

# **NEW SIMPLIFIED PLANNING ZONE DEPOSIT CONSULTATION**

JULY 2024

## **FAQS**

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What are the benefits of the Simplified Planning Zone for the people of Slough?

The Simplified Planning Zone (SPZ) gives Slough a competitive advantage by making it quicker and easier for businesses to locate on the Slough Trading Estate. The SPZ provides businesses with the speed, certainty and confidence needed to invest in the town, which helps to maintain a healthy economy. These businesses not only create jobs for local people and invest in the local economy but, along with SEGRO, contribute £49 million a year in Business Rates which is helping to fund essential local services.

The SPZ will help create a modern industrial estate supported by significant investment in new infrastructure that will improve the use of sustainable modes of transport. These include a new shuttle bus service and upgraded cycling routes which will also help more local people travel to and from the Estate easily and cost effectively as well as improve the health and wellbeing of local workers and visitors.

SEGRO will also develop a long-term skills and employment plan to enable residents to compete for new jobs and prepare young people for the world of work.

This scale of investment and improvement in the area would not be possible without the SPZ.

Having a SPZ in place also gives SEGRO the certainty and confidence to make long-term commitments to support and invest in the community. We are currently supporting a range of charities and local community groups to operate their vital services for local people from the Estate, including Slough Food Bank, Slough Museum, Slough Pitstop, Learning to Work and Haybrook College.

## What are the main similarities and differences between the new SPZ and the current SPZ?

The main similarities are the same permitted uses of the buildings, a height restriction of 7 metres for buildings adjacent to the boundary of residential properties (with the exception of the 3-meter height restriction adjacent to Furnival Avenue), and a cap on car parking across the Estate, which will help to mitigate road congestion. The main differences are greater controls on building design and quality, increased standards for sustainability, increased building heights in parts of the Estate (largely in the centre and along Bath Road) and substantial investments in community infrastructure and capacity building.

In essence, the new SPZ will enable the Slough Trading Estate to continue to be a successful and thriving place for business, in a more sustainable way that makes better use of the space available and elevates the level of investment in the local community.

## Why do you need to build taller / larger buildings?

A primary focus of the new SPZ is the development of taller industrial buildings in a planned and controlled manner. With no new development land available on the Slough Trading Estate the new SPZ will encourage a more efficient approach by intensifying the use of the existing land available. With the demand for housing a key priority for Slough, many commercial sites in the town have been redesignated for new homes resulting in a greater demand for industrial space. Through the new SPZ, the Slough Trading Estate will aim to capture that demand by delivering new and taller industrial schemes, that will be design-led to enhance the character of estate.

In the new SPZ we will continue to propose the current restriction of 7 metres on the heights of buildings adjacent to the boundary of residential properties (there is a 7-meter height restriction adjacent to Furnival Avenue), and 12 metres where the buildings are close to residential areas but with some space in between. Away from residential areas, the current SPZ allows SEGRO to develop buildings up to 23 metres tall whereas the new SPZ would enable buildings up to 36 metres in more central areas of the estate. This proposed height limit is still well below the height of the power station's two cooling towers which measure 49 metres, and the chimneys which are around 105 metres tall.

## What will you be doing to make your buildings look nice?

As part of the new SPZ, we have proposed a Design Code which all new buildings will need to conform to. The new Design Code includes over 20 rules covering matters including minimum distances which buildings need to be set back from the pavement; minimum areas for green space; and requirements for building colour palettes and materials. We believe that these will ensure new buildings are appropriate for the industrial nature and heritage of the Slough Trading Estate and create a high-quality environment for people living and working in the area.

## Will the SPZ make traffic congestion around the Slough Trading Estate worse?

No. We will not increase the car parking cap that exists today and will support the use of alternative and sustainable modes of travel for employees and visitors to use. Based on the extensive traffic surveying and modelling we have undertaken, we do not anticipate that congestion levels during the new SPZ period will change materially. This is largely a result of high traffic generating office-based businesses exiting business parks, and the Estate, in favour of alternative smaller spaces and home working.

