

Norton Radstock Town Council 29 June 2009

Statement from Radstock Action Group on Reserved Matters 08/02332/RES

Although further changes not yet noted may emerge, it is absolutely certain that the applicant has chosen to keep timber cladding on at least two buildings, despite the very clear view of the BANES Development Control Committee which thought it inappropriate.

The plans, under the section, 'Justification of Design Approach for Use of timber Boarding on Facades', states:

'The use of timber boarding is now restricted to the monopitch roofs of Flats D and B. The timber cladding will be heat treated Thermowood, a natural wood that retains the original brown tone of sawn wood.'

It was considered that restricting its use to parts of the monopitch buildings Block B and D would be appropriate, augmenting the 'brown roofs' and supplementing the use of render on these more contemporary style blocks. The timber boarding will emphasise the architectural massing on the 'monopitch' gable ends and the bays that project over the front entrances.'

There are important points to be made in relation to this proposal. They deal with both materials and style questions:

1. Timber has been retained only on the blocks which are intended for rental for social housing, with all those likely to be offered for sale having been given different facades. This, in itself, to us, appears to be an admission that the appearance will be less attractive; it will certainly mark out the two blocks as different, in contravention of all housing policies that social and private housing stock on developments should be indistinguishable.
2. Elsewhere in the paperwork, we are told that the wood will be the colour of 'sawn wood' (Letter from Tetlow King to David Audsley, dated 18 May 2009). This is meaningless as it depends entirely on which type of wood is being used.

Thermowood appears to involve a patented wood treatment which increases the durability of wood as well as reducing other negative properties such as shrinkage. Websites say that it gives wood a thirty year life, but we wonder where the evidence of all this can be seen and whether hard or soft woods are proposed.

We contend that even were wood regarded as a desirable option, a lot more information is required before a decision can be made.

3. The stained timber boarded door to flat entrances has been retained despite general agreement that it should not be used.
4. The applicant refers to 'more contemporary style blocks'. This admission that the designs are 'more contemporary (they also include the brown roofs) does nothing to answer the question as to why such buildings are being considered in the conservation area of the town with the best preserved mining town centre in the country. (English Heritage).
5. Anyone approaching Radstock from the cycle track will see these

uncharacteristic buildings before they see anything else. This will make them less likely to stop in Radstock and hence will fail to exploit the potential of the town to build its tourism and heritage potential.

6. An additional change involves the 'cosmetic' use of frames and lintels which are aesthetically unacceptable because they do not match the real designs of original buildings, since such frames and lintels were required to actually ensure the buildings were able to incorporate windows and retain their structural integrity.