

CLERK'S REPORT SEPTEMBER 2026

CORRESPONDENCE

10/07/2026 Resident:

I was so happy to see so many large trees planted this spring and that they had watering bags attached to them to ensure they survived their first few years. Unfortunately they don't seem to have actually been watered and most look as if they are close to dying. I don't know if it is the parish council or local council that planted them but I wondered if they had been forgotten? I have tried to water the one nearest my home which is a cherry tree and hope it makes a recovery.

Response from HCC via Cllr Kingsbury:

"We instruct our contractors to carry out a regular regime of watering. All newly planted tree stock are fitted with twenty-gallon, slow-release watering bags which are ideally suited to satisfy the watering needs of newly planted specimens. The watering bags slowly release water over a period of five to nine hours depending on the variable weather conditions. This slow release ensures that water deeply penetrates the ground. When watering it is crucial for the water to seep deep into the ground and this is best achieved over the above mentioned timeframe, if the water was released too slowly it is likely that it would evaporate and if it was administered too quickly it would run off before it reached the trees rooting system.

Due to the slow-release delivery method offered by the tree bag, the ground below the soils surface around the rooting system of the tree has a high concentration of moisture available to it and therefore the bag does not need to be refilled every day. Furthermore, after a deep-water application, the subsequent drying out of the soil will actively encourage deeper root growth as the fine fibrous roots at the periphery of the rooting system will endeavour to explore and exploit moisture found at a deeper level in the soil profile. Keeping the soil too moist for too long can remove oxygen from the soil, which will have a very detrimental effect upon the tree. If the roots have no access to oxygen, the root cells die and if the root cells die, the tree will decline and die.

Any trees which fail to establish, will be replanted. There could be a plethora of reasons as to why trees are failing to establish as well as we would like them too, we will closely monitor the situation and where trees do fail, we will remove them and replant."

Clerk response:

I have been observing the new trees and some are not looking great but you never can tell.

Regarding the watering, I understand the process but the water bags have not been filled for some weeks. Since the planting, when I presume the bags were filled, they have been refilled only once and that was well before the current heatwave, maybe around May or perhaps before that.

How often should they be refilled? Is the contractor doing as they agreed? I notice a couple of bags have water in them so they may not be delivering it to the tree for some reason.

Monitoring the watering frequency is something Parish Councils could help with. It would be a shame to lose the trees.

Response from HCC via Cllr Kingsbury:

"The changing climate presents a significant challenge to traditional approaches to tree establishment. The recent Met Office findings reinforce that what were previously considered extreme heat and drought conditions are becoming increasingly common, we have already had three heat waves and in the longest prolonged dry period for 30 years.

The highway environment is also one of the most challenging locations in which to establish trees. We take a lot of time to select species and sustainable locations for trees however, verges present challenges with compacted soils, competition from utilities, reflected heat from hard surfaces, and exposure to vehicle emissions and road salt. These factors can significantly restrict root development and moisture availability, making successful establishment more difficult than in parks, woodlands or other green spaces.

For a few years now we have been selecting and trialling species from Mediterranean climate adapting our approach through careful species selection, favouring species which demonstrate

greater tolerance to drought and heat stress. However, species selection alone will not overcome the constraints of poor soil quality, compaction, and the increasing frequency of prolonged dry periods. There are several species we do not plant on the Highway now such as Betulas and others like Moras alba, Prunus laurocerasus Novita, Ligustrum japonicum have established really well in these dry and hot conditions.

The answer to these challenges isn't just down to watering although we recognise that establishment assumptions developed under historical climate conditions will need to be reviewed. This season the issue has been the prolonged intensity of heat, both direct and reflected from hard surfaces which has caused issues and there is very little we can do to protect against that. We do have a good watering schedule/process through the planting contractor, and we have been bolstering this with additional watering focussing on trees which are stressed. This planting season we will be trialling a selection of smaller trees which we believe will be less susceptible to heat stress, with a smaller canopy and therefore less water demand."

