

Proposal Document – Blackwater Valley BRMA

Review

1.0 Proposal

- 1.1 I propose to amend the boundary in the north west of the existing Blackwater Valley BRMA to include the villages of Eversley, Eversley Cross, Eversley Centre and Lower Common, thus excluding them from within the Basingstoke BRMA.
- 1.2 I propose to amend the southern boundary of the existing Blackwater Valley BRMA to include the towns of Alton and Bordon together with their rural hinterlands, excluding this area from the Basingstoke BRMA, and to include Headley, Headley Down and their surroundings, thus excluding them from the adjoining Guildford BRMA.
- 1.3 I propose a change to the northern boundary of the BRMA so that Windlesham, currently in East Thames Valley BRMA, be included in the Blackwater Valley BRMA.

2.0 Map of existing BRMA

- 2.1 See Fig. 1.

3.0 Maps of existing BRMA with proposed changes overlaid

- 3.1 For the proposed Blackwater Valley BRMA overlaid on the existing BRMA see Fig. 2.
- 3.2 For proposal 1.1 - clarification of proposed changes around the villages of Eversley, Eversley Cross, Eversley Centre and Lower Common - see Fig. 3.
- 3.3 For proposal 1.2 - clarification of proposed changes around the towns of Alton, Bordon and Headley - see Fig. 4.
- 3.4 For proposal 1.3 - clarification of proposed changes around the village of Windlesham - see Fig. 5.

4.0 Overview of the proposed BRMA

- 4.1 The proposed Blackwater Valley BRMA is a mixed urban and rural area. At its widest point the BRMA is approximately 14 miles from east to west and is approximately 21 miles from north to south.
- 4.2 The BRMA is a conglomeration of towns and villages within what is often referred to as the Blackwater Valley sub regional housing market, and encompasses nearly all of the Aldershot Urban Area. The main centres are Aldershot, Camberley, Cove, Farnborough, Farnham, Fleet, Frimley, Sandhurst and Yateley. Over time, these urban centres have developed and now form one continuous linear conurbation. At

the southern tip of the proposed BRMA, separated from the main conurbation by a rural hinterland, are the towns of Alton and Bordon with their surrounding villages.

4.3 With a number of key sites in the area, the BRMA is identified with the armed forces although it has also now developed into an important transport hub being intersected by the M3 and A331 and having both north-south and east-west rail routes running through its axis.

4.4 The BRMA lies across the border of Hampshire and Surrey, with a small amount of Berkshire in the north, and is administered by seven local authorities: East Hampshire, Hart, Rushmoor, Waverley, Surrey Heath, and Guildford District Councils and Bracknell Forest Council.

5.0 Legislation - Rent Officers (Housing Benefit Functions) Amendment (No.2) Order 2008.

5.1 A Broad Rental Market Area is an area '*within which a person could reasonably be expected to live having regard to facilities and services for the purposes of health, education, recreation, personal banking and shopping, taking account of the distance of travel, by public and private transport, to and from those facilities and services.*'

5.2 A BRMA must contain '*residential premises of a variety of types, including such premises held on a variety of tenures*', plus '*sufficient privately rented residential premises, to ensure that, in the rent officer's opinion, the LHA (LRR) for the area is representative of the rents that a landlord might reasonably be expected to obtain in that area*'.

6.0 Identification of facilities and services

6.1 I have plotted the facilities and services on a map, which can be seen at Fig. 6. (Health, Education, Recreation, Banking and Shopping are referred to as HERBS in this report.)

6.2 The map at Fig. 6 indicates that the HERBS are distributed across the urban areas of the BRMA, with each of the centres providing a range of facilities that complement each other.

6.3 NHS South Central and NHS South East Coast Strategic Health Authorities cover health services within the BRMA. There are three Primary Care Trusts operating in the area.

6.4 The main hospital is the 700 bed Frimley Park Hospital, at Frimley, which incorporates a Ministry of Defence hospital. Frimley Park Hospital offers a wide range of services and has an Emergency Department, a maternity department and a cardiac centre. It is run by Frimley Park NHS Foundation Trust which also runs outpatient services at Aldershot, Fleet and Farnham. There are several community type hospitals in the area, namely, Alton Community Hospital, the Chase Hospital at Bordon, Fleet Community Hospital and

the Farnham Hospital and Centre for Health. These hospitals provide inpatient beds for patient recuperation and outpatient services.

