



SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL ON THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF AN ECO-TOWN

MEETING WITH PAUL TAME OF THE NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION - 29 SEPTEMBER 2008

The Panel met Paul Tame of the National Farmers' Union (NFU) to receive advise on the grade of farming land that would be lost to the proposed development and the possible effects on the production of food.

Prior to discussing these issues Mr. Tame wished Members to note that the Co-operative Group was the NFU's largest member and that he had requested information from Co-operative Farms in order to inform his response prior to meeting with the Panel. He therefore asked that his comments be taken in that context.

The Panel NOTED the following points that arose from that meeting:

- The view that Pennbury would take away vital farmland was not supported for the following reasons:
 - The proposed development represented just 0.23% of the County's total farmed area and would have little effect in comparison to threats such as flooding;
 - The farm land at the proposed development site was at grade 3 of an average quality. For example, wheat yields were slightly above average. Yields for beans (for animal feed) and rape were average. The loss of this farmland would not be a major problem. Scope for intensification was limited – it could be done with a number of glass houses but this could create environmental/planning problems. The land could be improved but this would be expensive;
 - Part of the proposed development site was old concrete runways or contaminated land due to its current and past use as an airfield;
 - The Co-operative group owned over 50,000 hectares of farmland across the County, and the relatively small loss of farm land to the proposed development would not be detrimental to their business;
 - 'Set aside' was abolished for crops grown across Europe in 2008. This would mean that 8% more arable farmland would be available next year.

- In respect of the Co-op proposal to locally source as much produce from within the Eco town boundaries as possible, this was seen as a positive step as increasingly, farmers were embracing the need for locally grown produce due to rising consumer demand.