

Hampshire County Councillor Update 61

Dear All

Apologies for the lateness of this month's update. Here as usual is the latest County Councillor Update, covering the principal Hampshire-wide and Romsey Rural matters from 1 July to 9 August 2026.

Highways Information

Roadworks across southern Test Valley

It has been an exceptionally busy period on our roads. Alongside Hampshire County Council maintenance, residents have faced National Highways schemes, utility works and emergency repairs. I have continued to publish weekly lists so that people can plan ahead and understand which organisation is responsible for each site.

The main local works during the period included:

- The A3090 through Hursley, where an emergency Southern Electricity Networks closure outside the Kings Head was announced until 15 September, alongside other traffic controls on the Romsey-Winchester route.
- The A3057 Romsey Road at Nursling, closed after a burst main outside Romsey Golf Club. Southern Water completed the repair and reopened the road on 4 August.
- Bassett Avenue, closed southbound between Chilworth and Memorial roundabouts from 3 to 16 August, with a single northbound lane, while the carriageway was rebuilt after a major water-main repair.
- Dunbridge Lane at Awbridge, where Southern Water began a rolling water-main replacement scheduled from 3 August to 16 October.
- Nutburn Road and Flexford Road in North Baddesley, and a substantial programme of shorter works in Ampfield, Braishfield, Nursling and Rownhams, Romsey, Wellow and neighbouring parishes.
- The A27 Botley Road between Chilworth Golf Club and North Baddesley Infant School, where a one-day surface treatment was carried out on 12 July to restore grip and seal the carriageway against water ingress.
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The yellow site signs remain the best source for late changes. The full weekly parish-by-parish lists are available on my Facebook page.

Southern Water works and coordination

At the beginning of August I counted at least 14 Southern Water closures or traffic-management sites across southern Test Valley and the approaches to Southampton. Some were planned investment and others were emergency responses to burst pipes. The emergencies underline why investment in ageing water infrastructure is essential, particularly during a dry summer when treated water cannot be wasted through leaks.

However, investment must be matched by coordination. Multiple closures and temporary lights operating at the same time place enormous pressure on the remaining network. I have asked Southern Water to look at the cumulative impact of its programme and work more closely with Hampshire County Council, National Highways, other utilities and bus operators. Diversion routes must be protected, works should be sequenced wherever possible and residents need clear joined-up information.

Dunbridge Lane is a particular test. Southern Water acknowledged that its earlier operation failed to meet expectations. It promised a new team, more resources, work in smaller moving sections, access support at each end of the closure and fortnightly progress updates. I will continue to watch delivery closely.

M3 Junction 9 and M27 works

National Highways' M3 Junction 9 improvement scheme has required repeated overnight and full-weekend closures. The most significant change is the closure of the Junction 9 northbound entry slip road from 31 July until winter 2027. Three full-weekend closures were also announced for 31 July-3 August, 21-24 August and 11-14 September, affecting the A34, A33, A272, Easton Lane and all Junction 9 slip roads.

These are National Highways works rather than Hampshire County Council works, but the diversion traffic affects Hampshire residents and local roads. Drivers should allow extra time and follow signed diversions rather than satnav routes through unsuitable villages.

On the M27, the temporary 50mph restriction between Junctions 5 and 7 was removed, although final overnight activity and later verge and road-marking work continued during July and August.

Reporting Highway Problems

Links to report road issues are here:

Potholes: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/potholes>

Tree/hedge problems: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/treehedge>

Flooding/drainage issues: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/flooding>

Pavement problems: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/paving>

Broken or missing signs: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/brokensigns>

Faulty street lights: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/streetlight>

Faded or missing road markings: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/road-markings>

Problems with rights of way:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway/reportaproblem>

When reporting an issue, you'll be sent an email confirming a reference number for the report. If you would like me to follow this up for you then do please forward that message to me and I will chase for you.

Hampshire's water resources under pressure

After an exceptionally dry spring, Southern Water reported rainfall at only 57% of the long-term average in March, 27% in April and 60% in May. The River Test, which supplies most homes and businesses in our area, fell to around 25% below its normal level for the time of year. A Temporary Use Ban therefore came into force across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight on 10 July.

Residents were asked not to use hosepipes for watering gardens, washing cars, filling paddling pools or cleaning patios and other outdoor surfaces. Exemptions are available for some customers on the Priority Services Register and WaterSure scheme. Collective action matters: during previous restrictions, residents reduced demand on local rivers by around 5%.

Customers are entitled to expect Southern Water to match their efforts. By early August the company said it had repaired more than 4,000 leaks since January, saving around 40 million litres a day across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. It also applied to DEFRA for a precautionary Drought Order for the River Test and permission for a possible Non-Essential Use Ban. The consultation ran from 4 to 11 August; an application did not mean the measures would automatically be introduced.

