



Draft strategy and action plan for Faringdon and Wantage 2010/11 to 2012/13

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Introduction

This strategy and action plan for Faringdon and Wantage ('the strategy') has been developed to improve town centre vitality in the market towns of Faringdon and Wantage. A separate strategy will be prepared for Abingdon by the Choose Abingdon Partnership. The vitality of the Vale's market towns is important because they provide both local shopping and employment opportunities and a range of services including libraries, post offices and health facilities for the majority of Vale residents.

The strategy supports the council's strategic objective 'supporting a vibrant economy' and the corporate priority to 'work in partnership to sustain vibrant market towns'. The strategy and action plan also supports the Vale sustainable community strategy 2008/16 priority: 'Maintaining and enhancing the health and vitality of the Vale's market town centres'. More details of supporting strategies and plans are included in the appendix.

The Vale council recognises that action needs to be taken quickly to address some of the issues faced by the town centres of Faringdon and Wantage but short term actions need to be supported by a longer term strategy to make sure that these actions provide permanent rather temporary improvements.

The strategy has been developed by the council but its success is dependent on strong partnership working with a wide range of organisations. Many problems cannot be tackled effectively by any single organisation and co-ordinated action is required.

The strategy focuses on new economic development actions as the driver of town centre vitality but it is important to note that the council already provides a number of services that influence town centre vitality including: development policy and management, community safety, street cleansing, public conveniences and car parking. The council understands that there is a strong relationship between economic development, physical development and social development and the strategy supports the vision of the Vale sustainable community strategy 2008/16:

A sustainable Vale;

- **with prosperous, inclusive and thriving communities that have good access to a range of housing, jobs and services**
- **where everyone can feel safe and enjoy life**
- **where our needs can be met without compromising the natural and built heritage or the ability of future generations to meet their needs**

The strategy also needs to complement the core strategy of the local development framework, which will set out the spatial vision for the Vale, including the broad locations for land use.

Background

The national context

Government recognises the importance of vibrant town centres:

‘Town centres that are attractive, well-designed, and well-managed, with a range of shops, arts and cultural uses, entertainment, good amenities, and good transport connections, are engines for economic growth, providing a focal point for business and social interactions. Vibrant town centres are good for business: they create jobs, attract investment and generate income. At their best, they create a local buzz and define the wider area, attracting people from near and far.’ (‘Looking after our town centres’, Department of Communities and Local Government, 2009)

However a Commission for Rural Communities briefing note on market towns published in June 2009 included the following points:

- almost 11 million people live in approximately 1600 market towns and larger villages across rural England – over 20% of the total population
- to May 2009, market towns have seen steeper rises in unemployment than the national average – 120% compared to 90% for England as a whole
- amongst the hardest hit are middle class and professional groups with greater links to urban economies, and towns with high levels of young families and those working in the administrative sector in middle England
- in the majority of market towns recently surveyed, the number of vacant shop units has increased over the last six months; around 60% of existing vacant retail premises have remained empty during that time - this damages both the look and economic vitality of town centres.

The local view

‘Throughout the country the development of large retail centres and the increasing number of people buying goods through the internet is threatening the vitality of market towns and their traditional role as service centres. The challenge is to create attractive local shopping environments in the towns and secure new shops of a sufficient scale and quality that attract key retailers and retain expenditure in the area. In addition there are opportunities for the Vale's historic town centres with their small shops, to attract independent, specialist businesses that provide a distinctive and contrasting experience to shopping in the multiple chains in large modern centres.’ (Draft Core Strategy, Vale of White Horse District Council, 2009)

Market towns have therefore suffered in the last few decades from the growth of out-of-town retailers, internet shopping and increased car ownership which allows people to travel further for shopping and leisure facilities. In addition to these longer-term structural trends, market towns have also been particularly affected by the 2008-10 recession which was the worst downturn in forty years with significant consequences for the retail sector.

Faringdon

Faringdon is the Vale's smallest market town. The population was 6,187 at the time of the 2001 Census and recent population estimates released by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) for Faringdon and the Coxwells are 7,252 in 2007. Its attractive landscape setting on the limestone ridge overlooking the Thames Valley, its period market hall and town houses give it the ambience of a quintessential English market town. From afar the town is dominated by Folly Hill and its iconic tower. The A420 bypasses the town.

