

NEWSLETTER

November – December 2025

No. 188

Thoughts from the Co-Chair

More traffic, more noise, more pollution, more mess, more houses.... Ever feel a bit overwhelmed? This newsletter touches on some of these themes.

Bill writes about the effect traffic has on the quality of the air we breathe. The monitors which tell us if the air is safe to breathe have produced some good news about improvements in two areas of the town, but could they be moved to register the impact of HGVs visiting the industrial area? He has written more fully about air quality in an article to be found on the website - <https://www.hitchinform.org.uk/air-quality-in-hitchin-2/>. Bill also reports on local footpaths (see picture, right) - a healthy way of exploring the area.

Another pollution issue, Luton Airport expansion, which could bring more traffic through Hitchin as well as spilling unhealthy airplane fumes above us, is under Judicial Review with the result awaited.

While the spilling of litter is bad news, the good news is that our Autumn Clean-up was again a great success. Bill, who organised that, gives a report, with more on that on the website <https://www.hitchinform.org.uk/hitchin-forums-autumn-clean-up/>.

More houses are needed, but where should they be built? District Councillor Louise Peace explains the concerns of Ickleford residents about the plans to build on the 'Grey Belt' between there and Hitchin.

Such developments are also a recurring concern for CPRE. Valerie reports back from their Hertfordshire AGM and Countryside Day, and the discussion there. (That event also included a talk from our local naturalist and author Nic Wilson – her recent book, 'Land Beneath the Waves', does include some fascinating reflections on Hitchin).



The beautifully rebuilt Chalkdell Path wall. See Bill's report.

We regretted the departure of Tom Hardy, a very enthusiastic town centre manager for several years. But there is a great replacement – Danny Pearson, a Forum member, who writes to us about his new job as TCM for ‘Visit Hitchin’ (see their website for details of all that involves - <https://visithitchin.com/>), and we feel his excitement at being involved in Hitchin’s future. We wish him every success.

Finally, Neil gives us his planning update. He includes within it a number of Grey Belt candidates other than those in Ickleford covered by Cllr Peace.

Read on...

Mike Clarke - Co-Chair

Air Quality Management Areas Revoked in Hitchin

This is apparently good news - North Hertfordshire Council revoked both of Hitchin’s Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) on 19th November 2025 because measured nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels have fallen below the target level (called the Air Quality Objective – AQO) in both areas for five consecutive years.

During the years leading up to 2012, levels of NO₂ exceeded the AQO at several points in Stevenage Road on the approach to the Three Moorhens roundabout. North Hertfordshire declared the area an AQMA in 2013. Environmental Health Officers prepared an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to address the issue. The Plan featured 22 measures that would drive down emissions generally – for instance measures to encourage electric vehicle use or walking to school or work – but with few that would directly affect the situation in Stevenage Road. A measure to divert lorry traffic away from the area could have addressed the issue more directly but might simply have displaced the problem to somewhere else in the town. In 2016, a similar action plan was prepared to address the same issue at a second AQMA near the library roundabout.

Fortunately, over the period during which the AQMAs were in force, two factors combined to work in favour of North Hertfordshire. The proportion of diesel cars reduced as relatively low excise duty levels (introduced in the 1990s to promote diesel use to drive down carbon dioxide emissions) were increased. Also, vehicle manufacturers were forced to comply with more stringent emissions standards by the EU, which came into force during the period 2014-2016 (so-called Euro 6). As older vehicles were replaced by newer models, emissions went down. The UK retained the requirement to comply with Euro 6 after Brexit. The reduction in emissions was in spite of ‘Dieselgate’ where it is alleged that Volkswagen, and possibly



Monitoring equipment currently at the top of Stevenage Road.

other manufacturers, installed software in their vehicles which reduced emissions when the software detected that the vehicle was being tested. Court cases involving other manufacturers are likely to be heard during 2026, with manufacturers possibly facing expensive compensation bills if found guilty.

