



FRIENDS OF BUTTS CLOSE

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER

November 2023

Big Visitors

The Close has gone through its summer cycle: growing, tending, harvesting, and entertaining. The big visitors – two funfairs and the circus – were better neighbours than last year. I confess I do enjoy those sudden transitions from quiet meadowland to that shuddering jangle of lights and sounds, and then (quickly) back again to peace.



I asked for any feedback on the Abbotts funfair noise – I've appended the replies – and sent them off to Andrew Mills, NHC. The Council's licensing approach seems to have made a real difference: less noise and a bit less litter, and the on-site loos have stopped those quick runs to the pond.

TR



Circus Wonderland

Unwelcome Visitors

We did have another (very short) visit by a detectorist, along the swimming pool edge of the Close. You'll maybe remember that I'd reported the last chap to the Police as he appeared to be committing a 'crime in progress'. The Police referred the matter to the Council.



Anna Parr

I asked the Police (through the Heritage Watch Scheme) what thresholds would trigger a Police response. Interestingly, the first criterion was that the owner would need to report the matter to the Police. The information would then be prioritised 'according to the demands on the Police Service at the time,' and an appropriate response would then be made. It's pretty clear if a Council Officer did report a detectorist to the Police, that would be referred back...

But it won't ever happen again, as there are now stern notices at each entrance to the Close forbidding them. Maybe...

Very, Very Small Visitors

In October Phil Barron and David Inward¹ made a detailed survey on Butts Close of leaf mines.

What?

Leaf mines are tiny corridors and blotches on leaves, often created by moths, which include their signatures for those able to decipher them. They sent a bag of likely leaves to an expert (possibly the foremost in the country) who identified the winged critters. The results are attached to this email, kindly drawn up by Phil.

I needed to learn more. For me, moths were of passing interest or relevance, and have never given me the sudden thrill of a Red Admiral butterfly, a pair of flickering Whites or the tango dance of a dragonfly. Moths get a bad rap, more associated with the night, death and of course with holes in your jumpers². But I've learnt how much they contribute to the richness of our environment, essential step-ladders to increased biodiversity. And have suffered a loss in abundance of 31% over the last 50 years³, with knock-on effects on agricultural pollination and on other wildlife.

Anna Parr has also provided a rich table of Butts Close wildlife data. I have emailed this out as a separate attachment (as excel files don't seem to reproduce well as pdfs) for those interested.

¹ Both David and Phil are amateur wildlife enthusiasts and contributors to the databases of Hertfordshire flora and fauna. Phil also does a wonderful nature blog on Hitchin Cemetery, with superb photographs of its very lively inhabitants - <https://hitchinwildlife.blogspot.com/>

² "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt" Matthew 6:19-34.

³ <https://stateofnature.org.uk/> gives the up-to-date picture. Not happy reading.

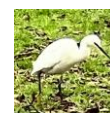
Plans Afoot?

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are major elements of a national initiative to improve our health and well-being by enabling and encouraging us to walk and to cycle more. Introduced by central government in 2017, local authorities are expected to create LCWIPs to make this happen⁴. Six years on, local government is moving apace.

Hertfordshire County Council commissioned a major analysis of current and future opportunities for increasing walking and cycling, including in and around Hitchin⁵. Plans have been approved at County and District level, but details will be subject to further consultation. In fact Bedford Road, Hitchin tops the list of prioritised areas for development. Below is a map of 'our' part of Hitchin. Red lines are cycleways, green lines are pedestrian routes. The plan is to create a segregated cycleway from Ickleford down Bedford Road to the town centre, remodel the junctions/roundabouts, and improve pedestrian routes⁶. Formal consultation on the plan has ended but people's views will still be welcomed, as they will further inform the details. Cllr Ruth Brown, the NHC Lead Member on this work, has said that any comments and views can be given to your local Councillors.

