

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 25th February 2019

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PORTFOLIO: Cllr Martin Carter – Planning and Transport
Councillor James Swindlehurst – Leader/Regeneration & Strategy

PART I **KEY DECISION**

TRANSPORT VISION FOR THE CENTRE OF SLOUGH

1 Purpose of Report

A report describing the key principles of a transport vision for the centre of Slough. Further reports seeking approval for delivering subsequent stages of the vision will be brought to Cabinet in due course along with the Centre of Slough Development Strategy.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Cabinet is requested to resolve:

(a) That the key principles of the transport vision for 2040 be welcomed as input to the Centre of Slough Development Strategy and the emerging Local Plan.

(b) That the importance of transport in achieving the vision for the centre of Slough be noted and how the transport vision will:

- make public transport the dominant mode of travel to and from the centre of Slough;
- provide a public transport network with the capacity to enable a higher scale of development, and which maximises the benefits of Crossrail and Western Rail Access to Heathrow;
- make walking and cycling to and from the centre of Slough an attractive option;
- create a safe, healthy and vibrant urban space which encourage people to live, work and relax locally;
- reduce the dominance of the car, improving air quality and road safety.

(c) That the commencement of work on the next stages of technical work be approved to feed into the Centre of Slough Development Strategy and the Local Plan and to provide the basis for subsequent decisions on implementation.

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

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Priorities:

Increasing life expectancy by focusing on inequalities – providing better and more connected public transport services to the town, leisure and places of work enabling better air quality and helping our residents to stay active.

Improving mental health and wellbeing – Cycling can contribute to maintaining physical and mental health. Switching more journeys to active travel will improve health, quality of life and the environment

Housing – Improving integrated transport links in the area and giving greater choices for residents as to where they can live by improving access to work and facilities

3b **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The Transport Vision will contribute to the delivery of the following Five Year Plan outcomes:

- *Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful:*
Increased cycling levels will lead to fewer cars on the road providing safer, cleaner environment for Slough's children.
- *Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs:*
Cycling, walking and using public transport can contribute to maintaining physical and mental health.
- *Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay:*
Reduced traffic congestion through increased cycling and walking and more public transport services will result in improved air quality and safer roads, making Slough a place where people want to live, work and visit
- *Our residents will live in good quality homes:*
Improved integrated transport links in the area, giving greater choices for residents as to where they can live and access work and facilities
- *Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide opportunities for our residents:*
Continuing to work with businesses to reduce congestion on Slough's roads and provide integrated transport options will reduce employee's travel time, and provide reliable travel times.

4 **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

At this stage there are no financial risks. However, the next stage of the technical work feeding into the Centre of Slough Development Strategy and the Local Plan will need to develop a method of securing significant funds from developments (including the Northern Expansion) as part of the adoption of this vision to meet capital costs and to be confident that the costs of operating the MRT can be met from fare revenues.

(b) Risk Management

Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/ Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
To adopt the key principles of the transport vision for 2040.	Refusal from developers to contribute significantly to the implementation of the vision	Funding secured through trip generation for S106 contributions	Political – (Severity/negligible: Probability/low) = rating 1	Work with the planning policy team to develop a robust mechanism to secure funding.
To approve commencement of work on the next stages of technical work on the first stages of delivery.	Reducing capacity on the main roads to facilitate modal shift	Use of the UTMC to control traffic	Political – (Severity/negligible: Probability/low) = rating 1	Significant modelling using the council's new strategic model and the new micro-simulation model. Identifying specific junctions along the network that will be beyond capacity and developing new junctions to mitigate against traffic congestion.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no HR or legal implications resulting from this report

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no impacts as a result of this vision.