All vehicles produce particulates during braking and from tyre wear. Heavier vehicles produce more, so the popularity of SUVs is a cause for concern. Electric vehicles are also heavier than their equivalent petrol and diesel vehicles.

However, the AQO for fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$) has never been exceeded in either of the two AQMAs over the period from 2012 to the present. This does not mean there isn't a problem. The dangers of such particles are only now becoming appreciated, to the extent that some scientists believe there is no safe lower limit for them. In 2023, the government agreed to delay imposition of a lower limit (recommended by the World Health Organisation) until 2040 in deference to manufacturers who argued that they needed time to prepare for the changes. Some recent readings in Hitchin's AQMAs were close to this limit.



Grove Road. Most lorry traffic for the waste sites has to come this way.



Lorries approaching from Cambridge Road use Nightingale Road and Grove Road to access the industrial estate.



Massive articulated lorry leaving Hitchin at the Three Moorhens roundabout having travelled through the town.

North Hertfordshire appears to possess very few detectors for $PM_{2.5}$. One has been in use near the Three Moorhens roundabout having been moved from the library grounds some time ago.

Lorries are a major source of particulates, and not just from their diesel engines, brakes and tyres. Those travelling through Hitchin's residential areas to the waste processing sites on the industrial estate generate dust from their cargo which is often open to the atmosphere. When that cargo is unloaded, the process is bound to generate more particulates. Is it therefore time to install PM_{2.5} detectors, one of which is apparently redundant at Stevenage Road, on the industrial estate and on Grove Road?

Our steering group has recently sent an email to Councillor Ian Albert discussing the above points and requesting that they consider installing PM_{2.5} detectors to help assess the impact of this HGV traffic.

A more detailed, fully referenced version of this article appears on the Forum's website.

Bill Sellicks – Co-Chair

Footpaths

Since the last AGM, I have been able to submit brief details of only about 25 rights of way in Hitchin and its surroundings in WhatsApp messages to Hertfordshire County Council's Rights of Way Unit. The majority of these have been simple confirmation that the paths have no issues, but some have been about specific problems such as fallen trees, flooding and problems with structures such as steps or gates. In March, volunteer surveyors were told that we would no longer be able to submit these brief informal reports via WhatsApp, which reduces the immediacy and makes the reporting process lengthier. That, combined with circumstances which have often taken me away from Hitchin unexpectedly over the summer, has meant that I have submitted fewer reports than previously. However, since last year's AGM, I have completed three rounds of the more formal Ease of Use surveys on a total of about 18 rights of way in and around Hitchin, which now uses an online reporting system as one walks the path. The system needs some refinement, but is improving slowly. The overall result of these surveys is that Hertfordshire rights of way are in pretty good condition, with 85% of them being assessed as having no barriers to their use.



Another section of the wall which left to deteriorate will eventually collapse.

As reported last year, I had been pressing for action on the wall bordering the old hospital site on Chalkdell Path, which I believed to be leaning dangerously. It collapsed in January this year, fortunately without any injury to passers-by. That finally resulted in the repair of the fallen section. I have since pointed out that other sections are not vertical, but no action on those has so far been forthcoming.

Bill Sellicks – Co-Chair

Luton Airport Update

The long-awaited report arising from the Examination in Public by the National Planning Inspectorate of Luton Rising's application for a Development Consent Order to expand to cater ultimately for 38,000,000 passengers per year (38mppa) was published in May this year. The Inspectors' decision was that the order should not be allowed on the grounds that 'the public benefits do not outweigh the environmental harms'. The Secretary of State for Transport, Heidi Alexander, overruled the Inspector's decision – largely on the basis of predicted benefit to the local and national economy. Local pressure groups, led by Luton and District Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise (LADACAN, <https://ladacan.org/>) and funded by donations from individuals and groups such as Hitchin Forum, had 6 weeks to assess whether legal grounds existed to request a Judicial Review of the decision. Legal advice was that there were indeed grounds. The application for Judicial Review was granted by a judge despite opposition from government and Luton Rising. The Judicial Review hearings took place on 4th and 5th November. The outcome may not be known until after our AGM.

