



FORDINGBRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Pre-Submission (Reg 14) Draft — October 2026

This is the Pre-Submission (Reg 14) Draft Plan

It does not represent final planning policy. All policy wording, supporting text, images, maps, and diagrams will be subject to revision through the neighbourhood plan preparation process, including further community consultation, review by NFDC and other statutory agencies, and independent examination.

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Introductory Note

This draft document is the pre-submission version of the Fordingbridge Neighbourhood Plan. Each planning policy is grounded in evidence gathered by community volunteers and professional advisers between January 2025 and September 2026.

The policies are organised under the following nine themes that reflect the priorities identified through community engagement:

1. Town Centre Vitality
2. Active Travel, Movement & Accessibility
3. Riverside Access & the Public Realm
4. Lighting & Dark Skies
5. Ecology & Nature Recovery
6. Heritage & Character
7. Climate Resilience, Water & Energy
8. Car Parking & Town Centre Accessibility
9. New Housing in Fordingbridge as a Community-Led Design Process

The themes are numbered for ease of reference only, in the order in which they were addressed through the community engagement process. This numbering does not represent a ranking of priority between themes; all nine are considered integral to the plan.

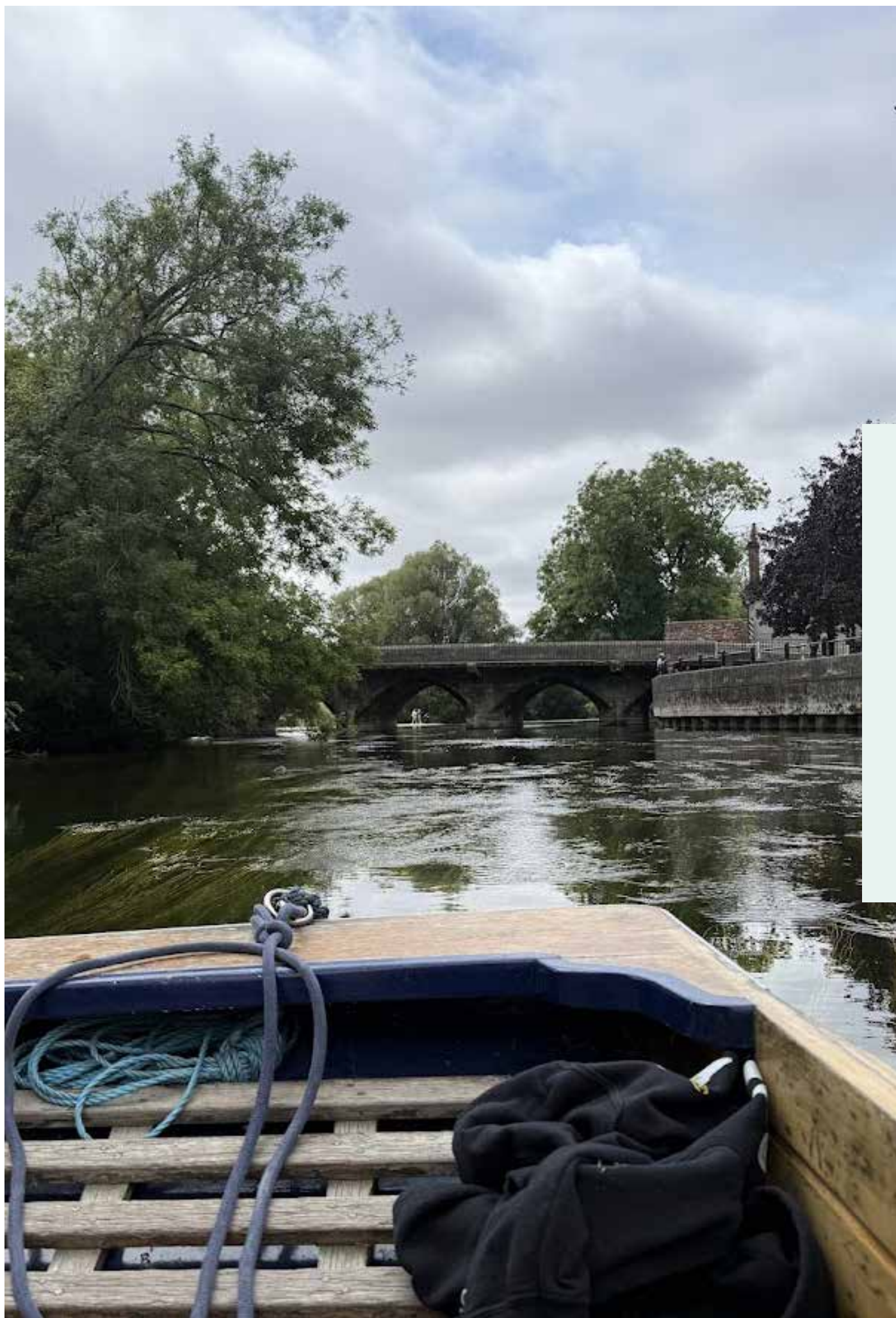
Supporting text around each policy explains the rationale, summarises the relevant evidence and cross-references the specific evidence task documents.

Footnote references in the supporting text correspond to the numbered evidence documents listed at the end of this draft.

Planning policies are introduced with **dark blue text**; supporting text follows immediately beneath or before. These are draft policies for discussion. They are intended to be read alongside the full evidence base and will be subject to revision as the plan is progressed, tested against national policy, reviewed by NFDC, and tested through formal public consultation before being submitted for independent examination.

This draft also incorporates policy statements drawn from appended technical evidence covering the following topics:

- Net-zero and low-carbon design in new residential development
- Water-source management and sustainable drainage
- Alignment with the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS, May 2025)
- Dark-sky compliant lighting standards from the Cranborne Chase AONB Good Practice Notes



How This Plan Was Made

Community Engagement and the Path to This Plan

Background

The Fordingbridge Neighbourhood Plan is not a document produced by professionals and handed to the community for approval. It is a plan that has grown, stage by stage, out of the voices, priorities and ideas of local people, from primary school children to long-standing residents, from local business owners to community group representatives. This section describes how the plan came to be, who was involved, and how their contributions have shaped the policies and proposals set out in the pages that follow.

The process has been led by Fordingbridge Town Council, supported by an active Steering Group of local volunteers, and facilitated by FERIA Urbanism, an urban design and planning consultancy. It began in early 2025 and has moved through three distinct phases of community engagement before arriving at this draft. Each phase built on the one before it: ideas generated by young people were tested with community representatives; the priorities of community representatives were explored in depth with the wider public; and the evidence gathered through that public engagement has been used to shape the policies in this plan.

How this plan was made

Phase 1 - March 2025

Listening to the Next Generation



Phase 2 - May 2025

Community Planning Event



Phase 3 - September 2025

Public Exhibition



All three photos © FERIA Urbanism

Phase One: Listening to the Next Generation (March 2025)

The process began, deliberately and meaningfully, with young people. In March 2025, the Steering Group worked with local schools, engaging students aged 8 to 18 in structured sessions about Fordingbridge: what they valued about the town, what frustrated them, and what they would change if they could. Three classrooms of students participated, representing a range of ages and perspectives.

This was not a token gesture. The decision to start with young people reflected a clear belief that a neighbourhood plan should be shaped by those who will live with its consequences longest. The ideas that emerged from the school sessions (about the river, about places to go and things to do, about safety on the streets, about the environment) were vivid, direct and often surprising.

One of the most memorable ideas, a zip-line across the River Avon, began as a student suggestion and became a playful but serious thread running through the subsequent engagement: a symbol of the community's desire for a new crossing connecting the town centre to the Recreation Ground.

The outputs of the school sessions were not set aside after Phase One. They were reviewed, analysed and used as the starting point for the material presented at the next stage of engagement. The origins of this neighbourhood plan can therefore be found, genuinely and traceably, in the views of the next generation.

Phase Two: A Community Planning Event (May 2025)

In May 2025, the Town Council and Steering Group hosted a Community Planning event attended by more than fifty representatives of local groups, organisations and interests. This event brought together people with specific knowledge of particular aspects of Fordingbridge life: those involved in local business, conservation, sport and recreation, ecology, heritage, transport, housing, health and the arts.

The event was structured as a working session rather than a presentation. Participants were asked to engage with the ideas and themes that had emerged from the school sessions, to test them against their own knowledge and experience of the town, and to identify the priorities that should drive the neighbourhood plan forward. The discussion was wide-ranging and at times challenging: areas of consensus emerged quickly, but so did areas of genuine tension and disagreement, which the process did not shy away from.

The outputs of the May event were a refined and tested set of priorities, grounded in both community values and specialist local knowledge and these formed the evidence base for the design and content of the September exhibition. By this point, the emerging themes of the plan were becoming clear: the town centre and its vitality; movement and safety on foot and by bike; access to and along the River Avon; the quality of the natural environment and the ecological importance of the river corridor; the character and heritage of the town; and the importance of managing growth in a way that genuinely reflects local need.

Phase Three: A Public Exhibition (September 2025)

In September 2025, the Steering Group and Town Council opened the process to the entire community through a public exhibition. Nearly 500 people attended, a remarkable level of engagement for a town of Fordingbridge's size, and a clear indication of the depth of local interest in the plan and in the future of the town.



The September 2025 exhibition © Feria Urbanism

The exhibition presented the emerging themes and priorities in a visual and accessible format across a series of display posters. Crucially, it also presented, for the first time, a spatial vision for the town centre: an urban design diagram bringing together the ideas, interventions and projects that the earlier phases had identified, showing how movement, public spaces, buildings and local activity could be better integrated.

The adjacent diagram illustrated opportunities to make the town centre more connected, welcoming and accessible e.g. how streets, footpaths and public spaces might work together to encourage social interaction and create a more attractive environment.

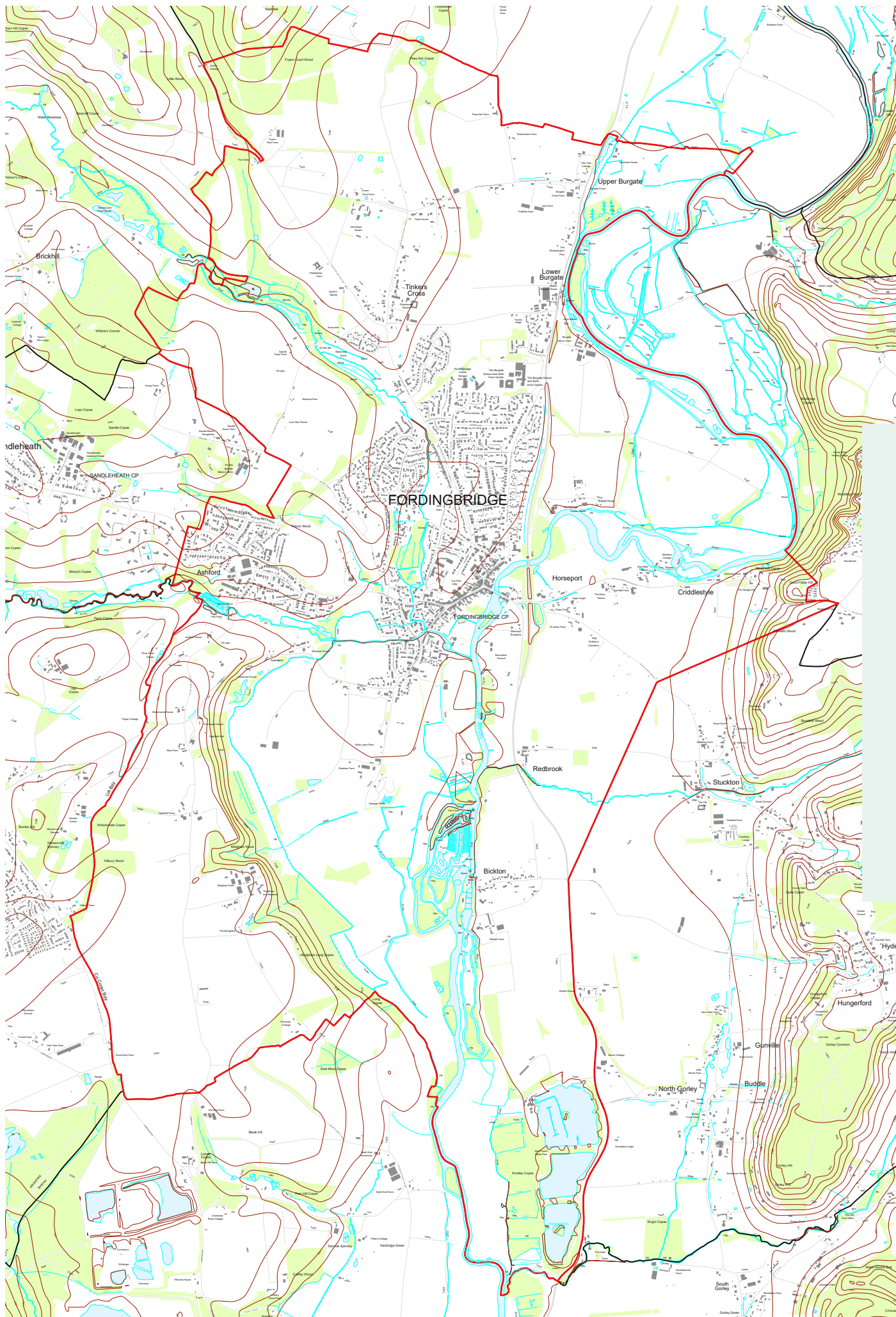
It also showed how these physical improvements could strengthen economic vitality, support local businesses, attract visitors and make the centre more appealing for future investment.

The response was striking. Thirty per cent of survey respondents gave the town centre vision their strong support, and a further 48 per cent gave it their general support. That is a mandate, not merely an indication of interest. It tells the Town Council and the Steering Group that the direction of travel set out in this plan reflects what the community wants, and that the detailed work of turning vision into policy is work worth doing.

The September exhibition also gave the Steering Group its clearest picture yet of the community's priorities across all the plan's themes. There was strong consensus around the protection and improvement of the town centre; the delivery of safe and attractive walking and cycling routes; the creation of a continuous riverside walk along the River Avon; the safeguarding of the town's heritage and natural character; and the importance of sustainability, biodiversity and climate resilience as principles running through all new development.



The September 2025 exhibition © Feria Urbanism



From Engagement to Evidence (Autumn 2025 to Summer 2026)

Following the September exhibition, the focus shifted from broad engagement to targeted evidence gathering. The Recommendations Report prepared by FERIA Urbanism in December 2025 set out a programme of 25 practical research tasks to be undertaken by Steering Group members and Town Council volunteers, designed to build the factual foundation needed to support the plan's emerging policies.

These tasks were deliberately designed to be accessible and participatory. Volunteers walked the town centre and mapped its uses, frontages, shopfront conditions and vacant properties. They counted pedestrians at key junctions. They mapped cycle parking and assessed its usefulness. They conducted evening walkabouts to assess lighting quality and safety. They surveyed access points to the river, documented barriers and deterrents, checked land ownership, and researched rights of way along the Avon corridor. They compiled case studies of successful town centre activation from comparable market towns. They investigated the ecological character of the riverside.

This body of volunteer-led evidence (supplemented by technical inputs from specialists in ecology, lighting, water management, energy and nature recovery) forms the evidence base for the policies in this plan. Where a policy makes a specific claim about conditions in the town, that claim is traceable to a specific research task. Where a policy identifies a priority location or intervention, that identification comes from systematic observation



Swimming in the River Avon © Fordingbridge Camera Club

and measurement, not assumption. The evidence task numbers cited in the supporting text throughout this document are the direct output of that volunteer effort.

The Recommendations Report also identified a clear separation between two parallel tracks of work. The first track (covering the town centre, the riverside, movement, ecology, lighting, heritage, climate resilience and related topics) could proceed on the basis of the community evidence gathered to date and does so in the policies set out in this plan. The second track (covering strategic housing allocations) necessarily depends on the timetable of the NFDC Local Plan review. The approach to new housing set out in Theme 9 of this plan reflects the most constructive response available in that context: establishing a clear community framework for shaping the design and delivery of new homes, ready to be activated as soon as the Local Plan process makes site-specific allocations possible.

Partnership with NFDC

Throughout the preparation of this plan, the Town Council and Steering Group have maintained an active dialogue with officers at New Forest District Council. A series of regular meetings between Town Council representatives and NFDC planning officers has established a constructive model for the relationship between the two documents: site selection and housing numbers will be determined at Local Plan level, while the Neighbourhood Plan focuses on the detailed design quality, community character and local distinctiveness of how that growth is delivered. This division has been received positively by NFDC officers and is reflected in the structure of this plan. The Town Council is committed to maintaining this partnership as the plan progresses. Draft policies will be shared informally with officers for comment, and their feedback has been incorporated into subsequent drafts of this document.



