

Matter 10 – Strategy for Western Vale Sub-Area (CP20)

10.1 Are the Strategic Housing Allocations listed in policy CP20 soundly based and deliverable?

- (a) South of Park Road, Faringdon (site 17) (Sandhill-Bloor Homes)*
- (b) South-West of Faringdon (site 20) (Highworth Rd-*
- (c) East of Coxwell Road, Faringdon (site 18) (Fernham Fields-SGR)*
- (d) South of Faringdon (site 19) (Steeds Farm-Welbeck))*
- (e) North of Shrivenham (site 21)*
- (f) West of Stanford-in-the-Vale (site 16)*

The policy does not take into consideration the impact of the 7,500 houses allocated in western Swindon, within km of site (e) above and within 15 km of sites (a)-(d). This will have a significant impact on the housing market in Faringdon and the Western Vale generally. Swindon, with a population of 212,000, is a cheaper and more sustainable location than Faringdon.

With little if any increase in employment provision, Faringdon has seen a 15% increase in population between the 2001 and 2011 censuses compared to the national average of 6.9% and the Vale's 4.6%. Since 2011, Faringdon housing numbers have grown by a further 13%; if and when the proposed housing allocations are built, the housing stock will have increased by 50% since the 2011 census. Although this future development cannot take place until after April 2018, when the sewage treatment works is to be upgraded, the additional housing will have increased the population from 7,121 in 2011 to around 11,000 with currently no identified employment opportunities, nor any commensurate improvements in infrastructure and facilities apart from a new primary school.

Although the Local Plan proposes significant increases in employment opportunities at the Science Vale Oxford area, it should be noted that Faringdon housing allocations are located some 20 miles away along inadequate roads and with no direct public transport links to Faringdon.

- a) The retail centre of Faringdon has a congested, 17th century road layout with inadequate parking that will have difficulty in accommodating the proposed increase in population.
- b) Swindon has a greater influence on employment and services for the residents of Faringdon than Oxford and this should be a consideration.

A further concern is the chaos that will result once the sewage works is upgraded in April 2018 should the start of building occur simultaneously on all four of the allocated strategic sites.

10.2 Are there other sites which would more appropriately meet the identified need for new housing?

No.

The Local Plan allocates 950 houses to Faringdon, but only 1,000 to Abingdon which is significantly closer to the proposed employment growth and is a more sustainable town with a population some four times greater than Faringdon's

10.3 Are the identified and safeguarded Employment sites listed in policy CP20 soundly based and deliverable? Are there other sites which would more appropriately meet the identified need for employment land?

The employment land allocations in Faringdon referred to in paragraph 5.122 of the Local Plan are based on the *URS VoWH Employment Land Review 2013 Update including Addendum 2013*. This review, which informs the Local Plan, identifies in paragraph 5.122 three employment sites included in the 2011 Local Plan that 'do not meet the criteria to satisfy the forecast demand up to 2031' and are rejected because of 'constraints'. These are:

- Site C9a, North of Pioneer Road, 0.85 ha,
- Site C9c, Strip of Land along Park Road, 0.71 ha,
- Site C9d, Land to the South of the Playground, 0.28 ha

The owner of site C9a intends to develop it for employment use and it does have access contrary to

its description in the 2013 URS review. Worse, the description of each of the sites C9c and C9d is the same and states: *'the site has physical constraints, most notably a slope. This would require landscaping and groundworks to improve the site for development potential.'* This may describe C9d but site C9c is the bed of the old railway track and so is remarkably flat and clear.

Unfortunately this 'cut and paste' error has been perpetuated throughout the preparation of the Local Plan despite it being pointed out to the Vale on several occasions. Planning permission was granted for site C9c for eight office units and 16 flats; the latter have been built, but the landowner has applied for the remainder of the site to be developed for housing claiming that there is no demand for commercial units despite the current shortage of office space in Faringdon and it being ruled as unsuitable for housing on noise grounds because of its proximity to the Industrial Estate.

The 2011 census data for Faringdon showed that of a population of 7,121, 5,097 (i.e. 71.6%) were in the age range 16-74 classified in the census as 'potentially economically active'. Of these 3,851 were economically active (i.e. 75.6% of the 16-74 age group or 54.1% of the total population). Of these only 4.4% were unemployed (171), 58.3% were full time employees (2,247), 18.8% were part time (725), 3.3% were full time students (128) and the rest (580) were self employed. Hence, out of a population of 7,121, 3,552 Faringdon residents (49.9%) had full or part time jobs.

Assuming a future population of ~11,000 and the same rates of economic activity as in 2011, these figures indicate that 5,487 Faringdon residents will be in full and part time employment; an increase of 1,935 over the 2011 numbers. (This is probably an underestimate taking into consideration a decreasing rate of unemployment and that probably most of the new householders will be in the potentially economically active age band.)

The Faringdon Chamber of Commerce reported that only 27% (i.e. ~959 in 2011) of residents in work were employed locally, implying that Faringdon was effectively a 'dormitory town'. By 2021, or whenever the population peaks at ~11,000, even to maintain local employment at the 27% level will require another 522 jobs over the 2011 number. The Neighbourhood Plan has a more ambitious target of 44% of those in work to be locally employed, i.e. an extra 1,455 jobs. Taking 27% and 44% as upper and lower bounds indicates that, for a population of 11,000, between 1,481 and 2,414 local jobs will be needed together with sufficient employment land to satisfy this need.

The Vale of White Horse report of July 2008, *Analysis of travel patterns of people living in new homes built between 2001 and 2007 in the Vale of White Horse* showed that, between 2001 and 2007, only 15% of new residents in Faringdon travelled less than 5 km to work (i.e. within Faringdon) implying that 85% commuted out, possibly because of the lack of employment opportunities in the town.

Irrespective of the method by which employment need is estimated, all show a need for increased employment opportunities in Faringdon to reduce out-commuting in accordance with Strategic Objectives 5 and 8 of the Local Plan Part 1.

Site	B1 (ha)	B2 (ha)	B8 (ha)	Total ha
C9f 4&20 Business Park	1.4	1.4	1.4	4.2
C9b HCA Business Centre	0.18			
C33 South Park Road		1	2	3.0
Total allocation for Faringdon	1.58	2.4	3.4	7.38
Total for VoWH to 2029	62.6	57.7	27.7	148.0

Table 1: recommendations for employment land in Faringdon;
ref. Vale of White Horse Employment Land Review 2013 Update, March 2013, URS

Table 1 shows the sites allocated for employment in the Local Plan to meet the increasing population of Faringdon. Of these, the undeveloped C9f 4&20 Business Park and the C9b HCA Business Centre were already allocated as employment land in the previous Local Plan while the C33 'South Park Road' site is the long established Rogers Concrete business so is already

employment land. The point being that none of these sites is a new allocation to meet the needs of a growing population.

However, of these, site C9f now has planning permission for A1/A5 retail on the larger part of the site with an application for B1 plus some housing (under consideration at the time of writing) on the rest; these premises are expected to be opening by late 2016, which is before the new housing can be constructed. Although it will not be used for B2/B8 (as specified in the draft Local and Neighbourhood Plans) it will provide about 130 jobs for the current population. Of the total 4.0 ha area of the C33 Rogers Concrete site (site 3 in the NP) half has constraints because of drainage, having been excavated down to the limestone pavement, hence only ~2 ha may be available. This leaves a maximum of ~2.18 ha of employment land out of the 7.38 ha allocated in the Local Plan to meet the future needs of Faringdon's growing population.

The surveys on employment land and retail need that inform the Local Plan Part 1 underestimate Faringdon's requirements as they were undertaken before the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment¹ that resulted in the allocation of an additional 600 houses in Faringdon.

As a result, the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan seeks to allocate more employment land in Faringdon than is included in the Local Plan by allocating Wicklesham Quarry (site C30; ~12 ha of which ~8 ha is developable) as employment land and preserving sites C9a, c and d, above, for employment.

