



FARINGDON
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
2015 - 2031

Faringdon Town Council
Submission Version
October 2015





FARINGDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
FARINGDON TOWN COUNCIL
FOR THE PLAN PERIOD 2015 TO 2031

Dedicated to the memory of
Cllr Alan Hickmore 1942-2014

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CONSULTATION ON THE FARINGDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Documents submitted for the formal consultation process are available online at <http://faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk/council/neighbourhood/> or at the Faringdon Town Council offices in Gloucester Street, Faringdon SN7 7JA and at the Public Library, also in Gloucester Street.

Faringdon Town Council would like to thank the members of the Steering Group and pay tribute to their work since June 2012. The Town Council is also grateful for the help and the engagement of many others in the town and district without which it would not have been possible to produce this Neighbourhood Plan.

The original draft (March 2013) was prepared by Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners on behalf of Faringdon Town Council. This version has been revised by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Bluestone Planning with graphic design and layout by DPDS Consulting, and additional photographs by Al Cane Photography.

Left: Consultation events undertaken as part of the preparation of the draft Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan

Previous page: Panorama of Faringdon from Highworth Road

GRAFTON AND RADCOT CP

KEY

Faringdon's Neighbourhood Plan Boundary



Faringdon's Development Boundary



SCOTT CP

Eaton Hastings
ON HASTINGS CP

LITTLEWORTH CP

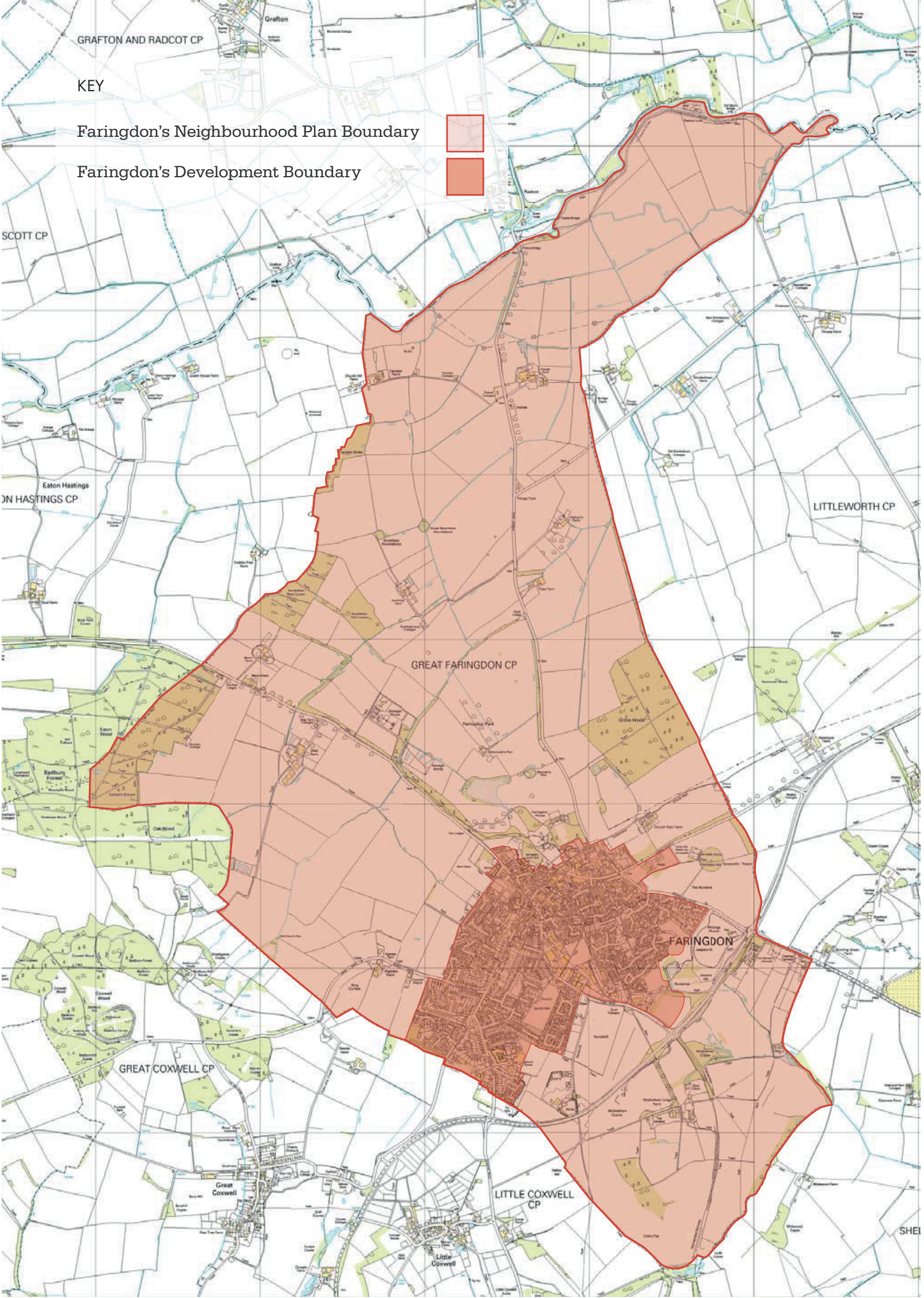
GREAT FARINGDON CP

FARINGDON

GREAT COXWELL CP

LITTLE COXWELL
CP

SHEPHERD



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Localism Act 2011 set out major changes in the regulatory framework for town planning that have since been taken forward through the implementation of a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012). Local people, through a town or parish council or neighbourhood forum, can now produce their own planning strategy for their local area in the form of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Faringdon Town Council has been awarded Front Runner Status by the Government and the project is an excellent opportunity to develop one of the first Neighbourhood Development Plans prepared under the new regulations.

A team of local people was established to lead the project, working with the Town Council, the Vale of the White Horse District Council and consultants appointed to assist with the process. This document is the result of a significant collaborative process with a large number of local people and organisations. It is supported by a technical report that provides details of the research and consultation that have been undertaken.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Neighbourhood Plan) will have an important relationship with the Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan Part 1 (the Local Plan), which is targeted for adoption in 2015.

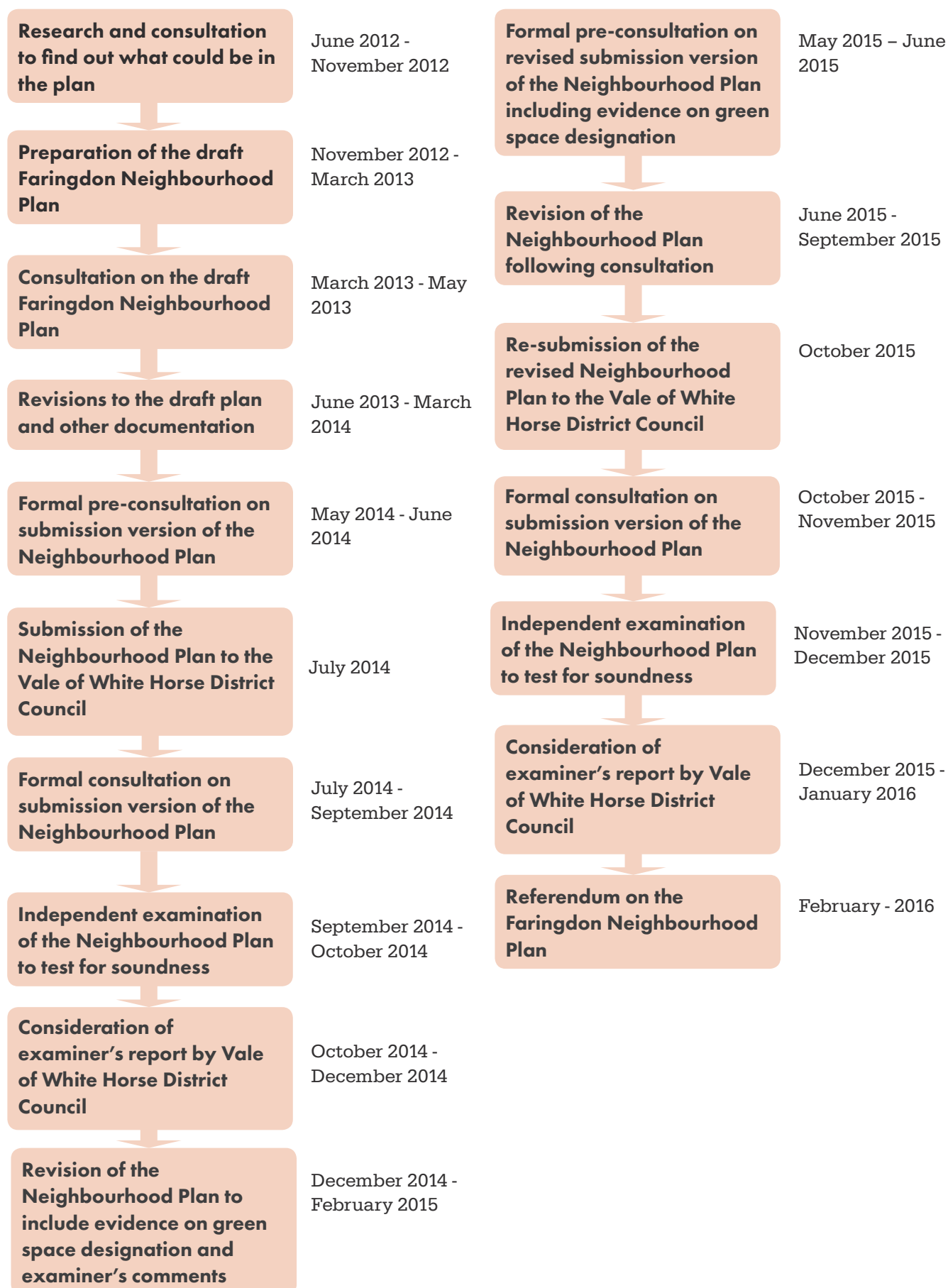
Left: Figure 1: Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan boundary, comprising the parish of Great Faringdon, and the town development boundary

1.2 SCOPE

This Neighbourhood Plan includes the whole of the Great Faringdon Parish, Figure 1, and covers the period up to 2031 to be coincident with the Local Plan Part 1 2031. It focuses on future changes in the town of Faringdon, which acts as the local service centre to the surrounding parish, as this is where most change is proposed; however, it also includes key ideas for the rural hinterland. Figure 2 shows Faringdon's location with respect to its nearest large settlements in the Thames Valley and Figure 3 its location in the Vale of White Horse.

Neighbourhood Plans can cover a wide range of topics, and deal with a range of issues and opportunities relevant to land use planning. However, there are some limits on what they can say, and importantly the plan must be 'in conformity' with the strategic policies of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan. This simply means that the local policies cannot contradict the main points in the Local Plan, but can add more information about how local people want to see those policies applied in Faringdon. Reference is made throughout this Neighbourhood Plan to the emerging Local Plan. A draft District Infrastructure Plan is also being developed and sets a benchmark for the delivery of supporting infrastructure to developments across the district.

A wide range of issues have been identified through the consultation. Those that do not relate to land use planning are noted in the Evidence Base Review that supports this document (available at <http://faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk/council/neighbourhood/>). This is to ensure that they can be taken forward through appropriate groups and organisations.



1.3 PROCESS

This Neighbourhood Plan is the result of significant local engagement and input, and represents the latest stage in over ten years of local pro-active planning.

Pre-2012

Faringdon Town Council was one of the first bodies to undertake a town healthcheck¹. This involved a significant amount of information gathering and survey work, alongside prioritisation of issues and interventions by local stakeholders. The healthcheck helped to inform active investment in Faringdon as well as strategic policy at the District level. It provided a strong direction for local investment and, although some actions have been completed, it is still very relevant today.

In addition, over the last ten years various local groups have put significant effort into improving Faringdon and carving out a strategy for its future growth. The Town Council and groups such as Our Faringdon Our Future have contributed to planning discussions and helped influence development strategies.

2012 Onwards

The process of working towards a Neighbourhood Plan began in 2012. Consultants were appointed in June and the project began with a public launch evening attended by over 100 local people. The main phases that make up the neighbourhood planning process are outlined in the diagram on the facing page.

The first phase of work focused on collating information from existing surveys and talking to local residents, business owners, land owners and group representatives. As gaps in information were identified these were addressed and new information sought. Together the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, its themed Sub-groups and the appointed consultants analysed the information thus obtained and identified the key issues that needed to be addressed. This stage of work culminated in the Evidence Base Review Report that brought together all the baseline information and analysis together with all the comments and suggestions made through the various consultation events (available at <http://faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk/council/neighbourhood/>).

The second phase of work involved defining what the major elements of a local strategy should be. Various sites were suggested for different types of development and a range of options were put forward. A sustainability appraisal, produced initially by AMUP, since revised by URS, (available at <http://faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk/council/neighbourhood/>) reviewed the potential of each of the sites to contribute to the sustainable evolution of the town and parish and a set of preferred options was identified. The Sub-groups then considered the assessment and put forward their preferred strategies for each theme. The outcomes of this process have informed the policies set out in the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan.



Consultation

Since commencing the Neighbourhood Planning process the steering group has worked hard to engage as many local people as possible in informing the development of the plan. The following list provides an overview of the process to date:

1. Launch event - 12 June 2012
2. Stakeholder meetings - 29 June 2012
3. Market stall consultation - 10 July 2012
4. Initial information gathering and analysis by local groups - June/July 2012
5. Consultation with youth groups - June/July 2012
6. Stakeholder issues workshop - 26 July 2012
7. Meeting with Faringdon Academy - 26 September 2012
8. Steering group presentation of emerging work - 26 September 2012.
9. Steering group meeting to discuss emerging options - 15 November 2012
10. Steering group meeting to agree preferred options - 28 February 2013
11. Draft Neighbourhood Plan issued for informal six week consultation - 31 March 2013
12. Comments on draft from consultees received and tabulated - 9 June 2013
13. Comments received from employment, retail and housing groups – 9 July 2013
14. Comments incorporated into draft Neighbourhood Plan for review - 15 July 2013
15. Comments reviewed, annotated and actioned - 17 July 2013
16. Draft Neighbourhood Plan reviewed by P&H Committee - 19 August 2013
17. Evidence Base revised, referenced and updated - 9 October 2013
18. Steering group meetings August 2013 to January 2014
19. Bluestone Planning appointed to revise draft Neighbourhood Plan – 19 Nov 2013
20. URS appointed to undertake Sustainability Appraisal – 19 Nov 2013
21. Screening in agreed with URS following screening report – 28 November 2013
22. Stakeholder meetings on specific sites held - January - February 2014
23. Revisions of draft Neighbourhood Plan January-May 2014
24. Revised Evidence Base approved by Steering Group - 17 March 2014
25. Consultation with statutory consultees on Scoping Report 24 March – 28 April 2014
26. Preparation of the Sustainability Appraisal
27. Approval of Neighbourhood Plan, Evidence Base and Sustainability Appraisal for pre-submission consultation by Faringdon Town Council - 14 May 2014
28. Launch of six week formal pre-submission consultation on Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan 17 May 2014 - 28 June 2014
29. Consideration of consultation responses; finalisation of the Neighbourhood Plan and Sustainability Appraisal; preparation of the Consultation Statement, Basic Conditions Statement and Equality Impact Assessment.

Left: Consultation events for the Neighbourhood Plan

30. Submission of Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents to the Vale of White Horse District Council for seven week formal consultation period - 18 July to 5 September 2014.
31. Submission of Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents to the Independent Examiner.
32. Report received from Independent Examiner - 22 October 2014.
33. Discussions with Vale of White Horse District Council on options following receipt of Independent Examiner's report - October to November 2014.
34. Following public response, decision to resubmit Neighbourhood Plan including evidence to support Green Space designations at Faringdon Town Council meeting - 10 December 2014.
35. Preparation of revised documentation - December 2014 to February 2015.
36. Launch of six week formal pre-submission consultation on revised Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan - 15 May 2015
37. Preparation of revised Consultation Statement, Neighbourhood Plan and Evidence Base Review.
38. Submission of revised Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents to the Vale of White Horse District Council for six week formal consultation period - October 2015

Within this process, a number of bodies have been integral to the draft strategy presented in this document. They include:

- **Themed sub-groups** - a number of working groups was established by the Steering Group at the outset of the process to collate data, highlight issues and provide reports to inform the strategy options for the major topic areas reviewed in Section 4.
- **Faringdon Academy of Schools** - concurrent with the planning process, the Academy board has been involved in the process of education provision planning.
-
- **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031** - the team at the District Council has been drafting the new Local Plan and has met regularly with the steering group to review emerging policy to ensure the district policy facilitates the local desired strategy wherever possible.

