



Sam Dicocco
NHDC Council Offices
Gernon Rd
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 3JF

Hertfordshire County Council
Farnham/Robertson House
Environment and Transport
Stevenage, Herts SG1 2ST

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 123 4040

Reference: Hertfordshire County Council
Highway Authority - Interim Statement on
TAA

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Planning Reference 25/02571/OP

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.

Documents reviewed (and List of Abbreviations)

- Transport Assessment PC7029-ITP-XX-XX-RP-TP-0001 (Referred to as the TA)
- PC7029-ITP-XX-XX-RP-TP-0001 Appendices A – L
- Appendix 4.1 - Transport Assessment Addendum PC7029-ITP-XX-XX-RP-TP-0012-C01-Growing Baldock-TAA (the additional evidence presented following modelling work)

Reference: Local Highway Authority Comment

These comments progress those made in 2025 in light of further evidence being presented through the document '*Growing Baldock TAA*'. The majority of this document details the findings from transport modelling that has been undertaken.

The Highway Authority has been engaged in a significant pre application process for some time, including the development of the now adopted master plan and transport vision for the site. Engagement is continuing. The following is our commentary on the submitted TAA, we envisage a further response will follow making a recommendation.

HCC Highways Authority and Transport for Hertfordshire Comments following the submission of the TAA which includes significant modelling evidence.**Summary on outputs from modelling**

We agree that the use of COMET was a suitable tool for assessing the strategic impact of the site due to scale and complexity of the surrounding areas highway network. Also, with the approach to move through traffic from the local to strategic network the testing was required.

The work has been undertaken by WSP and HCC were engaged to ensure the data included within the modelling work was agreeable.

The COMET modelling has been undertaken as a strategic validation exercise to independently test the robustness of the Transport Assessment and to assess the wider network effects of the Growing Baldock proposals. The model is based on a 2023 baseline and applies forecast growth to 2029 and 2043 using NTEM assumptions. To ensure a like-for-like comparison, the COMET model adopts the same development quantum, land use assumptions, trip generation rates, phasing strategy and transport mitigation package as the submitted Transport Assessment.

As a strategic, multi-modal transport model, COMET is designed to assess cumulative impacts, route choice behaviour and network-wide traffic reassignment rather than detailed operational performance at individual junctions. A key assumption of the modelling is that travellers respond dynamically to changing network conditions and congestion levels, allowing trips to reroute across the wider highway network. This enables the assessment of whether traffic associated with the development would be attracted to local roads within Baldock or remain on the Strategic Road Network, including the A505 and A1(M).

The modelling also assumes implementation of the proposed vision-led transport strategy, including highway improvements, public transport enhancements, active travel infrastructure, traffic management measures and the proposed internal link road. Accordingly, the model tests the effectiveness of these interventions in encouraging modal shift, reducing through-traffic on sensitive town centre streets and directing longer-distance trips to the strategic highway network.

A range of forecast scenarios have been assessed, including an interim 2029 development scenario, two alternative 2043 build-out scenarios reflecting potential options for the future location of Knights Templar School, and a cumulative Local Plan sensitivity test. The Local Plan scenario represents a worst-case assessment, assuming full delivery of all allocated housing and employment growth across Hertfordshire by 2043.

The outcomes align with the approach that has built on the original traffic counts and ANPR data showing significant through movements coming off of the A505 and A1 and routing through Baldock (notably the Whitehorse Junction).

Overall, the COMET modelling demonstrates a strong correlation with the findings of the Transport Assessment and provides strategic validation of the proposed transport strategy. The results indicate that the mitigation package performs as intended by encouraging traffic to remain on the Strategic Road Network and reducing through traffic within Baldock. The evidence supports a position that the Growing Baldock development would not result in a severe residual cumulative impact on the transport network, either in isolation or when considered alongside wider planned growth.

Phasing of Transport measures

It is helpful to have the phasing of transport mitigation set out in phasing plan and summary sheet. The infrastructure phasing strategy sets out that transport and sustainable travel measures are delivered alongside development and, where necessary, ahead of occupation of new homes. The approach prioritises early provision of walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure, with more significant highway interventions delivered as development progresses. We expect detailed conditions to be included in any permission for each of these schemes and trigger points.

In the early phases of development, the focus is on establishing sustainable travel choices from the outset. This includes new and enhanced pedestrian and cycle routes, crossing facilities, bus service enhancements, traffic calming measures, and the initial improvements to the North Road and Station Road corridors. The intention is to embed travel behaviour change early in the life of the development and reduce reliance on private car use.

During the interim phase (the first 850 dwellings), the modelling assumes delivery of key transport interventions including the BA1 and BA2 access arrangements, bus access measures, pedestrian crossings, closure of the Icknield Way vehicular connection, and shuttle-working arrangements beneath the railway bridge. These measures manage traffic impacts prior to completion of the internal link road and support the operation of the wider transport strategy.

As development approaches full build-out, the strategy includes delivery of the proposed link road between North Road and Royston Road, additional junction improvements, enhanced public transport provision, active travel enhancements and upgrades to key highway junctions. This phase is intended to reinforce the shift of traffic towards the Strategic Road Network whilst improving connectivity within the development and to Baldock town centre, the railway station and surrounding destinations.

For strategic highway infrastructure, the principal mitigation identified is the enhancement of A1(M) Junction 9, involving partial signalisation and layout changes. The modelling concludes that this intervention is required in the later phases of development when background traffic growth and development traffic together create greater pressure on the junction.

