

The Ongar Academy

Section 10 Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation report

February 2015

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1. Introduction

Place Group were delighted to be appointed by the Ongar Academy Trust to advise Governors on the requirements to open a new secondary school in Ongar and to support with the project management, as the Trust works to fulfil all DfE conditions for a new Free School project.

This report is prepared by Place Group for the Governors of The Ongar Academy to consider.

2. The Ongar Academy

Ongar is a small and historic market town located in the Epping Forest District of the county of Essex. It is situated 5 miles east of Epping, 6 miles northwest of Brentwood, and 21 miles north east of London.

Ongar has a population of 6,251 which is served by 5 primary schools, but no secondary school since the town's previous secondary school, the Ongar Comprehensive, closed in 1989. Ever since then, the Town's secondary school pupils have faced long daily return bus journeys of up to 100 minutes a day to access their secondary education.

Furthermore, the priority catchment area for Ongar includes the immediate neighbouring villages within 5-10 minutes of the town, with a population of 15,087, of which 1,535 are aged 11-18 years. There are currently 798 students in the Priority Catchment Area attending secondary schools. Within seven years, this number is projected to rise to 1,132, representing an expansion of 334 students.

A group of passionate advocates for a new secondary school in Ongar, who have built on and developed the belief in the community that the town deserves and can support a replacement secondary school, have established the Ongar Academy Trust. These advocates continue to plan to use the Government's free schools programme to open a new secondary school in Ongar.

The vision for The Ongar Academy is to provide an inspiring, outstanding educational offer for local children, based upon a STEM curriculum, which meets and exceeds the aspirations of students and their parents alike. The School will fully equip young people to take their place, not only within their local community, but within the wider world and provide a focus for the local community, building opportunities for all. Every student will be empowered to not only reach their potential but to exceed it.

The Ongar Academy students will:

- Achieve outstanding personal academic results;
- Be inspired to challenge and question the world they live in and have high aspirations for themselves and others;
- Develop the personal skills needed to maximise opportunities and make intelligent informed decisions using fact based evidence to inform actions in every aspect of their lives;
- Become citizens of the future, adaptable and receptive to change, an essential skill in a world that is constantly evolving; and
- Have opportunities to not only enrich themselves but also the communities they will be contributing to.

Place Group is proud to be associated with the enthusiasm and vibrancy of The Ongar Academy Project.

3. Consultation Methodology

Activities undertaken prior to the formal consultation

In order to raise awareness of the project, its aims and the forthcoming statutory consultation, The Ongar Academy undertook significant community and stakeholder engagement activities prior to the commencement of the formal consultation period. The aim of this activity was to ensure that at the start of the formal consultation, on 1st December 2014, the majority of community members were already aware of the free school proposal.

Specifically the following activities were undertaken to inform parents and the wider community members about the project between October 2012 and November 2014:

- Formal meetings with local councillors and community groups
- Canvassing in Ongar High Street, outside supermarkets and at local summer play events
- Sending information letters to parents, via the local primary schools
- Personal approaches to local businesses and community groups for their support
- Placing articles in local media and specific publications, aimed at raising awareness and support of the community
- Press releases and regular updates to local media
- Flyers and leaflets in local shops and meeting places
- Development of a dedicated Free School website: www.theongaracademy.org
- A twitter feed
- Facebook awareness, through a dedicated Facebook page
- Creation of a specific email enquiry address and mailing list to keep those interested abreast of the proposal

The Ongar Academy Trust has used social media throughout the project as a means of communicating events, meetings and key milestones for the project to interested parties. To this end, the period of Statutory Consultation was based within a context of previous strong local awareness and concerted advertising throughout the community.

Statutory Consultation

The Ongar Academy Trust has its roots in the Ongar community, and the formal stakeholder consultation process summarised in this report represents only a snap shot of opinion canvassed in December 2014 and January 2015, as other sections of this report set out.

The Ongar Academy Trust and the proposals for a new secondary school in Ongar would not have reached this point in the DfE process without the clear community support they enjoy. The Trust is committed to continuing to work with and involve the community over time.

The newly formed Board of Governors of The Ongar Academy Trust worked with Place Group to devise and implement a comprehensive statutory consultation plan which sought to openly and honestly engage with the Ongar community in fulfilment of the statutory obligation to consult under the Academies Act 2010.

The Trust is committed to listening to concerns raised, and to developing responses to them in order to fine tune proposals for the Academy and ensure that it continues to carry as much public support as possible.

