

District Council Report for Faringdon Town Council

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Spring is almost here and it's great to see Faringdon getting a new look with The Crown's facelift now in full progress - we are looking forward to its completion. We care deeply about the vibrancy of the town centre and have also been working hard, consulting with planning officers, to get the best outcome for the Red Lion and Budgens sites.

We are doing our best to highlight that Faringdon's individual needs are recognised as new parking charges are being suggested for Vale-owned car parks across the district; while other market towns are serviced by privately run car parks offering free parking, Faringdon is not and should not be subject to the same increases as elsewhere in the Vale.

We're also looking after the whole district and doing our bit for the planet with a brand-new joint design guide that is now open for consultation. We think this has the potential to give real weight in planning decisions to the things we want to see in high quality design but need everyone's input to make it as strong as possible.

Local Issues to Faringdon

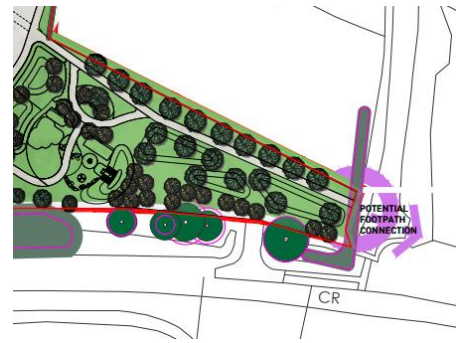
- **Red Lion Pub & Budgens proposed redevelopments (P21/V3520/FUL, P21/V3542/FUL & P21/V3543/LB):** Officers have confirmed that these applications will be considered together at the district planning committee regardless of their recommendation. This is because the Vale of White District Council is a direct neighbour affected by the application.

As ward councillors we have been enquiring why solar panels were dropped from the scheme after they were included in the previous application following our request to address Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan Policy 4.7B. We were pleased to hear at their presentation to the Town Council Planning & Highways Committee that the developers have heard this request and are planning to submit an amendment to this effect. Officers have also confirmed they are awaiting a viability report from the developers on the possibility of continued use of the Red Lion as a pub. If this is shown not to be possible other use for the community appears preferable to both sites remaining shuttered.

- **Car park fees:** Faringdon's individual needs have been recognised in proposed new parking fees for Vale-owned car parks. Last year, the Vale council effectively subsidised private car use with £450,000 of taxpayers' money by offering free town centre car parking and with tight finances and a climate emergency this is no longer deemed viable or justifiable. To rectify this, it is proposed that free parking be reduced to 1 hour in Abingdon and Wantage. However, Faringdon has been recognised as a special case with two hours free parking set to remain in Southampton St Car Park due to the risk of vehicles being displaced to the supermarkets. The proposal is due to be discussed at cabinet on 4th February.

- **Incomplete Fernham Fields Path:** We were notified by a local resident and the town council that a new path from Fernham Fields estate is a few metres short of connecting to Fernham Road causing residents to make an increasingly muddy cut through.

We've discovered that this has been completed by the developers as per the plan and the issue is that the other strip of land is owned by someone else. This means the district have no power to enforce the link.



It seems clear that it would be sensible to complete the connection and suggest the town council and county council liaise to find a solution with the landowner.

- **Elmside Refurbishment:** We have been following this up to get details of the works being undertaken before reopening in March. We hope to be able to give you a verbal update at the town council meeting, but would like to reassure you that we feel that further refurbishments are critical and have raised this at the highest level.
- **Civil Parking Enforcement:** Tickets have now started being issued in Faringdon to enforce on-street parking rules. As expected, there'll be some knock-on effects and we're listening to feedback from residents as it arises and asking for further data around the number of tickets issued in the town. We're looking forward to hearing the experience of a greater number of residents and any ideas they have when the town meeting is rescheduled.
- **Gloucester St Car Park:** The property issue that we reported previously needs to be resolved before new licensing actions can be taken, but officers are working to get this resolved as soon as possible and we are awaiting an update. Actions on the list for when we can move forward are:
 - Recycling & waste bins for town centre businesses
 - Pool hire car location
 - Lockable cycle storage
 - Safety railings outside Faringdon Junior School
- **Adoption of Folly View estate:** We are discussing with council colleagues what the options are to encourage Bloor to meet their obligations to either facilitate the adoption or conduct the necessary maintenance and health and safety works they are responsible for in the meantime. We will update you when possible. We are also looking into a similar issue on the Bellway Estate off the Coxwell Road where a children's play park remains unopened.
- **Folly Park car park:** As reported previously, we have money reserved to repair the council-owned half of the car park but Bloor Homes are unwilling to commit to repairing the half still under their control.
- **Funding for leisure returning to Faringdon:** The consultation for the reallocation of funds from the Wessex Leisure Centre has been slower going than we would have wished, and with several parishes involved it has been difficult to meet everyone's needs, but we are working within the council to push this forward so Faringdon's share of the money can be put to use.

District Update

[Joint Design Guide](#)

Our consultation has been launched on a draft Joint Design Guide that will provide guidance on how new developments can be designed and constructed to the highest quality and sustainability across the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils. It provides a series of steps and design principles that will be considered when deciding on all future planning applications – whether it's a resident looking to build an extension or a developer building a large housing site.

We think there are some really important changes in here including steps to meet our carbon targets such as aiming for net-zero carbon construction, use of solar technologies, better environmental standards of buildings and tree planting.

We're asking for the public's input on how the draft Joint Design Guide sets out what makes a high-quality development and how we ensure there are clear steps for developers and others to follow, so we ask everyone to help make it as good as possible.

The consultation runs until Tuesday 1st March 2022.

<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/urban-design/joint-design-guide-consultation/>

[Covid-19 business support](#)

The closing date for the Leisure and Hospitality Grant to support rate-paying businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors that have been affected by Omicron is 18th March. Businesses can be supported with a government grant of up to £6,000 each. To find out how businesses can apply, please visit the South & Vale Business Support (SVBS) website. There is also a further top-up round of the ARG Scheme after further funds were secured from central government; some businesses, like gyms, that had not been included in previous rounds may be able to apply, so it is worth checking out on the SVBS website – please note this is only a short round closing on the 9th February.

<https://www.svbs.co.uk>

[Climate Action Plan and Climate Action Fund](#)

The district council's new action plan to tackle its carbon emissions is due to be considered at cabinet on 4th February covering all areas of its services. A potential climate action fund of £50k for community groups will also be considered at the same time to help them get small projects going, so please keep an eye out for this soon.

[Trial for Simpler Neighbourhood Planning Process](#)

Recognising that neighbourhood plans can be hard work and time consuming the district council has successfully applied to be part of a government trial for a simpler process.

Given that members of the town council have expressed their concern about the complexity of the process and the town council has written to the district to enquire about master planning we had hoped it might be worth exploring for Faringdon, however the criteria includes only communities that don't already have neighbourhood plans in place. Nevertheless, we have used the opportunity to highlight Faringdon's desire within the council for a simple process that works.

Major Planning Developments

[Planning enforcement](#)

Recently we launched the new enforcement statement with a town and parish briefing explaining the differences we have made to the process. If you missed it there will be further information to explain the new statement going out to all town and parish councils in the near future. We still rely on reports from residents and have been following up on some of these lately, so please do let us know of any planning enforcement issues you are aware of in Faringdon. You can also direct residents to report matters directly on our website:

<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/planning-enforcement/>

[South of Park Road Phase 2 \(P21/V0984/RM\)](#)

We understand officers are close to making a recommendation on this application.

We still have a call in request to take this to committee if officers are minded to accept it as we were unhappy with the explanation as to how the applicants intend to address Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan Policy 4.7B to minimise energy consumption. We are currently in the process of confirming whether this can be tackled at this reserved matters stage for this the development.

[Fernham Road \(P21/V0576/O\)](#)

Revisions have been made to this application to re-route the pedestrian link to correctly link with the neighbouring Fernham Fields estate as requested.

We are continuing to ask questions as whether this could be widened to 3m to allow a future shared cycle link to be created as supported by the town council planning & highways committee at their last meeting.



[Fernham Road \(P21/V3041/FUL\)](#)

We have had feedback from officers that they are currently minded to reject this application due to the number of houses in a small plot. They are giving the applicants the opportunity to withdraw the application and consider if they want to submit an alternative which clearly shows how it would integrate with surrounding developments.

[Contact us](#)

District and County Surgeries will continue with a presence at the first Saturday Market of the month from 11.00am. As ever, if you have any questions or want to let us know about anything, we are very happy to take phone calls and emails from residents and town councillors at any time.

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Faringdon Ward, District Council Report, Feb 2022