

**Arun District Council Eco Town Select Committee**  
**Existing and proposed Community Infrastructure**

**Submission by V Newman – 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2008**

**EXISTING FACILITIES**

The FAVG and FEH proposal involves a development encompassing a land mass of 360ha which merges the three small rural villages of Ford, Clymping and Yapton to form one large new Eco Town. The site is predominantly agricultural land.

The existing village's local facilities range from none to very limited, in terms of retail provision and community services. Yapton is the only village with a convenience store (approx 2,000sq ft) part of which is dedicated to a small Post Office. Both Ford and Clymping are car dependant on all major retail facilities in Littlehampton, Bognor Regis and Chichester.

Yapton and Clymping both have a primary school. These form a key community focal point. Both schools are close to capacity.

Access to the area is via minor B roads which eventually link to the A27 to the north and A259 to the south. The site is currently 'rail locked' to the north by two level crossings.

There is a very limited bus service to Yapton and Clymping's southern edge.

**PROPOSED FACILITIES**

FAVG and FEH propose differing levels of facilities, but both propose retail and leisure and educational provision. Both recognise the need for a substantial infrastructure programme including major road and rail facilities to overcome the site's rural and isolated location.

FEH emphasise the need to protect both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis as retail centres to ensure their much recognised need for regeneration.

To achieve this FEH acknowledge the need for: ....**'a minimal level'... of retail provision ....'to ensure that as much benefit as possible migrates outwards towards existing nearby retail operations'**...

However, such a measure will not build towards a sustainable environment, create a community focal point for the new settlement or reduce car dependency.

FAVG's retail capacity assessment makes it clear that at least 100,000sq ft of retail, including a food store, will be needed once all 5,000 dwellings are inhabited, ie. at the earliest 2026.

Both proposers recognise the need for two primary schools, but there is a discrepancy with regards to the need of a secondary school; a prerequisite of an eco town.

The key leisure facility will be integrated within the proposed secondary school if built.

FAVG and FEH state the key to a successful bid is to ensure easy access to all facilities from inception. Affordable housing should be sited close to these facilities, ideally within 400m. They also recognise the need for good spatial design and the use of open space and existing natural surroundings.

Both promoters agree that a transport HUB, new internal roads and major improvements to the A27 will be required to ensure a reduced dependency on private car journeys. They acknowledge that the scheme is reliant upon either an Arundel Bypass or other A27 improvements.

## **MASTER PLAN AND PHASING**

FAVG and FEH proposals anticipate starting on site in 2011. Both assume to build 400 dwelling per annum, with facilities being dependant upon number of inhabitants within the new settlement.

**Phase I. (2011-14).** The construction of the first 1,000 dwellings. These are earmarked as affordable housing. But no facilities, ie. retail, leisure, schools or transport links, are programmed into the build at this stage.

**Phase II (2014-18).** 2-3,000 dwellings. Construction to commence on the initial retail facilities (approx 10,000sqft), the first primary school and link road.

**Phase III & IV (2018-2026+).** Final residential element. Expansion and full development of neighbourhood centre. Second primary school. Construction of the Transport HUB.

## **Comment**

Eco towns are being likened to New Towns such as Milton Keynes and Crawley. These are much larger settlements and not comparable. A New Town of 5,000 dwellings constructed in the method proposed will be nothing more than a 'dormitory' or satellite settlement with little social cohesion and culturally bereft.

Furthermore a New Towns' success lies in the overall implementation of an agreed master plan for the town via the overriding role of Development Corporation. Their success centred around a Development Corporation controlling the land through ownership, and not a sole reliance on legal agreements, providing all the social and physical requirements.

### **The Site**

Ford airfield site is a very rural location which is clearly illustrated in its lack of existing facilities, poor communications and being typically an area where residents are totally dependent upon the use of the private car for all journeys ie work, leisure and services.

Local debate concerning the proposal to build houses on Ford Airfield has been ongoing since 2000 and the topic has been considered by three Planning Inspectors during the past five years. The Arun District Local Plan Inspector said in 2002 that:

**“I can conclude that the severe harm to the rural character of the locality together with the serious sustainability drawbacks outweighs any potential advantages”.**

Similarly the West Sussex structure plan said in 2003 that

**“as a whole it does not fall within the definition of PDL, it is isolated and lacking in many existing facilities and it is not particularly well located for travel other than by car bearing in mind ..... the lack of ..... major facilities nearby”.**

And more lately the South East Plan EIP Panel said in 2007 that

**“we acknowledge local concern that the ability of this search area to accommodate large scale development is inhibited by capacity problems on the A27 particularly at Arundel”.**

### **Residential.**

FAVG and FEH both agree that phasing must be residential led. The actual facilities and infrastructure implementation plan is dependent upon a minimum of 1000 dwellings being built and, more importantly, occupied.

