

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee **DATE:** 2nd November, 2016

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PART I **FOR COMMENT / CONSIDERATION**

REVIEW OF THE LOCAL PLAN FOR SLOUGH – ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to explain what the contents of the proposed Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation document will be and set out what the key policies will be. Any comments will then be forwarded to Cabinet.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Committee is requested to make comments to Cabinet about the contents of proposed Issues and Options Consultation Document.

3 The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

Ensuring that local needs are met within Local Plans will have an impact upon the following SJWS priorities:

- *Health*
- *Economy and Skills*
- *Regeneration and Environment*
- *Housing*
- *Safer Communities*

3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes

Ensuring that development is properly planned in Slough will contribute to the following Outcomes:

- 4 *Slough will be the premier location in the South East for businesses of all sizes to locate, start, grow and stay.*
- 2 *There will be more homes in the borough with the quality improving across all tenures to support our ambition for Slough.*
- 3 *The centre of Slough will be vibrant, providing business, living and cultural opportunities.*

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications of the proposed action in this report which can be achieved within existing budgets.

(b) Risk Management

It is considered that the risks can be managed as follows:

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Risk/Threat/Opportunity</i>	<i>Mitigation(s)</i>
That the Committee remain aware of work on the preparation of Issues and Options for the Local Plan.	Failure to be aware of the Issues and Options could affect progress on the Review of the Local Plan for Slough.	Agree the recommendations.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications as a result of this report.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no equality impact issues.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 The Council is proposing to produce an “Issues and Options” report as the first stage in the Review of the Local Plan for Slough. It is important to note that this is not a draft plan but a discussion document which is being put forward for public consultation.
- 5.2 It is proposed that the Cabinet will approve the “Issues and Options” report at its meeting on 21st November and it will then be the subject of a public consultation exercise for six weeks beginning in January. The results of this will be fed into a “Preferred Options” document which will be followed by the production of a “Submission” version of the plan which will be submitted to the Secretary of State and then be the subject of a public inquiry. The timing of the later stages of the plan will be at least partly dependent upon external factors such as any proposals for Heathrow airport and the results of Duty to Cooperate discussions with neighbouring authorities.
- 5.3 A previous report to this Committee highlighted what the key issues are for the Review of the Local Plan and the report to the last meeting set out what the possible Spatial Options are for distributing development throughout the Borough.
- 5.4 The main focus of this report is to set what out the overall themes of the Local Plan are and what the key policy responses could be.

- 5.5 A summary of the whole document is included in the appendix so that Members can understand what the key contents of the “Issues and Options” document will be and make any comments that they would wish to be forwarded to Cabinet.
- 5.6 It should be noted that it is intended to hold a second Member workshop on 27th October which will focus upon the issue of congestion within Slough. The results of this can also be forwarded to Cabinet.

Contents of the Consultation Document

- 5.7 The Issues and Options Consultation Document will contain the following sections:

Introduction

- 5.8 The introductory section will have a portrait of Slough today which will, amongst other things highlight the advantages of living, working and visiting Slough. There will also be a short section on the past which will show how the town has previously managed to successfully accommodate growth.
- 5.9 The “key drivers of change” section will highlight what the pressures are on Slough and that “do nothing” is not really an option. The most significant factor which drives everything that we are seeking to do in the Review of the Local Plan is that our population will grow by nearly 22,000 people over the twenty years of the plan period.
- 5.10 The reason for this can be seen from Figure 2 in the Appendix which shows that Slough currently has a very young population with a lot of young children. Figure 3 shows that as these children age we will have a larger but more balanced population. Critically this will result in there being more households in Slough who will need more homes.

Vision

- 5.11 In order to deal with the pressures for growth the document sets out an aspirational vision for Slough (see Appendix).
- 5.12 The first part of the vision sets the tone when it states that by 2036 Slough will...

...have a high profile image which reflects its important role in the region as a prosperous, confident, attractive metropolitan place where people choose to work, rest, play and stay.
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- 5.13 One of the key words within this is that we want Slough to be a place where people want to stay. There is currently a concern that some people are only in Slough because it is cheaper than other areas and not somewhere where they actually want to live. At the same time there may also be a lack of a range of suitable accommodation within Slough which means that people who do wish to remain in the town can't find the sort of place that matches their lifestyle.

