

**THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
FOR THE PARISH OF
GREAT FARINGDON
2015-2031**

EQUALITY IMPACT STATEMENT

FEBRUARY 2015

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INTRODUCTION

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between persons who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not.

“Protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

This report assesses the pre-consultation draft of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that Faringdon Town Council is satisfying its statutory duties in this regard. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic analysis of a policy or policies, in order to explore the potential for an adverse impact on a particular group or community. It is a method of assessing and recording the likely differential and/or adverse impact of a policy on people from different groups. If a policy results in unfairness or discrimination then changes to eliminate or lessen the impact should be considered.

Aims of the Equality Analysis

The purpose of the analysis is to increase participation and inclusion, to change the culture of public decision-making and to place a more proactive approach to the promotion of equality and fairness at the heart of public policy. The processes involved in conducting the analysis should not be looked on as an end in themselves. Instead, it should be borne in mind that the aim is the promotion of fairness and equality of opportunity and thus it is the outcomes that are of primary concern. In undertaking the EIA we should be clear about why the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan is needed, what the intended outcomes are, and how it will be ensured that the policy will work as intended.

Methodology

An assessment has been made on whether the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan has a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics (in so far as data is available). A brief justification of the policies and proposals in the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan, and notes of any mitigation, has been provided. Where the impact is negative, this would be given a high, medium or low assessment. It is important to rate the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place, etc.

Medium impact – some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence.

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led.

BASELINE DATA

Data for the Parish of Great Faringdon are available for the following protected characteristics: age, disability, race, religious belief, and sex.

Data are not readily available for the following protected characteristics: gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and sexual orientation.

Unless stated the data source is the 2011 census. These data have been summarised in more detail in the Evidence Base Review.

At the time of the 2011 census there were 7,121 people living in Faringdon: 48.7% male, and 51.3% female: comparable figures for England were 49.2% male and 50.8% female. Faringdon had a higher proportion of children aged 0-4 yrs (7.5%) than the England average (6.3%), a comparable proportion aged 5-17 (15.2% cf. 15.1%); a slightly lower proportion of people older than 65 years (16.1% cf. 16.3%), but a higher proportion aged over 85 (2.8% cf. 2.2%). The proportion of people of working age (18-64) at 61.2% was slightly lower than the England average of 62.3%.

The 2011 census showed that Faringdon had a higher proportion of households **not** deprived in any dimension compared to England (51.3% cf. 42.5%). It had slightly fewer households than England with a single person with long term health problems or disabilities 23.2% (cf. 25.6% for England); of

Faringdon households in this category 4.4% (4.6%) had dependent children, 18.8% (21%) did not have any dependent children.

According to ONS figures for Vale of White Horse Areas 009A-D (approximating to the town of Faringdon) in 2013, Faringdon had 100 claimants for Job Seekers Allowance; 55 for Incapacity Benefit, 10 for Severe Disablement Allowance and 120 for Employment and Income Support.

From the 2011 census, the profile of ethnic origin for Faringdon in 2011 in terms of place of birth was 91.9% UK (cf. 86.2% for England); 0.5% Ireland (cf. 0.7% for England); other EU 2.7% (cf. 3.7% for England) and 'other countries; 4.9% (cf. 9.4% for England).

In terms of ethnic group: 92.2% were British white (cf. UK 86%); 3.7% were Other white (0.5% Irish, 0.1% Gypsy or Irish Traveller); 1.2% were from mixed/multiple ethnic groups 2.2% UK); 2.2% were Asian/Asian British (7.5% UK) and 1% were black African/Caribbean/black British (3.3% UK). These figures show that Faringdon has very low Non-white population (232 persons in 2011) compared to the national average.

In terms of religious belief in Faringdon, 61.4% were Christians (cf. 59.4% in England) while 29.6% claimed no religious beliefs (cf. 24.7% in England). Of the other principal religions are very small proportions of the population: 0.4% were Muslims (cf. 5% in England), 0.2% were Hindus (cf. 1.5% in England), 0.2% were Buddhist (cf. 0.5% in England), 0.1% were Sikhs (cf. 0.8% in England), and 0.1% were Jewish (cf. 0.5% in England). These five religions comprised only 0.5% of the population in total (cf. 8.7% in England). 7.5% (7.2%) did not state their religion.

