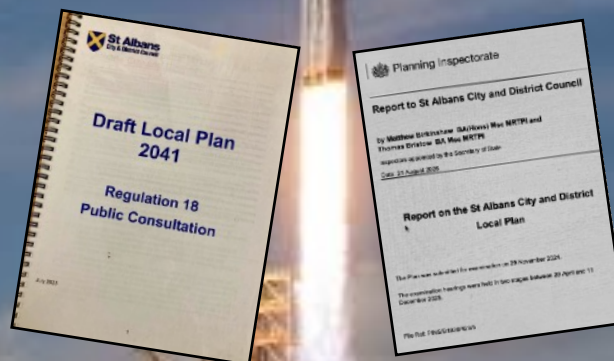


Autumn News 2026

Hello  
Harpenden...



## *The Final Countdown for our Local Plan*



Courtesy phys.org

### **September 9. An extraordinary meeting has been called for the Full Council of St Albans District to consider the adoption of the Local Plan.**

This Report (134 pages) concludes that the St Albans City and District Local Plan provides an appropriate basis for the planning of St Albans, provided that **Main Modifications (137 MMs)** are made to it. These modifications are grouped in **13 Main Issues** covering all aspects of the Plan. SADC requested that the Inspectorate recommended any MMs necessary to enable the Plan to be adopted. All of which are shown in the Report and the Appendix.(233 pages)

As an example each issue has a conclusion: *Eg. Conclusion 65*  
*We therefore conclude that the Plan is informed by a robust, objective assessment of housing need and that subject to recommended MMs, the housing requirement in Policy SP3 is justified and positively prepared to meet that need.*

**Follow the Society web site for the results of the Full Council meeting.**  
**[www.harpendensociety.org](http://www.harpendensociety.org)**

# Harpenden Society objection to Batford Development

**Outline Planning Application for a residential development of up to 90 dwellings on land north of St Martins Close and east of Lower Luton Road, Harpenden by Miller Homes.**  
**Ref: - 5/2026/1083**



The Map above shows the connection with the proposed Crest Nicholson development, and its location directly adjacent to the Lower Luton Rd.

The site visual here shows the intended development format.

The Harpenden Society has reviewed the full proposals and considers this application to be confusing due to the different site layouts proposed.

The Society agrees with the concerns expressed by National Highways. The presented traffic flow diagrams do not contain specific development generated traffic which makes assessing the impact difficult.

Plus Central Bedfordshire Council have also submitted an objection to the application as they are concerned that insufficient consideration has been given to the extra traffic generated as it is likely to impact the flow of traffic to employment areas in the region and to Luton Airport.

Being an adjacent part of the Crest Nicholson site (Ref: - 5/2026/0051) the Society agrees that wider traffic implications will arise from this development. National Highways Planning Response have already objected as there is insufficient data to assess the impact of additional traffic disgorging onto the Lower Luton Road. They have recommended that the application is not determined until at least Jan 2027 to enable studies to be undertaken. Whether Miller Homes intend to integrate their development with the Crest site or not, then the same concerns expressed by National Highways are likely to apply.

The Harpenden Society has previously stated that the SADC should insist that the owners of the 4 parcels of land included in the Masterplan (within the Design & Access Statement) submit a composite application so that all aspects of the overall development can be considered rather than doing so on a piecemeal basis. The planned development of this area will have significant implications for Harpenden town



centre and the wider community. There are limited options to deal with the traffic congestion and other pressures on local services/infrastructure that will result. It is essential that realistic answers to these issues are found before consent is given.

**Follow progress on the Harpenden Society web site,**  
**[www.harpendensociety.org](http://www.harpendensociety.org)**

# Local Government Reorganisation - as it affects Harpenden

On 16 July 2026, the government announced its decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Hertfordshire, confirming it will create four new unitary councils to replace the current Herts County Council and St. Albans District Council

This means that from 1 April 2028 new authorities will take over responsibility for delivering the services currently provided by the county council and the district and borough councils in that area.

