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## Executive Summary

This heritage strategy results from the findings of a Member led working group that was established in August 2002 to consider the role of heritage as an aspect of the Community Plan and Cultural Strategy; both of which seek to develop a sense of place and increase local identity amongst residents of Bracknell Forest.

The Heritage Working Group visited a variety of heritage related sites over an 18 month period so as to develop a broad understanding of heritage issues across the borough. Visits were made to the Berkshire Record Office, which preserves the paper archive for Berkshire in environmentally controlled conditions. The group was then able to see a comparison with the store at Easthampstead Park which houses the remains of the heritage display from the former Heritage Centre at The Look Out. This focused attention on the need for a collection and storage policy. Many items, such as old local store signs are of high local importance but of low economic value and could easily be lost if not collected or stored properly.

The Working Group visited Caesar's Camp Iron Age Hill Fort, a Scheduled Ancient Monument in the care of the local authority, and The Look Out Discovery Centre's display about Caesar's Camp. The issues surrounding the management of archaeological sites and their interpretation were considered. The built heritage and the reuse of old buildings were examined during a visit to Winkfield Manor and Binfield House, former large country homes that have now come into the ownership of the local authority and are used as rest homes. Visits were also made to two other structures: The Ice House, a listed building situated in an open space and the Sandhurst Well as examples of issues surrounding vandalism and sympathetic restoration. The final visit was made to the Sandhurst Historical Society's store of local documents and artifacts located at the Police Point in Memorial Park. The voluntary curator talked about the importance of the archive for local residents and to the members of the society who collect and research the material. Each year a display is compiled and displayed for the public.

The result of these site visits led to the framework for the Heritage Strategy. This includes five strands: Community Participation, Audit & Assessment, Collection & Protection, Interpretation & Dissemination and Funding. Through these strands the views of the Heritage Working Group have been focused onto a series of outcomes. For example, the need to identify our local heritage through an audit and assessment process, to get people involved through specialist staff, to develop a collection and storage policy and to develop projects to interpret and disseminate the story of the borough's heritage. To achieve these outcomes it is proposed that a Heritage Forum is established to take the Heritage strategy out into the communities.

## Summary Action Plan

- To Establish and run a Heritage Forum
- To undertake an audit and assessment of existing heritage resources
- To designate buildings and other features of local importance
- To establish an archaeological policy
- To establish a collections and storage policy
- To set up a Heritage On-Line website
- Maintain the commitment to restoring Lily Hill Park
- Establish a heritage trail around the Borough
- Explore the feasibility of setting up a heritage centre
- Link into the Reading Museum Box Scheme
- Seek to make the Sites and Monument Record available on the intranet
- Run talks and events that raise awareness of local heritage
- Celebrate National Heritage Week
- Create an additional half time post to implement the strategy
- Continue to seek new funding opportunities
- Submit a Heritage Lottery Fund Bid for the restoration of the South Hill Park grounds

## Part 1      **Background to the Strategy**

### **1.1 Introduction**

- 1.1.1 This Heritage Strategy seeks to develop a wider understanding, appreciation and participation in the heritage of Bracknell Forest. Although it has been compiled by officer from Bracknell Forest Borough Council, through a member led Heritage Strategy Working Group, it is a strategy to guide and inspire anyone who is interested in the conservation of our heritage and the development of a 'sense of place' within the borough.
- 1.1.2 Strategic justification for the development of a local heritage strategy has come from both the Community Plan, *'Shaping Tomorrow Together...A Community Plan for Bracknell Forest - 2002-2005 and Beyond'* and *'Bracknell Forest's Local Cultural Strategy: Life is for Living'* (2002). Public consultation undertaken for these strategies highlighted the need to develop a 'sense of place' and 'identity' for Bracknell Forest that should generate a feeling of belonging amongst residents. The strategies seek to develop pride in Bracknell Forest through the use of cultural activities to:
- develop sustainable involvement by all sections of the community, removing barriers to participation where they exist
  - develop a distinct and positive sense of place, ownership and belonging for Bracknell Forest
  - ensure the sustainability of cultural programmes and facilities.
- 1.1.3 Both strategies seek to influence issues that 'make life worth living' and that make Bracknell Forest 'an enjoyable place to live and work'. Some of the aims are based around improving service provision, such as the maintenance of a pleasant environment, the provision of high quality education and life long learning. However, the cultural strategy also seeks to foster a distinct local identity and a 'sense of place' within communities. This can be encouraged through community development methods that facilitate and encourage local people to become engaged in projects that are of their own design and choice.
- 1.1.4 The development of a Heritage Strategy is also consistent with the aims of the South East England Cultural Consortium's strategy 'Cultural Cornerstone'.