Although direct data are not readily available for local pregnancy and maternity rates, the data show that Faringdon has a relatively high proportion of children under 5.

The 2011 census showed that of those in Faringdon living as couples, 48.7% (57.8%) of persons of opposite sex were in married households and 14.2% (11.2%) were co-habiting. 0.9% (0.9%) were living as a same sex couple, either cohabiting or in registered civil partnerships. In single occupancy households in Faringdon; 20% (25.8%) of persons were never married or in a registered civil partnership) and 1% (1.5%) were married or in a registered civil partnership, 2.4% (2.1%) were separated, 6.5% (6.5%) were divorced and 6.3% (6.3%) were surviving partners.

The 2011 census also showed that Faringdon had 5.6% (7.1%) of single parent households.

Gender reassignment and sexual orientation are generally invisible characteristics for which little reliable data exist at local level.

In summary Faringdon has a higher proportion of children under 5 and more people over 85 than the national average, a very low proportion of non-white persons and persons practising religions other than Christianity and fewer married and single parent households.

IMPACT ON GROUPS WITH PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

The vision for Faringdon is of an inherently sustainable town with a high degree of self-containment that enables a wide range of people to live, work and socialise, and that meets their day-to-day needs.

Age

There are no negative impacts with regard to age in the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan: in contrast, it proposes many positive aspects. Section 4.3 Connections begins by advocating that bus services are particularly important for those who do not drive, especially the young and the old, who need to access facilities such as schools, medical and dental services, library, market and shops. Specific objectives designed to help these age groups are:

- Faringdon should be a safe and pleasant place for everyone - pedestrians, cyclists, old and young - to move around and spend time in.
- Faringdon should be easy to get to and from, whichever mode of transport is chosen, so that people are encouraged to live, work, shop and visit the town.
- The wider parish should be well connected to Faringdon via public transport services to enable its use as their primary service centre.

- Cycling in and around the town should be encouraged.
- There should be easy bus access to neighbouring towns and villages.

These objectives are supported by Policy 4.3A.

For journeys around Faringdon, walking and cycling should become the preferred means of transport, particularly for the school run. A 'Living Streets' approach is favoured that gives precedence for walkers and cyclists over motorists and is supported by Policy 4.3C on shared surfaces. Cycling is promoted in Policy 4.3D, which encourages the development of safe cycle routes throughout the town and to neighbouring villages.

Section 4.4 Town Centre Shopping and Services requires the development of the retail provision so that people do not have to leave the town to shop. Walking and cycling to shop is encouraged in Policy 4.4D.

Section 4.5 Local Jobs promotes the aim of enabling over a third of the working age population to work in Faringdon. This is relevance to young people and those of working age.

Section 4.6 Family Housing, Policy 4.6A requires a range of housing to be provided including accommodation for the elderly and meeting the housing needs of families with children and older people with concomitant infrastructure support.

Section 4.7 Design requires new housing to have the following qualities related to the quality of family life, the lifetime needs of people as they age and avoiding the need for car transport:

- Housing developments should be steered by local parish need and form attractive family friendly streets and neighbourhoods.
- Family homes should ideally have enough space to enable food preparation and storage, and for a family to be able to eat together.
- Family homes should have both front and back gardens and a minimum of two parking spaces. Garages must be of an appropriate size to support both parking and storage.
- Smaller houses and flats should be designed so as to be suitable for an ageing population, with regard for Lifetime Homes standards.
- All new developments should be well linked by foot and cycle to the town centre and schools.

Section 4.8 on Infrastructure proposes the following improvements that affect the old and young.

