

# 2026



# CELEBRATING 75 YEARS OF KNOWLE

In 1276, the village of Knowle came into being, entering historical records by the grant of becoming a Manor in its own right.

Until then, those living at this settlement at the top of a hill (or Cnolle in Saxon terminology) were living in an outlying settlement of the Manor of Hampton-in-Arden.

This change did not, though, reflect a change of ownership as both Manors remained amongst the estates of the powerful de Arden family until 1285 when Knowle was purchased by King Edward I and Queen Eleanor.

So, 2026 affords our community an opportunity to celebrate 750 years of our history and to explore this rich and fascinating timeline with the Society's Local History team as our guides.

Make a note now of Sunday 21 June 2026, when, led by our village community organisations, we will come together to celebrate and party in the village centre, closed to traffic for the day, with entertainment, food, drink and activities for all ages.

And watch out for announcements of other 750th Birthday related activities, exhibitions and events throughout the year.

## Celebrations in June and Throughout the Year

### Events Diary

**Saturday February 21st**  
2.30pm in the Village Hall

**Monday March 23rd**  
10.30am in the Village Hall

**Monday April 20th**  
7.30pm in the Village Hall

NB: There will be no evening Speaker Meetings in January, February or March

**Annual General Meeting**  
Refreshments and discussion after the formal business (see page 7)

**History Talk - Memories of Knowle**  
Refreshments from 10.00am

**Speaker Meeting - TBA**  
TBA

**HOUSING  
DEVELOPMENTS  
SPECIAL  
SEE PAGES  
12 to 15**

# Reflections on Four Years in the Chairman's Seat

*David Bower looks back on his term of office*



Christmas Light Switch-on 2025 - Challenge to meet the requirements of Martyn's Law

This is my last foray into patrician 'state of the nation' articles for the newsletter, some may say 'rants', but it has been my pleasure to serve as the Society's Chairman for the last four years; three is the normal stint and as is often the case it is just when you are getting into your stride, so it was perhaps not such a bad thing to have been asked to hang on for another year.

Anyway, I am proud of the Society's achievements over that period and long before, and very privileged to have had such commitment and support from the trustees and volunteers who all make it tick.

None of these achievements came from my initiative which also speaks volumes for the health of the Society; our renewed playground equipment, the very well-used basketball court, a thriving and active Local History Centre, several imaginative 'green' initiatives, highly successful celebratory street events, a packed major public meeting on the new housing developments and a plethora of regular commitments including newsletters (and their distribution), talks, walks, manning the Library on Saturday afternoons, maintaining membership, the website, our telephone kiosk in the High Street, community services such as maintaining the precinct flower beds and litter picking, representing the Society on various forums and official bodies, and not least, feeding the social media frenzy.

In all these I have not mentioned the foundational role of the Society in preserving and improving the built environment in Knowle.

This is the constant concern of our planning committee, which inspects and considers its response to every planning application. Their work has involved responding to the tsunami of applications being made to build the government imposed quota of new homes on our green and grey belt land.

I have already paid tribute to the volunteers who have given so much to making the Society a vibrant and effective contributor to 'village' life but the regulatory environment in which organisations such as ours are having to live is beginning to have a marked negative effect.

This has been apparent in many organisations, perhaps a little smaller than ours in many cases but also some bigger, in which the weight of legislation is proving to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

The impact of Martyn's Law arising from the Manchester Arena bombing and requiring greater recognition of terrorist risks, very nearly scuppered our Christmas Lights switch-on this year and has certainly caused the cancellation of many such events across the country.

On another front, your trustees have been advised that it cannot have a charity bank account if it exceeds twelve trustees (our Articles permit more and we benefit from a large pool of active volunteers). The 'trustee directors' also now have to meet stringent new requirements from Companies House and declarations for HMRC that seek to limit fraud and money laundering.

*(continued on next page)*

## Reflections on Thirteen Years of Community Service

*A Trustee Director since 2012, Lilla Baker is retiring*



Lilla Baker, right, leading the October 2022 Precinct Tidy Up

This is likely to be my last contribution to the Newsletter, as I will be stepping down as a TD of the Knowle Society at the AGM in February.

During the years I have been a Trustee Director, I have seen the Society grow as an organisation. It has done its best to support the village and its community within Solihull Borough and put our views and concerns to the forefront.

With the help of volunteers we have undertaken regular tidy ups of the flower beds in the Precinct and litter picks throughout the village, often managing in excess of 20 rubbish bags at a time. Many more people seem to be taking an interest in how the village looks. It is good to see the Park well used, with the Society having contributed towards the play area and more recently with the basketball court.

Wider afield, I have ensured that Knowle has been taken into account at the Airport Consultative Committee, have attended the Talking Rubbish Group meetings and been the Society's face at the KDBH Neighbourhood Forum.

I have participated in many events with the Society, in addition to the Christmas Lights, such as having stalls at the VE Celebrations and Party in the Park.

Looking to the future, we face an increase in the size of the village and we can look to influence this in much the same way as in the 1970s/80s, with new estates becoming very pleasant places to live supported by the necessary infrastructure.

Can we do it again?