Bill Sellicks – Co-Chair

Is dealing with litter only the job of the Council and its contractors?

I am not a fan of social media, and the initial response to my post about our last litter pick on the Forum's Facebook page did nothing to endear me to it. Somebody had taken it upon themselves to ask: "Isn't that the Council's job?" At first sight, that seemed a cynical response. I take exception to the implication that our volunteers are wasting their time or covering up for the failure of the Council to do its job properly. I am not prepared to enter into a shouty 'debate' on Facebook, but I am prepared to provide some thoughts about the value of community litter picks to our members and others who might read our Newsletters via links on our website.

In terms of numbers, 115 volunteers (72 adults, 43 children) collected at least 86 bags of rubbish from about 16 locations in Hitchin on Sunday, 12th October. Several local groups were involved, including Holy Saviour Guides, 3rd Hitchin Cubs, Hitchin Tennis Club and Bubbleworks Community Running Group. The overall volunteer figures are pretty much stable from one event to the next. Given that we provide litter pickers which need to be distributed and collected, the total number is relatively easy to manage.

Would the waste and recycling our volunteers collect be removed by Council contractors if we didn't run our events? The answer to that is a resounding 'no'. Much of what we collect is entangled in vegetation and may have been discarded long ago (We have on occasions found items such as the discarded Spam tin from well over 30 years ago). Considering the lengths to which our volunteers go to extract this material, were it not for them, it would remain in situ. Much of that material consists of food packaging, cans, plastic bottles and some glass, all in their way damaging to the environment.



Heavily rusted remains of a spam tin found on Butts Close



One volunteer brought their grey bin to collect glass to clean and recycle at home.

There are some limitations to what volunteers are supposed to collect: North Hertfordshire's instructions on community litter picks ask that we do not collect glass, broken or intact, at all, as a safety measure to protect workers. Nevertheless, some volunteers, frustrated by this, will take unbroken glass home to ensure that it is cleaned and recycled. Plastic items and aluminium cans are often so heavily soiled as to make recycling unrealistic, but again, some volunteers take them home if they feel they can clean them. There are sometimes items that pose a serious threat to the environment. Two years ago, a lead-acid battery was extracted from deep in a hedge on Bancroft, and most recently three plastic containers full of used engine oil were found on St Michael's estate. Occasionally abandoned knives have been taken away by police.

Should the Council (through its contractors) be doing this? The details of North Hertfordshire's contract with either its ground maintenance contractor (John O'Conner) or contractor responsible for emptying bins and street cleaning other than on green spaces (now Veolia, but previously Urbaser) are unavailable. Obviously, the terms of the contracts will be constrained by budget. I wonder how much the Facebook questioner would be prepared to see added to their council tax in order to pay for a comprehensive clean up. Maybe there are council services that they don't use for which they resent paying. They might believe that the contractors should be made to work harder. If the rubbish was not removed, what would be the consequence? There is evidence from Keep Britain Tidy that, when visiting locations where litter is obvious, people think it doesn't matter if they too don't take their litter home.

In addition to those organised by Hitchin Forum, several other groups pick litter on a regular basis. A number of individuals regularly clear their local area. Were it not for these public-spirited efforts, I am sure the difference would be noticed very quickly.



Volunteer at Purwell in search of embedded litter

There is a social benefit beyond the immediate environmental impact. Of our approximately 280 contacts, the majority have taken part in one or more of our litter picks. The remainder have at least expressed an interest in doing so. I estimate that about half of our participants turn out for every event. If they have other commitments, they are keen to make it clear that they want to be involved next time. They enjoy being involved and want to see the town looking its best. Children are particularly keen, and it is often through them that their parents have become involved. Volunteers want to make a statement that the town is something they value; they enjoy working alongside people who share their aims. People notice that.