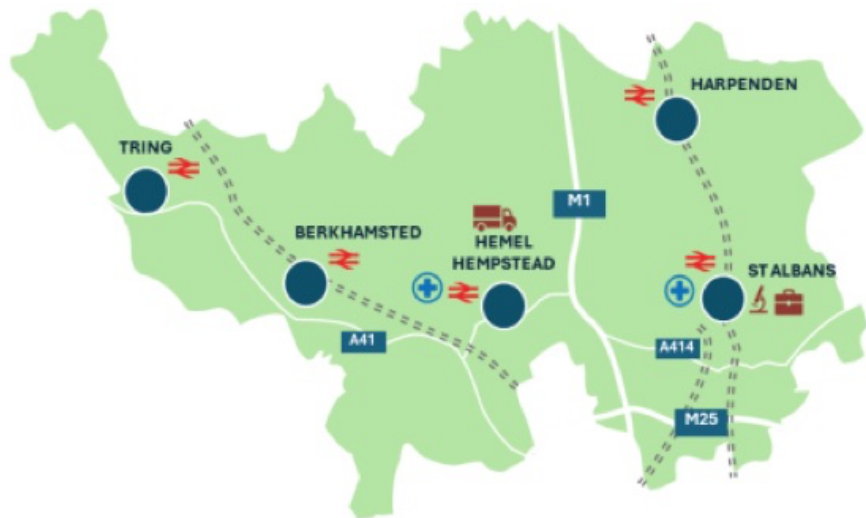
This means Herts County Council and St Albans District Council will be abolished. But Harpenden Town Council will remain and can expand it's coverage of local services. ( Details to be announced late September)

## The new unitary authority covering Harpenden will be:

West Hertfordshire - serving the communities of the existing Dacorum Borough Council and St Albans City & District Council  
See Map above

## What happens next?

Elections to the new authorities will take place in May 2027. These elected councillors will help set up the new councils and operate in a "shadow" capacity ahead of the new authorities being established on 1 April 2028.



## In the intervening time:

\*All councils in West Hertfordshire will work together to make sure that the new Unitary Authority council is set up and ready to begin work in April 2028.

\*Until then you will get the same things from councils that you do now.

\*The new councils will begin work in April 2028.

\*You will get a chance to have your say on how the new councils will work.

**The Harpenden Society will update you with relevant information going forward.**

**See our web site**

**[www.harpendensociety.org](http://www.harpendensociety.org)**

***NB. Whilst the original view of the Harpenden Society disagreed with the Government decision it will now focus positively on the agreed decision.***

## Public Meeting Nov 26. 7.30 pm

High Street Methodist Church. Harpenden.

### ‘ The Future of Healthcare in Harpenden’

Our guest speakers: Dr Bethan Rees-Clinical Director  
Harpenden Health Primary Care Network  
Elliott Howard- Jones – Chief Executive  
Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust.

**Check our web site for booking details nearer the event.**

**[www.harpendensociety.org](http://www.harpendensociety.org)**



## The Summer drought and the consequences for Harpenden

Thankfully the rain has arrived in Harpenden (Aug 27) but it will take months of really wet weather to replenish reserves and regenerate 'green' to our fields, parks and gardens. Looking at our scorched surroundings you can see why the Environment Agency declared a drought in over half of England back at the end of July. This included East Anglia, Hertfordshire and the whole of London.

Our local farmers have been affected by the prolonged dry weather and soaring temperatures which have caused extensive damage to cereal and vegetable crops, with wheat, oats, and root vegetables showing very poor yields. Farmers have had to begin their harvests early, with warnings that cereal yields will be lower than expected. Water shortages are occurring across the world as the Climate gets hotter by the year driving water shortages in key agricultural regions in the UK.



**Dr Mikhail Semenov**, co-author of the study from Rothamsted, said, "The study does not claim that drought alone sets wheat prices. Energy costs, fertilizer markets, grain stocks, exchange rates, trade policies, pests, diseases, and geopolitical shocks all play major roles. But the research reveals a climate-driven signal that has been extremely difficult to quantify until now and shows that large-scale drought across key production regions can ripple through global wheat markets."

**NB>** The research was led by Miroslav Trnka of the Global Change Research Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences (CzechGlobe) who brought together scientists from research institutions across Europe and the United States.



