

Growing Baldock

Planning Statement



October 2025

Urban&Civic

Hertfordshire



CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	2
2.0	SITE CONTEXT	5
3.0	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.....	13
	Description of Development	13
	OPA Parameters	13
	Planning Approach	19
4.0	PLANNING POLICY APPRAISAL AND PLANNING ASSESSMENT	24
	<i>North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan (Adopted 2022)</i>	<i>26</i>
	<i>Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan (2021)</i>	<i>45</i>

Appendix A: Affordable Housing Statement

Appendix B: Town Centre Assessment

Appendix C: Approach to Stewardship

Appendix D: Draft S106 Heads of Terms

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared by David Lock Associates, on behalf of Urban&Civic Baldock North Ltd (U&C) and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), in support of an outline planning application (OPA) for the Growing Baldock residential led development of up to 3,200 homes together with highway accesses, provision of employment, waste and leisure infrastructure alongside green infrastructure, open spaces and community facilities including primary, SEND and secondary education provision (the 'Proposed Development').
- 1.2 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022) allocates the Growing Baldock site for strategic, mixed-use development. In accordance with the Local Plan policy SP9, a Strategic Masterplan (SMP) has been prepared for the Growing Baldock development and was approved by North Herts Council (NHC) in July 2025. It is now a material consideration in the determination of this OPA.
- 1.3 This Statement provides a description of the site context and Proposed Development; an assessment of the Proposed Development against national and local planning policies and other material considerations. This Statement also incorporates an Affordable Housing Statement (Appendix A), a Statement on the approach to stewardship (Appendix B), a Town Centre Assessment (Appendix C), and draft Heads of Terms which will form the basis of the Section 106 legal agreement (Appendix D).
- 1.4 This Statement is structured as follows:
- **Chapter 2** – provides the site context;
 - **Chapter 3** – defines the Proposed Development; and
 - **Chapter 4** – assesses the Proposed Development against the relevant planning policy.
- 1.5 This Statement forms part of a suite of documents submitted in support of the OPA for Growing Baldock, and should be read in conjunction with:

Formal Documentation

- Covering Letter;
- Application Form;
- Ownership Certificate C and Notices; and
- Development Specification.

Application Plans

- Site Location Plan (UAC092-001 Rev F);
- Parameter Plan (UAC092-002 Rev Q); and
- Development Site Access Plans:
 - North Road Junctions (PC7029-ITP-CE-GB-DR-D-0150 Rev P01);
 - A505/Royston Road Junction (PC7029-ITP-CE-GB-DR-D-0151 Rev P02); and

- Clothall Road Junction (PC7029-ITP-CE-GB-DR-D-0152 Rev P02).

Supporting Reports

- Environmental Statement (Text, Figures, Appendices and Non-Technical Summary);
- Planning Statement;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan;
- Green Infrastructure Strategy;
- Sustainability and Energy Strategy;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Matrix;
- Ecological Mitigation Plan;
- Employment Statement;
- Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan;
- Tree Survey and Arboricultural Planning Statement; and
- Statement of Community Involvement.

1.6 The Proposed Development has been the subject of extensive public consultation, known as 'The Baldock Conversation', as reported in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement. This has involved consultation relating to the emerging and now approved Strategic Masterplan, and the current OPA, in the form of multiple public exhibitions, public and neighbourhood group meetings, stakeholder and community workshops, drop-in sessions and attendance at the Baldock Area Forum and other local events.

1.7 The OPA has also been the subject of a comprehensive programme of pre-application meetings as agreed in a Planning Performance Agreement with NHC. This has involved fortnightly meetings with NHC planning officers, a series of design, education, infrastructure and transport focused working groups with NHC planning, design, transport and HCC highways, education and GIU officers. In addition, a series of topic specific sessions with a wider set of stakeholders have been undertaken, all attended by NHC planning officers, including:

- Public Rights of Way (HCC PRoW team, British Horse Society);
- Biodiversity Net Gain, Ecology (NHC Ecology, RSPB);
- Employment (NHC Economic Development, Herts Futures);
- Stewardship (NHC open space);
- Housing (NHC housing);
- Station Improvements and Rail Crossing (Network Rail);
- Sustainability (NHC and HCC Sustainability);
- Sports Provision (NHC policy, Sports England);
- Waste (NHC and HCC waste);
- Drainage and Flooding (LLFA, Affinity Water);
- Archaeology (HCC Archaeology, Historic England);

- Transport (NHC Transport, HCC Highways, National Highways)
- Active Travel (Active Travel England); and
- Green Infrastructure (NHC Open Space and Ecology).

2.0 SITE CONTEXT

Site Description

- 2.1 The site is 219.84 hectares in size and comprises a series of parcels of predominantly agricultural land immediately adjoining the urban area (refer to site boundary at Figure 1). These parcels reflect the Local Plan site allocation references.



Figure 1: Growing Baldock Site

- 2.2 The Growing Baldock site comprises a series of parcels of predominantly agricultural land immediately adjoining the urban area (refer to Figure 1 above). The northernmost, and largest component of the site (BA1) lies to the east of North Road, which connects to the A1 junction to the north (the A1 runs in parallel to North Road in the vicinity of the site) and Baldock town centre to the south. Baldock railway station, which provides direct rail connections to Letchworth Garden City and onwards to London is to the south and west of the site.
- 2.3 The southern boundary of BA1 is defined by the railway line and the eastern and northern edge by existing field boundaries and footpaths. Bygrave / Ashwell Road runs through this part of the site, from North Road to the village of Bygrave to the north east.
- 2.4 A narrow strip of land between the railway to the north and Royston Road to the south, forms the central portion of the Baldock development area (BA10). This area incorporates a number of small businesses and private homes. The remaining portion of the Baldock site

wraps around the eastern side of the settlement (BA3 and the Urban Open Land), bound to the west by existing development area and to the east by the A505, which travels south west beyond Baldock to connect to the next A1 junction further south. Clothall Road dissects this part of the site (BA2), as it runs north west towards the town centre. Walls Field Scheduled Monument forms part of the site, between the Urban Open Land and the town centre.

- 2.5 The majority of the site is given over to agricultural tenancies and is therefore rural in character, with field boundaries defined by hedgerows / trees of varying age and quality. A network of public rights of way and bridleways traverse the site.

Site Location

- 2.6 The site is located to the north-east of the historic market town of Baldock (population c.10,000), within the administrative area of North Hertfordshire. It benefits from a well-connected strategic location on the A1 and lies to the north of Stevenage and immediately to the east of Letchworth Garden City and Hitchin. Once an important coaching town, it has been bypassed twice: first by the A1(M) and more recently by the A505 Baldock Bypass, which opened in 2006.
- 2.7 Baldock is a historic market town comprising a large Conservation Area and numerous listed buildings. A Scheduled Monument (Romano-British town and Late Iron Age settlement – Walls Field) is located within the OPA site, off Clothall Road adjacent to the Urban Open Land. A further Scheduled Monument is situated west of the BA1 site and North Road (Ivel Springs).

Topography

- 2.8 The southern part of the site generally falls from south to north from a high point of c.90m AOD at the south western corner, to c.72m AOD at Clothall Road and c.68m AOD at Royston Road.
- 2.9 The central area falls from east to west from a high point of c.83m AOD at the eastern boundary, down to c.61m AOD next to Laymoor Farm.
- 2.10 The northern part of the site falls from east to west from a high point of c.80m AOD at the eastern boundary, to c.57m AOD at North Road.
- 2.11 The site's topography is 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 line running east-west, dropping towards the west and the course of the River Ivel.

Landscape Character

- 2.12 Baldock is a compact and historic market town, set within the rolling chalk landscape of north Hertfordshire. Visually, the settlement of Baldock lies in a bowl, with relatively distant views across the town from elevated positions on the surrounding chalk ridgelines and scarp slopes.
- 2.13 The site is visible from limited locations including the northern, outer residential edge of Baldock, from parts of Lower Bygrave to the north east and from residential areas bordering the site.
- 2.14 More extensive views of the site and beyond to St Mary's Church are possible from the Public Right of Way network. Existing large buildings along Royston Road (at Ashville Trading Estate) – along with the Letchworth retail and business park – serve as detracting features in views from the surrounding countryside, when looking back towards Baldock. Electricity pylon towers dominate the skyline in views from the north and west.
- 2.15 Linear transport routes, including the Cambridge railway line and Baldock A505 bypass, sever views – with their alignments partly picked out by flanking existing vegetation, along with associated infrastructure (bridges over the A505, the Weston Hills tunnel and signage at the Royston Road junction).

Transport and Accessibility**Active Travel**

- 2.16 Baldock is a compact town which provides a range of facilities and services for existing residents within walking / cycling distance. Baldock is in close proximity to farmland and rural villages and surrounding PRow are dominated by Bridleways. The National Cycle Network does not run directly through Baldock, but Route 12 does reach the western extent of the town with an off-road, unlit cycle path. There is no dedicated cycle infrastructure within the existing town and congestion and flows of vehicular traffic, in particular HGVs, act to limit active travel movements in some places, particularly in the town centre.

Public Transport

- 2.17 Baldock is served by multiple bus services, the most frequent of which connect the town centre, Knights Templar School and South Baldock into Letchworth Garden City. Services to the east of the town are more infrequent, with the most frequent services operating hourly.
- 2.18 Baldock Railway Station, located to the south west of the site, is on the Hitchin to Cambridge Line and served by the Thameslink and Great Northern franchises. Services provide connections to Cambridge, London and the south east. The number of people using Baldock Station has been increasing over the last 20 years, although with a marked drop in

2020/2021, reflecting the impact of the pandemic, with numbers increasing again in subsequent years.

Roads

- 2.19 The A1(M), A507 and A505 connect in the area surrounding Baldock, with Junctions 9 and 10 providing regional connections to the A1(M). This provides connections to London, Cambridge and into the Midlands.
- 2.20 The existing road network, particularly within Baldock is congested, principally at peak periods with the network providing important links across the county, and with many longer-distance journeys being made through the town. Around 50% of traffic that passes through Baldock does not stop in the town, of which a significant proportion is made up by HGVs.

Trees

- 2.21 A BS:5837 Tree Survey has been undertaken of the site. This reports that the majority of the site is arable farmland with existing hedgerows and trees associated with field boundaries and farmsteads. There are no ancient natural woodlands, Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) or veteran trees located on site.
- 2.22 The arboricultural tree survey identified multiple broad-leaved and coniferous trees on site are category B (moderate quality) and category C (low quality). There was only one category A tree (high quality) identified, a Common Walnut on the north western boundary of BA2. The tree survey recommends those trees which will need to be removed in order to accommodate the Proposed Development. None of the trees proposed for removal are afforded statutory protection by a TPO, Conservation Area nor considered aged or veteran.

Ecology

- 2.23 An Ecological Assessment of the Growing Baldock site was undertaken in 2022 which refined the scope of subsequent Phase 2 surveys required to inform this outline planning application. Additional surveys of badgers, bats, breeding birds, brown hare and invertebrates in addition to desktop studies have since been undertaken to support this OPA. Further details of these are summarised in the submitted Ecological Mitigation Plan.
- 2.24 The majority of the site is arable farmland of low ecological value. The site does not include any statutory designated sites of nature conservation. The Weston Hill and Ivel Springs Local Nature Reserves (LNR) border the site, at the south east and northwest boundary respectively. Ten non-statutory designated sites of nature conservation, six priority habitats and two notable habitats are located within 1km of the Baldock site. The Bygrave Road Local Wildlife Site (LWS), a small area of semi-improved neutral grassland within the verge, is located within the centre of the site, contiguous with Bygrave Road.

- 2.25 Land to the east of Clothall Common, formed by the spoil from construction of the A505 forms a broadly triangular area that has since self-colonised and formed an area of ecological interest.
- 2.26 The PEA concludes that the two LNRs provide strong wildlife corridors for numerous species, some of which may use the development site, with Ivel Springs being of particular relevance as it falls adjacent to the site boundaries. The LNRs will be adequately buffered and complemented through additional habitat provision to further limit impacts and improve connectivity of the LNRs to the wider landscape both within and beyond the boundaries of the site.
- 2.27 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 direct evidence of nesting birds on or immediately adjacent to the site and habitats present within the site have the potential to support bats, reptiles, common amphibians, badgers and other notable and priority species such as hedgehog and brown hare.
- 2.28 The site supports a diverse assemblage of breeding birds, including an onsite population of corn bunting of county importance for this species. Protected and notable bird species are also present within 1km of the site.
- 2.29 There are also areas of dense scrub which are of some conservation value because this habitat forms an important habitat corridor in a largely arable landscape. The site offers some commuting and foraging habitat for bats, principally on the site peripheries which connect with off-site habitats.
- 2.30 There is commuting and foraging habitat for badgers particularly in the north of the site, in a woodland block, hedgerows, scrub and grassland field margins. Within the south of the site, a large area of neutral semi-improved grassland of high suitability for reptiles.
- 2.31 The ditches, amenity grassland, improved grassland and semi-improved grassland on site are all thought to be of limited ecological value, whilst areas of semi-improved grassland are considered to be of moderate ecological value at a local level and some high value trees are present within the hedgerows.

Heritage

- 2.32 With the exception of the Walls Field Scheduled Monument (a Romano-British small town and Late Iron Age settlement off Clothall Road), there are no designated heritage assets within the site. There are, however, a number of listed buildings, a further scheduled monument and a conservation area within the vicinity of the site.

- 2.33 Baldock Conservation Area is located in relative proximity to the south west of the site in the historic core of Baldock. Outward views from within the conservation area to the site are prevented by topography and intervening built form. The application site forms part of the open landscape setting surrounding Baldock and its conservation area, but it is not appreciable from within it.
- 2.34 The Grade I listed Church of St Mary is situated in the centre of the Conservation Area and the most prominent heritage asset in the area. The church spire is visible from a number of vantage points in Baldock and from the site. Whilst the site does not form part of the church's setting, the Proposed Development may alter the context within which it is appreciated.
- 2.35 The Scheduled Monument site south of Blackhorse Farm (Ivel Springs) is currently experienced as green space and has no visually tangible historic features. The setting of the Walls Field Scheduled Monument, within the site, is characterised by the surrounding built form of Baldock.
- 2.36 Four listed buildings are located outside the conservation area, along North Road, none of which are considered to be susceptible to the level of change posed by the Proposed Development, although consideration will need to be given to any impacts on these historic assets. There are no non-designated heritage assets in or within the vicinity of the site.
- 2.37 Bygrave Common is an area of land within BA1 which is noted on historic OS maps, which is identified in the Historic Environment Record as having historic landscape character, but not as an identified heritage asset. This area has remained mostly open to the community as agricultural land and has changed over time, such that there is no remaining identifiable boundary treatment or land form. As such, in its current form, this area is relatively unremarkable, with no tangible evidence of its history in an intact landscape.
- 2.38 Much of the site has been the subject of archaeological investigations in relation to previous planning applications including the Baldock bypass and the two withdrawn OPAs for the site, and more recent extensive investigations to support this OPA, in the form of both geophysical surveys and trial trenching.
- 2.39 Within the site, pre-Roman remains include Neolithic pits, elements of Bronze Age barrow cemeteries, Iron Age field enclosures and part of an Iron Age pit alignment. Subsequent geophysical surveys and trial trenching has been undertaken on BA1, BA2, BA3 and BA10 during 2024 and 2025. The vast majority of recorded archaeology within the site relates to Late Iron Age and Roman agriculture, to the east of the contemporary settlement, including ditched enclosures, fields and trackways and an area of possible settlement.

Drainage and Flood Risk

- 2.40 The site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore suitable for development. There are no surface water sewers on the site. There is a foul water rising main crossing the

northern part of the site, the risk of flooding from which is considered to be negligible. The site is also at very low risk of flooding from groundwater or artificial sources.

- 2.41 The majority of the site is at also at very low risk of surface water flooding, with the exception of two areas on the southern part of the site and an area adjacent to North Road and Bygrave Road in the northern part of the site. The Environment Agency's superficial aquifer designation map indicates that the site is underlain by a Secondary A or Secondary (undifferentiated) Aquifer. The Bedrock Aquifer map indicates the bedrock underlying the site is classified as a Principal Aquifer.
- 2.42 The site is located partially within an Environment Agency SPZ designated Zone II - Outer Protection Zone and partially in a Zone III - Total Catchment. Groundwater has not been encountered in the site-specific ground investigations.

