



North Hertfordshire District Council

# Heritage Assessments

Heritage Assessment of Baldock



June 2016

Amec Foster Wheeler Environment  
& Infrastructure UK Limited



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## Report for

Louise Symes  
Strategic Planning and Projects Manager  
North Hertfordshire District Council  
Council Offices, Gernon Road  
Letchworth Garden City  
Hertfordshire  
SG6 3JF

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## Main contributors

Chris Constable  
Helen Noakes  
Victoria Donnelly

---

## Issued by

Chris Constable

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## Approved by

Sean Steadman

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## Amec Foster Wheeler

Floor 4  
60 London Wall  
London EC2M 5TQ  
United Kingdom  
Tel +44 (0) 203 215 1610

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## Document revisions

No.	Details	Date
1	Final Heritage Assessment	31/05/2016
2	Client Comments	27/06/2016



# Executive summary

## Purpose of this report

This report has been produced for the purpose of providing North Hertfordshire District Council of an appraisal of the potential impacts of a housing allocation site, upon the significance of both designated and undesignated heritage assets. The report makes recommendations as to the suitability and management of such allocations, as well as the compliance with planning policy.

The proposal site is for a major extension to the north east of Baldock. Historic England have identified the need for an assessment of heritage impacts related to the proposal site. Views from the site towards St Mary's Church Baldock have also been identified as a significant heritage issue.

Subject to high quality urban design, consideration of potential archaeological impacts, maintaining and improving landscape screening within and around the site and integrating views of St Mary's Church this proposal site can be considered to comply with the NPPF test and not significantly impact upon heritage assets.



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Document

North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) are currently preparing a new Local Plan for the period of time 2011 – 2031. It is anticipated that NHDC will be planning for a minimum of 14,400 additional dwellings over the plan period to meet its own objectively assessed housing needs. North Hertfordshire is unable to accommodate this level of growth on previously developed sites. As a result, NHDC are proposing to consider large amounts of growth on greenfield sites in sustainable locations on the edges of urban settlements and larger villages. The focus of this report is an allocation located within the village of Baldock.

In January 2015, NHDC undertook public consultation on its Local Plan Preferred Options. Number of representations were concerned with the impact of some of the proposed site allocations on the setting of both designated and undesignated heritage assets.

Of particular relevance is the representation submitted from Historic England with regard to specific sites.

The Council is working towards submitting its proposed Local Plan Submission Draft to its Executive in September 2016.

As a result, NHDC have therefore commissioned Amec Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure (Amec FW) to assess the potential impacts of housing allocation upon the significance of these heritage assets and make recommendations as to the suitability and management of such allocation.

## 1.2 Planning Policy and methodology

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) provides a policy framework under which Heritage Assets are protected. Of particular relevance to the scheme are the following:

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF emphasises the role of heritage, and the positive enhancement of the historic environment as one of three dimensions to achieving sustainable development.

Paragraph 14 states that local authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. Proposals should also seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Historic England<sup>1</sup> have produced a guidance document to enable the historic environment to play a positive role in identifying allocation sites which are suitable for development, whilst also providing advice on policies to ensure proposal sites protect and enhance the significance of heritage assets.

The purpose of this guidance document is to ensure that proposal sites comply with the requirements of paragraph 182 of the NPPF, in that sites are prepared, justified and consistent with national and local policy.

This document provides a methodology for site selection and NHDC have made some specific requests for the study:

- ▶ Step one - Identify which heritage assets are affected by the potential site allocation;
- ▶ Step two - Understand what contribution the site (in its current form) makes to the significance of the heritage asset(s);
- ▶ Step three – Identify what impact the allocation might have on that significance, including the setting of heritage assets;

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<sup>1</sup> Historic England (2015) The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans. Historic England Advice Note 3.



- ▶ Step four – Consider maximising enhancements and avoiding harm through design, layout or contributing to the significance of other heritage assets, mitigation measures;
- ▶ Step Five – Determine whether the proposed site allocation is appropriate in light of the NPPF's tests of soundness and the site can accommodate residential development without having an unacceptable impact upon nearby heritage assets; and
- ▶ Should the site be considered suitable recommend policy wording to ensure the appropriate protection of heritage assets for the specific site.

