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OPINIONS

spiked fencing at the back of the hospital??
No matter how much they deceive the community it IS a secure (or supposed to be) mental institution!

RICHARD ROYDHOUSE
Hillcrest, Baldock

Options for town centre's survival

I, like all of you, are saddened to see the demise of Stevenage town centre. In the 25 years since we moved to this area we have witnessed the steady decline.
I was particularly miffed when M&S abandoned us and I know I will miss the creative and interesting displays of Christmas gifts at BHS. However we are where we are. It seems that the majority of us do not visit high streets anymore or buy stuff in shops. Obviously no high street giant will be coming to Stevenage in the near future to fill the void. At best all we can hope for are super-sized charity or pound shops.
But we desperately need housing. Both the Marks & Spencer and BHS buildings are substantial and given the excellent job that is being made in turning the council offices opposite Tesco into apartments, why cannot the same thing happen to them?
The BHS building would be an excellent candidate given it shares the same brutalist architecture and is only a few yards away. An

apartment in a town centre location with a 24-hour Tesco just next door, what more does the young, professional metropolitan elite need?
Surely it is better for planners to change the use of these redundant buildings to residential rather than to insist on building all over the Green Belt, which is abhorrent to us all?
A TODDS GREEN RESIDENT

Poodle power?

When is your paper going to stop being a poodle for Stevenage Borough Council?
They feed you false hopes with artist's impressions of future developments which never happen, to show the Stevenage public they are doing something, while wasting lots of money.
The super sports stadium is now the Roaring Meg, Westgate is now only half the size of the original plans, the new bus station at the railway station cannot happen as they don't own the land.
The town centre is no better off today than when it first opened in 1959. People want shops not flats in the town centre.
You have refused to publish any letters against the Bunyan Baptist Church as they have been censored by SBC. Well we don't need poodles. Time to call in the Rockefeller national papers. Report this back to your friends in Stevenage Borough Council.
A BASILS ROAD RESIDENT

Fearing for air pollution

Anyone familiar with Baldock's background would know the area has a history of poor air quality, a problem exacerbated by the town being located in a valley.
Diesel engines remain one of the worst polluters emitting specs called particulates in the air which increase the risk of asthma, especially in children, stroke and cancer. These invisible ultra fine particles known as PM2.5 present a major risk to public health as they penetrate deep in the lungs and circulatory system causing disease.
Dr Flavia Bustreo, assistant director general at the World Health Organisation, states clearly that air pollution continues to take a toll on the health of the most vulnerable groups, particularly children and the elderly.
Recent research by Dr Gavin Shaddick at Bath University for the WHO has confirmed that PM2.5 air pollution does present a major risk to public health and that a substantial number of lives could be saved if such pollution was effectively tackled.
Prior to the Baldock bypass public inquiry in 1995, to which our organisation was called to make a submission, the levels of asthma in local children was well above the

Speaker's Corner



John Gingell, Campaign Against Continued Traffic Damage to Children

“The sheer scale of development now proposed for Baldock can only increase damaging air pollution

national average. The problem was so bad that the local MP felt it appropriate to include the issue in his House of Commons speech on 16th December 1997, an extract being as follows: “Residents feel inconvenienced by the traffic and local people fear the pollution that it causes.
“The local pressure group, The Campaign Against Continued Traffic Damage to Children, led by Mr Gingell, has for years been asking for fair, just and compassionate consideration to the health interests of Baldock Children who walk to school and

live against a background of heavy traffic and pollution.”
Although opposed by NHDC the Inspector approved the bypass after listening to all the evidence presented by those in favour including our group.
Following the opening of the bypass air quality and other environmental factors have undoubtedly improved in and around the town.
The sheer scale of development now proposed for Baldock can only serve to increase damaging air pollution. Consequently it is difficult to see how the present administration could possibly be in tune with the statement on this subject that was made to the House of Commons by Sir Oliver Heald in 1997.
One is left with the conclusion that the council does not really care whether the risks to health have been properly researched and addressed in their haste to manufacture a Local Plan.

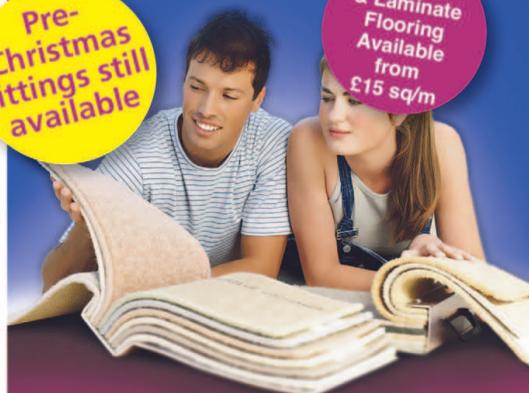
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