

Agenda Item 7
Report PC22/23-27

Report to	Planning Committee
Date	9 March 2023
By	Director of Planning
Title of Report	Proposed Nepcote Conservation Area
Purpose of Report	To designate part of Findon Parish, known as Nepcote, as a Conservation Area To seek adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan for the purposes of development management and to inform the wider activities of the National Park Authority and its partners.

Decision

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Approve the designation of the area identified on the map forming Appendix I to this report as a Conservation Area under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.**
- 2. Endorse and adopt the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP), forming Appendix II to this report, for the purposes of development management and to inform the wider activities of the National Park Authority and its partners.**

Executive Summary

- Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to “from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” and, having done that, “designate those areas as conservation areas”
- The area of Nepcote Green, Cissbury parkland, and the hamlet of Nepcote has been identified as potentially having the special architectural or historic interest referred to in Section 69. This is described in the CAAMP attached as annex II to this report.
- The proposal to designate the conservation area and the contents of the CAAMP were both the subject of a public consultation exercise. Because of this, the boundaries of the putative conservation area have been amended and the CAAMP substantially revised.
- Should the recommendation to approve the designation be supported, it would be the first new conservation area created since the inception of the National Park Authority.

I. Background

- I.1** At its inception, the National Park Authority inherited 166 conservation areas from its predecessor authorities, more than any other UK National Park. As a result, virtually all of

the areas within it that met the requirements of Section 69 had already been designated and there are relatively few opportunities for new designations.

- 1.2 In considering the possibility of making Nepcote a conservation area, Officers were responding to an initiative from the Findon Neighbourhood Planning Group. Paragraph 3.3.7 of the first iteration of the Findon Neighbourhood Plan noted that “A second Conservation Area centred on Nepcote is under consideration at the request of the Neighbourhood Planning Group ... This addition was welcomed by the residents when presented at the open events”. These words were repeated in the updated version of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.3 At that stage, the Parish Council’s interest centred on Nepcote Green. This is an attractive open space, which has long been the location of one of the most important sheep fairs in Sussex. Given the importance of sheep husbandry to the South Downs, this gives the site a particular local resonance which is reinforced by the presence of the Wattle House, a Grade II listed building purposely built to store the wattles used to corral the sheep. A number of other attractive buildings, including two listed cottages, are located on the perimeter of the site.
- 1.4 Whilst investigating this possibility, Officers recognised that other adjoining areas, most notably Cissbury and its parkland but also including the small hamlet, probably a squatters settlement in origin, also had the special architectural or historic interest referred to in the legislation.
- 1.5 Cissbury is an early 19th century parkland, associated with a smaller country house, Cissbury, which is Grade II listed. It appears to be a ‘post-medieval gentrified parkscape’, where a park has been created by removing elements of past land use such as hedges and adding more formal tree planting, and perhaps plantations, and water features. As such, it has similarities with the park at Castle Goring, which was incorporated into that conservation area with an extension approved in May 2016. The garden is not on the National Register but is almost certainly a non-designated heritage asset and forms the setting of the listed house. Sussex Garden History Society have supported its inclusion in the proposed conservation area.
- 1.6 The lane known as Nepcote contains some listed buildings and others that retain sufficient architectural merit to make a positive contribution to a conservation area. These are identified on Figure 32 of the CAAMP. Others are more modern and are best viewed as neutral. It is an interesting example of a squatter’s settlement.
- 1.7 From within the proposed conservation area, the visual interconnection from the Green and the lane through to the actual parkland is limited and varies with the seasons. However, its boundary walls are very visible, as is some of its woodland planting, and the whole parkland is laid out in full view from the top of Cissbury Hill.
- 1.8 Conservation Areas are not required or expected to be homogeneous in character and many of the larger ones have distinct character sub-areas. This would be the case for the proposed conservation area, with three adjoining areas all having their own characters, which are dependent on each other to varying degrees. This variable character should not be viewed as an obstacle to the proposal to designate.

2. Public Consultation

- 2.1 The gestation of the proposal has been a long one, being considerably affected by the general impact of the Covid pandemic and its specific impact on the officer working on it.
- 2.2 A draft CAAMP was the subject of a public consultation that ran from 1 March 2020 to 8 June 2020. This consultation period was extended beyond the normal six weeks in recognition of the difficult times in which it was happening.
- 2.3 As part of the exercise, letters were sent to every property within the proposed boundaries of the conservation area, as well as to the Parish Council, Arun District Council, and West Sussex County Council. The draft document was available on the Authority’s website.
- 2.4 Two distinct questions were asked of the consultees; (1) was the principle of a conservation area as set out in the draft CAAMP accepted? and (2), if it was, did they have any comments or observations to make on the contents of the draft CAAMP?

2.5 When presenting revised CAAMPs for committee's consideration, comments received are usually presented in tabular form. However, recognizing that this is a completely new designation raising more fundamental issues than our normal CAAMP reviews, they are included here in a more discursive format. As normal, no names are given, but the interests of the respondents in the area are described.

2.6 The respondents to the public consultation fall into three groups; those whose primary interest is as a resident of Nepcote; those who own land beyond a normal residential curtilage and/or run businesses in Nepcote; and local government bodies.

3. Residents of Nepcote

3.1 Twelve representations were received from people who fall into this group.

3.2 Eight of them offered unqualified support for the proposed conservation area.

3.3 A ninth generally supported the proposal and provided a lot of additional information, most of which has been incorporated into the revised CAAMP to its great benefit.

3.4 A tenth supported the designation subject to a series of comments. These included (i) the suggestion that there is no heritage connection and little visual connect between the Green and Cissbury, and that the latter should be removed from the Conservation Area, and (ii) the history of horse racing is important and that the boundary should be extended to include Soldiers Field House and Soldiers Field Stables sites, as well as the Downs Racing Stables and the footpath extending north from it. This first point is addressed in the Background section of this report, whilst the second point is considered in the discussion of the proposed boundaries in the draft CAAMP. As neither of the respondent's comments have been accepted, this representation should be regarded as neutral.

3.5 The eleventh respondent was neutral in terms of the overall proposal, but did query the rationale behind the proposed boundary on the west side of Nepcote, which is described as resembling a jigsaw puzzle. This boundary was reviewed because of this comment and has been amended to make it more logical.

3.6 The final representation from a resident was an objection to the overall proposal as it would create potentially unquantifiable cost impacts on all residences; introduce a new layer of needless bureaucracy (& again cost); and has too broad a scope that will lead to needless additional cost to the Authority at a time when money is tight. He did offer support for a designation covering the Green, but questioned why such a large area of unrelated private land and dwellings had been captured.

4. Land and/or Business Owners with Nepcote

4.1 The nature of these responses was quite different, often being very detailed and in some cases including reports from professional advisors. The paragraphs below summarise the key points made:

4.2 A significant landowner in the proposed conservation area made his own comments by letter and submitted a report, prepared for him by Cotswold Archaeology, on the draft CAAMP and a document prepared by Complete Land Management (CLM).

4.3 The letter sets out his objections under a series of headings; general points; heritage assets; pre-assessment planning process; and management of the farm lands and woods. The following paragraphs follow the same order as the points in the letter.

4.4 General points: the land is private, not crossed by any public footpaths and not accessible to the general public, so why should it be included in any conservation area? Proposed response: No Change. The facts are accurate and could apply to parts of many conservation areas. It remains officers' judgement that the land is a non-designated heritage asset that is otherwise without any heritage protection and one that is highly visible within the wider landscape, as shown by Figure 7 of the draft CAAMP.

4.5 Heritage assets: attached to the letter is a report from Cotswold Archaeology that indicates that much of the land and buildings within the proposed conservation area beyond the Green do not warrant being classified as heritage assets. Proposed response: No Change.

This is based on a professional judgement, which can be challenged, but in this case, the recommendation to members is that the original justification as set out in the document is maintained.

- 4.6 It is suggested that the “pre-assessment planning process” adds cost and uncertainty with regard to future planning applications and thereby hinders business. Proposed response: No Change. Assuming that the reference to ‘pre-assessment process’ refers to a pre-application inquiry, this is recommended as advice in Section 6.22 of the Management Plan. It is sound advice, encouraged by central government, which the National Park Authority would offer in almost all cases. In contrast with the suggestion in the letter, it is actually intended to reduce costs and uncertainty in the planning process and often helps to save an applicant abortive and expensive work. The CAAMP does not, and cannot, require the submission of a pre-application enquiry.
- 4.7 Management of the farm land and woods. The report from CLM is invoked in support of the farm land. This refers to Higher Level Stewardship of the land and its objectives of providing a suitable habitat for farmland birds that are typical in the South Downs and the preservation of the remain of a Roman settlement in Bank Field. Proposed response: No Change. Beyond an erroneous reference to “widescale planting of trees”, there is no explanation of how or why conservation area designation would threaten the achievements of the HLS programme.
- 4.8 The letter states that one of the main concerns relates to the management of the woods. Proposed response: No Change. Conservation Area designation does give a degree of protection to trees, although it is not as strict as a tree preservation order. The issue has been recognised and a whole section of the management plan - paragraphs 6.14 to 6.20 plus Actions 6 and 7 - is devoted to it. This was included to offer the landowner some reassurance on the good intentions of the National Park Authority.
- 4.9 Strutt and Parker has submitted a letter on behalf of owners of unidentified land within the proposed conservation area. The letter states that their clients do not object to the establishment of an additional conservation area at Findon, nor one based around the Nepcote Green. However, they did object to the inclusion of land in the south-west part of the then proposed boundary. Proposed response: In part as a result of this objection, the great majority of that area has been removed from the proposal and is identified in the CAAMP as being outside the conservation area but particularly significant in defining its setting. The letter goes on to suggest that Cissbury parkland and the hamlet lack the heritage significance to justify inclusion in a conservation area. Proposed response: this is a professional judgement and paragraphs 1.4 to 1.7 plus the CAAMP set out the alternative view. No Change.
- 4.10 The holder of the Farm Business tenancy at Cissbury Farm has objected to the inclusion of agricultural land because of the impact it would have on his ability to manage the land in accordance with the Higher Level Stewardship scheme, particularly if the parkland is replanted with trees to take it back it how it was 150 years ago, thereby reducing the acreage that can be used for arable crops and livestock grazing. This letter was accompanied by the same document prepared by Complete Land Management referred to in paragraph 4.7. Proposed response: No Change.
- 4.11 The letter from the Farm Business does not explain how its author believes that designation as a Conservation Area would affect his operations. The only clues are the reference to replanting of trees in the letter and a reference in the CLM document to the widescale planting of trees.
- 4.12 This does to some degree represent a misunderstanding of the intentions and powers of the conservation area designation. One purpose of a CAAMP is to identify possible enhancements to a conservation area and, in paragraph 5.9 of the CAAMP, the possibility of some historic landscape restoration, which would include some limited tree planting, is correctly identified. However, it is important to understand that this particular enhancement suggestion, and most others, are aspirational and cannot be imposed on the landowner or farmer against their wishes.

