



Leicester
City Council

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FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

**OSMB
Cabinet**

**12th February 2009
16th February 2009**

CONSULTATION ON DRAFT PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT ON ECO-TOWNS

Report of the Service Director, Planning and Policy (Regeneration and Culture)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the Council's response to the Draft National Planning Policy Statement (PPS) on Eco-towns which was published for consultation in November 2008.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 A Draft National Planning Policy Statement (PPS) on Eco-towns has been published for consultation with responses invited by 6th March 2009. The Draft PPS sets out what constitutes an eco-town, planning principles, standards and what is necessary for eco-towns to be delivered. It also considers the current shortlist of 11 locations including the Leicestershire Eco-town at Pennbury. Following consideration of consultation responses, the PPS, including a final shortlist of eco-town sites, is expected to be published by Government in Spring 2009.

2.2 Consultation responses are invited on specific set questions on the adequacy of guidance and standards for all eco-towns set out in the PPS. A response from the City Council has been prepared, based on joint work with Harborough District Council, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council and this is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. It is also proposed to forward the recent Cabinet resolution of 29th October 2008 (Appendix 2) to confirm the Council's current position in respect of Pennbury.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is requested to note this report and endorse the proposed response on the Draft PPS on Eco-towns.

4. REPORT

Draft Eco-town PPS Consultation response

4.1 A Draft National Planning Policy Statement (PPS) on Eco-towns has been published for consultation with responses invited by 6th March 2009. The PPS sets out in technical terms what constitutes an eco-town, planning principles, standards and what is necessary for eco-towns to be delivered. The PPS also considers the current shortlist of 11 locations including the Leicestershire Eco-town at Pennbury, for which a sustainability appraisal is provided. As part of Draft PPS consultation a new

Government website has been launched at www.directgov.uk/ecotownshaveyoursay to both explain the eco-towns concept and standards and to invite comments and ideas.

- 4.2 Following the end of this consultation on the PPS, in Spring 2009, the Government will announce a final shortlist of locations with the potential to site an eco-town. Schemes in these locations will then need to apply for planning permission and go through the local planning process. Eco-towns would be considered in the same way as any other major development proposal and the Government remains committed to the plan-led system.
- 4.3 The Draft PPS confirms that eco-towns will be developments of between 5,000 and 20,000 homes, well linked to but distinct from existing settlements. It indicates eco towns are most appropriate when they are near to and well connected to existing settlements, particularly major centres of employment, leisure and retail and where there is clear capacity for public transport links to that centre. They should act as an exemplar for other future development and that achieve the highest standards of environmental sustainability. The PPS sets out the standards for new development which will be required in eco-towns. In summary, these include:
- Achieving zero carbon status across all the town's buildings;
 - Allocating 40 per cent of the area within the town to be green space, at least half of which should be open to the public as parks or recreation areas;
 - Requiring individual homes to reach the Building for Life silver standard and also achieve 70% carbon savings above current building regulations in terms of heating, hot water and lighting;
 - Providing a minimum of 30 per cent affordable housing;
 - Creating more options for travel so that residents are able to make the majority of their journeys without a car, such as by public transport, walking and cycling;
 - Ensuring a minimum of one job per house can be reached by walking, cycling or public transport to reduce dependence on the car;
 - Locating homes within 10 minutes walk of frequent public transport and everyday neighbourhood services;
 - Raising the threshold for individual homes so that they must all achieve at least level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes;
- 4.4 All of the eco-town proposals will be assessed in detail against these criteria. The PPS also states that individual eco-towns will need to submit planning applications in the same way as any other major development proposals.
- 4.5 Responses are invited on specific set questions on the adequacy of general guidance and standards for all Eco-towns set out in the PPS. A response from the City Council has been prepared partly based on joint work with Harborough District Council, Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council and this is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 4.6 A detailed Sustainability Appraisal on each of the 11 shortlisted locations has also been published as part of the PPS. This identifies and evaluates the likely impact of the proposals on the local economy, community and environment.

- 4.7 The Sustainability Appraisal has assessed each location and graded them as A, B or C: Grade A: generally suitable for an eco-town. Grade B: might be a suitable location subject to meeting specific planning and design objectives. Grade C: location only likely to be suitable as an eco-town with substantial and exceptional innovation.
- 4.8 Pennbury has been classed as Grade B. Of the 11 shortlisted locations, only one potential site has been graded as A and one as C – the rest are all B.
- 4.9 The Draft PPS Sustainability Appraisal identifies key potential strengths of the Leicestershire location from a sustainability point of view:
- Proximity to existing settlements at Leicester and Oadby provides strong opportunities to share and improve existing infrastructure, with potential sustainability benefits for existing and future populations. At the same time land ownership of the green wedge between Pennbury and Oadby will help to restrict growth and infill;
 - High potential for benefits through land and water quality improvements;
 - Leicester is an identified Growth Point, and a lack of affordable housing is a significant issue particularly in Harborough. The eco-town could make a significant contribution to affordable housing, especially through the application of recently developed English Partnerships intermediate housing models;
 - The location has been identified as an area of solar and wind energy potential, and the close proximity to Leicester means that there is potential to connect to a district heating system in Leicester maximising efficiency and minimising waste energy.
- 4.10 The draft PPS Sustainability Appraisal also identifies key potential weaknesses of the Leicestershire location from a sustainability point of view:
- The two main roads going into Leicester which run alongside and through the proposed location are generally acknowledged to be at capacity during peak flows, and car use in the existing area is notably high. Therefore the public transport solution is the key element of the scheme in terms of the need for excellent access to the city centre, rail transport, and improved services for satellite rural settlements. The planning of a tram or rapid bus route to the edge of Leicester is relatively easy, but the second part of the route into central Leicester is more difficult. This is essential in ensuring a low carbon development;
 - There is a major resource issue with regard to impacts on existing waste and water infrastructure which are already at capacity. This can be overcome to a certain extent through measures incorporated into the design, but a full solution will potentially require improvements to infrastructure in the region;
 - Potential flooding downstream at Great Glen as a result of surface water run off is certainly an issue but can be mitigated with the potential for net benefits;
 - Despite the focus of development at the airfield site, development of greenfield land is considerable;
 - Public perception, attitudes and issues of community cohesion will require careful attention and will be important in ensuring that the scheme is successful.
- 4.11 The PPS sustainability comments highlighted in paragraphs 4.9 and 4.10 above are considered to be a fair assessment of Pennbury at this stage of the planning process

but clearly a great deal more detailed work will be required to develop the potential scheme, should Pennbury be shortlisted, by the Coop working with the relevant local authorities. The PPS comments are generally consistent with the Cabinet stance adopted on Pennbury set out in its resolution from 29th October Cabinet meeting in that there remains clear potential that Pennbury could be an Eco-town subject to the necessary more detailed ongoing assessments.

- 4.12 In response to the draft PPS consultation exercise it is also proposed to forward the recent Cabinet resolution of 29th October 2008 (See Appendix 2) to clarify the Council's current position in respect of Pennbury. Clearly a great deal of work continues to be carried out to inform the consideration of the Pennbury proposal including the recent Strategic Assessment (and a response by Coop) and the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment launched in January 2009. These highlight a series of outstanding questions in respect of Pennbury and also highlight particular areas of opportunity, for instance in dealing with the difficulties of delivering affordable housing in the sub-region. These will be referred to CLG as part of their information gathering work contributing towards consideration of individual schemes. CLG are also involved in gathering information on the deliverability of the Eco-town schemes in relation to financial viability and arrangements for taking the schemes forward should they be chosen.
- 4.13 Should Pennbury be shortlisted by CLG when it responds to the PPS consultation in Spring 2009, the City Council will need to consider potential new joint working and governance arrangements with Government and the relevant local authorities. Any new arrangement should enable partners to work towards delivering opportunities provided by the Eco-town and resolving outstanding issues. For the City Council a focus for joint working is provided by the Cabinet resolution of October 2008 in Appendix 2.

