

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee **DATE** 9th September 2020
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PART I
FOR DECISION

LOCAL PLAN SPATIAL STRATEGY – REMAINING KEY COMPONENTS

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out the content of the remaining two “key components” of the Preferred Spatial Strategy which will be the subject of public consultation in November. These cover the proposals for the “Centre of Slough” and “Cross border expansion of Slough”.

2 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is requested to resolve that:

- a) The content of the two “key components” for the “Centre of Slough” and “cross border expansion of Slough”, set out in this report, be agreed as the basis for the preferred Spatial Strategy for the Slough Local Plan.

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

3a Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Part of the Spatial Strategy is to enhance neighbourhoods which will help to implement Priority 3

- *Strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods.*

3b Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Ensuring that needs are met within the local area will make a positive contribution to the following SJWS priorities:

- *Economy and Skills*
- *Regeneration and Environment*
- *Housing*

3c Five Year Plan Outcomes

The proposed Spatial Strategy for the Local Plan will contribute to the following Five Year Plan outcomes:

- **Outcome 3: Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay.** The Preferred Spatial Strategy will seek to protect and enhance the local environment.
- **Outcomes 4: Our residents will live in good quality homes.** The Preferred Spatial Strategy will seek to ensure that we have a balanced housing market that can meet the range of housing needs in Slough.
- **Outcome 5: Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investments to provide opportunities for our residents.** The Preferred Spatial Strategy will promote areas for employment growth in Slough.

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications.

(b) Risk Management

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Risk/Threat/Opportunity</i>	<i>Mitigation(s)</i>
That the Committee approves the recommendation.	Failure to agree the proposed content of the Preferred Spatial Strategy will affect the Council's ability to bring forward the Local Plan and plan for development in the most sustainable way.	Agree the recommendations.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

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

5 Supporting Information

5.1 The five component parts for the Local Plan Spatial Strategy are:

Delivering major comprehensive redevelopment within the “Centre of Slough”;

Selecting other key locations for appropriate *sustainable* development;
Enhancing our distinct suburbs, vibrant neighbourhood centres and environmental assets;

Protecting the “Strategic Gap” between Slough and Greater London;

Promoting the cross border expansion of Slough to meet unmet housing needs.

- 5.2 At the meeting on 26th August 2020 the content of the “Selected Key Locations” “Suburbs” and “Strategic Gap” key components were agreed. This report and appendices set out the remaining components which deal with the “Centre of Slough” and the need for the “cross border expansion of Slough to meet unmet local housing needs”.
- 5.3 The proposals for the Centre of Slough take account of the work and the findings of the draft Centre of Slough Regeneration Framework which is the subject of a separate report to this Committee.
- 5.4 Final approval of the Spatial Strategy will be sought at the Cabinet meeting on the 12th October. There will then be a six week public consultation from 2nd November to 11th December.

Components of the Spatial Strategy

- 5.5 One of the main tasks of the Spatial Strategy is to decide what the best use of scarce land in the Borough should be, In doing so the following factors have to be taken into account:
- Based upon the current standard methodology for calculating objectively assessed housing needs, there is a need for 15,460 houses over the remaining 16 years of the plan period at an average of 966 a year. (This may change as a result of the Government’s latest proposals to change the standard methodology.)
 - There is also a significant need for affordable housing and for a range of house types including family housing.
 - We are unable to set a target for the number of jobs that are required to support the Slough economy but will continue to aim to provide an additional 15,000 jobs in order to meet the needs of the growing resident workforce. This should not be regarded as a maximum figure.
 - There is a general demand for land for warehousing in the Slough area.
 - There will be a significant reduction in the amount of retail floorspace in Slough town centre in recognition that it will no longer be a sub-regional shopping centre.
 - Slough will become an increasingly important transport hub
 - There continues to be a shortage of public open space in the Borough.
- 5.6 There are three important themes for the Spatial Strategy which can be derived from the Local Plan Vision and analysis of the big issues that are facing Slough.
- 5.7 The first of these is making Slough a place where people want to “work rest, play and stay”. One of the most important elements of this is making sure that people who have prospered in Slough have the opportunity to “stay” in the

Borough.

