

Faringdon Market Town Healthcheck – Initial Findings



Economic

FINDINGS	COMMENTS	ISSUES	POTENTIAL ACTION
<p>As of March 2002, 43 persons were registered unemployed (Nomis). This equates to about 1% unemployment rate. There were no persons under the age of 18 registered unemployed. 36 were male, 7 female. This compares with 127 in 1996, 95 in 1997, 66 in 1998, 58 in 1999, 43 in 2000 and 43 in 2002.</p> <p>Oxfordshire has an unemployment rate of 1%(3752) as of March 2002 compared to over 3%(12842) in 1996. The trend for Faringdon is similar.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Employment</p> <p>Unemployment is not a significant issue at present.</p>		
<p>In absolute terms employment has fallen since 1996. This is in line with Oxfordshire as a whole. The trend locally for unemployment seems largely to reflect that of the County. This is also the case when comparing to national and regional data.</p>			

<p>The labour market participation rate is 82% in 1991. This compares to 80% for Oxfordshire as a whole.</p> <p>This figure was calculated by dividing the total persons economically active by total population aged between 16 and 65. There are not more recent figures available to date and as the data is 11 years old rates for women compared to men were not calculated.</p> <p>However the unemployment data available for Faringdon reflects largely the County trends and it may be assumed that labour market participation rates are no different.</p>	<p>We are not aware of any specific trends in unemployment</p> <p>We have no other indication of hidden unemployment apart from the lower than average income</p>		
<p>The average gross weekly pay for the Faringdon area for 2001 £354.09 (this figure comes from Nomis with a warning on its statistical significance)</p> <p>Average annual gross earnings nationally are £23499 which equates to £451.90</p> <p>Oxfordshire annual gross earnings are £24046 which equates to £462.42</p> <p>South East Region figures are £24944 annually and £479.69 weekly</p>	<p>Below average wages is a threat. The impact upon the purchasing power of the population is evident, especially in the retail industry.</p>	<p>There may be an issues relating to re-skilling and training.</p>	<p>Attract more prestigious employers into the area, by providing more attractive business premises</p> <p>Carry out research to identify the nature of the low wages</p> <p>In the longterm raising skills and qualifications may help</p>
<p>13% of the unemployed have been unemployed for more than 6 months. This compares with less than 4 % for Oxfordshire.</p> <p>This may seem significant (and may be), however with the small numbers being dealt with in Faringdon just 1 or 2 people can bias the statistics dramatically.</p> <p>In absolute terms 6 people were unemployed for more than 6 months in Faringdon compared to 135 in Oxfordshire.</p>	<p>This may seem significant (and may be) however with the small numbers being dealt with in Faringdon, just 1 or 2 people can bias the statistics dramatically. In absolute terms 6 people were unemployed for more than 6 months in Faringdon compared with 135 in Oxfordshire</p>		

<p>Although there are no figures available empirical observations and rough calculations suggest that Faringdon has a high proportion of commuters.</p>	<p>Number of Businesses in Faringdon: Agriculture, hunting and forestry : 49, Mining and quarrying : 3, Manufacturing : 31, Construction : 28, Wholesale and retail trade : 72, Hotels and Restaurants : 26, Transport, storage and communication : 10, Financial intermediation : 5, Real estate, renting and business activities : 32, Public administration and defence, compulsory social security : 4, Education : 16, Health and social work : 15, Other community, social and personal service activities : 25</p>	<p>A strength is the high diversity of employment, so that the community is less vulnerable to one business failing. The weaknesses are dependence on agriculture and tourism which are both seasonal and traditionally low wage payers. The Enterprise Gateway is an opportunity</p>	<p>Commuters tend to shop out of town</p>	<p>Seek to involve newcomers who are commuters in the life of the town</p>
<p>There are only two employers in the Faringdon area that employ more than 100 people other than local Government. This implies that the economy is not dependent on a small number of employers.</p>	<p>There is a shortage of appropriate business space forcing firms to leave. It is believed that restrictive planning policies are hampering the expansion of businesses and the economy in Faringdon.</p>	<p>Lobby for the release of more land in the Local Plan and Structure Plan. Provide a package for businesses of relevant services and opportunities. Link closely with the planning of the Enterprise Gateway</p>		
<p>There are no figures available for jobs available locally but indications are that there is slow growth in non-skilled areas.</p>	<p>This trend could suggest a lack of land available for buildings and industry to allow businesses to both move to Faringdon and expand on site. This may further suggest that the price differential between residential and commercial planning on land encourages landowners to hold out for the more lucrative residential use.</p>			
<p>Oxfordshire has a higher than average business start up and small business sector i.e. 85% - 90% of employees in Oxfordshire work for small businesses (information supplied by TBAC). From information supplied by a telephone survey to local Landlords and Managing</p>				

