

**Proposed Neighbourhood Plan (NP)
for
Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath**

Minutes of Meeting Held at Arden School on 14.05.2015

Present: Jane Aykroyd (JA, Interim Chair); Karen Allen (KA); Tony Aykroyd (TA); Eleanor Collett (EC); Ian Fisher (IF); Dave Fraley (DF); David Gentle (DG); Gill Griggs (GG); Lis Hedley (LH); Andy Hinsley (AH); Bryan Hunt (BH); Ian Kay (IK); Bill Lally (BL); Richard Newton (RN); David Pinwell (DP, last of part meeting); David Wallis (DW).

Guest: Emma Tinsley-Evans (ETE, Solihull MBC).

Apologies: Sam Clarke; Geoffrey Evans; Louisa Jakeman; Robert Keenan (ill health for foreseeable future); Martin Murphy (MM - Andy and Eleanor standing in); David Roberts (unable to attend meetings due to other commitments, but wants to be kept informed); Vanessa and Geoff Thorne.

1. Agenda Item 1 - Introduction:

Jane introduced and welcomed the guest speaker, Emma Tinsley-Brown, Principal Planning Officer at Solihull MBC. The primary purpose of this meeting, with ETE's input, is to develop a more detailed understanding of the Solihull Local Plan as it relates specifically to communities in our proposed Neighbourhood Forum (NF), in terms of both current and strategic planning. Also to understand the Council's perspective on operating and supporting a NF, learning from their prior experience.

2. Agenda Item 2 – Solihull Local Plan: Knowle, Dorridge & Bentley Heath

ETE advised that this is the first time she has been involved in working with a NF, and that she is not an expert on housing. As our first point of contact for Council liaison, however, she can identify the right resource(s) and expertise within the wider Council team to support us, as appropriate.

General Context:

ETE identified some typical key themes for Neighbourhood Plans (NP) as being to, eg. protect a strong village centre and local character. While a NP cannot reduce development already planned, it can look at how best to identify and manage any proposed increases.

There will be an ever-increasing need for more housing. Work is currently being undertaken by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to assess and quantify the number of new homes required across the LEP Area (including Greater Birmingham and Solihull). Birmingham believes that it cannot meet all its own needs, with few brown field sites remaining.

With a shortfall of housing already across the Borough, things are likely to become even more challenging given the number of new developments in the wider Region. UK Central (UKC) developments (formally known as M42 economic gateway) anticipate creation of 100,000 jobs in the Region - contributing £5.4 billion to the regional GDP. (More details on UK central website at <http://www.uk-c.com>). UKC proposals include new housing on a significant scale, much of which could be on green belt – including to the North of the County.

For its part, Solihull Council are required to identify a rolling five year supply of land for developers. The Council are just about managing to achieve this for now, but this could change by the end of the year. If the Council fails to deliver a five year supply, then developers (many of which already hold options on sites across the area) could potentially

**Proposed Neighbourhood Plan (NP)
for
Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath**

seek to develop on green belt sites. Solihull Council therefore expects that it will need to review the green belt before too long.

Specific points of discussion in terms of our NP were:

- **Affordable Housing:** One of the top issues for our NF, given, for example, resident feedback on how difficult it is for young people and family members to find homes they can afford in the villages. ETE explained the potential remit of the NF in relation to housing, and affordable housing in particular, as below:
 - the NF could have a good say in the type and mix of housing development sites in our area - as long as this is based on evidence;
 - in terms of affordable housing for local people: Policy P4 (b) of the Solihull Local Plan makes provision for affordable housing development on green belt to meet the needs of households in that neighbourhood - where this is supported by a Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan could, therefore, identify green belt land as a 'Rural Exceptions' site to build affordable housing for local people;
 - housing policy dictates that 40% of new housing development is to be 'affordable housing' - as set out in policy P4 of the Solihull Local Plan + the Council's adopted 'Meeting Housing Needs' Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – see <http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Resident/Planning/appealsenforcement/planmaking/ldf/meetinghousingneeds>.
More recently, however, these policies have been amended following changes to national guidance regarding the threshold at which affordable housing contributions will be sought. Originally, developers of allocated and unidentified sites were required to make a contribution to affordable housing for any residential site of more than three (net) dwellings, or over 0.2ha. The amended policy increases this threshold to 11 units or more, or with a maximum combined gross floor space of over 1000sqm. The new requirement also stipulates that, of the 40% set aside for affordable housing, 65% will be rented from a housing association at social rents; the remaining 35% will be shared ownership. Successful applicants can purchase shares starting at 25% (using savings/mortgage), and pay rent on the remaining share.
- **Green Belt:** designated areas can only be changed via a Local Planning Review. In our case, a particular challenge for further clarification applies to any proposal to eg. relocate Arden School (already on designated Green Belt) to another area of green belt.
- **Parking:** is dealt with by Solihull Council Transport and Highways. Issues relevant to the NF must relate to land use, or to car parking development. For example, the NF can identify land to put a car park on.
- **Community Facilities:** This can include, for example, stipulating where developer contributions are sought - such as listing car parking as a priority consideration. ETE was uncertain about the role of a NF in addressing any need/desire for new roads, but will

**Proposed Neighbourhood Plan (NP)
for
Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath**

follow up with her colleagues to clarify.

ETE advised caution with regard to Hampton-In-Arden's approach of including aspirational goals, such as Community Actions, in their NP.

- **NF Boundary:** ETE advised that we can identify a NP area as large or small as we wish - her steer was to aim to use Ward boundaries (although this is not a requirement) and significant geographic divisions, such as railway lines and roads, that are easily recognisable. Neighbourhood Areas cannot overlap, and the boundary cannot go over existing Parish boundaries – although can, if desired, go over Solihull Council boundaries. What's most important is to be able to clearly articulate a good rationale for choosing the boundary, which could relate to communities, common interests, geographic features etc.

Members discussed what is seen to be the one potential outstanding question relating to our proposed boundary – ie. determining the Northern perimeter at the top of Knowle Ward, and determining whether this should extend beyond the motorway to include Ravenshead. We need to follow up with (the few) residents in this area to see whether or not they feel affiliated with Knowle and wish to be included in our NF Area.

- **Referendum / Voting:** Responding to a query arising from Solihull Council's 'Neighbourhood Planning FAQ's' (Does everyone in the Neighbourhood Area have to agree to the Plan?), ETE confirmed that:
 - the 50% majority needed to adopt a draft NP relates to 50% of those voting (ie. NOT 50% of all Residents in the NF Area);
 - the 'Examiner' decides who can vote in the NF Referendum. This can sometimes include people outside the Neighbourhood Plan area, in which case the Examiner must advise what the extended area should be and why;
 - within the Neighbourhood Area (or extended area, if appropriate), everyone entitled to vote in a regular election is entitled to cast a vote for the NP.

ACTIONS:

- **BH** to follow up with **ETE** to:
 - clarify the role of a NF in addressing any need/desire for new roads;
 - clarify considerations around, for example, relocating Arden School (already on designated green belt) to another area of green belt;
 - identify someone from Housing who could come to speak to our Group.
- **BH** to consider actions required to determine the Northern boundary of our NP, and how, if appropriate, we confirm this with residents of Ravenshead.

As part of discussions above, ETE addressed all the questions arising from the previous meeting, with updates below:

Proposed Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath

- provide a copy of: the 'Strategic Housing Market Assessment' and the 'Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment' (SHLAA) documents
Update 15/05: These documents form part of Solihull Council's own evidence base. ETE provided paper copies of both (relevant sections only of the 500-page SHLAA – Chapter 8, 'Providing Homes for All').
The SHLAA identifies sites that landowners (developers or private individuals) have submitted for potential building purposes. To create the SHLAA, the Council calls for sites (most being in 3rd party ownership), details of which are then included in a database of potential development land. This does not necessarily mean that all these sites form part of current Plans; all will, however, need to be considered as part of future policy discussions. Note that, for our Area, all sites other than the three under development, have to date been told 'no' to development.
ACTION:
 - **IF** to scan and upload the paper documents provided by ETE into the NF library.
 - **BH** to follow up with ETE to ascertain the publishing date of these documents.

- provide a copy of the large scale (AO) map that clearly defines the green belt around our villages (created as part of the last Solihull Plan – UDP?);
Update 15/05: ETE provided a map of green belt for our area. However, this was on a much smaller scale than the older, UDP, plan, and not ideally suited to the NF's needs.
ACTION: **BH** to follow up with ETE to get hold of a copy of the larger scale UDP map (although now out of date) and upload to the NF library.

- provide a copy of a short council presentation on planned strategic developments around our assumed NF boundary.
Update 14/05: ETE has no knowledge of this (but would appreciate a copy for her information).
ACTION: **BH** to liaise with MM and forward copy to ETE.

3. Agenda Item 3 – Neighbourhood Forum Application Process

In discussions below, ETE addressed requests from the last meeting to:

- advise on Council support available to help us with aspects of planning for assessment / maintenance of a 'sustainable environment' - and in particular, Council policy in regard to our rural setting;
- advise on Council requirements, and any assistance available, to prepare and submit our application for formal recognition as a NF;
- advise how we confirm, and gain official recognition of, our NP boundary.

ETE confirmed / clarified as below:

Council Support: The Council can provide non-financial support, guidance and assistance to complete the application - which is not overly complex.

**Proposed Neighbourhood Plan (NP)
for
Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath**

The Formal Application: to establish a Forum requires a minimum of 21 members who live, work or have businesses in the area, comprising a mix of people of different ages, gender and ethnicity. While it may not always be possible to achieve this, we must be able to evidence how we have actively sought to engage a representative cross-section of residents and businesses. It is also important to ensure that Ward Councillors, as elected representatives, are briefed and on board.

Overall Timeframes: A Local Authority has a total of 13 weeks from the date of submission to determine the application. This includes a statutory six weeks consultation period before the area boundaries can be agreed / confirmed.

The NP Area Map/Boundary: Forms a crucial part of the NF application (see note 2 above).

A Forum Constitution: Needs to be part of our application, clearly setting out how the Forum will operate. The Constitution needs to include:

- Forum Name
- Purpose
- Working Arrangements
- Nominated Signatories to Bank Account etc
- Meetings and AGM

The name of at least one person from the Forum needs to be publically available.

Relationship Between Company and Forum: Members discussed whether we need to set up the Company first, or make the NF Application first. As the Company will form part of our Application relating to governance and operation of the NF, this needs to be established first.

Application Approval: Ultimately, a Cabinet Member will make the final decision on our application – in our case, this will most likely be Jeff Potts.

Funding: A grant of £8K is available, with a potential further £6K if we meet specific criteria (which we think we do). DW advised that the grant would only be released where supported by a clear case explaining what the money will be spent on. The funding can then be drawn down in up to 4 chunks, with timing of expenditure having due regard to the financial year-end. This will ensure we are compliant for audit purposes.

GG thought that a small amount of funding (£1,500?) may also have been set aside as part of the local Ward action plan / Council Neighbourhoods team. However, this would most likely need to be used to fund a specific cost or activity (such as community engagement), rather than as general expenditure.

DECISIONS:

- **BH** (or nominated Deputy, if absent) to be the single point of contact for all communication / liaison with the Council - all communication from the Group to go via BH. Emma will be the Group's single point of contact into the Council – all Council communications to go through her (or nominated Deputy, if absent).

ACTIONS:

- **BH** to:
 - contact Councillors Courts and Potts to advise of Forum creation and seek their thoughts on the proposed Neighbourhood Area - particularly in the context of Ward boundaries and any relationship with Ward development plans;

**Proposed Neighbourhood Plan (NP)
for
Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath**

- obtain a pro-forma application template from ETE for review and circulation to the Group in advance of further discussions at our next meeting;
- obtain a Council contact for Network Rail from ETE. (Confirmed later via a centralised point of contact at network rail. TownPlanning.LNW@networkrail.co.uk)
- **GG** to clarify position with regard to potential Ward / Council Neighbourhood Team funding to support NF aims and update next meeting.

4. Agenda Item 4 – Group Organisation and Roles

Following discussions at the last meeting, and subsequent Member feedback, JA provided a draft one-page summary outlining a possible Governance structure, roles and responsibilities (attached to these minutes). JA noted that, before finalising this, she wants to double check with a number of active members (see 'TBC') not yet included; and also complete the follow up with residents who have previously expressed an interest in the NF, but have not engaged in activities to date. This is to ensure that no-one who wants to be actively involved is left out. In discussing the draft, JA emphasised that all roles - including that of Chair - are open to anyone who wishes to express an interest.