5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are clearly significant financial implications from any future development both in terms of our existing regeneration work and finding sufficient funding to develop new linkage infrastructure. In relation to future infrastructure funding some guidance has been issued on how the Community Infrastructure Levy may work and its interaction with the current system of negotiated section 106 agreements. The Planning Bill, which introduces the levy, is still going through its committee stages before going to the House of Lords.

Martin Judson, Head of Finance, extension 297390

Legal Implications

- 5.2 The proposal is for an Eco-town in South East Leicestershire. Although Market Harborough District Councillors are likely to be the primary decision makers, if the scheme does go ahead, there will be implications for the city which may require planning applications to be determined by City Councillors. This means that a degree of care has to be taken by City Councillors who may be involved in the planning and development control process when making any statements that might suggest they already have a predetermined view on what is being proposed.

Dina Nathwani Legal Service, extension 296345

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph references within the report
Equal Opportunities	Yes	Whole Report
Policy	Yes	Whole Report
Sustainable and Environmental	Yes	Whole Report
Crime and Disorder	Yes	Whole Report
Human Rights Act	No	Not at this stage
Elderly/People on Low Income	Yes	Whole Report

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

See Government background papers at:-

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/growthareas/ecotowns>
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/ecotownsgreenerfuture>

Also visit the Council's micro site for copies of the inter Authority and Coop Technical Group action points and other briefing material at:

<http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council--services/ep/planning/pennbury-eco-town-hp>

Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment – December 2008.

8. CONSULTATIONS

Officers from within Regeneration and Culture and Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

See section 4.1 for PPS consultation link provided by CLG.

9. REPORT AUTHOR

Andrew L Smith, Service Director Planning and Policy, Regeneration and Culture

Key Decision	No
Reason	N/A
Appeared in Forward Plan	N/A
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)

Eco-towns PPS – Response to CLG consultation – Jan 2009

Response to Part 3 Questions

DRAFT PPS ECO-TOWNS-CONSULTATION		KEY POINTS
Q1	Does the draft Planning Policy Statement provide sufficient guidance on the consideration of eco-towns through the plan making process?	• The draft PPS should state clearly that eco-towns should be progressed through the RSS and LDF process since this is the best means to ensure that proposals are thoroughly tested and alternatives considered. Paragraphs 2.7 - 2.9 are ambiguous on this point and should be clarified. • The PPS should give clear guidance as to exactly how eco-towns should be dealt with in development plans – for example in core strategies where they are out of sync with the regional planning process. • The PPS should be clear that the ET programme sites should be tested against other options for meeting additional housing growth and the final sentence of paragraph 2.2 amended accordingly. • Para 2.4 suggests that Core Strategies should include the option of an eco-town to meet future development where a new town has been identified in the ET programme in order to meet current or emerging housing requirements. Also they are not to be finally allocated if better options to meet housing need exist. In circumstances where the level of housing requirement can be met through options which conform with regional policy and do not require a new settlement, there would be no need to include the eco town option. The relationship with RSS and Core Strategies needs clarifying since this PPS appears at odds with the principles of PPS 11 and 12. • Also the draft PPS focuses on a narrow aspect of sustainability - principally home energy/water production/consumption and building performance as a delivery mechanism and primary determining indicator for building new eco-towns. This is an unbalanced approach and should consider other critical demographic, economic, and environmental, place making, community requirements and consequential impacts.

Q2	Are the locational principles for eco-towns sufficiently clear and workable?	• The Eco-town prospectus and locational requirements as outlined in the draft PPS is unclear because it does not take into account complex interdependencies and regional/local conditions and circumstances within which an eco-town is expected to function. • The need to consider these potential interdependencies and as such possible consequences or impacts of large scale new town planning on local, sub regional and regional spatial and economic strategies should be clearly explained in the PPS. • Housing need should be included as one of the locational requirements for eco-towns in paragraph 3.2. All the DCLG statements on eco-towns have emphasised their important role in housing delivery and the links to the Housing Green Paper and the concept of new settlements is introduced in PPS 3 in the context of areas where “the need and demand for housing is high” (paragraph 37, PPS 3). Paragraph 7, Part 1 Introduction of the draft PPS uses the same language as PPS 3 and paragraph 14 states that PPS 3 will be amended to make it clear that eco-towns are one type of new settlement. Housing need is an important criterion which will have a direct bearing on the size and location of any new settlement, including potential eco-towns, and the draft PPS should recognise this. Paragraph 3.2 on page 13 should be amended, by the addition of a point (e), to reflect this. • The meaning of point (b) in paragraph 3.2 on page 13 is ambiguous. It is not clear whether this refers just to on-site employment or also to employment opportunities at a nearby higher-order centre.
Q3	Taking overall the standards set out in draft PPS do you think they achieve a viable eco-town concept?	• Many of the examples used in the Eco-Town prospectus and reflected in the draft PPS have been developed in a different set of cultural, social, economic and funding institutional circumstances. Consequently the PPS should be clear that more detailed and relevant contextual work is required to demonstrate viability of the proposed Eco-town sites and how the potentially negative consequences of establishing Eco-towns in the UK would be mitigated and overcome. • In a UK market context, it remains to be demonstrated how in direct market terms viability can be achieved without significant public sector investment. Given the current emphasis on spatial planning dealing with funding infrastructure and delivery, the Government's approach in relation to this issue and specifically how RSS / LDFs should deal with this matter should be set out in the PPS.

		Past experience from English Partnerships delivery of its Millennium Communities programme on seven sites in England to high environmental and building performance standards suggests off-setting development costs either through subsidy or direct delivery of infrastructure through servicing and other provisions. The Cyril Sweet Report commissioned by English Partnerships has also highlighted exclusions and increases in cost for housing units against the various levels of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Funding for eco-towns must not be at the expense of funding for current growth points elsewhere. • Viability in the terms of built environment should be considered holistically. The draft PPS focuses on particular aspects of building performance and energy/water/waste service delivery, all of which have strategic design influences and as a consequence will have significant implications for place making and master planning. • In terms of achieving the high standards highlighted in the draft PPS, higher density development may well be a response many promoters will take. The PPS should be clear that this will require careful consideration and planning to create a viable and quality 'place' which recognises the local context. • The question also concerns the viability and sustainability of the communities that will live there. This is greatly influenced by housing mix/type, employment opportunity and demographics. Evidence suggests that large scale development such as that proposed attracts younger, more economically active individuals and as a consequence higher child densities and demand for services. The PPS should therefore refer to the need to consider the consequences of creating a "specialist type of new settlement" Part 2- Para 2.1, in terms of the need to establish a balanced community.
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ECO-TOWN STANDARDS		
Q4.1	Do you consider the planning standards for eco-towns provide a	• They are generally clear. However more work is required particularly around the modelling and profiling of these new communities over time, say over 50 years; and their likely impact and requirements on existing communities and public services/investment

