

“A majority of Brits of all demographics agree that if the economic recovery does not tackle climate change it will be bad for the economy in the long run.”

Conservative Environment Network, 2020

***“I want you to act as you would in a crisis.
I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is.”***

Greta Thunberg, Davos 2019

***“These young people are terrified of what is happening.
They are looking to us for leadership.”***

GR, secondary school teacher and member of Havant Climate Alliance, September 2020



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Introduction

We are in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic which has wrought sudden damage on lives and the economy. The crisis has also shown that governments both national and local can and have implemented sudden and dramatic policy changes to tackle and mitigate the impacts of the crisis. The climate emergency will have far-reaching, longer term and more devastating consequences than Covid-19 as it damages the core of the planet that sustains us and all life upon it.

Rather than just suggesting three or more actions that the council can take, this paper addresses the fundamental change needed within the council and the borough that will enable the council to meaningfully address the climate emergency. It has not included discussion on mitigating the impact of the climate emergency - although this will have to be addressed. As a low lying local authority close to the sea large sections of the borough will be lost and a genuine and honest conversation with local people needs to happen as we will start to lose housing to the sea - and this includes developments which are still in the pipeline.

This paper has been prepared by Havant Climate Alliance - which unites a growing band of individuals and organisations who share the concern that not enough is being done to tackle the climate emergency within the local area. We bring a range of knowledge, specialisms and skills to the table and many of us are involved in a number of other environmental and social initiatives within the borough.

This is an unfinished document - it is the start of a way forward and, we hope, a collaboration for the future of our borough.

HAVANT CLIMATE ALLIANCE was launched in May 2019 to lobby Havant Borough Council to **declare a climate emergency** and put in place **an action plan** to achieve a meaningful reduction in local greenhouse gas emissions. To date, Havant has done neither - and is therefore one of only two local authorities in the south east to have made no formal commitment to tackle climate change.

Within the council there are no formal policies in place to make tackling climate change a priority and core part of decision-making - and more importantly can be used within the democratic process to provide checks and balances on the council's decision-making process. This has to change as an URGENT priority to ensure that any **future decisions or policies with positive environmental benefits are implemented across the board** and supported by other policies rather than just being piecemeal.

At the same time we need to see a change in the style and level of debate and scrutiny at councillor level. As an example, at this month's Development Management Committee a deputation from Havant Climate Alliance on the proposed development at Castle Avenue was largely ignored. The officer made no reference to the need for sustainable green building standards, energy efficient homes, more green space, wildlife corridors for biodiversity etc. The councillors' discussion focussed instead on issues related to car access such as the size of garages and the standard of the access road. If the development was being considered from a climate perspective and councillors truly considered and understood the impact of failing to take action on the climate emergency their debate would be around improved energy efficiency standards, better access and provision for walking and cycling and resilience to the impacts of sea level rise and flooding - and they would instruct their officers to consider these issues.

It should be noted that Jeff Fairburn - previous boss of Persimmon (the house builder in question) collected a £75 m bonus in 2018 (source The Guardian) while the replacement CEO Dave Jenkinson sold £7m shares in the last 3 months, and he in turn is leaving. Vast profits are being made at the expense of other people and the environment. Our Council should not be beholden to such firms and allow them to build substandard homes lacking environmental features, and with affordable homes which do not even meet minimum space standards.

ACTION 1: All council decisions and policies must place **tackling the climate emergency at their heart**. The environmental impact of every council decision and policy should be taken into account and evaluated and rejected if it contributes to an unjustifiable increase in carbon emissions. To ensure that this is being done in a measurable and reasonable way **the council needs to understand the scope of its**

emissions both within its own operations and within the areas of its influence, for example planning, building standards, waste and recycling. From there it can start to make genuine changes which will focus around not just technological solutions but on reducing consumption of planetary resources and putting in place measures to achieve resilience to climate induced changes.

The council should start by following up its “commitment” to the climate made at a May 2019 council meeting with meaningful measurement of local emissions and a borough wide policy on tackling the climate emergency. In order to hold itself to account the council should seek suitable training for its councillors - following the example of best practice within similar local authorities such as [Eastleigh Borough Council](#). It should be noted that the East Hants District Council with whom Havant shares a senior management team has already declared a climate emergency and started to put in place an action plan to tackle this. Creating a portfolio post for environment and climate change is a step in the right direction - but only the start of a massive and sustained change needed within the borough.

THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENTLY announced [Gear Change](#) is a huge opportunity for Havant to enable more **walking and cycling**. With revamped design standards, shared cycle and walking paths will no longer receive national government funding and design for movement must adhere to a hierarchy that puts pedestrians top. However HCA members are already hearing feedback that some of the measures will be impossible to implement in Havant.