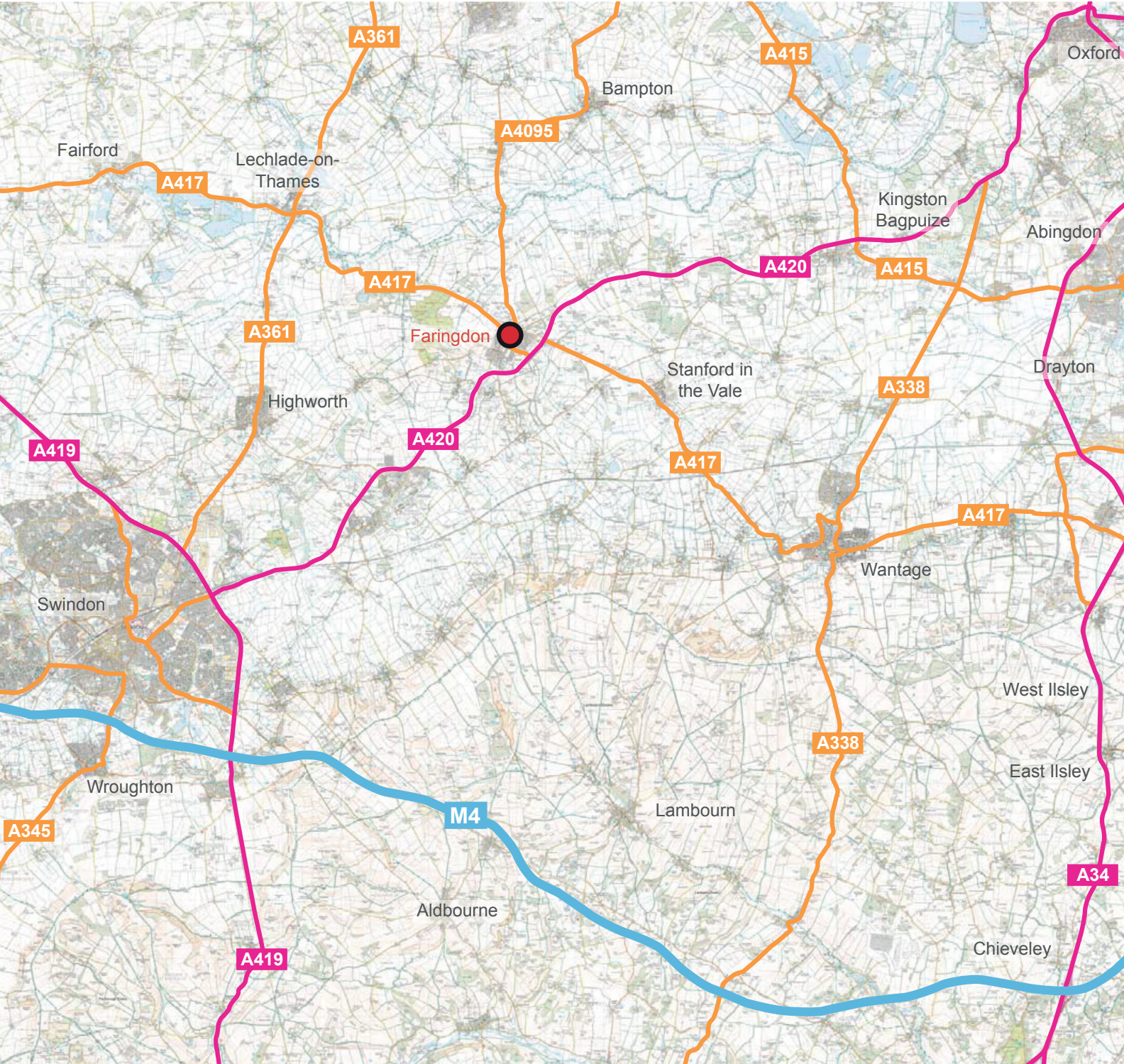
Current consultation and subsequent procedure

Following the previous public consultations, where local people were invited to comment on the emerging strategy and identify their preferences, a final draft Neighbourhood Plan was published for the six week 'pre-submission' consultation. Following final amendments, the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents were submitted to the Vale of White Horse District Council, the body responsible for presenting the documents for independent examination.

The Independent Examiner's report was received on 22 October 2014 in which various recommendations were made: one of these was to delete the section of Green Space Designation. All of the other recommendations were accepted, but there was strong local feeling that rather than going to referendum in February 2015 as planned, the Neighbourhood Plan should be re-submitted with the appropriate evidence supporting the Green Space Designation. This course of action was resolved at the Faringdon Town Council meeting of 10 December 2014.

A revised Neighbourhood Plan was then prepared including the Independent Examiner's recommendations, but with an amended section, evidence and policy on the designation of the eleven Green Spaces agreed for inclusion. This revised Neighbourhood Plan and associated documentation was submitted for a second six week pre-submission consultation in Faringdon, prior to a second six week formal public consultation by the Vale of White Horse District Council after which the documents and any further comments will be submitted to the Independent Examiner. He will assess the revised information, recommend any modifications to the Neighbourhood Plan and indicate whether a public hearing is necessary. The Independent Examiner's report will then be sent to the District Council to decide whether it agrees with his recommendations and whether the plan should proceed to referendum. The District Council will publish the report and decision statement which will then be followed a period during which legal challenges can be made to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Finally, the Democratic Services Team of the District Council will organise a referendum for the electorate of Great Faringdon, in which the following question will be put: "Do you want the Vale of White Horse District Council (the Local Planning Authority) to use the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Great Faringdon to help decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?" If 50% or more of those voting, vote in favour, then the plan can move forward to be 'made' by the District Council providing it does not contravene any Human Rights Conventions.



2 LOCAL ISSUES

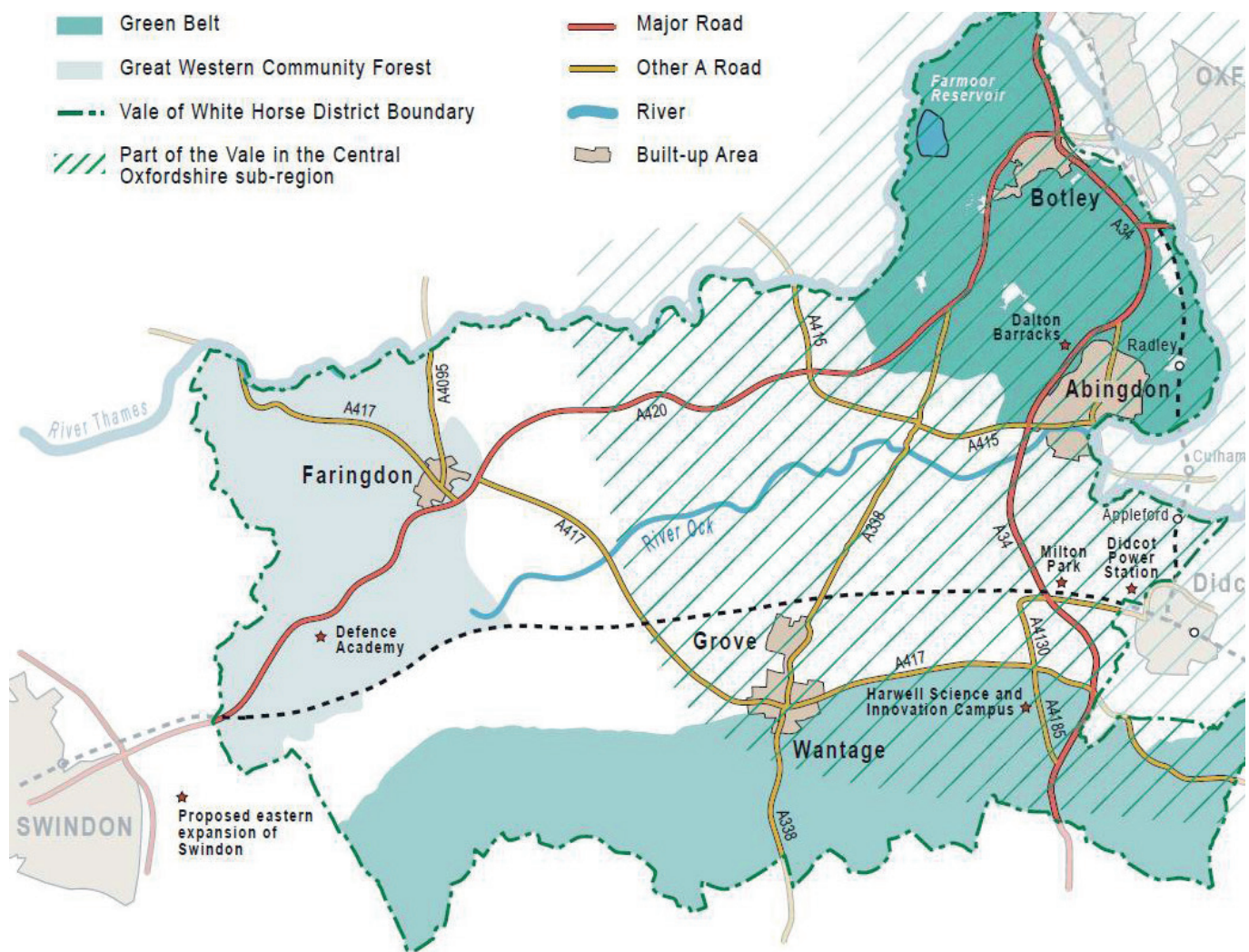
2.1 INTRODUCTION

The 'Penny Cyclopaedia' of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge published in 1833 notes that in 1831 Faringdon had a population of 3,033 people, significantly larger than the small village of Swindon a few miles to the south west that had a population of just 1,742. In 1840 Brunel's railway carved through the vale and changed Swindon practically overnight. Faringdon, however, retained its charm as a small thriving market town with a population that had barely doubled until the latter part of the twentieth century.

Faringdon has a rich and intricate history, with an ancient church, a market that has been held weekly since 1218 and its distinctive Folly, located on the site of an ancient hill fort. It has also had its fair share of eccentrics, including Lord Berners, infamous for dyeing his doves in curious colours, and Doctor Foster, the famously wet visitor to Gloucester. More recently, Faringdon became the first Fairtrade Town in the south east; a little unconventional at the time, but subsequently acknowledged as visionary and now very much part of the mainstream. A huge part of the town's appeal is that it not only retains its historic core of coaching inns and 17C Market Hall (Old Town Hall), but also includes a significant network of streets that are still lined with older buildings. These establish a very clear character that is not challenged by too many modern interventions.

Faringdon is a market town set within an extensive rural hinterland. A significant number of local villages, hamlets and farms have historically used Faringdon as a market town and local service centre. Beyond this role, there is no one overriding factor or connection upon which Faringdon operates. It has a selection of local employers, but no one strong sector. The town centre does perform its role as a service centre for residents in the parish and beyond, but it could do this much better, although it is also fortunate to retain a good number of local shops. There has been a steady pattern of fewer and fewer people using the centre as their primary service centre, and more and more using out of town supermarkets and centres further afield. Barclays closed its branch in October 2013, which now leaves Faringdon with only one major bank branch.

Left: Figure 2: Faringdon location plan



²Population estimate; M L H Wise for FTC; Appendix E to the Evidence Base Review

³The 2011 census indicates an occupancy rate for households of 2.33, or 2.36 overall for dwellings. Oxfordshire County Council has variously used figures of 2.48 to 3.15 for new estate dwellings, according to the style of the estate proposed. An average of 2.55 (i.e. Fernham Fields) has been used in these estimates.

However, Faringdon is growing; between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, the population of the town grew by 15% to over 7,000. Since then it has already grown to over 8,000^{2,3}, with planned housing developments, approved or under construction, likely to add another 22% to the current (December 2013) population taking it to almost 10,000. The additional sites allocated in the Vale's emerging Local Plan will increase this number to around 11,000. When all these new houses have been built the town's population will have increased by 55 %, since 2011 and by over 75% since 2001.

Much of this has happened while the Neighbourhood Plan has been in preparation and has already exceeded the predicted population growth expected during the lifetime of the Plan. The principal task for this Neighbourhood Plan is, therefore, to set out how the town should respond to this change, and to provide guidance on the ways in which change can contribute to the identity of Faringdon.

2.2 HEADLINE ISSUES

Together, the Steering Group, sub groups and workshops helped to identify a set of headline issues to steer the Neighbourhood Plan. These are set out in detail in the supporting Evidence Base Review (available at <http://faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk/council/neighbourhood/>) and summarised overleaf:

Left: Figure 3: Vale of White Horse

2 LOCAL ISSUES



Whilst Faringdon town centre experiences low vacancy rates, footfall is dropping significantly and the future vitality of the town centre is under pressure.



The 2011 census shows that Faringdon had 50% more social housing than the Vale average, thereby helping to meet the growing local need. The town also had proportionally fewer properties in Council Tax bands F, G and H.



The size and number of shops offer a limited range, which is felt to be the primary reason for lack of footfall.



Housing provision should be better matched to the needs of local people, with sufficient affordable housing to enable Faringdon people to live in Faringdon together with a mix of larger houses.



Opportunities for Faringdon residents to work locally are limited; therefore, it is essential to ensure that employment land is available for businesses to grow and residents to work locally.



Faringdon has a low profile for tourism despite its proximity to key attractions, and having its own historic assets.



A high proportion of residents travel more than 30 km from the parish to work. Key employment destinations are Swindon (20 km) and Oxford (30 km).



Recent developments in the parish have not been successful in reflecting local character and there is a need to raise the quality and character of future developments.



Faringdon has a good reputation as a family friendly town. However, education and leisure facilities need to change and expand as the town grows to ensure that this is maintained.



While the Faringdon A420 bypass, opened in 1979, has removed most of the through traffic, congestion is regularly experienced through the confined streets in the centre, partly due to illegal on-street parking.



Between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, Faringdon experienced an increase in the proportion of residents over 60 years old (from 18.7% to 22.2%). Services and facilities need to adapt to keep step with this trend.



The quality of the streets and public spaces in and around the historic core has deteriorated and needs real improvement to support the success of the town centre and attract new commercial investment and visitors.



The town boasts a fine array of historic buildings, particularly within the Faringdon Conservation Area. Long term uses and ongoing investment are needed if they are to continue their attractive role.



Pedestrian connections between different parts of the town are often limited and are not as attractive as they could be. Wider pedestrian and cycle connections within the parish are not well used and need improvement and promotion.



Faringdon has grown significantly over the last decades, a trend that is continuing today. There is a real local concern that, if unchecked, this growth could encompass adjacent villages.



Whilst bus services to Oxford and Swindon are good, there are no direct bus services to Abingdon, where district and health services are located, or Witney, the nearest A&E hospital and location for mental health services.

Local character

Playtime

Local jobs

Ideal homes

Weekly shops

**Family friendly
Faringdon**

Community life

Walk to school

**A well-proportioned
town**

Links to the land

3 VISION

3.1 THE VISION FOR FAMILY FARINGDON

Faringdon is a growing market town with a great deal to offer. It is large enough to provide education, employment, housing, amenities and shopping for its residents but still benefits from a compact town centre and attractive rural setting that enhance its intimate character.

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.

Faringdon is a small market town and it should stay that way, retaining its character and culture with an intimate and friendly feel.

Faringdon has a strong historic character and sense of place. This will continue to be protected and enhanced through the careful design of new developments, streets and spaces. The town will be an attractive, clean and pleasant place in which to live and spend time.

The market square will be the bustling heart of the parish.

Faringdon will act as a strong centre for the local parishes and a hub for public transport connections to all surrounding towns.



4 STRATEGY AND SUGGESTED POLICIES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter has been divided into twelve sections that examine in depth the key themes identified by local stakeholders. These themes have been developed for the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan to reflect the issues and opportunities identified through the consultation:

A Well-Proportioned Town

Faringdon needs to be a well-proportioned town that is self-sustaining in terms of everyday living; e.g. schools, shops, health care and other essential services.

Connections

The parish needs to be well connected, both within the town itself and to neighbouring towns and villages.

Town Centre Shopping and Services

The town needs to meet the weekly shopping needs of the local population.

Local Jobs

There should be a diversity of employment to suit a range of skills; links to the land need to be enhanced to unify the parish, bringing local produce into the town and extending enterprise opportunities to rural areas.

Family Housing

The town needs good family housing to meet the needs of local people.

Design

Development should reflect and express the historic character of Faringdon.

Appropriate Infrastructure

The increasing number of houses and employment sites must be matched by a corresponding improvement in facilities needed to support the increased population.

School Provision

There should be a school place in the town for every resident of school age.

Sport and Leisure

Faringdon should provide a range of sports and leisure opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.

A Caring Community

Local community facilities, including health provision, need to grow and adapt as Faringdon changes.

Landscape

The town's setting in the landscape needs to be protected and its links to the land enhanced to unify the parish by bringing local produce into the town and extending enterprise opportunities to rural areas.

Tourism

The important work of the Tourist Information Centre in promoting Faringdon as an historic town should be built on and the neglected Thames river frontage developed.

Left: 20th anniversary celebrations of the twinning between Faringdon and Le Mêle-sur-Sarthe in Normandy



"A town which is well-proportioned - not too big and not too small"

4.2 A WELL-PROPORTIONED TOWN

Context

Although this Neighbourhood Plan relates to the whole of the Greater Faringdon parish, many of the core issues and aspects relate specifically to the town of Faringdon itself and how it can best evolve to meet the needs of the whole parish.

The vision for the town of Faringdon focuses on the feel of the town and maintaining the strong community spirit that exists. Local stakeholders are keen to avoid losing the character and friendliness of the town in the face of growth. Many stakeholders describe the town in terms such as 'neither urban, nor rural' or 'a small market town / big village'. Whilst these qualities cannot easily be classified, there is a desire to ensure that growth does not force it across a threshold into a different type of town.

Objectives

Much of the discussion and debate around the Neighbourhood Plan with local residents and other stakeholders has focused around the degree to which the town should grow. There is general consensus that some growth is acceptable with the following reasons given:

- Additional residents would help support the critical mass of the town and help it become more self-sustaining.
- Additional population would boost the number of potential customers to the town centre, helping to reverse declining footfall and support a greater range of shops.

- Additional population would help support the business case for better public transport services, thus supporting better connections for all.
- A larger population might support the case for better community facilities within the town, including the scale and scope of health care provision.

Much of the debate has focused on what the total population of the town should be limited to. The town currently has a population of around 8,000 people. Existing residential development currently being planned could add up to 3,000 new people to the population and, therefore, the population level could reach around 11,000 in the next ten years and beyond.

Oxfordshire County Council is aware of the huge problems faced by local traffic increases on the A420, which will become more of an issue as the proposed houses are built and occupied. The infra-structure for schooling, medical care, library facilities and social amenities need to be developed to meet the needs of the growing population.

Many people who live in Faringdon work outside the town in, for example, Swindon/ Oxford/ Abingdon/Science Vale/Wantage and Didcot and will tend to shop where they work, so, it is imperative that the shopping experience, road access and car parking are improved to encourage greater footfall in the very attractive market centre.

Left: The Old Town Hall

Policies

After much debate, it has been decided that this Neighbourhood Plan does not set a maximum population level. This is not so as to allow growth to go unchecked, quite the opposite. Such a strategy will allow each development proposal to be decided on merit and would guard against developers using a population maximum as a target and tool to gain planning permission. Along with this approach, it is recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan includes a strong policy to keep the existing development boundary (as defined in the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan (2011)) as it is except for the proposed strategic site allocations set out in the emerging Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (Core Policy 20), or where changed as a result of the policies in the adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

The housing target and sites for the Plan period will be set out in the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 (Parts 1 and 2) or its successor document(s). The Town Council will seek to have full representation in negotiations between developers and the District and County Councils in this regard.