Air Quality and Noise

- 2.43 There are two Air Quality Management Areas in North Hertfordshire, both of which are at too great a distance (c.8.5KM) from the site to be affected by the Proposed Development. An air quality assessment has been prepared for the OPA to consider the impacts of road traffic emissions and any other potentially pollution generating uses such as waste facilities.
- 2.44 The main existing constraint on the Proposed Development with respect to noise sensitive uses is noise from road traffic. The principal roads affecting the site are the A1(M) which runs around 300m to the west of the site at its closest and the A505 which is adjacent to the south-east of the site. There is also a railway line running though the site which runs domestic services between Baldock and Royston which imposes a noise constraint on the site.
- 2.45 There are also industrial and commercial uses, which primarily fall between the railway line and Baldock Road. The predominant use of these sites as mainly offices with some service yards and delivery areas.

Utilities

- 2.46 There are two overhead powerlines (11KV) located within the site: one running along the western boundary, adjacent to North Road, and a second in the southernmost parcel of the site south of Clothall Road.
- 2.47 33KV undergrounded cables are present along the northern edge of the site and routed across this area (broadly along the route of the existing Public Right of Way) linking Bygrave Road. A further 33KV cable runs along the northern side verge of Royston Road, transecting the central part of the site. An 11KV cable is located on the southern side of the railway line.
- 2.48 There is no gas mains apparatus present within the site itself, therefore no on-site diversionary works are required to facilitate the Proposed Development.

- 2.49 A water main is routed within the carriageway and verge of North Road on the northwestern edge of the Proposed Development. Water mains are routed along the northern side of Royston Road and the site side verge of Bygrave Road, to provide connections to the existing properties. The southern part of the site is dissected by a number of existing water mains of varying sizes (125mm to 400mm).
- 2.50 Openreach and Virgin records indicate a network of communications apparatus present in the verge alongside North Road, Royston Road, Clothall Road, Wallington Road and Bygrave Road.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Description of Development

- 3.1 The description of development for which planning permission is sought is:

Outline planning application with all matters reserved except for means of highway access into the development from the A505/Royston Road, North Road and Clothall Road: for up to 3,200 homes, up to 16ha of employment, waste and leisure infrastructure, a mixed use local centre, up to 1 secondary school, up to 2 x primary schools, up to 1 SEND school, health hub, green infrastructure (including parks, formal sports provision, play, habitat areas, informal open space and structural planting), internal street network, access junctions and railway crossing, public transport infrastructure, pedestrian/cycle network (including PRow diversions, active travel routes, mobility hubs and crossing of the railway), utilities and drainage infrastructure (including diversions of existing and provision of new infrastructure, pumping stations, sustainable drainage, primary substations, rising main/strategic sewer and renewable energy infrastructure), ground remodelling/earthworks and any necessary demolitions. (the 'Proposed Development')

OPA Parameters

- 3.2 The parameters of the Proposed Development are defined by the Parameter Plan, Development Specification and Detailed Junction Access Plans.
- 3.3 The **Parameter Plan** defines existing features, the disposition of land uses and open spaces, key access points, movement networks and infrastructure and the approximate location of key facilities.
- 3.4 The **Development Specification** comprises a written series of spatial principles to describe the Proposed Development, define the range and maximum quanta of land uses, and set principles in relation to green infrastructure, water, ecology, heritage, connectivity and transport and development areas.
- 3.5 The **Detailed Junction Access Plans** show the access junctions for which detailed approval is sought as part of the OPA. These are:
- North Road (vehicular access and bus only);
 - A505 junction additional spur; and
 - Clothall Road.
- 3.6 These parameters are the basis upon which the Environmental Impact Assessment has been undertaken and therefore together define the key components of the Proposed Development as follows.

Physical Design and Layout

- 3.7 The OPA comprises a mixed-use development of residential, local centre, health, education, energy, waste and employment uses together with pedestrian and cycle connections, formal open space (including areas for play), informal open space, surface water drainage and other supporting infrastructure / engineering works and formation of accesses.
- 3.8 The Proposed Development layout and structure as a whole have been influenced by the landscape context and topographical features of the site. The arrangement of land parcels and their associated uses, form and type of open space and route ways are based on the established physical features within the site.
- 3.9 Development will comprise walkable residential parcels. Each area benefits from access to formal and informal open space, identified as 'Strategic Green Infrastructure' on the submitted Parameter Plan.
- 3.10 The site comprises a series of allocations, the components of which are described below.

BA1

- 3.11 BA1 is the largest of the site allocations incorporating new homes centred around a new Local Centre at the heart of the Proposed Development, where the north-south Active Travel Spine and east-west Bygrave Road (active travel route) intersect.
- 3.12 A bus only link into BA1 is proposed from North Road alongside a vehicular access point slightly further north from North Road, connected by the development access to the A505 junction south of BA10. An active travel underpass and all modes bridge railway crossings are proposed to connect with BA10. The existing Public Rights of Way crossing the railway will be retained and realigned.
- 3.13 Up to two primary schools will be delivered in BA1, one being in the heart of the Local Centre and the second further east, fronting Bygrave Road.
- 3.14 Strategic green infrastructure areas are proposed in the form of Bygrave Common to the north and the Eastern Park to the east to provide multifunctional open space and a green setting for the wider development. The Baldock Greenway, a circular leisure route, will form part of and connect these green spaces, wrapping around the development area.
- 3.15 Additional green space will be provided in the parcel west of North Road, within the sustainable drainage corridor at the south western corner, at the lowest point of the site, along the active travel routes, and within development parcels.

BA2

- 3.16 BA2 is the smallest of the Growing Baldock allocation sites incorporating a single residential use and a linear green space between the A505 to the east and the residential area incorporating the Baldock Greenway. Detailed approval is sought for the access junction into BA2 from Clothall Road.

BA3 and Urban Open Land

- 3.17 In the northern half of BA3 the ecological habitat area within the strategic green space known as 'land to the east of Clothall Common' will be retained and enhanced. The Baldock Greenway will run through this green space. A modest residential parcel is located at the north western corner of this site, discrete from the ecological area.
- 3.18 A flexible land use parcel is proposed to the south of the ecological area to incorporate one of three of the following potential land use mixes, dependent upon the outcome of the S106 Education Review Process which will determine whether a secondary school is required on BA3 and its size:

Option 1 – Knights Templar expansion and relocation to BA3

- 3.19 Relocation and expansion (up to 12FE) of Knights Templar school to BA3. BA3 to accommodate SEND school and secondary school.

Option 2 – Knights Templar expansion

- 3.20 Expansion of Knights Templar on existing site (up to 10FE). BA3 to accommodate SEND school and residential.

Option 3 – Additional secondary school on BA3

- 3.21 Provision of additional secondary school (up to 5FE) on BA3. BA3 to accommodate SEND school, secondary school and residential.
- 3.22 The Urban Open Land to the south of BA3 will accommodate sports pitches, enhanced allotments and potentially play provision, with the final mix depending upon the land use to the north. If a secondary school is located in BA3, the majority of the Urban Open Land will form part of that school campus and be used for sports pitches. If there is no secondary school in BA3, and it is built out for residential (save for the SEND school), the Urban Open Land will incorporate all weather sports pitches and play provision and associated facilities e.g. parking and sports pavilion.
- 3.23 BA3 will be accessed off Wallington Road. Detailed approval of the junction(s) with Wallington Road is not sought at this stage as the design and final location will depend on the final land use mix within BA3.

Distribution of Land Uses

- 3.24 The distribution of land uses across the site aligns with that set out in the approved Growing Baldock Strategic Masterplan (SMP) (2025), with the developable area within BA1 lying between the railway to the south and the east-west ridgeline to the north. The northern edge of development within BA1, as it fronts Bygrave Common, extends slightly further north than envisaged by the SMP. This approach has been fully tested in terms of landscape and visual impact (refer to separate ES chapter and CGIs in the Design and Access Statement) and remains compliant with the Local Plan policy (SP14), with development remaining south of the ridgeline.
- 3.25 The Proposed Development also seeks to retain the green space east of Clothall Common as ecological green space, and Walls Field and the Urban Open Land remaining open and delivered (in the case of the latter only) as open space which retains the important open characteristics and views east towards the countryside.
- 3.26 The Growing Baldock Proposed Development will be made up of the following land uses:

Residential

- 3.27 Up to 3,200 new dwellings, including a mix of tenures, sizes and designs including homes for senior living and 28 self and custom build plots. A proportion of affordable homes will be provided alongside market units.

Employment

- 3.28 Up to 16 hectares of employment development will be located between Royston Road and the railway. The ambition is for this parcel to accommodate strategic and/or aspirational employment uses and may include a mix of the following uses:
- office – up to a maximum of 20,000m²;
 - indoor sport and recreation – up to a maximum of 5,000m²;
 - research and development – and/or light industrial – up to a maximum of 26,500m²;
 - industrial – up to a maximum of 26,500m²; and
 - health hub – up to a maximum of 6,000m² – at the western end of BA10.

Green Infrastructure

- 3.29 A network of open spaces and green infrastructure will be provided throughout the Proposed Development, both in the form of strategic open spaces and green infrastructure within and through development parcels. A Design and Access Statement (DAS) and GI Strategy is submitted with this OPA both of which should be referred to for details of the range of open space typologies to be included.

Waste Facilities

- 3.30 The easternmost end of the employment parcel (BA10) may also incorporate some or all of the waste facilities as follows:
- vehicle depot – up to a maximum of 1,500m²;
 - waste transfer station - up to a maximum of 3,500m²;
 - household waste recycling centre – site area of up to a maximum of 1.1 hectares.

Primary Education

- 3.31 A maximum of two up to 3FE primary schools will be delivered in BA1 to meet the needs of the northern part of the Proposed Development. One primary school will be located in the vicinity of the local centre, at the heart of BA1, with the second school located further east, adjacent to the Bygrave Road corridor. Both will be wrapped in residential uses, with the main school buildings fronting and defining the street. The timing of delivery and size of the primary schools will be determined by the Education Review Process set out within the S106.

Secondary Education

- 3.32 Three options for secondary school provision are captured within the OPA as set out above: expansion and relocation of Knights Templar secondary school to BA3 (up to 12FE), expansion of Knights Templar on its existing site, or provision of a second smaller secondary school on BA3 (up to 5FE). A decision on the preferred secondary provision route will be taken later in the development's lifecycle in accordance with an Education Review Process enshrined within the S106 agreement. Whichever option is selected, there will be implications for the provision of indoor and outdoor sport and some localised highway interventions, which will depend on the location and size of the school.

Early Years

- 3.33 Up to two private commercial nursery facilities will be provided on site, one within the local centre and the other either in BA1 or BA10. Nursery provision will be included within the primary schools.

SEND

- 3.34 A 1.78 hectare site for a Special Educational Needs (SEND) school to be delivered by HCC will be reserved on BA3.

Local Centre

- 3.35 A single local centre is proposed as part of BA1 to be located centrally at the confluence of active travel routes through the Proposed Development. It will support a mix of uses including local retail and community facilities. It is important that the primacy of the town

centre as the main retail / leisure centre is not compromised by over provision of these uses. As such the following, limited floorspace is proposed within the local centre:

- up to 3,500 m² hotel/residential institution;
- up to 750m² pub/takeaway;
- up to 700m² convenience retail;
- up to 800m² retail/cafe/restaurant;
- up to 550m² office;
- up to 1,150m² gym;
- up to 2,250m² of Health Hub, if not provided on BA10; and
- up to 500m² community hall.

Energy

- 3.36 Potential renewable energy infrastructure may also be located at the eastern end of BA10, adjacent to the waste uses.

Health

- 3.37 A health 'hub' may be incorporated at the western end of the employment parcel, adjacent to the active travel crossing. This has an upper floorspace limit of 6,000m² that can accommodate 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. If not provided in BA10, the health hub could form part of the Local Centre in BA1, albeit on a smaller scale (up to 2,250m²).

Sustainable Design and Renewable Energy

- 3.38 Sustainability is an integral part of the OPA. The site has been designed to give people the opportunity to choose a healthier, more sustainable lifestyle; for instance through reducing the need to travel, establishing sustainable drainage systems and creating a place that engenders social connections.
- 3.39 The applicant is committed to delivering a sustainable development, a component of which will be the level of sustainable design and energy conservation incorporated into the Proposed Development.

Drainage

- 3.40 An assessment of the flood risk demonstrates the site lies wholly within Flood Zone 1; being an area of Low Probability of flooding (refer to Flood Risk Assessment appended to the ES). A Drainage Strategy (also appended to the ES) reviews the site's drainage characteristics and sets out a sustainable strategy to accommodate surface water from the Proposed Development which will control of peak discharges from the site to a rate commensurate with the baseline conditions, and generate storm water management Proposed Development

that maintain water quality and biodiversity as part of a SuDS management train. SuDS basins have been located at the lowest point of each parcel to detain and discharge surface water to a rate no greater than the existing greenfield runoff rate.

- 3.41 Surface water will be disposed of through infiltration wherever possible and will follow the disposal hierarchy. The residential plots are proposed to discharge to individual soakaways, with driveways and parking areas constructed of permeable paving. The general road and footpath network and the employment buildings will be drained to infiltration basins through a combination of swales, bio-retention areas and piped networks.

Planning Approach

- 3.42 U&C's delivery of strategic sites via the master developer model is predicated on a now tried and tested approach to planning, that allows for the approval of the appropriate level of detail at the appropriate time, cascading down from site wide (high level) to parcel wide (more granular detail) The U&C model engages bespoke planning conditions alongside the S106 agreement to establish a tiered approval regime. This inserts an additional approval stage (Tier 2) into the planning process between outline consent (Tier 1) and reserved matters applications (RMAs) (Tier 3).
- 3.43 This Tier 2 'Framework' submission and approval shapes phases and development at a level of detail that gives the master developer and LPA a high level of control over implementation. A Design Code is produced supported by other technical delivery documents e.g. relating to biodiversity and construction management. The approach substantially lifts the burden off individual parcel developers, that follow through with parcel RMAs and enables the LPA to deliver a joined up and comprehensive development management approach.
- 3.44 The principle of this approach is proposed to be adopted at Baldock, with bespoke variations to reflect the intended early delivery of BA2 as a first phase, and to reflect the fact that the land use mix within BA3 will not be agreed until later in the development programme. The proposed planning approach is set out in the diagram at Figure 2 below and explained further in the paragraphs that follow:

Figure 2: Growing Baldock – OPA and Post OPP Approvals Structure

		BA1  - residential - local centre - up to 2 x primary schools	BA2  residential	BA3  flexible land use (residential / secondary / SEND education)	BA10  - employment - health hub - waste / energy infrastructure	
Tier 1	Approved OPA Documents	Covers all OPA area				
		<i>Core Documents:</i> - Parameter Plan - Detailed Access Plans - Development Specification, including DAS Site Wide, Key Places and Spaces and BA2 Design Principles - Environmental Statement <i>Supporting Site Wide Documents:</i> - Design and Access Statement including IMP - Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan - Transport Assessment - Framework Travel Plan - Green Infrastructure Strategy - Ecological Management Plan (including outline BNG HMP) - Outline BNG Plan and metric - Sustainability Strategy - Planning Statement - Drainage Strategy - Flood Risk Assessment - Noise / Air Quality Assessment - Statement of Community Involvement - Arboricultural Impact Assessment				
Tier 2	Allocation Specific Approvals (via OPA condition discharge)	BA1 Design Code Phase BNG Plan and HMP Detailed CEMP	See reference to BA2 in Tier 1 Approved OPA Documents above	BA3 Design Code (high level) Phase BNG Plan and HMP Detailed CEMP	BA10 Design Code (high level) Phase BNG Plan and HMP Detailed CEMP Employment Strategy	Site Wide Review Processes (via S106) Series of reviews throughout development in relation to viability, affordable housing, education, transport (monitor and manage) linked to pre-defined occupations trigger points
Tier 3	Reserved Matters (either enabling works or RMA in accordance with tier 1 and 2 documentation)	Scheme design and usual RMA requirements Plus statements to demonstrate compliance with Tier 1 and Tier 2 documentation	Scheme design and usual RMA requirements Plus statements to demonstrate compliance with Tier 1 documentation	Scheme design and usual RMA requirements Plus statements to demonstrate compliance with Tier 1 and Tier 2 documentation	Scheme design and usual RMA requirements Plus statements to demonstrate compliance with Tier 1 and Tier 2 documentation	

Tier 1 – Outline / Site Wide

- 3.45 The outline permission will approve the broad quantum and disposition of land uses as defined by the Development Specification, Parameter Plan and the design principles within the Design and Access Statement (also appended to the Development Specification and specifically referred to in Spatial Principle 1) and as supported by the Environmental Statement (ES) and other relevant documents such as the Planning Statement.
- 3.46 Spatial Principles set out within the Development Specification and mitigation measures identified in the ES will ensure that, as development advances, the relevant and appropriate supporting infrastructure is delivered in the right place.
- 3.47 Site-wide strategies to supplement the parameters set by the outline permission and inform the delivery of the Phase and Reserved Matters material have been provided as part of this submission.

