and banks. The limited width of these roads, combined with a lack of passing places, can create conflicts between large vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, agricultural traffic and other road users. Concerns have also been raised about road safety, particularly at blind bends,

narrow pinch points and areas with soft verges. Over the past 18 months, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of HGVs using the parish's rural roads. This may be due to the intensification of commercial activities in the area, concerns regarding planning compliance at certain sites, or the use of local lanes as 'unofficial' diversionary routes during roadworks and road closures elsewhere. Whatever the cause, many HGVs appear to be following the "path of least resistance" through roads that were never designed to accommodate vehicles of this size. Suitable routes already exist via the A113 and A414, which are better equipped to accommodate larger vehicles safely and efficiently. The Parish Council believes that introducing appropriate restrictions on Protected Lanes would help preserve the rural character of the parish, reduce damage to the local environment and improve safety for residents, visitors and all road users. Residents will be kept informed of any response received from ECC and of any future consultation relating to the proposed restrictions. The Parish Council has also offered to meet ECC officers on site to discuss the most appropriate measures for safeguarding these important rural lanes for future generations.



Helping Local People Remain Part of Our Community

The Parish Council has recently begun discussions with the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) regarding the possibility of delivering a small rural affordable housing scheme within the parish. **DON'T PANIC!** It's important for residents to understand what Rural Affordable Housing is, what it isn't, and also that this is ultimately about securing homes in our parish which are offered to people with a local connection before anyone else. At this stage, no decisions have been made, no site has been selected, no planning application exists, and this idea won't progress unless it has the support of local people. Please take some time to read what this means before jumping to the automatic position that 'we don't want new homes', and perhaps ask yourself that question again at the end of this article. Many residents will have heard the term "affordable housing" but may not be familiar with how rural affordable housing works, how it differs from conventional housing development, or the protections that exist to ensure homes remain available for local people both now and in the future. This article aims to explain the process and answer some of the most common questions. One of the biggest misconceptions about affordable housing is that it resembles the large council housing estates that were often built in significant numbers during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Modern rural affordable housing is very different. Today's schemes are typically small, carefully designed developments that are intended to blend into the character of a village. They are subject to modern planning standards, high-quality design requirements and extensive consultation with local communities. In many cases, it is difficult to distinguish affordable homes from privately owned properties, as they are built to the same standards and are often integrated within attractive, well-landscaped developments. It is also important to understand that rural affordable housing is not simply "council housing" in the traditional sense. Homes may be owned and managed by a housing association and can include a range of tenures, such as affordable rent, social rent and shared ownership. Residents are carefully assessed to ensure they meet eligibility criteria and have a genuine housing need. In rural exception schemes, additional priority is given to people with strong local connections. The purpose is not to create large-scale housing estates, but to provide a modest number of homes that allow local people, including young families, key workers and older residents wishing to downsize, to remain within the community and continue contributing to village life.

Why Are We Looking At This?

Like many villages across Essex and throughout rural England, Toot Hill and Stanford Rivers face the challenge of maintaining a balanced and sustainable community. People move to this area because they love the rural feel, access to the countryside, and the quiet lifestyle. House prices in rural areas have increased significantly over many years, and whilst this reflects the attractiveness of our countryside and village environment, it can make it increasingly difficult for younger people, families and key workers with local connections to remain in the area. As a result, many villages experience:

- Young adults being unable to afford to live independently within their home parish.
- Families having to move away from parents and support networks.
- Older residents wishing to downsize but finding no suitable local option.
- A gradual reduction in the diversity and sustainability of rural communities.

The result can be that villages slowly lose the very people who help sustain them: young families, working-age residents, carers, key workers and people with long-standing local ties. Rural affordable housing seeks to address this issue in a carefully controlled way. Concern has been expressed that without affordable housing, rural communities are at risk of becoming lifeless, dormitory settlements.

What Is Rural Affordable Housing?

