

Knebworth Viability Study – Preliminary Report

Following an exceptionally well-attended Parish Meeting in early December and a modest response to the Options Form, the Parish Council felt that it would be helpful to provide some preliminary feedback relating to the possible future development of Knebworth.

As far as the preferences are concerned, as shown by the results of the survey, we feel that there is no clear-cut message from the residents in favour of any one option. Approximately three hundred forms were returned, either electronically or on paper, and this represents around 10% of the electorate. This relatively low percentage, together with the spread of results, suggests that it is extremely doubtful that any statistical significance can be placed on the data. Nevertheless, and at this stage for information only, the results are shown in the Table below.

This analysis is based only on the response to the 3 options shown below. It takes no account of the comments written by the responder.

Option 1: Accept the current recommendations of NHDC's Local Development Framework that there be no Greenfield development around Knebworth before 2021
Option 2: Support Greenfield development specifically to facilitate the relocation of Lowes.
Option 3: Support Greenfield development to facilitate wider village improvements.

E-mail Responses	Paper Responses	Totals
Option 1	Option 1	Option 1
No 90	No 26	No 116
Yes 70	Yes 62	Yes 132
No response 26	No response 30	No response 56
Option 2	Option 2	Option 2
No 45	No 42	No 87
Yes 124	Yes 63	Yes 187
No response 17	No response 13	No response 30
Option 3	Option 3	Option 3
No 84	No 60	No 144
Yes 59	Yes 29	Yes 88
No response 43	No response 29	No response 72

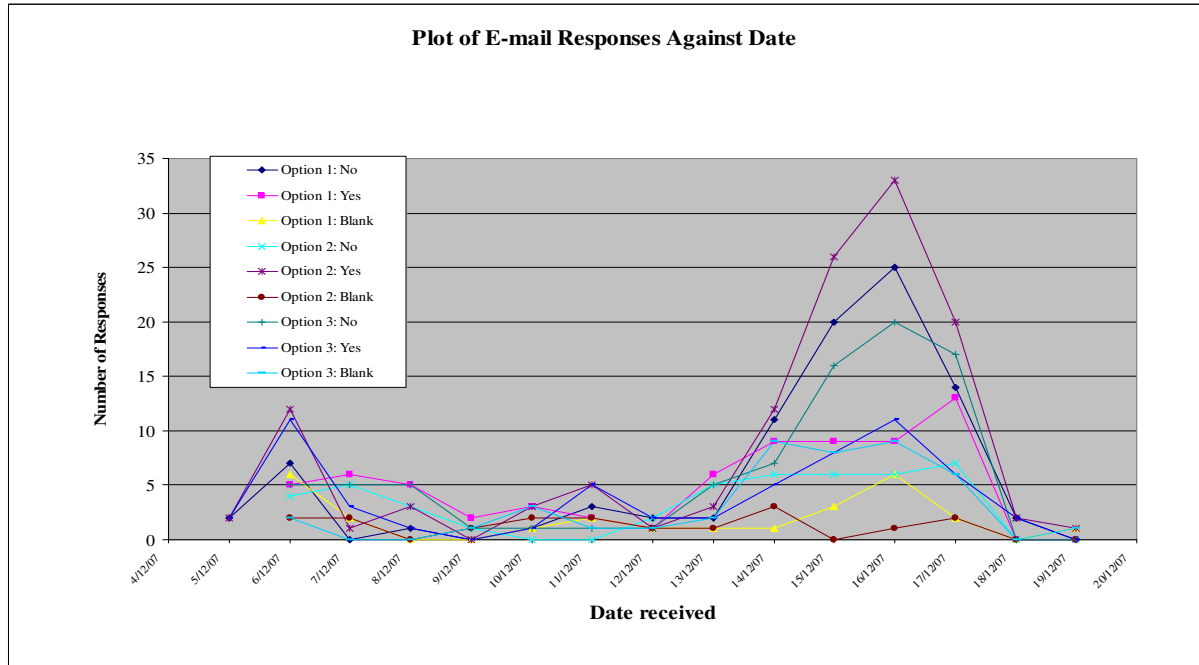
4 sheets with no opinion stated

186 E-mail responses

118 Paper responses

304 Total Responses

However, whilst these figures may be taken at face value, the Parish Council feels that they might possibly be flawed since external influences may have played a part. In order to try to explain our uncertainty regarding the validity of the data, we would draw your attention to the following graph.



This shows the number of electronic (e-mail) responses received for each option against the date on which they were received. Interestingly, the graph shows a peak within the first two days and then, somewhat surprisingly, a much higher peak ten days later. This is a remarkably unusual pattern of “voting” for this type of situation and was totally unexpected. However, the Parish Council feels that this can be ascribed to one major effect. On the weekend of 14-15 December, a document was distributed to a large number of houses in the village calling for a positive response to Option 2. The document was not from the Parish Council, nor did it have our blessing. We, therefore, consider that this was an interference with the democratic process and for this reason the Parish Council feels that the overall response rate has been skewed and that the results must be considered to be unsafe.

The Parish Council intends to present a fuller report of the outcome of the viability study in a forthcoming newsletter which will be distributed to all households. In the meantime, the results have been forwarded to the Local Development Framework team at North Herts District Council for their consideration in respect of their Land Allocations document (which is currently out for public consultation).