Although it acts as the local service centre and has a reasonable range of local shops and services, many people look to Oxford and Swindon for work and their higher order goods and services. It has one infant and one junior school, a private prep school (Ferndale), a secondary school, a health centre, a swimming pool, a leisure centre, a library and three hotels. Faringdon town centre accommodates a range of mostly independent shops and enjoys low levels of retail vacancy. According to the council's retail vacancy survey, only three per cent of commercial units in Faringdon town centre were vacant in September 2009. However since the survey was completed two further shops have closed for various reasons and the vacancy rate has doubled to 6 per cent.

The Local Plan 2011 allocated land for some 400 houses and a new business centre between the town and the bypass. The housing development is now underway and outdoor leisure facilities at Jaspers Hill are soon to follow. A key challenge will be to continue to maintain the vitality and historic character of the town and its centre, and ensure that future development supports the social and economic well-being of the town and its residents. In drawing up its draft core strategy the council is considering alternative proposals for improving the shopping offer in the town. An option is to enlarge Budgens store and provide more spaces in Southampton Street car park and/or identify land for an additional foodstore north west of Gloucester Street car park or east of Park Road.

Wantage

Wantage is an historic market town, thought to be the birth place of King Alfred. It is the second largest settlement in the district and a shopping and service centre for the central part of the Vale. The population was 9,767 at the time of the 2001 Census and recent population estimates released by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) estimated the population of Wantage as 10,498¹ in 2007. Its attractive market place and downland setting are essential components of its character. Just to the north of the town is Grove, the Vale's third largest settlement with a population of 7,224 in 2007².

Wantage has four primary schools (one is a private preparatory school), the Fitzwarren special school, King Alfred's Community and Sports College, a community hospital, a residential home, a library, the Wantage Civic Hall, the

¹ Source ONS Mid Year Population Estimates for 2007

² Source ONS Mid Year Population Estimates for 2007

Wantage Leisure Centre and the Vale and Downland Museum. There are plans to rationalise King Alfred's school onto two sites, which will provide an opportunity to consider the future of the land no longer needed by the school. A challenge will be to upgrade the town's leisure offer to meet the growing recreational requirements of Wantage and Grove.

The former industrial area around Limborough Road has recently been redeveloped to provide a new Sainsbury supermarket and other retail and residential units, and the site of St Mary's School is being redeveloped for housing. One issue is the vacant and under used premises around the Waitrose supermarket in Wallingford Street, which offer an opportunity to improve the retail offer and appearance of the town. A key challenge will be to maintain the vibrancy of the whole town centre, and serious thought will need to be given to how to retain and improve the character of the historic Market Place. The council is also conscious that parts of Wantage town centre have been affected by the recession and by the expansion in retail floorspace that has occurred in Wantage over the last two or three years. According to the council's retail vacancy survey, there were 25 vacant business premises in September 2009 which is equivalent to a vacancy rate of 15 per cent (measured in terms of business units). However since then three of the larger empty premises on the Market Place have secured tenants, bringing the vacancy rate down to 12 per cent.

The Local Plan 2011 has allocated land for 2,500 new houses in Grove and a planning application is due in mid 2010. The Vale Council is considering identifying land for a further 2,400 homes over the next twenty years. The council will shortly consider - in its 'managing development' document – how the area around Wallingford Street, Waitrose and Campbells Yard can be developed to complement the Limborough Road retail area and strengthen the vitality of the Market Place.

Joined-up council services

The Vale's economic development officers work closely with colleagues in car parks, commercial services, environmental health, planning and development policy teams within the Vale. The council's community safety team works in partnership with Thames Valley Police, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust and other agencies to reduce crime, disorder and the fear of crime. All of these areas work in partnership together to maximise the social and economic prosperity of our market towns.

Joint economic forums (JEFs)

The Faringdon Joint Economic Forum is working to improve the vitality of the town centre. The forum is made up of representatives of the Vale of White Horse District Council, Faringdon Town Council, Faringdon Chamber of Commerce and number of other community groups. Recent projects supported by the Joint Economic Forum include the establishment of the Faringdon Craft Fair, Faringdon in Bloom, a re-enactment of a Civil War battle in 2008 and eco-weeks during 2009 and 2010.

