

Eco-towns Select Committee Summary Statement – Thursday 29th May 2008

All sides are agreed that more work needs to be done on the economic impact. FAVG have agreed to participate in an economic impact assessment with the Council, and this is very welcome, but that does make it difficult to see how we can make decisions without this further information. However:

Once again, the A27/Arundel bypass is a critical factor – the difficulties and challenges posed by delivering any significant employment in this part of the world, let alone high-end business, can only be overcome by improved road access, and so the bypass must be a pre-requisite. However, we have heard that even this may not be enough, given the macro-accessibility challenges of the area.

A key element of the FAVG offer is energy production, and the potential to support long term governance over employment and business investment. We will be debating energy production tomorrow, but we are not sure at this stage how location-specific this is, as energy is relatively efficient to move around.

It seems to us that there must, at some level, be some competition and therefore conflict with current regeneration programmes in Littlehampton and Bognor Regis, and we have heard that while good progress is being made with these schemes, they are still at a relatively early and somewhat fragile stage of delivery, so any threat to them is a matter of serious concern. There is also concern over the future of employment sites in Littlehampton and Bognor Regis, and the loss of local jobs to the Eco Town.

We have heard the FEH concept of a Science Park being doubted by FAVG, and this does seem to emerge as a significant difference between the bids. There was common acceptance that we would not get a Science Park on this site, and it is not clear whether the main factors for even a Technology Park would be present. The very fact the energy subsidy/long term governance are key factors implies that subsidy is required for the business/employment mix, so this again becomes a further area of uncertainty, both for initial delivery, and long term sustainability.

Please note that the Housing findings will be summarised at the start of tomorrow's hearing.