		Applic. No:	P/06684/015
Registration Date:	21-Nov-2012	**Ward:**	Upton
Officer:	Ian Hann	**Applic type:**	Major
		13 week date:	20th February 2013

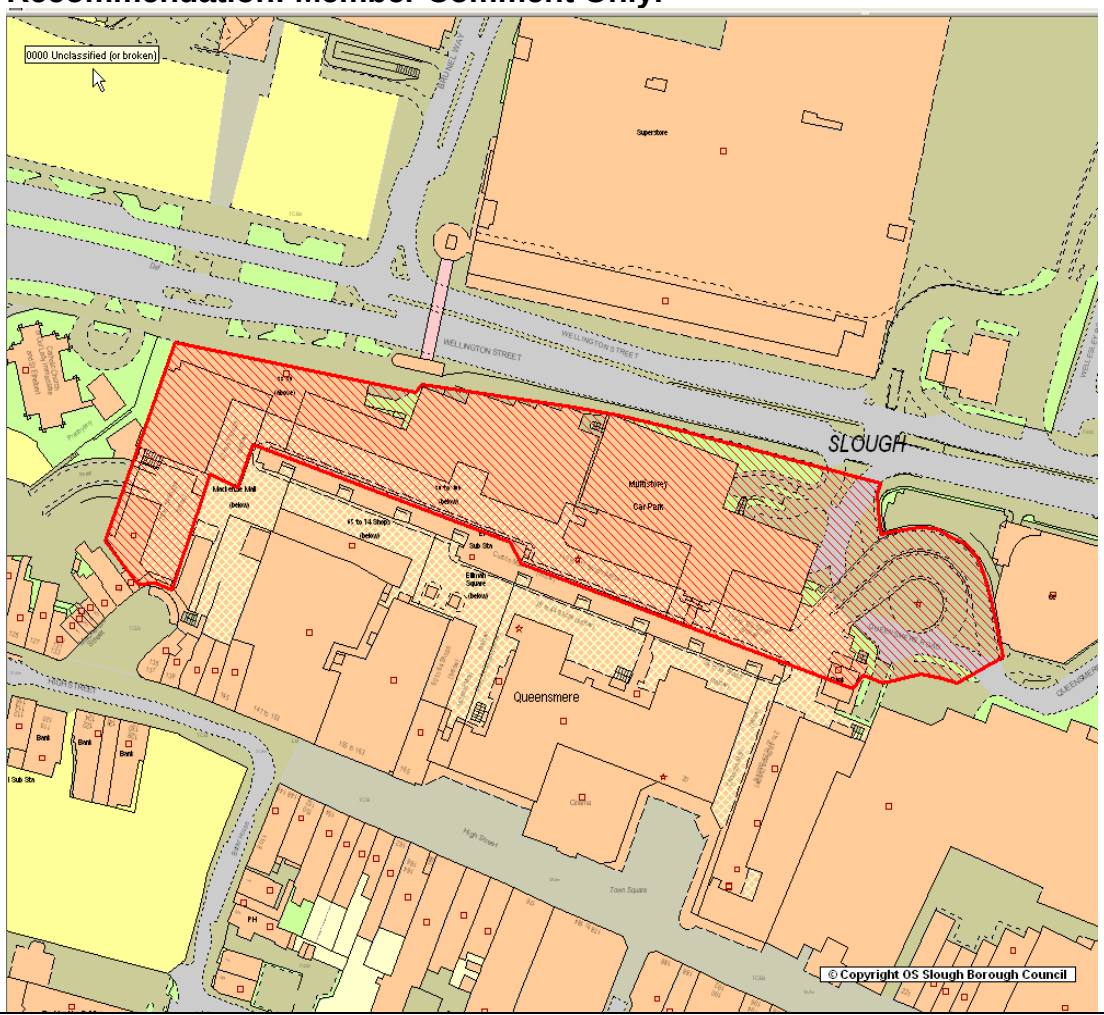
Applicant: Slough Shopping Centre LLP

Agent: Mr. John Blackwell, Cunnane Town Planning LLP 67, Strathmore Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 8UH

Location: Queensmere Shopping Centre, Wellington Street, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 1LN

Proposal: PARTIAL DEMOLITION AND INTERNAL ALTERATIONS/EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING SHOPPING CENTRE AS PART OF A PART NEW BUILD/PART REFURBISHED MIXED USED SCHEME FOR 11, 833 SQ M OF RETAIL INCLUDING THE CREATION OF AN ADDITIONAL 535M² OF A1 RETAIL, 439M² OF CLASS A3 - A5 FOOD AND DRINK , 958M² OF CLASS D2 ASSEMBLY AND LEISURE FLOOR SPACE AND 908 RESIDENTIAL UNITS. THE RESIDENTIAL ELEMENT COMPRISING 632 NO. 1 BEDROOM, 189 NO. 2 BEDROOM AND 87 NO. STUDIO APARTMENTS BEING CONTAINED WITHIN 4 NO. TOWERS OF BETWEEN 14 AND 21 STOREYS PLUS INFILLING DEVELOPMENT ON TOP OF THE EXISTING SHOPPING CENTRE AND A STAND ALONE TOWER OF 21 STOREYS WITH A VIEWING GALLEY ON TOP. RECONFIGURATION OF EXISTING ACCESS AND FRONTAGES ONTO WELLINGTON STREET AND WORKS INCLUDING, ALTERATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ENTRANCES TO THE SHOPPING CENTRE; PROVISION OF AMENITY SPACE AND LANDSCAPING; VEHICLE AND CYCLE PARKING; REFUSE AND RECYCLING STORAGE; PROVISION OF NEW AND/OR UPGRADING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE; GROUNDWORK'S AND RE-PROFILING OF SITE LEVELS; ANCILLARY ENGINEERING AND OTHER OPERATIONS AND PLANT AND MACHINERY

Recommendation: Member Comment Only.



1.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

1.1 Members will be aware that this application was considered by this Committee at its previous meeting on 28th November 2013 when Members were invited to comment on the design aspects of the scheme.

1.2 As a result it was resolved that the views submitted by the Committee be noted, relayed to the applicant and incorporated in a final report for presentation to the Committee at a later date.

1.3 In the light of this, Officers have now had further discussions with the applicant and their design team which has resulted in substantial changes being proposed for the scheme as detailed below.

1.4 The purpose of this report is to consider the proposed new design that has been suggested by the Applicant. It also highlights the proposed improvements to the appearance and layout to the retail on the ground floor and the improvements to the public realm.

1.5 Member's views are therefore being sought in relation to the design, layout and appearance of the latest proposals in order to help progress negotiations with the applicant. Because the current proposals are so different from the application that was originally submitted, a full round of public consultation will have to take place prior to the application coming back to Committee. The final Committee report will also have to deal with all of the other outstanding issues which have not yet been considered by Members which will include the contents of the Section 106 agreement.

2.0 PART A: BACKGROUND

2.1 Details of the application site, the proposal, the planning background, consultations and an initial planning appraisal of the design aspects of the proposal were set out in the previous Committee report which is reproduced as "Appendix B" for Members information.

PART B: PLANNING APPRAISAL

3.0 Design

3.1 Members will recall that at the previous Committee meeting various concerns were raised with regards to the design and appearance of the proposed development, with most comments concerning the height of the development, the use of colour in the development the mix of the residential element of the development and the overall impact on the town centre and wider area of Slough. These comments are summarised in the minutes which are recorded elsewhere on this agenda.

3.2 One of the main concerns about the design of the scheme as originally submitted and as considered at the previous Committee was the lack of a coherent design philosophy,

particularly in relation to the composition of the towers as they appear on the sky line. At the same time there was concern that the round tower, which was the main distinctive feature of the design, was potentially going to be removed.

3.3 Taking on board some of the comments made at the last Committee the applicants have now come up with significant changes to the design which have a number of elements. The new concept and explanation is set out in the "Statement of Intent" which is attached as Appendix A to this report. Large scale images of the new proposal will be on display at the meeting. It should be noted that the proposed changes have not been formally submitted as amendments to the planning application at this stage but have been put forward on an informal basis to help make progress

3.4 The first major change that is proposed is to redesign the four towers so that they are of a uniform shape and spacing. This means that the western most tower, which was double width, is now proposed to be the same shape as the other three. It is also proposed to reinstate the round tower to the east which now provides an interesting contrast to the other four.

3.5 Another change is that it is proposed that the towers will get progressively taller as they go eastwards stepping away from St Ethelberts church to the west.

3.6 The other significant change to the design is the removal of all of the low level development that was going to go on the podium. This has a number of advantages. Firstly it gets rid of the cluttered appearance of the design so that from a distance the towers have a more elegant slim line appearance. It also improves the appearance of the scheme when seen from closer up in that, when seen from Wellington Street for example, there would be nothing above the retail frontage apart from the towers. This will help to reinforce the appearance of this area as a boulevard and shopping street. It also means that there is more room at the service deck level to create green amenity space for residents.

3.7 The proposed residential development at the eastern end of the centre, above Dukes House has been retained but this has been reconfigured into a concave shape which is more sympathetic to the setting of the Church and the Curve.

3.8 The design of the tower blocks have also been changed so that they are a more sculptured shape tapering towards the south. In addition to being visually more attractive, this has the advantage of improving the aspect from the windows and balconies. A more interesting roof line is also proposed which slopes towards the south. This could facilitate the inclusion of penthouses at the top of the towers. It is also now proposed to provide much higher quality materials with the use of glazing in place of the previous coloured concrete.

3.9 The applicant's Statement of Intent in Appendix A explains that it is proposed that the scheme will provide high quality apartments within an elegant and contemporary setting with high end internal and external finishes. These will be managed as a long term investment.

3.10 Although no final figures have been provided at this stage it is envisaged that there will be in the region of 800 apartments built over four, five or six phases with a range of 1,2

and 3 bed apartments including some penthouse style flats also.

4.0 Improvements to the Shopping Centre

4.1 It is important to remember that the main purpose of this application is to improve the retail offer within Queensmere Shopping Centre and the wider Town Centre area and try to recapture the spending that has left the Town Centre and Slough over recent years.

