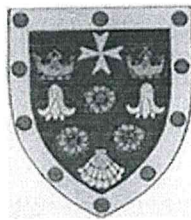


Ingatestone and Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan

Community Engagement Strategy

November 2020



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Introduction

The purpose of this strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to guide and monitor the process of community and stakeholder engagement on Ingatestone and Fryerning's Neighbourhood Plan. This will allow us to produce an informed and relevant community-led Neighbourhood Plan which reflects the aspirations of Ingatestone and Fryerning.

Effective engagement with local residents, businesses, workers, and community groups will be crucial in the preparation of a well-informed Plan, and in getting buy-in from the community.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

The Localism Act 2011 introduced statutory Neighbourhood Planning to England. The purpose of the legislation was to allow local communities to have a greater say in the development of their local area (within certain parameters).

A Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led planning framework, designed to guide the future development, regeneration, and conservation of an area. It focuses on the use and development of land, and may contain the vision, aims, planning policies, and proposals for improving the area, or providing new facilities. It may also allocate key sites for specific kinds of development. It can deal with a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues, such as housing, employment, heritage, and transport.

These plans may give opportunities to choose where new homes, offices and shops are built, have a say on the design of new buildings, and support the granting of planning permission for new buildings which you want to see go ahead. Neighbourhood Plans allow communities to get the development which is needed for their area, but the Plans must also consider the need across the wider Borough, and ensure that the Plan is consistent with Borough-wide policies.

A Neighbourhood Plan is a planning document which will guide future development in Ingatestone and Fryerning. The exact scope of the document will be determined by the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group in consultation with the community. However, it may include the following sections:

- Introduction
- Vision and aims
- Information about the area
- A summary of the community engagement

- Planning guidance
- Planning policies
- Site allocations and/or development areas
- Infrastructure

Why is it so important for our future?

Neighbourhood Planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. For the first time, community groups can produce plans that have real statutory weight in the planning system. Neighbourhood Plans are *not* about stopping development. Rather, they are about shaping the future and growth of our villages and towns.

Background

What have Ingatestone and Fryerning done so far?

In summer 2017, a group of residents came together to begin the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. This is a significant endeavour, and is expected to take a number of years. The aspiration to create a Neighbourhood Plan was presented to the community at the Ingatestone and Fryerning Horticultural Show on Saturday 15th July, and residents were asked about what they knew about Neighbourhood Planning, and was also included as a front page feature in the August 2017 Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council newsletter, which is delivered to every household in the village.

The first step was to get Ingatestone and Fryerning parish designated as a Neighbourhood Plan area. This request was made to Brentwood Borough Council in August 2017. Brentwood Borough voted to approve the designation in October 2017.

In October 2017, a Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group was set up. It is important to note that this group is independent of Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council, but a number of Parish Councillors have chosen to sit on this group. The purpose of the Advisory Group is to facilitate, coordinate, and guide the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. As the need arises, topic-based Working Group will be set up which will report to the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group.

Residents and stakeholders were invited to attend the Advisory Group meeting using social media, and Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council's website.

Why do we need an Engagement Strategy?

Neighbourhood Plans are a community-led policy document. It is imperative that communities have a chance to feed into the Plan, and provide comment and feedback at every stage. We recognise that we have a diverse community in Ingatestone and Fryerning. Different residents will have different constraints on their time and ability to engage with us. Therefore, it is important that we set out a strategy to make sure that we make our consultation and engagement activity as accessible as possible.

This strategy describes the methods of consultation which we may employ in our community engagement activity, and sets out our commitments to the community about how we will seek to inform, communicate with and involve them through the project.

What does the strategy hope to achieve?

Our strategy hopes to ensure effective and meaningful communication and engagement with the community in Ingatestone and Fryerning, facilitating the community-led process, resulting in a useful and comprehensive plan, informed by the aspirations of the community.

Previous consultation

Our parish has a record of documenting its environment. In 2005, it produced a Village Design Statement illustrating how its history and character should be respected in any new development or redevelopment. This document has been valuable when commenting to Brentwood Borough Council on its planning intentions. However, it remains 'advisory', whereas a neighbourhood plan is part of the statutory planning process.

