

# Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation and Forum Designation Application

**Name of Neighbourhood Area** (*the name by which your Neighbourhood Area will formally be known*): Soho and Handsworth

**Name of Neighbourhood Forum**: Soho & Handsworth Neighbourhood Planning Forum

**Relevant body** (*Please confirm that you are the relevant qualifying body to undertake neighbourhood planning in your area in accordance with Section 61G of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act and Section 5C of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and the Localism Act 2011*)

YES

This is an application for the designation of the emerging Soho & Handsworth Neighbourhood Planning Forum (hereby referred to as the Forum), which is a qualifying body for the purposes of the Localism Act 2011. This application for designation is being initiated by the current Forum pre-steering group.

The proposal for the Forum emanated from the exploratory discussions between residents, business owners, community groups, and other stakeholders. It has been in development for almost two years, led by a pre-steering group consisting of members of the residential and business community, local councillors and other local stakeholders.

We are now seeking formal Neighbourhood Forum designation in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012). The content of this application fulfils the requirements of the Regulations and clearly highlights the extent of the proposed Neighbourhood Area and the emerging Forum's desire to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.

**Describe how the proposed Forum meets the requirements to be recognised as a Qualifying Body** (*i.e. meeting requirements regarding being established with at least 21 members, to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area in a manner that reflects the diversity, character and inclusivity of the area and includes people who live and work in the area and local councillors*):

The Forum has been created for the purpose of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Area. The Forum is a relevant body for the purposes of section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and has a written constitution (Appendix 2).

The Forum currently comprises 30 members (see Appendix 3 for a list of current members). Members includes 16 members who live in the Neighbourhood Area, 3 members who work in the Neighbourhood Area, and 6 members who are representatives of a community group or other organisation which operates in the Neighbourhood Area, and 2 elected representatives of Birmingham City Council whose ward falls into the Neighbourhood Area. Furthermore, as outlined in the Objectives of the constitution in Clause 2, we look to promote the Soho and Handsworth

neighbourhood, promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of Soho and Handsworth in a manner that reflects the diversity, character and inclusivity of the area and includes a variety of people who live and work in the area.

The Forum meets the conditions contained in section 61F(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as required by the Regulations as follows:

- It seeks to promote and improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the proposed Neighbourhood Area (see Object 2 in the Constitution).

- Its membership (Constitution Clause 4) is open to:

- i) Individuals who live in the Neighbourhood Area;

- ii) Individuals who work in the Neighbourhood Area;

- iii) Elected representatives of Birmingham City Council or Members of Parliament whose wards/constituencies fall into the Neighbourhood Area who shall be ex officio members.

As per Clause 5 of the constitution, The Forum will vote on the adoption of the written constitution and on the election of officers to form an Executive Committee at their first General Meeting. The Executive Committee, once elected, will amongst other matters, manage the finances of the Forum.

Forum members have been recruited through information circulated to households and local businesses through community organisations, through the local press, social media and at events held in a variety of online and in person settings. The community events have been extensive and targeted to engage all communities in the neighbourhood.

A detailed summary of consultation events is also attached herewith under Appendix 4.

Shuranjeet Singh will be the main point of contact for the emerging Forum, until a Management Committee is voted at the first General Meeting.

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We trust that the information submitted meets the requirements set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. We look forward to formal designation to enable us to progress with the Neighbourhood Plan, helping to realise our regeneration aspirations for the area.

**Intention of Neighbourhood Area (*Please indicate which of the following you intend to undertake within your Neighbourhood Area*):**

- *Neighbourhood Development Plan;*
- *Neighbourhood Development Order; and / or*
- *Community Right to Build Order". you will wish to edit your response to this section accordingly*

The emerging Forum intends to ***undertake a Neighbourhood Development Plan, which helps to*** sustain a long-term residential population and embraces the needs of a diverse community. Soho and Handsworth are urban areas with a diverse and engaged population. There are community challenges as well as community aspirations. The creation of the Forum represents the increased cohesiveness of the neighbouring wards of Soho, Jewellery Quarter, Handsworth, Holyhead and Lozells.

