

Ms Amanda Leon
Secretary, Radstock Action Group
8 Colliers Rise
Radstock
BA3 3AU

17th December 2012

Dear Amanda

Thank you very much for your recent questions on the regeneration of Radstock. Please find below the answers in turn.

1. You have repeatedly and publicly stated that unless there are houses built on the railway land, there will be no road. Can you confirm that this remains your position?

The Former Railway Land in Radstock has been an allocated development site in the B&NES Local Plan since 1997. Linden Homes are fully committed to this development and are looking to submit Reserved Matters consent for the first two phases of development once the new Outline Planning Consent is in place.

For this development to be successful, a significant upgrade of Radstock's road system is required to increase capacity on the network which is why the Council is progressing with the proposed scheme.

Clearly, if there was no intention for the Council and its public/private sector partners to regenerate the town with new homes and open up other existing sites for development then the road network upgrade would not be funded in the first place.

2. If this does, in fact, remain your position, please would you explain why you propose removing the Jubilee Oak, given the fact that there is no current, live planning application for housing? Cabinet acknowledged this at their last meeting at which we were present. Your most recent press release about Radstock also acknowledges this.

This is the best time of year to move the tree in order to give it the greatest possible chance of survival in a location where people

are committed to looking after it. Cuttings and acorns from the existing tree are also being cultivated at Writhlington School and Norton Radstock College.

The Outline Planning Permission 06/02880 EOUT is a current application. It remains valid and implementable from a purely Planning perspective. If there are other reasons why it will not be implemented these do not negate the validity of the Planning Permission and are not in any way associated with the Conservation Area Consent, which remains focussed solely on the demolition of specified unlisted buildings within the Conservation Area. The valid Planning Permission will be a strong material consideration in the consideration and determination of any new application for Planning Permission.

3. The road, which at least 18 months ago was estimated to be going to cost £1.2m, is an irresponsible use of public funds, especially in a period of very severe cuts. Some professionals said, at the time of the original estimate, that it was not nearly enough and it will certainly cost more if you ever get round to building it at any point in the future. How can you justify this expense when you are cutting such vital services as those for children and young people? And when the local community has repeatedly voiced its strong opposition to it? And when all current thought on traffic management is quite clearly opposed to putting increased traffic through town centres?

One of the Council's key priorities is to invest in the future with projects to promote new jobs, homes, and opportunities for local people.

The Council has been very clear about the reasons why the road network needs upgrading in order to deliver much needed new homes and regenerate the economy of the town. The overwhelming numbers of people who I talk to are positive about the proposals and are pleased that there is a clear timeline in place to deliver local improvements.

You refer to cutting vital services for children and young people – the service provided by the Children's centre and Youth Centre in Radstock will form part of our budget proposal to Council in February.

4. In the event of the Jubilee Oak being removed, this will constitute additional major expenditure which will almost certainly be wasted as the tree will not be able to survive. As many people have pointed out, even if you persist with the road, what reason have you got for not leaving the Oak in its present position on the roundabout proposed in the (now defunct) plans?

Extensive work was carried out by road engineers to determine the most effective solution to upgrade the transport network in

the town. Regrettably, the oak tree could not be accommodated in the scheme. We have listened to local opinion on the tree which is why we have agreed to relocate it to Writhlington School.

5. You have been asked repeatedly why there has been no safety audit for the proposed new road. Perhaps you will now answer this question.

The road safety audit will form part of the Outline Planning application.

6. Given the revised flood assessments for Radstock and the most recent weather which resulted in the land near the river being heavily waterlogged and, in the case of St Nicholas' School field, actually flooded, would you explain how B&NES can justify building on this area as it will clearly increase flood risk with all the accompanying problems for residents, including insurance possibilities and run-off complications?

The Council will submit a revised Environmental Statement with the Outline Planning Consent. This will cover flooding issues.

7. We are very concerned about the lack of transparency in the composition, reporting lines and remit of the Radstock Economic Forum. Please could you let us know how the forum has been constituted and how the council guarantees that it is representative of the business community and residents? Exactly how does B&NES justify the giving of £100K to this forum from a fund which was trumpeted as new money for Radstock? What will the money be spent on?

The Radstock & Westfield Economic Forum was established to work with officers to develop an Economic Development Action Plan for Radstock & Westfield to improve the skills and employability of local residents and strengthen local business competitiveness.

The group comprises:

- Elected members from Radstock Town & Westfield Parish Councils;
- B&NES ward members;
- Chair of Economic and Community Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel;
- Chair of Radstock Town Traders;
- Representative from manufacturing sector (as dominant sector within the area);
- Chair of Small Business Focus – representing micro and home business;
- Representative from a new start-up business in Radstock;
- Norton Radtsock College;
- Writhlington School Enterprise Co-ordinator.

The Council will not be allocating funds directly to the Forum. The group will make representations to Cabinet on the allocation of funds based on the wider consultation which RAG has responded to.

8. B&NES recently 'consulted' on possible ways of using the £500K for Radstock. What is the final decision following from this consultation?

Part of this money will be allocated for bringing Victoria Hall back into use. The allocation of the remainder will be made at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

9. Given the vast disparity between regeneration sums being spent on Keynsham and Radstock, we would like to ask B&NES to ensure that the Victoria Hall retains snooker facilities whether by using the caretaker's house or building an extension to the Hall – this would not bring parity but it would certainly enhance the community facilities in the town. If you are not prepared to do this please would you explain why this is not an option?

The reasons behind snooker not being proposed as being part of a future Victoria Hall facility were outlined in the Cabinet paper that was discussed in November. This is available on our website.

10. What provision are you making for reinstatement of the Radstock to Frome rail link, including Radstock Station?

The branch railway line between Radstock and Frome is protected under existing Council policies as a sustainable transport route. The majority of the route runs through Somerset County Council who do not see re-opening of the line as a transport priority. In January, the Cabinet will consider the Halcrow report which reviews the potential to re-open the Radstock to Frome railway line. This report highlights the considerable challenges, both practical and financial, associated with re-opening the railway line notwithstanding the lack of an alternative location for a station to support any rail service.

If you have any further questions, please get in touch. Given the fact you have also asked these questions in public, I will also be placing these answers on the Council's public website and submitting them to the relevant local media.

Yours sincerely



CLLR PAUL CROSSLEY
Leader of the Council