The policies set out below are important to ensure the proposed development is delivered in the most appropriate way by adding positively to the town and its services and facilities.

Policy 4.2A: Residential Development within the Development Boundary

Small scale residential development within the existing development boundary of the town will be supported in principle, subject to compliance with the policies in the Development Plan. All development in Faringdon should be carefully planned to respect the special character of the town.

Policy 4.2B: Infrastructure Requirements

Qualifying development proposals will be expected to contribute to achieving the objectives in the Neighbourhood Plan through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions made in accordance with the Vale's CIL Strategy (once adopted, or any equivalent policies in the Local Plan 2031), planning obligations or other relevant mechanisms.



Summary

In summary, Faringdon's growth should be well controlled and the town should not be allowed to sprawl towards nearby villages. Faringdon should remain as a small market town with a clearly defined development boundary. In particular:

- Further major housing developments (i.e. >10 dwellings) outside the development boundary will not be supported.
- Any additional development within the Parish that adversely affects the setting of the Town or the green corridors leading to nearby villages will be resisted. All development in Faringdon should be carefully planned to respect the special character of the town.
- Approach roads (other than Park Road) leading into the town, now bordered by trees, fields and hedges should not be developed. These form a pleasant and appropriate setting for the town.
- The Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan supports paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012):
"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible"

Left: Ceramic plaque produced by Karen Vogt to commemorate 20 years of twinning between Faringdon and Le Mêle-sur-Sarthe in the Department of Orne, Lower Normandy. The blackbird is the symbol of Le Mêle (le merle in French) and the pink pigeon is a feature of Faringdon commemorating Lord Berners' surrealism. The leaves on the tree are hands of friendship and the link between the towns is made by the fish swimming from Faringdon down the River Thames, across the sea, up the Loire and into Le Mêle via the Sarthe.



"A town which is easy to get to and to get around"

4.3 CONNECTIONS

Context

Bus services are necessary to enable Faringdon residents to get to work, to access national and international transport services, to shop and to access services and facilities that are not available in Faringdon. This is particularly important for those who do not drive, especially the young and the old. It is equally relevant for those who live in neighbouring villages who need to access facilities in Faringdon such as schools, medical and dental services, library, market and shops.

Faringdon is centrally located between Oxford, Swindon, Witney, Wantage and Abingdon. It has good road links to surrounding towns with good bus connections to Swindon and Oxford and less frequent bus connections to Wantage. There is a need to ensure that any gaps in strategic public transport connections are addressed. In particular, 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. It is interesting to note that when the frequency of the 66 Swindon to Oxford bus service was increased from hourly to half hourly in 2011, passenger use increased by 80% despite the comparatively low density of population along the route⁴.

The traffic situation has changed radically in Faringdon since the bypass was opened in the 1970s. The population has grown considerably and car ownership is now much higher. This has led to increased traffic through the town, and a growing demand for on-street parking which, because of its limited availability in certain areas, often results in illegal parking and the obstruction of major routes.

A comprehensive study of roads and traffic volumes and flows is needed to understand the impact of any changes. From this can be established an integrated transport policy that meets, in a safe and secure manner, the needs of all those who live, work and use Faringdon. This will best be done when the areas allocated for housing, business development and schools have been finalised. A parking survey was undertaken by a group of residents under the auspices of the Town Council in 2004; however, this was not accepted by either the Vale of White Horse District Council or Oxfordshire County Council. The Vale of White Horse District Council has received funding from Section 106 planning gain from a recent development for another parking survey; this took place in late 2014, undertaken by consultants GKS Ltd.

Left: Faringdon should provide a good pedestrian environment to suit all needs

One of the attractive features of the older parts of Faringdon is the network of streets and open spaces. This creates distinct and attractive routes between different places in the town. By contrast later development has tended to be cellular comprising large cul-de-sacs of distinct building types and land uses. Whilst there are some very useful pedestrian short-cuts that link these together, there are opportunities to provide a more cohesive network of streets that will make Faringdon better for pedestrians and cyclists.

The way in which Faringdon has expanded over time has made the town very asymmetric, with the historic town centre to the north and most of the later growth to the south and east. This makes the quality of walking and cycling routes all the more important, as connections to the 'town centre' are longer for those living at the edge of the urban area than would be the case in a more conventional town plan; this is particularly true for those living in the new developments situated on the periphery of the town.

Objectives

The following statements have been drawn from local input to date and define the aspirations for the town's connections:

- 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.
- Traffic in the town should be better managed, without inhibiting traffic flows.
- Cycling in and around the town should be encouraged.
- There should be easy bus access to neighbouring towns and villages.
- Walking and cycling should be encouraged through campaigns supported by the Town Council and the Faringdon Academy of Schools and the cycle routes shown in Figure 5 developed.'

Policies

To achieve these objectives, there are some key aspects around which the Neighbourhood Plan can stipulate policies, and the options that need to be considered.

Strategic connections

Faringdon needs a comprehensive network of public transport connections to reflect the needs of local people. Whilst many of the existing services are very good there are some important destinations that are not served at all. In particular, the community amenities and services provided in Witney and Abingdon (including hospital Minor Injury Units, cinemas and higher order shops) are not easily accessible by public transport from Faringdon and new, direct bus services are needed.

In addition, there is an ongoing need and demand for a more easily accessible rail connection. The Neighbourhood Plan supports the reopening of either Grove or Challow stations, with the provision of good bus and cycle links between Faringdon and the new station.

Improved facilities for long distance/express coach routes, such as a designated stop at a convenient lay-by on the A420, would also be welcomed as helping to support public transport options.

Connections within the town

As a general principle, areas of development should connect with one-another. Simple and clear street connections are greatly preferred over pedestrian cut-throughs as these feel clearer and safer. Opportunities should be sought to improve linkages between existing areas and to link existing areas with any new development. Where a new development forms the edge of the urban area it should establish the potential for further connections to be made in the future.

Additionally, connections between housing and employment areas will aid the integration of various activities and will perhaps help to blur boundaries in a way that allows their use to change in respond to demand.

Policy 4.3A: Connections

Ensure that new developments create attractive street connections into the town centre that encourage walking and cycling. Opportunities to create or improve routes between existing parts of the town should be maximised.

Streets and spaces

Streets and spaces in Faringdon should be simple and conventional. This applies both in terms of the form of the streets, which should have clearly defined pavements and carriageway, but also in terms of layout, which should avoid the use of cul-de-sacs and allow interconnectivity for easy access.

For any schemes that are considered in the Conservation Area it is important that appropriate design standards are applied to signage, street furniture and elements such as tactile paving to create an appropriate context for the historic buildings. English Heritage's Streets for All publication can provide a useful source of advice.

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;
- Good, safe pedestrian links from any new housing developments to the market square must be considered.

The cleanliness of the market square and surrounding roads has improved greatly in the last year. However, surrounding streets have been given a lower priority and are less well cared for; these need attention. In the design of streets and signage, priority should be given to pedestrians and cyclists particularly given the narrowness of the streets and pavements in many older parts of the town.

Policy 4.3B: Streets and Spaces

Streets and spaces, including street paving, soft landscaping, lighting and street furniture in and around the town centre should be designed to conservation area standards, as set out in District Council policy.

Movement

For journeys around Faringdon, walking and cycling should become the preferred means of transport, particularly for the school run.

Links to the sport and leisure facilities including the Country Park to the east of the town need to be improved. The provision of a safe pavement surface and well-lit route should be designed to ensure that it is possible to walk and cycle to these facilities.

Because people visit the Folly Park sports and leisure facilities by car, consideration should be given to creating a link from the A420 roundabout into the car park but without a connecting route through to the town that could provide a 'rat run' for other traffic. This would help to reduce traffic through the pinch points in the town centre.

The historic town centre is always going to be a limit to vehicular movement and will be difficult to change. A more sustainable long-term solution is to consider how patterns of use and behaviour can be influenced.

⁵A woonerf is a living street where pedestrians and cyclists have legal priority over motorists as implemented in the Netherlands and in Flanders

Changes to traffic movement within the town must both increase the ease of pedestrian and cycle movement whilst ensuring good traffic flow. It has been suggested that inspiration could be drawn from the Woonerf⁵ or Living Street movement. In the UK a number of "shared spaces" that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists over cars have been successfully implemented, many in historically sensitive environments.

In Faringdon town centre the delivery of an attractive movement solution is closely related to parking issues, in particular the problem of illegal parking, which is a contributing factor in causing traffic congestion, and delays and inconvenience to buses.

Policy 4.3C: Shared Surfaces

Any shared surfaces in new developments must give priority to pedestrians and cyclists over motorised vehicles with that priority clearly indicated.

Parking

There should continue to be free parking in the town centre with differential time limits according to location to attract both visitors and shoppers. There should be an evaluation of how parking can be managed to make best use of the space available, bearing in mind the competing needs of residents, town centre workers and visitors/shoppers for long or short stay parking, respectively. Any parking additions will avoid the major bus routes.

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.

There is a need to provide additional parking to alleviate the on-street parking shortage. Opportunities to deliver additional car parking for the town centre, for both residents and visitors, should be explored alongside future retail development.

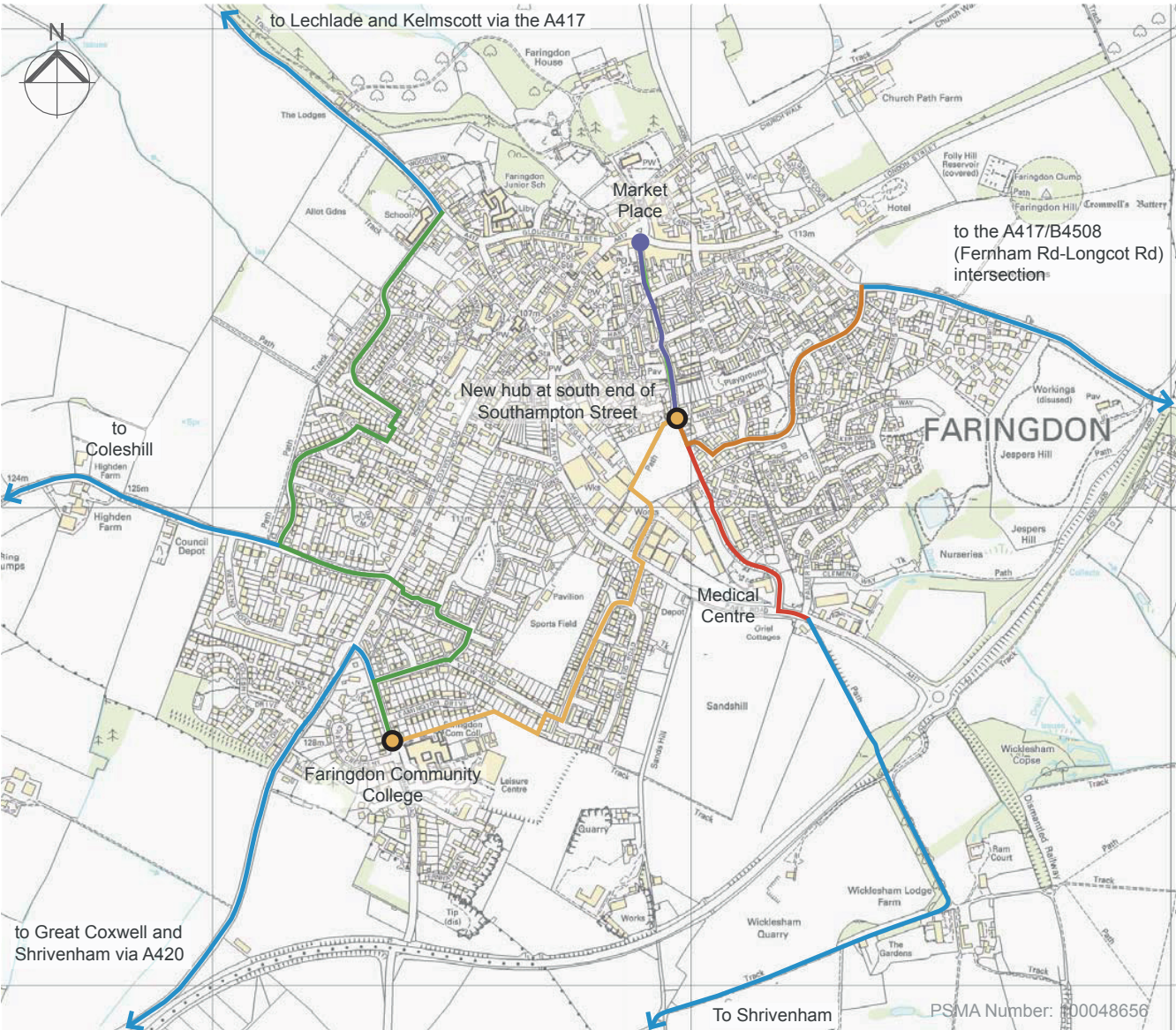
In addition, to support greater tourism activity in the town and parish, there is a need for designated coach park outside the town centre. This could possibly be located in the Park Road Industrial Estate.

Policy 4.3D: Parking

Proposals for delivering more off street parking for visitors and workers in the town centre, together with a coach park outside the town centre, will be supported where they accord with other policies in this plan.

For the longer term, there is a need to have a full review of traffic speeds and flows alongside the demand for worker and visitor on-street parking to inform both an effective enforcement regime and a longer term solution for prioritising pedestrians in the town centre.

Figure 5: Proposed Farcycle cycle routes including routes within the town and longer distance routes to surrounding settlements



KEY

Proposed Cycle Routes



Cycling

Proposals for a much improved cycle route network were prepared by the Farcycles group in 2009, and are set out in detail in the Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base Review, pages 61-62 (<http://faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk/council/neighbourhood/>). These proposals are strongly supported locally and it is recommended that the Neighbourhood Plan supports the delivery of these routes.

The proposed routes include links within Faringdon town itself to ensure attractive and safe cycle connections between residential areas and the town centre and to key leisure and community facilities. In addition, new routes from Faringdon out to the wider parish are supported. Safe crossings over the A420 are needed at both the Fernham Road and Stanford Road junctions.

Supportive actions

Enhancing how vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians move around the parish can be influenced by other actions beyond planning policies.

It is suggested that the following actions could be promoted across the parish through other strategies and programmes:

- **Parking** - Businesses should work together to consider how staff could be encouraged to park outside the core town centre to leave more space available for shoppers and visitors.
- **Walking and cycling** - greater promotion of new and existing routes, particularly those out into the wider countryside, is needed.

Policy 4.3E: Footpaths and Cycleways

New developments should contribute to the delivery of improvements to the quality and extent of the pedestrian and cycle network in and around Faringdon and connecting with the adjoining parishes (including those identified in the 2009 Farcycles' report). In addition they should contribute towards the provision of new lockable cycle parking facilities close to local amenities. These will be sought through developer contributions.



⁶Vale of White Horse Footfall Survey Results 2009-2012

⁷<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/news/2014/2014-02/increased-footfall-provides-boost-vale-high-streets>

"A town where you can do your weekly shop, peruse the market and pick up a quirky gift"

4.4 TOWN CENTRE SHOPPING AND SERVICES

Context

Faringdon's existing shopping offer

Faringdon has a small but attractive town centre with a mix of shops and services. Faringdon benefits from a number of good local food shops, including a butcher, a baker and various others that help to meet regular needs. There is also a selection of cafés, bars, restaurants and public houses that provide choice for eating and drinking. The town is also host to a number of valuable destination shops including a nationally renowned piano retailer that draws in customers from some distance.

Despite these assets, a large proportion of residents choose to shop elsewhere. Retail surveys carried out by Savills (2008, 2010), Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners (2013) and Tesco (2010) indicated the need for another supermarket because of the low level of food purchases (~20%) made within the town by Faringdon residents. In the most part this was due to a lack of range of shops and in particular the absence of a larger food store that could provide the typical weekly family shop. As a result, other shops in the town were losing out on the higher footfall that a centrally located food store would bring to the town, creating a self-reinforcing downward spiral that has seen footfall in the town centre gradually decline. In some parts of the town centre footfall had dropped by up to 50% from 2009-12⁶. However, the Vale of White Horse District Council reported that a footfall survey undertaken in October 2013 in Faringdon showed a doubling over the previous year with the average number of people walking through the town centre during a typical two hour period increasing from 178 in 2012 to 395

in 2013⁷. This increased footfall may be partly explained by the introduction of two hours free parking in 2011, the renovation of the Budgens supermarket in 2012 and the opening of more retail outlets in the Town centre.

Food shopping provision has been increased by the opening in late 2013 of a Tesco food store on Park Road and a small Kwiksave food store on London Street. The latter has provided additional competition in the Town centre and helped to increase footfall.

The detailed retail assessments undertaken on behalf of the District Council in 2008 and updated in 2010 found there to be some capacity for additional retail, but the 2013 survey concluded that the Tesco commitment would absorb growth in Faringdon for the foreseeable future. However, on 5 September 2015, the District Council gave outline planning permission for an additional 2,817 m² of A1/A5 retail floorspace on part of the 4&20 site (site 2 in Figure 8), previously designated as employment land, as it was considered that this was the best opportunity for this site to be developed and that it would provide ca. 120 jobs. Although this has been a shift towards service employment, rather than to B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution) employment, we would not wish to see further loss of B2/B8 employment land as this would undermine our employment strategy.

The Local Plan, therefore, emphasises Faringdon as a service centre for the surrounding rural catchment, a role that is to be reinforced, maintained and enhanced with larger shopping, tourism and community facilities. There is a clear aspiration to see footfall increase in order to secure the long term future of the town centre and to help Faringdon build a role as a sustainable town and local service centre.

Left: Local shops and produce in Faringdon

Features of successful small town centres

Small town centres that have succeeded in recent years have been those that have a strong local character and that offer an attractive experience in terms of the shops, services and produce available. Many towns have also managed to establish a reputation for a particular niche activity that has helped to attract people in from a wider area. The future vision for Faringdon is that the town centre will be able to meet the regular weekly needs of most people in the town, providing food shopping and other convenience and durable goods. To achieve this the overall retail offer needs to expand, with improved food retail, whilst protecting and developing the attractive local businesses.

Improving existing retail

It is important that Faringdon supports and extends its existing range of local shops to ensure that it can retain a viable role as a service centre that meets the regular needs of local people. There are also opportunities for the existing town centre businesses to work together to consider how the assets of the town centre can be presented in a collective way. Similarly, there is potential for physical changes such as shop front improvements

The weekly market is not well supported and does not contribute significantly to the vitality of the town centre. There is a need for the market to be re-energised, with a stronger emphasis on quality and local produce so that it properly complements the shops in providing an attractive offer.

However, the monthly Faringdon Farmers' Market, which offers a wider choice of fare, has successfully operated in the market square for the last 13 years and is well patronised.

Services and supportive activities

A successful town centre is about much more than just retail activities. Faringdon has historically acted as a local service centre for the surrounding villages and hamlets. It continues this role today, and is the focus for leisure facilities, community activities and local employment. Within the town centre are a host of supportive services upon which the parish's wider population depend. Emphasising the importance of these services in the town's long term vision is essential, and opportunities exist to improve the range of services on offer, despite the fact that recent years have seen the loss of opportunities for savers with the closure of building societies. In October 2013 Barclays closed its branch leaving Lloyds as the only 'high street' bank. This means that Faringdon residents who are customers of other banks have to travel to Carterton (HSBC), Lechlade or Wantage (Barclays), etc. or even Oxford or Swindon for 'across the counter' banking services.

An attractive setting for shopping

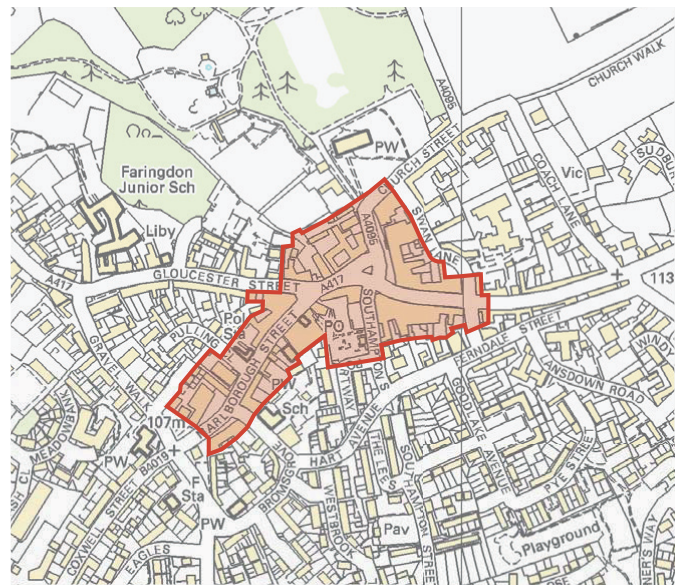
Recent improvements in the public realm around the market square have made a notable difference in improving the setting of the shops. However, there are opportunities to consider how more social and commercial activities can take place in the market square to generate life and activity. Such improvements will help encourage local shoppers to keep using the town centre in the long term and limit the potentially negative impact of internet shopping on the town centre.

Objectives

The following statements have been drawn from local input to date and define the aspirations for the town centre and in particular the town's retail offer:

- Support the town's existing retail businesses;
- Support the town's "destination shops" and ensure these are promoted as part of the town's visitor appeal;
- Extend the range of shops in the town - working towards meeting the bulk of local residents' weekly shopping needs within the town;
- Support the town centre as a hub for shops, services, community and leisure activities; and
- Continue to promote the market square as the heart of the town and encourage its role both as a location for businesses, community activities and markets.

Figure 6: Faringdon town centre boundary

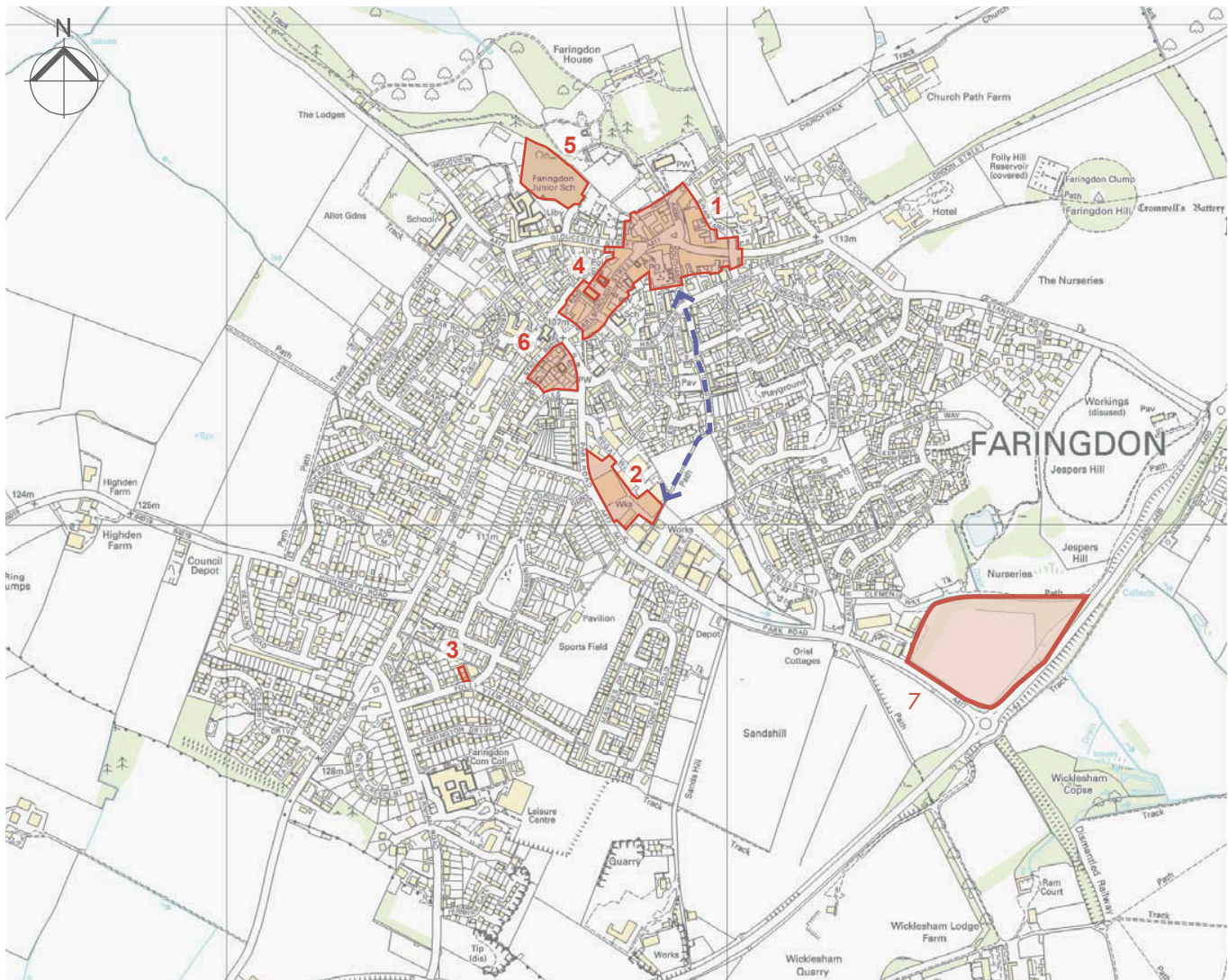


KEY

Faringdon town centre boundary



Figure 7: New major development sites



KEY

- 1. Existing town centre, local retail and potential retail development sites:
 - 2. Tesco development site
 - 3. Local Costcutter shop
 - 4. Sites within the town centre boundary - BT Exchange and Police Station site
 - 5. Land north west of Gloucester Street car park
 - 6. The Fire Station
 - 7. Part of the 4&20 site now has outline planning for A1/A5 retail
- Improved Link between the town centre and Tesco

Policies

In order to realise these objectives, some policy stances are set out to steer development and activities towards achieving a more sustainable town centre.

Extending the retail offer

Whilst the town centre (as defined on the Vale of White Horse Local Plan (2011) Proposals Map under policy S5) includes a small number of attractive shops and services, the current potential for growth is severely constrained by the lack of available premises or the availability of any easy potential development sites. The existing food store offer includes a Budgens supermarket (renovated in 2013) and another small convenience store (Kwiksave) in the town centre, a small Costcutter located away from the town centre on Folly View Road, and a Tesco supermarket on Park Road. Only Budgens and Tesco have car parks, the former being a pay-and-display car park owned by the Vale of White Horse District Council with two hours free parking.

The Tesco food store on Park Road opened in November 2013 and although not located in the town centre, as defined above, it is situated in the town's geographical centre and within walking distance of the majority of housing.

It has 1260 m² of convenience space and 145 m² of comparison space and, most significantly, a 148 space car park (132 plus 10 family and 6 disabled) with, currently, no restrictions. This has made a significant change to parking provision in Faringdon and could encourage more visitors to the town, so helping to reduce loss of trade to other centres by providing a platform for the gradual improvement in the retail offer around the core town centre.

In order to encourage shoppers, there should be strong linkages between the Tesco site and the town centre to facilitate pedestrian movements between the two as this will increase town centre vitality. As part of this and prior to its opening there were discussions with Tesco about this issue and as a result the footpath between the store and Southampton Street was resurfaced. However, this is only a start and more needs to be done to promote the town centre to visitors to the store.

As the town centre is constrained by both the historic nature of the buildings and by land ownerships it is difficult to identify opportunities for town centre retail expansion. However, as the population of Faringdon grows, opportunities to deliver more retail floor space including some larger units would be welcomed.

The proposed development of the 4&20 site will include an Aldi (1,254 m² of sales area), a small Waitrose (650 m² of sales area) and a drive-through Costa Coffee (165 m² of floorspace).

Policy 4.4A: Minimising the Loss of Retail Space

Any net loss of retail (Use Class A1) space in the defined town centre will not be permitted other than where one or more of the following circumstances can be demonstrated:

- a) The site has been marketed for retail (Class A1) use for a period of one year with no viable offers received; or
- b) A replacement premises of equivalent size, function and accessibility is to be provided in the town centre in exchange so that there is no net loss; or
- c) The loss of the retail (Class A1) use is facilitated by the General Permitted Development Order 1995 (as amended) or by the policies in the Development Plan.

Policy 4.4B: Extending the Town Centre Retail Offer

Within the Town Centre Boundary as defined in Figure 5 of the Neighbourhood Plan planning permission will be granted for the change of use or redevelopment of sites currently not in retail use (Use Class A1) to retail use. Other uses that support the retail function of the town centre will be encouraged.

Policy 4.4C: Extending the Wider Retail Offer

Where sites become available on the edge of the town centre or on the main routes between the town centre and the Tesco Park Road site, favourable consideration will be given to the redevelopment or change of use of those sites to retail (Use Class A1) and other uses that support the retail function of the town centre providing more suitable sites are not available within the town centre.

The sites that would be considered under policies 4.4B and 4.4C include:

- Under-developed or lower quality sites within the town centre such as the BT exchange and the Police station site (see Figure 7 sites 4)
- Part of the site to the north of the Gloucester Street car park (a small amount of retail may be supported within a wider mix of uses on this site - see Policy 4.5C and Figure 7 site 5)
- The Fire Station on Station Road (see Figure 7 site 6)

Any development or redevelopment on sites 1, 4 and 5 should conserve or enhance the special architectural and historic character of the Conservation Area.

⁸Communication from Sjoerd Vogt, Organiser of Faringdon ECOWEEK. http://www.ecoweeek.info/Food_-_Drink/ECOFARMS/ecofarms.html shows organic farms comprise 26% of the land area in a four mile radius of Faringdon cf. 3.5% of the land area in the UK as reported in the Soil Association Organic Market Report 2014.

Ensuring a 'linked up' shopping experience

To maximise any potential for linked trips between different shops and retail areas, way-finding and signage should be improved together with the quality of the pedestrian environment.

In particular, the pedestrian routes between the town centre and the Tesco Park Road site need attention to ensure any customers shopping at the food store are encouraged to make use of the town centre shops in the same trip.

Policy 4.4D: Improving Pedestrian and Cycle Links

New developments between the town centre and the Tesco and 4&20 Park Road sites will be required to contribute to an enhanced pedestrian and cycle environment that ensures that linkages between the development and the town centre are attractive to pedestrians and cyclists. Additionally, any development of the land north west of the Gloucester Street car park should contribute towards providing a high quality pedestrian link between the site and the town centre (see also Policy 4.5C).

The intention of this policy would be to improve retrospectively the pedestrian route between the Park Road site and the town centre. Enhancements might include an improved pavement and footway, the delineation of a cycle route or lane, additional street tree planting and improved signage.

For the link between the Gloucester Street site and the town centre, physical improvements such as an improved footway, signage and lighting will be expected.

Supporting Actions

In addition to policies linked to planning and development activities, there are also a number of more general actions that would help support the objectives identified.

Existing retail businesses

To further support the town centre there is a need to find other opportunities to increase or improve its offer and draw people in. This could include programmes to improve shop fronts and to look at ways in which businesses collaborate to boost the presentation of the town centre.

Local produce

Opportunities that promote the integration of local produce with the town centre should be supported to enhance the links between the town and the surrounding countryside. Such efforts will support a high quality choice for local shoppers and help to draw in visitors from further afield.

Faringdon has at least 16 certified organic farms within a four mile radius of the market place, encompassing dairy, beef and vegetables with 'veggie boxes' delivered over a large area. This green land area makes Faringdon the largest organic producing area in the UK⁸.



Public Houses

Public houses are important community assets providing places for people to meet, relax and play games. They often provide additional important functions that support the local community including hosting events, supporting local sports clubs etc.

Viability and Marketing - Where applications for a change of use or redevelopment of a public house are received, supporting evidence will be required to demonstrate that:

- A comprehensive sustained marketing campaign (agreed in advance with the local planning authority) has been undertaken, offering the public house for sale as a going concern and using an agreed realistic valuation of the premises;
- The marketing campaign has run for a period of at least twelve months before the planning application is submitted;
- If marketing has been based wholly or partly on an alternative community or employment use, there has been prior discussion with the local planning authority on the principle of the proposal;
- The public house has been offered for sale locally, and in the region, in appropriate publications and through specialised licensed trade agents;
- The public house is not financially viable; in order to determine if this is the case, the application must be accompanied by detailed trading accounts for the last three full years in which the pub was operating as a full-time business;
- The CAMRA Public House Viability Test, or a similar objective evaluation method, has been employed to assess the viability of the business and the outcomes (to be shared with the local planning authority) have demonstrated that the public house is no longer economically viable.

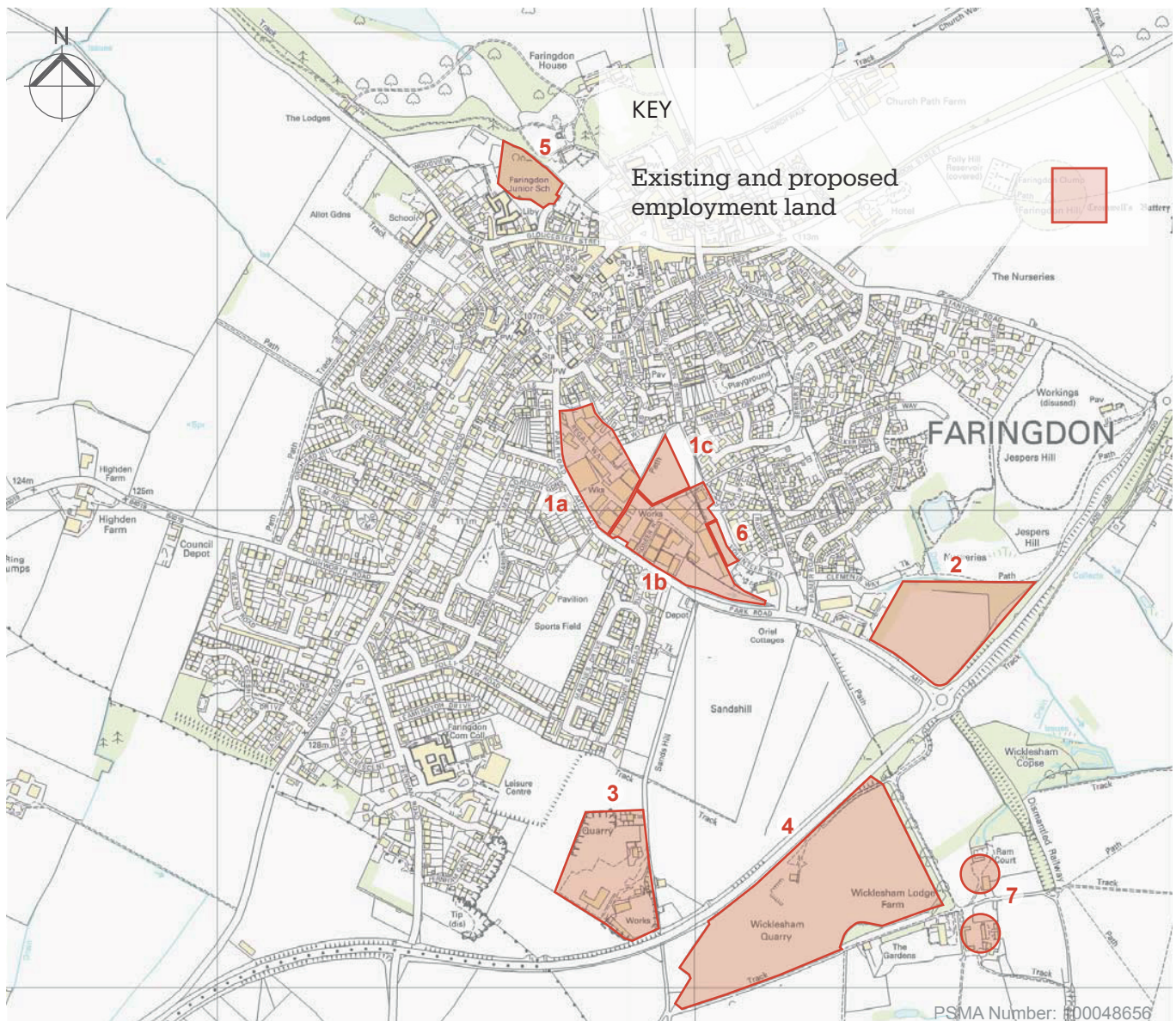
Where applications for a change of use or redevelopment of a public house are received, supporting evidence will be required which demonstrates that:

- There is no significant local support for its retention;
- There are alternative licensed premises within easy walking distance of the public house;
- Any such alternative premises offer similar facilities and a similar community environment to the public house that is the subject of the application.

