



Candidate Questionnaire

Please complete by typing your responses in to the appropriate boxes or by typing an 'X' in the relevant tick-box where appropriate, then save the file as 'Your_Name.pdf' and email it back to southhamsociety@gmail.com.

Your name:

David Hancock

Political allegiance:

Liberal Democrats

Ward in which standing:

South Brent

Housing

According to the *Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan: The Housing Market Area and Updating the Objectively Assessed Need*, in the 20 years between 2014 and 2034 a further 3,924 homes would have to be built to meet the objectively assessed housing requirement, or an average of 196 new dwellings each year.

However, in the seven years between 2014 and 2021, no fewer than 2,957* of those dwellings were actually delivered, at an average of more than 420 a year. Then, in 2021/22, an additional 454 were added to the total.

Nor are we due to stop building any time soon. The Council's Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2023/24 is assuming that the number of properties is to increase by 500 per annum from 2023/24 onwards, while the Authorities Monitoring Report 2020-21 tells us there are 6,869 homes secured by planning permission that have yet to start construction.

In other words, we are building many more houses than were required.

Do you believe that we should continue building at the rate 500 new homes each year for the foreseeable future?

Yes:

No:

Other:

tick

If your answer is 'Other', please explain why here

We have a growing population and a housing crisis. The reasons for this are national and complex. We also have an aging population nationally but Devon, and in particular South Hams, is older than most other parts of the UK. Older people require more from public services, primarily the NHS and social care but due to local house prices such key workers cannot afford to live and work here. We have more acute labour shortages locally than in other regions. Such issues are made worse locally by the prevalence of second homes (1 in 11 homes in South Hams is a second home) which is a symptom of wealth inequality at a national level. So, key workers need somewhere to live to provide services to the population already here, but equally we cannot continue building houses forever.

I do not want to see South Hams become a housing estate but I do recognise that there is also an a need for housing. I think my role as a councillor would be to balance these competing need pragmatically and honestly.

* Plymouth, South Hams & West Devon Local Planning Authorities' 2021, 5 Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement November 2021



Housing/continued

Taking the number of dwellings that have already been built and the number of homes secured by planning permission that have yet to start construction, we are going to be able to construct 2.5 times more homes than the JLP said were required.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, do you believe we should give consent for any more, other than possibly homes for social rent, before the next Joint Local Plan is approved?

Yes: No: Other: tick

(If you wish to give an explanation or your reasoning please type in the box below)

I am not currently a councillor, so it is difficult for me to give full answers to a technical question such as this.

However, it seems to me to be prudent that if a plan is devised and agreed, it should be followed. If we are exceeding the intended outputs of the JLP I would want to see a very strong case as to why we would want to continue to exceed it when it regards such a sensitive area such as housing development.

At a density of just over eight dwellings per acre, using the Bloor Homes land at Sx 651 560 development at Filham as an example, accommodating 500 new homes each year will require a further 60 acres of land to be found. That will be the equivalent of imposing another settlement the size of Marlborough on the landscape every year.

Where do you suggest that land can be found?

As noted above, I am not currently a councillor and I am not going to suggest 60 acre sites in this document. I would favour future housing development being planned so that the impact on communities is managed with services grown to meet need, etc.



Social Housing

Figures from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities suggest that in the ten years until March 2022 no more than 24 social homes were built in the South Hams. Over the same period 107 social homes were sold. In other words 83 social homes have been lost while, in March 2022, there were no fewer than 1,795 people in the South Hams on the local authority waiting list for social housing.

Do you believe South Hams District Council should build homes for social rent?

Yes: No: Other:

Please add any further thoughts you might have below and say what other steps you think the District Council could take to resolve this problem.

The provision of affordable and social housing will be a priority. We need to provide homes for our key workers, and for the many other residents that are struggling to find affordable places to live. This applies to all ages but especially the young and the elderly. We need these homes to allow our communities to thrive. We will resist the building of any more market-value homes except where the need is properly established and there is community support.

- Give priority to truly affordable and social rented housing by mandating these as a high proportion of all new developments
- All new homes built should be primary residence only
- Charge all holiday and second homes double council tax.



Wind Turbines

The Government is proposing changes to the existing National Planning Policy Framework to enable many more wind turbines to be installed through Local Development Orders, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders, 'providing it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been appropriately addressed and the proposal has community support.'

Do you believe that the 'affected local community' should be defined as

- a) those living in the South Hams?
- b) those living within audible distance and/or one mile of the proposed turbines?
- c) Other tick

Do you believe the decision to grant approval should be taken by officers and members:

- a) after the application has been advertised?
- b) only after the 'affected local community' has voted in a referendum?
- c) Other tick

If you select 'Other' to either of the above, please explain why below.

I think renewable energy is vital both in terms of climate change and energy security. If we take South Brent as an example which has a wind turbine and solar farm in the parish, clearly, the whole of the South Hams is not impacted by either but I am not sure if audible distance and/or one mile is right either. For example, I can see the South Brent turbine from my window as I write this, this impacts me, though it is probably more than a mile away (I actually quite like it). However, I suspect that what counts is not my belief as to the matter but that it would be a matter of law which, if involved with a planning decision, I would have to follow. In addition to this, if there is a legal option for a referendum on planning matters relating to wind turbines, that should be upheld but if not, as a council we would not be able to grant a legally enforceable referendum on a planning matter. The district council would not be setting the law in this regard. Additionally, I do not believe that a particular planning matter, turbines, should be granted referenda but not others – that would be unfair. However, if all planning matters came down to referenda, we would have a planning system costing millions.