5 Supporting Information

Background

- 5.1 In early 2018, Slough Borough Council's Executive Member for Planning and Transport requested that work commence on a new transport-led vision for the centre of Slough which could guide development and regeneration to 2040 and beyond. The brief was to develop an ambitious transport vision to support a town fit for the 21st Century, one which would improve the quality of life of those living in, working in, and visiting the Borough, and which would support the creation of a stronger, more sustainable and viable centre of Slough.
- 5.2 However, Slough's road network is under significant pressure, particularly at peak times, resulting in congestion and air quality issues. Peak period congestion is a serious threat to achieving the vision for a forward-looking, 21st Century Slough. It is

also a threat to achieving the scale of growth proposed in the Local Plan Review. Without addressing the demand for travel by car, and the resulting congestion:

- the ability to improve the quality of the urban realm is severely limited;
- there will not be sufficient capacity for movement, or sufficient connectivity to and from the centre of Slough; and
- inward investment by existing businesses and developers will be suppressed.

5.3 The transport vision core principles are therefore intended to reverse current trends in car use by providing a step-change in alternatives, defining a low-car urban core and, over time reducing the attractiveness of car travel to or from the centre of Slough.

Input to the Centre of Slough Plan and the emerging Local Plan

5.4 The transport vision provide input to the Centre of Slough Development Strategy and the emerging Local Plan; the vision sets out the 'end point' of what is likely to be a 20-year journey. Significant further technical work will be required to test these principles and the phasing of delivery of the different components to achieve the 'end point' of the vision. The timing of delivery will be dependent on the pace of regeneration in the centre of Slough, as well as availability of resources, support from third parties and the speed at which travel behaviour changes. The technical work will also need to consider how the proposed transport led regeneration can be delivered through the Local Plan process.

5.5 The Council is now preparing the Centre of Slough Development Strategy and reviewing Slough's Local Plan. The includes the delivery of major comprehensive development within the 'Centre of Slough. It also includes meeting housing needs through high density residential development in the centre of Slough, a northern 'Garden Suburb' expansion of Slough within Green Belt in South Bucks and, to some extent developing in existing urban centres such as Langley. The Northern Expansion will be required due to the limits on the capacity in the Centre of Slough and in other existing urban centres and in order to provide a balanced housing market with a range of properties.

5.6 The transport vision will be incorporated in the Centre of Slough Development Strategy and the Local Plan. Phased delivery of the components of the vision will provide the public transport connectivity and capacity critical to ensuring that Slough is able to take full advantage of the anticipated growth in jobs and homes; and to achieve the objectives of the Local Plan.

Beyond the Local Plan

5,7 The transport vision covers the period up to 2040 and beyond; which is a longer time period than the Review of the Local Plan which goes to 2036. It assumes that the expansion of Heathrow and the Northern Expansion of Slough will take place and that key infrastructure such as the Western Rail Link to Heathrow will be provided.

5.8 The implementation of the public transport-led vision will help to facilitate large-scale redevelopment and regeneration of the centre of Slough, and could enable more development to take place in the longer term. The scale of development will, however, have to be tested. In the short term it may be necessary to introduce some safeguarding for elements of the transport vision. Beyond this major development will have to be phased to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place which will require appropriate contributions towards the funding of public transport and other transport related infrastructure.

Summary of transport vision

- 5.9 Proposals for the redevelopment of several key sites in the centre of Slough, the expansion of Heathrow, and proposals for new strategic transport infrastructure (such as the Elizabeth line and Western Rail Link to Heathrow) offer a once in a generation opportunity to transform Slough, and in particular the 'Centre of Slough'. Further, large parts of the centre of Slough have been earmarked for redevelopment. Planning and enabling high quality, integrated transport networks to, from and within the centre of Slough is a particular opportunity. This transport vision sets out the aspirations for those networks.
- 5.10 The transport vision for the centre of Slough also looks to address the challenges facing it today. Most importantly, the transport vision seeks to deal with the problems of congestion through a significant reduction in traffic volumes in parts of the centre of Slough. This would bring benefits in terms of local air quality, road safety and the quality of the urban realm. Improved journey times for buses and more space for pedestrians and cyclists would also result.
- 5.12 The ambition for the centre of Slough is to exploit the once in a generation opportunities to:
- Create a world class town where people want to: work, live and visit.
 - Reconnect the centre of Slough with the rest of the borough with public transport-led regeneration.
 - Provide a walkable high quality urban centre with green spaces and streets.
 - Attract and support more leading global businesses.

