

Urban&Civic



Baldock Strategic Masterplan

Options Report

Growing Baldock

September 2023



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 A Strategic Masterplan (SMP) is being prepared for development on land to the north and east of Baldock, in accordance with policy SP9 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan. The Baldock site is allocated in the Local Plan as a sustainable extension of 3,300 homes, employment, local centre(s), schools and community facilities, sustainable transport connections and green infrastructure. The initial stages of SMP production, including the collation of baseline evidence, public consultation and an options workshop are now complete, and the SMP is now at options and preferred option stage.

Purpose of the Options Report

- 1.2 The North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) brief for the SMP requires that masterplan options be prepared and tested against agreed criteria, culminating in a robustly justified preferred option masterplan. This report therefore presents and tests a series of masterplan options and concludes with a preferred option, which will form the basis of the draft SMP that will be prepared as part of the next stage of the masterplan process.
- 1.3 Five SMP options are set out in this report and tested against the following agreed criteria:
 - response to baseline constraints and opportunities;
 - compliance with the agreed placemaking objectives;
 - compliance with planning policy; and
 - feasibility and delivery.

Structure of the Options Report

- 1.4 The Options Report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2: Strategic Masterplan Process – an explanation of the stages undertaken in preparation of the SMP to date;

Chapter 3: Baseline Evidence – a summary of the baseline evidence and key site features and opportunities that will influence the SMP;

Chapter 4: Strategic Masterplan Fixes – a summary of the key elements of the masterplan that are fixed in all options, informed by the baseline evidence;

Chapter 5: Strategic Masterplan Issues to be Resolved – identification of the issues that are not yet resolved and that require further investigation / discussions with stakeholders before they can be fixed within the SMP;

Chapter 6: Strategic Masterplan Options – five SMP options which will test different approaches to movement within the site, alongside a qualitative assessment of each against agreed criteria;

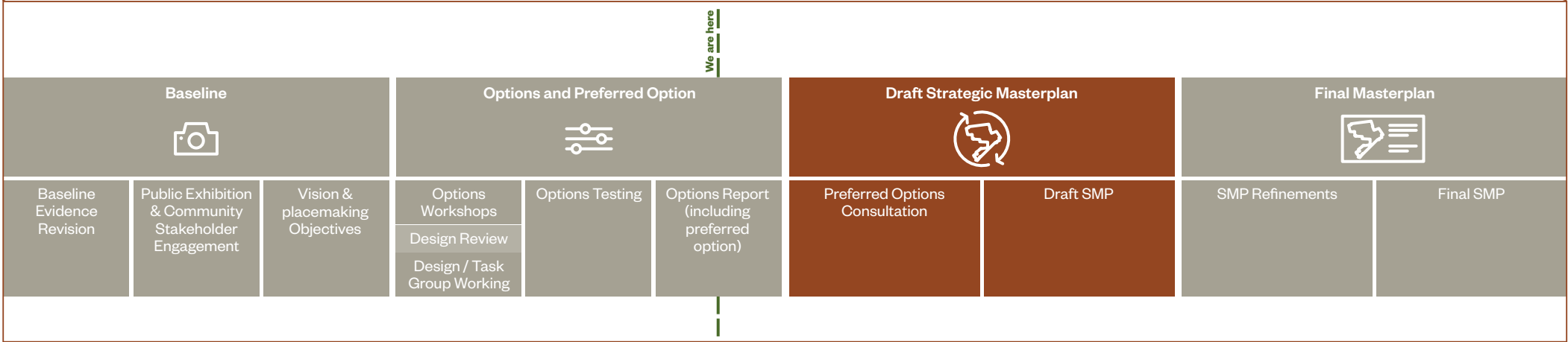
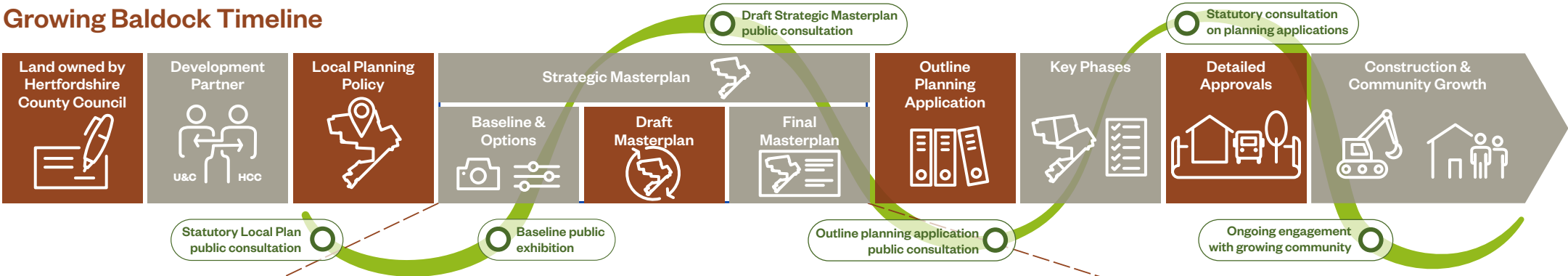
Chapter 7: Preferred Option Masterplan – presentation of the preferred option SMP, alongside a clear justification; and

Chapter 8: Next Steps – identification of the next stages in the SMP process, including preparation of the draft SMP, based on the preferred option, and future engagement/consultation.

2. Strategic Masterplan Process

- 2.1 The Strategic Masterplan for the Baldock site is a requirement of the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan. This section of the report summarises the stages of SMP production undertaken to date and explains how the options testing stage fits within the overall SMP process. A timeline for delivery of the Baldock site, and within that, the production stages of the SMP is set out in Figure 1.

Growing Baldock Timeline



SMP Production Timeline

Figure 1: Growing Baldock and SMP Production Timelines

Baseline Evidence

2.2 An extensive range of baseline evidence and technical studies have been produced to inform the SMP. A summary of this baseline work is provided in section 3 of this report and in the Composite Baseline Report at Appendix 1. The five options presented in section 6 are tested against the baseline evidence and the opportunities and constraints it identifies.

Public Consultation

2.3 A public consultation event to share and confirm the baseline evidence with the Baldock community was undertaken in March 2023 (see photograph at Figure 2). The consultation allowed the team to understand the issues of most interest to local residents and discuss how they might be overcome by the SMP. Over 600 comments were obtained from the event itself and via the project website.

2.4 The exhibition was very well attended generating a comprehensive set of responses, both at the event and subsequently, via feedback submitted online. The majority of feedback (summarised in the diagram at Figure 3 and described in more detail in the report at Appendix 2) reinforced the baseline position that was presented and understood by the development team, emphasising the importance to the local community of issues of traffic and congestion, water supply and the River Ivel and the need to strengthen community provision through the new development.

2.5 Baldock benefits from an engaged and interested community, who value its historic market town character and its proximity to open countryside. Residents were overwhelming keen to ensure that the development does not detract from these facets and brings multiple benefits to the area, through affordable housing, new school provision, open space and access to nature.

2.6 A series of additional community events, such as a further drop in session in Ashwell, meetings with local interest groups and stakeholders and topic based community forums have also been undertaken to strengthen our understanding of the influences that will help shape the SMP.



Figure 2: Public Consultation Event

Baldock responses proportional comparison
(All Themes 614 comments):



Figure 3: Public Consultation Feedback by Theme

Options Workshop

2.7 An options workshop, facilitated by Hyas Associates, was held with key stakeholders in May 2023. The purpose of the workshop was to understand the spatial options that need to be tested and agree the tasks required to progress the masterplan. A report summarising the workshop discussions is provided at Appendix 3 to this report. Consensus was reached on a number of spatial issues that will inform the SMP, including the following:

- **Landscape led** approach to development, with a strong network of blue and green infrastructure making connections to the Baldock community and town centre;
- Need for a central and accessible **neighbourhood centre**, to also accommodate schools and playing fields / open space;
- Northern area of green infrastructure (**Bygrave Common**) is substantial asset and should have a variety of uses;
- The **Baldock Greenway** concept, to provide a green connection around the town is widely supported;
- **Active travel links** into the town and across the railway are critical for integration and achieving modal shift.

2.8 The workshop also identified issues that need to be addressed to inform the emerging options and SMP more generally, as follows:

- **Education** – timing, quantum and location of schools to serve the development;
- **East-west link** – alignment and purpose (strategic or local);
- **Southern access** – alignment and purpose (vehicular or public transport only);
- **Off Site Transport Interventions** – timing and type of improvements, particularly to facilitate active travel movements to key destinations and the town centre;
- **Active Travel crossing** – location and design of active travel crossing of railway;
- **Train Station** – opportunities to improve pedestrian / cycle access to the station;
- **Sustainability** – opportunities for site-wide and building scale low carbon and sustainability initiatives;
- **Character** – overall aspirations for built form character and character areas.

2.9 The fixes and uncertainties identified in sections 4 and 5 of this report, plus the options presented in section take forward these recommendations, identifying those that have been resolved, those that need further consideration and those that have been tested in the options.

Design Review

- 2.10 A Design Review, undertaken by Design South East was undertaken on 20th July 2023. Following a presentation of the baseline evidence and emerging options, panel members, NHDC and HCC officers and the U&C team walked the site, focusing on the active and sustainable transport issues and connections. The panel then reviewed the emerging options and design feedback was presented and discussed in a workshop format.
- 2.11 The Design South East report of the review (refer to Appendix 4) made several recommendations as follows, which have directly informed the options presented in this report:
- discussing the potential for station improvements with Network Rail, including an eastern entrance and active travel crossing;
 - explore more westerly location of multi-modal crossing;
 - clarify non-residential components of masterplan;
 - identify areas for higher density, low car parcels;
 - develop mini masterplan for community hub;
 - revisit design of link road;
 - continue to develop the green infrastructure strategy.

Design Workshop

- 2.12 A design workshop was held on 16th August with the U&C team, NHDC officers and advisors and HCC officers (highways and education), the aim of which was to explore outstanding design issues. The principal focus of discussions was the approach to active travel (including railway crossing and connections to the town centre), location of the multi-mode crossing, education provision, archaeology and the employment parcel. These discussions (the outcome of which is summarised in the NHDC note of the workshop at Appendix 5) were helpful in reaching consensus on the approach to several issues including the active travel crossing.

3. Baseline Evidence

- 3.1 A comprehensive set of baseline evidence has been collated and summarised in the Composite Baseline Report and its appendices (see Appendix 1), which should be read alongside this report. A brief summary of the key constraints and opportunities identified as part of the baseline review is set out below:

3.2 The site is c.220 hectares in size and located to the north and east of the historic market town of Baldock. It comprises a series of parcels of predominantly agricultural land immediately adjoining the urban area. The site is within walking distance of Baldock town centre and Baldock railway station (see Figure 4 below).

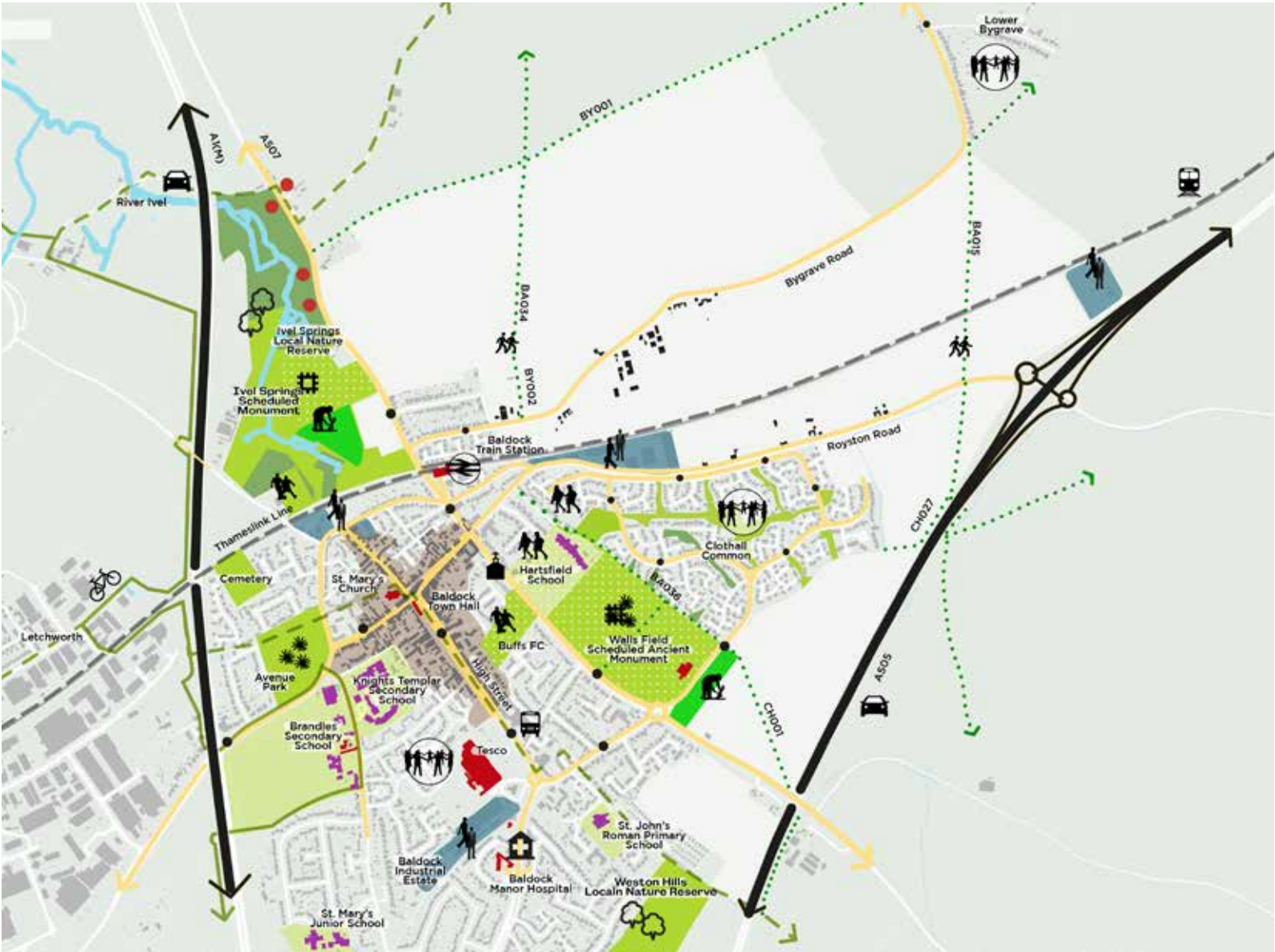


Figure 4: Site Context

Planning Policy Context

- 3.3 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022) allocates the Baldock site as an urban extension made up of a series of separate allocations (refer to figure 5): BA1 (North of Baldock), BA2 (Land southwest of Clothall Road), BA3 (Land south of Clothall Common) and BA10 (between Royston Road and the railway). A series of requirements are set out for the allocated sites, including up to 3,300 homes, 19.6 hectares of employment land, sustainable and active travel connections, green infrastructure, schools, community and local centre facilities and infrastructure.



Figure 5: Local Plan Allocation Sites

Topography

- 3.4 The site features a varying topography, influenced and characterised by the rolling chalk landscape of north Hertfordshire. The northern part of the site is defined by a ridgeline of natural chalk running east-west, dropping towards the west and the course of the River Ivel (refer to Figure 6).



Figure 6: Site Topography

Townscape and Urban Design

3.5 A Townscape Character Study was undertaken as part of the baseline assessment and details the pattern of historic growth of Baldock since the prehistoric era (refer to Figure 7).

3.6 An assessment of Baldock's townscape character has been undertaken, identifying the positive built form, landscape and public realm features that characterise the town, to directly inform the SMP and the characteristics it seeks to reintroduce or reinterpret. Key elements of the town's character to be retained and reflected in the site include historic routes such as Icknield and Millers Way; the visual landmark of St Mary's Church; the varied archaeological remains, and the Baldock architectural vernacular (refer to Figure 8).

