

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

FINAL VERSION

JANUARY 2006



PREPARED BY: PLANNING POLICY & PROJECTS GROUP
PLANNING SERVICES

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The Vision for the Baldock Town Centre Strategy is:

'To maintain, regenerate 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'.

Full Council adopted this Strategy on 19 January 2006 as the Council's Statement of Policy.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 North Hertfordshire District Council (from here referred to as The Council) adopted a Town Centre Template in May 2001, which sets out the Council's intentions for developing town centre strategies. Baldock is the second town centre strategy to be prepared following the adoption of the Hitchin Town Centre Strategy as the Council's statement of policy in November 2004.
- 1.2 This Strategy provides a context for promoting integrated development and enhancement of the Baldock town centre that will:
- benefit the future economic viability and social vitality of the town centre, with emphasis on its future post completion of the Baldock bypass in Spring 2006, given the anticipated decrease in through traffic;
 - provide opportunities for enhancement of the High Street and other streets thereby improving the overall environment;
 - emphasise its historic character and local identity as a market town;
 - aim to meet the needs of its business and local community; and
 - Create a vibrant social centre for residents and visitors to interact.
- 1.3 It comprises an overall vision with aims and policy guidance. The Strategy looks forward to the next 10-years up to 2016 (and possibly beyond). Like all strategies, it should not be viewed as a fixed plan, but as a continuing process. It should inform other plans and strategies and in turn be informed and updated by them. This will require a review every 3 to 5 years. In particular this Strategy should be seen as contributing towards achieving the districts vision, and the Council's mission and strategic objectives as outlined in the Corporate Plan (2005 – 2015). The Strategy is inextricably linked to the Council's Community Strategy and Baldock Area Visioning Action Plan.

The District's vision set out in the Corporate Plan is
"Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper."

The Council's mission for North Hertfordshire is
"To work collaboratively with our partners and communities to achieve the vision for the district of North Hertfordshire."

This is supported by the following strategic objectives, which are relevant to this Strategy:

(1) Sustainable communities

promoting sustainable development of the district to ensure we deliver adequate affordable housing, protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic towns and rural settlements;

(2) Safer communities

encouraging responsible citizenship and creating safe communities with less crime and less fear of crime;

(3) Healthier communities

promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all our citizens;

(4) Equal communities

targeting resources and areas of disadvantage in the district to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone;

(5) Prosperous communities

creating opportunity for all by promoting sustainable local economic development;
and

(6) Satisfied communities

ensuring that we listen to our citizens and deliver high quality, value for money, customer focused services.

SECTION 2: CONTEXT AND A VISION FOR BALDOCK

2.1 National and Local Context

2.1.1 There have been important developments in national and regional policy particularly over the last 5 years, which will impact on the future development of town centres and local communities. National policy is set out in legislation, circulars, ministerial statements and planning policy guidance notes/statements (PPG's/PPS). Sustainable development and Community Strategies are key priorities. All relevant national, regional and local documents are listed in Appendix 2.

2.1.2 The Government is committed to creating sustainable communities; communities that will stand the test of time, where people want to live, and which will enable people to meet their aspirations and potential. Local Authorities have a critical role in delivering the five principles of sustainable development as set out in the Government's paper *Securing the Future – UK sustainable Development Strategy* (2005). These include:

- living within environmental limits; ensuring a strong healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly. *PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development – 2005)* elaborates on the above principles and specifies that planning authorities should promote sustainable economic development by:

- Recognising that economic development can deliver environmental and social benefits;
- Recognising the wider benefits of economic development and considering these alongside local impacts;
- Ensuring that sustainable locations are available for developments;
- Providing for improved productivity choice and competition;
- Recognising that all local communities are subject to change;
- Actively promoting good quality development;
- Ensuring the provision of sufficient, good quality homes;
- Ensuring that infrastructure and services are provided;
- Ensuring that plans take account of regional strategies; and
- Identifying opportunities for future investment.

Herts County Council (HCC) are in the process of preparing a sustainability guide for the County (see Appendix 2) and once published will assist planning authorities in meeting the Government's principles for sustainable development. This Strategy through its vision, aims and policy guidance contributes to fulfilling the aims of sustainable development as set out in PPS1.

2.1.3 The thrust of planning policy for retailing and similar uses is to, whenever possible, locate them within town centres, being sustainable locations, and to generally encourage mixed-use developments within town centres.

2.1.4 Of particular significance for guiding future development within town centres are *PPS6 on Town Centres and Retail Development* (2005) ¹, *PPG3 on Housing* (2000), *PPG13 on Transport* (2001) and *PPG15 on Planning and Historic Environment* (1994). The relevant key components are:

- *PPS6* encourages local authorities to promote the vitality and viability of their town centres by:
 - (i) planning for the growth and development of existing centres;
 - (ii) promoting and enhancing existing centres by focusing development in such centres and encouraging a range of services appropriate to meet the needs of its catchment area in a good environment that is accessible to all;
 - (iii) delivering more sustainable patterns of development, through high density, mixed-use developments, and promoting sustainable transport choices with less reliance on the car; and
 - (iv) promoting high quality and inclusive design that will protect and enhance the architectural and historic heritage of centres, provide a sense of place and an attractive and safe environment for businesses, shoppers and residents.
- *PPG3* also adds impetus to residential development within town centres through the emphasis on brownfield sites being preferred development locations, as well as encouraging the reuse and conversion of floor space in vacant commercial properties and on upper floors above shops for residential purposes;
- *PPG13* encourages local authorities to actively manage the pattern of urban growth to make full use of public transport by focusing major travel generating development in town centres and near to public transport interchanges, and to plan for increased intensity of development at locations that are highly accessible by public transport, walking and cycling; and
- *PPG15* contains a statement of Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of the historic environment including archaeology. It explains the role played by the planning system in their protection. The guidance urges local authorities to maintain and strengthen their commitment to the stewardship of the historic environment.

2.1.5 The advice in Government policy at the national level is complemented by *Regional Planning Guidance for the Southeast* (RPG9) and adopted *Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1998*. The regional guidance was published in April 2001 and sets out various key principles to govern the continuing development of the region, of which the following are pertinent to this Strategy:

- urban areas should become the main focus for development through making them more attractive, accessible and better able to attract investment;
- the pattern of development should be less dispersed and more sustainable

¹ As part of the changes to the planning system introduced in the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Government is in the process of publishing Planning Policy Statements (PPS) to replace PPG's.

patterns of activity, allowing home, work, leisure, green spaces, cultural facilities and community services to be in closer proximity; and

- access to jobs, services, leisure and cultural facilities should be less dependent on longer distance movement and there should be increased ability to meet normal travel needs through say walking, cycling and public transport with reduced reliance on the car.

Hertfordshire now forms part of the East of England Region and the emerging *Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)* will provide relevant regional guidance when it is adopted². A deposit draft of the East of England Plan was published in December 2004. This draft Plan encourages local authorities within the context of a community strategy approach (see para. 2.3.2 below) and local development documents (see para. 2.1.7 below) to include a strategy for each town centre to promote successful mixed used economies, manage change, refocus where necessary and support cultural heritage.

- 2.1.6 The *Hertfordshire Structure Plan* reinforces the role of the planning system by seeking to provide a positive framework in encouraging appropriate investment in town centres, and identifies the role of local planning authorities in promoting town centre strategies. The Structure Plan identifies priorities by which the vitality and viability of town centres should be maintained and strengthened. It also states that local authorities should identify sites in town centres for key town centre uses and prepare development briefs for such sites. Once RPG14 is adopted, it will supersede the Structure Plan.
- 2.1.7 The adopted District Local Plan – *North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations*, through its various policies provides guidance on development within town centres. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the District Council is required to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will comprise a series of Local Development Documents, which will set out the Council's planning policies for the District. The LDF will eventually replace District Local Plan No 2, which is currently saved under the above Act. A deposit draft for the first set of development documents is anticipated in 2007³.
- 2.1.8 This Strategy acknowledges these national and regional principles and policies and is intended to supplement and complement the Structure Plan and District Local Plan and other documents prepared by the County, District and other statutory authorities. Some of the policies stated in the Strategy may be taken forward as land use policies and included in the Council's Local Development Framework. The relevant Local Plan policies are indicated in *italics* next to those policies in this Strategy for information purposes and to show the links between the District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations and the Strategy.
- 2.1.9 This Strategy has been prepared in the context of national, regional and local policy. Its purpose is to provide overall guidance for all people that live, work and visit the town centre and to ensure that change occurs in a positive way, so that it improves the economic, social and environmental well being of the town centre.

² The RSS for the East of England is the subject of a Public Examination in late 2005 and early 2006 and is thus at a relatively early stage. The East of England Regional Assembly have suspended their support for the Plan.

³ The Council has an approved Local Development Scheme, which sets out overall timetable for LDF.

2.2 A Vision for Baldock

- 2.2.1 Baldock is the smallest of the four towns in North Hertfordshire located to the east of Letchworth Garden City separated by the A1(M) (see Fig 1 Appendix 1). The local economy offers a mix of independent specialist retailers, business and leisure activities, which in turn provides a social centre for residents and visitors to interact. Baldock town centre has a strong local identity with its wide High Street and many fine old buildings within a small area, making it a unique gem of an historic market town.
- 2.2.2 The town, and its centre in particular, suffers from high volumes of through traffic. This detracts from the living environment as well as from its attractiveness as an historic place to visit and work in. Following completion of the bypass, opportunities exist to promote a more vibrant and sustainable town centre, a social centre for residents and an attraction for visitors.
- 2.2.3 Thus the vision for Baldock town centre is:

'To maintain, regenerate 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'.

- 2.2.4 A number of key aims have been identified to achieve this vision, namely:

- *ensure the long term economic sustainability and viability of the town centre;*
- *promote 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 environment of the town centre by promoting and conserving the historic character and layout of the town, achieving good quality design and improving public spaces;*
- *actively promote the weekly chartered street market and ensure it continues to operate successfully;*
- *provide a safe and secure environment;*
- *encourage development to the highest quality achievable which complements and enhances the historic character of the town;*
- *promote a town centre accessible to all by encouraging a choice of transport modes;*
- *improve access for pedestrians and other non-car users to and within the town centre;*
- *improve and replace existing community facilities;*

- *ensure the long term management and maintenance of the town centre as a whole, for the benefit of shoppers, businesses and residents;*
- *improve tourism and inward investment to the town;*
- *encourage greater community involvement in the life of the town centre;*
- *retain the local identity/charm and cultural heritage of the town centre; and*
- *make the most efficient use of land, buildings, energy, and materials.*

2.2.5 The Strategy is divided into a number of themes, which provide a number of policies to help deliver the key aims identified above. The themes are:

- Built Environment and Public Spaces;
- The Street Scene and Enhancement Opportunities;
- Land Use Activities and Development Opportunities;
- Community Facilities;
- Transport and Access;
- Community Safety; and
- Promotion and Marketing.

2.3 Community Involvement & Partnership Working:

2.3.1 North Hertfordshire District Council recognises the value and importance in consulting with and working in partnership with public, private and voluntary organisations, the local community including young people in producing a strategy for Baldock.

2.3.2 Local authorities are under a duty to prepare Community Strategies as set out in the Government White Paper: '*Modern Local Government –In touch with the people*' (1998) and *Local Government Act of 2000*. Community Strategies have been introduced to enhance the quality of life of local communities through action to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of an area and its inhabitants. The Council has produced a Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, the Police, Fire Service, Primary Care Trusts, business representatives, community and voluntary groups. The process of collecting information for the Community Strategy began with Area Visioning exercises within each of North Hertfordshire's towns and rural areas. This took place in Baldock in 2000/1. The outputs from the visioning exercise that are of relevance to the Baldock town centre have been taken into account in preparing this Town Centre Strategy. Linked to the Community Strategy are Area Visioning Action Plans, which are monitored quarterly. The Community Strategy itself is reviewed annually. The Baldock Area Visioning Action Plan is one such mechanism to ensure deliverability of the policies identified in this Town Centre Strategy, and will be updated accordingly following adoption of this Strategy.

