

The Co-operative Group
Response

Draft Planning Policy
Statement: Eco-towns

Document 11

Getting From A to B
The Co-operative Group Transport Report Summary

April 2009

an **ECO-TOWN**
for **LEICESTERSHIRE**



This report, 'Getting from A to B' is intended to be a simple guide to the transport proposals which form part of The Co-operative Group's proposed Eco-town scheme.

The Eco-town policy was formally launched in July 2007 when the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) published its Eco-town 'Prospectus', which asked for public and private sector developers to submit proposals for scrutiny and consultation. Following the Co-operative Group's own submission for its land to the South-East of Leicester, the bid was included on an initial shortlist of 15 sites to go through a second phase of consultation. A final shortlist of sites with the potential to become an eco-town is expected later in 2009. If shortlisted, the Co-operative Group's scheme will then be progressed through the normal planning process.

Good transport links are vital to ensuring that eco-towns are places where people can be mobile and that impacts on the environment are minimised. The provision of high quality transport choices and the close proximity of key services to homes will see a shift away from using the private car in favour of public transport, cycling and walking.

Eco-town Planning Policy Statement (PPS) – what we have to achieve

The draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) sets out standards for transport that must be met by eco-towns. The PPS is currently in draft and is open for anyone to comment on until the end of April 2009. It notes that transport is currently around a quarter of each individual's carbon dioxide emissions and that this can be cut significantly through locating homes within walking distance of public transport and services. It requires eco-towns to locate homes within 10 minutes of public transport links and local services. Given the congestion problems often attributed to the school run, it requires safe walking and cycling routes to schools and for every home to be within 800m of a primary school. It sets a target of at

least 50 percent of trips from and within the eco-town to be by non-car means with eco-towns close to existing settlements expected to demonstrate that they will not cause congestion on key routes and to deliver more ambitious target than 50% of trips. The PPS requires the necessary infrastructure to be in place from day one to ensure that early residents have a range of low-carbon travel choices and that good travel habits can be developed from the start.

Further reading

Eco-town consultation material and policy information – CLG website
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/ecotowns/>

Eco-town for Leicestershire Transport proposals
<http://www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop/the-masterplan-transport.html>

What is the transport proposal for an Eco-town for Leicestershire?

The Co-operative Group's response to the criteria set-out in the draft PPS has been to develop a Masterplan Vision that would deliver a compact town layout with easy access to public transport, schools, shops and services for all residents. The Co-operative Group's overall objective from its submission to the Eco-town Prospectus was to provide a leading public transport system and optimise use of existing transport infrastructure to increase travel options.

Being close to the city of Leicester allows the eco-town to aim for a higher than 50% of journeys by non car means, ensuring that impacts on existing traffic networks are minimal. It is recognised that primary routes into Leicester from the South experience high volumes of traffic at peak times and that infrastructure has suffered from under-investment to date.

The transport proposals include the following:

- A new dedicated high speed bus route to link the eco-town with Leicester city centre and Leicester station.
- New orbital bus routes linking the eco-town to major employment areas, universities, hospitals and leisure facilities
- A local bus service for residents to get to other locations from a transport 'hub' linking the range of transport options for the town
- Integrated smartcard ticketing for transport services
- £5m for a sub-regional transport study to examine a wider solution to tackle existing transport challenges – a further commitment to re-direct later stage funding for the eco-town to a tram if it is proved viable by the study.
- Design viable alternatives to the car by placing homes near to schools and services and managing car parking provision to improve the quality of the living and working environment in the eco-town whilst still ensuring accessibility for all.
- High provision of safe cycleways and pedestrian routes, giving priority over private vehicles. Cycle links to the main university sites.
- A Smarter Choices Company to manage travel planning for the town, promoting a wide range of support services including personalised travel planning, real time travel information, integrated ticketing systems and cycle loans
- Delivery of a 'green lane' for cyclists.

- Effective management to the A6 to ensure reduced 'rat running' through local villages than at present.
- An upgrade of Humberstone Gate to provide a better bus interchange in the city and improved interchange at Leicester Station
- 500-1000 car Park and Ride provision on the A6

Through these range of measures, the eco-town aims to surpass the eco-Town PPS recommendations to create a high level of sustainable journeys in the town and to and from the town. Within the eco-town – 35% journeys by foot, 25% cycle, 25% public transport and 20% by car. To and from the eco-town – 55% public transport, 20% cycle and 25% by car.

Further reading

Eco-town for Leicestershire Transport Assessment Report
<http://www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop/transport-reports.html>

An Eco-town for Leicestershire – Summary transport assessment Sept 2008
<http://www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop/assets/pdf/octoberDocs/Summary-Transport-Assessment-September-2008.pdf>

An Eco-town for Leicestershire – Full transport assessment Sept 2008
<http://www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop/assets/pdf/octoberDocs/Transport-Assessment-September-2008.pdf>

Cars and the eco-town

Modelling work shows that capacity exists for either a bus rapid transit or a tram route from the eco-town to the city of Leicester. This is dependant upon car-use in the eco-town being lower than would normally be found in a typical 'Anytown'.

The Co-operative Group's approach to the car within the eco-town is to design out reasons to use a car but not to prevent car ownership. The eco-town should enable essential journeys such as the daily commute and the school run to be made in a number of lower carbon ways but an eco-town is not intended to stop a family taking a road trip on a weekend or to prevent car visits to town residents. What it does intend to do is to design out the high proportion of car trips at peak times that are often for short journeys or undertaken with only one person per car.

How the eco-town will reduce car usage

- Building homes, services and public transport near to each other – this will encourage walking and cycling, promoting more healthy lifestyles and provide for a vibrant sustainable community. It will also mean that for many a car becomes an unwanted expense which they can avoid.
- Schools within walking distance of all homes – this aims to negate the need for the school 'run', lower local emissions, less road congestion, lower pollution and could help reduce cases of asthma compared to schools in high car use areas. The Co-operative 'Walking Bus', already in place for schools in the UK, will free up parent time otherwise taken up by the school run.
- Separating parking costs from housing costs – this will demonstrate the costs usually levied on parking provision in typical developments. The parking cost will therefore become an optional extra for residents. Residential parking will average 0.5 spaces

per home with a higher proportion for some properties in lower density areas and additional parking for commercial premises in the town. The aim is to balance current car ownership with the higher provision of local services and public transport alternatives.

- Paid-for parking for businesses and residents – this model already operates across the UK through a permit allocation system which seeks to find a balance between securing resident parking and raising revenue to invest in infrastructure provision.
- The Smarter Choices approach – as outlined previously.

Further reading

6CsCongestion Study

<http://www.6cscongestionmanagement.co.uk/Study%20outputs.htm>

What is Smarter Choices?

Smarter Choices are innovative measures to help people to choose public transport, walking and cycling instead of using the car and the Smarter Choices Company would be dedicated to this.

It is this innovation which will significantly increase the likelihood of people making use of the high quality public transport, walking and cycling choices available to them.

The Smarter Choices Company set up to serve the town will be run in the same way as a co-operative. This will allow all residents to become members of the company and have a say in how it is run and how services should be provided. The company will provide a range of services including:

- Real-time travel information and information on routes and options. Leicester already has a Startrack system which is the basis for this approach.
- Formal links with local authorities and bus operators – on provision, safety and security of routes, walking safety and a public realm maintenance complaint service
- The Smarter Choices Company will lead on quality of services including: frequency, punctuality, cleanliness – also public transport stop infrastructure
- Smart card administration – allowing easy and convenient access to a range of transport options in the town, including car hire and car share services, payment for parking and bus services.
- Personalised travel planning - this will include monitoring personal carbon emissions through travel surveys, provision of an optional health assessment and fitness programme for cyclists and walkers. Walking and cycling buddies will encourage long-term commitment by residents to low carbon transport.
- The management and charging of car parking
- Cycle provision including route maps, cycle training for adults and children, cycle hire and repair, cycle loans, guided rides and links with local and national cycling

organisations. A Paris-style 'Velib' system will be considered as part of phase two of the town where cycles can be dropped off and picked up at points across the town.

- The Smarter Choices Company will also work closely with employers on areas such as paying mileage for cycling on business travel, increasing efficient delivery of goods and encouraging lower emission vehicles across the town.

