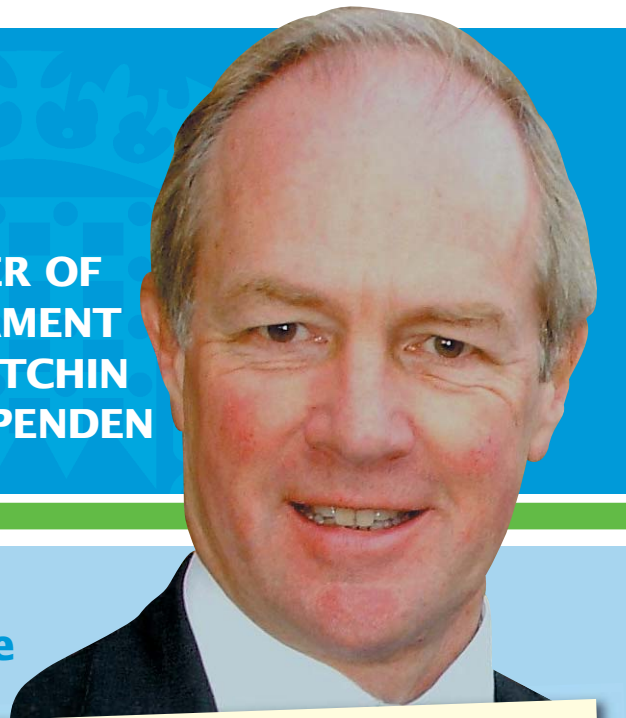


Peter Lilley's Westminster Report

MEMBER OF
PARLIAMENT
FOR HITCHIN
& HARPENDEN



WINTER 2008



INSIDE
**Good News
for Village
Shoppers**



INSIDE
**Could Someone
Steal Your
House?**

DON'T BE FOOLED BY DEVELOPER'S RETREAT – WARNS LILLEY

Save Our
Countryside



PROTEST MARCH |
Peter Lilley joined local residents and councillors in their Protest March.

Plans by Luton and Bedfordshire Councils to meet their housing targets by building thousands of houses over the Hertfordshire Green Belt have been withdrawn by developers, Bloor Homes.

But local MP, Peter Lilley, who originally exposed the plans, has warned that this is just a temporary reprieve. "They are reeling from the credit crunch" he says "but we should not drop our guard – they will return, possibly with even bigger plans."

Peter is fighting what he calls "Luton's attempted land grab of Hertfordshire countryside" since he discovered that

Government officials had held private talks with developers and Luton Council about building up to 7,000 houses between Luton and Hitchin. This was done without consulting with the authority most directly involved, North Herts District Council. "This was outrageous and I protested to ministers in the strongest possible terms."

"These plans threaten some of the most beautiful parts of the County. I will fight tooth and nail alongside the CPRE and local protest groups against any moves to expand Luton into Hertfordshire. Anyone wishing to help the campaign please contact me at the House of Commons."



Peter Lilley MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Dear Constituent,

Even the darkest clouds have silver linings. The credit crunch has brought us a breathing space as developers have shelved plans to build Luton out into Hertfordshire. But don't be fooled; they haven't gone for good as I warn on this page. Government house building targets rise inexorably (see page 2) and will continue to do so as long as we encourage mass immigration which is why I have backed the new all-party Balanced Migration group (see page 3).

Happily I can report a more lasting victory as NHDC rejected all six possible gypsy sites in North Herts (see page 3) though the threat still blights several sites in St Albans District. So, 'consultation' – despite understandable cynicism – is not always a sham.

The National Air Traffic Control System has also consulted about plans to route planes over the least populated areas – very welcome in Harpenden, less so in Wheathampstead. I urged NATS' to tweak the route to take more planes away from Wheathampstead and welcome their promise to consider this (see below). Tesco have also responded positively to my pleas for a store in Wheathampstead (see page 2). On the other hand the Post Office agreed to save Whitwell post office yet ignored equally powerful arguments to retain the branches in Station Road Harpenden and St Ippolyts as well as Hexton, and Blakes End (see page 3). Following the Buncefield Inquiry into the oil terminal fire we wait to see whether they genuinely listen to concerns about rebuilding near residential homes (see page 3).

