

LOCAL PLAN FOR SLOUGH – SPATIAL STRATEGY

Enhancing our distinct suburbs, vibrant neighbourhood centres and environmental assets

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is preparing a new Local Plan for Slough. An important part of this is the Spatial Strategy which will set out what the pattern, scale and quality of development will be in the Borough. .
- 1.2 It is proposed that the Spatial Strategy should have the following five key components:
- ***Delivering*** major comprehensive redevelopment within the “Centre of Slough”;
 - ***Selecting*** other key locations for appropriate sustainable development;
 - ***Enhancing*** our distinct suburbs, vibrant neighbourhood centres and environmental assets;
 - ***Protecting*** the “Strategic Gap” between Slough and Greater London;
 - ***Promoting*** the cross border expansion of Slough to meet unmet housing needs.
- 1.3 This report sets out proposals for the suburban areas of Slough which contain most of our family housing and green spaces.
- 1.4 In doing so it is important to understand how this fits in with the Spatial Strategy as a whole. The bulk of new housing and most of the other major development is proposed to take place in the “Centre of Slough”. This follows the overall guiding principle for the Spatial Strategy that development should be located in the most accessible locations which have the greatest capacity to absorb growth and deliver social and environmental benefits.
- 1.5 There will be major development elsewhere in the Borough on “Selected Key Locations” that are suitable for regeneration. This could include releasing some Green Belt sites for housing in order to meet local needs. It is not proposed that there should be any development in the Colnbrook and Poyle area which is to be protected as part of the “Strategic Gap” between Slough and Greater London.
- 1.6 In line with the principle of meeting needs as close to where they arise, it is proposed that any housing needs that cannot be reasonably accommodated in

the Borough should be provided on the edge of Slough.

- 1.7 This report sets out the proposals that will form the “Enhancing our distinctive suburbs, vibrant neighbourhood centres and environmental assets” component of the Spatial Strategy.

2 Context

- 2.1 Most of Slough’s residents live in the suburban areas of Slough which mainly consist of family housing which was built in the last century. These areas have adapted and absorbed a lot of growth and it is proposed to retain the stock of family homes and the green spaces around them. The reasons for adopting this approach and promoting the concept of people being able to “live locally” if they want to, can be seen from the following analysis.

Population

- 2.2 Slough is one of the fast growing places in the UK which is largely as a result of having a young population and high birth rate.¹ The latest estimates published by Government Office of National Statistics (ONS) predict that Slough’s population will increase from 149,000 to around 169,600 in 2036.
- 2.3 Slough does not have very many elderly residents. Only one in ten people are aged 65 and over. This makes it one of the youngest places in the UK. A breakdown of the age groups that 29% of the population is in the 0-17 age group and 26% are in their parents’ age group of 30 to 44 year olds. These are likely to need family housing. There is also a tendency for Slough people to live in multi generational households which means that there is a need for large homes. The figures from ONS 2011 for household size in Slough indicated that 12% of existing households have 5/6 members and 2% have 7 or more members.

Housing Needs

- 2.4 Whilst some of the future needs of Slough’s younger generation can be met in the centre of Slough through the provision of high density flats, there will continue to be a requirement for family housing as demonstrated by the Local Housing Needs Assessment. (GL Hearn, 2019).
- 2.5 In addition to demographic factors, this looked at future growth in real earnings, a households’ ability to save, economic performance and housing affordability

¹ 2008-2018: An uneven geography of population growth in UK cities, 26th February 2020, Centre for Cities, <https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/2008-2018-an-uneven-geography-of-population-growth-in-uk-cities/>

in order to predict the future demand for different sizes of homes. The results are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Modelled Mix of Housing by Size and Tenure²

Slough	1 Bedroom	2 Bedrooms	3 Bedrooms	4+ Bedrooms
Market	5%	19%	57%	20%
Affordable home ownership	33%	32%	26%	10%
Affordable housing (rented)	44%	27%	25%	4%

