

Questions from the public 20/10/2026

Full Council
PART I
Questions from the public
(ADCCC)

1	From Jack Lambourne to the Lead Member for Climate Change and Sustainability, Councillor Aidan Bentley
	Since the government has overridden the local council to approve this massive 84,000 square metre ai data centre what specific, legally binding enforcement measures will Three Rivers District Council put in place to help protect Abbots Langley residents/environment and its wildlife from water loss, noise pollution and environmental damage?
	I thank Mr Lambourne for his question and you are correct that Three Rivers Council refused the planning application and strongly defended this refusal at the Public Inquiry arguing that was the wrong. We were of course overruled by the Sectary of State. Before work can commence, a reserved matters application must be submitted to the council by 12 May 2028 and then be subsequently determined. The reserved matter(s) application must deal with access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale. If approved, the scheme must be commenced within 2 years from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters. The outline permission deals with the principle of development whereas the reserved matters will deal with specific details, for example arrangement of building(s), materials and landscaping. The council would only be able to enforce against the planning conditions imposed on the outline permission and any subsequent reserved matter applications. From a planning perspective, we do not have the power to introduce new measures; however, there are many existing conditions tied to the outline permission which seek to mitigate impacts through construction and require further information and seek to ensure that matters pertaining to land contamination, on-site surface water management, air quality, noise impacts, to name a few, are made acceptable in planning terms. In addition, officers of the Council and I know the Leader has engaged with the site promoters in order to secure additional benefits for the local community on what I know is an unwanted development.
2	From Alison Scarth to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst
	Four members of Three Rivers District Council have been found to have breached its Member Code of Conduct. At a meeting of the Council's Standards Panel on 7 September 2026, it was found that Councillors Christopher Alley, Ian Campbell, Oliver Cooper and Vicky Edwards had breached paragraph four of the council's Member Code of Conduct. The Councillors published two political leaflets containing links to a restricted council report marked "not for publication". The constitution has already been changed twice to address Councillor Cooper's appalling behaviour. This latest incident was a flagrant breach of trust bringing the whole council and all its staff into disrepute. At least one of the Councillors involved is a solicitor and one refers to himself as a lawyer. How can the Council

	stop a repetition of the appalling behaviour of the four people concerned - does the constitution need to be changed again in light of what they did, and in order to prevent a repetition of this kind of utterly unacceptable behaviour? Behaviour like this is potentially putting taxpayers money at risk through actions by third parties.
	The behaviour of councillors is governed by the Council's Constitution, and all councillors are required to sign up to the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020. Part of this states very clearly that councillors must follow the advice of the Monitoring Officer and other statutory officers, whether they agree with it or not. In this case, that was not what happened. Despite being asked to cease the distribution of the publications in question and remove the website link, they refused to do so. It is therefore not surprising that the Monitoring Officer referred the matter for an independent investigation and that the councillors concerned were subsequently found to have breached the Code. They also had full advance notice that the confidential Part II papers would be made public following the Council meeting on 27 January. It therefore appears that they sought to gain a political advantage through their actions, which could potentially have undermined the Council's position at any future public inquiry relating to the Local Plan. It is particularly concerning, in my view, that two councillors with legal backgrounds believed this conduct to be acceptable and then refused to comply with the Monitoring Officer's requests to cease and desist. As for what the Council can do, unfortunately the changes to the standards regime mean the available sanctions are very limited. Unlike the House of Commons, there are few meaningful penalties available. I understand that one option might have been to bar them from Three Rivers House, but that may well have been perceived as a disproportionate response. In any event, it was not for me to decide what action should be taken. That was a matter for the Standards Panel. Naturally, I hope, and indeed expect, that no other councillors will choose to release confidential Part II papers which have been classified as confidential by the Monitoring Officer. Such actions bring into question the integrity of both the members involved and the Council as a whole. Very few items are considered in Part II, and where they are, it is for a good reason. In most cases, the information will eventually become public once the circumstances requiring confidentiality have passed.
3	From Pandora Vaughan-Melly to the Lead Member for Resources, Regeneration and Economic Development, Councillor Louise Price
	I have made frequent complaints to TRDC via the enquiry email route about householders' misusing what is now a village green (South Oxhey Playing Fields, aka The Old Golf Course) through the grubbing-up of the historic hedgerow, enclosures of the land with fencing, also the placement of both wanted and unwanted articles (fly-tipping) of household and garden on the land and the laying of paths, coconut mulch etc. but it seems that no action is taken, and the boundaries and property of householders remain in situ, which invariably leads to something called adverse possession - that after a statute length of time - I believe this to be a period of twelve years - the land then belongs to the householder, rather than the public via TRDC.

