

TRANSPORT

'MAKING BETTER CHOICES'

An Eco-town for Leicestershire

A consultation paper

Overview

Providing effective transport systems and transport choices is fundamental to the success of the Co-operative Group's proposals for an eco-town for Leicestershire.

We need to make sure that the way in which we design the town meets the needs of everyone who lives, works, or visits and that, in the wider context, we develop transport networks and facilities which plug into and improve the local and regional network. We will also need to future proof the transport solution for the town, so that it can be adapted to meet changing circumstances

Put simply, we will manage the transport demand we create but also look to play our part in delivering better transport around Leicester and in the region.

Central to the success of the eco-town will be how people living or working in the new settlement will get from A to B and beyond, and how, through a combination of innovative public transport solutions and thoughtful masterplanning, car use can be reduced to an absolute minimum.

To successfully reduce private car use the alternative needs to be reliable, regular, safe and convenient. There needs to be a variety of choices for those travelling within and to and from the town. The Co-operative Group is working with expert transport consultants and the local authorities on an area-wide transport strategy, which incorporates a range of initiatives. This will help ensure the very best transport solutions are introduced for the proposed eco-town.

The Co-operative Group will be keeping an open mind on what transport initiatives are included in the proposed eco-town throughout the duration of the public consultation.

It is anticipated that 85 per cent of journeys generated at the proposed eco-town will be going to destinations within the development itself or to nearby Leicester, where it is expected that up to 70 per cent of the working population of the proposed eco-town will secure employment.

Our aim is to see the proposed eco-town become a catalyst for a new approach to transport provision in the area.

Transport issues facing the region today

In Leicestershire, as across the UK, a core challenge is to reduce private car use and to provide realistic and attractive alternatives. The UK simply cannot sustain the current levels of annual increases in vehicles coming onto the network – and cutting CO₂ emissions will not happen unless current transport habits change. The cost of motoring is continuing to rise and more affordable alternatives are required.

Looking locally, the recent '6C's congestion study' has shown that congestion in the south east quadrant of Leicester, adjacent to where the eco-town is to be located, is no worse than congestion elsewhere around Leicester city. However, there will be a need to increase the capacity of the network in this part of Leicester (in terms of passenger throughput) to facilitate journeys to and from the eco-town, particularly by public transport.

We are also aware of wider aspirations for improving bus services within Leicester and the surrounding area. At the same time, we are aware of opportunities to improve the road network in eastern Leicester and to help provide better connections locally. Without an eco-town, there are no immediate plans to deliver major investment to the public transport network. By delivering an eco-town we believe we can be part of the solution through focused investment.

In the local area, there are distinct challenges for villages currently suffering from large amounts of rush-hour traffic due to a lack of capacity. Reliance on the car is part of the reason why there are few bus services to many parts of the area. With the kind of investment that the eco-town can bring forward, many of these problems can be addressed.

The Government's call to eco-town developers

In line with the Government's Eco Town Prospectus, the Co-operative Group's proposal for an eco-town in Leicestershire needs to:

- Provide an area-wide travel plan to ensure significantly more journeys are completed (compared to settlements of a similar size) on foot, by cycle and by public transport.
- Develop high quality public transport links to reduce car dependency down to a minimum.
- Be configured in such a way (with key public services clustered rather than dispersed) as to minimise unnecessary need to travel.
- Only be developed with the right transport infrastructure in place from the start.

Our initiatives

The Co-operative Group will focus on making public transport, walking and cycling the most popular means of travel, providing excellent public transport links into Leicester City and nearby villages and towns and making it easy for people to get around on foot and by bike.

The core of the transport strategy will be an exemplary public transport network providing travel within the new town and to Leicester, serving key destinations such as the city centre, university and hospitals.

This could be delivered through a range of options including bus, rail and tram. These public transport links could also connect direct to the nearest train stations linking the eco-town with the regional and national transport network: Leicester and Market Harborough with links to London, Melton Mowbray, Oakham, Kettering, Corby (when opened at the end of 2008) and possibly Stamford as well as links to Nottingham East Midlands Airport.

As the proposed eco-town is 7.5 miles (over 15 minutes journey time) from the M1, it is unlikely to become a major commuter settlement serving towns away from Leicester. An M1 link would not be consistent with our plans to reduce reliance on the car and therefore we are not seeking a specific response to questions around this option.

We believe that everyone would want to get to work or reach vital services in a quicker and cheaper way than at present with much less impact on the environment. That is why we are seeking your views on how this will be achieved.

Our land ownership and partnerships allow us to examine a range of options and your views at this stage are vital to rule in or rule out these initiatives.

