



Network Rail Consultation Response

FAO:	Justin Booij
Date:	17 th November 2025
Application reference:	25/02571/OP
Proposal:	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
Location:	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

Thank you for your recent correspondence relating to the above application.

Network Rail own, operate and develop Britain's railway infrastructure. Our role is to deliver a safe and reliable railway. All consultations are assessed with the safety of the operational railway in mind and responded to on this basis.

It is noted that the development will impact on NR infrastructure in a number of ways. Chief amongst these are the proposed crossing of the railway at two points, by means of an overbridge and underbridge respectively, along with the closure of the existing level crossing known as Bygraves. Additionally, the application makes reference to the provision of a new station entrance to the north-east of the current eastbound platform, and improvements to the station itself (principally by means of providing step-free access to both platforms).



Following assessment of the details provided to support the above application, Network Rail has no objection in principle to the development and supports the provision of improvements to our infrastructure. However, below are some requirements which must be met in relation to both the requirements for the proposed new crossings and potential improvements to the railway station, along with important safety issues, especially with the proximity of the development to high voltage overhead line equipment.

It is recognised that some of the detail given below may be more appropriate for the reserved matters stage but is mentioned here as a reminder of the issues that will need to be considered)

Proposed Bridge Crossings

It is acknowledged that the applicant is in discussion with us over a standard bridge agreement (which will include the necessary easement over and under the railway) and liaison with our asset protection team to develop a programme of implementation. Given a disruptive possession of the railway will be required to insert the two bridges, this will impact on the phasing of the development, and it should be borne in mind that such possessions have to be booked at least a year in advance but may be disrupted due to inclement weather conditions or the availability of suitable crane equipment. An element of flexibility should therefore be built in to phasing requirements. It is presumed that the design of the bridges will be the subject of an individual condition but given the design will have to be approved by NR engineers as part of the Bridge Agreement this should not present any issues.

Given the need for a bridge agreement, it is axiomatic that the developer will have to enter into a basic asset protection agreement with us. If they have not done so already, the applicant is urged to contact the asset protection team (address below) as soon as possible.

However, in relation to the proposed new overbridge, it is important that the S106 agreement which will accompany the determination of the application should include heads of terms which specifically lay out both the mechanism and timing by which the level crossing at Bygraves (NGR 526114/234753) will be closed. Also, it should specify who will be specifically responsible for facilitating the closure, noting that the crossing should be closed as soon as the new bridge is open. On a detailed point paragraph 3.12 of the planning statement states "*The existing Public Rights of Way crossing the railway will be retained and realigned.*" This infers that the level crossing may be retained, which is not acceptable. It may be helpful to clarify the position by stating that the existing PROW will be retained but diverted over the new bridge.

Fencing

Given the existing fencing is of the simple stock-proof post and wire variety, it will be necessary for the fencing to be upgraded on either side of the railway to class 1 palisade or paladin fencing on security grounds given the change in use of the land as proposed. This should be at the developer's expense. The S106 agreement should make provision for a sum to facilitate the renewal of the fencing to something more appropriate for an urban setting. An appropriate fence can either be provided and maintained by the developer and being placed alongside NR's own fence or, preferably, the developer pays for the replacement of the existing NR fence, but future maintenance remains with NR.

Station Improvements

We are aware that the applicant has begun dialogue with our development group and capital delivery in relation to the scope of improvements at Baldock station. We also note mention is made in the application for an item in the heads of terms to include railway station improvements subject to viability. Initial discussion has



concentrated on two desirable improvements, viz. the development of a new pedestrian entrance to the NE side of the station, on land to the rear of Larkins Close, as well as the provision of step free access to both platforms at the station. A short engineering feasibility report and cost advice note will be prepared once initial design costs have been agreed which will help shape the size and scale of improvements.

One detailed design point that the applicant should be aware of is that any new access on the NE side of the station will have to be carefully designed so as not to attract on-street car parking by commuters on nearby streets.