15/08/2026 Resident:

Unfortunately the contractor clearly hasn't been watering the trees at all, I have never once seen any of the watering bags on the trees on Mardleybury Road bulging as they do when filled with water. I have been away for 3 weeks and the cherry tree I had been watering on Mardleybury Road which had almost recovered is now pretty much dead-

Also the trees that were planted in front of Tesco have clearly never been watered and now have no leaves at all-

I know this is not the time of year to replace these trees but if I don't raise it now then I suspect the county council will suggest that they have simply dropped their leaves for autumn. Such a shame and waste of county council money.

Response from HCC via Cllr Kingsbury:

Thank you for your email on behalf of your constituent regarding tree watering in Woolmer Green.

I can confirm that the trees have been watered but due to the weather they are just stressed:

Please see the list below completed our subcontractor.

RINGWAY HERTS - Location	Species	R13 Team	R13 Date	R13 Condition	R12 Team	R12 Date	R12 Condition
Mardleybury road (W3W horn.trout.public)	Prunus avium Plena	Jack 2	12/08/2026	stressed	Craig	03/08/2026	stressed
Either side of Broadfield entrance	Ostrya carpinifolia	Jack 2	12/08/2026	stressed	Craig	03/08/2026	Healthy
Outside 28 Mardleybury Road (W3W keeps.risk.rainy)	Prunus avium Plena	Jack 2	12/08/2026	stressed	Craig	03/08/2026	stressed
Either side of Broadfield entrance	Ostrya carpinifolia	Jack 2	12/08/2026	stressed	Craig	03/08/2026	Healthy

Thank you for bringing this to our attention and trust the above information is of use. "

13/07/2026 Castle Water:

Dear Customer,

We have been asked by Affinity Water, your water wholesaler, to make you aware that it is introducing a Temporary Use Ban (hosepipe ban) across its Central region, covering Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Surrey and parts of London. The restrictions will come into force on Friday 17 July and will remain in place until further notice.

Are businesses affected?

Businesses can continue to use a hosepipe where it is directly required for commercial activities. However, some restrictions apply where hosepipe use is not specifically related to business needs. For full details and answers to frequently asked questions, please visit Affinity Water's website [here](#).

How can your business help

Affinity Water is asking customers to support water conservation efforts by:

- Avoiding, reducing or delaying non-essential hosepipe, irrigation and sprinkler use
- Identifying and repairing any leaks on your pipework
- Reviewing timed water usage, including urinal controls and overnight flows
- Promoting water efficiency awareness across your business

You can find out more about [water efficiency](#) on our website.

Thank you for your support in helping to conserve water supplies during this period.

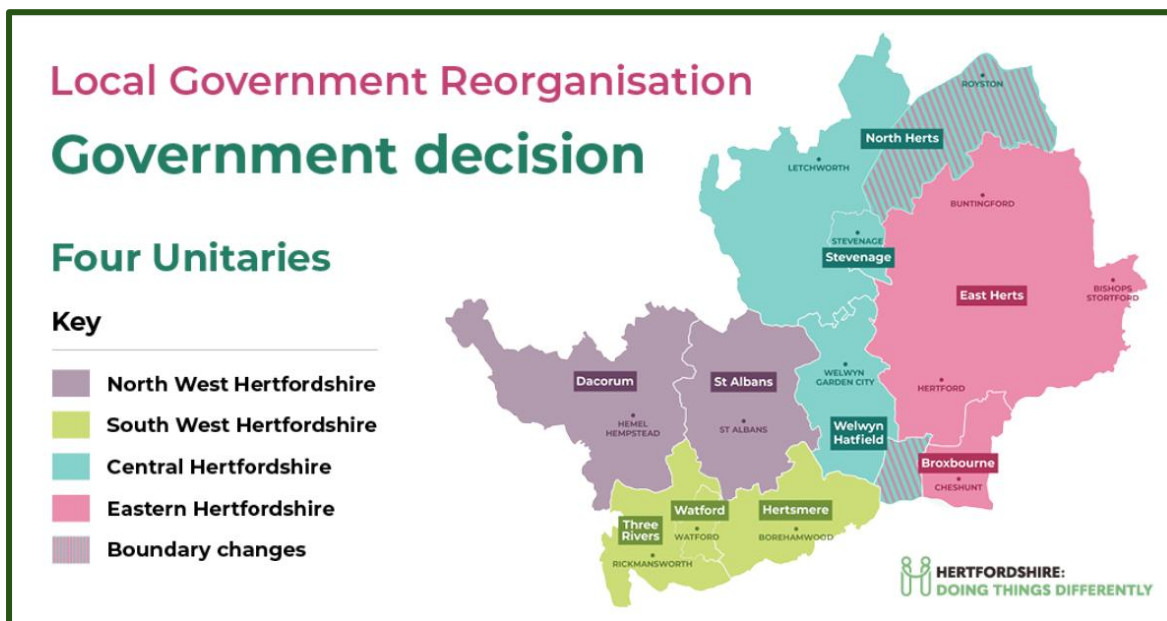
16/07/2026 WHBC Chief Executive:

Dear Partners and Stakeholders,

Thank you for your support and engagement during the preparation of Hertfordshire's Local Government Reorganisation proposals. The participation, insights and constructive feedback of local stakeholders played an important role in shaping the proposal documents.

I am writing to inform you that the Government has now set out its decision regarding the future structure of local government in Hertfordshire. The Government's preferred model is for four unitary councils to be established across the county.

The decision means that Hertfordshire County Council and the ten district and borough councils will be reorganised to form four new unitary authorities, North West Hertfordshire, South West Hertfordshire, Central Hertfordshire and Eastern Hertfordshire. In particular, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council will form part of the new Central Hertfordshire Council, serving the communities of the existing Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (excluding the Northaw and Cuffley ward), North Hertfordshire District Council (excluding five district council wards) and Stevenage Borough Council from 1 April 2028.



This now brings clarity to the future direction of the local government reorganisation process in Hertfordshire and provides a clear framework on which the next phase of implementation can proceed.

I understand that change of this scale may raise questions, particularly around continuity and service delivery. I want to reassure you that maintaining high-quality services for residents, businesses, and communities remains our priority. Robust transition plans are already in development across the county to ensure that services continue without disruption throughout this period.

Equally important is ensuring that the future arrangements reflect the needs and aspirations of our communities and partners. Your continued involvement will be vital in ensuring that the new structures deliver effective, responsive and locally accountable services.

Over the coming months, there will be further updates and opportunities to engage as more detailed proposals are developed.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

23/07/2026 Stevenage Borough Council:

Dear Consultee

This is to inform you that on 22 July 2026, Stevenage Borough Council adopted the Stevenage Local Plan Partial Update at Full Council.

In accordance with Regulation 26 and 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) the attached Adoption Statement hereby gives notice that on 22 July 2026, Stevenage Borough Council adopted the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031 Partial Update as a development plan document.

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination in August 2025 and was the subject of an independent examination conducted by L Fleming B.Sc. (Hons) MRTPI IHBC. The Inspector's Report was published on 27 May 2026, which confirmed that the Plan Partial Update was sound, subject to a number of main modifications, and recommended its adoption.

The recommended main modifications, along with additional minor modifications, now form part of the adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Update. They can be viewed separately on the link provided below.

In accordance with Regulations 26 and 35 of the 2012 Regulations, the following documents have been made available.

1. The Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031 Partial Update
2. The attached Adoption Statement
3. The Sustainability Appraisal Report

These and supporting documents can be viewed here: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan> .

If you have any queries or questions regarding the Local Plan or any supporting documents, please contact the Planning Policy team.

23/07/2026 Stevenage Borough Council:

Dear Consultee,

We are writing to inform you that Stevenage Borough Council's Revised Community Infrastructure Charging Schedule was adopted on 22 July 2026.

The revised levy rates as per the schedule are shown below:

Development Type	CIL Rate	
	Zone 1: Stevenage Central	Zone 2: Everywhere else
Residential		
Market Housing	£50 per m2	£120 per m2
Sheltered Housing	£120 per m2	
Extracare Housing	£50 per m2	
Retail Development	£75 per m2	
Industrial Development	£40 per m2	
All other Development	£0 per m2	

The full Charging Schedule and supporting documents can be viewed at: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/community-infrastructure-levy-cil>

If you have any queries or questions regarding the CIL or any supporting documents, please contact the Planning Policy team.