Better monitoring for Hampshire's chalk streams

Hampshire contains some of the finest chalk streams in the world, including the Test and Itchen. Southern Water has confirmed funding for continuous water-quality monitoring at key points on the Test, Itchen and Blackwater, with data intended to be available publicly in real time. Reliable and independently scrutinised information will help residents understand what is happening and hold organisations to account.

Southern Water is also developing the Hampshire Water Transfer and Water Recycling Project, which would use advanced treatment to turn highly treated wastewater into purified recycled water and reduce abstraction from the Test and Itchen. Work on the River Anton is intended to improve habitat for fish, otters, water voles and other chalk-stream species while reducing flood risk. Residents will rightly judge these commitments by the environmental improvements delivered.

Water-quality monitoring: <https://riversandseaswatch.southernwater.co.uk/?map=live-updates&zoom=12>

Water transfer and recycling project: <https://www.hampshirewtwrp.co.uk>

A historic first for Hampshire and the Solent

July saw the inaugural meeting of the Hampshire and the Solent Combined County Authority, bringing together Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils and the Isle of Wight Council. I was honoured to be elected as the Authority's first Chair, with Councillor Jonathan Bacon as Vice-Chair.

This is a huge moment for our region. The Combined Authority gives us a stronger collective voice and the opportunity to make more decisions closer to the people and businesses affected. It will work strategically on transport and infrastructure, skills and training, housing, economic development and attracting investment. It is backed by a long-term investment fund worth more than £1.3 billion.

The first meeting necessarily focused on governance, finances and the legal framework. The real test will be whether these new powers and resources deliver practical improvements which residents and businesses can see and feel. Different political perspectives will be represented, but our responsibility is to work constructively for the more than two million people across the region.

Local Government Reorganisation must protect adult social care

The Care Quality Commission's national report on adult social care should be a warning for Hampshire. It found that strong local leadership is central to people's experience of care and highlighted risks around prevention, safeguarding, unpaid carers, assessments and young people's transition from children's to adult services.

Adult social care cannot simply be moved around an organisational chart. It depends on local knowledge, trusted relationships and clear accountability between councils, the NHS, care providers, voluntary organisations, carers, families and the people who draw on support. If reorganisation absorbs senior attention, drains capacity or disrupts care partnerships, older people, disabled people, unpaid carers and families will feel the consequences first.

Hampshire County Council has sought a full and transparent explanation of how and why the Government chose a five-unitary model, including the financial case. Before the county is locked into a new structure for decades, residents deserve evidence that it is financially sustainable and capable of protecting vital services. Adult social care must not be treated as an afterthought.

Planning and local democracy

Planning reform

From 31 October, Government changes require applications for up to nine homes, householder applications and smaller commercial proposals to be decided by planning officers. Councillors will no longer be able to call in those applications for public committee consideration. Even larger applications will be presumed to be officer decisions unless both a senior officer and the committee chair agree otherwise.

Most applications are already determined by officers, and only a small proportion reach a committee. Removing democratic scrutiny from much of the remaining minority will not cause developers to build homes which already have permission; it risks making local people feel even more powerless. Planning decisions require judgement about housing need, highways, infrastructure, the environment, local character and neighbouring communities. Public meetings allow arguments to be tested openly and can secure improvements or compromise.

We need more homes, but they must be the right homes in the right places, supported by the right infrastructure. Planning reform should rebuild trust rather than centralise decisions and weaken public accountability.

Test Valley's housing land supply

Test Valley's lack of a five-year housing land supply continues to trigger the 'tilted balance' in national planning policy. This makes it harder to refuse speculative proposals even where there are serious concerns about sustainability, village character, access to services and infrastructure. The fear of appeal costs cannot become a reason never to defend communities where the planning harms are clear and evidence is strong.

Residents are not anti-housing. They understand the need for homes, including affordable homes for local people and families. Development must, however, be planned and supported by infrastructure. Test Valley must restore a defensible housing land supply and adopt an up-to-date Local Plan as quickly as possible.

Test Valley abandons current Local Plan work.

At its meeting on 22 July, Test Valley Borough Council agreed to stop progressing the Draft Local Plan through the old "legacy" system and instead begin a new Local Plan under the government's "gateway" process.

The council's Strategic Planning briefing explains why the previous timetable had become increasingly difficult to deliver.

The government's changes to national planning policy significantly increased the number of homes Test Valley must plan for and caused our five-year housing land supply to fall sharply. The draft plan subsequently grew from 10 proposed housing sites to 35.

Sites at Weyhill and Appleshaw were then withdrawn, while circumstances changed at Stockbridge, removing provision for 1,169 homes. Finding replacements would have required further assessment and another public consultation.