The Wantage Joint Economic Forum is working to improve the vitality of the town centre. The forum is made up of representatives of the Vale of White Horse District Council, Wantage Town Council and Wantage Chamber of Commerce, Grove Parish Council has 'observer' status. The Joint Economic Forum is sponsoring a Market Town Healthcheck for Wantage, Grove and the surrounding area.

The JEFs have also identified the projects underpinning the action plan and by working in partnership they create an opportunity to engage local stakeholders in discussion and collaboration; influencing organisational agendas to develop a shared strategic approach to town centre development and thus facilitating access to funding and resource opportunities.

Health-checks

Faringdon and Wantage (together with Grove) have recently undertaken market town 'health-checks' - an action planning approach for communities originally designed by the Countryside Agency to assess the strengths and weaknesses of market towns. As a result of this, there are community action plans in place in these towns. These plans tend to be focused on specific activities which result in events and/or promotion of the town centres in order to attract more visitors.

Oxfordshire-wide economic partnerships

The Vale's economic development officer is also represented in a number of strategic economic partnerships that operate across Oxfordshire. This 'partnership' approach to economic development will maximise benefits for businesses and residents in the Vale. The council is a member of:

- the Oxfordshire Market Towns Network (OMTN) which works with small market towns to help them remain vibrant and sustainable communities that serve both their town and the communities in the neighbouring area. OMTN has been successful in setting up business networks, linking schools with local businesses and has information about other funding that is currently available. OMTN also has information and contact details for various other agencies that can offer help or specialist advice to market towns.
- the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership (OEP) was formed in 1998 and includes key business support organisations, local authorities, academic institutions and Oxfordshire based businesses to promote economic development across Oxfordshire. The Vale is working with OEP to create a vision to guide future strategic economic development in the county, develop new ideas for strategic economic actions and share ideas and best practice. The Vale is represented in a number of task groups - business support, digital inclusion, inward investment, promoting Oxfordshire – to ensure that local businesses and residents prosper from these initiatives, pilot projects and funding.
- the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council has been supporting local village life across the county since 1920. It provides advice and guidance for community transport schemes, village shops, village hall management

committees, rural housing and support for community-led planning. The Vale works in partnership with ORCC to ensure that our smaller market towns and villages benefit from this wide range of support, funding and initiatives.

Car parking

The council provides two car parks in Faringdon, on Southampton Street and Gloucester Street. In Wantage it provides three car parks, on Portway, Limborough Road and Mill Street. All these car parks give easy access to town centre shops and services. The council's car parking charges are designed to meet the council's objectives of covering the cost of the service, influencing usage patterns, and supporting town centre vitality.

A report on car parking in market towns, commissioned by Yorkshire Forward notes: 'It is the town's broader retail, commercial, leisure and/or tourism offer which is the primary factor affecting a town's competitiveness, not the provision of parking. So, if a town has a good retail offer, it will continue to attract customers, despite having poor parking facilities; in contrast, a town with very good parking facilities, but a limited retail offer, will struggle to attract customers. However, all other things being equal, parking will clearly have an effect.' (A detailed report on how parking can be managed in the region's market towns, Yorkshire Forward, 2007)

The council recognises that car parking charges do have an effect, along with a number of other factors, on town centre vitality. It welcomes evidence based proposals that meet the council's objectives for its car parking service and help to improve town centre vitality. For example, the council supports the Faringdon Retailers' Group's 'Buyback' scheme which allows shoppers to claim back the cost of car parking.

Public toilets

The council provides public toilets at the Southampton Street car park in Faringdon and the Portway car park in Wantage. These permanent toilet blocks are all cleaned regularly and have disabled access. They are closed overnight to reduce the risk of vandalism.

Strategy

The Joint Economic Forums already have aims related to the economic vitality of town centres and bring together a number of partners including the district council, town councils and chambers of commerce. Therefore, this strategy proposes that the role of the Joint Economic Forums should be strengthened. The Forums should play a key role in preparing, co-ordinating, monitoring and reviewing economic development plans for Faringdon and Wantage.