4.2 The Site Allocations Document makes it clear that the reason for promoting the comprehensive redevelopment or reconfiguration of the Queensmere shopping centre is to ensure that it positively contributes to the wider regeneration proposals for the town centre, particularly the Heart of Slough, and to encourage further retail investment in the town centre. The site allocation document therefore considered that redevelopment or reconfiguration proposals should have the following:

- Create a internal pedestrian link between the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres (this has now been achieved through the extended T.K. Maxx store)
- Improve the retail and leisure offer around the Town Square through change of use of key units and improved retail offering
- Link to the Heart of Slough through provision of a western entrance to the shopping centre, and access to residential units above the centre
- Create active frontages along the A4 Wellington Street and St Ethelbert's Church frontage
- Remove the service ramp to the Prudential yard in coordination with the Heart of Slough proposals for the area
- Improve pedestrian links to the bus and train stations via Wellington Street
- Rationalise multi-storey car parking provision and its links to the centres and Wellington House
- Redevelop the western end of the Queensmere Centre adjacent to St Ethelbert's church, including improved retail units, residential accommodation above the centre and removal of the toilet block
- Transform the Wellington Street frontage to create an urban boulevard with tree planting, improved north-south route connection to the town centre, active retail frontages and access to residential accommodation above the retail units

4.3 The current planning application meets many of these objectives.

Firstly it proposes to increase the amount of floorspace in the follwing way:

- 535m² retail use
- 439m² food, drink and restaurant use
- 958m² assembly / leisure use

4.4 Secondly it proposes to change the range of units available which will hopefully attract new tenants. This involves creating 6 large new retail units , 5 of which will have first floor elements, and 4 will be accessed directly from Wellington Street.

4.5 The façade of the shopping centre facing onto Wellington Street will be redesigned so that the retail units facing onto Wellington Street will have window displays replacing the existing blank and uninviting elevations that act as a barrier to the High Street from the north of the site and will be more inviting to attract people into the shopping centre and the High Street beyond. The design and appearance of this new elevation will be more open and inviting than the current bland and oppressive concrete façade. While there is a difference in levels from Wellington Street to the floor level of the stores and will need to be considered when the internal layout of the units are finalised it will still give views into the units which must be welcomed and will improve the appearance of Wellington Street.

4.6 Thirdly the scheme proposes to improve the entrances into the shopping centre from Wellington Street and improve access through the mall. Although the most recent plans appear to removed of a second entrance this will have to be reinstated when the final plans are submitted.

4.7 This will provide a link from Wellington Street to the High Street and ensure that it doesn't act as a barrier stopping people coming from the north into the shopping centre and the High Street beyond. It is important that identifiable and strong links are created to allow direct access without forcing people to go through the retail units to get into the shopping centre and High Street. It is also important that the entrances are directly in line with the pedestrian desire lines from the north and there are strong linkages between the shopping centres, town centre and rail and bus stations.

4.8 An important part of the scheme is the proposals for the western end of the shopping centre next to the Curve and St Ethelbert's church. The submitted plans show that one of the large retail units will be located here along with 4 no. units created for café, restaurant and takeaway uses along the flank.

4.9 The existing toilet block will be moved into the shopping centre under a planning application for enabling works to the Curve building that is to be built under the Heart of Slough works. This provides an additional frontage onto St. Ethelbert's Church and the new curve building and will also improve the setting between these areas which in turn will make the area more inviting for the public to use and therefore increase pedestrian footfall into the Town Centre and improve the viability of the area.

5.0 Public Realm

5.1 The proposal also includes improvements to the public realm. The Applicant's have stated in their Townscape Assessment the public realm along Wellington Street will be improved with the removal of vehicular access points along Wellington Street as well as upgrades to the pavement landscaping treatments to complement the public realm investments in the Heart of Slough and can be secured via a Section 106 Agreement. These improvements together with additional tree planting will give Wellington Street a more boulevard appearance and will provide a welcoming environment for people visiting from the north and attract them into the shopping centre and the area beyond rather than the shopping centre acting as a barrier as it currently does.

6.0 Summary and Conclusions

6.1 The applicants have responded positively to the comments made by Members about the proposed scheme by significantly changing the design.

7.0 PART C: RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Recommendation

7.2 It is recommended that the views of this Committee in relation to the design, appearance and layout of the proposed development be recorded and that the applicant be invited to amend the planning application accordingly.

APPENDIX A

slough shopping centre statement of intent

GA&A

Delivery of new retail

Criterion Capital is a long term and committed investor in Slough.
Our strategy is to responsibly create a sustainable destination for to shop, work and live.

To implement this strategy successfully we will work with Slough Borough Council to jointly deliver a truly landmark scheme that underpins the Council's wider regeneration objectives for the Heart of Slough.

Our objective is to create a single shopping centre with a variety of retail offers to meet the needs and aspirations of existing residents and workers and to help attract new visitors to this important shopping destination. Our plans provide:

- New community in the heart of the Town Centre with high quality apartments above the new retail offer.
- New 71,000sq ft of retail space to allow existing retailers to expand and attract new anchor tenants
- New retail facade to Wellington Street with increased permeability to the shopping centre and the High Street beyond.
- New elegant external facades to reflect the quality of the retail and residential offer to include features such as contemporary glazing and balconies throughout, lending texture and elegance to the development.

Economic viability and employment creation and retention underpins our approach as asocially responsible investor. Supporting the Council's regeneration plans for Slough will attract new national and independent retailers, new residents, create additional employment opportunities, and economic growth for the Major Stakeholders of the Heart of Slough.

Delivery of new homes

Our quality driven approach will attract new residents to urban areas creating and rejuvenating communities in the process.

- We are proposing in the region of 800 apartments over 4 – 6 phases over the Queensmere Shopping Centre comprising of 1, 2 and 3 bed urban apartments.
- Our wider development pipeline equates to over 5000 apartments and houses to be delivered over the next ten years.
- We have one of the strongest track records of delivery in the build to rent sector and have already delivered over 500 apartments at Canada Water, Deptford and Wandsworth in 2013.
- We have planning permission for over 1000 apartments and houses in Croydon, Merton and Bracknell with a construction programme starting in 2014.

Our rental model is a long-term investment and as responsible landlords our developments offer :

- High quality apartments set within elegant and contemporary setting with high end internal and external finishes.
- Good spatial design that supports and enables responsible living and good management.
- Open plan layouts and duplex penthouses.
- Concierge service.
- Accessible and well-designed communal gardens.
- Excellent storage via separate utility spaces and walk in wardrobes, robust detailing and specification.
- Bike spaces & car club
- Suitable Affordable housing/S106 contributions with an overage payment based on certain trigger points.

APPENDIX B Committee Report 28th November FOR INFORMATION

1.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

1.1 This application is not before Planning Committee for determination at this stage, but is being presented as an opportunity for Members to make comments on the design of the scheme, which may provide an opportunity for additional changes, should the applicant wish to make any. A further report will be brought to Planning Committee in due course to discuss matters of living conditions for future occupiers, transport and parking, sustainability / environmental issues and financial contributions.

1.2 This report will consider the principle of high density flats and the principle of the development in terms of its scale bulk massing height design and external appearance of the development, the impact on the surrounding area including short and long range views, listed buildings and the relationship to the Heart of Slough. These matters all fall under the umbrella of design and need to be considered so that any changes will not have a detrimental impact upon surroundings properties and the character of the area.

1.3 It is recommended that the views of this Committee in relation to the design and appearance of the development be recorded, that such views be relayed back to the applicant and be incorporated in a final report which will be presented to this Committee at the earliest opportunity.

PART A: BACKGROUND

2.0 Application Site

2.1 The subject of this application consists of two shopping centres The Queensmere and The Observatory Shopping Centres which are spread over circa 54,000 square metres and consist of 124 retail outlets, restaurants and cafes, plus a ten screen cinema and a health and fitness club. The centres are situated approximately five minutes' walk to the south of Slough railway station and bus station. The main landmark between the station and the site is the large Tesco Extra which is situated to the north of the site on the opposite side of Wellington Street.

2.2 The site is located between Wellington Street to the north with Tesco Superstore beyond and the railway and bus stations further to the north. The High Street is to the south of which the western part is defined as the Slough Old Town Area, with residential properties further to the south. The area to the west of the supermarket is to be developed as an office scheme which is part of the Heart of Slough development. To the west of the site is Our Lady Immaculate and St Ethelbert Church which is a grade II Listed Building. The area immediately to the south of the church is to be redeveloped for the Curve building which is again part of the Heart of Slough development.

2.3 The proposals are centred around the northern side of the Queensmere Centre facing onto Wellington Street returning along the pathway between the application site and Our Lady Immaculate and St. Ethelbert Church. This area of the site which is the subject of this application has retail units, including the old Woolworths unit, toilets and entrances into the shopping centre at ground floor level with multi-storey car parking levels above. The entrance to the car park is also accessible from this side of the shopping centre.

2.4 The application site covers an area of approximately 3.51 hectares between High Street and Wellington Street, Slough and is located within the Town Centre and Town Centre Shopping area as defined within the Slough Local Plan 2004 and is an allocated site within the Slough Local Development Framework, Site Allocation Development Plan Document, November 2010 (SSA14). The site currently has 37,000M² of retail floor space and 7,300m² of office floor space, although planning permission has been granted to convert the office space into residential flats and is currently being implemented.

3.0 Proposal

3.1 This application seeks permission for the partial redevelopment of the Shopping Centre to create and enhance the retail offer at Queensmere Shopping Centre with improved pedestrian entrance onto Wellington Street and the provision of residential units above the centre with their own amenity space and to provide a landmark development. The scheme is intended to compliment the Heart of Slough development, reinvigorate the town centre area of Slough and act as a generator for further development. Various amendments have been made to the scheme since it was submitted and the following reflects the current application.

3.2 In terms of the retail elements of the proposals this application seeks to add the additional floor space:

- 353m² retail use
- 439m² food, drink and restaurant use
- 958m² assembly / leisure use

The changes to the shopping centre involves the creation of 6 large A1 retail units , 5 of which will have first floor elements, and 4 accessed directly from Wellington Street. There will be two entrances from Wellington Street that will access the mall directly. The façade of the shopping centre facing onto Wellington Street will be redesigned so that the retail units facing onto Wellington Street will have window displays replacing the existing blank and uninviting elevations that act as a barrier to the High Street from the north of the site.

