

## **NOTE OF A PUBLIC MEETING HELD BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL ON 9 JUNE 2008 AT GARTREE SCHOOL IN OADBY TO DISCUSS THE PENNBURY PROPOSALS**

**Chairing the meeting – David Parsons (Leader of the County Council)**

**Speaking on behalf of the Co-op – Graham Ramsbottom (Head of Land Development and Ventures for the Co-operative Estates)**

**Speaking on behalf of CASCET - Simon Galton (Vice-Chairman of CASCET)**

**Attendance – approximately 50 people**

David Parsons (DP) opened the meeting and set out the County Council's views on Pennbury including the process that is being followed, the Pennbury location and the further work which is needed to ensure that the proposals are properly assessed.

Graham Ramsbottom (GR) outlined the Co-op's proposals for Pennbury including the homes to be provided, jobs, transport, support services and environmental considerations. He referred to technical studies being commissioned and options for the form the development could take. He stressed that the plans were still at an early stage and encouraged everyone to visit the Co-op's exhibition to find out more and make comments on the scheme.

Simon Galton (SG) explained who CASCET are and outlined the concerns they have about Pennbury including concerns about its scale and size, transport and environmental concerns and concerns about the process. He referred to the concerns of EMRA, the results of the recent parish poll and the concerns raised by prominent figures and experts. CASCET supported eco-towns and affordable housing but Pennbury was the wrong location and was not sustainable.

A question and answer session followed with three questions being taken at a time:

### **Questions/comments**

- The original Stretton Magna proposals were for 2,400 houses and 1.6 million sq ft of employment space. How much employment space will there be at Pennbury?
- The eco benefits will be lost with people travelling to Leicester. How many houses will be built before the support facilities are built?
- Concern about the lack of information from the Co-op. Concerns raised about drainage and sewage but no proper response received from the Co-op despite follow up requests. DP asked for the questions to be put to the County Council – he would follow up with the Co-op.

### **Answers - GR**

- GR gave a commitment to early provision of support services such as schools and buses with the Co-op meeting the costs.
- The Co-op will try to make public transport affordable and convenient and the main mode of transport.
- Employment proposals are based on technical assessments of what would be needed. Pennbury would, however, be very different from Stretton Magna.

### **Questions/comments**

- Why is Pennbury needed and why here?
- Does GR rely on public transport or does he use a car for work?
- What about losses to existing home owners?
- What profit will the Co-op be making from Pennbury?
- Why are bus routes needed out of Pennbury?
- Who will buy the houses especially bearing in mind current market difficulties?
- What sense of identity will Pennbury have?
- What provision will be made for faith communities?
- The Co-op has a good brand but with total opposition to Pennbury, when does it lose the brand name?

### **Answers – SG**

- The City Council have been unable to put a complete bus lane down London Road. The costs involved are very large – will the Co-op meet them?
- Possible rail station at Kibworth has been rejected in the past because the rail companies do not want more stops.
- Could a freight station really be opened at Great Glen? The station at East Midlands Airport - very difficult to get that opened.

### **Answers – GR**

- Does use a car for work. However, with rising fuel prices, public transport needs to be made better and more convenient – Pennbury can help to do this.
- The Co-op is developing Pennbury to make a profit but it is a business with a difference – it has strong social objectives such as supporting education schemes.
- Final costs of support services are not yet known.
- The Co-op will work with the City Council on the question of jobs and try to complement their proposals with what happens in the City.
- There is a long term need for 3 million new houses across the country with many of them being affordable. The current market difficulties will hopefully be relatively short term – Pennbury would be a more long term project.
- A sense of identity will be important for Pennbury – the Co-op will work with the community to develop this. It will set up work forums, work with religious groups etc. A strong community is an essential part of a

sustainable community. The Co-op will be looking to see what the new community can bring to the area.

- The Co-op is working elsewhere with National Rail to develop rail opportunities and would want to do the same with Pennbury. DP commented that possibilities for Pennbury may be very limited.

#### **Questions/comments**

- Pennbury will create pressure on existing fire services and hospitals. How will the Co-op deal with this?
- Is the Co-op receiving any sweeteners?
- How will energy (and in particular electricity) generated off site be linked into Pennbury? It would need to be privately connected.
- David Wilson Homes are stopping their residential development in Kibworth – will there be a demand for Pennbury?
- Existing nearby schools are already overloaded.

#### **Answers – GR**

- The Co-op will have to deal with the pressure for support services – schools, fire, police, health etc.
- The Wilson's decision is a reaction to current market difficulties – Pennbury is a longer term project. There is a possibility that the RSS housing need figures may be increased.
- The Co-op already has a commercial wind farm and would look to develop CHP at Pennbury and the possibility of getting energy from waste. This requires further investigation but GR did not envisage any major problems.
- There has been no agreement between the Government and the Co-op and no sweeteners.
- The Co-op wanted to be open with their proposals and would urge everyone to attend the consultation sessions.

#### **Answers – SG**

- A full financial assessment will be needed – people should set out what they would want to see in Pennbury. In addition to capital costs, revenue costs would also need to be considered.
- If a school is built but not initially fully occupied, would school catchment areas have to be redrawn?

#### **Questions/comments**

- Buses are not well used and the roads into the City are already congested. How will buses get into the City any quicker and will park and ride really work?
- Why is there no public meeting on the other side of the A6?
- Is increased cycling a real option given some of the distances involved? Support for a station on the main railway line but would this be needed if Pennbury is to be a self contained community?
- What assurances can be given that lives will not be blighted by noise, traffic, dust etc during the building period?

#### **Answers – GR**

- Residents will not be locked into Pennbury and journeys would be via sustainable forms of transport.
- Assurances during the building period – the Co-op would want to work with the community to minimise inconvenience. Experience from elsewhere suggests it can be done.
- Park and ride – is happening elsewhere and working.

#### **Questions/comments**

- What will happen to the aerodrome?
- Traffic on the A 47 is already very congested. Will drivers chose alternative routes leading to chaos elsewhere?
- Concern about people from Manchester telling local people what to do. Do they have the skills to do this?
- Why can't the land remain as farmland? Any new farming techniques could still be used.

#### **Answers – SG**

- Have concentrated on the A6 concerns because this meeting is being held in Oadby. There is little scope for improvements on the A47.

#### **Answers – GR**

- The airfield lease is not that long. It would not, however, be appropriate to discuss a commercially confidential matter in a public meeting.
- Problems on the A47 are important and need to be looked at. Buses can help to take cars off the roads. There are existing transport problems which need to be addressed. Pennbury can help with this.
- The Co-op will continue to farm in the area and use new techniques wherever possible.

#### **Summary – GR**

GR urged everyone to go to the Co-op exhibitions to find out more and make their views known. The Co-op does have a reputation and a brand to maintain. It will only move ahead if it is right to do so.

#### **Summary –SG**

The Pennbury site has already been rejected through the RSS process. There are major transport concerns – it is not connected to the main road network. A link to the M1 would be needed but this may be unrealistic. The site is mainly open countryside and should remain as such. There is a lack of detail about the proposals although a recognition that this is partly the Governments fault. The Co-op should withdraw their proposals and put them instead through the normal planning process.

#### **Conclusion**

DP closed the meeting by thanking everyone and reminding them to send in their comments. There were some concerns that the newsletter had not been delivered to all houses in Oadby. As a result of this, if people asked, another public meeting could be arranged for Oadby.