



Wicklesham Quarry

*Justification and supporting evidence for its inclusion in the Vale of
White Horse Local Development Framework*

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1. Summary

This report has been prepared to support the inclusion of Wicklesham Quarry as a site for B2/B8 business use in the Vale's emerging Local Development Framework. Wicklesham Quarry is an area of land with development potential of over eight hectares that lies to the south of Faringdon adjacent to the A420. Well screened by tree-planting, its floor also lies well below that of the surrounding area, making it ideal to accommodate an industrial business park. The current lease with Grundon, held since 1982, is due to expire in March 2010, when extraction will cease.

Since 2006 support has grown locally for developing the site as an industrial business park, led by Faringdon Town Council and businesses with an interest in relocating within the town. But the recently published Vale of White Horse Employment Land Review (ELR) identified no need for additional land to be made available at Faringdon and the site was excluded from the preferred options for the Local development Framework (LDF). Vale planning officers, however, have acknowledged that the ELR is a general study that looks at the whole district and that a study that looked in detail at the local employment market may draw different conclusions.

An independent survey of local businesses was therefore commissioned and carried out by Kemp and Kemp in January and February 2009. This survey has revealed that there are many businesses that have aspired to relocate or expand within the Faringdon area but have been unable to do so due to lack of suitable sites. Almost half of those that responded currently wish to expand and stay within the Faringdon area. According to the survey, that includes responses from Faringdon's largest employers, the majority of businesses fall in the B2/B8 use class. This indicates there will be a significant requirement for large areas of B2/B8 land in the period up to 2026. This is likely to exceed current and proposed provision of B2, while Faringdon has no land available for B8 allocation.

The survey backs up experience of local agents. Poor local availability and inadequate current stock of business premises has led to a high demand for new premises, despite the current economic downturn. This shortage is particularly acute in the industrial sector where there are no vacant units available in Faringdon. This means companies have been forced to use non-contiguous units to accommodate expansion plans or even rent additional space in Swindon. The new 4&20 Business Park is set to alleviate difficulties for office-based businesses, but problems will continue to exacerbate for Faringdon's industry unless a new B2/B8 site is allocated.

The LDF Preferred Options report bases its employment land provision on recommendations in the ELR. It has however provided an additional allocation of 4ha of B1/B2 employment land at Faringdon. Included in the preferred options for Faringdon, however, is the proposed conversion of the 4ha Rogers Concrete site to either residential or business use. The site already contains a business that occupies at least half of this land. While the owners say they could retreat to a site of around 1.5ha, there are 2.71ha currently allocated for employment use in Faringdon but proposed to be reallocated to residential. This means the preferred options report is proposing a lower allocation of land for employment use than that allocated in the current Local Plan, despite an additional 420 dwellings proposed. The current preferred options report is therefore an unsustainable solution for Faringdon.

Although this approach is unsustainable, it will mean there will be a total of 8.38ha of dedicated, useful employment land to accommodate the expansion of Faringdon businesses, including the 4&20 Business Park and the SEEDA business development land. But, as noted earlier, this will supply Faringdon with B1/B2 land only, while there is a large requirement for B2/B8 premises. None of the proposed sites will be suitable for heavy industry or to accommodate the type of units required by the large companies wishing to expand due to their proximity to housing or location on higher grade business parks such as the proposed 4&20 site.



Moreover the passage of heavy lorries to these sites is likely to be strongly opposed by Faringdon Town Council, local residents and office-based businesses. This will force Faringdon's industry to relocate away from the town, unless another suitable site such as Wicklesham Quarry is allocated.

Preserving the Vale's industry or manufacturing sector is not a high priority over the majority of the district. The Vale's predominant knowledge-based economy will drive growth in office and light industry sectors, while manufacture and heavier industry is forecast to contract. However businesses in Faringdon and the western Vale are significantly influenced by Swindon, which has experienced considerable industrial growth and will continue to do so. Employment land allocations recommended in the Vale's ELR specifically exclude any reference to this influence.

If Swindon's economy and prospects for its growth are taken into account, it throws a whole new light on Faringdon's employment land requirements and further exposes the inadequacies of current provision. Ancillary trades that feed Swindon's buoyant industry have developed in Faringdon. The town's skill set is closer to that of Swindon than it is to the rest of Vale, while, as noted earlier, Faringdon's businesses have relied on Swindon for their expansion plans.

