

LOCAL PLAN FOR SLOUGH – SPATIAL STRATEGY

Delivering major comprehensive redevelopment within the “Centre of Slough”

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Council is preparing a new Local Plan for Slough. An important part of this is the Spatial Strategy which will set out what the pattern, scale and quality of development will be in the Borough. .

1.2 It is proposed that the Spatial Strategy should have the following five key components:

- **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.

1.3 This report sets out how major comprehensive redevelopment will be delivered in the Centre of Slough as a key component of the Spatial Strategy.

1.4 In doing so it is important to understand how this fits in with the Spatial Strategy as a whole. There is a shortage of land in Slough. Opportunities have been identified for the development or redevelopment of Selected Key Locations in the Borough. It is not proposed to allow any further loss of Existing Business Areas to housing. As a result the limited number of Selected Key Locations are not likely to produce much of a net increase in commercial floorspace or a significant number of new residential units.

1.5 The Protecting the Suburbs report has showed that it is not practical, viable, sustainable or desirable to allow any of the existing stock of family housing to be lost. This, along with the need to prevent any further loss of parks or open spaces, means that the Enhancing the Neighbourhoods component of the Spatial Strategy will only deliver a very limited amount of new housing.

1.6 It is not considered that the Colnbrook and Poyle area is suitable for housing for environmental reasons. It is not proposed to meet the demand for warehousing in Slough. In the absence of any current proposals for expanding Heathrow airport, it is proposed to apply a restraint policy to the Colnbrook and Poyle area in the Protecting the Strategic Gap component of the Spatial Strategy. This means that only development that is considered to be “essential

to be in this location” will be allowed.

- 1.7 In recognition of the fact that Slough may not be able to meet all of its housing needs, it is proposed they should be met as close as possible to where they arise. This is why the cross border expansion of Slough is promoted as component of the Spatial Strategy.
- 1.8 This means that the bulk of new housing and most of the other major development is proposed to take place in the Centre of Slough. This follows the overall guiding principle for the Spatial Strategy that development should be located in the most accessible locations which have the greatest capacity to absorb growth and deliver social and environmental benefits.

2 POLICY BACKGROUD

- 2.1 There is a long history of promoting major development in Slough town centre. The Spatial Strategy contained within the 2008 Core Strategy was one of “concentrating development but spreading the benefits to help to build local communities” .This involved directing development to a tightly defined “town centre” area. .
- 2.2 Major regeneration projects were then promoted within the town centre in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (2010). This included SSA 13 Heart of Slough which has been partly implemented but proposals for the TVU site, now known as the North West Quadrant (NWQ), are still being developed.
- 2.3 Similarly proposals for Queensmere and Observatory Shopping centres (now known as Slough Central) and SSA 17 Canal Basin (now known as Stoke Wharf) are being produced. There are no current proposals for SSA 15 Upton Hospital or SSA 16 Post Office Sorting Office. Many of the requirements set out for all of these sites in the DPD are still applicable today.
- 2.4 The Issues and Options Consultation (2017) contained a number of options. “Option A” proposed the “expansion of Slough town centre”. This would involve increasing the amount of development that can take place in and around the town centre on the basis that it a sustainable location which can potentially absorb higher density development.
- 2.5 Option C proposed a new residential neighbourhood on the Akzo Nobel and National Grid site. Option D 1 proposed the redevelopment of the Canal Basin for residential with ancillary retail and leisure uses.
- 2.6 The main conclusion from the Issues and Options consultation was that there was no realistic option or combination of options which could meet all of Slough’s housing and employment needs within the Borough. As a result all of

these options were taken forward.

- 2.7 In November 2017 the Council agreed an “emerging” Preferred Spatial Strategy. This had five key elements. One of these was “delivering major comprehensive redevelopment within the “Centre of Slough”;

Centre of Slough Interim Planning Framework

- 2.8 In July 2019 the Council approved the Centre of Slough Interim Planning Framework (July 2019). This was essentially a land use document which promoted an “activity led” strategy which sought to maximise the opportunities for everyone to use the centre for a range of cultural, social, leisure and employment activities which are unique to Slough.
- 2.9 This was based upon Slough becoming an even more important transport hub, the potential for it to become a thriving business area and its ability to accommodate a large amount of new housing.
- 2.10 The Interim Planning Framework proposed the creation of a new pedestrian link from the Station to a “rediscovered” High Street which would be the focal point of the centre.

Centre of Slough Regeneration Framework

- 2.11 The work on the Interim Planning Framework has now been taken forward in the Centre of Slough Regeneration Framework produced by Urban Initiatives. The Framework has a number of roles and purposes:
- sets a clear and overarching vision and spatial plan for the town centre that can guide development and regeneration in the centre of Slough,
 - identifies the opportunities for growth and transformation at a town wide scale and then on a specific basis,
 - identifies linkages and opportunities for improved movement, transport and access for people travelling by all modes but facilitates and encourages a shift to more movement by foot, bicycle and public transport,
 - establishes design principles and development parameters at a town wide scale and then on a site-specific scale and the potential development quantum’s that could be delivered. This information will feed into the emerging Local Plan Spatial Strategy,
 - identifies the potential meanwhile uses of sites pending more permanent development; and
 - provides a strategic delivery plan setting out how projects might be phased, identifying priorities and delivery approaches.

2.12 In order to do this it has ten objectives which are:

- To deliver a 21st Century town centre that is accessible to everybody and enhances health and well being,
- To develop a New Central Business District to the south of the railway station,
- To revitalise the shopping and leisure offer in the town centre,
- To deliver a range of new homes in the town centre,
- To strengthen Slough's cultural offer,
- To create a people focused public realm,
- To improve connections between the town centre and Slough's neighbourhoods and the wider area,
- To deliver a step change in the quality of design and architecture in the town centre,
- To provide the right amount of car parking in the right locations; and
- To deliver small interventions, events and early wins.

2.13 The Centre of Slough Regeneration Framework has not been prepared as planning document but has many elements that can be taken forward into the Spatial Strategy.

2.14 The Regeneration Framework identifies how 7,400 residential units can be developed upon 28 sites. One of the main conclusions is that:

“Delivering a step change in Slough town centre will not be delivered by building new homes but rather through the economic prosperity that comes with a new Central Business District. New jobs will support the local population, make town centre living more desirable and invigorate the retail, leisure and cultural activity and offer in the town.”

2.15 As a result the Regeneration Framework identified 5 sites which could provide up to 290,000 m² of offices and two sites that could provide up to 48,000 m² of warehousing or industrial uses.

2.16 The Regeneration Framework also concluded that *“Slough town centre has too much retail space, some of poor quality and too many large floorplates”*. As a result, although it identified sites for around 15,00m² of new retail floorspace, 10,000m² would be as a result of the Queensmere and Observatory centres where there would actually be a significant net loss. It is anticipated that the Observatory Centre will remain as shopping centre for some considerable time, (possibly in the region of 10 years. Apart from this the largest amount of new retail is likely to be on the North West Quadrant site.

2.17 The Regeneration Framework identified the need for more leisure and cultural facilities in the centre including the need to replace the cinema if the

Queensmere gets redeveloped.

- 2.18 The work that has been carried out for the Centre of Slough Regeneration Framework and the conclusions within it have been used in the preparation of the Local Plan Spatial Strategy..

Inclusive Growth Strategy

- 2.19 The Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy focuses on delivering a more equitable share of Slough's prosperity for its residents. Its Vision is that: 'Slough will be an economy which is defined by its inclusiveness, diversity and resilience – where small businesses flourish, large employers invest, and residents have the opportunity to aspire and prosper.'
- 2.20 The strategy's priorities include the creation of secure and productive jobs, a skills system that works for all, and regeneration that can deliver the infrastructure to unlock growth.

Transport Strategies

- 2.21 The Council is currently preparing a Strategic Transport Infrastructure Plan (STIP) which will set out the actions required to deliver the key principles of the town centre transport vision, as approved by Cabinet in February 2019. These principles are designed to support the creation of a town centre which people want to work in, live in and visit, as described in the Regeneration Framework.
- 2.22 Traffic forecasts assuming the scale of development now envisaged in the centre of Slough show that there is not enough highway capacity to cater for all the additional trips generated. In fact, the forecasts suggest that, depending on when redevelopment occurs, the roads in the town centre could be at capacity in the peak periods by as soon as 2026. The Strategic Transport Infrastructure Plan will therefore set out the Council's plans to make public transport the dominant mode of travel to and from the centre of Slough. This will include provision of high capacity and quality services which will attract passengers and enable redevelopment of the town centre.
- 2.23 The Council has already begun to improve bus service reliability in Slough by installing new bus lanes along the A4 on the approaches to the town centre. The STIP envisages that road space on the A4 in the centre of Slough will later be reallocated to buses and the proposed new transit network.
- 2.24 A refreshed Local Transport Plan, currently in development, will also describe plans to provide a network of attractive walking and cycling routes to encourage shorter distance trips to the town centre by these modes. This will be complemented by gateway treatments on the approaches to the town centre,

such as along Stoke Road, to provide better facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as public transport.