A major international study has found that severe drought across the world's wheat-growing regions strongly drives global wheat prices with future climate warming threatening to make these drought-price shocks far more frequent and far more extreme.

Published in *Earth's Future*, the research shows that if the planet warms by around 3°C, average global wheat prices could rise to USD 364 per ton, roughly three times higher than the inflation-adjusted price in 2010. For farmers, traders, millers, and food manufacturers, the findings highlight a growing climate-related risk to one of the world's most important crops.

As global warming increases, severe water scarcity becomes more widespread across major wheat belts, amplifying price volatility and raising long-term average prices.



### The cost of our daily bread could rise!

Did you know that wheat covers more land globally than rice or maize, supplies a major share of human calories and protein, and is one of the most widely traded agricultural commodities. Much of the world's wheat is grown under water-limited conditions, making it highly sensitive to drought.

### Farming's future in Harpenden.

**We will be talking to local farmers this autumn about their views on supplying agricultural crops for 2027 and beyond.**  
Ron Taylor

# Society Annual Awards 2025



The Harpenden Society is proud to recognise these worthy nominations for our Annual Awards. Please note individuals who have contributed immense efforts to their particular causes are now featured. Presentations for three Awards have taken place. (Featured right)

The remaining Plaque and Letter of Commendation will be taking place in September. See our web site.

## Prestige Plaque

Redclyffe Place Apartments in Salisbury Avenue, for the 55+ age groups.

## Certificate of Merit

Artichoke Bake & More in Leyton Road

## Letters of Commendation

**Derek French** for his work to secure a Town Centre Bank Hub.

**Sue Hobley** for her volunteer work for Harpenden & District Macmillan Cancer Support.

**Mike Hodge** for his fund raising work as the Harpenden Busker.



Artichoke owner Seda (right) pictured with Aysegul (left) and Awards secretary Ron Taylor.



Mike Hodge with Awards Secretary Ron Taylor



Sue Hobley with Awards Secretary Ron Taylor

## Society Long Service Awards

### 'WITHOUT WHOM'

**Harry Downie** (left) for help in keeping the finances of the Society safe and secure over many years, and supporting the Society's activities' with sage financial advice.

**Alan Bunting** (right) who always brought a fresh perspective to the Newsletter and whose personal editorial comment was always sparky, and a delight to read.

Pictured with Society Chair **Jeff Phillips** (centre)





# Eating out – and healthily

At the Harpenden Society's June public meeting, under the heading of 'Soil to Supper', local restaurateur Andrei Lussmann spoke of the challenges today facing those ecologically-minded caterers striving to maintain sustainability. He told an 80-strong audience, in High Street Methodist Church, how, across the Lussmanns chain of five restaurants, including the one in Leyton Road, Harpenden, the sourcing of ingredients aimed to support ethical standards in farming and fishing. Locally, that included a close working relationship with Hammonds End Farm where farmer Stuart Roberts pursued an organic agricultural policy.



Fish dishes figure prominently on Lussmann's menus and Andrei said protection of fish stocks in our seas influenced the choice of fish offerings on his restaurant menus. And wherever possible UK sourced ingredients were selected rather than imported, sometimes cheaper, alternatives. Apart from such an obvious merit as freshness, there was, he said, the carbon footprint and hence climate change consideration in transporting foodstuffs over long distances, by sea, air or road.

Sustainability and its importance for the environment and for the health of the planet had, said Andrei, become a byword in many areas of 21st Century life, not least in the catering business, although he admitted that even as a child, he was exhorted by his mother in the kitchen to minimise waste and to make the most of available ingredients.

Lussmann's restaurants are noted for their fish dishes. Among the items on their summer menu for example are 'south coast sprats', 'Devon white crab croquettes', 'ChalkStream trout' and 'whole Cornish sole'. Andrei said the company does its best to ensure that none of its fish supplies are a product of over-fishing, thereby helping importantly to conserve fish stocks.



He added that 'we try, where possible, to buy British, and not just fish of course, for sustainability, not necessarily patriotic, reasons'. English cheeses figure prominently on Lussmann's menus, as do a number of wines from UK vineyards, including award-winning champagne-type sparkling wines from grapes grown in Kent and Dorset.

