

Slough Borough Council

Information needed	Details
Report To:	Planning Committee
Date:	26 th February 2025
Subject:	Update to the Local Development Scheme for the Slough Local Plan
Chief Officer:	Dan Ray; Chief Planning Officer
Contact Officer:	Pippa Hopkins, Planning Policy Manager
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	Draft Local Development Scheme March 2025

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members about the need to publish a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) which sets out the timetable for delivery of the new Local Plan, and seek approval for the LDS in the Appendix.

Recommendations:

1.2 Committee is requested to resolve:

That the draft Local Development Scheme in the Appendix be approved for publication on the Council’s website.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

2.1 The Council is required to set out its timetable for the preparation of the local plan in a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Government has asked all local planning authorities to publish an updated LDS on their website by 6 March 2025. The updated draft LDS for the Slough Local Plan is at Appendix 1 and proposes consultation on the Local Plan in February 2026 and submission for examination in December 2026.

Publication of an up to date Local Development Scheme

- 2.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (section 15) requires the local planning authority to prepare and maintain a local development scheme. The Deputy Prime Minister asked local planning authorities to review and produce an updated LDS within 12 weeks of the publication of the NPPF, i.e. by no later than 6 March 2025 (MHCLG Chief Planners Newsletter December 2024). The LDS should include clear, realistic, and specific dates for consultation and submission of a Local Plan, define what development plan documents will be produced and when, with what they will contain and the geographical area they will cover.
- 2.3 Slough’s March 2025 LDS includes dates for key stages for the new Local Plan to progress including a new ‘Call for Sites’ from May 2025, publication of a draft local plan for consultation in February 2026, and to the Secretary of State in December 2026. An explanation of the two stages is in Figure 2 below.
- 2.4 The approval of the LDS provides for the delivery of the new Local Plan (a Development Plan) which will take a proactive approach to deliver the Council’s corporate priorities including regeneration in the town centre, environmental quality, adapting to climate change, addressing health inequalities, housing need, and enabling inward investment for employment.
- 2.5 The Government have made it clear that housing delivery continues to be a starting point for Local Plans. The new local housing need figure for Slough is equivalent to 808 additional homes per year. The figure for 23/4 was 825. To date the Council is delivering fewer than this annually. The new Local Plan will set out if or how we can meet Slough’s need for housing.
- 2.6 Slough will progress its Local Plan according to the LDS and other Government requirements that emerge. There will be scope to revise the LDS if necessary.

Figure 2 Stages of Plan progress

(Pre-Submission) Publication Stage (Regulation 19)
<p>This is with the Council will publish a planning document for a statutory consultation period of six weeks before it is submitted to the Government for ‘Examination’ by an independent Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate. A Sustainability Appraisal report will be issued as part of the pre-submission public consultation. To get to this stage the Council needs a special evidence base to inform the needs the plan has to address, and agreement from some statutory consultees (such as the Environment Agency and National Highways) that the approach the plan takes is acceptable.</p> <p>The local planning authority can then make changes to the draft document or decide to carry out further consultation if the changes needed are significant.</p>

Submission of Document and Independent Examination (Regulation 22)

This is when the final draft document is submitted to the Government, and an independent Inspector holds an Examination into the plan, including checking it has produced properly. The Examination allows anyone to participate on key issues or questions highlighted by the Inspector.

The Inspector can require further changes and recommend adoption where they consider the Plan satisfies legal requirements and can be considered 'sound'. The Council can then adopt the Plan and it can become the adopted Development Plan.

Background

- 2.7 Local plans form part of the statutory 'development plan' for an area. This forms the starting point for the determination of planning applications, unless material considerations strongly indicate otherwise. The Government has confirmed the importance of a plan led development system through updates to the NPPF, PPG, and proposals for new bills and working papers, including to implement some of the proposals set out in the Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023.
- 2.8 The Council was making good progress in producing the new Local plan for Slough. A report to Planning Committee in March 2022 reported results of the consultation on the release of sites for family housing in the Green Belt. In March 2023 the business case to continue was paused to address budget shortfalls associated with Government intervention, and the consequential inability to meet deadlines set out by the (previous) Government.
- 2.9 The Council remained pro-growth and with resources available progressed with renewal of the SPZ.. The 2024-2034 SPZ was successfully adopted in November 2024. The Council regards the need to restart work on the Local Plan as a key priority. A new deadline for Plans to be submitted for examination by the current Government has made that possible.
- 2.10 On 12 December the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) update was published, alongside the Government's response to the consultation which launched in July 2024. The new NPPF is effective immediately.
- 2.11 The NPPF proposed some significant changes to national policy as part of a broader agenda for changes to Planning over the next year and parliamentary term. The Government has confirmed further information on these (such as for consistent application of grey belt and the golden rules) will be published this year. 'In headline terms', the new NPPF:
- Makes housing targets mandatory and reverses other changes made under the previous Government regarding housing supply;