- 4.13 An owner of an equestrian business within the proposed conservation area objects to the inclusion of her site in the conservation area. The owner has ambitious plans to further adapt the land and building and believes that inclusion in a conservation will increase the expense by requiring her to go through a 'pre-assessment process', plus a requirement to "use original materials where possible on what are effectively redundant agricultural buildings". Proposed response: No Change.
- 4.14 In response to the first of these, see the comments in paragraph 4.6. It is difficult to comment on the suggestion that original materials would have to be used on redundant buildings outside of a specific proposal. However, it should be noted that, irrespective of a conservation designation, traditional farm buildings frequently make a significant contribution to the landscape character of the National Park and, in this specific instance, to the setting of an important listed building, so proposals relating to them will usually bring the sort of issue mentioned.
- 4.15 Finally in this section, Gillings Planning has submitted a representation on behalf of a client who owns land to the north of the conservation area and without the proposed boundaries. The representation points out that this land is allocated for 10-12 dwellings in our Local Plan. It goes on to say that the client has no objection to the proposed conservation area or its boundaries but does object to the wording of paragraph 5.8 of the draft CAAMP, which states that "the use of well-managed hedges with fences on either side to divide the paddocks would produce both visual improvement and secure other benefits for the natural environment".
- 4.16 Gilling's client believes that this phrase is too prescriptive and suggests that the original text should be amended to read "The use of other methods of enclosure, including well managed hedges or tree belts with fences on either side to divide the paddocks would produce both visual improvement and secure other benefits for the natural environment". Proposed response: No Change.
- 4.17 This is an issue relating to the wider landscape, rather than the conservation area specifically, perhaps other than its setting, and the original words are those of the Authority's Landscape Officer. She has confirmed that she does not consider the suggested amendment to be appropriate and the document has not been revised.

5. Local Government Bodies

- 5.1 Findon Parish Council has given a mixed response to the original proposal. As might be expected, it supports the designation of the Green, but questions the merits of including Nepcote lane and does not support the inclusion of Cissbury parkland, endorsing the landowner's objection to its inclusion.
- 5.2 Findon Neighbourhood Planning (Amended 2020) Working Group has presented a substantial body of evidence in support of a northern extension of the proposed boundaries to incorporate areas associated with the horse racing industry. This was considered in paragraphs 4.35 to 4.39 of the draft CAAMP and the suggestion discounted. Having said that, there was recognition that this area was particularly important in the setting of the conservation area and this is identified in Figure 6 of the CAAMP.
- 5.3 The Conservation Officer at Arun District Council has commented that he has reviewed the draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan, and believes that a comprehensive case has been made for the identification of a new conservation area. He further notes that the designation will help to ensure that the National Park Authority meets its duty under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to "from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" and, having done that, "designate those areas as conservation areas".

- 6.2 For the reasons set out in this report and the CAAMP attached as Appendix II, the area identified on the map forming Appendix I is considered to be one of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.
- 6.3 Accordingly, the area should be designated as a conservation area as required by Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- 6.4 A two part recommendation is made; that the area be designated as a Conservation Area, and that the CAAMP attached as Appendix II be adopted by the National Park Authority for the purposes of development management and to inform the wider activities of the National Park Authority and its partners.

7. Other implications

7.1 Designation as a conservation area is a local land change

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	<p>There are no direct financial implications in terms of expenditure but it is possible that there may be a small impact on officer time in terms of additional planning applications. These would be met from existing resources</p> <p>By providing advice to the public and the Development Management team, the CAAMP should improve the quality of planning applications and reduce the time taken to determine them.</p> <p>The Management Plan contains a number of recommendations, but none directly requires a financial input from the Authority.</p>
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	Not applicable
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	<p>PMP Outcome 1.1 To protect that natural beauty and character of the National Park.</p> <p>PMP Outcome 4.1 To increase conservation. Awareness, access to and understanding of South Downs cultural heritage.</p>
Links to other projects or partner organisations	None
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	No direct contribution
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	No implications
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes, insofar as no such impacts have been identified

Implication	Yes*/No
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	It does have an impact on the rights of property owners in the proposed conservation area. However, given the role of the planning system in protecting the historic environment, this is considered to be proportionate with the aims sought to be realised.
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	None
Are there any Data Protection implications?	None
<p>Are there any Sustainability implications based on the 5 principles set out in the SDNPA Sustainability Strategy?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Living within environmental limits 2. Ensuring a strong healthy and just society 3. Achieving a sustainable economy 4. Promoting good governance 5. Using sound science responsibly 	None

8. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

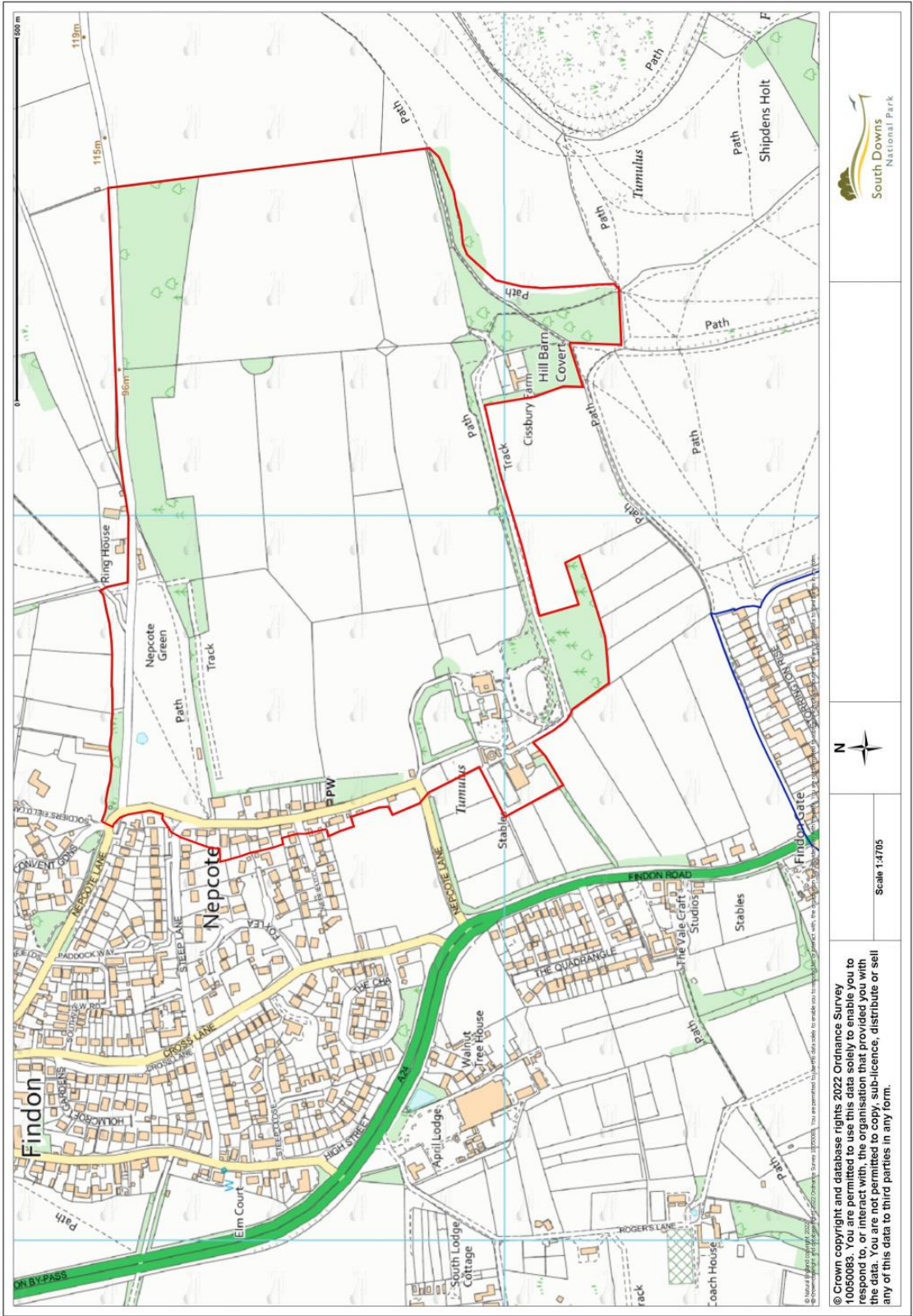
Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Failure to meet the duty placed on the National Park Authority by S.69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990	Low	Low	Designate the proposed Conservation Area, as recommended in this report
Should the proposed Conservation Area be designated, any failure to adopt the draft CAAMP will leave both applicants and officers lacking sufficient information to make informed planning decisions.	Low	Low	Adopt the draft CAAMP attached as an Appendix to this report

TIM SLANEY

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South Downs National Park Authority

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Appendices	Draft Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan
SDNPA Consultees	Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services,
Background Documents	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990





CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL & MANAGEMENT PLAN

NEPCOTE

South Downs National Park Authority - March 2023



SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

Nepcote is an unusual Conservation Area in the sense that its as much about space as buildings, if not more so.

The two main spaces are Nepcote Green and the Cissbury Estate. Both are attractive parts of the wider landscape in their own right and also have a degree of historic interest which is more specific to each.

Sheep husbandry is fundamental to the formation and maintenance of the downs landscape and Nepcote Green is home to one of the most significant sheep fairs in the downs, giving it a particular resonance in the locality and region.

This is reinforced by the survival on the Green of the Wattle House, a building purposely constructed in the late 18th century to house the wattles used to create sheep pens during the fair. It is a rare building type and one in which function and location are inextricably linked.

The Cissbury Estate comprises a relatively modest country house, 18th century in origin, but much altered in the 19th century, which sits within a designed parkland of early 19th century date. This is a relatively late manifestation of the parkland tradition. Together, the house and designed landscape form an attractive and distinct entity in the historic landscape.

Having said that Nepcote Conservation Area is a lot about space, it is also true that both important spaces have a key building which links to their role in the landscape.

Between the Green and Cissbury is a single street of mainly modest dwellings which appears to have originated as a squatters settlement. The architectural quality of the houses is mixed, but does include three which are listed buildings and a number of others which can be said to make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

Each of these three elements makes its own contribution to the Conservation Area, but the 'whole is greater than the sum of the parts' in the way in which they illustrate, in one relatively small area, some of the ways in which the downland landscape was used, managed and enjoyed in the past.

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I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 Conservation Areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Section 69 (1) (a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

I.2 The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) has a duty to determine which parts of the National Park have that special architectural or historic interest, to designate those parts as Conservation Areas, and to keep the existing Conservation Areas under review.

I.3 When it came into being, the SDNPA inherited 166 Conservation Areas that had already been designated by the various Local Planning Authorities that preceded it. These included nearly all the villages and other areas that obviously merited such designation. As a result, the SDNPA has so far, in its existence, not designated any additional ones; the designation of Nepcote Conservation Area by the Planning Committee on 9th March 2023 is its first.

I.4 In considering the possibility of making Nepcote a Conservation Area, the SDNPA was responding to an initiative from the Findon Neighbourhood Planning Group. Section 3.3.7 of the first Neighbourhood Plan notes that:

A second Conservation Area centred on Nepcote is under consideration at the request of the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group ... This addition was welcomed by the residents when presented at the open events.

These words are repeated in the Updated Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2035

and it seems clear that there is considerable local support for the designation.

