

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA): Screening Opinion

Ingatestone and Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan

Brentwood Borough Council

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Quality information

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1. Introduction

Overview

- 1.1 This SEA Screening Opinion has been prepared in relation to the Ingatestone and Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan by AECOM.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Screening Opinion is to set out AECOM's opinion in relation to whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process is required to accompany the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.3 This Screening Opinion is provided to the statutory consultation bodies for SEA (the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) for their opinion. Subsequently, Brentwood Borough Council will make a final decision in respect of whether SEA is required.

Background to SEA screening

- 1.4 SEA is a systematic process undertaken to evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of plans. The requirement for SEA in England was introduced in 2004 through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('The SEA Regulations'), which transposed the European SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).
- 1.5 One of the 'Basic Conditions' that a Neighbourhood Plan is tested against is whether the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with European Union obligations, including obligations under the SEA Directive. Neighbourhood Plans only require SEA where they are likely to lead to significant environmental effects. To decide whether a proposed Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it should be screened having regard to the criteria set out in Annex 2 of the SEA Directive, which is transposed into the SEA Regulations as Schedule 1.
- 1.6 Where it is determined that the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require SEA), a statement of reasons should be prepared. Where a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, an SEA process must be carried out.

Structure of this report

- 1.7 This report is structured as follows:
 - Section 2 – explores the objectives, scope and likely content of the Neighbourhood Plan, and the key environmental constraints in the vicinity of the Neighbourhood Plan area;
 - Section 3 – presents a discussion of the potential significant environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and their significance; and
 - Section 4 – sets out the screening opinion.

2. Context for the Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Key information relating to the Ingatestone and Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan is presented in **Table 2.1**. Further context for the Neighbourhood Plan is then presented under three headings, which explore the Local Plan context, the key components of the Neighbourhood Plan, and sensitive receptors within or nearby to the Plan area.

Table 2.1: Key information relating to the Ingatestone and Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan

Name of Qualifying Body	Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council
Title of the Plan	Ingatestone and Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan (IFNP)
Area covered by the Plan	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan covers the parish of Ingatestone and Fryerning in Brentwood Borough in Essex. Ingatestone and Fryerning is located approximately 9km north east of Brentwood and 9.5km south west of Chelmsford.</p> <p>The boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area, which is consistent with the Parish boundary of Ingatestone and Fryerning, is presented in Figure 2.1.</p>
Timescale	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period to 2020 to 2033.
Purpose, aims and objectives	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan has identified the following vision:</p> <p><i>“Ingatestone and Fryerning are vibrant and distinctive rural villages with easy access to fields and the countryside. We strive to respect and reflect the views of our communities, to evolve and expand whilst retaining our unique and distinctive character and to provide a good quality of life for current and future generations of residents.”</i></p> <p>The following objectives support this vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognising and protecting the character and history of the neighbourhood area, its conservation areas (Fryerning, Ingatestone High Street, Station Lane and Tor Bryan), listed buildings and sites. • supporting measured, proportionate, timely and sustainable development to meet local requirements, particularly those of our young people and older residents. • influencing key ‘age friendly’ issues, for example, community safety, housing, planning, street lighting, green spaces, playing fields and parks, community centres, war memorials, seats, shelters and public toilets. • engaging residents, particularly older people in the creation of social networks, enabling action for safer,

kinder, cleaner, inclusive and connected communities (both online and offline).

- promoting a flourishing local economy with a range of successful independent businesses.
- giving consideration to effective transport links, the staffed train station, the bus service and access routes for movement around the village of cyclists and pedestrians.
- endorsing policies that have a positive effect on the environment, including those that remove or minimise flood risk, mitigate climate change, reduce our carbon footprint and minimise the impact of traffic to protect the quality of air within the parish.

Figure 2.1: Ingatestone and Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan area



Relationship with the Brentwood Local Plan

- 2.2 The IFNP is being developed in the context of the adopted Brentwood Replacement Local Plan (BRLP) and the emerging Brentwood Local Development Plan (BLDP).
- 2.3 The BRLP was adopted in 2005 and recognises Ingatestone as an important shopping centre with good rail connections. The High Street contains a good range of shops, public houses, wine bars, restaurants and cafes. Other services include a secondary school, post office, estate agents, optician, veterinary surgery, doctor's surgery, dentist, and an undertaker. There are also several churches of different denominations as well as supporting community infrastructure, including allotments, parks, fishing lakes, leisure facilities, children's play areas, the Community Club on the High Street, and Fryerning Parish Rooms. Mixed-use development and retail growth are sought through the BRLP to strengthen the role of the High Street.

