

CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE BUILDING ORIENTATION

Town Centre zone

The historic buildings in the Town Centre zone face the High Street, offering active frontages, most accommodating shops at ground level. Several buildings offer views into rear courtyards, which were once coaching stables.

Historic High Density zone

Houses are set in rows facing the street. Houses sitting at corners and junctions often have windows facing both access and residential streets.

Semi-rural zone

Houses are generally oriented towards the street. Some properties have medium-large front gardens with high hedges creating sections of blank frontages. In other areas open plan front gardens ensure active frontages.

Contemporary Inner zone

Informal street layouts, cul-de-sacs and houses perpendicular to the street create several blank frontages in the Contemporary Inner zone. In some places rear gardens front the street, and the use of high hedges or timber and brick fences also contributes to inactive street frontages across the zone.



1. Coach arches offer views into colourful rear gardens, enhancing frontage activity in the Town Centre zone.



2. Houses in the Historic High Density zone are set facing the street.

KEY ISSUES

CE4: BUILDING ORIENTATION

CE3A

The Town Centre zone offers a continuous wall of active frontages, including coach arches which are a local feature.

CE3B

Blank frontages are common in the Contemporary Inner zone as a result of informal housing layouts.



3. Hedges contribute to blank frontages in the Semi-rural zone.



4. Timber fences create blank frontages across the Contemporary Inner zone.

CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE PAVEMENTS

Town Centre zone

Pavements in the town centre are mostly asphalt and are generally narrow. Combined with the wide roads, this gives the centre a car-dominant feel in terms of pedestrian and motorist ownership of space.

Historic High Density zone

Pavements in the Historic High Density zone are generally narrow, and often subject to pavement parking due to the lack of space for on-street parking, and the demand from rail commuters.

Semi-rural zone

Lower densities allow for grass verges on pavements, creating a rural character to many parts of the zone. There are several places where grass verges replace pavements.

Contemporary Inner zone

Pavements in this zone vary. In some areas, blocks of flats are surrounded by small greens and streets have large pavements. Where higher densities are built in the form of detached houses, pavements tend to be narrow.



1. Narrow pavements create a car-dominant feel in the Town Centre zone.



2. Cars parked along narrow pavements in the Historic High Density zone.

KEY ISSUES CE4: PAVEMENTS

CE4A

The narrowness of pavements and contrasting width of roads in the Town Centre zone gives it a traffic-dominant feel. This could be altered now that the bypass is complete.

CE4B

Parking on narrow pavements is a problem in the Historic High Density zone due to street widths.

CE4C

Lower densities in the semi-rural zone allow for large pavements with grass verges

CE4D

In the contemporary inner zone, high densities are configured either as flats with amenity greens, or detached houses with narrow pavements.



3. Wide pavements with mature planting in the Semi-rural zone.



4. Narrow pavements in the Contemporary Inner zone.

CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE

OPEN LAND

Pattern of Open Space

Town Centre zone

The Town Centre zone does not incorporate any open land, although the High Street borders a football ground level with Mansfield Road. The wide High Street could provide a large hard-landscaped space at the heart of Baldock.

Historic High Density zone

The Historic High Density zone does not have immediate access to open land, sitting in between the Town Centre zone and the railway line.

Semi-rural zone

This zone benefits from proximity to the Brandles School playing fields to the west of the settlement, as well as paths to Weston Hills.

Contemporary Inner zone

The development to the north-east of the settlement enjoys access to open space within Clothall Common, while the areas of the zone east of London Road have access into the surrounding countryside via a number of paths. There are two cultivated fields next to Clothall Road which remain undeveloped due to the presence of archeological remains on the site.

KEY ISSUES

CE6: OPEN LAND

CE5A

Public open space in Baldock as a whole is limited, although there are a number of paths into the surrounding countryside.

CE5B

Large gardens, wide verges and extensive planting combines with lower densities to give the Semi-rural zone its distinctive character.

CE5C

Some parts of the Contemporary Inner zone contain large green spaces, but houses are poorly designed into them.

CE5D

One of the playing fields is cut off by the railway line.



Open space in Baldock

CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE

OPEN LAND

Quality of Open Space

Town Centre zone

There is little soft landscaping in the Town Centre zone except for the greenery around St Mary's Church and churchyard and a few trees around the lower end of High Street. There are also a number of historic walled gardens to the rear of properties in the High Street.

Historic High Density zone

Houses in the Historic High Density zone have short front gardens planted with shrubs, and back-to-back rear gardens. The public realm does not accommodate greenery.

Semi-rural zone

Planting and greenery is a distinctive feature of the Semi-rural zone. Houses have medium sized front gardens with hedges and trees and extensive rear gardens. Wide streets accommodate large verges and mature trees.

Contemporary Inner zone

In this zone streets are interlaced with stretches of green space, either open or planted with trees rather than shrubs. Front gardens are often open plan with shrubs and hedges. Blocks of flats are surrounded by small green spaces and are often poorly designed into these spaces.



1. There is little soft landscaping in the Town Centre zone in general.



2. Greenery is limited in the public realm within the Historic High Density zone.



3. Large front and rear gardens accommodate large trees and shrubs in the Semi-rural zone.



4. Although parts of the Contemporary Inner zone include large areas of open space, houses are poorly designed into these spaces.

MAKING CONNECTIONS LAND USE

Town Centre zone

The Town Centre zone contains a mix of uses, with A1 uses concentrated around the High Street/Hitchin Street/Whitehorse Street junction and a large number of A3 - A5 uses across the zone. There are residential uses at ground floor as well as upper floor level, to the extent that Baldock does not offer a primary retail frontage. Although a consistent mix of uses and lack of vacancies in the Town Centre zone suggests that it is healthy, the recent Town Centre Strategy considers ways to build on Baldock's existing strengths and enhance competitiveness. It acknowledges that Baldock is unlikely to attract multiple retailers due to its size, but suggests that an increase in specialist, high quality comparison shopping would help retain the settlement's competitiveness into the future. It also envisages potential for further A3 day-time uses, utilising Baldock's fine architecture to promote a pavement culture. Public realm enhancements would play an important role in this goal.

There is a need to ensure that Baldock's current mix of uses continues into the future; a particular threat to this is the pressure to convert shops to residential uses.

Land uses in the Town Centre zone are inextricably linked to the convenience retail offered by Tesco in the Employment Area. A recent study by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners suggested that, although Tesco draws a large number of visitors to Baldock, these do not generate many linked visits to the Town Centre zone. A number of public realm enhancements could address this.

KEY ISSUES MCI: LAND USE

MCIA

The Town Centre zone has a large convenience retail offer due to the location of Tesco, but only limited comparison shopping.

MCIB

Baldock is unlikely to attract multiple retailers due to its size, but could accommodate specialist retailers.

MCIC

A pavement culture could be fostered in Baldock, aided by the town's fine architecture.



1. Baldock is unlikely to attract multiple retailers due to its size and proximity to Letchworth. However, the town has a high proportion of owner-occupied retailers.



2. Baldock's existing strength could be built on by attracting more specialist, high quality retailers who would profit from, rather than compete with Tesco's proximity.



3. A pavement culture could be fostered in Baldock, underpinned by the town's fine architecture and wide pavements.



4. Enhanced connectivity between the Town Centre and Tesco would increase the number of trips made into the Town Centre by visitors shopping there.

MAKING CONNECTIONS CIRCULATION, DEMAND AND LINKAGES

Town Centre zone

The Town Centre zone's historic layout includes a number of pedestrian links traversing the High Street. The main streets of the zone have been defined in places to accommodate vehicles at the expense of pedestrian use, however, with a lack of clear crossing points and narrow pavements. There are connectivity problems for pedestrians travelling between Tesco and the Town Centre, causing a loss of potential visitors to the Town Centre.

Historic High Density zone

Due to later infill, the straight Victorian road patterns common in the Historic High Density zones of other towns, have accommodated new cul-de-sacs, making the zone less permeable than it was originally.

Semi-rural zone

Geometric street plans and wide roads aid pedestrian and traffic flow in this zone. The semi-rural character of the zone creates a pedestrian-friendly environment, encouraging pedestrian movement.

Contemporary Inner zone

Much of the contemporary development in Baldock favours the use of cul-de-sacs. These reduce permeability and ease of flow through the settlement. There are however, a number of pedestrian paths through the zone, leading out into the countryside.