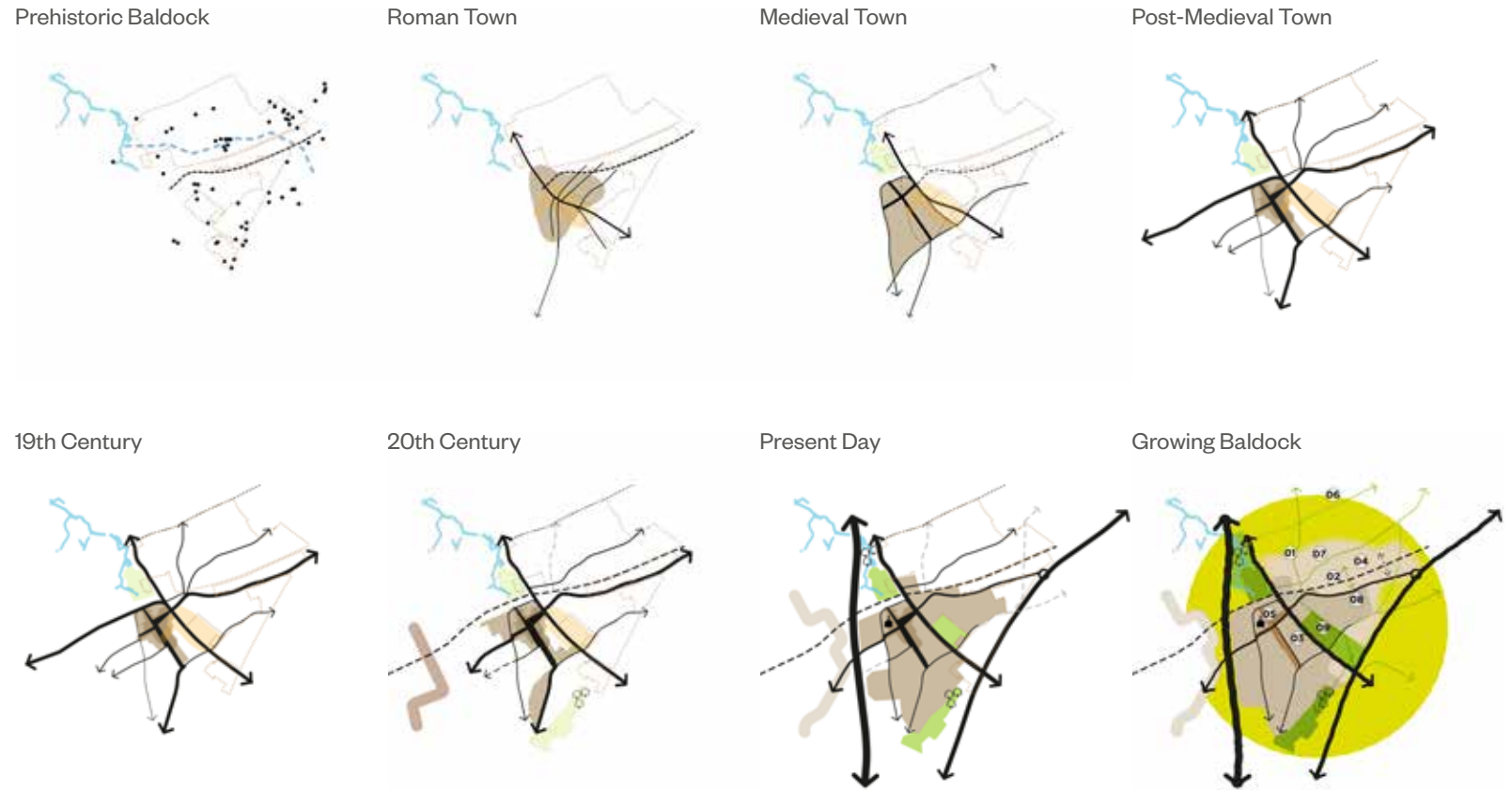


Figure 7: Baldock's Historic Growth

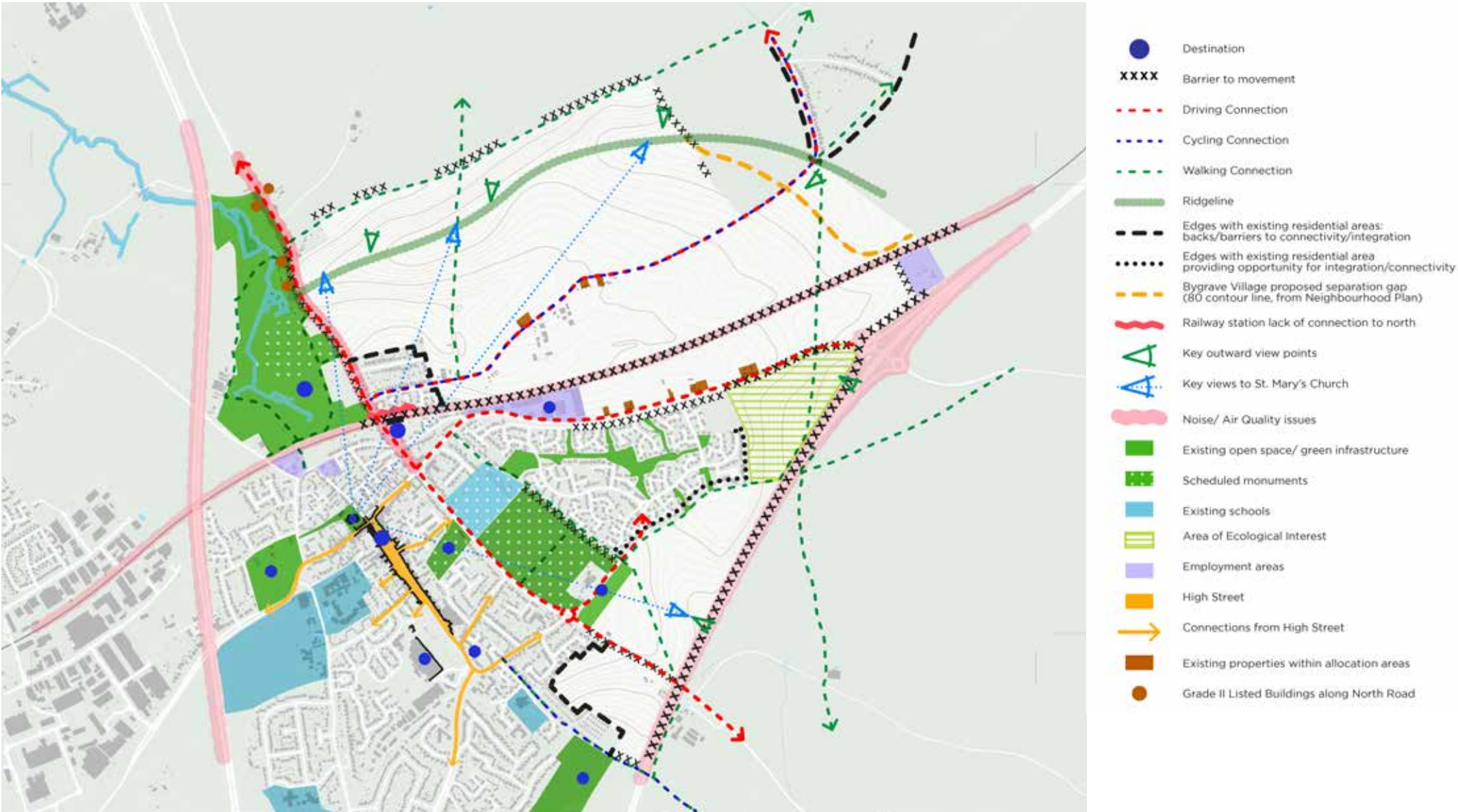


Figure 8: Urban Design and Townscape Features

Access and Movement

- 3.7 Baldock is a compact town which provides a range of facilities and services within walking / cycling distance of its residents. It also benefits from a network of Public Rights of Way through and beyond the site, including the Etonbury Wheel and Letchworth Greenways which both link to Baldock town centre (refer to Figure 9). The Accessibility and Green Infrastructure Audits undertaken as part of the baseline have identified various opportunities to enhance and add to the existing network of walking and cycling routes, with a particular focus on connectivity to the town centre and other key destinations.

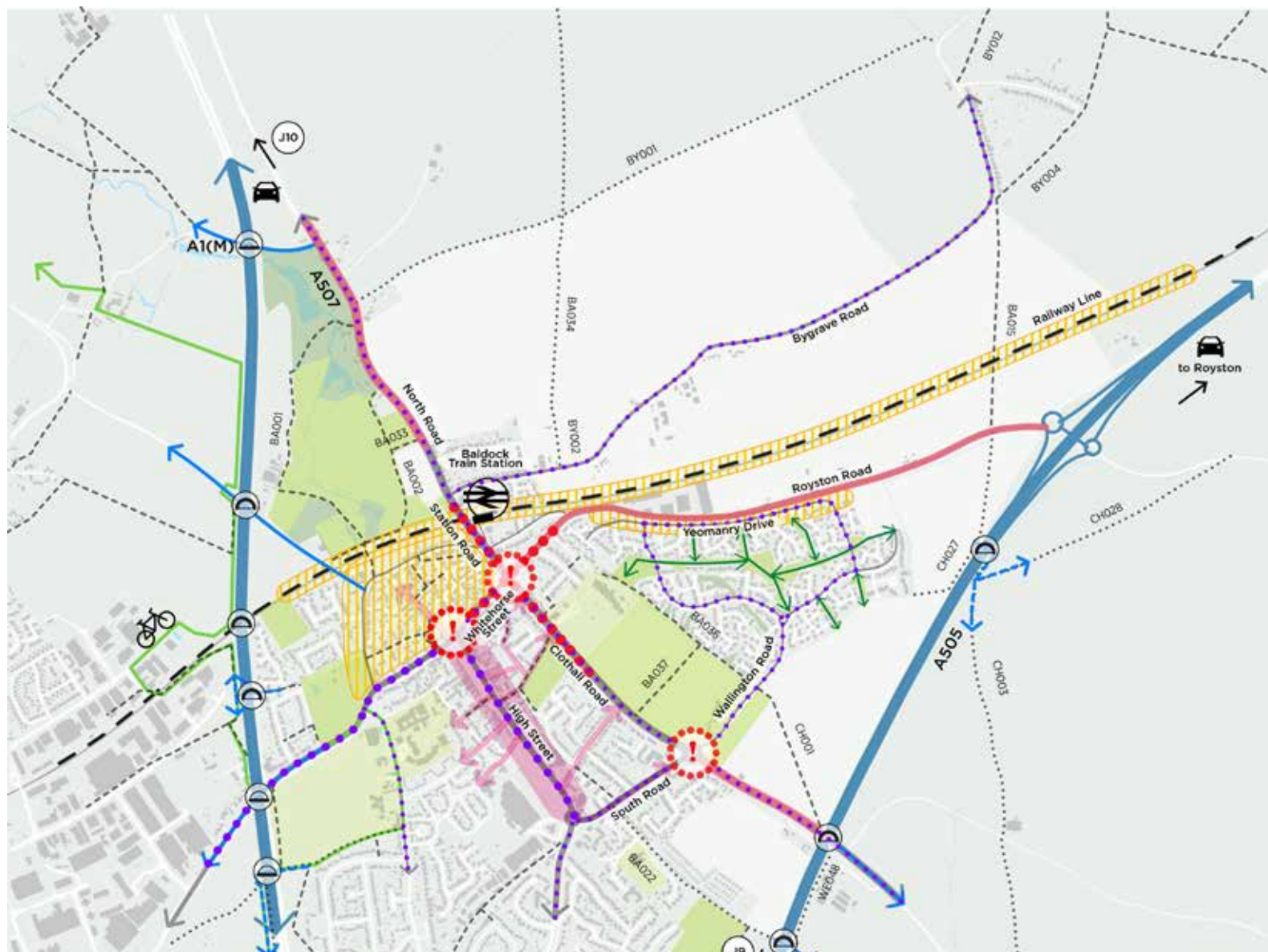


Figure 9: Site Access and Movement



- 3.8 In terms of public transport, Baldock currently experiences a low frequency of bus services, particularly on the eastern side of the town, but is well served by rail travel from Baldock station which provides connections to London, Stevenage and Cambridge.
- 3.9 Baldock town centre and particular junctions (such as the Whitehorse Street junction) experience high levels of congestion at peak hours. Data has been assembled to understand existing vehicular movement patterns in ascertained that 50% of traffic passes through Baldock to other destinations, some of which could be diverted onto the strategic road network.

Archaeology and Heritage

- 3.10 Whilst there are no designated heritage assets within the site, four Grade II listed buildings, two scheduled monuments and a conservation area are all located within its vicinity. The Hertfordshire HER records 74 monuments and findspots within the Baldock site, the earliest of which date back to the Neolithic period. The large number of HER records present within the Site reflect the importance of the local settlement landscape from the late Prehistoric and throughout the Roman period. The areas of highest potential archaeological importance are identified at Figure 10. Area 4 is currently the subject of further archaeological investigations, as outlined further in section 5 of this report.
- 3.11 The baseline work undertaken has highlighted the need for a sensitive design approach to be taken and for the heritage of the site to be embedded in its design and in particular the green infrastructure network.

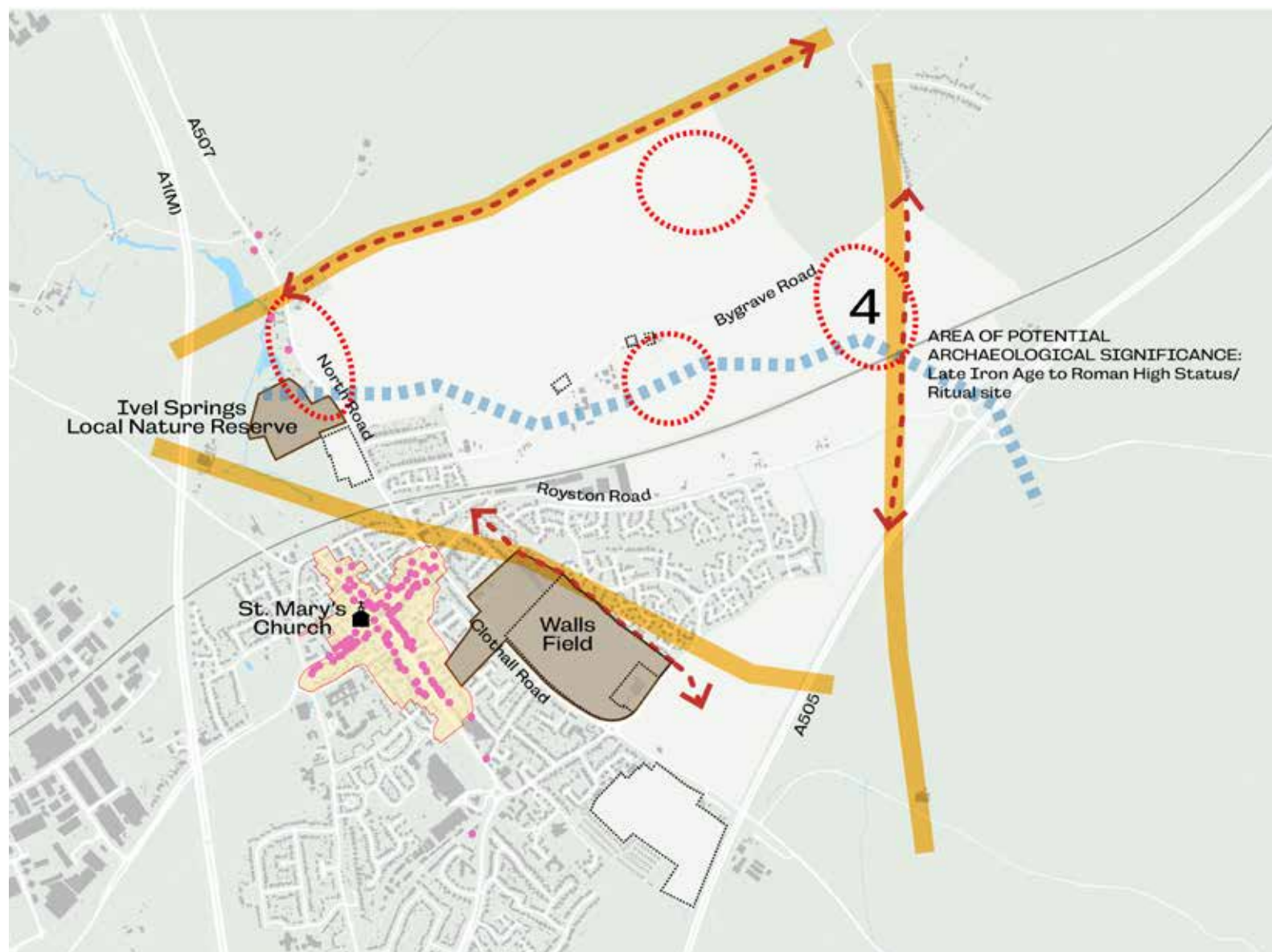


Figure 10: Heritage Features

Green Infrastructure and Landscape

3.12 The Green Infrastructure (GI) Audit undertaken as part of the baseline evidence reviewed the existing context for the development, including the Ivel Valley to the west, the North Baldock chalklands, the Wallington Scarp slopes and Weston Hills, all of which will influence the part of the development that they adjoin. The GI Audit also reviewed existing open spaces, identifying the deficit of parks and gardens, outdoor play space and amenity green space in Baldock and making recommendations for the typologies of open space that the development should include.

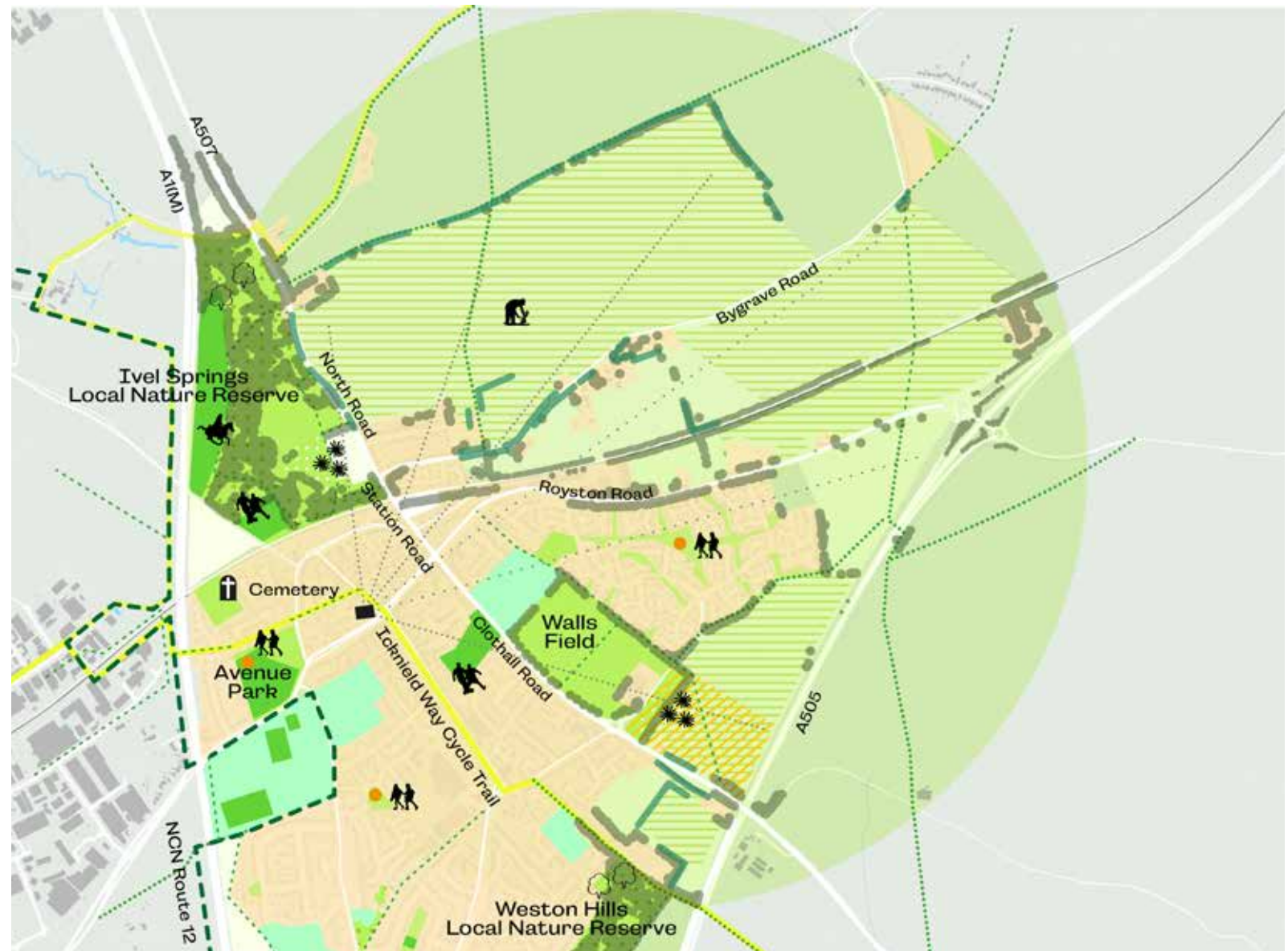
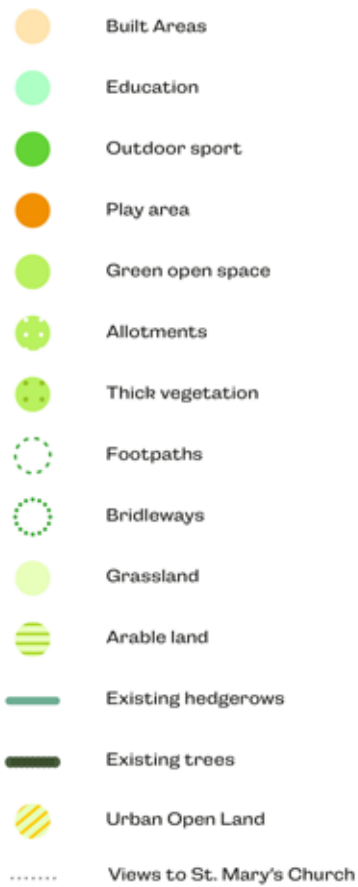


Figure 11: Landscape Features



- 3.13

Connections to the existing Nature Reserves (Ivel Springs and Weston Hills), the creation of a third circular walking/ cycling route (to connect to the Etonbury Wheel and Letchworth Greenway, the reinterpretation of the historic Bygrave Common and maintained openness of Walls Field and the Urban Open Land were all identified as opportunities emerging from the baseline.
- 3.14

The site's landscape is predominantly arable farmland with some existing trees and hedgerows (refer to Figure 11). Work undertaken as part of the baseline has concluded that trees rated as category A or B, and important linear groupings of vegetation should be retained and incorporated into the masterplan, where possible. Some priorities have been identified including the sensitive design of woodland and planting, particularly promoting hedgerow restoration and the creation of habitat buffer zones.
- 3.15

Visually Baldock lies in a 'bowl', largely hidden from many surrounding locations but with relatively distant views across the town from elevated positions on the surrounding chalk ridgelines and scarp slopes.