In addition to these requirements Historic England<sup>2</sup> have provided comments about the proposed allocation site BA1. Historic England were unclear whether there had been an adequate assessment of heritage impacts from the proposal and to justify the site in terms of historic environment impacts.

Any historic environment impacts could be mitigated by high quality urban design. Historic England have identified views towards St Mary's Church, Baldock as an important contribution to the urban design of any proposals within the allocation site.

### 1.3 Site Location

The location of the allocation site is shown in Figure 1, Appendix B. The site is located to the north east of Baldock, east of the Great North Road, A507 and north of the railway line to Royston.

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from Historic England to North Hertfordshire District Council dated 6 February 2015 reference HD/P 5255

## 2. Heritage assets affected by the proposal site

The location of the proposal site is shown in Figure 1, Appendix B. This figure also shows locations of designated and undesignated heritage assets.

### 2.1 Scheduled monuments

The proposal site adjoins the scheduled monument of Settlement Site S of Blackhorse Farm (list entry 1003548). This site is described as a multi-period crop-mark complex, visible on air photographs showing ditched enclosures and pits. Excavation to the south edge confirmed Iron Age, Roman and Saxon dating for the settlement. The monument is presently an open field with a hedgerow towards the east side surrounded by housing and woodland to the north, allotments to the south and woodland to the west.

Within the Baldock area there are two other scheduled monuments:

- ▶ Radwell Roman Villa (list entry 1016308) and
- ▶ Romano-British Small Town and Late Iron Age Settlement at Baldock (list entry 1016305).

However these two sites will not be impacted by the proposal and therefore, have not been included in this assessment.

### 2.2 Registered Parks and Gardens

There are no registered parks and gardens impacted by the proposal site. The nearest registered park at garden is Howard Park and Gardens (list entry 1000913), Letchworth which is over 3km south west of the proposal site.

### 2.3 Listed buildings

Blackhorse Farmhouse (list entry 1295436) is located to the west side of the Great North Road, A507, opposite the north most extent of the proposal site where it meets the Great North Road. Blackhorse Farmhouse is a grade II listed building, located to the west of an extensive farm complex that stands between the listed building and the main road. The proposal site, at this point, is shielded from the 'A' road by a heavily planted hedge bank.

The Compasses (list entry 1102133) is a grade II listed building located to the west side of the A507, immediately west of the proposal site. The proposal site is separated from the house by the 'A' road, planting and hedges in its garden and the hedgerow, bank and planting at the margin of the proposal site.

It is judged that these two listed buildings would be affected, in some degree, due to their location adjacent to the proposal site and its change in character from open, agricultural land to a housing site.

North of the proposal site, on the west side of the A507 is grade II listed Long Bailey (list entry 1102675). The property is accessed from Norton Mill Lane and is separated from the A507 by an extensive range of planting and trees, to the extent that little of the property can be seen from the main road. The property is 225m north of the nearest part of the proposal site and separated by extensive planting. This property will not be impacted by the proposal.

The Nook Cottage (list entry 1176203) is also grade II listed. The house is 230m north west of the nearest point of the proposal site. The house is well screened with a heavily planted garden and is separated from the proposal site by two hedgerows and the planting within its garden. This property will not be impacted by the proposal site.

Historic England have referenced that the proposal site should positively integrate views towards St Mary's Church within the layout of the site. St Mary's is a grade I listed building (list entry 1347611) of multiple

phases of construction within the medieval period, dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The west tower, of three stories, the upper storey of which is visible from parts of the proposal site, is crowned with a 19<sup>th</sup> century lead spire.

## 2.4 Conservation areas

At its nearest point the Baldock Conservation Area is 225m south west of the proposal site. NHDC have published a Character Statement<sup>3</sup> for the conservation area in June 2003. This statement includes, in Section 10, a summary of the features and characteristics important to the special interest of the conservation area. These features include:

- ▶ The routes and layouts of ancient trackways and historic roads, including the Great North Road;
- ▶ The medieval layout of the town and its relationship to ancient trackways, historic road and the Roman settlement;
- ▶ The position and contribution of the St Mary's Church and churchyard;
- ▶ The form of the streets, market places, linking alleys and property plots;
- ▶ Buildings parallel to and abutting the road with rear ranges and outbuildings of lower in form following the shape of the plot;
- ▶ The mix of buildings with many dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, including refronting of earlier buildings;
- ▶ The general variety and character of buildings within the town, and surviving historic surface treatments; and
- ▶ The consistent heights of buildings, largely two to three stories, use of red brick facades and the high number of buildings of special architectural interest.