<p>Agents:</p> <p>Upto 500 sq. ft. Upto 1000 sq. ft. Above 1000 sq. ft. % companies surviving after 5 years 20% 50% 100%</p> <p>These figures reflect business start ups and failures for commercial and office businesses but not for manufacturing or industrial businesses as there is no space available for small businesses.</p> <p>Average <i>survival rate for start-ups in</i> Oxfordshire is 67% (1996 data) over a three year period. Oxfordshire tends to be higher than the national average.</p> <p>It is difficult to fully identify how dynamic the local economy is. Most businesses moving to Faringdon and Stanford have been trading for some time as there is very little allocated space for small business start ups.</p>			
<p>On the consumer side there are little or no prospects for new employment amongst town centre shops, but some growth prospects in hotels and catering. However strong growth estimated at 10% p.a. at Faringdon Community College, limited by the shortage of teachers.</p> <p>Non-consumer firms appear to have better prospects with five out of the nine replies indicating firm expansion plans and prospects. These range across commercial offices, through specialist clothing to engineering.</p> <p>Some economic development/ inward investment funds are available to areas of the hinterland.</p> <p>It is believed there are no forms of assistance available to existing and new local businesses</p>	<p>It is thought that there is generally poor retail profitability, and that it has a low profile. Property rents are low and a poor investment. The retail sector is generally unattractive.</p>	<p>If the view on poor retail profitability is well founded it is a major issue</p>	<p>Market research is needed to determine how and whether Faringdon could generate significant extra retail volumes</p>
<p>Some economic development/ inward investment funds are available to areas of the hinterland.</p> <p>It is believed there are no forms of assistance available to existing and new local businesses</p>	<p>There is a weakness that Faringdon is not designated as an area of high need.</p>		<p>Seek recategorisation of Faringdon as an area of high need</p>

Retail and Town Centre Services			
<p>The vast bulk of the shopping is in the town centre, with only Stanford in the Vale in the villages (only c. 2000 sq ft) providing more than small Post Office type operations plus single shops in Clanfield and Coleshill.</p> <p>Major centres of competition to Faringdon supermarkets are Wantage (9 miles), Swindon (9 miles), Witney (12 miles) and Abingdon (12 miles) and Frilford (8 miles) all within 20 mins, where the latter offers a free bus service from Faringdon</p>	<p>There is competition from nearby out of town supermarkets, some of which offer free transport.</p>	<p>Health and employment regulations are seen as a threat to the viability of village shops</p>	
<p>Faringdon has a fair range of shops, mainly in the convenience sector. The total of shops and consumer services is over one hundred.</p> <p>Numbers by category are antiques (4), architects (2), bakers (1), banks (2), barbers (3), specialist books (1), building societies (2), butchers (2), cafes (1), confectioners (2), pharmacist (1), clothing (1), discount stores (2), dry cleaners (1), estate agents and surveyors (5), fish and chip shops (2), fishing tackle (1), funeral directors (1), bespoke furniture (3), gift shops (4), glaziers (1), grocers/food (excluding butchers and bakers) (3), hairdressers (3), hardware (1), insurance (2), jewellery (2), car accessories (3), car dealers (2), car service (6), newsagents (2), opticians (1), pet shop (1), petrol (2), pianos (1), plant and tool hire (2), plastics (1), printers (1), pubs (6), restaurants (6), sandwich bars (2), soft furnishings (1), solicitors (1), take-aways (2), bookmakers (1), vets. (2), video hire (1), wine shop (1).</p>	<p>The main magnets are probably food (supermarket and specialist butchers and cheese shop) and the basic services in particular banks and still possibly the pharmacy.</p> <p>There are few obvious gaps given the size of the town and its catchment area, however lack of shops supplying shoes, general clothing, greengrocer and general books was remarked upon at the Healthcheck Community event in April 2002.</p>	<p>There may be an opportunity to exploit a niche market, linked to tourism (kitchen shops, wine warehouses, second hand book clientele from a wider area)</p> <p>There is a need to research the potential market in the surrounding villages.</p>	<p>Research the potential markets in the hinterland.</p> <p>Consider initiatives such as a shoppers creche to attract people in and create more volume in the market.</p>
<p>Retail floorspace in the town centre has been lost in the past five years but only a small</p>	<p>The town is not attractive to retail developers and, with the increase of out of town retail</p>		