- 2.25 The Strategic Transport Infrastructure Plan will set out the Council's long-term plans for the overall supply of car parking spaces, the locations of the main car parks. Park & ride will play an important role in minimising the amount of parking needed in the town centre. It is envisaged that the new transit network will provide reliable and fast connections from a ring of park & ride sites around the edge of the Borough to the town centre as well as other key locations.

3 CONTEXT

Housing Needs

- 3.1 One of the main functions of the Centre of Slough is to provide as many new houses as possible to meet local housing needs. Using the Government's standard methodology it can be calculated that Slough has a housing need of 893 dwellings per year. This results in a total need of 17,860 over the Local Plan period from 2016 to 2036. Taking account of completions over the first four years this leaves a residual need for 15,460 at an average of 966 completions a year.
- 3.2 The Government has consulted upon a proposed new way of calculating the standard methodology which could result in a reduction in the need for houses in Slough. The Spatial Strategy has, however, been prepared upon the basis of the current figures. Any change in the way in which housing need is calculated will not affect the requirement to make optimum use of the sites that have been identified in the Centre of Slough.
- 3.3 The Local Housing Needs Assessment. (GL Hearn 2019) showed that there is a net need for 734 affordable rented houses a year in Slough and 234 affordable home ownership units a year. This gives a total need for 968 affordable houses a year which is the equivalent of the total annual requirement.
- 3.4 The Core Strategy Core Policy 4 (type of housing) states:
- “All sites of 15 or more dwellings (gross) will be required to provide between 30% and 40% of the dwellings as social rented along with other forms of affordable housing.”*
- 3.5 This is basis upon which the Spatial Strategy has been prepared. Viability problems mean that this amount of affordable housing is often not being provided at this rate which means that there will be a continuing shortfall.

- 3.6 The Housing Needs Assessment also showed that there is a need for a range of different house types. For private housing, the greatest need is for 3 or 4 bedroomed family homes. For affordable housing to rent, the greatest need is for 1 or 2 bedroomed accommodation. The Spatial Strategy is trying to address this issue by protecting the existing stock of family housing in the suburbs and promoting the expansion of Slough to create a more balanced housing market. Whilst it is recognised that the majority of units built in the Centre of Slough will be one or two bedroomed flats, there is a need to ensure that larger family accommodation is provided wherever possible.
- 3.7 The scale of housing proposed has to take account of viability issues and the ability of the market to absorb so many new dwellings with the “square mile”.
- 3.8 The ability of the road network to accommodate additional traffic is also a factor in determining how much housing can be carried out. High level traffic modelling has been carried out. Additional detailed modelling will be required for individual sites in order to assess what mitigation may be needed to address traffic congestion and air quality issues.

Employment

- 3.9 The Local Plan has a target of creating 15,000 new jobs in Slough in the plan period.
- 3.10 The Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) (2016) predicted that in order to meet growth in the various sectors in the local economy an additional 14,680 jobs would be needed in Slough from 2013-2036. It also showed that in order to meet the predicted increase in the labour supply that would come about if the population grows at the rate that is projected, 20,080 new jobs would have to be created in Slough by 2036.
- 3.11 The EDNA used the 2013 Cambridge Econometrics forecasts which are now out of date and has been shown to have some technical flaws.
- 3.12 Employment forecasts for the local area were produced by Lichfields for the proposed expansion of Heathrow airport but these are no longer applicable. Various studies on the future of Slough’s office market have generally be based upon past take up rates which are not considered to be particularly relevant.
- 3.13 Given the current uncertainty about what the short or long term effects of the Covid19 pandemic will be upon the economy and employment levels it is not considered possible to carry out new economic forecasts until we know what the new normal will be. The Spatial Strategy has therefore had to be prepared in the absence of reliable economic forecasts.
- 3.14 At the same time EDNA uses out of date data and an approach to calculating

labour supply that is no longer consistent with the latest Government Standard Method. The Local Housing Needs assessment (LHNA) (GL Hearn, 2019) sets out the most up to date position on jobs growth figures for Slough using the standard methodology. This concludes that the growth in the economically active population would require 11,970 additional jobs in Slough over the period of 2019 to 2039. This forecast does not take account of any population growth that may occur as a result of the cross border expansion of Slough.

- 3.15 Consideration will also have to be given for the need to create new jobs to replace those likely to be lost as a result of the Covid19 induced recession.
- 3.16 Taking all of this uncertainty into account, the Spatial Strategy objective is to create 15,000 jobs in Slough. This should not be seen as limiting the opportunity for more employment growth should that be possible.
- 3.17 Not all of these new jobs will need new floorspace or land. The opportunity for finding this in Slough is limited. The Spatial Strategy does not propose that there will be any major employment development in the suburban areas or in the Colnbrook and Poyle area. The Selecting Key Locations Component of the Strategy encourages the regeneration of the Slough Trading Estate and Poyle Trading Estate. It also protects all Existing Business Areas from the change of use to non-employment uses. All of these areas are already fully developed and so it is not anticipated that there will be any significant increase in jobs in the rest of the Borough.
- 3.18 As a result the only area with any real potential for employment growth is the Centre of Slough. The Panattoni and National Grid sites could provide around 37,000 m2 of warehousing which could help meet some of the demand for distribution facilities. All other opportunities for job creation with the centre are likely to be in offices or the service sector.
- 3.19 One of the main objectives of the Spatial Strategy is therefore to create as much employment as possible in the Centre of Slough. Not only will this help the local economy it will promote an “employment led” regeneration of the centre.

Retail

- 3.20 The Centre of Slough has around 850,000 ft2 of retail and leisure floorspace. Much of this is concentrated in the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres and along the High Street.
- 3.21 In the Core Strategy (2008) Slough town centre was classified as a “Primary Regional Centre” which reflected the fact that it drew shoppers from a wider catchment area. In 2006 it was ranked as the 57th most important shopping centre in the country. Ten years later this had dropped to 147th and it is now,

likely to have fallen even further following the closure of Marks & Spencer and Debenhams.

- 3.22 A household survey conducted by Cushman and Wakefield in 2015 showed that Slough town centre's catchment had dropped to around 60,000 people which meant that it was no longer serving the whole of the Borough. A more recent survey by CACI has shown that many Slough residents are using the centre infrequently if at all.
- 3.23 As a result the town centre is acting more like a large District Centre serving local needs rather than the Regional Centre that it used to be.
- 3.24 There are a number of reasons for this. Some are the result of national trends. Some are more specific to Slough.
- 3.25 Covid-19 has provided a further boost to online spending, as a consequence of non-essential retail stores being closed for several months during lockdown and many shoppers lacking confidence to return to physical stores now that restrictions have eased. According to ONS, online accounted for 31.4% of retail sales in Q2 2020. It appears highly likely that at least some of the market share gains made by online retailers will not be reversed.
- 3.26 The traditional retail anchor and large format stores need to be replaced by what will be either smaller format retail offerings (unique, experience led, convenient) or indeed uses that are not retail. In either case, the town centre of the future will have a significantly reduced quantum of retail floorspace, and most likely a smaller number of units overall as well.
- 3.27 The House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee in its 2019 report on 'High Streets and Town Centres in 2030' identified a broad approach to meeting this challenge:
- "We believe that high streets and town centres can survive, and thrive, by 2030 if they adapt. Our vision is for activity-based community gathering places where retail is a smaller part of a wider range of uses and activities and where green space, leisure, arts and culture and health and social care services combine with housing to create a space based on social and community interactions."*¹
- 3.28 In addition to being hit by the national trends in retailing, there are a number of factors specific to Slough which have made the situation worse. These include its image, a poor built environment, the lack of green spaces and a focal point and the lack of a historic core. There is also a perception that the centre may not be as clean or safe as it could be.
- 3.29 The Regeneration Framework found that:

¹ House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, High Streets and Town Centres in 2030 report

“Overall, the town’s retail mix is characterised by a mix of low to mid-range retailers, with an emphasis on discount oriented retailers. Slough town centre has too much retail space, some of poor quality and too many large floorplates.”

3.30 In addition to reducing the amount of retail floorspace, it concluded that a shift towards more service led retail uses is likely to be a more resilient, sustainable approach for Slough town centre.

3.31 There is, however, currently a lack of an evening economy and cultural and leisure amenities as explained in the section below.

3.32 The failing shopping centre is clearly a big risk to the future of the centre of Slough as a whole. The Centre for Cities report “What’s in Store” concluded:

“Stronger city centres are able to better match current customer preferences. Retail is taking up less and less space on high streets across the country as customers shift to online shopping, while places to eat and drink are less replaceable and so have not seen the same decline.” “Weaker city centres may be more vulnerable to the continued evolution of the high street”

3.33 It is also clear that retail can no longer deliver town centre regeneration in the same way that it did in the past. Another report by Centre for Cities called “City Centres past, present and future” concluded:

“Crucially, policy must look beyond the retail sector. The health of the high street is a barometer of a local economy. Successful high streets are an outcome, not the cause, of successful city centre economies.”

3.34 The Interim Planning Framework (2019) noted that pedestrian counts had shown that around 9,000 people walked along the High Street which showed that, despite the closure of shops, it remains a popular destination.