1. The Town Centre zone is geared to traffic flow. The pedestrian environment could be enhanced.



2. A pedestrian link in the Semi-rural zone.

KEY ISSUES

MC2: CIRCULATION DEMAND AND LINKAGES

MC2A

The Town Centre zone has been configured to accommodate heavy traffic flow and could be more pedestrian-friendly.

MC2B

There are considerable connectivity issues regarding pedestrian flow between Tesco supermarket and the Town Centre. Improved connectivity could have large benefits for the Town Centre.

MC2C

The use of cul-de-sacs in the Contemporary Inner zone creates permeability issues for motorists.



3. Much of the Semi-rural zone is connected by through roads. There are several cul-de-sacs, however, which detract from the permeability of the zone.



4. The new development south of Royston Road is permeated with pedestrian paths, but the many cul-de-sacs make the zone less permeable to motorists..

MAKING CONNECTIONS

PARKING

Town Centre zone

The Town Centre zone offers extensive on-street parking along the wide High Street as well as around the smaller streets north of Hitchin Street and Whitehorse Street. The large number of parked cars along High Street does not enhance the streetscape. Car parking competes with the Market for space on market days.

The car park in front of Tesco could sacrifice some space to create improved connections to the town centre.

Historic High Density zone

Narrow streets in this zone are often filled with cars as front gardens are too small to accommodate off-street parking. Pavement space is often taken by cars. This issue is exacerbated by commuters who park in the zone to park in, rather than use.

Semi-rural zone

Medium sized front gardens allow for some off-street parking in this zone, and wide streets also accommodate on-street parking. More recent houses have garages.

Contemporary Higher Density Zone

Most houses have garages to the side, or as part of the ground floor. Others use communal parking areas.



1. The wide High Street provides a large parking capacity in the Town Centre zone, although this detracts from the visual quality of the streetscape.



2. A rare example of off-street parking in the Historic High Density zone. The majority is on-street, despite narrow roads and narrow pavements.

KEY ISSUES

MC3: PARKING

MC3A

There is a conflict between car parking and the market in the Town Centre zone.

MC3B

Car parking occupies prominent areas in the Town Centre zone, some of which might provide excellent public spaces.

MC3C

Commuter parking in the Historic High Density zone causes congestion problems there.

MC3D

The car park in front of Tesco could sacrifice some space to create improved connections to the town centre.



3. Parking in the Semi-rural zone is either on wide streets, or in garages in some places.



4. Garages and communal parking area, Contemporary Higher Density zone.

QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

Town Centre zone

The streetscape elements in the Town Centre are uncompromisingly functional, due to the high volumes of traffic it accommodated prior to the completion of the bypass. Higher quality of signage, and overall reduction of it, would improve the cohesion and legibility of the Town Centre zone as a whole. Signage and street furniture should match the quality of the fine architecture which gives Baldock its special character. The Town Centre strategy details several measures which could take place as part of a streetscape enhancement programme such as street lamps designed to match historic styles and the development of an outdoor café culture.

Historic High Density zone

Planted front gardens are an important feature of the Historic High Density zone, adding colour and vibrancy to an otherwise hard and functional streetscape.

Semi-rural zone

Extensive greenery, including tall trees create a vibrant and rural street scene in this zone. Pedestrian paths are bordered by high timber fences or low chain fences.

Contemporary Inner zone

Natural elements are a strong feature of the Contemporary Higher Density zone streetscene, although green areas tend to consist of plain lawns rather than shrubs. High timber fences often border pavements where rear gardens front the street.



1. Upgrades to the streetscape and signage in the Town Centre zone could improve its legibility and cohesion as a Town Centre, rather than a through-route for traffic.



2. Planting in small, low walled front gardens adds colour and interest in the Historic High Density zone.

KEY ISSUES

QPR1: STREETSCAPE ELEMENTS

QPR1A

Enhancements to streetscape elements in the Town Centre zone would improve its image, character and legibility as a destination.

QPR1B

Natural elements in the Semi-rural and Contemporary Inner zones contribute to their contrasting characters, with open plan front gardens and large open areas more commonly found in the Contemporary Inner zone, compared with mature trees and shrubs in the Semi-rural zone.



3. Dense planting and mature trees are characteristic of the Semi-rural zone and contribute to its distinct character.



4. Natural elements are an important feature of the Contemporary Inner zone, although mostly in the form of flat lawns with a few trees.

QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM SECURITY

Town Centre zone

The Town Centre zone experiences safety issues associated with the night time economy. This is exacerbated by the tremendous width of the High Street, which prevents natural surveillance from both sides of the road. CCTV and good lighting can help reduce this in places where these two tools are not already in place.

Historic High Density zone

Security within the Historic High Density zone is aided by higher densities and light emanating from houses, low boundary walls, increasing natural surveillance on the street. Well-lit streets are essential to security here.

Semi-rural zone

High hedging and fencing reduces natural surveillance in parts of the zone. Dark alleyways can pose a risk to pedestrians, particularly at night and should be well lit.

Contemporary Inner zone

There are large sections fronted by rear gardens and timber fencing in the development south of Royston Road. This creates blank frontages and areas void of natural surveillance. Open plan front gardens improve natural surveillance in other parts of the zone.



1. The tremendous width of the High Street prevents natural surveillance from both sides of the road.



2. Narrow or dark alleyways are a security risk, and can become barriers to pedestrian movement if they aren't well enough lit.

KEY ISSUES QPR2: SECURITY

QPR2A

The Town Centre zone and dark alleyways in the outer zones should be well lit to minimise safety problems.

QPR2B

In the Contemporary Inner zone rear gardens and high timber fences create blank frontages and associated security risks.



3. Open plan front gardens allow for natural surveillance in some parts of the Contemporary Higher Density zone.



4. In other parts of the Contemporary Higher Density zone rear gardens and timber fences create inactive frontages increasing security risks in the area.

SETTLEMENT-WIDE CRITERIA CIRCULATION

Pedestrian Routes

The town centre is permeable to pedestrians. The outer zones are less so, but there are a number of footpaths leading into the countryside to the south of the settlement. Access points across the A1(M) and the railway are limited.

Vehicular Routes

Baldock Road connects Baldock to its neighbour, Letchworth, while Clothall Road and North Road link Baldock with the smaller settlements in the locality. Royston Road provides access to the A505 towards Royston and Cambridge, while London Road provides direct access to the A1(M), leading south to Stevenage and north to St Neots. The Baldock Bypass, completed in 2006, connects the A505 directly with the A1(M) at the southern end of London Road, aiming to reduce the volume of traffic travelling through the town centre. Access is good throughout the rest of the settlement which is permeated with primary and secondary distributor roads. These also serve as frequent bus routes.

