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Radstock Action Group wishes to OBJECT to the latest B&NES road proposals for Radstock as identified through a document entitled 'Tackling congestion in Radstock and kick-starting the economy' and associated documentation.

This document is designed to be read in association with our previous submission on the TROs.

INTRODUCTION

Radstock Action Group congratulates B&NES on abandoning the idea of closing the Frome Road. However, the listening exercise must continue as the plans still constitute major obstacles to the future regeneration and prosperity of the town.

The overarching question which B&NES has failed to explain in any of the publications is the purpose and status of the current proposals. When B&NES presented the first TROs earlier this year, it was in the context of the need to provide access for a proposed new housing development on the NRR land. This would, we were assured, only be possible if the Frome Road was closed.

A matter of months later, we are advised that the whole purpose of this exercise is 'Tackling congestion in Radstock and kick-starting the economy'. This was the first time that B&NES had raised the question of traffic congestion and declared that it was going to tackle it.

Whilst there is clearly some congestion in the town at peak travel hours, congestion has never been high on the agenda as it is no more serious in Radstock than in most places.

Perversely, even though many people see the current double mini-roundabout at the A367/A362 junction as the single most significant source of congestion, B&NES has decided not to address that problem owing, allegedly, to high costs, an argument supported by the most rudimentary of costings which suggest they were assembled as a short term response to local pressure, rather than with any serious intent.

The latest B&NES proposals are not designed to improve or regenerate Radstock. They do nothing for Radstock – they will lead to people avoiding Radstock and the only benefits will be to those who see Radstock as a traffic junction. Radstock is a town which deserves regeneration. B&NES should be listening to what businesses and residents want. What's in it for Radstock?

Key points giving cause for concern in the proposals include:

1. More than 40 new jobs – there is no indication of where these jobs will come from, what type of jobs they will be and whether they will be long term. They are likely to be outstripped in number by the loss of jobs such as if the Sorting office were to move (a definite possibility as the new proposals do not allow vehicles to enter the sorting office yard, owing to road layout and traffic flow direction) and the loss of jobs which could be forced on traders whose businesses will suffer if the proposals are implemented.
2. At no point is it stated how such claims answer the needs of the residents in the proposed new housing development, let alone how they will make Radstock anything more than a traffic junction.
3. The document sent to all residents stated that 'We're working with the local community on an action plan to achieve this' 'the 'this' being the goals expressed in the title. Unfortunately this is not an accurate account of what has been happening. True, an initial meeting of Radstock Economic Forum was convened in August, then nothing of which we are aware happened until a meeting convened by B&NES in November, from which most of the original participants were excluded. Only after complaining did Radstock Action Group get a meeting with B&NES. We wonder how many of the other original participants have been able to be included.

Owing to the very short time during which members of the public have been able to see the proposals and respond, our response is not exhaustive, and cannot hope to address all the matters that arise from these 'proposals'.

In the following sections, created for clarity and convenience, we identify points which relate roughly to the headings under which they have been placed. No item necessarily belongs exclusively in any one section. No significance should be attached to the order in which sections or items within them appear.

1. PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

1. When the Traffic Orders were published initially, and on many occasions before, Radstock had rejected the plans, but, undeterred, B&NES is now trying to get the answer it wants. An example of this opposition is to be found in the petitions organised by Radstock Action Group, including one against the 'link road' which has in the region of 2,000 signatures on it.
2. The data on which these plans are based is not at all clear. We know that they are from 2009, so at least two years old, are highly selective and not able to detail what happens to traffic entering Radstock – which route does it take out or does it stay in Radstock?
3. Not all traffic movements are included even though they may contribute to what happens at peak and other times.
4. Paul Crossley, the leader of B&NES, has stated clearly that if there are no houses, there will be no road, so why are they rushing through this unpopular measure.
5. The questions asked in the Feedback Form are not the ones that are relevant to the needs of Radstock. B&NES is not interested in whether

people want the link road, or two-way traffic in the Street or a reversal of traffic direction in Fortescue Road.

6. In the period since publication, inconsistencies and inaccuracies have emerged in the published pronouncements. This means that people have been unable to see what the real proposals are.
7. Maps used do not contain indications of scale making it difficult to make accurate, detailed statements regarding traffic including on roundabouts and in the streets of the town.
8. Maps used are out of date. Many buildings, both housing and other which have now been in existence for ten years, are not shown.

2. WHY IS THE FOCUS NOT ON THE NEEDS OF RADSTOCK?

1. These proposals are certainly not about the needs and regeneration of Radstock. But it is unclear what they are about. Previously the closure of Frome Road was about providing support and access to the new proposed housing development, but now the goal posts have been moved and it's about tackling congestion.
2. Nowhere in the B&NES leaflet is there any indication of how this will 'boost the town's economy' as B&NES claims.
3. £1.6m will be generated for the Somer Valley Area. Nowhere is it stated what proportion of this will come to Radstock, over what period this money will be generated and how it will be generated.
4. Radstock residents pay council tax to B&NES. It is time for B&NES to take its responsibilities to the town seriously and not squander money on unwanted and unworkable proposals. It is time for B&NES to make some serious investment in the town, based on meaningful dialogue with those who count – the traders and residents.
5. The most effective way to boost Radstock's economy and bring regeneration is to build on all the town's strengths, including its industrial expertise, its history, its current and prospective tourism role. Plus, the subsequent creation of jobs and the provision of affordable homes, coupled with an affordable, regular and frequent public transport service on buses and,, eventually, trains. This set of proposals simply deals with irrelevant road construction and traffic changes which will have the opposite effect.

3. WHY IS THE PROPOSED NEW LINK ROAD NECESSARY?

1. Why is a new link road necessary now that the Frome Road is going to remain open? Traffic flow will continue to be interrupted intermittently by the continued existence of the current double mini-roundabout. But the answer is not to go against all good practice and route some through traffic through the town centre, especially as it is a conservation area made up of buildings not built to withstand heavy traffic and the concomitant air pollution and vibration which will inevitably compromise the integrity of the key buildings of the town conservation area.
2. Radstock has a vibrant town centre, has great potential as a tourist destination, having been described by English Heritage as 'the best-preserved mining town centre in the country'. Yet B&NES is determined

to promote a traffic system which will make the town more like a traffic junction and less like a place to visit and work in.

3. The Council has failed to show how its estimates for moving the double mini-roundabout have been arrived at, furnishing nothing more than vague estimates for equally vague items.
4. Some traffic congestion is an inevitability in all towns now. Radstock suffers build-ups of traffic at peak times like everywhere else. The proposed plans appear to be a very expensive and impractical way of dealing with this issue. In addition, it is unlikely to work since the congestion caused by the density of traffic junctions and pedestrian crossings in such a confined area will bring a whole new series of problems to the situation, slowing down the through traffic and impeding traffic flow in general.
5. B&NES says that 40 jobs will be created but nowhere do they say how, or whether they are permanent or temporary. The sorting office will face difficulties getting trucks into their yard in Fortescue Road. The traders are weathering the economic downturn and continue to offer a variety of attractive, useful and niche shops. But if the town becomes a less attractive place to shop owing to increased parking restrictions and increased air and noise pollution, then these will constitute additional stressors for the traders and the total job losses may well exceed the 40 unsubstantiated gains claimed by B&NES.

4. ROAD SPEEDS AND TRAFFIC CONGESTION

1. Increasing speeds through Radstock are not in the interests of the town and appear to have been addressed to enable through traffic to proceed more smoothly. This, if effective, will result in the town becoming nothing more than a housing estate at a traffic junction, since high speeds will deter the pedestrians who are the principal users of the town centre (parking permitting).
2. Speeds and amounts of time saved are suspect. For example, to achieve the savings claimed between Peasedown Flat/Camerton turn off and Westfield, drivers will have to exceed the speed limit, thus defeating the declared object of limiting speeds. Even if this first point of departure was wrong (we have seen no announcement that the run should have started at Clandown Corner), the same still applies. B&NES appears to have overlooked its own imposition of a speed limit in the town.
3. Traffic jams created by the double roundabout at the Frome Road (A362) junction with the Bath Road (A367) plus the new roundabouts at the junction of Wells Road and the Street and on the Frome Road with the proposed link road will result in continuing and new traffic jams.
4. Data and modelling on speeds and traffic volume appear highly selective and are unrecognizable to many who regularly use the roads involved.

5. TRAFFIC FLOWS AND PATHS

1. Two way traffic in the Street:

1. Two way traffic will increase the total volume of vehicles using the Street.
2. The 7.5 tonne limit for vehicles doesn't apply to the Street which would still have multi-axle vehicles of 40+ tonnes travelling in both directions to and from the Haydon area and beyond.
3. Trucks travelling in opposite directions will be unable to pass when there is anyone parked.
4. There will be increased noise, vibration and air pollution compromising the health and well-being of residents and traders.
5. The buildings of the conservation area will be structurally compromised by the increased volume of traffic.
6. Two way traffic does not allow adequate parking for those using the amenities in the Street including the shops, the Methodist Church and the Doctor's surgery.
7. The essential traders service road will be exiting onto the new roundabout which one B&NES official has described as 'acceptable but not ideal'.
8. B&NES, during the exhibition, agreed that there would be more traffic in the Street because of the introduction of two way traffic. Apart from the objections just listed, the Street which will be heavily congested will feature a major obstacle to traffic flow at each end.

Firstly, Traffic from Haydon will have to give way at the junction between the Street and the proposed new link road to traffic travelling in both directions. This will cause major hold-ups for all traffic from Haydon. Additionally, Church Street is inevitably congested at peak times such as dropping off and picking up for St Nicholas School, and commuting times.

Vibration and exhaust fumes from standing vehicles stuck in the queues will further jeopardise the fabric of local buildings, especially the Victoria Hall.

Secondly, it is highly likely that traffic coming down Wells Hill and wishing to turn right round the roundabout will be backed up on Wells Hill thus causing another hazard, on a bend. It will lead to increased risk of accidents as drivers, unaware of the hazard they are approaching, fail to stop.

2. Reverse traffic flow in Fortescue Road:

1. All traffic exiting Fortscue Road, regardless of destination, will be forced to turn left and go the proposed new roundabout at the end of the Street where it will then have to do a complete turn doubling back on itself, if going to Somervale Road, Frome Road, Waterloo Road,

- Whisty and Tynning, Bath Old Road, Bath and Clandown. In the course of this manoeuvre, it will also have to negotiate a new pedestrian crossing which it will encounter in both directions.
2. Fortescue Road shops will suffer a decline in trade, especially casual shoppers who currently park up briefly and drop in to shops and who will not want to get involved in the above traffic and will seek alternative places to shop.
 3. Sorting office vehicles will be unable to enter their yard and the viability of the business in this location will be compromised, potentially leading to the loss of 60 Radstock based jobs.
 4. The limited on-street parking available will be dangerous because the driver will be expected to come out blind into the traffic as they will be sitting on the kerb side, rather than the traffic side of the road.
 5. In these circumstances, it is highly likely that Fortescue Road will be reduced to a deserted patch in the middle of a larger traffic complex.

6. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

1. Buses will enter and exit the town centre in a variety of ways all of which result in bus stops being further away from shops and on the proposed link road.
2. Buses will be running in both directions in the Street, causing additional congestion.
3. Buses from Wells/Midsomer Norton direction wishing to travel on to Bath will have to negotiate the new roundabout at the bottom of Wells Hill, turn right into the Street, go to the bus stops on the new link road and then out onto the Frome Road roundabout, left and back to the double roundabouts to travel on to various destinations towards Bath.
4. Buses from Frome and Bath directions will turn left onto link road from Charlton Frome Road roundabout, stop at bus stops on link road, then go along the Street to the new roundabout where they will have to re-enter the Wells/Midsomer Norton/Bath traffic.
5. In addition, buses from Bath will have to turn left into Frome Road at the current double roundabout, then head towards the new Charlton roundabout.
6. The link road will effectively put paid to the reinstatement of the Radstock/Frome rail link, the real solution to the congestion caused by private car usage.

7. PARKING

1. There is a net loss of parking in Radstock town centre as a result of these proposals. According to B&NES the loss is 24 spaces. In reality it is far higher.
2. In order to give the impression that the loss is only 24, which would be bad enough, B&NES has now used so-called 'new public parking (44 spaces) within the NNR development' to increase the parking. When questioned at the exhibition on 9/10 December, they agreed that this would be the only parking available to residents in any new development, that it was not for them exclusively as it will be on a public highway. In

other words there will be an overall increase in residential and it will have no parking.

3. There are going to be three parking spaces on the new link road – this seems highly unlikely to be workable as the new link road will also have two pedestrian crossings, bus stops in both directions and a roundabout at the Frome Road end.
4. A large number of pedestrian crossings has been introduced into the plan to counter accusations that pedestrians will be at risk. Parking is not allowed on zigzags either side of crossings, so there will be less parking.
5. As long as there is no affordable and reliable public transport system, cars will remain the only option for many people living in and visiting Radstock.

8. HEAVY GOODS VEHICLES

1. The ban on vehicles over 7.5 tonnes applies only to the link road.
2. Vehicles of all sizes will be allowed to travel in both directions on the Street and elsewhere.
3. Buses are exempt from the ban.
4. The limit will be impossible to police/enforce.
5. HGVs turning from Wells Hill, and therefore, at the bottom of a very steep incline, into the Street will have to negotiate the new roundabout at the end of the Street (where the Jubilee Oak currently stands) and deal with a very difficult camber.
6. Even 7.5 tonne vehicles can be very large and overall length, according to the Road Haulage Association, may be up to 12 metres (maximum width 2.55 metres), so any suggestion that there will only be small vehicles on this weight limit stretch once this ban is in place is incorrect. Owing to the lack of scale on the plan, it is not possible to give a detailed account of the situation that will ensue when vehicles of these dimensions are on the proposed link road. What is certain is that such large vehicles coming into the town either from the Charlton end or from the Street will lead to further congestion and difficulties for pedestrians and other road users.
7. It is impossible for many large vehicles to turn left out of the Street into Fortescue Road, owing to the configuration of the corner and this will effectively further isolate Fortescue Road.

9. ROUNDABOUTS

1. The current proposals retain the double mini-roundabouts at the A362/367 junction and involve two new ones. One will replace the Jubilee Oak at the junction of Wells Hill and the Street; the other will join the Frome Road to the new link road at Charltons. Both of these changes will involve the demolition/removal of key historic features of the town – one the site of the original war memorial, currently maintained as a public garden, the other, the Jubilee Oak. One is a blow to the natural built environment, the other a blow to

the natural environment. In both cases the proposals show a manifest disregard for the wishes, values and traditions of the people of the town.

2. Although traffic can do a full turn on a roundabout, it is not good practice to build such turns into traffic planning (see section on Fortescue Road, left turn only). See, for example:
www.dft.gov.uk/ha/standards/dmrb/vol6/section2/td5407.pdf especially para 7.

10. THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

3. 1. With increasing numbers of extreme weather events, it is a matter of concern that there are no references in this operation to the flood risk assessments which have been done for the town. The centre of Radstock is clearly at risk of flooding and the risk has been doubled in the most recent flood risk assessments. The proposed new link road will raise additional run-off problems; the construction of homes on such risk areas will need to be addressed.
4. 2. Radstock is particularly fortunate to be surrounded by green spaces in the valley and the hills. It is essential that increased traffic should not be allowed to impact on the very special natural environment which is currently an asset to the town and increasingly attracts tourists, including walkers and cyclists. Levels of pollution are unacceptably high already and the authority should be seeking ways of addressing such problems whilst looking at traffic which is a major source of this pollution.

CONCLUSIONS

These proposals are not in the interests of Radstock; they are poorly thought out and they pose a threat to the character of the town, its built and natural environment. They also pose a threat to the health and safety of those who live and work in the town or come as visitors.

We suggest an immediate moratorium on all future decisions in relation to the town until such time as independent assessments can be made of all aspects of the scheme including health and safety issues in the broadest sense of the word – in other words, how these proposals could impact on the health and well-being of residents, workers and visitors to Radstock.

Radstock Action Group is fully committed to the regeneration of Radstock and look forward to a meaningful dialogue with the local authority on all matters relating to what could be a positive and exciting future for the town.

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