Ecology

- 3.16 Baseline work including a preliminary ecological assessment indicates that the majority of the site is arable farmland of low ecological value. The Weston Hill and Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) border the site. These provide strong wildlife corridors, with Ivel Springs also being adjacent to the site boundaries.
- 3.17 The site itself comprises a range of habitats of varying quality and ecological value, including amenity grassland, dense scrub, hedgerows and trees, improved and semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal and woodland. There is evidence of nesting birds and habitats with the potential to support bats, reptiles, common amphibians, badgers and other notable and priority species. The areas of greatest ecological interest are identified at Figure 12, including the Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site and the area at Spital Hill south of Royston Road.

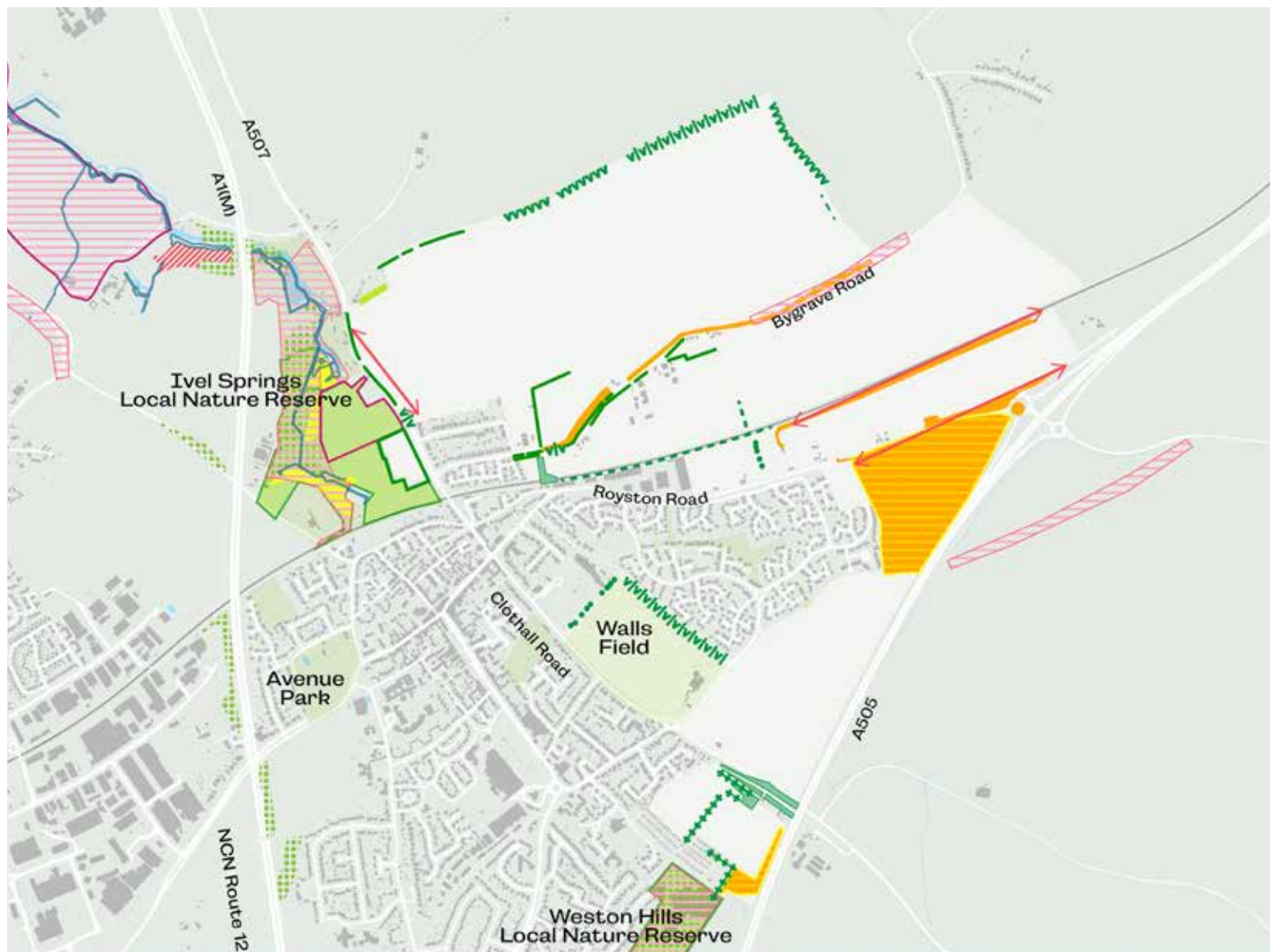


Figure 12: Ecology Baseline Plan

	Watercourses
	Areas of Ecological Interest
	Key Reptile Areas
	Key Foraging Bat Corridors
	Local Nature Reserve
	Local Wildlife Sites
	Deciduous Woodland
	Good Quality semi-improved Grassland
	Lowland Calcareous Grassland
	Lowland Meadows
	No Main Habitat
	Traditional Orchard
	Broadleaved Parkland/ Scattered Trees
	Intact Hedge - native species-rich
	Intact Hedge - species-poor
	Defunct Hedge - species-poor
	Hedge with Trees - native species-rich
	Hedge with Trees - species-poor

Drainage and Flooding

- 3.18

The site is located within Flood Zone 1. The majority of the site is also at very low risk of surface water flooding with the exception of two low lying areas adjacent to North Road and Bygrave Road. There are no surface water sewers on the site, however an existing foul water rising main crossing the northern part of the site may need to be relocated to facilitate development. Additional foul drainage infrastructure will be required in due course to connect the site to the Letchworth Waste Water Treatment Works.
- 3.19

SuDS features will be required in the areas of greatest surface water flood risk, at the lowest points of the site. The masterplanning of the site will also provide an opportunity to improve overland flows and reduce localised flooding. In addition, the infiltration of surface water may help recharge groundwater and positively impact the water levels in the River Ivel, which have been the subject of recent over-extraction.

Community Facilities

- 3.20

An assessment of the existing facilities in Baldock and the surrounding area was undertaken and identified a number of well used community facilities in the town. The report has noted that there are opportunities to provide new facilities on site, particularly a network of play spaces and green corridors and new health services.

3.21 Drawing on the baseline evidence, NHDC have prepared a draft vision statement for the Baldock development as follows:

Vision

The new development will facilitate the transition towards net zero in carbon emissions through excellent planning, design, construction and operation. In addition to targeting net-zero, the new built development and infrastructure will be designed to minimize consumption of energy and water and to be resilient to more extreme climate and weather conditions.

The new development will strengthen Baldock's status as a cultural, inclusive and vibrant town with a rich and distinctive historical past, landscape setting and access to extensive leisure routes into the surrounding countryside. New development will help to reveal and celebrate the towns' rich and important historic environment and value through green spaces, heritage trails and community involvement.

The new development and Baldock's town centre will prioritise people walking, cycling and using public transport. The sites will be planned in a way that encourages every resident's first choice of movement to be to walk or cycle, or use public transport to meet their daily needs.

Through a landscape-led approach the expanded town will gain access to new green spaces for nature and recreation. Walking and cycling routes through and around the town, including a Baldock Greenway, will support active travel, healthy lifestyles and provide excellent access to the surrounding countryside.

Areas of habitat enhancement and new habitat creation will make substantial new 'space for nature' and deliver at least a 20% net gain for biodiversity, aiming for 25%, and a significantly enhanced ecological network.

New community amenities will complement and enhance existing provision in Baldock and surrounding areas, meeting day to day needs. They will be located to enable easy access by sustainable travel modes, promoting social inclusion and interaction, well-being and strong communities.

Off Royston Road there will be new adaptable spaces for inward investment and local businesses to start and grow, ensuring job opportunities for local people, plus actively encouraging development opportunities for sustainability, such as a sustainable waste facility. The space will be complemented by a range of home-working and co-working spaces. The town centre will thrive as the additional population and increased footfall will support a greater diversity of retailers, businesses, cafes and restaurants.

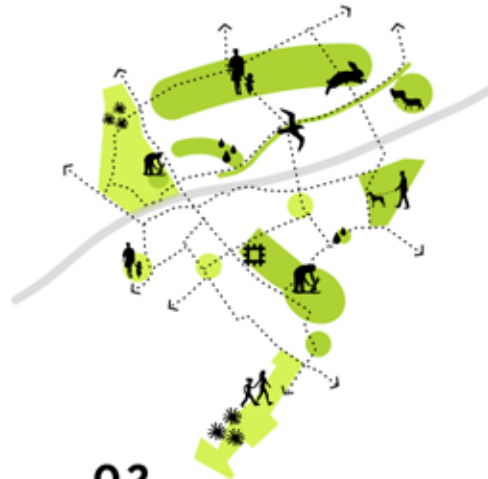
Placemaking Objectives

3.22 The following set of placemaking objectives flow from the vision and have been used to test the masterplan options against (refer to section 6).



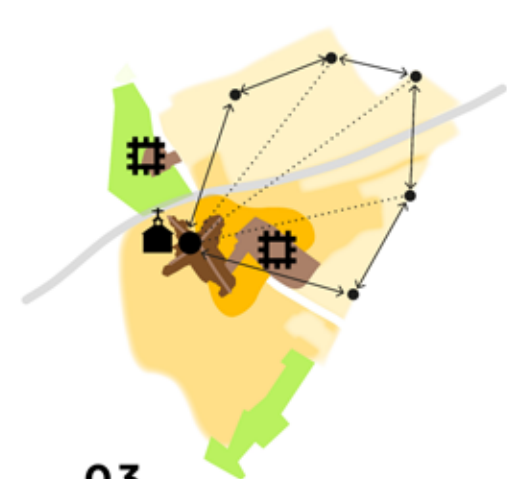
01 Landscape led approach

To adopt a landscape-led approach to planning and design with a minimum of 40% of the sites dedicated to green infrastructure. The natural features, characteristics and connectivity of the site will guide the provision and distribution of green and blue infrastructure before overlaying areas of development



02 Connected and accessible green infrastructure

To deliver a multi-functional network of connected and accessible green infrastructure, including amenity space for formal and informal recreation, a haven for wildlife and biodiversity, sustainable surface water drainage, climate change adaptation and mitigation, encouraging active travel, improved air quality and reduced noise pollution, food-growing and community engagement



03 Conserve and enhance historic environment

To conserve and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets on site including using areas of archaeological interest to inform the location, character, function and design of green infrastructure and designing heritage trails increasing public understanding of the history of the site through community involvement



04 Walking and cycling prioritised

To ensure walking and cycling will be the first choice of transport by most people for most trips, minimizing carbon, NOx and particulate emissions



05 Town centre adaptation

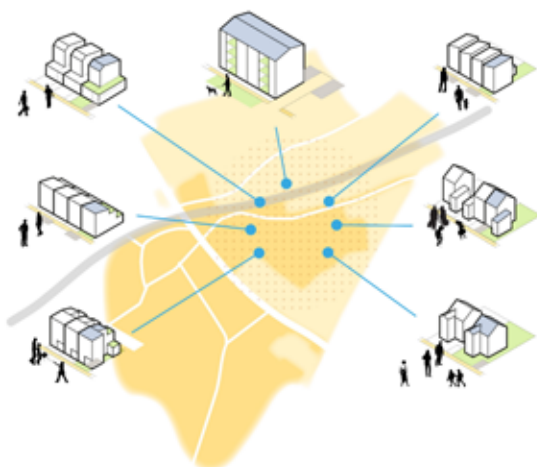
To adapt the town centre towards a more people-centred experience, encouraging people to walk, cycle and spend more time there



06 Walking and cycling network to key destinations

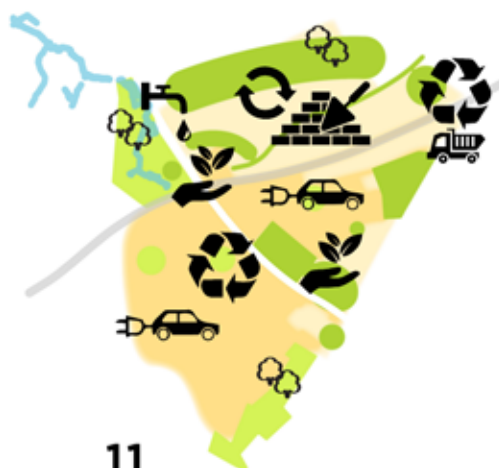
To create safe, direct and coherent networks of walking and cycling routes to key destinations within and beyond the development sites (including addressing areas of existing severance such as the railway line and areas with a poor pedestrian and cycling environment)

To support the vitality and viability of Baldock town centre through ensuring a complementary range of facilities and services within the development sites and strengthening active travel linkages (walking and cycling) between the development sites and the town centre to increase footfall and visitor spend/dwell time



To enable the delivery of c. 3300 homes that are well designed in terms of local character, identity and sustainability to meet the needs of the current and future generations

To provide education, nursery, health and community facilities on the development sites in co-located community hubs that complement existing provision support social integration, inclusivity and promote inter-generational activities and interest and are designed to meet the needs of everyone



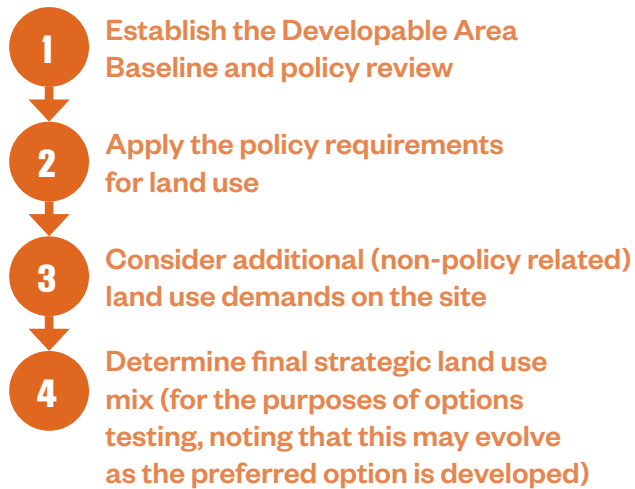
To ensure the efficient use of natural resources including the optimal use of land and buildings, the use of materials from sustainable sources and sustainable construction methods to minimize embodied carbon usage

4. Strategic Masterplan Fixes

- 4.1 The baseline evidence and subsequent options preparation and workshop process has generated a range of areas of consensus where elements of the masterplan are effectively 'fixed' or agreed between all parties. This section of the report articulates the scope of these fixes which are found within all the masterplan options.

Land Use

- 4.2 All masterplan options have been designed to incorporate residential, employment, education, community and local centre uses, alongside grey, green and blue infrastructure. The land use and development mix tested within the options has been established through the following staged approach:



Developable Area

- 4.3 Each option adopts the same approach to the extent of development area, all of which exclude the following area to respond to policy and baseline influences:

- northern extent defined by the east-west ridgeline which forms the highest point of the site and a natural 'break' for development, north of which lies Bygrave Common;
- northeastern edge of development limited by Neighbourhood Plan policy E5 which seeks to maintain the separation between Baldock and Lower Bygrave by ensuring the development is set back from the village by 170m (corresponding with the 80m contour line);
- Walls Field, as a Scheduled Monument, is protected from development that would impact on its archaeological remains and heritage interest, so falls outside the developable area;

- An area of Urban Open Land to the south east of Walls Field is identified by the Local Plan (via policy CGB5), within which openness is to be maintained, to protect the views from Baldock out to the open countryside and the Wallington Scarp slopes. Accordingly, this area will focus on open space provision and not built development;
- areas of ecological interest including the Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site and the Spital Hill area at the northern end of BA3 will remain undeveloped;
- land to the west of North Road, adjacent to the Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserve will not be developed but instead will deliver some form of open space;
- the areas of greatest surface water drainage risk at the lowest parts of the site, largely in BA1, will form a SUDS corridor to convey and store surface water, as well as performing a wider ecological and amenity function, so will fall outside the developable area;

- 4.4 Having removed the above areas from the area of potential development, all options therefore assume a gross developable area of 84ha (or 80 ha if the archaeological remains at Area 4, described further in section 5, are to be retained in situ effectively precluding development), and this is the starting point for the emerging land use budget.

