

To: **Executive**
19 March 2024

**Approval to consult on the Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans Supplementary
Planning Document
Executive Director: Place Planning & Regeneration**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek endorsement of the Executive to hold a public consultation on the Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Consultation Draft (see Appendix 1).
- 1.2 The Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the masterplan areas. The SPD has been produced in parallel with the emerging Bracknell Forest Local Plan (BFLP) to facilitate development of two strategic locations within Bracknell's town centre and the High Street multi-storey car park. The three masterplans within this document cover the Southern Gateway (emerging Policy LP10) and Eastern Gateway (emerging Policy LP9), that form key approaches to the centre and have direct links into the heart of the centre, and the High Street Car Park site.
- 1.3 The SPD builds upon Local Plan policies and the Town Centre Vision 2032 (approved by Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) in January 2019) in order to add greater detail, guide development and facilitate delivery of the two strategic locations.
- 1.4 The SPD provides design guidance, presented as a series of Development Principles that are to inform Design Codes that are to be submitted as part of planning applications for these sites, to demonstrate any development proposals accord with the SPD.
- 1.5 In order for the Council to adopt the document as an SPD it must be subject to public consultation under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Upon adoption, this SPD will become a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within these sites, with the SPDs production supporting the Council's plan-led approach to development.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That Executive:

(i) agree public consultation on the Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans SPD Consultation Draft (Appendix 1) and supporting documents, beginning on 8 April 2024 and ending on 20 May 2024 as set out in section 7 of this report.

(ii) delegate authority to the Executive Director Place Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Transport to agree any necessary minor amendments to the Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans SPD Consultation Draft, and supporting documents, prior to publication for public consultation.

3 Reasons for Recommendation(S)

- 3.1 The emerging BFLP contains site-specific strategic policies that allocate the Eastern Gateway (Policy LP 9) and Southern Gateway (Policy LP10) sites for comprehensive well-designed mixed-use development.
- 3.2 The sites are Council-owned, sustainably located and form key gateways into the town centre, and their development will make an important contribution to the town centre's continued regeneration.
- 3.3 The Council has committed to ensuring that development is plan-led, that achieves a high standard of design that positively contributes to placemaking. Policy LP28 – 'Design principles' in the emerging Local Plan states that for larger, complex and more sensitive developments to be delivered in a structured and coherent way, a masterplan and design code would be required to be produced and agreed with the Council to establish an overall vision and strategy for a development as a whole. The policy specifically requires these of the Eastern Gateway and Southern Gateway sites. Further to this, both policies LP9 and LP10 make specific reference to a forthcoming 'Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans' SPD. This SPD provides the Masterplan element, and a design code would be required to be submitted as part of subsequent planning applications for these sites.
- 3.4 The High Street Car Park has recently been closed and, for structural reasons, can no longer function as a car park; the site will therefore require redevelopment. This site is not specifically allocated in Local Plan policy but falls within the town centre area on the Local Plan Policies Map. Guidance for this site is included in the SPD given its proximity and significance as a natural continuation of the Southern Gateway development. It also provides an opportunity for a key connection between the town centre to the east, and Market Street and Peel Centre to the west.
- 3.5 Given that the emerging Local Plan is anticipated to be soon adopted as part of the Council's development plan, it is important for the masterplans to be progressed ready for the submission of planning applications on these sites.
- 3.6 A statutory stage in the production of an SPD is public consultation on a draft document. Therefore, an effective consultation on the Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans SPD will ensure it can be adopted and become a material consideration in determining planning applications affecting the sites. The SPD will allow the comprehensive masterplanning of the site through the planning application process.
- 3.7 The preparation of the SPD contributes towards the Council Plan (2023-2027) priority for a 'Thriving and connected economy' to ensure that 'Bracknell town centre continues to thrive and be a destination of choice'. This is to be measured by increasing visits and the development of new homes within the town centre.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Production of the SPD could be delayed, however this would result in a lack of guidance to support emerging Local Plan policies LP9 and LP10, and to guide the beneficial redevelopment of the High Street Car Park site. Given that a masterplan is required to be agreed with the Council prior to the submission of any planning applications for the gateway sites (Policy LP28), delay to SPD adoption would also have knock-on delays for the development of these strategically important sites.
- 4.2 The Council could opt not to take a lead on the production of masterplans for these sites, and instead leave this for future developers to undertake. This approach would

put the Council in a weaker, more reactive position to control development on these sites.

- 4.3 The absence of an adopted up to date SPD would make the Development Management process more difficult to implement if planning applications are received, potentially leading to uncoordinated, piecemeal development. This is a particular concern for these strategically important sites that are key components of the continued regeneration of Bracknell town centre. Production of the SPD will assist potential developers by providing clarity on the Council's expectations and requirements for the sites.

5 Supporting Information

Background

- 5.1 The purpose of the Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans SPD is to provide land use and design guidance for the three strategically important development sites in Bracknell town centre – two of which are allocated in the emerging Local Plan for mixed-use development. Once adopted, the SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications on these sites.

Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans SPD Consultation Draft

- 5.2 The document is structured to provide an initial overview of the Council's vision for the town centre with detailed analysis of the opportunities and constraints of the wider town centre, in terms of the heritage, character, access, landscape, heights and land use. A synopsis of recent property market analysis provides an overview of demand for residential and commercial opportunities in and around the town centre. The analysis has informed proposed uses in the masterplans.
- 5.3 In order to ensure that individual site proposals consider the town centre as a whole, a town centre-wide concept is developed; shaped around the key objectives and principles set out in the Bracknell Town Centre 2032 vision document. Such considerations include the need for new homes and employment spaces, as well as new cultural and leisure uses to ensure that the town centre feels sociable, vibrant and welcoming. Reconfiguration of the road network would also serve to encourage walking and cycling, and to create a more legible centre. The gateway location of the three sites provides an opportunity to address the inward-looking approaches to the town centre and create a more outward looking and welcoming approach.
- 5.4 The SPD contains a number of site-specific and general 'Development Principles' that planning applications for each of the sites would be required to respond to. Key issues include:
- Movement
 - Key frontages and edges
 - Heights
 - Land use
 - Green infrastructure
 - Landmark buildings
 - Public realm
 - Sustainability
 - Public Art

- 5.5 Additionally, there are a number of key public spaces within each of the sites that have been identified as requiring a specific development principle.
- 5.6 The SPD also sets out the quantum and types of uses which will be included within the development areas. This includes housing (with a proportion of affordable and older peoples housing), commercial space for retail and business purposes, open space with play and youth provision, carparking and other uses which may feature in the schemes, including hotel use. The SPD also highlights key routes and linkages and identifies buildings (such as Easthampstead House) that could be retained and repurposed in any redevelopment scheme.
- 5.7 A phasing and delivery section indicates the anticipated timing of development and emphasises the need to deliver supporting infrastructure in the early phases. Because of the structurally unsound condition of the High Street Car Park and it's more compact size, this site is expected to be developed in a single phase. Whereas the more expansive Southern and Eastern Gateway sites are anticipated to be delivered across a number of phases.

Next Stages

- 5.8 It is proposed to consult on the Draft SPD for 6 weeks starting on 8 April 2024 and ending on 20 May 2024. Consultation will take the form of a town centre exhibition, an online summary and response form, hardcopies of the documents provided in the Council offices and all Libraries across the Borough. The consultation will also be publicised through the Town and Parish Council's and all of the Council's social media channels. The responses to the consultation will be considered and used to inform and update an amended SPD which will be presented back to Executive for adoption in Summer 2024. Further details of the proposed consultation are in Section 7 of this report.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 Preparation, consultation and adoption of Supplementary Planning Documents is carried out in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The recommendations in this report comply with the legal requirements set out in the Regulations.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations and a suitable budget is in place to fund the consultation exercise.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 As set out in the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken and is appended to this report (Appendix 2).

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Failure to publish the SPD Consultation Draft in accordance with regulations will lead to a delay in adoption of the final document which may affect the delivery timings for

development and the ability to plan properly, for the development of this land and related infrastructure.

- 6.6 Delay or failure to deliver development could result in the Council being unable to demonstrate housing land supply, and therefore could be in a weaker position to oppose unplanned and inappropriate development.
- 6.7 Adoption of the SPD is therefore important to maintaining the Council's plan-led approach to development.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.8 Bracknell Town Centre is the most sustainable location for development in the Borough. It has excellent access to a wide range of facilities including retail, employment, leisure and various forms of public transport without the need to travel by car. The promotion of significant development in this most sustainable location is therefore beneficial in terms of minimising climate change impacts and reducing pressure to provide development in less sustainable locations.
- 6.9 All planning applications for development covered by this SPD will be required to accord with development plan policies. Policy requires that construction meets climate change objectives and achieves a high standard of environmental sustainability. Combined with the sustainable location of these sites, near to main public transport links, development in this SPD will deliver access arrangements that encourage sustainable modes of transport, such as safe, attractive and efficient pedestrian and cycle routes being integrated into schemes. Policy will also require the incorporation of green and blue infrastructure into schemes, such as tree planting and water attenuation features.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.10 Development will create attractive places to live, work and socialise. Good access to open space, shops, leisure and healthcare facilities will positively contribute towards the health and wellbeing of residents, workers and visitors.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (Regulations 11 to 16) set out the requirements for producing Supplementary Planning Documents. By undertaking public consultation as set out below, the Council will accord with the requirements of the regulations covering the production of Supplementary Planning Documents.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Consultation documents will be made available as hard copies and online for comment for a period of 6 weeks, which exceeds the statutory minimum period of 4 weeks.
- 7.3 The following consultation strategy is proposed:
 - a) Creation of a BTC SPD consultation webpage on the Council's website containing all relevant information.
 - b) Online consultation using the Council's consultation portal.

- c) Placing all consultation documents in the Time Square Council office.
- d) Placing all consultation documents at all Libraries across the Borough.
- e) Placing all consultation documents at the Bracknell Town Council office.
- f) Press release to local newspapers at start of the consultation period.
- g) Targeted notification to statutory and other consultees, including individuals, developers, landowners, environmental bodies and other interested parties.
- h) Additional notification to properties around the site (similar to how neighbouring properties would be identified on a planning application consultation).
- i) A public consultation exhibition in Bracknell town centre.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Bracknell Town Centre Masterplans SPD (consultation draft)

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment screening

- Draft Bracknell Forest Local Plan: <https://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/file/5926701>
- Town Centre Vision Document: <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/bracknell-town-centre-2032-vision.pdf>

Contact for further information

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