



## Newsletter March 2021

# Never has Spring Been More Welcome!

**Winter 2020/21 has been really tough - but the good news is that your Forum's spent lockdown forging ahead in both its core and new areas of activity. So we've a bumper crop of news to share, including some new community initiatives seeking your feedback!**

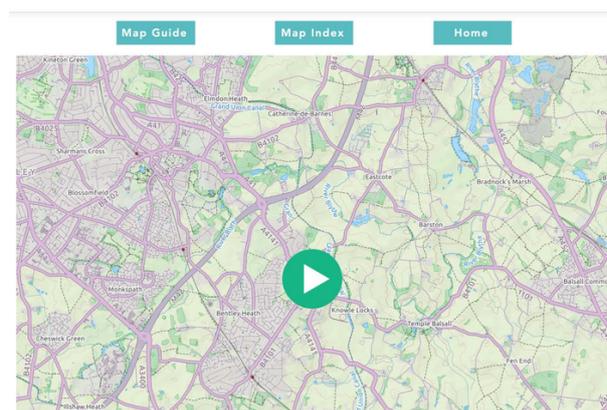


**With the Forum fully up and running as a charity, and Local Plan consultation done for now, we're finally in a position to turn our thoughts to how we could use the huge amount we've learned about life in KDBH in the course of developing the Neighbourhood Plan. From a stack of ideas bubbling away, we'd love your feedback on the first two emerging:**

### 1. Interactive Map of KDBH

Creating a Neighbourhood Plan means developing skills in digital mapping. It also means learning all about our built and natural environment, our conservation areas, listed buildings and heritage assets and local green spaces.

And wow, what an eye-opener that was for us, despite most of the team having lived in KDBH for over 20 years!



It really brought home why KDBH is such a special place; and why one of the Forum's driving purposes as a charity is the “*protection, preservation, improvement and revitalisation of the natural and built environment in or affecting the KDBH Neighbourhood Area.*”

So, our challenge was: a) to share and bring alive what we've learnt; and b) to showcase many sources of local knowledge and information we found along the way, created by generations of people who love this neighbourhood. We're very pleased to say that today, *as a first step on this journey*, we're launching an interactive map of the KDBH Area where users can:

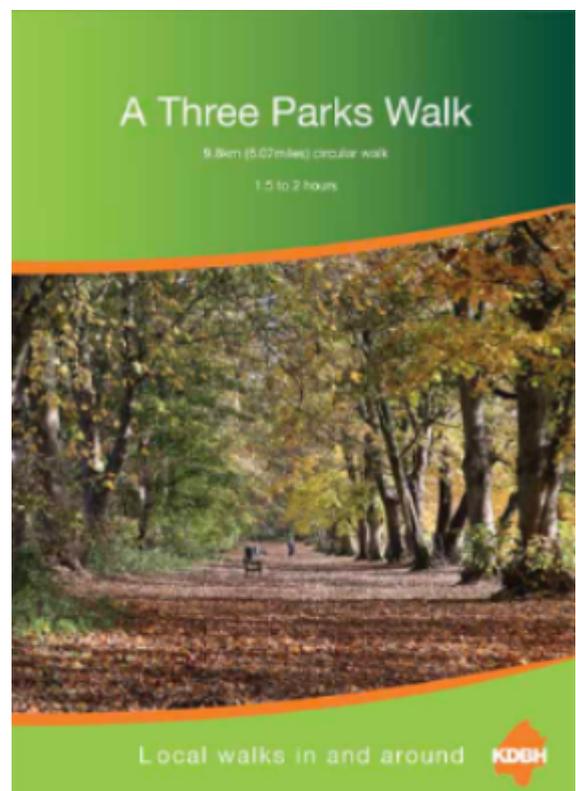


- view the location and pictures, and read the history, of all our listed and heritage buildings, including links to local sources that provide a wealth more information about KDBH
- see where our protected local green spaces provide oases of calm for a moment's respite, leisure or recreation

- access walks in and around KDBH: we'll add a few to the map itself, along with downloadable leaflets - the first two examples are already there. But there are so many ideas for walks already 'out there', created by local enthusiasts who know our Area inside out. Rather than recreate the wheel, our aim is to signpost and increase awareness of these sources so more of us can share and benefit from them. What better incentive to keep us all walking for our physical and mental health even after lockdown eases?!

