



Active
Travel
England

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Your Ref: 25/02571/OP
Our Ref: ATE/25/01572/OUT
Date: 14 November 2025

Active Travel England Planning Response Detailed Response to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Planning & Development Division, Active Travel England

To: North Hertfordshire District Council

Application Ref: 25/02571/OP

Site Address: BA1(Land East Of North Rd And North Of Railway Line); BA10(Land Between Railway Line And Royston Rd); BA3 (Land West Of A505); BA2 (Land South Of Clothall Rd); Walls Field; Urban Open Land West Of A505, And Land West Of North Rd, Baldock

Description of development: Growing Baldock Development Site: 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.

Notice is hereby given that Active Travel England's formal recommendation is as follows:

- a. ~~**No Objection:** ATE has undertaken a detailed assessment of this application and is content with the submission.~~
- b. ~~**Conditional approval:** ATE recommends approval of the application, subject to the agreement and implementation of planning conditions and/or obligations as set out in this response.~~
- c. **Deferral:** ATE is not currently in a position to support this application and requests further assessment, evidence, revisions and/or dialogue as set out in this response.

- d. ~~**Refusal:** ATE recommends that the application be refused for the reasons set out in this response.~~

1.0 Background

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above planning application.

It is understood that the application site is subject to a number of site allocations for a range of uses. These allocations are contained within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031, adopted in 2022, and referenced within the Planning Statement at Sections 4.35–4.38.

To date, Active Travel England (ATE) has engaged as a consultee through the pre-application process. These discussions formed part of ATE's Pre-application Pilot and culminated in a meeting on 14 November 2023, followed by a written response from ATE. A further meeting was held on 7 May 2025, after which ATE issued an annotated plan titled 'Growing Baldock Outline Planning Application Location Plan' containing high-level comments to the applicant on 9 May 2025.

ATE has assessed this current application (The Outline Planning Application (OPA)) using the ATE Planning Assessment Toolkit, national planning policy, and relevant active travel design guidance. Whilst the overall approach taken is generally welcomed, several areas of concern exist. Consequently, a deferral response is being issued at this stage pending the provision of further information and analysis, as outlined below.

2.0 Areas of Concern

1. Trip Generation Analysis and Travel Plan Targets

Trip Generation

Paragraph 115 (d) of the NPPF requires that development proposals adopt a vision-led approach to addressing significant impacts on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion) or on highway safety. It is understood that the Transport Assessment (TA) adopts such a Vision-Led methodology, prioritising sustainable travel outcomes over traditional traffic-based assumptions. This approach is embedded throughout the design and assessment process and aligns with national and local policy objectives.

The mode-share summaries indicate that the combined sites have the potential to achieve approximately 50% of all daily trips by active and sustainable modes when fully built out and with all interventions delivered (noting some variation across the different 2040 scenarios).

Generally, the approach to trip generation and scenario testing is considered robust, with appropriate consideration given to active travel interventions and the subsequent adjustment of trips to reflect the overarching vision.

However, it is noted that whilst the TA calculates residential trip generation separately, it does not provide a standalone published table for "residential-only" trip generation. It would be helpful for the applicant to confirm whether this was the intended approach and to provide justification for this omission.

Trip Distribution and Assignment

Section 7.5 of the TA sets out the trip distribution assessment, and Figure 7-2 illustrates the resulting assignment across the network. It would be helpful if the applicant could undertake a similar distribution exercise for active modes, to understand likely trip attractors within Baldock and beyond. This would support a clearer understanding of required route interventions in the local area.

Travel Plan

It is understood that the trip generation figures in Chapter 2 of the Travel Plan have been derived using the vision-led methodology. The Travel Plan states that a level of mode shift has already been incorporated into these figures. The targets presented in Table 5-1 therefore exceed what has already been assessed in the TA and reflect an ambitious approach to behaviour change within the Growing Baldock development.

