

FARINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

FARINGDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

EVIDENCE BASE REVIEW

**Original Draft by Allies and Morrison Urban
Practitioners March 2013**

**Revised by
Dr M L H Wise for Faringdon Town Council
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FARINGDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Faringdon Town Council Evidence Base Review

Original draft by Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners March 2013
Revised by Dr M L H Wise for Faringdon Town Council 10th October 2013;
updated 23rd February 2015

INTRODUCTION

This document provides the evidence base for the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan. It identifies the key issues that have informed the preparation of the draft document and includes a review of hard data evidence, surveys and studies, local information and input, as well as a summary of the information gathered through local consultation.

EVIDENCE BASE REVIEW

The first part of the report comprises the baseline report, which is a review of the evidence-based information relevant to the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan. This has been structured under four core headings: economy, society, transport and physical environment as follows:

Economy

- Town centre vitality
- Retail activity
- Employment and business activity
- Tourism

Society

- Population trends
- Social distribution
- Housing provision and accommodation type
- Employment trends
- Deprivation / wealth
- Community facility provision: Education
- Community facility provision: Health
- Community facility provision: Elderly and disabled care
- Community facility provision: Leisure and culture
- Community facility provision: Family and youth provision

Transport

- Travel patterns
- Public transport provision
- Walking and cycling
- Highways
- Car ownership
- Parking provision
- Road safety

Physical environment

Built environment

- Local character
- Conservation and listed buildings
- Town structure

Natural environment

- Landscape value
- Habitat protection
- Access to the countryside and nature
- Parks and open spaces
- Climate change implications

Evidence sources

Under each of the themes outlined above, the evidence to support them has been explored. The sources of information are as follows:

- 2011 Census
- ONS data
- County /sub-regional level studies / strategies
- District level studies / strategies
- Faringdon specific studies / strategies
- Other relevant studies / information sources
- Local expertise and input
- Additional analysis by AMUP team and Dr M L H Wise

This document has been prepared through substantial collaboration with local people. In light of this, as a baseline report for a Neighbourhood Plan it is somewhat different from a standard planning policy evidence base document. Sections of this report have been written directly by local stakeholders and groups. Rather than homogenise this language we have allowed the various voices to be reflected. The local experience of Faringdon comes through strongly and enriches the analysis of the formal data.

Key issues and implications

Each chapter then considers the key issues and implications for the Neighbourhood Plan and identifies where issues are priorities and what the direction of travel for the strategy in the plan should be.

Information gaps

An objective assessment of the evidence available was undertaken to highlight if there were any gaps in information, or whether any information was considered to be out of date or insufficient.

Direction of travel

Each section concludes with a summary of the implications for the Neighbourhood Plan.

FARINGDON HEALTHCHECK

This final section of the Evidence Base Review refers to the work undertaken by the townspeople in 2002 and 2008 in partnership with Vale of White Horse District Council, Faringdon Town Council and The Countryside Agency in undertaking a Market Town Healthcheck. The aim was to address various issues of concern, many relevant to the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan, which can be seen as its natural successor.

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

The second part of this report comprises a summary of the commentary and input gained through a series of consultation workshops and events. This input has been invaluable in guiding the interpretation of the baseline information, and in particular how issues have been prioritised and solutions considered.

PART 1: EVIDENCE BASE REVIEW

ECONOMY

This chapter explores the evidence and emerging issues related to Faringdon's local economy. It explores both the wider sub-regional economic activity and the day-to-day economic activities that dominate in Faringdon itself.

This chapter covers the following themes:

- Town centre vitality
- Retail activity
- Employment and business activity
- Tourism

The following sources of information have been used to build up a picture of economic character and emerging issues under these themes:

County / sub-regional level studies / strategies	Economic Development Strategy Oxfordshire 2006-2016 (Oxfordshire Economic Partnership)
District level studies / strategies	Vale of White Horse Employment Land review (2008 and 2013) Vale of White Horse Retail Study (2008 and 2010 and 2013 updates)
Faringdon specific studies / strategies	Economic Development Action Plan for Faringdon 2011-12 Faringdon Healthcheck (economy section)
Other relevant studies / information sources	Office for National Statistics; Faringdon Tourist Information Office
Local expertise and input	Retail sub group submission (July 2012) Employment sub-group submission (July 2012) Employment land report and maps (July 2012) Our Future Our Faringdon Employment Review (July 2012) Faringdon jobs requirement analysis submission (July 2012) Tourism report (July 2012)
Additional analysis by AMUP team	Faringdon Property Market overview (July 2012) Faringdon Benchmarking analysis (July 2012)

Context

Faringdon is located 12 miles from Swindon and 19 miles from Oxford. It is, therefore, close to the education, science and technology strengths of the Oxford sub-region, whilst also having a strong economic relationship with Swindon, where many Faringdon residents work and shop.

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 economic character or connection upon which Faringdon operates. It has a selection of local employers, but no one dominant sector. The town centre performs its role as a service centre for residents in the parish and beyond, but it could do this much better. With the growth of car use, fewer and fewer local people use Faringdon as their primary service centre¹, and with more and more using out of town supermarkets and centres further afield, such as Swindon, Oxford, Wantage and, increasingly, Witney since the redevelopment of its shopping area.

¹ Updated Assessment of Convenience Goods Capacity in Faringdon and Abingdon, for Vale of White Horse District Council, March 2010, Savills Table 3.4

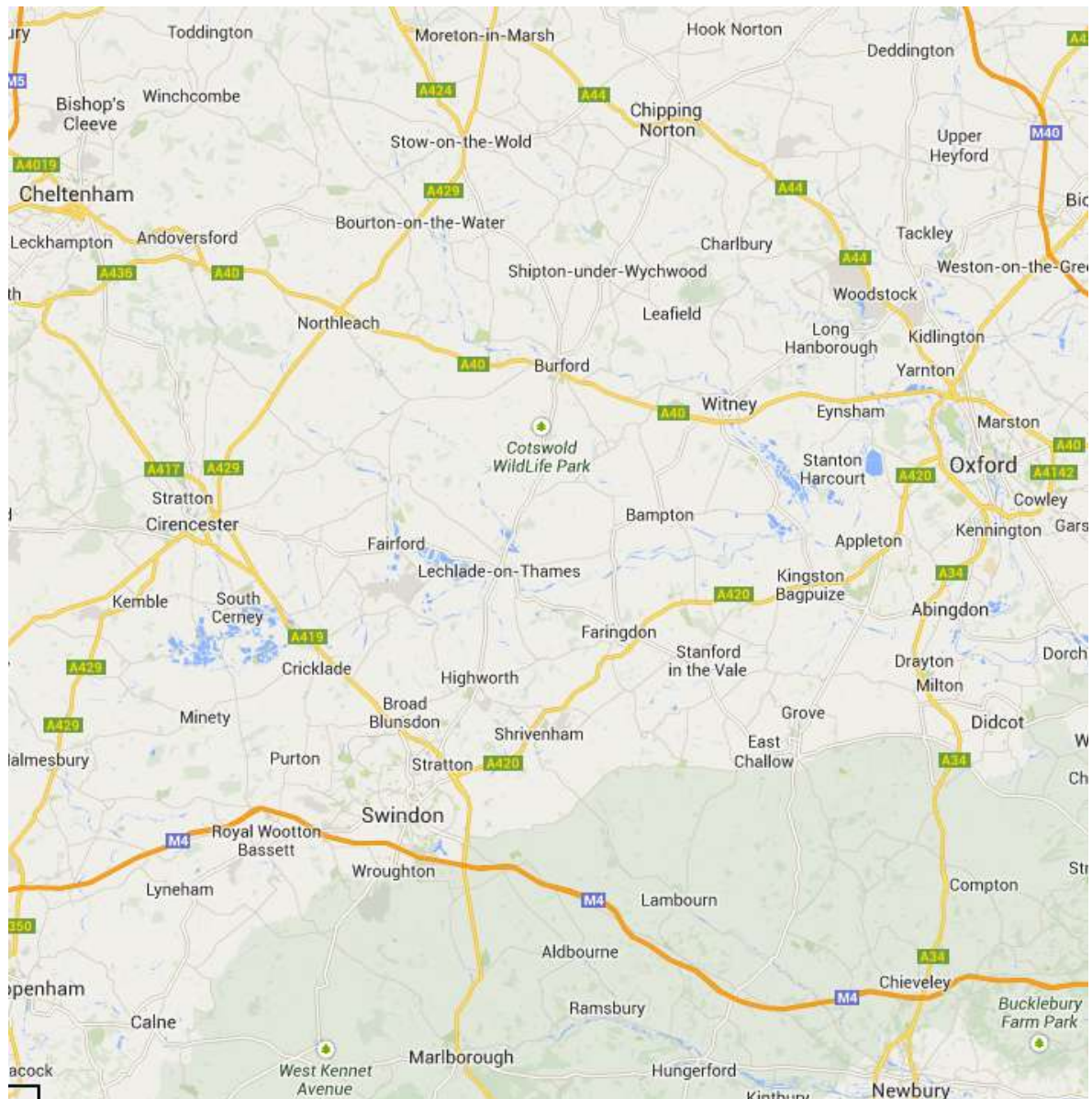


Fig. 1: Faringdon location (courtesy Google maps)

Key issues and implications

Town centre vitality

PPS5 defines the following indicators as measures of town centre vitality: accessibility, customer views, diversity of uses, environmental quality, pedestrian flow, retailer profile, retailers' views, shop rents, vacancy rates. These headings have been used as a basis to assess Faringdon town centre's vitality.

Accessibility:

Faringdon's location has made it a strategic crossroads and the town has had a long history² as a service centre and stopping point, particularly in the days of the stagecoach. The local road network provides good access into the town from all directions. The introduction of the A420 by-pass to the south of the town in 1979 significantly reduced the amount of through traffic particularly the frequent transit of lorries between British Leyland's plants in Swindon and Oxford. Although the by-pass was much needed it resulted in the loss of passing trade.

There is no longer a railway station in Faringdon (the branch line to Uffington closed in 1951), but on weekdays there is a half-hourly bus service (daytime) between Oxford and Swindon, via Faringdon town centre. This affords access to the main line railway and long distance coach stations from which there are excellent onward links to London and major cities, and to Heathrow and Gatwick airports. Access from surrounding villages is primarily by car, unless served by local/community bus services. Paradoxically, Faringdon town centre is not centrally located so is not as easily accessible to residents living in the southern part of town.

Customer views:

Local residents were surveyed in 2008 as part of the district retail study³. Of those living in the district's shopping catchments, 68.9% stated that they did not visit Faringdon for shopping and leisure and a further 14.5% said that they liked nothing or very little about Faringdon. Of those that did visit Faringdon, the main factors people liked were its attractive environment (14%), convenience/being easy to get to (14%), and its historical environment (4%). Residents were also asked what factors they disliked about the town centre: the most frequent response was that Faringdon was inconvenient to get to (38%); however, this is largely explained by the extent of the survey, which covered the whole district. The most significant comment about Faringdon was its poor range of shops (31%).

Diversity of uses:

The town centre has a range of retailers and service providers, but beyond retail uses (including services such as a bank and hairdressers) it is primarily residential use that occupies the rest of the built form. There are a number of commercial/small office businesses, and larger industrial activities outside the centre on Park Road. In addition to these businesses, there are also some community facilities including the library, churches and Corn Exchange. The balance of uses feels appropriate, but perhaps could be more diverse to support greater activity in the town centre during the day.

Environmental quality:

The town centre is set within a wider conservation area that is characterised by attractive historic buildings and public spaces. The market square is particularly attractive. The Faringdon Environmental Trust invested money in the public realm of the town, adding planters and street furniture to enhance the overall quality of the environment. Some areas of pavement and public realm are looking tired and the quality of shop fronts could be improved to enhance the environmental quality. Recent improvements to planters and other accessible sites have been made by the Faringdon Free Food Movement⁴

² <http://www.faringdon.org/faringdon-through-history.html>

³ Vale of White Horse Retail Study, March 2008, Savills, paragraphs 4.67-4.72

⁴ <http://www.faringdonfreefood.org>

Pedestrian flow:

Pedestrian footfall in the town centre has been declining up to 2012, Table 1, and is considerably lower than in other, albeit larger, market towns in the district⁵. Pedestrian counts undertaken over the past four years illustrate the declining pattern with the once buoyant Saturday trade now comparable to that of an average weekday. Greatest footfall is found next to Budgens, on Marlborough Street, with figures tailing off as one moves east through the Market Square and up London Street. However, the footfall survey undertaken in October 2013 showed that footfall had more than doubled from 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 2013⁶. This may be partly explained by the provision 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.

	Budgens, Marlborough Street	Market Square	London Road
Saturday average (per hour)			
2012	264	184	164
2011	458	276	190
2010	540	320	252
2009	519	255	178
Weekday average (per hour)			
2012	283	147	63
2011	258	259	79
2010	315	296	177
2009	382	368	153

Table 1 Pedestrian footfall data, Faringdon; ref. 5

Retailer profile:

The local retail market is dominated by independent and local traders. The national multiples are limited to Boots, Martin McColl, Budgens, Tesco, Costa and one high street bank, Lloyds (Barclays closed in 2013). While the dominance of independent retailers creates a unique character for the town, this can also have the more negative effect of deterring greater numbers of shoppers to the centre of town. Retailers in Faringdon include a baker, butcher, chemists, cheesemonger, delicatessens, bridal shops, key-cutting and trophy shop, bargain shop, dry cleaners, cd/dvd/games exchange, pet shop, sweet shop, motor parts shop, gift shops, estate agents, beauty salons, hairdressers, fast food outlets, newsagents, food shops, restaurants, coffee shops, boutique fashion retailers, jewellers, piano shop and charity shops. While there is a broad mix of retailers the opportunity for comparison shopping is limited. Shop units are typically small in size and can, therefore, carry only a limited selection of goods.

Retailers' views:

A group of about ten retailers was consulted for the FNP. The general view is that retailing has become increasingly challenging in the town and that dropping footfall is a particular issue, despite the increase in the town's overall population. The retailer group has organised a number of activities to help boost retailing in the town including a winter festival (Festive Faringdon) and a summer music/arts festival (FollyFest).

Shop rents:

The prime retail pitch in Faringdon is situated on Market Place. Local agents suggest that Zone A rents are in the region of £215 - £237 per m² (£20 - £22 per sq ft). These rental levels are relatively low when compared to other comparable market towns in the region

⁵ British Retail Consortium/Springboard Footfall and Vacancies Monitor
http://www.brc.org.uk/brc_footfall_and_vacancies_monitor.asp

⁶ <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/news/2014/2014-02/increased-footfall-provides-boost-vale-high-streets>

such as Witney, Wantage, and Carterton where Zone A rents are understood to be up to twice the value achievable in Faringdon. In practice, the Zone A rent is of limited relevance in Faringdon. As a general guide, the typical retailer in Faringdon can afford to pay a rent equivalent to £100 - £125 per week. This is irrespective of the size of the shop unit. This is dictated by the level of trade a retailer in the town is likely to achieve based on current shopper numbers.

Vacancy rates:

Faringdon has low vacancy rates; over the last five years the number of vacant units has varied between four and one with usually rapid re-occupation. There were 95 retail units in Faringdon in October 2001; therefore, to have consistently below 5% overall vacancy is very good. In both Wantage and Abingdon vacancy is around 10%. Generally vacant units have been outside the core of the town centre, and persistently vacant units have changed use to housing.

This review illustrates that Faringdon has all the essential prerequisites to be a successful and vibrant market town; crucially, it has a good catchment and an attractive town centre. However, the poor range of shops is threatening town centre vitality, with mainly decreasing footfall trends suggesting that significant investment is needed to reinvigorate the town, particularly as the population, and hence potential customer base, is growing.

Retail activity

There are a total of 95 retail units in Faringdon town centre (October 2012). The main retail area within Faringdon is clustered around the Market Place at the junctions of Church Street, London Street and Marlborough Street. Retail uses extend along London Street to the east of Market Place, south west along Marlborough Street and up Coxwell Street. There are also shops and hairdressers on Gravel Walk/Lechlade Road and Station Road. Tesco is on Park Road where there are other outlets including bathroom and kitchen retailers, builders merchants and an upholsterers. There is scope to extend the retail offering along Marlborough Street towards Tesco on Park Road to link it better to the town centre.

Interestingly, it is thought that town centres need to have about 100 shops to offer a viable proposition⁷, and, therefore, Faringdon is positioned right at this threshold, albeit with a predominance of small units.

As would be expected, the current economic climate has had a detrimental impact on the local property market. This has affected the number of potential businesses looking to rent premises and also the level of rent that is affordable. Discussions with letting agents confirmed that the average lease length is now in the region of three to five years. Typically, a five year lease may also include the provision to break at year three and also include a rent review at year three if the break is not operated. Incentives such as rent-free periods are negotiated on a tenant by tenant basis but will likely extend to six months for retail premises where the initial lease term is for a period up to five years.

Tesco opened a 1,400 m² (15,000 ft²) food store on Park Road in November 2013. Although located outside the defined town centre, it is located in the geographical centre of Faringdon on the 66 bus route, adjacent to existing and future housing developments in the town. The store has 153 (137+16 disabled/family) car parking spaces.

This was a controversial development. The Vale of White Horse refused Tesco planning permission to build on Park Road, preferring an alternative site on land owned by Faringdon House Estate, adjacent to Gloucester Street Car Park. The Town Council did not object to a store on the Park Road site, but did object to the alternative site on grounds of access, risk to school children accessing the adjacent junior school, the impact of traffic on the town centre and its location in the conservation area. Tesco was granted planning permission at

⁷ Medium- Sized and Smaller Towns – Raising The Game, BCSC, 2009;
<http://www.bcsc.org.uk/media/downloads/09SmallITownsReport.pdf>

appeal in 2011. The Inspector ruled that the alternative site was not deemed to be a suitable sequential site for a supermarket as it comprised a purposely planted woodland containing exotic trees⁸.

Work by Wrigley et al has suggested that out-of-centre supermarkets are not necessarily detrimental to a town centre⁹. This 'before/after' study conducted in eight centres between 2007-09 took evidence from over 8000 consumers and 1000 traders and found that:

1. Edge of town centre supermarkets encouraged significantly fewer local residents to leave those towns for their main food shopping.
2. The new supermarkets were not just used for 'one-stop' shopping. Via linked trips, existing town centres experienced increased footfall and urban 'buzz', helping to maintain and enhance their vitality and viability.
3. Amongst local residents the new supermarkets encouraged a significant decrease in car usage and increase in walking for main food shopping trips.
4. A year after the opening of the new supermarkets two-thirds of consumers believed the new stores were beneficial to themselves, local residents and the town centre. Only 8% believed otherwise.
5. Feedback from traders was consistently positive about the impact of the new supermarkets on local residents and the town centre. Contrary to popular opinion, traders also took a generally positive or neutral view on the impact on their own businesses.
6. A detailed study of changes in retail composition of the eight centres provided little support for widely held views linking supermarket development to the decimation of existing centres and their retail diversity.

The important conclusion from this study is the need for good links between the Tesco site and the town centre to encourage shoppers using the Tesco car park to visit town centre shops.

The annual retail survey undertaken by Vale of White Horse District Council¹⁰ provides a basis upon which to assess the relative stability of retail businesses in the town. Over the last five years the occupiers of each of the retail units have been logged. The change in units allows some conclusions to be made on business start-up success and failure. Between 2008 and 2012, eight retail businesses either failed or moved out of Faringdon. In the same period, 12 new retail businesses started up in the town centre, of which 11 are still operating.

Typically, shops do not remain vacant for long unless there are external factors such as administration, as happened with the former Thresher's store on London Street; this is now a food retailer. The vacancy caused by the closure of Blockbuster's was quickly filled by a games/dvc/cd exchange shop and other vacancies have only been of short duration.

The key issues identified by local stakeholders and independent surveys^{1, 2, 11} are:

- The retail offer in Faringdon is relatively limited and at the current time most residents will make journeys into Swindon and Oxford for comparison shopping trips and other surrounding towns such as Wantage, Highworth and Witney where there are larger supermarkets.

⁸ Appeal Ref: APP/V/3120/A/10/2143419; 19-25 Park Road, Faringdon, SN7 7BP; <http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk>.

⁹ N. Wrigley, D. Lambiri & K. Cudworth 'Revisiting the Impact of Large Food stores on Market Towns and District Centres' Geography Dept., University of Southampton, December 2010; http://www.ruben.org.uk/Current_&_recently_completed_projects/Large_Foodstores_Exec_summary.pdf

¹⁰ Vale of White Horse Retail Vacancy Survey, 2012, Savills

¹¹ Retail and Town Centre Study, Vale of White Horse, Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, March 2013

- While Faringdon town centre presents a quirky and independent offer, there is a lack of opportunity for comparison and everyday shopping. There are a number of cafes and coffee shops and lifestyle businesses, although the numbers of shoppers and visitors to the town centre will limit the appeal to many retailers seeking to open new outlets within the town.
- Faringdon town centre is considered too small to meet the needs of the local population.
- A growing town would provide more critical mass to support better shops and facilities.
- Food shopping is a significant requirement and an important current gap.
- There was concern and divided opinion around the approval of the Park Road site for the Tesco supermarket concerning its likely impact on the town centre.

Retail capacity studies^{10, 11} have been undertaken for the district and identified the existing convenience and comparison goods floor space as set out in Table 2a and the additional floor space requirements to 2029 as set out in Table 2b.

Location	Existing retail floorspace
District-wide	15,809 m ² convenience goods floor space
District-wide	46,339 m ² comparison goods floor space
Faringdon	1,174 m ² convenience goods floor space
Faringdon	1,1729 m ² comparison goods floor space

Table 2a. Existing floorspace ref. 11. Table 2.2

The figures in Table 2b reflect the most recent district-wide retail study prepared by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners in March 2013. This study concludes there to be limited residual capacity for further comparison or convenience goods floor space in Faringdon up to 2029.

Time period	Location	Additional capacity requirement
2012-2029	District-wide	7,603 m ² A1 convenience goods floor space
2012-2029	District-wide	13,781 m ² A1 comparison goods floor space
2012-2029	District-wide	4,276 m ² A2-A5
2012-2029	Faringdon	520 m ² A1 convenience goods floor space
2012-2029	Faringdon	252 m ² A1 comparison goods floor space
2012-2029	Faringdon	154 m ² A2-A5

Table 2b. Retail capacity requirement ref. 11, Table 4.1

The 2012 average comparison sales density (ref. 11, Table 3.2) in Faringdon was £2,702 per m² cf. £3,498 per m² for the district, reflecting the dominance of independent traders in Faringdon. The conclusion from this was that Faringdon retailers appear to be struggling and future growth would be required to secure their viability (ref. 11, paragraph 3.46).

The Savills 2008 retail study³ suggested there was a limited convenience goods floor space capacity and that a new food store would only become feasible in the longer term. However, these figures were revisited in 2010¹ to inform the Tesco application. From this review it was concluded that the case for a new convenience store located on either the Gloucester Road or Park Road site could be justified by 2015. The assessment suggested that a new store and an enlarged Budgens food store could co-exist but that the final decision would be made by the retailers themselves. The review concluded that preference should be given to the Faringdon House Estate/Gloucester Street Car Park site for a new food store as an edge of centre site, over the Park Road site which is out of centre. However, the former was rejected as a sequential site by the Inspector at the Tesco Planning Appeal⁶. Nevertheless, in late

2013 another food store, Kwiksave, opened in the old Threshers shop on London Street to provide competition for Budgens and Tesco.

The retail sub-group has provided detailed thoughts on the retail offer and economy in Faringdon and this is included in full in Appendix 1. A summary of the key issues raised by the sub-group is set out below:

- **Population:** The town is currently too small to attract larger retailers (so any expanding housing provision is fully supported by the group). This is confirmed by the study in ref. 11.
- **Unit size:** The stock of historic buildings means that most of the current shops are too small and this is a further deterrent to retailers coming to the town. It also prevents successful shop owners from expanding.
- **Location:** The town centre is not the centre of town; almost all of the housing is to the east and south.
- **Footfall** is a big concern to current retailers. Any proposals should be sensitive to attracting or keeping people near the town centre (e.g. moving schools away from the town centre is likely to reduce town centre footfall).
- **Retail offer:** The range of shops is considered to be an issue in attracting greater footfall; however, this should not undermine the fact the town has an eclectic offering of 'destination shops' including a nationally known piano retailer and two wedding dress shops. This needs to be better recognised and promoted. Ref. 11 recommends further growth to underpin the existing retail offer and notes the number of high quality independent shops.

The Retail Sub-Group suggests the following requirements and objectives to steer retail policy in the Neighbourhood Plan:

- A mix of **new, larger shops** alongside the existing offering ("which we are passionate to preserve and sustain"), but also catering for **destination shops** and possibly new, smaller units for start-ups. The preference would be for **niche operators** rather than multiples.
- To protect and promote the **town centre**.
- A **food outlet** as close to the town centre as possible. (Kwiksave has since opened on London Street)
- More retail space with **bigger shops**.
- Scope to establish a **trade counter cluster** around the Tesco site.

Local stakeholders confirmed many of the points made by the sub-group, emphasising the need to increase the range of shops, support better footfall and increase the vitality of the town centre. However, a key area of debate among local stakeholders is around how a food store should be accommodated in the town. Many of the residents were eager to see the Tesco proposal delivered given the length of time the subject had been debated. Others strongly opposed the Tesco development on the basis that it would not support the town centre given its location, some distance along Park Road. Many were keener on the Waitrose proposal for the Faringdon House Estate site off Gloucester Street, suggesting this edge-of-centre site would have contributed more strongly to the town centre. Other views included the suggestion that online food shopping and delivery might negate the need for a supermarket entirely. It is clear that the food store debate was a major focus for the Neighbourhood Plan and this is detailed in full in the consultation summary in Part 2 of this report.

Employment and business activity

The parish is home to a range of businesses providing opportunities for local employment. The industrial areas along Park Road form a focus for skilled and manual labour

employment within the town itself. Outside the town, locations such as Wicklesham Farm provide office and studio space for a growing number of creative industries. The wider rural parish is home to a significant agricultural industry.

Office accommodation within Faringdon is located in two primary locations within the main town centre, typically located on the upper floors above retail units, and within the business and industrial centres on Park Road.

The main industrial areas in Faringdon are located to the south of Faringdon, and accessed from Park Road. These are the adjacently located: Park Road Business Park, Sawmills Industrial Estate and Pioneer Road Industrial Park. The quality of business units in Faringdon varies but much of the stock dates back to the 1970's and 1980's. The units are relatively small and the eaves' heights appear to be quite low compared to modern standards, which may deter some potential occupiers. Current businesses include shop fitters, vehicle mechanics, storage firms, builder's merchants, skilled trades and other light industrial uses. The Tesco food store on Park Road may have the effect of generating demand for new industrial or business space accommodation in the adjacent premises.

The allocation of employment land in the parish is undertaken by the Vale of White Horse District Council. In 2008, URS undertook an employment land review for the Vale¹² to assess the quantity, quality and viability of the District's employment land supply and forecast the future demand for employment land over the next planning period. It emphasised the importance of the eastern part of the District around Abingdon and Didcot as being the primary cluster of employment activities, with a particular emphasis on science and technology. The review found that *"in the western Vale, office premises are available at several key locations such as the Shrivenham 100 Business Park and Faringdon, with modest expansion evident at the latter. Most premises are designed for office-use owing to the proximity to the Swindon market. Most available accommodation is new and of relatively low-density. It is thought amongst local agents that demand generally outstrips supply in these areas with very little vacancy existing."* The review recommended a slight increase in employment land in Faringdon with an additional 0.18 ha of B1 use at the SEEDA Business Centre, which is no longer extant.

The more prominent business locations of Oxford to the northeast and Swindon to the southwest were viewed as preferential for locations for businesses. Even so, the Swindon office market was itself struggling and with an over-supply of space and more favourable terms to be agreed in Swindon, the demand for office space in smaller market towns such as Faringdon was thought likely to struggle unless it could offer other benefits such as working environment or added value. However, Oxford has problems with traffic congestion and consequent delays (flooding of Botley and Abingdon Roads in 2013 and 2014 being another disincentive), which could make Faringdon a more attractive place in which to do business.

Discussions with local agents then suggested that there was very little demand from business occupiers for office accommodation within Faringdon. Self-contained office suites were attracting very little interest from potential tenants and even serviced offices were struggling to attract occupiers. However, as of January 2014, evidence from a local agent¹³ suggests that the situation has changed, with increasing demand as the economy picks up. (ONS reported 1.9% GDP growth in 2013¹⁴.) As a result, there is now a shortage of office accommodation in sites outside the town centre (i.e. with parking).

URS's 2008 desk-based review was roundly criticised for not contacting the appropriate agents in Faringdon. This prompted Marriotts Chartered Surveyors to commission another report by Kemp & Kemp¹⁵. This report argued that while the URS survey had provided a

¹² Employment Land Review for Vale of White Horse, 2008, URS.

¹³ Communication from Sarah Allen Stevens, Wicklesham Commercial Properties Ltd. 3rd April 2014.

¹⁴ Economic Review, ONS, February 14, 5th February 2014.

¹⁵ Faringdon Business Requirements 2009-2029, February 2009, Kemp & Kemp

general analysis of the whole of the Vale of White Horse district *'it did not provide a specific review and analysis of the spatial requirements of businesses in the Faringdon area between 2009-26'*. 136 businesses were contacted of which 23 replied (17%).

The report found that 65% of full-time and 84% of part-time employees came from the local area with a predicted 48% of full-time staff coming from the local area by 2026. 48% of respondents were seeking to expand and 59% replied that they would require new premises in by 2019, increasing to 75% by 2026 as their existing premises would no longer be suitable for even current or new business. The area of land required for each expansion varied from 50 sq ft (4.6 m²) to 80,000 sq ft (7,400 m²) and 1-2 acres (0.4-0.8 ha) (mainly B8 requirements). Furthermore, 44% of respondents had aspired to expand in Faringdon over the previous three years but had been unable to do so. Reasons given were:

- No available land or buildings
- No appropriate offices for sale
- No suitable premises
- No suitable sites available for their use
- Lack of property to expand into

56% of respondents wished to remain in the town, which, together with those wishing to expand, indicated a need for an increase in suitable land for employment. The majority of responses were from B1/2 uses with some B8.

The Vale of White District Council commissioned a further report from URS published in March 2013¹⁶; however, it is short on local knowledge and contains some errors. The report underlines the main employment areas to be Science Vale UK, Oxford and Swindon. Because the A34/M4 is the *'main artery of commerce and industry in the district'*, the eastern Vale is the key employment area for B1, B2 and B8; whereas the western Vale, being relatively isolated from this communications link, cannot be considered to be a key employment area, despite its closer proximity to the M4 via Swindon. *'Despite this, Faringdon is linked to the Oxford and Abingdon/Didcot market by the A420 which is a good quality road and dual carriageway from Cumnor'*; in fact the A420 has only three stretches of dual carriageway. Since it was de-trunked, lorries of seven tonne axle weight are limited to 40 mph on the 50 mph limit single carriage way stretches. Access to Abingdon is via the A415, a notorious peak hour bottleneck, and Didcot is either accessed via the A415/A34, both congested, or by the narrow A417 (a lorry cannot overtake a bicycle if there is oncoming traffic) or via village rat runs. It assumes that all business is focused on the eastern Vale whereas for Faringdon, there are much better links to Swindon and Oxford.

It states that there is a demand for 'industrial style sheds' in Faringdon citing the former Cameo Glass site (now a bathroom retailer) and the new building occupied by Alser (shopfitters) on Pioneer Road as examples. (Alser own other premises on Pioneer Road and are expanding into adjacent buildings because of demand.) It concludes that the 'lack of industrial supply in Faringdon will hinder demand' with the improving economic climate. Despite this it concludes that only three sites in Faringdon should be recommended for employment land to 2029, Table 3, reiterating the conclusions of URS's 2008 report including sites which have already been built on.

Site	B1 (ha)	B2 (ha)	B8 (ha)
C9f 4&20 Business Park	1.4	1.4	1.4
C9b HCA Business Centre	0.18		
C33 South Park Road		1	2
Total for VoWH to 2029	62.6	57.7	27.7

Table 3: recommendations for employment land in Faringdon; ref. 16

¹⁶ Vale of White Horse Employment Land Review 2013 Update, March 2013, URS

Figure 2 shows maps of the sites under consideration. Of these, the C9f 4&20 Business Park (site 2 in the NP) is already allocated as employment land as is C9b HCA Business Centre (site 6 in the NP and the former SEEDA site from the 2008 survey). The C33 'South Park Road' site is mainly allocated for housing leaving only the original Rogers Concrete site (site 3 in the NP) available for employment; however, half of this site has constraints because of drainage, having been excavated down to the limestone pavement.

- Site C30 (site 4 in the NP), Wicklesham Quarry, proposed for B2/8, is dismissed because it is outside the settlement boundary and would have high remediation costs.

Three other sites, two of which were originally designated as employment land, are rejected because of 'constraints' as in the 2008 report.