<p>amount (approx. 1000sq. ft.) in off peak areas.</p> <p>Retail rents in Faringdon are markedly lower than in comparable towns in the area. In Faringdon these are typically £12.50/£15 per sq. ft. in Highworth about £25 and in Burford £35. Town centre office space is £8 in Faringdon against £11 in Burford. Poorer profitability is the most likely cause.</p>	<p>centres, is becoming less so</p>	<p>Organise the Farmers' market in the evening at weekend so that those working can use them.</p>
<p>The general market draws shoppers into Faringdon as does the Farmers Market. There would be an opportunity for growth should it run on a Saturday on into the evening.</p> <p>The market would benefit from successful strategies to increase Faringdon's retail volume</p>		
<p>There is a centuries-old general market on Tuesdays with seldom more than a dozen stalls offering food, clothing, plants and baskets. A Community bus comes in from Stanford in the Vale. The number of stalls has fallen over the years by approximately 50%.</p> <p>On Friday mornings there has been a well-supported W1 market for nearly twenty years.</p> <p>A farmer's market has been running since April 2001 on the first Tuesday of the month. This is successful with over a dozen stalls each month.</p> <p>There is a possibility of a French visiting market running twice per annum.</p>	<p>Were it not for the planning policy of refusing changes of use from retail, there would be more</p>	
<p>Currently three shops are vacant in the town centre, amounting to approx. 2000 sq. ft. No retail space has been vacant for more than 2 years..</p> <p>15 new shops have opened in the centre in the last five years, <i>but only replacing others which have ceased operations</i></p> <p>Rents for retail premises are stable. Rents peaked in 1990/91, dropped dramatically to reach a nadir in 1993-5, and have since only</p>	<p>This suggest that Faringdon may appear more attractive for retail business than on average it proves to be in practice</p>	

<p>regained their earlier levels.</p> <p>Retail rents in Faringdon are currently approximately under 50% of the level of nearby towns and over the past few years have declined relative to the other towns. Various shopkeepers intend to relocate, but this is mainly to release residential development value within their properties. Our replies suggest that local retailers are not very confident about trading prospects. On a scale from high (5) to low (1), the average was 2.75.</p> <p>Their confidence about Faringdon as a shopping destination was 2.55. There are few enquiries for retail space. The low level of retail rents confirms their lack in confidence.</p>	<p>While not conclusive this suggests that Faringdon shops generally suffer from low profitability</p>	<p>This needs to be further researched and action taken. Almost certainly strategies should be pursued to increase sales volume or encourage moves into other product areas</p>	<p>Research into retail profitability and strategies to remedy this. In particular to consider the potential contribution from surrounding villages</p>
<p>Following a Survey of shoppers in the town and villages carried out in 1998 the town was specifically promoted as a shopping destination by means of: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A gazetteer of all its shops and consumer services (complete because not dependent on entry fee) distributed to all household in the town and villages up to 6 or 7 miles out. 2. An advertising programme in the local monthly newspaper "The Faringdon Folly" which has approx. 50% local penetration. This ran for a year and featured specific local traders with quarter-page items and the regular message "Faringdon: a friendly and convenient place to shop". This had been a prime conclusion from the shoppers' survey. 3. A full-page advert in the RMCS Shrivernham staff handbook about Faringdon as a shopping centre. <p>In addition Faringdon benefits from having</p>	<p>Whilst these initiatives may have been beneficial they have certainly not been adequate in intensity or frequency.</p>		<p>Develop strategies for promoting Faringdon as a tourist destination <i>and address the negative issues raised by the villages, principally parking and transport</i></p>

