

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

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WARD(S): All

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PART I **FOR DECISION**

REVIEW OF THE LOCAL PLAN FOR SLOUGH

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to seek Member's approval to begin the process of reviewing the Local Plan for Slough.

Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

1.1 The Committee is requested to resolve:

- (a) That the Council formally agrees to carry out a Review of the Local Plan for Slough;
- (b) That all interested parties be notified of the intention to review the Local Plan;
- (b) That the Council prepares a Statement of Community Involvement; and
- (c) That the Council prepares a Local Development Scheme which will set out the time table for the preparation of the Review of the Local Plan for Slough.

2 Community Strategy Priorities

2.1 The Review of the Local Plan for Slough supports the following objectives

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

3 Other Implications

(a) Risk Management

The failure to review the Local Plan could prevent the Council from delivering fundamental aspects of its 5 year plan, and its resident and business communities the benefit of economic growth and commercial and residential development.

(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 at this stage.

(d) Workforce

A bid for additional funding has been included as part of the Council's 5 Year Plan. This envisages that there will be a need for an additional full time equivalent member of staff over a three year period as well the need to commission specialist reports.

4 Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Core Strategy for Slough, which was adopted in 2008, covers the period up to 2026. The Site Allocations Document was adopted in 2010 but other elements of Slough's Development Plan such as the "saved" policies of the Local Plan, the Minerals Plan and the Waste Plan are much older.
- 4.2 The "self assessment" exercise carried out in 2013 showed that the policies in the various plans were still compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework and were performing well. We also still have in excess of a 15 year supply of housing land.
- 4.3 Nevertheless the NPPF came into force in 2012 and although the plan remains robust in the short term it is recognised that we have now reached the point where we will have to begin to review the Local Plan so that it does not become out of date.

The Council's Five Year Plan

- 4.4 On the 19th January the Cabinet approved the 5 Year Plan which sets out a vision for the Borough against which the Council will prioritise its resources.
- 4.5 One of the key outcomes that will be used to shape the Council's response to the challenges facing the town is "*changing, retaining and growing*". As part of this the 5 Year Plan states that:
 - Slough will be the premier location in the south east for businesses of all sizes to locate, start, grow and stay
 - There will be more homes in the borough, with quality improving across all tenures to support our ambition for Slough
 - The centre of Slough will be vibrant, providing business, living and cultural opportunities.
- 4.6 In order to achieve this, the 5 Year Plan proposes that we will develop planning policies which deliver more high value business properties to meet modern needs. We will also build an average of 550 new homes a year over the 5 year period compared to the current target of 315. At the same time we will make better use of land for new high quality family housing and high density residential developments through the Local Plan.
- 4.7 Whilst most of the objectives of the 5 Year Plan, including the increase in house building, can be achieved by using existing planning policies, it is clear that we now need to start to review the Local Plan for Slough in order to sustain this over a longer period. As a result a growth bid has been prepared to finance this as part of the 5 Year Plan.
- 4.8 The start date for the Council's 5 Year Plan is 2015 and so it is suggested that the Local Plan should cover the twenty year period from 2015 to 2035.

Third Runway at Heathrow

- 4.9 One of the reasons why we have not begun to review the Local Plan up until now is because of the uncertainty about the future of Heathrow. The construction of a third runway would obviously have a significant effect upon the way that Slough is planned in the future. Although a final decision about this is unlikely to be taken for some time, the Airports Commission is due to publish its recommendation in the summer. This should be able to

provide the context for a review of the Local Plan, although there will continue to be uncertainty about the future of Heathrow until the Government makes a decision.

- 4.10 As a result the time table for the review of the Local Plan will have to be flexible enough to take account of the decision making process for Heathrow. Whilst it may be possible to produce an “issues and options” document in the short term, it will not be possible to develop a spatial strategy for the Borough until a final decision has been made about whether a third runway will be built at Heathrow.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Berkshire

- 4.11 The housing figures in the Core Strategy are derived from the South East Plan. In the absence of any Regional Plans each authority has to produce its own housing allocation. As a first step towards this we have joined together with all of the other Council’s in the Berkshire to commission a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This will define how Councils fit into Housing Market Areas and produce a figure for what the “objectively assessed housing need” is for each authority.
- 4.12 This is the key starting point for any review of the Local Plan and the initial results should be available in the summer.
- 4.13 It will also be necessary to commission other research to build up the evidence base that is needed to review the plan. We have already begun this process by joining in with a retail study being carried out by Windsor and Maidenhead. This will help to define the size of Slough’s catchment area and collect information about what people think of the shopping centre.

Other Authorities’ Local Plans

- 4.14 Another factor to consider in deciding when to review of the Local Plan for Slough is the progress that adjoining authorities are making in preparing their plans.
- 4.15 Windsor and Maidenhead have not produced a Core Strategy and have been trying to produce a Local Plan for some time. They produced a Preferred Options consultation document in January 2014 but are not intending to progress the plan further until we have the results of the Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- 4.16 South Bucks adopted its Core Strategy in 2011 but has now announced its intention to review it beginning with a “call for sites” in the spring. The initial results of the Buckinghamshire Strategic Market Housing Assessment suggests that South Bucks is in the same Housing Market Area as east Berkshire which may have implications for the planning of both areas.
- 4.17 As a result it would appear sensible to begin to review the Local Plan for Slough in parallel with adjoining authorities so that issues can be addressed in a coordinated way. This will also make it easier for all parties to fulfil their obligations to comply with the Duty to Cooperate.
- 4.18 It also means that there is greater scope for the joint working which has already started to some extent.

The Centre of Slough Strategy

- 4.19 One of the key outcomes from the 5 Year Plan is the need to produce a Centre of Slough Strategy. Although this will be prepared as a “Council” document, it will be carried out in a sufficiently robust way for it to be used for planning purposes in the future.

4.20 Work has already begun on this and it is envisaged that the Strategy should be produced by the autumn. This can then be taken forward as a key input into the Review of the Local Plan.

Proposed Timetable

4.21 As explained above, there are a number of key factors which will affect the timing of the review of the Local Plan for Slough. As a result, although it is proposed to prepare and adopt the plan in the next three years, it is not possible to specify when all of the stages will be completed.

4.22 In order to comply with the 'Duty to Cooperate' the first stage is to notify interested parties of the intention to review the plan.

4.23 It will be necessary to produce and publish a Local Development Scheme which sets out a timetable for the plan.

4.24 It will also be necessary to prepare a 'Statement of Community Involvement' which will set out how we will engage with interested parties.

4.25 In the short term the main focus of work will be the preparation of the Centre of Slough Strategy, liaising with those adjoining authorities who are preparing plans and developing the necessary evidence base which includes the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Berkshire.

5 Conclusion

5.1 We have now reached the point where it is necessary to begin to review the Local Plan for Slough. This report sets out what the initial stages of this will involve as well as the key factors which will affect the timing of the review.

6 Background Papers

1. Slough Core Strategy 2006-2026
2. Site Allocations DPD 2010
3. Five Year Plan for Slough