- Site C9a (site 1c in the NP), North of Pioneer Road, 0.85 ha,
- Site C9c (part of site 1b in the NP), Strip of Land along Park Road, 0.71 ha,
- Site C9d (not considered in the NP), Land to the South of the Playground, 0.28 ha,

Regarding C9a, this site was designated for B1 use in the VoWH 2011 plan, but the VoWHDC's Core Strategy for the LDF *Appendix 8_tcm4-5204* identified this land as a 'suitable site' for housing because it was 'currently allocated for business use but adjacent to housing and no developer interest'.

The 2013 assessment, Table 6.2 Cluster Assessment, states that for site C9a: Quality of Environment is poor; Facilities & Amenities are good; Road Access is **very good** (despite there being no direct road access to the site; this being effectively blocked off by the Alser building on Pioneer Rd).

The URS conclusion in both the 2008 and 2013 reports states: '*the main problems with this site relate to **poor road access** (from the south) and the proximity to the industrial estate. This can be overcome through creating a southern buffer (vegetation) and orientating the access to the east along Volunteer Way.*'

It seems surprising that proximity to an industrial estate should be grounds for rejection as employment land. The problem of access from Pioneer Way has changed since 2008 because of the construction of the Alser building on the site, which has restricted access from Pioneer Road. However, it may be possible to access it from Old Sawmills Road if a current occupant relocates. Access from Volunteer Way is contingent on the development of site C9b (HCA Business Centre), but these access constraints are equally applicable to its use for housing.

Regarding C9c, both the URS 2008 and 2013 reports state: '*the site has physical constraints, most notably a slope. This would require landscaping and groundworks to improve the site for development potential.*' In fact this site is the track of the old railway and so is remarkably flat suggesting that they did not visit the site. Planning permission¹⁷ was granted for this site for eight office units and 16 flats, originally to ARicab for Kingerley, but the site is now owned by Builders Ede. The intention was that the portion of the site adjacent to the industrial estate would be commercial with the rest adjacent to the Health Centre used for housing. The site is directly accessed from Park Road, but the designated commercial part backs on to Pioneer Road, which could equally provide access to the commercial part.

Regarding C9d, in both the 2008 and 2013 reports the conclusion for this site is exactly the same wording as that for site C9c. However, site C9d really is steeply sloping, suggesting a cut-and-paste error on the site evaluation for C9c that has been perpetuated over the two URS reports. C9d is a wild, overgrown site; nevertheless, a housing estate has been built next to the site so it is capable of being developed if the opportunity and need should arise.

¹⁷ Vale of White Horse Planning application GFA/18495/1 (P05/V1050/O, 2005)

The employment land sub-group has undertaken a thorough analysis of the available and future employment land required to meet local employment objectives¹⁸. The full assessment can be viewed in appendices 2a and 2b to this report, and a summary of the key issues and opportunities raised is provided below:

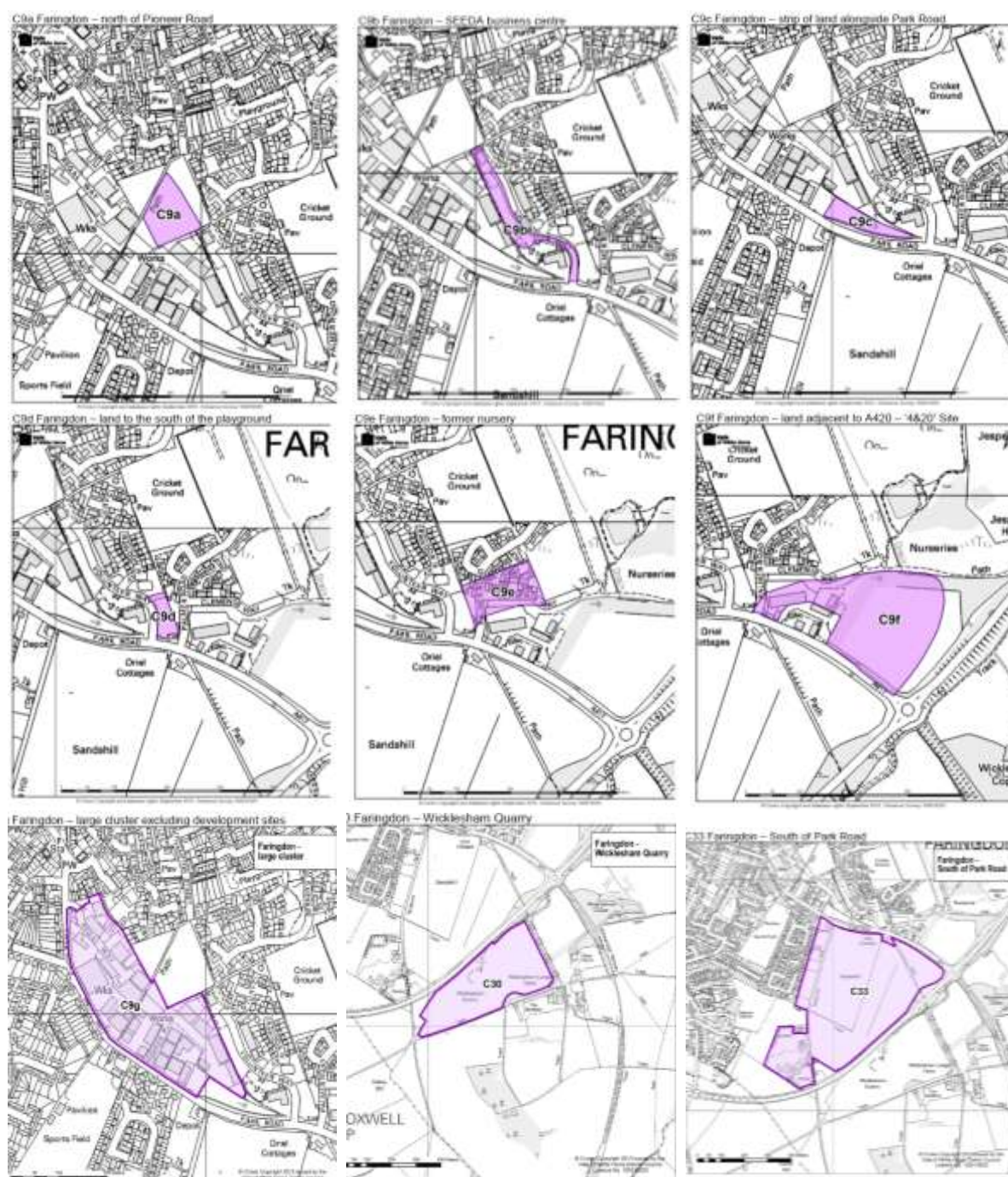


Fig. 2: Faringdon employment sites from ref. 16. C9e is now built on (Folly Park View); C9g is the existing Park Road industrial estate; most of C33 is committed for housing bar the SW corner (Rogers Concrete). C9a does not include the whole of the field, part is possibly reserved as a buffer; Willes Close Triangle is adjacent to the NW.

¹⁸ Appendix 2a Our Future our Faringdon Employment Review, Faringdon Chamber of Commerce, 2013.

The east of the District is promoted as a key growth location for science-based industry (Science Vale UK), however, the Local Plan confirms that this should not be to the detriment of providing local employment opportunities in the west of the District.

- Locations such as Faringdon need to be able to offer a sustainable level of employment that matches their population growth and which allows their economies to expand.
- An assessment of the existing employment allocations in the Faringdon area suggest there could be a net loss of employment land of 6.495 ha due to losses to residential housing at the following sites: 5 Lechlade Road (former Tetronics factory), land at Regal Way by the Tesco site, Pioneer Road (proposed) and Volunteer Way (proposed).
- Despite the scope to increase the B1 employment areas, to the detriment of B2 and B8 employment areas, (primarily along Park Road), there would still be a net loss of employment of over 1,200 jobs, when taking into account the new housing allocations from 2006 to 2026.
- The percentage of the working age population of Faringdon able to work within a set radius of Faringdon ('factor k' in ref. 18) is currently 27%, which suggests the town operates as a dormitory town.
- The VWHDC Local Plan 2011 suggests an employment allocation which would raise this to 38%.
- The aspiration of the employment sub-group is to raise the amount of employment land and economic activity in the local area to values sufficient to support a 'factor k' figure of 44%. This would allow a much higher proportion of residents to work within the locality and significantly reduce the amount of out-commuting.
- The Employment Sub-Group has suggested a series of sites that should be considered for allocation as employment land to support this aspiration. These are detailed in the appendices and include: Wicklesham Quarry, Rogers Concrete, Sands Hill, the Faringdon House site adjacent to Gloucester Street Car Park, Sudbury House and the Willes Close Triangle (See Figure 2).
- The re-allocation of the B1 site at Folly Park View to housing means the loss of 233 potential jobs and puts greater emphasis on the need to allocate new employment land.
- There is a need to campaign against employment land being developed as housing, particularly in regard to the latest proposals from the Government to allow change of use from office to residential as permitted development. There are some existing threats to sites such as Pioneer Road and Volunteer Way, but care will also be needed to safeguard any future allocations.

Travel to work patterns and in particular, out-commuting, are a real issue for Faringdon¹⁹. The scale of out-commuting for work and shopping is outlined in the Transport chapter, but the conclusion is that Faringdon residents travel the farthest to work of any of the major settlements in the Vale.

The rural parts of the Greater Faringdon Parish are a focus for agricultural activities. In 2011, 1.6% of the Great Faringdon population was employed in agriculture, hunting or forestry, compared to the District average of 1.4%²⁰. A significant range of agriculture takes place in the Faringdon hinterland including cattle rearing, sheep farming, dairy and arable farming.

Faringdon has 16 certified organic farms within a four mile radius of the market place²¹.

¹⁹ Analysis of travel patterns of people living in new homes built between 2001 and 2007 in the Vale of White Horse, July 2008

²⁰ 2011 Census, QS606EW - Occupation (Minor Groups)

²¹ <http://www.ecoweek.info/Food - Drink/ECOFARMS/ecofarms.html>

Step Farm (Saunders), a 345 ha mixed farm, was the first large farm to receive a certificate from the Soil Association in 1982²², the previous recipients being experimental plots. Hence, it is the oldest such officially recognised 'organic' farm in the UK.

Local farmers and growers have been exploring the opportunity of using Faringdon as a focus for the sale of local produce. Previous studies have looked into the potential for a vegetable washing plant, and a meat and vegetable storage facility in the town or wider parish for use by local farmers, growers and allotment holders that could then feed into local shops and market stalls. There is a good level of support for such a distribution centre, but no site or funding has been secured to date.

The key issues identified by local stakeholders are:

- A strong desire to see employment provision indexed to the population of Faringdon in order to reduce out-commuting.
- Current employment sites need to be protected and new sites identified.
- The town needs to meet the requirements of businesses thinking about locating in Faringdon.
- More flexible employment models, including home-working, are needed.

Tourism

Tourism is very important to the Faringdon economy. The Town has unique shops as well as a variety of restaurants, coffee shops and pubs and has been welcoming visitors for centuries. The Community and Tourist Information Centre (CTIC) (and related staff costs) are funded by the Town Council and the busy centre is open six days a week during the summer season. Faringdon is a good location for a 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. According to English Heritage, Great Faringdon has 134 listed buildings (three Grade I and two Grade II*) and two ancient monuments²³. A list of these is attached.

A short stroll from the town centre leads to a network of footpaths and circular walks (maps are available from the CTIC). The Thames Path runs along the edge of the parish and other long distance footpaths, including the d'Arcy Dalton way and the Ridgeway, are close by.

Kelmscott Manor (Society of Antiquaries), White Horse Hill, Buscot House, the Great Coxwell Tithe Barn and the villages of Buscot and Coleshill (all National Trust) are easily accessible from Faringdon (there is brown signage sign-posting Buscot House & Gardens from the town centre). There are 14 accommodation providers in the Faringdon area and a range of shops, tea-rooms, restaurants, cafes and bars that rely on visitor spending.

Despite these assets, visitor figures and spending are thought to be low (anecdotally). Enquiries through the CTIC have been relatively consistent at 8,340 in 2011, 8497 in 2012 and 5593 to September 2013.

The tourism sub-group provided extensive views and information on issues concerns and opportunities related to tourism in the parish. These are detailed in the appendices, with the key points summarised below:

- The town needs a collectively-owned vision that local stakeholders can buy into.
This should consider:
 - What assets the town can build on and protect,
 - What the Faringdon of 2029 will look like

²² <http://www.soilassociation.org/visitanorganicfarm/visitanorganicfarm/articleid/1408/step-farm-oxfordshire>

²³ Radcot Bridge, SU 286 995; Wyke Monastic Grange and section of 18th Century turnpike road 780m south of Tudor Farm, SU 289 965; VoWH Local Plan 2011, Appx 3. and <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/#>

- What will be the magnets to attract visitors
- What should the town's identity be?
- A recent Hidden Britain survey²⁴ highlighted some important concerns:
 - When measuring perception of the town prior to a visit, Faringdon only scored 41.6% compared to a market town average of 65.8%
 - The town received an extremely low score of 12/120 on the identity and message for external visitors.
 - However, when Hidden Britain undertook the mystery visitor survey, Faringdon scored much higher in terms of the actual experience (71.85%, compared to an average of 72.9%.
- Consideration should be given to developing the food offer, with an emphasis on local food.
- There should be scope to let vacant shops to producers.
- The shopping experience needs to be improved as this is an important leisure activity for visitors.
- There should be scope to combine art and food through festivals and activities.
- Develop the arts in the town – scope for an arts festival (FollyFest²⁵ started in 2013 replacing the previous summer event) or arts/performing venue.
- Faringdon should learn from other places; e.g. Todmorden²⁶ where the incredible edible green route takes visitors on a walk around local producers.
- Simple steps should be employed to make the town more attractive; e.g. painting signposts black, blackboards for retailers, and the use of pendants rather than more costly bunting.
- Consider the infrastructure needed to support more visitors such as a campsite, coach park and more accommodation.

Local stakeholders echoed the Leisure Sub-Group's views confirming that the following aspects need to be considered:

- There appears to be little tourism activity despite the parish's historic assets.
- There needs to be a collective vision for Faringdon and a collective responsibility to present the town well.
- The town has historic assets and features which need to be presented in a coherent way.
- Opportunities need to be explored for celebrating local food and produce.
- There are opportunities for festivals around food and arts as well as year-round activities.
- Is new visitor infrastructure (such as a coach park) needed?

Priorities / principles / policies

A review of the strategic policy context suggests the following aspects are considered to be important considerations for a Neighbourhood Plan for a town such as Faringdon:

- Market towns are considered vital in the county²⁷ – supporting them as important service centres for rural populations and economies is a priority at the county level.
- Town centre vitality should be given higher priority in the county – economic

²⁴ Faringdon External Marketing Audit Summary, Hidden Britain, July 2012

²⁵ <http://www.follyfest.co.uk/>

²⁶ <http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>

²⁷ <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/economic-growth-centres>

strategies at the county level emphasise the need to support town centres and ensure they are vibrant and viable in the long term.

- Nurturing and growing enterprise is considered a county priority – encouraging new business start-ups and new enterprises will be essential to maintaining Oxfordshire's competitive edge.

Information gaps

In reviewing the economic evidence to support the baseline the following aspects were highlighted as possible information gaps that could not be addressed:

- Retailer views – there are no formal surveys to draw on to analyse retailers views now or over the last decade. Anecdotal evidence has been used which has been put forward by the retailers group and retail sub-group.
- Tourist visits: there are no statistics on the number of visitors / overnight stays within Greater Faringdon parish. The only local figures which could be used were enquiries via the CTIC.

Direction of travel

There is a clear need to improve the retail offer in order to attract additional shoppers to the town, and this comes through as a major economic priority. While independent traders will continue to support the character of the town, there should be efforts to raise the quality and diversity of retailers and potentially introduce a number of national retailers that could act as an anchor and help to increase regular footfall. Currently, there are only five shops from national chains (Budgens, Boot's, Costa, Tesco and Martin's); the rest are independent retailers. Is this an advantage or a disadvantage? Previously, the absence of national chains has been seen as an advantage as it renders Faringdon distinctive.

- A mix of new larger shops with the existing offering (which we are passionate to preserve and sustain), but also catering for destination shops and possibly new smaller units for start-ups. The preference would be for niche operators rather than multiples.
- To protect and promote the town centre.
- A food outlet as close to the town centre as possible.
- More retail space with bigger shops.

With regard to other commercial property land uses, although there was limited demand for traditional office space within the town centre (*see employment and business activity*), there may be potential to provide new light industrial and business space units within the town as the economy improves. There is concern that the opening of the Tesco store will deter new retail from locating to the town or existing shops from expanding, although Costa Coffee has opened subsequently on Marlborough Street.

Stakeholders have suggested the following should be considered through policy development in the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Planning policy to prevent loss of existing retail to housing (Final Local Plan Part 1²⁸, paragraph 6.72 states '*The current Local Plan 2011 includes policies CF1 (protection of existing services and facilities. These policies will continue to be saved, and will be used alongside the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 until such time as they are replaced or updated in the Local Plan 2029 Part 2 or a Neighbourhood Development Plan.*').
- Development of opportunity sites for mixed use/retail, particularly those which would help to support the viability of the existing town centre Two of these were proposed: Willes Close Triangle and the Gloucester Street site; however, the Employment Sub-

²⁸ Vale of White Horse 2013-03-14_FinalLocalPlanPartOneReduced.pdf; <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/new-local-plan-2029>

Group have conceded that the former would be better for housing and there is an on-going debate as to whether to include the latter, as it is outside the development boundary which some wish to maintain.

- Possible development of the Junior School site or the Gloucester Street/Faringdon House for additional retail with housing/office space above and using protected areas to enhance the shopping experience, subject to its meeting appropriate environmental conditions. There were also proposals to widen the access from Gloucester Street. This will not happen as it is contrary to the Faringdon Academy of Schools plans for primary school development.
- Encourage a trade counter cluster on Regal Way next to Tesco with more attractive links towards the town centre, creating a gateway to draw people towards the Market Place.
- The establishment of a “Covered Market” style shopping mall for artisan operators. It is not clear where this could be sited.
- Free parking (beyond the two hour limit in VoWHDC controlled car parks. This is unlikely; however, Tesco currently has an unlimited parking policy.

In addition to improving the context for retailing in the town, there is a need to revisit the allocation of employment land in the parish, with a view to supporting local employment opportunities. This aspect should form an important part of the Neighbourhood Plan (ref. 18).

SOCIETY

This chapter explores the evidence and emerging issues related to Faringdon's local population and social provision and covers the following themes:

- Population trends
- Social distribution
- Housing provision and accommodation type
- Employment trends
- Deprivation / wealth
- Community facility provision: Education
- Community facility provision: Health
- Community facility provision: Elderly and disabled care
- Community facility provision: Leisure and culture
- Community facility provision: Family and youth provision

The following sources of information have been used to build up a picture of social character and emerging issues under these themes:

County / sub-regional level studies / strategies	Oxfordshire 2030 (Sustainable Community Strategy prepared by Oxfordshire Partnership) Oxfordshire Population Forecasts to 2026 Oxfordshire Housing Market Assessment (2007)
District level studies / strategies	Vale of White Horse Housing Needs Assessment (2008) Vale of White Horse Affordable Housing Viability Study (2010 and 2011 update) Vale of White Horse Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Study Vale of White Horse Youth development strategy 2006-2009 Vale Partnership Connecting our Community 2008-2016
Faringdon specific studies / strategies	Faringdon Healthcheck (community section)
Other relevant studies / information sources	Office of National Statistics, Neighbourhood Statistics Oxfordshire Observatory
Local expertise and input	Education Group submission (July 2012) Housing and Health Group submission (July 2012) Leisure and Community Group report (July 2012)
Additional analysis by AMUP team and Dr M L H Wise	Analysis of National Census 2011 data

Context

The town of Faringdon, Figure 3, saw significant growth in the inter-war and post-war periods such that, between 1920 and 1970, the number of houses almost doubled. The 2001 census gave the parish's population as 6,187; making it the fourth largest in the Vale of White Horse after Abingdon, Wantage and Grove.

The population figures from the 2011 census indicate that parish of Great Faringdon had grown to 7,121, an increase of 15.1% over the 2001 census figure²⁹.

Since the 2011 census, new housing developments have extended the built area of the town resulting in an estimated population in 2013 of about 8,000 (13% growth). (Occupancy was calculated by dividing the population in 2011 (7,121) by the number of occupied dwellings (3,013) to give a figure of 2.36 people per dwelling. This could be an underestimate for new dwellings given that Oxfordshire County Council have variously used figures of 2.48³⁰ to 3.15³¹ for new estates according to the housing type; a figure of 2.55³² was used for the

²⁹ Census data sets KS02 (2001) and KS102EW (2011) for the Great Faringdon parish

³⁰ Vale of White Horse Planning Application P13/V1653/O

³¹ Vale of White Horse Planning Application P13/V1102/O

Fernham Fields development for their estimates and this mid-range figure has been used as an upper bound for population estimates.)



Fig. 3: Faringdon town context

Population trends

Figures 4a and b show the age structure of Faringdon's population in 2001 compared with that in 2011. Comparing these figures shows an increase in the 0-4 population by 2011, probably reflecting the influx of young families to the new estates; the relative decline in the key 20-50 economically active group; and the increase in those aged 60 and above. Table 4 shows the pre-school age group to have increased by 0.5% and the post 65s by 1.6% since 2001.

Figure 5, taken from the 2011 census data, compares Faringdon's age distribution with that of the Vale, SE Region and England. It shows that Faringdon's 0-4 population was much higher than that of the district, region or country with corresponding peaks in the young family age groups 25-44.

There was a comparatively lower population in the 45-84 age group, but higher numbers of the very elderly. These data indicate that Faringdon needs higher than average facilities to cater for the young, from pre-school coming through to school age, and the very elderly. Figure 21, reviewed later in the education section, shows that at 2011 census 92% of the population of Faringdon was born in the UK, a much higher proportion than for the Vale, SE and England. Only 5% of the population was born outside the EU.

Age Distribution					
2001	2011	ages	2001	2011	change
434	533	0-4	7.0%	7.5%	0.5%
1,019	1085	5-17	16.5%	15.2%	-1.2%
3,835	4356	18-64	62.0%	61.2%	-0.8%
901	1147	65-90	14.5%	16.1%	1.6%
6,189	7121	Total			

Table 4: Age distributions at the 2001 and 2011 censuses

³² Vale of White Horse Planning Application P13/V0139/O

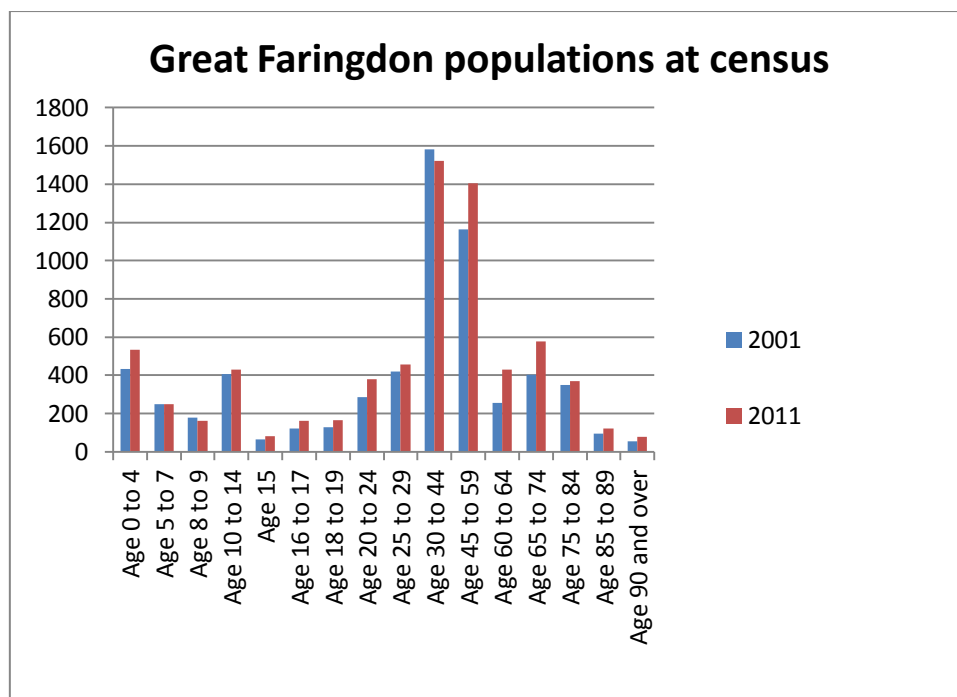


Fig. 4a: Showing the age distribution by number at the 2001 and 2011 censuses

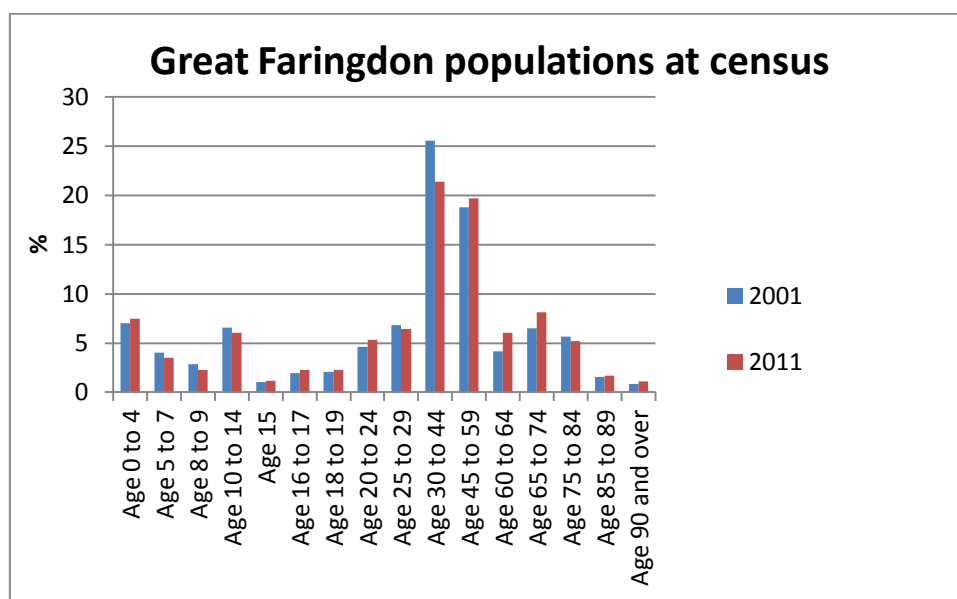


Fig. 4b: Showing the percentage age distribution at the 2001 and 2011 censuses

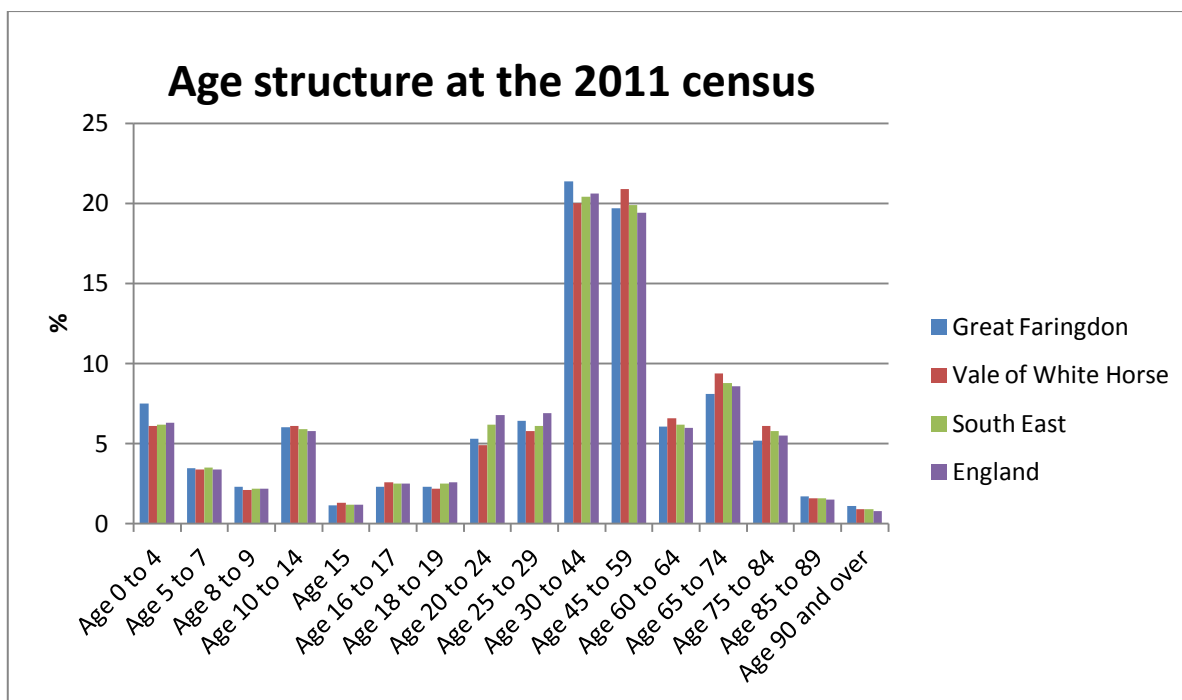


Fig. 5: Comparative age distributions by region at 2011 census (KS102EW)

Social distribution

Figures 6a and b show the population distribution by social grade. Fig 6a shows that Faringdon has far fewer residents in the AB social grade compared to the Vale, but higher than the regional or national figure. Faringdon has fewer C1s but more C2s than elsewhere, more DEs than the Vale and the SE region, but fewer nationally. This reflects, perhaps, the fact that the SE has more professional/managerial residents than the rest of England with the Vale being an extreme example.

Faringdon, however, is not typical of the Vale, possibly because of its distance from the high technology employment sites in the eastern Vale. This may suggest that Faringdon is more like its nearest large neighbour, Swindon. However, Fig 6b shows that urban Swindon (pop. 209,200) is typical of England whilst rural Swindon, i.e. including the villages, is more like the Vale, but Swindon 'rural town and fringes', e.g. Highworth, (6.5 miles away) is a good match for Faringdon as a comparable working market town.

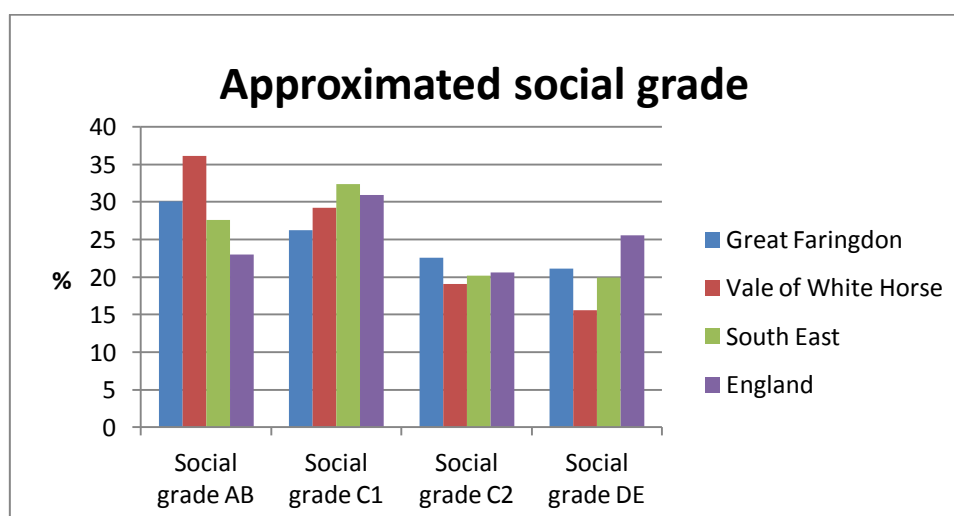


Fig. 6a: Comparative distributions by social grade at 2011 census (QS611EW)

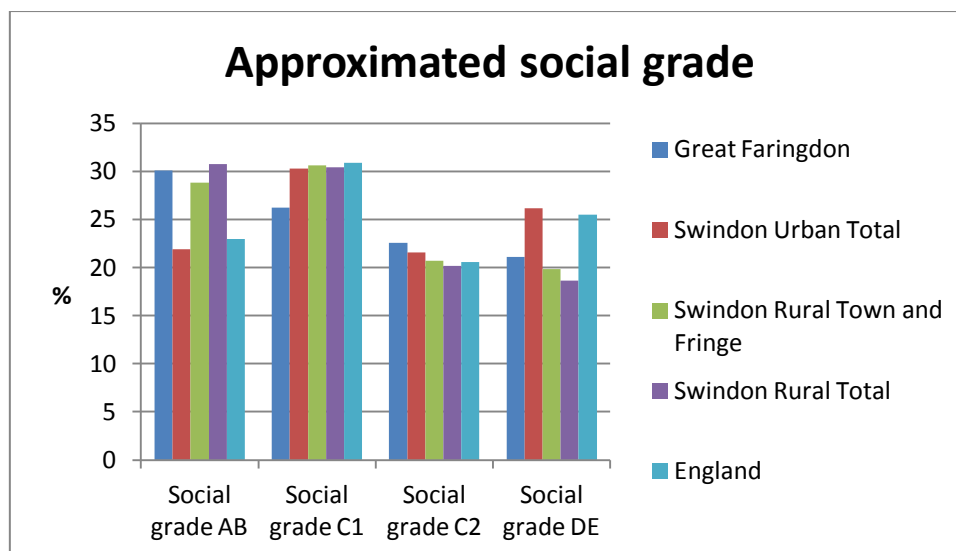


Fig. 6b: Comparative distributions by social grade at 2011 census (QS611EW)

Key

AB: Higher and intermediate managerial/administrative/professional
 C1: Supervisory, clerical, junior managerial/administrative/professional
 C2: Skilled manual workers
 D: Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers
 E: On state benefit, unemployed, lowest grade workers

Housing provision and accommodation type

The 2011 census indicated that there were 3,126 dwellings in the Great Faringdon parish. Subsequent building has increased this figure to over 3,500 with planned development (excluding speculative applications) likely to increase this figure to ~4,220 or possibly ~4600, depending on current planning applications and appeals.

