



The Planning Inspectorate

Report to Bracknell Forest Borough Council

by Louise Nurser BA (Hons) Dip UP MRTPI

and David Troy BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State

Date 1 March 2024

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)

Section 20

Report on the Examination of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan

The Plan was submitted for examination on 20 December 2021

The examination hearings were held between 10-18 May, 6-15 June and 18-20 October 2022

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34. The spatial strategy seeks to deliver the sustainable growth envisaged in the vision and strategic objectives. Following discussion at the examination hearings, it was agreed with the Council that a revised and amended Spatial Strategy was required to provide an appropriate planning framework to make it clear where future growth and development was being directed and to provide further guidance on the approach to development in the main settlements and different areas in the Borough. **MM3** is required to ensure the Spatial Strategy is justified, effective and consistent with national policy, including removing reference to the Garden Village Allocation at Jealott's Hill, and we recommend it accordingly.
35. The revised Spatial Strategy appropriately identifies a pivotal role for Bracknell Town focused on previously developed land in and around Bracknell Town Centre as a location for retail, leisure and other main town centre uses, a key location for designated employment areas and for housing. Elsewhere the Plan seeks to bring forward further opportunities for housing on a variety of previously developed and greenfield sites, bolster existing employment and support sustainable growth in and around the main settlements of Sandhurst and Crowthorne and smaller scale growth within the defined settlement areas of certain villages to support their service role. The revised spatial strategy also provides an appropriate planning framework for other areas in the Borough, including land in the countryside, Green Belt and areas covered by neighbourhood plans in the Borough.
36. The principles set out in Strategic Policy LP1 seek to guide development proposals in line with principles of sustainable development. **MM5** is necessary for Policy LP1 to be effective and consistent with national policy, in order to ensure that the policy makes the efficient use of suitable previously developed land and conserves and enhances the significance of heritage assets.
37. As submitted, the Plan did not contain a clearly defined settlement hierarchy. Following discussion at the examination hearings, it was agreed with the Council that a new standalone Settlement Hierarchy Policy was required to identify the roles of the different settlements in the Borough and provide a clear and effective framework to guide decision making on new development proposals both within and outside the defined settlements in the Borough. **MM4** would deal with this and would supersede and replace the sustainable locational principles in Policy LP2. As such, **MM6** is also required to remove Policy LP2 to ensure that the Plan is effective.
38. The defined boundaries of each settlement are set out on the Policies Map. The boundaries are soundly based, logical and justified in defining the built limits of the settlements and the land to be included or excluded, with a few exceptions. This includes several changes to the submitted Policies Map to expand settlement boundaries to include permitted and completed new developments [EXAM19 and EXAM22], which we consider are justified. In addition, a change

is proposed to include the park homes development at Warfield Park and recently permitted and implemented development adjacent to Warfield Park that forms a natural extension to the adjoining residential area on the northern eastern edge of Bracknell. These changes were consulted upon alongside the MMs. To ensure the Plan is effective, these changes will need to be made to the Policies Map when the Plan is adopted. There will be an opportunity at the next Plan review to make further changes to the settlement boundaries to reflect permitted and implemented development, where necessary.

Conclusion

39. Subject to the MMs set out above, the Plan is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to the spatial strategy.

Issue 2 – Whether the Plan has been positively prepared and whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national policy in relation to the housing requirement?

40. As written, Policy LP3 is ambiguous and not consistent with paragraph 61 of the Framework. To ensure that it is clear on what basis any annual housing requirement is predicated and that the plan is justified, effective, and consistent with national policy a MM is required to differentiate the Local Housing Need (LHN) of 614 dwellings per annum (dpa), based on the standard method set out in the Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), from a supply which includes an element of flexibility. This impacts on the subsequent calculation of the five-year housing supply (see below) and makes it clear that the housing requirement for the Plan period is 10,438 dwellings.
41. The Plan was submitted over two years ago. The PPG [ID:2-008-2019220] states that local authorities can rely on housing figures for up to two years from submission. The most recent affordability ratio has reduced. This has meant in the last three years, year on year, the LHN [EXAM 71] has reduced to a figure of 566 dpa predicated on the most up to date data. Consequently, given that the two- year anniversary of the submission of the Plan fell very recently, late in the examination, and as the most recent figure is lower than the original LHN of 614 dpa and it will provide a modest increase in flexibility within the housing supply, we conclude it is appropriate to continue to rely on this figure.
42. Bracknell Forest Council does not look to other authorities to take any of its housing need and plans to meet its own needs in full. However, whilst it does not share a boundary with Reading Borough, it has agreed, together with the three other Councils in the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area to help meet the 230-dwelling deficit which could arise from Reading Borough's unmet housing needs in the second half of its plan period (2013- 2036) [LP/Ev/2m].