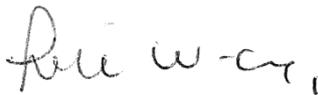


Date of issue: Monday 20th September, 2021

MEETING:	PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL Councillors Mohammad (Chair), Strutton (Vice-Chair), Bal, A Cheema, H Cheema, R Davis, Gill, Grewal and Minhas)
DATE AND TIME:	TUESDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2021 AT 6.30 PM
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	MANIZE TALUKDAR 07871 982919

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



JOSIE WRAGG
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I

<u>AGENDA</u> <u>ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
	Apologies for absence.		
1.	Declarations of Interest	-	-
	<i>All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 9 and Appendix B of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed.</i>		
	CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS		
2.	Minutes of the Meeting of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel held on 21st April 2021	1 - 4	-

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
3.	Member Questions <i>(An opportunity for panel members to ask questions of the relevant Director/Associate Director, relating to pertinent, topical issues affecting their Directorate – maximum 10 minutes allocated.)</i>	-	-
SCRUTINY ISSUES			
4.	Bus Service Improvement Plan	5 - 58	All
5.	Slough Local Plan - Proposed Consultation on the Release of Green Belt Sites for Family Housing	59 - 88	All
6.	Asset Disposal Update	89 - 96	All
ITEMS FOR INFORMATION			
7.	Forward Work Programme	97 - 102	-
8.	Date of Next Meeting - 8th November 2021	-	-

Press and Public

Attendance and accessibility: You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before any items in the Part II agenda are considered. For those hard of hearing an Induction Loop System is available in the Council Chamber.

Webcasting and recording: The public part of the meeting will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The footage will remain on our website for 12 months. A copy of the recording will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

In addition, the law allows members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record or tweet the proceedings at public meetings. Anyone proposing to do so is requested to advise the Democratic Services Officer before the start of the meeting. Filming or recording must be overt and persons filming should not move around the meeting room whilst filming nor should they obstruct proceedings or the public from viewing the meeting. The use of flash photography, additional lighting or any non hand held devices, including tripods, will not be allowed unless this has been discussed with the Democratic Services Officer.

Emergency procedures: The fire alarm is a continuous siren. If the alarm sounds Immediately vacate the premises by the nearest available exit at either the front or rear of the Chamber and proceed to the assembly point: The pavement of the service road outside of Westminster House, 31 Windsor Road.

Covid-19: To accommodate social distancing there is significantly restricted capacity of the Council Chamber and places for the public are very limited. We would encourage those wishing to observe the meeting to view the live stream. Any members of the public who do wish to attend in person should be encouraged to contact the Democratic Services Officer before the meeting.

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Wednesday, 21st April, 2021.

Present:- Councillors Hulme (Chair), Ajaib, Begum, Matloob, Minhas, S Parmar and Sabah

Residents Panel Board:- Trevor Pollard

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Dhaliwal, Gahir, Nazir, Pantelic and D Parmar

PART 1

62. Declarations of Interest

None received.

63. Minutes of the last meeting held on 25th February 2021

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2021 be approved as a correct record.

64. Member Questions

None received.

65. Safer Slough Partnership Update

The Group Manager, Community Safety, Housing Regulation and Enforcement outlined details of the progress of the Safer Slough Partnership (SSP) in relation to the delivery of work aligned to the partnership 20/21 priorities. The SSP was co-chaired by the Chief Executive of Slough Borough Council and the Local Policing Area (LPA) Commander for Thames Valley Police and supported by representatives from multi-agency statutory and community partners.

In addressing the Panel, Gavin Wong, Local Police Area Commander explained that the impact of the global pandemic meant that 20/21 had been a year of challenge and change. Recorded crime levels had fallen and risen in line with the lockdowns and easing of lockdowns from April 2020 to February 2021. It was explained that the pandemic had influenced and changed the behaviour of victims and perpetrators of crime and SSP had had to adapt quickly to the ever changing crime picture and threat assessment throughout the year.

The new operating model for the SSP and priorities for 20/21 were highlighted. However, as result of Covid-19 pandemic, work was focused on the priorities relating to Domestic Violence and Re-Offending and Substance Misuse.

Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel - 21.04.21

Data indicated a steep national increase in domestic abuse (DA) incidences, as a result of Covid-19 lockdown measures. The SSP recognised the critical need to intervene at an early stage, and put into place measures to support victims of DA which included:

- Domestic Abuse Covid-19 Response Group - A weekly DA Covid-19 Response Group was initiated on 7th April 2020 to provide a multi-agency co-ordinated response to DA during the pandemic. SBC and partner call centre handlers were provided with a DA script.
- Domestic Abuse and the Business Community: Training offered to all hairdressing salons and barbers, both within Slough, and in neighbouring areas.
- Domestic Abuse Awareness Raising Campaign: Public space and digital communications campaign aimed at raising awareness of support available; campaign materials made available to all partners. Increased reporting of DA incidents to the police during lockdown may in part be attributed to this online digital communications piece.

A number of comments were made and points raised in the ensuing discussion, including by Members in attendance under Rule 30 and were summarised as:

- Priorities were based on data but no quantifiable data to measure them against. It was explained that whilst collection of data and use of it in a meaningful manner remained a challenge, the priorities that had been identified were relevant to the needs of the communities of the town and the challenges they faced.
- Referring specifically to the crime rates for Slough in comparison to other Berkshire local authorities, it was explained that the borough was more akin to London boroughs and challenges in the town were unique. Partnership working was key to continue working towards addressing the challenges presented.
- Although figures relating to modern slavery had increased this could be attributed to improved reporting following a recent campaign to raise awareness of this type of crime. It was noted that a Modern Slavery Exploitation Group had also been established.
- Councillor Pantelic, in her role as Chair of the Slough Wellbeing Board (SWB), welcomed the recent Jubilee River Campaign, which highlighted the dangers of swimming in rivers. The importance of improved cross partnership work between SWB, SSP and the Safeguarding Board to ensure no duplicity of work was discussed and it was agreed that the matter would be raised with the Chief Executive.
- The key role councillors had in maintaining a dialogue between their local communities and the police was emphasised. Members were informed that neighbourhood teams were being reviewed in order to build consistency and greater active local policing within communities.
- In response to the need for a strategy for a Safer Slough Town Centre the Committee were informed that this was a priority for the neighbourhood team.

- Clarification was sought regarding the SSP Project Boards and allocation of resources. It was explained that board membership was varied and that they were responsible for reporting to the Police and Crime Commissioner as to how funds had been used to ensure value for money was being obtained.

The Chair thanked Mr Wong for attending the meeting and the Committee agreed a vote of thanks to all frontline police officers for carrying out their duties during the pandemic, often during challenging circumstances.

Resolved – That details of the report be noted.

66. Update on Waste Management Facilities - Household Waste & Recycling Centre Services

The Executive Director Customer and Community provided the Panel with an overview of the services provided at, and the performance of, the Chalvey Household Waste and Recycling Centre (Chalvey HWRC). Use of the site was free to residents. Although the recycling percentage rates in 2020 had improved to 35%, it was explained that the ability to recycle was dependent on the availability of “markets” for recycled products.

It was confirmed that there were no current plans to introduce charges for non household waste and should there be a change to this policy in the future, charges were likely to be in line with the pricing schedule introduced by Bucks County Council at its Burnham HWRC; details of which were set out in the report. A Member asked whether there had been an increase in fly-tipping in the Borough or an increase in the non-chargeable waste coming to Chalvey HWRC as a direct result of Bucks County Council’s decision to reduce opening hours at its Burnham HWRC site from April 2019. Panel Members were informed that there had been no significant impact on non-chargeable waste coming to the Chalvey HWRC site or an increase in this type of fly-tipping in Slough.

The Chair stated that 25% of residents did not have a car and asked whether there were any plans to implement pedestrian access to the site. The Executive Director informed Panel Members that health and safety concerns of implementing such measures would need to be explored further.

Resolved – That details of the report be noted.

67. Members' Attendance Record 2020/21

Resolved – That the details of the Members’ Attendance Record be noted.

68. Date of Next Meeting - 28th June 2021

The date of the next meeting was noted as 28th June 2021.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.24 pm)

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Place Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 28th September 2021

CONTACT OFFICER: Eddie Hewitt. Principle Transport Strategy Officer.
(For all Enquiries) 01753 474101

WARD(S): All

PART I
FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION

BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. **Purpose of Report**

A Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) has been created in partnership between the Council and the bus operators of registered local services in Slough, along with a new Enhanced Partnership with the operators (EP). This is an essential development in the Council's response to the Government's National Bus Strategy (NBS). The BSIP is due to be submitted in its final form to the Department for Transport (DfT) by 31st October 2021. A cabinet report has been produced in support of this proposed BSIP plan. This, will be reviewed by cabinet on the 18th October. In order to present the most satisfactory version of both the cabinet report and BSIP, we are seeking comments from the Scrutiny panel first, as requested by the Lead Member, Cllr. Anderson. All comments and requests will be considered and applied to the cabinet report and BSIP as appropriate.

This is considered a matter of urgency due to the tight deadlines imposed by the DfT. There will be limited time available to apply any necessary changes following the panel meeting.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Panel is requested:

a) to note the report for information regarding the BSIP and related Enhanced Partnership and

b) to make any comments and requests for possible amendment to the cabinet report to follow and the associated BSIP document.

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

3a. **Slough Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The BSIP and Enhanced Partnership will contribute to meeting the needs of the Slough Wellbeing Strategy as follows:

Priorities:

1. Starting Well

Increased availability and patronage of public transport is essential to all aspects of sustainability. The BSIP will help create a safer and more reliable network, which will be of benefit especially to young people, include school children, by meeting their transport needs in the first instance, and also forming part of a much wider behavioural change process that is needed in society, and which must cover all age groups.

2. Integration (relating to Health & Social Care)

A better, more reliable bus network will lead to greater accessibility and mobility, particularly for those without private transport. The BSIP will help ensure that services will provide better access in particular to health care services and facilities, and all locations where people want and need to travel to. Improved connectivity across the borough is expected.

3. Strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods

The BSIP includes measures to promote environmental sustainability, including better air quality and reduced carbon emissions. This includes proposals to support better quality fleets and zero emission buses. Furthermore, reduced congestion and better infrastructure, along with improved modal integration are all expected to be realised through the plan.

4. Workplace health

As above, better environmental conditions will contribute to better workplace health, including a fitter workforce, for the bus companies and more widely throughout the borough.

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership will support all outcomes of the Five Year Plan, 2020-2025, noting, specifically:

Outcome 2: *Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs*

The schemes that will be delivered through the Enhanced Partnership Plan will be designed to reduce congestion and improve safety at key locations, also to improve air quality, and will therefore lead to better public health across the borough.

Outcome 3: *Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay.*

Enhanced provision of public transport will improve social inclusion by making Slough more accessible and increasing mobility across the borough. This will provide better access to commercial / retail centres as well as access to jobs and education. Increased patronage of public transport will also contribute to the reduction in CO² and improved air quality.

Outcome 4: *Our residents will live in good quality homes*

The BSIP will focus on services and infrastructure which will provide high quality transportation links for both existing and new areas of housing development.

Outcome 5: *Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide opportunities for our residents*

Better connectivity through improved services and links will contribute to economic growth. Greater priority for public transport and increased modal shift will reduce congestion and make journey times more reliable on the road network.

4. Other Implications

(a) Financial

As proposed, the BSIP does not include any immediate financial commitments.

However, given the requirements of the Government and the DfT, in the absence of a satisfactory BSIP, a range of negative financial implications for the Council would be expected to arise.

From 2022, Local Authorities with BSIPs / EPPs in place will be invited to submit bids for EP / BSIP related schemes, for funding contributions from the overall £3bn pool. From Government guidance, it is not clear how much will be available in due course for scheme contributions. However, currently, the only way to have the opportunity to formally seek any such funding is to have an Enhanced Partnership in place.

An underlying principle applicable to all schemes and improvements proposed in the BSIP is that they are subject to availability of funding and that they are feasible in all relevant ways. Currently there is no funding available from the Council. There may be some consideration of the use of possible future Section 106 contributions as partial funding towards schemes, but this is not currently being proposed. Furthermore, the Council is currently seeking ways to reduce expenditure in any way legally and practically possible.

SBC officers will negotiate agreements with bus operators that are conditional on the level of funding that can be secured. This may lead to some efficiency savings in due course, but no such savings have been confirmed at this stage.

Bus operators will be expected to be equally committed to the BSIP (they will be joint owners of and legally bound to all commitments in the plan). This, in theory, would suggest financial investment and contribution. However, in addition to the need for all scheme delivery to be subject to available funding and feasibility, commercial interest will also be an inevitable factor affecting the likelihood of any such constraints.

The DfT has said that it will welcome bids to other funds / sources, e.g. Levelling Up, to contribute to the success of the EP.

Regarding services to Heathrow Airport, there is a possibility that funding opportunities may arise in the future, potentially to be provided by Heathrow Airport Limited, for improved services across the relevant authority areas. Noting the current economic circumstances and the impacts of COVID-19, no such funding sources have currently been made available.

Overall, subject to the successful establishment of the partnership, and ongoing effective provision of bus services and relations with the bus operators, no negative financial impacts are anticipated.

However, should the Council choose not to submit a satisfactory BSIP, this would immediately raise financial problems for the Council. This would include the cessation of COVID-19 related payments, which would reduce support for bus services and would therefore be detrimental to both the Council and the operators, who would then be obliged to provide funding for necessary measures from alternative sources.

A grant of £100K already has been received by SBC from the DfT from the Bus Capacity Grant. This was in response to the Council's provisional indication that it has

committed to an Enhanced Partnership arrangement and BSIP submission. A subsequent £50k has been received to further assist in the development of the BSIP.

The funding covers the following:

- Preparation of the formal statement committing to an Enhanced Partnership
- Development of the BSIP, including preparatory work with the bus operators
- Development of the subsequent specific scheme bids in the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP).

All of this expenditure is subject to satisfactory business cases being approved by the Expenditure Control Panel.

Consideration is already being given to the suspension of subsidies by the Council to support a number of services that are not commercially viable. The lack of a satisfactory BSIP would virtually guarantee that there is no scope to engage with the operators to try to maintain these services on any basis. It would also prevent the ability to bid for DfT funding for schemes in the lifetime of the National Bus Strategy, placing both the Council and bus operators at a disadvantage compared to other authorities where partnerships or franchises are in place.

The budget for the Council's contribution to the Enhanced Partnership will be managed by the Transport team in the Strategy and Infrastructure division of the Place directorate.

(b) Risk Management

A risk assessment has not been conducted specifically to accompany the preparation and submission of the BSIP to the DfT. However, when it comes to progressing proposed schemes, the risk assessments, notably including financial risks, will be considered and prepared as appropriate.

In broad terms, there is no financial risk associated with the preparation and submission of the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership. Conversely, there would be a significant risk should the Council decide not to proceed with its BSIP commitments already made. This relates to the comments in the Finance section above.

Similarly, there are no policy related risks associated with the preparation and submission of the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership. Given the options made available by Government to local transport authorities, the BSIP and EP route is considered the best way to deliver on policy commitments already made by the Council. Conversely, again, there would be a significant risk of failing to meet targets and commitments should the Council not continue with the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership.

Recommendation from section 2 above	Risks/Threats/Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
<i>To note the report for information regarding the BSIP</i>	<i>No risks. This is an opportunity to gain knowledge of the upcoming</i>	<i>Transport team engaging with the DfT and responding to all guidance.</i>		<i>The BSIP will be presented along with a report to the cabinet meeting on October 18th</i>

	<p><i>implications of the NBS at local level. Also to ensure that the Council's BSIP is as well designed as possible to meet the needs of bus users and the wider community throughout the borough.</i></p>	<p><i>Professional consultants with detailed knowledge of Public Transport have been engaged to assist in the preparation of the BSIP and EP.</i></p> <p><i>Engagement with the bus operators is ongoing.</i></p>		<p>2021.</p> <p><i>All proposals for BSIP schemes and measures are subject to feasibility, funding and consultation.</i></p>
<p><i>To make any comments and requests for possible amendment to the cabinet report</i></p>	<p>No risks.</p> <p>As above, this is an opportunity for the BSIP to be fine-tuned as well as possible, to ensure that it is ultimately results in the successful further development of the Enhanced Partnership, as well as success in securing funding from the DfT to facilitate the delivery of schemes and measures proposed in the BSIP.</p>			<p>Any responses from this panel meeting will be collated and considered by the Transport team, and applied as appropriate, in the first instance to the cabinet report.</p> <p>Cabinet members will have will be asked to approve the draft BSIP presented and to make any further comments and requests. Ultimately, any final amendments to the BSIP will be subject to approval by Cllr. Anderson with support from the AD for Place, Operations and team.</p>

				<i>All proposals for BSIP schemes and measures are subject to feasibility, funding and consultation.</i>
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(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

The associated cabinet report and BSIP document have been reviewed by Harrow Public Law.

There are no Humans Rights Act implications in this proposal.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

This section should include an assessment as to the impact of the proposal/policy on race, gender and disability groups. The council also requires assessments to take into consideration the possible impact for age, religion and sexual orientation and mitigate against any adverse impact. Please ensure that an Equalities Impact Assessment Initial Screening is undertaken.

(e) Workforce

Three SBC staff are currently engaged in overseeing public transport operations and delivery, but all three have a wide range of duties of which public transport is only one. The team has been supplemented by specialist support from Atkins Ltd. Hence there is limited officer capacity to engage with bus operators and to provide proactive policy and operational direction. This situation will require ongoing review and potentially additional resources to ensure the optimum success of the BSIP and the EP.

5. **Supporting Information**

The overarching objective in establishing the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership is to deliver significant improvements in bus services in the borough. This is designed to result in more frequent services, more reliable journey times, increased bus patronage, lower fares, better and easier ticketing systems, and a raft of associated benefits.

5.1. The structure and main contents of the BSIP are as follows:

- Review of the current bus services ‘offer’ in Slough
- The headline targets for improvement, specifying journey time, journey reliability, passenger numbers and passenger satisfaction as the main features to be addressed.
- Proposed measures and how they can be delivered, including (but not limited to) bus priority, service frequency, fares, ticketing, modal integration and so forth.

- A proposed reporting mechanism.
- Reference to DfT guidance throughout.

5.2. The following general principals apply to the BSIP:

- The DfT has instructed local authorities and bus operators to be ambitious in their plans.
- All the measures proposed in this plan are subject to feasibility and availability of funding, and also to satisfactory consultation outcomes.
- The proposals also depend upon thorough cooperation between the Council as Local Transport Authority and the bus operators in Slough.
- The BSIP is the first phase of the overall plan. Subsequently, as the second phase, an Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP) will be prepared, again in partnership with the bus operators, for submission to the DfT. This will include more detailed, scheme specific content for the purpose of requesting funding.

5.3. The priorities to be addressed in the establishment of the Enhanced Partnership will also be in line with the overarching Council policies, notably the Carbon Strategy. The Council has committed to challenging targets, with a nett zero carbon target by 2040 for the borough, and a stretch target of 2030 for the Council's own organisation operations. Increased public transport will make a significant contribution to meeting these targets.

5.4. In Transport terms, specifically, and the links with Planning, the Council's Transport policy is focused on providing a sustainable, integrated travel solution at local level. At the heart of this is the need for modal shift, with public transport and mass movement of people playing an essential role here. Multi-modal and linked journeys involving public transport and active travel especially, are also crucial. The BSIP will also support the following specific related policies:

- The Strategic Transport Infrastructure Plan (STIP)
- The Network Management Plan
- The Local Transport Plan.
- The Low Emission Strategy.
- The Slough Local Plan and Spatial Strategy.

5.5. The requirement is now to submit the final version of the BSIP to the DfT by the end of October 2021. No exceptions are being allowed by the DfT for late submission. Should the BSIP not be submitted on time, it is unknown exactly what the implications would be for the Council, but there is a possibility that any initial allocation of funding, and any future funding opportunities would be either lost or delayed.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

The BSIP and Enhanced Partnership have not been considered by any other Council committees.

7. **Conclusion**

The key purpose of this review by the panel is to ensure that there is wider awareness amongst members of the main features and proposals contained within the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The BSIP is a new plan in response to the national bus strategy, with far reaching implications relating to the success of public transport at local level.

The key action required is for panel members to make any comments or requests in this review in order to make any necessary amendments. This is largely expected to be a fine tuning process, although all comments will be considered and addressed as appropriate. The overall purpose of this scrutiny review, then, is to ensure that the BSIP and the associated cabinet report are in the best state possible prior to the October cabinet meeting. Ultimately, the recommendations to cabinet are to approve the BSIP in principle, request any final amendments, approve the submission of the BSIP to the DfT, and authorise the commencement of the preparation of the subsequent Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme (EPP), which will also be presented to Cabinet for review, once ready, for approval in principle.

8. **Appendices Attached**

- 'A' BSIP v0.3 The Bus Service Improvement Plan – in draft
- 'B' BSIP Prioritisation and Summary Scoring Matrix
- 'C' BSIP Equality Impact Assessment

9. **Background Papers**

- Slough Baseline: Technical Note
- Significant Decision: Place – Strategy and Infrastructure: Response to the National Bus Strategy. Dated 12th July 2021.
- DfT: Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy
- DfT: National Bus Strategy: Bus Service Improvement Plans Guidance to local authorities and bus operators

National Bus Strategy

Bus Service Improvement Plan

Slough Borough Council

September 2021

0.3

WORKING DRAFT FOR CLIENT COMMENT

Notice

This document and its contents have been prepared and are intended solely as information for Slough Borough Council and use in relation to Updated draft

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This document has 34 pages including the cover.

Document history

Document title: Bus Service Improvement Plan

Document reference: 0.3

Revision	Purpose description	Originated	Checked	Reviewed	Authorised	Date
0.1	First draft for client review	MG	<initials>	<initials>	<initials>	<date>
0.2	Updated draft for senior officer consideration	MG				10/09/21
0.3	Eddie Hewitt comments 10/09/21	MG				10/09/21

Client signoff

Client	Slough Borough Council
Project	National Bus Strategy
Job number	5207070
Client signature/date	

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1. Overview

DfT Guidance

Name of LTA(s) that the BSIP covers. This should also set out whether the BSIP covers a single LTA or more than one and the justification for that decision.

Map showing geographical area(s).

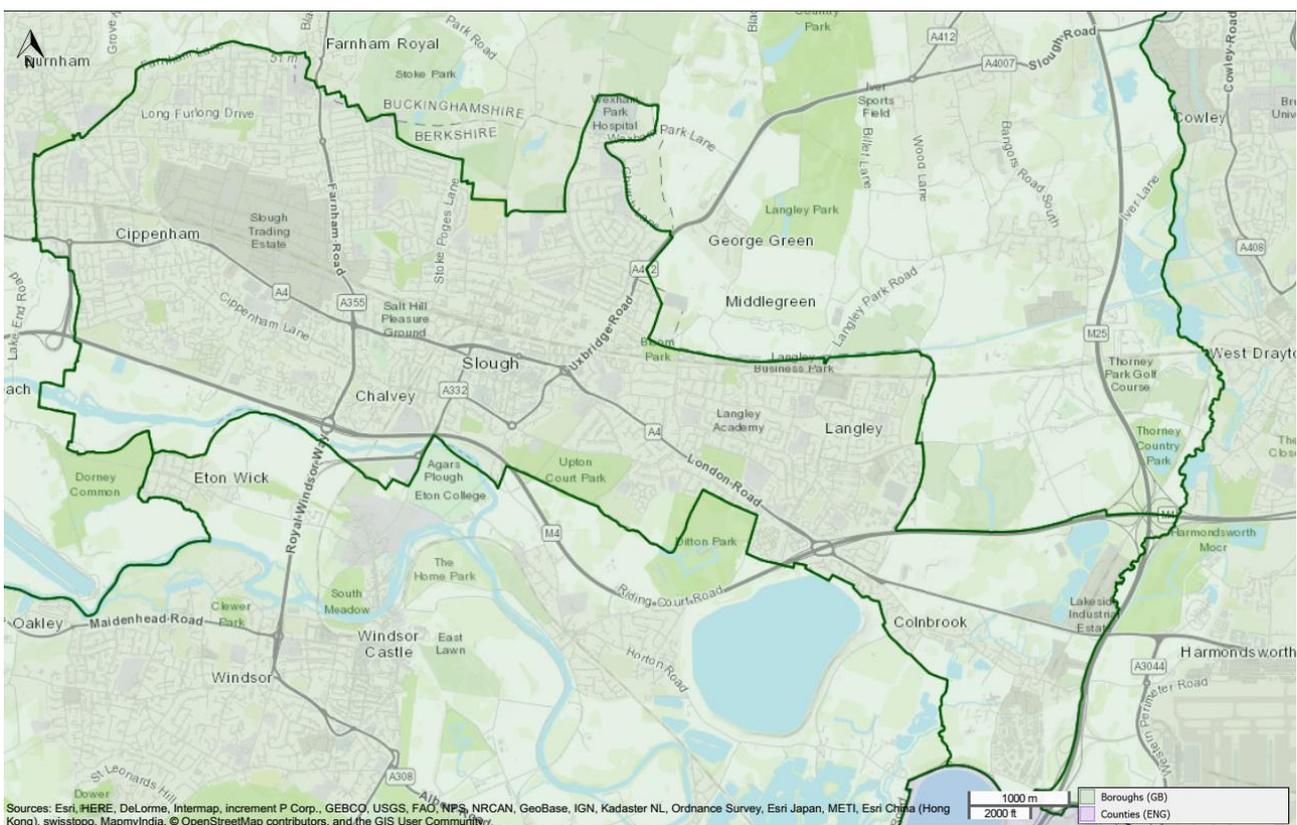
Explanation of whether that area(s) are proposed to be covered by an enhanced partnership scheme and/ or will form part of a franchising appraisal. All the LTA geographical area must be covered either by an EP or a franchising proposal

(Advice on using both an EP and franchising see advice on using both under Step 1 of the main guidance).

