

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee **DATE:** 7th September 2016
CONTACT OFFICER: Paul Stimpson
Planning Policy Lead Officer
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875820
WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR INFORMATION/ COMMENT**

REVIEW OF THE LOCAL PLAN FOR SLOUGH – UPDATE ON ISSUES AND OPTIONS

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the work that has been taking place to develop the “Issues and Options” report for the Review of the Local Plan and seek Member’s views on the emerging ideas.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Committee is requested to note the report.

3 The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Ensuring that local needs are met within Local Plans will have an impact upon the following SJWS priorities:

- *Health*
- *Economy and Skills*
- *Regeneration and Environment*
- *Housing*
- *Safer Communities*

3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes

Ensuring that development is properly planned in Slough will contribute to the following Outcomes:

- 4 *Slough will be the premier location in the South East for businesses of all sizes to locate, start, grow and stay.*
- 2 *There will be more homes in the borough with the quality improving across all tenures to support our ambition for Slough.*
- 3 *The centre of Slough will be vibrant, providing business, living and cultural opportunities.*

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications of the proposed action in this report which can be achieved within existing budgets.

(b) Risk Management

It is considered that the risks can be managed as follows:

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Risk/Threat/Opportunity</i>	<i>Mitigation(s)</i>
That the Committee remain aware of work on the preparation of Issues and Options for the Local Plan.	Failure to be aware of the Issues and Options could affect progress on the Review of the Local Plan for Slough.	Agree the recommendations.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications as a result of this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no equality impact issues.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 Previous reports to this Committee have explained how we have been making progress in reviewing the Local Plan for Slough and in engaging with other Local Authorities about the content of their plans under the Duty to Cooperate.
- 5.2 It should be noted that the approval of the Slough Local Plan is the responsibility of the Cabinet but it is important that the views of the Planning Committee are fed into the plan making process; this report is intended to be the first of three about the Review of the Local Plan before it goes to Cabinet.

Progress on the Review of the Local Plan

- 5.3 We carried out a "Call for Sites" exercise which was the subject of public consultation from 3rd June to 15th July this year. This has identified around 130 proposals for development or the alternative use of sites. We have carried out some technical work on these sites, such as assessing whether they are affected by flooding, and will be undertaking further work in due course. Information from the "Call for Sites" has been helpful in developing the Issues and Options work. Any assessment of the suitability of sites for development or protection will have to take into account the emerging strategy for the Local Plan and so a report on the Call for Sites exercise will be made to Committee at a later date.
- 5.4 We held a Member Workshop on 21st July which helped to identify the some of the key issues facing the Local Plan and enabled us to produce a

draft Vision which is set out in Appendix 1. This will be the subject of further discussions as the plan progresses but is being used at this stage to help develop the Issues and Options work.

- 5.5 It is proposed to hold another Member Workshop which will focus upon how we can plan for growth without adding to congestion, which is emerging as a key issue for the Review of the Local Plan.
- 5.6 Alongside this a small Member “task and finish” group has been set up to act as a sounding board and provide guidance on producing the Issues and Options.

Issues and Options

- 5.7 It is intended to seek approval of the “Issues and Options” at the Cabinet meeting on 21st November with a view to going out public consultation for a six week period starting in January 2017. It is important that the views of the Planning Committee are fed into the plan making process and so this will be reported to the Planning Committee before it goes to Cabinet.

ISSUES

- 5.8 The main focus of the work at this stage is to agree which strategic issues should be addressed in the Review of the Local Plan and which spatial options should be put forward for public consultation. It is important to note that the publication of the options for consultation does not imply that the Council is promoting them at this stage. We will not have to decide what our “Preferred” option is until we have considered the results of public consultation and carried out further technical work to test the options.
- 5.9 The Local Plan provides an opportunity to plan constructively for the future but it is important to remember that any proposals must be realistic, supported by evidence and capable of being justified at a Public Inquiry.

Growth

- 5.10 The first question that has to be addressed in the Review of the Local Plan is how much growth we should plan for. Slough has continued to grow at a significant rate over the last twenty years and all of the evidence shows that it will continue to grow over the plan period.
- 5.11 Some things, such as the growth of the existing population, are likely to happen regardless of what the Plan’s policies are. Other growth, such as the forecast increase in employment, is less certain and may require some intervention to make sure that it happens in the right way.
- 5.12 There are some potentially serious constraints to the amount of growth that can take place in Slough which include the shortage of land for development, the problem of congestion, and the impact upon the quality of the environment.
- 5.13 As a result the Local Plan will have to find the right balance between social, economic and environmental needs to ensure that it is truly sustainable.

