

FIRST VERSION

Development Control 6 August 2008

According to the BANES website pages about Development Control, 'Planning is about delivering what people want - jobs, houses, better transport, lively city centres and sensitive care for our built heritage and countryside. To deliver these objectives in the most sustainable way, planning has to be positive and dynamic.

Planning provides a positive opportunity to protect and enhance our environment while balancing the need for development to promote economic and social opportunities for all'.

Entirely commendable principles to which we would all subscribe. But these ideals have been lost in relation to Radstock.

In the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Radstock was controlled by the mine and land owners who determined the shape of development and ran the local pits and associated infrastructure in their own interests, creating a social and economic situation in which the local people had little say.

In the years since the mining industry closed down, there have been limited attempts to address the regeneration agenda in this historic town. Public authorities have had the opportunity to remedy the shortcomings of previous industrial overlords and to replace them with enlightened regeneration. But now a modern day equivalent of these overlords has been given unfettered rights to 'regenerate' Radstock.

BANES has abdicated its responsibility to ensure their own planning goals and have handed control to the Norton Radstock Regeneration Company who, in partnership with Bellway Builders, are shaping the future of the town without any attention to the wishes of key stakeholders, including residents and businesses.

In particular:

1. There is no observance of any of the wider strategic planning structures currently being promoted by BANES
2. All proposals are piecemeal and have not been subject to proper public scrutiny and consultation

3. Requests to call in the plans have so far not been heard, despite consistent and substantial evidence that there is little, if any local public support for what is going on– in marked contrast to the response of BANES to protests about proposed developments in Bath
4. Current plans include a totally new road through the conservation area at the centre of the town, thus, in one fell swoop contravening BANES declared objectives to deliver better transport, lively city centres and sensitive care for our built heritage and countryside – can you imagine ever driving a new main road through the centre of Bath? No and quite rightly not – because such an act kills businesses, deters lively environments and clogs up traffic
5. This road is allegedly a vital aspect of new housing also being put in environmentally sensitive areas and ensuring that the rail link to Radstock can never be restored, whilst also being totally at odds with the buildings of the adjacent conservation area
6. Repeated requests for information about transport strategy objectives and how they will be applied to Radstock have been ignored
7. No-one has been able to show how any of the plans will bring jobs to the town, provide houses for local people or make Radstock a better place in which to live and work.

BANES is clearly flouting its own strategic planning principles and has allowed Radstock planning to be piecemeal and in no way answerable to either the council or local people. Immediate steps must be taken to bring the current chaos to a stop and to promote true, sustainable regeneration for Radstock. This can only be achieved by putting people and their needs centre stage.

Plans must be recalled and go back to the drawing board with proper discussion and consultation and a people-centred approach to the future of a town prized by residents, visitors and businesses alike for its history and its extraordinary natural environment as well as the potential to be a distinctive modern community.

Radstock Action Group