

## **Eco-towns Select Committee Summary Statement – Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

### **SUSTAINABLE LIVING – ENERGY, WASTE, WATER**

Friday afternoon's session was without doubt one of the most technically challenging for the Select Committee, as we were dealing with highly technical subjects, often at the forefront of technology where the debate is unresolved even amongst the experts. Some of the Eco Town claims include technology that is being introduced in Abu Dhabi, but is not yet trusted by the Portsmouth Water Company!

At the heart of our investigations were the central proposals for energy generation, which form the basis for exemplar status. We were concerned not only about these proposals in their own right, but also because of the reliance on energy generation to subsidise other elements, such as the Community Development Trust, and the employment/business mix.

What emerged from our discussion was that the central proposition is for a power generating plant, which would rely to a degree on gas burning, both initially and as a fall-back. In time, it would develop into a full blown waste-to-energy plant, initially taking waste from the Eco Town. If the claims of the Vision Group of generating 4 times the energy requirements of the Eco Town are to be achieved this would require a large number of refuse lorries to feed the plant, importing waste from further afield. To make sure the Select Committee isn't misdirected, I am going to ask the promoters if they can reach an agreement with the County Waste Officers on exactly what these numbers are, and what the possible waste catchment might be.

The promoters argue that these lorries would be on the road network anyway, but directing them to the Eco Town, and making it a net importer of waste is a matter of significant concern, and it seems to the Select Committee that this is not a sound basis on which to establish a sustainable New Town.

The claims for generating energy from the tidal flow of the Arun were found to be marginal to the scheme, so the main advantage of the site is the co-location of the MRF and the Waste Water Treatment plant. While the technical complications of using Waste Water Treatment residue for energy production might be overcome, the MRF would only be one element of the waste stream required, so this significantly diminishes this advantage.

The Council's advisers were concerned that the energy proposals are not wholly 'green', as they would result in carbon emissions, both from the energy production itself, and also from the initial waste 'cleaning' processes required. The promoters claimed they would achieve carbon neutral as a balance across many factors, but it was not clear how this would be achieved. There were many other difficulties, such as the reliance on agreements with waste contractors for feeding the waste stream, and overall the Select Committee were left with considerable concern at this element of the bid proposals.

With regard to the water cycle proposals, it is clearly possible to design and develop communities to maximise rain water capture, and reduce water consumption to a high degree of efficiency. The proposals to introduce a dual grey/potable water system seemed to be costly and wasteful if indeed the 'grey' water is in fact potable.

With regard to the design, townscape and landscape implications of high environmental performance, the promoters confirmed that they expect the development to be largely 2 storeys, while also achieving high densities, and in some, mainly central locations, storey heights might increase to 3, or at most 4 storeys.