

15 September 2005

Our ref: B&D September 05
Contact: Donna Levett
Direct Dial No: 01462 474648
Email address: donna.levett@north-herts.gov.uk

To: Members of the Baldock and District Committee of North Hertfordshire District Council

(Councillors I.J. Knighton (Chairman), M.E. Weeks (Vice-Chairman), G.C. Hollands, S.K. Jarvis, M.R.M. Muir and A.D. Young)

You are invited to attend a meeting of the
BALDOCK & DISTRICT COMMITTEE

to be held at

**THE COMMUNITY CENTRE, SIMPSON
DRIVE, BALDOCK**

on

MONDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2005

at

7.30 p.m.

Yours sincerely,



David Miley
Democratic Services Manager

AGENDA
PART I

ITEM	PAGE
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	-
2. MINUTES To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meetings of this Committee held on the 15 August 2005.	-
3. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS Members should notify the Chairman of other business which they wish to be discussed by the Committee at the end of the business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency. The Chairman will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.	-
4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive from Members of the Committee any Declarations of Interest in respect of business set out in the agenda. Members should either declare a prejudicial or personal interest and are required to notify the Chairman of the nature of any interest declared. Members declaring a prejudicial interest should not seek to influence the decision and leave the room during that particular item of business.	-
5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION To receive petitions, comments and questions from members of the public. No requests to speak have been received to date. Any public participation requests received within the agreed time will be notified to Members as soon as practicable.	-
6. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER REVIEW – MEMBER CONSULTATION REPORT OF THE HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES <i>Member consultation report for review of Traffic Regulation Orders in Baldock.</i>	1
7. CHAMPION NEWS REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT <i>A summary of the activities undertaken by the Community Development Officer for Baldock since the meeting of the Committee held on 15 August 2005 and events taking place in forthcoming months.</i>	5

8. BALDOCK & DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT AND AREA VISIONING BUDGETS 2005/2006 **9**
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The current budget balances for the Committee and grant applications from the following organisations:

1. *Rotary Club of Baldock*
2. *Baldock Allotment Association*
3. *Baldock Yoga Group*
4. *Weston Cricket Club*
5. *Avenue Park Baldock – Netball & Tennis area*

9. PLANNING APPLICATIONS **21**
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

Planning application for determination by the Committee:

1. **Childrens Home adjacent land south of New Farm, Weston Way, Baldock** **23**

10. PLANNING APPEALS **33**
ORAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

An update for the Committee on any planning appeals that have been lodged or determined since the meeting of the Committee held on 15 August 2005

Future meetings of the Baldock & District Committee will be held on:

- 7 November 2005
- 12 December 2005
- 23 January 2006
- 6 March 2006
- 10 April 2006

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TITLE OF REPORT: TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER REVIEW – MEMBER CONSULTATION

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES.

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Section 4 of the NHDC Car Parking Strategy, adopted by the Council in July 2004, deals in detail with on-street parking and sets out certain objectives regarding on-street parking, one of which is a requirement to “....review and amend where necessary existing on-street waiting restrictions....”.
- 1.2 This report forms part of that review and invites Members of the Area Committees to input their local knowledge of existing waiting restriction issues to inform the review.
- 1.3 The review is intended to deal with existing restrictions and their appropriateness, given that some restrictions have been in place in excess of 40 years and may in some instances be no longer applicable to today’s traffic management and town viability requirements.
- 1.4 This review runs in parallel with, but is separate from the current examination and implementation of Controlled Parking Zones and Residents Parking schemes and Members are requested to bear this in mind when responding to this report.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This Authority successfully negotiated with the Department for Transport and the County Council to take on responsibility for all parking enforcement in the District as from 17 January this year.
- 3.2 Part of the requirements of the DfT and HCC to grant the necessary powers to the Council was that the Authority should have a formally adopted Parking Strategy. The Strategy was developed alongside the negotiations and adopted by full Council in July 2004.

4. ISSUES

- 4.1 The Parking Strategy requires a full review of all existing waiting restrictions across the District to ensure they remain appropriate for the area and also to see if any extensions

are possible to limited waiting areas to increase the availability of on-street parking stock.