- 5.14 We also need to make sure that in addition to having better housing for future generations there will also be a range of good jobs in Slough which local people have access to. As a result the vision states that Slough will...

...be an 'economic powerhouse' with a large skilled workforce and a reputation as an excellent place to do business which will encourage established and new companies to invest and grow in the Borough.

- 5.15 Putting all of this together the final part of the vision states that Slough will...

...be a town with cohesive residential and business communities where people think globally but are happy to work and live locally.

Objectives

- 5.16 The document also sets out the objectives for the plan which are intended to help develop the Vision.
- 5.17 One of the key ones is to meet the Objectively Assessed Housing Need within the Borough or as close as possible to where the needs arises. This means that we are planning to provide around 20,000 new houses in or around Slough during the plan period.
- 5.18 There are also similar objectives for facilitating the creation of another 15,000 jobs in order to ensure that the new population can find employment and that Slough maintains its role as major commercial centre.

The Big Strategic Issues

- 5.19 One of the critical things that the Issues and Options document has to do is identify what we think the big strategic issues are that the Local Plan will have to address. These are mainly concerned with how we will be able to achieve the Vision and meet the objectives that we have set ourselves.
- 5.20 The issues addressed in the document are:
- *How can we meet as much of our Objectively Assessed Housing Need of 927 dwellings a year as close as possible to where these needs arise?*
 - *How we can continue to provide affordable housing for people in the greatest need?*
 - *How we can facilitate the creation of an additional 15,000 jobs in Slough and maintain its role as an 'economic powerhouse'?*
 - *How we can revitalise Slough town centre as a major retail, leisure and commercial centre?*
 - *How can we get the maximum benefits out of the growth of Heathrow airport and mitigate for any adverse environmental impacts?*
 - *How can we enable our suburban areas to continue to absorb the growth in population without losing the distinctive character of individual neighbourhoods?*

- *How can we deal with the problems of traffic congestion to ensure that people can get around Slough?*
- *How can we enhance the quality of the built and green environment in Slough and improve the overall image of the town?*

Proposed Policy Response

5.21 Taking into account all of the available information it is considered that the Local Plan needs to develop a strategy and new policies for the following key areas:

- Investment
- Housing
- Community
- Transport
- Design/Environment

5.22 An explanation as to what sort of policies the plan could adopt for each of these areas is set out below.

Creating an Environment for Investment

5.23 The Local Plan strategy will ultimately only work if people are prepared to invest in Slough. In 2012/3 there were only 182 houses built despite the fact that there were planning permissions for 4,323. In business terms in 2013 Slough was ranked 50th most competitive borough in the UK; the lowest in the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP area, and a drop of 2 places since 2008. Whilst we can't do anything about what is happening to the national economy we can do what we can to attract investment to Slough.

5.24 One of the biggest problems is Slough's perceived poor image. This can have a real impact if it means that house prices are depressed, shoppers no longer come to Slough, people don't want to work in the town and residents have less pride in where they live. As a result a cross cutting theme for the Local Plan is to try to improve the image of Slough which would also lead to more inward investment.

5.25 Public investment in the town is a positive indicator for attracting more from the private sector. The arrival of the Crossrail service in 2019 has already had an effect upon the housing and office market in Slough. The proposed rail link to Heathrow from Slough will also have a big impact in attracting inward investment when that opens.

5.26 The Council also has a role to play in promoting major regeneration schemes, such as the Heart of Slough, and the huge investment it is making in new developments through the Slough Urban Renewal partnership. It has also set up new Housing companies to start building residential development.

5.27 The Plan will need to ensure that necessary infrastructure is provided to support and accommodate the anticipated growth. This will include providing support for

better digital and broadband services, health care, and social infrastructure. The local plan policies will welcome the establishment of educational facilities supplying workplace learning and other tertiary education to meet the needs of business and raise the skill levels for residents.