- 1.1.5 The Local Government Improvement Programme (I&DeA) has identified the need to develop a stronger sense of image and identity as many residents do not identify with 'Bracknell Forest'.
- 1.1.6 Developing the image of the Borough will further economic development.
- 1.1.7 The success of the Bracknell Forest Heritage Strategy will be dependent upon input and participation from individuals and groups across our communities and neighbourhoods. Partnerships offer an invaluable opportunity to expand knowledge of our local heritage and provide opportunities to further community development. The role of BFBC will be to facilitate such partnerships, which may involve: local associations, clubs and organisations, individuals, special interest groups, other BFBC departments, schools and colleges, parish and town councils, landowners, churches and businesses.

## 1.2 Definition

- 1.2.1 Heritage is an important aspect of culture. Whilst at the same time very distinct, they are also closely intertwined. The following are how the two words are defined within both this strategy and the Cultural Strategy.

Bracknell Forest Cultural Strategy defines culture as:

**“The combination of pursuits, beliefs and knowledge which defines who we are and what we do”.**

The Heritage Strategy Working Group defined heritage as:

**“Heritage is what we have inherited and wish to keep for future generations, which is of cultural value.”**

Heritage forms an important aspect of culture, relating to those things that we have inherited and that we value and wish to keep for future generations. 'Heritage' is thus identified as being a part of 'culture' - since it is our culture that dictates what we value from our heritage, and what we wish to conserve for future generations. Both our culture and our heritage are fluid concepts. As our culture changes due to internal and external influences and fashions, the values placed on aspects of our heritage also change.

1.2.2 Heritage can be **tangible**, such as artefacts, documents, buildings, industrial techniques, breeds of livestock or landscapes and their associated structures or it can be **intangible** heritage in the form of legends, superstitions, language, accents, music, dance, sport, faith or memories.



Plate 1 Painting of Lily Hill House c. 1865



Plate 2 An Icehouse (grade II Listed Building)



Plate 3 Photograph of traditional brick making



Plate 4 An art exhibition based on memories of 'When I was 15'



Plate 5 Celebrations of faith - Christmas carols



Plate 6 Celebrating the heritage of cultural diversity



Plate 7 Movement and dance



Plate 8 Rugby Union – emulating England's World Cup winners

### 1.3 Purpose

1.3.1 Bracknell Forest identifies itself as 'The Borough of opportunity in the high-tech heart of Britain'. It is forward thinking - cutting edge - modern and dynamic. 'Change' has been the key attribute of the Borough over the last 50 years, since the area was earmarked for the development of Bracknell New Town after the Second World War. During this time the original population has not only witnessed old landmarks and ways of life disappear, but has seen a huge expansion in the population and the urban environment. Newcomers have left their family and friendship support networks behind as they have moved into the borough – mainly for work. The challenge is to help the indigenous residents to retain pride in their origins, histories and customs and to share this with newcomers so that both groups gain a sense of place. It is also about giving new comers the experience of being in a place that has a past as well as a future, and by acknowledging that their own personal heritages add to and enrich that which already exists.

### 1.4 Aim

1.4.1 The Bracknell Forest Heritage Strategy forms a basis from which to devise new policies and action plans, develop partnerships, encourage self sustaining community participation and to actively seek new funding opportunities.

- It should achieve this through the provision of a clear framework in which to undertake community development that will raise the profile of heritage within Bracknell Forest and generate a greater 'sense of place' within communities.
- By enabling research, collection, storage, interpretation and dissemination of our heritage for the benefit of the people of Bracknell Forest and other interested parties.

