

The Heart Beats On

On the evening of Monday 12th January it was cold and wet outside - but inside Cradley school the air was warm with animated debate. For two hours, 57 people gave their views on the potential ways forward for a new village café and shop when they joined us at an update meeting and workshop.

Alan Eldridge opened the event with an update on what has happened since the first village meeting back in August. Alan confirmed that we have explored the Heart of the Village idea with many people who represent a whole range of organisations in our local area. Landowners and people looking at the potential for new housing developments have also been talked to. Alan explained that we have gathered expert advice from specialists who have experience in setting up similar projects - and that we have visited other villages that have created their own community shops and cafés.

It was then time to hand over to 9 small groups of villagers to let the debate begin. In all, 14 different options were looked at. Everyone was given the chance to comment and offer advice. They were also asked to state whether they were for, against or neutral about each option that included: creating a shop inside Cradley Church; working directly with housing developers in two different locations; buying the old shop; creating a new building behind Cradley's Scout hut and finally, looking at options on Morgan's Field.

We are now gathering together all the comments and feedback so we can draw up a list of preferred options and work on detailed costings. These will be presented at the next update meeting in late February or early March.

It was incredibly rewarding to see so many people working together in one room to try and decide the best way forward. It is not an easy decision – there is not one ideal option. But it was clear from the meeting that there is a great deal of energy, expertise and love for where we live that will drive us all towards the best solution for the people of Cradley and its surrounding villages.

To find out the very latest information check www.heartofthevillage.co.uk or [facebook.com/cradleyHoV](https://www.facebook.com/cradleyHoV). You can also talk to any one of the Heart of the Village Team – but please remember we are all volunteers and would be very grateful if you have specific expertise you too can offer to the project:

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