## **Mr Stephen McPartland MP**

1. I have known Steve since before I was elected to be your MP in 2010 and am confident that he is a devoted to doing everything possible to improve Knebworth as place to live.

## Contact Details

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# **Your Local Campaigner Working for You**

Prospective candidate for Knebworth Ward on North Hertfordshire District Council  
  
Steve Hemingway will need no introduction to many of you, as a resident of 'New' Knebworth for thirty years. Steve is closely involved in representing the community, having served as a member of the Parish Council since 2010, and as chair of the Parish Council's Planning Committee since 2011.  
  
Steve is involved in a variety of local groups, such as the Knebworth walking group and Twinning Association, and is a frequent supporter of community activities such as the Knebworth Festival and performances by KATS, the Knebworth Players and Community Chorus.  
  
"Knebworth is a sustainable community, and an excellent place to live,", says Steve, "however, it needs strong representation in forums where it is competing for resources with other communities in the District and beyond."

## Development within Knebworth

There are a number of sites in the village where applications have been received for the building of five or more houses, including the site of the former Bulwer Lytton care home and of the hostel at 111 London Road. House prices in Knebworth are high, reflecting the good quality of our infrastructure and environment. I am not opposed to new developments as long as the developers make an adequate level of contributions, either via Section 106 payments or Community Infrastructure Levy, to offset the additional demand on this infrastructure.

## Development Around Knebworth

NHDC is in the process of developing a Local Plan which should be published for consultation later in 2014. Eight sites on the Green Belt around Knebworth have been identified, with a potential for a total of around one thousand additional dwellings to be built in Knebworth Parish. In previous local plans, these have previously all been low-priority sites: the plan recognised the value of preserving the Green Belt.

It is important to me that Knebworth retains its distinctive village character. I would therefore be very sorry to see any development on the fields between Knebworth and Stevenage, or on the field between us and Woolmer Green. Given the current capacity of transport and other infrastructure it is hard to see that any large-scale development would make sense anyway.

## Salt Bins

After the harsh winter of 2012/13 it became obvious that Knebworth did not have sufficient salt bins. Following on from a proposal in the Annual Parish Meeting, the Parish Council took the initiative to obtain two new salt bins and alerted HCC to the disappearance of three others, which had, somehow, over the years, gone missing.

## Resurfacing of Roads

Those of you who live in Swangley's Lane, Gun Road, Gun Road Gardens, Park Lane, Station Road and Deanscroft will have noticed resurfacing work in your road during the autumn. These roads had been in a very bad condition and as a result of consultation with the Parish Council the most severely affected parts are now as good as new.

## Parking

I believe that it is important to support local shops by making parking in the centre of the village as easy as possible. St Martin's Road car park which used to be free was becoming because filled up with long-term parking by commuters and local employees. By introducing 'Pay and Display' parking control last summer, NHDC reduced this problem last summer. Unfortunately the current charges are unfair to those who wish to park briefly, e.g. to drop their children off at the school, or to pop into the Co-op for a pint of milk. I would like to see at least thirty minutes free parking. This would make it enormously less likely that a flying visit to the car park would result in a hefty fine. I am part of the campaign to persuade NHDC to allow limited free parking there.

The Knebworth Parking Initiative Group (KPIG), which I joined in 2012, has made significant progress in improving parking in the village. Last year, after extensive consultation, parking restrictions were imposed in a number of roads near to the railway station. Last year, parking restrictions were introduced on Park Lane, Lytton Fields, Stonecroft, Gun Lane, Deanscroft, Watton Road, Oakfields Avenue and Oakfields Road. These stop all-day 'commuter' parking and prevent anti-social drivers parking near junctions and in other dangerous locations.

I will continue to work as part of KPIG to improve parking in Knebworth. I believe that the best long-term solution is to find additional parking space in the centre of the village. Some sites have been tentatively identified: with encouragement from us, the Redeemed Church of God are now selling spaces in part of their car park to commuters, thereby adding capacity to the parking immediately next to the station.

These measures are not a magic bullet, and car users will continue to experience inconvenience in finding on-street parking in Knebworth. However they should recognise that this is usually a small price to pay for having the very great amenity of a railway station with fast trains to London on our doorstep.

## Cricket Club

The Knebworth Park Cricket Club is one of the most successful in Hertfordshire. For a village club it runs a huge number of teams, both adult and junior. It currently occupies a site where is has only two pitches, at least one fewer than it needs. An application has been made to create a new site, also within Knebworth Park. The Park is a valuable amenity for the village and making changes to it without proper consultation would be a mistake. Plans for the proposal are available on the District Council and Parish Council websites.

## Knebworth in the Digital Age

As a rural village, Knebworth enjoys good broadband connectivity compared to other rural areas. However local digital engagement is disappointingly low. The Knebworth Village Website has a useful community directory as well as local news and Jo Simson keeps us all informed via her weekly bulletin. However, Knebworth as a community has an exceedingly low profile on Facebook, Twitter or Google Plus. The slow but inexorable decline of local print media will mean that without local engagement through digital channels, Knebworth will lose its shared experience . I am the webmaster of the Knebworth Parish Website and admin of its Facebook page. My email and twitter identies are at the bottom of this leaflet.

## Local Shops and Car Park Charges

The local shops in Knebworth are threatened by competition from large stores in Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City. To compete on a level playing field they need their customers need to be able to park nearby without excessive cost. Uncontrolled parking will result in spaces being filled by commuters and others, but high charges, levied from the first minute, in the car parks will also cause shops to lose business. I strongly support fairer, lower parking charges, especially for short stays.

## GP Surgery

The population of the UK is ageing, and older residents make more use of the NHS. The current site for the GP is cramped and near the end of its economic life. I believe that another, central and accessible site in Knebworth should be found for the surgery and I would support a site as long as it is well-sited and able to accommodate the needs of a twenty-first century practice. No sites are available now, but as the economy continues to recover it is likely that one or more sites will come up. It is important that the planning authority is ready to play its role when this happens.

## Norton Green Common

As a member of the Parish Council I have long taken an interest in Norton Green Common. It forms part of Knebworth's sites of special scientific interest and needs to be protected, managed and fenced. There is an ongoing campaign to improve this important part of our rural heritage, which I strongly support.