

Chapter 7: Spatial Strategy and core strategic spatial policies

Introduction

- 7.1 In order to deliver the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives, the Core Strategy sets out a series of key “place shaping” policies, which together provide the framework to guide future development in Slough.
- 7.2 The overall Spatial Strategy is contained in Core Policy 1. This sets out the principles for where development should be located in the Borough. All of the subsequent policies have a role in delivering this strategy and shaping the future of Slough. As a result each of these policies has a short explanation as to how it will be implemented and what the implications will be for the different areas in the Borough.
- 7.3 The Core Strategy policies will form the strategic framework for the preparation of all subsequent Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). These will provide further details as to how the Core Policies will be implemented.
- 7.4 The council is required to monitor the extent to which the objectives of the Core Strategy are being achieved, both in terms of their performance and their compliance with Sustainability Objectives. The indicators which will be employed to monitor the performance of the strategy are listed after each policy. A number of these indicators are drawn from the Core Output Indicators (COI) that are monitored as part of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). Where this is the case the COI number has been added to the indicator in brackets.

Spatial Strategy

- 7.5 The lack of suitable land for the outward expansion of the town, along with other constraints means that there are only a limited number of options for the future development of the Borough.

- 7.6 The preferred Spatial Strategy that emerged from the consultation on the Issues and Options report can be summarised as one of ***“concentrating development but spreading the benefits to help build local communities”***.
- 7.7 The key principle of this strategy is that all intensive trip generating development should be built in the most accessible location. In effect, this means directing development to Slough town centre since this is the most accessible for all of forms of transport. The co-location of employment, shopping, leisure, transport and other facilities in one place also means that people can carry out more than one activity in a single journey and there will be a boost to the local retail economy. The strategy is also the one that is the most likely to cut carbon emissions, not just by focusing development in accessible locations, but also because of the potential for getting decentralised energy systems within major comprehensive mixed use developments.
- 7.8 The strategy also recognises that parts of Slough town centre are in need of environmental enhancement and that the centre has the most capacity for absorbing major change. The prominence of the town centre also means that any improvements to its image, environment or facilities are likely to have maximum benefit for the Borough as a whole.
- 7.9 The Spatial Strategy is also in line with the national policy to put town centres first and seeks to implement the “Region Hub” concept in the draft South East Plan (Doc.10).
- 7.10 The spatial strategy will therefore build upon major town centre regeneration schemes such as the Heart of Slough project and promote a sustainable, comprehensively planned, high-quality, high-density, mixed-use environment and ensure that the necessary infrastructure and community facilities/services are located in highly accessible locations.

- 7.11 The findings of the Sustainability Appraisal Report (Doc.22) confirm that this Spatial Strategy is the most sustainable spatial option for Slough. It will not only direct development into the most accessible locations in the Borough, but also protect other more environmentally sensitive areas from over-development. It is therefore the strategy which is most likely to protect the existing biodiversity of the Borough. There will however be some negative effects generated by the Spatial Strategy. If development is not appropriately planned for the Spatial Strategy this may increase in-commuting and congestion and impact adversely upon certain local environmental conditions in the town centre, including air quality. The Spatial Strategy will result in more tall buildings, a predominance of flats and the need for parking restraint in the town centre.
- 7.12 The Spatial Strategy recognises that not all development could or should take place in the town centre and that some other areas within the Borough need to change. An important part of the "spreading the benefits" part of the strategy is that selected areas outside of the town centre should also be regenerated. Parts of Britwell and the Slough Trading Estate are examples of such areas which would benefit from being redeveloped in a comprehensive, properly planned and co-ordinated manner. The scale of development in these areas will depend upon the existing and proposed accessibility of sites and the extent of any environmental constraints.
- 7.13 Some relaxation of the policies and standards in the Core Strategy may be permitted in order to maximise the potential social, environmental and economic benefits that planned regeneration may bring.
- 7.14 The strategy will also allow for the redevelopment of individual sites in the more accessible "urban" areas of the town. This will generally be confined to Existing Business Areas, District and Neighbourhood shopping centres, some main road frontages and other mixed use medium or high density areas that are well served by public transport.
- 7.15 One of the other main benefits of concentrating development in the town centre is that there will be less pressure for development in the rest of the Borough. This means that local centres and facilities can be enhanced and managed in a way which meets local needs and encourages community cohesion. The existing residential neighbourhoods, or "suburban" areas, will also benefit from not being required to make a significant contribution to meeting the housing allocation. They can therefore also continue to adapt to meet the diverse needs of the local communities through appropriate extensions and limited infilling with family housing. The strategy also allows for full protection to be given to the most environmentally sensitive areas of the Borough such as Wildlife Heritage Sites, parks and open spaces, Conservation Areas and Areas of Exceptional Residential Character.
- 7.16 The Spatial Strategy also means that there is no need to build on any land outside of the urban area which has been ruled out for a number of reasons. Firstly at a strategic level, development in the Colnbrook and Poyle area would not be very sustainable because it would not form a natural urban extension of Slough. Secondly development there would fill in the very narrow gap between Slough and Greater London. Thirdly much of the land is subject to a number of physical or technical constraints. These include the land being subject to flooding, being landfilled, having unsuitable access, being in the Public Safety Zone and being subject to excessive noise or poor air quality.
- 7.17 The development of the open land around Slough would also be contrary to Government policy of making the best use of previously developed land and would be contrary to Green Belt policy. The adoption of the Spatial Strategy of concentrating development means that Slough's housing allocation can be met within the urban area

and so there is no need to consider reviewing the Green Belt boundary. This is confirmed in the Report of the Panel for the South East Plan (Doc.44) which does not recommend making any changes to the Green Belt around Slough.

