

**North Herts Council
BALDOCK & VILLAGES COMMUNITY FORUM**

**Meeting held in The Main Hall, at Baldock Community Centre, Simson
Drive, Baldock, SG7 6DH
On Monday 15 September 2025 at 7.30pm**

NOTES

Present: Cllr A Willoughby (Chair) (AW), Cllr Rowe (Vice Chair) (ER), Cllr Jarvis (SJ), Cllr S Willoughby (SW), Cllr Tyson (TT), Cllr Muir (MM).

In attendance:

Cllr D Allen (DA) – Leader of NHC
Cllr L Williams (LW) – Exec. Member for LGR
John Marshall – Community Safety Team Leader
Claire Morgan (CM) – Community & Partnerships Team Leader
Tracy Westgate (TW) – Community & Partnerships Officer

Also present:

At the commencement of the meeting there were around 34 members of the public (MoP), including 11 registered speakers.

Meeting Started at **19:30**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Cameron (RC)

2. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr A Willoughby welcomed everyone in attendance.

Highlighted that the Forum is an informal, inclusive meeting to share ideas.

Members were reminded to make declarations of interest before an item they may wish to abstain from voting if they have an interest, but they are merely making recommendations and not decisions.

3. PRESENTATION – LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Verbal presentation with slides (Appendix A) from Cllr Laura Williams, Exec Member for LGR.

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- The reduction of the number of Councillors across the County as a whole.
- Would the cost savings reduce the rate of Council Tax.
- The potential difference in cost savings and how this would vary between the 2, 3 or 4 new unitary councils proposals.
- If the outlined 4 unitary system is implemented, Arbury and Weston & Sandon would become part of the East Herts authority and would not remain in the same authority as Baldock.
- Who was involved in drawing up the potential new boundaries.
- The potential increase in costs regarding Highways as they are currently under HCC but would be split across the new unitary authorities.
- The need to match areas to equalize income and expenditure.
- The submission in November will include financial business case, but some assumptions used, these will be forecasts from information currently available.

Information on the Local Government Reorganisation can be found in the links below:

- [Help shape Hertfordshire's future - have your say on changes to local government | North Herts Council](#)
- [Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation | North Herts Council](#)

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RELATION TO GRANT APPLICATION

The Community Partnerships officer informed those present that there is £7,487 available in the Baldock & Villages grant budget. If all grants are recommended and subsequently approved, there will be £5,967 remaining in the budget for the remainder of the financial year.

Received presentations in support of grant applications by the following:

John Graham presented the **Avenue Park Sports and Social Club** application.

No questions were asked by the Members.

Avenue Park Sports and Social Club vote

AW proposed.

ER seconded.

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending the Avenue Park Sports and Social Club application for £1,020 to resolve the issue with the gents' toilets, which pose a health and safety concern.

Diane Gwint presented the **Weston Luncheon Club** application.

Members enquired and received satisfactory answers to:

- How much was the total cost of the hall hire for the year.

Weston Luncheon Club vote

SJ proposed.

MM seconded

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending the Weston Luncheon Club application for £500 towards the costs of hiring the Village Hall.

5. PRESENTATION – CCTV IN BALDOCK

John Marshall, North Herts Council

- There are two types of CCTV cameras in use, fixed and mobile cameras. There are 6 fixed cameras in Baldock and 5 mobile cameras available.
- The cost of monitoring the fixed cameras North Herts is £102,582 per year.
- Over the last 12 months there have been 77 requests for viewing footage from the cameras and 30% of the requests have been regarding concerns for welfare.
- The placement of mobile cameras is not straight forward, can only be attached to lampposts that have been assessed for suitability and the cost of the engineer to do this is £1,000 per day.
- Each mobile CCTV camera costs between £6,500 and £8,000.
- Incidents that occur need to be reported to the Police so that they are aware where placement of a CCTV might make a difference. These are then used as the evidence to support the request for a camera.
- PC Sam Durham has been very proactive in requesting the assessment possible sites that the mobile cameras can be placed. He has dealt with this very efficiently and because of this, multiple lampposts in Baldock have been approved.
- All the information about Hertfordshire CCTV is available from this [LINK](#) – it shows all the cameras and who owns / runs them.

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- The age and potential life span of the existing cameras.
 - They are 7 to 8 years old, and should continue in service for several years, giving time to plan in advance when replacements re needed.
- Are the cameras connected to the facial recognition system.
 - No, they are not and there are no plans for them to be.
- Traffic flow cameras belong to County / Highways, not NHC.
- Anti-Social behavior is the driver behind camera placement, not surveillance.
- The mobile cameras are on a 28-day loop, so if there is a need to see footage, it needs to be requested before day 29.
- Cllr Muir noted that out of the 10 boroughs, North Herts is the safest.

6. PRESENTATION – FRESH WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Ilias Karapanos, from Affinity Water, presented on the freshwater infrastructure in Baldock now and in the future.

The Water Resources Management Plan was explained. Please see the supporting slide presentation (Appendix B) for the details. Regarding the Growing Baldock development, it was confirmed that:

- Any new demand will be accommodated through a combination of internal and external transfers
- This will require additional network reinforcement (e.g. new booster stations)
- No additional local groundwater abstraction will take place as the local abstraction licences have been capped to recent actual abstraction
- The source of the water for any new development will be a combination of Grafham-derived water and other groundwater transferred from neighbouring zones as a displacement
- New demand already forecasted in our WRMP24
- Water pressure must meet certain statutory targets for every supply zone. Pressure in the Baldock area is well within the targets.