Fig 7 shows that at the 2011 census, of the total dwellings: 80% were houses; comprising 27% detached, 23% semis and 30% terraced: 20% were flats/apartments; comprising 15.6% purpose-built blocks of flats with the rest in either converted houses (3.2%), or commercial properties (1.3%). There were more terraced houses and flats than in the Vale and fewer detached and semis, making Faringdon more typical of the SE region or England than the district.

House Prices

An analysis of house prices undertaken on behalf of the Vale of White Horse in 2008³³ indicated that Faringdon was the cheapest place in the Vale in which to buy or rent comparable properties. For example, in 2008, to buy a two bedroom terraced property in Faringdon (purchase price £140,000) required a single income of £38,000 compared to £46,100 in Abingdon (purchase price £170,000) or £51,600 in the eastern parishes of the Vale of White Horse (purchase price £190,000)³⁴. (This was based on a 95% mortgage availability and a 3.5 times gross income to lending ratio).

The high cost of property is a problem for key workers; e.g., the same survey claimed that the purchase of a single bedroom flat in Faringdon required an income of £31,200, which would have excluded 40.7% of H.M Prison Service staff, 23.5% of Police Officers and 15.4% of Social Workers

Current price (January 2014) for a two bedroom terrace in Faringdon is £190,000-£200,000.

³³ Vale of White Horse Housing Needs Assessment 2008, DCA, www.dcauk.com

³⁴ DCA House Price Survey August 2008

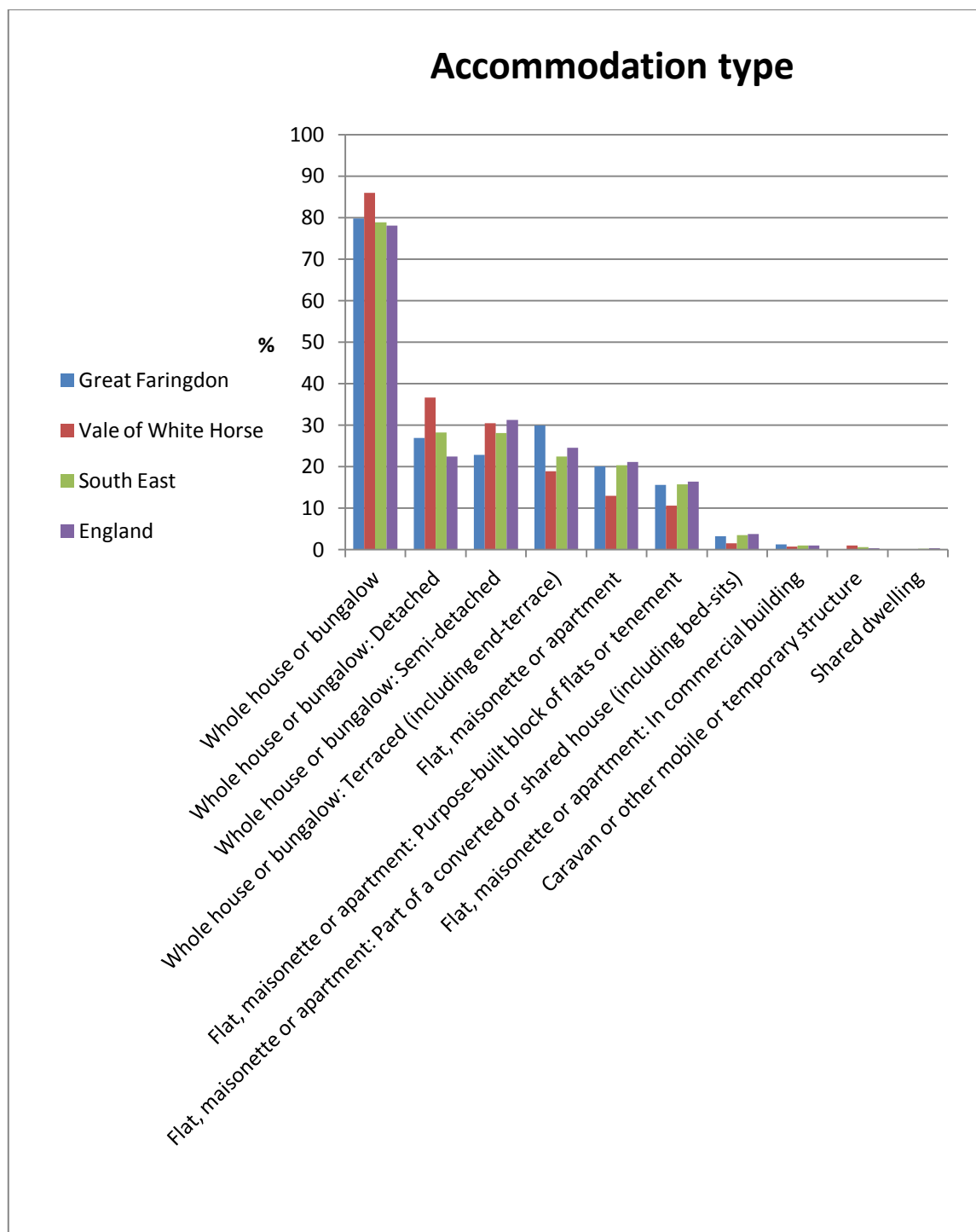


Fig. 7: Comparison of accommodation at 2011 census (QS402EW)

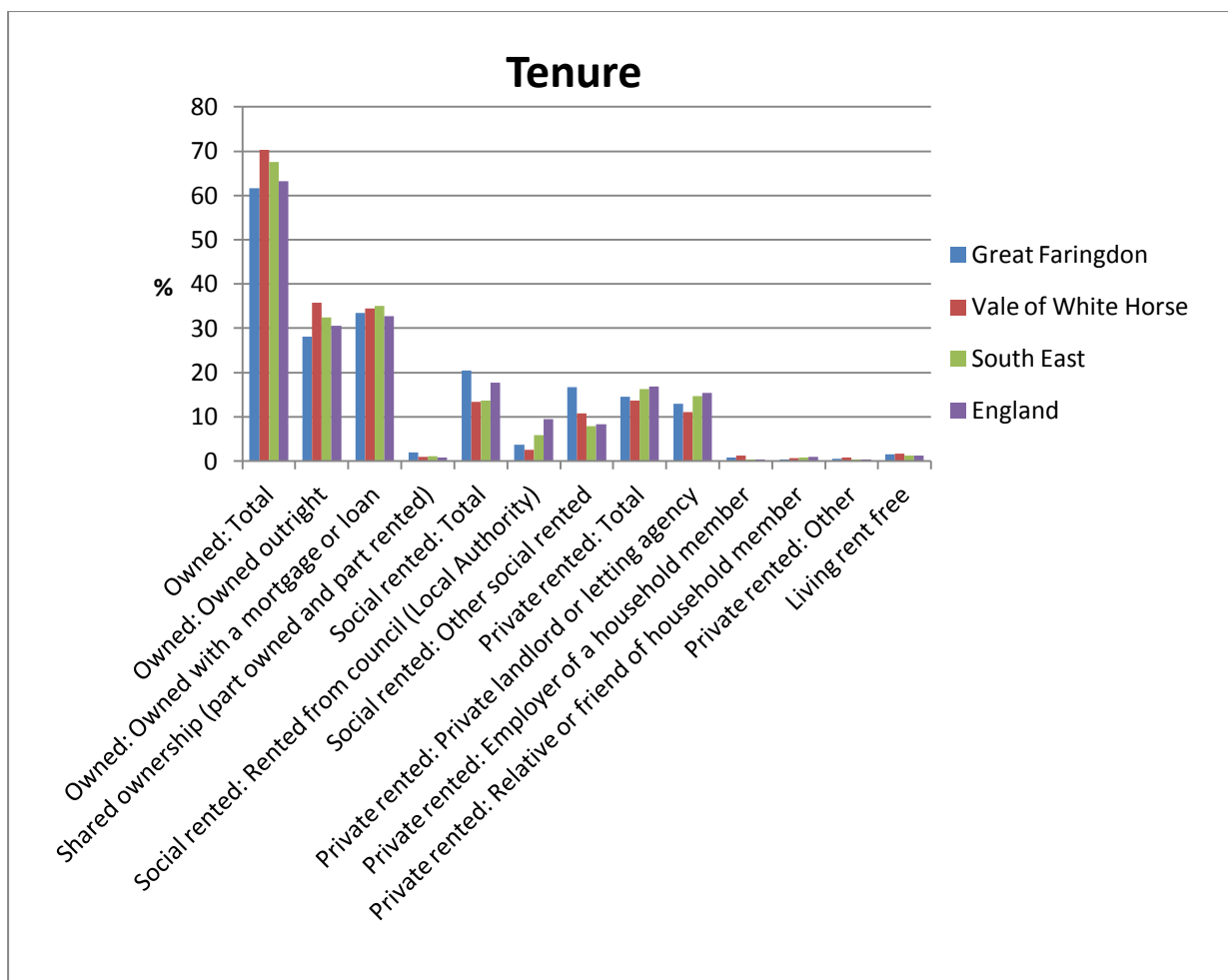


Fig. 8: Comparison of tenure at the 2011 census (QS405EW)

Tenure

The Housing Needs Assessment 2008 highlighted a significant level of outstanding affordable housing need of 497 units across the District. At the time, planned new supply levels were averaging 118 affordable units per year. This clearly represents a need to provide more affordable housing and as such the assessment recommended a 40% figure for affordable housing provision as part of private housing developments. This figure has been implemented for all developments over 15 dwellings.

The 2011 census showed that the tenure pattern of Faringdon's housing stock, Figure 8, is markedly different from that of the rest of the district, region and country. In Faringdon 20.4% of the housing stock is socially rented, compared to only 13.3% at district level. This means Faringdon has 1.5 times the amount of socially rented housing than the Vale average. Indeed, Faringdon has been a focus for the development of social housing stock over the past decades, successfully delivering affordable housing within the town. Correspondingly, dwelling ownership is only 78.7% of that in the Vale.

However, there now appears to be a discrepancy between the location of affordable housing in the District and the preferred choice of location of those on the housing needs register. The 2008 housing needs assessment, ref. 33, found that the majority of those surveyed wished to live in Abingdon or Wantage, with comparatively few people wanting to be located in Faringdon.

A more recent analysis found that there are 2,951 people currently on the District's housing waiting list (end June 2012 VoWHDC data) of whom 32 live in Faringdon (1% of total), and a further 44 (1.5% of total), have expressed an interest in a home in Faringdon.

Occupancy and lifestage

Figures 9a-e refer to the occupancy of households according to age and numbers of dependent children. Figure 9a shows that Faringdon had more young adults in the 16-24 age range than the Vale, but fewer than the region or country. Of these more had dependent children than elsewhere, perhaps reflecting the higher demand for social rented housing for this age group, as shown in Figure 8, as they were unlikely to be house owners.

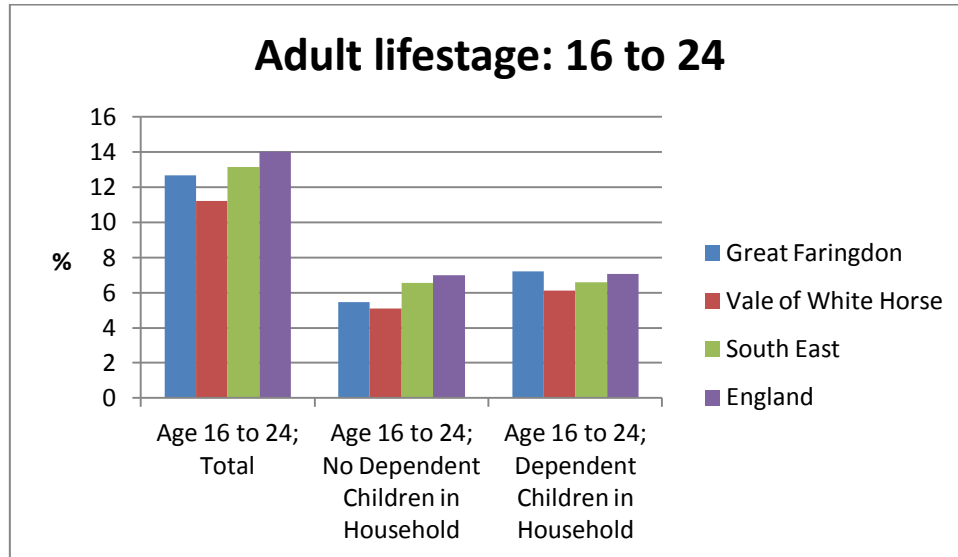


Fig. 9a: Comparison of adult lifestage 16-24 at the 2011 census (QS110EW)

Figure 9b shows that Faringdon had a higher proportion of 25-34 year olds than the Vale or region, but was roughly consistent with England. While this is the prime age group for young families, Faringdon had proportionally more families with children in the 0-10 age group than elsewhere and a similar percentage with even older children. Figures 9a-b show that Faringdon has a proportionally higher need for facilities for young families with women having children at a comparatively early age, confirming the tenure pattern in Figure 8.

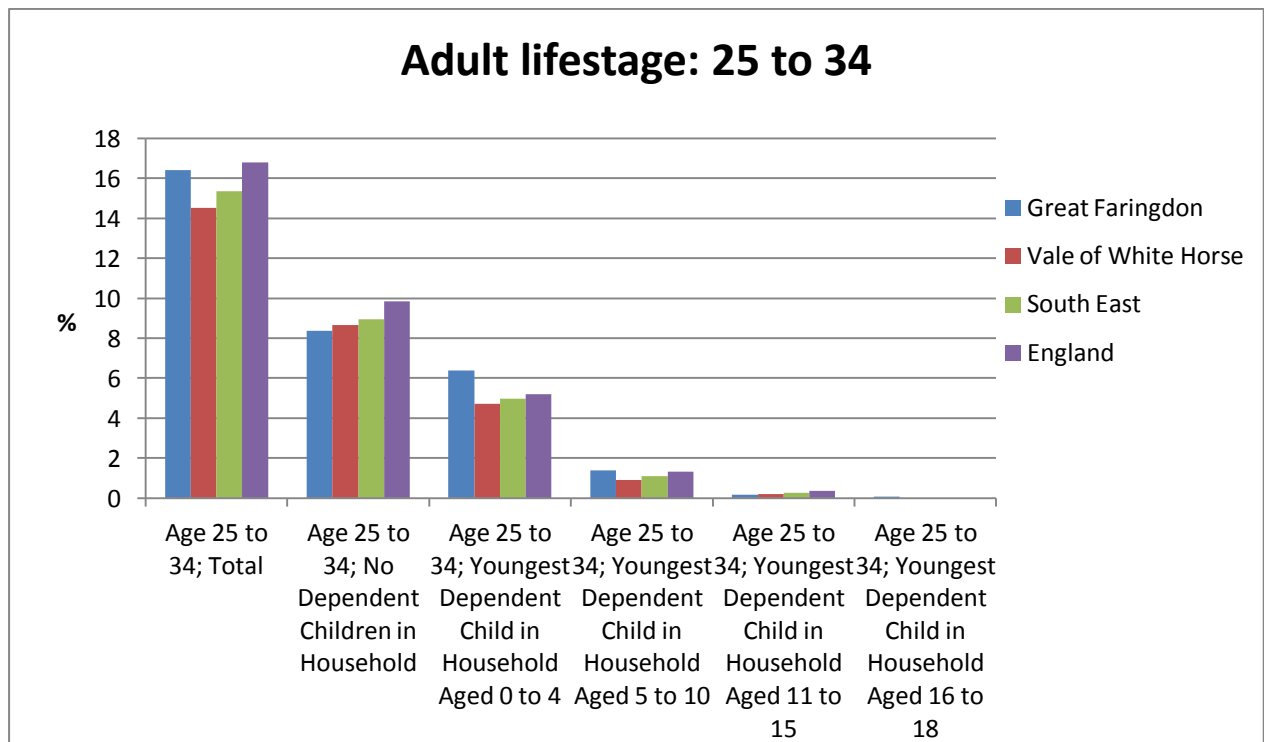


Fig. 9b: Comparison of adult lifestage 25-34 at the 2011 census (QS110EW)

Figure 9c shows that Faringdon had a higher proportion of 35-54 year olds than elsewhere with more having no dependent children while Figure 9d shows that Faringdon had proportionally fewer in the 55-64 age group, with slightly fewer dependent children. The plots confirm that, as shown in Figure 5, Faringdon had an age distribution skewed towards people younger than 54 and, for the 35-54 age group, slightly fewer dependent children aged 0-10, but slightly more aged 11-15. This reinforces the observation that Faringdon families tend to have children at a comparatively early age. Single occupancy in the 55-64 age group was just over 2% and consistent with elsewhere.

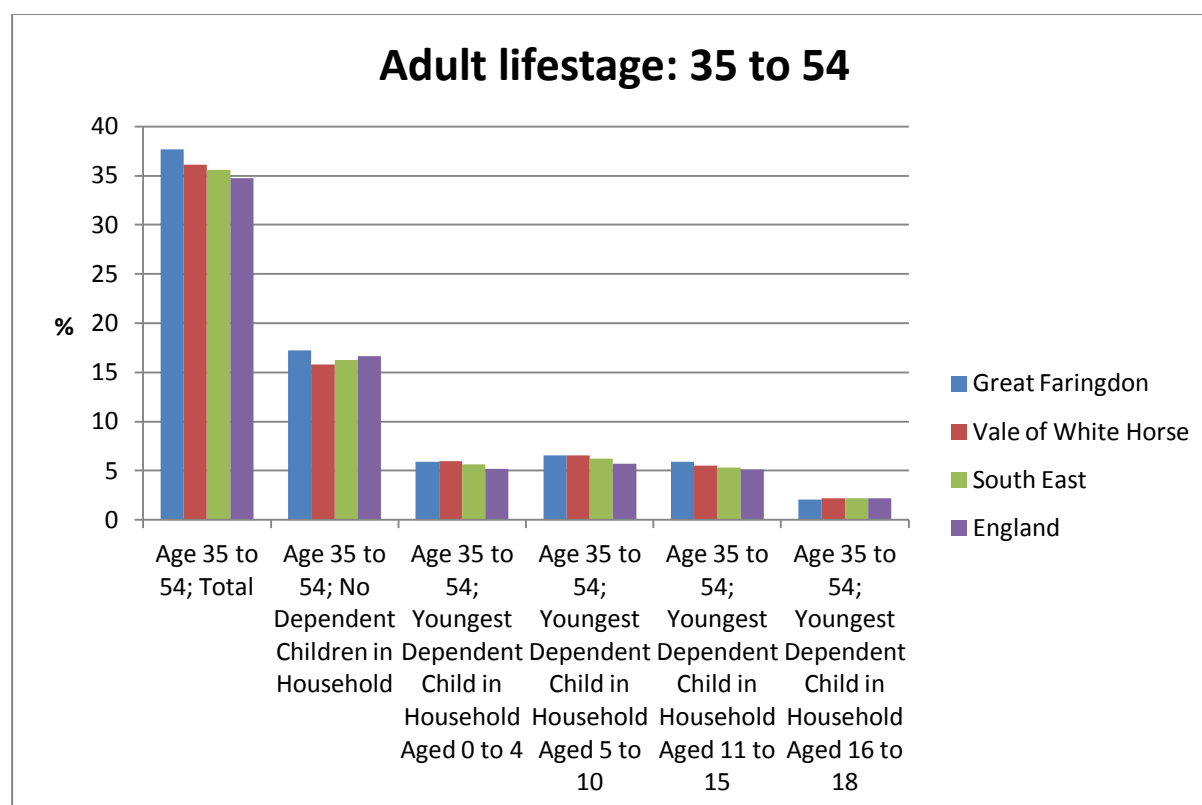


Fig. 9c: Comparison of adult lifestage 35-54 at the 2011 census (QS110EW)

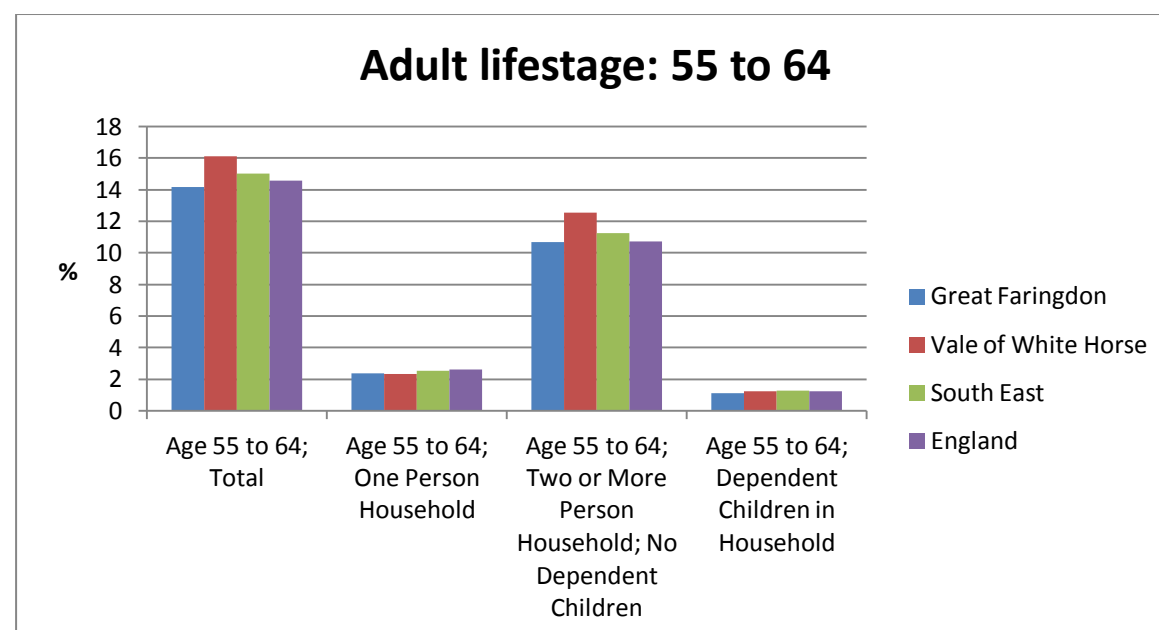


Fig. 9d: Comparison of adult lifestage 35-64 at the 2011 census (QS110EW)

Figure 9e shows that Faringdon had proportionally people fewer in the 65-74 age group (as shown in Figure 5 this trend continues up to 84) with ~2% fewer two person households than the Vale or region.

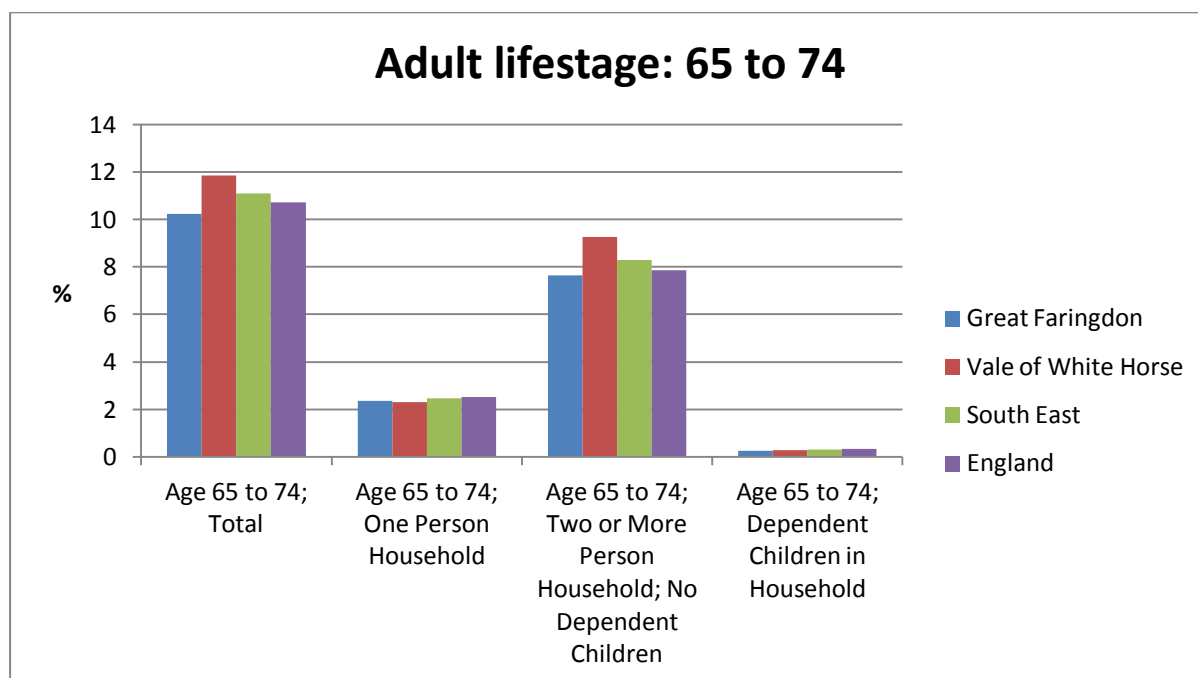


Fig. 9e: Comparison of adult lifestage 65-74 at the 2011 census (QS110EW)

Living arrangements

Following on, Figures 10a-b show living arrangements for couples and non couples. Figure 10a shows that proportionally 2% more Faringdon residents were living on their own (36%) than in the Vale (34%), but fewer than in the region (39%) or England (42%). 20% were single, never married, etc., which was fewer than the SE or country, but identical to the Vale; however, Faringdon had a slightly higher proportion of single separated/divorced (9% combined) than elsewhere (8.5%), with the Vale having the lowest combined percentages in this category (7%). Generally, surviving partners accounted for about 6% of single people.

These data indicate a higher need for single person accommodation in Faringdon than in the Vale. In contrast, new housing tends to have two, three or four bedrooms as this the most profitable sector. This need is further exacerbated for those on housing benefit in rented accommodation where the 'under-occupancy rules' (commonly referred to as the 'bedroom tax') introduced in April 2013 mean there is an incentive for those with spare rooms to down size. There is a shortage of one and two bedroom dwellings³⁵; hence, the Neighbourhood Plan should encourage the building of more of this type of accommodation in the affordable housing allocation as evidenced by Figure 10a.

Figure 10b shows correspondingly, proportionally fewer people living as couples in Faringdon (64%) than the Vale (66%) in 2011, but more than in the SE (61%) and England (58%). Of these couples proportionally fewer (49%) were married compared to those in the rest of the Vale (55%), but more than in England (46%). A higher proportion of Faringdon opposite sex residents were cohabiting (14%) than elsewhere and the proportion in same sex relationships was 0.9% comparable with the region or nationally but higher than in the rest of the Vale (0.6%).

³⁵ E.g. <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/mar/08/bedroom-tax-shortage-small-homes>

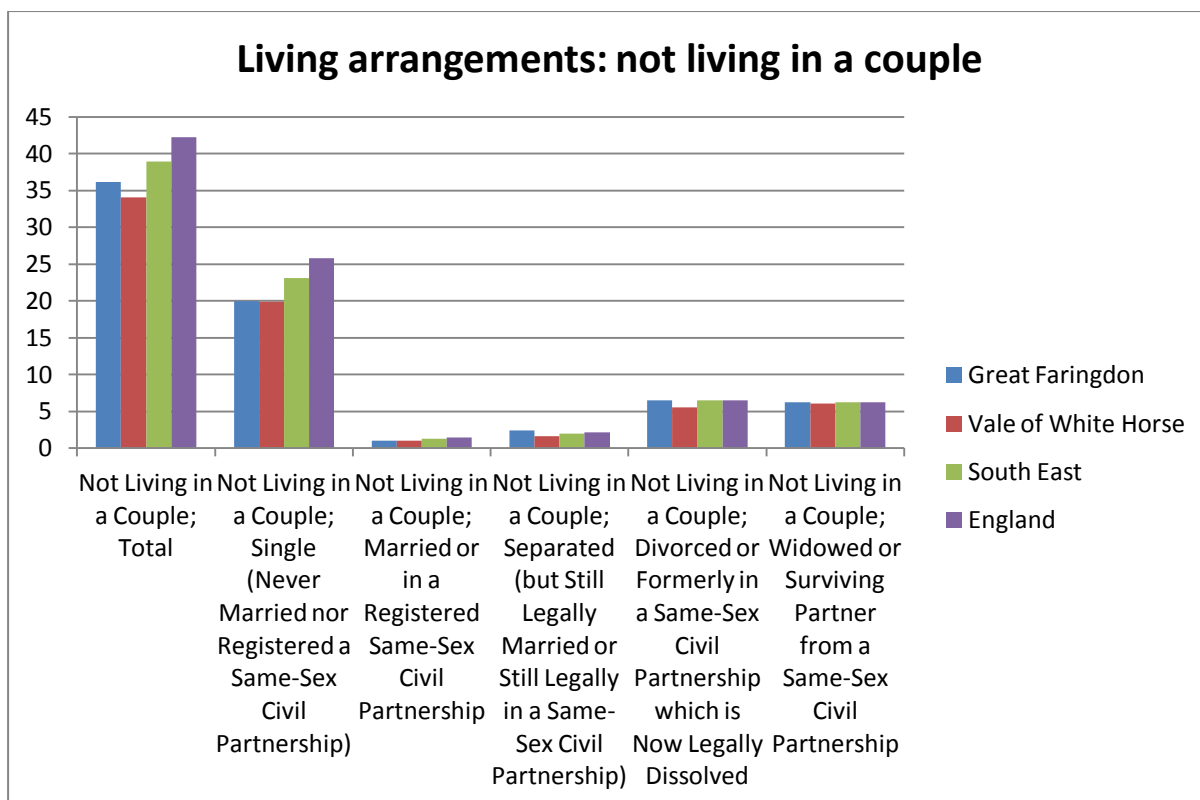


Fig. 10a: Comparison of living arrangements for non-couples at the 2011 census (QS108EW)

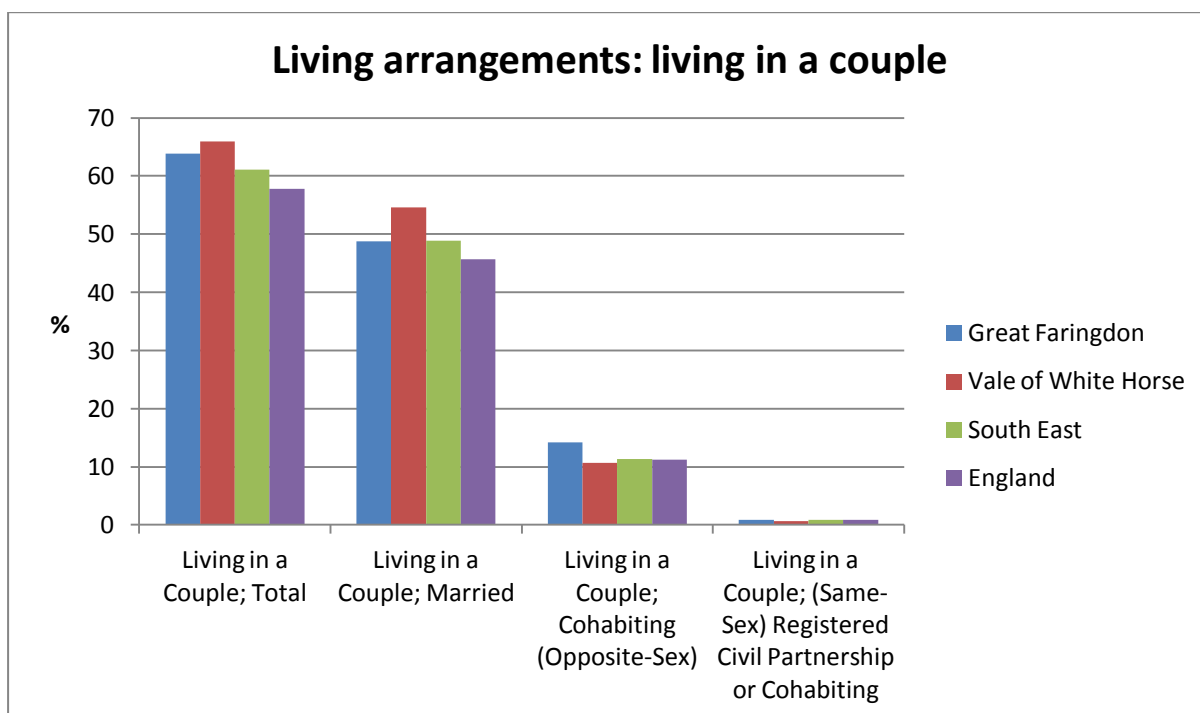


Fig. 10b: Comparison of living arrangements for couples at the 2011 census (QS108EW)

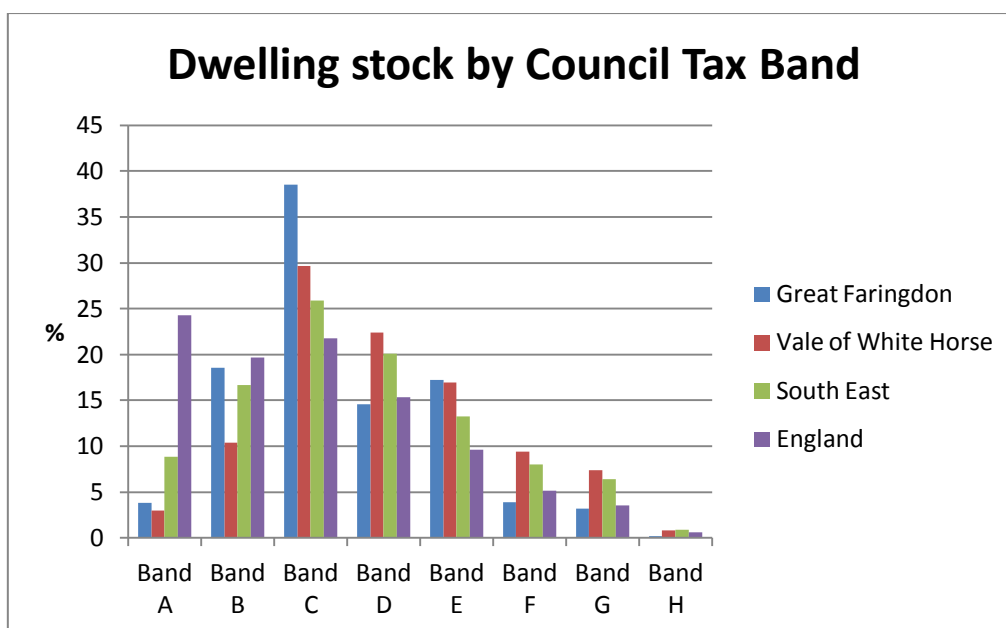


Fig. 11: Percentage of housing by Council Tax band (Source: Office for National Statistics, Valuation Office Agency for March 2011, updated April 2012. The data were obtained from VoWH Super Output Lower Layers 009 A-D plus output area E00146277 to include the south west area of Faringdon included in VoWH Super Output Lower Layer 013B.)

