



Finchampstead
Parish Council

FORWARD PLAN 2013 - 2018

INDEX

Introduction	Page 3
Description of the Parish	3
The Parish Today	3
The Parish Tomorrow	4
Parish Council strategic priorities	4
Parish Council Committee objectives and actions	4
Finance and General Purposes	5
Amenities	6
Footpaths	8
Planning	10
Roads & Road Safety	11

INTRODUCTION

Finchampstead Parish Council prepared its first forward plan for the period 2005 – 2010. The plan identified areas that provided opportunities for the Parish Council to make improvements to the quality of life in Finchampstead for parishioners. Many objectives have been achieved, including the development of the FBC Centre, others are continuing or have been superseded. Some projects not included in the previous plan have also been achieved, notably the allotment site.

Finchampstead Parish Council has 17 Councillors, 7 representing the North Ward, 8 the South and two the Lower Wokingham Ward. The Council aims to protect and improve the Parish for its residents, through work undertaken by the Councils five Committees - Amenities, Finance & General Purposes, Footpaths, Planning and Roads & Road Safety.

The Council's work includes facilitating projects, supporting and working in partnership with others and it has representatives on many local groups and organisations, from the Neighbourhood Action Group to the Council for the Protection of Rural England. Close liaison is maintained with Wokingham Borough Council over many issues, as well as with neighbouring parishes.

This plan sets out the objectives of Finchampstead Parish Council for the period 2013 - 2018. The plan will be updated as appropriate during its lifespan, and progress will be closely monitored and reported in the Councils Annual Report.

DESCRIPTION

Finchampstead lies in the south-east corner of Wokingham Borough. It covers an area of approximately 19.35 square Kilometres, or 7.47 square miles, and includes rural and residential areas. It runs from the Ford Garage on Finchampstead Road in the north, to the Blackwater River in the south, and from Crowthorne Station in the east to the Tally Ho Restaurant on the Reading Road in the west.

Finchampstead divides between the North and South wards of the parish. The "Village" is the centre of the southern area. This area is less closely developed and has an abundance of open spaces such as Finchampstead Ridges and Simons Wood, both owned by the National Trust, and the Memorial Park. The northern area, although more intensively developed, has open areas such as the California Country Park and the playing fields around the FBC Centre, but is generally a less rural area than the South Ward of the parish.

THE PARISH TODAY

The Parish population is approximately 12,000, with an electorate of around 9500.

In recent years there has been considerable residential development, often without the provision of appropriate infrastructure. There has been a trend towards larger higher priced properties, with few starter homes or smaller properties built.

Most working residents do not work locally. There is no railway station in the parish, and public transport is limited. Traffic congestion is an increasing issue during morning and evening rush hours. Many roads in the Parish are unsuitable for large vehicles that service local shops and businesses, or which pass through the Parish on route to other destinations

There are five schools located within the parish, including Finchampstead CE Primary School, Nine Mile Ride Primary School, Gorse Ride Infant School, Gorse Ride Junior School and Waverley School. There is no secondary school in the parish.

Community halls in the parish include the Memorial Hall in The Village, the California (Ratepayers) Hall at California cross-roads, and the FBC Centre in Gorse Ride. The FBC Centre is the base for the Baptist Church, also housing a sports hall, meeting and function rooms, the library, Parish Council and Police offices, and a café. Other churches in the Parish are St. James' CE Church, and St. Mary and St. John's CE Church.

Finchampstead is fortunate to have over 26 miles of rights of way, as well as several large areas of National Trust land which also give access for walking and riding. California Country Park provides scope for family outings and has a children's paddling pool which is extensively used in the summer months. Warren Wood Country Park, and also Rooks Nest Wood which is just outside the Parish provide for informal recreation. Moor Green Lakes, part of the Blackwater Valley, is valuable for both wildlife and recreation, as is the BBOWT Nature Reserve at Shepperlands Farm. Burnmoor Meadow is another informal open space.

The Memorial Park has cricket and football pitches, and a thriving sports club. There is a play area at the Park, and play areas are also found at the Gorse Ride Playing Fields, Woodmoor and a number of other smaller open spaces throughout the Parish. An allotment site was opened in 2012.

Local groups play an active role in protecting and improving the Parish. These include the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Action Group, the Finchampstead Society and other special interest groups.