- 2.3.3 Involved in the preparation of this first draft of the Baldock Town Centre Strategy has been the Baldock town centre stakeholder group and young people from the Knights Templar School Council. The Stakeholder Group has evolved from the Area Visioning Group, and comprises individuals who represent various voluntary and commercial interest groups in the town centre including local residents and district councillors (see Appendix 3). A series of stakeholder workshops were held over the winter months of 2004/05 to discuss various issues and to work together with Council officers in the interests of the town as a whole by providing positive inputs to progress the Strategy.
- 2.3.4 This Strategy seeks to recognise the varying interests of the town together with the needs of the local community and young people expressed through the workshops.⁴ As part of the formal public consultation process on the first draft (in addition to seeking the views of the local community and businesses) the Council also sought the views of major landowners, Herts County Council, surrounding Parish Councils and other relevant partners. All views have been addressed and incorporated where possible in this final version of the Strategy.

⁴ Copies of the notes from the Stakeholder Group workshop meetings and from the meeting with the Knights Templar School Council are available as a separate document – refer to Appendix 1.

SECTION 3: THEMES AND POLICY GUIDANCE

3.1 BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Historic Character:

- 3.1.1 The historic buildings and layout of Baldock are generally recognised by the people of the town as some of its greatest assets. This special historic character creates pride of place. It affects how people use and are attracted to the town. The existing high architectural quality of the town and the individual characters of High Street, Whitehorse Street and Church Street all influence how people wish to see the environmental quality of the town improved. The historic architecture sets high standards for any future development. The overall historic character of Baldock is also seen as having an important role in the creation of a more successful commercial town, social centre for residents and providing an attraction for visitors.
- 3.1.2 The existing town layout was probably established in the 12th and 13th centuries. The mediaeval plan is reflected in the continuous building frontages along the back pavement edge and the long rear plots extending at right angles to the street. The continuing importance of the market can still be seen in its central location and in the impressive and rather stately width of High Street and Whitehorse Street. The narrow streets of Hitchin Street, Church Street and Park Street and narrow alleyways at occasional intervals between the buildings also contribute to the historic layout of the town. Pepper Alley is an example of such an alleyway linking the High Street with Park Street. All of the town centre lies within a Conservation Area, which was reviewed in 2003. (See Fig 2 Appendix 1)
- 3.1.3 Most of the buildings in the town centre are Listed (see Fig 2 Appendix 1). Others are included in the Council's Register of Important Local Buildings. The earliest are timber-framed and rendered and some date back to the 16th century. Most buildings are domestic in scale and character. Many are two and two and a half storeys but the prosperity and importance of the town in the 18th century has left a legacy of many fine three storey red brick Georgian houses such as The Manor House, 21 High Street and Cambridge House in Hitchin Street. These are recognised as a very special feature of the historic character of the town. The subtle variety of heights that these different ages of building creates is an important part of the character of the town.
- 3.1.4 The importance of Baldock as a coaching town and later as a centre of the malting and brewing industry has also left characteristic buildings as an important part of the architectural legacy of the town. The 19th century has given Baldock some very fine and attractive shop fronts, for example at 7 High Street and 26 Whitehorse Street. These are recognised as important features of the town centre. In 1998, the Council produced a Design Guide for shop fronts in Baldock. This identifies the need to preserve existing good shop fronts and gives guidance for high quality new ones.
- 3.1.5 The Parish Church of St. Mary (listed Grade I and mainly dating from the 14th century) together with its spire is a recognised landmark in the town and this characteristic and its setting should be maintained. The surrounding churchyard is an important part of that setting and an important green space in the town. Close to the Church, the late Victorian Town Hall is another recognised landmark and is seen by local people as a

community focus for Baldock (Local List). Other recognised landmark buildings are the Old Engine Shed of the former Simpson's Brewery, now part of the Community Centre (Grade II Listed), and the 17th century Wynnes Almshouses (Grade II Listed). All these buildings, including Raban Court (Grade II Listed) and the facade to Tesco foodstore (Local List), which is located to the south on the edge of the town centre, were identified as important landmarks in the Stakeholder Group workshops.

- 3.1.6 Below ground archaeology is equally important in understanding the historic character of the town. The Baldock town centre falls within an archaeological area, which should be taken into account if any disturbance of the ground is made in the process of any development or enhancement works. Any development proposals may require an archaeological evaluation in accordance with the advice set out in *PPG16 Archaeology and Planning* (1990)⁵.

POLICY 1:

The Council will resist the loss of the many Listed Buildings and other Historic Buildings of Local Importance that are important to the character and appearance of the town. The Council will also ensure that any other proposals for these buildings preserve or enhance their character and appearance and give them sympathetic new uses as appropriate.

(LP Policy 18)

POLICY 2:

The Council will refuse development proposals within Baldock town centre that do not respect the historic layout, architectural character and the domestic scale including the heights and proportions of buildings which feature varied roofscape and narrow building frontages.

(LP Policies 1, 20 and 57 G2)

POLICY 3:

The Council will resist the loss of existing historic shop fronts and ensure that proposals for replacement or new ones are of a high quality so that they will preserve or enhance the conservation area and make a positive contribution to the special character of the town centre.

(LP Policies 18, 20, 45 and 46)

⁵ HCC has produced a summary on both the archaeology and the historic buildings of Baldock entitled – *Baldock Extensive Urban Survey Report* (2002), while useful this is not an exhaustive survey.

Architectural Quality:

- 3.1.7 In 2003 when the Council reviewed the Conservation Area, it produced a *Character Statement for Baldock*. This identifies the positive and negative aspects of the current appearance of the town's historic character. Because so many of the buildings on the street frontages are listed or identified as being of local historic importance, few parts of the built environment of the town were identified as being negative. However, it identifies some 20th century housing developments not respecting the historic character or layout of the town and falling short of the high architectural quality of Baldock's building heritage. This was also identified in some of the Town Centre Stakeholder Group workshops. The Character Statement also identifies the modern commercial building at the northern end of Church Street as a negative feature. The Police Station in High Street is one site within the town centre that has been identified in the character statement as having a negative impact on the townscape and the Stakeholders also highlighted 9-15 Hitchin Street.
- 3.1.8 Given the generally high architectural quality of historic Baldock, it is vital that any future development respects the historic environment and reinforces local distinctiveness in terms of scale, form, height, and proportions of surrounding buildings and predominant local materials. This does not mean that new buildings have to replicate the precise appearance of historic ones, but they should be of a high standard of design and add to the architectural development and quality of the town. This approach is in line with central government design guidance in its policy documents. Further guidance produced by CABI (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) and English Heritage also suggests that it is possible to introduce modern designs of architectural distinction, which understand and respect their historic context (see Appendix 2).
- 3.1.9 In order to ensure that development proposals achieve appropriate architectural and urban design standards, which address the character of the surrounding built environment, detailed design statements should accompany such proposals. At the very least such statements should cover key design principles, density of development, mix and types of uses, access and movement considerations as well as energy/resource efficiency measures⁶.

POLICY 4:

The Council will support the conservation and enhancement of the historic Character of the town centre by ensuring that proposals for development maintain a high quality and attractive environment and take the opportunity to introduce innovative design that builds upon existing features that make up the distinctive appearance of Baldock. The Council will encourage the submission of detailed design statements and requiring all proposals to demonstrate that they:

⁶ The Council places importance on sustainability issues in developments and encourages development proposals to incorporate suitable measures to conserve energy resources through the way in which buildings are constructed. Advice for small scale renewable energy development is provided in PPS22 *Renewable Energy* (2004),

- a) are appropriately designed through the application of principles contained within national and local planning policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents, Planning Development Briefs, the Baldock Conservation Area Character Statement and other relevant guidance;
- b) have regard to the character and setting of historic and listed buildings;
- c) make use of high quality materials in their design; and
- d) have included energy/resource efficiency measures in their design.
(LP Policies 12, 20 and 57 G2)



3.2 PUBLIC SPACES

Green Open Spaces:

- 3.2.1 There are very few green public spaces within the town centre. St Mary's Churchyard provides a semi-public area of green space to the north of the town centre and also an important setting for the Church. To the southern end of the High Street on the west side fronting Tesco's just outside the town centre boundary is a sunken garden (known as the Memorial Garden) surrounded by a cluster of mature trees. The trees provide a soft green setting when entering the town centre from the south and complement the trees fronting the buildings on the opposite side of High Street. By improving access to these areas and raising their profile, such spaces can be better used and enjoyed by the local community and visitors.
- 3.2.2 Green features are not generally characteristic within the streets of Baldock town centre with the exception of grass verges and an informal avenue of trees along sections of the High Street. These provide some green character. There are, however, a number of green public open spaces that surround the town centre namely Bakers Field and Avenue Park.
- 3.2.3 While these public spaces and green features together contribute to the open space pattern and landscape character of the town, they also provide benefit to wildlife. Any enhancement of these areas should provide opportunities to positively promote biodiversity taking into consideration the recently published *North Herts Biodiversity Action Plan* (2005).



Hard Open Spaces:

- 3.2.4 The broad width of High Street provides open space for a number of activities whilst still allowing traffic to flow along the highway. The importance of the market area as an open space within High Street and its relationship with the buildings to either side is still clearly evident today. This space is important for the vitality and viability of Baldock town centre and should be retained. However, this space is not well defined and any enhancement to High Street should create a defined usable space for the market and for a variety of activities and events.

POLICY 5:

The Council will seek to protect and enhance public and semi-public open space within the town centre that makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the town centre, to their amenity and wildlife value and are accessible to all.

(LP Policy 21)

3.3 THE STREET SCENE

Views:

- 3.3.1 The main views/focal points identified by the Stakeholders at the workshops are those along the High Street looking south towards Weston Woods and north towards the Town Hall. As well as along Whitehorse Street looking westwards towards Bell Row and the spire of St Mary's Church tower. Such views should be retained when considering any enhancement opportunities to these streets.

Gateways:

- 3.3.2 Some areas because of their layout, location and grouping of buildings have been identified as important visual gateways when approaching the town centre by vehicle or on foot. Opportunities to improve these gateways as part of the overall enhancements to the town centre post completion of the bypass, should include: improved pedestrian crossings; unity in the type and colour of materials used; appropriate signage that is of quality design and respects the character; and appearance of the town centre and maintenance of existing green spaces.
- 3.3.3 These gateways include (see Fig 3 Appendix 1):

Tesco's Roundabout – This is a major traffic junction at the southern end of High Street that creates a greenish gateway into the town centre. The street is fairly wide at this point and has a green and open character due to the planted embankment rising up to Tesco's car park.

A505/Great North Road – This gateway with The Maltings Raban Court and the new Pegasus House has a more enclosed character. It leads onto the eastern end of Whitehorse Street, which like High Street, widens out towards the heart of Baldock town centre.

Avenue Park/Knights Templar on Hitchin Street – This gateway is important as there is only a short, green and open gap between the built-up area of Letchworth and Baldock. The A1(M) crosses the road just prior to the gateway, which gives an added sense of arrival when entering the town centre along Hitchin Street.

Maintenance:

- 3.3.4 Clean, safe, accessible and well maintained streets, street furniture and signage are all elements, which contribute to the creating a pleasant environment for community life within the town centre. The Council and other agencies provide a range of services, which maintain the 'street scene'. These include maintaining public facilities, street cleansing, waste management, highway and car parking services and grounds maintenance. The Council is in the process of undertaking a Street Scene Fundamental Service Review (FSR), which seeks to improve the overall quality of these services in maintaining the 'street scene' across the district, including town centres. The FSR will include improving partnership working with other organisations to address maintenance issues and will produce an action plan setting out the priorities for maintaining the street scene. The Street Scene FSR will be completed by spring 2006.

POLICY 6:

The Council will promote opportunities for enhancement within the town centre that will improve the street scene. The Council will also set priorities for maintaining the street scene and will work together with Hertfordshire Highways and other organisations including local businesses and landowners to promote these opportunities.



3.4 ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

3.4.1 Following completion of the Baldock bypass and the anticipated reduction in through traffic there is an opportunity to improve the physical environment of the street scene within the town centre. This will contribute to the creation of a more vibrant town centre making it more attractive to local businesses, residents, visitors and future investors.