Duration of the published BSIP, arrangements for annual review and how it will be aligned with wider Local Transport Plans.

This Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) covers the entire administrative area of Slough Borough Council illustrated at Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1 – Slough Administrative Area



Slough Borough Council intends to enter into an Enhanced Partnership. Its notice can be found here: [National Bus Strategy / Bus Back Better – Slough Borough Council](#).

This Bus Service Improvement Plan will be published on 29 October 2021 and the Enhanced Partnership will enter force on 1 April 2022. Slough Borough Council will publish a review of the BSIP by 31 October of each subsequent year for as long as the Enhanced Partnership is in force.

The BSIP is consistent with the Bus Strategy and wider Local Transport Plan 3 covering the period 2011 – 2026 and which can be found here: [Local Transport Plan – Slough Borough Council](#).

2. Current bus offer to passengers

DfT Guidance

The Strategy requires BSIPs to drive improvements to local bus services in a number of ways – for example, by setting targets for passenger growth and developing plans for multi-modal ticketing. This section should provide an analysis and data of how the current bus network compares to the BSIP aims and objectives set out in the subsequent sections.

- **Analysis of existing local bus services compared to BSIP outcomes**
 - How current services meet or fall short of BSIP expectations as set out in this guidance and the Strategy.
- **LTA financial support for bus services**
 - Explain the financial support that the LTA(s) is providing for subsidised public bus services, listing the numbers of routes and route mileage supported.
- **Other factors that affect the use of local bus services**
 - This should include the extent and pricing of parking provisions in town and cities and the split between LTA and private sector provision. It should also include current LTA spending on parking enforcement.

This section describes the bus service offer to Slough, assesses its quality and suitability for Slough residents, and analyses the impact of background highway and socio-demographic conditions on buses. At a number of points it refers to “Slough BSIP Baseline Evidence Base” (SBBEB) which addresses these issues in some details and to which the reader is referred for more detail.

2.1. Analysis of existing local bus services compared to BSIP outcomes

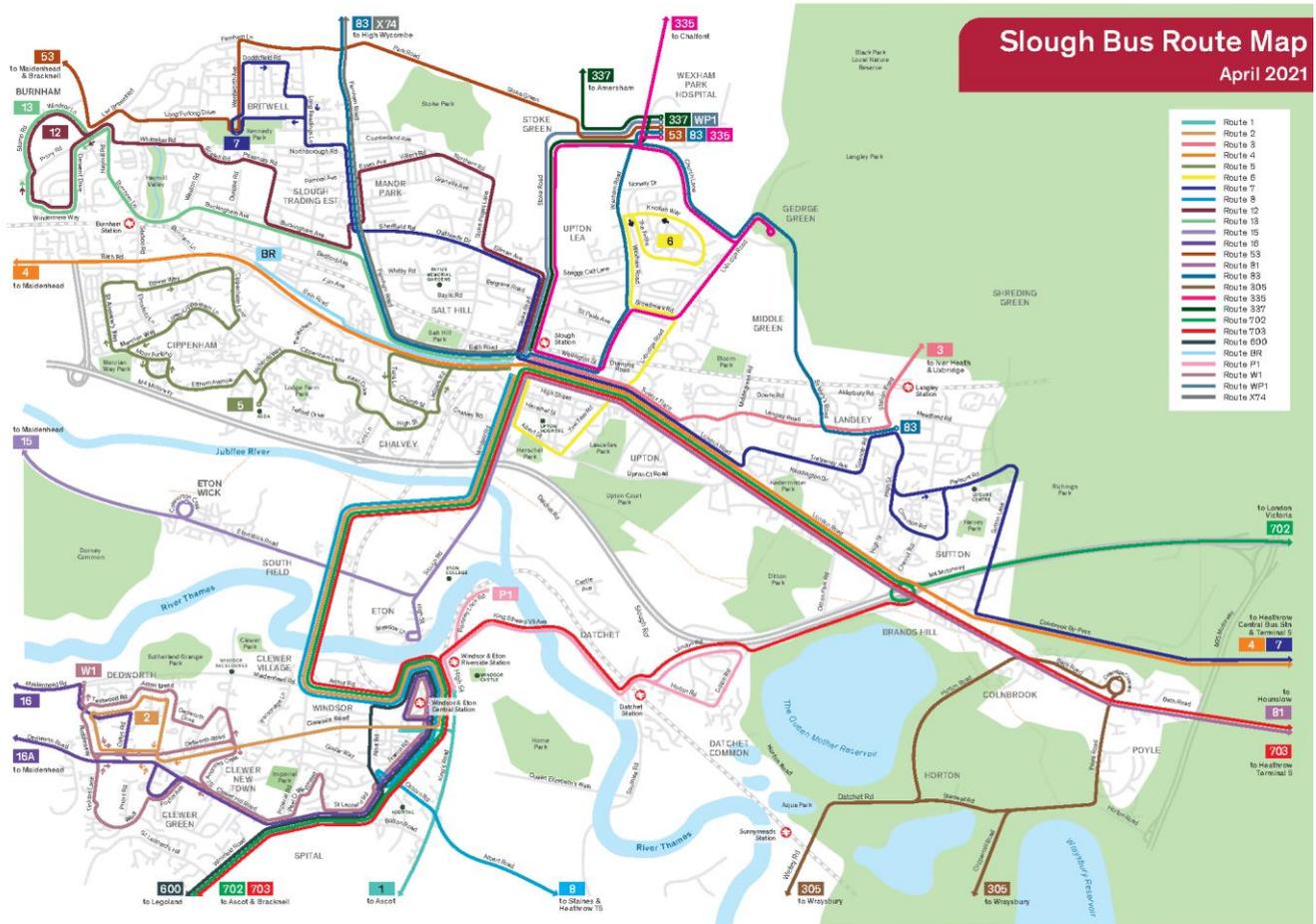
2.1.1. Operator Context

Slough’s bus network is provided by a number of operators, predominantly commercially, but some operating under tender to Slough Borough Council and other authorities. The major exception is bus route 81, which is procured by Transport for London and operated as part of the London bus network in order to fulfil TfL’s duty to secure local bus services to the benefit of London residents.

The major operator is First in Berkshire, with Thames Valley Buses (a subsidiary of Reading Buses) operating a significant number of services in Slough. Carousel Buses, Reading Buses and Redline Buses operate fewer services but are still a substantial presence in the authority. Carousel Buses re-started commercial operations in Slough at the end of August 2021. Bear Buses and Red Eagle operate limited services in Slough primarily under contract to other authorities, while Stewarts Coaches operates an innovative service connecting Slough rail station with major employers on Slough Trading Estate.

Figure 2-1 shows the bus map for Slough as at April 2021.

Figure 2-1 – Slough Bus Map



2.1.2. Bus Service Supply

The highest frequency service is TfL’s route 81 with up to 6 buses an hour (bph) at peak times. Transport for London provides this service in fulfilment of its duties under section 181 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 and its provision reflects the high volume of movement between Hounslow, Hillingdon and schools in Slough, but also to key employment locations such as Poyle Industrial Estate.

The next highest frequency is on First’s route 7 which before Covid ran up to 4 times an hour between Britwell, Slough Town Centre and Heathrow Airport, and on Redline Buses’ route WP1 between Slough Bus Station and Wexham Park Hospital (on the northern fringe of Slough), also at 4 buses per hour.

Most parts of Slough are serviced by routes running to a half-hourly frequency, with (where they exist) hourly services on evenings and Sundays. Most residents are within 400 metres of the line of bus route.

Services operate to a number of locations outside Slough. Heathrow Airport has been mentioned, but others include Windsor, Egham, Staines, High Wycombe, Maidenhead and Uxbridge. With the exceptions of Windsor and Heathrow, these also operate to half-hourly frequencies.

Bus journey speeds are relatively slow. We estimate an average scheduled journey speed in the morning peak (as at August 2021 timetables) of around 18 km/hour within the Slough boundary.

BSIP outcome: Only one bus service provides a ‘walk-up’ frequency of 5-6 bph. Other services are regular but relatively low frequency.

BSIP outcome: Regular but low frequency services to major settlements outside Slough – typically 2 buses per hour.

BSIP outcome: Low scheduled speed of around 18km/hour in the AM peak.

2.1.3. Bus Fares

Bus fares in Slough vary substantially. SBBEB Section 5-3 provides a summary of published fares. From this there is substantial variation in fares and the offers to different groups, notably younger people.

Table 2-1 illustrates some key fares charged and benchmarks these against other nearby towns.

Table 2-1 – Bus Fare Comparison

	Day Ticket	Weekly Ticket	Carnet Product
Slough			
First in Berkshire	£6.50 (on-bus); £6.00 (electronic)	£22.00 (on-bus); £20.00 (electronic)	10 trip: £24.00
Thames Valley Buses	£5.50	£17.00	5-day saver: Cippenham £15 / Slough & Windsor 5-day saver £17
Transport for London	£4.65 (daily cap)	£21.80 (weekly cap)	-
Benchmark			
Stagecoach: Basingstoke	£4.60 (on-bus); £4.40 (electronic)	£12.30 (on-bus); £11.80 (electronic)	n/a
Reading Buses: Reading	£4.00	£16.00 (electronic)	10 single journeys £16.00
High Wycombe Smartzone	£4.60	£16.00	Any 5 days £20.00 / 10 trips £18.00
High Wycombe: Carousel Buses	£4.00	£15.00	Any 5 days £17.50 / 12 trips £18.00
High Wycombe: Arriva	£3.90	£15.00	3-day flexi £11.00

This analysis suggests that fares in Slough are significantly higher than those in neighbouring towns in the Thames Valley, and that therefore there may be a need to reduce them in order to provide an attractive offer to passengers. For example, day tickets for the two commercial Slough operators considered lie in the range of £5.50 to £6.50, compared to a range of £3.90 to £4.60 in the towns considered outside Slough.

Bus fares are also generally higher than rail fares: between Slough and Windsor a peak rail return is £4.00 (falling to £3.10 off-peak) compared to £4.50 return on Reading Buses' services.

The provision of concessionary travel to older and disabled people is mandated by the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme, and Slough Borough Council operates the scheme between 09:30 and 23:00 on weekdays and all-day on Saturday, Sundays and Public Holidays. The provision of discounted travel to young people varies considerably. Redline Buses and First in Berkshire offer child fares to the age of 16. Reading Buses and Thames Valley Buses offer child fares to the age of 19, or 21 with a valid student identification. TfL offers free travel to the age 16 provided the user has an Oyster ZipCard, Between 16 and 18 residents outside London gain a 50% discount on bus fares, again provided they have an Oyster ZipCard.

There is no multi-operator ticketing scheme in Slough. First period ticket products are valid on Redline Buses' route WP1 between Slough Bus Station and Wexham Park Hospital.

BSIP outcome: With the exception of single journey fares on TfL services, many bus fares in Slough are relatively high compared to nearby towns.

BSIP outcome: There is no multi-operator ticketing scheme. A passenger wishing to travel from Cippenham to Wexham Park Hospital, for example, has to pay twice for their journey: once on the Thames Valley route 5 bus, and again on Redline's route WP1.

BSIP outcome: Complex range of discounts for young people which varies by operator.

2.1.4. Bus Passenger Information

Much information is available on channels which are universally available across the UK: Traveline, google maps, and a variety of open-source websites such as Citymapper.

Slough Borough Council has historically maintained a bus map which it has made available on its website [CO-5723 web version \(slough.gov.uk\)](https://www.slough.gov.uk/CO-5723_web_version). It does not provide other bus service information itself but signposts to Traveline and operators' websites.

For journey planning purposes most bus operators provide websites with service information. Provision of fares information is variable. For instance, First provides information on period ticket products such as day or weekly tickets, but not for 'point-to-point' fares. Thames Valley Buses by contrast provides information on all fares. Real-time information is generally available by app.

Transport for London provides bus stop flags at stops it serves. Slough Borough Council provides flags at other locations showing route number and direction, though coverage is not universal. For the most part bus operators post their own timetable information at bus stops. Slough Borough Council has provided information at some stops where there is more than one bus operator's services or at other locations. SBC operates a real-time passenger information system with displays at most busy stops and in the bus station. Most operators provide a data feed to this – the major exceptions being Redline Buses, Transport for London and Stewarts Coaches.

BSIP outcome: The environment of different operators providing services results in presentation of information in a variety of formats and with different levels of information provided. This makes the bus product unclear to prospective or occasional passengers. Information on fares is particularly variable.

2.1.5. Bus Fleet

Much of the bus fleet in Slough is mid-life:

- TfL route 81 (operated under contract by Metroline) – Volvo double-decks dating from 2010;
- First in Berkshire – a mixed fleet of single-deck buses including 15 hybrid buses dating from 2009 to 2015.

The exceptions to this are the Thames Valley Buses fleet allocated to Slough are generally less than two years old; and the Stewarts Coaches vehicles allocated to route BR operating between the rail and bus stations and the Trading Estate.

Emission standards are generally understood to be Euro VI. There are currently no zero-emission buses in the fleet.

BSIP outcome: a mixed fleet, albeit generally to a high emission standard.

2.1.6. Bus Priority Measures

Slough Borough Council has implemented a significant amount of bus priority over the last few years. Most of this has been located on the A4 London Road, with two stretches on the A355 Farnham Road. The Farnham Road measures were implemented using DfT 'Better Buses For All' funding, while the recently-implemented measures on the A4 followed award of funding by the Berkshire Thames Valley LEP. At this point there were nearly 3km of bus lane.

Further, there are bus gates at the entrance to Slough High Street and connecting the Bath Road Service Road with the A4 Bath Road at Galvin Road.

This bus lane provision was supplemented in 2020 using funds made available under DfT's Access Fund. These experimental bus lanes are located on the A4 London Road and Bath Road and stretch between the junctions of Cippenham Lane and Uxbridge Road. This has increased bus lane provision by around 6km. At the time of writing public consultation on whether to retain the experimental bus lanes was underway.

Further bus lanes are currently being implemented at Brands Hill as part of a further highway scheme on the A4 London Road funded by the LEP.

Most of the bus lanes in Slough operate between 07:00 and 10:00 and between 15:00 and 19:00. A range of vehicle classes are permitted. Camera enforcement is undertaken.

BSIP outcome: Extensive bus priority but a number of pinch-points on the bus network remain as do opportunities to implement more. The peak-only operation of bus lanes can lead to delays off-peak and is not consistent with NBS requirements. There is not yet any 'whole route' priority applying to any bus route.

2.1.7. Slough Borough Council Staffing

As explained in Section 8 of the SBBEB, three staff are engaged in public transport operations and delivery, but all three have a wide range of duties of which public transport is only one. To date they have been supplemented by specialist resource provided by Atkins Ltd. Contact with bus operators has in recent years been around specific operational and commercial issues.

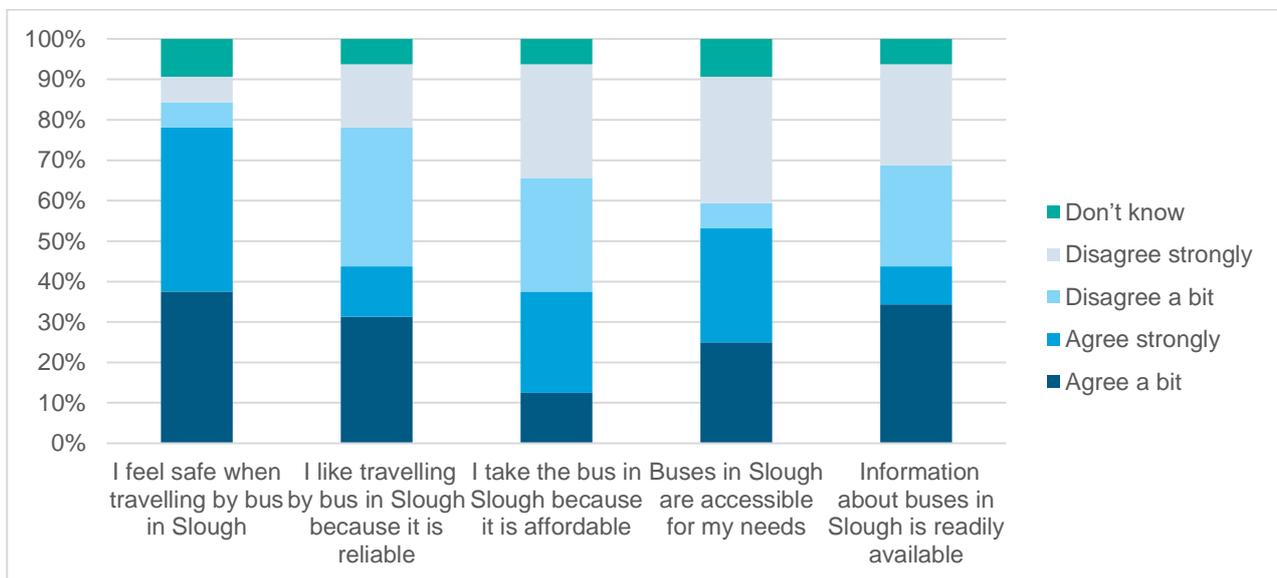
BSIP outcome: Limited officer capacity to engage with bus operators and to provide proactive policy and operational direction.

2.1.8. Views of Passengers and Stakeholders

Slough Borough Council is undertaking on-line consultation with existing bus users, non-users and with stakeholders. This survey concludes on 26 September 2021.

Initial results from the first 47 respondents (of whom 32 identified as bus users and 15 identified as non-users) are shown below. The analysis of the survey will be updated on completion, and it needs to be borne at mind that at present the sample is very limited.

Figure 2-2 – Perception of Bus Travel: Responses from Bus Users

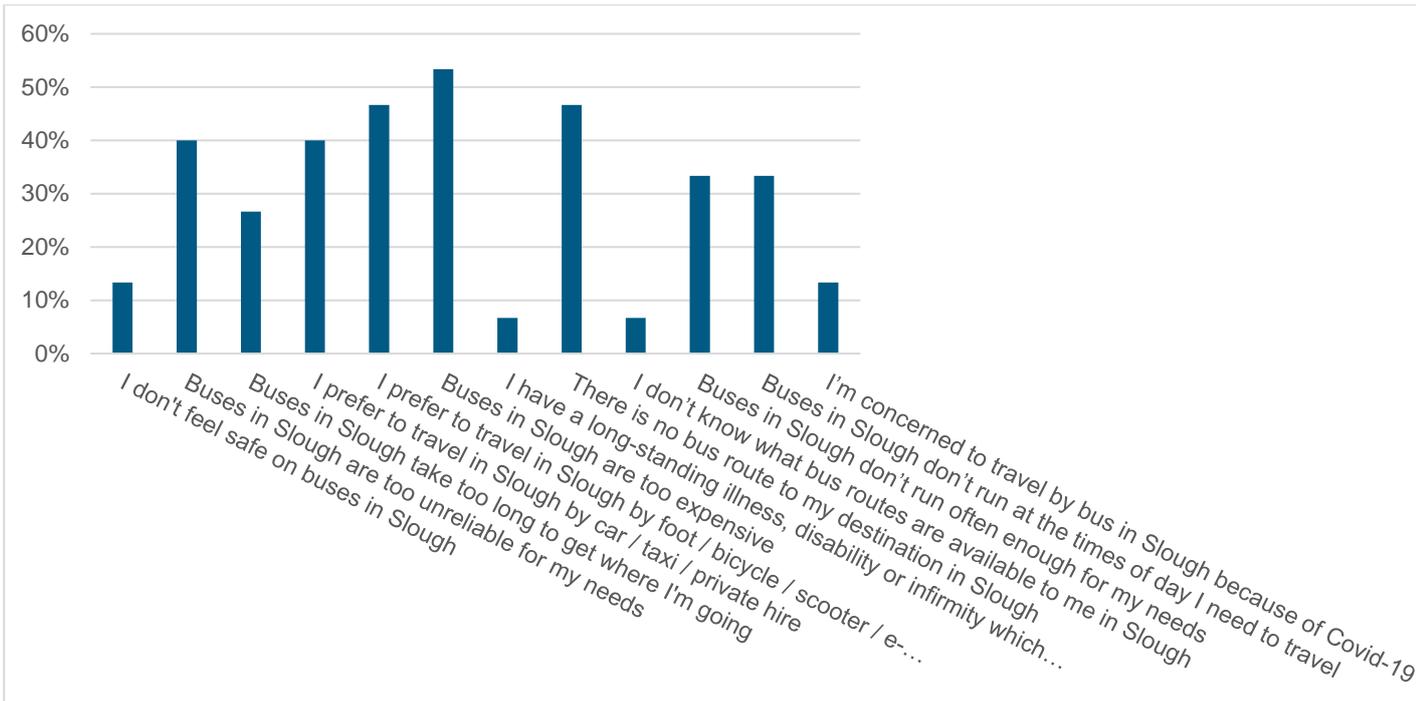


Around three quarters of bus users agreed either strongly or a bit that they felt safe or very safe travelling by bus in Slough. Around 40% agreed that bus travel was reliable and affordable (this latter including 44% of bus user respondents with a free concessionary pass). A similar proportion agreed that information was readily available, but the score improved to around 50% of bus users who felt that bus was accessible for them.

As a point of comparison, the Transport Focus Bus Passenger Survey of autumn 2019 (the last one available) found satisfaction with value for money in a range of 50% - 77%, and satisfaction with punctuality in a range of 53% and 84%. Accepting that the sample size is limited and the methodology different, these figures suggest that satisfaction with buses in Slough is at the lower end of the range.

Non-bus users were asked why they don't travel by bus at present.

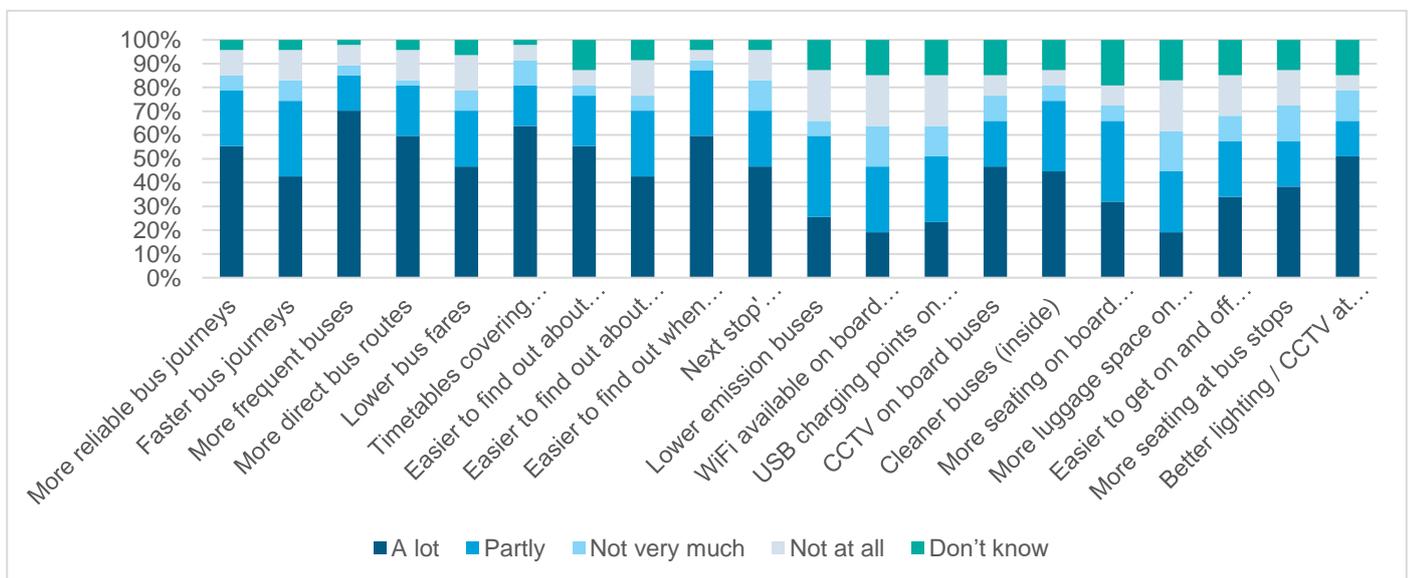
Figure 2-3 – Reasons Cited by Non-Bus Users for not Using Buses



The most frequently cited reason is that buses are too expensive, followed by a lack of bus route to the respondent's destination, and a preference to travel by other modes. Reliability was cited as the top fourth-equal response. Consistent with bus users, personal safety was cited by few respondents.

Both users and non-users were asked what attributes would make them use bus, or use bus more.

