

BALDOCK AREA FORUM
5TH March 2024

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT:

REPORT OF: Economic Development Officer

EXECUTIVE MEMBER:

COUNCIL PRIORITY: SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The public seating in Baldock Town Centre requires to be replaced. The Council proposes that, subject to satisfactory public consultation, to replace the wooden seating with seating made from low maintenance materials to ensure the longevity of the equipment.
- 1.2 This requires a deviation from the Baldock Management and Maintenance Plan (“Baldock Design Code”) approved and adopted in 2008.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Subject to the results of public consultation, to recommend to Cabinet

- 2.1 To liaise with relevant Council services and commence an appropriate consultation on specific proposed amendments as described in 8.2, of this report, to the Baldock Design Code in respect of materials and locations of seating and benches.
- 2.2 *Subject to that consultation*, to then consider and make appropriate recommendations to Cabinet in respect of any amendments to the Baldock Design Code, and in principle funding from the UK SPF 2024/25 allocation.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

NHC no longer has resources to maintain the style of public seating designated in the Baldock Design Code. Therefore, approval is sought for consultation to amend this – to a more sustainable designed and different locations.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The alternative is to repair or replace the seating with new timber items in accord with the Baldock Design Code.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. There has been some initial liaison with Cllrs Willoughby and Muir regarding this issue.
- 5.2. Further to this, the Service Director: Legal & Community has relayed discussions with the Strategic Planning & Projects Manager to Cllr Willoughby, regarding the previous process and need for consultation and approval by Cabinet if changes to material and location are proposed.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 Not relevant for the Area Forum, and it is not anticipated that if, post consultation, proposed changes are recommended that this would amount to a key Executive decision that would need to be in the Forward Plan.

7.0 BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Members have raised concerns that the wooden seats and benches installed as a part of the Baldock Design Code, have not been maintained for several years and are now in a state of dereliction due to water and other damage. They are both unsightly and, in some cases, possibly dangerous to sit on. (See picture A in Appendix B). (The Baldock Design Code is available in Appendix A).

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Members have discussed a number of sustainable options for replacement and for slight realignments of the seats to reduce the incidence of car damage and increase their usability.
- 8.2 A number of designs are being considered, although a final decision on model will be made on the basis of the durability of the seats over time, as North Herts Council does not currently have the resource to maintain materials which will deteriorate over time, as well as aesthetics and sympathy with the environs. It is most likely that replacements will be cast iron framed with recycled plastic slats, which are easier to maintain and clean and less prone to weather damage and vandalism. (see picture B below)
- 8.3 The change in design to metal and plastic does not conform to the Baldock Design Code. Therefore, we seek approval to commence consultation on changing the Code on the grounds of long-term sustainability and ease of maintenance.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Area Forums are informal Council bodies, and provide a 'sounding board' for community opinion and an opportunity to input to the Council. Under their Terms of Reference, their role can be "*To act as a Forum for discussion on matters of local interest and to elicit/hear the views of local bodies and organisations*" – as per section 9.7.1. and "*To provide local input into service specifications where feasible for a local area and input*

for relevant local area consultations”, as per section 9.7.5. The Forums can therefore in this instance agree to a consultation on something of this nature with a localised impact, albeit that the formal decision on the subject, given it is design/ planning in nature, would be by Cabinet. Any funding would also have to be agreed, potentially by Cabinet – through their adjustments within the overall budgetary framework in-year, or more specifically in this instance, potentially as an, in principle decision from the UK SPF funding pots identified for 2024/25, if so minded.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None at this stage.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered. Otherwise, none at this stage.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

See Guidance notes for how to complete this section

Use one of the following paragraphs only

13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report. However, it is likely to apply through any replacement procedure process.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

See the separate guidance note “Environmental Impact Assessment” before completing this section <https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/doing-business/communications-and-print/communications-templates/committee-reports>

Use one of the following paragraphs only

14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to *[the actions/ Policy/this report]*.

14.2. *Environmental Impact Assessment has been undertaken. [The actions / Policy /this report] have been considered and [there are/ are no relevant adaptations/ mitigation*

measure that could be applied] [the following adaptations/ mitigations have been included – as detailed in X].”

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 Summarise any impacts on staff and how they will be addressed, or state there will be no impact.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Baldock Management and Maintenance Plan “Baldock Design Code”.
Appendix B – Pictures

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Area Committee report from 2008.

Appendix A

Management and Maintenance Plan for Baldock



Management-Maintenance Plan Baldock_FI

Appendix B

Picture A



Picture B