- 5.28 It is recognised that development will not come forward if it is not viable. Brownfield sites with high alternative use values and high demolition and construction costs can be problematic. We will carry out a Viability Study of the Local Plan to establish what the baseline for development is. We have not so far sought to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy in Slough in order to reduce costs of development. Any schemes that are unable to provide a full range of Section 106 contributions will have to produce a viability study to justify this. The Council will take account of abnormal costs but green field sites will be expected to provide full quota of infrastructure contributions and affordable housing.
- 5.29 Insisting upon good design will help support investment. In deciding what the priorities for individual sites will be we will adopt a “Slough Pound” principle which involves getting the best value from public and private assets through directing investment to where it will deliver the biggest improvement to the town’s image, such as investing in the public realm.
- 5.30 One of the priorities is to get new investment into the town centre in order to revitalise it as a commercial office centre and improve the retail and leisure offer. Where development does take place we will protect the investment from inappropriate competition by adopting a strong “Centre First” policy which will prevent “town centre uses” such as major retail and offices from being built elsewhere.
- 5.31 By identifying areas for comprehensive redevelopment and other policies we will endeavour to give investors the confidence that there will be an uplift in the quality and appearance of the area. Good design and attractive spaces are at the heart of this strategy. The Council will invest by leading key regeneration projects and we will be prepared to use CPO powers to assemble sites where this is necessary to see key developments delivered.
- 5.32 Economic Assessments have indicated that 15,000 new jobs are required to meet the needs of population and economic growth during the plan period. Little new employment land can be identified so it is important that the land in employment use is protected wherever possible except in the particular circumstances of option sites where a housing provision is considered a strategic priority. Where existing buildings in employment use are redundant, redevelopment for employment will be encouraged in order to make the most of the scarce land available.
- 5.33 Spatial options include the release of green belt land in Colnbrook and Poyle to accommodate employment development where businesses can demonstrate that it is essential for them to be located in close proximity to the airport.

- 5.34 In order to attract new businesses to Slough we have adopted a Simplified Planning Zone (SPZ) for Slough Trading Estate which means that development which meets the necessary criteria can take place without the need for planning permission. We will try to ensure that suitable commercial development elsewhere can go ahead with speed and certainty.
- 5.35 We will also make sure that we optimise the reasons that new businesses seek to come to Slough whether it is its proximity to Heathrow or being the best location in the country for data centres.
- 5.36 We will also try to protect the network of small businesses in the Borough which support the local economy and encourage the development of more incubator or nursery business premises, as clusters of such units provide both flexible premises for growing businesses and soft networks that support innovation and enhance market and supply chain contacts.
- 5.37 The correlation between a good supply of quality housing and economic growth is well known. In order to encourage more housing we will consider allowing suitable high density metropolitan style development in appropriate locations such as the town centre and be prepared to make major policy relaxations such as the release of Green Belt for development.

Housing – Providing Homes for the Future

- 5.38 The plan has the ambitious objective of planning to provide for around 20,000 new houses in and around Slough over the plan period. Some of this additional housing can be achieved by allowing redevelopment of some existing sites at a higher density than existing housing areas and past new-build housing sites. But much of the housing growth will need new land that is suitable for housing to be identified. As a result a number of Spatial Options have been developed which are explained below.
- 5.39 Some sites already have planning permission or are commitments in the Core Strategy/Site Allocations but have not yet been built out. These will be important for delivery of housing particularly in the first five years of the plan period. In addition the plan will have policies that encourage new housing to come forward on as yet unidentified small sites and windfall sites. The Council Housing Department's Housing Strategy aims to ensure that 200 homes per year are delivered through Slough's own five year housing investment programme.
- 5.40 Initial calculations show that even if all of the identified sites in Slough, including those in the Spatial Options, were developed and an allowance is made for continuing small site development there would still be a shortfall of around 8,000 houses. This is why the options of finding housing opportunities outside Slough's closely drawn boundaries either northwards or southwards, have been developed.
- 5.41 Obviously these options cannot be achieved without the agreement of the relevant authorities and so will have to be pursued through Duty to Cooperate negotiations. Discussions are currently taking place with South Bucks and Chiltern Councils to see if we can agree a Memorandum of Understanding which would set out a way forward for progressing the northern expansion of Slough through a partial review

of the South Buck/Chiltern Plan. This could mean that it could be considered at examination in public at the same time as the Local Plan for Slough.