Dwelling stock by Council Tax Band

Figure 11³⁶ outlines the proportion of housing for the whole of Great Faringdon in terms of Council Tax bands. The graph illustrates that Faringdon has a much higher proportion of lower value properties Bands A-C (61%) than the District (40%) and a much lower proportion of higher value properties, Bands F-H (7% cf. 18%). This agrees with Figure 7 which shows the higher proportion of terraced houses, flats and maisonettes in Faringdon than the Vale. Faringdon's proportion of Band D, used as a benchmark in precept calculations, is similar to that of England at 15% but lower than that of the Vale (22%) or the SE (20%). Conversely, the proportion of Band E is similar to that of the Vale at ~17%, but higher than that of England and the SE.

A recent survey³⁷ undertaken by Sovereign Vale, the largest social housing provider in the area, of their residents living in the SN7 postcode gives an indication of how satisfied local residents in socially rented accommodation are. The headline findings were:

- 92% were satisfied with the quality of their home (88 out of 96 respondents);
- 80% were satisfied with the neighbourhood as a place to live (88 out of 96 respondents); and
- 76% were satisfied with how the provider managed the neighbourhood (67 out of 89 respondents).

The housing sub-group has undertaken a detailed review of the housing issues and opportunities in the parish. Their inputs are detailed in full in the appendices and the key points summarised below:

- Faringdon's growth should be limited to protect its character.
- Housing should be suburban in character and built to modest densities - lessons need to be learned from the Folly Park View development.

³⁶ <http://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/dwelling-stock-council-tax-band-0>

³⁷ Service Standards report, Sovereign Vale, H&C-24311Sept12inh. <http://www.sovereign.org.uk/for-residents/our-performance/>

- The local community wishes to be closely involved with the design of the Bloor Homes development south west of Park Road (Sandhill).
- Faringdon has a higher (1.5 times) than average amount of social housing (see Figure 8) but the need in the town is small (ref. 33). (*This is not necessarily borne out in the data from Figures 9a and 10, which indicate a potential need.*)
- It is not in the interests of social tenants or the town for people to be housed in Faringdon when they would prefer to be living elsewhere given local public transport and access to jobs.
- Where social housing is built it needs to be fully integrated with housing for sale.
- Faringdon has sufficient sheltered housing.
- Projections suggest housing provision will be ahead of locally derived housing need.

Size of the town

An area of debate for the sub-group and wider stakeholders has been the size of the town. There is a general understanding that some growth of the town's population would help secure greater viability and vitality of the town centre, however there is significant disparity between how much growth is acceptable:

- Limited growth – a number of stakeholders are keen to limit growth given the scale of development which has already taken place in the last decade – this would see any new development beyond that already proposed very limited.
- 10,000 population – for many in the town this is the figure which should be the cut-off for the town. This would ensure the town remains a small market town, and was the figure used by VWHDC in planning for the town in 2013 draft Local Plan.
- 10,500 population – some members of the community feel a more realistic figure given growth already planned is 10,500.
- 12,500 population – at the top end of the views is a figure of 12,500 which a small number of local stakeholders consider to be the figure that will achieve a critical mass of growth to properly support the town centre.

As of late 2013, an estimated 393 dwellings have been occupied since the 2011 census. Using as lower and upper bounds, respectively, the occupancy rate of 2.36 (based on the data from the 2011 census and probably an underestimate given the proportion of young families who have moved into Faringdon) or 2.55 (as a typical mid value used by Oxfordshire Council for occupancy of the proposed Fernham Fields estate) the population of the town as of December 2013, was between 8,016 and 8,123³⁸. Table 5 shows the likely increase in population resulting from applications granted planning permission (as of December 2014) and strategic sites allocated. This indicates a potential population of ~10,600 to ~11,000.

Table 6 shows the percentage growth figures. Taking the more realistic upper bound occupancy figure, they would result in a population of 10,921 representing an increase over the 2011 census of between 53.4% or 76.5% over the 2001 census figure. Hence, these new estates will result in a population that exceeds the 'realistic' estimate of population growth well within the lifetime of the Local Plan.

At the beginning of the Neighbourhood Plan process, applications had been received, for a further 500 dwellings, comprising 120 on smaller sites, and 380 on a strategic site within the town (Sandhill, aka Land South of Park Road), to which the Town Council had agreed as being the best location for development in the draft Local Plan published in 2013. This would have taken the housing stock to 3,900 with an estimated population of 9,400.

However, because the District Council had neither an adopted Local Plan, nor a five year supply of housing land and the consequence of the NPPF's 'presumption for approval for

³⁸ Population estimate M L H Wise for FTC Appendix E and Faringdon Folly, October 2013, p 3.

sustainable development³⁹, applications were received in 2013 for four estates on non-strategic sites; all were outside the development boundary with two located in Great Coxwell, but contiguous with Faringdon. At the application stage these sites totalled 570 dwellings or a potential 1450 extra population. The location of these sites is shown in Appendix G.

Since then, of these applications: one for 200 houses has been approved (Fernham Fields) despite strong objections from Faringdon Town Council, Great Coxwell Parish Councils and local people. The field known as 'Humpty Hill' was refused planning permission for 94 houses by the District Council; the developers, Gladman Estates, appealed, but the appeal was dismissed by the Secretary of State on 19th February 2015 (see File 7 in FNP Appendix 7). The other two sites (west of Coxwell Rd [the Steeds] and south of Highworth Rd) were allocated for development by the Vale of White Horse in its Housing Delivery Update published on 21st February 2014, but increased to 200 houses each. This update, which also included Fernham Fields, was done in order to meet the Vale's need for 20,560 new houses between 2013 and 2031, as set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Oxfordshire representing an increase of 7,430 houses over the 2013 draft Local Plan target.

The predicted growth from 2013 will require some intervention; for example, the existing schools are full, and the larger of the GP practices is nearing its limit; hence, there is a need for improvements in infrastructure, particularly for sewage treatment as indicated by Thames Water⁴⁰. The Sandhill development has provision for a new primary school; Thames Water will upgrade the sewage works in 2017, but this must be completed before any new houses can be occupied. Nevertheless, additional speculative developments may be expected.

Sites under construction or with planning permission	Number of dwellings	Estimated additional population @2.363/house	Estimated additional population @2.55/house
Stickley Court, Park Rd	18 under construction	43	46
Bloor Homes, Sandhill	380 homes outline permission	898	969
Winslow House, Coxwell Rd	36 under construction	85	92
Folly Park View	28 under construction	66	71
Haynes Close	10 occupied	24	26
Tetronics site, 5 Lechlade Rd	14 homes outline permission	33	36
Tennis Club, Southampton St.	11 homes outline permission	26	28
Fernham Fields (SGR)	200 homes outline permission	473	510
Total	697	1,647	1,777
Strategic housing allocations awaiting planning permission			
South of Highworth Rd.	200 (awaiting planning permission)	456	510
Steeds Farm	200 (awaiting planning permission)	456	510
Total increases	1,097	2,559	2,945
Estimates of housing stock and populations		Population est. @2.363/house	Population est. @2.55/house
Estimated current housing stock and population (as at the end of 2013)	3406 (actual 2014 tax base = 3,373) * this is usually in arrears	8,050	8,123
Predicted housing stock and population post 2017	4,503	10,643	10,921

Table 5. Increase in housing stock and population from developments planned or under construction.

³⁹ National Planning Policy Framework March 2012 ISBN: 978-1-4098-3413-7

⁴⁰ Correspondence from Thames Water re VoWH planning application P13/V0709/O

http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/java/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=194142399&CODE=82ECE0C7C12E2CFBC548926FCD F91ACD

Estimated population figures	Estimated additional population @2.363/house	Estimated additional population @2.55/house
Estimated population at the end of 2013	8,050	8,123
This represents a growth over the 2011 census figure of 7,121 of:	13.0%	14.1%
Estimated post 2017 population	10,643	10,921
This represents a growth over the 2011 census figure of 7,121 of:	49.5%	53.4%
This represents a growth over the 2001 census figure of 6,187 of:	72.0%	76.5%

Table 6. Population %increase predictions resulting from additional strategic allocations.

Employment trends

Employment for Faringdon's residents is an important issue, with many factors creating problems, including distance from main centres of economic activity and local employment limited to certain trades and sectors. Figures 12a-b show the distribution of employment type for the economically active and inactive, respectively, at the 2011 census for residents age 16-74.

Figure 12a shows that Faringdon had a higher proportion of economically active residents than the district, region or country with fewer of them employees, or even self employed-employing others (possibly small businesses), but with more full-time, self employed, 'one-man' operations. The unemployment rate was higher than in the Vale, but less than in England, and there were fewer full-time students resident in the parish than elsewhere at the time of the census. This suggests that Faringdon has more residents prepared to work on their own than elsewhere.

Figure 12b shows that Faringdon had fewer economically inactive residents than elsewhere, even marginally fewer than the Vale; a higher proportion of retired residents than the SE or England; far fewer students, but more homemakers and carers than elsewhere. Disturbingly, Faringdon had more long term sick and disabled than the Vale, but fewer than the region or the country. (This probably ties in with the higher deprivation levels in Faringdon compared to the Vale as shown in Figure 16)

For the assessment of the Chamber of Commerce review on employment needs (ref.15) the number in the 18-64 age group (perhaps more realistic figure than considering the 16-74 age group) at the 2011 census was 4356 or 61.2%. Using this figure and assuming an extrapolated population of ~10,000 by 2016 (Table 5 upper bound) gives ~6,100 between 18 and 64. (If all the applications for new estates are granted, this figure could be 6,600.)

Using the Chamber's figure of 27% employed locally as conferring 'dormitory town' status, implies that in 2011, 1,177 people were employed locally. By 2016, or whenever the population peaks, to maintain local employment at the 27% dormitory town level will require another 600 jobs, or an extra 1,000 jobs if the ambitious target of 44% of the workforce to be locally employed is used. This means that Faringdon will require between 1800 to 2900 jobs and sufficient employment land to meet this target.

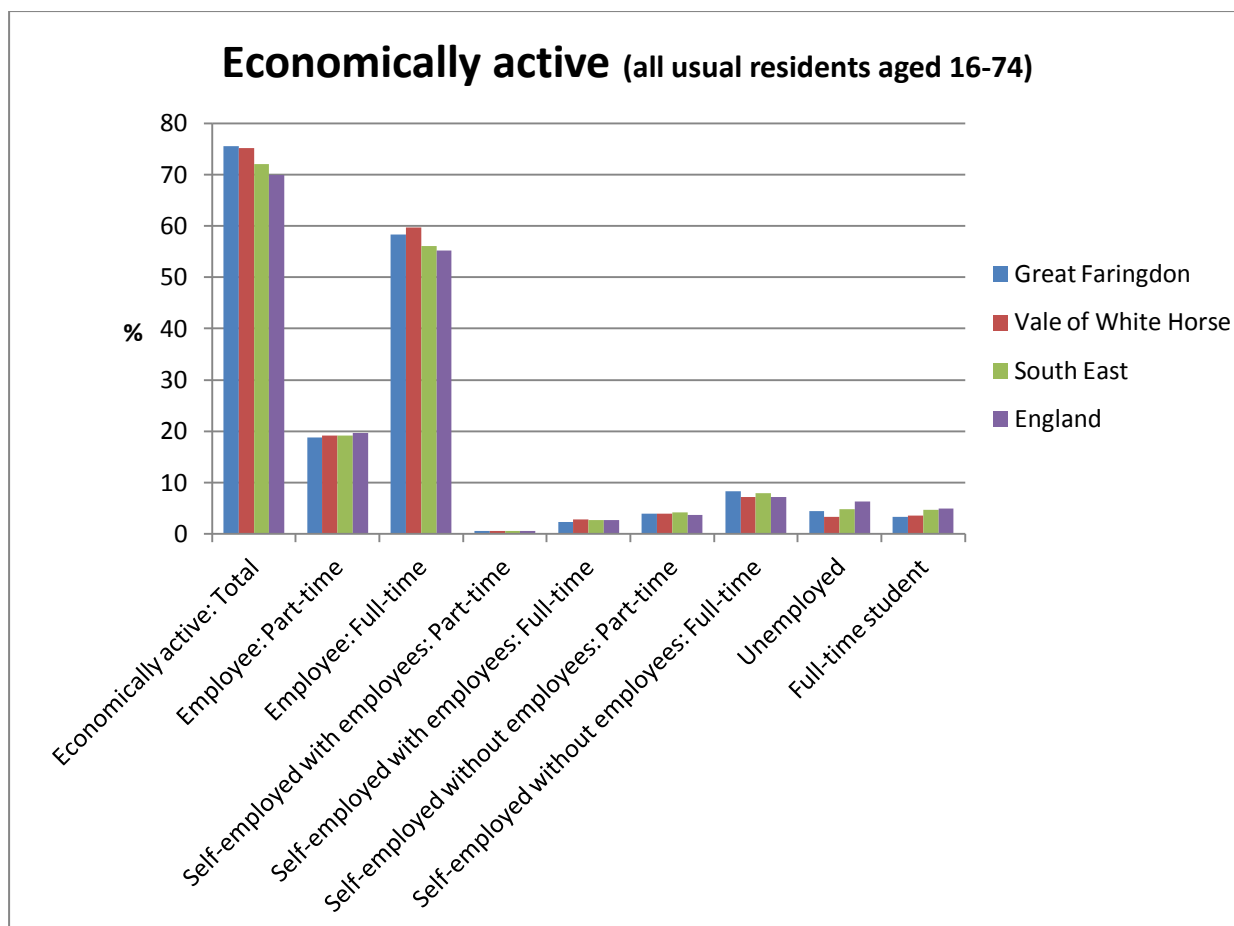


Fig. 12a: Distribution of employment type for the economically active at the 2011 census (QS601EW)

Figure 13 shows the principal classification of occupations from the 2011 census. This reinforces the social status data in Figure 6a with fewer Faringdon residents working as managers, etc. and in professional occupations compared with the Vale, but more than in England. There were far fewer working in administrative and secretarial jobs in Faringdon compared with elsewhere reflecting the comparable lack of large organisations and public sector agencies requiring that kind of employee. Faringdon scored highly in skilled trades and occupations with the single most important sectors being skilled agricultural and related trades but, most significantly, skilled building and construction trades. The latter were uniformly 37% higher than comparable locations. The higher levels of employment in the caring and leisure service sector were mainly accounted for by the higher proportions working in childcare and animal care in Faringdon. The higher level of employment in this sector, compared to the Vale, is reinforced by the large number of care homes for the elderly in Faringdon which is to be expected from its higher proportion of elderly residents, as evidenced in Figure 5. Faringdon also appears to have 28% more of its population working as hairdressers than does the Vale.

The lack of large retail outlets probably accounts for the relatively small proportion of Faringdon residents employed in sales and customer occupations, while Faringdon's much larger proportion of elementary occupations, compared to the Vale or SE, can be attributed to three times the percentage of Faringdon residents working in construction, reflecting the higher skilled trades construction sector figures shown above.

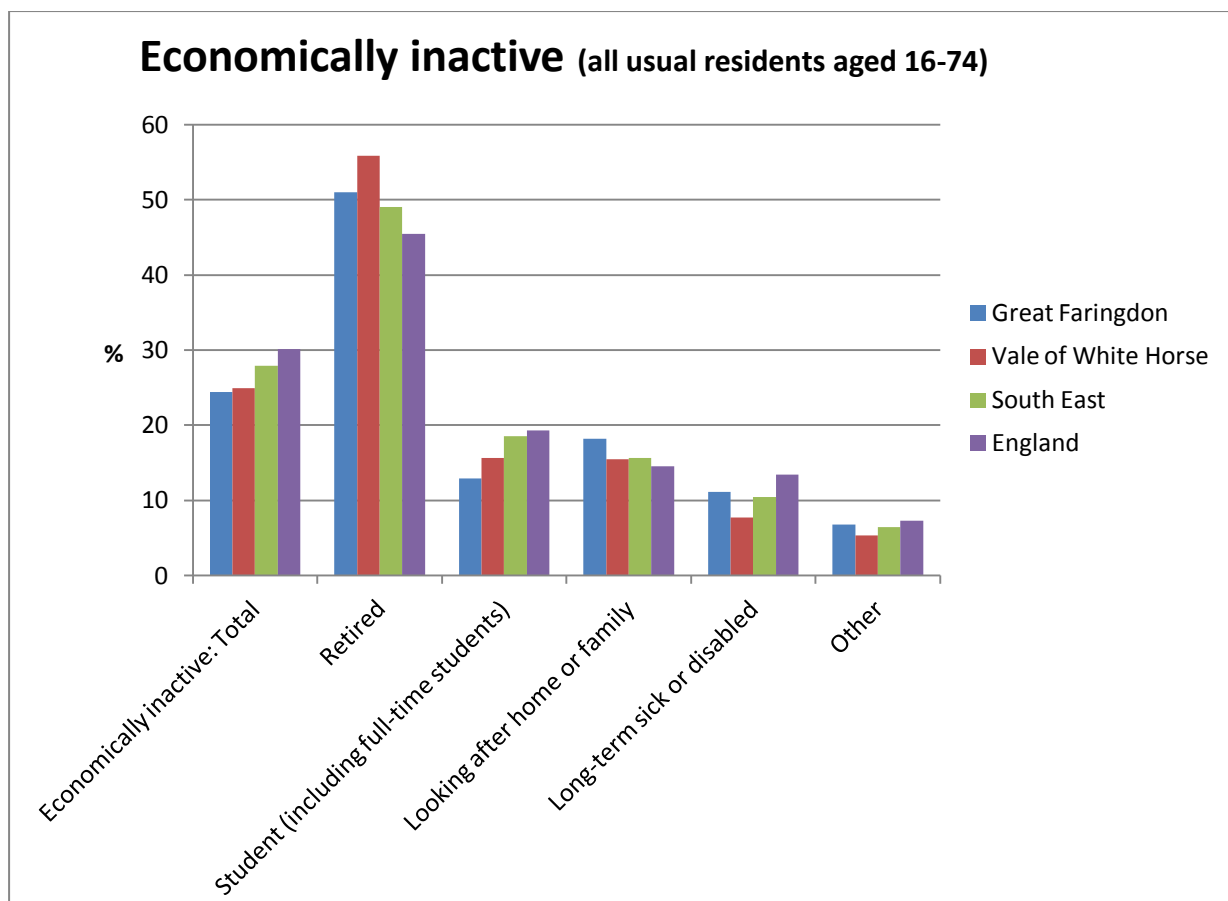


Fig. 12b: Distribution of employment type for the economically inactive at the 2011 census (QS601EW)

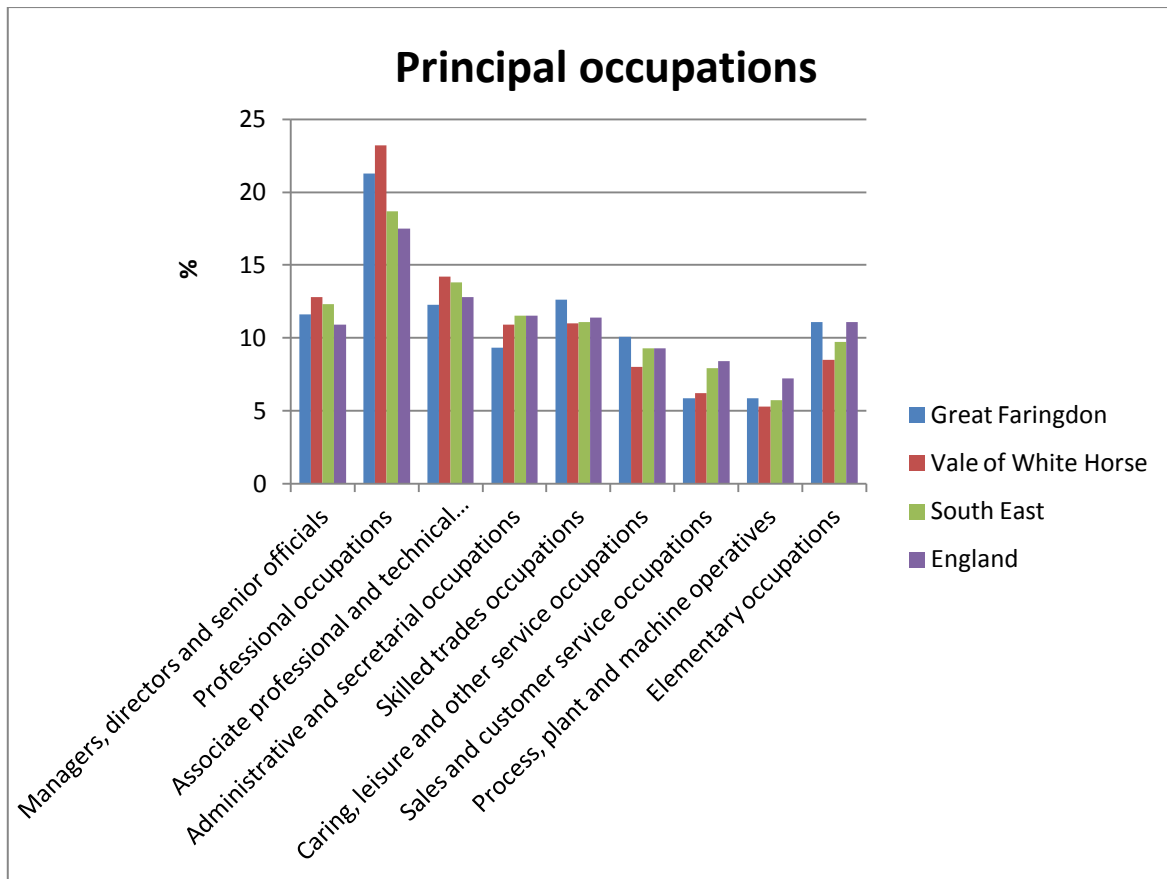


Fig. 13: Comparison of principal occupations at the 2011 census (QS606EW)

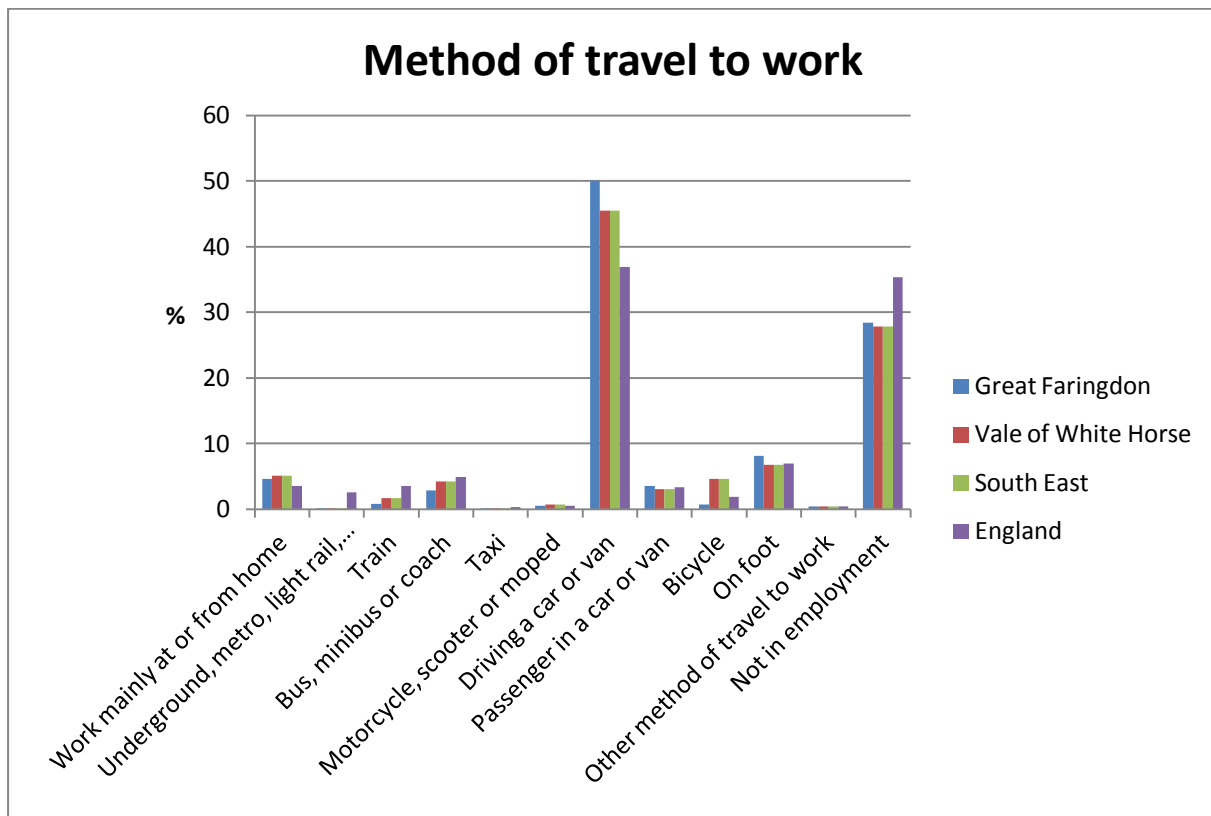


Fig. 14: Comparison of methods of travel to work at the 2011 census (QS701EW)

Figure 14 shows a comparison of methods of travel to work indicating that, in Faringdon, more worked from home than nationally, but not compared to the Vale or SE. By far the majority of Faringdon residents drove to work with comparatively fewer travelling by bus or train. This indicates the lack of public transport links from Faringdon to the main centres of employment and confirms the findings of the survey (ref. 19), that compared to the Vale, Faringdon residents travel the farthest to work. However, proportionally more Faringdon residents walked to work than elsewhere, but fewer cycled indicating, perhaps, the steepness of the terrain and the lack of safe cycle routes.

Deprivation / wealth

Whilst the rural parts of the parish exhibit low levels of deprivation, parts of the town itself have relatively high levels of deprivation compared to the rest of the District. In Figure 15 the darker blue indicates areas with higher levels of deprivation and the paler blues the more affluent areas. Faringdon is considered to be the most deprived of the market towns in the district compared to centres such as Wantage, which enjoy more consistent levels of affluence and access to services.

Figure 16 shows data from the 2011 census that confirm that Faringdon is more deprived than the district for those with 2, 3 and 4 dimensions of deprivation (see Figure 16 for key), but less deprived than the region or country for those with 1, 2 and 3 dimensions of deprivation. However, for those with 4 dimensions of deprivation Faringdon, at 0.4%, is as equally deprived as the SE region, only slightly less deprived than the 0.5% national figure, but twice as deprived as the Vale (0.2%). As this statistic is an aggregated index it is not possible to pinpoint the exact factors that contribute to deprivation; however, Tables 7, 8 and 9 may give some indication.



Fig. 15: Areas of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for Faringdon area (Source: Oxfordshire Observatory)

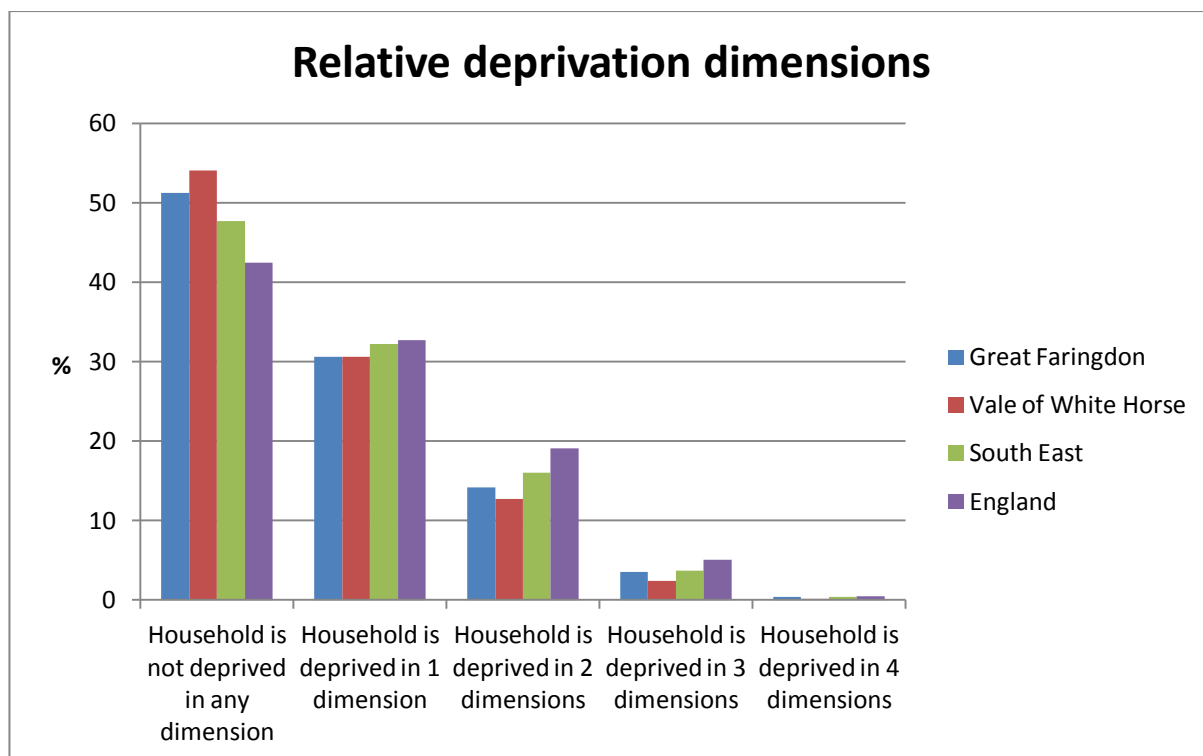


Fig. 16: Comparison of relative deprivation at the 2011 census (QS119EW)

The dimensions of deprivation used to classify households are indicators based on the four selected household characteristics: Employment, Education, Health and disability, and Household overcrowding

1. Employment: any member of a household not a full-time student is either unemployed or long-term sick.
2. Education: no person in the household has at least level 2 education⁴¹, and no person aged 16-18 is a full-time student.
3. Health and disability: any person in the household has general health 'bad or very bad' or has a long term health problem.
4. Housing: Household's accommodation is either overcrowded, with an occupancy rating -1⁴² or less, or is in a shared dwelling, or has no central heating.

Lone parents

Figure 17 shows that Faringdon had proportionally fewer female and more male lone parents with dependent children than elsewhere. Of these, proportionally more females were not in employment compared to rest of the Vale but more were in employment compared to SE or England. Of the males proportionally more were unemployed cf. elsewhere. The combined picture was as that for females as females represented 87% of lone parents.

Households with unemployed adults

Figure 18 shows the situation of households with unemployed adults as of 2011. In Faringdon there were proportionally fewer with no dependent children than elsewhere and these children tended to be in the 0-4 age group suggesting younger unemployed households. Of the unemployed households in Faringdon 23.2% had at least one person with a long term disability (with or without children), the Vale had 21.7%, the SE, 23.6%, and England 25.6%.

⁴¹ Attainment of Level 2 equates to achievement of 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C or equivalent qualifications

⁴² -1 = one room fewer than required, etc.

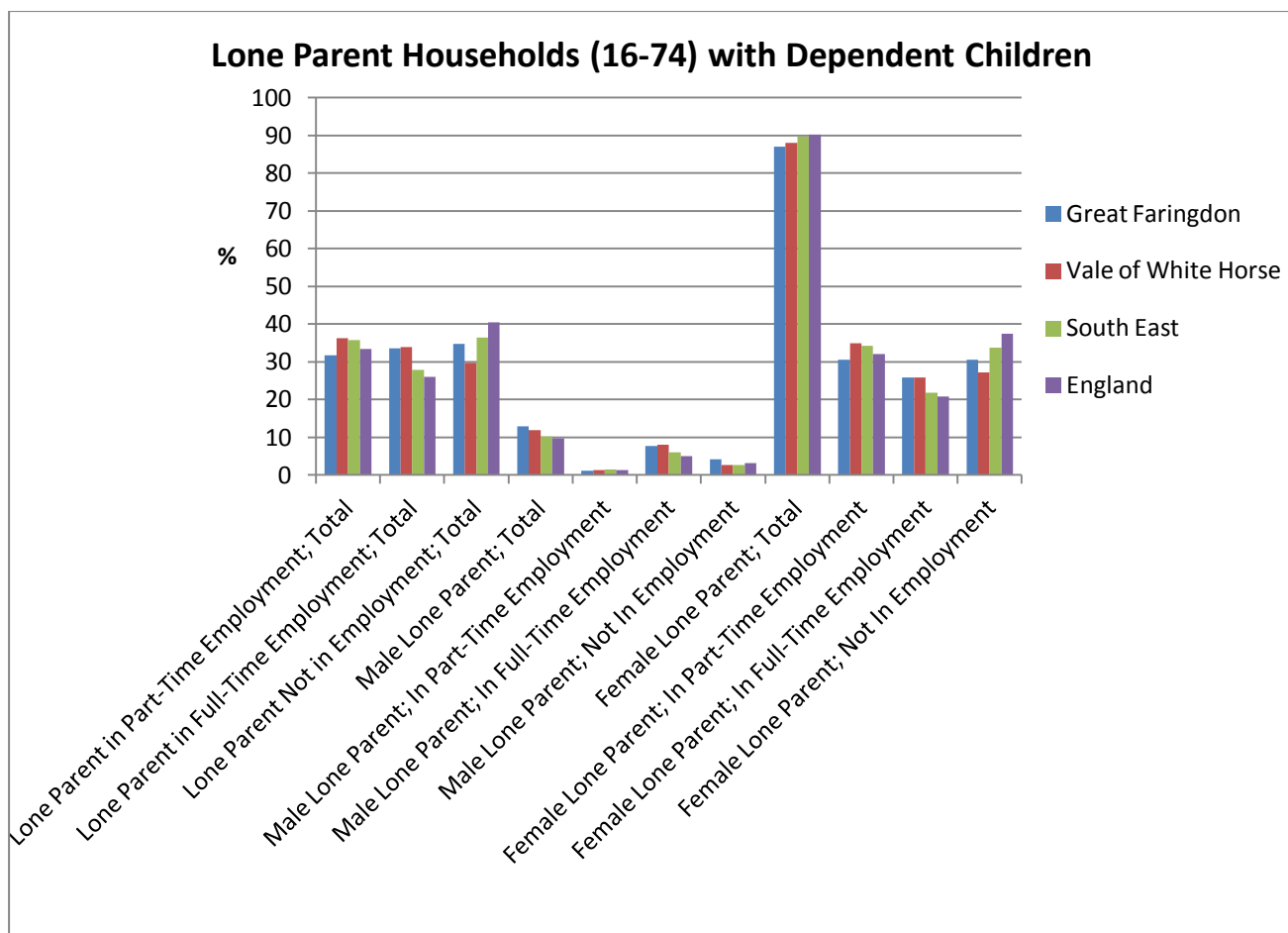


Fig. 17: Comparison of lone parent households with dependent children at the 2011 census (KS107EW)

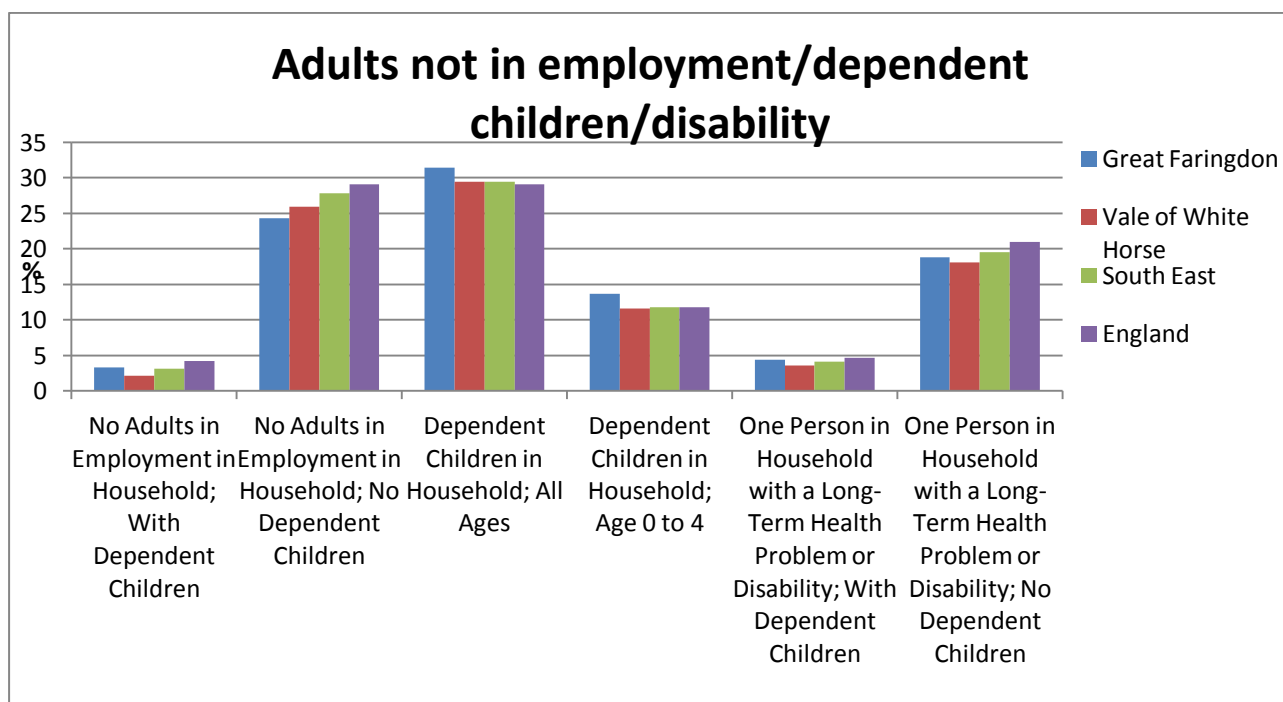


Fig. 18: Comparison of adults not in employment at the 2011 census (KS106EW)

Claimants

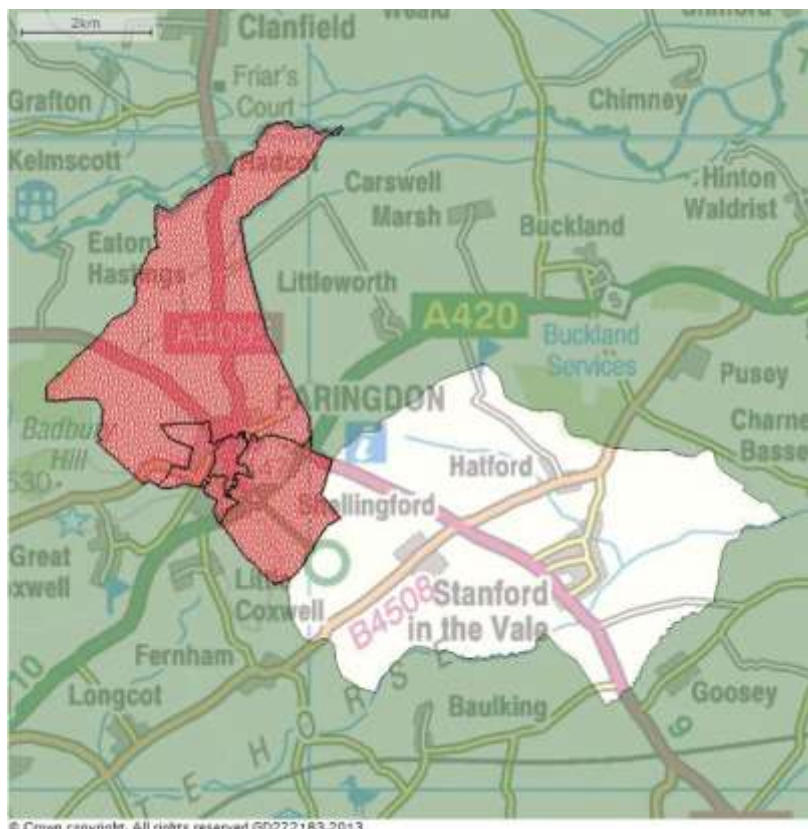


Fig. 19: Great Faringdon parish comprising Vale of White Horse areas 009A-D shown in red

Figure 19 shows Vale of White Horse Areas 009A-D for which data are available. This area (shaded red) comprises most of the parish but excludes the south west corner (VoWH 013B) either side of Fernham Road, which is included in the Great Coxwell area; the inclusion of which would distort the data for Faringdon. Unfortunately, no separate data were available for E00146277.

Table 7 shows that the number of residents on Job Seekers Allowance in VoWH areas 009A-D has increased since 2001. In particular, it shows the significant jump in numbers from 2008 to 2009 because of the recession, and its disproportionate effect on young adults, and males in general.

Year	total claimants	age 16 to 24	age 25 to 49	age 50 and over	male	female
2001	40	5	25	10	20	20
2002	40	10	20	10	30	10
2003	35	5	20	10	35	0
2004	35	15	20	0	25	10
2005	45	15	15	15	35	10
2006	30	10	15	5	25	5
2007	40	10	25	5	25	15
2008	40	5	30	5	20	20
2009	130	35	70	25	105	25
2010	115	35	60	20	80	35
2011	80	20	45	15	65	15
2012	125	45	60	20	90	35
2013	100	30	55	15	70	30

Table 7: Job seekers allowance claimants in VoWH areas 009A-D (Source: Office for National Statistics – figures taken for February each year)

Table 8 illustrates how the total number of benefit claimants has varied since 2000. The pattern for severe disability is about the same while those on incapacity benefit increased up to 2009, then showed a marked drop in 2010 with an even steeper drop in 2013, perhaps as a result of the more stringent criteria of the Personal Capability Assessment.

Table 9 shows the number of residents on employment and income support to have increased since its introduction, with a marked increase in 2012, and even greater increase in 2013.

Year	total claimants	incapacity benefit	severe disablement allowance	age 16 to 24	age 25 to 49	age 50 to 59	age 60 and over	male	female
2000	115	100	15	5	60	30	20	70	45
2001	115	95	20	10	55	40	10	70	45
2002	115	95	20	15	45	40	15	65	50
2003	115	100	15	5	50	40	20	70	45
2004	125	110	15	15	55	45	10	70	55
2005	140	125	15	10	70	45	15	85	55
2006	150	135	15	15	75	45	15	85	65
2007	160	145	15	15	90	45	10	95	65
2008	165	155	10	20	80	45	20	100	65
2009	165	155	10	25	80	45	15	90	75
2010	130	115	15	15	70	30	15	70	60
2011	125	115	10	15	60	40	10	65	60
2012	110	95	15	5	50	35	20	60	50
2013	65	55	10	0	35	20	10	40	25

Table 8: Benefit claimants in VoWH areas 009A-D (Source: Office for National Statistics – figures taken for February each year)

	total claimants	Age 16 to 24	age 25 to 49	age 50 to 59	age 60 and over	male	female
2009	10	10	0	0	0	0	10
2010	35	5	20	5	5	20	15
2011	50	10	20	20	0	30	20
2012	75	15	40	15	5	25	50
2013	120	5	70	35	10	55	65

Table 9: Employment and income support claimants in VoWH areas 009A-D (Source: Office for National Statistics – figures taken for February each year)

Community facility provision: Education

Schools

Within the parish of Great Faringdon there are three non-fee paying schools and one private preparatory school, Ferndale (2½ to 11); the latter was under threat of closure but an Action Group is organising a new management team to run the school. The former are: Faringdon Infant School, Faringdon Junior School and Faringdon Community College; these three schools comprise the founder members of the Faringdon Academy of Schools formed in April 2012. Tables 10 to 16 provide the latest available information for key stage educational achievement at each of the town's schools and numbers taken at the January census; data from Ofsted's School Data Dashboard⁴³.

The data for free school meals show that Faringdon Infant School has been above the national average for all three years whereas Faringdon Junior School was only above the national average in 2012. Nevertheless, these data are further evidence for the relatively

⁴³ <http://dashboard.ofsted.gov.uk/>

Faringdon Infant School

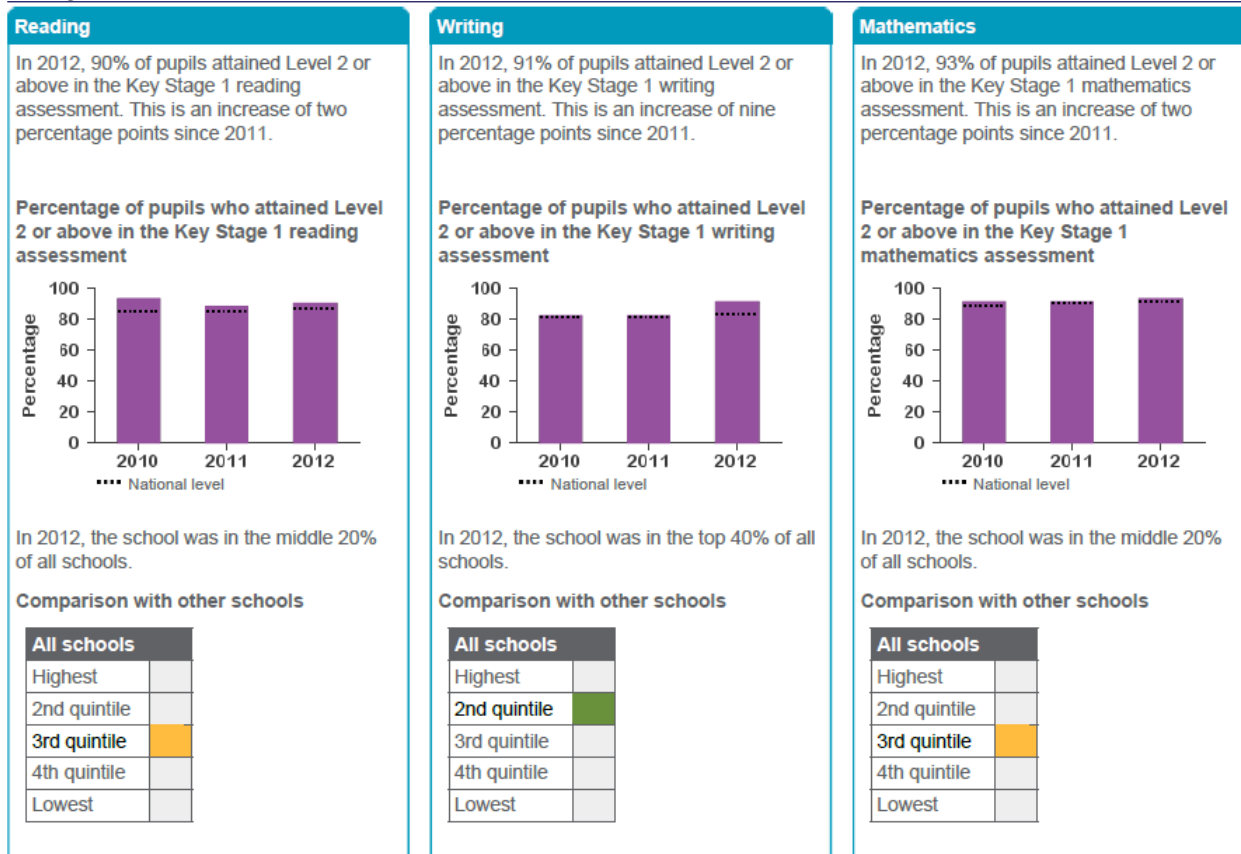


Table 10: Key Stage 1 data for Faringdon Infant School

Number of pupils	2010	2011	2012
National average	241	245	251
School (all pupils)	228	256	262
Year 2 pupils (KS1)	46	75	68

Table 11a: Faringdon Infant School; number of pupils

% eligible for free school meals	2010	2011	2012
National average	18.5	19.2	26.2
School (all pupils)	20.0	20.2	27.1

Table 11b: Faringdon Infant School; % of pupils eligible for free school meals; N.B. the method of assessment changed in 2012

% supported by school action plus or with a SEN statement	2010	2011	2012
National average		8.0	7.9
School (all pupils)		5.1	3.8
Year 2 pupils (KS1)		17.3	13.2

Table 11c: Faringdon Infant School; % of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of SEN

Faringdon Junior School

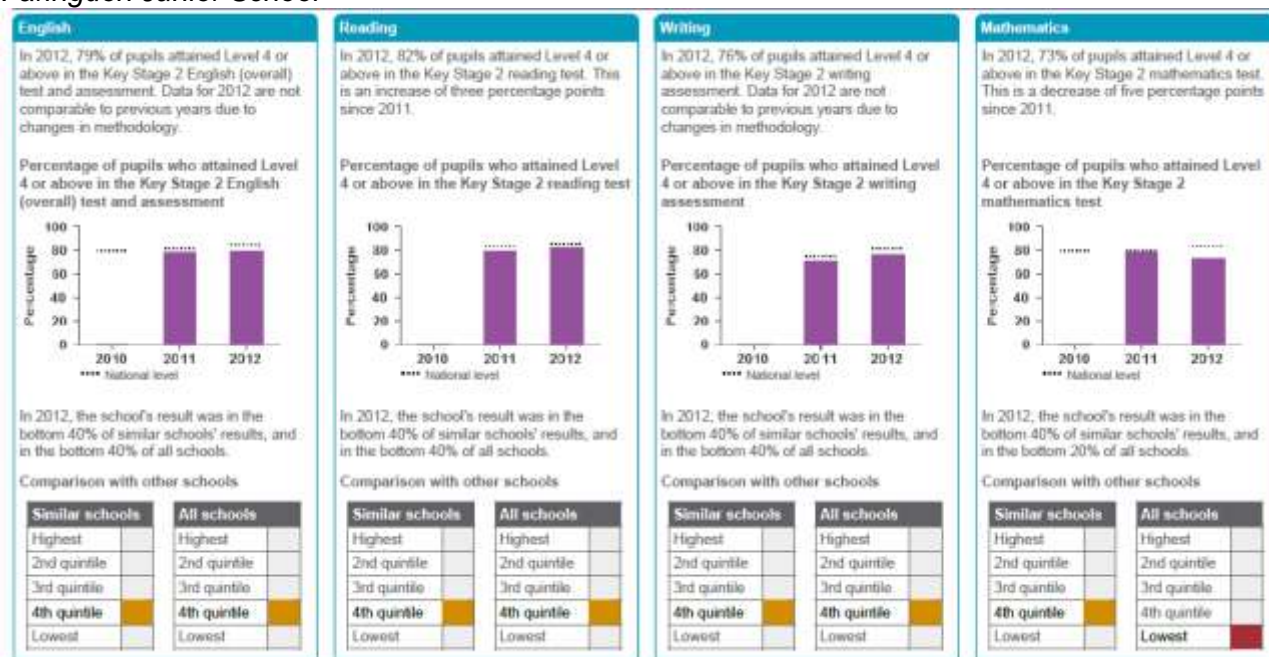


Table 12: Key Stage 2 data for Faringdon Junior School

Number of pupils	2010	2011	2012
National average	241	245	251
School (all pupils)	235	232	239
Year 6 pupils (KS2)	62	72	60

Table 13a: Faringdon Junior School; number of pupils

% eligible for free school meals	2010	2011	2012
National average	18.5	19.2	26.2
School (all pupils)	15.7	17.2	28.9

Table 13b: Faringdon Junior School; % of pupils eligible for free school meals; N.B. the method of assessment changed in 2012

% supported by school action plus or with a SEN statement	2010	2011	2012
National average		8.0	7.9
School (all pupils)		9.9	10.0
Year 6 pupils (KS2)		22.2	28.3

Table 13c: Faringdon Junior School; % of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of SEN

Faringdon Community College

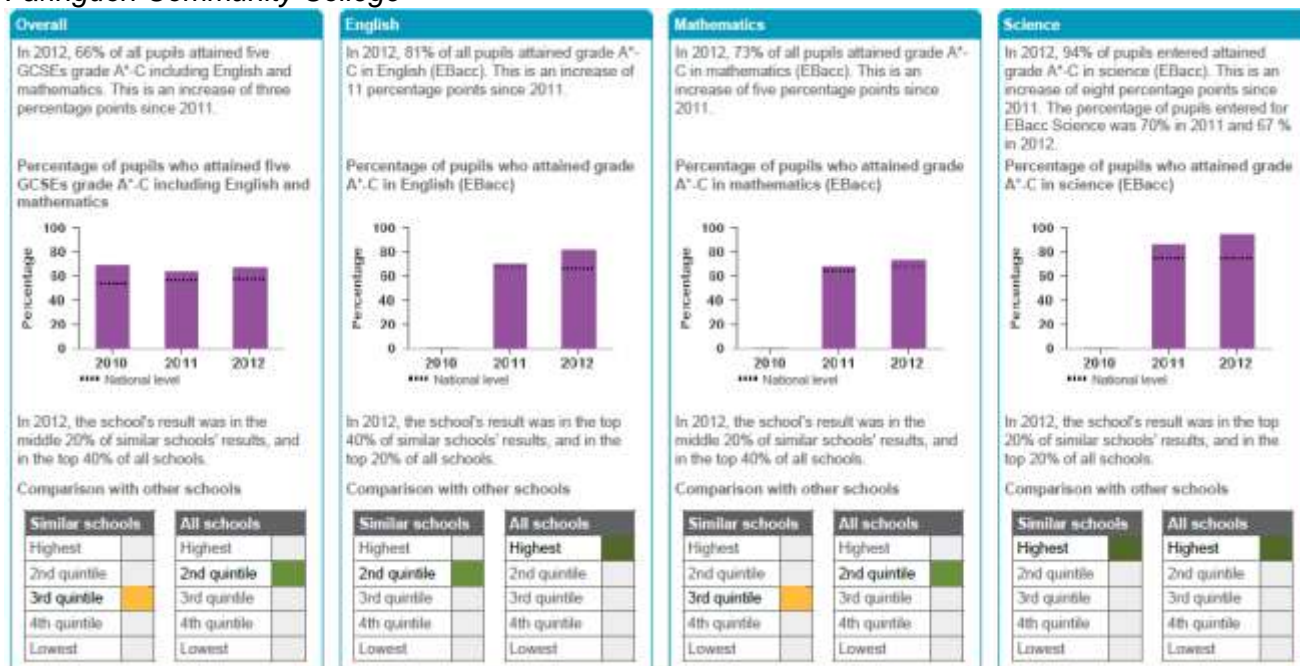


Table 14: Key Stage 4 data for Faringdon Community College

Number of pupils	2010	2011	2012
National average	984	986	990
School (all pupils)	962	1039	1090
Year 11 pupils (KS4)	141	174	173

Table 15a: Faringdon Community College; number of pupils

% eligible for free school meals	2010	2011	2012
National average	15.4	15.9	26.7
School (all pupils)	6.3	5.5	14.4

Table 15b: Faringdon Community College; % of pupils eligible for free school meals; N.B. the method of assessment changed in 2012

% supported by school action plus or with a SEN statement	2010	2011	2012
National average		8.5	8.1
School (all pupils)		5.7	4.2
Year 11 pupils (KS4)		13.2	17.9

Table 15c: Faringdon Community College; % of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of SEN

higher levels of deprivation in Faringdon compared to neighbouring villages, i.e. Stanford in the Vale (half the national average), Buckland, Longcot and Fernham, Shellingford and Uffington all with figures at least one third less than the national average. However, this pattern is not reflected in the data for the Community College, which had a much lower than average number for free school meals, perhaps reflecting the different take up of school meals at senior level.

Faringdon Infant School was rated 'satisfactory' in the 2011 Ofsted inspection, but 'good' in the 2013 inspection. Faringdon Junior School was rated 'good' in the 2007 Ofsted inspection but 'satisfactory' in the 2011 Ofsted inspection;

Faringdon Community College is the only secondary school in the parish and is well regarded. In 2012 it was rated as the best state school in the county at GCSE level and the best bar one compared to independent schools. At A level it was the best bar one state school and the ninth best compared to independent schools. At the last Ofsted inspection in 2008 it was rated 'outstanding'. Specialising in engineering, the college offers a range of GCSE, A-level, BTEC and other qualifications. Table 16 shows the GCSE attainments of the college's students for the past six years. The 2012 results exhibited particular strength in science and ICT.

Year	Pupils achieving 5 A*- C GCSEs including English and Maths
2013	72%
2012	66%
2011	64%
2010	69%
2009	63%
2008	62%

Table 16: GCSE results for Faringdon Community College (Source: Department for Education and FCC)

The Faringdon Academy of Schools

The Faringdon Academy of Schools (FAoS) has played a pivotal role in the debate about school provision and issued its considered best option for education in Faringdon. In conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council, it commissioned a report⁴⁴, which recommended the building of a new primary school capable of three-form entry (75-90 intake) on the proposed Sandhill estate by 2014/15. Hence, the Infant School will relocate to this site and take in juniors, while the Junior School will take in infants with both comprising single primary school based on two sites. From 2013, the FAoS is expanding to incorporate five of its partnership schools in neighbouring villages: Buckland, Shrivenham, Watchfield, John Blandy (Kingston Bagpuize/Southmoor), and Longcot and Fernham schools.

School places

The growing population of Faringdon has put considerable strain on school places. The intake into the Infant School was increased from 75 to 90 in 2012, but reduced to 75 in 2013 in order to maintain manageable class sizes and the quality of education; it will increase to 90 in 2014 because of demand. The Infant School has grown by erecting temporary buildings, however, the expanding population of Faringdon means that all the constituent schools of the Academy will have to expand to ensure that all children resident in Faringdon can be taught within the parish if they so wish; this is a key tenet of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan.

Figures from Oxfordshire County Council predict a 10% increase in the primary (4-11 year old) population across the county between 2010/11 and 2015/16 which is slightly above

⁴⁴ <http://www.faringdonacademy.org/faqs.html>

national expectations. However, the proposed new estates in Faringdon, if built, will exceed this requirement.

The education sub-group raised the following considerations for the Neighbourhood Plan:

- All Faringdon children should be able to attend school in Faringdon.
- There is potential to reorganise the schools to accommodate growth as follows:
 - Infant and Junior schools to move to a new site.
 - 6th form provision to move to the Junior School site (*not FAoS policy*)
 - The old Infant School building to be re-used for community facilities.

Qualifications

It is also useful to look at the educational attainment of the population at large in the parish. Figure 20 shows the comparative qualifications for residents of Great Faringdon compared with district region and country. These reflect the previous trends in social class and employment showing a lower proportion of Faringdon residents with purely academic qualifications than the Vale, but comparatively higher proportions with NVQs. Generally, Faringdon residents were better qualified than either the SE or England, but the small proportion of foreign qualifications compared to elsewhere reflects the mainly indigenous population of Faringdon.

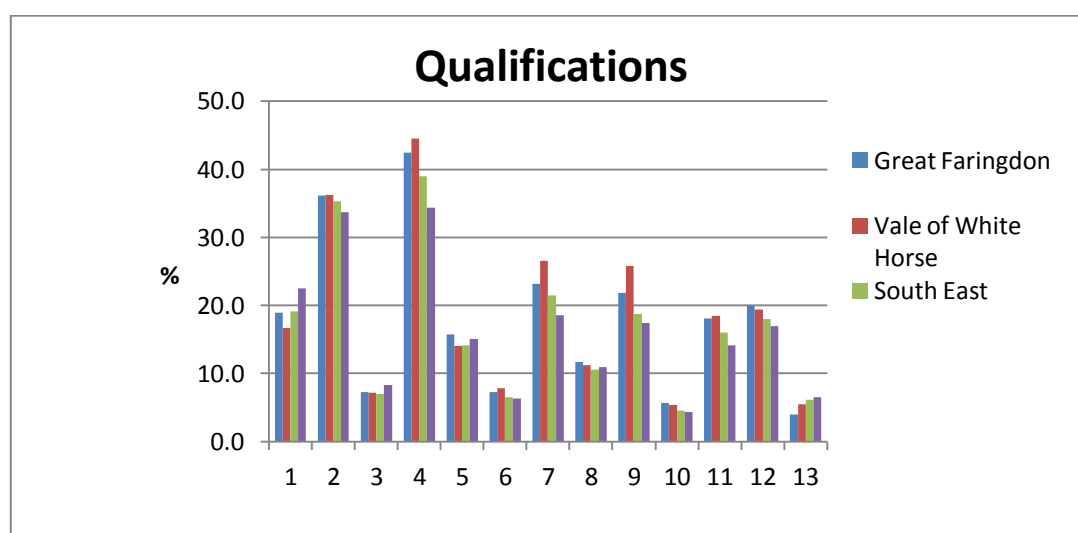


Fig. 20: Comparative qualifications at the 2011 census (KS502EW)

Key

- 1 No qualifications
- 2 1-4 O levels/CSE/GCSEs (any grades), Entry Level, Foundation Diploma
- 3 NVQ Level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic Skills
- 4 5+ O level (Passes)/CSEs (Grade 1)/GCSEs (Grades A*-C), School Certificate, 1 A level/2-3 AS levels/VCEs, Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Intermediate Diploma
- 5 NVQ Level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First/General Diploma, RSA Diploma
- 6 Apprenticeship
- 7 2+ A levels/VCEs, 4+ AS levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression/Advanced Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma
- 8 NVQ Level 3, Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma
- 9 Degree (for example BA, BSc), Higher degree (for example MA, PhD, PGCE)
- 10 NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher Level
- 11 Professional qualifications (for example teaching, nursing, accountancy)
- 12 Other vocational/work-related qualifications
- 13 Foreign qualifications

Place of birth

To explain the comparatively low number of foreign qualifications, Figure 21 shows that in 2011 Faringdon had a greater proportion of UK born residents than elsewhere. At the 2011 census, 91.9% of Faringdon residents had been born in the UK, 0.5% in Ireland, 2.7% in the EU and 4.9% elsewhere; hence, the 8.1% born outside the UK probably account for the majority of foreign qualifications.

Proficiency in English

Figure 22 reflects the data in Figure 21 showing that Faringdon residents being mainly indigenous are more proficient in English than elsewhere.

