



NORTON RADSTOCK
regeneration company

1st September 2008

COMMENTS ON RAG'S OPEN LETTER TO NRR AND BELLWAY:

I refer to your open letter dated 21st August 2008 and to the meeting that took place last Thursday between representatives of the Action Group and NRR. Thank you for your time last Thursday and also that of your colleagues.

The NRR board is made up of volunteers, many of whom are residents of Norton Radstock, who have been tasked with guiding the redevelopment of the railway lands and to stimulate regeneration.

For the first time after 30+years Radstock has a viable regeneration strategy. The scheme has a planning permission (supported unanimously by B&NES Planning Committee) backed by Bellway who is committed to carrying out the scheme.

The NRR board and Bellway have been conscious at all times of the issues of biodiversity and the conservation area. They also have been required to pay attention to a number of traffic and transport matters including some arising outside the site itself. Contamination from industrial activity is a major expense, but the heritage of that industrial activity must also be a part of the regeneration.

The issues raised in RAG's open letter have been addressed already in the documentation in support of the Outline Planning Application, and/or in B&NES officers' comprehensive report on the application which went to the Planning Committee in March 2007.

1. Economic Benefits:

The Economic Case is set out in the NRR Regeneration Case—The Development Imperative submitted in support of the PA –P17. Part of this is reproduced in the Planning Officers report.

We continue to have discussions with representatives of the local traders with the aim of ensuring that they and the town centre as a whole reap the maximum benefit from the scheme.

2. Historic Built Environment:

Considerable care has been taken to produce a design for the scheme which reflects the Conservation Area location. The Design Code which has been approved by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) establishes a standard of design and quality of materials that reflects the Conservation Area location and the local heritage of the town.

The LPA in the decision notice comments in the Reasons for Granting Planning Approval (No.4)

It is considered the proposal would result in development of high design quality and would secure significant enhancements to the public realm within the town centre; it is also considered the proposed development would enhance the character and appearance of the Radstock Conservation Area.

3. Natural Environment:

The planning permission includes agreement for the Ecological Mitigation Compensation and Management Plan and a legal requirement for this to be adhered to from pre-construction stage right through the whole construction process and then managed in perpetuity. A £100,000 bond backs these obligations. This Plan addresses the ecological impacts and has received the full support of B&NES as LPA. We shall adhere strictly to the Plan.

4. Health and Safety:

The flood risk issue has been addressed in the planning application and the proposal has been agreed by the Environment Agency (see P27 of the Officers Report to the Planning Committee).

We have made a commitment in the planning application to carry out a comprehensive remediation scheme for all contaminated land (see Condition 39). This is a requirement of the planning permission.

5. Housing:

National Planning Policy (PPS3) sets out guidelines for housing density which we have followed in this scheme.

The scheme will be to Eco Homes Very Good standard and we are looking to increase this at least in part to Level 3 of the new Code for Sustainable Homes.

The Affordable Housing scheme meets all the requirements set out in National Policy. This scheme has been approved as part of the Section 106 Agreement which specifies which plots are to be for shared equity and which for social rented (see Schedule 3 at the back of the Agreement).

We are continuing to work with Bellway and the Housing Corporation to increase the number of affordable units in the scheme.

6. Infrastructure:

The Highway Authority, B&NES, have supported the road scheme and commented in the Officers' Report on the planning application P13:

.....the roundabout arrangement represents a vast improvement on the current arrangement in terms of relieving congestion in Radstock which will have a positive knock-on effect for pedestrians and cyclists in respect of an increased and better quality space and an overall improvement to road safety in many areas.

The road proposals should be considered in the context of the refocusing of the town centre around the river and the downgraded Frome Road.

7. Public Consultation:

The evidence of public consultation is set out in the Statement of Community Involvement that accompanied the planning application. As well as a series of topic based public workshops in 2003-4 this included an event organised in 2006 prior to the planning submission attended by over 500 people.

The current application is simply for agreement from B&NES as LPA to the external appearance, materials of the buildings on Area 2 and landscaping. The first 2 are addressed in the Design Code which has been approved as part of the outline consent. All other matters on the plans have been approved—including numbers of units, layout and access arrangements and highway design.

NRR and Bellway welcome continued discussions with interested groups and individuals for further regeneration suggestions for the town.

Catherine Le Grice-Mack
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