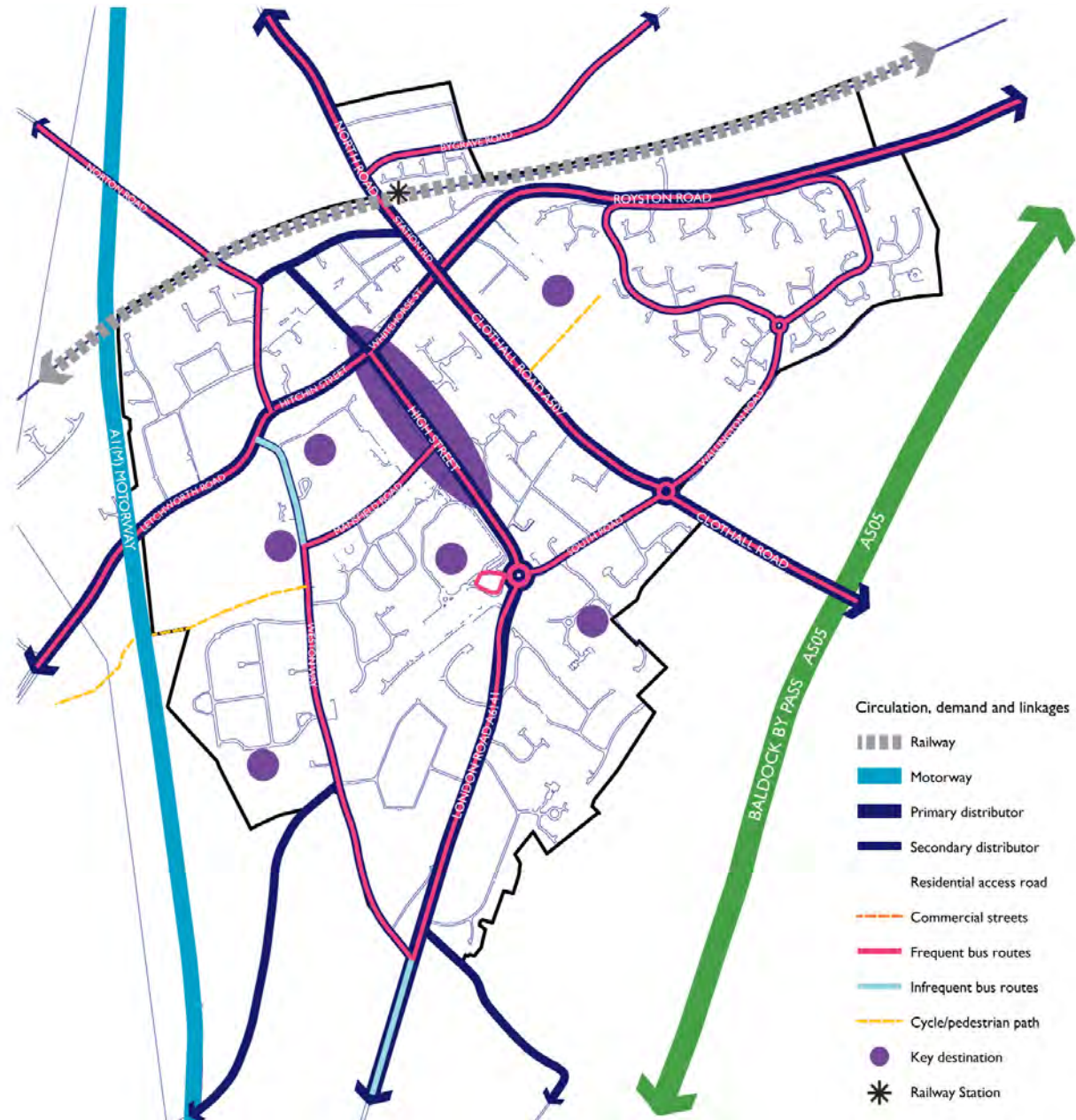
SETTLEMENT-WIDE CRITERIA SWC1: CIRCULATION

SWC1A

The recently completed Baldock bypass should reduce the volume of traffic travelling through the Centre of Baldock.

SWC1B

Primary and secondary distributor roads create good access throughout the rest of the settlement and serve as frequent bus routes.



SETTLEMENT-WIDE CRITERIA VIEWS

Baldock's flat topography makes street-long vistas particularly significant. Views of St Mary's Church are important, creating a visual connection between the town centre and the outskirts and aiding the settlement's cohesion. The views along the historic core of Baldock are also important as they take in the town's historic streetscape and the pleasing proportions of the architecture there. There are views across the town from Weston Hills to the south of the settlement. St Mary's Church appears as a prominent landmark from this distance over Baldock's consistent building heights.



1. Views of St Mary's Church create a visual connection between the centre and the outskirts, aiding the cohesion of the town as a whole.



2. St Mary's Church from Sun Street.

KEY ISSUES LE1: VIEWS

SWC2A

Baldock's largely flat topography increases the importance of street-long views and vistas within the settlement.

SWC2B

There are views of Baldock's roofscape from Weston Hills, taking in the settlement's consistent storey heights.

SWC2C

Views of St Mary's Church are especially important in Baldock, projecting the town's image and identity to its outskirts.

SETTLEMENT-WIDE CRITERIA

LEGIBILITY

Landmarks, gateways and orientation points

St Mary's Church and its 'Hertfordshire Spike' act as a prominent landmark among consistent two and three storey building heights. The High Street, Hitchin Street and Whitehorse Street are legible as the Town Centre because of the historic fabric which characterises them along with their width. Orientation is more difficult within the outlying zones, with no topographical views to aid navigation.

The Town Centre Strategy suggests the enhancement of three gateways; the Tesco roundabout, the A505/Great North Road and Hitchin Street. These are the three main approaches to the 'T' shape of the town centre for motorists, and define the boundaries of the Town Centre zone. Enhancements to these gateways would improve Baldock's character as a destination, rather than a through-route.

Paths and edges

The main streets of the Town Centre zone continue to be the most legible paths for pedestrians and motorists alike.



1. St Mary's Church is a very prominent landmark in Baldock as a result of the town's consistent (mainly) two-storey building heights.



2. Enhanced gateways into the settlement and into the Town Centre zone could improve the town's legibility and image as a destination.

KEY ISSUES

LE2: LEGIBILITY

SWC3A

The Town Centre zone contains some very legible features: St Mary's Church, the 'T' shape of the main streets and the historic architecture which lines them.

SWC3B

Enhanced gateways and public realm improvements to the town centre would counter negative images of the town among visitors and residents.

SWC3C

There are a number of significant barriers within and around Baldock, such as the railway, access to and from Sale Drive, and the lack of a link between Tesco and the Town Centre. The width of the High Street is a barrier to pedestrians.



3. The paths formed by the 'T' shape of Hitchin Street, High Street and Whitehorse Street create a very legible structure to Baldock.



4. Due to the relative width of roads and pavements, traffic is a barrier to pedestrian movement in Baldock.

SETTLEMENT-WIDE CRITERIA

LEGIBILITY

Barriers

Baldock is surrounded by barriers; the railway creates an edge along which the settlement spreads to the north and the A1(M) acts as a barrier separating Baldock and Letchworth and was noted at the consultation event. The Baldock bypass, to the south, would act as a barrier to future development in that direction. There are two pedestrian crossing points connecting Baldock with Weston Hills. A barrier was noted at Sale Drive where there is no access on to Royston Road.

There is a perceived barrier between the Tesco and the Town Centre, created by the large trees between them. This restricts the potential number of connected journeys into the town centre which could be made by the large number of customers Tesco attracts.

Image

Baldock's image is dominated by its grand High Street and prominent church. Responses at the consultation event revealed that residents felt Baldock had a 'run down' feel.

Signage

Baldock is well signed, although sometimes this signage overwhelms town centre shop fronts. Any future moves to reduce signage as part of visual enhancements to the Town Centre should ensure that the function of signage in Baldock is not compromised.

KEY ISSUES, SAFEGUARDS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

	Criteria	Issue Number	Issue	Safeguards	Opportunities
MAKING PLACES	MP1: Building Types	MP1A	The building typologies in the Town Centre zone give it a homogeneous and distinctive character.	Protect existing historic houses and civic buildings. New development should build to existing scales and reflect existing typologies	
		MP1B	The Semi-rural zone is characterised by widely spaced detached and semi-detached buildings, in contrast to the Contemporary Inner zone where close-knit detached and terraced houses are common.	Where higher densities are unsuitable in the Semi-rural zone, typologies should reflect the zone's semi-rural character.	Accommodate higher densities in terraces, flats and close-knit semi-detached and detached buildings.
		MP1C	The emerging mews typologies in the town centre creates significant new density within the centre.		
	MP2: Materials / Architectural Styles	MP2A	The Town Centre zone possesses some very fine architecture, particularly from the 18th century.	Preserve and maintain historic buildings.	Draw on Baldock's fine architecture to attract visitors and specialist retailers.
		MP2B	Carriage arches are common in Baldock, a distinctive feature of the town, and one which clearly reveals its history.		
		MP2C	There are few areas of distinctive historic periods in the outer zones due to the amount of infill they accommodate.		
	MP3: Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas	MP3A	Baldock's medieval street layout and fine architecture contribute a huge amount to the town's character by creating beautiful enclosed linear spaces at the heart of the town along High Street, Hitchin Street and Whitehorse Street.	Protect Baldock's historic plots.	
		MP3B	The unusual width of the High Street is a rare feature and adds to Baldock's identity and distinctiveness as a settlement.	Protect Baldock's medieval layout.	Investigate ways of resolving the conflict between the use of the street for car parking, the market and as a public space for pedestrians.
		MP3C	Poor quality of street furniture and shopfronts in the Conservation Area detracts from the fine architecture there.		Upgrade street furniture to complement the fine architecture in the Town Centre zone.
	MP4: Building Heights	MP4A	With the exception of the town centre, Baldock has developed to consistent building heights creating a pleasing unity about the town as a whole.	Ensure that new developments and higher densities do not break up the consistency of Baldock's building heights.	
		MP4B	There are few developments of three storeys or more outside the town centre. This aids the town centre's legibility as the heart of the town.		
	MP5: Topography	MP5A	Baldock's flat topography heightens the significance of landmark buildings.	Protect strong views within Baldock, particularly towards St Mary's Church.	
		MP5B	Weston Hills provides views of Baldock from the south.	Protect Baldock's largely consistent skyline.	