Tier 2: Phase

- 3.48 It is intended that development will commence with the delivery of BA2, followed by BA1 (broadly delivered from west to east) and BA10, potentially in parallel with BA1. The phasing (and land use mix) of BA3 will depend on the outcome of the S106 Education Review Process which is not expected until later in the development programme.
- 3.49 This sequencing necessitates a bespoke approach to the second tier of documentation approval in relation to each of the Local Plan allocations. These will be set out in specific conditions relating to each phase.

BA2

- 3.50 This parcel will be the first phase and will be brought forward as early in the development programme as possible. For this reason and because BA2 is physically separate from the wider development and in a discreet location on the edge of Baldock, meaning its design will need to reflect and respond to its immediate context, a Design Code is not required in this case. Furthermore, a scheme of this scale will be brought forward by a single housebuilder and therefore does not necessitate a Design Code which aims to secure design quality across multiple parcels. As such, it is proposed that BA2 progress straight to Tier 3, with an RMA submitted immediately post issue of the Outline Planning Permission (OPP). The Tier 1 material, principally the DAS, includes more detailed design requirements for BA2, with which the RMA must accord to ensure design quality is achieved for this important first phase. This will include additional detail for BA2 as part of the Illustrative Masterplan which will articulate one way in which the BA2 design requirements can be achieved. RMAs for this parcel will therefore need to demonstrate compliance with the Tier 1 site wide and BA2 specific documentation.

BA1

- 3.51 This phase forms the majority of the Proposed Development and will be subject to a suite of Tier 2 documentation, including a BA1 Design Code. This may be supported by phase wide material covering technical matters such as construction, the scope of which will be agreed with NHC officers in due course. The Design Code will include a Regulatory Plan and provide more detailed design requirements for BA1. Future RMAs will need to demonstrate accordance with both the Tier 1 OPP and Tier 2 Phase BA1 documentation.

BA3

- 3.52 The mix of land uses in BA3 will depend on the outcome of the S106 Education Review Process which will determine the scale of secondary educational need and how this will be met through additional provision either onsite (in a new school on BA3) or offsite (at the existing school in Baldock – Knights Templar School). The outcomes of this review and the implications for BA3 will not be known until some way through the development. At this point, a high level BA3 Design Code will be produced for approval to identify the land use mix within the parcel (education only or education plus residential) and key design parameters that flow from that mix e.g. principal access points, internal movement, green spaces, development areas and key frontages. Subsequent RMAs for schools (secondary / SEND) and residential will demonstrate compliance with the Tier 1 OPP and Tier 2 BA3 Design Code.

BA10

- 3.53 Employment, health, waste and energy infrastructure development in BA10 will also be subject to a suite of Tier 2 documentation. It is anticipated that this would, given the relatively small scale of this parcel, be akin to the BA3 approach, i.e. a high level BA10 Design Code and supporting technical material. Future RMAs within BA10 will demonstrate accordance with both the Tier 1 OPP and Tier 2 Phase BA10 documentation.

Tier 3: Reserved Matters

- 3.54 All infrastructure and development Proposed Development will then be subject to tier 3 RMAs which will include statements setting out how compliance with the tier 1 material (all) or bespoke tier 2 material (BA1, BA10, BA3) has been achieved. A condition setting out the specific requirements for RMAs will be included.
- 3.55 It will also be beneficial for the OPP to include conditions which allow for some (limited) RMAs to come forward in advance of approval of the Tier 2 material for BA1/BA10, in exceptional circumstances. This has proved very effective on other U&C developments allowing key early infrastructure such as roads, drainage, open space and schools to be approved and delivered in advance of approval of the Phase Design Code.

- 3.56 Similarly, a condition allowing enabling works (such as in relation to archaeology, demolition, site clearance, groundworks etc.) to be approved via RMAs in advance of Tier 2 approvals, has proven essential in facilitating the timely delivery of development parcels, and is considered appropriate in relation to this OPA. A further mechanism, permitting reserved matters 'outside a phase' has been incorporated into other U&C OPPs, to facilitate the early delivery of key infrastructure or development in advance of Tier 2 approvals. Such instances would be limited and would require the submission of more detailed (to be set out in conditions) information in support of the RMA but is important in allowing development to be expedited in certain instances, for example to take advantage of infrastructure funding.
- 3.57 In the case of 'meanwhile uses', temporary uses that occupy parts of the site that are yet to be developed, these will be the subject of separate planning applications for temporary use, outside the OPA.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY APPRAISAL AND PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 This section sets out the planning policy relevant to the determination of this planning application and provides the planning assessment of the OPA.
- 4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 directs Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the policies of the Adopted Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.3 In determining a planning application such as this the decision-taker, in this case NHC, must follow the decision-making process set out in section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 as amended, which provides:
- (2) In dealing with such an application the authority [decision-maker] shall have regard to:
- (a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application;
 - (b) any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application; and
 - (c) any other material considerations.
- 4.4 NPPF (paragraph 11(c) further reiterates that the Development Plan is the starting point for decision making in accordance with legislation and the approach to decision-making.
- 4.5 The adopted statutory Development Plan for North Hertfordshire District Council comprises the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (NHLP); Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan adopted in 2007 (HCC); Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document, 2012 (HCC); and Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Document, 2014 (HCC); and the made Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plans.
- 4.6 Material considerations also include national policy, which is primarily expressed through the National Planning Policy Framework and national Planning Practice Guidance, as well as additional guidance produced by the Council in the form of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). A further material consideration relevant to the site is the approved Growing Baldock SMP (2025) which outlines a series of themed frameworks and key principles for the development.
- 4.7 As set out above, the NPPF provides a clear basis for the decision taking framework, setting out in paragraph 11(c) the approach to the determination of planning applications in accordance with an up to date Development Plan. The OPA has been prepared on this basis, within the context of and deliberately aligning with the clear policy framework established by the adopted Development Plan.
- 4.8 However, the NPPF also requires that decision takers considers if the Development Plan is up to date (paragraph 11(d)). The assessment to determine whether policies are to be identified

as “out of date” can follow the steps outlined in footnote 8 of the Framework. Footnote 8 of the NPPF states that paragraph 11 (d) is engaged where: *“the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 78); or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years”*.

- 4.9 NHC published an updated housing land supply statement in May 2024 confirming a supply of 3.9 years against a five-year requirement. This figure uses a stepped trajectory housing requirement as set out in the adopted Local Plan of 1,198 dwellings per annum.
- 4.10 The lack of a five-year housing land supply (3.9 years) was confirmed by an Inspector at an appeal issued in April 2025 (Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/W/24/3347012), the most recent appeal derived supply figure at the time of writing.
- 4.11 It is clear therefore that NPPF paragraph 11(d) is engaged in this case and that for the purposes of determining this application the relevant development plan policies are out of date.
- 4.12 Paragraph 11(d) sets out: *“Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
- (i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination”*.
- 4.13 The OPA is not affected by any Footnote 7 designations that would otherwise restrict development or provide a clear reason for refusal, therefore the ‘tilted balance’ applies, meaning that development Proposed Development should be approved without delay if there are no adverse impacts that significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

- 4.14 The OPA should therefore be considered as set out above, having engaged the tilted balance required by NPPF paragraph 11(d)). This chapter however, to aid the overall consideration of the OPA, provides an assessment of the Proposed Development against the provisions of the Development Plan (as per NPPF paragraph 11(c)), concluding with a review of the tilted balance when applied to the Proposed Development (as per NPPF paragraph 11(d)).

Local Policy

North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan (Adopted 2022)

- 4.15 The relevant components of the adopted Development Plan for this application are the:
- *North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031).*
 - *Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan (2021)*
- 4.16 The NHLP 2011-2031 was adopted on 8th November 2022 and sets out the long-term vision and objectives for the whole of North Hertfordshire for the period up to 2031. The Local Plan addresses the key issues in the District including the allocation of at least 13,000 new homes.
- 4.17 The table set out below outlines relevant policies in the NHLP which relate to this submission. In respect of the Proposed Development, the policies are considered to the most important to its determination are assessed overleaf.

Table 1: Relevant Local Plan Policies

Reference	Policy
Policy SP1	Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire
Policy SP2	Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution
Policy SP3	Employment
Policy SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
Policy SP6	Sustainable Transport
Policy SP7	Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions
Policy SP8	Housing
Policy SP9	Design and Sustainability
Policy SP10	Healthy Communities
Policy SP12	Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity
Policy SP13	Historic Environment
Policy SP14 / BA1	Site BA1 – North of Baldock
Policy BA2	Land south-west of Clothall Road (Clothall parish)
Policy BA3	Land south of Clothall Common (Clothall parish)
Policy BA10	Royston Road
Policy T1	Assessment of transport matters
Policy T2	Parking
Policy HS2	Affordable Housing
Policy HS3	Housing Mix
Policy HS5	Accessible and Adaptable Housing

Policy D1	Sustainable Design
Policy D3	Protecting Living Conditions
Policy D4	Air Quality
Policy HC1	Community Facilities
Policy NE2	Landscape
Policy NE4	Biodiversity and geological sites
Policy NE6	New and Improved Open Space
Policy NE7	Reducing flood risk
Policy NE8	Sustainable drainage systems
Policy HE1	Designated Heritage Assets
Policy HE3	Non-designated Heritage Assets
Policy HE4	Archaeology
Policy IMR1	Five Year Housing Land Supply

Policy SP1 - Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

- 4.18 Policy SP1 (Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire) sets out a clear statement of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, reflecting the position taken by the NPPF, balancing social, economic, and environmental objectives. The policy requires new developments to deliver an appropriate mix of housing, jobs and services, contribute to high-quality design and provide the necessary infrastructure. The policy emphasises the need to protect the environment, including biodiversity, landscape and heritage assets, and encourages mitigation against climate change. The Proposed Development fully accords with Policy SP1: the Proposed Development will contribute to sustainable growth. The Proposed Development provides a mix of housing types, including affordable homes, and is designed to integrate with the existing built environment while promoting high-quality, landscape led design.

Policy SP2 - Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution

- 4.19 Policy SP2 (Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution) establishes the settlement hierarchy and spatial distribution of development across the district
- 4.20 The policy classifies Baldock as a 'Town', which establishes Baldock as a key location for sustainable growth and development due to its established infrastructure, services and accessibility. Baldock is therefore expected to accommodate a significant share of new housing and employment development to meet the district needs. Development in towns should support walkability, public transport use, high quality design, and infrastructure provision, whilst also reflecting local environmental and landscape constraints. This classification positions Baldock as a priority area for well-integrated growth.
- 4.21 The policy states that approximately 80% of the districts housing development should be located within the adjusted settlement boundaries – specifically 2,198 homes in Baldock, during the plan period.

- 4.22 The Proposed Development fully accords with Policy SP2, as the Proposed Development is located within Baldock's defined settlement boundary. The site offers a sustainable location for much needed homes where they can benefit from services and transport links that the town has to offer, and will further be bolstered by provision of services, amenities and infrastructure to be delivered on site.

Policy SP3 – Employment

- 4.23 Policy SP3 seeks to proactively encourage sustainable economic growth and support new and existing businesses. This is in part to be achieved through the allocation of employment land to meet the needs of the Functional Economic Market Area over the plan period to 2031. This includes the allocation of BA10 for 19.6ha of employment. Further policy SP3 seeks to promote and support the expansion of the knowledge based economy in the District, plus supports office, research and development, light industrial and B-class uses in appropriate locations outside of designated employment areas.
- 4.24 The Parameter Plan proposes BA10 for up to 16 hectares of employment use. Outline consent is sought for up to 84,000m² of employment uses. The slight reduction in total area, relative to the Local Plan policy reflects the masterplanning that underpins the Parameter Plan, and the need for this parcel to accommodate strategic drainage and accessibility infrastructure (the Active Travel link and development access).

Policy SP5 – Countryside and Green Belt

- 4.25 Policy SP5 reflects the Local Plan's review of the Green Belt and consequent release of strategic development sites, including the Growing Baldock site. Development within the Green Belt will only be permitted where it does not result in inappropriate development or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated.
- 4.26 The OPA incorporates a small parcel of land west of the North Road that remains within the Green Belt. However, the Parameter Plan identifies this parcel as green infrastructure, potentially as an extension to the existing allotments. Such a use accords with the NPPF definition of appropriate uses under paragraph 154(h) and therefore aligns with policy SP5.

Policy SP6 – Sustainable Transport

- 4.27 Policy SP6 promotes the use of sustainable transport modes, encouraging development in locations which enable sustainable journeys to be made to key services and facilities. It also seeks opportunities to implement sustainable travel infrastructure on the Strategic Housing Sites in order to influence the behaviour of occupiers or users, along with supporting Travel Plans to embed sustainable travel patterns at an early stage.

The Proposed Development incorporates a vision led approach to transport planning, prioritising active and sustainable transport measures from the outset, as articulated in the

Transport Assessment. The Framework Travel Plan and Monitor and Manage Framework will work together to ensure measures are in place to support the target of around 50% of all trips being made by modes other than the private car.

- 4.28 Policy SP6 emphasises the need for collaborative working with HCC highways and Highways England is encouraged to ensure sustainable transport options are available to all potential occupants. The Growing Baldock team have worked very closely with HCC, Highways England and NHC transport officers, through a regular transport working group that has run throughout the SMP and OPA processes. This has ensured that thorough examination of the sustainable transport potential and Proposed Development has shaped the OPA from the outset, informed at all times by the prioritisation of sustainable and active travel modes and connectivity to key destinations.
- 4.29 A series of on and off-site interventions are proposed to improve and provide active travel connections, as well as introduce a bus service into the site. Triggers for delivery of these interventions will be secured via condition or S106 agreement. In accordance with policy SP6, the OPA sets out a high level approach to parking, relative to standards, within the DAS and Transport Statement. The Proposed Development also protects existing Public Rights of Way (some of which will be subject to minor realignments to facilitate delivery), following pre-application discussions with rights of way user groups.

Policy SP7 – Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions

- 4.30 Policy SP7 requires development Proposed Development to make provision for the infrastructure necessary to accommodate the demands arising from the Proposed Development. Developers will be required to fund or contribute to funding of on-site and/or off-site improvements which includes the following:
- Provision of facilities and infrastructure for new residents;
 - Contribute toward addressing cumulative impacts;
 - Avoid placing unreasonable additional burdens on the existing community or existing infrastructure;
 - Mitigate adverse impacts where appropriate;
 - Enhance critical assets or make good their loss or damage; and
 - Cover maintenance costs of any such new provision.
- 4.31 The policy further requires developers to have regard to relevant national guidance or requirements in relation to planning obligations and any tariffs which may be introduced by the Council. Development Proposed Development will require working with landowners, developers and other agencies to facilitate the delivery of Local Plan sites and associated infrastructure.

- 4.32 Robust evidence will be required where developers consider that viability issues impact upon the delivery of key infrastructure and/or mitigation measures. This evidence will be used to determine whether an appropriate and acceptable level of contribution/mitigation can be secured. Section 8 of this Planning Statement sets out the proposed Heads of Terms for the S106 agreement, in line with policy SP7 and other relevant policy. A Viability Appraisal is expected to be required to inform S106 negotiations and will be submitted prior to determination of the OPA, once the expectations for the S106 have been expressed through consultee responses to the application.

Policy SP8 – Housing

- 4.33 Policy SP8 (Housing) sets out the housing growth required across the district. The policy acknowledges the requirement to release sufficient land to deliver at least 11,600 net new homes for North Hertfordshire’s own needs.
- 4.34 The policy also identifies that of the 2,800 homes allocated at site BA1, approximately 1,400 of these will be delivered by 2031. This policy also requires sites to deliver up to 40% Affordable Housing where this is viable, with a broadly even split between smaller (1-2 bed) and larger (3+ bed) properties. Demand for self build development must also be provided on specific sites.
- 4.35 The OPA is seeking approval for some 3,200 homes with affordable housing which could include self / custom build plots, older persons housing, accessible / adaptable housing.