- Implements a new standard method formula to ensure local plans are in line with the Government's manifesto commitment of 1.5 million new homes in this Parliament;
 - Confirms transitional arrangements for local plans in the existing system;
 - Defines grey belt land within the Green Belt, to be brought forward for homes and other important development through both plan and decision-making;
 - Defines new 'golden rules' for land released in the Green Belt to ensure release delivers in the public interest, as well as the policy considerations of affordable housing, design quality, and sustainable locations that are part of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 2.12 Members were made aware of the main matters for Slough in an amendment sheet presented at the December 2024 Planning Committee, and Member training provided before Planning Committee in January 2025.
- 2.13 In anticipation of these changes the Council requested an advisory visit from the Planning Inspectorate in January. The Planning team explained some of the complexities we had faced in progressing with the Plan. We set out what we were doing to enable new homes to be built, protect existing family housing, and the Council's challenge to identify sufficient housing sites to meet all the Borough's need for affordable and family housing within the Borough. We also explained how we were doing well with attracting employers to the Borough, and wanted to create new jobs from allocating and protecting land for different sectors such as logistics and warehousing connected with Heathrow, and the reason the Plan was paused previously because of the ANPS as explained in the April 2019 LDS.
- 2.14 The inspector advised that Slough should progress with its Local Plan, in accordance with the NPPF 2024 (such as para. 11b), and under the existing system for Plan making rather than wait for the introduction of the new system proposed in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, or proposals for Heathrow.
- 2.15 Since the PINS Advisory meeting the Government expressed its support for a third runway at Heathrow, and Heathrow Airport Limited confirmed their objective to get a decision within the current Parliamentary term, and complete other expansion proposals before delivering the third runway.
- 2.16 The Council wants to progress with the timetable in the proposed LDS. The plan will set a positive approach towards Heathrow expansion as

part of meeting employment need, and cross boundary engagement on strategic infrastructure.

- 2.17 The preferred location for third runway in the Airport National Policy Statement includes significant land in the east of the Borough, but the ANPS does not mean the Council can formally safeguard the land to prevent development. The local plan was paused previously due to expansion proposals, and there is a slight risk because it is a national strategic infrastructure project that proposals could delay the plan again. The Inspectorate have advised we can ask for additional advisory meetings if needed, so we may ask for their advice on the matter if it risks the plan meeting the plan making requirements set out in the NPPF and Local Plan Regulations 2012¹.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

- 3.1 Financial implications
- 3.2 Producing a local plan has significant funding implications, including for external work for evidence gathering and an examination in public. Not having this funding paused the plan progressing previously, and progressing the plan remains dependent on funding.
- 3.3 Key parts of the strategy work have been completed, and the proposed next stage (an update to the Statement of Community Involvement and a Call for Sites) can be carried out in house with minimal external consultants. This LDS sets out an ambitious timetable however and if the business case approval is delayed this will impact the ability to meet this timetable.
- 3.4 Achieving the timetable in this LDS is also dependent upon the Council having sufficient staff resources, and managing risks such as the new procurement process, availability of suitable consultants to assist preparation of evidence and policy formulation, approval of strategies from external statutory consultees, and adapting to impacts beyond the Council's control such as the change to the plan making system or national infrastructure. Financial impacts of resolving these will be considered.
- 3.5 The Chief Planning Officer and Planning Policy Manager have made cost savings to date through applications for grant funded evidence and joint

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/767/contents>

working to minimize the revenue business case needed. If the business case is not approved this will impact the ability to complete the Plan.

3.6 Legal implications

None. The LDS sets out the Council's intentions to produce plan. Failure to publish an updated LDS by March 6th 2025 will could put the Council at a disadvantage with the Government.

3.7 Environmental implications

No direct implications as it's a timetable for preparation.

3.8 Equality implications

None, this report is about a work program and compliance with Government regulations. The plan itself will consider equality impacts.

4. Background Papers

[links underlined in blue]

MHCLG Chief Planner [December 2024 Planning Newsletter](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework December 2024](#)

[Government response to NPPF consultation](#)

[Planning Inspectorate Heathrow Airport 3rd runway consenting process.](#)

Appendix

Draft Local Development Scheme for Slough, March 2025



DRAFT for Planning Committee
Slough Borough Council
Local Development Scheme (LDS)
March 2025

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1 Overview

- 1.1 A Local Development Scheme sets out the programme for preparing and adopting Development Plan Documents (DPDs) for a local planning area. Local planning authorities (LPA) are required to maintain and publish an up to date LDS.
- 1.2 This Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out Slough Borough Council's timetable and updates that published in April 2019. The Local Development Scheme will be available on the Council website and be updated in the future where necessary.
- 1.3 The LDS March 2025 proposes , dependent on funding, that the DPD for Slough Borough Council (SBC) will be in the form of a Local Plan with Strategic Policies, site allocations and a Proposals Map, with publication of the Plan in February 2026 and submission to the Secretary of State for examination in December 2026.

