

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

BALDOCK



Final Report
September 2007



urban
practitioners



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INTRODUCTION

The Baldock Urban Design Assessment final report is structured into four sections.

1. INTRODUCTION

The introductory section sets the context for the Urban Design Guidelines and the Urban Design Assessment by providing background information for some of the assessment criteria, an overview of the settlement's geographic and socioeconomic conditions, a review of the current policy context unique to Baldock and an historical overview of the town.

2. URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Strategy Plan and Settlement Principles lay out broad principles in both planimetric and text form which characterise the five Urban Design zones and set out principles for circulation, views and legibility.

The Urban Design zones section defines the areas associated with each Urban Design zone. The Baldock Urban Design zones have been created on the basis of existing characteristics, reflecting the morphology, density and typologies of each area, *and* an understanding of how these areas should be viewed in light of any potential development or regeneration of the zone.

The guidelines demonstrate the ideals for that zone in terms of such Issues as building heights, setbacks, typology, morphology and densities.

Guidelines based on the assessment criteria have been created for each zone, followed by case studies for infill sites and larger sites.

3. URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

The Urban Design Assessment provides the baseline evidence and analysis which has shaped the strategy plan, settlement principles and urban design guidelines. The assessment follows the criteria described in the district-wide report. Please note that the maps contained within this report are not to scale. The Key Issues, Safeguards and Opportunities outlines the issues that emerged from the baseline evidence and analysis with potential steps to be taken to address them.

4. CONSULTATION WORKSHOP

The Consultation Workshop summary encapsulates the results of the Baldock stakeholder workshop. Many of the stakeholder comments have been used as evidence in the urban design assessment.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES and CASE STUDIES

The Urban Design Guidelines have been created on the basis of each Urban Design zone. The guidelines have been developed following the Urban Design Assessment criteria described in the borough-wide report, although circulation, views and legibility have been addressed under the settlement-wide principles.

Urban Design Criteria

The following examples provide a summary of the urban design criteria used:

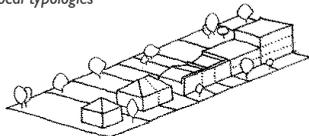
Building types

Building types considered for Baldock include:

- Bungalows
- Terraced housing
- Semi-detached housing
- Detached housing
- Two-storey block of flats
- Three-storey block of flats

Building heights

Local typologies



Building types considered for Baldock includes:

- One-storey
- Two-storey
- Three-storey

Density

Density is based on an amalgamation of a number of different elements including building typology, building height, spacing between buildings, setbacks and garden size:

- Low density generally refers to one and two storey detached houses, with large spaces between buildings, large setbacks and gardens;
- Medium density generally refers to two storey semi-detached houses with medium spaces between buildings and medium sized setbacks and gardens; and
- High density generally refers to two storey terraced houses and two, three and four storey blocks of flats, with small setbacks and small or communal gardens.

Building lines

Building lines will be considered for each Urban Design zones generally in terms of:

- Large setback (6+ metres, depending on the building height)
- Medium setback (3 - 6 metres)
- Minimal setback (0 - 3 metres)

Building orientation

Building orientation impacts urban design in terms of:

- Building orientation toward street front
- No particular building orientation

Pattern of open spaces

As well as the pattern of public open spaces within the urban area, gardens have also been considered in terms of:

- Divided front gardens
- Shared front gardens
- Divided rear gardens (back-to-back with rear gardens)

The type of garden reflects on such concerns as the appearance of the streetscape, the privacy of the dwellings, quality of the wildlife habitat, the type of development, and the size of the development site.

Parking

Parking options can be classified as:

- On-street parking
- On-site communal parking
- On-site individual parking

Decisions on the parking type relates to type of streets within the Urban Design zone (primary or secondary through streets, cul-de-sacs)

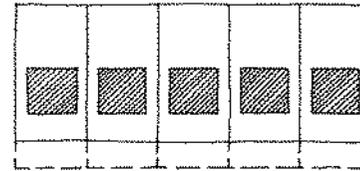
Case Studies

The case studies apply the various classifications of the guidelines to create a range of recommended possibilities for each Urban Design zone. Depending on the zone, case studies may suggest applying the following density conditions relative to the surrounding character:

- typical density - which works with the existing building typologies, building heights and setbacks;
- enhanced density - which considers a moderate increase in density looking at different typologies, building heights and setbacks; and
- increased density - which considers a significant increase in density looking at different typologies, building heights and setbacks. Increased density is generally only suggested where larger sites (discussed below) are available.

The case study drawings which follow each zone's guidelines are illustrative only, particularly as it regards car parking or amenity space.

Infill samples

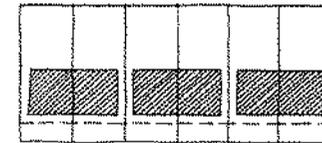


Detached housing, medium setback = approx. 30 dph

(Assumes 5m setback, 11.5m rear garden, 13m x 25m plot)

Detached housing, large setback = approx. 25 dph

(Assumes 10m setback, 11.5m rear garden, 13m x 30m plot)



Semi-detached housing, medium setback = 40 dph

(Assumes 3.5m setback, 11.5m rear garden, 9.5m x 25m plot)

Semi-detached housing, no setback = 50 dph

(Assumes no setback, 11.5m rear garden, 9.5m x 21.5m plot)



Two-storey terrace housing, medium setback = 60 dph

(Assumes 4m setback, 11.5m rear garden, 7m x 25m plot)

Two-storey terrace housing, no setback = 70 dph

(Assumes no setback, 11.5m rear garden, 7m x 25m plot)

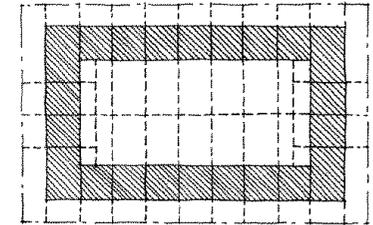
3/4-storey terraces with flats, medium setback = 100 dph

(Assumes 4m setback, 11.5m rear garden, 7m x 25m plot)

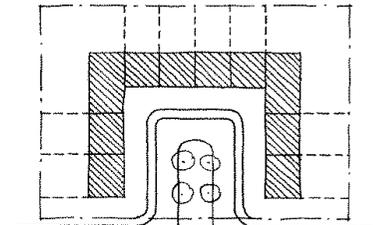
Block samples

The block samples were designed on the basis of the minimum block size of 50x70 metres (0.35 ha).

Minimum perimeter block



Close development



The case studies dedicated to each zone are divided into two categories, infill and block sites. A block site is considered to be an site area greater than 0.35 hectares, with dimensions of no less than (approximately) 50 metres by 70 metres. Block sites, due to their size, have greater latitude to introduce new densities and characteristics into an urban design zone. Examples are shown to the right.

The determination of minimum block size has drawn advice from the Urban Design Compendium, produced by Llwyn-Davies for English Partnerships and The Housing Corporation in 2000.

BALDOCK - TODAY

Physical Location

Baldock is a town located in North Hertfordshire, on the former Great North Road, some 39 miles north of London. The town has retained its traditional market town character, despite having absorbed a significant quantity of new residential development in recent years, its historic core containing fine architecture from the medieval and Georgian periods. It is one of five towns listed by the Council for British Archaeology as being of national importance, having been occupied as an undefended Iron Age and Romano British fort from the 1st century BC to the 6th century AD.

Transport Connections

Baldock is on the railway line between Cambridge and London Kings Cross, and is served by a frequent service. The journey time to London Kings Cross is approximately 40 minutes. The town is a five-minute drive to the A1 (M) and 25 minutes from the M25. Luton Airport is 14 miles away, whilst Heathrow Airport is 45 miles, or a one-hour and twenty minute drive from Baldock. The town neighbours Letchworth Garden City to the west, separated by a thin wedge of open space and the A1 (M).