I.5 This Appraisal seeks to set out what the National Park Authority considers are the most significant elements which define the character of the Conservation Area; it has an important role in making informed and sustainable decisions about the future of the area. Whilst comprehensiveness may be sought, the omission of any particular feature should not be taken as meaning that it is of no significance.

I.6 It sits within a wider policy context, including:

- The Purposes and Duties of the South Downs National Park.
- The National Planning Policy Framework,
- English National Parks and the Broads. UK Government Vision and Circular 2010
- The South Downs National Park Local Plan.
- Findon Neighbourhood Plan, both the original version of September 2016 and the amended version of January 2020

I.7 In looking at the area, issues which pose a threat to the quality of the area and any possibilities for improvement and enhancement have also been identified.

I.8 A public consultation process, which ran from 1st March 2020 to 8th June 2020, sought views on:

- the principle of designating the area as a Conservation Area and,

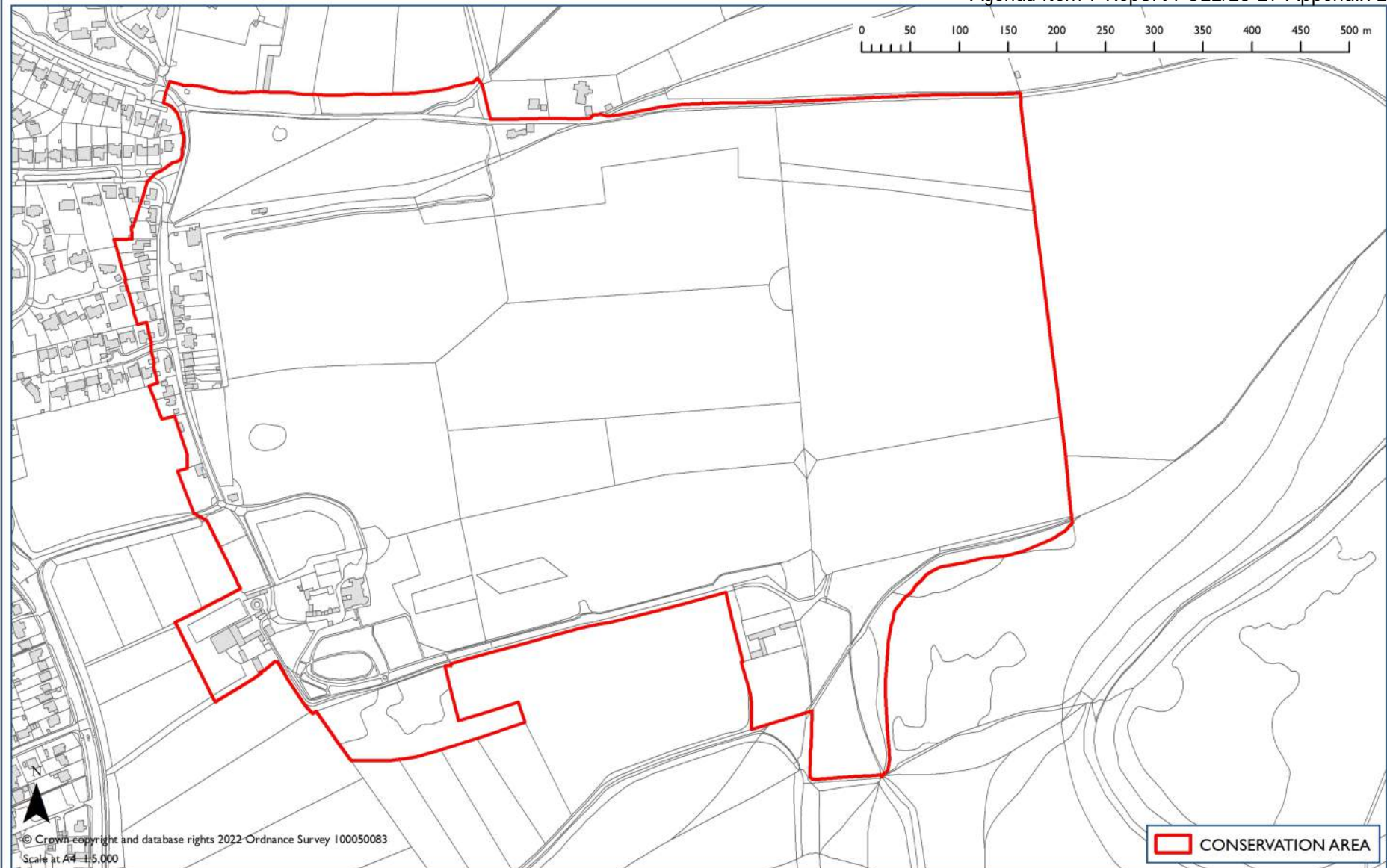
should that be generally supported,

- the contents of this document.

Specific consultations were also sent to Findon Parish Council, Arun District Council, West Sussex County Council, and the Sussex Gardens Trust, and the document was available on the SDNPA website.

I.9 Where appropriate, the initial document was amended to reflect comments received. It has also been reformatted into the Authority's current template for Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.

I.10 The revised and redesigned document was adopted by the South Downs National Park Authority for the purposes of Development Management and to inform other activities of the SDNPA and other agencies on 9 March 2023.



SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

Figure 1: The Boundaries of Nepcote Conservation Area



2. NEPCOTE IN THE LANDSCAPE

2.1 Nepcote is a small hamlet forming part of Findon parish and is about half a mile south-east of the main village centre of Findon. Both lie just to the north of Worthing, on the A24 running towards London. The road now bypasses the village (Figure 2)

2.2 In topographical terms, Nepcote Green and the Cissbury parkland are located in adjacent chalkland dry valleys. Dry valleys were created on the edges of ice sheet by meltwaters which drained from the higher areas and, in so doing, cut incisions into the chalk bedrock. (Figure 3)

2.3 The Green and its wider space covers a segment of one dry valley in the northern part of the Conservation Area, whilst Cissbury house and parklands incorporate an extensive transect across and along a coombe (dry valley) within the southern portion of the Conservation Area.

2.4 The Conservation Area sits within a network of public rights-of-way which are shown on Figure 4.

2.5 Figure 5 shows a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), a tool which indicates from where sites can in theory be seen. This particular example has been constructed using a series of points from within the Conservation Area and helps to demonstrate its visual relationship with the surrounding landscape. The red and orange areas are the most visible, with yellow and blue being less so.

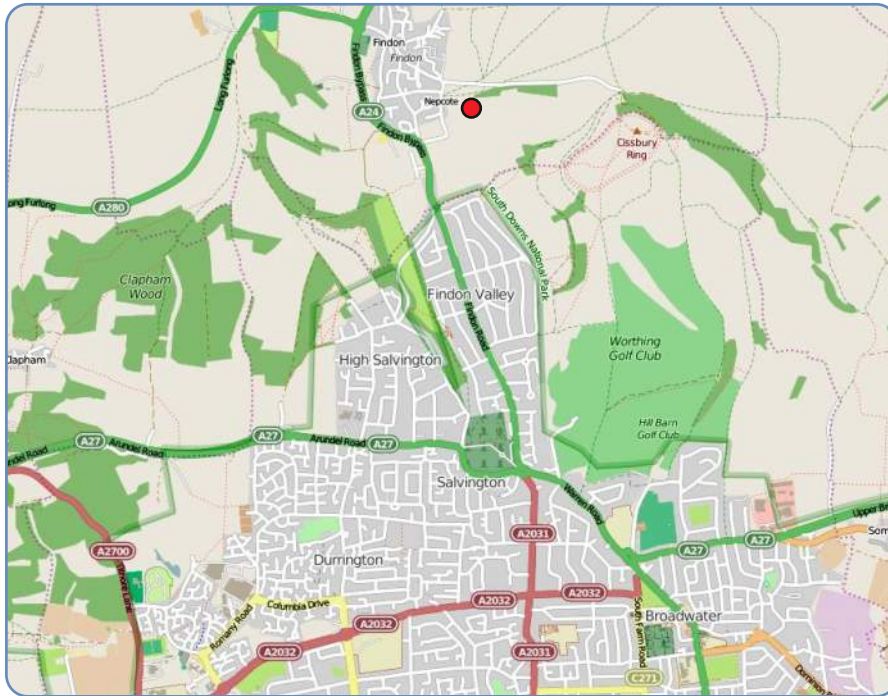
2.6 The importance of the views northwards from the Green towards the open downland to the north (Figure 19 top), and across the dry valley, (largely in blue) to the wooded downland ridge beyond to the west (Figure 19

middle) are obvious and these areas are particularly important to the landscape setting of the Conservation Area (Figure 6).

2.7 Having noted the significance of the view northwards from the Green, however, it must also be recognized that the open downland character of this part of the landscape has been degraded by equestrian activities and, in particular, by the boundaries which are untypical of this landscape type. Any more encroachment of this nature would further degrade the setting of the Conservation Area. (This subject is returned to in paragraphs 5-6 - 5.7). This area also has the modern settlement edge.

2.8 The land to the north, north-east and south-east of the Conservation Area retains its downland character and plays an important role in defining the setting of the Conservation Area.

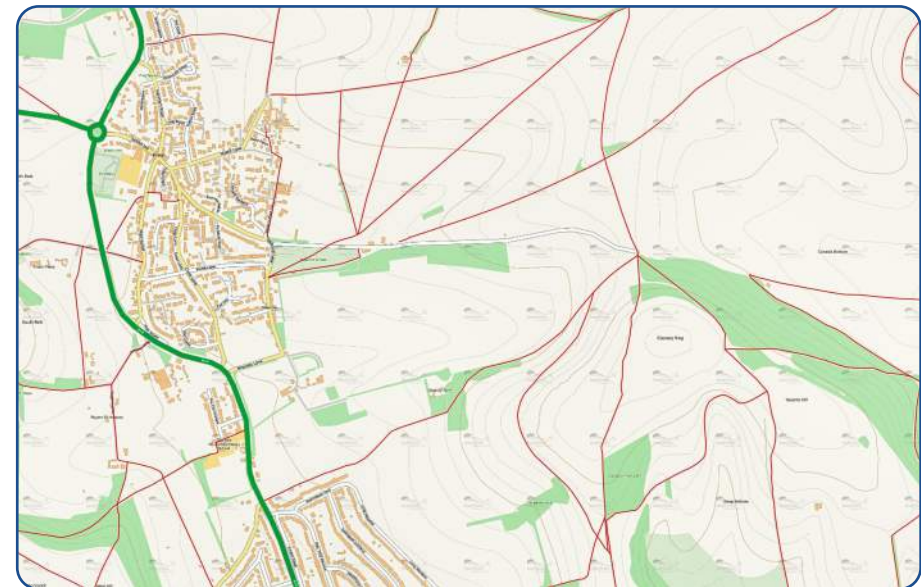
2.9 West and south-west of Cissbury are open fields, associated with the estate, which play an important 'gap role' separating the Conservation Area from the suburban development beyond. From parts of this area, there are important views across the valley to a wooded downland ridge beyond, which are all red on the ZTC graphic. Although this view crosses developed areas, in practice those areas are lost in the valley bottom and the view is unobstructed; this low visibility is reflected in the blue on the ZTV.



