

PLANNING REF : 260577
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Nine Mile Ride
: Wokingham, Berks
: RG40 3NL
SUBMITTED BY : B Pope
DATE SUBMITTED : 28/04/2026

COMMENTS:

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 260577

I write to object to this retrospective application for the use of land as two Gypsy and Traveller pitches. Having reviewed the submission in detail, I consider the proposal to be fundamentally unacceptable in planning terms and contrary to both local and national policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites.

1. Highway Danger and Substandard Access

The access arrangements to the site are wholly inadequate and present a clear risk to highway safety.

Range Road is a narrow, single-track rural byway with no pavements, no passing places, and limited structural capacity. It is unsuitable for the level and type of traffic associated with residential occupation, particularly caravans and larger vehicles.

The junction with Nine Mile Ride (B3430) is especially dangerous, with poor visibility and fast-moving traffic. There is documented evidence of accidents at this location, and similar concerns previously led to refusal under application F/2006/8196. Traffic volumes have increased since that time, exacerbating the risk. The alternative access onto Sandhurst Road is similarly constrained and fails to provide a safe or suitable means of access. This proposal therefore conflicts with national policy, which makes clear that development should be refused where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

2. Policy Conflict and Development Strategy

The application site lies outside any defined settlement boundary and is designated as countryside in both the adopted and emerging development plan.

It is not allocated for development in the 2010 Wokingham Local Plan, the draft 2024 Local Plan, or the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan. The proposal therefore conflicts directly with the spatial strategy, which seeks to focus development in sustainable locations and protect the countryside from inappropriate development. Under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. No such considerations exist in this case.

3. Environmental and Landscape Harm

The site contributes to an important green gap and forms part of a wider rural landscape characterised by woodland and historic routes, including Range Road itself.

The introduction of hardstanding, residential activity, vehicle movements, and lighting would result in a clear and harmful urbanising effect. This would erode the rural character of the area and undermine its function as a tranquil, undeveloped corridor. Such harm is directly contrary to national policy, which seeks to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and to Traveller site policy requiring developments to respect their surroundings.

4. Lack of Basic Infrastructure

The site is not served by essential infrastructure. There are no connections to mains water, electricity, or sewerage, and the application provides no credible detail as to how these fundamental requirements would be met.

There is also no adequate drainage strategy. The area is known to experience surface water issues, and the introduction of hardstanding is likely to exacerbate local flooding.

These deficiencies go to the heart of the site's suitability for residential use and cannot be resolved through the imposition of planning conditions.

5. Unsustainable Location

The site is located in an area with extremely limited access to services and facilities. There are no shops, schools, healthcare services, or community facilities within safe or practical walking distance, and there is little or no public transport provision. Future occupiers would be wholly reliant on private vehicles for all day-to-day needs, contrary to the sustainability objectives set out in national policy. Traveller site policy similarly emphasises the importance of access to services, which is clearly lacking here.

6. Ecological Deficiencies

The application fails to provide adequate ecological information. There is no detailed survey work, no baseline assessment, and no evidence of how biodiversity net gain requirements would be met. The site and surrounding woodland support a range of species, and development would inevitably result in habitat loss, fragmentation, and disturbance. The introduction of lighting is of particular concern in what is currently a dark corridor, with likely impacts on nocturnal wildlife.

In the absence of sufficient information, the Local Planning Authority cannot be satisfied that the proposal would avoid unacceptable ecological harm.

7. Impact on Trees

Trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders are located on and around the site and make a significant contribution to the character and environmental value of the area.

There are concerns that works already undertaken may have caused damage. In addition, any future installation of services would likely require excavation within root protection areas, placing these trees at further risk.

The application does not satisfactorily address these impacts.

8. Retrospective Development and Planning Integrity

This application seeks to regularise development that has already taken place without permission, including site clearance and the siting of caravans.

While retrospective applications can be submitted, the circumstances in this case indicate a clear disregard for the planning process.

Granting permission would risk undermining confidence in the system and could encourage similar unauthorised development elsewhere.

9. Cumulative Impact and Future Pressure

Approval of this proposal would create pressure for further similar development along Range Road and in other rural locations. The incremental erosion of countryside through piecemeal development is a well-recognised planning concern and weighs against granting permission in this instance.

10. Planning Balance

National policy recognises the need to provide accommodation for

Gypsy and Traveller communities. However, that need does not override the requirement for sites to be safe, suitable, and sustainable.

In this case, the proposal gives rise to multiple, significant harms, including highway danger, environmental damage, and clear policy conflict. These harms decisively outweigh any potential benefits.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, the proposal represents inappropriate development in an unsuitable rural location and would result in significant and lasting harm.

I therefore respectfully request that the application be refused.