

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

**DATE:** 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I** **FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION**

#### **LOCAL PLAN FOR SLOUGH 2013-2036**

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with information regarding progress made on the Local Plan for Slough, including an update on the Preferred Spatial Strategy.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Panel is requested to comment on the progress made in reviewing the Local Plan for Slough.

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:

- Housing

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The Local Plan will help deliver the following Five Year Plan outcomes:

- Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay
- Our residents will live in good quality homes

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no financial implications to this report.

(b) Risk Management

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

(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**

5.1 The progress on the review of the Local Plan was last reported to this Panel at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017. This set out the results of the Issues and Options Consultation and focused upon the “Emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy for Slough”.

5.2 An update on the Spatial Strategy was reported to the Planning Committee meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and the purpose of this report is to highlight the key issues that the Local Plan is having to consider, with particular emphasis upon the need to provide more housing.

5.3 It should be noted that the development of the Spatial Strategy is just one part of the Local Plan. We will also have to develop a set of detailed policies which can help to implement the strategy in the most sustainable way and form the basis for determining planning applications. Consideration of these policies is not, however, within the scope of this report.

5.4 It should also be noted that a new “Transport Vision for the Centre of Slough” is being reported to Cabinet on 4<sup>th</sup> February for consideration. If this is agreed, it will have a significant impact upon the development of elements of the Local Plan Spatial Strategy. It has not been possible to include any details of the proposed new Transport Vision in this report and so any consideration of this would have to be the subject of a separate report to this Panel.

Background

5.5 The overall strategy for the Review of the Local Plan is to deliver balanced cohesive growth which meets local needs as far as possible given all of the constraints to development. Our ambition is for Slough to become a place where people want to “*live, work, rest, play and stay*”.

5.6 The main conclusion from the Issues and Options consultation was that there are no reasonable spatial options or combination of options that would allow Slough to meet all of its identified housing and employment needs within its boundaries.

- 5.7 As a result we have prepared the emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy in accordance with the Local Plan Objective of meeting housing needs either within the Borough or as close as possible to where the need arises within a balanced housing market.
- 5.8 The Government has produced a new standard methodology for calculating what each Council's housing needs should be which has resulted in Slough having a figure of 912 a year. We have never been able to build this number in the past, although there were 846 net completions last year. Whilst we may be able to meet our current 5 Year Land supply, there is going to be a major shortfall in the longer term. Monitoring has also shown that last year 93% of residential units were built on brown field sites and 75% were flats.
- 5.9 The lack of viability in many of these brown field developments also means that it is difficult for us to obtain the amount of affordable housing that we require in our policies. 141 new affordable houses were completed last year.
- 5.10 The shortage of land in Slough means that we are having to use employment land for housing. Some of this is coming forward without the need for planning permission through the change of use of offices to flats under the Prior Approval system. We are also planning for the selective re use of employment land for housing on places like the Akzo Nobel and Horlicks sites. At the same time Data Centres are replacing tradition warehousing or industrial units on Trading Estate.
- 5.11 The decline of Slough shopping centre is well documented and will need major investment to completely regenerate it. By comparison Farnham Road and Langley centres have very few vacancies.

#### Emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy

- 5.12 The emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy has been developed using some basic guiding principles which include locating development in the most accessible location, regenerating previously developed land, minimising the impact upon the environment and ensuring that development is both sustainable and deliverable.
- 5.13 As a result the emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy has the following five key elements:
- **Delivering** major comprehensive redevelopment within the "Centre of Slough";
  - **Selecting** other key locations for appropriate development;
  - **Protecting** the built and natural environment of Slough including the suburbs;
  - **Accommodating** the proposed third runway at Heathrow and mitigating the impact;

- **Promoting** the northern expansion of Slough in the form of a “Garden Suburb”;

5.14 The Preferred Spatial Strategy can be seen in the Key Diagram in Figure 1. An explanation of some of the key elements is set out below.

Delivering major comprehensive redevelopment within the “Centre of Slough”

5.15 We have identified Key sites for redevelopment within the Centre of Slough as shown in Figure 2.

5.16 In order to set out in detail how we intend to deliver major comprehensive redevelopment we will be producing a “Centre of Slough Development Strategy” in the new year.

5.17 One of the main issues identified at the issues and options stage was how we can revitalise the town centre as a major retail, leisure and commercial centre? One of the keys to this is the future of the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres. Unfortunately the new owners have not been able to bring forward their proposals for the redevelopment of the shopping centres as quickly as we would like and so we will have to continue to work with them to make sure that we get the sort of transformational facilities that Slough needs. Detailed proposals for the former TVU site have also not come forward yet.

