

## Slough Borough Council

Information needed	Details
Report To:	Planning Committee
Date:	30 <sup>th</sup> July 2025
Subject:	Draft Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2024-25
Chief Officer:	Dan Ray; Chief Planner
Contact Officer:	Kerry Hobbs, Senior Planning Policy Officer
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	Draft Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2024-25

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members about the results of the annual planning policy monitoring for 2024/25. This includes information on housing, employment, retail and the natural and built environment.

#### Recommendations:

- 1.2 Committee is requested to note:

That the draft Annual Monitoring Report 2024-25 (at Appendix 1) be noted and published on the Council's website.

### 2. Report

#### Introductory paragraph

- 2.1 Local Planning Authorities have a statutory obligation to produce and publish an annual planning monitoring report. While some content is statutory, other elements are a matter for individual councils to decide. It is important for monitoring the effectiveness of current local plan policies and informing the preparation and production of a new Local Plan.
- 2.2 Slough's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) provides information and statistics on housing, employment, retail and the natural and built environment. It also includes a summary of the appeal decisions and, if any, implications for the Slough's current planning policy framework. This AMR covers the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, with additional updates where this is appropriate and they are available.

- 2.3 The AMR will be published on the Council's website, as it is factual report, it is not subject to consultation.

## **Housing**

- 2.4 In 2024/25, there were 207 net housing completions in Slough. This is very low compared to the average of 546 per year over the last 4 years and 588 per year over the previous 10 years. A dip in completions is consistent with the national trend. Figures are expected to rise in the medium term as there are several large major developments planned.
- 2.5 Of the total 217 gross completions, 5 homes were created by conversion of existing homes, and 81 were from a change of use. 12 homes were lost through conversion or demolition. Homes created from former office buildings is low but is expected to rise in the next few years.
- 2.6 There was a total of 1144 gross commitments at the end of March 2025, this is made up of 1548 dwellings under construction and 1144 with consent but not started. These figures are higher than last year but lower than the last few years.
- 2.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Local Planning Authorities to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement or their Local Housing Need (LHN) figure, with an additional buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land.
- 2.8 The buffer for Slough is currently 20% instead of the normal 5% as the Housing Delivery Test result for Slough is considered as below the critical threshold. At the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2025, the 5 year housing land supply figure was 2.58 years, which was higher than last year. As a 5 year housing land supply cannot be demonstrated, the Council has to apply the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' when determining planning applications (known as the tilted balance).
- 2.9 In 2024/25, 100% of the gross housing completions were on previously developed sites (brownfield). This is consistent with the figures in recent years.
- 2.10 As required by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), since 1 April 2016, the Council maintains a custom and self-build homes register, details of which are publicised on the Council website. The register holds information on individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land. The number of entries on the self- build register at October 2024, is 271. There are no serviced plots available in the borough to meet this demand.
- 2.11 In 2024/25, 30(14%) new build dwellings were in the affordable housing category. This percentage is consistent with the average over the last 10 years.
- 2.12 The results of monitoring for 2024/25, showed that 12% of housing completions were houses and 88% flats or maisonettes. This trend is likely to continue in the near future. This reflects the effectiveness of the policy in the Core Strategy that

seeks to firstly direct new development to the town centre and other urban areas, where flats are generally acceptable, and secondly ensuring that development in the suburban areas consists predominantly of family housing. But having more family homes with gardens is also needed.

- 2.13 In relation to the Core Strategy housing target, there was a shortfall of over 1,000 homes as of 31 March 2025. Looking ahead over the next 17 years, the estimate of future housing supply is below the current calculation of housing need by at least 5,000 homes. However, housing need calculations change yearly and as do estimates of supply so the size of the shortfall may change. As part of preparation for the new Local Plan an in-depth study of housing supply options and potential will be undertaken.

## **Employment**

- 2.14 The monitoring shows that there is a small net office use employment floor space loss recorded in 2024/25. This is the result of change of use to residential use at one building on Farnham Road. Industrial floospace has increased a small amount through two trading estate schemes. Detail of floospace change will follow if found.
- 2.15 Slough Trading Estate continues to do well under SEGROs management and remains a priority investment area. While it is prosperous as an employment land area, the number of office and manufacturing jobs is likely to continue to decrease. For example, more data centres are being built but they have a different employment profile, and do not employ as many people on site as the businesses lost.
- 2.16 Slough Trading Estate benefits from having a Simplified Planning Zone (SPZ). This helps existing and potential new occupiers plan for the future with more certainty by allowing construction of new buildings to take place without the need to apply for separate planning permission, provided they meet specified conditions and fall within agreed use classes and zones set out in the SPZ scheme.
- 2.17 The new SPZ was adopted on 12th November 2024 and will be in force for next 10 years. This new SPZ will help the trading estate adapt to the changes in business and the increase in demand for digital technology by allowing for data centres, and taller buildings, including for warehousing and research and development.
- 2.18 During 2024/25, two SPZ schemes were completed.

