



Newsletter February 2022



The best laid plans.....

Ever had that feeling you're on top of things, only to find the unexpected throws a spanner in the works? More on which below, but first:

Starting 2022 on a Positive Note

Great news to start the New Year off!

ALL the Neighbourhood CIL [projects put forward by KDBH groups](#) have been approved. Another excellent outcome for our community that brings total benefits delivered through NCIL from the last two bidding rounds to well in excess of £100,000.

The 'Covid effect' reduced overall funding available across the Borough as developers were allowed to defer community infrastructure levy payments. The Council received only 12 bids, compared with 26 last time - six of which from KDBH! They recently announced the successful bids for 2021/22. Many congratulations to all four of our KDBH community groups whose bids were successful:

- Installation of a disabled and wheelchair bound persons lift, St Philips Church and Community Centre - £20,507
- Construction of car park, Dorridge Scout Group 2 - £7,500
- Installation of basketball court in Knowle Park, Knowle Society - £12,000
- Table and chairs replacement, Royal British Legion Knowle - £5,592.

We're also pleased to say that the Council has taken on board our comments and funding for the two Council-proposed projects, to clean and enhance the ponds at Bridge Meadow Drive and Jobs Close Park, has been found from other budgets. Work at Bridge Meadow Drive pond has already been completed; Jobs Close pond is well underway.

St John's Way Shopping Centre (Knowle Precinct) Planning Application Reference (PL/2022/00064/PPFL)



We featured this in October's newsletter, when the promoters held public pre-consultation on their proposals to re-develop Knowle Precinct. The planning application has been submitted to the Council and is now out for formal consultation. In summary, proposals are to undertake refurbishment and upgrade to provide: 17 retail outlets; 28 first floor residential apartments; formation of a second floor providing 19 residential apartments; car parking; and demolition of the existing over passes. You can access full details by scrolling down our [listing of current applications](#) and clicking on the relevant link to go through to the Council's database.

Clearly this major and high profile development for Knowle is likely to require a little more time to finalise than most planning applications! The investment in Knowle is very welcome and we are very supportive of the development - a view generally shared in most of the community feedback we have received over the last 3 months, both directly and through resident groups. Having now assessed the detailed proposals and mapped these to KDBH Neighbourhood Plan policies, we have identified a few points of clarification and design-related aspects where we request the Council work with the applicant before proceeding further. Pending this, we have prepared [an initial response](#). This formed the basis for our involvement in discussions last week to review proposals with the Council, Ward Councillors and resident and business association representatives. The Council is following up on a number of areas and has agreed to provide us with updates, following which we may update our response prior to final issue.

This being the case, we're pleased to say that the Council has agreed to our request to extend the timescale for receipt of final submissions to 28 February. This gives an opportunity for residents to read our initial response (which we hope helps in clarifying thoughts on the proposals) and to make their own views known should they wish via email to the Council's Case Officer losborne@solihull.gov.uk.

Solihull Local Plan Review

December's newsletter featured a detailed update on how the Examination In Public (EIP) was going. Sessions restarted in January, with our two representatives once again in attendance for those most relevant to KDBH. After 4 months of representations, presided over by the two Government appointed independent Inspectors, the EIP concluded on 3 February.

As a next step, the Inspectors will provide an expected timetable for publication of their report.

In the event their report identifies that 'main modifications' to the Local Plan are necessary (as seems likely), the Council will need to update the Local Plan document and then undertake a further six week public consultation. We will keep you posted once we hear more....

