

Knighton Neighbourhood Forum – Housing & Planning Group Meeting 1
11th June 2018

Note of meeting

Attendees

Names of attendees are redacted from minutes made public for privacy reasons.

1) Welcome and Introductions

All attendees were invited to introduce themselves and briefly explain their interest in attending the group.

2) Knighton Neighbourhood Forum and the Working Group Approach

Simon Bennett gave a comprehensive overview of the history and purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and the role and objectives of the Knighton Neighbourhood Forum (KNF).

Simon Introduced Paul Tebbitt, an Independent Planning Consultant who would be chairing the meeting and leading the discussion in relation to key planning and housing issues that could be addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan.

PT gave a brief introduction explaining the role of NPs, their status and some context in terms of National Policy and the relationship with the Leicester Local Plan which was still being developed.

3. What are the issues for people at the meeting?

Many issues were raised amongst the group. These included:

a. Carisbrooke Road flood risk

- There were strong concerns about additional development in the area resulting in flooding issues.
- The Carisbrooke Road area has experienced flooding problems and there were concerns that backland development nearby may result in 'backing up' of underground culverts passing beneath those gardens, increasing the flood risk in Carisbrooke Road.
- The group agreed there needs to be certainty that development will not result in additional flooding.

b. Mary Gee Houses

- PT / SB indicated that Mary Gee Houses had been identified as a potential housing site by Leicester City Council as part of a consultation to inform their emerging Local Plan.
- KNF had submitted comments that broadly supported development of this site, subject to satisfactory design and other planning issues being addressed.
- This was the only site within the Knighton neighbourhood area that appeared to have any development potential.
- SB confirmed that, at the time, Leicester University were seeking to redevelop the site for student accommodation. This had now changed and disposal appeared likely.
- The group identified that the site was in a Conservation Area, had a spacious (low density) feel and contained many trees. There are also listed buildings nearby. It was agreed that any development would require a sensitive design solution.
- The removal of any trees could have potential implications for drainage as a result of adverse impacts on transpiration. Trees should be protected.
- Drainage could also be adversely affected by increased hard surfacing.
- The group considered that there needed to be certainty over drainage and flooding issues being addressed satisfactorily.

c. Welford Road Playing Fields

- The group were made aware of part of the playing fields at Welford Road being promoted for development and this was also identified in Leicester City Council's site assessments.
- At its peak 14 teams used the pitches.
- There was no support identified to redevelop this site;
- The group considered the site to be unsuitable because:
 - It is an important open space;
 - It has potential to flood;
 - There is a pavilion on the site that is an interesting building¹.

d. University related development

- It was acknowledged that the Universities are major developers in Leicester and that other impacts arose as a result of a growing student population in relation to accommodation.
- There is some uncertainty over the University's growth aspirations in terms of growth or contraction.
- The group agreed that the Universities should be contacted in order to understand future development plans.

¹ PT indicated that this could potentially be a 'non-designated heritage asset' that another working group might consider.

- The impact of student accommodation on the character of the area as a result of the transient nature, and sometimes anti-social behaviour of the population was a concern to some members of the group – recognising the important role of the University in the City.

Action: SB / GW to approach Universities to understand growth

e. Mix of houses

- There was a broad consensus that Knighton needed more ‘small’ starter homes / small houses / bungalows as recent developments had been dominated by larger detached houses.
- Accommodation for ‘downsizers’ was considered important.

f. Affordable Housing

- The group felt that ‘affordable housing’ was important but that this should be genuinely affordable. There was a concern that affordable housing in Knighton would not be affordable to those in acute need.
- Affordable housing need should be based on evidence. There is anecdotally a need, but evidence is required.

g. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HiMO)

- There was a perception that the prevalence of HiMOs was increasing in Knighton allied to growth in the Universities.
- Examples of communities elsewhere being eroded by increases in HiMOs were cited.
- PT explained the definition of a HiMO and when planning permission was required.
- A policy on HiMOs had some support from the group.
- PT suggested that ‘evidence’ of the level of HiMO concentrations would be helpful to understand the concentrations of HiMOs. Anecdotal evidence is not normally acceptable in plan making.

Action: SB/GW to speak with City Council in order to seek evidence.

h. Subdivision of houses

- The group recognised the distinction between HiMOs and subdivided ‘houses’.
- There was broad support for subdivision of large houses subject to:
 - No adverse impacts on character;
 - Sub-division can result in logical / useable space;
 - Adequate ‘on-plot’ parking is available

- Sub-division of other buildings may be acceptable if the above criteria are met.
- i. Living above shops
- There was broad support for a policy encouraging Living above existing shops.
 - The group recognised that there were limited opportunities and the costs might be prohibitive in terms of insulation and means of escape – otherwise more would have been converted.
- j. Backland development
- Examples of inappropriate backland development were cited.
 - It was recognised that this might be the main source of supply in Knighton given the limited number of identified sites and constrained boundary.
 - A policy should specify what is required to make backland development acceptable. It was suggested that some areas may not be suitable for backland development because of character / flooding constraints and these could be identified in the plan.
- k. Design of houses
- The group recognised that parts of Knighton had a strong character – not only the two Conservation Areas.
 - The group considered that new developments should be: of appropriate scale, have locally distinctive architectural detailing; use appropriate materials and be environmentally sensitive, low carbon and energy efficient.
 - A policy to address this was supported.
 - A policy that prevented turning front gardens into parking areas was also suggested.

4. What we know about Housing and Planning in Knighton (baseline study and Local Plan - if there are any results from the consultation)

PT gave a brief overview of some of the key findings of the 'Baseline Study' and indicated that it was available for inspection on the website. SB made available a summary sheet of some of the key findings.

Some of the key housing and planning findings were:

- Under-occupation of houses when compared to Leicester City as a whole;
- More detached and semi-detached houses when compared to Leicester City as a whole;
- Less terraced houses / flats;
- Significantly more owner occupation.

5. Actions for the Working Group members

Actions decided at the meeting were to:

- Make contact with the Universities to understand growth plans;
- Maintain contact with Leicester City Council (LCiC) planners regarding development of the Local Plan and relationship with Neighbourhood Plan;
- Request data from LCiC regarding HiMO concentrations;
- Look at examples of policies in other plans that might help inform the Knighton Plan;
- Gather evidence regarding what makes Knighton Buildings special / unique and locally distinctive;
- Think about what number of houses could realistically be accommodated.

6. Dates of future meetings

Thursday 5th July at 7:30pm in Main Hall, Knighton Parish Centre.

Monday 6th August at 7:30pm in the Lounge, Knighton Parish Centre.