



Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Section 78 Appeal

Hearing Statement on Landscape and Visual Matters

Produced by Stuart Ryder BA (Hons) CMLI

June 2025

in respect of

Full application for the proposed change of use of land for the
siting of 2no. gypsy and traveller pitches with creation of a second
access off Finchampstead Road and associated installation of soft
and hard landscaping

on behalf of

Wokingham Borough Council

LPA Application Ref:

242011

PINS Ref:

APP/X0360/WV/25/3364902

Appellant:

Mr Karl Richards



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List of Appendices to Hearing Statement

Set in a separate Appendix Report

- A – Methodology for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- B – Extracts from Landscape Character Information
- C – TGN 2/21 – Table I Assessment on Landscape Value
- D – Representative Viewpoint Panoramic Photography
- E – Illustrative Single Plate and Panoramic Photography
- F – Tree Preservation Order TPO-I306-2009

1.0 Introduction, Authorship and Expert's Declaration

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared by is Stuart Ryder and I am a Chartered Landscape Architect and Director of Ryder Landscape Consultants Ltd (RLC). I have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute since 1995 and have assisted local planning authorities across England and Wales. I have prepared the following Landscape Statement on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC).
- 1.2 It relates to the planning appeal for the construction of two permanent caravan pitches and two touring pitches for use by members of the Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities on land to the east of Warren Lodge, near Finchampstead. It addresses matters concerning landscape and visual effects.

Instruction

- 1.3 My instruction was to consider the landscape and visual effects of the refused development, consider the landscape proposals submitted with the Full planning application and prepare this Hearing Statement. It has been prepared to assist the Inspector to understand the effects on the character and appearance of the Site, its contextual area and the proposed development's potential relationship with Finchampstead.
- 1.4 I confine my Statement to landscape and visual matters. It should be read in conjunction with the Hearing Statement of Mr Kieran Neumann, Senior Planner with WBC who provides evidence on planning matters including the overall planning balance. Nor do I provide detailed ecological or historical review.

Expert's declaration and statement of truth

- 1.5 I confirm that insofar as the facts expressed in this Statement are within my own knowledge and I believe them to be true and that the opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinion.
- 1.6 I confirm that my Statement includes all facts that I regard as being relevant to the opinions that I have expressed and that attention has been drawn to any matter that would affect the validity of those opinions.
- 1.7 I confirm that in preparing this Statement I have assumed the same duty that would apply to me when giving expert opinions in a court of law under oath or affirmation. I confirm that this duty to the

Inquiry overrides any duty to those instructing or paying me, that I have understood this duty and complied with it in giving my opinions impartially and objectively.

- I.8 Finally, I confirm that I am not instructed under any conditional fee arrangements and that I have no personal or professional conflicts of interest in this matter. Nor was I party to the original application and its determination.

2.0 Methodology and Scope of Statement

Methodology

- 2.1 I attended the Appeal Site and surrounding area on June 10th, 2025 and walked the local paths and drove the surrounding roads to consider the Site within its landscape context including Public Rights of Way (herein PRoW) to the south of the Site. I am also familiar with the wider landscape around Wokingham borough after working on other projects and Appeals in the area.
- 2.2 The consideration of landscape and visual effects was undertaken following the guidance provided by the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3)*, Landscape Institute & IEMA, 2013.
- 2.3 Panoramic photography in accordance with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note TGN 06/19 was taken during my visit and some are contained in Appendix D along with five sheets of single plate photography in Appendix E to illustrate individual features or points of interest on and around the Site. Appendix E also contains further illustrative panoramic photography.
- 2.4 In addition Technical Guidance Note 2/21 (TGN 2/21) has been utilised to confirm that the Site and its contextual area is not a valued landscape with regards to the use of the term in the NPPF Paragraph 187 a). The summary of this assessment is held at Appendix C.
- 2.5 This has provided me with a good understanding of the area's landscape character and views to the Site from publicly accessible locations. In addition, I have studied relevant OS Mapping information, the WBC online version of the Definitive Map PRoW details, current and historic aerial photography and published landscape character information before preparing this Statement as presented.
- 2.6 Where possible I have attempted to tabulate information to save space and for ease of information retrieval.

Scope of this Statement

- 2.7 WBC's Planning Officer determined against granting Planning Consent using delegated powers on the 31st October 2024 giving eight Reasons for Refusal (RfR). RfR2 is the primary focus of this Statement as it addresses landscape character & rural appearance of the area.

2.8 However my Statement will also touch upon the RfR6 topic of visually valuable trees and RfR 7 veteran trees both as assets that assist to form landscape character and as individual features in their own right.

2.9 This Statement seeks to consider if WBC were correct in citing such landscape and visual harm in RfR 2 and whether the proposals are contrary to the development plan policies as listed in the same RfR.

2.10 RFR2 is reproduced below and four items of landscape and visual concern as identified by WBC are highlighted.

2. The proposed development will have a negative and detrimental impact on the landscape character & rural appearance of the area by reason of the development's cramped urbanising appearance and insensitive siting, thereby blur the transition between the settlement of Finchampstead and the Countryside.

The proposals are therefore contrary to contrary to Policies CP1, CP3, and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policies CC01, CC02, CC03, TB10 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, Policies D2, AHD3 and IRS4 of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan, sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF, Section B1 of The National Design Guide, R24 of the Borough Design Guide and Paragraphs 25 and 26 of the Planning Policy For Traveller Sites (PPTS).

2.11 With regard to RfR's 6 & 7 that consider the effects on trees the landscape and visual dimension of these reasons are also highlighted in the full copied text of the reasons below.

6. The siting of the proposals would result in the removal of, and encroachment into the RPA, with several visually valuable and prominent trees on or adjacent to the site, to the detriment of their health and subsequently to the detriment of the rural character of the area. There is insufficient justification to outweigh this harm. The proposals are therefore contrary to policy CP3 of the Core Strategy, policies CC01, CC02, CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, policy IRS6 of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan, BS5837:2012 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. The proposed development would conflict with and detrimentally impact Veteran Trees, an irreplaceable habitat, by reason of operational development associated with the proposal being located within the buffer zones of the trees. The proposals are therefore contrary to policies CP7 of the Core Strategy, TB23 of MDD Local Plan, Policy IRS5 of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.12 It is these highlighted factors in RfR 2, 6 & 7 that will form the focus of this Statement.

3.0 Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3.1 Recognising that the Framework has to be read and applied as a whole I do however consider the following parts to be pertinent to the consideration of this Appeal:

- Paragraph 135 – Good design with the exception of sub-point e) that addresses public realm;
- Paragraph 187a – Valued landscape considerations are not engaged at this location but the landscape at the Site and within its contextual area still retains a value;
- Paragraph 187b – Intrinsic value of the countryside given the Site's location in the defined countryside outside the extents of Finchampstead;
- Paragraph 189 – Designated landscapes are not a consideration within this Appeal as the Site is not within one, nor does it form the setting to one; and
- Paragraph 193 c) – Veteran Trees and the effects of development upon them is engaged.

Local Plan policies

3.2 The WBC part of the Development Plan is made up of two parts, The Core Strategy (CS) adopted January 2010 and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) adopted in February 2014. The policies cited in RfR's 2, 6 & 7 are listed below.

3.3 From the CS:

- CPI – Sustainable development;
- CP3 – General Principles for development;
- CP7 – Biodiversity; and
- CPI I – Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside).

3.4 From the MDD:

- CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development;
- CC02 – Development Limits; and
- CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping.

- TB10 – Traveller Sites;
- TB21 – Landscape Character; and
- TB23 – Biodiversity and Development.

3.5 A review of the Site on the WBC online Policy Map¹ indicates that it is within Countryside (Policy CPI I) and within the Thames Basin Heath SPA Mitigation Zone.

Neighbourhood Plan

3.6 The Site is subject to the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan 2022-2038 that was made in July 2023 and covers the settlement of Finchampstead and the wider rural Parish. The Policies as cited in RfR2 are:

- D2 - Preserving the rural culture of the parish;
- AHD3 - Provisions for Gypsy and Traveller communities;
- IRS4 - Implement strategy to preserve the identity of Finchampstead parish through green spaces; and
- IRS6 – Trees.

Designations at the Site

3.7 There are no landscape designations at the Site or in the vicinity to the Site.

Relevant guidance

3.8 The following parts of guidance documents were specifically cited in RfR2:

- Section B1 of The National Design Guide - Compact form of development ;
- Part R24 of the Borough Design Guide that states, *'The layout and design of gypsy sites should provide a safe living environment that meets the needs of residents, while respecting the character of the local area'*; and
- Paragraphs 25 and 26 of the Planning Policy For Traveller Sites (PPTS) that cover the topics of local provision / personal circumstance and limiting traveller site development in open countryside respectively.

¹ [Planning Policies and Constraints Map](#) – consulted 9/6/25

WBC Landscape Officer Consultation Comments

- 3.9 Two sets of WBC Landscape Comments were prepared during the determination period by the WBC's Landscape Officer – Ms Coralie Ramsey. The initial comments and objection to the scheme on 19th September, 2024 and an updated version of the note on the 15th October, 2024 that picked up highway comments and reinstatement of the remaining stumps of Tree T13 on the Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI) and still maintained the objection.
- 3.10 The summary of her remarks are presented in a concluding paragraph to her first note and they have been reproduced below for ease of reference.

In my view, the installation of urbanising built forms; access and hard surfacing on a small, narrow undeveloped field in a rural location would have an incongruous, detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area and countryside. I suggest the development is contrary to T&L parts of policies such as CP1, CP3 and CP11, policies CC01, CC03 and TB21, the Design Guide SPD and sections 180 and 186 of the NPPF December 2023.

4.0 Landscape and visual baseline at and around the Site

Sources of information

4.1 The following primary sources of information have been used to gain information on the character of the Site prior to attending it for the first time:

- Aerial photographs from Google Earth Pro. Bing Aerial and Bluesky Global Ltd;
- Existing landscape character assessments from WBC;
- National Character Area (NCA) 129 – Thames Basin Heaths;
- MAGIC Maps by Natural England;
- Green Infrastructure Portal by Natural England;
- Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI); and
- LiDAR topographical information regarding landform in the area.

Landscape designations and valued landscape status

4.2 The Site and its immediate context are not designated for scenic or historic landscape interest. Nor do I consider them part of a valued landscape as per the NPPF 187 a) meaning of the term.

4.3 A TGN 2/21 Table 1 - landscape value assessment has been conducted and is held at Appendix C to confirm the opinion that the Site and contextual area are not valued landscape. This process is useful to define elements of the area that have a higher value in landscape terms and is discussed later in this Section when the character of the Site and surrounding area are analysed.

