

## Annual Report 2022/23

### David Bill

After 50 years continual service on the Borough Council I stepped down in May. I will always be grateful to the people who gave me the opportunity to serve and to everyone who has helped me along the way. In May I was elected as Chairman of the Burbage Parish Council. I remain a member of the County Council. It occurs to me that taking into account my wife's service on both the Borough and County Council between us we will have been involved in representing all parts of the Hinckley Urban area and indeed Burbage.



### General Issues

#### A46

I have now completed my term of office on the A46 Partnership which oversaw the massive improvements in the Coventry area but unfortunately no discernable improvements in Leicestershire. At least the proposed southern A46 route failed to materialise which brings some comfort to people in Hinckley and Burbage who would have been in its path.

#### A5

There is still no sign of the long promised improvement between Dodwells roundabout and the Long Shoot junction although work is now promised elsewhere – as I report later in the reference to Padge Hall. If anything, development pressures continue to grow on both sides of the Leics/Warwickshire border but with no sign of any comprehensive scheme to tackle congestion.



### **Beaumanor Hall and Castle House**

These venues were for so long used to bring together County and District Members in convivial circumstances. I regret that we have now lost this facility. I have long argued the case for more joint working both between County and Districts and across the border into Warwickshire.

### **Blaby Local Plan**

I continue to hold to the view that it would be to the detriment of south Leicestershire in general if all the suggested developments proceed. The resulting continuous development between Earl Shilton, Elmesthorpe, Stoney Stanton and Sapcote would change our immediate countryside for ever. It would all be gone.

### **Climate Change**

Although we have been spared the impact of the temperatures being endured in southern Europe the excessive heat we experienced earlier in the year was pretty unbearable. It is essential we turn to the use of wind, solar and tidal energy with far more application to all our homes. Planting trees and rewilding is the very least we can do but even these measures seem to run into opposition.

### **Coventry**

My long association with the city seems now to have come to an end. It started when I worked there when I left school and continued when I helped argue the case for Coventry to be given City Deal status and more recently as a Board Member of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Area Partnership. All the way through I have pushed for a revitalised manufacturing base which would be to the benefit of the whole region including ourselves in southern Leicestershire.

### **Devolution**

It was long hoped that more responsibilities would be devolved from central government down to local level as local administration has always seemed to me to be more efficient and cost effected. Unfortunately we appear to be moving in the opposite direction with Nottingham and Derby forming their own combined authority, Lincolnshire and Northampton looking elsewhere for partners all of which means that Leicestershire will remain as it is, underfunded as ever.

### **East Midlands Councils**

I have retained my membership of this body, an organisation which I value as it is the only time that all parts of the region come together. The overwhelming theme is the underfunding of public services across the whole area in contrast to our neighbours in the West Midlands

### **Growth Unit at County Hall**

I continue to have concerns about the disposal of County Farms in the Hinckley area. These farms were intended to give new comers a start in the farming industry, a function which has been both successful and essential.

### **Hinckley Rail Freight Interchange**

Opposition to this most unwelcome proposition continues to be universal and many of us have registered our intention to speak at the hearing. Local authorities have all commented in some detail on the inadequacy of the so-called public consultation drawing attention to the total lack of any information about traffic impact. I have also commented on a consultation on Major Infrastructure Projects referring to the concentration of these interchanges within a narrow radius in this area. We need to move freight from road to rail but we do not need a massive warehouse complex the size of Burbage on our doorstep.

### **Hinckley Hospital modernisation programme**

Having been involved with so many consultative and other exercises dating back to 2005 it is good to see progress being made. Information is still sketchy but County Hall has now given me the following summary of the schemes now involved

- 1.The Community Diagnostic Hub which will include the x-ray and endoscopy plus other diagnostics and outpatients – this has a capital allocation of £24.5m
- 2.The Day Case Unit which will re-provide the Day Case theatre- final costs of this scheme are currently being finalised but likely to be circa £10m

There is clearly much further work to be carried out with feasibility and financial challenges but it looks as though the intention is to house both units at Mount Road on the site of the existing District Hospital.

What is missing from all this is any mention of the promised walk-in centre, a facility so badly needed with the difficulty of seeing GPs. At least we have the benefit of the ever helpful A&E at the George Eliot.

## **HS2 – Eastern Leg**

Although there was never going to be a station within Leicestershire a considerable amount of time and effort has been spent on planning for the implications for the north of the County. Will this section ever be built ?

