

## **Decisions about Baldock Town Centre**

We are currently in the middle of an admirable effort on the part of BDP to consult and distil the views of all Baldock “stakeholders” on how (limited) funds might best be deployed over the next 18 months to improve the centre of Baldock and breathe new life into the town.

Many ideas have been voiced and there is inevitably a spectrum of opinion. Many have said that there is no requirement to change the town’s character: all that is needed is a “tidying-up” operation. Others have made more radical suggestions.

Many of the more active citizens feel they have been consulted quite enough on various issues, particularly on the future of the Town Hall, where an extensive survey was conducted in 2005. The results of that survey are presented at [www.baldocktownhall.org.uk](http://www.baldocktownhall.org.uk)

This note poses the question: how will BDP know that they have accurately gauged the views of the majority, and not just the views of those who have made their suggestions with the most vigour or most recently?

Doubtless BDP have experience in this area. They must know that, whatever solution is proposed, it will have to be “sold” to the town, as there will always be prominent objections to any proposal. Who will do the selling, and how? And will it be bought?

We can’t have a plebiscite, and the last thing we want is yet another survey. But we could conduct a quasi-democratic process along the following lines:

- a. Through the clubs, societies, interest groups and the local media (Baldock Mail and Comet), we could invite all Baldock residents to register for a “vote”. An alternative would be to use the electoral register to contact all Baldock Residents to register a vote.
- b. When BDP have produced a (draft) set of proposals, these could be encapsulated in a “ballot paper” perhaps with one or two alternative options.
- c. The ballot papers would then be distributed to those residents who had registered and there would be a short period for public discussion and response.

Is this idea too impractical and expensive? I don’t think it needs to be. The procedure does not need to be rigorous because the results will not be binding. The final decisions will be taken by our properly elected councillors.