

## **Growing Baldock Advisory Forum**

Attendees: 16 attendees including representatives of community groups, ward councillors and council officers.

Michael Bingham - Baldock, Bygrave and Clothall Planning Group

Alison Gentle - Baldock Arts and Heritage Centre

Alice Clayton – Baldock Events Forum

Katy Matthews – Baldock Events Forum

Rosie Alsop - Girl Guides

Cllr Alistair Willoughby

Cllr Stewart Willoughby

Cllr Rhona Cameron

Cllr Tom Tyson

Alice Bearton - Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services

Robert Coldrey - Scouts

Tracy Westgate – North Hertfordshire District County community officer

Xavier Preston – Hertfordshire County Council

Madeline Lewis – Hertfordshire County Council

Graham Lee – Ashford Parish Council

Paul Taylor – Friends of Baldock Green Spaces

Paul Mumford – Urban&Civic

Kitty Eyre – Urban&Civic

Meeting led by Paul Mumford (PM) – Project Director at Urban&Civic.

This was the second meeting of the newly formed Growing Baldock Advisory Forum. The topic of this meeting was community spaces.

PM gave a recap of the development and the purpose of the Growing Baldock Advisory Forum. PM talked through the slide deck which included information on the community facilities currently available in Baldock, an example of a local centre on another Urban&Civic site and the ‘vision’ for community spaces at Growing Baldock.

The group was then split into three smaller groups to discuss three questions about the current community facilities, future facilities and integration of existing Baldock with the development.

**Question 1 - What are the strengths of Baldock’s community e.g. places, events, people?**

The following things were mentioned as the strengths of Baldock’s community:

- The strength of community spirit and the number of people willing to support events.
- The high street – very wide and events can be held without closing the road.
- There are a large number of varied events.
- Large number of varied spaces to hold events including schools and the high street.
- Strong network between the schools.
- There are a wide range of open spaces, including allotments.

**Questions 2 - What community spaces / facilities do you think are most needed in the wider Baldock (existing town and Growing Baldock)?**

The following spaces were identified as needed in the wider Baldock:

- Sports facilities including but not limited to space for indoor sports and football pitches. There was a discussion as to whether any new school sports facilities could be shared with the public.
- Youth spaces generally. This could include a youth club or outdoor spaces such as a skate park.
- Free or cheap activities
- Larger medical facilities
- A community hub space that could also be used for police and other services
- Green spaces, not just parks but other spaces too such as community orchards
- Spaces or activities to support children with special educational needs
- A large indoor space to hold events, potentially with catering facilities

Some people also commented that it is important not to displace users of the existing community spaces. Many of these spaces are in need of financial support or repair work. Another person commented that the development should be mindful to provide facilities to support neighbouring communities not just for Baldock itself.

### **Question three - How do we integrate the new Growing Baldock community with existing Baldock residents?**

The following ideas were raised as to how to integrate the new Growing Baldock community with existing Baldock residents:

- Easy access from the development to Baldock's centre, in particular for homes in the northerly part of BA1. This improved access would involve active travel connections, such as wider footpaths on North Road, and connections for cars.
- Provision of sufficient parking in Baldock's centre for people from the development to drive there and park.
- Community events that involve the new schools. To support this there needs to be good access between the new and existing schools.
- Opportunities for children in existing schools to visit the development e.g. nature areas, archaeology.
- The Headteachers Network would expand to encompass new schools.

There was also a discussion of the need to get the balance right between providing enough facilities in BA1 and not providing too many, so there are not two rival centres of power. In addition, people questioned how long the development would take to be completed and the need to invest in existing facilities in the first instance and then later build new facilities.

One person noted that whilst it would be good for community cohesion to have a single secondary school, the existing Knights Templar School and BA3 are both quite far from the northern sections of BA1 and hence there need to be safe routes to school that avoid traffic.

Questions were also raised around the long-term management of any new community spaces, including how they would be booked and maintained. It was agreed that stewardship and estate management should be the focus of a future meeting.

PM thanked people for their time and confirmed that the subject of the next meeting would be transport.

The meeting closed.

Future meeting dates:

**Tuesday 1st July** – 7pm to 8.30pm - online (TBC - Teams or in person)

**Wednesday 10th September** – 7pm to 8.30pm – IN PERSON (Baldock Arts and Heritage Centre)