

Cabinet Meeting 14 September 2011.

Agenda Item 16

Norton Radstock Regeneration TROs

So much to say, so little time to say it in! It is very easy to focus on the details such as whether or not a left hand turn out of Fortescue Road is practicable or not, and fail to see the wider socio-economic context of what will happen if these TROs are ever implemented. Of course some details are the most outrageous aspects of the case: eg raiding the social capital buildings fund for the £400,000 which is B&NES Council's contribution to the road scheme, or felling the 120 year old 'jubilee' oak tree. Vital information is still lacking such as the *analysis* of the 2009 traffic flow and car parking figures or a proper 2011 data based (not 2004!) case for the scheme's capacity to bring economic regeneration. Above all there is no certainty that the new housing estate will ever be built. There is no currently valid planning application in place, and will not be for at least another three months, probably much longer. Therefore I am asking you tonight to defer a decision until January 2012.

This is a difficult and complicated site. Like any community which has endured since the Bronze Age, whose manors and churches are mentioned in the Domesday Book, and which played a key role in the 19th century industrial revolution, it 'just grewed'. It needs to grow again now, in a properly planned way, because we need more jobs – rather than see the Post Office (63 jobs in Victoria Square) re-located to Bath, and our existing businesses need larger premises and facilities, not gridlock on their doorsteps in a contrived bottleneck that will ruin delivery schedules and drive away customers. No-one in their right mind now would close Peasedown bypass and send the traffic back into the High Street. No-one would re-introduce two way traffic into Midsomer Norton High Street. Yet the effect of these TR orders would be to do just that in Radstock. Cottle's bakery sells 85,000 pies and rolls per year to passing motorists. If they lose the parking spaces in Fortescue Road, they will close. You have seen in the meetings you kindly attended and in the responses a united cross section of Radstock Traders, Radstock Co-operative Society, bus company directors and hauliers, community groups and town centre churches, Lord Hylton's estate manager and Somer Housing pensioners, and even Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg MP. I suppose as a Labour councillor, I should be pleased if you alienate Radstock as you have done the votes of Keynsham by applying different standards from those you would in Bath, but I am concerned about the credibility of Council. If Cllr Crossley gives a commitment to residents to postpone a decision until the housing is assured, to do another engineering assessment of the A367 junctions, to consider alternatives and to listen, and understand local residents' concerns, then passing these TROs tonight not only blows a hole in the principles of the Localism Bill, the Draft Core Strategy and much else, but gives the Council such a bad name that residents will not engage again, except at judicial review. Please defer the decision until you really know the costs and implications are. You could be building a road to nowhere.

Cllr Eleanor Jackson (Lab. Radstock)