- 2.4 The emerging BLDP is at an advanced stage of development, having been submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in February 2020. Hearing sessions commenced in December 2020 and are still ongoing.
- 2.5 The emerging BLDP identifies Ingatestone (including Heybridge) as a Large Village in the second tier of the settlement hierarchy. Whilst there are a range of services and facilities available in Ingatestone, only a modest level of development is envisaged due to infrastructure constraints and a lack of suitable sites. However, as part of the Central Brentwood Growth Corridor, opportunities to grow Ingatestone Village where contained sites can deliver an urban extension to the south are sought, to include both housing and supporting employment land. The draft plan allocates the 'Land South of Ingatestone' under Policy R21 to deliver around 161 new homes and the 'Land adjacent to the A12' under Policy R22 to deliver around 57 new homes. However, the 'Land south of Ingatestone' (Policy R21) falls outside the designated IFNP area, in the neighbouring area of Mountnessing.
- 2.6 The 'Land Adjacent to A12 Slip Road' is also allocated under Policy E08 to deliver around two hectares of new employment land.
- 2.7 The emerging BLDP also identifies two Gypsy and Traveller sites in Ingatestone at Deep Dell Park (Willow Farm) accommodating six pitches and Poplar Farm accommodating two to three pitches (Policy HP09). Both of these sites currently exist and are occupied.

The emerging Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.8 The purpose and objectives of the IFNP are presented above in **Table 2.1**. Policies within the IFNP, as they currently stand, are discussed below; however, it is important to recognise that policies are naturally subject to change, and hence should not be the primary basis for SEA screening.
- 2.9 In terms of key land use policies which should be considered for their potential for significant environmental effects, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to establish policy to guide the Local Plan allocations:
- 'Land adjacent to the A12', which is currently envisaged to deliver 57 homes; and
 - 'Land Adjacent to A12 Slip Road', which is allocated for two hectares of employment land.
- 2.10 It is important to be clear that the IFNP does not propose any allocations additional to those identified through the emerging BLDP, and that development management policy in the IFNP will supplement that in the BLDP.
- 2.11 Additional thematic IFNP policies seek to shape development that may come forward during the Plan period by supporting development which meets a series of criteria in terms of design, layout, and type. This includes provisions to enhance environmental quality, limit flood risk, enhance access to open space and community infrastructure, and extend green infrastructure networks.

Sensitive receptors within or nearby to the Plan area

2.12 A key determinant of whether effects are likely to be significant is the sensitivity of the asset affected. In this context, the environmentally sensitive a location, the more likely it is that potential environmental effects from a plan will be significant.

2.13 The NPPG provides guidance on this topic through providing a list of sites and areas which should be deemed as 'sensitive areas' for the purposes of environmental assessment.¹

2.14 These comprise:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- Natura 2000 sites;
- National Parks;
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- World Heritage Sites; and
- Scheduled Monuments².

2.15 In the context of the NPPG, there are two 'sensitive areas' within the IFNP area, both of which comprise Scheduled Monuments. These are:

- The designated Roman villa 100m north west of Handley Barns lying north of Fryerning.
- The designated Barn at Ingatestone Hall, south of Ingatestone Rail Station.

2.16 The Plan area also falls partially within the identified 22km Zone of Influence (Zol) for the Blackwater Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. The Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) (2020) identifies mitigation measures that any development of additional new homes within the Zol will be expected to contribute towards.

2.17 In terms of other key environmental assets (i.e. those which are not defined as 'sensitive areas' by the NPPG), these include in the Neighbourhood Plan area:

- The National Heritage List identifies 98 listed features within the Parish, which includes three Grade I listings, five Grade II* listings, 88 Grade II listings and the two Scheduled Monuments discussed above.
- Ingatestone's High Street Conservation Area, established in 1969, contains a large number of grade II listed buildings and a grade I listed parish church.
- The Station Lane Conservation Area, established in 1981, includes many Arts and Crafts style properties designed by George Sherrin, the grade II listed railway station, the Catholic church and Tor Bryan estate. Outside this area is Ingatestone Hall, which includes a listed granary and gatehouse.

¹ I.e. those sites and areas that should be considered 'sensitive' for the purposes of screening projects for Environmental Impact Assessment.

² <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/environmental-impact-assessment/screening-schedule-2-projects/interpretation-of-project-categories/>

- The Fryerning Conservation Area, established in 1991, contains the listed St. Mary the Virgin Church, Mill Green Windmill, Fryerning Hall and medieval barns and many other listed properties. Mill Green also has evidence of medieval brick kilns where ancient pottery has been found.
- The BRLP currently recognises a small part of the Forest of Writtle in the Mill Green area to the north of Ingatestone and Fryerning as a designated ancient landscape.
- Part of the Plan area lies within the Impact Risk Zones of Norsey Wood SSSI and Hanningfield Reservoir SSSI, where development of 100 or more dwellings are captured as requiring further consultation with Natural England.
- The parish is bound by the River Wid to the south east and much of the west consists of woodland.

3. Screening assessment

3.1 **Table 3.1** discusses potential environmental effects and their significance. The discussion is presented under a series of topic headings, which reflects the list of topics presented in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations. Also, and to reiterate, the discussion is presented mindful of the 'significance criteria' set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations.

