



Newsletter December 2021

And the Result is?



To be honest, we don't know yet!

But the updates below are nevertheless important reading for all KDBH residents

1. Your Feedback on Funding for New KDBH Community Projects

Firstly, our thanks to all those who voted in our latest residents' survey to provide feedback on preferences / priorities for funding of new KDBH community projects in 2021/22. We're pleased to say that over 700 votes were cast and, also importantly, the responses included over 200 comments.

And the result?

is in [our report to the Council](#) which sets out the Forum's assessment of the projects and summarises the outcome of voting.

Soon after submitting the report, the Council contacted us to say that they wanted to defer the date for announcing project awards until the end of January 2022, giving an opportunity for them to discuss internally the matters we raised. We are aware that the Council has also sought views from our local councillors. All bidders have been notified of the delay.

2. The Solihull Local Plan saga continues, with Public Examination throwing up some concerning twists and turns

How are things looking?

In short, very worrying. As it stands currently, Hearing sessions, held in front of the Government-appointed Inspector, have thrown huge uncertainty on possible outcomes for the two large development sites proposed in KDBH. Basic issues relating to land ownership, as identified in our Forum consultation response, have come strongly to the fore - to the extent that Council proposals for both sites are in serious jeopardy. Consequently, there is a real risk that new housing could be built, but without the associated community benefits that, since day one, have been central to the proposals.

What happened?

You can see for yourself how events unfolded by going to the Council's YouTube channel, where all the Examination Hearings are publicly available. We provide direct links to the important sessions relating to the two KDBH sites at the foot below.

It seems it was anticipated these sessions could be more contentious, being the only site-related Hearings to be held 'in person' in the Council House (as opposed to on-line). Our two Forum representatives were present and very much in action on behalf of the KDBH community.

Conduct of the Hearings

It is important to note that, at the start of the Knowle site sessions, we set out deep concerns about the actions of the landowners / promoters ('the Promoters') of the Arden Triangle site. The Kler Group and Taylor Wimpey had advised the Inspector that they were unable to attend the session planned (months

before) for 18 November ("the main Hearing"). Instead, they were not only allowed an additional, separate session on 22 November, but also for this to be at the exclusion of all other interested parties. To compound matters further, *less than 24 hours* before the main Hearing, a substantial amount of new and materially significant documentation from the Promoters was made public for the first time and accepted into the evidence base. Although never consulted upon and with no time for close inspection before the main Hearing, these documents (including a so-called 'Statement of Common Ground' marked 'draft' and unsigned) were nevertheless referenced and heavily relied upon by the Promoters in propounding very different alternative proposals.

Unsurprising, then, that most attendees at the main Hearing shared our strong view that this course of events was unfair and unprocedural, in conflict with planning procedure as set down in National guidance. We view it as disrespectful not only to ourselves and other attendees, but most importantly to KDBH residents.

Summary Outcome for KDBH Sites

KN1, Hampton Road:

- Land ownership issues call into question the goal of moving the Knowle Football Club and creating new community sporting facilities.
- Deliverability and viability issues bring into question the soundness of the Council's Plan.

KN2, Land South of Knowle / Arden Triangle:

- Land ownership issues call into question delivery of a new, re-located secondary school. In short, the Promoters categorically rule out making their land available for a re-located new secondary school (which is what the Council's site Masterplan shows). Instead, they insist that the Council uses land it owns to re-locate the Arden Academy - to which the Council responds by setting out why this is not feasible.
- Deliverability and viability issues bring into question the soundness of the Council's Plan.

Where Does That Leave Us?

The upshot is that it is very uncertain that the Council has made a sufficiently strong case to justify their proposed allocations on either of the two sites.

This does NOT, however, mean that the housing allocations will be removed. What happens next will depend on the Inspectors' findings. Options could include (see also Giles Cannock QC for the Council summing up at the end of 18 November Hearings) the Inspectors deciding that:

- The allocations are justified as submitted and are confirmed.
- The allocations are unsound and the sites are removed - although this scenario could seem a 'last resort' given wider potential impact this could have on the Local Plan.
- The allocations are sound with modifications - which could include alternatives proposed by the promoters/landowners of KN1 and KN2. Clearly, this outcome would be a 'lose/lose' scenario for KDBH residents (lose Green Belt; lose community benefits).
- The allocations are sound with modifications - which could include additional sites if there is deemed to be a shortfall in housing numbers, resulting in loss of yet more Green Belt and even greater construction disturbance in the future.

What Next and When?

Hearings to date have already resulted in the timetable for the Examination in Public being extended out to the end of January 2022.

It thus seems unlikely that we will have sight of the Inspectors' report and findings before Spring 2022.

It is also already clear that the Council will need to make a significant number of 'Main' modifications to their Local Plan. This will almost certainly mean that they will need to undertake a further stage of consultation next year, prior to their Local Plan being in a state for final submission to the Secretary of State.

In Conclusion..

All in all, a depressing and very frustrating situation; one that for KDBH residents does little to engender confidence or trust, either in the planning system or its possible outcomes that will have such an impact on the future of KDBH - and Knowle in particular.

We await the Inspectors' report.

Links to KDBH Site Hearing Sessions on Council You Tube site:

[Solihull Local Plan EIP - 18 Nov 2021 Matter 6G](#) ("the main Hearing", attended in person by the KDBH Forum). Site KN1 is covered in the morning session; KN2 in the afternoon session.

- go to minutes 10:10 - 13:06. Forum representation re. a separate session for KN2 Promoters only
- go to minutes 16:20 - 18:28. Forum representation re. KN2 Promoters' additional documentation
- go to 4 hrs 40 mins - 4 hrs 47 mins. Forum sets out history of KN2 proposals, highlighting documentary evidence that a new secondary school was both a catalyst and instrumental to development of proposals for the Arden Triangle site - and the fundamental basis on which residents have been consulted
- go to 6 hrs 30 mins - 6 hrs 37 mins. KN2 Promoters' representative sets out their position regarding not allowing use of their land for a school.

[Solihull Local Plan EIP - 22 Nov 2021 Additional Matter 6G](#) (the additional Hearing for the Promoters of site KN2, Arden Triangle)

Finally, on behalf of all the KDBH community

Very grateful thanks to Andrew and Gill, our two Forum volunteer and unpaid representatives, who have worked so hard over the past 3 months (including when abroad on holiday) to prepare for, and take part, in many Hearings in addition to the two above. They have certainly done us proud in the professional way they have conducted their input and the respect they have clearly engendered from all those attending the Hearings.

It can be really hard to keep motivated, particularly in the face of such evolving events.

We certainly do hope it is not all in vain.