As well as Hammonds End Farm on its Harpenden doorstep, Lussmann's regularly sources premium organic produce from a specialist farm in Wales which, admitted Andrei, has its environmental downside in terms of the unavoidable carbon footprint involved in transport mileage.

Andrei said he and his restaurant managers have had to 'think on our feet' to take account of social changes, including the way people go out to eat. The risk of drink driving was now much more of an issue and restaurants like Lussmanns were seeing more group bookings. Vegetarians were now reckoned to constitute 3 to 4% of the UK population and their preferences had to be catered for, which meant widening menus. And there was, he pointed out, an implication of ever bigger menus – in other words an ever wider customer choice – and that mitigating against food freshness.

Andrei asked rhetorically what was the secret of Lussmann's ongoing success over nearly 25 years of catering for discriminating diners' tastes? Quite apart from the quality of the food he said a key factor had been, and continues to be, the retention of enthusiastic staff, not just in welcoming customers and waiting at table, but behind the scenes in the kitchen, where knowledge and experience, in a convivial atmosphere paid major dividends.

# Growing it locally – and healthily

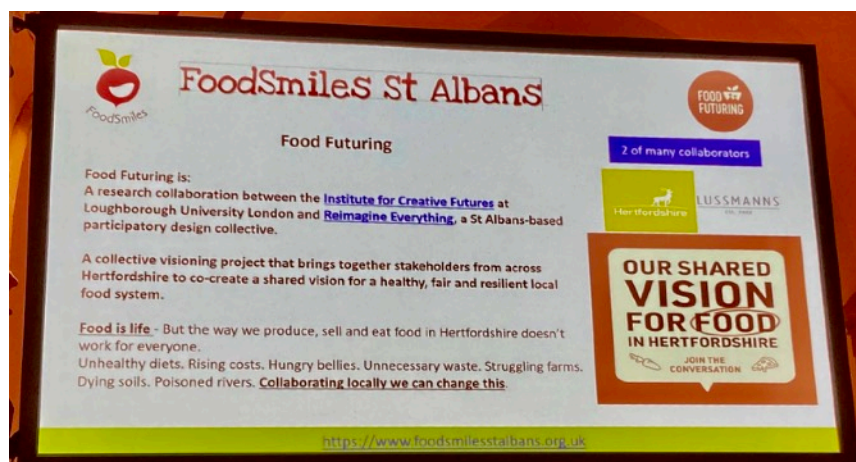
The UK's regrettable dependence on imported food supplies – as much as 45% at the last count – provided a launch platform for the second speaker at June's Harpenden Society meeting, Herts County Councillor Dr Allison Wren, who outlined the entirely volunteer-run FoodSmiles St Albans organisation.

Now established for more than a decade, its mission statement is 'Community Supported Agriculture', being a partnership between farmers and consumers in which the responsibilities, risks and rewards of food production are shared. Dr Wren said the resulting 'community gardens' addressed, in a radical way, what are increasing concerns about the lack of transparency, sustainability and resilience of our food system imposed by the big supermarkets and their suppliers.

Locally, the enterprise started in 2013, when a small group connected to Transition St Albans (now Sustainable St Albans) came together to create a local food-growing scheme. The project was designed to benefit the local area by producing organic food, building community involvement, and encouraging sustainable growing. The following year, after being unable to find suitable land in St Albans itself, the group began work at Hammonds End organic farm in Harpenden, Stuart Roberts having kindly made available a small plot which FoodSmiles members cleared and restored, repairing polytunnels, building compost bins, and making the ground ready for planting.

Dr Wren said 'we naturally followed the organic principles established over several decades at Hammonds End, employing methods that harmonise with nature, recognising the need for food production and care for the environment to function side by side, addressing the big challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and antibiotic resistance'.

FoodSmiles St Albans held its first AGM in 2015 and expanded through grants and



crowdfunding to pay for a packing shed (where produce could be boxed ready for distribution) and four polytunnels. A polytunnel, it should perhaps be explained, is a long, semi-circular tunnel comprising a metal frame covered in heavy-duty polyethylene sheet, acting like a greenhouse to trap solar heat and protect crops from harsh weather and, in doing so, extending the growing season.