- 6.5 Surrey, Hampshire, and Bracknell Forest LEAs are responsible for education services within the area.
- 6.6 The BRMA is served by both Primary and Secondary Schools as identified in Fig. 6 in the appendices as Key Stage 2 for primary schools and Key Stage 4 for secondary schools.
- 6.7 Post-16 education within the BRMA is provided at most secondary schools, at sixth form colleges and at Farnborough College of Technology which has a subsidiary campus at Aldershot. Farnborough College offers vocational and technical courses and degrees in conjunction with the University of Surrey. There is also, in Farnham, the campus of the University College for the Creative Arts.
- 6.8 The Blackwater Valley BRMA offers a wide range of recreational opportunities. Open spaces, playing fields, recreation grounds, parks, and the Blackwater Valley itself facilitate a range of formal and informal outdoor activities and sports, including cycling, fishing, horse-riding, golf, walking, nature watching and water sports. Entertainment and other recreational facilities are concentrated in the larger population centres and include museums, cinemas, bowling alleys and various entertainment venues. Aldershot, for example, has sports and leisure centres, a Lido, the Princes Hall multi-purpose entertainment venue, the Alpine Snowsports centre and the Aldershot Military Museum. Camberley has sports and leisure centres, a theatre, and the Vue cinema (situated within the Atrium development). Sports and/or leisure centres are also to be found at Alton, Bordon, Farnborough, Farnham, Frimley, Lightwater, Sandhurst and Yateley. There are numerous restaurants, pubs and clubs in the area,
- 6.9 All the main population centres offer a choice of high street banks and banking services are also available at post offices, garages and supermarkets across the area.
- 6.10 The towns within the BRMA offer a range of independent and high street chain retailers. Farnborough has a Debenhams and two covered shopping centres, whilst Aldershot has the Wellington (covered) Shopping Centre and a selection of well-known retailers. Camberley is home to the Mall Shopping Centre (anchored by the House of Fraser department store), as well as the Atrium shopping and leisure development. Retailers in the town include Bhs, New Look, Primark and Waterstone's. The Hart Shopping Centre in Fleet has more than 40 high street retailers, including Next. Farnham has many independent and specialist shops, some gathered in a cobbled shopping yard, but still features some national retailers such as Monsoon, Next and WHSmith. The smaller towns of Sandhurst and Alton have branches of some well-known high street chains, as well as

many independent retailers. Retail parks and warehouses add further to retail provision in the area.

- 6.11 Well-known supermarket retailers - Asda, Morrison's, Sainsbury's, Tesco, and Waitrose - are all represented in the area with stores situated in town centres or on their outskirts. All the towns, including Alton and Bordon, are home to at least one of these leading supermarkets and there is also a Waitrose in the village of Yateley. Several centres offer a choice of such supermarkets. Farnham town centre has a Waitrose and a Sainsbury's with another Sainsbury's store outside the town. Fleet has a Morrison's, a Sainsbury's and a Waitrose, while Farnborough has an Asda and a Sainsbury's in the town and a Morrison's outside the town. Sandhurst's out-of-town Meadows retail park has a Tesco hypermarket and a large Marks and Spencer. Smaller supermarket chains and "express" type outlets are also present across the area and some of the larger villages retain one or more food shops.

7.0 Access to facilities and services

- 7.1 The maps indicate that the towns and villages within the BRMA have reasonable access to the main facilities and services. A network of A and B roads provide links from the towns and villages within the BRMA to the Aldershot Urban Area. The M3 cuts through the BRMA from the north eastern border with the Guildford BRMA to the western border with Basingstoke BRMA. Motorway junctions 3, 4 and 4a provide quick access for the villages of Windlesham and Cove Heath to access Camberley and Frimley. The duelled A31 and A331 provide a fast route down the spine of the BRMA connecting Alton and Bentley to Farnham and on to Aldershot and Farnborough.
- 7.2 There are a number of bus operators serving the BRMA including Stagecoach and Countywide Travel. Many regular bus routes feed into the Aldershot Urban Area from around the BRMA. There are also two main rail lines running north to south through the BRMA, and one running east to west. The railways operated by South West Trains and First Great Western connect Fleet and Farnborough; Alton and Bagshot; and Ash and Sandhurst.
- 7.3 The table at Fig. 7 shows distances and times of travel to Basingstoke from the towns and villages within the BRMA.
- 7.4 The table indicates that journey times are around half an hour or less by car from the towns and villages listed; whilst public transport travel times are generally within 60 minutes from these areas.
- 7.5 With regard to the proposed change at paragraph 1.1, the existing journey by private car from Eversley Centre and its surrounding villages to Basingstoke, a distance of 14.2 miles takes 30 minutes, and by public transport, a journey that requires residents to take a bus to Farnborough and then a train to Basingstoke, 1 hour 13 minutes.