**Figure 2 (above left): -
Findon and Nepcote in a wider context. The latter is -
indicated by the red dot (left). -**



**Figure 3 (above right): -
the topographical setting of Nepcote -**



**Figure 4 (right) -
Public rights-of-way around the Conservation Area -**

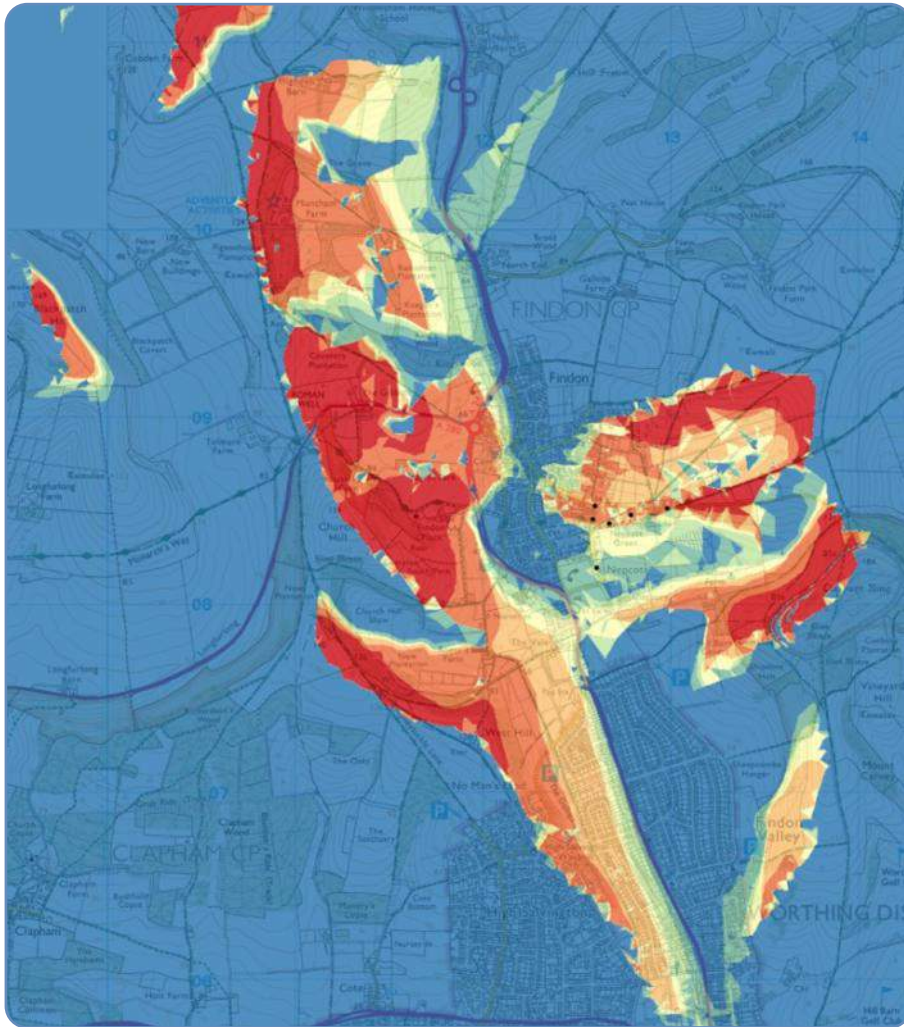


Figure 5:

A 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility' constructed using a series of points from within the Conservation Area.

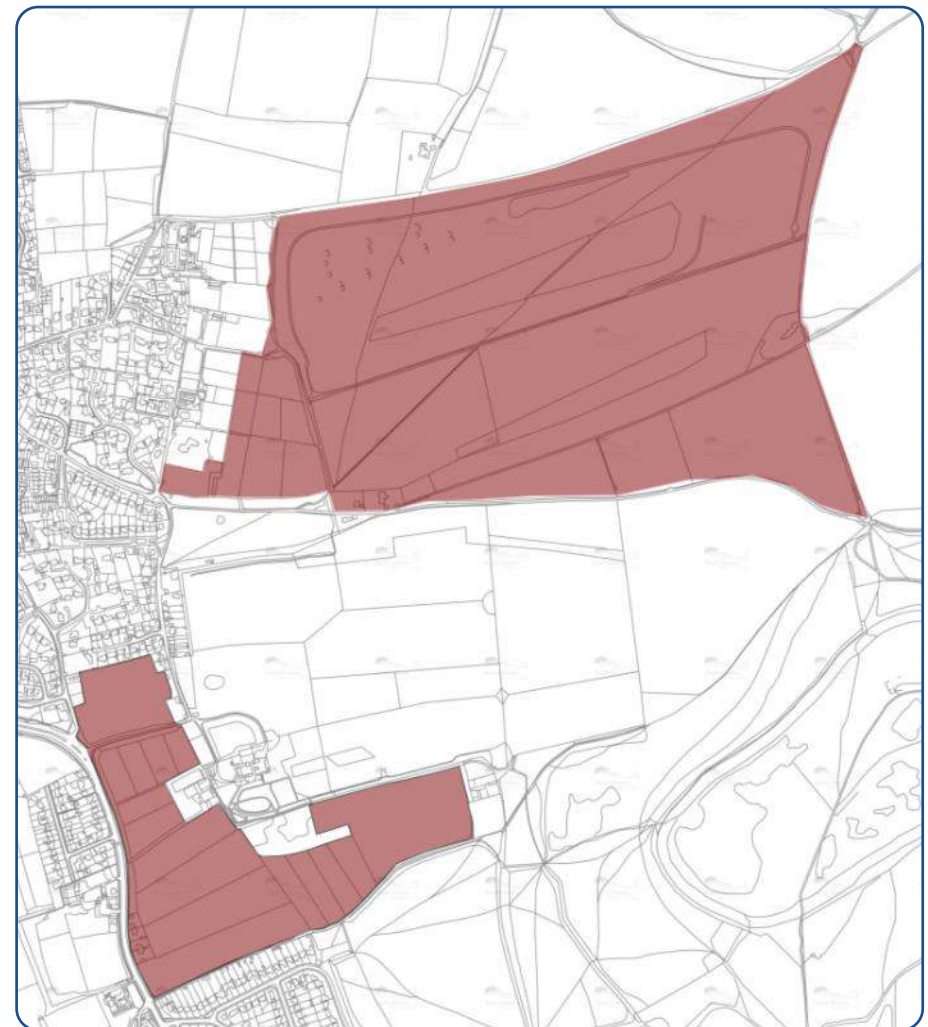


Figure 6:

Areas that are outside the Conservation Area but which make a particularly important contribution to its setting.



**Figure 7: -
Cissbury Parkland as seen from Cissbury Rings. The Green lies just beyond the large block of -
woodland in the upper part of the picture. -**

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Nepcote has always formed a part of the wider Findon parish but has long existed as a separate settlement node, along with East End, to the south east of the main village. Its origins may lie in the development of roadside wastes. The distinct character of Nepcote survives even as the gap between it and the main village has been slowly in-filled by 20th century housing of a rather suburban character.

3.2 The focus of the hamlet is Nepcote Green, which has great historic significance both to the immediate vicinity and the wider downland as the site of one of the most important sheep fairs.

3.3 This use of Nepcote Green seems to have emerged at the end of the 18th century, when George Holford received the agreement of the lord of Findon manor to hold a fair. Holford paid a rent for booths pitched there and on every head of cattle penned, and by 1814 the fair was an annual September event. The Wattle House was built to serve the event by 1803. In the later 19th century the fair was the great village holiday of the year and also served for the hiring of labour. Local auctioneers Churchman, Burt and Son of Steyning, ran the fair from 1910 through to 1977, with the number of sheep peaking at about 10,000.

3.4 The Green itself was given to the Parish in 1856 and was allocated for recreational use in the Inclosure Award of 1859. From 1887 the Parish has received the tolls.

3.5 Refreshment for visitors to the fair was provided by The Running Horse Public House, now Nepcote House, and a series of 'bough houses' (private houses allowed to sell liquor on fair days).

3.6 Nepcote was a centre of protestant non-conformity from the mid-19th century – with Mormons, Plymouth Brethren and other sects represented – and a Chapel was built by Particular Baptists in 1881.

3.7 The Wattle House was given to the Parish Council, along with the Lordship of the Manor of Findon, by Col. Margesson in 1937. In its time the building has been used as a meeting room, a library and as cottages in addition to its original function.

3.8 The wider parish of Findon has had a number of important parklands since the middle ages. For Nepcote this is Cissbury Park. This estate has its origins in Foster's Farm which was held freehold of the manor of Findon. By 1726, East End House was in existence as a five bay, two storey, house with hipped roof. Renamed as Cissbury House by 1811, it was enlarged on a number of occasions and reached its present form by 1897.

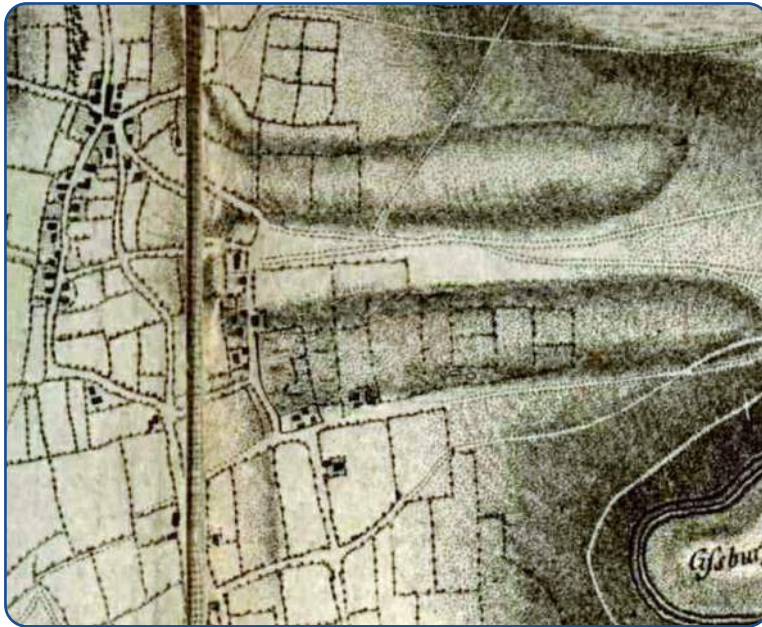
3.9 The accompanying parkland was formed between 1808 and 1839 and was enlarged on its east side before 1875. It is clearly distinguished from the surrounding downland on 19th and early 20th century OS mapping (Figures 9 and 10), and can be seen on aerial photographs (Figure 11).

3.10 From the mid 19th century, the parish of Findon started to play a growing role in the horse racing industry, with the construction of the Downs Racing Stable in 1854. This establishment used land that was previously farmland as turning-out paddocks and the open downland to the west served as training gallops. The yard remains as an active racing establishment today and is currently occupied by Nick Gifford, who followed his father, Josh, in 2003.

3.11 Further yards were created at Nepcote Lodge and The Vale in the later 19th century. The former later became a riding school, before being turned into flats in about 1955, and the latter seems to have ceased operating some years ago.