4.4 None of the Site or adjacent areas are Registered Common or Open Access Land.

Current and past landscape character

4.5 Landscape character is defined in the Glossary to the Guidelines to Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) as. *‘A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.’*²

² Page 157 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition 2013 by the Landscape Institute and the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment

- 4.6 The current landscape character of the Site is broadly as a narrow triangular shaped area of overgrown trees that is not agricultural in land use terms but set within a rural landscape outside of the settlement of Finchampstead. It's shape and boundaries are largely defined by adjacent roads to the north and east and Warren Lodge Care Centre (also known as Orchard House) and pasture fields to the west.
- 4.7 In reviewing aerial photographs from 1986 through to 2025 the area has primarily been under tree cover with no significant management of the trees. A regression of the images shows the die-back and loss of a large tree in the middle of the Site but no significant management such as felling or thinning appears to have taken place.
- 4.8 The range of tree species on the Site, particularly its coniferous stock suggests to me that it was laid out as part of the wider grounds to Orchard House when it was a residential property. Its positioning running up to Finchampstead Road would have made it difficult to farm and as a 'lot' it would have been logical to sell the corner of the field for development. Over time and with its change of use from the residential Orchard House to the Warren Lodge Care Centre this part of the original garden has been fenced off from the main house and maintenance reduced.
- 4.9 The landscape elements of the current Site and its contextual area as determined from the aerial photography and Site visit are set down in RLC Table 1 below.

RLC Table 1 – Landscape Elements at the Site and in its Contextual Area

Element ³	At the Site	Contextual Area
Geology	Presumed as sand and gravel measures base geology overlaid with thin topsoil sufficient to support tree growth, No outcropping noted at Site.	Pasture fields appear to have been improved from nutrification but other areas such as Warren Wood display more sandy soil near to surface.
Soils	Suitable for tree growth but colour and texture not evident.	Sandy in woodlands with improvement in pasture fields.
Landform	Slightly sloping from south to north following localised land form.	Sloping from south to north with higher land to the east of the Site and raising ground also discernible to the west in the field running up Church Lane.

³ As taken from §5.4 of the GLVIA3 that discusses Landscape Character Assessment

Element ³	At the Site	Contextual Area
Topographic levels & gradient	Higher south end is indicated at 73m AOD and the lower north end at 72m AOD giving a gradient of less than 1:100 across the approximately 120m long axis of the Site, this is perceived as effectively flat.	The field rising to the east peaks at approximately 81m AOD at the top of the field and the land to the west rises to 99m AOD at location of the Grade I Listed St James Church in the old village heart of Finchampstead.
Drainage & Waterbodies	There are no obvious drainage features such as streams or ponds on the Site.	No obvious drainage features in the contextual area either.
Vegetation	Mixed trees and scrub with ornamental species and native species achieving notable height and maturity leading to some being declared veteran trees.	Road side native trees and hedgerows extend into fields to form their boundaries. Woodland blocks are the most dominant vegetation form with a strong, mature tree edge to Finchampstead to the north.
Patterns of planting	No discernible.	Blocks and bands from hunting woods, plantations and remaining woods used for public recreation such as Warren Wood and California Country Park.
Tree cover	Good extent of tree cover with some more open patches of ground towards the centre of the Site.	Hedgerow trees and woodland blocks are largely deciduous. No active forestry. Mature oak stock down Finchampstead Road.
Land use & management	No active management or use for garden, agriculture or woodland.	Mix of pasture fields, the care home and dispersed properties along Warren Lane and greater Finchampstead set approximately 200m north around the curve of the B3016 Finchampstead Road.
Settlement & buildings	No settlement or buildings on Site. The adjacent Warren Lodge Care Home has however erected an entrance name sign on the Site towards its north west corner – see individual plate 5 on Photosheet 1 in Appendix E.	Nearest built form is to the west of the Site with Warren Lodge Care Centre which displays its former grand house at its centre and various extensions around it. The main Finchampstead settlement is 190m as the crow

Element ³	At the Site	Contextual Area
		flies from the Site to Finchampstead Surgery.
Type of enclosure	There is a timber post and four rail fence to the north and east sides of the Site and a similar fence but with some hedge stock to the west near the field and ornamental timber palisade fence to the care home..	Hedgerow and occasional mix of fencing types, no stone walling other than feature walling to Warren Lodge that is a rendered boundary wall painted white.
Scale	Small scale at the Site with its grand form hidden from general sight by the extensive tree and scrub growth.	Medium size field units that allow appreciation of rising land form, The areas of woodland combine to present a wooded edge to the north of the Site enclosing views in that direction.
Complexity	Generally simple on Site with trees as dominant feature.	Both ordered in terms of field form with strong definition formed by the mature woodland edge to the north.
Openness	To sense of openness given the tree cover.	Largely open but with layered vegetation and tree line to the north restricting longer views within the rural landscape.
Wildness	No sense of wildness.	No sense of wildness in the farmed areas but a small semblance of wildness in the larger woods like Warren Wood.
Tranquillity	No sense of tranquillity at the Site given proximity of B3016 Finchampstead Road.	Some tranquillity on footpath routes away from the roads but still some noise from B3016 Finchampstead Road

- 4.10 Overall the Site field appears as a small woody area possibly originating from the neighbouring Warren Lodge side garden that is now not under either active woodland or agricultural management. Its trees are its most prominent feature and they contribute to the rural character of Finchampstead Road at this part of the corridor. The Site is set outside of Finchampstead by approximately 200m and sits at the interface of a change from the larger wooded belt that screens greater Finchampstead to more open pasture fields.

4.11 The Site appears as incidental in terms of its low level of management and positioning between Warren Lodge Care Centre and the B3016. It currently does not appear untidy in terms of dumped material or litter but the state of the highway fence to the Finchampstead Road side could be improved and ivy cut back from it to provide a clearly defined fence line. It neither appears domestic or agricultural in character but rather as a small, road side field corner copse set within the wider countryside.

4.12 The TGN 2/21 landscape value assessment has highlighted that the Site has elevated value in the following factors;

- Natural Heritage:
- Distinctiveness; and
- Perceptual (Scenic quality).

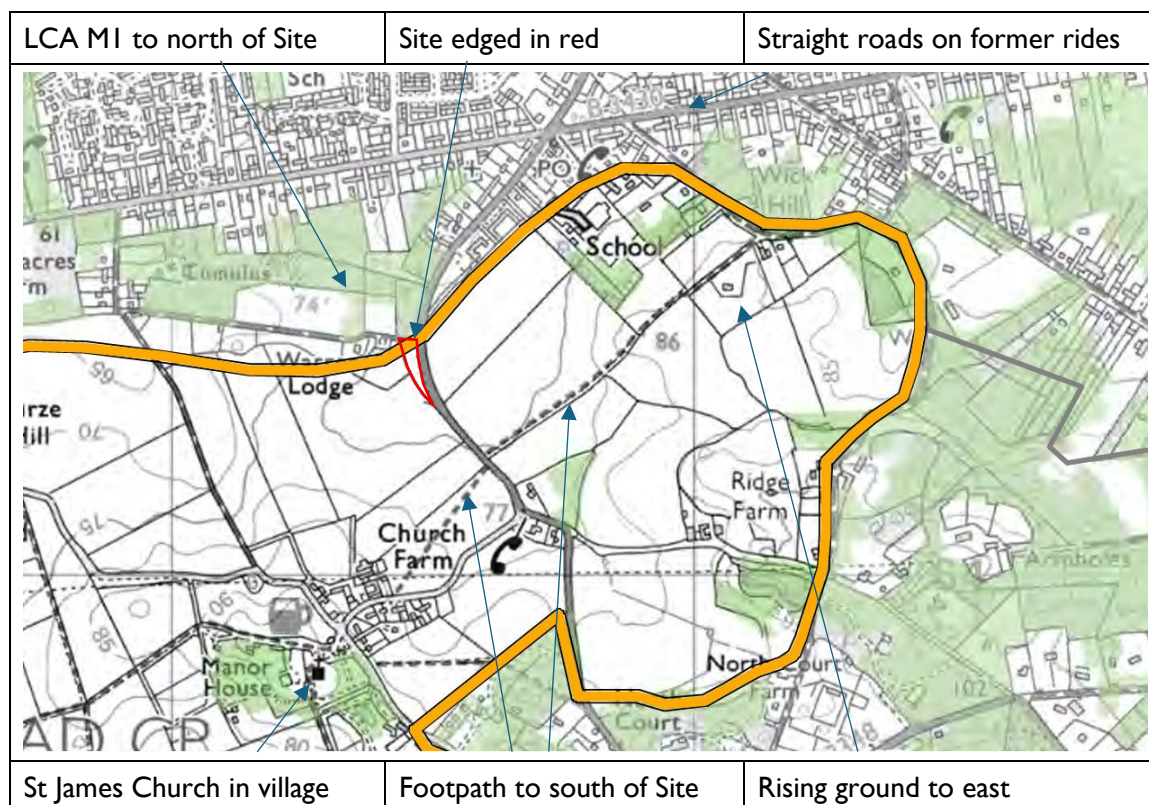
4.13 It is the Site's mature and veteran trees that increase its landscape value across these three factors.

Published landscape character information

4.14 At a national level the Site forms part of the NCA 129 – Thames Basin Heaths, this large scale level of landscape character information is useful at providing wider background to the area but not generally helpful in establishing local level landscape character and effects. It is not considered further.

4.15 At a local level there is the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment (WLCA) from November 2019 to consider. This document splits the Borough into 14 different Landscape Character Types (LCT's) that are further sub-divided into Landscape Character Areas (LCA's). The vast majority of the Site is located within N2 – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland. The smaller portion at the north end of the Site has the boundary of M1 – Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands. The division of the two LCA's is indicated on RLC Figure 1 below and their descriptors held in my Appendix B.