3.3 The proposals also sees the western side of the shopping centre redesigned so that an additional larger retail unit will be located close to the Mackenzie Mall entrance to the centre and 4 no. units created for café, restaurant and takeaway uses. An additional entrance into the shopping centre will be relocated within this elevation of the building. The current toilets in this location are to be moved into the basement of the shopping centre under a planning application for enabling works to the curve building that is to be built under the Heart of Slough works. The area outside of this location will be repaved with outside furniture and planting would be provided between the shopping centre and the Curve building.

3.4 The other element of this application sees the provision of 858 flats with the accommodation break down as follows:

- 581 X 1 bedroom flats
- 230 X 2 bedroom flats
- 47 X studio

These residential units would be provided within 4 towers above the existing shopping centre, with additional units at four stories between each tower block, returning along the western side of the building. The 2nd and 4th floors of the development would see amenity space provided for the occupiers of the flats. The towers will rage between 15 and 19 stories in height and will be accessed from their own entrances from Wellington Street and opposite the Church. The submitted plans also include a plan for a stand alone tower at the eastern end of the site which is currently occupied by a tall chimney The towers will have separate coloured cladding with the entrances having matched coloured entrances.

3.5 The existing Queensmere car park will be reconstructed to provide an additional 26 car parking spaces to take it to a total of 625 spaces over 4 floors accessed from the existing ramp into first floor level. The spaces will be allocated in the following way:

- Retail – 600
- Visitors to retail uses and disabled – 21
- Car Club spaces – 4

No car parking spaces will be provided for the residential element of the scheme. Storage will be provided for 908 cycles for residential use.

3.6 Vehicular access to the development will be from the existing service area which will be accessed from the same vehicle ramp as that for the car park although cars and service vehicles will be kept apart on the ramp.

3.7 Following discussion amendments have been made to the plans and submitted on a “for information basis” at a height of between 14 and stories with 625 flats with the accommodation broken down as follows:

- 331 X 1 bedroom flats
- 294 X 2 bedroom flats

As well as the change in the breakdown of the accommodation the plans have been amended so that the following has now been changed since the original submission:

- Double height retail frontages on the eastern end of the site.
- Removal of cladding around the podium levels.
- Provision of some private balconies.
- Entrance cores for the residential element going down to ground floor.
- Heights of towers stepping up from eastern end of the development and then back down towards the Church
- Different fenestration
- New layout for amenity space.
- Internal alterations to reduce the length of corridors.

This amendment also sees the stand alone tower at the eastern end of the site removed from the proposals. While there may be some desire for this to follow at a later date this will necessitate the need for a separate planning application which will be considered separately should one be submitted. These plans have been submitted on a for information basis to help shape the discussions around design.

3.8 Any permission would be built over 7 phases as follows-

- Phase 1 – western end of the shopping centre 123 units
- Phase 2 – to the east of phase 1 187 units
- Phase 3 – between 1st and 2nd tower 24 units
- Phase 4 – middle of the shopping centre 154 units
- Phases 5 & 6 – eastern part of the shopping centre 300 units

3.9 The following documents have been submitted along with this planning application:

- Application Form
- Plans
- Environmental Impact Assessment & Appendences
- Design & Access Statement
- Townscape Impact Assessment
- Visual Impact Assessment
- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Planning Statement and Retail Assessment
- Parking Survey Report
- Transportation Assessment & Appendences
- Residential / Workplace Travel Plan Framework
- Servicing Management Plan
- Site Waste Management Plan
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Daylight / Sunlight / Overshadowing Report
- Air Quality Assessment
- Noise Assessment
- Contaminated Land Risk Assessment
- Statement of Consultation
- Utility Statement
- Sustainability Statement
- Energy Statement

4.0 Planning Background

4.1 There have been aspirations for some years to achieve a radical comprehensive development of key sites within Slough in a way that would deliver significant change to the infrastructure and appearance of the area. Recognition that the town centre was not fulfilling its full potential as a community and leisure area was reflected in Slough's Millennium project in 1995. The Local Plan For Slough, 2004 also recognised the inadequacy of the town centre and the potential for its redevelopment.

4.2 The perceived problems within the town centre included:

- Substantial areas of land are dominated by public highway, including the wasted area of the sunken A4/William Street roundabout;
- Severing effect of the A4, with pedestrians forced to use subways and cyclists not catered for in a safe manner;
- Lack of focus and identity or sense of entering the Town Centre;

- Poor architecture and lack of landmark buildings at one of Slough's principle gateways;
- Poor pedestrian and cycle links between the railway station and town centre/shopping centre;
- Bleak unwelcoming environment outside Slough Station, with muddled usage patterns on forecourt areas;
- Poor unwelcoming environment in the Bus Station and at bus stops outside the Queensmere shopping centre; and
- Lack of integrated rail/bus/transport interchange.

4.3 As a result the Council and its partners have promoted the "Heart of Slough" comprehensive regeneration scheme in order to alleviate the problems identified above and regenerate Slough Town Centre and have started to be implemented with the highway changes along Wellington Street and creation of the new bus station. The next stage in this campaign is the construction of the Curve building to act as a new library, education facilities for adults, a café and a cultural centre for the town and work will soon start on this building. The proposals which are the subject of this application look to fit into the wider Heart of Slough scheme.

4.4 In order to inform the Core Strategy which was adopted in December 2008, the Council commissioned a Retail Assessment from Colliers CRE in January 2007 which considered the current and future role of the town centre. This concluded that Slough town centre is experiencing a significant leakage of retail expenditure to competing centres, retaining just 30% of market share of comparison goods expenditure within the defined core catchment area. This loss of market share and the associated decline in goods sales and shopper population is forecast to continue in the absence of an additional and improved retail offer within the town centre.

4.5 Following on from this report the Core Strategy identified the need to improve the range and attractiveness of Slough's retail offer to consumers and sort to positively enhance the role of the town centre by ensuring that all new major retail and leisure facilities are located within it. The redevelopment and reconfiguration of the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres are therefore pivotal in achieving this and improving the competitiveness of Slough Town Centre as a retail destination over other competing centres.

4.6 Therefore in order to establish the principles for comprehensive redevelopment or reconfiguration of the shopping centres allowing it to contribute to the wider regeneration proposals of the town centre and encourage further investment in the town centre the site was included in the Slough Local Development Framework Site Allocations Development Plan Document in November 2010 (site reference SSA14). When considering the site for inclusion in the site allocations document the refurbishment and reconfiguration of Queensmere Shopping Centre was seen as central to the wider regeneration of Slough Town Centre to help to reinforce the role of the town centre retail area in keeping with its sub-regional status in the South East Plan (now withdrawn) and to build on the town centre 'Art at the Centre' initiative and Heart of Slough proposals. It was further considered that through redevelopment and reconfiguration the amount of retail floorspace in the centres could be increased and enhanced.

4.7 The site allocation document also acknowledged some of the constraints of the sites

where the current layout of the site closes off the historic north-south routes from Mackenzie Street to the High Street, limited pedestrian access between the railway station and High Street (although this has been improved via the implemented Heart of Slough road infrastructure works.

4.8 The site allocation document therefore considered that redevelopment or reconfiguration proposals should have the following:

- Create a internal pedestrian link between the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres (this has now been achieved through the extended T.K. Maxx store)
- Improve the retail and leisure offer around the Town Square through change of use of key units and improved retail offering
- Link to the Heart of Slough through provision of a western entrance to the shopping centre, and access to residential units above the centre
- Create active frontages along the A4 Wellington Street and St Ethelbert's Church frontage
- Remove the service ramp to the Prudential yard in coordination with the Heart of Slough proposals for the area
- Improve pedestrian links to the bus and train stations via Wellington Street
- Rationalise multi-storey car parking provision and its links to the centres and Wellington House
- Redevelop the western end of the Queensmere Centre adjacent to St Ethelbert's church, including improved retail units, residential accommodation above the centre and removal of the toilet block
- Transform the Wellington Street frontage to create an urban boulevard with tree planting, improved north-south route connection to the town centre, active retail frontages and access to residential accommodation above the retail units
- Aim to reduce the negative impacts of construction upon existing businesses and on the quality of life for residents and users of the town centre by appropriate phasing and implementation

4.9 A Development Brief was produced in 2007, on which the Council is broadly supportive of the key proposals including the comprehensive redevelopment and reconfiguration of the shopping centres incorporated an element of high density residential development into the scheme. The brief indicates four phases/parts to the development:

- Part 1 – redevelopment of Queensmere multi storey car park, new retail, basement parking and residential units above
- Part 2 – redevelopment of western end of Queensmere centre of new retail and residential above
- Part 3 – Design solution for Wellington Street frontage and design code for soft and hard landscaping

Part 4 – Proposal for vehicular connection between Wellington House and Observatory car park.

Two broad locations for new build are identified. The first being redevelopment of the

existing multi storey car park and retail below, taking the form of two residential blocks above replacement extended and improved retail space. One of the towers would be 12 storeys above the retail equating to a total height of 15 storeys. The other would be 8 – 10 storeys above the retail, equating to a height of 11 – 13 storeys. A lower connecting residential block 6 -7 storeys above the amenity deck is also proposed. The vertical emphasis created by these blocks would balance the current horizontal emphasis onto Wellington Street.

The second location is above Queensmere shopping centre adjacent to Prudential Yard and the listed church. Retail will be provided at ground and mezzanine levels with a frontage to Wellington Street. Residential development above will be at a height of 8 – 9 storeys above the retail stepping down to 4.5 storeys above ground floor adjacent to the listed church.

Wellington Street would be enhanced through a use of modern and robust hard and soft landscaping in accordance with a design code.

4.10 The Council is supportive of the principle of the comprehensive phased redevelopment of the shopping centres including and supported by residential development.

4.11 The design brief was then used as a basis for a planning application which was considered by Planning Committee on 15th January 2008 reference P/06684/013 for the following scheme:

"Demolition of part of the Queensmere shopping centre and redevelopment to provide 3,019 sq metres of Class A1 retail floorspace together with associated alterations to pedestrian access arrangements to the shopping centre and demolition and redevelopment of existing service road with construction of a roof above".