KEY ISSUES, SAFEGUARDS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

	Criteria	Issue Number	Issue	Safeguards	Opportunities
CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE	CE1: Town Morphology	CE1A	The 'T' shaped structure of Baldock's town centre clearly reveals the town's historical roles as a market town and coaching stage.	Protect Baldock's historic layout.	
		CE1B	The location of Tesco almost at the geographical centre of Baldock is a unique feature of the town and a continuation of the market town tradition.		Improve connectivity between Tesco and the historic centre to increase linked trips.
		CE1C	The morphology shows higher densities closer to the station, and lower densities in the south		Use existing densities as a basis to guide Baldock's development into a settlement with distinct character areas.
	CE2: Building Lines, Setbacks and Gaps	CE2A	Building lines are strongest in the Town Centre and Historic High Density zones, and particularly weak in the Contemporary Higher Density zone.	Build to existing building lines where they are strong.	Encourage strong building lines in new developments, particularly at block size.
	CE3: Building Orientation	CE3A	The Town Centre zone offers a continuous wall of active frontages, including coach arches which are a local feature.	Protect Baldock's historic architecture.	Draw on Baldock's active frontages to foster a pavement culture, increasing street-side activity, particularly on market days.
		CE3B	Blank frontages are common in the Contemporary Inner zone as a result of informal housing layouts.		Encourage active frontages and frontages facing the street in new infill.
	CE4: Pavements	CE4A	The narrowness of pavements and contrasting width of roads in the Town Centre zone gives it a traffic-dominant feel. This could be altered now that the bypass is complete.		Reconfigure Baldock's public realm to improve the pedestrian environment and make Baldock attractive to shoppers and specialist retailers.
		CE4B	Parking on narrow pavements is a problem in the Historic High Density zone due to street widths.		Improve surveillance at the station where there is ample parking space.
		CE4C	Lower densities in the semi-rural zone allow for large pavements with grass verges		Planting on wide pavements should be protected as it enhances the rural character of the zone.
		DE4D	In the contemporary inner zone, high densities are configured either as flats with amenity greens, or detached houses with narrow pavements.		New developments should include generous pavement space as it improves the pedestrian experience and encourages walking.

KEY ISSUES, SAFEGUARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

	Criteria	Issue Number	Issue	Safeguards	Opportunities
CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE	CE5: Open Land	CE5A	Public open space in Baldock as a whole is limited, although there are a number of paths into the surrounding countryside.	Protect open space	Investigate opportunities to adapt parking space in Baldock to hard landscaped public open space.
		CE5B	Large gardens, wide verges and extensive planting combines with lower densities to give the Semi-rural zone its distinctive character.		Encourage the use of low-walled and open plan front gardens to maximise the amount of greenery visible from the street.
		CE5C	Some parts of the Contemporary Inner zone contain large green spaces, but houses are poorly designed into them.		
		CE5D	One of the playing fields are cut off by the railway line.		
MAKING CONNECTIONS	MC1: Land Use	MC1A	The Town Centre zone has a large convenience retail offer due to the location of Tesco, but only limited comparison shopping.		Utilise Baldock's excellent convenience retail offer to attract linked comparison shopping trips in the town's historic centre.
		MC1B	Baldock is unlikely to attract multiple retailers due to its size, but could accommodate specialist retailers.		Foster a café culture in the town centre underpinned by improvements to the pedestrian environment.
		MC1C	A pavement culture could be fostered in Baldock, aided by the town's fine architecture.		Promote a pavement culture in Baldock, starting with public realm improvements.
	MC2: Circulation Demand and Linkages	MC2A	The Town Centre zone has been configured to accommodate heavy traffic flow and could be more pedestrian-friendly.		Promote the Town Centre zone as a pedestrian environment, utilising the width of the High Street to create wider pavements and more crossing points.
		MC2B	There are considerable connectivity issues regarding pedestrian flow between Tesco supermarket and the Town Centre. Improved connectivity could have large benefits for the Town Centre.		Create a well-signed, direct pedestrian route between Tesco and the historic centre to encourage pedestrian flow between the two.
		MC2C	The use of cul-de-sacs in the Contemporary Inner zone creates permeability issues for motorists.		Avoid cul-de-sac development.

KEY ISSUES, SAFEGUARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

	Criteria	Issue Number	Issue	Safeguards	Opportunities
MAKING CONNECTIONS	MC3: Parking	MC3A	There is a conflict between car parking and the market in the Town Centre zone.		Seek ways of reducing demand for car parking in the Town Centre zone on market days.
		MC3B	Car parking occupies prominent areas in the Town Centre zone, some of which might provide excellent public spaces.		Create a parking strategy for Baldock to investigate ways of freeing up parking space for use as a public open space.
		MC3C	Commuter parking in the Historic High Density zone causes congestion problems there.		Investigate ways of reducing commuter parking in the Historic High Density zone as part of a wider parking strategy.
		MC3D	The car park in front of Tesco could sacrifice some space to create improved connections to the town centre.		
QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM	QPR1: Streetscape Elements	QPR1A	Enhancements to streetscape elements in the Town Centre zone would improve its image, character and legibility as a destination.		Enhance the streetscape with an improved street furniture scheme.
		QPR1B	Natural elements in the Semi-rural and Contemporary Inner zones contribute to their contrasting characters, with open plan front gardens and large open areas more commonly found in the Contemporary Inner zone, compared with mature trees and shrubs in the Semi-rural zone.		Encourage contrast between the Contemporary Inner and Semi-rural zones in terms of their natural elements.
	QPR2: Security	QPR2A	The Town Centre zone and dark alleyways in the outer zones should be well lit to minimise safety problems.		Improve lighting in dark alleyways and those without surveillance.
		QPR2B	In the Contemporary Inner zone rear gardens and high timber fences create blank frontages and associated security risks.		Ensure that houses face the street in new developments. Avoid the use of high timber fencing.

KEY ISSUES, SAFEGUARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

	Criteria	Issue Number	Issue	Safeguards	Opportunities
SETTLEMENT-WIDE CRITERIA	SWC1: Circulation	SWC1A	The recently completed Baldock bypass should reduce the volume of traffic travelling through the centre of Baldock.		Take advantage of reduced traffic volumes in the Town Centre to create an environment attractive to pedestrians and visitors.
		SWC1B	SWCB Primary and secondary distributor roads create good access throughout the rest of the settlement and serve as frequent bus routes.		
	SWC2: Views	SWC2A	Baldock's largely flat topography increases the importance of street-long views and vistas within the settlement.	Protect views across and vistas within Baldock.	
		SWC2B	There are views of Baldock's roofscape from Weston Hills, taking in the settlement's consistent storey heights.	Protect Baldock's pleasing skyline.	
		SWC2C	Views of St Mary's Church are especially important in Baldock, projecting the town's image and identity to its outskirts.		Protect views of St Mary's Church.
	SWC3: Legibility	SWC3A	The Town Centre zone contains some very legible features: St Mary's Church, the 'T' shape of the main streets and the historic architecture which lines them.		Build on Baldock town centre's legibility as a destination with enhancements to the streetscape there.
		SWC3B	Enhanced gateways and a public realm improvements to the town centre would counter negative images of the town among visitors and residents.		Build on Baldock town centre's legibility as a destination with enhancements to the streetscape there.
		SWC3C	There a number of significant barriers within and around Baldock which should be tackled, such as the railway, access to/from Sale Drive/Royston Road, and the lack of a link between Tesco and the Town Centre. The width of the High Street is a barrier to pedestrians.		Seek ways of improving connectivity across particular barriers in Baldock.

CONSULTATION

Baldock Workshop, 18 January 2007

The Baldock Urban Design Assessment Day was held on Thursday 18 January 2007 at St Marys Church Hall, Baldock.

The purpose of the event was to examine the perceptions of local people about Baldock, and to determine how local people perceive and utilise the town during their daily lives. The event was comprised of three workshop sessions, each examining a different issue with regards to Baldock, including the character and textures that generate a locality's unique identity, to personal perceptions of the local neighbourhood and its attendant local routes and connections.

The event was attended by 16 local stakeholders and was introduced by Helen Leitch, Urban Design Officer at North Hertfordshire District Council. Adam Lubinsky of Urban Practitioners facilitated the rest of the programme.

The format of the day involved three workshop sessions, outlined within this consultation document.