Planning Policy Requirements

4.5 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan policies set out the following land use requirements, which form the starting point for the SMP land use mix:

4.6 The Local Plan provides a clear and up to date set of land use requirements for the allocations and therefore the assumption is the options start from a position of policy compliance wherever possible. The box below sets out the Local Plan requirements for the SMP area:

- 3,300 homes 2,800 (BA1), 200 (BA2), 245 (BA3), 50 (BA4)
- Local centre(s)
- Structural planting to reinforce defensible green belt boundary
- Link road connecting A505 and A507 and southern link road connecting Royston Road to Wallington Road or A507.
- Vehicle, cycle and pedestrian links
- 19.6ha employment
- 28 self-build plots
- Site for care home
- Community hall and GP surgery
- Up to 6FE primary school provision
- Up to 8FE secondary school provision
- Secondary rail crossing
- Green infrastructure including play
- Urban Open Land

Other Potential Land Uses

4.7 A range of additional land uses have been suggested by NHDC / HCC and other stakeholders as having potential to be incorporated into the development. Discussions in relation to these uses are at an early stage and will develop as the Strategic Masterplan and OPA are progressed:

- Waste Transfer Station / Vehicle Depot / Household Waste Recycling Centre (dependent on funding being secured)
- On site utilities infrastructure - foul pumping station and primary substation
- SEND School
- Childcare – pre-school, private nurseries
- Youth provision
- Extra Care and supported housing
- GP Surgery to potentially accommodate relocated Baldock Surgery as well as to cater for demand generated by development
- Christchurch Baldock - Evangelical Church looking for new premises

Land Use Fixes

4.8 On the basis of the above assumptions, the SMP options therefore incorporate the following land uses, as shown on the plan at Figure xx:

- **Residential:** new homes will form the largest component of the Baldock development and will be delivered in BA1, BA2 and BA3. The housing areas will incorporate market, affordable and self-build units as well as potentially extra care and supported housing, in accordance with local need. The options consider variations in the quantum of housing that could be delivered, depending on the land take for other uses such as education and the impact any areas of archaeology might have on developable area. Overall, it is unlikely that the full up to 3,300 home maximum set by policy SP14 will be reached given site constraints;
- **Employment:** allocation BA10 between Royston Road and the railway, east of the existing industrial area, will deliver employment land uses. The SMP will explore options and typologies for this employment area, informed by ongoing reviews of the local economy and demand;
- **Health Hub:** a commitment has been made to deliver a health 'hub' of some form at the western end of the employment parcel, adjacent to the active travel crossing. Its form and land use mix is being explored but could include new GP services alongside a wider health offering, potentially combined with small community / retail uses that would connect the employment area to Baldock and create an active and vibrant community facility in this location;
- **Waste:** HCC and NHDC's requirements for a vehicle depot and waste transfer station will be accommodated at the eastern end of the employment parcel, east of the all-modes crossing of the railway;
- **Energy:** an area (size to be confirmed) will also be reserved at the eastern end of BA10 for potential future energy uses such as battery storage, to facilitate the low carbon nature of the development;
- **Local Centre:** a single local centre will be located centrally within BA1, at the confluence of active travel routes through the site. The development is not large enough to sustain a second centre and it is important that the primary of the town centre as the main retail / leisure offer is not compromised by over provision of these uses in the development. The exact nature and mix of uses within the Local Centre is being explored, but will likely comprise of local retail and community facilities;
- **Primary Education:** the masterplan options assume the delivery of two primary schools in BA1 in accordance with Local Plan policy SP14: one centrally located as part of the local centre and the second closer to Baldock, at the south western end of Bygrave Road. The size of these schools (either 2 or 3FE, and the need for reserved land to allow for expansion) is being explored with HCC Education and will depend on the anticipated development capacity, resulting pupil yield and the ability of Hartsfield School to expand to incorporate another form of entry;
- **Secondary Education:** masterplan option 4 considers the different means by which secondary education could be accommodated either on or off site, as part of an expansion of Knights Templar School. In every scenario, additional secondary school capacity will be provided to meet the needs of the new development;
- **SEND School:** the options all include a 2 hectare SEND school site in the vicinity of the local centre, in accordance with HCC requirements;



Figure 13: Land Use Fixes

- **Open Space:** a network of open spaces and green infrastructure is incorporated in all options, providing a range of open space typologies, as set out in the next section;
- **Community Hub:** an area of green space is proposed at the south western end of Bygrave Road adjacent to the railway, east of the station. This will incorporate open space in the vicinity of the southernmost primary school, forming a key gateway into the site from the station;
- **Infrastructure:** the masterplan options all include an all-modes vehicular crossing and active crossing of the railway, access points from the existing road network into the site and a series of station improvements and off-site highway interventions, outlined in the following sections.

Green Infrastructure

4.9 The development will be landscape led and structured around a network of strategic and local green spaces, performing a range of amenity, drainage, ecology, health, leisure and landscape functions. Each masterplan option includes the following strategic green infrastructure elements (refer to Figure xx):

- **Bygrave Common:** an area of strategic green space north of the ridgeline, which performs a transition role between the development edge and countryside beyond. Bygrave Common will incorporate a range of ecological areas as well as provision of formal open space and parkland which is accessible to the public. Its role and reach is intended to be Baldock wide, providing another valuable open space for the town and relieving pressure on the existing Local Nature Reserves.
- **Baldock Greenway:** a circular walking and cycling route around Baldock is incorporated in all options, forming a third green loop that connects to and complements the Letchworth Greenway and Etonbury Wheel. This route runs connects the High Street and Local Nature Reserves with the site, travelling through Bygrave Common in BA1, crossing the railway and through Spital Hill, BA3 and the Urban Open Land. This area, and others within the site, will provide the opportunity for heritage interpretation, with areas of archaeological and heritage interest embedded within green spaces. The potential for a heritage trail around the site, including historic routeways including Millers Way, is being explored with NHDC/HCC;
- **Walls Field:** the Scheduled Monument will remain undeveloped and will be taken out of its current agricultural use to become a valued open space at the heart of Baldock. The scope of interventions such as built footpaths in this location is limited due to the presence of archaeological remains close to the surface;
- **Urban Open Land:** this area will provide open space in a range of typologies likely to include sports pitches, productive landscapes and amenity areas, whilst maintaining the open views to the countryside to the south east;
- **Spital Hill:** the masterplan assumes the retention of the majority of this area of spoil from the construction of the A505 which has become an area of ecological interest and a key habitat for reptiles. It is also a well used recreational area and will therefore remain as an open space;
- **Wetland Corridor:** the lowest lying area of the site, east of North Road will incorporate a wetland corridor incorporating SUDS, green space and reflecting the route of the historic winterbourne ;
- **Internal Green Space:** a network of smaller green and blue spaces within the development parcels will also be provided, connecting to the larger areas of open space and providing more local opportunities for play and access to green areas, such as pocket parks and orchards.



Figure 14: GI Fixes

Movement

4.10 The NHDC objectives for the Baldock site includes a target of 60% of trips from the development being by sustainable modes (walking, cycling, public transport or car sharing). The approach to movement within the site and between it and Baldock town centre and other key destinations has therefore necessarily priorities the delivery of active and sustainable connections. A combination of on and off-site routes and interventions is therefore proposed, to provide the optimum conditions to achieve the sustainable and active mode targets. This section of the report summarises the measures that have been considered at length with HCC Highways and NHDC and are therefore considered as fixes (refer to Figure xx), subject to more detailed testing as part of a future Transport Assessment.

On Site

- **All Modes Railway Crossing:** multi-modal link between North Road and Royston Road (refer to options) connecting to crossing of railway at eastern end of the site. Crossing location determined by levels and archaeological remains (avoiding Area 4);
- **Active Travel Railway Crossing:** crossing or underpass beneath railway (refer to options for more detail), to provide active travel route from BA1, through Clothall Common, towards the town centre. To be located centrally, to the east of the industrial area, in land in the control of U&C/HCC and to include an at grade crossing of Royston Road;
- **Bus Route:** bus link from Royston Road through Clothall Common towards Clothall Road, to provide improved public transport to this area and BA3, as part of a bus loop through BA1;
- **North Road Access:** separate vehicular and bus access points into BA1 from new junctions on North Road;
- **Development Access:** local vehicular access into development at BA3 from new junctions on Royston Road and BA2 from Clothall Road;
- **PROW Improvement:** improvements to the existing network of PRowWs through the site, including upgrades to bridleways;
- **Station Improvements:** enhancements to access to the station with new access points (refer to options) and to the station facilities and crossings.

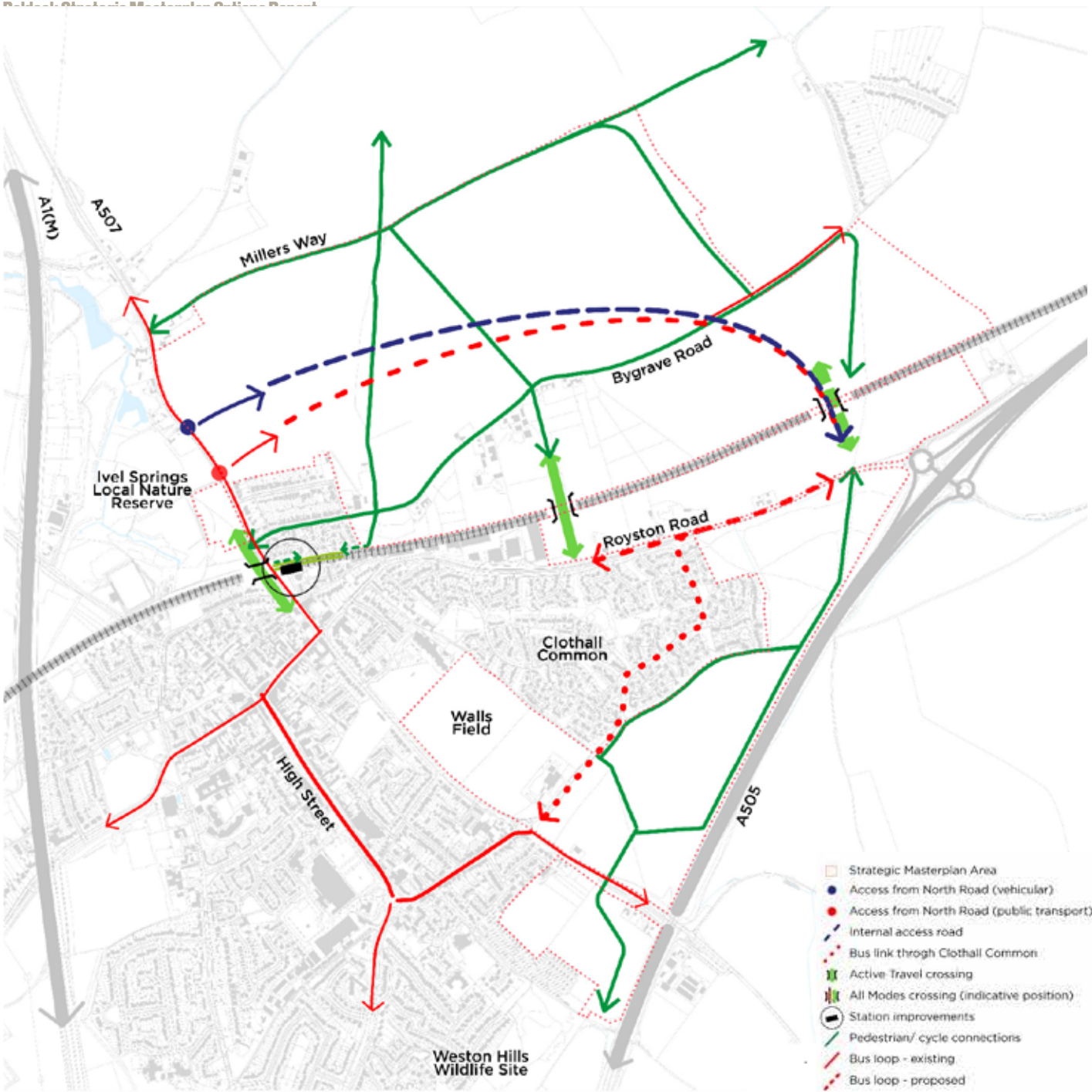


Figure 15: Movement Fixes

Off Site Interventions

4.11 A long list of off-site highway interventions has been explored with HCC Highways / NHDC in the transport task group meetings. The following short list (illustrated at Figure 16) provides a package of measures that aim to facilitate active travel movement to key destinations and ensure that the transport impacts of the development are mitigated. These will be refined as the SMP progresses and will be subject to ongoing assessment in relation to feasibility and viability.

- **Off Site PROW Improvements:** contributions to or delivery of improvements to the wider PROW network, such as to deliver the Baldock Greenway, connections to and through the Local Nature Reserves and towards Radwell Meadows;
- **Active Travel Route to Town Centre:** improvements are proposed to active travel routes between the site and the town centre primarily along two corridors:
 - o Icknield Way East, Icknield Way and Norton Road through parking controls, traffic calming and demand management to create a low-trafficked environment for walking and cycling;
 - o Clothall Road, Thurnall Close, Simpson Drive and Mansfield Road, taking advantage of the low-trafficked streets and improving crossing points.
- **North Road Interventions:** significant interventions are proposed for North Road, to prioritise its use by active and sustainable modes. The road will be narrowed to one lane in the vicinity of and under the railway bridge, allowing vehicles to only travel in one direction at a time, controlled by traffic lights. This will allow the footway/cycleway to be widened to around 4 metres wide, creating a much more pleasant pedestrian environment. The overall approach to North Road, through this intervention and the addition of junctions to access the development is to reduce space for vehicles and to create 'friction' which reduces the desirability of this route to access Baldock using private vehicles ;
- **Royston Road Improvements:** new crossing points to reduce severance, at the active travel bridge landing, between Kings Mount and Icknield Way East, and at the Whitehorse Street junction;
- **White Horse Street Junction:** improved crossing points, tying into the new infrastructure on Station Road, and reconfiguration of the Whitehorse Street junction to restrict:
 - o Left turns from Station Road to Royston Road;
 - o Right turns from Royston Road to Station Road; and
 - o Left turns from Whitehorse Street to Station Road.
- **Low Traffic Neighbourhood:** introduction of modal filters on Icknield Way, Norton Road (north) and potentially other residential streets bound by them (and north of Whitehorse Street) to create a more walk and cycle friendly area and to prevent displacement of traffic (resulting from other planned interventions). Formal cycle access at southern end of Church Street to facilitate access to High Street and new crossing at southern end of Norton Road to facilitate access to Knights Templar.
- **South Road:** traffic calming and public realm enhancements on South Road, including new crossings and continuous footway crossings over side roads.
- **Clothall Road and Wallington Road:** segregated cycle lanes (through reallocated road space). Enhanced crossings and junction improvements at Clothall Road / South Road.
- **A1 (M) junctions:** potential improvements as necessary to accommodate traffic displaced due to roadspace reallocation and friction within Baldock.

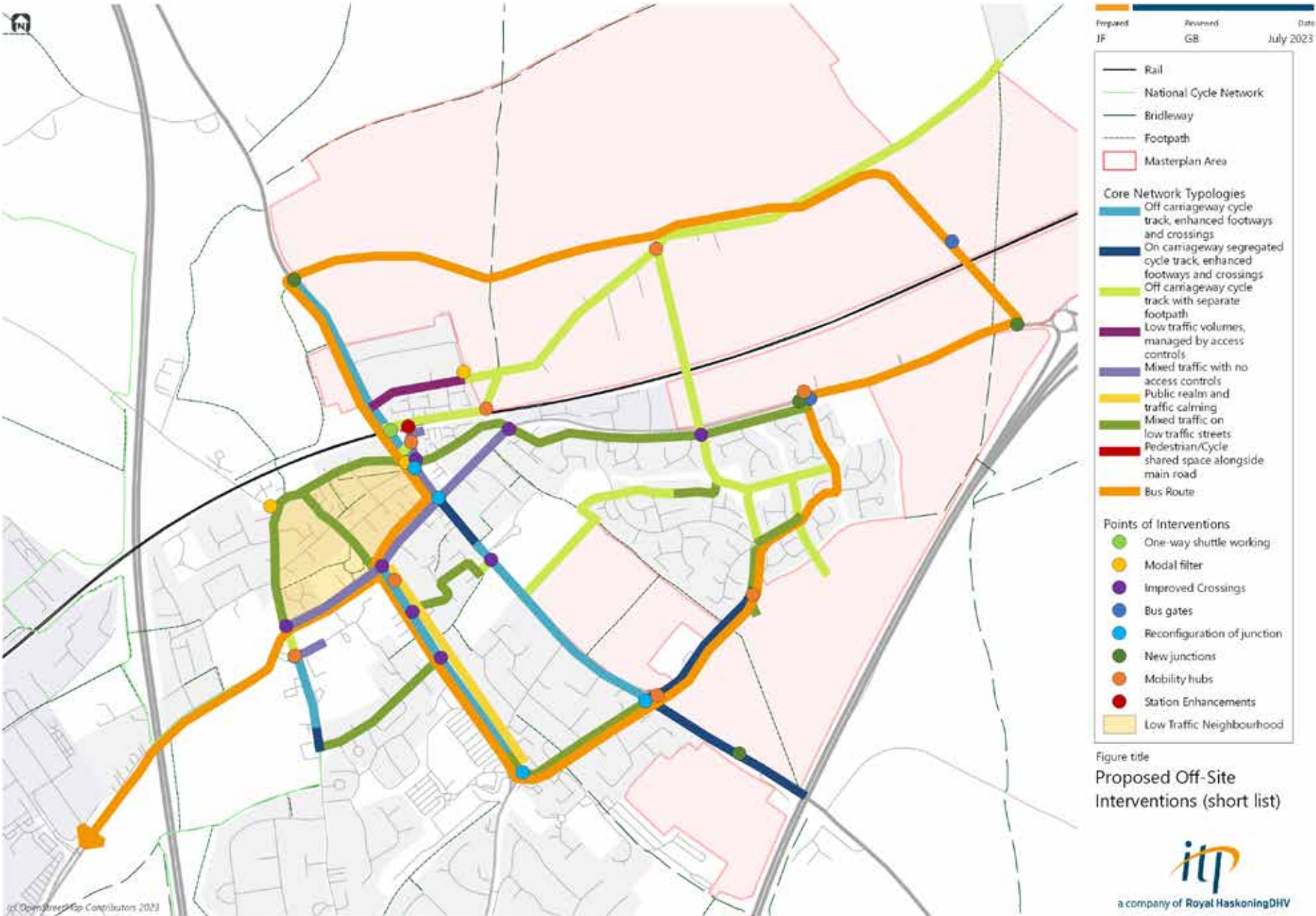


Figure 16: Off Site Highway Interventions

5. Strategic Masterplan issues to be resolved

Education

- 5.1 Section 4 set out the considerable progress made in fixing key components of the masterplan for Baldock. However, discussions are ongoing on the issues of education and archaeology and yet to be fully resolved. This section outlines the scope of these issues, the influence they have on the masterplan and the next steps involved in addressing them.
- 5.2 The approach and solution to the secondary school provision for Baldock has, and is continuing to be discussed at length, working in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council Growth and Infrastructure Unit (GIU) and Child Services, and North Hertfordshire Council.
- 5.3 In accordance with the Local Plan, each option that has been developed and tested, has provided for land for an up to 8FE secondary school situated within BA1. However, an opportunity to identify a more appropriate secondary school solution for Baldock needed to be addressed. This was not only due to the child yield of the development relative to the housing capacity in the preferred option, but also principally to embody the 'Baldock First' and 'Growing Baldock' aspirations of the vision.
- 5.4 The principle of providing two secondary schools at Baldock required testing, to identify whether a one-school solution was a better fit for both the Town and the masterplan. This was in response to feedback received at public consultation events, wide community engagement, and discussions with the Headteacher and Business Development Manager at Knights Templar School. This confirmed that Knights Templar School is a highly regarded education provider, central to the identity of Baldock as a place, and of importance to those who live there.
- 5.5 Three options for the secondary school provision were defined, to progress an acceptable position for the masterplan;
- **One secondary school provision:** Expanding the existing Knights Templar School
 - **One secondary school provision:** Providing the full required provision (12 FE) on BA1
 - **Two secondary school provision:** in line with the Local Plan policy.