None of the details which contribute to the significance or special interest of the conservation area relate to its wider setting or detail views into, or from outside the conservation area.

Due to the topography of Baldock, the presence of a raised railway embankment, buildings and planting providing screening between the conservation area and the proposal site, the conservation area is not affected by the proposal.

## 2.5 Archaeology

The proposal site includes a number of archaeological areas and areas of archaeological significance that are contained within the proposal site or cross its borders. These include:

- ▶ S of Blackhorse Farm area of archaeological significance. This area provides a wider margin around the scheduled monument of Settlement Site S of Blackhorse Farm;
- ▶ E of Blackhorse Farm archaeological area;
- ▶ SW of Bygrave Village archaeological area;
- ▶ S of Halfway Farm archaeological area; and
- ▶ N and S of Royston Road archaeological area.

The Historic Environment (Archaeology) team at Hertfordshire County Council should be consulted on archaeological implications for the proposal site.

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<sup>3</sup> North Hertfordshire District Council (2003) Character Statement for Baldock Conservation Area. NHDC.

## 3. The site and heritage assets

### 3.1 The contribution of the site to the significance of heritage assets

The scheduled monument of Settlement Site S of Blackhorse Farm is opposite the proposal site, across the A507. At present the proposal site contributes to the setting of the monument through the presence of a hedgerow and bank separating the proposal site from the main road.

At present, the site provides a rural, agricultural setting to two listed buildings, Blackhorse Farmhouse and The Compasses. The buildings are both located to the opposite side of the busy A507 road from the proposal site. The proposal site is defined by an extensive hedgerow and bank which reduces views into the site from the listed buildings. The presence of a mature hedgerow and the change in topography restricts views of the heritage assets from within the site.

Views of St Mary's Church across the proposal site are best experienced from the higher points of the site, especially to the west where the distance to the church is less. Plate 1 and 2, Appendix A show the church in distant views from Bygrave Road, approximately 1.2km from the church. Photographs showing the views across the site are included in Appendix A. Above the 70m contour line the upper storey of the tower and the lead spire are clearly visible above the tree line within the churchyard. At lower levels, from Bygrave Road, the view of the church, between buildings in the foreground, and over buildings before the church, views of the upper storey and lead spire are possible. The church, and the Baldock Conservation Area are located north of the 70m contour line, and south of the 60m contour line. In areas where the proposal site is below the 70m contour, views of the church are possible, but they are highly likely to be compromised by building between the proposal site and the church. In some cases, housing of two storeys with a pitched roof located between the church and viewpoints lower than the 70m contour line, would obstruct views of the body of the tower leaving only the spire visible, against the sky.

At the east end of the proposal site, on the Ashwell Road the east-most part of the site is above the 80m contour line the upper storey of the tower and spire are visible above the tree line and over industrial units in their foreground. This view is shown in Plates 3 and 4, Appendix A. Development to the scale of the two storey industrial unit in front of the church in this view would marginally compromise the volume of the tower which could be seen, but most of the upper storey and spire would still be visible.

Therefore the proposal site in its present form contributes to significant, and important views of the church tower and spire within areas of the site above the 70m contour line. Plate 5 shows a zoomed photograph of the church tower above the 70m contour line looking south west towards the church. At the west end of the site, above this level the upper storey of the church tower and spire stand above buildings within Baldock, the predominant tree line within the town and can be seen against a backdrop of distant trees, with the spire rising above the horizon. Below the 70m contour line there are glimpsed views of the church tower between buildings in the immediate foreground, and the view has the potential to be lost by other development outside the proposal site.

The site contributes to the significance of the archaeological areas and areas of archaeological significance by leaving these sites undeveloped thereby preserving their archaeological significance. Much of the proposal site is under plough so depending upon plough depths there will be an impact upon the long-term preservation of the archaeological resource.

