

Bracknell

Berkshire

'Mark One' New Town – Designated 17 June 1949

Following the rejection, due to agricultural value and airfield operations, of Patrick Abercrombie's Greater London Plan proposals for a New Town at White Waltham, five miles to the north, Bracknell, a small market town, emerged as the favoured alternative. The Development Corporation was determined that it should be 'a self-contained country town combining the amenities of town life with the advantages of country'. Its motto was 'Home: Industry: Leisure'. Today, Bracknell is a major centre, having absorbed the majority of the Borough's recent in-migration and containing three industrial areas. It has good accessibility by public transport and road and rail connections to other settlements. The town has largely been expanded to its north, east and west. Further growth will be to its south east and north.



Key facts:

- **Location:** 30 kilometres south west of London, with close access to the M3 and M4. Adjacent to a large part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) (which constrains growth to the south) and much high-quality recreation and open space.
- **2011 Census population:** 64,135, in 41,518 households.¹
- **Local authority:** Bracknell Forest Council.
- **Local Plan status:** Bracknell Forest Core Strategy DPD (2008), and Site Allocations Local Plan (2013), plus saved policies from the Local Plan 2002. There has been planned additional growth since the Development Corporation was wound up, and further growth is planned.

New Town designation:

- **Designated:** 17 June 1949.
- **Designated area:** 753 hectares, revised twice up to 1,190 hectares.
- **Intended population:** 25,000, revised to 55,000-60,000 in 1962 (population at designation: 5,000).
- **Development Corporation:** The Development Corporation set itself 'three principal objectives of close attention to people's human needs, preservation of the town's beautiful natural setting, and exploitation of the town's excellent communications'. Community facilities were set at the heart of each of the town's nine neighbourhoods. The transport system was designed to segregate roads and pedestrians/cyclists. Development Corporation wound up 31 March 1982.

Housing, deprivation and health:

- Owner-occupation in Bracknell (62.7%) is in line with the UK average (63.5%), and slightly higher than the UK New Towns average (58.9%). Socially rented housing is at slightly higher levels, and privately rented housing at slightly lower levels, than the UK New Towns and UK averages.
- Bracknell has lower levels of deprivation than the English New Towns and England averages.

- The 2011 Census reported that Bracknell Forest's residents declared themselves to be in 'good' and 'very good' health at levels above both the UK New Towns and UK averages, and reported below-average levels for 'bad' and 'very bad' health.

Employment/economic profile:

- There are three employment areas, home to multinational IT businesses. The economy is buoyant, with above-average employment in skilled professions.
- Within Thames Valley Berkshire LEP. Several key infrastructure projects around the town were highlighted in the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan submission, and town centre regeneration was identified as a key strategic priority.

Development Corporation legacy:

- The masterplan provided a robust framework to build upon, such as a transport network that allows for sustainable urban extensions well linked to town centre and employment areas.
- Congestion is relatively low compared with nearby towns.
- Most of the objectives are considered to have been met, but removing the original high street rather than incorporating it into the masterplan has added to regeneration needs.
- An emphasis on the open space network still makes a positive contribution to residents' quality of life.

Key issues for the future:

- Town centre regeneration.
- Infrastructure investment and replacement.
- Housing delivery to support need and economic growth (major urban extensions totalling almost 4,000 homes).
- Transport congestion and movement management.
- Provision of school, community and health facilities.
- Mitigating the impact of development on the SPA.
- Sustainable business and employment growth.
- Protecting the character and amenity of nearby settlements.
- Protecting the countryside and Green Belt for their own sake.

¹ Figures from Middle Layer Super Output Area data

Did you know?

The bricks for 10 Downing Street were made in Bracknell, and the town has provided locations for many films, including the house that Harry Potter grew up in.