

Bishop's Stortford Climate Group – Local Elections 2023

Liberal Democrats, Martin Adams

- *If elected, will you call for EHDC to reaffirm its commitment to its Climate Change Motion, review progress towards its target and strengthen its policies?*

The Liberal Democrats have a long history of pressuring the various councils and government bodies to address many of the issues regarding the environment and specifically climate change. The EHDC Climate Change Motion is a sound foundation, however in a part of the country that has significant change already in-flight (for example, the housing developments across Bishop's Stortford), every change should be assessed on its environmental business case, not just of the specific item (such as a house), but also the greater aspect as to how these people living in that house will get to work or move around the area. As a resident of East Herts since 1994, and Bishop's Stortford since 1995, much of the change over that period has not altered the prevailing dynamic that the area is still not, at its most basic level, adjusting the deprioritisation of cars as a focus for the population – in fact, the opposite has occurred in that even more new roads are added, nor is it looking at the overall package for employees of the council whereby their travel is directly incorporated into the council's own targets (no use in moving the problem around – letting people working from home where they will probably consume carbon in addition to their own workspace in offices).

Therefore to answer your question, reaffirmation of commitment must be improved by metrics and measurement – if a new housing estate is built that adds a further 1000 cars to the town, I would expect mitigation (especially offsetting) is adopted that will take 1000 cars off the road by building more cycle paths and walkways that encourage people to leave their cars at home (or even sold). If no mitigation is stated and adopted, then new developments just become a gateway to further climate changing behaviour.

I will call for EHDC to reaffirm its commitment, but expect progress to be measurable and publicly available, with stated mitigations to increasing over-development.

- *If elected, will you push for EHDC to undertake and complete, within one year of the election, a partial update of the Local Plan (LPPU) to require all new developments to be net zero? And to require net zero for domestic extensions when homes are modified?*

As stated earlier, adding more people to the town, should not result in more CO2 and other environmental pollutants; every change needs to be offset or assessed against its wider impact. As a cyclist (a reformed walker), I have deliberately cycled many parts of the town to test out our environmental credentials, and found that you cannot safely (even as an adult) cycle around town without using unsuitable pedestrian paths or dangerous roads. Until a unified cycle and pedestrian network is implemented, many cycle paths that exist cannot be readily used by many; for example, if a person cannot safely and cleanly cycle from their house to the train station, and park their bikes, then they will eventually find an alternative – and for children getting to and from school, this is even worse.

Getting out of town by bike is even more dangerous and problematic, particularly at rush hour. Dedicated cycle paths out of Bishops Stortford to other towns in East Herts and Essex (Harlow, Ware, Hertford, Hoddesdon, Saffron Walden) would reduce the need for much traffic, and possibly enable us to dispense with increased sport and health centre costs as people will be self-administering their own fitness regime as part of travel around town.

Therefore to answer your question, I pledge to push to make the new developments 'net zero' and updating the plan, not just for the properties, but also the access to and from these properties, amenities, and businesses. Clearly a net zero development that is effectively out of town, doesn't make sense unless transport access is included, to areas that people frequently want/need to visit. Looking at the current new developments, by adding thousands of new cars to the area, building more roads, these will not make 'Stortford' or any other town more net-zero, our overall CO2 emissions will increase irrespective of the actual housing materials (although we should be using the best net-zero construction materials), so long as we remain asymmetrically dependent upon cars (electric or fossil fuel). I agree wholeheartedly about the use of any new building work being suitably CO2-considered, and this includes extensions.

- *If elected, will you push for a full review of the project to regenerate the Old River Lane site, to engage the community and deliver new and exemplary proposals fully in line with the Council's commitment to work towards carbon neutrality by 2030?*

There are candidates who are better placed to respond to this 'officially' and have already been actively involved, however my response is below.

Until new developments within the town centre can be serviced by everyone using their own energies (walking cycling, ebikes, disability 'buggies', all with step-free access), leaving cars at home, then there should be a moratorium on major developments. Although the business and social buildings do need upgrading around ORL, prioritisation must firstly be given to improved access for the customers/users of the town centre, and give the current shops and businesses an opportunity to thrive, before further town centre congestion is added, and financial and business burdens increased. Cars will probably remain critical to the success and happiness of the town's population, however it is the number and absolute dependency on car journeys that is the issue as I see it, regarding carbon neutrality.