3.35 Research by the Centre for Cities showed that Slough recovered its footfall better than most towns after the Covid19 lock down. This was from a lower base than most centres.

3.36 Taking all of this into account the Spatial Strategy has to plan for a significant reduction in the amount of retail floorspace in the Centre of Slough but ensure that there is still a vibrant quality offer which meets the needs of all of the people who wish to use it, including the local people that it is currently serving and the future residents living in the town centre.

Cultural and Leisure Amenities

3.37 One of the aims of the Spatial Strategy is to try to make sure that more of the wealth generated in Slough stays in Slough. Part of the problem is that Slough doesn’t have a proper evening economy and has fewer places where people

can spend money on leisure and cultural activities.

- 3.38 The “What’s in Store” report produced by Centre for Cities (2019²).identified Slough as an exception to the rule that stronger economies tend to have more specialist and premium amenities. It found that Slough had the least day-to-day amenities per person of all the cities and major towns in the UK. This was particularly surprising since the presence of high-skilled jobs should enable it to sustain a wider range of amenities such as bars, restaurants and arts facilities. The report identified three key reasons for this.
- 3.39 Firstly Slough has unusual commuting patterns with the highest share of workers commuting in from outside. At the same 77% of the high-skilled jobs in Slough are filled by in commuters. As a consequence most of the people with the pending power to support more specialist and premium options leave after work.
- 3.40 The second reason relates to the concentration of jobs outside of the centre. The densest concentration of employment is on the Trading Estate which has around a quarter of the jobs in Slough. Very few of these workers are likely to spend time and money in Slough town centre.
- 3.41 The third reason is Slough’s proximity to other amenity-rich locations which may disperse consumers. London is accessible in 17 minutes by train, Reading and Westfield act as destination draws and Windsor and Eton are even closer. All these places are very popular places to visit. This means spending is likely to be dispersed to other locations.
- 3.42 The Centre of Slough Interim Planning Framework proposed having an “activity led” strategy that would encourage people to come into the centre for a whole range of reasons. This is why it proposed having a Cultural quarter and revitalized High Street.
- 3.43 It is important that the Spatial Strategy supports the provision of new leisure and cultural facilities and the creation of a proper evening economy within the Centre of Slough.

4 Constraints

- 4.1 There are a number of possible constraints to development in the Centre of Slough that have to be taken into account in the Spatial Strategy.

² What’s in store? By Rebecca McDonald, Lahari Ramuni (Centre for Cities, 12th September 2019) <https://www.centreforcities.org/reader/whats-in-store/how-does-the-amenity-offer-differ-across-cities/1-slough-a-strong-economy-with-a-weak-amenity-offer/>

- 4.2 Issues related to the geography of Slough and the overall shortages of land are explained in the Selected Key Locations component of the Strategy. This also considers climate change and establishes that there are no flooding problems in the centre. It also establishes that there are no nationally significant environmental sites in Slough and that the only qualifying feature outside of the Borough which needs to be taken into account is the Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The potential impact upon this will not prevent development in the Centre of Slough but there may be a need for appropriate mitigation.
- 4.3 The Spatial Strategy has to take account of the viability and deliverability of sites. It has therefore used the work carried out for the Regeneration Framework which took account of landowners' intentions and tested the viability of key sites. This showed that the scale of development identified in the Regeneration Framework should be viable and deliverable.
- 4.4 There are many other factors that may effect whether individual sites may come forward, but at the strategic level the two main possible constraints to development in the Centre of Slough are Highway capacity and air quality.

Highway Capacity

- 4.5 The amount of traffic in the Borough (excluding trunk roads such as the M4) has grown by over 15% since the mid-1990s. Slough's road network is under significant pressure, particularly at peak times, resulting in congestion and air quality issues (see below). In 2011 the Council estimated that congestion was adding 8% to the average journey time, costing Slough £34 million in lost time.
- 4.6 Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a reduction in travel by all modes, traffic levels in Slough are now returning to close to pre-lockdown levels. In the medium to long term, traffic levels may rise above those recorded prior to Covid-19 due to health concerns over using public transport, or may see a downward trend as more people work from home, increasingly use the internet for shopping and/or shop more locally. If pre-Covid-19 trends continue, congestion could worsen by up to 20% by 2027.
- 4.7 Current peak period congestion, and potentially worsening of congestion throughout the day, is a serious threat to achieving the vision of a high quality, low-car town centre and the development of the Centre of Slough. There is limited scope to provide more highway capacity and negative impacts from additional traffic such as poor air quality. Therefore additional capacity and connectivity for travel to and from the town centre must be provided by public transport, walking and cycling.
- 4.8 Slough's highway model has been used to forecast the changes in traffic in the

Borough arising from redevelopment of the town centre. The forecasts assume the type, scale and timing of development similar to those set out in the Regeneration Framework. Provision of parking in the new developments is assumed to be relatively low (typically 0.2 spaces per residential unit and 0.7-1.0 spaces per 100m² of commercial development) to encourage use of modes other than car.

- 4.9 The forecasts are for traffic in the town centre to increase by up to 15% between 2017 and 2026. This equates to over 8,500 additional vehicle trips in the morning and evening peak hours (combined). Due to the increasing congestion, and improvements to public transport, the number of trips by public transport rises by 20% by 2026 and by over 50% by 2036 (equal to 7,000 extra bus and rail journeys).
- 4.10 Traffic congestion is forecast to worsen, with the biggest delays around the Heart of Slough junction, Stoke Road and the Wellington Street/Uxbridge Road junction.
- 4.11 The forecasting work is currently being updated to reflect the land uses set out in the Spatial Strategy. The forecasts are not expected to result in material change in our plans for transport provision for the town centre.

Air Quality

- 4.12 Air quality is a problem in the Centre of Slough which is mainly caused by traffic. There are five Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in Slough. Two of these are around the Tuns Lane junction immediately west of the town centre. AQMA 4 runs along the A4 Bath Road/Wellington Street through the centre. There are over 800 residential properties within it. Air Quality is monitored by a combination of 22 diffusion tubes and two continuous monitoring sites in the central area.
- 4.13 Across all AQMA in Slough, there has been a slow improvement in air quality, however there are isolated monitoring locations which continue to have a persistent issue with NO₂ exceedance particularly in the centre
- 4.14 There has yet to be any cumulative assessment of air quality impacts of all the proposed redevelopments anticipated within the Slough Regeneration Framework. This will need to happen to ensure holistic consideration of environmental impacts – both beneficial and detrimental.
- 4.15 Whilst it is not considered that air quality issues will constitute an absolute constraint to development, an early assessment of the Spatial Strategy will have to be carried out. This would help to determine the overall level of mitigation required and whether this can be achieved through restraint, design or off setting measures. It will also be important to assess impacts at key

interim phases as regeneration occurs, especially in delivery of the Transport Vision, to ensure any unintended consequences caused in the short to medium term are recognised.

- 4.16 This will be informed by the Council's Low Emission Strategy (LES), the forthcoming Clean Air Plan (CAP) and Clean Air Zone (CAZ) feasibility study. The later could involve charging all HGVs, buses & coaches and other vehicles which fail to meet prescribed vehicle emission standards.
- 4.17 The overall approach within the spatial strategy is one of concentrating development in the most accessible location in the centre of Slough in order to reduce the need to travel by the most polluting modes of transport. The ability to absorb a large amount of development within the "square mile" without exceeding the relevant limit values will have to be tested and if necessary suitable mitigation will have to be put in place.

5 DELIVERING MAJOR COMPREHENSIVE REDEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE "CENTRE OF SLOUGH"

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 As a result concentrating development in the Centre of Slough is at the heart of the Spatial Strategy. The "square mile", as it is sometimes referred to, will provide the bulk of housing that will be built in the Borough. The proposed expansion of the Central Business District with new office development provides the main opportunity for employment growth in Slough.
- 5.4 The centre's role as a transport hub will make it the focus for the Council's forthcoming Transport Strategy. Although it is currently failing as a shopping centre it has the potential to provide a smaller but more attractive retail offer. There is a lack of leisure and cultural facilities in Slough and so there is the opportunity to create a range of these throughout the centre. There is also a need to improve the image and quality of the built and green environment in the Centre of Slough.
- 5.5 The Spatial Strategy builds on the work done for the Regeneration Strategy

and sets out the following planning proposals for each of the key areas within the Centre of Slough.