The statutory consultation plan identified the following range of stakeholders:

- Secondary Schools in the target locality
- Primary Schools in the target locality
- 11 day-care establishments
- 5 Libraries
- 4 Leisure Centres/Sports clubs
- 9 Community and Voluntary Groups
- 8 Faith Groups
- 3 Teaching Unions
- 59 Ward Councillors of Epping Forest and relevant Councillors from Essex County Council
- 1 Local MP

The approach developed ensured that the target audience had a number of opportunities to see information about the school and to respond in a way that suited them.

The formal consultation period ran from 1st December 2014 until 2 February 2015.

The Ongar Academy Trust should be credited for taking the decision on the 9th January 2015, to extend the consultation period by a further 2 weeks following an announcement about the permanent site for the Academy on 5th January 2015. This additional 2 week period allowed the proposer group to (a) end the uncertainty and concern over the location of the school, (b) to highlight this at the public meetings and (c) to further engage with the community and address any concerns over the proposed site.

This consultation methodology included setting up a bespoke website for the project at www.theongaracademy.org which contained details of how to take part in the consultation, as well as further information on the vision, ethos, proposed admissions policy and recruitment of staff for the School.

In this way over 100 organisations and/or Councillors/MP were contacted directly and social media and newspaper adverts were used to further raise awareness amongst members of the community including prospective parents of pupils.

The Ongar Academy Facebook page can be viewed at www.facebook.com/TheOngarAcademy and the Trust's twitter account can be viewed at <https://twitter.com/TheOngarAcademy>. Both forms of social media were used to promote the statutory consultation. In early February 2015 the Facebook page had been 'Liked' 630 times and the Twitter Account had 353 followers.

The details of the statutory consultation were issued to the local and regional media in December 2014. This included advertisements placed in the Brentwood Gazette and Epping Forest Guardian which brought the consultation to the attention of approximately 50,000 readers.

The emails sent to stakeholders identified as part of the consultation plan, the website, the press advertisements and the social media campaigns, were used to raise awareness of the two formal stakeholder consultation events, details of which are set out below;

- Event 1 – Wednesday 14th January 7.30pm to 9pm at Ongar Town Council building

- Event 2 - Saturday 17th January 2.30pm to 4.30pm at Ongar Town Council building

In addition to this the emails contained a link to The Ongar Academy website which encouraged attendance at one of the 11 additional meetings organised throughout the period of the consultation, and asked respondents to complete an online consultation questionnaire.

At telephone helpline and email address were set up to facilitate requests for a hard copy of the survey form.

Consultation with parents and the local community

As highlighted above, The Ongar Academy Trust hosted a further 11 meetings – as part of their Statutory Consultation process – with prospective parents of pupils at the Academy and the result of these events are also contained in this report.

- Monday 24th November, 7pm St. Andrews Primary School, North Weald School Green Lane, North Weald, CM16 6EH
- Wednesday 26th November, 7pm Rodings Primary School Dunmow Road, Leaden Roding, CM6 1PZ
- Monday 1st December, 6pm Moreton Primary School Church Road, Moreton, CM5 0JD
- Tuesday 2nd December, 6pm Chipping Ongar Primary School Greensted Road, Ongar, CM5 9LA
- Wednesday 3rd December, 6pm Blackmore Primary School Nine Ashes Road, Blackmore, CM4 0QR
- Saturday 6th December, 11am Budworth Hall, Ongar High St, Ongar, CM5 9JG
- Monday 8th December, 6pm High Ongar Primary The Street, High Ongar, CM5 9NB
- Tuesday 9th December, 7pm Kelvedon Hatch Primary School Road, Kelvedon Hatch, CM15 0DH
- Monday 15th December, 7pm Matching Green Primary Little Laver Road, Harlow CM17 0QB
- Tuesday 16th December, 5.30pm Shelley Primary School Milton Crescent, Shelley, Ongar, CM5 0FF
- Monday 12th January, 6.30pm St Peter's C Of E Primary School Wigley Bush Lane, Brentwood, CM14 5QN

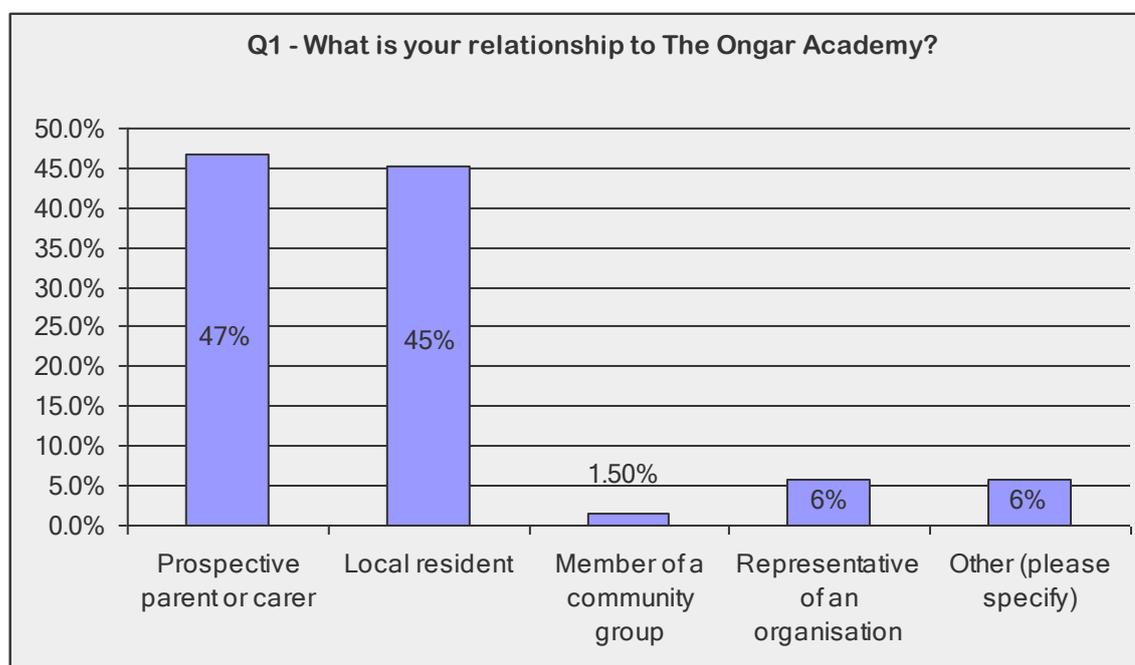
Appendix A to this report contains a sample of the communications used to raise awareness of the consultation.

4. Completed Questionnaires and Data Validation

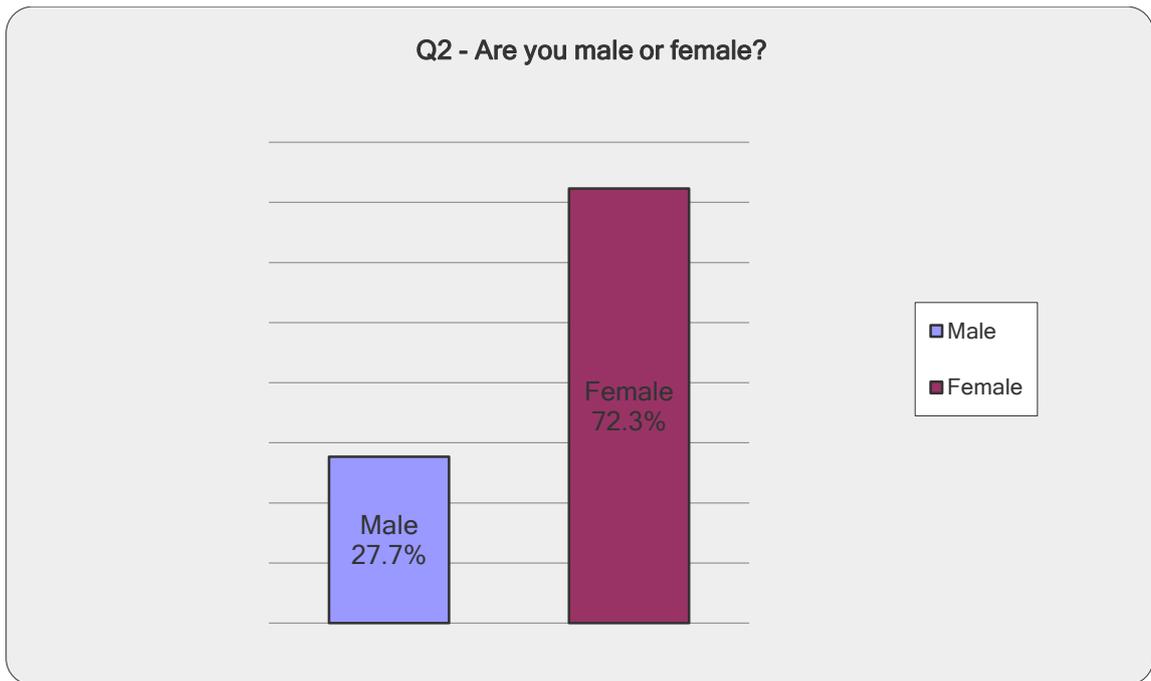
A total of 137 survey responses were received. All were received before the advertised close of the statutory consultation period and appeared to be genuine, and thus all 137 were included for analysis in the section below.

Questions 1, 2 and 3 asked details about the respondent, the summarised results for which are shown here.