- 4.2 In order to inform the review an extensive consultation process needs to be undertaken with affected parties, the public in general and Ward Members to tap into their extensive local knowledge. The opportunity will be provided through the Council's website and press releases for the public to express their views.
- 4.3 This particular report is to inform Members of the Committee of the review and to enable Members, either individually or as a Committee to feed their views and observations into the process.
- 4.4 There are areas across the District where waiting restrictions have been in place unchanged for many years, during which time traffic patterns and some road layouts have changed. It may be possible to amend restrictions such as these to provide additional on-street parking of varying duration. In some cases it may be possible to introduce a restriction of some type where none existed previously in order to increase the turnover of roadside spaces and improve the economic and environmental viability of some areas.
- 4.5 Members are therefore invited to submit their views and suggestions on waiting restrictions to the Chief Engineer during the next three months prior to Christmas. All views and comments will be analysed and consolidated into a further report for consideration by this Committee towards the beginning of summer 2006. The extent and intricacy of the review, together with resourcing necessitates the lengthy timescale.
- 4.6 In order to assist Members in their deliberations, listed below are some examples in this Committee's area of waiting restriction issues that have been identified and are already under consideration.
- High Street – timings of temporary restriction for market
 - High Street – possible time limited waiting in market area car park
 - Whitehorse Street - possible time limited waiting in parking area
 - Church Street – possible section of time limited waiting in de-restricted area.
- 4.7 The list above is by no means exhaustive and is intended to indicate to Members the type of amendment the review is examining. Any amendments in Baldock will need to take into account different traffic patterns following the opening of the bypass.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None at this stage. The legal implications will be detailed in the report referred to in paragraph 4.5 when proposals emanating from the review are brought before the committee.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None at this stage. The financial implications will be detailed in the report referred to in paragraph 4.5 when proposals emanating from the review are brought before the Committee.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None at this stage. The resource and equalities implications will be detailed in the report referred to in paragraph 4.5 when proposals emanating from the review are brought before the Committee.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 As referred to in paragraph 4.2

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the Members of this Committee give consideration to the appropriateness of existing waiting restrictions in their area and provide the Chief Engineer with their views and observations before Christmas this year.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To enable all views and observations to be incorporated into the Traffic Regulation Order review, as required in the adopted Parking Strategy.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 None

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 12.1 P.G. Marshall (Chief Engineer)
Telephone: 01462 474229
E-Mail: pete.marshall@north-herts.gov.uk

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 None.

TITLE: CHAMPION NEWS
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Officer has been involved during the past month.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Not Applicable

4. ISSUES – PROJECT / ACTIVITY / SCHEME DETAILS

4.1 Area Visioning

4.1.1 Baldock Town Centre Draft Strategy

The six weeks formal consultation period on the draft strategy, commenced on 3rd September 2005 and runs through to 15th October 2005. The Authority seeks comments on the Draft Strategy to ensure that it provides the overall context for guiding development and making the best use of enhancement opportunities that will benefit the future of Baldock and meet the needs of its businesses, local and surrounding communities.

Members are asked to note that the Draft Strategy can be viewed by members of the public at the following locations:

- The Baldock Library
- The Baldock Community Centre
- The Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City
- Via the Council's website at www.north-herts.gov.uk

In addition, members of the Baldock Town Centre Stakeholders group are invited to a further meeting at St. Mary's Church Hall on the evening of Wednesday 5th October 2005 to formally respond and comment on the Draft Strategy.

4.2 **Festivals/Fairs**

4.2.1 Baldock Street Fair 2005

This year's fair is scheduled to 'Pull On' to the High Street the early hours of Sunday 2 October 2005. Members are asked to note that the High Street will be totally closed from approximately 9.00am to midday on the Sunday, whilst the Fair vehicles move into position. A northbound single running carriageway will then be opened and maintained along the High Street for the entirety of the fair, in line with the similar procedures operated in previous years.

Members are asked, whilst carrying out their role of community leaders, to advise members of the public that all cars and vehicles that usually occupy overnight spaces on the High Street and Whitehorse Street Car parks, must be relocated Saturday night and before 7.00am on Sunday 2 October 2005.

The Fair will set up throughout Sunday daytime & evening and will operate Monday 3 and Tuesday 4 October 2005 from 3.30pm to 11.00pm.