Tinker's Cross © Fordingbridge Camera Club

What This Plan Represents

This draft neighbourhood plan is the product of that cumulative process: the ideas of schoolchildren, the knowledge of community representatives, the priorities of nearly 500 local people, the systematic observation of dozens of volunteers, and the technical expertise of specialists working in fields from hydrology to dark-sky ecology. It represents what Fordingbridge thinks, knows and cares about.

This Is Not A Final Document

The Regulation 14 pre-submission consultation period (running over the six weeks between Monday 19 October and Monday 30 November 2026) invites responses from local residents, businesses, statutory consultees including Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency, and anyone else with an interest in the plan.

Those responses will be considered, recorded and, where appropriate, used to refine the plan before it is submitted for independent examination. But the foundations on which it rests – the community engagement, the volunteer evidence, the partnership with NFDC – are solid, and the direction it sets for Fordingbridge is one that the community has clearly and demonstrably chosen.

Vision Statement

"Fordingbridge will grow into a vibrant, inclusive town shaped by its heritage, natural beauty and resilient community. Located beside the New Forest with strong transport links, it will offer an exceptional quality of life for people of all ages. Thoughtful development will deliver affordable housing, sustainable infrastructure and creative reuse of historic buildings.

The High Street will become safer and more inviting, with improved pavements, accessible shops and a lively café culture.

Natural assets such as the River Avon and recreation grounds will be better connected to the town centre, encouraging outdoor activity and wellbeing.

Enhanced transport links, inclusive venues and new cultural spaces will create opportunities for connection and civic engagement. Local organisations will continue to thrive, supported by an active population and a strong sense of shared responsibility.

Environmental stewardship will guide planning, with biodiversity protection, climate resilience and innovative water management built into new projects. Fordingbridge will welcome newcomers while celebrating its history, offering independent businesses, creative retail and community events. As a gateway to the New Forest and a hub of connection, the town will embrace respectful growth and ensure opportunity and wellbeing for all who call it home."

This vision statement was developed by the local groups and organisations that attended the Community Planning event in May 2025.



Aims & Objectives

The following ten aims set out what the Fordingbridge Neighbourhood Plan is seeking to achieve. Each aim is linked to the policies through which it will be delivered. Together they give effect to the Vision Statement on page 12.



A1: A vital and distinctive town centre

To protect and strengthen Fordingbridge town centre as a thriving hub of independent traders, services and community life, resisting the loss of active ground-floor uses, greening the street environment and supporting “meanwhile” (temporary, interim) and creative activation of vacant units.

Policies: [FTC1](#), [FTC2](#), [FTC3](#), [FTC4](#), [FHC2](#)



A2: A safe, accessible and well-connected town

To improve conditions for pedestrians, cyclists and people with reduced mobility, reducing the dominance of heavy vehicles in the town centre, ensuring cycle parking is provided in the right places and making car parking more accessible and fairly priced for visitors and tourists.

Policies: [FAT1](#), [FAT2](#), [FPK1](#), [FNH1](#), [FNH2](#)



A3: A town that faces its river

To restore and enhance public access to the western bank of the River Avon from the town centre, and to make the river legible, welcoming and well-interpreted for residents and visitors, with a new pedestrian and cycle bridge connecting the town to the Recreation Ground.

Policies: [FRA1](#), [FRA2](#), [FRA3](#)



A4: Dark skies protected for people and wildlife

To ensure that new development and new lighting installations do not erode the dark sky quality of the area, protecting Fordingbridge’s position adjacent to the Cranborne Chase International Dark Sky Reserve and the New Forest National Park, and safeguarding the ecological and human health benefits of dark nights.

Policies: [FLS1](#), [FLS2](#), [FLS3](#)



A5: A thriving natural environment

To protect the River Avon SAC and its bankside habitats, ensure that all new development delivers genuine biodiversity net gain, and strengthen the network of green corridors, including alongside Sweatfords Water, that connect wildlife habitats across and through the town.

Policies: FEC1, FEC2, FEC4



A6: Nature recovery embedded in place

To align the Neighbourhood Plan with the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, directing development to support riparian buffer strips, urban green space improvements, wildlife-friendly travel corridors and street tree planting in line with the LNRS priorities for the Central Chalk Belt.

Policies: FEC3



A7: Rain managed where it falls

To break the cycle of sewer overflows and river pollution by requiring all new development to manage rainwater at source, separating it permanently from the foul sewer system and making beneficial use of it before returning any excess to the natural water cycle close to where it fell.

Policies: FCR1, FCR3



A8: Homes built for a changing climate

To ensure that new homes are built to the highest achievable standards of energy efficiency and low-carbon design, achieving Passivhaus or equivalent performance, designed to minimise overheating, incorporating renewable energy generation and eliminating reliance on fossil fuels for heating.

Policies: FCR2, FNH1, FNH2



A9: A high-quality designed and heritage-led environment

To ensure that all new development, including extensions, conversions, shopfronts and changes of use, responds positively to the distinctive character, materials and scale of Fordingbridge, preserving and enhancing the Conservation Area and the historic core.

Policies: FHC1, FTC3, FTC4, FNH1, FNH2



A10: A resilient, flood-aware and leisure-rich community

To protect existing and future residents from flood risk, to support the improvement of the Recreation Ground as a major community leisure destination, and to ensure that the River Avon and its setting are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

Policies: FCR1, FCR3, FRA3

16 - Fordingbridge Neighbourhood Plan

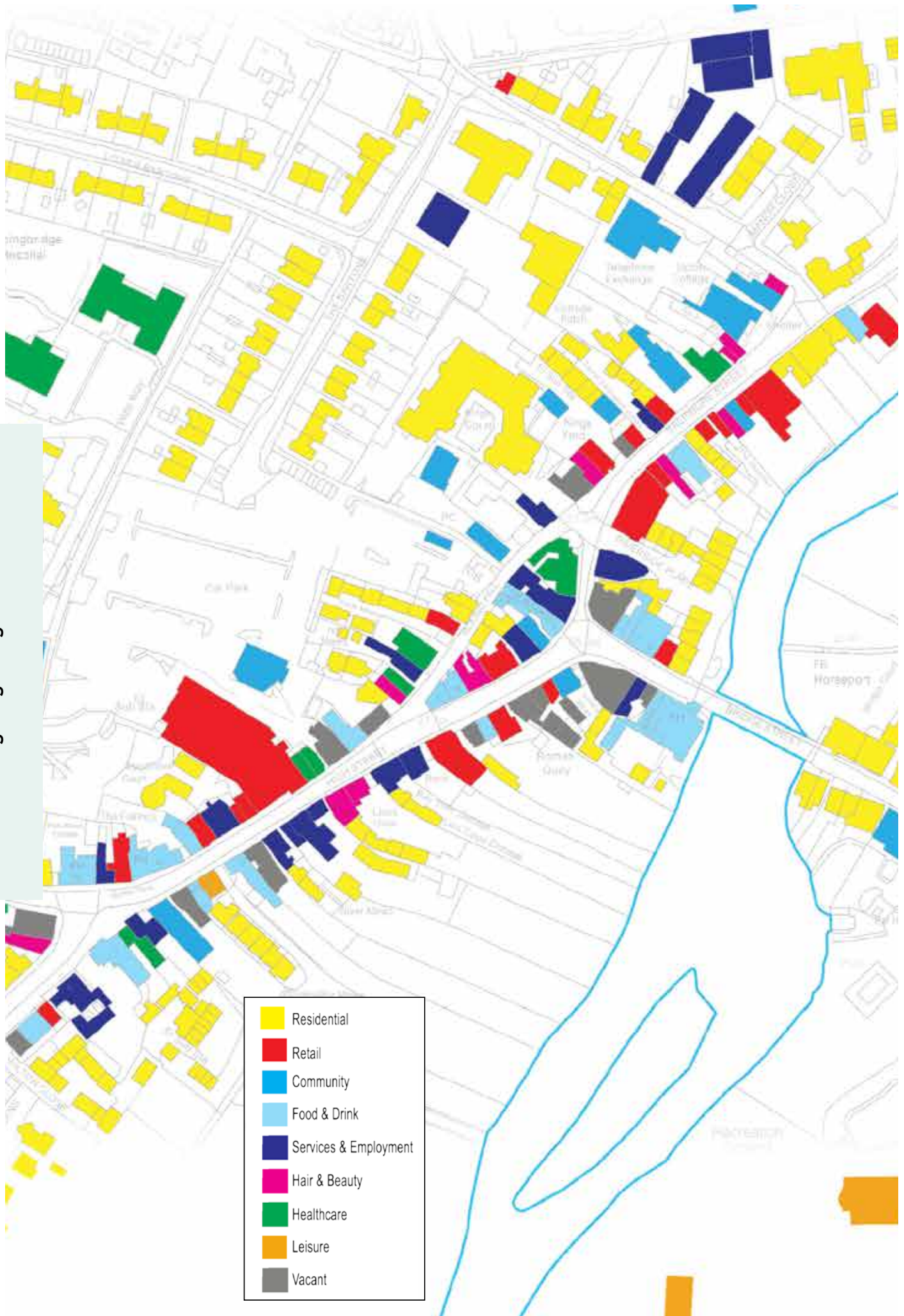


Diagram showing the results of the August 2025 ground floor land use survey. With thanks to Hannah Janes and Lydia McClay.

Theme 1: Town Centre Vitality

Background

Fordingbridge town centre is the social and economic heart of the community. A detailed town centre use audit, active frontage mapping, shopfront condition survey and vacancy survey carried out across Salisbury Street, High Street, Provost Street, Shaftesbury Street and Bridge Street provide a rich picture of the current state of the centre.

The surveys recorded over 140 ground-floor properties, identifying a diverse mix of retail, food and drink, professional services, hair and beauty, leisure and residential uses.

The vacancy survey¹ found 18 vacant ground-floor units in August 2025, falling to 11 by February 2026, a reduction of seven units in six months.



39% Reduction

Seven fewer vacant units between August 2025 and February 2026

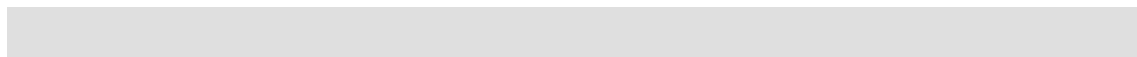
New occupiers included two food and drink venues, a retail shop, a tattoo studio and a dog groomer, with a further two units in active refurbishment. This trend is positive but fragile.

The town centre use audit and active frontage mapping² revealed a good level of activity across most of the High Street and Salisbury Street, with active window displays, clear entrances and an attractive range of independent traders.

High Street Vacancy Survey

August 2025

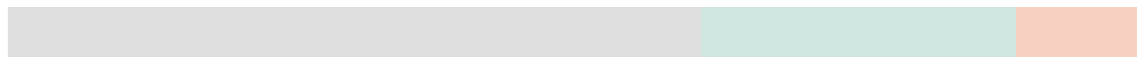
All 18 Units Vacant



Vacant (18)

February 2026

11 Units Vacant



Vacant (11) Occupied (5) Being refurbished (2)

However, several stretches of frontage are inactive, including gated residential entrances, service yards and blank side walls, which interrupt the pedestrian experience.

The shopfront condition survey² found that the majority of commercial frontages are in good or excellent condition, but a significant minority require attention: failing paintwork, rotten woodwork, signage that is out of keeping with the historic character of the town, and poorly maintained residential conversions that detract from the street scene.

Case study research into temporary uses³ identified a wide range of approaches used successfully in comparable market towns, including pop-up retail, temporary art galleries, food and artisan markets, community hubs in vacant buildings, shop-front grant schemes and high-street rental auction powers. Grant sources include the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Hampshire Cultural Trust Generate grants, and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation.

The evidence gathered to date has focused on the retail, food and drink and service offer of the High Street

and Salisbury Street. Community input also identifies a broader ambition: encouraging a wider base of economic activity in and around the town, including small independent industrial, manufacturing and service businesses, not solely shops on the High Street.

A more diverse local economy of this kind is seen as key to the town's continued independence, supporting local jobs rather than out-commuting, and helping the town centre remain resilient to changes in retail trends.

The attraction of a larger "anchor" retail or commercial occupier to a genuinely central location, rather than to the edge of town, has also been raised as a means of drawing footfall into, rather than away from, the town centre; this is identified here as a matter for further investigation rather than a settled policy position.

Following the closure of the town's bank branches, the case for a fuller banking hub facility able to handle business deposits and withdrawals, rather than paperwork only, has also been raised locally and is similarly flagged here for further investigation rather than as a committed proposal.



Fordingbridge town centre © FERIA Urbanism

Policy FTC1: Protecting and Diversifying Town Centre Uses

Development proposals within the Fordingbridge Town Centre boundary that would result in the loss of an active ground-floor commercial use to residential or non-commercial use will not be supported unless the applicant can demonstrate that:

- the unit has been actively and continuously marketed at a reasonable market rent for a minimum of 18 months without a viable occupier being secured; and
- the proposed alternative use would not result in a stretch of inactive frontage of more than two consecutive units; and
- the proposal would not prejudice the vitality or viability of the town centre.

Development that brings vacant or underused ground-floor units into active commercial use will be supported, including proposals for temporary, meanwhile and pop-up uses that complement the existing retail and service offer. Where a unit has been vacant for six months or more, proposals for temporary creative, cultural, community or food and drink uses will be given favourable consideration.

Policy FTC2: Active Frontages

Proposals for new development and changes of use on ground floor frontages within the defined town centre should maintain or enhance the active frontage of the street. Development will be supported where it:

- provides windows, displays and clearly defined entrances visible from the street;
- avoids blank walls, roller shutters or inactive service doors as the primary street-facing element;

- contributes to a varied, interesting and animated pedestrian environment.

Where development involves the conversion of a ground-floor commercial unit to residential use (where this is otherwise acceptable), the design should minimise the loss of active frontage, for example through the provision of transparent ground-floor elements or sympathetically designed garden enclosures.

Policy FTC3: Shopfront Design and Signage

New shopfronts, replacement shopfronts, external alterations to commercial premises, and signage within the Town Centre and Conservation Area should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the building and its setting. Proposals should:

- use materials, proportions and colours that are sympathetic to the age and character of the building;
- avoid fascia signs or signage that obscures original architectural features or extends above the ground floor;
- avoid the use of internally illuminated box signs or plastic fascias, with any signage lighting in accordance with general dark skies principles as per Policy FLS1;
- ensure that temporary signage, including boards, banners, and A-boards, does not dominate the street scene or impede pedestrian movement.

The Town Council will work with the local planning authority to produce a Shopfront Design Guide for Fordingbridge to support applicants in meeting this policy.

The town centre use audit and active frontage mapping² identified several stretches of the High Street and Salisbury Street where the pedestrian environment is uninspiring, interrupted by inactive frontages or dominated by traffic. Community input to the Neighbourhood Plan¹⁷ identifies extensive street tree and shrub planting as one of the most impactful and cost-effective interventions available to the town, one that would create a distinctive seasonal character, generate social media reach, attract tourists and provide meaningful competition with better-resourced neighbouring centres such as Ringwood, Romsey and Wimborne Minster.

The Hampshire LNRS (Measure U3)¹⁸ identifies street tree planting as a priority urban measure, delivering urban cooling, interception of surface water run-off, air quality improvement, support for wildlife corridors and improvements to mental health and wellbeing. Trees and planting also support the biodiversity net gain objectives of Policy FEC2 and the source-control drainage principles of Policy FCR1, where tree pits and planted containers can contribute to localised water management.

Shop blinds and awnings are identified in the community evidence¹⁹ as a low-cost, high impact means of animating frontages, providing shelter and giving the street a market character. Several comparable market towns use grant schemes and design guidance to encourage their uptake.

Policy FTC4: Public Realm Greening and Street Planting

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the greening of the High Street, Salisbury Street and Roundhill through tree planting, seasonal planting containers and public realm improvements. Proposals for public realm works in the town centre should:

- incorporate street trees in appropriate locations, using species suited to the local character and soil conditions, with native or wildlife-friendly species preferred;
- include seasonal planting in containers or planters to provide colour and interest throughout the year, using low-maintenance, pollinator-friendly species where possible;
- provide seating integrated with planting to create resting places for shoppers, visitors and older residents;
- be designed to complement the historic character of the Conservation Area and the setting of listed buildings.

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the development of a shop blinds and awnings grant scheme, working with the local planning authority, to encourage commercial premises in the town centre to install colourful retractable blinds that animate the street scene, provide shelter and contribute to the market character of the High Street, Roundhill and Salisbury Street.

Where planning permission or listed building consent is required for public realm works, proposals will be assessed against the design principles of Policy FHC1. The Town Council will seek to fund public realm greening through Community Infrastructure Levy receipts, s106 planning obligations, and Environmental Land Management scheme contributions where applicable.

Theme 2: Travel, Movement & Accessibility

Background

Pedestrian footfall surveys⁴ recorded between 126 and 190 pedestrians per hour at the mini roundabout at High Street/Bridge Street/Salisbury Road, confirming this junction as a critical pedestrian node that is poorly served in terms of crossing safety.

