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Ms Emma Tinsley
Principal Planning Officer
Policy and Spatial Planning
Solihull MBC
Council House
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13 July 2015

Dear Emma

Application for Designation of a Neighbourhood Planning Forum

Following several community meetings held jointly by The Knowle Society and the Dorridge and District Residents Association, a group has been established by the villages of Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath to work with the local community in the preparation and submission of a Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

Currently, the intended timetable is to launch an early draft plan in June 2016 and to have the final version ready for submission by June 2017. This programme is, of course, dependent on many variables and is subject to change.

Please find attached our formal Application for Designation of a Neighbourhood Planning Forum.

Yours sincerely,

Bryan Hunt
(Lead, Neighbourhood Plan and Council Liaison)

**APPLICATION TO DESIGNATE KNOWLE, DORRIDGE AND BENTLEY HEATH
AS A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING FORUM:**

STATEMENT OF INTENT

TO: Emma Tinsley - Principal Planning Officer, Policy and Spatial Planning,
Managed Growth Directorate, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

APPLICATION BY: Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum

CONTACT DETAILS: Jane Aykroyd, Dave Wallis, Bryan Hunt – email: chair@kdbh-np.org;
all care of Arden Academy, Station Road, Knowle, Solihull B93 0PT
website: www.kdbh-np.org

**NAME OF PROPOSED:
NEIGHBOURHOOD
FORUM:** The Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath (KDBH) Neighbourhood Forum

**NAME OF
NEIGHBOURHOOD
AREA:** The Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath (KDBH) Neighbourhood Area

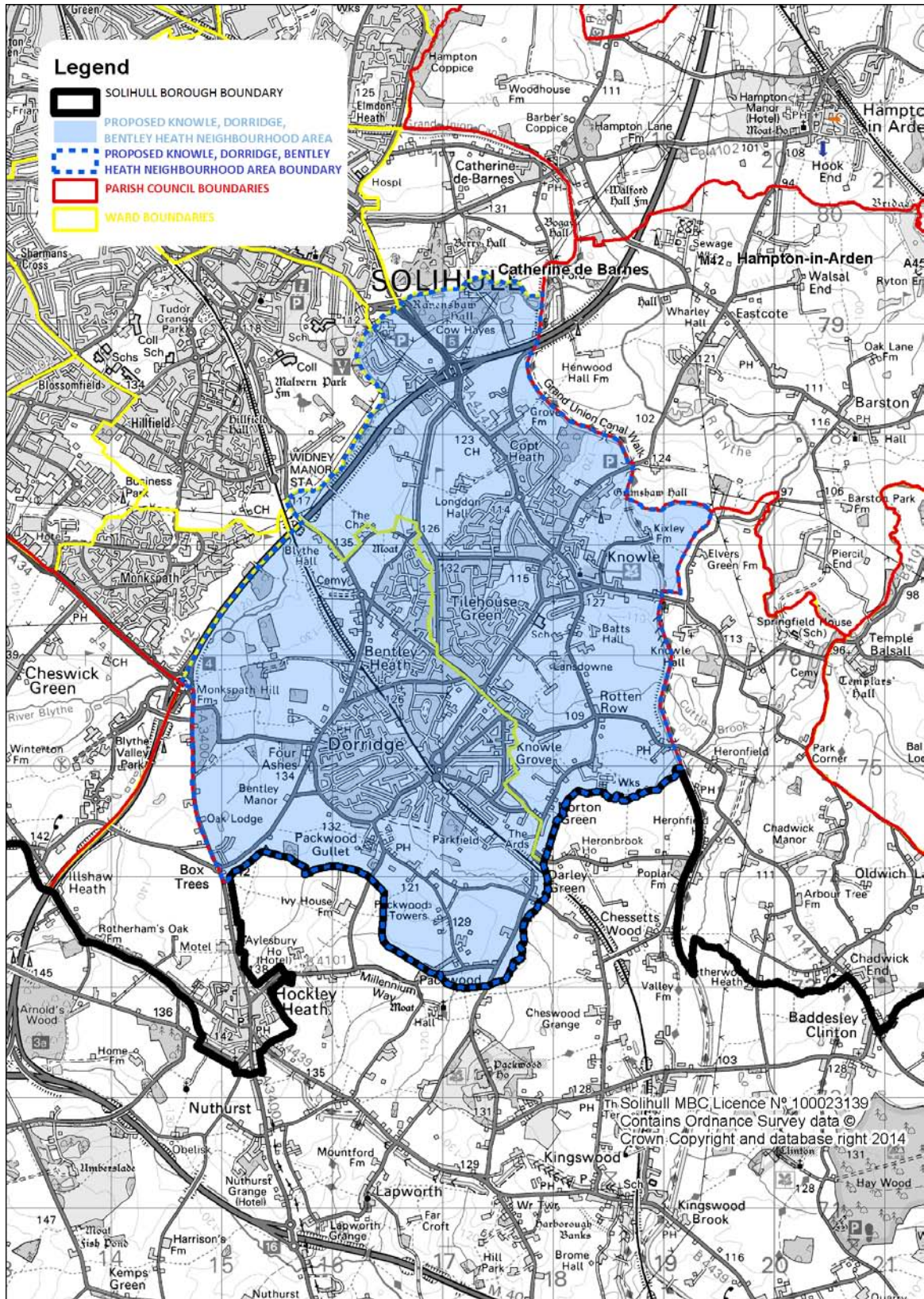
AREA: This application relates to an area formed by the current Knowle / Dorridge
and Hockley Heath Ward boundary with the adjoining Parish Council
boundaries of Lapworth, Hockley Heath, Chadwick End and Barston.

