

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

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WARD(S): All

PART I

CAR PARKING POLICY IN SLOUGH TOWN CENTRE

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to explain how the Council's current policy for car parking in Slough town centre operates and highlight a number of related issues.

Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

1.1 The Committee is requested to resolve:

- That the current policy for car parking in Slough Town Centre be noted.

2 Community Strategy Priorities

2.1 The Council's parking policies as set out in the Core Strategy and Local Transport Plan help to implement the spatial element of the Community Strategy and the delivery of the following priorities:

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

3 Other Implications

(a) Risk Management

The failure to ensure that the Councils applies the most appropriate parking policies could affect the vitality and viability of the town centre.

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

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

(c) Equalities Impact Assessment

It is considered there will be no equality impacts.

(d) Workforce

There are no workforce implications.

4 Supporting Information

- 4.1 At the Planning Committee meeting on the 20th February, Members requested that a report be provided on the Council's current parking policy for residential development in the town centre.
- 4.2 This was prompted by concerns about the number of proposals that are coming forward for the development of flats or change of use of offices to flats in the town centre.

Background

- 4.3 The type and amount of development that is taking place and is planned for the town centre is the result of the implementation of the Spatial Strategy in the Core Strategy of "*concentrating development*". This identifies the Town Centre as the major growth point for high density housing and all intensive trip generating development such as major retail, leisure and office development.
- 4.4 Core Policy 3 (Housing Distribution) states that a minimum of 3,000 houses out of a total allocation of 6,300 will be built in the plan period up to 2026. It also makes it clear that any additional growth will also predominantly take place in the Town Centre. Current monitoring shows that around 4,000 dwellings could be built in the Town Centre over the plan period if all of the existing commitments and proposed conversion of offices to residential were to take place.

Parking Policy

- 4.5 In order to accommodate the proposed growth in all forms of development in the centre, without causing additional congestion, it is necessary to control the number of car parking spaces. Core Policy 7 (Transport) states that: "Maximum restraint will be applied to parking for residential schemes in the town centre".
- 4.6 This also recognises that the town centre, with its railway station, bus station and potential for linked trips is the most accessible location in the Borough.
- 4.7 The parking standards in Appendix 2 of the Local Plan therefore have a "nil" requirement for 1, 2 or 3 bed flats or houses in the town centre. This does not prevent new residential developments from having parking spaces but means that they do not have to provide them if they do not want to. It is very expensive to provide things like basement car parks and so it is usually a commercial decision as to how much parking is provided in a development which reflects how much occupiers are prepared to pay to have a space.
- 4.8 People moving into a town centre flat do so knowing whether or not they have access to an allocated parking space. It is recognised that the lack of parking does not necessarily deter them from having a car but it will be difficult for them to find a space unless they pay to use one of the public car parks.
- 4.9 The whole of the Town Centre is covered by Controlled Parking Zones or Resident Parking Schemes which means that non residents cannot park on the streets. In order to prevent new residential developments adding to the pressure on these streets we always have a Section 106 agreement which makes it clear that new

occupants will be ineligible to receive a parking permit in existing or future residents parking zones.

- 4.10 As a result, in theory at least, providing flats with limited amounts of parking in the town centre should not have a detrimental impact upon existing residents.

Parking Strategy

- 4.11 The Council is currently preparing a Parking Strategy as a supplementary document to the Local Transport Plan. This will eventually replace the 2011 Strategy. The overall aim of the Parking Strategy is to balance the desire to maintain the economic competitiveness of the town centre, whilst using parking controls to moderate traffic to improve environmental quality and reduce the economic disbenefits of local traffic congestion.
- 4.12 The Strategy is generally about how on-street and public car parking will be managed but also contains elements that are relevant to planning.
- 4.13 The Draft Parking Strategy takes account of the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework that Local Authorities should improve the quality of parking to ensure that it is convenient, safe and attractive.
- 4.14 Nevertheless the Strategy proposes to continue to cap the total amount of public car parking in the town centre at 5,000 spaces. One of the purposes of this is to try to control the number of temporary car parks in the centre which tend to be of a poor quality appearance.
- 4.15 The Draft Parking Strategy assumes that the existing parking standards will continue to apply in the town centre on the basis that the demand for visitor and employee parking can be catered for within existing car parks. It does propose, however, that the monitoring of car park usage should be carried out more thoroughly in order to inform car park management.

Affect of the Parking Policy on the quality and type of flats being built in the Town Centre

- 4.16 One issue that needs to be considered is whether the parking policy affects the quality, type and size of flats that are being provided in the town centre? It is not clear whether the lack of parking limits the range of people who want to live in the town centre and result in a high concentration of single young people living there. Many of the offices that have been converted to flats have a significant number of existing parking spaces. This does not mean that the newly created flats are necessarily of a high standard or quality.
- 4.17 There have not been very many schemes for new build flats come forward but those that have generally provide less than a space per flat. A lot of schemes have involved the change of use of space over shops to flats where you would not expect new parking to be provided. There are, however, examples of developments, such as Kittiwake House on the High Street, which have not provided any parking.

- 4.18 There may be occasions where a requirement to provide some more parking within residential schemes could help to ensure that we get a better mix of flats in terms of their size, tenure and quality.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 It is considered that there is continuing need to apply some restraint to the amount of parking provided for new flats in the town centre and the overall supply of parking as a whole. Some refinement of the policy could be considered to ensure that the policy does not impact upon the quality or type of residential accommodation that is being provided.

6 Background Papers

1. Slough Core Strategy 2006-2026
2. Slough Parking Strategy 2004