Further reading

DfT (2005) *Smarter Choices – Changing the Way We Travel*. Department for Transport: London.

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/smarterchoices/casestudy/>

Paris Velib system

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Velib>

Getting from A to B

So what would travel in and around the town look like in reality?

Scenario 1 – the school run. Living near the school means that the journey time is short from door to door and that the journey can be done without using the car, saving on petrol and reducing emissions. High levels of cycle parking, cycle and walking route provision means that for most students cycling or walking with friends is the best option. The Co-operative 'Walking Bus' also allows parents to say good-bye to children at their front door in the knowledge that they will be safely guided to and from school that day. Benefits for residents include – less traffic at peak times than with alternative models, healthier and more active students, parents with more time for work or other priorities, empowering behaviour for the next generation for low carbon living.

Scenario 2 – the commute. Having a rapid link to primary destinations in the city will make the car a costly alternative to public transport. For those for whom a car remains the most viable transport option, car clubs and share schemes will ensure cars are full when travelling on primary routes reducing the numbers of overall vehicles alongside measures such as park and ride. IT provision in the town will enable many to work from home and to exercise more flexibility with work than at present. Running the shops, services and community facilities in the town will ensure local employment with many people able to walk to their place of work.

Scenario 3 – the weekly shop. A compact town design makes home delivery the most viable option for the weekly shop. Three distinct districts within the town will each have shops and facilities so that the top-up shop is within very easy reach and helping to support vibrant local communities.

Scenario 4 –community activities and events in the Great Park. All residents have easy walking or cycling access to the open spaces in and around the town. Aside from those with additional mobility requirements it would not be necessary to have to drive to most locations within the town, minimising road accident risks and pollution. Walking and cycling are cost-free travel options with additional health and lifestyle benefits

Scenario 5 – giving up the second car. For most families a second car is required where there is a lack of alternative modes of transport. High quality public transport reduces the need to use a family car intended for recreation for the commute. If a car is used only occasionally it becomes a high cost burden – instead joining a car club to hire a car as and when it is needed will reduce family car costs by not having to tax, insure and maintain a second car throughout the year.

Scenario 6 – not needing a car at all. A large proportion of the town, including those occupying higher density areas in locations with smaller household sizes, will never need to own a car. With all the primary services within walking or cycling distance or by rapid transit link, the car represents a high cost and unnecessary high cost option. Alternatives to the private car and genuinely local services will create a wider number of people not needing to additional cost of a car.

Further reading

Carclubs in the UK

<http://www.carclubs.org.uk/>

Bus Rapid Transit Thames Gateway – Fastrack

<http://www.go-fastrack.co.uk/>

Transport analysis – impacts

The eco-town process is intended to examine the vision and approach of proposed eco-towns and how they could be delivered to high sustainability criteria. It is not intended to produce the level of detail that would only be delivered in the later stages of the planning process. If shortlisting was intended to provide final permission for developments then more detail would be rightly expected. The planning process for an eco-town will be thorough and extensive and this process will see further discussions, models, studies, tests and analysis.

A test of The Co-operative Group's transport proposals was undertaken by Leicestershire County Council with input from Leicester City Council, the Highways Agency and The Co-operative Group. It demonstrated that the transport solution proposed was workable with limited effect on existing roads.

Various reports have been commissioned by Local Authorities including analysis undertaken by Halcrow, White Young Green and the County Scrutiny Panel. These raise a number of questions including asking for more detail on the bus rapid transit links proposed, the A6, road improvements, incentives and car use. Some are reflective of the comments received from local communities. The Co-operative Group is committed to providing the answers to these questions as it undertakes the necessary work through the normal planning process. It is impossible at 'vision' stage to outline specific bus timings, journey costs and so on as discussions have not taken place at this level with providers. This would only occur when a developer was preparing for an outline planning application – the process to that point would often take place behind closed doors: the process for the eco-town has however been undertaken in a much more open way.

Some studies have presented conclusions that are neither representative of the stage of the proposals or of the eco-town policy. Treating an eco-town as an 'Anytown' ignores how its design and alternative transport provision differentiates from traditional models. Analysing the eco-town vision as a final planning proposal ignores the work yet to come. The Co-

operative Group has produced responses to the various transport reports in order to ensure that local authorities have all the facts to hand when making representations to government and local communities.