FoodSmiles also became a Community Benefit Society, allowing the group to sign a formal tenancy agreement and adopt a legal structure. From 2016, the organisation was able to broaden its role, leasing another plot of land at Hixberry Lane, St Albans. Meanwhile, in the heart of the city, close to the Civic Centre, a small community garden under the name 'Incredible Edible' was established for the cultivation of berries and rhubarb as well as some vegetables and herbs.

By 2019, FoodSmiles St Albans had built up a membership of 35 enthusiastic, male and female and ethnically diverse amateur gardeners, harvesting around 3500lb (1,600kg) of produce annually. 'While our main activity of course means enjoyably getting our hands dirty', said Dr Wren, she made a point of mentioning the organisation's peripheral educational and social activities, all aimed at making FoodSmiles a community network centred on sustainability, learning, and local participation, backed by detailed record keeping. FoodSmiles' vegetables and fruit are distributed to members, typically weekly, following regular harvesting sessions.





# The Battle of the Bids for Rothamsted Manor

As many of you may be aware, the Lawes Agricultural Trust published a briefing on 6 March 2026 saying it had appointed Savills to market the Manor and was seeking a new guardian on a long leasehold basis. The reason is simple, as a Grade 1 listed building, the Lawes Agricultural Trust cannot afford to fund the renovation and maintenance that the building and its grounds so desperately needs.

The sale process is being managed through Savills, the estate agents, and has generated substantial interest with bids from private sector developers and a Harpenden based Charity Trust. This bidding process closed on August 7. Savills has confirmed that it will be some time before they complete their analysis and provide the trustees of the Lawes Agricultural Trust with a basis on which to proceed.

The Harpenden Society fully supports efforts to keep the Manor estate as a community asset, and as such, a living example of our community's heritage. Our main concern is that if the Manor is bought by a private developer, it will be lost as the community asset.

The formation of the Rothamsted Manor Project, to lead a community bid to purchase

the Manor leasehold and restore the fabric of the buildings, gardens and outbuildings fulfils the Society objective. (Should the RMP progress to the next stage of the bid, they will register as the 'Rothamsted Manor Trust', a charitable company limited by guarantee.)



Through the ownership of RMT, the estate could become a place where history is experienced, rather than just preserved – a vibrant location where heritage, nature, creativity, wellbeing, food and entertainment provide the revenue streams to sustain the fabric of the buildings and the historic

gardens, as well as the footpaths across the estate that so many of our community currently enjoy.

RMT will be led by four dedicated volunteers, three of whom live in Harpenden and one in Redbourn. They have significant professional expertise across heritage, commercial property, business operations and community engagement and they in turn are advised by a team of sector experts.

**To follow the project and find out the bid results go to the Harpenden Society web site. [www.harpendensociety.org](http://www.harpendensociety.org)**

OR search Facebook Rothamsted Manor Project

## WANTED

‘Year 12 Students for our new  
**Youth Collective’**

We are launching the Harpenden Society Youth Collective this Autumn and are inviting Year 12 students from across Harpenden to register interest.

This is an opportunity to plan and run a local campaign or event and help shape Harpenden's future.

Please share with family and friends.





# Standing Up to Unlicensed Street Collections

Residents may have noticed an increasing number of street collectors outside local supermarkets asking for donations to causes such as homelessness or veterans' support.

We are not referring to established registered charities such as The Royal British Legion, Herts Young Homeless, Centre 33 or St Albans Action for Homeless. Our concerns relate to organisations operating as Community Interest Companies (CICs), which are not registered charities and are subject to different regulations.

Following reports from the Harpenden Society, supported by Councillor Aaron Jacobs, St Albans City and District Council has tightened its procedures for dealing with unlicensed street collections.

## What happened?

The Society provided the Council with photographs, dates and locations of two organisations collecting outside Harpenden supermarkets. Both were found to be CICs rather than registered charities, and neither held a Council licence for street collections.