Policy 4.4E: Public Houses

The retention of the town's public houses will be strongly supported and their conversion or redevelopment for other uses opposed because of the important role they play in contributing to the liveliness and vitality of the street scene, promoting a competitive environment, offering services of particular local value, and, in some cases, including important historic features. Planning applications for change of use or redevelopment for other uses will be refused unless robust evidence can be provided to show that the public house is not economically viable and is no longer required to meet the needs of the local community.

Figure 8: Existing and proposed employment land:



1. Existing Park Road sites (1a and 1b) and proposed 1c. Land behind Pioneer Road
2. 4&20 site (part of this site has outline planning permission for A1/A5 retail use)
3. Rogers Concrete (although 3 ha is allocated employment use in the Local Plan Pt 1 only half of this 4 ha site is usable owing to geological constraints)
4. Wicklesham Quarry
5. Land north west of Gloucester Street car park
6. Volunteer Way
7. Wicklesham Farm

"A parish where you can choose to work locally, work from home, set up your own business or commute to surrounding employment centres"

4.5 LOCAL JOBS

Context

As part of being a town that supports and promotes sustainable lifestyles it is important that more employment opportunities are provided in and around Faringdon. This will bolster the general vitality of the town and the town centre, and also help to reduce out-commuting.

The area around Faringdon offers a strong business base, with major commercial centres including Oxford, Swindon, Abingdon and Witney and the cluster of science and business operations around Didcot. Faringdon has good road links, particularly to Swindon and Oxford, but needs to put in place the framework for new business investment.

As well as identifying sites through this process and the Local Plan, this relates to wider issues such as local training and skills and provision of fast broadband fibre optic connections. This will require action beyond planning policy.

The 2013 Employment Land review prepared on behalf of Vale of White Horse District Council characterises Faringdon as an important location for B1 (business offices) and B2 (industrial) employment uses and is influenced by Swindon, which is an important location for blue chip companies. Faringdon is located within this wider Thames Valley West sub-regional employment property market that is dominated by B1 and B2 uses. In addition, the connection to Oxford is strong and could also attract future employment activity. Whilst sites within the Science Vale Oxford area (Milton Park Enterprise Zone, the Harwell Campus Enterprise Zone and

Grove Technology Park) will likely absorb any large scale science-related industries within the District, associated services and industries could well be attracted to locate in the west of the Vale. In addition, commercial opportunities stemming from universities in the wider area should also be maximised.

Although the focus of employment opportunities within the Vale are at the Enterprise Zones close to the District's eastern boundary, the Local Plan recognises the importance of supporting the economy of towns and rural areas in the west of the District in providing a range of employment opportunities close to where people live. Faringdon is located at the western boundary, hence, the Local Plan emphasises the need to allocate land for strategic employment growth at Faringdon to complement the Science Vale Oxford sites.

The Local Plan Part 1 allocates a number of sites in Faringdon for future employment development, in particular the 4&20 site and employment use within the development mix for the Sandhill site south west of Park Road (formerly Rogers' Concrete). The Local Plan Part 1 allows for further non-strategic employment sites to be allocated through the Neighbourhood Plan.

⁹Our Faringdon Our Future; Faringdon Chamber of Commerce; Appendix 2b to Evidence Base Review

¹⁰The 2011 census defines working age as 17-74 and shows that 49.9% of the total population were in employment.

¹¹Population estimate; M L H Wise for FTC; Appendix E to Evidence Base Review

Local analysis suggests that the "do-nothing option" would result in a net loss of potential jobs despite a predicted population growth of ca. 3,000 people. As with the 4&20 site, other employment sites may see job levels reduce (as outlined in Appendix 2b¹ to the Evidence Base Review; e.g. The 4&20 site is expected to provide 120 jobs in the retail part of the site and possibly another 11 on the remainder, compared with the 490 jobs predicted in the URS Vale of White Horse Employment Land Addendum 2014, Table 3.1). This is felt to be unsustainable. Faringdon would like over a third of the working age population to have the option for local employment or at least a third of those in employment to be employed locally to reduce out commuting. (According to the 2011 census¹⁰, 50% of the total population were in employment.) This would translate to a minimum aspiration of ca. 1,500 jobs for residents¹¹ or a target of ca. 2,000 based on a final population figure of ca. 11,000.

Objectives

The following statements have been drawn from local input to date and define the aspirations for employment activity in the parish:

- Support existing businesses in the parish and help facilitate expansion where required;
- Ensure that the total number of jobs in Faringdon matches 38% - 44% of the working population of the Faringdon parish¹¹;
- Allocate enough employment land to meet the requirements of at least 38% of the working population of the Faringdon parish within a 5 km radius of the centre of the town;

- Resist the existing trend of B1, B2 or B8 employment sites being lost to residential or retail development;
- Support provision of four and five bedroom executive homes to attract business leaders to the town;
- Provide incubation and small business start-up facilities, always ensuring that enough employment land is available to meet the subsequent needs of a growing business;
- Establish a sustainable level of employment that matches the town's residential growth and that also allows Faringdon's existing economy to expand;
- Through greater employment land allocations give local residents the option to work locally within the parish;
- Reduce the scale of out-commuting to support greater vitality during the day and a more self-sufficient town;
- Encourage new types of B1 and B2 business into the town;
- Attract and support entrepreneurs and new business start-ups; and
- Support the full range of employment activities across the parish including rural jobs, whether traditional agriculture or diversified business activities.

In order to help to meet these aspirations, new employment uses on all opportunity sites should be promoted in order to boost the scope for local employment. This will help to stop the loss of industry from and encourage new businesses into the town. It will also help to alleviate the wider traffic issues that result from out-commuting.

Policies

There are a number of distinct strands to the employment strategy, reflecting the fact that a range of opportunities are needed if Faringdon is to attract a healthy mix of employment and enterprise.

Existing sites

The following strategic sites currently provide an important focus for employment activities within the parish:

- 1a. Park Road Industrial Area (Regal Way)
- 1b. Park Road Industrial Area (Old Sawmills Road and Pioneer Road)

These strategic sites are safeguarded for employment use in the Vale's draft Local Plan 2031 (see Core Policy 17). It is suggested that these sites could further support the employment needs of the town through intensification.

Policy 4.5A: Existing Employment Sites

Intensification or redevelopment of the existing industrial areas along Park Road for employment purposes will be supported where this enhances the quality of employment opportunities available, provided that the Park Road frontages are of a good quality design with an attractive landscape setting, in accordance with Policy 4.7E, and that there would be no adverse impacts on the amenities in the surrounding area.

- 1a. Park Road Industrial Area (Regal Way) - encourage Class B1 uses and trade counter style employment uses.
- 1b. Park Road Industrial Area (Old Sawmills Road and Pioneer Road) - encourage Class B1/B2/BB uses.

Additional sites

The following sites (see also Figure 8) have been allocated or protected through the Vale of White Horse Local Plan (2011) for employment use and remain in the Local Plan 2031. They form an important basis for future employment growth:

1. 4&20 site adjacent to A420 (site 2). (Part of this site now has outline planning permission for A1/A5 retail, but will provide ca. 120 full and part time jobs)
2. Rogers Quarry (Land south of Park Road as part of the mixed use strategic allocation - site 3)
3. Volunteer Way (site 6)

Each of these sites is essential to the town's future employment development and must be protected for such growth. Volunteer Way should be retained for B1 employment use.

Local business people feel these allocations will not bring forward the number of jobs needed locally and have therefore assessed the potential of other sites to support the employment land allocation. A set of additional sites (see Figure 8) are therefore proposed for allocation:

1. Wicklesham Quarry (site 4)
2. Land north west of Gloucester Street car park (site 5)
3. Wicklesham Farm (site 7)
4. Land behind Pioneer Road (site 1c)

Each of these sites is essential to the town's future employment development and must be protected for such growth. Some of these sites are already in employment use or allocated for such use, however the intention is to expand the scale of employment they offer.

At the Wicklesham Farm site, minimal expansion would be acceptable to help address unmet demand for units here. The site contains a Grade II listed barn and granary; their setting will be conserved or enhanced.

Of the new sites, Wicklesham Quarry is considered by local stakeholders to be a significant opportunity site that would expand the provision of local jobs. Quarrying activities have finished on this site and it is now being used for the storage of materials for golf courses pending restoration to agricultural use, according to its current permission which requires the cessation of working, storage, processing and sale of minerals and removal of buildings, plant, machinery and structures by 30 September 2015; and completion of restoration of the site by 30 April 2016. However, it is considered that this site could be more appropriately redeveloped for employment use to provide B2/B8 industry in the town with the associated jobs. In addition, it would help to reduce the amount of heavy goods vehicles and general traffic currently using Park Road. A site of this scale could also encourage new types of businesses into the parish to help diversify the range of local jobs on offer. The development of the site would need to also deliver a safe crossing over the A420 to serve pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. Any development on the site would need to be sensitively designed so as to be hidden within the landscape, and as it is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and could only proceed following completion of a geological assessment in consultation with Natural England who will ultimately, sanction if development proposals are appropriate.

Planning conditions to restore the site to its original condition following cessation of quarrying activities are currently in place. Any future proposals for development should be subject to discussion with Oxfordshire County Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council to ensure that these agreements do not prevent the site from being developed for employment purposes. Natural England could accept its use as industrial land provided the essential ecological constraints are observed; it must also provide access for those wishing to access its important fossils, which could be readily accommodated by its use as an industrial site¹².

Because of the concern raised locally about the development of Wicklesham Quarry for employment use, it should be emphasised that any planning application for development here would be subject to the most rigorous scrutiny by stakeholders, such as Natural England, to make sure that it was both in keeping with its SSSI status and sympathetic to the local environment. Although B2/B8 uses are specified it is not proposed that this would offer carte blanche to any development in these categories and that only uses that afforded full protection to the SSSI and ecology of the site would be allowed. The intention of Policy 4.5B is to protect the site against adverse use and to enable the SSSI to be accessible to interested parties.

The land north west of Gloucester Street car park is considered an appropriate site to be allocated, in part, for employment use (Use Class B1) and, in part, for retail use (Use Class A1) as a mixed employment and retail development bearing in mind the impact of any development on the green aspects of the site and its sensitive heritage location. Adjacent to the town centre, such uses would help support both town centre services and sustainable travel patterns. Proposals that facilitate the provision of new and enhanced pedestrian connections with the town centre will be encouraged. In this context, there is an aspiration to recreate 'Nut Walk', which would link the eastern end of the site through to the north western edge of the Market Place.

In developing the Gloucester Street site the adoption of 'Living Streets' principles will be encouraged.

The Land behind Pioneer Road (site 1c) was allocated in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan (2011) for Use Class B1 employment use and a landscape buffer. However, the emerging Local Plan 2031 does not propose to continue to allocate this site for development. It is important to maintain a variety of employment opportunities in the town and therefore the allocation of this site for B1 employment use is proposed to continue through the Neighbourhood Plan.

The employment land allocations identified in the Local Plan 2011 (as continued through to the Local Plan 2031) should be supplemented with the following sites:

Policy 4.5B: Wicklesham Quarry

Wicklesham Quarry will be safeguarded for employment uses (Classes B2 and B8) following the completion of quarrying activities, although any development would be required to deliver safe access over the A420, principally for pedestrian and cycle use. Employment development would be supported on this site if no other suitable sites closer to the town centre are available, providing there is demonstrable need and the following criteria have been satisfactorily addressed:

- i) Appropriate transport mitigation is proposed following completion of a transport assessment to the satisfaction of the Highways Authority and District Council;
- ii) A landscape assessment is completed with any appropriate mitigation agreed with the District Council and other stakeholders;
- iii) Appropriate ecological mitigation and enhancement measures are incorporated into the proposal and
- iv) Given its site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designation, there is a clear demonstration that any development would not harm the geological special interest of the site in consultation with Natural England and the District Council. The proposals shall incorporate measures to provide access to the protected site for the visiting public so that the special geological interest is better revealed and provision made for the protection and enhancement of the geodiversity interest of Wicklesham Quarry.

Policy 4.5C: Land North West of Gloucester Street Car Park

Land north west of Gloucester Street car park may be appropriate for development for mixed employment (Use Class B1) and retail (Use Class A1) uses.

Proposals that include retail use must demonstrate no suitable and viable town centre site is available.

The development of the site will be contingent upon demonstrating that the proposal can be achieved by:

- i) Avoiding harm to the special character and quality of the Faringdon Conservation Area and the significance of other, nearby, heritage assets and to the amenity of adjoining use;
- ii) Incorporating appropriate ecological mitigation measures and compensation;
- iii) Providing an acceptable drainage (surface and foul) solution; and
- iv) Providing satisfactory access and servicing arrangements (including the provision of high quality pedestrian link(s) to the town centre as required by Policy 4.4D).

Policy 4.5D: Wicklesham Farm

Limited expansion of the Wicklesham Farm site (Use Class B1) will be permitted where this provides for expansion of existing uses and/or meets an identified need for units of this type in order to support the success of this location. Proposals should incorporate retention of the grade II listed barn and granary and conserve or enhance their setting.

Policy 4.5E: Land behind Pioneer Road

New employment development (Use Class B1) will be permitted on land behind Pioneer Road. A landscape buffer shall be provided between the site and the housing development to the north at Willes Close, which will be protected as open space.

Other, larger sites were considered for employment use within the town and discounted for the following reasons:

Sandhill - the area of this site next to the A420 forms part of the proposed strategic allocation in the Draft Vale Local Plan 2031 (Part 1) and is needed to protect the landscape setting of Faringdon and to provide informal open space, allotments and noise mitigation for the adjacent housing due to the proximity to the A420 (see draft Local Plan 2029 Appendix A). This Neighbourhood Plan therefore recommends that this site should be retained as a green buffer to the development edge.

There is a strong desire locally to see all potential non-residential sites, whether allocated or not, protected from residential development in the long term. Many previously identified employment sites have been developed for housing in recent years and there is a need to guard against this happening in the future.

Town centre employment development

Achieving a sustainable and viable town centre in the long term will require greater activity to achieve a critical mass within the town centre. Employment uses in and around the town centre can be important in supporting daytime activity.

The town centre already has a number of smaller businesses and opportunities should be sought to encourage further commercial uses in the town centre as this supports the vitality of the town. It is important to protect and support business growth in the centre as many sites are likely to come under pressure for housing development.

The town centre could provide an attractive location for small businesses and new business start-ups, hence, it is recommended that opportunities to introduce more offices and employment uses into the town centre should be encouraged as part of the wider mix of uses. This approach would necessarily need to follow on from wider town centre improvements, particularly with respect to retail development, ensuring that the town centre provides an attractive option to new employers.

Where units become vacant or under-used they should be considered for employment uses as and when demand exists. This would not strictly involve allocating units for employment, but operate more as an 'employment first' policy for refurbishment proposals/change of use.

Policy 4.5F: Town Centre Employment

Subject to policies on town centre development, employment development (Use Class B1) will be encouraged within the town centre, particularly as part of wider mixed developments or in promoting the use of under-used space. Traffic and parking implications will need to be considered in each case and suitable solutions proposed. Contributions towards improving town centre parking will be sought. Proposals should be consistent with the other policies in the Development Plan.

Policy 4.5G: Rural Diversification

Diversification of existing farms will be supported through the reuse, conversion or adaptation of existing buildings and potential new build where economic benefits can be demonstrated, and where proposals do not negatively affect the landscape character or historical or architectural significance. New development must be sensitively designed and be of appropriate character with respect to the local context.

Wider parish

A series of opportunities exist in the rural parts of the parish to support enterprise and innovation:

Rural diversification – recognising the importance of local jobs in the wider parish, the policy will be to support appropriate levels of diversification with a particular emphasis on tourism.

Existing farms – existing agricultural businesses will be supported and encouraged to expand/diversify to support long term economic viability.

Redundant farm buildings - the conversion of redundant older farm buildings for enterprise space, workshops and tourism development will be encouraged, provided they can be clearly identified as surplus to agricultural requirements.





¹³Census 2011 Tenure - Households (QS405EW)

¹⁴Dwelling stock by Council tax band Mar 2011, last updated April 2012; Valuation Office Agency

"A parish where all can afford to live on a safe and attractive street in a good sized house with a garden"

4.6 FAMILY HOUSING

Context

The different phases of housing development through the twentieth century and into the last decade each have a distinct character and built form. Thus, away from Faringdon's historic core, there is generally a predominance of family housing, set within relatively generous streets and with front and rear gardens. It is important that new housing is provided in a manner that meets the needs of the town.

Faringdon is a growing town; the draft Local Plan makes provision for significant new housing development to the south and south-west of the town centre. The planned housing growth is to be accepted if only to support the provision of local services and encourage a more successful town centre. It is hoped that a larger town population will help to sustain a more vibrant mix of shops and services. This will, however, require significant investment in community infrastructure and particularly in the provision of school places.

At the 2011 census, Faringdon had 1.5 times the proportion of affordable/ social housing when compared to the Vale average¹³. This reflects the historic development of public sector housing. Careful consideration needs to be given to the proportion of affordable housing in any new development to ensure that it helps to meet local (Faringdon) needs.