Crossing behaviour observations and a traffic survey⁵ revealed that LGV/HGV movements rose from approximately 37 per hour (2022) to 147 per hour (2026) during the morning peak. The observer noted that HGVs are among the most significant contributors to the unpleasant and unsafe shopping environment, with vehicles mounting kerbs and overhanging side mirrors posing a risk to pedestrians.

Specific danger spots identified include: the crossing between Caxtons and the Post Office; the pavement outside Woolley Wallis on Salisbury Street; the entrance to Roundhill; the crossing at the roundabout; the pavement after the bridge towards the Recreation Ground; and the stretch in front of the solicitors opposite the Co-Op.

A cycle parking survey⁶ carried out across four visits between January and March 2026 found 30 cycle stands at nine locations. Usage was almost universally nil, pointing either to very low levels of cycling or to cycle parking being provided in the wrong locations.



Car parking on Church Street © FERIA Urbanism

Policy FAT1: Pedestrian Safety and Crossing Points

The Neighbourhood Plan supports measures to improve pedestrian safety within the town centre, and in particular at the following locations identified through the evidence base:

- A — the crossing between the Post Office and Caxtons on Salisbury Street;
- B — the pavement outside Woolley Wallis, Salisbury Street;
- C — the entrance to Roundhill/Tesco from the High Street;
- D — the mini-roundabout junction at High Street/Bridge Street/Salisbury Road;
- E — the approaches to and from the bridge on the east side, including the route to the Recreation Ground;
- F — the junction of Shaftesbury Street/High Street/Provost Street.

Development proposals that generate pedestrian movement, or that affect the above locations, will be required to demonstrate that they do not create or worsen unsafe conditions for pedestrians, wheelchair users and people with pushchairs.

Where development would worsen conditions, appropriate mitigation, including pavement widening or narrowing (for example at the pavement outside Woolley & Wallis, Salisbury Street, where localised narrowing of the carriageway has been discussed as a means of improving pedestrian safety), kerb realignment, or new or improved crossing facilities, will be required.

The Town Council will work with Hampshire County Council to progress improvements at the locations listed above, including exploring the feasibility of traffic management measures to address the disproportionate volume of large goods vehicles in the town centre.

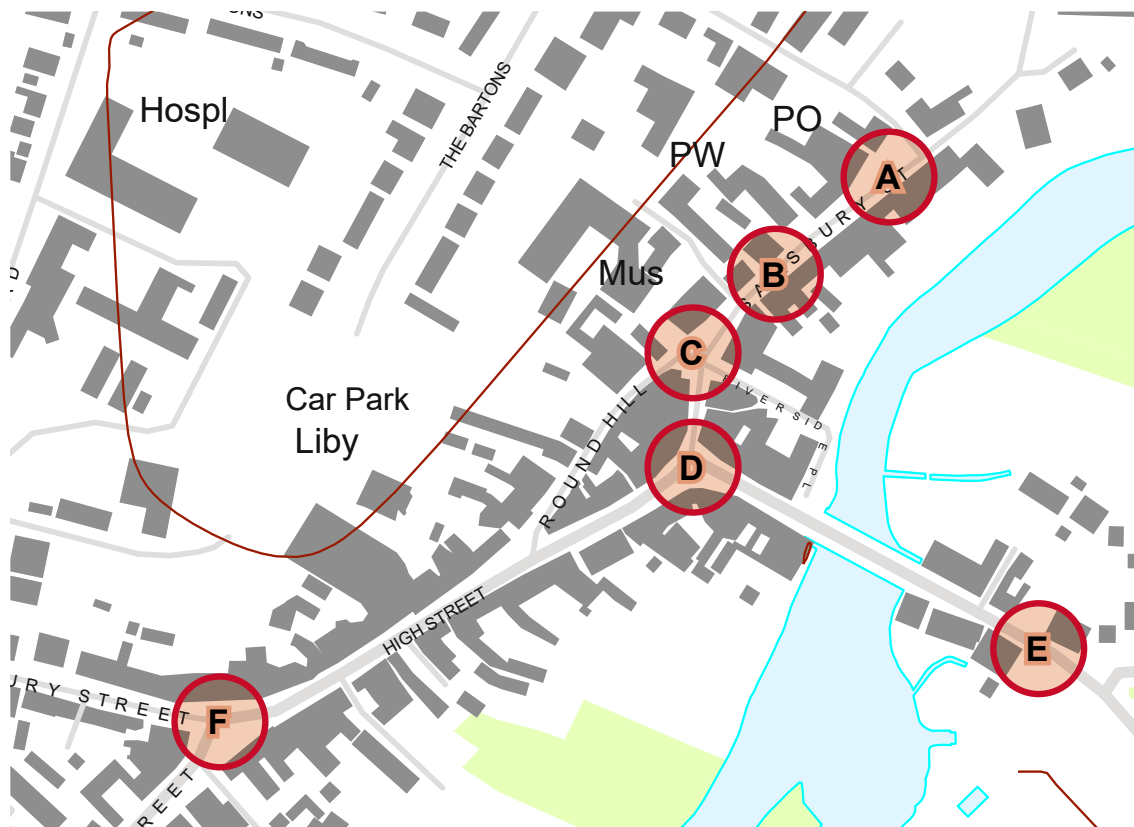
Policy FAT2: Cycle Parking

Development proposals in the town centre and at key destinations should make provision for secure and convenient cycle parking in accordance with Hampshire County Council Local Transport Plan standards. The Neighbourhood Plan also supports the provision and development of safe cycling routes into and through the town, recognising that cycle parking alone is not sufficient to encourage cycling as an everyday mode of travel. Proposals should:

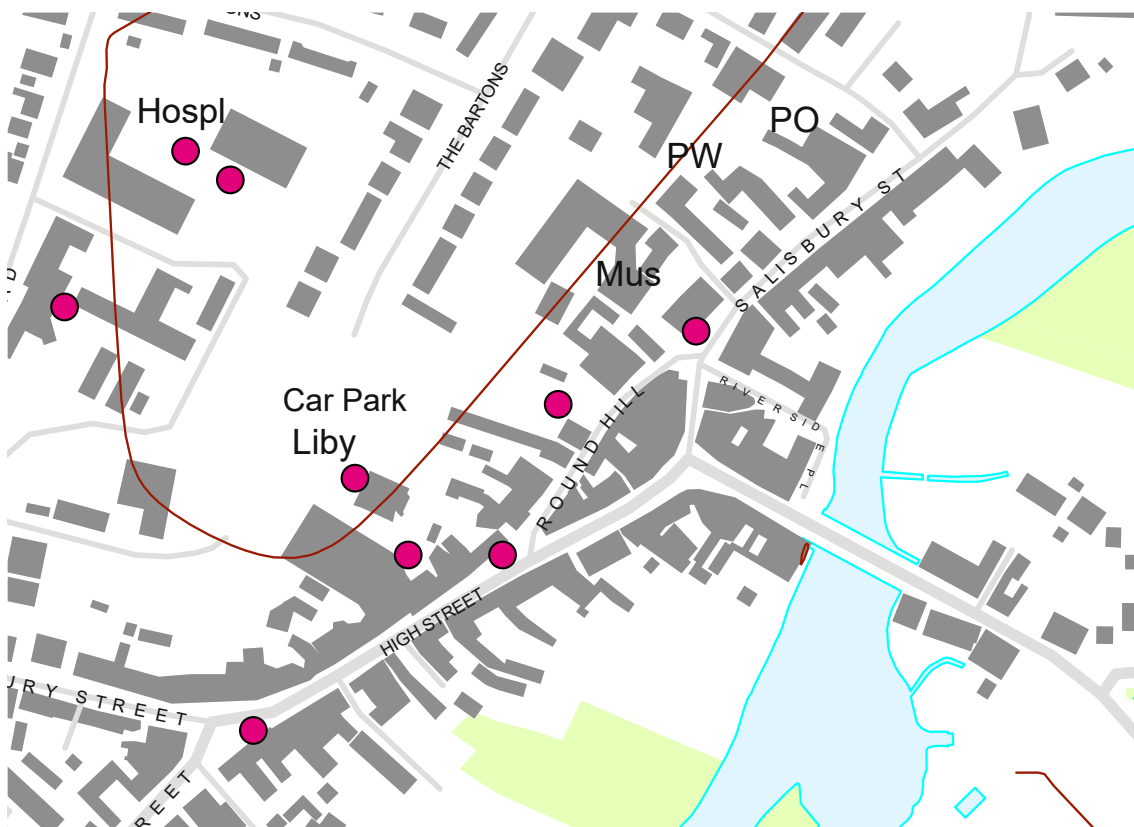
- locate cycle parking at prominent, visible and convenient positions close to main entrances;
- avoid locating cycle parking in positions that are hidden, poorly lit, or perceived as unsafe;
- provide covered cycle parking for long-stay uses, including employment and healthcare facilities.

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the provision of additional publicly accessible cycle stands at the following priority locations: NFDC Car Park, Ringwood Road; Fordingbridge Recreation Ground; Post Office, Salisbury Road; Avonway, Bartons Road; and St Mary's Church, Church Street.

The Town Council will work with the relevant landowners and highway authority to deliver these improvements.



The six locations (marked by the red spots) where pedestrian safety is an issue — see Policy FAT1.



The nine locations (marked by the pink dots) where cycle parking stands are currently located — see page 21.

Theme 3: Riverside Access & The Public Realm

Background

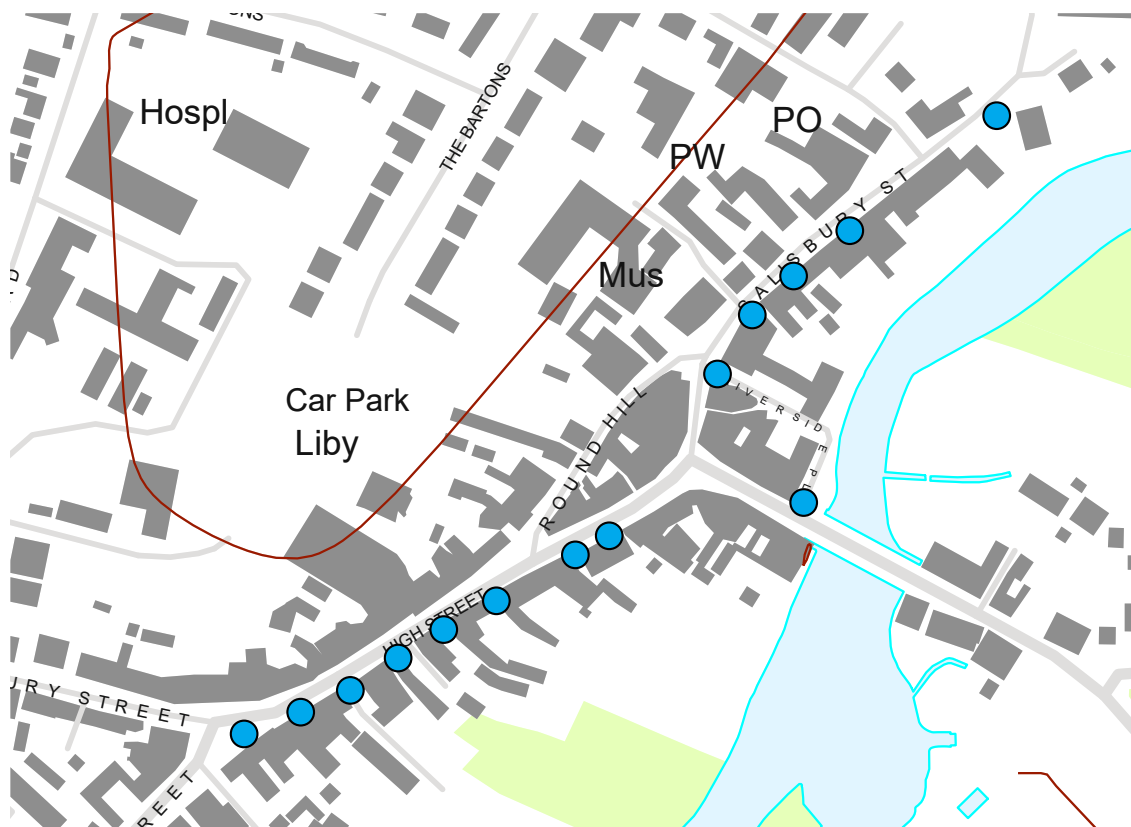
The quality of the public realm is a further important dimension of this theme, alongside the specific question of access to the river addressed below. English Heritage defines the public realm as relating to all parts of the built environment where the public has free access, encompassing streets, squares and other rights of way, whether in predominantly residential, commercial or civic use. Fordingbridge's town centre character has previously been documented in the Town Health Check (2007), the Town Design Statement (2008), the Conservation Area Appraisal (2001) and the accompanying Conservation Area Character Statement, and this evidence base has been revisited and supplemented through a dedicated public realm quality evidence task²¹.

The Conservation Area Appraisal describes the shape of the town centre as elongated to an exaggerated degree, with few streets running off the central High Street axis. This single linear route is made up of short lengths of street linking road junctions, at which the standard street width subtly widens to create a series of modest urban spaces. The Appraisal

identifies the treatment of these spaces, and of the individual buildings that look onto them, as critical to the appearance of the conservation area, particularly where those buildings form focal points in views into the spaces.

This elongated form also means that Fordingbridge town centre has no large green open space or communal area of its own. The single largest space, the public car park to the rear of the Co-op supermarket, incorporates trees and other vegetation but is visually dominated by its functional role and the presence of the supermarket's loading area. Its position and vehicular accesses mean that it is not directly visible from the High Street, although it continues to provide important pedestrian through-routes.

Building on an earlier Town Centre Audit (see below), a further walk-around of the town identified nine small areas which either contribute positively to the street scene of the High Street environment or are otherwise prominent, and which could be enhanced and supplemented as the plan progresses: the junction of Round Hill and Salisbury Road; the Roundhill entrance to the car park; the junction of



The 14 locations (marked by the blue dots) where access to the river from the town centre is possible. See Policy FRA1.



Blue diamond paviors (also called diamond-chequered or "chequer" paviors), here laid in a herringbone bond on Provost Street © FERIA Urbanism



One of the access points to the banks of the River Avon, south of High Street © FERIA Urbanism

Round Hill and the High Street; the Market Square on the High Street; Bridge Street adjacent to the Victoria Rooms; the area adjacent to Avonway at the Shaftesbury Street and Bartons Road junction; the forecourts to the Post Office buildings on Salisbury Street; and the public open space adjacent to the riverside and Bridge Street, including the setting of the Augustus John statue.

The same evidence work identified a series of twelve gateway or entrance views into and out of the wider town centre, shaped by the pattern of the roads and the frontages of the buildings that line them. These threshold views, at the principal approaches to the town, play a disproportionate role in forming a visitor's first and last impression of Fordingbridge, and are a material consideration for any future public realm, highways or development works within the town centre.

A Town Centre Audit undertaken by young people as part of community engagement in August 2025 provides a further, complementary perspective on the quality of the public realm. Positive features identified included the number of mature trees, several well-used positive spaces around the town hall, cinema and river crossing, the green expanse to the south of the centre, a well-used segregated footway and crossing point near the river, and the Recreation Ground as a valued multi-use space. Set against this, the audit also identified two locations where the street is difficult to cross, two stretches of narrow footway, and areas of poor-quality footway around the community cluster near the town hall and cinema. This balance of strengths and weaknesses in the existing public realm underpins Policy FRA2 below.

Three inter-related surveys⁷⁸⁹ investigated access to the west bank of the River Avon from the High Street and Salisbury Street, riverfront barriers and deterrents, land ownership, and defined rights of way. The surveys found that there are no formal designated public footpaths or bridleways on the west side that run alongside the river or give direct access from the town centre.

The access point survey identified 14 locations where the High Street and Salisbury Street provide proximity to the river, ranging from entirely public open space to private car parks with open access, narrow ginnels and locked gates. Most access points are actively discouraged by combinations of private signs, locked gates, fencing and the absence of any public signage.

Land ownership research¹⁰ identified a range of private owners for the parcels fronting the river on the High Street side. A riverside walk on the High Street side would need to be delivered through a combination of permissive access agreements, the creation of new permissive paths, and possibly a raised boardwalk to address seasonal flooding.

An interpretation and storytelling audit¹¹ found that the town's river is barely signposted. Of eleven signage locations surveyed, only one provides a comprehensive map of the town that includes the riverside. The Augustus John statue, which stands adjacent to the river at Bridge Street, has no interpretive information.

An ecology survey and drone footage¹² noted significant fallen wood and large woody debris in the river providing important habitat, and highlighted the need for surveys for water vole, otter and beaver prior to any planning applications within 10 metres of the riverbank.

