

Bracknell Forest Story of Place – November 2016

- 1.1 Bracknell Forest lies 28 miles west of London, at the heart of the Thames Valley and within the county of Berkshire. Our economy is of above average size and productivity, compared to the county and nationally. Good access links, a well educated labour force and the quality of the environment are key attractors to the companies that have and continue to locate here, including a number of multi-national organisations. The borough has experienced pressures on housing, infrastructure services and environmental assets including sites designated as being important for nature conservation at an international, national and local level.

A Thriving Population

- 1.2 The borough's population is 118,982 (Mid-2015 Estimates, based on Census 2011). The demand for an increased number of households still causes pressure for more housing. The population is relatively young (median age 38.5 years). 13.7% of the population is aged 65 or over, compared to 17.7% nationally, although this is expected to grow.
- 1.3 The health of people in Bracknell Forest is generally better than the England average. Life expectancy is increasing and is currently 81.4 years for men and 85.0 years for women. These are higher than the England averages which are 79.4 years and 83.1 years respectively. Smoking related deaths (254 per 100,000 population) and deaths from heart disease (31.7 per 100,000) and strokes (59.29 per 100,000) are below national levels.
- 1.4 Bracknell Forest has 32 primary schools, 6 secondary schools (including 1 academy), 1 special school and 1 Pupil Referral Unit. Overall results are consistently in line with or above the national averages.
- 1.5 GCSE results nationally have decreased significantly following a range of changes to curriculum, assessment and examinations. The proportion of young people obtaining 5 or more GCSE grades A* - C including English and Maths was 55.8% in 2015/16, just above the national average of 52.8%.

A Desirable Place

- 1.6 Bracknell Forest covers 109 sq km of central Berkshire and includes the town of Bracknell, together with Sandhurst town and the villages of Crowthorne and Binfield, along with Warfield and Winkfield. Close to London, the area has easy access to the motorway network (M3, M4, M40 and M25), Heathrow, and direct train links into London.
- 1.7 The north and east of the borough form part of the Metropolitan Green Belt, whilst land south of Bracknell and east of Crowthorne is internationally important for nature conservation. The borough is proud and protective of its green character, with a third of our area comprising woodland. The borough also has one of the highest ratios of publicly accessible open space to its population, and much of this open space is maintained at a high standard.

- 1.8 The average house price has remained well above the national average for many years. In Quarter 4 of 2015, the average house price in Bracknell Forest was £342,824 compared with a South East average of £331,757 and a national average of £271,622. Finding acceptable locations for new housing and providing appropriate infrastructure continue to be major challenges for partners and residents. The Council's Core Strategy Development Plan Document requires approximately 11,000 new dwellings between 2006 and 2026 to be built. The number of dwellings in the borough stands at 48,281 with 376 net completions in 2014/15.

Cohesive Communities

- 1.9 The 2011 Census showed that 84.9% of the population was 'White British' and 15.1% of the population was BME and 'white other'. The proportion of school pupils from Minority Ethnic Groups has increased steadily over the past few years rising from 16.1% in 2011 to 20.6% in 2016.
- 1.10 12% of pupils in Bracknell Forest schools have English as an Additional Language (EAL). There are 86 known first languages other than English spoken in our schools, although many of these in very small numbers.¹
- 1.11 The 2011 Census data showed the percentages of the population who identify with the major religious groups are as follows: Christian: 60.5%, No religion: 31.9%, Hindu: 1.61%, Muslim: 1.13%, Buddhist: 0.73%, other religion: 0.43%, Sikh: 0.40%, Jewish: 0.16%. Despite the steady change in the composition of the population, the area is generally a cohesive community where people get on well together.
- 1.12 Bracknell Forest is one of the least deprived areas of the country (ranked 287 out of 326 local authorities in England on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015). Property prices and levels of car ownership are significantly higher than the national average. However, these headline figures mask significant pockets of deprivation. For instance, 6 out of 19 wards in the borough have free school meal eligibility of over 10%. The borough rate is 7.9% compared to 14.3% nationally¹. 7.7% per cent of 0-15 year olds in the borough are living in poverty², compared to a South East average of 10.6% and a national average of 14.7%.
- 1.13 Bracknell Forest is within the economically buoyant Thames Valley and already a premier business location. But the aspiration is to make the local economy even more successful throughout the borough. The £240m town centre regeneration programme, the Lexicon, is well under way and due to open in September 2017. This will create a centre which provides a vibrant economic, social and cultural heart to the borough and a real sense of place.
- 1.14 The number of people claiming Job Seekers' Allowance has fallen from a peak of 2.5% in March 2010, to 0.6% in May 2016. This represents just 440

¹ Source: School Census Jan 2016

² Source: DWP May 2015 – Poverty: Number of Children living in all Out-of-Work Benefit Claimant Households by Local Authority and Age.

people. The figure remains lower than both the South East and national averages (0.8% and 1.3% respectively).³

- 1.15 The estimated proportion of young people aged 16-18 in Bracknell Forest who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in 2015 was 3.3%, representing around 120 young people. This remains a key priority for the area.
- 1.16 Overall crime in 2015/16 increased by 3.6% when compared to 2014/15. This increase is largely due a to rise in the number of 'Crimes Against Society', i.e. drugs offences, which is the result of police taking a robust approach to tackling the problem of drugs offences in the borough. All other areas of crime have seen decreases: Victim Based Crime is down by 6.8%, Recorded Hate Crime is down by 40% and Domestic Abuse Crime down by 7.6%.
- 1.17 Despite the increase in overall crime, Bracknell Forest compares favourably with the Thames Valley as a whole, which saw a 7.2% increase in overall crime and with the Berkshire Unitaries, which saw an average 6.25% increase.

³ Source: [Nomis](#)