



**Local People.
Local Decisions.
Local Future.**



**Finchampstead
Neighbourhood
Development
Plan Summary
2018-2036**

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Finchampstead Ridges, Simon's Wood & Ambarrow Hill

Welcome

For over 100 years the National Trust has cared for parts of these special places. This significant mosaic of sites form an important part of the Berkshire landscape. Here you will find spectacular views, open heathland, native woodland and internationally famous giant redwoods. A haven for wildlife and people alike.

National Trust
 Share photos of your time here today using #nationaltrust
 Contact us

Finchampstead Ridges, Simon's Wood, & Ambarrow Hill

- Car park
- Viewpoint
- Main paths and public rights of way (no horses)
- Centenary trail, 2.2km/approx. 40 minutes
- Restricted byways and bridleways (horses permitted)

Landmarks: Brook's Heath, Simon's Wood, Ambarrow Hill, Finchampstead Ridges, Wellington Avenue, Crow's Highway, Crossbarrow, Ambarrow Hill.



Protecting the future of Finchampstead

Giving you a voice in planning decisions

This booklet is being sent to every home in Finchampstead Parish as part of a consultation about the 'Neighbourhood Development Plan'; part of the planning process that gives us a local voice on planning issues.

'Finchampstead Future', an independent volunteer group of residents working with the Parish Council, is producing the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (the 'Plan'). Once it has navigated a process of external examination and has been voted for by the people of Finchampstead in a referendum, the Plan will play an important part in guiding future planning decisions affecting development and conservation in our parish.

In September 2019, we asked everyone in the parish for their views on how the parish should evolve and over a thousand of you responded. We have used what we have been told and what we have learned to create the first draft of our Neighbourhood Development Plan, including policies to help meet the growing need for homes whilst protecting the semi-rural character of our community. We now want to give you the chance to comment on that work.

This plan will influence the way that development takes place in Finchampstead up to 2036.

This booklet contains a summary of the main objectives, some key facts and summarised policies of the plan.

You can find the Plan itself, including all the details of policies that will affect the future of the parish and relevant background information online at:

<http://www.finchampsteadfuture.com/>

We urge you to spend the time to take a look at this, to get the full detail of what we are proposing and to let us know what you think about it.

What does the Plan do?

Our Neighbourhood Development Plan has been developed to reflect your views and to ensure that the community has made a positive, pro-active and meaningful contribution to the way in which decisions about new development, including housing, are made within the parish for the plan period 2018 – 2036.

Neighbourhood Development Plans have to fit within the national planning policy framework. Although they must deliver housing targets, they must also protect the environment and create a vibrant healthy community and economy.

The power of the Plan is in the **policies**, which:

- Must be consistent with National and Wokingham Borough Council policies
- Set out the standards and requirements that development plans must meet.
- Inform and guide decisions about planning applications

Our policies have been drawn up with specific relevance to Finchampstead and the objectives of the local community. They focus on enhancing our natural environment, ensuring that new development meets current standards of sustainable design and seek to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Most importantly to our residents, they are designed to avoid unplanned speculative development.

Housing

A growing population requires more homes; our borough and our parish do not exist in isolation from that national need. The Plan has identified that **1,152** new dwellings will be needed for the period 2018 – 2036 to meet local demand, including 580 affordable homes and 54 homes for the elderly. Family accommodation accounts for 80% of all the estate agent enquiries in the parish. Homes built in Finchampstead since the 1970s have catered well for this market but provision for first time buyers and retirees is more limited. The same is also true for the provision of affordable homes and socially rented accommodation.

Key facts about Finchampstead

- Population c. 11,000, c 5,000 dwellings
- 1,500 new houses at Finchwood Park will increase the number of homes in the parish by c30%.
- Gorse Ride re-development will provide c250 modern homes, many for those in social need.

Where will new houses be built and how many?

Development at Finchwood Park, on the western edge of the parish, is underway and when complete, will provide 1,500 new houses, considerably more than the ‘local need’ mentioned above.

