

FINDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Environment and Sustainability

Findon Parish, an ancient downland village lies within the South Downs National Park. Whilst growing from a small farming village, it has maintained its environmental importance with Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (*SNCI*) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (*SSI*). Ancient Woodland, and the Environmental Stewardship scheme provides effective environmental management of much of the surrounding land (*Natural England www.naturalengland.org.uk*). It has a notable ancient hillside fort - Cissbury Ring - on its boundary, part of which is managed by the National Trust, and areas of unimproved chalk grassland and scrub areas support breeding and migrant birds as well as varied butterfly fauna (*SSI, AONB*) (**Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre <http://sxbrc.org.uk/data-requests>**)

Historically sheep pasture has been important to Findon, with its noted Sheep Fair held every September for over 200 years on the Nepcote Green. The nearby hard chalk Gallops have nurtured successful racing stables in the Parish over many years, they remain an important contributor to the local business and character of the village by maintaining areas of grassland and wild flora and valued open spaces for enjoyment and recreation.

The *Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (Biodiversitysussex.org.uk)* notes that the lowland chalky grassland, ancient woodland (with noted ancient trees) and hedgerows, wood pasture and parklands within the Parish support diverse plant, bird and animal species including some whose population and range has rapidly declined in recent years (**Red List – Species Globally Threatened**). These include six on the Protected Species Register (Fairy Shrimp, Hazel Dormouse, Slow-worm, Common Lizard, Adders & Grass Snake), in addition five species of bats have been recorded. 36 birds are recorded on their Birds of Conservation Concern Red list and 53 on their Amber list, plus 199 significant breeding birds and 109 rare species have been recorded.

The sympathetic management of the woodland and hedgerows have provided a refuge for many woodland and farmland species, and are a primary habitat for species of conservation concern as well as acting as a barrier to soil erosion and linking safe corridor for birds and animals. (**Habitat Action Plan for Sussex biodiversitysussex.org.uk**). Within the Parish boundary the arable farmlands provide valuable varieties of feeding opportunities throughout the year and over-wintering stubble alleviate runoff and soil erosion while providing essential feed for the yellowhammers (**Biodiversity Action Plan, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, Species Globally Threatened**), Chaffinch, Skylark, that have also been recorded within the parish. Although Findon does not at the moment suffer greatly from localised flooding it has in the past seen the results of poor land management in the winter. The Parish has a notable amount of Tree Preservation orders (**Arun.gov.uk**) and benefits from retained old strips of roadside planting providing sanctuary and nesting sites for birds and small mammals, green vistas and valuable aid to water retention in times of heavy rainfall.

The important recreational and business rewards to the local economy as well as the enjoyment that the area provides with significant long distance bridle and cycle ways along well established routes

between villages and towns cannot be underestimated. With the National Monarchs way and South Downs Walks within close proximity and increasing loss of urban green spaces it is now recognised through the recently created South Downs National Park the Parish is in a position to enhance and preserve a valuable landscape for the future.