- 2.6 This shows that there is a very different pattern of need depending upon tenure. For private housing the highest need from Slough residents is for three bedroomed homes with a significant number wanting four or more bedrooms.
- 2.7 It should also be noted that overcrowding is a problem in Slough. The average person only has 27.2m² of floorspace compared to an average of 36.5m² for urban areas in England and Wales (Centre for Cities, 2018). This is one of the reasons why so many of the houses in the suburbs have been extended and outbuildings are used to provide ancillary accommodation for members of the main household. This is the main way in which larger affordable housing has been created.
- 2.8 Whilst there is an overall shortage of land for housing, the demand for smaller affordable units to rent can be met elsewhere in the Borough.

A Balanced Community

- 2.9 Slough is one of the most culturally diverse areas in the UK and has a need for larger accommodation because of this. The 2011 Census indicated that 40% of the population was classified Asian or Asian British and 36% White British. Over 150 languages have been recorded as being spoken in Slough schools. Slough also has the highest proportion of people who profess a faith anywhere in England. It has the highest percentage of Sikh residents in the UK and the highest percentage of Muslim and Hindu residents in the South East outside of London. Slough has a high level of community cohesion with the vast majority

² Local Housing Needs Assessment RBWM, Slough and South Bucks, page 54, 2019, GL Hearn, <http://www.slough.gov.uk/council/strategies-plans-and-policies/the-emerging-local-plan-for-slough-2016-2036.aspx>

of residents agreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well together.

- 2.10 The retention of the suburban areas with their supply of family houses which can continue to be adapted to meet the diverse needs of the local communities, is therefore very important.

Housing Supply in Slough

- 2.11 Despite the evidenced need for 2 bed, 3 bed and 4+bed homes, the vast majority of new homes being built in Slough are one and two bedroom flats. The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2018-2019 recorded that 83% of the new homes built were flats and 17% were houses³. It is estimated that if present trends continue approximately 80% of new homes would be flats⁴.
- 2.12 This demonstrates what an important role the existing stock of housing in the suburban areas has in continuing to supply larger homes that can accommodate families and extended families.

The Environment

- 2.13 Slough is already very urbanised and lacks the green infrastructure that many other Boroughs have. One of the indicators of the state of the environment in is the lack of tree cover in that Slough has fewer trees per hectare than London Boroughs. Slough's trees are mainly located in the suburbs but also in parks and unbuilt areas across the borough⁵, this makes them some of the greener places for residents to live in.
- 2.14 In 2019, the Council commissioned Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) to carry out a study called 'Valuing the Benefits from Trees in Slough'; this estimated that Slough has a tree cover of 16.8%. A further study has been commissioned for TVERC to estimate the ecosystems provided by trees and their value which is due to be completed by end of this year.
- 2.15 The PPG 17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study: Assessment of Quantity, Quality and Access (2005) highlighted there is a very limited amount of open space provision in Slough and the public open space that does exist is seen to be valuable to the local community.
- 2.16 The Parks and Open Spaces Management Framework 2012-2017 identified many smaller areas of open amenity land alongside formal parks that have

³ Annual Monitoring Report 2018-2019, page 3,

⁴ Housing Topic Paper 2017, page 34,

⁵ Planning Committee Report on Emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy for the Local Plan for Slough 2013-2036, 01.11.2017, page 18,

<http://www.slough.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=111&MId=5744&Ver=4>

been inherited over the years, some being the remnants of long established housing estates and roadside amenity space, which may appear to have little value but many are important to local communities because they are easily accessible and close to people's homes. They can be particularly important to people who do not have access to private transport, or are less mobile as they used the facilities closest to their home, and the majority walked to their local park. Some of these smaller areas of open amenity land provide residents and the local workforce, a place for dog walking, relaxation or meetings. The PPG 17 Study concluded there is a shortage of open space in some parts of the Borough, which will be hard to remedy due to the pressures for development and overall shortage of land. The lack of accessibility to green spaces in Slough can be seen in the work being carried out for the Open Space Report.