Whilst this ambition is welcomed, clarification is required on the following points:

- As above, it would be helpful to understand what the baseline residential trip generation figure is expected to be for active modes. It is assumed that the vision-led trip generation (2033) set out in Table 7-9 of the TA will form the baseline for monitoring trips. If so, clarity is required on the role of the Travel Plan in assessing whether this baseline has been achieved—presumably as part of a Monitor-and-Manage approach. It should also be confirmed whether the same approach will apply to assessing 2040 mode-share scenarios.
- The Travel Plan states that “The targets detailed in Table 5-1 therefore go beyond what has already been assessed...”. Further clarification is required on how these targets relate to the trip generation figures in Table 7-9—for example, which takes precedence when assessing success.
- Table 5-1 states that a target will be “At least 40% of households have at least one occupant who travels by walking or cycling weekly for short trips”. However, the number of active-travel trips generated is dependent on trip frequency. Clarification is required as to whether this assumes one trip per week, daily trips, or another figure.
- More broadly, what does this 40% target equate to in terms of active-travel trip generation? Is this intended to represent total active-travel trips for the residential element, or only a proportion of wider active-travel trips associated with the development?

3. Accessibility

Given the proposed mix of uses on site and the assessment of internalised trips, it is expected that accessibility to key services will be sufficient. ATE therefore has no significant concerns regarding internal accessibility. It is, of course, recognised that residents will wish to access external services, and movement between the site and key destinations such as Baldock and Letchworth, will be critical. This will rely on the delivery of high-quality footpaths and cycleways connecting to the existing active-travel network.

It has not been possible to identify a list of existing services within the local area in the submission documents. It would be helpful if the applicant could provide such a list. Whilst a basic exercise, it remains useful in understanding anticipated local trip attractors.

4. Active Travel Route Audit

Whilst it is accepted that much movement will occur within the site, travel to Baldock and Letchworth will remain likely.

Section 3.2 of the TA sets out the methodology for assessing current context and existing infrastructure.

It is understood that three types of audit were undertaken across 75 links:

- Healthy Streets: Design Check UK
- Walking Route Audit Tool (WRAT)
- LTN 1/20 Cycling Level of Service Tool (CLoS)
- LTN 1/20 Junction Assessment Tool (JAT)

Overall, the assessment is considered robust and thorough, with high-quality evidence presented.

5. Off-Site Active Travel Infrastructure Improvements

In ATE's most recent pre-application response, commentary was provided on wider active-travel network improvements. These amended interventions appear to have been included within Appendix E (Proposed Junction Layouts) of the TA. Additional access arrangements have also been submitted for approval. Table 3-2 of the Travel Plan lists further physical intervention packages and an indicative programme.

For clarity, comments have been provided on each drawing listed in Appendix E. However, as detailed (colour) drawings have not been provided for the wider network, it has not been possible to offer comprehensive commentary. It is understood that only parameter plans for access drawings have been submitted at this stage, and as such, comments relating to non-approved aspects are observational.

DEVELOPMENT SITE ACCESSES: NORTH ROAD

1. Provide improved access to the shared-use facility for southbound cyclists rather than the current arrangement, which sits at right angles and primarily serves pedestrians. See preferred example.
2. The revised staggered crossing at the site access is not supported and does not meet LTN 1/20 requirements. Please confirm the reason for this change. See preferred example.
3. It is noted that existing vegetation forms a substantial buffer between the carriageway and the proposed active-travel route. Please confirm the rationale for retaining such a large area of vegetation rather than providing a continuation of segregated cycle facilities and footway.

OFF-SITE INTERVENTIONS: NORTH ROAD (LOWER SECTION) & STATION ROAD

1. Consider a design change to allow northbound cyclists on the carriageway to turn left into Football Close and Icknield Way. Whilst the proposed parallel crossing is welcomed, it does not fully align with desire lines.

DEVELOPMENT SITE ACCESS – ROYSTON ROAD / A505

1. Please confirm why the bi-directional cycle track reverts to shared-use provision.
2. The proposed staggered crossing on the northern side of the site access is not supported. A straight-across crossing should be considered. See preferred example.

DEVELOPMENT SITE ACCESS – BA2 SITE

1. Consider zebra crossings on all arms of the Clothall Way roundabout. See preferred example.
2. Consider the transition arrangements from the carriageway to the shared-use facility.

Other matters

It would be helpful to confirm whether the proposed design interventions have been assessed using the same tools listed in Section 3.2 of the TA.

