



Network Event

Radstock - 24th June 2008

Summary of Presentations & Workshop feedback

Trudi Cannock, Chair Midsomer Norton MCTi & Somer Valley Partnership

Trudi gave an excellent presentation that gave some background to the area's needs and detailed the regeneration efforts since Single Regeneration Budget Round 3 bid.

- The North Somerset coalfield finally closed in 1973 – at its height there were 50 mines!
- Radstock used to have two train lines, now none
- Printing & packaging grew after mining but this has tailed off in last decade
- So Radstock has had to reinvent itself several times in the recent past!
- In 1997(?), Norton Radstock Regeneration Partnership was awarded £2.9m over 6 years after a bid to the SRB, which was informed by community consultation.
- The work focused on creating a thriving town centre – preserving some of the many historic buildings and diversifying the local economy
- HERS scheme developed
- In summary, lots of work completed from the SRB money
- Norton Radstock Regeneration Company (not for profit company) set up to deliver the key site
- Last year achieved Planning Permission on key site after almost 10 years! See Derek Hoopers presentation for more on this
- Radstock was one of the MCTi pilot towns
- Lots of benefits of doing MCTi but 'brokering table' didnt work for them
- Initially BaNES led the community planning (pre- and during MCTi) but there is now a strong partnership between BaNES Officers and the Somer Valley Partnership (the rebranded Midsomer Norton and Radstock MCTi partnership)
- Trudi's Tips; work with existing groups to address projects (even if difficult) as easier than starting from scratch; keep engaging with the Councils; in time they have built a strong relationship with BaNES and have gained a seat on the Local Strategic Partnership (Communities group); temptation to avoid the 'Strategic' and focus on the projects – don't! Long-term Partnership working is key. SVP has parishes in Somerset so keeping links with Mendip important. BaNES and Mendip LSPs working together.
- SVP are reviewing their Plan at the moment; important to keep up to date when local situation changes (sites developed, major employers relocating etc) or global changes (i.e. increasing focus on climate change)

Derek Hooper, Chief Executive, Norton Radstock Regeneration Company

See <http://www.somersetmarkettowns.co.uk/page/minutes> to download presentation.

Kauro Jakes, Planning Policy Officer, BaNES

Kauro briefly took us through the LDF process and how it should be seen as a more proactive system/catalyst for change than the Local Plan system.

What was striking was the integration of Planning Policy Officers and the SVP. Kauro attends the SVP meetings, has held many consultations in the area and taken onboard the lessons learnt about the area from the SRB and MCTi processes in forming policies in the Core Strategy. With Trudi of SVP she jointly met the BaNES Cabinet to discuss findings and how to proceed.

The viability testing of proposals – as land cannot be ‘allocated’ for certain uses unless it is economically and socially viable – is giving a level of reality to Allocations that didn't exist before.

Kauro's presentation will appear on the website page mentioned above shortly.

Section 106 agreements

Judith Plucknett from Paulton Parish Council spoke about their involvement with the development of the Purnells site which closed 2 years ago with loss of 600 jobs.

- Parish Council wanted to be involved as they saw what happened at Peasedown where 2000 houses were built that were not integrated to the existing village.
- PC had spent years lobbying to be involved in S106 agreement for this site.
- Site is allocated as Core Employment site so decision will go to Sec of State
- Proposal includes 400 homes, 200 retirement homes, some light industrial, offices, community building and family pub/restaurant.
- Retirement village will create new care jobs
- BaNES seeking to get some funds from developer to develop another more suitable site for employment use

What the PC have achieved from this;

- Community building suitable for preschool group
- Contribution towards youth centre
- Allotments
- Wildlife area & maintenance costs of this
- Police Post in Community building
- Provision of cash machine in Community building
- Contribution to off-site play provision
- Fitness trail – contributions in kind (landscaping)

£450k has also been allocated for bus services (PC will be involved in discussions).

Other Forum member towns then added that they don't get consulted on S106's and hear how the money will be used after agreement signed, or where Town Councillors do have delegated powers the discussions with developers have happened before they approach the TC.

Judith said Paulton's previous experience was that developers kept giving them money for play equipment they didn't need. In one case they persuaded the developer to change this to a contribution to a swimming pool.

LDF's and development

This workshop followed on from Kauro Jakes' (BaNES Planning Policy Officer) presentation on the BaNES LDF process and the working relationship with Somer Valley Partnership.

- 'Can the LDF force developers of large housing sites to pay for new roads as many

residents will drive to Bath & Bristol?’ – the BaNES Core Strategy will include promoting public transport rather than building new roads.

- A question was asked ‘Can government Planning Policies adapt quickly enough for the changing situation on the ground? i.e. higher fuel costs = less commuting = more local workspace or the economy will falter.
- Landbanking – either by large companies or by individuals – in towns has been and is a problem for some towns. Enhanced Compulsory Purchase powers may help to address this.
- Regards moving aspirations from Community Plans on; a delivery mechanism is essential (such as NRRC or Dev Trust) with experienced professional volunteers, so that a realistic and commercially-viable scheme can be developed (in NRRC’s case with a developer, Bellway Homes)

Further Information

If you have any queries, please phone Matt Day on 01458 252005 or email matt@somersetccc.org.uk