

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **DATE:** 11th September 2014

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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR CONSIDERATION**

CAR PARKING POLICY IN SLOUGH TOWN CENTRE

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 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 that have arisen from this which may need to be reviewed.

Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

- 1.1 The Committee is requested to resolve to either:
- a) Refer the issue to the Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for consideration
 - b) Establish a Task and Finish Group to review the issue
 - c) Add as an agenda item for a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further appraisal
 - d) Note the matter and take no further action

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 24th July 2014, Members requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider a report 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 and the fact that currently there is no minimum requirement for car parking in residential schemes in the centre.

Background

4.3 The Council's strategy for the Borough, as set out in the Core Strategy, 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 increase pedestrian, cycling and bus access to the town centre and 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 The parking standards in Appendix 2 of the Local Plan 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.

4.7 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.

- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 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. Nevertheless there are concerns that there will be some parking overspill into surrounding areas.

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

- 4.10 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 would 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.
- 4.11 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.
- 4.12 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. Any change in policy could not, however, be applied retrospectively or to the changes of use from offices to flats that are taking place under the prior approval process without the need for planning permission.

Parking Strategy

- 4.13 The Council is currently revising its Parking Strategy which is a supplementary document to the Local Transport Plan. 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.
- 4.14 The Strategy is generally about how on-street and public car parking will be managed but also covers other areas as well. Its vision is to "Support economic development in the Borough, whilst reducing the impact of the private vehicle on the environment and contributing towards increased usage of sustainable modes of transport by those who have an alternative to the private car".
- 4.15 The Strategy still 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 poorer quality. Any new

car parks that do come forward will be required to meet the Park Mark status within 6 months of opening.

- 4.16 The Draft Parking Strategy also 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. In order to help occupiers of new flats it is proposed that all town centre multi-storey car parks should be encouraged to allow a greater mix of parking including overnight use by residents. The new Parking Strategy is due to go out to public consultation.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The level of car parking provided within town centre residential schemes can have a big influence upon how the town centre is developed in the future. The amount of parking that is to be allowed has to take account of the need to prevent congestion and protect the environment; the need to promote the viability and vitality of the centre as well as the need to encourage town centre living. As a result Member's views are sought as to how this should be reviewed.

6 Background Papers

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