

Faringdon Neighbourhood Development Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Adoption Statement

DATE: 14 December 2016

Introduction

1. The Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan (FNP) was made (adopted) at full Council on 14 December 2016. It forms part of the Vale of White Horse district development plan and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in Great Faringdon Parish.
2. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was undertaken alongside plan preparation and this Adoption Statement is published as part of that process. SA incorporates the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) requirements and widens the scope from environmental to consider social and economic effects. SEA is a method for considering and communicating likely significant effects on the environment of an emerging plan, alongside reasonable alternatives. A key output of SA is an environmental report.
3. A hard copy of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan (FNP), the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Environmental Report, and a copy of this Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Adoption Statement can be inspected at:

Vale of White Horse District Council, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, OX14 4SB.

Copies are also available on the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan page of our website: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans>

4. SEA requires a number of procedural steps and this adoption statement presents:
 - The 'story' of plan making and SA up to the point of adoption.
 - Measures decided concerning the monitoring of plan implementation.
5. This statement is prepared in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (16) (3) and (4) to demonstrate:
 - *how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;*
 - *how the environmental report has been taken into account;*
 - *how opinions expressed in response to-*
 - *the invitation referred to in regulation 13(2)(d);*

- *action taken by the responsible authority in accordance with regulation 13(4) have been taken into account;*
- *how the results of any consultations entered into under regulation 14(4) have been taken into account;*
- *the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and*
- *the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.*

Sustainability Appraisal

6. The FNP was revised through an iterative process based on planning evidence, community engagement, and consultation. The key issues and policies arising from SA are detailed in the final SA environment report in July 2014. A parallel process of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was undertaken by Allies & Morrison Urban Practitioners (AMUP) alongside plan preparation.
7. The Initial Sustainability Assessment report published in March 2013 by AMUP considered a range of potential policy approaches for FNP. It provided context on potential thematic and spatial approaches from a sustainability perspective. The report identified approaches on population growth, local employment, rural diversification, social housing, allotment development, social infrastructure, connections, public realm improvements, design and the development boundary.
8. The report by AMUP also included an assessment of options for potential uses of various sites including; housing, retail, employment or school development, and an assessment of different policy approaches. This provided context and justification to support the initial iterations of plan-making. A summary of the report is on page 37 of the Sustainability Appraisal 2014.
9. The AMUP report was published as part of the first public consultation undertaken within the town that considered commercial sites to be included for development or enhancement, plus the policy approaches for key aspects of the plan.
10. A SEA Screening Report prepared by URS that determined SEA was required was published in December 2013. Principally this concerned the allocation of employment land at Wicklesham Quarry and the proposed mixed-use development north-west of Gloucester Street Car Park. Subsequently, the Town Council decided to carry out a SA, incorporating the SEA requirements.
11. A SA Scoping Report was prepared by URS in March 2014. The Scoping Report set out the proposed scope of the SA process, provided a short outline of the town, and identified the main issues to be considered whilst preparing FNP.

12. The sustainability context and baseline considered in the scoping report of 2014, and further discussed in the final SA report were; air quality, biodiversity, climate change, the historic environment and landscape, land and soil resources, water resources and flood risk, population, health and wellbeing, education and skills, transportation and the economy. The preparation of the FNP was also informed by an appraisal of a number of alternative sites relating to employment uses in Faringdon.

13. Drawing on the review of the sustainability context and baseline information the SA Scoping Report identified a range of sustainability issues that should be the focus of the SA. These issues were then developed into sustainability objectives and provided the methodological framework for the appraisal of likely significant effects on the baseline¹. A summary of the sustainability topics and objectives are outlined in table one below. The full SA framework of objectives and decision-making questions that informed the preparation of the neighbourhood plan can be found in Appendix Two of the SA Report.

Table One – Initial Sustainability Topics and Objectives for the FNDP

Topic	Objectives
Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support improvements to air quality in Faringdon.
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features.
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote climate change mitigation and adaptation in Faringdon.
Historic Environment and Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect, maintain and enhance Faringdon’s cultural heritage resource including its historic environment and archaeological assets. • Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.
Land and Soil Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the more efficient use of land. • Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.
Water Resources and Flood Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve water quality. • Improve water resource efficiency. • Increase resilience to climate change and flooding.
Population and Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce poverty and deprivation and promote more inclusive and self-contained communities. • Cater for existing and future residents’ needs as

¹ Some of these issues are not within the scope of the FNP but all those that are have either been included in the FNP, or are being addressed separately by Faringdon Town Council.

	well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve equality of access to local, high-quality community services and facilities.
Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the health and well-being of Faringdon's residents.
Education and Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve educational attainment and skill levels in Faringdon.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable transport.
Economy and Enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support a strong and sustainable economy within the plan area. • Maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of Faringdon town centre in order to strengthen its role as a service centre.

Consideration of reasonable alternatives

Appraisal of Site Options

14. Following the initial stages of plan preparation, the vision and objectives were developed to reflect consultation, stakeholder engagement and the evidence base for the plan. A central element of the plan is a focus on the self-containment and economic and community vitality of Faringdon.
15. A range of employment sites were considered over and above the strategic sites considered through the Local Plan 2031: Part 1 (LPP1). A key element of FNP has been to identify potential employment allocations, which in the period to 2031 may be appropriate for the development of employment uses. In total there were eleven sites considered and these are listed in the Sustainability Appraisal 2014 on page 41.
16. Eleven sites were appraised based on the eleven sustainability topics set-out above. The full and rigorous process for assessment of the sites is detailed in Appendix Three of the Sustainability Appraisal. Three strategic employment allocations in LPP1 were not appraised as reasonable alternatives. This is because FNP was prepared to be in 'general conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan' and did not seek to offer alternatives to these strategic sites. The strategic sites were also appraised through the LPP1 SA process.

Appraisal of the Draft Plan

17. The policies of the draft plan were appraised against the 11 objectives set out in table one. For each topic a range of sustainability objectives were listed and supported by decision-making questions developed during scoping. Taken together these provided the assessment framework for the appraisal of likely significant effects on the baseline. Options were discussed in turn and a series of recommendations were made and considered during the preparation of FNP.

Selecting a Spatial Strategy

18. After consideration of reasonable alternatives and resulting from the findings of the appraisal of reasonable alternatives, table two below summarises Faringdon Town Council's reasons for selecting the preferred approach.

Table Two – Preferred Approach

Site	Taken forward?	Comments
Industrial areas along Park Road x2	Yes	Through further development, it is considered that these sites are appropriate locations for supporting the employment needs of the town.
Wicklesham Quarry	Yes	This is a significant opportunity site that would expand diversify the provision of local jobs and could be redeveloped for employment use to provide B2/B8 industry in the town. A site of this scale could also help encourage new types of businesses into the parish to help diversify the range of local jobs on offer.
Land north west of Gloucester Street Car Park	Yes	This site is considered an appropriate site to be allocated, in part, for employment use (B1) and, in part, for retail use (A1) as a mixed employment and retail development. Adjacent to the town centre, such uses would help support both town centre services and sustainable travel patterns.
Wicklesham Farm	Yes	This site is a thriving business centre in an attractive location that has made use of redundant farm buildings. Minimal expansion would be acceptable to help address unmet demand for units here.
Land behind Pioneer Road	Yes	This site was allocated in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan (2011) for Use Class B1 employment use and a landscape buffer. However, the emerging Local Plan does not allocate this a site for development. It is important to maintain a variety of employment opportunities in the town and, therefore, the allocation of this site for B1 employment use is proposed to continue through the Neighbourhood Plan.
Infant School Canada Lane	Not as employment use	The site has been viewed as unsuited for employment uses and is instead viewed to be appropriate for community

		uses. On this basis, the plan seeks to encourage community uses for the site should the site become available.
BT Exchange, Police Station	Potentially	As a town centre location, the sites are deemed appropriate for retail uses if the site becomes available.
Fire Station	Potentially	Due to its location on the edge of the town centre, with good accessibility, the site is deemed appropriate for retail uses, if the site becomes available.
Sudbury House	No	The site has not been included because the site is no longer available and is deemed appropriate for continued use as a hotel/conference facility. The continuation of this use will support the town's visitor and tourism economy.

Monitoring Framework

19. This SA Adoption Statement must present 'measures decided concerning monitoring'. The district council will monitor those policies discussed in Part 3 of the Sustainability Appraisal 2014, where required. The district council will report on this in the Authority Monitoring Report, where possible.
20. The submission version of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan was likely to lead to positive effects in terms of the 'historic environment and landscape', 'population and communities', 'health and wellbeing', 'transportation' and 'economy and enterprise' objectives. These relate to the strong focus of the FNP and on improving the vitality and self-containment of Faringdon, improving employment and economic opportunities, supporting enhancements to green infrastructure provision and the plan's focus on protecting the town's distinctive characteristics.
21. The FNP also helps initiate a range of beneficial approaches in relation to 'air quality', 'climate change' and 'water resources' objectives. However, overall these are not considered as significant positive effects as the delivery of employment allocations through the neighbourhood plan may lead to some adverse effects in relation to these topics.
22. It is anticipated that the potential negative effects of the development of employment sites can in most cases be minimised (including at Wicklesham Quarry which is designated as a SSSI). However, the development of employment uses at the site to the north west of Gloucester Street Car Park (site 5 on page 44 of the FNDP) has the potential to lead to adverse effects in relation to biodiversity and environment.

23. The potential adverse effects in relation to the development at the site 'to the north west of Gloucester Street Car Park' will be monitored as part of the Authority Monitoring Report to determine whether development is having an adverse impact. Faringdon Town Council will monitor policies associated with site allocations through an assessment of planning permissions.