24/07/2026 Hirer:

The party on the 11th went really well, and we had a lovely time. However, I just wanted to make you aware of a couple of issues we experienced, as I'm not sure if they've already been reported. The shelves inside the fridge were damaged and wouldn't slot into the grooves properly. My husband and brother noticed this when they dropped off the drinks and equipment the evening before. The caretaker was there at the time, saw the damage, and mentioned that he would report it to you. The fridge didn't keep our food and drinks properly chilled.

We also had some difficulties with the oven, as it was very slow to heat up. This delayed us serving the food, and in the end we had to borrow our friend's air fryer to cook most of it in time. I just wanted to let you know in case these issues haven't already been brought to your attention.

26/07/2026 Resident:

I wonder if the fixings used for the newly located Judith Watson memorial bench are the permanent fixings? Only two of the four legs have been secured, these being on the diagonal. Currently, the bench is not properly secured and there is play which could cause the fixings to fail.

Clerk's response: Thank you for your email. The bench supplier recommends two fixings, and the contractor who installed the bench has confirmed that two diagonal fixings are sufficient. The Parish Council will, however, continue to monitor the bench to ensure it remains secure.

Resident's response: I have never come across a two fixings bench so I guess the PC would have to assess the cost of two additional fixings Vs the risk of someone toppling the bench as is and suing the council.

28/07/26 Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA)

We hope this email finds you well.

We are writing to introduce ourselves as Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd (SAAA), the organisation responsible for appointing external auditors to eligible smaller authorities in England. Our current appointed external auditors include BDO, PKF Littlejohn, Moore and Forvis Mazars.

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting smaller authorities, we are improving the way we communicate with councils and authorities. By ensuring we have accurate contact information, we'll be able to keep you informed about important developments, regulatory updates, training opportunities and key deadlines throughout the year.

We're also excited to let you know that SAAA will be introducing a new **Digital AGAR Portal**, designed to make the submission and management of Annual Governance and Accountability Returns (AGARs) simpler, more secure and more efficient. The portal is expected to be available for the **2027 AGAR submissions**.

The Digital AGAR Portal will be **voluntary for the 2027 AGAR submission**, giving authorities an opportunity to become familiar with the new process and benefit from the enhanced functionality. SAAA intends for the portal to become the primary submission route and, subject to final arrangements, its use is expected to become **mandatory for the 2029 AGAR submissions**.

To encourage early adoption, SAAA will also be introducing an **incentive scheme during 2027** for authorities that register for and use the Digital AGAR Portal. Further details of this scheme will be announced later this year.

To help us prepare for the portal launch, we'd like to make sure we have the correct contact details for your authority. Having up-to-date information will ensure that the right people receive important updates, training invitations and portal access information as soon as it becomes available.

What do we need you to do?

You will shortly receive a separate email from agarsupport@saaa.co.uk with instructions how to update your Authorities details. Please take a few minutes to log in to the Small Authority Portal and check that your authority's details are correct, including:

- Authority name
- Clerk details (where applicable)
- Responsible Financial Officer details (where applicable)
- Email addresses
- Telephone numbers
- Postal address
- Any other key contact information

You can also find out more about SAAA and our role in supporting the local audit regime for smaller authorities by visiting our website:

www.saaa.co.uk

We would be grateful if you could review and update your information within the next four weeks so that we can ensure everything is ready for future communications and portal access arrangements.

If you need any help accessing the Small Authority Portal, or if you have any questions, please get in touch with us at agarsupport@saaa.co.uk and we'll be happy to help.

Thank you for your assistance and for your continued support as we modernise the AGAR process for smaller authorities. We look forward to working with you and keeping you informed of developments over the coming months.

28/07/2027 WGC Town Council Campaign:

I am writing to you on behalf of [WGC Town Council Campaign](#). I am following up an earlier email from Melanie Peeke, our Chair, to request a meeting with yourselves.