The Fair will depart during the Tuesday night, leaving the High Street ready for the Wednesday Street Market to occupy the High Street area.

4.3 **General**

4.3.1 Local Development Framework

Between 13 September and October 2005 the Authority will be consulting on an Option Paper on what may be included in new planning policies and is holding a series of workshops across the District to which all members of the local communities are welcome.

The workshop planned for the Baldock Town area is scheduled for Wednesday 21 September 2005 at St. Mary's Church Hall and the workshop for the Eastern Rural Area of the District is scheduled for Monday 10 October 2005 at the Methodist Church Hall, Queens Road, Royston. Both workshops begin at 7pm and will last approximately 2 hours.

The Options Paper and its questionnaire are available on the Council's website www.north-herts.gov.uk, at the District's Libraries and the Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, or by request from the Planning Policy section on 01462 474826.

4.3.2 Baldock Bypass

Site Visit – Possible dates TBC 11 18 or 21 October 2005

Traffic Management

The A507 was re-opened to traffic at 5:30pm on Friday 5th August, following 6 days of intensive work in the area. There are still some minor works to complete but following an inspection by the Police and engineers the road was opened ahead of schedule. The remaining works include finishing off the footway on the north side, completion of a short length of safety fence and installation of some permanent signs to replace the temporary ones currently in place. During the closure the temporary bridge was removed.

Lighting columns, safety fence and signs have been erected on the new A6141 roundabout. The resurfacing of the A6141 between this roundabout and the A1(M) is still programmed for the end of October.

Due to bad weather, works on the existing A505 were programmed for the weekend of 10/11th of September 2005 and involved 24hr signals. Once works are completed traffic will be diverted onto the new carriageway between Bygrave underpass, over the Firs interchange, and back onto this new link to the town centre.

Programme

Tunnel - Backfill to the tunnel is complete, the topsoil is being replaced so that this area of land can be handed back to the farmer at a later date. Work is continuing inside the tunnel with the fitting of all the mechanical and electrical equipment. Painting of the tunnel walls and roof is 95% complete – the walls are magnolia and the roof dark grey. The gloss finish is to ensure that the correct light reflectivity is obtained and provides a sealed surface, which can be easily washed.

Other Structures

Weston Hills footbridge is finished and the remaining fencing works in this area are underway.

Welbury Farm - the fill material on the approaches is being placed and the surfacing of the bridge deck remains to be completed.

Wallington Bridleway - bridge still has the parapets to be completed.

Bygrave underpass - the backfill to the north side is being placed during September.

The brick cladding to the tunnel service building has been finished, the internal walls completed and the security doors are also being fitted.

Roadworks

Work is continuing at the A6141 roundabout on installing the safety barriers, signs and street lighting.

Variable Message Signs are due to be installed. These will be used when the tunnel is closed for essential maintenance and will direct traffic around the diversion route.

Between Hatch Lane and the Tunnel drainage works are continuing before the carriageway construction can begin. There is just one remaining area of chalk to be excavated south of the tunnel, and this should be removed during September weather permitting.

Between the A507 and the Firs is where most of the activity on site is taking place. Signs, lighting columns, VMS, safety barriers are all being installed, verges and the central reserve are being finished.

Other News

Look East filmed an item on the tunnel for the BBC News, which was broadcast on 4th August 2005.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Not Applicable

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Not Applicable

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Not Applicable

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Consultation with the respective agencies, organisations and Ward Members has taken place with regards to the projects, activities and events mentioned in section 4 of this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well being.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee enforces the actions and policies involved in the tasks and projects undertaken by the Community Development Officer.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 Not Applicable

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 None

13. CONTACT OFFICER

- 13.1 Stuart Izzard (Community Development Officer – Baldock & District Area & Youth)
Telephone: 01462 474854
E-Mail: stuart.izzard@north-herts.gov.uk

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 None

TITLE: BALDOCK & DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT & AREA VISIONING BUDGETS 2005/2006

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee Development Discretionary Grant funding made by community groups and local organisations.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Not Applicable

