



NEWSLETTER

March - April 2022

No. 167

Thoughts from the (Co)-Chair

While we think about our local environment, and how we can conserve and enhance it, we watch daily how Ukraine is being devastated by Putin's war. The contrast is difficult to think about. No planning application or due process there for the demolition of people's lives and homes. So, what follows is much less important than events further east.

A report on litter successfully collected follows. One comment came back about this – "but we pay the council to do this". The council does a lot on our behalf, but its resources are limited, and the sort of clean-up we do is often in places which would be difficult for a council to do with its usual staffing. Keeping areas clear of litter is reported to reduce the tendency of people to drop litter there, and it gives volunteers some fun and good feelings. Agreed?

We are grateful for the help from Hitchin Initiative for the litter day, and we are always grateful for the work that the Initiative and Hitchin BID do for the town. Our ever-energetic town centre manager, Tom Hardy, writes below about the achievements of BID and the plans for the year, including the Jubilee celebrations.

Ken reports on the changes to the Highway Code, with a hierarchy of road and pavement users, and rules for car drivers to give way to cyclists, and for cyclists to give way to walkers. It will take a while for people to just hear about this, and then a lot longer to adjust established habits. Fortunately, I sense drivers are often very considerate to me on my bike – maybe because they are bikers too. Such rules are also applicable on bridleways. I am reminded of this on my frequent bike rides around the area. My own difficulty is in remembering that people may not hear my bike bell, either due to headphones (how annoying is that, and why not listen to nature etc?), or due to hearing loss.

Walkers have been enjoying the area we now call Priory Fields, especially since COVID arrived. Valerie describes different aspects of that area, which is safe for the moment from development – it is not designated for housing in the draft Local Plan (and yes, we are still waiting for that to be finally agreed). Eight years ago the future of Priory Fields did seem precarious – hence the campaign and protest at that time to highlight its local importance.

Planning across the border at Luton Airport is well scrutinised by LADACAN, and Bill has summarised the issues as evident in the current consultation, the threat of noise and air pollution particularly. And of course the small matter of getting serious about climate change.

Local planning issues recur and recur. Neil has listed and commented on several that have emerged recently. These have been mostly the larger schemes, particularly where the green belt is under threat. We do look at some of the smaller developments, and recently at the change of use of the Lord Lister Hotel to become a facility for homeless people. We did not feel the need to comment on this as the local residents evidently knew what to do to make their feelings heard. They contacted the relevant councillors and, as a result, the original (delegated) authority to allow such a change of use has been called in to be fully debated by the council's planning committee.

Meanwhile the exodus from Ukraine will present a whole new perspective on what to do for the homeless, quite apart from all the other issues that will follow from the "military operations".

Mike Clarke - Co-Chair

Hitchin Forum's Big Spring Clean-up, Sunday March 20th

Without having to worry so much about COVID our most recent event was much easier to organise. I am pleased to say that, even though I tested positive up to 10 days beforehand, our almost paperless organisation (courtesy of Google Forms) but mainly the commitment and flexibility of our super volunteers, enabled arrangements to go smoothly.

Participants who had newly joined us back in October, and who had offered to focus on new hotspots, strongly supported us again. Also, since then, there has been a steady stream of enquiries from people eager to help. These have been added to our contact list, which now stands at well over 200. On the Saturday morning, while we distributed pickers outside the Information Office, we signed up a total of nine more participants. This was fortunate since we had lost a few through illness, so on the day we had just over 100 taking part. Once again, Holy Saviour Guides worked their magic on the Dell, which often provides some bizarre finds. Bizarre didn't really describe the side panel of a litter bin they discovered although the use to which it had been put was not entirely clear. Elsewhere, there was something of a theme with almost antique cans – an old Spam tin (pictured here with the inevitable traffic cone in the background) and a beer can which had contained a brew produced by a long-defunct brewery, which I can remember drinking in the 70s. In all, about 15 separate locations were cleared – it is hard to be precise because volunteers cleared their allocated areas and then did a sweep of nearby areas too. The general consensus was that there was less litter than last time. In terms of the amount collected, it is again impossible to be precise as some people took home items to put in their own bins to make sure that they were recycled. A preliminary estimate is about 70 bags – down on last time, and confirming the impression that people had.