'An Englishman's home is his castle' – yet one local family appealed to me fearing loss of their house after a fraudster downloaded title deeds, took out a mortgage and absconded. By calling a Parliamentary debate I managed to end such frauds (see page 3).

You can see what I am doing about these and other issues by visiting www.peterlilley.co.uk

I hope to meet many of you at my regular House Meetings (why not host one?) or my coach trips to the House of Commons (see page 4).

Yours sincerely

Peter Lilley,
MP for Hitchin & Harpenden



ROUTE FEWER PLANES OVER BUILT UP AREAS

Peter Lilley welcomed the decision by NATS – the National Air Traffic Service – to consider his call to bend the proposed flight path to reduce flights over Wheathampstead.

The main aim of the NATS proposals to take flights away from built up areas is welcome. But people in Wheathampstead had reasonable concerns about how the plans would affect them especially

as the published plans were pretty broad brush. After repeated enquiries Peter Lilley established that the precise route would not pass over the village but would funnel planes in a narrow path just south of Wheathampstead. So he asked NATS to consider 'tweaking' their plans to take the route further south over open countryside.

"I am pleased that they are considering this improvement."

To contact your local MP: call 01582 834344 or email feedback@peterlilley.co.uk

Peter Lilley, Member of Parliament for the people of Hitchin & Harpenden

FLEXIBLE GREEN BELT IS A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS SAYS MP

The government has acknowledged that its housing targets – 83,000 in Hertfordshire by 2021 – can only be met by moving Green Belt boundaries. To compensate for this the East of England Minister has promised to designate more land as Green Belt elsewhere.

In Parliament Peter Lilley argued that a flexible Green Belt is absurd. Its whole point is to pro-

vide barriers to stop built up areas merging into one another.

“To suggest we can replace lost green belt in Hertfordshire by designating land in areas where there is less pressure is absurd. It is like saying we can let rare species become extinct as long as we replace them by adding some more common species to the list of protected creatures. My great fear is that Harpenden and Hitchin will gradually be merged in to Luton and Stevenage.”



BREACHWOOD GREEN PROTEST MEETING | Peter Lilley joined Kevin Fitzgerald, Director of Herts CPRE, to address a meeting at Breachwood Green to oppose the development East of Luton.



UNDER THREAT | Peter Lilley joined the threatened residents of Thomas Sparrow House in Wheathampstead at their Christmas festivities.

PUT RESIDENTS' FEARS TO REST, LILLEY TELLS ST. ALBANS COUNCIL

After visiting residents of three sets of old people's flats threatened with closure by St Albans District Council, Peter Lilley criticised a badly handled consultation which caused residents unnecessary anxiety.

“I met residents and their relatives at Breadcroft and Leacroft in Harpenden and

Thomas Sparrow House in Wheathampstead after several people expressed concern about the Council's plans to close and refurbish their flats. It became clear that residents' concerns had been aggravated because the Council began consultation without having any concrete proposals or details of how existing tenants would be affected. This

frightened and confused vulnerable residents.

“The Council's underlying aim is to improve accommodation and adapt it to changing needs. They plan to resume consultation in the coming months. When they do so it is vital that they take into account the disruption and uncertainty which change will cause for existing residents.

VISITS TO PARLIAMENT ARE A HIT

Every year Peter Lilley invites scores of young people down to visit Parliament which have proved a great success. So much so, that their parents started to ask if they could come too.

So Peter started to organise visits for anyone ward by ward. These have proved such a hit that now several hundred local

“Thank you so much for the invitation to the House of Commons last Thursday. I very much appreciate the fact that Mr. Lilley gives up his time in this way”

Mrs B of Hitchin.

people have made the visit.