- 2.17 Open spaces and parks are vital to helping support Slough's residents health and wellbeing and provide opportunities for recreation. People in Slough live fewer years in good health than those in surrounding towns and have a lower life expectancy at birth than comparative authorities. They are also less active than the national and regional averages (55.8% physically active compared to 69.8% in the south east); and 66.8% of Slough residents are classified as overweight or obese (compared with 60.3% in the south east). Slough is the 10th least active council in England with 37.6% of adults classed as inactive (defined as having less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week over a 28 day period).
- 2.18 The Draft Slough Playing Pitch Study recommends continued protection all current sports pitch sites from loss due to re-designation or development and utilising the planning system to ensure provision is added and updated in line with population growth.
- 2.19 The Site Allocations DPD (2010) allowed for some loss of open space in order to allow important regeneration schemes to take place. It is not proposed that there should be any further loss given the likely increase demand from population growth and its importance for health and well being which has been highlighted by recent experience of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3 Policy Background

- 3.1 The need to protect the suburban areas of Slough and create sustainable communities where people will want to live as established in the Core Strategy (2008). Core Policy 4 (type of housing) is the key policy that protects the existing housing stock. The policy states that "there will be no net loss of family housing" and that "within the suburban residential areas there will only be limited infilling that will consist of family houses" and that should be at a density related to the character of the surrounding area. Core Policy 4 has been tested at planning appeals where it has been supported by Inspectors, even in the

absence of having a 5 year housing land supply. It has proved to be a robust and effective policy, successfully protecting the suburbs character and appearance. This provides significant justification for the continued application of this policy to deliver this component of the Spatial Strategy in the Local Plan.

- 3.2 The possibility of changing this policy approach was considered in In the Local Plan Review: Issues and Options Consultation document 2017. Option F proposed intensification of the Suburbs, as one option to provide more homes and this could be delivered in a number of ways through comprehensive redevelopment of several plots to create a whole new development at a more intensive density and a design that does not necessarily follow the traditional street pattern.
- 3.3 This did not obtain very much support from the public or consultees. One of the conclusions from the consultation was that there were no reasonable options or combination of options that could meet all of Slough's housing and employment needs within the Borough boundary. Nevertheless, intensifying the suburbs was not brought forward into the "emerging" Preferred Spatial Strategy which was agreed in November 2017. This proposed that one of the key elements should be "protecting the built and natural environment of Slough including the suburbs".
- 3.4 In June 2020 the Council approved a "Protecting the Suburbs Strategy" document which covered the residential parts of the neighbourhoods. This forms the basis of the proposals for the proposals in the Spatial Strategy as explained below.

4 Enhancing the distinctive suburbs, vibrant neighbourhoods centres and environmental assets

Living Locally

- 4.1 One of the themes of the Spatial Strategy is to allow people to be able to 'live locally' if they want to. On the one hand it supports the Council's aspirations to make Slough a place where people want to stay throughout the various stages of their life. 'Living locally' also means enabling people to meet their day to day needs within their individual neighbourhoods by having local facilities, such as health and community services that are easily accessible. It also means having access to local parks and open spaces which provide opportunities for recreation.
- 4.2 'Living locally' will have a range of positive benefits for residents such as improved health and wellbeing. It also helps the environment by reducing the need for private car use and therefore reducing local traffic congestion as

residents will be able to walk and cycle to their local facilities and services. Together this enable will residents in the suburbs to live positive, healthy, active and independent lives and support the Local Plan Vision and objectives.