In order to make a significant difference these plans need to take account of all the factors that influence the long term vitality of town centres. The plans should cover the following strategic aims:

- **SA1: Building for the future:** Support and help drive progress on key physical developments in the town centres. This will include historic assets, community facilities, visitor attractions and environmental improvements which are designed to be accessible to all.
- **SA2: Great shops:** Encourage town centre and edge of town retailers, and other businesses to work together to promote their towns and to help meet the needs of all customers. Make shoppers, visitors and potential investors more aware of what the towns offer. Explore opportunities available including loyalty cards, late night opening, Sunday trading and develop the towns' evening economies and tourism/leisure offers.
- **SA3: Market place hub:** To improve the 'offer' and accessibility of the towns' market places to make them a real focal point for residents, visitors and businesses and meet the needs of all customers.
- **SA4: High quality services:** Give residents and visitors the opportunity to enjoy high quality, accessible services and facilities within the towns; achieve continual improvement and enhancement of those facilities and services in accordance with the wishes of the electors, taxpayers and visitors.
- **SA5: Easy to get to:** Ensure everyone has good information about how to get to, and get around the towns (including a focus on signage; information about traffic, buses, car parks, cycle ways and accessible pedestrian routes).
- **SA6: Attractive and clean:** Ensure that there is good quality street furniture (bins, benches etc) and public toilets, minimal litter and graffiti, clean toilets, welcoming staff in shops, pubs cafes and restaurants.
- **SA7: To enhance the distinctiveness of our towns:** To add to and improve the quality of attractions in our towns, to promote what's on in the towns, and to make sure that there is good and widely accessible information about attractions, events, activities and eating out.
- **SA8: Safe and secure:** To ensure that everyone who lives, works and visits feels safe both by day and in the evenings.

Key principles

Consultation

Working in partnership with other agencies, statutory bodies, voluntary groups and individuals to ensure that changes and improvements to services and facilities meet the needs and wishes of residents and others; working with elected members to consult the people of Faringdon and Wantage about partnership services and levels of performance.

Breaking the cycle of deprivation

Recognising that many residents of Faringdon and Wantage are economically and socially disadvantaged and fully supporting priorities in the Oxfordshire and Vale sustainable community strategies that tackle economic and social disadvantage; using best endeavours to make sure that projects are inclusive and encourage community cohesion.

Action plan

The action plan that follows draws together actions arising from town health checks, through ongoing consultation with the towns and from the work of the JEFs. Overall responsibility for the delivery of the action plan will rest with the council's economic development officer. In Faringdon the District Council is providing a forward-funding facility to allow up-front investment in projects that will ultimately be funded by SEEDA. It is anticipated that projects will be delivered by community organisations (such as the Folly Tower Trust, the Community Bus Limited and the skateboard group SK8). In Wantage, the forward-funding facility is being provided by the Town Council while the economic development officer (EDO) will administer the shop-front improvement scheme. The EDO will also co-ordinate partnership activity, liaise with public sector colleagues and businesses, consult with residents, monitor progress and make recommendations to improve project delivery.

Funding

The JEFs in Wantage and Faringdon have a small amount of grant funding available to them and, at the discretion of the members, can offer grants to assist with new projects that will help to maintain or improve the vitality of the town centre. However public and private sector funding to maintain or improve the vitality of town centres is very limited. Partnership working and the support of the community can strengthen the case for access to limited funding.

The council also believe that by working in partnership and sharing information there is an opportunity to make better use of existing resources. For example, new highways signage could be designed within an existing budget to make a town more attractive; businesses that become aware of forthcoming events may be willing to sponsor an event using an existing advertising budget.

There are opportunities to unlock funding arising from new developments that may have a direct impact on the provision of existing community facilities. There maybe a requirement for the enhancement of existing facilities or the provision of entirely new facilities, funded by the developer (sometimes known as 'developers' contributions' or 's106 contributions').

