

THE BALDOCK SOCIETY

C/o 1 Norton Road, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 5AP

Info@baldocksociety.org.uk

Http://www.baldocksociety.org.uk



newsletter

An Early Season's Greeting – A message from the Chairman and Committee

First of all, as we no longer hold a meeting in December, may we take this opportunity to wish you all an early **Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year**.

We would also like to thank you for your support this year. We have had good attendances at our monthly general meetings and the feedback has been very encouraging.

Committee in Crisis

We still have several vacancies on the committee. This has become quite a problem this year; a mixture of work commitments, illness and other factors have meant that committee members have not been as active as they would like, putting quite a strain on the few remaining active members.

We are going to be unable to carry on with the current level of strength and unless we are able to recruit more members to the committee, meaning that the Society is in serious danger of closing up shop after over 30 years continuous service. The Society has established itself as a credible and respected voice within Baldock, particularly on matters of local planning, where Council planning officers both listen to and value the representations we make. To lose the Society would be tragic, so if you feel strongly about your town, would like to express your views and do something positive to help **protect** Baldock, then please consider joining the committee. We need you now more than ever -

ACT NOW, YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!

Your Questions to Our Councillors

For those of you who attended the August meeting, we have now received the Councillors' feedback on YOUR questions, and they are attached for you to read. If you want anything followed up, please let us know and we will get back in touch with them. For those of you who did not attend, you missed one of the best evenings of the year - so much so that we are having another "Members Evening" in 2009.



The Website -

www.baldocksociety.org.uk

The website is being used by both members and non-members as a method of contacting the Society on a regular basis and we hope you enjoyed the overview given by Lee at the August meeting. It is one of the best websites for Baldock and has interest from all over the world.

As Lee noted at the meeting, please bear in mind that the website is not just a set of pages on the Internet! It is a comprehensive store of information about the Society and its activities. In addition to information on membership, meetings, contact and town issue reporting, it includes details of the planning applications and consultations we review and our responses to them. We will always

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include key points in newsletters but cannot include the volume of information that we can offer on the website. So if you have Internet access at home, please take a look!

If not, internet access is available at Baldock Library. Who knows, you may be so inspired as to want to join us on the Committee!

Where is Baldock Heading?

The town is changing by the day. I know it is very painful to the shop keepers and I receive many comments about the ongoing work and eventual look of the town centre. I can only say that it is going ahead, we are not going to change anything now, and urge you to wait and see what it is like when it is finished.

After all, there's no point in complaining to the chef about the taste, when he is only half way through cooking your meal! We are trying to get the Council and the designers along to our November 2009 meeting, to have an informal discussion on what we all think of the town centre after living with it for 6 months.

We very much hope they will be able to attend for what could promise to be an interesting meeting!

The Future

We face many challenges in 2009 and our work is as relevant now as it was when the Society was founded in the early 1970s.

Help us help Baldock.

Chris Gomm
CHAIRMAN

The Baldock Society are extending their collection of Baldock Pictures and are actively seeking new material. If you have any pictures of the town, old postcards etc., consider donating to the Society. These will be used in future displays and for other suitable uses.

The Baldock Area Police Neighbourhood Panel

is now up and running very successfully. We held a recent "Public Meeting" in the Community Centre - having sent out 4,000 invitations to cover the whole of Baldock, 50 people turned up. We had representation from the Police and it was a very interesting and interactive evening. Results of the survey into the perception of Baldock citizens on various crimes will be available next month. Everyone who attended participated, and many took forms away for their friends, neighbours and relatives. Should be interesting! However, of the 250 forms handed out on the night only 36 were completed and handed in. The next public meeting is **9 October 2009**.

www.baldocksociety.org.uk

Planning update—what's happening in Baldock?

Town Hall

As you know, things are happening. The recent Arts Festival was a great success and the Town Hall is now going into the next phase of survival. We understand the Council budgeted something in the region of £50,000 for the safety improvements to the building, in order to make it available for use. We can only hope this investment is a positive indicator for the future. We wish the Art Festival organisers the very best of luck for their future projects in the building.

Monitoring Planning Applications

Our day to day work! We review the planning applications every month and comment on those that your elected Committee feel will have an effect on the town, in line with the Society's objectives. We know, from talking to members at meetings, that developments within Baldock are a matter of both interest and concern. As proof, our recent members' meeting was, to say the least, lively at times! You can find out about what's on the planning list on the Council's website, at the Council Offices in Gernon Road and also in local papers. We always welcome members' views on what's on the list.

Rentokil Building

Back in April 2007, the Society sent a pre-emptive message to the Council, raising concerns about perceived interest in

redevelopment of the location. There is no update on this building, but we are keeping a very close eye on it and will respond to any applications made in the future.

