



South West of England
Regional Development Agency

Councillor Robert Jones
Mayor
Bradley Stoke Town Council
7 The Courtyard
Woodlands
Bradley Stoke
Bristol
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12 March 2009

Dear Councillor Jones,

Re: Bradley Stoke

I am writing in response to seeing your recent press release "Mayor demands apology over Regional Development Agency slur".

Firstly, I would like to clarify that the article you are responding to was written by a Bristol Evening Post journalist following an interview I gave, lasting approximately one hour. Hopefully, you will appreciate that I had no editorial control over the way the article was framed, including the use of aerial images of Bradley Stoke or the headline. There were a number of inaccuracies in the article. For example I am an Area Director of the RDA and not the Chairman.

Personally, I would have strongly preferred the article to have focused on the Agency's desire to see the new Ashton Vale development promoted as a highly sustainable new community with a strong commitment to achieving a low carbon environment – rather than focus on negative associations with Bradley Stoke. It was certainly not my intention to slur Bradley Stoke as a place to live and I am very happy to be able to correct this point. The points I did make referred to Bradley Stoke when it was first developed.

I did directly refer to the history of the planning and development of Bradley Stoke in my interview to illustrate some of the challenges which would be faced in creating the most sustainable and attractive new community possible within Ashton Vale. Key challenges include the need to create the best possible public transport infrastructure to serve the new development with complimentary efforts to minimise private car use and wherever possible to create a fully integrated community with a blend of jobs, a mix of housing types and tenure (including high levels of affordable housing types) as well as the full range of other social, leisure, health and other facilities.

I have been advised on many occasions that the experience at Bradley Stoke was that private sector developers concentrated primarily on delivering commercially lucrative

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housing development and that overall a disproportionate burden has fallen on public sector resources to provide the full range of facilities you correctly refer to as creating “a fantastic place to live with a strong community”.

In terms of looking forward to the planning and development of the new Ashton Vale Community over the next 20 years I hope that rather than living in the past, we are keen to look forward and anticipate some very significant changes in the way we live, work and travel in the future – where we will have to respond to fundamentally different economic, social and environmental dynamics confronting us all as a result of Climate Change impacts and diminishing availability of cheap hydrocarbons.

It is my view that the planning of any new community at Ashton Vale will greatly benefit from being considered as an integral part of South Bristol – excellent public transport links and other community benefits need to be designed in at the outset. The wider community have a right to expect a very significant financial contribution to be made by the landowning/developer interests who will enjoy very considerable commercial value if planning consent is eventually granted for over 10,000 homes.

Once again I do apologise that the published article may have appeared unfairly critical of Bradley Stoke as a place to live. What I was trying to do was highlight the need for effective public transport and for work to be within a convenient distance from where people live. These are issues which I hope might be tackled at the outset when planning the Ashton Vale community. I am sorry that the way this article was published may have caused offence.

Yours sincerely



Ian Knight

Area Director - The West of England and Gloucestershire