

Issued by the authors of the Ford Enterprise Hub (FEH)

Community-based initiative chosen for Eco-towns programme :

“ This is especially for today’s young people and those who follow ”

As co-authors of FEH, a plan for sustainable growth to meet social and economic need for future generations in Arun we are delighted that the government have included Ford in the short-list of potential Eco-towns.

This creates an entirely new and far more optimistic outlook for young people who will be able to set higher, reachable objectives in their own lives

We take particular pride in DCLG’s recognition of the Science and Technology Park as a provider of worthwhile careers.

We ask Councillors and MPs now to accept that they themselves have to make fundamental changes in their own approach to planning for the future and give priority to meeting desperate need. The mind is like a parachute – it works better when open !

Background

John Penfold is retired and a parish councillor with a keen interest in the natural environment.

Tony Dixon is a former member of Arun District Council, very active in the community and has a young family.

Harold Hall is retired, formerly a County Councillor with special responsibilities for strategic planning and subsequently Leader of WSCC.

In 2002-3 the three, then serving Councillors, worked closely together to effect amendments to the emerging West Sussex Structure Plan. This resulted in planning bodies having to accept the need to provide infrastructure if major development is to be sustainable. The immediate effect was to require the provision of a by-pass on the A27 at Arundel if major development is to take place anywhere west of the River Arun.

This led naturally to a comprehensive approach to the social and economic issues facing Arun residents and to focus on the large, disused airfield and under-utilised station at Ford - probably the largest area of previously developed land, that is to say brownfield land, on the coastal plain of West Sussex - for a solution.

The authors took FEH to the Joint Downland Area Committee in October 2004 which, after six months for consideration, sent it forward with recommendations to both District and County Councils in April 2005.

Presentations were made to Nick Herbert, MP and to officers and Cabinet Members on the District Council. We made submissions from FEH to the Draft Local Transport Plan and ensured that FEH features as an option available to the District Council in its 20-year Plan. That position remains an obligation upon the District Council whatever the outcome of the Eco-town process.

The extent to which environmental impact had been considered in preparing FEH meant it was practically tailor-made for submission to government as a potential eco-town when bids were invited.

FEH correctly identified the major issues facing Arun :

- a chronic shortage of affordable homes :
- a worker on average pay in Arun wishing to buy in Arun would need a mortgage of 10 times annual earnings
- Ford Eco-town will provide 2000 affordable homes; Arun DC has a Housing Register of 3,880 and according to government figures Arun produced 61 in the years 2005-07 - at this rate it could take 125 years to meet current need.
- low-pay and poor career prospects; the average national weekly wage is £518 and the average in Arun is £396, a deficit of £122 a week (source Nomis)
- a sub-standard road network
- high levels of out-commuting for better paid jobs
- low levels of attainment and expectation
- dis-incentives to investment in science and technology.

Short-listing means the Government believes that FEH meets these needs with full regard to meeting new environmental standards and that Ford can become an outstanding model in the reduction of carbon emissions, provision of renewable energy and in truly sustainable transport.

The authors of FEH are not landowners and have no beneficial interest in development at Ford or anywhere else in the District. Neither are we under any Party political influence.

Where to from here ?

Eco-town listing requires us to face a range of issues including flood risk, water courses, water resources and contaminated land and we will be working closely with others to satisfy the criteria necessary to feature in the final list later this year.

On the other hand Ford has natural advantages with which to meet some of the objectives the government have set.

For example, close proximity to a railway with services to every town along the south coast, and to Horsham, Crawley, Gatwick and London - space for a new Parkway station operating as a transport interchange for bus, train and car - a bridge over the railway and new Link Road between A259 and A27.

Mixed residential and business development will mean that thousands of residents will be able to cycle or walk to work or to the transport hub.

Renewable energy can be derived from tidal flow on the Arun, recovery of energy from waste materials from the Water Treatment Plant and the new Materials Recovery Facility, bio-fuels and solar energy techniques.

Listing also requires us to work closely with local authorities, government agencies and the landowners and potential developers during this period of consultation and to make our response to the DCLG by 30th June 2008. We are a community based group and do not have funding or professional resources of our own. **We will, however, meet the challenge as we have done over the past three years and we expect to prove that a new settlement at Ford Airfield is appropriate to Arun's needs and capable of becoming an outstanding example of sustainable growth.**

continued

FEH has long provided for strong public involvement in managing the development programme at Ford (see www.fordenterprisehub.com) and then in management of the new settlement. We therefore welcome formal arrangements for this to be achieved and propose the creation of an appropriate development body, to include appropriate partners as soon as any announcement is made to develop at Ford

FEH itself stems from meaningful public consultation on strategic planning matters. We are pleased, therefore, that the public have that same opportunity to influence this, the most important shift in the way we plan to meet need without waste.

Solving today's transport problems and meeting social and economic deprivation is a matter of extreme urgency. At the pace Arun DC have adopted since 1974 it could take a further two generations to meet these needs and so we welcome measures to speed up the process and get building before the London Olympic Games become a distant memory.

END

John Penfold Tony Dixon Harold Hall co-authors of FEH. 04 April 2008