

Havant Civic Society
C/o Flat 12 Grove Court
Grove Road
Havant
PO9 1AP

February 6th 2018

Dear Sirs,

I am writing on behalf of Havant Civic Society to put forward our comments and observations on the Draft Havant Borough Local Plan 2036 as it relates to Havant Town Centre.

First of all, we welcome the opportunity to comment on the consultation, as well as supporting Havant Borough Council's intention to be more vigorous and pro active in its use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO). An obvious candidate for a CPO we believe are the vacant plots in the pedestrianised section of West Street, immediately east of the Post Office. This site has been empty for a considerable time and is a notable eyesore in the streetscape of that section of West Street. HBC has indicated that it intends to prioritise the development of brownfield sites and this site falls in to that category.

We welcome HBC's commitment to maintaining and enhancing the borough's heritage assets, while noting that its stewardship of these assets, including listed buildings, leaves something to be desired. Examples are the Homewell Spring Area and the signal box just east of the railway station. In a similar vein we are pleased to note that HBC recognises that the footbridge over the railway next to the station is a disgrace but would stress that remedying this situation cannot be left to some vague time in the future when the plans for connecting the Civic Campus to the town centre come to fruition. Action to address this eyesore is already long overdue, since the first impression it leaves on visitors arriving by rail is extremely damaging to the town.

Our key criticisms of the plan focus on two areas.

Market Parade. We urge HBC to recognise that a) the granting of planning permission to redevelop the northeast quadrant of Market Parade (APP/14/01225) was a mistake and b) that there was considerable local opposition to the concept of "a taller landmark building" in that location. This application was granted at a time when HBC was in the process of developing a Local Development Order (LDO) for Market Parade as a whole. The LDO was compromised by the short-term approach taken by granting permission for APP/14/01225, a project that has come to naught. Our firmly held belief is that HBC should revisit the proposed LDO but ensure that it is based on a scale that is appropriate to what is, after all, a small market town.

East Street. We strongly disagree with the apparent exclusion of East Street from the area designated Havant's "Historic Core" and would like to see the wording for KS 1 3.3 sub heading "Historic Core" amended to read "The traditional town centre focused on East Street, North Street, South Street and West Street - offering smaller retail units, cafés and restaurants". The Meridian Centre mentioned in the current wording is hardly traditional and some of the units are quite large.

There are two reasons why this is wrong. Firstly, it clearly contains a significant proportion of the borough's historic properties, several of which are listed. While the Council's support for the renovation of the Gazebo Garden has been much appreciated, more can and should be done to preserve and enhance these heritage assets (nos. 21 and 24 are looking particularly neglected)

Secondly, while the Society has no objection to the change of use of some properties in East Street to housing, the Council seems not to be aware of the existing, and growing, commercial activity in East Street. We agree that the traditional high street, essentially devoted to retail, is an out-dated concept and share the Council's wish to create a vibrant mix of retail, leisure and housing in the town centre. The Draft Plan fails to recognise that, without any obvious intervention by HBC, this is already happening in East Street. Some retail outlets have closed but several remain. In addition, there is leisure provision in the form of The Bear Hotel, a fitness studio, a café, the Havant Club, the Gazebo Garden, the rejuvenated St Faith's Centre and, of course, The Spring. There is a flourishing service sector, with three dental practices, bank, insurance broker, accountants, photographic studio, mediation service and two housing associations.

Given all this, it seems perverse not to include East Street as part of the "Historic Core" and thus a focus for the Council's attention.

A further concern for East Street is the proposal for 50 dwellings in The Bear car park. The continued success of not only The Bear but also the various businesses in East Street, the rejuvenated St Faith's Centre, The Gazebo Garden and The Spring Arts & Heritage Centre will depend on adequate parking, currently provided by both The Bear car park and East Pallant car park. Both of these were noted as having a high level of usage in a survey carried out for HBC in early 2016. We fail to see the logic in building on either car park, which would not only reduce the parking available but also inevitably bring with it more people wishing to park nearby. Large scale development in The Bear car park would, we believe have a detrimental effect on the success of the recently refurbished Gazebo Garden.

Finally, we see two opportunities for HBC to achieve more housing in East Street. One would be to encourage Royal Mail to move their sorting office to an industrial zone, freeing up the site for housing. The other would be to compulsory purchase nos. 5,7,9 & 11 East St and 10a The Pallant. These sites have all been granted planning permission in recent years but none have been developed. This would be in line with recently proposed "use it or lose it"

legislation and perhaps allow one cohesive scheme that could provide a greater number of dwellings.

In conclusion, we also share the general concern of many residents of the borough; as to what effect these proposals for new housing will have, not only on traffic but also on schools, health provision, etc. and whether sufficient thought has been given to these issues.

Yours faithfully,

Christopher Evans on behalf of Havant Civic Society.