

**TO: ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
22 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN UPDATE
Director of Environment, Culture & Communities**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Local Plan sets out policies and proposals for the development and use of land in an area taking account of social and environmental factors. It comprises Development Plan Documents (DPDs) that form part of the statutory development plan. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) can also be produced which provide further interpretation of the implementation of policies set out in a DPD. The policies in these documents are used in the assessment of planning applications.
- 1.2 This report summarises the position on the Local Plan, and provides an update following the previous report in March 2015.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Panel notes the documents that currently form part of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan, and documents that are under preparation.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 To advise the Panel of adopted documents and progress being made on those that it is hoped will eventually form part of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None.

5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Documents that have been finalised

- 5.1 The Bracknell Forest Local Plan comprises a number of documents. The Core Strategy (February 2008), the Site Allocations Local Plan (SALP) (July 2013) and the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (BFBLP) (January 2002) are the main adopted documents that help form the development plan for the area. The Core Strategy sets out the overarching strategy for the area, including a figure for housing growth (although this is not based on an objective assessment of housing need). The SALP allocates sites to meet the Borough's development requirements, particularly for housing. The BFBLP contains a number of 'saved' policies that remain in effect for the purposes of managing development in the Borough.

- 5.2 In addition to the documents referred to above, there are Minerals and Waste DPDs and a number of SPDs. A list of the Council's adopted documents is set out in Appendix 1.

Documents that are under preparation or planned

- 5.3 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a three-year project plan (2015 – 2018), which sets out time scales for the preparation of planning documents. The most recent version was approved by Executive on 23 June 2015.

Comprehensive Local Plan

- 5.4 The LDS states that the Council is intending to produce a Comprehensive Local Plan (CLP). The CLP will take the form of a single document, comprising three parts. The first part will relate to background and context, the second part to strategic matters (for example overall requirements on housing, employment etc, and any associated allocations), and the third part will relate to Development Management (DM) policies.
- 5.5 It is no longer intended to produce separate local plans covering DM policies and gypsies and travellers. This change in stance has been promoted by recent appeal decisions relating to sites at Tilehurst Lane, Binfield and The Limes, Forest Road, Hayley Green which have indicated that the Council needs to prepare robust housing policies more quickly than previously anticipated in order to be able to defend planning refusals and properly plan for longer term sustainable development. Progressing the CLP will enable a housing target to be set based on an objective assessment of housing needs and further sites to be allocated for residential development and other needs. The latter will help achieve a five year housing land supply.
- 5.6 The scope of the CLP is as follows, although this is subject to consultation with stakeholders in October 2015:

To include a vision, objectives, and strategy for the level and distribution of development in the Borough up to 2036, including housing, economic and retail development and new infrastructure;

Policies will relate to:

- development within the Green Belt;
- development within the Countryside;
- design, including residential extensions and shop fronts;
- environmental issues such as flood risk and water quality;
- heritage assets;
- the natural environment and biodiversity including landscape, green infrastructure and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area;
- infrastructure needs including open space, sport and recreation and community facilities;
- town, district and local centres;
- development affecting employment sites;
- housing needs including those for:
 - Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
 - affordable housing;
- healthy and inclusive communities, and,

- climate change including the delivery of renewable energy and sustainable construction.

5.7 Table 1 below sets out the intended programme for the preparation of the CLP.

Table 1 – Timetable for the Comprehensive Local Plan

Stage	Date
Notification of bodies/persons of intention to prepare a plan, Sustainability Appraisal scoping, evidence gathering and preparation of consultation documents	June 2015 - June 2016
Issues and Options consultation	June/July 2016
Further evidence and analysis / produce draft document	July 16 - June 2017
Draft Plan consultation	June/July 2017
Publication (6 weeks)	February/March 2018
Consideration of representations	April - June 2018
Submission	July 2018
Pre-Examination Meeting/Examination/Hearing/ Inspectors Report	August - December 2018
Report to Council/Adoption	February 2019

Progress on the Evidence Base

5.7 The Council is currently preparing a wide range of evidence studies which will support the formulation of policies within the CLP and decision making on planning applications. It is important that the evidence base is prepared in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance. A summary of the strategic evidence studies which are being undertaken is set out below:

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) – this sets out the relevant ‘housing market areas’ (HMAs) within the study area and the objective assessment of housing needs (OANs). It considers the need for all types of housing (including affordable) and for different groups (older people, students etc). It also identifies an appropriate mix and tenure for the plan period. The Council is working with the other Berkshire Authorities and the consultant (GL Hearn) on the SHMA.

