

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee **DATE:** 24th June 2020

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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR DECISION**

PROTECTING THE SUBURBS STRATEGY DOCUMENT

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Member's approval for the Protecting the Suburbs Strategy Document. This document supports the emerging preferred Spatial Strategy for the Local Plan for Slough and sets the direction of travel for future development management policies.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Committee is requested to resolve that:

- a) The proposed Protecting the Suburbs Strategy Document in Appendix A be adopted and approved for publication;
- b) Delegated powers be given to the Planning Policy Lead Officer to make minor changes to the document prior to publication.

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

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

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

- *Economy and Skills*
- *Regeneration and Environment*
- *Housing*

3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes

The Protecting the Suburbs Strategy document will have impact upon the following Five Year outcomes:

- **Outcome 3: Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay.** Our strategy will contribute towards ensuring Slough is an attractive place to live in by protecting our suburbs through managed change to enhance their distinct local character, environment and sense of

place for our current and future communities to live in.

- **Outcomes 4: Our residents will live in good quality homes.** By protecting the housing in the suburbs from intensification it will retain much needed family housing for our communities. This will make the suburbs a place where our residents feel a sense of belonging and are able to live in good quality and affordable homes.

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications.

(b) Risk Management

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Risk/Threat/Opportunity</i>	<i>Mitigation(s)</i>
That the Committee approves the recommendation.	Failure to agree the Protecting the Suburbs Strategy document will affect the Council's ability to plan for development in the most sustainable way.	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.

4 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 4.1 The suburban areas of Slough have an important role to play in making sure that there is a continuing supply of family houses to meet resident's needs. The Local Plan proposes that major growth should take place in locations such as the centre of Slough. This will predominately deliver new flats. An important part of the emerging preferred Spatial Strategy is therefore to protect the existing stock of family houses from redevelopment or change of use and manage the suburbs in a way which enhances their distinct local character, the quality of the environment and sense of place. The Protecting the Suburbs Document explains how and why this needs to be done and will form an important part of the evidence needed to support the emerging preferred Spatial Strategy in the Local Plan.

Current Planning Policy Framework

- 4.2 The proposal to protect the suburbs from intensification is a continuation of existing planning policy in Slough. The Core Strategy's Policy CP4 (Housing Type) states that "there will be no net loss of family housing" and that "within the suburban residential areas there will only be limited infilling that will consist of family houses that are designed to enhance the distinctive suburban character and identity of the area" This has proved to be a robust and effective policy. The Council has been successfully winning planning appeals using Policy CP4, which

has been found to be compliant with National Planning Policy Framework. Crucially Policy CP4 has continued to be given full weight in appeal decisions even in the absence of a 5 year land supply. The successful implementation of Policy CP4 provides significant justification for the continued application of this policy though our emerging Local Plan. Appendix 2 in the Strategy document provides the full details of the Planning Appeal decisions that show the success of Policy CP4 in protecting the suburbs character and appearance.

Delivering Sustainable Development

- 4.3 Protecting the suburbs from intensification supports our strategy to deliver sustainable development by locating development in the most accessible locations in the borough and regenerating previously developed land. The modelling results of the Slough Public Transport Accessibility Level Study (2018) supports the delivery of major housing and jobs growth in the centre of Slough as this is the most accessible place in the borough with high public transport accessibility. The centre of Slough contains a large number of brownfield sites and has facilities and services to meet local needs. In contrast, the suburbs in Slough have poor public transport levels and are much less accessible.

Housing Needs

- 4.4 Since the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2008, Slough's need for new homes has significantly grown. The Core Strategy housing target is 315 new homes per year, however Slough's housing need is now 893 new homes per year as per the Government's standard methodology. Slough's Local Housing Needs Assessment (2019) identified the biggest need for 3 bed homes as well as 2 and 4 bed homes in the borough.
- 4.5 The Annual Monitoring Report 2018-2019 data on development completions shows that most of Borough's housing completions are flats and this trend is set to continue in the future. Whilst the data on small sites completions shows that backland development makes up a minimal number of the small sites housing completions in the Borough. This demonstrates that intensifying the suburbs will not make a significant contribution towards meeting our housing needs.
- 4.6 It is therefore important to prevent any further loss of family housing through intensification of the suburbs because they provide the main supply of family housing which is unlikely to be delivered elsewhere in the Borough.

Why the Suburbs won't deliver the homes we need

- 4.7 Our analysis of the evidence shows that the availability of suitable land in the suburbs for infill development is very limited and the suburbs have already been intensified through extensions and outbuildings in gardens. It showed that Slough is more densely built up in a way that is more comparable with London than its neighbouring local authorities and that the suburbs have played a valuable role in absorbing a lot population growth and have already been fairly intensified. Overall it showed that by intensifying the suburbs it will not deliver very many additional units over and above the current level of small site completions that we have at present.
- 4.8 By utilising the methodology set out in the Wycombe District Council's Housing Intensification Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2011), the Strategy Document assessed the potential for growth in the suburbs without causing

negative outcomes such as bad design or poor living conditions. This involved measuring the depth between the backs of existing buildings in the suburbs and identifying whether there is available space for new development to fit in. It used the following depth categories as set in Table 1 below for the assessment.