Policy FRA1: Protecting and Enhancing Riverside Access

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the protection and enhancement of existing access points to the River Avon and the creation of new public or permissive access to the western riverbank from the town centre. Development proposals affecting land between the High Street, Salisbury Street and the River Avon should:

- not obstruct or diminish existing informal or permissive access points to the riverfront;
- where possible, incorporate or dedicate new permissive or public access to the riverfront;
- positively contribute to the creation of a connected riverside walking route on the western bank, and in particular to the priority access points at 1-3 Provost Street and 51 High Street (Cottage Loaf), and at 40 Salisbury Street.

Any development within 10 metres of the riverbank of the River Avon will be required to demonstrate that it does not adversely affect the River Avon Special Area of Conservation. Protected species surveys for water vole, otter and beaver will be required at the application stage where any riverbank works are proposed.

Policy FRA2: Wayfinding, Interpretation and Public Realm

Development proposals in the town centre that affect the public realm should make a positive contribution to the legibility and attractiveness of the route to the River Avon. The Neighbourhood Plan supports:

- the installation of consistent and high-quality wayfinding signage to

direct visitors from key arrival points, including the car park, bridge, High Street and Salisbury Street, to the river, the Recreation Ground, the Augustus John statue and the Tourist Information Centre;

- the provision of interpretive information at the Augustus John statue, currently located at Bridge Street, recognising that its location may change over the life of this plan;
- the integration of a town map and visitor information panel at or near the car park pay machines;
- any future raised boardwalk or riverside walk on the western bank, subject to the resolution of access and ecological requirements.



The statue of Augustus John — the Welsh painter who lived for many years in Fordingbridge — can be found near Bridge Street © Fordingbridge Camera Club

The Recreation Ground at the eastern end of the town centre is one of Fordingbridge's most significant community assets. It provides the town's primary public green space, sports pitches, children's play facilities and the only formal public access to the River Avon within the town. In 2024 the river at the Recreation Ground achieved bathing water designation, making the site of national as well as local significance.

Community input to the plan¹⁹ identifies the Recreation Ground as significantly underperforming its potential. The walkways connecting the various entrances, the play area, the riverside path and the commemorative garden are poorly surfaced and become inaccessible in wet conditions. The café kiosk provides a valued service but lacks capacity and covered seating. There is no covered sports and leisure facility in the town capable of hosting badminton, five-a-side football, netball, walking football, or community events and performances. Community consultation identified a new indoor sports and entertainment hall as one of the most widely requested facilities improvements in the town.

A new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Avon linking the town centre to the Recreation Ground would transform connectivity, making it accessible on foot and by bicycle without using the road bridge. This would be particularly significant for school-age children, older residents and visitors arriving at the car park. The bridge is also identified as a key enabler for a canoe and paddleboard hire facility proposed for the riverside near the Recreation Ground.

The ecology survey¹² notes that any works within or adjacent to the River Avon will need to demonstrate no adverse impact on the River Avon SAC and will require protected species surveys. These requirements apply to any riverside infrastructure including the proposed bridge.

Policy FRA3: Recreation Ground, Leisure Facilities and River Crossing

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the protection, improvement and enhancement of the Recreation Ground as the town's primary public leisure destination. Development or improvement proposals at or adjacent to the Recreation Ground will be supported where they:

- protect and do not reduce the area of publicly accessible open space within the Recreation Ground;
- improve the quality, accessibility and year-round usability of pedestrian routes through the site, including the provision of surfaced, accessible paths connecting the car park, play area, riverside path and commemorative garden, with sections raised or reinforced where necessary to maintain access during periods of flooding, and with night-time lighting upgraded, in accordance with Policy FLS1, to make the site accessible and safe to use after dark, addressing the inadequate lighting identified by the lighting survey;
- enhance the riverside environment and public access to the River Avon in accordance with the requirements of Policies FEC1 and FRA1;
- contribute to the ecological value of the site in accordance with Policy FEC2 and the Hampshire LNRS priorities for urban green space (Measure U1).

The Neighbourhood Plan supports in principle the following specific improvements, subject to detailed design, ecological assessment and funding:

- a new indoor sports and community hall at the western end of the Recreation Ground, designed to accommodate a range of sports, community events and performances;
- improvements to and enlargement of the riverside café and kiosk facility, with covered external seating, sited to avoid flood risk and accessible to users of the Recreation Ground and the proposed sports hall;
- athletics facilities in the currently underused area between the Sports Pavilion and the river, including a running circuit and field athletics provision;
- a canoe and paddleboard hire facility at the riverside, subject to ecological assessment and compliance with Policy FEC1;
- two tennis/netball courts and outdoor table tennis tables, sited near the skatepark and playground.

The Neighbourhood Plan strongly supports the provision of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the River Avon linking the town centre to the Recreation Ground. Any such bridge should:

- be designed to a high standard of quality and durability appropriate to its prominent setting within the Conservation Area and adjacent to the River Avon SAC;

- be accessible to wheelchair users, people with pushchairs and those with restricted mobility;
- be accompanied by an ecological assessment demonstrating no adverse effect on the integrity of the River Avon SAC, including protected species surveys for water vole, otter and beaver, and a lighting strategy compliant with Policies FLS1 and FLS2.

The Town Council will work with NFDC, Sport England, the National Lottery Community Fund, local business sponsors and other funding bodies to progress the delivery of the improvements identified above.



Children enjoy the cool water at the Recreation Ground on a hot day © Fordingbridge Camera Club

Theme 4:

Lighting, Dark Skies

& Biodiversity

Background

Fordingbridge is situated to the east of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR) and to the west of the New Forest National Park.¹³

Following the adoption of the International Dark-Sky Association's Values-Centred Outdoor Lighting policy in January 2021, the maximum permitted correlated colour temperature (CCT) for new external lighting in the Cranborne Chase IDSR is 2700K, with 2200K recommended. 3000K is reserved only for purposes where lower-temperature sources are unavailable.

A comprehensive street lighting survey¹³ was carried out across the main routes in the town in February and March 2026. The survey found wide variation in lighting quality. The best-performing streets are those lit by the WRTL Arc/Cosmo column (Salisbury Road), which direct light downward at 2700K. The most problematic fittings are the Metcraft Victoria lanterns (High Street, Church Street, Salisbury Street), which scatter light in all directions. Private lighting, including bulkhead lights, poorly aimed floodlights and festoon lighting, is identified as a significant source of inappropriate illumination.

New residential development at Augustus Park demonstrates a split: the street lights are

the best in the town, while developer-fitted house lights are poorly designed and highly intrusive.

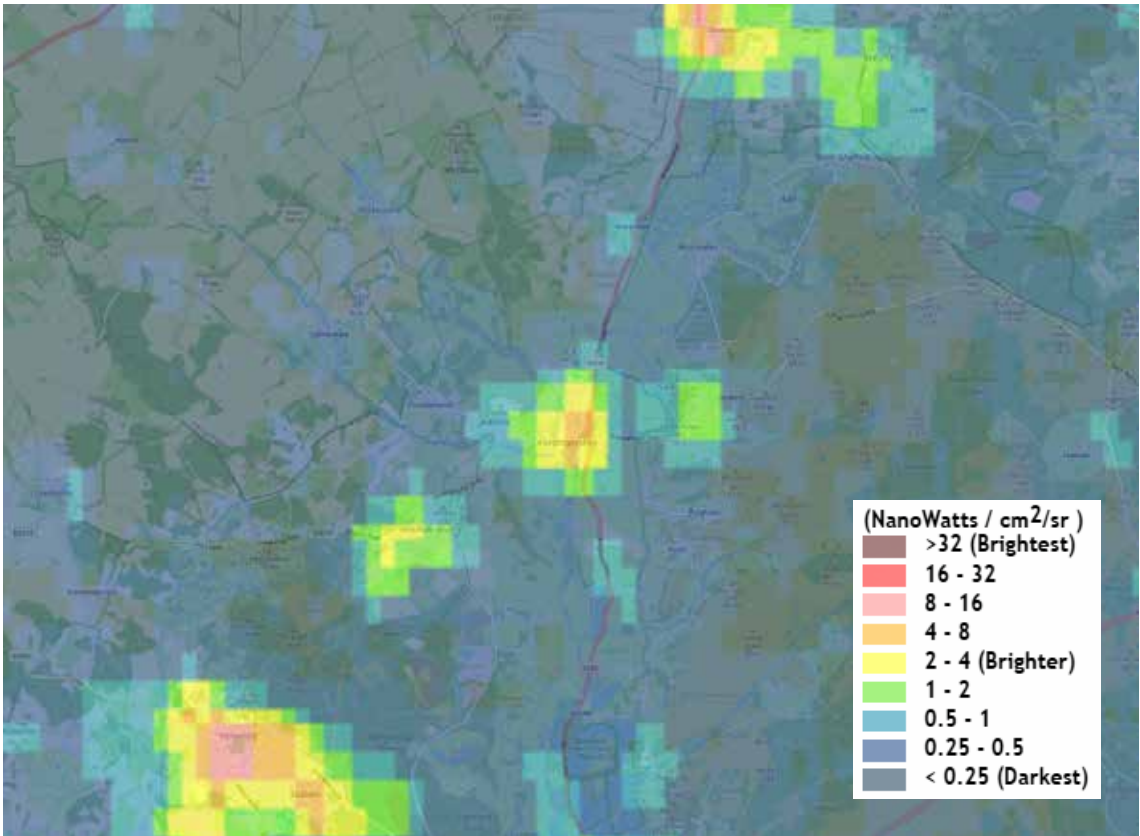
The Cranborne Chase AONB Good Practice Notes on External Lighting (Numbers 7a and 7b, including February 2022 Addendum)¹⁶ provide technical guidance for developers on compliant lighting fittings. Key requirements include: a maximum CCT of 2700K (2200K recommended) for all exterior fittings; fully shielded fittings with no direct upward light output where output exceeds 500 lumens; passive infra-red (PIR) switching with integrated daylight sensing; and the use of flat-glass asymmetric LED fittings for floodlights. Common 'bulkhead' style fittings are explicitly not permissible for new installations.

Two background research papers¹⁴¹⁵ document the broad ecological and human health consequences of artificial light at night (ALAN). At least 70% of UK fauna is partly or wholly nocturnal or crepuscular, and insect populations have declined by an estimated 68% in 30 years. The American Medical Association declared ALAN a human health hazard in 2016, linking blue-rich light at night to increased incidence of type 2 diabetes, hypertension and some cancers.

Poorly-shielded
Metcraft Victoria lanterns



Well-performing
WRTL Arc/Cosmo columns



Dark skies map with Fordingbridge in the centre. Source: <https://www.cpre.org.uk/light-pollution-dark-skies-map/>

Policy FLS1: Responsible Outdoor Lighting

Proposals for new external lighting, replacement lighting, or development that involves external lighting as part of the scheme, must demonstrate that the lighting is:

- Useful: lighting is provided only where and when it is needed, with a clearly identified functional purpose;
- Targeted: luminaires are fully shielded and aimed downward so that light falls only where it is needed, without lateral spill or upward sky glow;
- Low level: light output is no greater than necessary to achieve the functional purpose; over-lighting will not be supported;
- Controlled: timers, dimming controls or motion sensors are incorporated so that lighting is reduced or extinguished when not needed;
- Warm coloured: a correlated colour temperature (CCT) of 2700K or below (2200K preferred) is used in all external lighting.

Proposals for development adjacent to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs International Dark Sky Reserve, or within or adjacent to the New Forest National Park, will be required to demonstrate particular care in minimising sky glow and lateral light spill. A lighting design statement or lighting management plan will be required for all proposals that include external lighting.

Proposals for commercial or leisure uses that include festoon lighting, decorative lighting or illuminated signage should minimise glare and light scatter and should be designed to avoid adverse impact on neighbouring residential properties or wildlife habitats.

Policy FLS2: Lighting in New Residential Development

New residential development should incorporate external lighting that meets the ROLAN (Responsible Outdoor Lighting at Night) principles set out in Policy FLS1. In particular:

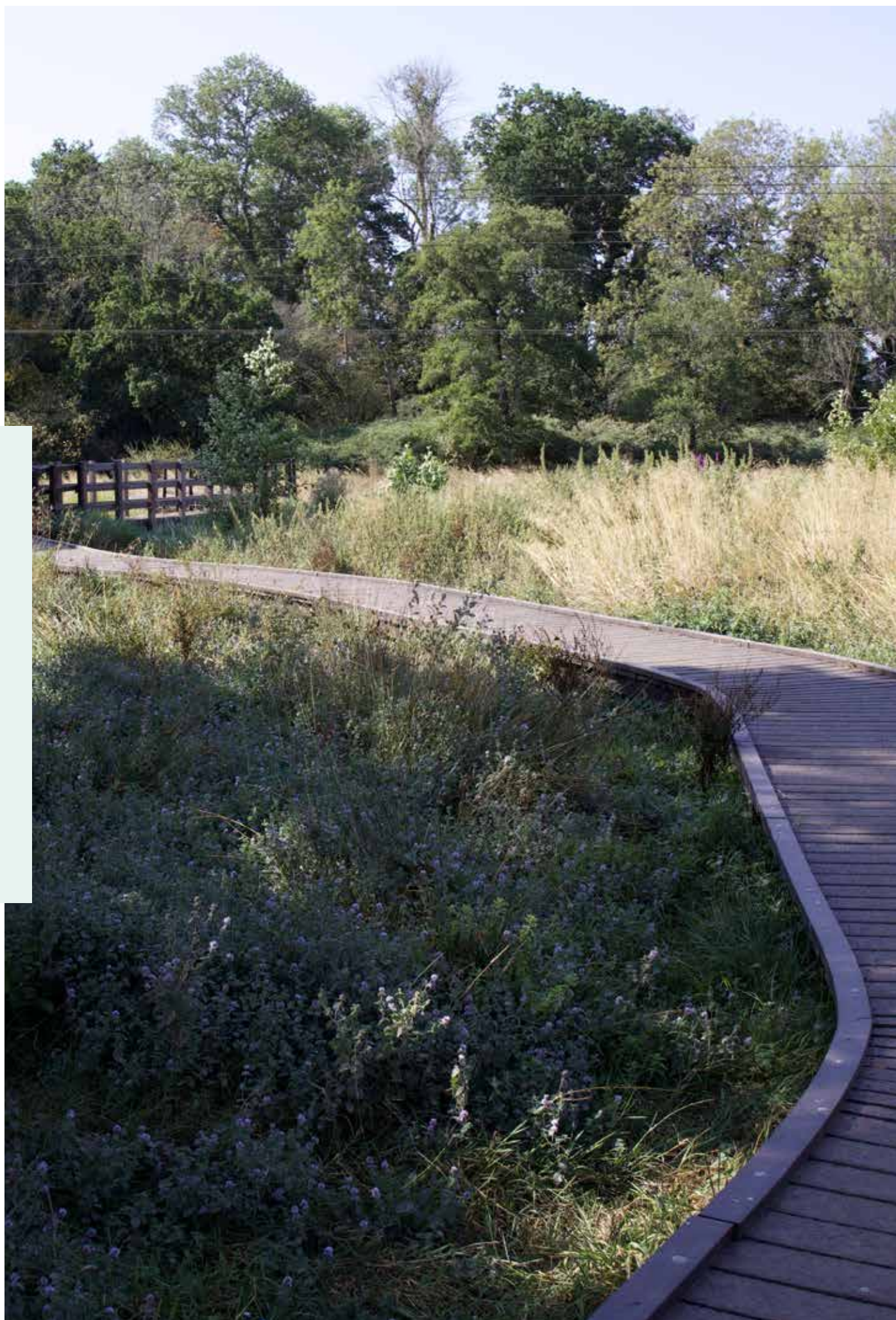
- developer-fitted external lights on dwellings should be warm-coloured (2700K or below), downward-directed and equipped with occupancy sensors or timers;
- street lighting in new residential development should meet or exceed the standard of the best current highway lighting in the town (as exemplified by the WRTL Arc/Cosmo luminaires on Salisbury Road), and should operate at 2700K or below;
- lighting in new development adjacent to habitats, watercourses or wildlife corridors should be designed to minimise impact on nocturnal ecology and should be the subject of a dark-sky impact assessment where the development is within 50 metres of a priority habitat;
- there must be no subsequent change to external lighting from that specified by the planning authority as part of any permission granted.

In accordance with the Cranborne Chase AONB Good Practice Notes (7a and 7b), common bulkhead-style fittings are not permissible for new installations. All exterior fittings with an output above 500 lumens must be fully shielded with no direct upward light output. Floodlight fittings must be of the flat-glass asymmetric type, mounted horizontally with a fixing arrangement incapable of being tilted upwards. All switching must incorporate PIR sensors with daylight sensing.

Roof lights emit light directly into the night sky, undermining the dark sky quality of the wider area and contributing to sky glow visible from the International Dark Sky Reserve. The Neighbourhood Plan community consultation¹³ and the community input document¹³ identify this as a specific concern, with the recommendation that no roof lights be installed as a condition of new housing in the area.