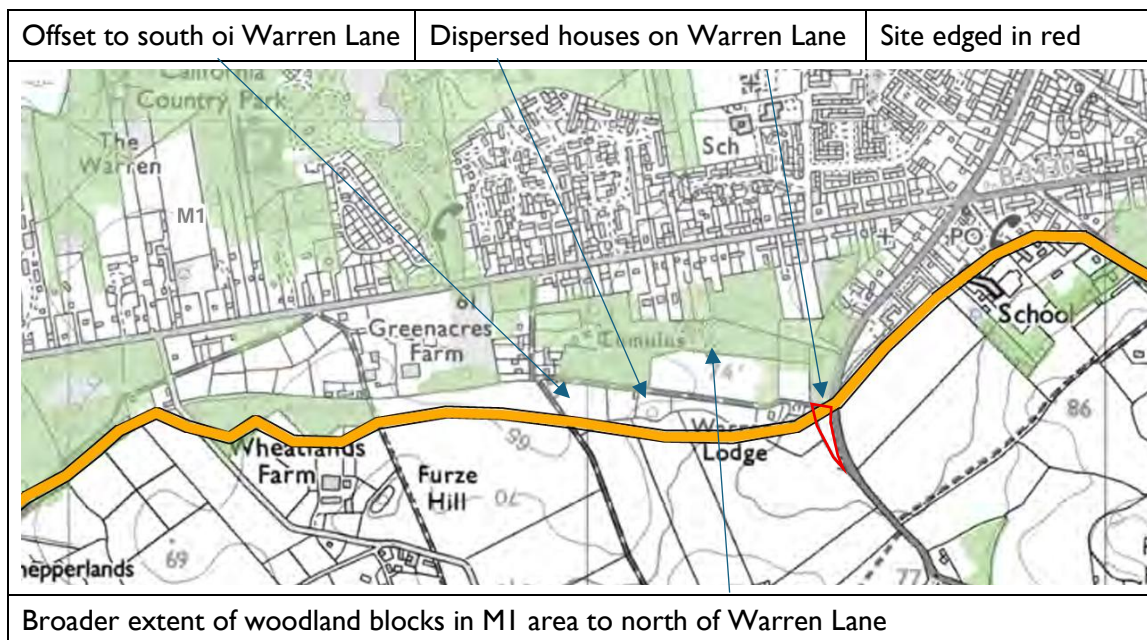
RLC Figure 1 – Extract from Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment N2 Mapping



- 4.16 In situations where a Site lies on the edge of two LCA's or is split by two or more LCA's boundaries then the characteristics of the Site are judged against the key characteristics of the different LCA's to see which it best fits. I have done this and the Site's characteristics align more with the N2 – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland than the M1 – Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands. The deciding factors were amongst other things the presence of open farmland, the longer views this offers and the lack of straight roads associated with historic rides.
- 4.17 The reason why this LCA information is important is that it places the Site firmly within the open, rural and more sparsely developed landscape than the neighbouring M1 LCA where there is a greater degree of settlement and enclosure.
- 4.18 Extracts from the local level documents are set within my Appendix B. As is a comparison of applicable and non-applicable key characteristics.
- 4.19 One other factor that struck me when I was comparing the two LCA descriptions is the mapping of where the two LCA's lie. Typically with LCA work hard and fast boundaries are followed such as roads and railway lines for ease of mapping and interpretation. As shown on RLC Figure 2 below the mapping purposely includes Warren Lane and the houses that lie upon it in M1. The

reason for this boundary draughting decision is not stated but I have interpreted it as a deliberate decision to include the dispersed properties along Warren Lane within the more settled M1 LCA leaving the Site in the more rural N2 LCA.

RLC Figure 2 – LCA M1 and N2's relationship with Warren Lane



- 4.20 The WLCA contains a series of landscape guidelines for the N2 LCA many of which are not directly applicable to the Site or are already being delivered in the contextual landscape. The desire to enhance the sense of place is however clearly stated at Landscape Guideline Bullet 12 on Page 353, reproduced below for ease of reference.

*'Enhance sense of place through careful design (including siting, massing, scale, materials and landscape – and sensitive lighting to retain dark skies at night) to minimise the impacts of any potential new development on valuable attributes.'*⁴

Veteran Trees

- 4.21 The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (LandArb Solutions). A summary of the arboricultural features on site impacted by the development are as follows:

- Tree T1 of the Tree Survey. TPO T1, lime. Veteran tree number 46644;
- Tree T6 of the Tree Survey. TPO T2, lime;

⁴ [Wokingham Borough LCA Part 2 Area N.pdf](#) – accessed 17/6/25

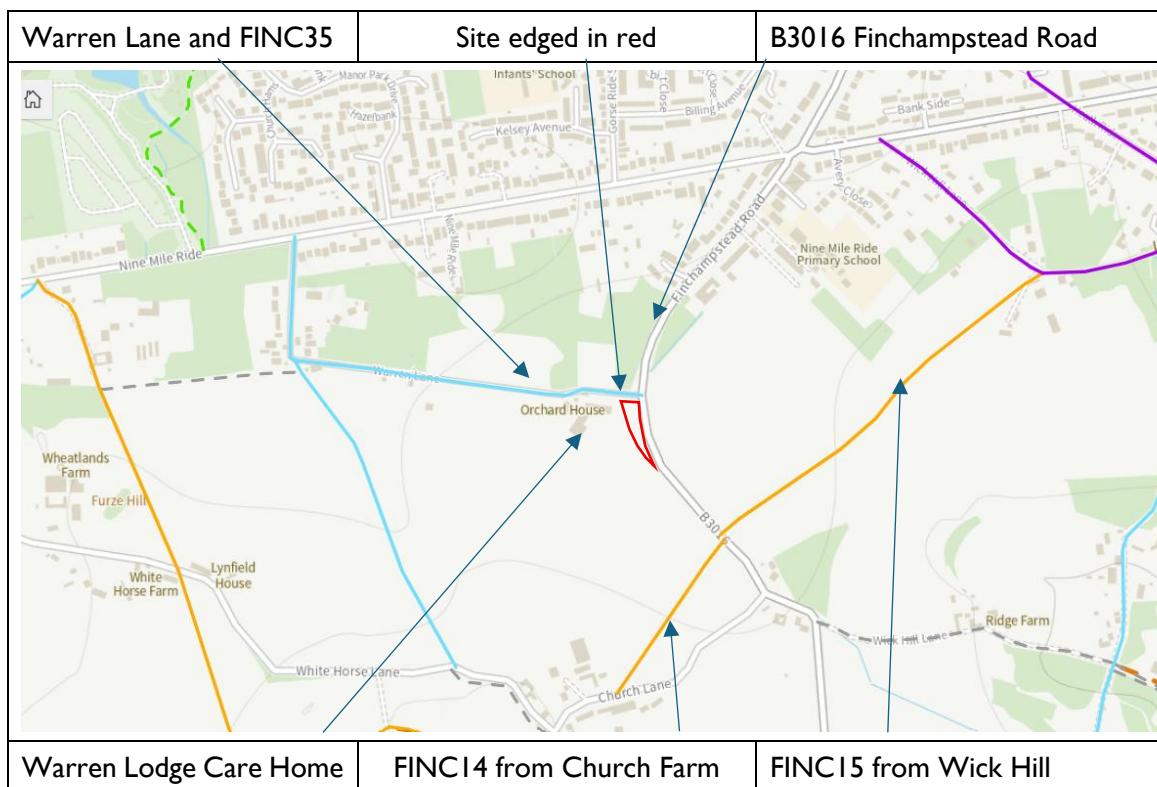
- Tree T14 of the Tree Survey. TPO T3, lime. Veteran tree number 218700;
- Tree T13 of the Tree Survey, sweet chestnut. Veteran tree number 46643, noted on the ATI as felled and this tree is no longer considered present in a recognisable form on Site: and
- Tree T30 of the Tree Survey, oak. Accredited by the Tree Survey as a veteran.

Identification of visual receptors

- 4.22 There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) on the Site and no other permitted land use that allow the general public to access the Site and experience its visual appearance from within it.
- 4.23 However I found it to be readily visible from a series of publicly accessible locations in close proximity to the Site and in mid-distance views from PRoW to the south of the Site. Starting to the north of the Site and using the cardinal points of the compass the following public vantage points were identified from my site visit. Where road users are discussed for Warren Lane and the B2016 this covers both motorists and pedestrians.
- 4.24 **North** – Directly from Warren Lane to the immediate north side of the Site for approximately 50m extending down the lane for a further distance of 50m until a curve in the lane removes the visibility to the Site. Warren Lane is also the definitive route of Bridleway FINC35.
- 4.25 **North and East** – B3016 Finchampstead Road for road users travelling south from the main Finchampstead settlement from a point approximately 75m north of the Site then along the curve of the road past the Site at its pointed southern tip.
- 4.26 **South and East** – again the B3016 Finchampstead Road but this time for road users travelling north towards the main Finchampstead settlement. The Site's end southern trees first come into view at a curve in the road approximately 200m south of the Site and then from passing the Site on the road until it is passed at Warren Lane.
- 4.27 **South East** – for walkers on PRoW Footpath FINC15 as it emerges from woodland on Wick Hill a localised high point near the Site and then runs south west for approximately 375m. The Site does not form part of the view for walkers moving in the opposite direction north east up Wick Hill.
- 4.28 **South** – for walkers on PRoW Footpath FINC14 as it emerges from Church Farm and runs approximately 300m in a north easterly direction to joining the B3016. The Site does not form part of the view for walkers heading south west up the rising pasture field towards Church Farm.

- 4.29 **Private views** – The only property that will have the potential to view the proposed development is the Warren Lodge Care Centre. The area of closest visual linkage is from the rear and side garden of the property. How much the garden is utilised by residents, carers and visitors at the home is unknown. The majority of visitors to and carers at the care centre will pass the Site as they turn onto Warren Lane from Finchampstead Road to access the centre's car park set to the front north side of their building accessed off Warren Lane.

RLC Figure 3 – Location of visual receptors.



- 4.30 There are four receptor groups from publicly accessible locations and one private visual receptor to consider when assessing the visual effects of the proposed development. They are listed below:

- Users of Warren Lane and Bridleway FINC35;
- Users of B3016 Finchampstead Road;
- Users of Footpath FINC 15 as it runs down from Wick Hill to its junction with the B3016;
- Users of Footpath FINC 14 leading from Church Farm down to its junction with the B3016 ; and
- Residents, visitors and workers at Warren Lodge Care Centre set immediately to the west of the Site.

5.0 The proposed development

5.1 The application is Full in nature, so the plans as submitted show the proposed way of delivering development at the Site. I note that there have been some changes since the determination date and the Soft Landscape Proposals drawing prepared by LandArb Solutions (LAS746 Dwg No.04 Rev B) is dated 24th April 2025. The plans that I have reviewed indicate the main elements associated with the Site and have allowed for my assessment of the key character and appearance effects of the proposed development to be undertaken.

5.2 I have looked at the proposals in my professional capacity as a Landscape Architect to better understand their foreseeable character to allow me to assess the resultant landscape and visual effects and how well the development will assimilate within the local and wider landscape settings.

Access Points

5.3 There are two accesses proposed. A new eastern access mid-way along the Site's boundary with the B3016 Finchampstead Road and a utilisation of the existing access into the Site from Warren Lane to the north west corner of the Site. This existing access is the northern access and its current arrangement is shown on Viewpoint Photograph 1 in Appendix D and illustrative Plate 6 in Appendix E.

5.4 The new eastern access scales at 5m wide and the existing northern one at 3.5m. The surface associated with the new eastern access is listed as 'Proposed Local Gravel' whilst for the northern one has a 'Proposed Permeable Geocell with gravel surfacing' listed on the soft landscape proposal plan drawing.

5.5 There is no indication of what the end apron at these two bell mouth access points would be surfaced in but realistically it is likely to be bitumen asphalt to withstand the frequency and turning loads placed upon them.

