

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
1 NOVEMBER 2010  
6.03 - 7.52 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Edger (Chairman), McLean (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Birch, Finnie, Harrison, Leake, Mrs McCracken, Turrell, Ms Whitbread, Worrall, Baily and Mrs Beadsley

**Executive Members:**

Councillor Mrs Ballin, Executive Member for Planning, Transport & Economic Development  
Councillor Bettison, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Mrs Shillcock and Virgo  
Mr G S Anderson  
Dr P Josephs-Franks

**In Attendance:**

Max Baker, Head of Spatial Policy  
Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview & Scrutiny  
Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning & Transport  
Alex Jack, Borough Solicitor, Corporate Services  
Vincent Paliczka, Director of Environment, Culture & Communities  
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services  
Emma Silverton, Democratic Services Officer  
Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive

**41. Apologies for Absence/Substitute Members**

The Commission noted the attendance of the following Substitute Members:

Councillor Baily for Councillor Virgo  
Councillor Mrs Beadsley for Councillor Mrs Shillcock.

**42. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

Councillor Bettison declared a personal interest as a close personal friend was a landowner at Amen Corner.

**43. Call-in of Executive Decision - Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework Site Allocations Development Plan Document**

The Chairman introduced the Call-In requested by five councillors of the Executive's decision I020719, to approve a Preferred Option of the Site Allocation Development Plan Document for Consultation, agreed at its meeting on 19 October 2010.

Bev Hindle, Chief Officer: Planning and Transport introduced the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework Site Allocations Development Plan Document which included details of the background to the Executive's decision and

work undertaken to identify sites to meet the Borough's development needs to 2026 in accordance with the Council's adopted Core Strategy.

Production of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SADPD) supported the Council's policy of a plan-led approach to development rather than reacting to developers' proposals.

The original housing target for Bracknell Forest based on the South East Plan of 12,780 new homes to be delivered by 2026 had been revoked. The proposal in the SADPD was for a figure of 10,780 new homes delivered by 2026 based on the Council's adopted Core Strategy. The Government had made it clear that work should not cease on preparation of Local Development Documents and that a long term supply of housing was needed. Local authorities would need to justify housing levels chosen.

A key component of the SADPD was the identification of sites to meet the Borough's housing needs. Of the total housing requirement, 66% was already committed which left a need for additional sites for 3,626 homes. From eight sites originally proposed the preferred option set out four sites for consultation which were:

- Broadmoor
- TRL site, Crowthorne
- Amen Corner North
- Land at the Blue Mountain Golf Course

These sites had been in the proposals process for a very long time. The reasons the other sites had not been chosen as part of the preferred option were that they were not sustainable sites and some were not being promoted by the landowners or developers. It was noted that full details of the sites were set out in the Preferred Options Background Paper.

The SADPD had undergone several rounds of consultation. Recent consultation included; stakeholder workshops, meetings with Parish and Town Councils, press releases, newspaper articles, exhibitions and member briefings. It was noted that Wokingham Without had been included in consultation.

Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive gave a short presentation on the SADPD which highlighted that the Government had made it clear that housing numbers set by local authorities needed to be based on robust assessment. The Council's Core Strategy was a robust document. Where local authorities had undertaken reassessment a higher housing target had been recommended.

Bracknell Forest Council had undertaken extensive work on the SADPD document and were confident that by being plan-led, the Council would be well-placed to deal with any planning appeals from developers. Consultation and research to reach the current stage of the SADPD had cost over £1 million which would be lost if a new approach was taken.

Local businesses, particularly those looking to expand had indicated that they were keen for BFC to move forward with its housing plan.

Councillor Mrs Ballin, Executive Member for Planning, Transport & Economic Development expressed her support for the SADPD preferred option which had been reached through robust, conscientious and transparent consultation with the public and members, supported by the Local Development Framework Steering Group. A

large amount of hard work had ensured that all details of the SADPD had been examined carefully and robustly. The Council had also played its part in controlling the aspirations of the now defunct South East England Assembly in regard to housing targets.

Councillor Bettison, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Executive gave a short presentation on the need for Bracknell Forest to be plan-led. The housing target of 10,780 homes by 2026 had been agreed by Council in 2004 as part of the Borough's Core Strategy. It was important that Bracknell Forest's Housing target was supported by strong research and planning and the SADPD preferred option document was the result of a robust process undertaken in the Borough. Councillor Bettison cautioned against producing a new estimate of housing needs, as any such figure would be most likely to be much higher than 10,780.

Councillors who had requested the Call-In of the Executive decision expressed their concerns about public consultation of the Preferred Option. Members had an opportunity to ask questions about the nature of the decision and the background and context to it, the various options considered by the Executive and the implications of these.

The key issues focussed on by Commission Members during the discussion and the main questions included:

- That the Executive's decision to reduce the number of sites from eight to four was recommended by officers and that full consideration of all eight original sites proposed should be included in public consultation.
- Officers had reviewed several sites for relocating Bracknell Football Club, excluding Downshire golf course.
- All members had not been fully consulted through the development of the SADPD.
- There would be an additional 5,000 – 7,000 homes within 3-4 miles of the centre of Binfield
- Development of proposed sites would lead to loss of existing communities' individual identities across the borough.
- In some cases development of sites would greatly increase the number of homes in the area and lead to overloading.
- Existing infrastructure would not be sufficient to support the new houses proposed and that improvement to infrastructure promised by developers would not be provided.
- Roads surrounding the proposed sites were not adequate to cope with the additional traffic pressures that would be placed on them should the development go ahead.
- Overview and Scrutiny had not been sufficiently consulted with during the development of the SADPD and strategy for public consultation.
- Consultation with stakeholders to date had not been thorough and that the strategy for public consultation needed to be more full with proposed sites recognising the impact on existing communities.
- Consultation with members had not been adequate and should be reviewed by the Executive.
- That the number of houses proposed in the SADPD could not be fully justified by the Executive.

Having considered the evidence presented by the witnesses and discussed the issue in detail, and receiving a briefing from the Borough Solicitor on the next steps in the SADPD process, the following motion was proposed and seconded:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission has the following concerns with the decision of the Executive's decision I020719, to approve a Preferred Option of the Site Allocation Development Plan Document for Consultation, and refers the matter to full Council. Their concerns are:

- (i) that the strategic issues involved had not been set out fully enough and the Preferred Option would overload areas of the borough, including the infrastructure and services available to communities,
- (ii) that there was not a wide enough consultation plan, particularly in respect of the sites proposed and that the report to the Executive should explore all sites,
- (iii) that before the Executive make a decision on the final document for consultation, the Executive refer the proposed consultation document to the Environment, Culture and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for their comments.

The Commission reached a majority decision not to agree the proposed motion set out above.

A second motion was proposed and seconded, and the Commission reached a majority decision that there were no concerns over the Executive's decision and that no further action was needed.

**RESOLVED** that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission endorses the decision of the executive's decision I020719, to approve a Preferred Option of the Site Allocation Development Plan Document for Consultation.

**CHAIRMAN**