

Faringdon Market Town Healthcheck – Initial Findings



Environment

| FINDINGS | COMMENTS | ISSUES | POTENTIAL ACTION |
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| <p>The main landmarks and distinctive buildings in the town are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ All Saints Church – large building close to market square – holds lots of local events inc. Flower Festival – most of local orgs take part ◆ Folly/Folly Hill – tall monument, built in hill above town, visible for miles in all directions. Opens first Sunday every month – spectacular views from top ◆ Town Hall – centre of town And prominent feature of market place, disabled access, small functions room for up to 80 people, local farmers market held underneath monthly ◆ Corn Exchange – large hall and suite of meeting rooms and offices – hob of local gvt, doubles up for communal and private functions ◆ Friends meeting house – renovated over last 25 years for minority group – covers | <p style="text-align: center;">Character and Vitality of the Town</p> <p>Heritage potential focused on town centre.</p> <p>Public access restricted in many areas.</p> <p>Tunnels and underground springs not currently accessible.</p> <p>Investment in the refurbishment of the market square has been promised by the VWHDC subject to matching funding</p> <p>No strategic overview of heritage potential and its development</p> | <p>Town has rich heritage that could be exploited to encourage tourism.</p> <p>Town lacks visitor centre/ museum to act as tourist focal point</p> <p>Market Square in current condition does not encourage tourists</p> <p>Much of heritage is hidden or inaccessible to the public</p> <p>Town would benefit from a heritage audit</p> | |

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| <p>area surrounding Faringdon. Private function/organisations meet there e.g. peace group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Portwell – outside area with seating in Market Square with well/pump (now closed off) Market held either side every Tuesday ◆ Faringdon House – largest building/estate in Faringdon – public have little access to house or grounds. Annual firework display only community event of year ◆ Crown Inn – in Market Square with original stables and courtyard to rear. Promote many local events and provide parking for community bus. ◆ Bell Hotel – central location, with natural spring and tunnel to church. Built on site of Cistercian Monastery on 12th century. <p>These are but few major landmarks, all within short walk from town centre. Town played part in civil war as Royalist stronghold besieged by Roundheads. Cromwell rested here after war ended.</p> <p>Believed Folly Hill occupied by Celts in late Neolithic and bronze age times and certainly by iron-age cultures.</p> <p>Saxon times Faringdon capital of England for short time – King Alfred built palace in town centre. Town recorded in Doomsday book as Ferendone.</p> <p>Market square built over two streams and series of tunnels dating back to era of Cistercian monastery.</p> | | |
| <p>Focal points of the town are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Market place: especially under the Old Town Hall | <p>Potential to create a vibrant town centre</p> <p>Town Council renovating community centre</p> | <p>Few facilities for teenagers leading to groups congregating around town.</p> |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Southampton St car park ◆ Marlborough Gardens play area ◆ 8 Town Centre pubs ◆ Library ◆ Community College and Leisure Centre ◆ Friends Meeting House ◆ Churches and Chapels | <p>Nothing for young people to do</p> <p>More needed for tourists – small museum/ visitor centre within main area.</p> | <p>No focus for community activity</p> <p>Skate boarding in car park</p> <p>Market square dominated by traffic</p> | |
| <p>The Conservation area centred on the Market Square represents the historic core of the town</p> | | <p>Other sites which could be included within the conservation area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Coxwell road pit is an important fossil site and a SSSI. ◆ The grounds of Faringdon House – the Park – are not included and are of significant landscape value. | |
| <p>Individual and/or groups of buildings which display design, detailing or materials which give the town a distinctive character are the Old Town Hall, the Faringdon Folly, Conservation area – stone slate roofs, local limestone, stucco rendering and eyebrow dormer windows. Later buildings in brick. Wide variety of 19th century shop fronts in Market Square and adjacent streets.</p> | | | |
| <p>Unattractive areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Market Place 2. Park Road industrial estate 3. Park road electricity sub station 4. The Lees/ Westbrook area 5. Community Centre 6. Folly Tower area 7. Telephone Exchange 8. Swan Lane area 9. Crown stables | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1, 5, 6 & 9 are areas with potential to positively enhance the town 2, 3, 4 and 7 are areas that could benefit from a strategy of landscaping and screening 8 requires a comprehensive redevelopment plan, linked to a process of land acquisition? Need for more tree/shrub planting around the town | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tarmac pavements and obtrusive lighting 2. Unattractive buildings/ frontages on main access road into town 3. Prominent and ugly 4. Area of poorly designed and laid out 3 storey houses close to town centre 5. Prominent building in the market square in urgent need of renovation 6. The footpaths leading to this prominent | |

