# April Newsletter KPN

### Chas Lowe Redevelopment

You will be aware by now of proposals by McCarthy and Stone to re-develop the former Chas Lowe builders' merchants site in London Road. I am not aware of any planning application yet, and so it is difficult to comment on proposals. A leaflet, which lacks details, has been delivered to residents.

What is clear is that distortions in the housing market have given rise to a situation where land for accommodation of the elderly has a higher value than almost any other. Knebworth, and North Herts generally has an ageing population. There is a need for this population to be housed. It is arguable that remaining in the larger properties they occupied when their children were young does not make a lot of sense.

The other factor is that this sort of development can be built to a much higher density than other types, and needs to be provided with fewer parking places. Under the current plan, if the development is in 'Category 2', the requirement is for 0.35 places per dwelling. Category 2 accommodation is *in grouped flat-lets for the less active elderly people normally with a self contained warden's dwelling.* This is much less than for other types of residential dwellings, and maximizes the return on a given size plot.

Knebworth residents have completed a questionnaire for the Neighbourhood Plan. This will reveal what type development village residents of Knebworth prefer. However, it is unlikely to be fully ready before a planning application is received.

The policies of the current Local Plan (Local Plan No. 2 with alterations, 1996) and the emerging Local Plan are similar, as far as development in what one might call town centre locations. Both seek to maintain shopping as the main activity in town centres, with permission for developments being given if retail use is preserved on the ground floor. This is my interpretation of the policies only: anyone interested would be advised to consult the Local Plan policies themselves. These are Policies 42 and 43 in the current Plan, and policy ETC6 in the emerging Plan. The emerging Plan states that larger developments, of more than 500 square metres would not normally be considered suitable.

### May Elections

Voting in County elections takes place this year on 4th May. Please make sure you are registered to vote. If you need to register, or would like a postal vote, please contact NHDC on 01462 474000 and ask for Democratic Services. It is also possible to register to vote on-line, although voting itself still requires the use of a pen (or pencil) and paper.

### Local Plan Update

Officers at NHDC have been hard at work cataloguing the responses to the Local Plan consultation from last year. This process will be complete by the 23rd March. The Council will decide on submission of the Plan on a special meeting on the 11th April. The submission is to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, formally. In practice the work is delegated to the Planning Inspectorate. The full plan, plus the evidence base, plus all the responses to the last consultation forms the submission. This will be delivered to the Inspector shortly after the 11th April assuming that the Council decides to proceed with submission.

Once the Inspector has reviewed the plan, the process moves to an examination in public. I will give further details in due course. The full timetable can be viewed on the NHDC website. Search for 'Local Development Scheme'. This is, obviously, subject to change.

### Knebworth Community Chorus

I am pleased to announce that Knebworth Community Chorus have received grants from NHDC and from the Knebworth Village Trust. This will provide them with staging and a new keyboard. The choir should now be fully equipped for its concert in the Village Hall on [insert date]. This is always a very entertaining and popular event, so book early to avoid disappointment.