This application was subsequently approved after being delegated back to officers to finalise a Section 106 Agreement in November 2008. This permission has now expired.

4.12 Prior to this the last planning permission for the extension of the shopping centre was in July 1997 when planning permission was granted for the following (reference P/06684/008):
REFURBISHMENT AND EXTENSION TO EXISTING SHOPPING CENTRE COMPRISING: (1) INFILLING OF THE GROUND FLOOR AREA BETWEEN THE CINEMA COMPLEX AND EXISTING RETAIL UNITS ADJOINING TOWN SQUARE TOGETHER WITH CHANGE OF USE OF PART OF EXISTING PROPERTY FOR RETAIL (A1) AND/OR RESTAURANT (A3) PURPOSES; (2) ERECTION OF SINGLE STOREY SHOP UNIT ADJOINING CINEMA AND OTHER GROUND FLOOR EXTENSIONS; (3) ALTERATIONS TO EXTERNAL APPEARANCE AND ENTRANCES; (4) REPAVING TOWN SQUARE, MCKENZIE STREET AND PARTS OF THE HIGH STREET (5) REMOVAL OF PLANTERS IN TOWN SQUARE AND CERTAIN PLANTERS ON THE HIGH STREET; (6) REMOVAL OF FOUNTAIN AND PUMPS IN MCKENZIE STREET

4.13 All other planning history relates to signage and small scale alterations to the shopping centre.

4.14 Wellington House is the office building which occupies part of the site. Planning permission was granted for the conversion of part of the building known as the annex into residential accommodation in December 2010 (reference P/03167/020) and has been carried out.

4.15 Planning permission was then refused for the conversion of one of the floors of the main office building into residential accommodation in October 2011 (reference P/03167/021). This refusal was appealed when it was dismissed in November 2012 due to the impact on the future occupiers in terms of lack of sunlight, daylight and outlook.

4.16 Most recently planning permission was approved for the following (reference P/11826/005):
CHANGE OF USE OF PART 1ST FLOOR FROM CLASS B1 (A) OFFICE TO CLASS C3, CHANGE OF USE OF 2ND FLOOR FROM CLASS B1(A) OFFICE/CLASS D1 NON RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION CLASS C3 RESIDENTIAL AND CHANGE OF USE OF 3RD TO 5TH FLOORS FROM B1(A) OFFICE TO CLASS C3 RESIDENTIAL. ERECTION OF A 6TH FLOOR FOR CLASS C3 RESIDENTIAL USE TO CREATE A SEVEN STOREY BUILDING CONTAINING A TOTAL OF 100 FLATS, COMPRISING, 2 NO. STUDIO FLATS, 76 NO. x ONE BED FLATS AND 22 NO. X TWO BED FLATS. PROVISION OF CYCLE AND BIN STORES ON REAR SERVICE DECK AND ROOF TOP COMMUNAL GARDEN.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 The consultation responses relating to design issues on the scheme are listed below as they are relevant to this report.

5.2 **ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD**

The building heights proposed in this application will drastically alter the skyline visible from Windsor Castle. In relation to Windsor Castle and Home Park, the Heritage Impact Statement submitted by the applicants indicates that: “The proposal would be sited some 3 km away. It would be visible in skyline views from the sensitive North Terrace and the Great Windsor Park. It would rise above the existing horizon and would result in a new skyline for the Town. The colour and articulation of the central three towers are likely to have an unusual blank presence on the horizon. The proposal will result in significant adverse impact.”

The submitted Visual Impact Assessment Document considers that the proposals would have a significant adverse impact from North Terrace and a Moderate adverse impact from Copper Horse. Mitigation is described as ‘articulation of gable façades of central three towers’. Whilst there are a number of tall buildings in the Slough area, the magnitude of the recorded negative impact of the proposals on views from Windsor Castle and Home Park are considered unacceptable. This intrusion into the skyline would potentially alter and damage the character of the view from Windsor Castle and Home Park

The Council raises an objection in relation to the heights of the buildings proposed – up to 108m. This is significant and runs contrary to the principles set out in the Heart of Slough Development Brief that was adopted in 2007 and the subsequent Slough Core Strategy and Slough Site Allocations DPD. The Council therefore urges Slough Borough Council not to grant approval for this development unless it is satisfied through further consultation with English Heritage regarding significantly enhanced mitigation measures.

5.3 **HERITAGE CONSULTANT**

This is a very considerable scheme and should presumably be read in conjunction with the Heart of Slough programme. It has to be accepted that the scale of development in the town centre and across the railway dwarfs the town centres few listed buildings, the railway station and the two affected by these proposals. It is also evident that the Council is committed to a virtual reconstruction of the town centre on a very large scale with many towers providing flatted accommodation and this scheme follows on from those north of the railway station and those intended for the Heart of Slough. However the Council has identified an Old Town Area which will be protected from development on this scale within its boundary. I note concern in the design and access statement to safeguard the church's setting and the group of Local List buildings in Mackenzie Street and the High Street, although obviously the tower blocks will dominate long views. The heritage asset statement suggests design changes to the elevations overshadowing Mackenzie Street and the Local List buildings along the High Street and I believe these changes have been made.

At present the area east of the church and presbytery is pretty grim and I welcome making this area more vibrant and the intention of introducing A3 type uses along this west side of the development should potentially enhance the currently somewhat degraded setting of the listed buildings. I note that the development has considerably fewer stories at this end of the scheme in deference to the scale and setting of the church and its presbytery. This is also welcome.

Accordingly the scheme should add some stimulating architecture to the town centre, improve the aspect to Wellington Street and ensure, in townscape terms a less inward looking development and an enhanced setting for St Ethelbert's church. In listed building setting terms the scheme is considered acceptable. In terms of impacts on Local List buildings their settings will not be as enhanced as that of the church and presbytery due to their relationship to the taller tower blocks.

5.4 **ENGLISH HERITAGE**

We do not wish to offer any comments on this occasion. The application) should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice.

5.5 **THAMES VALLEY POLICE**

There are no police objections to this application but comments regarding crime

prevention and community safety are below:

Main Access Control - The communal entrances to blocks of flats should form a line of defence acting as a physical barrier to access for outsiders and all five blocks should be fitted with an access control system with an electronic lock release with entry phone and video verification linked to the flats. Communal door entry systems prevent casual intrusion by offenders into the block, where they can break into unoccupied flats during the day without being seen and also act as a line of defence against bogus callers.

The method of mail delivery must be designed in from the start and this can be problematic with large numbers of flats. **Tradesman buttons are no longer acceptable and must not be used.** Royal Mail require them to operate until at least 2pm which in the town centre would be disastrous and on no account should be fitted. Mail boxes can be either positioned through the wall on the main entrance or be situated in the main lobby and a fob be given to the local Royal Mail sorting office for access.

Defensible Space Within Block - With this amount of flats in high rise blocks there should be some control over access between floors. It should not be possible, once in the block, to access all floors. There is no need for this and it actively encourages crime and anti social behaviour.

Access control systems can limit the levels of access that is permissible e.g. a resident on the first floor should not have access up to the nineteenth floor. This will provide residents with some defensible space and allows them to take control of their floor. There are examples of flatted blocks nearby in Slough that have continuous crime and anti social behaviour problems where access is uncontrolled throughout the block. So much so that expensive retrofitted CCTV and manned guarding have had to be implemented to try and reduce the anti social and criminal behaviour.

Crime is always easier to commit where offenders are not recognised as strangers. Consequently, they will take opportunities to offend where they are likely to benefit from this anonymity. People expect to see strangers in what in effect will become semi public space, so there is a natural tendency to ignore them, providing the offender with the anonymity, and the opportunity, to commit offences. In semi public spaces, everyone has a legitimate excuse to be there, and wrongdoers become indistinguishable from legitimate users. Because of this, many people are less inclined or able to recognise problems or, more significantly, to intervene when they occur. It is much easier to ignore anti-social behaviour in public areas over which individuals have little control than in more private areas.

Ideally each floor should have its own access controlled doors but there should at least be some control every few floors. This will encourage residents to take control of their own corridors and act as capable guardians.

Public Viewing Platform – I cannot find any indication in the application as to how access to this public viewing platform is to be controlled. Whatever means of access is finally decided it must not compromise the security and safety of the residents.

Secured by Design Standards – All communal entry doors to blocks and individual flat entry doors should be to BS PAS 24 standard. This is the minimum entry level for

security tested doors. These standards should also apply to the commercial element of this block and all exterior glazing should include a laminate pane.
If the development committed to achieving at least Part Two of the Secured by Design Award most of the above points would be covered.

CCTV - There is no mention in this application of any consideration to install any extra public, or private CCTV cameras. If this application is permitted then there will be a large increase in activity in the town centre. This will include night time economy activity and as such care should be taken that vulnerable areas such as the communal residential entrances to the blocks should be covered by public CCTV.

I would also recommend that CCTV be installed within the residential blocks. Unfortunately due to the high number of residential flats, there is a strong potential for offenders to be living within the development. Other large flatted developments have suffered anti social behavior, drug dealing along corridors / gathering points such as stair wells, and ground floor entrance areas. Also if the post delivery is via a post box system for each flat by the main entrances, these can be targeted for criminal damage and theft. The areas that should be covered are the communal post boxes inside the main entrances; inside ground floor entrances and communal hallways at ground level; ground level stair/lift core areas and cycle storage as a minimum.

