

# **North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 Examination in Public**

## **SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND**

As agreed between North Hertfordshire District Council  
and Hertfordshire County Council Property  
Concerning Strategic Site Allocation BA1: North of Baldock

**February 2018**

## **Introduction**

1. This is an agreed Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) between North Hertfordshire District Council (the Council) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), Property. WYG are representing the County Council as landowner of BA1.
2. This SoCG is in relation to the identification of the land north of Baldock proposed as a strategic housing allocation within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan at Policy SP14: Site BA1. The purpose of this SoCG is to provide the Inspector with a summary of the areas of agreement for the matters to be examined during the Local Plan hearing sessions scheduled for February 2018.
3. This SoCG supplements the previous agreement between North Hertfordshire District Council and Hertfordshire County Council that was submitted to the examination in November 2017 (ED31) (the first statement).
4. The first statement set out areas of agreement insofar as they related to broad issues of delivery and infrastructure provision in order to inform the consideration of strategic matters through the examination. The first statement set out the broad parameters of the development proposed for this site.
5. This supplementary SoCG provides additional information on site-specific issues and constraints. The two statements should be read alongside one another. In the event of any conflict between the two statements, this latter SOCG should take precedent.
6. The contents of this SoCG are without prejudice to the submission and determination of any future planning application(s) on this land.
7. The Council's own assessments and evidence have been supplemented by ongoing discussion between the parties and the provision of additional information by WYG as set out in this statement.
8. WYG on behalf of HCC have recently submitted a planning application for this site BA1. Planning application Ref: 17/04420/OP, validated on 8 January 2018. Documentation submitted with the Planning Application provides detailed information on the matters set out in this statement.

## **Layout**

9. An illustrative masterplan has been submitted with the planning application and a copy is attached at Appendix A of this statement. The proposal is for a mixed use development comprising up to 2800 new homes.
10. The illustrative masterplan shows how this strategic urban extension could address the site-specific criteria set out Policy SP14. This shows built development to be contained by a boundary to the south of the ridgeline with a proposed country park to the north of the site, softening the edge of the new urban area allowing a gradual transition northwards to the surrounding countryside. The masterplan shows a number of residential land parcels linked by a new central spine road running through the site and separated and /or bounded by green infrastructure links and other areas of open space thereby linking and integrating the development to the existing development of Baldock and the countryside beyond.

11. A proposed local centre is shown at the centre of the site alongside two proposed primary schools and a secondary school to be located towards the southern part of the site.
12. A proposed country park located within the north section of the application site, and open space to the east show structural planning coinciding with the proposed revised Green Belt boundary.
13. A proposed new link road connecting North Road (A507) in the west with Royston Road (B656) to the south will be provided as part of the development. This will include a new road bridge over the London-Cambridge railway line. A number of new pedestrian and cycle bridges across the railway line will also be provided to further improve north-south connectivity between the new development and the town of Baldock.
14. The detailed layout of the development will continue to be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders and the Local Planning Authority as part of the current and any future planning applications.

#### **Assessment and treatment of potential planning constraints**

15. All parties agree that the assessment of key potential planning constraints, as shown in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (HO9) for this site is accurate.
16. It is agreed that the following issues as listed below and as set out in detail by WYG in Appendix B attached to this statement, warrant consideration alongside the Proposed Development. Where necessary, measures to ensure these issues are appropriately addressed may be secured through conditions and / or legal agreements attached to any future planning permission.
  - Landscape
  - Ecology and green infrastructure
  - Green Belt
  - Heritage
  - Highways and sustainable Transport
  - Water and Flood risk
  - Community facilities
17. Any such conditions and / or legal agreements will be subject to any relevant tests or regulations at the time of their imposition and / or agreement.
18. It is agreed that the issues as listed in paragraph 16 above and detailed in Appendix B is not necessarily exhaustive and that the Council (or other parties) may require further issues to be investigated and/or addressed as part of, and/or prior to the determination of the current or any future planning application.
19. A secondary school site capable of accommodating 8FE will be accommodated within site BA1 as referenced in paragraph 53 of Appendix B.
20. Appropriate measures will be provided to ensure pupils can safely and conveniently walk or cycle to school from the south of the railway line. Paragraphs 38 and 41 at Appendix B make reference to new pedestrian and cycle connections across the railway line.

21. The County Council places importance on its role to assist in the delivery of new homes. As the single landowner of the site they are in control of the direction and pace of development as set out in the first statement.

