

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee **DATE** 17 October 2012

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PART I **FOR DECISION**

RENEWAL OF SLOUGH TRADING ESTATE SIMPLIFIED PLANNING ZONE

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to request Members agreement to work with SEGRO to renew the SPZ in accordance with the general principles set out below. Member's agreement is also sought to write to the Secretary of State to confirm Slough Borough Council's intention to prepare a new SPZ scheme for the Slough Trading Estate.

Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

1.1 The Committee is requested to resolve:

- That the Council should work with SEGRO to prepare a new Simplified Planning Zone for Slough Trading Estate in accordance with the general principles set out in the report.
- That the Council should write to the Secretary of State to confirm its intention to prepare a new SPZ scheme for the Slough Trading Estate.

2 Community Strategy Priorities

2.1 The SPZ forms part of the Council's planning framework which is an important spatial element of the Community Strategy and will help to contribute to the following emerging priorities:

- **A Cleaner, Greener place to Live, Work and Play**
- **Prosperity for All**

3 Other Implications

(a) **Risk Management**

There are no specific issues directly arising from this report

(b) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

It is considered that there are unlikely to be any significant implications in relation to the Human Rights Act.

(c) Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be prepared as appropriate.

(d) Workforce

There are no workforce issues arising from this report.

4 Supporting Information

Slough Trading Estate

- 4.1 Slough Trading Estate covers approximately 161 hectares and is the largest business area in the Borough. It currently includes a wide variety of business, industrial and warehouse uses and provides around a quarter of the jobs in Slough. As a result its continued success as an employment centre is important to the local economy and the prosperity of the town as a whole.
- 4.2 The Trading Estate benefits from its close location to Heathrow, London, the M25 and M4, and due to the power station, its own secure electricity supply. In recent years the Estate has seen a reduction in its traditional manufacturing base and an increase in demand for knowledge based industries, warehouses and data centres.

Simplified Planning Zones (SPZ)

- 4.3 A Simplified Planning Zone is a planning mechanism which has the effect of granting planning permission in advance for specified types of development within a defined area or Zone, for a fixed time period.
- 4.4 The SPZ only grants planning permission and so all other legislative requirements (such as building regulations, advertisements consent) remain and must be complied with.
- 4.5 Any development proposals which fall outside of the scope of the SPZ, either in terms of their scale or use, would have to apply for planning permission in the normal way.

The SPZ in Slough

- 4.6 SPZs were introduced in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Slough Trading Estate has been one of the few areas in the country to take advantage of this planning tool. The first SPZ for the Estate ran from 1994 to 2004 and the second one is due to expire in November 2014. As a result it is now proposed to put another one in place to cover a further ten years up to 2024.
- 4.7 An SPZ provides SEGRO, the owners of the Estate, a number of commercial advantages which include:
- **Flexibility** to respond quickly and effectively to changes in market demands and tenants' requirements

- **Certainty** for owners and occupiers about what development is acceptable to the Council under the scheme, and will therefore not require detailed planning approval
 - **Speed** of development being brought forward- as individual applications are not required and consistent parameters are established by the SPZ, they are not subject to the normal planning permission timeframes
 - **Marketability** of the Estate in a way which enhances the perception of the trading estate for investment, and has led directly to companies choosing to locate on the estate.
- 4.8 Two examples that demonstrate the effectiveness of the SPZ include the retention of Selig and Karl Storz on the Trading Estate. Selig manufacture food bottle seals and have been based on the Trading Estate since 1929. They had a requirement for a new building in order to meet modern food standards. The SPZ enabled a new building on Ajax Avenue to be built and was completed in 2011 and which resulted in the firm and associated jobs staying within Slough. Similarly, Karl Storz who produce endoscopes are relocating to new larger premises on Montrose Avenue, which are currently under construction and will be ready in early 2013. The SPZ provided the certainty to meet the firm's timescales for finding alternative premises and which again resulted in the firm staying in Slough
- 4.9 The advantage to the Council of having an SPZ is that it does not have to spend time processing what are straight forward planning applications.

The Planning Context

- 4.10 The planning objectives for the Trading Estate and the role of the SPZ in achieving these objectives are set out in the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPD.
- 4.11 The Core Strategy recognised that the Trading Estate will have to continue to evolve to serve the needs of modern businesses and provide the sort of facilities and infrastructure that is necessary to continue to attract inward investment.
- 4.12 As a result the Core Strategy proposed that the Trading Estate should be treated as a special case. Core Policy 5 therefore states that offices may be located on the Trading Estate, as an exception, in order to facilitate the comprehensive regeneration of the Estate. The policy makes it clear that this would be subject to the production of a Master Plan and the provision of a package of transport improvements. Core Policy 5 also envisages that this would be partly delivered through a Local Development Order or SPZ.
- 4.13 SEGRO have subsequently produced an illustrative Master Plan for the Trading Estate which has been included in the Site Allocations DPD.
- 4.14 A key component of the Master Plan is the proposed development of a central amenity core within the Trading Estate which would contain new offices, a transport hub, shops and other amenities. With the exception of the Bath Road, the rest of the Estate would then be developed with flexible business space.
- 4.15 In order to facilitate the development of the central amenity hub SEGRO have submitted planning applications for the Leigh Road Commercial Core Area. The latest of these (known as LRCC2) permits 152,800 square metres of new development including high profile offices plus hotels, retail, a health club and

conference and crèche facilities. This is subject to a Section 106 agreement which secures a package of transport and other benefits and applies a parking cap to the Trading Estate as a whole.