The next event will be in October, with the date yet to be decided. If you would like to take part, please email hflitterpick@gmail.com to be added to our circulation list. Who would ever have predicted what fun people could have picking up rubbish?!



Bill Sellicks – Co-Chair

Treasures on our Doorstep – Priory Fields and Charlton

During lockdown these two gems, special to Hitchin, became very familiar to me, not least because they feature on a weekly walking route, starting off at the Three Moorhens public house, on the schedule of North Herts Health Walks: www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/walkfinder/east-england/north-herts-hitchin-letchworth-health-walks.

It was once feared that Priory Fields, beloved by many, might be lost to housing development. This gave rise to the Priory Fields Campaign, which Hitchin Forum drew attention to in our newsletter article dated 9/8/2014:

www.hitchinforum.org.uk/priory-fields-campaign/

and which is definitely worth revisiting, as it emphasises how valuable and actively used this area is as a 'green lung' for Hitchin, with its many footpaths and wide-open views to the Chilterns - an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - not to mention how integral it is to Hitchin's historic character, with ancient connections to the Radcliffe family, one-time owners of Hitchin Priory.

Here is a photograph, source unknown, showing a walk-round organised to raise awareness of the plans. From an initial expectation that about 30 people might attend, the numbers grew to about 300. Ever the enthusiastic campaigner, the late Chris Honey is pictured at the rear holding a placard. A note attached to the photo read "It worked we saved it!"



Due to the success of the campaign, we can all thankfully continue to enjoy Priory Fields and the flora and fauna for which it provides a home. This is illustrated in the two photos that follow, namely Priory Fields ablaze with poppies, and a stonechat that was recently captured on camera by our co-chair, Mike Clarke, as it confidently perched on a post there. Local birders tell me that a pair have taken up residence in Priory Fields.



If on foot, it is easy to access our second gem, Charlton, via Priory Fields, which is in effect its back garden. Charlton itself is a component hamlet of Hitchin and part of a rural conservation area whose boundary surrounds a mill landscape that stretches from the wellhead, source of the Hiz, to beyond the Windmill public house: www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/charlton.pdf. The village is probably best known to the outside world for its links to Henry Bessemer, the inventor of the first inexpensive industrial process for the

mass production of steel from molten pig iron. He was born in 1813 at Charlton House, a Grade II listed building, upon the façade of which is a blue plaque verifying this fact as depicted in the photo below.



According to the Bessemer Society (www.bessemer-society.co.uk/background/) when the 200th anniversary of Sir Henry's birth came around on January 13th, 2013, much interest was shown in his life's work, not least in Charlton, the place of his birth. Indeed, a new village sign that most of us will be familiar with, and which was paid for by local subscription, was installed to mark the occasion. (Photo above is courtesy of Bill Sellicks.)

Another gentleman of note, and one that I wasn't hitherto aware of, also resided at Charlton House, namely Robert Harkness of Harkness Roses fame. Apparently, in the late 19th century their rose nursery was based in Charlton as well as in Bedale, Yorkshire, this according to an article by Peter Harkness in Vol 1, No 1 of "Old Hitchin Life". See also www.roses.co.uk/blog/a-brief-history-of-harkness-roses.

For myself, a walk across Priory Fields to Charlton is made all the more pleasurable by a stop-off to observe the pigs at Charlton Hill piggery (photo below).



Unfortunately, the nearby Windmill public house, once the beating heart of the village, but now the subject of an ongoing local campaign to save it from development and to maintain it as a community pub (see photo above right) is no longer open to serve refreshments. This is a great pity given the many splendid walks the area has to offer, such as this Charlton walk from the Chiltern Society - www.chilternsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Charlton.pdf. Do check for the latest news on the campaign to save the pub at www.savethewindmillpub.com/.

North Herts Council commissioned a 24-page Conservation Area Character Statement for Charlton, dated December 2019, that I would strongly recommend reading. The link to it is: www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Charlton_CA_Character_Statement_0.pdf. This document not only gives the reader the historical background of Charlton; for example, that it was mentioned in the Domesday Book as a small settlement with a mill, but also outlines its key assets and views as well as including a formal “Statement of special interest”.

To conclude, I hope you will agree with me that Priory Fields and Charlton are indeed ‘treasures’, and as such it is our responsibility to keep them safe and enhance them so that future generations may enjoy them as we do.