The Ingatestone Village Design Statement incorporated a significant amount of feedback from the local community. We recognise that whilst this was prepared 12 years ago, it still provides a useful starting point for the production of the Neighbourhood Plan. We will review this document, and the feedback received, carefully, to assess how we can update this, and allow previous feedback to feed into the Plan.

We recognise that over-consultation can lead to consultation fatigue. We will seek to make the most of all the consultation which has already taken place in the village, such as regarding the Local Plan, to ensure that we make the most of all the feedback residents have already given.

There is also significant information available regarding the Ingatestone High Street and Fryerning Conservation Areas.

Consultation and engagement strategy

Key principles to follow

It is important to us that engagement is effective and meaningful. Therefore, we have set out the following principles which we will seek to follow as we move through our consultation and engagement on the plan:

1. **Simplify technical language** – Complicated and technical language is difficult to understand and provide feedback on. It makes it difficult for residents to meaningfully engage because they cannot comment on specific aspects without a significant time investment. We will simplify the language as much as possible, and will prepare useful summaries for respondents and consultees to review.
2. **Avoid public meetings** – Public meetings are usually an ineffective way of consulting with residents, because it can be intimidating for most respondents to speak up. This leads to the same people having their say over and over again, and prevents us from getting feedback from a wider section of the community. Instead, we will hold drop-in style events where residents can get information about the Neighbourhood Plan and give their feedback in a non-intimidating way.
3. **Flexibility and openness** – Neighbourhood Plans are community-led. Therefore, it is important that at every stage, plans are not just presented and defended to residents. We want to be as flexible as possible throughout, whilst recognising that, following the receipt of feedback from residents, we need to make decisions about how to proceed. We will communicate openly with residents about when decisions are being made, and how we have responded to feedback.
4. **Use existing knowledge** – Ingatestone and Fryerning is a diverse and talented community. We have a lot of skills which will be useful to different elements of our plan. We want to make it as easy as possible for these residents to use their skills and engage with the plan, by creating topic based groups as the need arises. This prevents these residents from having to make a wider commitment to the whole plan if they are not able, or do not wish to do so.
5. **Responsible use of resources** – We will not commission consultants to prepare options before consulting with the community to understand their wider aspirations for the Neighbourhood Plan.
6. **Meaningful engagement** – Rather than consulting on a pre-determined Plan, we will provide meaningful engagement, allowing residents and consultees to have a genuine influence on the outcome of the Neighbourhood Plan.
7. **Keep it interesting** – We recognise that boards or slides with significant amounts of text are boring, are not engagement, and are unlikely to inspire residents to give us

constructive feedback. We aspire to keep all resources as interesting and engaging as possible.

When do we want to consult?

We will want to consult the community at each stage of the process. This will start with engagement regarding the village in general, but we aspire to later hold more topic-based consultations on specific aspects.

The length of time needed for each consultation will vary, based on the method of consultation chosen, and the level of response we need. However, best practice suggests a period of up to 6 weeks for consultation events.

When deciding on when to consult, we will keep the following in mind:

- **Time of day** – Ingatestone and Fryerning benefit from Ingatestone Station. As such, many residents commute some distance to London to get to work. Therefore, it is important that drop-in events are mindful of this, and make sure that it is possible for residents to participate easily by offering a range of times and dates.
- **Time of year** – Where possible and reasonable, we will avoid major holiday times such as Christmas and half term.
- **Clarity** – We will be clear about how long residents have to review the proposals, and the deadlines which they must meet to provide feedback.
- **Analysis** – When setting out our timeframes for engagement, we will also make sure that we build in sufficient time for analysis of the feedback, evaluation, and reporting back what we have learnt.

Who do we want to consult?

Ingatestone and Fryerning is a diverse community, and we want to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate in the Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst we recognise that there may be a range of opinions within groups, grouping residents and businesses into stakeholder groups helps us to identify the different methods of consultation which will be required, and will help us to ensure that a diverse and wide-ranging view from local residents is sought.

