

Note / Memo

Haskoning UK Ltd.
Mobility & Infrastructure

To: Anthony Collier
From: Mark Lever-Green
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Copy: Roger Flowerday
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Classification: Project related
Checked by Geoff Burrage

Subject: Growing Baldock - HCC Cover Letter

1 Introduction

The purpose of this Note is to respond to informal feedback on the draft Transport Assessment Addendum (TAA) that has been provided by Hertfordshire County Council through conversation, email and recent Transport Working Group meetings. It is intended to aid review and comprehension of the formal submission by highlighting where specific topics have been covered, amended or more information provided.

All the information presented in this Note is also available elsewhere, primarily in the accompanying TAA and preceding TA. It is not considered essential for this Note to form part of the formal planning submission. Nonetheless, for the purpose of transparency and accountability, there is no reason to prevent publishing this note alongside other planning documents.

2 Thematic Comments

The issues considered to remain outstanding and subject to informal commentary are listed below. These are addressed in the following sections of this Note.

- 1 A1(M) Junction 9
- 2 Station Road/North Street
- 3 Rural/impacted Routes
- 4 Bygrave Road
- 5 Broad Comment

2.1 A1(M) Junction 9

“HCCs position is that rerouting and vehicle trips directly from the site create significant issues to A1M Junction 9. We remain concerned at the proposal to ‘semi’ mitigate the issue when there is clearly an impact to a congested part of the network. Our concern stem from traffic actively avoiding j9, such as journeys using j10 and Norton Road in Letchworth, that are not identified in assessment nor would be as wider modelling actively re-routes journeys due to the congestion.

Further discussion suggested at previous meeting is welcomed.”

- The mitigation scheme presented accounts for the predicted increase in traffic flow as a result of the Growing Baldock development. This is predominantly between the A1(M) south and A505 east. This is illustrated by the table below that sets out the direct impact of development trips and indirect impact of rerouted trips.

To From	A1(M) North		A505 East		A1(M) South		A505 West	
	Dev trips	Rerouted	Dev trips	Rerouted	Dev trips	Rerouted	Dev trips	Rerouted
A1(M) North	-	-	0	61	-	-	0	8
A505 East	0	34	-	-	271	-23	49	40
A1(M) South	-	-	212	-170	-	-	0	-59
A505 West	0	-7	0	65	0	-38	-	-

- The additionally requested junction improvements seek to address an existing perceived deficiency in the current layout on an arm that is not heavily impacted by Growing Baldock, namely the left turn from the A1(M) onto Letchworth Gate.
- Additionally, the proposed signalisation of the existing walking and cycling route across the north of the junction would have very limited impact to future residents of Baldock and would be reliant on further upgrades to the A505 and B197 to provide onward cycle infrastructure. The proposed approach to demonstrate that the additional upgrades could be safeguarded to allow for future implementation by HCC or another party is therefore appropriate.

2.2 Station Road/North Street

“Appears that assumptions on impacts to station road rely on vision led trip rates from the outset, we seek clarification on how this could be justified.”

- The early phases of the development will not have as significant a mode shift. To reflect this, vision-led mode shift assumptions for the interim scenario are limited, to reflect the phased introduction of various interventions and reduced internalisation at early stages of build-out.
- Within the mode shift model (MSM), the mode shift is driven by “theme ratings”. The theme ratings for the opening year, interim year and full build out year are presented in Appendix H of the Transport Assessment (report PC7029-ITP-XX-XX-RP-TP-0001). The Opening year and Interim

year have lower theme ratings, to represent the lower mode shift assumptions at this phase of the development build-out.

- This position that mode shift will increase throughout the build out of the project has been taken throughout the assessment, with these assumptions being built into the COMET assessment.
- Recent adjustments to the intervention phasing, particularly the earlier delivery of the Station Road and North Street active travel corridor, may result in these assumptions being overly conservative.
- While the entire transport strategy will not be in place, people moving into very early phases will still benefit from:
 - Proximity to Baldock railway station and town centre on foot and by bicycle.
 - Landscape design that places emphasis on creating people-friendly places that are not dominated by cars, including parking provision and layout.
 - Activation and community building activities coordinated directly by U&C that encourage active local living. These can be agreed through subsequent travel plans and other monitoring mechanisms which will be established at the development.

2.3 Rural/Impacted Routes

“Note – these areas are flagged as potentially at risk of an impact to their function as places when considering the place/movement approach. The modelling shows these should be placed into a monitor and manage approach through conditioning the planning application and agreement of mitigation measures. This is due to the sensitivity of these routes to increased traffic levels.