4. ISSUES - FUNDING DECISIONS TO BE MADE

- 4.1 Rotary Club of Baldock
Funding request for a contribution of Development Discretionary funds to assist in the renewing and installation costs associated with the provision of the Town's Christmas lights.
- 4.2 Baldock Allotment Association
Funding request for a contribution of Development Discretionary funds to assist in the creation and installation costs associated with the provision of the first accessible plot for disabled holders within the District at the North Road site in Baldock.
- 4.3 Baldock Yoga Group
Funding request for a contribution of Development Discretionary funds to assist in transporting elderly and disabled members to the weekly sessions via the Baldock Community Bus.
- 4.4 Weston Cricket Club
Funding request for a contribution of Development Discretionary funds to assist in the creation and installation costs associated with the provision of a new artificial wicket for the club's Colts section and additional repair works required to the main Square.
- 4.5 Avenue Park Baldock – Netball & Tennis area
Funding request for a contribution of Development Discretionary funds to assist in the installation costs associated with the repair and provision of floodlighting for the area.

- 4.6 STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE DELEGATED BUDGETS 2005/06
See Appendix 1 – Spreadsheet of Committee Delegated Budgets 2005/06

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Committee has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.
- 5.2 There are no other legal implications pertinent to this report.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2005/06.
- 6.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2004/05 to the current financial year 2005/06.
- 6.3 In addition, the spreadsheet includes the balances and past expenditure relating to the allocated Visioning Budgets available to the Committee.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no human resource and equalities implications pertinent to this report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Consultation with the respective Ward Members has occurred in connection with the pre allocation of funds for Community Projects from the previous financial year 2004/05 Ward Development Discretionary Budgets to the current financial year 2005/06.
- 8.2 Consultation with the respective groups has taken place with regards to their funding requests for Area Committee Discretionary Development Grants.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Ward Development Budgets, the Small Area Grants Budget and the allocated Visioning Budgets.
- 9.2 The Committee is asked to consider the following request for financial aid from the appropriate Ward Development Budget:-
- 9.2.1 Rotary Club of Baldock
Funding request for £3,000 to assist in the renewing and installation costs associated with the provision of the Town's Christmas lights.
- 9.2.2 Baldock Allotment Association
Funding request for £750 to assist in the creation and installation costs associated with the provision of an accessible plot for disabled holders at the North Road site in Baldock.

- 9.2.3 Baldock Yoga Group
Funding request for £300 to assist in transporting elderly and disabled members to the weekly sessions via the Baldock Community Bus.
- 9.2.4 Weston Cricket Club
Funding request for £1,000 to assist in the creation and installation costs associated with the provision of a new artificial wicket for the club's Colts section and additional repair works required to the main Square.
- 9.2.5 Avenue Park Baldock – Netball & Tennis area
Joint funding request for £1,500 to assist in the installation costs associated with the repair and provision of floodlighting for the area.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The awarding of financial assistance to voluntary and community organisations, schemes and initiatives.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 Not Applicable.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix 1 – Spreadsheet of Committee Delegated Budgets 2005/2006.
- 12.2 Appendix 2 – Grant Form Rotary Club of Baldock
- 12.3 Appendix 3 – Grant Form Baldock Allotment Association
- 12.4 Appendix 4 – Grant Form Baldock Yoga Group
- 12.5 Appendix 5 – Grant Form Weston Cricket Club
- 12.6 Appendix 6 – Grant Form Avenue Park Baldock – Netball & Tennis area

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 13.1 Stuart Izzard (Community Development Officer - Baldock & District Area & Youth)
Telephone: 01462 474854
E-Mail: stuart.izzard@north-herts.gov.uk
- 13.2 Lois Stewart (Community Development Accountant)
Telephone: 01462 474566
E-Mail: lois.stewart@north-herts.gov.uk
- 13.3 Jodie Penfold (Community Development Accountants Service & Support Officer)
Telephone: 01462 474332
E-Mail: jodie.penfold@north-herts.gov.uk