### 3.2 The impact of allocation to the significance of heritage assets

The proposal has the potential to impact upon the setting of the scheduled monument by removing the hedgerow screening the proposal site from the A507, and the scheduled monument to the west.

The impact of the allocation has the potential to alter the setting of the two listed Blackhorse Farm and The Compasses on the A507 opposite the proposal site, subject to design details of the boundary between the proposal site and the A507.

The development of the proposal site, within archaeological areas and areas of archaeological significance, have the potential to impact upon the archaeological significance of the proposal site.

The development of the site, without consideration of views of St Mary's, Baldock, would be contrary to the advice of Historic England and would not aid the development of a sense of place, and connection to the historic core of Baldock.

Subject to mitigation these impacts upon the historic environment resource can be managed.

### 3.3 Mitigation and enhancement potential

#### Impacts upon scheduled monuments

The hedgerow and bank adjacent to the scheduled monument should be maintained and enhanced to improve its screening of the proposal site. The area of archaeological significance around the scheduled monument stretches 60m into the proposal site. This area should be left as open space. Any access from the proposal site onto the A507 should be located to the north of the scheduled monument to ensure the hedgerow near to the monument is maintained. The location and design of any new junction will need to be considered and located in a way to minimise impacts upon the setting of the scheduled monument and listed buildings to the north.

#### Impacts upon listed buildings

The design of the boundary to the proposal site should ensure that the present hedgerow against the A507 is preserved and enhanced through additional planting. This part of the site is also within the S of Blackhorse Farm Area of Archaeological Significance. This area stretches 60m into the proposal site and is the part of the site most likely to be impacted by noise and pollution from the A507. Moving development away from this area, and ensuring any access to the A507 is placed away from the listed buildings, to their south, will mitigate the most significant visual impacts upon the setting of the listed buildings. The location and design of the access will also need to consider the setting of the scheduled monument (Settlement Site S of Blackhorse Farm) south of the listed buildings.

#### Mitigation of impact to archaeology

As a first point, proposals for the site should endeavour to disturb the archaeology areas and areas of significance as little as possible by providing open space within these areas. To fully design a scheme the designated archaeology areas should be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation, including desk based assessments, geophysical survey and trench based evaluation to identify and assess the significance of the archaeological resource. Dependent on the significance of the remains encountered, the scheme should seek to develop proposals for the preservation in situ of the archaeological resource or its recording and management. It is recommended that the Historic Environment (Archaeology) team at Hertfordshire County Council should be consulted at the earliest opportunity to determine an archaeological strategy for the proposal site.

#### Views of St Mary's Church, Baldock

Views of St Mary's Church from within the site, are at their best with the upper storey of the tower and the spire visible, from the 70m contour line and above. Below this level, development outside the proposal site, between the proposal site and the church has the potential to impact upon views, even with buildings of limited scale. Views from the eastern edge of the proposed site, above the 80m contour line include the upper storey of the church tower and spire, however due to the greater distance, the scale of the church tower and the backdrop of buildings within the town, the church tower and spire are less easy to interpret and understand.

Cones showing the areas above the 70m, to the west, and 80m, to the east contour lines where the better views of the church can be seen are illustrated on Figure 2, Appendix B. It is recommended that managed, framed views of the church are incorporated into the urban design from these locations to positively integrate views of the church into the proposal site. Construction, planting and future management of planting within



the proposal site should be considered to ensure these views are maintained within any future development. The cones have been drawn to the rear of the contour line, or extent of the proposal site.

A further viewpoint above the 70m contour line starts within the SW of Bygrave Village Archaeology Area. Potentially a view from within this cone and at the 70m elevation would include the upper storey of the church tower and the spire. Incorporating views from all three location may significantly constrain the urban design of the proposal area.

Consideration could be made of views from lower parts of the proposal site, however, below the 70m contour future development between the site and the conservation area will potentially obscure any views.

## 4. Does the allocation meet the NPPF tests of soundness?

Paragraph 182 provides details of the NPPF test of soundness. The local plan should comply with the following tests:

- ▶ **Positively prepared** – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development;
- ▶ **Justified** – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- ▶ **Effective** – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities; and
- ▶ **Consistent with national policy** – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.