6. Permeability and Placemaking

While the proposals are in outline, ATE generally welcomes the proposed approach to internal permeability, design, placemaking, and the prioritisation of active modes. However, the following concerns exist.

Frontage

ATE has concerns regarding the lack of frontage onto North Road. Given that the proposals are promoted as 'Growing Baldock', the current design approach appears to seek to conceal the development behind existing hedgerows. This represents a missed opportunity to create a strong built frontage supported by high-quality active-travel infrastructure.

A strong active frontage is important to:

- Alert drivers that they are entering a residential area where pedestrian and cyclist activity is expected; and
- Integrate the development more effectively into Baldock's built environment.

The approach should be reconsidered.

Local Centre

The Local Centre is currently positioned centrally within the site. It may be more logical to locate it closer to Baldock Station to better serve rail passengers and existing nearby

communities, thereby reducing unnecessary vehicle trips from surrounding areas and improving vitality. The proposals should relate outwardly to the wider area rather than functioning as an inward-looking layout.

Bygrave Road Corridor

The Design and Access Statement states that “Bygrave Road will be a key east–west route through the development, designed to facilitate and prioritise active travel whilst providing limited vehicular access to existing premises only.” Whilst this approach is welcomed, it is unclear how this will operate in practice given existing vehicular access requirements. It would be helpful if the applicant could confirm which uses are expected to require vehicular access via Bygrave Road.

Active Travel Spine

The concept of an Active Travel Spine is supported; however, it is important that its design enables cyclists to travel efficiently. The Spine should minimise conflict and avoid becoming a leisure-focused route at the expense of coherence and directness. Pedestrian and cycle routes should generally be straight and legible. The indicative plan shown on page 69 of the DAS appears to include unnecessary changes in direction which may undermine its effectiveness.

Active Travel Underpass

The design approach to the underpass is supported. However, as the DAS states that detailed approval is not sought at this outline stage, an appropriate mechanism must be secured at OPA stage to ensure delivery of this essential piece of infrastructure.

Shared-Use Facilities

Development Access (Primary Street)

It is noted that the primary access includes shared-use facilities, with Figure 77 showing a 3-metre shared cycleway. Whilst dedicated routes will also be provided within the site (notably via Bygrave Road), the reliance on shared-use provision is not supported. A development of this scale (2,800 homes and associated uses) will generate significant movement. Whilst the vision for low vehicle movement is welcomed, this should not be to the detriment of delivering high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure on primary vehicular routes.

The Primary Street will serve a range of functions, and a shared-use facility is unlikely to operate effectively and not meet LTN 1/20 requirements. A more appropriate approach would be to provide cycle tracks on both sides of the carriageway, supported by greening, buffers, and high-quality pedestrian facilities. Without appropriate infrastructure, the proposals risk failing to incentivise active travel, particularly in respect of internalisation and the wider vision-led methodology.

Secondary Streets

Similarly, where segregation from the carriageway is deemed necessary, shared-use paths should be reconsidered in favour of dedicated cycle tracks. Two-way tracks on one side of the carriageway are generally not supported, for reasons set out in LTN 1/20 paragraph 6.2.16.

Multi-Modal Bridge

The DAS states that the bridge will include a segregated active-travel route on the western side only, comprising a 3-metre shared-use footway/cycleway and a 3-metre equestrian route. Clarification is requested on whether the total width will therefore be 6 metres for pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians.

Given earlier comments regarding shared-use facilities, the approach to segregation may need to be reviewed to ensure network consistency.

7. Cycle Parking

Paragraph 3.115 of the DAS states that cycle parking and storage will be integrated within the design and layout of development, with provision located to the front of dwellings for usability either as part of the building elevation or within a dedicated structure. This approach is welcomed, particularly the emphasis on convenient, front-of-plot storage. All cycle parking facilities should be secure and provided by the developer.

3.0 Next Steps

It is requested that these recommendations are provided to the LPA case officer and forwarded to the agent and applicant. ATE would be content to hold a meeting with the LPA to discuss matters raised and review further submitted information to help address the above identified deficiencies, with a view to providing a further response and recommended wording for planning conditions and obligations.