
From: Nikki da Costa [REDACTED]
Sent: 19 November 2025 10:41
To: Justin Booij [REDACTED]
Cc: HINCHLIFF, Chris (MP) [REDACTED] Cllr Alistair Willoughby [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Cllr Michael Muir [REDACTED] Tracy Westgate [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: Growing Baldock - objection

Dear Mr Booji,

Thank you for your letter regarding the "Growing Baldock" outline planning application. I am formally responding to the outline application and would be grateful if this could be registered on the website as public comment, along with the attached document.

I and many local residents have significant concerns regarding the proposed traffic intervention of a **single-lane shuttle system under the railway bridge on Station Road (Link 5)**, and the knock-on impacts this will have not only on that road but joining roads. While the Transport statement focuses on managing vehicle flow, our community findings indicate a significant risk to Baldock's businesses and the essential links between the town and surrounding villages, and this does not appear to be taken seriously.

[Keep Baldock Open's](#) findings (attached) are referenced in the statement of Community Engagement: "We also received the results of a survey undertaken independently, which received 235 responses. The feedback notes car access to the town centre is critical, that there is a negative sentiment locally towards the transport proposals and that there's been insufficient engagement with businesses to date".

However, having noted this, and that "the most frequently mentioned comment was in relation to traffic", it says nothing more about the need to engage with business or the substance of these concerns e.g. on the next page 'Conclusions and Continuing the Baldock Conversation' mentions no further work to engage with businesses.

Similarly [Chapter 13 on Socio-Economic](#) impacts says nothing at all about the potential impacts on business from reduction in traffic from North of the Town.

This is disappointing because Urban & Civic, responded to our findings, said they would engage directly with businesses before they submitted the application, but I cannot see any reference to further work or their findings. In an email on 2 September Philippa Curran said "we're in process of writing to all businesses with next steps and ongoing engagement. We'll also be in the area in the coming weeks and will use the time to speak to as many businesses as possible".

Further detail

Complexity of flow reduction and economic impact

Supporting documents from Urban & Civic confirm that the proposed Roadspace Reallocation Strategy will succeed in reducing traffic volumes on this corridor.

- They anticipate a substantial **reduction in total Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) flow on Link 5 of between 44.5% and 45.4%** by the Post-Completion Stage (2040).
- The ES concludes that the extensive embedded mitigation (segregated cycle routes, new crossings, narrowed carriageways) results in a residual severance effect of only **Minor adverse** significance, or even Moderate beneficial under some options.

However, the KBO customer survey, representing 235 responses from residents and regular visitors, strongly suggests that this intervention, while successful in reducing traffic entering Baldock, could create negative economic consequences for Baldock's businesses and economy, as this perceived inconvenience translates directly into lost custom:

- **Critical Car Dependency:** 88.5% of respondents travel by car, and 85.5% state that car access via North Road/A507 is "critical" or "very important" to their decision to visit Baldock's businesses.
- **Customer Loss Risk:** A vast majority, 73.9%, reported they are "extremely likely" or "very likely" to reduce their visits if accessing Baldock becomes more difficult due to delays.
- **Business Impact:** Local businesses surveyed estimate that 88.9% of their customers rely on car access. Open responses warn of a "ghost town" effect, with fears of closures for independent shops, cafes, and services due to lost footfall.

Severance of villages and impact on vulnerable users

The shuttle system also risks jeopardising essential connections for surrounding villages, which rely on Baldock for services and amenities.

- **Village severance:** Documents talk of severance of parts of Baldock, but visitors from villages such as Ashwell, Bygrave, Radwell, and Newnham frequently state that increased difficulty accessing the town would force them to switch their custom to other towns, including Letchworth, Hitchin, Royston, or Biggleswade. Residents of Salisbury Road, Baldock, voiced concern that the plans are "effectively cutting us off from the town we live in".
- **Vulnerable Users:** The elderly, disabled (including Blue Badge holders), and families with young children emphasize their reliance on the car, dismissing enhanced cycling or walking routes as "impractical" for shopping or travel in bad weather.

Concerns regarding implementation and timing of further mitigations

Finally, the shuttle system under the railway bridge is scheduled for implementation in **2027**. This will precede the railway overbridge and link road designed to realign traffic to the A505, by six years – or possibly more. But this is not made clear in the chapter on Transport when the overbridge is listed as a mitigation.

Please could the Council look into this in more detail. Specifically, it would be helpful for Councillors to know:

1. **Queue time modelling:** once introduced what will queue times look like? Urban & Civic have been upfront that they wish to generate a deterrent effect by creating friction. What does that look like at different points in the day (including school run and peak commute times) on North Road and adjacent roads? [I cannot find reference to the queue times in the overarching documents, and the detailed annexes are impenetrable to a lay person (they do not have any explanatory notes on what the different terms mean etc)].
2. **Results from business engagement and assessment of the economic impacts on existing businesses:** how have Urban & Civic assessed and addressed impacts on local businesses if custom is diverted elsewhere and takes years to be replaced?
3. **Vulnerable User Assessment:** What assessment has been made of how the changes affect car-dependent groups, including the elderly, disabled, and young families.

If Urban & Civic and the Council are determined that the measures are necessary and they do not risk Baldock's businesses, evidence needs to be provided for this. Then if they are determined to proceed, they

should run small-scale trials to gather real-world data on queues and what the changes do to Baldock. Once introduced the damage to businesses could be felt within months – it's no good saying 'we could think again if we see a problem' as Urban & Civic said to me at the drop-in in the summer. It could be too late and those small business owners and their employees would have lost their livelihoods.

I am copying our MP Chris Hinchliff and Cllr Willoughby who I have raised these issues with and who have also asked for greater transparency and business engagement. I am also cc'ing Tracy Westgate who was present at the discussion with businesses at Legend's Business Club in July.

Yours sincerely,

Nikki da Costa

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