It is a myth that people – young or old – aren't interested in seeing how they are governed.

If you would like to join a trip from your part of the constituency let us know on

01582 834344, by email on feedback@peterlilley.co.uk or tory-herts@btconnect.com

MP'S PAY SHOULD MATCH RESPONSIBILITIES SAYS LILLEY

If MPs vote to transfer more responsibilities to Brussels they should take a pay cut, Peter Lilley told Parliament. In a speech which won plaudits from the commentators if not from all his colleagues, he introduced a Bill to relate MPs' pay to their responsibilities.

“In most jobs pay reflects responsibilities,” he argued. “So if we give power away to Europe – as proposed under the Lisbon Constitutional Treaty – our pay should be reduced. But if (as I hope) Parliament ever regains power that should be reflected positively.

“The government admits that already ‘around half of all [UK] legislation, with an impact on business, stems from Brussels’. Last year the EU passed 177 directives and 2,033 regulations.

“Few people realise how much power has been transferred because ministers insist that they still retain those powers.

“They even defend and accept responsibility for Brussels' legislative progeny in whose conception they often played little part. They prefer to claim paternity rather than admit impotence – the fate of the cuckold across the ages!”



GOOD NEWS FOR VILLAGE SHOPPERS

Peter Lilley welcomed Tesco's plans to open a Tesco Express in Wheathampstead High Street.

“I and Gill Clark have been urging Tesco to go ahead with this proposal for some time. I think the fact that there was all party support for overcoming any access problems encouraged Tesco to go ahead. Villages like Wheathampstead need a range of shops to make the High Street attractive and vibrant.”

NEW TESCO'S | Peter Lilley and Gill Clark in the One Stop Shop which is soon to be transformed into a Tesco Metro.

To contact Peter call 01582 834344

WHITWELL POST OFFICE SAVED – SO WHY CLOSE OTHERS? ASKS MP

Peter Lilley welcomed the Royal Mail's decision to reprove Whitwell sub-post office. "But there are equally powerful – and, in the case of St Ippolyts and 107 Station Road Harpenden, very similar – arguments for saving the other branches (including Hexton and Blakes Corner in Hitchin). So why close them?"

"My mail bag has been full of letters defending these branches; and closely reasoned cases were deployed by vigorous local campaigns, culminating in a meeting I held with Post Office managers. I wanted them to appreciate the serious impact closures would have, especially on people who need their services most – the elderly, the less well off and anyone without access to transport. But the managers made it clear that the Post Office has been given a quota of 2,500 post offices to close across the country. So we were lucky to save even one branch.

"The post office is much more than a commercial operation. It lies at the heart of many villages and districts, and losing one can have far reaching social as well as economic and financial consequences."

POST OFFICE FIGHT | Peter joined the residents of Whitwell as they campaigned to keep their Post Office open.



MP HAILS WITHDRAWAL OF GYPSY SITES

Peter Lilley welcomed North Herts District Council's decision to reject all six proposed local gypsy sites.

"I knew from my correspondence and from public meetings that the locations under consideration were seriously flawed. Even gypsy representatives considered them unsuitable.

"The Council were as opposed as local residents to building more travellers sites in these locations but were legally required to go through a public consultation about possible sites. I am pleased that they concluded that none of these locations was suitable. Instead they will try to integrate new sites into new developments near Stevenage.

"Sadly in St Albans District the system works particularly unfairly as both Anne Main MP and I protested in Parliament. The quota of sites a District is required to find is greater the more travellers are already in the area – so because St Albans already has most it has to find the largest number of additional sites."

COULD SOMEONE STEAL YOUR HOUSE?

A local family brought this nightmarish problem to Peter Lilley's advice session: someone had stolen their house!