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| | <p>landmark are poor and the surrounding area of grass and trees need improvement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. A prominent utilitarian building in the conservation area 8. An area of run down industrial units and storage designated for mixed residential and employment re development 9. Neglected listed buildings in need of urgent repair | | |
| | | | <p>The limits of Faringdon are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ North – natural escarpment, National Trust farmland and Folly Hill ◆ East – A420 and Country Park land ◆ South – A420 and Local plan designated ‘Greenbelt’ ◆ West – Escarpment valley and areas of National Trust farmland. <p>In terms of the town centre condition the market square is lacking street furniture, there is pavement tarmac with weeds in places, the community centre dilapidated, the square becomes a car park on weekend</p> |
| | <p>The District Council have developed a comprehensive plan to improve the market square area and are now seeking funding to implement the plan.</p> <p>The Town Council has started restoration work on the community centre (Pump Rooms) and is seeking grants to complete the work.</p> <p>The town would benefit from a small museum/ visitor centre to augment its attractions.</p> | | <p>Physical gateway features have recently been built on three of the main entrance roads into the town: Park road, Cogwheel road and Highworth road. However the routes into the town would benefit from a co-ordinated landscaping and maintenance plan. The town does not have a train or bus station at present.</p> |
| <p>Bus links to the main rail network, possibly with the re-opening of either Uffington or Challow stations on the main London – West rail route.</p> <p>Re-open Stanford road access to improve access into new estates on the eastern side of town</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus station/Lorry park, linked to park and ride situated at the A420 end of Park road 2. Park road industrial estate needs further improvement to frontages. 3. London Street and Lechlade road gateways in need of tidying and planting | <p>Public transport limited and difficult to access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – National coaches no longer stop in town <p>Gateways into town potentially attractive, but:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Main road into town untidy ◆ Illegal parking causes problems in some areas ◆ OCC plans to construct a roundabout on | |