Valerie Schicker - Member of Steering Group

All photographs were taken by the author except where specified otherwise.

Hitchin BID – plans for 2022, including the Jubilee celebrations

2021 was a year of seismic change and numerous challenges for our businesses, the local community, and the country as a whole. With the start of the COVID crisis in late March 2020 and subsequent national lockdowns, we have repeatedly had to adapt to changes in guidance and restrictions as the pandemic evolved. Two years on from the start of the pandemic, it’s clear that the world is still adapting to the new landscape before us, with changed working practices and some ongoing restrictions. Throughout this challenging year, the work of the BID has been arguably more needed than ever. Despite the difficulties brought about by the pandemic, this third year of our third term saw Hitchin BID maintaining its position in the community as a symbol of continuity and reassurance, as we listened to the needs of businesses and worked alongside our partners to continue delivering and enhancing the footprint during a very difficult time for many.



Our agility has enabled us to pivot to where the greatest need has been, while still maintaining momentum on some of our big strategic projects. Early on in the pandemic, the Hitchin BID directors took prudent decisions to pause some of our day-to-day activities, focusing on providing what our diverse business community most needed. In a year that has been undeniably difficult for all businesses, we’ve been passionate about offering support and solutions wherever we can - from providing assistance to some of the most affected businesses in our community; to supporting businesses as they adapted their offer and providing clear, accurate communications to our stakeholders.

As ever, partnership sits at the heart of the BID movement, and our ability to collaborate with our partners at North Herts Council, Herts County Council, Herts Police, our local MP and wider stakeholders has been vital this past year. In a year when the importance of shopping local and supporting your local high street has been highlighted more than ever, we are proud to have delivered a successful High Street Reopening Plan to support businesses and breathe new life into our town centre.

The strength and resilience shown by the BID and our business community over the past year has been incredibly inspiring, but we know that the hard work is not over. As your BID, we will be ahead of the curve on future challenges, helping businesses navigate a new course and finding new ways of re-energising our beloved town centre. It will not be easy, and we cannot do it alone, but with a strategy based on genuine insights and a determination to continue to deliver for our wonderful business community, much can be achieved. We hope you enjoy looking back on some of the successes and challenges of the past year.

As we finally start getting back to normality, we're excited to be planning a bumper year of events, activities, and promotions to boost the town. We have positioned ourselves to not only run in-house events but to support and guide other local organisations and businesses wanting to run them in various locations. Volunteers have been busy helping paint bollards and litter picking, and we have recently completed a two-week deep clean resulting in 62,000 pieces of chewing gum being removed.

Plans are well under way to mark Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. On Thursday 2nd June, there will be a big screen in the Market Place live streaming the Trooping the Colour, followed by a special screening of the film *The Queen*. In the evening, Hitchin will be joining 1500 places across the UK in lighting a beacon, which will take place on top of Osinsky's Bar. There will be a band and sing-along music with the beacon being lit at 9:45pm. Friday 3rd June welcomes back the Hitchin Carnival. Travelling through the town, the Carnival will be made up of local groups, businesses, residents and charities. There will be entertainment and stalls on Market Place, as well as craft stalls and family friendly activities. On Saturday 4th June, there will be musicians playing on the square and on Sunday 5th June the main streets in the town centre will be closed to traffic, and local businesses will be taking part in the 'Big Lunch'. There will be live music, with chairs and tables laid out in the road encouraging the residents of Hitchin to come together for a day of celebration. We'll also have an allocated picnic area on Market Place where you can bring your own food and drink. If you would like to know more about the plans for the Platinum Jubilee this year, please get in touch with the BID team.

We look forward to building on the achievements of the past year as we continue to harness the power of collaborative action and ensure the best possible recovery for the area, thereby enhancing the prospects of the businesses that make Hitchin such a vibrant and exciting place to be.

