

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet **DATE:** 10 February 2014

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**WARD(S):** Chalvey, Central and Upton Wards

**PORTFOLIO:** Cllr Anderson – Leader of the Council  
Cllr Swindlehurst – Neighbourhoods and Renewal

### **PART I** **KEY DECISION**

#### **HEART OF SLOUGH MASTERPLAN – REVIEW OF PROGRESS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

This report is in respect of the Heart of Slough Regeneration Project (HoS project) and provides an update on progress. The report also seeks Cabinet agreement to opening discussions with interested parties to enable completion of the regeneration project.

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

2.1 Cabinet is requested to resolve:

- (a) That the progress made on the HoS project be noted.
- (b) That the opportunities be explored with interested parties regarding the purchase of land necessary to enable completion of the HoS regeneration project; reporting back to Cabinet with a financial options appraisal.
- (c) That the Strategic Director Regeneration, Housing and Resources, following consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Renewal, explore the use of compulsory purchase powers for the acquisition of all relevant property interests which are necessary to acquire to enable completion of the HoS regeneration project.

##### **3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Corporate Plan**

###### **3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities –**

The regeneration of the Heart of Slough delivers the following outcomes in support of the strategic priorities:

- Economy and Skills – the development of the Heart of Slough provides jobs and opportunities for training and apprenticeships in the construction process; creates new workplaces that will provide job opportunities for Slough residents and brings

more people, residents and workers, into the town centre which will have a benefit for town centre businesses enhancing the local economy

- Regeneration and Environment – the sites in the Heart of Slough are currently vacant and hoarded. The redevelopment of these sites will bring an immediate, and very visible, improvement to the environment of the town centre.
- Housing – the completion of the Heart of Slough regeneration project has the potential to bring in excess of 1500 new homes to the town centre
- The completion of the Heart of Slough regeneration project is a critical component of the long term plan to improve the image of Slough.

#### 4 **Other Implications**

##### Financial

There would be significant financial implications, both capital and revenue, if negotiations to purchase land or a compulsory purchase order were successful. No budget provision has been made for these costs therefore if a decision is made to proceed with this then the full financial implications, and consequent wider financial impact on the Council's budget would be brought back to Cabinet for decision.

##### Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<b>Legal</b>	None arising from the recommendations of this report	
<b>Property</b> – the sites that form the HoS project remain undeveloped and vacant and have a long term impact on the economy and image of the town.	This report proposes actions that potentially mitigate this risk	Completion of the HoS project and delivery of the long-held ambitions for the image and economic vitality of Slough
<b>Human Rights</b>	Addressed below	
<b>Health and Safety</b>	n/a	
<b>Employment Issues</b>	n/a	
<b>Equalities Issues</b>	Addressed below	
<b>Community Support</b>	n/a	
<b>Communications</b>	n/a	
<b>Community Safety</b>	n/a	
<b>Financial</b>	Addressed in the report	
<b>Timetable for delivery</b>	n/a	
<b>Project Capacity</b>	n/a	
<b>Other</b>		

## Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

If, in due course, it is decided to take compulsory purchase action, the Council has to weigh the Human Rights interests of public need against private property rights and consider that sufficient justification exists for making a CPO.

Should the Council wish to exercise CPO powers, the report seeking such authority will address both the human rights and legal implications of the action the Council is wishing to take.

## Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no equality issues arising from the recommendations of this report. Should the Council wish to exercise CPO powers, the report seeking such authority will include an EIA for the project.

## 5 Supporting Information

The Heart of Slough regeneration project (HoS project) is a complex and long term project covering four sites around the main transport hubs of the town forming 4 quadrants (Thames Valley University Site, Brunel Bus Station, land adjoining St Ethelbert's Church and the existing central library (Appendix A - Plan attached). The project was a partnership of landowners, both public, private and quasi public (TVU). The four key sites are in the ownership of Development Securities (NE quadrant), University of West London (UWL and formerly Thames Valley University) (NW quadrant), HCA (the current library site SW quadrant) and Slough Borough Council (SE quadrant/the Curve site, public highway, bus station and part of NW quadrant).

The objectives of the HoS project are:

- The physical regeneration of the town centre and key sites within it
- Challenge and change the perception of the image of Slough
- A demonstrated commitment to high quality design that contributes to changing the image of the town
- Development that meets high levels of sustainability and energy efficiency
- Creation of new open spaces
- Improvement in public transport and the creation of a transport hub
- Attract people back into the central area of the town with a civic building/library providing a community focus

To deliver these objectives the HoS project aimed to create:

- A new road layout replacing an existing roundabout with a crossroads, removing pedestrian underpasses and creating pedestrian access at street level.
- Up to 1,600 homes
- 49,000 m2 of new offices
- A new bus station.
- A new library/civic building. New restaurants, cafes and shops
- New open spaces and squares

From a spatial policy perspective the strategy set out in the Core Strategy is one of 'concentrating development in the town centre'. This recognises that parts of the

centre are in need of environmental enhancement and that it has the capacity to absorb major change. The prominence of the town centre also means that any improvements to its image, environment or facilities are likely to have maximum benefit for the town as a whole.