5.18 With regards to other key sites, the Horlicks site has been acquired by Berkeley Homes and the Akzo Nobel site is about to be sold to a developer. We have recently agreed the development of the Octagon site for high quality high rise residential towers and a new hotel which will begin to set the scene for the area.

5.19 The Centre of Slough Development Strategy will set out a strategy for dealing with all of these sites to ensure that they come forward in a properly planned comprehensive manner.

5.20 This will have to take account of the new Transport Vision which will set out measures for promoting public transport and determining what the future access, circulation car parking requirements will be.

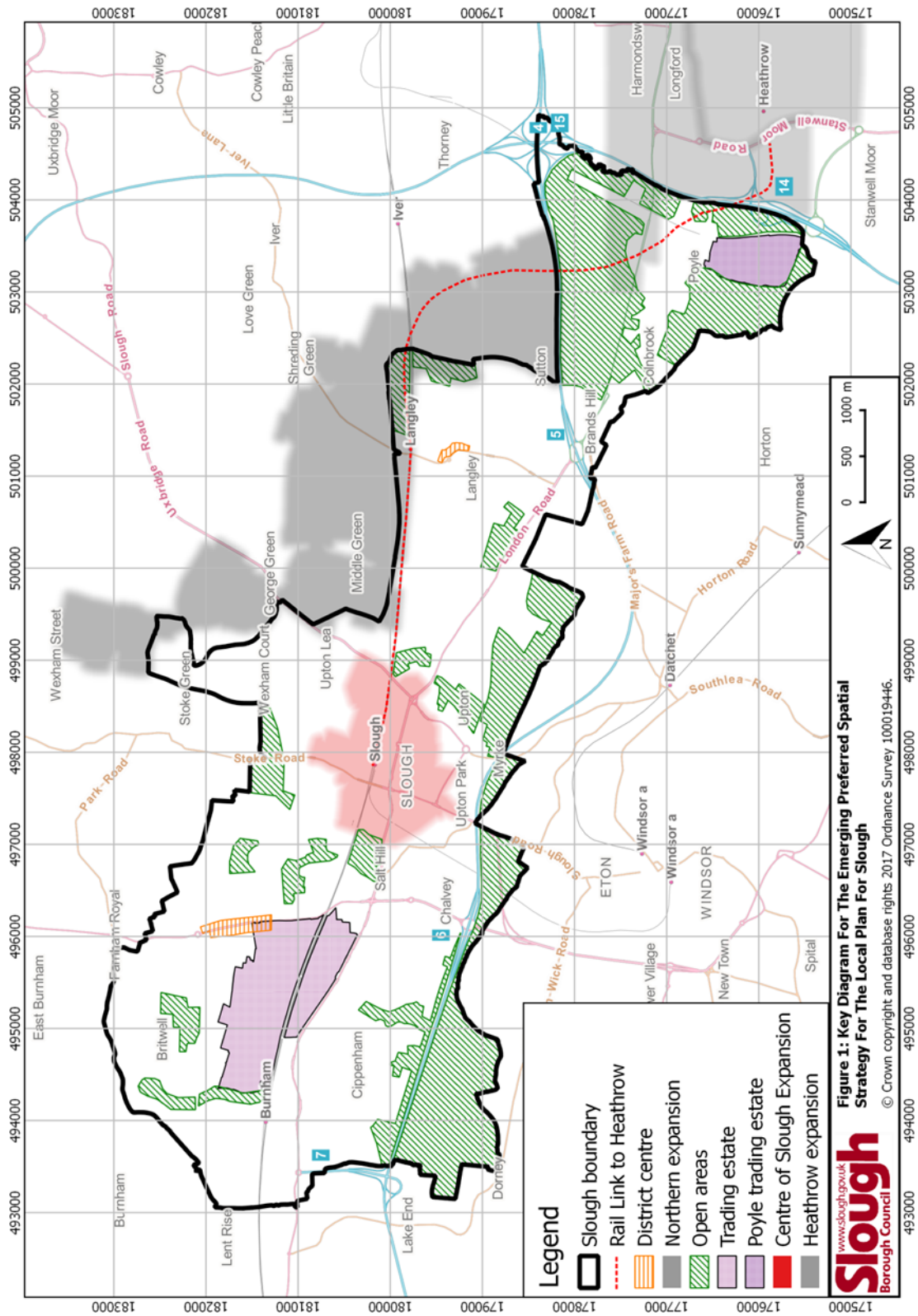