Finchampstead Future undertook its own assessment on the potential capacity of the parish to accommodate any further new housing development, based upon data provided by Wokingham Borough Council and by using a nationally accepted methodology.

The assessment took into account a desire to avoid developing within areas designated as ‘countryside’ and to avoid the joining up of separate settlements through ‘ribbon’ development and filling in ‘green’ gaps so essential for amenity and wildlife conservation. This reflects the views expressed by our community during consultation in 2019.

The strong conclusion was that the parish had only very limited capacity for new housing development beyond what is currently already planned and approved at Finchwood Park and the re-development of the Gorse Ride area and that there was no local need for further major developments during the period of the Plan.

In our consultation with you in 2019 we stated:

‘We will ensure that the identity of the distinct settlements that make up Finchampstead Parish will be protected so residents will be able to continue to enjoy life in a pleasant, well-served, semi-rural environment’.

95% of answers were in favour of this.

Existing Settlements (known as ‘Development Locations’)

Despite the above assessment, we can’t just say ‘There will be no housebuilding’. Small sites for a few houses are made available from time to time and as they often get built more quickly than the large developments, they help the council ensure that targets continue to be met.

The Plan, with Wokingham Borough Council, identifies four Development Locations in the parish, which broadly correspond to the existing built-up areas. These are North Finchampstead (centred on California Crossroads), The Village, along Lower Wokingham Road and the new development of Finchwood Park.

Within these Development Locations, the Plan will support these smaller opportunities for replacement or infill development. Outside of these areas, land is designated as ‘countryside’ and the Plan will not support proposals for development in the countryside unless related to agriculture or any very special circumstances.

A selection of our policies on Housing

Below is a selection of our policies on housing. These are summarised, so the wording of the policy in the Plan may be different and may also reflect the required phraseology of the planning inspectorate.

The full list, with complete wording is available in sections 4 & 5 of the plan, online.

Development outside of Development Locations (Policy AHD1)

There should not be any new houses built in the countryside (i.e. outside of existing settlement boundaries / Development Locations), unless for purposes of agriculture.

Development within Development Limits (Policy AHD2)

New development proposals must be contained within the Development Locations. Development within the Finchwood Park area of the Strategic Development Location area will be encouraged.

Infill Development (Policy D3)

Infill and small plot development will be supported under specific conditions and only within Development Locations.

Building Heights (Policy D1)

The development of 3-storey housing will generally only be supported within the Arborfield Strategic Development Location (Finchwood Park) and the Gorse Ride regeneration area.

Affordable Housing (Policy AHD6)

Proposals for new housing above must contain a proportion of affordable housing (in line with Wokingham Borough Council criteria)

Independent Living, Care and Vulnerable Housing (Policy AHD4)

Development proposals for older independent living housing accommodation for Care Homes and Vulnerable communities will be supported

Caravan and Mobile Home sites – (Policy AHD 7)

Finchampstead wishes to maintain caravan and mobile home sites at the level they are at present (January 2020).



Protecting our rural setting

The semi-rural nature of our parish and the sense of closeness to the countryside and open green spaces is repeatedly mentioned as what you most value about living in Finchampstead. A key objective of this Plan is to facilitate sustainable development in a way that blends in with, and protects, the more valuable parts of the countryside around us.

However, what we call 'countryside' is someone else's property and we must have specific reasons for asking for it to be kept as it is. To do this objectively, the Plan has designated certain areas of countryside against specific criteria, with explanations of why they are important.

Key facts about Finchampstead

- 39% of Finchampstead has tree cover
- Finchampstead has 28 Listed Buildings
- Our Local Green Spaces have over 340,000 visits each year
- Longmoor Bog is a site of Special Scientific Interest

Gaps between settlements

One of the community's biggest concerns is that the individual areas of current settlement become merged together into one great 'urban sprawl'. The Plan identifies five location (such as the fields near Sand Martins Golf Course) which must be protected from development if this is to be avoided.