Rural affordable housing is not the same as a large housing estate or speculative development. Instead, it is typically a small-scale development – typically a group of 6-10 homes - designed specifically to meet identified local need. These homes are intended for people who have a strong connection to the parish and who cannot afford suitable housing on the open market. The aim is to provide modest, high-quality homes that enable local people to continue living within their community. Schemes are usually developed in partnership between:

- The local parish council
- RCCE's Rural Housing Team
- A housing association or registered provider
- The local planning authority

Importantly, these schemes are not intended to generate profit for developers, nor for anybody involved, including the Parish Council. Their primary purpose is to provide homes that address a clearly demonstrated local housing need. Without opportunities for affordable housing, villages can gradually become places that only those able to afford high property prices can access, often resulting in dependents having to move away. Rural affordable housing helps maintain a balanced and sustainable community, ensuring that future generations, as well as those who have lived and worked in the area for many years, have the opportunity to remain part of parish life.



But Is There A Need?

Before any decisions can be made, evidence must be gathered. The first step is normally a Housing Needs Survey. This survey allows residents to confidentially indicate whether they need housing, the type of housing required, whether they currently live in the parish or have a local connection, and whether they may need affordable housing now or in the future. You may recall from the last News and Views that we commissioned a Rural Housing Needs Survey in 2025 to find out if there is in fact a need or desire for local people who already live in our parish to have a specific need to move, and their desire to do so locally. The results from the survey help determine whether a genuine need exists and how many homes may be required, along with the possible size and type of homes needed. Without evidence of local need, it would be difficult to justify a rural affordable housing scheme.

Affordable FOREVER!

Perhaps the most important feature of rural affordable housing is that the homes remain affordable in perpetuity. This is very different from some forms of conventional housing development. The homes are usually protected through legal agreements that ensure they continue to serve local housing needs for future generations. This means the housing remains affordable and the local connection criteria continues to apply. The homes cannot simply become open-market properties meaning future generations can benefit in the same way as current residents. Without these protections, a property that begins as affordable housing could eventually be sold on the open market and become unaffordable once again. The purpose of rural affordable housing is to create a lasting community asset rather than a short-term solution.

Is This A Large housing Estate?

No! Any future scheme would be informed by the Housing Needs Survey and local evidence, and as mentioned earlier rural affordable housing schemes are generally small in scale. The emphasis is on providing a limited number of homes that integrate sensitively with the character of the village and surrounding countryside. Any proposal would need to go through the normal planning process and be subject to consultation before any development could take place.

Who Would Be Eligible?

One of the most important aspects of rural affordable housing is that it is intended primarily for people with a local connection. Local People Come First! A concern often expressed when affordable housing is discussed is

whether local people might be overlooked in favour of applicants from elsewhere. Rural exception site schemes are specifically designed to avoid this situation. The allocation process normally operates through a clear cascade system that gives priority to those with the strongest local connection. This means eligible local residents would be considered first. Typically, priority is given in stages:

First priority

- People living in the parish.
- People who have previously lived in the parish.
- People with close family living in the parish.
- People who work in the parish.

Second priority

- People with a connection to neighbouring parishes.

Third priority

- Applicants from the wider district housing register if no eligible local applicants are available.

This means the homes are not simply available to anybody from anywhere. The purpose is to help local people who might otherwise be forced to leave the area because suitable housing is unavailable or unaffordable. For example, a typical family who live in Toot Hill – 2 adults and 2 children – where the children have now grown and want to move out, but are forced to move a considerable distance away to a more affordable area as the price of homes in our Parish are simply too high for them to move out. Only if homes could not be filled by qualifying applicants from the parish would the search area be widened according to agreed criteria. The underlying principle is straightforward. The homes are being provided to meet an evidence local housing need and local people should therefore benefit first.

What Happens Next?