SEEDA Small Rural Towns Programme

In October 2009, Faringdon's JEF discussed and approved a short-list of seven projects derived from the health-check, and submitted a bid for SEEDA Small Rural Towns Programme funding. OMTN recommended approval in principle for three of these projects (the Folly Tower, the Community Bus and the Skate Park). These projects will provide important community facilities, create new jobs, and significantly improve the quality of the towns' visitor attractions while contributing to the historical integrity of the town. The council will continue to work with Faringdon JEF to deliver these important projects, and to identify alternative funding opportunities for other projects that are deemed to be important for the social and economic well-being of the town. These might include: a performance venue feasibility study; Pump Rooms training centre; Tomb Restoration at All Saints Church; a Faringdon- Shrivenham cycling route; communications infrastructure for residents and businesses; and support for Faringdon Area Projects. We will also engage with both retailers and

potential funders to explore the possibility of introducing a Town-wide loyalty card scheme.

In November 2009, Wantage JEF discussed and approved a short-list of eight projects derived from the health-check, and submitted a bid for SEEDA Small Rural Towns Programme funding. OMTN recommended approval in principle for four of these projects (a Shop Front Improvement Scheme, the Market Place and Gateway Improvement Scheme, Letcombe Brooke improvements and walking and cycling cards). These projects will significantly improve town centre vitality in Wantage, result in environmental improvements along Letcombe Brook, and provide improved and contribute to the attractiveness of the area as a visitor / tourism destination. The council will continue to work with Wantage JEF to deliver these important projects, and to identify alternative funding opportunities for other projects that are deemed to be important for the social and economic well-being of Wantage and Grove. These might include: the community cinema initiative; environmental works to Tugwell field; a new youth venue; public artworks in Grove and a town-wide loyalty card scheme.

LEADER

In addition to the Small Rural Towns funding, South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council have successfully secured £1.89 million of European Union 'LEADER' funding to help support rural communities in southern Oxfordshire. The funding will help to revitalise and support rural businesses and communities in southern Oxfordshire between now and 2013. The council will continue to work with rural businesses and communities to make sure that the Vale benefits from this funding. Faringdon is eligible for this funding. Wantage and Grove because of their size are not. However, as surrounding villages are eligible. both can benefit indirectly.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Appropriate measures will be developed for each action in order to measure the success of the strategy. Baseline information will be collected for each action and targets for improvement will be agreed in consultation with the JEFs. The progress in achieving the targets will be reported to the JEFs. If any of the actions are not progressing the JEFs will be told what is being done to improve performance.

The strategy and action plan will be reviewed annually to take account of any changes in resources and economic circumstances. Any recommendations for amendments will be agreed in consultation with the JEFs.

DRAFT ACTION PLAN

1. FARINGDON ACTIONS

DISTRICT COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC AIMS	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC AIMS	PARTNER ORGANISATIONS	ESTIMATE OF TOTAL INVESTMENT & KEY FUNDING SOURCES	TIMESCALE	INTENDED OUTCOMES
SA1 and SA7	Folly Tower renovation.	Folly Tower Trust	£25,000 SEEDA £25,000 Leader £30,000 Country House Foundation £20,000 local fund-raising efforts	April 2010 – March 2012	To enable essential repairs to the roof and electrics and improvements to the outside space, taking into account access-for-all needs. This will improve its capability as a venue and allow it to continue to operate as a visitor attraction
SA1, SA4, SA7 and SA8)	Skate park build	Vale economic development officer/ SK8 / Focus on Faringdon/ County Youth Service	£21,000 (SEEDA) £35,000 Bloor Homes £8,000 Faringdon Town Council £7,500 SK8 £15,000 Lord Faringdon Trust	April 2010 – March 2012	To enable the provision of a youth and community resource by installing a Skate and BMX facility.
SA3 and SA7	Faringdon Arts Festival with a tint of Berners	Focus on Faringdon / Faringdon Town Council	£5,000 (Oxon Thriving Economies Fund/ £2,000 Faringdon Town Council £3,000 Focus on Faringdon	July 2010 (and then annually)	To obtain funding to enable the development of a Festival programme. To work with partners to improve the promotion of this event to residents in Oxford and other areas.

