**LETCHWORTH BALDOCK EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Introduction**

A series of town based evidence packs have been developed to support the emerging Growth and Transport plans. These include analysis of a range of socioeconomic, land use, and demographic factors, and consideration of current transport provision and usage to identify issues and constraints in relation to travel to / from and within the towns.

An assessment is also included of likely future transport pressures taking into account proposed growth and predictions from modelling work using the countywide transport model COMET.

The key findings from the Letchworth Baldock evidence pack are outlined below.

**Community Characteristics**

This section looks at the current land use, employment, education and social characteristics of the study area drawing on a variety of information sources including; Address Base Premium, ONS census 2011, Business Registrations and Employment Survey, DCLG Indices of Deprivation, Experian Mosaic profile and the Hertfordshire County Travel Survey.

Letchworth Baldock has three main employment centres (Letchworth Business Area; Baldock High Street & Letchworth Town Centre Business Area), a number of secondary schools both state (Highfield, Fearnhill and Knights Templar) and independent (St Francis College, St Christophers) plus a specialist school and colllege and a variety of sports and leisure facilities.

Socioeconomically the study area is mixed. South West Letchworth is generally affluent but there are pockets of the study area with relatively high unemployment and levels of life expectancy, long term illness and healthy eating which are worse than national averages.

There is no declared Air Quality Management Area but there are two congestion hotspots (Whitehorse Street /Station Road in Baldock and Letchworth Gate /Pixmore Way in Letchworth) with dwellings in close proximity to them.

**Economic Portrait**

This section investigates the current economic climate in the study area drawing on information sources such as the East of England Forecasting Model, ONS Census 2011 and the Business Registrations and Employment Survey.

North Hertfordshire district has around 132,000 inhabitants and around 59,000 jobs with key employment sectors identified as Wholesale and Retail, Manufacturing and Accommodation, food and services. Generally resident job skills appear to match the available employment sectors.

**Transport Network**

This section summarises existing transport infrastructure in the study area drawing on a variety of map based information sources held by HCC.

The study area has the strategic A1(M) corridor running through it along with key local distributor routes (A505 and A507).

There are around 700 car parking spaces in the study area. Most are controlled by the district council although there are also some large supermarket car parks. Free parking is available in some of the smaller car parks.

Letchworth Baldock is located on the Great Northern Rail line with services to Kings Cross and Cambridge / Peterborough. There are two train stations within the study area at Letchworth and Baldock which are located close to the respective town centres.

Frequent bus services run north south through Letchworth connecting with Stevenage. There are other less frequent services to Hitchin, Baldock, Royston, Ashwell and Stotfold. Despite this there are areas of both towns not served directly by buses and located over 400m from the nearest bus stop.

There are north south NCN (National Cycle Network) routes through the study area. However there are no direct cycle links between the two towns of Letchworth and Baldock.

**Network Analysis**

This section summarises current transport performance in the Study area drawing heavily on census journey to work data as well as Trafficmaster journey time analysis, TRACC analysis and collision data.

The study area has a relatively equal number of in and out commuters. This might be due to there being large employment areas in Letchworth Industrial Area which draws work trips into the area. Compared to other areas there is a high proportion of internal trips (20%) reflecting the presence of two separate towns within the study area.

The largest proportions of in commuting are from adjacent areas of Central Bedfordshire and North Herts (particularly Hitchin). Thirteen percent of in commuting trips also come from Stevenage.. Over eighty percent of these trips are by private car.

Out commuting is dominated by travel to Stevenage (19%), Hitchin (13%) and travel to London. Almost three quarters (72%) of trips out are by car and of 18% trips are by rail.

Around 20% of work trips are internal (i.e. people live and work in the study area). Despite the relatively short distances involved, over half (53%) of these trips are by car with a further 30% of trips made by foot and 6% by cycling. The level of bus or coach trips is however low (2%).

Letchworth Business & Industrial Area is a key employment area with over 7,800 inbound commuting trips. Despite large numbers of trips from adjoining residential areas around three quarters (76%) of trips there are by car..

Congestion hotspots are evident at A1(m) junction 9, the Whitehorse Street / Station Road junction in Baldock and at the Letchworth Gate / Pixmore Way junction as well as on the A1m southbound from junction 9 to 8. Junction 9 is also a defined hazardous site based on road collision data.

The stations are within the town centres and generally have good accessibility. The majority of the study area is within a 10 minutes cycle journey time of the stations.

The majority of the study area is within a 20-30 minute walk and 15-20 minute cycle ride of either Letchworth or Baldock town centre. A number of residential areas (including parts of Baldock) are within a 20 minute walk of the Letchworth Industrial and Business area and all areas are within a 20 minute cycle. Bus journeys from parts of south and north Letchworth and the southern part of Baldock however take over 20 minutes to this employment area.

**Future Transport**

This section draws comparisons between 2014 and 2031, using data from the COMET strategic transport model as well as data from the local council regarding development and growth statistics.

North Herts borough is set to experience a 14% growth in population over the next 15 years and a 9% growth in employment with main growth seen in construction and accommodation & food services sectors.

Within the study area there are key development site identified by the district as part of their local plan north of Letchworth and north and south of Baldock. There also a number of smaller sites which have been granted permission.

It is predicted that there will be significant growth in traffic between 2014 and 2031 on the Baldock Bypass & Letchworth Gate (A505) during the AM & PM peak hour (8-9AM & 17-18PM).

Journey time comparisons between the AM & PM peak area shows increases in journey times are predicted for journeys to Luton, Welwyn Garden City and Royston.