



Structural Ethics Charter

Development Phase Commitment

Status: Development Phase

SPRöUT is currently in a structured development phase led by the founders.

This document sets out the principles guiding decisions during this stage of the project.

Once the worker co-operative is formally established, the charter will be reviewed and ratified by the founding worker-members.

Publishing it now simply makes the intended direction clear while the project is still developing.

1. Why SPRöUT Exists

SPRöUT exists to make everyday food less stressful.

It is being developed as long-term food infrastructure for Leicestershire— a grocery focused on reliable staple foods, fair pricing and knowledgeable workers.

The intention is to build something stable and useful for many years, not a short-term retail venture.

2. Purpose Before Profit

SPRöUT will operate in the real economy and must generate surplus to remain stable.

However, profit is not the purpose of the project.

Surplus exists to:

- maintain stable employment
- protect the affordability of staple foods
- strengthen the long-term resilience of the grocery

SPRöUT is not designed to generate private financial gain for external owners.

3. Grocery-First Discipline

SPRöUT is first and foremost a grocery.

A core range of everyday foods will always be prioritised, including:

- rice
- pasta
- oats
- potatoes
- pulses
- tinned tomatoes
- onions and garlic
- core fruit and vegetables
- essential cooking ingredients

These foods form the backbone of everyday cooking.

During development, scale decisions, layout planning and financial modelling are anchored around these categories.

If choices need to be made, protecting staple affordability takes priority over expanding specialist ranges.

4. Worker Ownership

SPRöUT is being designed as a worker-owned co-operative.

The intention is that:

- each worker-member has one vote
- the business has no external equity investors
- ownership cannot be sold to private buyers

This structure ensures that decisions remain with the people doing the work and prevents value being extracted by outside owners.

5. Wage Integrity

SPRöUT is being modelled to:

- pay at or above the real Living Wage
- avoid extreme pay differences within the team
- rely on paid work rather than unpaid labour

If the numbers cannot support decent work, the model must change.

6. Pricing Approach

Pricing is a strategic decision, not just a mathematical one.

SPRöUT intends to:

- apply consistent margin logic
- maintain credibility on staple items
- explain pricing decisions clearly where appropriate

The aim is for everyday foods to feel dependable and fairly priced.

7. Surplus Allocation

Once operational, surplus will be used in the following order:

- protecting wages and working conditions
- maintaining competitive staple pricing
- building operational resilience
- investing in ecological improvements
- supporting community food initiatives

These priorities shape the financial assumptions being developed now.

8. Long-Term Site Stability

SPRöUT is intended to operate as permanent food infrastructure.

Development work prioritises:

- long-term land or lease stability
- avoiding dependency on speculative rent increases
- evaluating decisions with a long-term outlook

Short-term convenience will not override long-term viability.

9. Ecological Responsibility

SPRöUT will operate as a plant-based grocery.

This reflects a commitment to:

- resource efficiency
- environmental responsibility
- accessible everyday cooking

Operational priorities include:

- prioritising whole foods over highly processed products
- reducing packaging where possible
- supporting responsible and regenerative producers
- minimising waste through disciplined range management

Environmental responsibility is treated as an operational practice rather than a branding exercise.

10. No Moral Performance

SPRöUT will not attempt to persuade customers through moral pressure.

The focus is on competence:

- reliable food
- fair pricing
- knowledgeable workers

Trust should come from everyday experience, not messaging.

11. Public Accountability

This charter is published during development to make the intended direction clear.

Once the worker co-operative is formed it will be reviewed and formally ratified by the founding members.

If the principles in this document change in future, those changes will be explained publicly.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is SPRöUT already legally established?

No.

The project is currently in development.

This charter describes the principles guiding decisions during this stage.

Once the worker co-operative is formed, the charter will be reviewed and ratified by the founding members.

Can the charter change?

Yes — but not quietly.

Once the co-operative is established:

- amendments will require member agreement
- any changes will be publicly explained

How does SPRöUT's model differ from conventional businesses?

SPRöUT operates within the real economy and must function as a financially competent grocery.

The key difference is ownership.

The business is designed so that decisions remain with the workers rather than external investors, and surplus is reinvested into the stability of the grocery rather than extracted by outside owners.

Why focus on staple foods?

Because everyday habits are built around everyday ingredients.

For a grocery to become useful in people's lives, staple foods must be:

- available
- reliable
- price-credible

If those basics are not dependable, everything else becomes secondary.

Why worker ownership?

Worker ownership:

- aligns decision-making with daily operations
- prevents value being extracted by outside owners
- encourages long-term thinking
- protects standards from drifting over time

Is SPRöUT a charity?

No.

SPRöUT is being built as a financially competent grocery business.

The goal is stability and usefulness, not dependence on subsidy.

Why publish this now?

Because early commitments shape later decisions.

Publishing the charter during development helps keep the project aligned with its intended purpose.