<p>what was nationally the first ever brown sign on its bypass drawing the attention of passing traffic to its services.</p> <p>Traders have also subscribed for entry and advertisements in a Faringdon edition of Denton's Directory and in a Town Guide published for the Town Council in 2001 by Millennium Publications. For this our Gazetteer was updated and re-issued tucked in for distribution.</p> <p>The town shops had good publicity with BBC TV coverage of the Cavalier Christmas event organised by the Chamber in December 2001.</p>			
<p>There is reasonable commercial demand for space for A2 (financial services etc.) and A3 (hot food) Uses, but very little for A1 retail in the town centre. There is strong demand for at least one edge of town supermarket should the land and current planning policy be available.</p> <p>No shops are charity shops</p>	<p>Usually a good sign for the vitality of the town centre, <i>but appears to conflict with other indicators.</i></p>		
Training and Education			
<p>A cross-section of businesses were surveyed (by telephone). The majority of businesses employed local residents or personnel that relocated to take-up a job. The majority of businesses required professional/academic qualifications to be in place <i>before</i> employment was taken-up. Information technology training was either given in-house or courses taken at the local Community Education Centre (FACE). The employment vacancies identified when conducting the survey did not require any vocational training. Faringdon Community College students</p>	<p>The needs of the Joint Staff College at Shrivenham should be investigated</p>		<p>Explore with the Joint Staff College what could be done to enhance the skills of local schoolleavers to enable them to enter that job market</p>

<p>progress to colleges in Abingdon, Witney, Oxford and Swindon, which offer a vast range of vocational and non-vocational courses.</p> <p>Examples of gaps in vocational training are courses for The Association of Estate Agents, qualifications to work in an Opticians and Legal Secretary qualifications. In addition, there may be opportunity for Faringdon to become a centre for training organic farmers.</p>			
<p>Faringdon Community College is below the National Average figure within the league tables. When comparing the College to schools within a 10-mile radius (which encompasses the neighbouring town of Swindon) it still remains in the bottom half of the table.</p> <p>The Primary Schools are, on the whole, above the National Average figure within the league tables (in some subjects by a significant degree). This was also the case when comparing schools within a 10-mile radius above.</p> <p>Statistics for students with educational needs were given in the league tables, which were quite high for certain schools, but it was unclear as to whether the pass rates reflected these statistics.</p> <p>There was no theme to the problems head teachers saw surrounding the quality of education.</p>	<p>More work needs to be done to discover what lies behind the low figure for the 16 plus age group. One possibility is that students are moving to other sources of higher education with wider choices of course</p>	<p>This may be a significant issue</p>	<p>Further research should be undertaken to indicate what action should be taken</p>
<p>There are sufficient places available at present in local authority or independent nurseries and playgroups for 4 year olds, but is lacking within Faringdon for 3 year olds (42 places for a population of 99).</p> <p>The nursery within the Faringdon Junior School has increased facilities and a new,</p>		<p>Cross refer to the comments on the Community worksheets in relation to the needs of Faringdon Pre-School</p>	