Figure 2-4 – How much would the following make you start travelling, or travel more often, by bus in Slough?



Responses that led over 75% of respondents to answer that they would use buses more, or start using buses, 'a lot' or 'partly' focused on basic journey characteristics (reliability, speed, frequency, duration of services into evenings and Sundays) and information (making it easier to find out about routes, times, fares). Curiously lower bus fares attracted only 70% of responses – but bear in mind that 44% of respondents had a bus pass, so amongst fare payers this also is likely to be above 75%.

Respondents to date have been heavily represented by older people (32% over 60) and 83% identified as white, with very few responses from ethnic minorities.

2.1.9. Bus Service Outcomes

According to DfT bus statistics, the bus passenger trip-rate is a little under 30 per year and has been falling over recent years (SBBEB Figure 6-2). This rate is significantly higher than in neighbouring Berkshire authorities but lower than would be suggested by the level of zero car ownership amongst households in Slough. This suggests that the bus passenger trip-rate could be expected to be around 50% greater at around 45 trips per year (SBBEB Figure 6-3).

There are a number of exogenous factors for this:

- There is a high level of congestion on Slough’s highway network, though this appears to have fallen slightly in recent years (SBBEB section 6-8). There are two main causes. The first is a high level of both in-commuting and out-commuting. The in-commuting in particular takes place over a very wide geographical area, much of it to the Slough Trading Estate, some distance from the town centre (SBBEB Figure 3-10). It is therefore difficult for public transport to capture these trips at either trip origin or trip end. Slough Borough Council has sought to address this by combining four business shuttles into one publicly-available bus service linking Slough Station and the Trading Estate. On the other side of the coin the link from Burnham Station to the Trading Estate has been lost;
- SBC is close to the M4 motorway, and experiences variable levels of congestion resulting from incidents on the motorway, which then affects the reliability of local bus services;
- Slough town centre has lost a significant amount of retail activity over recent years;
- There is no university in the town – universities are associated with higher levels of bus usage; and
- Slough has an ethnically highly diverse population, elements of which are understood to place a high value of the ownership and use of a car as a status symbol.

On the other hand, Slough has a relatively high bus mode share for journeys to work at 7.5% (SBBEB Figure 6-13). This reflects in part the influence of Heathrow Airport, which is a significant attractor of demand for out-commuting (SBBEB Figure 3-9). Here Slough Borough Council, working in conjunction with Heathrow Airport Ltd (HAL) and the bus operators, has over recent years expended some effort in tailoring bus services to meet shift start and finish times, while HAL has offered very low public transport fares and extensive financial support to bus services. HAL has suspended both of these during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Analysis by Urban Transport Group suggests that at a mode share of 7.5% for journeys to work, the overall demand for bus travel could be expected to be roughly 50% higher (SBBEB Figure 6-14). Hence journeys to work are strongly represented in the overall demand for bus travel which indicates some success in attracting work trips to bus but ties in with the narrative above on exogenous factors which suggests reasons for lower levels of bus usage for discretionary and education journeys. As patronage on the bus network is so strongly tied to work journeys, particularly to the Airport, it is strongly reliant on the recovery of these businesses from the Covid-19 pandemic.

BSIP outcome: demand for journeys to work is high but overall demand is lower than would be expected for the socio-demographic characteristics of Slough.

BSIP outcome: the influence of Heathrow Airport in particular means that the recovery of demand for bus travel will be strongly aligned to recovering demand for air travel and associated activity.

Figure 2-5 summarises the strengths and weaknesses associated with the bus network in Slough affecting the demand for bus travel.

Figure 2-5 - Summary of factors affecting the demand for bus travel in Slough



2.2. LTA financial support for bus services

The financial support that Slough Borough Council currently provides (at 2021/22 prices) is shown at Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 Slough Borough Council Financial Support

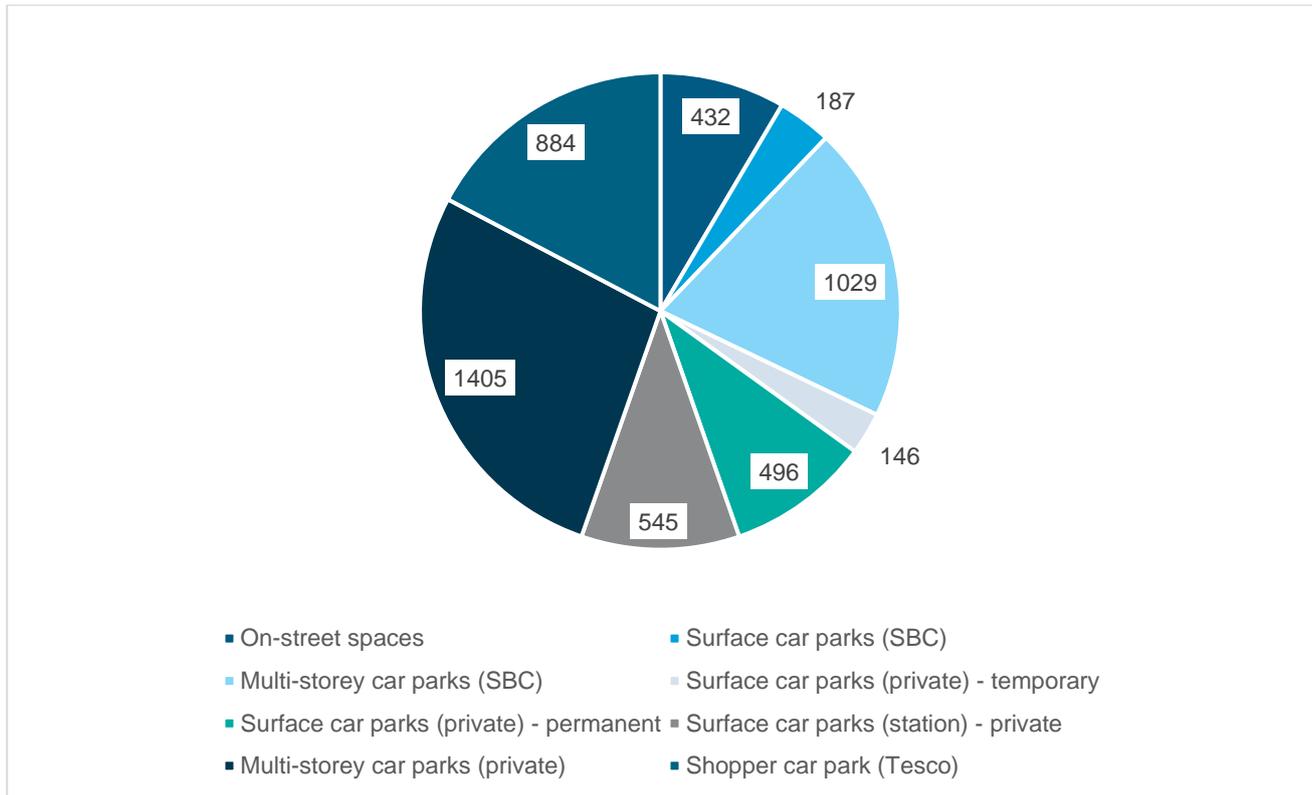
Route	Description	Annual Value	Funding Source
4	Monday – Sunday evenings between Slough Bus Station and Maidenhead	£65,200 (gross cost)	SBC
5	Cippenham 'loop'; early morning and late evening journeys; Sunday operation	£89,997 (net cost)	SBC
6	Sunday daytimes	£22,050 (gross cost)	SBC
12	Monday – Saturday one evening journey; Sunday daytimes	£26,412 (gross cost)	DfT Better Deal for Bus Users
63/68	Minor diversion to serve Goldsworthy Way	£2,354 (net cost)	SBC

2.3. Other factors that affect the use of local bus services

This should include the extent and pricing of parking provisions in town and cities and the split between LTA and private sector provision. It should also include current LTA spending on parking enforcement. - to be completed

An assessment by Atkins [citation] suggested just over 5,000 parking spaces in Slough town centre. The figure below shows the breakdown between on-street and off-street and ownership types.

Figure 2-6 – Slough Town Centre Parking Stock



It can be seen that SBC-managed car parking (on-street and off-street combined) accounts for 30% of the total, with private operators having a large proportion of the parking stock.

Table 2-1 below shows the pricing structure of the major car parks in the town centre.

Table 2-1 – Pricing Structure of the Major Car Parks in Slough Town Centre

Duration	SBC MSCPs (Hatfield and Herschel, 1,029 spaces)	Queensmere shopping centre MSCP (1,405 spaces)	Slough Rail Station (545 spaces)	SBC surface The Grove (45 spaces)	Tesco (884 spaces)	High Street (on-street parking)
Up to 1 hour	£1.00	£1.00	£7.60	£1.20	Free to customers – maximum 2-hour stay	£1.80
1-2 hours	£2.00	£2.00		£2.20		-
2-3 hours	£3.00	£3.00		£3.20	-	
3-4 hours	£4.00	£4.00		£4.20	-	
8 hours	£5.00	£8.00		£5.20	-	
12 hours	£5.00	£12.00		£5.20	-	

It can be seen that for stays of up to half a day, there is significant competition between SBC and Queensmere shopping centre, and in consequence parking is low cost. There is certainly no price incentive for an adult travelling on their own to use the bus. The cheapest available bus fare is on TfL’s route 81 (£3.10 round-trip) is only 90p less than £4.00 for up to 4 hours parking.

For stays of a day’s duration, SBC car parks offer the cheapest parking available, and at £5.00 all-day there is little or no price signal in favour of using the bus – a Thames Valley Buses day ticket is £5.50, a return trip using two First carnets is £4.80.

Car parking at Slough rail station appears to be cheaper than at large stations on nearby routes – examples are Staines (£9.40) and High Wycombe (£9.50). At £7.60 there is a price signal to use bus for a connecting journey to rail but it could be significantly stronger.

SBC earns £1.26m a year from parking charges. **Enforcement costs**

3. Headline Targets

DfT Guidance

Targets for improvement should be covered in this section. Each section should include an explanation of how and why these targets were chosen and what the percentage increase is on existing performance. The key here is that these targets should be assessed using existing available data or data that the partnership has or can compile. It is also vital to think about clear objectives and how success will be judged and explain your thinking here.

- Targets for journey times and reliability improvements
- These should cover the LTA(s) area as a whole and provide specific data for each of the largest cities and towns in its area.
- Performance against these targets must be reported against and published at least every six months.
- Targets for passenger growth and customer satisfaction

This should include details of how this will be measured.

3.1. Bus Journey Times

3.1.1. Target Development

We estimate that the average one-way bus journey time in the AM peak¹, weighted by bus service frequency, is 24 minutes within the Slough boundary. We estimate an average journey time saving, again weighted by frequency, of just over 2 minutes, or a 9% reduction, as a result of implementation of bus priority and other traffic management measures described in Section 4. This estimate is at present a very high level one.

In addition, work undertaken by Atkins in 2019 estimated a reduction in journey time of 2% resulting from a conversion of 50% of on-bus fare-paying transactions to Tap On Tap Out (TOTO). Adding this gives a total journey time reduction of 2.5 minutes or 11%.

We will review the target as design work on bus priority and traffic management measures proceeds, and as SBC gains a more in-depth understanding of the scope for journey time improvements.

3.1.2. Monitoring Proposal

We propose to measure performance in two ways:

- Analysis of bus scheduled journey times within the Slough boundary; and
- Analysis of real-time data from bus operators, both including and excluding bus stop dwell times.

We then propose to control the bus journey time results using results for car journey times using Slough's 'Drakewell' real-time database of Bluetooth car journey time data. Experience with monitoring the results of the A4 bus lane suggest that it is important to understand the effects of bus priority on bus journey times in the context of the change in car journey times in response to changes in traffic volumes and other capacity effects on the highway network.

3.2. Bus Journey Time Reliability

3.2.1. Target Development

DfT Bus Statistics give a figure of 78% 'on-time' performance for the latest year for which data are available, 2017/18. Further information including a time-series is shown at Figure 5-5 of SBBEB. According to the DfT definition of high frequency services (at least 6 buses per hour), no services in Slough currently operate to a

¹ Defined as the last arrival time in Slough Bus Station or at the destination of the journey before 09:00 Mondays to Fridays

high frequency. The highest frequency bus service in Slough, route 81, operates at a frequency of 5 buses per hour for most of the operating day.

Therefore no services should currently be measured using the ‘Excess Wait Time’ (EWT) formula. EWT measures the additional time that, on average, a passenger who turns up at a bus stop at random can expect to wait for a bus and is considered to be a measure that better reflects the passenger experience of reliability for high frequency services than deviation from the timetable.

However, at that frequency route 81 is measured as a high-frequency service by TfL. The performance standard is an EWT of 1.1 minutes and the service achieved an EWT along the whole route of 0.96 minutes in 2019. Interestingly, in 2020 it achieved 0.53 minutes – in other words as a result primarily of lockdown but possibly also the additional bus priority implemented by SBC under the Access Fund the route achieved punctuality twice as high as the minimum standard.

We propose to implement a target of a 10% improvement in reliability to be achieved by 2024/25. This will see:

- The target for low-frequency services move from 78% to 86% ‘on time’ at all timing points within the Slough boundary; and
- The target for any services meeting the definition of high-frequency move from the 1.1 minutes minimum standard of Excess Wait Time currently applied to route 81 to 1.0 minutes.

3.2.2. Monitoring Proposal

Reliability will be monitored using real-time data provided by operators and by SBC’s real-time passenger information system. In the case of route 81 we propose to use whole-route data published by TfL.

3.3. Passenger Numbers

3.3.1. Target Development

The development of the target increase in patronage resulting from measures implemented under the BSIP is summarised at Table 3-1 below. These are structured according to elements of Generalised Cost, which is a helpful framework in which to consider the changes to a passenger’s journey from walking to a bus stop, waiting for a bus, paying a fare, travelling on a bus, and experiencing ‘soft’ measures like real-time passenger information and on-bus audio announcements.

Table 3-1 – Target Development

Generalised Cost Element	Change	Elasticity Factor ²	Target % Change	% Passengers the Change Applies to	Forecast Demand Response
Scheduled wait time	Headway	-0.25	-33%	25%	2.1%
Journey time variability	‘On Time’ or EWT performance	-0.25	-10%	100%	2.5%
Walk	Service Density	-0.25	0%	0%	0%
In-Vehicle Time	On-bus journey time	-0.60	-11%	100%	6.7%
Fare	Average fare / paid passenger journey	-0.30	-20%	72%	4.3%

² Bus fare and journey time elasticities and diversion factors for all modes, RAND Europe and SYSTRA, 2018

Real-Time Information	Number of passengers who receive RTPI while waiting at a bus stop	-0.25	-2%	33%	0.4%
Simplified Ticketing	Number of passengers who benefit from simplified ticketing	-1.1	-2%	72%	2.2%
On-bus audio announcements	Number of passengers who benefit from simplified ticketing	-0.6	-2%	61%	1.5%
Target					19.7%

Taking each of these in turn:

- Scheduled wait time: this is a function of the bus service headway, and reflects a target that a 33% reduction in headway will apply to 25% of passenger journeys – described further in Section 4;
- Journey time variability: again, this is a function of the bus service headway, and reflects a target that additional waiting time resulting from late or irregular operation will reduce by 10%;
- Walk time: no change to service density or coverage is proposed, so walk time remains ‘as is’;
- In-vehicle time: as per the journey time target, this reflects the target that on average 100% of passenger journey times will fall by 11%;
- Fare: we estimate that 28% of passengers travel on TfL’s route 81 and it is not proposed that fares will change on this route. For the remaining 72%, we target a 20% reduction in average fare paid per journey as described further in Section 4;
- Real-time information: as described in Section 4, we propose measures to extend real-time to every bus stop in Slough, benefiting an additional 33% of users. To estimate the change in generalised journey time (GJT) we have taken the webTAG value of 1.47 minutes and expressed this as a percentage of the GJT – estimated at 2.5 times the estimated mean passenger journey time of 12 minutes. This gives a 2% reduction in GJT, applied to the headway elasticity;
- Simplified ticketing: as described in Section 4, we propose measures to simplify ticketing in Slough, benefiting the 72% of passengers who do not use the TfL service. To estimate the change in generalised journey time (GJT) we have taken the webTAG value of 0.84 minutes and expressed this as a percentage of the GJT – estimated at 2.5 times the estimated mean passenger journey time of 12 minutes. This gives a 2% reduction in GJT, applied to the total GJT elasticity; and
- On-bus announcements: as described in Section 4, we propose measures to extend on-bus announcements to every bus in Slough, benefiting the 61% of passengers who we estimate do not currently benefit from this. To estimate the change in generalised journey time (GJT) we have taken the webTAG value of 1.22 minutes and expressed this as a percentage of the GJT – estimated at 2.5 times the estimated mean passenger journey time of 12 minutes. This gives a 2% reduction in GJT, applied to the in-vehicle journey time elasticity.

It will be noted that the forecast percentage increase in patronage of around 20% is lower than the 50% increase suggested by the comparison of bus passenger trip-rate and car ownership set out in section 2.1.9. There are two reasons for this. The first is that the target is derived from individual measures, and it is to be hoped that the combined effect of the measures put forward in the BSIP is greater than the sum of the individual parts. But it is also important to recognise the exogenous demand constraints also considered at section 2.1.9 – notably the limited retail offer in Slough town centre, the limited tertiary education opportunities, and the high level of congestion on the highway network that inevitably will continue to affect buses despite the extensive bus priority measures proposed for implementation under the BSIP.

3.3.2. Monitoring Proposal

We propose to monitor the patronage target using data collated from the bus operators in Slough, using passenger boardings in Slough to be consistent with the DfT's bus statistics.

Before the return of schools in September, bus patronage nationally was at around 60% of pre-Covid volumes. The rate of Covid recovery has been considered in both the bus and rail industries and a number of scenarios constructed for rail reflecting the uncertainties around Covid recovery. Much of this recovery relies on exogenous sources such as the demand for travel to work. A particularly strong feature of Slough's bus network and its associated demand is the influence of Heathrow Airport, both as a source of employment and in terms of the support that it has previously provided to bus services in terms of financial support and to staff working at the Airport in terms of heavily discounted tickets. The rate of employment at the Airport will depend on the extent of the recovery in air travel, as will the Airport's ability to resume its financial support for services and to staff.

We therefore think that a baseline set in 2018/19 or 2019/20 will present particular difficulty to SBC in target setting.

More stuff on the baseline....

3.4. Passenger Satisfaction

Slough Borough Council has not been the subject of the regular 'Bus Passenger Survey' designed and administered by Transport Focus. There is therefore limited information available on the baseline. We have asked bus operators to provide information on customer comments and complaints which could form a baseline, and in terms of establishing a target or monitoring, could be used in future years. If this proves feasible, we will control this against patronage to provide a complaints or comments rate per 100,000 journeys.

In preparation of the BSIP we have undertaken an on-line survey of users and non-users which as requested, amongst other things, their views on the perceptions of the bus service. We intend to repeat this survey each year to inform revisions to the BSIP, and so this will also provide an evidence base which we can use to monitor the trend on satisfaction as well as gain intelligence on how the perceptions of users and non-users change.

4. Delivery

DfT Guidance

This is the main body of the BSIP. Its purpose is to explain how the requirements set out in the Strategy are to be delivered. Many factors and interventions by the LTA and local bus operators will influence and contribute to delivering outcomes. The purpose of this section is for the BSIP to set out detailed policies in each of the areas, explain delivery in more detail and how they each will work together to improve local bus services. The BSIP should contain a separate section on each as set out earlier in this guidance (paragraph references are given for ease).

Accountabilities and responsibilities for delivery of the measures proposed under this BSIP will be considered and codified as part of the Enhanced Partnership Plan. Some, such as the provision of highway measures, will clearly sit with Slough Borough Council. Given that all except two bus routes cross the Slough boundary, we will seek to co-ordinate these works with neighbouring highway authorities to deliver maximum effect across whole bus routes.

Many of the measures will require the agreement and active participation of the bus operators. These include, for example, measures to make it easier to pay bus fares or on pricing, or to improve bus passenger information, or on bus network development.

In some a number of specific cases, key stakeholders will be not only consulted and informed but will also be closely involved in delivery of the measures proposed under the BSIP – a key example being Heathrow Airport.

Finally, the implementation of the measures is reliant upon funding being available. SBC will follow its recent successes in seeking match-funding from other sources, but as with other local transport authorities SBC will rely heavily on funding provided by Government under the National Bus Strategy.

4.1. Make improvements to bus services and planning

We have found in recent years a willingness on the part of the main operator in Slough to consider minor changes to timetable proposals in response to suggestions to better meet shift change times at major employers or to make headways more consistent. This follows long-standing influence on the part of Heathrow Airport and Wexham Park Hospital to tailor services to the needs of their employees.

We will build on that co-operation to develop a more collaborative process as part of the Enhanced Partnership to consider proposals to change the bus network and to consider external influences, notably the planning of new development both in the context of opportunities to grow demand but also to ensure that bus services are able to meet the mobility needs in an efficient and cost-effective way.

Similarly we will work with neighbouring authorities and organisations to develop bus services which cross Slough boundaries. Our immediate neighbours are Buckinghamshire Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Transport for London. Other authorities with an influence on bus service provision are Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Surrey County Council. We will seek to co-ordinate with them on highway schemes which will benefit buses but more specifically we will focus on:

- Bus links between Slough and Windsor – co-ordinating services between different operators to achieve improved service regularity, and increasing frequency between Dedworth and Slough;
- Bus links beyond Windsor to Staines, Legoland and Bracknell, and to High Wycombe and Gerrards Cross – seeking to create the conditions for service development; and
- The proposals for the A4 outlined in sections 4.2 and 4.4 will improve bus speeds and reliability on cross-boundary services from Maidenhead and Taplow to Slough and Heathrow, and we hope help to create the conditions in which these can further develop.

4.2. More frequent and reliable services

Subject to funding made available under the National Bus Strategy and other sources, we aim to develop a core urban network consisting of the A4 east-west spine between Cippenham and Heathrow Airport, links to the Britwell Estate and the link between Slough town centre and Wexham Park Hospital. On these links the target is for a 10-minute daytime headway with maximum 20-minute headways during evenings and

Sundays, with services tailored to the needs of shift-workers particularly at Heathrow Airport and Wexham Park Hospital (see SBBEB Figure 3-13).

On other town routes we will seek standardised maximum 30-minute daytime headways with maximum 60-minute headways during evenings and Sundays.

In the case of services along the A4 and to Britwell, delivery of the bus priority measures described at Section 4-4 will help to reduce the vehicle requirement, in turn unlocking resource which can be directed at increasing the frequency on the core network or underpinning delivery of regular services on other routes. These bus priority and other highway measures will also promote reliability on this network, as will measures to reduce bus stop dwell times. These measures will also assist the development of interurban services crossing the Slough boundary as outlined at section 4.1 above.

4.3. Review service frequency

In addition, we have reviewed shift start and finish times with the major regional employer, Heathrow Airport, and will seek funding to enable more bus services to meet key shift start and finish times.

Also, we will seek funding for provide consistent service start and finish times across the core network, with the aim of providing last services at around midnight.

4.4. Increase bus priority measures

We propose a range of measures, from bus lanes to reviewing Traffic Regulation Orders, in order to reduce bus journey times and facilitate reliable operation.

