

The Legal Position

If undertaken carefully and considerately, the occasional bonfire or barbecue should not be a major problem. There are no bylaws to prohibit burning and so it would not be reasonable to issue an outright ban across the district. Bonfires can however be auctioned under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 if they are deemed to be a statutory nuisance.

To be considered a statutory nuisance, bonfires at an address must be a regular occurrence and would have to be interfering substantially with your well being, comfort or enjoyment of your property.

If you are bothered by persistent bonfires from a property, the first step is to approach the owner of the property, they may be genuinely unaware that their actions are affecting you. If this approach fails, you should contact Environmental Health on 01252 74421 and inform them of your concerns.

The officer dealing with your case may wish to visit and assess whether the bonfire is a statutory nuisance. If it is considered to be a statutory nuisance then an abatement notice will be served on the person who is responsible for the fire under

Good Bonfire Guide

If you must have a bonfire, follow these guidelines and the chances are you won't cause a nuisance:

- Compost as much as possible
- Any large woody cuttings that cannot be burnt should be dried before burning as this will produce less smoke.
- Choose the position of your bonfire carefully
- Never leave a fire unattended
- Never burn household rubbish, plastics, painted or treated wood, foam or paint.
- Never use old engine oil, meths or petrol to light or fuel a fire
- Do not light fires within an hour of sunset as the smoke may linger in the air or when the wind may carry smoke over neighbouring properties
- Avoid burning at weekends and on bank holidays when people want to enjoy their gardens



Hart District Council ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



BONFIRES

Bonfires

The Hart District Council Environmental Health Team is responsible for investigating complaints about smoke and nuisance caused by bonfires.

The Problem

Bonfires can be very annoying, the smoke, ash and smell generated by them are the subject of many complaints to the council. Smoke can ruin residents enjoyment of their gardens and also prevent them from opening windows or hanging out washing to dry.

Not only is the smoke, ash and smell annoying, burning garden waste produces poisonous gases, such as carbon monoxide and other toxic compounds.

Many of these compounds have damaging health effects particularly in susceptible groups, such as children, asthmatics and those with heart defects.

Even if there is little or no immediate health risk your bonfire is adding to the overall air pollution across the UK. UK air quality often hits 'poor' do you really want to make it worse.

The weather can make the effects of a bonfire worse. When the air is still in the late afternoon or early evening smoke will linger in the air. However if it is windy the smoke from a bonfire may be blown into neighbouring properties or across roads causing danger or annoyance.

Bonfires can also be dangerous and great care should be taken when lighting them. They should be tended while they are burning and should be positioned to prevent fire spreading to fences or buildings, or damaging trees or plants.

Alternatives to Bonfires

There are many ways of disposing of garden waste which are more environmentally friendly alternatives to bonfires, which include;

Composting: Most garden and kitchen waste can be recycled into compost, which can be used to improve soil conditions. Hart District Council is currently promoting composting through the 'Recycle for Hampshire' scheme. For further information on this scheme and to see what offers are available please phone 0844 571 4444 or visit www.hants.getcomposting.com

Recycling: If you are unable to compost at home, for a small annual charge, you can join the growing number of people who have subscribed to a fortnightly garden waste collection. To get more information about this service contact the Council on 01252 622122. Alternatively you can take your garden waste to the Household Waste Recycling Centre at Springwell Lane, Hartley Wintney.

For information or advice on the disposal or composting of garden waste please contact the Waste Management Team on 01252 622122.

Shredding: Woody waste can be shredded to make it suitable for composting or mulching; you can buy or hire shredders from your local tool hire, but remember be considerate when you use them, they can be noisy, you don't want to replace one nuisance with another.