5.6 To conclude on a preferred option, Hertfordshire County Council's GIU Team have instructed a feasibility assessment, with the following scope;

- Define principally the desired secondary school solution for Baldock; one secondary school or two;
- Calculate the required forms of entry yielding from the development as a result of the preferred option housing capacity;
- Identify and confirm the available capacity at the existing Knights Templar School for the intake from Baldock's new residents;
- Assess the feasibility of expanding the existing Knights Templar Site to increase its capacity to up to 12FE (to cater for the new residents of Baldock), including carrying out a highways and active travel feasibility assessment on the existing network for the expansion, and indicative designs / layout for an expanded school;

- Assess the cost and land take of providing the one secondary school solution at BA1, including understanding how a new secondary school at BA1 could expand from 6FE to 8FE to 10FE to and then to up to 12FE;
- Assess the feasibility and viability of the redevelopment of the KTS existing site for residential use, calculating the site's land value; and
- Define the phasing and delivery of the secondary school provision in line with the phasing of housing delivery and incorporate into the viability assessment.

5.7 Until the Education Authority has agreed their preferred secondary school solution, the masterplan options must reflect a position of compliance with the Local Plan policy, but with recognition that work is progressing and that the masterplan would be able to accommodate all Baldock's secondary education needs at BA1, or for delivery of residential development at BA1 if expansion of the existing school site is chosen as the preferred solution.

Archaeology

5.8 There is a wealth of existing knowledge and information on the rich heritage and archaeological history of Baldock, with archive Historic England files, published reports from previous developments in Baldock; most notably Clothall Common, aerial photographs of cropping lines and desktop studies.

5.9 Furthermore, previous trial trenching was carried out on the BA1 site, for the previous planning application, and on part of the BA3 site for the A505 Bypass works, providing us with a strong view of the archaeological remains and their relative level of significance, for this stage of the development's planning.

5.10 For any areas that trial trenching findings are more limited; BA2, and the southeastern part of BA3, including the planned urban open space/ landscaped area situated between BA2 and BA3, further trial trenching is proposed.

- 5.11 Collating all information available and retrieved on the archaeological history on site, multiple areas were highlighted as being of interest, of which the majority were able to be encapsulated within the core green infrastructure network of the site. The one area of interest that remained as a masterplan challenge is referred to as site 4, an 8 hectare site spanning north and south of the railway (refer to Figure 10 in section 3 of this report).
- 5.12 Sub options within Option 4, that are outlined later in this report, identified the access for the primary all-modes road, off the A505 into the BA1 site, to cross the railway line with the bridge landing proposed to be within the vicinity of the 8ha site of interest, creating a masterplan conflict.
- 5.13 To understand the archaeological site of interest further and assess whether the masterplan was to respond to the site, a three-stage geophysical survey was instructed which provides a further tier of detailed information on the site's potential remains and potential significance. The geophysical survey was non-intrusive and was made up of the following surveys;
- Survey of c. 8ha over the area of interest with a magnetic system;
 - A shallow, high-resolution electromagnetic (EM) survey across c. 6ha of the main rectilinear enclosure, giving a comparable dataset which might enable more information to be teased out of the results;
 - A final targeted high-resolution multi-channel Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to investigate particular areas within the enclosure complex with the aim of better characterising the features therein.
- 5.14 The geophysical survey is yet to be formally reported, and therefore a conclusion on whether further archaeological investigations, in the form of ground truthing, is yet to be made. However, as part of the option testing and development process, the masterplan decision was made to move the primary access road to the west towards Baldock town centre, along Royston Road instead of access directly off the A505 roundabout, as can be seen in the Rail Line All Modes Eastern Crossing Options. As a result, the bridge landing for the primary road is no longer conflicting with the archaeological site of interest. This enabled further masterplan benefits in ensuring the scale and nature of the access road was designed to be reduced from serving a bypass function, to serving a development access function, in alignment with feedback from the design review panel.
- 5.15 The remaining impact the archaeological area of interest has on the masterplan, is in continuing to assess and conclude on whether the site must be preserved due to its level of significance, or whether it can be developed as a residential land use. Further, assessing and concluding on the scale of either the preservation or the development.

6. Strategic Masterplan Options

- 6.1 Five masterplan options have emerged from the baseline and initial consultation stage of the SMP process, and from the options and design workshops/reviews. These have been agreed with NHDC officers and form the basis of this report and the options testing stage of the SMP.

- 6.2 All the options take into account and incorporate the same approach to the 'fixes' set out in section 4 of this report. These elements are therefore common features to all options and do not form part of the testing process. The features that vary between the proposed options, with one exception (education), focus on transport and movement issues. The intention is to unpack and test variations in approaches to prioritising active travel, providing internal connections and improving the railway station.
- 6.3 The purpose of the options stage of the SMP is to present and test such options, so that a preferred option can emerge. The process has been devised such that the preferred option can be a variation of elements of several options, such that an optimum masterplan solution results. As required by the SMP Brief, each option is tested against an agreed set of criteria as follows:
1. **Response to the baseline constraints and opportunities** – does the option respect, respond or maximise the opportunities presented by the key identified site factors?
 2. **Compliance with place making objectives** – does the option contribute towards the meeting of the vision set out in section 3 and specifically the emerging place making objectives?
 3. **Compliance with policy** – does the option comply with policy within the North Herts Local Plan and the Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan?
 4. **Feasibility and delivery** – is an option technically feasible, can it be delivered as part of the wider scheme, and is it supported by stakeholders (where relevant)?
- 6.4 Each option is presented in this section in the same way, with the masterplan option presented alongside a brief description of its key features, plus a qualitative assessment of how it performs against the above criteria. A brief RAG rating against each criterion is provided for the purposes of comparison between options, albeit it is recognised that each option's performance is more nuanced and so the qualitative assessment is the primary means by which decisions have been made in terms of the generation of a preferred option masterplan.
- 6.5 The options are focused on testing different approaches to movement, with very little variation in land use or development footprint, which is effectively the same for all, with the exception of option 5 which considers the implications of delivering a secondary school on or off site. As such, this option includes more information on potential development capacity.

Option 1: Strategic Road Links

- 6.6 This option proposes two strategic all-mode road links designed to divert traffic off the A507, including traffic travelling between the A1(M) and the A505 (see Figure 17). Two links are proposed: a link through BA1 north of the development parcels, providing a connection between the A507 and A505; and a link between Royston Road and Clothall Road, either through the development parcels (BA2 and BA3) to Wallington Road – option 1A, or south of the development area and A505 – option 1B. The link roads in this option would be designed as ‘strategic’ in form, characterised by higher speed, wide carriageways designed to allow for the free flow and prioritisation of private vehicles. An internal access road (shown in blue on Figure 17) is also proposed, that will provide access into the development parcels in BA1.

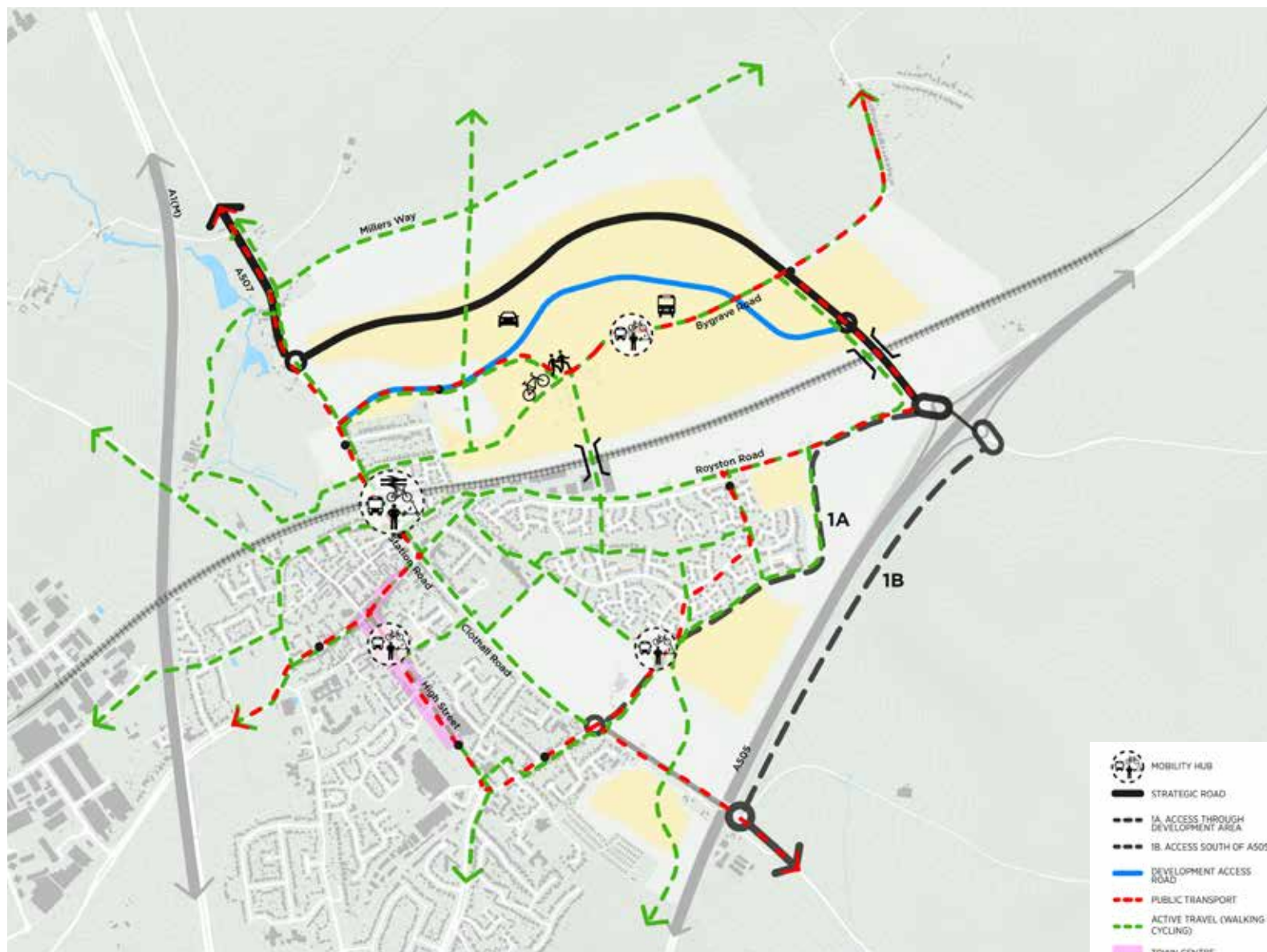


Figure 17: Option 1 Strategic Road Links

Assessment Against Criteria

Response to Baseline

- 6.7 A strategic link road around the edge of BA1 would follow the topography and the ridgeline that forms the northern most extent of the development area and would therefore be visible at the highest point of the site. This may result in landscape and visual impacts, as well as have negative noise and air quality impacts on adjacent residential properties. A direct connection of the link road through BA1 onto the A505 roundabout may also have implications for the area of most archaeological significance, known as Area 4, albeit options to test variations of this connection are considered later in this report.



Figure 18: Aggregated AM and PM Weekday Movements

- 6.8 Traffic surveys have been undertaken in Baldock to inform the baseline review and to understand the movement of vehicles into and through the town. This exercise concluded that only 7% of all traffic movements travel between North Road and Royston Road (see Figure 18 below), which is the movement that would be most affected by / benefit from a link road through the northern part of the site akin to that proposed as part of this option.
- 6.9 Similarly, the movement which would benefit by the southern link road (through BA3) between Clothall Road and Royston Road is not a significant through movement in Baldock; it does not feature in the top ten highest traffic flows through the town.
- 6.10 On this basis, and following extensive discussions with HCC Highways, it has been agreed that whilst a 'link road' would reduce traffic in Baldock, and particularly at the Whitehorse Street junction, if combined with the off-site interventions set out in chapter 4, this would not be to a degree that would justify the delivery of such a significant piece of infrastructure, in addition to the development access in BA1. As such, its inclusion does not align with the baseline evidence, which is clearly indicating that a link road of the form and function anticipated by the Local Plan, is neither necessary to mitigate the impacts of the development or likely to significantly reduce existing congestion issues in Baldock. It may also have the effect of inducing additional traffic either as new trips or rerouting from elsewhere on the surrounding highway network.
- 6.11 Option 1A is likely to add significant traffic volumes to Wallington Road, making it less attractive for pedestrians and cyclists, and the Clothall Road / Wallington Road junction, which is the only means of access to Clothall Common. Increased accessibility to the A505 may also worsen the existing traffic issues experienced along South Road, with consequent impacts on pedestrians / cyclists. Option 1A may impact on the reptile habitats in the area of ecological interest at Spital Hill.
- 6.12 Option 1B cannot be fully assessed against the baseline evidence as it falls outside the SMP boundary.

Compliance with Place Making Objectives

No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary	No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
1	Landscape led approach	N	Southern link road (1A) has potential to affect ecological area at Spital Hill	4	Walking and cycling prioritised	Y/N	Vehicular modes of transport are prioritised in strategic link road Congestion eased in town centre, improving pedestrian experience
2	Connected and accessible green infrastructure	N	Severance impact of link road, particularly affecting pedestrian access to Bygrave Common Increased traffic on Wallington Road limits connectivity between Walls Field and Urban Open Land	5	Town centre adaptation	Y	Reduced congestion in town centre as some traffic diverted through site
3	Conserve and enhance historic environment	N	A505 junction / railway crossing has potential to impact on 'Area 4' (area of archaeological significance)	6	Walking and cycling network to key destinations	N	Strategic road encourages use of private vehicles to reach destinations

Table 1: Option 1 Placemaking Objectives Compliance

No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
7	Supporting town centre vitality	Y/N	Traffic diverted from town centre may impact trade, albeit potentially offset by improved pedestrian experience
8	Community hubs	Y	Provision of community hub unaffected by this option
9	Opportunities for local employment	Y	Provision of employment unaffected by this option

No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
10	Delivery of new homes	N	Additional major area of infrastructure further limits area available for housing development
11	Efficient use of natural resources	N	Significant additional need for materials/resources for road construction

Feasibility and Delivery

- 6.14 The construction costs of this option would be substantially higher than other options due to the need to meet strategic road network design standards, as well as providing separate development access within the site. This would directly impact the viability of development proposals and its ability to deliver key infrastructure such as affordable housing and education and new walking and cycling infrastructure, without external funding.
- 6.15 The inclusion of a wide corridor of additional infrastructure will also directly affect the capacity of the development, reducing the amount of land available for residential, noting that it is already understood that the Local Plan capacity for the site is unlikely to be met. Construction of the link road will require substantial areas of tarmac, or similar materials, with high levels of embodied energy, which runs counter to the energy and low carbon vision for the development.

- 6.16 Option 1B requires land outside the SMP boundary and therefore introduces significant risk in terms of planning (it would require planning permission for infrastructure in the green belt), and delivery (it relies on the assembly of third-party land outside the current development agreement). Its delivery is therefore uncertain at best.



Option 1 RAG Summary

Option 2: Peripheral Development Access

- 6.17 Option 2, shown on Figures 19 and 20 below), tests an alternative approach to access and movement through the site, with the principal development access proposed around the edge of the built development area. This differs from Option 1 in that the peripheral route is not strategic in function or form. Its principal purpose is to provide vehicular access into the development parcels from the outer edge, with the primary focus of movements within the development parcels to be by pedestrians and cyclists. Residents would need to drive to the outer edge of the development and around it to enter / exit by vehicle, whereas walking and cycling routes within and between the parcels would be quicker and more convenient.
- 6.18 The road would be designed as a high quality, place focused link to connect the A507 and the A505, with a crossing of the railway, and a series of junctions/interventions along its route to slow traffic and provide access into parcels. It would be designed to prioritise pedestrian / cyclist crossings to Bygrave Common to the north. A separate bus only route would be provided into and through the central part of the parcels, connection to the local centre.
- 6.19 A variation of the southern link road is shown in Option 2, with an all-modes link provided from a junction on Royston Road, more centrally through BA3, to Wallington Road and then on to Clothall Road.

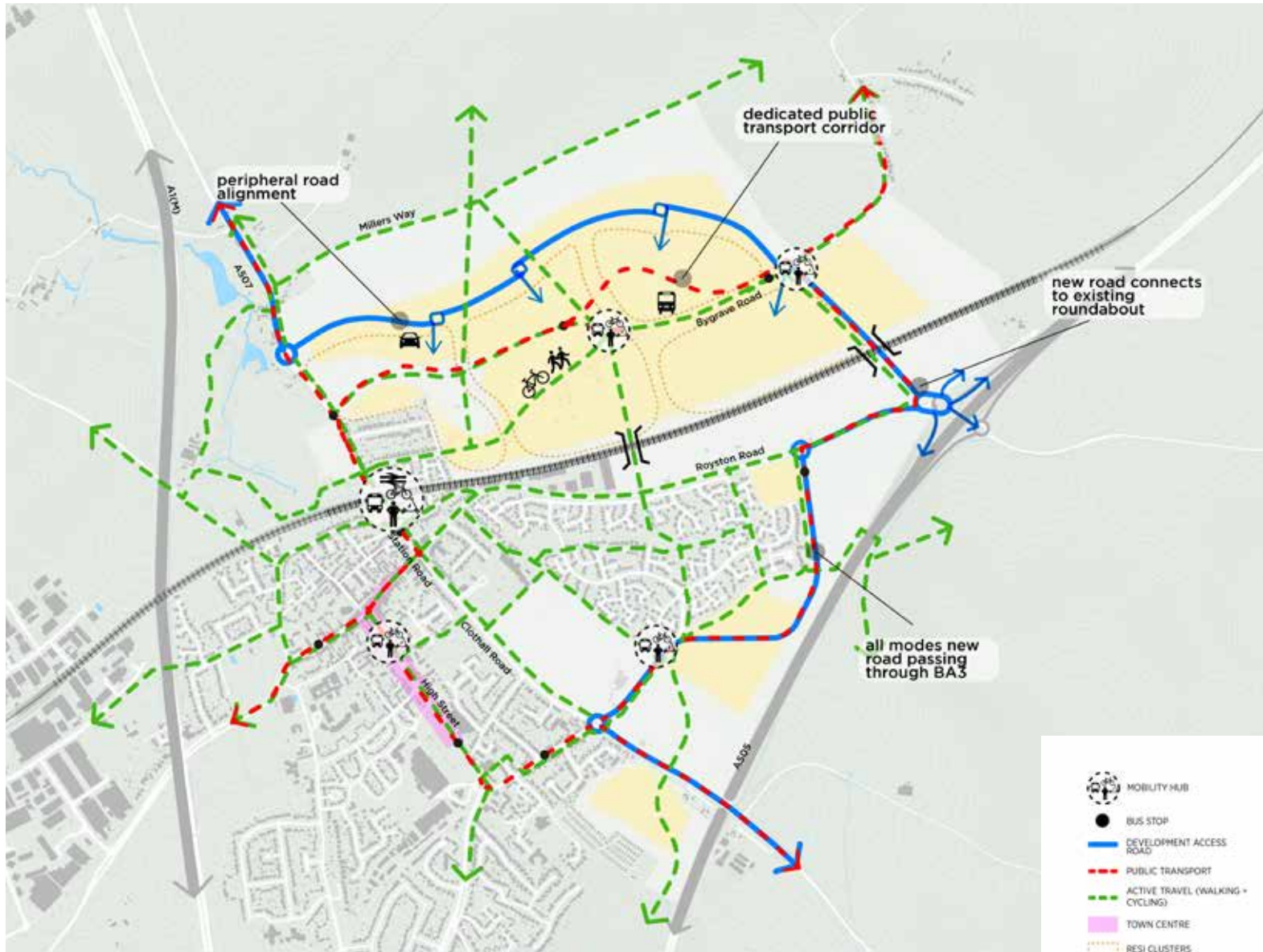


Figure 19: Option 2 Peripheral Development Access



Figure 20: Option 2: Peripheral Development Access Concept Masterplan

Assessment Against Criteria

Response to Baseline

6.20 By proposing a lower order connection, that focuses primarily on providing access to the new development rather than a more strategic vehicular link, Option 2 responds directly to the traffic survey data which indicated that a strategic road link between the A505 and the A507 would not have significant benefits and is therefore not required as part of the development. It could therefore be designed to fit into the landscape and encourage pedestrian/cyclist movements much more effectively than Option 1.