The Parish Council is currently working with RCCE to understand the process, assess whether a local housing need exists, and look at any potential sites. If the project moves forward, it will need to have the support of the community, and residents will have opportunities to:

View the evidence gathered - Engage with proposals - Attend public consultations - Share their views throughout the process

No decisions have been made at this stage, and community engagement will form an important part of any future discussions. If you would like to find out more, please contact the Parish Council at clerk@stanfordrivers-pc.gov.uk, or for general information about Rural Affordable Housing, visit the RCCE's website at <https://www.essexrcc.org.uk/our-work/rural-affordable-housing>. The Parish Council will continue to keep residents informed as discussions progress and welcomes constructive engagement as we explore whether this opportunity is right for our parish. Incidentally, all the pictures at the bottom of these two pages are of Rural Affordable Housing Projects in Essex.



Ongar & District Twinning Association

Many people know that Ongar has been twinned with the French town of Cérizay since 1984. What is perhaps less well known is the dedicated group of volunteers who continue to nurture and strengthen that relationship through the Ongar and District Twinning Association.

As residents of Stanford Rivers, it is worth drawing attention to the word "**District**" in the Association's name. Membership and involvement are certainly not restricted to Ongar itself. The Association actively welcomes people from across the wider area and continues to play an important role in promoting friendship, cultural understanding and international cooperation between communities on both sides of the Channel.

Cérizay is located around an hour inland from the Atlantic coast near La Rochelle, and each Easter the two communities come together for the main twinning event of the year. Host duties alternate between the two towns, with visitors enjoying a long weekend of friendship, hospitality and cultural exchange. The next visit, in March 2027, will see Cérizay guests welcomed to Ongar and the surrounding district.

Throughout the year, the Association's committee organises a range of social activities and fundraising events. It also works closely with counterparts in Cérizay to build wider community links, including connections between local schools. Being part of the Association offers a unique opportunity to experience everyday French life and, equally, for French visitors to experience ours. It is a world away from simply visiting as a tourist and seeing only the main attractions. Twinning allows people to gain a genuine insight into local life, traditions and culture while forming friendships that often last a lifetime.

A fascinating question was recently raised by one Association member: What exactly does the "*District*" in Ongar and District Twinning Association mean? Surprisingly, even some members who had been involved since the Association was founded in 1984 could not

remember the origin of the name. After some research, the answer turned out to have roots stretching back more than a thousand years. The reference relates to the historic Ongar Hundred, one of the ancient administrative divisions established during the 10th century.

The Ongar Hundred covered a remarkably large area, extending as far north as Abbess Roding, west to Thornwood, east to Stondon Massey, and south to Loughton and Chigwell. Understanding this history makes it clear that the Association was always intended to represent a much wider community than Ongar alone, and it continues to welcome members from across this historic district today.

The Parish Council recently received a presentation from the Association and discovered several fascinating stories connected to the twinning relationship. One particularly memorable example is that a traditional British red telephone box was transported all the way from Ongar to Cérizay. Today it stands proudly outside the Municipal Offices in France, where it has found a new lease of life as a public book exchange.

We also learned that the Epping Forest District Museum is currently hosting a small exhibition exploring the history of the twinning arrangement. Among the many interesting exhibits is an immaculate pair of children's shoes, preserved in their original shoebox. The shoes were recovered from beneath the rubble of a shoe factory that was bombed during the Second World War. In a touching gesture of remembrance and friendship, a pair of these shoes was presented to every member of the Association who took part in the most recent visit to Cérizay.



The exhibition runs until 16 December and is well worth a visit for anyone interested in local history, international friendship and the remarkable story behind the twinning relationship. Association members regularly enjoy visits, events and experiences that would otherwise never arise, but many would say that the greatest benefit is the lasting friendships formed with our French counterparts. These personal connections are at the heart of what twinning is all about. If you would like to learn more, you can find the Association on Facebook at **@Ongar Twinning**, or contact the Association Chair, **Bob Gammon**, on **07941 790326**. Bob would be delighted to welcome new members and answer any questions.

At a time when communities can sometimes feel increasingly disconnected, the Ongar and District Twinning Association serves as a reminder that meaningful relationships can be built across borders whilst also bringing local people together closer to home. More than forty years after the twinning began, the friendship between Cérizay and our district continues to thrive.