5.6 The access points are indicated as ungated presumably given the difficulty of stopping on a fast road such as the B3016 to get out of a vehicle to open the gates. Nor are there any pull ins indicated for safer parking before taking access to the Site. However an ungated situation would mean that young children and pets such as dogs would be vulnerable to straying onto the road.

5.7 A parking plan (ref 8848) has been submitted showing a total of seven parking spaces but generally set in a tight arrangement with limited turning or manoeuvring space.

Caravan Pitches

- 5.8 A total of four caravan pitches are indicated on the proposals with two measuring 12 x 6m suitable for taking static caravans and two measuring 8 x 4m and suitable for touring caravan positioning. The need for excavation or the surface types of these pitches are not defined on the soft landscape plan but it is presumed they will be compacted unbound stone.
- 5.9 These pitches are close to the mature retained trees which brings in consideration of over-shading and damage to caravans from wind blown boughs and branches that the mature trees may lose in high winds.

Lawns around pitches

- 5.10 The immediate areas around the four pitches are indicated as Proposed Grass with an ELI Flowering Lawn Mixture. There are no paths indicated from the stoned up access and parking areas to reach the doors of any of the caravans.

Hedge planting

- 5.11 Two hedges are indicated as being proposed to be planted as part of the proposals. The first is a new roadside hedge running from the existing access on the north side of the Site along Warren Lane, then round the filleted north east corner of the Site to run along the boundary to Finchampstead Road.
- 5.12 The second is an internal hedge to the Site that appears set in a curve around the extents of one of the veteran trees' Root Protection Areas. It is reinforced by a proposed 1.2m high post and rail fencing that also carries on to enclose the lawn of the southern touring caravan pitch.
- 5.13 The hedge planting species are all native with 10 No. species indicated to be planted at 10% by proportion in the mix. This is somewhat unusual as typically you have fewer species and the percentages of the mix are more varied. Although not stated the hedging plants appear to be planted at 4 per linear metre (based on scaling and associated calculations) which is a little lower than a typical 5 per linear metre in a double staggered row.
- 5.14 Just 10% of the hedge mix are evergreen and that is the Holly that is specified. This means that 90% of the hedge is leafless in winter and early Spring months.
- 5.15 It should also be noted that establishing a hedgerow within an already well wooded area is a difficult thing to achieve given the amount of overshadowing from existing trees and scrub. The

reduction in light typically leads to either failure to form a closed hedgerow or elongation of the establishment period.

Tree planting

- 5.16 A total of 24 No trees across three native species – Field Maple, Alder and Oak are indicated on the soft landscape proposals.
- 5.17 They are arrayed in the proposed road side hedge to Finchampstead Road but not Warren Lane. Five are also indicated as planted in a loose arc following the second hedge that marks the veteran tree's RPA. Further infilling of the existing woodland to the south end of the Site is also indicated.
- 5.18 Neither the trees or hedges appear to be arranged to provide an immediate setting to the four caravan pitches with all of them kept more open within lawn areas.
- 5.19 The Oak is indicative of existing trees on Site but the Field Maple and Alder did not strike me as common place to the N2 LCA or characteristic of the Site. They are not listed as present in the tree survey.

Tree Felling

- 5.20 To facilitate the proposed works the Officer's Report identified the need to fell or work on the following collection of existing trees:
- Ten trees and 2 groups of trees are to be removed, including three classified as Category 'B' trees:
 - These 'B' trees are 3 oaks being 9m to 10m tall with canopy spans from 5.5m to 7.5m:
 - That the proposed felling will reduce the verdant visual character and will have an amenity impact within the plot.

Missing elements

- 5.21 There is no indication of the following elements on the layout plan:
- Lighting and CCTV Camera Poles;
 - Amenity blocks (washing rooms, toilets, showers);
 - Built stores and sheds;
 - Waste collection points;

- Mains services;
- Gate posts, gates and ornamental fenestration;
- Play areas/Football goals; or
- Gardens, kennels or stabling areas other than the lawns.

5.22 I acknowledge that these facilities are not strictly necessary for a Travellers' Site but they are features that I have regularly encountered at other GRT locations, both consented and unconsented around England.

Design observations

5.23 The first and very striking observation about the Site is the narrowness of the Site. This leads to an orientation of the pitches and resulting vans upon them that will present a long side of the structures to the adjacent roads. This increases their visibility compared to the smaller end elevations.

5.24 The lack of gates or any curving of an access road means that the vans will be evident through the access points, particularly the new access associated with the B3016. The only effective screen between the roads and the new vans is a hedgerow and a line of trees. Even at maturity Field Maples remain a small tree whilst the Oak will develop a clear stem allowing general sight under its canopy.

5.25 As identified above the hedgerow will have just 10% leaf cover in winter and cannot be classed as an effective screen. Motion parallax is the name of the effect when the brain forms an image of what lies behind a hedge through the glimpsed breaks between its structure. Simple forms and shapes such as parked vans or vehicles will be evident with, or without bright colours such as white, or cream that can aid perception of the effect.

5.26 Planting within an existing well treed area such as those to the west of the Site will struggle to establish through suppression by the retained stock. Trees and the hedgerow to the east would be in a more open position after the proposed tree felling but would still require eight to ten years to establish to provide some level of screening.

5.27 Planting should also be recognised as a form of change and disturbance to the RPA's and setting of veteran trees and should be avoided even though it is presented as benefitting the amenity of the Site.

- 5.28 Overall the space within the Site appears cramped with limited communal space or storage space around the individual pitches. A narrow Site is further constrained by the presence of mature trees whether they are veteran or not. Even if consented and the residents of the Site sought to improve their pitches with items such as an amenity block there would little or no space to accommodate later changes.

6.0 Landscape effects

Three categories of landscape effects

6.1 The landscape effects are separated and described in three categories:

- At the level of the Site landscape;
- In the contextual landscape to the Site; and
- For the wider landscape that the Site contributes to.

6.2 The effects listed at the end of the descriptive paragraphs for each of the three landscape categories are my assessments of the foreseeable landscape change that the proposals would bring about. Types of effects can be adverse, positive or neutral. Where positive effects have been identified they have been set against the adverse ones before arriving at the final overall judgement.

6.3 At the end of this section is a brief review of Ms Coralie Ramsey's landscape consultation comments from the application stage and whether I find them fair and reasonable.

Site landscape effects

6.4 **Urbanisation of a wooded rural land parcel** – Effectively the current wooded parcel of rural land would appear urbanised with the permanent presence of two static caravans and at times an additional two touring caravans. This will appear in sharp contrast to the nearby sloping pasture fields and the dispersed properties along Warren Lane. The felling of mature trees on Site will reduce its overall appearance as a field corner copse. The replacement tree planting will take many years to reach any form of semi-maturity and effectively mitigate the loss of trees from Site. This is an adverse effect.

6.5 **Access track** – a new access track leaving the apex of a bend on the B3516 will have notability given its position on the bend and contrasting character to field entrances in the area. The track would allow clear recognition of the vans, parked vehicles and other paraphernalia for people driving or walking along Finchampstead Road, even with just a fleeting glimpse. Overall the access track will lead to an adverse effect and increase the land parcels relationship and association with the B3516 rather than Warren Lane.

6.6 **Stoning up** – and other surfacing modifications to form the lawns will add to the sense of domestication and urbanisation of the wooded copse and by bringing it into order. Stone surfacing in its own right is not unusual in rural areas but is more typically used to aid field access or around

heavily poached areas such as around feed stations or drinking troughs. The various surfacing elements on Site would lead to an adverse effect.

- 6.7 **Veteran trees** – the setting to the identified veteran trees on Site will be more formalised and domestic when compared to the existing copse like conditions. They currently appear in a semi-natural setting but would be judged with the close presence of the various vans and other development in their immediate setting. Even with the curved offset of hedged off and gated land the setting of the veteran trees would be fundamentally altered from being within a copse to being next to a small caravan park. This change of setting to the veteran trees would lead to an adverse effect.
- 6.8 **New hedgerow on Site** – the hedge along the B3016 provided for screening will continue the hedge along the road corridor providing a landscape benefit. However the hedge would have to respect the visibility splay from the new eastern entrance so could appear more contemporary when compared to older field hedges that follow the line of the road. Overall it is considered as a small positive landscape effect for the Site.
- 6.9 **Wildflower lawn seeding** – a wildflower grass seed mix is proposed for the lawn areas around the four pitches. The process to create a wildflower sward is not indicated e.g. de-nutrition or how they would manage a heavily shaded area. If successful the meadow would have a neutral landscape effect at Site level replacing one type of ground flora associated with woodland to one associated with grassland.
- 6.10 Taking all the above changes together the following assessment of the significance of effects for the Site is made for Year 0 effects:
- Landscape susceptibility – **Medium/High** because it is established woodland in a rural location that would require part felling to accommodate this form of development;
 - Landscape value – **Medium/High** as an wooded area containing veteran trees its value is above average to reflect its arboreal assets it contains and contribution to the wider wooded scene;
 - Landscape sensitivity – The resultant sensitivity by combining the landscape susceptibility and value together is **Medium/High**;
 - Magnitude of landscape change at the Site - includes the tree felling, formation of new access, part re-surfacing and insertion of the static and touring caravans as structures on the Site leading to a **Medium/Large** magnitude of effects; and

- Significance of landscape effect - is judged at **Major/Moderate, Adverse** for the at the point of construction completion and until the landscape mitigation starts to take effect.

6.11 The landscape mitigation proposed for the Site to address the landscape change includes the formation of a hedge to front Warren Lane and the B3016 with tree planting set within it. A further hedge is set within the Site to demarcate the root protection area of one of the veteran trees. Putting aside the concerns I have expressed about establishing new stock within a wooded situation and assuming that all the indicated trees and hedges establish it will have the following effects on the magnitude of landscape change and resulting significance of effect at Year 15:

- Magnitude of landscape change at the Site - includes the trees around the fringes of the development in a young semi-mature state, established hedgerows cut and shaped and toning down of new stoned up surfaces. There would still be the presence of the static and touring caravans as structures on the Site and in the vicinity of the veteran trees leading to a **Medium** magnitude of effects; and
- Significance of landscape effect - is judged at Year 15 as **Moderate, Adverse** and Permanent when the landscape mitigation has taken effect.

6.12 For the Site the proposed landscape mitigation measures reduce the landscape effects from **Major/Moderate, Adverse and Temporary** to a **Moderate, Adverse and Permanent** level. There is continued harm to the character of the Site and the setting of the veteran trees from the presence of the caravans and the associated domestic paraphernalia and activity.

Landscape effects in the contextual landscape

6.13 The following four landscape effects have been identified within the contextual landscape to the Site. The area I deem as the perceived contextual landscape has been indicated on the photograph location plan Figure 1 held in Appendix D.