- Bygrave – Ashwell
- Wallington (Route from A505 – A507)
- Norton Road (Inc Links between Norton road and North Road)
- Weston (route to East Stevenage) needs including
- Graveley (B197 as A1 relief) – seemingly not included in the current MM proposal needs including

To achieve that, any baseline figures would be helpful in modelling to use in the testing against the proposed trip rate figures.

These mostly align with the locations identified in the TAA, however clarity on the next steps, notably a how a monitor and manage ‘program’ will form part of the planning processes, is needed.

A suitable mitigation package for rural routes would comprise a proportionate, evidence led set of traffic management measures designed to discourage rat running, moderate vehicle speeds, and protect rural character, rather than increasing highway capacity as per HCC LTP approach (Place and Movement)

Monitor and Manage scheme scope should include construction phases”

- A package of traffic calming measures has been costed for each of the Monitor & Manage locations referenced in the TAA. These are effectively proxy schemes where the determined cost could later be spent on alternative equivalent interventions that would achieve the same or better outcomes. The costing based on the application of 20mph speed limits (including allowance for TRO costs) and speed cushions through the built-up area of the villages or residential portions of the routes.
- While the Monitor & Manage funding pot will not be great enough to cover all interventions, this is because it is not anticipated that all will be needed. The pot will be sufficient to cover a combination of measures, which will be developed to have greatest effect.

- We do not agree that the Monitor & Manage scope should include construction phases as the impacts of construction would be temporary and better addressed through a Construction Traffic Management Plan. This could include appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and mitigating and unexpected issues that may arise. This also helps to distinguish primary responsibility between U&C, as master developer, and the contractor, who is responsible for day-to-day construction site operation.

2.4 Bygrave Road

“Seek further clarity on statues and use of Bygrave Road in the early phases and its use as a sustainable corridor.”

- It is the intention for Bygrave Road to be downgraded in stages as build-out occurs broadly west to east.
- Connections between the new internal road network to Bygrave Road will be necessary to maintain access to existing properties, allowing for hybrid operation of the corridor as build-out continues – the western section may be downgraded for use by people walking and cycling, whilst the eastern section may be retained as the route for vehicles.
- The level of detail required to secure this is considered best dealt with at the next stage of planning through Design Codes and Reserved Matters Applications. As part of this, the phasing plan will be defined and timings for the road can be ascertained. We do not think it is necessary to secure this at Outline Planning Application stage.

2.5 Broad Comment

“Relying on acceptability based on ‘already congested’ is somewhat challenging, Appears the overall approach to design and mitigations is resulting in acceptable impacts (note specific issues exist), though remains a challenging location for development and identified measures are critical, with early delivery likely essential as well as very supportive travel plan measures to ensure behaviours are as expected. The monitor and manage scheme will be relied upon heavily to manage the development, notably through construction phases.”

- As an industry, we know that providing additional capacity encourages and induces additional trips to be made by car. An equilibrium in existing travellers’ minds has formed resulting in the ‘already congested’ baseline. This is an equilibrium that balances people’s desire to travel by car with their willingness to sit in a queue of traffic (or find a parking space).
- It would be disingenuous to suggest that infrastructure could be provided that would operate with spare capacity in the local context and limited highway space of Baldock. The approach that has been agreed is therefore to seek to maintain the equilibrium at or close to its current position. New residents would have to make the same decision as to whether their desire to travel by car is matched by their willingness to sit in a queue. This is offset by the provision of significant amounts of walking, cycling and bus infrastructure that enable them to instead make the positive decision to shift modes. This is in full alignment with the principles of LTP4.
- Existing users of the roads through Baldock should not see a significant degradation in their day-to-day experience, however neither should they expect all congestion to be removed by the proposals.
- The use of Monitor and Manage is therefore presented to address unexpected or uncertain impacts rather than being held in reserve to address any remaining congestion on the network.

3 Conclusion

This Note has been prepared to directly respond to informal comments provided by HCC prior to the submission of the TAA. We hope that by setting out this response, the review of the submitted material is more straightforward.

As throughout we have sought to work proactively with HCC, amongst other stakeholders, to present a high-quality proposal that adequately addresses technical matters and overcomes any reservations that may prevent a positive determination. We welcome the general support that is shown by HCC towards the scheme, in particular in relation to the extensive package of transport mitigation that is built into the proposal.

We hope that this puts us in a good position as we approach determination and welcome the opportunity to provide further reassurance or technical support as required.