After discussions, the following amendments were agreed:

- DW to act as Treasurer - although he does not count himself an expert in this area. RN, as a retired accountant, agreed to provide some 'light touch' guidance, if required. Need also to check what potential assistance could be available through eg. Sustain in terms of preparing Company Accounts;
- IK confirmed he is willing to act as Membership Secretary, with responsibility for maintaining a database of Member information - a key part of the evidence base, as well as supporting effective communications. IK also volunteered to be a member of the Roads and Infrastructure Group and to deputise for BH as overall Lead/Owner of the Neighbourhood Plan. He therefore asked to be removed as Knowle Lead;
- DF to act as the Group's nominated first point of contact for Member queries / communications (working closely with Karen);
- Lis Headley to serve as Company Secretary, and as a member of the Housing Focus Group;
- Gill Griggs to act as overall Planning Adviser to the Steering and Focus Groups;
- JA will deputise for IF as librarian; and, for the interim, act as overall Resident Communications and Engagement Planning lead, pending identification of individual representatives from each of the three communities. JA to be removed, therefore, from the Learning and Community Facilities Focus Group;
- (Subsequent to the meeting), David Gentle asked that his focus be as a member of the Learning & Community Facilities Group – remove from Roads and Infrastructure.

Discussion followed regarding the inter-relationship between the Company and its Directors and the Steering Group. Given the expectation that Focus Group membership will grow as new Members join, not all members of these groups can/should form part of the Steering Group, which needs to be kept small enough to be effective as a Steering and decision-making body. As a result of discussions, the suggested governance was:

- **NF Steering Group:** Chair; Neighbourhood Plan Lead; Treasurer; Company Secretary; Membership Secretary; + each Focus Group Lead (3), Planning Adviser

**Proposed Neighbourhood Plan (NP)
for
Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath**

- **Company Directors (sub set of Steering Group):** Chair; Neighbourhood Plan Lead; Treasurer; Company Secretary; Membership Secretary, Minutes Secretary

ACTION:

- **DW / JA / DP** to explore whether, and what, Accountancy support could be available to the Forum Treasurer.
- **JA** to update the framework Governance, roles & responsibilities document per changes above, and re-issue for review in advance of the next meeting.

5. Agenda Item 5 – Updated Draft Articles of Association & Insurance

DP has updated the document to reflect comments from the last meeting and circulated a revised version. DW subsequently provided a few additional comments on the second draft.

DECISION: Members agreed that, for AGM purposes, a quorum should be a minimum of 10 Members, or 1/3 of the Membership.

ACTION:

- DP to update version 3 of the draft Articles of Association to incorporate all the latest feedback and re-issue to Members for review in advance of the next meeting.

Insurance: DP gave examples of circumstances where Insurance could be required:

- volunteers are subject to employee liability when undertaking work on the Company's behalf (eg leafleting);
- public liability considerations can apply at NF events - for example, some venues (eg churches) will expect us, rather than them, to provide appropriate insurance cover. In the case of an open air event (eg a stall at a show) on Council land, the Council will require evidence of public liability insurance;
- cover is likely to be low cost, given the likely nature of the Forum's activities. There was some debate on this, however, given that the minimum employers liability is £5m;
- (Note: DP has previously advised the Forum to consider using an insurer who specialises in the charity and community sector, ie. is more likely to understand insurance needs for public meetings / fundraising events and insuring volunteers rather than employees. Three widely used potential providers are:
 - Tennyson Insurance - <http://www.tennysoninsurance.co.uk/>
 - Ecclesiastical - <http://www.ecclesiastical.com/>
 - Edwards Insurance - <http://www.edwardsinsurance.co.uk/>

'Locality' generally recommend Tennyson Insurance to their Members; Edwards Insurance is based in Knowle, run by a local family well known to Knowle Parish Church, and used by Sustain to considerable satisfaction.)

ACTION:

- DP to update version three of the draft Articles of Association with all the latest feedback and re-issue to Members;

**Proposed Neighbourhood Plan (NP)
for
Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath**

- **LH** to follow up with David Watson to understand how Knowle Society addresses insurance matters. Then discuss with DP, as appropriate, with a view to obtaining an indicative quote(s) for our NF purposes for review at the next meeting.