Tom Hardy - Town Centre Manager

Luton Rising

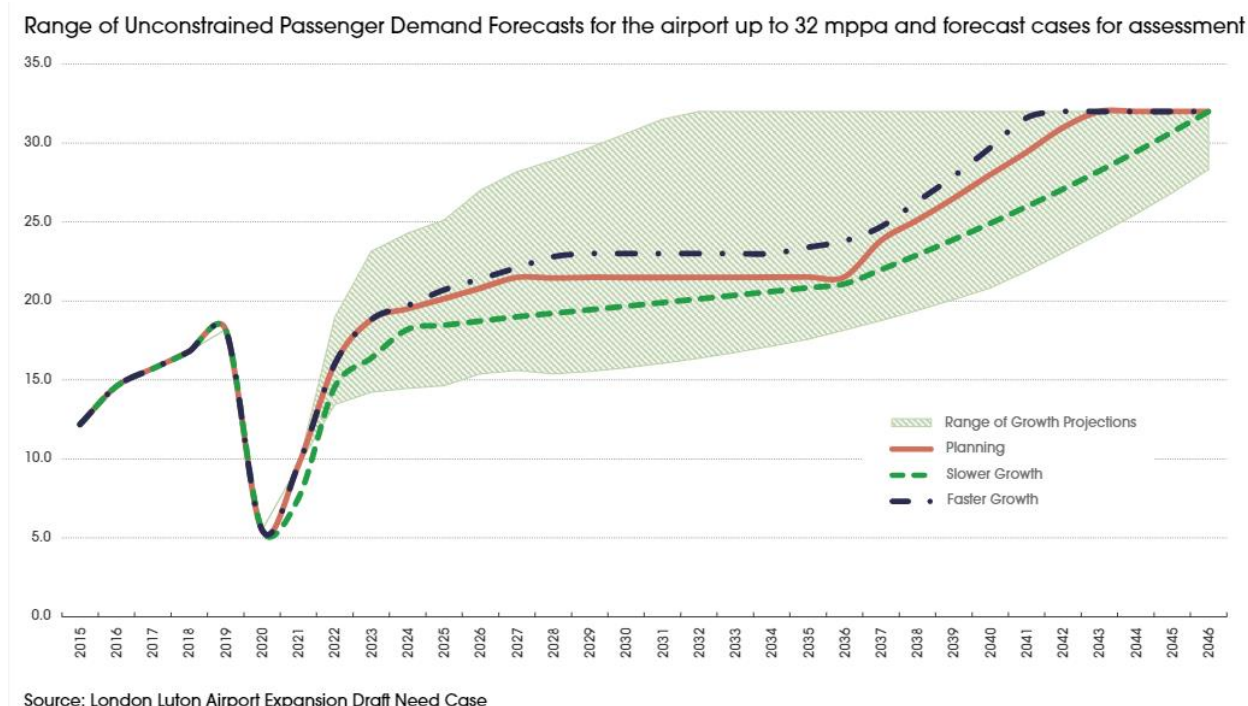
Bias warning

To say that I come to the subject of the expansion of our local airport with preconceptions will be no surprise to Forum members. One of the pleasures of living in Hitchin is that it is possible to escape to the surrounding countryside with relative ease and enjoy some delightful scenery in relative peace. Unfortunately, it isn't necessary to walk or cycle far before the airport starts to make its presence felt. At the moment, from a recreational point of view, it's bearable. A future where the Mimram valley experiences 20 deafening overflights per hour (I counted this figure from a simulation of how the runways would work in the airport's exhibition) is not one that I find attractive, to put it mildly. I can only imagine how those living under the flightpath must feel.

The exhibition and what comes next

On 10th March, the airport held its exhibition to present its plans for expansion from the current capacity of 18 million passengers per annum (18mppa) to **32mppa** by about 2043. I hope the exhibition was well attended – I was unable to attend due to continuing positive tests for COVID. I imagine people anxiously questioning the airport's representatives about the plans, which are now so ambitious that I predict that, if permitted, they will have an impact on Hitchin's residents which few will be prepared to tolerate. I was, however, able to see the online exhibition. If you wish to comment on the consultation, you have until April 4th. I would encourage anybody intending to do so to visit the LADACAN website¹ and look at the advice it offers first. Hitchin Forum has already responded, and our responses are available on our website at www.hitchinforum.org.uk/category/campaigns/luton-airport-expansion/. The LADACAN webpage has links to the necessary information, the virtual exhibition and the questionnaire. After the consultation, the next step is for the airport to submit its plans to secure a Development Consent Order (DCO) which it aims to do later this year.

The exhibition featured the graph below, showing the range of growth projections, which makes grim reading for anybody who is concerned about the impact expansion will have on the local and global environment. We are told that the graph takes account of the cost of carbon and measures to reduce carbon emissions from aviation to achieve net zero by 2050. It is by no means clear what assumptions were made in order to produce it.