SEE BACK PAGE FOR FULL INFORMATION





Your main NHW coordinator is **John Adams**
Tel **01277 362194**

It was disappointing to learn that the Toot Hill Village Hall was recently broken into. A man riding a push bike, 40s-50s, blond hair in a ponytail, rode into the hall grounds, broke open the front doors, caused some damage inside, and left. Other than damaged caused, nothing was taken. This has been reported to the police who are actively pursuing the matter, which may be linked to another burglary in Ongar. However, we are pleased that overall crime levels in Stanford Rivers Parish remain low, and the area continues to benefit from a strong sense of community and neighbours who look out for one another. However, as we approach the festive season, residents are reminded to remain vigilant. Historically, the run-up to Christmas can see an increase in opportunistic crimes such as burglary, theft from vehicles, and parcel theft, as people begin shopping for gifts and spending more time away from home. With more online shopping deliveries expected, residents should also make arrangements for parcels to be left in a safe place or with a trusted neighbour. By staying alert and looking out for each other, we can help keep Stanford Rivers a safe and welcoming community throughout the Christmas period.

If you haven't already joined our Facebook Group, visit www.facebook.com/groups/stanforddriversneighbourhoodwatch and request to join. Or email JA@stanforddrivers-pc.gov.uk with your name & mobile number to be added to the Neighbourhood Watch WhatsApp Group.

Average Speed Checks

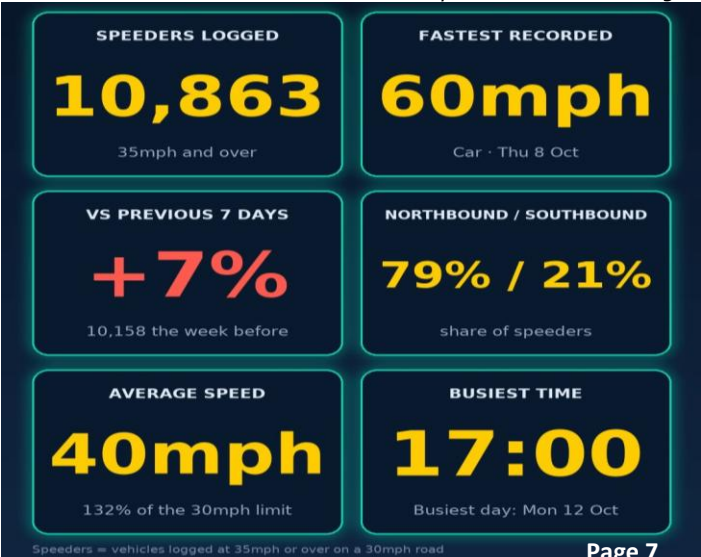
Many residents will have noticed the new average speed cameras recently installed along the A414 between Chelmsford and Harlow. These cameras form part of wider efforts to improve road safety on one of Essex's busiest routes and are a visible reminder of the increasing use of technology to reduce collisions and encourage safer driving. What is perhaps less widely known is that Essex County Council continues to progress its A113 Safer Roads Scheme, a major road safety project that will directly affect Stanford Rivers Parish. The scheme proposes the introduction of average speed enforcement along a strategic 18km section of the A113, covering the route from Woodford Bridge through Chigwell, Abridge, Stapleford Tawney, Little End and on towards Marden Ash. The project has been developed in response to concerns about road safety along the corridor and is currently at the Detailed Design Stage. Subject to approvals and programme scheduling, construction is expected to begin around this time next year. For residents of Stanford Rivers, where speeding traffic has long been a concern, the scheme represents one of the most significant road safety investments on the A113 in recent years. Further information, including detailed plans showing the proposed speed limits and camera locations, can be found on the Essex Highways website: www.essexhighways.org/a113-safer-roads-scheme.

