

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

DATE: 30th November 2022

SUBJECT: Slough Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2021/2022

CHIEF OFFICER: Richard West

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WARD(s): All

APPENDICES: Draft Annual Monitoring Report 2021/2022

1 Summary and recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Member's about the results of the annual planning policy monitoring for 2021/22. This includes information on housing, employment, environment, and update on the progress of the Local Plan.

Recommendation(s)

- 1.2 The Committee is requested to resolve that:
- a) The results of the Annual Monitoring Report 2021/22 be noted.
 - b) The Annual Monitoring Report 2021/22 be published on Council's website.

2 Report

Introduction

- 2.1 An Annual Monitoring report (AMR) provides information and statistics on housing, employment, and the environment. It also has an important role in informing the preparation and production of the new Local Plan.
- 2.2 Local planning authorities are required to publish information on monitoring. This includes progress of the implementation of their Local Development Scheme and planning policies included in their development plan documents at least on an annual basis. The AMR covers the period from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 with some updates where this is appropriate and are available.
- 2.3 The Council has a statutory obligation to produce a planning monitoring report. However, the Localism Act 2011 and Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 have reduced previous monitoring requirements for

Local Planning Authorities, and it is now generally a matter for individual councils to decide on the content of their monitoring reports.

- 2.4 The AMR will be made publicly available but is not subject to consultation. A copy of the full AMR 2021/22, which is summarised in this report, will be made available on the Council website.

Housing

- 2.5 In 2021/22 there were 532 net housing completions in Slough. This figure is broadly similar to the last 3 years and includes the first release of homes on the Horlicks Quarter. All except 32 were built on sites of 10 or more homes. Whilst 532 is above the 2010 and now superseded target of 315 it is below the recent Local Housing Need figure of 864 (average annualised figure). The latter is the result of Government introduction of a new method for calculating housing need. For the current year 22/23 the figure has reduced to 847.
- 2.6 Of the total 541 gross completions 8 homes were created by conversion of existing homes and 205 (38%) were from a change of use of an existing office building. 9 homes were lost through conversion or demolition. Most homes completed were flats, which is in line with recent trends. Family housing need is not being met to the same extent as small homes.
- 2.7 Whilst housing completions are expected to rise in the future there is likely to be a shortfall, of at least 5,000 homes, compared to the current Local Housing Need figure over the new Local Plan period to 2041. There are 1184 homes under construction, the Horlicks site contributing substantially to this figure, and 2817 homes granted consent but not yet started. However 1,000 of this figure is the Akzo Nobel site outline permission which may not now progress.
- 2.8 The National Planning Policy Framework requires Local Planning Authorities to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement or Local Housing Need (LHN) figure with an additional buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land.
- 2.9 The buffer for Slough is currently 20% instead of the normal 5% as the Housing Delivery Test result for Slough is below a critical threshold. At the 1st April 2022 the 5 year housing land supply figure was 2. Down from 2.2 in April 2021 but expected to rise a bit during this year. As a 5 year supply cannot be demonstrated the Council has to apply the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', when determining planning applications. Para. 2.8.3 of the AMR document sets out what this means.

Other Housing Indicators

- 2.10 98% of the gross housing completions in 2021/22 were on previously developed sites (brownfield). This figure tends to fluctuate over the years depending upon which sites are coming forward, but last year's figure is consistent with the last 4 years.
- 2.11 As required by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), since 1 April 2016 the Council keeps a custom and self-build homes register, details of which are publicised on the website. The register holds information on individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land. The number of individuals on the self-build register at October 2021 is 258.
- 2.12 63 new build dwellings were in the affordable category in 2021/22. This is more than the each of the last 3 years. 76% of them were secured via Section 106 planning obligations from private developers. Of the rest most were built by the Council – 13 houses. £698,507 was also secured for the Council to spend on affordable housing.
- 2.13 The results of monitoring for 2021/22 showed that 6% of housing completions were houses and 94% flats or maisonettes. This trend is likely to continue in the future. This reflects the effectiveness of the policy in the Core Strategy that seeks to direct new development to the town centre and other urban areas where flats are acceptable whilst ensuring that development in the suburban areas predominantly consists of family housing. Whilst this has had a positive impact upon housing supply the prior approval office to residential use schemes do not have to provide affordable housing.