Further information is provided in the 'Traffic and Movement' section of the 'New Simplified Planning Zone Consultation' document at [www.segro.com/ste-spz](http://www.segro.com/ste-spz)

## What has SEGRO delivered for Slough during the current SPZ?

Over the last 10 years, SEGRO has invested tens of millions of pounds in modernising the Slough Trading Estate, creating more than 2.4 million square feet of industrial and warehouse space. This includes some £60 million in refurbishments and building upgrades and £20 million in infrastructure improvements. The Slough Trading Estate is home to 350 businesses which employ over 15,000 people and contribute some £49 million in Business Rates every year that can be reinvested into other local services.

SEGRO also created Slough Aspire, a dedicated skills and employment hub on the estate, which was forced to shut its doors in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. However, during the 6 years it was operational, Slough Aspire:

- **Welcomed 17,066 visitors to the Aspire Centre**
- **Worked with over 400 local businesses committed to improving skills for Slough residents**
- **Facilitated 4,687 training and development interventions for unemployed residents to improve employment outcomes**
- **Enabled 15,590 young people to engage directly with business professionals to improve careers awareness and raise aspirations**

- **Contributed to the creation of 41 new company start-ups**
- **Supported 2,717 local business professionals through workforce development, networking and recruitment services.**

In 2022, SEGRO launched the Slough Community Investment Plan (CIP) to enable investment in projects over the long-term. The CIP is designed to inspire young people about the world of work, help unemployed people into employment, support the growth of local businesses and create a better environment that improves the health and wellbeing of residents. SEGRO has partnered with Fedcap Employment and The Slough Hub to promote job opportunities on the Slough Trading Estate and provide a dedicated training and job brokerage service to help local people into employment. Since 2022 we have enabled over local 8,400 Slough students to participate in our employment programme; helped 55 unemployed residents into work and delivered 11 environmental projects that have enhanced biodiversity and improved the health and wellbeing of the community.

## How will you develop the Slough Trading Estate in a way that is right for Slough?

Slough Trading Estate has been an important part of the local community for over 100 years and SEGRO remains committed to contributing to Slough's long-term economic vitality. This will be the fourth time the Estate has benefited from a Simplified Planning Zone, and we will approach this one with the same level of care, consideration, respect and responsibility as the previous three.

The new SPZ will secure a multi-million-pound investment into local infrastructure and community projects, representing a significant increase on past investment.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What are your plans for making the Slough Trading Estate more environmentally friendly?

As part of the new SPZ, SEGRO is committed to ensuring any new development will have sustainability at its heart. Any new buildings will have a minimum EPC rating of 'A', which means that they are very energy efficient and will help business occupiers to reduce their energy use and carbon emissions. Buildings will incorporate renewable energy generation – most likely solar panels – to help power the building and where possible the occupier's operations. New schemes will also include electric vehicle chargers and measures to improve biodiversity and employee wellness. Like all SEGRO developments, we will also be working hard to remove as much carbon as possible from the construction materials and process.

**For more information, please see the 'Sustainability requirements' section of the 'New Simplified Planning Zone Consultation' document at [www.segro.com/ste-spz](http://www.segro.com/ste-spz)**

## How will the SPZ change air quality in the area?

Records from air quality monitoring undertaken by Slough Borough Council indicate that air quality (in particular nitrogen dioxide concentrations) within Slough and nearby the Estate has been generally improving in recent years, likely as a result of falling traffic levels, use of more modern vehicles on local roads and increasing electrification of industry on the Estate.

Our SPZ proposals will include a range of measures, such as annual monitoring of air quality on and near to the Trading Estate, the retention of the car parking cap, dust control during construction, additional electric vehicle charging and renewable energy production, which will all help to support the continued improvement of local air quality.