THE PARISH TOMORROW

Over the next 20 years, development at Arborfield – one of the Wokingham Borough Strategic Development Locations - will bring a further 3500 houses to the area, along with a secondary school, two primary schools, community and recreational facilities. There will also be shops and commercial development. Only part of the development area is within Finchampstead, but the development overall will bring the Parish both benefits such as school provision and employment opportunities, but also threats, largely over traffic and transport issues.

Other changes may come with the increasing focus on localism encouraging more local provision and management of services and facilities, and potential devolution of services from the Borough Council.

The importance of the Blackwater Valley as a local resource for recreation and wildlife will continue to grow, with the addition of further areas of nature reserve following the completion of gravel extraction.

PARISH COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Protecting the character and features of the Parish
- Influencing development and ensuring provision of appropriate infrastructure
- Managing traffic
- Ensuring local amenities and facilities – educational, recreational and commercial – meet the needs of residents.
- Developing a stronger sense of community

PARISH COUNCIL OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

- Objectives are grouped below by Committee, along with more detailed actions.
- Progress against these objectives will be monitored by each Committee, collated twice a year, and reported at the Annual Parish Meeting (the Annual Gathering) and in an Annual Report.

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
FGP1 Financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor income and expenditure and to ensure appropriate levels of reserves. • Develop proposals for the precept for recommendation to the Council. • Oversee the internal audit and preparation of accounts for the annual return. • Ensure that the Councils banking arrangements are efficient and cost effective. • Monitor progress with the change in legislation to allow online banking by Local Councils. • Maximise interest receipts on any cash reserves.
FGP2 Risk and asset management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee the Risk Management process for the Council and ensure appropriate insurance cover is in place. • Maintain the asset register, digitising where possible. Carry out the annual asset inspection and ensure that required works are undertaken.
FGP3 General management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and other Council policies are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. • Regularly review office accommodation, staff terms and conditions and office systems used to ensure these are appropriate and cost effective. • Consider appropriate training opportunities for staff and Councillors. • Monitor progress on actions contained in the Forward Plan. • Produce an annual report for distribution at the Annual Gathering (the Annual Parish Meeting). • Consider seeking Quality Council status when the scheme is re-launched (potentially in 2013). • Establish what Developer Contributions have been secured from developments in the Parish and what these have been/will be spent on.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress with the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and implications for the Council. • Monitor progress with WBC plans for the devolution of services and implications for the Council. • Monitor progress with WBC plans regarding governance for the Arborfield SDL and implications for the Council.
FGP4 Communication and Parish profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee the continued development of the web site. • Aim to improve communication with residents. • Consider the use of social media.
FGP5 Grants and support for local organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess applications for grants and support for local organisations and activities. • Keep the grant policy and mechanism for assessment under review.

AMENITIES

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS
AM1 Protect and enhance local open spaces and facilities within them	<p>California Country Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with WBC over the CCP Vision and future improvements to the Park and ensure the Council is fully involved in any consultation process. • Assist the Scouts with improvements to their base in the Park. • Contribute to the cost of running the paddling pool, if income does not cover costs. <p>Memorial Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage FPMC and the Sports Club to resolve parking issues. <p>Burnmoor Meadow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the open space and liaise with WBC over maintenance issues and potential improvements. • Encourage additional tree planting. • Investigate a potential wildflower meadow. <p>Access to open space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and encourage public access to open space including National Trust land, WBC Country Parks and open

	<p>spaces, and SANGS.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage provision of seats and interpretation/information. • Monitor progress with land west of Longwater Road following completion of gravel extraction, and seek to ensure appropriate restoration for access and amenity for residents as well as for wildlife. (With Footpaths Committee).
<p>AM2 Seek to ensure appropriate recreational and community facilities and amenities are available for residents of all ages</p>	<p>Facilities for young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with WBC, FinchNAG and others towards provision of a skate park, MUGA or other facility for young people. • Continue to support youth work and activities provided through the FBC Centre and WBC. <p>Allotments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to manage the site in partnership with the Allotment Association. • Aim to purchase the freeholds to secure the allotments for the future. <p>Exercise equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish local opinion on adult/community outdoor exercise equipment or a fitness park. • Investigate locations, costs and sources of funding as appropriate. <p>Community Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Community Trip scheme, promote locally and aim to extend to other areas of the Parish. <p>Foodbank Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to assess the viability of a local scheme. <p>Seating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide and maintain seats in appropriate locations. • Map all seats and benches in the Memorial Park and clarify ownership/responsibility with FPMC. <p>Bus shelters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor condition of two Parish owned bus shelters and arrange maintenance work as required.
<p>AM3 Protect and enhance historic features and amenities</p>	<p>War Memorial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the Memorial and its surrounds. • Implement repair works to the Memorial in 2013. <p>Area opposite War Memorial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to research the unregistered land near the Memorial. <p>Jubilee Trees and Commemorative features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor, and seek to ensure the features are maintained and protected.