3.12 In the 20th century, the Soldiers Field Racing Stable was created to the south of the Downs Yard. In 2020, planning permission has been granted for creation of a new stable yard with menage, hay barn, and groom's ancillary dwelling at the northern end of the site and a replacement house, plus two new dwellings and a new holiday let to the south.

3.13 Elsewhere, until recently Philip Hide trained racing horses from another set of stables within the Cissbury Estate, but this yard has become a more general equestrian centre, offering riding lessons and private hacking within the South Downs.

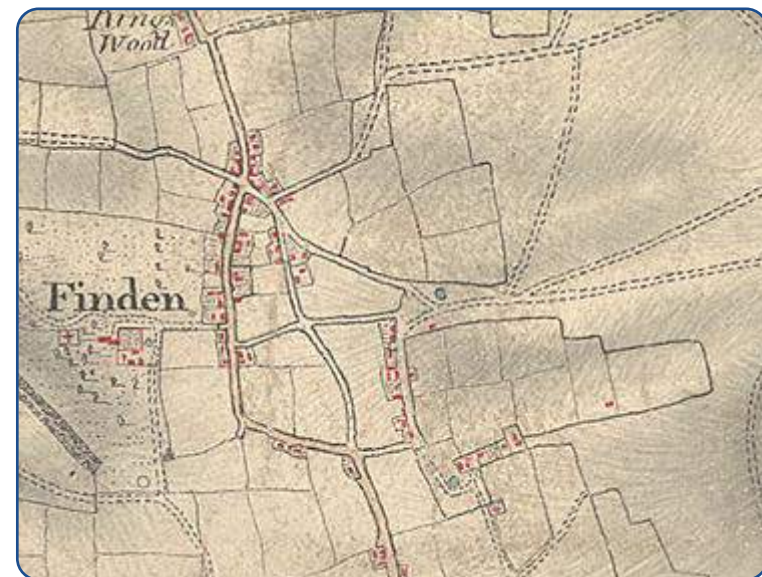


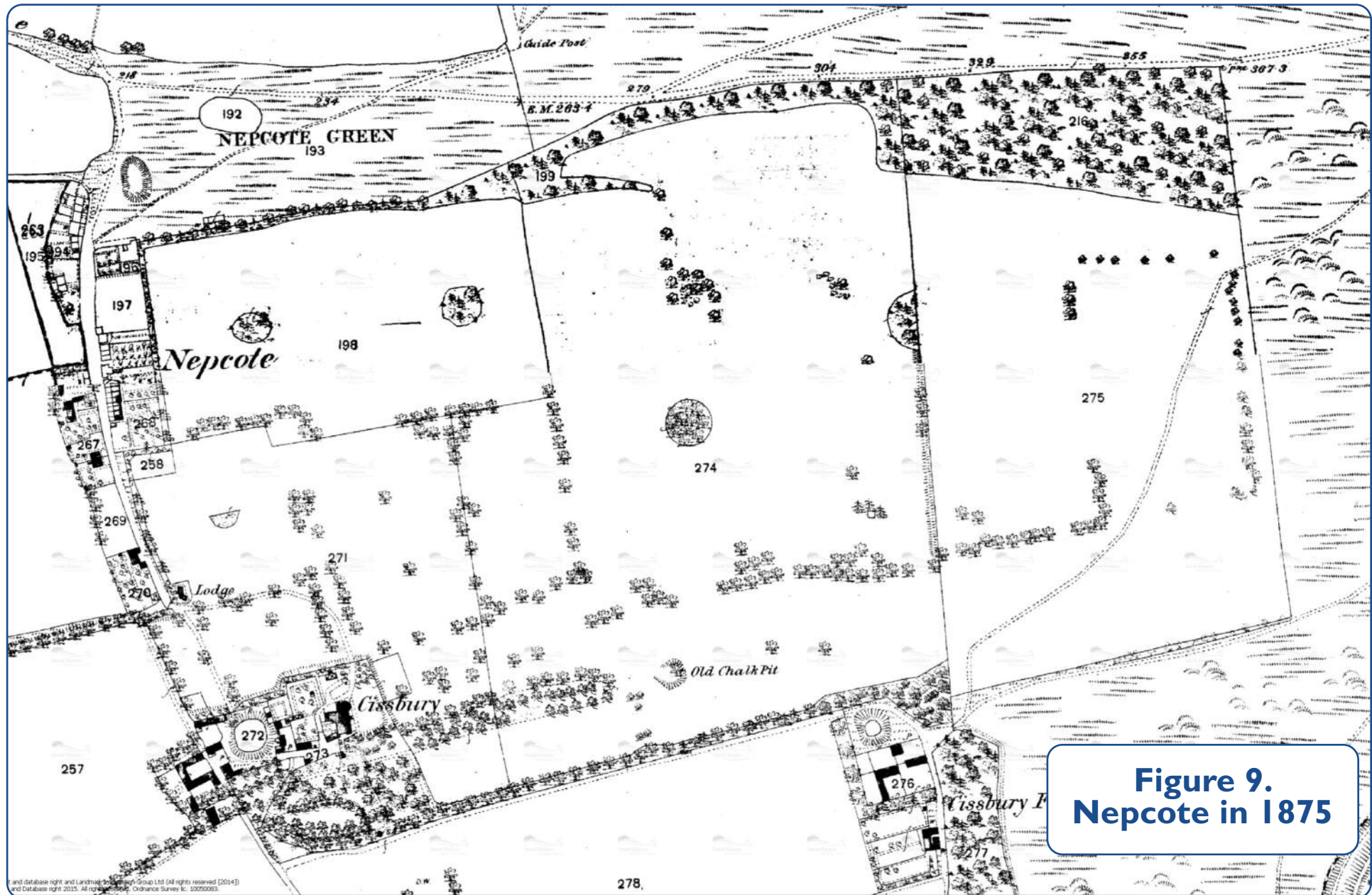
**Figure 8: -
Early Mapping of Nepcote -**

**Yeakell and Gardner Map of Sussex, 1778-
1783(top left) -**

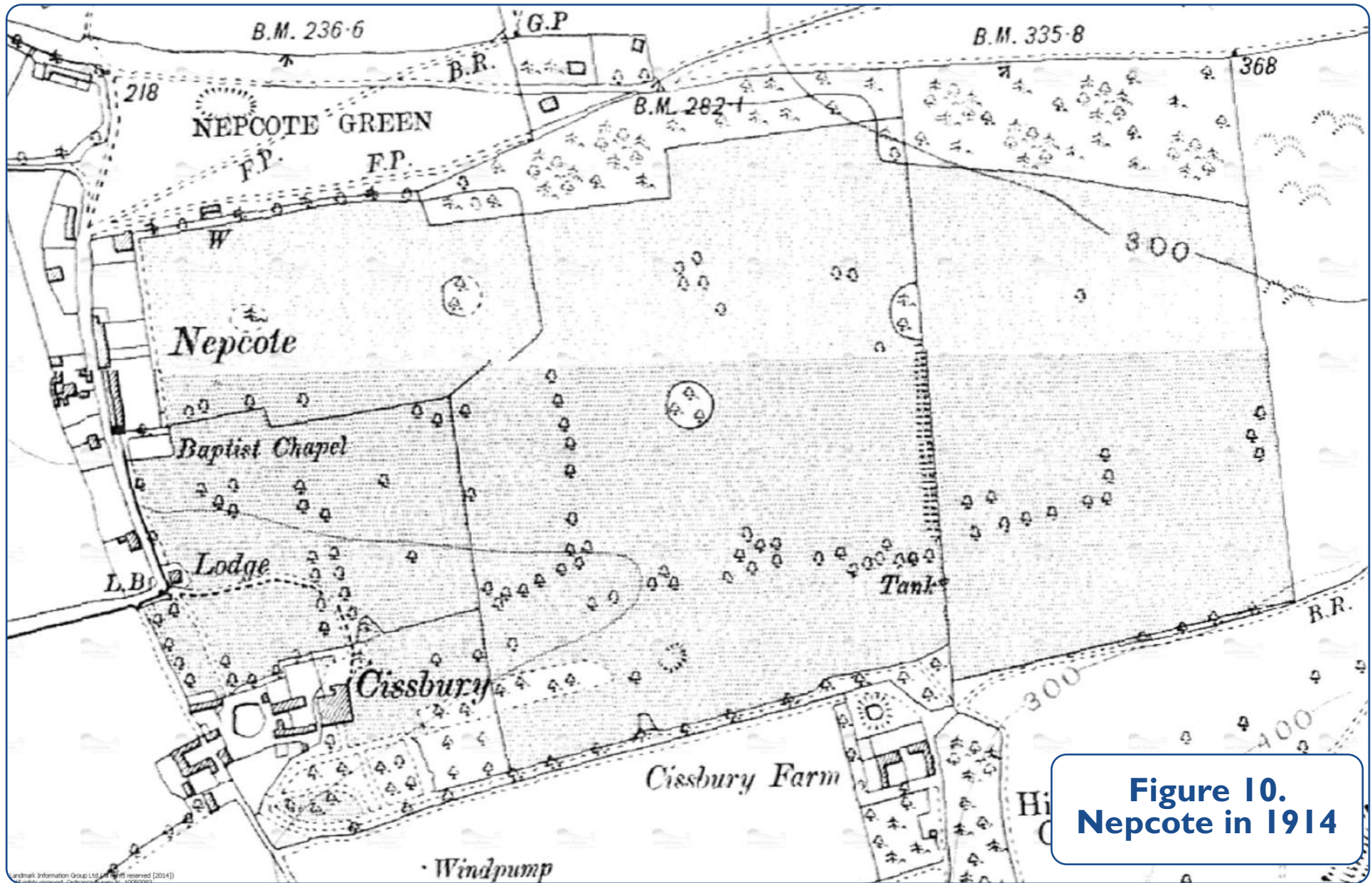
**Thomas Gream's Map of Sussex 1799 -
(bottom left) -**

Ordnance Survey Map of 1806 (bottom right) -





**Figure 9.
Nepcote in 1875**



**Figure 10.
Nepcote in 1914**



Figure 11: -

Aerial photographs showing the Cissbury Parkland in 1947 (left) and 2013 (right)

Figure 12:

The Sheep Fair on The Green, as shown on old postcards.

The Fair in 1920 (top left).

Long Furlong, on the way to Findon (bottom left).

South Down Sheep, Findon (below).

A Pathe news report of the fair in 1938 can be found at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZfC6KVFj20&t=27s>





**Figure 13:
Findon Sheep Fair 2022**

The modern fair combines the traditional showing and selling of sheep (top left), with this year's champion ewe (bottom left)

..... with a more modern fun fair, including the Wall of Death, roundabouts and a well-patronised beer tent.

(All photographs courtesy of Richard Bell)

<https://findonsheepfair.co.uk/ewetube/>





Figure 14: -

The pond on the Green. This is now surrounded by trees and other greenery and its visual impact on the Green is much reduced. A project which reinstated its contribution to the visual quality of the Green, which would include works to improve its ecological diversity, would be a worthwhile enhancement of the Conservation Area.



Figure 15:
Nepcote as shown on postcards sent in 1908 (top) and in 1959 - (below).



4. CHARACTER ANALYSIS

4.1 The Conservation Area falls into three distinct elements or character areas; the Green itself, the historic house and parkland of Cissbury, and the small settlement between the two.