- Improvements to bus services including a long distance coach stop.
- Provision of new cycle routes and parking.
- Improved road, footpath and cycleway linkages to sport and leisure facilities.
- Enhanced pedestrian access routes into the wider countryside.
- Provision of new school places in line with Faringdon Academy of Schools policy.
- Improved sport and leisure provision
- Increased youth provision in the town including an extension of activities at the existing FAZE site and a new facility located more centrally in the town.
- Greater provision of extra care accommodation, and enhanced elderly care linked to a new health and well-being centre.

Section 4.9 School Provision sets out the vision for the Faringdon Academy of Schools. A fundamental principle of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan is that every child of school age should be able to attend school in Faringdon.

Section 10 Sport and Leisure mentions the Pump House Project used by young people and the need to develop sports facilities. Policy 4.10A and the Non-Statutory Appendix, paragraph 3, specifies the need for high quality play facilities to meet the needs of all ages of children (particularly older children) in the Country Park. Policy 4.10D specifies the designation of Green Spaces, many of which are established play areas in order to protect them. It also designates other green spaces that have been used for recreation by all ages.

The section on additional provision for young people advocates the development of the town's facilities for young people including FAZE, scouts and other youth groups, better facilities at the skate park and an all-weather pitch for sports.

Section 4.11 A Caring Community, has a section on elderly care and recognises specific problems related to the elderly. In order to avoid separating families and the consequent possibility of long journeys in order to visit relatives, there should be provision of care places for elderly relatives within Faringdon. Examples include:

- Sheltered housing
- Warden controlled housing
- Care/nursing homes
- Extra care housing
- Housing built to Lifetime Homes Standards

New, specialist accommodation should be developed within the town, both as part of major housing developments and through windfall site development close to the town centre and community facilities. Local Plan policy CP23 supports this approach. This is supported in Policy 4.11B.

Disability

Section 4.3 Connections highlights the problem that the pavements in Faringdon are old and uneven making it difficult for wheelchair and pushchair users and those with restricted mobility. Some particular areas need improvement:

- The pavements in the old town need to be repaired/replaced appropriately;
- Drop kerbs and pedestrian crossing places need to be reviewed; and
- Good, safe pedestrian links from any new housing developments to the market square must be considered.

Policy 4.3 requires pedestrians and cyclist to have precedence over motorists which is of relevance to those with impaired mobility.

The problems of inconsiderate parking on those with disabilities is emphasised. Given the narrowness of the streets and the apparent low levels of policing, people need to park with consideration for the needs of others to ensure that traffic is not unduly restricted. Vehicles should not be allowed to park on pavements if this restricts the space for the visually impaired, pedestrians with push chairs and trolleys, users of mobility scooters, etc. to proceed safely.

Section 4.4 Town Centre Shopping and Services promotes development of the town centre shops so that travel distances are reduced.

Policy 4.6A requires that the mix of housing should be based on ... the needs of different groups in the community including people of all ages with disabilities.....

An example of caring for a particular disadvantaged group is demonstrated In Section 4.11 A Caring Community. The Community Amenities section has the statement that *the Town Council has received a grant and purchased its own projection equipment and is now able to provide more frequent showings. Films suitable for all ages and abilities, e.g. autism-friendly films, will be shown.*

The other Sections of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan are neutral with respect to disability and there is none with a negative impact.

Gender reassignment

There is no mention of gender reassignment in the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan and there are no policies that would have a negative impact on those it affects. The policies of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan are meant to be inclusive as stated in the Vision Statement that the vision for Faringdon is of an inherently sustainable town with a high degree of self-containment that enables a wide range of people to live, work and socialise, and that meets their day-to-day needs.

Pregnancy and maternity

The Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan is neutral with regard to pregnancy and maternity, but does highlight the need for improved health facilities and for easier access by public transport to health facilities in nearby towns.

There are no maternity facilities in the town, which means expectant mothers have to travel to nearby towns for non-home delivery. The White Horse Medical Practice has drawn attention to the impact of new housing developments proposed for the town¹.

The NP advocates an improvement in health services, as part of infrastructure developments accompanying new housing, in Section 4.8:

- Improved health infrastructure including additional social / health facilities and services to meet the needs of an increasing population, a new health and well-being centre in the town.