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| <p>Main car parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Gloucester Street – long stay. Access to town centre could be more direct. The footpath passes through a quiet secluded alley and is not well lit at night. The car park is not popular after dark because of its location. ◆ Southampton Street – short stay/shoppers car park. Well used day and night. Well-lit and open plan design encourages use. Young people meet here and use it as a skate park, which causes some friction with users ◆ Market Square (Eastern side and bus area evenings/Sundays) no time limit or charge. | <p>the A420 Stanford road junction</p> <p>Car parks centrally located and relatively cheap to use.</p> <p>On street parking is a problem in some areas</p> <p>Signage, lighting and pedestrian safety/access an issue in Gloucester Street</p> <p>Car park congestion may discourage town centre shopping</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Gloucester Street – the location of this car park discourages use after dark by ‘vulnerable’ users because of a fear of crime and possible vandalism to vehicles. Access to the town centre could be improved, one possibility is the old Monks path leading to All Saints church, however Faringdon House privately owns this and no negotiations have taken place to date. ◆ Southampton Street – this car park has recently been refurbished, is popular and well used, the only outstanding issue being its use as a ‘skatepark’. The Town Council are currently working to develop a skatepark on land in their ownership in the town. ◆ Market Square – plans developed by VWHDC will pedestrianise the bus area and restrict parking elsewhere to short stay. ◆ Many of the footpaths in the town centre are neglected, uneven or narrow, creating a rundown impression. Access to the new health centre in Park Road is difficult for pedestrians. ◆ Signposting of the car parks could be improved, especially Gloucester Street which could benefit from additional signs in Lechlade Road, Coxwell Road and Park Road ◆ Conflict between pedestrian/ car use in the centre – balance between ease of access and creating an attractive vibrant town centre ◆ Is there a need for additional off street parking? | <p>Gloucester Street car park – access, lighting and security</p> <p>Market Place parking</p> <p>Pavements in the town centre</p> <p>Pedestrian access to the Health Centre</p> |
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| <p>Faringdon Town Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council operate a Joint Environmental Trust between them, which administers Historic Building grants, and environmental improvements grants in the town. The Trust is pro-active in the development of plans to improve the Market Place.</p> | | <p>There is a need to protect and enhance the rural setting and market town image of Faringdon.</p> | |
| <p>The town centre (The Market Square, London St, Cornmarket and Marlborough St) contains a mix of shops, Hotels/Restaurants and some offices, many with accommodation above.</p> <p>'A' boards clutter the pavements in the town centre</p> <p>Street furniture confined to concrete planters outside the Old Town Hall and the Corn Exchange</p> <p>Road signage outside the Bell in the Market square – difficult area with poor sightlines – restrict to pedestrian fingerpost?</p> <p>Road/ direction signs moved further from town centre.</p> | | <p>Cleanliness of the Town Centre and surrounding streets is poor – litter, dog mess etc – exacerbated by fragmented responsibilities across County/Vale/Town.</p> <p>Verges are poorly cut, grass cuttings are left lying around on verge and pavements</p> <p>Weed killer has not been applied in Faringdon for 3/4/5 years</p> <p>Care of green spaces is mostly by the Vale, some by the town. These are only adequately done</p> <p>Street/Verge/Green space inspections are ineffective/infrequent/distant</p> <p>Street cleansing methods must take account of on street parking</p> <p>Some old buildings have inappropriate signage or colour schemes for the age of the town</p> <p>Bin collection schedule changes results in bins/bags littering the streets during and following Bank Holidays</p> | <p>Join up Town/County/District for s Streetcare approach</p> |
| <p>12 Tree Preservation Orders are in force on individual and groups of important trees in the town</p> <p>Gravel Walk has a row of pollard lime trees</p> | | | |