**Conclusion**

- 22. It is agreed that the landowner will continue to liaise with NHDC, and other relevant stakeholders as proposals for this land are developed. Subject to successful adoption of the Local Plan, the timetable for delivery of the allocation BA1 is as agreed in the first statement.
- 23. The proposed Local Plan allocation at Site BA1 North of Baldock constitutes an appropriate and deliverable extension to Baldock which supports the vision and objectives of the plan. It would extend Baldock to the north and make a significant contribution towards the housing and associated infrastructure needs of North Hertfordshire consistent with proposed settlement hierarchy.

**Declaration**

The content of this document is agreed for the purposes of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan Examination.

Signed on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council

**<<Company>>** .....Michael Evans.....  
Position: Head of Estates

[Redacted]

**Date:** 5th February 2018

And

Signed on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council

.....David Levett.....  
**Position: Executive Member for Planning and Enterprise**

**Date:** 5th February 2018

**Appendix A:**

**Illustrative Master Plan for Strategic Site Allocation BA1: North Baldock**



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Legend  
Redline Boundary



Project title:  
**Baldock North**

Drawing title:  
**Illustrative Masterplan**

Dwg N°: A090070-171\_302 Rev:

Drawn:LQ Checked:AC Date: 14/12/2017

Scale @ A2: 1:5,000



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## **Appendix B**

**Proposed response to potential planning constraints in relation to Strategic Site Allocation  
BA1: North Baldock – Drafted by WYG acting as agents for Hertfordshire County Council-  
Property (the landowner).**

**Appendix B:**  
**Assessment and treatment of potential planning constraints in relation to Strategic Site Allocation BA1: North Baldock**

**Baldock North** (planning application reference 17/04420/OP)

**Landscape**

1. As set out within the indicative masterplan the built development is to be contained by a boundary to the south of the ridgeline, with a nuanced edge. This will soften the edge of the new urban area, and allow a gradual transition northwards to the surrounding countryside.
2. The topography of the site, which slopes down from the north means that structural planting can be provided to the northern and eastern boundaries that will soften the development when viewed from the north. This structural planting will form one of the first stages of development and will therefore ensure the future development is screened from the initial stage of construction.
3. The use of green corridors and other areas of open space also ensure that the existing open space character of the local area is reflected into the new development. The new green pedestrian and cycle links also provide a direct route from the existing development to the country park and the countryside beyond.
4. The landscape framework for the application site has delivered a connected series of open spaces running through the masterplan area. These connect to existing areas of open space and provide access to the wider town through the network of footways and cycleways contained within.
5. The proposed Country Park, located in the north of the application site, is a key part of the overall landscape strategy for the site. Supported by a band of strategic planting along the highest point within the site, the park provides a strong green buffer to the wider countryside to the north and helps define a permanent defensible Green Belt Boundary.
6. There are also several linear parks located within the development which provide important visual links as well as convenient access to the existing town and to the wider countryside surrounding the site. A number of neighbourhood parks are also proposed within the parcels of residential development. These are well overlooked and provide important amenity space through the provision of play areas.







7. A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has also been submitted in support of this application which demonstrates that major adverse landscape effects are only anticipated to occur at a local scale upon landscape features of the site comprising the setting of public rights of way passing through the site area which is anticipated to alter from an area of arable land to an urban environment. This effect is considered significant. The effects upon the remaining landscape features or character areas are considered to be not significant.
8. All the significant effects on landscape views that have been identified through the EIA process will be substantially mitigated by the structural planting proposals put forward in the Landscape Strategy, and as are indicated on the Masterplan.

### **Ecology & Green infrastructure**

9. The green links are multifunctional linear corridors that extend through the site, creating strategic connections between the existing town and the new development. These connections occur both in terms of physical connectivity through new walking and cycle routes but also through the visual links created along view corridors linking the new development and St Mary's church.
10. The green links have been designed to provide a safe and convenient route between areas people most likely want to go on foot or bicycle. They lead directly to the train station to the south, connect to proposed pedestrian and cycle bridges and provide a direct route out to the wider countryside to the north, linking up with existing public rights of way.
11. The masterplan also includes the creation of new green infrastructure including 23ha of natural and semi-natural open space forming part of a wider network of green corridors and open expanses of landscape to the benefit of local wildlife.
12. Existing hedgerows will be retained, with buffers between these features and new areas of development, providing green corridors for bats to forage along as well as for birds to build nests and find food.
13. It is intended that the S106 agreement will include provision for enhancement of nearby farmland, in accordance with an Ecological Management Plan, which will increase the local landscape's ability to support corn buntings and other farmland birds. Measures are likely to include: widening field margins, building fences (for protection and provision of song posts), managing hedgerows and continuing/introducing rotational grazing by livestock. The land options for this mitigation, on land owned and rented out





by HCC have been identified, and will include at least 2.2 ha of new and/or enhanced habitat to compensate for both the application site and Baldock Southeast.