4.2 The elements which make a positive contribution to those character areas are identified on Figure 32 which can be found at the back of this document, with the small settlement being shown in more detail on Figure 32A.

NEPCOTE GREEN

4.3 There are usually important open spaces within Conservation Areas but this is particularly true of Nepcote

4.4 Nepcote Green, in particular, is the rock on which the Conservation Area designation sits. Sheep husbandry has been of great significance to Sussex and the Downs through history and the role of Nepcote Green as home to one of the largest sheep fairs gives it a local and regional resonance. (Figure 17).

4.5 This is reinforced by the presence on the Green of the Wattle House, a building purposely built in the late 18th century to house the wattles used to create sheep pens during the fair (Figure 20 left). It is a rare building type and one in which function and location are inextricably linked. The building was restored by the Parish Council some years ago.

4.6 At the other end of the Green, and prominent in views across it to the east, is an attractive Arts-&-Crafts house, at least insofar as it is viewed across the Green (Figure 20 right).

4.7 The Sheep Fair is a living tradition and is held annually on the Green, although it has grown beyond its original role. (Figure 13). The Green is an important amenity for the immediate community and for people from further away and is particularly well used for dog walking.

4.8 A pond survives on the Green (Figure 14) and provides some ecological diversity to the area. However, this contribution could be developed and this possibility is discussed in the management plan, paragraph 6.28 and Action 10.

4.9 There are important views from the Green to the areas beyond, which have already been discussed (Figure 19).

THE SETTLEMENT

4.10 The settlement itself is a very simple line of dwellings either side of Nepcote Lane. This perhaps reflects the creation of the house plots by squatters occupying marginal land along the roadside.

4.11 A series of period buildings survive on the northern part of Nepcote Lane, particularly on its east side, and these form the residential core of the settlement. They include two of the listed buildings; Coachmans and Greenside Cottage (both Figure 21). Nepcote House, Judens, and Hillbank Cottage (all Figure 22) all make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The former Chapel is the only non-residential building (Figure 24 left).

4.12 A newly built house next door to Coachmans and Greenside Cottage reflects the form of those buildings in its design. Figure 18 shows the view

prior to, and after, construction of the new house. The overall impact of the new development is an enhancement of the Conservation Area and, for this reason, the new house is identified as a building making a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

4.13 Modern residential development has encroached into the area west of Nepcote Lane and this has blurred the edge of the historic settlement in this area.

4.14 Further down Nepcote Lane, Millbrook Cottages and York Terrace (Figure 23) still make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. To the south, beyond the Chapel, development is much more limited, with only three buildings on this part of the lane; 1 & 2 Elder Cottages (Figure 24 right), the Grade II Threshers (Figure 25), and the Lodge to Cissbury (Figure 29). Otherwise, there is open land on either side of the lane.

CISSBURY HOUSE & PARKLAND

4.15 At its southern end, Nepcote turns sharp right and leads down the A24. From that sharp bend, a private drive leads to a small country house, Cissbury which stands with its estate buildings in one corner of a parkland. Cissbury is a Grade II listed building, with 18th century origins but much extended in the 19th century. (Figure 26)

4.16 The parkland associated with Cissbury, lies to the north and east of the main house (Figure 27). This is a largely 19th century creation. Aerial photography and map regression (Figures 9, 10 and 11) show that the parkland has been degraded with the loss of trees since the war but enough survives to recognise the parkland for what it is. It remains a high quality environment and heritage asset.

4.18 Cissbury and its parkland have remained in the current ownership for some time and this continuity has undoubtedly contributed to its survival. The agricultural land is tenanted and has been managed under Higher Level Stewardship (HLS), which includes management of the trees.

4.17 Like many estates, Cissbury Estate is seeking to diversify and has created a wedding venue in a group of converted farm buildings. This work has been undertaken to a high standard and the additional income it generates should help to maintain the house and the wider estate.

4.19 Beyond the Cissbury parkland, but contiguous with it, are a number of fields which remain undeveloped. The open nature of this area is a significant component in holding the spread of suburban Findon at bay and also allows fine views across to the wider landscape to the west, beyond the A24 which disappears into a fold in the landscape at this point.

4.20 The third open space is the fields to west of Nepcote lane and Cissbury. The undeveloped and open nature of this land plays a significant buffer role between the Conservation Area and the suburban spread of Findon

4.21 In both the Green and the Cissbury parkland, trees make a significant contribution to the character of the area. They are fundamental components of the parkland but the Green is also fringed with trees and there are other blocks of trees which make their own contribution.

ARCHAEOLOGY

4.22 The Conservation Area and its environs are a rich archaeological landscape and this is reflected in the identification in the area by the West Sussex County Council Historic Record Environment (HER) of a red 'Archaeological Notification Area Zone' (ANA). This is used in conjunction

with the planning system. The extent of the this ANA is shown in Figure 16.

4.23 The legal description for the ANA reads “Neolithic flint axes, a Bronze Age Bowl Barrow (Scheduled Monument 1018896), a Bronze Age Settlement, an Iron Age occupation site and a Roman occupation site with associated pottery and Roman coin are found. Evidence for an Iron Age-Romano-British field system identified by NMP survey. There is also a post-medieval parkscape at Cissbury”

4.24 The bowl barrow which is referenced in the legal description is situated on gently sloping ground at the foot of a chalk spur, 120m north west of Cissbury. It is marked on Figure 16 as "tumulus". The monument has a roughly circular mound, up to 12m in diameter and 0.9m high, which is surrounded by a ditch from which material used to construct the barrow was excavated.

4.25 The barrow survives well although construction of a track has destroyed its eastern edge and the eastern section of the ditch. Elsewhere, the ditch will survive as a now infilled buried feature up to around 2m wide. A Bronze Age pottery vessel is recorded as having been found in the barrow, probably during construction of the track.

4.26 Reference has already been made to the manner in which the Green and Cissbury are located in adjacent chalkland dry valleys. They offer shelter, natural corrals for livestock, routeways, fertile ground for growing crops or raising stock, and spring sources where the right geological contacts are exposed. All these features made them very attractive to past farmers and, as a result, they can be rich depositories of archaeological data.

4.27 Although Conservation Area status is not of itself an archaeological designation, the proper and appropriate management of the archaeological

resource, insofar as it is affected by development, is a function of the planning system and this is reflected in the advice contained in paragraph 6.20 and Action 8.

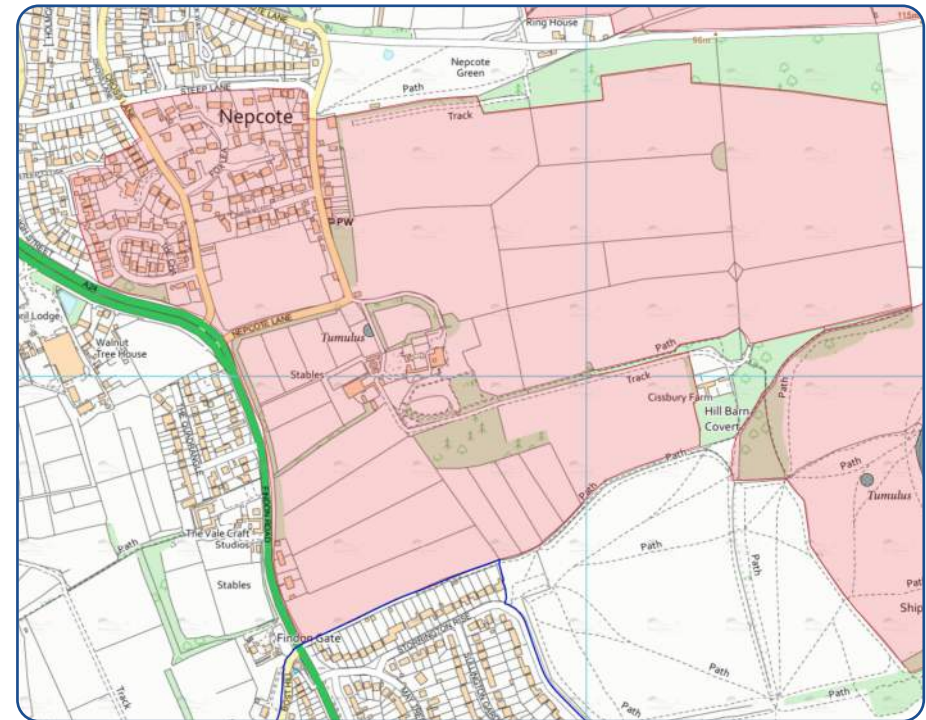


Figure 16: Archaeological Notification Alert zone & Scheduled Monument (the "tumulus") -

BOUNDARIES OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

4.28 To a significant extent, the boundaries of the Conservation Area are dictated by the historic arrangement and, to some degree, its survival to the present day.

4.29 The boundary to the north follows that of the Green as shown on the 19th century Ordnance Survey mapping. This takes it beyond the lane, which was originally no more than a footpath, to encompass the whole of the historic extent of the Green.

4.30 To the north-east and east, the boundary follows that of the parkland, which clearly contrasts with the downland beyond, and tree belts.

4.31 On the southern side of the parkland, the boundary incorporates a block of trees and the buildings of Cissbury Farm, which are incorporated into the Conservation Area in recognition of their historic role as part of the estate.

4.32 To the south and west of the Parkland, but contiguous with it, are a number of fields which remain undeveloped. The open nature of this land plays a significant buffer role in holding the spread of suburban Findon at bay. It also allows fine views across to the wider landscape to the west, beyond the A24, which disappears into a fold in the landscape at this point.

4.33 Given the importance of this open land to the Conservation Area, consideration was given to its incorporation into its boundaries. However, it is true to say that this importance stems from its role in the **setting** of the Conservation Area. As a result, it has not been included within the boundaries but attention has been drawn in paragraphs 2.9 and Figure 6 to its significance in that setting.

4.34 Finally, the boundary on the west side of the settlement is drawn along the back boundaries of the properties facing the lane. This does draw into the Conservation Area some more recent properties which can perhaps be best described as neutral in their contribution to the Conservation Area but it has the benefit of simplicity and clarity in defining the boundary. Consideration was initially given to drawing a boundary which excluded those houses, but this produced a rather complicated boundary, described by one consultee as 'jigsaw like'.

4.35 The role of the horse racing industry in the locality has been described in paragraphs 3.9 to 3.12 and the consultation process did result in a suggestion that the original boundaries as proposed be extended to include an area to the north. This would have brought the Downs Racing Stables, with its paddocks and gallops, and the Soldiers Field Stable into the Conservation Area.

4.36 Careful consideration was given to this proposal but it has not been pursued for a number of reasons. The earliest and most important of the racing establishments, the Downs Stables lies some distance to the north of the Conservation Area and relates as much, or more, to the village of Findon as it does to Nepcote; indeed, it is linked to the village by Stables Lane. Although the area between the Green and the stables was originally open fields, it has now seen a significant development which intrudes into any visual relationship that may have existed in the past.

4.37 Of the other stables, Nepcote Lodge was converted into flats in the 1950s and is surrounded by suburban development and Soldiers Field stables, whilst retaining some non-racing equine activity, has been granted planning permission for significant development. Both to some extent adversely affect their significance as evidence of the historic activity, and thereby any contribution to the Conservation Area.