Many residents will be aware of the ongoing concerns regarding speeding traffic along the A113 through Little End and Hare Street, and may recall the previous "SpeederBot" initiative run by an anonymous local resident, which ceased operating some time ago.



Well... it's back. A new **A113 SpeederBot v2.0** has been developed by what is believed to be the same anonymous resident, with the aim of monitoring vehicle speeds and highlighting dangerous driving behaviour on this busy stretch of road. The system uses modern artificial intelligence technology known as YOLOv8, an advanced object detection and tracking model capable of identifying and tracking vehicles in real time. By analysing traffic movements, the system produces statistics that help build a clearer picture of driving conditions along the A113. The project provides regular updates through its website and social media channels, allowing residents to see the scale of the issue for themselves. Recent Facebook posts have highlighted instances of excessive speeding and have sought to draw the attention of Essex Police and other road safety organisations. The stated aim of the project is not simply to record speeding offences, but to raise awareness of the risks that speeding presents to residents, pedestrians, cyclists and other road users. The figures being recorded make for sobering reading. During the weekly reporting period from 6th to 12th October, the SpeederBot recorded 10,863 speeding vehicles. While not all speeding motorists represent a serious danger, the data demonstrates the sheer volume of drivers exceeding the speed limit through our community. Residents interested in learning more can visit the project's website at www.a113speederbot.org or search for A113 SpeederBot v2.0 on Facebook. The project also provides access to an impressive online dashboard where visitors can explore traffic data and statistics in greater detail. As concerns over road safety continue, initiatives such as SpeederBot demonstrate how local residents can use technology to help inform public debate and support efforts to make our roads safer for everyone.

Extract: SpeederBot Facebook Page



Heritage Finger Posts – Restored....and Damaged

The Parish Council was delighted to recently replace two dilapidated heritage fingerposts within Stanford Rivers Parish. The new fingerposts have been installed at the triangle junction of Berwick Lane and School Road, and at the triangle junction of Mutton Row and Drapers Corner, renewing two much-loved features of our local landscape. These traditional signposts have long been part of the character and identity of the parish. More than simply providing directions, heritage fingerposts are a visible reminder of our rural history and help preserve the distinctive charm of the countryside. They are the sort of features that many of us pass every day without a second thought, yet they contribute greatly to the sense of place that makes village life so special. Replacing them was part of the Parish Council's commitment to preserving the historic character of Stanford Rivers for future generations. Unfortunately, the story does not end there. Less than four weeks after installation, one of the newly erected fingerposts was damaged in what is believed to have been damage caused by an HGV. While there is no CCTV footage of the incident, residents reported seeing a large goods vehicle parked at the location, with the driver walking along the lane towards Burrows Farm to check whether the route was passable. The damage is deeply disappointing, particularly given the investment of time and public funds required to restore these important heritage assets. It also highlights a concern frequently raised by residents about the increasing number of large vehicles using roads that were never designed to accommodate them. Rural lanes are not only narrower and more vulnerable to damage, but they are also home to many of the historic features that contribute to the character of our parish. The Parish Council will now work towards repairing the damaged fingerpost.



Heritage Fact: Traditional fingerposts are among the most recognisable features of the English countryside. Did you know many of Britain's cast-iron fingerposts date from the early 20th century and survived a government programme during the Second World War that removed or obscured road signs to confuse any potential invading forces. As a result, original fingerposts that remain today are considered an important part of our rural heritage and local history. Stanford Rivers Parish has Two!

Local Government Reorganisation

On 7th September, and after a cost of £3.3m to taxpayers in Essex, the Government announced it had withdrawn Essex from potential Local Government Reorganisation 'in light of fresh advice'. It confirmed that local elections in May 2027 would be going ahead on existing council boundaries, with Government stating it remains committed to effective and sustainable local government and simplifying these structures. While the Government has withdrawn and is reviewing proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Essex, the separate Greater Essex devolution programme continues to progress. Current plans would see the creation of a Mayor for Greater Essex and a new strategic authority covering Essex, Southend and Thurrock, with a mayoral election currently scheduled for May 2028.