RECORD OF ATTENDANCE The following people attended the event:
Helen Brookes, Urban Practitioners
James Gran, North Herts District Council
Mr Gomm, The Baldock Society
Ms Gosling, Baldock Community Association
Kirstie Hough, North Herts District Council
Stuart Izzard, Community Development Officer
Cllr Marilyn Kirkland, North Herts District Council
Helen Leitch, North Herts District Council
Adam Lubinsky, Urban Practitioners,
John McBride, Hertfordshire County Council
Michael Myer
Ms Christine Phillips, North Herts District Council
Kate Poyser, North Herts District Council
Paul Taylor, The Baldock Society
Richard Tiffin, North Herts District Council
Mr SJ Rogers, Templars Building Surveyors Ltd
Cllr Weeks, North Herts District Council
Mr White, County Community Safety Unit

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE
URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT
BALDOCK**

URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT DAY

Date Thursday 18 January 2007

Time 12.00noon-3.00pm

Venue St Mary's Church Hall

PROGRAMME

- 12.00** Registration and buffet lunch
- 12.20** Introduction
Helen Leitch, North Hertfordshire District Council
Adam Lubinsky, Urban Practitioners
- 12.30** What Surrounds Us? Neighbourhood Character and Textures
- 1.00** Does It Work For Us? Neighbourhood Perceptions
- 1.30** Where Are We Going? Routes and Connections
- 2.15** Tea break
- 2.30** Feedback
- 2.45** Summing Up and Next Steps
- 2.50** Close



Adam Lubinsky of Urban Practitioners explains key urban design principles to workshop participants.



Participants discuss barriers within Baldock.



Participants mark their favourite views in and around Baldock.

WORKSHOP I - WHAT SURROUNDS US?

How well do you know your village? Neighbourhood character and textures

The first workshop consisted of a quiz looking at textures, materials and landmarks throughout Baldock. Participants worked in small groups and were issued with a worksheet containing snapshots of photographs from around the town, and asked to identify what these images were of and where they were located. Following this, participants were asked to identify whether a series of photographs were of publicly or privately-owned areas. Finally, participants were asked to identify local features and their function.

In the first section, the majority of participants were able to identify the images of the local area and correctly locate them on the map. Photographs of the almshouses on High Street, a shop on Hitchin Street, the Methodist Church, the local studies museum, and the former Eight Bells public house were all correctly identified by the majority of participants. However, fewer were able to correctly identify the war memorial or Baranite House on Church Street.

During the second half of the workshop, participants were asked to identify the public or private status of particular spaces within the town by judging their physical appearance and whether they were public or private areas of the town, based on their appearance.

Most respondents correctly identified the public spaces at Park Street and Park Drive, but were less able to pinpoint the status of Pepper Alley and the flower bed at the Tesco Extra store.

The key factor determining whether participants correctly identified the public or private status of a space was the standard of maintenance and the perceived safety of a space, with private areas regarded as less vulnerable than public ones.


The third and final workshop section saw participants asked to identify the purpose of local features, namely the footpath route along the historic Roman Road, a shelter outside the community centre, and an award winning development scheme on Hitchin Street.

The vast majority of respondents correctly identified the signpost and map, but were slightly less familiar with the Civic Trust Award.


How well do you know your town?

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1





2




3

Recognise these features?
Can you map them by their number?






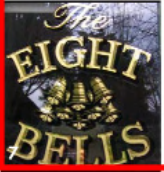
4




5




6




7




8




9



A



B



C

Recognise these features?
Are they public or private?

A.....


B.....

C.....


D.....

E.....


F.....




D




E




F



1



2



3

Recognise these features?
What are their function?

1.....

2.....

3.....

practitioners

WORKSHOP 2 - DOES IT WORK FOR US?

Neighbourhood perceptions

A short presentation was given to the group by Adam Lubinsky of Urban Practitioners about why certain aspects of the built environment have evolved in a particular way. The presentation examined the relationship between the built form and streetscape of an area and the paths that people chose to move around. In addition, the relationship between building density and street form, building heights and views was also discussed within the presentation.

Following the presentation, participants were asked to identify what they liked about their town by looking at a series of photographs examining building materials, shop signs, footpaths and boundaries. Participants were asked to consider four photographs under each heading and assign each one a mark between one and five to indicate which ones they liked the most (with five representing those that were liked the most). In addition, participants were asked to write a word or phrase to describe how they felt about the image.

The following pages outline participants' responses to each of the images and the words that were selected to describe them. Beneath each image and the number scale are the total number of participants that allocated the image that particular score.









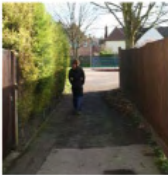







What do you like about your town?


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BALDOCK

Consider the architectural elements and materials in the photographs below. Give each one a mark from 1-5, where 5 indicates those that you like most. Below each image write a key word to describe how you feel about it.

When you have completed the sheet, please return it to a member of the Urban Practitioners team.

BUILDING MATERIALS	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1
SHOP SIGNS	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1
FOOTPATHS	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1
BOUNDARIES	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1	 5 4 3 2 1



WORKSHOP 2 - DOES IT WORK FOR US?

BUILDING MATERIALS



LIKE DISLIKE

0 0 2 2 8

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

This image illustrates the stock brick construction utilised in much of the town, and in particular within the Post-war Semi-detached urban design zone.

However, this image proved relatively unpopular with respondents, who saw it as 'unremarkable', 'drab', and 'lacking in character'. Perhaps the most positive response deemed this material 'acceptable'.

COMMENTS

Nonplussed
Lacks character
Dull
Bland
Unremarkable
Drab
Plain
Uninspiring
Acceptable



LIKE DISLIKE

2 3 4 3 0

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

This decorative brickwork is actually utilised on a contemporary building, as it seeks to work in harmony with its more traditional surroundings.

This form of decoration provoked a mixed, though generally positive, response from workshop participants.

COMMENTS

Fair
Modern/Classic
Cluttered
Fussy
Pretentious
Acceptable
Interesting



LIKE DISLIKE

6 6 0 0 0

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Decorative detailing from one of the town's older, more historic buildings was popular amongst respondents, who associate the historic with the attractive.

COMMENTS

Great details
Old attractive
Historical
Old



LIKE DISLIKE

7 3 1 0 0

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Entrance details like this are found in the town centre, the dense residential area off Whitehorse Street, and around Icknield Way.

This use of materials was well received at the workshop, providing further evidence of the popularity of traditional styles amongst participants.

COMMENTS

Great detailing
Historical/weathered
Contrast
Dignified
Detailed
Traditional
Very interesting

WORKSHOP 2 - DOES IT WORK FOR US?

SHOP SIGNS



LIKE DISLIKE

4 5 2 1 0

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Responses were broadly positive for this traditional shopfront display. Respondents obviously prefer commercial units to maintain the overall historic streetscape of the town centre.

COMMENTS

Sympathetic

Appropriate/traditional

Elegant

Respectful

Good



LIKE DISLIKE

3 6 2 1 0

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

This traditional shopfront at a butcher's shop on Church Street was reasonably popular amongst respondents, who saw it as 'fitting' and an 'original' aspect of the town centre.

COMMENTS

Traditional shopfront

Fitting

Commercial

Dated

Traditional

Open

Original



LIKE DISLIKE

0 0 0 3 9

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Given the popularity of traditional shopfronts, this modern cafe shopfront was viewed by respondents in a negative light.

The chief complaint was its failure to acknowledge the existing streetscape and prevailing design style.

COMMENTS

Totally unsympathetic

Harsh

Brash

Tacky

Ostentatious

Modern

Ugly



LIKE DISLIKE

3 8 0 1 0

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

The subtlety of this shopfront design was perhaps the main reason for its popularity amongst workshop participants. A traditional design is once again seen as the most 'fitting' and 'appropriate' design solution for a commercial property.

COMMENTS

Good, traditional shopfront

Subtle

Interesting

Artistic

Classy

Traditional

Trendy

WORKSHOP 2 - DOES IT WORK FOR US?

FOOTPATHS



This relatively enclosed pathway garnered a mixed response from participants, with some respondents regarding it as acceptable, whilst others regarded it as sub-standard and 'forbidding'.

- COMMENTS**
- Poor
 - Path
 - Acceptable
 - Forbidding
 - Ubiquitous
 - Green
 - Adequate



This is an open thoroughfare, subject to good maintenance, and with clear views of the destination.

As a consequence, it was viewed favourably by respondents, with 'uninteresting' the most negative comment received.

- COMMENTS**
- Satisfactory
 - Functional
 - Alley
 - Boring
 - Uninteresting
 - Connecting
 - Modern



The lack of overlooking windows, and hidden destination are perhaps the main reasons for the negative response to this alley.