As you are probably aware, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is undertaking a Community Governance Review to consider whether residents would like a town/parish council for Welwyn Garden City. We are currently the only community in the borough which remains unparished.

We believe a WGC Town Council would not only benefit Welwyn Garden City itself, but would strengthen local democratic representation across the borough and create new opportunities for town and parish councils to work together.

A WGC Town Council could help provide:

- A stronger collective voice for local communities across the borough.
- Greater influence on planning, transport, green spaces and local services.
- More opportunities for joint projects, funding bids and community initiatives.
- Stronger protection of local identity and community priorities.
- Better coordination on issues that cross parish boundaries.
- A fairer governance structure, bringing WGC into line with every other town and village in the borough.

The first formal CGR consultation ran up until 31 June. Assuming the consultation results show a high demand for a local council, we are now planning Phase 2; where our overall purpose, rationale and benefits, ideas, and general plans, will need to be translated into much more specific definitions of structure, responsibilities, roles and policies. We would be extremely grateful for any support you can offer, and sharing ideas on ways of working, and best practice.

We would also very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you and learn from your experience as an established local council. We are keen to understand both the opportunities and challenges of parish governance and to build positive relationships with neighbouring councils from the outset. This co-working can increase our collective influence within the new Central Hertfordshire unitary authority.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our request. We hope you feel able to support our campaign going forward and look forward to hearing from you. As with all these processes, time is tight. Mel and I could meet with you on Monday 3rd or Wednesday 5th. Otherwise let me have possible dates and times for the following week.

07/08/2026 Resident:

I am most concerned at the unkempt situation in our small area. The bushes and hedges haven't been cut back this year which causes people to have to dodge the overhang. I have spoken to the council about bushes and was told it is noted. The small children's park needs urgent attention. I have spoken about the swings with you before. The children this year are absolutely absent. The whole area is untidy and extremely scruffy and to add insult to injury everything is covered in brown dust. We should be able to put our washing out at this time but avoid it. Are we actually breathing in Brown dust too ??

We are mainly elderly in the Close and are unable to do much about it. In the past we have even swept the leaves in the road but I'm afraid we are all a bit too old now. We are not used to a scruffy area.

We also have a bungalow which is looking derelict as nobody has moved in there for 18 months.

Sorry to be moaning but we are rather fed up with it now.

Clerk's response:

The hedges in your area probably belong to the County Council. Hedge cutting should be carried out outside the bird nesting season from September so I would assume that is why it has been noted.

The park belongs to the Borough Council. The Parish Council maintains the play equipment. What in particular needs attention?

The issue of brown dust has been raised with Environmental Health and planning. I have not received any feedback so I will chase that.

I'm afraid the bungalow is the responsibility of the owner but I wouldn't know who that is.

Resident's response:

Thank-you for your reply. The council told me that the hedges should be cut by the end of July. That is usually the case. The hedge at the side of my bungalow is totally much too high and is a pressure on my fence. The playground needs maintenance, tidying and possibly painting. The swings need replacing too. That is also covered in brown dust.

We are not used to living in such an overgrown area.

I hope we are not being forgotten because of the building work that is going on. Why would that be allowed to impinge on our lives.

07/08/2026 Resident:

Can I kindly ask for an update on the equipment replacement, especially the swings in the park listed above. We understand that the swings have been removed for safety reasons but wondering how soon these will be replaced. I have also noticed inspections of the other equipment. We as a family and others too are very worried that this will be neglected, especially with the development with Miller Homes, as agreed by this council (not parish) also includes a childrens playground.

My children are looking to use the park as are other children in the village.

We do not wish for the village to lose a much loved feature and we certainly do not believe we should accept the council neglecting the current park in favour of one coming in the new Orchard Grove area. I appreciate funding is as ever an issue but interestingly very little of the funds accepted by Borough council from the developers seems to have benefited the village that is taking the pain from all the development, disruption, noise and dust created by this unwanted and certainly overpowering 150 houses. If we have had to accept this proposal, the very least we can expect is some benefits, that seems currently far off.