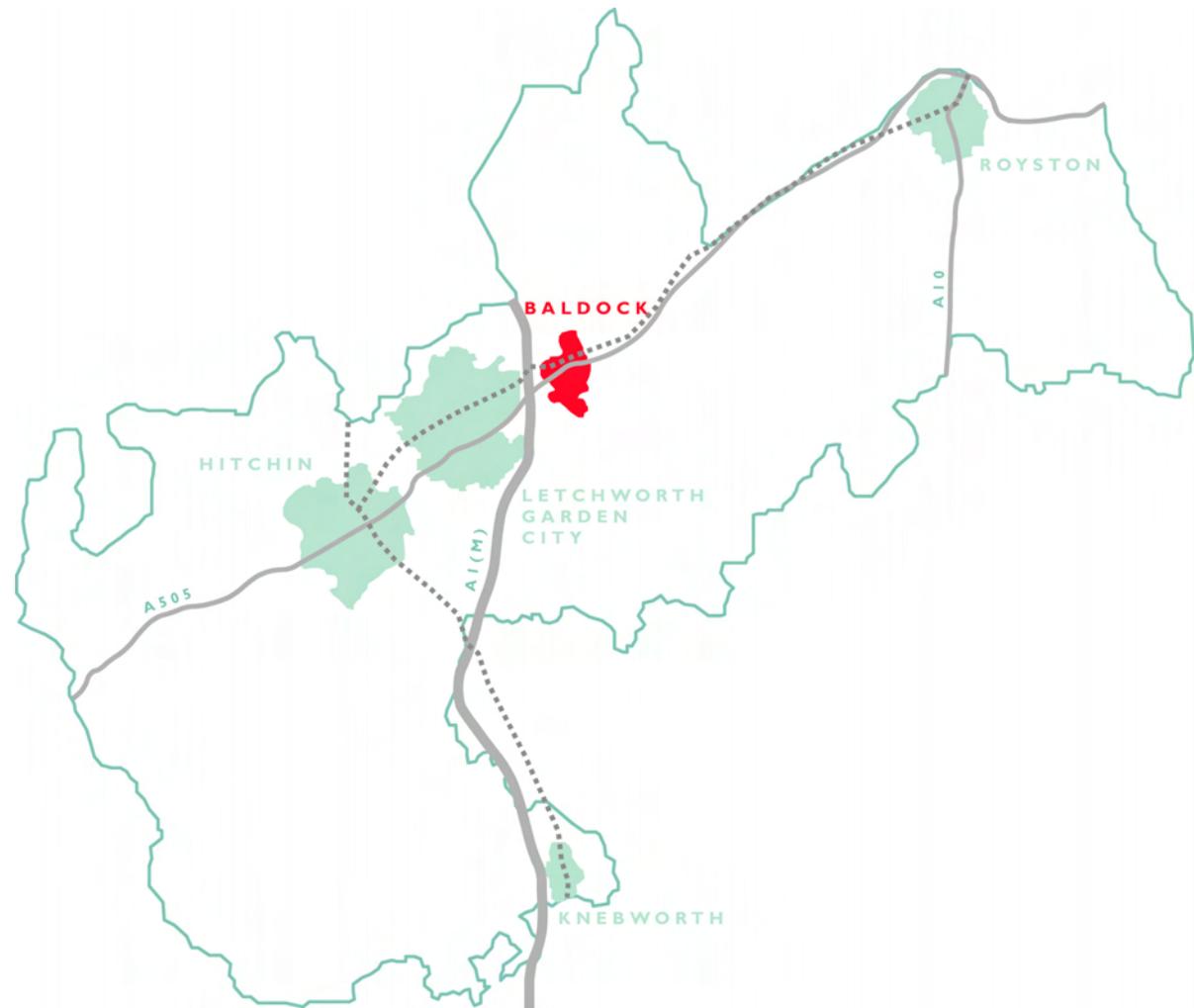
Population

With a population of 9,866 (OFNS, census 2001), Baldock is the smallest of the four North Hertfordshire towns.

Social Composition

The largest age groups in Baldock are 20-44 years old (38%), 45-64 years old (20%), and 65 years and over (16%).

1.93% of the economically active population is registered as unemployed, whilst 11.5% of the local population are retired. There are a total of 4,207 households in Baldock, of which 24% are owned outright, whilst an additional 46% owned with a mortgage or a loan.



LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

LOCAL POLICY:

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN, NO2 WITH ALTERATIONS(April 2003):

Employment:

Those employment areas in the town close to housing are regarded as unsuitable for certain industrial processes. This is particularly applicable at Bondor Business Centre, and Icknield Way. Existing uses should not be removed, but new proposals should be within the B1 Use Class.

Leisure uses:

Baldock is lacking in public and amenity space, though increases in provision in Letchworth would go some way to meeting the shortfall. Weston Woods also contributes to reducing the deficit, though it is a significant distance from the majority of the town's population.

Open space:

Open space and landscaped frontage should be retained at High Street for the purposes of amenity and the 'open space pattern'. The amenity of residents in areas BR7 and BR9 will be considerations if any alternative development is proposed in the future.

Policy 42: Shopping

Although Baldock is a historic market town, the town centre only performs a local shopping service to the local population in comparison with neighbouring towns like Letchworth. Much of the existing commercial offer is mixed with other uses, ranging from restaurants to small businesses, and domestic dwellings. The Council's planning policies are aimed at retaining this mix of uses, whilst committing to reviewing the situation after the completion of the bypass.

Policy 43 - Shopping areas in town centre:

This policy applies to five locations; the south side of Whitehorse Street, two islands of buildings in Whitehorse Street and High Street, Hitchin Street from its junction with High Street to the White Horse PH, and the High Street.

Policy 44 - Other areas in the town centre:

A large proportion of the town centre falls within the terms of this policy thanks to the diversity of land uses, which the Council is committed to maintaining.

Car Parking:

Car parking in the town centre is predominantly on street, which can affect the narrow streets around shopping areas like Sun Street.

Parking provision needs to be managed around Whitehorse Street and High Street in particular.

BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY (January 2006)

The vision for Baldock Town Centre is 'to maintain and develop an attractive, safe, accessible, vibrant and lively town centre, based on its historical context, for the local community and visitors to work, live, and relax'.

A number of key aims have been identified to achieve this vision, which include:

- Ensuring the long term economic sustainability and viability of the town centre;
- Promoting a balanced mix and range of land uses within the town centre that will contribute to its vitality and local character;
- Generate employment opportunities and housing for the benefit of the local community;
- Enhance the local environment by promoting and conserving the historic character and layout of the town, achieving good quality design and improving public spaces;
- Providing a safe and secure environment;
- Encouraging development to the highest quality achievable which complements and enhances the town's historic character;
- Improving and replacing existing community facilities;
- Improve tourism and inward investment to the town;
- Encourage greater community involvement in the life of the town centre; and
- Make the most efficient use of land, buildings, energy, and materials.

Enhancement opportunities:

The completion of the Baldock Bypass has reduced traffic levels in the town centre, and provide opportunities for physical improvements in the town centre. Areas in particular need of address include surface treatments, landscape materials, street furniture, and signage.

Streets identified for enhancement include High Street, Whitehorse Street, Hitchin Street, and Church Street. The following key principles will be taken into consideration when preparing Design Schemes:

- Retaining High Street and Whitehorse Street as wide open streets reflecting their historic character
- Including the market area as an important and robust open space
- Developing a 'pavement culture' through the introduction of small public and semi-public spaces
- Improving street surfaces and materials to ensure they are more sympathetic with the historic character of the town
- Improving pedestrian routes to create a safer and more pleasant pedestrian environment
- Enhancing existing open spaces and softening the physical environment along High Street and Whitehorse Street with additional trees and planting
- Improving the gateways at Tesco roundabout, A505

- great North Road, and Avenue Park/Knights Templar on Hitchin Street
- Improving the physical environment of Bell Row and Sun Street

A Class Land Uses:

A successful town centre requires a balanced combination of shopping, leisure, commercial, health, and other institutional uses. The right balance of commercial, residential, cultural, and tourist uses can meet the needs of the local community, business sector, and strengthen the role of Baldock in the wider area.

Baldock is the smallest retail centre amongst North Hertfordshire's four main towns, and is a minor town centre within a sub-region that includes major retail centres at Milton Keynes, Stevenage, Luton, Bedford, Cambridge and Welwyn Garden City. The centre primarily serves the daily shopping needs of the local community, and those of surrounding villages like Ashwell, Bygrave, Clothall, Wallington and Weston.

The presence of a Tesco Extra means that Baldock has a significant quantity of retail floorspace disproportionate for the size of the town, and up to 74% of visitors to the town cite 'food shopping' as the reason for their visit. However, Baldock has a relatively small quantity of comparative commercial floorspace, and has limited opportunities for new development. This means that it will be difficult to attract national multiple retailers to the town.

There is a widespread desire to maintain and enhance Baldock's shopping role, with the specialist, independent retail market identified as a potential area of growth. It is hoped that the Baldock Bypass will help to improve the town centre environment by diverting through traffic, which will in turn attract upmarket commercial investment.

The overall mix of types of use has remained relatively constant over recent years. As part of the Local Development Framework, the Council will consider introducing a robust though flexible policy for restricting non-retail uses in secondary shopping areas, to prevent undesirable concentrations of non-retail uses, and to ensure the range and choice of A1 uses is maintained.

The town centre has a high proportion of A3/A5 food and drink outlets, reflecting its past as a coach stop. The presence of so many food and drink uses could also be regarded as evidence of a relatively weak weekday economy.

Commercial/Leisure/Residential Land Uses:

Baldock has a long history of commercial, residential, retail, and institutional uses existing together in close proximity. However, the housing market and geographic position of the town has seen a drift towards residen-

tial development of any vacant or unallocated site. This could have the effect of disturbing the balance of land uses that is important to any successful town.

Development opportunities:

In accordance with government guidelines, North Hertfordshire District Council has identified the Police Station and adjacent dwelling opposite Tesco Extra as suitable for mixed-use redevelopment. This would ideally comprise of retail or food and drink uses on the ground floor, with residential units on upper floors.

Community facilities:

Baldock offers a range of community facilities, accessible to the wider community, including:

- Health and childcare facilities
- Leisure and sporting facilities
- Public conveniences
- Youth centre at Simpsons Drive Community Centre
- Emergency services
- Communal gardens
- Market area for Baldock Market

North Hertfordshire District Council produced the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for North Hertfordshire in 2001. This contains policies and objectives aimed at encouraging developments and activities appropriate to the town centre. Further consultation has identified support within the town for:

- Upgrading and modernising the community centre at Simpsons Drive
- Improving the Town Hall
- Improving and relocating existing public conveniences
- Improving and upgrading the museum, making it accessible to all

The Council has committed itself to working in partnership with the local community and local organisations to establish an appropriate use for, and ways of running, community buildings and facilities within the town centre that address aspirations across age groups. The Council will also resist the loss of community facilities, and will require the replacement of existing community facilities in development proposals.

Transport and access:

The Council is committed to ensuring the town centre is equally accessible to all forms of transport, including pedestrians, cyclists, those on public transport, and motorists. Local transport policy is organised at a strategic level through the Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan, with further detail provided in the Baldock Urban Transport Plan.

The recent construction of the bypass has reduced traffic levels within the immediate town centre. However, any new developments in the town of more than 100 dwelling units or 2,500 sq.m of B1 office space should be accompanied by a traffic impact assessment.

Parking:

The town possesses limited off-street parking provision, and a

LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

'reasonable' supply of on-street provision, with market days being particular stress periods.

Passenger transport:

The Council supports central Government initiatives to make passenger transport more attractive, ensuring access to services and facilities for all.

Baldock possesses 20 bus routes. The main bus stops can be found on Station Road, High Street, and outside the Tesco Extra store, with buses travelling to Cambridge, Hitchin, Letchworth, and Royston. The rail station is within walking distance from the town centre.

Issues around public transport provision in the town include:

- Frequency of services
- Location and infrastructure of bus stops
- Passenger information
- Quality of pedestrian links between the town centre, bus stops, and the railway station

Pedestrians:

Pedestrian routes in the town centre currently follow the highway, and can result in conflict with other forms of traffic. The Council has identified a number of improvements that could help to improve this situation:

- Enhancing the physical appearance, level surfacing, materials, and lighting of the town centre pedestrian environment
- Improving the pedestrian link between the rail station and the town centre
- Making links between Tesco Extra, Knights Templar School, the rail station, and the town centre safer
- Introducing an additional pedestrian crossing on High Street

New development should demonstrate how it strengthens and improves pedestrian links within the town centre.