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| <p>covered by TPOs Trees around the Folly and on the sides of Folly Hill stretching down to Park Road help to soften the visual impact of the housing on the eastern side of town Lechlade road, Faringdon House and the Junior School site, many prominent mature trees Avenue of trees recently planted along the by-pass end of Park Road. Many prominent trees located within private gardens across town.</p> | | | |
| The Countryside | | | |
| <p>The townscape is predominantly set in open countryside 1.5 miles from both Oxford (to the East) and Swindon to the West)</p> | <p>Surrounding farmland – small fields with hedgerows or stone walls NW – inalienable National Trust land (Map 1.6) SSSI – Wicklesham and Coxwell pits. (Faringdon sponge gravels – Lower Cretaceous Age) Entrances to the town: (Map 1.8) ◆ Lechlade road – some parts stonewalled ◆ London Street – partly walled town approaches ◆ Radcot Road – low wall topped by railings ◆ Coxwell Road – attractive rural aspect on this approach Park Road approach: initially hedged with an avenue of trees and gates, then business area – needs more planting and some sites tidying More could be done to open up and publicise features such as SSSIs</p> | <p>Exploit features that retain rural market town image of Faringdon – greener approaches to all town areas. Ensure development is contained by: ◆ Farmed land – grade 2/3a ◆ National Trust land ◆ School playing fields/ leisure areas ◆ SSSI ◆ A420 buffer Avoid developing high impact landscape areas</p> | |
| <p>In terms of the landscape quality: ◆ No ANOB ◆ No National Parks ◆ 8 ecologically important landscapes ◆ SSSI – Fernham Meadows. 29 VO4 – Shellingford Cross roads Quarry–39HO3</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of awareness of local SSSI's and limited access to them. 2. Potential to open areas to greater public access 3. The proposed Country Park will be a valuable asset when it is open 4. The town and hinterland villages enjoy | | |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grafton Lock. 30 K01 - Wicklesham Pts. 29 X01 ◆ Conservation areas: - Buckland - Buscot - Faringdon - Great and Little Coxwell - Littleworth - Longworth - Shellingford - Pusey - Stanford in the Vale <p>Two dominant landscape features frame the area, the Upper Thames valley to the north and the Downs to the south; both are designated as areas of high landscape quality.</p> | <p>an attractive rural setting.</p> | | |
| <p>The countryside is largely given over to agriculture, however there are 3 active quarries and some areas of managed woodland.</p> | | | |
| <p>County Wildlife sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buscot Park Lane - Coxwell Wood - Northfield New Covert - Northfield Old Covert - Badbury Forest - Buckland Marsh - Buckland Warren Woods <p>Ecologically Important Landscapes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buscot Park - Thames Meadows - Barcote - Pusey Park - Buckland House <p>SSSI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fernham Meadows | | | |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grafton Lock Meadow - Wicklesham and Coxwell Pits - Shellingford Quarry - Buckland Warren - Fernham Road Pit <p>The areas above and many other woodland, wetland and meadow habitats ensure a wide range of wildlife thrive in the area. Within the town there are a number of important wildlife sites including: The Country Park area, the Development Boundary Bund on the Coxwell Road development, Faringdon House Park, Town Park and Folly Hill</p> | | | |
| <p>Areas of historic importance. White Horse Hill and Uffington Castle dominate the area to the south together with other Neolithic and Bronze age sites. Great Coxwell Tithes barn Faringdon was a Royalist stronghold during the Civil War with evidence of the siege in St Marys church and other buildings in the town Buscot Park and grounds Faringdon's market place is in itself historic and there are important listed buildings in the town:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Faringdon House ◆ The Folly ◆ The Old Town Hall ◆ St Marys Church ◆ The Bell and the Crown – coaching inns ◆ The Friends Meeting House <p>Total listed buildings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faringdon 135 - Littleworth 11 - Buscot 38 - Coleshill 47 - Eaton Hastings 16 | <p>There are a number of neglected listed buildings</p> | <p>Opportunity to redevelop the Market Place and enhance its role in the Town and for the area.</p> <p>Appraisal of parking, transport options and their impact on the built environment and the vitality of the town</p> <p>Opportunity to develop architectural 'trails' to explore the building heritage of the area.</p> | |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great Coxwell 22 - Buckland 72 - Hatford 5 - Pusey 19 - Stanford in the Vale 46 - Little Coxwell 10 | | | |
| <p>The Countryside is predominantly managed as farmland with some managed woodland to the west around Eaton Hastings and Badbury Hill. Gravel extraction carried out to the south west of the town.</p> <p>Farms are mostly mixed – arable, beef and dairy and are above the county average acreage of 100 hectares (250 acres)</p> <p>DEFRA reluctant to identify land in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. There are no Nitrate Sensitive areas.</p> <p>Organic farming is practised on Step Farm, Church Path Farm, Colleynore Farm Coleshill and off the Radcot Road at Littleworth.</p> <p>The town and countryside to the south and west is within the Great Western Community Forest. Field officers are involved in active management of the countryside – encouraging tree planting on poorer grade farmland.</p> <p>Extensive pollarding of willow trees along the Thames is planned to assist navigation to the north.</p> | | | |
| <p>DEFRA could not identify any community groups who participate in countryside management in the area.</p> <p>The Community forest officers organise occasional ‘one off’ tree planting days.</p> <p>The Town Council are taking ownership of an SSSI at the old quarry on Fernham Road and it is anticipated the community group will manage the site.</p> | <p>There is definitely potential to expand community participation, especially if this leads to greater countryside access.</p> | | |