## Will the SPZ allow more data centres to be built?

Data centres account for 21% of the Slough Trading Estate, and while the new SPZ would allow for the development of new data centres, we are committed to maintaining a diverse mix of businesses and uses. Over the course of the current SPZ, we have developed 27 new buildings for businesses other than data centres and we are in the process of building a further 9 light industrial spaces at 136 Edinburgh Avenue.

Data centres provide the core infrastructure that underpins all digital activity across government, business and the community. They underpin an internet economy that contributes over 16% of domestic output, 10% of employment and 24% of total UK exports. The sector is a real success story, is globally important and provides the technical infrastructure for the UK's financial services, aerospace, transport, healthcare, retail and utilities sector.

## There is not enough electricity available because of the amount that is used by data centres. Why are you building more?

According to National Grid, peak electricity demand in the UK was 62GW in 2002. Since then, the nation's peak demand has fallen by roughly 16% due to improvements in energy efficiency, demonstrating there is enough energy to support the needs of the country.

Even with the increase in the number of data centres, data centre energy usage has been held at around 1-1.5% of all energy usage since 2010 because of increased efficiencies, according to a September 2022 report from the International Energy Agency.

Electricity is provided through the National Grid, which is a privately owned business. New applicants wishing to connect to the National Grid must fund the reinforcement works that support their required capacity. As the cost of National Grid reinforcement works are very expensive, only very large applications (such as from data centres) can afford to fund reinforcement works. This investment from data centres benefits smaller local sites as when reinforcing the network, National Grid usually provides additional capacity to supply connections locally at the same time and with minimal cost to them.

## Is the power being used by data centres 'green'?

The SPZ will require all new data centres to enter green leases which require operators to secure electricity from renewable sources wherever commercially available.

A number of large data centre developers are also actively developing or purchasing renewable generation capacity through Power Purchase Agreements to ensure the electricity they use is 100% renewable and zero carbon. The data centre sector is, therefore, a major driver in the development and deployment of renewable energy schemes that help reduce the carbon intensity of the UK grid.

## Are data centres good for employment?

Data centres are key national infrastructure and play a critical but unseen role in everyday life. Individual data centres may not employ the same numbers of people working in them as a similar sized manufacturing plant might, but they do provide direct and indirect high-quality employment both during construction and in operation. We have a number of companies based on the Estate which have been established to service the supply chain needs of the data centre sector. Furthermore, technicians and engineers from the companies whose data is stored on the servers are regularly on site to manage their own servers. However, it is indirect employment where data centres have most impact because they underpin almost every business across all parts of the economy in some way.

The new SPZ proposes a 10-year training and employment plan to enable more Slough residents to access the high-skill technology jobs that are available in data centres and the wider digital sector.

**See the 'Skilled & Sustainable Workforce' section of the 'New Simplified Planning Zone Consultation' document at [www.segro.com/ste-spz](http://www.segro.com/ste-spz)**

## Can the excess heat created by data centres not be used to provide heat for local homes or businesses?

We are exploring the potential for excess heat from data centres to be used in a productive way and, through the SPZ, we will commit to incorporate the ability for our new data centres to feed excess heat into district heat networks in the future, should the supporting infrastructure be in place.

## With costs increasing for small businesses, how are you helping them to stay on the Estate?

We are proud of the range of spaces we offer for companies of different sizes across the Slough Trading Estate. We have a number of developments, both completed and under development, that are well suited for smaller businesses, and the new SPZ enables us to deliver more of these. As an example, we have the Enterprise Quarter which is designed to support start-up and small companies and which provides highly flexible lease terms and as a result is almost fully let with 23 out of the 24 units occupied. The Estate has a thriving SME community with 44 start up units (up to 1,000 square feet) and 249 small business units (1,000 to 10,000 square feet).

We also have plans to deliver a 7-storey industrial building on Leigh Road that will create up to 71 small business units alongside shared office space and other amenities. If the concept proves a successful one, the increased heights proposed under the new SPZ will enable more of these small business hubs to come forward on the Estate.

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