

CONNECTING SPACES

Findon Wattle House Thinking Day Outcomes Report July 2026

Client: Findon Parish Council

Project: Community Thinking Day

Executive Summary

The Wattle House is one of Findon's most significant historic buildings and is believed to be the last surviving purpose-built Wattle House associated with the historic sheep fairs. Situated on Nepcote Green, the building remains an important symbol of the village's agricultural heritage and identity. As part of the early development of a long-term vision for the building, a Thinking Day was held on Wednesday 15 July 2026 between 3.00pm and 6.00pm at Findon Parish Hall. The event invited residents and stakeholders to consider how the Wattle House could be conserved and used in the future whilst respecting its historic significance. The event generated discussion and demonstrated a strong desire to preserve the building whilst making it a more active community asset. The feedback consistently highlighted education, heritage, community use and sensitive restoration as priorities.

1. What is a Thinking Day?

A Thinking Day is an informal community engagement event designed to encourage local people to share ideas and shape the future of an important community asset. The Findon Wattle House Thinking Day took place on Wednesday 15 July 2026, between 3.00pm and 6.00pm at Findon Parish Hall. Participants recorded their thoughts on flipcharts and discussion boards throughout the afternoon. The event was structured around a series of open questions encouraging residents to consider:

1. How could Findon use the Wattle House?
2. What should the building look like?
3. What activities should happen there?
4. Who should use the space?
5. How should parking and access be managed?

2. Target Audience

The Thinking Day sought views from:

- Residents
- Community organisations
- The Findon Sheep Fair Committee
- Visitors with an interest in the South Downs

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2.1 Attendance

Approximately 65 people attended throughout the afternoon, broken down as follows:

Age Group	Male	Female
0–18	6	3
18–25	0	0
26–40	0	3
40–55	0	2
55+	26	25

The audience was predominantly residents aged over 55, reflecting the strong local interest in the future of the building. There was also encouraging participation from younger families and children.

3. Community Feedback Overview

Across all discussions, several consistent themes emerged. The community overwhelmingly supports preserving the Wattle House but wishes to see it become a more active community resource whilst respecting its historic character. Four broad themes appeared repeatedly:

- Heritage conservation
- Education
- Community use
- Sensitive restoration

3.1 Question One: How can Findon use the Wattle House?

3.1.1 Heritage & Education The strongest theme was using the building as an educational resource. Suggestions included:

- Local history museum
- Sheep Fair interpretation
- Downs heritage centre
- Flint mining interpretation
- Nature education
- Schools learning space
- Heritage craft demonstrations

Many residents felt the building should become somewhere people could learn about Findon's history rather than simply view it.

3.1.2 Community Hub The emphasis was on creating somewhere local people could regularly use. Many respondents supported the creation of a small community space including:

- Drop-in café
- Community meeting place
- Workshops
- Art and craft activities

- Talks
- Clubs
- Small exhibitions

3.1.3 Sheep Fair Almost every discussion recognised the importance of the Sheep Fair. Residents strongly felt:

- Storage for Sheep Fair equipment must remain
- The building's historical connection with the Fair should never be lost
- Any future use must complement rather than replace this historic function

3.1.4 Sustainability Many comments recognised that whatever future use is chosen, the building needs to generate sufficient income to support its long-term maintenance.

3.2 Question Two: What would you like the space to look like?

The strongest message was remarkably consistent. Many people stressed that the building should remain recognisably the Wattle House. Residents wanted:

- Restoration rather than redevelopment
- Original appearance retained
- Historic character protected
- Traditional materials
- Windows restored
- Sensitive repairs

Additional suggestions included:

- Toilets
- Better flooring
- Water supply
- Small interpretation displays
- Outdoor seating

3.3 Question Three: What should happen here?

Residents envisaged a flexible building used throughout the year. A recurring suggestion was creating a Findon Museum telling the story of sheep farming, the Downs and village life. Suggested activities included:

- Heritage workshops
- Schools' visits
- Community café
- Craft demonstrations
- Local history exhibitions
- Walking information
- Small markets
- Talks

- Youth activities
- Village meetings

3.4 Question Four: Who should use the space?

Respondents saw the Wattle House serving both residents and visitors. Suggested users included:

- Local community
- Schools
- Scouts and Guides
- Walking groups
- Heritage organisations
- Visitors to the South Downs
- Artists
- Craft groups
- Families
- Volunteers

Several respondents suggested partnerships with organisations including:

- Weald & Downland Living Museum
- National Trust
- Sussex Wildlife Trust

3.5 Question Five: Parking & Access

Parking generated considerable discussion. The overwhelming majority opposed creating parking on Nepcote Green. This demonstrates that protecting the setting of the Wattle House is considered just as important as conserving the building itself. Key messages included:

- Protect the Green
- No large car park
- Improve existing parking where possible
- Provide disabled drop-off only
- Encourage walking and cycling
- Avoid increasing traffic

4. Overall Findings

Five clear priorities emerged:

4.1 Preserve the Building

Residents strongly support restoring rather than altering the Wattle House.

4.2 Celebrate Heritage

The building should tell the story of:

- Sheep Fair
- Agriculture

- Findon
- South Downs
- Rural crafts

4.3 Increase Community Use

The building should become active throughout the year rather than being used primarily for storage.

4.4 Support Education

Schools, heritage learning and practical craft skills featured throughout the consultation.

4.5 Respect Nephcote Green

Future development must protect the unique character of the Green and avoid inappropriate parking or overdevelopment.

5. Conclusion

The Thinking Day demonstrated overwhelming community affection for the Wattle House and recognition of its unique historic importance. Residents do not wish to see the building fundamentally changed. Instead, they support a carefully balanced approach that combines:

- conservation,
- interpretation,
- education,
- community activity,
- and sustainable management.

Perhaps the strongest message to emerge was that the Wattle House should remain a living part of Findon; celebrating the village's unique heritage whilst providing opportunities for learning, community activity and enjoyment for future generations.

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