



Highbarns News

Update 7 October 2010

Introducing the new Dacorum Borough Council Team

Welcome to this seventh edition of Highbarns News which will provide an update on the work to apply for funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, the new Dacorum Borough Council Team and planning advice for homeowners.

Following a staff restructure there are changes in the key personnel involved in the project. Please find below details of the new key contacts:



Steve Baker pictured

Steve Baker – Assistant Director, Legal, Democratic and Regulatory (prime contact)
01442 228229, steve.baker@dacorum.gov.uk

James Doe – Assistant Director, Planning, Development and Regeneration
01442 228583, james.doe@dacorum.gov.uk

Helen Lawrence – Communications Officer
01442 228184, helen.lawrence@dacorum.gov.uk

Funding application to Homes and Communities Agency

The Council has submitted an application to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for funding from the Land Stabilisation Programme to enable the Council to arrange for the completion of the detailed investigations, including boreholes, and the carrying out of the treatment works.

The Council has also applied to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for a Derelict Land Clearance Order under section 1(7) of the Derelict Land Act 1982 (as explained over the page). The purpose of applying for this Order is to enable the Council to receive 100% of the required funding for the project. Without the Order the project will only be eligible for 50% funding.

It is important to stress that, although the Council believes it has put forward a very strong bid for both the funding and the Order, there is no guarantee that they will be successful.

The HCA is currently reviewing the application, together with the large amounts of supporting evidence prepared by the Council's project managers, Hyder Consulting (UK) Ltd. When the HCA have finished reviewing the paperwork they will invite representatives from the Council and Hyder to a meeting to discuss the situation and to clarify any outstanding points. Once the meeting with the HCA has taken place the Council will have a better idea as to when we will hear about the success of the application.

If the application is successful, and full funding is made available, it is hoped that the main treatment works could start by October 2011 and substantially completed by February 2012. These dates have been provided by Hyder in their outline timetable submitted in support of the application. We must emphasise that these dates are provisional only and may well be subject to change due to factors outside the Council's control.

See over the page for planning and building control advice and information on derelict land clearance orders

Doing any works (large or small) at your property? Please read this important advice

While the Council continues to act in a co-ordinating role, as explained in previous Newsletters, the Council's technical advisors (Hyder) have confirmed that householders in the whole of the Highbarns area should exercise significant caution regarding works at their properties. We are therefore concerned both to ensure that all residents in the Inner and Outer Highbarns Areas are aware of the implications of carrying out a wide range of works and to provide advice before any such works begin.

Please therefore tell us if you are considering any works which would normally not require planning permission ("permitted development") and/or Building Regulations Consent. These include soakaways, hard surfaces (such as patios and parking areas), porches, extensions, conservatories, car ports, non-residential garden buildings (such as sheds/greenhouses) and swimming pools.

Merely starting these at one house could have structural safety implications for the much wider Highbarns area.

If you are proposing works of this type we urge you to contact us first.

For initial advice please contact:

John Keeton, Building Control on 01442 228907 or email john.keeton@dacorum.gov.uk

Nigel Gibbs, Development Management on 01442 228576 or email nigel.gibbs@dacorum.gov.uk

What a Derelict Land Clearance Order means for Highbarns

The Council has applied for a Derelict Land Clearance Order to be made for the Highbarns area in an attempt to obtain 100% funding for remedial works.

The Order is a form of legislation and is best sought at around the same time as an "ordinary" application for funding is made, on the basis the latter can, if successful, only secure 50% of the funding.

The matter is technical, but basically the Order is subject to governmental consent processes. While the name may sound off-putting, it does not mean the land covered by the Order is currently derelict. If the financial effect of an Order is considered, it should instead provide reassurance that land stabilisation issues in the area concerned are going to be addressed. Other Local Authorities up and down the country have obtained such Orders (for areas affected by disused mines) to positive effect, unlocking key additional funding over and above that which might otherwise be available.

Once any remedial works have been carried out with the benefit of necessary funding, completion certificates may be issued to provide owners with evidence of remediation.

The Council is of the view that there is no requirement to register the Derelict Land Clearance Order as a Local Land Charge.

Dropped Kerbs in Pond Road

A work order has been raised by Herts County Council to drop the kerbs at the junction of Pond Road and Highbarns, one on each corner, to facilitate use by wheelchair and pram users. They are the usual type seen on many road junctions, and consist of two ramped kerbs with one dropped kerb in the middle. These works will be carried out by hand to minimise vibration.

