

**B&NES Cabinet Meeting 14 March 2012**  
**Statement by Amanda Leon: Radstock Action Group**

If regeneration is the guiding policy for the future of Radstock, then we would ask the Cabinet to consider the following major points:

1. **A housing development does not constitute a regeneration plan**

The SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments) for B&NES shows conclusively that there are a large number of sites regarded as possible for housing development in Radstock. What is missing from the current debate is any coherent plan for the development of jobs and business in the town. One business director articulated this clearly when he stated, yesterday, that he expected to have to move from Radstock within the next two years as the council is not interested in making land available for him to expand his business. He contrasted this with the warm welcome given to enquiries to a neighbouring authority. It appears to him, and others, that the only planning idea for Radstock is to permit housing at the expense of industry and jobs.

2. **Well-being, health and safety should apply to all aspects of all plans for Radstock**

The current road proposals for Radstock are not designed to safeguard or improve the well-being of people who live or work in the town or who visit for social, family or tourism motives.

The most pressing matter in this regard is the failure of the authority to provide a safety audit for the new road proposals. One cynical interpretation of this omission might be that there are so many weaknesses in the proposals that would fail a proper audit that a preferable way of proceeding is to fudge the whole issue. This would be an even worse option than the desk-top exercise (ie. No-one actually came on site to consider the matter) which was carried out for the last proposed plans. Let us be in no doubt that the current proposals constitute major changes to a major A road and will irreversibly change Radstock.

*The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (HD 19/03)* makes it clear that not only are safety audits required, but that they must be done by appropriately qualified/trained staff. We understand that Glen Chipp has stated that works will not proceed further until the safety audit (about to be undertaken?) has been assessed by the relevant regulatory arm of the Council. Although this is superficially slightly more reassuring we fail to see how the authority can be assessing its own proposals. It appears that the way B&NES seeks to get round this is to say that the developer has commissioned a safety audit. B&NES should state who the developer is and explain how this has been determined, given the fact that any development on the NRR land will have to be subject to a new planning application.

Should the current plans go through, the health and safety of everyone will be compromised: everyone, particularly pedestrians, will be subjected to increased traffic as they negotiate the town centre with its narrow pavements and increased traffic (B&NES admits this) in The Street. Air pollution from more standing traffic queues will be an additional hazard. Radstock will become a place to be avoided.

3. **Radstock's future is in danger**

As the last few weeks have shown, major obstacles in Radstock serve only to cause major congestion and remove trade from our otherwise lively town centre. (See appendix A). The town cannot withstand the unwise and unnecessary strain that the new road system will impose. If B&NES is serious about the regeneration of the town then we urge them to reconsider, even at this late stage. Otherwise,

we shall be forced to conclude that Radstock is seen as a dumping ground for housing developments which will turn it into nothing more than a dormitory settlement for people working in Bath and Bristol.

Whatever happened to Regeneration? To jobs and homes for local people as articulated in the Core Strategy?

## Appendix A

### **PRESS RELEASE: Will politicians and planners learn the lessons from the temporary four way traffic lights in Radstock?**

The presence of Wessex Water's four way traffic light system in Radstock must surely have taught politicians and planners some important lessons. Radstock Action Group hopes that the lessons will be applied to the current road proposals without delay.

1. **Radstock does not normally have a traffic problem** - the alleged congestion which B&NES says is being solved by the new road system quite simply doesn't exist. Of course, at peak times, there are queues and drivers have to wait for short periods, but these delays compare favourably with the sort of hold-ups that occur regularly in Bath and elsewhere, and are a part of everyday life in all towns in the twenty first century. The only solution is to provide a reasonably priced, reliable, frequent public transport system.
2. **The more obstacles you put in the way of the traffic, the longer the queues and delays.** Thus when the traffic lights system as in operation, tailbacks developed instantly, trucks were seen having to go over kerbs to get round, buses ran late.
3. **When drivers have to wait more than what they regard as a reasonable time, they take avoiding action.** In the case of Radstock, they stopped coming into town to do their shopping; they pioneered new rat runs, thus disrupting other communities; and they took their business elsewhere.

**And so, the big question remains.** Why is B&NES intent on introducing permanent obstacles to previously satisfactory traffic flow? Why are they pursuing, for example:

- The introduction of two new roundabouts in the town centre
- The introduction of a traffic system which will require more pedestrian crossings to keep people safe, so that, for example, anyone turning out of Fortescue Road (an obligatory left turn in the new regime) will have to negotiate traffic coming from the right, deal with a pedestrian crossing going across to RADCO and a new roundabout at the bottom of Wells Road, all in the space of less than 100 metres
- The introduction of a 'give way' from Church Street to enable traffic on the proposed new road link to go down the Street

### **Unenforceable restrictions**

We saw clearly that the 'Access only' restriction for traffic coming down Bath Old Road during the Wessex Water four way traffic lights phase, could not be enforced, so why is there any reason to suppose that the proposed 20mph and 7.5 tonne limits on the new link road will be enforceable? They won't - anyone with the slightest imagination can work out what will follow when 44 tonne trucks meet in the newly two way Street and so on.

### **Health and Safety should come first**

The health and safety of everyone who works, lives in or visits Radstock should be paramount. So far, B&NES has not produced a safety audit for the proposed new road scheme. The authority has a duty of care to those who will be affected by any new development and must show, beyond question, that new proposals are safe. Whether it's air pollution caused by increased numbers of queuing vehicles, traffic flows involved in unsafe compulsory manoeuvres or two way traffic involving heavy goods vehicles in narrow shopping streets, the planned package looks anything but safe.

### **Take advantage of Radstock's unique blend of shops and services**

The traders in our very special shopping centre deserve a better deal - let's leave the centre of Radstock alone - this way customers can resume their shopping in the knowledge that hold-ups were a temporary hiccup and that parking will be available as they drop in to make their favourite purchases. Every thriving town needs varied and quality traders - that's what Radstock has.

We urge B&NES to think again and to listen to the people who know. These people have repeatedly made their views known - they live in and use the town. The council should work with the local people to develop true regeneration in the town. It is not too late.

12 March 2012

### **Appendix B**

Radstock Action Group regularly gets comments and copies of communications sent elsewhere. Printed below is the most recent one to appear in our Inbox last week, addressed to B&NES from a Midsomer Norton resident:

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to express my vehement opposition to the proposed changes to the road layout in Radstock and to the proposed housing development on the former railway land.

Both of these schemes fail to deliver the promised regeneration to Radstock and are in my opinion nothing other than profit making activities solely for the benefit of those living outside of the Radstock area. In the process of implementing these schemes, not only will there be massive disruption to the community for a protracted period but the very nature of Radstock will be irreparably damaged.

I add my voice to the extremely loud clamour that demands that you stop this madness immediately. The opinion of the local population has been so clearly articulated that it is impossible for anyone to fail to know that these so called "developments" are utterly unwanted, unwarranted and unwelcome.

I also add that the proposed felling of the Jubilee Oak is an absolute scandal and flies in the face of this year's celebrations of the Queen's diamond jubilee when thousands of trees will be planted. I shall be adding my yellow ribbon to those already adorning this tree and it will carry a clear message "Hands Off This Tree And Hands Off Of Radstock !"

I am disgusted by the carnage already wreaked upon other trees during the recent "enabling works". Those that sanctioned these actions should be ashamed of having allowed this to be done.