Swindon's growth plans provide significant prospects for Faringdon. The town is well placed to service a recognised opportunity for Swindon to develop as a production power house for Oxford's emerging innovations. What's more, the largest proposed development in the South West will be located just 10 minutes from Faringdon. If the town is not allowed the allocation of land to benefit from any opportunities that arise, it will surely suffer as its businesses will be drawn away by brighter prospects of growth provided by Swindon's Eastern Development Area.

If planning permission to develop Wicklesham Quarry is granted, access to the site will be improved through adding a fourth leg to the Park Road roundabout on the A420. This will have the added benefit of improving safety along this section of road. A bridge over the A420 will provide a pedestrian and cycle link with the town. As well as offering access to the town for staff working at the business park, this will allow a safer way for Faringdon residents to access the beautiful Oxfordshire countryside to the south of the town and provides a valuable link for the proposed new cycle route.

Preliminary investigations reveal clean water, gas, electricity and telecoms can be laid on at a viable cost. The most substantial cost will be electricity supply, owing to off-site reinforcement works. Surface water would discharge to a balancing pond located off-site on land in the same ownership as the quarry. The foul water may be pumped to the nearby public foul sewers, although Thames Water has indicated capacity problems at Faringdon. We have also started discussions with the Environment Agency over the use of a private treatment works.

Further site investigations have shown the ground will be suitable to support the proposed new structures. The quarry restoration plan, that includes building up the quarry floor by a depth of one metre, will ensure flooding is not an issue. Current intentions are to leave the sides of the quarry sheer and to provide an area for geological access in line with the site's palaeontological importance and status as an SSSI.

Outline costings are included in this report and are well within normal servicing-cost expectations. Based on current market values for serviced land, the figures show Wicklesham Quarry is financially viable.



2. Background

Wicklesham Quarry is a site south of Faringdon adjacent to the A420. Since 1982 it has been leased by Grundon for extraction of sand and the Faringdon sponge gravels. Extraction is due to come to an end in March 2010 when the Grundon lease expires. Appendix one includes photographs and a scale plan of the site. It occupies a total of around 12ha, with 8ha (enclosed by a blue line) of net developable land. The floor of the quarry is currently between 3m and 10m below the level of surrounding land. It is well screened by tree-planting that is now over 15 years old to the north, east and along most of the south side of the site.

In 2006 we were approached by a couple of local businesses looking for sites suitable for expansion of their businesses. Their interest was sparked because they were keen to remain in Faringdon, but there were no suitable sites included in the Local Plan that had just recently been finalised. At the same time discussions started with Grundon over the future of their lease beyond 2010 and suitability of the site for a waste transfer station. The possibility was suggested to Faringdon Town Council (FTC), which warmly welcomed the plan to develop the quarry.

More recently, we joined a group of local landowners, now the Sands Hill Consortium, with the quarry providing the employment allocation for Faringdon's growth up to 2026. Again this plan was approved by FTC and Wicklesham Quarry was included as a proposed distribution base in FTC's Development Strategy for Faringdon. Planning officers visited the quarry as part of a tour of Faringdon's possible development sites in September 2008.

However the quarry was not included in Vale of White Horse District Council's preferred options for the Local Development Framework (LDF), published in November 2008. Based on the findings of its Employment Land Review (ELR), the Council decided this would provide land well in excess of what is needed to 2027, and even if linked by a pedestrian/cycle bridge, it would not be as accessible to Faringdon residents as sites in the town.

At a meeting of the Vale's Development and Control Committee to discuss the report on 3 December 2008, we gave a short presentation in favour of Wicklesham Quarry and Cllr Richard Gibson (chair) asked councillors to "take on board the comments and look into them further". Cllr Roger Cox (member for Faringdon) stated he strongly favoured inclusion of the quarry "on the grounds of current lack of B8 industrial land at Faringdon". However the report was passed for public consultation on December 10 unchanged in this respect.

Vale planning officers called a further meeting with Sands Hill Consortium members on 9 December 2008. The consortium was asked to work up two options for the site, one as detailed in the preferred options report and the other including the quarry as an employment site. Vale officers indicated that the ELR was a general study that looked at the whole district and that a study that looked in detail at the local employment market may draw different conclusions. Along with justification to establish a need for Wicklesham Quarry, the officers requested that information is provided on:

- the access arrangements and whether these are acceptable to the County Council
- pedestrian/cycle link to Faringdon over the A420
- how and what services will be provided – for gas, water, electricity, phones, broadband
- whether there are any drainage issues and how they will be resolved
- how the wall of quarry will be dealt with
- the costs of providing/mitigating these factors, and whether the site is viable
- what the rents are likely to be and evidence to show there are local businesses willing to pay.