Local Green Spaces

A constant message from the residents of Finchampstead is that they value 'their' green spaces.

The National Planning Policy Framework Guidance allows local authorities to designate areas as 'Local Green Spaces' where the green space is:

"...demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife..."

Our Plan proposes 20 locations to be designated as 'Local Green Space'

In our consultation with you in 2019 we stated:

'...we will aim to offer recreational spaces where local people and visitors can enjoy and appreciate the countryside. Specifically, the 'Crown Jewels' of the Parish such as Simons Wood, The Ridges, Blackwater Valley, California Country Park and others will continue to be protected for future generations to enjoy'.

92% of answers were in favour of this.

'Outstanding' Views

The shape of the land in Finchampstead provides some wonderful viewpoints which give us that sense of openness. Our Plan identifies four of the most important views and requires any plans for development to show how they will protect these views for the benefit of everybody.

The historic character of Finchampstead

Although Finchampstead has a rich history of continual settlement stretching back from the Iron Age, most of the settlement is largely post-Victorian and includes a high proportion of post-war and modern estate dwellings; generally, the architecture is unremarkable. Nevertheless, the Plan identifies a number of locations that need to be protected.

Informal green spaces

Beyond the specific definitions of valued green space, the Plan sets out other general principles which will help development proposals to recognise, respect and preserve the identity and semi-rural setting of the distinctive settlements and to protect the identity of Finchampstead Parish as a whole.

A selection of our policies about our rural setting

Below is a selection of the policies on protecting our rural setting. These are summarised, so the wording of the policy in the Plan may be different and may also reflect the required phraseology of the planning inspectorate.

The full list, with complete wording is available in sections 6 & 7 of the plan, online.

Key Gaps Between Settlements (Policy GS1)

The Neighbourhood Development Plan has identified five locations which represent gaps between defined settlements or other areas of habitation within the parish and these should be generally excluded from any development proposals.

Protection and enhancement of Local Green Spaces (Policy IRS1)

Development on the designated Local Green Spaces will only be permitted in very special circumstances.

Protection of Outstanding views (Policy IRS2)

New development will be required to demonstrate that it does not have an adverse impact on the landscape setting in particular the distinctive views.

Protection and enhancement of the historic character of the area (Policy IRS3)

Locally valued heritage assets have been identified in the Plan and development proposals should protect and enhance them where possible.

Protecting the identity of Finchampstead through informal green spaces (Policy IRS4)

Proposals for development will be supported when they make provision to preserve the semi-rural look and feel of the parish with its surrounding natural open environment, and the green spaces and gaps, both formal and informal.

Ecological Green Space and biodiversity (Policy IRS5)

Development will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that it will not have an adverse impact on local biodiversity or wildlife, especially areas designated as of importance for nature conservation.

Trees (Policy IRS6)

Development proposals should seek to retain mature or important trees, groups of trees or woodland on site.



Getting About

You have made it very clear that you are very concerned about traffic congestion on arterial routes and new development (of any size) must not make this worse. The volume of traffic combined with excess speeds; congestion at the pinch points; delays; and concern over safe movement, plus noise and atmospheric pollution in a perceived green environment causes significant concern to many.

The protection of Finchampstead and its environment requires an offset in the expected growth in traffic with the construction of low-cost alternative movement routes in Greenways and car-sharing.

How does the Plan manage increased traffic congestion?

Unfortunately, a range of issues from expenditure on major capital infrastructure to speed limits are outside the scope of a neighbourhood plan. The Plan can't control public transport either.

Instead, the Plan looks at managing capacity and will require any development proposals to show how they will integrate with arterial routes in a way that does not impede traffic flow, make pinch-points worse or create any additional pinch-points. Develop proposals must also protect the rural lane network from increased traffic flows, especially as 'rat-runs'. These include Barkham Ride, Commonfield Road, Park Lane, Whitehorse Lane, Dell Road and Lower Sandhurst Road/Ambarrow Lane.