Policies BA1 / SP14, BA2, BA3, BA4 - Site Allocations (Housing)

- 4.36 In addition to these overarching strategic policies, there is a clear policy basis for the Proposed Development and the site is identified in the Local Plan as a series of allocations: BA1 (North of Baldock) for 2,800 homes; BA2 (Land southwest of Clothall Road) for 200 homes and BA3 (Land south of Clothall Common) for 245 homes (see Figure 3). Site BA4 (green space east of Clothall Common) lies outside the OPA boundary and is allocated for 50 homes.

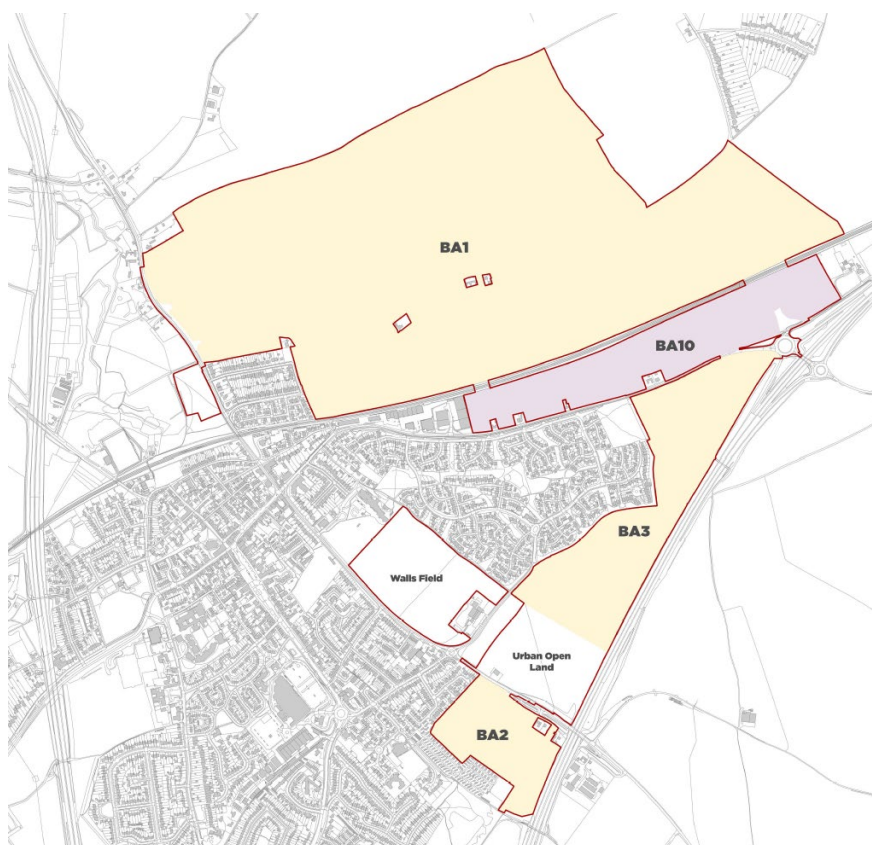


Figure 3: Local Plan Site Allocation Areas

- 4.37 The Development Specification and Parameter Plan submitted as part of OPA set out the components of the Proposed Development, and this confirms alignment with the site allocations policies and the residential quantum contained within them, including BA1 - North of Baldock. At BA3 a flexible land use is shown with the potential for this part of the site to deliver residential development and/or education provision subject to need. BA2 is proposed for residential development as per the allocation.
- 4.38 The site-specific policy SP14 relates to strategic site BA1 to the north of Baldock and the railway. Planning application(s) for this site are to be assessed against its contribution to the Strategic Masterplan and must not prejudice the implementation of the site as a whole. The policy also sets out specific criteria to be met as follows:

Table 2: Alignment of OPA with Policy SP14

Policy SP14 BA1 Policy Criteria	How Addressed in OPA
Mixed use local centre to provide for range of day to day needs along with additional neighbourhood level provision of around 500m ² convenience retail and 1,400m ² of comparison retail and food and beverage floorspace	As set out in Town Centre Assessment below, proposed provision of up to 700m ² of convenience retail and up to 1,550m ² of retail, food and beverage floorspace within the local centre, aligns with policy requirements

Structure planting to integrate into landscape and reinforce long-term, defensible Green Belt boundary to north and east	Spatial principle SP10 in Development Specification requires structural planting on north and eastern boundaries. Further details can be found within the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.
New link road connecting A507 and A505 including new bridge across the railway	Proposed development access between North Road and A505, plus bridge over railway, identified on OPA Parameter Plan
Sustainable transport measures: - secondary rail active travel crossing in vicinity of Ashville Way - Safe access routes and upgrades to Baldock station - integration of Bridleway Baldock034/ Bygrave002 as north-south route - use of Bygrave Road as sustainable transport corridor - integration into existing active travel, public transport and road networks	Proposed active travel underpass located east of Ashville Way, in accordance with SMP Potential additional active travel entrance to station proposed, alongside improvements to the station Bridleway retained on Parameter Plan Bygrave Road proposed as key east-west active travel corridor Connections to existing network from the site indicated on Parameter Plan
At least 28 serviced plots for self-build	Development to provide 28 self-build plots
Appropriate site for care home for elderly people	Up to 3,500m ² of floorspace proposed in Local Centre for care home
Community hall and GP surgery	Up to 500m ² of community hall and 6,000m ² of health hub proposed in local centre and BA10 respectively. The health hub could also be located in BA1 (up to 2,250m ²), if not provided in BA10
Up to 6FE of primary age education provision	Up to 2 x 3FE primary schools in BA1 identified on Parameter Plan
Up to 8FE secondary age education provision. A secondary school larger than 6FE will be supported where it is located to the south of the allocation site, and safe, sustainable and direct routes are provided from Clothall Common	Bespoke secondary school provision agreed with HCC/NHC following extensive discussions through the SMP process, which concluded that if a new secondary school is to be provided, it would be best located on BA3 rather than BA1. The Parameter Plan accords with this arrangement as defined in the SMP. Direct, safe and sustainable routes to the school from BA1, via Clothall Common, will be provided

Address existing surface water flood risk issues, particularly to the south of Ashwell Road, through SuDS	Sustainable drainage corridor proposed at the lowest point of the site in BA1. Strategic drainage strategy including SuDS provision to minimise flood risk.
Appropriate mitigation, compensation and/or enhancement of key features of biodiversity including: Ivel Springs LNR Bygrave Road LWS Identified protected species and priority habitats	Drainage Strategy identifies opportunity to help recharge the aquifer and therefore the chalk stream at the heart of the LNR. Bygrave Common to provide alternative strategic scale green space and access to nature, to reduce recreational pressure on the LNR Bygrave Road LWS and land to the east of Clothall Common identified on Parameter Plan and Development Specification for protection and enhancement
Built development contained to the south and south west of ridgeline	Extent of development area limited to south and south west of the ridgeline along northern edge, fronting Bygrave Common.
Sensitive treatment of heritage assets and settings including: -access solution from North Road which addresses potential impacts -retaining framed views of St Mary's Church -using areas of archaeological significance to inform site wide GI strategy -Ivel Springs Scheduled Monument	Proposed North Road junction located to limit impacts on archaeology and setting of Listed Buildings Views to St Mary's Church identified in DAS principles as for retention DAS principle to bring Baldock's history to life through GI design Ivel Springs Scheduled Monument not affected by development

Policy BA2 – Land West of Clothall Road

- 4.39 Policy BA2 is the site specific policy for land to the south-west of Clothall Road, also known as "Cambrai Farm" (Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan). The policy includes an estimate of 200 homes to be accommodated within this parcel. An assessment of the Proposed Development against the criteria of policy BA2 is set out overleaf:

Table 3: Alignment of OPP with Policy BA2

Policy BA2 Policy Criteria	How Addressed in OPA
Creation of defensible Green Belt boundary along south-eastern perimeter	DAS design principle requires structural planting along the south-eastern boundary providing both ecological and landscape benefits as well as noise attenuation.

Noise mitigation measures associated with A505	DAS design principles establish effective noise mitigation can be achieved through building orientation and design/specification. Please refer to submitted Noise Impact Assessment.
Proposed Development informed by site-specific landscape assessment	Landscape and visual impact assessment undertaken (in addition to landscape assessment within Environmental Statement)
Preliminary Risk Assessment to identify any contamination associated with previous uses	A preliminary risk assessment has been undertaken by Shadbolt in 2022. Refer to Environmental Statement Chapter 12 for further details. Prior to the construction phase, phase wide and parcel wide CEMPs will be formulated, which will outline the mitigation, control and monitoring measures to be put in place to minimise the effect of the development works on ground conditions and land quality.
Consider and mitigate against potential adverse impacts on Weston Hills LNR	DAS principles require Baldock Greenway connection to the edge of the site (connecting onwards to Weston Hills. Linear open space on eastern side of BA2 provides ecological habitat and connectivity to the LNR. The submitted Ecological Assessment considers these impacts and mitigation.
Heritage impact assessment and sensitive design to ensure protection of adjacent Scheduled Monument	Please refer to submitted Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and Chapter 8 of the Environmental Statement The setting of the monument is currently characterised by the surrounding settlement of Baldock, particularly at Clothall Road where built form and roads lie to the north, east, south and west of the scheduled area.
Archaeological survey prior to development	Trial trenching has been undertaken prior to submission of the OPA. See the submitted Archaeological Evaluation for details.

Policy BA3 – Land South of Clothall Common

- 4.40 Policy BA3 is a site-specific policy for the parcel located to the south of Clothall Common which provides a dwelling estimate of 245 homes. The following table assesses the Proposed Development for BA3 against the criteria within this policy.

Table 4: Alignment of OPA with Policy BA3

Policy BA3 Policy Criteria	How Addressed in OPA
Deliver southern link road connecting Royston Road to Wallington Road or Clothall Road	The OPA is not in compliance with this criterion of Policy BA3 but aligns with the SMP which does not require a connection in this location. This option was tested at the Strategic Masterplan stage and not pursued in favour of retaining high quality ecological habitat on the northern portion of BA3; and the inclusion of an SEND school on the southern parcel (with potential for a secondary school sited here too). It was concluded, via the SMP approval process, that this link was not required or desirable in highways terms and that alternative access arrangements would be acceptable. In order to ensure links and comprehensive development, access through BA3 to Royston Road will be provided for active travel only and forms part of the Baldock Greenway.
Provision of suitable vehicle and active travel links to ensure integration with adjoining site BA4	The allocation site BA3 and wider OPA will contribute to improvements to active travel routes across both the site and the wider Baldock area, this includes improvements to active travel along Royston Road which will connect into pedestrian/cycle paths along the northern edge of BA4.
Consideration of most appropriate routes and movements for all modes between site, Clothall Common and wider transport network	This has been considered as part of the site wide Transport Assessment. The Baldock Greenway will route through BA3, via land to the east of Clothall Common. A bus gate will be provided (as offsite works) into Clothall Common to allow buses to connect to Yeomanry Drive. Active travel routes from the underpass through Clothall Common will also be improved
Site layout to take account of wastewater infrastructure	The submitted Drainage Strategy has considered existing wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Anglian Water and the site layout can accommodate the required pumping stations.
Appropriate solution for short and long-term education requirements	The OPA allows for a school review process which will determine the size and location of the required secondary provision based on

	the most recently available data. This will ensure sufficient secondary places are available across Baldock, including for future residents of BA3 and the wider Growing Baldock site. Primary provision will be accommodated firstly within existing primary schools (where capacity allows) and then on up to 2 no. Primary Schools on Site BA1. The school review process will require BA3 to be delivered in the later phases of the development and sufficient primary school places will be available in existing and/or new primary school(s) at this point.
Appropriate mitigation measures for noise associated with A505	Potential layouts for housing, SEND School and secondary school have been tested during preparation of this OPA to ensure that the required noise levels are achievable for the potential mix of uses on BA3. Further information can be found within the submitted Noise Assessment.
Incorporate alignment of Bridleway Clothall 027 as green corridor	This will be incorporated within the Baldock Greenway as shown on the Parameter Plan and further information on proposed connectivity within key green infrastructure routes is included within the submitted Green Infrastructure Strategy.
Incorporate ordinary watercourses within GI and SuDS	Existing and proposed watercourses and SuDS ponds have been designed into the proposal. Refer to submitted Design & Access Statement, Green Infrastructure Strategy and Drainage Strategy.
Address existing surface water flood risk issues through SuDS	Surface water will be controlled through a SuDS infiltration system. Refer to the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Environmental Statement Chapter 10.
Proposed Development to be informed by site-specific landscape assessment	Landscape and visual impact assessment undertaken (in addition to landscape assessment within Environmental Statement).
Heritage impact assessment to ensure protection of adjacent Scheduled Monument	HIA submitted as part of the planning application. The OPA ensures protection of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.
Archaeological survey to be completed prior to development	Trial trenching has been undertaken prior to submission of the OPA. See the submitted Archaeological Evaluation for details.

Policy BA10 – Royston Road

- 4.41 Policy BA10 (Royston Road) allocates the land between the railway and Royston Road, which forms part of the wider Baldock site, as employment land (19.6 hectares). The OPA seeks approval for up to 16ha of employment uses which broadly aligns with the policy, albeit with a slight reduction in area reflecting the need for land in BA10 for infrastructure (bridge crossing and embankments and drainage) and buffers to existing properties. In conformity with the policy, the Proposed Development addresses surface water issues through the location of sustainable drainage basins within BA10, set design principles to provide landscaping to enhance the ecological value of the railway corridor (through the DAS design principles) and have considered the need for noise mitigation around the railway. A future BA10 Design Code will set principles for the retention of framed views of St Mary's Church and use of green roofs.

Policy CGB5 - Urban Open Land

- 4.42 Policy CGB5 allocates the land off Clothall Road between BA2 and BA3 as Urban Open Land, where planning permission will be granted for development that provides land or limited ancillary-built facilities for outdoor sport, recreation, rural land uses or landscaping/earthworks associated with the development. The submitted Parameter Plan shows that this land will be retained as open land as per the policy incorporating formal outdoor sport provision either in the form of grass pitches incorporated into the campus of a secondary school on BA3 (BA3 options 1 and 3) or in the form of all weather pitches for open community use if BA3 is predominantly delivered as housing (BA3 option 2).
- 4.43 Walls Field Scheduled Monument is proposed to be retained in-situ through the Proposed Development. It will be taken out of intensive agricultural use and a management approach will be agreed.

Policy T1 – Assessment of transport matters

- 4.44 Policy T1 requires that development does not lead to highway safety problems or cause unacceptable impacts upon the highway network. In addition, there will be a requirement to secure necessary sustainable transport measures and improvements to the existing highway network.
- 4.45 A Transport Assessment (TA) and Framework Travel Plan (TP) are submitted with the OPA. In line with policy requirements for major development, the TA and TP outline how the Proposed Development will be served by public transport; and outline a package of both on and off-site mitigation to ensure the existing and proposed highways operate safely. In additions, the Proposed Development provides extensive safe, direct and convenient routes for pedestrian and cyclists which integrate into and improve the existing network. This is complemented by improvements to the public transport network in order to serve the new development.

Policy T2 – Car Parking

- 4.46 Policy T2 requires parking for residential development to be provided in line with the minimum standards set out within Appendix 4 of the Local Plan. These comprise:

Table 5: Residential Parking Standards (Appendix 4, NHC Local Plan)

Use Class C3	Car Parking Standard	Minimum Cycle Parking Standard
1 bedroom	1 space per dwelling (minimum)	1 secure covered space per dwelling. None if garage or secure area provided within the curtilage of dwelling
2-3 bedrooms	2 spaces per dwelling (minimum)	
Retirement developments (e.g. warden assisted independent living)	1 space per dwelling (minimum)	1 secure and covered space for residents per 5 units

- 4.47 Proposed Development should also have regard to SPDs relating to parking and applicants should clearly identify how they provide for all likely types of parking demand and demonstrate that parking will be safe and of a design and layout that will function satisfactorily.
- 4.48 The OPA proposes a bespoke approach to parking which combines on and off plot spaces and a range of parking levels that seek to encourage active and sustainable travel modes in favour of the car. These are set out in the Transport Assessment.

Policy SP9 - Design and Sustainability

- 4.49 Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability) notes the importance of good design as a key aspect of sustainable development. The policy confirms that new development will be supported where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context, and further the policy requires the preparation and approval of strategic masterplans for the Strategic Housing sites and other significant development (>100 dwellings).
- 4.50 The 'Growing Baldock Strategic Masterplan' was approved by NHDC in 2025 following extensive drafting, options testing, stakeholder and community engagement. The SMP follows the criteria set out within Policy SP9, including responding to the local landscape and townscape, creating integrated and sustainable transport systems with a clear hierarchy of pedestrian friendly streets. The SMP has provided a framework for this OPA which has been drawn up to align with the frameworks and principles within the SMP. Section 4 of the Design

and Access Statement articulates in more detail how the OPA is in conformance with the SMP.

