

BYGRAVE PARISH COUNCIL

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The Independent Inspector
Strategic Planning and Projects Group
North Hertfordshire District Council
PO Box 480
Sale M33 0DE

Dear Sir,

RE EXPANSION PROPOSALS TO BALDOCK AND BYGRAVE

Although the requirement is understood for continued and additional housing in all communities I do not understand how Baldock including Bygrave and associated communities can be the subject of such a large designation proportionately to the remainder of North Hertfordshire. In fact North Hertfordshire is virtually one conurbation as it is with very little space between each town now and really none of the areas should be considered.

Land Ownership in Bygrave: Hertfordshire County Council own all of the proposed development land and because of this are using their weight irrespective of the local community to pander to Government pressure. This land should be considered as collateral for future generations and not a quick fix for the next few years.

Locality: Baldock is a small historic market town and Bygrave a small village also with its own history. These two will in essence be merged as one which will then destroy the individuality of both settlements.. Clothall Common was a new build 'add-on' community to Baldock - not considered a success in integrating the area into the town. Any expansion to Bygrave area -Black Horse farm site - would inherit the same issues. The proposal of adding 2800 houses + schools + community centres would destroy the current nature of the town and village.

Land: The Government has always indicated that brown field sites should be earmarked and that green belt sites should be avoided where possible. The Government stipulates that green belt should only be rolled back in exceptional circumstances – once lost never retrieved. This has been confirmed in a letter signed by The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP DCLG to a question submitted by Peter Lilley MP. I have not seen anywhere where this area is deemed an exceptional circumstance. The green field sites earmarked for the Baldock/Bygrave development are good quality farm land and it is again government & EU edict that this should be utilised and encouraged to continue producing crops for the ever growing population and ever important that this be used locally. The area has views over the countryside of natural beauty from all directions which would be lost and is an important habitat for foxes, deer, badgers and other wildlife.

Infrastructure: There would need to be a major review of all services. Bygrave has suffered a number of power cuts and the water supply has been a major issue over the years. Should this development go ahead where would these and other required facilities - schools doctors surgeries etc be provided. If funded by the Developers this will not be carried out timely as they would want to fund from profits of homes sold. When challenged at local Council meetings there has been no response that these have been adequately considered and is not consistent with the requirements of national policy.

Transport

The railway transport system is almost at capacity now and the Operator has just announced that services to Baldock will be reduced. In addition parking at the station would be undersized and the costs charged prohibitive for many to use even if made larger.

Parking in town is to capacity.

There is a plan to construct a road over the railway linking the A505 to the Great North Road A507. The Great North Road is to capacity at peak times in both directions. There is also the consideration of air, noise and light pollution of this proposed road. This will be totally unsustainable. There has been no detail given as to how this will work.

The Great North Road links with the A1 the major road into London. The road in peak times is to gridlock and can take up to an hour to pass the Stevenage bottleneck already. In addition the Great North Road into Baldock is also at capacity at peak times and joining from the Ashwell Road difficult. We are told by Highways that lorries cannot be rerouted to Letchworth to join the A505 as designed. This road will be horrendous both during construction and incapable of taking the extra load on completion of the proposal.

Utilising the figure of 3290 additional homes there will be approximately 7000 additional cars each with a minimum 2 movements per day giving additional journey movements of 14000 per day this will be unsustainable and will massively increase air pollution to the area and Baldock particularly as it sits in a valley.

People:

The population of Baldock and hinterland is not growing at such a level that determines such an invasive expansion. Therefore the obvious answer is that it is proposed to move people into this area. Little consideration has been given to where such a huge number of people (say minimum of two per household x 3290 = 6,500 – 7000) are going to work and play. Certainly there are not the jobs to sustain this number so all will be travelling out of the area.

Conclusion

The plan as such has been formulated to a point and falls short that information is not available to the residents of Baldock and that in itself is not consistent with national policy. It is understood that Henlow Air Base will be available shortly for development a far more suitable area for expansion that will affect less people instead of the panic that is being demonstrated by the Local Plan. I trust that the above is used in making the final decision to give historic Baldock and Bygrave the future that both warrants

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Yours faithfully,

Clerk to Parish Council