Toot Hill Show Another Success

The Parish Council was delighted to once again be part of this year's Toot Hill Village Show which took place on 1 August. This year's show was exceptionally well attended and we were blessed with beautiful weather. What makes the show particularly special is that it is run entirely by volunteers. Countless hours are dedicated throughout the year to planning, organising and preparing for the event, ensuring that it continues to thrive for future generations. At a time when many traditional village shows are disappearing, the continued success of the Toot Hill Village Show is a testament to the strength of community spirit and the commitment of those who work behind the scenes. The Parish Council's stand focused on promoting our Community Speedwatch initiative. Younger visitors were invited to test their speed against the Speedwatch speed gun, creating a fun and engaging way to start conversations about road safety. The challenge proved extremely popular and gave us an opportunity to explain the important role that local volunteers play in helping to encourage safer driving through our villages. The Parish Council would like to extend its sincere thanks to the dedicated team of volunteers, exhibitors, sponsors and supporters who made this year's show such a success.



New Village Landmark Takes Root on Jubilee Green

Residents may have noticed a wonderful new addition to Jubilee Green in the form of a handcrafted village sign, which now provides an attractive focal point and a warm welcome to all who enter Stanford Rivers. The project is yet another fantastic example of community spirit in action. The sign was designed, constructed and installed by a Parish Councillor, who generously donated their time, skills and labour free of charge. As a result, the only cost to the Parish Council was for the materials, ensuring excellent value for money while creating a lasting feature for the whole community to enjoy.



Village signs have long been a cherished part of rural life, helping to give communities a distinct identity and sense of place. Whilst attractive in their own right, they also

serve a practical purpose. For motorists, a village sign acts as a subtle but important visual cue that they are entering a populated area where people live, walk, cycle and enjoy community life. Research has shown that gateway features such as village signs can help reinforce a sense of arrival and encourage drivers to pay greater attention to their surroundings. The new sign also contributes to the Parish Council's commitment to supporting local biodiversity. Nestled beneath it are a hedgehog house, an insect hotel and a bee home, providing valuable habitat for some of our most important wildlife visitors. These small additions demonstrate that even modest community projects can play a part in supporting nature and enhancing the local environment.

Importantly, the new sign has been carefully positioned so as not to detract from the historic village sign that marks the site of the former Congregational Church. In this way, the new installation complements, rather than competes with, an important piece of the village's heritage. Sadly, not long after the sign was erected, it became the target of vandalism and graffiti, along with the opposite wall and both village gateway signs. The incident was reported to Essex Police, but despite investigations the individual(s) responsible has not been identified. While such behaviour is deeply disappointing, it has done little to diminish the positive impact of the project. The overwhelming response from residents has been one of appreciation and pride. Whilst one resident took a different view of the project which we fully respect, the Parish Council has been encouraged by the many positive comments received and the support shown by the wider community

A Reminder to Check Your Home Insurance Renewal

The Parish Council would like to remind residents to pay close attention when their home insurance policies come up for renewal, particularly those properties located within the area affected by the River Roding Project. Throughout the development of the flood alleviation scheme, the Environment Agency advised that householders should not experience increases in insurance premiums as a result of the project. However, we have recently become aware that some residents have reported changes to their insurance premiums or policy terms that they believe may be linked to the scheme. Whilst it is not possible to say whether individual premium increases are directly related to the Project, the Parish Council encourages residents to carefully review renewal documents, check that property details and flood risk information are accurate, and challenge any information they believe to be incorrect. It may also be worthwhile obtaining quotations from alternative insurers to ensure you are receiving the most appropriate cover at a competitive price. The River Roding Project is a major flood risk management scheme intended to reduce flooding and provide greater protection to communities further along the river. Residents wishing to find out more about the project can visit the Environment Agency's engagement page at www.engageenvironmentagency.uk. If you believe your insurance premium has changed as a result of information associated with the scheme, please consider informing the Parish Council, as this feedback may help us better understand any emerging issues affecting local residents.