<p>independent nursery is to be opened in Faringdon.</p> <p>Satellite communities within the Hinterland have adequate pre-school provision</p>			
<p>There are public internet access points in Faringdon Library, the local Community Education Centre (FACE), the Family Centre, Stanford-in-the-Vale village hall; learning points Buckland Dairy (under Oxon Virtual Campus), Longworth School (OVC), Library, together with all points within Faringdon Community College and Primary Schools within the area.</p> <p>There is also an Oxon Rural Laptops Project in operation at the moment which has/is visiting Faringdon Family Centre, Faringdon Town Hall, Uffington Village Hall, Stanford-in-the-Vale Village Hall offering internet courses to local residents.</p>	<p>Facilities, such as an internet cafe would be an opportunity for Faringdon.</p> <p>See comments on Broadband in section on commercial and industrial</p>	-	Establish an internet cafe
<p>There is a wide range of non-vocational courses available locally. There is a Leisure Centre within Faringdon offering sports and recreational courses for all ages and abilities; the local Community Education Centre (FACE) offers recreational and hobby courses; local interest groups and sports clubs – all of which advertise extensively in local publications; through school press releases; hoardings; brochures and flyers.</p>		-	
<p>There are not a high number of school exclusions and head teachers do not see this as a problem locally.</p>		-	
Commercial and Industrial Property Needs			
<p>Within the town only a doctor's surgery and a 5000 sq. ft. office block (to balance the loss of</p>			

<p>offices within the town centre to residential use) have been built in the last three years. A new veterinary surgery is planned. On the outskirts there has been some development through the conversion of farm buildings to commercial/industrial use. Confidence is low.</p>			
<p>There is no good quality office space that is vacant. Industrial space is concentrated in the Old Sawmills and Pioneer Roads industrial estates and there is approx. 6000sq.ft. available. There is no over-provision of office and industrial units, more likely to be under provision.</p>	<p>More high quality office space is needed Industrial space is generally unattractive and in a poor setting.</p>		<p>Seek to improve the quality and setting of the current industrial space and provide good new commercial and industrial accommodation.</p>
<p>There is a dearth of "starter units" suitable for small businesses. Although this could be rectified by possibly using redundant agricultural buildings, it is felt that there are not enough redundant agricultural buildings of the size, location or quality to fill this gap. It is very difficult for small businesses to find affordable premises.</p>	<p>There is a need for more starter units</p>		<p>Work with Business link to provide more flexible starter units.</p>
<p>Rents are currently stable, but have increased by around 5% in the last 3-4 years. When comparing like with like in nearby areas town centre office rentals are 30% lower, industrial rents are around 25% lower and commercial / office rents are also lower than nearby areas by between 10% - 30%.</p>	<p>Low business rents suggest Faringdon is not seen as an attractive location</p>		
<p>There has always been a fairly high occupancy rate for commercial properties, but this tends to reflect the lack of provision of premises suitable for new enterprises, rather than a high level of demand. There is demand for, but no provision of, units of around 1000</p>	<p>-</p>		<p>The whole industrial estate needs to be upgraded.</p>

sq. ft. and starter units.	There is little evidence of planned expansion. There have been several informal plans over the years to update and expand the industrial area. There may be a need for higher quality housing to attract those associated with more prestigious businesses to come to the area	There appear to be no schemes to encourage inward investment. Planning constraints may impinge on plans to revitalise the industrial estate. The inadequacy of local links and the A420 are recognised	- There is a need for a strategic plan to modernise and expand the industrial park.	Work with Business Link , OCC, TBAC and Oxford Innovations to draw up plans to revitalise this area including improving access arrangements. Recommend the dualing of the A420
Tourism and Visitor Services				
Standing tourist attractions are White Horse Hill, All Saint's Church at Faringdon, Faringdon Folly, Buscot Park (the Faringdon collection), William Morris' house at Kelmscott, The Great Barn at Gt Coxwell and Faringdon itself for its historical interest, the corallian fossil SSI and the town's proximity to the Ridgeway and the Thames path. Events such as the Battle of Faringdon re-enactment in 1995 and the Cavalier Christmas in 2001	Events bring visitors to the town, but need to be held more frequently and with greater regularity. The recently started series of concerts in The Old Crown could well build up a useful and wider following. There is an evident need for an annual national event. There is scope for more vigorous marketing and use of telecommunications technology to unite many of the tourist visiting and accommodation sites. Faringdon and district is pleasant, but not the basis for a volume tourist operation. Nevertheless there is scope to exploit what there is.	There is a distinct possibility that some figures significantly exaggerate the impact of tourism on Faringdon employment and economy. Tourism should be more important than it currently is. There are several good restaurants, but capacity and variety need to be expanded.	- There is inadequate cheap accommodation in the area. Providers of accommodation do not appear to liaise with each other	There is a need to bring those providing accommodation together to provide a more comprehensive accommodation service to visitors and promote their services.
There are 85 people working in hotel and restaurants in Faringdon. Estimates for the Vale of White Horse as a whole suggest tourism supports 874 full time equivalent jobs representing 1297 actual (taking into account part time and seasonal employment). Proportionately this is estimated as 130 and 194 jobs respectively.	Significant shortages are of accommodation along the Thames Path and of more moderately priced beds across the whole area. There is a need for greater co-operation	Numbers of beds in establishments in the VWH Accommodation Guide for the area covered by the Healthcheck are in Hotels (3 star) 132 beds of which 104 in Faringdon, in		