	<p>World War 1 centenary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider if and how to commemorate the WW1 centenary in August 2014.
<p>AM4 Improve and enhance the local environment</p>	<p>Litter and waste</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to employ a Litter Warden for litter clearance and cleaning of road signs Continue to fund the Saturday refuse vehicle programme. Promote and extend the adopt a street scheme. Investigate ways to reduce flytipping. Improve recycling information on the Parish website. <p>Hanging Baskets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide summer and winter baskets at the California Crossroads.
<p>AM5 Communication and information</p>	<p>Parish Noticeboards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the boards and keep updated with Parish Council information and information on other local events and activities. <p>Street map</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to distribute the street map through appropriate outlets. <p>Welcome Pack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to produce welcome packs for new residents and regularly review content to ensure packs are up to date. Monitor numbers distributed through each outlet, and consider alternative outlets.

FOOTPATHS

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
<p>FP1 Work with WBC, landowners and local organisations to ensure the rights of way network is well maintained</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to employ Footpath warden and fund extra work if required by climatic or other conditions. Work with WBC to resolve drainage issues including those on FP12,FP33,FP15, FP54,FP26 and BP11. Encourage adoption of footpaths or other cooperative efforts by residents / local groups where appropriate eg FP12.
<p>FP2 Improve accessibility and signage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace stiles with kissing gates (or gaps) beginning with two on FP29 and FP33 in 2013. Look into improving access/provision for the disabled / less mobile / dog walkers / horse riders.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct signage survey and improve where necessary. • Look at ways to increase funding for kissing gates and other enhancements beyond reliance on Parish and WBC Funds.
<p>FP3 Promote local footpaths and encourage use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put information on circular walks on the Parish website – first 3 in 2013 – follow up in 2014 and 2015. • Put updated Parish Walks map (suitable for downloading) on website 2013. • Set up suitable links on website to NT, Loddon Valley Ramblers, Health Walks, WBC Countryside interactive map. • Seek to include our Parish Walks on other organisations websites which promote walking. • Promote and support local walks and walking events eg on the Blackwater Valley Path, Health Walks, Finchampstead Society. • Purchase and install wayfinding and any other signage required for the Parish Walks in suitable timeframe.
<p>FP4 Actively pursue opportunities to enhance and extend the local rights of way network network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to follow up Wick Hill bridleway designation with WBC. • Seek to change status of FP19 to Bridleway. • Work with Cemex/ WBC / BVCP and any other interested parties to ensure appropriate restoration of Manor Farm and Fleet Hill for access and amenity for residents as well as for wildlife following completion of gravel extraction. (With Amenities Committee). • Should realistic opportunity arise (such as change of landowner or change in the law regarding ROWs) seek to re-establish the missing link btw Bridleway 34 and 36 (from previous plan). • Support provision of new footpaths and bridleway within the Arborfield SDL and links to the existing network and ensure that these are done in an appropriate and acceptable manner. • Encourage and support WBC in implementing the provisions of ROWIP for circular routes and new routes to link Finchampstead paths to the wider network. • Identify any historic paths in the Parish not shown on the Definitive Map and have them included before the proposed 2026 deadline if necessary.

<p>FP5 Improve management and documentation of Footpaths activities and communicate more effectively with stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place footpaths survey on website – phase 1 in 2013 and phase 2 in 2014. • Establish a register of major landowners and build good relationships. • Build more effective relationships with interested stakeholders – Ramblers, BVCP, WBC, West Berks Access Forum, U3A, NT, Focus on Finch, Finch Society , Health Walks, BHS etc. • Consider involvement in the Local Access Forum.
--	--