Key principles and aspects

- 5.13 Transport is key to achieving the ambition for the centre of Slough. Achievement of the transport vision will:
- Make public transport the dominant mode of travel to and from the centre of Slough and the rest of the Borough and beyond.
 - Provide the capacity for movement to and from the centre of Slough, in the form of a high quality, reliable, high capacity public transport network, which enables a higher scale of development.
 - Maximise the benefits of enhanced strategic public transport connectivity to London, Heathrow Airport and the wider Thames Valley.
 - Make walking and cycling to and from the centre of Slough an attractive option, and greatly improve the permeability of the centre of Slough for pedestrians.
 - Create an attractive environment in which people are put first in terms of movement and use of space for interaction, creating safe, healthy and vibrant urban spaces which encourage people to live, work and relax locally.
 - Use the high quality design of transport infrastructure to enhance the quality of the public realm.
 - Significantly reduce the dominance of the car as a mode of travel to, from and through the centre of Slough.

- Minimise the impacts of roads, parking and motorised vehicles on the urban realm and on people, including improved air quality and road safety.

5.14 The vision comprises four key aspects:

- A high quality public transport network, the core component being a Borough-wide mass transit system.
- High quality walking and cycling routes to and from the centre of Slough, and pedestrian environments within the centre.
- Provision of public and private parking supply, including the role of park and ride. Further work is required on determining what car parking is considered to be sufficient for commercial and residential developments.

Public transport

- 5.15 Ensuring that a high proportion of trips to and from the centre of Slough are made by modes other than the car is critical to achieving growth and regeneration by providing the accessibility and capacity needed. Providing a high quality, high capacity public transport system is central to achieving this goal.
- 5.16 The vision for public transport in the Borough is for an integrated network which is affordable, provides a realistic alternative to car journeys, and improves connectivity within and beyond the Borough. The core of the network is a mass rapid transit (MRT) system, more ambitious than the current SMaRT programme. The MRT would be 100% (or nearly 100%) segregated from general traffic to ensure speed and reliability of journey times and may include sections where vehicles run through pedestrian areas, as is common in many continental European cities. The network will also enable conventional buses to and from destinations not served by MRT to use the segregated infrastructure for part of their journey. As such, the MRT network would form the core of a 'hub and spoke' public transport network.
- 5.17 An indicative MRT network for Slough has been developed comprising an east-west spine running broadly along the A4 corridor; a north-south spine between Windsor and Wexham Park Hospital (the southern part of which conversion of the existing Windsor Branch heavy rail line); and a route serving the proposed northern expansion based on this network.
- 5.18 The system would use a 'fixed track' although no decision has yet been made about what type of technology would be adopted (guided bus, very light rail, light rail/tram). Each technology has pros and cons, with LRT/trams having higher capacity and potentially being more attractive to users and investors, but also significantly more expensive. The indicative capital cost of the network is between £180 million (for tram-like guided bus) and £980 million (for full LRT) excluding land costs and risk.
- 5.19 The network would be delivered in phases, beginning with those sections on Council-owned land and the public highway. Temporary routes could be used whilst alignments through developments are secured. Services could also initially begin with more conventional vehicles, with adoption of higher specifications once the potential demand and level of development in the centre of Slough is better understood. Funding is expected to come from government grant and local contributions linked to development. Developer funding for this infrastructure will need to be structured differently in order to lever the correct level of contributions.

Walking and cycling

- 5.20 Over the last ten years, the Council has invested heavily in improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Building on this, our transport vision for the centre of Slough is to create a low-car environment where space for walking and cycling is prioritised over other forms of transport and to make walking within the centre of Slough pleasant, convenient and safe.
- 5.21 To minimise car trips, our transport vision is to deliver high quality walking and cycling connections to the centre of Slough, encouraging people to walk or cycle between the suburbs (including the northern expansion) and the centre of Slough.

