

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

**Meeting held at Baldock Community Hub
(Formerly Baldock Community Centre)
Simson Drive, Baldock, SG7 6DH**

On Monday 15th June 2025 at 7.30pm

NOTES

Present: Cllr A Willoughby (Chair) (AW), Cllr E Rowe (Vice Chair) (ER), Cllr S Jarvis (SJ), Cllr S Willoughby (SW), Cllr T Tyson (Interim Chair for 1 item) (TT), Cllr R Cameron (RC), Cllr M Muir.

In attendance:

Officer Rachel Rooney (RaR) – Planning Approver
Officer Debbie Coates (DC) – Principal Strategic Planning Officer
Officer Tracy Westgate (TW) – Community & Partnerships Officer

Also present:

At the commencement of the meeting there were 15 members of the public (MoP), including 3 registered speakers.

Meeting Started at 19:30

1. OPENING REMARKS

Cllr A Willoughby welcomed everyone in attendance.
H&S announcement

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

3. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

AW 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.

4. ANNUAL BALDOCK & VILLAGES COMMUNITY FORUM MINUTES

Members voted whether they wish to approve the minutes of the 2024, 2025 and 2026 Annual Baldock & Villages Community Forums.

**AW Proposed
ER Seconded**

Following a vote, Members unanimously voted in favour of approving the minutes of the meetings from 2024/25/26.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – GRANT APPLICATIONS

The Community Partnerships Officer informed those present that there is £9,587 available in the Baldock & Villages grant fund. If all grants presented at this meeting are recommended and subsequently approved, there would be £7,489 left in the budget for the remainder of the 2026/27 financial year.

Presentations received in support of grant applications by the following:

Paul Haskings presented the **Avenue Park Sports Club** application.

No questions were raised.

Avenue Park Sports Club vote:

AW proposed.

ER seconded.

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending the Avenue Park Sports Club application for £598 to provide lockers in the female changing rooms at the Club.

The second application to be considered was from the **Baldock Community Centre Association 2025** (BCCA25).

AW, ER, RC and **SW** declared conflicts of interest as **AW** and **ER** are Trustees of BCCA25 and **RC** and **SW** are Council Representatives to the BCCA25. Therefore, a temporary Chair was required and **TT** was suggested.

AW proposed and SJ seconded

TT was unanimously voted in as temporary Chair whilst this application was considered.

AW, ER, RC and SW left the room.

Robin Brough (RB) presented the **Baldock Community Centre Association 2025** application.

TT asked about the purchase of tables listed on the request, as **RB** had focused on the purchase of new chairs in his presentation.

RB noted that the whole expenditure of £4,000 was for the tables and chairs, but the £1,500 from the Grant would be used towards the new chairs.

Baldock Community Centre Association 2025 vote:

MM proposed.

SJ seconded.

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending the Baldock Community Centre Association 2025 application for £1,500 towards the purchase of new chairs for the Baldock Community Hub.

**AW, ER, RC and SW returned to the room.
Chairing of the meeting was returned to AW (19:43)**

6. PRESENTATION – New Local Plan Scoping Consultation Officer Rachael Rooney & Officer Debbie Coates

RaR gave an outline of what the scoping consultation sets out to do and background as to why it's important.

The PowerPoint presentation has been published alongside these notes.
For full details please see the Scoping Document - [Community consultation strategy](#)
The scoping consultation is open until 28th June and welcome any feedback.