6.21 The southern link may impact on the ecological area at Spital Hill and is likely to add significant traffic volumes to Wallington Road, making it less attractive for pedestrians and cyclists, and the Clothall Road / Wallington Road junction, which is the only means of access to Clothall Common. Increased accessibility to the A505 may also worsen the existing traffic issues experienced along South Road, with consequent impacts on pedestrians / cyclists.

Compliance with Place Making Objectives

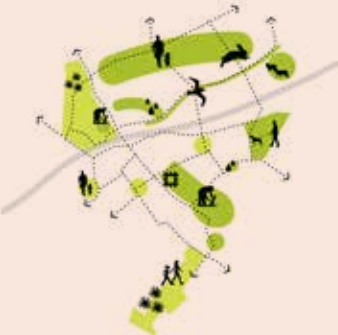
No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
1	Landscape led approach 	N	Southern link road has potential to affect ecological area at Spital Hill
2	Connected and accessible green infrastructure 	N	Severance impact of development access to Bygrave Common to the north, albeit not as significant as the more strategic scale route in option 1 Increased traffic on Wallington Road limits connectivity between Walls Field and Urban Open Land
3	Conserve and enhance historic environment 	N	A505 junction / railway crossing has potential to impact on 'Area 4' (area of archaeological significance)

Table 2: Option 2 Placemaking Objectives Compliance

No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
4	Walking and cycling prioritised	Y	Walking and cycling within development parcels would be prioritised. Active travel trips to destinations would be shorter, more convenient and more direct than by private vehicle.
5	Town centre adaptation	Y	Reduced congestion in town centre as some traffic diverted through site
6	Walking and cycling network to key destinations	Y	Option embeds walking/cycling 'habits' early on which will encourage longer trips to key destinations

No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
7	Supporting town centre vitality	Y	Active travel encouraged, including to town centre
8	Community hubs	Y	Provision of community hub unaffected by this option
9	Opportunities for local employment	Y	Provision of employment unaffected by this option

No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
10	Delivery of new homes 	Y	Neutral impact on housing delivery
11	Efficient use of natural resources 	Y	Natural resources required for link road, albeit no more than option 3 and a standard component of new development

Policy Compliance

6.22 Option 2 remains compliant with Local Plan policy SP14 and BA3 in that it provides a connection between the A507, A505 and Wallington Road.

Feasibility and Delivery

6.23 The construction costs of this option would not be substantially higher than other options as a comparable area of road infrastructure would be required to provide development access in any event (when compared with option 3). This would be a standard development cost. Land required to deliver these connections falls within the Development Agreement and therefore is not a constraint on delivery. There is no reason, subject to achieving the necessary planning permissions, that this option could not be delivered.

Baseline	Place-making	Policy	Delivery
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Option 1 RAG Summary

Option 3: Internal Development Access

6.24 Option 3, as shown on Figures 21 and 22 below, tests a third approach to access, with the principal development access proposed within the built development area. The road would be designed as a high quality, place focused link more akin to a 'High Street' running through the development parcels, with residential and local centre uses directly fronting onto it. It would connect the A507 and the A505, with a crossing of the railway, and a series of junctions/interventions along its route to slow traffic and provide access into parcels to the north and south. A separate bus only route would be provided into the site from further south on North Road, allowing the prioritisation of this sustainable mode of transport. This approach is strengthened further by a bus only link through Clothall Common to Wallington Road, with development access only into residential areas in BA3 and BA2.

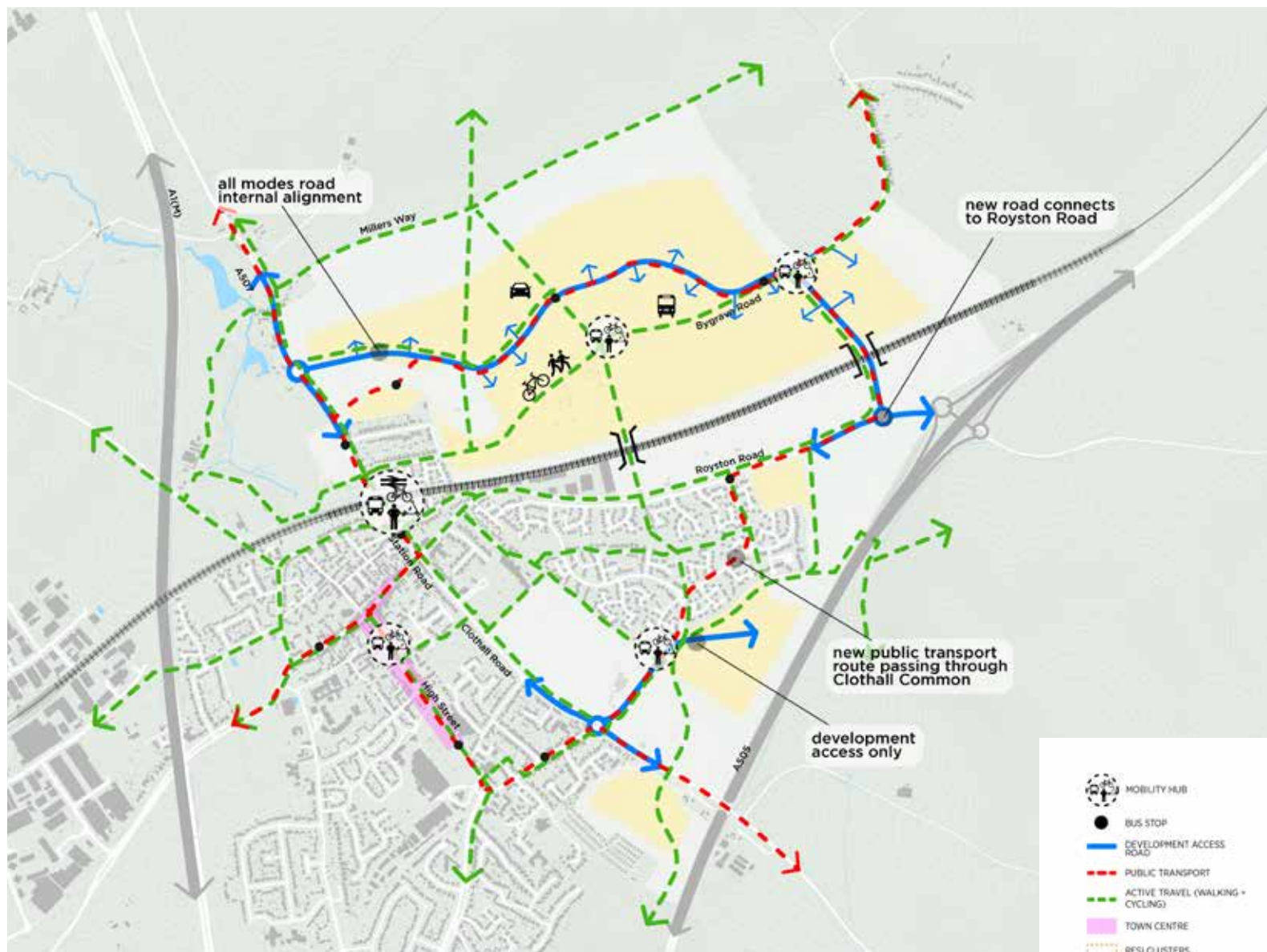


Figure 21: Option 3 Internal Development Access



Figure 22: Option 3: Internal Development Access Concept Masterplan

Assessment Against Criteria

Response to Baseline

6.25 As per Option 2, Option 3 also responds directly to the traffic survey data that indicated that a strategic road link between the A505 and the A507 would not have significant benefits and is therefore not required, by proposing a lower order connection, that focuses primarily on providing access to the new development rather than a wider vehicular link. It has the potential to create an active and busy ‘High Street’ through the development, connecting to and through the local centre. Its alignment responds to the topography and drainage constraints, skirting around the area best suited to a SUDS / wetland corridor east of North Road.

- 6.26

The development access road connects to Royston Road further west than the other options, rather than directly to the existing A505 roundabout, meaning impacts on the area of greatest archaeological interest are likely to be reduced and that the route for vehicles to and from the A505 is less direct.
- 6.27

The bus only link from Royston Road, via Clothall Common to Wallington Road responds well to the baseline by improving connectivity to Clothall Common (an area served by limited public transport and only one vehicular exit), and by avoiding the area of ecological interest at Spital Hill. It also recognises that there is not currently a significant number of trips undertaking the movement between Clothall Road and Royston Road, and hence a link road should not be needed to accommodate existing trips.

Compliance with Place Making Objectives

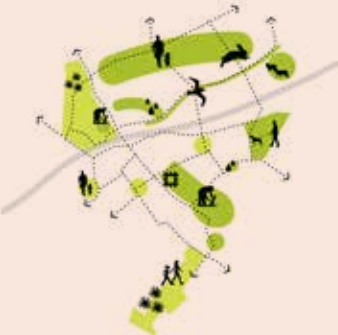
No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
1	Landscape led approach 	Y	Responds well to landscape, with no severance between the development and Bygrave Common. Also allows retention of Spital Hill as an area of ecological interest and landscape/amenity value
2	Connected and accessible green infrastructure 	Y	Development access has no impact on delivery of network of green infrastructure. Increased bus traffic on Wallington Road has only limited impact on pedestrian/ cyclist experience of between Walls Field and Urban Open Land
3	Conserve and enhance historic environment 	Y	Railway crossing and connection to Royston Road limits impact on ‘Area 4’ (area of potential archaeological significance)

Table 3: Option 3 Placemaking Objectives Compliance

No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
4	Walking and cycling prioritised	Y	Walking and cycling within development parcels would be prioritised.
5	Town centre adaptation	Y	Reduced congestion in town centre as some traffic diverted through BA1
6	Walking and cycling network to key destinations	Y	Option embeds walking/cycling 'habits' early on which will encourage longer trips to key destinations

No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
7	Supporting town centre vitality	Y	Active travel encouraged, including to town centre
8	Community hubs	Y	Provision of community hub unaffected by this option
9	Opportunities for local employment	Y	Provision of employment unaffected by this option

No.	Objective	Y/N	Commentary
10	Delivery of new homes 	Y	Neutral impact on housing delivery
11	Efficient use of natural resources 	Y	Natural resources required for link road, albeit no more than option 2.

Policy Compliance

6.29 Option 2 remains compliant with Local Plan policy SP14 and BA3 in that it provides a connection between the A507, A505 and Wallington Road.

Feasibility and Delivery

6.30 The construction costs of this option would not be substantially higher than other options as a comparable area of road infrastructure would be required (when compared with option 2). This would be a standard development cost. Land required to deliver these connections falls within the Development Agreement and therefore is not a constraint on delivery. There is no reason, subject to achieving the necessary planning permissions, that this option could not be delivered.

Baseline	Place-making	Policy	Delivery
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Option 1 RAG Summary

- 6.31 Options 1-3 have tested variations in the design of the 'link road' required by Local Plan policy. Option 1, the strategic route, performs poorly in terms of response to the baseline as it does not deliver significant improvements to congestion problems within Baldock, and has significant implications for additional cost, carbon use and overall development capacity. For these reasons, it is ruled out and taken no further in the SMP.
- 6.32 Options 2 and 3 compare the delivery of a lower order development access, which is not designed as a strategic connection but does provide connectivity between the A507 and A505. Both options have merits and prioritise pedestrian and cycling throughout the site. They are both deliverable, respond well to the baseline constraints / opportunities and are broadly policy compliance. The additional placemaking benefits of the internal development access (option 3), as well as the lack of severance that a peripheral road may create between Bygrave Common and the residential areas, lead to the conclusion that Option 3 presents the optimum access solution and should therefore be taken forward into the preferred option masterplan.

Option 4: Crossing the Railway and Station Improvement Sub-Options

6.33 Option 4 introduces a series of access related sub-options to test how improvements could be made to access to the station, and how an all-modes and active travel only crossing can be delivered over the railway separating BA1 and BA10. Due to the detailed nature of each sub-option and for the purposes of direct comparison, a slightly different approach is taken below to testing them against the four criteria, in that this is undertaken in tabular form, so that the relative merits of each sub-option can be compared directly. The review against placemaking objectives identifies only where each specific sub-option performs well or poorly against a particular objective, rather than noting a neutral impact. A RAG colour system is used to clearly denote where an option performs well (green), moderately (amber) or poorly (red) against each criterion.

Rail Line Active Travel Crossing Options

6.34 As confirmed in section 4, provision of an active travel crossing of the railway, to provide pedestrian and cyclist connectivity between Baldock town centre and BA1/BA10 is a Local Plan policy requirement and a masterplan fix. This was the subject of debate at the Design Review at which several options were discussed. Locations for the active travel crossing are being explored and the sub-options in this section (refer to Figure 23) articulate three possible options for the location and type as follows:

- **AT1 Local Plan Crossing** – a bridge crossing in the vicinity of Ashville Way, in the existing employment area off Royston Road. This would require a bridge and ramps/steps down on either side of the railway, to connect on to the existing green corridor in Clothall Common;
- **AT2 Central Crossing** - a bridge crossing further to the east, providing a pedestrian connection south to Clothall Common, through the existing green corridor south of Royston Road. This would require a bridge and ramps/steps down on either side of the railway;
- **AT3 Central Underpass** – an underpass beneath the railway, in broadly the same location as AT2. This would provide a direct route between BA10 and BA1, with the shortest distance to walk / cycle via a direct underpass.

6.35 An assessment of each sub-option against the four agreed criteria is set out in table 4.

6.36 The assessment at table 4 clearly indicates that sub-option AT2, the central bridge crossing of the railway, performs best against the criteria, and as such it is taken forward in the preferred option masterplan. Other means of providing additional active travel connectivity continue to be explored as the SMP process continues.