3.4.2 There are some features that currently detract from the special architectural and historic character and appearance of the town centre. These being mainly:

(i) **Surface treatments and materials**

There is a great mix of surface treatments in unsympathetic materials in all the streets. The materials are a mix of textures, colours and tones and do not help to define spaces or their function. The materials do not complement the historic buildings in colour, texture or tone and are not a unifying element in the street scene.

(ii) **Street furniture and signage**

There is a large amount of street furniture, traffic signage, etc, which in some cases appears randomly positioned with little relationship to its context and hence creates a cluttered appearance in some areas. This is particularly the case within High Street and the area between Whitehorse Street and Sun Street. Much of the signage and street furniture is inappropriate in quality and design and does not respect the special character or appearance of the buildings, or the spaces between them. Street furniture and signage should be of a high quality of design, complement the buildings and streets, assist in the way streets are used and should be kept to a minimum.



3.4.3 The streets identified for enhancement include High Street, Whitehorse Street, Hitchin Street and Church Street. The Council will work together with Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Highways, local businesses, organisations, landowners and residents when preparing and implementing Design Schemes for enhancement of the above streets. The following key principles will be taken into consideration when preparing the Design Schemes⁷ and will accord with other policies in the Strategy.

- (i) Retaining High Street and Whitehorse Street as wide-open streets reflecting their historic character.
- (ii) Including the market area as an important open space to be improved and become a flexible space for other events as well as the market along with enhancements to the High Street.
- (iii) Creating public and semi-public spaces and places for small scale activities such as public art and for outdoor eating and seating areas, creating a so-called pavement culture.
- (iv) Improving the surface treatments and materials within the streets so that they are sympathetic to and enhance the historic character of the town centre and its buildings.
- (v) Improving and providing appropriate signage and street furniture that is sympathetic to the historic character, whilst providing required information in accordance with regulations.
- (vi) Improving lighting along pedestrian routes, access ways and parking areas for safer use.
- (vii) Retaining and enhancing on street and off-street parking areas.
- (viii) Making provision for cycle routes and cycle parking.
- (ix) Improving passenger transport facilities and ensuring such facilities are accessible to all.
- (x) Improving and strengthening pedestrian links to and from the railway station and Tesco to the town centre.
- (xi) Creating a safer pedestrian environment with pedestrian crossings at appropriate locations.
- (xii) Enhancing existing open spaces and softening the physical environment along High Street and Whitehorse Street with additional trees and planting.
- (xiii) Improving the gateways at Tesco roundabout, A505/Great North Road and Avenue Park/Knights Templar on Hitchin Street as part of the enhancement scheme.

⁷ English Heritage in its recently published 'Streets for All' document for the East of England places emphasis on the need to retain liveliness and accessibility in town centres and sets out principles for audits of historic materials, street features and local details to be included in design schemes.

- (xiv) Improving the physical environment of Bell Row and Sun Street as part of the overall enhancement of High Street and Whitehorse Street.

Detailed consideration will need to be given to the type of enhancements required for each street and to the prioritising of such schemes, which will be subject to the availability of joint funding arrangements.

POLICY 7:

The Council will work together with Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Highways and other public, private and voluntary sector organisations, including land owners to promote opportunities for enhancement within the town centre that will improve the street scene of High Street, Whitehorse Street, Hitchin Street and Church Street. Appropriate joint funding will be identified to assist with the implementation of the enhancement schemes.

Design Briefs will be prepared for the enhancement of the above streets including the gateways at Tesco roundabout, A505/Great North Road and Avenue Park/Knights Templar on Hitchin Street as appropriate.

3.5 LAND USE ACTIVITIES

- 3.5.1 The competitiveness of a town centre largely reflects its vitality and viability. To be successful, a town centre needs a balanced mix of different land uses. Shopping, leisure, commercial, health and other institutional services all contribute to the viability of a town centre. Residential, cultural and tourism add to the vitality of town centres. Encouraging the right balance and range of land uses that meet the needs of its local community, business sector and surrounding villages can strengthen the role of small market towns such as Baldock.

Retail Land Uses

Shopping:

- 3.5.2 Baldock town centre is the smallest retail centre of the four main towns in North Hertfordshire. Baldock, together with Letchworth Garden City, Hitchin and Royston lie within the sub-regional shopping catchment areas of Cambridge, Stevenage, Luton, Welwyn Garden City, Bedford and Milton Keynes. Baldock is identified in the Hertfordshire Structure Plan as a minor town centre. Out of a total of 1,672 centres ranked in the Management Horizons UK Shopping Index 2003/2004, Baldock was ranked 1,545th compared with Hitchin (322nd), and Letchworth Garden City (435th).
- 3.5.3 Baldock town centre primarily serves the day-to-day shopping and service needs of local residents and surrounding villages within the parishes of Ashwell, Bygrave, Clothall and Wallington. The form and function of Baldock, is very different to its near neighbours of Letchworth Garden City and Hitchin. It does not offer the same amount, or variety of shops and services as these towns. Baldock's strength lies with its specialist, independent retailers and service business sector which make a valuable contribution to the local economy and community.
- 3.5.4 Given the very close proximity of Baldock, Letchworth Garden City and Hitchin, the catchment areas of these towns overlap, and there is significant movement between towns amongst shoppers. In 2004, the Council commissioned Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP) to carry out a Town Centre and Retail Study. This looked at the four main centres of: Hitchin; Letchworth Garden City; Royston and Baldock. The consultants identified that there was 5,684m² net sales floorspace of comparison goods (non-food) in Baldock. This included approximately 2,219 m² of comparison floorspace in the edge-of-centre Tesco Extra store located to the south of the town centre. The total convenience (i.e. food) floorspace within the town was 4,970 m². Letchworth Garden City had 23,864 m² and 10,247 m² respectively.
- 3.5.5 Because of the presence of the Tesco Extra store, the town has a significant amount of convenience floorspace for its size; half of that in Letchworth Garden City. However, it only has a quarter of the amount of comparison floorspace found in Letchworth Garden City, reflecting the centre's relatively limited shopping role. Compared to Hitchin and Letchworth Garden City, Baldock is also lacking in potential development sites for retail or mixed-use development. The NLP study only identified the Police Station as a site that may have the potential for redevelopment. (See section on development opportunities). National multiple retailers are increasingly focussing on larger centres, and Baldock is unlikely to attract many such retailers.

- 3.5.6 Baldock, therefore, is not in competition with surrounding towns to attract multiple retailers, though it is in competition for custom. As part of the NLP Study, the Council carried out a survey of all occupiers of retail units in the district's four main town centres, which identified Baldock as having the highest proportion (i.e. 25%) of premises as owner-occupied. Although Baldock's occupiers seem relatively content with their premises and trading performance, 80% of occupiers thought that Baldock was too down market and wished to see an improvement in the quality of shops and services and an increase in specialist/local shops. The current level of vacancies in Baldock town centre is low and has not changed significantly over the last few years which shows that whilst limited in size, the town centre itself is vibrant.
- 3.5.7 There is a keen desire to maintain and enhance Baldock's shopping role, particularly that of the independent, specialist retailers, in serving its immediate urban population and rural catchment. In a post by-pass environment, this type of shopping may be enhanced by a town centre relieved of a significant volume of traffic. At present, the level of traffic is considered a main factor in reducing the attractiveness of the shopping environment. The enhancement opportunities for the High Street and Whitehorse Street as identified in section 3.4 of this Strategy will help to enhance the shopping environment and improve accessibility to the centre. Also, section 3.9 on promotion and marketing considers opportunities for setting up a Town Centre Partnership and mechanisms for promoting the town centre and encouraging inward investment.



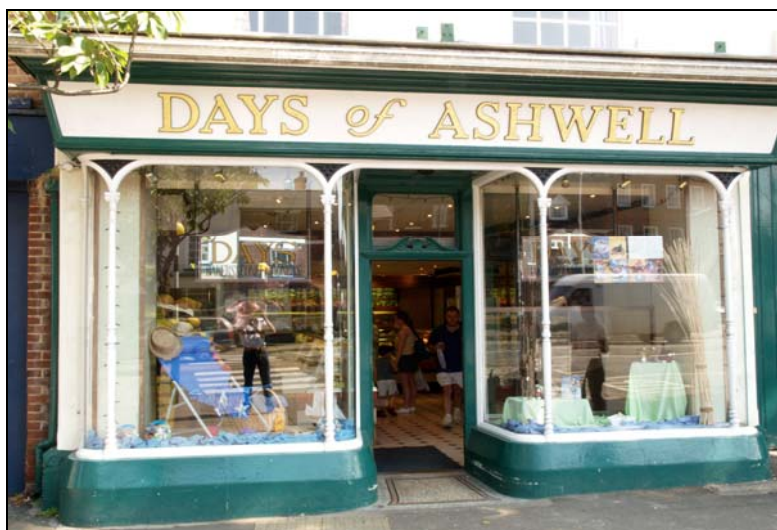
Retail Frontages and Retail uses:

- 3.5.8 Within Baldock, the pattern of streets containing shops consists of the High Street, with Whitehorse Street and Hitchin Street running at right angles at the northern end of High Street. There is no primary retail frontage⁸ in the town centre, compared with other towns in the district. These streets comprise a mix of retail (i.e. A1 – shopping and A3 to A5 - food and drink) and non-retail uses with significant breaks in their retail frontage by residential and other commercial uses. (See Fig 4 Appendix 1) Such

⁸ Primary frontage is defined in PPS6 as frontages likely to include a high proportion of retail uses.

streets should be classified as secondary shopping frontages⁹ as stated in the NLP Study, and also accords with government guidance in PPS6.

- 3.5.9 A1 (shopping) uses are scattered throughout the town centre, with a certain level of concentration where High Street meets Whitehorse Street and Hitchin Street. The NLP Study identified Baldock as having the highest proportion of food and drink uses of the four towns within the district. The Study found that 26.3% of units were Class A3 – 5 (restaurant and cafes; drinking establishments; hot food takeaway). This compares with 13.5% in Letchworth Garden City and 15.9% in Hitchin. This tendency for Baldock to attract A3 – A5 class users continues and is perhaps largely attributable to a weak retail environment. In addition the predominance of A3 (takeaway) users may be linked to the relatively large number of pubs (Class A4) and to former/existing hotels – a feature of Baldock linked to its past function as a main stop on the old Great North Road. As part of the enhancement of the High Street, post by-pass, there is the opportunity to promote a pavement culture thereby encouraging more daytime use of A3 uses within the town and reducing the amount of dead frontages.
- 3.5.10 Although there have been changes of occupiers and changes of use in the town centre in recent years, the overall mix of types of use (i.e. shops, estate agents, restaurants etc) has remained fairly constant. As part of the Local Development Framework the Council will consider the introduction of a robust but flexible policy for secondary shopping areas that may place a limit on consecutive non-Class A1 retail uses. This approach would not prevent new non-retail uses in secondary areas, but would help to prevent undesirable concentrations of non-retail uses and would ensure that the range and choice of class A1 uses within secondary areas is maintained at acceptable levels.



POLICY 8:

The Council will encourage and maintain shopping within the town centre and will regularly review the mix of uses to ensure the continued vitality and viability of the town centre.

⁹ Secondary frontage is defined in PPS6 as providing greater opportunities for diversity of uses.

POLICY 9:

The Council as part of the Local Development Framework will consider a secondary retail frontage policy that will maintain the continuity of the existing shop frontages and avoid further fragmentation of the centre.

POLICY 10:

The Council will encourage and approve proposals for the appropriate location of food and drink and leisure uses in the town centre, at street level or above, that will actively contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre and not to the detriment of the amenity of local residents.

Tesco Extra:

- 3.5.11 At the edge-of-centre, located immediately to the south of the town centre is a large Tesco Extra store serving a wide catchment area. The findings from a household survey carried out as part of the NLP Study cited food shopping as the most common reason for visiting Baldock (i.e. 74%). It is reasonable to conclude that most of the respondents were referring to food shopping at Tesco, although there are a small number of other food shops in the town such as butchers and bakers serving the immediate local population. Both the household survey and an on-street visitor survey also carried out as part of the NLP Study supported the point made by the Stakeholders in the workshops that although the Tesco Extra store is a key anchor store for the town attracting a significant number of customers, it appears to only generate a limited number of linked shopping trips to the town centre. It is considered that if more of these customers can be attracted to other shops and services in the town centre then this would help to significantly improve the vitality and viability of the town centre.
- 3.5.12 There are opportunities to encourage such linkages through physical enhancements to the High Street by improving accessibility and providing a more attractive and safe environment. A variety of means can be used to promote linked trips.