6.0 Neighbour Notification

6.1 The following neighbours have been consulted with regards to this application:

Queensmere : 1 -122
High Street : 16 to 339
The Observitory : 1-46b
Brunel Way : Tesco Stores Ltd and Occupiers Thames Trains
Mackenzie Street : 1-9a
Windsor Road : 1-51
Beechwood Gardens : 1-99
Osborne Street : Stephenson Court, Richard Dodd Place
Victoria Street : 2-107
Park Street : 4-77 inc Bishops Copurt, Spruce Court and Bembridge Court
Alpha Street North : 2-51b,
Alpha Street South : 44-75
Hencroft Street North : 1-55,
Hencroft Street South : 34, 59,
Herschel Street : 1-58
Church Street, : 1 – 77 inc Buttler House
Chalvey Park : 2-18
Burlington Road : Look Ahead, Burlington Court, Ibex House
Burlington Avenue : 1-3
William Street : Prudential Buildings
New Square : 2-30
Moorstown Court : 1-23
Chapel Street : 9-10
Buckingham Gardens : Brisbane Court
Bronte Close : 1-40

Grays Place : 31-75 inc The Junction, Automotive House and Roman House.
Mill Street : 64, Noble Court, foundary Court, Headington Place
Stranraer Gardens : 38-47
Stoke Gardens : 10, 1-5 Brostol Way
Stoke Road : 1-25
Wellsley Road : 15-80
Wellesley Road : 2-106
Wellesley Path : 201/215
Wexham Road : 2-44 inc Milford Court and Neo Appartments.
Rye Court : 1-12
Stratfield Road : 1-133 inc Duncansby House
Merton Road : 1-11
The Grove : 6-12 inc Amazon and Pechiney House
Richmond Crescent : 1-72
Wellington Street : 100
Leith close : 1-60
Whittenham Close : 1-15 Slough Interchange Industrial Estate
Albion Close : Sun Chemical and Manrose Manufacturing
Petersfield Avenue : Lion House

6.2 There has been three letters received as a response of the neighbour consultation raising the following issues related to this report:

- High rise buildings in the centre; the heart of Slough, is an over-development and is a backwards step.
  The five high rise buildings will be the tallest in the town and will completely overshadow St.Ethelbert's and the attractive Curve. The plans are not in keeping with its surroundings and are completely out of scale with all surrounding buildings.
- Do the blocks have to be so high? They will only provide an eyesore similar to those in parts of London where it is now excepted that high rise blocks of this type are not the solution and hence why many are being demolished.
- The whole place is an eye sore and should be done correctly to bring it in to the 21st century or not done at all. Slough has a big chance to change its image with a real complete overhaul with landscaped pedestrian areas grass/ trees and new shops
- If the focus is to build 5 large flats which is just an eye sore then we need to think again. Cross Rail comes in 2018 which could make slough a huge investment potential, we really must get this right or we will lose this massive potential to put slough on the map

These matters are discussed in the report below.

- The consultation by Criterion has been woeful. Their application only includes comments from the stand they had in the underused shopping centre over two days and a handful of comments from some leaflets. This limited consultation resulted in 135 comments – this is not representative of a town of over 200,000 residents. Looking in the application, there are no comments included from the online consultation portal. The consultation part of the application is clearly incomplete and inadequate.

While legislation currently states that developers undertaking major applications should engage in pre application consultations with the public and the Localism Act 2011 states that consultation should be genuine, responsive and demonstrable but does not stipulate how such a consultation should be done. Therefore although considered by some to be inadequate a consultation exercise has been undertaken and complies with the Localism Act 2011. This however did not inhibit the consultation undertaken by the council as part of their duty under the Planning Act where a full and comprehensive consultation exercise was undertaken, as documented above.

6.3 A petition has been received with the following citation:

"We call on Slough Council's planning committee to REFUSE permission for the development of five high rise residential flats (9 - 21 storeys in height) on the high street on the following grounds: a) it would have a significant detrimental impact on the visual amenity in the centre of Slough b) the density of accommodation would create huge stresses on community facilities such as schools and health provision; and c) the proposals are an overdevelopment which adversely affect the urban environment around the town centre, making it harder to bring business to the high street."

This petition has been signed by 72 people (5 of which are anonymous) but no addresses are given so it is not possible to verify where the people who sign the petition live.

6.4 A representation has been received from Barclays Bank who want no harm caused to their presence in the shopping centre as a result of these proposals and have agreed a better frontage and visibility so to better integrate Barclays into the proposed scheme. They support the principle of the proposed development to support the socio – economic regeneration of Slough.

PART B: PLANNING APPRAISAL

7.0 Policy Background

7.1 At this stage the report will only focus on the principle of high density flats in this location and the principle of development in terms of its scale bulk massing height design and external appearance, its impact on the surrounding area including short and long range views, listed buildings and the relationship to the Heart of Slough. This report concentrates only on those national and local planning policies application which are related to such issues and are listed below:

- **The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

- **Slough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006– 2026) Development Plan Document December 2008**

Core Policy 1(Spatial Planning Strategy),
Core Policy 3 (Housing Distribution),
Core Policy 4 (Type of Housing),
Core Policy 6 (Retail, leisure & Community Facilities)

Core Policy 8 (Sustainability and the environment)
Core Policy 9 (Natural, built and historic environment)
Core Policy 11 (Community safety)

• **Adopted Local Plan for Slough 2004**

Policy H7 (Town Centre Housing)
Policy S1 (Retail Hierarchy)
Policy S8 (Primary and Secondary Frontages)
Policy EN1 (Standard of Design)
EN3 (Landscaping Requirements)
Policy EN5 (Design and Crime Prevention)

7.2 The main planning considerations are considered in this report is as follows:

- Principle of a Mixed Use development
- Design
- Impact on surrounding area including listed buildings
- Relationship to Heart of Slough

The following issues will be considered in a later report when Members will be asked to determine the application:

- Living conditions for future occupiers
- Transport and parking
- Sustainability / environmental issues
- Financial contributions

8.0 Principle of a Mixed Use Development

8.1 The site is identified on the Local Development Framework Proposal map as within the shopping and Town Centre area. Policy S8 (Primary and Secondary Frontages) of the Local Plan for Slough (2004) identifies the Queensmere and Observatory as Primary Shopping Frontages in Slough Town Centre.

8.2 The proposed development is expected to build on the Heart of Slough Proposals. The redevelopment of the Queensmere and Observatory Shopping Centres was identified in the Heart of Slough Development Brief (April 2007). The principles established in the Heart of Slough brief tie into the Site Planning Requirements for the redevelopment of the Queensmere and Observatory Shopping Centre.

8.3 According to the Site Planning Requirements as outlined in section SSA14 of the Slough Site Allocations DPD the redevelopment and/or reconfiguration proposals should:

- Create an internal pedestrian link between the Queensmere and Observatory Shopping Centres.

- Improve the retail and leisure offer around the Town Square through change of use of key units and improved retail offering.

- Link to the Heart of Slough through the provision of a western entrance to the

shopping centre, and access to residential units above the centre.

- Creative active frontages along the A4 Wellington Street and St Ethelbert's Church frontage
- Remove the service ramp to the Prudential Yard in coordination with the Heart of Slough proposals for the area
- Improve pedestrian links to the bus and train stations via Wellington Street
- Rationalise multi-storey car parking provision and its links to the centres and Wellington House
- Redevelop the western end of the Queensmere Centre adjacent to St Ethelbert's church, including improved retail units, residential accommodation above the centre and removal of the toilet block.
- Transform the Wellington Street frontage to create an urban boulevard with tree planting, improved north-south route connection to the town centre, active retail frontages and access to residential accommodation above the retail units.
- Aim to reduce the negative impacts of construction upon existing businesses and on the quality of life for residents and users of the town centre by appropriate phasing and implementation.

8.4 Paragraph 1.5 of Slough Site Allocations DPD states that "the council will in principle support any development or use of land that is in accordance with the use proposed for it. In practice this means that a planning application that complies with the Site Planning Requirements, policies within the Development Plan and other regional and national guidance as appropriate, will be approved unless the details of the scheme are unacceptable or there are other material considerations that indicate otherwise"

8.5 The principle of the redevelopment of the Queensmere and Observatory Shopping Centre to present a high density mixed use scheme which complements the town centre is supported through the Slough Site Allocations DPD. Also the principle of the proposal was agreed at Planning Committee in September 2009. This is in accordance with Core Policy 1 (Spatial Strategy) which states that high density development should be located in Slough town centre. It is the most sustainable and accessible location for high intensity generating development. This proposal could be a catalyst for further regeneration of Slough Town Centre which would improve the overall image of the area.

8.6 The Retail assessment commissioned by Colliers CRE on behalf of Slough Borough Council (2007) identified that Slough is leaking expenditure to nearby town centres. The principle of improving the quality and scale of the shopping centre was established in the Core Strategy 2006-2006 DPD (2008).This was implemented through the identification of the Queensmere and Observatory Shopping Centre as in the Site Allocations DPD (2010). This is a key site identified for regeneration.

8.7 In terms of the residential element the Council supports the principle of the development of flats in the town centre above the shopping centre. This is in compliance with Core Policy 4 (Type of Housing) which states that high density housing should be located in Slough Town Centre. However there are concerns regarding the mix and design of these units which will be discussed later in the report.

8.8 Whilst the development is being advised as a retail led development which in principle can be supported in planning terms, the scale of retail development would be very modest when compared to the scale of residential development. As such the Council will need to ensure that the residential element of the proposal delivers the range of social, economic and environmental benefits which would normally be expected from a development of the scale and type proposed. These elements will be considered as part of a future report.

8.9 **The Principle of Retail**

There have been revised proposals for the retail element since August 2007. The current application proposes a reconfiguration of the retail facade so that the retail face of the Queensmere centre is redefined. The Design and Access Statement submitted by the applicant's states that this will include additional 1152 sqm of new retail space, new retail frontages to over 60% of the retail units at the northern face of the centre and reconfiguration and refurbishment of over 4,000 sqm of existing retail space.

8.10 Core Policy 6 (Retail, leisure and Community Facilities), states that all new major retail, leisure and community developments will be located in the shopping area of the Slough Town Centre in order to improve the town's image and to assist in enhancing its attractiveness as a Primary Regional Shopping Centre. The proposal is in compliance with Core Policy 6 (Retail, Leisure and Community Facilities) and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which supports sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units.

8.11 This proposal for the comprehensive redevelopment and reconfiguration of the shopping centres will have a positive impact on the vitality and viability of Slough Town Centre. Officers fully support the retail element of this proposal and believe that Slough will benefit from the investment into the centre by improved retail facilities and offer available to the community and improved retail experience of the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres. This will also attract new tenants to the shopping centre.