Existing businesses need encouraging, not having extra competitive burdens added (especially in light of online competition). Personally I'd like to see shops improved in their current location and buildings, with people shifting their spending pattern from expensive cars/fuel in favour of shopping in the local area, therefore providing the funds to upgrade shop establishments, either directly, or via the landlords. We cannot expect our shops to keep struggling against such economic and council policy headwinds – let's give them (the town centre establishments) via our custom, more money that would otherwise be spent either on carbon-based energy, expensive cars, or increased Council Tax in order to fund further capital development (such as Old River Lane) that does not facilitate a net zero carbon strategy in the quickest and optimal way. I am aware that these suggestions have weaknesses, but ideally people will start to make better use of what is all around them locally if presented with better transport alternatives.

I will commit to pushing for further development strategies and roadmaps that link change across the district (e.g. ORL) with how this is meeting environment targets and facilitating healthy social change by not allowing cars to take asymmetrical priority over other forms of transport. I will vote down any change that does not include mitigation relating to environmental impacts, nor integrates our housing with our town's business model and transport options.

- *If elected, will you commit to enhance the management of parks and green space for wildlife, to continue 'No Mow May', and to develop green corridors throughout East Herts?*

Like most people, I see the currently increasing urbanisation as uncontrolled and indifferent to a healthy social structure. I see farmers having to tolerate increasingly detrimental impact of this on their land and businesses (trespass and littering are but two); I see people having to live within earshot of busy roads – with all the pollution; I see people forced to live their lives not as they want to, but as they are directed to because the environment and low-impact transportation is deprioritised. I trust our farmers to tend to much of our countryside. I trust our residents in wanting a pleasant and enjoyable life that makes us feel free in a healthy environment; not rushed or noisy. We do need productive and self-administering green corridors throughout the district, where people are placed first, along with business such as farms who can maintain them.

I will commit to pushing for bringing the countryside (including practices and habits) back into our urban areas, and stop our countryside custodians (e.g. farmers) from suffering from the worst effects of urbanisation (theft or farming equipment, damage of crops and livestock, and the ability to tend to our land for future generations). Furthermore, there is still a need for allotments; but I would like to see plots increased (in size and security) in order for more people to make a real attempt to becoming self-sufficient in terms of food production – we need to cater for hobbyist gardeners, and also the people wanting to become more sustainable overall.

No Mow May is a great idea that fits many objectives, and the green corridors are likewise a brilliant thing to work towards – but with zero carbon strategies, I expect these to be a natural by-product of the correct strategy

- *If elected, will you follow the Pesticide Action Network UK three-year phase-out plan for pesticides?*

Pesticides and herbicides had their time and place, along with gratuitous use of antibiotics within our livestock – thankfully we have the technology and maturing behaviour (and money) to reduce our dependency on these – not always by becoming tied to genetic modification either, sometime by more natural methods. No non-commercial operations (such as Councils) or the public should be using pesticides, but only by land custodians such as farmers, for specific crops and for specific times (i.e. if there are droughts or blights, we need to be flexible). It is the sustained abuse and indifference to our environment that is a problem, so careful management away from this is required. As with all other great questions you've asked – the most fundamental theme is to make our society joined-up, this includes all the business models used by various sectors in order to provide the 'things' we must have; farmers need support in the same way as retailers if we are to enable them to become the businesses needed to become environmentally sound – transitioning is difficult.

At a personal level, I try and purchase organic wherever possible, I have a natural compost for the garden (I have cancelled my brown bin collection), I do not buy pesticides (although flypaper is still used to stop flies attacking my plants from my parents), and I listen to my daughter and her fiancé when they suggest natural gardening and farming remedies (they live on a smallholding and are landscape gardeners).

I will follow the Pesticide Action Network proposals, but knowing that this requires support and care in order to farmers to adapt without becoming bankrupt – the investment already made by farmers

into pesticide use (such as expensive machinery) needs to run its course, or that investment needs to be covered elsewhere (but I am assuming that the Action plan is pragmatic, which I suspect it is).

I would like the EHDC to mandate that all council-owned gardening allotments must be pesticide free (if this hasn't already been committed to), as with all urban areas within ring-roads or close to where people live, or along the verges of all public roads and rail network through the region