6. Agenda Item 6 – Resident Contact Follow Up

KA has started to contact residents on the consolidated list prepared by DW – although the quality of contact details is patchy, which may mean following up at people’s home address (rather than by phone or e-mail). Feedback from the two people contacted (by phone) so far has been positive, with both registering on-going interest. Their details have been logged and a form sent to register them as Members.

KW believes that she may also have identified a Bentley Heath resident to join the Group – to be confirmed at the next meeting. Other potential avenues to increase Bentley Heath representation are via the South Solihull U3A; and also via the weekly market held in Bentley Heath Village Hall on a Friday morning.

ACTION:

- **KA** to continue with resident follow up, working through the consolidated contact list, and provide further update next meeting.
- **BL** to follow up with the South Solihull U3A re. potential Members from Bentley Heath.
- **JA** to follow up with contact involved in Bentley Heath village hall market.

7. Agenda Item 7 – Web / Document Library Update

JA will act as Deputy Librarian. In due course, Focus Group leaders will probably also need to be able to upload and control information in their own directories to ensure quality of the evidence base.

To facilitate the process of creating a strong evidence base and easy access to storage, IF asked everyone issuing information to always copy in (cc) KDBH.librarian@gmail.com (per distribution of these minutes). This will then enable IF to pick up and centrally file a complete set of documents.

ACTION:

- **IF and MM** to consider how best to integrate the document store within the web site and update at next meeting (**CARRIED FORWARD**)
- **JA** to schedule further web site discussions with a small group of Members to prepare ‘strawman’ material for review at the next meeting.

8. Agenda Item 8 – Minutes and Actions From Last Meeting:

The minutes were agreed. Updates on Actions from the last meeting are below (where not referenced, actions have been completed or are updated as part of Agenda items above).

REMAINING ACTIONS FROM MEETING 30 APRIL:

- **MM** to send a copy of the short slideset he has re. Solihull Strategic Developments to BH and JA (for distribution to the Group).
Update 14/5: AH confirmed that MM will run through the slides at the next Group meeting on 4/7.

**Proposed Neighbourhood Plan (NP)
for
Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath**

- **All** to identify community groups or key individuals that we should be aiming to engage with, as input to discussions on resident communications and engagement. **CARRIED FORWARD** – main Agenda item for meeting on 4 June.
- **Jane** to attend Business meeting on 14 May and update the next meeting
Update 14/5: Immediately prior to the meeting, JA attended an informal social gathering of Knowle businesses at the Greswolde. This opportunity, facilitated by Caroline Wilden of PSL, was extremely useful in making contact with local businesses – a number of whom have expressed an interest in knowing more about NF developments, and potentially providing support. This included Gwen Worrall (The Vaults, St Johns Close); Robert Pannifer (Stanleys; Rotary Club) and Beverley Robinson (Scanlans).

ACTION: **JA** to follow up with business contacts to explore possible involvement.

- **MM and JA** to discuss potential support from Arup.
Update 14/05: Some Members were cautious about the benefits of involving Arup due to a concern about potential conflict of interest. JA acknowledged this, while also highlighting the benefits of gleaning further information on future developments given Arup's involvement in eg. UK Central. The key is transparency. It was agreed that any proposed involvement will be discussed with Members, following the meeting with Arup.
CARRIED FORWARD

6. Agenda Item 6 – AOB

Given our growing understanding of the application and planning processes, and indicative timescales, we need to start putting together a draft plan.

ACTION: **BH, GG and IK** to create a draft plan and circulate to Members for review in advance of our next meeting.

7. Agenda Item 7 - Agree Focus and Agenda for Next Meeting (4 June)

The proposed outline Agenda for the next meeting is:

- a. Brainstorm NF residents communication and engagement approach and plan - JA
- b. NF Application, inc Boundary Definition - BH
- c. Feedback from Members on First Draft Constitution – BH / JA
- d. Confirm decisions on:
 - Company name
 - Directors and Steering Group Members
 - Articles of Association
 - Insurance
- e. Review and feedback on draft plan – BH / GG / IK
- f. Overview of Solihull Strategic Planning Presentation – MM
- g. Agree frequency, and dates, for full Forum meetings going forward, and also how/when Focus Groups will meet and operate - Focus Group Leaders / All

Next Meeting: 4th June, 7pm – 9:30pm, Arden School