8.12 Currently Queensmere Shopping Centre suffers from a weakness of an entrance focal point due to the blank frontages on Wellington Street. By opening these frontages up it will address these concerns and it will create a street frontage with more activity on Wellington Street along the frontage and people will know there have arrived at the shopping centre. It will also provide a gateway to the town form the A4 Bath Road and the main route form the train station. This is in conformity with the site planning requirements set out in the Site Allocations DPD (November 2010).
Along with the lack of retail destination Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres also is lacking the attractiveness of the shopping centre and retail offer. By improving the retail façade and additional retail floorspace this will improve the retail offer and attract more footfall to the shopping centre which will have a knock on effect on the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

8.13 There have already been improvements to the shopping centres by creating new linkages within the centre, by way of internal works which allows the through movement between the centres. This is positive as it opens up the Observatory shopping centre and improves the design and layout which has increased permeability.

8.14 **The Principle of Residential**

As set out in paragraph 7.7 above the proposals for a high density flatted development within the town centre area complies with local planning policy, however concerns are expressed as to the scale and mix of the residential scheme.

8.15 Although the Council has supported residential as part of the proposal we have not agreed to 858 units. The specific site allocation SSA14 (Queensmere and Observatory Shopping Centres) refers to the development brief produced in 2007 and that the Council were broadly supportive of the key proposals in the document. This envisaged that there would be 474 residential units. The latest Annual Monitoring Report 2012-13 (AMR) identifies that there is a 5, 10, 15 year housing supply and the Borough is on target to meet our housing allocation before the end of the plan period. Therefore the Council are not reliant on the 858 units being delivered to meet the Borough's housing target

8.16 Core Policy 3 (Housing Distribution) states that a minimum of 6,250 dwellings will be provided in Slough between 2006 and 2026. There will be a minimum of 3,000 dwellings in the Town Centre. As stated above there is no objection in principle to the development of flats in Slough Town Centre which will provide a new resident population. The principle of residential above the shopping centres was established through the Core Strategy 2006-2026 DPD and the Site Allocations DPD.

8.17 Whist there is high housing need in Slough and these units will contribute to the housing supply, there is a need to ensure that high density development is not provided at the expense of good design, housing quality and mix, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework

8.18 The submitted Design and Access statement detailed the housing mix which was 70 percent one bedrooms with the remainder provided as studio and 2 bed unit. While this has changed to scheme still consists of predominantly 1 and 2 bedroom units. This is in conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework and the supporting text in the Core Strategy 2006-2026 DPD. Paragraph 7.53 states that "the Core Strategy has to ensure that there is a wide choice and mix of housing to meet local needs". There is high housing need in Slough for family homes and these units providing predominately 1B flats will not meet this need. The Heart of Slough Development Brief has a vision for town houses and flats with amenity space not smaller flats. The mix of housing and in particular the high concentration of one bed units was raised as a concern by the Berkshire Design Panel, the Council's external design advisers and is equally of concern to officers.

8.19 No objections are raised to the principle of a mixed use retail and housing development on the basis that the site is allocated for such development in the Council's adopted Site Allocations Document. However, given the more modest parameters as set out in the earlier design brief for the site and Council's Site Allocation DPP, there are concerns about the scale quality and mix of the housing development being proposed and which is discussed in more detail below.

8.20 There are some concerns that Officers have with regards to the living conditions of future occupiers especially with regards to the accommodation on the podium between the towers but this will be considered fully when living amenity is considered with other matters at a later stage.

9.0 Design

9.1 The National Planning Policy Framework confirms the following:

"Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people" (para 56).

"Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment" (Para61).

"Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions" (Para 64).

"Local planning authorities should not refuse planning permission for buildings or infrastructure which promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape, if those concerns have been mitigated by good design (unless the concern relates to a designated heritage asset and the impact would cause material harm to the asset or its setting which is not outweighed by the proposal's economic, social and environmental benefits." (Para 65).

9.2 Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy requires that, in terms of design, all development:

a) Be of high quality design that is practical, attractive, safe, accessible and adaptable;
b) Respect its location and surroundings;
c) Provide appropriate public space, amenity space and landscaping as an integral part of the design; and
d) Be in accordance with the Spatial Strategy in terms of its height, scale, massing and architectural style.

9.3 Policy EN1 of the adopted Local Plan states that development proposals are required to reflect a high standard of design and must be compatible with and/ or improve their surroundings in terms of scale, height, massing/ bulk, layout, siting, building form and design, architectural style, materials, access points and servicing, visual impact, relationship to nearby properties, relationship to mature trees; and relationship to watercourses.

9.4 This application was referred to the Berkshire Design Panel in December 2012. The Berkshire Design Panel is an independent panel who assess and comment on major schemes such as the one proposed. The use of such panels is encouraged in the National Planning Policy Framework. The panel on this occasion was made up of Tina Frost, Chris Bearman (architects) and Ben Van Bruggen (Planner / Urban Designer).

The scheme that was considered by the Design Panel was that originally submitted, and although some changes were made after the panel's decision is in line wilt the model supplied and described in sections 3.2-3.4 above with later changes as set out later in this report for information purposes. A full copy of the report is attached at appendix A.

9.5 With regards to the design and layout of the proposals the design panel had the following comments to make:

"The principle of increasing residential accommodation in the town centre is supported. The Council will however need to assure themselves that the type, mix and quality of the proposed homes is right and will support the regeneration of the town. The units are significantly weighted toward small one bedroom and studio living. The desire to attract new residents to Slough on the back of improved infrastructure, including Crossrail, is understandable. However, as Slough becomes better connected to other areas, including those in greater London, the choice, range and quality of potential new homes becomes greater. This development will be competing to attract residents alongside new developments in other towns (including those in greater London which will increasingly be subject to minimum space standards). A rebalancing of the provision of homes and greater thought about the quality of the proposed accommodation will ensure that the development is successful in the short and long term and contribute to a lively and attractive town centre."

While the overall height of the proposed development did not concern the panel, there is little evidence that the scheme is responding to a coherent approach to composing the towers on the site; how they respond to each other in terms of proximity and relationships to the medium and longer range views. For such a significant development which is considerably higher than the surrounding development we feel that this clear strategy is required. The development is very large and complex in its levels and the interrelationship of different elements and uses….This will not be the only tall building in the area and the proposed development will have to work alongside its emerging context. The development should be matched with a clear vision as to how it responds to the town centre. We note the urban design analysis that has been undertaken but it is difficult to see how this has informed the architecture

The desire to turn the A4 at this point into a street rather than a road solely for vehicles, is welcome, and we feel the development goes a long way in achieving a successful active frontage at this point."

A full copy of the report is attached at appendix A.

9.6 As already stated earlier in this report the Council are supportive of the concept of residential development in the town centre, subject to it being of appropriate type mix and quality. The current application seeks to have the following housing mix :

- 581 X 1 bedroom flats
- 230 X 2 bedroom flats
- 47 X studio

Whilst such provision will significantly increase the numbers of people living in the town centre and have some positive economic spin off for the town centre, the concentration

of such a large number of smaller dwellings, particularly if managed on the basis of short lets, could give rise to varying social problems and anti social behaviour. A rebalancing of the housing mix may bring positive benefits, in terms of meeting housing need, improvements to the social mix and integration and for design.

While some changes have been made to the original scheme following the design review the applicants still consider that the type, mix and quality of housing reflects the anticipated local demand for the Town Centre. However no evidence has been produced to support this position.

9.7 While the panel stated that there was no overall concern with regards to the overall height of the development concern was raised by the with regards to their being little evidence that the scheme responds to a coherent approach to having towers on the site, how they respond to each other and impact upon medium or long views. The applicants have failed to show that such an approach has been properly identified.

This a view which is further expressed by the Council's external design consultants and in response to which the towers and their respective heights have been reordered and the free standing tower at the eastern end has been deleted from the most recent proposals that were issued for information. However, notwithstanding the changes which are to be welcomed, in terms of height the proposed towers pay little more than lip service to the maximum heights of the office scheme as approved as part of the Heart of Slough on the former Brunel Bus Station site (Dev Sec buildings) formed by the higher edge of the tick design.

Notwithstanding the above and given the advice offered by the Berkshire Design Panel and the Council's own external design advisers, officers would advise that there is not a strong case to be argued on grounds of height alone.

As would be anticipated from a development of the scale proposed the architects have sought to create its own design. The scheme has undergone a number of design amendments. It relies heavily on the use of colour as a means of identifying individual towers. Balconies and fenestration help to create some horizontal emphasis to the individual towers and help to create a better balance between the vertical and horizontal planes. The lift towers now stretch to ground level on Wellington Street providing some interaction between the residential towers and the street. The introduction of shop display fronts to Wellington Street, some of which will be double height, will create an active frontage to Wellington Street, which will bring positive benefits. Changes to the design of the retail frontages has been simplified and now integrates better into the over design concept.

The Council's external design advisers have advised a complete rethink on the design strategy for Queenmere. In response to the concerns raised the applicants have made a number of changes to address some of the more detailed concerns and have gone some way to addressing the issues. What is clear is that the applicant is not prepared at this stage to instigate a fundamental rethink on the design strategy. Some of the more fundamental changes include the removal from the planning application of the freestanding tower at the eastern end of the site and a subsequent reduction in the total number of dwelling units, a reordering of the tower sequence, a simplification of the retail frontage to Wellington Street, and a better interaction between the residential towers and

the street. A revised pallet of external materials has been submitted with a view to improving the design quality.

The key issue for Officers and Members is whether or not the latest set of amendments are sufficiently transforming in design terms to obtain the support of Officers and Members.

It is the view of officers that a development of the height scale bulk and massing can only be accepted if the resulting development is of a quality and design which reaches the highest possible standards and whilst the amendments submitted to date do move in the right direction, the scheme as it currently stands falls someway short of achieving the very highest standards of design.

9.8 The design panel looked further at the layout of the development and how it would work with the surrounding transport links and High Street, which is all important for a retail led redevelopment, where the following points were made:

"The links from the station and car parks to the High Street will be critical to the success of any town centre. On the current plans the main route by which this can be achieved is via a newly created passage between St Ethelbert's and the Queensmere. This will require the removal of the service ramp that is currently at this location, and the general reordering of the servicing arrangements. It is not yet clear how this critical linkage at the southern end of this route as it joins Mackenzie Street will be achieved. The development team and the Borough Council will need to work together to ensure this is accomplished.