FTC has led strong objections to the exclusion of the quarry in the recent “Your Vale Your Future” public consultation. This objection has been submitted to VoWH and is supported by a number of Faringdon organisations including Faringdon Area Project, Chamber of Commerce and Faringdon Association of Residents. A number of local residents also strongly support inclusion of the quarry, and made their own submissions expressing this at the consultation. To date there has not been one local objection to the plan.

3. Justification

3.1. Analysis of local businesses

In January and February 2009 a survey of local businesses was carried out by Kemp and Kemp. The full report is included in Appendix two.

The report recognises the findings of the URS ELR for the Vale of White Horse, that there is a continuing demand for business accommodation in the B1, B2 and B8 use classes. But based on the survey, it also notes that Faringdon’s business make-up differs from that of the rest of the Vale. In particular, whereas the rest of the Vale has a thriving knowledge-based economy, providing mainly office-based jobs, there is a significant industrial element to Faringdon’s economy. According to survey responses, the majority of businesses fall in the B2/B8 use classes.

Despite the current economic downturn, there is a demand for a variety of business premises within the Faringdon area. 48% of those businesses that responded stated that in the last three years they had aspired to relocate or expand in the Faringdon area, but have been unable to do so. The same proportion of businesses is currently looking to expand, while three-quarters of businesses believe their current premises will be unlikely to fulfil their needs up to 2026. 56% of businesses wish to remain in Faringdon, which suggests significant additional employment land will be needed in the Faringdon area to accommodate the expansion needs of the town’s existing businesses.

The report also gives a valuable insight into the nature of employment land that will be needed up to 2026. There are a number of businesses looking to relocate that require a significant area. These expansion plans are unlikely to be accommodated by existing sites. Moreover, many of the businesses looking to expand have a specific B8 use class requirement. While there is now sufficient land allocated in the LDF for B1/B2 business use, there is absolutely no land available in the Faringdon area that can accommodate the requirements of those businesses that have identified a need to relocate.

3.2. Analysis of local employment market

3.2.1. Faringdon Employment Land Review

This section is an overview of the Faringdon economy and employment land review provided by Marriotts Chartered Surveyors.

As at February 2009, we are seeing downward pressure on both land values and rental values for all sectors of commercial property. This has been brought about by the restriction in bank lending and the downturn in the economy.

3.2.1.1. RETAIL

There has been good rental growth during the last five years in Faringdon. However, we are now seeing a strong resistance following eighteen months of the credit crunch to rental increases and can report reductions in capital values during recent months. The downward pressure is more noticeable in Faringdon as the traders tend to be small independent businesses.



3.2.1.2. OFFICE MARKET

There are few good quality offices within the Faringdon area, with the exception of Wicklesham Commercial Properties (barn conversions) and The Gateway Enterprise building in Volunteer Way. The remaining stock tends to be second-quality properties without air conditioning and little car parking, and at first-floor level. Although tenants can be found for these properties, it is taking significant time to fill any vacancies. As a result rents have fallen in recent months.

Despite the current economic climate, there are some businesses that have outgrown their older premises and are looking to relocate during the next few years. We are aware of two businesses with 10,000 ft² of demand between them wanting to stay within Faringdon. Such businesses will find a ready market for office space within the 4 and 20 Business Park when this comes on stream. At present the Business Park is being delayed through the planning process but it is hoped development can start on site in 2010.

3.2.1.3. INDUSTRIAL

Although most manufacturing processors within the town are complaining of poor order books, there are almost no vacant units within Faringdon. Again, because of the general economic conditions, any new units available to let are currently being offered at reduced rent levels from figures achieved eighteen months ago. There has been very limited new industrial space provided in Faringdon during the last five years. Within this sector, there are a number of businesses that are therefore looking to expand but have restricted space. Companies such as Cameo Glass, for instance, have been forced to rent two non- contiguous units to develop their businesses.

Those larger businesses within the town that rely on an element of B8 distribution within their manufacturing process have, over the last five years, had to look at industrial premises in Swindon and further afield. Despite the current economic climate, there is significant pent-up demand for such businesses and we are aware of active instructions to procure premises for Faringdon businesses as and when land is made available.

3.2.2. Vale of White Horse Employment Land Review

In 2008 Vale of White Horse District Council commissioned URS to carry out an ELR which was completed and submitted to the Council in December 2008. This section provides an analysis of this report, and specifically those areas that refer to Faringdon.

