

Launch of Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum

Earlier this year, you may recall Knowle Society worked closely with the Dorridge & District Residents' Association (DDRA) to raise awareness of new legislation giving communities more power to determine future development priorities through a 'Neighbourhood Plan'.

We're very happy to report that a group of local people has taken up the challenge and has been working hard over the past couple of months to set up a 'Neighbourhood Forum'. This is the body officially recognised by both central and local Government as responsible for leading development of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Forum is required to involve as much of the community as possible – this is vital, as the draft Plan will ultimately be voted on via a local referendum.

You will soon see and hear more about the Forum as the formal Application - covering Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath - is put to Solihull Council. Approval requires a 6 week community consultation period, as well as Local Council and Cabinet (Government) sign off – all in all a 13 week process to get a 'Yes'! In the meantime, though, Forum members will be out and about meeting community groups to explain more and seek early views.

The team running the Forum is very happy to 'do the leg work' on behalf of local people – but is acutely aware of the need to stay as close as possible to the needs and wishes of the communities it serves. No-one wants to get to the end of the process (likely to take around 2 years) and find that we have wasted our time! Local Residents Societies will, of course, continue to lend their active support, given the shared interest in many of the topics likely to be common across the three communities.

Whether you live or work in the area, the Forum really does need your input and support. There are lots of ways you can get involved – from attending Forum meetings and Open events when you can; to having your say in one of the Focus Groups covering immediate 'hot topics' such as affordable housing, school places or car parking.

Members have found another real benefit is the insight gained into the huge developments already underway around Junction 6 of the M42 (NEC, Airport, Jaguar LandRover, HS2) - and what these could mean for our communities. This longer term view will be a very important element in developing the Neighbourhood Plan.

The best way to show your support is to become a Member of the Forum. It costs nothing, while providing you with a channel to have your say and keeping you informed in a way that best suits your needs - via meetings, e-mail or the web.

For more information, please register through the website, contact membership@kdbh-np.org, or leave your details at Arden School reception. A member of the team will be in contact to provide you with more information.