The willingness of volunteers to take responsibility for doing something about a problem not of their making should be celebrated. Children enjoy making a difference and take away important lessons in citizenship. Apart from the environmental benefits, the contribution of activities like litter picks to community morale should not be underestimated.

If members would like to be involved in future, please email hflitterpick@gmail.com.

Bill Sellicks – Co-Chair

Planning in Ickleford and the ‘Grey Belt’

We have sought explanation for the large number of additional sites on Green Belt land in Ickleford and are grateful to Louise Peace, a Hitchin Forum Member and the North Herts Councillor for Cadwell (which includes Ickleford), for the following article. Hitchin Forum itself has objected to the development on the basis of the use of Green Belt, the significant number of actual and potential developments now appearing in Ickleford in what the developers are calling “Grey Belt”, and the resultant likely increase in traffic through the village and beyond.

Sites such as Highover Farm in Hitchin, the 3000 homes proposed for Baldock and the East of Luton development are very large sites for new homes, but they have something in common – they are allocated sites in North Herts Local Plan.

Whatever your opinion of the Local Plan, it was the subject of much consultation and scrutiny. In Ickleford there are also allocated sites; IC3 on Bedford Road (150 homes plus land set aside for a two-form entry primary school) and smaller site IC1 are in the planning process. Sites IC2 and LS1 at Ansell Grange and Lavender Grange, adjacent to Lower Stondon, have been built out.

The rest of the land surrounding Ickleford is Green Belt land. Until now this has been a reason to refuse planning permission on any further speculative sites around the village. Changes to the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) in December 2024 introduced a new concept: Grey Belt.

“For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, ‘grey belt’ is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143.”

Villages like Ickleford find that their ‘Green Belt’ may now be considered as ‘Grey Belt’ as (a), (b) and (d) in paragraph 143 make no reference to villages – only that neighbouring towns should not merge into one another and to ‘...preserve the setting and special character of historic towns’. Provided that certain ‘golden rules’ are followed, such as the provision of 50% affordable housing, applications can be made on Green Belt that would have previously been untenable.

The result of this in Ickleford is shown on the plan below – 300 homes currently under consideration or at pre-application stage as ‘Grey Belt’ with another approximately 50 on the border of neighbouring Bearton ward. There may be more to come. A green field is a much easier prospect to develop than, for example, the brownfield site at Ickleford Mill.



Can the infrastructure support these new homes? The A600 Bedford Road is very busy and residents in Ickleford have long campaigned for a pedestrian crossing to the north of Turnpike Lane and more effective controls on speeding. In common with many villages, the sewers in Ickleford are old and require considerable upgrading.

Neighbourhood Planning is seen as a way for local people to have their say about development. Ickleford is fortunate to have a 'made' plan with policies that argue for separation to be maintained from Hitchin and protection for chalk streams such as the Oughton and the Hiz. To quote NPPF paragraph 14,

"the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits."

All planning decisions are a balance of the benefits of new homes - these developments would provide 50% affordable housing which will be given significant weight - versus the harms they may cause. Decisions on these Grey Belt applications will significantly affect Ickleford and all our villages in North Herts.

Councillor Louise Peace, NHC councillor for Cadwell and member of Hitchin Forum

CPRE Hertfordshire's AGM and Annual Countryside Day



The countryside charity
Hertfordshire

Many of you will already be familiar with CPRE, the countryside charity, and most certainly if you attended the Hitchin Forum talk given by Chris Berry (CPRE Herts Planning Manager) at our Members' Meeting in 2023 and that given by Elizabeth Hamilton (CPRE Herts Trustee)

at last year's AGM. However, for those of you not so familiar with CPRE Hertfordshire, its purpose is "to protect, promote and enhance Hertfordshire's countryside for everyone to value and enjoy".