3.2.2.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS AND LOCAL ECONOMY

An analysis of the local economy takes national, regional, local and a number of other reports into consideration. The regional analyses revolve primarily around the Vale's position within the Oxfordshire sub-region, as defined in the South East Regional Strategy. A wealth of employment reviews and reports have therefore been assessed to consider the impact on the Vale's economy of factors such as the Oxford-Cambridge arc, that drives the region's knowledge-based economy. The report also acknowledges the South East Regional Strategy's preference to concentrate business growth in the Vale around Didcot.

Swindon's employment land review has been assessed and is summarised in the report. Other local reports assessed include the Vale's Local Plan, but the report stops short of assessing more targeted local reviews, such as Faringdon's Health Check. It should be noted that the majority of reports assessed in this section recognise the high regional growth in the knowledge-based economy, the need to nurture this and the contraction of manufacture. Most ELRs in Oxfordshire appear to conclude a low provision of B2/B8 land allocation is necessary up to 2026. The exception is the Swindon ELR, in which the report notes that "demand has in fact remained robust" for B2 sites and "increasingly buoyant" for B8 sites.



The report's socio-economic assessment of the Vale draws on 2001 census results to make its conclusions, comparing Vale residents with those of Oxfordshire, South East England and nationally. This section concludes Vale residents are:

- More economically active than the average South East of England resident
- More highly skilled than the average South East of England resident
- More likely to be managers, senior officials or professionals
- On a higher weekly salary than the average South East of England resident
- Most likely to work in the Vale of White Horse

There is therefore the need to provide sites and premises locally that attract and retain the highly skilled residents.

But Faringdon's 2002 Health Check revealed it is the most deprived market town in the Vale, with earnings below the national average. While the URS report recognises the need to nurture the Vale's skilled workforce, and Faringdon must strive to improve its skills balance, the report does not recognise any local variances in the Vale's skill set, nor make suggestions as to how these should be addressed.

3.2.2.2. PROPERTY MARKET ASSESSMENT

The report's review of the employment land property market combines telephone and desk-based research. It should be noted that much is made in the report of the telephone interviews with five "agents", whose views were assessed to draw conclusions on local factors that were likely to influence the employment land property market. These agents are detailed in Appendix E, one of which is Wicklesham Commercial Properties. WCP has no experience of letting property other its own offices at Wicklesham Business Park, while the others are agents located outside the Vale. It should be questioned why URS took this approach, rather than to interview agents with specialist experience of letting all types of commercial properties within the Vale, such as established agents in Faringdon, Wantage, Abingdon, etc. It should also be noted that, with just five views drawn, the potential for the view of one person to disproportionately skew the conclusions is high. It appears this was the only attempt made by URS to gauge the land property market and the views of local businesses themselves were not even considered, let alone surveyed.

This section of the report recognises that "local linkages are as, if not more, important than regional". It recognises the influence of Swindon on the western Vale, and on Faringdon in particular. The report notes that "supply and demand for employment land in the Vale of White Horse can differ over a relatively short geographical area and there is much evidence that demand is linked to the attractiveness of particular locations rather than general areas". The report also concludes that the eastern vale and western vale are "characterised by different property drivers and a certain separation between the two halves of the District".

In the western Vale, the report notes that demand of B1 land outstrips supply and that demand for B2 land is not strong but said to meet supply. The B8 land market is considered "stagnant" and "unhealthy", and the report fails to draw a conclusion as to whether demand generally meets supply, although it does conclude "an overall lack of supply in the VoWH". A restrictive planning policy is thought to influence the market.

This important section of the report is its only analysis of local factors, yet it is unclear what conclusions can be drawn from this for Faringdon. What's more, it is a qualitative assessment, and no reference to it, or to local factors or variations, are subsequently made in the quantitative and detailed supply and demand analysis.



3.2.2.3. EMPLOYMENT LAND SURVEY AND APPRAISAL

The report contains a very thorough review of current employment land. Included in this is an assessment, from very good to poor, of 28 employment land clusters, six of which are located at Faringdon.

Name, ref	Area (ha)	Quality of Environment	Facilities & Amenities	Road Access	Planning restriction	Recommendation
C9a north of Pioneer Road	0.85	Poor	Good	V Good	B1	Reallocate – poor road access
C9b SEEDA business centre	0.18	Good	Reasonable	V Good	B1	Retain
C9c by Park Road	0.71	Average	Reasonable	V Good	B1	Reallocate – slope restricts potential
C9d south of Playground	0.28	Average	Reasonable	V Good	B1	Reallocate – slope restricts potential
C9e former nursery	0.87	Good	Reasonable	V Good	B1	Reallocate – too close to residential
C9f 4&20 Business Pk	4.2	Good	Reasonable	V Good	B1/B2	Retain
C9g existing industrial est	5.4	Poor	Poor	V Good	n/a	n/a
Total	12.49					

The report concludes there are 66ha of land available for future employment use, with just over 7ha located at Faringdon. The report has accurately, although objectively, recognised that most of the sites at Faringdon do not make good employment land allocations. It has long been recognised locally that owners of small sites of allocated employment land have been reluctant to market the sites, preferring their use to be reallocated as a more lucrative residential site. Moreover many local businesses that would like to relocate or expand view the sites as inadequate. The URS report recommends the majority of these sites are reallocated, creating a net loss for the town of 2.71ha of employment land.