The emerging report suggests two HMAs within Berkshire:

- Western HMA: comprising West Berkshire, Reading Borough, Wokingham Borough and Bracknell Forest, and
- Eastern HMA: comprising Slough Borough, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, plus South Bucks.

Work is still being undertaken on finalising the OANs for the HMAs and constituent Authorities. Progress will be reported to a Member Reference Group, which will include a representative from each Berkshire Authority. The first meeting is due to take place on 15th September and will involve a presentation from GL Hearn. It is possible that a stakeholder event will take place in October 2015, at which point the findings will become public.

Following completion of the work, the Council will need to undertake further work on constraints, spatial distribution and the allocation of sites to meet the needs of the Borough to 2036. This will be informed by ‘land availability’ work.

- *Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)* - this study looks at the level of need for pitches/plots within the Borough. The report is currently in the process of being finalised. The results of this work may require associated allocations.
- *Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)* - the FEMA looks at the geographical extent of the local economy and its key markets. In summary, it suggests that Bracknell Forest falls within a FEMA which includes Wokingham Borough, Reading Borough, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Surrey Heath. It is available to view on the Council's web site¹. It is likely that further FEMA work will be undertaken across the whole of the SHMA study area. It is hoped that it will be undertaken as part of a two stage study that includes an Economic Needs Assessment. The LEP is involved in discussions on this matter.
- *Landscape Character Study* - LUC were appointed in December 2014 to undertake a number of pieces of landscape related work. The work has been carried out in two parts:
 - Stage one: Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of the Borough (excluding land within settlements).
 - Stage two: a 'recommendations report', which sets out LUC's recommendations on the approach to be taken on landscape designation policies, 'gaps', and Green Belt village boundaries (from a landscape character perspective).LUC is currently in the process of reviewing comments made by officers on the final draft report
- *Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)* – this process runs alongside the preparation of a Local Plan, and is an on-going iterative process, it considers environmental, economic and social matters, A focused consultation has taken place on the SA/SEA scoping and ended on 31 July 2015. Regulations require that the Council consults certain bodies (these are Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency). The purpose of this is to agree the methodology and collate the information needed to carry out the appraisal/assessment. Comments were received from all three statutory consultees. The draft Scoping Report will be updated to take account of the comments received.

Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan

- 5.8 It is now planned to produce a joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan with Reading Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council, and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. It is likely that West Berkshire Council will host a team that will prepare the Plan and associated evidence. A detailed timetable will be drawn up once costs and working arrangements have been sorted out (possible timetable is outlined in the LDS – see Appendix 1). If, for some reason a joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan proves not to be practical, the LDS will have to be updated accordingly.

Parking Standards SPD

- 5.9 A draft Parking Standards SPD is due to be considered by Executive on 22 September 2015, with a view to publishing a draft for consultation in October/November 2015. Consideration of any comments received and any necessary changes to the SPD would be undertaken in December 2015/January

¹ Comprehensive Local Plan evidence base:
<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/evidencebaseforcomprehensivelocalplan>

Unrestricted

2016. The target date for adoption is March 2016. A separate item on this agenda deals with this matter in more detail.

Background Papers

Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Scheme: June 2015

Contact for Further Information

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APPENDIX 1

Local Planning Documents Update

ADOPTED DOCUMENTS

Development Plan Documents

Available to view: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/developmentplan>

Core Strategy DPD

- A high level document containing the Council's long-term aspirations for the Borough, and policies to guide and manage development in Bracknell Forest until 2026.
- Adopted February 2008

Site Allocations Local Plan

- Implements the adopted Core Strategy. Identifies sites for future housing development, ensures that appropriate infrastructure is identified and delivered alongside new development and revises certain designations on the Policies Map.
- Adopted July 2013

Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan

- Some of the policies have been replaced by the adopted Core Strategy and adopted Site Allocations Local Plan. However, many were 'saved' by the Secretary of State beyond 27 September 2007 and remain in effect.
- Adopted 2002

Bracknell Forest Borough Policies Map

- Shows Core Strategy, Site Allocation Local Plan designations and Saved Policies from the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan.
- Adopted July 2013

Replacement Minerals Local Plan

- The plan intends to ensure that minerals were extracted in the right place to 2006 and that there are enough planning permissions for a further seven years. The plan also contains a number of Development Management Policies.
- Adopted May 2001

Waste Local Plan for Berkshire

- The plan has policies for waste management development and ensures that waste development is in the least environmentally sensitive locations.
- Adopted December 1998

Supplementary Planning Documents

Available to view: <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/spds>

Designing for Accessibility SPD

- Provides guidance on making development accessible, including for disabled and other less mobile people.
- Adopted at the 20 June 2006 Executive meeting.