	clear basis on which to make decisions on planning applications for eco-towns?	required.
Q4.2	Do you consider that the cost of implementing the standards will undermine the viability of eco-towns?	• In the UK market context, it remains to be demonstrated how direct market viability can be achieved and as a consequence the need for some form of public sector intervention, particularly given the high costs of meeting Eco- town standards. • As new stand alone settlements, the costs of providing new infrastructure and facilities will be high. However economies of scale will provide opportunities to offset some costs and high volume modern methods of construction will also lead to efficiency and cost savings. • Where potential eco-towns could reach significant size and require appropriate investment such as at Pennbury , the PPS ought to clearly state that an RSS process and public examination will look at infrastructure and issues around viability
Q4.3	Are there any standards that you feel are missing? (That are not covered in other Government policy or guidance)	• There are a number of standards missing, as set out below. • Master planning and urban design benchmarking and qualitative assessment and monitoring processes are required. • The draft PPS should expect a full and honest commitment to open book access to development and economic appraisals in going forward, this will enable respective authorities to make considered judgements about services and requirements. • Should be a requirement for a full impact assessment on likely and future public sector interventions across a range of service provision to determine effects on forward regeneration programmes, housing and employment provision within a sub regional context. This should also explore those inter-dependencies within which a proposed eco-town would be located. • Inclusive access assessment requirements based on walking times rather than prescribing distance for access, i.e. paragraph 4.16, should reference maximum walking travel times which take into account gradients, obstructions, road crossings etc.. • Equalities impact assessments concerning race/gender/disability/older people/employment and skills/ are required at an early stage in the process. The Draft PPS should reflect this as a key consideration.

		• Landscape characterisation and assessment is likely to be required in all greenfield locations. • Economic development strategies. • New community population forecasting and modelling and sensitivity testing. • House type/mix/tenure linked to employment-occupations/s salaries. • Prescribed processes for forward and future proofing. • Where possible schemes should encourage achievement of negative carbon levels.
Q4.4	Are any of the standards not essential?	• No.
Q4.5-Zero Carbon	The zero carbon standard attempts to ensure that carbon emissions related to the built environment in eco-towns are zero or below. Have we specified the calculation of net emissions clearly in away that avoids perverse incentives and loopholes? Is this standard the most cost effective way to do this?	• A consistent and clear definition of zero carbon development should be applied across government departments and agencies to avoid confusion and loopholes. This should confirm the position regarding carbon embodiment in the construction process and carbon emissions from transport.
Q4.6-Climate Change Adaptation	The climate change adaptation standard, alongside existing planning guidance, aims to ensure that eco-towns will be more future proof. Is it	• No; the statement concerning climate change adaptation is superficial and does not highlight the need for flexibility in master planning, design and construction process. • Solar gain/wind access through good orientation and microclimate assessment is critical to this process. • Whilst building for life standards and internal space standards will ensure some internal

	sufficiently clear and workable?	flexibility this also needs to be applied to the overall massing and scale of development as a whole. • Development should not restrict further opportunities to adapt over time and maximise access to natural resources.
Q4.7-Homes	Should the PPS be more prescriptive than set out in paragraph 4.9 (e) in relation to energy efficiency? Do you agree that 70% is an appropriate level of carbon mitigation through on site means?	• Yes, an eco – town should over its lifetime be delivering to a stretched target beyond compliance with planned Building Regulation requirements that are due to be imposed on all forms of new residential development. It is only by exceeding the regulatory standards that the eco town can distinguish itself as an exemplar development. • The minimum level of carbon mitigation through on-site measures could be higher if eco-towns are to be the national exemplars government wishes to achieve and to be consistent with one planet living principles.
Q4.8-Employment	Is this employment standard sufficiently clear and workable?	• It is vital that the phasing of delivery of jobs and housing are dovetailed together from “day 1”. • There must be a greater commitment in this draft PPS to a sustainable balance between jobs and housing provision and a greater emphasis should be placed on economic development which reflects regional and local needs and circumstances. • This should directly link housing provision to forecasting of jobs/occupations/salaries, referenced back to housing type/mix and tenures. Otherwise unsustainable development may occur with adverse economic and environmental impacts. • The employment strategy should be produced at an early stage in the development of the plans, and not left until the planning application.
Q.4.9-Transport	The transportation standard attempts to support people’s desire for mobility whilst enabling low carbon living, is it sufficiently clear and workable?	• This is clear and workable, however using an accessibility matrix approach may give a more robust assessment of mobility needs.