The Area is identified on the map below.

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MAP SHOWING PROPOSED NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA:



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BACKGROUND

The Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath communities lie within the Borough of Solihull in the West Midlands and are not governed by a parish council. In response to the Localism Act, we propose to create a Neighbourhood Forum for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of all those who live or work in our Neighbourhood Area.

There is already a strong civic ethos in all three communities, resulting in a wide range of active associations. The proposed Neighbourhood Forum is not an attempt to supersede or to subvert these groups, but to act as an umbrella organisation that can bring together the many diverse voices within Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath. Building on the strength of relationships within the individual communities, formation of the Forum as a statutory body will provide a more effective way to better shape and influence development plans as one collective voice, within the constraints of the legislation.

The opportunity to take more ownership of planning and development decisions in our villages was first highlighted by our two long-standing resident associations – the Knowle Society and Dorridge and District Residents Association. To test the communities' appetite for this new approach, each of these resident associations held its own all-day 'drop in' sessions. These allowed local residents and businesses to express their views on, or interest in, Neighbourhood Planning and creation of a Neighbourhood Forum as a way of promoting and improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath.

Given the level of positive response to this initiative, a combined meeting (chaired jointly by both residents' groups) was subsequently held at Arden school, when the proposed Neighbourhood Area was presented to a packed main hall. It was out of this meeting that the embryo of the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Forum was born, and the proposed Area ultimately defined.

Since then, a series of follow up sessions and on-going communications over the past 3-4 months have been successful in securing a core of prospective Forum Members, with meetings being held regularly to take plans forward.

ELIGIBILITY AND MAKE UP OF PROPOSED FORUM

The proposed Forum is fully open to new members who live or work in the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Area, or who are elected members of the Council Wards representing the Area.

We already have over the minimum 21 members (a current list is available), with a number of additional prospective Members in the pipeline (ie. people who have registered an interest, but have not yet formally signed up). As numbers grow, details are being held and tracked on a Membership database, maintained by our Membership Secretary. In this way, we are able to confirm and validate that all individuals meet the required criteria for membership, ie. live, work or do business in our proposed Neighbourhood Area. All current registered Members have formally confirmed their wish to be a part of the Forum and have met eligibility checks.