**Lilla Baker**

**communityservices@knowlesociety.org.uk**

**Lilla Baker, Community Services**

## A Tribute to our Community - the Main Hall Was Packed

*(continued from previous page)*

None of these worthy objectives make it any easier to foster a healthy volunteering corpus at a time when many organisations are dying on their feet for lack of new blood.

May I finish with a tribute to our local community that puts a more positive face on life today. By all accounts our public meeting was a huge success (at least in updating the community, even if not achieving any reduction in that housing demand, but then it never was expected to do more than convey public feeling back to the decision makers).

Arden Academy's main hall was packed and the conduct of the debate and questions was noticeable for a traditional civility and politeness that bucked the trend of much social media incivility, well done Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath, give yourselves a pat on the back!

Thank you for your support and I look forward to a new era under our next Chair.

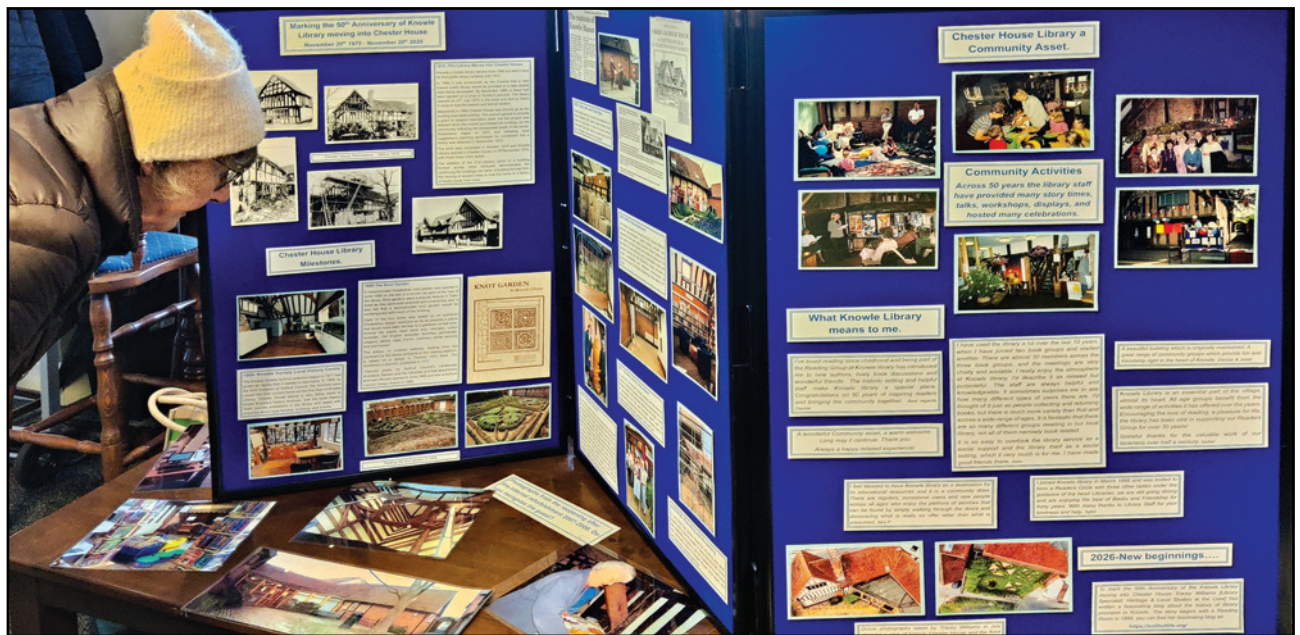
**David Bower**

**chairman@knowlesociety.org.uk**

**Knowle 775790**

# The Library at Chester House - Past, Present and Future

*The Local History Team helps with an Exhibition*



Lilla Baker visits the Local History Team's display boards at the 50 years celebration

## **FROM SELECT MAGAZINE - 1991**

“There can be few, if any libraries throughout the land that are as pleasant and well preserved as the branch library at Knowle, Solihull. Of course, it was never meant to be a library and was saved from an ignominious fate by Solihull Council who rescued it in 1972 and carefully restored it to its former glory.”

## **THE PRESENT**

The reroofing and repair plan for Chester House is on schedule for completion by mid-February 2026, with the Library and Local History Centre set to reopen in early March.

The Local History team's plans for reopening include changing the name of The Local History Centre to The Heritage Centre, preparing a '600 years of Chester House' exhibition and installing the 'Walk Through Time' heritage trail board in the Library courtyard, together with a new bench funded by the Knowle Society with profits from the October Quiz Night.

When plans are finalised, and dates confirmed, detailed information will be placed on our website and Knowle Library's Facebook page.

## **THE PAST - A SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY**

On Thursday 20 November, the staff marked the 50th anniversary of our Library's relocation from a shop in the Precinct, to its current home in Chester House. Visitors were invited to the Library's temporary home at Knowle Royal British Legion for anniversary

refreshments and to view a display of photographs which recorded those fifty years of the Library's history as well as its contribution to community life.

There have been several milestones across these fifty years (see panel on opposite page).