- 5.42 The new Local Plan will be tested to ensure that its strategies are deliverable. The identification of sites and granting of planning permission cannot guarantee that housing will actually be built which is why a proactive approach to encouraging investment is required in order to make development of housing in Slough more financially attractive. Part of this strategy is to ensure that we build a range of houses that are attractive to people with different housing needs, including the skilled workers sought by existing and new businesses. In addition the Housing Strategy has plans for estate renewal to improve existing homes and increase the number of homes in some estates.
- 5.43 Between 2004 and 2016, 61% of all dwellings built in Slough were flats. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (February 2016) identified a need for a range of accommodation in terms of both size and tenure. This showed that there will be a need for family sized accommodation in Slough with 45% being three bed 16% being four bed properties.
- 5.44 It is estimated that if we built everything in the current housing trajectory and all of the proposed spatial options around 80% of new dwellings would be flats. In future a proportion of these could be family apartments in order to provide affordable housing in the higher density new neighbourhoods rather than in traditional suburban development. This would also help to provide an opportunity for more mixed income and mixed tenure developments that also give scope for housing suitable for elderly or vulnerable people or those with special needs.
- 5.45 More green field development land, within Slough, will only be provided through the release of Green Belt land. Ultimately the best way of providing a substantial amount of family accommodation would be to build a “garden suburb” to the north of Slough. The other main policy response would be to ensure that the existing stock of family housing is not reduced. The Core Strategy currently has a policy of there being no net loss of family accommodation and limiting new development in the suburbs to infilling with family houses. This approach may have to be continued in the Review of the Local Plan.
- 5.46 Whilst there may be an increase in density within new development, housing standards will still need to be applied as explained in the Design/Environment section.
- 5.47 A key concern of the local plan is to provide affordable housing. House price inflation has increased 39% in the past three years and the average house price is now 11.1 times the average salary in the Borough. All other indicators such as the housing register and increases in homelessness also point to the urgency of providing more affordable housing. Recent and emerging government policy has widened the definition of affordable housing to include the traditional social rented sector, intermediate housing in schemes such as shared ownership and discounted starter homes. The Housing Strategy commits to providing 100 new

affordable homes on our own land over the next five years. Other forms of affordable housing will be sought through s106 developer contributions from new housing developments. The amount of affordable housing achieved is going to be dependent on increasing development viability and therefore the overarching commitment to raising the image of Slough and getting the best for the “Slough Pound” is relevant.

Fostering Choices for the Community

- 5.48 Our aspiration is to make Slough a place where people want to ‘live locally’ and are able to stay throughout the various stages of their life. The Plan therefore needs to provide for a full range of facilities and services to provide for people’s changing needs and feel a sense of belonging. The major element of this is providing residents with opportunities to live and work locally that meet their aspirations.
- 5.49 One of the strengths of Slough is the number of diverse and distinct local neighbourhoods that it has. Although some are not as prosperous as others they all have something to offer their residents. The policies in the plan need to recognise this, and provide scope for residents to determine the character of their area and the way that it develops to suit their needs and those in the future. There is also the need to provide for additional infrastructure to enable the Plan’s objective to provide opportunities for our residents to live positive, healthy, active and independent lives.
- 5.50 In the absence of any emerging Neighbourhood Plans, the Local Plan can provide the opportunity for residents to have a say in the way in which their area is developed and can potentially adopt different approaches to suit different areas.
- 5.51 We want residents to live their whole life in Slough if they want to, and make the most of their existing family and social networks. This is not always possible at present due to a lack of housing that people aspire to, or the services, schools and jobs they need or want within their local area.
- 5.52 To date the suburban areas have been able to accommodate the growth in population in an “organic” way which has not significantly affected their overall character. One example of this is the way in which outbuildings have been used as ancillary living space for larger families with a minority being utilised as self-contained accommodation (‘beds in sheds’). In addition many private homes have had large extensions or otherwise extended to meet particular needs. Another is the specialist and independent retailers in neighbourhood parades. There have however been negative impacts on the general street scene such as loss of greenery due to extra parking and bin storage, poorly maintained or inappropriate commercial frontages, and a lack of space for proper footpaths /cycleways.
- 5.53 Whilst there is an overall need to retain family housing within the suburbs there may be scope for some intensification of development. This would still have to

recognise the importance of protecting the overall character of the area and the street scene in particular. It would also have to take account of the need to provide adequate garden space, protect the amenities of neighbours and maintain the amount of greenery.