- 4.16 As a result, having put in place the Core Strategy and the Site Allocation Document with the Master Plan, and granted planning permission for the commercial core area, the SPZ is the last part of the planning framework for the Trading Estate that needs to be put in place.

Renewal of the SPZ

- 4.17 Members were advised at the meeting of the Planning Committee on 19th June of SEGRO's wish to renew the current SPZ. Negotiations have been taking place since then to agree the general principles.
- 4.18 The current SPZ is due to expire on the 11th November 2014 and so it is proposed to make a timely start on the process of renewing it now in order to ensure that there is no gap.

The Contents of the SPZ

- 4.19 The purpose of the SPZ is to allow development to take place within the Trading Estate which does not conflict with the planning objectives set out above. As a result it excludes potentially inappropriate uses such as B1(a) offices, major retail or specialist development such as the power station.
- 4.20 It would, however, grant planning permission for other business uses such as research & development, light industrial, general industrial and warehousing uses (Classes B1(b), B1(c) B2 and B8). It would also allow some retail, food and drink and financial and professional services within the existing Buckingham Avenue Centre (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4 and A3). There can also be Data Centres (Sui Generis Use).
- 4.21 The SPZ would also be deemed to grant planning permission for demolition without the need for prior notification.
- 4.22 All development would have to comply with a series of conditions which control the height, plot ratio and provision of parking, servicing on a site. There is however, no control over the design of buildings.
- 4.23 The amenities of any adjoining residential areas will be protected by retaining the existing "Sensitive Boundary Sub Zones", and the buffer zone in the North.

Outstanding Issues

- 4.24 The SPZ has worked successfully over the last 17 years without producing very many problems. There are, however, a number of lessons that have been learnt that can be taken forward in the detailed wording of the renewed Scheme to ensure it is fit for purpose up to 2024.
- 4.25 The renewal also enables the SPZ to implement a standard approach to a few major issues that need to be addressed on the Estate, and that at this stage form the basis upon which the Council agrees to progress with the renewal of the SPZ.

- 4.26 *The Hoppa bus*: The existing SPZ has a legal agreement that introduced the 'Hoppa' bus service that runs from Slough train station through the Estate to Burnham or Britwell. This service has been secured up until 2015 but it is important that the new SPZ will have an agreement to secure the 'Hoppa' bus service, or its equivalent up until 2024.
- 4.27 *Car parking cap*: One of the key planning policies for the Trading Estate is that there should be a cap on the total number of parking spaces in order to ensure that any redevelopment does not add to existing congestion. As such it is proposed that the new SPZ will require development to provide parking within a range of minimum and maximum spaces (per gross floor area). While SPZ development generally only results in minor alterations to car parking numbers, there will not be any specific mechanism in the SPZ to deal with the cumulative impact of the individual schemes. As a result it will be necessary to rely upon the controls within the Section 106 agreement for the Leigh Road Commercial Core Area planning permission to enforce the parking cap. If, however, for any reason this planning permission is not implemented a mechanism to control parking will need to be built into the SPZ. The SPZ will also continue to specify values for cycle and lorry parking provision, but these do not require a cap.
- 4.28 *Retail and amenity services provision*: In order to enable the SPZ to implement its objectives as simply as possible it is proposed to retain the existing 'Service Use Sub-Zone' which includes the Buckingham Road centre. The Sub-Zone allows the SPZ to permit flexible provision of amenity uses such as shops and banks on the estate for employees whilst controlling the impacts of it on neighbours and the road network. A significant amount of retail has been permitted in the Leigh Road Centre and it is recognised that small food outlets could be provided in convenient locations throughout the Estate. These will, however, have to be the subject of separate planning applications which will enable the appropriateness of individual proposals to be assessed.

Timetable

- 4.29 In order to renew the SPZ under the 1990 Act a number of steps have to be followed.
- 4.30 Firstly a letter needs to be sent to the Secretary of State to confirm Slough Borough Council's intention to prepare a new SPZ scheme for the Slough Trading Estate.
- 4.31 Although there is no statutory requirement to do so, it is proposed that there will be a Pre-Deposit consultation with statutory consultees and local residents. The Revised SPZ will then be placed on Deposit for 6 weeks during which period objections can be made. If no objections are made the Local Authority can adopt the SPZ. However, if objections are made a Public Local Inquiry will need to be held and proposed modifications made as necessary. A further report will be made to Planning Committee with the results of the 6-week Deposit period.
- 4.32 Assuming that no Public Inquiry is needed, it is envisaged that the new SPZ would be completed by the end of 2013.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 Members' approval is being sought to begin the process of producing a new SPZ for the Slough Trading Estate in order to replace the existing one which runs out in 2014. The first stage involves writing to the Secretary of State to confirm the Council's intention to prepare the new SPZ scheme.

6 Background Papers

- Slough Trading Estate SPZ (January 1995)
- Slough Trading Estate SPZ (November 2004)