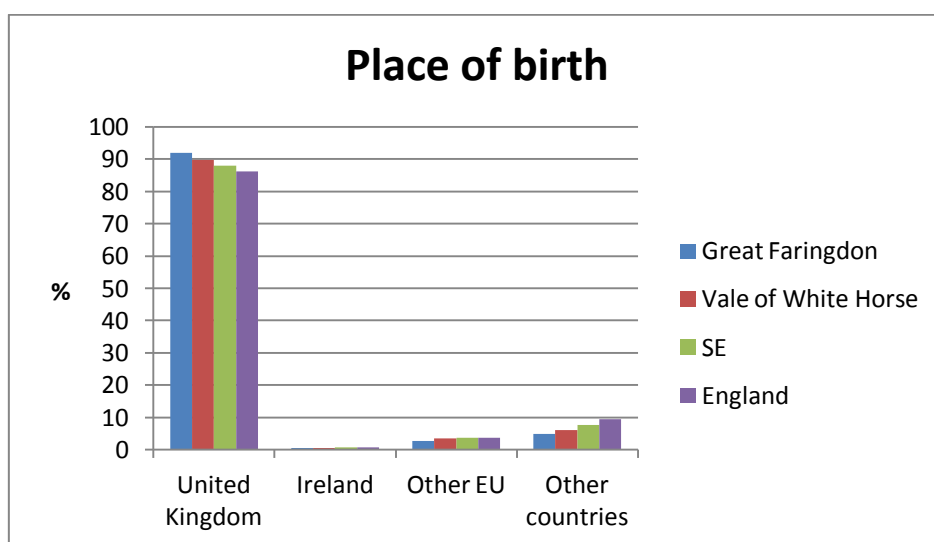


Fig. 21: Showing place of birth at the 2011 census (KS204EW)

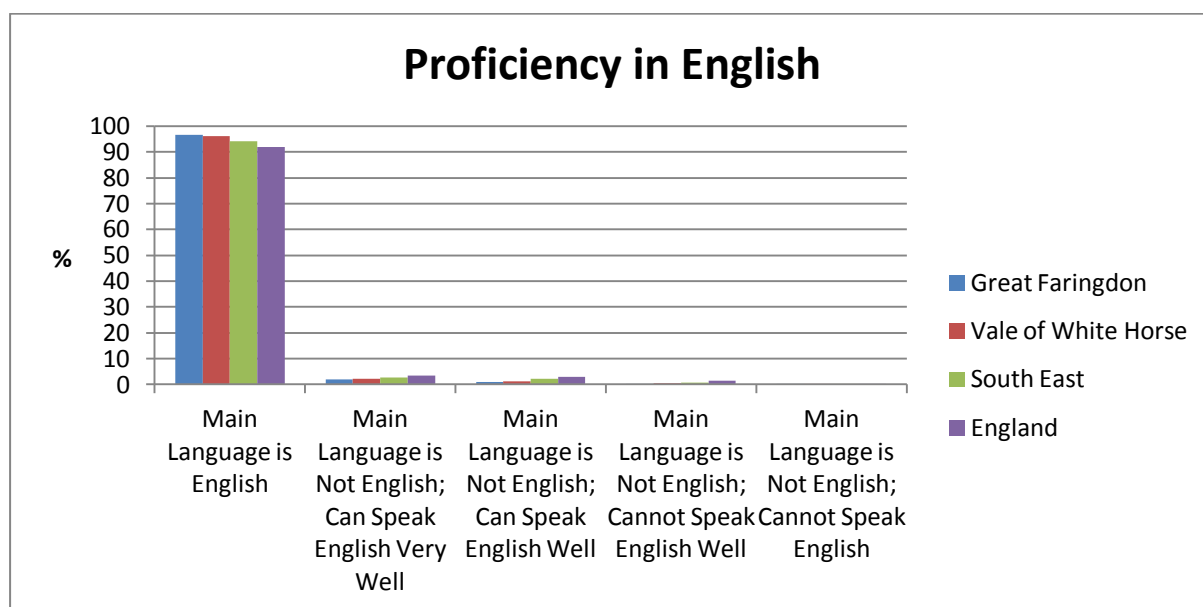


Fig. 22: Showing proficiency in English at the 2011 census (QS205EW)

Community facility provision: Health

The parish is served by two GP surgeries: the White Horse Medical Practice and the Fern Hill Practice. Both GP surgeries are based in the Health Centre on Volunteer Way, outside the town centre. There are two pharmacies, one optician and one dentist (taking private and NHS patients). Ferendune (Anchor Homes) on Ash Close provides care for the elderly for the district, but no longer offers intermediate or respite care.

The typical list size for a full time GP in Oxfordshire is around 2,000 patients. The Oxfordshire PCT has periodically contacted all its practices to ascertain the stresses on the system and more particularly whether practices have spare capacity in their premises to take on additional patients. When this was last carried out both Faringdon practices reported that they had no space issues and could both take on additional patients, at least to the level of growth anticipated at the time which would have included the planned housing developments at Folly Park View and Sandhill.

In October 2012 the patient list sizes were as follows:

- White Horse Medical Practice –9,939
- Fern Hill Medical Practice – 4,425

The White Horse Practice has nine registered GPs (although not all are full time) and the Fern Hill Practice has three GPs.

Local stakeholders have voiced concern about the capacity of local doctor surgeries and medical provision to cope with an expanding and ageing population in Faringdon. A key concern is access to out-of-hours and emergency health care, which is not currently provided for in the town.

A senior GP in the town indicated that GP surgery hours have increased to deal with the increased population, and this could continue as the population grows. At present, the out of hours GP service is provided through Witney Hospital (covering all evenings and all weekends). An out-of-hours visit by a GP can mean he/she travels from Henley 37 miles away.

Local stakeholders raised the following concerns with respect to health provision:

- The present GP practices were not big enough when they moved from Coxwell Road.
- Now with all the extra housing already built and proposed new houses it will be painfully inefficient.
- Space for the community in the areas of new housing is likely to be important as new housing grows.
- GP services are already stretched. A second health centre or extension of an existing one will probably be needed if the population grows more.
- Out of hours GP services should be provided within the town.

Community facility provision: Elderly and disabled care

At present there are two Day Centre facilities for the elderly in Faringdon: the Faringdon/Bromsgrove Day Centre, run by an independent charity, meeting every Monday and Thursday in the old Baptist Church; and Oakwood Day Centre, run by Age UK, meeting Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at Oakwood. Both of these have limited facilities to cope with disabled clients (including those with dementia), and there are no apparent day centres in Faringdon for younger disabled people. The nearest facility for Tier 3 elderly and disabled (i.e. needing specialised facilities and staff) is in Wantage. The growth of Faringdon and the increasing proportion of elderly in the population could result in the number aged over 65 nearly doubling by 2029, with the number aged over 75-80 likely to increase even more.

Ferendune Court is a nursing home for those recovering from illness or injury, as well as residents for long-term stays. In 2009 Ferendune Court had 48 beds (used by the following GP practices: Elmtree, Shrivenham; White Horse and Fernhill, Faringdon):

- Nursing wing: this had 6 short term beds and 3 long term. Short stay beds were discontinued from 10th February 2014 and intermediate care beds from 31st March 2014 as being no longer financially viable. Anchor, the owners, declined to retender to the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Residential: 39 separate flats
- Intermediate care beds are no longer available; this means elderly people discharged from hospital have to be cared for elsewhere. There are no longer any respite beds.

The impression is that ageing, poorly people from Faringdon are often cared for in Witney, or farther afield, as there are now no intermediate care beds available Faringdon. Local stakeholders have expressed concern about this as this situation makes it difficult for the patient and their relatives, particularly those without access to a car, as there is no public transport link to Witney.

Coxwell Hall provides residential care for, mostly, patients with dementia. No details of numbers of rooms or catchment for patients are known.

Local stakeholders have raised the following concerns regarding elderly care:

- Given the ageing population, it is important that there are more nursing residential services in Faringdon.
- The government initiatives to keep sick people in their own homes will require more respite services to be available locally.
- Improved nursing and residential care needs to be provided within the town.
- Local stakeholders suggest that space should be allocated for a building similar to the Health & Wellbeing Centres in Witney, Abingdon, Didcot, Wantage, Oxford, Banbury and Wallingford. These would be used by Tier 2 and 3 elderly and disabled during most days of the week, but would be available in the evenings and weekends for other purposes.

A 64 unit Extra Care Home is planned for the Sandhill development.

Community facility provision: Leisure and culture

Leisure

The Leisure and Community sub-group has considered the community provision in Faringdon in detail. Their views and assessment can be viewed in full in the appendices with the main points summarised here. A Leisure and Sports Facility Strategy consultation was undertaken for the Vale⁴⁵ by Nortoft Partnerships in October 2012. The Leisure Centre was opened in 1990 and the pool in 1997. A survey report in 2005 indicated that certain items needed attention with a budget cost of £77,000. The 2012 survey reports that Faringdon has a 50% usage (cf. 100% at Abingdon) and recommends no further development, only improvement to existing facilities, despite the increase in housing. It does, however, recommend the siting of an artificial grass pitch as part of developer contributions.

Faringdon offers a number of leisure opportunities to its residents but essentially it is also a local hub for a large rural area ranging from Kingston Bagpuize and Fyfield in the east, Shrivenham in the west, Bampton in the north and Stanford-in-the-Vale in the south. Because of this, it needs to manage the diverse needs of a large number of people and have a large variety of opportunities available. Many people travel to Oxford or Swindon for large entertainment venues and options, or to Wantage, Witney, Abingdon and Didcot for some

⁴⁵<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/VoWH%20Main%20Report%20CONSULTATION%20DRAFT%20141112.pdf>

resources. The town cannot hope to compete with the options in Swindon or Oxford but can offer residents better choice without needing to travel such great distances.

Faringdon is reasonably well supplied with sporting facilities: new cricket and rugby pitches, tennis courts (The Tennis Club is relocating to Folly Park and there are Town Council courts at Woodview), a skate park on the Folly Park site, football pitches at Tuckers Park (Faringdon Town Football Club), a Bowls Club, and the Leisure Centre with swimming pool, gym, squash and badminton courts.

Faringdon has a number of play areas for children: Marlborough Gardens, Pitts Park (in Pye Street), Tuckers Park, Oakwood Park, Coleshill Drive and Volunteer Way. These are all relatively small 'town style' parks for younger children with limited scope for teenagers.

At present, Faringdon has few facilities devoted to entertainment, outside of a number of public houses. The theatre behind the Pump House has a maximum capacity of about 200 (due to the number of fire exits) and local stakeholders have indicated this needs complete refurbishment, if not total redevelopment of the site. It is currently being used by a Parkour and community group who have partially refurbished the facility. The intention is to re-establish it as a performance venue when funds are available. The Corn Exchange is used as a cinema on a monthly basis, which attracts capacity (~125) audiences, and is often used for wedding receptions, dinners and dinner-dances. Its use for amplified music is restricted because of noise disturbance to people living nearby; however, live music can be provided for social functions provided it is not excessively loud. The Junior School hall is used by the Faringdon Dramatic Society and as a music venue; however, there is a limit to the number of performances that can be mounted each year.

Religion and culture

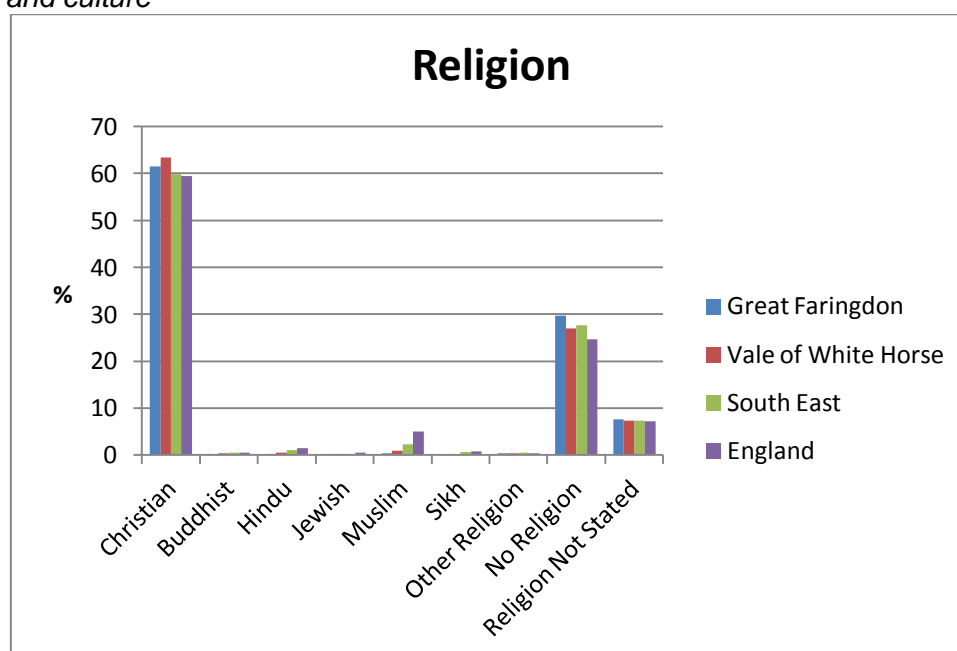


Fig. 23: Showing comparative religion at the 2011 census (KS209EW)

Figure 23 shows the predominant religion to be Christian, which is probably to be expected from the mainly UK born population shown in Figure 21. However, as of 2011, Faringdon had slightly fewer believers than the Vale and proportionally more non-religionists than elsewhere. Nevertheless, Faringdon churches are well supported and a notable feature of the town. There is a strong ecumenical base, with the five churches: All Saints' (Church of England), the Parish Church of Blessed St Hugh (Roman Catholic), Faringdon Baptist Church, Faringdon United Church and the Quaker Meeting House (Religious Society of

Friends) united as 'Faringdon Churches Together'⁴⁶. Through this body the churches share services, meetings and community activities.

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

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

The greatest need is for the Scouts/Cubs/Beavers/ Explorers, who are currently using St Hugh's School and the Theatre; the Guides/Brownies/ Rainbows use the United Church Hall. A list of venues is attached as Appendix 5a.

Allotments are becoming increasingly popular and at present the c.200 allotments in Canada Lane are insufficient for the demand. There are currently (October 2013) 79 on the waiting list. The allotments are owned by the National Trust of which 26 full-size and 12 half-size plots are administered by the Town Council.

Local stakeholders have raised the following issues with respect to community provision of leisure, culture and related services:

- There is generally good sports provision in the area but there are opportunities for further consolidation and improvement.
- There are good local play facilities for younger children but the town lacks facilities for older children.
- A project to deliver a Faringdon Folly Country Park, linked with the recent new sports facilities could help to provide spaces for families and older children.
- Existing facilities for young people are in very peripheral locations.
- A place for live music/entertainment is needed.
- The church halls are not as well used as they could be.
- The Scout Association is currently using St Hughes Cricket Pavilion, which requires a drive out of town. A community centre for youth clubs and associations is needed, however the most likely sites are on the periphery of the town.

Community facility provision: Family and youth provision

A number of parents and young people who use the current family orientated facilities were asked for their views on Faringdon. This included young mothers at the Children's Centre, teenagers who use the FAZE youth centre, children at the Breakfast Club at the Family Centre and skate park users. A summary of the key issues identified is set out below:

- Getting about around the town could be made easier and safer – key issues include crossing the road in the Market Place.
- The Skate Park and FAZE are too far out of town and separate.
- There are very few indoor activities for young people.
- Public transport links to Witney and Abingdon could be much better to help young people access other facilities.

⁴⁶ <http://www.ctfaringdon.org.uk/>

Priorities / principles / policies

A review of the strategic policy context suggests that the following aspects are important for Faringdon's Neighbourhood Plan:

- Existing sport and recreation facilities are to be protected and all new housing developments should either provide or contribute to appropriate open space, sport and recreation facilities. (Vale Community Strategy)
- Good access to health facilities across the District should be ensured. (Vale Community Strategy)
- Specialist housing suited to those residents with special needs including the elderly should be provided. (Vale Community Strategy)
- Developers should be encouraged to provide more 'Lifetime Homes' (i.e. homes that can be easily adapted to meet the changing needs of older residents). (Vale Community Strategy)
- Financial contributions should be sought towards public transport services and infrastructure from significant new developments. (Vale Community Strategy)
- Major residential developments should provide local services such as shops and community facilities. (Vale Community Strategy)
- Developers should be required to provide a significant proportion of affordable housing on new development sites. (Vale Community Strategy)
- The quality of housing design should be improved to meet sustainable design objectives.
- Overall life expectancy should be improved and health inequalities tackled (Oxfordshire Public Health Strategy).
- There should be housing provision for single people in new developments.

Information gaps

The 2011 census provided a good snapshot of Faringdon. The uncontrolled population growth expected as a result of the National Planning Policy Framework and the lack of a Local Plan and of a five year housing land supply is going to put considerable strain on local services. There is need to identify essential infrastructure provision (health, education, elderly care, leisure facilities) to meet the needs of this growing population.

Direction of travel

Faringdon is a small market town and local stakeholders have a desire to see it stay as such. Most stakeholders are keen to see some growth in order to support the viability of the town as a whole, but many are nervous about seeing growth extend beyond a 10,000 population. One aspect which has come through strongly from the evidence and stakeholder input is a desire to see a rebalancing of the housing stock to ensure Faringdon welcomes all household types. In practice this would mean a reduction in the provision of new affordable units, matched with a preference for larger market sale units which local people feel Faringdon lacks. However, this is against Vale policy.

Faringdon is an attractive town and will continue to prove popular with residents seeking to move to an established and historic location, close to major towns and cities while offering a more rural setting. As such, it is likely that demand for new homes will remain healthy and that new homes should reflect the mix of population. The provision of well-sized family homes as well as smaller, more affordable homes should be considered. The provision of outside space and car parking will offer buyers what they need and help maintain values and sales.

Faringdon has many attributes attractive to young families, with good schools, good community facilities and affordable housing. However, local schools are operating over capacity and the Faringdon Academy of Schools is looking at how future demand could best

be met. Addressing this important issue will be critical to Faringdon remaining an attractive location to bring up children.

There is a desire to address the growing health and elderly provision needs proactively, with many keen to see a Health and Wellbeing Centre in Faringdon that would bring together elderly care and wider medical facilities. However, this is not supported by the County Council⁴⁷.

Faringdon residents have jointly established the concept of a Faringdon Country Park. It is envisaged that this could address many of the issues associated with leisure provision and open space in the parish. This proposal is covered in more detail in the Natural Environment section.

There is a desire to see a new multi-use community facility that would provide space for cultural, community and leisure activities. The viability of such a venue will need to be fully assessed as the demand and funding for such a venue cannot be confirmed at this stage.

There are a number of facilities catering for young people in the parish; however, these are generally on the periphery of the town and some distance from each other. The medium-long term aspiration should be to bring facilities together and into more accessible locations. The Faringdon Country Park would provide an important opportunity to provide play for older children and could be an early win in this regard.

⁴⁷ Oxfordshire County Council Response to the FNP consultation

TRANSPORT

This chapter explores the evidence and emerging issues related to transport and movement to and around Faringdon and covers the following themes:

- Travel patterns
- Public transport provision
- Walking and cycling
- Highways
- Car ownership
- Parking provision
- Road safety

The following sources of information have been used to build up a picture of the key movement and transport issues under these themes:

County / sub-regional level studies / strategies	Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2030
District level studies / strategies	Analysis of travel patterns of people living in new homes built between 2001 and 2007 in the Vale of White Horse (2008)
Faringdon specific studies / strategies	Faringdon Healthcheck (transport section)
Other relevant studies / information sources	Bus data information
Local expertise and input	Transport and roads group submission (July 2012)
Additional analysis by AMUP team	Urban design analysis – structure of town and inter-connections

Context

Faringdon is located between Oxford to the north-east and Swindon to the south-west on the A420, the principal strategic transport connection between these centres. Prior to the opening of the bypass in 1979, the A420 passed through the town centre resulting in serious congestion exacerbated by the regular passage of lorries carrying car bodies from the Pressed-Steel Fisher plant in Swindon to British Leyland's Cowley plant in Oxford. Although the bypass reduced the amount of traffic travelling through the historic core of the town, the growth in the town's population and the heavy reliance on private cars, owing to the relatively limited public transport connections available, means that the three exits from the town onto the A420 can become heavily congested at peak periods

Key issues and implications

Travel patterns

Travel patterns within Faringdon are influenced by the town's relatively isolated geographical location within the district. Faringdon has been described as the least sustainable settlement in the district as a result of the high percentages of local residents recorded as having to travel farther than 5 km for various activities including: employment, education, main food shopping, top-up food shopping, non-food shopping and recreation. In a survey⁴⁸, Faringdon scored the worst out of all the settlements in the district in the ranking of these activities:

- A high proportion of people in Faringdon, relative to the other settlements in the district, travel particularly long distances for work, food shopping and non-food shopping.
- Most residents in Faringdon travelled to Swindon (15-30 km) for their main shopping both food and non-food. This centre was also used for recreational activities.

⁴⁸ Analysis of travel patterns of people living in new homes built between 2001 and 2007 in the Vale of White Horse'. Document commissioned by the Vale of White Horse District Council, July 2008.

- 78% of residents in Faringdon did not travel elsewhere for top-up shopping, but used the local town centre.
- 80% of people in Faringdon used a private car to drive to work, the highest of all the settlements in the Vale. Fewer people in Faringdon cycled or took the bus to work than in any other town in the district. (See Figure 14)
- 42% of people in Faringdon moved to the town for their job. However, long distances were commuted from the town with 42% of people travelling 15-30 km (Swindon). A further 34% of people travelled farther than 30 km.
- In only 14% of households did all members stay in Faringdon during the day.
- Residents commented that they wanted to see the town centre improved to reduce their need to travel.

Public transport provision

Public transport provision to and from Faringdon, whilst comparative in range to other settlements of its size, does not meet the aspirations of local people and there is a high dependency on the private car.

There is no longer a railway station within the town (nearest Swindon 13 miles, while Oxford and Didcot are both 19 miles distant). Reopening Challow station or delivering existing proposals for a new station north of Wantage would help with accessibility and reduce road traffic for Faringdon and many other settlements in the area.

Faringdon has a relatively good range of bus services for a town of its size; however, there is scope to improve links to some nearby towns other than the well-served Oxford to Swindon route., Witney, Highworth, Lechlade and Abingdon, to which there are currently no direct bus services, would be key examples in order to provide access to public services (including a hospital minor injuries unit), leisure facilities and higher-order shopping.

The Swindon to Oxford 66 bus service is half-hourly to both Oxford and Swindon during working hours, but would benefit from being extended into the evenings. Section 106 contributions are currently being collected towards improving this service to provide three buses per hour in each direction, and there should also be improvements to evening and Sunday bus services as part of this package⁴⁹.

The current road layout and street furniture in the centre of Faringdon, does not make it easy for buses to manoeuvre.

Another problem arises from the increased traffic on the A420 especially in peak periods which makes it difficult for buses to make the right turn from Coxwell Road onto the A420 towards Swindon. Although planning applications for new estates on Coxwell Road have proposed the creation of either a traffic island⁵⁰ or refuge to alleviate this problem, there will still be a problem owing to the amount of traffic coming from the Swindon direction with priority from the right.

Hence, there is a need for active traffic control at this and the Park Road junctions, to enable access onto the A420 in peak periods. Drivers and passengers can experience long delays at these junctions and this is likely to get worse as a result of the increased traffic from the 8,000 houses planned in the west of Swindon, the two new estates comprising 800 houses exiting on to Park Road and the two new estates comprising 400 houses exiting on to Coxwell Road.

There is an aspiration to achieve 'real time' information at bus stops, and to improve bus services to and from surrounding areas.

⁴⁹ Oxfordshire County Council Section 106 requests for Fernham Fields P13/V0139/O, The Steeds P13/V1102/O.

⁵⁰ Planning application for The Steeds P13/V1102/O

Current bus services:

Destination	Frequency
Services from Faringdon town centre	
Oxford-Swindon; service 66	From Oxford: Mon-Sat, every 30 mins from 7:00 until 18:45 then hourly until 20:50, with a final service 23:25. Sundays, every hour from 10:45 to 18:45pm. To Oxford: every 30 mins from 6:11 (6:36 Sat) to 17:53 then ~hourly until 20:01 then 22:41. From Swindon: Mon-Sat, every 30 mins from 5:40 to 18:15, then only 19:30 and 22:10. Sun: hourly from 9:15 to 18:15. To Swindon: Mon-Sat: every 30 mins from 6:38 (8:00 Sat) to 19:27 then hourly until 21:29 then 00:08. Sun, hourly from 9:27 to 19:27.
Wantage; services 67/A/B	Weekdays, To Wantage via Fernham, Shellingford, Stanford in the Vale every 2 hours from 7:50 to 17:55; 9:05 only goes via villages to Uffington, Kingston Lisle, etc. From Wantage: every 2 hours from 7:20 to 17:05, with 12:35 via villages.
Swindon via villages Fernham, Longcot, Shriveham, Bourton, South Marston; service 65	From Swindon: weekdays 12:00, 13:50, 17:45 plus 9:00 Saturdays To Swindon: 9:52, 12:52 plus 14:52 Saturdays.
Burford/Fulbrook via Clanfield and Carterton; service 113	Thursdays only; three buses from Fulbrook: 9:05, 10:35, 13:05; two buses from Faringdon: 9:50, 12:00.
Great Coxwell; FCB service 61	Mon-Fri, 4 buses between 8am and 1pm (Faringdon Community Bus)
Services in nearby villages	There are several services to neighbouring towns and villages that can only be accessed via a larger destination; e.g. Swindon, Witney, Carterton. N.B. There is no direct bus access to these starting points
Witney and Carterton (Swindon-Witney; service 64) (via Lechlade)	Mon-Sat, from Lechlade every 2 hours to Witney from 9:10 to 18:12
Witney and Carterton (Carterton-Witney; service 19) (via Clanfield)	Mon-Sat, from Clanfield: every hour to Witney between 6:56 and 18:21; to Carterton 7:27, then every hour from 9:05 to 16:05, then 17:25 and 18:25.
Cirencester–Lechlade; service 77 via A417	Mon-Sat, from Lechlade, 5 services between 7:30 and 17:17 every 2-3 hours during the day. Cirencester 5 services daily between 8:30 and 18:00. No Sunday service
Key destinations not directly accessible	
Abingdon	Accessed either from Southmoor, service X15, or Oxford; both accessed by service 66. Service X15 to Abingdon runs weekdays only at 7:30 (school term only), then two hourly from 8:21 until 14:27, then 16:27 (school term only) then 17:32. Service 66 arrives in Southmoor at 7:25, 7:47, 8:30, 9:05 then at 35 and 05 past. This usually requires at least a 20 minute wait with no Sunday service.
Witney	Accessed either from Southmoor, service X15 or Oxford service S1 (regular service weekdays and Sundays 20-30 mins), both accessed by service 66. Service X15 to Witney runs weekdays only at 8:25 (school term only), 9:21 then two hourly from 11:14 until 15:14, then 17:26 (school term only) then 18:29. Service 66 arrives in Southmoor at 7:25, 7:47, 8:30, 9:05 then at 35 and 05 past.
Highworth	Accessed from Swindon; service 7, every 10 minutes
Lechlade	Accessed from Swindon; service 64
Didcot/Milton Park/Harwell	Accessed from Wantage; service 32 or Oxford; service X32

From Swindon, there are regular services to Cirencester (services 51 and 53), Cheltenham (service 51), Devizes and Trowbridge (service 490), Calne and Chippenham (service 55), Salisbury (service X5). From Oxford, there are regular services to Banbury (service S4), Bicester (service S5), Chipping Norton (Service S3), Thame and Aylesbury (service 280), Wallingford and Reading (services (X39 and X40).



Fig. 24: Plan of Faringdon highlighting road network and the town's relationship with the by-pass (A420 to Oxford and Swindon)

Comments on public transport

- There is currently no bus station and public bus stops are in the market square.
- A community bus service Route 61 (volunteer run) operates in Faringdon that provides an hourly service on weekday mornings around town and also provides some trips to further afield. This service should receive further support.
- Access to the rail network is relatively poor from Faringdon and local stakeholders would like to see a 'Parkway' railway station opened either at East Challow or Grove with a connecting bus service.
- Stakeholders have suggested the following extensions are needed to bus services:
 - To Clanfield (4 miles) for access to Witney or direct to Witney
 - A more frequent service to Wantage and a direct service to Abingdon
 - Additional late evening buses to and from Oxford and Swindon
 - Direct access to the major employment sites at Harwell and Milton Park

Nevertheless, bus usage on the 66 route has grown considerably. The response to the consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan from Stagecoach West asked that consideration be given to spending more developer funding on buses because: *'it is indeed that kind of funding which has helped initially boost the 66 to its current half hour frequency and 80% passenger growth which the writer would have almost failed to believe was possible given the relative low density of population along the line of the whole route!'*

Walking and cycling

Pedestrians and cyclists are not particularly well catered for in the town.

- Generally, pavements within Faringdon are old and uneven. Some are very narrow particularly in areas of The Corn Market, London Street and Marlborough Street. This can make moving around the town centre difficult for the elderly, those in wheelchairs, with impaired mobility or with a pushchair. There is also a lack of clear, readable signage for pedestrians. A full audit of footways is needed to identify the improvements required within the town centre.
- Housing is mainly to the south and south-west of the town centre. This results in greater distances for some to walk into the centre of town than would be the case if the residential areas were more evenly spread around the town centre. This potentially reduces the number of people who are prepared to walk. However, the vast majority of housing within Faringdon is within a 15 minute walk of the centre.

Walking enthusiasts and groups in the town have been contacted for their views on wider walking connections into the countryside. Given Faringdon's position within an attractive rural setting one would expect there to be good access into the countryside, and hopefully a number of circular walks which local people and visitors can enjoy. Those consulted have indicated that there are indeed a number of walks enjoyed by local residents. The Faringdon Health Walks, set up five years ago under the Walking for Health Initiative runs two circular walks every Wednesday leaving from the Market Place. One walk is a 40 minute steady pace walk and the second a 60-80 minute faster pace walk. There are over 30 walkers involved with around 20 walkers joining each week.

Having the town centre (Market Place) so close the countryside is a major bonus for walks such as these as access to the countryside is gained immediately via Church Path. The experience of these walkers over the last few years has highlighted some footpaths and access points which could be improved to encourage greater use:



Fig. 25: Walking distances to Faringdon town centre

- The footpath beyond Church Path Farm, towards Grove Cottage slopes steeply and is too dangerous when wet or frosty. Additionally, it is often overgrown and impassable, in spite of the group's best efforts with secateurs. At present this route is not family friendly and is unsuitable for cyclists.
- Vigorous under and overgrowth of vegetation is often a problem for walkers generally seeking to access the countryside from Faringdon. In addition some cross-field paths can cause problems when not reinstated after ploughing.
- The walks often take in Folly Hill and, via Nursery View, Folly Park, although the path needs to be re-established once the building work is complete. There is a good track around the cricket ground, but the access to Folly Park needs to be improved.
- For safety reasons the group prefers to avoid crossing the A420. However, to create a variety of longer walks the members cross at the roundabout on the Wantage Road then take the footpath to Wicklesham Farm, then re-cross the A420 close to the Park Road roundabout. The group also have to be very careful crossing Park Road between the roundabout and garage.
- Occasionally, mothers with toddlers in pushchairs have joined the group but, apart from Folly Hill, it is almost impossible to find suitable routes for them to access the countryside on this side of the Town.
- There are no suitable longer walks from Faringdon and therefore the group choose to drive to and from Coleshill when members wish to take in a longer route.

The Secretary of the local Ramblers Association has highlighted that as Oxfordshire County Council's funds are limited in these economic times, the Vale Ramblers have set up a working party that works in co-operation with the Council, and some on-going problems are being solved in this way.

Other residents have provided comments on walking routes elsewhere. In particular there appears to be a lack of suitable safe walking routes to access the countryside on the western and southern side of town. Indeed, even some of the routes highlighted in the Faringdon Walking Guide to walk through the urban area and out to the countryside cannot be used owing to private fences. Crossing the A420 was highlighted by many stakeholders as a major issue for pedestrians. There is a feeling locally that this crossing is an accident waiting to happen, and, therefore, local people tend to drive out of Faringdon in order to go for a walk to the south.

It has been suggested that establishing a safe crossing over the A420, at the junction with Fernham Road, for both pedestrians and cyclists should be a priority for the Neighbourhood Plan, and that future development should contribute towards delivering this. In addition, consideration needs to be given to the improving the approaches to either side of the A420 at Fernham Road. Two short stretches of dedicated and set-back pavement would make for a much safer environment for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. These small interventions would make an important step towards better access to the countryside to the south. However, the provision of pedestrian and cycle bridges would be the ideal scenario, and this is increasingly considered a necessary output that should be delivered by future development on the south side of town.

There should be more encouragement of cycling in the town centre because of its positive effects on health, finances and the environment. There are currently poor cycle connections and infrastructure within residential areas and into the town centre. A number of suggestions to improve facilities include:

- Better signage and publicity of routes and events.
- Improved links between important destinations and the town centre; e.g. health centre, schools, leisure centre. Additionally, the introduction of longer distance cycle routes out of the town centre, linking with other towns.

- Where new housing is built, ensuring cycle lanes are included.
- Using separate cycle lanes, where possible, on current grass verges to make them safer to use and to include crossing and refuge points at busy junctions.
- Provide more cycle parking in the town centre to encourage people to cycle into Faringdon.

The Farcycles group in Faringdon prepared a comprehensive report⁵¹ in 2009 setting out the cycle links needed to support a more joined-up network to encourage cycling in and around the parish. The connections shown in Figures 26a-b were proposed.

A wider set of inter-settlement routes were proposed as longer term aspirations that would help to support longer distance cycling, they were:

- Faringdon – Swindon
- Faringdon – Wantage
- Faringdon – Oxford
- Faringdon – Lechlade

These wider links will require significant investigation and cross-agency partnership working to deliver. Obvious routes away from major vehicular roads to link Faringdon to these settlements are limited, and achieving safe cycle routes on these roads may be challenging due to their narrow width.

Highways

Faringdon has a clear road hierarchy:

- The A420 is approximately one mile from the town centre (single carriageway – no plans to improve this) and there is good access to it along Park Road which provides the key route from the town centre to Oxford and Swindon.
- The A417 from Wantage and the A4095 pass through the town heading for Lechlade and Witney, respectively. Neither is particularly heavily used and traffic on the A417 does not go through the town centre.
- Locally there is a network of routes through the town centre, predominantly the central arterial route through the historic core that the A420 now bypasses. Connections to other villages and back to the A420 span from this main route.
- Residential roads connect to this local network. The vast majority of these roads are cul-de-sacs (highlighted in red in Figure 27) resulting in a relatively impermeable and disjointed access to large proportions of the residential neighbourhoods in the town centre.

Speeding is considered a problem on a number of roads in the town, in particular London Road, Park Road, Lechlade Road and Highworth Road.

Local stakeholders have highlighted a number of issues with congestion, often caused by illegal parking, in the town centre. There is a local desire for a traffic study to be undertaken to identify improvements which could be made to ease congestion, whilst also enhancing the pedestrian experience. Some suggestions put forward include:

- Better enforcement of existing speed limits.
- Introduction of a 20 mph limit where appropriate.
- Introduce effective traffic calming measures and remove speed humps.
- Re-surface key areas to enhance the experience and appearance of areas where pedestrians and traffic are currently in conflict.