The Forum will focus on the development of a Neighbourhood Plan which will enable community involvement in how this takes place and will help ensure development contributes to a sustainable and vibrant neighbourhood. As well as working to develop a Neighbourhood Plan, the Forum initially intends to establish working groups to explore key community issues as guided by Forum members.

**Should the Neighbourhood Area be proposed as a Business Area? (i.e. Is the area proposed for designation wholly or predominantly business or residential in nature? See [section 61H of the of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#)).**

No, we believe this area should not be designated as a Business Area, as the area is predominantly residential in nature. However, business uses still cover a significant part of the area and therefore, the concerns of businesses and their employees are also important to the emerging Forum. These concerns are reflected in the Consultation Summary wherein we held an engagement event specifically with local businesses who reflected the same feeling and felt as long as their perspectives were included, that they were happy with the Forum being considered primarily residential in nature. Subsequently, a member of the Soho Road Business Improvement District, representing over 250 businesses, has become part of the pre-steering group and has been actively involved in discussions.

**Proposed Neighbourhood Plan Area Description: (*extent, boundaries, what landmarks it includes / does not include, does it follow an administrative / statistical boundary etc*)**

The Neighbourhood Plan Area is a key feature of a Neighbourhood Planning Forum. In order to develop the right Area we undertook multiple rounds of consultations with community stakeholders. Here, we sought to understand the balance of administrative and community boundaries through an inclusive and interactive consultation methodology. After extensive boundary related consultation (see Consultation Summary in Appendix 4) - the proposed boundary for the Forum includes a mixture of administrative boundaries (e.g. wards) and community boundaries (e.g. local landmarks). For instance, during consultation events, the A41, Soho Road was mentioned in three consultations as the heart of the neighbourhood running through the centre of the proposed area with Handsworth Ward and the Soho section of Soho and Jewellery Quarter Ward. This consistent input meant that we recognised that the boundary would cross over two administrative boundaries to ensure that the Soho Road remained central. Furthermore, there are two local centres in the proposed boundary, including Soho Road and Rookery Road as well as two major parks in the area, including Handsworth Park and Gib Heath Park. Through consultation with the local community a number of development sites were highlighted, namely Bill House, which is on the eastern boundary of the proposed Forum. Alongside this there are a range of community organisations, buildings and faith organisations. The extent of the proposed Neighbourhood Area boundary has been in development for over 18 months, led by a pre-steering group of members across membership categories.

The administrative boundary features of the area are described below:

- Westward side of Soho and Jewellery Quarter Ward which follows along the tram line but does not encroach on the Jewellery Quarter.
- The entirety of Handsworth Ward.
- A small area of Lozells Ward which faces onto the Soho Hill area.
- A very small area of Holyhead Ward following the Soho BID boundary which includes a place of worship, a school, and a few local shops.

Appendix A highlights the proposed Neighbourhood Area, marked by a blue line.

**Appropriateness of Neighbourhood Area (*describe how the boundary has been determined, how it has a coherent physical and functional identity, alignment with ward or statistical boundaries etc; if possible exclude a bullet list of contentious areas where a specific argument was built on why these should be included or excluded*)**

The Neighbourhood Area has been developed alongside residents, businesses, community organisations, faith groups and other local stakeholders. The boundary was determined through a structured, participatory process as described below:

- 1) Step 1 involved community stakeholders identifying areas of importance on a large map of the local area. By placing stickers on a large map, community members could begin to identify their hyperlocal area of focus, thereby starting to create the neighbourhood area.
- 2) Step 2 involved community stakeholders drawing boundaries on smaller maps which demonstrated administrative boundaries so as to include their perception of the local neighbourhood. These results were diverse but consensus was gained through group discussion and a recognition of the difference between lived and administrative boundaries.
- 3) Step 3 involved community stakeholders further refining a draft boundary through our final boundary consultations.