As this piece is not intended to delve into the history of CPRE either locally or nationally, which can be discovered on the [CPRE website¹](#), I will move on to talk specifically about the CPRE Hertfordshire AGM and Countryside Day, which is held each year at different locations within Hertfordshire. The day, on this occasion, was held at Knebworth Barns on Saturday, 11th October 2025. As a member, Hitchin Forum was invited to attend the AGM in the morning. However, everyone is welcome to attend the Countryside Day afternoon events, but you need to book your free tickets in advance. To find out more, you can sign up to their [e-newsletter²](#).

The AGM started with a welcome to the [Knebworth Estate³](#) by The Hon. Edward Lytton Cobbold, who encouraged attendees - about 150 in all - to take a wander around Knebworth House Gardens to which free access was given for the day.

The welcome was followed by a brief opening address by Sir Simon Bowes-Lyon, the President of CPRE Hertfordshire, who indicated he was proud of the achievements of CPRE in view of the many challenges faced.



Images of Knebworth House Gardens

Next came the Chairman's Report that maintained it had been a very good year in spite of such things as the expansion of Luton Airport, the proposed 1,000 miles of new pylons nationally, each reaching the height of Nelson's Column, not to mention the solar panels

destined to destroy the beauty of the Hertfordshire countryside and elsewhere. The Chief Executive, for her part, commented on how busy the year had been for staff and volunteers and, in particular, responding to all the Government changes to the planning system, which has been seen as a Green Belt betrayal. Positives included being able to work with others, for example, LADACAN (<https://ladacan.org>) against the expansion of Luton Airport, newly built homes having solar panels and swift boxes and the enhancement of the countryside with new hedgerows as a potential habitat for wildlife.

[Recently, CPRE followed up their stated intention to introduce new hedgerows by issuing a letter, accessible via <https://mailchi.mp/fdc6f63346b8/supporters-newsletter-july-10975084?e=2e7ef60073>, giving dates for a series of events in which we are invited to join in the planting of 2km of new hedgerows in Hertfordshire.]

The Treasurer's report followed on with the news that a large legacy had helped income this year otherwise the balance would have been negative. Nonetheless, the overall financial position was deemed good. Thereafter, elections for the various positions were held, the main change being the election of a new Vice-President. In the closing remarks by the Chairman, it was stated that CPRE wins arguments because their expertise is highly valued. Reference was also made to Bill Bryson, a former National President of CPRE, and his words about the British countryside and its supreme beauty that must not be lost. (Although from 14 years ago when he was President, you may be interested in [this clip](#)⁴ where he talks about the same.)

The morning's AGM business being concluded, there was a break for lunch during which there was time to view the Hertfordshire Schools' Children's Artwork Exhibition prior to



CPRE AGM 2025 and Countryside Day at The Barns, Knebworth House

the presentation of prizes later on in the afternoon. Also, in the courtyard, there was an opportunity to browse the stalls of the local environmental and wildlife charities that had been invited.

In addition, it was possible to purchase CPRE Christmas and note cards as well as pin badges and tote bags, etc. If you are interested in supporting CPRE in this way, the link is <https://www.cpre.org.uk/send-the-seasons-greetings-and-support-cpre/>.

Hedgerows Petition

There was a call to sign a very important [petition](#)⁵ urgently calling on the Government to amend the definition of 'Grey Belt' to uphold vital Green Belt protection.

After lunch there was an engaging introduction to the afternoon from CPRE's National President, [Mary-Ann Ochota](#)⁶. This was followed by the keynote speech given by Nic Wilson, Guardian Country Diarist and local author of [Land Beneath the Waves](#)⁷ amongst other things. Nic stressed the importance of having green spaces around us, however small, and how connecting with the natural world sustains our wellbeing and provides us with inspiration and support. The photos below were taken by her husband, Colin Wilson.



Nic Wilson addressing the Countryside Day. Photos by Colin Wilson

Now, if one were lucky, there was a brief period before the art competition prize-giving when one was able to scoot quickly around the Knebworth House Gardens.