- 4.3 'Living locally' is supported by the Council's locality model approach and in its ambitions to develop community plans. The locality model focuses on delivering a combination of public services by in one building. It will bring services to the heart of communities tailored to meet the local needs of individuals, families and communities. A hub has recently opened at Britwell and there are plans to open hubs at Cippenham, Chavley and Langley during this year and next. The locality model prioritises wellbeing and enables behaviour change in communities that builds resilience and independence in communities.
- 4.4 Part of this approach will be to develop Community Plans for areas. The Draft Strong, Healthy and Attractive Chalvey community plan is currently being developed. It covers health and wellbeing, housing and regeneration, business skills and jobs, community safety, community cohesion and the environment with a detailed action plan for each theme. The draft community plan supports the spatial strategy's 'living locally' concept by including actions to improve air quality and green spaces and create a great place to live, learn and work.

Protecting the Suburbs

- 4.5 The evidence shows that the residential areas of the suburbs have a really important role to play in making sure that there is a continuing supply of family houses to meet resident's needs. We need to ensure that the existing stock of family houses in suburban areas is retained in order to meet the needs of the community. This will also help to maintain their distinctive character and protect the environment and ecology of the areas.
- 4.6 The "Protecting the Suburbs Strategy" document clearly explains how and why we need to protect the residential areas of the suburbs and how this fits into the wider Spatial Strategy and supports the Council's other strategies and priorities.
- 4.7 This shows that are five key reasons why we should retain and enhance the existing residential areas. Firstly this supports the guiding principles in the Spatial Strategy of locating development in the most accessible locations and regenerate previously developed land. The centre of Slough will therefore be the focus for major growth.
- 4.8 Secondly the vast majority of new residential development coming forward in the Centre of Slough and elsewhere will be flats. Protecting family housing in the suburbs will help to maintain a balanced housing market.

- 4.9 Thirdly the suburban areas of Slough have been able to absorb a lot of organic growth. Large numbers of extensions and outbuildings buildings have been built in gardens in the suburbs of Slough. Household occupation is generally high and the use of garden space to accommodate extensions and outbuildings is already quite intensive. There is scope for the existing residential areas to be able to continue to do this without major redevelopment.
- 4.10 Fourthly, analysis has shown that, because of the tight layout of the areas, there is very limited opportunities for infilling or backland development.
- 4.11 Finally practical issues, such as site assembly and multiple ownership, means it is often not viable to redevelop existing residential areas. As a result intensifying the suburbs will not make a significant contribution towards meeting our significant need for new homes.
- 4.12 As a result the evidence shows that it is not practical or viable to intensify the suburbs and lose valuable family housing. The residential areas of the suburbs will continue to develop organically and will accommodate growth where feasible. This will not involve large scale new development upon what is currently “garden land”.
- 4.13 Protecting the residential areas of the suburbs from major development will not prevent the Council’s programme for estate renewal and delivery of new homes on Council land to support neighbourhood regeneration and increase the supply of affordable homes. Increasing the number of homes through the Council’s housing delivery programme can take place in a number of ways such as redeveloping surplus garage courts through to redeveloping Council owned housing which is not fit for purpose. There may be the capacity to build additional stories onto existing low rise blocks through a process known as “top-hatting”. Some development can also take place within the neighbourhood shopping centre as explained below.

Vibrant Neighbourhood Centres

- 4.14 The suburbs contain a series of neighbourhood centres and parades which form part of the network of shopping facilities in the Borough. They provide access to their immediate population for local services and facilities and generally reduce the need for residents to travel to obtain everyday basic goods and services. They also provide some community and employment opportunities.
- 4.15 Unlike the town centre most of the local shopping areas are thriving and are not reliant upon an increase in population to succeed. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in more people staying in and using their local area. The neighbourhood centres are able to provide for the specific tastes and

needs of the communities that they serve. Enhancing the neighbourhood centres and local parades supports the Local Plan objectives to provide vibrant network of facilities and reduce the need to travel for short journeys and encourages walking and cycling.

- 4.16 In order to encourage the continued future success of the neighbourhood centres, complementary non-retail uses such as leisure activities may be needed to diversify the range of uses, adding to neighbourhood centres vitality and viability. As a result some appropriate development may be encouraged within selected neighbourhood centres.
- 4.17 An example of this is the Council's proposal to redevelop part of the Trelawney Avenue neighbourhood centre to provide a new health centre and community hub.
- 4.18 Any enhancement taking place in a neighbourhood centre will need to be appropriately located, scaled and designed to serve the needs of local residents. They should be designed to reduce the need to travel and not increase traffic or congestion in the area.