Policy FLS3: Roof Lights in New Development

In new residential development within or adjacent to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs International Dark Sky Reserve buffer zone, or within or adjacent to the New Forest National Park, roof lights and skylights that emit light directly upwards will not be supported. Where roof lights are proposed for amenity reasons in other locations, they must be equipped with blackout blinds or covers to prevent light emission at night, using automatic dusk-dawn opaque blinds operated by light sensors, with the blinds defaulting to the closed position in the event of a power failure.



The boardwalk at Tinker's Cross © Fordingbridge Camera Club

Theme 5: Ecology, Habitats & Green Infrastructure

Background

Drone footage and an initial ecology spot survey of the River Avon corridor¹² identified the river and its banks as a high-quality ecological asset. The River Avon is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the likely presence of water vole, otter and beaver, all legally protected species, has been confirmed. The adviser indicated that any works within 10 metres of the riverbank will require careful consideration of SAC features, and that species-specific surveys will be required at the point of any planning application.

The Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS, May 2025)¹⁷ designates the River Avon SAC as one of the Central Chalk Belt's 'crown jewel' sites and identifies key priorities for the area including: enhancement of chalk rivers and their floodplains as wildlife corridors; creation of riparian buffer strips; introduction of beaver to waterways and wetlands; and removal of non-native invasive species.

The LNRS identifies priority species present in or near Fordingbridge including otter, water vole, white-clawed crayfish, southern damselfly, salmonids,

eel, brook lamprey, bullhead, and a range of farmland birds and chalk grassland invertebrates.

The lighting surveys and research papers¹³¹⁴¹⁵ highlight the particular vulnerability of the River Avon corridor to artificial light at night. Light falling on water causes proliferation of cyanobacteria and diatoms, disrupts the microbial biodiversity of sediments, and can contribute to algal blooms. Bat foraging, moth and insect populations, and invertebrate communities in the river are all sensitive to lighting.



A view of the River Avon © Fordingbridge Camera Club

Policy FEC1: Protection of the River Avon Corridor

The River Avon and its bankside habitats form a nationally and internationally important ecological network. Development proposals within or adjacent to the River Avon corridor will be assessed against the need to protect and enhance the integrity of the River Avon Special Area of Conservation.

Development within 10 metres of the riverbank will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that:

- the proposal will not cause harm to the integrity or favourable conservation status of the SAC;
- appropriate protected species surveys (including water vole, otter and beaver) have been undertaken and any mitigation measures identified are incorporated into the scheme;
- lighting associated with the development meets the requirements of Policies FLS1 and FLS2, with particular attention to minimising sky glow, light spill onto the water surface, and disruption to bat foraging routes.

Development proposals that would result in the loss of large woody debris in the river channel will not be supported. Tree works within the river corridor that require planning permission will be required to include a bat roost suitability assessment.

Policy FEC2: Nature Recovery and Biodiversity Net Gain

All development that requires planning permission will be expected to deliver a biodiversity net gain. Development proposals should:

- retain and enhance existing habitats, including hedgerows, trees, and riverbank vegetation;
- incorporate features for wildlife, including bat and bird boxes integrated into the fabric of buildings, wildlife-friendly planting, and permeable surfaces;
- connect new habitat features to existing wildlife corridors, particularly the River Avon and its tributaries;
- address lighting as part of biodiversity net gain, ensuring that new external lighting does not sever dark wildlife corridors.

Proposals should be accompanied by a biodiversity assessment and management plan prepared by a suitably qualified independent ecologist.

The Hampshire LNRS (2025)¹⁷ identifies the Central Chalk Belt, including the River Avon SAC and its corridor through Fordingbridge, as a priority area for nature recovery. Neighbourhood plans are identified by the LNRS as a key mechanism for planning and delivering the National Nature Recovery Network. The Fordingbridge community consultation also identifies the Hampshire LNRS as a document whose principles should be adopted by the Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy FEC3: Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Alignment

Development proposals should contribute positively to the priorities identified in the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (May 2025) as they apply to the Fordingbridge area. In particular:

- development on land adjacent to the River Avon or Sweatfords Water should incorporate or contribute to the creation and management of riparian buffer strips (LNRS Measure R1) to protect watercourses from nutrient and sediment run-off and to improve habitat connectivity; such buffer strips should be managed as dog-free areas, given the toxicity of dog faeces and urine to wildlife and their tendency to enrich and degrade sensitive riparian habitats;
- new development should contribute to improving nature in public and urban spaces, including wildflower planting, native tree and shrub planting, and reduced mowing regimes on open spaces (LNRS Measure U1);
- proposals that affect road verges or travel routes should improve biodiversity on those corridors, including through the incorporation of SuDS features, native seed mixes and planting that reflects the character of the area (LNRS Measures U4 and U5);
- larger development proposals should assess opportunities to plant street trees to reduce run-off, provide urban cooling, and support wildlife corridors (LNRS Measure U3).

The Town Council will use the Hampshire LNRS and its accompanying maps to inform Neighbourhood Plan delivery, including identifying locations for biodiversity net gain offsetting and guiding applications for Environmental

Land Management scheme funding by local landowners and farmers in the Fordingbridge area.

Policy FEC4: Green Corridors and Sweatfords Water

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the creation and strengthening of a green corridor running through the town alongside Sweatfords Water, connecting the River Avon to the outer edges of the town to ensure safe movement of animals and birds. Development proposals that affect land within or adjacent to Sweatfords Water or its margins should:

- protect the ecological function of the watercourse and its bankside vegetation;
- incorporate or contribute to the extension of the green corridor, including through the creation of wildflower margins, native planting, and habitat features for invertebrates, birds and bats;
- avoid any net increase in impermeable surface within the Sweatfords Water catchment without compensatory SuDS measures, in accordance with the source-control water management principles of Policy FCR1, in order to protect the downstream capacity of the watercourse and the River Avon SAC;
- include swift bricks, bat boxes and other integrated habitat features in accordance with Policy FEC2.

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the development of a green corridor network plan for Fordingbridge, prepared jointly by the Town Council, Fordingbridge Greener Living, and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, to provide a spatial framework for habitat creation and enhancement across the town.



The old hospital tower © Fordingbridge Camera Club

Theme 6: Heritage & Character

Background

The town centre use audit and shopfront survey² demonstrate that Fordingbridge retains a distinctive character built around independent traders, historic buildings, a medieval bridge and a riverside setting. This character is the town's greatest asset, and is vulnerable to incremental erosion through poor-quality signage, inappropriate shopfront alterations, the proliferation of inactive frontages, and the cumulative impact of traffic.

A schedule of the many non-designated heritage assets identified through community research, ranging from historic shopfronts and public houses to former civic and religious buildings, is included at Appendix A: Heritage Assets²², and forms part of the evidence base for this theme and for Policy FHC1 below.

The townscape includes a number of specific public realm features that are either underperforming or poorly connected to the wider visitor experience. The Augustus John statue at Bridge Street is an asset of national significance, yet it is without interpretive information.

The museum and information office are set back from the main pedestrian flows with limited visibility.

The temporary use case study research³ identifies a range of approaches that have successfully animated high streets in comparable towns, including Britain in Bloom, monthly food and artisan markets, seasonal pop-up events, and grant schemes to improve shop fronts.

Fordingbridge already has the infrastructure at The George public house for riverside events, and a track record of successful pop-up gallery use. Direct engagement with The George regarding the use of their terrace infrastructure has not yet taken place and will be an important next step in progressing this opportunity, recognising that the business has been sensitive to similar proposals in the past. Community input¹⁹ further identifies a Saturday specialist market on Roundhill, a managed crafts emporium in a vacant High Street unit, and a rebranded and relocated museum as priority heritage and cultural investments.

Policy FHC1: Design Quality and Heritage

Development proposals in Fordingbridge should demonstrate a high standard of design that respects the character, scale, materials and historic grain of the town. Proposals should:

- respond positively to the distinctive character of the street or area in which they are located, drawing on the use of traditional materials, roof forms, window proportions and details characteristic of the local vernacular;
- preserve or enhance the setting of listed buildings, the Conservation Area, and locally distinctive unlisted buildings identified through the town centre audit;
- make a positive contribution to the quality of the public realm, including street furniture, paving, planting and lighting;
- avoid the use of materials, colours, signage or fittings that are out of character with the historic setting.

Policy FHC2: Temporary Activation and Community Uses

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the activation of town centre spaces through temporary, meanwhile and community uses. Planning applications for temporary change of use or temporary structures for markets, cultural events, pop-up retail, food and drink, art installations, or community gatherings will be viewed favourably where they:

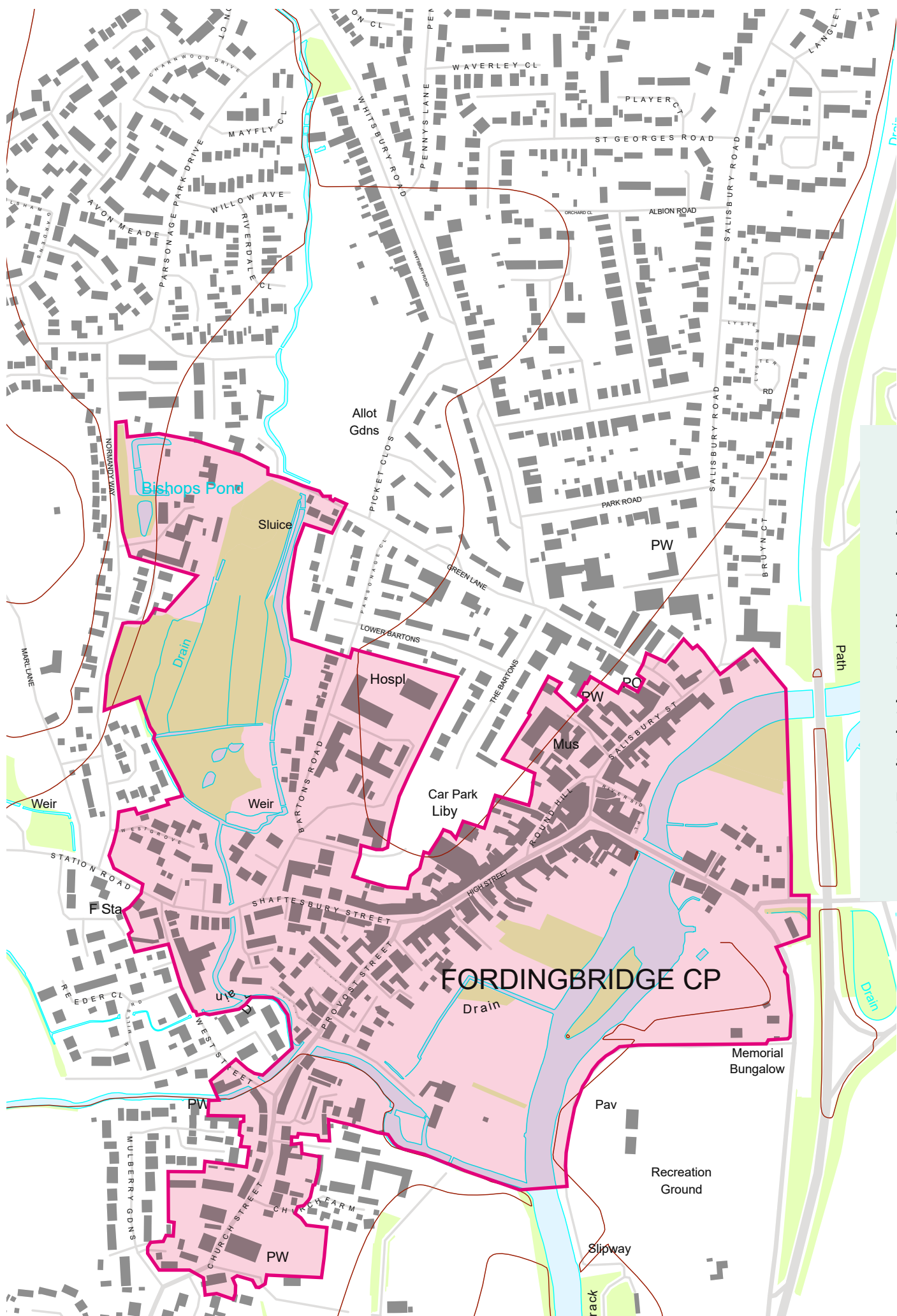
- do not cause significant harm to neighbouring amenity;
- do not result in permanent loss of open space or highway;
- are time-limited and reversible.

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the following specific opportunities identified through the evidence base:

- the use of The George on the river for riverside pop-up markets and events, utilising the existing terrace infrastructure;
- the continued and expanded use of vacant High Street units for temporary art gallery and creative spaces, building on the established precedent of collaboration with Fordingbridge Art Club;
- the development of a regular food, artisan or farmers' market in the town centre, complementing existing retail outlets rather than competing directly with them (for example by favouring stalls offering local game, fish or organic produce over lines already well served by existing butchers or greengrocers), including the use of a pedestrianised Roundhill and the car park entrance area, drawing on best practice from comparable market towns including Christchurch, Ringwood, Blandford Forum and Bridport.



The footway alongside the road bridge © FERIA Urbanism



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Theme 7: Climate Resilience, Water & Energy

Background

Fordingbridge sits alongside the River Avon, an internationally important chalk stream. The town has a well-documented and serious water management challenge. Groundwater levels are close to the surface throughout the town, meaning that in periods of heavy or persistent rainfall there is very limited absorption capacity. In 2024 the town attained bathing water status at the Recreation Ground; in both 2024 and 2025 the water classification was poor, reflecting the pressure of sewer overflow events on the river.

An expert op-ed on water management¹⁸ makes the case clearly: England does not have a water shortage; it has a rainwater management problem. On average, enough rain falls on every roof in England to meet all a household's non-potable water needs. Yet rainwater is routinely discharged into combined sewer systems, mixing with sewage and generating the overflows that pollute the River Avon. The solution is source control: capturing rain locally and returning any excess to the environment close to where it fell, without ever mixing it with sewage. Done at scale, this approach simultaneously tackles water scarcity, reduces flooding, reduces storm overflows, and cuts carbon.

The NFDC Local Plan process is currently exploring potential new housing growth areas, some of which include land to the south of the town and on the Avon floodplain. The community input document¹⁹ sets out that any housing built on this land will put immense pressure on the already overstretched water system, and that independent hydrological surveys should be required before any designation proceeds.

The draft green policies document²⁰ prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan evidence base draws on the Future Homes Standard and comparable neighbourhood plans to set out a fabric-first, low-carbon approach to new residential development. Evidence from neighbourhood plans in Exeter St James, Norwich, Lancaster South, Stroud and parts of Bristol demonstrates that Passivhaus-standard and equivalent low-carbon policies have been found sound at examination where they are clearly justified and aligned with national policy.

The River Avon SAC has poor bathing water status at Fordingbridge, attributed in part to sewer overflow events caused by groundwater ingress into the Victorian sewer system and by the routine connection of rainwater drainage to the combined sewer.

Expert evidence¹⁸ demonstrates that source-control rainwater management is the most effective and lowest-carbon means of reducing flood risk, storm overflows and water consumption simultaneously.

The community evidence document¹⁹ records specific concern about groundwater ingress into drainage connections in new developments.

Policy FCR1: Rainwater Source Control and Sustainable Drainage

All new development in Fordingbridge will be expected to adopt a source-control approach to rainwater management, treating rain as a local resource to be captured and beneficially used, and ensuring that any excess is returned to the natural water cycle as close as possible to where it fell, without entering the foul sewer system.

Development proposals must demonstrate that:

- surface water drainage is fully separated from the foul sewer, with no rainwater entering the combined sewer system;
- each dwelling incorporates a rainwater harvesting tank of adequate capacity for non-potable uses including toilet flushing and garden irrigation, with a target water consumption of 100 litres per person per day or lower;
- green roofs, permeable surfaces, rain gardens, swales, soakaways or other property-level or site-level SuDS measures are incorporated to slow surface water run-off;
- in larger developments, shared rainwater harvesting or greywater recycling systems should be considered where technically feasible;
- SuDS basins and attenuation features are designed to achieve run-off rates no greater than the equivalent greenfield rate for a 1 in 100 year rainfall event (with climate change allowance), to protect Sweatfords Water and the River Avon SAC from increased flood and pollution risk downstream.



Bridge Street, as seen from the north bank of the River Avon © FERIA Urbanism

Policy FCR1: Rainwater Source Control and Sustainable Drainage (Continued)

All drainage connections to Wessex Water infrastructure must be signed off only after testing under high groundwater conditions has demonstrated that the connection is watertight and free from groundwater ingress. This may require a testing period of greater than 12 months given the specific groundwater conditions in Fordingbridge.