14. The proposals incorporate a green buffer along North Road, stepping back from Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve and reinforcing the existing mature hedgerow planting along North Road.

## **Green Belt**

15. Where Green Belt boundaries are amended, the NPPF requires that a new strong permanent and defensible boundary must be created (Paragraphs 84 and 85 of the NPPF). The A505 provides an appropriate boundary for the new eastern edge of the Green Belt around Baldock, readily identifiable and being strong, defensible and permanent.
16. North road provides a strong permanent Green Belt boundary, to the west of the site.
17. The planning applications submitted for development at BA1 seek to create an appropriate transition from the built-up area to the Green Belt boundary. This includes perimeter landscaping, structural planting and consideration of topography.

## **Heritage**

18. The application is supported by a desktop archaeological evaluation prepared following onsite works between October and December 2016 when archaeological trial trenching was carried out across the site. The trenches largely targeted anomalies detected in an earlier geophysical survey.
19. Archaeology was found to be distributed across the entire evaluation area and was characterised by dispersed prehistoric remains, including up to ten Bronze Age barrows, one with a possible Saxon burial cut into it. Three separate areas of late Iron Age to early Roman (1st century BC to 2nd century AD) occupation were identified, of differing sizes and probably also function. A small area of medieval settlement-related activity was located at the north-east of the site.
20. An Archaeological Impact Assessment is also submitted in support of this application. The report states that the significance of the archaeological features recorded at Baldock as part of the trial trenching do not meet the criteria on the scheduling of heritage assets of national importance as guided by the Principles of Selection (HE 2015) and are not demonstrably of equivalence to scheduled monuments (NPPF 2012). The report considers that the archaeological features recorded at Baldock are of low to







moderate (local and regional) significance and the effect of the proposed development would be moderate adverse changes to the significance of these heritage assets.

21. The report recommends that in order to advance the understanding of the significance of the potential archaeological features that would be affected by the development, they should be recorded in a manner proportionate to their importance and impact from the development, and the evidence should be made publicly accessible.
22. The report recommends that if a program of archaeological mitigation works, working to the landscape design of the final masterplan, was undertaken within the development site generating preservation by record and made publicly accessible, then the effect on the heritage assets would be neutral.
23. As the archaeology recorded on site is only of local or regional significance the landowner consider that it remains appropriate to build over the site in accordance with the recommendations set out in the Archaeological Impact Assessment Report and summaries in the paragraph above.
24. During the preparation of this application the landowner's consultant archaeologist liaised with the County Council's archaeology team who requested 3% trial trenching of the site. At present 1% has been carried out. The landowner has not completed any further additional trial trenching but acknowledge that this may be required during the course of the assessment of the application.
25. It is considered that the development would not impact upon the setting of the Settlement site South of Blackhorse Farm. The planning submission considers that through the provision of alternative additional station car parking that the development would mitigate any potential harm caused by additional unauthorised commuter parking within the Ivel Springs car park, which adjoins the Settlement site South of Blackhorse Farm.
26. The proposed development would also be separated by North Road from the two Grade II listed buildings to the north of Settlement site South of Blackhorse farm. Due to this separation distance and the use of planting along the western boundary the development, the proposals would not harm the significance or setting of these listed buildings.

## **Highways and sustainable Transport**

27. The masterplan supporting the planning application has been designed to promote opportunities for sustainable travel. A new community spine has been designed to

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provide a range of facilities such as shops, health care, schools and employment. The land uses have been structured around a linear movement corridor which is anchored in the north by a new country park and in the south by a new park to provide access to the wider countryside.

