

VERSION 2

Development Control 6 August 2008

Radstock Action Group wishes to draw the attention of the Committee to the general apparent unwillingness of BANES to listen to and consult with local people when strategic planning developments are raised. We do not believe we are the only group that feels this way, but regard our experience as important and of wider application to how strategic planning is managed within the authority.

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 appears to be ignoring all the principles which are enshrined in the aspirations to which I have already referred.

The future of the town is drifting without any attention to the wishes of key stakeholders, including residents and businesses. And, equally significantly, without any substantive input from BANES itself.

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. BANES has not acknowledge the consistent and substantial evidence that there is little, if any local public support for what is going on– in marked contrast to the Authority’s response 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, allegedly a vital component of the future of Radstock, will irreversibly compromise and most probably destroy important environmentally sensitive areas and ensure that the rail link to Radstock can never be restored; it will threaten the buildings of the adjacent conservation area – both their aesthetic impact and their physical viability
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.

Immediate steps must be taken to halt the current chaos and to promote true, sustainable regeneration for Radstock. This can only be achieved by putting people and their needs centre stage.

All we want is 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