Q4.10-Local Services	The local services standard allows for flexibility to reflect existing service provision and the size of development. Does it cover essential services which will be needed in eco-towns?	• The principles of Paragraph 4.17 are supported, subject to the following: • Firstly local service provision should be linked to detailed demographic and robust population modelling which recognise issues concerning the make up and dynamic of the new community which will not be the same as the host community in which it sits. • Importantly for social cohesion, community and local services should also be available to those who live/work nearby or are linked to the new community to avoid a split level of service between the “old and new community”. Capacity and impact studies of community and local services should be undertaken across a range of sensitivity testing and costings, and funded by the promoters. • Inclusive access assessment for all members of the community should be undertaken, and an Equalities Impact Assessment should also be required.
Q4.11-Green Infrastructure and biodiversity	The standards proposed on green infrastructure and biodiversity aim to ensure that development is undertaken in such a way that it protects and enhances the best features of local landscape for the benefit of both people and wildlife. Are these standards reasonable and deliverable?	• The principles of the green infrastructure and bio-diversity proposals are supported, subject to the following: • As with our comment on local services, this should be strengthened by capacity and impact assessments on accessibility and equalities. These impact assessments should also consider the impact/effect proposals may have on other green infrastructure in the locality and their management and resource implications. Options should explore the ability to link and provide networks of spaces which respond to the needs and functions of the local communities.
Q4.12-Water and flood risk management	The water and flood risk standard aim to sure that eco-town developments are planned so that they will minimise water use and flood risk, and raise quality. Are the standards proposed	• Whilst standards themselves are clear significant questions remain about their deliverability. Particular points are in terms of adoption, management and maintenance, likely revenue support required and viability arising from up-front costs. Much evidence exists about the unwillingness of statutory bodies and the appropriate industry regulating bodies to adopt services which are outside of their agreed operating procedures and processes. Questions therefore remain about the management and maintenance of such functions. • Paragraphs 4.27-4.28 reflect much of the material contained within PPS25 and are

	clear and deliverable?	therefore unnecessary. • The concept of water neutrality should apply to all sites, not just those in areas of severe water stress.
Q.4.13 Waste	The waste standard aims to ensure that eco-towns manage their waste effectively, from construction onwards. Is the proposed waste standard a clear and workable way of doing this?	• The Draft PPS should set overall stretch targets and milestones in percentage terms for the re-use of construction, domestic and non-domestic waste. • There should be a presumption in favour of these targets unless there are very exceptional circumstances as to why this cannot be achieved. It is recognised that to be consistent with national policy the Draft PPS should not specify technologies and delivery mechanisms but targets should be applied to all eco-town proposals and should explicitly require the re use of waste material as a fuel source for district wide or micro CHP generation.
Q4.14-Transition and Development	The transition and development standard should ensure that initial residents will not live in un-serviced and isolated building sites. Does it get the balance right between supporting initial residents and enabling developers the flexibility they need to build and grow the town?	• The requirement for an overall masterplan for an eco-town is welcomed. • Paragraph 4.31 ought to better set out the status of any masterplan for the proposal. In view of the significance which the Statement gives to the integrity of the masterplan, the PPS ought to be clear that every Eco town should ideally be the subject of a specific DPD which is drawn up initially as a masterplan but is tested to form a DPD and adopted by the local authority. • A defined process for open dialogue should be agreed between the promoters and the local planning authority. • If there are significant changes in the development and masterplanning processes then the sustainability and environmental impact analyses should reflect this.
Q4.15 Community and Governance	The community and governance standard attempts to ensure that eco-towns will be successful communities, that residents will have a say in how their town is run, and that standards are	• This is a broad and complex issue, the principles of the proposal are supported however it is not clear as to how such functions will develop, be supported and function over time. Community capacity building will be an important feature in any new community and as with many of the issues raised above will need to be accessible and inclusive. As it stands it is unclear as to how this would work. • The relationship between the local governance structures in the eco-town and the relevant local authorities and parish councils needs to be clear.