POLICY 11:

The Council will promote more linked trips between the town centre and the Tesco Extra store, through partnership working with Tesco, landowners, Hertfordshire Highways and local businesses.

Baldock Market:

- 3.5.13 Baldock market is a Charter Market and operates once a week, on a Wednesday. It occupies an area on the west side of the High Street approximately between numbers 14 and 46. On non-market days this area operates as a car park. The actual area that the market occupies varies from week to week, depending on the number of casual stall holders and licensed traders. Over the last few years, the number of

traders and the number of visitors to the market has been in decline. This appears to be a general trend across the country.

- 3.5.14 The market is an important asset to the town and can be a contributor to the local economy. At present the market area is in need of enhancement with improvements to on-site facilities for traders. In addition, because the market has not been operating at full capacity for a number of years there is conflict between parked cars from nearby residents and businesses and market traders wishing to set up their stalls. There is currently an experimental traffic order in place, which means there is no waiting between 6am and 4pm on market days, to try and stop parked cars disrupting the operation of the market. The Council will shortly be assessing the outcomes of this experimental order as part of its car parking review (Refer to car parking in the Transport & Access section).
- 3.5.15 The Council operates an ongoing maintenance programme to ensure that the Baldock market is fit for purpose in providing a safe and pleasant environment for both traders and customers. As part of the enhancement opportunities to the High Street post by-pass, the market area could be improved and enhanced in terms of layout, accessibility and facilities to better meet the needs of traders and customers. Active promotion of the market, including consideration of themed/specialist markets on other days, improvements to the market area and promotion/use of the space on non-market days for other activities would encourage visitors to the town thereby contributing to the viability and vitality of the town centre. The management of car parking within this area would need careful consideration when used for other activities.



POLICY 12:

The Council will work together with the market traders and other organisations to actively promote the market to ensure that the market continues to operate successfully.

POLICY 13:

The Council will work together with the market traders, Hertfordshire Highways, local businesses and other organisations to improve the layout, accessibility and facilities for the market area as part of the physical/environmental enhancement of the High Street.

Commercial, Leisure and Residential Uses

- 3.5.16 There are a limited amount of commercial and leisure uses in Baldock town centre (see Fig 4 Appendix 1). In terms of commercial activity there has been an ongoing tendency for commercial land uses on non-allocated sites to drift toward residential re-development, often in the small backland areas characteristic of the town. The size of sites and premises in the town and the tendency for owners to occupy and run businesses has been a factor in Baldock retaining small commercial sites for as long as it has. However, as owners retire or sell businesses, these small employers and their sites have inevitably disappeared in favour of residential schemes commanding higher values. Even on the larger allocated sites, there has been pressure to re-develop in favour of residential schemes, a phenomena associated with factors such as rising residential values generally, commercial rent reviews and the imminent opening of the by-pass.
- 3.5.17 As with all North Hertfordshire's towns, the market for residential development remains strong. As set out above, those non-residential sites not protected by allocations in the current Local Plan have progressively been re-developed for residential purposes – some opportunities still remain. The town has a number of older residential properties, a significant number of which are listed, particularly in the central area, which have given over large gardens to higher density modern housing schemes. Opportunities for this type of development remain albeit in limited number.
- 3.5.18 Given the intimate scale of the town, commercial, retail, residential and institutional uses co-exist in close proximity. This is an historical feature of the town. Because of the scale and nature of the town, it is unlikely that there will be any major changes in land use within Baldock town centre. This said, the drift to residential will continue, and it is important to ensure that an appropriate balance of mixed land uses is maintained within the town centre.

POLICY 14:

The Council will work together with its partners, including Business Link and the Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce to maintain and facilitate commercial development opportunities within the town centre.

- 3.5.19 The more people who live in the town centre, the more they contribute to the local economy and in particular to the evening economy. Refurbishment and sensitive re-use of historic and older buildings plus occupation of vacant flats improves the

attractiveness and vitality of the town centre. This in turn adds to the feeling of security and encourages more visitors and therefore more investment into the town. It is also necessary to provide an appropriate mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures within town centres as a way of preventing the occurrence of social segregation. A *Housing Needs study* conducted by the Council in 2002 identified the need for an element of affordable housing to be provided within town centres, and recommended that the Council negotiate with developers towards providing 35% subsidised affordable housing. Affordable housing should be provided in a suitable mix of types, sizes and tenures in order to meet the identified needs. Current planning policy requires developers to make provision for at least 25% of the total housing to be affordable housing. In North Hertfordshire, this currently relates to all housing developments comprising 20 or more units. This policy will be reconsidered as part of the Local Development Framework and in light of the findings of future Housing Needs Studies.



POLICY 15:

The Council will promote, within all tenures, a mix of dwelling types and sizes within the town centre to encourage activity throughout the day and to contribute to the area's safety and security, especially outside normal business hours.

(LP Policies 27A, and 57 G4)

POLICY 16:

The Council will promote and where appropriate approve well-designed proposals for housing through the re-use and conversion of floor space in vacant commercial buildings or in upper floors above shops, or as part of new developments. Net losses of housing will be refused.

(LP Policy 27A)

POLICY 17:

The Council will seek appropriate levels of affordable housing in accordance with development plan policy. Currently a minimum of 65% of affordable housing should be social rented housing, and the remaining 35% being tenures suitable for intermediate incomes. However this ratio/percentage may change in light of future Housing Need surveys. Policy 17 will also apply to affordable housing.

(LP Policy 29A)

Development Opportunities:

- 3.5.20 Both Government guidance and the Hertfordshire Structure Plan promote policies that encourage mixed-use development in town centres by identifying suitable sites. Within Baldock town centre the Police Station and the adjacent dwelling located on the corner of Mansfield Road and High Street opposite the Tesco Extra site, may have the potential for mixed-use development.
- 3.5.21 Should this site come forward for development in the future, the following guidelines should be considered:
- promoting either retail (ie for shopping) or food and drink uses at ground floor to encourage linked trips between the Tesco Extra store and the town centre with residential above. Another type of leisure use would also be considered acceptable; and
 - achieving a high standard of design, using good quality materials that accord with the Conservation Area objectives/policies and local character in terms of scale and form. (See section 3.1 on Built Environment)

POLICY 18:

The Council will work with landowners, potential developers and others to stimulate and guide the re-use/redevelopment of suitable town centre sites.

3.6 COMMUNITY FACILITIES

3.6.1 Baldock offers a range of community facilities that are accessible to the local community and contribute to the health of the town centre (see Fig 4 Appendix 1). The Council and other agencies provide a range of community and public facilities including access to public services. These include:

- health and child care facilities;
- leisure and sporting clubs;
- various religious buildings;
- public and community buildings;
- public conveniences;
- Youth Centre at Simpson Drive Community Centre including outside play space;
- voluntary and advisory services;
- Police Station and a Fire and Rescue Service Station;
- A market area for Baldock market, events, visiting fairs and festivals; and
- communal gardens

3.6.2 The Council has produced a *Leisure & Cultural Strategy for North Hertfordshire (2001)*, which identifies leisure and cultural initiatives as being particularly effective in developing community confidence, local identity and pride. These initiatives are considered as important tools to enhance the physical fabric of town centres, to stimulate the local economy and to improve its image with outside investors and tourists/visitors. The Leisure and Cultural Strategy has policies and objectives, which complement this Strategy and seeks to encourage developments and activities on a scale and form appropriate to the town centre. Outstanding elements of the Leisure & Cultural Strategy are to be incorporated into the North Hertfordshire Community Strategy at its next review.

3.6.3 Residents and businesses in the town centre through the *Community Strategy*, the *Baldock Visioning Action Plan* and the *Stakeholder workshops* have expressed their wish for a good range of public facilities within the town centre. These include:

- upgrading and modernising the Community Centre at Simpson Drive with improved facilities and activities for all age groups particularly children and young people;
- the promotion of cultural and leisure facilities, including improvements to the town hall;
- improving and relocating the existing public conveniences and making them accessible to all; and
- improving and upgrading the museum, making it visible and accessible to all.



3.6.4 The Council, through its Asset Management review and review of Public Halls and Public Conveniences, has undertaken an assessment of all its public assets, i.e. buildings and facilities, to find out if they meet the needs of the local community, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 access requirements, and whether they require improvement, refurbishment or replacement. The Council is in the process of preparing an action plan, which will identify and prioritise which buildings in Baldock will be retained and what adaptations will be needed to satisfy future uses and activities. Some buildings may be sold or redeveloped for other purposes. Funding for improvements, refurbishment or replacement of community facilities could come from a combination of receipts, such as from the disposal of Council assets, S106 agreements and partnership funding.

3.6.5 The town hall is one such facility that requires further investigation in terms of its potential use. The Council will undertake a feasibility study that will seek to identify:

- (i) alternative community uses for the building including renovation and maintenance costs;
- (ii) other uses that will contribute to the economic viability and social vitality of the town centre should no alternative and sustainable community use be found.

Such a study will include community involvement, working in partnership with key organisations to investigate alternative community and non-community uses and appropriate funding arrangements.

3.6.6 The Council has completed a Fundamental Service Review of its Museum Service and as a result will be making significant changes to and reinvestment in a newly created Community Development and Cultural Service division. These changes would seek to improve the overall quality of service to the community, work in partnership with several not for profit organisations to deliver a district wide cultural service. These changes will also address the problem of outdated facilities that do not meet current needs, and the provision of more modern and efficient service for the future. One of the key outcomes of the FSR is the desire to improving partnership working, specifically with the seven non NHDC museums, such as the Baldock museum, and other heritage and cultural groups, to achieve local representation across the district and more efficient use of resources.

POLICY 19:

The Council will maintain and enhance the existing level of community services and facilities available in Baldock Town Centre using the outcomes of reviews into its Asset Management, Public Halls and Public Conveniences, Museum FSR, Baldock Area Visioning and the Community Strategy.

POLICY 20:

The Council will work in partnership with the local community and local organisations to establish the appropriate use for, and ways of running, community buildings and facilities within the town centre, that address the aspirations across the range of age groups. Where necessary appropriate funding will be identified.

POLICY 21:

The Council will resist the loss of community facilities and will require the replacement of existing community facilities in development proposals or through enhancement schemes.

POLICY 22:

For new developments that do not include community facilities within the scheme, the Council will seek commuted payments from developers through S106 agreements towards the provision of new off-site facilities or enhancements to existing community facilities within the town centre where there is a demonstrable need.



3.7 TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

- 3.7.1 The ease with which people can travel to and from the Baldock town centre and move around it will influence its attractiveness and success as a town centre. It is important that the town centre is equally accessible to all, be it by bus, rail, on foot, by bicycle, motor cycle or in the car. The government is seeking ways of reducing car use by widening travel choice, which would have the benefits of a better environment, less congestion, less noise and air pollution, and more space for non-motorised transport and buses. The Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP), which considers the wider aims of national and regional guidance, sets out the broad transportation framework for the county¹⁰. The Northern Hertfordshire Area Transport Plan (NHATP)¹¹ produced by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) in 2004 seeks to address the issues identified in the LTP and sets the framework for the production of future Urban Transport Plans. The Urban Transport Plans in turn will set their own action plan, and seek to deliver local schemes in accordance with the objectives and strategies set out in the NHATP.
- 3.7.2 HCC is presently preparing the Urban Transport Plan for Baldock. This will be linked to a joint plan with Letchworth Garden City given their close proximity, strong links to the A1(M) and supporting a similar rural catchment area. The local schemes to be identified in the Letchworth and Baldock Urban Transport Plan will seek to address the issues raised by the public at the Baldock and Letchworth public exhibitions held by HCC in November 2004 and January 2005 respectively. It is anticipated that the Letchworth and Baldock Urban Transport Plan will be prepared by spring 2006 and will provide the necessary transport policy guidance for this Strategy.

