

# **HEALTH & WELLBEING**

## **'LIVING A FITTER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE'**

### **An Eco-town for Leicestershire** **A consultation paper**

## Overview

Most towns in the UK have evolved over centuries. Throughout their history, each of them will have been forced to adapt to transformed circumstances; from early agricultural settlements to places for the sale and exchange of goods to industrial and manufacturing bases to service industry centres.

Few towns have actually been purpose-designed from scratch with the health and wellbeing of their inhabitants in mind.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Sir Ebenezer Howard established the concept of Garden Cities; planned, self-contained communities containing carefully balanced areas of housing, industry, and agriculture. Letchworth and Welwyn were both inspired by this conceptual framework and provide historical reference for today's proposed eco-town for Leicestershire.

The Co-operative Group has reflected on the values of its Victorian founders and on the wisdom of Victorian new town pioneers such as Howard and Robert Owen. From this perspective, the proposed eco-town offers us the opportunity to extend our work in the area of diet and health and to create a new built environment where exercise and wellbeing are integral to daily lives.

It is our intention that the eco-town will provide a healthy urban environment. Inhabitants across the age spectrum will be able to breath cleaner air, take more exercise and enjoy adequate health and sports facilities. The design and planning process will deliver physical and mental health benefits for everyone.

## The health and wellbeing issues facing the region today

NHS East Midlands comprises 23 organisations; nine primary care trusts and 14 NHS Trusts. The eco-town would be within the region covered by the Leicestershire Primary Care Trust (LPCT) and Rutland County.

The challenges faced by the NHS East Midlands and PCT area are not untypical of those faced by counterparts in many other areas of the country, with inequalities in service provision and access being high up the agenda. While most people in the region are becoming healthier and living longer, there is increasing inequality between rich and poor as the health of those in deprived communities does not improve as rapidly as that of others.

Risks to public health can be split into two main groups:

**How people live:** largely lifestyle choices e.g. smoking, rising levels of obesity, an increase in sexually transmitted infections, increases in harm caused by alcohol and in mental illness.

**Where people live:** there are large differences in the health of people in different areas and one of the aims of Local Primary Care Trusts is to improve the health of people from disadvantaged groups and to reduce the inequalities in health that currently exist.

We will plan for these issues in the way we approach the eco-town's design. We will work with Primary Care Trusts and other Health Trusts to address the provision of care and to devise plans for tackling health inequalities. Our aim will be to offer choices for healthy living, through "Active Design" principles, community action and encouraging healthy behaviours.

The health aspects of the eco-town will respond to Government health policy and complement the aspiration of the regional NHS (East Midlands) for 'an environment where looking after your health and healthy living is commonplace and the norm.'

#### **The Government's call to eco-town developers**

The Government has identified healthy living as one of the most important outcomes from eco-towns, which should **'be designed as healthy and sustainable environments, encouraging healthy living for all through 'Active Design' principles, community involvement and encouraging healthy behaviours.'** \*

\* Page 20, Eco-towns, Living A Greener Future, DCLG, April 2008

Government guidelines stipulate that residents of eco-towns should have access to well-designed health and social care facilities and that proposals should consider a range of service provision models. Overall, facilities must meet the needs of the local community providing '*convenience, accessibility and flexibility*'.

Eco-towns are expected to learn from and emulate the new health centres being developed across the country and to maximise the scope for co-locating GP-led services and community-based services such as diagnostic pharmacy and social care services.

Eco-towns are also given guidelines on designing sports facilities into the community. The Community Sports Hub (CSH) concept brings sports and physical activity directly into communities. The model seeks to increase sports participation and to ensure that facilities can operate with more financial stability than is often the case. This new approach focuses on the development of 'hubs' that meet the needs of the community, combining private and

public investment in multiple sports and activities. There is also potential to bring health, social welfare and educational services together on a site.

*[A comprehensive guide to developing a CSH can be downloaded at www.sportengland.org](http://www.sportengland.org)*

Much has been made of eco-towns being 'healthier' places to live, but just how realistic is this goal? Common sense dictates that an eco-town could be healthier for a child than an inner city housing estate, but how would an eco-town compare in health terms with a more typical town or suburban area?

Critics might say that changing attitudes towards diet and exercise are at the core of the UK's health problems and that living environments are only a small part of the problem.

The important thing is that eco-towns are a step in the right direction, designed for healthier living.

### **Our initiatives – healthy living by design**

We are proposing to design the eco-town to be a compact town in its layout – this will have attendant benefits for health because the distances travelled during the day will be walkable. Regular exercise will become a natural part of daily life within walkable neighbourhoods, which in turn will increase interaction with neighbours and give rise to a stronger spirit of community. Diverse cultural, social and educational facilities will help to 'thread' the community together and promote mental and social wellbeing.

Facilities to promote healthy living will also be provided, from sports and leisure facilities to healthcare – both public and private clinics and surgeries. Facilities will be designed to accommodate all sectors of the community. The town will cater to the health needs of people at all stages of their lives from infants to the elderly. Our commitment to 'lifetime homes' – a concept that enables the elderly to remain within their community in their own homes – is known to aid mental and physical wellbeing.