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

We will provide genuine transport choice by investing in new, innovative and effective public transport systems. A fast, frequent and reliable Bus Rapid Transit link through the centre of the new town to the city centre is a central element of our proposals, and this has the potential to become a tram service over time. Buses would be of a high quality providing a quick and convenient service to encourage use.

We will set up and fund a Smarter Choices Travel Management Company dedicated to developing and implementing transport solutions for the town. This company will have a commitment to long-term targets for sustainable transport. It will work with the Transport Authorities, public transport operators and other sustainable transport agencies to optimise the sustainable transport strategy for the eco-town itself, while benefiting a wider audience by helping to deliver the objectives of the Central Leicestershire LTP and The 6C's Growth Point programme.

We can be an enabler for much needed transport investment, acting as a catalyst for improving services locally and making improvements happen. Our investment can help solve existing problems on the network, such as congestion in east Leicester, and we will work with partners and the local authorities to unlock opportunities and deliver improvements, including Park & Ride sites and, potentially, a new public transport-based road link for east Leicester.

Getting around, into and out of the eco-town needs to be convenient and easy – we will work on innovative solutions to make public transport, walking and cycling safe, affordable and attractive. We will design in features to help reduce reliance on the car and to support a shift to more sustainable transport choices.

We are assessing a number of options with the four local authorities (Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, and Harborough District Council) to achieve the best possible scheme. These include:

- **Guided busways** – high quality and efficient bus networks to provide faster and smoother connections than 'traditional' bus routes
- **Trams** – intended for the later stages of the development should a tram system come forward in Leicester and as a potential successor to the high quality bus routes
- **Rail links** from the Co-operative Group's nearby land holding on the Midland Mainline at Great Glen, which could become the location for a **new passenger station or freight hub**
- **Improved networks and priorities for cycle paths and footpaths** – encouraging people to walk or cycle to destinations within the eco-town as well as connecting into the existing network
- **Designing key destinations close to public transport hubs** – it sounds obvious but, because we are designing the eco-town from scratch and with no pre-set plan, we can position buildings like shops, schools, offices and community facilities in the best places to connect with transport links. We are not constrained by existing systems and layouts.
- **Park & Ride sites** – to help reduce pressure on the road network in Leicester city and encourage more sustainable transport habits.

- **Using low emissions technology** – we will look to ensure vehicles serving the town use the latest in low-carbon technology.
- **Smarter Choices innovations** – will use the highly effective ‘soft measures’, known as Smarter Choices, to encourage public transport use and reduce car use to much lower levels than those currently experienced in southeast Leicestershire.
- **Demand management measures** – to reduce car use, such as restricting car parking and charging for car travel at peak times.

Question 1 - What do you think are the main transport challenges involved in building the eco-town? Do you agree with the options we are looking into – or have others to suggest?

A more detailed look

Buses

By investing in **new buses and improved bus networks** we can provide solutions for people travelling within, into and out of the eco-town as well as help deliver better services into neighbouring villages and the wider region.

We are **working with partners within the local authorities** to explore a wide range of possibilities.

We are proposing to invest in a high quality and modern bus system – which is similar to a ‘metro-style’ system – and which provides people with the services they need. We realise that, to become preferable to the car, bus services need to go where people want to go, when they want to go, and to be fast, reliable, affordable and safe.

We recognise the need to ensure bus routes connect with important transport links. A key aspect of our proposals is a fast and direct bus connection from the eco-town to Leicester city centre and Leicester railway station.

Because we want to make bus use as easy and convenient as possible, we are proposing **options for integrated ticketing**. This will mean that people can use one ticket to have access to a range of transport services, for example a ticket which covers both local bus and rail trips.

We will also be working the local authorities **to make bus transport as affordable as possible**. We are proposing ticketing and pricing structures which will make bus travel more accessible and affordable for all – providing another attraction over the car. We will also

working to ensure that the comparative cost of using the bus is favourable against using a private car.

Buses can help reduce overall levels of CO₂ emissions by taking private car journeys off the network. However, they should also have the very best standards of carbon efficiency themselves. We are proposing **the option of gas or hybrid buses which provide the lowest possible levels of emissions** per mile.

The eco-town will make it easier for people to catch the bus by providing **more convenient real time bus information**. At a basic level, this will be information on when the next bus will arrive available at the stop. In addition, we are proposing ways to make this real time information available to people's homes, to workplaces and to mobile phones meaning you always know when the next bus is due, making it as convenient as travelling by car.