Table 1: Depth Categories

Depth Categories
Depth between dwellings is smaller than 60m: no type of intensification is possible.
Depth between dwellings is between 60m to 80m: possible new perpendicular street or mews.
Depth between dwellings is between 80m to 100m: possible new two sided street.
Depth between dwellings is larger than 100m: possible new short cul-de-sac.

- 4.9 To calculate the capacity for intensification the following steps were performed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Methodology

Step 1	Residential blocks in Slough were defined.
Step 2	<p>For every block:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All distances between residential buildings were calculated. - All distances across existing roads were ignored; only distances across rear gardens were used. - Blocks were classified using the categories above.

- 4.10 The analysis of the depths between the back of existing buildings revealed very limited opportunity for backland development, with only 9.1% of the Slough area having potential for possible intensification with the mews type development having the most potential. It concluded that intensifying the suburbs using infill development would make a minimal contribution towards delivering the significant number of new homes needed in Slough.

- 4.11 There are also a number of delivery constraints that mean intensifying the suburbs will not deliver the homes we need. Most infill developments will produce fewer than 15 additional units and therefore under government policy these developments will not be able to contribute towards either affordable housing or towards other community infrastructure. There are also other issues relating to the practicalities of delivering intensification in the suburbs such as site assembly and multiple ownership making delivery unviable.

Protecting the Environment

- 4.12 Slough is already very urbanised and the suburbs are some of the borough's greenest areas. They have an important role in tackling climate change, reducing air pollution and contributing towards the health and well-being of residents. The trees and vegetation in the suburbs also make them an attractive place to live in and add to their local character. Intensifying the suburbs will result in a loss trees and vegetation and which would have a negative impact on the environment and character of the suburbs.

Supporting Sustainable and Liveable Communities

- 4.13 The distinct local character of the suburbs plays an important part in the image and attractiveness of Slough and is one of the reasons why residents choose to live in there. Intensifying the suburbs could have a damaging impact on the character of the suburbs. Inappropriate new building could have a cumulative negative impact that would change the character of the suburbs in a permanent way.
- 4.14 Intensification could result in a loss of community cohesion if new development resulted in a more transient population and a reduction in family housing. Protecting the suburbs through managed change will ensure they deliver balanced communities.
- 4.15 Overdevelopment of the suburbs through intensification would result in poorer living conditions for existing and new residents. The suburbs are therefore important for social reasons and any major growth should take place away from the suburbs in order to be as least disruptive as possible for the existing local communities.

The emerging preferred Spatial Strategy for the Local Plan

- 4.16 One of the five key elements of the emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy is:
 - **Protecting** the built and natural environment of Slough including the suburbs;
- 4.17 The Strategy Document supports this key element of the emerging preferred Spatial Strategy by protecting the residential parts of the suburbs and managing change in a way which enhances their distinct local character, environment and sense of place. This will mean that the suburbs will continue to provide a place for sustainable and balanced communities where people want to live.
- 4.18 The suburbs will continue to provide the main stock of family housing in the borough and will accommodate Slough's housing needs in a different way by providing extra bedrooms and increased living space rather than providing a large numbers of new homes. This will be achieved through the provision of extensions to homes and outbuildings in gardens.
- 4.19 There will be very limited infilling development in the residential parts of the suburbs and this will consist of family houses that are designed to enhance the distinct local character and identity of the area. The density of new development will be reflective of the accessibility of the area. However there will still be opportunities for development in the neighbourhood centres and on sites that don't currently have family housing, including estate renewal.
- 4.20 The strategy supports the Council's growth ambitions and corporate strategies to deliver major housing and employment growth in the centre of Slough and reflects this in the key elements of the emerging preferred Spatial Strategy for the Local Plan.
- 4.21 Protecting the suburbs will not prevent the delivery of the Council's Housing Strategy to deliver new homes or redeveloping existing ones. This can take place in a number of ways such as redeveloping surplus garage courts through to redeveloping other types of Council owned housing which aren't fit for purpose.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Protecting the Suburbs Strategy Document forms an important part of the evidence base for the emerging preferred Spatial Strategy for the Local Plan for Slough. The Strategy Document demonstrates why family housing in the suburbs must be protected and how vital a role the suburbs have in continuing to provide the main supply of family housing in the Borough. This Strategy Document will support the Local Plan's vision and objectives for the Borough by ensuring that the suburbs are protected and any changes are managed in a way which will enhance their distinct local character, the quality of the environment and sense of place.

7 Appendices

"A" - Draft Protecting the Suburbs Strategy Document