Q1 – What is your relationship to the Ongar Academy		
Background	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Prospective parent or carer	64	46.7%
Local resident	62	45.3%
Member of a community group	2	1.5%
Representative of an organisation	8	5.8%
Other (please specify)	8	5.8%



Note - All 137 respondents answered the question, and some gave multiple answers.



Note - All 137 respondents answered the question. 38 (27.7%) stated Male and 99 (72.3%) stated Female.

Question 3 asked respondents to name the postcode of their residence, the result of which is set out in the table below;

Postcode of respondents	
Postcode	Number of respondents
CM1	6
CM14	10
CM15	12
CM16	7
CM17	3
CM2	1
CM23	1
CM4	3
CM5	63
CM6	22
CO10	1
CV21(cont)	1

Postcode of respondents	
Postcode	Number of respondents
E18	1
IG10	1
IG6	1
NW6	1
RM16	1
RM4	2
Total	137

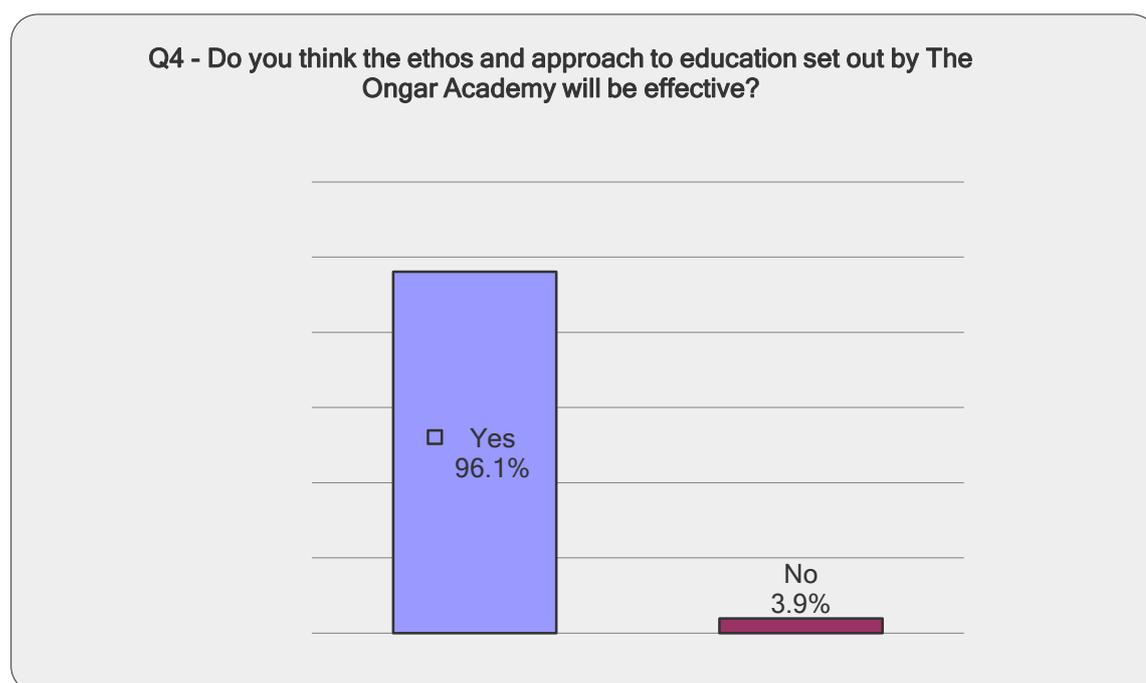
The following section of the report analyses the questions relating to The Ongar Academy.

5. Quantitative Findings from the Survey Forms

This section sets out the answers to questions 4 to 10 of the survey form which lend themselves to a quantitative analysis.

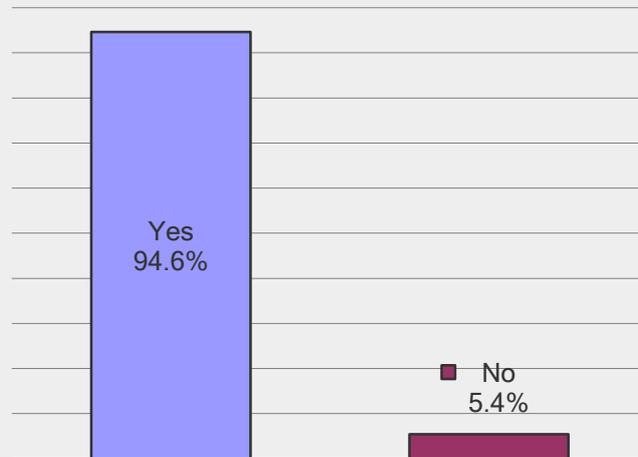
Appendix B to this report contains the survey form respondents were asked to complete.