**Discover the Interactive Map at**  
<https://www.kdbh-np.org/mapguide>

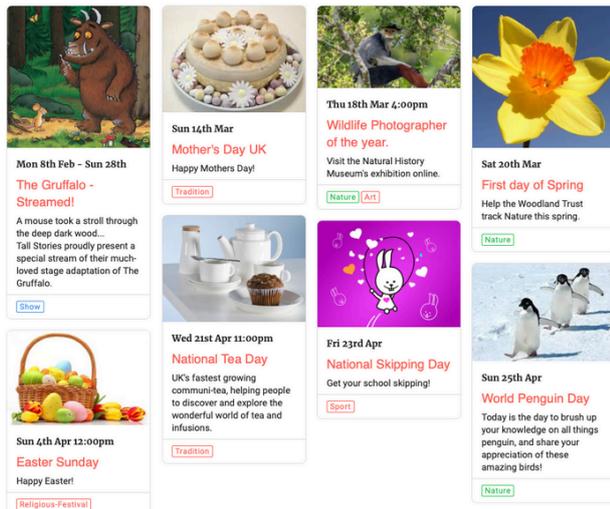
Though very much a 'work in progress', we're hoping that early visibility of what we're doing will stimulate community feedback and involvement - all of which is most welcome. If this is an area you're interested in, or you want to share ideas or information, we'd love to hear from you at [kdbhforum@gmail.com](mailto:kdbhforum@gmail.com).



## 2. Supporting Our Community Organisations and Promoting Local Events

Another big positive from developing the Neighbourhood Plan is the knowledge we've gained, and involvement we've had, with many community organisations. Few other neighbourhoods can boast such a rich and diverse community life that generates activities and events enough to fill three village/community halls and many other local venues. We wanted to find a way to help promote and strengthen the work these groups do in the service of our community.

Events from Feb 20th



One idea is to use our technology and communications infrastructure and skills to:

- bring details of community groups together into one place as a way of helping to raise their profile across KDBH;
- provide an 'Events Calendar' enabling groups to quickly and easily publicise and promote their events, which the community can then access all in one place.

You can see a mock up of what this might look like at:

<https://www.kdbh-np.org/clubs-and-events>.

Before progressing further, we're very keen to hear your views - next steps will very much be driven by feedback since the level of interest / take-up is vital to the success of this type of project. If you lead, or are a member of, a local organisation, please share the link, and your thoughts, within your group. To find out more, do not hesitate to get in touch with us at [kdbhforum@gmail.com](mailto:kdbhforum@gmail.com).

### KDBH Community Projects Funding (NCIL)

Back in December 2020, in the depth of finalising our response to the Council's Local Plan consultation, the successful bids for NCIL community funding were confirmed. In all, the Council received 26 bids from across the Borough, six of which from KDBH (details at <https://www.kdbh-np.org/2020-21-community-projects>).

Three successful bids from KDBH were awarded the highest scores:-

- A path for Bentley Heath Park - £12,865
- Central Knowle Improvement Plan - £17,000
- Knowle Park Play Equipment Renovation - £35,000

In addition, Knowle Allotments Society were asked to provide more details on their bid for Security Fencing (£3,000) for further review at the Council's Decision Meeting on 21st April.

Congratulations and very well done indeed to all involved in producing high quality bids.

Work is already moving apace on project implementation (the photo shows Bentley Heath path underway), so keep a look out for some visible improvements to our community facilities coming your way soon!



Whilst all Knowle Ward funds are thus expected to be used up, in Dorridge £29,095 will roll over to the next funding round. After some consideration, the Forum saw a need to better understand, and to be able to clearly explain, the reasons for this. On 9 December 2020, in advance of the Council's meeting to ratify the results, we emailed Cllr Alison Rolf (who leads the Decision Board) flagging some queries (see emails via link above).

Consequently, in mid-February we welcomed the opportunity for a review with Cllr Rolf and two of the Council's NCIL team. The aim was to consider learnings from 2020/21 generally, and specifically the queries raised. The open and frank discussions were helpful and productive, with a number of changes mutually agreed and one point on which we agreed to differ. We highlight below two key points to adapt in next year's process, as we eagerly await confirmation of funds available for 21/22 (to be announced in April):

Amongst all the (non-parished) Wards bidding for NCIL funds, KDBH is unique in having a high level of community interaction through its Neighbourhood Forum. We undertook an on-line survey to seek community feedback on KDBH bids that generated over 1,000 responses. These results were an important part of our report to the Council.

What we hadn't realised, however, is that the Council's process of applying a single standardised assessment across all bids meant that our survey results could not be included - hence the queries on scoring. Having identified the issue, there was total agreement that excluding a source of well-structured and independent community feedback is clearly not right; and that next year's assessment needs to consider how to reflect important differences due to KDBH having a Neighbourhood Forum.

Another topic that drew much discussion:

*if a bid is discounted because its cost exceeds funds available, can another, lower-cost bid that scores well be considered for approval?*

This is pertinent to the Dorridge St Philips Church and Scout Group Bids, and is the reason why so much of Dorridge funds rolled over into next year. Differences in opinion have been debated twice already at the Council's Scrutiny Board, resulting in the Council's firm position that a lesser cost bid cannot 'leapfrog' a bid rejected on cost grounds.