Figure 1 Spatial Strategy Key Diagram

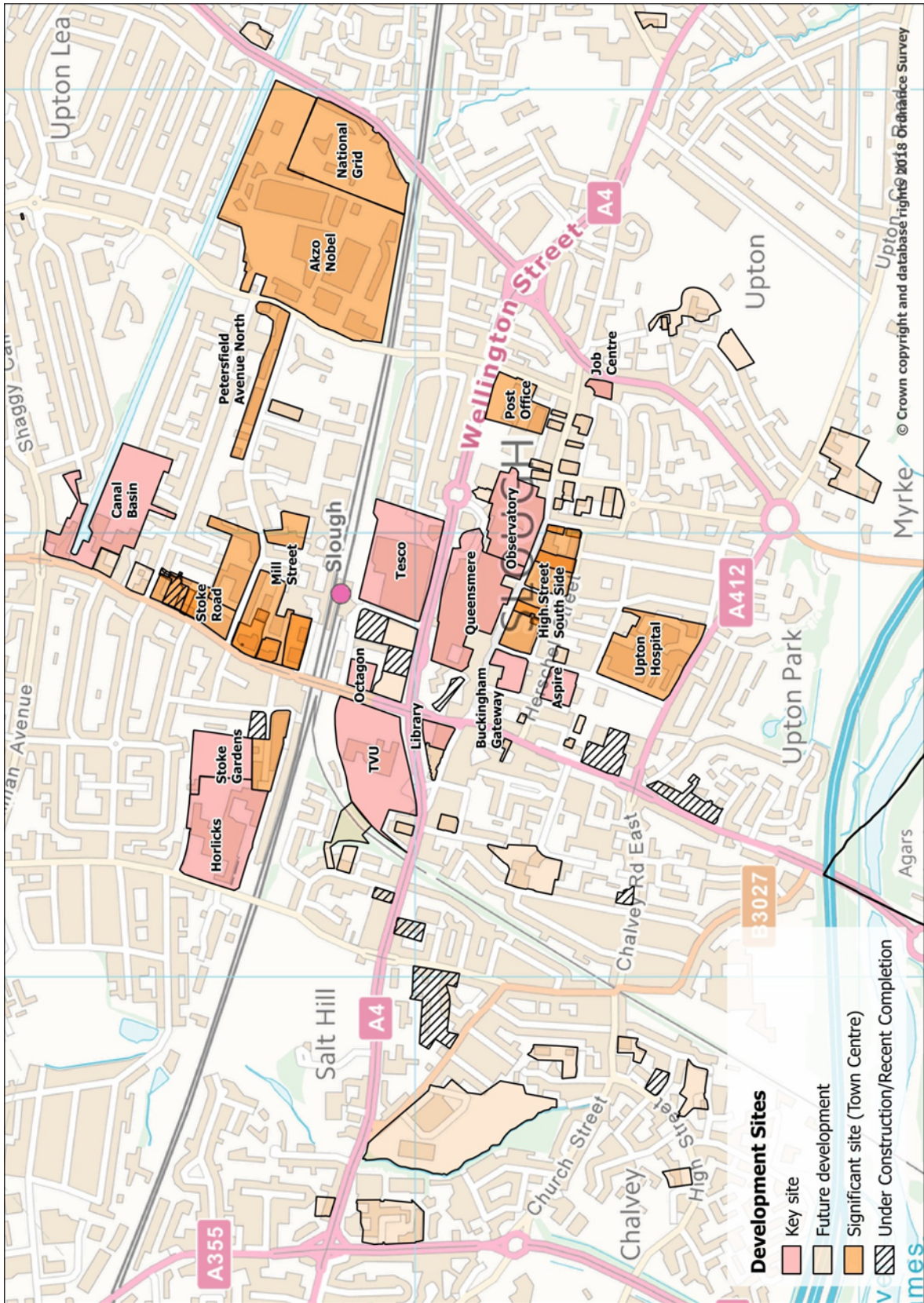


Figure 2 – Development Sites in the Centre of Slough

- 5.21 The new Development Strategy will establish the appropriate mix and scale of uses and identify character areas within the centre. It will include a building height policy and identify key linkages that need to be provided or improved. It will set out a strategy for improving public space and the public realm, including the enhancement of heritage assets. It will also identify the necessary infrastructure that will be required and the possible phasing of development.
- 5.22 The overall objective will be to promote and protect investment in the comprehensive regeneration of the centre.