Other Planning Updates - the 'Long Burners'

Motorway Services Station (MSA), M42, Junction 4 (Dorridge)

APPEAL REF: APP/Q4625/W/21/3273047 (Apple Green) linked to APP/Q4625/W/21/3275290 (Extra)

Our original response to proposals to build a new MSA at Junction 4 goes back to November 2016! In its latest iteration, the Council consulted on proposals in October 2020, resulting in our response [Here](#). Ultimately, the Council decided to consider this proposal alongside a separate proposal for a MSA at Solihull Road, Hampton In Arden ("the Catherine de Barnes site"). Both came before the Council's Planning Committee in February 2021; both were resolutely refused, with a primary determinant being impact on Green Belt and failure to demonstrate 'very special circumstances'. The promoters for both schemes subsequently appealed the decision. The Independent Inspector's inquiry, [details here](#), ran from 12 October - 5 November, with proceedings live-streamed on the Council's YouTube channel. You can get a sense of how things went by going to the [closing statements from all parties](#). The Council's 40 minute closing submission, starting at 52:50 minutes, clearly sets out why both proposals must be rejected as 'wholly unacceptable'. We await news on a final decision.

Wyndley Garden Centre, Warwick Road, Knowle, B93 0DX - Appeal

Demolition of the existing garden centre and associated buildings, and erection of an extra care facility

Our [response on this planning application](#) goes back to October 2020. In April 2021, the Council's Planning Committee refused the application, following which an Appeal was lodged. On **17 December 2021**, we became aware via a third party that the Council had issued a notification of appeal for this site, with any further comments arising from the Appellant's Statement of Case (or associated documents) to be submitted by **22 December**. Aware of the growing residents' petition against the proposals, we therefore had to respond very quickly. Although largely content to rely upon our October 2020 objection, we submitted [a short update on 21 December](#) highlighting a couple of points arising, but otherwise re-iterating our wholehearted support for the Council's reasons for refusal. We now await the Inquiry, scheduled for 11 March 2022.

2, Station Approach, Dorridge (Skogen):

PL/2021/01000/MINFOT; prior Appeal Ref: APP/Q4625/C/19/3223403

This case goes back to an initial planning approval, subject to conditions, in July 2017. Since then issues resulting in Council Enforcement, an Appeal that found in favour of the Council, and a new planning application in April 2021 are well documented in previous newsletters. After months of little apparent progress, out of the blue on 10 December we received notification of final consultation from the Council, with a shortened timeframe to respond by 20 December. We submitted [a response on 17 December](#).

We assumed that the team could then finally focus on Christmas. On 23 December, we were made aware that papers published for a Planning Committee meeting on 5 January 2022 included 34 pages relating to this case, with a recommendation to approve. We immediately contacted the Council requesting a delay given Christmas and New Year holidays. This was refused; we were informed that representations must be in by noon on 4 January. We submitted [a representation](#) by the deadline, although causing stress to the team and affecting precious family time, particularly given Covid had cancelled Christmas in 2020. Given more time, we would have wished to clarify certain points, and in particular give transparency to the comments many of you have sent in to us supporting the objection.

On 5 January, the majority of Planning Committee Members (but not all) voted to approve the application ([on-line proceedings here, starting at 11:15 minutes](#)). From the proceedings we note:

- the Agent's statement that in hindsight "the applicant deeply regrets not having completed the development in accordance with the 2017 approved plans"
- the Chair of the Planning Committee's summing up comments that 'the way this has been handled by the applicant over the years has caused a great deal of angst' and that he 'must adhere to what is approved and not go off at a tangent to do your own thing.'

The development must conform with the terms and approved plans and be implemented within 4 months. The Council has also advised us that "We are keeping the Planning Enforcement case open until the requirements of the conditions have been met, and will carry out visits to ensure that they are."

Above all, there is relief, from everyone no doubt, that this matter is now hopefully finally resolved.

Alongside all the above, and following on from a very busy Autumn, there has been much to do preparing our first charity Year End and other aspects of running a Charity. Given the length of this newsletter, we'll keep that for a 'Part Two' after half term. What's becoming ever more clear, however, is that Forum workload rarely lets up and is increasingly intruding on the personal lives of our volunteer team. A focus on the longer term sustainability of the Forum is therefore uppermost in our minds for 2022, something we very much look forward to discussing with the KDBH community now the Covid situation finally looks as if public open Forum meetings could safely re-start, perhaps after Easter.

Wishing you all a very relaxing half term break.