Policy HS2 – Affordable Housing

- 4.51 Policy HS2 requires the delivery of affordable housing as part of development, with a target of 40% affordable to be delivered on site, on sites of 25 or more dwellings, subject to viability. The size, type and tenure of affordable housing should meet the housing needs of the area, with the expectation that 65% will be rented, and will contribute to an appropriate mix of housing across the site. The Proposed Development will incorporate a proportion of affordable housing to be agreed with NHC informed by a future (post OPA submission) viability review of the development, reflecting the multiple variables that will affect viability, including the conclusion of the Education Review Group. Affordable housing will be delivered tenure blind, across the site.

Policy HS3 – Housing Mix

- 4.52 An appropriate range of house types and sizes are required in accordance with policy HS3 (Housing Mix). The density, scale and character of development should be appropriate to its location and surroundings. As an edge of settlement site an initial assumption of 60% larger (3+bed) and 40% smaller (1 and 2 bed) homes is suggested by the Local Plan. This will form a starting point for the overall indicative housing mix at OPA stage, which will then be subject to detailed agreement with NHC at the next stage of approval (Design Code in all instance except BA2). Housing will be of a high-quality design, with provision of appropriate private amenity space.

Policy HS5 – Accessible and Adaptable Housing

- 4.53 Policy requires that applicants for major development must demonstrate that at least 50% of homes can be built to the M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable standard. On schemes of 10+ affordable dwellings, 10% of these should additionally be built to the M4(3) wheelchair user standard.

Policy D1 – Sustainable Design

- 4.54 To meet policy requirements for sustainable design, developments should respond positively to their local context and take account of all relevant Design guidance and/or SPDs. This includes taking all reasonable opportunities to:
- Create or enhance public realm;
 - Optimise the potential of the site by incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS);
 - Reduce energy consumption and waste;
 - Retain existing vegetation and propose appropriate new planting;

- Maximise accessibility, legibility and physical and social connectivity both internally and with neighbouring areas;
- Future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle;
- Design-out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Minimise the visual impact of street furniture and parking provision; and
- For residential schemes, meet or exceed the nationally described space standards and optional water efficiency standards.

4.55 The DAS explains the evolution of the Proposed Development, which has progressed since preparation (and approval) of the Strategic Masterplan. The Proposed Development seeks to achieve high quality public realm, open spaces, sustainable drainage. The Design Principles embedded within the DAS are key to ensuring the delivery of sustainable spaces and places for Baldock. The OPA is further structured to ensure design codes for BA1, BA10 and BA3 are secured via a planning condition. The detail required for each code is influenced by the type of development and proportionate to the scale of each parcel. Further information can be found within the DAS.

Policy D3 - Protecting Living Conditions

4.56 The Council seeks to protect the living conditions of both existing and potential future occupiers. Therefore, where the living conditions of proposed developments would be affected by an existing use or the living conditions of an existing development would be affected by a proposed use, the Council will consider whether there are mitigation measures that can be taken. Prior to submission of the OPA, the SMP process and pre-application process ensured that the developer has consulted extensively with stakeholders with the siting of each land use being carefully considered to ensure acceptable living conditions can be achieved for future occupants. Furthermore, development includes appropriate buffers where required, to minimise changes in setting to existing residents and/or businesses where possible and ensuring an acceptable level of amenity is achievable for all neighbouring uses.

Policy D4 – Air Quality

4.57 Proposed Development should consider the potential or actual impact on local air quality, both during the demolition/construction phase and as a result of its final occupation and use. Appropriate levels of mitigation will be required to minimise emissions and effects upon health and the local environment. The submitted Air Quality Assessment has considered potential impacts on air quality and sets the required parameters and mitigation measures to ensure that no harmful air quality effects arise from the Proposed Development. This includes measures secured by the Outline CEMP, and subsequent phased CEMPS which will be prepared for each phase (BA1, BA3, BA10). The Proposed Development implements significant embedded measures to ensure reduced exposure to air quality impacts such as

residential dwellings being set back from roads and other sources of pollution, provision of EV Charging and promotion of sustainable travel choices being integral to the design.

Policy HC1 – Community Facilities

- 4.58 New community facilities should be appropriate in scale having regard to their local context. Furthermore, they should be accessible by a range of transport modes and meet an identified need in the local community. The Proposed Development includes provision for a community centre, community food production (allotments) and a local centre incorporating a number of retail, community, health and educational facilities to serve the immediate day to day needs of the new residents. Furthermore, and in line with policy requirements, sports provision will be accompanied by ancillary facilities including a sports pavilion in the Eastern Park. Such provision will be proportionate to the level of playing field provision and provide high quality facilities accessible to both schools and the community.

Policy NE2 – Landscape

- 4.59 Development Proposed Development should respect the sensitivities of the relevant landscape character area they sit within and have regard to the guidelines identified for built development and landscape management. Proposed Development should not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, taking account of any suitable mitigation measures necessary to achieve this.
- 4.60 Development should be designed and located to ensure the health and future retention of important landscape features and developers should consider the long-term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping.
- 4.61 The OPA seeks to respect the landscape character of the area, limiting the extent of development in BA1 to south of the ridgeline that runs east west through the northern part of the site.

Policy NE4 – Biodiversity and Ecological Sites

- 4.62 The policy is clear that planning permission will only be granted for development Proposed Development that appropriately protect, enhance and manage biodiversity. Furthermore, all development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity and geodiversity, contribute to ecological networks and the water environment.
- 4.63 An ecological survey is required for submission and Proposed Development should demonstrate that adverse effects can be avoided or adequately minimised and mitigated for. Development should include appropriate measures to manage construction impacts by demonstrating how existing wildlife habitats supporting protected or priority species will be retained, safeguarded and managed during construction

- 4.64 Appropriate buffers of complimentary habitat for designated sites and other connective features, wildlife habitats, priority habitats and species should be integrated into the ecological mitigation and design. The appropriateness of any buffers will be considered having regard to the status of the relevant habitat.
- 4.65 12 metres of complimentary habitat should be provided around wildlife sites (locally designated sites), trees and hedgerows. It may be necessary to exceed this distance for fragile habitats such as ancient woodland or to provide appropriate root protection for mature trees. Developers should provide a long-term management and monitoring plan.
- 4.66 The OPA aligns directly with policy NE4 by protecting the areas of existing ecological value including the Bygrave Road LWS, and introducing a 12m buffer around it within which built development is prohibited (Development Specification Spatial Principle SP2). The Ecological Mitigation Plan appended to the ES ecology chapter outlines the Proposed Development for protection and enhancement of existing ecological areas and the Green Infrastructure Strategy identifies where additional ecological areas will be delivered.

Policy NE6 – New and Improved Open Space

- 4.67 The Council will support Proposed Development for open space which meets the needs arising from the development having regard to the Council's open space standards and other relevant guidance. These areas of open space may incorporate any necessary open space buffer(s) for landscape, visual, ecological or air quality reasons. Any on-site provision must include a long-term maintenance and management plan, and where required phasing plans.
- 4.68 Proposed new built facilities within new or existing open space must be ancillary to the primary use and of an appropriate scale and design. Measures should be taken to integrate such facilities into the landscape. Proposed Development for new open spaces which meet identified needs will be encouraged in suitable locations, served by a choice of sustainable travel.
- 4.69 The submitted Green Infrastructure Strategy demonstrates how large areas of open space have been incorporated into the Proposed Development (e.g. Bygrave Common), linked into a new Greenway for Baldock providing access to high quality open space within walking distance of new homes, connected by a network of active travel routes. Buffers to open spaces, particularly to the north and east are incorporated, through areas of structural planting.

Policy NE7 – Reducing Flood Risk

- 4.70 The Council requires that development be located outside of medium and high-risk flood areas (flood zone 2 and 3) and other areas affected by other sources of flooding where possible.

- 4.71 A Flood Risk Assessment should be prepared in accordance with national guidance that considers the lifetime of the development, climate change impacts and safe access and egress. The Flood Risk Assessment submitted in support of the OPA undertakes the necessary consideration of flood risk issues in relation to the development, which lies outside medium and high-risk flood areas.

Policy NE8 – Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 4.72 Policy NE8 requires that the most appropriate sustainable drainage solution is used taking into account technical, viability and design issues to reduce the risk of surface water flooding, enhance biodiversity, water quality and provide amenity benefits. Drainage solutions should aim to mimic the natural drainage patterns and processes as far as possible. Drainage solutions should follow the SuDS hierarchy.
- 4.73 The Drainage Strategy submitted in support of the OPA outlines a comprehensive approach to strategic drainage design, proposing a combination of residential soakaways and drainage basins as part of the SuDS hierarchy.

Policy HE1 – Designated Heritage Assets

- 4.74 Planning applications relating to Designated heritage Assets or their setting shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment.
- 4.75 The proposal incorporates Walls Field (SAM) and in line with policy aspirations, Walls Field is proposed to form a wildflower meadow, retaining the public right of way mown path across. This ensures the asset is taken out of intensive agricultural use enabling the heritage asset to be used in a way that maintains its conservation and preserves its significance.

Policy HE3 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets

- 4.76 Policy HE3 states that permission for a proposal that would result in harm to, or the loss of, a non-designated heritage asset will only be granted provided that a balanced judgement has been made that assesses the scale of harm to, or loss of significance of the non-designated asset. No non-designated heritage assets have been identified by the LPA on the site.

Policy HE4 – Archaeology

- 4.77 Policy HE4 requires development which may affect sites of archaeological interest to submit a desk-based assessment and field excavation. The OPA is accompanied by an assessment which sets out the archaeological findings. The Parameter Plan has been informed by the archaeological findings, locating green space where possible in areas of archaeological interest. Where this is not possible, excavations will be undertaken prior to construction and any finds appropriately recorded and analysed in conjunction with the HCC archaeology team.

- 4.78 In addition, the site incorporates the provision of a circular permissive footpath which will form a "Heritage Trail" around the development that connects and shares information about the site and Baldock's history.

Policy SP10 – Healthy Communities

- 4.79 Maintaining healthy communities is a key priority for NHC in accordance with policy SP10. This includes support for the retention of existing community, leisure, and recreation facilities. The policy also requires for new development to make provision for these facilities in addition to appropriate coverage of healthcare facilities. The submitted Development Specification confirms the commitment to deliver such facilities and a breakdown of the proposed floorspaces is provided.

Policy SP12 – Green Infrastructure

- 4.80 In parallel, new development is also to protect and enhance physical and green infrastructure which will foster healthy lifestyles. Policy SP12 (Green Infrastructure) requires proposed development to protect, identify, manage and where possible enhance a strategic multi-functional network of green infrastructure and consider and respect landscape character, scenic beauty and locally sensitive features. This approach is embedded into the Growing Baldock SMP, as such it has informed the OPA and is reflected in the submitted Parameter Plan for approval, which identifies substantial areas of Strategic Green Infrastructure. The Design Principles within the DAS provide further requirements for green infrastructure within the development to ensure the delivery of a connected, multi-functional green space network.

Policy SP13 – Historic Environment

- 4.81 Policy SP13 requires proper protection of the historic environment balanced with the need for growth. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight will be given to the asset's conservation and the management of its setting. NHDC seeks to maintain a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting according to their significance.
- 4.82 The Proposed Development seeks to preserve the Walls Field Scheduled Monument, which is proposed to be retained in-situ and is not physically altered by the Proposed Development. In addition, there is a commitment within the Design Principles in the DAS to embed heritage into the green infrastructure network through, for example, delivery of a Heritage Trail around the development which will connect areas of archaeological interest and share information about the very rich archaeological heritage found in Baldock.

Policy NE7 Reducing Flood Risk

- 4.83 Policy NE7 requires the management of flood risk through directing new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding; ensuring that new development addresses the effective management of flood risk; and Policy NE8 requires developments to incorporate sustainable drainage systems.
- 4.84 An FRA forms part of the submission document. The FRA concludes that the application site is suitable for the Proposed Development, and no built development is located within the floodplain.
- 4.85 The drainage strategy identifies no prohibitive engineering constraints in developing the proposed site for residential use and refers to sustainable urban drainage solutions that will be incorporated into both the built and green environments.

Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan (2021)

- 4.86 The Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' in June 2021 and now forms part of the Development Plan for North Hertfordshire. In addition to its planning policies, the Neighbourhood Plan provides design guidance for new developments. Four key objectives have been identified for the Neighbourhood Plan as follows:
1. Sustain and strengthen Baldock's character as a historic and vibrant market town, and the rural character and separate identities of Bygrave, Clothall and Luffenhall;
 2. Ensure that new development is well designed, maintains and reflects important features of Baldock and its surroundings, and is resilient to climate change;
 3. Secure the right infrastructure and facilities needed to serve the expanded town, and to avoid unacceptable impacts from new development; and
 4. Ensure that Baldock grows in a way that builds strong connections between all parts of the town (and maintains good connections with neighbouring villages and countryside); and which provides homes, services and job opportunities that cater for both existing and new residents.
- 4.87 The Neighbourhood Plan will support Proposed Development for specific access and parking improvements under policy G1 (Improving Access and Parking):
- Limited additional parking to serve Baldock train station within the built up area of Baldock, or as part of site BA1;
 - Pedestrian and cycle improvements to Baldock station;
 - Changes to the drop-off and pick-up arrangements serving Knights Templar School to

improve safety; and

- Improved pedestrian and cycle connections to the High Street and Tesco.

- 4.88 The OPA proposes improvements to active travel connections to the town centre from Growing Baldock and incorporates plans to improve Baldock Station and provide an additional active travel entrance from the north.
- 4.89 Policy G2 (Strategic Green Space) requires the conservation of a 'green lung' at the heart of Baldock. Applications for development should maintain the predominantly open character of the land lying between Hartsfield School and the A505 Baldock Bypass. Proposed Development to improve the visual or recreational value of the land will be supported, including as part of a comprehensive strategy for improved public access and the conservation and interpretation of the scheduled area. Proposed Development affecting Walls Field and its setting should also conserve, and where possible enhance, its value as a scheduled monument.
- 4.90 This site comprises Walls Field Scheduled Monument and the Urban Open Land, both of which fall within the OPA boundary (with the exception of the garden centre site). The OPA seeks to retain the openness of these parcels, in direct conformity with the Neighbourhood Plan: Walls Field will be removed from intensive agricultural use and planted as a wildflower meadow; and the Urban Open Land will accommodate formal sports provision (either as part of the secondary school campus, or as an open community facility) and potential play space. These uses will maintain the openness of this key piece of open space, so views to the countryside from the heart of Baldock are not compromised.
- 4.91 Policy G3 requires all applications to demonstrate a high standard of design that accords with relevant aspects of the Plan's Design Guidelines. For allocated sites (BA1, BA2, BA3, BA4 and BA10) Proposed Development should relate sensitively to their immediate context and the wider character of Baldock. The policy further states that sustainable extensions should be subject to an independent design review process. The Proposed Development has been to two Design Review Panels, as explained in the DAS, which have informed the OPA Proposed Development presented in this application. The DAS design principles require that the Proposed Development is respectful of its Baldock context and the character.
- 4.92 The Neighbourhood Plan (Policy G5) reflects the need for development either within or affecting the Baldock Conservation Area to conserve or enhance its character including reiterating that key views of St Mary's Church towers should not be obstructed. Policy G6 also seeks to conserve or enhance other local heritage assets which includes listed buildings, buildings of local importance and scheduled monuments. The OPA enshrines the principles (through the DAS) of retaining and enhancing key views from the site to St Mary's Church tower at the heart of Baldock.