Last, but not least, came the presentation of prizes for the children's artwork, which you can read all about on [the CPRE Herts website](#)⁸:

It is worth noting that next year's CPRE Countryside Day will be a special one celebrating 100 years since the founding of National CPRE. Furthermore, CPRE will also be hosting an Open Garden and Music Event at St Paul's Walden Bury, home of CPRE Hertfordshire President Sir Simon Bowes-Lyon, as part of their centenary celebrations. Should you be interested, you can learn more and book your tickets on the [St Pauls Walden Bury website](#)⁹. The event will be held on 5th July 2026.

Note: All photographs were taken by the author except where stated.

Valerie Schicker - member of Hitchin Forum Steering Group

1. CPRE history:
<https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/about-us/our-history/>
2. CPRE newsletter sign-up:
<https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/about-us/newsletter/>
3. The Knebworth Estate:
<https://www.historichouses.org/house/knebworth-house-park-gardens/visit/>
4. Video of Bill Bryson, former president of CPRE:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjsPYM71J3Y>
5. Petition to amend the definition of Grey Belt:
<https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/help-protect-our-green-belt-petition-to-change-the-grey-belt-definition/>
6. Mary-Ann Ochota:
<https://www.cpre.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/meet-our-president-and-vice-presidents/>
7. Land Beneath the Waves, by Nic Wilson:
<https://nicwilson.co.uk/land-beneath-the-waves/>
8. Prizegiving for the children's artwork:
<https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/news/2025-childrens-art-competition-results/>
9. St Paul's Walden Bury 2026 event:
<https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/get-involved/events/st-pauls-walden-bury-open-garden-and-music-event-5-july-2026/>

A Letter from Danny Pearson, our Town Centre Manager

Dear Hitchin Forum Members,

I am thrilled to have stepped up to the position of Town Centre Manager for Visit Hitchin (formally Hitchin BID). This feels like a job I have been training for my whole life, and it's been an extremely busy and exciting start. I come with over forty years of lived experience as I was born and bred in this wonderful town.

It has been a pleasure working with Tom this last year and I know it will be an extremely tough act to follow. Those who already know me will know how deeply passionate about Hitchin I am and I feel very proud to have the opportunity to promote our town and the businesses within the BID area as the Town Centre Manager.

I'm an active member of the community and I carry a lot of local knowledge, contacts, and skills that I believe will help the team and me keep to the high standards the people of Hitchin expect. I will continue to champion our wonderful town centre and the businesses, places and people here.

This town, my home, means everything to me and it fascinates me, daily. Every time I walk through its streets, parks, and alleys, I spot something new. There is so much potential out there and many areas to explore. Our town offers so much and it's all there, waiting for us to discover.

I will continue to encourage people to go and explore Hitchin. Go down a street they've never been down before. Visit a green space that they've only ever seen on a map or seen a photo of on social media. Go and grab a drink in that pub or bar they've only ever seen the outside of. Go into the shop they've always thought had nice window displays. Swim at the outdoor pool. Eat at that restaurant or order that takeaway. Support that live band. Take a look inside St Mary's Church at the very heart of Hitchin. Walk around the Market and see the amazing items on display. Visit that exhibition at North Herts Museum. Take a trip to the library. Sit on top of Windmill Hill and drink in the stunning view. Explore the past, enjoy the present and think about how they're going to help create the future. And there's no better place to do that than in the remarkable British Schools Museum. Don't miss the immersive experience of Dickens' A Christmas Carol. It's on right now!