Will this affect Butts Close? At this point the only suggested change is to improve the transverse pathway. But if this means providing lighting, there are good arguments against that, both on safety and ecological grounds. You might notice too that Elmside Walk is ignored, but pedestrians and cyclists alike seem to prefer that route from the north side of the Close to the town centre or to Waitrose, unless they are heading to/from the library or Samuel Lucas School.

Needless to say, we'll be watching...as is our egret – back on the Close this week.



Tree Work



David M expressed concern regarding a branch crossing the grassy path south of the pond – see left. It is splitting and infected, and it's a big branch, so a risk to life. Karl Wilkins, NHC Tree Officer, has arranged for it to be reduced, which is happening this week.

Tony Riley, for FoBC Steering Group

⁴ LCWIPs are not required by law, so there are no sticks, but the carrots of transport finance will not be on offer without one.

⁵ If you are interested, Hitchin is covered within this document: <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s20352/Appendix%201%20North%20Herts%20District%20LCWIP%20-%20Final%20Report%203.pdf.pdf> and the detailed maps are in <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s20353/Appendix%202%20North%20Herts%20LCWIP%20Final%20Report%20Combined%20Appendices.pdf.pdf>

⁶ Earlier this year, some press announcements of the LCWIP included 'traffic calming' on the Butts Close section of Bedford Road. I have double-checked and this was in error; there are no such plans.

FEEDBACK ON ABBOTT'S FUNFAIR 2023

Summary

Only four people/families gave me feedback.

We did have problems with a very bright flashing light coming into our lounge but to be fair this is something the fair folk could not have been aware of. Once made aware of it they stopped. Personally I felt the litter collection was v v late in the day and the park was in a very bad state until late on Sunday. There was still litter left behind yesterday which I picked up. Other than that I agree no real issues this year.

Apart for half an hour of Mr Shouty on Saturday I thought it was within acceptable limits. Their litter collection on Sunday was thorough, as well, at least on the north part of the Close.

We felt it was fair. Noise was less than previously. And a thorough tidy up at the end.

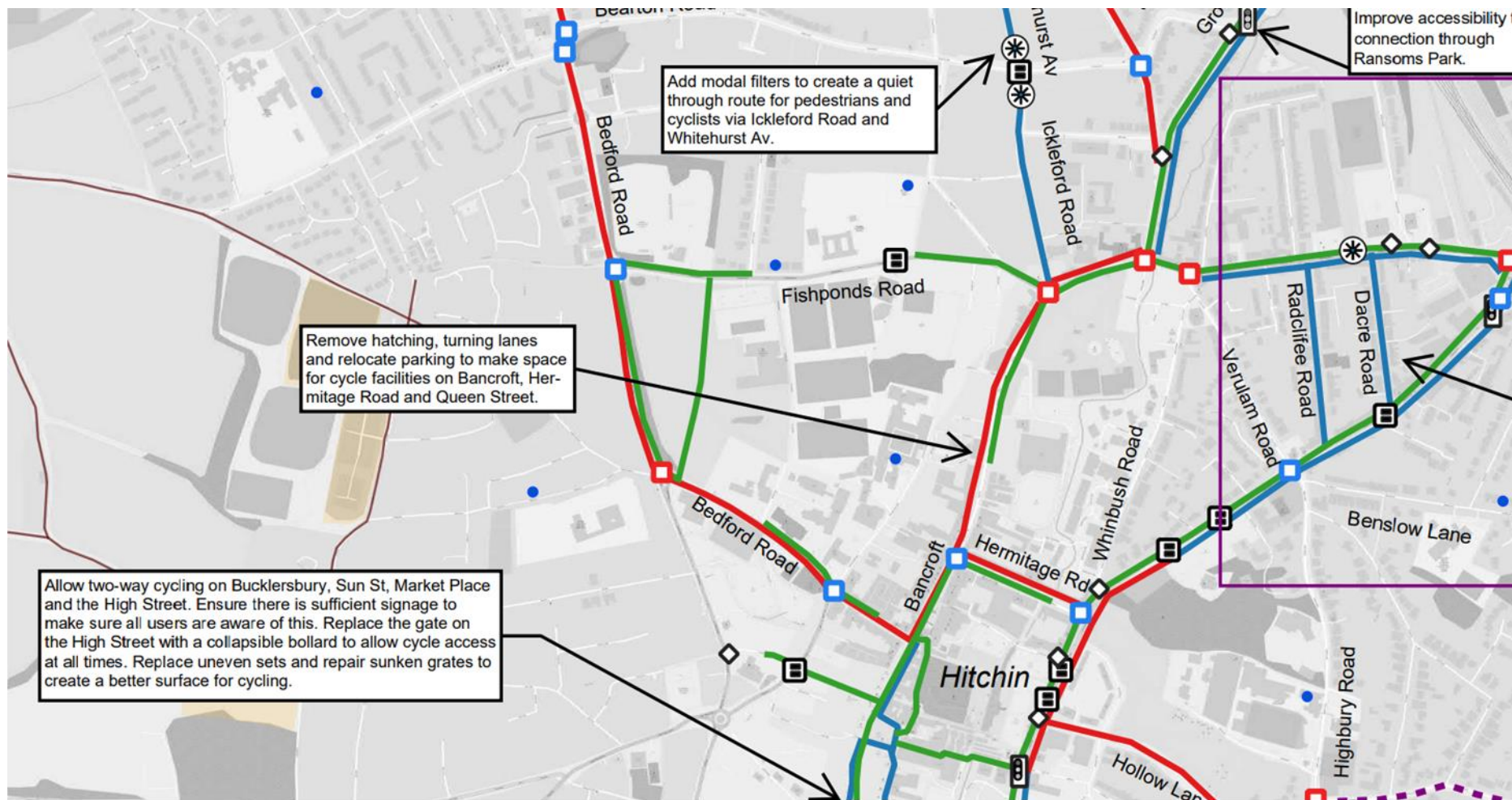
The bass [sound] is very much carrying into our house.