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| <p>Major plans to change the urban edge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possible changes to the A420 trunk road to improve it, including a proposed roundabout at the junction with the A417 Wantage road (Local Plan 5.27 and Oxfordshire Structure Plan.) - Plans for housing development (Local Plan Proposals Map) - Great Western Community Forest extends west from Folly hill to Swindon. | <p>Pressure to expand the town development boundary to build additional housing</p> <p>Opportunity to define and maintain development boundaries</p> <p>Ensure measures to 'soften' the built environment are included in any planning applications</p> <p>Include footpaths in future proposals to improve the existing network</p> <p>Developments to the eastern and southern edges of the town and restrictions on development to the north and west have 'offset' the town centre; need to improve links with these areas</p> <p>Schools and services beyond walking distance for many people</p> <p>Limited cycle path network – opportunities for further development to include the hinterland</p> <p>'Home zones' offer an opportunity to improve the environment of existing housing estates</p> <p>Increase levels of tree planting across the area</p> <p>Ensure Faringdon does not overshadow its hinterland.</p> | | <p>Retention of a natural edge to housing development. I.e. strive to contain development within the topographical features of the area</p> <p>Develop physical buffers to soften the impact of further development</p> <p>Further development of the Great Western Community Forest</p> <p>Development of the Folly Country Park</p> |
| Link between Town and Country | | | |
| <p>Man-made links between town and country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Faringdon stands on the crossing of the A417 and the A420 a major arterial route between the Midlands and the M4. ◆ Roads into the town give good access to the hinterland <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From the north along London Street and Radcot road 2. From the west via Lechlade road and Highworth road 3. From the south along Coxwell road 4. From the east via Park road | | <p>Cycleways are virtually non-existent</p> | |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A disused railway line runs south from the Old Railway Station in Park road. ◆ Footpaths beside the A420 connect the town and some villages to the north. To the south, a footpath connects the town with the Coxwells ◆ A number of unmade footpaths provide countryside access from the town <p>Visual links</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Folly is a prominent landmark visible over a wide area ◆ The town stands on an escarpment overlooking the Thames valley to the north and the Downs and White Horse Hill to the south ◆ South and West of the town, there is some quarrying but the other approaches provide a more traditional setting | | |
| <p>Distinctive design features shared between town and villages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Local stone features in the construction of many older buildings in the town and adjacent villages including: Great and Little Coxwell, Littleworth, Eaton Hastings, Buscot and Coleshill ◆ Stone slate roofs and limestone walls feature in both cottages and larger houses across the area. | | |
| <p>Memorable views to and from the town.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Folly Tower is a prominent landmark visible from a distance on all sides of the town. 2. Views across the Thames valley from Highworth road lay-by. 3. From the Folly Tower views of the Thames valley, White Horse Hill, Stanford in the Vale and towards Oxford | | |

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| <p>4. and Swindon Church Street offers views to Radcot Bridge and the Thames</p> | <p>Historic commercial links between town and country apparent today.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The Corn Exchange building once the centre of local commercial activity is now the centre of local government services ◆ The Market Square once a focus for trading now has a weekly market and a monthly farmers market ◆ Coaching inns are still located in the market square ◆ Local shops selling equestrian goods and selling specialist foods ◆ Banking | | | |
| <p>Some elements which give the countryside its distinctive character become less distinct closer to the edge of the town:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Park road industrial estate is an unattractive transition between town and country ◆ Green belt between town and A420 provides a development buffer but is generally unattractive. | | <p>There may be a need for a comprehensive development plan to improve the run down industrial estate</p> | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The town occupies a prominent position on raised ground with most of the town set in a natural bowl. Recent development has taken the town boundary over the lip of the bowl on the southern side of the town. | <p>The area around the Folly would benefit from additional tree planting and would link well with the proposed country park to the south and the Great Western Community Forest. Some tree planting on areas flanking the A420 would soften views of the town</p> <p>Fernham road SSSI and the proposed public open space provide an opportunity to enhance a brown field site.</p> | <p>The main access roads to the town could be improved</p> <p>All of the approach roads would benefit from tidying up or landscaping, especially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Park road from the A420 roundabout through the industrial estate ◆ Lechlade Road, especially opposite the allotments <p>The top end of London Street, beyond Sudbury House Hotel, which is overgrown</p> | | |

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| <p>Recreational links, footpaths and bridleways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Great Western Community Forest ◆ Thames Path ◆ The Ridge Way ◆ Circular paths around the town linking it to attractive features such as Badbury Woods and the Folly Hill ◆ Footpaths from the adjacent villages to the town ◆ Faringdon cricket ground enjoys an attractive edge of town setting. | <p>There is potential to develop a canal link to the south using the disused railway line and Faringdon's high-up water supply.</p> | <p>with nettles and weeds Folly footpath is never cleared</p> | |
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