	Here are photographs of the latest illegal action - the laying of paving and coconut mulch on land that was previously covered by a hedgerow. I have sent a great many photographs over the last few years which evidences that this is very much a 'copy-cat' action, which spreads throughout those gardens backing onto the land, so that eventually all the hedgerow will have been removed and the householders will claim more and more land for themselves via this underhand method. May I ask that some proper action is taken before the land is lost? The hedgerow is necessary for the smaller wildlife to move safely around the area avoiding predators. I also feel that its loss looks very unsightly, spoils the character of the area and should not be allowed through the turning of blind eyes. Could you please find out why so little action is being taken?
	I share your concerns over the actions taken. The Council recently supported the adoption of the area as a Village Green and remains committed to protecting it. Encroachment is an issue that the Council takes seriously however the legal processes involved in dealing with encroachment are complex and require due legal process to be followed. The Council is continuing to pursue action and I thank you for supplying the information and photos
4	Question from Elizabeth Willetts to the Leader of the Council Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst
	My question concerns the upkeep of the Eastbury Recreation Ground on Batchworth Lane, Eastbury, including the children's play area. The play area in particular needs attention; the willow tunnel is overgrown and unsightly and planted areas are very untidy. Please supply the maintenance schedule for the last 6 months detailing the work carried out to the playground and the surrounding grass and planted areas within the Recreation Ground
	Eastbury play area is inspected at least once a week under the British Standards for play areas – EN BS 1176 and EN BS 1177 for health and safety purposes. These routine inspections are carried out by the Grounds Maintenance team, along with a more detailed monthly inspection. In addition to this, new planting took place within and around the play area in May this year. Play areas are primarily maintained for health and safety reasons, following the standards as detailed above. However, during the public consultation and in particular with the eco warriors at Eastbury Farm school, the children were passionate about creating a natural and wild area for wildlife and insects, so whilst an area may seem "unsightly" or "untidy" it is purposely maintained for wildlife and natural play. The willow tunnel is scheduled to be cut back during the autumn as it has been in previous years.
5	Question from Alex Hayward to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst
	With the under delivery of housing in Three Rivers Distict, will the few areas of Green Belt identified in the forthcoming Local Plan be reassigned as brownfield to allow appropriate development to provide the much needed homes?
	Brownfield land, also referred to as Previously Developed Land (PDL), is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as "Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it". It is not possible to reassign land as brownfield. It either is brownfield and meets the NPPF definition or it is not.

	A site's designation as brownfield land is independent of whether it is located within or outside the Green Belt. Brownfield sites can therefore exist both within and outside of Green Belt. However, the council has the ability to review and amend Green Belt boundaries through the Local Plan preparation process. Where sites currently within the Green Belt are proposed for development in the emerging Local Plan, these sites are removed from the Green Belt and the boundaries are redrawn accordingly. There are some exceptions, particularly where sites, or parts of sites, comprise brownfield land within the Green Belt, which may retain their Green Belt designation. Given the limited availability of brownfield land, the vast majority of new housing proposed in the emerging Local Plan is expected to be delivered on land currently designated as Green Belt. However, most of these sites are proposed to be removed from the Green Belt as part of the Local Plan process. Once the new Local Plan is adopted, these sites will no longer fall within the Green Belt and planning applications for their development will not be assessed against Green Belt policies and therefore contribute strongly to delivering new homes.
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