



Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan

KEY MESSAGES

1. Vote YES for our Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan in the referendum in May.
2. It's about additional rules for assessing planning applications, so Knebworth can have more of a say about the village we love.
3. It sets out our own community's vision for the future of the Parish and is five years hard work by local volunteers.
4. Supporting our Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan is NOT voting for more housing.
5. It is strongly supported by the Parish Council, who object to building on green belt.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Who is our Neighbourhood Plan for?

It is for people in our community who:

- Care about Knebworth
- Want to influence future developments
- Want Knebworth to retain its village character
- Want to strengthen Knebworth's community

2. What is this referendum on 5th May about?

Neighbourhood Plans are tools to help local communities shape the future of their local areas. We have written one for Knebworth.

- The referendum asks voters if they want North Herts District Council (NHDC) to use the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications.
- Our Neighbourhood Plan sets out our own community's vision for the Parish's future.
- If a majority of voters support it, future planning applications for development in Knebworth will have to take it into account when they are assessed.
- The referendum is run for the community by NHDC alongside the District and Parish elections and follows the normal election rules. It is not run by the Parish Council.

3. What happens if people vote for the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan or against it?

The referendum is the final stage in a five year process to develop our Neighbourhood Plan, which has included several stages of public consultation already.

- If voters support it, then the plan becomes “made”. This means that when NHDC, as the Planning Authority, assess future any planning applications they also have to take into account the policies in our Neighbourhood Plan as well as District and National level policies.
- If voters do not support it, then there will remain no specific policies in place for Knebworth written by the local community. Planning Applications will be judged on broader District and National level policies only.

4. Is voting for the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan voting for more houses?

In a word - no.

- This referendum is not about saying yes or no to more houses in Knebworth, or voting for or against any specific planning application.
- The decisions about changing the Green Belt boundary, approving new housing around the edge of the village – or anywhere else – are all part of the NHDC Local Plan process across the whole District.
- The Neighbourhood Plan lays out how we would like any future developments to take into consideration the vision and wishes of our local community.
- But the Neighbourhood Plan is not proposing to allocate any land for housing or applying to build any houses. It attempts to influence HOW any future development happens, if and when it should occur.
- However, it also cannot stop the NHDC Local Plan process from changing the Green Belt boundary and allocating sites for new housing around Knebworth.
- This is a separate matter for NHDC and District Councillors, not the Neighbourhood Plan nor the Parish Council.

5. How does the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan relate to the North Herts District Council's Local Plan and national level planning?

There are essentially three tiers of planning body, each can set policies.

- Firstly there is the overall National Planning Policy Framework which sets out the whole approach for the country.
- Secondly there is the Local Planning Authority, which for us is North Herts District Council (NHDC). They set policies and run the planning function across the whole District. When you make a planning application for something, it is made to NHDC. Knebworth has two District Councillors.
 - It is the district-wide NHDC Local Plan that is proposing housing growth right across the district to meet housing needs identified with central government.
 - This includes the allocating the proposed sites around the current edge of Knebworth, which are known as KB1, KB2 and KB4.
 - These are currently in the Green Belt but the NHDC Local Plan, if and when finalised, will alter this to facilitate more development.
- Finally there are local communities, in this case Knebworth Parish and our Parish Council.
 - Local communities have the power to create Neighbourhood Plans for the local community – which is what this referendum is about.
 - Local communities in Knebworth have a say in specific planning applications through consultation processes run by NHDC, the Planning Authority.
 - Anyone can comment on a planning application, and the Parish Council is a statutory consultee on applications within the Parish.
 - However our comments do not have to be listened to by NHDC, who are the Planning Authority and make the planning decisions.

6. How can the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan have an impact on what gets built?

If our Neighbourhood Plan is voted for and “made” then it becomes part of the overall set of planning policies that apply to Knebworth, alongside the District level and National level policies.

- This means that when NHDC, the planning authority, are assessing the merits of a planning application to make a decision, all the agreed policies – including ours – have to be taken into consideration.
- It does not mean that everything that ever gets built will confirm to all policies of course, there are always exceptions and appeals that succeed.
- In that way we can maximise our influence over what gets approved and built. It is our “best shot” at helping shape the future of Knebworth, and it is the only mechanism available to us to create binding policies in the planning system.