Please can you provide details of the next steps for this children's playground.

We are also conscious of the plans to maintain the grounds of the children's playground and the public footpath alongside the trees and shrubs in the locality.

09/08/2026 Knebworth FC:

Fees

Please will the Council consider a reduction in fees for the coming season, based on reduced pitch marking costs.

We've always had multiple pitches on the field to maximise use and I know that the blue markings come at a premium. However, we only require one pitch marked this season (so no expensive blue paint) and it is the smaller of the existing ones.

Pitch layout

We're just working out which dimensions we want to best suit our needs; it'll be no bigger than the smaller (9v9) pitch that we had last season. I will let Glen know when we know.

We would like it sited from the driveway and hall corner, if that makes sense?! i.e. away from the railway and away from the Bridge Road houses.

We hope that the Council will be supportive to our request and pass on cost savings from only marking one pitch and the saving on the more expensive blue paint materials

24/08/2026 Oaklands resident:

On Sunday morning 24th August the car park at Woolmer Green Parish Hall was closed. This meant that visitors were unable to park to use the field or the play area on a fine, sunny Sunday morning. What are the opening times of this car park? Why aren't these clearly displayed? What are the reasons for restricting access to the park during the day?

Clerk's response: Thank you for your email.

The car park is not a public car park and is opened for hirers of the village hall. As a result, there are no fixed daily opening hours, and access times vary depending on hall bookings.

Pedestrian access is available at all times.

Keeping the gate closed when the hall is not in use helps to manage site security.

03/09/2026 Welwyn Garden City Town Council Campaign.

Questions it is taking to the WHBC Cabinet meeting on the Borough's draft Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy and a critique of the draft policy.

Details from Sevenoaks Town Council on its dispute with Sevenoaks District Council regarding the Community Asset Transfer.

Emails regarding 6/2026/1452/FULL 51–53 London Road, Palisade Fencing

30/07/2026 Resident:

Driving past the Carverse site yesterday I noticed that they have started to erect some incredibly ugly fencing along the front. I know they have had some thefts from the site, but this seems like overkill as a way of dealing with it!

I would have imagined that they should have submitted a planning application for something that changes the appearance so much, but I can't find anything on the WHBC planning site.

Is it something that is on the radar of the PC?

Clerk's reply:

I reported it to planning enforcement yesterday. My understanding is a fence along the highway should be no more than 1 metre, and this includes businesses, without planning permission.

<https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission/common-projects/fences-gates-and-garden-walls/planning-permission>

Resident's reply:

I am glad it is on your radar already - it would be entirely inappropriate for the village and I am amazed they didn't recognise its unsuitability.

You may need to put quite a bit of pressure on the planners to get them to start an enforcement action, but now they have been told about it they should act.

I wonder whether a meeting with the company in which the PC points out that it is in breach of the planning rules, and if they continue with the installation there is a strong chance that the cost of that fence will be wasted, and they may then have to pay to take it down, and pay to get a replacement (compliant) fence installed might focus their thoughts?

03/09/2026 Resident:

Obviously the enforcement action has forced them to put it through planning - well done in getting that going!

How do local people feel about this? Personally I don't like it - it feels like there is a prison camp in the centre of Woolmer Green. However I bet they will get their consent unless people show that it is a big issue for them, and a petition to the planners would probably be the best way of demonstrating that.

I notice that there is no attempt at justification in the application, not even a design statement or anything of the like. It suggests they are pretty confident that it will be approved retrospectively.

The photos do show the difference in appearance very effectively though! Welcome to Stalag Luft Woolmer Green...

03/09/2026 Resident:

I'm writing regarding the retrospective application for the 2m palisade fencing at 51–53 London Road.

I have submitted my own objection, but given the scale and prominence of the fencing I wanted to ask whether Woolmer Green Parish Council will also be considering the application and submitting a formal response.

There appear to be some particularly strong planning grounds for objection, including the impact on the character and appearance of Woolmer Green, Policy SP9, the specific Local Plan objective to maintain and enhance Woolmer Green's character, and the availability of less visually intrusive security measures.