Road Network and Traffic Circulation:

- 3.7.3 Baldock, like other areas of Hertfordshire, is suffering from increasing traffic growth. This is due in part to its position on the primary route network. The principal roads of the A505, A507 and A6141 are the most heavily used routes linking the town to the A1(M) and experience delays during peak hours, in particular at the A505/A507 junction in the Baldock town centre. These routes pass directly through the town centre carrying a significant proportion of through traffic as well as local traffic. The Baldock Bypass once completed in spring 2006 will relieve some of the traffic congestion caused by these three principal roads. The overall environment within the town centre and the town should be improved and enhanced with the reduction in traffic post bypass. A detailed post bypass study will be undertaken to assess the possible effects that the Baldock Bypass may have on the Baldock town centre and the surrounding road network. The associated impacts will be addressed through the Urban Transport Plan.

¹⁰ The current LTP is under review and will cover the period 2006/7 to 2010/11. It will build upon the success of the first LTP and focus on delivering shared priorities of tackling congestion, delivering accessibility, providing safer routes, improving air quality and improving the quality of life for all residents in Hertfordshire through more sustainable modes of transport.

¹¹ NHATP – covers the towns of Stevenage, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Baldock and Royston. This area encompasses the strategic transport routes of the A1(M), the A505, the A602, the Great North Eastern Railway and is sited between London Luton and Stansted Airports.

- 3.7.4 Developments within and on the edge of the town centre and elsewhere within and around the town can significantly alter the traffic patterns and working of a town centre, particularly at peak periods. To this end, development proposals will need to be assessed and judgements made in terms of their traffic, highway and transport impacts. PPG13 states that Transport Assessments (TAs) should be submitted for developments that have significant transport implications. HCC stipulates that a TA is required for all but the smallest developments (less than 100 dwellings or 2,500m² of B1¹² use for example). Small developments should be supported by Transport Statements (TSs) setting out the existing use of the site and details of the proposed development. Such Statements may also need to justify proposed parking arrangements if the Council considers that proposals could have unacceptable impacts. HCC and the Highways Authority should agree the scope of such assessments.

POLICY 23:

The Council will support the NHATP in seeking to minimise the impact of congestion on the primary network and make the best use of the existing network following the outcome of traffic assessments. Development proposals will be supported by either a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement depending on the size and type of development.

Parking

- 3.7.5 Baldock has limited town centre off street car parking and a reasonable provision of on street parking, which is reduced on Wednesdays by the on street market adjacent to the High Street. There is however a certain amount of conflict between local business, residential, commuter and visitor parking within the town centre, in particular on market days when the market itself is suffering through competing with motorists for space. There are also some on street car parking issues in the residential areas located within walking distance of the railway station that are being put under strain by out of town commuters unable to find adequate parking at the railway station.
- 3.7.6 Government guidance encourages local authorities to adopt a more sustainable approach to car parking, and to reduce reliance on the car by promoting alternative modes of transport. The Council prepared and adopted a Car Parking Strategy in June 2004, which sets out the Council's agreed approach to parking issues in North Hertfordshire over a 5 year period, and is set within the context of relevant national, regional and county policies. The Council is presently undertaking a review of all on and off street car parking provision within the district and as part of the strategy is already considering the following issues in relation to Baldock – some of which have also been identified through the Stakeholder Workshops.
- Improvements to the Council's car parks over a 5 year period to ensure that they are fit for purpose and meet the expectations of the users.

¹² B1 – relates to light industrial business uses as listed in the General Development Use Class Order

- Provision of sufficient, convenient and suitable parking spaces for orange (blue) badge holders in the Council's car parks and on street within the town centre.
- Introduction of limited duration on street parking within the town centre to provide adequate turnover to promote commercial viability and the utilisation of off street parking for longer stay parking.
- Introduction of designated parking areas and/or permits for residential areas.
- Possible provision for car parking within High Street and Whitehorse Street as part of the overall enhancement schemes post completion of the bypass.
- Implementing controlled car parking (CPZ's) measures in residential streets within walking distance of the railway station and to encourage alternative methods of transport to the station wherever possible.
- Actively working with the train operators and the Rail Authority to ensure best use of available parking at the railway station.
- Using on street parking controls to assist the functioning of the market on market days.

3.7.7 Some of these issues are currently being addressed by the Council, such as the use of an experimental traffic regulation order to restrict day time parking within the market area on market days, and implementing CPZ's within the residential streets to the north and east of the town centre. The other issues need to be considered within the context of future changes to traffic movements within the town and possible parking patterns following completion of the bypass. There is also the opportunity for these issues to be addressed as part of the proposed enhancement schemes to the main streets within the town centre (Refer to Section 3.4).

POLICY 24:

The Council will work in partnership with the Hertfordshire County Council, the police, local businesses, residents and local organisations including the Rail Authority to progress and implement the key aspects of the North Hertfordshire District Council Car Parking Strategy that are important in sustaining the economic viability and environmental quality of Baldock town centre.

3.7.8 Other parking issues relate to recognising the needs for the parking of powered two-wheelers and for servicing and delivery vehicles. The use of powered two-wheelers can reduce the amount of cars on the road, and with regard for the demand for parking could reduce the amount of space required. Consideration needs to be given to the parking/loading requirements for service and delivery vehicles serving the town centre businesses. There is also the need to reduce potential conflict between delivery vehicles and pedestrians. Opportunity exists to provide more detailed consideration to parking for powered two wheelers and parking/loading requirements for service and delivery vehicles when considering detailed design matters for the proposed enhancement schemes of the main town centre streets (See section 3.4)



Passenger Transport

3.7.9 The Council supports the government initiative to improve the attractiveness of passenger transport as an alternative mode of travel. HCC through its recently revised Bus and Rail Strategies (2005), Accessibility¹³ Strategy (2005) and Intalink Strategy (2002) seeks to meet the following objectives of the LTP:

- To provide a transport system which provides access to employment, shopping, education, leisure and health facilities for all, especially those without a car and those with impaired mobility;
- To work in partnership with transport providers and users to achieve an efficient, affordable and enhanced transport system, which is attractive, reliable, integrated and makes the best use of resources;
- To raise awareness and encourage the use of alternative modes of transport through effective promotion, publicity and information.

3.7.10 Baldock is served by around 20 bus services, principally run by Arriva and other bus companies. The main bus stops are near the train station on Station road and on the High Street opposite market Place and outside the Tesco Extra store, conveniently located for shopping purposes. The railway station is within reasonable walking distance from the town centre, approximately 400m from the northern end of High Street. The bus routes connect Baldock with the surrounding rural area as well as Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston. Bus routes also connect the centre with Bishops Stortford, Cambridge, London, Luton, Stevenage and Hatfield. HCC are in the process of undertaking area network reviews, which will take account of:

- demand for services;
- availability of financial resources;

¹³ The Accessibility Strategy is concerned with delivering improvements to accessing key services for those people without access to a car and by passenger transport.

- land use and transportation planning issues; and
- the need for investment in vehicles and infrastructure.

3.7.11 The North Herts area network review is expected to start in spring 2006. District councils and bus operators will be included in these reviews. The Council will ensure that issues raised through the Stakeholder Group workshops and the Baldock Area Visioning Action Plan are considered in such a review. These include improving:

- the frequency of services;
- the location of and infrastructure at bus stops; and
- information for passenger transport users.

3.7.12 Consideration will also need to be given to improving pedestrian links to bus stops within the town centre and to the railway station as a means of encouraging people to use passenger transport facilities. Opportunities to improve the infrastructure at bus stops exists as part of the enhancement scheme to the town centre streets post completion of the bypass.



POLICY 25:

The Council together with the Hertfordshire County Council will seek to reduce the reliance on the private car for access to and from the town centre by identifying ways of improving access to passenger transport facilities. In doing so regard will be given to the Northern Hertfordshire Area Transport Plan and other relevant documents including Hertfordshire's Bus, Rail and Intalink Strategies.

POLICY 26:

The Council together with the Hertfordshire County Council will investigate ways in which bus priority measures may be introduced alongside qualitative enhancements to the location and infrastructure at bus stops including information and publicity on bus services.

Pedestrians

3.7.13 The main pedestrian routes through the town centre tend to follow the highway network and place pedestrians in conflict with traffic travelling through the town centre and the need to cross busy roads. The High Street where it joins Whitehorse Street in the north, is the main shopping area and has a limited number of crossing points, thereby constraining pedestrian movement and impacting on the shopping environment. There are identified opportunities to improve pedestrian linkages to and within the town centre by:

- improving the pedestrian network in the town centre in terms of physical appearance, level surfacing materials, appropriate lighting and clear signage;
- improving the surface and signage of the pedestrian link along Station Road between the railway station and the town centre;
- strengthening and providing safe pedestrian links between Tesco Extra Store, Knights Templar School plus other nearby schools, the station and the town centre;
- providing safe pedestrian crossing points within the town centre and at the Whitehorse Street/Clothall Road intersection and at South Road leading to the town centre; and
- providing an additional crossing point in High Street opposite the Library or Community Centre.

3.7.14 Such opportunities will contribute to meeting the strategies specified in the NHATP, which refers to the provision of new and improved pedestrian links and facilities to improve safety on the network and also to develop pedestrian networks to key facilities to improve access.

POLICY 27:

The Council will seek to improve the pedestrian network within and to the town centre, and will ensure that future developments and enhancements to the main streets have regard to strengthening and improving pedestrian links in terms of the physical appearance, signage and safety.

Access for the Less Mobile:

- 3.7.15 The ease with which disabled people can move around the town centre is important in terms of the design of buildings, pavement widths, surfacing materials, the location of street furniture, suitable crossing points across streets and access to disabled parking and passenger transport facilities. Accessibility is not just about disabled people it also assists the elderly or infirm and, those people pushing a pram or carrying shopping. Dial-a-ride services as well as other community based transport services are available to assist those persons who are disabled and have difficulty using passenger transport, particularly from the surrounding Hertfordshire villages.
- 3.7.16 The Council will work together with the Disability Forum and the recently established Access Consultancy Forum when considering and implementing future policies, practices and procedures of relevance to disabled people.

POLICY 28:

The Council together with Hertfordshire County Council and the Disability Forum and Access Consultancy Forum will aim to secure an accessible town centre for disabled people by ensuring that:

- a) the design and maintenance of the urban fabric will accommodate the needs of all people;**
- b) adequate provision will be made for disabled parking and access within the town centre, and**
- c) passenger transport facilities are improved and made more accessible to disabled people.**

Cycling:

- 3.7.17 There are no designated cycle routes passing through the town centre, meaning that cyclists follow the highway network thereby placing them (as vulnerable road users) in conflict with traffic travelling through the town centre. In order to meet the Government initiative of reducing reliance on the private car and promoting alternative modes of transport such as cycling, there is a recognised need to:
- improve the safety of cycle routes to and through the town centre;
 - avoid unnecessary conflict with pedestrians;
 - make provision for and maintenance of cycle parking and equipment storage facilities within the town centre; and
 - encourage local businesses to provide facilities and incentives for employees cycling to work.
- 3.7.18 The Council has produced a *Cycling Strategy for North Hertfordshire* to encourage cycling. An outcome of the strategy was the production of a Cycle Route Network,

which identifies potential safe and direct cycle routes through the districts urban areas including the Baldock town centre. The enhancement of the High Street provides an opportunity for the inclusion of a safe designated cycle route passing through the town centre and linking into other route serving the town.

POLICY 29:

The Council will work with Hertfordshire County Council to identify ways in which access by bicycle can be improved, such as on or off road cycle routes, cycle crossings, cycle signage and cycle parking. In doing so, regard will be given to the Council's proposed Cycle Route Network Study for Baldock.

Consideration will also be given to establishing a development programme for further cycle parking and equipment storage facilities within the town centre. All new developments will need to reflect the Council's Cycling Strategy, Cycle Route Network Survey and provide facilities and incentives for employees and residents.

The Council will seek funding for cycle provision through the Local Transport Plan, S106 agreements with potential developers and the Council's own budgets.

Taxis:

- 3.7.19 A number of private taxi services operate in the town, serving a demand for journeys both within the town and to surrounding areas. The town centre provides a focus for taxi activity and provides a service to those who choose not to use the bus or for whom suitable bus services are unavailable. The number of food and drink facilities within the town has contributed to an increase in the demand for taxi services.

POLICY 30:

The Council will work together with taxi services to ensure that taxi ranks are located in appropriate locations that serve the day and evening economy within the town centre.