Table 3.1: Potential environmental effects of the IFNP and their significance

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes/No)?
Biodiversity, flora and fauna	Whilst there are no significant receptors within the Plan area, there is a need to consider the possibility of recreational disturbance impacts on the Blackwater Estuary SPA and Ramsar Site. The provisions of the Essex Coast RAMS are considered likely to ensure <u>sufficient mitigation is provided to avoid significant effects arising.</u>	No
Population and human health	The Neighbourhood Plan sets out a range of policies which have an explicit focus on improving the quality of life of residents, including improving the public realm, for accessibility to services and facilities and green infrastructure enhancements. Whilst the benefits which arise for residents from a well-designed Neighbourhood Plan have the potential to be wide-ranging, these are <u>not deemed to be significant</u> with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.	No
Soil	Recent agricultural land classification has not been undertaken in the parish. According to Natural England's provisional agricultural land quality dataset, which is based on a high-level assessment undertaken prior to 1988, much of the parish is underlain by land classified as Grade 3 agricultural land. As such it is uncertain whether this is land classified as the 'best and most versatile' (i.e. Grade 3a land) or land which is not classified as such (Grade 3b land). There are smaller areas of Grade 2 best and most versatile agricultural land, though it is not clear whether these intersect the Plan area. Overall, whilst there is potential for the allocation sites to result in the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, it is important to recall that these sites are allocated through the Local Plan, as opposed to through the Neighbourhood Plan. As such, <u>no significant effects</u> are deemed likely.	No

SEA topic	Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes/No)?
Water	<p>Development proposals influenced by Neighbourhood Plan policies may lead to very limited changes in water demand in the Neighbourhood Plan area. However, in the context of water management within Essex, and wider population pressures, the effect on water resources is <u>deemed to be insignificant</u>.</p> <p>Impacts on water quality in the Neighbourhood Plan area from the Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to be significant, with the River Wid forming the border of the Plan area to the south east.</p>	No
Air	<p>There are no declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within the Plan area. Whilst there are AQMAs in nearby Brentwood, and there are recognised congestion constraints within Ingatestone, the level of growth, as determined by Brentwood Borough Council, is <u>not considered likely to lead to significant impacts</u> in relation to congestion and indirectly air quality.</p>	No
Climatic factors	<p>In terms of emissions from transport, the objectives and policies of the plan actively seek to encourage sustainable modes of transport, discourage private car use and reduce the need to travel. This will help ensure that per capita emissions are minimised, and potential able to decrease over the plan period.</p> <p>Areas at high risk of flooding from rivers and the sea follow the corridor of the river Wid and are unlikely to be affected by or affect the proposals of the IFNP. Surface water flood risk is far more extensive across the Plan area. The proposed policies of the IFNP actively supports development which incorporates sustainable drainage systems to manage rates of surface water runoff and to reduce the potential for flooding. Alongside the existing provisions of the NPPF, <u>no significant effects</u> are deemed likely.</p>	No
Material assets	<p>Population growth will lead to increased waste management requirements; however, effects are likely to be limited by statutory requirements regarding waste management.</p> <p>No mineral sites are likely to be affected as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Effects are therefore <u>unlikely to be significant</u> in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p>	No
Cultural heritage	<p>The Local Plan allocations do not contain or lie immediately adjacent to any designated heritage assets and in this respect, <u>no significant effects</u> are considered likely. Both sites are separated from the nearby Station Lane Conservation Area by local roads and existing housing and woodland areas along Roman Road.</p>	No
Landscape	<p>In the absence of nationally significant landscape designations in the Plan area, <u>no significant effects</u> are considered likely because of the allocations of the IFNP. The Local Plan allocations do not affect the existing locally designated ancient landscape. The policies of the IFNP have a close focus on protecting and enhancing landscape and townscape character, the historic environment, and on implementing high quality design.</p>	No

4. Summary of screening opinion

- 4.1 This screening opinion has considered whether the Ingatestone and Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan is likely to lead to significant environmental effects in line with Directive 2001/42/EC (the 'SEA Directive') and accompanying regulations.
- 4.2 The screening has considered a number of potential environmental effects that may arise as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst some limited environmental effects have the potential to take place as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan, it is considered that these are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.
- 4.3 The SEA topics where effects have the most potential to be significant relates to the historic environment and biodiversity. However, recognising the limited scope of the IFNP and, in particular, recalling that the IFNP will not allocate land but rather set policy to guide the development of two sites set to be allocated through the emerging BLDP, significant effects are considered unlikely.
- 4.4 In addition, key elements of the Neighbourhood Plan's objectives and emerging policies are to limit potential environmental effects, secure environmental enhancements and to bring benefits for the quality of life of the town's residents. This will further limit the potential for significant environmental effects.
- 4.5 For these reasons, it is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan is not subject to the requirements of Directive 2001/42/EC, the 'SEA Directive' and associated Regulations. As such, **an SEA process meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations is not deemed to be required to accompany the development of the Ingatestone and Fryerning Neighbourhood Plan.**
- 4.6 The comments of the SEA statutory consultees are sought on this Screening Opinion.

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