Within the provision of affordable housing, there should also be a broad mix of types to suit local needs, including social rented accommodation and options such as shared equity to enable local people to own their own homes.

Local stakeholders have suggested there is a need for larger homes for private sale, developed to provide the full range of housing in the town. The Evidence Base Review highlights the comparative lack of housing in Council Tax bands F, G and H¹⁴. Such housing would meet the needs of executives employed in and around the local area.

The ideas of connectivity and integration expressed in other parts of this Neighbourhood Plan should also extend to the provision of all new housing, with a strong preference for much greater 'pepper-potting' of social housing.

Guidance on the design of housing in Faringdon is included in section 4.7.

Objectives

The following statements have been drawn from local input to date and define the aspirations for housing in the parish:

- Faringdon should remain a comfortable, quietish, pleasant place and not sprawl outside the proposed boundary of development as set out in the Vale Local Plan 2031.
- Any future residential development outside the town, within the rest of the parish, should be limited to meeting identified rural need or as provided for in the policies of the Development Plan.
- Faringdon should have a good choice of housing that meets local need.

Left: Examples of existing suburban housing in Faringdon

Policies

There is a strong desire to limit any further residential development in the parish although it is accepted that a number of sites are proposed for residential development in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031. Future development should be consistent with the Local Plan, and should be delivered at a slow and steady rate of growth to avoid the town getting too big, too quickly.

It is recommended that a review of the town and the services should be carried out every five years. Following the review, an Action Plan will consider the state of the town and the benefits and impact of growth.

The policies set out in Section 4.1 of the Neighbourhood Plan will limit growth in the town and ensure any future residential development is kept within the development boundary except where allocated in the Vale Local Plan 2031.

Housing balance

The town of Faringdon provides a variety of housing styles ranging from historic cottages around the town centre to suburban type housing in more modern developments. However, there is a need both to achieve a better balance in the overall housing mix in the parish. This involves diversifying the choice of housing to include for a number of larger properties in the town as well as providing for those on lower incomes through affordable housing.

The nature and range of affordable housing has changed significantly since the bulk of social housing was built in the parish.

Today there are the following types of affordable housing:

- Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with the Homes and Communities Agency.
- Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
- Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

(Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as 'low cost market' housing, are not affordable housing for planning purposes.)

¹⁵Dwelling stock by Council tax band Mar 2011, last updated April 2012; Valuation Office Agency

¹⁶Census 2011 Living Arrangements (QS108EW)

¹⁷42% (34% in the Vale of White Horse)

¹⁸Census 2011 Age structure (KS102EW)

The comparative lack of housing in Council Tax bands F, G and H¹⁵ means that housing is needed at the larger end of the spectrum to provide a more varied choice for existing and new residents, and to harmonise Faringdon's housing mix with that of the Vale of White Horse.

At the same time there is a need for one and two bedroom homes. The 2011 census reported that 36% of Faringdon's population lived alone¹⁶; and although less than the national average¹⁷, this need should be catered for, particularly because of the increased number of service personnel living in Faringdon as a result of the expansion of RAF Brize Norton.

Additionally, the 2011 census showed that Faringdon had a higher proportion of those aged 85-plus than either the District or England¹⁸; hence, the need for adequate accommodation for the elderly in the form of sheltered housing, extra care housing and other models.

Opportunities exist for both sensitive infill development through to town expansion in delivering new areas of family housing. New developments, therefore, should offer a range of housing to suit all needs and all generations.

Policy 4.6A: Housing Balance

New developments should deliver a range of housing types that meet local parish needs. Proposals that provide for a range of housing types including larger houses and accommodation for the elderly will be supported.

The mix of housing should reflect or improve on the character of the immediate area and be based on current and future demographic trends, market trends, and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, service families, people of all ages with disabilities, older people, and people wishing to build their own homes) as specified in the up to date VoWH Housing Needs Assessment and 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

The following section deals with the design of housing in more detail, but some key factors are noted here:

- Affordable housing should be distributed in sensible management clusters through new developments and should be indistinguishable from market housing.
- The density of new housing is of particular concern and stakeholders would prefer to see lower density development.

Further information and guidance on design is set out in section 4.7.

Facilitating resident aspirations

Stakeholder engagement has identified a need for more encouraging policies towards self build housing. Local people would prefer to see smaller scale residential developments and the scope for individual or group led self build projects could give local people a chance to deliver the housing they want to see.

Policy 4.6B: Self-build Housing

Self-build housing projects will be supported in appropriate locations and in line with national and local planning policy.

Right: Folly Park View, Faringdon





¹⁹<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/england/oxfordshire/great+faringdon>

²⁰<http://towns.org.uk/market-town-awards/market-town-awards-2012/>

"A parish which values its distinctive character, cherishes its historic assets and demands locally appropriate design"

4.7 DESIGN

Context

The parish exhibits a strong character with much of the area's history still very evident through an extensive stock of old and listed buildings as well as networks of historic streets and spaces, and attractive countryside. There are 134 listed buildings in Great Faringdon¹⁹ including the landmark Folly Tower. In 2012, the Folly Regeneration Project, including the tower and its associated woodland, was the joint winner of the Environment and Culture Category in the Action for Market Towns' South of England zone. It then went on to win the Action for Market Towns' National Award²⁰ for the Most Highly Transferable Project, out of the twenty zonal category winners, and over 1000 entrants, at the awards ceremony in Kendal.

A schedule of the Listed Buildings in Great Faringdon is included as Appendix F to the Evidence Base Review. Of these All Saints' Church, Faringdon House and the part of Radcot Bridge in Great Faringdon are Grade I listed; the Old Town Hall and Sudbury House are Grade II*; the rest are Grade II listed. There are also two scheduled monuments (Radcot Bridge and the Wyke monastic grange and section of 18th century turnpike road). A small part of the adjacent grade II* Registered Historic Park and Garden (Buscot Park) lies within the parish in Eaton Woods. The Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record has a more comprehensive list of archaeological and historical buildings within the parish and an Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment is currently underway.

As yet, no buildings or features of local interest that are important in a local context as nationally listed buildings have been identified in Faringdon. The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 indicates that the Local Plan Part 2 may provide a set of criteria for identifying non-designated assets. This process can be undertaken as part of the Action Plan.

There is a need to raise the standard of design across the town for both new housing and commercial developments. Any new development must be absolutely appropriate to the Faringdon context, whether location, scale, density, layout, materials or visual appearance.

New housing should be required to respond to the town context. In central areas, and particularly within and close to the Conservation Area, there will be an expectation that housing will closely reflect the nature of the historic buildings in form, materials, scale and massing. In areas away from the town centre, and particularly in new areas of expansion, the expectation is that the character should be more open and spacious with an emphasis on family housing.

New commercial building should be treated similarly. Most commercial building is on Park Road, one of the main approach roads into the town, and displays a variety in both character and quality.

Left: Examples of historic character in Faringdon



In addition to ensuring new development is in keeping with local character, the Conservation Area itself needs attention in terms of maintenance. The street care in the Conservation Area is in some places not as good as it should be. There are weeds on the streets and around trees; verges and open spaces are not always well cared for. All this leads to an uncared-for look to the town, and this needs to be reversed. Some protection is in place through the VWHDC planning guidance for conservation areas, but there are buildings and areas in much need of improvement.

In summary, Faringdon is an historic market town, and as such needs to be developed and maintained appropriately. Its history and buildings are a substantial part of its uniqueness.

Objectives

The following statements have been drawn from local input to date and define the aspirations for housing and non-residential development design in the parish:

- All new development must be in keeping with local character, the design process should be clearly influenced by an analysis of local context.
- Housing developments should be steered by local parish need and form attractive family friendly streets and neighbourhoods.
- New areas of housing must connect clearly with the rest of the town.

Left: Large commercial buildings can have a significant impact on the roofscape of the town and key views

- A review of the Conservation Area should inform revisions to the boundary and actions to improve the appearance and maintenance of buildings and spaces.
- All new developments should seek to respect the setting of heritage assets in the Parish and to avoid harm to their significance.

Policies

The following policy stances are set out to support high quality design and maintenance in the parish.

Character and identity

Faringdon sits on the point of transition between two significant geological areas; the soft, warm stone of the Cotswolds that can be seen in towns like Burford to the north, and the chalk downs to the south where towns such as Marlborough are dominated by brick and flint buildings. It also has its own unique geological character from the coral-rich limestone of the Golden Ridge that extends from Swindon towards Oxford. As a consequence, the buildings of Faringdon feature an eclectic mix of materials and treatments with brick and stone alike used for both significant and humble buildings. Render is also common in the town, often painted and sometimes featuring strong colours, which adds vibrancy.

Roof materials also vary. Cotswold Stone roofs are most likely to be found on stone buildings and tend to have a steeper pitch than slate roofs that tend to be more common on brick buildings. As a consequence of having steeper roof pitches, the stone roofs are also more likely than slate roofs to feature small dormer windows for accommodation in the roof space.

Roofscape is important to the character of Faringdon, particularly given the views over the town from surrounding hills. As with most traditional town centres, the varied shapes and pitches of the roofs and also the strong chimneys are important elements in the visual appeal of Faringdon.

Any new development should consider how this mix of local character can be reflected in a convincing way without resorting to pastiche. This should particularly apply to the pairing of appropriate wall and roof materials and consideration of how roof pitch varies in response to the material used.

New developments should be constructed in such a way as to minimize their impact on the environment. Resource efficiency in both construction and operation should be a priority, and minimum standards required by legislation should be exceeded where possible.

Policy 4.7A: Materials and Roofscape

New buildings should be constructed using sympathetic building materials in keeping with the local character and styles in the town and parish. The roofscape should be designed with careful regard for the potential impacts on the townscape and the surrounding landscape. In the case of residential development, regard must be had to the up-to-date Residential Design Guide SPD produced by the Vale.

Policy 4.7B: Resource Consumption

All new buildings and major refurbishments should minimise their energy, water and resource consumption and, where possible, exceed the minimum standards set by legislation. District heating schemes will be strongly supported. New developments should provide sufficient space for recycling and composting containers in order to encourage recycling and composting through the District Council schemes or home composting for garden use.

Town centre development

Faringdon benefits from a cohesive town centre with a strong legacy of historic buildings. A large portion of the town centre is covered by a conservation area, hence, there are few opportunities for residential infill development. Any new development should respect the scale, proportions and character of the existing historic fabric.

Conservation Area

One of Faringdon's most distinctive features is the attractive historic town centre with its market square and charming network of streets. This is reflected in the definition of the Conservation Area, which covers the town centre and extends out to include the Folly and its setting. It is felt that greater emphasis needs to be placed on the quality and management of the Conservation Area to ensure that this is protected and enhanced. In particular a conservation area appraisal is needed along with a management plan to guide any change.

As part of this process the Conservation Area boundary should be reviewed and where the findings indicate that it should be altered, the Town Council will work with the District to facilitate the changes. Local stakeholders have suggested the following areas that may be considered for inclusion in the Conservation Area:

- The part of Coxwell Road including the former Cottage Hospital;
- Bromsgrove, including The Swan Public House;
- Station Road and the old railway station buildings;
- The old school house on Stanford Road;
- The original school building at the Infant School; and parts of Ferndale Street.

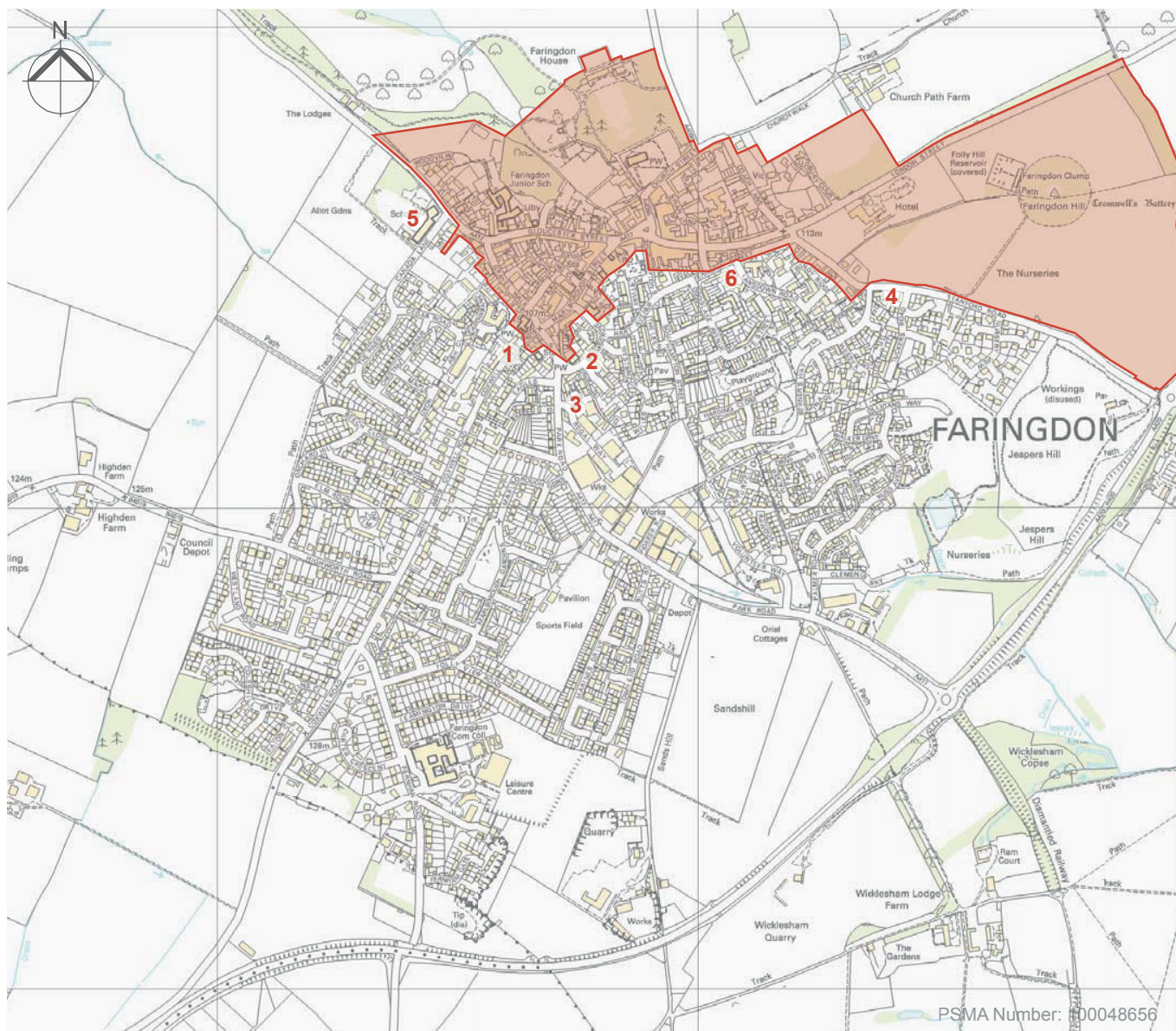
New areas of housing

New housing development away from the town centre should feel distinctly different from the historic area. The nature of the development should learn from the best suburban forms such as the garden city movement and pre-war suburbs to create attractive environments for family housing. Development should decrease in scale and density closer to the edge of the settlement area to provide a clear transition between the heart of the town and the rural hinterland.

Residential areas should be intimate in scale to promote a sense of community, although they should create a connected network rather than being designed as insular cul-de-sacs. Housing should be laid out in a perimeter block format that creates a clear distinction between the street and the private spaces within the block without leaving rear boundaries exposed.

The creation of pleasant streets should be a priority, with predominantly two storey buildings arranged to face onto them as part of a consistent building line. Homes should usually have front gardens with a clear boundary feature. Rear gardens should be large enough to provide usable family space. Parking should be provided for each dwelling within the plot, and garages should be set back from the building line so that they do not dominate the street scene. Streets should be sufficiently wide to allow for vehicles to pass easily as well as allow for informal on-street parking and some street tree planting.

Figure 9: Faringdon Conservation area and location of potential additional areas



KEY

1. Coxwell Street/Road including the former Cottage Hospital
2. Bromsgrove including the Swan Public House
3. Station Road and the old railway station buildings
4. The old school house on Stanford Road
5. The original Infant School
6. Parts of Ferndale Street

Faringdon Conservation Area



²¹Further details can be found at www.securedbydesign.com.

The buildings should reflect the range of materials and forms found in Faringdon's traditional buildings, but should not resort to pastiche. As with all new developments in the town, each development must make every conceivable effort to reduce resource consumption through the design.

Following the public consultation, Thames Valley Police made a recommendation in which they suggest adoption of principles of Secured by Design (SBD)²¹. SBD is an Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) initiative, which has a proven track record in assisting with the creation of safer places by providing guidance on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), and by requiring a minimum set of standards on physical security measures. Independent academic research shows that it can reduce burglary by up to 75% and vehicle crime by 25%.

The scheme comes in two parts; an SBD Award, which is achieved by whole developments that demonstrate conformity to design principles and security standards across the entire site and, Part Two compliance that is achieved when the physical features (windows, doors, locks etc) of the structures themselves meet specified, Police preferred standards.

Although an award can be more difficult to achieve at times and may require negotiation, achievement of Part Two compliance is simply a matter of supplying and fitting the required features to accepted and tested specifications.

Local stakeholders have indicated a desire to see new housing developed with the following qualities:

- 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.
- The density of housing developments should be consistent with Development Plan policies.
- Housing should be of a mix of sizes and styles appropriate to local need and context.
- Affordable housing should not be distinguishable from market housing.
- 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.
- The scale of new housing should be limited to one or two storeys.

Policy 4.7C: Housing Design

Each new housing development should respond to its local context through appropriate use of scale, form, height, detailing and materials. Exceptions will be made for outstanding or innovative design in accordance with paragraph 63 of the NPPF.

The density of development should be consistent with the character of the immediate area and with the Development Plan.

All new development should be well linked by foot and cycle connections to the town centre and schools.