Accessibility contributions:

- 3.7.20 As a means of achieving a more sustainable approach to transport infrastructure and car parking provision, government guidance encourages local authorities to consider means of achieving alternative sources of funding to improve transport infrastructure within towns. Accessibility contributions are made by a developer as a contribution to improving more sustainable modes of transport within the town centre that will benefit the local community and minimise the transport impacts resulting from new development. Examples of such contributions include:

- pedestrian facilities, including pedestrian crossings and improved street furniture;
- cycling infrastructure, including cycle lanes, crossings and secure bike parking facilities;
- passenger transport facilities, including costs for provision of new or relocation of existing bus shelters, timetable information, funding bus priority measures on the surrounding road network, and providing or supporting bus services to and from the site for customers and staff; and
- being used for transport feasibility studies associated with this Town Centre Strategy.

3.7.21 Payments would be made to the Council who together with Hertfordshire County Council, would develop and implement proposals for improving transport modes within the town centre. This would allow the Council to maximise the benefits from the contributions of both the public and private sectors. It is considered that accessibility payments would help “swing the balance” of transport investment towards more sustainable modes.

POLICY 31:

The Council will secure accessibility payments depending on the nature, scale and location of the developments. These payments will be used for the transport aspects of this Town Centre Strategy.

3.8 COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 3.8.1 The quality and design of public spaces and buildings is important in terms of safety. New development and on-going maintenance of the urban fabric create impressions about the town centre's image and people's care for it. This affects people's perception of their safety and vulnerability to crime. Environments that are perceived as safe will attract people.
- 3.8.2 North Hertfordshire has a relatively low crime rate and has no areas with severe or longstanding crime and disorder problems. There are, however, some areas in the district where some types of crime and disorder are concentrated, and this can impact on the quality of life of those that live and work there. Baldock town centre is no exception compared to other town centres in the district in experiencing relatively high levels of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage.
- 3.8.3 Recognising the importance of providing a safe and secure environment, the Council together with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership has produced a new Community Safety Strategy for North Hertfordshire for the period 2005 to 2008. This partnership includes the Council, Hertfordshire Constabulary Eastern Area, Hertfordshire County Council, the Police Authority, the Primary Care Trust, Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue and Hertfordshire Probation Service. The key priorities of the Community Safety Strategy are to tackle anti-social behaviour, seek to reduce crime (both acquisitive and violent crime) alcohol and drug related issues, as well as reducing fear of crime within the district, including the town centres. This is to be achieved through partnership working and task groups have been set up to work together with the Police, schools, local businesses, residents and other organisations to tackle and solve crime and disorder issues. Included within these initiatives is to ensure that Baldock town centre remains an area with low crime rates and high levels of community safety.
- 3.8.4 The town centre benefits economically from a variety of leisure, food and drink outlets which meet the needs of many people who live locally or in nearby towns and villages. There is also a significant local residential community. These activities offer natural surveillance thereby increasing safety and reducing crime. Unfortunately, linked with the number of evening activities is an element of anti-social behaviour and alcohol related crime. This can cause conflict or loss of amenity for other users of the town centre. The Council through the Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group will work closely with the Police, schools, residents and local businesses within the town to prevent and reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour within the district including the town centres.
- 3.8.5 In addition, under the *Licensing Act 2003* through the Council's *Licensing Policy* (adopted in January 2005), the Council is responsible for licensing functions in the district. The Council recognises that fixed and artificially early closing times may lead to peaks of disorder and disturbance on the streets when large numbers of people tend to leave licensed premises at the same time. Staggered licensing hours regarding the sale of alcohol are an important factor in reducing friction at late night food outlets, taxi ranks and other sources of transport. When the Council is considering licensing applications, each application would be considered on its individual merits in accordance with the Department for Culture, Media & Support guidance issued under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003, on hours of trading, and have to meet the four licensing objectives, which are:

- the prevention of crime and disorder;
- public safety;
- the prevention of public nuisance; and
- the protection of children from harm.

Since taking over licensing in February 2005 the Council, through its Licensing Policy and working in partnership with the local police will seek to develop and strengthen links with licensed premises, i.e. shops/off licences, pubs and restaurants. This will help to monitor alcohol related incidents and reduce anti-social behaviour within the town centre. It is a statutory obligation that the Council's Licensing Policy must be reviewed every three years. This review will reflect necessary changes in government legislation and possibly changes in culture, such as that to the evening economy within the districts town centres and will aim to meet the objectives of the Licensing Act.



POLICY 32:

The Council, through partnership working and the Community Safety Strategy, will seek to ensure that the town centre remains an area with low crime rates and high levels of safety.

- 3.8.6 A major part of the town centre is covered by CCTV, which contributes towards people's perception of a safe environment. However, certain parts of the town centre and pedestrian access ways to and within the town centre are not well illuminated at night, such as St Mary's Churchyard, Pepper Alley, the area to the rear of the Community Centre at the Twitchell and the access links from Tesco's to the town

centre past the Memorial Gardens and health centre, and from the town centre to the railway station. Adequate street lighting is also an effective means of reducing crime, enhancing public safety and will encourage residents and visitors to use the town centre. The Council recognises the need to enhance street lighting and CCTV coverage of the town centre. Improvements to lighting are referred to under enhancement opportunities in section 3.4.

- 3.8.7 The design and layout of development proposals including enhancements to the street scene and car parks are important contributors to the prevention of crime. The Council will encourage land owners and developers to achieve safe and secure places as set out in government guidance on Safer Places, the planning system and crime prevention (2004) (See appendix 2).

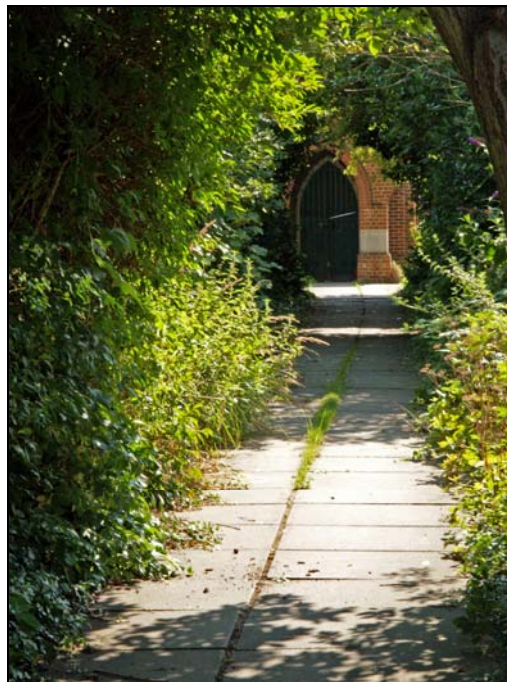
POLICY 33:

The Council will continue to provide and monitor and review the provision of CCTV within the town centre to ensure that it is effective. The Council will work with Hertfordshire Highways, land owners and other partners to improve lighting.

POLICY 34:

The Council will promote best practice guidance to land owners and developers for designing out crime. Developers must demonstrate how through design, layout, usage, lighting and landscape of proposals, they will create a safe and accessible environment for all.

(LP Policy 57 G2)



3.9 PROMOTION & MARKETING

- 3.9.1 Baldock town centre is multi functional serving the day to day needs of its urban and surrounding rural population. It is an historic market town and is part of the heritage of Hertfordshire and lowland England. The impact of the Baldock bypass is likely to be substantial, providing opportunities to improve the town environmentally but could also threaten retail trade with the reduction in passing through traffic.
- 3.9.2 The Baldock Area Visioning meetings and the Stakeholder Workshops have together considered and created a list of suggestions aimed at the successful enhancement, and promotion of Baldock town centre post-bypass. These include:
- retaining the High Street as a wide open space when undertaking any future enhancements;
 - respecting the historic layout and character of the town centre through enhancements to the streets and new developments;
 - encouraging retail and specialised shops into the town centre;
 - improving and actively promoting the Baldock Market and the use of the market area for other events;
 - developing a strong Chamber of Trade; and
 - promoting Baldock's heritage, cultural and leisure facilities.
- 3.9.3 Many of the issues and ideas raised at Stakeholder workshops are similar to other market towns (both in Hertfordshire and further afield). Two reports have been compiled recently which help to set out the context for Hertfordshire towns:
- A common approach for Market Towns – *Action for Market Towns* (commissioned by IiC¹⁴ the new funding stream for economic development from EEDA).
 - Review of Market Towns in Hertfordshire – *Ecotec Research* (commissioned by EH and NH and funded by Herts Rural Forum. This is particularly relevant as it focuses on Royston and Buntingford.
- 3.9.4 The recommendations from these reports should be considered as part of any improvement plans emerging from the town centre strategy since they may offer the opportunity for networking and outside assistance. Both reports make specific reference to Town Centre Management as an effective delivery vehicle for town improvements.
- 3.9.5 Mechanisms for promoting and marketing the town centre will depend on the availability of funding streams and effective partnership working between the Council, the Hertfordshire Chamber of Trade, local businesses, residents plus voluntary and private sector organisations.

¹⁴ IiC Investing in Communities

Raising the Profile:

3.9.6 Already included in raising the profile of the town is the work and events of various groups and organisations in promoting the historic and cultural features of the town, thereby seeking to increase tourism and visitors to the town. Other suggestions include:

- producing a town guide and town website;
- improving signage at key gateway locations to the town centre;
- providing good quality signage and street furniture which make a positive contribution to the area and sited in appropriate locations; and
- promoting the town centre via an information board/map at the Tesco Extra site.

POLICY 35:

The Council will support and work together with local private and voluntary organisations to enhance the quality of visitor experience within the town through the provision of appropriate signage, interpretation and information material.



Town Centre Partnership:

3.9.7 A Town Centre Partnership is a mechanism where members from various local organisations could work together and be responsible for prioritising and implementing the suggestions/actions for raising the profile of the town, thereby enhancing its vitality, viability and local identity. Such partnerships operate

successfully within the district's other towns of Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston. It is generally accepted that the partnership should be independent of the local authority, and comprise local businesses, retailers, public sector, voluntary and community groups. In some areas a town centre manager is employed to implement the work of the partnership and organise marketing of the town centre. Some examples of actions and responsibilities that a town centre manager might undertake in Baldock are:

- organise events, fairs, specialist markets;
- help to promote the town and attract new retailers;
- recruit members to the partnership;
- communicate (possibly by newsletter) to traders, residents and all interested parties;
- co-ordinate activities;
- welcome pack for new residents;
- help to increase the vitality of the market;
- promote the town through Tesco, the station and the library; and
- investigate the need and funding arrangements for the provision of a shopmobility scheme within the town centre.

POLICY 36:

The Council will work together with local businesses and organisations in investigating the potential for creating a Town Centre Partnership, and seek joint funding opportunities for the Partnership.



Networking and Tourism:

3.9.8 The protection and development of market towns as a pivotal part of a region's prosperity is recognised nationally. It features in the liC (Investors in Communities) initial strategy for Hertfordshire. In essence this means that some of the issues facing Baldock will be similar to those of other towns in both Hertfordshire and the East of England. Shared strategies may be applicable and it is important that the town gains from this and seeks the maximum benefit by networking both County wide and regionally. Areas where this networking can benefit Baldock town centre is by:

- ensuring information is linked to all appropriate web sites;
- inclusion in county and regional tourism guides;
- partnerships with other districts (especially East Herts) and involvement in partnered projects;
- usage and awareness of cycling and walking guides;
- involvement at ATCM¹⁵ and Market Towns Network; and
- ensure involvement within the liC process.

POLICY 37:

The Council will work together with the county tourism officers and other organisations to raise the profile of the town centre and enhance its vitality, viability and local identity.