2 Government reforms to the Plan making process

- 2.1 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (October 2023) introduced a new system for the preparation of Local Plans. The Secondary legislation required has yet to be published. The consultation document on the LURA2 (para. 40) reiterated proposals for Local Plans that they will need to be adopted within 30 months.
- 2.2 These are part of more changes to Planning that the current government will implement to deliver their 15.million homes target. They are expected to include the LURA proposals for publication of National Development Management Policies; a Planning and Infrastructure Bill; further guidance on the application of Grey Belt and updates to the Compulsory Purchase Order procedures.
- 2.3 A consultation document on the responses to published alongside the draft revised NPPF in (Chapter 12, published in July 233) advised that LPAs without an up-to-date plan should not stop work on a plan with the intention of preparing a plan under the new system but rather should continue to progress their plans to adoption under the existing system⁴ without delay. To do so, plans should be submitted for examination no later than December 2026. The Government considers this allows time to progress positive plans that will stand up to scrutiny at examination.
- 2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2024. The transitional arrangements mean for the purpose of preparing local plans, Slough's Local Plan will be prepared under the Dec 2024 NPPF.

3 Slough Local Development Scheme

- 3.1 SBC have considered the Plan making requirements in the Plan Making Regulations 2012, LURA and NPPF, and advice from the Planning Inspectorate Advisory meeting held on 28th January 2025. As a result SBC have decided to continue to progress under the current development plans system. The LDS will be updated in the future if needed.
- 3.2 The LDS should state:
- the local development documents that will be produced;
 - the subject matter and geographical area to which each document is to relate;
 - which documents are to have 'development plan' status;
 - which documents (if any) are to be prepared jointly with one or more other local planning authorities;
 - any matter or area where there is, or is likely to be, a joint committee;
 - the timetable for the preparation and revision of the documents
- 3.3 A DPD for Slough Borough Council will be produced in the form of a Local Plan. The Local Plan will contain a Vision, Spatial Strategy, Strategic Policies, site allocations and a Proposals Map. The Plan will cover the geographical area of Slough Borough Council shown outlined in red in figure 1 below.
- 3.4 No documents are to be prepared jointly at this stage, and there is no intention at present to have a formal joint committee. The plan will cover at least 15 years from the anticipated date of adoption as required by national policy and is expected to cover a 20 year period from 1st April 2025.
- 3.5 Slough proposes the timetable set out in Figure 2 below.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-consultation-on-implementation-of-plan-making-reforms#chapter2>

³ [Government response to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system consultation - GOV.UK](#)

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making>

Figure 1 Geographical area for Slough local plan

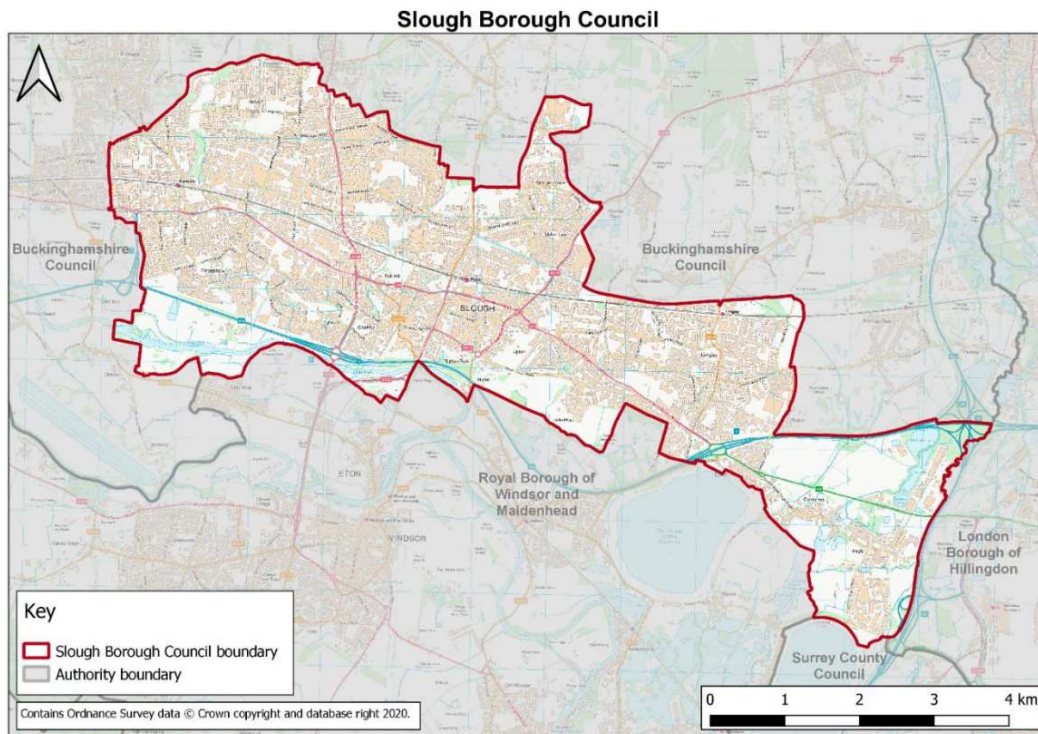


Figure 2 Key Milestones for the preparation and revision of the documents.