<p>Hotels (2 Star) 63 beds all in Faringdon, in Farmhouses (3 diamonds) 12 beds all in villages, in Inns (unclassified) 54 beds of which 18 in Faringdon, in B&B (3 diamonds) 8 beds all in villages, in B&B Unclassified 16 beds of which 7 in Faringdon. 285 beds in total. There are no Youth Hostels, Self Catering premises nor Camping and Caravanning Sites listed in the Guide.</p> <p>Besides these are a number of perhaps 100 or more in unclassified accommodation in categories from hotels to B&B not in the Guide. There is also known to be a Camping Site at Radcot. The nearest Youth Hostel is at Wantage.</p>	<p>between accommodation suppliers, and adequate IT provision for the TIC both inside and outside of working hours.</p>	
<p>The Visitor Survey for 1997 carried out by the Southern Tourist Board found that 15 % of visitors to the Vale of White Horse intended visiting Faringdon. This equates to 66,000 (Vale total is estimated at 440,000). The same survey shows that 41,580 (63%) are day visitors. Of those that stay longer than a day 68% stay between 1 and 3 nights. This may be a high estimate as it may include "locals".</p> <p>We have no figures but have no reason to question that Faringdon follows the national trend of seasonal activity</p>		
<p>There is a TIC in the town centre without disabled access. According to the visitors survey 16% of those visiting Faringdon visited the TIC.</p> <p>Number of phone calls to TIC between April 2001 and March 2002 : 1,744 (an increase of 25% compared to previous year)</p>		<p>There is a need to provide disabled access to the TIC</p>

<p>Number of visitors to TIC between April 2001 and March 2002 : 14,512 British visitors (an increase of 29% compared to previous year); 719 overseas visitors (a decrease of 50% compared to previous year) The Faringdon web site www.faringdon.org is another useful source of information</p>			
<p>The average spend per person per night in the UK is £50.89 (Southern Tourist Board) It is difficult to discover how that translates to Faringdon. If we used the national figure and an estimated nights stayed (Vale of White Horse Visitors Survey) we have a figure of : £50.89 x 91,334 = £4.6m The average spend per day visitor in the Southern Region is £22.75 (Southern Tourist Board). This translates in Faringdon to: 41,580 x £22.75 = £945.945 (a total of £5½m) In reality for Faringdon the figure is likely to be greatly less than this. A rough estimate of spend per night for the Faringdon area equates to about £22.50 and for day visits about £7. This would put Faringdon's financial gain from its tourist economy of somewhere in the region of £2.3m.</p>	<p>It is important to encourage visitors to stay overnight. Faringdon should be a centre for exploring the local area – the Downs, Vale of White Horse and Upper Thames</p>	<p>More could be made of Faringdon's heritage. There is scope to develop stronger links with surrounding villages (especially those near the river) to promote Faringdon and its hinterland as tourist destinations.</p>	<p>Whilst some visitors come to see Faringdon itself including All Saints Church and the Folly, a larger number come in passing to attractions in the country around including the Gt. Coxwell Barn, Buscot Park also to destinations further afield including the Cotswolds. A number of walkers on the Thames Path and Ridgeway come into Faringdon as do many visitors to Lechlade. Accommodation and eating in Faringdon for commercial travellers is a significant part of</p>
<p>Develop a programme of events which will help to attract tourists such as Jazz events. Employ a marketing/events manager for the town.</p>			<p>A comprehensive package of tourist attractions in and around the area needs to be developed. A Group needs to be established to promote Faringdon as a tourist destination. More use could be made of the community bus in this respect.</p>