Each question is taken in turn and illustrated using graphs.



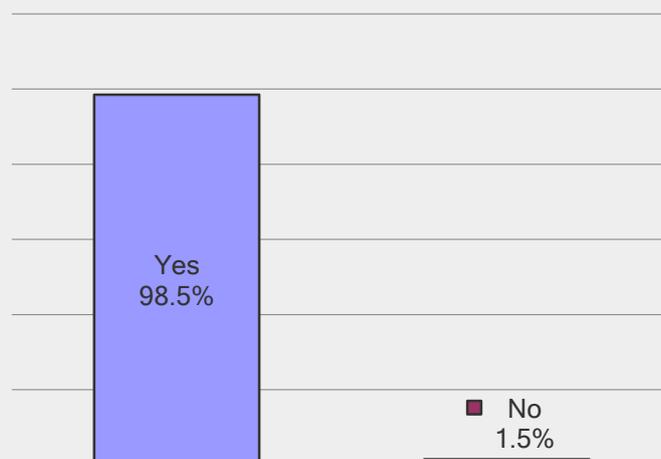
Note - 129 of the 137 respondents answered the question. 124 (96.1%) stated Yes and 5 (3.9%) stated No.

Q5 - Do you think that the curriculum plans outlined in our literature and at our open events will be effective?

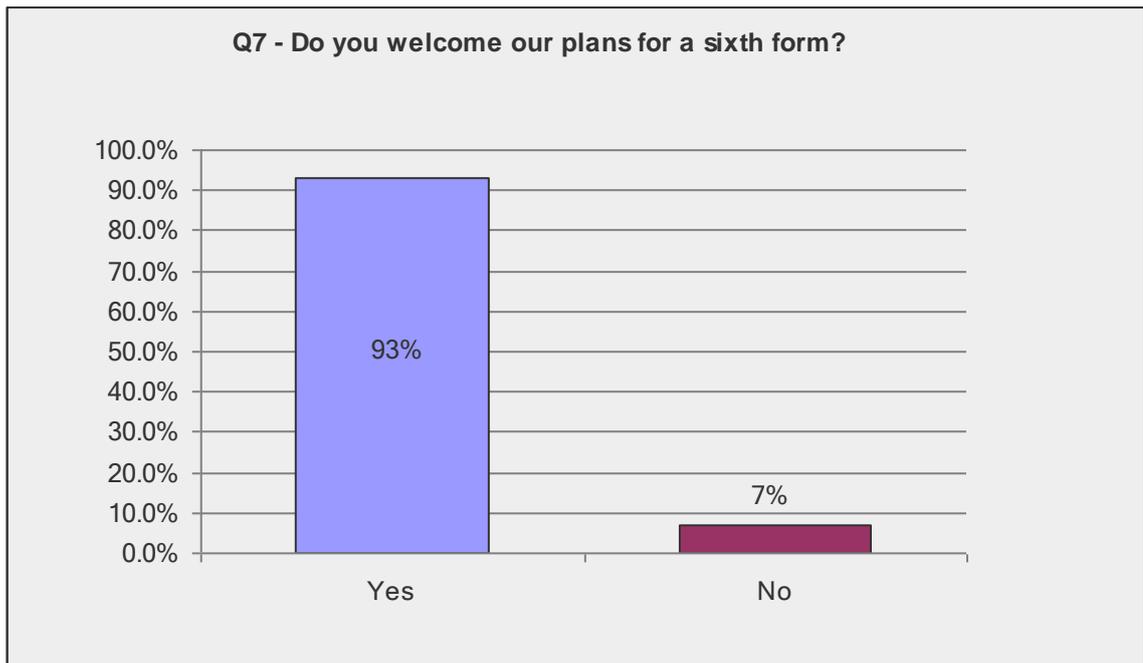


Note - 130 of the 137 respondents answered the question. 123 (94.6%) stated Yes and 7 (5.4%) stated No.