CORE POLICY 1 (SPATIAL STRATEGY)

All development will have to comply with the Spatial Strategy set out in this document.

All development will take place within the built up area, predominantly on previously developed land, unless there are very special circumstances that would justify the use of Green Belt land. A strategic gap will be maintained between Slough and Greater London.

Proposals for high density housing, intensive employment generating uses, such as B1(a) offices, and intensive trip generating uses, such as major retail or leisure uses, will be located in the appropriate parts of Slough town centre. Such development will have to be comprehensively planned in order to deliver maximum social, environmental and economic benefits to the wider community.

Proposals for the comprehensive regeneration of selected key locations within the Borough will also be encouraged at an appropriate scale. Some relaxation of the policies or standards in the Local Development Framework may be allowed where this can be justified by the overall environmental, social and economic benefits that will be provided to the wider community.

Elsewhere the scale and density of development will be related to the site's current or proposed accessibility, character and surroundings. Significant intensification of use will not be allowed in locations that lack the necessary supporting infrastructure, facilities or services or where access by sustainable means of travel by public transport, cycling and walking are limited.

Target:

- 95% of all housing development to be on previously developed land by 2016.

Indicators:

- Percentage of residential and employment generating development completed on previously developed land (COI 1c and 2b);
- Percentage of B1 (a) development completed in the town centre (COI 1b); and
- Percentage of major retail and leisure development completed within the town centre and district centres (COI 4b).

Implementation

7.18 This policy will be implemented, in conjunction with all of the other policies in the plan, through the development control process. It will also be implemented through a combination of public and private initiatives. The council will prepare a Development Control Policies and Site Allocations DPD plus informal documents such as Supplementary Planning Guidance, which could include Design Briefs. Developers will be encouraged to prepare Master Plans for the comprehensive redevelopment of areas such as the Heart of Slough, Queensmere/Observatory shopping centres and Slough Trading Estate. The extent of the town centre will be defined through the Site Allocations DPD. It is likely that will be based upon the Commercial Core Area in the current Local Plan (Doc.24) with possible extensions to take in locations such as part of the Stoke Road area immediately north of the central station.

7.19 The council has already begun to implement the strategy of concentrating development in the town centre by allowing a number of high density mixed use, commercial and residential developments. These will begin to transform the appearance of areas such as that north of the railway station, the A4 corridor and the Windsor Road, into attractive squares and boulevards.

- 7.20 The regeneration of Slough town centre will also be implemented through major environmental enhancement schemes such as the Heart of Slough, Art@the Centre and the central station forecourt improvements. It will also be implemented through local and national transport and infrastructure proposals projects, such as those set out in the Local Transport Plan (Doc.14) and for Crossrail.
- 7.21 The council has also been proactive in promoting the Heart of Slough regeneration scheme in conjunction with English Partnerships and other development partners. This involves the comprehensive redevelopment of 12.7 ha of land; including the Brunel bus station, the library, Thames Valley University and the area around St Etheberts Church. In addition to making major changes to the urban townscape and the quality of the public realm it will provide a new bus station, new library building, new university facilities as well as significant amounts of new residential and commercial floorspace.
- 7.22 The overall effect of the strategy of concentrating development in the town centre through regeneration schemes such as the Heart of Slough will be to transform it into a more pedestrian friendly and attractive centre, with improved facilities which will improve the vitality and viability of the centre and enhance the overall image of the town.
- 7.23 As part of the "spreading the benefits" part of the Spatial Strategy, there will also be other selected regeneration projects, which will include Britwell, Slough Trading Estate and parts of Chalvey. These will be expected to be comprehensively planned to meet the diverse needs of the local community. Other selected key locations and regeneration projects are discussed in more detail in the implementation sections of subsequent policies. Proposals for other areas for comprehensive regeneration will be considered in the subsequent Site Allocations DPD.

- 7.24 Whilst the Spatial Strategy provides a clear indication as to what should go where, it does allow for some relaxation of policy, in exceptional circumstances, where it can be demonstrated that there will be social, economic and social benefits to the wider community. This will provide flexibility within the strategy and allow the council to manage any unforeseen circumstances that may occur in specific locations in the Borough. A further explanation as to how the Spatial Strategy will affect areas of the Borough is provided in the relevant sections below.

Green belt and open spaces

- 7.25 Whilst most of the Borough is built up, there is a significant area of open land around Colnbrook & Poyle and smaller areas to the north and south of Slough which are designated as Metropolitan Green Belt. It has been established in the Spatial Strategy that there is no need to review the Green Belt boundaries in Slough and so all of this land will continue to be subject to Green Belt policy. Planning Policy Guidance 2 - Green Belts (PPG2) sets out a general presumption against all uses that would affect the openness of the land; apart from agriculture, forestry, some sport and recreational purposes or mineral workings.