The HoS is the key site for comprehensive regeneration in the town centre which because of its size and prominent location will have most impact in terms of making changes to the urban townscape, public realm and image of the town. In accordance with the Core Strategy principle of “concentrating development” it proposes that a minimum of 3,000 houses should be built in the town centre which is almost half of the allocation for the whole town.

Because of its importance, the Heart of Slough has been included in the Council’s Site Allocations Plan. This requires that each of the sites (quadrants) must be redeveloped in a complementary, comprehensive way which, in addition to reconfiguring the road system to create a new public realm would establish new residential, commercial and community quarters. A complementary range of uses has therefore been permitted within the Heart of Slough which are intended to improve the image, attractiveness and vitality of the area. These include residential, offices, education, community facilities (The Curve), retail, cafes/restaurants and pubs/bars.

Planning permission is in place for all development proposed for the HoS. The infrastructure works listed above, funded by central government and costing a gross figure of £17.52m, have been fully implemented. The new bus station, of an innovative design, is also complete and operational. The construction of the new civic building/library, now known as the Curve, commenced in January 2014. The project is fully funded by the Council – an investment of £22m. This will ensure that the south east quadrant is developed and completed by summer 2015.

The remaining ambitions for the HoS – new homes, offices, potential hotel and additional commercial offer have yet to be delivered. Development of those quadrants that would provide sites for the housing and office development, with ancillary commercial uses, has been seriously impacted by the recession of 2008 and the succeeding years of property market slump and availability of finance.

Since Cabinet last reviewed progress with the entire HoS project in 2009 a number of things have changed or are changing: the financial climate is beginning to improve with a perceptible increase in confidence in the commercial property market; the need for housing continues unabated and government is stimulating the property market through its incentive schemes; Crossrail will be operational from Slough from 2019. Each of these factors will make the development of the remaining quadrants more attractive and viable.

Progress on the remaining undeveloped quadrants is as follows:

- The NE quadrant, a site for new offices and ancillary commercial uses is currently subject to an active marketing campaign by the owners, Development Securities. Planning permission has recently been granted for an on-site marketing suite which indicates an increasing market interest and commitment to the long term development of the site
- SW quadrant – remains occupied by the current library and will be vacated mid-2015. Discussions are underway between SBC, HCA (the owners) and

Slough Regeneration Partnership to develop plans and an implementation route to achieve an hotel and other commercial uses on the site.

- NW quadrant – this site is mostly in the ownership of University West of London with around 16% in the ownership of SBC. The site has remained dormant since 2009 when Thames Valley University (the predecessor of UWL) vacated the site. The NW quadrant site remains a critical part of Slough’s housing provision. Not only does it contain half the residential units proposed in the town centre, it also represents 27% of the dwellings sites identified in the housing supply for the whole Borough up to 2026. Whilst a limited amount of residential development could be provided on the SW quadrant there is no scope on the NE quadrant. As a result it is important that the proposed housing on the TVU site comes forward as an integral part of the Heart of Slough comprehensive regeneration scheme.

To date all the development that has taken place or is under construction has been driven by the actions of the Council. It is evident that having a strong local ‘voice’ in driving the vision for the HoS has been critical to bringing these sites forward. To continue with the implementation of the HoS vision some further action from the Council is needed. Therefore it is proposed to explore the opportunities with interested parties regarding the purchase of land necessary to enable completion of the HoS regeneration project; reporting back to Cabinet with a financial options appraisal in due course. Following these discussions it may be necessary to consider the use of the Council’s powers to compulsorily purchase land to acquire that part of the HoS, specifically including the NW Quadrant, not currently in SBC ownership to ensure delivery of the final components of the HoS project..

In order to enable a comprehensive regeneration scheme for the whole regeneration project it may be necessary for the Council to advance one or more Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) to ensure full site assembly and to minimise the risk of the project being ransomed. Whilst all reasonable endeavours will be made by the Council to acquire interests through negotiation, however a resolution to explore the use of CPO powers at this point will signal the Council’s intention to actively support the programme of regeneration in this area. Although the formal CPO will not be made until a later date (if required), the resolution will provide impetus to negotiations for owners and will also establish their entitlements under the formal CPO process, including possible eligibility for disturbance compensation and other additional payment.

## 6 **Comments of Other Committees**

This matter has not been considered by any other Committees

## 7 **Conclusion**

In order to continue the implementation of the Council’s vision for the Heart of Slough Cabinet is requested to agree to formal discussions taking place with landowners regarding the purchase of their interests in the to the use of the Council’s compulsory purchase powers.

## 8 **Appendices Attached**

‘A’ - Plan of Heart of Slough project area