This policy aligns with the UK's statutory commitment to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and with the NPPF requirement for development to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. The community evidence¹⁹ and the draft green policies document²⁰ both identify Passivhaus or equivalent standards as the appropriate benchmark for new housing in Fordingbridge. The Future Homes Standard will require new homes to be zero-carbon ready and fossil-fuel-free; this policy anticipates and aligns with that direction of travel.

Policy FCR2: Net-Zero and Low-Carbon Design in New Residential Development

New residential development will be expected to demonstrate high standards of energy efficiency and low-carbon design.

Proposals should:

- adopt a fabric-first approach, incorporating high levels of insulation, excellent airtightness and construction methods that minimise thermal bridging;
- achieve the Passivhaus Classic, Plus or Premium standard, or demonstrate equivalent performance through an independently verified energy

strategy showing zero-carbon readiness, low space-heating demand, and the capacity to integrate future low-carbon technologies without significant retrofit;

- incorporate on-site renewable or low-carbon energy generation, which may include solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, solar thermal systems, air-source or ground-source heat pumps, and battery storage;
- orient principal elevations and living spaces within 30 degrees of south where practicable, with roof pitches of 30–40 degrees designed to maximise solar gain, and building massing arranged to avoid overshadowing of solar panels or south-facing elevations; orientation and fenestration should also take into account the ease of summer cooling, avoiding excessive solar gain and overheating through appropriate shading, glazing ratios and passive ventilation;
- avoid fossil-fuel heating systems; all new homes should be heated without gas or oil boilers.

For major residential developments, applicants must assess the feasibility of shared or district-scale low-carbon heat solutions, including ground-source district heating loops, shared borehole fields, ambient temperature heat networks and communal heat pumps. Where feasible, such systems should be designed to allow future expansion.

Renewable and low-carbon technologies must be sensitively integrated into building design and the wider landscape to ensure that local character, key views and heritage assets are conserved and that the setting of the Conservation Area and listed buildings is not harmed.

The community evidence¹⁹ sets out the specific risk to new housing proposed on the Avon floodplain, noting that houses built in this area may not be insurable and that the additional impermeable surface and drainage load will put immense pressure on the already overstretched water system.

Policy FCR3: New Development on Flood Risk Land

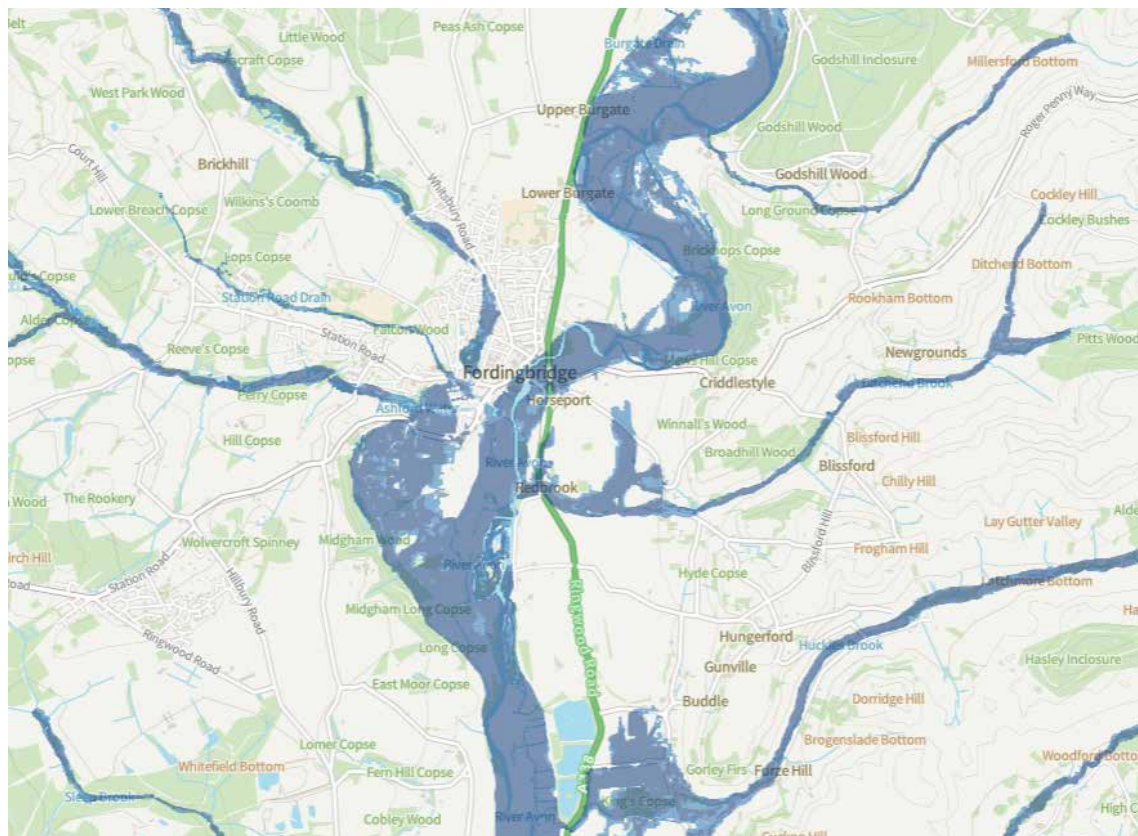
Development proposals on land within or adjacent to the Flood Zone 2 or Flood Zone 3 boundaries, or on land that drains to Sweatfords Water or the River Avon within the Fordingbridge area, must be accompanied by:

- an independent hydrological assessment demonstrating the likely impact of the development on surface water run-off rates and volumes, groundwater levels, and flood risk to

downstream properties and to the River Avon SAC;

- evidence that the proposed development will not increase flood risk to existing properties or to the ecological integrity of the River Avon SAC during a 1 in 100 year flood event with a 40% climate change allowance;
- a drainage strategy incorporating the source-control measures required by Policy FCR1;
- a site-specific assessment of long-term flood insurability for the proposed dwellings.

Development on land within Flood Zone 3, or on land identified as having a high probability of groundwater flooding, will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated through a sequential test and exception test that there are no suitable alternative sites at lower flood risk.



Flood Zones 2 and 3 around Fordingbridge. Source: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

Theme 8:

Car Parking & Town Centre Accessibility

Background

Car parking is a significant factor in the competitive position of Fordingbridge town centre relative to neighbouring centres. Community input¹⁹ and the town centre use audit² both identify the absence of free short-stay parking as a material disadvantage. Neighbouring centres including Ringwood, Romsey and Wimborne Minster all provide a number of free short-stay spaces, which are particularly important for tourists who have not purchased resident parking concessions and who are more likely to choose an alternative destination if parking costs are perceived as a barrier.

The pedestrian footfall surveys⁴ confirm that the Ringwood Road car park is the primary arrival point for visitors to the town centre. If the town centre improvements supported by this plan are successful in increasing footfall, through town centre greening, market activation, tourism promotion and the Recreation Ground improvements, the existing car park is likely to come under significant pressure.

Community input¹⁹ identifies the structural upward extension of the existing car park as the most realistic

means of increasing capacity without further loss of town centre land, and notes that this extension should be designed from the outset to be capable of a further storey if demand requires it.

An alternative or complementary option raised through the same process is the structural extension of the Recreation Ground car park rather than, or in addition to, the Ringwood Road car park, particularly if a new pedestrian and cycle bridge (Policy FRA3) is delivered. This could allow a tree-lined walkway to be created from the Recreation Ground car park to the river and into the town, giving visitors arriving by car their first impression of Fordingbridge's riverside setting, directed by clear on-site mapping, while avoiding the pressure that the existing narrow bridge places on pedestrian movement.

A lower parking charge at the Recreation Ground car park, relative to the Ringwood Road car park, could also be considered as a means of encouraging its use and easing pressure on the town centre car park. These options merit further feasibility work, including confirmation of land ownership, before either is progressed.

Free short-stay parking provision is a matter for NFDC as the car park operator. The Neighbourhood Plan cannot compel NFDC to provide free parking, but it can set out clearly that the community regards this as an important component of the town centre offer that NFDC should actively consider, and it provides a basis for the Town Council to negotiate with any significant new commercial operator to contribute to car park improvements.

Any assessment of car parking requirements should also take account of the very poor or non-existent public transport serving the small villages surrounding Fordingbridge, including Alderholt.

A number of these communities could potentially be served by a rural community transport service, of the kind operated in other rural areas using shared minibuses covering several villages across a rotating timetable; funding for this may be available through rural transport grant schemes, and it is identified here as an area for further investigation by the Town Council rather than a committed proposal.



Fordingbridge's main surface car park, to the rear of the Co-Op food store © FERIA Urbanism

Policy FPK1: Car Parking, Short-Stay Provision and Town Centre Accessibility

The Neighbourhood Plan recognises that the availability and affordability of car parking is a material factor in the vitality and competitiveness of Fordingbridge town centre. The Neighbourhood Plan supports:

- the introduction of a number of free short-stay car parking spaces (of up to one to two hours) within the Ringwood Road car park or at other appropriate locations in the town centre, to improve accessibility for visitors and tourists and to reduce the competitive disadvantage of Fordingbridge relative to neighbouring centres;
- the managed upward extension of the existing Ringwood Road car park to increase capacity in the event that town centre footfall increases significantly as a result of the improvements supported by this plan. Any such extension should be designed to be structurally capable of a further floor if required, and should not compromise the amenity of neighbouring properties or the character of the street scene;

- the improvement of pedestrian connections between the car park and the town centre, including wayfinding signage, lighting compliant with Policy FLS1, and accessible surfacing throughout.

Development proposals that would generate significant additional car parking demand in the town centre, including major retail, food and drink or leisure uses, will be required to assess their impact on car parking capacity and to demonstrate that adequate provision exists or can be made.

Where a new commercial use would displace existing parking, a like-for-like replacement or an equivalent contribution to the upward extension of the Ringwood Road car park will be sought.

The Town Council will engage with NFDC as car park operator to make the case for free short-stay provision, drawing on the comparative evidence from neighbouring centres set out in the plan evidence base.



Bartons Road surface car park, with the town hall clock tower in the background © FERIA Urbanism

Free Car Parking: Which way next?

The case for

The most straightforward argument is competitive: if nearby towns offer free short-stay parking and Fordingbridge does not, some shoppers will simply go elsewhere. This is not hypothetical in Fordingbridge's case. The evidence gathered for the neighbourhood plan confirms that Ringwood, Romsey and Wimborne Minster all provide free short-stay spaces, and the town centre use audit records a long-term decline in footfall that has multiple causes, of which parking cost is one.

For a town trying to reverse that trend, removing a perceived barrier to entry has an obvious logic.

Free short-stay parking also benefits specific groups disproportionately: older residents who may make shorter, more frequent trips; visitors and tourists who have no prior knowledge of the parking arrangements and are more likely to be deterred by unfamiliar pay machines; and people on lower incomes for whom a parking charge is a more meaningful cost. In a town that aspires to be inclusive, this matters.

There is also an argument about signal and aspiration.

Offering free short-stay parking communicates that the town is open, welcoming and confident in its offer. It shifts the psychological framing from a transaction to an invitation.



"If nearby towns offer free parking, shoppers will simply go elsewhere."



"From a transaction to an invitation."

The case against

Free parking is not actually free as the revenue loss falls on NFDC, which uses car park income to fund services. In a period of significant local government financial pressure, that is not a trivial consideration, and NFDC would need to be persuaded that the indirect economic benefit to the town justifies the direct revenue cost to the authority.

There is also a well-established planning and transport policy argument that free car parking stimulates car use, increases congestion and undermines the case for investment in active travel and public transport. Most sustainable transport frameworks, including the NPPF, push in the direction of managing car use rather than subsidising it. Free parking sits awkwardly alongside a neighbourhood plan that is otherwise committed to active travel, pedestrian safety and low-carbon development.

The empirical evidence on whether free parking actually increases footfall in small market towns is also more mixed than its advocates tend to acknowledge. Where footfall decline is driven by structural changes in retail behaviour, demographic shift or competition from larger centres, parking charges are rarely the primary cause and removing them is rarely sufficient as a response. Free parking may attract more cars without necessarily attracting more spending.

Finally, free car parking tends to be used by whoever arrives first, meaning that in practice it often benefits commuters and all-day parkers rather than the short-stay shoppers it is intended to serve. Without effective enforcement of time limits, free short-stay spaces quickly cease to function as intended.



"Free parking is not actually free."



"More cars without necessarily more spending."



"Free parking tends to be used by whoever arrives first."

The middle position

The most defensible position for the neighbourhood plan is probably the one already reflected in Policy FPK1: supporting the principle of free short-stay provision without mandating it and making the case to NFDC on the basis of the specific competitive context of Fordingbridge rather than as a general principle. A time-limited free period of up to an hour, well enforced, is meaningfully different from a blanket free parking policy, as it targets the visitor and tourist audience while limiting the revenue impact and the risk of abuse.

In practice, this need not require any change to existing car park processes: a free period can be ticketed and monitored in exactly the same way as paid-for parking, simply by issuing a ticket priced at £0, giving NFDC a straightforward means of introducing and enforcing a free short-stay period without new administrative systems.

A complementary idea, raised through community engagement, is the introduction of a weekly parking pass or clock, priced at a modest level (for example £5), available from the Tourist Information Centre and, potentially, in a scratch-card format that could be purchased and retained by Sandy Balls, local B&Bs and other accommodation providers for their guests.

This would give local visitors more flexible, unrestricted access to the town over the course of a stay, is likely to be attractive at a price well above the equivalent cost of an annual pass and could generate additional income for NFDC from visitors who would not otherwise purchase all-day parking, albeit at the cost of some additional administration.



"Targets visitors while limiting revenue impact and abuse."



"Flexible access to the town over the course of a stay."



"Support the principle without mandating it."

Theme 9: New Housing as a Community-Led Design Process

Background and Context

The New Forest District Council Local Plan is expected to identify land within Fordingbridge Parish for new residential development.

The quantum, phasing and precise location of these allocations will be determined through the Local Plan process, which is a matter for NFDC as the Local Planning Authority. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to challenge that process or to pre-empt the sequential and sustainability assessments that will inform site selection. It is important to record that previous housing allocations have already considerably increased the size of the town, achieving a scale of growth that the Town Council and community are mindful of in considering how any further allocations should come forward.

However, the Fordingbridge community has a clear and legitimate interest in how new housing, once allocated, is designed, laid out and integrated into the town. The existing policy themes in this plan (e.g. covering climate resilience, ecology, dark skies, active travel, public realm, heritage and water management)

collectively describe the kind of place Fordingbridge wants to be.

New housing should not sit outside that framework. It should be shaped by it.

The community's concern, reflected clearly in the evidence gathered for this plan¹⁹, is that planning applications for new residential sites tend to arrive at the planning authority as largely resolved proposals, with design decisions already fixed, commercial parameters already set, and scope for meaningful community influence already foreclosed.

By the time a planning application is registered, the land promoter or developer has typically invested significantly in a scheme design. The cost and difficulty of change at that point is high, and the community's influence through the formal consultation process is consequently limited to comments on a proposal already formed.

Early engagement provides an opportunity to influence the core principles of a scheme, helping to establish a shared understanding of

local priorities and expectations. It also gives landowners and promoters greater clarity about the community's aspirations at an earlier stage.

The Fordingbridge Neighbourhood Plan therefore establishes a structured pre-application engagement process, to be known as the "Fordingbridge Design Development Brief" process, through which the community, the Town Council, NFDC and the relevant landowner or promoter will work together to agree the design principles, site-specific requirements and development parameters that should shape any housing allocation before an application is submitted.

This process is not a veto over development. It is a mechanism for ensuring that when development comes forward it is better: more sustainable, better integrated, more responsive to the specific qualities and vulnerabilities of the Fordingbridge context, than it would otherwise be.

This approach is consistent with national planning policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises that design quality should be established through early engagement and that local communities should be involved in the development of design parameters for their area.

Design codes and development briefs prepared with community involvement are given weight in the assessment of subsequent planning applications.

The Neighbourhood Plan is identified in national policy as a key mechanism for community-led design influence, and the policies in this section give effect to that purpose.

Design Development Brief Process

Invitation

A formal invitation to be issued by the town council within three months of the allocation being confirmed or promotion of the site becoming known

Community Design Event

At least one publicly accessible community event to contribute ideas and aid in shaping the design principles

Working Session

At least one collaborative working session between the Town Council, NFDC planning officers and the landowner or promoter, to agree the design principles

Draft Brief

The preparation of a draft Design Development Brief, incorporating the agreed design principles

Consultation

A period of community consultation of no less than four weeks. Confirming the Design Development Brief ahead of Adoption.

Adoption

Adoption by the Town Council as a material consideration in the planning process

The Design Development Brief (DDB) process set out in this policy is intended to operate in the period between the confirmation of a housing allocation in the adopted Local Plan and the submission of any planning application (whether outline, full, or in the form of a Planning Performance Agreement) for that site.