The proposal site examined here has the potential to make a significant contribution to the objectively assessed housing needs of North Hertfordshire. Proposals presented here and policy suggestions answer the concerns of Historic England about impacts to both designated and undesignated heritage assets and the integration of the proposal site with Baldock by recommending areas where views of the church tower and spire can be incorporated into the urban design of the proposal site. The site can also be seen to be consistent with national policy concerning potential impacts upon designated heritage assets.

## 5. Policy recommendations

The following policy recommendations should help guide development of this proposal site:

- ▶ NHDC should consider revising the Character Statement for Baldock Conservation Area;
- ▶ Any revision to the character statement should include an assessment of views into and out from the conservation area, including those of St Mary's Church and tower;
- ▶ Proposals for development within views included within the conservation area character statement should be tested to ensure the proposal preserves or enhances the character of the views;
- ▶ The wider development site should be informed by research into historic field boundaries and patterns across the site, and such boundaries should be restored and reinforced with hedgerow and tree planting;
- ▶ Outline design of the proposal site should be informed by prior archaeological assessment and evaluation to ensure the archaeological resource is adequately characterised and managed. This will ensure that significant sites are preserved in situ and maintained as open space, whilst other areas are recorded proportionately according to their significance;
- ▶ Open spaces designed to preserve the archaeological resource should be secured as such in perpetuity through planning conditions or legal agreement;
- ▶ Landscape design proposals for areas designed to ensure the preservation of the archaeological resource should ensure planting schemes do not compromise the preservation of the archaeological resource;
- ▶ Landscape design and management conditions should be placed on any proposals for the site to ensure the continued maintenance and improvement of the hedgerow separating the site from the A507; and
- ▶ Building heights within the proposal site, in the more elevated locations, will need careful consideration. Within Baldock a three storey building with a pitched roof would be significantly higher than much of the conservation area, and subsequently would affect the broader character of the town.



## Bibliography

Historic England (2015) The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans. Historic England Advice Note 3.

North Hertfordshire District Council (2003) Character Statement for Baldock Conservation Area. NHDC.

Letter from Historic England to North Hertfordshire District Council dated 6 February 2015 reference HD/P 5255

## Appendix A

### Photographic Gazetteer



Plate 1: South, south west view of Baldock Church, the spire is to the centre of the photograph, from Bygrave Road, over farm buildings between the 60m and 70m contours



Plate 2: A zoomed view of Baldock Church in comparison to the height of a two storey house with a pitched roof in the foreground between the proposal site and the church tower



Plate 3: West south west facing photograph from allocation site towards Baldock. Located on 80m contour line at the east of the proposal site. St Mary's Church is located to the centre of the photograph, just to the right behind the light coloured warehouse