However, the journey from these villages to Camberley, one of the main service centres in the proposed Blackwater Valley BRMA, by private car is a distance of 6.1 miles and takes 15 minutes. By public transport the bus service via Darby Green takes just 38 minutes. I consider it appropriate therefore that Eversley Centre and the surrounding villages are included in the Blackwater Valley BRMA.

7.6 With regard to the proposed change at paragraph 1.2, the existing journeys from the towns of Alton and Bordon to Basingstoke by private car are a distance of 13.8 miles taking 31 minutes, and 23.3 miles taking 46 minutes respectively. These same journeys by public transport take in excess of 90 minutes from Alton and there are no services from Bordon to Basingstoke. However, the journey from Alton and Bordon to Aldershot, identified as one of the main clusters of HERBS in the Blackwater Valley BRMA is a distance of 12.8 miles and takes 24 minutes by private car and 11.4 miles taking 25 minutes by private car respectively. By public transport, there is a regular train service between Alton and Aldershot that takes 20 minutes and a frequent bus service connects Bordon and Aldershot that takes 42 minutes. I consider these distance and travelling times reasonable and it is therefore appropriate that both Alton and Bordon should be included in the Blackwater Valley BRMA.

7.6 Similarly the proposal to exclude Headley, Headley Down and their surrounding areas from the Guildford BRMA and to include them in the Blackwater Valley BRMA is based on reasonable access to the HERBS. Access to Aldershot from these areas by public transport is direct and on balance faster than into Guildford. Some of the public transport journeys into Guildford require a change in Aldershot, thus making Aldershot more readily accessible. The private transport time from Headley to Aldershot is 29 minutes for the 12.8 miles, compared to 32 minutes for the 18.4 miles to Guildford, and Farnham is yet more easily accessible at just a 20 minute journey for the 9.5 miles. The bus to Guildford takes 1 hour 27 minutes and the bus to Farnham just 46 minutes.

7.7 With regard to the proposed change outlined in paragraph 1.5 the table shows that Slough is not easily accessed from Windlesham, taking 1 hour 21 minutes by bus, but rather Camberley is most easily accessed at just 20 minutes by bus, or 12 minutes in the car. It is for this reason that I propose to move Windlesham from the East Thames Valley BRMA into the Black Water Valley BRMA.

7.8 In summary, the tables lead me to conclude that these distances and times of travel are reasonable to access the facilities and services in the proposed BRMA.

8.0 Variety of property types and tenures

8.1 The table at Fig. 8 shows a breakdown of property types and tenures in the proposed BRMA.

- 8.2 Within the property type section of the table it can be seen that there are substantially more houses and bungalows than flats. There are slightly more houses that are detached than are semi-detached, and there are relatively few terraced properties. The majority of properties in the 'flats, maisonettes and/or apartments' group are within the 'Purpose-Built' category.
- 8.3 Within the household tenure section of the table it can be seen that there are a greater number of owner occupied properties, but social and privately rented properties account for some 20.7% of total tenures.
- 8.4 In summary, the table leads me to conclude that there is a variety of property types and tenures in the proposed BRMA.

9.0 Sufficient privately rented premises

- 9.1 The table at Fig. 7 shows a total of 12,462 privately rented premises in the proposed BRMA which is sufficient in my opinion.
- 9.2 In accordance with our published guidance, we expect to collect 20% of lettings in the private rented sector market. In this case we would have 2,492 pieces of lettings information to include on our list of rents. I consider this amount to be sufficient to enable me to ensure that the LHA (LRR) for the area is representative of the rents that a landlord might reasonably be expected to obtain in the proposed BRMA.

J C Hodgkinson
Review Manager
November 2010