6.14 **Insertion of urbanising form within the rural landscape** – the combined effects of the caravans, new access off B3016 and associated activity and paraphernalia would act as a point of uncharacteristic development in a rural area. This is an adverse landscape effect as it reduces the rural character of the contextual landscape.

6.15 **Extending development out from greater Finchampstead** – The proposed Site is separate from the current edge of greater Finchampstead to the north and the original village form of the original Finchampstead centred on St James Church to the south. There is a clear gap of approximately 200m between Warren Lane and the southern edge of greater Finchampstead at

the surgery. The positioning of the Site next to Warren Lodge complicates this sense of separation slightly as there is built form adjacent to the Site. However, Warren Lodge is a large individual rural property rather than an extensive area of settlement. It is no mistake that the Site is categorised in LCA N2 – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland rather than the more developed LCA M1 – Finchampstead Forest and Settled Sands. The development would be clearly evident and understood on the approach to greater Finchampstead from either Warren Lane, or the more frequently travelled B3016. This sense of extending greater Finchampstead out into the adjacent rural area is an adverse landscape effect.

- 6.16 **Character change to B3016 corridor** – This road corridor between the edge of greater Finchampstead up to Arden House near Church Lane is rural in character with agricultural fields set to both sides. It measures approximately 540m along the line of the road. The Site is set roughly midway along this stretch and seeing urban development at this location would reduce the rural qualities of this stretch. The proposed development would become the effective gateway to greater Finchampstead and will be the first roadside development experienced from the B3016 as people travel towards the settlement. This is considered an adverse effect as it breaks up the clear, rural break between Church Lane and the start of Finchampstead nor introduces a development of high visual amenity into this location.
- 6.17 **Understanding of Warren Lodge** – Warren Lodge Care Centre is an unlisted large, older building that has been extended to offer more accommodation and services to its current elderly residents. It still at its heart is an older, substantial dwelling positioned towards the end of a rural lane. Forming the additional development in the gap between the lodge and the end of the lane will reduce the setting and understanding of it as an older building. This is an adverse effect for the lodge itself and the character of Warren Lane.
- 6.18 No positive landscape effects have been found within the contextual landscape to the Site and the Year 0 effects are summarised as.
- Landscape susceptibility – **Medium** because the contextual area is fundamentally a collection of rural pasture fields and dispersed rural properties set within a countryside area;
 - Landscape value – **Medium** because the landscape is attractive as an area with the interest of the tree line, rolling land form, mature and veteran trees and agricultural features such as hedged fields and Church Farm;

- Landscape sensitivity – The resultant sensitivity by combining the susceptibility and value together is **Medium**;
- Magnitude of landscape change in the contextual area with the caravan site development included as a new feature within the rural scene is a **Medium** magnitude of effects.
- Significance of landscape effect in the contextual area is judged at **Moderate, Adverse and Temporary** until the landscape mitigation proposals start to take effect.

6.19 The landscape mitigation proposed for the Site to assimilate it into the contextual landscape area includes the formation of the hedge to front Warren Lane and the B3016 and the tree planting tree planting to re-establish the felled tree cover it will have the following impacts on the magnitude of landscape change and resulting significance of effect at Year 15:

- Magnitude of landscape change within the contextual area - includes the trees around the fringes of the development in a young semi-mature state, established hedgerows cut and shaped and toning down of new stoned up surfaces. There would still be the presence of the static and touring caravans as witnessed down the access points. However the tree canopies will start to have filled in the lower space near the vans reducing their notability, but not screening them or things liked parked vehicles entirely. A **Medium-Small** magnitude of effects is assessed; and
- Significance of landscape effect in the contextual area - is judged at Year 15 as **Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent** when the landscape mitigation has taken effect.

6.20 For the contextual landscape around the Site the proposed landscape mitigation measures reduce the landscape effects from **Moderate, Adverse and Temporary** to a **Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent** level. There is continued harm to the character of the contextual area from the presence of the caravans immediately adjacent to the B3016 reducing the rural character of the approach to greater Finchampstead.

Landscape effects in the wider landscape

6.21 Taking LCA N2 – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowlands as a handy reference for the wider landscape area that the Site is located within and contributes to the following landscape effects are noted.

- 6.22 **Introduction of uncharacteristic structures** – Static caravans are an unusual structure within the N2 area. Touring caravans are less unusual parked on people's drives but these are typically viewed next to houses rather than other caravans, This is considered an adverse effect on the character of LCA N2.
- 6.23 **Uncharacteristic arrangement** – the proposals are also laid out in an uncharacteristic arrangement leading to the formation of a cramped and restricted development. Most development in the area is set back away from the road with longer drives or greater plot sizes around the properties which is reflective of its rural character and many of the properties' origins. There is less separation at the Site when compared to other development in the area and when combined with parked vehicles and domestic kit will appear even tighter in terms of spatial arrangement. This contrast in character is considered an adverse effect.
- 6.24 Taking the above changes to the wider landscape together the following assessment of their effects is made;
- Landscape susceptibility – **Medium** given the rural landscape has considerable appeal and holds a degree of development;
 - Landscape value – **Medium** because as a landscape it holds interest in the form of the mature and veteran trees, good access and is on the whole well maintained;
 - Landscape sensitivity – The resultant sensitivity by combining the susceptibility and value together is **Medium**;
 - Magnitude of landscape change to the wider landscape of N2 – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland is **Small** magnitude of effects.
 - Significance of landscape effect is judged at **Minor, Adverse** for the wider N2 – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowlands.
- 6.25 The proposed hedge and tree planting to replace the felled trees on Site will also act as mitigation within the wider N2 landscape. However the presence of the caravans will still remain when they start to become effective. The magnitude of change will remain at **Small** meaning that the longer term effects will also remain at **Minor, Adverse and Permanent**.

Review of Coralie Massey's landscape consultation comments at application stage

- 6.26 Ms Massey in her landscape consultation notes pointed to the following landscape effects:
- Irrevocably changed by the installation of built forms and associated paraphernalia

- Existing trees have a verdant visual and amenity impact within the plot;
- Tree planting is proposed but it would take many years to successfully replace the existing in form and function;
- Planting to screen the scheme would also take years to become effective, if at all, due to the close proximity of the structures to public realm views;
- Driveway access gaps would still allow views through to urban constructions;
- Urbanising built forms;
- Access and hard surfacing on a small, narrow undeveloped field in a rural location; and
- Incongruous, detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area and countryside

6.27 I find that I agree with all of the points that Ms Massey makes with regards to the existing character of the Site and the effects the proposals would have on it. I only have one slight area of difference and that is I would not call the Site a field but rather a field corner copse, or small wooded parcel.

Summary of landscape effects

- 6.28 Taking all of the above into consideration, including the scheme's landscape mitigation measures the proposals will lead to adverse landscape effects at a Site level (**Moderate, Adverse and Permanent**), within its contextual landscape (**Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent**) and to the wider landscape of the N2 Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland character area (**Minor, Adverse and Permanent**).
- 6.29 The mitigation measures proposed will not adequately address landscape change brought about by the insertion of the characteristic structures and associated equipment and domestic activity. Nor do they prevent change to the setting of the veteran trees on Site.

7.0 Visual effects

7.1 This section addresses visual effects that would arise from the proposals and confirms the following as pertinent at the start of discussions:

- That the proposals are visible from four public locations and one private location as identified in §4.30 above;
- That a range of both short and mid-range views exist to the current Site and would allow potential sight of the caravans;
- That road users include motorists, pedestrians on highway footpaths and cyclists;
- That existing tree and hedge planting to the south and west of the proposed pitches can be retained;
- That tree and scrub clearance in the centre of the Site is necessary to form an open area for the proposed pitches and access;
- That existing mature trees along the B3016 road corridor and within the gardens of Warren Lodge Care Centre will be retained;
- That mitigation planting will take varying periods of time to establish and are designed to not totally screen the development;
- That mitigation planting on Site and other nearby existing trees off site will not be as effective in winter months with bare canopies; and
- That the proposed caravans will be lit at night to facilitate residential occupation and that the external realm around the vans is currently indicated as unlit.

The prominence of the Site

7.2 The Site displays varying degrees of prominence depending on the position of the viewer as summarised below using the cardinal points as a handy order:

- Views from the north are gained from the B3016 corridor as people leave the perceived end of greater Finchampstead. The Warren Lane end of the Site forms the focus of the forward view cone from the road and the Site's eastern edge is looked along in an oblique fashion as the road bends around it.

- Immediate and close range views are gained from the north from Warren Lane that also forms part of Bridleway FINC35;
- To the east there are further close range and prominent views from the B3016 as the road runs directly past the Site and its entrance;
- Further to the east the views from FINC14 as it descends from Wick Hill places the Site in the middle of a wider scene, its positioning is not as prominent in this view but it's existing trees added to the wooded character of the view to the north;
- Views from the south occur from the B3016 from a point just after the Arden House curve with the road focussed on the Site and it becoming increasingly more prominent as people travel down the route;
- Views from the elevated ground to the south west look towards the western, or rear side of the Site. The trees on Site are discernible and add to the appearance of the northern wooded belt but the open ground of the Site is not and I would not class it as prominent.

7.3 In summing up the Site is more prominent in views from the existing roads given their alignment and proximity to the Site than from the twin local footpaths to the south but the Site is still discernible in mid-range views from FINC14 & FINC15.

OS viewpoints, designed vistas and protected views

7.4 There are no OS viewpoints marked in the area that take in the Site, nor are there any designed vistas that take in the Site are. WBC like most local authorities do not have any policies protecting specific views.

7.5 However the elevation experienced from FINC 14 & 15 means that longer, expansive views can be gained and this is one of the key characteristics of the N2: Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland.

Representative viewpoints around the Site

7.6 Representative viewpoints are those selected by Landscape Architects to consider as typical of the visual experience gained by a given group, or 'visual receptor' to use LVIA terminology.

7.7 I have selected the following eight panoramas to act as representative viewpoints. They are held in Appendix D and provide a step by step description of the visual effects at Year 0 and Year 15:

- VP 1 – View east to Site from Warren Lane

- VP 2 – View southbound along the B3016 near to Site
- VP 3 – View west across B3016 towards the proposed new entrance
- VP4 – View northbound from B3016 at south end of the Site
- VP5 – View north from Footpath FINC 14
- VP6 – View west from Footpath FINC 15
- VP7 – View northbound along B3016 from proposed new entrance
- VP8 – View southbound from B3016 when leaving Finchampstead

7.8 Further panoramas are presented in Appendix E that were also taken on the day as illustrative photographs of various parts of the road corridors and footpaths. Likewise individual plate photographs are contained in Appendix E and show a series of different elements from the Site and surrounding area.