Parking Standards SPD

- Contains guidance on parking requirements for residential and other forms of development.
- Adopted at the 24 July 2007 Executive meeting.

Sustainable Resource Management SPD

- Provides guidance on renewable energy, climate change, efficiency and sustainable construction in relation to Core Strategy policies.
- Adopted at the 21 October 2008 Executive meeting.

Amen Corner SPD

- Provides guidance for planning applications in respect of a comprehensive mixed use development on land at Amen Corner South which was agreed through the Core Strategy and allocated through the Site Allocations Local Plan.
- Adopted at the 16 March 2010 Executive meeting.

Character Area Assessments SPD

- Defines the character of specific areas in the Borough and interprets Core Strategy policy.
- Adopted at the 16 March 2010 Executive meeting.

Streetscene SPD (and Annex relating to Highway Guide for Development)

- Contains design guidance for streets and other public spaces in residential developments.
- Adopted at the 29 March 2011 Executive meeting.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy SPD

- Explains how negative impacts of residential development on a special protection area for rare birds will be avoided and mitigated.
- Adopted March 2012.

Warfield SPD

- Provides guidance for planning applications in respect of a comprehensive mixed use development on land at Warfield (formerly known as land North of Whitegrove and Quelm Park). The area was agreed for development through the Core Strategy and the land was allocated through the Site Allocations Local Plan.
- Adopted February 2012.

Planning Obligations SPD

- Replaced the Limiting the Impact of Development SPD which has now been withdrawn.
- Takes account of the changes to developer contributions arising from the introduction of CIL.
- Adopted April 2015.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- The CIL is a charge on new development payable to Bracknell Forest Council to deliver infrastructure needed to support new development.
- Commenced charging CIL 6 April 2015.
- <http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/cil>

DOCUMENTS UNDER PREPARATION

Development Plan Documents

Comprehensive Local Plan

- To include a vision, objectives, and strategy for the level and distribution of development in the Borough up to 2036, including housing, economic and retail development and new infrastructure;

Policies will relate to:
 - development within the Green Belt;
 - development within the Countryside;
 - design, including residential extensions and shop fronts;
 - environmental issues such as flood risk and water quality;
 - heritage assets;
 - the natural environment and biodiversity including landscape, green infrastructure and the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area;
 - infrastructure needs including open space, sport and recreation and community facilities;
 - town, district and local centres;
 - development affecting employment sites;
 - housing needs including those for:
 - Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
 - affordable housing;
 - healthy and inclusive communities, and,
 - climate change including the delivery of renewable energy and sustainable construction.
- Timetable, as set out in Table 1 in covering report. Key dates are Issues and Options consultation in June/July 2016, Draft Plan consultation June/July 2017, Submission July 2018, Adoption February 2019.

Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan

- To set out the policies on minerals and waste across 4 authorities: Bracknell Forest, Wokingham Borough, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Reading Borough. It will be informed by a robust evidence base.
- Timetable, as set out in the LDS:
 - Commencement of Review (notification of bodies/persons of intention to prepare a Plan, Sustainability Appraisal scoping, evidence gathering and preparation of consultation documents): June 2015 - June 2016
 - Issues and Options consultation: June/July 2016
 - Further evidence and analysis: June 2016 - July 2017
 - Draft Plan consultation: June/July 2017
 - Publication (6 weeks): February/March 2018
 - Consideration of representations: April - June 2018
 - Submission: July 2018
 - Pre-Examination Meeting/Examination/Hearing/Inspectors Report: August – December 2018
 - Report to Council/Adoption: February 2019 (provisional)

Policies Map

Unrestricted

- The adopted Policies Map spatially illustrates the policies in the Local Plan on an Ordnance Survey base. It will be updated to incorporate any changes in area specific policies resulting from the adoption of the Comprehensive Local Plan and Minerals and Waste Local Plan.
- To be progressed alongside the timetable for the Comprehensive Local Plan and Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Parking Standards SPD

- To contain guidance on parking requirements for residential and non-residential development and will replace the 2007 Parking Standards (see above).
- The draft SPD is due to be considered by Executive on 22 September 2015, in respect of agreeing public consultation on the document. Public consultation is anticipated to take place in October/November 2015.
- Target date for adoption is March 2016.

Neighbourhood Planning

- To date, three neighbourhood areas have been designated in Bracknell Forest covering:
 - Binfield Parish
 - Bracknell Town
 - Warfield Parish
- Pre-submission consultation has taken place on the Binfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (June-August 2015). The Plan may be submitted to Bracknell Forest Council towards the end of September.
- Further details of progress on neighbourhood plans is available at <http://bracknell-forest.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning>