



Planning

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Client:

Mr and Mr B and M Maughan

Woodside Park,

Blagrove Lane, RG41 4BA

*Change of use of land to allow the creation of
7 new gypsy pitches*

Gareth Jones **BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the change of use of land to allow the creation of 7 new gypsy pitches at Woodside Park, Blagrove Lane, Wokingham, RG41 4BA.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents by Martin Peacock Architectural Services and EDM Planning:
- Site Location Plan
 - Block Plan
 - Existing Layout Plan
 - Proposed Layout Plan
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Statement

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The application site comprises a parcel of land sited to the west of Blagrove Lane which already provides a caravan site of 3 no. existing pitches.
- 2.2 The site is located within the designated countryside but is in close proximity to the defined settlement of Wokingham.
- 2.3 In terms of the surrounding area to the north and east there is residential development. To the south and west there are fields.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 F/2013/0698 - Proposed change of use of land to a residential caravan site for two Gypsy Traveller families, to contain two static caravans, two touring caravans and parking for four vehicles with associated hardstanding. – Refused – 28.08.13
- 3.2 APP/X0360/C/15/3085493 – Appeal against enforcement notice for alleged in the notice is the material change of use of the land from agriculture to the stationing of caravans for residential purposes, including the creation of a new access and hard surfacing. – Enforcement notice quashed and temporary planning permission granted – 15.01.18
- 3.3 181694 - Application for the variation of condition 1 (names of residents) and condition 2 (number of pitches) of appeal reference 3085493 dated 15/1/18. – Granted – 16.11.18
- 3.4 192128 - Application to vary condition 1 (relating to temporary and personal restrictions) of planning consent 181694 which was a variation to conditions 1 (names of residents) and 2 (number of pitches) of planning permission 152821 (appeal decision

APP/X0360/C/15/3085493 dated 15/1/18) for the change of use of land for the stationing of caravans for residential purposes – Granted – 03.09.21

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The development comprises 10 no. pitches (7 new net). Each pitch will consist of a static caravan, touring caravan and day room with associated parking.
- 4.2 An example of the dayroom has been submitted as part of this application and can be controlled by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 4.3 The site will utilise existing landscaping features on site which can be supplemented by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 4.4 All elements of the proposal will be single storey in scale.

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 In this instance the Development Plan comprises:
- Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2010) ('CS');
 - Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) ('MDD');
- 5.3 The Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are material considerations of **significant weighting**.
- 5.4 The PPTS sets out the Government's aim in respect of Gypsy and Traveller sites. This includes at paragraph 4 a requirement *"to ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites.....to promote more private traveller site provision while recognising that there will always be those travellers who cannot provide their own sites...and...to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply"*.
- 5.5 **Policy CP2 of the CS** states in order to contribute to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities to meet long term needs, planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of (amongst other things) **the specific identified needs of minority groups in the borough, including Gypsies, Travellers** and Travelling Showpeople and black and minority ethnic

groups [ET Planning emphasis added]. Proposals for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (including allocations in other Development Plan Documents) will demonstrate that:

*"i) The site is located either within or **close to the development limits of a settlement in policy CP9** in order to maximise the possibilities for social inclusion and sustainable patterns of living; and*

ii) The proposed site is not disproportionate to the scale of the existing settlement whether singly or cumulatively with any existing sites in the area".

5.6 In this case the site is existing and is considered to be adjacent to the settlement boundary, surrounded by residential development to the North and East.

5.7 **Policy TB10: Traveller Sites of the MDD** is also relevant to this application. This policy states that planning permission may be granted for new gypsy and traveller pitches where it can be demonstrated that:

a) The site is located in the Borough's existing settlements or is adjacent to an existing settlement either within or adjacent to the Borough;

b) Avoids impacting on the separate identity of settlements;

c) The site has access to a range of local services such as shops health facilities including doctors, schools, and a range of amenities including play areas and other recreation facilities;

d) No significant barriers to development exist in terms of flooding, poor drainage, poor ground stability or proximity to other hazardous land or installations where conventional housing would not be suitable;

e) Unacceptable impacts on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape will be minimised through the sensitive and appropriate design of the scheme;

f) The proposals will not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity of neighbouring land uses;

g) Mixed use proposals (which are sites that include a business use) will only be considered if appropriate to the locality and such uses will not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity;

h) The scheme avoids any adverse impacts on the Special Protection area.

5.8 In this case, the site is adjacent to the settlement and close to local services and facilities. It does not affect the separate identity of settlements as it is an expansion of an existing site. Point 2 of CS Policy CP11 is also of relevance on this point. The policy states that if proposals do not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion away from the original buildings then this can be acceptable. The proposed pitch expansion is within the visual envelope of the existing site and continues to be set back within the plot, following the pattern of both the existing pitches and surrounding development, retaining a green buffer to the front of the site.

5.9 For the reasons detailed above, the principle of development is considered acceptable. Other matters in the above policies are discussed below.

5.10 **Character and Appearance of the Area / Impact to Landscape:** Policies CP1 and CP3 seek for development to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment and ensure development is on an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height and materials and character to the area.

- 5.11 Paragraph R24 of the BDG 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.
- 5.12 As discussed elsewhere in this statement, the pitches follow the existing set back nature of the existing pitches and retain a green buffer to the front of the site, softening the impact of the further pitches. Further landscaping can be secured by condition if this is deemed necessary.
- 5.13 The existing tree belt around the site provides a natural barrier, with only glimpse views of the existing pitches visible.
- 5.14 Given the proposed pitches will be set back beyond the existing, it is not considered that cross-sectional views will be affected and so the character will remain relatively unchanged with any harm localised.
- 5.15 Looking more widely at the site there is a large amount of commercial and residential development surrounding the site and so in character terms, the proposed development will fit in with the changing character of the site's surrounding.
- 5.16 As such, it is considered the development complies with policies CP1 and CP3 and is acceptable to the character of the area.
- 5.17 **Residential Amenity:** Policy CP3 of the CS and TB10 of the MDD seeks for development to be without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users and occupiers.
- 5.18 In terms of amenity impact for prospective residents, the pitches will provide further formal space for the occupants and their families to live – helping them build local connections. Given the undersupply of pitches within Wokingham Borough, this is a key amenity benefit of the scheme.

- 5.19 In terms of impact on prospective residents, the pitches are well located away from neighbouring residential dwellings so as to not impact matters such as privacy overlooking etc.
- 5.20 It is not considered the proposal would conflict with policies CP3 of the CS nor TB10 of the MDD.
- 5.21 **Trees and Landscaping:** Policy CC03 of the CS states development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved a number of criteria into proposals including how they protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and incorporate native planting and landscaping as part of a scheme.
- 5.22 The existing boundary trees will be retained and can be further supplemented by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission alongside further soft/hard landscaping if this is required.
- 5.23 As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in tree/landscape terms.
- 5.24 **Transport and Parking:** The proposed development would utilise the existing access from Blagrove Lane.
- 5.25 The existing driveway/parking areas will need to be extended as part of the proposal which will be made from permeable surfacing (exact details can be secured by condition).
- 5.26 In terms of locational sustainability, the site is located adjacent to the Major Development Location of Wokingham which is classified as one of the most sustainable places within the Borough with a wide array of services and amenities available for residents.