Drainage

It is imperative that drainage associated with the site does not impact on or cause damage to adjacent railway assets. Surface water must flow away from the railway, there must be no ponding of water adjacent to the boundary and any attenuation scheme within 30m of the railway boundary must be approved by Network Rail in advance. There must be no connection to existing railway drainage assets without prior agreement with Network Rail. Please note, further detail on Network Rail requirements relating to drainage and works in proximity to the railway infrastructure is attached for your reference.

Condition

It is expected that the preparation and implementation of a surface water drainage strategy addressing these above points will be conditioned as part of any approval.

Boundary Treatments, Landscaping and Lighting

Trespass Proof Fencing

Fencing has been discussed previously.

Vehicle Incursion Measures

An Armco or similar barrier should be located in positions where vehicles may be in a position to drive into or roll onto the railway or damage the lineside fencing. Network Rail's existing fencing / wall must not be removed or damaged. Given the considerable number of vehicle movements likely provision should be made at each turning area/roadway/car parking area adjacent to the railway. This is in accord with the new guidance for road/rail vehicle incursion NR/LV/CIV/00012 following on from DfT advice issued in 2003, now updated to include risk of incursion from private land/roadways.

Condition

Given the nature of the proposals and likely location of turning areas/car parking, we would expect that a condition securing the design and installation of suitable vehicle incursion measures adjacent to the railway by the developer is included in any consent. This is for the safety, operational needs and integrity of the railway.

Landscaping

It is imperative that planting and landscaping schemes near the railway boundary do not impact on operational railway safety. Where trees and shrubs are to be planted adjacent to boundary, they should be positioned at a minimum distance greater than their height at maturity from the boundary. Certain broad leaf deciduous species should not be planted adjacent to the railway boundary. Any hedge planted adjacent to the railway boundary fencing for screening purposes should be placed so that when fully grown it does not damage the fencing, provide a means of scaling it, or prevent Network Rail from maintaining its boundary fencing. Below is a list of species that are acceptable and unacceptable for planting in proximity to the railway boundary;

Acceptable:

Birch (Betula), Crab Apple (Malus Sylvestris), Field Maple (Acer Campestre), Bird Cherry (Prunus Padus), Wild Pear (Pyrus Communis), Fir Trees – Pines (Pinus), Hawthorn (Cretaeagus), Mountain Ash – Whitebeams (Sorbus), False Acacia (Robinia), Willow Shrubs (Shrubby Salix), Thuja Plicatata “Zebrina”

Not Acceptable:

Acer (Acer pseudoplatanus), Aspen – Poplar (Populus), Small-leaved Lime (Tilia Cordata), Sycamore – Norway Maple (Acer), Horse Chestnut (Aesculus Hippocastanum), Sweet Chestnut (Castanea Sativa), Ash (Fraxinus excelsior), Black poplar (Populus nigra var, betulifolia), Lombardy Poplar (Populus nigra var, italica), Large-leaved lime (Tilia platyphyllos), Common lime (Tilia x europea)

Condition

Landscaping detail should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in conjunction with Network Rail.

Lighting

Where lighting is to be erected adjacent to the operational railway, the potential for train drivers to be dazzled must be eliminated. In addition, the location and colour of lights must not give rise to the potential for confusion with the signalling arrangements on the railway.

Condition

Detail of any external lighting close to the railway should be provided to the Local Planning Authority to be approved in conjunction with Network Rail.

Additional RequirementsRailway Noise Mitigation

The Developer should be aware that any development for residential or noise sensitive use adjacent to an operational railway may result in neighbour issues arising. Consequently, every endeavour should be made by the developer to provide adequate soundproofing for each dwelling. Please note that in a worst-case scenario there could be trains running 24 hours a day and the soundproofing should take this into account.

Informatives:

Please see attached standard railway requirements to be included as informatives.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the proposed scheme. We trust that the above will be given due consideration in determining the application and if you have any enquiries in relation to the above, please contact us at townplanningline@networkrail.co.uk.

Useful Network Rail contacts;

Asset Protection Eastern

OFFICIAL



For enquiries, advice and agreements relating to construction methodology, works in proximity to the railway boundary, drainage works, or schemes in proximity to railway tunnels (including tunnel shafts) please email assetprotectioneastern@networkrail.co.uk.