Central Business District

- 5.6 The Heart of Slough strategy proposed major office development in the area south of the railway station alongside the proposed new bus station.
- 5.7 At the time of the Issues and Options Consultation in 2017 two large HQ buildings, the Porter Building and phase one of The Future Works, were under construction. As a result, part of Option A (Expansion of Slough town centre) included at the promotion of this area the “Central Business District” (CBD) where commercial offices should be located.
- 5.8 The Centre of Slough Interim Planning Framework (July 2019) promoted an “activity led” strategy which sought to maximise the opportunities for everyone to use the centre for a range of cultural, social, leisure and employment activities which are unique to Slough.
- 5.9 This was based upon Slough becoming an even more important transport hub, the potential for it to become a thriving business area. As a result it identified a “Business Quarter” which included the five office sites to the south of the station expanded to include part of the former TVU site. These sites would between them provide around 90,000m² of new Grade A office space. At the same time the ground floors would provide cafes, bars or small scale shops which can meet some of the day to day needs of the office workers. It was noted that there were additional supporting facilities in close proximity including the Tesco superstore, The Curve community centre, new hotels and the shopping centre.
- 5.10 The Interim Planning Framework noted that there may be scope to further expand the Business Quarter further to meet the anticipated demand for new HQ offices and other flexible workspace. In this context it referred to the possibility of office development taking place in the area occupied by Dukes House at the western end of the Queensmere.
- 5.11 One of the main conclusions of the draft Centre of Slough Regeneration Framework (2020) was that:

“Delivering a step change in Slough town centre will not be delivered by building new homes but rather through the economic prosperity that comes with a new Central Business District. New jobs will support the local population, make town centre living more desirable and invigorate the retail, leisure and cultural activity and offer in the town.”

- 5.12 This reflects the findings in the Centre for Cities “What’s in Store” report which states that: “Policy must focus on making cities more attractive to businesses, especially those providing well-paid jobs. This will provide those living and working in cities with the income they need to enjoy a greater range of amenities and keep them open”.
- 5.13 The same report explains:
- “The presence of well-paid workers in and around the high street creates demand for amenities. These workers will often spend their lunchtimes and evenings using the shops, restaurants and bars near their workplaces, providing an additional source of footfall and spending power on top of residents and visitors. In doing so, they are sustaining local services firms on the high street. This effect of high skilled exporting jobs creating and sustaining jobs in local services is known as the multiplier”*
- 5.14 It is considered that the Spatial Strategy should promote this form of “workplace led” regeneration. This does not mean that all of the new floorspace has to be offices. There can also be some mixed use schemes that can provide employment.
- 5.15 The main area where major office development can go is the Central Business District and so this has to be the focus for creating the step change in employment activity that is needed to create the wider multipliers effect for the rest of the Centre of Slough.
- 5.16 The Regeneration Framework has identified that the current proposal for the Octagon site would provide around 12,000 m² of offices, the proposals for the remaining two parts of Future Works sites could provide around 25,000 m² of offices and the North West Quadrant is proposing a range of 35,000 to 50,000 m² offices plus 2,400 to 4,000 m² of education/innovation space.
- 5.17 This shows how up to 90,000 m² of new office or workspace floorspace could be built in the Central Business District.
- 5.18 In addition the Regeneration Framework identifies the scope for 50,000 to 200,000m² of offices on the Queensmere site as an extension to the Central Business District. Details of this are considered in the section on the Queensmere Observatory shopping centre below.
- 5.19 In addition to having the right scale, the “workplace led” regeneration strategy will only work if the Central Business District is attractive to potential occupiers and designed it so that workers are encouraged to visit the facilities in the rest of the centre.
- 5.20 One of the big advantages that the area has is its proximity to the railway station which is likely to be used by an increasing number of office workers,

particularly when the Elizabeth Line service starts. Improvements have already been made to the station forecourt but further enhancements will be necessary to improve the access for the number of people that are anticipated to be using the station in the future.

- 5.21 The creation of a new pedestrian route from the station to the High Street and to Stoke Road is an important proposal in the Spatial Strategy. This will include improvements to Brunel Way and William Street and the creation of a new at grade crossing of Wellington Street.
- 5.22 All developments that face onto Brunel Way will be required to provide attractive active ground floor frontages which enhance the public realm.
- 5.23 A high standard of design for buildings and the public realm will be required throughout the Central Business District. The heights of buildings should comply with the principles set out in the Regeneration Framework. Previous proposals for the Octagon site have included high rise buildings. Although the current office scheme is medium rise, the Regeneration Framework has identified it as a site where a tall building could go if there was a change in plans. Roof top green areas should be provided which provide amenities for occupiers and exploit the views of the surrounding area.
- 5.24 It is recognised that some car parking will need to be provided for workers in order to make sure that office developments in Slough can compete with other locations in attracting tenants. It will be important that vehicular access points to car parks are limited and designed to minimise conflicts with proposed pedestrian routes.
- 5.25 It was envisaged that the three buildings that form the Future Works would be of a uniform design in the shape of a “tick”. Any proposals for the two remaining phases should be of the highest design quality which respects and compliments the appearance of the existing central building. They should have active uses on the ground floor with enhanced public realm and positively contribute to establishing Brunel Way as a principle pedestrian route through the centre.

North West Quadrant (NWQ)

- 5.26 The former Thames Valley University (TVU) campus and Market Yard Car Park formed the North West Quadrant of the Heart of Slough.
- 5.27 The Heart of Slough Development Brief was agreed in 2007 and planning permission subsequently granted in 2008 for the comprehensive redevelopment of this important part of the town centre. The new road layout and improvements to the public realm have been carried out. The new bus station, the Curve, the first phase of the Future Works and the new hotels have

been developed. The main remaining part is the North West Quadrant.

- 5.28 The outline planning permission was for 1,500 residential units on the site along with around 50,000 m² of offices, retail, leisure and a partial replacement of the university. It was proposed that this would be provided in a series of high rise buildings, the tallest of which would be alongside the railway line to the north.
- 5.29 These proposals were taken forward in the Site Allocations DPD (2010). No proposals were brought forward and in 2017 the University of West London, who had already vacated the site decided to sell it..
- 5.30 Proposals for the redevelopment of the campus were included as part of the Expansion of Slough Town Centre option in the Issues and Options consultation.
- 5.31 The site was bought by the Council in 2017 who have used part of it for education purposes whilst two new secondary schools were being built. The rest of it has been cleared.
- 5.32 The Interim Planning Framework (2019) continued to promote the redevelopment of the site TVU site as a mixed use quarter which complemented the town centre. It proposed incorporating the Network Rail land to the north into the site as a way of providing car parking both for the new development and the railway station. The Planning Framework made it clear that the location of tall buildings on the site would have to take account of the potential adverse impact upon the setting of Windsor Castle as seen from the Copper Horse at the end of the Long Walk.
- 5.33 The Interim Planning Framework recognised the potential for the TVU site to form part of the expanded Central Business District with improved connectivity across William Street.
- 5.34 The Council, in public/private partnership with Morgan Sindall, is now bringing forward a residential led mixed use high density scheme on the site. This is intended to set the tone for future development through the provision of active uses and high quality public realm and architecture. It is proposed to have 1,300 dwellings, between 35,000 and 50,000 m² of offices, 5,000 m² of education/innovation use and 2,400 to 4,000m² of retail.
- 5.35 These proposals were considered in the Regeneration Framework which recognised that the NWQ site has the following opportunities:

“Large scale mixed-use development opportunity to re-use a brownfield site in a very sustainable location. The scale and location of the site lends itself to higher density flatted development together with commercial uses. Scope for differing residential products: affordable, private sales and Private Rental

Sector (PRS). Scale of office development capable of meeting broad range of space needs, including larger occupiers and generate significant job opportunities. Scheme offers scope for education use and ancillary supporting retail and food & beverage uses given the scale of the project. Significant place making potential while contributing to the wider townscape improvements in and around the train station and town centre as well as an improved sense of arrival in the heart of Slough.”

- 5.36 As a result the Regeneration Framework supports the proposal for a new mixed use quarter on the NWQ site and the proposed scale of development subject to it meeting a number of requirements.
- 5.37 It is proposed that the Spatial Strategy should also fully support the principle of the comprehensive regeneration of the site in this form and scale and that the following planning principles should be applied to any proposal that comes forward.
- 5.38 It is important that the site should have a range of mixed uses in order to create activity but the scale of retail and leisure uses should complement the town centre. The office element should form an extension to the Central Business District as explained above. There should be improved linkages across William Street in order to better integrate it with the railway station and rest of the centre. Potential for a new footpath cycleway link over the Windsor railway line should be accommodated by the design.
- 5.39 The architecture should be of a high quality which creates a sense of place that contributes to the image and identity of the centre. High quality public realm and new areas of public open space will be required. Car parking should be located where it is not very visible and doesn't impact upon pedestrian cyclist movements.
- 5.40 The location of tall buildings on the site would have to take account of the potential adverse impact upon the setting of Windsor Castle as seen from the Copper Horse at the end of the Long Walk.

Tescos

- 5.41 The Tescos Extra superstore occupies an important site within the Centre of Slough. It provides for the needs of many Slough residents and people working in the centre. The large building with its inactive frontages does not contribute to the overall attractiveness of the centre.
- 5.42 The Interim Planning Framework recognised the importance of Tescos. It envisaged that, in the short term at least, it would remain as a superstore which would continue to attract significant numbers of people into the centre. It was considered important that it remained as an anchor store whilst the future of the

Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres is being resolved. It also noted that the car park operates as a town centre facility for people doing linked trips.

