

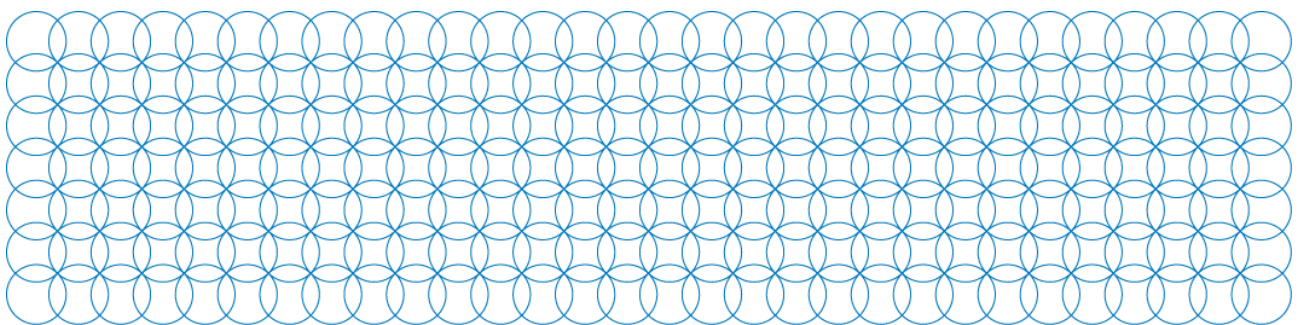


Ministry
of Justice

Proposal on the future of Bracknell Magistrates' Court

This consultation begins on 18 June 2014

This consultation ends on 30 July 2014





Ministry
of Justice

Proposal on the future of Bracknell Magistrates' Court

A consultation produced by the Ministry of Justice. It is also available on the Ministry of Justice website at www.justice.gov.uk

About this consultation

To: The consultation is aimed at court users, magistracy, judiciary, and anyone else with an interest in the provision of local justice arrangements in Berkshire.

Duration: From 18 June 2014 to 30 July 2014

Enquiries (including requests for the paper in an alternative format) to: Bracknell Magistrates' Court Consultation
HM Courts & Tribunals Service
Ministry of Justice
Post Point 9.07, 9th Floor, 102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Email: ConsultationBracknellMC@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

How to respond: Please send your response by 30 July 2014 to:

Bracknell Magistrates' Court Consultation
HM Courts & Tribunals Service
Ministry of Justice
Post Point 9.07, 9th Floor, 102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Email: ConsultationBracknellMC@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Additional ways to feed in your views: For further information please use the Enquiries contact details above.

Response paper: A response to this consultation exercise is due to be published by 13 October 2014 at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk>

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Foreword

HM Courts & Tribunals Service is committed to running an efficient and effective courts and tribunals system, which enables the rule of law to be upheld, and provides access to justice for all. As part of our commitment to continue the reform of our estate, HM Courts & Tribunals Service is consulting on whether Bracknell Magistrates' Court should close.

Bracknell Magistrates' Court has three courtrooms, and up until the 1 April 2012, was a satellite court of the former East Berkshire Local Justice Area (LJA). The court dealt with criminal cases and was used as a trial centre for the East Berkshire LJA. From January 2012 this work has primarily been listed at Reading Magistrates' Court, which has better facilities such as a witness suite staffed by Witness Support, and as the site is an administrative centre, this allows for a better network in terms of staffing and support on the ground. Bracknell Magistrates' Court has not been used since January 2012.

In addition to Bracknell and Reading there are three other magistrates' courts in Berkshire. These are located in Slough, Maidenhead and Newbury. There is sufficient capacity in these four sites to meet current and anticipated demand in the Berkshire area.

Bracknell Magistrates' Court was built in 1965 as a purpose built court house, and is situated in the town centre. The facilities are of poor quality, and the flat roof and judicial areas require major refurbishment. The building has no independent central heating, no form of mechanical plant, or air conditioning for the summer months.

Reading Magistrates' Court is situated 10 miles away from Bracknell Magistrates' Court, and is a modern, purpose built courthouse. The court has good transport links and excellent facilities on both floors, including facilities for people with disabilities.