4.38 Finally the stables at Cissbury are well within the Conservation Area and remain in non-racing equine use.

4.39 Other than the stable buildings, the proposed extension related to the open land used as gallops. The same argument advanced in paragraph 4.26 also applies here, with this open land making a contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area. It has not, therefore, been included within the boundaries, but again attention has been drawn in Figure 6 to its significance in that setting.

5. ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 The majority of the buildings within the Conservation Area are generally in reasonable order. At the time of the Building at Risk survey undertaken in 2012-13, none of the listed buildings emerged as being at risk, although the Wattle House was identified as being vulnerable. However, the Parish Council has subsequently undertaken a programme of works which have returned the fabric to good order.

5.2 The ground floor of the building remains in its original use as storage associated with the sheep fair, which is welcome, but the upper floor remains largely unused. There is an opportunity to use that floor in some productive manner and the Parish Council may wish to explore this in discussions with the Local Planning Authority.

5.3 Elsewhere, the boundary wall to the Cissbury estate on the lane has seen a couple of collapses and other sections are leaning (Figure 28), whilst the chapel is showing early signs - slipping slates, rotting windows - that it is in need of maintenance to ensure its long term future. (figure 24 left)

5.4 In terms of opportunity sites within the settlement, the main possibility is represented by the large, flat-roofed garage set back from the lane on its east side (Figure 30). The existing structure is not attractive nor particularly well maintained. It may be worth examining the feasibility of redeveloping this site in a modest and sensitive fashion, or at least painting the main doors in the meantime.

5.5 The undergrounding of overhead wires, particularly those which run along the northern edge of the Green, would produce a worthwhile enhancement of the Conservation Area.

5.6 The pond on the Green is now surrounded by trees and other greenery and its visual impact on the Green is much reduced. A project which reinstated its contribution to the quality and appearance of the Green, which would include works to improve its ecological diversity, would be a worthwhile enhancement of the Conservation Area.

5.7 The significance of the land to the north of The Green as part of the setting of the Conservation Area and the urban-rural interface has already been mentioned in Section 2. This land accommodates equine activities - a gallop and paddocks - which have quite a long history in the locality.

5.8 Having said that the manner in which some of these activities are currently undertaken does tend to degrade the land visually. This is particularly true for the way in which the paddocks have been carved out of the original downland with inappropriate boundaries. The use of well-managed hedges with fences on either side to divide the paddocks would produce both visual improvement and secure other benefits for the natural environment, whilst continuing to recognise the on-going contribution of equine activities.

5.9 The historic designed landscape that accompanies Cissbury is an important element in the Conservation Area. However, as the photographs in Figure 11 demonstrate, there has been some decline since the War and a programme of historic landscape restoration could produce significant improvements to the landscape and historic environment.

PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY



Figure 17 - Important Views across Nepcote Green, looking eastwards (above) and westwards (below).





Figure 18: The photograph above is a 'before' image and shows an undistinguished house (outside the Conservation Area) to the right of two listed cottages. The photograph below is an 'after' image, with a newly constructed house which picks up on the form of the adjacent listed buildings.

The introduction of a building of more sensitive design, which also screens the white house behind, enhances the Conservation Area, the setting of the listed buildings, and the overall view.





Figure 19: -
Important views out of the Conservation Area into the surrounding countryside. That at the top show the view across Nepcote Green into the land to the north which accommodates equine activities, whilst that above is looking westwards to the wooded ridge beyond.
Some of the farm buildings of Cissbury, which are in the Conservation Area, can be seen in a closer range view from the road (below).



Figure 20: The Wattle House. and Thistle Down

The **Wattle House** was first listed at **Grade II** on **21st December 1994**, It was built between between **1792 and 1803**, probably by - **George Holford** who got permission from the lord of **Findon Manor** in **1790** to hold an annual sheep fair at **Nepcote Green**. - This building was specifically designed to store the wattles and is a rare building type which reflects both its function and - location.

Thistle Down stands at the end of **The Green**. to which it presents a simple **Arts-&-Crafts** elevation which acts as an attractive - visual stop to **The Green**



Figure 21: Listed Cottages -

Greenside Cottage (left) was listed at Grade II on 20th September 1984. The list entry describes it as: "Early C19. Two storeys. Four windows. Faced with flints with dressings and quoins of red brick and grey headers. Tiled roof. Glazing bars missing."

Coachmans (right) was also listed at Grade II on the same day. The list entry describes it as: "C18. Two storeys. Two windows. Red brick and grey headers alternately. Tiled roof. Glazing bars intact. Doorway with modern hood and original door of six fielded panels. Lean-to portion to the north, faced in flints, with modern garage "doors and a large lunette window above."



Figure 22:

The former Running Horse public house is now a private house, known as Nepcote House, and has been recently restored (left).

No. 8 (Judens) and No. 10 (Hillbank Cottage) (right) stands more-or-less opposite on the other side of the road and are built using a typical combination of brick and flint.



Figure 23:

Further down Nepcote, Millbrook Cottages and York Terrace have also been modernised but have retained much of their historic character and continue to make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area



Figure 24:

The former Chapel (left) is the only building on Nepcote not built as a dwelling. It is no longer used for worship and has not been for many years. There are early signs - slipping slates, rotting windows - that it is in need of repair and maintenance, and ideally a new use, to ensure its long term future.

Houses on the opposite side of the road (right), 1 and 2 Elder Cottages, have retained some of their historic character and, along with the Chapel, continue to make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.



Figure 25:

**Numbers 1 and 2
Threshers.**

**Despite the numbering, this
Grade II listed building is a
single dwelling.**

**Although ascribed to the
18th century, a closer
archaeological examination
of the surviving fabric might
shed more light on this, and
perhaps an earlier origin.**



Figure 26:

Cissbury. First listed at Grade II on 20th September 1984, the list entry describes it thus: "The centre portion of the east front is an C18 farmhouse. Two storeys. Five windows. Faced with knapped flints with red brick dressings and stringcourse. Wooden modillion eaves cornice. Tiled roof. Glazing bars intact on first floor only. At each end gabled wing containing an attic window and with a large projecting bay of three windows on ground and first floors. C19 additions to the west."



**Figure 27:
Cissbury Parkland.**

The house stands within its own parkland, laid out in the first half of the 19th century. The view out from the house over the parkland is shown left and the reverse view, back to the house, is below.





Figure 28:
Boundary Wall to Cissbury Estate.

The estate is bounded by a substantial flint wall along the lane. This wall is not in good condition, with two areas of collapse and other stretches leaning.



The wall is an important component in defining the character of the Conservation Area and its loss would represent significant harm to that character.



Figure 29:

The Lodge to Cissbury

It is an attractive building of flint, brick and tile which stands at the bottom of Nepcote at the point where the lane turns towards the main road.



Figure 30:

A possible enhancement opportunity

The flat-roofed double garage sits a little set back from the lane and behind a concrete apron. As such it is an alien architectural element within the streetscene and is also not in particularly good order. Redevelopment of the site could improve the streetscene visually.

6. MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.1 At the beginning of this document the legal definition of a Conservation Area as an “area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” was acknowledged.

6.2 Taking this definition as a starting point, it follows that the proper management of a Conservation Area will have as its objective both the protection of its existing qualities and its enhancement in ways that build upon its special interest.

Four broad aims can be defined:

- To ensure that the Heritage Assets (the Conservation Area and its constituent buildings and other historic features) are properly and effectively designated;
- To ensure that the Heritage Assets are in good condition;
- To secure the conservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the Heritage Assets,
- To secure the enhancement of the spaces within and around the Heritage Assets.

PROPER DESIGNATION OF THE HERITAGE ASSET

6.3 The rationale for the boundaries of the Conservation Area are set out in paragraphs 4.28 to 4.39 and, as a newly designated Conservation Area, can be assumed to represent current thinking and best practice. Appraisals of this sort should be reviewed on a ten-year cycle and the first review will be the time to consider if the designated boundaries have stood the test of time.

6.4 As part of the appraisal process, the buildings of the Conservation Area were all considered in terms of their status and protection. It was judged that all the buildings worthy of national listing were so designated and the grade of listing also appropriate.

6.5 Many of the other buildings within the Conservation Area make a positive contribution to its character and these are identified on Figures 31 and 32. As part of a designated heritage asset, to which they make a positive input, such buildings should be regarded as individual non-designated heritage assets for the purposes of Development Management.

6.6 In addition to making a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, it is possible that some of those buildings could meet the criteria for inclusion on a Local Heritage List. The National Park Authority does not have such a list at the time of writing but has undertaken a public consultation on the selection criteria to be used with a view to creating one.

6.7 Arun District Council does have a list of 'Buildings or Structures of Character', which was prepared in 2005 before the creation of the National Park and which can be found on its website at: <https://www.arun.gov.uk/download.cfm?doc=docm93jjjm4n1724.pdf&ver=1373>

6.8 Arun's list included 32 buildings within Findon Parish, of which the following fall within Nepcote Conservation Area:

- 4
- 16
- 18 ('Little House')
- Cherry Croft
- 8 ('Judens')

- 10 ('Hillbarn Cottage')
- 1 and 2 Millbrook Cottages
- Nepcote Chapel
- 1 and 2 Elder Cottages
- Nepcote House

and all were identified as being meeting criteria numbers 2, 3, 4 and 5, which are:

- Buildings which are extremely good examples of traditional or established style, or unusual type.
- In special cases, buildings or structures which contribute towards the local townscape or have important historical associations.
- All buildings must be largely intact and not adversely affected by later extensions or alterations.
- Preferably, although not exclusively, they should make a positive contribution to their surroundings or the street scene.

6.9 They are embedded within Policy ES5 of the Findon Neighbourhood Plan, which requires the effect of a proposal on the significance of these non-designated heritage assets to be taken into account in determining an application in order to minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and their contribution to Findon's distinctiveness.

6.10 In practice, all of the buildings identified in the Arun list are also identified in this document as being buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area i.e. non-designated heritage assets.

ACTION 1 – that the buildings identified as making a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area in this Appraisal and as 'Buildings or Structures of Character' in the Neighbourhood Plan be regarded as non-designated heritage assets for the purposes of Development Management.

ACTION 2 - that those buildings within the Conservation Area be considered for possible inclusion on a National Park-wide Local Heritage List once the criteria and list are in place

CONDITION OF THE HERITAGE ASSET

6.11 The Wattle House has been the subject of a significant repair programme in recent years, undertaken by the Parish Council, and is now in fair condition, though underused.

6.12 Visual inspection of the buildings from the public realm does not suggest that any are in a poor condition and certainly none could be described as being "at risk", though the Chapel does appear to be vulnerable.

6.13 The boundary wall to the Cissbury Estate where it bounds the lane is deteriorating, with some areas of collapse and other parts leaning.

ACTION 3 - that the National Park Authority and the Parish Council monitor the condition of the buildings and structures, and particularly the Chapel and the boundary wall to the Cissbury Estate, within the Conservation Area.

ACTION 4 - that the National Park Authority work with the owners of any buildings and structures identified as deteriorating in condition to secure their repair and a sustainable future.