Enhancing Environmental Assets

- 4.19 The term "environment asset" covers all elements of the natural, green, built and historic environment that are of value. Most of these are found within the suburban areas of Slough. The environmental assets, both the built and natural, have an important role in contributing towards the character and creating a sense of place in the suburbs.
- 4.20 Enhancing and protecting these environmental assets is an important part of the Spatial Strategy and this includes maintaining, improving and celebrating those elements that are of local value.

Heritage Assets

- 4.21 Slough does not have many historical or heritage assets. It is therefore important that we make the most of what we have.
- 4.22 The identity of some of the suburbs in Slough is partly derived by the Conservation Areas within them. The historic core of Langley St Mary's is a good example of this.
- 4.23 Elsewhere the character of Upton is enhanced by its association with the Upton and Sussex Place Conservation Areas.
- 4.24 There are a number of Listed Buildings and two Ancient Monuments in the Borough which need to be sustained and enhanced for the enjoyment of

residents. The Local Plan also identifies Locally Listed Buildings which need to be retained, enhanced and, where appropriate, refurbished in accordance with Policy EN17. The opportunity to identify more of these will be explored.

- 4.25 It is also important that we retain buildings with group value which create a particular style, character and image for a locality. This includes the “Residential Areas of Exceptional Character” which are identified in Policy H 11 of the Local Plan for Slough.

Parks and Open Spaces

- 4.26 The suburbs contain a lot more greenery compared to other more urban parts of the borough. The gardens, grass verges, trees, small green spaces, formal parks and open spaces are all vital for the environment and for creating a sense of place and belonging.
- 4.27 One of Slough’s most important environmental assets is its parks and open spaces. In addition to their recreational and amenity value, they provide a landscape context for many of the suburban areas.
- 4.28 Work on the Open Space Study has shown that not all residents have easy access to local green areas. These open spaces provide recreational space and are needed to support health and active lifestyles, image, sense of place and environment to the local communities living in the suburbs.
- 4.29 In addition to being destinations in themselves, parks and open spaces provide attractive routes for walkers and cyclists. The possibility of creating more links to informal recreational areas outside of the Borough, such as the Linear Park identified in Local Plan Policy CG2, will be investigated. Slough is surrounded by attractive countryside and it is easy for residents to get access to countryside recreation corridors such as the Jubilee River to the south, the Colne Valley Way to the east and the canal to the north.
- 4.30 A key principle of the Spatial Strategy is that there should be no loss of parks or public open space. Protecting the green spaces in the suburbs will deliver multiple environmental benefits such as helping address climate change and pollution levels but it will also contribute towards improving the health and well-being of communities living in suburban areas and contributing towards the amenity and attractiveness of neighbourhoods and streets.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 Enhancing the suburbs, providing vibrant neighbourhood centres and protecting environmental assets for Slough’s local communities means the

suburbs will continue to provide a place for our residents to work, rest, stay and play. The suburbs will continue to provide the main supply of family housing in the borough and will be protected from major redevelopment.

- 5.2 Family housing along with local shopping provision, schools, local facilities, community hubs and open spaces together will meet the needs of residents who live in the suburbs and will contribute towards their sense of place and residents wellbeing.
- 5.3 The positive enhancement of the suburbs and natural areas for local communities will ensure they are a sustainable and liveable place for the future. Any change in the suburbs will enhance their distinct local character and environment. This will retain a sense of place for our current and future communities to live in.
- 5.4 An important part of this approach will be to ensure that the existing neighbourhood parades, local shop and community facilities are utilised or re-provided in a way which optimises their use and community value and there maybe some scope for redevelopment. This vibrant network of facilities will encourage people living in the suburbs to “live locally”.