



Highbarns News

Update 4

June/July

Thanks for your survey responses

Thanks to all the residents who sent back the survey enclosed with the last Chalk Mines News.

In all we had 24 responses. Of these most people reported no issues with their properties. In the minority of cases where residents had fed back about incidents or anomalies with their properties, the information has been passed on to the Council's Building Control team who are keeping a log and will follow up with residents as appropriate.

In addition to gaining data on individual properties, the survey will help to build up a picture (if one exists) of any ground activity in the area.

As part of continuing research into historical mining activity in Hertfordshire, Council officers recently met with an expert from the British Geological Survey. Whilst there is nothing conclusive from this in terms of the Highbarns area it's good to explore authoritative sources of information to see what we can discover.

If you haven't yet filled in a survey but would like to report any issue with your property you can get a copy from the Highbarns area of the Council's web site (www.dacorum.gov.uk/highbarns).

Any resident with a concern about any specific incident can also contact the Council's Building Control team on **01442 228587** or email building.control@dacorum.gov.uk

Highways Update

On 2 June residents of Highbarns and Pond Road, met with Hertfordshire Highways engineers to discuss the progress of the highways work associated with road closures.

During the meeting residents impressed upon engineers the need to speed-up the work to remove the temporary fencing which was considered an eyesore and somewhat of an overkill to solve the problem. It had been previously agreed that a smaller railing be installed in its place, and to place concrete planters behind the permanent railing.

After the meeting, Hertfordshire Highways engineers gave further consideration to the arrangements and thought that railings would not offer the best long-term, aesthetically pleasing solution. A better solution was to install kerbs across the road with large upright timber bollards. The gaps in between bollards would be insufficient to allow a car to pass, but wide enough to give ample view of the flowers in the planters and not give an impression of enclosure. The timber bollards would be consistent on all three approaches plus at the edge of the grassy area. This work has already started and is due to be completed within a couple of weeks.

In addition to introducing the improved barriers, the following work is planned to be undertaken within the following two weeks:

- Resurfacing of the holes in the footway
- Additional signs to advise motorists of access restrictions
- Installation of concrete planters (soil and flowers to follow)
- Removal of all of the temporary fences, barriers and signs
- Tidy-up of the site, including the grassy area

Lastly, the repair of street light number 4 should be carried out before the end of July.

To contact Hertfordshire Highways call **01923 257000** or email southwestherts.area@hertshighways.org.uk

Residents Group Update

Since its first meeting in January, the Highbarns Residents Group has had four further meetings with officers from the Council, Police and Hertfordshire Highways and with local Councillors to feed back on local issues.

In addition to the highways issues covered on the first page of this newsletter the following issues have been discussed by the Residents Group.

Council Tax banding reduction. A local resident has put in a test application to the Valuation Office Agency for a reduction in the Council Tax band for her property as a result of the chalk mines. This proposal was turned down on the grounds that there wasn't enough of a material difference to her property. This resident plans to appeal against the decision and will look to work up a new case for review. If successful, this appeal could pave the way for other residents to apply for the banding of their properties to be reduced.

Security issues. One of the concerns expressed by local residents has been nuisance caused by motorcycles driving through the road closures and on the footpaths. Registration numbers of motorcycles have been passed on to the Police. Generally, home security has been improving across the Borough, with only one burglary reported in Dacorum in the last nine weeks.

Communications. A communications plan is in place to make sure that residents get regular and coordinated information. This has been discussed with the Residents Group, who did not suggest any change to what was tabled.

Copies of Residents Group minutes are on the Highbarns section of the Council's web site. See below for more information about this.

Project Progress

Project Management

Progress is being made with the tender to appoint a specialist project manager to assist the Council in its co-ordinating role, although this has taken longer than was originally envisaged. The tender will be finalised over the summer period. A full update on the latest position will be provided to the next Residents' Group meeting.

Research Activity

Borough Council officers have been, and continue to be, very active in researching a variety of matters. In addition to the historical research mentioned previously officers have also been researching potential legal requirements (eg. planning or environmental). The aim is to make sure that we would be legally covered to carry out any future works, subject to funding being in place.

Keeping you informed

We are looking to hold another public meeting, potentially in early October, to bring you up to speed once we have made further progress on these areas. Further details will be in the next edition of Highbarns News which will be issued in September.

Information on-line

Find up-to-date information on the chalk mines project on a dedicated area of the Borough Council web site: www.dacorum.gov.uk/highbarns

- Newsletters
- Minutes and presentations from public meetings
- Residents Group minutes
- Committee reports
- Advice (including Questions and Answers)