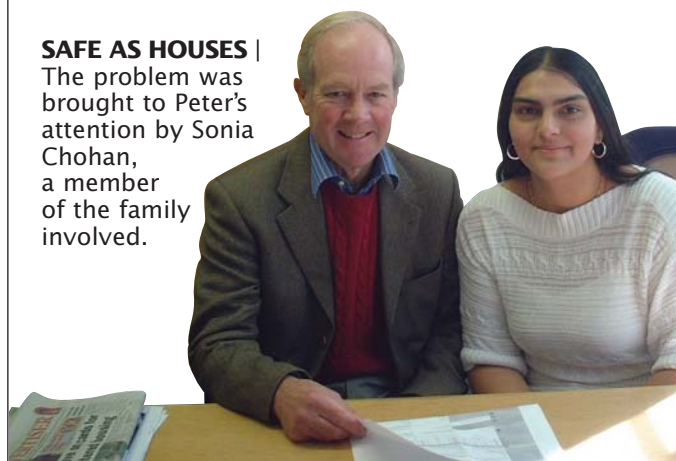
They had let it out; the tenant downloaded the title deeds from the Land Registry; fraudulently transferred them to his own name; took out a £140,000 mortgage and disappeared with the cash. The true owners only found out when the mortgage company tried to repossess the house.

"I often say 'safe as houses' because I assumed this was impossible," Peter told fellow MP's when he raised the issue in Parliament. He succeeded in getting the Land Registry to admit liability so that his constituents got their house back free of mortgage debt. He also persuaded ministers to change the rules to make this sort of fraud virtually impossible.

Once again 'an Englishman's home is his castle'!

SAFE AS HOUSES

The problem was brought to Peter's attention by Sonia Chohan, a member of the family involved.



MP JOINS ALL-PARTY CALL FOR BALANCED IMMIGRATION

"At last there is a sensible debate about immigration," Peter Lilley told local businesspeople. "For too long it has been based on caricatures."

"On one side the tabloids often falsely portray immigrants as scroungers, criminals etc – whereas in fact the vast majority are hardworking, law abiding, decent people. The other side has labelled anyone who wants to limit mass immigration in to the UK as 'racists' – whereas their main concern is about numbers: England is already the most densely populated country in Europe.

"My own concern has always been based on housing – government figures show that projected immigration will

account for about 40% of new households in Britain, requiring us to build a new Birmingham every five years.

"So I was delighted when an All-Party Group supporting Balanced Immigration was formed – chaired by Labour MP Frank Field and Conservative Nicholas Soames and backed by Trades Unionists, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, academics and economists. It urges limiting the number of people allowed to settle here permanently to roughly match those emigrating or returning home. That would still allow quite large numbers of people to come here to work for a period – just as many British people work for some years abroad.



BUNCEFIELD BILL

Following the massive fire at the Buncefield oil depot which borders on Hitchin and Harpenden, local MP Peter Lilley backed a Bill to protect communities from hazardous industrial sites.

"In the case of Buncefield, there should be no question of automatically rebuilding the terminal. The safety of everyone in the area should be the priority. The government must listen to concerns expressed during the inquiry," he urged.

WORK IS BETTER THAN BENEFITS – SAYS EX-MINISTER

Former Secretary of State, Peter Lilley recently returned to his former concerns – helping people off benefit and back into work. He published research from five countries that use the private and voluntary sector to help people find work as well as rewarding those who succeed.

"This approach could really help if we learn the lessons from other countries. In Wisconsin they cut the benefit rolls by 80% over four years; in Australia they reduced administrative costs by two thirds; Germany got 1 million people back into work; and Denmark and the Netherlands have shown the voluntary sector can take on this task especially for people with the most severe problems.

"When we help someone off welfare into work they benefit, the taxpayer benefits, the economy benefits. At present the only people who don't benefit directly from that success are those employed to help people into work. We should reward their success and pay by results.

"I am delighted that the government responded positively to these ideas."

