

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet **DATE:** 21st November 2016
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PORTFOLIO: Councillor Ajaib, Housing & Urban Renewal

PART I **KEY DECISION**

APPROVAL OF LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

1 Purpose of Report

To seek approval of the Local Plan Issues and Options document which will be the subject of a six week public consultation exercise in January.

This is the next stage in the process of the Review of the Local Plan for Slough. The Local Plan is the Statutory Development Plan for Slough and supports the decision making process for new development in the Borough.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Cabinet is requested to resolve:

- (a) That the draft Issues and Options Document for the Review of the Local Plan for Slough (2016-2036) be approved for public consultation, with delegated powers to Officers, following consultation with the Commissioner for Housing & Urban Renewal, to make any necessary minor changes prior to publication.
- (b) That delegated powers be granted to Officers, following consultation with the Commissioner for Housing & Urban Renewal, to publish a Local Development Scheme setting out a timetable for the Review of the Local Plan for Slough.
- (c) That delegated powers be granted to Officers, following consultation with the Commissioner for Housing & Urban Renewal, to publish a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) setting out how the Councils stakeholders and community will be involved in preparation of Planning Policy documents.

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

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

The review of the Local Plan is directly linked to the following priorities in the Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy:

- Health
- Economy and Skills

- Regeneration and Environment
- Housing
- Safer Communities

It will also contribute to Improving the image of the town.

3b **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The Review of the Local Plan will contribute to the following Outcomes:

- 1 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 Slough will be one of the safest places in the Thames Valley

4 **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications of proposed action. The costs of the proposed consultation can be met from existing budgets.

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal	No risks identified	
Property	No risks identified	
Human Rights	No risks identified	
Health and Safety	No risks identified	
Employment Issues	No risks identified	
Equalities Issues	No risks identified	
Community Support – There will be a need for a formal public consultation exercise.	A public consultation strategy will be developed.	
Communications	No risks identified	
Community Safety	No risks identified	
Financial	No risks identified	
Timetable for delivery – The review of the Local Plan is dependent upon a number of internal external factors which could delay the time table.	Contingency plans for a delay to the timetable can be put in place.	

Project Capacity – The review of the plan will require additional resources.	A Project Plan for the Review of the Local plan has been produced, a budget secured.	
Other		

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no legal or Human Rights Act implications.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need to complete an EIA at this stage of the plan preparation process.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Government require all Local Authorities to have an up to date Local Plan that sets out how many homes it will provide, and its approach to permitting new development. We have reached an important stage in the Review of the Local Plan which involves producing an “Issues and Options” document. It is important to note that this is not a draft plan but a discussion document which is being put forward for public consultation. 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 Co-operate discussions with neighbouring authorities.
- 5.2 As the name suggests, the Issues and Options document sets out what the Council considers to be the key issues and drivers of change that the Review of the Local Plan will have to address and some Spatial Options which show where development could take place in the future. A Copy of the Draft Consultation Document is set out in Appendix 1. A brief summary of its contents is set out below:
- 5.3 The document contains a “Vision” for Slough, 14 “Objectives” and an outline of what future policies could be in order to implement the strategy in the emerging plan. The consultation document will have a number of specific questions for the public and statutory Consultees to answer but we will also be seeking any other comments that people may have.
- 5.4 It also sets out some ambitious and aspirational ideas for the future growth of Slough and contains some fairly detailed Spatial Options for major new development around the Borough. It should be noted that although the options are considered to be realistic, they have not yet been fully tested and are not being endorsed by the Council at this stage.

Aim of the Plan

- 5.5 At its simplest we want to make Slough a better place for Slough people. We also recognise that it has an important role to play within the region and want Slough to continue its role as a thriving commercial centre.
- 5.6 Slough has been very successful in accommodating growth in the past and we want it to continue to do this for the benefit of future generations. Most of the new housing and facilities that we are proposing are required to meet the needs and aspirations of our existing population and so it is important that it takes place in a way that supports our local communities.
- 5.7 We want to enable our residents to improve their health, wealth and well-being, and establish the reputation of the town as a place where people '*choose to work rest play and stay*'.
- 5.8 One of the key words within this is that we want Slough to be a place where people want to stay. Our aspiration is to make Slough a place where people have everything that they need to be able to 'live locally' and are able to stay throughout the various stages of their life.

Objectives

- 5.9 In order to achieve our vision for Slough we have identified 14 objectives. The two key ones are to enable around 927 new houses a year in or around Slough and to create 15,000 new jobs over 20 year period.

The Big Strategic Issues

- 5.10 The consultation document identifies the following big strategic issues. The Local Plan will have to address these if we are going to be able to achieve our vision and meet the objectives that we have set ourselves. These 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 offer a wide choice of high quality housing and create balanced communities?*
 - *How can Slough maintain its role as an economic "powerhouse"?*
 - *How can we support the creation of an additional 15,000 jobs?*
 - *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 effects?*
 - *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