### The Society asked the Council to:

- \* Reduce ambiguity by licensing only registered charities.
- \* Publish an online register of authorised collections.
- \* Require collectors to carry proof of Council authorisation.
- \* Strengthen enforcement against unlicensed collectors.

The Council has responded positively and acted on these requests by updating its procedures and guidance.

## Police enforcement

Harpenden Society representatives have also met with Hertfordshire Police, who have conducted both covert and overt operations involving street collectors.

Police can obtain collectors' personal details and require unlicensed collectors to leave. If they return, officers may consider Community Protection Warnings where behaviour is considered antisocial because of forceful or persistent approaches to the public. Further enforcement action may follow if the problem continues.

## Donating with Confidence

### If approached by a street collector:

- \* Check that the organisation is genuine and, where applicable, registered with the Charity Commission.



\*Do not feel pressured into donating immediately.

\*Ask to see identification and evidence of Council authorisation.

\*Check the Council's register of licensed collections.

\*Remember that CICs are not charities and are governed by different rules.

The Council's guidance is available at [stalbands.gov.uk/charity-collections](http://stalbands.gov.uk/charity-collections).

To report an unauthorised collection, contact St Albans City and District Council's Charitable Collections Team on 01727 866100 or [CharitableCollections@stalbands.gov.uk](mailto:CharitableCollections@stalbands.gov.uk). If you suspect fraud or other criminal activity, contact Hertfordshire Police on 101.



*Alan Bostock, Society Trustee with Sergeant Mark Essam from the Neighbourhood Policing for Harpenden.*

**Harpenden Society Trustee Martyn Reed welcomed the improvements, describing them as a great example of society members, the Council and police working together to address a local concern and protect residents.**

# New Mayor's focus on youth wellbeing

After some years representing the East Ward on Harpenden Town Council, Kirsti Wenn was installed in May as Town Mayor. It followed a year as deputy mayor under her predecessor Beth Fisher, who we profiled in our Autumn 2025 newsletter.

In addition to her ceremonial and other mayoral duties Cllr Wenn chairs the council's important planning committee, fulfilling the Town Council's role as a statutory consultee to what is currently the ultimate planning decision making authority, namely St Albans District Council – whose own future is destined for amalgamation with neighbouring Dacorum to create a new 'unitary authority' entitled West Hertfordshire Council.

It should be added that the HTC planning committee deliberations over the next year or more could well be further disrupted by the Andy Burnham government's probable changes on housing need assessment, surrounding the most recent SADC Local Plan machinations with further uncertainty.

Another committee on which Cllr Wenn sits is 'Corporate Policy & Finance' which, as she points out, oversees the council's financial health, internal governance and corporate policies, striving to ensure value for council tax payers' money.

As someone keen to maintain Harpenden's rural surroundings she has become involved in HTC's fauna-as-well-as-flora 'rewilding' project to re-introduce water voles to a place where they had historically flourished on the River Lea close to Batford Springs. It has involved 120 of the animals being transported from Devon and released into a secure riverside Hertfordshire environment.

Away from her civic duties Kirsti has for several years been very active in the charity sector. She is a team leader on the St Albans and District branch of the Trussell Trust food bank



charity, to which she devotes around two to three hours every two weeks at both the Harpenden and St Albans Jubilee food distribution centres.

Another volunteer role is that of a mentor in Hertfordshire County Council's Safe Space initiative, which offers young people, mainly in the 11 to 19 age group, a 'creative, confidential and safe space to explore any issues affecting their daily lives', including the provision of counselling in schools.

As the mother of an 18-year old and a 16-year old, Kirsti's 'Mayoral Theme' for 2026/27 is 'building a better future for our young', nominating two particular charities: Youth Talk and Herts Young Homeless. The declared mission of St Albans-based charity Youth Talk – subtitled 'We're listening' – is to

'provide free, confidential (one to one) counselling to 13-25 year olds in St Albans, Harpenden and surrounding areas'.