- 5.54 Slough has a very low level of tree cover even compared to built up areas like London, and street trees can have a positive impact on wellbeing and air quality. At present the majority of these are in the suburbs and so if, like London, we want to increase the greenery of the town it will be important that we encourage people to replace lost trees, hedges and shrubs and, where possible, plant more trees within new developments and along the verges.
- 5.55 We also want to enable people to meet many of their day to day needs without having to get in their car. This will mean a combination of providing local facilities within individual neighbourhoods and providing better access to health, education, active leisure and other services. This will help to improve fitness and well-being, foster a sense of community and reduce congestion.
- 5.56 Existing parks, public open spaces and buildings of interest are important for creating a sense of place and belonging so the Plan will include policies which adapt these so they can accommodate more and varied uses. It will also be important to ensure that existing neighbourhood parades, local shops and community facilities are utilised or re-provided in a way which optimises their use and community value.
- 5.57 The Spatial options include proposals for new neighbourhoods. In most cases they can be designed in a way which creates their own character with a distinctive architectural style. It will, however, be important that they include all of the necessary local facilities that the new residents will need.
- 5.58 It is also important that our neighbourhoods feel safe and well connected to the jobs, services and facilities nearby, and to the town centre, which means that new developments should provide attractive local links between existing and new facilities in order to make them feel more connected. ‘Smart’ technologies, good design and place-making mentioned elsewhere will also help deliver this.

Transport – Making it Easier to Move Around

- 5.59 We are currently in the process of constructing some major transport schemes which should help to ease congestion. These include the A355 Tuns Lane scheme which will improve traffic flow on this important north south route. The A322 Windsor Road widening scheme will make journeys quicker and more reliable on this strategic route.
- 5.60 There are proposals for further improvements to the roads which could provide additional capacity at “pinch points” and make the network operate more effectively. It has to be recognised that there is a limit to how far physical changes

to the roads can be made given the fact that Slough is so densely built up and constrained. At the same time any additional capacity created will quickly be used up by the latent demand for travel.

- 5.61 A lot of the congestion in Slough is caused by local people. 66% of residents commuting out of Slough do so by private car and many travel a short distance. This is the 6th highest proportion for all towns and cities in the South East. During the morning peak one in three car journeys is taking a child to school.
- 5.62 The overall policy response to the problem of ensuring that as many people as possible can travel around Slough more easily will have to be one of finding ways of encouraging a modal shift away from the private car.
- 5.63 Despite its compact nature a walking and cycling culture has not yet been established in Slough.
- 5.64 This could be due to a number of things such as the busyness of the roads, noise, fear of accidents, lack of permeable routes, the poor health of some residents or the view of the car as a status symbol.
- 5.65 Also use of public transport is not as high as it could be. We are carrying out the first phase of the Slough Mass Rapid Transit (SMaRT) which is a bus lane and bus priority scheme. This should increase patronage but further improvements to bus services will be required.
- 5.66 The new Crossrail service which comes in 2019 will improve rail services, particularly to Langley and Burnham stations. The proposed passenger link to Heathrow will make access to the airport by train very attractive from the town centre. How passengers will travel to the stations needs to be addressed.
- 5.67 There are a number of things that the Local Plan can do to help to bring about behavioural change that will be needed in order to reduce the use of the private car particularly for short journeys.
- 5.68 Firstly we can make sure that major new development is located in the most accessible locations near to railway stations and bus routes. We can also locate development so that it is close to major retail or employment centres and make sure that neighbourhoods have key the facilities needed to enable people to live locally.
- 5.69 We can improve the footway and cycleway networks to make them safer and more attractive to use. We can also ensure that new developments provide or contribute to some of the missing links in the network. Compulsory purchase powers may be needed to implement some key links.
- 5.70 We can provide better bus infrastructure such as the second phase of SMaRT which will provide an improved service to Heathrow for the 4,000 residents who

work there. More bus priority measures, that allow buses to bypass and move ahead of queues, can be introduced. New developments that generate extra traffic will need to contribute to infrastructure for non-car modes of travel.

- 5.71 There is also the possibility of having a Park and Ride which would reduce the number of cars in Slough and the need for on-site parking.
- 5.72 Major residential development on the edge of the town needs layouts that support viable bus routes.
- 5.73 The introduction of new digital infrastructure and technology should in the future reduce the need for people to travel and smooth out the peaks as people will be better informed as to when to travel and use public transport.
- 5.74 There is clearly a need to try to reduce the percentage of children who are being driven to school in the morning peak which will require coordinated action and enforcement of travel plans.
- 5.75 There will also have to be some form of parking restraint at the destination of the journey. The evidence shows that car commuting to places like the Trading Estate is much higher than town centre where private parking is limited. As a result selective parking controls will have to be introduced in order to reduce peak time car commuting.
- 5.76 Parking standards for new residential developments needs to be refined to generally limit parking in well located developments but still ensure the associated homes are attractive to a range of people. Initiatives to restrict car use, at peak times, rather than just car ownership need to be explored.
- 5.77 It may also be necessary to bring in traffic management measures which deter through traffic from coming through Slough.
- 5.78 Members will be aware that a workshop for all Councillors has been arranged for 27th October which will focus upon congestion. Any feedback from this will be reported to Committee.