#### Accommodating the Proposed Third Runway at Heathrow and Mitigating the Impact

- 5.23 There have been some important developments in the last year with regards to the proposed third runway at Heathrow.
- 5.24 In June 2018 the Government approved the Airports National Policy Statement. This establishes the need for the expansion of Heathrow and confirms the principle of a north-west runway and the principal planning policies that should be applied to it. This means that Heathrow can now proceed with preparing its application for the expansion of the airport through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process.
- 5.25 This will involve the Planning Inspectorate examining the application and then making a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport who will then decide whether or not the third runway should go ahead. A final decision is not expected until 2020.
- 5.26 The emerging Spatial Strategy agreed in November 2017 contained the following principles that should be applied to the expansion of Heathrow:
- Protect Colnbrook and Poyle villages in a “Green Envelope” and enhance the Conservation Area and built realm.
  - Prevent all through traffic but provide good public transport and cycle routes to the airport
  - Provide for the replacement of Grundons energy from waste plant and the rail depot north of the new runway
  - Ensure that there are good public transport links into Heathrow from Slough.
  - Enlarge the Poyle Trading Estate for airport related development but with access only from the M25.
  - Provide mitigation for the Colne Valley Park and ensure that existing connectivity is maintained through Crown Meadow.
  - Develop tangible measures to improve air quality in the Heathrow area
  - Ensure that all homes in the Borough that are eligible for noise insulation are provided for under the Quieter Homes Scheme.

- Ensure measures to address flood risk from the proposals include mitigation to reduce the risk of existing flooding for residents and businesses in Colnbrook and Poyle.

5.27 We have now developed this into an “Emerging Spatial Strategy for Accommodating Growth at Heathrow” . This sets out our planning principles for how the Colnbrook and Poyle area could be developed, if the proposed third runway at Heathrow goes ahead. The primary proposed land uses are shown in Figure 3 below.

5.28 From the work that Heathrow airport have produced so far, it appears that the most important issue that is likely to arise is whether or not the A3044, which currently runs east of the M25, should be relocated through Colnbrook and Poyle as a trough route which could act as a link between the M25 and M4. The Council’s position is that whilst a link is needed for public transport access to the airport and there needs to be a direct link from the Poyle Trading Estate into the airport, there should not be a new through route.

5.29 Another important issue is the need to create more jobs in Slough as a result of the expansion of Heathrow. As a result the Emerging Spatial Strategy proposes that the Poyle Trading Estate should be expanded and transformed into an area for more airport related development.