3.2.2.4. SUPPLY AND DEMAND ANALYSIS

The report follows a robust synthesis approach to employment land forecasting. This takes account of both the local context and the wider regional property market macro-economic context. To reflect the influence of Oxford, South Oxfordshire and the wider Thames Valley West area, a number of Property Market Areas (PMA) are considered.

All of these PMAs are in the South East. Swindon is specifically excluded because it is in the South West. The reason for this is that Swindon’s expansion is planned to be self-contained. The disadvantage of this approach is that the projections fail to take account of Swindon’s influence on the local economy in the western Vale – all figures are based on the Vale PMA and regions lying to its east. The result is a projection heavily weighted in favour of B1 allocations. The table below contrasts Vale recommended allocations with those recommended for Swindon’s core strategy.



District	Average allocation			
	Office (B1)		Industrial (B2, B8)	
	Ha	%	Ha	%
Vale of White Horse	32.3	64%	17.9	36%
Swindon	37.5	20%	147.5	80%

Swindon's historic leaning towards industrial growth, reflected in the 80% of land allocated, will have had an influence on the business make-up in the western Vale. This is not reflected in the Vale's overall land allocation.

This imbalance is rectified to a certain extent with the ELR's recommended land allocations at Faringdon. The majority of the 4&20 Business Park is recommended for B2 use, allowing 64% of the town's allocated employment land as industrial at Faringdon. But the aspirations of the current owner for this site is a predominantly B1 hi-tech business park. This is to ensure maximum revenue potential from the land – allowing primarily industrial use of the land will lead to a requirement for cheaper fabrication of units and large volumes of heavy traffic, which would tend to compromise the rental premium potential paid by office-based businesses looking for a quality working environment. FTC has also noted its strong objection to the site being used for industry. In such a prominent and exposed place, a development of industrial buildings would be inappropriate. Moreover, the current plans that have been submitted to VoWH and are expected to be approved detail a high specification of commercial building and road construction and layout that would be severely restrictive for light industry, and inadequate for a large proportion of Faringdon's current business make-up.

In the ELR there is no provision at Faringdon for B8 storage or distribution, whereas this is currently the predominant use for industrial land in Swindon. As noted in the Kemp and Kemp report, summarised earlier, the majority of larger employers in Faringdon have a B8 requirement in their use classification.

3.2.2.5. CONCLUSION

The Vale's ELR provides a robust review of employment land and recommendations for the next 20 years within the context of the South East Regional Strategy. Broadly speaking its assessment and projections for the wider Vale are accurate and justifiable. It recognises there are local variations that will influence the market within regions of the Vale, and it also recognises the influence that neighbouring economies, such as Swindon will have. But it is beyond the scope of this report to look in too much detail at how these local variations will affect employment land allocations at a local level, and how this should be split between B1, B2 and B8. It would therefore be unwise for the Vale to draw its conclusions on employment land allocation at Faringdon purely on the basis of this report.

3.2.3. Swindon Core Strategy

Included in Appendix three is an analysis of Swindon's Core Strategy, its Employment Land Review and their relevance to Faringdon's local economy.

While Faringdon is in the South East, rather than the South West, and Swindon's expansion plans are designed to be self-contained, its current economy has a significant influence on Faringdon. This is likely to increase under the proposed expansion plans. This has not been taken into full consideration by the Vale of White Horse's ELR, which considers the Vale as a district within the South East.



3.2.3.1. *CURRENT ECONOMY*

The ELR notes that ancillary trades have grown up around Swindon that feed into the borough's growth. There have been examples of businesses at Faringdon that have developed specifically to supply Swindon's car plants, for example.

Faringdon's relatively low skill set fits well with that of Swindon, which is also below average.

Industry is Swindon's main economic driver and demand for industrial land, and B8 warehousing and storage in particular, is strong. Its large provision of this type of business accommodation has allowed Faringdon businesses to grow by renting storage space in Swindon, because none has been available locally. The lack of suitable sites for expansion at Faringdon, and proximity to Swindon, have also caused businesses to relocate to the borough, rather than grow in situ.