- 4.93 Policy E1 deals with transport and air quality. The policy states that applications to develop sites allocated in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan should not be permitted if, taking into account proposed mitigation, the residual cumulative impact on the local road network would be severe or if national Air Quality Objectives would be breached. The Transport Assessment submitted with this OPA details the wide ranging measures proposed to prioritise active and sustainable travel throughout Baldock, and the means by which impacts on the local road network (and therefore air quality) will be minimised.
- 4.94 Policy E2 requires that the allocated sites provide for an appropriate amount and range of publicly accessible green infrastructure which either complies with or exceeds NHC's standards. The Green Infrastructure Strategy outlines how the Proposed Development aligns with current and emerging open space standards. The OPA proposes a range of open space typologies within the wider network of strategic green spaces including new parks in the form of Bygrave Common and the Eastern Park, ecological areas and green corridors, complemented by in-parcel smaller open spaces.
- 4.95 The Neighbourhood Plan also considers managing construction impacts to ensure that during build out of sites, impacts upon Baldock, Lower and Upper Bygrave and local roads is minimised. The Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan submitted with the OPA outlines how construction will be phased and controlled throughout the build process to ensure impacts are minimised, for example, by routing construction traffic via the strategic road network (A1, A505, A507), rather than through neighbouring villages.
- 4.96 In addition, building strong communities is a priority for the Neighbourhood Plan Group including active engagement with local people throughout the design of each phase of development; provision of community facilities and making arrangements for new residents and business to be involved in ongoing management of their community as outlined in Policy E4. The Growing Baldock project team has undertaken significant community engagement through the SMP process and on into the OPA stage, and this will continue throughout the lifetime of the development. Community creation and growth is at the heart of the Growing Baldock project, with all efforts made to ensure the development connects with and becomes part of Baldock, as well as providing new community facilities that will benefit the whole population.
- 4.97 Policy E5 requires site BA1 to maintain *"a clear visual and physical gap [of at least 170m] between the expanded edge of Baldock and Lower Bygrave, of sufficient size to integrate development into the surrounding landscape and ensure a sympathetic transition towards Lower Bygrave"*. This includes incorporation of appropriate planting around the periphery of the Proposed Development and giving careful consideration of positioning and heights. The proposed development edge closest to Lower Bygrave as defined on the Parameter Plan conforms with this minimum setback, achieving a 170m gap at the closest point, with open space proposed between the development area and existing homes. Buffer planting around

the eastern edge of development, to further minimise the visual impact, is required by the Development Specification spatial principle SP10.

- 4.98 Policy E5 requires careful consideration to be given to how the Proposed Development areas relate to the existing residential properties. The site wide and key places and spaces design principles in the DAS take account of this relationship, for example requiring longer gardens backing onto the existing park homes in BA2.
- 4.99 Policy E5 states that Site BA1 should *"retain and incorporate existing landscape and built features that contribute to the site's history and character, including Bygrave Road/Ashwell Road and trees and hedgerows (while safeguarding the habitat value of the Bygrave Road local wildlife site)"*
- 4.100 The policy further requires BA1 to *"make provision for improved pedestrian and cycle access between Bygrave and Baldock, through a new footpath and cycleway using the route of Bygrave Road/Ashwell Road, designed in a way that maintains as much as possible of its rural character and habitat value; and to minimise the potential for increased traffic flows through Lower and Upper Bygrave, by providing for an appropriate package of measures such as: suitable access arrangements (including restrictions on heavy vehicles); physical features such as gateways and appropriate road surfaces; speed limits and signage)"*
- 4.101 This Neighbourhood Plan policy requirement will be achieved by the Proposed Development which includes Bygrave Road as a key east-west active travel route linking key destinations within the site including the primary schools and local centre. This will be achieved by introducing modal filters at either end of Bygrave Road within the Proposed Development, restricting vehicular access to local access only (to existing properties). Residents of Lower Bygrave and beyond will instead use the development access route, if travelling into Baldock via car. The transformation of Bygrave Road into an active travel link further aligns with Policy E5 (e) which seeks to retain existing site features.
- 4.102 In terms of minimising the potential for increased traffic flows in Bygrave and Lower Bygrave as a result of the Proposed Development; these impacts will be further tested through the COMET transport modelling that will be provided as an Addendum to the Transport Assessment prior to the determination of the OPA.
- 4.103 In accordance with criterion (h) of policy E5, the site makes provision within the local centre for a community centre as well as formal open space facilities in two locations (the Eastern Park – closest to Lower Bygrave) and in the Urban Open Land. These facilities will be available for community use, either independently, or as part of the community use within the secondary school.
- 4.104 Policy E6 (Royston Road) comprises a policy specific to Local Plan sites BA3, BA4 and BA10 and seeks for these developments to create a high quality and distinctive entrance to the town along Royston Road, relating sensitively to existing housing fronting this road. The

A505 Gateway 'Key Place and Space' principles in the DAS explain how this will be achieved, creating a new, landscape led gateway into Baldock and the Proposed Development.

- 4.105 Policy E7 (Cambrai Farm and south of Clothall Common) is specific to Local Plan sites BA2 and BA3. A landscape buffer between the edge of the developments and the Baldock bypass is required, alongside avoiding buildings on raised land in BA3, shown in the extracted figure 4 below. In addition, the policy requires reinforcing the planting between Hillside Park mobile home site and new residential development on site BA2, to provide a stronger green margin. The Parameter Plan proposes no development on the ecological area within the north of BA3, in direct accordance with the green area shown in Figure 4. This area will all be retained for its ecological habitat. A small parcel of housing is proposed adjacent to BA4, on Royston Road, but this falls outside the area of higher ground.



Figure 4: Location of Raised Land

Source: Baldock, Bygrave & Clothall Neighbourhood Plan (2021)

- 4.106 The DAS design principles for BA2 require buffer planting between the Park Homes and any development within this parcel.

Local Plan Review

- 4.107 In January 2024 NHC's Cabinet approved a process of review and update to the adopted NHLP. Preparation of a new plan is at an early stage – a call for sites exercise was undertaken during the summer 2025. In view of the stage at which the draft Local Plan has reached in its preparation and that no material or policies have been published to date, limited weight should be given to it in decision making. This Planning Statement will therefore not assess the Proposed Development against the policies contained therein.

Other Material Considerations***Growing Baldock – Strategic Masterplan (2025).***

- 4.108 As referred to above the Growing Baldock SMP was approved by NHC in 2025 and is now a material consideration in the determination of this OPA. Approval of the SMP was a requirement of Local Plan Policy SP9.
- 4.109 The SMP follows the criteria set out within Policy SP9, this includes responding to the local landscape and townscape, creating integrated and sustainable transport systems with a clear hierarchy of pedestrian friendly streets. The SMP has provided a framework for this OPA and the Proposed Development are therefore aligned with the criteria of Policy SP9. A review of the OPA against the requirements of the SMP is provided in section 4 of the DAS, confirming that in all substantive respects, the OPA Proposed Development align with the SMP frameworks and principles.

Developer Contributions SPD (2023)

- 4.110 The SPD sets out NHC's approach to securing the infrastructure required to support development in the district. Policy SP7 of the adopted Local Plan requires developers to make provision for infrastructure deemed necessary to accommodate additional demands resulting from the development.
- 4.111 Contributions for the Proposed Development to which this OPA relates will be secured via S106 Agreement. An initial set of Heads of Terms for the S106 agreement are provided later in this Planning Statement. The SPD advises that obligations will be considered on its merits on a case-by-case basis, in line with the CIL Regulations. It further states that where an agreed viability study has been produced in accordance with relevant policies, the Council will consider the requirements most critical to securing development and meeting the overall objectives of the Local Plan.

Sustainability SPD (2024)

- 4.112 The SPD sets out NHC expectations and aspirations in order to meet the visions, objectives and policies of the North Herts Local Plan as sustainably as possible. Each measure expected to be reached by developers is graded at levels between bronze, silver and gold. A review of the OPA Proposed Development against the SPD requirements is provided within the Sustainability and Energy Strategy (Appendix 2). This outlines the sustainable design measures which have been incorporated into the design at OPA stage, in addition to those measures which will be considered further during the detailed design stages.

Hertfordshire County Council Developer Contributions Guide

- 4.113 This document provides an overview of obligations which may be sought as part of the planning process by Hertfordshire County Council (the county council) to mitigate the impact

of development. Contributions are sought for a range of facilities / infrastructure including transport, education, youth, libraries, waste, fire and rescue and adult social care. The Guide is not an SPD and it will be up to NHC to attribute the appropriate weight to the identified planning obligations when determining the OPA.

- 4.114 As confirmed above, contributions for the Proposed Development will be secured via S106 Agreement and a draft Heads of Terms are provided in this Planning Statement. These have been informed by ongoing discussions with HCC's education and GIU teams in relation to onsite provision of facilities and potential contributions to off site provision.

Draft Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (2025)

- 4.115 LNRS The consultation draft Hertfordshire LNRS maps where the most important actions to help recover nature in the county are needed. It identifies protected areas of high nature value alongside strategic priorities for nature and priorities and actions for 10 identified habitat groups. Strategic priorities for the Herts Chalk Area Focus Area (within which the site is largely located) are set out including opportunities for chalk grassland habitat creation and enhancement.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.116 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the purpose and role of the planning system. The most recent iteration of the NPPF was published on 12th December 2024 (and was subject to minor amends on 7th February 2025).
- 4.117 The NPPF is the overarching national tier of planning policy setting out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England and articulating a vision for sustainable growth. The NPPF is supplemented by the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). A presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF (Paragraph 10 and 11).
- 4.118 NPPF Chapter 5 focuses on delivering a sufficient supply of homes of new homes. Paragraph 61 states that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. The overall aim should be to meet an area's identified housing need, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community. Paragraph 77 states that: "...new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes)". The OPA proposes a development that will deliver up to 3,200 homes, making a substantial and long lasting contribution towards meeting North Hertfordshire's identified housing need.

- 4.119 Section 6 of the NPPF identifies the need to build a strong and competitive economy. Paragraph 85 requires local authorities to place significant weight on the need to support economic growth, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Paragraph 86 is also clear that planning policies should positively and proactively encourage sustainable economic growth. The development of allocation BA10 for employment, health, energy and waste uses, balanced against the housing growth in adjacent parcels, will support the economic growth of Baldock and the sub-region, providing opportunities for new and growing businesses to locate in Baldock.
- 4.120 NPPF Chapter 8 focuses on the promotion of healthy and safe communities. Paragraph 96 states that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles. Paragraph 98 goes on to state that planning decisions should plan positively for the provision of community facilities and ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services. The Proposed Development has been shaped around the aspiration to create a walkable, well connected new community that is part of Baldock. Its network of active travel routes, green infrastructure and local facilities will all support healthy lifestyles and community growth.
- 4.121 Further within Chapter 8, consideration is given to the role of open space and recreation in supporting development. Paragraph 103 states that access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and wellbeing of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. The OPA proposes substantial areas of open space throughout the Proposed Development, in the form of large new parks and strategic green spaces incorporating formal and informal sports, play, community food production, sustainable drainage and ecological areas.
- 4.122 Chapter 9 focuses on promoting sustainable development and paragraph 115 confirms that through development Proposed Development sustainable transport modes should be prioritised, taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location. The OPA takes a vision led approach to transport planning, adopting ambitious sustainable mode targets, to ensure the development prioritises active and sustainable movements wherever possible. The site's location next to a rail station and in close proximity to Baldock town centre enables it to capitalise on this existing accessibility and further strengthen this through on and off site interventions to encourage walking and cycling throughout.
- 4.123 Chapter 12 focuses on design and sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It sets out design expectations in relation to new development, ensuring that development decisions add to the overall quality of an area, are visually attractive, establish a strong sense of place, are sympathetic to local character and history and optimise the potential of a site. The Design and Access Statement sets out the design principles for Growing Baldock that will ensure that development responds to site characteristics, context

and local character, taking those aspects forward into a high quality, landscape led development.

- 4.124 The role of planning in conserving and enhancing the natural environment is considered in Chapter 15 of the NPPF. It states, at Paragraph 187, that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance valued landscapes, recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and minimise impacts, providing net gains in biodiversity. The Proposed Development recognises and seeks to protect and enhance the areas of existing ecological value, including land to the east of Clothall Common, the Bygrave LWS, adjacent Weston Hills and Ivel Springs LNRs and on site areas of habitat e.g. for ground nesting birds. Enhancement of these areas, along with some off-site mitigation Proposed Development (to provide for corn buntings), will ensure that significant biodiversity benefits are delivered.
- 4.125 In relation to the protection of heritage assets, paragraph 210 of the NPPF instructs decision makers to take account of the significance of heritage assets and, should the desirability of sustaining them be ascertained, ensure these assets are put to viable uses consistent with their conservation. Further to this, paragraph 219 encourages development within the setting of heritage assets that will enhance or better reveal their significance. The Proposed Development recognises the importance of supporting the promotion of the history of the site and Baldock, and the need to protect existing areas such as Walls Field Scheduled Monument.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 4.126 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was first launched in March 2014 and is a web-based resource which is considered a 'live' document and updated or amended when required. The online resource is intended to amplify and reinforce the policies within the NPPF.
- 4.127 The following paragraphs set out the areas of guidance relevant to the OPA.
- 4.128 ID 42-006-20140306 of the NPPG identifies the benefits of preparing a Transport Assessment. It states:

"Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements can positively contribute to:

- *encouraging sustainable travel;*
- *lessening traffic generation and its detrimental impacts;*
- *reducing carbon emissions and climate impacts;*
- *creating accessible, connected, inclusive communities;*
- *improving health outcomes and quality of life;*
- *improving road safety; and*
- *reducing the need for new development to increase existing road capacity or provide new roads"*

4.129 ID 26-001-20191001 of the NPPG provides further information on design in the planning process and states:

"Well-designed places can be achieved by taking a proactive and collaborative approach at all stages of the planning process, from policy and plan formulation through to the determination of planning applications and the post approval stage. Good design is set out in the National Design Guide under the following 10 characteristics:

- context;
- identity;
- built form;
- movement;
- nature;
- public spaces;
- uses;
- homes and buildings;
- resources; and
- lifespan.

4.130 ID 53-003-20191101 of the NPPG explains the links between health and planning, that development should avoid adverse impacts on human health, create opportunities for people to make healthy choices, promote active travel, physical activity and mental wellbeing, and promote access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for play, sport and recreation.

4.131 ID 7-020-20220825 of the NPPG identifies the objectives of a flood risk assessment. It states:

The objectives of a site-specific flood risk assessment are to establish:

- "whether a proposed development is likely to be affected by current or future flooding from any source;
- whether it will increase flood risk elsewhere;
- whether the measures proposed to deal with these effects and risks are appropriate;
- the evidence for the local planning authority to apply (if necessary) the Sequential Test; and
- whether the development will be safe and pass the Exception Test, if applicable."

4.132 ID 8-018-20190721 of the NPPG explains how biodiversity should be taken into account in preparing a planning application. ID 8-019-20190721 of the NPPG identifies the issues that should be considered when seeking to avoid, mitigate or compensate for significant harm to biodiversity and further more that green infrastructure can help to conserve and enhance the natural environment (ID 8-006-20190721).

Planning Assessment

Location

- 4.133 The principle of an eastern expansion of Baldock is deeply rooted in policy, reflecting a long standing and independently endorsed evidence base which fully represents and justifies the delivery of the Proposed Development as a whole. The evidence base clearly sets out a presumption that north and east of Baldock is the most appropriate location to develop over the Local Plan period and that the expansion of the town in a coherent and well-planned manner is preferable to more dispersed growth around its periphery.
- 4.134 The site is highly accessible particularly by sustainable modes, incorporates a substantial parcel of employment land (BA10) and is relatively unconstrained in landscape and ecological terms. It is well connected to Baldock town centre and existing communities and is capable of becoming an integral part of the town, connected to the centre through safe and direct active travel connections. It is also close to employment opportunities in Letchworth and the wider sub-region.
- 4.135 The site is readily available, deliverable, and further benefits from a sustainable location and no significant site constraints that preclude its development. This is accepted in the Local Plan policy allocations and confirmed through the material that accompanies this OPA. On this basis, and in light of the Local Plan's spatial strategy and site allocations, the site's suitability for development is firmly established.

Supportive Policy Framework

- 4.136 A strategic approach to housing delivery is articulated within the NPPF, recognising the opportunities it provides in promoting sustainable development. In reference to delivery of new homes, paragraph 77 of the Framework states that *"...new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes)"*.
- 4.137 The consistency of the Proposed Development across the broad range of core planning principles set out in the NPPF is described above. The Proposed Development accord fully with the NPPF.
- 4.138 Locally, Policies SP14 / BA1 (North of Baldock), BA2 (Land southwest of Clothall Road), BA3 (Land south of Clothall Common), BA10 (Royston Road) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (2022) provides the policy framework for the Proposed Development.
- 4.139 The Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Neighbourhood Plan (2021) provides a further relevant policy basis for the type and locations of development for the area. The Proposed

Development has been drawn up having close regard to the vision and principles established through the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan as referred to above.

- 4.140 In summary, the OPA Proposed Development align with the recognition that the site is an appropriate location for growth. The principles contained within detailed policies relating to delivery of housing, open space and sustainable transport, are closely followed by the OPA Proposed Development.