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The Forum includes a mix of men and women from each of the three communities, business representatives and also includes youth representation, which we see as providing an important perspective in creating a vision for the future of our Area. We have contacted all elected members with an interest in the Area, one of whom has confirmed his membership (all have been supportive of our application, although some are unable to actually join as Members due to a conflict of interest).

Forum Members are a diverse group, drawn from a broad range of different backgrounds and perspectives (employed and retired; from age 17 to 70+) and groups across the three communities. We are very fortunate in having within the group a high level of relevant expertise (eg. planning, legal, report writing, project management, communications etc), as well as community knowledge and awareness. This makes us ideally placed to become the Neighbourhood Forum for Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath and to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for our Area.

Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath boasts an historic and distinctive commercial and business presence and small business forms an important part of our communities: from offices to small and medium retailers; popular bars and restaurants to first class hotels. We have already started to engage with a number of local businesses to ensure that they will be inclusive to the Neighbourhood Planning process. As a result, we already have three members who work in local businesses, although we are aware that we need to do more to attract greater involvement and explain what Neighbourhood Planning means for businesses.

PLANS FOR GROWING MEMBERSHIP

In accordance with Regulation 61F(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act, we are planning to undertake a number of actions to promote and encourage further membership growth. We are preparing a high profile communications campaign to attract many more Members, which we plan to launch as soon as we receive confirmation of designation as an approved Neighbourhood Forum.

From consultations to date with stakeholders across the community, we have been able to develop a database of contacts and groups with whom we will interact via email, newsletters and open public meetings. Recognising that not everyone can, or wants to, communicate electronically, we are using community facilities, such as schools and village halls, as a means by which individuals can get in touch. We continue to undertake a level of general communications, which has been successful to date in ensuring that the Forum includes representation from across the communities.

We have already started development of a dedicated website, to include use of social media, which will continue to be enhanced over the coming months. This will lie at the heart of our communications approach with Forum members and other stakeholders, allowing easy and flexible access to any member of the public wanting more information about the Forum. The site will provide details about when the Forum meets, how to join, how to find out how eligible individuals and businesses can get involved, information on current issues under discussion and progress on the plan.

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CURRENT STATUS

Since March 2015, an Interim Group of the proposed Forum has been meeting regularly, once or twice a month. Much of our initial focus has been taken up with understanding the background to resident feedback and also to current Solihull Plans, as well as with establishing the Forum itself (governance, finance, communications etc.). This period has included working with Solihull Council to understand the wider planning context in our Region and to identify and acquire extracts of relevant information from their evidence base as an objective foundation upon which to develop our plans. Our Solihull Council Liaison officer has been very supportive in assisting us to get up and running, and will continue to play an important role in guiding us through relevant planning legislation.

DEVELOPING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Our Neighbourhood Plan will focus on the opportunities and issues that are of most importance to Forum Members across Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath, with an emphasis on the social, economic and environmental aspects of community life. We will adopt a positive and constructive approach to developing the plan, with the aim of encouraging relevant and appropriate development within Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath.

Development of the Plan will be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for Solihull Borough, which comprises the Solihull Local Plan 2013 and the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations Plan 2014. So far as they are relevant, the Plan will also take into consideration various planning briefs that affect the area.

We have already undertaken detail analysis of resident and business feedback gathered as part of the initial awareness sessions undertaken by the two resident associations, with a summary of this included on our website. This has served as our start point for setting up Focus Groups to address current highest priority issues, and provides an initial outline framework for our Neighbourhood Plan.

We have therefore created three Focus Groups to address current priority areas, and so started the real business of the Forum to develop thinking around the Plan approach and content. Emerging priority areas are as diverse as our membership and include affordable housing, development, office space, parking, traffic, green belt, learning and community facilities and maintaining the identity of our villages for the future. Our aim is to have developed sufficient content to stimulate discussion and encourage active participation in a series of Open Events to be launched as soon as possible after hearing that the Forum has been approved.