Section 4.3 mentions that direct bus connections to Witney, Wantage and Abingdon are needed given the important roles these towns play in providing public health and social services not available in the parish itself. Midwives are based in Wantage; there are antenatal classes in Faringdon as part of outreach; however, there is only an infrequent bus service to Wantage and no direct bus services to Abingdon and Witney, where some maternity services are provided.

Policy 4.11A: Health and Care Provision, states that new development must support the expansion of local health and care facilities to meet the need for these services in the town.

Race

The Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan is neutral with respect to race and ethnicity and this is reinforced in its Vision Statement, which is intended to be all-embracing. As reported above, the 2011 census data show that Faringdon is predominantly white with no significant ethnic minorities.

The policies regarding housing are aimed to provide a family friendly environment in which to live as exemplified by Policy 4.6A. Policy 4.7 E on 'Secured by Design' proposes that all developments should adopt the Secured by Design principles to ensure a safe and sustainable community is maintained.

Religion or belief

The Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan is neutral with respect to religion or belief and this is reinforced in its Vision Statement, which is intended to be all-embracing. The topic is only implied indirectly through the use of church premises for community activities.

Faringdon churches are well supported and a notable feature of the town. There is a strong ecumenical base, with the five churches: All Saints' (Church of England), the Parish Church of Blessed St Hugh (Roman Catholic), Faringdon Baptist Church, Faringdon United Church and the Quaker Meeting House (Religious Society of Friends) united as 'Faringdon Churches Together'². Through this body the churches share services, meetings and community activities.

The churches and a number of other community groups fund and run their own buildings, and most, if not all, are willing to rent out their buildings to other groups for regular or occasional use. However, finding suitable plots of land for community use has been a significant obstacle due to cost, zoning restrictions, parking and other requirements, etc.

For several years Faringdon Baptist Church, having outgrown their premises in Bromsgrove (now used as the Family Centre) have been looking for land on which to erect a new building (including space for community activities), but without success. They are currently using the Junior School hall for their services. The Roman Catholic Church and the United Churches have halls that can accommodate smaller functions (i.e. smaller than can be accommodated in the Corn Exchange) and All Saints' Church is currently constructing an extension that will serve as another community hall.

¹ http://www.whitehorsepracticeppg.org.uk/uploads/1/4/7/6/14765418/maternity_provision_may_2014_gw.pdf

² <http://www.ctfaringdon.org.uk/>

Section 4.8 on infrastructure states the need for new and improved community facilities including a community centre and entertainment venue.

Policy 4.9A on school provision requests that should the Infant School on Canada Lane become vacant, proposals to reuse the existing buildings for community use will be encouraged.

Policy 4.10A proposes that a community facility space will be identified for use by local community groups on the Country Park.

Section 4.11 similarly advocates that in the need for community space:

- Opportunities may be available for existing buildings used by churches and community groups to be adapted to play a wider community role.
- A new facility could be provided; e.g. as part of the Country Park or on a new development.
- Greater use of the Corn Exchange / Pump House.

Hence, it is recognised in the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan that the churches play an important part in the life of the community by providing facilities used by all.

Sex

The Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan is neutral with respect to sex and this is reinforced in its Vision Statement, which is intended to be all-embracing. There is no mention in the text of any differentiation between male and female and the words ‘man, woman, boy, girl, etc’ do not appear.

Sexual orientation

The Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan is neutral with respect to sexual orientation and this is reinforced in its Vision Statement, which is intended to be all-embracing. There are no references to sexual orientation in the text.

Conclusion

The Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan provides a strategy for the development of the town, and a range of policies and proposals, which will result in positive benefits for many parts of the local community with protected characteristics: older people, young people and young children, disabled people and those with limited mobility, and maternity and pregnancy.

Whilst not explicitly addressing the needs of racial or religious groups, or transgender, homosexual groups, or women, the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan advocates a wide range of housing, and improvements to social, community and leisure facilities, which will benefit these groups equally. It also seeks to provide a safer environment, particularly a safer public realm, where people with protected characteristics will be less liable to be subject to hate crime.

M L H Wise
for Faringdon Town Council, February 2015