



Earls Colne Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

- a. The main purpose of the Steering Group is to oversee the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan for Earls Colne in order that it will then progress to Independent Examination and a successful community referendum and ultimately be adopted by Braintree District Council as part of their planning policy when considering planning applications within the parish boundaries.
- b. The Steering Group will engage the local community to ensure that the Plan is truly representative of the ambitions of Earls Colne. The Group will maximise support for the approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan by ensuring high levels of community engagement throughout the plan-making process.

2. Principles

- a. The Steering Group will undertake the process in a democratic, transparent and fair fashion, encouraging widespread participation and giving equal consideration to opinions and ideas from all members of the community
- b. All decisions made shall be fully evidenced and supported through consultation with the local community.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

In order to achieve this, the Steering Group will carry out the following roles.

- Be accountable for steering and providing strategic management of the Neighbourhood Plan for Earls Colne;
- Produce, monitor and update a project timetable;
- Produce a consultation and engagement strategy, showing how the public will be involved throughout the process;
- Regularly report back to the Parish Council for endorsement of decisions taken;
- To undertake analysis and evidence gathering to support the plan production process;
- Actively support and promote the preparation of the Earls Colne Neighbourhood Development Plan throughout the duration of the project;
- Identify sources of funding;
- Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the plan as effective as possible.
- Gather data from a wide range of sources to ensure that the conclusions reached are fully evidenced and that the aspirations and issues of all residents are understood
- Consult as widely and thoroughly as is possible to ensure that the draft and final NDP is representative of the views of residents
- Agree, subject to ratification by the Parish Council, a final submission version of the Neighbourhood Development Plan;

4. Membership

- a. The Steering Group will be made up of a cross-section of volunteers from the community, including Parish Councillors.
- b. Membership of the Steering Group will be open to the public indefinitely, (up to a maximum of 10 members at any time).

5. Decision Making

- a. The Steering Group has full delegated authority from the Parish Council to deliver its planmaking functions up to and including preparation of the Consultation Draft Plan. The Group will report [monthly] to the Parish Council setting out progress on its work. The Parish Council will approve the Submission of the Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan prior to publication for consultation and independent examination.
- b. The plan-making process remains the responsibility of the Parish Council as the qualifying body. All publications, consultation and community engagement exercises will be undertaken by or on behalf of the Parish Council with appropriate recognition of the Parish Council's position given in all communications associated with the project.

6. Meetings

- a. Steering Group meetings will generally take place monthly or, with the agreement of members, more or less frequently as may be appropriate during the project.
- b. Where possible, all meetings should be held in the parish council offices or the village hall. The dates of future meetings will be made publicly available via the [parish council] website.
- c. The Steering Group will elect a Chair and vice-chair from its membership to remain in those positions until the project is completed. If these positions should become vacant, the Group will elect alternatives from members of the Steering Group.
- d. The Parish Clerk shall keep a record of meetings and circulate notes to Steering Group members and the Parish Council in a timely fashion. Minutes shall be made publicly available on the [parish council] website.
- e. At least seven clear days' notice of meetings shall be sent to members via email [or an alternative agreed communication method].
- f. Decisions made by the Steering Group should normally be by consensus at Steering Group meetings. Where a vote is required each member shall have one vote. A minimum of six members shall be present where matters are presented for decisions to be taken. A simple majority vote will be required to support any motion. The Chairman shall have one casting vote.

7. Task Groups

- a. The Steering Group may establish task groups, made up of volunteers from the community to aid them in any Neighbourhood Plan related work.
- b. Each task group should have a lead person from the Steering Group.
- c. Members of the community will be encouraged to participate in the process at all stages.
- d. The scope of activities for each task group shall be agreed by the Steering Group

8. Finance

- a. All grants and funding will be applied for and held by the Parish Council, who will ring-fence the funds for Neighbourhood Development Plan work.
- b. The Steering Group will seek approval from the Parish Council for any planned expenditure before any commitment is made.

9. Conduct

- a. It is expected that all Steering Group members abide by the principles and practice of the Parish Council Code of Conduct including declarations of interest.
- b. The Steering Group will ensure the following principles are maintained:
 - i. Be clear and open when their individual roles or interests are in conflict;
 - ii. Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion and belief;
 - iii. Actively promote equality of access and opportunity.

10. Changes to the Terms of Reference

- a. This constitution may be amended with the support of at least (two-thirds) of the current membership at a Steering Group Meeting and with the approval of the parish council.

11. Dissolution

The Steering Group will be dissolved once its objectives have been attained and/or when at least (two- thirds) of its members and the parish council, consider its services are no longer required.

The Steering Group will then dispose of any remaining funds held in accordance with any conditions imposed by the grant funders and in the best interests of Earls Colne Parish.

Approved by Full Council 17th June 2020

Frequency of review - Annual