These groups may include:

- Primary school children
- Secondary school children
- Young people (aged 18-30)
- Business owners/Local businesses
- Commuters
- Older residents

- People employed in the parish
- Community groups and societies
- Families
- Single parent families
- People with physical needs
- People with learning needs
- Housing estate representatives
- Residents associations
- Homeowners
- Tenants
- Faith groups
- Travellers and gypsies
- LGBT+ community
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- Voluntary bodies
- Farmers
- Landowners
- Visitors and tourists
- Education establishments
- Local branches of professional bodies
- Local institutions

Other bodies may also need to be consulted, outside of our parish. These may include:

- Mountnessing Parish Council
- Margaretting Parish Council
- Brentwood Borough Council
- English Heritage
- Natural England
- Highways England
- Essex County Council
- Essex Police

How do we want to consult?

In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic meant that we could not carry out in-person consultation to members of the public. Unfortunately, any consulting had to be conducted either online or by a delivery of a letter to each household in the parish

There are a number of methods of consultation which we think are suited to the Neighbourhood Planning process. This list is not exhaustive, but some of the methods we may consider are:

Online engagement

Methods may include a website, social media, and photo survey.

The community in Ingatestone and Fryerning is active on social media and online. A website is an excellent way to provide the community with information and updates about the Plan, invite them to give us feedback, and to answer any questions. We hope to get a website started as soon as possible so that we can easily let residents know about our meetings, and how to get involved. A website will publish the contact details of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group, so that residents, stakeholders and interested parties can easily get in contact.

A website would also be a great place to publish a photo survey of the parish which we hope to use to encourage residents to identify which areas of the village they most value.

We are also aware that social media is popular among many residents, and information about local meetings is often distributed in this way. We hope to have a social media presence distinct from Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council, to ensure that it is independent.

Events

Events are a great way to engage with the community and get their feedback. As discussed, we will avoid public meetings where possible, but will make the most of other methods of consultation, such as drop-in consultation events, focus groups, stakeholder groups and seminars, forums, community meetings, workshop or group events, and open day events.

These events will be made as accessible as possible by holding them at a variety of times, and by making the information we display as easy to digest as possible.

In addition to holding our own events, we will also seek to get involved with other local community events which are taking place in our parish, as we did in July by attending the Ingatestone and Fryerning Horticultural Show. This should allow us to reach a broader section of the community, and engage with residents who may not proactively engage with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Engagement with representatives

We will make sure to engage with the elected representatives for Ingatestone and Fryerning. At present, these are:

- Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council
- Cllr Noelle Hones – ward member for Ingatestone, Fryerning and Mountnessing

- Cllr Thomas Bridge – ward member for Ingatestone, Fryerning and Mountnessing
- Cllr Jon Cloke – ward member for Ingatestone, Fryerning and Mountnessing
- Cllr Lesley Wagland – division member for Brentwood Rural

Questionnaires

At all stages, written feedback is useful, as it allows us to carefully consider and record a resident's views. We also recognise that it will not always be possible for residents to come along to an event which we are hosting or attending. Therefore, residents need to be able to provide written feedback at each stage.

At some stages, it will be useful to direct residents to specific areas or topics of discussion, and to receive answers to questions from many residents, so that we can compare responses.

In all of these cases, a questionnaire will be useful. Care will need to be taken to ensure that as many responses are made online as possible, as this will significantly reduce the time it will take for us to collate the responses electronically, allowing us to analyse and action responses as soon as possible.

Self-completion questionnaires, questionnaires – 'open questions'

Interviews

For some stakeholders, such as local representatives, leaders of local stakeholder organisations, and headteachers of our local schools, it may be appropriate to conduct interviews. This will allow us to get comprehensive and specific feedback.

We suggest that these interviews are most likely to be semi-structured. This means that there will be some set questions, but we will allow the interview to respond to the issues and concerns raised. This means that we get comparable feedback between stakeholders, but also understand their key aspirations and concerns.

