

SLOUGH *Changing Views*

CPO/ SITE ACQUISITION STRATEGY WORKSTREAM

Lead – Stephen Gibson, Head of Asset Management

Introduction

This workstream is directly linked to delivering the desired outcomes of the Site Allocation workstream and will allow the Council to assemble land and gain control of key strategic sites that will facilitate regeneration objectives.

The Council will need to develop a clear strategy for acquiring the required interests and at the same time make sure it is not left with any onerous liabilities. In accordance with good practice, before using Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers the Council should first attempt to purchase the required land by agreement. If after making reasonable attempts to purchase the required interests by agreement the owners are still unwilling to release their land then Councils can proceed with the CPO.

This will ultimately provide a valuable fall-back position where negotiations by private treaty prove unsuccessful and, subject to the confirmation of the CPO, guarantee the delivery of the site. Also the possibility of a CPO should convince landowners and/or occupiers of the serious intent of the Council.

Definitions

It is suggested that a strategic acquisition should be defined as the acquisition of land or property that will allow the Council to expedite key outcomes contained of the 5 Year Plan 2015/20. To be considered strategic, it is suggested that acquisition must make a significant contribution towards:

- Enabling collaborative working with adjoining owners to maximise value; or
- Improving the image of Slough to a status that fully recognises the strategic importance and benefits offered by the town as a sub-regional gateway to and from London; or
- Delivering large scale development that will provide attractive, accessible places to live, work or do business; or
- Making the best possible use of Council owned assets for the benefit of the local community.

The Council is authorised by the Secretary of State under section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to acquire compulsorily any land that will facilitate development for Regeneration purposes. Using these powers, Slough will operate on the basis that the redevelopment of the subject will contribute to the achievement of improvement of the economic, environmental or social well-being of their area.

SLOUGH *Changing Views*

Strategy

Whilst the Council will negotiate with third party owners to acquire land required for regeneration, it requires sufficient flexibility to use Compulsory Purchase powers when required. In the event that negotiations by private treaty prove unsuccessful, the Council will use CPO powers as a fall back position to guarantee the delivery of land where it can be demonstrated that the use of such powers is in the public interest.

Quick Wins

- Demolition of the old library in Q4 2015/16
- Commence development of Alpha Street site (planning permission for 14 flats) by Q 4 2015/16.

Key Actions

- Linked to the Site Allocation Workstream, identify key regeneration sites and undertake full title searches to identify ownership and potential constraints.
- Agree strategic priorities.
- Develop and seek Cabinet approval for Strategic Acquisitions Policy.
- Appoint agents to negotiate with third parties.
- If necessary, appoint CPO consultant.
- Report to Cabinet seeking Resolution. The report will include a) the identify of the Statutory provisions under which the Order will be made, b) State the purpose for the requirement to acquire the land, and c) Include a boundary plan indicating the full extent of the land likely to be required.
- Seek approval for strategic acquisitions budget.
- Appoint contractor/developer for Alpha Street site.
- Appoint demolition contractor for old library site.

Outcomes

The proposed actions will help to deliver the Five Year Plan's outcomes by:

- Proactive acquisition and redevelopment will help raise the quality of Slough's real estate stock attracting skilled residents, employees and businesses,
- Amalgamating sites and strategic acquisitions should enable higher quality schemes with higher quality homes across the tenures,
- Expedient strategic acquisitions could directly contribute towards shaping the centre of Slough into a vibrant place, providing business, living, and cultural opportunities,
- Larger sites can create "places" rather than schemes and the urban design of these new neighbourhoods can be designed to contribute

SLOUGH *Changing Views*

- towards Slough becoming one of the safest places in the Thames Valley, and
- Strategic acquisitions should maximise the value of Slough's existing assets.

Resource

The Head of Asset Management will lead this workstream with support from the General Manager of SRP. Additional support will be required including:

- External agents to negotiate acquisitions
- Appointment of CPO consultant if required
- External legal advice.

Funding

The budget required to acquire third party interests is unknown, but will be developed as a key action.

Before embarking on a CPO process, SBC must be satisfied that there are resources in place to allow the proposed scheme to be carried through to its conclusion. Broad terms of financial viability of the wider scheme would need to be provided to demonstrate that Council and/or its strategic partner can and will deliver the various schemes.

Details of proposed funding, along with robust development appraisals including the costs of site assembly should be developed to ensure that there are no financial implications to the Council in proceeding with the CPO.

In order to ensure the scheme is viable from the outset and remains viable throughout the process, the Council/SRP may wish to appoint a suitably qualified independent financial advisor to produce and maintain a robust financial model that will withstand the test of challenge at the CPO inquiry.