

## **Annie Kilvington's Speech to B&NES Cabinet**

**14 November 2016**

"What can I possibly say?" said I to my family over Sunday Roast last night. "...that I haven't said already, and that will make people stop and think?" My 15 year old son suggested a 3 minute "No P & R Bro" rap but I decided instead to call my sister Meg in Christchurch New Zealand. Meg has a doctorate in social and environmental policy, and brokering honest, responsible engagement between public body decision takers and other stakeholders is her day job.

Having cursorily ascertained that she and her home were still all the right way up after the latest major earthquake there a few hours earlier, I quickly moved onto *my* problem. "You are depressed" she diagnosed. Tick. "You are depressed because you feel impotent." Tick Tick. "You feel impotent because your council confuses its power to do this thing with its right to do this thing". Pause, while I digest this. My lightbulb moment.

Because this is at the heart of this isn't it. You can do this thing. You can go back to your desks, put the decision on the Forward Plan, convene an urgent Cabinet meeting for 24 December hoping we are all not watching, and vote to develop the Meadows. You could go on and vote to put a consolidation centre there also, and heck, once you've done that, why not just go and infill the remaining gaps between Bathford and Bathwick with housing.

You have the power to take these dreadful decisions. But neither the facts or the law countenance them, and you don't have the right to take them because as custodians of one of the World's greatest cities, you have a duty to preserve and enhance it for those of us lucky enough to live here today, and for those many millions who will follow us.

The law affords the Meadows the highest possible protection and development of the green belt setting must be refused unless it can be clearly and convincingly established that the harm of the destruction of the Meadows will be outweighed by the public benefit. As you sit here today, the only evidence you have received from your advisors is that no such public benefit exists. Pollution and congestion will be undiminished by this proposal. A wrong choice now will condemn our children and theirs to live with a changed climate, depleted resources and without the green space and biodiversity that contribute both to our standard of living and our quality of life.

Acting as you do as counsel for both the prosecution and defence of this proposal you have to be sceptical. Has the presumption of untouchability of the Green Belt been rebutted by evidence of the highest calibre? Because from the public gallery, your defence counsel appears struck dumb and the prosecution juggernaut proceeds unchallenged. Unless the case for the defence is made as strongly as the case for the prosecution, you cannot hope to discharge your duty to those who follow us.