

Hitcham and Taplow Society
Annual General Meeting 15th April 2026

Chairman's Report

Thank you all for being here tonight and for your ongoing support.

After last year's stress over the New Town proposals I had hoped for a quieter year but not so!

The document that we submitted as an objection to a New Town was effective but I think it also has a **lasting value as an assessment of exactly what we have in Taplow and the constraints imposed on any future developments. This has immediately become of use as no sooner had we seen off the New Town threat than Buckinghamshire Council revealed the process of creating a new Local Plan for the county.**

We **responded** with the Parish Council to the first **outline consultation** and then more recently to **the informal consultations on Grey Belt** allocations and the suitability of individual sites. There is a full report on this in the Newsletter coming out very shortly.

The real concern is that there is a new version of the NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF) coming along – consultation on it has just finished- and if it is implemented in its present form then the greater part of Taplow Parish will become Grey Belt and be exposed to development applications.

The new Local Plan may well not be adopted until well into 2027 but even before that we will be vulnerable to applications seizing on the nominal Grey Belt designations.

We have been working with Taplow and Burnham Parishes and consultants on **responses to the Local Plan** and the Parish Council has resolved that we should restart the **production of a Neighbourhood Plan** that we will engage with.

The gross overloading of the A4 may well become a major defence against any large-scale developments, bearing in mind the already committed housing growth across the bridge.

We can talk on these developments during the break and if there is sufficient demand we could arrange a separate meeting to discuss in much more detail. I should perhaps explain what **Grey Belt actually is**: Green Belt is defined by five criteria – such things as the separation of conurbations, important historical areas etc. Grey Belt land is defined as parts of the Green Belt that do not contribute strongly enough to at least one of these criteria – as such it is a

judgement by an official and does not mean that the land is necessarily suitable for development.

More immediately: Cliveden Stud

The well documented planning abuses continue but there have been some successes. Many of the abuses went to appeal as those concerned are well aware of the up to two years delay in appeal processes. These appeals are now being heard and rejected - the first land clearance and restoration are now in progress and tenants, evicted and arrests made but it will still be a slow process.

Conversion of the **Amerden kennels** site to 16 houses is under way after concerns over approvals of conditions, particularly in respect of drainage to the lake revisions and despite our concerns over A4 access.

The problem for **Public Footpath 13** off Ellington Road being impassable due to encroachment by landowners has been properly recognised by the County Rights of Way team who have written to the landowners but they have yet to issue an enforcement notice.

The **Community Boards** set up by the County as their sop to Localism have been drastically curtailed and they now longer have any meaningful moneys to support projects such as our Celtic Cross restoration.

As Eva has said we owe **grateful thanks to** our committee members and countless volunteers for the continued success of the Village Green Party (first held 40 years ago!) and the Tidy up Taplow day. These events together with many others - Screen on the Green, the sadly cancelled Xmas Carols last year and others keep us together as an active community. This will be most **important over the next 18 months** or so as planning changes start to materialise with large scale housing applications posing a greater threat to the identity of Taplow than we have seen for many years. To ensure that your committee can respond in the most positive and effective way we need your continued support. Please think what you could do to help. If you are not sure what joining the committee might involve please come to one of our regular meetings (posted on the web site diary) and see what goes on.

In that context I would like to talk about **Robert Hanbury**. Robert was the chairman of our Society 40 years ago when the first Village Green Party was held. He has been chairman, treasurer, secretary, our representative at public hearings and continued wise counsel. We owe him many thanks and great appreciation. He has now stood down from the committee. We had intended to make a presentation to him tonight but he is busy enjoying himself with Gillie in Sicily. You can see the map of Hitcham we have for him which is signed by the members of the committee. Thank you Robert.

I thank you all for your continuing support and interest in the Society.