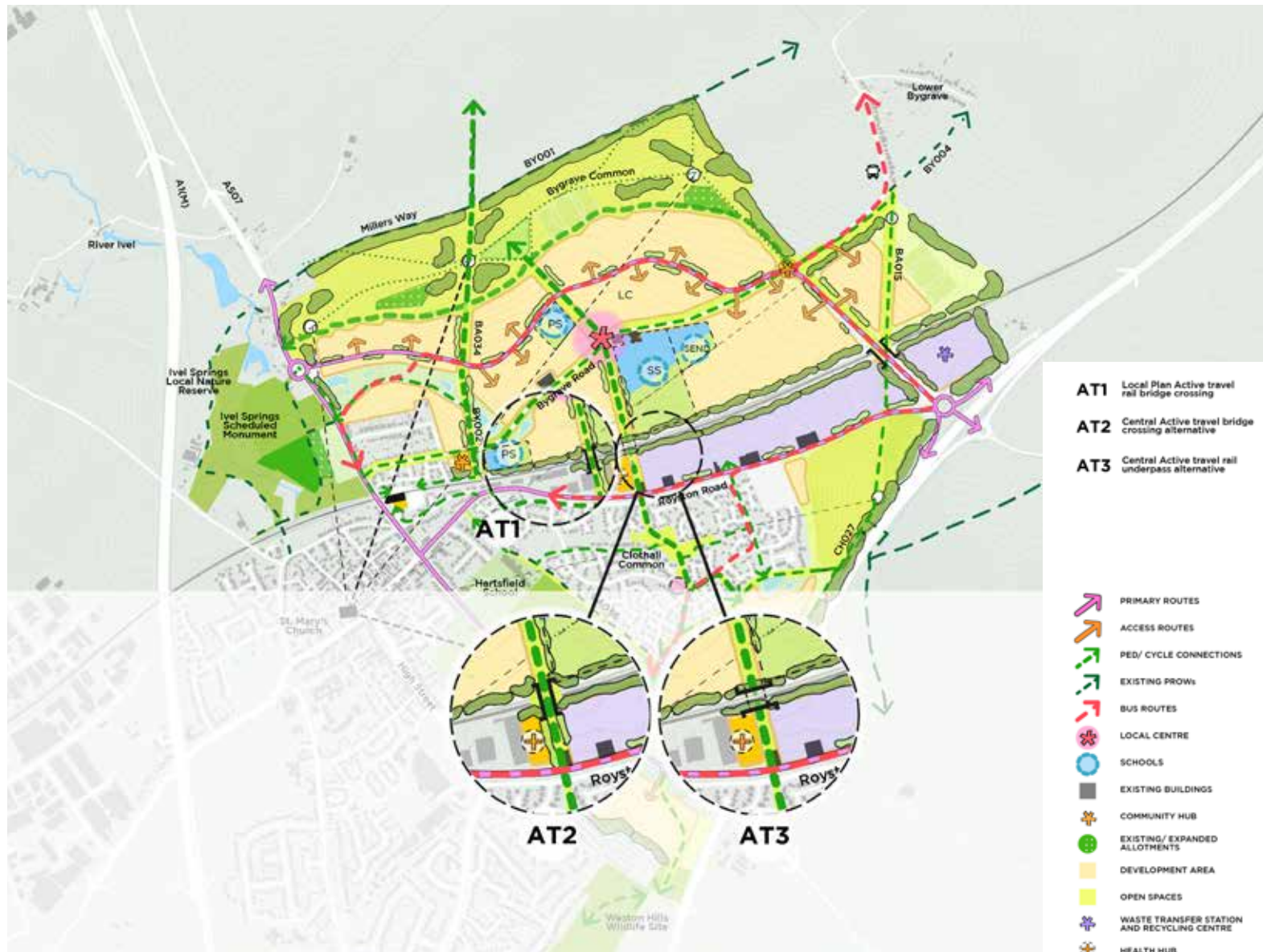


Figure 23: Rail Line Active Travel Crossing Sub-Options

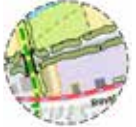
	Response to Baseline	Policy Compliance	Placemaking Objectives	Feasibility / Deliverability
AT1 – Local Plan Crossing 	- Route through industrial estate does not provide optimum pedestrian / cyclist experience – not overlooked during the evening and potential conflict with vehicles accessing industrial units - Some connectivity to Clothall Common achieved (baseline identified Clothall Common as relatively isolated from the rest of Baldock), albeit not providing strong onward pedestrian connectivity within Clothall Common	Directly compliant with Local Plan policy requirement for crossing in vicinity of Ashville Way (SP14)	- Placemaking potential of route through industrial estate is limited; - Route to bridge unlikely to be overlooked and therefore may be perceived as unsafe particularly in the evening and at weekends when the industrial units are closed, thus limiting the use and effectiveness of the crossing.	Land not in control of U&C/HCC therefore introduces significant risk to programme and is currently undeliverable
AT2 – Central Crossing (bridge with ramp and stairs) 	Establishes excellent active travel connectivity to Clothall Common which has been identified as being isolated from the rest of Baldock	Broadly compliant with Local Plan, as bridge location 'in the vicinity' of Ashville Way (c. 130m further east)	Establishes clear connections between BA1, BA10 and Clothall Common, which in conjunction with improvements to ongoing routes to the town centre, will support connectivity to and the vitality of Baldock High Street	Land in control of U&C/HCC therefore deliverable
AT3 – Central Crossing (Underpass) 	Establishes excellent active travel connectivity to Clothall Common which is identified as being isolated from the rest of Baldock	- Broadly compliant with Local Plan, as underpass location in the vicinity of Ashville Way (c. 130m further east) - Underpass is not a crossing per se, as policy requires, but achieves the same aim of connectivity between parcels either side of the railway.	Establishes clear connections between BA1, BA10 and Clothall Common, which in conjunction with improvements to ongoing routes to the town centre will support connectivity to and the vitality of Baldock	- May not be deliverable due to cost of constructing underpass under railway; - Operationally difficult to deliver whilst maintaining train service; - To be discussed with Network Rail but considered least likely option to be supported

Table 4: Active Travel Crossing Sub-Options Criteria Assessment

Rail Line All Modes Eastern Crossing Options

6.37 An all-modes crossing of the railway at the eastern end of the site is also a Local Plan policy requirement and a masterplan fix. Sub-options for this crossing are set out in Figure 24 to articulate how it could respond to the potential area of archaeological interest reported in the baseline and referred to as 'Area 4' (refer to Figure 10), and where the route connects to the existing road network: either at the A505 roundabout, or further west on Royston Road.

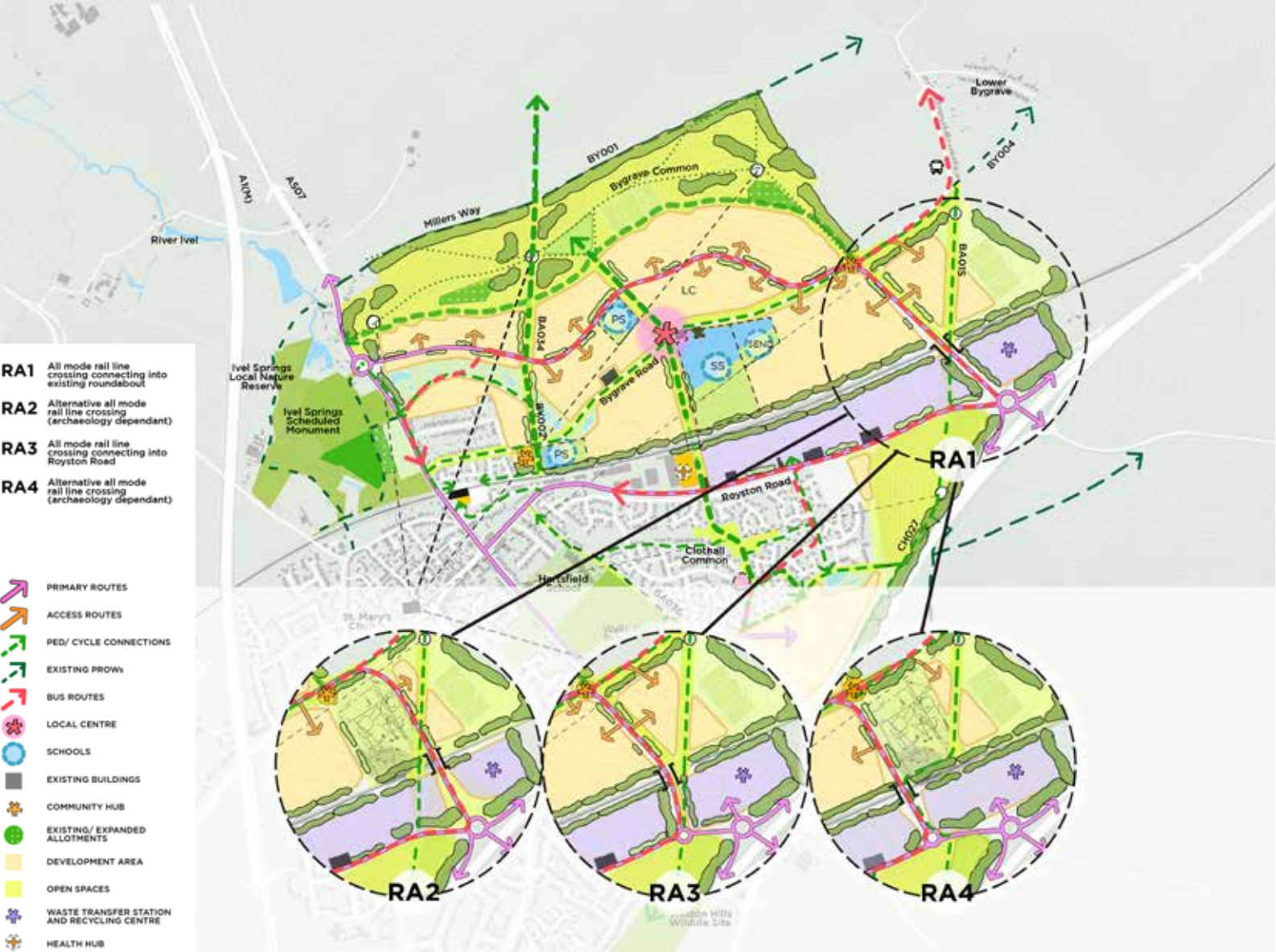


Figure 24: Rail Line All Modes Eastern Crossing Sub-Options

6.38 As reported in section 5, the archaeological potential of Area 4 is being investigated further with additional and more detailed geophysical surveys which will establish the significance of any archaeological remains. Until this is understood further, various sub-options have been explored that either anticipate this area being sufficiently significant that it precludes development (both for road infrastructure and housing) or not significant enough to warrant retention in situ, and therefore not a direct constraint on development, subject to removal and recording of any finds.

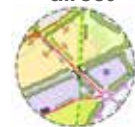
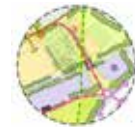
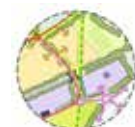
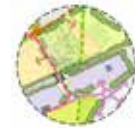
6.39 Another variable tested in these sub-options, is the point at which the internal road within BA1 links to the existing road network: either directly to the existing A505 roundabout, or further west onto Royston Road. The latter was supported by the Design Review panel.

6.40 The following sub-options are proposed:

- **RA1: A505 roundabout direct connection** – assumes archaeology is not a constraint on development and provides direct route from Bygrave Road to the A505 roundabout, with residential development on either side;
- **RA2: A505 roundabout archaeology dependent connection** – assumes that the connection will need to be realigned slightly around an area of retained archaeology and that there will be no development parcel immediately to the west of the road in BA1;

- **RA3: Royston Road direct connection** – assumes that the road crosses the railway and connects to Royston Road to the west of the A505 roundabout. Archaeology does not pose a constraint this far west, so development parcels are located either side of the road in BA1;
- **RA4: Royston Road archaeology dependent connection** – assumes a connection to Royston Road to the west of the existing roundabout, with the road routeing around an area of retained archaeology to the east, beyond which is a narrow residential parcel;

6.41 An assessment of the all-modes crossing sub-options against the criteria is set out in Table 5.

RA1 – A505 roundabout direct	
RA2 – A505 roundabout plus archaeology	
RA3 – Royston Road direct	
RA4 – Royston Road plus archaeology	

Response to Baseline	Policy Compliance	Placemaking Objectives	Feasibility / Deliverability
Requires crossing of road and existing PROW, directly affecting the pedestrian experience and severing this important PROW, which may be upgraded to a bridleway as part of the development	- Compliant with policy SP14 requirement for connection to A505 - Maximises developable area and therefore residential capacity and ability to meet Local Plan 3,300 homes target	- Impact on PROW impacts limits prioritisation of walking/cycling - Ability to deliver 'gateway' into new development and Baldock is limited if access into site is off roundabout on strategic road network. - Road presents severance to westernmost development parcel (west of the road)	Likely lower infrastructure costs than delivery of entirely new junction
- Requires crossing of road and existing PROW, directly affecting the pedestrian experience and severing this route - Allows potential retention of archaeological remains	- Compliant with policy SP14 requirement for connection to A505 - Compliant with policy SP14 requirement for sensitive treatment of heritage assets - Reduces developable area, thereby impacting on residential capacity and ability to meet Local Plan 3,300 homes target	- Allows integration of heritage into green infrastructure network - Impact on PROW impacts limits prioritisation of walking/cycling - Ability to deliver 'gateway' into new development is limited if access into site is off roundabout on strategic road network; - Creates potentially isolated and small residential parcels to the east of Area 4 - Road presents severance to westernmost development parcel, albeit that this is small in scale	Likely lower infrastructure costs than delivery of entirely new junction
- Additional junction on Royston Road would act as traffic calming feature, reducing current high speeds of vehicles entering and leaving Baldock - Allows existing PROW to continue to run through BA1 on its existing alignment, and incorporate its crossing over the rail line and Royston Road into the bridge and access junction	- Broadly compliant with policy SP14 for connection to A505, albeit via Royston Road - Maximises developable area and therefore residential capacity and ability to meet Local Plan 3,300 homes target	- Opportunity for placemaking and gateway entrance into site and Baldock enhanced if separated from strategic road network and major A505 roundabout - Potentially greater requirement for materials to construction new junction - Road presents severance to westernmost development parcel	- Requires new additional junction on Royston Road, so more costly than A505 connection. Although provision of new junctions is standard development cost. - Levels around rail line begin to rise further west, and so depending on exact location a higher bridge may be needed to overcome the rail embankment.
- Additional junction on Royston Road would act as traffic calming feature, reducing current high speeds of vehicles entering and leaving Baldock - Allows existing PROW to continue to run through BA1 on its existing alignment, and incorporate its crossing over the rail line and Royston Road into the bridge and access junction - Allows potential retention of archaeological remains	- Broadly compliant with policy SP14 for connection to A505, albeit via Royston Road - Compliant with policy SP14 requirement for sensitive treatment of heritage assets - Reduces developable area, thereby impacting on residential capacity and ability to meet Local Plan 3,300 homes target	- Opportunity for placemaking and gateway entrance into site and Baldock enhanced if separated from strategic road network and major A505 roundabout - Creates potentially isolated and small residential parcels to the east of Area 4 - Potentially greater requirement for materials to construction new junction - Road presents severance to westernmost development parcel, albeit that this is small in scale	- Requires new additional junction on Royston Road, so more costly than A505 connection. Although provision of new junctions is standard development cost. - Levels around rail line begin to rise further west, and so depending on exact location a higher bridge may be needed to overcome the rail embankment.

Table 5: All Modes Eastern Crossing Sub-Options Criteria Assessment

6.42 The assessment of the all modes crossing sub options at table 5 indicates that the sub option RA1 performs the least well and is therefore ruled out. As set out in section 5, the extent and significance of the archaeology in Area 4 is being investigate further, in parallel with production of this options report and the emerging SMP. Therefore, it is not yet possible to definitively conclude which sub-option will feed into the preferred option – either around the retained archaeology, or through Area 4, on the basis that archaeological remains are removed. In any event, there are strong placemaking and active travel arguments that support the crossing connecting to Royston Road rather than the A505 roundabout, and this is expressed in the preferred option in section 7.

Station Access Options

6.43 Local Plan policy SP14(d) requires a series of sustainable transport measures, including safe access routes to / from and upgrades to Baldock Station. All parties agree that station improvements will form a key component of the development and any offsite transport measures secured via the S106 agreement in due course.

6.44 The sub-options presented in Figure 25 articulate the range of means by which improved access to the station from BA1 to the north and Baldock to the south might be achieved. These are all subject to discussion and agreement with Network Rail, as well as detailed feasibility studies and viability assessments.

6.45 The following sub-options are tested below:

- **ST01 – connectivity between platforms** – improving the existing underpass or potentially provision of a new bridge structure or lift;
- **ST02 – northern access** – provision of a new pedestrian / cycle access to the northern side of the station via North Road, alongside an opened up station building;
- **ST03 – Larkins Close access** – pedestrian and cycle access into the station from Larkins Close, the existing residential street to the north of the station;

- **ST04 – platform extension** – extension of platforms to the east to allow for all passengers on longer trains to leave the train at Baldock;
- **ST05 – eastern access** – provision of new ticket gate or station building at north eastern end of station, via new pedestrian / cycle route.

6.46 It is noted that the above options are not mutually exclusive (as with the options appraisal of the rail crossings). An assessment of the station improvement options against the agreed criteria is set out in table 6 below:

6.47 Options for improvements to the station are complex and governed, to a degree, by Network Rail's land control, its own improvement plans and appetite for small or large scale interventions at the station. As such, the sub options set out in table 6 represent a range of schemes which would deliver improvements to a greater or lesser degree, but all of which require the agreement and cooperation of Network Rail. These will all therefore be considered further as the SMP progresses and the package of off-site transport interventions finalised for the outline planning application in due course. The only exception to this is sub option ST3 which is ruled out at this stage for reasons of feasibility and deliverability, given the land ownership and physical constraints of Larkins Close.



Figure 25: Station Access Sub-Options

	Response to Baseline	Policy Compliance	Placemaking Objectives	Feasibility / Deliverability
ST01 –connectivity between platforms 	- Existing connectivity between platforms is poor and limited to an unattractive and uninviting underpass that is likely to be perceived by many as unsafe at certain times of the day. It is also not inclusive as only stairs are provided. Improvements to the underpass would support higher levels of use, albeit any changes would be reasonably limited in scope (e.g. improved lighting, maintenance, use of artwork to create a more inviting space) - Community feedback has been clear that additional or improved crossings would significantly improve the passenger experience, so local support for an enhanced underpass or bridge/lifts would generate local support (with a lift likely to be the favoured option)	Complies with Local Plan policy SP14 requirement for improvements to station	- Increased connectivity between platforms would directly improve pedestrian / cyclist access and through the station - The connectivity between platforms would not in isolation benefit wider north / south trips (made by people who are not using the station / rail passengers)	Cost implications of these improvements vary significantly. A new lift and/or bridge crossing would bring substantially more infrastructure costs than improvements to the existing underpass. All require discussion with Network Rail to establish feasibility.
ST02 – northern access 	Station access is currently limited to the southern entrance via a complex junction, and there is no northern access, requiring passengers to use the existing underpass from the southern entrance. Provision of an alternative to the north would establish an access into the station from the north, accessible to residents from the western half of BA1	Complies with Local Plan policy SP14 requirement for improvements to access to station	- Provides direct pedestrian connection to those living in the north and western sides of BA1 to the station (a key destination), without having to walk to the southern entrance. - A northern access would not in isolation benefit wider north / south trips (made by people who are not using the station / rail passengers), unless the station is opened up (and connectivity between platforms also improved).	- Land required to facilitate this link in HCC/U&C control ; - Only limited interventions needed to facilitate this connection;

Table 6: All Modes Eastern Crossing Sub-Options Criteria Assessment

	Response to Baseline	Policy Compliance	Placemaking Objectives	Feasibility / Deliverability
ST03 – Larkins Close 	- Station access is currently limited to the southern entrance via a complex junction, and there is no northern access, requiring passengers to use the existing underpass from the southern entrance. Provision of an alternative to the north would establish an access into the station from the north, accessible to residents from the western half of BA1 - Requires pedestrian / cyclist access through quiet residential cul-de-sac which would affect residential amenity	Complies with Local Plan policy SP14 requirement for improvements to access to station	- Limited space for connection (unless properties are purchased) may result in unattractive and narrow pedestrian connection; - May encourage additional vehicle drop-offs in vicinity causing congestion and disturbance to residents	- Land required to deliver link in third party ownership therefore deliverability is uncertain; - Relies on feasibility of ST04 to some extent.
ST04 – platform extension 	Limited length of existing platforms highlighted as an issue for passengers to/from Baldock who have to use certain front carriages to depart the train. Extending the platforms would improve the quality of service for Baldock residents, encouraging use of sustainable transport	Complies with Local Plan policy SP14 requirement for improvements to station	Neutral placemaking potential, although aligns well with sub-option ST03 and ST05 which would allow pedestrian access to the northern platform directly, if extended	Feasibility to be established with Network Rail. Levels, cost and land control may limit potential of this option.
ST05 – north-eastern access 	- Station access is currently limited to the southern entrance via a complex junction, and there is no northern access, requiring passengers to use the existing underpass from the southern entrance. Provision of an alternative to the north would establish an access into the station from the north, accessible to residents from the western half of BA1 - would require careful integration of area of ecological interest in this location and retention where required of existing trees and hedgerows.	Complies with Local Plan policy SP14 requirement for improvements to access to station	- Responds to pedestrian and cycle desire line from BA1 towards the station, allowing direct access to the station without using North Road or an active travel crossing further east; - Potential to integrate well with new community hub at eastern end of station; - width of land strip between railway and residential limits potential for an attractive and safe pedestrian route, albeit the limited width affects only part of the route;	- narrow width of land between the platform offset and rear of residential properties (2-3m in places) may raise operational difficulties for Network Rail, if pedestrians access is allowed here. Feasibility to be discussed with Network Rail. - Relies on feasibility of ST04.