## **Retail**

- 2.19 Slough has not had any major retail scheme completions in the last few years. The annual retail vacancy survey of the town centre and district centres was undertaken in February 2025.

- 2.20 The retail offer in Slough town centre has changed in recent years as multinationals have moved out of the town centre, in line with national trends (e.g. Wilkinson's, Smiths, M&S). However, it continues to operate well as a large district centre rather than a regional centre. There has been a decrease in the number of chain stores and increase in the number of independent stores.

### **Slough Town Centre Retail**

- 2.21 The annual retail vacancy survey showed Slough town centre has a retail unit vacancy rate of 9%. However, the retail vacancy rate does not reflect the quality of the retail offer. Some of the units in the shopping centres have no signage or permanent shop fit out and appear to be pop ups with temporary/short term lets. The nature of the offer appears to serve a local population with a lot of takeaways and small independent grocery shops.
- 2.22 A summary of the vacancy rates for Slough town centre are:
- 2.23 The Queensmere has 12% of units vacant.
- 2.24 The Observatory has 3% of units vacant.
- 2.25 The High Street has 9% of units vacant.

### **District Centres Retail**

- 2.26 Retail vacancy surveys were conducted in Slough's district centres at Langley, Farnham Road and Chalvey.
- 2.27 Chalvey has a retail vacancy rate of 9%, Langley 0% and Farnham Road 3%. These are low retail vacancy rates which show these centres are healthy and vibrant and supporting the local community. Chalvey and the Farnham Road both benefit from independent supermarkets.

### **Retail Parks and major stand alone stores**

- 2.28 Outside the town and district centre retail areas, there are 40 retail stores (excluding small food and beverage outlets). 18 of these retail stores are within either the large Bath Road (Cippenham) or Slough (Twinches Lane) Retail Parks. None of these stores are included in the High Street and district centre retail vacancy studies but they contribute to the general retail offer and economic activity in Slough. The vacancy rate for the retail parks and major stores is 18% for 2024/25.

### **Biodiversity Net Gain**

- 2.29 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a way to contribute to the recovery of nature while developing land. It makes sure the habitat for wildlife is in a better state than it was before development.

- 2.30 Since the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) legislation in February 2024, there have been 30 validated planning applications: 5 showing as major (large sites) and 25 showing as minor/other (small sites).

### **Appeal Decisions**

- 2.31 Appeal decisions are regularly reported to Planning Committee. The AMR looks at whether there are any patterns in appeal decisions that can support future decision making. There were 59 appeals in Slough in the 12 months from April 2024 with 48 dismissed and 10 allowed by Inspector, with 1 part granted and part dismissed. 12 out of the 59 appeals were enforcement cases, with all notices upheld.
- 2.32 19 of the appeals were for householder applications. Of the 10 allowed, the key issues related to design, character of the area or amenity which tend to be site specific judgements.
- 2.33 There were 40 appeals on strategic matters such as housing and employment, this includes 12 enforcement cases. The upholding of decisions for major planning applications demonstrate that the current Local Plan is working well and continues to be compliant with the NPPF. This is useful as it shows our specialist policies, such as those to protect family housing from conversion to flats, and refusing poor design, continue to be justified.

### **Slough Local Plan**

- 2.34 The Council has completed its Regulation 18 phase of the Local Plan preparation, and the next step is gathering evidence in support of the Regulation 19 phase. A new Call for Sites exercise was carried out in May. In addition, the Statement of Community Involvement is currently out for consultation until 29<sup>th</sup> August 2025.
- 2.35 The new Local Development Scheme (LDS) was submitted to Ministry of Housing and Local government (MHCLG) in March 2025. This sets out a timetable for production of the new Local Plan. It will soon be presented to Cabinet with further detail of the timetable and implications of preparing the Plan. The aim is for a draft plan to go out to consultation early next year and for it to be submitted to MHCLG for independent examination in December 2026.

### **Cross boundary engagement on significant issues**

- 2.36 The Local Planning Authority (LPA) has a duty to engage actively and, on an ongoing basis, with specified partners on their Local Plans including adjoining Councils. Slough does this via responding to consultations, engaging with officers and Members as needed. These discussions are focused on significant strategic cross boundary matters such as employment, housing and flooding to support the evidence base in policy development.
- 2.37 In 2024/25, regular meetings were held with Buckinghamshire Council to discuss cross boundary issues in particular, the pressure for land to meet housing need

in the sub-region. Slough has engaged formally and informally with other Local Authorities Local Plans/neighbourhood plans including Spelthorne, Wokingham and Hillingdon.

## **Summary**

- 2.38 The Council has a duty to publish monitoring information on the Local Plan. This report highlights key points and statistics from the AMR from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The AMR will be published on the Council's website once noted by the Committee.

## **3. Implications of the Recommendation**

### 3.1 Financial implications

3.1.1 None

### 3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual monitoring report.

### 3.3 Environmental implications

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

### 3.4 Equality implications

3.4.1 There are no equality implications.

## **4. Background Papers**

## **Appendix**

Draft Annual Monitoring Report 2024-25