

DRAFT PRESS RELEASE – 2 JULY 2009

SAVE BATH ROAD RESERVOIR GROUP MEETING THAMES WATER CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Alok Sharma, Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Reading West, together with members of the Save the Bath Road Reservoir campaign group, met on 30 June with David Owens, the Chief Executive of Thames Water and senior members of the Thames Water management team to present the views of local residents.

Alok Sharma, who set up the meeting with David Owens, said: “We had a full and frank discussion with Thames Water and I made it clear to Mr. Owens that the clear preference of local residents is for no development on the site. Ideally we would like Thames Water to set up a nature reserve which could be used as an educational resource for local schools to study Reading’s heritage and urban wildlife.”

Alok continued: “Thames Water said that this is not an option and that their objective is to maximise value from the site. We are obviously very disappointed by this attitude of putting profit above people. However, Thames Water still have an opportunity to not just talk the talk about being an organisation concerned about sustainability and the environment, but walk the walk by saving this green haven from development.”

Alok concluded: “The campaign group members and I pressed Mr. Owens very hard and explained that Thames Water have not really listened to the views of local people so far and in any new planning proposal we want to see a much lower density of housing, the retention of embankments around the site to retain the privacy currently enjoyed by local residents and a community facility, along the lines of an educational resource centre, which would give something back to current local residents.”

Reservoir campaign group member Mel Woodward said: “David Owens said at the meeting that he had listened to our views and Thames Water would consider them very seriously. We will find out in a matter of weeks, when their new application is due to be submitted to Reading Borough Council, just how much Thames Water have really listened to the ideas we put forward. As a bare minimum, we expect Thames Water to follow the guidelines set out in the Council’s 1996 planning brief for this site. These include the retention of the embankments, buildings of no higher than 2 storeys, and recommended a maximum of 80 homes on the site. In reality, with all the development which has taken place around this area since then and the associated burden on local infrastructure in terms of traffic, transport and schools, we would argue that even 80 homes is now too many for this site.”

Mel added: “We also gave Mr. Owens letters written by local primary school children who want to save this green space for the wildlife and the local community. Mr. Owens promised to read the letters and if he does so I hope he will realise just what the reservoir site means to local people, young and

old alike. The letters are very poignant, and are a stark warning about the sort of Reading we will be leaving to our future generations if this relentless development at all costs is allowed to continue – a concrete town with no sense of heritage or community”

Fellow campaigner Elaine Cobb, who was also at the meeting, said: “We have been campaigning for over 18 months and the fight to save this reservoir site will go on. Reading Borough Council knows exactly how local residents feel about any development here and what people want to see is a Council on their side and not on the side of big business and the developers.”