Option 5: Secondary School Options

- 6.48 As reported in section 5 secondary education provision associated with the development is the subject of ongoing discussions with HCC education, NHDC and other stakeholders. It is therefore not expected that the preferred option in this report necessarily concludes this process, but that the masterplan be prepared in such a way that it can accommodate whichever secondary school solution is arrived at. This section of the report sets out the sub-options for secondary education as they currently stand for completeness and to aid discussions with HCC.
- 6.49 It should be noted that a separate transport appraisal is also being undertaken to inform this decision. It is appraising the capacity of the walking, cycling and road network around the existing Knights Templar school to expand, and suggesting mitigation measures as appropriate. This will feed into the decision-making process regarding secondary provision, however, it is noted that the off-site transport interventions proposed as part of the SMP will cater for active travel trips between the sites and central Baldock, and be delivered at the highest possible quality and capacity, therefore accommodating trips exiting the sites towards Knights Templar just as much as trips entering the sites to a new school within them.
- 6.50 Provision of secondary education in Baldock generally and to serve the development specifically is intrinsically linked to the future of Knights Templar school, the one existing secondary school in the town. Options are being explored (see Figure 26) that consider the potential expansion of Knights Templar to accommodate the additional pupils generated by the development, the relocation of Knights Templar to a new school site within the development, or a two secondary school approach for Baldock. Within the development area itself there are several options for the location and size of a secondary school, the latter being a factor of the development capacity, which itself may vary. All options assume that Knights Templar effectively has two forms of entry capacity which can serve the needs of pupils from the development in its early phases.
- 6.51 In this context, the following sub-options have been tested:
- **SS1: Knights Templar relocation to BA1** – assumes existing school site is redeveloped (at least in part) for housing, and all facilities including pitches are relocated to BA1 on a site sufficient for an 11FE school;
 - **SS2: Knights Templar relocation to BA10** - assumes existing school site is redeveloped (at least in part) for housing and all facilities including pitches are relocated to BA10 (the employment allocation parcel) on a site sufficient for an 11FE school;

- **SS3: Knights Templar expansion** – assumes the existing school is subject to improvements to expand to 11FE capacity and no secondary provision is included on the development site;
- **SS4: Two Schools approach** – assumes Knights Templar is retained and a new, smaller (6FE) secondary school provided on site, in accordance with Local Plan policy.

6.52 An assessment of the secondary education sub-options is set out in Table 7 below:



Figure 26: Secondary School Sub-Options

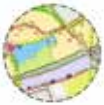
	Response to Baseline	Policy Compliance	Placemaking Objectives	Feasibility / Deliverability
SS1 – KT School on BA1 	- Secondary school site can be accommodated on BA1 within a central location, taking advantage of this area's relatively flat topography; - Potential school location aligns with area of heritage interest which could be incorporated into design and education; - The planned off-site interventions and connections to the site would cater for inbound active travel trips;	- Compliant with Local Plan policy SP14 requirement for secondary school on BA1, albeit a larger size (11FE) 11FE school has larger land take with implications for housing delivery. Increasing the school to 11FE requires 0.5ha of additional land, which equates to 175 units, at a density of 35dph	- Potential location of school adjacent to local centre, primary school and SEND school will generate significant activity and movement, and help facilitate community growth; - On-site school provision facilitates shared use of sports facilities required to meet the needs of the wider development; - Pedestrian and cycle routes to the school within the site can be prioritised, alongside public transport links.	Significant land take beyond policy requirement and pupil yield generated by the development will impact development capacity and therefore overall viability. Could be offset, in part by the residential redevelopment of the Knights Templar site.
SS2 – KT School on BA10 	- Royston Road and the railway generate noise and air quality pollution, making the site less than favourable for a school; - Locating secondary school on BA10 prevents the advantages of co-location of secondary and SEND schools that would be achieved on BA1.	Local Plan policy BA10 allocates the site for employment uses. Policy ETC1 restricts the use of this parcel to employment. Developing a school on BA10 is directly contrary to policy and may have a damaging effect on the ability of North Herts to deliver its economic strategy, which is in part reliant on the employment allocation at Baldock.	- Central location between BA1 and Baldock has placemaking advantages in terms of connecting the town and new development - Active travel bridge (if located centrally) would provide direct access from BA1 to a school in BA10. - Draws more active travel trips along Royston Road, which is an unattractive environment and has lower scope for improvement (compared to other routes being considered).	Long, narrow parcel shape results in unorthodox school layout with buildings at one end and pitches, some distance away, meaning it is unlikely to be supported by a school operator

Table 7: Secondary Education Sub-Options Criteria Assessment

	Response to Baseline	Policy Compliance	Placemaking Objectives	Feasibility / Deliverability
SS3 – Knights Templar Expansion 	Knights Templar is a long established, popular school with a strong identity. This option is therefore likely to be strongly supported by local community.	- No provision of a secondary school on BA1 would be contrary to Local Plan policy, albeit the purpose of the policy (the need to provide secondary education to serve new residents of the development) would be met; - Residential capacity, to meet the Local Plan policy, and North Herts housing need more generally, would be maximised in this option. Utilising the Local Plan 8FE school site (8ha) for housing, could deliver an additional 280 units, at a density of 35dph.	Through the planned off-site interventions, active travel links to Knights Templar, from the site and through the town centre will be significantly improved, to facilitate walking and cycling to the school, bringing benefits to existing and future residents and encouraging patronage of the town centre	- Subject to feasibility studies ongoing by HOC to establish highways / movement issues relating to expansion of the existing site; - Feasibility of expanding the school within its existing site is also being tested, including the practical issues associated with delivering major expansion in parallel with secondary school operation;
SS4 – Two Schools 	Introducing another secondary school to Baldock is unlikely to be supported by the community and may impact on the success / viability of Knights Templar school	- Directly compliant with Local Plan policy SP14 requirement for 6FE secondary school on BA1; - Less impact on housing delivery as smaller secondary school site required;	- Walking and cycling to secondary school on site would be encouraged through a network of direct routes; - Potentially reduced need for active travel connectivity between BA1 and the rest of Baldock to meet the needs of secondary school pupils travelling either to Knights Templar or BA1 (depending on location of larger school); - On-site school provision facilitates shared use of sports facilities required to meet the needs of the wider development.	If two forms of entry at Knights Templar are utilised by the development's residents, the remaining need from the development is insufficient to warrant a 6FE secondary school on site (the minimum size of a new school that HOC Education would allow). This option is therefore neither required by the development, or feasible in that it is too small to meet HOC's minimum standards.

- 6.53 Delivering secondary school places to meet the needs of the new development, whilst supporting the existing pattern of school provision in Baldock, focused on the successful and well-respected Knights Templar school, is a challenge. Each option has implications for movement around Baldock and the masterplan in terms of housing delivery, as well as for placemaking and community building within the new development. The assessment in table 7 sets out some of the
- high-level considerations that will inform a decision on the optimum secondary solution, but other factors and influences will be important and there are many stakeholders with an interest in this issue, as well as the Baldock community, who will be keen to ensure that there is continuity and quality of secondary education in the town. HCC's feasibility work in relation to the potential expansion of Knights Templar will be key in unlocking, or discounting options, to allow discussions to progress towards a conclusion.
- 6.54 Of all the sub-options, SS2 (large school on BA10) can effectively be ruled out at this stage for reasons of feasibility (site size, shape, proximity to noise and air pollution) and departure from Local Plan policy. Similarly, SS4 (Local Plan policy smaller school) cannot be progressed as the need generated by the development is not sufficient to support a 6FE school, the minimum required for a new secondary school.
- 6.55 The two remaining sub-options: expansion of Knights Templar, or relocation to BA1 both have benefits and disbenefits which continue to be explored with HCC education and other stakeholders, as set out in section 5. It is important to recognise that whilst these discussions are ongoing, the SMP process can continue in parallel. Either option can be accommodated within the SMP, with either a school site or residential parcel indicated in BA1, depending on the outcome. Active travel movements within and through the town by students accessing the school will be the same in either scenario, with the only difference being the direction of movement either to BA1 or to Knights Templar, and active travel interventions to establish clear routes to school will be prioritised wherever the school is located.

7. Preferred Option Masterplan

7.1 Sections 1 to 6 of this report have described the systematic process that has been undertaken to develop and test SMP options, in accordance with the requirements of the SMP brief, and as set out in the diagram overleaf:

Options Assessment Process



- 7.2 This section starts to draw conclusions from the options assessment stage, that have fed into the preferred option masterplan that will be the subject of public consultation in due course, and further development and inclusion in the draft SMP thereafter.
- 7.3 The preferred option masterplan is shown at Figure 27.



7.4 The process by which the options have been assessed and either ruled out or taken forward into the preferred option (or elements within an option) is set out in the diagram at Figure 28. The preferred option incorporates all the masterplan fixes set out in section 4 and then applies the elements of the options that have been identified, through the option testing process in section 5, as preferred. These are articulated in the commentary below, within the three themes of land use, movement and access and green infrastructure.

7.5 Where it has been possible to rule out an option based on the results of the assessment (those shown in red), the preferred sub option (shown in green) is then taken forward and layered with the subsequent preferred sub options under each category. In some circumstances a clear preferred option isn't apparent and further work is required, for instance in relation to education and station improvements, both of which need further discussion with stakeholders to resolve.

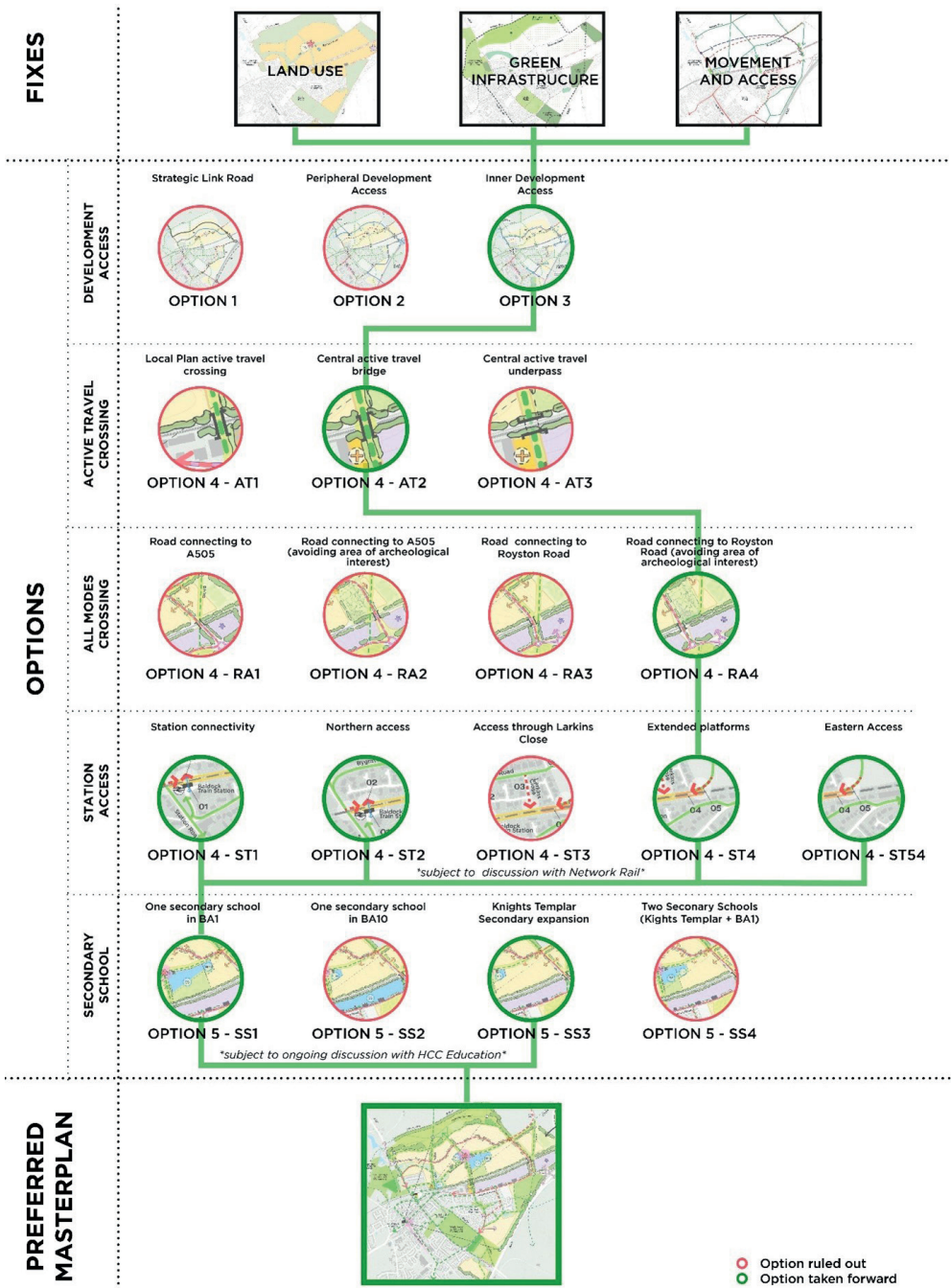


Figure 28: Options Testing Process Towards a Preferred Option

Land Use

Fixes

7.6 As set out in section 4, the preferred option incorporates the following land use fixes:

- **Residential** – net residential area of between 65 and 69 hectares (depending on whether development is permitted in archaeological area 4). This will deliver between 2,275 and 2,764 new homes, applying a density range of 35-40 dwellings per hectare to the two net residential areas (refer to the land use budget at Table xx8);
- **Employment** – 15.5 hectares of employment land in parcel BA10, to also incorporate a health hub in the vicinity of the active travel railway crossing, and waste facilities in the easternmost parcel adjacent to the A505 roundabout;

- **Local Centre** – land for local centre uses (size to be defined) at heart of the site in the vicinity of the central primary school and secondary school (if provided on site);
- **Primary Schools** – two primary schools: one within the local centre and one at the south western end of Bygrave Road, to the east of the station;
- **SEND School** – adjacent to the secondary school, if this is provided on site;
- **Open Space** – network of different open space typologies (refer to fixes in section 4 and below);
- **Community Hub** – green space adjacent to south western primary school at gateway to site;
- **Infrastructure** – active travel, sustainable and vehicular access and networks, drainage, energy and utilities infrastructure to support the development.

Preferred Option Elements

- **Secondary School** – as set out in section 7, a final decision on the preferred approach to secondary provision in Baldock has not been made and discussions are ongoing on this topic, pending feasibility studies testing the expansion of Knights Templar School. In the interests of progressing the SMP and in accordance with the Local Plan policy, the preferred option currently shows an 8FE secondary school site. This may be subject to change, pending the outcomes of the feasibility work and ongoing discussions with stakeholders.

7.7 Table 8 provides a high-level and approximate land use budget for the preferred option masterplan, taking into account either the retention of archaeology in Area 4 or its removal and the development of this area.

	Including Area 4 in Developable Area		Excluding Area 4 From Developable Area	
Land Use	Area (ha)	Units	Area (ha)	Units
Residential*	69.1	2,419 (35dph) – 2,764 (40dph)	65	2,275 (35dph) – 2,600 (40dph)
Employment**	15.5		15.5	
Secondary School	8		8	
Primary School	4.6		4.6	
SEND School	2		2	

*Including local centre, community hub and green infrastructure within parcels

**including waste facilities, energy infrastructure and health hub

Table 8: Indicative Preferred Option Land Use Budget

Green Infrastructure

Fixes

- 7.8 The majority of green infrastructure elements at a strategic scale are fixed and therefore featured in all options, as set out in section 4 and summarised again for clarity below:
- **Bygrave Common** - large area of strategic green space to north of ridgeline to include ecological, amenity and formal sports;
 - **Walls Field** – Scheduled Monument to be retained as open space and taken out of arable use;

- **Urban Open Land** – formal sports, productive landscapes and amenity area with only ancillary built development;
- **Spital Hill** – retained as ecological area;
- **Wetland Corridor** – SUDS and ecological corridor following route of historic drainage channel;
- **Internal Parcel Green Space** – smaller areas of green space, play and formal/civic parks within parcels;

Preferred Option Element

- 7.9 The Preferred Option masterplan retains optionality in respect of Archaeological Area 4, one of the two unresolved issues reported in section 5. If the archaeology is found to be of such significance that it must be retained in situ, this area will become green infrastructure within the masterplan, with no built development that might impact on the archaeological remains. If it is agreed that the archaeology can be recorded and removed, allowing development to take place, the parcel will accommodate residential units.

Movement

Fixes

- 7.10 The Preferred Option masterplan incorporates the movement fixes outline in section 4 as follows:
- **North Road Access** – separate vehicular and bus access into BA1 from new junctions on North Road;
 - **PROW Improvements** – upgrades to existing and new connections within and beyond the site;
 - **Development Access** – local vehicular access into residential parcels in BA2 and BA3;
 - **Off Site Interventions** – range of improvements within Baldock to ease congestion and improve active travel routes.

Preferred Option Elements

- 7.11 The options tested a range of movement related proposals, with the preferred option taking forward the following elements:
- **Active Travel Crossing** – bridge/ramp in central location over the railway line, to connect directly to Clothall Common;
 - **All Modes Crossing** – easterly vehicular crossing of railway to connect to Royston Road. The preferred option masterplan indicates two scenarios to account for the retention or otherwise of archaeological remains in Area 4;
 - **Station Improvements** – a range of measures continue to be considered, including new northern and eastern entrances / access points, connectivity between platforms and platform extensions;
 - **Development Access** – access road running within the development area, connecting North Road and Royston Road;
 - **Bus Only Link** – bus only connection through Clothall Common, between Royston Road and Wallington Road.

8. Next Steps

- 8.1 This options report and the preferred option within it represents the completion of Stages 4-6 of the SMP production, as set out in the SMP brief. The report will now be the subject of review by NHDC and HCC officers and presented to relevant stakeholders and the ongoing SMP task groups.

- 8.2 Subject to comments, and subsequent refinement, the preferred option masterplan will then form the basis of a public consultation event, to garner feedback from the local community and stakeholder groups.
- 8.3 The draft SMP itself, alongside its supporting technical reports, will then be prepared and submitted to NHDC for review and further discussion. The final stage in the SMP process is the submission of the final draft SMP for approval by NHDC. This will be followed in due course by an outline planning application for the development and subsequent Key Phase and reserved matters applications, that will facilitate commencement of the development.

Appendices