History and the track record of the airport's projections

After permission was granted in 2013, when the airport was supposed to grow to its passenger cap of 18mppa by 2028, demand soon soared, and the airport responded. As a result, the passenger cap was breached almost 10 years early. Noise controls were flouted in 2017, 2018 and 2019. If the graph above is to be believed, 32mppa could be achieved as early as 2032. If expansion is permitted, what will happen if that turns out to be the case? On the basis of what has happened since the noise conditions were first breached in 2017, it seems likely that the airport would again demand that the cap be lifted.

'Green controlled growth' – a new approach?

The airport will always prioritise growth over controlling its impact. There has to be a limit to growth, but from what we have seen of the 'green controlled growth' proposals, they will almost certainly allow for growth first. Mitigating the impact of that growth will come afterwards, but only if it is convenient. More about that later.

Won't there be more jobs?

The same exhibition panel justifies expansion on the basis of the economic benefits, some of which are undeniable, and which include new jobs. We have been fed this assertion before – it is a tactic used by the airport's supporters to give the impression that objectors are simply a bunch of NIMBYs eager to protect their property prices, who are unconcerned for the people of Luton, forgetting, of course, that some of those most severely impacted are Luton residents themselves. The economic benefits of the airport's existence have been 'enjoyed' by the area for many years, and, given the apparent runaway 'success' of expansion since permission was granted in 2013, why is it that Luton continues to have areas of deprivation? What guarantees are there that the benefits of expansion which, so far, have not lifted these areas out of poverty, will suddenly start to do so this time around? If we are interested in making a decision based on evidence rather than assertion, should we not be provided with graphs which show projections of local economic indicators both for expansion and no expansion scenarios? Shouldn't these also take account of the costs of environmental

impacts? How reliable are these projections anyway? In 2015, the airport commissioned a report from Oxford Economics² which included some projections based on the then cap of 18mppa. The report predicted that by 2030 when 18mppa was due to be achieved, the total of direct jobs (that is, at the airport) would reach 13,100 whilst that for indirect jobs would be 131,000 nationwide. In 2019, when the airport actually handled 18m passengers, those totals were just 10,900 and 28,400 respectively. There are doubtless good reasons why the figures should not be compared, but particularly the number of predicted indirect jobs (which is 4.6 times higher than the actual 2019 value) seems to have been achieved simply by multiplying the direct jobs by 10. The airport pays for this stuff!

‘Green’ expansion

Along with a scaling back of the magnitude of development (from 38mppa to 32mppa), ‘green controlled growth’ is the airport’s response to the negative reaction to its Future Luton proposals of 2018 and 2019. The display boards gave relatively little detail about how it will really work, but in the more detailed document ‘Managing and Mitigating the Effects of Expansion’³, we start to see some clues, and it is not long before the built-in potential for wriggle-room becomes apparent.

There is not really space to look at all aspects, so I will confine my comments to noise and surface access. Without going into the detail of what future limits might be, the key feature of the proposals is the establishment of a ‘noise envelope’. According to the document:

‘We will also define noise limits and controls within which the airport would be allowed to operate as part of a Noise Envelope.’

‘A ‘Noise Envelope’ is a framework of legally binding and enforceable limits and controls to manage air noise.’

‘The type and nature of the controls that will apply within the Noise Envelope would be influenced by the Noise Envelope Design Group (NEDG). The NEDG is independently chaired, and includes representatives from local authorities, the community and other stakeholders with the necessary technical expertise.’

In other words, the airport decides the parameters of the noise envelope. External (and apparently independent) oversight is provided by the NEDG, but its role is limited to ‘influence’. You will notice that there is nothing which limits the representation of the airport on the NEDG. How breaches of the noise controls would be treated is unclear. Crucially, how the system would control growth is unclear too.

Surface Access

Compared to other airports, Luton has a woeful record in encouraging passengers to shift from private cars to public transport. Forecast traffic increases in North Hertfordshire are assessed to be up to 2.2%³. How to address this is not covered in any specific way, although improvements to bus and coach services, allied with a reduction in the amount of parking to be provided to try to encourage the use of public transport, would appear to be a move in the right direction. There are plans for modifications to the roundabouts along the A602 / A505 corridor designed to make traffic move more smoothly, which might help in controlling NO₂ and particulate emissions, but their real aim is to make the journey easier for passengers. If they ease traffic flow, evidence shows that will attract more traffic, and we will be back to Square One. There continues to be no mention of any attempt to deal with the impact on North Hertfordshire by liaison with NHC.