## **Part 2      Current Participants, Roles and Responsibilities**

### **2      Organisations involved in heritage issues**

The following groups and organisations contribute to the heritage provision of the borough:

#### **2.1      Bracknell Forest Borough Council's role in protecting the heritage**

- Development of the heritage strategy.
- Management and restoration of Lily Hill Park in conjunction with guidance and funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- Creation and management of the 'Heritage On-Line Project' funded by Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a sustainable community interest and input of the heritage of the people and place.
- Production and distribution of free heritage information leaflets for the borough.
- Management of several locally important historic parks and gardens for public enjoyment - Pope's Meadow, South Hill Park, Lily Hill Park, Easthampstead Park, Snaprails Park, Ambarrow Court.
- Retention of characteristic landscape features within land holdings e.g. hedges and ditches, and use traditional management methods to maintain the land e.g. coppicing, hedge laying, grazing where practical.
- Incorporation of historical information into 'on site' information boards.
- In conjunction with the planning section, encourages developers to conserve aspects of the heritage within developments e.g. reconstruction of the brick kiln chimney within the Lawrence Meadows as part of a planning agreement.
- Owner / leaseholder of two Scheduled Ancient Monuments (Bill Hill Bronze Age Round Barrow and Caesar's Camp Iron Age Hillfort) and a grade II listed Icehouse.
- Custodian of a collection of heritage artifacts and other material of local interest (in store).
- Jointly fund Berkshire Record Office with the five other unitary authorities.
- Member of the Berkshire Museums Network.
- Member of the Berkshire Archaeological Trust.
- Hold local history collections within the nine libraries, with the main collection held in Bracknell Library.

- Management of The Look Out Discovery Centre which houses a permanent exhibition on the history of Caesar's Camp.
- Hold and maintain the Sites & Monuments Record (SMR) of archaeological sites available in Binfield, Bracknell and Birch Hill Libraries. Publicly accessible PowerPoint presentation of old local photographs
- Provide planning advice and development control for listed buildings and Conservation Areas.
- Arrange for Scheduled Monument Consent for any development or works that may directly or indirectly affect a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- Ensure that the Bracknell Forest Local Plan 2002 provides clear guidelines on landscape, archaeology, listed buildings, conservation areas and historic parks and gardens.
- Ensure that the planning document 'Limiting the Impact of Development' (2001) provides supplementary guidance to developers on how development can be undertaken sustainably.

## 2.2 Parishes

- Parishes are the closest level of government to local people. The clerks, local people and councillors are often highly knowledgeable about important local places or collections and are frequently in contact with individual enthusiasts and groups.
- There are collections of objects and archives relating to local history in both the Parish Council Offices and Libraries. For example, Binfield Parish Council and Library holds a large number of important archives and also several oral history tapes. Sandhurst Parish Council also supports a Museum Committee which holds collections and archives relating to the history of Sandhurst.
- Many parishes have direct control over significant areas of land and property within their ownership or management, for example Sandhurst Town Council is seeking Heritage Lottery Funding for the restoration of Sandhurst Well, other parishes manage historic parks or other traditional meeting places.
- There is a wealth of local information and knowledge and enthusiasm for heritage within the parishes. Working in partnership with the Parishes will enhance and underpin the Heritage Strategy.

## 2.3 Berkshire Record Office

With the creation of the six unitary authorities in 1998, it was agreed that a new Record Office would be jointly funded by the new unitary councils. The purpose built building opened to the public in 2000. The new location is:

9, Coley Avenue  
Reading  
Berkshire, RG1 6AF

The Berkshire Record Office is responsible for housing:

- The archive holds a vast range of documents, some of which are:
- Parish records (baptism, marriage and burial registers) from 16<sup>th</sup> century
- Census return for Berkshire 1841-1891
- Probate records 1508 - present day
- Workhouse and school records (admission records)
  
- Tithe and Enclosure Maps and Awards
- Poll books and electoral registers (1832 and from 1839 - the present day)
- County and borough trade directories from 1823 - the 1976
- International Genealogical Index
- Title deeds and sale particulars of specific houses
- Licensing records from late 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Estate and family papers
- Local Acts of Parliament for making of the railways
- A library of secondary source history books

## 2.4 Reading Museum

- Provides archaeological advice to planners.
- Provides general museum collections and displays on aspects of Berkshire's History.
- Maintains 1,700 theme boxes for loan to schools.
- Provides education events for schools and special interest groups.
- Provides advice on finds and acts as intermediary between the landowner and/or the finder and the British Museum under the Treasure Act.
- Stores artifacts.

## **2.5 Local Groups**

- Local History Groups - Binfield, Bracknell, Sandhurst Historical Societies.

## **2.6 Companies & Sector Industries of significant importance in the history of Bracknell Forest**

- The Met Office
- Other long standing companies such as 3M, Syngenta, Fujitsu (formally ICL), British Aerospace, Pilkington Glass, Ferranti and Daler Rowney
- The Crown Estate and Forestry Commission
- The Royal Military College
- Broadmoor Hospital