- 5.43 The Interim Planning Framework suggested that in the medium term there may be an option to partially remodel the western side of the building in a way which retained most of the store but improve its appearance and provide an active frontage for Brunel Way. The Framework stated that the future access to the car park needed to be reviewed in order to reduce traffic on Brunel Way as part of the strategy of enhancing this key pedestrian link to the High Street.
- 5.44 In the longer term the Planning Framework recognised that there is the opportunity for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site to create a mixed use street based development that was better integrated with and supported the town centre. This could also include creating a new bridge over the railway line to improve access to the town centre from the north.
- 5.45 The Regeneration Framework does not anticipate the Tesco site being redeveloped in the 15 year timeframe of the plan. It does recognise the long term potential to redevelop the site to create a more permeable pattern of development close to the station. It also identifies the potential for creating a new pedestrian/cycle bridge over the railway line as part of the reconfiguration of the Tesco Site.
- 5.46 Taking all of the uncertainty into account the Spatial Strategy is not proposing any development upon the site during the Local Plan period. It does, however, set out proposals for the improvement of Brunel Way.
- 5.47 One of the key proposals in the Interim Planning Framework (2019) was to create a new pedestrian link from the Railway station through the Queensmere centre to connect the High Street. The northern part of this link would be formed by Brunel Way which runs alongside the Tesco store. The Regeneration Framework identified the following problems with this route at present.

“Pedestrians travelling between the station and the town centre must currently contend with traffic on Brunel Way as well as the station / Tesco car park access with little assistance. Once beyond the immediate station environs there are relatively few opportunities to pause and rest, queuing taxis eat into potential footway space in this most valuable of locations and there is little sense of the importance of this route.”

- 5.48 The Regeneration Framework concluded that the importance of this route cannot be understated since it formed a critical spine through the town centre. As a result it included proposals for improving Brunel Way in the following manner:

“By reconfiguring traffic management along Brunel Way there is the potential to

create a traffic-free route for pedestrians between the train station and Wellington Street, with only two minor crossovers to navigate. This would also have the benefit of encouraging pedestrians onto the western side of Brunel Way where the existing, wide pedestrian crossing on Wellington Street can operate most efficiently. This will then lead directly into any future redevelopment of the Queensmere / Observatory shopping centres and the High Street beyond”.

- 5.49 The Spatial Strategy supports the principle of creating a direct traffic free route for pedestrians and minimising the space given to vehicles along Brunel Way subject to a suitable detailed design being agreed. This would require the optimum use being made of available land, including that controlled by Tesco. It would also involve making all frontages, including Tescos, as active and attractive as possible.
- 5.50 The existing bridge and stair tower is in a poor state of repair and has been closed. It is Tesco's responsibility to maintain and keep the bridge and lifts available for use by the public. As a result it should be repaired and reinstated in the short term. It is proposed that it should be removed in the longer term as part of the comprehensive proposal to improve the pedestrian crossing on Wellington Street. This will create more space for this important strategic pedestrian route that will eventually link up with the High Street.

Queensmere and Observatory Shopping Centres

- 5.51 The Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres currently perform many of the traditional town centre functions in Slough. The malls are dated and no longer fit for purpose. As a result they provide the biggest opportunity for mixed use comprehensive regeneration in the Centre of Slough.
- 5.52 The centres are now owned by the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA). Working on its behalf, British Land is currently developing proposals for redeveloping the malls. Full details of what they propose for “Slough Central” as it will be known, has not been made public. As a result, the Spatial Strategy will have to set out general principles for the future of the Queensmere and Observatory centres based upon the recommendations of the Centre of Slough Regeneration Framework.
- 5.53 The overall objective is to encourage the comprehensive redevelopment of the centres which will transform the area into an attractive, vibrant, well connected place that can provide for some of the important shopping, leisure, cultural and business needs. It also has the opportunity to meet some of Slough's housing needs.
- 5.54 The Queensmere Shopping centre was opened in 1970 as part of the

remodelling of the town centre which included the creation of Wellington Street as a bypass for the High Street. The observatory was completed in 1991. The two indoor malls, which have now been linked together, have formed the core of Slough shopping centre. In addition to the shops there is a cinema, some leisure, food and beverage outlets and two multi story car parks.

5.55 Most of the anchor stores have closed, including Marks and Spencer and Debenhams which were integrated into the centres. The largest stores left are TK Maxx and Primark.

5.56 The Regeneration Framework noted that:

“Slough has already seen a decline in its retail performance with significant vacancy in the Queensmere shopping centre in particular. This vacancy however presents a significant opportunity for transformative change; the chance to redevelop the centre and transform the heart of the town and at the same time to deliver a more coherent and attractive place. Doing nothing is not an option”.

5.57 In addition to no longer functioning properly the shopping centres are unattractive and have a poor environment. They form a barrier between the High Street and the railway station and turn their backs on Wellington Street and other buildings such as The Curve and St Ethelbert’s Church. The redevelopment of the centres would create the opportunity to create a new attractive vibrant area which is fully integrated with and supports the revitalised High Street.

5.58 There have been a number of previous proposals for the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres. The Site Allocations DPD (2010) established the principle of comprehensive redeveloping or refiguring them in way that positively contributed to the wider regeneration of the town centre. At this time this was also intended to support proposals for further retail investment in the centre. It was proposed that the redevelopment of the shopping centres would be supported by the inclusion of high density residential development.

5.59 In the Issues and Options Consultation (2017) the Queensmere and Observatory centres were identified as a proposed location for high rise flats which would help generate the investment necessary which would make the Queensmere the “centrepiece” for prime retail and leisure uses.

5.60 The Centre of Slough Interim Planning Framework (2019) recognised that the size of the shopping centre will have to be reduced. It concluded that:

“The preferred strategy is to keep the High Street as the primary shopping area and redevelop the southern part of the Queensmere and Observatory centres as integral parts of the new High Street. This will then allow the northern parts of the precincts, including the Wellington Street frontage, to be

developed for a mix of other uses including high rise residential”

- 5.61 The demolition of the precincts was seen as allowing replacement retail and new leisure uses being provided including some large stores and a big leisure complex including a replacement cinema. The basic requirement was that all buildings along the south side respect the scale of the High Street and the primary frontages and entrances from the High Street. It was envisaged that the existing car parks would be reconfigured.
- 5.62 The site was included in a “mixed use” area which merged with a residential area to the east. As a result it was envisaged that there would be major residential development and employment uses. This would include major high rise residential development on the Observatory and parts of the Queensmere. The exact scale and mix of uses was not determined in the Interim Planning Framework.
- 5.63 One of the key proposals was to reconnect the High Street with the railway station by creating a new pedestrian street from Mackenzie Square through to Brunel Way.
- 5.64 In May 2020 British Land held a consultation inviting the local community to find out more about their proposal for “Slough Central” which is name given to the project for redeveloping the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres.
- 5.65 The stated vision for “Slough Central” is to create long-lasting economic growth in Slough, for all cultures, communities and ages to believe in and for everyone to enjoy.
- 5.66 The proposed phased redevelopment of the site would replace the existing shopping centres with a wide range of uses and activities including workspace, new homes, retail, food and beverage, and leisure and culture.
- 5.67 The consultation stated that it would also provide improved connectivity across the site, creating new pedestrian routes and improved connections with the surrounding streets. It would also create new public spaces with a variety of uses and characters.
- 5.68 The indicative plan, which was included in the consultation, divided the site into four. There would be a proposed Cultural and Civic quarter to the west next to The Curve and St Ethelbert’s church. A Commercial District is proposed for the northern part fronting onto Wellington Street. There would be a proposed High Street Neighbourhood in the south, facing the High Street and a Residential Garden Quarter to the east.
- 5.69 The plan showed a new north south pedestrian route through the site which would provide the link from the railway station to the High Street. There is another link running east west between the different sectors.

- 5.70 These proposals for Slough Central are therefore broadly in line with the proposed pattern of development that was envisaged in the Interim Planning Framework. No details of the scale of development proposed in Central Slough have been provided.
- 5.71 The Queensmere and Observatory is one of the sites that have been assessed in the Regeneration Framework. The draft report has recognised there is the opportunity to redevelop these shopping centres so to provide a modern town centre layout and mix, which replaces the covered centres with a permeable, open street environment.
- 5.72 It explains that redevelopment will enable the scheme to embrace and integrate The Curve and St. Ethelbert's Church, as well as strike a clear pedestrian link between the train station and the High Street, alongside creating a more permeable and positive pedestrian environment. The scale and location at the heart of the town centre lends itself to a diverse and layered mix of uses: including retail, leisure, offices, residential, together with supporting parking - and a range of new public spaces. Cultural activities too will add interest and diversity to the scheme.
- 5.73 The sustainable location points toward much higher density development than is currently there: and particularly offices and residential, with modern – yet consolidated – retail and leisure space, including a cinema.
- 5.74 The site has scope to deliver a substantial new business district alongside a neighbourhood residential quarter, with typically ground floor shopping and leisure facilities. The scheme will be able to meet demand from both large and smaller scale office and retail occupiers. Car parking will support the development as well as the town centre's retail and leisure offer more generally, with supply of spaces managed throughout the development period to avoid undersupply. Over time, other appropriate town centre uses might become part of the mix.
- 5.75 The development will be set within a significantly improved public realm, as well as mitigating the significant pedestrian barrier caused by the traffic dominated Wellington Street, thus enabling easier access to the train station.
- 5.76 The Regeneration Framework has taken the principles from the Interim Planning Framework and Slough Central consultation material in order to devise an indicative layout for the redeveloped Queensmere and Observatory sites.
- 5.77 This suggests that there could be a mixed-use quarter on the southern edge of the site fronting onto High Street. This would have retail uses at ground floor but with residential uses above. On the northern part of the site, fronting Wellington Street there could be large footprint office buildings as part of the