To mark this special anniversary Tracey Williams (Library Specialist: Heritage & Local Studies at the Core), pictured below, left, with Library Manager, Donna Brennan, and the celebration cakes, has written an interesting blog about the history of library provision in Knowle. The story begins with a Reading Room in 1860. You can find the blog on [www.solihulllife.org](http://www.solihulllife.org). It is well worth a read.

## **THE FUTURE**

In 2026 the library will reopen, and another new chapter will begin for this much valued community asset.



## Celebrating the Library Opening for a Second Time

*and other planned Local History activities for 2026*



Chester House - before restoration and opening as Knowle Library, 1975

Our team is planning a programme of talks, exhibitions and celebrations for 2026, which will be a landmark anniversary for the village.

The first of our talks for the year, 'Memories of Knowle', will be on Monday 23 March at 10.30am. Come along to the Village Hall to find out more about life in Knowle in the 20th century from archive snippets of films, interviews, audio recordings and individual life stories. There is much to be gleaned about Knowle's history from these eyewitness accounts and their unique perspectives.

During the year, we will be creating a series of exhibitions about people who have made a significant contribution to Knowle through their work, generosity, personal service, individual skill

or community activities. Look out for them in 'The Heritage Centre' when the Library reopens.

Celebrations are being planned to mark the reopening of the Library, with possibly a Tudor event. We will also be joining in with the celebrations of 2026 marking 750 years since Knowle first appeared in historical records, see the front cover for more details, and tracking its interesting timeline from then until today. This is a milestone which will certainly be worth celebrating!

Look out for more information on our website, via posters and in the 2026 newsletters. We look forward to sharing an interesting year ahead.

**The Local History Team**  
[history@knowlesociety.org.uk](mailto:history@knowlesociety.org.uk)

### Fifty Years at Chester House - The Library Milestones

There have been several milestones across those years:

1975 - Knowle Library moved into the newly restored Chester House

1988 - Knowle Society Local History Centre opened on the first floor of the Library

1989 - Elizabethan knot garden opened at the rear of the Library on a former car park. The garden won a Civic Award

2002 - Society led Tours, talks and Tudor days to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II

2007/2008 – Internal refurbishment which provided additional shelving, new seating areas and special furniture for the Children's Library

2011 - Knowle Society Library Volunteer Group formed to extend Saturday opening hours

2019 - Owl carving commissioned by the Society, with book titles selected for the owl's perch

2025 - Chester House closed for repairs and reroofing, and the Library moves to the Knowle Royal British Legion for six months.

# AGM 2026

In advance of the 2026 Annual General Meeting of the Society, to be held on Saturday 21 February, the following three pages provide information and matters for approval at the meeting.

## AGM 2026 - Summary of 2025 AGM Minutes (held on 22 February)

### **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

David Bower, as Chairman, welcomed everyone to the AGM of the Society, thanked all for their attendance and took apologies for absence.

The Minutes of the AGM held on 24th February 2024 were approved.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

David Bower referred to the Trustees' Report which detailed the many and varied activities of the Society, thanking members and volunteers for their valued support.

Depicting the job as "taming the elephants", made harder by the rejection of the Solihull Local Plan and the government-led accelerated housing initiative, the Society would continue to engage with and work to influence proposed development on the KN01 and KN02 sites as much as possible.

He was also pleased to report that volunteer support had now resulted in keeping the Library open on Saturday afternoons for 14 years.

A second major project had now been developed in association with "Love Knowle Park". A half basketball court had been funded by £15K from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and £15K from the Society, courtesy of the Mary Riley legacy, with the Local Authority having responsibility for seeing it through.

He was pleased to read out a very appreciative Facebook message from a parent who had observed how much it meant to her to see her young son enjoy the court, which she felt exemplified great hope for the future.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

David Watson presented the accounts for the year ending 30th September 2025, referring to the full set of accounts available in hard copy and on the website.

Although income had dropped slightly, membership remained stable with subscriptions moving steadily to collection by Direct Debit and boosted by Gift Aid.

It had not been a high spending year, with very little activity outside of normal spending, resulting in an increase in reserves of £2,803. Combining the nominal fund, the general fund and the legacy fund, the total Reserves now stood at £112,060.

Investment in current projects, however, was anticipated to reduce this figure by an estimated £17,000. These initiatives would include the planned Basketball court for the Park, various Natural Environment improvements and a Heritage Trail information production using QR codes to access digital information and learn more about the area.

There were no direct questions but an observation from Peter Johnson who was pleased to note the stabilisation of membership after a number of years of decline and a hope that this would be an ongoing trend.

The adoption of the Treasurer's Report and Accounts was proposed by Peter Johnson, seconded by Lilla Baker and carried unanimously.

### **APPOINTMENTS AND RETIREMENTS**

The appointment of West & Co Accountants as Independent Examiner was proposed by David Watson, seconded by Bill Bohanna, and agreed.

Peter Ewin as President took the Chair for the appointment of Officers: David Bower as Chairman, Gavin Allen as Deputy Chairman, Maria Brown as Secretary and David Watson as Treasurer who were all duly elected.