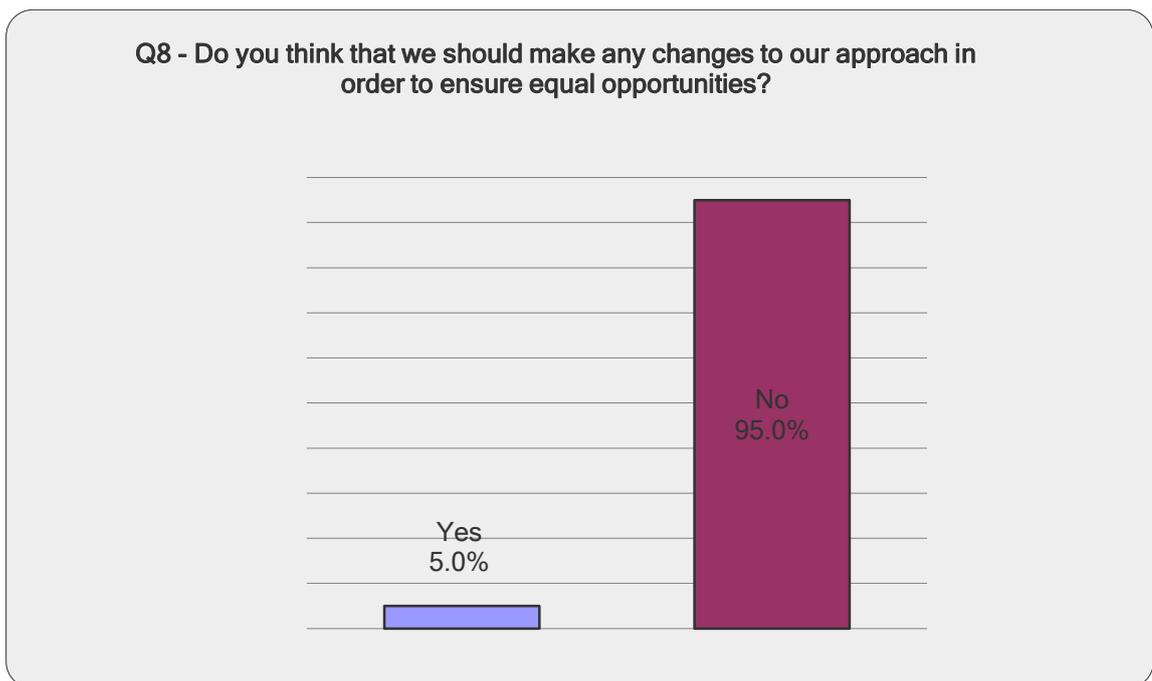
Q6 - Do you welcome the plans for enrichment (i.e. extra curricular activities)?



Note - 131 of the 137 respondents answered the question. 129 (98.5%) stated Yes and 2 (1.5%) stated No.

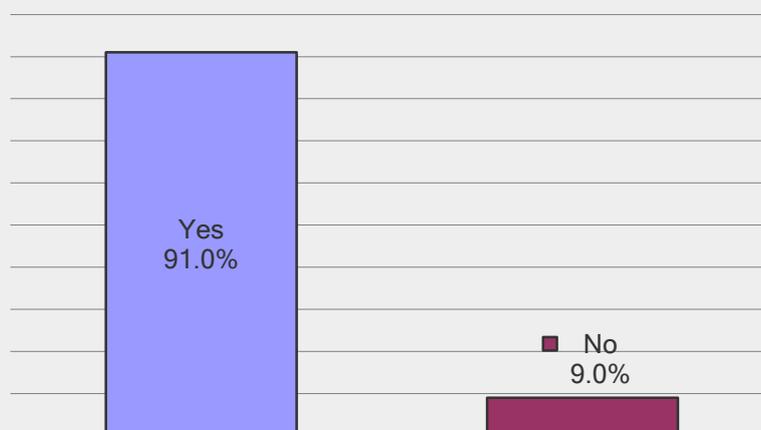


Note - 132 of the 137 respondents answered the question. 123 (93%) stated Yes and 9 (7%) stated No.



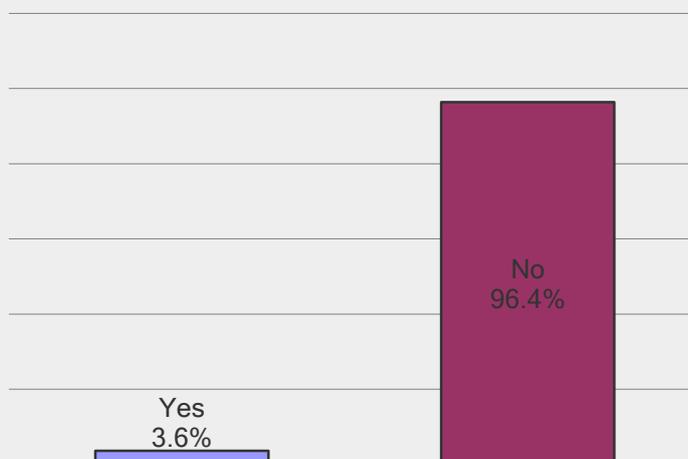
Note - 120 of the 137 respondents answered the question. 6 (5%) stated Yes and 114 (95%) stated No.