Cumulative visual effects and local precedents

7.9 There would be no cumulative visual effects as there are no similar types of development with intervisibility to the Site, or experienced sequentially with the Site.

Beneficial visual effects

7.10 The planting of additional trees in the hedgerows is the only visual effect that will be discernible from a distance. This will likely be from 25 years onwards when they have achieved a more visible stature.

Review of Ms Ramsey's visual effects comments at application stage

7.11 Ms Ramsey did not highlight any specific viewpoints within her consultation comments. However she was concerned about the ability to see the proposed development through the access points.

Summary table of visual effects

7.12 Set overleaf is a table that provides the visual sensitivity of the various visual receptors at each of the viewpoints, their susceptibility to change, resulting visual sensitivity, magnitude of visible change and the final judgement of the visual effect. Just like landscape effects they can be either adverse, positive or neutral.

RLC Table 1 – Visual Effects Summary Table – See Viewpoint photography in Appendix D for images and discussion of features and effects.

VP & Receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Year 0 Effects	Year 15 Effects
VPI – Warren Lane	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium/High	Moderate, Adverse - with the tree loss and replacement by the northern static caravan being highly evident. Longer views across Site would be filled in and lane appear more urbanised. Vans appear close to mature and veteran trees.	Moderate, Adverse and Permanent – with the static caravan still evident viewed through the northern access or behind the new boundary hedge. Longer views remain lost and the mature and veteran trees will still appear crowded.
VP2 – B3016 southbound near Site	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium/High	Moderate, Adverse - with the full appreciation of the removal of the Site's tree block and side elevation of the unscreened northern static caravan being evident in this prominent position. Longer views down the east side of the Site would also appear bare and unvegetated with northern tourer and southern static likely evident.	Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent – with the boundary hedge established the edge of the Site would have re-vegetated and added some screening to the vans. However their form and likely bright colour will still likely be evident behind the new hedge giving the sense of development in an otherwise rural scene.
VP3 – Towards new B3016 access	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Moderate/Major, Adverse - with the tree loss and replacement by sight to the central caravans through the new eastern access. Full awareness of new development and it becoming the focus of the view instead of the mature and veteran trees.	Moderate, Adverse and Permanent – with the southern caravans still evident viewed through the eastern access and awareness of parked vehicles and the domestic paraphernalia and activity going on around the vans.

VP & Receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Year 0 Effects	Year 15 Effects
VP4 – B3016 southbound at south end of Site	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate, Adverse - Part appreciation of the removal of the Site's central tree block and sight of the new access and southern static and northern touring caravans. The caravan structures will be evident set within the line of trees inserting a new uncharacteristic feature within the roadside tree line.	Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent – with the boundary hedge established and trees taking a more mature form the edge of the Site would have re-vegetated and added some screening to the vans. However their form and typical bright colour will still likely be evident behind the new hedge and also through the eastern access.
VP5 – North to Site from FINC14	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/High	Small	Moderate/Minor, Adverse – Views would be partly screened by field boundary hedges as well as the existing vegetation to the west side of the Site near the veteran trees. The effectiveness of the screen decreases in winter with leaf fall.	Minor, Adverse and Permanent – with the establishment of additional tree planting to the western boundary of the Site the southern static and touring caravans would become more screened but still likely to snippets of structures, particularly in winter and early spring.
VP6 – West to Site from FINC15	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/High	Medium/Small	Moderate, Adverse – Mid-distance views to the four vans arrayed where the tree block currently stands. The eastern, roadside planting will not have taken effect and given the distance and elevation above the proposed Site the scale and number of vans	Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent – with the establishment of the eastern hedge and tree planting the caravans and associated paraphernalia will be less evident but still noticeable beyond the hedge. The additional elevation of the mid to upper path

VP & Receptor	Susceptibility	Value	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Year 0 Effects	Year 15 Effects
					would be appreciable inserting development into the tree line. View more evident in winter months.	aids observation of the wider Site. early spring. The view to the vans and parked vehicles would remain more evident in winter.
VP7 – View north-bound from new B3016 access	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate, Adverse – the view looking towards greater Finchampstead from the B3016 adjacent to the Site entrance would have development to its immediate west with the removal of frontage vegetation and presence of caravans and parked vehicles. This will bring development out beyond the well-defined wooded edge of the settlement.	Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent – the boundary vegetation will screen some of the lower features on Site but a view to vans and vehicles on Site will still be gained through the eastern access. The front verge would require cutting to form sightlines on leaving the Site making it appear more urbanised and domesticated compared to its current state.
VP8 – View south-bound from edge of Finchampstead	Low	Medium/Low	Low	No Effect	No Effect – the Site and the proposals for it are not evident from the current edge of greater Finchampstead when leaving the settlement on the B3016.	No Effect – the Site and the proposals would remain out of view when leaving greater Finchampstead on the B3016.

Summary of visual effects

7.13 The following is a summary of my assessment of the visual effects associated with the proposals:

- The most significant visual effects are experienced closest to the Site on Warren Lane and the B3016 with initial effects **Moderate, Adverse and Permanent** in nature for these road and bridlepath users, the effects from Warren Lane remain at **Moderate, Adverse and Permanent** whilst those from the B3016 reduce slightly to **Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent** effect at Year 15 with the establishment of the boundary hedge and tree planting.
- For the two rural footpaths set to the south of the Site there would be greater visual effects from FINC15 that runs down Wick Hill looking onto the east side of the proposed Site compared to views from FINC14 that look to the more vegetated, western rear of the Site. The visual effects from FINC15 would start at **Moderate, Adverse** and reduce to **Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent** at Year 15, whilst the visual effects from FINC14 would start at **Moderate/Minor, Adverse** and decrease to **Minor, Adverse and Permanent**.
- There are currently no views to the Site looking out from the edge of greater Finchampstead, nor would there be with the proposed development. This is due to the sense of separation created by the tree belt to the south side of the settlement.
- There are no foreseeable positive visual effects identified from the proposals to put into any balancing exercise.
- There are no cumulative visual effects to take into account as there are no similar forms of development within the area.
- The Site is not visible from the Grade I St James Church in the village of Finchampstead and does not affect its setting or views to it.

8.0 Veteran Trees on Site

8.1 The following discussion of veteran trees is from my professional point of view as a Landscape Architect considering their contribution to a landscape's character and visual amenity rather than their arboreal value that an Arboriculturalist would describe, or their habitat value that an Ecologist is concerned with.

8.2 The following veteran trees have been established as being present on, or near the Site:

- Tree T1 of the Tree Survey. TPO T1, Lime. Veteran tree number 46644;
- Tree T6 of the Tree Survey. TPO T2, Lime;
- Tree T14 of the Tree Survey. TPO T3, Lime. Veteran tree number 218700;
- Tree T13 of the Tree Survey, Sweet Chestnut. Veteran tree number 46643, noted on the ATI as felled and this tree is not considered further in this section: and
- Tree T30 of the Tree Survey, oak. Accredited by the Tree Survey as a veteran.

8.3 Photographs of T1 and T30 are set below to indicate their scale, appearance and quality.

	
<i>Veteran Lime tree – No 46622 and noted as T1 on TPO-1306-2009</i>	<i>Veteran Oak tree T30 – accredited by surveyors set to the southern end of the Site.</i>

- 8.4 All the trees on Site whether they be defined veterans, mature stock or semi-mature are seen as a group within the landscape. Larger stock benefit from the individual tree TPO-I306-2009 that cover three recognisable Lime trees on Site and a Pine tree in the rear garden of Warren Lodge. The wider tree group are viewed as extending the woodland belt that runs from the edge of greater Finchampstead to Warren Lane to beyond the lane and out into the pastoral landscape.
- 8.5 They have a high degree of prominence just like the rest of the Site given their location near the B3016 and Warren Lane. This prominence is accentuated by the alignment of these roads and the ability to see the veteran trees from readily accessible public locations.
- 8.6 When looked at from the contextual landscape they are viewed as part of the wooded edge that separates greater Finchampstead from the more open pastoral landscape. T1 given its considerable height is useful as a marker for the north end of the Site as it stands taller than the surrounding canopy layer. T30 is useful to position the southern end of Site.
- 8.7 All mature trees, whether identified veterans or not give a time depth to the landscape. A character of the roads in Wokingham borough are large oak trees typically hedgerow standards that have been incorporated into the road corridor. T30 and other oaks on Site contribute in such a way.
- 8.8 The trees are not 'open-field' trees such as those found in landscaped parklands with a traditional flat browsing layer to the bottom of their canopies but they are still a highly scenic and valuable asset adding to visual amenity and the broader landscape character of N2 – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowlands.
- 8.9 It is recognised that the proposals do not seek to fell the veteran trees but what they will lead to is a change to their immediate setting. The presence of the caravans, vehicles and other domestic equipment in close proximity will turn them from old trees perceived as being part of a small copse to trees associated with and set close to a caravan site. The adjacent surroundings within which they are judged would be fundamentally changed.
- 8.10 Veteran trees of this size when they do drop limbs or branches could cause damage to the caravans or worse injury to residents. It would require an Arboriculturalist to attest to the health and structural integrity of the various trees, particularly the veteran Liem trees nearer to the caravan pitches. If there are concerns about tree health in the future from residents on the caravan park they could make applications for tree works to reduce the veterans, or remove them entirely. Such tree work applications to protected trees to prevent personal injury must be taken seriously by Local Planning Authorities and typically an abundance of caution is applied to such requests.

Landscape screen planting

- 8.11 The landscape mitigation proposals seek to provide screening to the caravans and other features of the proposed caravan site. Trees in front of the veteran trees is almost a like for like replacement to the current situation where they are viewed with blocks of other vegetation. The difference is the insertion of the caravans and other features within their close proximity leading to a sense of urbanisation and domestication for the retained site trees.

Summary regarding veteran trees

- 8.12 The veteran trees on Site are a significant positive asset contributing to the wider landscape character and pleasing rural amenity of the area. They appear as part of the overall wooded copse at the Site and are not proposed for felling as part of this Appeal.
- 8.13 This contribution would be notably reduced by the presence of the proposed caravans leading to a detrimental effect on the overall appearance of the trees changing them from ones set within an immediate rural context to ones that have had urbanising development placed too close to them, including proposed permanent access works, reducing their individual character and collective value as a group.

9.0 Landscape parts of Planning Policies and Guidance

- 9.1 Recognising I am not a Town and Country Planner I have kept this part of my Statement to obvious landscape and visual strands of the various policies and guidance cited in RFR's 2, 6 & 7. I also recognise that it is requirement of Planners to apply policies and guidance as a whole and conduct planning balance exercises to consider often competing requirements.