To be attractive and make people want to use them, **buses and bus stations need to be safe at all times of the day and night**. We are proposing modern buses equipped with the latest security and safety measures (including CCTV). We will also be looking to ensure buses run regularly into the evening and through the night, in line with demand. We want people to be able to get into, out of and around the eco-town safely, no matter what time of day or night.

We are also proposing to make improvements to the main roads connecting the eco-town with Leicester city, including the A6 and A47. In partnership with the local authorities, we are **proposing introducing alternative uses of new and existing roadspace to give public transport priority** and to help make the bus connections fast and reliable.

Question 2 - What do you think are the most important aspects of providing an attractive bus service which would help reduce people's dependence on the car?

Question 3 - What are your views on prioritising public transport links and investment in the existing road network? How do you think we can best achieve an increase in overall capacity and more efficient use of the road network?

Cycling and walking

We want to promote cycling and walking through the way we design the eco-town and how we link foot and cycle paths to the existing network. This is not just about promoting forms of travel which are healthier, but is **about extending choice**.

We envisage that walking and cycling will be **the** major modes of travel for residents and employers in the eco-town.

Safety – or perception of safety – is one of the single biggest barriers to more people walking and cycling. We want to change this by giving people foot and cyclepaths which are safe, which are distinct and separate from where cars and buses move, and which go where people want to go. We are putting a strong emphasis on designing the eco-town around the needs of pedestrians and cyclists to help make these forms of travel to become ‘the norm’.

We are also exploring the introduction of a **cycle-share scheme**. We want to make cycling convenient and easy, and by having a centrally run cycle-share scheme, we believe we can make cycling a more attractive choice.

Safe cycle parking is essential. We will **design covered and secure cycle store facilities** across the eco-town and at key locations, such as schools and community buildings.

We will **promote the existing National Cycle Route** that runs through the site, as well as the parallel route of Gartree Lane, as safe, well-lit, convenient cycle routes to major employment locations such as the University of Leicester, Leicester General Hospital and Leicester city centre.

We want walking to be one the main ways people get around the eco-town. **We will make footpaths within the town convenient and easy to use for everyone** (regardless of age or mobility). We will also develop a network of footpaths which connect the developed area of the eco-town into the surrounding countryside, **opening up access to our land** and providing a better connection between the town and its setting.

Question 4 - Do you agree with any initiative to promote and expand existing cycle networks? Do you have any additional ideas you think we should include?

Reducing reliance on the car

To change patterns of behaviour calls for the introduction of alternatives to be made readily available. The Co-operative Group is considering introducing a range of initiatives to help people rely less on private car use and more on public transport, walking and cycling.

First and foremost, we need to assess the scale of solution we need to deliver. An eco-town of up 15,000 homes will mean a considerable population but the design of the settlement, and the measures proposed, will mean that many families can, if they choose, live without daily use of a private car. For journeys outside the town, public transport links and cycle paths are

envisaged to be the travel option of choice. The remaining journeys at peak time by car will therefore be a small proportion of overall travel. This will be supported by appropriate demand management measures.

Secondly, **this is about design and what is built where**. Because we are starting with no pre-conceived plan, we can develop our proposals to position transport connections and services at the points of greatest demand, making it easier for people to walk, cycle or travel by public transport.

Thirdly, it is also about behaviour. People will choose the way they travel to suit their needs but, by working with the community and helping to establish strategies and schemes within the town which educate and which encourage more sustainable transport choices, **we believe we can make a difference in reducing dependence on the car**.

This is a national problem, not just one for Leicestershire. We do not underestimate the challenge but we believe that we have ideas that can make a difference and which, potentially, could become the source for wider behavioural change across the area.

The 'Smarter Choices' programme is the principal example of this type of initiative. This will include personalised travel planning for residents and businesses, with flexible ticketing alongside real time information systems at interchanges, on bus stops, via text to mobiles and to homes and work places via the town's intranet. Frequent buses will run during off-peak times and late into the evenings, bus stops and stations will be safe and comfortable and buses will be of a high quality with low level easy access for disabled users and those with pushchairs. We will look at local mobility schemes for disabled and older residents and the possibility of talking signs to help guide blind and partially sighted people to key transport links and local services.

Another established technique we will support is the '**walking bus**' and The Co-operative Group has sponsored walking bus initiatives elsewhere in the UK. We will provide support to schools within the town to encourage pupils to walk to school together with the improved safety that comes with the walking bus.

Question 5 - How would you look to reduce people's reliance and dependence on the car? What would it take to make you think differently about how you use your own car?

Charging for car-use

We will introduce a charge for people leaving the eco-town by car at peak times in order to disincentivise car use and to encourage people to reassess their travel choices. We will also

explore the possibility of making key routes within the town 'car free' at peak times, both in the morning and evening peaks.