- 5.8 The second is making sure that we have “inclusive growth” in Slough. This means making sure that more of the wealth that is generated in Slough stays in Slough. This can be achieved by residents taking more of the well paid jobs in the town and providing more facilities in the Borough for people to use and enjoy.
- 5.9 The third is making Slough a place where residents can meet all of their needs and be able to “live locally” in their own community if they want to. This will help to develop local communities and reduce the need for people to travel.
- 5.10 In order to achieve this we have developed some guiding principles to help determine what the Spatial Strategy should and what strategic policies will be needed to deliver it in the most sustainable way.
- 5.11 Firstly we should plan to meet our needs, as far as is practical, within the plan area, as close as possible to where they arise.
- 5.12 The overall guiding principle for the Spatial Strategy is that development should be located in the most accessible locations which have the greatest capacity to absorb growth and deliver social and environmental benefits.
- 5.13 These are particularly important factors for the Centre of Slough and deciding where any unmet needs should be met. Before considering this in detail it is necessary to understand how they fit in with the other Components of the Spatial Strategy.
- 5.14 We have sought to find areas for development outside of the Centre of Slough as part of the Selected Key Locations component of the Spatial Strategy. Although a number of individual sites have been identified, it has only been able to find one new area, at Cippenham, that is capable of being comprehensively redeveloped for housing. As a result whilst there are opportunities for development the Selected Key Locations component of the Spatial Strategy is not likely to produce a much of a net increase in commercial floorspace or a significant number of new residential units.
- 5.15 We have identified 10 sites which could possibly be released from the Green Belt for housing. These will have to be the subject of a separate consultation exercise once the results of the Wider Area Growth Study have been agreed.
- 5.16 Because of the need to retain the stock of existing family housing, the Spatial Strategy has decided that there should be no loss of these in the Enhancing the Suburbs component of the plan. There will, however, continue to be an ongoing supply of new housing from small sites.
- 5.17 It is not considered that the Colnbrook and Poyle area is suitable for housing

because of environmental issues including noise from the nearby Heathrow airport. This is one of the reasons why one of the components of the Spatial Strategy is Protecting the Strategic Gap between Slough and Greater London. Whether there are any opportunities for development in this area will be tested in the Wider Area Growth Study.

Delivering major comprehensive redevelopment within the “Centre of Slough”;

- 5.18 As explained above the overall guiding principle for the Spatial Strategy is that development should be located in the most accessible locations which have the greatest capacity to absorb growth and deliver social and environmental benefits. With its transport hub the Centre of Slough is by far the most accessible location in the Borough
- 5.19 One of the other core principles is to make the most effective use of land by using that which has been previously developed. The centre of Slough contains a lot of these brownfield sites which should be capable of being regenerated without a significant environmental impact. The centre of Slough is also the area with the most demand for new development and so should be the area most likely to be able to deliver this .As a result concentrating development in the Centre of Slough is at the heart of the Spatial Strategy.
- 5.20 The Regeneration Framework has identified sites which could accommodate 7,400 dwellings in the Centre of Slough. When completions over the first four years of the Local Plan period are taken into account, along with other likely sites, it is estimated that around 9,000 dwellings will be built in the twenty year period. This is a very large number to be accommodated in the “square mile”.
- 5.21 The four largest sites are Horlicks, North West Quadrant, Akxo Nobel and Queensmere/Observatory (Slough Central). Although the sites are very different it is likely that the vast majority of units will be flats which are why it is important that family housing is provided where ever possible.
- 5.22 Although having more people living in the centre is important, it is not considered that this will be enough to create the sort of step change in regeneration that is needed. As a result the Spatial Strategy is promoting an “employment led” strategy. This will be focused upon having an expanded Central Business District which will include part of the North West Quadrant site. Current proposals suggest that up to 90,000 m² of new office floorspace could be built here which provides one of the best opportunities for employment growth in the Borough.
- 5.23 It is still not entirely clear what the proposals for the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres will be. It is generally recognised that there will

be a significant reduction in retail floorspace and that both of the malls need to be comprehensively redeveloped. This will leave the revitalised and better connected High Street as the prime shopping area.

- 5.24 British Land held an initial consultation on “Slough Central”, as it is now known could be developed. It is important that a core of retailing and leisure (including a cinema) is retained within any redevelopment proposals. The Queensmere and Observatory sites can also accommodate a large amount of residential development.
- 5.25 It is also recognised that major new office development can take place there as an extension to the Central Business District linked by an improved pedestrian route to the station. As a result 50,000 m² is assumed to be built along Wellington Street. It is understood that British Land may have ambitions to build up to 200,000 m² of offices as yet another step change in the scale of regeneration of the area. As a result this is allowed for in the Spatial Strategy but it will be necessary for the owners that this is a viable and deliverable proposal.
- 5.26 There is a lack of leisure and cultural facilities in the Centre of Slough which doesn't have a proper evening economy. All major developments will be expected to contribute to improving the overall vitality of the area.
- 5.27 There is a general need to improve the appearance, environment and image of the Centre of Slough. Proposals will therefore be brought forward for improving the public realm and increasing the amount of greenery. It is important that more priority is given to pedestrians and so improved footpath/Cycleway links are proposed to enable people to move around the centre better and have access to the parks and open spaces around the outside.
- 5.28 Details of the proposed content of the Centre of Slough component of the Spatial Strategy are set in Appendix A.

