



HERTSMERE FIRST INDEPENDENTS – PEOPLE BEFORE POLITICS.

13th August 2026

Dear Mr Matthew Bunyon (Head of Finance & Business Services, Hertsmere Borough Council)

Cc Sajida Bijle, Chris Shenton, Jeremy Newmark, Ian Kershaw, Paul Sawyer

Re: Shenley Road Scaffolding, Borehamwood – Urgent Financial Support for Affected Businesses and Leaseholders

I am writing regarding the ugly and dangerous scaffolding outside 83-125 Shenley Road, Borehamwood, which has now remained in place for approximately a year.

During that period, very little if any progress has been made towards the completion of the underlying remedial works. Meanwhile, local businesses, leaseholders and residents have borne the consequences.

Numerous shopkeepers have informed me that they have suffered substantial losses of trade because:

- customers are unable to clearly see their shopfronts;
- some members of the public assume the premises are closed;
- pedestrian access is impeded;
- accessibility difficulties discourage customers from visiting; and
- the general appearance of the scaffolded area deters footfall.

At the same time, leaseholders and occupiers report significant service charge increases which have run into thousands of pounds that have arisen from the costs associated with the proposed building works. Residents and businesses are therefore understandably frustrated that, despite the severe and ongoing impact upon Borehamwood's principal shopping area, progress towards a permanent solution has been painfully slow.

I appreciate that Hertsmere Borough Council does not control the scaffolding licence itself. However, residents are struggling to understand how the situation has been allowed to deteriorate to this point.

Hertsmere Borough Council has recently granted planning permission for the required façade works. The permission allows the development to commence within a period of up to three years. Given the extraordinary impact which this scaffold has already had on local businesses and the number of injuries it has caused to residents, many are questioning, understandably, whether a more urgent timetable should have been secured.

Worse still, according to the most recent update provided to me by Hertfordshire County Council, the scaffolding contractor has advised that funding may not be available to Leathbond, the freeholder, to commence these works until early 2027 and only after that would a construction programme of approximately 16 weeks follow. The Highway Authority has consequently approved a further 6-month extension allowing the scaffold to remain in place; this notwithstanding Hertsmere Borough Council's Portfolio Holder for Environment and Net Zero's assurance in the July meeting of Hertsmere's full council that the scaffolding will come down at the end of the summer. It appears in hindsight that this promise was given more in hope than expectation.

In summary, after a year of disruption, local businesses, tenants and therefore the wider local community are now being told that they may have many further months to wait before work even begins.

The justification being advanced by Leathbond is that funding arrangements between the freeholder and leaseholders must first be resolved before works can proceed. According to publicly-available Companies House filings, the relevant freeholder group has reported profits of approximately £127 million and net assets of approximately £1.4 billion.

Local residents and traders may reasonably ask why a major billion-pound property owner has been permitted to bring our high street to a standstill ostensibly to exert leverage over their leaseholders. This behaviour is wholly unacceptable. And unfortunately, the costs of this huge company's recklessness are ultimately being borne by those with much smaller pockets - the local traders, leaseholders and residents through reduced footfall, lost business, and increased service charges.

Whilst the councils' sympathy is welcome, what is needed now is tangible action and redress. Parliament has already provided local authorities with powers intended to assist businesses facing exceptional circumstances.

As the billing authority, Hertsmere Borough Council possesses discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Government guidance further confirms that businesses affected by severe local disruption, including nearby building works and roadworks, may be entitled to reductions in business rates where the disruption affects the value of their premises. The guidance specifically identifies nearby building works and roadworks as examples of circumstances that may justify a reduction.

If a year-long scaffold covering a substantial section of a town centre shopping parade, with a further six-month extension approved and commencement of works potentially delayed until 2027, does not amount to exceptional local disruption, it is difficult to imagine what would.

I therefore believe it is now incumbent upon Hertsmere Borough Council to move beyond expressions of concern and actively utilise the powers available to it. Accordingly, I formally request that the Council:

1. Establish an urgent discretionary business rates relief scheme for businesses directly affected by the Shenley Road scaffolding.
2. Assist affected businesses in securing any reductions in rateable value available through the Valuation Office Agency as a consequence of the prolonged disruption.
3. Publish a statement setting out precisely what powers are available to the Council under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and how it proposes to utilise those powers in this case.
4. If the Council considers that it cannot provide meaningful relief, publish the legal, financial and policy basis for that conclusion.

Given the scale and duration of the disruption, I believe that a minimum 50% discretionary business rates rebate for directly affected businesses would be both justified and proportionate, covering (respectively) the entire period from when the scaffold was put up and extending until the scaffold is finally removed.

I therefore look forward to receiving a detailed response explaining what practical financial assistance Hertsmere Borough Council intends to provide to those businesses (and potentially leaseholders) who have carried the consequences of this situation for far too long.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Graeme Alexander

**Hertsmere First
Ward Councillor for Borehamwood Brookmeadow
People before politics.**