It is hoped that this work will be completed within the next three months.

See over the page for information on the permanent road closure and news on a similar chalk mines project in Reading

Permanent Road Closure

Following the chalk mine collapse in Highbarns, an emergency closure was put in place prohibiting all traffic from using a small section of Pond Road and part of Highbarns. When the time limit on this closure expired it became necessary to obtain a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order which covered a further 18 month period. The purpose of the Order was to protect the general public. This Order expired and could only have been extended for a further six month period.

It therefore became necessary to organise a permanent closure (which came into operation on 11 October 2010) and will remain in place until it is no longer needed. The timescales are currently unknown, the application for funding from the HCA has now been submitted but it was necessary to cover a time period longer than the six months that would have been possible on a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order.

There will be no visible changes other than slight adjustments to improve what is already in place. The permanent closure is called a Prohibition of Driving Order, which prohibits any person from causing or permitting any motor vehicle to enter or drive through the area covered by the closure.

Safety of children in the street

Although we are approaching winter, we would just like to take this opportunity to advise parents and guardians that young children should **not be allowed to play in the street in the road closure area**. The Highway Code advises that young children should not be out alone on pavements or roads.

Letter of advice attached

The Highbarns Residents Group fed back to the Council team that some residents were experiencing problems with insurance and mortgage companies on learning about the chalk mines situation.

In an attempt to help to address this issue, we have provided a letter, attached to this newsletter, which gives clarification and background information should an insurance company or mortgage company request it. Although this letter may be of assistance, insurance companies are entitled to make their own decisions about premiums, in line with their own perception of the risk.

Reading news

A district in Reading is in a similar situation to the Highbarns area. Work will start early in 2011 on a £4.3million project to carry out further investigations and stabilisation works to homes in the Field Road and Coley district of Reading, which they think is built on land where historical chalk mining took place. The mine is thought to be underneath more than 50 properties.

The project is being funded by the Homes and Communities Agency following a successful bid by Reading Borough Council. The properties are all sited within a derelict land clearance order area and therefore qualify for 100% funding. Phase 3 of the project will include further detailed ground investigations involving borehole drillings and dynamic probing techniques.

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

Home emergencies: Who to contact...

Type of problem	What to do	Who to tell	Contact details
If you smell gas or are worried about gas safety	Put out any naked flames. Contact the 24 hour emergency line. Keep well away from the area. Do not use any electrical switches or something which may cause sparks.	National Gas	☎ 0800 111 999 www.nationalgrid.com
If notice a water leak or a burst pipe in your local area		Veolia Water (Three Valleys)	☎ 0800 376 5325 ('Leakspotter' hotline) leakspotter.central@veoliawater.co.uk www.veoliawater.co.uk
If there is a problem with a drain or sewer		Thames Water Utilities	☎ 0845 9200 800 www.thameswater.co.uk
If there is a power cut or problem with your electricity supply	Check whether your neighbours have also lost their supply. If your neighbours don't have power, call the 24 hour emergency line.	EDF Energy Networks	☎ 0800 783 8838 www.edfenergy.com
If you are worried about the stability of your home	Keep out of any affected buildings until you are told it is safe to return	Emergency services Council Building Control	☎ 999 ☎ 01442 228907
If you notice damage to roads, pavements or street signs or a faulty street light		Hertfordshire Highways Local Highways area office	☎ 0300 123 4047 www.hertsdirect.org ☎ 01923 257000 southwestherts.area@hertshighways.org.uk

Other useful contact numbers:

Police

If you are in immediate danger and need urgent police, fire and rescue or ambulance assistance call **999**.

In non-emergency situations you can contact Hertfordshire Police on **0845 3300222**.

Local police officer covering the Nash Mills Area:

PCSO 6582 Lesley Kirkpatrick

lesley.kirkpatrick@herts.pnn.police.uk ☎ 01442 271636

Councillors

Councillors representing the Nash Mills area are as follows:

Dacorum Borough Council: Lucy Foster, 7 Crabtree Lane, Hemel Hempstead ☎ 01442 257203

Hertfordshire County Council: Jan Maddern, 29 Swan Mead, Hemel Hempstead ☎ 01442 401241