	maintained. Is this standard clear and workable?	
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Leicester City Council Cabinet Resolution on Pennbury Eco-town 29th October 2008

At the Cabinet meeting on 29th October 2008, it was RESOLVED that :-

That Cabinet agrees the following:

Having considered the issues in the Council report and having studied the documents related to this matter, Leicester City Council's Cabinet resolves that the Co-op/English Partnership's proposal on their land south east of Leicester (known as Pennbury) is a suitable site for an Eco-Town at this stage and is supported by the City Council subject to the following conditions related to five tests set out earlier this year.

1. Housing

That there is at least 30% affordable housing brought forward as part of the scheme. We would welcome discussions with the Co-Op/English Partnerships on bringing affordable housing funding into regeneration intervention areas of the city as a means of

increasing the viability of the regeneration schemes and producing a better social mix of housing. In this respect we would ask Government to contribute towards delivering additional affordable housing provision to help meet identified housing needs.

2. Community Facilities

We believe the Pennbury proposal produces the necessary community provision and the advantage of the Eco-Town concept is that it is potentially more likely to produce the necessary level of community facilities than the Sustainable Urban Extension model. The Council would look forward to discussions as to how the community facilities in Pennbury and the city can work together in the long term.

3. Environment

The City Council welcomes the commitment to retain the vast majority of the total site area for open space and countryside uses including the creation of the Great Park. The Council further recognises that the size of the proposal presents an exciting opportunity to create a critical mass for the development of environmental technologies in house building and community development. Leicester City Council wishes to be at the cutting edge of the development and the use of these 21st Century technologies in partnership with the Co-Op/English Partnerships.

The City Council welcomes the Co-Op/English Partnerships' commitment to firstly Code 4 and eventually Code 6 sustainable homes and the vision for Pennbury, as a community, to eventually become a net exporter of energy. The City Council recognises that by providing for a sustainable amount of the housing need in Leicestershire that this proposal will help to combat unplanned and undesirable housing "creep" in towns and villages across the county.

4. Transport

We welcome the planned park and ride site in Oadby and the other public transport contributions. Leicester City Council welcomes the ambition by the Co-Op and English Partnerships in developing new attitudes to transport but believe that only by putting a tram system as the “Jewel in the Crown” of transport measures will Pennbury truly be able to achieve the change in attitudes to transport necessary for the 21st Century. We would also ask that there is further examination of the impact of Pennbury and other Sustainable Urban Extensions on the A47 corridor into the city.

5. Regeneration

We believe that the combination of introduction of a tram system, building and construction jobs, spin offs from environment house building technologies and potential for affordable housing support for regeneration schemes in the city means that there is great potential for Pennbury to boost the regeneration of Leicester and surrounding areas. Furthermore we would want to see that Pennbury is developed in such a way as it faces towards the City of Leicester and grows as a sister town to the city. We do believe that as they stand there needs to be further work on the employment models for Pennbury and they need to be refined and co-ordinated with proposed employment development in the City in order to be suitable robust.

6. Planning

The City Council in its conditional support for Pennbury would ask that Government takes this proposal through a Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy process so that the figures and assumptions behind Pennbury can be examined in detail and that equal rigour is applied to Pennbury and the potential Sustainable Urban Extensions in Leicester and Leicestershire.

The City Council further believes that the proposal should not be reduced from its current level of 15,000 homes as the number is necessary to address housing need and any less would reduce the viability of the provision of the community and transport infrastructure necessary for the Eco-Town to thrive. Leicester City Council would welcome discussion with Government and the other local authorities involved to set up robust joint governance of planning arrangements. The nature of these arrangements will determine whether the conditions stated above are adhered to and therefore are crucial towards any continuing City Council support for the Pennbury scheme