Central Business District for Slough; The area to the west, currently occupied by the Observatory Centre would be established as a new residential quarter;

- 5.78 A strong north south pedestrian route would be established connecting the railway station to the High Street. This could also be the location for a new Civic Square. There would then be a network of smaller streets and lanes which would make the whole area as permeable and well connected to the surrounding areas as possible.
- 5.79 The Regeneration Framework includes a 3D model of what this layout could look like. In the absence of any firm proposals for the site the Framework has come up with some indicative estimates as to what scale of development could be provided. It states that there could be a minimum of 1,000 dwellings, 50,000 m² of offices, 10,000 m² of retail and 5,000 m² of leisure including food and beverage and a cinema.
- 5.80 In addition to stating a minimum, the Framework includes a range of offices up to 200,000 m². The range is included because it is understood that this is the quantum of development that British Land/ADIA consider is necessary to deliver a step change to the town centre.
- 5.81 Whilst the principle of having “employment led” regeneration is supported, for the reasons explained in the section on the Central Business District Centre above, this scale of development on the Slough Central site is not currently underpinned by economic and market analysis. As a result it will be necessary for the developers to come forward with a fully justified, viable and deliverable scheme which meets all of the planning requirements. Until then the Spatial Strategy will have to assume that the scale of office development within Slough Central will be around 50,000m². When this is added to the 90,000 m² proposed in the Central Business District it can be seen that there is significant potential for Slough town centre to transform itself into a major commercial centre in the Thames Valley which benefits from a highly accessible location and offers a range and quality of employment space and supporting facilities to meet employers requirements.
- 5.82 In addition to accommodating British Land/ADIA’s ambitions for the creation of an enlarged workspace led development within Slough Central, there are a number of reasons why there may be a need for new large scale office development in the Centre of Slough. As companies seek to consider their post COVID locational strategies, there is the potential for accessible outer London centres such as Slough to provide an alternative to central London workspace. It is also noted with significant amount of aging office stock reaching lease expiries over the next 5 years in Slough. This provides opportunities for occupiers to seek modern fit for purpose accommodation within their existing catchment, in a central location offering supporting amenities compared with

edge of town locations.

- 5.83 The following planning principles will be applied to any proposals that come forward on the Queensmere or Observatory sites.
- 5.84 It should be a comprehensive mixed use scheme which follows the principles set out in the Centre of Slough Interim Planning Framework and the Regeneration Framework.
- 5.85 It is essential that it provides new retail and leisure facilities which will create an attractive vibrant centre. This will include new food and beverage outlets and a cinema which help to sustain an evening as well as day time economy. This could also include provision for new cultural facilities.
- 5.86 New office development can be provided as an expansion to the Central Business District to the north. This could deliver an “employment led” regeneration scheme. The scale of new office development will depend upon a number of factors, including the aspirations of the owners of the site.
- 5.87 A substantial amount of housing should be provided throughout the redevelopment within a concentration at the eastern end, possibly in a new residential quarter. This should include a range of accommodation including the maximum reasonable provision of affordable housing.
- 5.88 A high standard of architecture will be required in order to deliver this dense city centre scale development. The tallest buildings should generally be to the north along Wellington Street, which should become a new “address street”. The height of buildings should step down towards the High Street in the south where they should be generally be a maximum of 6 stories in order to retain its human scale.
- 5.89 The scale and nature of development at the western end of the sites needs to reflect and enhance the setting of St Ethelbert’s church and The Curve.
- 5.90 A new pedestrian route will be created which links the High Street to the railway station via Brunel Way. This will have active frontages in order to encourage office workers, residents, shoppers and other visitors to use it. The whole site will need to be permeable with convenient and attractive links to the rest of the centre.
- 5.91 There is a need to improve the environment and create more greenery. Buildings should be set in a high quality public realm that includes areas of planting and semi-mature tree planting. New areas of public open space will have to be provided including a “civic square” adjacent to, or part of, the new pedestrian link from the High Street to the railway station.
- 5.92 The shortage of public open space means that opportunities should be taken to

provide landscaped roof gardens on the tops of buildings. The views of the surrounding area should be optimised, particularly those of Windsor Castle to the south. A public viewing area should be provided to create an attraction and enhance the appreciation of the area.

- 5.93 The southern side of the facing onto the High Street should be the prime retail area with active frontages which help to deliver the “rediscovered High Street” aim of the Spatial Strategy. There is the possibility to create a secondary “neighbourhood” of shops and leisure uses behind the High Street frontage which would be a more tightly drawn area with its own distinctive character. This is described in the Regeneration Framework as having:

A network of smaller streets, lanes and squares to provide a choice of routes through the area that encourages shoppers to step off the High Street to explore. These streets to have active ground floors, predominantly with retail use but also including a food and beverage, leisure and cultural offer;

- 5.94 The layout of the development as a whole should be permeable with new south to north links extending Church Street, Park Street and Alpha Street. Pedestrian links should also be integrated with The Curve and St. Ethelbert’s church.
- 5.95 The layout should put pedestrians first. The impact of car parking and servicing on the streetscape must be minimised and wherever possible. Car parking should be provided either below ground or with in multi-storey car parks or a combination of both.. Access to the public car parks should be from Wellington Street.
- 5.96 The redevelopment should ensure that a minimum amount of car parking should be provided to meet the needs of shopper and visitors in as convenient location as possible. This should be managed in such a way as to ensure that it remains available for short term use. This could include some shared use of other parking spaces at weekends and evenings to ensure that there is sufficient visitor parking to make the retail/leisure/cultural offer attractive and viable. It is recognised that the scale of parking provided for other uses offices and residential has to ensure that they are viable and lettable but it will be important that this and doesn’t undermine the overall need to encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport. The preferred phasing would be to begin the redevelopment from the west in order to obtain maximum benefits from the new public facilities that can be provided in this area. It would also enable the new pedestrian link from the High Street to the railway station to be created at the earliest opportunity. It is important the core of retail and leisure facilities and suitable public car parking is retained during all phases of the redevelopment of the two shopping centres. There will also be a need to provide some “meanwhile” uses to support the on going vitality of the centre.

- 5.97 It is proposed that there should be a minimum of 1,000 dwellings, 10,000 m² of retail and 5,000 m² of leisure including food and beverage and a cinema.
- 5.98 It is proposed that there should be a minimum of 50,000 m² of offices on the site. This could be increased up to 200,000 m² if the owners are able to bring forward a viable and deliverable scheme that meets all of the planning requirements.

The High Street

- 5.99 One of the main proposals in The Centre of Slough Interim Planning Framework (2019) was to promote a strategy which “rediscovers the High Street” and makes it the focal point of the centre.
- 5.100 The problems facing retailing in Slough, and the need to refocus its role, are explained above. It is acknowledged that Slough will no longer be a sub regional shopping centre and proposed that the oversupply of retail floorspace will be resolved by greatly reducing the amount of shops in the redevelopment of the Queensmere and Observatory centres.
- 5.101 Whilst there will still be a significant amount of retailing in the new Slough Central development that replaces the shopping malls, this is likely to be in small scale and specialist units which complement the retailers on line trade. It is envisaged that the Tesco’s superstore will remain but the main focus for shopping in Slough centre will be the revitalised High Street.
- 5.102 The Interim Planning Framework explained that:
- “The expected reduction in the overall amount of retail space will create the opportunity for the High Street to become the busiest shopping street. It will contain a variety of shops meeting daily needs. It will also be important that it continues to provide a range of shops, including those that cater for people on low incomes. This will ensure that the “rediscovered” High Street remains valued by the community and attractive to visitors.”*
- 5.103 The main part of the High Street was comprehensively refurbished as part of the Council’s Art@Centre scheme which was inspired by the town’s art, historic and cultural background. This introduced high quality natural stone paving materials, bespoke granite benches, new lighting, art work, open spaces, public plazas and semi mature tree planting to drastically change the High Street’s physical appearance and open it up to pedestrians. It is considered that this refurbishment has passed the “test of time” although it continues to require on going maintenance and there could be better interpretation of the historical references and art work. Proposals for further improvements to the environment will be developed by the new Business Improvement District (BID) organisation.

5.104 The western end and southern side of the High Street has retained a lot of older buildings which help to create its character. The older two or three storey buildings mean that the High Street gets a lot of sunshine which makes it an attractive space to spend some time.

5.105 The Regeneration Framework notes that:

“The eastern end of High Street has already developed a differentiated offer with a high proportion of independent shops, cafes and restaurants. This part of town is more reflective of the multi-cultural make up of Slough’s population and improvements to the public realm in this area could help to strengthen its draw and benefit local businesses.”

5.106 The northern side of the High Street is dominated by the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres and the large department store units formerly occupied by Marks and Spencer and Debenhams. As explained above all of this is proposed to be redeveloped as part of the Slough Central scheme.