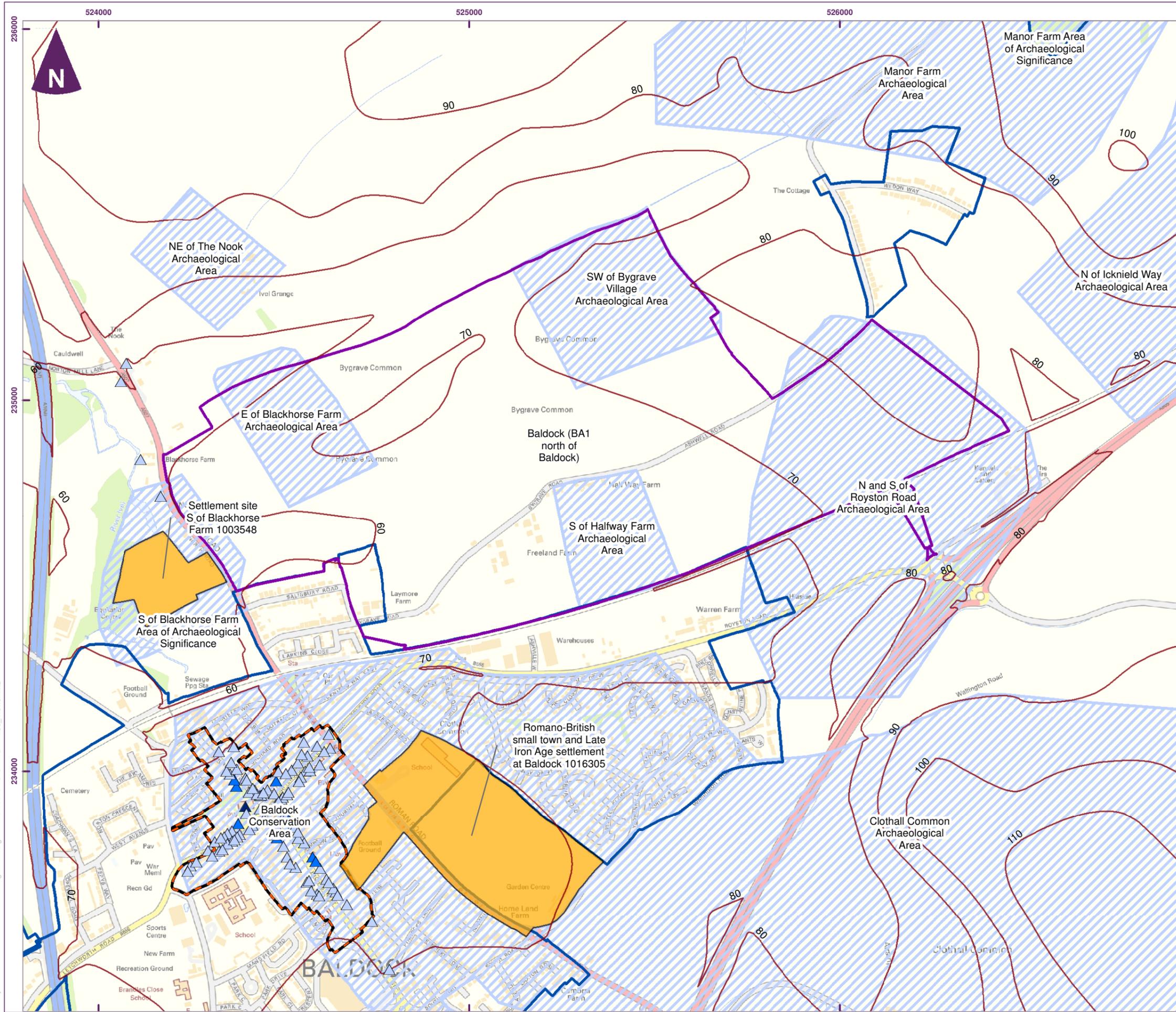
Plate 4: West south west facing photograph towards Baldock Conservation Area. Taken at 80m contour line zoomed in to show St Mary's Church



Plate 5: South west facing photograph, taken towards St Mary's Church (Grade I listed). Photograph taken at the 70m contour line from public right of way east of E of Blackhorse Farm Archaeology Area zoomed to show detail of tower and spire



# Appendix B Figures



**Key**

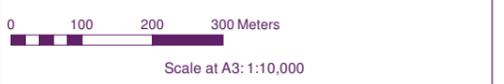
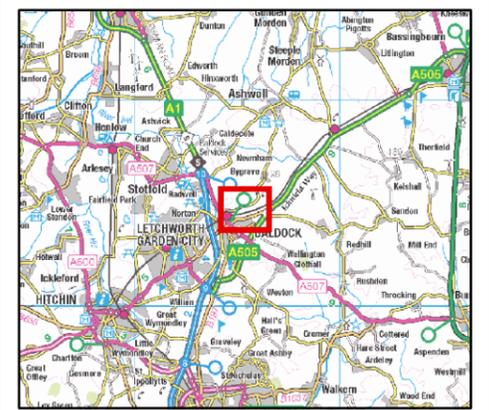
- Elevation
- Proposed allocation area
- Scheduled Monuments