7. What areas of community life does the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan cover and why?

Knebworth aims to be a vibrant and inclusive village community, a great place to live that is distinct and separate from its neighbouring communities.

- A place that aspires to good design and improved environmental performance where everybody has access to green spaces.
- A community that will accommodate sustainable growth and development in its population, services and infrastructure that embraces our values, has the minimum impact on local nature and wildlife and that ensures Knebworth's fundamental rural character is maintained.

The Neighbourhood Plan has focused on areas of life where planning policies can have an positive impact on our community. This includes:

- Development strategy – the identity of Knebworth and housing density
- Local economy – in the village centre, more rural locations: existing and new, home working and telecommunications
- The built environment – housing mix, sustainable buildings, accessibility, design
- Wellbeing – community facilities and amenities, green spaces, allotments
- Environment – character areas and views, heritage assets

This has resulted in a set of objectives and policies which are documented in the plan.

8. Why have the draft policies around transport, education and environmental pollution been left out for now?

Our Neighbourhood Plan has gone through several rounds of formal consultation following our draft document, as prescribed by planning law.

- In 2018 we presented the draft vision and objectives for public consultation, listened to that feedback and developed policies.
- In 2021 we agreed a "submission" version having factored in comments from prior public consultations and statutory bodies such as NHDC.
- This version then went for review late last year by an independent Planning Inspector. We received the results of this in February.

The inspector decided that several modifications should be made to our proposed Neighbourhood Plan to make it sound and in line with the National and District policy framework as it stands.

- This most notably included the removal of several policies related to traffic and transport, education and environmental pollution.
- The rationale for this, in most part, was due to the reliance that we were placing on the emerging NHDC Local Plan, which is not finally agreed yet.

- There were some other areas of wording change where the inspector felt that we had policies beyond what was deliverable.

This was unexpected. However, rather than try and engage in a potentially lengthy and costly challenge process, the Neighbourhood Plan team and the Parish Council decided that it was in the best interests of the community to ask for the modified version to be approved via the referendum now as it already contains most of our vision is.

- This is so we get most of what we want in place soon for use in planning decisions.
- If our Neighbourhood Plan is agreed, the team intend to start work on a review of the approved plan right away, to develop additional policies for those areas in a way that reflects the concerns of the prior inspection.
- This is because the team recognise the importance of these topics to the local community.

9. Who has created the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan?

- The Parish Council ultimately owns the Neighbourhood Plan and instigated its creation, including funding it and also obtaining grants from central government.
- However the hard work has been done by a group of unpaid local volunteers from who have worked on the developing the objectives, doing research and writing the proposed policies. They have also ran the consultation events we have held.
- This has meant the creation of an overall Steering Committee as well as several specific teams to work on topics such as housing design, the environment and wellbeing.

10. How long has it taken to develop the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan?

- To get to this stage has taken approximately five years hard work and dedication.
- This includes the initial setup of the team, holding initial consultations to ask the community what its issues were, developing draft policies and several formal stages of consultation.
- Our Neighbourhood Plan is a living document, and will continue to be reviewed and improved over time.
- However we believe that it is vitally important that we get the initial Neighbourhood Plan agreed now so we have something in place, in particular given the potential for significant housing growth soon due to the NHDC Local Plan.
- If it is approved now in the referendum, the Neighbourhood Plan team are intending to carry on work to address the further topics, including transport and education. Any modifications would be subject to further consultation and referenda.

11. Where can I find more information?

More information on the Neighbourhood Plan being voted on is available here:

- Knebworth Library and Knebworth Village Hall hold the full paper copies

The NHDC documentation for the Neighbourhood Plan version to vote on is:

- www.north-herts.gov.uk/approved-neighbourhood-areas-knebworth
- Information about the Planning Inspector's report and the "submission" versions they reviewed is here:
 - <https://knebworthneighbourhoodplan.org.uk>
- General information about Knebworth Parish Council can be found here:
 - <https://www.knebworthparishcouncil.gov.uk>
- If you wish to ask a question about the Neighbourhood Plan please contact:
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