

Environmental Statement Volume 1: Text

Chapter 2: Proposed Development



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2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 This chapter provides a general description of the Application Site and its immediate context. Where required, more detailed descriptions of the Site, its surroundings and specific features are offered within relevant Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) topic chapters.
- 2.1.2 The chapter also provides a description of the Proposed Development, the assumptions that have been made concerning its construction stage, the alternatives to the Proposed Development that have been considered and the approach to the assessment of Cumulative Effects that has been adopted in the EIA and Environmental Statement (ES).

2.2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Site Location and Context

- 2.2.1 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, the Site is identified on the Site Boundary Plan included as **Appendix 1.1**. This is the site for the purposes of this Environmental Statement and the OPA.
- 2.2.2 The Site is located adjacent to the market town of Baldock to the north-east of Letchworth Garden City. Some 9 miles south lies Stevenage and 20 miles north-east is Cambridge. Baldock train station, located immediately adjacent to the site, provides access north to Cambridge and south to London Kings Cross, and Baldock is conveniently located for the strategic road network with accesses to the A505 and A1(M).
- 2.2.3 The Site forming the "Growing Baldock" project, is located to the north and east of Baldock on the north side of the A505 and east of the A1(M) and is comprised of a number of housing and employment land allocations within the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan (2011-2031).
- 2.2.4 Site allocation BA1 is bounded to the west by North Road, to the north by the Millers Way Public Right of Way and to the south by the railway line. Site allocation BA10 is located land between the railway line to the north and the B656 Royston Road to the south, forming part of the wider Baldock site and allocated as employment land.
- 2.2.5 BA3 includes land to the south of Royston Road and north of the A505, wrapping around the eastern edges of existing housing at Clothall Common, and adjacent to parcel BA4 (which forms a separate planning application, consented in 2025). The village of Bygrave lies just north-east of the site. BA2 is located immediately south-west of Clothall Road and north-east of the Baldock Park Homes (Hillside Park) site, on the southern side of Baldock.
- 2.2.6 In addition, Policy CGB5 allocates the land off Clothall Road between BA2 and BA3 as Urban Open Land, where planning permission will be granted for development that provides land or limited ancillary built facilities for outdoor sport, recreation of cemeteries, rural land uses or landscaping/earthworks associated with the development.
- 2.2.7 The Site boundary also includes an area of green space to the west of North Road; the Scheduled Ancient Monument "Walls Field".

Site Area

- 2.2.8 The Site is circa 220 hectares (543 acres).

Existing Uses

- 2.2.9 The Site is currently predominantly in agricultural use. Some existing buildings present on the site are in agricultural or residential use. Those that are in HCC ownership are included in the OPA boundary. Those in private ownership are excluded from the boundary.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Description of Development

2.3.1 The proposed development will comprise the following:

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.

Parameter Plan

2.3.2 The spatial elements of the Proposed Development are set out on the Parameter Plan **Appendix 2.1**. This plan has evolved over time and has taken into account surrounding developments, site assessments, policy requirements and recent public consultation processes. This plan includes information on the extent of built development, the disposition of different land uses, and key access and movement parameters.

2.3.3 In addition to the Parameter Plan, a **Development Specification (Appendix 2.2)** has been submitted, and tested, as part of this Environmental Assessment. This includes further spatial principles and specifications for land use and access parameters, for example setting the building height parameters.

2.3.4 The formal drawings that form this OPA are as follows:

- Outline planning application site boundary plan – UAC092-001 Rev F
- Parameter Plan – UAC092-002 Rev Q
- Access Plans:
 - Development Access: North Road (vehicular and bus only) - PC7029-ITP-CE-GB-DR-D-0150 Rev P01
 - Development Access: Royston Road/A505 - PC7029-ITP-CE-GB-DR-D-0151 Rev P02
 - Development Access: Clothall Road - PC7029-ITP-CE-GB-DR-D-0152 Rev P02

2.3.5 Indicative / illustrative supporting plans which can be found within the DAS assist with interpretation and consideration of the Proposed Development but are not submitted for approval. The detailed design of the Proposed Development will be in accordance with the

Approved Plans and Development Specification once fixed through any resulting Outline Planning Permission. Conformity with the Approved Plans and Development Specification can be secured by the imposition of appropriate conditions and planning obligations related to any grant of Outline Planning Permission for the Proposed Development.

