

News release from The Co-operative Group

## **ECO-TOWN – LEICESTERSHIRE’S OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME WORLD LEADER**

### **Government recognises potential in The Co-operative Group’s vision**

The Co-operative Group has welcomed the Government’s shortlisting of its vision for a new eco-town on its land to the south east of Leicester.

The organisation was one of more than 50 which responded to the Government’s challenge to bring forward sites which could deliver new communities to the highest standards of design and sustainability.

The Co-operative Group’s vision for a new eco-town for Leicestershire was one of the 15 schemes shortlisted in an announcement by the Minister for Housing and Planning following a careful cross-departmental examination of each submission. Now, these 15 projects will go forward for public consultation before the final locations are identified later this year.

Lynda Shillaw, Managing Director of The Co-operative Estates, the land and property arm of The Co-operative Group, commented: “The Co-operative Group is in a unique position to deliver a new town which will mark a step change to the country’s approach to community design and the way we live together. It will help provide a sustainable future for ourselves and our children.

“Our track record on environmental and community issues is exemplary whether it is in working to combat climate change, pioneering sustainable technology or working closely with people to improve community life. If anyone can deliver the eco-town vision, it is The Co-operative Group.”

Consultation and engagement with the community will be a central part of the project’s next stage and The Co-operative Group plans to begin the process as soon as possible, subject to consultation with the Department of Communities and Local Government and local authorities.

“We need to share our ideas with local people and get their input to help shape the definitive plan,” Ms Shillaw added.

The Co-operative Estates has made six key pledges in progressing plans for the eco-town, which has been given the working title of Pennbury:

1. The town will represent a step change in the creation of UK communities, in terms of their design, operation and community empowerment.
2. The Co-operative Group has already demonstrated to the Government that there is a sustainable and practical transport system for the town

- but commits to working with local authorities to explore alternatives within a strict sustainable framework.
3. The Group will work with local authorities to ensure that investment in the town is made with the aim of enhancing the regeneration of the wider area including Leicester city.
  4. The Group will use carbon offsetting and power from its own wind farm elsewhere in the country to ensure the town achieves the Government's carbon neutral goals for eco-towns. Ultimately it will be self-sufficient in energy production using sustainable methods of power generation appropriate to the area.
  5. The town will include up to 15,000 homes, up to 5,000 of them in the affordable category.
  6. New ways of integrating schools at every level to improve the effectiveness of education will be introduced in the town. The Co-operative Group will build sufficient schools to ensure every child in the town has a place.

Graham Ramsbotton, Head of Rural Property for The Co-operative Estates, added: "The Government has brought forward the concept of eco-towns in response to two major social issues the whole country is facing – the growing shortage of housing and the threat of climate change which will affect us all.

"The Co-operative Group, an organisation owned by the people who trade with us and with its roots in thousands of communities across the UK, is tremendously excited that we have reached this stage. The challenge now is to ensure there is a measured and balanced debate in Leicestershire and to get the direct input of local people to the community's design. "

"There are a number of good reasons why this site is the right place for an eco-town," he explained. "Because of the size of the site and our direct control over it, the plans can be brought forward quickly – this could be the first and best eco-town in the country.

"Less than 40 per cent of the site will be needed to create the community including open space and gardens and the remaining land will ensure the town retains its separate identity from Leicester."

"The country needs to act now if the issues of climate change and housing shortage are to be tackled and we are talking here about a scheme, which will chart a new way forward. We intend to make the eco-town an international centre of excellence for the development of sustainable technology – technology which can then be used to benefit existing communities.

"This is a major investment in sustainability by The Co-operative Group. We are an organisation with a social conscience which invests its profits in its business, the communities it serves and the members who trade with it.

Lynda Shillaw added: "We have sometimes swum against the social tide of the times to pioneer concepts such as Fairtrade products and ethical banking - concepts which today are accepted and whose benefits are recognised. We

believe passionately in the eco-town project and we are confident that once people understand the concepts behind eco-towns, they like us, will recognise the benefits and feel this is the right decision for the future.”

**end**

**Notes to editors:**

1. Further details of The Co-operative Group's plans for public consultation will be published in due course.
2. Further background on the Co-operative Group is available at [www.co-operative.coop](http://www.co-operative.coop).
3. Other useful websites with information about sustainable communities include:  
The Town and Country Planning Association  
[http://www.tcpa.org.uk/](http://www.tcpa.org.uk)  
The Academy for Sustainable Communities  
<http://www.ascskills.org.uk/pages/home>  
The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment  
<http://www.princes-foundation.org/>
4. The Group is an acknowledged leader in sustainable development. Voted Britain's most ethical brand in 2006, we have also received the Queen's Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development, the Renewable Energy Association's Pioneer Award and Business Commitment to the Environment's Peter Parker Award for Environmental Leadership.
5. English Partnerships is the national regeneration agency, supporting high quality sustainable growth in England. A non-departmental public body, it is sponsored by the Communities and Local Government department (CLG). English Partnerships owns around 80 hectares of land to the south of Great Glen which is included in the proposals.
6. Midlands Co-operative Society, which operates stores in the Leicester area, is an independent Co-operative business, which is not involved in the eco-town proposal.

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