Developing easier alternatives to driving

A lot of residents (although not all) would be happy to leave their car at home if only there were safe and easy alternatives available.

Residents feedback is clear on several points:

- Settlements need to be connected by safe routes. It is felt that it is not safe ('dangerous') to walk or cycle on the arterial roads: Jubilee Hill/Finchampstead Road, Barkham Ride, Reading Road and Nine Mile Ride.
- Safe routes are needed for getting to school.
- Cycleways are best if they are off-road and don't have to mix with traffic.
- Rights of Way are valued as access to Green Spaces and for leisure use, as well as linking communities.
- Greenways are great and need to be extended

The Plan sets out a number of polices that any development must follow to encourage less dependence on cars. However, the Plan does not just link this to development and encourages the Parish Council and Wokingham Borough Council to work together to develop safer and greener options for getting about the area.

Key facts about Finchampstead

- Each day there are **55,000** car movements in the Parish
- We have **34km** (21 miles) of Rights of Way
- There are **630** registered Horse owners in Finchampstead

In our consultation with you in 2019 we stated:

We will aim, where possible, to confine any traffic growth to the planned/ recognised arteries through the Parish. We will aim to reduce car usage locally through better opportunities for other types of travel such as cycle paths and a bike friendly environment, greenways, and better public transport where possible.

81% of answers were in favour of this.

A selection of our policies about how to improve options for getting about

Below is a selection of our policies on how to get about. These are summarised, so the wording of the policy in the Plan may be different and may also reflect the required phraseology of the planning inspectorate.

The full list, with complete wording is available in section 8 of the plan, online.

Minimise impact from development on local road network (Policy GA1)

Plans for any new developments must show how they integrate with arterial routes in a way that does not impede traffic flow or make pinch-points worse.

Reduction in car usage with safe personal mobility options (Policy GA2)

The Plan supports and encourages the building of Greenways within and between residential developments, protects existing Rights of Way and seeks support from stakeholders in the creation of new ones.

Thriving Communities

Residents are keen to maintain the ‘community feel’ of the parish, retaining the key elements that make it a place to live, work, relax and raise families. These include retail facilities, local businesses and a basic social and leisure infrastructure. Small local retail was the most favoured, followed by small business start-ups and artisan crafts.

Our Plan encourages planned economic regeneration, with the preference being for new enterprise to be located on Brownfield sites, and on existing business estates. As well as retail options, the Plan welcomes office-based enterprise, high-tech, light industry and services.

The Plan also recognises the need to make it easier for people to work from home.

Policies for developing thriving communities, including the protection of retail business space, commercial development in the countryside, supporting brownfield development and supporting home working are all set out in section 9 of the plan, online.