Housing Delivery

- 4.141 The Written Ministerial Statement, dated 30 July 2024, made by the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government explicitly acknowledges the acute housing crisis and sets out the clear priorities for the Government that include measures to build the 1.5 million homes that the county needs through a series of reforms to the planning system to improve affordability, 'turbocharge' growth and deliver 1.5 million homes over the next 5 years. This OPA must be considered in light of this significant step-change in significantly boosting the supply of homes as is the intention of the plan-led system.
- 4.142 House building has fallen below evidenced demand in recent years, having a significant detrimental impact on people's access to an affordable, decent home. The Government through the NPPF made the case for growth and housing delivery to meet locally assessed housing need. The NPPF seeks to "boost significantly the supply of housing". The Proposed Development forms part of a locally derived strategy of growth that delivers directly to this national agenda.
- 4.143 The Proposed Development can deliver a significant proportion of North Hertfordshire's total planned housing requirement, contributing to the supply of a mix of housing to meet identified local needs. It is anticipated that the site could be delivered on a phased basis and could support the build out period as set out in the housing trajectory that supports the Local Plan.
- 4.144 The applicant is committed to securing the early and progressive development of the site. The evidence accepted generally is that housebuilders may be relied upon to construct some 50 dwellings per annum on any given site (i.e. approximately a dwelling each week). In this case, given the scale of the development and potential to open up multiple development fronts at a time, annual delivery rates are likely to be higher, providing a much needed and steady boost to housing supply in Baldock and North Hertfordshire. Once commenced, development will take place in accordance with a clear implementation strategy, the aim of which will be to achieve strong build out rates and the timely delivery of infrastructure in accordance with triggers set out in conditions and the S106 agreement.
- 4.145 As a result, the Proposed Development will significantly boost the supply of housing in Baldock, in accordance with the aspirations of the NPPF.

- 4.146 The NPPF also highlights the need to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes and plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends and local needs. The Proposed Development would have a beneficial impact on the housing market, increasing the current housing stock and providing a mix of dwellings, to be fixed through subsequent reserved matters pursuant to any outline planning permission. A range of housing types and sizes will be provided.
- 4.147 The Proposed Development will include onsite provision of affordable housing. The amount and mix of affordable housing will be the subject of discussions with NHC as the Proposed Development advances through the planning process, subject to viability.

Infrastructure

- 4.148 Local Plan Policy SP7 requires development Proposed Development to make provision for infrastructure that is necessary to accommodate the additional demands resulting from the Proposed Development. This is further supported by the NHC Developer Contributions SPD which sets out the approach to securing, via conditions and/or planning obligations, the infrastructure required as a consequence of development. The approach seeks to achieve the effective delivery of infrastructure to enable sustainable growth, to ensure delivery in an orderly fashion.
- 4.149 The Growing Baldock population will benefit from the provision of community and open space infrastructure in the form of the mixed use local centre incorporating community facilities, onsite primary, SEND and secondary education, recreation and sporting amenities and a new employment area.
- 4.150 The Proposed Development will also ensure appropriate access to necessary infrastructure, facilities and services which will serve the new community. This includes delivery of substantial on-site infrastructure to support active and sustainable modes of transport, such as the active travel routes and underpass, as well as the all-modes bridge across the railway and bus only access from North Road.
- 4.151 The Proposed Development also incorporates some 88 hectares of strategic GI, where enhancements to specific habitats will be delivered through the creation of further areas of planting and natural spaces within a wider network of green infrastructure to provide long term biodiversity benefits.
- 4.152 The GI network provides green space comprising informal and formal opens space resource which incorporates a comprehensive network of footpaths and cycleways and includes areas for play, and allotments. It also includes sustainable urban drainage systems to reduce flood risk, minimise pollution and provide landscape and wildlife benefits.

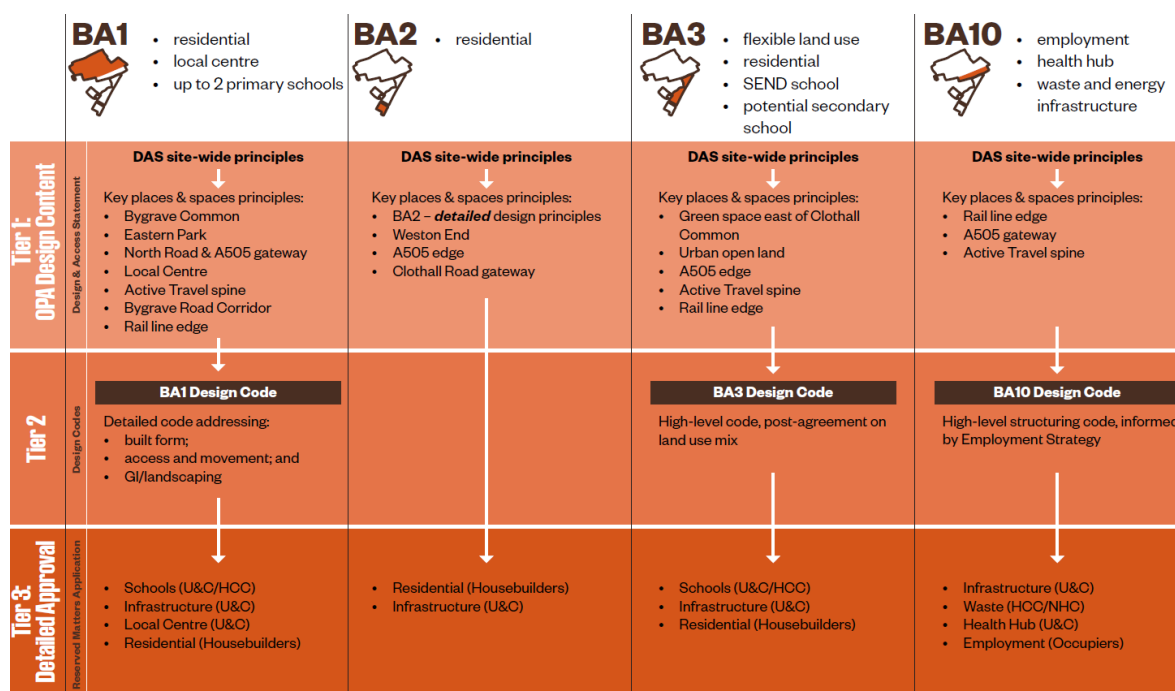
- 4.153 A range of offsite highway interventions have been identified with NHC / HCC and are set out in the Transport Assessment. Through subsequent discussions with the relevant stakeholders, these schemes will be secured through conditions or S106 agreements.
- 4.154 The OPA demonstrates provision of the necessary infrastructure to support itself and to mitigate any impacts of development on existing communities and wider infrastructure. This approach will help to establish a well-balanced and sustainable new community, as advocated in the NPPF.

Highways, Access and Sustainable Travel

- 4.155 The Proposed Development has been designed with a clear emphasis on sustainable and active transport, in accordance with Local Plan policies T1 and the approved SMP. Key spatial principles for internal movement within the site and connections into existing networks around the site, as set out in the SMP have been embedded into the Parameter Plan and Development Specification and further detailed in the DAS design principles. This includes a main east to west active travel route along Bygrave Road, and a north-south Active Travel Spine linking Royston Road, the health hub, underpass, local centre and Bygrave Common, which will facilitate sustainable travel across the site. This will be supported by a further network of lower order active travel routes and leisure routes through green spaces, including the Baldock Greenway and retained and enhanced PRoWs. In addition, a bus only link into BA1 from North Road will prioritise sustainable transport access into the site, connecting to the High Street and other town destinations.
- 4.156 The development access is proposed to be aligned through BA1, connecting North Road and the A505, passing to the north of the Local Centre. The mix of uses within the site incorporating homes, employment, education and community facilities and greenspace will enable residents to meet many of their day-to-day needs via a network of walking and cycling routes, minimising the need for travel by private car. The routes within the site will also connect and integrate into the existing surrounding network of streets, cycle routes and public rights of way to promote sustainable travel patterns when leaving the site, particularly towards the town centre. The Proposed Development is supported by a comprehensive Framework Travel Plan which also promotes the use of sustainable transport modes.
- 4.157 The above measures and site design place walking, cycling and public transport networks and connections at the heart of growth in the area to create a step change in mode. The timing of the provision of measures would be commensurate with the phasing of the Proposed Development and will be agreed with NHC and HCC and taking into account the viability of the Proposed Development, to encourage sustainable travel patterns from the outset in accordance with Local Plan policy.

Design Approach

- 4.158 In accordance with the NPPF, the Proposed Development recognises the importance of good design and this is enshrined within the OPA (in particular through the design principles in the DAS). The applicant is committed to high quality standards of design to create a desirable new community that reflects the best of the surrounding area's vernacular where appropriate and to create walkable and characterful residential neighbourhoods.
- 4.159 The Proposed Development layout and structure as a whole have been influenced by the landscape context and topographical features of the site. The arrangement of land parcels and their associated uses, form and type of open space and route ways seek to respond to the established physical features within the site and enhance the sustainability of the Proposed Development.
- 4.160 As required by policy SP9, a Strategic Masterplan has been prepared by the applicants in collaboration with NHC. This process included the use of a Design Review Panel to inform the evolving Proposed Development and SMP frameworks. The SMP includes a number of frameworks and principles with which the OPA accords.
- 4.161 The Design and Access Statement submitted in support of this OPA sets out a series of site wide and key place and space specific design principles, with which future development must align. These principles will likely be conditioned to secure compliance. The process for subsequent design approval in relation to the site allocations (see Figure 5) has been carefully considered, and developed with NHC officers, to ensure that the outcome for Growing Baldock is a highly successful, well designed development.

**Figure 5: Post OPA Design Approval Process**

Balance of Considerations

- 4.162 The Proposed Development has been subject to careful scrutiny first in the careful construction of an evidence base as the basis for the identification of the Local Plan allocations (BA1, BA2, BA3, BA10) to accommodate objectively assessed housing needs in North Hertfordshire.
- 4.163 The Proposed Development benefits from a SMP that provides a series of frameworks and principles that ensure that the Proposed Development will be well connected to and an integral part of Baldock, supported by necessary infrastructure, embedded in the landscape and a network of green infrastructure and capable of providing much needed homes, jobs and community facilities. The OPA has been prepared to deliver on these aspirations and the Local Plan policy requirements for the site.
- 4.164 The OPA Proposed Development have further been the subject of an ongoing environmental impact assessment process and assessment which has sought at all stages to identify any significant environmental impacts resulting from the Proposed Development. The Environmental Statement concludes that such impacts are limited and capable of effective mitigation.
- 4.165 As set out in the introduction to this chapter, the NPPF provides a clear basis for the decision taking framework, setting out in paragraph 11(c) the approach to the determination of planning applications in accordance with an up to date Development Plan. The preceding paragraphs have provided an assessment of the OPA against the Development Plan, demonstrating its alignment.
- 4.166 However, NPPF (paragraph 11(d)) is engaged as NHC cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and therefore the 'tilted balance' approach to decision making applies, subject to the following considerations:
- 4.167 Paragraph 11(d) sets out: *"Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
- (iii) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance⁷ provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - (iv) (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination".*

- 4.168 The OPA is not affected by any Footnote 7 designations that would otherwise restrict development or provide a clear reason for refusal. The Walls Field Scheduled Monument will be brought out of intensive agricultural use, thereby protecting its archaeological value, and as per NPPF paragraph 212, this should be afforded great weight. The very small part of the site (land west of North Road) which remains within the green belt, will be utilised as open space, an exception allowed for by NPPF paragraph 154(h).
- 4.169 Further, as demonstrated in the Environmental Statement there are no adverse impacts that significantly and demonstrably outweigh the substantial benefits of the OPA when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
- 4.170 The Proposed Development accords with the definition of Sustainable Development by establishing a place that will establish a vibrant and healthy community through a mix of housing, that reflect the community needs, and by protecting and enhancing the natural environment through integration of existing valuable habitats and landscape elements into the wider green infrastructure network.
- 4.171 Drawing together the merits of the proposal in terms of its location; delivery of significant housing numbers and new jobs through the employment land; provision of infrastructure and design approach, there are substantial factors that weigh strongly in favour of the application.

Conclusion

- 4.172 In summary, this Planning Statement confirms that the Proposed Development is in accordance with the Development Plan, by virtue of paragraph 11(c). However, the Proposed Development should also be considered in the context of paragraph 11(d), applying the tilted balance in favour of the development.
- 4.173 There are no substantial and demonstrable adverse impacts of development to offset against the substantial benefits of the Proposed Development, and consequently no impacts that are of such significance as to overturn the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF.
- 4.174 The Proposed Development is in direct accordance with the Government's aspirations for sustainable growth that meets local needs and establishes new, healthy communities. It accords fully with the core planning principles of NPPF.
- 4.175 The adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (2022) includes the OPA site within its allocations for new homes and employment land as part of the strategic planned growth east of Baldock. The OPA is submitted within a supportive, up-to-date policy context and helps to deliver a significant supply of much needed homes.

- 4.176 The proposed scale and number of dwellings located at the site has been achieved through a careful design process through which, landscape character and constraints of the site has been weighed up against providing an appropriate level of homes that will help to achieve an appropriate scale of development. Overall, the Proposed Development would comprise a substantial amount of green infrastructure, including green space for amenity and would seek biodiversity net-gains.
- 4.177 The submitted Environmental Statement that supports the OPA confirms that no significant cumulative effects will arise from the Proposed Development in respect of its relationship to the remainder of the proposed allocation.
- 4.178 In conclusion and in the context of the growth agenda and the pressing national and local need for housing growth, the OPA proposes a major residential led urban extension capable of delivering new homes and supporting the planned growth of Baldock. There are no significant and demonstrable impacts that outweigh the benefits of granting consent. Therefore, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, permission should be granted for the Proposed Development.

APPENDIX A: AFFORDABLE HOUSING STATEMENT

This section provides an analysis of and identification of the potential affordable housing provision within the Proposed Development and forms the OPA 'Affordable Housing Statement'.

Housing need has been identified by this and previous governments as a significant national issue. This is reflected in North Hertfordshire, where housing need is acute and worsening. Analysis has been undertaken into housing, demographic, household and health matters across Baldock and North Hertfordshire as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment. This has identified that:

- property prices in North Hertfordshire have increased 74.1% in the last ten years (between 2015 and 2025), slightly less than in Hertfordshire County. This lack of affordability is also reflected in the private rental market where rents have increased approximately 62% over ten years; and
- 66% of households are occupied by family units, however approximately 30% are formed of one-person households. The average household size being just slightly lower than the national average for England.

Pre-application discussions with NHC has further outlined that evidence from the Council's housing register suggests the number of three bed houses suggested in the SHMA is greater than required and there is greater need for two bedroom family homes and a need for larger family homes (4+ bedrooms).

NHC has set a target through Local Plan Policy SP8 (Housing) and Policy HS2 (Affordable Housing) for up to 40% affordable housing on sites of 25+ dwellings and will negotiate this target with developers subject to housing need and economic viability. This equates to up to 1,280 affordable dwellings (40% of 3,200 homes).

The precise quantum of affordable housing will be subject to discussions with NHC during the determination of this OPA.

This would include a range of house mix, types and sizes and which will be designed such that the development is 'tenure blind' in respect of its character and appearance and will be well integrated with the open market housing, creating a mixed and balanced community in accordance with the Local Plan and the NPPF. This will make a significant contribution meeting the need for affordable homes in the District.

Policy HS2 sets out that the Council expects that 65% of the affordable housing required will be rented and 35% will provide other forms of affordable housing and will meet the housing needs of the area (including needs identified by relevant local authority housing register data). The NPPF (paragraph 66) expects that the mix of affordable housing on larger sites should meet identified local needs and be provided across Social Rent, other affordable

housing for rent and affordable home ownership tenures. Homes will therefore be available for affordable home ownership and rent as part of the overall affordable housing contribution from the site.

An indicative housing mix (including affordable) will be negotiated and agreed with NHC at OPA stage, informed by evidence of local need and local incomes (currently based on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2023, following the previous 2016 iteration). Discussions will also need to take account of and ensure the site can maintain its deliverability and viability in accordance with the provisions of policy HS2 and that it does not prevent the overall delivery of homes and infrastructure. Policy HS3 expects permissions for new homes to contribute to an appropriate range of house types and sizes including taking into account the findings of the most up-to-date evidence including the most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), the Council's Self Build Register and other relevant evidence of housing need. Final housing mix will be secured at phase or reserved matters stage.

