

News release from The Co-operative Group

PUBLIC RESPONSE HELPS SHAPE ECO-TOWN MASTERPLAN

The public have played a key role in shaping the Eco-Town for Leicestershire Masterplan launched today (9 October) by The Co-operative Group in conjunction with its land partner English Partnerships.

The Masterplan has been submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) for the next stage of the Government's assessment.

The Group has underlined its confidence in and commitment to the eco-town – provisionally named Pennbury – emphasising the fact that, as one of the UK's most trusted brands, it is in a unique position to deliver a sustainable community which stands apart from other eco-town proposals.

The Masterplan Vision Document is underpinned by a number of key pledges from the Group:

1. In response to public feedback, the masterplan **boosts the total area of 'green space'** to almost 70%, consisting of the Great Park, which provides a major recreational and educational facility for Leicester and its surrounds as well as enabling the Group to retain a significant farming presence on the site. This represents a substantial increase on the Group's original commitment to 60% green space. In addition to this, almost a third of the town itself will be public open space ranging from parks and plazas to community orchards and allotments.
2. The plan will **deliver significant new investment in public transport** and act as a catalyst for further investment in this area. The Group's **Transport Study**, also published today, demonstrates that the plans for new walking, cycling and public transport routes are deliverable and would benefit both eco-town residents and the wider community.
3. The Transport Study shows that a high quality, high frequency **bus rapid transit system** linking the eco-town community to Leicester is viable. However, the Co-operative Group has always been committed to using its proposals to deliver wider benefits wherever feasible. It is committed to working with the region to see if the eco-town can act as a catalyst to deliver a step change in public transport provision for the city and its surrounds and not just the parts of the conurbation closest to the proposed town. The Group will contribute £5 million towards a **tram feasibility study**, which will examine the significant potential benefits of bringing a tram system to the Leicester city region. If a viable tram scheme can be delivered, the Group will transfer the funding committed to the bus rapid transit solution to support the tram scheme.

4. The road network for the eco-town will centre on **restrictive road links** from the **A6 and A47**. **The link to the A47** will act as a relief road to **negate traffic pressure on Houghton on the Hill**. A **park and ride** facility will be provided on the A6. The **Eastern District Distributor Road** will **not** be completed as part of the proposals.
5. The eco town will be “energy positive”, using a variety of **sustainable energy sources** including wind, and biomass to generate **surplus renewable electricity** and heat which can be supplied to nearby communities.
6. Provision of an innovative **Eco-town Community Company**, which will offer the town’s residents the chance to become **directly involved in determining the community’s development** in areas such as the community safety, health, education and public transport.

The ‘Compact’ layout remains the Group’s preferred option and the basis for the Masterplan but has been evolved to take account of feedback from local communities and stakeholders. Development remains concentrated at the heart of the site. With an average housing density of 60 dwellings per hectare, the overall ‘footprint’ of the eco-town has been reduced.

The Masterplan is being placed on the Group’s new eco-town website today (9 October) at www.ecotownforleicestershire.coop. Details of consultation events will be announced in the coming weeks and the Group is particularly keen to talk to a broad mix of local and regional stakeholders.

“If the eco-town proceeds, there should be no doubt that it will put Leicestershire on the global map of leading edge sustainable development,” said Lynda Shillaw, Managing Director of the Co-operative Estates.

“The wealth of detail in the Masterplan is evidence of the amount of work that has gone into making this a showpiece community, more ambitious and more advanced than any ever before attempted in the UK. This is the right time, the right site and The Co-operative Group is the right organisation to take a proposal of this scale and importance forward.”

She added that the Group would seek views on the Masterplan from local people in a fresh round of consultation. “We want to ensure the eco-town meets the needs and aspirations of both the area and the region,” she explained.

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Kitt McGrath, the Project Manager for English Partnerships, said: “This Masterplan represents a major step forward in the development of a truly sustainable community. The plan will continue to help us as we enter the next phase of public consultation and will enable us to prove the viability of the proposed development.”

The Department of Communities and Local Government will also be carrying out a series of national and local eco-town consultation events during the autumn.

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Notes to editors:

1. Masterplan consultation:

People from local communities, Leicester and beyond are being invited to comment on the Masterplan and, in particular, their views on the following:

- The layout and design of the eco-town
- Plans to create genuine mixed communities through a variety of tenure types and linkages to the town centre
- Plans to place every service within walking distance of every home to minimise car use in the town
- Relief of existing traffic problems through park and ride sites and better bus routes to Leicester.
- Plans for community involvement and the governance model proposed
- The delivery of healthy lifestyles in terms of growing food around the town and educating through the schools with benefits for the wider area.
- How education and jobs in and linked to the town could help Leicestershire become more sustainable and encourage more sustainable industries to grow
- The proposals for increasing biodiversity and managing the environment.

Further background on the Co-operative Group is available at www.co-operative.coop.

Copies of the Masterplan have been sent to **local libraries** including:

- Great Glen Library, Ruperts Way, Great Glen, Harborough, LE8 9RG
- Fleckney Library, School St, Fleckney, Harborough, LE8 8AS
- Lutterworth Library, Coventry Rd, Lutterworth, Harborough, LE17 4SH
- Kibworth Library, Paget Street, Kibworth, Harborough, LE8 0HW

- Market Harborough Library Adam & Eve Street, Market Harborough, LE16 7LT
 - Broughton Astley Library, Main Street, Broughton Astley, Harborough, LE9 6RD
 - Oadby Library, Sandhurst Street, Oadby & Wigston, LE2 5AR
 - Wigston Library, Bull Head Street, Wigston Magna, LE18 1PA
 - South Wigston Library, Basset Street, Oadby & Wigston, LE18 4PE
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)