Subject to funding, technical and construction feasibility and consultation we propose a range of bus priority measures:

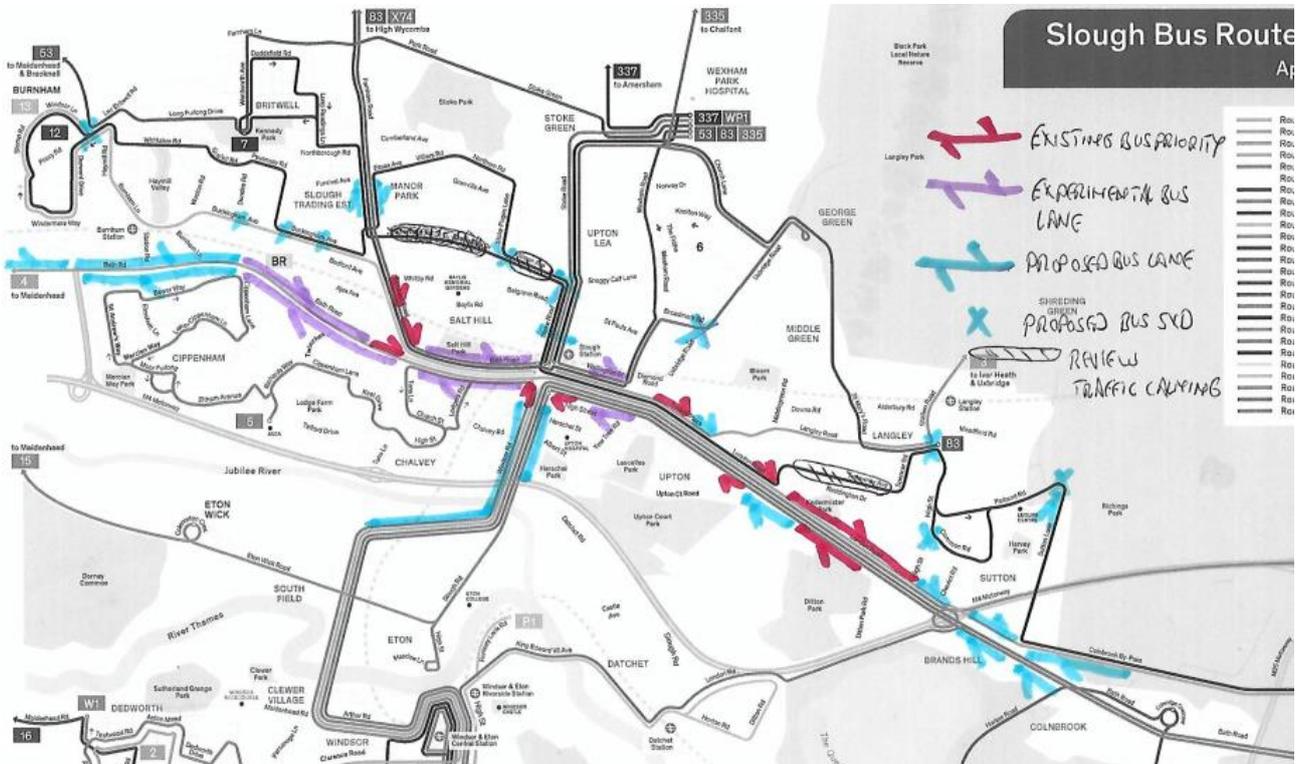
- Further priority on the A4 Bath Road and London Road in order to complete provision of priority on this route and provide 'whole route' priority for key bus services to Heathrow Airport and address congestion on the A4 identified at Figure 6-11 of the SBBEB;
- Priority measures on the A355 Farnham Road, and enhancement of existing measures, in order to help buses travel more quickly and reliably along a congested section of road – again, see Figure 6-11 of the SBBEB;
- Priority measures on the A332 Windsor Road, where an opportunity exists to convert the nearside lane in each direction between the town centre and the B3022 junction following recent highway enhancements. The opportunity exists to further enhance this by converting the nearside lane of the A332 inbound from its junction with the A355 to further insulate buses from the effects of highway congestion. We hope that this will help to re-invigorate bus service provision between Slough and Windsor;
- A northbound bus gate on Stoke Road as part of a wider urban realm improvement on this busy and congested link, which is a key part of the route utilised by the core service between Slough town centre and Wexham Park Hospital;
- Other more minor sections of bus lane to identify known issues – notably the westbound approach to the Brands Hill junction from Colnbrook, and the northbound approach on Sutton Lane to Parlaunt Road;
- Bus priority at a number of traffic light-controlled junctions, either to address issues of congestion or to provide an appropriate level of priority where bus service frequencies are low. Altogether 10 locations are currently proposed, subject to feasibility;
- Whilst not in itself bus priority, a proposed link between the A4 Bath Road and Chalvey Church Street will enable a significant reduction in the distance travelled by outbound route 5 buses; and
- Review existing traffic calming measures on Elliman Avenue and Trelawney Avenue, where existing road humps cause delays to buses and significant discomfort to passengers.

This package would increase the distance of bus lane provided in SBC by around 8.5km. Consistent with the requirements of the NBS, we propose to work towards the conversion of existing bus lanes to '24-7' operation in order to provide maximum protection to buses from fluctuations in traffic flow. We propose also that new bus lanes will be '24-7'. We will review the classes of vehicle to be permitted in the bus lanes, and comment that there are no current plans to allow electric vehicles to use these bus lanes.

We aim to work collaboratively with Buckinghamshire Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to deliver bus priority on a co-ordinated basis, recognising that the priority itself may take a number of forms depending on local circumstances and need.

These measures are shown below at Figure 4-1.

Figure 4-1 – Proposed Bus Priority Measures



We recognise that there are other means by which journey times can be improved, and by which reliability will be enhanced. We propose to:

- Review the process of communicating roadworks with operators, with the aim of enabling better planning and communication of diversions;
- Give bus operations control staff access to traffic cameras such that bus service controllers can identify incidents emerging in real-time and take early appropriate action; and
- Review Traffic Regulation Orders in force at bus stop clearways, with a view to standardising on '24-7' operation.

Finally, we will undertake a review on each bus route. This will include identification of locations where minor works or a review of parking and loading controls could ease pinch points for buses. It will also review the potential to fill in bus stop laybys, which are identified as causing delays to buses on departing from the bus stop. Subject to funding we propose to commit to a rolling programme of reviewing 3 bus routes a year under the Enhanced Partnership, the routes to be distributed equitably amongst operators but focusing on the busiest routes first.

4.5. Increase demand responsive services

No DRT services operate in Slough at present except for a 'Section 19' community bus operation. We are conscious of the financial and commercial risks involved in establishing a DRT operation at scale. We are also conscious that accessing employment opportunities is challenging in many circumstances.

We therefore propose to work with major employers to establish one or more DRT schemes. We propose to utilise the model developed by 'Tandem' and others which establish a brokerage scheme using local transport providers – in many cases local taxi companies where the demand is low. In this way the service can begin at a low scale (and low financial risk) and scale up easily in response to demand. Such a scheme

would not necessarily be restricted to operation within Slough’s boundary. Employers with whom we might work include the NHS at Wexham Park Hospital and SEGRO, who manage a large part of Slough Trading Estate.

4.6. Consideration of bus rapid transport networks

The proposals for whole route priority along the A4 Bath Road and London Road represent the foundations for Bus Rapid Transit, and is reflected in SBC’s proposals for Slough Mass Rapid Transit (SMaRT). Phase 1 is in operation between Slough rail station and the Bath Road Trading Estate and Phase 2 is under construction at Brands Hill. By further developing priority measures and working in co-ordination with Heathrow Airport and with neighbouring Buckinghamshire Council and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, we hope to stimulate operation of high-frequency BRT services on this corridor.

4.7. Improvements to planning / integration with other modes

We propose to liaise with TfL Rail and First Great Western on timetable co-ordination.

Subject to funding we will re-focus cycle hire / e-scooter hire at Slough and Burnham stations at commuter journeys. We will review the provision of cycle racks at bus stops and consider the potential for mobility hubs.

The requirement is noted to integrate potential cycling infrastructure (subject to a separate Capability Fund bid) on the A4 with bus priority infrastructure.

4.8. Integrate services with other transport modes

Subject to funding, we will implement a wayfinding project at Slough Bus Station to help passengers find their bus. This will be of particular value to occasional visitors to Slough arriving by rail and who need to identify the stand or on-street bus stop from which their service departs. Given the high rail service frequencies – particularly with the start of Crossrail services – we do not believe that there is a need to co-ordinate frequencies, but we will seek opportunities to develop early morning and late evening bus services, and bus services on Sundays, in order to improve opportunities to connect between bus and rail services.

Subject to funding, we will seek to re-establish the link between Burnham Station and the Trading Estate, which we believe is a valuable link for rail commuters from the west. We will seek to ensure timetable co-ordination between bus and rail as part of the re-establishment of the link.

We will also seek opportunities to improve timetable co-ordination between bus and rail services at Langley station.

4.9. Simplify services

Services are already generally quite simple in Slough, but opportunities will be pursued, subject to funding, where these require more resource.

We will also seek to ensure that services remain simple – in particular, that bus operate on consistent routeings on a '24-7' basis. We will prepare a short set of network planning guidelines under the Enhanced Partnership for agreement by operators.

To the north west of Slough a number of areas are served by one bus route with frequent changes in direction. This results in lengthy journey times for some users. These areas are amongst the more deprived in Slough (SBEB Figure 2-4) and we will work with the bus operator to develop quicker and more direct services for the benefit of these residents.

4.10. Review socially necessary services

SBC has sought to retain Sunday and evening services previously lost, and will continue to do so with the target, subject to funding, of a maximum 20-minute headway on core network and 60-minute headway on secondary network at these times.

Again subject to funding it will seek to ensure that the majority of its residents are within 5 minutes walk of a daytime bus service, as it has done to date with funding the 'Cippenham loop' of bus route 5.

4.11. Invest in Superbus networks

Superbus consists of a comprehensive network of bus priority measures; fares caps; and increased service frequencies. Subject to funding and feasibility we propose to implement each of these elements and so we believe that our proposals qualify for ‘Superbus’ designation.

4.12. Improvements to fares and ticketing: lower fares

As set out in Section 2, fares in Slough (and east Berkshire generally) are significantly higher than fares in comparable towns. This reduces the competitiveness of bus with driving, getting a lift with a friend or relative, or even using a taxi or Uber. A minimum £5 applies to an Uber fare in Slough, but with a base fare of £2.50, it is highly likely that many journeys within the town will be charged at no more than £5³: Where more than one passenger is travelling, this is unlikely to represent a significant premium over many bus fares.

Subject to funding and feasibility, we propose to reduce the highest fares paid in Slough by around 20% to bring them into line with fares paid in other geographically similar locations and where possible to align with rail fares for equivalent journeys. In 2021/22 prices, our aim is for a day ticket price of around £5.00 and a weekly ticket price of around £17.50. In advance of periodic fares capping, we also want to see a more comprehensive and consistent offer for occasional users of bus, with a carnet of single journeys priced at around £2.00 per journey and a carnet of day tickets priced at around £4.50 per day ticket.

Passenger fares also increase as a result of a need to change between buses of different operators. For instance, someone wanting to travel between Cippenham and Wexham Park Hospital pays twice. Even where tickets are accepted (as with First period ticket products on Redline Buses route WP1) low awareness almost certainly results in passengers paying more. The proposed multi-operator proposition described in section 4.13 will eliminate the need for passengers to pay twice for journeys involving more than operator.

4.13. Improvements to fares and ticketing: simplify fares

Subject to funding and technical feasibility, in particular recognising the constraints imposed by the different technologies employed by TfL and by commercial bus operators, we propose to undertake this in two key ways.

The first is to address the current issue that fares for young people are applied inconsistently by standardising under the Enhanced Partnership (EP) on the age of 19 as the minimum cut-off for a youth discount, that discount being set at not more than 75% of the equivalent adult fare.

The second is a migration to seamless multi-operator ticketing in three stages.

Stage 1 is to mandate under the EP a QR-code paper-based and/or app-based multi-operator ticketing scheme with minimal or zero premium over operator own-price products. This would be based on the model being operated successfully in High Wycombe as Wycombe Smartzone. Some funding will be required from NBS to pay for establishment costs.

Stage 2 is to encourage a move to own operator account-based tap on tap out ticketing, subject to funding being made available under the NBS for second card readers on each bus to enable alighting passengers to ‘tap out’ separately from those those tapping in. We recognise that TfL in effect has this already – but with no ‘tap out’ since this is not required as flat fares apply.

Stage 3 is to pull together stages 1 and 2 to develop multi-operator account-based ‘tap on tap out’ ticketing mandated under the EP. This would be consistent with Project Coral being developed by the major group operators and we would hope to be able to adopt the infrastructure and processes developed under Project Coral. A significant advantage in Slough is that all operators except Bear Buses and Transport for London currently utilise ‘Ticketer’ ticket machines and therefore have access to the same ‘Littlepay’ back office. This may allow SBC to proceed more quickly than a nationally-based scheme would allow, but clearly we will keep this under review. A significant objective at Stage 3 is to integrate Transport for London into the multi-operator scheme. This requires that TfL’s ‘Pay As You Go’ back office is integrated into the Ticketer / Littlepay back office, or whichever back office becomes available nationally.

Stage 3 would substantially replace the multi-operator ticketing scheme, though we recognise that there are some issues around equality of access to the scheme for the unbanked and those eligible for youth fares

³ [Taxi rates UBER in Slough \(taxihowmuch.com\)](https://www.taxihowmuch.com/).

which will need to be addressed during design phases. Partly for this reason SBC would seek funding from NBS to facilitate the introduction of this scheme.

4.14. Improvements to fares and ticketing: Integrate ticketing between operators and transport

Subject to funding and feasibility, we would hope that Slough could be an early adopter of an electronic PlusBus scheme. A significant benefit we hope will be to allow Plus Bus tickets to specify bus at the start as well as the end of the journey.

A significant benefit of the 'back office' integration proposed to be developed between TfL's and the commercial operators' back offices is that opportunities would be opened up to integrate local bus fares with TfL Rail 'Pay As You Go'. This would maximise the opportunities for bus/rail multi-modal journeys.

4.15. Make improvements to bus passenger experience: higher specification buses

We will conduct customer research to establish customer priorities, but at this stage we envisage:

- Seeking funding from NBS to ensure as far as possible that buses are fitted with USB chargers as standard, since the ability to charge an iphone en-route is likely to be a significant bonus to bus passengers; and
- Seeking a higher specification including air-conditioning and double-glazing for buses used on the core network and other long-distance journeys in order to provide a journey experience more akin to using a car.

Transport Focus research on attitudes of young people to using the bus in 2018 suggested that free on-board wifi was one of three top requirements. We will keep this under review: with improved data bundles this may not be the priority that it once was.

4.16. Make improvements to bus passenger experience: Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services

Subject to funding, we will identify and develop solutions for bus stops which do not currently meet accessibility standards. It is considered that filling in bus stop laybys, where appropriate, will also assist.

Subject to funding we will mandate 'next stop' screens and announcements on vehicles as standard on all bus services regardless of DfT moves to mandate AV equipment on the bus. We will investigate the scope of any on-bus AV equipment to accommodate information on diversions.

Finally, we will ensure that the new development takes appropriate account of the needs of bus users and efficient use by bus operators.

4.17. Make improvements to bus passenger experience: Protect personal safety of bus passengers

Subject to funding, we will review access routes to bus stops including footpaths as part of the series of route reviews described at section 4.4.

Subject to funding, we will implement CCTV at Slough Bus Station and at selected bus stops.

Most buses in service in Slough are equipped with on-bus CCTV, but we will mandate its use on all but the most infrequent services.

Subject to technical feasibility and funding, we will consider developing a system in conjunction with bus operators whereby a parent is notified when a child's QR code / app is read by a ticket machine as he or she boards a bus.

4.18. Make improvements to bus passenger experience: Improve buses for tourists

Buses serving tourist destinations travel through Slough, notably Reading Buses routes 702 and 703 providing links between central London and Heathrow and Legoland and Windsor. A number of visitors to the tourist attractions in Windsor stay in hotels in Slough. The bus priority and service development measures we propose will help these buses provide reliable journeys to tourists and visitors.

4.19. Make improvements to bus passenger experience: Invest in decarbonisation

We will seek funding opportunities to deliver a migration to zero-emission bus fleet with associated infrastructure over the coming years. We will co-ordinate with neighbouring authorities especially Transport for London, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Buckinghamshire Council in recognition of the fact that most bus services cross the Slough boundary.

We will in the meantime, subject to funding, investigate the feasibility of different types of technology applied to the constraints at bus depots and the mileages being operated on bus routes in Slough.

4.20. Improvements to passenger engagement: Passenger charter

We will develop a passenger charter in conjunction with operators. This will include commitments around:

- Ensuring that passengers can find out about their journeys in an impartial manner;
- Ensuring that accurate bus service information will be provided at bus stops;
- Ensuring that buses are clean and conform to an agreed specification for that service;
- Ensuring suitable redress for when things go wrong, including provision of a taxi if the last bus on a route is cancelled; and
- Regular reporting of key bus service performance metrics such as reliability.

4.21. Improvements to passenger engagement: Strengthen network identity

Slough's geography means that most bus services cross its boundary, so a Slough-specific brand is not considered appropriate. Indeed, we estimate that around half the operated mileage is outside the authority's boundary, and only two bus routes (routes 5 and 6) operate entirely within Slough's administrative area. First and Reading Buses have already adopted 'Thames Valley' branding which is considered to be more reflective of the area in which buses operate, and in addition buses on Heathrow services carry Heathrow branding.

4.22. Improvements to passenger engagement: Improve bus information

We propose a suite of measures to overcome the opaqueness that arises from a complex operator landscape and the multiplicity of information sources:

1. Explore potential for operators to share more service information on each others' services on websites and apps. This happens to an extent now in operators' journey planners and is likely to become more practical as operators begin to retail tickets for travel on each others' services under a multi-operator ticketing scheme;
2. Develop e-ink to provide static and real-time information at all bus stops in Slough as part of a large-scale demonstration project. Currently, paper timetable displays are labour intensive to post, prone to becoming out of date, and because of the logistical challenges changing a number of displays at once it is rarely possible to align changing the roadside at precisely the time of the timetable change. The cost of changing a paper display is around £4 - £5 a unit. It involves a significant amount of vehicle mileage and associated carbon and other emissions. Finally, with multiple operators at some stops but not others there is the potential for confusion about responsibility for posting the roadside. Paper-based roadside information is hard for people to read after dark and is vulnerable to vandalism. It would be tempting to abolish roadside information altogether but there is evidence that passengers value it:

Transport Focus’s research on attitudes of younger people to using buses found that a third gained their information from roadside displays, and this percentage is likely to increase for older people. Further, e-ink offers the potential to include real-time information at each stop rather than at selected stops, and may be able to integrate with Urban Traffic Management Control systems (see point 5 below). We are therefore keen, subject to funding, to pursue e-ink as a more accurate and engaging means of displaying information at bus stops. We would propose an early pilot project on one route, with fuller roll-out once the concept has been proved;

3. In the meantime we will revise processes for the provision of roadside information and, where possible, standardise provision of display cases;
4. Under the EP we will require co-ordinated timetable changes at set times during the year; and
5. We will seek opportunities to integrate Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) and bus passenger real-time systems to improve information about disruption and diversions.

Figure 4-2 – Sample e-ink displays



5. Reporting

DfT Guidance

This section should set out the arrangements for publishing six-monthly performance against BSIP targets. Please include the URL on your website where these reports will appear.

We propose to publish performance against the four key targets on our website every six months. These will include:

- Bus journey times on a sample of routes, controlled against car journey times so that the context for changes in journey times can be properly understood;
- Reliability on the same sample of routes;
- Patronage as measured by the number of passengers boarding buses in Slough, using figures provided by operators; and
- Bus passenger satisfaction and perceptions, using results of a rolling survey administered by SBC.

The reporting will also summarise changes made to the bus product such as the implementation of bus lanes, service development and fare changes.

6. Overview table

DfT Guidance

This section should summarise the key outputs of the BSIP and how it meets requirements set out in the Strategy. The purpose of this section is to give readers, including passengers and the Department, an overview of the commitments in the BSIP which LTAs and operators will work towards to improve local bus services. LTAs should complete all sections of the template.

BSIP Overview Table Template

Name of authority or authorities:	Slough Borough Council
Franchising or Enhanced Partnership (or both):	Enhanced Partnership
Date of publication:	29 October 2021
Date of next annual update:	31 October 2022
URL of published report:	tbc

Targets	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2024/25	Description of how each will be measured (max 50 words)
Journey time	-	Based on current timetables (Aug 21) existing average one-way AM peak bus journey time weighted by frequency is 24 minutes within Slough	21.5 minutes (11% reduction)	Analysis of bus schedules and real-time information for bus services within Slough. This is because half of route mileage currently operates outside Slough: to measure the whole route would under-represent SBC's delivery of bus priority measures. Change in bus journey times to be controlled against change in car journey times (Bluetooth data).
Reliability	78% on-time (2017/18 figure)	78% on-time (2017/18 figure); TfL measures Excess Wait Time on route 81. EWT in 2019 0.96 mins against minimum standard of 1.1.	85% on-time for low-frequency routes; Excess Wait Time (for high frequency routes) 1.0 minutes	Values for timing points to be estimated from real-time passenger information systems for stops within Slough. In the case of TfL route 81 results to be drawn from TfL's published results.
Passenger numbers	4,655,093	4,536,793	?	20% increase in passenger numbers as a result of BSIP measures. Need to consider an appropriate baseline given the importance of Heathrow Airport's recovery from Covid-19 to bus service demand.
Average passenger satisfaction	-	-	-	Number of complaints received / 100,000 passenger journey. Regular SBC customer surveys.

Delivery - Does your BSIP detail policies to:	Yes/No	Explanation (max 50 words)
Make improvements	Yes	More collaborative process as part of the EP to consider proposals to change the bus network and to consider external influences, notably the planning of new development.

to bus services and planning		Collaborate with neighbouring authorities on cross-boundary interurban service design.
More frequent and reliable services	Yes	Subject to funding, core network of the A4 east-west spine, Britwell Estate and Wexham Park Hospital: target 10-minute daytime headway with 20-minute headways evenings and Sundays. On other town and core interurban routes target maximum 30-minute daytime headways (60-minute headways evenings and Sundays). Improved reliability through intensification of bus priority measures and reduced bus stop dwell times.
Review service frequency	Yes	See above. We will seek funding to provide more bus services to meet key shift start and finish times at Heathrow Airport and other major employers. Also, we will seek funding to provide consistent service start and finish times, with the aim of providing last services at c. midnight.
Increase bus priority measures	Yes	Subject to funding, feasibility and consultation new bus priority on various links and at various junctions. Review traffic calming measures, and bus stop laybys across the network. Minor works and review Traffic Regulation Orders on each bus route. Review TROs at bus stops. Review process of communicating roadworks with operators. Give bus operations control staff access to traffic cameras
Increase demand responsive services	Yes	Propose to establish shared transport services to major employer(s) using a transport brokerage model.
Consideration of bus rapid transport networks	Yes	The proposals for whole route priority along the A4 Bath Road and London Road represent the foundations for Bus Rapid Transit, and is reflected in SBC's proposals for SMaRT, of which Phase 1 is in operation between the rail station and the Bath Road Trading Estate. SBC hopes to stimulate operation of high-frequency BRT services on this corridor.
<i>Improvements to planning / integration with other modes</i>	Yes	Liaise with TfL Rail and First Great Western on timetable co-ordination. Subject to funding re-focus cycle hire / e-scooter hire at stations at commuter journeys. Review provision of cycle racks at bus stops. Requirement noted to integrate potential cycling infrastructure (subject to separate Capability Fund bid) on A4 with bus priority infrastructure.
Integrate services with other transport modes	Yes	Subject to funding, a wayfinding project at Slough Bus Station to help passengers find their bus. Timetable co-ordination between bus and rail as part of re-establishment of the link between Burnham Station and the Trading Estate, subject to funding.
Simplify services	Yes	Services are already generally quite simple in Slough, but opportunities will be pursued, subject to funding where these require more resource.
Review socially necessary services	Yes	SBC has sought to retain Sunday and evening services previously lost, and will continue to do so with the target, subject to funding, of maximum 20-minute headway on core network and 60-minute headway on secondary network.
Invest in Superbus networks	Yes	Superbus consists of a comprehensive network of bus priority measures; fares caps; and increased service frequencies. Subject to funding and feasibility we propose to implement each of these elements.
<i>Improvements to fares and ticketing</i>		
Lower fares	Yes	Subject to funding and feasibility, propose to reduce the highest fares paid in Slough to bring them into line with fares paid in other similar locations and where possible to align with rail fares. The proposed multi-operator ticket will eliminate the need for passengers to pay twice for journeys involving more than operator.
Simplify fares	Yes	Subject to funding and technical feasibility: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Standardise on age 19 as the minimum cut-off for a youth discount; 2) Mandate a QR-code paper-based / app-based multi-operator ticketing scheme; 3) Encourage operator own account-based tap on tap out ticketing;

		4) Mandate multi-operator account-based tap on tap out ticketing consistent with Project Coral.
Integrate ticketing between operators and transport	Yes	Subject to funding and feasibility, electronic PlusBus to allow Plus Bus tickets to specify bus at the start of the journey; Under stage 4 above, integrate local bus fares with TfL Rail Pay As You Go.
Make improvements to bus passenger experience		
<i>Higher spec buses</i>		
Invest in improved bus specifications	Yes	We will conduct customer research on priorities, but at this stage we envisage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking funding from NBS to ensure as far as possible that buses are fitted with USB chargers as standard; Seeking a higher specification including air-conditioning and double-glazing for buses used on the core network and other long-distance journeys.
Invest in accessible and inclusive bus services	Yes	Subject to funding, we will identify and develop solutions for bus stops which do not meet accessibility standards. Subject to funding, 'next stop' screens and announcements on vehicles as standard on all bus services. Ensure that the new development takes appropriate account of the needs of bus users and efficient use by bus operators.
Protect personal safety of bus passengers	Yes	Subject to funding, review access routes to bus stops including footpaths. Subject to funding, implement CCTV at Slough Bus Station and at selected bus stops. Mandate CCTV on-bus. Subject to technical feasibility and funding: Notifications to parents when a child's QR code / app boards a bus.
Improve buses for tourists	Yes	Bus priority and service improvements proposed will boost services to tourist attractions in Windsor.
Invest in decarbonisation	Yes	We will seek funding opportunities to deliver migration to Zero-Emission fleet with associated infrastructure over the coming years. We will co-ordinate with neighbouring authorities especially TfL, RBWM and BC.
<i>Improvements to passenger engagement</i>		
Passenger charter	Yes	We will develop a passenger charter in conjunction with operators.
Strengthen network identity	No	No specific proposals. Slough's geography means that most bus services cross its boundary, so a Slough-specific brand is not considered appropriate. First and Reading Buses have already adopted 'Thames Valley' branding. Heathrow branding in place.
Improve bus information	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Operators to share more service information on each others' services; Develop e-ink to provide static and real-time information at all bus stops in Slough; Co-ordinated timetable changes at set times during the year Seek opportunities to integrate UTMC and bus passenger real-time systems to improve information about disruption and diversions.
Other		
Other		

