

Housing and Planning Policies

Draft for Review

1 Preamble

Knighton is primarily a residential suburb with a population that is predominantly families, living in family housing. However, it has an ageing population, and creating opportunities to allow existing residents to downsize within the neighbourhood, retaining contacts and networks of support, as well as encouraging people with young families to move into the area, is a key objective of these policies, and is reflected in policies on housing mix and social housing.

Within the Neighbourhood Area, there are very few sites that allow for significant development, and two have been considered specifically in these policies. Most development is likely to be in one of these sites and through the development of infill and backland including gardens. However, there is a shortage of public green space in much of the area, and gardens provide an essential service to people and wildlife, so their development will only be allowed where there is a strong case and there is no contradiction with policies.

While predominantly residential, the area is quite diverse, with some areas having large detached houses with large gardens and off-street parking, and other areas of terraced and semi-detached housing that is more densely packed. New development will seek to provide sufficient off-street car parking to avoid adverse impacts resulting from on-street parking.

2 Policies

2.1 Policies for All Developments

2.1.1 General

Developments will be permitted where:

There are no demonstrable adverse impacts on the amenity¹ of neighbours, for example light, aspect, overshadowing, enclosure, noise and disturbance; and

Houses are sympathetic to the scale, mass, height and form of neighbouring development; and

Houses use materials and architectural detailing sympathetic to the character of the area; and

Development retains the current spacious, verdant and open character² of the neighbourhood (where this is the case) and does not lead to the appearance of cramming; and

Important trees³ are retained on site and incorporated into the development; and

Important site features including but not limited to hedges and ponds⁴ are retained on site, mitigated or incorporated in the design; and

¹ The term amenity needs to be defined and then referred to consistently in other parts of the policy document.

² The spacious, verdant character needs to be backed up with evidence, for example a canopy survey of the Neighbourhood Area, showing what percentage is tree cover, what is green open space.

³ Trees on the boundary of a site, trees visible from the public highway and mature trees within the site. The City Council officers will discuss whether they have a definition of important or significant trees.

⁴ Clarify if this means garden ponds or natural ponds. Should this include ponds full of koi carp, for example?

Adequate amenity, refuse and recycling storage is incorporated into the scheme to minimise visual impact.

2.1.2 Design of Houses

New development should be of high quality design and respect the character and appearance of the surrounding area of Knighton.

All new developments should:

Be sympathetic to the built form of Knighton generally and the local environs of the proposal including local street pattern, architectural form, scale, massing and layout; and

Use high quality materials that complement the existing palette within the area; and

Ensure safe access for pedestrians, cyclists and road users, including emergency services.

Innovative designs of high-quality architecture that are energy efficient and incorporate sustainable design and construction features will be supported, where they are sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area.

2.1.3 Parking

Developments should provide adequate parking for residents⁵. Developments will only be permitted where:

There is adequate on-site car parking; or

Where adequate on-site car parking cannot be provided the proposal must not exacerbate existing on-street parking problems in the local area (for example, demonstrating that there is sufficient capacity on street through a robust parking survey to demonstrate that parking can be accommodated on street without resulting in adverse impacts);

Provision is made for parking on the following basis:

House conversions and HiMOs – 1 car parking space per bedroom unit;⁶

One and two-bedroom flats/houses – 1.5 car parking spaces per unit;

Three-bedroom flats/houses – 2 car parking spaces per unit;

Larger houses – at least 3 car parking spaces per unit.

2.1.4 Flood Risk

Proposals for new development that have the potential to be adversely affected by flooding, or to increase flood risk off-site will be required to demonstrate how they will completely mitigate the increased flood risk to people, property and infrastructure. Note that this is an issue where development in neighbouring parts of Leicester City or Oadby and Wigston District can have an impact on Knighton that is beyond the control of these policies.⁷

⁵ The relevant government guidance is the Planning Practice Guidance from 2015. We need to provide evidence, for example using photos, and to be clear that parking is more of a problem in some areas than others. We can set parking standards. This data would be better presented in a table. We should initially set higher standards. Bicycle parking should be included. It may be necessary to define the acceptable size of a parking space, given the increasing size of cars, and the increasing use of cars like SUVs in urban areas. (The standard parking space in the UK is 15.7ft (4.8m) in length, by 7.8ft (2.4m) in width.) We should consider the DCRG method for calculating parking demand.

⁶ It may be possible to create an Article 4 Direction, but evidence would need to be provided.

⁷ We need to look at the NPPF guidance and make sure that we are in line with it. We also need to distinguish between vulnerability and risk. The areas at risk in the City are being renewed. Maps showing areas at risk should be included.

New development should:

Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding; and

Assess the impact of the development proposal on existing sewerage infrastructure in particular the Carisbrooke Road and Knighton Church Road environs; and

Where possible, incorporate the use of sustainable drainage systems; and

Avoid the creation of impermeable surfaces, including within the gardens and amenity space of dwellings, unless it can be demonstrated that the resulting surface water run-off can be satisfactorily directed to ground water.

In addition, the 'naturalisation' of existing water courses in the Knighton area will be encouraged in the interests of visual amenity and improved bio-diversity.