Martin Fortune, Dave Fraley, Alistair Innes, Andrew Marston and Dave Pinwell were elected for three-year terms of office as Trustee Directors.

Bill Bohanna paid tribute to Martin Warr, who was stepping down after a number of years as a Trustee Director and David Bower presented Life Memberships to Peter and Betty Ewin, stepping down as Joint Chairs of the Local History Group.

In his absence, Robert Hopkins, who had been a stalwart volunteer of the Library for nearly 14 years, was also honoured with the award of Life Membership of the Society.

**THE KNOWLE SOCIETY**  
(A company limited by guarantee)

I give notice that the 62nd Annual General Meeting of The Knowle Society will be held in Knowle Village Hall on Saturday 21st February 2026 commencing at 2.30pm. A copy of the proposed Agenda will be downloadable from the Society's website in advance of the meeting.

The meeting will receive Reports on the activities of the Society during the previous twelve months and also the Accounts for the year ended 30th September 2025. It will elect the Officers of the Society (Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer) for the ensuing twelve months and the appointment of a number of Trustee Directors in addition to the Independent Examiner of the Accounts for the coming year.

Nominations for these vacancies should be in writing and sent to the Hon Secretary of the Society, c/o 2 Hall Farm Court, Kenilworth Road, Knowle, B93 0AD as soon as possible. They should be signed by the proposer, seconder and nominee, all three of whom must be members of the Society. The Nomination Form may be downloaded from the Join Us page of [www.knowlesociety.org.uk](http://www.knowlesociety.org.uk). If you do not have convenient access to the Internet please call me on 01564 775790, and I will be pleased to make a paper copy available to you.

David Bower, Chairman

Company Number 05514023    Charity Number 1111085

**AGM 2026 - Accounting Summary for 2024-2025**

**Financial results for the Year**

For the year ending 30th September 2025, the Society received £15,809 income, of which £9,641 was from membership subscriptions and £1,815 from recovery of gift aid tax. £3,387 was also added from savings account interest.

Expenditure was £12,164, plus £30,000 for the Knowle Park basketball court project totalling £42,164. £1,178 was spent on the various social events throughout the year, including the October

fish and chips quiz night. The profit from the Quiz Night of £378 which was added to the basketball court fund.

The reserves at 30th September 2025 stood at £85,705. This represents a reduction in reserves of £26,355 for the year.

The unrestricted general fund and restricted other funds are set out below.

**David Watson, Hon Treasurer**  
[treasurer@knowlesociety.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@knowlesociety.org.uk)

**AGM 2026 - Summary of Knowle Society Reserves**

<b>Nominal Account</b>	<b>As at 30th Sep 2025</b>
General Fund	£32,581
Legacies	£45,879
Natural Environment Fund	£7,038
SUSTAiN Prize Fund	£207
Love Knowle Park (Basketball Court)	NIL
<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>£85,705</b>

## AGM 2026 - Three Year Summary of Accounts 2022/25

Year Ending September	2023	2024	2025
Members' Subscriptions	10,056	9,650	9,641
Gift Aid Tax Recovered	2,137	1,829	1,815
Love Knowle Park Donations	3,368	207	0
General Fund Donations	624	36	5
Christmas Cards & Calendar sales	1,625	0	0
Meetings, Visits and Social Event	1,230	888	961
Bank Interest	845	1,945	3,387
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<b>19,884</b>	<b>14,555</b>	<b>15,809</b>
<b>Resources Expended</b>			
Meetings, Visits and Social Events	1,935	1,147	1,178
Newsletter & Printing	2,660	2,420	2,400
Advertising, membership & gifts	712	866	846
Website	19	29	20
Local History Centre	511	712	597
Christmas expenses (Tree etc)	480	510	510
Subscriptions & Donations	2,663	1,115	588
Knot Garden maintenance	1,360	0	0
Phone Kiosk maintenance	250	250	250
Natural Environment	110	360	633
Love Knowle Park Project	121	0	30,000
Heritage Projects	0	0	2,779
Planning	15	1,570	390
New Equipment	0	668	0
Accountancy	648	678	739
Storage Facilities	225	225	225
Governance, Trustee meetings & Insurance	1,096	1,202	1,009
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>12,806</b>	<b>11,752</b>	<b>42,164</b>
<b>Net Income (Net Expenditure where negative)</b>	<b>7,078</b>	<b>2,803</b>	<b>-26,355</b>
<b>Balance Sheet</b>			
Fixed Assets	NIL	NIL	NIL
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>109,257</b>	<b>112,060</b>	<b>85,705</b>
<b>Number of Members</b>	<b>2,544</b>	<b>2,481</b>	<b>2,420</b>

## Making Representations to Save Evidence of the Knowle's Past

*Andrew Marston reports on objections to destructive development plans*



Proposed entrance to the Bloor Homes site by demolition of 51 Knowle Wood Road

I was reminded by the Editor at the beginning of December that 'copy' for this issue was due promptly to ensure a timely delivery of the Newsletter to all our Members.

Unfortunately, at that time I was just putting the finishing touches to the Planning Committee's response to Solihull Council planners regarding the proposal of 22 new dwellings, accessed where Chris' Mowers stands at the top of Stripes Hill. The Council are due to consider the application shortly.