3.2.3.2. *OUTLOOK 2008-2026*

The ELR's recommendation of 200ha of land for business growth has been trimmed back to 170ha in the Core Strategy. The adopted 'smart' growth strategy aims to curtail B8 land provision, while encouraging B1 provision to drive forward a knowledge-based economy. This strategy will decrease availability of B8 space in Swindon, which could cause rental prices to increase, further limiting the options for Faringdon businesses to expand.

The ELR notes competition from centres such as Oxford may limit Swindon's aspirations for a knowledge-based economy. But it encourages the borough to develop linkages with Oxford and become a production power house for Oxford's innovations. Faringdon is well placed to benefit from such linkages and the ideal location for such businesses. The town is within easy commuter distance of both Oxford and Swindon to accommodate the employment needs of pioneers in this field. Its resident skills set is ideally suited for such ventures and, with Wicklesham Quarry, the town will have the full spread of employment land needed.

3.2.3.3. *THE EASTERN DEVELOPMENT AREA (EDA)*

This is the single largest new development proposed in the South West Regional Strategy. There are 12,000 homes proposed for the 900ha site that will incorporate 50ha of employment land. It is only 10 minutes down the road from Faringdon so will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the town. If Faringdon businesses have the room to grow, the town can nurture ancillary trades that will support Swindon's growth. Conversely, if Faringdon's business growth is restricted in any way, the exodus of businesses will accelerate and the town's ability to sustain itself will suffer.

4. Access

A topographical survey has been carried out by Brunel Surveys and a preliminary plan drawn up of changes proposed to the Park Road roundabout. In addition MJA Consulting has prepared and provided outline costings for a pedestrian/cycle footbridge over the A420.

The access proposals have been submitted to Oxfordshire County Council for its comments/approval, but we have yet to receive its response.

4.1. Roundabout improvements

The existing access to Wicklesham Lodge Farm lies approximately one hundred metres to the south west of the Park Road Roundabout on the A420. Attached as Appendix four is a detailed topographical survey of the access to the site and Park Road Roundabout.

The existing access serves Wicklesham Quarry (operated by Grundon), Wicklesham Commercial Offices (twelve units) and the residential and agricultural traffic to the farm and its cottages. If the eight-hectare development



site at Wicklesham Quarry is consented for B2 and B8 usage, we have anticipated that a new access will be needed to Wicklesham Lodge Farm. Attached as Appendix five is a plan showing the location of the new leg and the connection to the roundabout on the A420.

The proposed new access will provide a safer connection to the development and the other properties at Wicklesham Lodge Farm, as well as reducing speed on the roundabout by the creation of a fourth leg. Traffic passing along the A420 between Oxford and Swindon will be forced to slow to check emerging traffic from not only Park Road but also from Wicklesham Lodge Farm. This will reduce the speed of the traffic using the roundabout as an uninterrupted section of the A420.

In addition to the above, the existing access will be closed and sealed off. This will be a significant improvement to road safety, particularly emerging traffic from Wicklesham Lodge Farm that needs to cross the western flow of the A420 and turn right towards Oxford.

4.2. Link with Faringdon

Further to the vehicular access, it is proposed as part of the Quarry Business Park scheme to provide a pedestrian and cycle crossing point over the A420 on the line of the existing footpath. A preliminary plan is shown in Appendix six. This link will provide foot and cycle access to the town for staff working at the Business Park. In addition it would provide inhabitants of Faringdon a safe crossing point to the A420 to enjoy the countryside and network of footpaths and bridleways to the south of Faringdon. At present the only way across the A420 is to cross the main carriageway on foot – there is no pedestrian crossing or pedestrian warning signs on the road.

A safe cycle route has long been an aspiration for the town, but the provision of one that connects with the local countryside has been limited by the barrier provided by the A420. A footbridge would therefore provide the town with a significant amenity, in keeping with current national priorities to promote healthier activities and greener transport, as well as safe access to the Quarry Business Park.

5. Site investigation and preparation

This section provides a summary prepared by MJA Consulting (service provision, groundwater and drainage), while the quarry restoration summary was prepared in consultation with Grundon.

5.1. Service provision

The preliminary statutory undertakers report can be found in Appendix seven.

5.1.1. Clean Water-Thames Water

Thames Water has advised the nearest main with capacity to supply the development is a 355mm main located in Park Road (A417). This main is located 270m from the site boundary. The cost of bringing a water supply to the site boundary will be in the region of £40,000. Once the off-site reinforcement mains have been installed, a water supply will be available to supply development.