<p>the visitor activity.</p> <p>There are variously complaints and bouquets about the public toilet facilities, more definitely complaints about dirt and rubbish in the streets, about shops not being open and about inadequate numbers of reasonably priced B&Bs.</p>	<p>The town centre needs cleaning up. The plans for the market place will help but other areas need attention</p>	<p>Employ a part-time town centre manager</p>	
<p>The Faringdon brochure published in 1999 is still largely current, very useful and is well received.</p> <p>There have been two Town Trails leaflets one longer, one shorter but both are now out of print and will need some alterations before reprinting.</p> <p>There are noticeable numbers coming on account of the older buildings and the geological SSSI. We have nothing to meet this interest.</p> <p>There is a gap identified in the distribution of leaflets and other tourist material.</p>	<p>A Childrens' and/or Schools Trail would be a possibility. There may be opportunities for further trails, such as a driving trail using Faringdon as a base.</p>	<p>Develop a more comprehensive selection of town trails and tourist packages to include nearby attractions</p>	
<p>The town has not entered Britain in Bloom or other National Competitions. A local version has been run as a possible pilot for such an entry. There is to be a local Golden Jubilee Faringdon in Bloom this year. Whether to go national after this has not yet been decided.</p> <p>Faringdon House gardens used to be open to the public and brought many visitors, but this ceased after the estate was vandalised.</p>			
<p>The main example of specialist tourism enterprises is the Sudbury House Hotel conference centre with a ramped lecture room seating 90, with full modern display facilities and associated flexibly partitioned meeting rooms. Costume events such as the 1995</p>	<p>Events organised in the past indicate scope for such attractions in the future, but they need to be regular with clear responsibility for their organisation</p>	<p>Employ a part time programme organiser.</p>	

<p>English Civil War re-enactment and the Cavalier Christmas last December provide good publicity and do bring in visitors. The latter event drew an estimated number of going on for a thousand visitors.</p>			
<p>The signing in Faringdon is quite good except for that relating to the long stay car park in Gloucester Street and that there is still a sign (about 15 years out of date) indicating that Tourist Information is available in the Southampton Street car park.</p>	<p>There is scope to improve visitors awareness of linkages to the Thames Path and other attractions. There is a need to strengthen and in some cases make safer pedestrian and cycle links with other networks such as the Ridgeway and Thames Path</p>		
Business Support			
<p>A full range of financial services and advice is offered by the two bank branches in the town but little of it is from personnel based locally. There is no employment service but an opportunity to link up to a networked service.</p>			
<p>The town does not have a Town Centre Manager.</p>	<p>There is scope for a least a part-time appointment. There is also an opportunity to provide advice through networks, possibly an interactive site on the Faringdon webpage.</p>		<p>Employ a part time Town Centre Manager (perhaps shared with Wantage)</p>
<p>No business advice services have presences in the town, although services are accessible electronically. The Chamber does not of itself have a business advice service.</p>	<p>There is evident scope for a one stop facility offering not only CAB services but a range of business advice services.</p>		<p>Arrange a business advice facility, probably in conjunction with the start-up accommodation. This could be associated with an enhanced Chamber of Commerce. Alternatively it could be part of a local service point, internet café and Citizens Advice Bureau, for example in the premises adjacent to the Corn Exchange.</p>
<p>It is difficult to recall any examples of successful business support or initiatives, apart from the Faringdon website which has a business sector and may have some beneficial impact on the business community</p>			