Car parking spaces

One of The Co-operative Group's goals is to reduce car ownership in the new town to below national and local averages.

To deliver this objective, **it is proposed that car parking at homes, workplaces and other facilities in the eco-town should be limited to discourage car ownership.** Through our proposed design, we are also placing an emphasis on car-free residential streets, where car parking is provided but at locations slightly separated from residents' homes. This system has been proven to be effective in making people think twice before deciding to go by car. Disabled spaces and cycle parking, however, will be provided close to the front door of public facilities and the need for access for all will be a key feature right across the town.

We want to ensure we encourage more sustainable transport choices but that we also provide **effective choice.** This is not about penalising car ownership and use – it is about working to adjust the hierarchy of different forms of transport and making public transport, walking and cycling the most attractive and convenient options for travel.

Personalised travel planning

To help change patterns of behaviour we will explore introducing personalised travel planning for residents and businesses coming to the new town as trials have shown that this prompts a significant increase in public transport use, walking and cycling . This type of initiative works by providing detailed information on all of the available ways of making a journey, including detailed information on how to use public transport .

Car clubs

Some times, for some journeys, you have to travel by car. To encourage lower levels of car dependency, we will be providing car clubs, where people can have access to shared cars and pay by the hour according to how they need to use them. Already established in most UK cities and on the continent, membership of these clubs gives people convenient **access to a car when they need one without the hassle or cost of owning one** personally. We see car clubs as part of the wider solution for breaking the link between car use and car ownership..

Car sharing

To encourage car sharing, we are considering the introduction of **High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes** to encourage more sustainable use of cars. This will benefit car sharers. We will promote an on-line sharing database to make bookings easy and safe. It could even process payments to the car owner of sharing journeys, on a one-off or regular basis.

Question 6 - What do you think about car clubs and car sharing? Do you have any views on different or alternative approaches that have worked elsewhere?

Park & Ride

As part the public transport strategy, and to assist Leicestershire County Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP2), we are promoting Park & Ride systems. These could remove existing traffic from congested corridors into the city, providing scope for bus priorities or HOV lanes on the approach to the city centre from the east.

Park & Ride sites adjacent to the A47 to the north of the proposed town and the A6 to the south will provide complementary transport infrastructure and remove substantial numbers of private car movements into Leicester city centre along each corridor.

We are proposing Park & Ride facilities which we think will be genuinely attractive. For example, we are proposing that these should be '**dry in, dry out facilities**' which provide fully covered parking, possibly on several levels. Buses would collect and return people direct to the parking point so that, if it was raining, people could stay dry and under cover at all times. We are also investigating the option to provide convenience services, such as shopping and dry cleaning, at the parking point so that people can manage day-to-day errands easily and while catching the bus. We may also persuade major retailers from the city centre to deliver goods for pick-up at the Park & Ride.

Question 7 - Do you agree with Park & Ride as part of the solution for reducing the number of private cars travelling into Leicester city centre? Do you think that combining Park & Ride hubs with retail services would make it a successful option?

Rail

Working with industry partners, we are exploring the feasibility of rail links on land near the former station at Great Glen. It is envisaged that local rail facilities in this location would strengthen the public transport structure for both the eco-town and the wider local area.

These proposals would be likely in the potential third and final stage of development of the eco-town and are not integral to our main transport strategy. If we can achieve it, **we want to**

see a new station at Great Glen as a further boost to public transport services in the local area.

Great Glen station could be a **freight hub for the delivery of building materials and manufactured goods** for the wider area or just for the new town. This could help to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of supply chains for the eco-town and local area, as well as delivering benefits in terms of taking lorries off the roads and reducing overall CO₂ emissions.

Key to the development will be the establishment of **effective links and transport interchange with Leicester rail station**. This is an essential component for our transport strategy in order to attract people to live without the use of a private car. Links with the rail station will provide effective connections to the region and nationally. Such connections are also vital to bring investment and new industries into the town and to benefit the wider regeneration of Leicester city as a whole.

Question 8 - What are your views about the idea for a new station at Great Glen? What else do you think the eco-town should do to provide connections with rail services? Do you think a freight hub would be a good use of the land next to the railway at Great Glen?

Question 9 - Do you have any other views on the content of this consultation paper or other environmental aspects of an eco-town which you do not feel are addressed here?

How to Respond:

Please direct any comments or responses to www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop and complete the online response form in the “your views” section, with ‘**Transport**’ 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 homes, community, health, climate change and employment in response to the consultation documents that will follow in the next few weeks. 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.