

Sushila Dhall – Campaign to protect Port Meadow – Address to Council

You will recall that I addressed your December meeting about the outrage and upset that people feel about the vandalism to the views of the Dreaming Spires, and most particularly the Grade I listed St Barnabas spire from the unique common land that is Port Meadow. A most exceptionally beautiful view has been needlessly destroyed. You listened with what mostly appeared to be sympathy and understanding, (with a couple of notable exceptions who think the Roger Dudman Way buildings look fine), and referred the matter to WAPC, who agreed to ask Oxford University to work on ameliorating the height and mass of the buildings in order to restore the damaged views for current and future generations. However these fine words have led to nothing, and now it turns out that WAPC do not have a mandate to request officers to hold such talks with Oxford University. In addition very many irregularities in the planning process have been brought to light, not by this Council but by members of the public who have trawled through background documentation using FOI requests. To name but a few: uncompromising heritage advice from within this Council was ignored and suppressed, the apex of roofs being very minimally lowered in order to justify this being shocking and unacceptable, soil contamination surveys were not carried out, trees are said to be able to be planted where they will not be, and anyway trees will never hide these ugly tall blocks, the view cone has been destroyed, consultation that was said to have taken place did not, numbers of rooms have been fudged, and still not EIA has taken place, meaning that the impact of light pollution from these buildings, amongst other things, has not been assessed. A figure of £20 million to rectify the situation has been bandied about without basis as scaremongering to try to get people to react against our campaign, and has not yet been clearly stated by Oxford City Council as a figure without basis. These things have made us lose faith in the workings of this City Council, and we therefore support the legal challenge which is ongoing. However there is still a chance to redeem yourselves, by accepting things have not gone as they should have, and applying to the Sec of State for revocation of this planning permission. You know it is the right thing to do.

This page is intentionally left blank