The first 1,000 to 3,000 dwellings will be predominantly affordable housing. They will be built approx 1.5km from the proposed transport hub and neighbourhood centres. This contradicts the central framework of an eco town and will severely slant the socio-demographic profile of the settlement during its early formative years. Affordable housing should be well integrated throughout private housing schemes to ensure a good social mix. It should

also be primarily clustered around the neighbourhood centre/transport HUB, ideally within 400m.

### **Retail.**

FAVG predict up to 1,000 - 2,000 dwellings need to be occupied before any local facilities will be provided; a potential time lag of 3 to 7 years. During this period new residents will be reliant upon existing poor and overstretched local facilities encouraging a substantial increase in car journeys.

### **Primary schools.**

Construction of the first primary school will commence once the first 1,000 to 3,000 households are built. ie. 2,200 to 6,600 people – a 3 to 7 year lead time. The proposal relies solely on existing primary schools in the early stages, placing great pressure on already near to capacity primary schools within the immediate vicinity of the proposal. New families will have to look beyond a 3km distance for schools, fragmenting the new community.

### **Secondary school.**

A recent study topic paper (2008) carried out by Arun District Council has analysed the proposed household number in relation to projected children of schooling age. It concluded that 5,000 dwellings would not generate sufficient secondary age children to warrant the development of a new secondary school. This influx would, however, lead to a major review of secondary education in the area disrupting local communities and hindering the development of the proposed new community.

### **Transport HUB.**

This is said to be the key to the success of the eco town, but it will not be constructed until the end of the programme circa 2026. A population of up to 11,000 people will (approximately 7,000 extra cars) be left with no option than to use the private car to access appropriate facilities and services.

The new community will develop with the use of the private car use being central to daily requirements.

### **Open Space and leisure.**

Both schemes recognise the importance of incorporated open space. However, the identified open spaces lie at the extremities of the site (3km and 4km from the neighbourhood centre respectively), divorced from the key residential areas by existing and proposed roads, the railway line and the proposed employment zone.

The area to the east of the site is a high risk flood area and cannot be developed. To the south of the site, in the Clymping zone, the open space is on existing prime agricultural land that lies within the airfield curtilage, ie.

perceived Brownfield Land. The remaining open space lies to the north of the railway line which has poor accessibility.

The proposed leisure/sports facility is reliant on a secondary school which may never be built.

## **CONCLUSION**

The DCLG eco town challenge is to build a sustainable, low car dependent (50% reduction) fully integrated community from inception. The Eco Towns should be separate and distinct, having little to no impact on neighbouring towns and villages both physically and in terms of community and facilities.

It is apparent that both FAVG and FEH proposals are totally dependent upon neighbouring facilities for at least the first 3 – 7 years. The eco efficient and sustainability elements of the development are diluted and back-ended in the phasing of the proposal. This will place severe strain on the existing communities and their limited facilities contradicting the whole ethos of the eco town concept.

It is difficult to understand how the proposals are anything but a standard private residential scheme of 5,000 dwellings which will simply engulf three rural villages. The shortage of facilities on all counts, will simply lead to a fragmented and socially dispersed community lacking a true central focal point and being car reliant.

This proposal simply ratifies past finding that the site is too isolated for a development of this size and nature. Such a proposal will simply increase pressures on an already facility deficient area and promote increased traffic flow. This was highlighted and noted by an ADC Inspector in 2002

***...Such a scheme would have a significant impact on the sub-regional pattern of development and transport. The mass and form of an urban development here would be particularly harmful.***

***Such a large development in this rural area which is not readily accessible to specialist or higher order facilities would be likely to generate a large volume of car traffic rather than reduce car dependency. Many occupiers of the site would be likely to travel to other towns for employment as well as for shopping, services, entertainment and other facilities....***

Finally, it should also be noted that in a recent appeal decision dated 11<sup>th</sup> July 2007 a Government Planning Inspector dismissed an appeal to build 82 affordable homes at Ford.

The Inspector dismissed the appeal on grounds that  
**...the site is poorly located in respect of the existing services and facilities. It is not on a bus route, the nearest stops with frequent services being on the A259 some 1.1 to 1.3 kilometres south of the site entrance. The closest railway station, at Ford, lies some 1.6 kilometres away to the north...**

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I am a Chartered Surveyor and have worked for 15 years in the private sector specialising in retail development. My last role, being at BP Oil developing and implementing strategic investment reviews of their retail network, facilities and development programmes.