28. To improve connectivity, a new pedestrian and cycle bridge will be constructed over the railway line at the midpoint of the Community Spine. This bridge will link the new schools and local centre north of the railway line to the employment area and the existing Clothall Common neighbourhood in the south.
29. The access and movement strategy for the application site is founded on a sustainable, highly permeable and well connected new neighbourhood across the BA1 site, which supports the provision of new walking and cycling routes, connecting into the existing networks within the town, as well as a new link road running centrally through the site. These strategic connections are then complemented by a hierarchy of new residential streets within the development site.
30. The application site has been designed around the key themes of integration, services and facilities and infrastructure. The proposals seek to link the new development to the existing town. The application site will provide for the needs of the new as well as existing community and ensure shared resources are effectively accessed. Assessment of the infrastructure proposals by the landowners' consultants conclude there would be no adverse impact on the existing functioning of the town.
31. The NHDC Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) that was prepared to support the emerging Local Plan sets out NHDC's general strategy for transport up until 2031 and identifies that proposals to develop the land to the north and south of Baldock will require the provision of new link roads. The IDP also identifies a number of 'problem junctions' around Baldock. Several of these are proposed to be improved as part of the planning application:
32. Works to the A507 North Road / Clothall Road / B656 Royston Road / Whitehorse Street junction to improve its operation and improve pedestrian facilities;
  - Upgrading signal control of the Junction 9 A1(M) roundabout to deliver a significantly better improvement in predicted performance following delivery of the site as a stand-alone development; and
  - Introduction of signal control at the Junction 10 A1(M) access roundabout.
33. The improvement of these junctions will be funded through S.106 contributions. As set out in NHDC IDP, the provision of the northern link road is a key infrastructure requirement and without it development of this scale could not be provided at the site.







As identified within the Phasing Plans supporting the planning application, the northern link road will need to be provided before any housing is constructed on the site.

34. The northern link road will provide an alternative route ensuring that not all vehicular traffic needs to pass through the existing town centre. However, the northern link road has also been designed to accommodate some existing traffic. The northern link road is proposed to run from a new junction with the A507 in the west to the A505/B656 Royston Road junction at the south-east corner of the BA 1 site.
35. The outline planning application (with all matters reserved save for access) seeks approval for the two identified access points to the western boundary and the southern boundary of BA1. Further details of the exact alignment and design of the northern link road will form part of any future reserved matters application.
36. The new link road connecting North Road in the west with Royston Road to the south acts as the primary vehicular access to the BA1 site. It is envisaged that the link road will meander through the site before bridging over the London-Cambridge railway line on a newly provided road bridge. A number of new pedestrian bridges across the railway line will further improve north-south connectivity.
37. The shape and design of the northern link road has been carefully considered, with traffic calming measures such as a slight bend throughout to deter speeding, and a raised median strip which will contain trees for its entire length. It is envisaged that the link road will be a dual carriageway with a 30mph speed limit.
38. The indicative link road design has been developed to safely accommodate pedestrians, cyclists and buses. The design comprises a designated off-road cycleway along its length with direct links to the pedestrian and cyclist only green corridors.
39. The masterplan has been designed with an emphasis on improving connectivity to the rest of the town to the south and to the wider countryside to the north. Policy T1 also requires major developments to be served by public transport and provide safe, direct and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Specifically, two new dedicated walking and cycling routes lead directly towards Baldock Station, bridging across the London-Cambridge Railway line and continuing along Royston Road and Whitehorse Street into Baldock Town Centre. In accordance with the requirements of Policy T1 the development will increase opportunities for sustainable travel. A new/extended bus service will link Baldock North with Baldock railway station, the town centre and beyond to Letchworth.





40. The proposed local centre, which it is suggested should be located alongside two primary schools, a secondary school and green infrastructure such as a parkland, community playing fields and public open spaces, is intended to support the residential development and as such provide the local essential facilities that residents need on site, thereby reducing the need to travel off site. In addition, where residents need to travel, many trips can be made by non-car modes of transport through the use of the identified walking, cycling and bus options. The BA1 application site is well positioned with regards to existing and proposed employment, retail and leisure facilities, enabling these trips to be made by sustainable transport modes.
41. As detailed in the supporting Transport Assessment supporting the planning application, a bus service will be provided from early occupation of development involving rerouting of the existing commercial services 97 and 98 providing links to Baldock town centre, Letchworth and Hitchin. In accordance with NHDC guidelines, all bus stops within the development site will be within a 400m walking distance of homes. The Travel Plan submitted in support of the application also sets out measures that will encourage sustainable travel such as subsidised bus travel for residents.
42. Extensive new and improved walking and cycling routes are proposed both on and off the site. These improvements will provide a comprehensive network of walking and cycling routes within the site. Through provision of a network of walking and cycling routes, several connections will be provided into existing areas of Baldock and towards Letchworth and other more distant settlements as follows:
  - Existing on-highway pedestrian routes between the site and Baldock town centre (and other areas);
  - Connections to National Cycle Route 12 approximately 500m to the west of the site providing onward cycle connections to settlements including Letchworth and Stevenage;
  - New pedestrian and cycle connections across the London – Cambridge railway line, to connect to the Ashville Way Industrial Estate.
43. A new access to the railway station is proposed from the north which will provide much needed level access. Additional cycle parking will also be provided at the new northern access point to assist those cycling to the station from the North of Baldock.
44. The need for additional station car parking has also been identified, and a parcel of land close to the station has been identified as an appropriate location for this provision. Without the provision of additional dedicated station car parking, there would be the risk that commuters would seek to park at the Ivel Springs car park which could harm the Nature Reserve through unregulated car parking.