- 5.14 Our overall objective should be to aim to plan for housing needs within Slough or as close as possible to where these needs arise. We should also aim to plan for continued economic growth in a way which provides jobs, creates wealth and builds on the strengths of our existing successful business areas and potential in the town centre. In doing so we should aim to enhance the built and green environment and mitigate against any environmental impacts.

Housing

- 5.15 The evidence from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA, Feb 2016) suggests that we need to build 927 houses a year to meet our “Objectively Assessed Housing Needs”. It also identifies the need for a significant amount of affordable housing to meet local needs.
- 5.16 The Housing Trajectory, which is included in a separate report on this agenda, shows that we have never been able to build as many as 927 houses a year. We may be able to build around 800 a year over the next five years, but after this the rate of house completions is likely to reduce. This is because the supply of greenfield sites is likely to dry up and the supply of office accommodation that can be converted into flats is likely to have been used up. The need to get high quality design standards and a wide range of house types may also reduce the number of dwellings that can be accommodated upon high density sites.
- 5.17 Failure to provide sufficient housing to meet overall needs will result in a combination of more overcrowding, homelessness, and forced outward migration.
- 5.18 As a result it is suggested that we should aim to meet our housing need in full as close as possible to where it arises. The proposed “spatial options” set out below show how we could begin to do this but it has to be recognised that we may not be able to meet all of our needs within our tight boundaries.
- 5.19 The needs of local people will only be met if they can afford to live in the housing available, and it is of a size, type and standard that meets their requirements.
- 5.20 It is very unlikely that we will be able to meet all of the requirements for affordable housing but it is suggested that we should aim to provide a full range of accommodation which includes affordable housing for rent.
- 5.21 It is important that the quality of the existing housing is maintained and where necessary improved. It is suggested that we should make it a requirement that all new housing is of a high standard of design in terms of its appearance, layout, levels of amenity and environmental quality. In addition we need to specify the mix of house types to ensure that they are suitable for a wide range of households.
- 5.22 The Government places the highest priority to providing housing, and has introduced some measures that will affect the ability of the Plan to deliver affordable housing. The Local Plan will have to work with the emerging Housing Strategy to ensure an appropriate mix of housing is provided.

Economy

- 5.23 The forecasts suggest that the number of jobs in Slough will increase by 14,680 during the 23 years to 2036. Since market forces and economic circumstances can change quite quickly it is by no means certain that this will happen without the necessary economic development measures being put in place.
- 5.24 The forecasts for types of jobs show the largest increases in office jobs and in distribution, with a decline in manufacturing. Many of these new jobs will be needed to support the increase in population.
- 5.25 It is also important that Slough continues to be an economic powerhouse and create the wealth that is needed if the town is to thrive. Employers choose to locate in Slough because of the access it provides to a large and suitably skilled workforce. It is therefore important our strategy continues to provide for this.
- 5.26 The findings of the Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) suggest that up to 180 hectares of new employment land will be needed to provide for these jobs. A lot of the proposed increase in jobs can be met without the need for any new land through the redevelopment or re-use of existing sites. Whilst there are sufficient sites within the town centre to meet the need for new offices in the short to medium term, it will be important that provision is made for an on-going supply of the right type of premises to meet employment needs.
- 5.27 It is, however, likely that we won't be able to find enough land to meet all of the demands for large scale uses such as warehousing.
- 5.28 It is likely that the pressure for existing employment land to change to other uses will continue and so we will have to try to address this to ensure that it doesn't impact upon the way in which the local economy can continue to operate and the range of jobs that are available for local people.

Town Centre

- 5.29 The future of the town centre is of particular significance for the way that Slough develops in the plan period. Not only will it become an increasingly important transport hub, it will also have to continue to provide a full range of facilities including new offices and it will have an influence upon the perceived image of Slough as a whole.
- 5.30 The evidence shows that it has been declining as a shopping and commercial centre because of structural changes in the economy and it does not have the attractions of competing centres. It can also be subject to high levels of traffic congestion.
- 5.31 There are, however, high quality offices being built near the station which are starting to deliver the Corporate Five Year Plan strategy to promote the centre of the town as a new business, transport and employment hub. It is important that it becomes a major sub regional office centre in order to boost economic activity and create jobs. This will complement the town

centre's role as a major new residential area which attracts a range of new residents.