Within the context of Youth Talk, Kirsti agrees with the now widely-held view that young people's societal challenges, notably issues of low self-esteem, have today become much more complex, largely through the all-pervasive effects of social media which, in her words, 'needs reining in'. Resulting disrupted family relationships can regrettably sometimes lead to young people becoming homeless and Kirsti Wenn is an avid supporter of the fund-raising charity Herts Young Homeless, aiming to help young victims of any kind of family breakdown.

Born in Wakefield, West Yorkshire, Kirsti has lived in Harpenden for 21 years. Alongside her role as Town Mayor she is also working for her Master of Studies degree at Cambridge University in the speciality subject of Coaching, a course which appropriately fits in with her self-confessed 'curiosity about people' and which embraces such disciplines as psychology, philosophy and neuroscience, all related to the analysis of human behaviour.



*Kirsti cutting the ribbon to mark the opening of the Padda Courts*



# Ron's Summer Retail Round -Up

On a national level UK retail sales fell 0.5 per cent in July due to the prolonged heatwave and earlier summer promotions, preceded by a World Cup boost in June. Here in Harpenden, High Street business have reported a mix of good to satisfactory sales.



Above L2R: Opening soon. New BREAD AHEAD Baking classes, pizza, doughnuts, pastries and coffee. Banking Hub now trading. The old M&Co awaiting a new ground floor retailer with 2 upstairs floors of apartments. A new Hopper names HETTY coming soon.



Above L2R: Daniel Craig Hair Salon has moved to Wheathampsted, Molasses House Art Gallery has moved to London. District & Modern Stores has closed down. Lazy Bear Cafe in Southdown has closed down



Above L2R. Clarendon Fine Art event for Doug Hyde. Southdown Shops now have flower troughs, plus pavement improvements. Morrisons have closed the High St shop.  
Below left. Solar powering panels in the CO -OP car park to monitor parking.



**Shop local with  
businesses you can  
trust in Southdown &  
the Harpenden  
High Street**



## From Soil to Supper: Finding Joy in the Seasons

When I was researching for our June Harpenden Society event, 'From Soil to Supper', I visited FoodSmiles at Hammonds End Farm. I was expecting to learn more about local food growing, but what I didn't expect was to instantly love what they do and sign up! There is something truly wonderful about people coming together, getting their hands in the soil, growing food and sharing the harvest.



FoodSmiles is a Community Supported Agriculture project that encourages people to grow and eat sustainable, local food by creating a community of food-growers. At Hammonds End Farm, members work together throughout the year to grow a wide variety of predominantly organic vegetables, with the harvest shared in weekly veg boxes.

What is particularly special is being part of the whole journey. The magic of planting a tiny seed and weeks or months later, seeing it develop into something you can pick and eat. From sowing seeds and nurturing young plants, to watering, weeding and caring for the beds, through to harvesting the finished crop, you really begin to appreciate how much goes into the food on our plates.

Part of the appeal of membership is the sense of community, there really is a role for everyone. You don't need to be an experienced gardener or grower as skills and knowledge are shared, so you can learn as you go. The collective nature of the group enables all to be part of an allotment style community without

taking on all the responsibility.

For me, it has also highlighted the joy of eating seasonally. We can buy almost anything at any time of year, so it is easy to forget that food has its

own natural rhythm. At FoodSmiles, you eat what is growing and those first broad beans, tomatoes or courgettes of the season feel and definitely taste all the more special.

Being outdoors, getting active, learning new skills and spending time with people all contribute to a wonderful sense of wellbeing and connection.

Every session at FoodSmiles always includes a tea break, chat and very often cake.

So if you fancy swapping a supermarket aisle for a vegetable bed, take a look at FoodSmiles.

Membership involves contributing time on the farm each month in return for a share of the harvest. I can't recommend highly enough being part of the process from soil to seed, seed to plant, plant to harvest and, finally, supper!

**Katharine Tate. *The Food Teacher***

**Find out more at:**

**[www.foodsmilesstalbans.org.uk](http://www.foodsmilesstalbans.org.uk)**



Please send comments on articles or any other issues raised in this edition to the Newsletter producer Ron Taylor.  
[publicity@harpendsociety.org.uk](mailto:publicity@harpendsociety.org.uk)  
Assistant producer Harry Downie

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