Havant did not receive any of the recent Covid-19 transport-related funding allocations to improve access for walking and cycling which were allocated to and distributed by Hampshire County Council (the transport authority). This is despite strong support from local residents for improvements which were pinpointed on the Hampshire Covid-19 Active Travel Map in early summer. Centres such as Emsworth and Waterlooville for example would benefit from additional measures prioritising active travel giving priority to pedestrians first in line with the government's new road user hierarchy. It is a myth that a change of priority from cars to pedestrians and cyclists causes a loss of economic activity in town centres - in fact the reverse is the case in almost all situations. An example is Lewes where there is a large and bustling pedestrian area which also provided access for cycles and disabled motorists.

As the planning authority Havant has a role in ensuring that new developments support active travel and that cycle routes and lanes meet the needs of users rather than being shoehorned in and changed about causing danger to cyclists such as has been the case at Saxon Corner. An urgent review of cycle routes is required. Transport and its associated areas has risen where other sectors such as energy consumption has fallen - there needs to be a genuine reduction in car travel which will in turn enable more space to be provided for people to move and travel safely around the borough on foot and by bike. Havant Climate Alliance members have seen first hand the value that people place on cycling through their involvement in supporting the running of Repair Cafe Havant's Dr Bike sessions in Havant Park.

ACTION 2: We need to be bold in Havant in promoting active travel. This includes making walking and cycling the best options within new developments, delivering segregated cycle paths and joining up and expanding the cycle provision within the borough. Where this is a role within the highways authority (Hampshire) Havant should be bolder in seeking better funding to improve walking and cycling. It has borough councillors who are also county councillors to help make this case. Through the Havant Climate Alliance the council should engage with the emerging Cycle Havant group which is promoting active travel across the borough.

TREES PLAY AN incredible role in combating climate chaos by removing and storing carbon emissions. Despite their importance, just 13% of the UK's total land area has **tree cover** compared to an EU average of 35% (source: Friends of the Earth). Havant has a strong, experienced and committed Tree Warden network which works to promote, for public benefit, the conservation, protection and improvement of the environment through the planting, care, nurture and cultivation of trees in the Borough of Havant. The network has also [measured and mapped the current tree cover in Havant](#) Borough which is about 19% - above the UK national average but well below the European average - although this falls to less than 7% in a large part of Haying.

The Tree Warden network has noted that there are problems finding locations for tree planting because of the nature of the local landscape, utilities etc. More importantly existing tree sites are under threat from infill and wider development after the council's decision to approve the use of Warblington Farm as a nitrate mitigation scheme. The erosion of individual wooded areas results not only in the loss of biodiversity but the erosion of any network of wildlife corridors creating fragmented and threatened local habitats.

According to the RSPB, the UK has [failed to reach 17 out of 20 UN biodiversity targets](#) agreed at the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2010 and on six of the targets the UK position has worsened. Its [2019 State of Nature report](#) found 41% of UK species are declining and one in 10 is threatened with extinction.

In Havant there are more than 20 dedicated individual nature and conservation volunteering groups from the Friends of Hermitage Stream in Leigh Park, the Brook Meadows in Emsworth and the No Mow May campaign in Hayling in other parts of the borough. These groups work on a voluntary basis to support biodiversity and habitat renewal in their local areas - covering areas the size of grass verges to larger woodlands and stream habitats. However alone they are not enough to tackle the loss of biodiversity.

In Making Space for Nature: a review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network by Professor Sir John Lawton said, "There is compelling evidence that England's collection of wildlife sites are generally too small and too isolated, leading to declines in many of England's characteristic species. With climate change, the situation is likely to get worse. This is bad news for wildlife but also bad news for us, because the damage to nature also means our natural environment is less able to provide the many services upon which we depend. We need more space for nature." This quote is included in Havant Borough Council's 2036 Local Plan Biodiversity Strategy - which stipulates that

specific policies are required to ensure wildlife corridors are put in place - but to date this has not been done, even though planning permissions continue to be granted for housing under the local plan.

Havant Climate Alliance supports the Friends of the Earth campaign to **double tree cover** and help deliver carbon storage. Trees also have a general role to play in climate and weather resilience. Our neighbouring local authority of East Hants has launched an ambitious campaign to plant a tree for every resident. In Havant we would like to see **tree cover increased** - rather than just a figure for trees planted with the goal of 30% tree cover across the borough by 2030 - with milestones along the way.

Tree coverage first and foremost should be about maintaining existing trees and enabling natural regeneration rather than the type of tree planting that is seen at the edges of new developments. Many of the 3,000 trees planted in a much publicised campaign by Portsmouth Water, as part of the Havant Thicket reservoir development have died. Tree Preservation Orders are difficult to obtain in the borough and there is no presumption in planning policy to support natural regeneration of woodland. This should be encouraged through a biodiversity policy that also supports the creation of wildflower areas and campaigns such as no-mow May which have been promoted locally in parts of the borough. While wildflowers are not significant carbon stores they support a wider biodiversity which provides food and a habitat for pollinators that are essential for our crops as well as ensuring a resilient natural environment and healthy food chain in the face of climate change.

There has been a significant increase in paving of front gardens in recent years to allow additional off-road parking resulting in the loss of front garden biodiversity. Where possible a re-greening of these areas should be considered and at the very least the council should ensure that these new hard surfaces are porous to reduce storm surges and releases of untreated sewage into the sea.

ACTION 3: Set an ambitious target for 30% tree cover across the borough by 2030, set interim tree planting targets to monitor and ensure that tree planting and natural regeneration is happening on the scale to support this. Ensure that new developments also have a 30% tree canopy cover. This can include community orchards and fruiting hedgerows. Develop a stronger and equal working relationship with the Havant Borough Tree Wardens to develop a tree strategy that cuts across council policy making rather than making trees the remit of one tree officer. Identify spare council land where tree planting can take place, support schools and colleges and larger employers to do the same. Follow the examples of neighbouring local authorities such as Chichester where

a wildlife corridor has been created along the east of the River Ems and develop an ambitious network of wildlife and biodiversity corridors by joining up and expanding the work and embed this clearly and immediately into the local plan.

WITHIN THE AREAS of **energy production and consumption** Havant Borough Council has a real opportunity to achieve carbon reductions. A new energy strategy is being developed for the council area and the lessons of the previous one should be learnt - in that the new strategy should be published with real figures as well as percentages to show that carbon savings are meaningful and measurable. The focus for carbon emission reduction should be on transport and buildings emissions, but not exclude energy production.

Havant Borough should strive to have better carbon emission reductions than that mandated by the national government.

Improvements in building insulation in the borough should aim at achieving the borough target emissions reductions. Agreements should be made with developers to use higher energy efficiency standards in the borough.

As mentioned, new housing developments should be located and have supporting infrastructure to encourage cycling (Dutch system), walking, low carbon public transport, energy efficiency and low carbon energy use. New developments should adhere to the hierarchy of travel: Walking first, cycling then public transport, then private car.

ACTION 4: Havant Borough Council should actively look at encouraging significant renewable energy projects in the borough. This would include appropriately sited wind farms, tidal energy projects and solar farms. New housing should include solar panels. Havant Borough Council itself should ensure its energy supply for its offices and operations - including those operated on its behalf - is from a non-fossil fuel source. Fossil fuel extraction should be banned in the borough.

The council should HBC should monitor EV uptake in the borough and work to be sure sufficient charging infrastructure is available to support those EVs and all Havant Borough Council vehicles should be electric by the end of the strategy time period with the appropriate supporting charging infrastructure at all HBC sites.

Although outside its immediate remit it should be noted that renewable energy is an attractive green business and one that should be encouraged into the borough at a time when many people are losing their jobs.

THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC has shown us that fast change is possible within policies and behaviour when people are faced by an emergency. Climate change is one such emergency, yet often people fail to take action because they feel overwhelmed or simply unaware of the challenge. The borough council must **engage the local community** to help tackle climate change and help its residents understand the dangers of climate change and the simple actions to cut their individual carbon footprints. Like Covid-19 the emphasis should be on taking action for “the greater good”. For example reducing waste should be as expected a behaviour as wearing a mask when going into shops. Under Covid-19 the local community has shown what it is capable of in terms of supporting others and making sacrifices for the greater good.

There is an opportunity to involve the local community in developing climate action - such as within Portsmouth and other local authorities. These can be in the form of citizen’s assemblies and at the very least should encourage more and formalised and meaningful consultation with the local community

ACTION 5: *The council should allocate a budget and officer time to implementing a meaningful communication campaign with its local residents and also start by demonstrating clear carbon reduction strategies within the council itself - for example by discouraging unnecessary car travel, publicising a cycle mileage scheme on parity with any car mileage payments and so on.*

The council campaign should focus on avoiding unnecessary consumption of planetary resources “for the greater good”. Leaflets, posters, articles in the local press and Serving You and information on the HBC website are a first step. Training for community leaders, businesses and climate champions is important. Use events like tree planting, the Repair Cafe and beach cleaning as springboards for wider conversations around tackling climate change. NB the Tree Wardens / HCA are running a series of seed collection events for tree planting. Havant Borough Council should work with local partners through the HCA to develop a citizen’s assembly to support action on climate change.

Briefing prepared by Havant Climate Alliance members and associates September 2020
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