2. WANTAGE ACTIONS

DISTRICT COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC AIMS	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC AIMS	PARTNER ORGANISATIONS	ESTIMATE OF TOTAL INVESTMENT & KEY FUNDING SOURCES	TIMESCALE	INTENDED OUTCOMES
SA1, 2, 3, 6 7, and 8	Shop front improvement initiative	Wantage Rejuvenated/ Wantage JET/Vale economic development officer	£37,500 SEEDA £37,500 retailers	April 2010 – March 2012	To support at least ten prospective new tenants and existing occupiers and encourage take-up of this scheme.
SA1, SA3, SA4, SA5 and SA6	Market Place improvement scheme and gateway treatments	Wantage Town Council/	£38,000 SEEDA £38,000 Wantage Town Council	April 2010 – March 2012	To improve the functionality, accessibility and attractiveness of Market Place by investment in street furniture, notice boards and improvements to the central iconic space surrounding the statue of King Alfred.
SA2, SA4, SA5 and SA7	Letcombe Brooke trail and improvements	Letcombe Brook project /Wantage and Grove JETs	£15,000 SEEDA £15,000 Wantage Town Council	April 2010 – March 2012	To enable the introduction of a designated Letcombe Brooke trail with associated biodiversity and landscaping works.
SA4, SA5 and SA7	Walking and cycling route cards	HarBUG/ Grove Parish Council	£5,000 SEEDA £5,000 Thriving Economies Fund	April 2010 – March 2012	To enable the creation of walking, wheelchair-accessible and cycling cards that support local residents and business communities in Wantage and Grove. The information will support the visitor economy and raise awareness of the proximity of Wantage and Grove to the Ridgeway National Trail

3. VALE-WIDE ACTIONS THAT WILL BENEFIT FARINGDON AND WANTAGE

(All contributes towards the Vale council's corporate priorities 'work in partnership to sustain vibrant market towns and 'support rural business and communities')

DISTRICT COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC AIMS	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC AIMS	PARTNER ORGANISATIONS	ESTIMATE OF TOTAL INVESTMENT & KEY FUNDING SOURCES	TIMESCALE	INTENDED OUTCOMES
SA2, SA3, SA4 and SA7	Write a Tourism Statement to promote tourism within the Vale	Choose Abingdon Partnership / Focus on Faringon / Wantage Rejuvenated	officer time only	March 2011	Production of a Tourism Statement for the Vale by December 2010. Production of a Tourism Publication that promotes the Vale as a destination for a week-long stay by June 2011.
SA2, SA4, SA5 and SA7	Manage and improve the Vale's tourism website: www.VisitVale.com	Vale economic development officer/ Tourism SE	£4,500 p.a. (VWHDC)	April 2010 – March 2013	To increase the number of website 'hits' by 5% p.a. To promote the Vale as a visitor destination and help to increase visitor spending by 1% p.a..
SA2, SA4, SA5 and SA7	Promote the Vale's tourism offering through events and exhibitions	Vale economic development officer/ Tourism SE/Oxfordshire County and District Councils	£5,500 p.a. (Oxfordshire County Council, Tourism SE, Oxfordshire Economic Partnership)	April 2010 – March 2013	To promote the Vale as a visitor destination and help to increase the spend by visitors
SA2, SA4, SA5 and SA7	Support museums, tourist information centres and attractions	Vale economic development officer	£32,000 p.a. (VWHDC)	April 2010 – March 2013	Enabling the provision of good quality visitor information and attractions.
SA1, 2, 3, 6 7, and 8	Work with Oxfordshire agencies to tackle skills and worklessness issues	Vale economic development officer/Oxford Economic Partnership/Oxfordshire Learning & Skills Council/ Oxfordshire	£150,000 (DWP Future Jobs Fund) £50,000 (Oxon Learning & Skills Partnership)	April 2010 – March 2013	To ensure that at least 5 businesses benefit from FJF placements. To ensure that at least 10 young people who are Vale residents benefit from FJF placements. To reduce worklessness and number of young people aged 16 – 24 who are not in