Cycling:

There are currently no designated cycle routes within Baldock town centre, meaning cyclists must currently utilise the public highway network. The cycling environment in the town centre could be improved by:

- Improving safety and security for cyclists on the highway network
- Working to avoid any conflict with pedestrians on the highway
- Making greater provision for cycle parking and maintenance, and for equipment storage, within the town centre
- Encouraging businesses to provide improved cycle facilities for employees

Following a programme of physical improvements, the High Street could provide a designated cycle route through the town centre, which could then link with other cycle routes serving the town.

Community safety:

The quality and design of public spaces and buildings is a major influence on whether an environment is perceived to be safe. Active, well-lit places are generally regarded as safe, and the Council is committed to ensuring that the positive elements of the town centre are maintained in this regard.

Anti-social behaviour linked to licensed premises is perhaps the town centre's biggest community safety issue, and as a result the Council has produced four licensing objectives:

- Prevention of crime and disorder
- Public safety
- Prevention of public nuisance
- Protection of children from harm

In general terms, the Council will seek to ensure that Baldock town centre remains a safe and secure place, with low crime rates and high levels of safety. It recognises that certain issues should be addressed to achieve this, including improved street lighting and extended CCTV coverage. The Council will also look to work with local landowners and businesses to create safe and secure places as set out in Government guidance like 'Safer Places'.

Promotion and marketing:

Partnership groups and consultation exercises have produced a number of suggestions for enhancing the town's status through promotional means, including:

- Retaining High Street as a wide open space
- Respecting the town centre's historic layout and character
- Encouraging retail and specialised shops
- Improving and promoting Baldock Market
- Developing a strong Chamber of Trade
- Producing a town guide and town website
- Improving signage at major gateways to the town
- Providing good quality signage and street furniture, which makes a positive contribution
- Promoting Baldock's heritage, cultural, and leisure facilities

The Council will look to work with local private and voluntary organisations to enhance the quality of the Baldock visitor experience, with the Town Centre Partnership acting as a mechanism for local organisations to work together to prioritise and implement suggestions for raising the profile of the town. The key aim is to enhance the town's vitality, viability, and local identity.

Networking and tourism:

To achieve this aim, the Council will endeavour to ensure that relevant information on the town website is linked to all appropriate websites, and that formal

partnerships with other comparable districts are maintained and developed where desirable. The Council will also continue to work with the Association of Town Centre Managers and the Market Towns Network.

Monitoring performance:

The Baldock Action Plan((January 2007) states priorities, resources, and timescales for schemes and projects identified within the Baldock Town Centre Strategy.

The Action Plan takes its place within a broader framework of policy documents that includes the North Herts DC Local Plan, the Community Strategy for North Herts, the North Herts DC Car Parking Strategy, the North Herts Community Safety Strategy, North Herts DC licensing policy, and the North Herts Area Transport Plan.

BALDOCK - HISTORY

Though evidence has been found suggesting that a settlement has existed at Baldock since the Roman era, it is generally believed that the Knights Templar established the modern town of Baldock in the 12th century. However, the modern layout of the town primarily dates from the 16th century, when the settlement grew around the intersection between the historic Great North Road and the Icknield Way crossed, providing rest stops for travellers.

The first settlements at Baldock were east of the existing town centre, around the junction of Icknield Way and Stane Street. Recovered remains suggest Romano-British and Iron Age settlements at this location. There were also significant burial grounds nearby dating from the second to the fourth century.

The first documentary evidence of the town consists of a medieval charter by William, Earl of Pembroke. This confirmed a grant of land from an ancestor to the Knights Templar, and referred to the town as Baudac. In subsequent years the Knights Templar would fragment, and the land at Baldock was transferred to the Knights Hospitallers. From this point on, the town grew at a steady rate, becoming particularly important when it operated as the first major coaching stop on the route north from London.



Sun Street, Baldock (Courtesy of the Hertfordshire County Records Office)

The town centre features buildings from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, and features examples of Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian design, though the town centre's four main streets meet at a Roman-era junction. The town centre's predominant character is Georgian, and many buildings feature the classic aspects of Georgian architecture, such as pilasters and pediments.

There are also many older buildings, including Wynne's Almshouses on High Street, which were built in 1621. These were built for the elderly following a donation by a wealthy Londoner.

Perhaps the town's greatest feature is St Mary's Church, notable for its large 14th century west tower, capped by a traditional Hertfordshire 'spike' or steeple. The main part of the church was constructed in the 14th century, though some windows were added at a later date. Notable monuments include a 13th century marble coffin lid, and several 15th century brasses. There is also a Victorian monument to Georgiana Caldecott, who is depicted with an angel taking her soul to heaven.

Beyond the town centre, the residential areas of the town evolved at different periods, with significant portions being developed simultaneously. The area to the north of Whitehorse Street is perhaps the oldest residential part of the town, and is characterised by a dense development form and narrow streets.

Beyond the town centre there are a number of pre-war and post-war housing estates constructed between the 1930s and 1960s. These are predominantly sited across the south and west of the town, and take the form of semi-detached dwellings organised on curvilinear street patterns with significant areas of public open space and private amenity space.



Baldock, 1901

URBAN DESIGN ZONES

Urban Design zones

For the purpose of this study, Baldock was divided into four Urban Design zones with additional areas including the employment areas, open land, and local amenities noted separately. The four zones were created on the basis of such criteria as building typology, density, road morphology and historical period.

Town Centre zone

The Town Centre zone is structured around the historic core of the settlement, comprised of Hitchin Street, Whitehorse Street and High Street. The historic core is predominantly Georgian in character, the terraced buildings creating a strong building line fronting the pavement. Development is mostly three and four storeys, and the steeple of St Mary's Church to the north of the High Street is the dominant landmark. The Tesco Extra at the bottom of the High Street has been included within this zone. While North Herts District Local Plan: No.2 with Alterations does not include Tesco within the town centre, this study looks to integrate this store into the town centre and sees Tesco within the context of Baldock's history as a "market town."

The zone features a mix of uses, including A1 retail and A3/A5 food and drink outlets as well as the large convenience offer provided by Tesco.

Historic High Density zone

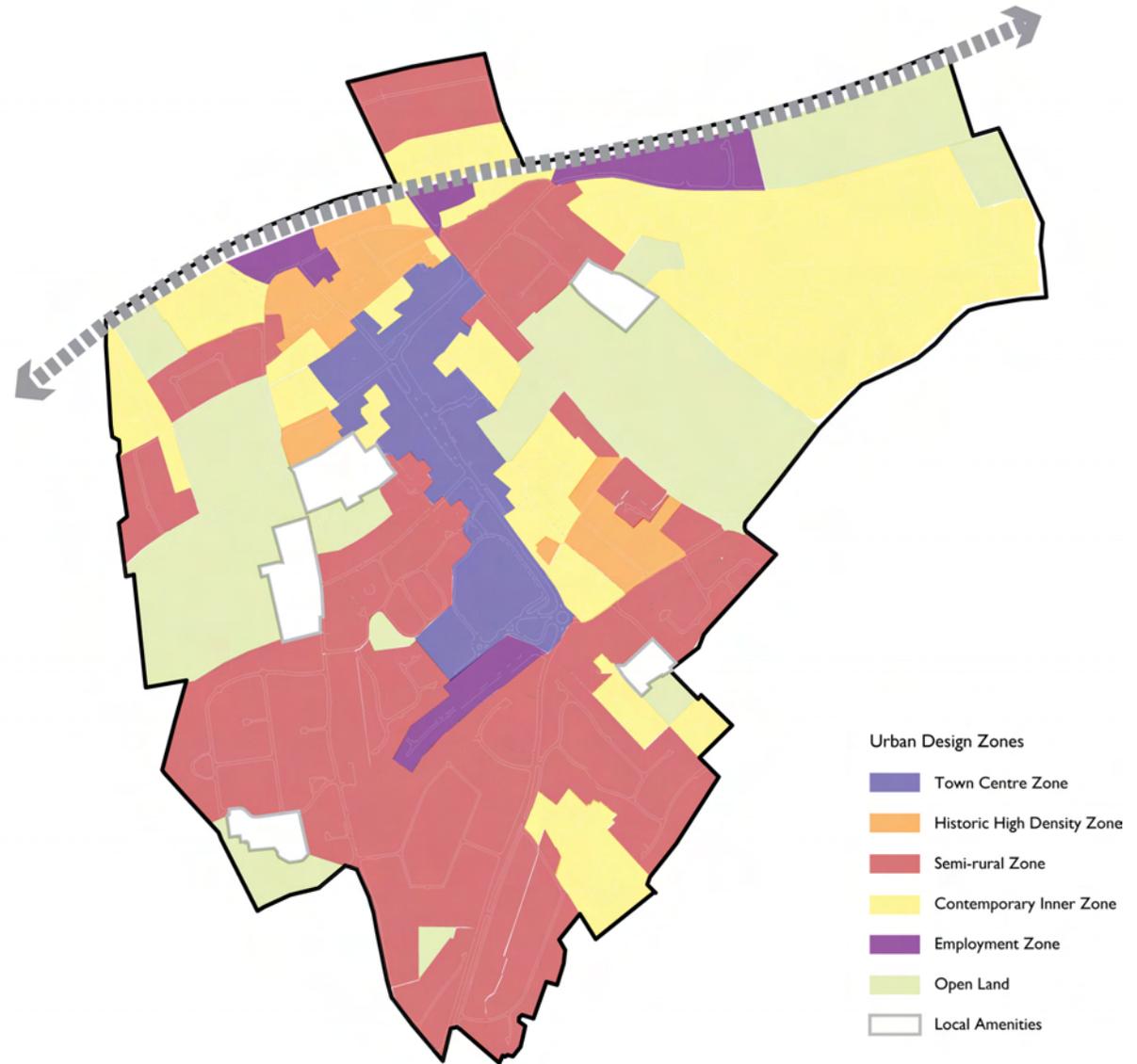
The Historic High Density zone is predominantly two-storey terrace houses along perimeter block streets. The area around, Church Street, Orchard Road, and Pond Lane is the oldest residential area of the town, and features a mixture of 17th, 18th, and 19th century terrace dwellings.

