

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

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

On Monday 14th September 2026 at 7.30pm

NOTES

Present: Cllr A Willoughby (Chair) (AW), Cllr S Jarvis (SJ), Cllr S Willoughby (SW), Cllr T Tyson (TT), Cllr R Cameron (RC), Cllr M Muir.

In attendance:

Officer Rachel Rooney (RR) – Planning Approver
Officer Alan North (AN) – Service Manager Green Space
Officer Kieran Cockayne (KY) – Graduate Management Trainee
Officer Tracy Westgate (TW) – Community & Partnerships Officer

Also present:

At the commencement of the meeting there were 16 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

Cllr E Rowe

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. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – GRANT APPLICATION

The Community Partnerships Officer informed those present that there is **£7,489** available in the Baldock & Villages grant fund. If all grants presented at this meeting are recommended and subsequently approved, there would be **£5,989** left in the budget for the remainder of the 2026/27 financial year.

Presentation received in support of grant application by the following:

Richard Julian (RJ) presented the **Caring Herts CIC** application.

- **MM** asked the cost of running the Baldock Wellbeing Hub for 3 months. **RJ** confirmed this would be approximately £3,000.

RC Asked how they envisage the group becoming self-sustaining. **RJ** advised that with the current model attendees pay £8 per session and therefore once established, they see Baldock Wellbeing Hub funding itself in the same way as the other 15 established hubs. However, they do not want cost to prevent anyone from attending, so concessions will be available for those who need them.

Caring Herts CIC vote:

AW proposed.

SW seconded.

Unanimous vote in favour of recommending the Caring Herts CIC application for £1,500 to set up a new Wellbeing Hub in Baldock.

5. PRESENTATION – GREENSPACE **Officer Alan North & Officer Kieran Cockayne**

AN & KC gave an update on the ongoing Green Spaces Consultation which ends on 30 September 2026.

[Have your say on North Herts Council's green spaces | North Herts Council](#)

KC noted there is a freeform box at the end of the survey if there are specific things people wish to be addressed.

On the survey there is a link to the NHC parks, nature reserves and play areas.

[Parks, nature reserves and play areas | North Herts Council](#)

Topics Covered in the Q&A:

- **AW** - Is there a link between NHC and HCC - Confirmed
- **SW** - Does it include rivers – yes, but not all rivers
- **TT** - Some rivers are included in nature reserves
- **Nicky Forrester** – Do you review the smaller play areas as well as the larger central ones to see if they need refreshing. For example, the Temple recreation ground in Letchworth. **AN** confirmed the current review processes and where the focus' have been in recent years and thanked **NF** for highlighting her area of concern.
- **Julie Colegrave** – How will your work interlink with Growing Baldock. **AN** confirmed there is a lot of discussion regarding the green spaces and Growing Baldock project and how things will be managed moving forward.
- **RC** - referred to the need for more football pitches in Baldock. **AW** noted that is being covered in Growing Baldock.
- It was also noted that some footpaths fall under this consultation, but not all of them as some fall under HCC.

6. PRESENTATION – New Local Plan Scoping Consultation **Officer Rachael Rooney**

RR gave a brief update on the current position. The next Consultation element will be running from 13 October to 24 November 2026.

[New Local Plan | North Herts Council](#)

RR noted they are looking for some smaller sites and brownfield sites to complement the areas that have already been submitted for assessment. The sites that have been identified for consideration in the next local plan will be published on Friday 18 September 2026, prior to the Cabinet Meeting on Tuesday 22 September 2026. Planning Officers will be attending Forums and some Councilor Surgeries. There will also be a meeting for Parish Councils.

Topics Covered in the Q&A:

- How the information would be sent out. Website and mailing list.
- Question regarding the cutoff for providing affordable homes withing a development. Currently placed at 10, which encourages developers to build fewer larger houses, rather than multiple smaller houses which would require affordable homes to be incorporated into the development. It was noted at a better way of calculating the cut-off for providing affordable homes might be based on the number of bedrooms built. **RR** provided a response and confirmed that the MP Chris Hinchliff is also looking at this.

7. GROWING BALDOCK – URBAN & CIVIC **Philippa Curran (PC) & Kitty Eyre (KE)**

This section commenced with a question that had been submitted prior to the meeting and a response from NHC.

Question:

We are the four owner-occupiers of The Barn and Halfway Farm, Bygrave Road. Our properties sit within the adopted BA1 allocation but outside the planning application's red-line boundary, with the Growing Baldock development proposed around them.

All four of us wish to sell our homes and move.

Halfway Farm has already been marketed and, at our meeting with HCC and Urban & Civic on 3 September, its estate agent presented evidence of substantial online interest but very limited viewing activity which, based upon his professional experience and feedback, he attributed to Growing Baldock.

HCC has told us that it does not require either property for the development and maintains that the statutory blight provisions do not require it to acquire them.

Our question is therefore very simple: if HCC does not need our properties and will not acquire them, but Growing Baldock is materially impairing our ability to sell them and move, what practical solution is being offered to the four existing homeowners who appear to have been left trapped between those two positions?

We would particularly like HCC and Urban & Civic to explain whether discretionary acquisition or any other practical solution has been considered and, if not, why not?