¹⁵ ATCM = Association for Town Centre Management

SECTION 4: THE WAY FORWARD - MONITORING PERFORMANCE

- 4.1 The production of this Strategy is not an end product in itself. It is to provide the overall framework for guiding development and enhancement opportunities within the town centre. It has important links to other strategies and plans, such as the current NHDC Local Plan, the Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire, the NHDC Car Parking Strategy, the NHDC Community Safety Strategy, the NHDC Licensing Policy, and the Northern Hertfordshire Area Transport Plan which together provide the necessary guidance to inform identified and other development/enhancement areas within the town centre.
- 4.2 This Strategy will be supported by an Action Plan, which will set short to medium term targets to deliver the policies and aims of the Strategy. The Baldock Town Centre Strategy Action Plan will be linked to the Council's Corporate Action Plan and to other relevant corporate action plans to ensure continuity and efficient use of resources, in particular to the Baldock Area Visioning Action Plan and to the regular reviews of the Community Strategy. The Action Plan will be monitored on a regular basis will include Quality of Life and Town Centre 'health check' factors as set out in current government guidance. Monitoring will include observation of key town centre features as well as noting progress on implementing this Strategy. These will be linked to the Council's Improvement Plan. The Action Plan is attached at Appendix 5 to the Strategy.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the Strategy will be reviewed approximately every 5 years as part of the Council's Service and Financial Planning Process. The Strategy has been formulated assuming that the resources for its implementation will be little different to those currently available. To ensure success, staff and financial resources will need to be redirected towards achieving the aims and policies outlined in this document. Every opportunity will be taken to gain additional funding from sponsors and partners to give added value to the Council's existing resources and to assist in the delivery of various development and enhancement schemes outlined in this Strategy.
- 4.3 The Town Centre review will take into account views expressed through the local visioning work, reported quarterly to the Baldock & District Area Committee; this will include decisions on small grant funding by the Committee and prioritisation of works based on local input. In addition, ongoing consultation via the councils' Citizens Panel, District Wide Survey and Best Value Reviews will provide a valuable check on progress to improve the town centre, as perceived by residents.

POLICY 38:

The Council will prepare an Action Plan that will identify the priorities, resources and timescales for schemes and projects that will deliver the aims identified in the Strategy. The Baldock Town Centre Strategy Action Plan will be reviewed annually and linked to other relevant corporate action plans and strategies, in particular the Baldock Area Visioning Action Plan.

POLICY 39:

The Council will review the Baldock Town Centre Strategy in the light of regular monitoring procedures and of views expressed through the Area Visioning process and the review of the Community Strategy.



APPENDIX 1: PLANS/FIGURES

Fig. 1 Location Plan

Fig. 2 Baldock Town Centre and Conservation Area

Fig. 3 Gateways

Fig. 4 Land uses as at April 2005 (to be updated following Town Centre Health Checks as per the Action Plan)

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

Government Guidance Documents include:

- Securing the Future – UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy (March 2005)
- RPG6 Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia to 2016
- RPG9 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (2001)
- Draft RSS Regional Planning Guidance for the East of England (Feb 2004)
- PPS1 Creating Sustainable Communities (2004)
- PPG3 Housing (2000)
- PPS6 Planning for Town Centres (2005)
- PPG13 Transport (2001)
- PPG15 Planning and Historic Environment (1994)
- PPG16 Archaeology and Planning (1990)
- PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation – (July 2002)
- By Design – Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice (2000)
- By Design – Better Places to Live (A companion guide to PPG3) (2001)
- Building in Context: New development in Historic Area by Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment 2001
- Streets for All: East of England by English Heritage
- Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention (2004)
- Planning and Access for Disabled People: A Good Practise Guide (2003)
- Planning for Town Centres: Guidance on Design and Implementation Tools (2005)
- Guidance Issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 (July 2004) – by Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Local Documents include:

- Hertfordshire County Structure Plan: 2001 – 2016 - Deposit Draft February 2003
- Hertfordshire County Structure Plan: Adopted 1998
- North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations (1996)
- Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan – 2001/02 to 2005/06 (2000)
- Hertfordshire's Intalink Strategy 2002/3 to 2005/6 (2001)
- Northern Hertfordshire Area Transport Plan (HCC, 2004)
- Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP2) – 2006/07 – 2010/11: (July 2005)
- Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP2) 2006/07 to 2010/11 Bus Strategy and Rail Strategy (July 2005)
- Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP2) 2006/07 to 2010/11 Accessibility Strategy (2005)
- Leisure and Cultural Strategy for North Hertfordshire 2001 – 2005 (2000)
- Community Safety Strategy for North Hertfordshire 2006 – 2008: Consultation Draft (2005)
- NHDC Town Centre and Retail Study (June 2004) prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners
- Conservation Area Character Statement for Baldock (June 2003)
- Hertfordshire County Council: Baldock Extensive Urban Survey Report (2002)
- North Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (2005)
- North Hertfordshire Cycling Strategy (2000)
- North Hertfordshire Towns Cycle Route Network (2000)
- North Hertfordshire District Council Car Parking Strategy 2004-2009 (June 2004)
- Hertfordshire County Council: Supplementary Planning Guidance on Parking Provision at New Development: (Adopted December 2000)
- North Hertfordshire District Council Community Strategy (November 2003)
- A Vision for Baldock - July 2001
- Baldock Area Visioning Action Plan 2004 onwards

APPENDIX 3: BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Members of the Baldock Town Centre Stakeholder Group – Formed

Almshoe Trust Land

Baldock Community Association

Baldock Community Police

Baldock Horticultural Society

Baldock Mail

Baldock Museum

Baldock Neighbourhood Watch

Baldock Society

Baldock Town Youth Football Club

Baldock Vision Steering Group

Hanover Housing Assoc Forum

Hartsfield JMI School

Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Hertfordshire Fire Service

Knights Templar Ladies' Club

Local Residents (18)

Mansfield Mews Management Group

North Herts & Stevenage PCT

Representatives from Local Businesses (11)

St John's RC Primary School

St Mary's Church

APPENDIX 4: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accessibility	The ability of people to move around and through an area.
Affordable Housing	Housing made available based on the evidence of need, to people who are unable to afford housing at market prices. Legal agreements can be used to restrict the occupation of property to people falling within categories of need.
Burgage Plots	Long narrow mediaeval property boundaries with narrow frontages comprising the trading part of the burgess – (merchants or traders allowed to make profits) - facing onto the street.
Charter Market	A charter granted by the crown or parliament to have a fair or market on a specific site on a specific day and changes have to be made through official channels, if applying for a change of day.
Community Facilities	Facilities used by the local community to meet their day to day needs. These include community buildings (places of worship, community halls, libraries), health and education facilities (schools, doctors and dentists surgeries, pharmacies).
Commuted Payments	A sum of money paid to a Local Authority by a developer (often under a Section 106 Agreement) to provide facilities or improvement connected with a development.
Comparison Shopping	Non-food goods such as clothes and electrical equipment, for which the consumer generally expects to invest time and effort into visiting a range of shops before making a choice.
Conservation Area	Area of special architectural or historic interest, which has been determined by the Local Planning Authority as one where the character or appearance is worthy of preservation or enhancement (s.69, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990).
Design	Relates to the layout, character, enclosure, ease of movement, legibility and diversity of a building or development scheme. It also includes construction materials, orientation, density and open space provision. Good design can create spaces that people are proud of and somewhere they want to live.
Design Brief	A non-statutory document produced by the local planning authorities in partnership with other interested parties that sets out the main principles for the design, siting and layout of a development/enhancement scheme.
Dwelling	A self-contained unit of accommodation that includes both houses and flats.

Enhancement	To positively add to a building or area that already has high quality.
GFA – gross floor area	The total floor space of a building measured to the outside of all external walls.
Hard and soft Landscaping	Refers to hard surfacing materials such as block paving and planting and street furniture for soft landscaping.
Health Checks	Information on town centres, which should be gathered on a regular basis to assess the vitality and viability of a centre, and includes, amongst other things: pedestrian flows, level of vacancies, diversity of uses, shop rents.
Housing Needs Study	Studies/Assessment done by district and borough councils to assess the level and types of unmet needs for accommodation, particularly affordable housing.
Landmark	A building or structure that stands out from its background by virtue of its height, size or other aspect of design.
Legibility	The degree to which a place can be easily understood and traversed.
Listed Building	A building identified by the Secretary of State for the Environment as being of special architectural or historical interest and entered on the statutory list (Panning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 S.1(5)).
Local distinctiveness	An architectural design term used to refer to building materials or design features that can be identified as belonging to the local area.
Locally Listed Buildings or Buildings of Local Importance	Buildings of Local Importance do not merit statutory listing, but are important individually in a local context for their local historical connections, local vernacular construction or detailing or their contribution to the local cherished scene. These are listed on the Council's Register of Buildings of Local Importance for Baldock adopted in 2003.
Local Plan	Statutory document produced by District Councils setting out detailed land use policies for the area concerned, to implement the development strategy set out in the County Structure Plan.
Local Development Framework	Statutory document produced by District Councils setting out detailed land use policies for the area concerned, will replace Local Plans.
Mixed use development	Developments which include a mix of uses including housing, employment, leisure and community facilities.
Passenger/Public Transport	Those services on which members of the public rely for getting from place to place when not using their own private transport. It includes bus, rail and taxis.

PPG's - Planning Policy Guidance Notes / PPS – Planning Policy Statements	A series of notes/statements that set out the Government's policy guidance on planning issues, such as housing, shopping, the countryside etc.
Public Realm and Spaces	Areas that are available for the public to use, without charge such as streets, squares and parks.
Retail Hierarchy	Hierarchy of shopping centres ranging from regional and sub-regional centres through town centres, district and local centres. Structure plans outline the hierarchy within a county and local plans indicate the hierarchy within districts.
Scale	The impression of a building when seen in relation to its surroundings.
Section 106/Planning Obligation	Legally binding undertakings, which can be used to mitigate the effects of, or enhance development. They are generally complementary to conditions, which may be imposed on planning consents and can control the use of land, require specific actions and provide for payments to be made. Government policy on the use of planning obligations is currently contained in the revised Circular 5/2005 Planning Obligations and S106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.
Shopping Area	An area within the Town Centre which is identified for mainly shopping uses.
Shopping frontage	Areas within shopping areas identified on the District Local Plan Proposals Map as the main frontages for shops.
Shopmobility Scheme	A nationally run scheme to enable people with physical disabilities to loan a self-propelled or battery operated wheelchair or scooter to travel around shopping centres and town centres. This service is usually free, although there may occasionally be a small charge to cover local costs.
Structure Plan	Statutory document produced by County Councils outlining their strategy for development over a 10 – 15 year period.
Sustainable development	Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

APPENDIX 5: BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY ACTION PLAN (2005 – 2009)

The attached Action Plan supports the Strategy and is divided in accordance with the following Themes:

- Enhancement Opportunities
- Land Use Activities
 - Shopping Commercial and Residential Activities
 - Baldock Market
- Community Facilities
 - Young People
 - Baldock Town Hall
 - Baldock Museum
- Transport & Access
- Community Safety
- Promotion & Marketing

The Action Plan will be monitored on a regular basis and reviewed annually.

BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY DRAFT ACTION PLAN: 2005 – 2009 (DEC 2005)

Enhancement Opportunities:

NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer(s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure the long term economic sustainability and viability of the town centre; • enhance the environment of the town centre by promoting and conserving the historic character and layout of the town, achieving good quality design and improving public spaces; • actively promote the weekly chartered street market and ensure it continues to operate successfully; • provide a safe and secure environment; • encourage development to the highest quality achievable which complements and enhances the historic character of the town; 	<p>Prepare a design brief/scheme for enhancement works to High Street, Whitehorse Street, Hitchin Street and Church Street..</p> <p>This will include the following preliminary design works:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appoint consultants to undertake a parking review of all on and off street parking provision within the town centre and surrounding streets. 2. Carry out an origin/destination survey of all people parking in the town centre 3. Assess pedestrian flow counts and movements 4. Assess service delivery requirements to commercial businesses within the town centre 5. Appoint consultants to undertake a cellar survey – (Radar survey and site inspection) 	Design Brief/scheme produced for public consultation.	<p>By Oct 2006</p> <p>By Aug 2006</p> <p>By Aug 2006</p> <p>By May 2006</p> <p>By April 2007</p>	<p>NHDC / Louise Symes;</p> <p>HCC / Roxanne Glaud</p> <p>Herts Highways / Steve Greenhill</p> <p>Consultants</p>	<p>P7, P5, P11, P13, P23, P24, P25, P26, P27, P28, P29, P30, P33, P35</p> <p>NHDC Car Parking Strategy</p> <p>NHATP</p> <p>Baldock & District Area Visioning Action Plan</p>

BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY DRAFT ACTION PLAN: 2005 – 2009 (DEC 2005)

NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer(s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>promote a town centre accessible to all by encouraging a choice of transport modes;</i> • <i>improve access for pedestrians and other non-car users to and within the town centre;</i> • <i>improve tourism and inward investment to the town;</i> • <i>encourage greater community involvement in the life of the town centre;</i> 	6. Survey all existing street furniture, signage and lighting.	As Above	By March 2006	As Above	As Above
		7. Document information about utility services		By Oct 2006		
		8. Meet with BTC Stakeholder Group and local Members to discuss preliminary design codes.		By Dec 2006		
		9. Undertake Post – Bypass traffic survey.		By April 2007		
		Report to Baldock & District Committee & Cabinet to agree Design Scheme for public consultation.	Scheme for public consultation.	By July 2007	NHDC / Louise Symes	As Above
		Amend design scheme in light of public consultation and seek Member agreement of preferred scheme.	An agreed scheme approved by members and public.	By Sept 2007	NHDC / HCC & consultant	
		Prepare brief and contract documents for contractor.	Brief prepared for tenders	By November 2007	NHDC / HCC	
		Appoint contractors and start implementation of scheme.	Implementation of Scheme	Start Spring 2008	NHDC; HCC; Herts Highways & Contractors	

BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY DRAFT ACTION PLAN: 2005 – 2009 (DEC 2005)

Land Use Activities:

NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer (s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
SHOPPING, COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITIES						
1, 2, 3, 4 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure long term economic sustainability and viability of the town centre 	Carry out town centre monitoring and health checks	Publication of results of town centre monitoring and health checks	Town centre monitoring annually – April 2006 to 2009 Health checks biennially: Oct 2006 and Oct 2008	NHDC, Mark Wilson/ Louise Symes Baldock Town Centre Partnership	P8 LDF Annual Monitoring Report
1 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a balanced mix and range of land uses within the town centre that will contribute to its vitality and local character. 	Preparation of appropriate retail/town centre policies for inclusion in the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) to identify and addresses any undesirable concentrations of non-retail uses.	Adopted retail/town centre policies in the Council's Local Development Framework	Draft policies – Jan 2007; Adopted policies – Jan 2009	NHDC Mark Wilson Louise Symes	P9 & P10 LDF Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Preferred Option Paper
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate employment opportunities and housing for the benefit of the local community 	Produce housing policies in the Council's Local Development Framework	Adopted housing policies in the Council's Local Development Framework	Draft policies – Jan 2007; Adopted policies Jan 2009	NHDC Andy Beavan	P15, & P16 LDF Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Preferred Option Paper NHDC Housing Needs Study
		Produce Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on affordable housing	Adopted SPD on affordable housing	Draft document July 2007; Adopted document Jan 2009	NHDC Andy Beavan	P17 Core Strategy & Development Control Policies LDD

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NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer (s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
1, 2, 3 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the long term economic sustainability and vitality of the town centre 	Produce Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on planning contributions	Adopted SPD on planning contributions	Draft document April 2006; Adopted document August 2006	NHDC Karen Allen/ Louise Symes	P17, P22, P29 & P31 NHDC Local Plan No.2
BALDOCK MARKET						
1 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively promote the weekly chartered market and ensure it continues to operate successfully Ensure the long term economic sustainability and viability of the town centre. Enhance the environment of the town centre by promoting and conserving the historic character and layout of the town, achieving good quality design and improving public spaces. 	Seeking external funding from EEDA or other agencies for short term enhancements/improvements to the market	Improved market	2006/7	NHDC Tara Page	P12 & P13
		Exploring opportunities to open up the market on bank holidays and linking in with specialist markets, including holding a farmers market.	Promotion for a more successful market	2006/7	NHDC Tara Page	P12 & P13
		Review experimental Traffic Regulation Order for the market area in High Street	Proposing to formalise experimental order with shorter period	By Sept 2006	NHDC Terry Nickolls	P12 & P24

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Community Facilities:

NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer (s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
YOUNG PEOPLE						
3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a balanced mix and range of land uses within the town centre that will contribute to its vitality and local character. 	Formation of a representative Youth Forum/Council for Baldock	Improved Youth Participation & Inclusive Consultation	Commence April 06	NHDC Stuart Izzard	P19 & P20 Youth Services FSR Development Plan
3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve and replace existing community facilities 	Improve partnership working with statutory and voluntary agencies	NH Youth Issues Group Co-ordinated & joint approach to service provision and support	Current	NHDC Stuart Izzard HCC Youth Services Andy Manson	P19 & P20 Youth Services FSR Development Plan
3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage greater community involvement in the life of the town centre. 	Promote Grant Aiding for Youth Activities & Youth Projects	Financial support given to existing and new groups/initiatives	Current	NHDC Stuart Izzard	P19 & P20 Youth Services FSR Development Plan
BALDOCK TOWN HALL						
5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve and replace existing community facilities 	Prepare options appraisal brief for consultants for Baldock Town Hall.	Ensure that the future use of the town hall will benefit the vitality and viability of the town centre and the local community	By end Jan 2006	NHDC Peter Underwood/ Jim Turner	P19 & P20

BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY DRAFT ACTION PLAN: 2005 – 2009 (DEC 2005)

NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer (s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Improve and replace existing community facilities</i>• <i>Promote a balanced mix and range of land uses within the town centre that will contribute to its vitality and local character.</i>• <i>Encourage greater community involvement in the life of the town centre.</i>	Invite fee quotations from suitably qualified and experienced design and planning consultants	Ensure that the future use of the town hall will benefit the vitality and viability of the town centre and the local community	By end Feb 2006	NHDC Peter Underwood/ Jim Turner	P19 &P20 Asset Management Review & Review of Public Halls & Conveniences
		Assess quotations and appoint consultant		By mid Mar 2006	NHDC Peter Underwood/ Jim Turner	
		Consult relevant local bodies to establish preferences for future use of the building.		By end April 2006	NHDC & Consultant	
		Complete outline options appraisal for possible uses and prioritise these against a range of agreed criteria such as community benefit, cost, risk, conformity of use etc		By end June 2006	Consultant	
		Prepare report for assessment and shortlisting of identified options.		By end July 2006	Consultant	
		Agree most suitable option(s) for further consideration as part of the agreed plans for the Town Centre		By end Aug 2006	NHDC / Consultant	
BALDOCK MUSEUM						
3 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Improve and replace existing community facilities</i>	Prepare a project plan for implementing the key works of the Museums Improvement Plan	Part Project Plan to improve partnership working with non NHDC museums	1 st Draft Discussed at Dec 2005 Project Board Meeting	NHDC/ Lynn Saville	P19 & P20 Museum FSR

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NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer (s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
3 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improve tourism and inward investment to the town</i> • <i>Improve and replace existing community facilities</i> 	Work with local volunteers who operate Baldock Museum to identify new opportunities for joint working	Viability to be considered as part of Museum FSR project within context of new Heritage and Cultural Strategy.	<p>First meeting of stakeholder forum January 2006</p> <p>Further dates will be subsumed into work programme.</p>	NHDC / Patrick Candler	<p>P19 & P20</p> <p>Museum FSR</p> <p>Asset Management Review & Review of Public Halls & Conveniences</p> <p>Baldock & District Area Vision Action Plan</p>

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Transport & Access:

NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer (s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
1, 3 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ensure the long term economic sustainability and vitality of the town centre.</i> • <i>Promote a town centre accessible to all by encouraging a choice of transport modes</i> • <i>Improve access for pedestrians and other non-car users to and within the town centre</i> • <i>Ensure the long term management and maintenance of the town centre as a whole, for the benefit of shoppers, businesses and residents</i> 	Appoint consultants to undertake a town wide Parking review of provision and usage	To meet the objectives of the North Herts Car Parking Strategy.	By Oct 2006	NHDC/ Simon Young Terry Nickolls & Consultants	P24 NHDC Car Parking Strategy
		Prepare Baldock & Letchworth Garden City Urban Transport Plan	Draft prepared for public consultation	Draft by May 2006 Final Report by July 2006	HCC/ Herts Highways Roxanne Glauf	P23, P24,P25, P26, P27, P28 &P29 NHATP
		Improvements to pavement network and pedestrian crossings as part of Enhancement Schemes and HCC Integrated Works Programme (IWP)	To strengthen and improve pedestrian links within and to the town centre.	Enhancement works by 2009 IWP ongoing	NHDC Simon Young HCC Roxanne Glauf Herts Highways Mike Morelee	P27, P28, P6, P7 & P11 NHATP Hertfordshire Highways Integrated Works Programme Baldock & District Visioning Area Action Plan

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NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer (s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
1, 3 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ensure the long term economic sustainability and vitality of the town centre.</i> • <i>Promote a town centre accessible to all by encouraging a choice of transport modes</i> 	Review NHDC Cycling Strategy and Network Review as part of policies for the LDF and to inform the Baldock & Letchworth Garden City Urban Transport Plan.	To improve access by bicycle to the town centre	Start Nov 2006	NHDC Simon Young HCC	P29 NHATP NHDC Cycling Strategy NHDC Network Review Baldock & District Visioning Area Action Plan
		Prepare a Passenger Transport Strategy for Baldock, Letchworth & Hitchin to link in with the HCC North Herts Area Network Review and to inform the Baldock & Letchworth Garden City Urban Transport Plan.	Improved bus services, infrastructure and information	Start April 2006	NHDC Simon Young HCC Keith White	P25, P26 & P28 NHATP LTP Herts Bus, Rail and Intalink Strategies Baldock & District Visioning Area Action Plan

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Community Safety:

NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer (s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provide a safe and secure environment</i> 	Monitor hotspots and work to make them safer through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.	Ensure Baldock Town Centre remains an area with low crime rates.	Ongoing	NHDC Michael Nadasdy Crime Reduction Partnership, Local Police /	P32 & P33 Community Safety Strategy for North Herts
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provide a safe and secure environment</i> 	To encourage licensees to form a PubWatch scheme to work in partnership with the local Police to tackle anti-social behaviour as and when it arises.	Ensure Baldock town Centre remains an area with high levels of community safety.	Ongoing	Local Police; Pub Licensees; NHDC - Michael Nadasdy	P32 Community Safety Strategy for North Herts
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provide a safe and secure environment</i> 	Sign up to an Enforcement Protocol with neighbouring authorities and Herts Constabulary in dealing with licensed/unlicensed venues	Ensure that the aims and objectives of the Licensing Act 2003 Joint Enforcement Statement ¹⁶ are promoted and met.	By March 2006	NHDC Giovanna Silverio / Herts Constabulary, Neighbouring Local Authorities/	P32

¹⁶ The Licensing Act 2003 Joint Enforcement Statement, is a Statement between Local Authority Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).

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Promotion & Marketing:

NHDC Corporate Strategic Objectives	BTC Strategy Aims	Actions	Output	Key Dates	Lead Agency / Officer (s)	BTC Strategy Policies & Links to other Plans/ Strategies
1, 2, 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ensure the long term economic sustainability and viability of the town centre</i> • <i>Improve tourism and inward investment to the town</i> 	<p>To investigate setting up a Town Centre Partnership:</p> <p>First set of meetings arranged with interested individuals to form/select the Partnership.</p> <p>To develop an Action Plan for the TCP and consider necessary funding requirements.</p>	To work with local businesses to raise the profile of the town Centre	<p>Nov/Dec 2005</p> <p>By April 2006</p>	NHDC Ron Chalkley /Herts Chamber of Commerce	P36, P11, P12 & P14
1, 3 & 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improve tourism and inward investment to the town</i> 	Improve co-ordination and networking links with Herts County Council and EEDA to promote Baldock through various tourism initiatives	Raise the profile of Baldock town across the County and regionally.	Start May 2006	NHDC Ron Chalkley/ HCC/ TCP	P37 & P14
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improve tourism and inward investment to the town</i> 	Install Directional Tourist Information Road signs for Baldock as part of Bypass works And Gateway signs as part of enhancement works	To encourage motorists to visit the historic Market Town of Baldock	<p>Directional signs by April 2006</p> <p>Gateway signs by 2009</p>	HCC / Herts Highways	P35