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By email

Councillor Paul Crossley
Leader
Bath and North East Somerset Council

3 August 2011

Dear Paul Crossley

Radstock Action Group would like the Council to consider a moratorium on all decision making in relation to the Radstock Railway Land, including the NRR/Linden Homes proposals on roads and buildings, the draft Road Traffic Orders, the awarding of contracts for road and home building, in other words on *all* current proposals that impact on the future of Radstock town centre.

Our reasons for this are as follows:

1. The new administration is clearly having to deal with a whole range of unjoined-up ideas, proposals and planning applications in relation to Radstock. Such are the labyrinthine processes that have taken hold of the whole situation that it is no longer possible to detect an overall strategic direction for the town; decisions may be taken piecemeal and will certainly have unforeseen, long-term and irreversible impacts on the town.
2. The evidence base to support the implementation of ill-thought out plans is suspect and in some cases missing. For example, the pollution level monitoring appears to have been done incorrectly; the results of the 2009 traffic survey have not been analysed.
3. The road system quite clearly won't work; there is a growing body of opinion which says that the projected plan is totally inappropriate, with professionals and those who use the roads in Radstock understanding immediately that this is the case.
4. The rhetoric of Linden Homes about community engagement and corporate responsibility, as seen on their website, is a fiction. Their representatives who came to a meeting with Radstock Action Group were far more honest about the need to make a profit, which they acknowledged could mean going against the aims of the community in regenerating the town.
5. There has been a suggestion that Radstock needs a town centre – Radstock *has* a town centre, it's the lozenge-shaped complex created by The Street and Fortescue Road. Nothing should be going ahead on the basis of such a massive misunderstanding of the nature of the town and the way it works.
6. There is overwhelming public opposition to the project. This has erroneously been portrayed as people being against regeneration. Nothing could be further from the truth. Everyone in Radstock wants a prosperous future for the town,

- which is precisely why they are opposed to the present scheme which has absolutely nothing to say about the creation of jobs and the support of current business as well as the encouragement of additional employers.
7. There is a further danger that the road might be built and not the housing development – this will result in the destruction of the town centre and no gain, even for the developer. Overall, the idea of spending £1.2m on a very short stretch of road which will produce total gridlock, not to mention rat runs in a wider area, is not advisable.
 8. Since the original proposals were agreed, building practices and attitudes in relation to climate change and housing have moved on; it would be irresponsible to allow this scheme to follow outdated standards which will do nothing to enable the authority to meet its CO2 emissions targets.
 9. It would be irresponsible to enter into contractual arrangements with any agency/company at this time. Such contracts might lead to compensation clauses being invoked if it became necessary to call a halt to operations, so it is clearly important that nothing is agreed in the current state of confusion.

Obviously, there are many additional considerations to support our view that a moratorium is required. However, above all, it is the total lack of overall direction and strategic operations which demands a rethink. You will note that we are not saying that the key issue is whether or not we or the authority support specific aspects of the proposals. Rather that it is important to take a step further back than such discussions and look at the principles underpinning the regeneration that everyone aspires to for Radstock.

In conclusion, BANES has proved, in reconsidering the BTP, that change to agreed policy is possible when plans are seen to be unacceptable and/or unpopular. So, there is no reason not to apply the same principles to Radstock where the lack of strategic structures/objectives makes the situation even more serious.

In these circumstances, to contemplate major changes to a community and its town centre is irresponsible, for once the changes are made they will be irreversible.

We hope that you will take this suggestion seriously and would welcome the opportunity to discuss matters further with you.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Leon
Secretary, on behalf of Radstock Action Group