WHBC has also previously refused substantial palisade security fencing elsewhere in the borough on very similar grounds, including the availability of alternative security measures.

Given that the next Parish Council meeting is on 8 September and the consultation remains open, I would be very grateful if this could be considered by the Council and, if members agree, a formal objection submitted.

I'm very happy to forward the detailed planning points and precedent I have found if useful.

03/09/2026 Resident:

When I was objecting to the security fence my mind started wondering...

How did the change of use come about without Planning Permission?

When the transporters are off and on loading adjacent to the road. Wheeler chair users and prams are in real danger. Forced to walk in the road or cross over, with line of sight obscured by the transporter and the bend of the road. The pavement is not wide enough to safely walk past the transporter when this is happening.

It seems to me the transporters don't drive into the site anymore. Probably not the case and I happen to pass by on the odd occasion the transporters park curbside.

We discussed this at the Village meeting earlier this year. No doubt you have raised our concerns with the leaseholders. Seems they don't care about the disruption they are causing in the village.

Times are changing, scary.

TWIN FOXES GATE

The gate was closed for 24 hours from 10.00pm on 17th July to 10.00pm on 18th July.

CLERK'S MEETING ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

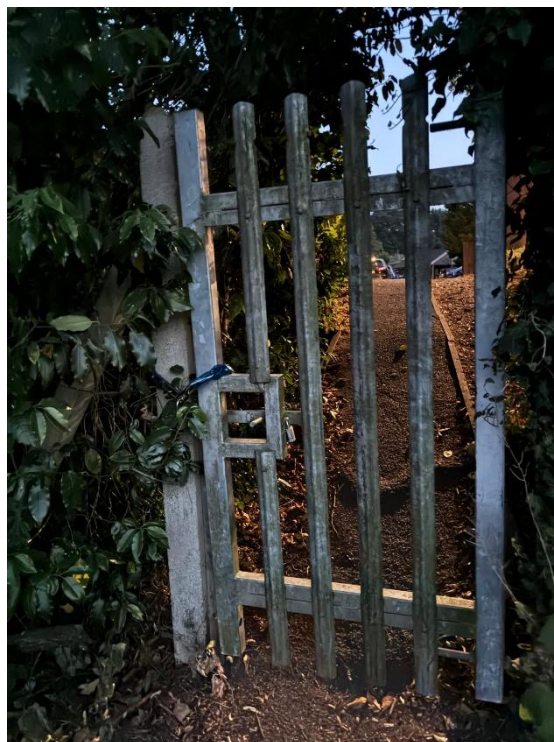
The meeting was called as Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council are not willing to engage with Parish & Town Council's regarding transfer of assets. This is in contrast to St. Alban's Borough Council which is actively engaging with its Parish & Town Councils:

<https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/news/councils-launch-stakeholder-engagement-future-local-government-hertfordshire>

The meeting was attended by HAPTC County Officer who will meet with the Boroughs Chief Executives in early September.

Depending on the outcome of that meeting, it was suggested:

- To arrange a Clerk's networking event for all Parish & Town Council in the new Hertfordshire Central Unitary Authority.
- Set out the principles for how the unitary and community level councils can best work together.



PLANNING ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATION ENF/2026/0120

Alleged Breach: Erection of outbuilding. At: 46 New Road Woolmer Green SG3 6LB

PLAYGROUNDS

GARDEN ROAD PLAYGROUND	
Rocker – 1. replace footholds 2. replace tyre dampeners	on order
Roundabout – raise floor level to between 60mm to 110mm.	
Swings – remove swing seats.	completed

HALL PLAYGROUND	
Benches – 1. remove 1 rotten bench. 2. cut bench seats to remove rotten timber. 3. replace 4 slats on 1 picnic bench. 4. on 2 nd picnic bench make protruding screws safe.	completed completed
Rocker – replace missing bolt.	
Bridge - replace blue cap.	part received, to be fitted
Wobble Board – oil parts.	completed

Quotation for above works from TJ & TC Tyler £650+vat.

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