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 None

APPENDIX 1

**BALDOCK & DISTRICT AREA COMMITTEE
FINANCIAL REPORT**

VISIONING	Funding	Year Allocated	Project	Allocated	Date	Spent	Outstanding	Comments
Preallocated Funds Brought Forward from 04/05	£37,000	2002/2003 - 2004/2005	Baldock Plan	£25,000	30.09.04	£23,409	£0	Complete
		Pre allocated from 2004/05	Baldock Conservation Area Work	£3,000	17.06.03	£1,275	£1,725	Complete
		Pre allocated from 2004/05	Ivel Springs	£4,500	23.02.04	£0	£4,500	
		2004/05	Tree Works	£4,500	13.12.04	£4,500	£0	Complete
Unallocated Funds Brought Forward from 04/05	£3,870							
Visioning Allocation 05/06	£5,520	2005/2006	Town Centre Strategy	£3,500	11.04.05	£144	£3,356	
05/06 Balance Unallocated							£5,890	
Total	£46,390			£40,500		£29,328	£15,471	

SMALL AREA GRANTS	Funding	Year Allocated	Project	Allocated	Date	Spent	Outstanding	Comments
Base Budget 05/06	£2,010		Baldock Retirement Sewing Club	£420	07.03.05	£0	£420	
			Baldock Festival	£1,060	07.03.05	£1,060	£0	Complete
			Ashwell Museum	£340	07.03.05	£0	£340	
Total	£2,010			£1,820		£1,060	£190	

DEVELOPMENT BUDGETS								
BALDOCK TOWN	Funding	Year Allocated	Project	Allocated	Date	Spent	Outstanding	Comments
Preallocated Funds Brought Forward from 04/05	£3,930		Street Furniture	£250	27.08.03	£0	£250	
			Baldock Town Community Projects	£3,680	07.03.05	£0	£3,680	
			Childrens Holiday Club	£150	15.08.05	£150		Complete
			Bench Seating Weston Way	£150	15.08.05	£0	£150	
Base Budget 05/06	£9,430						£9,430	
Total	£13,360			£3,930		£150	£13,210	

BALDOCK EAST								
BALDOCK EAST	Funding	Year Allocated	Project	Allocated	Date	Spent	Outstanding	Comments
Preallocated Funds Brought Forward from 04/05	£4,530		Baldock East Community (C/F 03/04)	£1,710	05.04.04	£0	£1,660	
			Childrens Holiday Club	£50	15.08.05	£50		Complete
			Bench Seating Chauncy Gdns	£400	15.08.05	£0	£400	
			Baldock East Community (C/F 04/05)	£2,820	07.03.05	£0	£2,820	
Base Budget 05/06	£2,900						£2,900	
Total	£7,430			£4,530		£50	£6,980	

ARBURY								
ARBURY	Funding	Year Allocated	Project	Allocated	Date	Spent	Outstanding	Comments
Preallocated Funds Brought Forward from 04/05	£180		Arbury Community Projects (c/f from 04/05 Small Area Grants)	£180	07.03.05	£0	£180	
Base Budget 05/06	£3,260		Radwell Social Club	£400	04.07.05	£400		Complete
							£2,860	
Total	£3,440			£580		£400	£3,040	

WESTON & SANDON								
WESTON & SANDON	Funding	Year Allocated	Project	Allocated	Date	Spent	Outstanding	Comments
Preallocated Funds Brought Forward from 04/05:	£3,454		Weston & Sandon Community Projects (c/f 03/04)	£984	05.04.04	£920	£64	
			Weston Voluntary Nursery	£500	23.05.05	£500		
			Sandon Sports & Social Club	£420	23.05.05	£420		
			Weston & Sandon Community Projects (c/f 04/05)	£2,470	07.03.05	£0	£2,470	
Base Budget 05/06	£2,540						£2,540	
Total	£5,994			£3,454		£920	£5,074	
GRAND TOTAL								
GRAND TOTAL	Funding	Year Allocated	Project	Allocated	Date	Spent	Outstanding	Comments
Total	£78,624			£54,814		£31,908	£24,210	

TITLE: PLANNING APPLICATIONS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and Local Government Act 1972

In respect of each of the following reports concerning individual applications for planning permission, Listed Building Consent, the whole of the application file shall be regarded as background papers for the purposes of Section 100(d) of the 1972 Act.