Land Use

- 2.3.6 The Proposed Development comprises a residential-led, mixed-use urban extension; including employment uses, early years, primary, secondary and SEND education facilities, local centres, active travel and public transport infrastructure, and highways improvements and a network of green infrastructure. Further detail about each land use can be found in the Design and Access Statement prepared in support of the OPA.
- 2.3.7 In order to ensure that the environmental assessment of the Proposed Development is rigorous and robust, the development parameters reflect a “worst case scenario” in terms of the quantum of development tested, i.e. the maximum number of dwellings and maximum amount of employment space applied for. However, consideration has also been had regarding the flexible land use parcel within BA3 which will affect housing numbers delivered and the size / form of secondary school provision.
- 2.3.8 As outlined within the Scoping Opinion, the OPA will include a flexible land use parcel within the southern half of BA3 which will comprise of either one, or a combination, of residential / education uses. The flexible land use parcel is introduced in order to allow for the most appropriate secondary school provision option to be selected at a later date, in accordance with a review process to be set out in the S106 agreement, to meet the additional needs generated by the development.
- 2.3.9 The flexible land use parcel will deliver one of three potential land use mixes dependent upon the selected secondary school strategy, as outlined below:

Table 2.1 Flexible Land Use Parcel (Within BA3)

Option	Secondary School Solution	Flexible Land Use Parcel Mix
1	Relocation and expansion of Knights Templar School (KTS) on BA3 – up to 12FE	Up to 12FE secondary school SEND school
2	Expansion of KTS on existing site	SEND school Residential
3	Provision of additional secondary school on BA3 – up to 5FE	Up to 5FE secondary school SEND school Residential

2.3.10 Each technical chapter has considered the “worst case scenario” in relation to the options in **Table 2.1**. The worst case may be different depending on each topic area and some topic areas may require all scenarios to be tested. Each chapter clarifies the approach taken, to ensure that any significant environmental impacts of the options are robustly assessed.

2.3.11 The generalised development parameters adopted for the purposes of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are based on the Land Use schedule of accommodation as presented below for the Proposed Development:

Table 2.2 Land Use

Land Use	Area (hectares)
Residential / primary education / local centre development area (BA1, BA2, BA3 north)	100.03
Employment Development Area (BA10)	19.11
Flexible Land Use Development Area (BA3 south)	10.64
Strategic Open Space, including:	87.42
Bygrave Common	37.98
Other Areas (existing land uses, infrastructure)	2.65
Total	219.84

Building Heights

2.3.12 In considering the scale and density of the Proposed Development, consideration has been given to the relationship between the Site and the existing settlement of Baldock, and the requisite design, layout and connectivity considerations to ensure that the Proposed Development forms part of the existing town of Baldock. Additionally, consideration has been given to the local and wider landscape, its topography, heritage assets, public highways, views, and the nature of other villages in the wider area.

2.3.13 The building heights have been deemed acceptable following extensive testing and are defined within the Development Specification under Spatial Principle 3 (SP3).

2.3.14 The following maximum building heights will apply:

- Development within BA1, BA2 and BA3 will be up to 3 storeys (12.5m) except for development in and adjacent to the Local Centre, the Active Travel Spine (to the

south of the Local Centre) and adjacent to the northern station entrance where building heights of up to 4 storeys (16m) may be appropriate;

- Development within BA10 will be up to 3 storeys (14m);
- The general location of the potential Waste Transfer Station is indicated on the Parameter Plan, where a stack of up to 15m will be permitted;
- All building heights referred to in SP3 are from finished floor level to building ridge height. Finished floor levels may vary from existing ground floor levels AOD by up to 1.5m (+ or -).

2.3.15 The total residential development will be up to 3,200 dwellings, with a variable (net) density of 35-40 dwellings per hectare. The Proposed Development will provide higher densities in some of the more core central locations, and lower densities at the edges and more sensitive locations. This will provide variety in character and placemaking, with a range of street scenes, plot designs and house types which reflect the local character and housing needs of Baldock and North Hertfordshire.

Site Access and Movement

2.3.16 A core design principle is to create a walkable neighbourhood that prioritises active and sustainable movement and transport connectivity both within the site and with Baldock town centre and the station. This principle will underpin the structure and detailed design of the development.

Green Infrastructure

2.3.17 The development is green infrastructure led and incorporates large areas of both formal and informal green space such as Bygrave Common, Eastern Park, green space east of Clothall Common and Walls Field. Connectivity is a key aspiration including creation of a Baldock Greenway providing a multi-user route through and around Baldock linking green spaces.

Education

2.3.18 The Proposed Development includes provision for up to two primary schools within BA1 and a SEND school in BA3. In terms of secondary education, as outlined in Table 2.1 (above) the most appropriate mechanism for delivery of secondary places will be decided via an Education Review mechanism agreed as part of the S106.

"Production Processes"

2.3.19 The EIA Regulations require the main characteristics of any "production processes" to be described. Class E (g) uses, by definition, are compatible with residential and other non-employment uses without detriment to its amenity. As such, any "production processes" within the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant adverse environmental effects.

Residues and Emissions

- 2.3.20 The EIA Regulations also require these to be identified and quantified. For the Proposed Development, residues and emissions are limited to nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and noise arising from construction of the Proposed Development and from road traffic, and other activity it would generate once operational. These matters are assessed in detail in the relevant ES chapter.

Climate Change and Sustainability

- 2.3.21 The Site will aim to meet upfront embodied carbon targets which are aligned with the UK Net Zero Carbon Building Standard. The Proposed Development will embed measures such as reducing energy demand through high performing building fabric and include measures for high energy efficiency for building and low carbon heating.