At the same time, I was presented with the unenviable tasks of informing him that my next priority was not this Report but preparing the Committee's reply to the Bloor Homes planning application for another development of either 350 or 430 dwellings (the number varied between different submission documents).

The land proposed for these is located behind Grove Road to the south, to the east of Knowle Wood Road and to the north of Norton Green Lane. With only two vehicular and pedestrian access points, one each on Knowle Wood Road and Norton Green Lane, to a site nearly 500 metres long, you can well imagine the resulting impact on the countryside and the existing road network surrounding the site, should it be approved.

We considered the loss of a huge open agricultural area with, would you believe, a somewhat considerable historic past, revealed through trenches dug by the applicant to see if any archaeological features could be found.

Although unsuccessful in finding any relics, the excavations looking back to before medieval times indicated that the land would then have been used for agricultural purposes. Then, from medieval times, post 1500's ridge and furrow remains evident. Physical evidence found to confirm this suggestion of agricultural use includes a trowel spur, strap fitting and alloy buckles.

If the ridge and furrow, a non-designated historic asset as noted by Heritage England, is lost, as it might be on the Warwick Road site mentioned above, should the planners decide that new development is more important than both decreasing the supply of agricultural land and, in this instance, losing historic evidence, then it will be a tragic end to those features which helped sustain Knowle from its outset.

If the application is approved, once building work has started to provide acres of tarmac and hundreds of brick boxes, evidence of our history will be gone for ever, the complete antithesis of the purpose of this Society of 'to preserve and protect'.

Whilst we appreciate that the housing stock needs to be increased to meet the needs of others who wish to live in the area, it must not be at the expense of history with nothing to show for it other than documentation, preferably stored in Warwick County Archives, as a reminder to those in the future who will wish to look back and ask 'why?'.

**Andrew Marston**  
[planning@knowlesociety.org.uk](mailto:planning@knowlesociety.org.uk)  
 Knowle 774082

# Could You Spare Some Time to Support Your Society

*We have opportunities for a few hours a year or for all year around*

**Have you an interest in aviation?** We seek a volunteer to take over from Lilla Baker as our representative on the Airport Consultative Committee. Representatives of the various communities affected by aircraft flying overhead meet with Airport managers four times a year.

The ACC considers matters such as aircraft noise and night flying but also offers a fascinating insight into airport operations, market demands and trends in technology. Our representative provides a voice for Knowle at the meeting and is asked to provide a report back to the membership on key developments through this Newsletter.



**Do you use our buses?** We also seek a volunteer to take over from Lilla Baker in keeping an eye on bus services and attending the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Bus Action Group. This gets together to discuss issues with bus services and has occasional meetings with Transport for West Midlands.

Again, our representative provides a voice for Knowle at the meeting and is asked to provide a report back to the membership on forthcoming service changes through this Newsletter. It could even suit someone to do this role and the one above as a Transport specialist....

**Could you help with the Christmas Lights Switch-on?** Each year, with the support of other local organisations, the Society plans and manages the Christmas Lights Switch-on ceremony for the benefit of local families. But growth in numbers attending and increasing safety demands mean that we need more volunteers to don a hi-viz jacket and help manage the crowd or the traffic.

You would be asked to attend an advance briefing as well as the event itself, but it would just require a total of four hours of your time once a year to be part of one of the most enjoyed events of the year.



**Do you want the Library to stay open on Saturday afternoons?**

For almost 15 years now, Society volunteers have manned the Library from 1pm to 3pm on Saturdays, with a rota that schedules everyone on the list about once every four weeks. The volunteers oversee the return and lending of books and answer general queries if they can (other Library services being suspended for that period).

When the Library re-opens, hopefully in March, we shall start again with this rota but as volunteers retire we need replacements in order to sustain the service.

**Is there any other help you could offer the Society?** From Trustee Directors, who meet monthly to govern the activities of the Society, to the Planning Committee, meeting monthly to review local planning applications, to the Local History Group, managing the archive of historic photographs and documents reflecting 750 years of life in Knowle, to litter picks and to the distribution of this Newsletter four times a year, there are many other ways in which our Members can help put a little back into our Knowle community. If you have specific skills or interests to offer, talk to us about how you might help.



**To find out more - please email [volunteer@knowlesociety.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@knowlesociety.org.uk) or speak to us at the AGM**

## A Day Out and Stroll Around Lichfield's Historic Heart

*Visting the famous cathedral and other major attractions*



The city of Lichfield has 259 listed buildings, the majority of which are in a central area.

A walk around the square formed by Cathedral Close, Dam Street, Market Street and Bird Street will surround you with a host of them, as well as offering the hungry or thirsty a constant temptation from tea shops and restaurants.

Although there are short term car parks here, the long term Lombard, Redcourt and Friary car parks are better value. Two are shown on the map above. Friary, the largest and only multi-storey, is off the map, to the west of Bore Street/Swan Road junction.

Lichfield Cathedral, the only one in the UK with three spires from medieval times, has much to see from its 1300 years of history. In the Lady Chapel is the stained glass from Herkenrode Abbey in Belgium, saved from destruction by Napoleon's army.