Q9 - Do you think that the Secretary of State and The Ongar Academy should enter into a funding Agreement and therefore allow The Ongar Academy to open?



Note - 134 of the 137 respondents answered the question. 122 (91%) stated Yes and 12 (9%) stated No.

Q10 - Finally, have you provided us with any information that you would wish to be kept confidential?



Note - All 137 respondents answered the question. 5 (3.6%) stated Yes and 132 (72.3%) stated No.

In Place Group's experience as educational consultants and project managers to over thirty Academy and Free School projects, these findings are unprecedented in terms of the (Ongar) community support for The Ongar Academy Trust's proposals to open a Free School in the town.

6. Qualitative findings from the survey forms and stakeholder events

Question 11 of the survey form asked respondents to provide any additional comments in relation to the previous 10 questions:

Respondents were given direction that this consultation was not related to any building or planning applications surrounding the new Academy; it was solely to consult on whether appropriate persons supported the Academy Trust to enter into a funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for Education to run The Ongar Academy (see Appendix B).

However, 17 of the 137 respondents took the opportunity to contribute further views in this way, and 10 other parents raised issues through other meetings. Appendix C to this report contains all responses made as part of the statutory consultation. In addition to this, attendees at both statutory consultation events, and the additional 11 parental events that constituted part of this report were invited to contribute their views and identify any areas of concerns that they might have about the proposed school.

A summary of the issues raised are listed below;

- Location of the permanent and temporary sites – including concerns about increase in traffic congestion (7 responses)
- The Academy's admissions policy for SEN students (5 responses)
- Marketing of the school in Brentwood, where respondents considered there to be excess capacity (2 responses)
- Concern about the impact on neighbouring schools and projected levels of demand in the area (6 responses).
- Feeder primaries and (related) admissions policy (1 response)
- Value for money from the tax payers purse for building a new school (2 responses)
- Current excess capacity in secondary schools in the neighbouring Brentwood area (2 responses)
- Education philosophy (1 response)

7. Acknowledgement

Both The Ongar Academy Trust and Place Group would like to express their gratitude and appreciation to the prospective parents, local residents and representatives of the wider community who engaged in the consultation, visited the website, followed the Academy on social media, attended one of the 13 meetings and took the time to complete the online survey form.

The submitted responses were all thoughtful, articulate and passionately argued.

8. Conclusion

Ongar is clearly a close knit community, many of whom still regret the closure of the town's previous secondary School in 1989. Parents are concerned about the impact daily journeys of up to 50 minutes in each direction are having on pupils of secondary school age in the town. The responses to statutory consultation questions 4 through to 10, above all, show a minimum of 91% in favour of the proposal to open a new secondary school in the town indicating that The Ongar Academy Trust has the overwhelming support of its community.

Some respondents did raise issues that require further consideration and The Ongar Academy Trust will give further thought to how their plans can be developed to accommodate legitimate concerns of parents and residents. Essentially, this report fulfils the Trust's statutory requirement to consult with stakeholders about its proposals and the

Governors can proceed with the next phase of the project in the knowledge that no significant barriers to their proposals have been identified.

9. Responding to the Findings

Whilst the proposal is supported by the vast majority of respondents in the locality some genuine concerns have been raised that warrant further consideration. These include;

- A. Projected demand for school places in the locality over the next 10 years and more.
- B. Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) issues concerning The Trust's approach and admissions policy
- C. Location of the temporary and permanent facilities, and the increased traffic these will in all probability generate.

The Ongar Academy Trust has addressed (A) and (B) above at some length in its proposal to the DfE, and will develop in earnest detailed plans for SEND provision as the project progresses towards opening in September 2015. Any issues around traffic congestion will be considered as part of the statutory planning application and consultation process that Epping Forest District Council will undertake following submission of a planning application for works on both sites.

10. Next Steps

As a result of this exercise Place Group recommends that;

1. This report should be now reviewed and approved by a meeting of the Ongar Academy Trust's Governing Body.
2. The Trust should establish a Sub Group to give further consideration to the concerns raised during the consultation process and how they can best be sensibly mitigated. This should specifically include reassuring parents and members of the community in respect of the need for secondary school places in the area (as raised by 8 respondents). Whilst the Trust do not consider their demand figures are overstated (as was claimed by one respondent), communicating their rationale clearly may give comfort to concerns offered by some respondents that this proposal will have an adverse impact on schools in neighbouring towns. The Trust will naturally give further detailed consideration to SEND (as raised by 2 respondents) as the project progresses. The Trust should maintain a dialogue with the respondents who raised such concerns and share further information as it becomes available.
3. The Trust should take steps to emphasise that a key priority is to develop a quality provision for pupils resident in Ongar and its surrounding villages – as opposed to those who live in surrounding towns, such as Brentwood.
4. The report should then be published on the Trust's website so that all who took part in the consultation can see the overall response.
5. The Trust should send the report to the DfE as proof of the completion of the statutory consultation exercise and of the overwhelming local support the project and Trust commands.

