



## Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath (KDBH) Neighbourhood Forum

### Response to Planning Application PL/2020/00411/PPFL

#### 25 Station Road Knowle Solihull B93 0HL

#### **Demolition of the existing car sales showroom and associated buildings and the erection of nine terraced residential dwellings with associated parking and landscaping.**

This proposal to demolish the existing showroom fronting on to Station Road and replace it with residential dwellings is of concern to the KDBH Neighbourhood Forum. It introduces a residential use into a run of commercial buildings, interrupting the commercial frontage in the centre of Knowle village, in an area that falls within the Secondary Retail Frontages defined in Appendix 9 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This does not accord with Policy E1 of the Neighbourhood Plan, which seeks to maintain a mix of commercial uses at ground floor within the defined secondary frontage in order to maintain and improve local shopping facilities and services in Knowle centre. A document submitted with the application suggests the opinion that continued commercial use of this site is not viable, but provides no evidence that this has been properly investigated. The viability of this site for future commercial use is clearly fundamental to its development, and we believe that this should be thoroughly and properly investigated and reported on to SMBC before any decision is made to develop the frontage as residential.

Policy E1 supports residential uses above ground floor on such frontages and we could support a proposal for residential apartments above ground floor commercial uses with either houses or flats to the rear. This could help tie together the frontages either side and could be an opportunity to significantly enhance this area of Station Road.

Neighbourhood Plan Policy E3 relates to encouraging a business centre in Knowle, and we note that this is one of the few sites in Knowle centre that would be large enough to accommodate such a use. Whilst it is not part of this proposal, it is something that we believe should be considered for this site, and not to do so would be a lost opportunity.

We would also like to commend this proposal for the effort it has put into the design of the residential scheme and its acknowledgement of relevant parts of the Neighbourhood Plan. However, the overriding consideration should be the principle of retaining commercial use in this frontage.

In view of the above, the Neighbourhood Forum contends that this application should not be approved at this time, and should not be reconsidered until the viability of alternative options that accord with the Neighbourhood Plan have been thoroughly investigated. We would be grateful if you would take these comments into account in determining this application.