NHC Response:

The Forum recognises the concerns that have been raised by the owners of The Barn and Halfway Farm regarding their ability to sell their properties and the impact they believe the Growing Baldock proposals are having on the local property market. The Community Forum is not a decision-making body. We cannot direct any organisation to take any particular action. This includes on the matters that have been raised. However, your question raises issues that are clearly important and it is entirely appropriate that HCC and Urban & Civic are given the opportunity to respond. I will therefore invite representatives of HCC and Urban & Civic to address the points you have raised in further detail regarding the options they have considered for homeowners in this position, including any information they are able to provide regarding how they have considered the concerns raised by affected homeowners.

Urban & Civic also provided a response, offering some practical support in where they can. There was an involved discussion between the various parties, which resulted in the topic being taken offline for a separate meeting with Cllr Jarvis.

Q&A

- **David Cook** raised the National Planning Policy Framework's comments regarding a higher density of properties around railway stations. There was significant discussion regarding the effects of the new development and what these might be for Baldock Station, Ashwell & Morden Station and also included an observation that there could be a knock-on effect at Stevenage Station.
- It was noted that U&C are working with NR to confirm if there could be improvements to disabled access at Baldock Station
- U&C were asked directly if the impact on Ashwell & Morden Station had been assessed. Currently only people living in Odsey can reach the station on foot. **PC** noted the information is being shared with Ashwell Parish Council.
- It was noted that if Bygrave residents were to choose to use Baldock Station, there would need to be an appropriate bus service to support this.
- **Julie Colegrave** raised the question are U&C consulting with the Solar Farm so that digging up the roads in central Baldock can be coordinated. U&C confirmed they are trying to do this but have had trouble getting engagement from the Solar Farm.
- There was a query regarding why the Farm's had been given notice to vacate their tenancy's if the work is not due to commence for a couple of years. **PC** noted the archeological and environmental surveys that need to be complete before any groundwork may commence.
- There was strong feeling of concern that the Green Buffer between the new development and Bygrave that was in the original design is not going to remain in place and the Bygrave might become an extension of Baldock.
- **TT** raised the discrepancy between the amount of affordable housing on the original plan and the current suggested level, which is significantly less. **AW** observed that HCC could use some of the profit from this scheme to create more affordable homes.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

AW read the statement provided by NHC Communications Officers regarding the 'pause' in the Local Government Review.

Statement:

On 7 September Central Government announced that the current Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme is being paused whilst a review takes place. The review has been announced to ensure the process is robust and aligns with the new government's plans to shift power, funding, and accountability from Whitehall and Westminster to local elected mayors and combined authorities.

For Hertfordshire this means that the decision to create four new unitary councils for 1 April 2028 has been paused while this review is carried out. This means there will not be elections to the shadow authorities. The May 2027 local elections planned before LGR was announced will go ahead in the other nine Hertfordshire districts and boroughs. Parish Council elections will continue as planned for North Herts in May 2027 with the next North Herts District Council elections held in May 2028.

This Government states that it remains committed to devolution and remains of the view that unitary councils are a better foundation for mayors and strategic authorities. We await details on the devolution plans and how the Government plans to ensure effective and sustainable local government in the future. We also await further details on the scope and timetable for the review and will update staff, councillors, stakeholders and the public when there is further substantive news. Please accept our apologies if you have come this evening to specifically hear more about LGR.

- **Julie Colegrave** asked if the change from the initial plan to the revised plan could be challenged. **SJ** noted, until it is confirmed what is happening, there is nothing to challenge.
- **David Cook** asked if there was any sense of a timeframe for this review. **AW** – No.
- **SJ** noted there will need to be decisions regarding what happens to the staff who were currently working on the LGR project.

9. WARD MATTERS & OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

- **AW** Baldock Eco Fest is on Saturday 19 September from 10am until 3pm.
- **AW** Baldock Charity Oktoberfest will take place on Friday 9 and Saturday 10 October at Baldock Hub.
- **SJ** The safety on the A505 will be looked at in the next couple of months.
- **TT** The Ashwell Show was a fantastic success and he thanked those involved.

- **RC** There will be a meeting of the Bee Corridor network on 15 September 2026.
- **SW** Work has commenced on the site at the end of Clothall Common. Access to these works is only from the Royston Road, not through the estate.
- **AW** confirmed the success of the 'Rat Run' a 5k Charity Run with 112 participants.

10. COMMUNITY UPDATE

TW, Community Partnerships Officer, referred to the Community Update as contained in appendix 3 of the previously published agenda and noted that there is to be a screening of The People Emergency Briefing in November at District Council Offices for Officers and Councillors to attend.

11. TOPICS FOR FUTURE FORUMS

- **Julie Colegrave** suggested The Climate Emergency – how the council is doing against its targets. Discussion suggested that Cllr Amy Allen and Cllr Adrian England, Exec Member for Sustainability, might be the right people to approach to cover this topic.
- **MM** suggested Recycling. Discussion suggested that Cllr Amy Allen and Cllr Paul Zukowskyj, Exec Member for Environment, Transport and Growth might be the right people to approach to cover this topic. It was noted that North Herts are doing exceptionally well with their recycling.

AW Thanked everyone for attending.

MEETING CLOSED 20.57