Policy 4.7D: Secured by Design

All developments should incorporate the principles of Secured by Design (SBD) and, where appropriate, seek to achieve SBD accreditation to ensure that a safe and sustainable community is maintained.

Non-residential development

Development of larger buildings, particularly those for commercial or industrial use, needs to be undertaken both with care and a concern for the wider setting and the impact that they may have on the overall character of the town.

The principal approach into Faringdon from the A420 is along Park Road, the location of significant existing and planned business development. It is, therefore, vital that a high design standard is achieved for these buildings as they will play a substantial part in defining first impressions of Faringdon for many visitors. Whilst large format buildings that try to take on traditional forms are often regarded as unsuccessful, good quality modern design that makes reference to local themes will be expected.

Visual impact

Several of the key sites, including the Wicklesham Quarry site and the proposed Sandhill development to the north of the A420, are visible from elevated vantage points such as Folly Hill and the Folly Tower. Protecting views from these locations needs careful management. The integration of any development with the landscape and particularly the nature of the roof forms will play an important role in achieving successful development. Initiatives such as green roofs and photovoltaic arrays will also be encouraged where they do not conflict with key views of the town's roofscape or harm either the setting of listed buildings or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Householders in the Conservation Area have had requests to install satellite dishes rejected even though they are not visible from the road. This facility is needed because Folly Hill obscures the signal with the result that television and radio reception in certain parts of Faringdon is unobtainable from the Oxford transmitter. (Some residents can only get reception from the Mendip (Bristol) transmitter and FM and DAB radio reception may be only possible with an external aerial.) Because of these reception difficulties in certain parts of the Conservation Area it is recommended that the Local Planning Authority recognises the problem and grants approval in those circumstances where aerials and satellite dishes are not visible from the public highway.

Policy 4.7E: Visual Impact

All alterations or new build of commercial buildings, and especially those that are publicly visible or that form gateways to Faringdon, should be of a scale and form appropriate to their location and landscape setting and will be expected to create a high quality environment combining the best modern design with local influences.



4.8 ENSURING APPROPRIATE SUPPORTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

An important principle that underlines the acceptance of any further residential development is the need for all types of supporting infrastructure to keep pace with the projected growth in population. Historically, the town has seen significant housing development without the infrastructure to match; this practice must be reversed and guarded against in the future. This section outlines all the required elements including the transport needs highlighted in 4.3. In summary these are principally

- Improvements to bus services including a long distance coach stop.
- Better access to the rail network through the re-opening of a railway station at either Grove or Challow with bus and cycle links
- Provision of new cycle routes and parking.
- Public realm improvements in the town centre / Conservation Area including enhanced pedestrian routes to the Tesco store.
- Improved road, footpath and cycleway linkages to sport and leisure facilities.
- Provision of additional parking facilities, including coach parking
- Enhanced pedestrian access routes into the wider countryside.
- Provision of new school places in line with Faringdon Academy of Schools policy.
- Enhancement and maintenance of Faringdon Country Park in liaison with existing land owners and operators.
- Improved sport and leisure provision
- Additional allotments.
- 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.
- Improved health infrastructure including additional social / health facilities and services to meet the needs of an increasing population.
- Greater provision of extra care accommodation, and enhanced elderly care linked to a new health and well-being centre.
- The provision of intermediate and respite care for local residents.
- New and improved community facilities including a community centre and entertainment venue.
- A new museum or visitor centre to support tourism.
- Infrastructure to support the sale and storage of local produce.

Policy 4.8A: Improving the Infrastructure

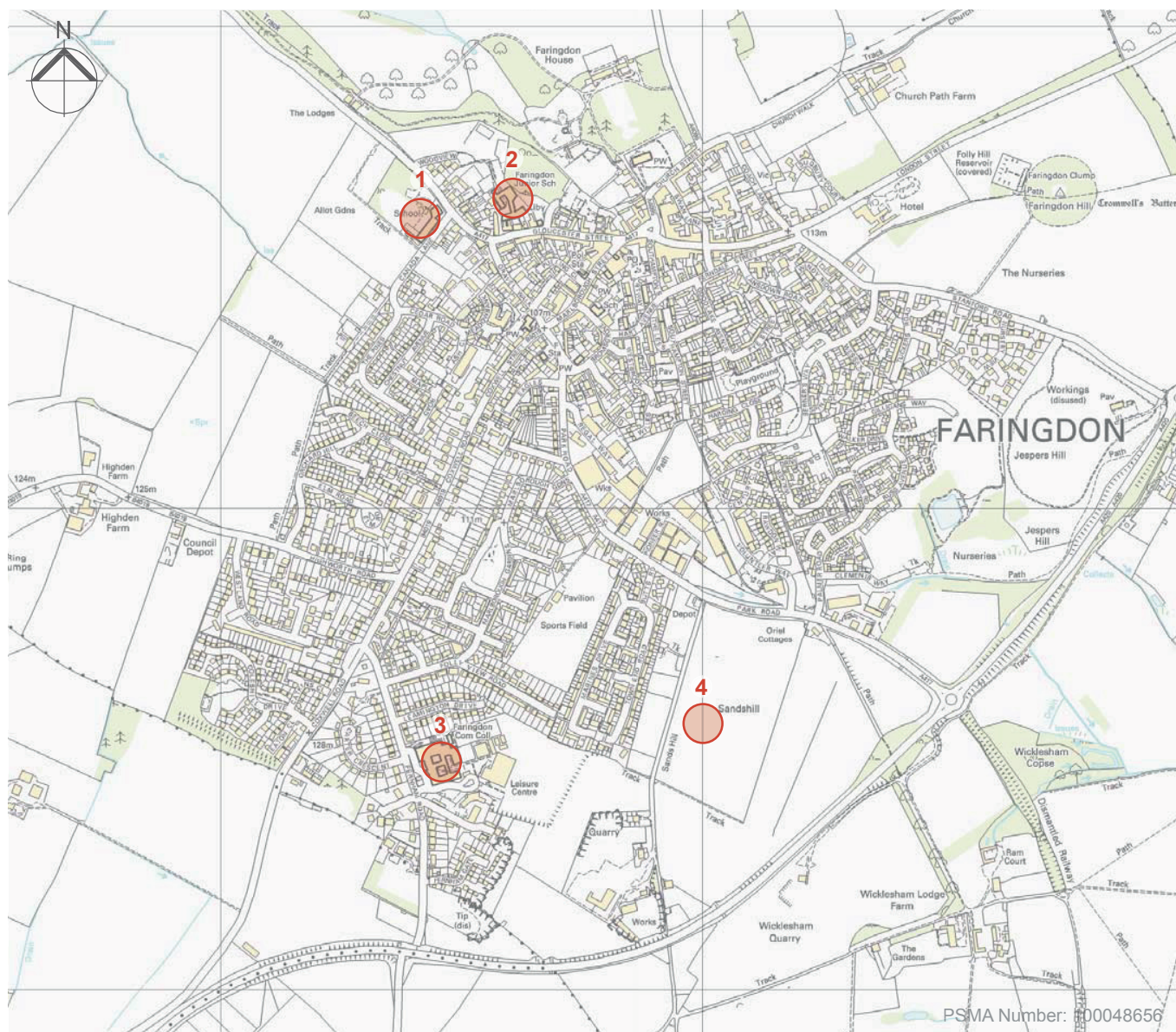
All qualifying developments will be required to demonstrate provision of appropriate new facilities on site and provision of, or contributions towards, off-site facilities in order for the development to be sustainably accommodated. This will be secured through the use of planning conditions, planning obligations or the Community Infrastructure Levy if and when adopted by the Vale of White Horse District Council.

Utilities Infrastructure

Developers must ensure that they liaise with utility providers at the earliest opportunity in order to discuss existing capacity, additional infrastructure requirements and technical issues so that developments can proceed in a timely fashion and without unplanned delays.

Left: View from Folly Tower looking west

Figure 10: Existing and potential school locations:



KEY

1. Existing Faringdon Infant School
2. Existing Faringdon Junior School
3. Existing Faringdon Community College
4. Approximate location for potential new primary school

Existing and potential school locations



"A parish where every child can go to school in the town and benefit from a high quality education"

4.9 SCHOOL PROVISION

Context

Faringdon benefits from three schools that provide statutory education from infant school (reception) to sixth form (Year 13). These are managed collectively by the Faringdon Academy of Schools.

At present there is an infant school on Lechlade Road that feeds into a junior school located off Gloucester Street, both of which can be reached easily from the town centre. The Community College is located off Fernham Road on a site shared with the local leisure centre.

As part of the plan to be a family-friendly town, there is a strong desire to ensure that Faringdon provides a school place in the town for every local child that needs one. This is a key objective of the Faringdon Academy of Schools.

The key issue relating to education in Faringdon is the rapid expansion of housing in and around the town and the resulting pressure this puts on the provision of school places at both primary and secondary level.

Academy Strategy Consultation 2013

In tandem with the Neighbourhood Plan process the Faringdon Academy of Schools carried out a public consultation in 2013 on their long-term strategy, for addressing the issue of expanding school provision to meet the planned growth in population in and around Faringdon. The Academy strategy was supported through this consultation.

The main driver of the Academy strategy is to meet the substantial growth in demand for school places in Faringdon schools that is predicted in the coming years. Following the public consultation that took place between March and June 2013 the preferred option for future educational provision in Faringdon has been set. The educational plans have been developed in close collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council's Schools Organisation and Planning Team and meet Department for Education requirements.

The strategy is based on converting the current Junior School into a Two Form Entry Primary School and transferring the Infant School to a new site on the other end of the town and expanding it to become a second Two Form Entry Primary School. Secondary provision will also be significantly increased and the aim is to have an Eight Form Entry capacity achieved through a staged build programme. The aim is to double primary provision and increase secondary places by approximately a third over the next 10-15 years.

Academy Expansion

In November 2013 the Faringdon Academy of Schools expanded to become an eight school multi-academy trust with Shrivenham Primary, Watchfield Primary, John Blandy Primary, Longcot & Fernham Primary and Buckland Primary joining the three Faringdon Schools.

Developments since the Strategy Consultation

The recent growth in potential housing developments in the area has led to an extension beyond even the assumptions in the Faringdon Education Strategy 2013. As of early 2014 the picture has moved to the point where there is likely to be a need for a Two Form Entry plus a Three Form Entry Primary School; and a Nine Form Secondary School to take account of housing developments not only in Faringdon but also in other surrounding places, including Shrivenham and Kingston Bagpuize. The Academy will continue to work with Oxfordshire County Council's education team and the Vale of White Horse planning team to increase the provision of school places. Funding for the increase in school capacity to meet the significant growth in school places is an area of concern. It will require finance from a number of sources being made available, including developer Section 106 contributions, OCC basic needs funding and central Department of Education grants through the EFA (Education Funding Agency.)

Issues that Arise

At the point that the Infant School moves to a new site, the current site reverts to Oxfordshire County Council ownership. This raises a question of the potential usage of this land within the Neighbourhood Plan scope.

A range of uses may be acceptable on the part of the site located within the development boundary although it is accepted that, from an educational perspective, it is desired to have the funding from the site disposal to contribute toward the project costs of developing additional places in our Faringdon schools.

Policy 4.9A: Infant School Site Redevelopment

Should the Infant School on Canada Lane become vacant, proposals to reuse the existing buildings for community use will be encouraged. The site may present opportunities for additional low key, sensitively designed, development on that part of the site within the development boundary.

All future uses and/or development must pay special regard to the desire to preserve the historic character of the School site and its low density edge of settlement location. Proposals that enhance the character and setting will be encouraged.

Faringdon Town Council expects that any proposals for the redevelopment/reuse of the School site (including the playing field and wooded area) will be made in consultation with the local community. There is strong support in the community for a pre-school facility to remain in the town. The Town Council will work with the Academy and other stakeholders to achieve this objective.

Right: View of the Faringdon Infant School site from Highworth Road





²²<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parkour>: practitioners aim to get from A to B in the most efficient way possible, using only their bodies and their surroundings to propel themselves while maintaining as much momentum as is possible in a safe manner.

"A town where you can learn any sport, at any age, choose from a range of attractive walks or simply relax in a local park"

4.10 SPORT AND LEISURE

Context

Existing provision

Faringdon offers a wide range of sport and leisure opportunities to local people, ranging from formal indoor and outdoor sports through to more informal walking and cycling routes that take in the countryside around the town. The town has a Leisure Centre with sports facilities and swimming pool; the Pump House Project provides a Parkour²² (free-running) facility and other activities for young people in the old Theatre and the Town Council provides a frequent cinema in the Corn Exchange.

Pitches for organised sports are concentrated in various locations - at the Leisure Centre located with the Community College, Tucker Park, the Bowls Club, the Municipal Tennis Courts, and the Country Park to the east of the town centre. The facilities by the A420 include a cricket pitch and clubhouse, rugby pitch, tennis courts and a skate park.

Green spaces are located across the town and are important resources for local residents of all ages. There is a need to protect these resources for future generations. Opportunities to extend green space provision and the facilities they contain should be encouraged, particularly in the face of planned housing growth.

Faringdon Country Park

It is proposed that the new sports facilities to the south east of the town and the landscape around them should be defined as a new Faringdon Country Park. This would take in a range of landscape types including farmland, sports facilities and uncultivated areas and offer a co-ordinated network of walks and leisure activities with the Folly Tower and Woodland as the centrepiece.

Such a facility would allow the incorporation of activities for older children, such as an adventure playground. This will provide an attractive resource for local people and draw in families from outside the parish, thereby increasing the visitor numbers to the town. Any development of the Country Park would need to happen in close liaison with existing landowners and occupiers to ensure activities such as farming are suitably accommodated.

Access to the wider countryside

The Country Park could provide a stepping stone for residents and visitors to enjoy the wider landscape and countryside around Faringdon. Enhancing existing footpaths and promoting circular walking / cycling routes will help to increase the usage and appeal of the attractive countryside on Faringdon's doorstep. The local Farcycles group has promoted a family-friendly 12 mile circular cycle route that should be supported as a future asset. Enhancing the safety of pedestrian and cycle crossing points across the A420 will also support access to the countryside to the south of the town beyond the proposed Country Park.

Left: Rugby on the Country Park below Folly Hill

Figure 11: Faringdon Country Park with Folly Tower, woodland and surrounding fields



KEY

Faringdon Country Park with Folly Tower, woodland and surrounding fields



Objectives

The following statements have been drawn from local input to date and define the aspirations for sport and leisure facilities in the parish:

- Faringdon should continue to act as the local hub for sports and leisure facilities. Existing facilities should be regularly updated to ensure they keep pace with local demand and maintain a high quality service.
- New facilities should be added to ensure Faringdon provides a high standard provision and a wide choice of sports and leisure opportunities.
- Existing green spaces should be well protected and new spaces provided to support a good level of provision across the town.
- The Faringdon Country Park proposal should be fully explored and delivered as far as possible.
- Young people should be closely consulted and involved in future decisions about provision.
- Provision should cater for all ages and abilities and encourage efficient use throughout the day and evening.

Policies

Faringdon Country Park

There is strong local support for the ongoing development of the existing Country Park in Faringdon. It is recommended that some of the key elements of this proposal are taken forward as soon as possible and contributions from developers targeted towards its delivery.



Policy 4.10A: Faringdon Country Park

Development proposals that improve leisure, sport, recreation and wildlife habitat and associated facilities at Faringdon Country Park will be supported.

Sports

The town is well served with sporting facilities and this forms part of Faringdon's attraction to residents. There is a pressing need to ensure this advantage is maintained as the town grows by ensuring that the facilities keep step both with needs and expectations. Investment in the existing facilities, such as the Leisure Centre, is needed in accordance with the Vale Leisure Facilities Strategy, and current gaps such as the lack of provision for an all-weather pitch need to be addressed. To some extent the town already acts as a hub for leisure facilities, but if this were further enhanced and promoted, it would benefit of local footfall and, therefore, businesses.

Policy 4.10B: Sports Facilities

Proposals for extension of existing sports facilities, in particular at the Leisure Centre, or new sports facilities in the town, will be supported. Proposals for a floodlit multi-use all-weather pitch will be strongly supported.

²³<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slacklining>: Slacklining is walking along a slack rope, or webbing, as opposed to tightrope walking.

Allotments

Allotments provide a valuable leisure activity for a wide range of people and also help to support the character of Faringdon as a sustainable town. Faringdon Town Council currently manages 26 full size and 12 half-size allotment plots on Lechlade Road. These are very popular with a reported waiting list of 79 people. The National Trust also owns 171 plots on the site, also with a waiting list.

It is proposed that new allotment plots should be identified, with a particular emphasis on provision on the eastern/ southern side of Faringdon to balance the existing plots on the western side of the town. This could be accommodated as part of the Country Park proposals or as part of future housing development.

Policy 4.10C: Allotments

The development of new serviced sites for allotments will be supported. New developments in excess of 20 houses will make provision either on-site or off-site at a level of provision to be agreed by the Local Planning Authority based on an assessment of need in a locality and so as not to render a development scheme non-viable.

Additional provision for young people

Faringdon Town Council took over the provision of the Youth Service after the withdrawal of funding by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) in 2011. It runs a youth facility, known as FAZE, from premises on Highworth Road. FAZE has been successful through having dedicated premises although there is a need to extend youth provision in the town. Firstly, utilising the whole of the FAZE site for youth purposes would enable a stronger provision on this site. Secondly, as this operation is located on the edge of the town, there is a need to ensure that there is some form of youth facility more centrally placed as well.

This has been partly addressed through the Pump House Project, which has taken a three year lease on the old theatre in Swan Lane. The Pump House Project, a registered charity financed through donations and fundraising, has transformed the old theatre into a vibrant centre for parkour and other alternative sports and community activities for young people of the town and county. It is the first designated Parkour Centre in Oxfordshire and has a set of specially designed parkour equipment, one of the first sets of this kind in the country. Current activities include: parkour, slacklining²³, bouldering, media, dance, music, art and craft. It is also home to the Faringdon Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorer Scouts.

However, there is a wish to re-open the building as a theatre and the project may want to relocate to larger premises. Hence, there needs to be some certainty of provision for these organised youth activities.