AGENDA INDEX

ITEM:	REF NO:	LOCATION:DESCRIPTION	CONTACT OFFICER:	PAGE:
1.	05/01136/1CM	Childrens Home adjacent land south of New Farm, Weston Way, Baldock, SG7 Outline application for new children's home (all matters reserved except means of access)	Richard Tiffin 4522	23

ITEM NO: 1	<u>Location:</u>	Childrens Home adjacent land south of New Farm, Weston Way, Baldock, SG7
	<u>Applicant:</u>	Ms K Ingram- County Development Unit
	<u>Proposal:</u>	Outline application for new children's home (all matters reserved except means of access)
	<u>Ref.No:</u>	05/01136/ 1CM
	<u>Officer:</u>	Richard Tiffin

Date of expiry of statutory period : 28 September 2005

1. Relevant History

- 1.1 The County Council has identified a need in the County for residential places for secondary school aged children, particularly those with complex needs, particularly those with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- 1.2 In August 2004 the County Council made 9 outline applications, 6 new and 3 replacement children's homes.
- 1.3 In November 2004 consideration of the planning applications was placed in abeyance in the light of comments received and pending a review of the County's provision strategy. The Rhee Spring proposal, considered by Members on 1st November 2004, was part of this overall review.
- 1.4 Following this review, the County Council is proposing 5 replacement homes and 3 new homes (with specialist function).
- 1.5 The latest application off Weston Way relates to a replacement general purpose home.

2. Policies

- 2.1 **District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations**
BEd/01
- 2.2 **District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations**
Policy 21 - Landscape and Open Space Patterns in Towns
- 2.3 **County Structure Plan Review**
Policy 7 - Main Development Strategy

3. Representations

- 3.1 This is a County Council application which will be determined by that Authority. As a consultee, the District Council would not normally expect to receive representations as these would normally be sent direct to the County Council. Unlike the similar application at Rhee Spring, considered by the Area Committee last November, few representations have been received directly by the District

Council. Indeed, other than specialist advice, a letter from the Baldock Society and the Baldock Museum and Local History Society are the only representations to be received at the time of writing this report.

3.2 **The Baldock Society** - opposes the demolition of the existing barns as they are considered to have significant historical value. The Society argues that the loss of the buildings would destroy a link to Baldock's agricultural past - a loss not justified by the benefit the new use would bring to the local community.

3.3 **Baldock Museum and Local History Society** - objects to the demolition of buildings on the Register of Buildings of Local Importance.

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site & Surroundings

4.1.1 The application site occupies an area of about 0.2 hectares and is situated off Weston Way opposite Mansfield Road. The site is bounded to the north by an access road off Weston Way serving the former New Farm farmhouse and an elderly person's day centre. To the west, the site is bounded by an area of disused land beyond which is the Knights Templar School playing fields. To the south, the site is bounded by Brandles School and to the east, over Weston Way, a terrace of houses leading into Mansfield Road.

4.2 Proposal

4.2.1 The proposal under consideration by the County is for a new, two storey, purpose built children's home. The application is outline in form and the County will only be considering the principle and the issue of access to the site. That said the scheme does include illustrative material depicting the anticipated position of a two storey building on the site together with the layout and arrangement of car parking and garden area.

4.2.2 As part of the scheme, the proposal would involve the demolition of most of the existing barns on the site save one leg of the 'L' shaped building facing Brandles School and newly re-furbished as a vocational education centre.

4.2.3 The supporting statement supplied with the application details, indicates that the proposal would provide a long stay general needs home for 6 children in the age range of 11-16 years.

4.3 Key Issues

4.3.1 As with the previously considered Rhee Spring proposal, it should be noted the the District Council's role in this case is as a consultee. The recommendation at the end of this report comprises a series of comments which Members are invited to consider with a view to forwarding to the County Council in order to assist that Authority in its formal decision making process. Members may want to amend or supplement the comments set out in the recommendation.

4.3.2 The report which considered a similar application at Rhee Spring and presented to Members at Committee on the 1st November 2004, is attached as Appendix 1. This report sets out the issues relevant to this kind of land use, particularly those pertaining to operational characteristics and the perception of such uses in residential areas. Accordingly, I would suggest Members re-acquaint themselves with the detail of that report.

