

News release from The Co-operative Group

CO-OPERATIVE GROUP PUBLISHES ECO-TOWN LAYOUT OPTIONS

The Co-operative Group and English Partnerships have published initial plans demonstrating three potential layouts for the proposed eco-town on their land south east of Leicester.

The layouts bring together, in visual form, the results of the Group's consultation and technical assessments to date. Each of the three layouts presents a different approach to maximising the potential for the town and all are informed by the Group's central focus of creating a community with strong links between the town and the surrounding farmland and countryside.

The layouts are being published on the eco-town website today (Friday 11 July) at www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop together with technical reports on individual elements of the eco-town which have been in preparation since April.

The Group has stressed that the proposals are at an interim stage and are subject to further consultation.

Each of the layouts is described with text and drawings. The drawings show the town made up of grids of development. The grids are not solid blocks of development but comprise of open space and buildings, with a typical grid square containing over 30% public open space - private back garden space would be additional to this amount.

A 'Great Park' is being proposed to deliver a large area of open space with access for all. The Great Park – which would extend across more than 600 hectares (1,500 acres) – would become a centrepiece for the Group's proposed combination of new homes in a sustainable countryside setting. The Group is also drawing upon its expertise in agriculture to inform the outline plans.

The Group – together with its land partner English Partnerships – is now focused on refining the three initial layouts, developing them to a higher level of detail ahead of further consultation later this summer. The layouts – all of which are available to view on the Group's consultation website – are called:

1. **Network** – a central town core with surrounding linked villages
2. **Archipelago** – a central town core complemented by development on the eastern fringes of Leicester
3. **Compact** – a single and central town core surrounded by countryside

Within each layout, the Group is following the Government's guidelines for achieving an innovative and standard setting development. With advice from leading international masterplanners and technical consultants, incorporating the views of communities and key stakeholders within Leicestershire, the

Group is proposing designs for transport, homes, schools and public open space which it believes will create a successful community where people will want to live and to stay.

The eco-town will provide up to 15,000 new homes of which up to 5,000 will be affordable homes. It also has the capacity to provide 14,000 jobs.

The Group also outlined the proposed phasing programme over which the eco-town would be built. It is envisaged that there would be three distinct phases of construction, each of which would see 5,000 new homes provided.

Phase One to run from 2011-2016; Phase Two from 2016-2021 and Phase Three from 2021-2026.

This approach will ensure that new homes are delivered alongside essential infrastructure, services and utilities (including energy waste and water).

Lynda Shillaw, Managing Director of The Co-operative Estates, said: "These initial layouts show the results of all of our technical planning, consultation and dialogue with stakeholders to date represented in straightforward diagrams. As we have delved deeper into the potential of the site and talked to people about their preferences for future development, we have been able to introduce new ideas into our approach and these are captured in the designs. We are now working to take these options to the next stage and will consult again later this summer."

The Group's technical analysis also contains detailed information on individual elements of the eco-town including housing, transport, education and employment.

The 'Compact' layout, with a single and central town core surrounded by countryside, demonstrates the best fit with feedback from stakeholders to date and preferences for a stand-alone community. Its design ensures that development is concentrated within the core of the site with open areas of farmland and countryside surrounding the town and extending to the edge of the Co-operative Group's land ownership.

The Group is now also looking at a second reference option for the Compact layout to explore the benefits of using different densities of development within the town. This layout will also be published on the Group's website at **www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop**

The Group is partnering with English Partnerships, the national regeneration agency, on the project.

end

Notes to editors:

1. Further background on the Co-operative Group is available at www.co-operative.coop.
2. Other useful websites with information about sustainable communities include:
The Town and Country Planning Association
<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/>
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.

For further information contact:

Ben Copithorne or Paul Browne
Camargue PR

Tel: 0207 636 7366

Phil Edwards
PR Manager – Specialist Retail
The Co-operative Group

Tel: 0161 827 5289 (24 hours)

11 July 2008