Appendices



Appendix A. Heading 6

Body Text (Appendix) style

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Prioritisation and Summary Scoring Matrix

	Total	categorisation	Impact on targets				Full impact relies on measures implemented by another LTA	Will impact positively on bus journeys made by Slough residents	Technical Feasibility	Current Legal Position	Ongoing costs beyond 2024/25				
			3 = high impact; 2 = medium impact; 1 = low impact												
			2022/23 - 2024/25		2025/26 - 2028/29										
			capex	opex	capex	opex	journey time	reliability	patronage	customer satisfaction	1 = heavy reliance; 2 = some reliance; 3 = can be implemented by SBC independently	1 = minimal; 2 = a bit; 3 = a lot	1 = difficult; 2 = medium; 3 = straightforward	1 = not clear; 3 clear	1 = high; 2 = medium; 3 = low
Bus Service Enhancements															
First 7	19	M	£0	£3,180,000	£0	£3,350,000	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	1	1
First 12 / 13	18	L	£0	£530,000	£0	£460,000	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	1	2
Redline WP1	17	L	£0	£330,000	£0	£350,000	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	1	1
702 / 703	13	L	£0	£180,000	£0	£220,000	1	1	2	2	1	1	3	1	1
Additional services at Heathrow shift-change times	18	L	£0	£410,000	£0	£550,000	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	1	2
Min 60 min headways eves and weekends	16	L	£0	£650,000	£0	£870,000	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	1	2
Bus Priority and other Highway Measures															
Bus lanes - Windsor Road (no carriageway widening)	17	L	£730,000	£0	£0	£150,000	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	3
Bus lanes - A4 (no carriageway widening)	24	H	£750,000	£0	£0	£150,000	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	3
Bus lanes - A4, Sutton Lane, Colnbrook Bath Road (carriageway widening)	24	H	£4,740,000	£0	£0	£950,000	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	3
Bus lanes - A355 (carriageway widening)	22	H	£1,670,000	£0	£0	£330,000	3	3	2	2	2	3	1	3	3
SVD - routes 12 / 13 corridor	20	M	£260,000	£0	£0	£50,000	2	2	1	1	3	2	3	3	3
SVD - Langley corridor	20	M	£110,000	£0	£0	£20,000	2	2	1	1	3	2	3	3	3
SVD - route 6 corridor	20	M	£50,000	£0	£0	£10,000	2	2	1	1	3	2	3	3	3
Stoke Road bus gate	24	H	£280,000	£0	£0	£60,000	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	3
review traffic calming route 7 corridor in Langley	19	M	£150,000	£0	£0	£30,000	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	3
review traffic calming route 12/13 corridor	19	M	£190,000	£0	£0	£40,000	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	3
review bus lane operation times	21	H	£30,000	£0	£0	£10,000	2	2	1	2	3	2	3	3	3
route reviews 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12/13, WP1/53 - TRO reviews and minor schemes	21	H	£400,000	£0	£0	£80,000	2	2	1	2	3	2	3	3	3
fill in bus stop laybys	19	M	£720,000	£0	£0	£140,000	1	2	1	1	3	2	3	3	3
Integrate bus services with other transport modes															
wayfinding Slough Bus Station	19	M	£150,000	£0	£0	£30,000	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	3
Higher specification buses															
USB chargers on buses	17	L	£150,000	£0	£0	£30,000	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	1
air con and double glazing on core network	16	L	£300,000	£0	£0	£60,000	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	1
Simpler ticketing															
Multi-operator scheme (start up and running costs)	20	M	£0	£50,000	£0	£40,000	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
Single-operator ABT TOTO	19	M	£0	£50,000	£0	£0	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	3	3
Second card readers	19	M	£150,000	£0	£0	£30,000	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
Multi-operator ABT TOTO	18	L	£0	£200,000	£0	£20,000	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	3	3
Reduced fares															
15% to 20% fares reduction	16	L	£0	£1,140,000	£0	£1,520,000	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	1	1
standardise on <19 young persons fare	17	L	£0	£1,080,000	£0	£1,440,000	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	1
Passenger engagement															
Passenger charter	18	L	£0	£50,000	£0	£60,000	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3
eink displays	19	M	£6,750,000	£0	£0	£1,350,000	1	1	2	3	3	3	2	3	1
Accessibility and Inclusion															
next stop announcements	20	M	£500,000	£0	£0	£100,000	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	2
bus stop upgrades	20	M	£1,500,000	£0	£0	£150,000	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	3	3
Passenger Safety															
CCTV capex	19	M	£120,000	£0	£0	£0	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	3
CCTV opex	19	M	£0	£240,000	£0	£320,000	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	3
Review footways to bus stops	19	M	£500,000	£0	£0	£100,000	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	3
Local Authority Capability															
		H	£0	£320,000	£0	£420,000									

	2022/23 - 2024/25		2025/26 - 2028/29		total
	capex	opex	capex	opex	
L	£1,180,000	£4,570,000	£0	£5,730,000	£11,480,000
M	£11,150,000	£3,520,000	£0	£5,760,000	£20,430,000
H	£7,870,000	£320,000	£0	£2,000,000	£10,190,000
	£28,610,000			£13,490,000	£42,100,000

Score Criteria

L	19
M	19
H	21

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Equality Impact Assessment

Directorate: Place	
Service: Strategy and Infrastructure – Transport	
Name of Officer/s completing assessment: Eddie Hewitt	
Date of Assessment: 14th September 2021	
Name of service/function or policy being assessed: Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)	
1.	<p>What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?</p> <p>The BSIP is an essential element of the Council’s response to the National Bus Strategy. This response also includes the development of an Enhanced Partnership with Bus Operators in Slough. The overall requirement is to establish and commit to a joint plan to improve reliability and quality of services, increase bus passenger levels and improve bus passenger satisfaction.</p> <p>The National Bus Strategy has been developed by Government in the context of the need to bring about a post-COVID-19 recovery across the country, and to ensure the recovery is not car-led. This follows on from the publication of the DfT’s <i>Better Deal for Bus Users</i> guidance, with a commitment to help local authorities improve current services and restore lost services where they’re needed most.</p> <p>During the COVID-19 restrictions, demand for public transport was substantially reduced and emergency government funding was applied to maintain bus services. All formal restrictions were lifted in July 2021. In transport terms, the essential policy is for public transport to be an integral part of the overall recovery. For buses, the Government has put forward the slogan ‘<i>Bus Back Better</i>’, indicating the intention to ensure that services post-COVID will be an improvement on the situation before the restrictions came first came into place. However, even before the COVID-19 restrictions came into place, policies were in place at Slough to promote increased uptake of public transport and specifically travel by bus. Hence the National Bus Strategy is building on existing plans and aspirations in Slough. The mass movement of people on the network has long been a priority in order to deliver an integrated, sustainable transport solution in and across the borough.</p> <p>The headline objectives in the BSIP include targets as follows:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reductions in journey times • Improvement in journey time reliability • Increased patronage (passenger numbers) • Increased levels of passenger satisfaction. <p>The proposals in the BSIP designed to realise these objectives include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased bus priority on the road network • Better service frequency • Lower fares • Better ticketing systems and arrangements (including multi-operator ticketing) • Improved modal integration opportunities • Better service information <p>The BSIP is the first stage in the overall response to the National Bus Strategy, and is by its nature a preliminary plan which is subject to various factors and circumstances coming into alignment. Hence, this Equality Impact Assessment is an initial, overarching review.</p> <p>The BSIP has also not yet been finalised. The BSIP is currently in draft form, and will be finalised in time for submission to the Department for Transport by the 31st October 2021. Subject to Cabinet review, towards the end of October, the main content of the BSIP is, however, not expected to change significantly.</p> <p>The BSIP will then be followed by the development of an Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP) which will contain detailed, specific schemes. Further, scheme specific EIAs will be produced in due course, where the schemes are considered to be of an appropriate scale and scope, and where such schemes are expected to lead to significant impacts for any protected group(s).</p>
2.	Who implements or delivers the policy, service or function? State if this is undertaken by more than one team, service, and department including any external partners.

	<p>The BSIP is a shared plan. Slough Borough Council and the Bus Operators of registered local services in Slough have joint ownership of the BSIP. Subject to feasibility, funding and consultation, the proposed measures will be delivered jointly, through the Enhanced Partnership. However, ultimately, Slough Borough Council has responsibility for leading the development of the plan and submission to the Department for Transport (DfT).</p> <p>The development of the BSIP has been overseen by the Transport team in the Place directorate, Strategy and Infrastructure division. Responsibility for regular progress reviews, liaising with the bus operators and all related administrative activities lies with the Transport team.</p> <p>The DfT is responsible initially for reviewing the Slough BSIP, and for determining any initial levels of funding. Subsequently, the DfT will also be reviewing scheme specific proposals that are set out in local traffic authority Enhanced Partnership Plans (EPPs) – the next stage in the overall process – and determining any grant funding to facilitate the delivery of the proposed schemes and measures.</p>
3.	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal? For example who are the external/internal customers, communities, partners, stakeholders, the workforce etc. Please consider all of the Protected Characteristics listed (more information is available in the background information). Bear in mind that people affected by the proposals may well have more than one protected characteristic.</p> <p>The overall expectation is that this proposal will lead to improvements for all who use bus services in Slough, with wider benefits for all. However, it is acknowledged that bus travel may be used and relied upon by certain protected groups more than others. Broadly speaking, the relevant groups are expected to be affected as follows:</p> <p>Age: Older people are often particularly reliant on public transport and bus travel especially. Service frequency, safety, access to bus stops and the bus station, information availability, and concessional fares are all of particular relevance here. The same applies to young people, including school pupils and students.</p> <p>Disability: As above, people with disabilities are often reliant on public transport. Again, service frequency, safety, access to bus stops and the bus station, information availability, and concessional fares are all of particular relevance.</p>

	<p>Pregnancy and maternity: There may be some specific impacts for this category, relating to access to healthcare and facilities for parents and also young children.</p> <p>Race: Generally speaking, there are no specific impacts here. However, there may be some cultural cultural/religious aspects which relate to the perceived and actual benefits or otherwise of public transport services and patronage.</p> <p>Religion and Belief: Generally speaking, there are no specific impacts here. However, there may be some impacts, including better access to places of worship. Furthermore, as above, there may be some cultural/religious aspects which relate to the perceived and actual benefits or otherwise of public transport services and patronage.</p> <p>Gender Reassignment: No specific impacts associated with this category.</p> <p>Marriage and Civil Partnership: No specific impacts associated with this category.</p> <p>Sex: No specific impacts associated with this category.</p> <p>Sexual orientation: No specific impacts associated with this category.</p> <p><i>Details relating to the nature of the various, expected impacts are set out in sections 4 and 5 below.</i></p>
4.	<p>What are any likely positive impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? You may wish to refer to the Equalities Duties detailed in the background information.</p> <p><i>The positive impacts for all groups identified above, and indeed for all bus travellers from all groups, are likely to be:</i></p>

- More frequent bus services
- More reliable journey times
- Lower fares
- Multi-operator ticketing arrangements (a simpler ticket and therefore easier travel)
- Better quality buses
- Improved air quality, reduced carbon emissions
- A more extensive network of services / greater access to places of work and education, shop, services, healthcare, and other destinations
- Further benefits.

Nb the above list of likely benefits is not exhaustive.

Other likely benefits or aspects which are particularly relevant to the specific groups identified are as follows:

Age

More frequent services will be especially helpful to both older people and young people. This will lead to increased perceptions of safety and, for the elderly mainly, greater comfort / minimised physical pain related to traditionally longer waiting times. A more reliable network of services will also increase connectivity and social inclusion, as well as easier access to a range of destinations.

Disability

As above, similar benefits will arise as for older people.

In addition, the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership is expected to lead to more considerate and more responsive bus companies, through a greater understanding of the issues, which will be shared by the operators and the Council. Where not already included, the proposed table of measures and schemes will be reviewed and strengthened to better address the needs of people with disabilities.

Parents and young children

Again, as above, more frequent and reliable services will improve safety (perceived and actual) especially for mothers of young children and young children themselves. Benefits will also be associated with better access to healthcare related destinations. Lower fare costs may well be of particular benefit here too.

	<p>Race Although it can be hard to demonstrate with empirical evidence, certain cultural attitudes towards public transport do appear to be of particular relevance to certain ethnic and minority groups. Themes include actual and perceived safety on public transport and a preference for car ownership and travel combined with reluctance to travel on public transport for a variety of reasons (termed sometimes as '<i>car culture</i>'). Improved bus services are expected to provide a more attractive, more efficient travel option for all, and hence the benefits here may be particularly attractive to certain groups within the community.</p> <p>Religion and Belief More reliable bus services, reduced waiting times, and a better bus network are all likely to provide a more attractive travel option to those seeking to travel to places of worship across the borough. In addition, there may also be some benefits in terms of safety – again, perceived or actual – for members of certain religious groups who may generally feel vulnerable on public transport.</p>
5.	<p>What are the likely negative impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? If so then are any particular groups affected more than others and why?</p> <p>There are very few negative impacts anticipated for any of the groups identified above. The only impact that stands out is a possible reduction in parking availability at certain locations across the borough (although no firm plans – or even locations – have been established). This impact would potentially be detrimental to those who have a particularly strong preference to travel by private car. In the wider interests of the borough, the more important need here is for the Council, as local transport authority, to provide more education and to engage with residents better to promote more sustainable forms of travel, including public transport and active travel.</p>
6.	<p>Have the impacts identified in (4) and (5) above been assessed using up to date and reliable evidence and data? Please state evidence sources and conclusions drawn (e.g. survey results, customer complaints, monitoring data etc).</p> <p>In preparing the BSIP, the Council has taken into account all relevant and available data sources, including data from the bus operators. Nb in the case of some operators, data is yet to be received and is subject to non-disclosure agreements, due to commercial interests. The analysis of this data is therefore not yet complete.</p> <p>Regarding other sources: The Council is currently hosting a public survey for both bus travellers and non-bus travellers. This survey is currently still active and is due to cease at the end of September 2021. The BSIP team is already engaged in reviewing the responses as they come in, and</p>

	<p>considering how best to respond to the results. At present, there are no early indications of any issues relating to specific, protected groups, but this will be closely monitored during the finalisation of the BSIP, subsequently the EPP, and then on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Responding to customer complaints and other correspondence are generally considered as part of the general Transport team duties. All relevant information has been discussed and referred to the authors of the BSIP document, either verbally as part of ongoing discussion, or in written form via emails. However, the information here is not extensive and there are no major points of reference relating to any specific group.</p>
7.	<p>Have you engaged or consulted with any identified groups or individuals if necessary and what were the results, e.g. have the staff forums/unions/ community groups been involved?</p> <p>Staff forums and unions have not been consulted. Community groups have been sent information regarding the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership development, via email correspondence, with a request for any comments to be made. One particular group specifically targeted is schools, with head teachers having been contacted for this purpose. Staff resources at the Council are quite limited, at present, but the intention is to engage further with as many relevant organisations and community groups as far as reasonably possible. This process is expected to continue for the lifetime of the national Bus Strategy, specifically the period during which the Government is coordinating the overall realisation of the strategy and making funding streams available for local authorities to bid for.</p>
8.	<p>Have you considered the impact the policy might have on local community relations?</p> <p>The BSIP is expected to make a positive contribution here. Public Transport plays a valuable role in the borough, and nationally, in providing greater mobility and accessibility to all members of the community. The BSIP contains a comprehensive list of measures and proposals designed to have the overall effect of improving connectivity within and across the town. This will be achieved through more frequent services, more reliable journeys, better value with fares, and all associated benefits. All of these impacts are expected to be valued by the community, and specific community groups, as referred to in section 4.</p>

	<p>The expected benefits arising from the improved air quality, reduced carbon emissions, reduced congestion levels, will all be particularly valuable in terms of greater social and environmental sustainability. Better, more reliable access to jobs, education and shopping areas will all be expected to lead to greater economic sustainability, with positive implications for all within the various communities.</p>
9.	<p>What plans do you have in place, or are developing, that will mitigate any likely identified negative impacts? For example what plans, if any, will be put in place to reduce the impact?</p> <p>As throughout this review, there are currently no negative impacts anticipated for any protected group, or indeed all members of the public. It is possible that some changes may have some unexpected consequences, including some short term detrimental impacts, but the BSIP is a 'living' document / plan, and any negative impacts will be reviewed and addressed accordingly.</p> <p>Engagement with the public increasingly takes place via online communications, and the various websites run by the Council and the bus operators, and all other sources, will continue to play a vital role in the exchange of information and comments. However, as far as practically possible, greater input from community groups will be actively sought and welcomed by the Council, through current channels and new initiatives to be explored and implemented.</p>
10.	<p>What plans do you have in place to monitor the impact of the proposals once they have been implemented? (The full impact of the decision may only be known after the proposals have been implemented). Please see action plan below.</p> <p>The reporting procedure for the BSIP has not yet been fully finalised. The current proposal is that six monthly reviews will be appropriate to monitor the effectiveness of both the BSIP and the Enhanced partnership. In addition, the Council will respond to all relevant guidance from the DfT, and will comply with all formal reporting requirements.</p> <p>The success of all major schemes and measures to follow via the EPP will typically be subject to evaluation reports and regular monitoring, as well as discussion at partnership meetings to come with the bus operators.</p> <p>In addition, the Transport team will oversee an ongoing review of the overall development and progress of the BSIP and all associated measures, including consideration of the perceived and actual impacts on the public – including, specifically, all protected groups. The Enhanced Partnership will provide greater opportunity for the Council to engage in meaningful discussion with both the bus operators and the public on all relevant matters, and this will be expected to lead to further positive and specific outcomes.</p>

What course of action does this EIA suggest you take? More than one of the following may apply	✓
Outcome 1: No major change required. The EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken	✓
Outcome 2: Adjust the policy to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers identified? (Complete action plan).	
Outcome 3: Continue the policy despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact (see questions below). (Complete action plan).	
Outcome 4: Stop and rethink the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (Complete action plan).	

As stated in the question, the full impacts of the BSIP, the EPP, and the partnership will only be realised initially over the lifetime of the National Bus Strategy and the local response, and subsequently beyond. For a long-term, sustainable solution, thorough, ongoing review will be vital, along with continuity and increased commitment to the essential principles and objectives established in the plan.

Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

At this stage a timetabled Action Plan should be developed to address any concerns/issues related to equality in the existing or proposed policy/service or function. This plan will need to be integrated into the appropriate Service/Business Plan.

Action	Target Groups	Lead Responsibility	Outcomes/Success Criteria	Monitoring & Evaluation	Target Date	Progress to Date
Final version of the BSIP to be submitted to the DfT	All groups	Eddie Hewitt Support from Atkins (consultants)	Satisfactory review and feedback from the DfT, along with any relevant funding award	Review	31 st October 2021	On course

Regular reviews of the progress of the implementation of the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership	All groups	Eddie Hewitt / Transport	Satisfactory review findings	Monitoring	Ongoing (minimum every 6 months)	Planned
Development of the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP) and submission to the DfT)	All groups	Eddie Hewitt / Transport. Support from Atkins (consultants)	Satisfactory review and feedback from the DfT, along with any relevant funding award for specific schemes proposed.	Review	March 2022	On course
<p>Name: Eddie Hewitt, Principle Transport Strategy Officer</p> <p>Signed: E Hewitt (Person completing the EIA)</p> <p>Name: Misha Byrne, Transport Lead</p> <p>Signed:</p> <p>.....(Policy Lead if not same as above)</p>						
Date: 14th September 2021						

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Place Scrutiny Panel **DATE** 28th September 2021
CONTACT OFFICER: Paul Stimpson, Planning Policy Manager
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875820
WARD(S): All

PART I
FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION

SLOUGH LOCAL PLAN – PROPOSED CONSULTATION ON THE RELEASE OF GREEN BELT SITES FOR FAMILY HOUSING

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Members about the consultation on the proposed release of Green Belt sites for housing which is the latest stage in the preparation of the Local Plan.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

- 2.1 The Panel is requested to resolve that
- a) The proposed consultation on the release of Green Belt sites for family housing be noted.
 - b) Any comments on the proposed consultation be forwarded to the Executive Director for Place and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulation for consideration.

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

3a Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

- 3.1 The proposal to increase the supply of family housing in Slough to meet local needs supports the Slough Wellbeing Strategy 2020-2025 and its priority of having strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods

3b Five Year Plan Outcomes

- 3.2 The proposal to increase the supply of family housing in Slough to meet local needs supports the delivery of the 5 Year Plan and the following outcomes in particular:
- Outcome 3: Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay.
 - Outcome 4: Our residents will live in good quality homes.

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications of this report but approval for expenditure upon the consultation exercise will be sought from the Cabinet..

(b) Risk Management

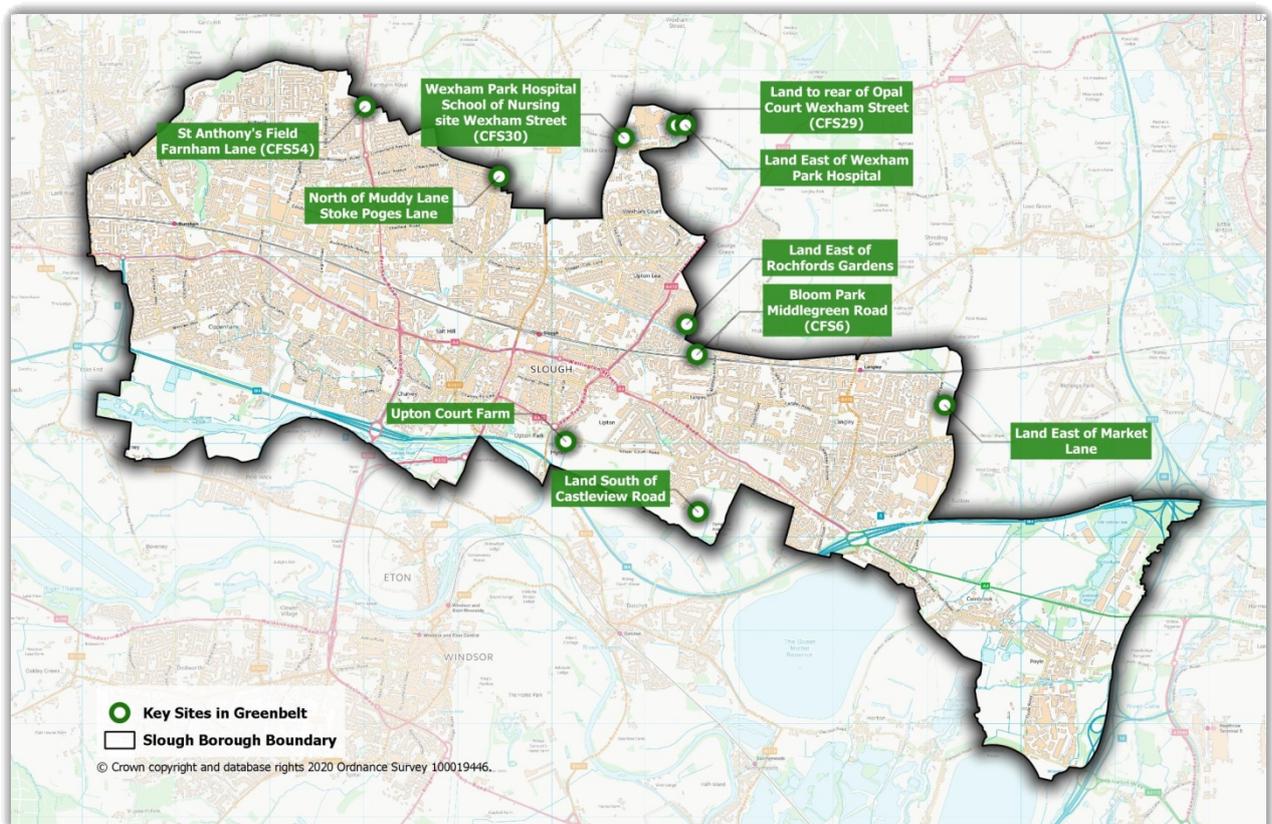
<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Risk/Threat/Opportunity</i>	<i>Mitigation(s)</i>
That the Committee approves the recommendation.	Failure to proceed with the proposed consultation on the release of Green Belt sites for family housing will affect the Council's ability to bring forward the Local Plan and meet local housing needs ..	Agree the recommendations.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

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

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 We are continuing to progress with the preparation of the Local Plan for Slough. One of the Objectives of the Plan is “to meet the Objectively Assessed Housing Need of 893 dwellings within the Borough or as close as possible to where the need arises within a balanced housing market”. All of the work that we have done has shown that there is a shortage of land for residential development in Slough and a shortage of sites suitable for new family housing in particular. As a result, one of the key components of the Local Plan’s proposed Spatial Strategy is to promote the cross-border expansion of Slough to meet unmet housing needs. It is recognised that, because of the lack of any suitable brownfield sites, this would have to take place on Green Belt land.
- 5.2 Before we can do this, we have to make sure that we have “left no stone unturned” in our search for housing within the Borough. This means that we have to consider releasing Green Belt sites in Slough for housing. One of the advantages of this is that greenfield sites can provide lower density family housing with a higher proportion of affordable housing than brownfield sites can deliver.
- 5.3 As part of the work on the Local Plan both the *Issues and Options* and *Proposed Spatial Strategy* consultation documents identified ten sites that could possibly be released from the Green Belt for family housing. The locations of these are shown below .