5.107 One of the most important proposals in the Interim Planning Framework is the creation of a new pedestrian street linking the High Street via Mackenzie Street and Brunel Way to the railway station. An improved pedestrian crossing of the A4 and creation of active frontages along this route would encourage more people to visit the reinvigorated High Street.

5.108 The major change that is likely to happen is the redevelopment of the northern side which contains the Queensmere and Observatory Shopping centres as described in the section above. Although there are limited details as to what British Land are proposing for its Slough Central redevelopment the consultation document produced in May 2020 showed there would be a “High Street Neighbourhood” facing the existing High Street.

5.109 The Regeneration Framework has taken the principles from consultation material and the Interim Planning Framework in order to devise an indicative layout for the redeveloped Queensmere and Observatory sites.

5.110 This suggests that there could be a mixed-use quarter on the southern edge of the site fronting onto High Street. This would have retail uses at ground floor but with residential uses above. This new development to the north would then transform the central setting of High Street and turn it from a linear processional route to one that interfaces with a more permeable fabric in the Slough Central site.

5.111 The Framework also states that building heights will need to step down towards the south in order to respond to heritage assets and the lower-scale context on the High Street. It therefore proposes that, in order to avoid unbalancing the High Street a maximum of 6 stories, with a set back at the top, should be allowed on the northern side.

5.112 The southern side of the High Street is composed of numerous small plots which have been built at different times. Some of these buildings have architectural merit and collectively they create the character and ambiance of the shopping street. With the comprehensive redevelopment of the northern side of the High Street expected in the coming years it is important that some form of continuity and familiarity is retained. A limited amount of redevelopment has taken place and there are long term vacant plots at either end of the central strip. New developments have the opportunity to provide residential apartments above.

5.113 The Regeneration Framework suggests that further redevelopments of plots may be acceptable so long as they deliver active ground floors and that the scale of buildings responds to the context. This means that there would typically be four storey developments with the potential for up to two additional set back storeys.

5.114 In addition to being a human scale shopping street, one of the key characteristics of the High Street is its openness. One of the critical tests for any development scheme on the southern side will be whether it continues to allow sunshine onto the Street. The scale and design of any development will have to take account of its impact upon Chapel Street, Herschel Street and the relevant side street.

5.115 One of the most important sites on the southern side of the High Street is the temporary car park on the corner of Church Street which is known as Buckingham Gateway. The Regeneration Framework recognises that there is the opportunity for a higher density mixed use development, reflecting its location in the heart of the town centre. Modern retail / leisure space uses would be attracted to the space fronting the High Street, with scope for residential or other accommodation forms to be stacked above and to the south of the site

5.116 The Regeneration Framework states that the public realm within the High Street will require an upgrade. In addition to promoting the new pedestrian link from the railway station to the High Street, the Regeneration Framework identifies the opportunity to give further priority to pedestrians at both the western and eastern ends.

5.117 At the western end it notes that:

As is common in Slough, space for moving and storing vehicles has been maximised with relatively little space provided for pedestrians, with no public seating or tree planting. Whilst connections for pedestrians to the rest of the High Street are direct via a signal-controlled crossing, they must cross four lanes of traffic on a sweeping bend. Despite the relative hostility of this environment, a number of restaurants and pubs cluster in this area.

5.118 As a result it suggests that the western end of the High Street could be made traffic free by removing the gyratory system and making William Street two ways. This has not been tested and is something that would have to be considered in the Transport Strategy and so is not being promoted in the Spatial Strategy at this stage. Similarly the proposal in the Regeneration Strategy for introducing new footpaths and cycle ways along Windsor Road is a longer term idea which will have to be considered in the Transport Strategy and is not part of the Spatial Strategy.

5.119 The Regeneration Strategy recognises that at the eastern end:

The street already benefits from relatively high levels of footfall as it is on an important walking route that connects the town centres pedestrianised area with neighbourhoods to the east as well as the main pedestrian route to Hatfield car park. The challenge is to capture a greater share of this footfall, encouraging people to pause and explore rather than simply pass through.

5.120 As a result it proposes removing some parking spaces on the northern side to enable more trees to be planted, produce to be displayed, and tables and chairs to be introduced.

5.121 Overall it is considered that the proposals outlined above should enable the Spatial Strategy to realise one of its key aims which is to revitalise the High Street as the primary shopping area in the Centre of Slough.

Area north of the Railway Station including the Stoke Road Corridor

5.122 The Centre of Slough Interim Planning Framework identified the area north of the Station, including Mill Street, as an area of change. This reflected the decision in the Site Allocations DPD (2010) to treat it as part of the town centre and accept the loss of some existing employment uses around Mill St in favour of comprehensive redevelopment for good quality mixed use development plus public realm enhancement.

5.123 Over the last 15 years some new residential development has occurred in the area and there is scope for more to take place. This should improve the image of the area and provide homes in a very sustainable location close to the town centre and next to the railway station.

5.124 Regeneration Framework identifies a Stoke Road Corridor character area. It proposes retaining mixed uses alongside Stoke Road and next to the station with Mill Street is proposed primarily for residential use. The aim is to replace the existing fragmented pattern of existing development and yards with a coherent pattern of residential streets providing a new residential quarter linked with the railway station's northern entrance. This is alongside public realm improvements to enhance the streetscape inclusive of the north forecourt of the

Station and improved pedestrian links.

- 5.125 The Regeneration Framework has identified Mill Street area as one of its key development opportunity areas. As a result it has produced outline design principles and assessed the potential development capacity and the delivery approach for the area. It proposes primarily flats, up to five/seven storeys, to line the street with some town houses adjacent to existing homes to the north for the area north of Mill St. Similar flats are proposed for a small site south of the street that incorporates a currently derelict property. Proposals for a site at Stanley Cottages are similar.
- 5.126 Where sites face Stoke Rd commercial uses are possible at ground floor of new buildings. Comprehensive development is promoted but if brought forward incrementally development on each site must be co-ordinated to deliver a coherent development. Inclusive of adjacent sites on Stoke Road the estimated capacity is over 450 homes. The timescale for delivery is dependent upon when sites become available and could be up to 15 years.
- 5.127 The bus depot site is also a potential redevelopment site, up to 8 storeys, but it is unlikely to happen unless the bus operator relocates and consequently this is not expected to happen within 15 years.
- 5.128 The Regeneration Framework incorporates current Council transport improvements such as enhancements to the north forecourt of the Station and better pedestrian/cycle links to the station from the north in particular a cycle link to the proposed canal basin redevelopment area. It also identifies a new pedestrian/cycle link over the railway, east of the station, to provide easy access to the town centre from the growing and proposed residential areas north of the station such as on Petersfield Avenue and the Akzo Nobel site.
- 5.129 More railway passengers are using the northern entrance to the station partly as a result of recent nearby housing development. This is expected to increase in the future when Elizabeth Line and, hopefully Heathrow train services commence. The northern forecourt of the railway station does not present a good image for the town nor for its ambitions to be a transport hub. The forecourt enhancement includes moving parking spaces to the main station car park and create space for pedestrian flows and station related traffic to spread the load from the south side forecourt.
- 5.130 The overall approach to the Stoke Road corridor area is therefore to encourage development but also ensure it is coordinated and of a good quality so that the benefits of regeneration can be achieved. There is also a need to ensure that all the infrastructure that is necessary to support the schemes is provided.

Stable Residential Areas

- 5.131 Not all of the areas within the Centre of Slough are suitable for redevelopment. The Protecting the Suburbs report (2020) concluded that it was not practical, viable, sustainable or desirable to allow any of the family housing to be lost. As a result the Enhancing our Distinct Suburbs component of the Spatial Strategy proposes that there should be no loss of family housing within existing residential areas.
- 5.132 There are pockets of suburban residential development within the Centre of Slough area, many of which are very close to the town centre. The Centre of Slough Interim Planning Framework identified these suburban areas and came to the following conclusions:
- “They are established and have consistency in terms of character, providing family accommodation close to the centre and contribute to providing a variety of accommodation in the centre of town. There is no specific regeneration benefit in redeveloping these “stable residential areas” and it is impractical to do so because of multiple ownership. Small scale infill is generally not viable or practical as garden areas are too small or it has an adverse effect on neighbours or the character of the area”.*
- 5.133 The Framework highlighted the area south of Herschel Street, known as “Herschel Village”, as a special area with a distinctive character which should be enhanced. It stated that whilst no substantial redevelopment is being promoted, any proposals that do come forward will need to respect the character of the area.
- 5.134 The overall conclusion of the Interim Planning Framework was that there should be no change to the “stable Residential Areas”.
- 5.135 The Regeneration Framework identified a number of character typologies within the Centre of Slough. One of these is areas of historic terraces which survive from the Victorian period. These are made up of a mainly rectilinear grid of streets south of the High Street and northwards as far as the railway line. These provide an attractive residential environment close to the centre.
- 5.136 It identified street based suburban housing some of which consists of 20th century semi-detached dwellings. These consist of coherent and consistent streets characterised by repetitive house types.
- 5.137 The Framework also identified some mixed housing areas to the south of the centre with a less consistent layout or house types. It concluded that because the character is less coherent in these mixed residential areas there is greater potential for intensification or change.