⁵¹ http://www.faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk/files/resourcesmodule/@random4c12155f58a6f/1276254031_Final_Report_June_2010_Appendix_vi_Faringdon_Cycle_Network.pdf

- Review on-street parking restrictions and enforce these better.
- Review one-way system to improve traffic flow.



Fig. 26a: proposed cycle routes within Faringdon
(Source: Farcycles report, 2009)

Within Faringdon

- Faringdon Market Place to a new hub at the south end of Southampton Street, where a series of cycle routes would come together
- From this hub to Faringdon Community College
- From the hub to North East Faringdon
- From the hub to the Medical Centre
- Faringdon Community College to West Faringdon

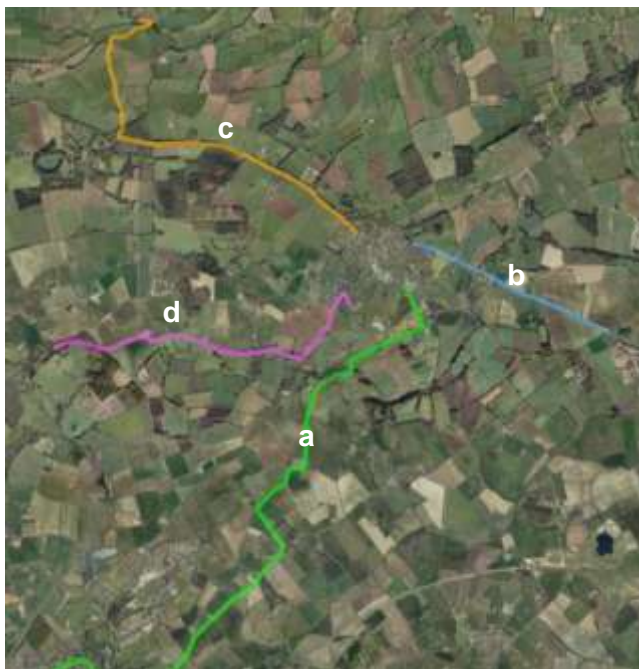


Fig. 26b: proposed cycle routes Faringdon links
(Source: Farcycles report, 2009)

Faringdon Links

- From the Medical Centre to Shrivenham
- Faringdon Market Place to the A417/B4508 intersection
- Faringdon Market Place to Kelmscott via the A417
- Faringdon Market Place to Coleshill



Fig. 27: Plan highlighting the hierarchy of roads in Faringdon and the prevalence of cul-de-sacs

Key  Cul de-sac or no through route

Car ownership

Much like everywhere else, car ownership in Faringdon has increased significantly over the last 50 years, putting increasing pressure on road infrastructure and parking. The opening of the bypass means that the town now experiences much less congestion than in similar sized towns although congestion within the town centre is considered to be an issue, particularly at the start and end of school and working days.

The 2011 census indicates that Faringdon's vehicle ownership per household, Figure 28, is lower than that of the Vale's with 15.2% of Faringdon households without a vehicle compared to 13.1% at District level; however, this is much lower than the national average where 25.8% do not have access to a vehicle. Single car ownership in Faringdon is typical of the national average at 42%, but multiple car ownership, while higher than the national average is lower than that in the Vale.

Parking provision

There are two District Council owned car parks in the town centre: one on Southampton Street and the other off Gloucester Street. These car parks are ticketed Monday to Saturday, from 8 am until 6 pm, and are free all day on Sundays. Parking is free for the first two hours, but a valid ticket must be displayed at all times - including the free two hours. The car parking capacity in the town centre comprises the following spaces:

- Southampton Street – 69 spaces
- Gloucester Street – 52 spaces
- Market Place – 25 spaces

The Tesco supermarket car park has over 150 spaces and is not currently restricted.

Data on parking comparing years 2009-10 and 2010-2011 indicated that the combined income from the Gloucester Street and Southampton Street car parks for equivalent nine month periods had fallen by 13% for excess charges and by 10% for pay-and-display. Permits for Southampton Street were down 59% with day permits up 45%. Since then two hours free car parking has been introduced making comparisons difficult, but the indication was that car parking revenue was falling year on year.

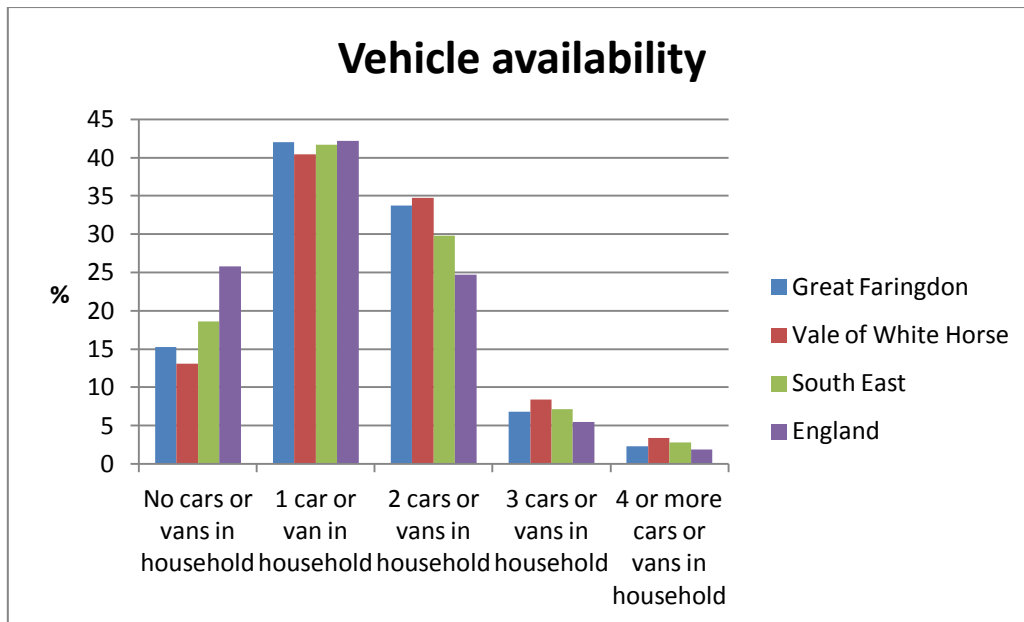


Fig. 28: Car or van availability 2011 at the 2011 census KS404EW

On-street parking is in heavy demand in the town centre. Whilst double yellow lines border the streets throughout the core of the historic town centre, these are not always respected and there is significant anecdotal and observed evidence that such infringements are causing congestion within the town centre.

Faringdon was once a stop on long distance coach routes; however, access to the town centre is difficult and there are no longer coach parking spaces. Local stakeholders would like to see greater provision for coaches to support connections generally and the visitor economy. A coach park as well as formal coach drop off area should be considered.

There are a number of parking issues in Faringdon:

- Much of the free on-street parking provision in the town centre is used by those who drive into the town for work. It is suggested that a new car park is provided with a very low rate for all day parking to encourage people to park off-street.
- The number of off road car parking spaces (121 spaces) has not increased since 2004. This needs addressing for those visiting, working and shopping in the town centre.
- Single and double yellow lines in the town centre need reviewing to help ease congestion. These also need stronger enforcement with more traffic wardens to control illegal parking.
- There should be a use of bollards in some places to prevent verge parking in key problem locations.
- Significant congestion is caused on Canada Lane/Lechlade Road, Gloucester Street and Fernham Road by parents parking to collect and drop off their children at the schools located there.
- The use of a residents parking scheme in some of the key congestion areas would help to assist with traffic flow (Marlborough Street, Gloucester Street, Coxwell Street and London Street).
- Coach and bus parking also needs to be reviewed in the town centre to encourage coach routes into Faringdon and an increase in school buses.
- A review of possible locations for a coach and long stay car park should be undertaken.

Road safety

Generally, road safety is good in Faringdon with no serious/fatal accidents reported within the town over the last five years.

The following issues exist:

- There is a need for stronger local signage and way-finding devices to help people and car users navigate through the town centre.
- Faringdon does not suffer with a town-wide congestion problem, but an increase in traffic volume at peak periods causes vehicles to move slowly through the centre to access the A420.
- Legal and illegal parking in the town centre causes congestion at a number of key junctions in the town centre and at school pick-up and drop-off times.
- A strategy is needed for reviewing road safety improvements and parking arrangements that cause congestion.

Priorities / principles / policies

Key local policies for Faringdon within the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan (2011-30)⁵² include:

- Improving facilities for all pedestrians by developing clear routes from residential areas to the town centre and other key services and facilities.
- Developing new cycle routes and ensuring that the best cycle links between residential areas and local services, schools, employment areas and Regional Cycle Route 40 are publicised.
- Working with local bus companies, developers and other partners to improve the frequency and attractiveness of the bus services in Faringdon.
- Supporting information provision and platforms such as car sharing to reduce the need to travel and inefficient car use.
- Making best use of existing road space through careful planning, working with partners and utilisation of technology.

Information gaps

Modes of transport used by leisure centre users, school pupils, etc.

Direction of travel

In order for Faringdon to develop in a positive way to meet the needs of the local residents, there is a call for the town centre to become more self-contained with regards to shopping facilities, healthcare and local employment. This will reduce car dependency and make Faringdon a more attractive place to live and work. Opportunities to support better connections across the town and to the town centre should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

⁵² <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/local-transport-plan-2011-2030>

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

This chapter explores the evidence and emerging issues related to the built and natural environment in and around Faringdon and covers the following themes:

- Built environment
 - Local character
 - Conservation and listed buildings
 - Town structure
- Natural environment
 - Landscape value
 - Habitat protection
 - Access to the countryside and nature
 - Parks and open spaces
 - Climate change implications

The following sources of information have been used to build up a picture of the key physical environment issues under these themes:

County / sub-regional level studies / strategies	Oxfordshire County Council Local Climate Impacts Profile 2007-09
District level studies / strategies	Vale of White Horse Landscape Assessment (2008) Vale of White Horse Open Space Strategy (2009)
Faringdon specific studies / strategies	Faringdon Healthcheck (Environment section)
Other relevant studies / information sources	
Local expertise and input	Conservation and development boundary sub-group report (July 2012)
Additional analysis by AMUP team	Urban design and contextual analysis including historic evolution of the town

Context

Faringdon has a distinctive built and natural environment. It is an historic market town and as such, needs to be developed and maintained appropriately, taking account of and respecting the surrounding attractive rural environment. Both the town's rural location and its historic central core are significant parts of its unique quality.

However, from a number of the reports that have been reviewed, many local people highlighted the uncared-for look-and-feel in Faringdon. This needs to be addressed in order for Faringdon to take full advantage of the potential assets that its built and natural environment offer.

Key issues and implications

Built environment

Local character

Faringdon's town centre has a distinctive character with relatively new housing surrounding a comparatively small historic core, Figure 29.

- The town has a series of landmarks and distinctive buildings including All Saints' Church, Folly Tower/Folly Hill, the Old Town Hall, the Corn Exchange, the Friends' Meeting House, the Portwell, Faringdon House, the Crown Inn and the Bell Hotel.
- There is a series of key design details on buildings that together combine to shape the town's distinctive character. These include stone slate roofs, distinctive local Corallian stone, local limestone and stucco rendering. Unattractive features include tarmac pavements, obtrusive lighting, poorly designed modern homes, industrial buildings and neglected listed buildings.

- The Market Square should be an attractive focus point in the town centre but lacks street furniture and needs better maintenance and management.
- The town centre has an interesting history – the Market Square was built across two streams and a series of tunnels dating back to the era of the Cistercian monastery. During Saxon times the town centre was reputedly the capital of England for a short time. Along with a number of the key landmarks in the town centre, Faringdon has a rich heritage that could be further exploited to encourage tourism with information boards, a town trail or a visitor centre.
- A street by street character appraisal would be useful in order to classify positive and negative areas within the town to inform future development and planning, design guidance, materials and style for building and public realm work.

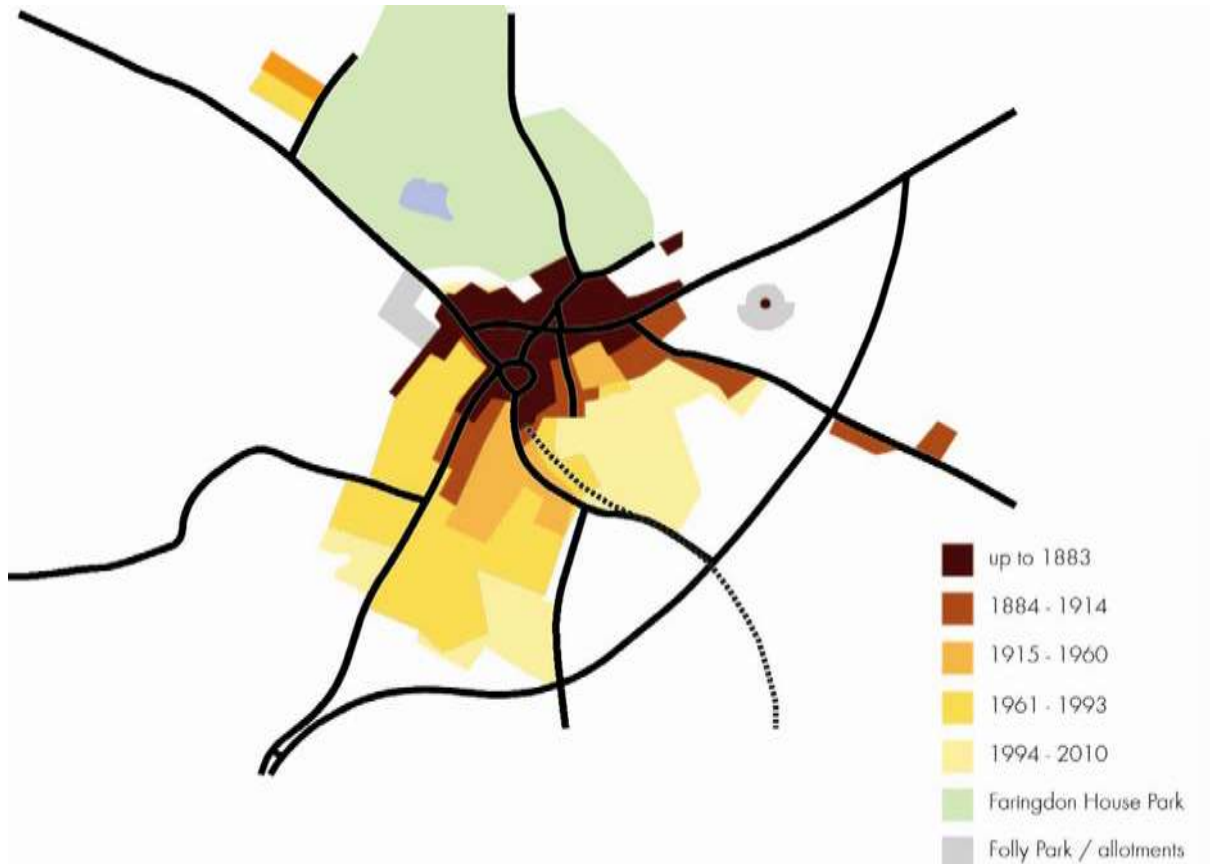


Fig. 29: Historic evolution of Faringdon town (also showing historic route of rail line connection)

Conservation and listed buildings

There is an extensive conservation area, Figure 30, centred on the Market Square, which stretches out to encompass the historic features of the town including the Folly and Faringdon House. The conservation area needs to be better managed and clear guidelines for its maintenance need to be set. There are 133 listed buildings in Great Faringdon⁵³.

- The conservation area needs to be expanded to include certain buildings and to protect specific street scenes. These include Coxwell Street/Road up to the former Cottage Hospital; Bromsgrove including The Swan Pub; Station Road and The old railway station; the old school house on Stanford Road; the original school building at the Infant School; Canada Lane cottages; parts of Ferndale Street and the grounds of Faringdon House.
- Key listed buildings in the town include Faringdon House, the Folly, the Old Town

⁵³ <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/england/oxfordshire/great+farindon>

Hall, All Saints' Church, the Bell and the Crown Inns and the Friends' Meeting House. There are 135 listed buildings in total in Faringdon.



Fig. 30: Faringdon Conservation Area boundary (Source: Vale of White Horse District Council)

Town structure

Faringdon is a small market town with a distinct boundary. The town has grown from a relatively small historic core outwards to the south-west, with newer residential neighbourhoods expanding further into the surrounding rural areas. The town is set within a natural ridge which 'contains' Faringdon's built extent.

- Faringdon's growth should be well controlled and not be allowed to sprawl towards nearby villages.
- Certain sites should be prevented from being developed. These include the land off Coxwell Road (within Great Coxwell parish) and the land off the approach roads to the town centre that are currently bordered by trees and fields (other than Park Road).
- The conservation and the housing groups concluded that a development boundary should be maintained that includes some previously identified developable land in order to meet the growing needs of the town. This boundary would prevent development from coming forward in areas that should be protected and are valued by the town.

Natural environment

Landscape value

The parish of Faringdon sits within the Upper Thames Clay Vales (National Character Area 108), with the Midvale Ridge immediately to the south (National Character Area 109). The Upper Thames Clay Vales form a broad belt of open, gently undulating lowland farmland. Around Faringdon, the clays support arable farming with some tracts of sheep pasture in medium sizes and regular field patterns with few hedgerows or trees. The open floodplain of

the Vale in Oxfordshire creates a flat 'chequer board' agricultural landscape with occasional copses and hedgerows. Brick built buildings within the Vales reflect the widespread use of the local clay as a building material. The influences of the Cotswolds to the north are also evident in older stone walled and stone-slatted buildings.

Pressures on this landscape character include:

- Loss of hedgerows to field enlargements.
- Pressure from new roads and road improvements.
- Localised recreation pressures.

Opportunities to enhance the landscape character area include:

- Woodland planting – trees are important landscape features, particularly the black poplar.
- Restoration and replanting of hedgerows.

The surrounding countryside around Faringdon is designated as high value landscape (Upper Thames Valley to the north and the Downs to the south):

- The town is predominantly set within open countryside. Faringdon is surrounded by a natural escarpment and National Trust farmland and Folly Hill to the North, the A420 and Country Park land to the East, the A420 and Local Plan designated 'greenbelt' to the South, and Escarpment valley and areas of National Trust farmland to the West. This setting should be exploited to create greener approaches to all town areas.
- The countryside is predominantly managed as farmland with some woodland to the west around Eaton Hastings and Badbury Hill. The Farms are mostly mixed arable, beef and dairy and are above the national average size of 100 hectares.

Within the town centre:

- There needs to be better maintenance of natural landscape assets such as on the approach roads to the town centre with regard to grass verges and planting.
- There are a series of tree preservation orders in force within the town on groups of important trees such as those located on key routes; for example, groups of pollarded lime trees, the trees surrounding the Folly and trees in private gardens.

Habitat protection

Within the parish, Faringdon Wet Meadow⁵⁴ at the end of Canada Lane is a County Wildlife site and there are geological SSSIs at Wicklesham and Coxwell Pits⁵⁵ and at Fernham Gate, the location of the Faringdon Sponge Gravels.

There are a series of protected landscapes surrounding the town. These include:

- County Wildlife sites: Buscot Park Lane, Coxwell Wood, Northfield New Covert, Northfield Old Covert, Badbury Forest-Eaton Wood, Buckland Marsh, Buckland Warren Woods.
- Ecologically important landscapes include: Buscot Park, Thames Meadows, Barcote, Pusey Park, Buckland House.
- Designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest include: Fernham Meadows, Grafton Lock Meadow, Shellingford Quarry, Buckland Warren.

These areas, along with other areas of woodland, wetland and meadow habitats ensure a wide range of wildlife thrive in the area.

Within and immediately around the town there are also important wildlife sites including the

⁵⁴ [http://www.oncf.org.uk/pdfs/West Oxfordshire Heights CTA.pdf](http://www.oncf.org.uk/pdfs/West%20Oxfordshire%20Heights%20CTA.pdf)

⁵⁵ <http://www.faringdon.org/fossils-and-colespits.html>

country park area, Faringdon House Park, Town Park and Folly Hill.

Access to the countryside and nature

Local stakeholders feel more could be undertaken to open up and publicise the features such as SSSIs and improve access to these sites, particularly those further out of the town centre. There was also felt to be a loss of connection between the town and Faringdon House and estate. It was suggested that if this were a National Trust property, it would be more accessible, but this would probably be an expensive option for the National Trust.

Parks and open spaces

Faringdon has a variety of park and open space facilities:

- There are a series of recreation links, footpaths and bridleways local to the town including the Great Western Community Forest (stretching from Royal Wootton Bassett to Faringdon), the Thames Path, the Ridgeway, the circular paths around the town linking to attractive features such as to Badbury Woods and the Folly Hill. In addition, footpaths link from the adjacent villages to the town.
- There is potential to develop a canal link to the south using the disused railway line and Faringdon's high-up water supply which would provide a visitor attraction and an outdoor recreation facility for local people.
- According to the VoWH Open Space Background Report there is much less open space than needed within housing areas and a general lack of landscaped areas throughout the town centre. There is also a need within the town for more children's play areas and hard surfaced multi-sports courts.
- The street care and open space management in the town centre is described as poor in places, with weeds in pavements and in other spaces. This leads to an uncared for look to the town.

Climate change implications

The Vale of White Horse's Core Strategy calls for effective action on climate change. This includes:

- A requirement that all new development should help to reduce carbon emissions by achieving the highest standards of energy efficiency and the on-site production of renewable energy.
- Sustainable design and construction of buildings will be supported.
- A range of technologies could be explored including biomass heating, combined heat and power, ground source heat pumps, solar panels, solar water heating, absorption cooling and wind turbines.

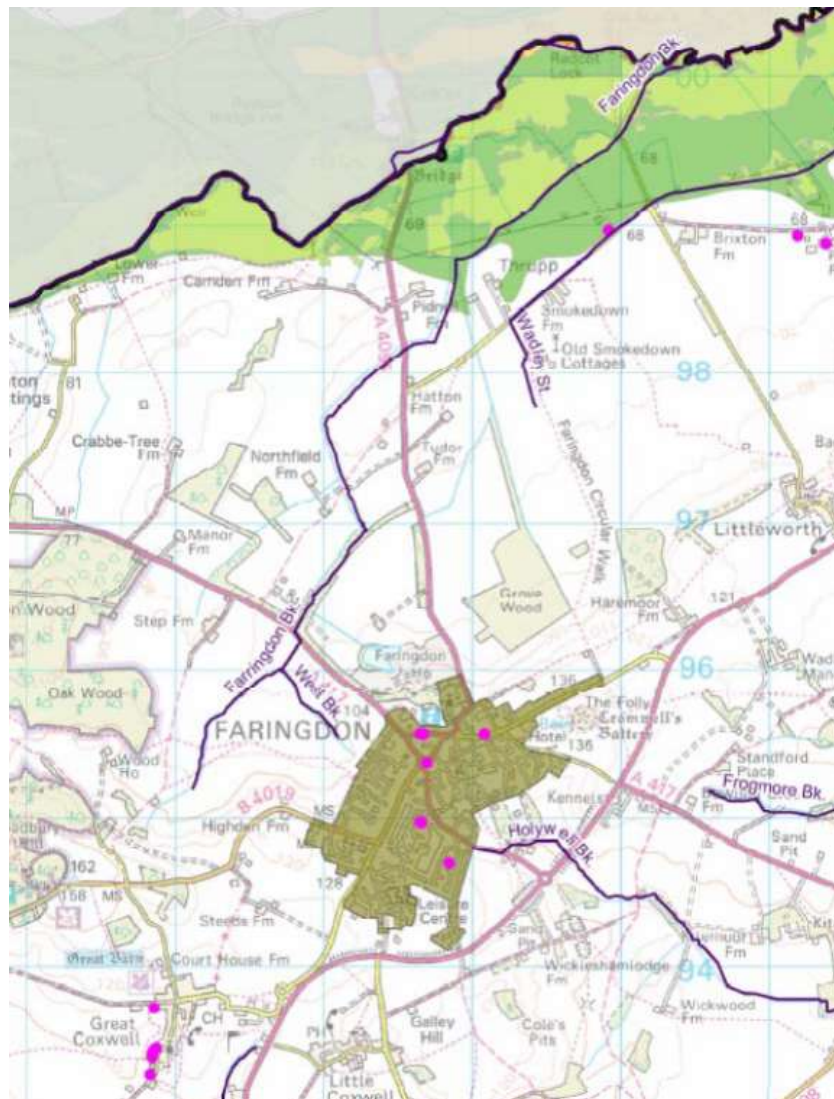
A historical review of flooding and extreme weather in Oxfordshire as part of a Local Climate Impact Programme study assessed the economic cost of weather events between 2007 and 2009. The flooding in July 2007 is estimated to have cost £3.6 million across Oxfordshire, some of which affected Faringdon. Other sources highlight the impact of previous summer storms which have "caused devastation to maize, potatoes or linseed crops, flooding houses in towns such as Faringdon in Oxfordshire" (Guardian, 15 Nov 2000).

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment covering this part of Oxfordshire highlights the impact of flooding in 2007 in Faringdon (see Figure 31), and the increasing risk of flooding in the wider rural parts of the parish as a result of climate change (see Figure 32).

Linked to climate change issues are potential problems with local infrastructure such as sewers which would be put under pressure in the event of extreme weather events. Anecdotal evidence from residents suggests that the sewage treatment facility off Faringdon/Lechlade Road is overstretched and has been known to overflow.

Thames Water has confirmed that the sewage treatment facility is at capacity and cannot accommodate the sewage from any new major developments. They have written similar

letters to the Vale of White Horse (e.g. see ref. 40) in response to planning applications for the new estates proposed in Table 6. The letters recommend that 'a *Grampian style condition*' should planning permission be approved; i.e. 'development shall not commence until a drainage strategy detailing any on and/or off site drainage works, has been submitted to and approved by, the local planning authority in consultation with the sewerage undertaker.' Thames Water are awaiting Ofwat approval to update the Lechlade Road plant, but this will not take place until 2015-20, hence developers are having to meet the cost of bringing this forward. Additional concerns have been raised about the ability of existing water supply provision to meet the growth envisaged for the town and this is confirmed by Thames Water in the same letters.



LEGEND

— Rivers	Historical Flood Mapping	December Winter 1979
District Council Boundary	Events	February Winter 1990
South Oxfordshire	March Spring 1947	September Autumn 1992
Vale of White Horse	September Autumn 1968	October Autumn 1993
Historic Flooding - Other Sources	June Summer 1971	April Easter 1998
Key Settlements	November Autumn 1974	December Winter 2000
● VOWH 2007 Flood Grant Claimant	August Summer 1977	January NewYear 2003
July 2007 Flood Extents	February Winter 1979	

Fig. 31: Historical flooding identified in VWHDC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2007)

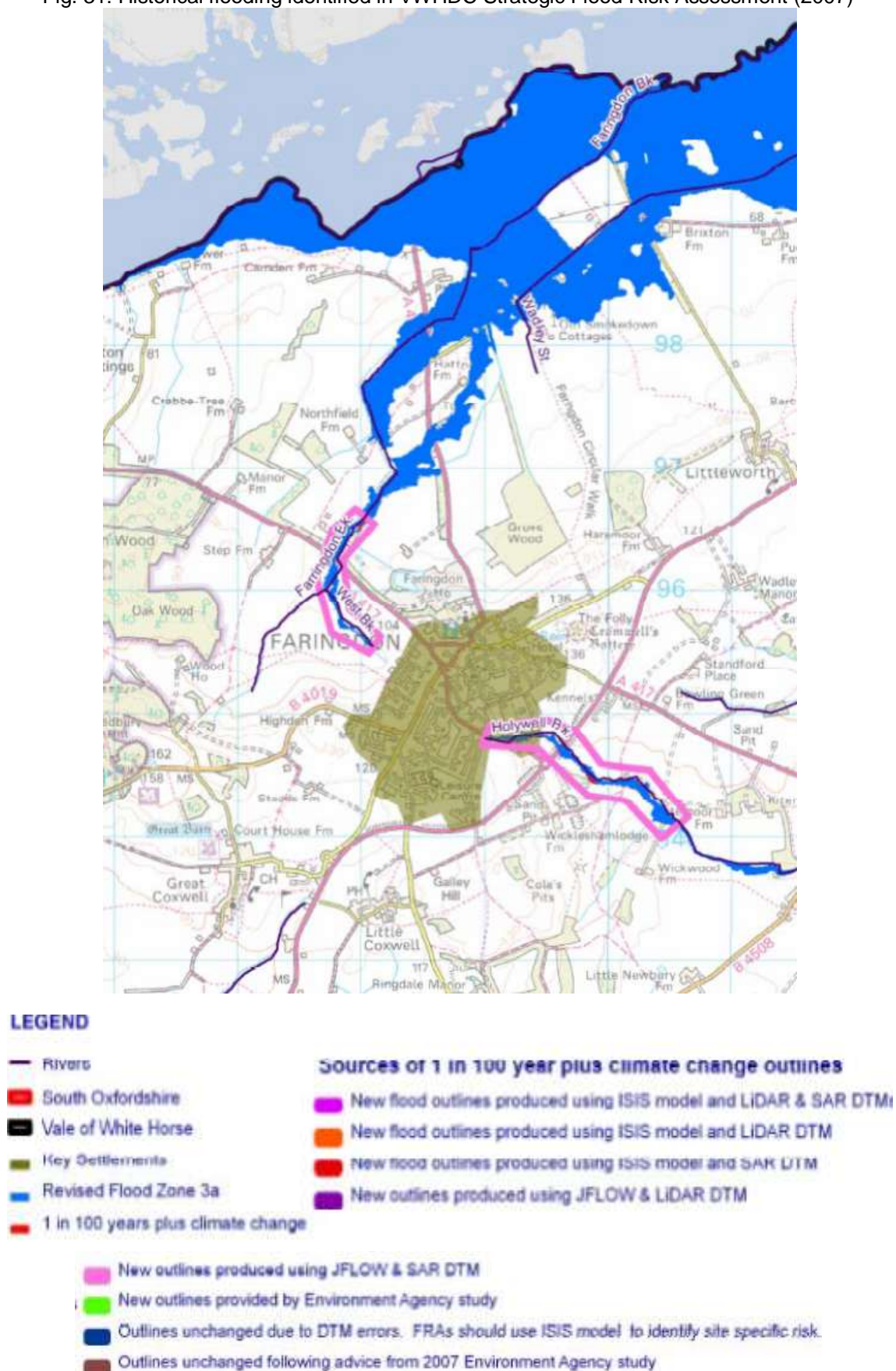


Fig. 32: Impact of Climate Change on Flood Zone 3 from VWHDC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2007)

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment⁵⁶ prepared for Vale of White Horse District Council highlights the need to consider future flood risk seriously for the Faringdon area. As flood risk is increasing, particularly in the northern part of the parish, there is a need to ensure plans do not exacerbate and, wherever possible, look to reduce flood risk. Individual proposals will need to consider how surface water run-off will be managed and how they might be able to create flood water storage capacity and offer attenuation methods.

Priorities / principles / policies

The Vale of White Horse District Council adopted a Climate Change Strategy (2008-2010 and beyond) in 2008. This adoption followed the significant floods of 2007 and outlined a series of objectives and actions to both tackle the causes of climate change and deal with the effects of climate change. The Strategy focuses on corporate actions the Council can take to bring forward changes in emissions and impacts, but highlights the role the Council has in influencing activity, particularly through planning strategy and development control.

Objective 3 is of particular relevance to the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan: 'to use the Council's powers to influence residents and organisations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change'. Actions against this objective include the implementation of supplementary planning policy on sustainable construction and resources conservation and the requirement for significant planning applications to be directly assessed against these policy requirements.

The Vale's Design Guide was adopted in December 2009⁵⁷ and this requires that:

- all new residential developments of ten or more dwellings to achieve the Sustainable Homes level specified (Code Level 3 from 2010, Code Level 4 from 2013 and Code Level 6 from 2016) and to install renewable energy systems to offset a proportion of each building's carbon emissions.⁵⁸
- all new commercial developments to achieve a level of performance equivalent to BREEAM excellent⁵⁹. Very good will be accepted only in those cases where developers can present robust arguments why an excellent rating is not viable for their development. Developers will also be required to install renewable energy systems on all new developments over 1,000 m².

Information gaps

No information gaps were identified under this theme.

Direction of travel

The review of physical environment evidence suggests the following will be important considerations for the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan:

- The town has a strong historic core, but this could be better supported through public realm enhancements and new development which reinforces the centre economically and physically.
- The town has grown through a series of large residential developments over the past decades, there is a real need to ensure a more joined up approach is enforced in future to provide better linkages between different parts of the town and from new developments through to the town centre.
- The town's character needs careful management to ensure further loss of character is checked. New development needs to be respectful of Faringdon's qualities and be appropriate to Faringdon's position as neither rural nor urban.