- 5.4 In selecting these sites large areas of Green Belt were ruled out as being unsuitable for development. This included the whole of the Colnbrook and Poyle area which was

not considered suitable for family housing for environmental reasons and has been identified as part of the “Strategic Gap” in the proposed Spatial Strategy. The area south of the M4 which contains the Jubilee River and sewage works was also ruled out as being unavailable for development..

- 5.5 The ten sites have been assessed against a range of planning criteria which include elements of Green Belt policy. It should be noted that they have only been subject to very high level technical and policy assessments at this stage. One of the purposes of the consultation is to help gather evidence about what other constraints there may be to developing the sites.
- 5.6 In order to help inform the consultation, each site has now been given a preliminary “traffic light” assessment to indicate whether they are considered “suitable”, “possible” or “unsuitable” for housing development. The main reason for coming to these preliminary conclusions about the sites are as follows:
- 5.7 The development of **St Anthony’s Field** would have a significant visual impact upon the small gap between Slough and Farnham Royal resulting in the merging of the two settlements. It would also have an impact upon the adjoining Conservation Area. It is for these reasons that the site is considered to be “**unsuitable**” for housing development.
- 5.8 Building upon **part of Bloom Park** would result in the loss of public open space. This is considered to be sufficient reason to make this an “**unsuitable**” site for housing development.
- 5.9 The site **North of Muddy Lane** is part of the Singh Sabba sports centre playing field. The site consists of a strip of land along the Stoke Road frontage which is not delineated on the ground in any way. This, and the loss of private open space, is considered to make this an “**unsuitable**” site for housing development.
- 5.10 The **land east of Market Lane** is part of the Colne Valley Park and forms part of the Strategic Gap between Slough and greater London. It is very visible with no clearly defined boundary. As a result any development could be described as “sprawl”.
- 5.11 The site was identified for possible housing development in the Slough Northern Extension study produced by Atkins in 2017. It also forms part of the area of search for major housing development in the Wider Area Growth Study which is being produced by Stantec. As a result it remains as a “**possible**” housing site but it is considered that it should only come forward as part of a wider comprehensive development where a full mitigation package can be provided. This will include the necessary infrastructure to make the development sustainable and include compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land.
- 5.12 The **land south of Blenheim Road** is adjacent to the recent Kings Reach housing development which was released from the Green Belt for housing development in the

2004 Local Plan for Slough. One of the reasons why the proposed site was not allocated for housing at that time was that it formed part of the designated Ditton Park Historic Park and Garden. Any harm or loss of a designated heritage asset such as a registered park and garden requires exceptional, clear and convincing justification.

- 5.13 The site is not in the same ownership as the rest of the park and has no discernible historic features. As a result it remains as a “**possible**” housing site provided heritage objections can be overcome with suitable mitigation.
- 5.14 There are no fundamental policy objections to the development of the cluster of sites around Wexham Park Hospital. Land to the south was released from the Green Belt in the 2004 Local Plan and the three proposed sites would result in the rounding off of development in the area.
- 5.15 As a result **Wexham Park Hospital School of Nursing** site, Wexham Street; **Land to the rear of Opal Court** Wexham Street; and **Land east of Wexham Park Hospital** are considered to be “**suitable**” for housing development.
- 5.16 Land **east of Rochfords Gardens** is a natural infilling site because it is surrounded by development on three sides. It is field with no intrinsic qualities. As a result it is considered to be a “**suitable**” site for housing development.
- 5.17 The land at Upton Court Farm is a partly underutilised site close to the centre of Slough. It has a number of buildings on the northern side fronting Upton Court Road and is well contained. As a result, on balance, this is considered to be a “suitable” site for residential development.

Green Belt Considerations

- 5.18 It is recognised that the fact that all of these sites are within the Green Belt remains the biggest policy constraint to development. Government policy attaches great importance to Green Belts which are intended to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. This means that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered through the preparation of plans where there are “exceptional circumstances” which are “fully evidenced and justified”. The NPPF states that, before green belt boundaries are redrawn, an authority must demonstrate that it has “examined all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development”, including making use of brownfield land, increasing the density of existing settlements and exploring whether neighbouring authorities can help meet its needs. How this has been done is explained in Section 7 of Appendix 1.
- 5.19 The final decision as to whether the necessary “exceptional circumstances” exist to justify allocating any of these sites for family housing will have to be made when the final version of the Local Plan is produced. This will be able to take account the results of public consultation and all other factors in determining whether there are the necessary exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green Belt land for housing. This “publication” version of the plan will be the subject of a further round of

public consultation before it is submitted for an examination by the Planning Inspector.

Consultation

- 5.20 Details of the proposed consultation exercise have not yet been finalised but it will take place over a six week period before Christmas. It is envisaged that a full range of consultation methods will be used..
- 5.21 A draft of part 1 of the proposed consultation document is included in Appendix 1. Part 2 will contain a more detailed assessment of each site.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposed consultation on the release of Green Belt sites for family housing is an important stage in the preparation of the Local Plan.

7 Background Papers

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

Slough Local Plan Proposed Spatial Strategy (2020)

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Draft of Part 1 of proposed consultation document on the release of Green Belt sites for family housing..

Appendix 1: PROPOSED RELEASE OF GREEN BELT LAND FOR FAMILY HOUSING

A1. Introduction

A1.1 The text below is the outline draft for the first part of the Consultation document referred to in the Cabinet Report. The final document layout and appearance will coordinate with the Spatial Strategy Consultation document released last year.

A1.2 The section here sets out the context and purpose of the consultation. The second part, yet to be finalised, will contain site specific details such as initial site assessment criteria to inform their suitability. The decision to include the incomplete text was made by the Local Plan Board in August, so the team can progress with agreement in principle ahead of the more detailed proposals being available.

A1.3 The Consultation will include a set of questions to guide responses. These will be about:

- Site selection methodology
- Individual sites
- Any other Green Belt sites
- Alternatives to Green Belt releases
- Whether there are “exceptional circumstances” to justify the loss of Green Belt

A1.4 Formal representations require minimum contact details to show they are legitimate and enable them to be followed up, but general comments can be submitted. For more detail please see the Cabinet Report.

A2 Draft text

PROPOSED RELEASE OF GREEN BELT LAND FOR FAMILY HOUSING

FOREWARD

CONTENTS

1 About this Consultation

1.1 The Council is consulting people about the proposal to release some sites in Slough from the Green Belt so that they can be developed for family housing. As a result we would like your views as to whether the ten sites that we have identified are suitable for housing.

1.2 It is recognised that Green Belt boundaries should be permanent and so we would also like your views as to whether the necessary “exceptional circumstances” exist to justify building upon Green Belt land.

1.3 It should be noted that this consultation is only about the possible release of land for housing. Any proposals for the use of Green Belt land for any other purpose will be considered at a later date as part of the Local Plan process.

1.4 The consultation period runs for 6 weeks from ??? to ???. All responses must be received before the close of the consultation at 5pm.

1.5 If possible responses should be submitted using the online form at www.slough.citizenspace.com

1.6 Those not using the online form should submit representations:

- Via email to planningpolicy@slough.gov.uk
- Via post to: Planning Policy (GB), Slough Borough Council, Observatory House, 25 Windsor Road, Slough SL1 2EL

1.7 If you have any queries relating to the consultation please contact the Planning Policy team using the contact details above.

2 Why are we consulting about releasing Green Belt for family housing?

2.1 All Council's have a duty to produce a Local Plan which contains proposals and policies for the future spatial planning of the area. We are in the process of producing one for Slough which will cover the period up to 2040.

2.2 One of the Objectives of the Local Plan is “*to meet the Objectively Assessed Housing Need of 893 dwellings within the Borough or as close as possible to where the need arises within a balanced housing market*” Although the precise number may vary (currently 864) it is clear that there is a genuine need for more housing in Slough.

2.3 All of the work that we have done on the Local Plan through the *Issues and Options* and *Proposed Spatial Strategy* consultations has shown that there is a shortage of land for residential development in Slough and a shortage of sites

suitable for new family housing in particular.

2.4 As a result we have been trying to promote “*the cross border expansion of Slough to meet unmet housing needs.*” In practise this would involve the development of Green Belt land in adjacent Council areas. The Planning Process places a ‘Duty to Co-operate’ on all parties involved to address the matter.

2.5 As part of this process we have to make sure that we have “left no stone unturned ” in our search for deliverable housing sites within the Borough. This means that we have to first consider releasing Green Belt sites in Slough for housing before asking our neighbours to meet some of Slough’s need.

2.6 One of the advantages of this is that greenfield sites have more ‘financial viability’ to provide lower density family housing with a higher proportion of affordable housing than brownfield sites can deliver. Because of the importance of Green Belt, Sites can only be released from the Green Belt through the Local Plan process which is explained below.

3 The Local Plan for Slough

3.1 The starting point for the preparation of the Local Plan for Slough (2016 – 2040) was the *Issues and Options* consultation which took place in 2017. This identified a number of options for development. One of these was Option H: “The release of Green Belt land for housing”. There were a number of objections to the principle of the loss of Green Belt land and to the ten possible sites that were identified in the consultation document.

3.2 The main conclusion from the consultation was that there were no reasonable options, or combination of options which could accommodate all of Slough’s housing and employment needs within the Borough.

3.3 An “emerging” proposed Spatial Strategy was agreed in 2018 which took this into account. One of the main focuses of this was how the Local Plan could accommodate the proposed expansion of Heathrow with a third runway as this had a significant impact on land use in Colnbrook and Poyle in the east of the Borough.

3.4 Once it became clear that the proposed third runway was not going to go ahead in the short to medium term, a revised *Proposed Spatial Strategy* was produced. This was the subject of public consultation in November 2020.

3.5 This proposed to deliver most of the necessary growth through the major comprehensive redevelopment of the “centre of Slough”. Another component of the Strategy involved “*selecting other key locations for appropriate sustainable development.*” Part of this could involve green field or Green Belt land being released for housing.

3.6 The same ten possible sites from the Issues and Options document were identified for consultation. No details or assessments were included at this stage and it was made clear that further consultation would have to take place before any proposals could be made to release sites from the Green Belt for housing.

3.7 It was also suggested that any decision would have to take account of the results of Part 2 of the Wider Area Growth Study which is assessing the potential for developing major sites for housing in and around Slough.

3.8 One of the questions asked in the Spatial Strategy consultation was “*If you think that more homes should be built in Slough to meet local needs where should it be?*”. There was a range of responses but only around 10% of respondents thought that Green Belt sites on the edge of Slough should be released for housing. There were also objections to the specific sites that were identified in the consultation. At the same time only around 40% of respondents thought it was appropriate to plan for a shortfall of housing in Slough and promote the cross border expansion instead.

4 Why is there a need for more housing in Slough?

4.1 The Government requires Local Plans to make sufficient provision for housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development. (NPPF para 20) to meet the needs of the population over the long term.

4.2 The Government puts particular emphasis upon meeting housing needs and has produced a “standard” methodology for calculating what they are in each Local Plan area using household projections and an ‘affordability ratio’. This produces a need for an average of 864 dwellings a year in Slough.

4.3 The Spatial Strategy Consultation Document (November 2020) identified that the proposed Strategy could result in a shortfall of 5,000 homes in Slough. This was based upon a slightly higher annual need figure of 893 and the supply of housing sites identified in April 2020.

4.4 The most recent annual housing figures have reduced need in Slough slightly, and some new sites have been identified, but the rate of house building has remained low with just 501 completions last year. In addition, as a result of responses to the public consultation, it has been acknowledged that the end of the Local Plan period needs to be extended from 2036 to 2040. This means that another four years supply of housing has to be found.

4.5 The Housing Trajectory includes sites that have been built in the first five years of the plan, sites with planning permission, allocations and sites that could potentially be developed for residential use. The latest version identifies around 12,000 dwellings mostly in flatted development. This is well below the number

needed to meet the objectively assessed housing need over the Local Plan period up to 2040 as shown in Table x below.

Table x Housing Supply Calculations

[INSERT MOST UP TO DATE CALCULATION before publication]

4.6 As a result it is clear that there will continue to be both a shortfall of housing supply and the provision of family housing in Slough over the Plan period which requires us to consider the release of Green Belt land to try to reduce this.

5 Why is there a need for more family housing in Slough?

5.1 There is currently a mismatch between the type of housing that is needed to meet the needs of Slough residents and the type of new housing that is being built. This is resulting in overcrowding, people living in unsuitable accommodation and families having to move out of the Borough. As a result it is difficult to create a stable balanced community and the Local Plan Objective of enabling people to be able to “stay” in Slough if they want to. .

5.2 In addition to meeting the overall numbers, paragraph 62 of the NPPF states that “the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. In order to do this a Local Housing Needs Assessment was produced by GL Hearn in October 2019 on behalf of Windsor & Maidenhead, South Bucks and Slough.

5.3 This showed that for market housing in Slough, the overwhelming requirement was for larger units with a need of 57% of the supply as 3 bedroomed houses and 20% as 4 or more bedroomed houses. The need for larger affordable housing for rent was not as high, but still constituted 29%.

5.4 Monitoring shows that around 80% of the dwellings built in Slough in the first five years of the Plan period were flats. Looking forward only around 6% of dwellings with planning permission are for houses..

5.5 This is reflected in research which has shown that the average size of residential properties built in Slough over the last three years is 68m² which is almost half the size of those built in South Bucks which is 132m². This is despite the fact that the average household size in Slough (2.8) is higher than South Bucks (2.6) It also helps to explain why Slough has some of the highest levels of overcrowding with each person having on average 27.2 m² of space compared to an average of 36.5m² in other towns and cities.

5.6 In order to address this problem the Core Strategy and proposed Spatial Strategy seeks to protect the existing stock of family accommodation by preventing the redevelopment or subdivision of housing for flats. This will not meet demand and so there needs to be an increase in the supply of new family homes.

6 Is there a need for more affordable housing in Slough?

6.1 Slough has a significant shortage of affordable housing. In March 2021 there were 1,911 households on the Council's Waiting List. Whilst only around 10% of these need 4 or 5 bedroomed houses, there is an extreme shortage of these larger homes with very few becoming available to rent. Indeed in 2020/21 only four units of this size were able to be let to new tenants which means that these large households can have up to a 5 year wait to get the accommodation that they need.

6.2 Paragraph 34 of the NPPF states that Local Plans should set out the types and level of affordable housing that is needed. Core Policy 4 of the Core Strategy states that all sites with 15 or more dwellings will be required to provide between 30% and 40% of the dwellings as social rented along with other forms of affordable housing. It has not, however, been possible to obtain this level of affordable housing on sites because development will only proceed if it is viability and a developer can make a reasonable return on investment. As a result we have had to grant planning permission on some brownfield sites which have not provided any affordable housing at all.

6.3 This has resulted in an average of around 50 affordable units a year being provided during the first five years of the Local Plan period. Previous peak building rates for affordable housing has happened when there has been a supply of greenfield land.

6.4 Viability is much less of an issues when developing greenfield sites because they do not have the same existing use value and the cost of building can be lower than on previously developed sites. As a result it would be possible to obtain a much higher proportion of affordable housing upon any sites that are released from the Green Belt . And in addition there is more opportunity for those homes to be family housing.

6.5 The NPPF also requires plans to identify land for self or custom build homes. The Self Build Register in Slough currently has requests for a building plot from over 200 people. It is not possible to allocate plots for self build within flatted schemes and so the only opportunity for doing this is likely to be on greenfield sites where houses rather than flats are being built. More recent Government Policy is requiring the provision of a new type of affordable housing called 'First Homes'. The initial implications of that will also need to be assessed and integrated.

6.6 As a result it can be seen that there is a need for a more balance housing market in Slough which meets one of the main aims of the Local Plan which is to make it a place where people want to "work, rest, play and stay".

7 Are there any alternatives to releasing Green Belt land for housing?

7.1 Paragraph 141 of the NPPF states that before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development.

7.2 As a result it is necessary to demonstrate whether the Local Plan strategy:

- a) Makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
- b) Optimises the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of the Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport;
- c) Has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development.,

7.3 These matters have been considered through the Issues and Options consultation (2017) and the consultation on the Spatial Strategy (2020). The key conclusion from the Issues and Options consultation was that there was no reasonable option, or combination of options that could accommodate all of Slough's needs within the Borough boundary.

7.4 Taking this into account the proposed Spatial Strategy has the following 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.

7.5 A large proportion of the proposed growth will take place in the Centre of Slough. The rest of the town is already highly developed. The need to retain Existing Business Areas means that it has not been possible to identify very many selected key locations for major housing development. There is a shortage of public open space and so it is not proposed to identify any more of this for development.

7.6 The only other scope for major new housing would be to redevelop the suburban housing areas. The Spatial Strategy does not propose to do this because of the need to promote healthy, inclusive and safe communities and retain the existing stock of family housing. The “Protecting the Suburbs” report (2020) showed why it was not practical, viable, sustainable or desirable to allow any of the family housing to be lost.

7.7 As a result it can be demonstrated that there is no suitable underutilised major brownfield land in Slough that hasn’t already been identified for housing and optimum use is being made of the existing housing stock.

7.8 Paragraph 125 of the NPPF states that where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site. As a result it states that Local Plans should include minimum density standards for town centres which should seek a significant uplift in the average density of residential development.

7.9 The Core Strategy sets out an indicative density range for different location in Slough. This states that densities should be between 35 and 55 dwellings per hectare in the suburban areas, between 40 and 75 dwellings per hectare in the urban areas and above 70 dwellings per hectare in the town centre.

7.10 Development within the Centre of Slough has significantly exceeded this density with some schemes up to ten times higher than the minimum. Whilst these very high densities have delivered the maximum number of dwellings possible they have not produced the range of housing that is required in Slough.

7.11 Part of the Spatial Strategy involves promoting the cross border expansion of Slough to meet unmet housing needs. Discussions with neighbouring authorities about meeting some of Slough’s unmet housing need have not so far been very successful. One of the reasons is that this would also involve releasing Green Belt land for housing.

7.12 As a result it can be seen that the proposal to release Green Belt land in Slough for family housing has been brought forward as a last resort after making as much use as possible of brownfield sites, optimising the density of development and exploring the possibility of building outside of the Borough.

8 How have the possible housing sites been selected?

8.1 The ten sites that could possibly be released from the Green Belt were first identified in the Issues and Options consultation document (2017).

8.2 This noted that the largest area of Green Belt in the Borough is in Colnbrook

and Poyle. This was not considered suitable for new housing because it is subject to a number of environmental constraints and the Government announced its support for a third runway in this location which makes it even less appropriate for housing.

8.3 The area of Green Belt south of the M4 in Slough was considered unsuitable for housing development because it contained the Jubilee river and the sewage works as well as having poor access and is mostly liable to flood.

8.4 A number of other pockets of Green Belt were also scoped out because they were not considered suitable for residential development for a variety of reasons such as their existing land use (eg education, cemetery, allotment, utility infrastructure, public open space); fundamental constraints such as flood risk or designated ecological value, or major utilities underground.

8.5 As a result, the ten possible sites identified in the Issues and Options consultation were:

- St Anthony's Field, Farnham Road;
- Wexham Park Hospital School of Nursing site, Wexham Street;
- Land to the rear of Opal Court Wexham Street;
- Land east of Wexham Park Hospital;
- North of Muddy Lane, Stoke Poges Lane;
- Land east of Rochfords Gardens;
- Bloom Park (part of), Middlegreen Road;
- Land East of Market Lane;
- Land south of Castlevue Road (south of Bleheim Rd)
- Upton Court Farm; Upton Court Road

8.6 It should be noted that no detailed work was carried out about possible constraints to the development of the sites. The consultation document also recognised that they could be subject to policy constraints. These included Bloom Park being public open space, the Castlevue site being part of an Historic Park and Garden, Market Lane being within the Colne Valley Park and Strategic Gap and St Anthony's Field having a role in the prevention of the coalescence of settlements.

8.7 The Spatial Strategy consultation document (2020) included the same ten sites as potential housing sites. It should be noted that the site south of Castlevue Road was renamed as being south of Blenheim Road since this is a more accurate description of its location. No further assessments of these sites had been carried out at this stage and the document reiterated that consideration would have to be given to strategic policies and local designations.

8.8 No new possible "Omission" housing sites within Green Belt were identified through the Spatial Strategy consultation exercise apart from some in the Colnbrook and Poyle area. As a result these ten sites have been brought forward for

assessment as part of this consultation exercise.

8.9 One of the key elements of the proposed Spatial Strategy was “protecting the Strategic Gap between Slough and Greater London”. As a result the assumptions about not building any housing in the Colnbrook and Poyle area remained. This strategy would also effectively safeguard land from being developed which could be needed for the expansion of the airport in the future.

8.10 As a result no possible housing sites have been identified in the Colnbrook and Poyle area in this consultation document. Any comments upon this would be welcomed and any proposals that do come forward for the release of sites from the Green Belt will be considered against the criteria for site selection.

9 What criteria will be used for deciding which Green Belt sites could be released for housing?

9.1 There are a number of factors that have to be taken into account in deciding whether sites are suitable for housing or not. Some of these relate to Green Belt factors others do not as explained below.

Green Belt Considerations

9.2 All of the sites that have been identified as possible housing sites are in the Green Belt. Paragraph 137 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts and that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. It is considered that all of the sites continue to have a Green Belt function and so have to be judged against Green Belt policy.

9.3 Paragraph 138 of the NPPF explains that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

9.4 Not all of these are relevant to the sites in Slough but the need to check sprawl and prevent settlements from merging are two of the criteria that can be used for assessing the potential housing sites.

9.5 Paragraph 141 of the NPPF describes some of the beneficial uses of Green Belt land. This includes providing access and opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation as well as retaining landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity. All of these factors can be included in the site selection process.

9.6 Paragraph 146 of the NPPF gives examples of how Green Belt land can be improved by looking for opportunities to provide access; provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation, to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity, biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land. The potential impact upon any of these existing features can also be used as part of the site selection process.

9.7 Finally Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states that where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously developed and/or is well served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt.

Other Site Selection Criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework

9.8 There are a number of other factors that have to be taken into account in order to ensure that any proposed development is sustainable. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out the basic principle that:

“all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects”.

9.9 Paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless they are surplus or being replaced with better provision.

9.10 Paragraph 110 of the NPPF states that in allocating sites for development in plans, it should be ensured that there are appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes and a safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved.

9.11 Paragraph 159 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development, such as housing, should be avoided in areas at risk of flooding.

9.12 Paragraph 175 of the NPPF states that plans should allocate sites with the least environmental or amenity value. This should be achieved by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils and recognising the benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland(174).

9.13 Paragraph 189 of the NPPF explains that Heritage assets, including sites and buildings of local historic value, should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their

significance.

Paragraph 212 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should not permit other development proposals in Mineral Safeguarding Areas if it might constrain potential future use for mineral working .

Local Planning Policies

9.14 Existing and emerging local planning policies reflect those set out in the NPPF. There are, however, some additional strategic designations which need to be taken into account. The most important are the policies in the Core Strategy and emerging Spatial Strategy which seek to protect the “Strategic Gap” between Slough and Greater London and the Colne Valley Regional Park.

9.15 The site selection process also has to take account of one of the elements of the proposed Spatial Strategy which is to promote the cross border expansion of Slough to meet local housing needs. This will be informed by the Wider Area Growth Study which was originally jointly commissioned by Windsor & Maidenhead, South Bucks and Slough. Part 2 of this study, which is being carried out by Stantec, is due to be published in the coming months.

9.16 The Spatial Strategy also seeks to safeguard the proposed third runway at Heathrow which remains as Government policy as set out in the Airports National Policy Statement.

Conclusion

9.17 All the above criteria have been taken into account in coming to our initial conclusions about the suitability of sites for development for family housing. Full details of the site selection criteria and how they have been applied to individual sites are set out in Part 2 of the report.

9.18 One of the purposes of this consultation is to seek views as to whether the correct criteria has been used to assess the sites, and the weight given to them is appropriate and suitable (see question [insert ref. xx]).

10 Sustainability Appraisal

10.1 All elements of the Local Plan have to be informed throughout is preparation by a Sustainability Appraisal. This demonstrates how the plan has balanced the relevant economic social and environmental objectives and considered alternative options which could reduce significant adverse impacts upon these objectives.

10.2 An addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal of the Proposed Spatial Strategy has been produced which considers the proposed Release of Green Belt Sites for Family Housing. This does not assess individual sites at this stage but assesses the

extent to which the principle of developing greenfield sites to meet local housing needs meets the Sustainability Objectives. As a result this can be used to inform the decision making process.

10.3 The Sustainability Appraisal Report is available to view and comment upon and will be subject to public consultation for a six week period as part of the overall consultation exercise.

10.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment will also be available.

11 What are the initial conclusions?

11.1 All of the sites have been subject to a high level assessment against the criteria identified above. It should also be noted that further detailed technical assessments will be needed. One of the purposes of the consultation is to help gather evidence about what other constraints there may be to developing the sites.