5.32 There are also indications that major investment can be encouraged to revitalise Slough as a retail and leisure centre.

5.33 All of this will require the plan to provide businesses with a clear, consistent and positive strategy to support the investment that is needed to regenerate the town centre as a major commercial centre. Failure to do so could undermine the strategy for the Review of the Local Plan as a whole.

Heathrow Airport

5.34 The Council supports the construction of a third runway at Heathrow because of the benefits that this will bring to the economy.

5.35 We are still waiting for the Government to make a decision about this and it is likely to take some years before any planning permission could be granted. As a result the Local Plan will have to try to find a way in which we can deal with the uncertainty and make sure that we get the best form of development which can also mitigate the adverse environmental effects.

5.36 Even if the third runway does not go ahead Heathrow will continue to grow and have an important relationship with the Borough. This could result in an increase in the need for airport related warehousing and other services in the Colnbrook and Poyle area.

5.37 We will also have to ensure that places like Slough town centre are able to capitalise upon improved transport links and the inward investment opportunities that the continued growth of the airport will bring.

Neighbourhoods

5.38 The vast majority of Slough's residents live in the various neighbourhoods that make up the Borough. It is important that with all of the growth that is being proposed we continue to protect and enhance the distinctive character of these areas so our residents can meet their needs locally and live healthy lives.

5.39 Slough's suburbs have historically absorbed an increase in population through organic growth and the Local Plan will have to make sure that any new development within the suburban areas can be successfully accommodated.

5.40 This may mean adopting London style higher density living where appropriate. This does not mean having high rise blocks. There may be scope in some areas to have street based development such as terraced housing, small mansion blocks for flats and more town houses.

Transport

5.41 One of the reasons for Slough's success as an employment centre is its location in the Sub-region and excellent transport links to the rail, airport and road network. Whilst it is well connected to the outside world, travelling

even short journeys within the Borough can be difficult as a result of high levels of congestion in the morning and evening peaks. Apart from making it difficult for local people to travel to work or school, increasing congestion could threaten our ability to deliver economic growth and revitalise the town centre.

5.42 The geography of Slough means that there is only a finite capacity on the road system. We are investing in a number of improvement schemes but there is a limit to how much traffic management can achieve. As a result the Local Plan will have to develop new solutions for how people can get around, particularly for short trips, and make journey times much more reliable. This may involve adopting radical measures that reduce the reliance upon the private car. Failure to do this will make it difficult to accommodate the scale of new growth that we are planning for.

SPATIAL OPTIONS

5.43 Having established what the strategic issues are for the Local Plan it is necessary to consider how these can be addressed and how development could be distributed around the Borough.

5.44 There are a number of ways in which this can be done but we have tried to produce a number of realistic meaningful spatial options for the Local Plan which can be described as follows:

- Expand the centre of Slough
- Develop major new hub or hubs
- Comprehensive regeneration of selected areas (Major Sites, Area wide, Estate Renewal)
- Intensification of the suburbs
- Redevelop existing Business Areas
- Release land from the Green Belt (Housing around Slough and/or Heathrow related development in Colnbrook and Poyle)
- Northern expansion of Slough

5.45 There is an overlap between some of the options and others may be mutually exclusive but it is considered that they could form the basis for discussion and consultation.

Expand the Centre of Slough

5.46 The current spatial strategy as set out in the Core Strategy is to “concentrate development” within a tightly drawn “town centre”. This includes promoting residential development near the railway station particularly to the north.

5.47 Planning permissions for higher density housing and major housing development have already begun to spread outside of the traditional town centre. This can be seen in the plan in Appendix 2 of the report on Housing Supply in Slough elsewhere in this Planning Committee agenda. There is the opportunity to continue this trend provided it is done on a selective basis which takes account of the amenities of existing and new residents.

- 5.48 There could also be more high density development within the existing centre not just to accommodate more housing but also provide more employment and facilitate the regeneration of the shopping centre. In order to maintain vitality and ensure quality of development we may have to seek more of a mix of uses within buildings. This could include having start-up business space on the ground floor, flats above and a 'penthouse' on top.
- 5.49 Enlarging the centre would have the advantage of increasing its immediate catchment and enable more people to benefit from its facilities and transport links and support businesses in the town centre.