⁵⁶ http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2013s6892%20VOWH&SODC%20SFRA%20Final%20Report_0.pdf

⁵⁷ <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/vale/assets/138.pdf>

⁵⁸ <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Design%20Criteria.pdf>

⁵⁹ Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction, VoWH, December 2009

- The landscape setting of the town is important to the town's overall character and image. Existing landscape features need to be respected and gateways into the town need to be high quality.
- Connections into the countryside, both physical and visual, should be supported, enhancing residents' access to the wider parish for recreation and access to nature.
- The wider parish landscape needs sensitive management. Field enlargements which remove existing hedges and trees need to be resisted and new activities need to be respectful of the landscape character.
- The Country Park proposals would appear to contribute positively to the above objectives and with potential to support both landscape character and the quality of gateways into the built environment.
- Recognition of climate change needs should be at the heart of the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure the parish's long term sustainability. The 2007 floods brought the risks into sharp focus and these need to be actively managed to ensure both environmental and economic sustainability.

FARINGDON HEALTHCHECK

A market town Healthcheck process is essentially a tool leading to a local action plan that guides and plots regeneration activity. In addition, the Healthcheck process itself aims to involve communities and strengthens relationships between active community groups and local government.

In 2002 volunteers within Faringdon undertook a Market Town Healthcheck in partnership with the Vale of White Horse District Council, Faringdon Town Council and The Countryside Agency to address issues such as unemployment, low monthly earnings, transport and access problems, parking issues etc. The result was a comprehensive report on the town and an Action Plan⁶⁰. In 2008 the Healthcheck was revisited through the auspices of the Faringdon Area Project and a revised Action Plan was produced⁶¹.

The introduction to the 2002 document sets the context for Faringdon, much of which is valid today. The 2002 report had recommendations on tourism; improving access and transport; strengthening the economy, improving and protecting the environment; developing recreational, cultural, social amenities; addressing the needs of young people. Of these some have been realised; e.g. skate park, improved bus service, broadband, cinema, FAZE, but many are still on the wish list and have been incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan; e.g. coach park, parking, cycleways, increasing employment land, community facilities.

The 2008 Action Plan included a performance and conference venue, a visiting cinema (we now have our own facilities in the Corn Exchange), a cycle route to Shrivenham and cycle paths in central Faringdon (both still in the NP), support for carers, improved breast cancer screening, coach park (in the NP) and a Saturday fine food market. Other actions referred to an improved 66 bus service (implemented in 2011), affordable housing (Vale policy to have 40% in all developments above 15 houses), Faringdon Folly (extensively renovated with major developments to the woodland such that the Folly Regeneration Project won the award for the Most Highly Transferable Project at the Action for Market Towns National Awards held in Kendal in 2012⁶² out of over 1000 entrants), recycling (Vale is now a leading Council for recycling). Both Healthchecks have informed the Neighbourhood Plan.

⁶⁰ <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/communityandliving/communityplanning/plans/faringdon2002.pdf>

⁶¹ <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/communityandliving/communityplanning/plans/faringdonactionplan2008.pdf>

⁶² <http://towns.org.uk/market-town-awards/market-town-awards-2012>

PART 2: CONSULTATION SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

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:

- i. Launch event - 12 June 2012
- ii. Stakeholder meetings - 29 June 2012
- iii. Market stall consultation - 10 July 2012
- iv. Initial information gathering and analysis by local groups - June/July 2012
- v. Consultation with youth groups - June/July 2012
- vi. Stakeholder issues workshop - 26 July 2012
- vii. Meeting with Faringdon Academy – 26 September 2012
- viii. Steering group presentation of emerging work - 26 September 2012
- ix. Presentation of draft proposals for Neighbourhood Plan – 15 November 2012
- x. Consideration of proposals in sub-group meetings – November 2012

Alongside this process, a number of other workstreams have been integral to the draft strategy presented in this document:

- Themed sub-groups - a significant number of working groups were 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 different themes including employment, retail, community and conservation.
- Faringdon Academy - concurrent to the planning process, the Academy board has been
- starting the process of education provision planning. This work is ongoing and will be consulted upon in parallel with the Neighbourhood Plan in early 2013.
- Vale of White Horse Core Strategy - 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 strategy desired wherever possible.

This section provides an overview of the consultation events and the comments and input received.

LAUNCH EVENT

Over 100 people attended a launch event on 12 June 2012. Town Council representatives introduced the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, supported by a presentation by Steve Walker from Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners.

This event was an introduction to the project for local people rather than an information or comment gathering activity. Steve Walker's presentation introduced the consultant team from Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners and their experience of working on similar projects. The presentation also outlined the approach to the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan, explaining the process that would take place over the following months. He encouraged all local people to get involved and send their ideas through to the team. The upcoming engagement activities were summarised, including a series of meetings with stakeholders, a market stall consultation event and a Neighbourhood Planning Day.

As part of the event, local people were invited to put forward their initial thoughts and comments to feed into the Neighbourhood Plan discussions. An overview of the issues is presented here and a full list of the comments is included in Appendix A.

- Housing – comments focused on the quality and design of recent and future housing, as well as the amount of housing growth which should be considered. The need for supportive infrastructure such as parks, schools and public transport for new housing was also made.
- Employment – comments focused on the need for better and more infrastructure for businesses including office space, car parking and broadband. The need to address land use planning classes to support a wider range of businesses was also raised.
- Tourism – comments majored on the need to improve the tourism offer and make more of the town's existing assets.
- Retail / leisure – comments focused on the need to improve the quality and range of shops, cultural activities and leisure opportunities. Suggestions for an arts or music festival in the town were also made. The scope for emphasising local produce and organic food through outlets in the town centre was also raised.
- Vision – local people felt headline objectives should cover a varied shopping offer, a new flexible community facility, better transport links, a maximum population limit, and to create a town centre which meets the needs of its community.
- Sustainability – Many people emphasised the need to establish a sustainable future for the town, touching on issues such as travel, walking and cycling, local food production and eco housing.
- Transport – a number of specific interventions to ease transport issues were suggested including a bridge over the A420, the opening up of the Stanford Road / A420 for access to the sports complex, improved bus services to centres such as Wantage, Witney and Abingdon and the re-opening of Challow rail station.
- Conservation / development – comments included the need for greater consistency and clarity of what is acceptable within the Conservation area, the need to rationalise signage and revisit shop fronts, and review development boundaries.
- Education / youth support – comments raised included concerns about the capacity of existing schools and the need for more facilities generally, as well as inaccessibility of some existing facilities on the edge of the town. It was felt Faringdon needs to be much more “family friendly”.

These comments fed directly into the early stages of analysis and discussion on the Neighbourhood Plan – helping to highlight issues and areas for investigation.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The team contacted a number of key strategic organisations and stakeholders to gain a clear picture of the context for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners met with the following representatives:

- Trudy Godfrey, Economic Development, Vale of White Horse District Council
- Kate Arnold, Economy, Leisure and Property, Vale of White Horse District Council
- John Banbrook, Faringdon Academy of Schools
- Philip Archard, FAZE Youth Centre

The full list of comments is shown in Appendix B; the key points made through these discussions are as follows:

Economic development

- Faringdon is an attractive town for families – walkable, good leisure provision, whole educational offer within the town, slower pace of life, good links (equidistant from Oxford and Swindon), good access to the countryside, low crime rates and more affordable house prices.
- Business - SEEDA funded the Business Enterprise Centre Gateway aimed at small

start-ups, it is currently 80% full. Whilst it is competitive in terms of pricing, it is a little dated and has no communal space.

- Retail – shopping is limited in Faringdon, particularly with regards to convenience retail.
- Many residents use Sainsbury's in Wantage or Waitrose in Abingdon.
- Employment – workplace statistics indicate that Faringdon has a high percentage of residents in industrial employment, less in the retail industry and more in construction than would be expected for town of its size.
- Wicklesham Farm has been very successful. Attractive rural alternative for small firms and much cheaper than Oxford or Swindon.
- Employment land – while on paper Faringdon has adequate allocations, there is a need for windfall sites to support SMEs.
- Tourism – District Council are working with local community to promote the town. Leaflets such as Fabulous Faringdon promote 12 things to do locally, but there are far more. Faringdon is off the beaten track, but far from inaccessible and should be promoted along these lines.

Leisure

- A draft leisure and sports facilities strategy was completed on behalf of the Vale of White Horse District Council in October 2012 and consulted upon. The strategy suggested an artificial grass pitch is needed in Faringdon.
- Faringdon has a reasonable range of facilities for a town of its size, and in comparison to other locations does not have major deficiencies in provision.
- However, a key outstanding need is an artificial turf pitch. Most logically this would be provided on the school site next to the Leisure Centre or alongside the new facilities by the skate park. The provision of an ATP would reduce the pressure on other local pitches, and will be delivered through developer contributions. Flood lighting will be required and could be an issue for local residents.
- The Leisure Centre is now doing quite well. Major investment 13 years ago extended the pool. However, the centre would benefit from more space to extend facilities and offer. It is likely that parking capacity will limit any future expansion, although there are no current plans for expansion.
- Residents also use the High Moor Leisure Centre and the Oasis Centre in Swindon. There are a number of options for leisure facilities within a 20 mile radius of Faringdon.

Youth services

- FAZE centre is a purpose built, bespoke layout which caters well for diverse needs, from local youth group to more specialised facilities for a mentally disabled group. The space represents a major improvement on previous venues such as the Market Hall and Pump Room.
- Key objectives for FAZE have been on developing youth services and raising funds.
- Some parents feel it is too far from the town centre to send their children, which does represent a problem to potential attendance.
- FAZE officer keen to give young people the opportunity to input to Neighbourhood Plan.

Education / Faringdon Academy

- Academy Board is looking at the strategic issues of education provision in the town. Currently focused around the new school to be provided as part of new development, and the nature of this school to support a future strategic vision.
- Board will be looking at each of the existing school sites and future options, and will want to consult local people on the preferred option.
- The Academy board would be keen to dovetail the consultation on this work with the Neighbourhood Plan as it is an issue and programme which falls within the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan.

MARKET STALL EVENT

On Tuesday 10 July 2012 the consultant team erected a bespoke market stall underneath the Old Town Hall to coincide with the weekly market.



Local people were encouraged to come and discuss their thoughts about the town and learn about the Neighbourhood Plan process. Thoughts were recorded under the following headings:

- The **best** thing about Faringdon is...
- The **worst** thing about Faringdon is...
- My **wish** for Faringdon is...

A record of all the comments received is included in Appendices G1-3. A summary of the comments is outlined below:

Best things about Faringdon

- Community spirit – many people commented on how the town is a friendly place to live, with a positive community spirit as a result of its size.
- Service centre – people suggested the town provides key services such as doctors, dentists, vets and opticians.
- Connections – many suggested the bus services were good.
- Character – the historic buildings and old houses are thought to give the town a lovely character.

Worst things about Faringdon

- Lack of integration of young people – a number of comments focused around the poor provision for young people, and that provision that does exist is out on the outskirts of town.
- Parking – various comments were made on parking from careless parking causing

congestion to a lack of parking to support the town centre.

- Services / function – a number of people expressed concern that the town's services were reducing or not keeping up with housing growth. The lack of a supermarket was flagged, although others commented that they did not want to see Tesco develop their proposal.
- Housing – many people commented on housing issues ranging from concerns about the density of new housing to people being relocated to social housing in Faringdon.

Wishes for Faringdon

- Better provision for young people - more facilities for families and young people.
- Better infrastructure – from cycle routes and bus services to car parking and schools.
- Cultural attractions – suggestions ranged from new festivals to a theatre.
- More and better shops, alongside a desire to see the supermarket issue solved.
- Enhanced housing areas – the immediate environment to new housing should be of the highest quality and create attractive and safe neighbourhoods.

SUB-GROUP MEETINGS AND REPORT

A series of sub-groups were established at the outset of the process to explore key themes for the town. Each group has had regular meetings throughout the process and in July 2012 submitted reports which form an important part of the baseline for the Neighbourhood Plan.

The sub-groups established covered the following themes:

- Retail
- Employment land
- Tourism
- Housing and health
- Leisure and community
- Education
- Transport and roads
- Conservation and development boundary

The sub-group reports have fed directly into the baseline outlined in Part 1 of this report. Each of the reports are included in full in the appendices to Part 1.

YOUTH GROUP CONSULTATION

A series of questions were put to young people and parents at local groups in the town in the form of questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed and completed by the following people:

- SK8 – Skate park users (7 young people – 2 x 9 year olds and 5 x 13 year olds)
- Family Centre Breakfast Club (7 x 9 and 10 year olds)
- Faringdon Children's Centre (Group discussion with 4 young mums of 18-25 years)
- Faringdon Baptist Church (9 x adults and 2 x 12-14 year olds)

The questionnaire posed the following questions:

- What are the best things about Faringdon?
- What are the worst things about Faringdon?
- What are your favourite places in Faringdon?
- Which parts of Faringdon could really be improved?
- What new things does Faringdon really need?

- What would make Faringdon great for young people?
- What would make Faringdon great for families?
- What would make Faringdon great for older people?

The messages from these completed questionnaires were converted into a presentation to local people, the slides are shown below and give a good flavour of what young people feel is important.



Which parts of Faringdon could be improved?

London Street
Shelter at Skate Park
Opening hours of the police station
Westway
Bike repair shop
Behind Budgens
Tuckers Park play area – too small
The alleyways
Portway underpass
Zebra crossings in town
Town centre
Pye Street Park is run down
Road system
Housing stock
The Lees
Outskirts e.g. Badbury Woods
More things like zip wire
Folly Park – the park is overgrown
All the parks
Park Road – it's not a good entry into Faringdon

What new things does Faringdon need?

A non-Tesco food shop
Country Park
Improved leisure centre – ski slope/water slides
Street gym
Basketball courts
Multi sports courts
Places to go
Adventure playground
A zoo
Hospital – for sports injuries
Seating areas / picnic area
More things to do
More shops
Clothes shops (for kids)
Outdoor sports courts
A tree house
Toy shop
A lake with fish
Improved parkland
Family restaurant / pub
Another church

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

On 26 July 2012, local people were invited to a workshop in the Corn Exchange to discuss the initial findings from the Neighbourhood Plan work. Over 100 people attended and provided valuable input to the baseline process.

The evening started with a presentation from Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners which outlined the issues highlighted to date. The evening was then split into two sessions. The

first session required attendees to review and validate the key issues and priorities to be addressed under a series of themes. All the comments to date had been collated and printed under the relevant themes, alongside a proposed summary of the key issues for that theme. Attendees were asked to annotate and add commentary to each of the theme sheets.

Below the key issues identified under each issue are outlined, alongside the headline comments received under each theme.

Conservation

Key issues identified:

- The heritage of Faringdon is one of the town's most significant assets.
- The presentation of the buildings and streets don't do the built heritage justice.
- There is a need for more pro-active management of the conservation assets - a conservation area appraisal is needed and this should include a review of the Conservation area boundary and the future management of the area.
- Design guidance is needed to protect key assets and to ensure the quality of new development.

Headline comments:

- Design guidance for new development is seen as important, particularly for new commercial development.
- Shop fronts and signage should be more appropriate to the town's heritage – it has a particularly direct impact on the quality of the conservation area. Guidance on this, including colour palette and approach to design and detailing could be developed in collaboration with local businesses to build consensus.
- A number of stakeholders expressed concern about seeking to constrain design and character in Faringdon, suggesting the approach would be too bureaucratic and control would make the town bland.
- The need to extend the conservation area was questioned, with one stakeholder suggesting it should be more about protecting views of the Folly.

Development boundary

Key issues:

- Faringdon should avoid coalescence with surrounding villages.
- The approaches to Faringdon should retain their green character.
- Long term growth (beyond 10,500 residents) needs to be controlled to retain the character of the town - this may mean setting limits on future large developments beyond those already identified.
- Development adjacent to the town but outside the parish boundary on the Great Coxwell Road should be resisted.

Headline comments:

- There is a strong unanimous desire to ensure Faringdon avoids coalescence with nearby settlements and maintains green approaches which reflect its rural market town character. Any movement towards surrounding villages should be avoided.
- Government guidance relates to Urban and Village communities. Faringdon is neither of these, so development plans must be entirely appropriate for this size of community.
- Faringdon should not expand into the open countryside, and its small rural market town feel should be maintained.
- Some stakeholders thought there should be a clear boundary set out on plans to identify what land can and cannot be considered for development.

Education

Key issues:

- All Faringdon children should be able to attend school in Faringdon.
- There is potential to reorganise the schools to accommodate growth as follows:
 - Infant and Junior schools to move to a new site.
 - 6th form provision to move to the old Junior site.
 - Old infant school could be re-used for community facilities.

Headline comments:

- It is essential that every child from Faringdon has the opportunity to be educated in Faringdon.
- There have been a number of suggestions for adding to/amending the schools provision in the town, of which the key part seems to be taking the existing infant school on Canada Lane out of educational use. In establishing a strategy for school provision in the town, there should be sensitive consideration to the impact schools have on footfall to the town centre.
- The Faringdon Academy of Schools is starting a review process to consider school provision and this should feed into the development of the neighbourhood plan through the autumn.
- Stakeholders emphasised that the town currently experiences capacity problems in education and these issues need addressing as a matter of urgency.
- Safe walking and cycling routes to schools were also highlighted as a key issue to be addressed.
- Further education and evening courses were also highlighted as a need which should be considered alongside basic education provision.

Retail

Key issues:

- Faringdon town centre is too small to meet the needs of the local population.
- A growing town will provide more critical mass to support better shops and facilities.
- Food shopping is a significant requirement.
- How can the town centre grow and how should the planned Tesco development be better integrated with the historic town centre?

Headline comments:

- Faringdon needs to expand its retail offer to ensure that a larger proportion of local shopping is done within the town rather than leaking to other centres.
- Some consultees have identified that the Tesco project will potentially help to meet the need for new food retail in the town. However, significant efforts need to be made to ensure that this project is delivered and to establish stronger physical links with the town centre, particularly including direct and attractive pedestrian routes.
- A significant proportion of consultees consider it essential that a food outlet is achieved within the town centre in order to support the vitality of the town centre. Options to achieve this, therefore, need to be considered notwithstanding the position with Tesco.
- Consultation responses indicate that there could be appetite for additional retail development (larger format retail such as DIY) around the Tesco project to provide an alternative retail focus which meets the day to day needs of the town.
- A number of stakeholders questioned whether residential growth was needed to support the retail in the town centre. There was a concern that other issues were more significant in limiting footfall such as disposable income.

Highways

Key issues:

- Faringdon struggles with narrow historic streets - there is a desire to ease traffic flows.
- Unnecessary trips through town should be reduced, particularly for larger vehicles.
- There is potential for improvement and renewal of the streets and spaces.
- The streets don't seem to be well cared for – better maintenance and cleaning is required.

Headline comments:

- Some stakeholders suggested additional roads or linkages are needed to reduce traffic flows in the town centre that provide new connections to the A420 including via the Old Stanford Road. Others felt new roads or bypasses were unrealistic.
- Parking is considered to be a major cause of congestion and that illegal parking should be the focus of attention.
- Stakeholders were concerned that a lack of maintenance would result in major deterioration of the highways, with a high cost to resolve it.

Parking

Key issues:

- Parking needs to be addressed as the town grows - a growing town centre will attract more visitors.
- It is important to consider the various parking needs for different groups (workers, shoppers, visitors etc) in order to make appropriate provision and optimise the use of the existing facilities.
- Enforcement of parking restrictions is needed to make the system work and limit unnecessary congestion caused by inconsiderate drivers.

Headline comments:

- The town centre has an acknowledged problem with narrow roads and lack of parking available. Opportunities should be sought to deliver new parking, but there are no obvious options close to the town centre. Sufficient free or low cost off road parking needs to be explored to support those visiting and working in the town centre.
- More rigorous policing of cars parked illegally is needed.

Cycling and walking

Key issues:

- The network of paths and cycleways which connect areas of housing to the town centre is really important – new development must be well connected.
- Public realm improvements are needed for pedestrians.
- Better provision is needed for cyclists in the town including cycle routes and parking.
- There are opportunities for wider walking and cycling leisure routes into the surrounding countryside and linking with nearby villages.

Headline comments:

- Reducing speeds on some key routes such as Coxwell Road and London Street was thought to be important to supporting more and safer walking and cycling.
- Concern was raised about any proposals to pedestrianise areas, and whether this would really be necessary.
- Creating better links into the countryside was thought to be important by some stakeholders, for example a new crossing at A420 / Fernham Road junction, and cycle links to wider national routes.

Infrastructure delivery

Key issues:

- There is a need to deliver community infrastructure to address the growing needs of Faringdon as the population increases.
- Local people would like to have more of a say in setting priorities for any Community Infrastructure Levy.
- As well as core infrastructure issues there is a desire to see investment in more holistic community improvements.

Headline comments:

- Safe routes through towns for pedestrians and cyclists or community bus services need to be supported as the town grows to ensure different areas are integrated.

Employment

Key issues:

- There is a strong desire to see employment provision which relates to the population of Faringdon to reduce out-commuting.
- Employment sites need to be protected and new sites identified.
- We need to meet the requirements of businesses thinking about locating in Faringdon.
- Opportunities are needed for more flexible employment models, including homeworking.

Headline comments:

- Faringdon employment opportunities should be enhanced by building a strong link with the Science Vale UK initiative and Enterprise Zone.
- An increase in small start-up units was suggested.

Visitors and tourism

Key issues:

- There needs to be a collective vision for Faringdon and a collective responsibility to present the town well.
- The town has historic assets and features which need to be presented in a coherent way.
- Opportunities need to be explored for celebrating local food and produce.
- There are opportunities for festivals around food and arts as well as year-round activities.
- Is new visitor infrastructure (such as a coach park) needed?

Headline comments:

- Better recognition of geological visitors was thought to be needed as Faringdon is well known to the geological profession, and the town could more proactively welcome them.
- Stakeholders suggested particular new opportunities such as a theatre to support the tourism economy.
- The importance of the visual appearance of the town was raised, and the need to restore and maintain buildings in the town centre.

Sport and leisure

Key issues:

- There is generally good sports provision in the area but there are opportunities for further consolidation and improvement.

- There are good local play facilities for younger children but the town lacks facilities for older children.
- A project to deliver a Faringdon Folly Country Park, linked with the recent new sports facilities could help to provide spaces for families and older children.
- Existing facilities for young people are in very peripheral locations.

Headline comments:

- Stakeholders had a huge range of suggestions for additional facilities including a multi ball hard surface court, a dedicated building for scouts and guides, a better swimming pool and an outdoor gym for adults.
- There was strong support for the Country Park proposal.
- A number of stakeholders suggested a new entertainment venue is needed which could cater for live music, dance, theatre and film.

Community

Key issues:

- A review of community group needs in the parish and how these might change in the future is needed to help inform how groups could best be accommodated in community buildings and churches in the parish.
- Health provision needs to keep pace with population growth, and out of hours provision needs to be addressed as is currently provided through Witney.
- Elderly and disabled care needs to be proactively planned given the ageing population and current issues with limited provision within the town.

Headline comments:

- Stakeholders were concerned that existing GP services were overstretched.
- Stakeholders would like to see new community space provided as part of new housing development.
- The use of existing community buildings should be maximised before building new provision to ensure efficiency.

Public transport

Key issues:

- Bus links to Swindon and Oxford are good.
- New and better public transport links need to be provided to other locations for important services, particularly Abingdon, Witney and Wantage.
- Faringdon community bus is a valuable service but limited. Potential expansion of the service into new housing could affect existing services.
- Links need to be established if the railway station at Challow is re-opened.

Headline comments:

- Witney services were considered to be important.
- Evening services of existing routes, particularly bus no. 66, should be improved.
- Rail connections were raised by a number of stakeholders – some emphasising the need to re-opening Challow station, others suggesting a rapid link to Didcot to connect with rush hour trains should be considered.

Housing

Key issues:

- Faringdon's growth should be limited to protect its character.
- Housing should be suburban in character and built to modest densities - lessons need to be learned from the Folly Park scheme.

- The local community wishes to be closely involved with the design and development of the Bloor Homes scheme south of Park Road.
- Faringdon has a higher than average amount of social housing but the need in the town is small.
- It is not in the interests of social tenants or the town for people to be housed in Faringdon when they would prefer to be living elsewhere given local public transport and access to jobs.
- Where social housing is built it needs to be fully integrated with housing for sale.
- Faringdon has sufficient sheltered housing.

Headline comments:

- A number stakeholders suggested an adjustment to the social housing provision would be beneficial – both reducing the allocation to meet the town's need and a presumption in favour of allocating social housing to persons with Faringdon links.
- A better balance of housing types was supported by a number of stakeholders.

Following the confirmation of key issues, stakeholders were asked to note down any ideas they thought were missing from the debate so far. Some of the suggestions made included:

- Latest request for neon signs in conservation town area should be resisted.
- No dog litter bins in Faringdon town – why not?
- Tasteful flood lighting of Folly to put us on the map.
- Maintenance of Folly Park and to be considered as family park.
- Decent high paid employment in town.
- Traffic survey required, why cars coming through town centre down Market Street, where are they going to? Seems no need with A420 by-pass.
- Lots of ideas for Tucker Park, but I do feel we have been left behind and let down with the 106 money that we could have used to develop the club as we struggle with funding and mainlining the club and the grounds in this economic climate.
- We need a central supermarket and car park, something better than Budgens.
- Are Tesco going to develop? We know it has been delayed but has Budgens offered to sell to Waitrose?
- Have Waitrose refused to buy without car park?
- Have the Vale refused to sell car park?
- Will there be residential e.g. nursing home, care accommodation for elderly (presently have to go to Swindon or elsewhere)?
- Has any thought been given to cars in the street, where to park them?
- No. of buses seems to be overkill through town, big heavy double-deckers too frequent, perhaps need central coach/bus station also not many passengers on each bus – cost?
- Engage with crime reduction experts during developments and improvement to prevent creating future problems.
- VOWHDC needs to consider view of people of Faringdon, we are not just a nuisance but a viable small community.

Priorities

The second part of the stakeholder workshop focused on what the priorities should be for the Neighbourhood Plan. Each group identified what they felt were the key components of a strategy for Faringdon.

Each group's proposals were as follows:

Group 1:

1. Maximum population under 10,000
2. Better mix of housing - Band F,G – More
3. More local jobs and enough employment land
4. Keep local character, atmosphere of the town & update conservation areas and management
5. No more large housing sites (after Park Road). Appropriate density e.g. standing close
6. Define planning guidance/conditions etc relevant to Faringdon – small town/big village
7. Develop/extend Southampton Street car park
8. Clear policy for light industrial land and office/science/IT (like Shrivenham 100)
9. Park Road - more modern development, sports shops, garden centre, DIY, motorparts, entertainment
10. Retail square – niche/destination/tourist
11. Reduce through-traffic

Group 2:

1. Before any further development we need to properly provide for the expansion that has already occurred e.g. community facilities, health and social care, education
2. Improved routes through town – pedestrian & cycle to connect disparate areas of housing with each other and local amenities
3. Balance the need for amenities to be near the growing part of the town with revitalising the existing town centre
4. Involving existing community groups and enabling them to thrive – community hall
5. Transport links
6. School places for all essential
7. Parking

Group 3:

1. Develop a joined up area from historic market town towards Park Road – for retail to expand
2. Faringdon needs to have a stronger integrated/coherent identity: historic, eccentric elements emphasised
3. Faringdon to be a 'hub' for the surrounding areas: traditional market experience, especially for food
4. Character of Faringdon to remain sympathetic development architecture

Group 5:

1. Improve signage for existing leisure facilities e.g. Parks which have not got signs!
2. Any building on A420 must be attractive so that the approach to the town does not look completely industrial and therefore off putting to potential visitors
3. Quarry site at Wicklesham should be made use of for light industrial or leisure facilities e.g. water sports, footbridge over by pass
4. Design guide for industrial buildings

5. Roundabout at south end of by pass to Great Coxwell for safety
6. Park & Ride?
7. Possible use of field behind FAZE (on Highworth Road) for industrial use – problems of access for lorries
8. No more major high density housing estates beyond those already agreed
9. Coach park

Group 6:

1. Tourism
2. Historic attractions (Faringdon House, Folly Tower, Museum etc)
3. Consideration of parking/coaches
4. Enlarge schools
5. More employment – infrastructure, high speed broadband, geographic links to town
6. Design important for any new development
7. More public transport
8. Connect with local villages
9. Better food outlet for town centre e.g. supermarket
10. Community facilities to match growing population e.g. athletics track
11. Faringdon is a good place to live, generally safe, we enjoy being here, so can it be improved and made even better?

Group 7:

1. Create more art and arty workshops to attract people to the historical centre as retail is failing more and more due to the internet (Amazon)
2. Develop a vision of Faringdon as a tourist hub central to a range of attractions e.g.
3. White Horse, Kelmscott, Folly
4. Develop a vision of the old town as a commercially viable artistic hub, inspire aspirational showcase for London Museum excellence
5. Consider alternative vision which preserves the old town centre
6. Preserve historic centre and develop appropriate retail
7. Bread and butter retail
8. Would a 'Witney style' development work here?
9. Convert garage to multi-storey underground car park
10. Cinema & performing arts centre
11. Park Road widened 'boulevard'
12. Do not cross A420

Group 8:

1. Swimming pool – wide enough & deep enough to swim/dive in. Toddler facilities
2. Bury telephone cables and electric overhead wires (e.g. in Coxwell St and Road)
3. Cable TV and fast broadband connection
4. Folly Park needs revamping
5. VWH to release car park to encourage Waitrose into the town
6. Recognise and celebrate the diverse amount of community activity across the town from family centres to U3A, bowls clubs to judo etc..
7. No new houses without off-street parking
8. Maximise use of existing school sites – the sites are superb and would allow for expansion/improvement of the buildings

9. Large care home for local elderly (with dementia etc)
10. Job creation at Wicklesham – with pedestrian bridge across A420 to encourage people to walk/cycle to work
11. Traffic calming in Coxwell Road, Gloucester Street, Marlborough Gardens, London Street.
12. Address parking in London Street and Coxwell Street
13. Please a decent supermarket – fast!
14. Open Stanford Road onto the A420
15. Roundabout at the Great Coxwell turn
16. Coach park in town centre
17. A clean & well maintained town – enhancing historic buildings and ambience
18. Greater sensitivity in use of building materials to reflect conservation aspects of town

Group 9:

1. Most people do not want this developed north of the town
2. No supermarket out of town shopping, overall shops in Market Square, new car park north-east of town
3. Develop land north of town centre adjacent to Witney Road
4. A big venue for conferences and music events so people will come to Faringdon
5. Build new supermarket and car park on Budgens site
6. Park Road development to be reassigned as retail
7. Redevelop Portway/Lees for small retail development
8. Open up culverted stream under centre – waterside attraction
9. Accept that the “town centre” isn’t!
10. Cycle way should be developed between all the areas of Faringdon
11. Another supermarket in place of Budgens

FARINGDON ACADEMY MEETING

The consultant team met with representatives from the Academy of Faringdon Schools Board on 26 September 2012. The Board briefed the team on the work they were about to commission looking at options for education provision in the town. This work will be completed in late 2012/early 2013 and will look at each of the existing school sites and possible additional sites and review the best combination to meet future education needs.

It was agreed that dovetailing the consultation on these provision options with the wider consultation to be held on the draft Neighbourhood Plan would be beneficial and allow the Neighbourhood Plan policies to be directly informed by the options and the consultation views.

STEERING GROUP PRESENTATION

On 26 September 2012 the consultant team presented the findings and analysis to date to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

The presentation ran through the findings from the evidence base review and highlighted any information gaps which needed addressing. The Steering Group provided very helpful suggestions to populate the information gaps and commented on the key issues emerging.

PRESENTATION OF DRAFT PROPOSALS

On 15 November 2012 the consultant team presented draft proposals for the Neighbourhood Plan to the Steering Group. The presentation covered the following:

- Background and scope of the plan – citing the Act and the local process to date
- Local issues – setting out the headline problems identified by the evidence review

and consultation activities

- Vision – suggesting ‘Family Faringdon’ should be the focus for the plan, with an inherently sustainable town with a high degree of self-containment for day to day needs as the goal
- Strategy – divided into the following themes:
 - Retail – covering improving the existing retail, the provision of a food store and possible future retail development.
 - Local jobs – covering additional employment land allocations to support more local working opportunities, and rural diversification.
 - Family housing – covering housing growth and affordable housing provision.
 - School provision – referencing the wider Academy of Faringdon Schools work.
 - Sport and leisure – covering Faringdon Country Park proposals, access to the wider countryside, sports provision and allotments.
 - A caring community – covering health and elderly care, social facilities and community group needs.
 - A well-proportioned town – addressing character and identity of the parish, the extent of growth, management of the conservation area, connections between parts of the town, parking and the quality of the public realm.
 - Design – covering new development within the town centre, new housing development away from the centre and non-residential development.
 - Landscape – covering physical and visual links to the countryside, sensitive management of the wider landscape and stronger links between local produce and local economic activities.

The Steering Group provided comments on the first proposals, highlighting aspects which have yet to be drawn through into the Plan. The next phase of work was agreed which encompasses a sustainability assessment of all the sites and policy proposals with a view to identifying sustainable preferred options which can be agreed by all.

SUB-GROUP CONSIDERATION

Following the presentation in November 2012, each of the sub-groups considered the emerging proposals for the plan and provided more detailed feedback to inform the sustainability assessment work. In particular, this feedback emphasised the need to consider all the sites put forward as opportunities as part of the assessment where not already assessed through the Vale of White Horse Local Plan work.

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