11.2 All of the sites constitute an extension of the existing urban area, which are considered to be one of the most sustainable forms of development once all opportunities for the reuse of brownfield land have been used up..

11.3 None of the sites have any particular landscape value and there are not subject to any biodiversity or ecological designations. As a result there are no known fundamental constraints to development in these respects but they will have to be subject to detailed surveys

11.4 All of the sites contain potentially developable land that is not constrained by flood risk.

11.5 The key factors which distinguish the sites are the impact upon the wider Green Belt in terms of physical and visual sprawl, the impact upon the coalescence of settlements, the loss of public or private open space and the impact upon historical assets

11.6 In order to help inform the consultation, each site has been given a preliminary “traffic light” assessment to indicate whether they are considered “suitable”, “possible” or “unsuitable” for housing development. Maps of the sites are in the figure 1. The results of this are shown below:

“GREEN” Suitable

- Wexham Park Hospital School of Nursing site, Wexham Street;
- Land to the rear of Opal Court Wexham Street;
- Land east of Wexham Park Hospital;
- Land east of Rochfords Gardens;
- Upton Court Farm;

“AMBER” Possible

- Land East of Market Lane;
- Land south of Blenheim Road

“RED” Unsuitable

- St Anthony’s Field, Farnham Road;
- North of Muddy Lane, Stoke Poges Lane;
- Bloom Park (part of), Middlegreen Road;
- All other areas of Green Belt land

11.7 A detailed assessment of each site is set out in the proformas below but the main conclusions are as follows:

Red - Unsuitable sites

11.8 The development of **St Anthony’s Field** would have a significant visual impact upon the small gap between Slough and Farnham Royal resulting in the merging of the two settlements. It would also have an impact upon the adjoining Conservation Area. It is for these reasons that the site is considered to be “**unsuitable**” for housing development.

11.9 Building upon part of **Bloom Park** would result in the loss of public open space. This is considered to be sufficient reason to make this an “**unsuitable**” site for housing development.

11.10 The site **North of Muddy Lane** is part of the Singh Sabba sports centre playing field. The site consists of a strip of land along the Stoke Road frontage which is not delineated on the ground in any way. This, and the loss of private open space, is considered to make this an “**unsuitable**” site for housing development.

Amber – sites possibly suitable for family housing

11.11 The **land east of Market Lane** is part of the Colne Valley Park and forms part of the Strategic Gap between Slough and greater London. It is very visible with no clearly defined boundary. As a result any development could be described as “sprawl”.

11.12 The site was identified for possible housing development in the Slough Northern Extension study produced by Atkins in 2017. It also forms part of the area of search for major housing development in the Wider Area Growth Study which is being produced by Stantec. As a result it remains as a “**possible**” housing site but it is considered that it should only come forward as part of a wider comprehensive development where a full mitigation package can be provided. This will include the necessary infrastructure to make the development sustainable and include compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land.

11.13 The **land south of Blenheim Road** is adjacent to the recent Kings Reach housing development which was released from the Green Belt for housing development in the 2004 Local Plan for Slough. One of the reasons why the proposed site was not allocated for housing at that time was that it formed part of the designated Ditton Park Historic Park and Garden. Any harm or loss of a designated heritage asset such as a registered park and garden should require exceptional, clear and convincing justification.

11.14 The site is not in the same ownership as the rest of the park and has no discernible historic features. As a result it remains as a “**possible**” housing site provided heritage objections can be overcome with suitable mitigation.

Green – Sites suitable for family housing

11.15 There are no fundamental policy objections to the development of the cluster of sites around Wexham Park Hospital. Land to the south was released from the Green Belt in the 2004 Local Plan and the three proposed sites would result in the rounding off of development in the area.

11.16 As a result **Wexham Park Hospital School of Nursing site, Wexham Street; Land to the rear of Opal Court Wexham Street; and Land east of Wexham Park Hospital** are considered to be “**suitable**” for housing development.

11.17 **Land east of Rochfords Gardens** is a natural infilling site because it is surrounded by development on three sides. It is field with no intrinsic qualities. As a result it is considered to be a “**suitable**” site for housing development.

11.18 The **land at Upton Court Farm** is a partly underutilised site close to the centre of Slough. It has a number of buildings on the northern side fronting Upton Court Road and is well contained. As a result, on balance, this is considered to be a “**suitable**” site for residential development.

Additional general requirements

11.19 A full explanation as to why the sites may or may not be suitable for housing development is set out in the site assessments in part 2 of this document.

11.20 It should be noted that the sites have not been the subject of detailed site technical assessments at this stage. It is recognised that some of them may have access issues and parts of some of them are liable to flood.

11.21 It will also be necessary to show that development of the sites is viable and capable of delivering family and affordable housing in high quality developments.

11.22 All of these issues will have to be resolved before the sites can be considered for allocation for development in the Local Plan.

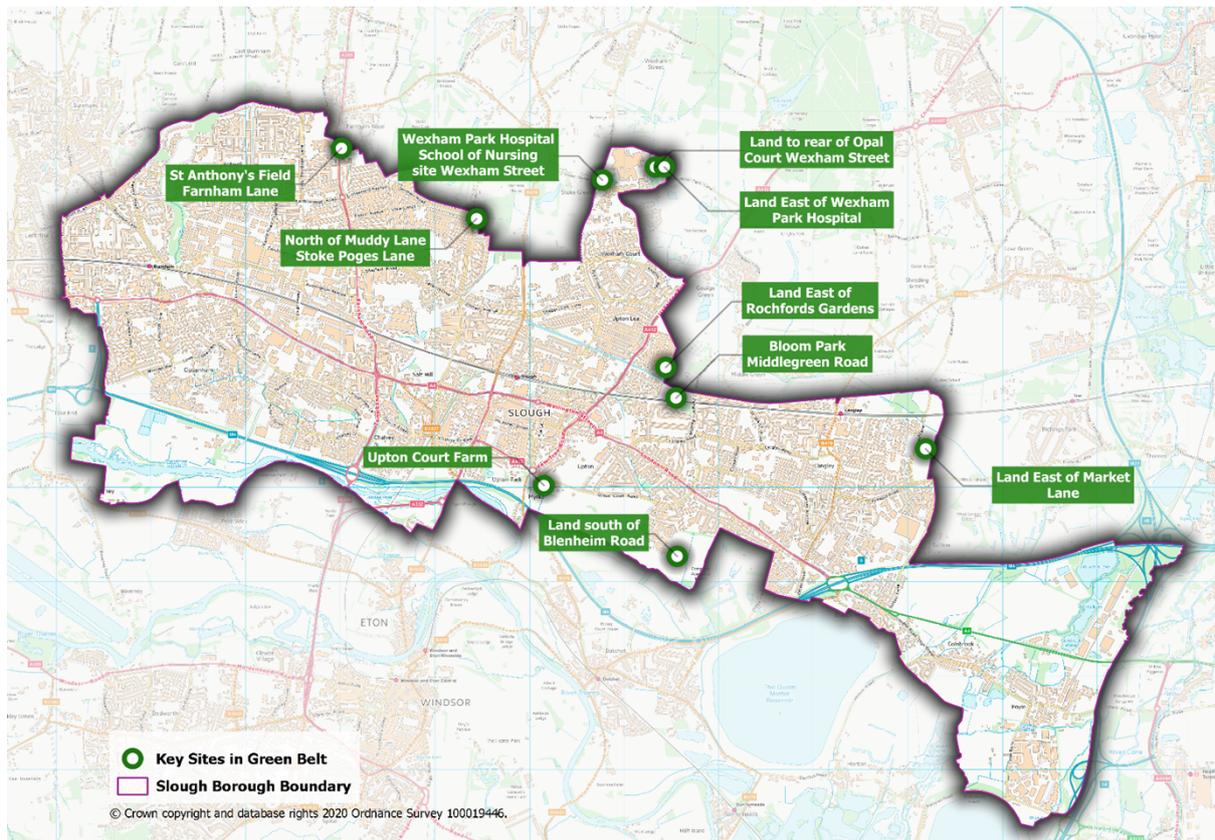


Fig. 1 Plan of proposed Sites to be released from the Green Belt for family housing ; see Part 2 for individual sites

12 What is the process for releasing Green Belt land?

12.1 Although the site assessments have taken account of some elements of Green Belt policy, they have not addressed the fundamental issue of the presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As a result they will have to be subject to a Green Belt Assessment. This will have to consider the impact upon the Green Belt in terms of the loss of openness and the impact upon the five purposes of having Green Belt which are:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

12.2 The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts which are to be regarded as permanent. Paragraph 140 of the NPPF states that “Green Belts should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified,

through the preparation or updating of plans”.

12.3 There is no definition as to what constitutes “exceptional Circumstances” but the Courts have found that “In principle, a shortage of housing land when compared to the needs of an area is capable of amounting to very special circumstances”.

12.4 The final decision as to whether it is justifiable to allocate Green Belt sites for housing in Slough will have to be made through the Local Plan process once we have taken into account a number of factors.

12.5 Firstly we will have to consider the response to the public consultation. Secondly we will have to carry out all of the necessary detailed technical work to ensure that the proposed housing can be delivered. Thirdly we will have to compile further evidence, including a detailed updated Housing Capacity Study, to confirm that we have left “no stone unturned” in our search for alternative ways of providing housing, including family housing.

12.6 It will also be necessary to identify ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land.

12.7 Finally we will have to decide whether the release of Green Belt land in Slough is the most sustainable form of development for the Local Plan to promote in order to meet the objective of meeting a range of housing needs.

13 Conclusion:

13.1 This consultation document identifies ten sites that have had a high level assessment to indicate if they are suitable to be released from the Green Belt to provide family housing. This forms part of the ongoing work for the Local Plan for Slough.

We have done an initial assessment of the suitability of the sites but would like your views on any aspect of this. We have set out a few questions on the topics below:

[Insert questions]

- Site selection methodology
- Individual sites
- Any other Green Belt sites
- Alternatives to Green Belt releases
- Whether there are “exceptional circumstances” to justify the loss of Green Belt

PART 2 INDIVIDUAL SITE ASSESSMENTS

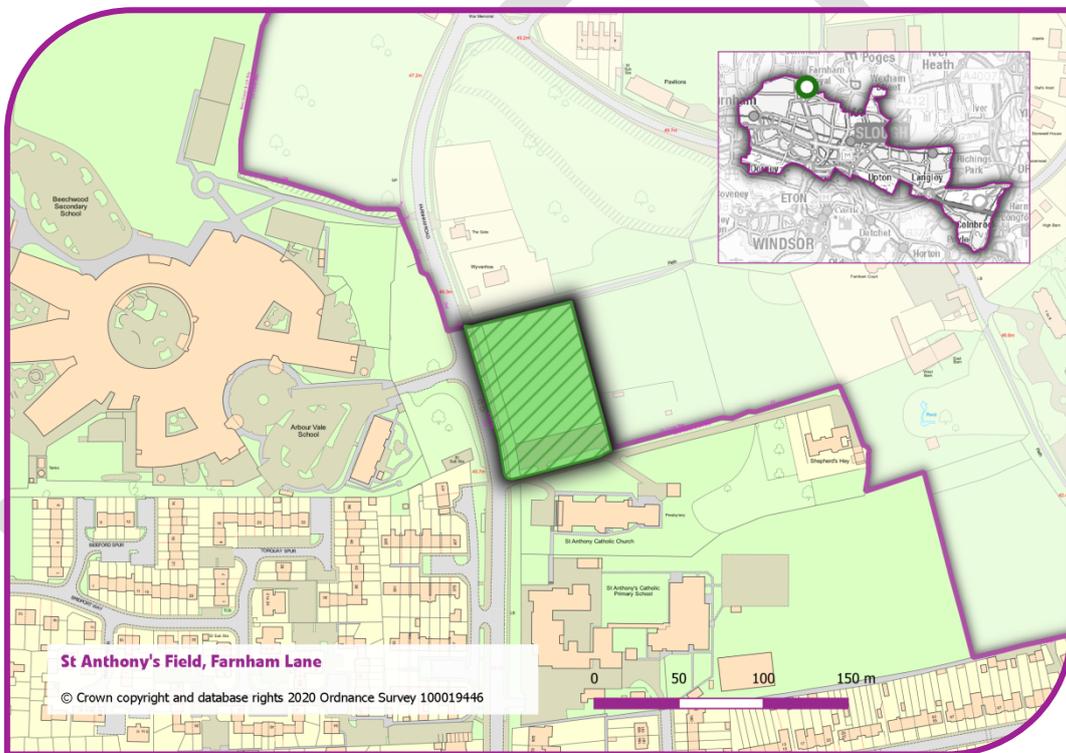
Site Name	Initial rating
1. Wexham Park Hospital School of Nursing, Wexham Street;	Green – Suitable
2. Land to the rear of Opal Court Wexham Street;	Green – Suitable

3. Land east of Wexham Park Hospital;	Green – Suitable
4. Land east of Rochfords Gardens;	Green – Suitable
5. Upton Court Farm;	Green – Suitable
6. Land East of Market Lane;	Amber – Possible
7. Land south of Blenheim Road	Amber – Possible
8. St Anthony's Field, Farnham Road;	Red – Unsuitable
9. North of Muddy Lane, Stoke Poges Lane;	Red – Unsuitable
10. Bloom Park (part of), Middlegreen Road;	Red – Unsuitable
11. All other areas of Green Belt land	Red – Unsuitable

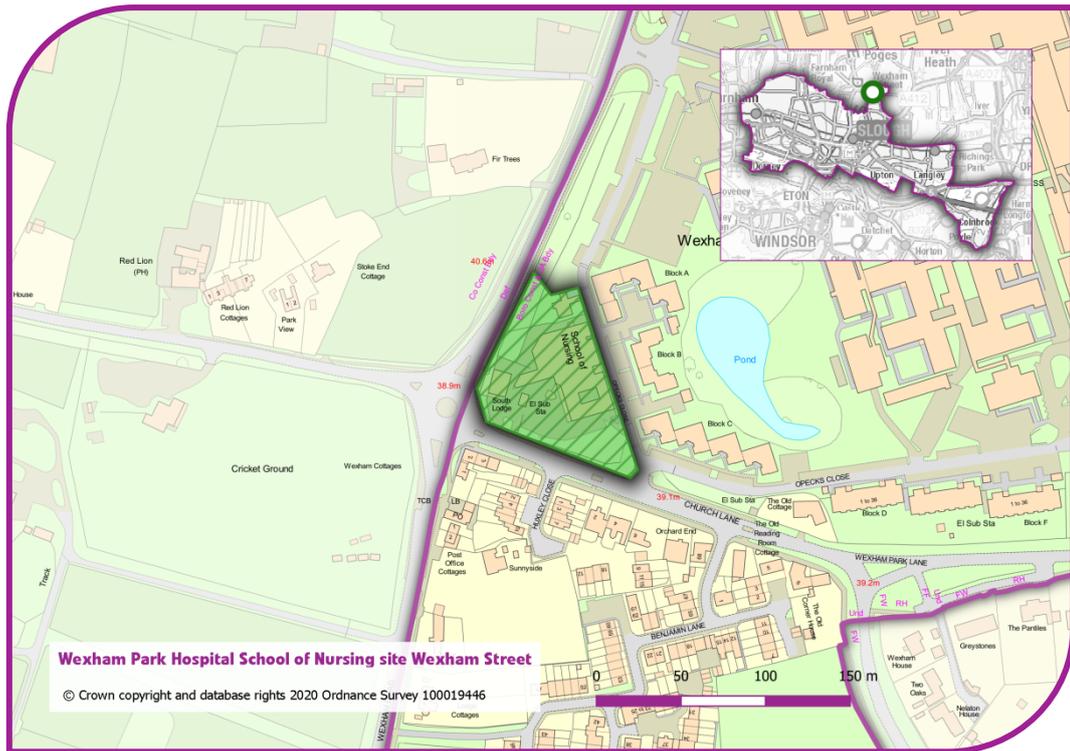
[insert site schedules]

Plans of Site locations and boundaries

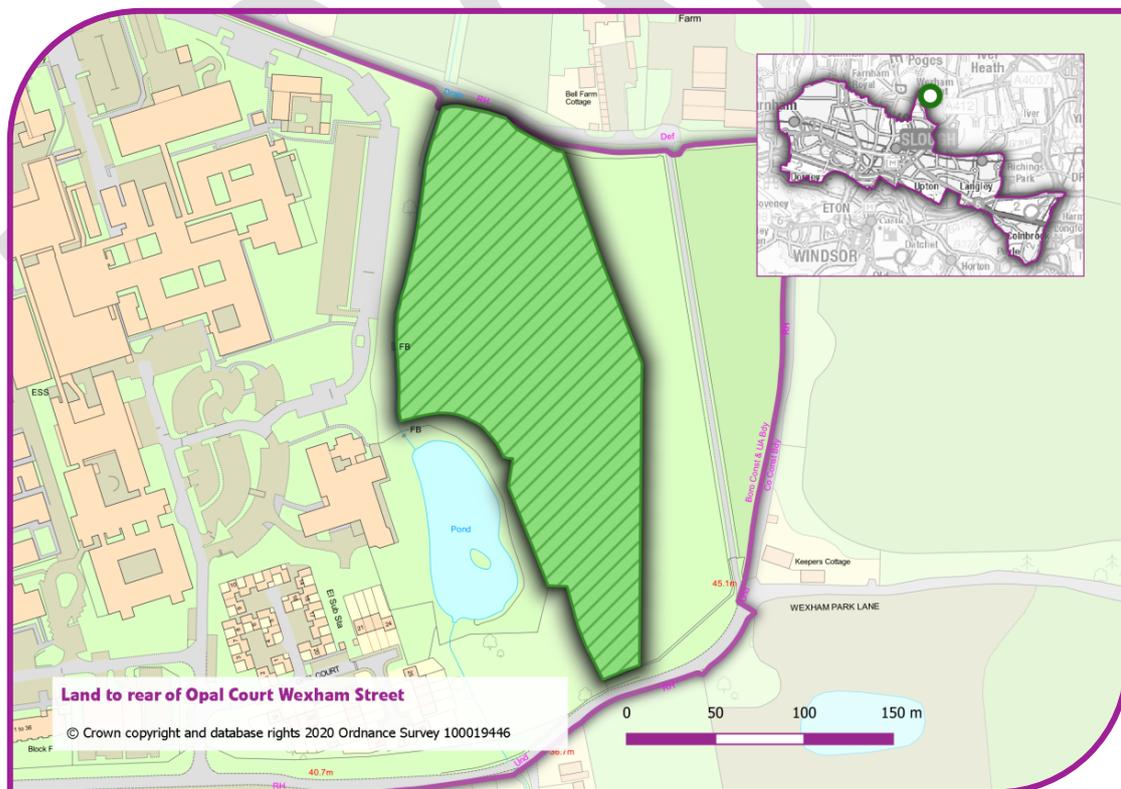
- Site 1 -St. Anthony's Field, Farnham Lane



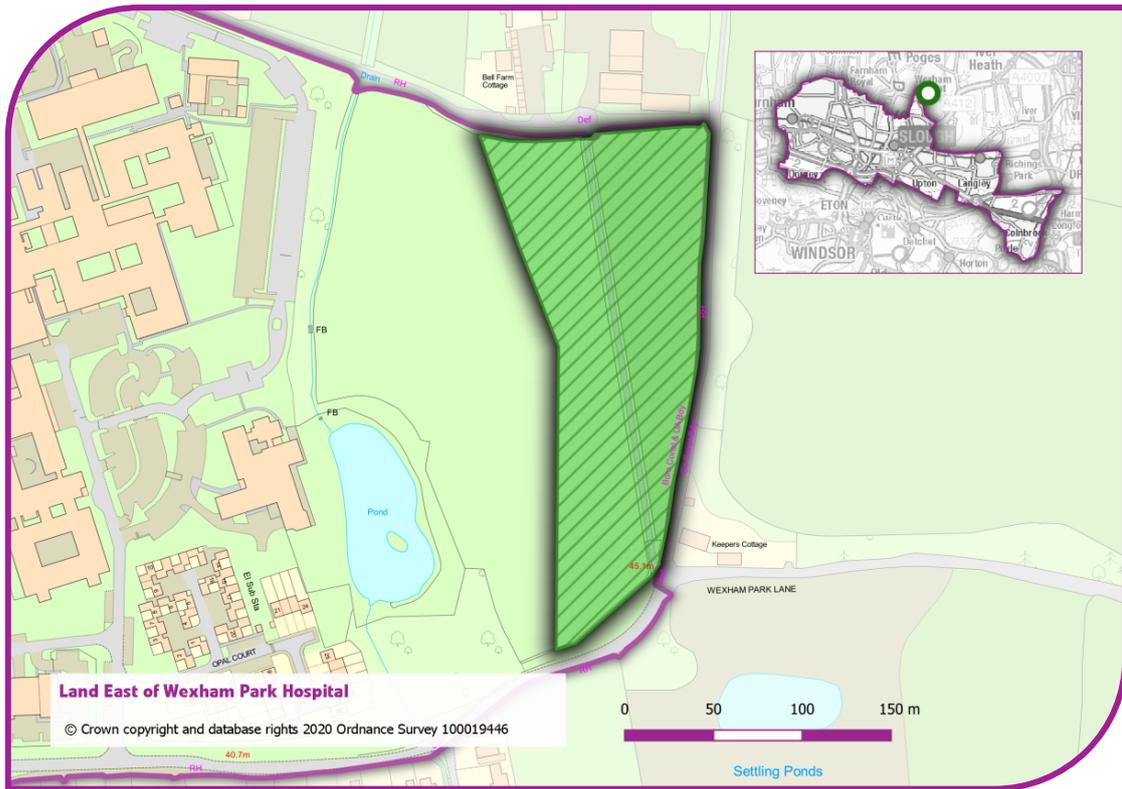
- Site 2 - Wexham Park Hospital School of Nursing site, Wexham Street



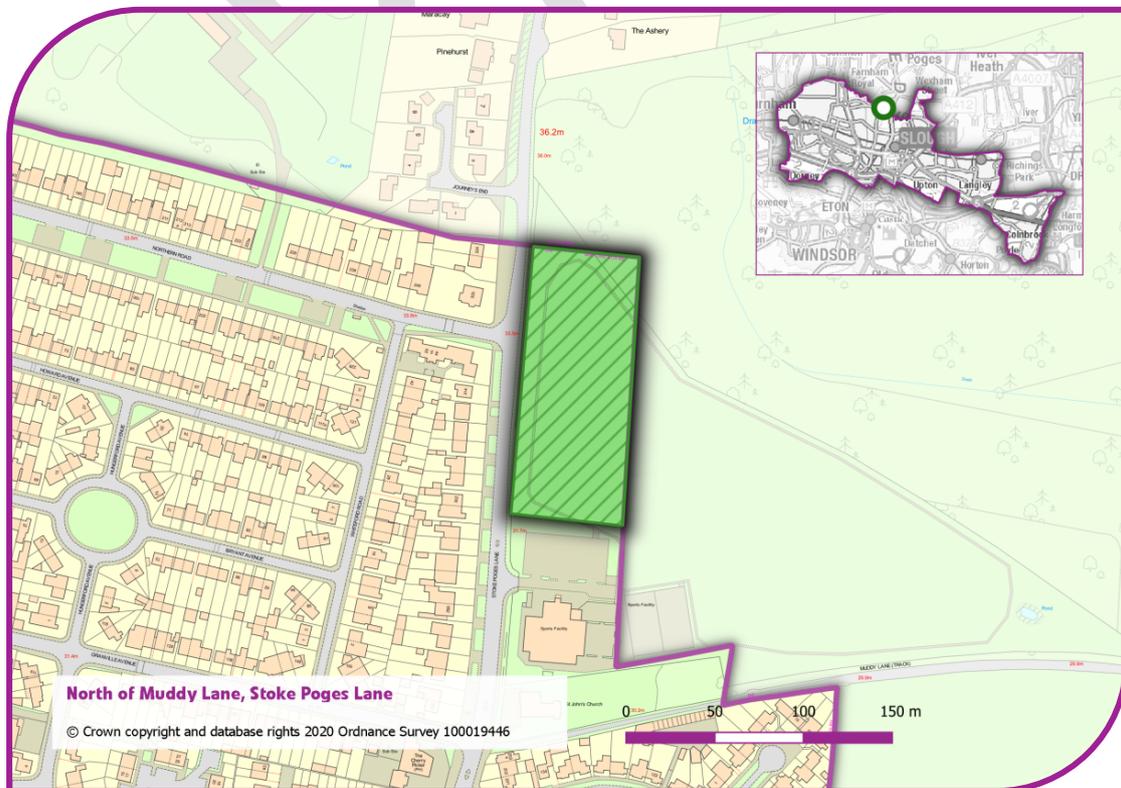
- Site 3 - Land to rear of Opal Court Wexham Street