## **Leicester Unmet Need**

It has been the concern in this area for some time that the proposed 35% uplift in the housing allocation for Leicester will simply result in an overspill into the surrounding Districts. The latest pronouncement from Mr Gove does not address this fundamental problem. Who should be deciding where all this additional housing and indeed employment land should be allocated ?

## **Midlands Connect**

Aspirations to improve the A5 and the rail connections between Leicester and Birmingham and between Leicester and Coventry are supported by all of us. Unfortunately there is no sign that any of these schemes are supported by the Treasury. Even our own Transport for the East Midlands group has omitted to include the vital cross country lines in their latest plans. It is not clear whether full electrification of the Midland Main Line will now take place.

The closure of the booking offices is deplorable.

## **Planning for the Future White Paper**

It is not clear to me what has happened to the various proposal to simplify the system and speed up house building. The Government's intention seems to veer from side to side being influenced in the main by the latest wave of public sentiment on the one hand and developer pressure on the other. The existing planning system is still the only safeguard for local communities despite continually being derided by Ministers.

## **Schools**



The move away from local accountability has not served communities well. We used to have direct knowledge about pupil attainment, school capacity, the state of schools, class sizes, funding issues and teacher-pupil ratios. It is not clear to me who now has an overall view of the situation but at some point I would like to see a return to accountability at both a local and national level.

### **Unadopted roads**

Despite all the concerns expressed by local councillors, estates are still being built with the future maintenance of roads and sewers far from clear. Previous arrangements which saw roads being handed over by developers to the County Council have been set aside in the

headlong rush to built roads on new estates with no clear indication about future maintenance liabilities. In Hinckley's case I have serious concerns as ground conditions away from the central core are often far from stable.

### **Hollycroft Division issues**

#### **A5**

It is to be hoped that the planned lowering of the road under the "Most bashed bridge in Britain" will actually work. We are assured that the drainage issue has been addressed. The overnight parking of HGVs and their drivers continues to be a pressing issue along much of our stretch of the A5 and adjoining roads.

### **Battling Brook**

Wild flower planting and allowing the grass to grow has created a really attractive scene. It was always my hope that the existence of the brook and its surrounds would continue to provide a lung of fresh air and allow flora and fauna to flourish stretching from the edge of the built up area into close to the centre of town. I think we are getting there.



### **Congestion outside schools**

This affects schools all over the country but we seem to have a particular issue in this part of town with its concentration of schools within a close radius. Many of these schools seem destined to expand.

We took a particular interest in the planning of the Primary School on Hollycroft Grange and are pleased that it has been designed with off –street parking on site. It was very pleasing to see that it was also designed to be carbon neutral, a feature which needs replicating in all new building.

### **Faray Drive and The Bramblings**

The open spaces have been adopted by the Borough Council but the County Council has not yet taken over the roads, a situation which we continue to investigate for the reasons previously stated.



### **Hays Lane**

It was a pleasure to see the success of the collaboration between residents and the Hinckley Area Committee in bringing about improvements to the road surface. Congratulations for the persistence and patience of all involved!

## **Hollycroft Medical Centre**

We have been assured that monies from the Hollycroft Grange development will now be available to fund the improvement and expansion of this most vital facility. There is still a long way to go but this is an important hurdle overcome.

## **Padge Hall Farm**

This latest warehouse development which will be sited alongside the A5 has finally been approved. I remain concerned that this will have an adverse impact on HGV movements in Nutts Lane and other residential routes despite assurances to the contrary. Increased employee traffic is inevitable on both the A5 and the A47 all of which needs to be factored in when the Burbage Common Freight Depot is assessed.

## **Speeding**

Posts for the MVAS speed detection devices have been erected across the town for some time. The devices themselves have proved problematical but hopefully this will soon be resolved. This was a useful collaborative project involving the Hinckley Area Committee and NHW as well as use of the County's Member Highway Fund. Excessive speeding on the Northern Perimeter Road remains a challenge to be overcome although the 40 mph limit we negotiated has eased the situation.



## **Waterside Park**

Once again I regret to have to report that despite so many assurances on the part of the developer the open spaces have still not been transferred to the Borough Council resulting in a continual call for attention to the grass cutting across the area and on the bund alongside the A5.

## **Wykin estate**

We asked whether the existing bus service could be diverted around the estate but we have been told that parked cars prohibit this.

## **Wykin village**

The area around the village is not immune to development pressure but the main concerns we have is that so many people drive through the village and indeed other residential areas to avoid congestion on the A5. There has to be measures taken to protect the village when the promised roadworks start on the A5.

D.C.Bill 1<sup>st</sup> Aug 2023