It is the Town Council's intention to initiate the process at the earliest possible stage, ideally as soon as a site is identified as a likely or confirmed allocation in the emerging Local Plan, rather than waiting for adoption.

The process is co-produced: it requires the active participation of the landowner or their agent, NFDC, and the community, coordinated by the Town Council. It is not a process the Town Council can or should conduct unilaterally.



Working with local people in Bridport to develop design guidance for shopfronts © Fera Urbanism

The output (i.e. the agreed Design Development Brief) will be a document that all parties have contributed to and, by signing, commit to as the design framework for the site. It is not a legal contract, but it carries significant material weight in the assessment of any subsequent planning application. A planning application that departs materially from the agreed DDB without good reason will be in conflict with this neighbourhood plan policy and will be the subject of a formal objection from the Town Council.

The process draws on established tools and techniques from community planning, urban design and development practice: design workshops, public exhibitions, site walks, visual preference surveys, community design days and co-design sessions.

The Town Council will draw on the expertise of suitably qualified urban designers, landscape architects and planning consultants to facilitate the process where resources allow, and will seek funding for this work from NFDC, the planning performance agreement budget, or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

The specific content of each Design Development Brief will depend on the site in question, but the policy sets out the minimum requirements that every DDB for a Fordingbridge housing site must address. These requirements reflect the policy themes of this neighbourhood plan and the specific environmental, ecological and character sensitivities of the Fordingbridge context.

The Town Council will agree with NFDC a proportionate threshold, based on site size and number of dwellings, below which smaller developments may be excluded from some or all of these requirements, so that the DDB process remains proportionate to the scale of development proposed.

Policy FNH1: The Fordingbridge Design Development Brief Process

Where land within Fordingbridge Parish is allocated for residential development in the adopted or emerging NFDC Local Plan, the Town Council will initiate a Design Development Brief (DDB) process for that site as soon as reasonably practicable following confirmation of the allocation or the landowner's intention to promote the site.

Landowners, promoters and developers of allocated residential sites in Fordingbridge Parish are expected to engage constructively with the DDB process before submitting any planning application for the site. Pre-application engagement with the Town Council and NFDC, and participation in the DDB process as described in this policy, is strongly encouraged and will be a material consideration in the assessment of any subsequent planning application.

The DDB process will be coordinated by Fordingbridge Town Council and will involve, as a minimum:

- a formal invitation to the landowner or promoter to participate, issued by the Town Council within three months of the allocation being confirmed or the promotion of the site becoming known;
- at least one publicly accessible community design event at which residents, community organisations and other stakeholders can contribute to the shaping of design principles for the site;
- at least one collaborative working session between the Town Council, NFDC planning officers and the landowner or promoter, at which the outputs of the community design event are discussed, and design principles are agreed;

- the preparation of a draft Design Development Brief, incorporating the agreed design principles, and circulated for comment to all parties and to the wider community;
- the finalisation of the Design Development Brief following a period of community consultation of not less than four weeks, and its adoption by the Town Council as a material consideration in the planning process.

The agreed Design Development Brief will be adopted by the Town Council as a planning document and submitted to NFDC for formal acknowledgement as a material consideration in the determination of any planning application for the site.

A planning application for a Fordingbridge housing allocation that is submitted without prior engagement with the DDB process, or that departs materially from the design principles set out in an agreed Design Development Brief, will be in conflict with this policy. The Town Council will register a formal objection to any such application and will set out in that objection the ways in which the proposal fails to reflect the community's established design requirements for the site.



Community-led approaches to influence the design of new homes in Kent © FERIA Urbanism

The following policy sets out the substantive design requirements that the Town Council will seek to embed in every Design Development Brief for a Fordingbridge housing allocation. These requirements derive directly from the evidence base and the wider policy themes of this plan. They are not a wish list: each requirement is grounded in a specific and documented characteristic of the Fordingbridge context that new development must respond to if it is to be genuinely integrated into the town.

They are set out here as policy, rather than purely as DDB guidance, so that they carry independent weight as neighbourhood plan policies in the assessment of any planning application, regardless of whether a DDB process has been completed. They represent the community's baseline expectations for new housing in Fordingbridge, applicable to all residential sites.

Policy FNH2: Design Requirements for New Housing in Fordingbridge

All proposals for new residential development on allocated sites in Fordingbridge Parish should demonstrate how they address the following requirements.

Where a Design Development Brief has been agreed for the site under Policy FNH1, these requirements should be reflected in the principles set out in that brief. Where no DDB has been agreed, these requirements apply directly and will be assessed at the planning application stage.

a) Integration with the town

Development should be planned as a genuine extension of the existing settlement, not as a self-contained estate. Proposals should demonstrate how new streets, routes and spaces connect to the existing movement network of the town, and how the development provides convenient and attractive walking and cycling access to the town centre, the Recreation Ground and key services, in accordance with Policy FAT1. Cul-de-sac dominated layouts that generate car dependency and create poor permeability will not be supported.

b) Character, scale and materials

Development should draw on the local character and materials of Fordingbridge, as evidenced through the town centre audit and the character analysis prepared for the Design Development Brief.

It should not import generic estate housing typologies unrelated to the local context. The scale and massing of new housing should step down at the edges of the site to respect the character of adjoining streets and the rural fringe, and to avoid creating an abrupt or visually intrusive transition between town and countryside.

c) Climate resilience and energy

All new homes must meet the requirements of Policy FCR2, achieving Passivhaus or equivalent zero-carbon-ready performance, incorporating renewable energy generation, and eliminating fossil-fuel heating. Site layout must be designed to maximise solar access in accordance with the solar orientation principles set out in Policy FCR2.

c) Climate resilience and energy (continued)

The site should be master planned to avoid overshadowing between plots, and to maximise the proportion of dwellings with principal elevations and roof slopes facing within 30 degrees of south.

d) Water management

Development must meet the full requirements of Policy FCR1. Given the specific groundwater conditions in Fordingbridge, a detailed surface water drainage strategy based on source-control principles must be prepared and agreed with Wessex Water and the Lead Local Flood Authority before an application is submitted. The strategy must demonstrate that development will not increase flood risk to existing properties downstream, will not contribute additional load to the combined sewer system, and that drainage connections will be tested and adopted under high groundwater conditions.



A view of the River Avon from the Recreation Ground © Fordingbridge Camera Club



Sweatfords Water © Fordingbridge Camera Club

e) Ecology and biodiversity

Development must meet the requirements of Policies FEC1, FEC2 and FEC3. An ecological assessment of the site must be completed before the DDB process is initiated, so that the presence of priority habitats and protected species can inform the layout of the site from the outset rather than constraining it retrospectively. Where the site is adjacent to the River Avon, Sweatfords Water or any tributary, a buffer strip of not less than 8 metres from the top of the bank must be retained in public or community ownership, managed for biodiversity and incorporated into a green corridor in accordance with Policy FEC4.

f) Dark skies and lighting

The site lighting strategy must comply with Policies FLS1, FLS2 and FLS3 from the outset, and must be agreed as part of the DDB process. The lighting strategy must address street lighting, dwelling-level lighting, communal areas and any public open space or play areas within the development. No roof lights will be installed in new dwellings unless they are equipped with blackout blinds or covers, and this requirement must be secured through a planning condition on any permission.

g) Affordable housing and housing mix

The Design Development Brief process will include a community session focused on housing need, at which the Town Council will present the evidence of local housing need and affordability drawn from the NFDC Strategic Housing Market Assessment and any local evidence gathered for this plan. The agreed DDB will set out the community's expectations for the quantum and type of affordable housing, including the proportion of social rent, shared ownership and discounted market sale. The housing mix for the site should reflect the identified local need, which the evidence base for this plan indicates is weighted towards smaller homes for younger households, older residents wishing to downsize, and households on lower incomes.

h) Public open space and play

All new residential development should provide publicly accessible open space in accordance with NFDC standards. Open space should be designed as a functional, attractive and ecologically valuable asset rather than as a residual space between buildings. Where the development is within comfortable walking distance of the Recreation Ground, a financial contribution to the improvement of that facility (in accordance with the priorities identified in Policy FRA3) may be accepted in lieu of on-site provision, subject to agreement with NFDC and the Town Council.

i) Community infrastructure

The Design Development Brief process will identify the community infrastructure requirements generated by the development, including contributions to education, health, transport, open space and the delivery of the priorities identified in this Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council will seek to direct Community Infrastructure Levy receipts and s106 planning obligations generated by housing allocations towards the specific projects identified in this plan, including the Recreation Ground improvements (Policy FRA3), public realm greening (Policy FTC4), the pedestrian river bridge (Policy FRA3), and the car park extension (Policy FPK1).

j) Housing at distance from the town centre

Where an allocated site is located more than a mile from the town centre, it should be designed to function as a supportive, mixed housing community in its own right, with appropriate infrastructure provided on site (such as local open space, play provision and, where scale justifies it, small-scale local services), rather than relying solely on walking or cycling trips to the town centre for day-to-day needs.



Fordingbridge Hospital t © FERIA Urbanism

Supplementary Note

Design Development Brief Minimum Content

Every Design Development Brief prepared under Policy FNH1 should address, as a minimum, the following topics. This list is not exhaustive and the DDB for any particular site may require additional content reflecting the specific characteristics of that site.



Vision and design objectives for the site, agreed between the community, the landowner and NFDC



Site analysis: topography, drainage, ecology, archaeology, character, access, views, constraints and opportunities



Movement and connectivity: street hierarchy, active travel connections, public transport access



Land use and mix: housing types and tenures, affordable housing quantum and distribution, any community uses



Character, massing and materials: building heights, street widths, architectural character, materials palette



Open space and landscape: public open space, play, ecology, SuDS, tree planting and green infrastructure



Energy and sustainability: performance standard, renewable energy approach, solar layout principles



Water management: surface water drainage strategy, rainwater harvesting, SuDS typologies



Lighting: site-wide lighting strategy compliant with neighbourhood plan policy



Community infrastructure: CIL and s106 priorities, phasing, management and maintenance arrangements



Monitoring and review: how delivery will be monitored against the agreed brief

This section should be read alongside the evidence base documents, and, where prepared, the specific Design Development Brief for each allocated site. The Town Council will maintain a register of all DDB processes initiated under Policy FNH1, including their status and outcome, and will publish this register on the Town Council website.

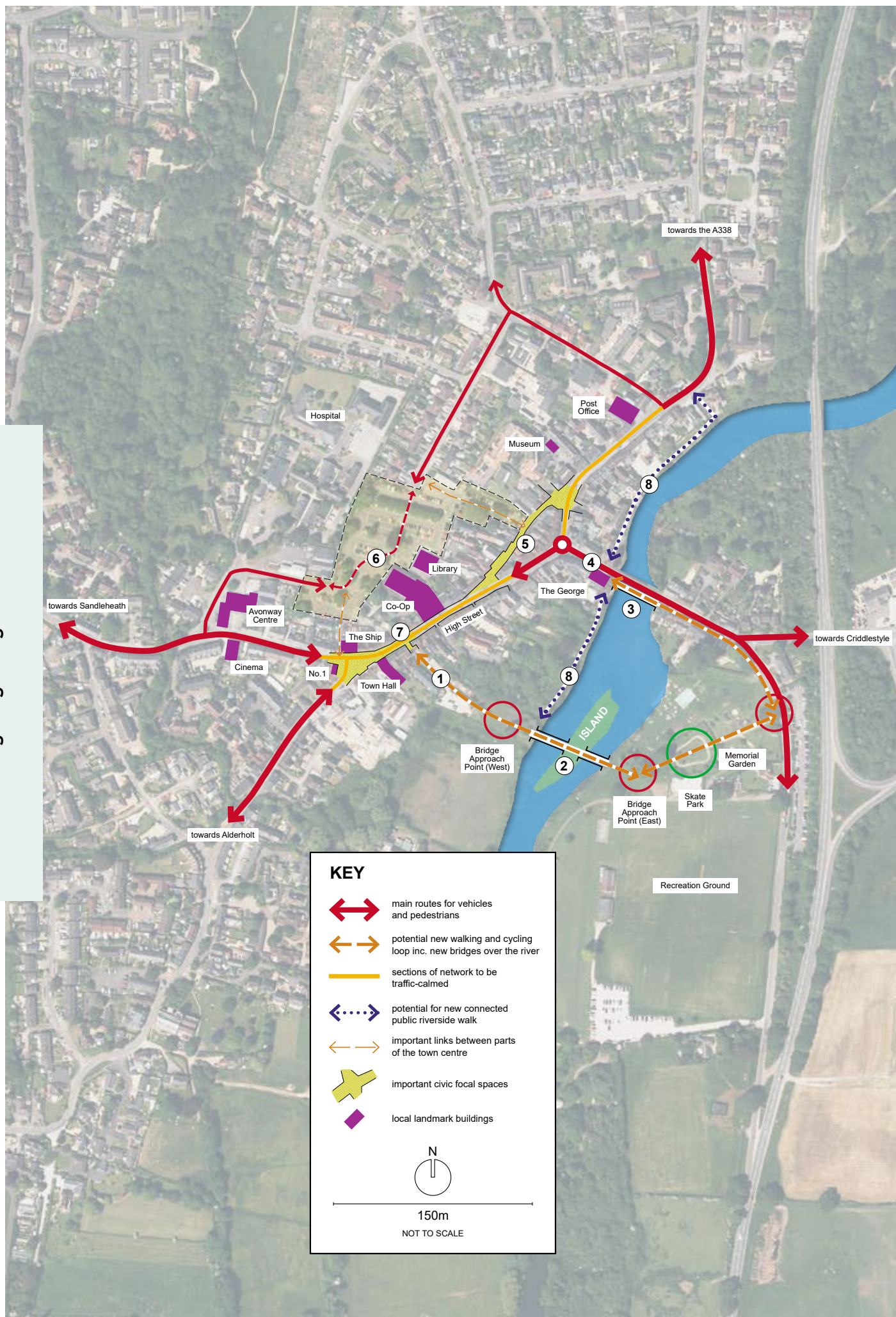


Diagram showing projects to improve the town centre experience. For details, see pages 59 and 60.

Plan Projects: Town Centre

1. Walking & Cycling Links

- Investigate landownership and permissions for potential access between 53 and 55 High Street via Blue Valley Mews to the River Avon.
- Survey the route down to the western bank of the river to assess feasibility, safety, and accessibility.
- Document potential design options for a walking/cycling link, including signage, gradients and surfacing.

2. New Bridge Connection

- Research feasibility of a new pedestrian/cycle bridge from the town centre to the recreation ground, via the island.
- Identify landowners at all bridge touchdown points (western bank, island, eastern bank near Memorial Gardens) and explore permission requirements.
- Compile examples of lightweight, modern bridge structures from other towns for inspiration and cost benchmarking.
- Set up a zip-line across the river as part of a community fun day, to explore the positive impact of a new crossing and this initiative is a positive feedback

loop, as it relates back to one of the earliest ideas from school students, when a zip-line was suggested.

3. New Bridge Adjacent to Existing

- Assess the southern edge of the existing bridge for potential attachment of a lightweight pedestrian/cycle structure.
- Measure available space to determine whether safe separation from vehicles is achievable.
- Explore design precedents for similar "clip-on" bridge structures that double as viewing points.

4. Pinch Point & Levels

- Map the intersection where the (potential) new bridge link and riverside path converge.
- Record level changes and identify where steps or ramps may be required.
- Test accessibility solutions (ramps, lifts, stepped access) for inclusivity.

5. Roundhill Pedestrianisation

- Trial temporary closures of Roundhill (e.g., one Sunday per month) to host markets and events.
- Monitor traffic flow impacts during closures and collect feedback from residents and businesses.
- Evaluate potential for permanent pedestrianisation based on trial outcomes.

6. Link Road via Car Park

- Model traffic diversion scenarios using the car park as a through-route from Shaftesbury Road to The Bartons.
- Estimate car park space loss and assess impact on parking provision.
- Engage residents of The Bartons to understand concerns about increased traffic or nuisance.

7. Small Pedestrian-Friendly Space

- Design a concept for widened pavements and surface treatments adjacent to 53 and 55 High Street.
- Mark the location as a gateway to the proposed bridge link, ensuring visibility and attractiveness.
- Test use of materials, signage, artworks, sculptures and colours for durability and aesthetic impact.

8. Continuous Waterside Route

- Map all riverside landownerships and identify properties backing onto the River Avon.
- Explore agreements with landowners to relinquish control but not ownership of a 5–7m strip for public access.
- Develop a phased plan for connecting these strips into a continuous, accessible waterside path.
- Document potential benefits (tourism, recreation, wellbeing) to support negotiations.