Public parking

- 5.22 At present, there are approximately 5,100 public parking spaces in the centre of Slough, of which about 4,800 are available to shoppers. This is broadly consistent with the ceiling set for the town centre in the Town Centre Parking Strategy of 5,000 spaces. This is a relatively large number of spaces for the amount of retail floorspace in Slough.
- 5.23 The transport vision is to reduce the overall supply of public parking in the centre of Slough, and to provide a significant share of this supply at peripheral park and ride sites. The overall balance has yet to be determined. However, this is critical to achieving the key principles of the transport vision. In addition, the vision is to aggregate public parking into three primary locations on the edge of the low-car zone where they can be accessed without passing through the centre of Slough.
- 5.24 Within the centre of Slough, the transport vision will be achieved by:
- Removal over time of the temporary car parks and other car parks earmarked for development.
 - Construction of a new 1,200-1,500 space multi-storey car park on the Network Rail land to the north of the TVU site. This will predominantly be used by rail passengers and by residents and employees within the TVU redevelopment.
 - Construction of a new c.1,500 space multi-storey car park serving the east side of the urban core to replace the existing multi-storey Observatory and Queensmere car parks as the shopping centre is redeveloped. This will also replace the Council's Hatfield car park.
 - Expansion of the Council's existing Herschel multi-storey car park (subject to feasibility) serving the west side of the urban core with up to 1,500 spaces. It is envisaged that new development between Herschel Street and the High Street will provide a high quality covered walking route between Herschel car park and the redeveloped shopping area.
 - Replacement of the eastern station car park with a similar-sized car park on the same site, and closure of the small Railway Terrace car park to the north of the station.
 - As and when the Tesco site is redeveloped, the public parking on this site will not be replaced. The extent to which the Tesco car park is used by centre of Slough visitors and shoppers is unknown at this time. This needs to be more fully understood and taken into account when determining the appropriate level of parking to be provided elsewhere in the centre of Slough.

- 5.25 Should all three new car parks have 1,500 spaces each, and assuming that 955 of the spaces in the new TVU car park are for private use, the above would result in a total of 4,400 public spaces in the centre of Slough. The exact locations of the new car parks have yet to be determined and will ultimately be agreed through collaborative dialogue with developers, including the owners of the shopping centres.
- 5.26 Provision of park and ride sites around Slough is critical to encouraging use of non-car modes for the 'last mile' of journeys, thereby reducing the impact of cars on the centre of Slough. The transport vision is for a ring of sites around Slough, intercepting car trips before they reach the most congested and sensitive parts of the Borough's road network. The sites will be linked to the centre of Slough by direct services on the proposed MRT network.
- 5.27 Four preferred site locations have been identified:
- to the west of Slough to the north of M4 Junction 7;
 - to the north-east of Slough on the Uxbridge Road corridor;
 - to the east of Slough south of M4 Junction 5; and
 - to the south of Slough on the Jubilee River.

Private parking

- 5.28 At the heart of the vision is a low-car urban core where the negative impacts of moving and stationary vehicles are minimised. However, this ambition must be balanced against the need to ensure that residents, workers and visitors can easily travel to and from the centre of Slough, and the commercial viability of potential developments.
- 5.29 A phased approach is therefore required whereby the amount of private parking in relation to the amount of homes and commercial floorspace is gradually reduced to a level which ultimately achieves our vision. However this can phased reduction in standards can only be achieved as viable non-car alternatives, such as Western Access to Heathrow and the proposed MRT services, are delivered.
- 5.30 As part of the next phase of technical work, parking standards in the centre of Slough will be reviewed and a phasing strategy proposed. As development comes forward, the Council will also look at innovative options whereby the use of private parking stock can be flexed over time, for example spaces in the proposed car park on the TVU site, could be leased to residential and commercial occupiers with options for relinquishing them over time.

6 Comments of Other Committees

This report has not been considered by any other committees.

7 Conclusion

Adopting the Transport Vision *key principles* will enable progress towards dealing with planned growth and transport issues in the centre of Slough. The Transport Vision looks to radically change the movement of public transport, traffic and pedestrians to facilitate better living for our residents and better growth opportunities for our businesses.

8 **Appendices Attached**

'A' – A Transport Vision for the Centre of Slough: *Core Principles* (NB. Updated version published on 20th February 2019)

9 **Background Papers**

'1' – Slough Local Plan Review – Draft Transport Strategy (January 2016)