Semi-rural zone

The Semi-rural zone contains a range of residential developments dated from the 1930s through to the last decade. There are few large areas with a strong period character to them. The zone is characterised by the following predominant characteristics: low density, semi-detached and detached typologies, curvilinear streets and generous gardens accommodating mature planting and dense shrubbery. These characteristics lend a semi-rural quality to the zone, and comprise a distinct character area covering much of the southern half of the settlement.

Contemporary Inner zone

In contrast to the Semi-rural zone, the Contemporary Inner zone's main features are medium to high densities, comprising a wide range of typologies that includes close-knit detached houses and blocks of flats. Street layouts are often informal, including cul-de-sacs. The houses are often set in open green areas, rather than being surrounded by mature trees or shrubs.



Baldock Urban Design zones

URBAN DESIGN ZONES

Employment area

The employment area covers the industrial estate adjacent to the Tesco, as well as three sites abutting the railway.

Open Space

There are several areas of open space, including publicly accessible fields, parks, archaeological sites and playing fields, as well as the two arable fields adjacent to Clothall Road.

Local Amenities

Local amenities include schools, sports facilities, leisure centres and health facilities.

STRATEGY PLAN and SETTLEMENT PRINCIPLES

Urban Design Zones

A Town Centre zone

Baldock is a small market town with a very fine historic core and a large Tesco Extra supermarket situated at the southern end of the High Street. Although the historic town centre and Tesco are considered to be separate parts of the settlement, they are linked in terms of the wider settlement's retail offer, and its future as a successful market town. Urban design strategies should therefore be directed at integration to benefit the historic town centre.

While Tesco gives Baldock a strong convenience retail offer, the town's comparison retail offer is weak. Public realm enhancements, including an improved pedestrian link between Tesco and the High Street, could connect the supermarket's shoppers with the town centre's specialist retailers.

The historic core could be enhanced through improvements to the pedestrian environment, such as wider pavements, appropriate street lamps and signs, and planting along pavements. A "pavement culture" that takes advantage of the wide High Street could be fostered, there to draw people there.

The upper floors of buildings along the High Street should accommodate residential land uses, to help create a vibrant town centre, and the mews-type residential developments occurring in the historic coach courtyards should be encouraged. These should have a mercantile, rather than domestic theme, reflecting the area's working past.

B Historic High Density zone

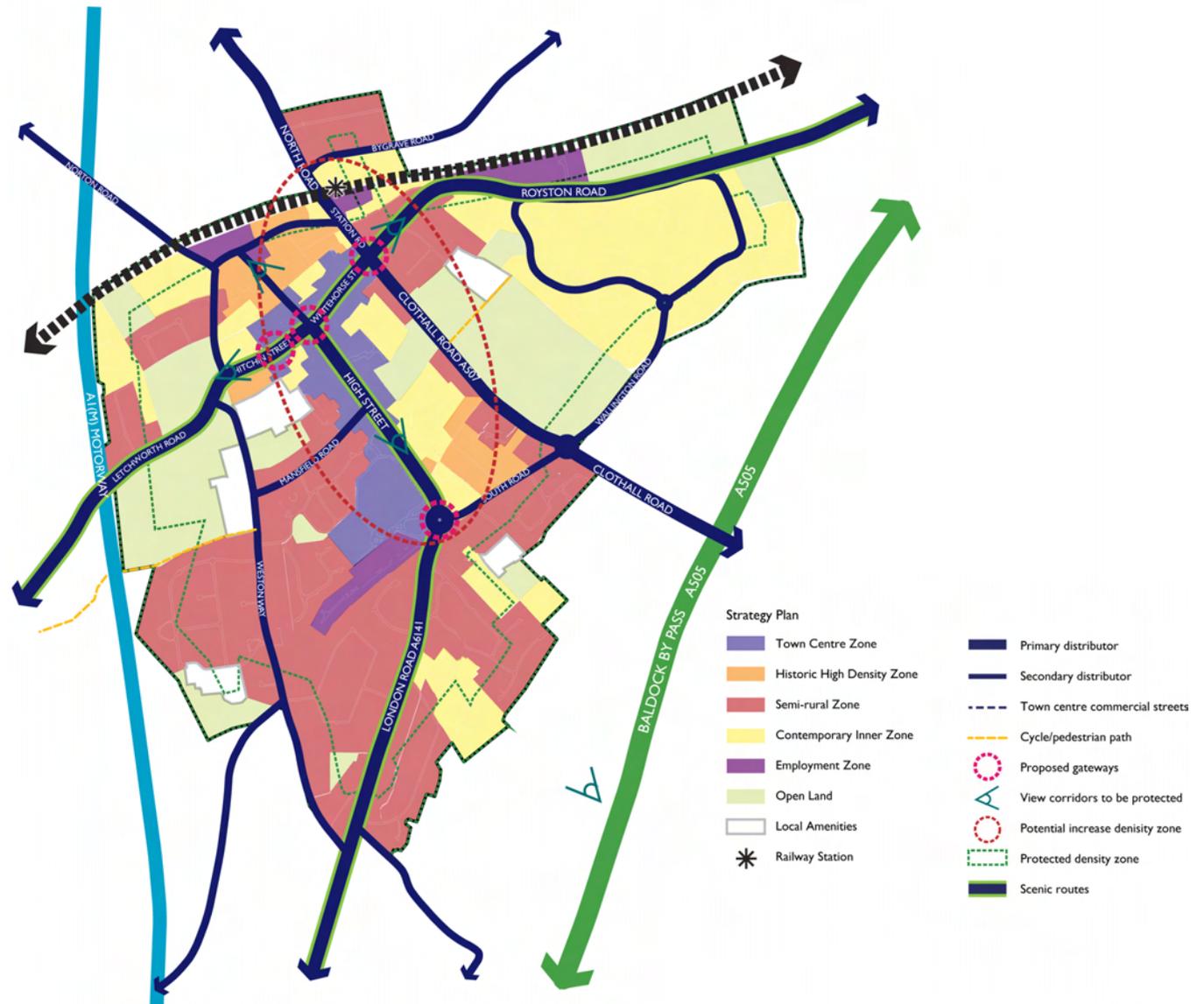
Although much of the Victorian character of the zone has been diluted by later infill, it retains its distinctiveness due to common building heights, strong building lines and a formal grid layout. These qualities should be preserved across the zone. Three-storey buildings could potentially be suitable in the zone, so long as they do not obscure sightlines between the railway and St Mary's Church.

C Semi-rural zone

The semi-rural character of this zone is shaped by the zone's lower densities and generous gardens with shrubs and mature trees. Forming a large block of broadly uniform character covering the southern half of the settlement, the semi-rural qualities of the zone should be pursued and enhanced. This would provide a structure to Baldock comprised of contrasting zones, a lower density semi-rural area to the south of the town centre, and higher density area adjacent to the town centre and the railway station.

D Contemporary Inner zone

While this zone includes many semi-detached and detached houses in addition to blocks of flats, the



Settlement-wide principles for Baldock

STRATEGY PLAN and SETTLEMENT PRINCIPLES

close-knit clustering of houses, short setbacks and contemporary materials and designs defines this higher density zone. Developments have open plan front gardens and are often set in large open spaces with small trees, rather than dense shrubbery and foliage. The contrast between this zone and the semi-rural zone should be maintained.

Cul-de-sacs and informal street layouts hinder pedestrian and motorist movement and create large blank frontages formed by rear garden fences along streets.

E Potential Increased Density sites

An area for increased density should be structured around the station and the Town Centre zone, with high densities maintained in the Town Centre zone, and densities potentially increased in areas adjacent to the town centre and the station. Higher densities would support local shops and encourage walking to the railway station.

Circulation

F The primary distributors London Road/High Street and Letchworth Road/Royston Road should facilitate through traffic, but should not create barriers to pedestrian movement around the Town Centre zone.

G Due to the volume of traffic that the main roads had been handling prior to the completion of the Baldock Bypass, there is significant scope for new pedestrian oriented public realm improvements and additional crossing point around the High Street, Hitchin Street and Whitehorse Street.

H Pedestrian and cycle routes should be protected and enhanced throughout the settlement to encourage sustainable transport choices for those travelling to the railway station, and within Baldock in general.

I The connection between Tesco and the historic core of Baldock is a critical link to be developed. Improvements to this connection could potentially bring huge benefits to the historic core and to the settlement as a whole.

J Several barriers were identified in Baldock. Sale drive was noted by many participants, and opportunities should be sought to improve permeability between this residential development and Royston Road. While the A1(M) was noted as a barrier at the consultation, this also acts as a boundary protecting Baldock's separation from neighbouring Letchworth. Pedestrian links between Letchworth and Baldock could be improved.

Views

K Views along the historic streets in the town centre

and to St Mary's Church should be protected. The view across the settlement from Weston Hills is a particularly strong view which should be maintained through close consideration of building heights. St Mary's Church should remain the dominant landmark at the centre of the town, embodying Baldock's image as a medieval market town.

Legibility

L High Street

The width of Baldock's medieval High Street should be maintained and considered as a significant event space for the weekly markets and seasonal activities.

M Gateways

The approaches to Baldock's historic core should be treated as significant gateways that enhance the experience of arrival in the town centre. Gateways should be identified as the western end of Hitchin Street, the eastern end of Whitehorse Street, and the High Street/London Road roundabout.