Employment

- 2.14 The monitoring shows that there was a net gain of 6,010 square metres of employment floor space in 2021/22. Although there is likely to have been a net loss of employment floorspace because of the change of use of offices to residential use.
- 2.15 The Thames Valley and South-East Office Market Report (2021) produced by Lambert Smith Hampton shows that Slough has 5.7 years supply of offices. Slough office Market was one of the hardest hit in the South East due to the pandemic with low levels of office take up since 2018. Availability of office space currently stands at 64,751 sq. m.
- 2.16 The general trend of loss of employment space continues in the town, but Slough Trading Estate continues to be doing well under SEGROs management. The estate continues to be a priority investment area for example through SEGRO re-acquiring the Bath Road offices in January 2021. While it is prosperous as an employment land area, the number of office and manufacturing jobs is likely to continue to decrease. For example, datacentres are increasing and don't employ many people.
- 2.17 The Trading Estate still benefits from being a Simplified Planning Zone (SPZ). This helps existing and potential new occupiers plan for the future with more certainty by

allowing certain types of development to take place without the need for planning permission provided they meet specified conditions set out in the SPZ scheme. The Slough Trading Estate SPZ is due to expire soon; a new one is being prepared for 2024. Six SPZ schemes were permitted, and three data centres completed in 2021/22.

Retail

- 2.18 Slough has not had any major retail schemes in the last few years. The planning application for redevelopment of Queensmere shopping centre was submitted during the year 21/22. It includes much less retail floorspace than now but provides for a substantial regeneration of the town centre including better public realm. The outline application was approved in principle at the Planning Committee in October 2022.
- 2.19 A retail survey was undertaken in February 2022. The results showed overall Slough Town Centre vacancy of 16.3%. Slough high street is in decline. Even though the retail vacancy rate doesn't seem particularly high, this does not indicate the true health of Slough high street and the shopping centres.
- 2.20 Also, the retail vacancy rate does not reflect the quality of the retail offer. Many of the units in the shopping centres have no signage or permanent shop fit out. These are pop ups which are temporary/short term lets.
- 2.21 The Farnham Road and Langley District centres were not surveyed due to Covid restrictions and lack of resources. These are healthy centres and have a range of shops that meet the daily needs of the local residents.

Appeal Decisions

- 2.22 The AMR looks at whether there are any lessons to be learnt from appeal decisions. There were 25 appeals against the refusal of planning applications in Slough in the 12 months from April 2021. 10 appeals (33%) were allowed by Inspectors.
- 2.23 It should be noted that nearly all of the appeals were regarding householder applications. Of those that were allowed the key issues related to design, character of the area or amenity which tend to be subjective judgements.
- 2.24 These indicate the current Local Plan is working well and some policies, such as those to protect our family housing can be carried over to the new local plan. None of the appeal decisions are considered to indicate that there is a need to review any policies.
- 2.25 Progress on Slough Local Plan
- 2.26 An update of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) has been prepared for publication in the near future. It sets out a programme for the preparation of the new local plan including the key documents to be produced. It is a statutory requirement. Whilst covid and the Council's current circumstances have slowed progress on the

new Local Plan some preparation work has continued. A report on the updated LDS and decisions needed for next steps is to be presented to Cabinet soon.

2.27 Following on from the Spatial Strategy agreed in 2020 the consultation on Proposed release of Green Belt sites for family housing took place in November 2021. A report on the response was presented to the March 2022 Planning Committee.

Duty to Cooperate

2.28 Effective joint work is important. We have been engaging with adjoining authorities on review of the Slough Local Plan and their own Local Plans. Engagement has included progressing part two of the Wider Area Growth Study the concluding part now due for publication. The Study indicates, at a strategic level, how some future housing need for Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead and Buckinghamshire could be accommodated. It concludes need is best met as close to Slough as possible. The Study results can be used to inform respective Council debate and decisions on accommodating housing need in the future.

Conclusion

2.29 The Council has a duty to publish monitoring information on the Local Plan. This report highlights key points from the draft AMR. The AMR will be published on the Council's web site once approved by the Committee. .

3 Implications of the Recommendation

Financial implications

There are no financial implications for this report.

Legal implications

There are no legal implications for this report.

Risk management implications

Minimal – The Council has a duty to publish monitoring information for the Local Plan but failure to do so does not incur any sanctions.

Environmental implications

There are no environmental implications for this report.

Equality implications

There are no equality implications for this report.