

Forum Activities

This section expands information provided in the Code of Practice, describing the Neighbourhood Forum's (NF's) four main areas of activity and how they are managed.

- **Plan Monitoring and Reporting**

Section 1.5 of the KDBH Neighbourhood Plan (NP), 'Plan Monitoring and Review', sets out five important aspects where the NF has a joint responsibility working with Solihull Council. The NF will liaise with Solihull Council to agree an appropriate method for Plan monitoring and reporting and define supporting processes for tracking, analysis and documentation.

The NF will assess the feasibility of adopting 'outcome based' monitoring to measure the medium to longer term success of policies in delivering the NP vision and objectives. In the short term, however, the NF's focus is on tracking and reporting the outcome of planning applications to monitor and evidence whether NP policies are being referenced appropriately and applied effectively to all new development in KDBH.

Periodically, the NF will assess whether any changes are required to the NP, either to improve clarity or to keep policies valid.

- **Planning Applications**

The NF's capacity and remit are limited in this aspect given the need also to resource its other activities. The agreed NF focus is therefore on the larger or more complex planning applications, or those with potential Area-wide significance. The NF does, however, work in conjunction with, and provide advisory support on request to, The Knowle Society and Dorrige and District Residents Associations (the RAs), who deal with the majority of planning applications. Where appropriate, the NF and RAs may choose to combine their work on a particular planning application.

Whenever possible, the NF's Planning Advisor will provide planning policy guidance on an identified planning application. All NF members will also have the opportunity to contribute their views. A lead Team member will then draft a response taking account of the feedback received and circulate this to all team members for review prior to issue.

The NF will seek to ensure that the responses it makes to planning applications are objective (based on the NP and associated planning law) and consistent, whilst recognising that every application must be assessed on its own merits. All NF responses will be kept in a central archive and made available on the NF website.

The NF holds quarterly meetings with Solihull Council to review how the NP is being used in determining planning decisions. The RAs also monitor their planning applications and, if they wish, can feed any matters they wish to raise to Solihull Council to the NF for inclusion in the quarterly reviews.

KDBH Neighbourhood Forum CIO (NF)

Activities and Benefits to the KDBH Community

- **Solihull Council Local Plan Review (LPR)**

Since late 2015, Solihull Council (SMBC) has been undertaking a review of its Local Plan. This sets out the strategic policies governing the scale and type of new development proposed across the Borough. The LPR is expected to have significant implications for the future of the KDBH Neighbourhood Area.

Development of the LPR must follow a prescribed series of stages that require public consultation. The NF has consequently identified a number of tasks in relation to the LPR, including:

1. as a minimum, responding to consultations on draft versions of the Local Plan to reflect the views of the community members of the Forum and, as far as possible, of the wider community
2. pro-actively gathering evidence relating to key planning issues - for example transport, landscape, housing - to serve as an objective basis for informing responses to consultations
3. pressing for early, active involvement in (not just consultation on) Concept Masterplanning
4. leading community-wide communication and engagement for all SMBC consultations
5. being the primary focus for community representation (closely supported by the RAs)
6. maintaining on-going contact with SMBC
7. undertaking early assessment of potential consequential changes required to the NP to keep it valid.

To support this work, the NF will seek to ensure that SMBC proposals relevant to the KDBH Neighbourhood Area are publicised as widely as possible and enable ways of collecting community feedback. This may include, for example, presentations and discussion at Forum meetings, liaison through the Residents Associations or other community organisations, electronic methods of communication as well as paper based methods through eg. the Knowle library. The scope of what can be done will be driven by the NF resources available at the appropriate time to undertake work within the required statutory response timescales.

The NF's Planning Advisor(s) will play a particularly important role in this aspect of NF activities.

- **Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL), Community Actions and Wider Community Involvement**

The NF is committed to maintaining regular, pro-active (including face to face) community engagement, and in this regard differs slightly from the role of the RA's. SMBC is looking to the Neighbourhood Forum to take a lead role on NCIL and other aspects of community engagement on behalf of KDBH (in the absence of a Parish Council). Some aspects of what this work could cover are incorporated in the Neighbourhood Plan, as set out in Appendix 4, 'Community Actions'. With limited resources, however, the NF will need to prioritise community-related activities, unless and until more people join the team.

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Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL)

Although SMBC owns the process and final decisions around NCIL, they are statutorily bound to listen to, and reflect, the NF views (evidenced as representative of the community) in determining the 25% community allocation. NF tasks here include the need to:

1. hold regular meetings with SMBC
2. help in communicating and engaging with local groups and in advising bidders on alignment to the NP (SMBC criteria give weight to NP-aligned projects)
3. use Forum meetings to help groups seeking community input
4. consider bidding directly on projects of Area wide benefit
5. seek match funding from SMBC (where a project links into SMBC's own objectives)
6. help identify priority community actions/projects to assist SMBC assessment of individual bids.

Community Actions

Community Actions are set out in Appendix 4 of the NP. These represent a snap shot of matters which, though not directly related to land use or new development, were nevertheless important issues raised by residents at the time of preparing the NP. These Actions need to be kept under review and updated to reflect emerging issues. The NF approach therefore needs to be flexible in considering what is most relevant and how action can best be delivered.

Due to resource constraints, the NF's role will largely be one of signposting residents to any initiatives being undertaken in the community through its web/Facebook/newsletter, with the aim of helping to maximise community awareness and engagement. We will also liaise as appropriate with relevant members of SMBC teams who are also working to benefit our community, eg. the East Locality Plan.

Where the NF does get involved in a particular community action, it will generally do so from a 'strategic', or Area-wide, perspective. This is to ensure that there is no conflict or duplication between what the NF, Residents Associations and other community groups do. The NF sees its primary role as helping to promote a coordinated approach across KDBH, as well as to increase awareness of other potential sources providing opportunities to deliver community benefit.