



**Hertfordshire &  
North Middlesex**

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**hnmramblers.org.uk**

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17 November 2025

Dear Mr Greaves

### **25/02571/OP: BALDOCK**

I am responding in my capacity as Ramblers Footpath Secretary for Baldock, Weston and Clothall parishes; I regularly walk in these parishes and also the parishes of Bygrave and Radwell. Ramblers is a national charity which works to protect the countryside and to safeguard and enhance the places where people walk. We believe it is important for any developments in the countryside to be located and designed in a way that protects and enhances precious landscapes, improves access to the outdoors, works with nature, and supports local communities and sustainable development.

Whilst regrettable more countryside will be lost to urban development, the plan could be improved by making greater reference to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) including Para 105, which states “Planning policies and decisions should: Protect and enhance public rights of way and access taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails”, Para 111d “provide for high quality walking and cycling networks”, and Para 89 “ensure that development exploits opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot...). This of course encompasses use for leisure as well as travel for work and education etc.

At present the plan does well on describing active travel routes in and around the perimeter of the proposed development, links to the rail station, and existing town of Baldock but Ramblers would suggest the plan would benefit from the inclusion of specific commitments to Public Rights of Way (PRoW) improvements to mitigate and compensate the impact of development and achieve consistency with the goals of NPPF 2024. Many of the proposals below are already in the North Herts Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP) and are necessary to improve the safety of vulnerable road users including pedestrians. Safety where PRoW cross highways is already an issue, and will become more so given the increase in traffic along all the roads in the general area of the proposed development. The proposals below are also designed to ensure there is good access to the existing PRoW network (including the national trails- Icknield Way and Hertfordshire Way), and the existing PRoW are reasonably accessible and “active travel” is truly and practically supported.

The listed proposals coincide with most of those made by the British Horse Society who also focus on the safety of vulnerable road users and access to wider networks of routes. Ramblers are inevitably less concerned as to whether a PRow is classified as a bridleway (BR) or footpath (FP) but recognise that classification as a bridleway opens routes to cyclists which is consistent with the active travel goals of the NPPF. In terms of road crossings, light controlled crossings would always be the preferred option, but where this was deemed impractical then central islands or some other safety measures are needed. Where any new routes are created (or existing routes or PRow modified), they should be formally classified as PRows to afford full legal protection and inclusion on Ordnance Survey mapping rather than being created as cycle ways, footways or permissive paths.

### **SPECIFIC PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS TO THE PLAN (Public rights of way are identified by their designation on the definitive map and gazetteer)**

1. Alignment of Baldock FP001 and Bygrave BR001 with improvements to verge paths to integrate with Bygrave RB014 and Norton Mill Lane. Some sort of safer crossing is essential. FP001 provides one of the access routes to the Ivel Springs local nature reserve which features prominently in various local plans.
2. Norton Mill Lane/ Nortonbury Lane require some enhancements to make them safer for pedestrians as they are links to other PRow and the Letchworth Greenway. The status of the Kingfisher Way needs clarification; if this continues to be a recognised route it utilises these roads.
3. Radwell FP006 and its continuation into Bedfordshire leads to an almost impossible crossing of the A507 east of Stotfold. Perhaps some change to enhance Letchworth FP030 for users and discourage use of Radwell FP006 would be the pragmatic approach to linking networks of paths.
4. Norton Road south of Stotfold where it is crossed by the Letchworth Greenway and Letchworth FP031 commences requires a safe crossing; it is already hazardous and is of course used by many of all ages and mobility.
5. Norton Road, Baldock- A1M bridge requires a safe crossing where the Letchworth Greenway crosses (and accesses Letchworth FP024. There is also an access route to Baldock FP001, the rotary club woodland and Baldock FP003 so the roadside footway merits improvement.
6. Clothall FP001 which crosses site BA3; this needs to be retained both during and after development of the site to provide access to the wider footpath network
7. Clothall BOAT12 and BR003 need to be aligned with a safe crossing; it is far too dangerous for vulnerable users to negotiate this stretch of road. There also needs to be a roadside safe path to safely link Clothall FP025 to BR003.
8. Clothall BR005 requires some sort of improvement for safer crossing of the A507. There is limited sight lines and fast moving traffic. A roadside path/ extension of the lay-by to provide a safe link to Clothall FP007 is also appropriate. The Bridleway is a very useful link to the Icknield Way and the Hertfordshire Way national trails.

9. Clothall BR003 and Bygrave FP015 require a safe crossing of the B656 Royston Road; FP015 would merit some improvement as it is often muddy and inadequately reinstated after ploughing/ planting. It should become a key access/ egress route from site BA1 (and appears to be recognised as a “primary route” in the plans, but it needs to be clear that it is a PRow). BW003 links to Clothall BR027 and the UCR old Wallington road (c10/420) therefore the DMMO NH315 should be processed to rationalise and improve the routes.
10. Bygrave Road and Baldock BR034, Bygrave BR 001and BR002 appear to become integral parts of development BA1 (similarly, Clothall FP001 within BA3). It is important these PRow remain open during development and are enhanced with Bygrave Road made safe for pedestrians. Further comments are made below regarding planting and maintenance.
11. Pedestrian lights on the B656 Royston Road at the west end of the Clothall estate (Sale Drive/ Kings Mount) to improve pedestrian safety to Icknield Way East and the rail station to provide further route options from BA1.

## **GENERAL POINTS**

1. The plans for the development, particularly of site BA1, include considerable landscaping and planting along existing and new pedestrian and cycle routes. This is welcome but it is important that adequate provision is made in the plans for subsequent maintenance. This would include removal of tree guards (or use of biodegradable) as all too often these are left to damage the trees they are designed to protect and leave quantities of plastic litter. The planting itself needs to be considered carefully, other locations where there has been recent planting seem to have a high proportion of fast growing but prickly species such as hawthorn and blackthorn that without adequate maintenance become a hazard to users of the routes a few years later .
2. In the same vein, enforcement needs to be considered and included in the plans; adjacent properties often detriment rights of way and footways with overhanging vegetation, whilst landowners sometimes fail to respect their statutory obligations to reinstate PRow after ploughing etc. This is vexatious to path users and potentially restrictive to active travel.

In conclusion, Ramblers believe the plan can be improved by the inclusion of the points made.

Ramblers would be happy to discuss or clarify any aspects of this response.

Yours faithfully

Roger Tester