FORUM GOVERNANCE

We have developed a written constitution (see Appendix), which has been agreed by current Members of the proposed Forum. It is underpinned by a shared commitment from individuals to be accountable to each other and to the goals of the Forum. We are also keen to liaise with, and support, other adjoining Neighbourhood Forums to create a joined up approach to shared areas of interest that cross boundaries.

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we believe that this application meets the relevant legislation for formal designation of a Neighbourhood Forum.

We therefore invite SMBC to designate our proposed Forum, as outlined herein, as the Neighbourhood Forum representing the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath area.

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Appendix 1: Forum Constitution

1. Introduction

This is the Constitution of the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath (KDBH) Neighbourhood Forum (hereafter referred to as the Forum).

It also acts as a Scheme of Delegation from Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Plan Ltd (hereafter referred to as the Company), the legal entity through which any commercial activity of the Forum is transacted.

The Forum is established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Area.

The Forum shall be an arm of the Company with delegated objectives of:

- i) Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Neighbourhood Area.
- ii) Encouraging goodwill, promoting and supporting the involvement of the wider community.
- iii) Fostering, mobilising and engaging community spirit and encouraging civic pride.

The Forum shall exist for a period of up to five years from its formal designation by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC).

2a. Forum Steering Committee

The Steering Committee (SC) exists to co-ordinate, implement and monitor the work of the Forum, including development of a Neighbourhood Plan for KDBH. It will prioritise, schedule and publicise the work of the Forum.

The Directors of the Company, appointed by the Forum Members at the Company AGM, will also be members of the Steering Committee. There will be such further members of the Steering Committee as the Directors may appoint. Non-voting attendees with specialist skills may be co-opted onto the SC.

The SC may further delegate specific projects or tasks to Focus or Working Groups of Forum Members that it establishes and that will report back to it.

The SC will liaise as may be appropriate with relevant bodies such as the schools, medical centres, sports clubs, community associations, business associations, the local authority, police and the elected representatives for Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath.

SC decision making can be by consensus or after a vote – the Chair will have the casting vote where necessary.

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The Steering Committee has the power to hold votes of no confidence in any member by simple majority vote.

2b. Steering Committee Powers

In fulfilling the purposes of the Company, the Steering Committee has the power to: -

- i. Co-operate, support and work with other groups with similar purposes by exchanging information, advice and knowledge, including cooperation with other voluntary bodies, charities, statutory and non-statutory organisations.
- ii. Promote sustainable development, environmental improvement and conservation.
- iii. Publicise and promote the work of the Forum and organise a programme of community engagement, to include meetings, training courses, public events, seminars etc.
- iv. Employ such staff, consultants and other freelance personnel (who shall not be members of the Steering Committee) as are necessary to conduct activities to meet the objectives.
- v. Promote the health, social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the residents of the area by working together with all people irrespective of age, sex, ethnicity, ability, religion or political affiliation.
- vi. Do anything else within the law and within its delegated powers that is necessary to achieve the objectives.

3. Membership

Membership of the Forum shall be open to anyone who is resident in, works in or is an elected member of the Council representing the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Area. At all times the Forum will comprise at least 21 individuals who meet these criteria. Membership shall be invited from anyone who thus qualifies and wishes to actively commit themselves to the realisation of the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Plan. Members of the Forum shall also be Members of the Company.

4. General Meetings

The Forum shall hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year on the same date as the Company AGM. An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) may be called at any other time at the written request of at least ten Members, and must be called within three (3) weeks of the receipt of such a request.

Each AGM or EGM of the Forum will be called with at least fourteen (14) working days' notice by giving written notice to all Members and by informing all residential properties within the agreed Neighbourhood Plan Boundary, through a best endeavours approach of publishing in local newspapers, posting on the Forum website, and utilising community groups' email distribution lists.

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The notice for each AGM or EGM of the Forum shall specify the time and place of the meeting, the nature of the business to be transacted and any resolutions that are to be proposed.

