

COUNTY COUNCIL - GARTREE NEWS

DOWN WITH ECO TOWN

The news about a new town, the size of Hinckley, which could be built on the Co-op's 4,000 acre Stoughton Estate, north of Great Glen and west of little Stretton, has been much in the news lately. An e-petition on the No. 10 website that I set up in November: <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/PennburyEcoTown/>, has almost 2,000 names, and by the time you read this article, there will have been public meetings in Billesdon on 1st February and Great Glen on 5th February. I have been elected by members of the affected parish councils, and other elected representatives, as chairman of the Campaign Against the Stoughton Co-op Eco Town (CASCET). The Co-operative Group has provisionally called their project "*Pennbury*" after the farm on Stretton Road.

Since the announcement of the Eco Town bids, I have campaigned, with other members of the CASCET Committee and the two local MPs, that the originally announced process for eventual selection was wrong, because it did not include any local accountability or public consultation. This message seems to have hit the spot, because the latest information is that there will be an announcement at the end of February/beginning of March about a shortlist of some 15 locations, which have the potential to be taken forward from the original 57 bids. Due to the single ownership of the Stoughton Estate, I would be surprised if *Pennbury* is not on that list. There will then be a period of detailed discussions with the county and district planners, including public consultation I am told, while the developers try to strengthen their proposal and overcome identified issues. Finally, there is expected to be an announcement in June or July about 10 locations in England which have the potential to receive Eco Town status, and which will then be taken forward through the planning process. Unfortunately, at this stage there are no further details about what form this "planning process" will take. The East Midlands Region has already signed up to 79,450 houses being built in Leicestershire over the next 18 years, with 6,900 of these in the Harborough District. The 15,000 homes in the Eco Town would be on top of that.

I am certainly committed to campaigning against *Pennbury* because it will do irreparable damage to our local way of life and will concrete and tarmac over a beautiful area of rural tranquillity and wildlife. A list of themes including: transport, education, health, waste, environment, pollution, employment, and others, is being drawn up, and each will need to be researched and expanded to form counter-arguments against the Co-operative Group's plans. The campaign will need considerable finances to support this work so a membership drive will begin soon, and I am happy to talk to anybody, who has the necessary skills or experiences in any of the main themes, to help us stop the Eco Town.

A campaign website (see www.save-england.net) gives more information and a map, and provides the contact details of the two Government Ministers who are expected to eventually take the decision.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

The speed of traffic on many of the rural roads in south-east Leicestershire exceeds the statutory speed limit at times, and this sometimes leads to serious or fatal accidents. There were two fatal car accidents in the Gartree area before Christmas, where no other vehicles were involved. One was on the B6047 when a car crashed into the railway bridge after the East Langton Back Lane turn. The other was at the bottom of Carlton Road in Kibworth Harcourt. The investigations of road conditions, weather and speed of the vehicles, amongst other factors, are all being studied.

I wrote about a new 40 mph limit being proposed on Stretton Road in the last *Glen Sence*. Speed activated signs have been installed on the B6047 in both Tur Langton and Church Langton to warn drivers of excessive speeding. Above all, though, we all need to be careful when driving along these narrow rural roads, as it is not always us that are speeding.

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