DISTRICT COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC AIMS	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC AIMS	PARTNER ORGANISATIONS	ESTIMATE OF TOTAL INVESTMENT & KEY FUNDING SOURCES	TIMESCALE	INTENDED OUTCOMES
		County Council/Abingdon and Witney College/ Oxford Brookes University			education, employment or training by 10 p.a.
SA2, SA3, SA4 and SA7	Support and develop the rural economy	EU LEADER manager/ Vale economic development officer	£100,000 p.a. (EU LEADER)	April 2010 – March 2013	To appraise 2 Leader projects p.a. To help 3 businesses develop Leader applications. To audit 2 Leader projects p.a.
SA4 and SA7	Undertake economic research to inform policy making and meet Funding Agency needs.	Vale economic development officer /Chambers of Commerce	Officer time only	April 2010 – March 2013	To undertake a retail vacancy survey, footfall survey & car park users survey. To input to the Oxfordshire Skills Survey.
	Support the Embrace partnership's engagement with ethnic minority business people in Faringdon and Wantage provide relevant articles for the newsletter.	Officer time only Vale equalities officer/Vale economic development officer/Embrace partnership	April 2010 – March 2013	To make sure that ethnic minority business people in Faringdon and Wantage have equal access to local government services so that they can compete successfully and provide good quality products and services	Support the Embrace partnership's engagement with ethnic minority business people in Faringdon and Wantage provide relevant articles for the newsletter.
	Support a disabled access survey and 'shopability' awards scheme in Faringdon and Wantage	Officer time only	April 2011 – March 2013	To encourage town centre businesses to provide good quality access and service to	Support a disabled access survey and 'shopability' awards scheme in Faringdon and Wantage

DISTRICT COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC AIMS	ACTIONS TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC AIMS	PARTNER ORGANISATIONS	ESTIMATE OF TOTAL INVESTMENT & KEY FUNDING SOURCES	TIMESCALE	INTENDED OUTCOMES
				customers with disabilities	
SA1, 2, 3, 6 7, and 8	To provide ongoing technical economic support to the SVUK Project Director	SVUK Project Director / Oxfordshire County Council/ OEP	Officer time only	April 2010 – March 2011	To undertake economic analysis to define and quantify the economic significance of the SVUK area. To undertake primary and secondary research to define the importance of the SVUK aerospace sector that will be used by SEEDA / OEP as an inward investment offering.
SA7	Provide support to businesses in partnership with Business Link, SEEDA and through breakfast events	Vale economic development officer /Business Link / Science Vale UK Partnership/ Tourism South East	Officer time only	April 2010 – March 2011	To organise 4 Business Breakfast events.

Appendix - Supporting strategies

The Vale council corporate plan 2009/12

Introduction by Councillor Tony de Vere, the Leader of the Council:

'One of the key challenges we face is the current economic climate and addressing the many ways it will impact on residents. The plan strives to ensure that the Vale remains a sustainable and vibrant place to live and work during this period, by supporting people and the local economy where possible, and ensuring that we are ready to take advantage of the upturn when it occurs.

For the coming year we want to start tackling head-on some of the issues that people in the Vale feel are important, such as market town vitality and the problems of flooding and other issues associated with climate change. We want to make sure that there are more affordable homes, and that our towns and villages are cleaner, greener and safer communities.

One of the key challenges we face is delivering high quality and good value services with increasingly limited resources. We will continue to search for new ways of getting the best value for our Council Tax payers.

We are lucky that we live in a beautiful area with vibrant towns and villages and an economy that is relatively resilient in the face of economic stress. We want to continue to do what we can to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in the Vale.'

Relevant corporate strategic objective and priorities:

Supporting a vibrant local economy:

- work in partnership to sustain vibrant market towns
- support rural business and communities
- promote "Science Vale UK " as a world leading area for science and technology

The Vale sustainable community strategy 2008/16 priority

MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING THE HEALTH AND VITALITY OF THE VALE'S MARKET TOWN CENTRES:

The Partnership is working to make sure that Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage town centres share in the economic prosperity of the rest of the Vale and provide residents with a good choice of shops and a wide range of cultural and leisure facilities.

What the Partnership will do:

- create better local awareness of the variety and quality of the shops and services that are available in the Vale's town centres
- prepare action plans designed to promote the retail offer in the town centres and consider the establishment of Business Improvement Districts for the Vale's main market town centres to help with the achievement of action plans, and
- continue to improve the character of the town centres through investment in environmental improvement works and by maintaining control over fly-posting, advertisement display and street cleanliness.

