



www.radstockactiongroup.org.uk

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By email

Nigel Palmer
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Dear Nigel Palmer

Radstock Action Group would like to draw your attention to the unacceptable situation which exists in Radstock, 'the best-preserved mining town centre in the country' in connection with the NRR, and now Linden Homes as their new partner for the 'redevelopment' of the railway landing the town centre.

Radstock Action Group has been looking at the website of Linden Homes and found under 'Community Engagement':

'Working with local communities comes as second nature to Linden Homes. We understand that if we are to deliver houses that not only meet the aspirations of those who seek to live in them but also enhance the existing neighbourhood, then we need to talk to and engage with local people'. It continues, 'By seeking out local knowledge, and listening to local opinion, we are able to build a fuller picture and progress our plans accordingly'.

So why are these admirable sentiments not being applied to Radstock – surely it is not possible that Linden Homes doesn't know that the proposals that they are in danger of being drawn into do not fit at all with the company's expressed aims?

We'd like to suggest that Linden Homes:

1. Acknowledges that the road and the housing arrangements in the scheme will certainly not enhance the existing neighbourhood.
2. Recognises that the 'local knowledge' you refer to, in the case of Radstock provides a picture of a well-informed community which can give chapter and verse on why the road proposed in the plan to which Linden Homes is proposing to sign up, cannot work.

3. Listen to local opinion and stop risking the good name of their company in an unsustainable and hugely unpopular scheme.

When Radstock Action Group met Linden Homes representatives, Simon Gait and Mark Rooney, on 22 June, we were not left with the warm glow and positive feeling suggested by the website, about the company's principled aims. We had 'a frank discussion' with them and they were honest enough to acknowledge that developers are not universally popular and that the job of commercial companies is to make money. They certainly didn't underline, or even mention, the company's commitment to the statements quoted above from the website. We would suggest that Linden Homes needs to match its boasts to the Radstock 'project'.

On your website under 'Environment and Climate Change', we read:

'We acknowledge that climate change is one of the greatest challenges we face, both as a business and a society. We recognise that we have a key part to play through:

- Our direct carbon footprint
- The long term sustainability of the services we provide
- The relationships with our clients, customers and the communities in which we work provide a great opportunity to positively influence

We aim to protect the environment in everything that we do, and minimise the impact of our operations.'

Unfortunately, the current Radstock scheme, including the road, is totally unsustainable. In traffic terms, it will lead to the degradation of the whole town centre with increased levels of air and noise pollution, damaging the health and safety of everyone in the town and the destruction of the beautiful buildings in the town centre conservation area. Through traffic will fill the streets where it currently skirts round the edge, gridlock will ensue and the Jubilee Oak will be a casualty of this unacceptable road scheme, which will put a roundabout in its place. People who currently come to Radstock to enjoy its amenities will quite simply go elsewhere. Local business will suffer. The embryonic tourist industry, which could do so much to boost the regeneration of the town, will not develop.

Additionally, we are exceptionally concerned that the plans that you have taken up from Bellway were already very poor quality in terms of issues such as low energy use homes and insulation. Surely, a new build project should aim for the very best standards in the industry?

The project will lead to the destruction of valuable natural habitats – so valuable that Bug Life (www.buglife.org.uk/) recently suggested seeking SSSI status for these habitats.

We also note on the website:

'Our work with communities is driven by the regional businesses. At this level, the businesses have a greater understanding of community needs and know the most effective and appropriate channels through which to engage.' The traders and businesses are amongst the most vociferous opponents of the scheme, since it is apparent that the project will destroy their livelihoods. As far as we are aware there has been no attempt to consult with traders, businesses or any other members of the community.

We would like to stress that the opposition to the whole scheme is growing all the time – the local press has failed to print a single letter in its support since the latest draft RTOs were published for comment. We all support regeneration but know that this scheme can only lead to degeneration.

We are totally opposed to the latest planning applications submitted to BANES and are opposing both the substance of them and the unacceptable position you have adopted of requiring leeway to make further changes of an unspecified nature to the plans.

We are surprised that Linden Homes, which claims to be a reputable and forward-looking company, has chosen to pursue this irresponsible project and would like to request that we meet to elaborate on our position and to put some alternatives to your company which is certainly risking its good name around Radstock.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Leon
Secretary, On behalf of Radstock Action Group