Respondents felt it to be 'gloomy', and 'claustrophobic'.

- COMMENTS**
- Foreboding
 - Poor
 - Gloomy
 - Neat
 - Claustrophobic
 - Uninspired
 - Access



In terms of respondents comments, this footpath recieved perhaps the most positive feedback of all. The clear, well maintained route was seen as inviting and in accordance with the wider historic context in which it exists.

- COMMENTS**
- Acceptable
 - Restrictive
 - Inviting
 - Historic
 - Inviting
 - Threatening
 - Intimidating
 - Traditional

WORKSHOP 2 - DOES IT WORK FOR US?

BOUNDARIES



LIKE DISLIKE

0 2 5 2 2

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Steps and entrance treatments of this kind are common in the areas of semi-detached housing around the town, and were broadly popular with respondents.

One respondent regarded this image as 'boring and others praised its simplicity and tidiness.



LIKE DISLIKE

0 1 6 4 0

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Tabulating responses showed that the general response to this area of paved front garden was indifference, though comments were generally positive as people found the design adequate and even 'pleasant'.



LIKE DISLIKE

0 0 5 4 1

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Respondents appreciated the functional value of this fence, but would have preferred to have seen some attention to its appearance, as people described it as 'boring' and 'unfriendly'.



LIKE DISLIKE

0 3 4 2 2

NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Despite favouring more traditional shopfront designs for commercial units, respondents were less enthusiastic about this picket fence and wall plant entrance.

Some respondents appreciated the homey feel, whilst others saw it as 'quaint', or 'olde world'.

COMMENTS

- Functional
- Plain
- Suburban
- Boring
- Ambiguous
- Simple
- Tidy
- Interesting

COMMENTS

- Inadequate
- Pleasant
- Interesting
- Defined
- Pleasant
- Modern with good design
- Good

COMMENTS

- Functional but unfriendly
- Clean
- Needs weathering
- Tidy
- Uninviting
- Enclosing
- Boring
- Practical

COMMENTS

- Good - pleasing to the eye
- Pretty
- Quaint
- Interesting
- Intimate
- Traditional/Homey
- Olde World

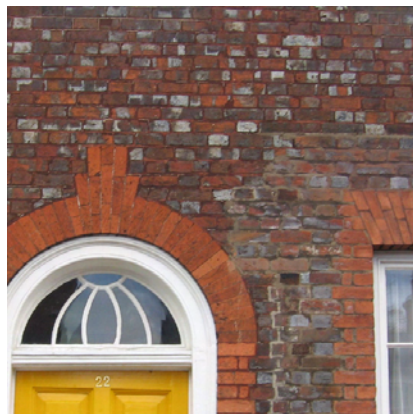
CONCLUSIONS

BUILDING MATERIALS

Workshop participants clearly favoured traditional materials and historic design solutions that were seen as 'in keeping' with the historic past of the town.

Brickwork designs with an element of visual interest were the preferred design solutions.

MOST POPULAR IMAGES



SHOP SIGNS

Spare, traditional designs with modest colour schemes and historic typeface were preferred by respondents at the workshop.

The examples below were found in the dense historic area and on the High Street. They were seen to represent the historic character that the Conservation Area seeks to preserve and enhance,



FOOTPATHS

Clear, well-maintained thoroughfares were preferred by respondents, as illustrated below.

Covered thoroughfares with inadequate lighting schemes were the least favoured thoroughfares. The examples below are clearly navigable and well-maintained.



BOUNDARIES

Effective boundaries were seen as those which combined adequate security with aesthetic quality. Great emphasis was placed on neatness and management, with solely utilitarian designs subject to some criticism.



WORKSHOP 3 - WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Routes and connections

Participants again divided into small groups to discuss the routes that they use within the town and the barriers that they encounter on their journeys. Each group was provided with a large scale plan of Hitchin and different coloured pens. Each participant took a turn to annotate the plan with the routes that they regularly take on foot, by car or by bicycle. Participants then marked the plans with areas where they encountered barriers or edges to their journey. Barriers to movement were identified as not only physical constraints but also psychological barriers that discourage people from visiting place or taking particular routes. These barriers could include graffiti that makes an area feel unsafe or traffic congestion on some roads during peak periods.

Next, participants used the pens to highlight the routes and connections that they would like to make within the town on foot, by car and by bicycle. Finally, they marked favourite views and places to visit.

Routes and connections

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT BALDOCK

Where do you live/visit?
Destination ●

Where are your routes?
Walking ———
Cycling ———
Driving ———

What are the barriers/edges you encounter?
Barrier XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

What other routes/connections would you like to make/take?
Walking - - - - -
Cycling - - - - -
Driving - - - - -

Where is your favourite place?
Favourite place ★

Where is your favourite view point?
Favourite view point ▲

WORKSHOP 3 - WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Routes

Driving routes were marked covering the main distributor roads around Baldock. Cycling did not feature as a popular mode of transport, routes marked by only one group. However, group 4 displayed aspirations for increased cycling in Baldock, identifying an extensive network of cycle routes in the 'desired connections' section.

Barriers

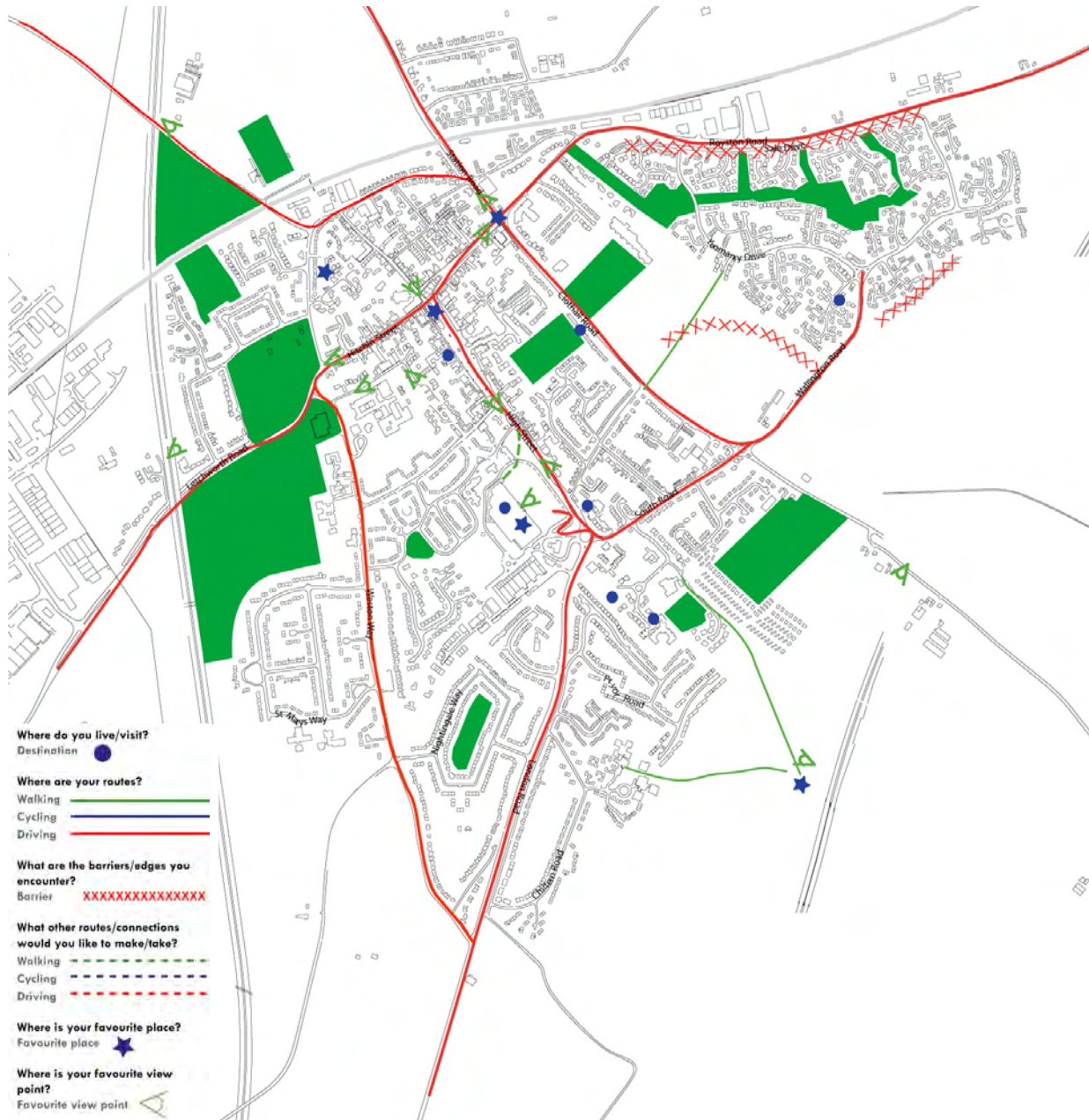
The railway and A 1(M) featured prominently as barriers during the workshop, as did heavy traffic on Sale Drive. The lack of a direct pedestrian exit out of Tesco onto High Street was identified by several groups.

Favourite views and places

Residents' favourite views were to be found mostly within the town around the high street and historic areas around the church to the north of the town. The higher ground to the south of the settlement was also the location of several participants' favourite views across Baldock, and out into the surrounding countryside.



Group I



NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT BALDOCK SEPTEMBER 2007

Residents' houses and destinations
 Tesco was noted as were locations on Providence Way and Clothall Road.

Routes
 Driving routes were noted to cover Baldock's main access roads and the route into Tesco. Few cycle and pedestrian routes were identified - one traversing Clothall Common, and a further pedestrian route leading from the south-east of the settlement up to Weston Woods.

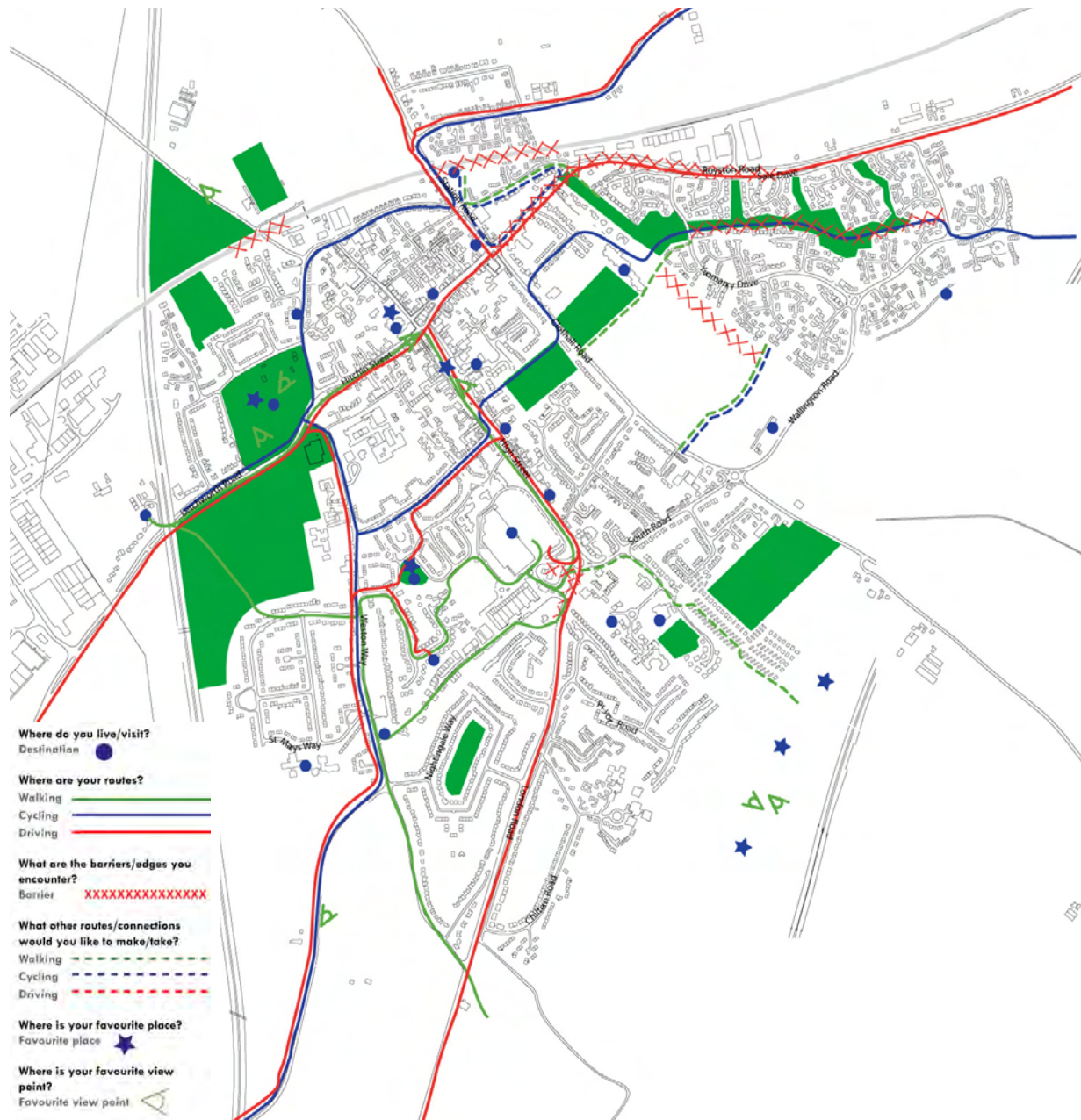
Barriers
 This group identified barriers at Sale Drive (traffic congestion) and the southern end of Clothall Common.

Desired connections
 One desired connection was identified by the group leading from Tesco to the High Street.

Favourite places
 Within Baldock Tesco, the top end of High Street, the Royston Road/Clothall Road junction and Pond Lane were marked as favourite places. Outside the settlement Weston Woods were identified, and the view of the bypass tunnel from Clothall Road.

Favourite view points
 Weston Woods provided a favourite view point, as did High Street, Hitchin Street, Whitehorse Street, Church Street and the Tesco car park.

Group 2



NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT BALDOCK SEPTEMBER 2007

Residents' houses and destinations
Several residences and destinations were marked, spread out fairly evenly across Baldock, including the church, schools and parks.

Routes
Group 2 noted driving routes running to the north along Letchworth Road, Hitchin Street and Royston Road and southwards along Station Road, High Street, London Road and Weston Way. The Group emphasised the fact that the route to Tesco is important for those arriving by car to do bulk shopping. Cycle routes ran east-west through the centre of town via green spaces and Mansfield Road, and north-south along Weston Way, Icknield Way and Bygrave Road. Pedestrian routes were noted along High Street, Hitchin Street, Letchworth Road, Weston Hill and around the residential area behind Tesco.