The shopping centre development will perform best if it can stitch into the existing fabric of the town. This might not be easily achieved, but the proposal contains the right elements to allow this to happen successfully. The improvement of the access into the shopping centre from the north west is welcomed, this area of the existing centre is particularly poor. The location of this entrance should respond to the clear desire lines that exist in the area as people approach the town centre from car parks north of Wellington Street. This is not fully incorporated in the planning of the area and could be better refined to reflect the needs of customers.

The opportunity to access the shopping mall from Wellington Street without having to pass through an individual retail unit should be further explored. The easier the connection into the Queensmere the more appealing it will be for potential customers. If designed in an appropriate way this could also offer the centre more significant and attractive presence onto the A4. The natural point for this connection to be made would seem to be where the centre addresses Brunel Way and the station."

9.10 The current proposals show the link to be between St Ethelbert's Church, the shopping centre and curve community building will also be situated along this passage way. This passage way will be improved by the removal of the existing service ramp as part of the Curve enabling works. Additional plans have been provided to show how this important access way would be laid out and shows the area to be relatively well planted with a selection of cycle parking and seating areas. The area will be further improved with the units facing onto the passage way being used as restaurants, cafes and takeaways providing an active frontage and help to make the access way more welcoming. It is

understood that the link between the buildings to lead to and from the passageway by St Ethelbert's Church will not be amended under this proposal and the existing access way will be used. Any additional changes relates to buildings outside the control of the Applicant's so no further changes could be undertaken under this application. The point with regards to the links from the station and car parks to the High Street being critical to the success of the town centre is accepted by the Council.

9.11 The council have employed architectural consultants who undertook a review of the design of the proposed building and discussed issues with the applicant's to try to make some improvements, some of which are incorporated in the above changes although their report summarised the following:

"At our initial meeting the applicant showed good intent to amend the design to address the Planning Department and Design Panel's concerns, but this was not reflected in their subsequent submission of drawings. Our conclusion is that the concerns raised by the SE regional Design Panel, the Planning Department, and by us have not been adequately addressed by the applicant during this process.

While the proposed alterations constitute an improvement, and a move in the right direction, they do not constitute the fundamental review, or fresh start that the Design review panel have recommended.

We agree with the S.E. Regional Design panel's review of this application. They expressed "concerns about the quality of the proposed development and do not support the application in its proposed form"

We also note that this review would have been more productive if it was carried out at an earlier stage of the project, when major changes could be made with a minimum of wasted time and effort."

A full copy of the report is attached as appendix B to this report.

9.12 As previously stated officers support that fact that the shopping centre will have a frontage to Wellington Street and therefore allow the shopping centre to link the High Street to the north and not act as a barrier that is the current situation. However the opportunity should be taken to ensure that identifiable and strong links are created to allow the shopping centre to tie into the area to the north rather than forcing people to go through the retail units to get into the shopping centre and High Street beyond and an additional entrance should be located in this area directly in line with the pedestrian desire lines from the north.

9.13 This opportunity should be taken to ensure that the links are provided to allow a retail regeneration of the area but the current proposals do not allow this to happen. Pedestrian penetration is an important design concept in any scheme of development and every effort should be taken to ensure strong linkages between the shopping centres, town centre and rail and bus stations

10.0 Impact on the Surrounding Area

10.1 The National Planning Policy Framework outlines the following points.:

"Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal" (para 129)

"When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional" (Para 132).

"Within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. These 12 principles are that planning should … always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings (Para 17).

10.2 Core Policy 8 states "The design of all development within the existing residential areas should respect the amenities of adjoining occupiers and reflect the street scene and the local distinctiveness of the area … Development shall not give rise to unacceptable levels of pollution including air pollution, dust, odour, artificial lighting or noise".

Core Policy 9 states that "Development will not be permitted unless it:
• Enhances and protects the historic environment;
• Respects the character and distinctiveness of existing buildings, townscapes and landscapes and their local designations;"

10.3 Policy EN1 of the Local Plan requires that "Development proposals are required to reflect a high standard of design and must be compatible with and/or improve their surroundings in terms of a) scale, b) height, c)massing/Bulk, d)layout, e)siting, f)building form and design, g)architectural style, h)materials, i)access points and servicing, j) visual impact, k)relationship to nearby properties, l)relationship to mature trees and m)relationship to water courses. These factors will be assessed in the context of each site and their immediate surroundings. Poor designs which are not in keeping with their surroundings and schemes which result in over-development of a site will be refused."

10.4 Policy EMP2 of the Local Plan requires that: "there is no significant loss of amenities for the neighbouring land uses as a result of noise, the level of activity, overlooking, or overbearing appearance of the new building".

10.5 Given the Heart of Slough context, the introduction of tall buildings in this location as a principle is not opposed subject to such buildings being of a high quality design.

However, there would be significant visual impacts when assessing the development from key viewing points. These impacts are assessed in the applicant's Visual Impact Assessment and are summarised below:

Negligible Impacts:

- East end of the High Street
- St Bernards School Conservation Area
- St Marys Church
- Entrance to Herschel Park

Adverse Impacts:

- Park Street At Herschel Street (2 views)
- Church Street At Herschel Street (2 views)
- A332
- Windsor Castle – North Terrace
- Windsor Castle – Copper Horse

10.6 These adverse impacts are to the south of the site impacts upon the amenity of the High Street and the adjacent residential areas due to the expanse of southern elevations of the second, third and forth towers as well as the south elevation of the west wing. The setting of Windsor Castle, an internationally significant building and settings, is also affected as the proposed towers would rise above the existing horizon and would result in a new skyline for the town. The colour and articulation of the central three towers are likely to have an unusual blank presence on the horizon. Attempts have been made to soften the impact caused by massive blank elevation by inserting colour onto the elevation to match the colour insert in the rest of the tower. However it is considered that the simple use of colour does very little to actually break up this vast blank elevation but simply colour it so that it stand outs more in the sky line. A more intelligent solution should be sort to overcome this issue to truly break up the elevations should be sort to ensure that there is no impact upon the surrounding area and on longer views to the south. The development will change the skyline of the town and great care needs to be taken to ensure that it will not have an adverse impact upon the surrounding area and these current proposals fall short on this point.

10.7 The proposal site is surrounded by several heritage assets including:

- Church of Our Lady and St Ethelbert and St Ethelbert's Presbytery (Grade II Listed Building)
- 1-7 Mackensie Street (Locally Listed Building)
- Properties in High Street (Locally Listed Building)
- Properties in Windsor Road (Locally Listed Building)
- Slough Old Town

10.8 At present the area east of the church and presbytery is pretty unwelcoming and does not benefit the setting of a listed building and the renovation around this area will make it more vibrant and the introduction of A3 type uses along this west side of the development should potentially enhance the currently somewhat tarnished setting of the listed buildings.

10.9 Accordingly the scheme should improve the aspect to Wellington Street and an enhanced setting for St Ethelbert's church. In listed building setting terms the scheme is

considered acceptable. However in terms of impacts on locally listed buildings their settings will not be as enhanced as that of the church and presbytery due to their relationship to the taller tower blocks and the uninteresting elevations that will face onto these properties as stated above.

10.10 The proposals would have an impact upon the overshadowing experienced on Wellington Street but would not be a big difference that that currently experienced and should not be a significant impact. Likewise the proposals would have a negligible impact upon Wellsey Road in terms of loss of day light and sunlight.

10.11 The applicants also own Wellington House which is the office building on the same site as the Queensmere Shopping Centre and raises 5 floors above the shopping centre, which is in the process of being converted into residential accommodation (2 no. studio flats, 76 no. x one bedroom flats 22 no. x two bedroom flats) as well as a new floor on top of the existing building with a roof top garden. This results in residential development having habitable room windows that would be approximately 15m from the new development. This would result in an unacceptable degree of overlooking and adversely affecting the outlook for the new proposed residential development and therefore impact upon these flats which have the potential to be created and have an adversely detrimental impact upon the amenity of these properties.

10.12 The proposed development is also close to the former O2 building to the east but as this is a commercial building is not afforded the protection residential buildings are given in terms of loss of light and therefore no objections are raised with regards to the impact on this building

10.13 It is therefore considered that the proposals fail to provide a scheme which will not have any adverse impact upon the surrounding area and the surrounding buildings as this scheme does.

11.0 Relationship with Heart of Slough Proposals

11.1 As previously mentioned, this site is located adjacent to the 'Heart of Slough' proposal. The Heart of Slough, includes Thames Valley University; the existing Library site, the Day Centre, St Ethelberts church site as well as The Brunel Bus Station and Compare House. In total the Heart of Slough will provide 1,598 new dwellings; 48,708sqm of (Class B1 use) office space; an 120 bed hotel; a new bus station (; 6,085sqm of Community floor space (Class D1 use) including provision of a new library, Class A1 retail use and Class A3 café/restaurant, Class A4 use (pubs/bars), Class D2 use (Leisure) and associated public realm and parking.

11.2 The Development Brief for the Heart of Slough, which was prepared in November 2007, includes a number of points that are relevant to the proposed application. One of the strategic objectives of the Brief is to ensure that the A4 frontage acts as an "address street" for the town. This means that the character and environment of Wellington Street needs to be improved to provide an appropriate setting for the high quality office, educational and cultural buildings that will front this main street. Building lines should follow the boundary of the street block to reinforce and define the character of Wellington Street.

11.3 The changes to the frontages facing Wellington Street as discussed above are therefore considered to be of benefit to the Heart of Slough as it provides an active frontage and improves the appearance of the frontage at ground floor level, as outlined above. This element of the scheme can be supported in the terms that it helps improve the stetting for the Heart of Slough. Further works improving the appearance and the setting of Wellington Street will also go further to help improve the setting for the Heart of Slough.