The phasing strategy is supported by a Monitor and Manage Framework, under which key junctions and transport indicators will be monitored throughout the development period. If actual traffic conditions differ materially from forecasts, further targeted interventions can be identified and delivered. This approach recognises the uncertainty associated with long-term growth forecasts and ensures that mitigation remains proportionate to observed impacts. Agreement on the monitor and manage details will be required and then suitable method of securing funds agreed.

Noting A1M junction 9. Table 3-2 in the Framework Travel Plan should be expanded to include measures from the TA Addendum and potentially further Junction 9 interventions.

Public Transport

Engagement with HCCs public transport service has questioned the long-term sustainability of a 'Baldock Flyer' bus service. An approach to enhance existing services with routing thought the development and improved routing within Baldock as well as connections to other settlements suggest that there may be alternative opportunities for a service that can deliver both the aims of the applicant's proposal whilst ensuring the long-term sustainment of the service without reliance of funding.

Further engagement with HCCs public transport team is suggested and a response on the final agreed approach can be provided subsequently. The overall principles of a public transport service to meet the mode shift strategy will remain.

BA1

Bygrave Road

Noting the comments in the Growing Baldock HCC Cover letter, paragraph 2.4 Clarity over any additional residential units (or other land uses) utilising the existing Bygrave Road need agreement with principles of use of the route being agreed including the retainment of the route for access to Bygrave until alternatives are in place and clarity around phasing this element and its proposal to become a walking and cycling route of the site through the buildout require further clarification so suitable conditions can be made.

Clarity is required for the highway authority to determine the suitability of the existing network to accommodate initial development phases, as well as the long term approach to routing within the existing area, the site over its build out, and connections to the wider rural area including Bygrave and Ashwell (and others)

North Road/Station Road

Delivery of this key connection has been brought forward to now in advance of the 310th occupation. We agree with this approach noting the vision led method and the impacts to vehicle traffic flow through Baldock. Delivery will be by the developer via a S278 agreement, we envisage a prior to occupation condition as below

Part A. Notwithstanding the details indicated on the submitted drawings, a detailed scheme for the offsite highway improvement works as indicated on drawing(s) number(ed) (Insert) will be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Part B. Prior to the 310th occupation of the development of site BA1 hereby permitted the offsite highway improvement works referred to in Part A of this condition shall be completed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and that the highway improvement works are designed to an appropriate standard in the interest of highway safety and amenity and in accordance with Policy 5, 13 and 21 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

BA2

Access and improvement measures to A507

We require further information on the proposals for access and improvements relating to BA2, set out in drawing PC7029-ITP-CE-GB-DR-D-0152 and detailed in the phasing delivery tables as *Footway between access and Wallington Road, including signalised crossing point at access and improvements to Wallington Road*. Connections to the existing network and local destinations appear missing, as do opportunities for public transport.

Framework Travel Plan

Following the submission of the TAA with the included modelling work and requirement for mode shift, it is evident there is a strong reliance on of the travel plan and monitor and manage framework. A such further scrutiny of these approaches has been undertaken with points of clarification required.

The targets in Table 5-1 of the framework travel plan require further explanation, particularly in terms of how they contribute to achieving the overall target of 50% sustainable journeys.

It is not considered acceptable to include 'park and stride' education trips as sustainable.

The commitments in section 6 do not adequately address the interface with HCCs travel plan team. Due to the scale and nature of the approach it is expected that there will be additional requirements on HCCs travel plan team and funding to enable this will be required.

The Site-Wide Travel Plan Coordinator will be required to agree the delivery of defined travel plan measures with the highway authority.

Monitor and Manage

There needs to be clarity on which infrastructure elements and associated triggers are intended to remain flexible. However, it may be that “monitor and manage” is intended to provide flexibility in relation to additional measures, rather than core infrastructure. While there may be scope to delay infrastructure delivery (subject to agreement), this should be clearly defined and tied to monitoring outcomes.

The Framework Travel Plan should identify where additional monitoring is required (as set out in the TA Addendum) and include a firm commitment to a mitigation fund to support any necessary interventions.

There will be a requirement for comprehensive monitoring on an agreed schedule that includes the strategic re-routing of traffic (e.g. Google API or equivalent). This should be completed at key stages throughout the sites development.

Clarity over expected mode splits should be broken down and aligned with the site’s phasing to enable effective decisions on mitigation and later parcels.

We welcome the clarification in section 3.7.1 in the TAA that the monitor and manage/travel plan trigger points will be tested against the below factors rather than a reliance on a NPPF based ‘Severe’.

- *Deterioration in the Place and Movement function in line with HCC guidance and policy*
- *Peak delay frequently in excess of levels presented in technical assessment.*
- *Material increases in recorded collisions relative to background trends.*
- *Evidence that intervention would assist in achieving a mode shift to sustainable modes where this is currently below required Travel Plan targets.*

We see this as critical to the effectiveness of the monitor and manage approach. Agreement on the monitor and manage funding remains to be agreed.

Conclusion

HCC as Highway Authority agree with the findings from the transport modelling set out within the TAA. There remain matters requiring further clarity or agreement, notably public transport and the monitor and management scheme (and funding).

It is envisaged there will be an additional comment from ourselves once public transport discussions have concluded, with a final recommendation to the consultation following.

Anthony Collier

Local Plan and Strategic Development Manager