

Eco-towns Select Committee Summary Statement – Tuesday 3rd June 2008

ENVIRONMENT

On many of the topics discussed under the overall heading of Environment there was a common theme in that while the area for the proposed Eco Town is not of itself of any great distinction, the environmental implications of an Eco Town need to be carefully considered.

On biodiversity, the particular concerns were with increased visitor pressure on the designated Climping Beach SSSI, and also Binsted Woods. While any major development in this general area would increase visitor pressures, the proximity of the Ford site to Climping beach was a matter of concern. However, there was a view that, on the information available, the biodiversity concerns are not a 'show stopper'.

On Flood risk there were again issues of assessment and analysis – for instance any impact of the proposals on the hydrology of the river Arun. It was established that 80% of the site is in flood risk zone 1, which is safe from flooding. Of the remaining 20%, much of this is in land north of the railway line and east of the Ford Rd, and proposed as managed open space/landscaping, so a very small part of flood risk zone 3 land would be in the area to be developed, and the promoters argue that any such area can be planned and managed so as not to put houses at risk of flooding.

We discussed the spine road, and established that it will not form a significant flood defence, and reassurances were given about the bridge over the railway acting as a bund to retain water run off from lower lying land to the north. There was some concern, however about the vulnerability of the Ford Rd north of the site to flooding.

On landscape and heritage, we heard about concerns about the role of the Arun Valley as a unique transition from the sea to the downs as presented to the South Downs National Park inquiry. Although the enquiry rejected boundary extension these are matters of serious concern. We heard that views from the town of Arundel itself are limited, but there are long distance views into the site from Arundel Park and Perry Hill above Burpham. The promoters argued that visibility was not of itself a damning factor, noting that many buildings on the site already are unsightly and prominent.

Like other environmental designations, more information would be needed on e.g. the impact of visitor pressure on the Downs and light pollution to properly appraise the proposals. Developer contributions would be appropriate to deal with increased visitor pressure.

The promoters were challenged about the design concept, and argued that they were now moving away from the 'Versailles' approach and would be happy to follow the County's Landscape guidelines.

On heritage, the main concern was on the 'outstanding' rural setting of St Mary's at Yapton, with concerns also about views of Ford Place, particularly from the river.

On archaeology, although there are no specific known areas of interest it is expected that the site would yield evidence from Bronze Age through to Roman and Mediaeval periods – the promoters accepted that substantial survey information would be necessary. There was also an acceptance the more recent interest of airfield use would also merit investigation and recording. The question of unexploded ordnance was raised, and while the MOD will have given the site a clean bill of health when it was decommissioned, this would require careful attention.