Evidence gathering including review of existing evidence	Ongoing
Update to the Statement of Community Involvement	April 2025
Call for Sites	May 2025
Update to the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping report	From April 2025
Publication/ Pre-submission consultation (Regulation 19)	February 2026
Submission (Regulation 22)	December 2026
Examination (Regulation 24)	To be confirmed by Inspectorate
Consultation on modifications	If necessary
Receipt of Inspector's Report (Regulation 25)	To be confirmed by Inspectorate
Adoption (Regulation 26)	To be confirmed

4 Background

- 4.1 The Slough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2006-2026 was adopted in December 2008. The Site Allocations and Proposals Map were adopted in 2010 and there are saved policies from the Local Plan 2004. These documents will remain the statutory Development Plan until the new Local Plan reaches adoption. There are also saved policies from the Adopted Minerals and Waste Plans that will be retained and continue to form part of the Development Plan.
- 4.2 The Slough Local Plan 2025-2045 will replace the Core Strategy 2006-2026 DPD, Site Allocations DPD 2010. We anticipate saved policies from the 2004 Local Plan will be replaced by the National Development Management Policies.
- 4.3 Work on the plan to date is summarised here:
- Intention to Prepare a Local Plan: January 2015.
 - Call for Sites January-March 2016
 - Consultation on the Call for Sites: June 2016
 - Issues and Options Consultation: January 2017
 - Spatial Strategy consultation: November 2020
 - Proposed release of Green Belt Sites for Family Housing consultation: November 2021
- 4.4 The Council was making good progress in producing the new plan but several events impacted progress including uncertainty caused by DCO proposals for the Heathrow 3rd Runway, Covid and a section 114 notice by the Council in June 2021 that lead to a freeze on non-essential expenditure and further recruitment.
- 4.5 An LDS was published in April 2019, and a report to Planning Committee in March 2022 reported results of the consultation on the release of sites for family housing in the Green Belt.
- 4.6 In March 2023 the business case to continue was paused to address budget shortfalls associated with Government intervention, and the consequential inability to meet deadlines set out by previous Government.
- 4.7 The Council remained pro-growth and with resources available progressed with renewal of the Slough Trading Estate SPZ in the interim. The 2024-2034 SPZ was successfully adopted in November 2024. The Council regards the need to restart work on the Local Plan as a key priority. A new deadline for Plans to be submitted for examination by the current Government has made that possible.

5 Risks

- 5.1 The LDS once approved is an intention to progress Plan preparation. Parts of producing a local plan have significant funding implications, including for external work for evidence gathering and an examination in public. Not having this funding paused the plan progressing previously. This LDS sets out an ambitious timetable and progressing the plan to meet this is dependent on funding.
- 5.2 Key parts of the strategy work have been completed, and the proposed next stage (an update to the Statement of Community Involvement and a Call for Sites) can be carried out in house with minimal external consultants. If the business case to complete the plan is delayed this will impact the ability to meet this timetable.
- 5.3 Achieving the timetable in this LDS is also dependent upon the Council having sufficient staff resources, and managing risks such as the new procurement process, availability of suitable consultants to assist preparation of evidence and policy formulation, approval of strategies from external statutory consultees, and adapting to impacts beyond the Council's control such as the change to the plan making system or national infrastructure.

6 Summary

- 6.1 This Local Development Scheme(LDS) meets the requirement to have an up to date LDS set out in Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by part 111 of the Localism Act 2011).
- 6.2 Section 3 sets out the Local Planning Authority's proposals for the Slough Local Plan to achieve Submission in December 2026. Section 4 provides some of the background to date, and section 5 the risks to achieving the adoption of the plan.
- 6.3 The Background section explains why preparation of the Local Plan slowed down and confirms that the Council remains committed to continuing with preparation to achieve submission in December 2026.
- 6.4 Publishing this on the Council's website will also comply with the Deputy Prime Minister's statement in the December 2024 Planning Newsletter that all local planning authorities produce and publish an updated LDS by the 6 March 2025.
- 6.5 This LDS was approved for publication by Slough Borough Council's Planning Committee in February 2025.

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