N Scenic routes

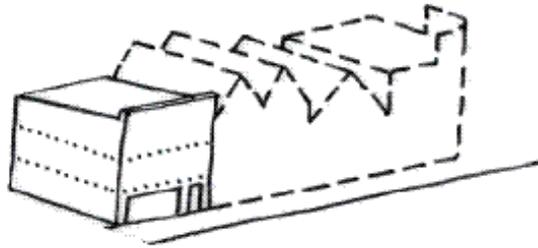
The important access routes into Baldock are Letchworth Road/Royston Road and High Street/London Road. These are lined with residential uses and short setbacks and should be characterised as scenic routes. With the completion of the Baldock Bypass and reduced traffic flows, there is considerable scope to make them particularly amenable to pedestrians and cyclists with planting, clear cycle routes and wide pavements.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES:TOWN CENTRE ZONE

	Criteria		Page Reference	Photo Reference
Making places	Building types	The town centre contains a large majority of town houses built on small plots as continuous frontages. These should dictate the scale and typology of new build in the zone.	19	
	Materials / architectural styles	The historic fabric of the Town Centre zone is one of Baldock's most important features and contributes to the character of the settlement. New buildings in the zone should enhance the existing fabric rather than compete with it through the use of similar materials and sympathetic designs.	21	3-5
	Listed buildings/ Conservation Area	The Conservation Area covers the Town Centre zone excluding Tesco, safeguarding Baldock's medieval layouts and plots, the grade A listed St Mary's Church and several Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings. This is therefore a sensitive area for new architecture, and an area where public realm quality is more noticeable. The public realm should be enhanced to complement the high quality of architecture in the Conservation Area.	23-24	
	Building heights and massing	Baldock's skyline is relatively consistent, drawing out the spire of St Mary's Church as the dominant local landmark, and creating pleasing views from Weston Hills and from the approach to the town by train. This consistency should not be broken by inappropriately tall buildings, particularly around the church where such developments might compete with the church as the dominant landmark. The Town Centre zone is the most suitable area of the settlement for buildings of three and four storeys, as this adds to the legibility of the settlement.	25	7-9
	Density	High densities are suitable within the Town Centre zone, and could accommodate a mix of uses, with retail at ground floor level and residential above ground, or residential uses in mews-type development through the town's many coach arches. These developments should replicate the town's mercantile ambience beyond frontages.	26	11-13
	Topography	Baldock's relatively flat topography increases the importance of vistas within the settlement. Views and vistas within the Town Centre zone should be protected, particularly those along the Historic streets noted as favourite views at the consultation event. Taller building heights in the Town Centre zone are visible from Weston Hills and could be continued in new developments, enhancing the image of the town.	27	15
Continuity and enclosure	Town Morphology	Baldock's morphology comprises a visible link with the past in the Town Centre zone. The historic layout should be preserved, and the zone's historic pedestrian permeability protected and enhanced.	28	
	Building lines, setbacks and gaps	The continuous frontages which line many of the streets in the town centre create very strong building lines. New buildings should maintain continuous frontages where appropriate. High density infill and block development in the zone should create strong building lines with continuous frontages, short, consistent setbacks and regular gaps.	30	17-19
	Building orientation	Baldock Town Centre is characterised by active street frontages. New frontages should be directed towards the street.	32	21-23
	Pavements	Pavements are a weak feature of the Town Centre zone at present, and could be given better surface treatments. Public realm enhancements could potentially bring considerable benefits to residents and visitors by promoting a more pedestrian friendly environment.	33	25
	Open space	The Town Centre zone lacks large public green space, but the High Street and the Tesco car parking areas could potentially allow for new and very successful hard-landscaped spaces, as could the corner of Whitehorse Street/Sun horse street.	34-35	27-28
Making connections	Land use	The Town Centre contains a disproportionately large numbers of convenience retail and A3 - A5 land uses. Specialist comparison retail could attract Baldock's convenience retail customers and build off of Tesco's draw, supported by a café culture based on existing A3 - A5 uses.	37	
	Circulation, demand and linkages	The recent completion of the Baldock Bypass and the permeability of Baldock's historic centre make the town well suited to pedestrian oriented public realm improvements.	39	30-31
	Parking	Parking in the Town Centre zone conflicts with pedestrian and market use there. The generous width of the High Street and the large car parking space offered by Tesco should be considered as opportunity sites to link with new public open spaces.	41	33-36
Quality of the public realm	Streetscape elements	Streetscape elements in the town centre are weak compared with the fine architecture there. Opportunities should be sought to upgrade the street furniture and reduce unnecessary traffic signage in order create a more attractive and legible town centre.	42	39-40
	Security	The town centre strategy has acknowledged the issue of anti-social behaviour in Baldock. Urban Design should be seen as one of many ways of addressing this; streets and alleyways should be well lit, and narrow, alleyways covered by CCTV.	44	42

CASE STUDIES:TOWN CENTRE ZONE - INFILL SITES

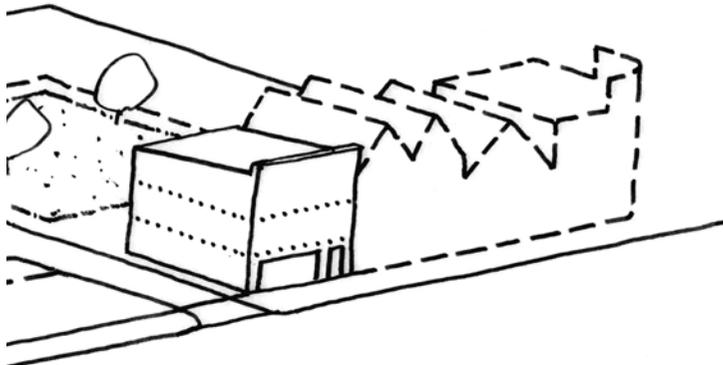
This page considers the typical typology of the Town Centre Zone.



CASE STUDY TCI:Typical density

This case study shows a three-storey infill building with no setback. This approach could apply to any area within the town centre. It is assumed that car parking would occur on-street or in nearby existing car parks.

CASE STUDIES:TOWN CENTRE ZONE - BLOCK SITES



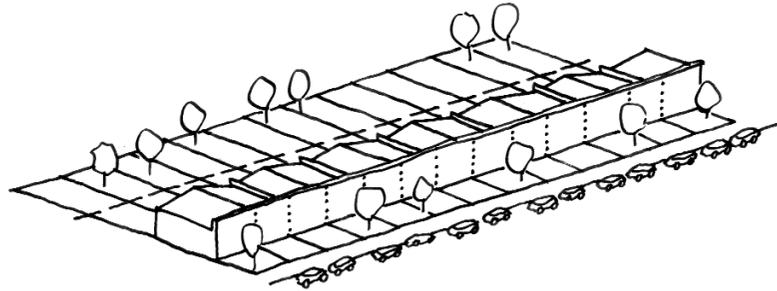
CASE STUDY TCI:Typical density

This case study shows a three-storey building frontage. New blocks should match typical dimensions, including the demarcation of plots within blocks.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES: HISTORIC HIGH DENSITY ZONE

	Criteria	Guidelines	Page Reference	Photo Reference
Making places	Building types	The Historic High Density zone contains differing typologies including terraced, semi-detached and detached houses. Although the zone contains much later infill, this is usually consistent with existing scales and typologies, helping to preserve the character of the zone's Victorian streets. This should be continued. Higher density terrace housing should be encouraged.	20	
	Materials / architectural styles	Properties in this zone are usually built of red and yellow brick and include high levels of brick detailing. These characteristics should be incorporated into new properties in the zone.	22	3-5
	Listed buildings/ Conservation Area	N/A		
	Building heights and massing	Two storeys are standard across the zone. Infill should respect this, although there is some scope to accommodate higher densities in three storey houses in a 'block-sized' site scale.	25	7-9
	Density	The Historic High Density zone is of a medium to high density, particularly in terraced areas. The zone as a whole would be suited to high densities, and is a sustainable location due to its proximity to the station and the town centre.	26	11-13
	Topography	The Historic High Density zone in Baldock is relatively flat and allows pleasing views from the railway to the church. These views should not be obstructed.	27	15
Continuity and enclosure	Morphology	The Victorian street grid is permeable, and cul-de-sac development should be avoided as it detracts from this.	28-29	
	Building lines, setbacks and gaps	Setbacks in this zone should be short and consistent, maintaining the strong building lines across the zone.	31	17-19
	Building orientation	Buildings and entrances should front the street to increase natural surveillance of the zone.	32	21-23
	Pavements	Pavements in the Historic High Density zone are often narrow, and roads can become congested with on-street parking. This issue should be addressed with parking, traffic flow and sustainable transport strategies. Pavements should be maintained to encourage pedestrian movement.	33	25
	Open Space	Links to open space to the north and south-west of the zone should be protected and enhanced. Front gardens should be protected and the paving of them discouraged as a means of absorbing stormwater runoff and promoting greenery.	34-35	27-28
Making connections	Circulation, demand and linkages	Victorian streets are narrow and accommodate commuter parking in addition to residential parking, restricting flow through the zone. This should be addressed with a parking strategy. The pedestrian flow should be encouraged by maintaining the pedestrian public realm to a high quality, with good paving and planting.	37	
	Parking	Parking within the Historic High Density Zone is predominantly on-street, causing congestion to some streets. This problem should be tackled as part of a wider parking strategy within Baldock, and communal parking areas.	39	30-31
	Land use	N/A	41	33-36
Quality of the public realm	Streetscape elements	High walls and fences should be discouraged along street fronts to promote natural surveillance and green front gardens. Paving should be well maintained.	42	39-40
	Security	Security within this zone is enhanced by natural surveillance from high densities.	44	42

CASE STUDIES: HISTORIC HIGH DENSITY ZONE - INFILL SITES

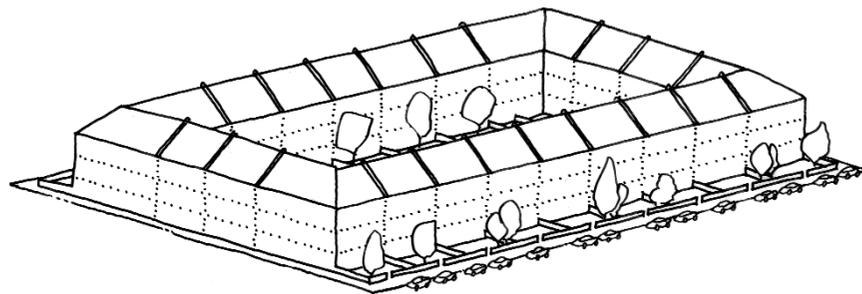


CASE STUDY HHD1: Typical density

This case study shows terraced housing characteristic of the victorian streets. Infill should repeat typical typologies.