Meanwhile, the plan has increasingly been overtaken by speculative applications. The briefing states that 28 of the remaining 32 draft Local Plan sites were expected either to have a live application or permission by the end of 2026. Just under 1,400 homes were also being considered through applications on speculative sites.

I have repeatedly warned about the vulnerability this creates.

Speculative development can mean homes being proposed in unsuitable locations, without the coordinated investment in roads, schools, healthcare and other services that should accompany growth. It reduces the ability of communities to shape development through a proper borough-wide plan.

Equally, we do need new homes—particularly genuinely affordable homes for local people. The answer cannot simply be to oppose every proposal. We need a credible Local Plan that directs the right homes to the right places, protects our environment and ensures infrastructure is planned alongside development.

I therefore understand the reasoning behind changing course. Persisting with a plan that was being overtaken before it could be examined would not necessarily have given residents the protection they need.

However, there is an important question that must now be answered: what is Plan B?

The approach approved by the council is explicitly tied to local government reorganisation. The current timetable assumes that work will transfer to the new Mid Hampshire authority in April 2028, with further consultation during the following year and adoption anticipated by October 2029.

But what happens if local government reorganisation is delayed, significantly altered or cancelled?

Does Test Valley continue the plan independently? Who takes responsibility for it? Can the gateway timetable be changed once it has started? At what point would an alternative course be triggered—and how would communities be protected from an even longer period of speculative development?

The Strategic Planning briefing itself notes that, once the new system is triggered, it is unclear whether there will be flexibility to extend the timetable if necessary. Yet it does not set out an explicit contingency should the reorganisation timetable change.

That concerns me.

This does not mean changing course was necessarily the wrong decision. But a strategy that depends upon another major government programme proceeding exactly to timetable must have a clear and credible fallback.

Residents deserve to know what the trigger points will be, who will make those decisions and how the evidence and community input already gathered will be protected.

I will continue to oppose speculative schemes that are unsustainable, poorly located or unsupported by adequate infrastructure. I will also press for a published Plan B, because Test Valley cannot afford to lose more time if events outside the council's control change again.

Planning applications across Romsey Rural

I continued to publish weekly planning lists for the Blackwater, Dun Valley, Chilworth and Nursling and Rownhams parishes. Representative applications during the period included:

- Permission in principle for up to five homes off New Road, Michelmersh and Timsbury.
- Conversions of agricultural or former stable buildings at Kimbridge and Lockerley, including proposals at Beaters Barn and Carters Clay Road.
- A ground-mounted battery energy storage system at Lockerley Memorial Hall.
- Demolition of a bungalow and construction of a six-bedroom dwelling at Oaklands, Awbridge.
- Two buildings for extra-care accommodation for older people in Nursling and Rownhams.
- A four-bedroom dwelling through conversion and extension of a former game-rearing building at Mount Pleasant Game Farm, Lockerley.
- A garden annexe in West Tytherley, ancillary family accommodation at West Dean and a home-office/games-room outbuilding in Nursling.

The weekly posts contain application numbers, addresses and descriptions. Please use Test Valley Borough Council's planning portal for the formal documents and consultation deadlines.

Health and care accountability

Protecting Healthwatch

The Government's proposal to abolish Healthwatch is deeply misguided. Healthwatch provides independent local scrutiny, gives people a route to raise concerns and ensures patients, carers and communities are heard by those making health and care decisions. As a member of the Local Government Association's Health and Wellbeing Committee, I have worked with colleagues to highlight the consequences of removing that independent voice. The proposal should be dropped.

The future of policing

The Government is considering significant changes to policing in England and Wales, including possible mergers into much larger regional organisations. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight contain distinct urban, rural, coastal and island communities. Effective policing depends on local knowledge, responsiveness and accountability. Larger and more remote structures risk weakening the voice of individual communities.

Police and Crime Commissioner Donna Jones launched a short consultation so residents could express their views before decisions are made which may reshape local policing for many years.

High Property Value Surcharge

The Government's proposed High Value Council Tax Surcharge would add an annual charge of between £2,500 and £7,500 to homes valued at £2 million or more. Although collected alongside council tax, councils would not control the rates, rules, exemptions or who pays. They would be expected to identify owners, issue bills, administer deferrals and appeals and pursue unpaid debts, while the proceeds return to Whitehall.

The cross-party Local Government Association has warned that the proposal could be costly, confusing and damaging to local accountability. If central government creates a national tax, it should administer and collect it rather than turning councils into unpaid tax collectors and blame-catchers.

Getting About

Attendance at Parish Councils this month was impacted by a couple of weeks of family holiday and a busy County Council schedule, so just a visit to Wellow Parish Council to report.

I also attended the Local Government Association Conference in Bournemouth, met colleagues from across the Hampshire and Solent Combined County Authority, supported and mentored fellow councillors in Berkshire and joined Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's 'Future-proofing our Economy - Nature, Growth and Resilience' conference in Southampton.