Conclusion

In spite of the promise of ‘green controlled growth’, I remain alarmed by these proposals. To return to my earlier mention of the countryside, hidden away in the documentation is the admission that: ‘...significant adverse (traffic noise) effects are possible for properties in the vicinity of Tea Green and Cockernhoe as a result of increased traffic on Stony Lane and Chalk Hill’³. As evident from the photographs below, Stony Lane

and Chalk Hill are little more than single track rural roads. They link the back of the airport to Lilley Bottom



and were never designed for large volumes of traffic, certainly not routes which could be described as efficient thoroughfares. If a document published by the airport implies that roads like that will become congestion blackspots (or even just ridiculously busy at some times of day) that suggests a serious problem. The attempt to sell the idea of Luton airport as some sort of benevolent organisation with environmental credentials at its heart, rather than a business determined to maximise profit, stretches my credulity.

1. LADACAN website: www.ladacan.org/luton-rising-consultation-questionnaire/
2. The Economic Impact of London Luton Airport (Oxford Economics 2015): www.london-luton.co.uk/LondonLuton/files/7e/7ec334b4-23ae-46ad-b8a3-d46c53c4007a.pdf
3. Managing and Mitigating the Effects of Expansion: www.lutonrising.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/LR_Managing-and-mitigating-the-effects-of-expansion.pdf

Bill Sellicks – Co-Chair

What About Pedestrians? – The Sequel!

Since my last article, the Department of Transport, as expected, has now amended the Highway Code to codify a new hierarchy of road users and has added some new rules and recommendations. There has been limited publicity so I thought it might be useful to set out the new rules here for the guidance of members.

The new hierarchy places at the top those road users most at risk in the event of a collision; that is, pedestrians and cyclists. It does not, however, remove the need for everyone to behave responsibly.

People crossing the road at junctions

The updated code clarifies that:

- When people are crossing or waiting to cross at a junction, other traffic should give way and let them cross.
- If people have started crossing and traffic wants to turn into the road, the people crossing have priority and the traffic should give way.
- People driving, riding a motorcycle or cycling must give way to people on a zebra crossing and people walking and cycling on a parallel crossing (a parallel crossing is similar to a zebra crossing, but includes a cycle route alongside the black and white stripes).

Walking, cycling or riding in shared spaces

These are routes shared by people walking, cycling and riding horses. People cycling or riding a horse should respect the safety of people walking in these spaces, but people walking should also take care not to obstruct or endanger them. People cycling are asked to:

- Not pass people walking or riding a horse closely or at high speed, particularly from behind;
- Slow down when necessary and let people walking know where they are (for example by ringing their bell);
- Remember that people walking may be deaf, blind or partially sighted;
- Not pass a horse on the horse's left.

Road positioning when cycling

When out riding, cyclists are asked to:

- Ride in the centre of their lane on quiet roads, in slower moving traffic and at the approach to junctions or road narrowing.
- Keep at least 0.5 metres (just over 1.5 feet) away from the kerb edge (and further where it is safe) when riding on busy roads with vehicles moving faster than them.

And when riding in groups:

- Be considerate of the needs of other road users.
- Optionally ride two abreast, particularly in larger groups or when accompanying children or less experienced riders.

Cyclists are asked to be aware of people driving behind them and to allow them to overtake when it is safe to do so.

Overtaking when driving or cycling

You may cross a double white line if safe and necessary to overtake someone cycling or riding a horse if they are travelling at 10 mph or less. Safe passing distances are:

- At least 1.5 metres when overtaking people cycling at speeds of up to 30mph and giving them more space when overtaking at higher speeds;
- At least 2 metres when passing people riding horses at speeds under 10 mph;
- At least 2 metres and keeping to a low speed when passing people walking in the road.

People cycling may, with caution, pass slower-moving or stationary traffic on their right or left.

When cycling and turning into or out of a side road, cyclists should give way to people walking who are crossing or waiting to cross.