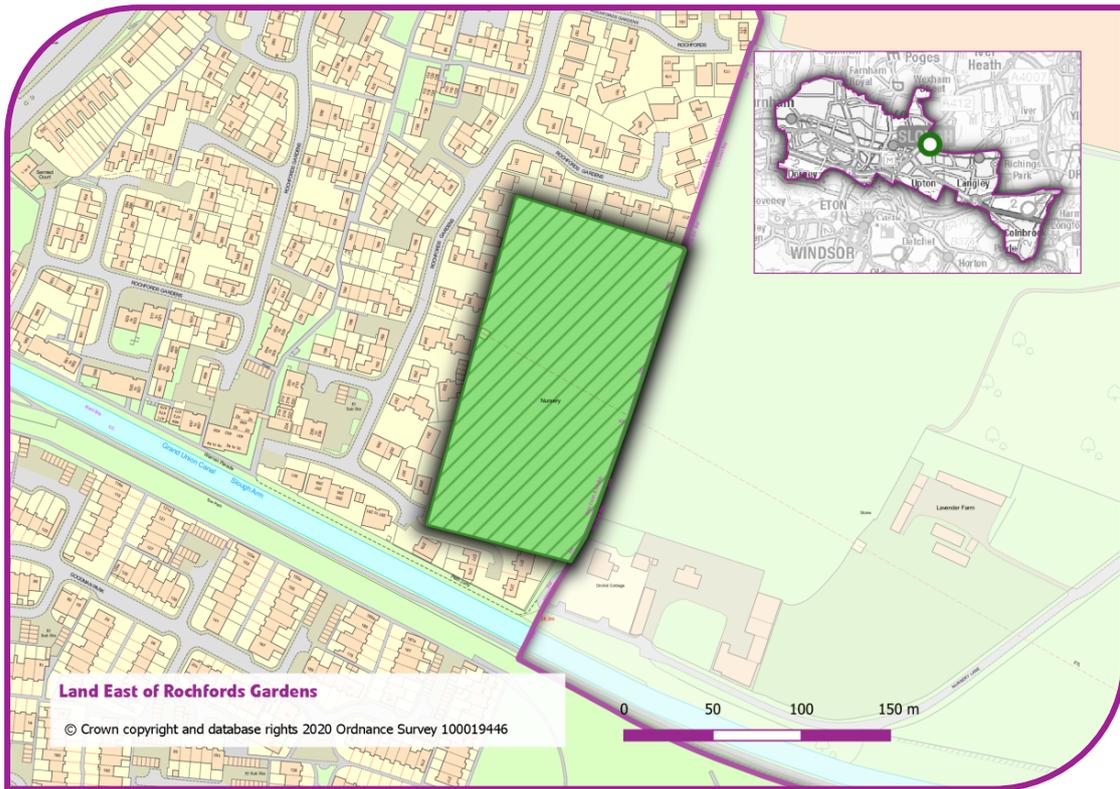
- Site 4 - Land east of Wexham Park Hospital



- Site 5 - North of Muddy Lane, Stoke Poges Lane



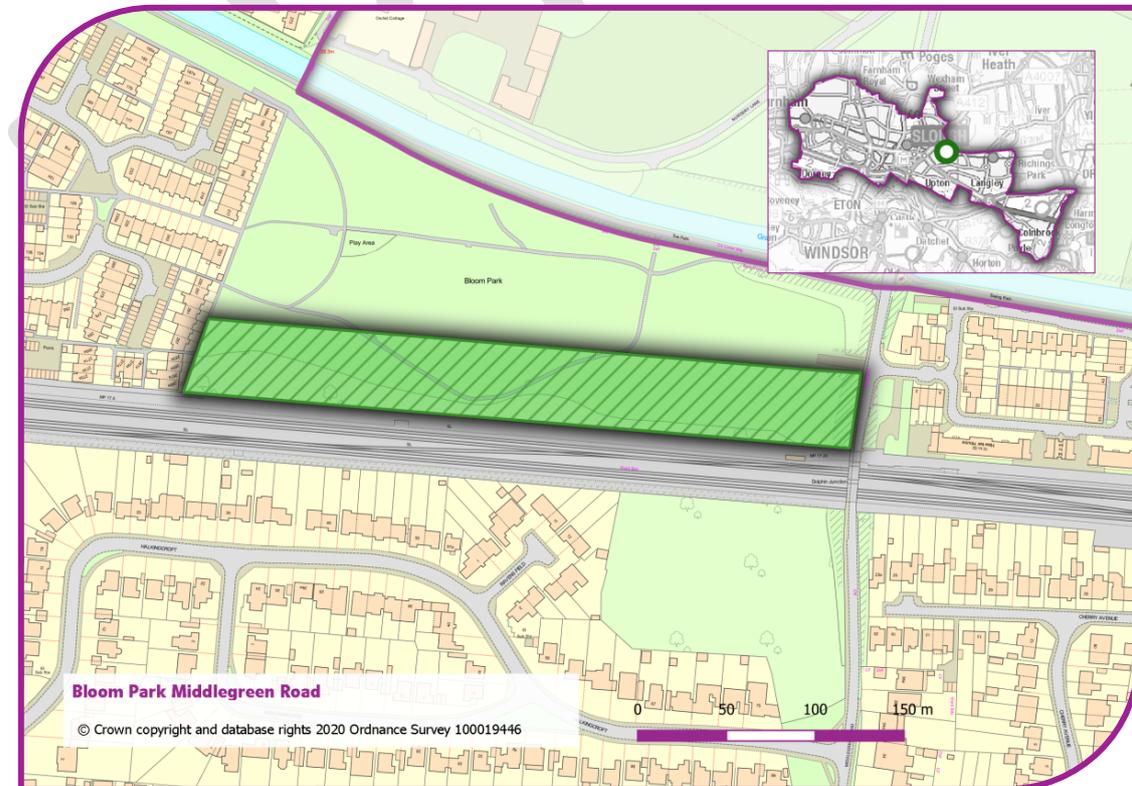
- Site 6 - Land east of Rochfords Gardens



Land East of Rochfords Gardens

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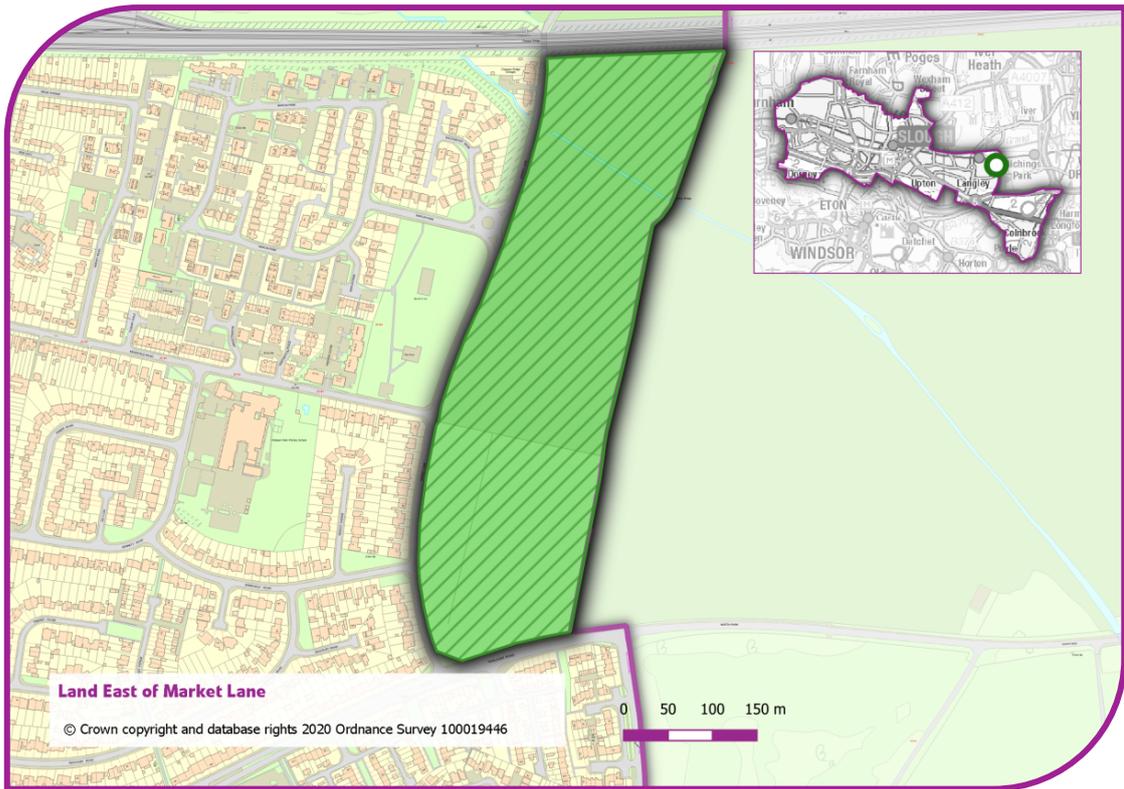
- Site 7 – Part of Bloom Park, Middlegreen Road



Bloom Park Middlegreen Road

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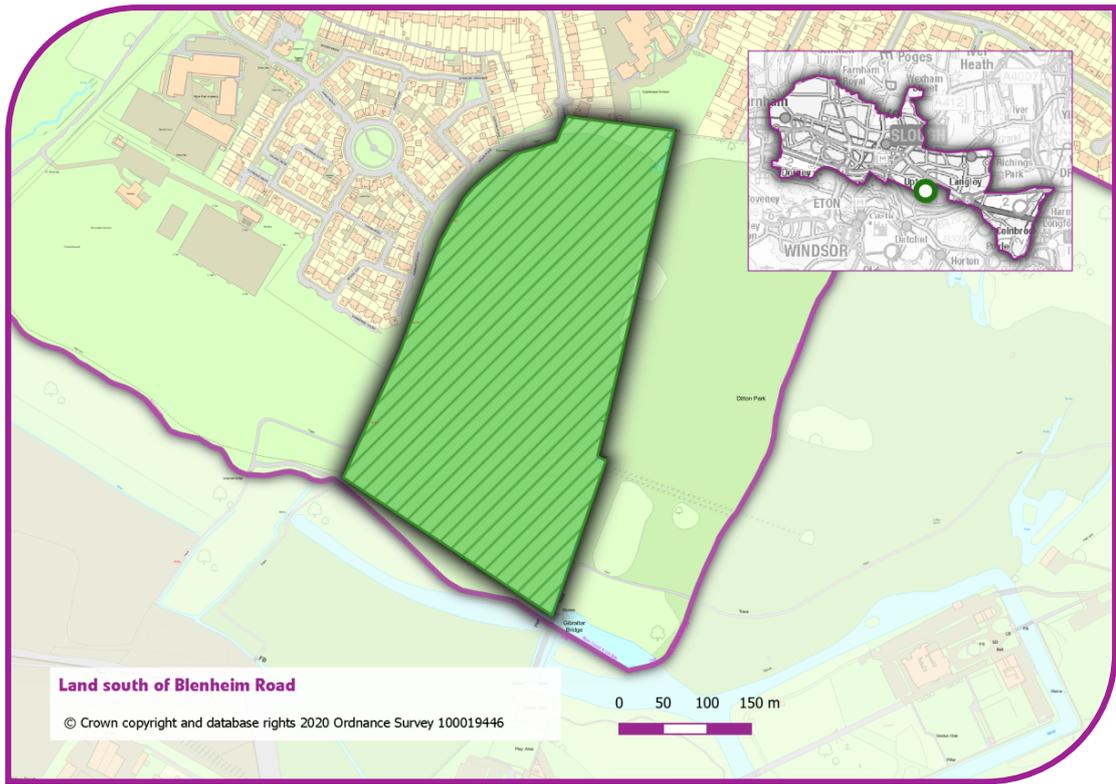
- Site 8 - Land east of Market Lane



- Site 9 - Upton Court Farm



- Site 10 - Land south of Blenheim Road



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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Place Scrutiny
DATE:	28 th September 2021
SUBJECT:	Asset Disposal
CHIEF OFFICER:	Stephen Gibson, Executive Director, Place
CONTACT OFFICER:	Dean Tyler, Associate Director, Place, Strategy and Infrastructure
WARD(S):	All
PORTFOLIO:	Cllr James Swindlehurst, Leader of the Council and Cabinet member for Financial Governance, Economic Development & Council Plans Cllr Pavitar K. Mann, Cabinet member for Housing, Highways, Planning & Place
KEY DECISION:	YES/NO
EXEMPT:	YES/NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES/NO
APPENDICES:	None

1 Summary and Recommendations

1.1 The purpose of this report is:

- To inform Place Scrutiny on the asset disposal strategy presented to Cabinet, within the Debt Repayment Strategy Cabinet Report, on the 20th September 2021.

Recommendations:

1.2 At the Cabinet meeting held on 20th September 2021, Cabinet was requested to agree that:

- Officers conduct a procurement exercise in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, to obtain the support of external organisations that can assist the Council with a programme of asset disposals to generate capital receipts.

1.3 Cabinet was also requested to agree that:

- Income generated from asset disposals will be used in the first instance to finance any Capitalisation Directions received from the Government, and that

- Additional sale proceeds thereafter will be used to repay existing external debt.

Reason:

- 1.4 The Council currently has much higher levels of borrowing and debt charges than most other similar-sized authorities. This position is not sustainable. An orderly programme of asset disposals will improve the Council's financial position by realising capital receipts which can be used firstly to finance any Capitalisation Directions that may be received from the Government and secondly to repay existing external debt.
- 1.5 This course of action will reduce both interest costs and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) set-aside charged to revenue budgets. Asset disposals will also relieve pressure on revenue budgets by reducing property repairs, maintenance and utility costs.
- 1.6 A comprehensive asset disposal programme would:
- Assess current market opportunities
 - Complete option appraisals across the Council's portfolio of land and buildings
 - Prioritise assets for revaluation and marketing
 - Proactively identify and negotiate with potential investors and purchasers
 - Liaise with the Council's own valuers and legal representatives
 - Dispose of assets within identified timescales; and
 - Achieve best value for the Council.
- 1.7 Whilst Council officers have sufficient capacity and expertise to manage such an asset disposal programme overall, officers are seeking to obtain the assistance of external organisations with specialist skills who can support successful asset disposals within required timescales.

2 Report

2.1.1 At Cabinet 20th September 2021, Cabinet was asked to approve:

- Commence a proactive, but orderly disposal process to generate capital receipts which will be used firstly to finance any Capitalisation Directions received and secondly to repay existing external borrowing and
- Conduct a procurement exercise in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, to obtain the support of external organisations who can assist the Council with an ambitious programme of asset disposals over the next five years.

2.2 Assets identified for disposal

2.2.1 The Council owns approximately 6,700 property assets (land and buildings) with a total value of £1.2bn. A summary analysis is provided below:

Table 1 – Council-owned land and buildings at 1 August 2021

Category		Estimated Value	No. of Assets
		£m	No.
1	Investment Assets and land awaiting redevelopment	250	55
2	Assets not currently used in delivering services	20	25
3	General Fund Assets	380	375
4	HRA Assets	550	6,000
	Total	£1,200	6,455

2.2.2 It is suggested that all these assets are subject to an option appraisal based on:

- current running costs e.g. repairs, maintenance and utilities
- current use and potential for re-purposing
- contribution to Council priorities
- where relevant, current investment returns
- any restrictions on disposal
- expected pre-sale costs e.g dilapidations and marketing
- identified disposal opportunities
- expected sales proceeds.

2.2.3 Marketing efforts can then be prioritised accordingly, within the overall objective of:

- realising disposal proceeds of £200m within two years ie by 1 April 2024
- using this first tranche of capital receipts to finance any Capitalisation Directions received from the Government
- realising further disposal proceeds of between £200m and £400m within the following three years ie by 1 April 2027
- using these disposal proceeds to repay existing debt.

2.2.4 Members will be advised of option appraisal outcomes in due course. In addition, all property disposals will be subject to formal officer or member approval in accordance with the Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation before any binding sale contracts are entered into. Currently these requirements state that:

- all assets valued above £1m will be subject to Cabinet approval.
- assets with a value of £1m or less can be disposed of via delegated authority by the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the s151 Officer and appropriate Lead Member.

2.3 Use of external consultants – Proposed Approach

2.3.1 A disposal programme of this size will be complex and will require detailed and specialist knowledge of both local and national property markets – especially for complex/high value assets. Options available are as follows:

- Option 1 - Use internal resources to develop and implement the disposal strategy
- Option 2 – Use internal resources to manage the process but appoint external specialists to deal with the operational aspects of disposal.

2.3.2 The Cabinet Report recommended that Option 2 was pursued and that the Council seeks external support from organisations with a successful track record of developing and implementing asset strategies and disposals across a range of asset types, values, and geography.

2.3.3 The specialist's key tasks would include:

- Analysis of local market needs
- Option appraisal for all land and buildings currently owned by the Council
- Advising on how best to dispose of Council assets in a way that that delivers expected levels of capital receipts but still represents value for money
- Arranging condition and site surveys
- Advertising land and property for sale
- Proactively identifying and contacting potential purchasers
- Completing due diligence work on prospective purchasers
- Identifying where appropriate potential sub-lease or sale and lease-back arrangements
- Negotiating sale prices, terms and conditions on the Council's behalf
- Undertaking value for money assessments
- Appointing and liaising with legal advisers, valuers etc.
- Liaising with Council officers and reporting to senior management team and elected members as appropriate.

2.3.4 Procurement of these services will be carried out in compliance with:

- the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, including potential use of suitable compliant frameworks
- Council procurement policies, and
- Expenditure Control Panel requirements.

3 Implications & Recommendations

3.1 Financial implications

3.1.1 Impact on debt charges:

- As at 31 August 2021, the Council's total external borrowing was £760m and its debt charges for 2021/22 are expected to total circa £30m, rising to circa £38m if the current capital programme is implemented as planned. This represents 31% of the Council's net revenue budget respectively (although capital spending plans are currently under review).
- The Council is expecting to receive a Capitalisation Direction from the Government in 2021/22 which, unless financed from capital receipts, will increase external borrowing and debt charges even further in future years
- If capital receipts of £200m can be realised by 1 April 2024, and these receipts are used to fund any Capitalisation Directions received, further increases to debt charges could be avoided
- If additional capital receipts of between £200m and £400m can be realised by 1 April 2027, and these additional receipts are also used to repay existing loan

debt, interest charges should reduce to between £33m and £23m per annum for 2027/28 and future years i.e. between 27% and 19% of the current net revenue budget respectively.

- 3.1.2 This is still significantly higher than the average level of debt charges for unitary authorities, which currently stands at around 15%, but represents a more sustainable position for the Council going forwards.
- 3.1.3 Disposal costs – fees paid to external consultants will be determined as part of the procurement process, which will evaluate (amongst other things):
- total fees payable as a percentage of asset sale price
 - incentivisation arrangements, and
 - impact (if any) on revenue budgets.
- 3.1.4 Other revenue implications – in recent years net rental income from investment properties has not covered the combined cost of operating expenses, debt charges and the (generally adverse) change in market value of these properties. If the Council disposed of its investment properties it would experience, based on current information, a net reduction in revenue costs.
- 3.2 Legal implications
- 3.2.1 Local authorities must follow a strict legal framework in relation to disposal of land and property. Under the Local Government Act 1972, it has a statutory duty to sell land at the best price reasonably obtainable, unless it has the express consent of the Secretary of State. A “disposal” includes the sale of the freehold, granting a lease, assigning a lease and/or granting an easement. Entering into option agreements or sale and leaseback contracts are also be deemed to be disposals.
- 3.2.2 In addition to the general provisions contained in the 1972 Act, open space is subject to further procedural requirements, including a requirement to advertise. Open space includes land laid out as a public garden, used for the purposes of public recreation or disused burial grounds.
- 3.2.3 The power to dispose of land under the 1972 Act does not apply to any land or property that is being held in trust. Land that has been used as a school or for specific education purposes also has a specific status and there are legal restrictions governing the disposal of playing fields.
- 3.2.4 For land held within the HRA, local authorities have the power to dispose of land under s.32 of the Housing Act 1985. Secretary of State consent is often required, but there are some general consents that can be relied upon, for example if land or property is being disposed of to provide affordable housing. There are also obligations to consult tenants on certain housing management issues.
- 3.2.5 In addition to the statutory framework controlling the ability to dispose of land, local authorities are public bodies and must follow a fair process in relation to decision-making. This must include taking account of:
- all relevant information and financial implications
 - specific and overarching statutory duties and responsibilities

- the duty to act reasonably and to make decisions in line with Council policies which have been properly approved.

3.2.6 Where land or property is used to deliver services, the Council must take a decision on changing or maintaining its existing service provision before disposing of assets that are used to provide these services.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 No key risks have been identified as a direct result of this report, however:

- Failure to reduce external loan debt could comprise the Council's ability to produce a balanced revenue budget or to provide current levels of Council services in future years, and
- Successful delivery of the proposed Debt Repayment Strategy requires the Council to dispose of a significant number of assets within a relatively short time. This is unlikely to be achieved without external support.

3.3.2 The work streams resulting from this report are all subject to future Cabinet Reports which will fully consider risks and risk mitigation for any specific actions agreed.

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 No environmental Implications have been identified as a direct result of this report. The work streams resulting from this report are subject to future Cabinet Reports which will fully consider all environmental implications.

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 No Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out at this stage. The work streams resulting from this report are subject to future Cabinet Reports which will fully consider equality implications for residents, communities, partners and stakeholders.

3.6 Procurement implications

3.6.1 Expressions of Interest for external support consultants will proceed in compliance with:

- the Public Contracts Regulations 2015,
- Council procurement policies, and
- Expenditure Control Panel requirements.

3.6.2 The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR) apply to contracts for services (public services contracts) above £189,330. Therefore, the procurement of external resource to develop and implement an asset disposal strategy for the Council must be carried out in compliance with the PCR.

3.6.3 The contract must be advertised and procured in compliance with the rules and procedures set out in the PCR, which include calling off from a lawfully procured public framework agreement.

3.6.4 Before commencing a procurement procedure, the Council can conduct market consultations with a view to preparing the procurement and informing organisations of their procurement plans and requirements, including seeking or accepting advice from independent experts or authorities or from market participants. This advice can be used in the planning and conduct of the procurement procedure if it does not have the effect of distorting competition and does not result in a violation of the principles of non-discrimination and transparency.

3.7 Workforce implications

3.7.1 No Workforce Implications have been identified as a direct result of this report. The work streams resulting from this report and subject to future Cabinet Reports will fully consider workforce implications.

4. Background Papers

Cabinet Report – Debt Management/Asset Disposal Strategy, 20th September 2021

Cabinet Report – Proposed Asset Disposal Programme, 21st June 2021

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Place Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 28th September 2021

CONTACT OFFICER: Nick Pontone
Democratic Services Lead
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875120

WARDS: All

PART I
FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION

PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL - WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

1. **Purpose of Report**

For the Place Scrutiny Panel to discuss its work programme for 2021-22.

2. **Recommendations/Proposed Action**

That the Panel review the work programme and potential items listed for inclusion.

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

3.1 The Place Scrutiny Panel, along with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and other Scrutiny Panels combine to meet the local authority's statutory requirement to provide public transparency and accountability, ensuring the best outcomes for the residents of Slough.

3.2 The effective scrutiny of the council's decision making and work in the area of health and social care underpins the delivery of all four of the Joint Slough Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- Starting Well
- Integration
- Strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods
- Workplace Health

3.3 The work of the Health Scrutiny Panel also reflects the following priorities of the Five Year Plan:

- Outcome 1: Slough children will grow up to be happy, healthy and successful.
- Outcome 2: Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications of proposed action.

(b) Risk Management

There are no risk management implications of proposed action.

(c) Human Rights Act and other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no Equalities implications arising from this report.

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 This work programme should cover all aspects of the Place Scrutiny Panels remit. The respective areas of responsibility between the Panel's is set out in Appendix B which was approved by Council in May 2021.

5.2 The work programme is a flexible document which will be continually reviewed throughout the municipal year. It will be updated to take into account requests for consideration of issues from members of the Place Scrutiny Panel.

6. **Conclusion**

This report is intended to provide the Place Scrutiny Panel with the opportunity to review its upcoming work programme and make any amendments it feels are required.

7. **Appendices Attached**

A - Work Programme for 2021/22

B – Scrutiny Structure 2021/22

8. **Background Papers**

None.

**PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL
WORK PROGRAMME 2021/2022**

Meeting Date
28 September 2021 (moved from 9 September)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus Service Improvement Plan • Asset Disposal Update • Local Plan – Green Belt Consultation
8 November 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget 2021/22 and 2022/23 (<i>note the Panel is requested to dedicate the full meeting to the budget proposals</i>)
12 January 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
24 February 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
29 March 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

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Overview & Scrutiny Committee	People Scrutiny Panel		Customer and community Scrutiny Panel	Place Scrutiny Panel	Audit & Corporate Governance (No change)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overarching strategies • Strategic Finance • Commercial operations • Gold projects • Performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School standards and effectiveness • School services • Inclusion • Early Help • Early Years & Children’s Centres • Music services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health • Mental Health • Integration • Safeguarding • ASC operations • People strategy & commissioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Services • Revenues and benefits • Community & Neighbourhoods • Learning, Skills & Employment • Accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Services • Asset management • Place Strategy • Infrastructure • Housing Regulation • Planning • Public Protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards of conduct • Risk management and controls • Financial statements • Governance statements
Cabinet portfolios					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader, Regeneration and Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children & Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and customer services • Housing & community safety • Inclusive Growth & Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning & regulation • Transport & env. services • Housing & community safety • Incl. growth & Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and customer services

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