5.138 In the Spatial Concepts section of the report all of these areas are shown as being in the Residential Hinterland. The Spatial Strategy assumes that there will be no significant change within these stable residential areas and will apply the same restraint to them as the other suburban areas of Slough. This means that there will be no loss of family housing as a result of redevelopment or change of use. The change of use to Houses in Multiple Occupation will also not be allowed where this would result in the loss of a family house and have an unacceptable impact upon the amenities of a residential area.

5.139 Herschel Village is identified as a separate area within the Regeneration framework which describes it as follows:

To the south of the High Street the blocks of modest scaled residential terraces will be retained and enhanced. Vacant plots will be developed at a scale that is contextual with the terraces and the links to Herschel Park to the south enhanced through public realm improvements. Modest infill development of service yards on plots to the rear of the High Street will improve integration with the Urban Core to the north. The Upton Hospital site is located within this area and it is anticipated that it will be redeveloped for residential use including family homes

5.140 The same principles will be applied to this area where there will be no loss of family housing.

Open Space and Heritage Assets

Open Space

5.141 There is only a limited amount of public open space within the Centre of Slough. The only green areas of any size are the pocket park on Yew Tree Road and St Mary's church yard. There are, however, a number of parks around the centre. These include Herschel Park, Lascelles Park, Upton Court Park, Salt Hill Park and Bowyer playing fields. These perform a number of functions. Herschel Park is a Grade II Listed ornamental park. Upton Park is the largest in the Borough where major events can be held. Salt Hill Park contains sports and major children's play facilities.

5.142 It is a basic principle of the Spatial Strategy is that there should be no loss of open space. The only exception to this will be at Bowyer playing fields where it was agreed in the Site Allocations DPD that a limited amount of this could be developed as part of the comprehensive regeneration of the Canal Basin subject to enhancement of the retained area.

5.143 New developments within the Centre of Slough will be required to provide open space where this is feasible. The Local Plan requires developments of two hectares or more to provide ten percent of the total area as public open

space. For housing sites under two hectares, open space will be sought at a level appropriate to the type of development and availability of open space in the vicinity. Major redevelopment sites in the centre will be required to provide open spaces and “civic squares”, The more peripheral housing sites will be expected to provide usable green open spaces with play areas.

5.144 The Regeneration Framework noted that:

“Covid19 has shed new light on the value of open space in peoples’ lives with the benefits of access to open spaces, gardens and even balconies increasingly recognised and the inequalities for people who lack this fundamental human need sharply defined.”

5.145 Green roof gardens should be provided within residential blocks and commercial buildings where ever possible. Given the lack of green spaces contributions will be sought for improving the routes to parks, open spaces and facilities such as the canal and Jubilee River.

5.146 The lack of green spaces makes it all the more important that vegetation is included within improvement to the public realm. Tree planting can have multiple benefits in providing both physical and visual amenity, improving biodiversity and enhancing sense of place

Heritage Assets

5.147 The Spatial Strategy has to take account of the heritage of Slough. There are two Conservation Areas immediately adjacent to the Centre of Slough. These are the Upton Park / Upton Village; and Sussex Place / Clifton Road Conservation Areas.

5.148 The Upton Park / Upton Village Conservation Area is located to the south of the town centre and includes the Grade I listed St Laurence Church which dates from Norman times and the Grade II* 14th century former manor house Upton Court. The Conservation Area also encompasses Herschel Park and the Victorian villas that were built around it. Herschel Park is also a Grade II Registered Park.

5.149 Sussex Place / Clifton Road Conservation Area is located at the eastern end of the High Street and encompasses many of Slough’s finer Victorian houses.

5.150 Other listed buildings within Slough town centre include:

- St. Mary’s Church (Grade II*);
- Slough railway station (Grade II);
- Upton Hospital (the former workhouse) (Grade II);
- Church of Our Lady Immaculate and St Ethelbert, Wellington St. (Grade II);
- The Red Cow Public House on St Laurence Way (Grade II).

5.151 There are also a number of Locally Listed Buildings which are subject to Policy EN17 in the Local Plan. There are also non designated assets such as “Herschel Village” which is described above.

5.152 The re use of Upton Hospital for residential purposes was proposed in the Site Allocations DPD (2010) in order to secure the long term future of the Listed Buildings on the site. This proposed the redevelopment of surplus buildings with little or no architectural or historic significance in a way which positively enhanced the setting of the Listed Buildings.

5.153 The Regeneration Framework identified this as an opportunity area and proposed that:

Subject to relocating the hospital services, the scheme offer scope for residential - houses and flats (and possibly senior living / care home) - to provide a more diverse housing offer in and around the town centre. Re-purposing of the listed buildings for residential uses to create an attractive setting for wider development, whilst demolition of other buildings of poor quality as part of the transformation of this site.

5.154 The Spatial Strategy supports the principle of enhancing the heritage asset in a way which would create a distinctive residential area which provided some much needed family homes.

5.155 Whilst the Spatial Strategy has sought to steer development away from heritage assets there will be some development near to St Ethelbert’s Church, the railway station and Mary’s Church. In each case schemes will have to be carefully designed to ensure that that they meet the test in the NPPF that there should be less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset.

Other Key Sites

5.156 There are a number of other key sites within the Centre of Slough which are important for delivering the Spatial Strategy.

5.157 Planning permission has already been given for the redevelopment of the Horlicks site for 1,300 dwellings. This retains the iconic factory and refurbishes the existing clock tower and chimney in order to create a high quality and distinctive new residential quarter. It also provides the opportunity to reconnect the site with the town centre with a new pedestrian route along Stoke Gardens. The Regeneration Framework has identified the opportunity to redevelop the Stoke gardens area which will help to make this area more attractive with significant townscape improvements.

5.158 The Azko Nobel site on Wexham Road and National Grid site on Uxbridge Road was identified in the Issues and Options consultation (2017) as a possible new residential neighbourhood. Proposals have now been brought forward by

Panattoni, the new owners of the Akzo Nobel site for a mixed commercial and residential scheme. Outline planning permission has been agreed for up to 1,000 houses on the site with around 40,000m² of warehousing to the north. It is propose that this should deliver some family accommodation as well as new employment. Provision will be made for a new bus link through the site which would be completed through to Uxbridge Road when the National Grid Site is developed.

- 5.159 Proposals for the redevelopment of the Canal basin were first included I the 1992 Local Plan. The Site Allocations DPD (2010) agreed the principle of allowing some residential development within Bowyer playing field in order to deliver comprehensive regeneration which would maximise th attractiveness of the anal and basin.
- 5.160 The Regeneration Framework identified Stoke Wharf, as it is now called, as having the potential to provide new residential (mostly flats), with enhancement of – and connection to - the canal waterway, associated towpath and neighbouring playing fields.
- 5.161 The Council has bought the former Travis Perkins site in order to help deliver this important regeneration project. It is in the process of bringing forward proposals for Stoke Wharf in partnership with the Canal's Trust and a private developer.
- 5.162 All of these sites will help to deliver around 9,000 houses in the Centre of Slough over the Local Plan period which is a very important part of the Spatial Strategy.

Connections

- 5.163 The Regeneration Framework highlights that improving connections and overcoming severance is fundamental to the vision for the centre of Slough. This is to create an environment that is more attractive to pedestrians and cyclists. It will enable residents in nearby suburbs to more easily access the centre and to feel more connected with the town centre. It also allows town centre residents to easily access nearby open spaces enhancing the attractiveness of living in the centre where most homes will be flats.
- 5.164 A network of new and improved routes in the centre is associated with proposals to create new public spaces in the centre making Slough a more pleasant and healthy place to live and work in. The spaces could include station forecourt, a new Civic Square within the Queensmere redevelopment and, within the North West Quadrant development. The area around St. Mary's Church could be enhanced to become a more useable space. Connections might take the form of traffic free routes or enhancing existing streets to turn these from imposing highways into civilised, tree lined streets that have a more

human-scale environment.

5.165 Within the centre the most important connection proposed is a street from the Station to the High Street and formed in a way to minimise the severance effect of traffic on Wellington Street. Also proposed are complimentary links, to the east, from High Street to Wellington Street reintroducing street links lost when the shopping centre was built.

5.166 Other proposals include:

- Enhanced connections to and from the railway station in particular to the canal basin redevelopment, the canal tow path, and beyond but avoiding Stoke Rd.
- A link over the railway east of the station.
- A bridge over the Windsor branch railway to link the centre, North West Quadrant, to Salt Hill Park and suburbs beyond without using the A4.
- Links from the centre to Herschel Park and potentially beyond to Jubilee River and to Lacselles Park.
- Routes from the centre to Akzo Nobel residential development.

5.167 To implement the connections policies and guidance will be needed to ensure necessary land is available to form the links, that infrastructure is provided as new built development progresses and that public realm is high quality. Where public funding is not available developer contributions will be needed and in some cases the Council may use its powers to acquire land needed for new connections.

5.168 The details of future connections in the Centre of Slough will be determined in the Transport Strategy. The design of the connections will be informed by a public realm strategy.