



NEWS RELEASE

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LOCAL RESIDENTS APPALLED BY THAMES WATER'S NEW APPLICATION TO DEVELOP BATH ROAD RESERVOIR

Thames Water has once again ignored local opinion with their latest attempt to obtain planning permission to develop the Bath Road Reservoir site. The application appears virtually no different from the previous one, which was withdrawn in December 2008.

The site is a unique wildlife haven within walking distance from Reading town centre in an area well known for its lack of open green space. Along Bath Road, the reservoir site is fronted by the pumping station and Victorian Water Tower (a Grade II listed building) and formerly listed decorative railings.

Under the Water Act 1973 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, water authorities have responsibilities to further conservation of flora and fauna and to protect buildings of historic interest. Reading Borough Council's own guidance for prospective developers (Core Strategy, Biodiversity guide...) also endorses respect and conservation of mature trees and hedgerows, and the need to preserve the habitat requirements of birds, mammals, reptiles and insects.

The residents of the local area appreciate the need for homes for people, but question the wisdom of destroying the homes of our wildlife in the process. Petworth Court resident and campaigner John Howes said: "This site is unique: it has not been polluted by chemicals or earlier building and it forms a resting and feeding haven on an established wildlife corridor which runs along the adjoining railway line. The idea that this is a typical industrial 'brownfield' site is absurd."

Thames Water's plans for the site are opposed not only by all local residents but also by all local councillors, local businesses, by our MP Martin Salter and the Conservative Parliamentary Candidate Alok Sharma. The public meeting held by the Save the Bath Road Reservoir Campaign Group in May 2009 elicited overwhelming support, and filled the meeting hall to capacity.

In their press release, Thames Water claim to have taken into account the views of local residents. Nothing could be further from the truth! Mel Woodward, a member of the campaign to save the site, said: "Thames Water has consistently ignored views expressed by local residents and councillors, and have refused any form of compromise regarding the future of the site."

It has been suggested by local residents that the site could be wholly or partly used as a community resource such as a local Wildlife Reserve or parkland area. Local resident Graham Griffiths said: "I would expect a company that year on year is increasing its profitability (over £600 million in 2008), that claims to 'put the community and the environment at the heart of everything we do' and that is based in Reading to put something back into the community'.

The application is to build 96 dwellings and convert the listed Water Tower into primarily office space plus car parking. Details can be found in the planning section of the Reading Borough Council website - the references are 09/01360/OUT and 09/01359/LBC. Objections, which need to be submitted before 2nd September, can be made online or by writing to Justin Turvey in the planning department at Reading Borough Council.

Further information: Mel Woodward (07866 500854), Graham Griffiths (07808 143649) or visit www.savethebathroadreservoir.co.uk