Ultimately, we agreed to differ on this point. What we could all agree on, however, is that it is entirely appropriate for the Forum to liaise with all bidders as they develop their bids and, in doing so, create awareness and common understanding of the overall picture and potential mix of outcomes in KDBH.

## Latest on Council's Draft Local Plan and Planning Applications



You may recall in November 2020 we created a number of videos explaining what the Council's proposals mean for KDBH (see <https://www.kdbh-np.org/analysis-and-feedback>). To inform our response, we asked for your feedback on the Plan via an on-line Residents' Survey. A huge 'thank you' to all those who made time to respond at one of the busiest times of the year in the run up to Christmas.

The results are enormously helpful in developing our understanding - not just for the Local Plan, but for how we approach a number of important topic areas going forward. We've spent a good deal of time reviewing and structuring your (anonymised) feedback to help with our analysis, and are pleased to now make this available for all to share on our website <https://www.kdbh-np.org/slp-representations>.

On 19 March, the Council published details of representations received from the consultation, which can be read at: <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Planning-and-building-control/Local-Plan-Review>. Documents include:

- A summary of the main issues raised under chapter heading/policy/site allocation
- Summary of all individual representation received in respondent order

They are arranging for the representations to be reviewed before a decision is made to submit the Plan to the Secretary of State (via the Planning Inspectorate). Once this happens, the Council will publish the updated Plan and confirm the timeline for the rest of the Local Plan process. We will continue to follow developments very closely and keep you posted.....

### Backland Development: What is it and Why is it Important?

In February, the Council launched a new consultation on draft guidelines for 'Backland Development'. This type of development has been a notable feature in KDBH over recent years, a typical example being erection of one or two big houses in the rear garden of large plots in a residential area (called tandem development). In some cases, this is giving rise to neighbour objections and adversely affecting local character.



The Forum, Knowle Society and DDRA came together to submit a joint response which you can read at: <https://www.kdbh-np.org/planning-responses>.

We all welcome the Council's work to provide guidance and greater clarity over when, where and how such development will be permitted, and consider that the principles set out in the document are reasonable. We have highlighted three key aspects that need improving to ensure clarity and consistency before the policy is adopted, so that the final document:

- explicitly supports the principles and purpose of Neighbourhood Planning as being the basis for local communities to shape the nature of development in their areas. Backland development needs to be thoroughly assessed in its neighbourhood context and adhere to any detailed layout and design principles established in Neighbourhood Plans, including local character assessments;
- makes a greater distinction between backland development on vacant, underutilised or derelict land as against development in rear garden areas of established residential roads. A 'one size fits all' approach gives insufficient weight to the surroundings and character of the specific location in which the backland development is proposed;
- removes or replaces some of the illustrations which, though intended as examples of 'good' practice, are inconsistent with principles set out in the text and could cause confusion or mis-application of policy intent.



#### Motorway Service Area (MSA) J4 M42 PL/2016/02754/MAJFOT

News on the long running saga of proposals to build a MSA somewhere between Junctions 4 and 6 of the M42. For some time now, the Council has been assessing two competing proposals, both of which in Green Belt. In particular, you may recall Applegreen's proposal for Junction 4 (Dorridge), details at: <https://www.kdbh-np.org/msa-junction-4>.

The Council Planning team concluded its deliberations on the two options and produced a report (see link above) for consideration by the Planning Committee on 24 February 2021 that recommended:

- refusal of the proposed scheme at Junction 4, Dorridge on the basis that:

***“the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposed development have not been demonstrated and the proposal does not accord with the Development Plan in respect of Policy P17 Solihull Local Plan and Policy VC1 of The Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Plan and policy in the National Planning Policy Framework. There are no other material circumstances to be taken into account...and the planning application should therefore be refused.”***

- that **'the Council are minded to approve the planning application' between Junctions 5 and 6 near Hampton in Arden / the 'Catherine de Barnes site'**.

We were, of course, very pleased and relieved to see that, by referencing policies in our KDBH Neighbourhood Plan, the Council's own Plan and National Planning legislation, development at Junction 4 had been ruled out altogether. In the event, the Planning Committee was unanimous in refusing planning permission at both locations as neither justified loss of so much Green Belt.

So good news for now - although not the end of the story. **We note on 16 March Applegreen's 'Notification of Intention to Submit an Appeal' against the Council.** Watch this space ....

### Arden Triangle: Felling of Trees on the Council's Proposed Housing Development Site

On 1 February, a number of concerned residents contacted the Knowle Society and the Forum having seen a number of trees being felled around Lansdowne House. This understandably rang alarm bells given previous experience (see our Facebook posts 6-8 November 2017).

Our Forum Planning Lead immediately alerted the Council to request urgent investigation. An initial exchange of emails identified that 3 of the trees had Tree Protection Orders (TPOs).