Within the consultations there emerged two areas of contention: ‘the Triangle’ a portion of Handsworth Wood Ward bordering Handsworth Ward as well as the area around ‘Crick Gardens’ which falls into Birchfield Ward but borders Handsworth Ward. These discussions were resolved in liaison between elected representatives and residents. It was recognised that ‘the Triangle’ would remain outside of the boundary as well as ‘Crick Gardens’. The main reasoning for this was that the area felt more connected to Handsworth Wood and that it would be best engaged through other local initiatives. It was agreed that the Forum would work closely with residents across the ward boundaries in case further neighbourhood planning forums were to be developed. Finally, these discussions led to the development of the Allied Membership category for those living external to the boundary but wanting to be connected into the Neighbourhood Forum.

As per the consultation summary, the proposed boundary defines the area with a coherent physical and functional identity provided in large part by significant roads and tram lines following consultations with a range of local stakeholders.

**Membership statement: (*how were members sought through engagement; what is the policy regarding membership in the constitution; what is profile of membership and is it representative of the area / different parts of the area / different sections of the community; how did the group secure, or take reasonable steps to secure, membership from at least one person falling within each of the required categories*)**

At every engagement event there was an opportunity to recruit members. This was done through an online form, linked to the Forum’s website, where data was stored in line with GDPR and also through a physical sign-up sheet. This meant that we could engage and recruit potential members both in-person and online. During events as seen in the consultation summary (Appendix X), we inclusively engaged with a range of potential members and different parts of the local community, as per the constitution Clause 4 which states that membership is open to all people who live and work in the area, as well as elected members, without distinction or discrimination on the grounds of sex, disability, sexual orientation or race, or of political, religious or other opinions.

As per the consultation summary, membership has been sought from a range of individuals and organisations. Events were held both in-person across the neighbourhood area and online for those unable to make it in-person as reflected in our consultation summary. This has been done by holding engagement events in a variety of locations spread throughout the area such as St Andrew's Community Centre, Lodge Road Community Centre, and venues which represent different community groups and religious groups present in the area, as well as in neutral venues, such as the local library. Each of the venues used are visible in Appendix 4. Events have been held over a period of more than 12 months, and clearly advertised in a variety of ways, including online, on local radio and TV, as well as on paper flyers distributed to individual households and displayed in local venues.

Currently, the pre-steering group is populated with individuals who live or work in the neighbourhood area, representatives of organisations operating in the area. Furthermore, current members align well with the demographics of the neighbourhood. Out of current members, 53% identify as male and 47% female, with a range of people across age ranges from 18-30 to 60+, a mixture of ethnicities present in the area, as well as a very diverse range of professional backgrounds or occupations. Further detail can be seen in Appendix 3 as to individual breakdown, demonstrating how the membership effectively reflects the local area.

This comprehensive approach was aimed at ensuring that nobody in the area was excluded who is eligible for membership and who supports the aims of the Forum, in line with its constitution. The constitution states that Soho & Handsworth Neighbourhood Forum will "sustain a long-term residential population and embrace the needs of diverse local communities" and these endeavours will be the basis of all future meetings and engagements. The steering group and officers will be elected through open meetings. The Forum aims to reflect the diversity of the interests in the area, which will continue to be discussed at open meetings once the Forum is established, to take place at a neutral venue such as Handsworth Library.

**Lead Applicant Details**

**Title:** Mr

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**Additional Contact 1**

**Title:** Mr

**Name:** Ravinder Chohan

**Address:** XXXXXXXXXXX

**Additional Contact 2**

**Title:** Rev

**Name:** Ashley Barker

**Address:** XXXXXXXXXXX

**Declaration**

**I/we hereby apply for designation of a Neighbourhood Area and Neighbourhood Plan Forum as described in this form, for the area shown on the accompanying map**

**Signature(s)**



**Name**

Shuranjeet Singh Takhar

**Date** 12/7/2024



# Appendices

Appendix 1: Map which identifies the area to which the neighbourhood area application relates

Appendix 2: Written Constitution of the proposed neighbourhood forum

Appendix 3: Membership (*attach a list of members, showing for each member whether they are a resident / business owner or employee / representing a community organisation / elected member / more than one of these*)

Appendix 4: Detailed Summary of Consultation Events

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