### **Headline commitments – what can we do that's different?**

#### **Working in partnership with the NHS**

The Co-operative Pharmacy already works closely with the Department of Health in delivering quality care to local communities through the LIFT programme. We also work closely with other healthcare providers, most notably GPs, to deliver fully-integrated and seamless healthcare solutions which improve health outcomes and overall satisfaction with the service,

and in tandem, reduce journeys. Our expertise in this area will provide a model for joined-up service provision and localised care in the eco-town.

In our experience, pharmacies located in the hearts of their communities form part of the everyday fabric of people's lives, in particular, providing health information, advice and support to all sections of the community on an informal, walk-in basis. The Co-operative Pharmacy has 800 plus stores across the UK and each of them offers a tailored range of services to meet the needs of the local population.

**From the food people eat to the way they exercise, we want to give people the options to live a healthier life.** This starts with connecting agriculture and land use back into the town. With our farming experience, we will grow crops and produce on the site, for use by local residents. We want to make it easier for people to have convenient access to fresh food every day, whether that is buying in produce or growing their own. Through our food retailing, the Co-operative Group is acutely aware of the need for healthy living. We have been at the forefront of challenging suppliers to reduce fat and salt in products and have encouraged more informative labelling to increase consumer awareness. We are a firm supporter of 'Sustain' - the alliance for better food and farming and through Co-operative farms - launched a food education programme for children on the Stoughton Estate. Our 'Farm to Fork' programme is just one way through which we will build understanding of the relationship between food production, food consumption, and healthy living.

**Providing for food to be grown.**

Space will be provided in the town for community allotments and orchards, and other opportunities to grow local produce. Through our landholdings, the eco-town will be linked to the surrounding rural economy and will benefit from local organic and sustainable forms of production.

**The town's layout will encourage and support healthier lifestyle choices.**

We support the principles of Active Design - Improving Accessibility, Enhancing Amenity and Increasing Awareness - and will incorporate these into our master planning. Local facilities will be planned and inter-linked to make walking and cycling the quickest and most attractive means of circulation. To complement these active travel routes, we will design in safe and varied locations for recreation. In addition, sports and leisure facilities will be provided, through community schools facilities and a network of footpaths and cycleways.

**We are committed to delivering a substantial reduction in private car use.**

The eco-town will be designed to give safe cycle and pedestrian access to all central facilities within the town, encouraging people to take exercise as they attend to their daily needs. Walking and cycling will be complemented by a range of public transport alternatives.

**We will provide healthcare facilities in the town to meet local needs, from dental practices to doctors' surgeries, and we will work with the relevant partners to ensure people have access and choice when it comes to local healthcare provision.**

We are equally aware of the need to provide integrated healthcare facilities. We already bring expertise and experience in healthcare, pharmacy services and funeral care. We would work in partnership with the PCT to ensure healthcare facilities are well positioned, logically inter-connected and appropriate.

**We will promote healthy living.**

The Co-operative Group will support initiatives that raise awareness of the recreation and leisure options available to the community and we will encourage innovative ideas for active living. (We already support 'Walking Buses' for schools and Jog Scotland).

**Question 1** - What do you feel the key challenges are for healthcare in an eco-town? Do you agree with our focus on the above areas of priority?

**Question 2** - What more can be done to design healthier living into eco-towns? Do you have any specific ideas?

**Question 3** - What are your views on how healthcare facilities are provided in an eco-town - what lessons should we draw upon?

**Question 4** - If the objective is healthier living for all sections of the community, what should our priorities be when considering sports facilities?

**Question 5** - In terms of overall healthcare provision, if we are starting with a blank sheet of paper, what would you say is the number one priority for a new community?

**Question 6** - In design and planning terms, what more can be done to encourage people to leave their cars at home?

**Question 7** - Would you grow more of your own food if you had the space and the opportunity?

**Question 8** - Do you have any other views on the content of this consultation paper or other health related aspects of the eco-town proposal which you feel are not addressed here?

## How to Respond:

Please direct any comments or responses to [www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop](http://www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop) and complete the online response form in the “your views” section, with ‘**Health**’ in the subject heading. In order to help with the feedback process, please make clear to which questions you are responding in your feedback.

Due to the volume of submissions we are receiving it may not be possible to respond to each individual submission at this stage. However, all comments are noted and are very important to the development of a best-in-class eco-town.

This is just one of a number of consultation themes which we are exploring in the early phase of consultation. You can share views that you have on specific elements of transportation, homes, community, the environment, and employment in response to the consultation documents that we are publishing. Any other views that you have at this stage can be submitted to the website.

We are also holding a series of local events at which we would be delighted to hear your thoughts on the specific questions posed in this consultation paper. You can also submit written responses to this and future consultation papers to members of the team at the events. Please check our website and news releases for the latest dates.

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