

21. Faringdon Area Strategy

- 21.1** Faringdon is a market town in the Vale of White Horse District. It is situated on the edge of the Thames Valley, between the River Thames and the Ridgeway and is 19 miles (30km) southwest of Oxford, 10 miles (16km) northwest of Wantage and 13 miles (21km) northeast of Swindon. The A420 (which is mainly single carriageway with limited stretches of dual carriageway) is situated to the south and east of Faringdon providing good links to other towns; however, there is no rail station. Faringdon is compact yet hilly which could affect movement across the town, especially for local trips.
- 21.2** Faringdon has a population of approximately 6,000. The town has many local amenities such as two primary schools and a secondary school, health centre (with the nearest hospitals being in Witney and Swindon), police station, fire station, leisure centre and library.

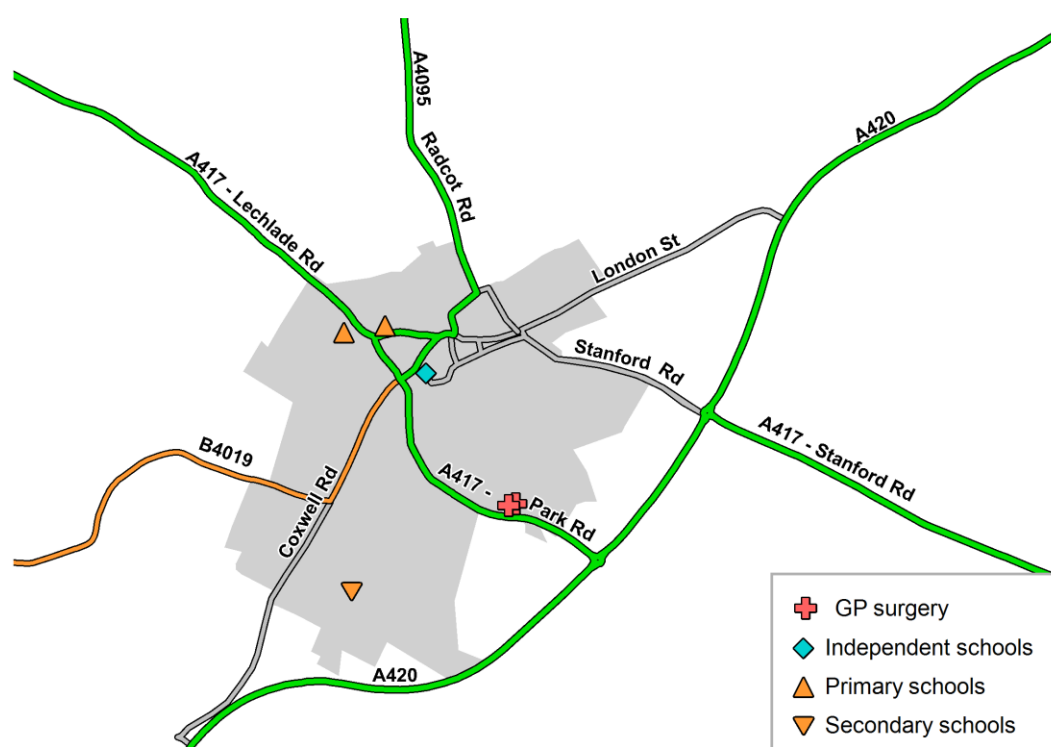


Figure 21.1 Faringdon

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- 21.3** According to the Market Town Healthcheck undertaken in 2002 by the town and district councils, compared with the rest of the country, Faringdon may have appeared affluent (ranked 6173/8414 on the indices of deprivation) but it had the fifth worst score within the Vale of White Horse District. Unemployment was low, but so were the average monthly earnings, which at the time were well below the national average. The Healthcheck also identified that a lack of visitor/community focal points and facilities for young people are issues that affect the town's vitality.

Transport in Faringdon

- 21.4** The main commercial bus service serving Faringdon operates half hourly between Oxford and Swindon.
- 21.5** There is also a regular weekday service every one to two hours between Wantage and Faringdon. There are also some minor services that run within the town to Wantage, Buckland and Highworth; however these are mainly Monday to Friday services that run in the mornings only.
- 21.6** The A420 bypasses Faringdon to the south and east with the A417 and A4095 running through the town to both the north and south. According to the 2001 Census a high proportion of Faringdon's residents, 47.5%, drive to work. This could be attributed to the main employment bases being located outside Faringdon in Oxford and Swindon which are easily accessible via the A420.
- 21.7** The main bus stops are located in Faringdon town centre, Park Road and Coxwell Road, along with most schools and local amenities, which means that for many residents (especially those living in the outskirts of the town), driving may be a more attractive option, given the distance to the town centre combined with the local topography.
- 21.8** There is a good range of public rights of way that connect Faringdon to the surrounding countryside. However, the network is disjointed in many places where paths meet the road network. Selected improved management, road crossings and traffic-free links could help enable more people to access the countryside.

Transport Strategy

Walking and the Pedestrian Environment

Policy FN1 – Oxfordshire County Council will improve facilities for all pedestrians, including disabled people, in Faringdon by developing clear routes from residential areas to the town centre and other key services and facilities around the town.

- 21.9 There is a lack of clear, readable signage directing people to key destinations particularly within the residential areas of Faringdon. There is also a lack of joined up footways linking the residential areas to key facilities, amenities and the surrounding countryside via urban footways and rights of way. There are a number of footways in Faringdon that are narrow and would benefit from upgrading and light repair. Publicity of pedestrian routes from residential areas to local services, schools, employment areas and the town centre is limited.
- 21.10 Housing in Faringdon is mainly to the south, west and east of the town centre. This means that some residential areas are a greater distance from the town centre than others, which can discourage residents from walking. The main proportion of students either walk or cycle to the local schools, however a large proportion, 41%, still travel to school by car.
- 21.11 When resources or opportunities allow, this will be achieved by:
- * conducting an audit of footways will identify measures to improve way finding by creating formal walking routes to key facilities from residential areas and in between key facilities by providing new and improved signage, widening, dropped kerbs and improved crossing points;
 - * publicising and promoting walking routes by producing information on walking maps and route planners; and
 - * improving connections to the rights of way network particularly where urban footways meet rural rights of way.

Cycling

Policy FN2 – Oxfordshire County Council will develop and publicise cycle routes from residential areas to local services, schools, employment areas the town centre and links to Regional Cycle Route 40 and will provide a suitable number of good quality cycle stands at the destinations and appropriate infrastructure where required along the routes.

- 21.12 The potential of cycling accessibility across Faringdon is hindered by the relatively poor cycling connections within the residential areas. A Health check carried out in 2002 reports that there is inadequate provision for cyclists within the town and links between Faringdon and its hinterland are poor or non-existent. There is a lack of adequate cycle infrastructure particularly within the town centre and access to key local facilities from residential areas.
- 21.13 The publicity of cycling routes from residential areas, to local services, schools, employment areas and the town centre is limited. Cycle parking (especially within the town centre) is inadequate and in some cases not fit for purpose.
- 21.14 There are unclassified tracks and paths surrounding Faringdon which are available for walking and cycling, however these are not publicised within the town. The Regional Cycle Route 40 runs through the southern section of the town; this is also not well publicised. Although cyclists can use bridleways, restricted byways and byways (along with horse riders) these often do not connect up safely with roads.
- 21.15 When resources or opportunities allow, this will be achieved by:
- * improving infrastructure and facilities for cyclists by conducting an audit of existing cycle ways, well used routes and locations of cycle parking across Faringdon in order to develop a high quality cycle network with a particular focus on improving accessibility to key destinations and Regional Cycle Route 40;
 - * publicising and promoting cycle routes by producing, in conjunction with local cycle groups and cycle

- organisations, information on cycling, maps and route planners; and
- * joining up the cycling network across the wider area using public rights of way so that routes for commuting and recreation are improved.

Public Transport

Policy FN3 – Oxfordshire County Council will work with local bus companies, developers and other partners to:

- * ***improve the frequency and attractiveness of the bus services in Faringdon;***
- * ***develop bus services on other routes to increase the accessibility of Faringdon to/from other key locations particularly the surrounding villages; and***
- * ***retain the existing local bus services in the area.***

- 21.16 Faringdon does not have direct access to rail services; the nearest rail stations are in Swindon, Oxford and Didcot. Should Grove & Wantage Station be developed this will increase rail access for those living in Faringdon.
- 21.17 Faringdon has a relatively good range of bus services for a town of its size. However, apart from the main Oxford to Swindon bus route, public transport links to other nearby towns could be improved (as well as increasing the frequency of the Oxford to Swindon service). Public transport links to the Faringdon Community College from areas outside of Faringdon are limited, although students can access the college by three existing bus services that serve bus stops near to the college. The River Thames, with its limited number of crossing points, some of which are inadequate for public service vehicles, presents a barrier to providing bus services to Faringdon.
- 21.18 When resources or opportunities allow, this will be achieved by:
- * continuing to work with bus operators to upgrade the existing Swindon to Oxford service to 4 buses per hour, in line with the Premium Route strategy;
 - * investigating what improvements could be made to the town centre to improve manoeuvrability for buses around the town centre;

- * aspiring to premium route standard stops with Real Time Information at bus stops which are accessible by good walking routes, in particular Park Road;
- * improving the marketing of all bus services to encourage travel by public transport; and
- * taking any opportunities to improve bus services to and from other surrounding areas, as and when these arise.

Promoting Travel Choices

Policy FN4 – Oxfordshire County Council will, where appropriate, work with organisations and businesses to reduce the occurrence of congestion and its impact and will support suitable information provision and platforms (such as car sharing) to reduce the need to travel and inefficient car use.

21.19 When resources or opportunities allow, this will be achieved by:

- * Increasing awareness and promoting better infrastructure for walking, cycling and public transport;
- * Influencing travel choice by encouraging schools, businesses and organisations to make fewer trips by car;
- * Encouraging the use of more efficient and lower emissions vehicles as they become available;
- * Encouraging a greater number of trips by walking, cycling and public transport.

Traffic Management

Policy FN5 – Oxfordshire County Council will ensure that best use is made of existing road space through careful planning, working with partners and utilisation of technology.

21.20 Faringdon does not suffer with a town wide congestion problem; however during the morning weekday peak periods an increase in volume of traffic causes vehicles to move more slowly especially within the narrow roads of the town centre and accessing the A420.

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- 21.21 The lack of wide spread congestion within Faringdon allows people to drive, even for short journeys; this can exacerbate environmental and air quality issues. Roads within Faringdon and around the town are classified in the priority 1 and 2 lists for gritting in ice and snowy weather conditions as they are both vital links and the only access for the community.
- 21.22 The road network, within the town centre in particular, is narrow and can easily become congested with on-street parking and/or the presence of large vehicles.
- 21.23 There are three road accesses to Faringdon from the A420, however only Park Road (A417) has a roundabout. A large number of drivers use this junction wishing to access the A420 carriageway. The majority of employment sites and existing and proposed new housing are mainly situated off Park Road. This development is likely to have an impact on congestion in the area and place greater strain on the Park Road roundabout junction, as well as create potential safety issues.
- 21.24 When resources or opportunities allow; this is to be achieved by:
- * reviewing road safety incidents and conducting speed surveys and junction reviews at sites of concern. Consider measures such as installing vehicle activated signage, lining, traffic calming measures and junction improvements to address any problems;
 - * considering traffic calming measures along the Highworth Road (B4019) to reduce speeds;
 - * investigating potential improvements to the Park Road roundabout;
 - * reviewing parking arrangements throughout the whole town to enable better management of spaces and improve pedestrian safety;
 - * reviewing the signage within the town centre for all modes;
 - * considering traffic calming measures near schools and cycle routes to enable safer integration of all modes; and
 - * considering implementing traffic calming measures on Canada Lane and Gravel Walk.

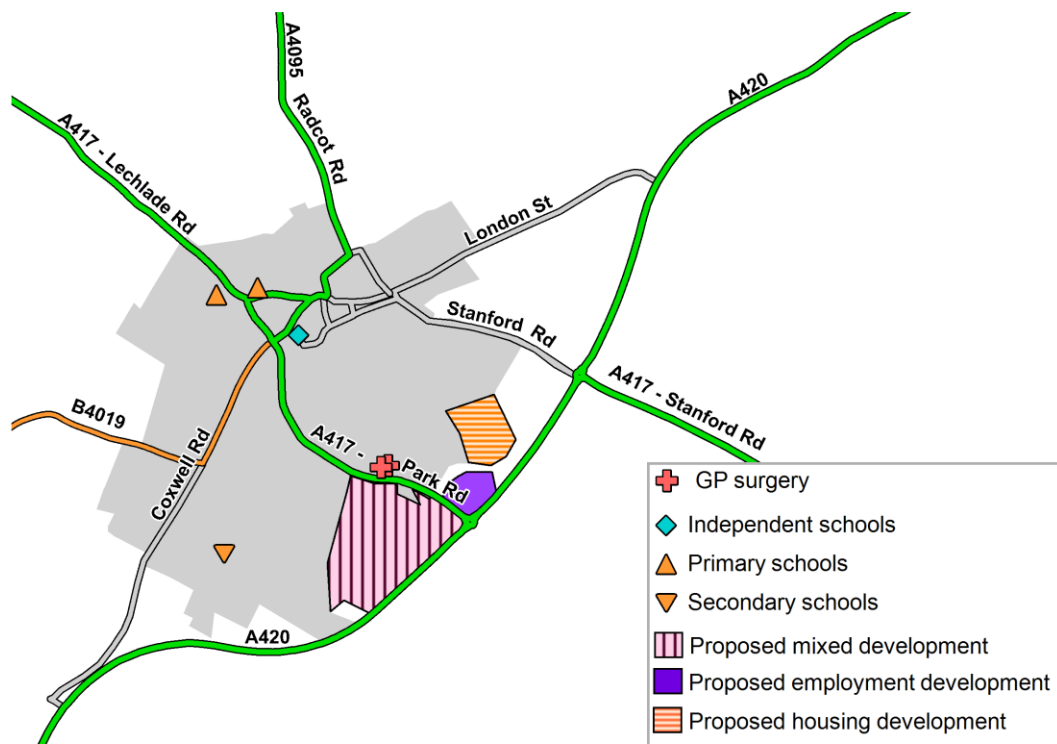


Figure 21.2 Future development in Faringdon