11.4 The Heart of Slough Development Brief also states that "At the junction with Brunel Way, the height of the corner building on the bus station can increase to around 10-12 storey's subject to respecting the overall height cap of 54m. This will be a landmark building marking views of the Heart of Slough along the western approach." The building at this point is in 2 separate sections and building 1 is ground plus six stories high and building 2 is ground plus thirteen stories high and has been designed to have a distinctive sloping roof rising to a point on the Brunel Way frontage. The highest point is 65m tall which exceeds the cap proposed in the Heart of Slough Brief but this was considered acceptable because of the specific design and it was considered that it would not set a precedent elsewhere. The proposed tower elements on top of the Queensmere stand a maximum of 70.6m and will therefore be taller than the consented office buildings, the tallest point of which is a small point on top of a pyramid design, and the proposed towers will dominate over the Heart of Slough development and thus have an adverse impact upon this major development.

11.5 **Summary and Conclusions**

The principle of a mixed use development comprising retail and residential is acceptable, subject to the development achieving the very highest design standards. Notwithstanding the amendments made to the scheme, it is not considered that scheme meets such standards and that a complete rethink of the design strategy needs to be made. Whilst the introduction of tall buildings in this location is considered to be acceptable there are no substantive mitigation measures in place to minimise local impact on for instance the High Street, nor long range views form Windsor Castle.

Whilst the retail improvements are to be welcomed the scale of the retail development/improvements fall short of what can reasonably be expected as a truly retail led development.

The scheme as it currently stands misses an opportunity to improve linkages between the town centre, shopping centre bus and rail stations. Good pedestrian penetration is key to a successful design.

PART C: RECOMMENDATION

12.0 Recommendation

12.1 It is recommended that the views of this Committee in relation to the design and appearance of the development be recorded, that such views be relayed back to the applicant and be incorporated in a final report which will be presented to this Committee at the earliest opportunity.

APPENDIX A

South East Regional **Design Panel**

Tel: +44(0)1634 401166 **Fax:** +44(0)1634 403302

the **architecture** centre
Historic Dockyard
Chatham
Kent
ME4 4TZ

Email: info@kentarchitecture.co.uk
www.architecturecentre.org

Michael Hughes
Head of Development
Criterion Capital
13 Coventry Street
London W1D 7DH

29 January 2013

Dear Mr Hughes

QUEENSMERE SHOPPING CENTRE, SLOUGH (REF: 06684/015)

Thank you for inviting the Berkshire Design Panel to review the proposed development at the Queensmere Centre, Slough. The Panel had the opportunity to visit the site ahead of our meeting at the Observatory, Slough. We are grateful to you and Paul Stimpson of Slough Borough Council for your introduction to the site and its context, and to Sundeep Bhavra of GA&A Design for his presentation.

The Panel are concerned about the quality of the proposed development and do not support the application in its proposed form. We have particular concerns about the quality of the accommodation for future residents. This development will have a major impact on Slough, and given its size and significance could set the tone for the future image of the town. The Panel do not have an objection to the overall height of the development, but rather how this quantity and mix of development is composed on the site, which currently appears to lack a clear rationale. A clear approach to the distribution of development across the site, and greater attention to the quality of life for future residents in the design of the apartments, open spaces and communal areas will be needed to address these concerns.

BACKGROUND

The Queensmere Shopping centre is one of two retail malls at the heart of Slough town centre. The centres are bounded to the south by High Street and to the north by the A4/Wellington Street beyond which are the train and bus stations. Over recent years a great deal of investment has been made into the street network around Slough, most notably the removal of the A4-A332 roundabout. This and the improvement works to High Street evidence the Borough Councils intention to regenerate the town centre, through an increasingly diverse mix of uses and higher quality of environment.

The location of the shopping malls and their introverted nature effectively cuts off the town centre from the north. The current proposal looks to reanimate Wellington Street with new retail frontage and reconfigure some of the shop formats. The majority of new development however will happen above the shopping centre where 900 predominately one and two bedroom units are proposed. As currently planned these flats are arranged into series of four towers up to 20 storeys in height above the centre and a single tower of 21 storeys on top of the car parking ramp. The remainder of the residential units will be arranged in lower blocks along the street edge between the towers.

DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The principle of increasing residential accommodation in the town centre is supported. The Council will however need to assure themselves that the type, mix and quality of the proposed homes is right and will support the regeneration of the town. The units are significantly weighted toward small one bedroom and studio living. The desire to attract new residents to Slough on the back of improved infrastructure, including Crossrail, is understandable. However, as Slough becomes better connected to other areas, including those in greater London, the choice, range and quality of potential new homes becomes greater. This development will be competing to attract residents alongside new developments in other towns (including those in Greater London which will increasingly be subject to minimum space standards). A rebalancing of the provision of homes and greater thought about the quality of the proposed accommodation will ensure that the development is successful in the short and long term and can contribute to a lively and attractive town centre.

While the overall height of the proposed development did not concern the Panel, there is little evidence that the scheme is responding to a coherent approach to composing the towers on the site; how they respond to each other in terms of proximity and relationships and to medium and longer range views. For such a significant development which it considerably higher than the surrounding development we feel that this clear strategy is required. The development is very large and complex in its levels and the interrelationship of different elements and uses. We would have found a physical model extremely helpful and, in our view, it would highlight the issues of scale and massing, as opposed to height. This will not be the only tall building in the area and the proposed development will have to work alongside its emerging context. The development should be matched with a clear vision as to how it responds to the town centre. We note the urban design analysis that has been undertaken but it is difficult to see how this has informed the architecture.

The desire to turn the A4 at this point into a street, rather than a road solely for vehicles, is welcome, and we feel the development goes a long way in achieving a successful active frontage at this point.

LAYOUT AND CONNECTIONS

The links from the station and car parks to the High Street will be critical to the success of any town centre. On the current plans the main route by which this can be achieved is via a newly created passage between St Ethelbert's and the Queensmere. This will

require the removal of the service ramp that is currently at this location, and general reordering of serving arrangements. It is not yet clear how the critical linkage at the southern end of this route as it joins Mackenzie Street will be achieved. The development team and Borough Council will need to work together to ensure this is accomplished.

The shopping centre development will perform best if it can stitch into the existing fabric of the town. This might not be easily achieved, but the proposal contains the right elements to allow this to happen successfully. The improvement to the access into the shopping centre from the north west is welcomed, this area of the existing centre is particularly poor. The location of this entrance should respond to the clear desire lines that exist in the area as people approach the town centre from car parks north of Wellington Street. This is not yet fully incorporated in the planning of the area and could be better refined to reflect the needs of customers.

The opportunity to access the shopping mall from Wellington Street without having to pass through an individual retail unit should be further explored. The easier the connection into the Queensmere the more appealing it will be for potential customers. If designed in an appropriate way this could also offer the centre more significant and attractive presence onto the A4. The natural point for this connection to be made would seem to be where the centre addresses Brunel Way and the station.

QUALITY OF LIFE FOR FUTURE RESIDENTS

A particular area of concern of the Panel's relates to the quality of the proposed residential accommodation, which is currently very poor. There is little evidence that the quality of residential accommodation has been considered in the design. There are clearly some considerable constraints relating to the existing structure below. Each of these issues will require great design skill to make it work. In our view, a fresh start on these elements is required.

The quality and size of the residential units themselves are poorly considered. There are, for example, a large number of single aspect north facing units which directly over look the heavily trafficked A4 (in some instances these flats are over 10m deep with only a single window). These will not be hospitable living spaces; this is further exacerbated in certain locations where they are located directly above three storeys of naturally ventilated car parking. We feel the planning of residential layout needs to be reconceived. There are splendid and far reaching views south across Slough towards Windsor, this could be a unique asset but unfortunately is ignored by the proposed layout. More could also be made of the communal areas which are currently undervalued.

The entrance to blocks and communal areas, especially given the large number of units that are served by each entrance, needs careful thought. The entrance to the eastern block above the car parking ramp is particularly constricted and is unlikely be a welcoming space. Once within the residential areas the majority of homes are accessed via very long corridors with private flats on both sides. These long corridors with little or no natural lighting will not be pleasant environments and gives the development the feel

of a hotel or municipal accommodation such as halls of residence. This form of development effects perceptions of safety and security, as well as issues of ownership and identification with your own home and front door; all of which will affect the attractiveness of the new homes for potential residents and the quality of the overall development. We feel the housing layout would benefit from being reviewed against the principles of Secure by Design.

Considering each of these elements from the perspective of future residents would also give an insight into how successfully they will operate, and therefore how attractive they will be to occupiers. Day to day issues such as visitor parking and access, furniture and bulky goods deliveries and refuse storage and removal should also be tested. The decision to provide no car parking will need to be fully examined; the Panel are not in a position to comment on the viability of this aspect in detail.

The prominence of the location and scale of the building should be matched with a corresponding increase in architectural quality. We are yet to be convinced that the proposed design will fulfil this role as significant new development in the town. The composition and height of the towers, the development relationship to its context including the listed church, the relationship between the different uses, and more careful application of colour and materials could each have considerable scope to positively improve the architectural design. The incorporation of balconies and private open space to all apartments could also start to help in this regard.

As currently planned the areas of communal open space add little value to the development. If positively planned these areas could be attractive and functional spaces. They currently suffer from lack of enclosure and from exposure to the service yards to the south. We feel there is potential for a new form of development which would allow for the screening and enclosure of the deck. Testing of the microclimate of these areas will also be required to ensure they will be hospitable.

Future adaptability of the residential and retail development needs to be considered as the needs of users and occupiers change. Given the long delivery timescale the demands of future residents are likely to shift over the life time of the project. The scope for the development to adapt in accordance with these changes should be considered at this stage.

Do contact us if there is anything in this report that is unclear and please keep us in touch with further progress with the project.

Yours sincerely

ROBERT OFFORD
Panel Manger

cc Roger Kirkham, Slough Borough Council
Ian Hann, Slough Borough Council
Paul Stimpson, Slough Borough Council
Paul Reynolds, Atkins (on behalf of Swale Borough Council)
John Blackwell, Cunnane Town Planning
Sundeep Bhavra, GA & A Design

Panel members present: Tina Frost (Meeting Chair), Chris Bearman, Ben van Bruggen

This review was commissioned by Slough Shopping Centre LLP with the knowledge and agreement of the Slough Borough Council.