Development of the Convent Site

The developer's appeal to the Council's refusal of planning permission was overturned, meaning that the location has a reprieve - at least for now. The spectre of development will definitely be back, so we must be diligent. **STOP PRESS — SEE BACK PAGE!**

Redevelopment of the George & Dragon

No news to report on this.

Redevelopment of the Goldcrest

The housing at the rear is now on sale, but there seems to be no movement in the actual main building, which is looking in a very poor state. We will keep our ears open and report as soon as we hear anything about it's future.



The Changing Face of Baldock Shops

The Tattoo parlour is on its way and whilst a number of people have

aired their concerns, nothing could be done to contest it because the premises did not require change of use permission. However, we have to admit that it is looking like one of the better shop fronts in Whitehorse Street and that the clientele of these establishments are not what people fear. Tattoos are widely accepted and fashionable thing nowadays, with Millionaires having them as often as most folk. Let's keep an open mind.

The "Adult Gaming Centre" seems to be moving very slowly, with no sign of it opening yet. Again, nothing could be done to prevent it from a planning point of view, as again there was no change of use permission needed (because originally the building was a bank, which is the same category as a gambling establishment). We will have to accept it and live with it, though of course it will be subject to The Licensing Act. In reality, it is an addition to the two book makers who have gaming machines in their premises anyway, so it is nothing new to Baldock. Progress is being made on the Veterinary Centre being constructed at Tapps Garden Centre on Wallington Road.

Archaeological Dig?

We understand a dig has started on the field off Wallington Road, on the land up to the By-pass. Could this be the start of the infill development? We will try to find out!

TOWN CENTRE ENHANCEMENT WORKS

I have quite a few comments made to me about this from many people.

There are some significant issues for the town while the work is ongoing, especially for business and shop owners.

Parking seems to be the most complained about aspect; it is total chaos at present. Also, traffic is a significant issue in some

parts - especially Hitchin Street, Weston Way, Letchworth Road and Norton Road, where the queues are horrendous in the morning.

No doubt the debate will continue for some time. The Town is changing and some areas are already looking much improved. It just takes a close look at the plans (in the Community Centre) and some

imagination to picture the end results. In fairness this is not easy for many people, who are not used to reading plans.

There is some utter nonsense being spoken and some very valid difficulties being experienced, but only time will tell. One thing is for sure; it will not suit everyone but it will please many and there will always be a lively debate.



A.G.M.

BUFFET, WINE, QUIZZES, RAFFLE AND REFRESHMENTS

Thursday 15th January 2009 at 8.00 pm in the large Hall in the Community Centre

We are staying with the January AGM, as it was such a success this year; a full house and a good night out for our members. If you were unable to attend, you missed a good evening - but don't despair, you can make up for it by attending the next one!

Again, we are making the AGM a **ticket only event** so we can judge the numbers for catering purposes (this worked very well last time).

Members can book their ticket, **FREE OF CHARGE** by sending back the slip below or hand in your form at the November meeting. Tickets will be available up to Monday before the AGM. We will be having our AGM (approximately 30 minutes) followed by the Buffet (a good mix of cold foods, cheese and various snacks), red or white wine (for the over 18's) and soft drinks, as well as the quiz and raffle.

It is always a night full of fun, challenges and social interaction, so please make the effort to attend.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY FOR 2009

2009 Speakers Already Booked

We nearly have a full set of speakers for next year. Those booked are:

January 15 th	A.G.M. (see notes)
February 19 th	Mr Ron Marks – Confessions of a Carpet Fitter
March 19 th	Mr Williams Manning – Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
April 16 th	Members Evening
May 21 st	Festival Meeting
June 18 th	Ms Angela Forster – Countryside Management Service Working Around Baldock, Especially on Weston Hills
July 16 th	Mr Martin Copping – St Pauls in London
August 20 th	An Evening with the Councillors
September 17 th	TBA
October 15 th	David Garner Presents
November 19 th	Town Centre Enhancement – Now it's Finished!
December 17 th	No meeting

This year we have had some excellent nights, our speakers have excelled themselves. If you know of any suitable speakers, please let us know so we can build a database for future years.

Memberships Subscription 2009

The New Year is getting closer and membership subscriptions are due on 1 January 2009. Again we are

increasing the subscription by 50p on each member grade. This is unfortunate, but necessary to maintain our level of funds - Membership remains excellent value at **£6.50 for group** and **£4.50 single**. Subscriptions are used for running the society, including

hiring the hall at the Community Centre, administration for printing and postage, etc. Do not forget, this also covers the food at the AGM for members.

The renewal form is enclosed with this newsletter.

STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS ... STOP PRESS!