CASE STUDIES: HISTORIC HIGH DENSITY ZONE - BLOCK SITES

This case study considers enhanced possibilities for block site development within or adjacent to the Historic High Density Zone.



CASE STUDY HHD2: Enhanced density.

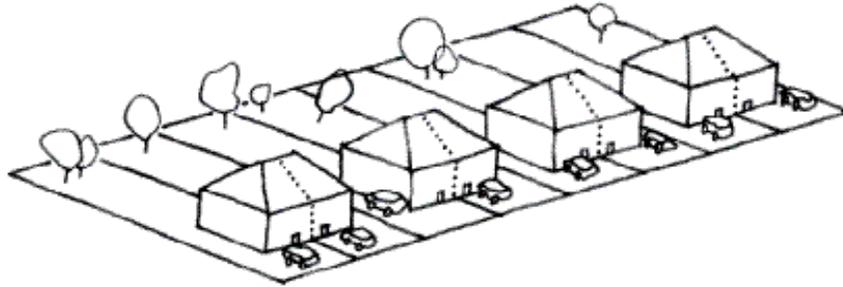
This case study shows three-storey terrace perimeter blocks where car parking would occur off-street within the block. Three storey dwellings could place higher densities near the town centre and the station, but should remain inconspicuous within the building heights of the zone as a whole.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES: SEMI-RURAL ZONE

	Criteria	Guidelines	Page Reference	Photo Reference
Making places	Building types	The main typology in this zone is currently semi-detached and detached houses, set in generous gardens. Semi-detached houses should be encouraged in any future development.	20	
	Materials / architectural styles	Due to significant amounts of infill in neighbourhoods across Baldock, there are few neighbourhoods of period distinction to be respected in any new build, and neighbourhoods range in age across the zone. Materials should reflect those used for the majority of houses across the zone; the use of brick with a medium-high level of detailing. Scale and density should be respected as this contributes to the semi-rural character of the zone.	22	3-5
	Listed buildings/ Conservation Area	N/A		
	Building heights and massing	Building heights should be of two storeys.	25	7-9
	Density	Lower and consistent densities are essential to the spacious character of some parts of this zone and should be respected. Higher densities are appropriate where the zone neighbours the Town Centre zone.	26	11-13
	Topography	The semi-rural zone is largely flat, with a slight rise at its southern boundary. There are views across the zone from Weston Hills which should be protected.	27	15
Continuity and enclosure	Morphology	The majority of the semi-rural zone lies to the south of the settlement. Wide streets contribute to the open and semi-rural character of the zone and should be retained.	28-29	
	Building lines, set-backs and gaps	In order to create strong building lines in a low density area, buildings should face the street, gaps should be regular and set-backs even.	31	17-19
	Building orientation	Buildings should front the street to increase natural surveillance of the zone. High hedges and timber fences are discouraged.	32	21-23
	Pavements	Lower densities in the zone provide space for wide pavements. Advantage should be taken of this space to provide green verges and mature planting to improve the pedestrian environment in the zone and to increase capacity for natural habitats across the settlement.	33	25
	Open Space	Links from the zone into the countryside should be protected and enhanced, particularly those leading to the southeast of the settlement where the nearest open land lies.	34-35	27-28
Making connections	Circulation, demand and linkages	Street layouts should be formal, using geometric networks to create permeable neighbourhoods.	37	
	Parking	Streets should be wide in order to accommodate on-street parking without restricting flow.	39	30-31
	Land use	N/A	41	33-36
Quality of the public realm	Streetscape elements	The zone is characterised by dense shrubbery and mature trees, contributing to its semi-rural feel. Space should be provided to accommodate shrubs and mature trees in future development.	42	39-40
	Security	High hedges in medium-sized front gardens reduce visual connectivity between the public and private realm, and should be discouraged.	44	42

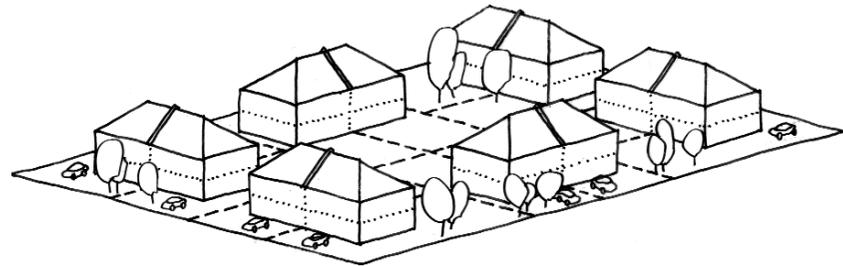
SEMI-RURAL ZONE - INFILL SITES

These case studies demonstrate the dominant typology of the Low Density Mixed Residential Zone, and how densities within it could be increased in the second of the two.



CASE STUDY SR1: Typical density

This case study shows two-storey semi-detached housing. Infill in these areas should respect existing typology.



CASE STUDY SR1: Enhanced density

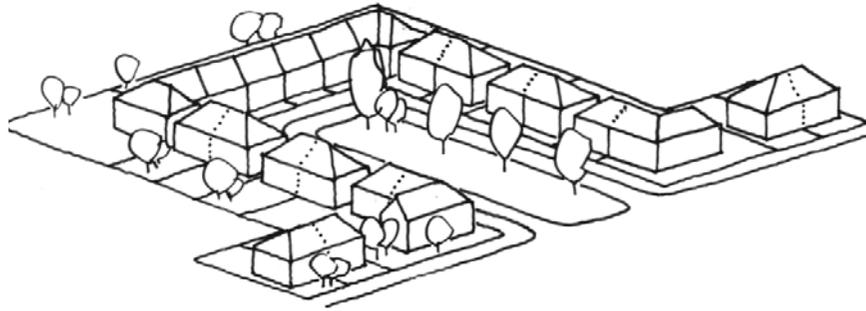
This case study shows two-storey semi-detached houses with on-site parking, laid out to suit a block site in the Semi-rural zone.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES: CONTEMPORARY INNER ZONE

	Criteria	Guidelines	Page Reference	Photo Reference
Making places	Building types	The main typologies in this zone are close-knit detached and semi-detached buildings. Due to the zone's close-knit qualities, high densities among these typologies may allow for terracing without detracting from the existing neighbourhood character. Blocks of flats are suitable, but should contribute to the building lines within the streetscape rather than standing away from the street as isolated blocks.	20	
	Materials / architectural styles	High levels of detailing in this zone are to be encouraged, along with the use of high quality, and where possible, local materials.	22	3-5
	Listed buildings/ Conservation Area	N/A		
	Building heights and massing	Two and three storeys are common in the zone. Three storeys could therefore accommodate higher densities in parts of the zone surrounding the town centre zone.	25	7-9
	Density	The Contemporary Inner zone should be characterised by medium to high densities.	26	11-13
	Topography	Two and three storey buildings should be designed so as to create the perception of consistent building heights along each street.	27	15
Continuity and enclosure	Morphology	The Contemporary Inner zone is fragmented around Baldock and often incorporates cul-de-sac development. Cul-de-sacs should be avoided and future developments should be well integrated into the surrounding street network, so as to be as permeable as possible.	28-29	
	Building lines, setbacks and gaps	Higher densities should be seen as an opportunity to create strong building lines. Informal site layouts and irregular setbacks should be avoided.	31	17-19
	Building orientation	Buildings should front the street to create active frontages. Houses set perpendicular to the street are to be discouraged.	32	21-23
	Pavements	All streets should have well maintained pavements of a generous width. Soft landscaping should enhance the pedestrian environment.	33	25
	Open Space	Access routes to open space should be provided. Houses should be well integrated into open spaces surrounding them. Back to back rear gardens should be encouraged to facilitate privacy and continuous habitat areas.	34-35	27-28
Making connections	Circulation, demand and linkages	Pedestrian and cycle routes should be laid through the zone to provide linkages between the town centre and settlement fringe.	37	
	Parking	Off-street parking is encouraged to ensure free flow through the zone. Where new developments involve the creation of a new street, road widths should allow for proper on-street parking.	39	30-31
	Land use	This zone is and should remain residential.	41	33-36
Quality of the public realm	Streetscape elements	Soft landscaping and planting should be provided where space allows in order to provide for wild habitats and to create a high quality environment for pedestrians.	42	39-40
	Security	Security within this zone is enhanced by natural surveillance from high densities. Streets should be well maintained as a high quality public realm can discourage anti-social behaviour. Back and front garden fences along streets should be discouraged to promote natural surveillance.	44	42

CASE STUDIES: CONTEMPORARY INNER ZONE - INFILL SITES

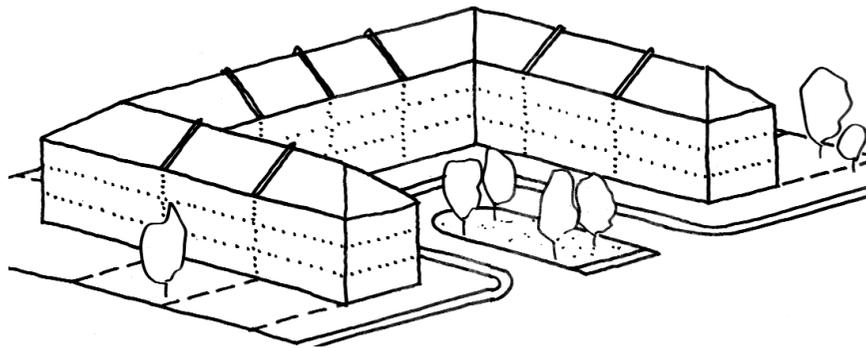
This page considers the typical typologies of the Contemporary Inner zone.



CASE STUDY CII: Typical density

This case study represents the two-storey high density mixture of detached and semi-detached houses found in the Contemporary Inner Zone. Infill should repeat heights, small gaps and short setbacks.

CASE STUDIES: CONTEMPORARY INNER ZONE - BLOCK SITES



CASE STUDY CII: Enhanced Density

Higher densities could be accommodated in three storey blocks in the Contemporary Inner zone. Blocks should contribute to the streetscape in terms of building lines and orientation.