*Danny Pearson, Town Centre Manager,
preparing for the 2025 Hitchin Soap Box
Derby*

As a member of Hitchin Forum I know how important this group is to Hitchin. The group is always there to test both sets of councils on issues that would otherwise slip underneath the radar. It's crucial that we all keep current, and future, residents in mind

when we look at subjects like infrastructure, green spaces, buildings, and services. I love how the group is so integrated into our community already. A great example of this is the brilliantly organised litter picks that occur twice a year. I will of course love to have members come and volunteer at one of our main events. Can you spare a couple of hours to help at our Hitchin Food Festival, Hermitage Road Day, Hitchin Comic Con or even our epic wrestling event 'Showdown on the Square'?

Like the Hitchin Town Centre Managers before me - Keith Hoskins and Tom Hardy - the Visit Hitchin team and I look forward to building on the achievements of the past as we continue to harness the power of collaborative action and ensure that Hitchin remains the envy of North Hertfordshire. I believe that a strong town centre community enhances the prospects of the businesses that make Hitchin such a vibrant and exciting place to be. So, prepare yourself for more weird and wonderful happenings in our town. Wrestlers, an Anglo-Saxon re-enactment group, alpacas, a bat cave, beach time stories, Elvis and stormtroopers are already pencilled in for 2026!

I pride myself on having a reputation of being reliable, approachable and 'getting things done'. This amazing town is full of so many talented people and I really want to showcase this and work with as many of you as possible. I love a little creative mischief, and I look forward to seeing what we as a community can do when it comes to elevating our Hitchin.

I always welcome questions, ideas and feedback, so please feel free to contact me on tcm@Visithitchin.com.

All the best,

Danny Pearson - Hitchin Town Centre Manager

Planning Update

Our long-running opposition to successive applications to convert basement areas of The Exchange in Queen Street into flats with little natural lighting has finally paid off, leaving about 27 dwellings at Ground and First Floor levels with good lighting. For details refer to application 25/02305/PNMA via the NHC website planning portal.

A "consultation" by developers Martin Grant Homes, has been made for 35 to 42 dwellings on a site adjoining Mill Lane off London Road. This makes use of access from the new roundabout serving the Pound Farm housing site on the other side of London Road. Another "consultation" has been made by Bugler Homes (Buglerbeckclose.uk) for 51 dwellings at 'Beck Close' between the Stevenage side of Kingshott School and the Hitchin side of Ash Brook. The developer has denigrated this Green Belt site, calling it "Grey Belt", a designation which seems to be an excuse for unfettered development.

There has been an application for up to 100 dwellings on land South of Turnpike Lane, Ickleford. We do not usually comment on village matters but we agreed that we should oppose this development, both in support of residents and out of concern for the resulting traffic increase involved, in both Ickleford and Hitchin. Our review found that

recent and proposed developments in Ickleford already amount to 296 dwellings, 25% more than allowed for in the Local Plan. The developer has designated this Green Belt land, currently given over to paddocks, as “Grey Belt”. For details refer to application 25/02401/OP via the NHC website planning portal.

Work has started on some of the sites to the West of Hitchin. At the top of Grays Lane, Site HT5 with 9 large houses is well advanced, while Site HT6 with 47 generally smaller houses is just beginning. Meanwhile, the building at 1 Pirton Road, involving 9 flats appears to be nearing completion. Refer to 25/01745/S73, 22/00516/FP and 23/01446/FP respectively.

Neil Dodds – member of Hitchin Forum Steering Group

Notice Board

Health Walks Timetable

The Health Walks timetable for September to December 2025 is available online. Just search for ‘*Hertfordshire Health Walks Timetable*’ and navigate to the North Herts timetable, which is available as a pdf file.

Dates for your Diary

Hitchin Councillor Surgeries. Hitchin Market Place.	10.30 am to 12 noon	First Saturday of every month.
Hitchin Forum AGM. Followed by a talk by Keith Hoskins MBE.	7.15 pm for 7.30 start	Wednesday, 3 rd December 2025
Hitchin Community Forum. Town Hall, Hitchin. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Draft Town Centres Strategy – Talk and Q&AGrant presentations https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-forums	6.45 pm for 7 pm start	Tuesday, 9 th December 2025