In the Chapter House sits the eighth century manuscript known commonly as the Lichfield Gospels. Another treasure comes from that same century, but was discovered in 2003 during archaeological work, a statue of the Angel Gabriel known as the Lichfield Angel.

Also in Cathedral Close, but best accessed from Beacon Street, is the fascinating Grade I listed, Georgian house that belonged to Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles and a leading physician of his day. He was a Founder member of the Lunar Society and thus a contemporary of Matthew Boulton, James Watt and Josiah Wedgewood.

The house is now a museum and tribute to his work, with a collection of artifacts alongside interactive displays amongst the period furniture and furnishings. Winter opening days are Thursday to Monday.

The house is also famous for its Herb Garden, multiple gardens in one, each dedicated to a different purpose, culinary herbs, medical plants, specimens used for their dye and those that are simply scented.

Another museum dedicated to one of the city's famous past citizens is the birthplace of Dr Samuel Johnson, author, playwright, poet and compiler of what has been considered the earliest authoritative English dictionary, published in 1755. He is thought to be one of the most quoted people in the country.

The museum, free to visit and open daily, has reflected his life over its five floors and through its collection of over 8000 exhibits since it opened in 1901. The collection includes not only many of Johnson's manuscripts, letters and possessions, but also some of his famous contemporaries, including David Garrick, Anna Seward, Joshua Reynolds and James Boswell.

The visitor to the central area can also break away from the streets to stroll the paths alongside the scenic Minster and Stowe Pools, with their views across to the cathedral spires, or Beacon Park with its more than 70 acres of gardens and wider open space.

Lichfield has much to offer for a bit of exercise, fresh air and indoor interest and as such, ideal for a winter visit.

# HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

A four page special supplement summarising the housing development plans and issues covered at the Public Meeting organised by the Society on Monday 3 November at Arden Academy

## Current New Housing Site Proposals and Status



Plan of Arden Triangle Sites



Locations of Other Potential Sites

## List of Confirmed and Potential Sites

There are currently twelve sites surrounding Knowle on which new housing is approved to be built, an application to build has been submitted or a developer is expected to seek permission to build.

- 1a Inspired Villages (Arden Triangle/KN2 - Full planning permission for approximately 48 extra care units including a 'village centre' as well as outline planning permission for approximately 122 extra care units granted on 13 November 2024 (Application 2023/0222).
- 1b Taylor Wimpey (Arden Triangle)/KN2 - Outline planning application, with all matters reserved for the erection of up to 200 dwellings granted on 16 December 2025 (Application 2025/00155).
- 1c Kler Construction (Arden Triangle)/KN2 - outline planning application for the construction of up to 450 houses granted on 21 May 2025 (Application 2023/02294).
- 1d Gardner Land (Arden Triangle - Land owner by the Gardner family for which a planning application for up to 40 dwellings is expected, but not as yet received,
- 2 Knowle FC Ground/KN1 - the palying field was included in the previous Draft Local Plan with a proposal that the Club could relocate to a larger site, which is its aspiration, but as yet no proposals are forthcoming.

*(continued on next page)*

## Background to the Current Situation



Proposed entrance to Blacksmiths Fold on Warwick Road

At the meeting on 3 November, Councillor Andy Mackiewicz, Cabinet Portfolio Holder - Climate Change & Planning and Mark Andrews, Head of Planning, made presentations explaining the current situation.

In 2024, the incoming Government made major changes intended to address the national housing shortfall and 'Get Britain building'. Under the leadership of Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner, two very significant developments were a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and a reallocation of housing targets to Local Authorities.

For Solihull Council, the latter change increased the number of dwellings to built in the borough from 816 to 1331 per year, an increase of 63 per cent.

The changes to the NPPF introduced the concept of Grey Belt, see details on the next page, which makes it substantially more challenging to reject new housing plans on the fringes of our built up area.

Solihull now needs to create a new Local Plan which will identify how the new higher target will be met and identify suitable sites for new homes.

The borough has little previously developed, ie brownfield, land available for redevelopment and thus some Green Belt land will need to be included.

This new Local Plan will take time to prepare and meanwhile developers are free to suggest sites which might meet the immediate targets by presenting their planning applications.

See also page 16 - more planning change to come.

## List of Confirmed and Potential Sites (continued)

- 3 Former Thacker Nursery/KN1 - included in the previous Draft Local Plan but only within the last few weeks has the site seen any activity, surveying work believed to be on behalf of Bloor Homes.
- 4 Former Wyndley Garden Centre - Full planning permission for the erection of a 'village care centre', and 85 one and two bedroom care dwellings granted on appeal on 25 March 2022 (Application 2020/01993).
- 5 Blacksmiths Fold - Planning application received from Bordeaux Estates for outline permission to demolish existing building and build up to 22 dwellings (Application 2025/01660).
- 6 Blue Lake Road - Planning application received from Bloor Homes for outline permission to erect up to 350 dwellings (Application 2025/01903).
- 7 Golden End - Pre-application consultation in progress for a development of 250-300 homes at the rear of Kenilworth Road and Kixley Lane by an unnamed applicant.
- 8 Smiths Lane - It is known that a developer is seeking to develop this parcel of land bounded by Smiths Lane, Browns Lane and Widney Manor Road, but this is at early stage.
- 9 Langfield Road - An application to develop land alongside Purnells Brook with 15 houses, accessed from Langfield Road was rejected on 22 May 2024 (Application 2023/01579).