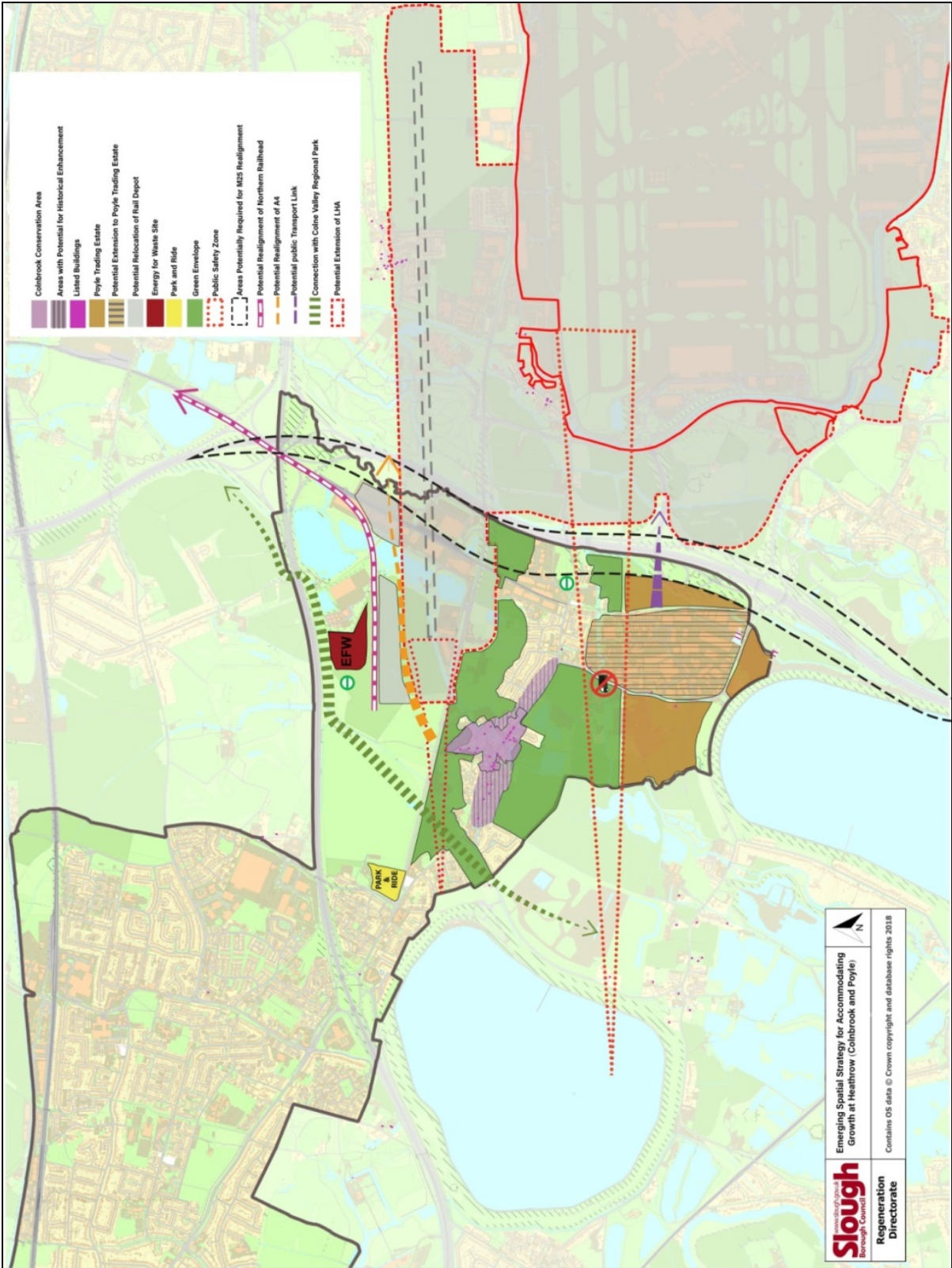


Figure 3 – Key Diagram for Colnbrook and Poyle

Promoting the northern expansion of Slough in the form of a “Garden Suburb”;

- 5.30 One of the key parts of the emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy is the promotion of a northern extension of Slough into South Bucks District in the form of a “Garden Suburb”. This is considered to be the most sustainable way of meeting Slough’s unmet needs because of its proximity to existing jobs, facilities and community facilities. It also make use of major national infrastructure investment such as the crossrail service on the Elizabeth Line.
- 5.31 It could also help to solve some existing transport problems by providing major new infrastructure to promote public transport. It would provide a range of housing including a large supply of affordable and family housing. It would therefore help to rebalance Slough’s housing market and meet local needs.
- 5.32 In order to promote the proposed new “Garden Suburb” we commissioned a high level spatial plan for the Slough Northern Extension which was produced by Atkins in September 2017.
- 5.33 This attracted strong objections from South Bucks District Council for a number of reasons which included the fact that the release of Green Belt land has not been justified. As a result they have not agreed that there is a need to meet any of Slough’s unmet housing needs within South Bucks.
- 5.34 In order to help to resolve this important cross boundary issue we have obtained Government funding for a Joint Growth Study along with Windsor & Maidenhead, South Bucks and Chiltern Councils.
- 5.35 The first part of the work is to establish the geography for a wider area growth study which can be agreed by the authorities for sound for plan-making purposes.
- 5.36 Work on the first stage is being undertaken by Peter Brett Associates whose brief is to define a growth area, or study area, that may potentially accommodate unmet development needs from the four client local authorities. They will produce a final report in February.
- 5.37 Once the study area has been agreed, the second phase of the work is to develop and test various scenarios for meeting development needs at a strategic level. All appropriate options will then be tested in order to produce a preferred solution.
- 5.38 Overall it is considered that, as a result of the work on the Joint Growth Study, we are now making progress with the promotion of the northern expansion which remains as this Council’s preferred option for meeting Slough’s unmet needs.

## Protecting the Suburbs

- 5.39 In addition to promoting growth in the most sustainable locations, an important part of the Preferred Spatial Strategy is the need to protect and enhance the suburban areas within Slough.
- 5.40 The suburban areas of Slough have already absorbed a lot of growth and it is unlikely that these areas would be able to deliver very much additional housing because of practical and viability issues.
- 5.41 They provide the main supply of family housing which is unlikely to be able to be provided elsewhere. They also contain distinctive communities with their own network of facilities.
- 5.42 As a result it is considered essential that the Preferred Strategy continues to protect the suburban residential areas from major intensive redevelopment and we maintain our current policy of not allowing the loss of existing family housing.

## **6 Conclusions**

- 6.1 This report sets out some of the important planning issues that are being considered in the development of the Preferred Spatial Strategy as part of the review of the Local Plan.
- 6.2 In particular it highlights the need to ensure that we continue to provide a range of housing to meet local needs and ensure that Slough has a balanced housing market where people can work, live and stay.

## **7 Background Papers**

Agenda Papers, Planning Committee, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Agenda Papers and Minutes, Neighbourhoods and Community Services  
Scrutiny Panel, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017