

PLANNING REF : 260439
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Redacted
: Wokingham, Berkshire
: REDACTED
SUBMITTED BY : Dr Redacted Lee
DATE SUBMITTED : 18/04/2026

COMMENTS:

I write to formally object to the above planning application, which relates to the proposed use of land off Range Road, Finchampstead, as a Gypsy and Traveller pitch. I have reviewed the application carefully and set out below my grounds for objection. These are substantial and, in my view, should lead to refusal.

1. Conflict with Local Development Plans

This site is not identified for development in any of the relevant planning documents. It does not appear in the 2010 Wokingham Local Plan, the 2024 draft Local Plan, or the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan. Each of these documents has been prepared following extensive work and meaningful local consultation. The proposed site lies outside the defined settlement boundaries and is not an allocated site under any of these plans. The application therefore conflicts fundamentally with the adopted and emerging planning framework for this area. Agreed and more suitable alternative sites for development already exist within Wokingham Borough, and approval here would be contrary to the careful and considered spatial strategy that underpins these plans. Otherwise, why bother to go to all the effort of producing the plans?

2. Highway Safety and Access

Range Road is a narrow, single-track, unmade rural byway that is wholly unsuitable for the additional vehicle movements and the type of traffic that this development would generate. My concerns are as follows:

- The road is far too narrow to accommodate the movement of large vehicles, including caravans.
- The junction of Range Road with the B3430 Nine Mile Ride is a well-established and documented road safety hazard. Visibility is severely restricted, particularly for drivers looking right, and vehicles on Nine Mile Ride cannot see emerging traffic from Range Road until it has already committed to the junction. This routinely results in vehicles having to reverse back towards the main road - a dangerous manoeuvre at any time, but especially so given the volume and speed of traffic on Nine Mile Ride.
- The dangers posed by this junction were a key material consideration in the refusal of planning application F/2006/8196. Traffic volumes on Nine Mile Ride have increased substantially since that refusal, yet the conditions of the junction have not improved. The same concern therefore applies with even greater force today.
- Range Road is regularly used by walkers and cyclists. There are no safe refuge points along the lane, and the removal of verges, apparently carried out without permission, has reduced these further. Any increase in traffic would materially worsen the danger to these vulnerable users.
- The proposed development is hardly served at all by public

transport and would therefore be entirely dependent on private vehicle use. There are no shops, schools or medical facilities within walking distance. This would inevitably lead to a significant increase in car movements, including those by large vehicles towing caravans, on a road and junction that cannot safely accommodate them.

3. Impact on the Rural Character and Appearance of the Area

Range Road and its surrounding woodland form a quiet, rural setting that is characteristic of this part of Finchampstead and contributes positively to the established appearance of the area. The proposed development would introduce built form, hardstanding, artificial lighting and the associated noise and disturbance of regular site activity into what is currently a dark, tranquil and unspoilt rural location. This would represent an unacceptable urbanisation of the countryside and would cause severe and irreversible harm to the intrinsic character and visual quality of the rural landscape. The installation of caravans would fundamentally and permanently alter the look and character of Range Road and its wooded setting in a manner that could not be mitigated.

4. Impact on Wildlife and Biodiversity

The ecological impact of this proposal is a matter of serious concern. The site and surrounding woodland support a range of species including bats (a protected species), deer, badgers, owls, hedgehogs and nesting birds. Development of this kind would result in:

- Loss of trees and habitat fragmentation, directly threatening the species that depend upon them. Damage to the site has already had a visible impact on local wildlife.
- The introduction of artificial lighting into a currently dark rural area. The evidence from the adjacent unauthorised site (application 260577) already demonstrates extreme light pollution that is visible from a considerable distance. Such 'urban glow' is well documented as being harmful to nocturnal species, particularly protected bats and owls.
- No indication has been provided as to how the applicant intends to achieve the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. Without an ecological assessment, baseline biodiversity data and a defined plan to deliver measurable improvements, the application fails to demonstrate compliance with BNG obligations. This is a significant deficiency that cannot be overlooked.

5. Tree Preservation Orders and Utilities Infrastructure

A number of trees on and immediately around the site are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. These trees provide important environmental screening and contribute significantly to the character of the area. The application proposes a 'no-dig' solution in order to protect these trees, but the installation of essential utilities - water, power and sewage, none of which currently serve the site - will inevitably require trenching through protected root zones. This would lead to the progressive decline and eventual loss of the very trees the approach purports to protect. The application provides no convincing or credible explanation of how this can be avoided.

6. Existing Enforcement Order

An enforcement order relating to this site remains in force, prohibiting the stationing of caravans on the land. Any planning permission granted for use involving caravans or residential occupation would therefore conflict directly with the terms of that existing enforcement order, and the application should be refused on that basis.

7. Prior Unauthorised Works and Notification Concerns

Works to clear and alter the site appear to have been carried out without the benefit of planning permission, including significant removal of trees and vegetation and attempts to widen the lane. This has already caused harm to the site and the wider environment. The fact that such works were undertaken before any permission was sought or granted undermines confidence in the applicant's intentions and approach. It is also a matter of concern that residents were not formally notified by the Council of this application in the normal way and only became aware of it by chance as a result of the unauthorised land clearing.

8. Lack of service infrastructure

The site does not have the infrastructure to connect to electricity, gas, water or sewage systems.

9. Precedent

Approval of this application would be likely to set an unwelcome precedent for further applications of a similar nature along Range Road and elsewhere in the lane. This could lead to a significant cumulative increase in vehicle movements and further erosion of the rural character of the area, the harm from which would be very difficult to reverse.

Conclusion

While I recognise that there is a need to make provision for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation within Wokingham Borough, and that national planning policy requires this to be addressed, such development must nonetheless be sited in locations that are appropriate and sustainable, and must be designed so as to minimise harm to the surrounding environment. This site meets neither of those requirements.

The proposed development conflicts with the local development plan framework, would cause serious harm to highway safety, would urbanise and damage an unspoilt rural landscape, would harm local wildlife and biodiversity, and is not sustainably located. There are other sites within the borough that are better suited to development of this kind.

For all of the reasons set out above, I respectfully but firmly urge the Local Planning Authority to refuse this application.