## What is 'Grey Belt' and Why is it Problematic



Fields adjacent to Blue Lake Road - considered to be Grey Belt by Bloor Homes

When the concept of Grey Belt was introduced it was stated as parts of the Green Belt that do not contribute strongly to its aims. Early discourse suggested it could include:

- poor quality land, car parks and wastelands;
- poor quality scrubland, mothballed on the outskirts of town;
- car parks or similar land which do not affect the beauty of the countryside;
- disused petrol stations.

When the new NPPF was published, however, the situation had changed. It was defined as 'land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d)'.

Those three Green Belt purposes are:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

It can be seen, from the above, why designating Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath as a town should be helpful in defending against areas on the periphery of Knowle being designated as Grey Belt, given that the protections of (b) and (d) do not apply to villages.

It is already clear, though, that heritage gives no guarantee of protection. In South Gloucestershire, a 140 home development has been allowed on appeal despite acknowledged harm to the setting of nearby listed buildings'.

In another case, in Surrey, an 80 home site was given a green light at the appeal stage despite being located in a Conservation Area.

Developers of proposed sites are already submitting arguments that the land they seek to build on should be considered as Grey Belt.

Bloor Homes, for example, have written, in their Planning Statement for their proposed 350 dwelling site at Blue Lake Road: "The site is considered to be grey belt land" and "does not strongly contribute to any of the purposes (a), (b), or (d)".

## The Impact on Infrastructure and Potential Mitigations

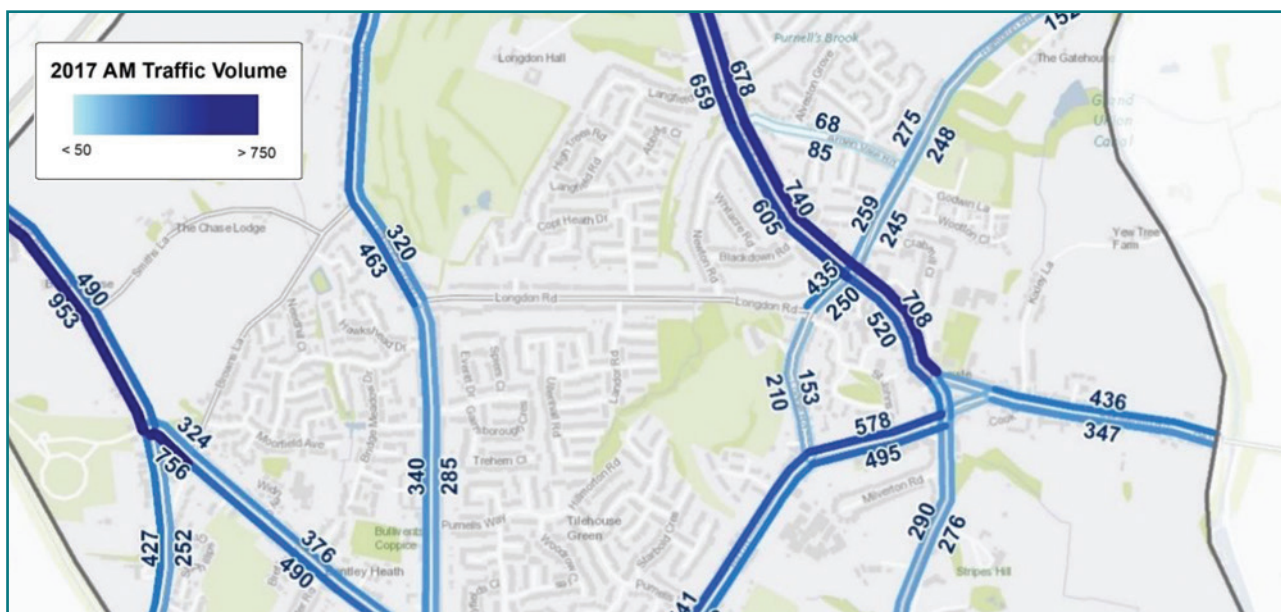
Dave Pinwell, Knowle Society Trustee and Ward Councillor gave the final presentation of the evening, looking at the impact on infrastructure, ie schools, health, roads, parking, etc.

The Council will require financial contributions towards infrastructure improvements in the form Section 106 Agreements.

Between the three Arden Triangle developments which are already approved, the Council is seeking the following:

- Education - £7,218,173
- Health - £4,451,878
- Highways - £2,844,774
- Sports and Leisure - £2,034,477.

## The Impact on Infrastructure (continued)



The Knowle Transport Study 2020 used the 2017 traffic levels as its base line

The uncertainties lie with where, how and when this money will be spent. From the community perspective, we want infrastructure investment at least at the same time as, if not before, houses are built and occupied, especially as much of it is already overstretched.