Major New Hubs

- 5.50 The latest Government consultation on changes to the NPPF proposes increasing residential densities around commuter hubs. This helps reduce use of the car.
- 5.51 The most obvious place where we could do this is around Langley railway station. We have already promoted some redevelopment in the vicinity but there would be the opportunity to create a new residential and commercial centre with enhanced facilities which would complement the nearby Harrow Market shopping centre.
- 5.52 It is not considered that there is the same scope to do the same around Burnham station but this could still be enhanced in a different way. Options to further exploit the town centre as a commuter hub, including the area north of the station, are considered above.

Comprehensive Regeneration of Selected Areas

- 5.53 The strategy in the Core Strategy is to spread the benefits that regeneration can bring by identifying selected key locations for redevelopment. Details of how this should be carried out have been set out in the 2010 Site Allocation Plan. Some of these schemes have been implemented, others such as the Canal Basin, are in the process of coming forward but there has been no progress on some such as the Trade Sales Site on the Bath Road in Cippenham. A number of new sites have come forward through the Call for Sites exercise such as the Akzo Nobel site east of Wexham Road. The Council is also promoting major residential development upon sites such as the Montem Sports Centre.
- 5.54 The important thing is that all of these sites should be planned comprehensively with the right mix of uses to ensure that maximum benefits can be obtained for the community. Sites will also be required to improve their connectivity by providing new links into the footpath and cycleway network. Plans need to take account of viability to ensure that proposals are attractive to developers and include affordable housing, high quality design and infrastructure to support the new housing.
- 5.55 There are also some areas which may not have very large sites which are available for development but there are a collection of smaller sites which could be brought forward in a way which enhances the area as a whole. Chalvey is an example of where a combination of private and public

investment can be channelled into an area in a way which can improve the area as a whole and in this case could involve the opening of a new railway station on the Windsor Brach line.

- 5.56 Some of the Council's housing stock may need to be refurbished or replaced during the plan period. The Britwell regeneration scheme is a good example of a successful estate renewal project and it may be possible to carry out similar schemes in other areas where the quality of the housing stock and the environment needs to be improved.

Release of Land from the Green Belt

- 5.57 We have already released land for housing in previous Local Plans which means that there is not very much land left that would be suitable for development. The option of building upon the remaining parcels of land around the built up area within the Borough of Slough will have to be considered. Some of these may, however, have specific constraints which may not make this possible.
- 5.58 A number of sites in the Green Belt were promoted in the Colnbrook and Poyle area through the Call for Sites exercise but these may be even more constrained than elsewhere. It is not considered appropriate to promote these for housing at this stage given the uncertainty about the future of Heathrow. Some commercial development may, however, have to be considered at Poyle to meet airport needs.

Northern Expansion of Slough

- 5.59 Initial assessments show that even if all of the options discussed above were promoted through the Local Plan there would still be a significant shortfall of housing compared to the Objectively Assessed Need of 927 dwellings a year.
- 5.60 As a result it would be necessary to consider the northern expansion of Slough into Green Belt land within South Bucks District. We have already made representations to South Bucks & Chiltern Councils that they should consider this in their joint Local Plan.
- 5.61 It is considered that the development of a new "garden suburb" could be a very sustainable option for providing the housing we require. Failure to achieve this could have serious impact upon our ability to meet local housing needs. We will, however, have to work with South Bucks and Chiltern Councils in order to progress this option.
- 5.62 It should be noted that there may be scope for the development of a small site east of Ditton Park which is in Windsor & Maidenhead.
- 5.63 The Government gives great importance to Green Belt protection so any development proposed would need to demonstrate very special circumstances to justify its release.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This report sets out the initial the ideas as to what the “Issues and Options” could be for the Review of the Local Plan. It shows that there are a number of possible ways in which the growth of the town could be planned over the next twenty years but also identifies the potential constraints that would have to be overcome.
- 6.2 Consideration needs to be given as to how these “Issues and Options” can be developed so that they can be put out for public consultation in January 2017.