Topics Covered in the Q&A:

- **MM** requested hard copies of the brochure to be available to the Councillors. **RaR** to investigate.
- The links between the existing planned Baldock Expansion and the new plan were discussed and satisfactory explanations received.
- A member of the public queried the affordable housing element of any new plan, providing excellent background to his enquiry which gave everyone present a good understanding of his starting point. The Planning team asked him to raise this in the consultation. There was also discussion about the amount of land available for self builds.
- **AW** noted the current Local Plan, whilst covering 2011 to 2031, was not approved for over 10 years. A more up to date approach will be needed in the new plan.
- A member of the public raised a query regarding the amount of council houses / social housing available on the Growing Baldock development. This question was deferred to item 7, with Urban & Civic.
- There was discussion surrounding the potential impact of the different possible outcomes from LGR. (2, 3 or 4 Unitary Councils). The expectation is that the new authorities will take forward the proposed plans from each area until such time that they are able to propose new plans that cover their new Unitary Council area.
- **RC** raised a question regarding land usage and **DC** confirmed that this is the scoping stage, so none of those decisions are ready to be made yet.
- With the new plan, all sites that have been put forward will be looked at. A plan showing the submitted sites is expected to be published in September with the Content and Evidence Base document published in October 2027 for consultation. It will be available online, in the library and at the Council Offices. Another option is for people to sign up to the mailing list to be notified.
- **RaR** confirmed there is still time to add new suggested sites, or to remove previously suggested sites for development until the end of the consultation period in October.
- A member of the public queried how the development areas are chosen, as over time the proportion of properties in urban areas is increasing and there are fewer rural developments. **RaR** noted this should be raised as part of the consultation.

7. GROWING BALDOCK – URBAN & CIVIC Philippa Curran (PC)

Q&A

- Questions raised in the previous agenda item that were deferred to Urban and Civic were answered. Urban & Civic have submitted an Outline Planning Application, which includes parameters for development. If approved, detailed applications will then be prepared and submitted for consideration for each key parcel of development.
- There was further discussion about the ability of 1st time buyers being able to purchase in the areas they serve. Key worker products will be looked at. It was agreed there needs to be affordable social housing.
- A member of the public raised the query regarding education and catchment areas and was reassured by the response from U&C, around the increase in secondary provision. Catchment areas are determined by the education authority.
- The timing of the building of the new Rail Bridge was discussed. It is currently planned to be built before 850 new houses have been occupied on BA1. It is crucial to the villages requiring access to Baldock. Interim measures will be in place before the bridge, including the one-way shuttle under the railway bridge, new link from North Road to Royston Road, and bus priority.
- There was discussion regarding the new bus routes, their times and the type of vehicles that would be used. The outcome was the buses would need to operate in appropriate timescales to allow commuters to travel to the station for work and ideally electric vehicles would be used not diesel.
- There was discussion surrounding the 7.5-ton limit on the Royston Road (up to but not including the stretch on the business/industrial area), Station Road, and Icknield Way. AW is working on this in his County Councilor capacity with a feasibility study upcoming. If this change can be put in place, it would hopefully trigger the desired behavior change.
- The transport assessment was discussed and the volume of traffic passing under the existing bridge. **PC** confirmed it has been modeled in detail and stress tested with the outcome being acceptable.
- A member of the public expressed concerns about the aim of the new development regarding transport. Aiming for more people to walk, cycle and use buses, whilst being ideal, is unlikely to be the case, people will still prefer to use their cars, and this will cause further traffic issues. It was confirmed that any new infrastructure to support active travel will need to be in place from the very part of the project so the public become used to it from the outset.
- A query regarding the Bygrave Road being cut off was addressed satisfactorily. U&C explained the aim is to remove rat running and support active travel, the walking/cycling route would be operational only once a new bridge delivered.

8. WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- Ashwell at home was very successful.
- **SW** noted the 42 houses have started to be built after 40 years.
- **AW** noted all the successful events Baldock has hosted over the last few months, including the Beer Festival, Country Boots Baldock Roots, the Street Festival and the Car Show.

10. COMMUNITY UPDATE

TW, Community Partnerships Officer, read extracts from the Community Update as contained in appendix 4 of the previously published agenda.

11. TOPICS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

- **TW** noted there will be an LGR item in September.
- **MoP** requested Water is covered. It was noted that this was last covered in September 2025.
- **MoP** asked if the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) could be covered.

AW Thanked everyone for attending.

MEETING CLOSED
21.02