



Annual Report 2021/22

David Bill CC

What is of overwhelming importance is the financial crisis facing the country in general and the impact this is having on our public services and in particular the public services supplied by the County Council. I am deeply concerned that the current paralysis in central government is not only exacerbating the situation but that none of the leading players at the heart of government seem to be addressing the problem.

The East Midlands is the lowest funded region in the country as illustrated in the attached table issued by the East Midlands Councils last week. Leicestershire is likely to fall even further behind as the County Council's attempts to align with other counties to form a devolution deal have not yet been successful.

This lack of funding in comparison to other regions extends across all sectors including education, health and all the emergency services, a state of affairs which does not seem to have registered with most of the people we represent. It is worth contrasting the funding between East and West Midlands.

General issues

A46 Partnership

Thankfully both Midlands Connect and National Highways have maintained the stance that the proposed motorway standard road that would have emerged at Junction 2 of the M69 should be dropped. As stated previously my concern is that this would have inevitably drawn more traffic through Burbage and Hinckley. It is worth noting the massive improvement schemes now being carried out along the A46 Coventry by-pass as this serves to illustrate my previous observations about the imbalance of investment.

A5

It is worth re-iterating concerns felt by all users of this road that there is no immediate prospect of any improvements between Smockington Hollow and the junction with the Long Shoot. Over 20 years ago we were presented with plans to improve this section. This is having a serious impact on our ability to provide for the employment sites we have to accommodate although it is notable that housing development alongside the A5 in Nuneaton and Bedworth seems to grow unabated.



Blaby Local Plan

I stated at the outset that we very much hoped that the proposed housing and employment proposals which would result in continuous development between Earl Shilton, Elmesthorpe, Stoney Stanton and Sapcote would not materialise. I remain of the same view.

Climate Change



The impacts of what we face have been played out this year with the excessive heat we suffered and the cost of energy which threatens us in the winter. The County Council has issued a net zero carbon plan which has to work for everyone's sake. I would welcome far more public engagement on the issue and will support all positive initiatives.

Sansome Drive - working with nature can produce a remarkable and beneficial impact on new developments

Growth unit at County Hall

The population is growing as can be seen from the latest statistics but I remain concerned about the prospect of losing County owned farms in the south of the county and around Hinckley

Hinckley Rail Freight Interchange

This most contentious issue continues to focus minds. My concern is that this looks like another massive warehouse development could be heading our way with the promised rail connection likely to be of minimal use. Moving freight off the roads is highly desirable but in my view we need a network of road/rail interchanges spread across the whole country and not all clustered within about 20 miles of this proposed site.

Leicester Unmet Need

The population of the City and County is growing and therefore people need somewhere to live. The Government's answer is a 35% "Uplift" in the allocation to Leicester but of course the city cannot accommodate this amount. The net effect has been that the surrounding districts have to take up this unmet need.. We have said in



Hinckley & Bosworth that we will take our fair share but at the moment we are not prepared to accept an unfair allocation

Midlands Connect

We have welcomed the ambitions of this body towards improving the A5 along our unimproved stretch and of course improvements to the rail service between Leicester and Birmingham and between Leicester and Coventry all of which will be of immense benefit to the Hinckley area. The problem arises in seeing any commitment on the part of the Government. Levelling Up seems to have past us by.

National Forest

As previously reported I am disappointed about the lack of interest in extending the forest to the south and to the east. Having been involved with the project in its initial stages I can report that the original boundary was always very arbitrary and roughly drawn in order to attract government support.

The emergence of Tiny Forests is to be supported of course but much more needs to be done to increase tree cover everywhere.



Tiny Forest in Langdale Road Park. Tiny forests and wildflower areas are now coming along nicely all across the area.

Planning for the Future. White Paper

I expressed concern a year ago about the further loss of the ability of local communities and their representatives to influence the decision making process. The situation now appears to have moved on with the Levelling Up Bill now going through Parliament with the admission of the Secretary of State that the planning system is not working. This admission has been repeated by at least one of the candidates to be Prime Minister. The confusion needs to be clarified as soon as possible.

Schools funding

As far as I am aware, the funding of schools in Leicestershire has not improved over the last 12 months. I still very much regret that the previously strong links between local government and schools was broken as we used to have direct knowledge about pupil attainment, school capacity, class sizes, funding issues, teacher-pupil



ratios and all the other educational challenges and opportunities. It is not clear to me whether anyone now has an overview of this most important of all our public services.

Strategic Planning

I have still have the same concerns as expressed 12 months ago. Are we planning for people who live and work here or for some other economic ambitions? Much is being made of the latest Strategic Transport Plan with its laudable aims but I cannot see any dates being set for the implementation of the road and rail improvements contained within it.

Unadopted roads and open spaces

We continue to have issues with some maintenance companies on certain unadopted sites failing to fulfil their upkeep without significant prompting. While we remain hopeful that the transfer of these sites to Hinckley & Bosworth and to the County Council will improve maintenance this is a long process.



Overgrown bund behind Waterside Park threatening properties in Beams Meadow, a situation likely to remain until Crest Nicholson transfers the open spaces to the Borough Council.

Warehouse & Logistics Study

This work seems to have stalled but I would still like an explanation about whether we are catering for the employment needs of people living here or paving the way for more people to come in to meet the ever expanding number of job vacancies. My view is that we should concentrate on returning to research, ,engineering and manufacturing rather than shifting goods made abroad and shipped in to this country.

Hollycroft Division issues

ASB in parks

Last year saw a most unwelcome trend of vandalism in our parks and open spaces. There are still incidences of drug dealing and drug taking which need tackling but the use of CCTV has been helpful.



A5



As mentioned, we have to be concerned about the complete lack of progress in our stretch with the railway bridge now returning to its top spot as the most bashed bridge in Britain. The fortnightly incidents now go by hardly noticed except by the people in Nutts Lane and Coventry Road who have to endure the diverted traffic.

*Nutts Lane canal bridge.
The towpath has now
been made safe but
there are still concerns
about the bridge itself.*

Battling Brook

This is a wonderful natural feature running through the area. It never dries up and the water looks pretty clear to me. I look forward to the planting of more trees along here and indeed in the other stretches of hedgerow in the area.

Bloors development off the Northern Perimeter Road.



This development now has a name, Hollycroft Grange and the first 100 or homes are now occupied. The long promised. 40 mph limit between Roston Drive roundabout and the Ashby Road junction was implemented. Hopefully this has led to a greater awareness of road safety and reduction of noise nuisance for adjoining residents

*Hollycroft Grange - the new
development off Normandy Way
and the site of a much needed new
Primary School.*

Congestion outside schools

This is an issue affecting every school in the County but we have particular problems here in Hinckley with the Battling Brook School being only one example. The use of the camera car has helped but tensions remain between parents and residents in too many instances



Faray Drive and the Bramblings

It was unfortunate to say the least that the sewers collapsed in part of Faray Drive, a situation which has led to the delay in the adoption of the roads by Severn Trent and the County Council. The planting of trees which hamper visibility has further delayed matters but hopefully the trimming which has now taken place should speed up the process.



Faray Drive, Hinckley. - trees being trimmed to allow visibility.

Hays Lane

The anticipated supply of tarmac from the A47 did not materialise in the end so we are back to the need for residents to decide whether to jointly work together to pay for the road surface improvement work. The Borough Council has set aside £5000 and residents have offered to match fund this amount.

Hinckley Hospital modernisation programme

It is frustrating to have to say that there appears to have been little or no progress since my last annual report. We have raised this issue on many occasions on the very few occasions we have as elected members to engage with the NHS. The issue was first raised with us as County Councillors for Hinckley back in 2005 when we gave our immediate approval for work to proceed. With the current crisis with ambulance delays and lack of beds in the acute hospitals I would have thought that there is a pressing case for more community hospital beds.

Hollycroft Medical Centre

We have been involved on almost a weekly basis on trying to ensure that the monies derived under the Section 106 process are applied to the essential modernisation and expansion of the centre. Assurances have recently been given that the process is underway but we have heard the same assurances over many years.

Hinckley Heritage project

Work continues on a number of projects including improving shop frontages in Castle Street and improvements to the Church Walk car park area.

Langdale Road roundabout

During the last year the heavily used roundabout was finally resurfaced



Padge Hall Farm

As previously reported, the proposal for a massive warehouse development in the triangle formed by the A5, the Long Shoot and the railway line is still being processed but National Highways appear to be objecting on the grounds of the impact on to the A5. The offer from the developers to increase the capacity of the railway bridge now looks in doubt leaving us with the fortnightly impacts with all the disruption entailed.

Paddock Development

The flats have now been named Danelaw Court and are fully occupied. There are still issues involving the impact which have to be resolved including questions of drainage and excessive lighting. Parking on Paddock Way is a further issue as Danelaw Court is now a gated community.

Speeding

The comprehensive scheme involving the Borough and County Councils, NHW and the police to put together a network of MVAS speed detection devices has still be to implemented. There have been supply side issues causing a frustrating delay but hopefully these will shortly be resolved.



40 mph limit finally imposed on Normandy Way between Roston Drive and Ashby Road , a major contribution to road safety and to the well being of adjoining residents.

The Limes

We have previously expressed the concerns of the community that this old people's home which was previously a County Council flagship premises serving the Hinckley community should now be closed. It is currently being used to house staff employed in other residential homes.

Waterside Park

Despite all our efforts, the open spaces and in particular the Bund at the rear of Applebees Meadow still remains in Crest Nicholsons' hands and has not been transferred to the Borough Council who will maintain this area to the same high standard we see in all the other parks.



Wykin village

The village continues to have to endure traffic avoiding congestion at the Dodwells roundabout, a situation likely to last until the long awaited A5 improvements take place. It remains to be seen whether the promised improvements to Stoke Lane will materialise with the additional housing coming on stream in Stoke Golding

Finally we undertook our own survey across the Division to ascertain residents' views on the main challenges facing the community. Our findings and our responses are listed below

- **Over development and lack of roads, schools etc** - agreed. The infrastructure always lags far behind development. See Midlands Connect above.
- **State of our roads and footpaths** – The County Council is very short of money but we do follow up and report particular issues
- **Difficulties with doctor and dentist appointments** – agreed. We continually raise this at Health Scrutiny committees at Borough and County level
- **Drug abuse and associated ASB** – CCTV has been installed in parks and we would welcome an extension to surveillance
- **Need for more police presence** – agreed. We would welcome a return to more police/community involvement
- **Need for the long promised Hospital improvements** – agreed. See the reference to Hospital Improvements above
- **Opposition to the Burbage Common warehouse development** – agreed. A sentiment shared by virtually everyone.
- **Need more tree planting** – agreed. See the reference to National Forest and Tiny Forests
- **Irresponsible speeding** – agreed. See the reference to Speeding
- **Need for improved bus services** – agreed. There is a need for improved bus company /community liaison.
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And on a personal note, I am coming up to having completed 50 years in local government and am still learning new ways of carrying out the responsibility.

David Bill

1st August 2022