The latest SHMA update was required following publication of new data underpinning the affordable housing needs figures and new guidance released for policy issues such as First Homes. The SHMA update considered the current level of affordable housing need in light of the 7,888 dwelling requirement for the remainder of the Local Plan period in North Herts and the 5,275 dwellings required in Stevenage.

Pre-application advice received from the NHC Housing Team included discussion around both the requirements of the SHMA (2023 Update), and information provided from the housing register.

The Section 106 agreement will include mechanisms to secure the appropriate timing of delivery of affordable homes whilst also being adaptable to meet the changing affordable needs and products available as well as being able to reflect changes in government guidance and policy and ensure more choices for local households in need of affordable homes. Viability reviews will be required by the S106 agreement to establish the proportion of affordable housing to be provided throughout the Proposed Development.

Further consideration will be required surrounding the delivery of affordable housing within each phase or parcel. The NHC Housing team pre-application advice indicates that NHC will seek policy compliant affordable housing provision within each phase, as well as across the whole development, with 5% flexibility.

APPENDIX B: STEWARDSHIP APPROACH

This section provides a high-level summary of stewardship options for the management and maintenance of common spaces and buildings which could be brought forward as part of the Growing Baldock project. Urban&Civic and Hertfordshire County Council are committed to exploring a variety of stewardship options that will have the best outcomes for the ongoing quality and upkeep of shared spaces, having regard to viability considerations, best value and tried and tested management approaches.

The spaces and infrastructure that may require further consideration of management requires and responsibilities include:

- Strategic green space for resident and wider use
- Doorstep green space including amenity play
- Primary, secondary and tertiary roads
- Community amenities and facilities e.g. community centres, allotments
- Strategic facilities for resident / wider use (sports pitches etc)
- Active travel network, such as the Baldock Greenway

The purpose of the selected stewardship mechanism will be to ensure the following:

- a sustainable approach is set in place for the varied spaces and places coming forward to maximise the social and environmental benefits, whilst ensuring robust, diverse and therefore sustainable funding to minimise cost to the public purse in the short, medium and long term;
- engagement and empowering of local (and neighbouring) residents and businesses through community participation so they can continue to shape and care for the public areas and green spaces; and
- maintenance of high-quality spaces throughout the life of the Proposed Development.

Policy Context

The NHC Local Plan Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability) requires Strategic Masterplans and strategic housing sites to create multi-functional green infrastructure network which is designed to last with a clear stewardship, management and maintenance strategy.

Policy NE1 states that permission will be granted for strategic green infrastructure where it is accompanied by a plan for its long-term maintenance and management.

The NHC Developer Contributions SPD covers open space and includes that the council will consider the adoption and management of new strategic green space in the following circumstances:

- It is located within the four main towns of Baldock, Letchworth, Hitchin and Royston (and Great Ashby) and complements existing service maintenance operations.

- The green space is meeting a current deficiency and new provision would meet the needs of existing and new residents.
- The green space is meeting a strategic gap in the green space network and improving the quantity, quality and connectivity of the district's green space network.
- Where longer term revenue streams such as council tax can be effectively recycled back into the locality as part of place investment.
- Where other corporate objectives can be met such as climate change, biodiversity and health and wellbeing.

The NHC Green Space Management Strategy 2022-2027 sets out that all sections of the community should have access to green space and experience its multiple benefits. Green space should be freely accessible to all the public and not be reserved for the private use of residents.

The Growing Baldock SMP sets out an overarching vision for stewardship: that the range of new spaces, places, facilities and overall public realm across the Proposed Development in Baldock will be managed to a consistent high quality standard throughout and will be the unifying element that ties together different land uses, character areas and building types. The SMP anticipates that the OPA agrees the approach to stewardship in conjunction with HCC and NHC

Stewardship Options

Management Company

Urban&Civic have significant experience of delivering landscape led strategic sites and establishing an Estate Management Company (ManCo). The ManCo is typically set up to manage areas such as green spaces and community buildings prior to the first house sale. The service is financed through a service charge with the annual charge reflecting market conditions as well as the ManCo's wider income. The long-term intention is for the ManCo to be transferred to community management over time, which will reflect greater occupation of the sites and therefore greater community representation and governance.

At the outset of the development, prior to there being a substantial number of homes occupied and the annual charge covering management costs, Urban&Civic would need to subsidise the operation of the ManCo for the first few years of development which is likely to be in the region of £1m-£2m and is required until the occupation of at least 1,500 homes.

Where residents or community groups do not want to take on a formal role, further community governance options could be discussed with the Local Planning Authority, and may involve third party not for profit local organisations for the management of specific areas, or a potential role for a Parish Council, with processes for local accountability.

NHC Adoption

NHC have expressed a desire to explore the potential to adopt some of the community assets, particularly the strategic areas of green space, reflecting the fact that these facilities will serve the whole of Baldock, not just the Growing Baldock population. Adoption of open spaces by NHC or by a Town or Parish Council would require a significant commuted management sum to be payable for a period of not less than 20 years with the contributions being given to the relevant body. This approach may also compromise design quality if spaces / facilities are built to adoptable (sometimes equalling lesser) standards.

Other bodies may also have a role to play in the management of community facilities, such as Historic England in relation to the Scheduled Monument, the LLFA for below ground drainage systems and allotments associations.

A number of options are available for the Growing Baldock site which require further discussion in order to achieve high standards of open space and community facilities which are well managed in perpetuity for all residents to benefit from. Stewardship options will be explored as part of the OPA negotiation process and conditioned.

APPENDIX C: TOWN CENTRE ASSESSMENT

This section of the Planning Statement considers the potential impact of the Proposed Development on and interrelationship with Baldock town centre and its high street and constitutes the OPA 'Town Centre Assessment'.

Policy Context

Local Plan policy ETC3 allows for new retail, leisure and other main town centre uses to be provided outside of town centres where an impact assessment is provided (in the case of Baldock, in circumstances where greater than 500m² of floorspace is provided). The OPA proposes floorspace within the Local Centre that moderately exceeds this threshold, and as such this section of the Planning Statement provides the necessary assessment. The policy also requires that such development must be appropriate to the area in terms of its use, size, scale, function, catchment area, historic and architectural character. These criteria are further considered in the assessment below.

It is however concluded that, on the basis that the Local Plan policy for BA1 requires the delivery of a local centre at the heart of the Proposed Development and that the proposed scale of the centre broadly aligns with the site specific policy for BA1, that a formal sequential test for the uses within the local centre is not required in this instance. Consequently, this section provides a qualitative assessment of the potential impact of the Proposed Development on the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Policy SP14 requires the provision of a local centre as part of the BA1 development that meets the day to day local needs along with additional neighbourhood level provision of around 500m² convenience retail and 1,400m² of comparison retail and food and beverage floorspace.

Local Context

Baldock has an attractive, historic town centre and high street, incorporating a range of mostly smaller, non-chain retail and food and beverage outlets. A large Tesco superstore is located to the south of the town centre, providing for the majority of convenience retail needs in Baldock.

The 2024 North Hertfordshire Town Centres and Retail Study, prepared by Lichfields, includes an assessment of future retail and leisure-related development needs within North Hertfordshire, including the District's main town centres of Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston.

This concludes that the North Hertfordshire centres compete with each other, and with centres in surrounding authority areas. There are three village centres in Ashwell, Codicote and Knebworth. Ten neighbourhood centres are identified in the District.

Each designated centre in the District has been allocated a score out of 16 in terms of Local Needs Index, which is a useful indicator of whether a centre is meeting some or all the needs of residents, based on the number of categories of shops and services such as food or convenience store, bank, post office, and restaurants.

Most neighbourhood centres have a low Local Needs Index score. Baldock town centre, the retail centre closest to the site, scored 12 out of 16, which has the lowest score among all town centres. Additionally, in the survey which respondents were asked which of the town centres they had visited to use shops, services and leisure facilities in the last year, Hitchin and Letchworth Garden City appear to be the main non-food shopping destinations in the District. The proportion of all respondents who do most of their non-food shopping at these destinations is relatively low (11.8% and 9.4% respectively). Baldock (29.9%) and Royston (24.8%) have the lowest proportions of regular visitors, reflecting their size and importance in the wider hierarchy.

It has also been identified that food shopping was particularly high in Baldock likely due to the large Tesco Extra superstore, but non-food shopping was lower than in other centres. Despite all four centres having a reasonable mix of retail and service uses, Baldock has a lower proportion of comparison goods retail than the District and UK averages. Baldock has a strong provision of non-retail services and food/beverage outlets.

North Herts Council has prepared a draft Town Centres Strategy (due for publication in Autumn 2025). We anticipate the OPA Proposed Development being in line with the Strategy, and indeed that through the planning framework and development process Growing Baldock will play an active role in supporting the Town Centre's future growth.

Proposed Development

In accordance with Local Plan policy SP14, the Proposed Development incorporates a local centre at the heart of the BA1 allocation site. The Development Specification sets out the uses proposed within the local centre as follows:

- Up to 3,500 m² care home/hotel/residential institution;
- Up to 750m² pub/takeaway;
- Up to 700m² convenience retail;
- Up to 800m² retail/café/restaurant;
- Up to 550m² office;
- Up to 1,150m² gym;
- Up to 2,250m² of Health Hub, if not provided on BA10;
- Up to 500m² community centre.

This provision aligns closely with the requirement for around 500m² of convenience retail floorspace (up to 700m² proposed in OPA) and 1,400m² of comparison retail and food and beverage floorspace (up to 1,550m² pub/takeaway and retail/café/restaurant uses proposed in OPA). The quantum of main town centre uses (as defined by the NPPF) in the local centre has been carefully selected so as to meet the broader aspirations of the policy, that the centre meets only the day to day needs of the Growing Baldock population. The proposed convenience retail floorspace will accommodate no more than a small convenience store around the standard 400-500m² standard scale, along with two or three much smaller units ideally suited to emerging local businesses.

The local centre is not planned to be a destination in its own right, instead it will meet the day to day needs of the new population, without drawing trade from the high street. The primacy of Baldock town centre as the main service centre for the town and the surrounding villages will be maintained, as a result of the very modest scale of services provided within Growing Baldock.

The package of highway interventions proposed within the OPA is specifically targeted at reducing through traffic (those trips identified by traffic surveys that travel through Baldock taking less than 8-9 minutes, and therefore not stopping in the town centre) that is not benefitting the Baldock town centre economy. The proposed interventions will also result in the benefit of reducing HGV presence in the town centre which will play a key role in supporting more local use from existing residents, as the new footfall grows from the new homes. It is important that any potential temporary impacts on the town centre are considered, and the effects of the highway interventions will be tested further through the COMET transport modelling in due course.

In fact, the new population will provide a much-needed boost to the economy in the form of an expanded customer base for businesses in the town centre. The emphasis on delivering safe and direct active travel links between the Proposed Development and the High Street further supports this, allowing the population to easily access the town centre and services within it. Consequently, the Proposed Development will result in a strengthened town centre offer, capable of supporting a wider range of units to potentially fill some of the gaps identified in the Town Centres and Retail Study outlined above.

It can be concluded that the proposed local centre, and town centre uses within it, will not compromise the viability and vitality of the town centre. A brief analysis is provided below of the criteria identified by Local Plan policy ETC3 to consider when proposing a town centre use such as this:

- Use – local centre uses only, including convenience retail, food and beverage, community and potentially health uses
- Size – modestly sized units in general alignment with the site allocation policy (SP14)

- Scale – clearly subordinate to Baldock town centre in physical scale. Units to be clustered around the public realm, with provision at ground floor level allowing first floor and above residential or office uses;
- Function – to serve the immediate day to day needs of Growing Baldock residents. The local centre will perform a supplementary role to the town centre, and will be substantially more modest in both design and scale of facilities;
- catchment area – the Proposed Development – particularly those within walking distance. The local centre is deliberately located at the heart of the development so as to be within easy walking and cycling distance of homes
- historic and architectural character – the local centre could integrate some of the existing residential / agricultural buildings, if they are suitable for conversion. The local centre design will be informed by the character of the area.

APPENDIX D: DRAFT S106 HEADS OF TERMS

It is proposed that the applicant would enter into a Section 106 agreement with NHC and Hertfordshire County Council (as required, or as updated as a result of local government reorganisation), such an agreement being conditional upon the grant and implementation of the planning permission.

The following headings set out the anticipated heads of terms that will form the basis of the detailed S106 agreement associated with the Growing Baldock OPA, subject to further justification, assessment and ongoing discussion with NHC, HCC and other stakeholders.

Affordable Housing

On site provision of affordable housing. The quantum and tenure mix will be informed by a viability assessment in the context of Local Plan policy HS2 which sets a target percentage of 40% of dwellings to be affordable in schemes of more than 25 dwellings, taking into account the viability of the Proposed Development. The amount, distribution, phasing and triggers for the delivery of affordable housing are to be agreed and controlled by the S106.

Healthcare

On site provision of a health hub, either in BA10 or the Local Centre in BA1. Facility could accommodate up to 6,000m² of medical / health services floorspace. Up to 3,000m² of this floorspace could incorporate GP services to meet the needs of the Growing Baldock and existing Baldock population, on the basis that the existing surgery is relocated onto the Proposed Development. In the event that the existing facility remains in situ, a smaller GP provision will be needed on site. The remaining up to 3,000m² of floorspace is notionally included in the OPA to provide space for the ICB to provide healthcare services. Importantly, this is not required to meet the needs of the Growing Baldock population. The ICB's requirements and funding sources are currently unknown and will be explored as the OPA is progressed.

Primary Education

On site provision of up to 2 primary schools (up to 3FE) in BA1. S106 to detail mechanisms for delivery (provision of land to HCC and payment of contribution towards school construction or developer construction of school) and transfer to HCC, site size and specification and triggers for delivery, on the agreed basis that initial primary need generated by the Proposed Development will be met through existing Baldock schools. The Education Review Process will determine how many FEs are to be delivered and when.

Secondary Education

Secondary school provision will either be delivered on site in a new secondary school on BA3, or in an expansion to Knights Templar School. Initial secondary school need will be met by existing capacity within Knights Templar. An Education Review Process will be established

through the S106 agreement to determine whether secondary provision is made on or off site, how many forms of entry are required to meet the need generated by the Proposed Development and triggers for delivery. The S106 will also detail mechanisms for delivery (provision of land to HCC and payment of contribution towards school construction or developer construction of school) and transfer to HCC, site size and specification, as well as triggers for payment of a contribution, should the provision be made off site (at Knights Templar). The S106 will also set out the approach to indoor and outdoor sports which will differ, depending on the outcome of the Education Review Group decision on secondary school provision.

SEND School

Up to 1.78 hectares of land for SEND school on BA3 and potential contribution, dependent on ongoing discussions with HCC about land value. S106 to capture delivery triggers and school site specification.

Public Transport

Contributions towards bus service provision, subject to discussions with relevant providers.

Highway Works

Necessary junction and other offsite highways improvements, to be defined by the Transport Assessment. Contributions towards and delivery of works to be agreed with HDC and HCC as Highways Authority. Works to be delivered by U&C may be conditioned.

Framework Travel Plan

Implementation of the recommendations of the Framework Travel Plan submitted in support of the OPA.

Transport Monitor and Manage Framework

Monitor and manage framework to monitor and address network capacity or sustainable mode issues that arise during build out and operation and identify appropriate mitigation.

Formal Sports

Extent (area), location, phased delivery of and management regime for formal sports and associated infrastructure on the Eastern Park and Urban Open Land (if not part of secondary school campus). Indoor sports facilities to be provided either as part of a new school on BA3 (school sports hall) or in improved sports hall at Knights Templar School.

Informal Open Space / Ecology

Extent, phased delivery of and ecological management regime for informal open space and ecological areas

Off-site Corn Bunting Mitigation

Management and maintenance regime for off-site corn bunting mitigation sites.

Childcare

Provision of two childcare settings for 0-2 year olds within BA1 and potentially BA10. S106 to establish triggers for delivery, high level specification and marketing requirements.

Community Space

Provision of shared use community space within the Local Centre. To accommodate space for Youth. Specification and triggers for delivery to form part of S106.

Monitoring

Contribution towards S106, Travel Plan and BNG Monitoring Officer(s).

Stewardship

Stewardship arrangements for communal spaces – open spaces and community buildings.

Optional Contributions

Subject to viability, other contributions may be made towards libraries, fire services, adult social care and improvements to the rail station to be agreed with Network Rail and other stakeholders.