Former Convent of Providence, Limekiln Lane, Baldock, SG7 6PG

We have today (12 November 2008) received notification from NHDC of a new Planning Application for the former Convent site at Limekiln Lane, this time for:

Residential development of former convent site with 29 residential units comprising 3 x 1 bedroom flats, 3 x 2 bedroom flats, 2 x 2 bedroom houses; 3 x 3 bedroom houses, 1 x 4 bedroom house and 17 x 5

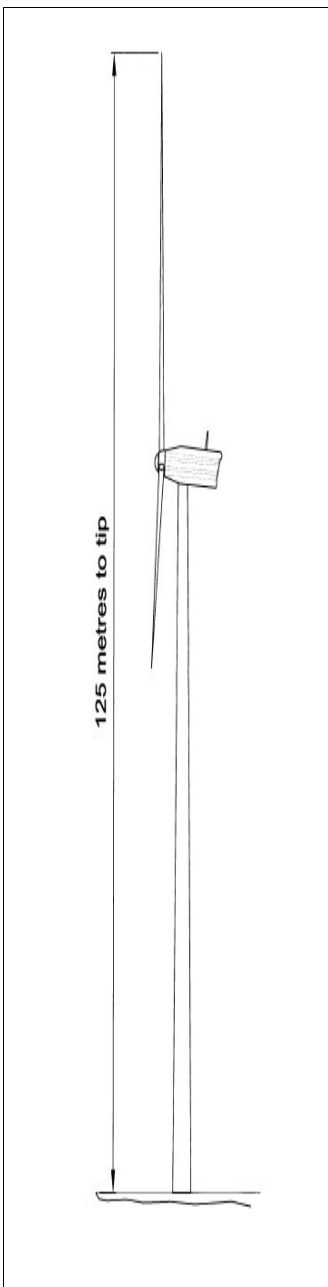
bedroom houses (housing mix: 69% market housing; 21% affordable for rent and 10% shared equity). Associated landscaping, main vehicular access onto Limekiln Lane; 3 units with direct vehicular access onto Limekiln Lane and 3 units with direct vehicular access onto Providence Way, 35 garage spaces and 12 car parking spaces, bin & cycle store and associated infrastructure following demolition of existing convent buildings.

The Planning Application

Number is 08/02230/1 and the full documents can be viewed on:

<http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/> (select "Planning Services" then "Planning Applications" then enter the application number). There are 15 plans and 28 supporting documents to be reviewed (Committee in crisis strikes again) before 1 December 2008.

BALDOCK 2009 CALENDARS (produced from original water colours by Shirley Smith). Now on sale at local pubs and the Community Centre.

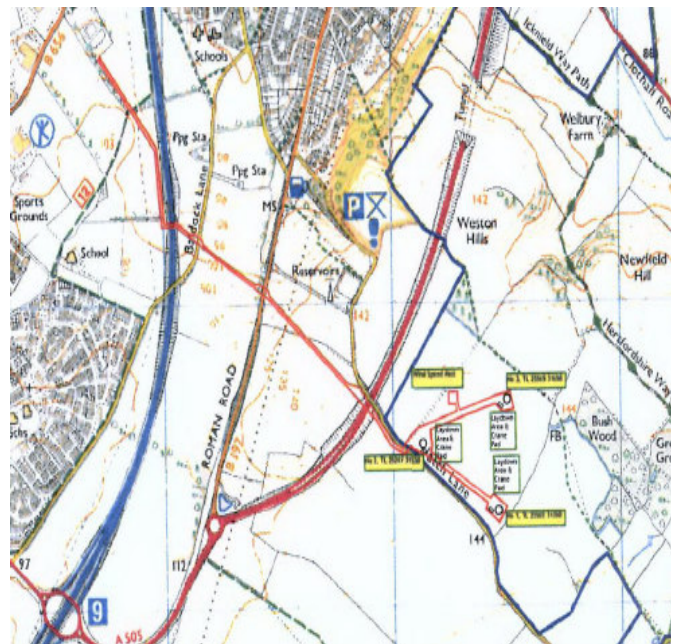


A very controversial application has been made for 3 no. 125 metre tall (that is longer than a football pitch) WIND Turbines on top of the Weston Hills off Hatch Lane.

There is a public meeting in Weston Village Hall at 11.00 am on Saturday 15 November 2008. If anyone is interested in attending, let them know on 07934 432084. Oliver Heald will be speaking. They have a web site at www.westonturbines.org.uk

We will be writing to NHDC to object on behalf of the Baldock Society.

Wind Turbines on Weston Hills



RNLI TALK 20 NOVEMBER 2008



As you know, John Hale is giving a talk on the RNLI at our next meeting.

There will be the opportunity to buy various Christmas items such as cards, gifts etc., so we would urge you all to support this meeting and worthwhile cause, and buy as much as you can, it all goes to this great charity.