- 4.3.3 It should be noted from the outset that this application has not given rise to direct representations from the public to the District Council (unlike the proposal at Rhee Spring). This may, in part, be a function of the proposal's siting off Weston Way in an area with fewer nearby residential properties.
- 4.3.4 In my view Members need to consider two central issues in this case: the appropriateness or otherwise of the location and the loss of historic buildings which, while not listed, do appear on the Council's 'Register of Buildings of Local Importance'.
- 4.3.5 Turning to the issue of location first, I would refer Members to paragraph 4.3.10 of the Rhee Spring report (Appendix 1). This identifies the issue of accessibility in relation to a residential use such as a children's home and contrasts this with the Clothall Common proposal's siting away from the town centre in an overwhelmingly residential area. The challenge for providers and indeed for communities, is to accommodate these small scale residential homes in areas which are both accessible and facilitate social inclusion.
- 4.3.6 The Weston Way site is close to the town and while non-residential uses predominate around the application site, the area is, overall, mixed comprising private dwellings, schools and other institutional uses. In this regard, I would suggest that the Weston Way site offers more in terms of social inclusivity and accessibility than the Rhee Spring proposal. It should be noted that the Council has just approved the provision of an all-weather soccer pitch to the rear of the application site. This decision has been brought to the County Council's attention. While the County appear to be satisfied that such a use would not be prejudicial to the proposed use on the basis that this Council has imposed restrictive conditions on hours of operation, I would recommend that Members endorse a cautionary response specific to this issue.
- 4.3.7 Part of the locational consideration does, of course, include the issue of general land-use policy. The site is within the defined urban area of Baldock on land notated as BEd/01 and with an area designated under Policy 21 of the District Local Plan No 2 with Alterations. Subject to the submission of acceptable details pursuant to the outline application, I do not see any objection to the principle of the use in this policy context.
- 4.3.8 The second substantive issue centres on the proposed demolition of the former farm buildings - buildings which appear on the Council's Register of Buildings of Local Importance.
- 4.3.9 The County Council has considered the feasibility of retaining the historic group of farm buildings which form New Farm, converting and refurbishing 'Barn 5' to provide a new children's home. The County Council however concluded, through its consultant, as follows:

"With the benefit of the above studies and surveys, a comparison of the new build and refurbishment options has been carried out. Whilst the refurbishment option would undoubtedly be much more expensive than the new build option, its major disadvantage was considered to be that, once the other barns on the site had been removed, the barn would appear as an incongruous feature on the site. In addition, the architectural integrity of the barn would need to be compromised by a number of new door and window openings."

- 4.3.10 The Register identifies the 19th Century farm buildings "forming a courtyard to the south of the farmhouse" as important examples of a local building type with local industrial and agricultural historical value.

4.3.11 The Council's Conservation Officer the Baldock Society and the Baldock Museum and Local History Society have commented on the proposed demolition and it is clear that there are legitimate grounds for concern. The Baldock Society counterpoint the loss of these buildings of acknowledged local importance with the benefit of the proposal to the local community which, it asserts, would be 'minimal, if not non-existent'.

4.3.12 Clearly, development often involves the loss or renewal of old buildings, indeed this is an essential characteristic of regeneration. However, buildings which do represent a physical reminder of human development in a locality can make a positive contribution to our sense of place, particularly when those buildings are of special historical or architectural interest. Whilst I would suggest to Members that the Baldock Society's assumptions in relation to the community benefit arising from the proposed children's home may be too narrowly considered, there is undoubtedly merit in its call for buildings which have been locally identified as valuable to be protected or, at least, acknowledged as part of any redevelopment proposal. This proposal fails in this regard and, despite the laudable nature of its principles, would involve the destruction of some important local buildings. In these circumstances it is not considered that the County Council has adequately made the case for converting the existing building group such that it would provide the accommodation sought.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

6. Recommendation

6.1 That Members of the Area Committee endorse the following comments to be forwarded to the County Council in response to its formal consultation:

1. The District Council would ask the County Planning Authority to consider very carefully the views and concerns of local residents and consultees in the process of determining the application.
2. The District Council is of the view that the case for the conversion of the existing buildings of local importance has not been adequately made. In this regard the District Council would ask the County Authority to make every effort to preserve the existing farm buildings in their current form rather than resort to demolition as the only option.
3. The District Council cautions the County Planning Authority to consider fully the impact of the proposed new floodlit all-weather playing surface at Knights Templar School on the amenities of the proposed children's home.

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***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM

10

TITLE: PLANNING APPEALS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND BUILDING CONTROL

This Item will take the format of an oral report

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