What the local development framework will do:

- resist retail and other commercial development where this would damage town centre health and vitality, and
- encourage retail and other commercial development in town centres that will support town centre health and vitality.

Oxfordshire 2030

Oxfordshire 2030 identifies how the county will respond to the challenges facing Oxfordshire over the next 20 plus years

We pledge to

- collaborate across public, business and voluntary sectors to build on Oxfordshire's economic success.
- create the conditions for everyone to have access to jobs.
- ensure that educational attainment and skill levels are amongst the very best in the country so we provide a well qualified, motivated workforce to meet the needs of business.
- grow the economy whilst achieving a sustainable balance between jobs, housing and the environment.
- tackle traffic congestion across Oxfordshire, particularly on trunk roads and around market towns, Oxford city and other hot spots.
reduce the gap between the best and the worst off by targeting our work appropriately

The draft Vale core strategy

The first policy document that the council is preparing as part of the local development framework is the core strategy. This will replace the local plan, and will set out the spatial vision, spatial objectives, policies and a monitoring and implementation framework for the Vale. The core strategy will be used to help determine future planning applications.

Shopping and town centre uses:

The council considers it important that the core strategy refers to the sequential approach to locating shops and town centre uses, and makes provision for additional floorspace in the town and district centres. Without this it is unlikely that the council would be able to resist new shopping floorspace elsewhere, including on the edges of the towns. This would undermine the vitality of the existing centres and potentially lead to their decline.

There are opportunities to redevelop the shopping areas built in the late 1960s/early 1970s in Abingdon, Wantage and Botley, and also achieve more limited improvements in Faringdon. This would provide shop units that more closely match what retailers want and an environment that shoppers expect. The council therefore proposes that the core strategy should reinforce the roles of the town and district centres as follows and identify areas for redevelopment.

Abingdon will continue as the Vale's largest shopping area serving the town and villages in the east of the district. The Bury Street precinct and the Charter could be redeveloped to improve the range of shops and the appearance of the area. Opportunities could be taken to enlarge the library and health centre, and provide offices and homes above the ground floor.

Wantage will continue as the second largest shopping area serving the town, Grove and the villages in the southern central part of the district. The area around Waitrose in Wallingford Street could be redeveloped to improve the environment and provide a larger store, other shops, offices and town centre uses.

Faringdon will continue as a small but important centre serving the western part of the Vale. The area of Budgens store and Southampton Street car park could be redeveloped to provide more shopping floorspace and better car parking.

Consultation questions

To what extent do you think the strategy presents an accurate picture of the economic vitality of Faringdon and Wantage?

Faringdon

Accurate

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 Not accurate

Wantage

Accurate

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 Not accurate

Any comments about accuracy:.....

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Do you know of any other issues that are affecting the economic vitality of Faringdon and Wantage?

Faringdon:.....

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Wantage:.....

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Do you think that there any other strategic objectives that will help to improve the economic vitality of Faringdon and Wantage?

Faringdon:.....

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Wantage:.....

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Do you think that there any other actions that will help to improve the economic vitality of Faringdon and Wantage?

Faringdon:.....

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Wantage:.....

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Do you know of any other organisations that the council should be working with to improve the economic vitality of Faringdon and Wantage?

Faringdon:.....

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Wantage:.....

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Do you have any other comments about the strategy and action plan?

Faringdon:.....

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Wantage:.....

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External consultees

Faringdon and Wantage JEFs
Faringdon and Wantage Town Councils
Grove Parish Council
Faringdon, Grove and Wantage JETs
Faringdon and Wantage chambers of commerce
Vale Partnership
Vale Disability Access Group
Embrace
Tourism South East
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Oxfordshire Economic Partnership
Business Link
Oxfordshire County Council
Cherwell and West Oxfordshire District Councils
Vale & Downland Museum
Wantage Independent Advice Centre
Faringdon Folly Trust
Focus on Faringdon
Faringdon Area Project
HarBUG
Vale's Tourism Monitoring Group
Wantage Rejuvenated
Wantage Silver Band
Wantage Concords
faringdon.org
wantage.com