PLANNING

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
<p>PL1 Maintain the character and semi-rural status of the Parish</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resist any further encroachment into Greenfield sites and aim to maintain the green gaps and wedges between settlements. • Object to all proposals where development is in front of the existing building line, in order to avoid urbanisation and to maintain the character of the road or lane. • Aim to ensure that any new development is aesthetically in keeping with other properties in the area.
<p>PL2 Consider all development proposals and submit comments to WBC</p>	<p>Residential development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oppose further high density development outside of the Arborfield SDL. • Aim to ensure that future developments feature a mix of housing types and tenures, including smaller properties for those downsizing. • Resist further Traveller Sites while there are vacancies on existing sites within Wokingham Borough. • Encourage affordable housing to enable young people to stay in the area as well as catering for elderly, disabled and keyworkers. • Monitor the Rural Exception Site policy in relation to Affordable Housing. <p>Commercial, industrial and business development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the local economy and aim to retain shops, post offices and small businesses currently located in the Parish and expand provision where possible. • Applications to turn farm buildings or similar into semi industrial enterprises or workshops will each be considered on their merits and whether they are in keeping with the semi rural nature of the Parish.

	<p>Other development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Object to any telecommunications masts proposed to be built in a settlement area close to properties and schools. • Monitor any applications for mineral extraction to ensure that the impact on local residents and roads is minimised. • Monitor the reinstatement of land following mineral extraction to ensure that it adheres to the agreed plan. <p>Arborfield SDL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor carefully the progress of the Arborfield SDL development, in liaison with other Committees, WBC and other partners. • Monitor proposed changes to the Hogwood Industrial Estate.
PL3 Enforcement issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to report planning violations to WBC. • Monitor sites subject to enforcement action and aim to ensure a satisfactory outcome is achieved.
PL4 Protect trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek Tree Preservation Orders where appropriate to protect the character of the Parish. • Consider and comment on applications for works to Protected trees.
PL5 Liaison with WBC and other bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain regular dialogue with the Borough Council on all aspects of planning and enforcement. • Liaise with the Borough Council over developer contributions to ensure appropriate infrastructure is provided in conjunction with development, and / or developer contributions are secured towards appropriate related provision. • Liaise with neighbouring Parishes over development proposals where appropriate. • Monitor the number of houses built in comparison with those given permission.
PL6 Planning Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Councils Planning Guidelines annually to ensure these are relevant and complement WBC policies.

ROADS & ROAD SAFETY

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS
RRS1 Work with partners to identify and address local road traffic	<p>Speed data recorders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use two units in regular approved locations to collect data on traffic speed and volume, analyse data and share with WBC and TVP.

<p>issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep locations under review to ensure best use of units to address current issues eg in connection with the Arborfield development. • Use in other locations as required to assess problems reported. <p>SID Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist TVP with regular SID sessions to address speeding issues. <p>Arborfield SDL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with WBC, partners and other Parish Committees over proposed junction changes/improvements in relation to the development, and over appropriate transport infrastructure provision to minimise impacts on the Parish. <p>Road traffic incidents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor accidents and other incidents.
<p>RRS2 Improve road safety especially for school children</p>	<p>Avery Corner Car park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor success of new footway to nursery implemented May 2013. • Encourage completion of second phase by WBC including reduction of the central island, modifying parking bay layout and relocating recycling bays. • Create school drop off zone.
<p>RRS3 Encourage the use of sustainable transport</p>	<p>Cycle parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the landowner and WBC to install cycle racks at the California Cross road shops. <p>Links between The Village and Finchampstead North</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to encourage WBC to create a dual use footway /cycleway on Jubilee Road B3016. • Continue to encourage WBC to provide additional footway at Junction of Church Lane / Finchampstead Road B3016.
<p>RRS4 Enhance entrances to the Parish</p>	<p>Gateway Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop proposals for features at Parish entrances, to create identity and to reinforce speed limit information . For phased implementation subject to budget. • Introduce Roundels or other appropriate road markings on problematic roads to reinforce the speed limit.
<p>RRS5 Manage and maintain Council owned roadside assets</p>	<p>Street lights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange appropriate maintenance for the 17 Parish owned streetlamps. • Use digital mapping system to record details of lamps. • Look into introducing part night lighting as now introduced by WBC. • Arrange removal or replacement of 3 concrete lampposts.

<p>RRS6 Liaise with partners to share information for the benefit of the road network and safety for users</p>	<p>Major Projects meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend Major Projects Meetings to gain information on works affecting the local road network, and to ensure Parish interests are represented. <p>Road maintenance and signage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report road maintenance issues to WBC. • Collate details of missing, damaged or outdated signage and street furniture and forward to WBC. <p>Consultations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to and monitor progress with WBC consultations on strategies and other plans.
--	--