Promoting the cross border expansion of Slough to meet unmet housing needs

- 5.29 One of the principles of the Spatial Strategy is that unmet needs should be met as close as possible to where they arise. As explained above, It has not been possible to find sites to accommodate all of Slough's housing needs within the Borough which means that there is a 5,000 shortfall. There is already a shortfall of housing in southern Buckinghamshire. There is also a need to rebalance the housing market in Slough in order to provide more family housing. It is for these reasons that the Cross Border Expansion of Slough is being promoted as a component of the Spatial Strategy. This is now dependent upon the outcome of the Wider Area Growth Study.

- 5.30 The “Wider Area Growth Study” is a government funded study which is intended to address issues arising from growth that is anticipated across the area. The work has been jointly commissioned by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, the former Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils and Slough Borough Council.
- 5.31 Part 1 was carried out by consultants PBA who published their report in June 2019. This identified a very narrow area of search where Slough’s unmet needs could realistically be met in southern part of South Bucks south of the M40.
- 5.32 As part of the work on the Growth Study a Local Housing Needs Assessment for RBWM, Slough and South Bucks Local Authorities was commissioned from GL Hearn. This suggested that that as a result of the proposed distribution of housing in the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan there could be a shortfall of 4,300 houses in the southern part of South Bucks over the Plan period. This would be in addition to the unmet need from Slough.
- 5.33 Part 2 of the Wider Area Growth Study is now being carried out by Stantec. This will look at housing needs, supply, capacity and constraints in the study area in order to identify specific locations where housing development could be deliverable and sustainable.
- 5.34 The report is due to be completed by the end of the year and will then have to be agreed by all of the Councils.
- 5.35 The Council has previously promoted the “Northern Expansion of Slough” which remains its preferred option. However, in order not to prejudice the results of the Wider Growth Area Study, the Spatial Strategy is not promoting any particular form of development as part of the cross border expansion of Slough to meet housing needs.
- 5.36 The Government has recently published proposals for changing the standard methodology for calculating housing needs. This would result in Slough’s need being reduced from 893 a year to 597. If these changes, which are currently out to public consultation, were to be implemented it would mean that Slough would have to provide around 6,000 less houses and would no longer technically have a shortfall.
- 5.37 Using the Government’s new figures South Bucks’ needs remain the same. This means the shortfall of 4,300 in the south of the former district remains unchanged. At the same time Chiltern’s unmet needs would go up from 343 to 619 a year. The Government’s new figures would require Aylesbury to build an extra 801 houses a year which is significant because this would mean that it would no longer be able to accommodate the housing that was planned to be exported there from Chiltern and South Bucks in the Local Plan.
- 5.38 The Government’s new methodology has proved to be controversial and it is

not certain that it will be introduced. The use of the housing stock as the base line for the calculation is likely to underestimate Slough's housing needs because it doesn't take account of current levels of overcrowding. As explained above there is also the need to rebalance the Slough housing market with a wider range of housing, including family homes. This is one of the reasons why the Council has been promoting the new "garden suburb". Whichever methodology is used for calculating housing needs, there is still a strong case for promoting the cross border expansion of Slough.

5.40 Although the expansion of Slough is outside of the scope of the Slough Local Plan, it remains a component of the Spatial Strategy. Exactly how this could be delivered will have to be decided once the results of the Wider Area Growth Study have been agreed and further joint working has taken place.

6 Conclusions

6.1 The Spatial Strategy is an important part of the Slough Local Plan which will set out what the pattern, scale and quality of development will be in Slough. This report sets out proposals for how the Centre of Slough should be planned and explains why it is necessary to promote the cross border expansion of Slough to meet unmet housing needs.

7 Background Papers

Review of the Local Plan for Slough – Issues and Options Consultation Document 2017

Centre of Slough Interim Planning Framework (2019)

Draft Centre of Slough Regeneration Framework (2020)

8 Appendices

Appendix A – Spatial Strategy Key Component – “Delivering major comprehensive redevelopment within the Centre of Slough”.

Appendix B – Spatial Strategy Key Component – “Promoting the cross border expansion of Slough to meet unmet housing needs”;