Too often, though, the infrastructure work comes later, not least because developers are asked to pay when phases of site development are complete.

The principles of Section 106 payment require that the benefit of the investments are accrued where the developments take place, but that leaves significant questions as to how. There are some key questions that we would wish to understand the answers to.

The Arden Triangle developers have allocated land for both primary and secondary schools. But will the new Arden Academy be larger than at present to accommodate the additional pupils in the area?

Is there space to expand any of the three existing GP surgeries in Knowle and Dorridge, or to build a new one?

And what of Highways? From information published thus far we can infer that there is no inclusion for parking capacity, 4% is for bus stop improvements, 10% for the Warwick Road Cycleway and the remainder for Highways Infrastructure.

But for clues on what that might entail we should probably look to the Knowle Transport Study 2020.

## Knowle Transport Study 2020

Put ‘Knowle Transport Study’ into a Google search and you will find a really important document. The consultants Mott MacDonald were commissioned to generate an assessment of how developing the KN1 and KN2 sites would affect local roads.

They used simulation techniques based on known peak time traffic levels, average annual growth levels and typical movements generated by new housing to model local roads to produce maps of hourly peak time traffic predictions for 2036, like that above.

They then modelled each key junction to determine whether it could handle the new levels arriving from each direction.

The conclusions indicated that volumes would be highest in the morning peak, with the High Street

handling 1520 vehicles in an hour. Consequently, its junctions with Station Road, Kenilworth Road and Lodge Road would all experience significant levels of congestion on an average day.

Furthermore, the Hampton/Arden Vale Roads, Warwick/Grove Roads and Station/Grove Roads junctions would also be at risk of congestion issues.

However, these simulations were done pre-Covid and thus before the Work at Home culture reduced peak volumes. It was based on 600 KN2 homes not the currently projected 890 and before KN2 was to accommodate the morning traffic to a new Primary School.

For those reasons, five years on, there is pressure to update that model before decisions are made.

# Twenty One New Members to be Welcomed

## *and more from our Membership Secretary*

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members to the Society:

Mr & Mrs B Jones	Mr & Mrs A Gilluley	Mrs G Poultney
Mr & Mrs J Green	Mrs M Noden	Mrs M Allsopp
Mr & Mrs D Doody	Mr & Mrs S Cowling	Mr & Mrs I Atkins
Mr & Mrs D Carter	Mr P Lawrence	Mrs L De Cesare
Mr & Mrs C Price	Mrs M Dale	Mrs J Jaffe

Please always let us know of any friends, family or neighbours who may be interested in joining the Society and we will get in touch with them.

We also keep in touch with many members who leave the area and who still want to hear about our activities in Knowle. Simply let us know you are moving, ensure that we have your up-to-date email address and continue to pay your annual subscription, and we will send you our quarterly newsletters by email.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has already paid their annual subscription. This money funds all our activities throughout the year.

**Graham Tucker**  
**membership@knowlesociety.org.uk**  
**07710 009761**

## **The Planning and Infrastructure Bill**

In September, the Government announced its intention to go even further in a quest to 'Get Britain Building'. The following appeared on the gov.uk website:

"The Planning and Infrastructure Bill is central to the government's plan to get Britain building again and deliver economic growth. The Bill will speed up and streamline the delivery of new homes and critical infrastructure, supporting delivery of the government's Plan for Change milestones of building 1.5 million safe and decent homes in England and fast-tracking 150 planning decisions on major economic infrastructure projects by the end of this Parliament.

"Decisions about what to build and where should be shaped by local communities and reflect the views of local residents. However, in exercising local democratic oversight, it is vital that planning committees operate as effectively as possible. The Bill will ensure that they play their proper role in scrutinising development without obstructing it, whilst maximising the use of experienced professional planners."

The Bill received Royal Assent a week before Christmas, revealing the true extent of those plans to move powers from Planning Committees to the hands of 'professional planners'. The gov.uk website included the following in its summary of the Act:

"Modernising planning committees to focus on the most significant developments rather than smaller projects, speeding up local decisions on new homes."

In other words, small site decisions about how to use local land and protect the appearance of neighbourhoods risk being removed from local communities and reduced instead to desk exercises by professionals with limited local knowledge.

## **The Knowle Society Newsletter**

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*www.knowlesociety.org.uk*

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## **The Knowle Society**

*We have about 2400 members; can you encourage your friends and neighbours to join too? This may be done either by contacting the Membership Secretary or through an application form on our website (address below).*

*Established to maintain the character of the Village.*

## **Website and Social Media:**

*www.knowlesociety.org.uk*  
*www.facebook.com/*  
*KnowleSociety*

## **Membership:**

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## **In this issue**

- 1. Knowle's 750th Anniversary*
- 2. From the Chairman*
- 3. Community Services*
- 4-5. Local History*
- 6. AGM Minutes 2026*
- 7. Financial Report*
- 8. Accounts 2024/25*
- 9. Planning*
- 10. Volunteering Opportunities*
- 11. Day Out / Walk - Lichfield*
- 12-16. Housing Developments*
- 16. Membership*

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