These interviews could take place face-to-face, or could be undertaken as a telephone interview.

Where do we want to consult?

We need to try to meet with residents in a number of different venues to ensure that we engage with as many residents as possible. We may also seek to 'piggy back' on other community events, allowing us to access further venues and community groups.

Possible venues include:

- Village halls and the Community Centre
- Ingatestone Library
- In the High Street

- Community events
- Clubs and society meeting rooms
- Supermarkets and shops
- Pubs
- Schools

Ingatestone and Fryerning is a diverse parish. It is important that community engagement takes place in both Ingatestone *and* Fryerning, as residents in one of the settlements may not find it easy to get to the other.

Publicising and advertising the Neighbourhood Plan

Ingatestone and Fryerning's Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group will publish our meeting and events as widely as possible to ensure that residents are able to attend. This publication may include:

- Posts on social media
- Articles on the web
- Notification of meetings to local print media, such as the Brentwood Gazette
- Posters on the parish noticeboards
- Advertisements in parish newsletter

The progress of the Neighbourhood Plan will be published on the website, and we will issue updates to the community as often as is useful and possible. We hope that residents will attend our meetings to ask residents and get an update on the Plan.

Timelines for engagement

We recognise that there are a number of different stages of engagement in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. It is important to be flexible as we move through the process. However, we have set out the overall, broad plan for engagement below.

Early engagement

Arguably the most important stage of engagement happens at the beginning, as this frames the process of the Neighbourhood Plan preparation.

The focus at this stage will be to ask residents open, broad questions to establish what residents and stakeholders feel is good and bad about the area, what they think makes the parish a good (and bad!) place to work and live, what needs to change in Ingatestone and Fryerning, and what pressures residents feel are affecting the parish now, and what they expect the pressures to be in the future.

Mid-stage engagement

It is expected that the early stage consultation will establish the key themes and issues which the Neighbourhood Plan needs to address. This will guide the mid-stage engagement

phase, where we will consult the community on the draft vision and aims for the Neighbourhood Plan.

This phase may include workshops and focus groups on different topics, to try to get more detailed feedback on the different themes.

The purpose of this phase is to get the detail needed from residents to flesh out the Neighbourhood Plan, and to write policy,

Consulting on the completed plan

Once we have established the key themes, drafted a vision on each of these, and consulted on them, we will be ready to draft the full plan.

When this is completed, we will need to undertake a comprehensive consultation on the final document. This is a statutory requirement of the Neighbourhood Planning regulations.

At this stage, it is important to recognise that most residents will not have the time or inclination to read the full document, and every policy. Therefore, it will be possible to prepare a short summary which outlines the key points and policies included.

However, it is still important that residents can comment on the detail of the policy if they wish to. Given that the document will be comprehensive, the length of time allowed to give responses must reflect this.

Consultation Action Plan

As the Neighbourhood Plan progresses, there will be a number of different elements which we want to the residents of Ingatestone and Fryerning to have an opportunity to feed into. In order to maximise these opportunities as much as possible, for each phase of engagement, we will fill in the following action plan. This will ensure that residents have a number of different opportunities to engage with us, and will help us to engage with and access hard-to-reach groups. This action plan will identify:

- The aims of the consultation and engagement phase
- Who we are seeking to engage with
- The methods of consultation for each group
- Where and when we will engage
- The method of feedback

Please see a template Consultation Action Plan overleaf, with an example in italics.

Consultation Action Plan – template

Consultation phase: *Phase 1: aspirations*

Aim of this phase of consultation: *To identify the aspirations of the community of Ingatestone and Fryerning for this Neighbourhood Plan*

Audience	Consultation method	Where and when?	Feedback method	Notes/comments
<i>Secondary school children</i>	<i>Focus group Online questionnaire</i>	<i>During school hours, at the Anglo European School</i>	<i>Paper feedback forms for focus group, online feedback form for questionnaire</i>	<i>Students for focus group identified by school. Online questionnaire publicised in newsletter and to school email addresses (via school)</i>