7 Background Papers

Core Strategy DPD

Site Allocations DPD

Call for Sites Consultation (3 June- 15 July 2016)

Report on Housing Trajectory –also in the Agenda for this Planning Committee

8 Appendices

1. Note on Member Workshop of 21st July and draft Vision

Appendix 1

A VISION FOR SLOUGH FOR MEMBER CONSIDERATION

OUTCOMES FROM MEMBER WORKSHOP ON 21 JULY

In preparing Local Plans Local Authorities have to set out a “positive vision for the future of their area”. The Briefing Paper for the Workshop identified how Slough has changed, what factors will drive future change, and the key choices facing Slough in the next 20 years. The main conclusions that can be drawn from the Workshop are that Members:

- **Are positive about** promoting economic growth, planning for the needs of the existing population and **reducing inequalities** across the Borough;
- **Agree** that some of this growth could be accommodated through (‘Smart’) technology that makes more efficient use of existing resources, the **redevelopment** of the **town centre** at higher densities, **comprehensive renewal** of other areas across the Borough, and on a relatively small number of vacant sites within the urban area;
- **Value** the **distinctive character** of Slough’s “more suburban” neighbourhoods and appreciate the ways they successfully absorb growth;
- **Recognise** that due to the small size and urban nature of the Borough **there are very few vacant sites** within the existing urban areas of Slough available to meet the development needs of the Borough
- **Agree** therefore, some of this growth must be accommodated by **promoting** the **northern expansion** of Slough, on Green Belt sites in the Borough, but also on land in South Buckinghamshire, primarily in the Green Belt adjoining Slough
- **Support** the expansion of **Heathrow** both from altered use of two runways or the construction of a new runway
- **Accept** the **need to resolve traffic congestion** directly by investing in measures to encourage journeys to work and to learn by public transport, walking and cycling; investing in more facilities throughout the Borough to enable people to “live locally” and reducing the use of private cars, especially for short distances
- **Prioritise high quality design** in all major new developments in order to change Slough’s image and make Slough a preferred location to work, to live, visit and stay – a true **destination of choice**.

Thus, Members see Slough continuing to become more like **an Outer London Borough**.

Members believe that policies in the new Local Plan should be focused on achieving these aspirations. This means, that to protect the character of Slough’s

neighbourhoods, the new Local Plan will have to be more fine grained than the approved Core Strategy. This also means that the Plan will have to promote the release of a few sites in Slough currently designated as Green Belt and that the Council will need to actively engage with the South Bucks and Chiltern Local Plan process to ensure South Bucks also allocate Green Belt sites for new housing.

FORMULATING THE VISION

The vision for Slough should encapsulate all of these ideas into a short statement which can be easily understood by the public. This Vision should set out a clear indication of the Council's priorities and pointers towards the Council's planning strategy for achieving this Vision.

It is helpful if the vision contains key phrases which can be expanded into more detailed meaningful policies. For example, the inclusion of the word "metropolitan" reflects the similarities between Slough and Outer London Boroughs; it signifies that the Local Plan will promote modern urban living.

If possible, the vision in the new Local Plan should reflect, or be aligned with other visioning work for Slough. This means that it can take forward the relevant elements in the current Core Strategy vision and the planning related parts of the Five Year Plan as well as a variety of other sources such as the Council's "Digital Vision".

A DRAFT VISION FOR SLOUGH FOR MEMBERS TO CONSIDER

In 2036 Slough is an attractive, prosperous, confident, metropolitan place where people choose to work, rest, play and stay.

We have a positive image which reflects Slough's role in the region, and are proud of our diversity and community cohesion.

We all live in a decent and affordable home in a safe neighbourhood. Slough is a place of opportunities where we can work in a good job and get an excellent education.

We have easy access to a full range of facilities and open spaces. We have an environment that motivates people to have a healthy active lifestyle.

The town centre, Trading Estate and all of our commercial areas are thriving.

Since 2016 we have achieved this vision by promoting significant economic and population growth and sustaining the regeneration of many areas across the Borough. We have enlarged the town centre, developed a new "garden suburb" to the north of the town and successfully accommodated the expansion of Heathrow airport.

We have exploited the Crossrail connection to Greater London, the new rail link to Heathrow Airport on our doorstep, and accessibility to the motorway network which makes Slough one of the best connected locations in Europe. We have retained our excellent reputation as a place to do business location so that established and new companies want to invest in Slough.

We have established a reputation for high standards of design for all new development in Slough which creates a sense of place and protects the

environment. We have enabled Slough's neighbourhoods to adapt and grow in a way which enhances their distinctive characteristics.

We have a Council that is inclusive but 'digital by default' enabling us to embrace new and SMART technologies, optimise the use of our spaces, places and transport network, and help our people help themselves to a better quality of life.

We have improved accessibility within the town by making it easier for people to cycle, walk or take public transport to work, school or shop.

As a result, although Slough thinks globally, we have ensured that it has everything that people need to live in the locally.

---End---