Insisting Upon High Quality Design and Environmental Standards

- 5.79 An overarching theme of the plan is the need for good design in order to improve the image of Slough. This can improve the viability of development, enhance the wellbeing of residents and workers, and attract visitors and investors.
- 5.80 One of the key policy responses could be that good design is not negotiable and will be given top priority. This approach will need to be backed up by design guides and site development briefs. This would flag up to prospective developers that they need to factor in good quality design to their costing before they

purchase sites. This will need to be balanced with viability issues on brownfield development sites.

- 5.81 In residential areas the top priority will be to protect and enhance the appearance of the “street scene”. There will also be an emphasis upon greening the appearance of streets with an emphasis on street trees.
- 5.82 The Local Plan policy of “Residential Areas of Exceptional Character” can be adapted and expanded in order to recognise the importance of maintaining the appearance of key arterial residential and commercial roads.
- 5.83 Main road corridors, gateways to the town and other entry points such as stations can be made as attractive as possible so as to enhance the image of Slough and encourage walking and cycling. This will happen through design policy for new development and via the Council’s local highway authority role. Getting developers to contribute financially to neighbourhood wide enhancements will be explored.
- 5.84 The quality of the urban realm will be particularly important in the town centre and the other district and commercial centres. The Heart of Slough already has high quality hard and soft landscaping plus landmark buildings at the bus station and The Curve. This approach to comprehensive regeneration should be rolled out elsewhere.
- 5.85 Achieving high standard of design within the major new development areas which form part of the Spatial Options will be particularly important so that new neighbourhoods have a sense of place and are distinctive in appearance. What these areas look like could vary considerably from more traditional suburban type developments. Sites near the centre of Slough can be higher density and metropolitan in style. Very large edge of town sites can be ‘garden suburb’ in style. Connections to existing neighbouring developments will be important but they need not reflect their appearance.
- 5.86 For higher density development to succeed good quality design is essential. The spaces around the base of big buildings and the prominent tops of tall buildings against the skyline warrant special attention. Higher density can also be achieved through street based development; the traditional street is an enduring feature of successful towns. Design policy can promote this to help quell fears about high density development.
- 5.87 Part of the good design policy will need to cover building materials and surface treatments to ensure good quality and lasting finishes are used.
- 5.88 A good design policy will cover the natural environment also. Landscaping is often an afterthought but well planned and specified planting and surfaces can make a big difference to the attractiveness of developments.

- 5.89 Residential design policies will cover living conditions as well. This is associated with good design in terms of health and wellbeing objectives. Key aspects to be covered are garden/amenity space; day and sunlight; privacy and dwelling size.
- 5.90 For medium and high density development to succeed reasonable living conditions are important. However high density can mean some compromises in comparison to traditional suburban home living conditions. Policy will need to be flexible to provide for high density development but not compromise basic needs.
- 5.91 Introduction of a minimum dwelling size policy can be explored. Government policy allows Councils to adopt a nationally prescribed floor space standard if there is evidence that this is needed in the area. However blanket adoption of this policy can mean fewer homes might be built as extra space is taken up compared with what developers might otherwise design.
- 5.92 To assist with affordability allowing a few special small homes can be part of housing/design policy. To be successful the quality will need to be high; specialist developers involved, occupancy restricted and affordability protected long term.
- 5.93 Policies will, as now, prevent exposure to unacceptable levels of pollution. However greater emphasis on air quality will be needed. This relates to health objectives and, in terms of implementation, policies to reduce car use. Environmental quality policies will need to take account of any low emission strategy through, for example, promotion of electric vehicle use, where practical use of less polluting vehicles (in particular diesel trucks for large scale construction and development with significant net increase in commercial vehicle traffic), control of new homes in areas with poor air quality including fitting of air filters.
- 5.94 Existing policy on flood risk will be updated including on-site drainage (sustainable urban drainage) as this is still a significant issue in the town. Government policy now limits Councils' influence on limiting carbon emissions from buildings. However, at present, there are still opportunities to promote low carbon buildings and existing policy can be adapted to include this. Green infrastructure can be promoted via a number of policies – recreation space requirements, gardens, landscape, street trees/public realm quality etc. Biodiversity policy will protect key natural habitats but as important is the design of new landscaping to create new habitat that supports biodiversity. Whilst growth and intensification may mean loss of some existing green space and trees there is scope to help mitigate this loss even in an urban environment through careful design and appropriate management.

