

# Planning Statement

Site Address: Plot B, Lot 4, Eversley Road, Arborfield, Reading

Applicants: Archie Nolan and Johnny Nolan

Proposal: Change of use of land to allow the siting of two residential static caravans (2 pitches) (gypsy/traveller)

Contents

## **1. Introduction**

This statement supports an application for the change of use of land at Plot B, Lot 4, Eversley Road, Arborfield to permit the stationing of two residential static caravans for occupation by persons from the gypsy and traveller community. The proposal responds to an identified need for gypsy and traveller accommodation within Wokingham Borough and aligns with national and local planning policy objectives.

## **2. Site Context**

The site is located along Eversley Road (A237) within a semi-rural setting adjacent to Arborfield and close to the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location. The surrounding area comprises of a mix of residential dwellings, established gypsy/traveller sites, and redeveloped land. The location benefits from proximity to local services and infrastructure improvements associated with Arborfield Green making it a sustainable location.

The application site itself covers an area of approximately 0.16 hectares (0.30 acres). An existing track (with planning permission) provides access from to the site directly onto Eversley Road (as per site location plan). The site also has a second established access to the south. The north east and southern boundaries of the site is made up of trees and mixed vegetation screening views from Observatory Way and Everlsey Road respectively.

## **3. Background of proposed occupants**

The proposed occupants are Irish Travellers (also referred to as Irish Gypsies) a recognised ethnic group under the Equality Act 2010. Irish travellers have a distinct cultural heritage and traditions. Historically their lifestyle involved mobility and seasonal work, but modern constraints including planning laws, road safety legislation and lack of stopping places mean that living on the road is no longer viable. The

# Planning Statement

applicants are currently have a base with extended family in overcrowded conditions where there is insufficient space to meet their needs, which is a base to live their way of life. Their current situation is unsustainable and does not allow for privacy, security and to plan for a future and existence within the modern restrictions placed on their cultural way of life. National planning policy recognises that traveller communities require settled accommodation to secure work, access healthcare, education and community services while maintaining cultural identity.

## **4. Need and Justification**

Paragraph 25 of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) sets out the key considerations for local planning authorities when determining planning application for traveller sites. In summary it states that local planning authorities should take into account:

### **a) The existing level of local provision and need for sites**

Wokingham Borough Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable gypsy/traveller pitches, as confirmed by the GTAA 2023. The borough has an identified need for 35 pitches between 2023 and 2027. This proposal contributes positively to meeting that need.

### **b) Availability (or lack) of alternative accommodation for the applicants**

The proposed occupants are Irish Travellers currently living with family members in unsustainable circumstances. Existing sites allocated for additional pitches with planning permission is unrealistic as those sites are privately owned where the landowners will only accept members of their own family. Furthermore not all travellers mix with each other.

### **c) Other personal circumstances of the applicants**

The occupants require a permanent base to access healthcare, education and maintain cultural practices. Overcrowding and lack of security in their current arrangement adversely affects their wellbeing.

### **d) Local specific criteria to guide the site allocation**

# Planning Statement

Paragraph 28 of the PPTS states that if the Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate an up to date five year supply of deliverable sites, this should be a significant material consideration in any subsequent planning decision. It is understood that the lack of supply is a material consideration the application will still be considered against the relevant policies in the adopted and draft local plans.

**e) Applications should be determined for any travellers, not just those with local connections.**

The proposal aligns with this principle, while the applicants have local ties, PPTS requires fair treatment for all travellers regardless of local connection.

## **5. Local Planning Policy**

Policy TB10 of the Management Development Delivery Plan states that planning permission may be granted for new gypsy and traveller pitches or travelling showpeople plots providing the relevant criteria will be met. This criteria is as follows:

**a) The site is located in the boroughs existing settlements or is adjacent to existing settlements.**

The site is adjacent to Arborfield and close to the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Location, ensuring reasonable access to services.

**b) Avoids impacting the separate identity of settlements**

The proposal is modest in scale (two pitches and no operational development) is well enclosed and will not cause coalescence or harm the identity of Arborfield.

**c) Access to local services**

The site benefits from proximity to shops, schools, healthcare and amenities in Arborfield and nearby settlements.

**d) No significant barriers to development**

There are no significant barriers to development in terms of flooding, drainage, ground stability or proximity to hazardous land.

# Planning Statement

**e) Minimises unacceptable impacts on landscape character.**

The proposed development is small scale on land that is well enclosed and protected from impacting the wider landscape character. Within its immediate landscape the development will integrate itself within its surroundings and therefore will not appear intrusive or incongruous.

**f) No unacceptable loss to amenity to neighbouring land uses**

The proposal does not result in any overlooking, loss of light or noise impacts and is compatible with surrounding land uses.

**g) Mixed use proposals only if appropriate**

The proposal is not mixed use

**h) Avoids adverse impacts of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA**

Mitigation can be secured via a Section 106 agreement for SANG and SAMM contributions.

Policy CP2 states that to ensure that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities to meet the long term needs, planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirement of :

**a) Ethnic minority groups**

The proposal provides two permanent pitches for Irish Travellers, a recognised ethnic group under the equality act 2010, meeting their cultural and housing needs.

**b) Promotes social inclusion and sustainable living**

The site is well related to Arborfield and close to services such as schools, healthcare and shops, enabling access to essential facilities and reducing isolation from the community.

**c) Proportionate to settlement scale**

# Planning Statement

The development is modest (two pitches) and no proposed operational development. It does not dominate its surrounding environment and landscape or harm its character.

## **d) Supports equality and human rights obligations**

By providing lawful accommodation the proposal helps prevent discrimination and supports article 8 (family life) under the human rights act.

Taking the above factors into account the proposal appears to accord with policies H9 and H10 of the draft local plan update.

## **6. Further considerations**

### **Highways, Access and Parking**

Access to the site is via an existing access off Eversley Road which has planning permission. Eversley Road itself is a classified 'A' road providing connectivity to the wider road network. Each pitch has sufficient parking for the occupants and visitors.

### **Layout and Amenity Standards**

Each pitch has outdoor amenity space for drying and modest recreation. No dayrooms are proposed. Modern caravans have the necessary integrated facilities. No outdoor lighting is proposed to protect local amenity. Bin storage areas will be provided and there will be ample space to store bicycles.

### **Drainage and Flood Risk**

The site is not located within a flood risk zone. Foul water drainage will be via a septic tank but the applicants are open to a package treatment plant if necessary. Connection to mains sewers is not possible.

Ecology, Biodiversity and BNG – To be provided

# Planning Statement

## **7. Conclusions**

The proposed development for the stationing of two residential static caravans for occupation by persons from the gypsy and traveller community accords with national and local planning policy and represents sustainable development. It addresses and identified shortfall in gypsy and traveller accommodation within Wokingham Borough, a significant material consideration under PPTS paragraph 28.

The site is well related to Arborfield in scale and designed to minimise visual and environmental impact. It complies with relevant Core Strategy Policies as well as emerging local plan policies, meeting all criteria for location, access to services, amenity and landscape character. The proposal also satisfies the requirements of PPTS paragraph 25, considering local need, lack of alternative accommodation and the personal circumstances of the applicants.

On balance, the benefits of meeting and urgent housing need for gypsy and traveller families significantly outweigh any limited impacts. The proposal is policy compliant, proportionate and sustainable, planning permission should therefore be granted.