ACTION 5 - that the National Park Authority works with the Parish Council to secure a productive use for the upper floors of the Wattle House.

MANAGEMENT OF TREES IN THE - CONSERVATION AREA -

6.14 The significance of trees to the Conservation Area has already been discussed and this contribution needs management.

6.15 The primary legal mechanism for protecting trees is a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). These can cover individual trees, defined groups of trees, or any tree within a defined area. Permission is required to cut down, top, lop, uproot, wilfully damage or wilfully destroy a tree protected by a TPO, or to cause or permit such actions.

6.16 TPOs can cover trees which are also within a Conservation Area but this is not currently the case in Nepcote Conservation Area.

6.17 However, there is a degree of protection for those trees which are not covered by a TPO but which are in a Conservation Area. This protection is in the form of a requirement on the owner of the tree to give the South Downs National Park Authority six weeks' notice of any works to the tree. This is to allow the making of a TPO should the National Park Authority feel it necessary to influence the works proposed.

6.18 There are, however, some circumstances in which work can be carried out to a TPO'd tree or tree in a Conservation Area without gaining permission first. These include:

- If the tree is dead or the work is necessary to remove an immediate risk of serious harm. The risk must be immediate and the onus will be on you to prove this if there are questions. You must let the National Park Authority know in writing that you propose to carry out work on this basis at least 5 days in advance unless the danger is imminent. In this case, you must notify the Council as soon as practical. Removal of dead wood from an otherwise

healthy tree is also allowed.

- If you are obliged to carry out work by an Act of Parliament. Most commonly, this applies to trees that overhang a public road where you have an obligation to maintain reasonable clearance above the road. This usually means 2.5m above a footway or 5.5m above a vehicular carriage way.
- Where the work is absolutely necessary in order to implement a detailed planning permission. Note that this does not apply to outline planning permission or to permitted development rights.
- If the tree is a fruit tree and you prune it in accordance with good horticultural practice, or if the tree is a fruit tree situated in a commercial orchard.
- If the work is to be carried in accordance with a Forestry Commission grant scheme or if a felling licence has been granted by the Forestry Commission.

6.19 Moreover, the additional exemptions apply to non-TPO'd trees in Conservation Areas:

- Trees which have a trunk diameter of less than 75mm when measured at 1.5m from ground level
- Trees which have a diameter of less than 100mm measured at 1.5 m above ground and are being pruned or felled to help the growth of other trees.

6.20 Many of the trees fall within the historic landscape at Cissbury. This land is farmed and has until recently been managed under a Higher Level Stewardship management regime which ran until 31 January 2019. In making the Conservation Area, it is not the wish or intention of the National Park Authority to impose an unreasonable burden of tree management procedure on either land owner or farmer and this is reflected in Action 6.

ACTION 6 - that the National Park Authority works in co-operation with the farmer and landowner of the Cissbury Estate to manage the trees on the

Estate in the most convenient and appropriate manner.

ACTION 7 - that the visual amenity and contribution of any particular tree(s) to the Conservation Area be given careful consideration when considering any notification to the National Park Authority.

CONSERVATION & ENHANCEMENT OF THE - CHARACTER & APPEARANCE OF THE HERITAGE - ASSET -

6.21 Protection of existing quality will be achieved through careful application of the planning system in general and the Development Management process in particular. One way in which this can be facilitated is by the provision of pre-application advice to householders, architects and developers to achieve a high quality of design. The National Park Authority has a system for the provision of such advice, which is explained on its website.

6.22 The National Park Authority's archaeological advisor for Nephote is Hampshire County Council, which can be contacted at :

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/environment/historicenvironment/planners>

ADVICE – that anyone considering development of any form which affects Nephote Conservation Area or its setting should seek pre-application advice from the National Park Authority planning department and Hampshire County Council Archaeological Service before submitting an application and, ideally, before starting any design work.

6.23 Once an application has been received, it will be assessed against a range of national and local planning policies. At present these include the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework, the Purposes and Duty of the National Park, the South Downs National Park Local Plan, and conservation best practice (including this document).

6.24 Whilst discussing proposals with applicants, both at pre-application stage and in the course of determination, opportunities may arise to achieve improvements both to the proposal itself and its contribution to the wider character of the Conservation Area. These may not originally form part of the proposal. The Local Planning Authority will seek to maximise these opportunities as far as possible.

ACTION 8 – that planning applications be determined in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidance, with any opportunities to achieve further improvements during that process being secured as far as possible.

6.25 The special character of any Conservation Area can be degraded through the loss of architectural features and traditional materials, particularly roofing materials. Individually, these changes may be relatively minor, but taken collectively can represent a real threat to the special character.

6.26 This problem can be addressed in two ways. One would be to bring those minor works within the ambit of the planning system using a measure called an Article 4 Direction, which removes 'permitted development rights' from specific domestic properties. The other, complementary, way would be to encourage the reinstatement of architectural features and traditional materials with a grant scheme targeted at such works.

6.27 At present there is some evidence of this problem in Nephote, which presumably reflects the fact that it has only recently been designated as a

Conservation Area and it is difficult to pull this situation back. It must also be acknowledged that the provision of a grant budget is unlikely in the current circumstances and for the foreseeable future. Both factors inform the Action below. Nevertheless, it is important that the historic building stock should be monitored so that an appearance of an emerging problem is identified at an early stage. In reality, this means everyone. National Park and District Council officers and members, Parish Councillors and the community, keeping an eye on what is happening.

ACTION 9 - that the loss of architectural features and traditional materials be monitored by all parties and for the National Park Authority to consider making an Article 4 Direction, in consultation with the community, should it emerge as a problem adversely affecting the special character of Nepcote Conservation Area.

ENHANCEMENT OF THE SPACES IN THE - CONSERVATION AREA -

6.28 Conservation Area designation is a response to the qualities of the settlement as a whole and it is important to recognise that the spaces between the buildings are a significant component in this.

6.29 Nevertheless, significant improvements to that quality can be achieved by pro-active work. Although it remains difficult to secure finance for such projects, it is by no means impossible to put together a funding package from a number of sources.

6.30 A number of opportunities to improve the general appearance and quality of the area have been identified in the appraisal, including:

- i. Sympathetic redevelopment of the site currently occupied by a large domestic garage; or removal of the garage (Figure 30);

- ii. Removal of poles and overhead wires;
- iii. Replanting of lost trees to reinforce the historic landscape at Cissbury.
- iv. Works to enhance the ecological diversity of the pond which survives in the Green

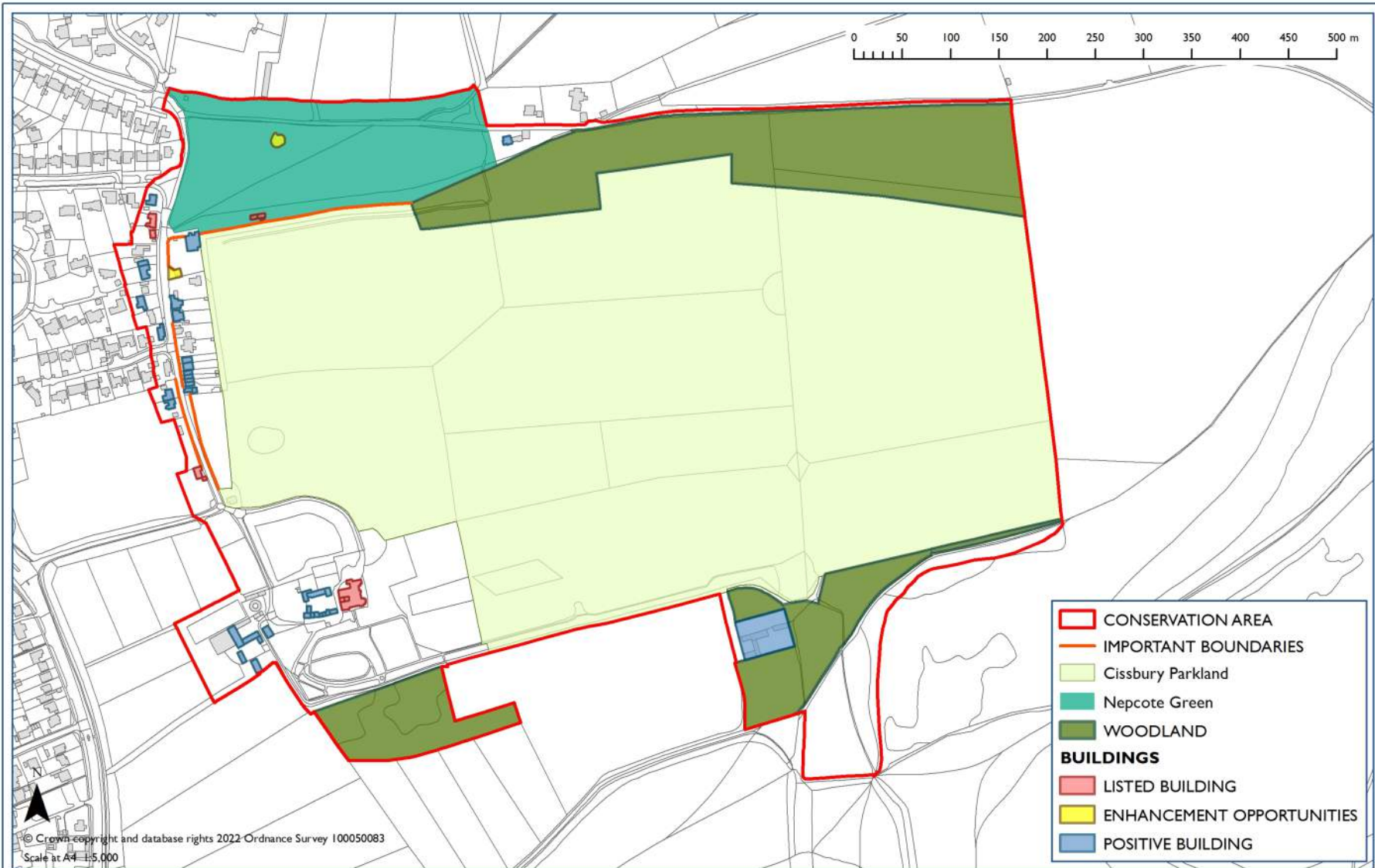
ACTION 10 - that the National Park Authority supports, in principle and in association with other partners, the undertaking of the enhancement works identified in paragraph 6.30

RESPONSIBLE CONSERVATION IS A PARTNERSHIP

6.31 This document has been prepared by the National Park Authority as the Local Planning Authority for Findon. However, it is very important to stress, and for other parties to understand, that effective management of any Conservation Area is the responsibility of all organisations and all parties who undertake works which affect the character of the area.

6.32 Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 sets out a range of bodies to which the National Park duties apply.

6.33 At a local level, this includes the residents of the village and the Parish Council. Slightly more removed, it means Arun District Council, West Sussex County Council as the Local Highway Authority and in its other activities, and all those Statutory Undertakers which do works in the public realm.



SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

Figure 32: Nepcote Conservation Area Analysis Map



**Figure 32A: Nepcote Conservation
Area Analysis Map -
the settlement in closer detail**



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