This proposal aims to ensure our court estate is used more efficiently and the closure of the court would offer HM Courts & Tribunals Service savings of around £40,000 a year. This consultation seeks the views of local users, judiciary, magistracy, staff, criminal justice agency practitioners and elected representatives to better understand the impact that this proposal would have on the community in Bracknell and Berkshire.

Chris Jennings
Delivery Director

Executive summary

Bracknell Magistrates' Court opened at its current site in 1965. The building requires significant upgrade work which HM Courts & Tribunals Service is unable to justify, given that the court has not been used since January 2012.

Since the trial work has been moved from Bracknell to Reading there have been no recorded complaints from the public about the current arrangements.

This consultation recommends the closure of Bracknell Magistrates' Court.

The closure of Bracknell Magistrates' Court would enable the Council to consider the site as part of any possible future regeneration of the town centre.

Introduction

This paper sets out for consultation the proposal on the closure of Bracknell Magistrates' Court, following the previous transfer of the trial work to Reading Magistrates' Court.

The consultation is aimed at court users, magistracy, judiciary, and anyone else with an interest in the provision of local justice arrangements in Berkshire.

An Impact Assessment, which indicates the groups that are likely to be particularly affected, is attached. Comments on the Impact Assessment are welcome.

Copies of the consultation paper are being made available to:

Unitary Authorities

Bracknell Forest Council

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

West Berkshire Council

Slough Borough Council

Reading Borough Council

Wokingham Borough Council

Members of Parliament

Dr Phillip Lee, MP for Bracknell

Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

Rob Wilson, MP for Reading East

Adam Afriyie, MP for Windsor

Richard Benyon, MP for Newbury

Theresa May, MP for Maidenhead

John Redwood, MP for Wokingham

Fiona Mactaggart, MP for Slough

Criminal Justice Stakeholders

Mark Lovett, Bench Chairman, Berkshire Local Justice Area

Sara Thornton, Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police

Anthony Stansfeld, Police and Crime Commissioner Thames Valley

The Chief Crown Prosecutor, Thames and Chiltern CPS

The Director of Probation, Thames Valley Probation Service

David Colchester, Thames Valley Local Criminal Justice Board

Karen Roberts, Head of Service, Bracknell Youth Offending Service

Linda Darrell, Divisional Manager, Victim Support & Witness Service

Jason Barrett, Contract Manager, Legal Aid Agency, Reading Crown Court

This list is not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive and responses are welcomed from anyone with an interest in or views on the subject covered by this paper.

The proposals

Bracknell Magistrates' Court is a three-courtroom building, and is one of five magistrates' courts in Berkshire. It was previously used as a satellite court of the former East Berkshire Local Justice Area (LJA). The court dealt with criminal cases, and was used as a trial centre for the East Berkshire LJA.

The accommodation at Bracknell Magistrates' Court is in need of updating; the judicial areas are in need of major refurbishment and, in addition, the flat roof is in need of repair. HM Courts & Tribunals Service would not be able to justify the cost of this work, given that the court has not been used since January 2012 and alternative facilities are located 10 miles away.

The work that was undertaken at Bracknell Magistrates' Court has been successfully transferred to other magistrates' courts in Berkshire. In particular, the trial work that was previously heard at Bracknell Magistrates' Court is now being held primarily at Reading Magistrates' Court which has better facilities for witnesses and court users.

Closure of the court will result in savings of around £40,000 per year.

Workload

Bracknell Magistrates' Court has three magistrates' courtrooms. It has not been used since January 2012. It previously dealt with criminal cases and was used as a trial centre for the former East Berkshire Local Justice Area.

Accommodation

Bracknell Magistrates' Court opened in 1965. The accommodation includes three magistrates' courtrooms. There are two formal courtrooms on the first floor that are accessed via a staircase. The third informal courtroom is based at ground level. There are no facilities available for people with disabilities for the two formal hearing rooms on the first floor. There are witness facilities available on the ground floor. The building has no independent central heating, no form of mechanical plant, or air conditioning for the summer months. The custody suite which is linked to the adjoining Police Station has recently been closed as it is no longer fit for purpose. The magistrates' car park is situated at the rear of the premises and access is gained through the local Police Station entrance. There are Health and Safety implications for magistrates entering the car park. Access to the building and the car park can only be gained by entering the Police Station at the back of the premises. The police station is operational and emergency vehicles enter and leave the building at speed.