NPPF

- 9.2 **Paragraph 187 b) – Intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside** is applicable and how proposals affect it is a key consideration of the character and appearance of development in rural locations. As there is both landscape and visual harm identified to the Site, its contextual area and the wider piece of countryside in which it is located there would be conflict with this part of the Framework as decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment..
- 9.3 **Paragraph 193 c) – Loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats** – veteran trees are specifically listed in this part of the Framework and the caravans would lead to a deterioration of the trees through changing their setting and how they are perceived. Footnote 70 lists out some wholly exceptional reasons when such irreplaceable habitats can be lost or adversely affected and these proposals do not meet the suggested criteria of being nationally important infrastructure or for the public benefit.
- 9.4 **Paragraph 135 – Good design** – is not delivered by these proposals with significant issues with regards to the prominence of the Site, tree loss, resulting urbanisation within a rural area and change to the well defined edge of greater Finchampstead. This is before considering the cramped nature of the Site, access challenges, lack of amenity and parking space around the pitches and proximity to the veteran and other mature trees.

Core Strategy Policies

- 9.5 **CPI – Sustainable development** – particularly Part 1 that requires development to '*Maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment*'. The proposals do not maintain or enhance the landscape character of the area which is a key part of how the environment is perceived and understood.
- 9.6 **CP3 - General Principles for development** – Specifically Part 3 that requires development to '*Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys)*'

amongst other environmental features. The Site is not part of a recognisable river valley but as a piece of landscape it is important as the approach to greater Finchampstead and for the contribution it makes to the good visual amenity of the contextual area. The proposals have a detrimental impact to landscape receptors at the scale of the Site, its contextual area and in the wider N2 – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland landscape character area.

9.7 **CP7 – Biodiversity** – I am not professionally qualified to comment on the effects to biodiversity at the Site.

9.8 **CP11 - Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)** – this policy starts, *‘In order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where’* and goes onto list seven forms of development that are excepted. The proposals are outside the development limits of greater Finchampstead and remote from the older Finchampstead village settlement and none of the exceptions forms listed are applicable to new caravan sites.

9.9 It has been argued by the Appellant that the Site is on the edge of Finchampstead, or adjacent to it and WBC’s concerns about the proposals adversely affecting this interface are inaccurate. From a landscape point of view I consider the Site a rural location for the following reasons:

- It is set in the more rural N2 LCA rather than the more settled M1 LCA in the WBC Landscape Character Assessment;
- There is a clear break of approximately 200m between the Site and the established edge of greater Finchampstead formed by the Finchampstead Surgery and The Dittons cul-de-sac;
- That the Site is not visible from the established edge of Finchampstead;
- That although the Site is set next to an extensive property at Warren Lodge Care Centre that this property is more rural in origin and position at the end of low key lane rather than an extensive area of planned development;
- That the associated landscape to the Site is of pastoral fields whereas the context to greater Finchampstead is the enclosed views of its former woodland origin; and
- Finally at a less obvious, subliminal level urban markers such as street lights, concrete road kerbs and highway footpaths do not run past the Site itself.

Managing Development Delivery (MDD)

9.10 **CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** – to be applied by a Chartered Planner with no obvious landscape matters to comment upon.

9.11 **CC02 – Development Limits** with Part 2 explaining that *‘Planning permission for proposals at the edge of settlements will only be granted where they can demonstrate that the development, including boundary treatments, is within development limits and respects the transition between the built up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.’* The proposals do not take account the overriding character of the contextual landscape or the wider N2 – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland. The proposals would be incongruous in this location and adversely affect the setting and perception of veteran trees on Site.

9.12 **CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping** – with Part 2 being directly applicable to Site. This section of CC03 has five sub-points that have been digitally snipped and set below for completeness.

2. Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals:

- a) Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development
- b) Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways
- c) Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside
- d) Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features
- e) Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.

9.13 Sub-points a), c) and d) appear the most applicable when considering character effects from the proposed landscaping:

- a) – a native planting scheme has been provided for the limited space around the caravan pitches and accesses onto Site and the trees towards the west of the Site have been retained but with a reduced quality of setting.
- c) – the policy aims for integration with the adjoining countryside but the proposals do not achieve this given the lack of planting depth and prominence of the Site's location; and

- d) – the proposals do not retain all the trees currently on Site but rather fells the central portion of on site stock. The western trees including the Site's veteran trees would be retained but in a significantly reduced setting with caravans and other domestic features set close to them.

9.14 **TB10 – Traveller Sites** – there are eight sub-points to this policy with a), e) and f) having a landscape element:

- a) the proposals are neither within the settlement of greater Finchampstead or adjacent to it so do not comply with this first point. They are located within a countryside location for all the reasons explored in §9.9 above;
- e) the proposals will cause unacceptable impacts on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape by virtue of the notable tree loss, reduction in the quality of setting to retained mature and veteran trees and the insertion of caravan structures that are incongruous in this countryside area; and
- f) the loss of amenity of neighbouring land uses has not been explored within this Statement. After visiting Site the only piece of land that I think this may apply to is the rear garden space of Warren Lodge Care Centre. I have not entered this space, nor conducted an amenity assessment so cannot pass comment on this part of TB10.

9.15 **TB21 – Landscape Character** – has two parts the first relating to how proposals have addressed the WBC's Landscape Character Assessment and the second requiring proposals to retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

Policy TB21: Landscape Character

1. Proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues.
2. Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

9.16 There is no Landscape and Visual Appraisal submitted to analyse the proposals or explain how WBC's Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) has been used to shape them including their landscape mitigation proposals. There is no reference to LCA in the application Planning Statement but it is mentioned at §3.34 and §3.58 of the Appellant's Appeal Statement of Case (AASoC). The first reference acknowledges that WBC require demonstration of how the LCA has been applied

and the second reference asserts that it has been by the development proposals. There is no analysis or commentary within the AASoC to evidence this assertion.

9.17 The second part of TB21 is not met either for the following reasons:

- The condition of the Site at the moment is as a result of low levels of active management leading to a more natural dense, scrubby copse appearance through natural processes at the Site. The proposed condition would be less appropriate to this rural location and would effectively urbanise and domesticise this ongoing condition of the landscape;
- The character would change from a wooded copse free of habitation to a domestic character where caravans and associated vehicles and paraphernalia are set in close quarters with the retained trees and newly planted stock; and
- The primary features of the Site that contribute to its character and that of the contextual landscape are its mature and veteran trees. A number of the mature trees are removed for the development and the remaining ones and veterans would then be set in a lesser setting reducing their contribution to the rural landscape.

9.18 **TB23 – Biodiversity and Development** – matters require the professional expertise of Chartered Ecologists to confirm whether the space associated with the retained trees is sufficient to retain their habitat value and what habitat additionality, if any, that the new planting proposals bring to the Site.

Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP) 2022-2038

9.19 Four policies from the FNDP are cited in RfR2 each are reviewed in turn for how landscape and visual matters contribute to their consideration:

9.20 **D2 - Preserving the rural culture of the parish** – contains five sub-points as presented in the digitally snipped extract below.

Preserving the rural character of the parish

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should be located and designed to maintain the separation of settlements and to complement the characteristics of the landscape in the immediate locality through:

1. Locating structures where they will be viewed against existing built form and wherever possible, development should deliver enhancements to the landscape character.
2. Retaining the proportion, scale and the space between the main residential buildings on each residential plot with reference to the built vernacular of the neighbourhood area and conservation of traditional boundary treatments.
3. The use of appropriate plant species in a comprehensive landscape scheme with appropriate boundary treatments to integrate with the rural character.
4. The use of street trees.
5. The protection of existing street trees.

9.21 With regards to individual points I make the following landscape and visual points:

- 1 – The caravan structures would not be viewed against existing built form given the screening between the Site and Warren Lodge Care Centre other than partially from Warren Lane;
- 2 – Scale and space appears cramped for incidental space around the pitches and the caravans do not match the built vernacular of the adjacent Warren Lodge or other properties along Warren Lodge or in the contextual landscape;
- 3 – The plant species are all native and appropriate but the proposed mix for the hedgerow is not balanced and major use of Field Maple is not reflective of how other hedgerows in the area are populated with hedgerow standards;
- 4 – Street trees are not appropriate for this Site; and
- 5 – There are no street trees to protect but there is the stock to the front of the Site which is removed in the vicinity of the pitches.

9.22 **AHD3 - Provisions for Gypsy and Traveller communities** – policy does not appear to be relevant as it addresses the development at, or expansion of existing facilities rather than FNDP expressing a list of requirements for the location and character of new sites.

9.23 IRS4 - Implement strategy to preserve the identity of Finchampstead parish through green spaces – is a multi-stranded Policy with seven individual sub-points with varying degrees of applicability to the proposals:

- 1 – Seeks the preservation of the Parish's semi-rural look that the caravans do not achieve;
- 2 – Preserve the distinctive character and appearance of the Parish's countryside which is similar to Point 1 and which the proposals fail to do;
- 5 – Specify tree and hedgerow planting that is appropriate which the proposals go some way to doing by using native species subject to the design and planting caveats I have already raised in this Statement;
- 6 – Retain informal green gaps and other small areas of natural green space which again the proposals do not achieve with regards to retaining the Site as a small, natural green space.

9.24 Taken as a whole I judge the proposals to be in conflict rather than compliance with the intention and details of the overall policy.

9.25 IRS6 – Trees – is the final FNDP Policy listed in RfR2, it contains four sub-points that the proposals partly conflict with and partly comply with. Taken as a whole I judge that the removal of the existing trees and reduction in the quality of setting and appreciation of the retained veteran trees means that on balance there is more conflict with this policy than compliance. The mitigation planting is not sufficient to offset the overall loss of wooded copse character for the Site.

Other Cited Guidance

9.26 National Design Guide B1 – Compact Development – contains three descriptive paragraphs Nos 64 to 66. The first paragraph is not applicable in landscape terms as it relates to larger developments, Paragraph 65 addresses optimum density for a location and how *'it also relates well to and enhances the existing character and context.'* That given the identified adverse landscape effects these proposals do not succeed in achieving. Paragraph 66 continues to explain how layout, form and scale helps to respond positively to context which again these proposals fail to do.

9.27 Wokingham Borough Design Guide Part R24 - states, *'The layout and design of gypsy sites should provide a safe living environment that meets the needs of residents, while respecting the character of the local area'*. Taking each of these points in turn the safe living environment is not fully confirmed given the proximity to veteran and mature trees with potential branch and bow shed and the indicated ungated nature of the access points particularly the eastern one opening directly

onto the B3016. The second point about respecting the character of the local area is not achieved given the landscape character harm identified by this Statement.

- 9.28 **Planning Policy For Traveller Sites (PPTS) Paragraphs 25 and 26** - that cover the topics of local provision / personal circumstance and limiting traveller site development in open countryside respectively. I cannot attest to matters of local provision or personal circumstances of the Appellant but consider the Site to be in the open countryside outside of a settlement boundary which Paragraph 26 directs Local Planning Authorities (LPA) to '*very strictly limit*'. A second part of this Paragraph requires LPA to '*ensure that sites in rural areas respect the scale of, and do not dominate, the nearest settled community, ...*'. These proposals would not dominate the nearest settled community which is greater Finchampstead set approximately 200m to the north.

Summary on Landscape Planning Policy and Guidance Compliance

- 9.29 After considering the applicable landscape elements of the WBC cited policy and guidance references included in RfRs 2, 6 & 7 I found that they were correct in identifying character and appearance conflict arising from the proposals. Where there are policies where partial compliance can be shown e.g. IRS4 and IRS6 from the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan then on balance the conflict that arises outweighs the elements of compliance.

10.0 Conclusions and Summary

- 10.1 This Statement is in relation to landscape character and visual appearance matters as contained in Reason for Refusals No 2, 6 & 7 (RfR) brought about by the proposed development to build a four pitch caravan site (two static and two touring caravans) for use by members of the Gypsy, Roma or Traveller communities on land near the junctions of Warren Lane and Finchampstead Road (B3016).
- 10.2 In Section 1, I explain my professional credentials as an experienced Chartered Landscape Architect with over 30 years' experience of working on projects where landscape character and visual impacts are critical considerations. It confirms my professional duties in preparing this Statement on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) as they seek to defend their decision to refuse planning consent for the development.
- 10.3 Section 2 sets down the scope of this Statement and explains in broad terms the approach that I have adopted in its preparation.
- 10.4 Section 3 provides the planning policy context to the development and lists those policies and parts of guidance cited in RfRs 2, 6 & 7.

Landscape and visual baseline

- 10.5 Section 4 considers the landscape baseline of the Site. By reference to the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment (2019) it finds the boundary of two landscape character areas (N2 and M1) run through the north of the Site. Through analysis I judge the Site is a characteristic piece of the wider N2 Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowlands landscape character area which is rural in character rather than the M1 Finchampstead Forested Settled Sands that is more urban and settled in character. The Site is not subject to any national or local landscape designations, nor do I consider it is a valued landscape for the purposes of NPPF 187 a).
- 10.6 Overall the Site field appears as a small woody area possibly originating from the neighbouring Warren Lodge side garden that is now not under either active woodland or agricultural management. Its trees are its most prominent feature and they contribute to the rural character of Finchampstead Road at this part of its corridor. The Site is set outside of Finchampstead by approximately 200m and sits at the interface of a change of the larger wooded belt that screens greater Finchampstead to more open pasture fields.
- 10.7 The Site appears as incidental in terms of its low level of management and positioning between Warren Lodge Care Centre and the B3016. It currently does not appear untidy in terms of

dumped material or litter but the state of the highway fence to the Finchampstead Road side could be improved and ivy cut back from it to provide a clearly defined fence line. It neither appears domestic or agricultural in character but rather as a small, road side field corner copse set within the wider countryside.

10.8 Visual receptors from publicly accessible locations have been identified on:

- Warren Lane to the north of the Site,
- Finchampstead Road (B3016) to the north and east of the Site;
- On Public Footpath FINC15 that runs down from Wick Hill to the east of the Site; and
- On Public Footpath FINC14 that runs down from the older village core of Finchampstead set to the south west of the Site.

10.9 In addition to the four publicly accessible viewpoints a single private viewpoint from the rear garden of Warren Lodge Care Centre set to the immediate west of the Site would also experience visual change to some level.

Review of development proposals

10.10 Section 5 provides a review of the proposed development drawing out the primary elements of development under seven headings:

- **Access Points** – effect on the B3016 road corridor with an apparent lack of gates to both accesses. Limited area for parking vehicles within the proposals;
- **Pitches** – alignment determined by the long narrow shape of the Site meaning the longer caravan sides are facing the visual receptors and that they are close to retained mature and veteran trees leading to shade and possible damage from limb loss;
- **Lawns** – small and do not provide much incidental or amenity space;
- **Hedge planting** – to eastern B3016 boundary and internally to define an area around a veteran trees. Just 10% of the hedge mix is evergreen increasing winter visibility and the internal hedge will struggle given the shade it is planted in;
- **Tree planting** – to the eastern B3016 boundary hedge and to augment existing trees adding more shade to the Site;
- **Tree felling** – Ten trees including Category B trees and two groups would require felling or works to create the open area in the centre of the Site for the four pitches and access;

- **Missing elements** – That are sometimes included on similar developments including
- **Missing information** – Lighting and CCTV Camera Poles, amenity blocks (washing rooms, toilets, showers), built stores and sheds, waste collection points, mains services, gate posts, gates and ornamental fenestration, play areas/football goal and gardens, kennels or stabling areas are not shown on the proposals but are frequent features of other similar developments I am aware of.

Landscape effects

- 10.11 Section 6 considers the landscape effects that would be caused by the development at three landscape scales, namely at the Site itself, in the context to the Site and within the wider landscape character area.
- 10.12 The Site would lose its primary characteristic as a wooded copse and will take on an urbanised form of development. The tree felling, the insertion of the caravans as an incongruous form of development and change of setting to the veteran trees are the primary site level landscape effects. The proposed landscape planting would not mitigate these adverse landscape effects to the Site.
- 10.13 The significance of the landscape effect for the Site itself is judged at a **Major/Moderate, Adverse** at Year 0 declining to **Moderate, Adverse and Permanent** effect at Year 15. The proposed landscape mitigation measures reduce the landscape effects but there remains continued harm to the character of the Site and the setting of the veteran trees from the presence of the caravans and the associated domestic paraphernalia and activity
- 10.14 Four adverse landscape effects are described in the contextual area including the insertion of an urbanising development within the predominately rural landscape character, a sense of extending development out from greater Finchampstead, character change to the B3016 road corridor and reduction to the setting and understanding of Warren Lodge as a large rural property.
- 10.15 For the contextual landscape the proposed landscape mitigation measures reduce the landscape effects from **Moderate, Adverse** to a **Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent** level. There is continued harm to the character of the contextual area from the presence of the caravans immediately adjacent to the B3016 reducing the rural character of the approach to greater Finchampstead.
- 10.16 The wider landscape area as defined by LCA N2 – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowlands would experience the inclusion of uncharacteristic development arranged in an uncharacteristic fashion

close to road corridor. The magnitude of effect on the much larger landscape character area is Small leading to a **Minor, Adverse** landscape effect on LCA N2 at Year 0.

- 10.17 The proposed hedge and tree planting to replace the felled trees on Site will also act as mitigation within the wider N2 landscape. However the presence of the caravans will still remain when they start to become effective. The magnitude of change will remain at **Small** meaning that the longer term effects will also remain at **Minor, Adverse and Permanent** at Year 15.

Visual effects

- 10.18 Section 7 considers visual effects using eight representative viewpoint panoramic photographs set at Appendix D. The following is the summary on visual effects from the end of Section 7:

- The most significant visual effects are experienced closest to the Site on Warren Lane and the B3016 with initial effects **Moderate, Adverse and Permanent** in nature for these road and bridlepath users, the effects from Warren Lane remain at **Moderate, Adverse and Permanent** whilst those from the B3016 reduce slightly to **Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent** effect at Year 15 with the establishment of the boundary hedge and tree planting.
- For the two rural footpaths set to the south of the Site there would be greater visual effects from FINC15 that runs down Wick Hill looking onto the east side of the proposed Site compared to views from FINC14 that look to the more vegetated, western rear of the Site. The visual effects from FINC15 would start at **Moderate, Adverse** and reduce to **Moderate/Minor, Adverse and Permanent** at Year 15, whilst the visual effects from FINC14 would start at **Moderate/Minor, Adverse** and decrease to **Minor, Adverse and Permanent**.
- There are currently no views to the Site looking out from the edge of greater Finchampstead, nor would there be with the proposed development. This is due to the sense of separation created by the tree belt to the south side of the settlement.
- There are no foreseeable positive visual effects identified from the proposals to put into any balancing exercise.
- There are no cumulative visual effects to take into account as there are no similar forms of development within the area.
- The Site is not visible from the Grade I St James Church in the village of Finchampstead and does not affect its setting or views to it.

Veteran Trees

- 10.19 Section 8 addresses the topic of veteran trees on Site and concludes that given their stature and visibility that they are a significant positive asset contributing to both the site and contextual landscape character and pleasing rural amenity of the area. They appear as part of the overall wooded copse at the Site and are not proposed for felling as part of this Appeal.
- 10.20 However their landscape and amenity contribution would be notably reduced by the presence of the proposed caravans leading to a detrimental effect on the overall appearance of the trees changing them from ones set within an immediate rural context to ones that have had urbanising development placed close to them reducing their individual character and collective value as a group.

Landscape aspects of the cited planning policies

- 10.21 Section 9 provides a review of the landscape aspects of the planning policies and guidance as cited in RfRs 2, 6 & 7. It is a lengthy section given the number of policies listed and the full findings are not listed again in these conclusions. However the section summary at §9.29 is repeated below as a brief way to record my judgement on whether the landscape and visual harm indicated by WBC would take place.
- 10.22 I found that they were correct in identifying character and appearance conflict arising from the proposals. Where there are policies where partial compliance can be shown e.g. IRS4 and IRS6 from the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan then on balance the conflict that arises outweighs the elements of compliance.
- 10.23 Overall the adverse landscape effects that lead to conflict with cited policies are not offset by the indicated landscape mitigation proposals.
- 10.24 Harm to the intrinsic character and beauty of the Site as a piece of countryside is found contrary to direction. provided at NPPF 187b) as any decision to grant consent to the proposals would not contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment which is the underlying plank of paragraph NPPF 187.

Final summary

- 10.25 For all the reasons explored above I consider there to be notable adverse effects to the landscape character and visual appearance of the Site and surrounding landscape from this development. These adverse changes will be experienced on the local roads – Warren Lane (also Bridleway

FINC35), Finchampstead Road (B3016) and Public Footpath FINC15 running down from Wick Hill.

- 10.26 I consider the Site to be located in countryside given its distance from the well-defined edge of greater Finchampstead and the overriding character of the surrounding landscape. This development will appear intrusive and uncharacteristic in this rural scene where there is a distinct lack of caravan form and will continue to appear at odds with the rural character of the contextual landscape.
- 10.27 On balance I can only find adverse landscape and visual effects arising from the Appeal proposals and consider that Wokingham Borough Council were correct in refusing planning consent for the development on that basis.

The following appendices support this Hearing Statement and are held in a separate Appendix Report.

- A – Methodology for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- B – Extracts from Landscape Character Information
- C – TGN 2/21 – Table I Assessment on Landscape Value
- D – Representative Viewpoint Panoramic Photography
- E – Illustrative Single Plate and Panoramic Photography
- F – Tree Preservation Order TPO-1306-2009