45. Car parking on the site will be provided in accordance with the Council's latest parking standards.
46. The majority of the existing Public Rights of Way have been retained and incorporated within the new movement network, including Bygrave 001, 002 and Baldock 034. Bygrave 015 which currently crosses the railway line towards the east of the site will be rerouted to provide a safer crossing over the newly provided road bridge before continuing its existing route along the Ashwell Road and Bygrave 004.
47. The development has been designed fundamentally to promote healthy communities. The scheme will provide a new GP's surgery and pharmacy within the new local centre. The new local centre has been strategically located along the green corridors through the site which will allow access to these services by not only car but by walking and cycling which promotes healthy and sustainable travel. Generally, the scheme has been designed to be highly walkable. The schools are also to be located along these green corridors that also link to the town centre, the employment centre on the land to the south and the country park to the north.
48. The development has been designed to set the new dwellings away from the railway line wherever possible. The three new schools and associated sport pitches have been sited adjacent to the railway line. These uses are less sensitive to noise and will provide a buffer between the railway and the houses to the north. Where housing is proposed near the railway line an area of open space will be provided as a buffer which will contain planting and potentially a noise barrier to reduce the impact of the railway noise on future residents.
49. The development will provide for three new schools. A new secondary school will be provided on a site able to accommodate eight forms of entry, as well as two three form of entry primary schools. It is likely the schools will be provided to the south of the site adjoining the railway line as these are less noise sensitive uses. The sports pitches associated with the schools will be positioned adjacent to the railway line where possible. The schools are also located close to the local centre and along the green corridor which links the existing residential area with the countryside to the north and the local centre to promote travel by walking and cycling.

## **Water and flood risk**

50. The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 which has a low risk of flooding. Therefore, there is no loss of floodplain as a result of the construction of the development. In accordance with Policy NE7 consideration has been given to ensuring the development meets acceptable discharge rates of run off during construction and





once construction is complete. The outline drainage strategy will be further developed to a sufficient level of detail based on the individual detailed applications that follow the phasing of the proposed development.

51. A site wide SuDS strategy has been incorporated into the wider landscape framework, addressing existing surface water flood risk issues within the site as well as providing future capacity. The SuDS system proposed will provide attenuation and treatment of site run-off to reduce the effects of urban run-off. In accordance with the requirements of Policy NE7 the Drainage Strategy for the site will be further developed with the agreement of the relevant authorities at the detailed design stage.
52. There are several basins proposed to be located throughout the site for SuDS. The indicative locations of the SuDS have been informed by the Flood Risk Assessment. The SuDS also provides opportunities for ecological enhancement in the landscape consisting of shallow vegetated depressions that temporarily hold water after heavy rainfall. There are sizes and locations of the attenuation basins on site are determined by the amount of non-permeable development delivered across the site. The basins will provide natural green/blue open spaces that are multi-functional in nature, designed in such a way as to provide attenuation capability in relation to site drainage; provide opportunities for visual enhancement through the creation of wildflower grassland and naturalised areas of wetland; and offer opportunities for educational resources and further enjoyment of wildlife habitats.

## Facilities

53. The provision of onsite facilities includes a 6FE Secondary school, on a site capable of accommodating 8FE; two 3FE primary schools; healthcare premises (likely to include a doctor's surgery, dentist and pharmacy); premises for a police hub; and a local supermarket.
54. New recreation facilities will be provided in the form of linear parks, open spaces, a Country Park (including toilets and car parking), play spaces and facilities, and sports pitches.
55. Allotments will be provided too.