Reading Magistrates' Court is a nine courtroom centre (seven magistrates' and two dual purpose courtrooms). In 2010 two courtrooms were converted from magistrates' courts to dual purpose courts and these are used for Reading Magistrates' Court and Reading Crown Court. Courtrooms 8 and 9 were also created at the same time and allow easy access to people with mobility issues. During these works, a disabled passenger lift was installed that allows access to the first floor. There are also disabled parking bays within the boundary of the court allowing easy access. There are separate waiting areas for

prosecution and defence witnesses, each with their own toilet facilities. There is a vulnerable witness suite available with video link equipment for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. There is also a disabled toilet available within the main concourse and close to Court 8 and 9.

Location

Bracknell Magistrates’ Court is located 10 miles away from Reading Magistrates’ Court. There is a frequent direct bus link between Bracknell and Reading that operates every 20 minutes from Monday to Saturday, with a journey time of approximately 50 minutes at a return ticket cost of £6.30 (this is an area ticket and can be used on other routes). There are three trains per hour from Bracknell to Reading with a journey time of 23 minutes and there are two trains per hour for the return journey with a time estimate of 20 minutes. The train service between Bracknell and Reading costs £5.90 for an anytime return ticket (including peak time services).

Detailed below are the transport links and travel times for car, bus and train from Bracknell to the other magistrates’ courts in Berkshire. The work that was previously done at Bracknell Magistrates’ Court is now done at Reading Magistrates’ Court, which has the best transport links to Bracknell.

	Reading	Maidenhead	Slough	Newbury
Car mileage	13	10	12	31
Car travel time	22 mins	20 mins	20 mins	36 mins
Bus travel time	57 mins	50 mins	1 hour:5 mins	2 hrs:36 mins
Train travel time	20 mins	55 mins (1 change)	53 mins (1 change)	1 hour:16 mins (1 change)

Staff Impact

There are no staff based at Bracknell Magistrates’ Court.

Questionnaire

We would welcome responses to the following questions set out in this consultation paper.

- 1. What comments would you like to make about the proposed closure of Bracknell Magistrates' Court?**
- 2. Please describe any particular impacts that should be taken into account and why.**
- 3. Will the closure of Bracknell Magistrates' Court have a direct impact on you? If so, please provide additional details.**
- 4. Do you agree that we have correctly identified the full range and extent of equality impacts for the proposals set out in this consultation paper? Please give reasons.**

Thank you for participating in this consultation exercise.

About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself

Full name	
Job title or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (e.g. member of the public etc.)	
Date	
Company name/organisation (if applicable):	
Address	
Postcode	
If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response, please tick this box	<input type="checkbox"/> (please tick box)
Address to which the acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above	

If you are a representative of a group, please tell us the name of the group and give a summary of the people or organisations that you represent.

Contact details/How to respond

Please send your response by 30 July 2014 to:

Bracknell Magistrates' Court Consultation
HM Courts & Tribunals Service
Ministry of Justice
Post Point 9.07, 9th Floor, 102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Email: ConsultationBracknellMC@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process you should contact the Ministry of Justice at the above address.

Extra copies

Further paper copies of this consultation can be obtained from this address and it is also available on-line at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/index.htm>.

Alternative format versions of this publication can be requested from the above address.

Publication of response

A paper summarising the responses to this consultation is due to be published by 13 October 2014. The response paper will be available on-line at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/index.htm>.

Representative groups

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent when they respond.

Confidentiality

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Ministry.

The Ministry will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Impact Assessment

An Impact Assessment has been published on the Ministry of Justice website (www.justice.gov.uk) alongside this consultation.

Consultation principles

The principles that Government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Consultation-Principles.pdf>

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Alternative format versions of this report are available on request from: HM Courts & Tribunals Service, Ministry of Justice, Post Point 9.07, 9th Floor, 102 Petty France, London SW1H 9AJ