Tony Riley

for

FoBC



















12 October 2023










Segregated cycleway	
Footway improvements	
Traffic calming	
Minor intersection improvements	
Major intersection improvements	

LCWIP Map of Hitchin (Part)

Butts Close Leaf Mines 11.10.2023

Butts Close	TL182295	Notes	Host Plant	Picture
04.012	<i>Stigmella aceris</i>	Scarce Maple Pigmy	Field & Norway Maple	 
04.043	<i>Stigmella lemniscella</i>	Red Elm Pigmy	Elm	 
04.045	<i>Stigmella aurella</i>	Bramble Leaf Miner	Bramble	 
10.001	<i>Tischeria ekebladella</i>	Oak Carl	Oak	 
15.011	<i>Caloptilia falconipennella</i>	Scarce Alder Slender	Alder	 
15.028	<i>Parornix anglicella</i>	Hawthorn Slender	Hawthorn	 
15.029	<i>Parornix devoniella</i>	Hazel Slender	Hazel	 
15.037	<i>Phyllonorycter tenerella</i>	Hornbeam Midget	Hornbeam	 
15.082	<i>Phyllonorycter klemannella</i>	Dark Alder Midget	Alder	 

Butts Close	TL182295	Notes	Host Plant	Picture
15.089	Cameraria ohridella	Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner	Horse Chestnut	
15.043	Phyllonorycter oxyacanthae	Common Thorn Midget	Hawthorn	
15.052	Phyllonorycter corylifoliella	Hawthorn Midget	Hawthorn, Apple & others	
15.054	Phyllonorycter viminiella	Willow Midget	Willow	
15.064	Phyllonorycter coryli	Nut Leaf Blister Moth	Hazel	
15.078	Phyllonorycter tristrigella	Elm Midget	Elm	
15.090	Phyllocnistis saligna	Willow Bent-wing	Crack Willow	
49.279	Gypsonoma dealbana	Common Cloaked Shoot	Various deciduous	