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HOUSE OF COMMONS

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EX16 6PP



14 February 2012  
My Reference: JAMH20198

Dear Alison Fish

Re: JAMH20198 In support of planning applications 12/00045/MFUL, 12/00107/MFUL, 11/02007/MFUL

As the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Peak Oil, I believe that all levels of society should be working urgently to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the looming peak oil crisis.

Agriculture is a key sector, with modern industrial farming using 6-10 calories of fossil fuel energy for every calorie of food energy brought to market. The UK is also highly dependent on imports, producing only two-thirds as much food as it consumes (among the lowest self-sufficiency ratios in the EU). The entire UK food sector is locked into dependency on oil, while oil prices have risen from an annual average of \$27/barrel in 2003 to \$87/barrel in 2011, with supply constraints likely to continue to tighten.

The UN-backed International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAATSD) report – the biggest study of its kind ever undertaken, led by DEFRA’s Chief Scientist and the result of four years’ work by over 400 scientists – found that industrialised agriculture is “too narrowly focused” and called for more support for small-scale farms supplying to local markets. Meanwhile, DEFRA’s own paper Ensuring UK Food Security in a Changing World emphasises the need “to strengthen the resilience of our food chain, and reduce its energy dependence, so it is less vulnerable to shocks which could put our food security at risk”.<sup>[1][1]</sup>

Small-scale production like that proposed by the Ecological Land Cooperative dramatically reduces fossil-fuel use (and thus greenhouse gas emissions), as well as increasing food yield per acre relative to large-scale monoculture, especially on marginal land, thanks to employing more intensive application of skilled labour and careful management.<sup>[2][2]</sup> By providing healthy food to people in the local area, it also reduces the need for driving to out-of-town supermarkets. Projects of this type thus have a crucial role to play in safeguarding the UK’s food and energy security.

Accordingly, I am writing in support of the planning application of the Ecological Land Cooperative, and hope that it will provide a model for other similar developments.

Your sincerely,

John Hemming MP  
Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Peak Oil

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[1][1] International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development report, Executive Summary, April 2008, <http://tinyurl.com/5uprvl>  
Ensuring UK Food Security in a Changing World, DEFRA Discussion Paper, 2008, <http://tinyurl.com/756ujn2>

Also see: Sustainable Development Commission response to the DEFRA Discussion Paper, 2008, <http://tinyurl.com/77dhs6e> ("In view of the importance of energy prices to the viability of the supply chain, and impact on food prices, efforts need to be focused on improving the efficiency of the system and reducing reliance on fossil fuel energy sources. In this context, reducing the distances that food travels can be a sustainable, solution that encourages locally sourced products and can improve a local economy.")

[2][2] See e.g.

The Multiple Functions and Benefits of Small Farm Agriculture, Peter Rosset, Food First/The Institute for Food and Development Policy, <http://tinyurl.com/6fm5m5>

2002 Census of Agriculture, US Department of Agriculture, Volume 1, Chapter 1, Table 55, <http://tinyurl.com/5hnnbs> (showing increased productivity for smaller farms - whether measured in tonnes, calories or income - in every farm-size category)