Contact

Do please get in touch if I can ever be of any help. For those of you using social media, I post very regular updates on many local issues including roadworks and planning applications on my Facebook page here: facebook.com/nickadamsking

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CLLR NICK ADAMS-KING
Caring for Romsey Rural



General Updates from HCC:

New Skills Bootcamps help residents get job-ready

A huge range of Skills Bootcamps is now available across Hampshire, giving people the chance to gain valuable skills and boost their career prospects

[New Skills Bootcamps help residents get job-ready | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire County Council gives green light to safety improvement scheme at Pulens Lane and Durford Lane

Residents and road users in Petersfield are set to benefit from a safety improvement scheme at the Pulens Lane and Durford Lane junction, which has been given the green light by Hampshire County Council

[Hampshire County Council gives green light to safety improvement scheme at Pulens Lane and Durford Lane | Hampshire County Council](#)

Make a record-breaking pledge to ditch single-use plastics this July

This Plastic Free July, Hampshire County Council is encouraging residents to make a 'plastic-free pledge' to help the environment – and even cut their household costs

[Make a record-breaking pledge to ditch single-use plastics this July | Hampshire County Council](#)

Children invited to join Hampshire Libraries' Summer Reading Challenge 2026

Children across Hampshire are being invited to sign up for this year's Summer Reading Challenge as it returns to Hampshire Libraries from Saturday 11 July. The 2026 challenge is called Read to the Beat

[Children invited to join Hampshire Libraries' Summer Reading Challenge 2026 | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire foster carers play key role in children's safe return home

Foster carers across Hampshire are playing a vital role in helping children return home safely to their families when that is the right and best outcome for the child, as shown in a new video released by Hampshire County Council

[Hampshire foster carers play key role in children's safe return home | Hampshire County Council](#)

Cabinet to consider recommending Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan for adoption

Hampshire County Council's Cabinet will be asked to recommend that Full Council adopt the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan, after the council invited people to have their say on proposed modifications

[Cabinet to consider recommending Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan for adoption | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire campaign urges residents to reflect on alcohol's role in relationships as domestic abuse awareness campaign continues

To mark Alcohol Awareness Week, Hampshire residents are being encouraged to consider the impact alcohol can have on their lives and relationships, while a county-wide domestic abuse awareness campaign continues during the men's World Cup

[Hampshire campaign urges residents to reflect on alcohol's role in relationships as domestic abuse awareness campaign continues | Hampshire County Council](#)

Young people with SEND recognised at Supported Internship Awards

Young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have been recognised at this year's Hampshire and Southampton Supported Internship Awards, held at Ashburton Hall in Winchester

[Young people with SEND recognised at Supported Internship Awards | Hampshire County Council](#)

Young people across Hampshire to showcase climate-themed artwork made from old musical instruments

Young people from 12 schools across Hampshire are taking part in a countywide art project that turns unwanted musical instruments into public artwork

[Young people across Hampshire to showcase climate-themed artwork made from old musical instruments | Hampshire County Council](#)

Prestigious Green Flag status secured for Hampshire County Council's five country parks

The Green Flag quality mark has once again been awarded to Hampshire County Council's country parks in recognition of the high standards they offer to visitors

[Prestigious Green Flag status secured for Hampshire County Council's five country parks | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire Day 15 July: celebrating communities that help residents thrive

This Hampshire Day, Hampshire County Council is celebrating the vital role local groups and volunteers play in helping residents thrive, while highlighting the range of services and support available from the Local Authority to communities across the county

[Hampshire Day 15 July: celebrating communities that help residents thrive | Hampshire County Council](#)

Summer of fun: What's on at Hampshire County Council's outdoor attractions

Ahead of the summer holidays, here's a round-up of activities and events happening across Hampshire County Council's outdoor attractions

[Summer of fun: What's on at Hampshire County Council's outdoor attractions | Hampshire County Council](#)

Key milestone reached in delivery of new secondary school in North Whiteley

The roof is complete and everything is on track for students to arrive from September next year – that's the latest update from the site of a new 900-place secondary school currently being delivered in North Whiteley

[Key milestone reached in delivery of new secondary school in North Whiteley | Hampshire County Council](#)

£15 million programme underway to improve Hampshire's roads this summer

More miles of Hampshire's roads will be strengthened and repaired this summer, following a £15 million investment by Hampshire County Council in highway maintenance

[£15 million programme underway to improve Hampshire's roads this summer | Hampshire County Council](#)

Boost for rare butterflies at new nature recovery project

A major boost for wildlife, including rare butterflies, is on the way at Butser Hill Nature Reserve in Petersfield, thanks to £160,000 in new funding secured from a range of organisations by Hampshire County Council, working closely with the South Downs National Park Authority

[Boost for rare butterflies at new nature recovery project | Hampshire County Council](#)