Leaving vehicles

There is a new recommendation when leaving vehicles. This has received much less publicity than the other changes and is sometimes called the "Dutch Reach". When drivers or passengers can do so, they should open the door using their hand on the opposite side to the door they are opening. For example, using their left hand to open a door on their right-hand side. This will make them turn their head to look over their shoulder behind them. They are then less likely to cause injury to people cycling or riding a motorcycle passing on the road or people on the pavement.

I hope the above serves as a reminder to members of the new rules and recommendations which prioritise the safety of the more vulnerable road users over those more likely to cause injury to them. Sadly, there has been little real promotion of the new rules and recommendations and one wonders how long it will take for them to be recognised and enforced.

At the last Steering Group meeting there was some discussion about the use of electric scooters, some of which have appeared on the streets of Hitchin. At the moment their use is illegal in this country and failure to comply could result in a fine, penalty points or the e-scooter being impounded. That is unless they are used in

a town where trials are taking place. The nearest towns to Hitchin where this is happening are Milton Keynes and Cambridge.

Ken Chapman – Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Planning Applications

Your Steering Group has been operating throughout the pandemic, with frequent exchanges of emails and regular meetings via Zoom. We have kept reviewing planning applications, which have mainly been concerning new housing developments in the Green Belt.

At the Hitchin Town Talk on 1st March 2022, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg – the leader of North Herts Council – said that the Local Plan for 2011-2031 is still with the Government Inspector, who is due to report back ‘soon’. Until this happens, and the Local Plan is approved, the various schemes which involve building on Green Belt land should not go ahead. However, as advised in previous editions of the Newsletter, most of the plans are drawn up and planning applications made, so once the Local Plan is approved, a great deal of development is likely to begin.

- One such scheme is the proposed Highover development, involving 700 new homes to the east of the town. We have written opposing the submitted outline planning application, principally on the grounds of loss of Green Belt, but also proximity to Letchworth and increased traffic congestion.
- We have also objected to the full planning application for 52 new dwellings located to the south of Waterdell Lane, St Ippolyts, because it involves building on the Green Belt. It is also just south along the B656 London Road of the Pound Farm development of 84 dwellings, and north of the ‘safeguarded land’ west of Stevenage for up to 3100 dwellings, to both of which we have objected. In addition to loss of Green Belt, we argued that these schemes would result in loss of character, urban sprawl, traffic congestion and stresses on water supply and wastewater treatment.
- We argued against Stevenage’s 1500 home development west of the A1, including putting detailed questions to Stevenage Borough Council, some of which were addressed in the Planning Meeting, which we attended by Zoom.
- We have previously objected to the three housing schemes on the Green Belt just to the west of Crow Furlong and Lucas Lane.
- We reviewed the application for the proposed solar array on Green Belt farmland to the East of Great Wymondley. Because of differences of opinion in the Steering Group on the merits of this proposal, it was left for individual members of SG to make their own representations.

In contrast to the Green Belt schemes, we welcomed the development of the brownfield site at Weston’s Motors at 114-142 Cambridge Road, which has been derelict and unused for the last four years. We made suggestions on the initial application, leading to the replacement of some flats by houses. We also asked for the flats to be more spacious, and made a number of other comments on the proposals. We look forward to the development of this derelict site, which appears to be delayed by flooding issues raised by the water authority and by neighbours’ concerns.

On another brownfield site, at 65 Bury Mead Road, we have reviewed a revised part-scheme for four houses, which excludes the original scheme’s two blocks of flats until a later submission.

We have recently reviewed and commented on an application for a block of 10 flats at 1 Pirton Road, at the intersection of Pirton Road and Offley Road. Our feeling is that this block would be an overdevelopment of the site, and that it would contribute to the already congested traffic at this location. We also queried the appearance of the block, as it would be very different from its surroundings. Following discussion among SG members, we registered an objection to the application.

Neil Dodds – Member of Steering Group

Dates for your Diary

Deadline for responses to the Luton Rising consultation

Monday 4th April

Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, live streaming the Trooping the Colour, followed by a special screening of the film The Queen. Beacon lighting at 9.45pm on top of Osinsky's bar

Thursday 2nd June

Hitchin Carnival, town centre. Food and entertainment in Market Place

Friday 3rd June

Music in Market Place

Saturday 4th June

Jubilee Big Lunch, Town Centre. Live music, with chairs and tables laid out for a day of celebration

Sunday 5th June