<p>Apart from general meetings of Chamber members, periodic meetings which it organises on issues of concern also to non-members (as for example the disruption caused by Transco road works) and an informal monthly business persons lunch, there are no activities which bring the business community together.</p>	<p>There is scope, with modest additional funding to expand the work of the Chamber of Commerce</p>																									
<p>There is currently no broadband communication network available on Faringdon exchange. Although the hinterland includes Oxford and Swindon exchanges, which are due to be upgraded for ADSL within the next couple of weeks, the businesses are too far from the exchanges to receive ADSL. The local businesses can be split into four different areas encompassing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Industrial 2. Retail 3. Light Industry e.g. craft 4. Commercial / Office <p>These areas have differing requirements for broadband communications and the use of the internet. By conducting a telephone survey of some of the landlords and managing agents of businesses in these sectors, we have established the following:</p>	<p>The survey showed a definite demand for broadband communications, and without it, there may even be a threat to future business at Faringdon. <i>NB This is a condition of survival not a potential competitive advantage.</i></p>	<p>As a priority ensure that broadband is generally available in Faringdon, but make sure it is installed with a comprehensive overview rather than in a piecemeal way</p> <p>The provision of an internet café for community use should be explored</p>																								
<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Industrial</td> <td>Retail</td> <td>Light Industry</td> <td>Commercial / Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Demand for Broadband</td> <td>10%</td> <td>20%</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E-mail</td> <td>55%</td> <td>70%</td> <td>65%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Website Address</td> <td>50%</td> <td>45%</td> <td>40%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Purchases / Sales over Internet</td> <td>10%</td> <td>15%</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>70%</td> </tr> </table>	Industrial	Retail	Light Industry	Commercial / Office	Demand for Broadband	10%	20%	0%	E-mail	55%	70%	65%	Website Address	50%	45%	40%	Purchases / Sales over Internet	10%	15%	15%				70%		
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<p>Internet Partner Firms 10% 3 0% 15% 85%</p> <p>We have not been able to establish whether any private homes have internet access but we do know that there are no broadband communication facilities available through the exchange. Faringdon Community College and the Library both have broadband communications, supplied by OCN (Oxfordshire Community Networks), which represents approximately 30% of the public sector buildings.</p>			
<p>Faringdon is the closest exchange and this is understood to provide ISDN capabilities for ISDN-2 only, and not broadband. BT have plans to upgrade the Faringdon exchange in the short-term, but details of the upgrade will not be made available until June 2002. It is known that Faringdon is not one of the 100 exchanges due to be upgraded for ADSL. No-one within BT is able to state when Faringdon will be able to offer ADSL.</p> <p>There is no telecom provision franchise that has been awarded to any competitor to BT. Ntl hold the franchise for nearby areas and currently have no intention of installing a service to Faringdon, unless the Government releases new franchise areas. It is felt by the telecom industry, that Faringdon is too rural a community to benefit from installing a broadband service – however, should the Government wish to meet coverage targets and any new franchise areas released were to have different regulations, ntl do feel that they may be able to offer a broadband service to Faringdon, through either a fixed or wireless service.</p> <p>There is no direct telecom services</p>	<p>Information on business support services is available but not from sources within Faringdon. This is a possible pointer to action with the evident scope for start-ups.</p>		

<p>competition to BT within Faringdon, as yet, and therefore there is no obligation for BT to provide Local Loop Unbundling facilities within the local exchange. NTL are telecom providers, with their own broadband communication service and do not require access to BT's exchange.</p> <p>There is reasonable mobile phone coverage by 3 of the 4 suppliers – Vodafone, BT Cellnet (O2) & Orange. There is poor coverage by T-Mobile. Orange have a transmitter at Faringdon, and the transmitters for Vodafone & Cellnet are based at Shrivvenham and Wantage for coverage of Faringdon.</p>		
<p>Sudbury House has facilities for conferences which include three auditoriums and other meeting rooms, plus OHP, Powerpoint, video, slide and computer based visual aids in all conference rooms, together with large restaurant, bar and accommodation.</p> <p>The Crown Hotel has three meeting rooms, a large ballroom and OHP, video, slide and computer based visual aids for one conference at a time.</p> <p>The United Church, Faringdon Hotel and the Bell Hotel have single conference facilities with OHP, video and slide visual aid capabilities.</p> <p>There are also numerous meeting rooms throughout the town, the largest being the Corn Exchange and the at present unused former Community Centre theatre.</p>		
<p>There is not a published strategy relating to the use of information technology</p>		