MAKING PLACES

BUILDING TYPES

Town Centre zone

The Town Centre zone is comprised of large, grand town houses, timberframed houses built on narrower plots as well as large civic buildings. These form a semi-continuous frontage along High Street, Hitchin Street and Whitehorse Street, with detached buildings at the outer edges of the zone. At the southern end of the zone, the Tesco supermarket occupies a large warehouse building.

There are a number of recent mews developments in the town centre which are of high density and a range of quality.

Historic High Density zone

This zone is made up of Victorian terraces, detached and semi-detached houses plus a significant amount of later infill, including flats. There is much infill on Orchard Road and Roman Way.

Semi-rural zone

This zone is predominantly made up of semi-detached and detached houses set in spacious gardens. These types span several historical periods, including inter-war, post-war and recent suburban developments. There are blocks of flats in a number of places such as Hillcrest and the end of Woodland Way.

Contemporary Inner zone

Houses in this zone are laid out at high densities, mostly as terraces or close-knit detached properties. There are flats at Thurnall Close.

KEY ISSUES

MPI: BUILDING TYPES

MPIA

The building typologies in the the Town Centre zone give it a homogenous and character

MPIB

The Semi-rural zone is characterised by widely spaced detached and semi-detached buildings, in contrast to the Contemporary Inner zone where close-knit detached and terraced houses are common.

MPI C

The emerging mews typologies in the town centre creates significant new density within the centre.



1. Several large Georgian properties within the Town Centre zone give the area a grand character.



2. A Victorian terrace (with recent cladding).



3. Generously spaced detached and semi-detached houses (these converted into maisonettes) are characteristic of the Semi-rural zone.



4. Close-knit semi-detached housing in the Contemporary Inner zone.

MAKING PLACES

MATERIALS / ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

Town Centre zone

Baldock's town centre is lined with fine historic buildings. The majority are of the 18th century, fronted with red brick, classical facades, plus some earlier timber-framed houses with rendered fronts. Nineteenth century developments include Butterfield House, employing a modified Gothic style of red brick with bands of black brick, and the Town Hall with a prominent tower sited at the crossroads. St Mary's Church dates from the 14th and 15th centuries, the tower supporting a 'Hertfordshire spike'. Several houses have carriage arches as well as long rear wings as a legacy of Baldock's function as a stage coach stop between London and the north.

Tesco is housed in the former Kayser Bondor Stocking factory, fronted with an Art Deco facade of a high level of detailing.

Historic High Density zone

This zone contains Victorian development as well as much later infill. Houses are mostly of red and yellow brick, with high levels of brick detailing, especially around windows and doors.



1. Elegantly decorated eaves supporting a projected first floor, common among timber framed houses in the Town Centre zone.



2. Tudor timber frame construction in Baldock town centre.

KEY ISSUES

MP2: MATERIALS/ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

MP2A

The Town Centre zone possesses some very fine architecture, particularly from the 18th century.

MP2B

Carriage arches are common in Baldock, a distinctive feature of the town, and one which clearly reveals its history.

MP2C

There are few areas of distinctive historic periods in the outer zones due to the amount of infill they accommodate.



3. Traditional stonework stone and flint at St Mary's Church and the 'Hertfordshire spike'.



4. The high level of detailing on the Art Deco Kayser Bondor building, Town Centre zone.

MAKING PLACES
MATERIALS / ARCHITECTURAL
STYLES

Semi-rural zone

This zone contains primarily inter-war and semi-detached houses, built of brick and plainly rendered in cream colours. Roofs are pitched and hipped, and often long so as to be a prominent feature of the building, sometimes with large gables facing the street. Upper storeys often have wide, flat windows and recessed doorways.

There are also more modern, rendered, semi-detached houses with bay windows and tile and plastic cladding. At Hillcrest, houses are of brick in a range of pale oranges. There are also timber clad brown brick flats.

Contemporary Inner zone

Houses in this zone are of brick in varying tones, including brown, orange and lighter yellows. They often have canopies over front doors, and some have rendered gables or pediments. The majority are plain, but the occasional house has brick detailing. Most roofs are pitched, with the occasional half-hipped roof, and most are covered with concrete tiles.



5. Decorative brickwork on residential dwellings at Pembroke Road, Historic High Density zone.



6. Decorative pattern on traditional render in the town centre



7. Brick semi-detached dwellings typical of newer residential development at Yeomanry Drive.



8. Stock brick semi-detached dwellings are found in many of the residential areas to the east and north-east of the town centre.

MAKING PLACES

LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

Town Centre zone

The Baldock Conservation Area was designated in June 1970 and was recently reviewed in June 2003. The Conservation Area is a fine example of a traditional Georgian market town and coach stop. The area is characterised by the extremely wide High Street, which has traditionally accommodated through traffic and commercial uses associated with the Great North Road.

A variety of buildings line the High Street, with the majority developed as a terrace within a strong building line. Despite the width of the High Street, a sense of enclosure is generated by the consistent 3-4 storey building height, which has been maintained by development from all eras.

The section of the Conservation Area around Church Street has a different character, and primarily consists of historic residential dwellings within a tight urban grain. A variety of building styles are present, and many buildings feature strong colour schemes, which should be protected into the future. As with the High Street, this area features a strong building line and consistent building heights, which generate a strong sense of enclosure. There are also several listed buildings in this area.

St Mary's Church is also located within the Conservation Area, and represents the town's most readily identifiable landmark. Both the church and its setting should be protected, with particular attention



Typical listed Georgian building on Whitehorse Street



17th Century alms house on the High Street, still utilised as residential accommodation.

KEY ISSUES

MP3: LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

MP3A

Baldock's medieval street layout and fine architecture contribute significantly to the town's character by creating beautiful enclosed linear spaces at the heart of the town along High Street, Hitchin Street and Whitehorse Street.

MP3B

The unusual width of the High Street is a rare feature and adds to Baldock's identity and distinctiveness as a settlement.

MP3C

Poor quality of street furniture and shopfronts in the Conservation Area detracts from the fine architecture there.



Traditional shop front in the Historic High Density zone north of Church Street.



Diverse building designs united within a regular building line in the Historic High Density zone.

MAKING PLACES

LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS

given to key views of the tower.

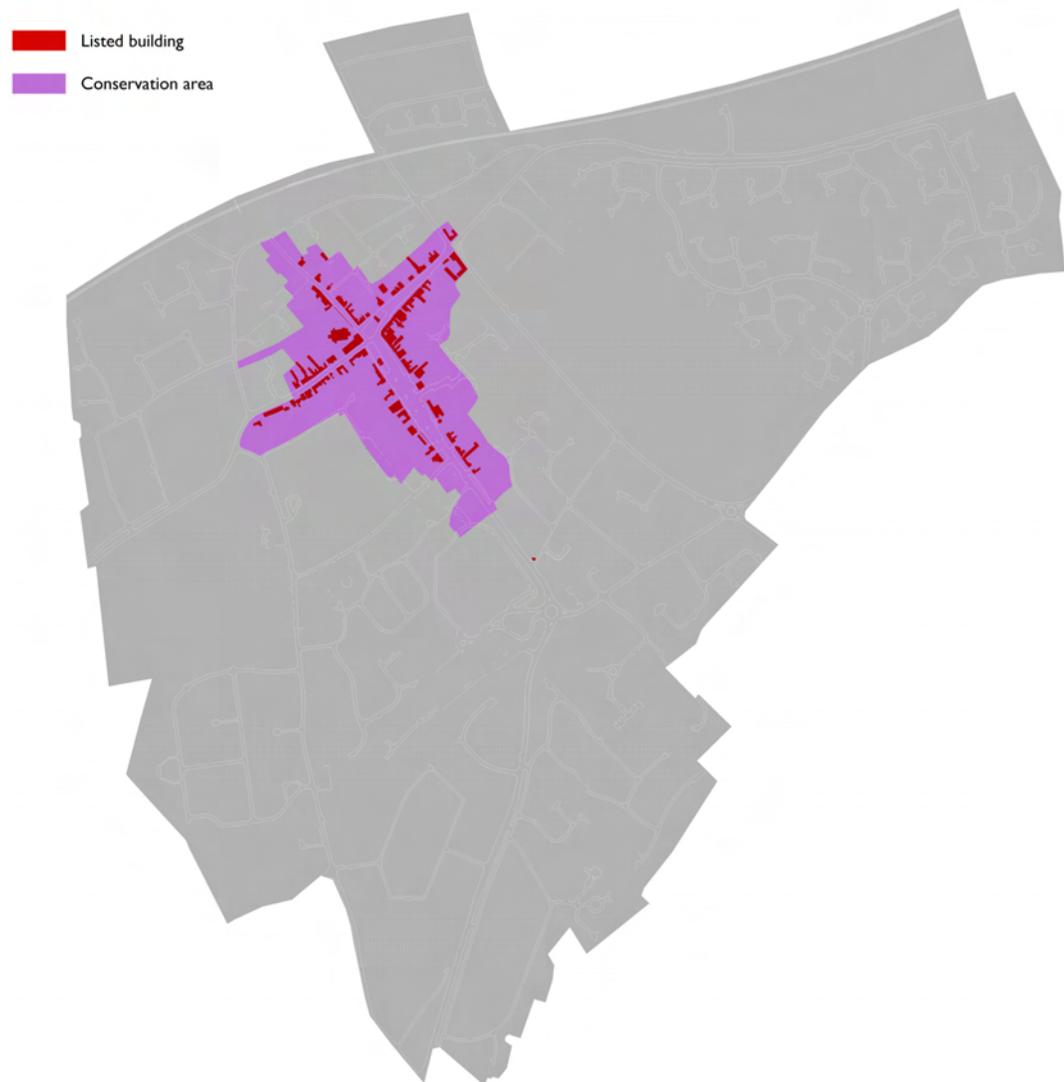
The Baldock Conservation Area has a strong and distinctive streetscape, which must be protected if the town is to retain its unique character. Baldock's origins as a market town are evident in its wide High Street, and its medieval importance is made clear in the surviving narrow plots. There are several fine buildings in the Conservation Area. St Mary's Church, Grade A listed, is of the 14th and 15th centuries, its tower supporting a 'Hertfordshire Spike'. The High Street contains several Grade II* Georgian town houses, with fine frontages paid for with wealth from the coaching industry. There are also Grade II* listed properties in Whitehorse Street, Church Street and Hitchin Street. Butterfield House is located at the latter end and was built in red brick with black brick details in the 19th century.