The Co-operative Group remains fully committed to further transport work and has taken on board questions raised so far.

Further reading

Eco-town for Leicestershire Transport Assessment

<http://www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop/assets/pdf/octoberDocs/Transport-Assessment-September-2008.pdf>

Pennbury Strategic Assessment (Transport Report) by Halcrow Group Limited on behalf of Harborough District council, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council and Oadby&Wigston Borough Council

http://www.harborough.gov.uk/hdc/ECotown/Transport_TP.pdf

The Co-operative Group Response to the Pennbury Strategic Assessment

<http://www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop/assets/pdf/Halcrow-Summary-of-main-criticisms.pdf>

White Young Green Report on behalf of Leicestershire County Council

http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/ecotown/ecotown_transportation.html

The Co-operative Group Response to the White Young Green Report

<http://www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop/reports/html>

Leicestershire County Council Scrutiny Review Panel Report

[http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000137/M00002055/A100021564/\\$1FinalReportFinalversion.doc.pdf](http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000137/M00002055/A100021564/$1FinalReportFinalversion.doc.pdf)

The Co-operative Group Response to the Scrutiny Review Panel Report

<http://www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop/reports.html>

The tram and the £5m study -

Modelling work undertaken on behalf of Leicester City, Leicestershire County Council and the Highways Agency demonstrates that the eco-town would work with the proposed bus-based transport solution - but where does a tram fit in?

The Leicester City sub-region faces key transport challenges:

- Growing congestion on primary roads with no current encompassing solution
- High pollution at peak times from car emissions and impacts on health
- Lack of alternative transport provision and limited bus links for many communities
- Urgent need for new homes well served by transport links and local services
- Rising cost of fuel putting pressure on two-car families
- Social inequality in car ownership
- Inadequate transport hub provision in the city to accommodate growth
- Lack of a region-wide solution to sustainable transport

The eco-town has the critical mass to help deliver wider transport benefits and to commit its own funding to help bring about a sub-regional solution. It would not make sense for the

eco-town to have a transport solution that did not link with and feed into the broader network. The Co-operative Group approached all local authorities in the early stages to examine wider aspirations for sustainable transport. While the tram is not essential to delivering the eco-town it is a viable option to be considered for the city region.

If the eco-town proposal is shortlisted by Government, The Co-operative Group is willing to commit £5m to a sub-regional transport study which will examine the potential of a tram versus alternatives to solving the city regions' major transport challenge.

Technical work has already been undertaken that shows that there is a realistic prospect of a tram link from the Eco-town to Leicester City Centre and also to Oadby and Wigston but it will benefit the city region to look at alternatives and find the best option. The £5m is a transparent commitment to demonstrate the Co-operative Group's aim that the eco-town can act as a catalyst for the solution to much wider existing challenges. When a viable scheme is identified and procured, The Co-operative Group will transfer the funding it has committed for a bus rapid transit system in the later phases of the development to support the delivery of that solution, tram or otherwise.

The cost of a tram from the eco-town to the city centre could be around £250-300m – the cost of not tackling congestion could be much much higher.

Next steps

Later in 2009 it is expected that CLG will make a decision on those locations which could support an eco-town. Shortlisting will in effect mean that early analysis has shown the plans have the potential to work. It does not mean that planning permission will be given – only that the eco-town is a viable option for consideration alongside other options in the region.

The Regional Plan for the East Midlands was adopted in March 2009 but requires an immediate review as it does not take account of the updated population figures and increasing housing need in the area. The current transport plan for the Region has also been judged to be inadequate.

As part of the review of the Regional Plan eco-towns are to be considered as a potential option. Each option for delivering new sustainable communities will need to demonstrate how it will deliver on key regional criteria such as affordability, renewable energy, transport, school and health provision and employment. A decision on which options are most valid will see each tested against the criteria and will take account of the circumstances around viability and deliverability of each scheme alongside existing information on how impacts of development will be managed.

The eco-town option does not seek to solve every problem but at its vision stage sets out how it would seek to tackle both the impacts of the development and how it can help wider challenges. In this context it remains a viable option for consideration through the established regional plan-led process.