

**TO: ENVIRONMENT, CULTURE & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
23 MARCH 2016**

**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 January 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATION

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

- 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 The scope of the CLP is as follows, and was 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 cover:

- 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	Status
Notification of bodies/persons of intention to prepare a plan, Sustainability Appraisal scoping, evidence gathering and	June 2015 - June 2016	Completed

Unrestricted

preparation of consultation documents		
Issues and Options consultation	June/July 2016	Pending
Further evidence and analysis / produce draft document	July 16 - June 2017	Programmed
Draft Plan consultation	June/July 2017	Programmed
Publication (6 weeks)	February/March 2018	Programmed
Consideration of representations	April - June 2018	Programmed
Submission	July 2018	Programmed
Pre-Examination Meeting/Examination/Hearing/ Inspectors Report	August - December 2018	Programmed
Report to Council/Adoption	February 2019	Programmed

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 has worked with the other Berkshire Authorities and the consultant (GL Hearn) on the SHMA which has now been finalised.

The 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.

Following completion of the work, the Council now needs 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 scope and cost of a further piece of work that takes account of changes in national policy documented in ‘Planning Policy for Traveller Sites’ (August 2015) is currently being discussed with ORS.

- Criteria based policies will need to be developed which will provide a framework against which planning applications can be assessed.
- 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

Unrestricted

Heath. It is available to view on the Council's web site¹. The Berkshire FEMA report has been finalised, and will be published alongside the SHMA. Bracknell Forest is in a Central Berkshire FEMA with Wokingham Borough, Reading Borough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Work is now underway on the Central Berkshire EDNA. A draft report is expected in mid March.

- 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).

The Landscape Character Assessment has now been completed and is being used by Officers in determining planning applications.

- 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 has now been finalised taking into account the comments received.
- Green Belt Review – Consultants Amec have been appointed jointly with Wokingham BC to carry out this work across both Boroughs which will involve an assessment of the Green Belt against the five purposes set out in the NPPF:
 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
 - To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another
 - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
 - To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

The study will not allocate sites. The outcome of the study may not necessarily result in any significant changes to the Green Belt boundary.

Focused consultation (on the methodology for assessing land parcels, and land parcel definition) with Parish/Town Councils within the two authorities and adjoining District/Borough/County Councils took place between 1 February and 15 February 2016.

(Members were notified of the consultation by email on 29 January).

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

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. Options are being further explored for who will carry out the work and options include West Berkshire Council and Hampshire County Council. 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). Work is also being undertaken to establish an effective system of joint governance of the Plan.

Parking Standards SPD

- 5.9 A draft Parking Standards SPD was approved for consultation by the Executive on 22 September 2015, and was published for consultation in October/November 2015. 30 responses were received and officers have considered these and have prepared responses and recommendations on them. A revised SPD has been prepared for adoption in Spring 2016.

Design SPD

- 5.10 Consultants Tibbalds have been selected through a competitive process to produce a Supplementary Planning Document on Design, including general principles and some clear guidance on the design of extensions. It is intended to consult on a draft version of the SPD in the summer of 2016.

Background Papers

Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Scheme: June 2015

Contact for Further Information

Max Baker – 01344 351902

Email: max.baker@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

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

- 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.

Design SPD

- To provide guidance on the design of development at a range of scales, including updated guidance on the design of household extensions.
- It is intended to seek approval for a consultation draft of the SPD at the May Executive.
- Target date for adoption is October 2016.

Neighbourhood Planning

- To date, five neighbourhood areas have been designated in Bracknell Forest covering:
 - Binfield Parish
 - Bracknell Town
 - Sandhurst
 - Warfield Parish
 - Winkfield
- The Binfield Neighbourhood Plan has been through examination and the Examiner has recommended that, with modifications, it proceeds to referendum. Following approval by Bracknell Forest Council the referendum was held on 3rd March 2016 and a clear majority voted in favour of making the Plan. It is proposed to bring the plan into effect following the May meeting of the Council Executive.
- Further details of progress on neighbourhood plans is available at <http://bracknell-forest.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning>