

FRIENDS OF CHICHESTER HARBOUR
COMMENTS ON THE HAVANT BOROUGH DRAFT CORE STRATEGY JUNE 2009

The Friends of Chichester Harbour are a charity dedicated to the protection of the countryside and wildlife of Chichester Harbour, and advancing the education of the public in relation to the harbour. It has some two and a half thousand members and is in its twenty first year. The charity provides weekly work parties for the Harbour Conservancy and gives around £30,000 each year to research and projects in the harbour. A full range of activities can be seen on its website www.friendsch.org

The Friend's representative attended the presentation in the Council Chambers on 16 June and members have studied the Draft Core Strategy. It was encouraged to hear at the presentation Andrew Biltcliffe acknowledge the existence and importance of the various environmental designations and legislation which border much of Havant Borough Council's southern area.

Membership feedback shows the Friends of Chichester Harbour fully support and wish to be associated with the Chichester Harbour Conservancy's Draft Core Strategy response e-mail 22 July 09, in its entirety. In particular the Friends membership would like to highlight the following points of concern:

Lack of AONB policy
Hayling Island Footpath
Havant to Emsworth Strategic Gap

Chapter no.7 Policy Area "Caring for our Borough" - AONB Policy

To achieve "The Vision for Havant Borough in 2026" and be "one of the South East's most sought after locations" the AONB will be an important factor. "The Friends" would like to see this valuable part of the borough receiving more prominence. It should be a proud boast in any of the Borough's literature and future plans. The Draft Core Strategy is in danger, in its present form, of giving an overall impression that the AONB is an inconvenient restriction to housing expansion and economic development of the Borough.

Standard textbook statements such as "Safeguard the protected habitats" show no passion for Chichester Harbour AONB's true value or little understanding of its extreme fragility. It needs bespoke heartfelt descriptions and policies.

The Harbour Conservancy's response shows in careful detail where the Core Strategy can be strengthened to give the AONB more prominence and have expressed their willingness to be involved in developing the Core Strategy AONB policies.

Chapter no.2 Policy Area "Health and Wellbeing" – Around Hayling Island Footpath

Almost the entire shoreline of Langstone harbour is available to the public, served by some form of footpath. In Chichester Harbour eighty percent of its shore can be

walked. This provides over 60 miles of shoreline walking within or within easy access of the Borough.

For the wildlife it is very important to keep some areas of shoreline undisturbed for feeding, breeding and roosting at high water. Langstone harbour has these successful areas as inaccessible islands and marshes. Chichester harbour has no such features and relies on sections of shoreline that have traditionally been difficult to access. The eastern shoreline of Hayling Island is one such area.

Any around Hayling Island footpath needs to divert inland to safeguard these natural nature reserves. It is suggested that the eastern shoreline is only accessed by the general public at North Common, the Northney Farm permissive footpath, the public footpath at the end of Woodgaston Lane, Tye, and the various footpaths in Mengeham Rytte and Milords Pond area. Elsewhere the path should divert inland through attractive alternative walking areas.

The Friends of Chichester Harbour whose many members walk these shores frequently are keen to be involved in deciding the detail of any around Hayling Island footpath.

Chapter no.8 Policy Area “Spatial Distribution and Strategic Sites” – Havant to Emsworth Strategic Gap

This is the nearest green coastal area to Havant centre. It not only provides grazing areas for wintering Brent Geese and other wildlife but supports arable farming and recreational animals. Any greenfield development in this area would establish the appearance of a suburban belt from Havant to Emsworth destroying the separate unique attractiveness of Emsworth and old Havant centre.

There are no valid exceptional circumstances for development in this area of the AONB.

The Friends of Chichester Harbour welcome this opportunity to comment on the Draft Core Strategy and ask that these concerns and our association with Chichester Harbour Conservancy’s response be noted by the appropriate Core Strategy drafting planning policy team.