6. The Trust should publish any amendments it can reasonably make to its plans for the Academy, in response to community concerns raised here, in order to increase support for a new secondary school in the town.
7. The Trust should proceed with the next stages of the Free School project with the confidence and support of the community, without taking this for granted, and continue to involve and inform prospective parents and local residents in developments.

Ongar Academy Trust Consultation Appendices

Appendix A –Communications highlighting the statutory consultation

Via Facebook...



The Ongar Academy

January 13 at 7:45am · <https://www.facebook.com/TheOngarAcademy>

The first of our Consultation Drop-In Sessions takes place on Wednesday 14th January from 7.30pm to 9.00pm at Ongar Town Council, Basons Way, Ongar, Essex CM5 9AS.

The events are linked to the Statutory Consultation, details of which can be found at this link www.theongaracademy.org/statutory-consultation/

These events are intended for members of the public with a general interest in The Ongar Academy and the Trustees would be very pleased to meet you and receive your feedback. Please note, there are separate 'Open Days' for prospective parents and their children on 17th and 25th January.



Statutory Consultation Drop-in, Wednesday 14th January 2015 - The Ongar Academy

Members of the public are invited to come to meet members of the Trust, ask questions and share your views at one of our drop...

THEONGARACADEMY.ORG

Via Twitter...



The Ongar Academy@TheOngarAcademy

Reminder, our Statutory Consultation is open. Let us know your thoughts.

[theongaracademy.org/the-ongar-acad....](http://theongaracademy.org/the-ongar-acad...)

RETWEETS **6**



10:38 pm - 17 Dec 2014

Via E-mail...



The
Ongar
Academy

Consultation on proposals to establish The Ongar Academy

Dear Sir/Madam

You may have seen the recent publicity announcing the statutory consultation on proposals to establish The Ongar Academy from September 2015.

We would very much like to receive your views and are writing to you personally to encourage you to take part in the process. More information can be found **here**.

We look forward to hearing your comments. Please feel free to pass this information on to anyone who you may feel would be interested in the proposals.

A hard copy of materials can be requested by emailing info@theongaracademy.org

Thank you for your interest.

Kind regards

Mr. Pete Marchant
Chair, The Ongar Academy Trust

Appendix B – Statutory Consultation Section 10 on-line Questionnaire***1. What is your relationship to Ongar Academy?**

- Prospective parent of carer
- Local resident
- Member of a community group
- Representative of an organisation

Other (please specify):

***2. Are you male or female?**

- Male
- Female

3. What is your postcode?**4. Do you think the ethos and approach to education set out by The Ongar Academy will be effective?**

- Yes
- No

***5. Do you think that the curriculum plans outlined in our literature and at our open events will be effective**

- Yes
- No

***6. Do you welcome the plans for enrichment (i.e. extra curricular activities)?**

Yes

No

***7. Do you welcome our plans for a sixth form?**

Yes

No

***8. Do you think that we should make any changes to our approach in order to ensure equal opportunities?**

Yes

No

***9. Do you think that the Secretary of State and The Ongar Academy should enter into a funding agreement and therefore allow The Ongar Academy to open?**

Yes

No

***10. Finally, have you provided us with any information that you wish to kept confidential?**

Yes

No

***11. Please provide any additional comments in relation to the above comments.**

Note, this consultation is not related to any building or planning applications surrounding the new Academy; it is solely to consult on whether appropriate persons support the Academy Trust to enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education to run The Ongar Academy.

***12. Please provide your contact details if you would like to be kept Informed about the progress of the project.**

Note, you do not have to include your name or contact details with your response although we ask you to confirm your postcode (above). Please note that those making a submission should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it.

Name:

Company/Organisation:

Address 1:

Address 2:

Town/Village:

County:

Postcode:

E-mail Address:

Phone Number:

Appendix C – Qualitative responses to consultation

NB: The full version of Appendix C is available on request. Please contact info@theongaracademy.org if you would like to receive a copy.

C1) Question 11 - Please provide any additional comments in relation to the above questions [4-10]

Of the 137 completed survey forms 17 (12%) respondents used Question 11 to make additional comments.

Of the 17 written responses 7 (5%) were supportive of the proposal and 10 (7%) were critical of the proposal. 120 (88%) of the consultees completed questions 1-10 and did not make any additional comments.