**Listed Buildings**

**Grade**

- I
- II\*
- II

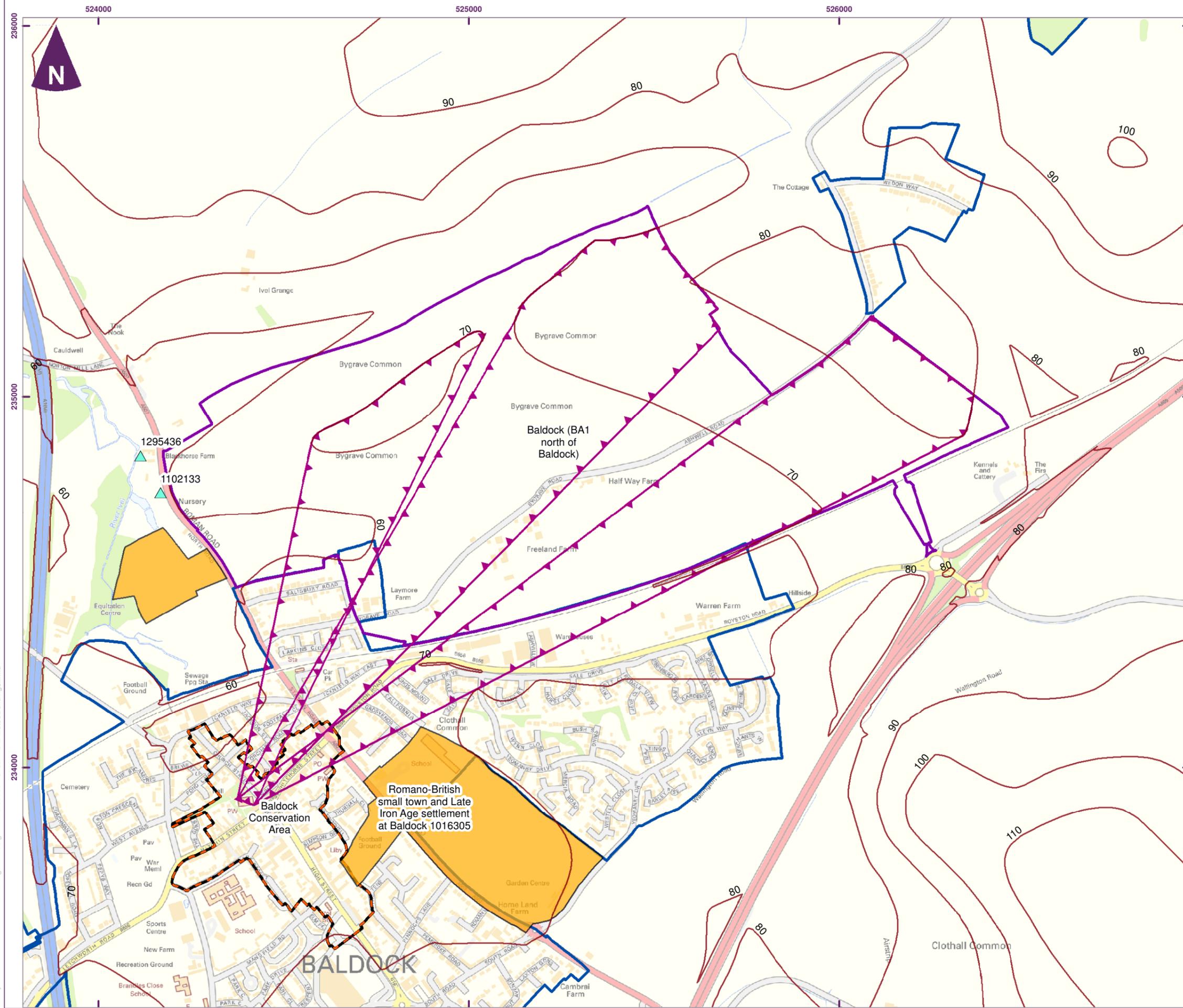
- Conservation Areas
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Core of modern settlement
- Archaeological designations



Client  
North Hertfordshire District Council

North Hertfordshire proposed allocations  
Heritage Asset constraints plans

Figure 1; Baldock proposed site



**Key**

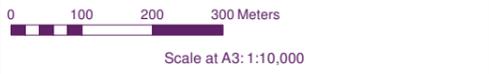
- Views
- Proposed allocation area
- Revised allocation area
- Scheduled Monuments

**Listed Buildings**

**Grade**

- I
- II\*
- II

- Conservation Areas
- Core of modern settlement



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North Hertfordshire  
 proposed allocations  
 Heritage Asset  
 constraints plans

**Figure 2; Baldock views and recommendation**