On personal level, I am an enthusiastic supporter of the South Brent Community Energy Society which owns and operates the South Brent turbine. South Brent Community Energy Society is a community interest company which uses the profits made through the turbine to grant to local organisations. Money from the turbine has installed solar panels on community building in South Brent as well energy efficient lighting in local schools and even supported the South Brent warm space. In terms of wind turbines I think this is an excellent model whereby the community most affected sees the benefits rather than profits being extracted from the local economy.



Solar Farms

Do you believe the climate emergency requires us to give up more of our agricultural land in order to accommodate solar panels?

Yes: No: Other:

If **Yes**, do you believe that should apply as much to land inside the AONB as without? If **Other**, please explain why below.

Yes: No: Other:

If **No**, please say where else can solar panels be accommodated other than on agricultural land? If **Other**, please explain why

Inevitably, yes, agricultural land should be used for solar generation though this should be marginal rather than prime agricultural land. In this regard I would highlight that sheep can be grazed around solar panels or the field can be left as wildflower meadow which would be a net benefit to biodiversity in comparison to agriculture. I would not favour the use of AONBs for solar farms. However, we need to do much better at installing solar on buildings and I am enthusiastic about our policy to install solar panels on South Hams owned car parks. We need to do better at using the space we have efficiently before using agricultural land. I would highlight the following from our manifesto:

Climate change and the degradation of our planet are the world's greatest challenge. Time is rapidly running out and we all must play our part. As a Local Authority we must provide the crucial leadership and resources necessary so that together with partners across the district we can effect the changes needed and build on the opportunities that greening our local economy presents.

also

- 1 Commit to investing £0.5M per year to address the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.
- 2 Set up a Climate Change Working Group within the Council that will include representatives from community groups and organisations from across the district to help coordinate projects, allocate resources and to harness their expertise and energy.
- 3 Review the Council's Climate Change action plan and develop an integrated plan with partners to reduce emissions and develop a low emissions green economy.
6. Add Photo Voltaic (PV) over all our car-parks

Planning Enforcement

To quote Ian Tant, President, Royal Town Planning Institute 2019: 'Successful planning relies on three essential areas of work by our local authorities: visionary plan-making which sets out the policies and proposals for the area; efficient and effective development management, which applies those local and national policies in the determination of planning applications; and well-resourced and effective enforcement. These three aspects go hand-in-hand.'

Unfortunately effective enforcement costs money, and there are many who believe that the LPA has been less than proactive in ensuring that developers and others comply with the conditions imposed by their consents.

Do you believe that the LPA has been sufficiently proactive in ensuring that developers and others comply with the conditions imposed by their consents?

Yes: No: Other:

If **No**, please answer the first question on the next page.



Planning Enforcement/continued

If you have answered **No** to the last question on the previous page, what would you suggest?

I am not currently a district councillor and my knowledge of these matter is therefore limited. However, my general sense is that the LPA is not sufficiently proactive though I have not looked at the particular matter in detail. My first instinct would be to look at their budget to assess their capacity to enforce. It is quite probable that after 13 years of austerity they are unable to act in the public interest.

Environmental Impacts

Do you believe pollution is adversely impacting our rivers or rias or beaches?

Yes: tick

No:

If **Yes**, how can the problem(s) best be addressed?

Our rivers and beaches are impacted by pollution. This is a national issue whereby water companies are sanctioned by the UK government to discharge sewage. I am strongly opposed to this.

I support attempts to designate areas as bathing water which compels water companies to monitor pollution and would like to look at this in South Hams. However, DEFRA tend to reject these and are coy about the reason why they reject applications - I suspect because it demand enforcement. So, my hopes for the success of such plans are low.

As a local authority (and local community) we can make noise about this to compel a change in the law to prevent sewage discharge. I would highlight to you that the present government voted down a private members bill that would have done just that. We will have to continue to campaign on this and, quite probably, demand a wholesale upgrade of the sewer system – this, I imagine, will be very expensive.



Environmental Impacts/continued

Do you believe there are air quality problems that need addressing in the South Hams?

Yes:

No:

If Yes, how can the problem(s) best be addressed?

Urban areas do suffer from air pollution. We need to reduce petrol and diesel car use to affect this by encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport and by enabling the take-up of electric vehicles.

I would highlight the following from our manifesto:

- Develop a network of Electric Bicycle hubs across the District
- Add electric car charging points in car parks.

Trees

The loss of many of our mature trees as a consequence of unauthorised felling, often as a precursor to a planning application being submitted, has long been a problem in the South Hams. Yet we have only the one tree officer, who we also have to share with West Devon. Consequently the combined area for which he is responsible totals 2,047.6 square kilometres. By comparison, East Devon has three tree officers to cover 814.3 square kilometres, or a far more manageable individual average of 271.4 square kilometres.

Would you be in favour of resourcing the tree protection function on a similar basis to East Devon?

I am afraid that I am not familiar with the East Devon scheme though if it s successful and there is a need for something similar in South Hams I would be interested in looking at it.

Yes:

No:

other



Other Issues

There may also be other issues affecting the natural and built environment of the South Hams that you think the District Council, in addition to those identified above, can and should be addressing.

Please detail those here:

I would urge members of the South Hams Society to read our manifesto. We are the only local party to present such a document to the public at this election . It is a document we are proud of and look forward to working towards its implementation.

<https://southhamslibdems.org/pdf.js/web/viewer.php?pid=manifesto>

Date completed: