

**FAIRFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN
TOWN CENTRE WORKSHOP: 14/12/2015**

FULL WORKSHOP REPORT

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Place Studio
19th December 2015

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place

INTRODUCTION

This workshop was requested by the Fairford Neighbourhood Plan (NDP) Steering Group as a first key event to consider the need for, scope of and initial evidence for policies in the NDP specifically about the town centre. Place Studio were commissioned to prepare, run and report on the workshop. Invitations to the Steering Group and others were managed by Sarah Basley and the list of those attending (and sending apologies) is in Appendix 1.

Vaughan Thomson and Katie Lea of Place Studio made a preliminary visit to Fairford town centre in advance of the workshop, which provided an opportunity to meet a few NDP people and get an initial briefing for the workshop. That briefing was used to develop the programme for the event.

The workshop took place on the evening of 14th December 2015 at the Community Centre. Vaughan Thompson was joined this time by Jeff Bishop to help run the session.

The programme (explained more fully in later sections) was as follows:

- Brief Introduction and scene-setting.
- Group work on 'a better town centre by 2025' and shared feedback.
- Group work on the necessary evidence for the above and initial thoughts on accessing that evidence.
- Some closing comments.

Everything in *italic text* (as here) is explanation and commentary; everything in plain text is exactly as noted by participants or during discussion on the night.

Separately to this full report, Vaughan and Jeff will be submitting their own reflections and thoughts for next stages.

A BETTER FAIRFORD TOWN CENTRE

This opening session focused on what the NDP might aim to achieve for the town centre over the next 10 years. Participants worked in four small groups, mixed up (as best as possible) according to what was known of their personal interests. The task was to work as a group to make notes using a brief, one example of which said:

- It is now the year 2025 and Fairford Town Centre is a lot better in every way.*
- Please now think about this better town centre from the perspective of a **family** living near the edge of town with two young children, one still needing a buggy to get around.*
- Imagine them experiencing the improved town centre: going in during the week, at weekends, summer, winter, perhaps evenings (if not with the kids!)*

Other groups were asked to do the same task but from the perspective of an **elderly couple**, **retailers** and **visitors**. Notes were taken and follow below and overleaf per group.

ELDERLY COUPLE	
Priority Actions	Lead Group
Accessible shop entrances	VS/HC
Accessibility within venues/shops (aisle sizes etc.)	VS
Parking	IE
Disabled people's parking	IE
Plenty of lowered kerbs esp. outside church	IE

Market Square shared space	IE/SF
Wide pavements through major thoroughfares	IE
Better lighting in Croft Alley (and everywhere)	IE
More places to sit and converse – cafes etc/	VS/HC
Benches	IE
Post office	VS
Pharmacy	VS
Hardware store	VS
Mobility scooter parking places	IE
Smooth walking surfaces	IE
Narrowed crossing places on wide roads (eg top of High street)	IE
More outside seating	VS/IE

RETAILERS	
Priority Action	Lead Group
Wheelchair/pushchair access	IE/SF
Parking	IE/SF
Carrying shopping	IE/SF
Stop turning shops into houses	H
Encourage retailers to come to Fairford	VS
Encourage Fairford residents to use local businesses	VS
Complimentary businesses so a "full shop" to be done in town	VS
Home deliveries	VS
Improved transport even if only within town	IE
Must retain key outlets – bank, chemist, dentist	VS/BE
More effective communications with customers including surrounding villages	VS
Advertise free parking	SCS
Choice and Quality – Info. about what is in Fairford (for residents and people travelling through)	VS
Something to bring people in apart from retail	VS
How to engage with working adults that are only in Fairford at weekends and evenings	VS
Cafe in Market Square + restaurant – outside/pavement life	SCS
Stronger sense of community so people want to come in to meet/chat	SCS
Local produce	SCS

VISITORS	
Priority Action	Lead Group
Culture.	
Cotswolds history	SCS
Country life	SCS
Cycling	SCS
The Lakes	SCS
Focal point	
Information centre	SF
Parking	SF
Ease of access	SF

Regional Events	
Air Tattoo/Sailing/Cycling	VS
Engagement in (wider) area South West/London/Midlands/The Lakes	VS
Shopping/Leisure – Fairford branded	VS/BE
Alliance partnerships	BE/IE

FAMILY WITH CHILDREN	
Priority Action	Lead Group
Dropped kerbs both sides of crossings	IE
No HGVs	IE
Less traffic	IE
Better lighting	IE
Crossings on A417	IE
Speed Restrictions	IE
Improved access - design of shops	VS
Tea/coffee shop in Market Square	VS
Easier Access to Walnut Tree field	SCS
Wider footpaths – better surfaces	IE
Better traffic management	IE

The annotations after each initiative relate to the NDP Working Groups. People were asked to suggest which current group would best lead on each initiative (accepting that many initiatives would link to several groups). The annotations refer to the following:

- IE: Infrastructure and Environment
- SF: Local Community Services and Facilities
- VS: Visiting and Shopping in Fairford
- BE: Business and Employment
- HC: Maintaining Heritage and Unique Character
- SCS: Social, Cultural and Spiritual
- H: Housing

Once the group work was complete, groups were asked to look at what others had done, note common themes, any possible differences or conflicts and perhaps anything particularly new or interesting. Some key points were then shared back and discussed. The common themes noted were:

- Traffic
- Accessibility
- The Market Square/Café
- The need to link to a wider area
- Character and distinctiveness

In the discussion, it was also noted that:

- All the Working Group themes were picked up through the annotations.
- This also included Housing because of the need to consider the town centre in the context of the whole town, including new housing developments.
- Some initiatives could potentially have 'ticked' almost all Working Group themes – potential priorities?

- Some initiatives could be thought of as quick wins, others would take longer and be more expensive.
- Tackling traffic would be difficult (especially through a NDP) given the approaches currently taken by County Highways and their lack of resources.
- One key group missed by the exercise was young people*.

(* Vaughan and Jeff mentioned an in-principle willingness to use some of Place Studio's annual commitment to working with young people to run some similar exercises with the secondary school.)

EVIDENCE NEEDED AND HOW TO COLLECT IT

The aim of the first part of the second group work session was to start to identify the information needed to convince the eventual NDP Examiner that the policies and projects in the NDP were based solidly on appropriate and robust evidence, not just what are often called 'wish lists'. In this second group work session, people allocated themselves into three groups that probably better reflected their personal interests. The groups addressed three aspects or initiatives that had emerged from stage 1. Vaughan and Jeff chose these to maximise diversity. The topics this time were:

- Character and Design:** highlighting, celebrating and enhancing the distinctive character of Fairford town centre.
- Shopping and Facilities:** retaining those there now and enhancing/adding to the provision.
- Accessibility:** all aspects of making the town centre more accessible to all.

Each group worked with the prepared grid (see over) to first of all list down (in the left hand column) all the evidence they thought might be needed for their topic. Once that was as complete as possible in the time, the groups then placed ticks in the other columns according to whether they thought that the evidence (or some of it) was available now, whether people in the local community could collect it, whether the Council might/should be able to provide it or whether outside consultant help might be needed. (The answer could be ticks in more than one column). The results, presented as in the original grids, follow below.

TOPIC: RETAIN/ENHANCE CENTRE SHOPPING AND FACILITIES

INITIATIVE AND EVIDENCE NEEDED	GOT NOW	COUNCIL	CONSULTANT
Reasons why people don't use existing commercial facilities? (Specific reasons for specific shops?)			
What other facilities (shops) are required?			
Global evidence on sectors on the rise – that might be applicable to Fairford?			
Local Plan retail policies (need to enable Fairford to become a 'Key Centre')? (Suggest in LP consultation?)	✓	✓	
'Portas' Review?	✓		
Visitors to similar towns (and look at their statistics/surveys)?			✓ (unpaid!)
Business rates – how calculated? – 'market rates' basis? (National Rates Valuation Office)		✓	

TOPIC: CHARACTER AND DESIGN

INITIATIVE AND EVIDENCE NEEDED	GOT NOW	COMMUNITY	COUNCIL	CONSULTANT
Conservation Area Character Appraisal		✓		
Update Listed Building list and add to it		✓		

Identify green spaces within the town – have any already been protected? – how? – how strong?	✓	✓		
Research historic value		✓		
Research hydraulic value				✓
Identify and protect historic infrastructure – Drove roads, markets, ponds, holding areas, enclosure roads/paths etc.)	✓	✓		
Review medieval town plan – conserve main features	✓	✓		
Heritage trails/boards, apps (QR codes), booklets	✓	✓	✓	
Ensure that all developments enhance the environment, eg. consistent, appropriate signage	✓		✓?	
What do people look at now?		✓		
Links with other local attractions, eg. Water Park?	✓		✓	

TOPIC: ACCESSIBILITY

INITIATIVE AND EVIDENCE NEEDED	GOT NOW	COMMUNITY	COUNCIL	CONSULTANT
Improved footpaths – width, routes, maintenance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Route survey (width) - Measure footfall on routes and demographics 	✓(all)			✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measure accidents (traffic, pedestrians etc.) - Survey numbers/types of facilities served by footways 				
<p>Public transport – better service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current use of public transport - Current routes in operation - Survey service facilities, ie. bus stops, shelters, lighting - Survey population – ‘would you use a bus if ...?’ - Survey population’s common destinations, eg. railway station, shops, theatre etc. 	✓	✓ ✓ ✓		
<p>Cycling – locking facilities, cycle paths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of bikes in use in centre - Survey cycle routes in area - Note publicised examples of Fairford as cycling destination - Note cycling accidents in recent years - Route between Fairford and Lechlade? 		✓ (all)		
<p>Accessibility for wheelchair/frame users to shops and facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prove feasibility of Plan - Survey numbers of disabled population - Demographic survey of elderly population 	(No time for more ticks!)			
<p>Improved lighting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accidents in poorly lit areas? - Survey dark spaces in town 				
<p>More lowered kerbs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey current crossing places and necessary routes for those with wheeled conveyances - Local views 				
<p>Car parking around town:</p>				

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- All areas- School: access from main entrance – make crossing and extend pavement				
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It was not really appropriate to share the results of this session (they are better studied here) although Jeff and Vaughan made some comments on the importance of the community undertaking as much of the evidence collection as possible (bringing in key local knowledge and saving consultant time/cost). They also gave some examples of how communities can do much of such work to an acceptable standard – eg. Character Assessment and Town Centre Healthchecks. They also handed round some examples of other successful NDPs that include policies about and for their town centres, illustrating what is possible and potentially adaptable to Fairford.

Their final comments were:

- Similar grids or lists should probably be prepared for other NDP topics not covered by the three chosen for the group work, and that this would usefully be done on issues other just the town centre.*
- It is probably too early to decide whether the NDP will need a completely separate section on the town centre but, as shown with the examples, there are definitely some important and relevant policies that can be produced.*

APPENDIX 1: WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

- Sarah Basley
- Margaret Bishop
- Malcolm Cutler
- Clive Elliott
- Richard Harrison
- Alison Hobson
- James Hunter (Traffic Consultant)
- Bharat Jashanmal
- Sue Middleton
- Gill Peachey
- Jennie Sandford (towards the end)
- Ian Summers
- Liz Summers
- Caroline Symcox

- Jeff Bishop: Place Studio
- Vaughan Thompson: Place Studio

Apologies: Andy Miles