Images of scheme progress from the River Roding Project website

Increased Police Presence for Stanford Rivers

The Parish Council is pleased to report that Stanford Rivers is set to benefit from a dedicated Community Special Constable (CSC) who has committed to spending up to eight hours each month patrolling the parish. Whilst this may not sound like a significant amount of time, it represents a considerable improvement on the situation many residents have experienced in recent years, where visible police patrols within the parish have been extremely infrequent. The additional presence will provide greater opportunities for reassurance patrols, engagement with residents, and the identification of local concerns before they become more serious issues. Visible policing plays an important role in rural communities. Quite apart from helping to deter crime and anti-social behaviour, regular patrols provide reassurance to residents and ensure that local concerns are heard and understood by the police. For a parish such as Stanford Rivers, where residents have often expressed frustration about the lack of a visible police presence, this commitment is a welcome step in the right direction. The new Constable is undergoing the final vetting processes, and all being well should start by the end of the year. The Parish Council looks forward to working closely with our new CSC and hopes residents will take the opportunity to engage with them when they are out and about in the parish.

Rural Broadband - Renegotiate

Many residents will remember that rural broadband was originally introduced to the area as part of the Superfast Essex rollout, bringing much-needed high-speed internet connectivity to communities that had previously suffered from poor broadband speeds. The broadband market has changed considerably in recent years, and as contracts come up for renewal, residents are encouraged to review the options available to them rather than simply accepting the first renewal offer presented. A few minutes spent comparing packages and prices could result in a better deal, improved service, or additional benefits. Even if you are happy with your existing provider, it is often worthwhile contacting them before renewal to discuss your contract and ask whether a more competitive package is available. Many providers, including existing customers' providers, may be willing to offer improved terms to retain business. Shopping around, comparing the market, and renegotiation will mean you are getting the best value for money for a service that best suits your needs. In an increasingly connected world, a little research at renewal time could potentially result in significant savings over the course of a contract.

Hire Toot Hill Village Hall

**The hall is available to
hire for Parties –
Weddings – Community
Events – Social Occasions**

To find out more, and view the
hall fees, visit

www.stanforddrivers-pc.gov.uk

Or contact clerk@stanforddrivers-pc.gov.uk

Or phone 077 377 36365

Regular groups include Dog Training – Silk
Painting – Folk Club – Flower Club –
Wildlife Society.

Beware Rogue Waste Collectors

Please be reminded that if you pay someone to remove waste from your property, **YOU** have the legal responsibility to ensure that the person carrying out the work is properly registered as a waste carrier. Whether you are having a garden cleared, a shed dismantled, building materials removed or simply disposing of unwanted household items, it can be tempting to choose the cheapest quote. However, if the waste is subsequently fly-tipped and the person you employed was not authorised to carry waste, you could find yourself facing questions from the authorities about where the waste originated. EFDC has recently increased its fine for fly tipping to £5,000! Before hiring a contractor, residents are encouraged to ask for their Waste Carrier Registration Number and check that it is valid. Reputable contractors will be happy to provide this information. You should also request a receipt or written record of the work carried out and the waste collected. Fly-tipping continues to blight the countryside and rural roads across Essex, costing landowners and taxpayers thousands of pounds each year to clear up. By taking a few moments to check a contractor's credentials, residents can help ensure their waste is disposed of responsibly and play their part in protecting our local environment.