On 4 February, the Forum formally raised the matter to the Council, since when we've had various email exchanges (see <https://www.kdbh-np.org/planning-responses>) to understand the process followed both in this particular case, and also more generally regarding removal of trees with a TPO.

We're very pleased to say that the Council has listened to, and taken quick and positive action on, concerns around the efficacy of their current system for managing trees. On the Lansdowne site, we were satisfied that the Council's current process was followed. However, we identified aspects of this process as being insufficiently robust or responsive enough to give confidence on controls for removal of protected trees. The Council has responded by improving both management capacity and process:

*"Procedure around 5 day notices is an aspect of the team that I am mindful needs updating, and certainly, your letter has highlighted this. In response... our new Head of Service, Mark Andrews, has been keen to resource a bespoke Tree Officer who would work within our service area. A business case to support this is currently live."*



Knowle, Dorridge & Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum

6 November 2017 · 🌐

'Like' this post if you want us to maintain the pressure and get all of Arden Triangle protected.

Quick update on our last post. The Council has confirmed two new Tree Protection Orders will be in place by close of play tomorrow - one on the Hampton Road site between the football club and Grimshaw Hall; the other on the rest of the land at Lansdowne House that's in the same ownership as the land that has been damaged.

Good news in so far as it goes. We're pressing for the re... [See more](#)

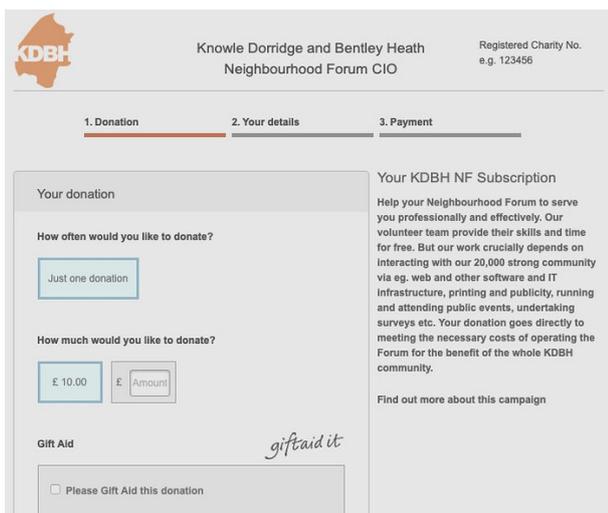


*"..the Council has already written to the land owner reminding and requiring that replacement tree planting is necessary to replace the two TPO'd trees... They have responded to agree replacement planting. The Council's tree officer will be advising on appropriate details.... and there seems a willingness to act swiftly on behalf of the landowner. Written confirmation and photos have been requested to evidence the replacement planting once it has been carried out.."*

*"Going forward, internal process for dealing with 5 day notices will be more streamlined, with results of notices clearly logged. This new procedure will be reflected on the TPO pages of the Council website."*

We very much welcome the Council's approach and resolution to this matter - not just because a large number of applications in KDBH involve removal, lopping or other tree works; but also because it will benefit management of trees across the whole Borough.

We continue to press for an update from the Council's Planning Policy Manager on protection of trees.



## Raising Funds for a Sustainable Forum

A downside of successfully completing the Neighbourhood Plan is that your Forum no longer has recourse to any grant funding to sustain its continued work on planning - and now also its wider charitable purposes - to deliver community benefit. It's never easy asking for donations, but two years on from completing the Neighbourhood Plan our continued operation depends on support from our community.

We are asking for you to show your support through a £10 year's subscription. Less than £1 a month will enable us to continue our work to:

- actively inform, engage, debate and reflect community views on the future of our villages through newsletters, public open meetings (Covid allowing), special events, topic-based workshops etc
- act as custodian of your KDBH Neighbourhood Plan, providing planning expertise to help ensure implementation of the Plan to protect and enhance the character of our villages, address local need and promote sustainable development
- raise awareness of, and provide guidance and support on, opportunities for community funding
- support and collaborate with other community-led organisations to deliver community benefit through our wider charitable purposes.

It's important to note that donations are needed not to fund the team, all of whom are volunteers who continue to offer their skills and time for free. The funds raised will go directly to meeting the necessary costs of operating a Forum professionally and effectively across our very large neighbourhood of c. 20,000 people. Costs such as web and other software and IT infrastructure, printing and publicity, running and attending public events, undertaking surveys, company insurance, specialist training etc. Our annual accounts will, of course, continue to show you (and the Charities Commission) how funds raised have been spent in meeting our charitable purposes for the benefit of KDBH.

We use the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) to process donations for us via credit/debit card or Paypal. You can find more information and a **Donate** button on our website Home Page <https://www.kdbh-np.org>.

Thank you - your contribution makes a huge difference to us.

**Wishing You All a Very Happy Easter Holidays**

**and looking forward to the prospect of meeting up face to face again in summer'**