The quorum and arrangements for conducting a General Meeting of the Forum will be as those for General Meetings of the Company and set out in its Articles of Association. Only registered members will be entitled to vote.

All registered members are entitled to vote on resolutions at a general Meeting of the Forum. Voting shall be made by a show of hands on a majority basis. In the case of a tied vote, the chair of the meeting shall make the final decision.

5. Public Meetings

Holding public meetings gives legitimacy to the Forum and to the plans that they, or their Focus or Working Groups, may develop. The Forum shall hold public meetings as may be necessary to engage the public and give clear direction to the Forum's work.

A public meeting may be held at the same time as the AGM each year, or any other General Meeting, with the public able to participate after the completion of formal Company and Forum business.

Only full members of the Forum may stand for the Steering Committee and should be nominated by a Member or Associate Member.

7. Steering Committee Meetings

The SC shall meet at least four times a year. Meetings shall enable the group to discuss actions and monitor progress to date, and to consider future actions.

SC members shall be given at least fourteen (14) days' notice of when and where a meeting is due to take place, unless it is deemed as an emergency. Dates of SC meetings shall also be publicised on the Forum's website.

At least five (5) members of the SC must be present in order for a meeting to be quorate.

The Chair of the Board of Directors shall chair the SC meetings. In the absence of the Chair, the SC Members shall appoint one of those present to chair the meeting. All meetings shall be minuted and the minutes made accessible to the public and published on the Forum's website.

8. Finance

Any money acquired by the Forum, including donations, contributions and bequests, shall be paid into a bank account operated by the Steering Committee in the name of the Forum. All funds shall be applied to the furtherance of the objects of the Group and for no other purpose.

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Any deeds, legal documents and/or cheques etc. relating to the Forum shall be signed by at least two (2) of the following Steering Committee members: Chairperson; Vice Chair, Treasurer; Company Secretary. All four signatories must be informed of the cheque disbursement prior to its issue. In most cases, it is expected that there will have been prior discussion of the disbursement at a meeting of the Forum.

Financial monitoring and reporting shall be the responsibility of the Treasurer, who will be accountable for maintaining records of income and expenditure. Official accounts shall be maintained, and will be examined annually by an independent accountant who is not a member of the Group. The Treasurer will present an annual financial report to the membership at the AGM and intermittent reports to the Steering Committee upon request, in order to ensure funds are utilised effectively and that the Group stays within budget. The accounting year of the Forum shall run from 01 April to 31 March.

9. A Neighbourhood Plan – the Process

Any decision to proceed to the 'Pre-Submission Consultation' or 'Submission to the Local Authority' stages with a draft of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan shall be subject to approval of a resolution at a General Meeting.

Consultation on a Neighbourhood Plan will be open to people who live, work or carry out business in the Neighbourhood Area, as well as other identified relevant stakeholders, whether members of the Forum or not.

The Forum shall set up a website to publicise all stages of the Neighbourhood Planning process, to promote planned engagement of the community, to seek the views of the public and to publish the results of community consultation.

Key stages of the Neighbourhood Plan preparation process, as defined in the Forum's Project Plan, shall be subject to a full General Meeting of the Forum to facilitate consideration and discussion by the full membership.

The SC may delegate work with the local planning authority and any independent experts and advisors on the Neighbourhood Plan to a 'Neighbourhood Plan Working Group'.

The SC may delegate the task of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan to a 'Neighbourhood Plan Working Group'.

10. Alteration of this Document

This document may be amended by a resolution at a General Meeting of the Company by a two thirds majority of Members present and voting.

**APPLICATION TO DESIGNATE KNOWLE, DORRIDGE AND BENTLEY HEATH
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This Constitution and Scheme of Delegation was adopted at an inaugural meeting of Members held on 06 July 2015 by the following persons:

Name Jane Aykroyd
(Chair)

Name Dave Wallis
(Treasurer)

Name Bryan Hunt
(Lead, Neighbourhood Plan and Council Liaison)