Preparing For Emergencies – The Ongar Community Network

In recent years, the Government and emergency planning organisations have increasingly encouraged households to be prepared for unexpected events that could temporarily disrupt everyday life. These might include severe weather, flooding, power outages, major incidents affecting transport or communications, or interruptions to essential supplies. This has been seen more recently in the press. The aim is not to cause alarm (unavoidable I would say), but simply to ensure that families can remain comfortable and self-sufficient for a short period should normal services be disrupted. Being prepared is particularly important in rural communities such as ours, where weather events or infrastructure problems can sometimes have a greater impact than in urban areas. A little forward planning can make a significant difference during an emergency and help reduce pressure on emergency services. With this in mind, residents may wish to join the newly established **Ongar Community Network**, which aims to connect local people, businesses, community groups and organisations. Not only could this group help you in an emergency, but perhaps you could help others? The Ongar Community Network (managed by Everything Epping Forest and endorsed by Ongar Town Council) is collating details of residents willing to volunteer in a local emergency and contact information for halls / schools / pubs which could be used as an evacuation centre (this information was previously held in the District Council's Emergency Plan). In the event of local issues or emergencies, networks such as these can play a valuable role in sharing information, coordinating support and helping residents stay informed. The Parish Council encourages residents to take a few moments to review their own emergency preparedness and to consider becoming part of local community networks that help strengthen resilience across our area. After all, one of the greatest strengths of rural communities has always been people looking out for one another.

You can register as a volunteer by emailing ongarcommunitynetwork@gmail.com or for more details go to <https://cutt.bio/OngarCommunityNetwork>, or ring David Jackman on 07710 447868.

The Governments 'Be Ready' campaign - www.beready.campaign.gov.uk/be-ready-for-emergencies - provides a checklist that residents should consider as part of their own 'be ready' preparations. It states you should start by:

- Seeing what you already have
- Plan for your household
- Build it gradually
- Check it regularly
- Connect with your community

Talk to your neighbours about what extra support you might be able to share during an outage, and swap contact details.

Water	Bottled water for 3 days 3 litres per person per day for drinking. More would be needed for other tasks such as cooking and washing.
Food	Non-perishable food for 3 days Food with a long shelf life that doesn't need refrigeration or cooking e.g. tinned meat, fish or vegetables, dried fruit and nuts. It's best to buy food you'd usually eat.
Hygiene	Hand sanitiser, wet wipes and bathroom products
Light and warmth	Torch (and spare batteries) Torches are safer than candles. Blankets, sleeping bags and warm clothing Homes can become cold very quickly when the heating goes off.
Communication and information	FM radio (battery / wind up) - for updates during outages, write down frequencies of any national or local radio stations you use for news. Charged power bank - To charge phones or compatible medical devices.
Money and documents	Cash (mix of coins and notes) and cards in case electronic payments or ATMs are disrupted. The amount of cash you should keep depends on your family's specific needs for essentials. Copies of IDs / documents Have printed copies of important documents such as passports, birth certificates, insurance policy details and instructions for any medical equipment you rely on. Important phone numbers and information - Write down contact details of who you'd need to contact in an emergency (including anyone who might need checking on) and a list of any regular medication and doses.
Medical and health	First aid kit / first aid items including items such as waterproof plasters, bandages, a thermometer, antiseptic, eyewash solution, sterile dressings and gloves, medical tape for dressings, and tweezers. Essential medication and medical supplies - Always leave enough time to request repeat prescriptions so you have less chance of running out in an emergency. It's important to request prescriptions up to 5 working days before you need your medicine.
Baby products	Baby formula - Ready-made or 'ready-to-feed' formula is best, as you may not be able to boil water to make up powdered formula safely. Nappies and wipes
Pet products	Pet food and bottled water

We Need New Members!

Be part of
something special!

To ensure the future of twinning in Ongar,
we are looking for enthusiastic new members to join us.

Whether you have travelled extensively or simply
enjoy meeting new people, everyone is welcome.
You do not need to speak another language or
have previous experience, just an interest in
supporting community connections and
cultural exchange.



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

By becoming a member, you can:

- ✓ Help organise events and exchanges
- ✓ Meet new people locally and internationally
- ✓ Play a role in preserving an important part of Ongar's community life
- ✓ Help shape the future of the Twinning Association



Building Friendships!



Exploring Culture!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

on how to become a member, please contact:

BOB GAMMON – 07941 790326

**CHAIR OF ONGAR & DISTRICT
TWINNING ASSOCIATION**



Find us on Facebook @OngarTwinning