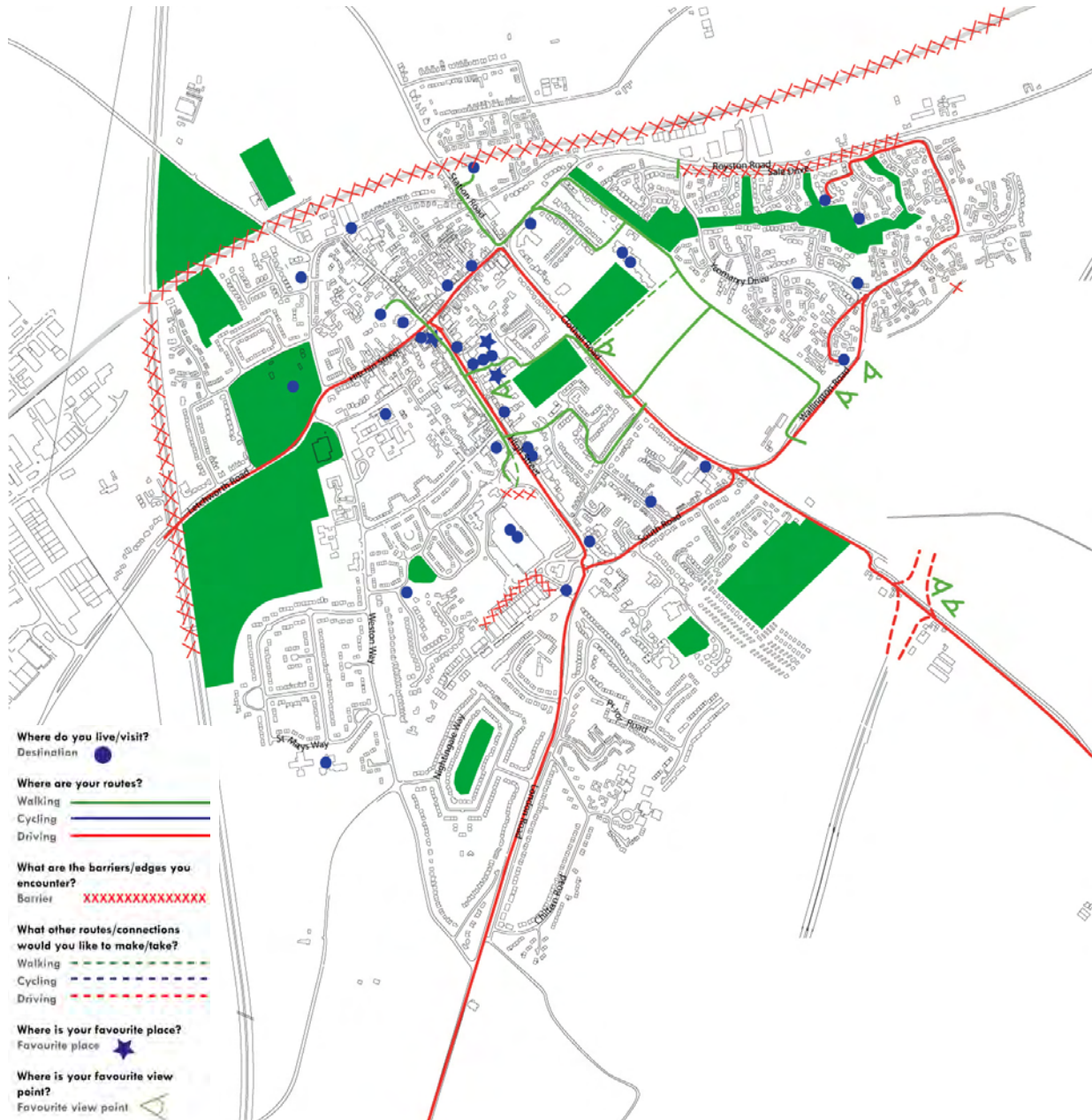
Barriers
The railway was considered a barrier, along with Royston Road and the north end of London Road. The group also defined a barrier running from Hartsfield Junior School to Wallington Drive, and cycling was indicated to be a barrier to pedestrian use of the green corridor south of Sale Drive.

Desired connections
Pedestrian and cycle routes were suggested heading west from Clothall Road, and an additional cycle route was proposed for a loop around Royston Road and Icknield Way East.

Favourite places
Favourite places were noted along the high street, at St Mary's church, on Weston Hill and in the playing fields north of Letchworth Road.

Favourite view points
The group noted several favourite view points; Weston Hill, looking both across Baldock and in the opposite direction, the high street from the north, St Mary's church from Norton Road, and views across Hitchin from the playing fields north of Letchworth Road.

Group 3



NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT BALDOCK SEPTEMBER 2007

Residents' houses and destinations

Group 3 marked many destinations clustered along High Street and including Tesco. Residences were noted across the settlement.

Routes

Traffic routes covered Hitchin Street, London Road, High Street and Clothall Road and several pedestrian routes were marked around the green space north-east of Clothall Road.

Barriers

Several barriers were marked; one was the railway, skirting the town to the north, another was the A1 (M) bordering Baldock to the west, and a section of the B656 north of Sale Drive was noted. Within Baldock, barriers included the entrance to the Tesco car park north-east of the shopping centre, and another was the industrial estate south of Tesco.

Desired connections

Two connections were suggested by the group, one running along the northern edge of Clothall Common, the other comprising a junction onto the Baldock bypass from Clothall Road.

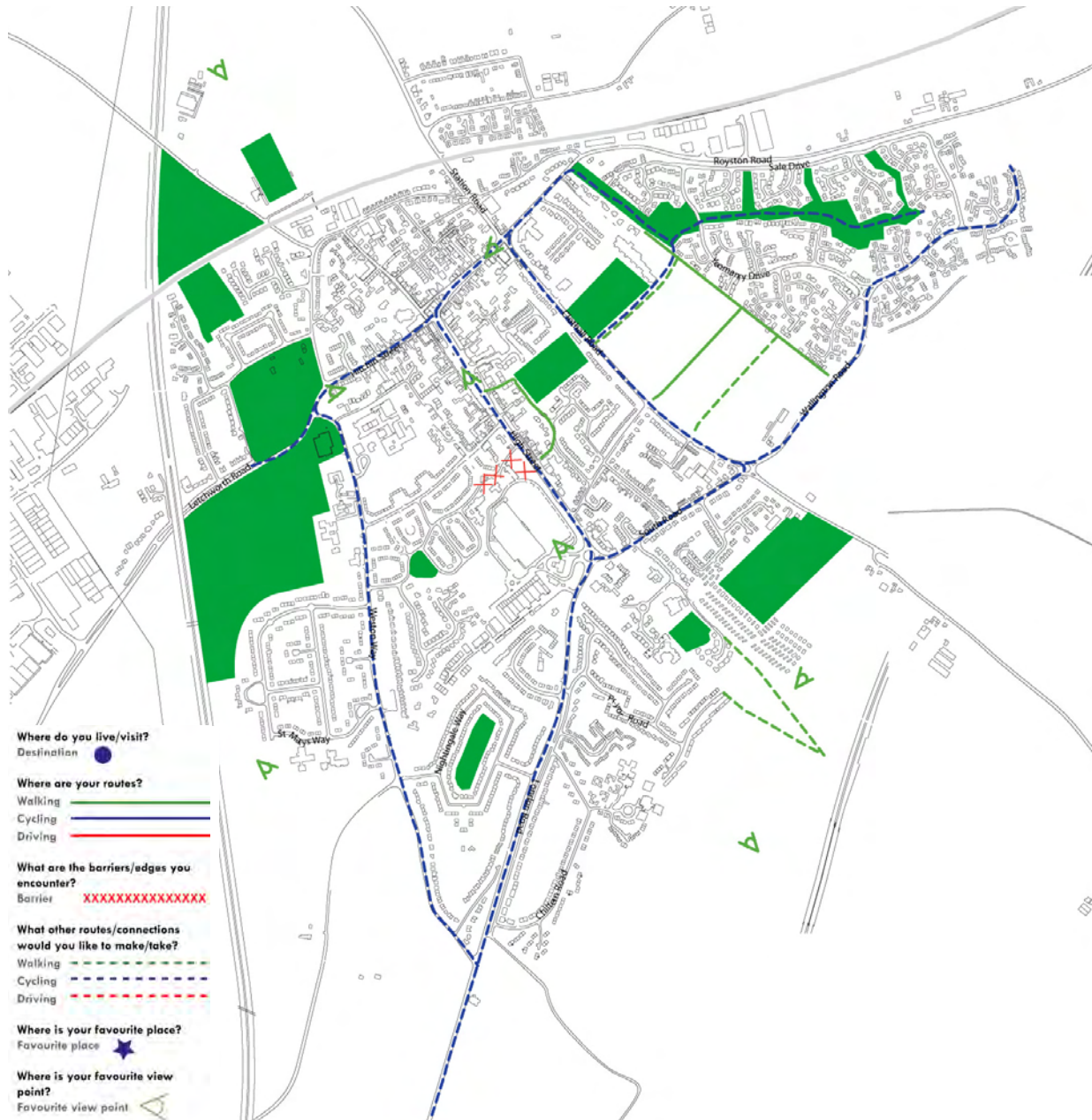
Favourite places

Favourite places were located along High Street.

Favourite view points

Views were identified outwards from Wallington Road and in both directions along Clothall Road. Within Baldock, the High Street was marked by twice and Clothall common once, from the north-west.

Group 4



NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT BALDOCK SEPTEMBER 2007

Residents' houses and destinations
One house was marked just outside the settlement.

Routes
Group 4 chose to concentrate on pedestrian routes, which ran across and down the eastern side of the open land adjacent to Clothall Road.

Barriers
A barrier was marked to the north-west of the Tesco site, demarcating the lack of a direct pedestrian route from Tesco to the High Street.

Desired connections
Group 4 marked a few pedestrian routes and several cycling routes. Pedestrian routes ran along the north-western side of Clothall Common, from the Tesco car park to High Street and from the south-east of the settlement up towards Weston Hill. Cycle routes ran north-south along Weston Way, High Street, Clothall Road and London Road. Perpendicular to these routes were marked along Hitchin Street, South Road and Wallington Road.

Favourite places
No favourite places were marked by the group.

Favourite view points
The group identified favourite places looking northwards down the slope of Weston Hill, and north-west into Baldock across Pryor Road. Within the town, views included along the High Street from the northern end, and outwards along Letchworth Road and Royston Road.