Peter Lilley MP: Your voice in Westminster

“NEW WOOD WILL REINFORCE GREEN BELT” SAYS MP

Welcoming plans for the largest new woodland in Britain to be planted north of Sandridge, Peter Lilley said that as well as being a valuable environmental feature it would virtually guarantee the local Green Belt against development.

The Woodland Trust is to create a huge woodland over 845 acres. Its 640,000 trees may be planted by individuals. It will provide a huge habitat for woodland species as well as a visitor attraction for local nature lovers.

For more details or to support this project, please go to www.woodland-trust.org.uk



WOODLAND WALK | Peter welcomed Beric Read at the end of his 166 mile Sponsored Walk along Hertfordshire Way to raise money for the woodland project.

NEW WOODLAND SITE | Peter Lilley visited the site with James Cooper and Toby Bancroft from the Woodland Trust



Peter Lilley

Member of Parliament for Hitchin & Harpenden



Need to contact your MP?

Please write to me about problems that I may be able to help with or to let me know your views at this address:

House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA

Tel: 01582 834344

Fax: 01582 834884

Email: feedback@peterlilley.co.uk

Website: www.peterlilley.co.uk

MP CALLS FOR REAL TRADE OPPORTUNITIES FOR POOR COUNTRIES



DELHI SCHOOL VISIT | Peter Lilley visited a slum school in Delhi as part of his work as Chairman of the Global Poverty Commission.

After Chairing the Global Poverty Commission last year, Peter Lilley is taking a leading role in planning a new campaign to give all low income countries real opportunities to trade out of poverty.

The Real Trade Campaign hopes to achieve for trade policy towards developing countries what Make Poverty History and Drop the Debt did for aid policy and debt relief by mobilising public opinion across the developed world.

The developing countries which have been most successful in growing out of poverty have done so by trade. It's a tougher task for the remaining poorest

countries to follow in their footsteps since they have to compete with low wage China and India but have still to acquire the critical industrial mass to be competitive.

So it is vital to remove the obstacles they face. We are calling on the EU, USA, Japan and other rich countries unilaterally to open their markets to all low income countries, to remove damaging rules of origin, to end export subsidies and to help the poorest countries to build up the physical and commercial infrastructure they need to be able to export.

Anyone wanting more information or to get involved should contact me at www.peterlilley.co.uk

HOUSE MEETINGS



Would you let this man into your home?

We are fortunate to have an MP who is keen to meet us month by month – not just at election time.

Peter's first promise when he became our MP was that if anyone would invite their neighbours (of all political views) to meet him over a cup of coffee, or a glass of wine, he would accept. That is how his now famous House Meetings started. They have proved a great success.

"I really enjoyed it – I am new to the area so I got to know neighbours I had never met before" said Helen Feetenby of Harpenden. "We all found it much easier to talk to our MP and each other in this relaxed atmosphere. So everyone joined in the discussion. And with Geraldine's help it turned out far easier to organise than I thought."

If you would like to know more about hosting a House Meeting, or to be invited to one near where you live, please contact Geraldine Mitchell at my constituency office on 01582 834344, by email on feedback@peterlilley.co.uk or tory-herts@btconnect.com



Young Visitors

Members of Harpenden Youth Town Council were entertained at the House of Commons this year.

If his young constituents cannot get to London, Peter Lilley is always willing to visit local schools and colleges and is pictured with three students from Haberdasher's Aske's when he joined their sixth form for a discussion.



ADVICE SURGERIES

If you have a problem or wish to share your views with me please write to me or visit one of my regular advice surgeries that I hold all over the constituency. I cannot always find a solution but I always try and I am there to listen and give an honest response.

■ If you would like to share your views, you can write to me at the House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1A 0AA.

■ To arrange an appointment at one of my Advice Surgeries, please contact Geraldine Mitchell in my Constituency Office on 01582 834344.

These are held on Friday afternoons in venues from Sandridge to West Mill, from Redbourn to Wheathampstead and of course, in central Hitchin and Harpenden.

Visit Peter's website – www.peterlilley.co.uk