TW has advised that on-site mains will be charged at £150 per metre. The total cost of the main will be in the region of £120,000 based on 800m of on-site main. TW will consider the future revenue that they will gain from the new main when calculating the client contribution for the main, therefore this sum could be reduced by up to 50%.

The developer will be liable for the cost of the new connection and the infrastructure, these costs will be based on the level of water usage. This information can be calculated once the use of the land parcels is known.



5.1.2. Gas

Off-site reinforcement works will be required to supply gas to the development. These works will be carried out by the successful Independent Gas Transporter.

The options available are to extend either the Low Pressure 600m to the site or to extend the Medium Pressure network 1500m with an off-site feeder main. If the LP option is preferred the network will need to be reinforced, while the MP will not need to be reinforced. Therefore the MP option would be the better choice.

The cost of this work is expected to cost the developer £100,000.

5.1.3. Electricity-Scottish and Southern Electricity Power Distribution

The SSE network planner has confirmed that off-site reinforcement works will be required.

A load of 2.4 MVA plus will require a new circuit breaker at Faringdon Primary Substation + 11kV cable to site, with a ring network to supply the development and link up with the HV system.

The cost of the infrastructure and services to the first 12 Units will be £900,000, assuming that no civil work will be required to extend the Substation building to accommodate the new circuit breaker.

5.1.4. British Telecom

The site can be supplied from the existing BT plant adjacent to the A420 without the need for extensive off-site reinforcement. BT will supply a connection which will be the responsibility of the occupants and is usually negotiated at minimal cost.

5.1.5. Pipelines/Major Utility Networks

Linesearch has confirmed that there are not any oil pipelines with the vicinity of the development area.

5.2. Groundwater and drainage

The preliminary drainage strategy can be found in Appendix eight. The preliminary site investigation report can be found in Appendix nine.

5.2.1. Surface water drainage proposals

The presence of the Kimmeridge Clay and the high water table would preclude the use of soakaways across the site. There are no public surface water sewers within 1Km of the site. There is a watercourse approximately 225m east of the site which is within the control of the current landowner.

Surface water run-off from the industrial units and associated roads and car parking will therefore be collected via a gravity system through double trapped gullies and where appropriate petrol/oil interceptors, prior to discharging to a balancing pond located offsite. This pond will then discharge to the watercourse at a controlled rate equivalent to that of green field run off.

A budget cost for providing the offsite gravity storm sewer will be in the order of £125,000 to £175,000. Designs of the storm water discharge will be discussed and agreed with the Environment Agency at the detailed design stage.

5.2.2. Foul drainage proposals

The nearest public foul sewers are approximately 850m from the boundary of the site one is located in Fernham Road to the north west and within Park Road to the north east.

Initial consultations with Thames Water have shown that there are capacity issues within the whole of the Faringdon network. Assuming that capacity is available within the existing public system a foul pumping station will be required to enable the effluent to discharge to the sewers. From here a rising main of



approximately 850m will be required to be laid along the A420 to the preferred location. A budget cost of between £200,000 and £225,000 should be allowed for with this scheme.

We have started discussions with the Environment Agency with regards to the use of a private package sewage treatment works to serve the site which in turn would discharge to the proposed storm system. If this option is acceptable to the Environment Agency then the balancing pond will need to be increased in size to cater for the additional flows and there will be a requirement for a reed bed to assist with the water quality prior to discharging to the balancing pond and ultimately the watercourse. The budget cost of this proposal would be similar to that for the pumped option.

5.2.3. Foundations and groundwater

The preliminary site investigation indicates that the site is immediately underlain by Faringdon Sponge Gravels generally comprising medium dense, orange brown to light brown sands and gravels, slightly clayey in parts with some thinly bedded limestone bands, underlain at depths of between 1.10m and 2.60m by hard grey, slightly shelly and crystalline limestone rock.

Groundwater was encountered at depths between 0.25m and 1.35m below existing ground level, subsequent site visits have confirmed these levels with little or no variation.

The ground will be suitable to support the proposed new structures with the limestone rock providing an allowable bearing pressure of 150KN/m² for pad foundations for a projected portal framed building. Some reinforcement of the foundations should be allowed for.

Given the high water table it is proposed to raise the site by up to 1.0m to provide a free board to the ground water and to assist the gravity drainage system proposed for the surface water run off. Several options are available for filling the site including imported 6F2 material and also providing a class 7E material by utilising a lime/cement stabilisation method on a relatively low grade cohesive material giving an end CBR of approximately 10-15%.

Given the high water table combined with the proposed level of filling and the inherent problems associated with dewatering it may be more cost effective to consider foundation solutions such as continuous flight augured piles or a Vibro replacement piling system.

5.3. Quarry restoration plan

The current restoration concept plan can be found in Appendix ten.

Discussions are currently underway with Oxfordshire County Council and Natural England to revise the restoration plan currently in force. This would require a 45 degree slope against all sides. Such a restoration plan would conflict with the designation of the site as an SSSI. This designation reflects that the quarry walls provide good exposure to a rich and unusual assemblage of marine fossils laid down some 110 million years ago, which make the quarry noted as one of Britain's richest palaeontological sites.

Subject to OCC and NE agreement, it is therefore the intention to leave the sides of the quarry sheer and exposed. No development will take place within 10m of the quarry walls. The terms of the SSSI prohibit placing or storing any material against the walls, which will safeguard access around the quarry perimeter. The topsoil bunds around the quarry will be removed, and the material used for landscaping and topsoil around the development.

A geological access area will be provided. Currently the intention is to locate this against the north east face of the quarry.



The quarry floor will be built up to a height and with material deemed suitable for its future use as an industrial development. The area will be adequately drained.

The pond at the western end of the quarry will be filled in, in accordance with OCC requests.

It is currently the intention for Grundon to release around four hectares (10 acres) of the quarry to the east of the site when its lease expires at the end of February 2010. The rest of the site will be retained as quarry workings for about another five years after the current lease expires.

6. Finances

From the costings produced within section five above, Marriotts Chartered Surveyors has produced the following table detailing the value of the site together with servicing costs to assess viability.

Details	Amount	Notes
1 Sale Proceeds		
1.1 Sell 7 acres*	£2,450,000	First tranche 2011/12 at £350,000 per acre
1.2 Sell 3 acres	£1,050,000	Second Tranche 2013/14 at £350,000 per acre
1.3 Sell 10 acres	£3,500,000	Released over following 6 years at £350,000 per acre
Total Income	£7,000,000	
2 Service Costs		
2.1 Water		
Clean connection to site	£40,000	
Internal site pipe	£60,000	
2.2 Drainage		
Foul	£212,500	Mains or private
Surface	£150,000	
2.3 Gas	£100,000	
2.4 Telephone	£-	F.O.C.
2.5 Electricity	£900,000	
3 Access Costs		
3.1 New junction and access to A420	£750,000	
3.2 Footbridge over A420	£400,000	
Total Costs	£2,612,500	
Summary		
Sale proceeds**	£7,000,000	
Service and access	£2,612,500	
Surplus	£4,387,500	

* Marriotts is in negotiations at present with 3 businesses to take 7 acres of the site if consent can be obtained

** No allowance for cost of money

For the purposes of this assessment Marriotts has looked at sale values of the land with planning consent rather than the sale of developed plots (i.e. built-out units) which would produce a higher financial return.

Sale values are based on comparable evidence of land in and near Faringdon taking into account the current financial crisis in the banking world and its impact on land values. A figure of £350,000 per acre has been used to assess viability for fully serviced land.

The results of the analysis show that the site is well within normal servicing cost expectations for commercial land. When related to the sale prices of commercial land, set out above, the figures show the site is financially viable.



Marriotts Chartered Surveyors considers this site to be not only financially viable but, from their experience in the market, as a potentially sought-after site for commerce between Swindon and Oxford.

7. Acknowledgements

This report has been compiled using the input, support, professional opinion and guidance of the following:

- Andrew Brown, Marriotts Chartered Surveyors
- Laura Buxton, Kemp and Kemp Property Consultants
- Paul Berrill, MJA Consulting
- Peter Albinson, Brunel Surveys
- Julian Huxham, Ground Investigation Services
- Bob Nicholson, Grundon Quarrying and Waste Management

Reference is made within this report to their specific contributions and, where appropriate, their reports have been included either as an appendix or within the body of this report.



Appendix one – Site plans and photographs



Appendix two – Faringdon Business Requirements



Appendix three – Swindon Prospects and their relevance to Faringdon’s local economy



Appendix four – Topographical survey of Park Road roundabout



Appendix five – Preliminary plan of Park Road roundabout improvements



Appendix six – Preliminary plan of pedestrian/cycle bridge



Appendix seven – Preliminary statutory undertakers report



Appendix eight – Preliminary Drainage strategy



Appendix nine – Preliminary site investigation report



Appendix ten – Restoration concept plan