Please see Appendix A for the slide presentation.

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- The acidity of the water that came from Grafham when there was a drought in the 1990's and the issues this presented.
 - At the point of entry, the newly installed Sundon treatment plant, ensures that the water's alkalinity is made suitable for where it will be distributed.
- Are new reservoirs being built?
 - Yes, there are several reservoirs planned around the country such as the South East Strategic Resource Option (SESRO, in Abingdon, Oxfordshire) built for Thames Water, Affinity Water and Southern Water and the Fens Reservoir (Chatteris in Cambridgeshire) built for Anglian Water and Cambridge Water.
- How will the short-term additional supply be met if the link to the Grand Union Canal will not be available until 2033?
 - There are plans to unlock existing surplus water and move it around the Affinity Water area as a displacement and also reduce demand from existing users.
- How big a risk are AI datacenters?
 - The whole industry is looking at how much water is used for cooling purposes and how this is dealt with once used. IK noted there is a tradeoff between using power and water for cooling.
- There is very little water in the River Ivel. When there was a power cut in 1962 the reservoir ran out of water as it was pump fed. If there is another power cut, how long would it be before the water would run out?

- There is now provision for gravity fed water to Baldock and the provision for generators to power the pumps so there is no disruption to customers.
- Will all new properties be fitted with smart water meters?
 - Yes, with a 1-year customer journey to allow customers to reduce their usage. Most people who transition to meters receive smaller water bills.
- There was further discussion around the abstraction licence and capping of the abstraction volume from the Chalk aquifer and what is in place with regard to abstraction not drying up the river.
 - IK explained how the abstraction licence works in terms of the capped volume in a normal year to what was historically pumped. Also explained that a new augmentation scheme was recently installed and is now in operation to balance the abstraction impact on river flow in the Ivel Spring area. The term “deployable output” that is used in the WRMP is the source output during droughts as severe as 1 in 500 and is lower than the licence as the abstraction sources are drought sensitive.

7. PRESENTATION – WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Rob Morris from Anglian Water, presented on the proposed wastewater infrastructure for the Growing Baldock development.

The wastewater from the initial development will go into the existing wastewater infrastructure. When the larger development of 3000 homes is built, their wastewater will not touch the existing infrastructure and will be fed to a new water recycling center to the north of Letchworth.

Please see Appendix C for the slide shown.

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- There are issues with effluence at Pixbrook where it already floods.
 - The new infrastructure will not pass through the areas that already flood.
- Will the new system be overflow free?
 - Yes, 100% and they are also looking to reduce existing overflows.
- Surface water will be kept on site and not transported anywhere, so it will be directed to the swale to percolate through the ground to the natural aquifers which will recharge the river.

8. PRESENTATION – GROWING BALDOCK

Paul Mumford, from Urban & Civic, presented an update on Growing Baldock.

The current position with the Growing Baldock plans were covered, please see the slide presentation (Appendix D) for details.

The plans for rainwater and surface water were expanded upon, with confirmation that each house will have a soak away.

Topics covered in the Q&A:

- How will you ensure that as the packages of plots are sold to the individual developers that they will adhere to what was documented in the master plan?
 - This will be agreed with local authorities through the planning process and set down in the legal planning framework for the development.
- There was discussion regarding the position with the secondary school.
 - There are three options - this is a planning approach that allows for flexibility, enabling pupil numbers to be monitored and ensure funding and capacity are in place to support the preferred solution.
 - The new homes will initially support filling places at existing primary schools.
 - In terms of secondary school provision, we know The Knights Templar School is extremely important to Baldock and have committed to an approach with one secondary school provider for the growing town.
 - The land shown on the plans will be held until a decision is made.
- There will be a need for additional Health practices.
 - There is land set aside to build a Health Hub.
 - The location is twice of the existing GP facilities and has requested 50 parking spaces.
- Will the new Health Hub be on a bus route?
 - There will be new bus route put in place to link the new development with other areas.
- The traffic proposals were discussed.
 - Discussion about directing through traffic away the town center and the effects this may have on local businesses.
 - There was a survey completed using ANPR cameras which tracked the length of time taken between entering and exiting Baldock to gauge how many vehicles stopped on route.
 - There were discussions regarding the closure of the road between Ashwell and Baldock. It was confirmed that there will never be a point where the only route from Ashwell to Baldock takes you onto the A505.
 - It was noted that there will be a hidden minority of people who will be adversely affected by the new road layout.
- What about business engagement?
 - North Herts Council are consulting on a district wide town center strategy next year which is timely. U&C have a new resource in post and are in process of writing to all local businesses to set out next steps and how they'd like to work with us in the future.
- Will ponds overflow and flood local houses?

- U&C confirmed that the calculations will be made to mitigate this and make sure the swales are as big as they need to be to stop this happening.

9. WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

None were raised by the Members.

10. COMMUNITY UPDATE

TW, Community and Partnerships Officer, noted there were no changes to the Community Update as placed in Appendix 4 of the Agenda Pack.

11. TOPICS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

No suggestions were put forward at the meeting. AW noted that suggestions could be sent directly to him.

MEETING CLOSED 22:05