The cricket / rugby / tennis facilities and skate park located at the end of Stanford Road do allow some element of youth provision, but there is scope to extend these facilities so that there is proper parking and toilet facilities at the site. There is also a need to improve pavement access to the skate park for young people.

As highlighted earlier in this section, Faringdon should have an all-weather pitch to allow a wider range of sports to be available in the town. At present people have to travel to other towns in the area if they want to play sports like hockey. There is a debate about whether the location of the all-weather pitch should be at the Community College, Tucker Park or near the Skate Park. It is thought that most appropriate location would be in Tucker Park.

Local Green Spaces

The NPPF sections 76 and 77 permit local communities, through Neighbourhood Plans, to identify for special protection Green Spaces of particular importance to them, subject to certain conditions.

They must be demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance and character, for example: because of their beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness in wildlife. The plan below identifies the sites that meet these criteria. In the past, two of these sites have come under threat and one is currently proposed for development; hence, it was the will of the local community to offer as much protection to these sites as Local Green Space designation can afford.

The sites shown in Figure 12 have been chosen for Local Green Space designation and the evidence to support their designation has been prepared using the following guidance:

- The National Planning Policy Framework
- The National Planning Practice Guidance.
- The Cotswold District Council Local Green Space Designation Toolkit (The Vale of the White Horse District Council does not provide any such document, so the guidance of an adjacent authority was considered suitable).

These documents state that to be suitable for designation a site must:

- Not be subject to an extant planning permission.
- Not be allocated for development in the relevant Neighbourhood or Local Plan.
- Not be an extensive tract of land.
- Be in proximity to the community it serves.
- Be demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife.

The Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan intends to designate the following areas, shown in Figure 12, and identified in detail as Green Spaces in Appendices 1-11, under these provisions:

1. Tucker Park Recreation Ground: Policy 4.10D a)
2. Oakwood Park: Policy 4.10D b)
3. Pitts Park and Adjacent Green Space either side of Berners Way: Policy 4.10D c)
4. Town Park: Policy 4.10D d)
5. Faringdon Folly Circular Woodland: Policy 4.10D e)
6. Faringdon Country Park and Adjacent Sports Pitches: Policy 4.10D f)
7. The Site Known as Humpty Hill: Policy 4.10D g)

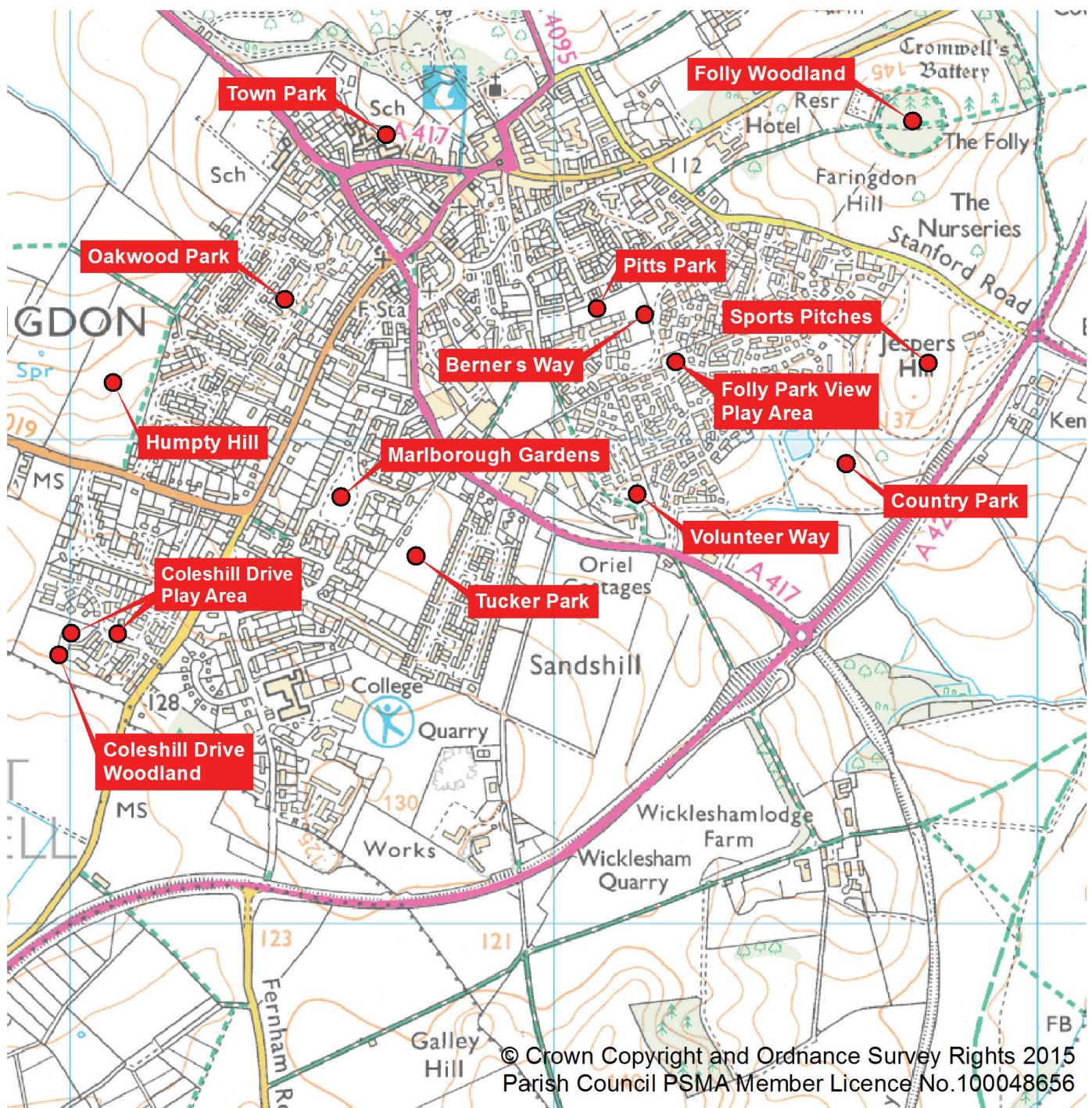
8. Marlborough Gardens Play Area: Policy 4.10D h)
9. Coleshill Drive Play Area and Open Space and Adjacent Woodland: Policy 4.10D i)
10. Volunteer Way Play Area and Open Space: Policy 4.10D j)
11. Folly Park View Play Area: Policy 4.10D k)

Policy 4.10D: Local Green Space Designation

To ensure local green spaces are protected and enhanced. The areas listed below and defined in the Appendix to the Neighbourhood Plan are designated as local green spaces:

- a. Tucker Park (see Figure TP1)
- b. Oakwood Park (see Figure OP1)
- c. Pitts Park (see Figure PP1)
- d. Town Park (see Figure ToP1)
- e. Faringdon Folly Circular Woodland (see Figure FW1)
- f. Faringdon Country Park and Adjacent Sports Pitches (see Figure CP1)
- g. The Site Known as Humpty Hill: (see Figure HH1)
- h. Marlborough Gardens Play Area (see Figure MG1)
- i. Coleshill Drive Play Area and Open Space and Adjacent Woodland (see Figure CD1)
- j. Volunteer Way Play Area and Open Space (see Figure VW1)
- k. Folly Park View Play Area (see Figure FP1)

Figure 12: Showing the location of the sites proposed for green space designation.





"A parish which serves the community well - providing services for local needs and keeping step with demand"

4.11 A CARING COMMUNITY

Context

In order to support and sustain a growing community it is important that Faringdon provides an appropriate level of care infrastructure to meet the needs of all sections of the community.

Whilst education provision has particularly been covered in section 4.9 of this document it is also important that the health and social care needs of the town are appropriately tackled. The aim is to ensure that Faringdon can provide for the day to day needs of all its residents from early years care through to care and accommodation for elderly residents.

Objectives

The following objectives have been identified as needing to be met in order to support local residents:

- Faringdon must provide a strong and high quality range of health services to support the wider parish needs.
- Faringdon must serve its ageing population well, ensuring high quality accommodation and health facilities.
- Enhanced public transport connections must be provided to ensure easy access to larger facilities further afield such as hospitals.
- Social facilities that can accommodate a variety of functions should be provided in the town and provision should keep pace with the growth of the population.
- Future infrastructure requirements will be reviewed periodically in the Action Plan

Policies

Health infrastructure

Faringdon must maintain local GP and dental care services that meet the needs of the whole town as it continues to grow. In addition, a health and well-being centre should form a new focus for health provision in the town.

Since Ferendune Court ceased the provision, there has been no intermediate or respite care in Faringdon. This means that patients discharged from local hospitals needing intermediate care, or those seeking respite care, have to be accommodated in other locations. There is a serious shortage of intermediate and respite beds in the locality that needs to be addressed.

Policy 4.11A: Health and Care Provision

New development must support the expansion of local health and care facilities to meet the need for these services in the town bearing in mind the extra demands on them as a result of increased longevity and the higher proportion of those over 85 in the population. (Census 2001 and 2011).

Elderly care

Left: Faringdon Community Bus



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. Specialist accommodation can take several forms depending on the degree of care required. 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.

Policy 4.11B: Care for the Elderly

New development must support the provision of specialist accommodation for the elderly who live in or wish to live in Faringdon. New development will contribute towards a health and wellbeing centre as a central piece in the town's welfare provision.

Community amenities

There is a thriving Arts scene in Faringdon and it would be of great cultural benefit to have an Arts Centre/theatre/gallery type venue. Faringdon, unlike many of its neighbouring villages, does not have the equivalent of a village hall, with a stage, lighting and changing/back-stage facilities, that can be used as performance space.

Left: Faringdon High Street

The only currently used performance spaces are the Junior School and Community College, which, while good, are obviously school spaces with competing demands. Local stakeholders have identified a need for a large entertainment venue to be used as a theatre or cinema, while the provision of a multi-use community centre that could support local clubs and societies in a single, co-ordinated facility has also been suggested. An entertainment venue that could accommodate a mix of theatre, cinema and live music would make a significant contribution to the cultural and social life of Faringdon. Ideally, such a venue would be located in the town centre to reinforce activity in existing restaurants, cafes and public houses.

It has already been shown that there is a demand for enhanced community facilities. Since November 2012, the Town Council has organised a monthly cinema in the Corn Exchange that has attracted capacity audiences (125+ people) at each showing. As a result 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.

In terms of a community centre, there are three practical options:

- 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, potentially as part of the Country Park or new development.
- Greater use of the Corn Exchange / Pump House.

Costed proposals and assessment will be included in the Action Plan.



"A parish which has strong links to countryside, supporting local food production at all levels and becomes known for its local produce"

4.12 LANDSCAPE

Context

Faringdon benefits from a superb landscape setting. The parish lies on the northern edge of the Mid Vale Ridge National Character Area (NCA 108), with the Upper Thames Vale (NCA 109) to the north. The Midvale Ridge in this area is described as a low, irregular Corallian Limestone escarpment rising up from the upper Thames Valley to the north and with a very gentle dip slope into the Vale of White Horse to the south. The town sits in a slight dip in the limestone escarpment that runs from the southwest to northeast splitting the Thames Valley, to the west, from the Vale of the White Horse to the east. Much of the northern part of the parish is level farmland in the Thames basin whilst the undulating land in the southern part of the parish around the town offers attractive scenery and long views across the Vale.

The landscape is made up of woods and arable fields interspersed by numerous, distinctive small villages. Fields are typically defined by a regular pattern of hedgerows and trees that enclose characteristically large and geometrically spaced fields. The centre of Faringdon sits at an elevation of 105 m. From there the ground rises to the northeast to an elevation of 150 m at Folly Hill affording spectacular views across the Thames to the Cotswold ridge in the north, and to the Berkshire Downs with the Uffington White Horse to the South.

The major estates of Faringdon House and Buscot Park account for significant rural land ownership and the National Trust and Faringdon House Estate are major landowners. This has had a notable effect in limiting the potential for the town to expand to the north. However, this lack of development on the northern side of the town has ensured that Faringdon town centre has retained the strong relationship between the historic town, the church and the landscape beyond.

Protecting the town's landscape setting

Faringdon's landscape derives from its setting in a dip at the crest of a ridge. It is, therefore, important that Faringdon does not spill over the surrounding hills, or into the Thames Valley, or the Vale of White Horse. At the commencement of the Neighbourhood Plan there was concern that, if unchecked, growth could encompass adjacent villages, particularly Great Coxwell. However, since then proposals for two estates Fernham Fields (approved) and The Steeds (allocated) will mostly bridge the green space between Faringdon and Great Coxwell. Nevertheless, it is essential to protect the landscape setting of the town, particularly the views from highpoints, such as Folly Hill and the top of Folly Tower and Highworth road.

Any new development must take into account Faringdon's historic relationship with its landform and landscape; this can be informed by the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment that is currently underway. It should contribute to improving the quality of the town/ countryside interface as much as possible. As new development occurs in Faringdon consideration needs to be given to the distinct identities of the settlements beyond to avoid any potential for coalescence. Development other than the redevelopment of the Wicklesham Quarry site should particularly not extend to the point where it approaches Great Coxwell and Little Coxwell to the west and residential development would be considered inappropriate to the south of the A420. Section 4.2 emphasises this point and the need to maintain the existing adopted development boundary.

As working patterns and lifestyles have changed through the twentieth century, the intimate links between the town and the landscape beyond have been gradually eroded. However, there are a number of opportunities to reconnect the town with its hinterland, for example:

- Converting surplus older rural buildings to provide attractive business and enterprise space within the countryside as typified by Wicklesham Farm;
- Encouraging sales of high quality local produce to become a major feature of the town centre, both in shops and through the market;
- Reinforcing and extending facilities for walking, cycling and other sports in the countryside.

These opportunities, which have all been included in sections above, should be regarded as important steps for the future of the parish.

Objectives

The Neighbourhood Plan proposes the following aspirations for the wider landscape in the parish:

- The important landscape setting of Faringdon should be protected
- A stronger connection between the surrounding countryside and Faringdon town should be encouraged.
- Pedestrian and cycle access into the wider countryside and to the Thames from the town should be enhanced.
- The sale and prominence of local produce in the town centre should be improved.

Right: View of Folly Tower





²⁴<http://www.historytoday.com/stephen-porter/property-destruction-english-civil-wars> 'At Faringdon virtually the entire town was destroyed by the defenders of Faringdon House in 1646; 236 families were made homeless and the losses were valued at almost £57,000.'

"A welcoming place for visitors, with a wealth of gems to be discovered"

4.13 TOURISM

Context

Tourism is important to the Faringdon economy. The town has been welcoming visitors for centuries since its days as an important coaching stop on the routes between Oxford, Bristol, Marlborough, Gloucester and London. Faringdon makes a perfect holiday base being ideally placed for exploring Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Berkshire, only a half hour drive from Oxford and on the threshold of the Cotswolds. There are 14 accommodation providers in the Faringdon area and a range of shops, tea-rooms, restaurants, cafés and bars.

Faringdon has had an eventful history of civil wars from the 12C conflict between Stephen and Matilda, through the Wars of the Roses, to the Civil War in the 17C when Faringdon was a Royalist stronghold protecting Oxford; it remained undefeated, but paid heavily²⁴, as can still be seen today by the truncated tower on the 13C All Saints' Church. The Market Hall in the town centre (now the Old Town Hall) was built in the late 17C by public subscription.

The wider parish and neighbouring villages house a wealth of tourist assets. These include:

- Folly Hill with its woodland and 1935 Folly Tower, the last major folly built in England;
- The artistic, musical and surrealist legacy of Lord Berners and Faringdon House;
- The River Thames with its oldest bridge at Radcot and the Thames Path;

- Uffington Castle, the White Horse, the Ridgeway and Wayland's Smithy;
- Nearby National Trust and other heritage properties including Buscot House and gardens (NT), William Morris's Kelmscott Manor (Society of Antiquities) and the Great Coxwell Tithe Barn (NT);

all of which form an impressive draw for visitors.

The Community and Tourist Information Centre (CTIC) is funded by the Town Council to support tourism and to promote the town and the surrounding area. The CTIC is open six days a week and has a wealth of information for visitors and local residents including help in finding accommodation.

However, whilst Faringdon and the wider parish have much to interest the visitor, the tourism economy is currently small in scale. There is great potential to boost the number of people visiting the town and local area through enhanced facilities and better promotion.

Objectives

The following statements have been drawn from local input to date and define the aspirations for tourism in the parish:

- The parish's infrastructure to support visitors must be improved.
- The historic character of the town must be conserved and enhanced to give the very best impression to attract visitors.
- Existing assets such as the Folly Tower, Sudbury House Hotel and Faringdon House should be promoted.
- A co-ordinated programme of promotion will be initiated as part of the Action Plan.
- Access to the River Thames should be enhanced and links between Faringdon and the river promoted.

Policies

Museum / Visitor Centre

Policy 4.13A: Museum or Visitor Centre

Proposals to develop a Museum or visitor centre to promote tourism will be supported.

River frontage

Policy 4.13B: River Frontage

Tourism activities that promote the section of the River Thames within the parish as an attraction will be encouraged. Appropriate activities could include a cafe, moorings and other activities designed to promote tourism, complement the natural environment and support an active community.

Any riparian development would not occur near the Grafton Lock SSSI.

Within the parish of Great Faringdon we have a river frontage (Policy 4.13B refers) and lock at Radcot. This has the potential for development as a micro hydroelectricity scheme. This would be of low impact to the surroundings and environment and have the potential to supply 60kW of electrical power, subject to Environment Agency permits. A proposal is being prepared to develop this scheme as a community project.

Policy 4.13C: Alternative Energy Schemes

A micro hydroelectricity scheme at Radcot on the River Thames will be supported as will other alternative energy schemes.

Original version by Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners 85 Southwark Street London SE1 0HX Tel: 020 7921 0109 Fax; 020 7921 0101 Web; am-up.com

Revised by Bluestone Planning, Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Faringdon Town Council. Layout by DPDS consulting with additional photographs by Al Cane photography.

Right: View of Folly Park Lake







