



THE BALDOCK SOCIETY

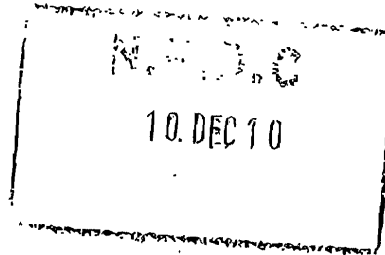


## Baldock Community Centre Association

## Baldock Mail

Mr P Underwood  
North Herts District Council  
Gernon Road  
Letchworth Garden City  
Hertfordshire  
SG6 3JF

8 December 2010



Dear Mr Underwood,

Following our meeting at the Town Hall in November, we would like to thank you for your time and positive response to our initiative to explore the potential use of the Baldock Town Hall.

To reiterate the discussion held during the meeting, a group has been formed to review the current status and potential use of the Baldock Town Hall, which includes representatives from:

The Baldock Community Centre Association  
The Baldock Mail  
The Baldock Festival  
The Baldock Museum and Local History Society  
The Baldock Society  
The Baldock Town and District Partnership  
Joanne Cherry (2007 Baldock Arts Festival Organiser)  
Dr Jennifer Gosling – Baldock Resident.

A Baldock Town Councillor also sits on the committee.

All of the above groups and individuals want to see the Town Hall reinstated as a community asset for the benefit of Baldock, and are willing to commit to doing so. The emphasis on using the Town Hall has been revived since our recent Town Centre enhancements have been completed, and the footfall into Baldock Town has increased. This is coupled with the efforts and initiatives made by various groups within the town to make use of the enhanced facilities.

To that end, the group would hereby like to make a formal expression of interest in the use of the Town Hall and set out below our thoughts on a way forward.

We appreciate this is at a very early stage of development, but we do require feedback from NHDC to allow us to explore the viability of the use of the building in the short and medium terms. We are extremely conscious of the need for our proposals to be viable financially and this is at the core of our thinking.

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To state our position and Intent, we outline our thoughts to date as follows:

- 1.1 The aim of the group is very specific. It is to review the current opportunities the Town Hall can offer to potential users of the building. Our objective is to organise a long term plan to ensure the Town Hall can be self-sufficient in funding without affecting the viability of any other facility in the town, especially the Community Centre.
- 1.2 Without prejudicing any future thoughts or avenues, the current thinking within the group is that the potential use of the Town Hall would be aimed at the "Arts" type of events, similar to the Festival organised in 2007, but on a more regular basis. This would be supplemented by other more regular Arts events, used by Performing Arts Groups as a base, and maximising the unique feature of a stage and large hall. The use of one small area as a permanent office for the Baldock Town Centre Manager is also a requirement. Other event types are shown on the attached draft schedule. The use would be aimed at both day and evening events to maximise the potential income.
- 1.3 We have some longer term plans for the Town Hall, which include opening up areas currently not accessible and adding a café area, which may well incorporate the Museum. At this stage the group understands that further usage would be at the discretion of available funding, etc.
- 1.4 As previously stated, a draft schedule of potential events has been prepared and is attached to this document. This list is indicative of the events that would be arranged. They do not compete directly with other available venues in the town and as such are thought to be a good basis for discussion and planning.
- 1.5 There is a requirement for a considerable amount of detailed planning to be undertaken by the group before it can commit to taking this matter forward in any formal manner. The most important issue facing the group is how the facility would be funded, both initially to ensure the facility is viable for intended uses, and in the longer term to sustain a viable operation.
- 1.6 We are at an early stage of developing our thoughts, but a key factor is financial management of the building and proposed projects. We require a considerable amount of information from NHDC before we can commence our detailed planning work. As such, we hereby request accurate information on the running costs of the building, preferably covering a full maintenance cycle (it was mentioned that the building is painted externally every 7 years for example).

We see the way forward as being outlined as follows:

- 2.1 The Town Hall Group make a formal representation of interest to NHDC to use the building (in essence this document).
- 2.2 NHDC to respond with detailed information on:
  - a) The running costs, as recorded to date.

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- b) The basis on which the building would be made available (lease term, conditions, or similar agreement).
  - c) The state in which the building would be handed over.
  - d) a schedule of any works to be carried out by NHDC as part of the ongoing routine maintenance (external decorations due in 2011, removal of rot etc., for example),
  - e) any other restrictions, covenants, warranties or the like that would be in place or required.
- 2.3 The group will then consider the viability of the proposal; if positive we will begin drawing up a formal Business Plan.
- 2.4 At this stage the group would also explore formally the potential users and organisations that it would see as its customers, and obtain a commitment or expression of interest to consolidate the annual calendar of events and income stream.
- 2.5 The group would also explore the potential of other funding streams and grants.
- 2.6 The group would review its make up, expand this to include other principal representative groups and individuals, prepare a formal structure and constitution.
- 2.7 On the basis of a positive outcome, the group would then submit all of this information to NHDC for review and discussion.
- 2.8 The formal arrangements would then be put in place to allow the group to take over the Town Hall for whatever lease (or similar) period is agreed.

We trust this document gives you the information you require to, in return, provide us with the information we require to develop a comprehensive Business Plan based on factual information about the building, its condition, operating costs, maintenance costs and the basis of a formal arrangement with NHDC.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Chris Gomm  
Group Elected Chairman  
c/o 1 Norton Road  
Baldock  
Hertfordshire  
SG7 5AP

cc All Group Members

## DRAFT SCHEDULE OF POTENTIAL EVENTS

Foyer	Main Hall
Office space for Town Centre Manager	Exhibitions: photography, local artists, the museum, quilting
Partnership events	Partnership Events
Jazz on Sunday afternoons	Baldock Festival Events
Baldock Festival Events	Balstock
Writing group	Annual Arts Festival
Reading group	Film showing
U3A meetings (Interest already expressed in Baldock as a venue)	Games evenings – bridge, backgammon, chess, beetle drives
Language conversation groups	Baldock Councillors' meetings
Computers	Monthly Dances (Ballroom, salsa, tango, etc.)
Local history / family history research groups	Monthly Ceilidh
Singing for pleasure	Business and NVQ courses
Natural history / bird watching groups	Exercise classes (Zumba, yoga, etc)
LALG groups	Rehearsal space for bands / orchestras
Art / art appreciation	Open mic nights
If facilities were available for a small 'coffee bar', maybe with snacks, it could be a general café venue with a range of live music (background rather than recital style) – jazz, folk, guitar, etc.	Children's shows to show off their talents and routines learnt in classes – ballet, etc.
	Plays – extra nights for events at Gordon Craig (Arcadians) or the Settlement
	Stand up gigs