Plan Projects: Capital

Capital Works Projects

Theme 1: Town Centre Vitality



Pedestrianisation or traffic management of Roundhill, with delivery bay space repurposed for Saturday market stalls



Extensive street tree planting (where practical) along the High Street and Salisbury Street (proposal for flowering cherry trees with seasonal displays)



Shrub containers and seasonal planting along widened pavements



Pull-out/retractable blinds scheme for shop frontages (grant-assisted)



Small water feature with seating and information boards at the bottom of Roundhill, by the old Gallery



Conversion of larger vacant High Street units into a managed crafts and local produce emporium (e.g. a council-led meanwhile use)



Swapping the museum and Town Hall venues to give the museum a more prominent central location



Extension and refurbishment of the museum building (if council owns rear land) to add gallery space and a tearoom (should museum not swap locations with the town hall)



Relocation of the Augustus John statue to the pavement outside the museum

Theme 2: Active Travel, Movement & Accessibility



Consideration of one-way traffic system on the High Street and Bridge Street in order to deliver a better pedestrian experience e.g. wider pavements and narrower carriageways providing greater pedestrian priority, and therefore increased footfall and dwell time that can boost economic activity



Creation of chicanes to calm traffic and allow for additional pedestrian crossing points; double yellow lines on Salisbury Street; a 20 mph limit along the main shopping area, extending to the car park entrance on Shaftesbury Street



Reallocation of pavement space outside the grocer's on Sandle Heath Road to create outdoor hospitality seating



Integrated dry-surface walkways through the Recreation Ground connecting all entrances, play areas, the riverside path and the commemorative garden (some sections raised for flood resilience)

Theme 3: Riverside Access & the Public Realm



New pedestrian/cycle river footbridge linking the town centre to the Recreation Ground



Canoe and paddleboard hire facility at the Recreation Ground (riverside, near the proposed sports hall)



Improved and enlarged café/kiosk at the Recreation Ground, sited on raised decking by the river



New sports hall/entertainment centre at the far end of the Recreation Ground, by the river



Athletics facilities in the underused area between the Sports Pavilion and the river (e.g. long jump pit, running circuit)



More prominent park entrance with large, clear signage



Two tennis/netball courts and outdoor table tennis tables, sited near the skatepark and playground



Riverside walk on the town side, subject to the resolution of access and ecological requirements (Policy FRA2)

Theme 6: Heritage, Character & Public Space



Museum rebranding and refurbishment as the Augustus John, New Forest and Smuggling Museum, with dedicated gallery space, retail area and tearoom



Large directional signage on Salisbury Street directing tourists to the information centre and museum

Theme 8: Car Parking & Town Centre Accessibility



Additional storey on the existing Ringwood Road car park (designed to be structurally capable of a further future storey)



Introduction of free short-stay parking spaces in the town centre



Feasibility study into extending the Recreation Ground car park as an alternative or complement to the Ringwood Road car park extension, linked to delivery of the new river footbridge (Policy FRA3) and a riverside walkway into the town



Introduction of a weekly parking pass or clock, available from the Tourist Information Centre and local accommodation providers

Plan Projects: Revenue

Revenue-Funded Works & Programmes

Theme 1: Town Centre Vitality



Regular Saturday specialist street market on Roundhill / car park entrance area, with mobile food outlets and live music



Appointment of a dedicated fundraiser for the sports hall (following the Ringwood model)



Social media and Instagram-led promotional campaign built around seasonal street planting and events



Open negotiations with a national food retailer (e.g. M&S Foodhall) to open a food-only unit in the town centre

Theme 6: Heritage, Character & Public Space



Tourism promotion campaign positioning Fordingbridge as a destination, linked to the Augustus John heritage offer, or All The Cool Stuff, the comic and collectables shop



Partnership approach to sourcing and displaying Augustus John works for the museum



TV documentary pitch, to follow Fordingbridge's high street revival – possible major free publicity opportunity



Promotion of the Recreation Ground and riverside offer to tourists, including wayfinding from the town centre, and back again



Appendix A: Evidence Sources

The footnote references in the supporting text correspond to the following evidence task documents and technical sources. Sources marked with an asterisk (*) are additional technical documents used to support the suite of policies.

1. Tasks 5 and 10: Vacancy Survey and Vacancy Duration (May 2025 and February 2026)
2. Task 1/3/8: Town Centre Use Audit, Active Frontage Mapping and Shopfront Condition Survey (High Street Spreadsheet, 2026)
3. Task 9: Temporary Use Case Studies (February 2026)
4. Task 6: Pedestrian Footfall and Activity Count (4 and 10 February 2026)
5. Task 13: Crossing Behaviour Observation and Traffic Survey (February 2026, with comparison to May 2022 survey data)
6. Task 11: Cycle Parking Spot Check and Usage Survey (January–March 2026)
7. Task 16: Access Point Mapping (January 2026)
8. Task 19: Riverside Barrier and Deterrent Recording (January 2026)
9. Task 22: Riverside Access Evidence – Defined Rights of Way (January 2026)
10. Task 25: Land Ownership (linked to Tasks 16 and 22)
11. Task 18: Interpretation and Storytelling Audit (February 2026)
12. Task 17: Ecology Spot Survey and Drone Footage (March 2026)
13. Task 12: Lighting and Safety Survey (February–March 2026)
14. Task 12, Appendix 1: The Role of Artificial Light Control in Nature Recovery
15. Task 12, Appendix 2: Briefing Note – Artificial Light at Night, Biodiversity and Health

16. (*) Cranborne Chase AONB Good Practice Notes on External Lighting: Number 7a(i) – Developers’ Guide to Dark-Sky Compliant Lighting on New Builds and Refurbishments (February 2022); and Number 7b(i) – Examples of Dark Sky Compliant Lighting Units (February 2022 Addendum). Published by Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
17. (*) Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (May 2025). Published by Hampshire County Council. Sets out priorities and measures for nature recovery across Hampshire, including the Central Chalk Belt area that encompasses Fordingbridge and the River Avon SAC.
18. (*) Managing Rain Better Where It Lands (Op-Ed). Matt Wheeldon, Director of Infrastructure Development, Wessex Water. Sets out the case for source-control rainwater management as the primary response to England’s flooding, water quality and water scarcity challenges.
19. (*) Fordingbridge Neighbourhood Plan Community Input Document (Fordingbridge Town Council / Fordingbridge Greener Living). Includes evidence and community aspirations on housing location, water management, flood risk, energy standards, lighting, wildlife corridors, the Recreation Ground and recreational facilities.
20. (*) Draft Green Policies: Net-Zero and Low-Carbon Design in New Residential Development (Fordingbridge Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base). Sets out Local Planning Authority-style policy wording and justification for fabric-first, Passivhaus-equivalent low-carbon residential development standards.
21. Task 3: Public Realm Quality Evidence (evidence task background paper). Draws on the Town Health Check (2007), Town Design Statement (2008), Conservation Area Appraisal (2001) and Conservation Area Character Statement, together with a town centre walk-around identifying key small spaces and gateway views, and the August 2025 Town Centre Audit undertaken by young people as part of community engagement (with thanks to Hannah Janes and Lydia McClay).
22. Task 2: Fordingbridge Parish Plan heritage asset walk. A schedule of locally identified, non-designated heritage assets across the town centre and surrounding streets, compiled through community research and forming the basis of Appendix A: Heritage Assets.

Appendix B: Heritage Assets

This appendix schedules 86 locally identified, non-designated heritage assets across Fordingbridge town centre and the surrounding historic streets, compiled through community research undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan (Task 2: Fordingbridge Parish Plan)²².

It complements the Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Area Character Statement referred to elsewhere in this Plan, and forms part of the evidence base for Policy FHC1: Design Quality and Heritage.

NOTE – Assets are numbered as in the original source schedule, including a small number of lettered sub-entries (Nos. 22A, 40A and 51A). Not every entry in the original schedule identified a specific street; where a location was not stated, it has been inferred from the sequence of the schedule, which appears to follow a continuous walking route through the town, and is marked with a dagger (†).

The assets listed here are non-designated heritage assets for the purposes of national planning policy. Their inclusion in this schedule does not of itself confer statutory protection, but it provides a material consideration to be weighed in planning decisions affecting them, in accordance with Policy FHC1.

No.	Location	Heritage Interest
1	Salisbury Street	The South Lodge to Burgate Manor, marking the northern approach into the town along Salisbury Street.
2	Salisbury Street	The former Star public house, later an antiques shop.
3	Salisbury Street	The Manor House, built in the 1600s and rebuilt after a fire in 1710; manorial courts were held on the first floor, and it was here that the constable for the Hundred of Fordingbridge was appointed.
4	Salisbury Street	An extension to the site of the former Star Hotel.
5	Salisbury Street	A notable example of a brick-built, double-fronted private house.
6	Salisbury Street	Upton House, once the home of the Neave family, prominent Quakers and owners of a factory producing farinaceous food; now in use as the Post Office and a hairdressers.
7	Salisbury Street	The Post Office building, on the former site of the town's Fire Station.
8	Salisbury Street †	Caxtons hardware shop, formerly the site of the Silver Dollar nightclub, which occupied a first-floor room.
9	Salisbury Street	The United Reformed Church (URC) Chapel.
10	Salisbury Street †	The Manse House associated with the URC Chapel (see No. 9).
11	Salisbury Street †	The former butchers' shop, one of the few remaining thatched buildings in Fordingbridge; it had a small slaughterhouse to its left and the Kings Arms public house to its right.
12	Salisbury Street †	The entrance to Kings Yard, where a surviving ghost sign advertises a former saddlers' shop.
13	Salisbury Street †	The Golden Key building.
14	Salisbury Street †	A former bank building, brick-built with ham stone decorative features, originally the home of the Freemasons.
15	Salisbury Street †	Caxton House, a tile-hung building with a shopfront and side alley, originally a printing works.
16	Salisbury Street †	Now occupied by Gullivers Osteopaths; brick-built.
17	Salisbury Street †	An antiques shop and estate agents, brick-built. The original source schedule flags this entry as a duplicate of No. 15, and it should be read alongside, or treated as superseded by, that entry.
18	Salisbury Street †	The Old Rose and Alexanders shop, previously the site of an early garage, with an interesting bay window.

No.	Location	Heritage Interest
19	Bridge Street †	The George public house, the site where a smuggling gang once shared out smuggled tea, and also where a watchman checked for poached venison crossing the bridge.
20	High Street †	Now occupied by Dowding Estate Agents.
21	High Street †	Bridge House, home of Dr E P Vickery.
22	High Street †	An extension to the former doctors' surgery, known as Horseport.
22A	High Street †	The Victoria Rooms.
23	High Street †	The old Furbers' blacksmiths.
24	High Street †	Slate Cottage, owned by the Hood family, coal merchants.
25	High Street †	The former house of Ernest Westlake.
26	High Street †	Now a sandwich shop; previously a dolls' museum and a dentist's surgery.
27	High Street †	The old Lloyds Bank building, noted in the original schedule alongside the former bank building at No. 14.
28	High Street †	A building known as The Hundred, a name recalling Fordingbridge's historic status as the seat of the Hundred of Fordingbridge (see also No. 3).
29	High Street †	The old Midland Bank building, later a cycle shop; previously the Rose and Crown public house (1792).
30	High Street †	Timothy's Gift Shop, brick-built, originally Paxton's off-licence.
31	High Street †	The site of a former Roman quay, reflecting Fordingbridge's long history as a crossing point and trading location on the River Avon.
32	High Street †	Midducks Gift Shop.
33	High Street †	An emporium and fish and chip shop, originally a school (1890).
34	High Street †	The Green Gram, formerly Harrisons and, in 1868, a 'Seminary for Young Ladies'.
35	High Street †	The old NatWest building, built in 1893 with a coaching arch.
36	High Street †	The old Quaker meeting house, rebuilt after a fire in 1705; later Miss Lock's school and subsequently an auction room.
37	High Street †	Originally G.A.W. Jones, drapers, retaining attractive ornamental shopfront features.
38	High Street †	St Ives, dated 1697, with Chilmark stone mullioned windows and an attractive porch; home to successive generations of doctors named Rake.

No.	Location	Heritage Interest
39	High Street †	Carl Hillwoods, formerly the Three Lions public house, with a good cobbled carriage entrance and an imposing front door; the site of a murder in the 1680s.
40	High Street †	A solicitor's building, formerly The Orchards and home to the Chubb family, dating from the early 18th century.
40A	High Street †	Bridges Café.
41	High Street †	A dry cleaners, formerly a butchers' shop.
42	High Street †	The old paper shop, erected in 1702; later a barbers' shop run by Ernest Perry.
43	High Street †	Originally a fruiterers and audio-visual shop, later home to The Crypt, Juniper and Vine, and Jessica's; retains good original shopfronts with a porch and tiled decoration. Juniper and Vine occupies the site of the old post office, its former bay window marked by tiles in the pavement and was subsequently a butchers' shop.
44	High Street †	The Cottage Loaf bakers, previously a grocers, a DIY shop and a record shop.
45	High Street †	Hayes Travel Agents and the Luxury Bubble shop, dated 1685, with good ornamental shopfronts and a tiled entrance; both shops originally belonged to the King family's drapery business.
46	High Street †	The Crown Public House (1689), formerly the town's post house, with an interesting porch and an old coach entrance within a brick extension; note the historic street sign and the Yorkshire window within the coach entrance.
47	High Street †	The Cool Stuff shop and The Ship public house, occupying an old coach entrance and a small former public house building to its left; previously Baileys Electrical and the New Inn.
48	High Street †	Price's butchers' shop, part of an ancient row of shop buildings dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, notable for the carved heads on its gables and the rails once used for hanging game at the front.
49	High Street †	The Gourmet Grocer, part of the same ancient row of shops; previously Gaddes, chemist.
50	Shaftesbury Street	A row of brick-built artisan cottages.
51	Shaftesbury Street	Girlings Hearing Centre, notable for its ghost signs, ornamental brickwork and original shopfronts.
51A	Shaftesbury Street †	The Vintage Wine Shop.

No.	Location	Heritage Interest
52	Shaftesbury Street †	A house with an archway and an original porch.
53	Shaftesbury Street †	Houses retaining original porches and a blind window.
54	Shaftesbury Street †	Terraced houses with ornamental brickwork and verandas.
55	Shaftesbury Street †	The original cinema, later Branksome Pottery, recently converted into flats and a small luxury cinema.
56	Shaftesbury Street †	A row of Victorian terraced cottages opposite Avonway.
57	Shaftesbury Street	Nyanza Terrace, Victorian cottages built in 1877 with good ornamental brickwork, including one doorway with a rare Odell lock; the date and name are carved in stone.
58	Shaftesbury Street	Now an Indian restaurant; notable for its blind window and ornamental stonework, and formerly a well-known café.
59	Roundhill †	The Police Station, the oldest police station in continuous use in Hampshire until recently and now in private hands; the original County Police Station sign is carved into the front, alongside an original police light.
60	Roundhill	The old Fire Station, formerly used for horse-drawn appliances.
61	Provost Street	A handsome house with a carved head beside the door, originally a shop.
62	Provost Street	Handsome brick houses, one featuring ornamental hand-bell devices on its front wall.
63	Provost Street	A handsome brick house with the oldest surviving shopfront in the town, once the shop of a woman known locally as Molly Parker, who sold paraffin from a donkey cart.
64	Church Street	An old brick house with ornamental light and dark patchwork brickwork, formerly a brewery and later a shop, retaining a well-preserved ghost sign.
65	Church Street †	A weavers' terrace of brick cottages, with brick outhouses to the rear formerly used for dyeing cloth.
66	Church Street †	Almshouses in a Mock Tudor style, known as The Quadrant, on the site of an earlier calico printing works.
67	Church Square	A brick-built cottage.
68	Church Square	A brick building bearing a plaque recording the annual fair once held in the Square.

No.	Location	Heritage Interest
69	Church Square †	A row of thatched cottages, once shops, one of which was used to sell petrol in cans before garages came into general use.
70	Church Square	A handsome large house with a fire mark, once the doctor's house; Florence Nightingale is reputed to have stayed there.
71	Church Square	A large house with a veranda, now converted into flats.
72	Church Square †	Church Cottage, once the home of the footballer Frank Jefferis, born in Fordingbridge and capped twice for England.
73	Church Street †	St Mary's Parish Church.
74	Church Street †	The Church Hall opposite the church, a good example of a Reema building.
75	Church Street †	The Vicarage opposite the church, now converted into flats.
76	Church Street †	The former nursing home, or infirmary.
77	Roundhill	Florists Yard, the site of the former Microbiologicals premises.
78	Roundhill †	The Old Workhouse (1885), described as state of the art when built and later the site of the Fordingbridge Infirmary; now converted into flats.
79	Roundhill †	The Drill Hall, used for recruitment during the First World War.
80	Roundhill †	The old school buildings, now in use as the Avonway Community Centre.
81	Roundhill †	The Methodist Chapel, one of the first buildings in the town to have gaslights; used to accommodate American soldiers during the Second World War and now in private ownership.
82	West Street	A terrace of houses opposite West Street.
83	Salisbury Road	No. 45 Salisbury Road.



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