Development of the Spatial Options

- 5.95 Having established what the strategic issues are for the Local Plan and a possible policy response, it is necessary to consider how these can be addressed by identifying where major new development could go within the Borough.

5.96 As a result we have produced a number of strategic 'Spatial Options' for the Review of the Local Plan. Whilst these have not been fully worked up at this stage it is considered that they are realistic meaningful options which can be used for public consultation.

5.97 The options have been set out in a logical order but this does not necessarily imply that there is a preference for any one of them at this stage. It should also be noted that it may not be possible to carry all of them out because they may not be compatible and there may be cumulative impacts which would have to be addressed.

5.98 Some of the options such as "intensifying the suburbs" or "releasing employment land for housing" are more generic and so do not contain specific sites. The option to build new housing or employment elsewhere in other districts will have to be explored through the Duty to Cooperate process and cannot be defined at this stage apart from drawing up an area of search.

5.99 The Spatial Options that it is proposed to put forward for public consultation are as follows:

- A. Expand the centre of Slough (upwards and outwards)
- B. Expand the Langley Centre (to include land around the railway station)
- C. Create a new residential neighbourhood on the Akzo Nobel and National Grid sites west of the Uxbridge Road
- D. Regeneration of the selected areas:
 - D1 - Canal basin
 - D2 - Trade Sales, Bath Road
 - D3 – Chalvey regeneration
- E. Estate Renewal
- F. Intensification of the suburbs
- G. Redevelop existing business areas for housing
- H. Release land from the Green Belt for housing (edge of Slough)
- I. Release land from the Green Belt for employment (Heathrow related development in Colnbrook and Poyle)
- J. Expansion of Slough
 - J1 – Northern expansion into South Bucks (Garden Suburb)
 - J2 – Southern expansion into Windsor & Maidenhead (small sites)
- K. Build in other areas outside of Slough

5.100 Details of these options were included in the previous report to this Committee and have been reproduced again in the Appendix.

5.101 The amount of housing that each option could produce has also been estimated. The Housing Trajectory in part 4 of the Appendix shows that if all known sites and all of the Options were to be developed, along with an allowance for ongoing small site completions, it is likely that we could be around 8,000 houses short of meeting the Objectively Assessed Need of 927 a year. Whilst it is likely that further windfall

sites will come forward in the latter part of the plan period there will still be such a shortfall that the options of building outside of Slough will have to be considered.

5.102 The expansion of Slough, either northwards or southwards, has been included as Option J even though this would involve building in land in South Bucks or Windsor & Maidenhead. Obviously this, and Option I (build in other areas outside of Slough), cannot be achieved without the agreement of the relevant authorities as a result of Duty to Cooperate negotiations. It is, however, important that as many details of Option J could look like are included in this consultation so that the public can understand what the implications of this option could involve and the necessary technical work can be carried out to assess the practicality of this option.

5.103 It should also be noted that with the exception of the option to provide for more airport related development at Colnbrook and Poyle none of the options provide any new employment land. Indeed many of the options involve the change of use of land which is currently in employment use. As a result it is extremely unlikely that we will be able to meet the need for up to 180 hectares of new employment land. This means that the objective of providing 15,000 new jobs will have to be achieved through having more intensive development upon existing employment land.

6 Conclusion

6.1 This report seeks to highlight what the key elements of the Issues and Options consultation document will be. Any comments that this Committee may have about the document can be forwarded to the Cabinet which will be asked to approve it for consultation purposes.

7 Background Papers

Core Strategy DPD
Site Allocations DPD
Call for Sites Consultation (3 June- 15 July 2016)

8 Appendices

Appendix – Summary of Issues and Options consultation document