2.2 Policies for Large Developments⁸

2.2.1 General

Developments will be permitted where:

Affordable housing is proposed in accordance with the policy below and opportunities to accommodate key workers explored; and

The necessary infrastructure is provided to support development including school and primary health care provision and transport improvements.

2.2.2 Housing Mix

On schemes of ten dwellings or more, a mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of current and future households in Knighton will be sought. The provision of up to two-bedroom houses and bungalows is strongly encouraged to meet the needs of those requiring smaller properties including downsizing households, younger families and people with limited mobility. Developments consisting exclusively of house types with four or more bedrooms will not be acceptable. Provision of housing accessible to people in wheelchairs is strongly encouraged.

2.2.3 Affordable Housing

On schemes of ten dwellings or more, affordable housing will be sought. Developers are required to provide a Specific Affordable Housing and Dwellings Mix that reflects the identified needs of Knighton⁹ and demonstrate how the proposed development addresses those needs. In particular, the information should set out the type, size and tenure of affordable housing (social rent, affordable rent, low-cost or discounted market housing or shared ownership) and how the mix meets local needs.

Where a development is likely to be undertaken in stages over time, each of which falls below the threshold, but where there is scope for further development, an initial outline planning application should be made for the whole scheme.¹⁰

⁸ We need to define what we mean by a large development.

⁹ Study of needs to be completed. A survey may be required to show evidence of what the local housing need is. In particular, affordable housing needs evidence. LCC officers will talk to Housing Department about housing need in the area, and check what the normal criteria are for the number of dwellings as a threshold.

¹⁰ Added at the suggestion of LCC. Wording may need adjusting.

2.3 Policies for Developments in the Conservation Areas

2.3.1 General

Developments will be permitted where:

Special regard is had to the impact on the Stoneygate Conservation and Knighton Conservation Areas, nearby listed buildings and buildings of local heritage¹¹ interest.

2.4 Policies for Shared Use Developments

2.4.1 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HiMO)

Changes of use to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HiMO)¹² will only be supported where:

The proposal would not result in more than 10% of houses within a 100m radius of the application property being of HiMOs unless it can be demonstrated that this would not change the character of the area or result in an unbalanced mix in the local community;¹³ and

The proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the building; and

The use of the building would not have a detrimental impact on nearby residential properties (including through noise and disturbance to neighbouring properties); and

Adequate, usable and accessible amenity space, refuse storage, drying space and car parking are provided (subject to policies on flood risk associated with impermeable surfaces); and

The proposal would not create unacceptable highway hazards from vehicles entering and leaving the site.

2.4.2 Subdivision of houses¹⁴

The sub-division of existing properties to self-contained flats will be allowed provided that:

The property is suitable for conversion to the number and type of units proposed in a logical and usable way without the need for substantial extensions and external adaptations; and

The proposal would not adversely impact on the exterior appearance of the existing building, and should respect the character and appearance of surrounding properties; and

It will not result in an excessive concentration of flats and houses in multiple occupation exceeding 20% of all residential properties in a 100m radius of the application property; and

It will not have detrimental impact on residential amenity; and

There is adequate on-site car parking or where this cannot be provided the proposal must not exacerbate existing on-street parking problems in the local area; and

There is adequate, usable amenity space and refuse bin storage space.

¹¹ Needs to be defined.

¹² Currently where fewer than six units are developed, conversion of a property to a HiMO is permitted development, i.e. the developer does not need to apply for planning permission. This can be changed by an Article 4 Direction.

¹³ It is not clear that this policy would achieve what we want. An Article 4 Direction may be required. The City Council is currently looking at policies relating to HiMOs.

¹⁴ We need to look at the issue of concentration, with evidence.

2.4.3 Living above shops

Applications for planning permission for the conversion of vacant space above shops and other business premises to residential use will be supported where this would not result in an unacceptable living environment for new occupiers or conflict with other policies of this plan.

2.5 Policies for Backland Development

2.5.1 General

Planning permission for residential development proposals on backland sites¹⁵ will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

Proposals should reflect the character of the surrounding area in terms of street pattern and built form; and

It can be demonstrated that the proposal can be implemented without adversely affecting on- and off-site flooding; and

It can be demonstrated that development would not result in adverse transport impacts in relation to access to the site from existing roads; and

The proposal does not result in the loss of public green spaces or the interruption of green infrastructure including green links.

2.6 Policies for Specific Areas

2.6.1 Mary Gee Houses

Residential development at Mary Gee Houses, as shown on the policies map¹⁶, will be supported where:

Development would retain the current spacious, verdant and open character of the current site and not lead to the appearance of cramming.

Documents Relevant to Policies

The LCC Officers provided documents to cover some of the policy areas. These are as follows:

NPPF (sections 9 and 14):

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf

Historic England document:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/neighbourhood-planning-and-the-historic-environment/>

House of Commons Statement by Eric Pickles:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2015-03-25/HCWS488/>

¹⁵ This needs to refer back to other policies, particularly in relation to open space and amenity. It is okay as a working draft but may be covered by LCC Local Plan policies, as LCC are considering what policies on backland to include in the Local Plan.

¹⁶ To be provided.