- 5.11 We have developed a number of possible ways in which the Local Plan could address these issues.
- 5.12 In order to try to build enough houses to meet our needs we will have to identify a range of new sites both within and on the edge of the urban area, including using the Duty to Co-operate to investigate providing some outside of the Borough.
- 5.13 We want to be pro-active in our support for future economic growth and create the right climate for new investment so that Slough continues to be recognised as an “economic powerhouse”. The demands on land for housing means we will only provide very limited new land for employment uses and so we will have to create more jobs through increasing densities in existing employment areas, supporting job creation that doesn’t need new buildings (service jobs), and directing development of more offices to the town centre. If the third runway at Heathrow is built this could create up to 77,000 new jobs at the eastern end of the Borough which would help to meet our future employment needs.
- 5.14 We also need to halt the decline of the town centre as a shopping centre and revitalise it as a commercial and residential area where people choose to work and live..
- 5.15 To achieve all of this we will have to change the perceived image of Slough. One way in which we will do this is by insisting that all new development is high quality and well designed.
- 5.16 We will also have to have a strategy for encouraging investment in the town and making sure that we get the best value for every pound that is spent in Slough.
- 5.17 We need to make the most of our diverse neighbourhoods to enable people to be able to live locally within their community which means providing facilities and creating an environment where people feel ‘happy and at home’ and they can meet many of their day to day needs without using their cars.
- 5.18 It is recognised that the scale of growth being proposed to meet the needs of our population will add to congestion and if not properly controlled will have an impact upon the attractiveness and quality of environment. As a result the plan will have to find ways of mitigating these effects as far as is possible. This could include having to have policies which restrain the use of the private car so that more people use public transport or walk or cycle.

Development of the Spatial Options

- 5.19 Having established what the strategic issues are for the Local Plan it is necessary to consider how these can be addressed by identifying where major new development could go within the Borough.
- 5.20 As a result we have produced a number of strategic ‘Spatial Options’ to be put forward for public consultation which 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 – New Cippenham Central Strip (Trade Sales etc. A4)
 - 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 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

- 5.21 It is estimated that even if all of the Options from A to H came forward along with small sites and all of the other sites we know about we could still be around 8,000 houses short of meeting the Objectively Assessed Need of 927 a year. This is why the options of expanding Slough or building elsewhere (Options J and K) will have to be considered.
- 5.22 These options are beyond our direct control and could only be achieved with the agreement of the relevant authorities as a result of Duty to Cooperate negotiations. It is, however, important that these options are included in the Issues and Options consultation so that the public are aware that the Council is doing all it can to meet housing need and what the implications could be for meeting or failing to meet these.
- 5.23 It should also be noted that with the exception of the option to provide for more airport related development at Colnbrook and Poyle (Option I) none of the options provide any new employment land. Indeed many of them involve the loss of land which is currently in employment use. As a result it is extremely unlikely that we will be able to meet the potential need for up to 180 hectares of new land for business uses such as warehouses due to the shortage of land.

Next Stages for the Review of the Local Plan for Slough

- 5.25 The Government's expectations are that all Local Authorities will have a new Local Plan in place at the beginning of next year. This is clearly not going to happen in many cases but the focus is likely to be on the authorities who have not produced a Plan since 2004 and those which are not providing enough housing to meet Objectively Assessed Needs. The Government is taking powers to directly intervene where it considers that sufficient progress is not being made. As a result it is very important that we produce the Issues and Options document on the suggested timescale.
- 5.26 Progress of the plan after this is dependent on external factors which include the uncertainty about what is happening at Heathrow and the need to try to co-ordinate the plan making process with our neighbours.

- 5.27 We have not yet published a Local Development Scheme which sets out key dates for the subsequent stages of the plan. The DCLG recommended that we should do so once a decision about Heathrow has been made.
- 5.28 Although the Government has announced its support for the proposed third runway it has set out a very long decision making process. As a result the Inquiry into the Review of the Local Plan may have to be delayed so that it can be synchronised with the Inquiry into the proposed third runway at Heathrow.
- 5.30 The other big issue which affects the timing of the Review of the Local Plan for Slough is how we can coordinate it with the South Bucks/Chiltern plan. They have not included the proposal for a northern expansion of Slough in their latest Green Belt Preferred Options consultation. Nevertheless we will have to continue to promote this through the Local Plan process and if necessary seek to get agreement that there will be an immediate partial review of the South Bucks/Chiltern plan just to deal with this issue.
- 5.31 In the meantime we need to make progress as much progress as we can with the Review of the Local Plan for Slough. As a result we could produce a “Preferred Options” plan in September 2017 followed by a “Submission” version in early 2018. As explained above it may not be possible to actually submit the Local Plan for a Public Inquiry at this stage because of the need to coordinate with other plans and proposals.
- 5.32 We will have further discussions with the DCLG and Planning Inspectorate about this but it is recommended that delegated powers be given to publish a Local Development Scheme with a timetable for the next stages of the Review of the Local Plan.
- 5.33 We also need to produce an updated Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) setting out how we will engage with the community throughout the preparation of the Local Plan. This will include a range of methods to engage and inform parties who have expressed interest in the Local Plan, or may be affected by it.

6 Comments of Other Committees

- 6.1 Information reports on the Issues and Options for the Review of the Local Plan have been put to the Planning Committee at its meetings on 2nd November and the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 17th November. The Planning Committee had no comments. Any comments from the Scrutiny and Overview Committees will be reported orally to Cabinet.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Approval is being sought for the “Issues and Options” document for the Review of the Local Plan for Slough which will be the subject of a six week public consultation exercise in January.
- 7.2 In addition Delegated Powers are also being sought for the Officers to produce and Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement to support the consultation exercise.

8 **Background Papers**

'1' - Strategic Housing Market Assessment – GL Hearn Feb 2016

'2' -Economic Development Needs Assessment – NLP Feb 2016

9 **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Draft Issues and Options document for the Review of the Local Plan for Slough.