Our Vision for Finchampstead

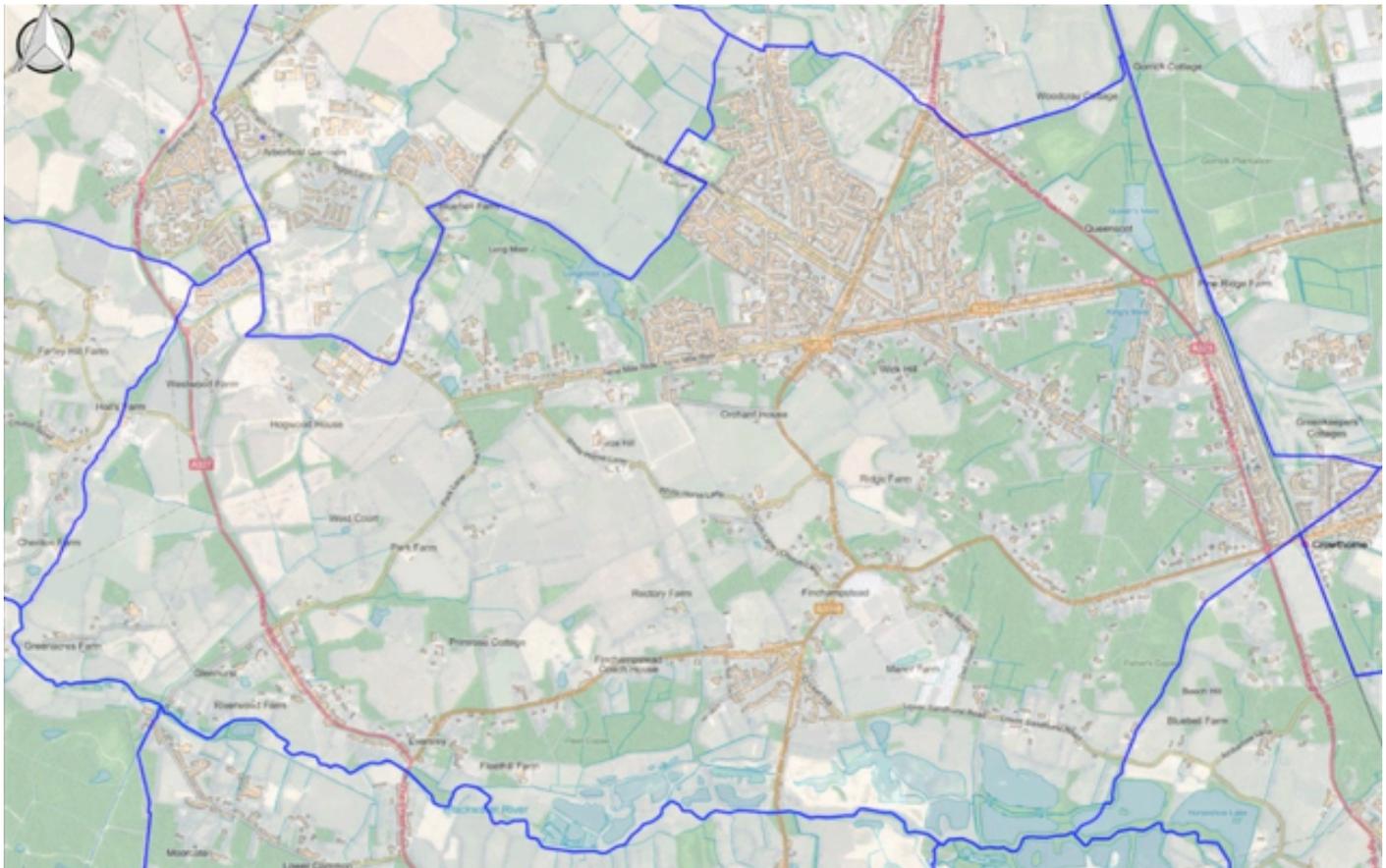
To embrace the need for change and to meet the expanding needs of a growing population whilst protecting those important things that have attracted generations of people to choose Finchampstead as a place to live and raise their families.

What the plan doesn't do...

The Plan can't say 'NO MORE HOUSES'. The government gives Wokingham Borough a housing target, which the authority must plan for. However, the Plan does allow us to say where they can and cannot be built. The good news is that apart from Finchwood Park, no major developments are proposed in our plan.

The Plan can't regulate traffic – the Plan is only about how land gets used. However, we have used the plan to highlight issues and ensure that any developments must include plans to mitigate traffic growth. We have used the plan to highlight the need for alternatives to car use, such as cycling and walking.

The Plan can't ask for more healthcare provision – that is the responsibility of the NHS.



What next?

The consultation runs for 6 weeks and ends on 19/03/2021.

You can comment on the plan through one of the following methods:

-  Email us at: ndp@finchampstead-pc.gov.uk
-  Write to us at: **FNDP, c/o Finchampstead Parish Council, FBC Centre, Gorse Ride North, Finchampstead, RG40 4ES**
-  Complete an online survey at: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FinchFutureFeedback>

This plan is important for you and for the look and feel of Finchampstead. Please let us have your views about our future.



St. James' Church



Longwater Lane



Parish of Finchampstead



Wellingtonia Avenue



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