Streetscape furniture

Street furniture could be upgraded to reflect the fine qualities of the Listed structures in the Conservation Area.

Shop fronts

There is a mixture of shop fronts within Baldock town centre Conservation Area, ranging from contemporary commercial shop fronts to more traditional designs. The Conservation Area would undoubtedly benefit from a coherent and uniform shop front design strategy, which would ensure high standards, and attempt to preserve the character of the Conservation Area.



Baldock's Conservation Area

MAKING PLACES

BUILDING HEIGHTS AND MASSING

Town Centre zone

The majority of Baldock has developed at a low-rise scale, predominantly featuring two-storey dwellings. However, within the town centre, and in particular along the High Street, there are numerous buildings of 3 and 4 storeys, which create a denser feel in the central part of the town, especially around the High Street/Hitchin Street/Whitehorse Street junction. The taller buildings here relate well to the wider high street and make the Town Centre zone very legible as the heart of the settlement.

There are some recently built three storey flats at the eastern end of Whitehorse Street.

Historic High Density zone

Victorian properties within this zone are two storey. Most of the later infill in the zone respects this.

Semi-rural zone

Houses from the inter-war and post-war period are characteristically two-storey and of a domestic scale. There are some taller buildings to the south of the zone, near Woodland Way.

Contemporary Inner zone

The vast majority of development found in this zone is of two storeys, along with some bungalow infill.



1. Taller buildings in the Town Centre zone, and at the top end of High Street in particular, enhance Baldock's legibility.



2. Two-storey Victorian properties create consistent building heights in the majority of the Historic High Density zone.

KEY ISSUES

MP4: BUILDING HEIGHTS AND MASSING

MP4A

With the exception of the town centre, Baldock has developed to consistent building heights of two storeys creating a pleasing unity about the town as a whole.

MP4B

The taller buildings at the town centre aid the overall legibility of Baldock.



3. The Semi-rural zone - two storeys with the occasional bungalow.



4. Two-storeys are common across the Contemporary Inner zone, although there are also three-storey houses and apartments.

MAKING PLACES TOPOGRAPHY

Baldock is set on relatively flat ground, with a rise to the south. This makes street-long vistas important in the absence of roofscape views, particularly those penetrating right into the centre. Views of Baldock are strong when approaching the town by train, where the flat topography is matched by a flat roofscape, with a slight rise in building heights around the town centre, crowned by the 'Hertfordshire spike' on top of St Mary's Church tower. This can also be observed from Weston Hills to the south of the settlement.

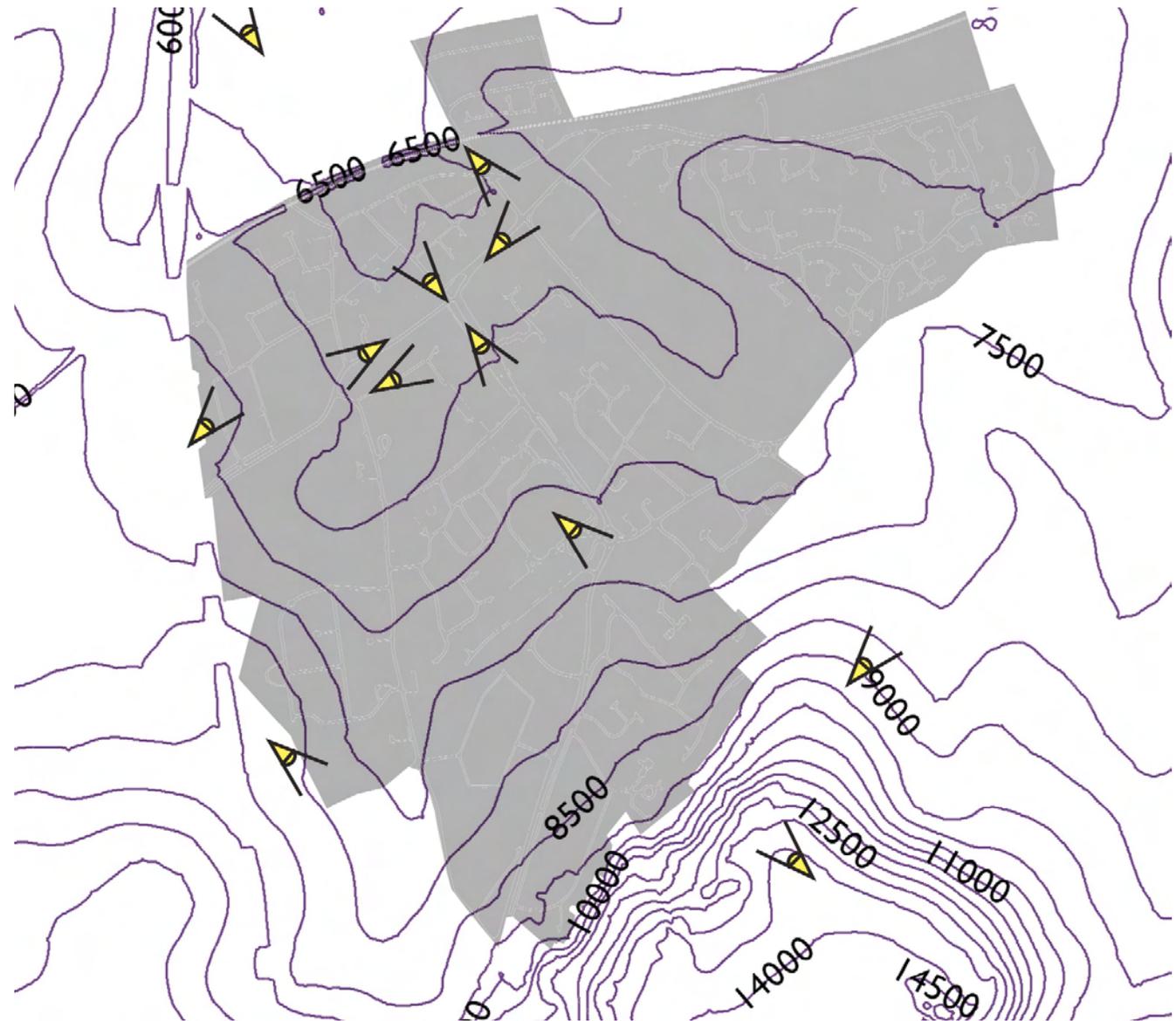
KEY ISSUES MP5: TOPOGRAPHY

MP5A

Baldock's flat topography heightens the significance of landmarks buildings.

MP5B

Weston Hills provides views of Baldock from the south.



Views within Baldock (heights in cm above sea level)

CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE TOWN MORPHOLOGY

The Town Centre zone

Baldock's morphology clearly demonstrates the settlement's evolution. Hitchin Street, Whitehorse Street, and High Street form a 'T' shape at the meeting point of the Icknield Way and a Roman Road running south. The width of these roads, particularly of the High Street reveals the location of the medieval market, and their use as thoroughfares for coaches travelling to and from London.

Although located at the end of the town centre zone, Tesco is, unusually, located near to the geographical centre of the settlement, and continues the market town tradition in terms of its function.



KEY ISSUES

CE1: TOWN MORPHOLOGY

CE1A

The 'T' shaped structure of Baldock's town centre clearly reveals the town's historical roles as a market town and coaching stage.

CE1B

The location of the Tesco almost at the geographical centre of Baldock is a unique feature of the town and a continuation of the market town tradition.

CE1C

The morphology shows higher densities closer to the station, and lower densities in the south.

Town centre morphology

CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE TOWN MORPHOLOGY

Historic High Density zone

The Historic High Density zone is located in several closely knit perimeter blocks around Baldock town centre. One lies to the north of the Town Centre zone, formed around the station and railway industries which arrived in 1850, others are located in small pockets around the outside of the Town Centre zone.

Semi-rural zone

The Semi-rural zone occupies most of the southern half of the settlement. Houses are well spaced, mostly built on curvilinear geometric road layouts, with large rear gardens.

Contemporary Inner zone

Streets are laid out informally. Cul-de-sac developments are common, making parts of the zone very impermeable to motorists, and difficult to navigate for pedestrians. In some areas higher densities are accommodated in blocks of flats are set in large green spaces.

The railway line acts as a boundary to the north of the settlement, and the A1 M as a boundary to the west.



Urban morphology of Baldock

CONTINUITY AND ENCLOSURE

BUILDING LINES, SETBACKS AND GAPS

Town Centre zone

Building lines are strong at the upper end of High Street and along Hitchin Street and Whitehorse Street where narrow plots dictate continuous frontages. These become weaker heading down High Street with some detached properties and varied building heights. Tesco at the south end of the Town Centre zone is setback from the street, with large car parks sitting adjacent to the main building both to the front and rear.

Historic High Density zone

Building lines are relatively strong due to high densities, formal street layouts and consistent building heights. The majority of the later infill in the area maintains the existing building lines.

Semi-rural zone

Straight and curvilinear streets, regular gaps and consistent building design creates strong building lines in most of this zone.

Contemporary Inner zone

Although some streets in this zone are built to straight building lines, in others, houses are laid out along curved roads and cul-de-sacs, houses set both parallel and perpendicular to roads or with staggered building lines. Irregular gaps are common, formed of partial terracing, widely spaced detached buildings and isolated flats. This creates weak building lines despite relatively high densities.



1. Continuous frontages create strong building lines along the gentle curve of Whitehorse Street, Town Centre zone.



2. Later infill is mostly respectful of the strong building lines formed by Victorian semi-detached and terraced houses in the Historic High Density zone.

KEY ISSUES

CE2: BUILDING LINES, SETBACKS, GAPS

CE2A

Building lines are strongest in the Town Centre and Historic High Density zones, and particularly weak in the Contemporary Inner zone.



3. Strong building lines, formed by consistent housing design, draw out the gentle curve of a road in the Semi-rural zone.



4. Irregular gaps and setbacks along with informal layouts create weak building lines in some parts of the Contemporary Inner zone.