Phasing and Delivery

- 2.3.22 The Site will be phased, with development commencing in site BA2 (Phase 1) and thereafter progressing in BA1 from a west to easterly direction (from North Road) alongside the build out of BA10. The final phase will comprise BA3 (dependent on the decision regarding secondary school provision). Infrastructure will be delivered at appropriate triggers throughout the development, to be agreed as part of the S106 agreement. Construction is anticipated to commence in 2027 with the first completions (in BA2) in 2028. The Proposed Development completion date is envisaged to be approximately 2043 with an average annual housing completion rate of 200 dwellings per annum.

2.4 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

- 2.4.1 The EIA Regulations require any alternatives to the Proposed Development that have been considered by the prospective applicant to be outlined and an indication of the reasons for their rejection to be set out, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment.
- 2.4.2 The adopted Local Plan comprises the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted in November 2022. The Local Plan sets out the spatial development strategy for the District including the allocation of at least 13,000 new homes. The Local Plan was consulted on throughout the preparation period and adoption process. Just under half of all new homes over the plan period are to be delivered on six Strategic Housing Sites removed from the Green Belt. Each strategic allocation has a site-specific policy which defines the required components of the development. The Local Plan identifies much of the Site as an urban extension made up of a series of development allocations (BA1, BA2, BA3, BA10).
- 2.4.3 The process undertaken by NHC considered a number of sites throughout the process including a Call for Sites, and consideration of potential alternative sites initial within a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Subsequently the preferred locations were tested further at Regulation 18. Local Plan Preferred Options stage.
- 2.4.4 The merits of the strategic development locations and reasonable alternative sites were further considered within the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal, published alongside the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 during examination.
- 2.4.5 The form, amount and land use of the Proposed Development has evolved through consultation and technical assessment, and through the masterplanning process associated with the preparation of the Strategic Masterplan (SMP). The SMP Options Report (September 2023) articulates the process of option testing and refinement that informed the final, approved SMP, which in turn has shaped the parameters within the OPA.
- 2.4.6 Key decisions made, evolving through that consultation and assessment process, are set out below:
- agreement to incorporate flexible land use within BA3 to accommodate a secondary school in options 1 and 3, or an expansion of Knights Templar School in its existing site (option 2). The location of the site for the potential secondary school, if on site (in BA3), was influenced by the desire to locate it centrally within Baldock within walking / cycling distance of as much of the potential catchment as possible;
 - alignment of the development access between North Road and Royston Road / A505 to take account of the topography of the site, landscape and visual characteristics of the site, the function of the road and implications for active travel;
 - location of the railway crossings (active travel underpass and road bridge); and

- options for improved station access resulting in the proposed inclusion of an eastern station access (active travel).

2.4.7 Therefore, through this process of engagement and iteration embedded within the SMP, with which the Proposed Development aligns, reasonable alternative options have been considered and discounted. Collectively these design changes have been embedded in the Proposed Development and therefore collectively reduce the environmental effects.

2.4.8 On the basis of the Local Plan and the detailed assessments which underpin this process, alongside the options testing undertaken as part of the SMP, it is concluded that no further alternatives require consideration for the purpose of this Environmental Impact Assessment.

2.5 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

- 2.5.1 Interactive effects, in the sense of particular impacts interacting with each other and the extent they may give rise to cumulative effects, are considered in relevant topic chapters and in the concluding chapter of this ES.
- 2.5.2 The assessment of cumulative effects considers those arising from the Proposed Development in combination with allocated or approved developments which are located nearby, which has been led by the guidance on cumulative assessment in EIA within the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance (Reference ID: 4-024-20170728). The sites selected are approved developments, in addition to one site selected due to its proximity to Baldock and its allocated status and approved SMP, implying the development is progressing.
- 2.5.3 Completed developments are not included in the cumulative effects assessment as the view is taken that these are already included within the 'baseline' conditions and should not therefore be 'double counted' in the cumulative assessment.
- 2.5.4 The following table sets out the list of cumulative assessment developments considered as part of this EIA:

Table 2.2 'Cumulative' Assessment Developments

Site	Policy/application reference	Summary of the Proposal	Status
Land east of Rhee Spring and Orwell View, Royston Road, Baldock	NHLP Local Housing Allocation BA4 21/01882/FP	42 dwellings	Appeal allowed on 20 May 2025, to be commenced
Land to the east of Talbot Way And Kristiansand Way and Flint Road, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 1TY	NHLP Local Housing Allocation LG3 21/00504/OP	120 dwellings	Outline permission granted on 3 April 2025, to be commenced
Land to the north of Letchworth	NHLP Strategic Housing Site LG1	900 dwellings	Strategic Masterplan has been approved
Land west of Ashwell Road, Bygrave, SG7 5EB	22/00741/FP	53.62 ha solar farm	Full permission granted on 17 June 2024