- 5.27 Wokingham station is an approximate 20-minute walk from the site and provides onwards connections to areas such as London, Reading and the wider South East.
- 5.28 The site is also located in close proximity to the Ye Olde Leathern Bottel Bus Stop (approx. 8 minute walk) which is served by the Leopard no 3 Bus which again provides direct connections to Wokingham and Reading.
- 5.29 **Cycle Provision:** Cycle storage can be secured by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.30 **Refuse Provision:** Refuse collection will continue to take place as per the existing situation. Refuse and recycling stores can also be secured by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.31 **Drainage and SuDS:** The site is located in Flood Zone 1 – the lowest risk of flooding and is under 1 ha in size. As such, a Flood Risk Assessment is not required.
- 5.32 **Ecology:** The submission is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment from EDM Planning.
- 5.33 The PEA assesses the ecological baseline for the site and states that:
- Great Crested Newts are unlikely to be on site (an avoidance statement is submitted alongside this application as a precautionary measure)
 - The risk of common amphibians is low
 - The proposal is unlikely to have a harmful impact on bats
 - The site is unlikely to be suitable habitat for Hazel Dormouse
 - Hedgehogs may be present in the local area

- No badger sets were identified on site

- 5.34 The mitigation and enhancement measures detailed in the PEA could be secured by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.35 The Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment states that the proposal will be able to demonstrate a 10.4% increase in area-based units and 61.5% increase in hedgerow units and can be delivered on site. As such, this can be controlled by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.
- 5.36 For the reasons detailed above, the proposed development is considered to accord with CS Policy CP7: Biodiversity and MDD Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development.
- 5.37 **Special Protection Area:** The application site is within 7km of the Thames Basin Heath SPA and as such, no mitigation is required. This addresses TB10h of the MDD as well as CS policy CP8.
- 5.38 **Material Considerations:** Should the LPA consider the development is does not accord with the Development Plan as a whole, it is considered that there are material considerations to be considered to resolve in favour of granting a planning permission.
- 5.39 As previously stated, the PPTS is a material consideration for the determination of this application. Should there be any conflict in relation to the location of the site it should be noted the PPTS implicitly accepts pitches in countryside locations regardless of proximity to facilities and services. As such, should the LPA consider there to be any policy conflict owing to the location of the site in the countryside the weighting to this conflict can only be considered limited at most, this would also include any visual impact to the countryside (it is implicitly accepted this form of development will

come forward in these locations and therefore the development of a site which does not comprise PDL is also accepted).

Need

- 5.40 Notwithstanding the compliance with CP2 and TB10 of the Development, it should be noted the Council have recently updated their Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment in 2023. The Council agreed as part of the Statement of Common Ground for appeal ref. APP/X0360/W/25/3364902 that they unable to deliver a 5 Year Supply of pitches – with their currently supply standing at 3.64 Years.
- 5.41 The Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of pitches, the granting of the permission for 7 extra pitches would contribute significantly to the Council's current shortfall which would weigh in favour of the development.

Efficient Use of Land

- 5.42 Paragraph 128 of the NPPF supports decisions that make an efficient use of land taking into account the identified need for development and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it; the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services (existing and proposed) and the desirability of maintaining an areas prevailing character.
- 5.43 In the context of the current shortfall of G&T pitches it is apparent that pitches are going to need to come forward across the borough and likely in countryside locations. The current application would look to effectively extend an existing lawful site which is in a location adjacent to a settlement as supported by CP2 and MD10 of the Local Plan.

- 5.44 The application provides an opportunity to optimise the use of the site to meet the Borough's need without any detrimental character or landscape harm to other more sensitive areas of the countryside.

6. Conclusion and Planning Balance

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would contribute an appropriate windfall site to the Borough's supply without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 6.3 In regard to the planning balance, Significant weight should be given to the Council's lack of supply for Gypsy and Traveller pitches whilst it is clear that there is no conflict with the countryside designation of the site and the proposal is in a sustainable location.
- 6.4 The biodiversity net gain affords significant weight in favour.
- 6.5 The appeal scheme's contribution toward the general need for sites should be afforded significant weight, as should the fact that the Council is simply not providing for the accommodation needs of the travelling community.
- 6.6 Landscape and general ecology matters are shown to be policy compliant and are attributed neutral weight, as are other policy compliant factors such as sustainability, highways and amenity.
- 6.7 Overall, the proposal provides a suitable pitch which supports the need for sites within the Borough in a suitable and available location which already is partly occupied by pitches under an existing consent.

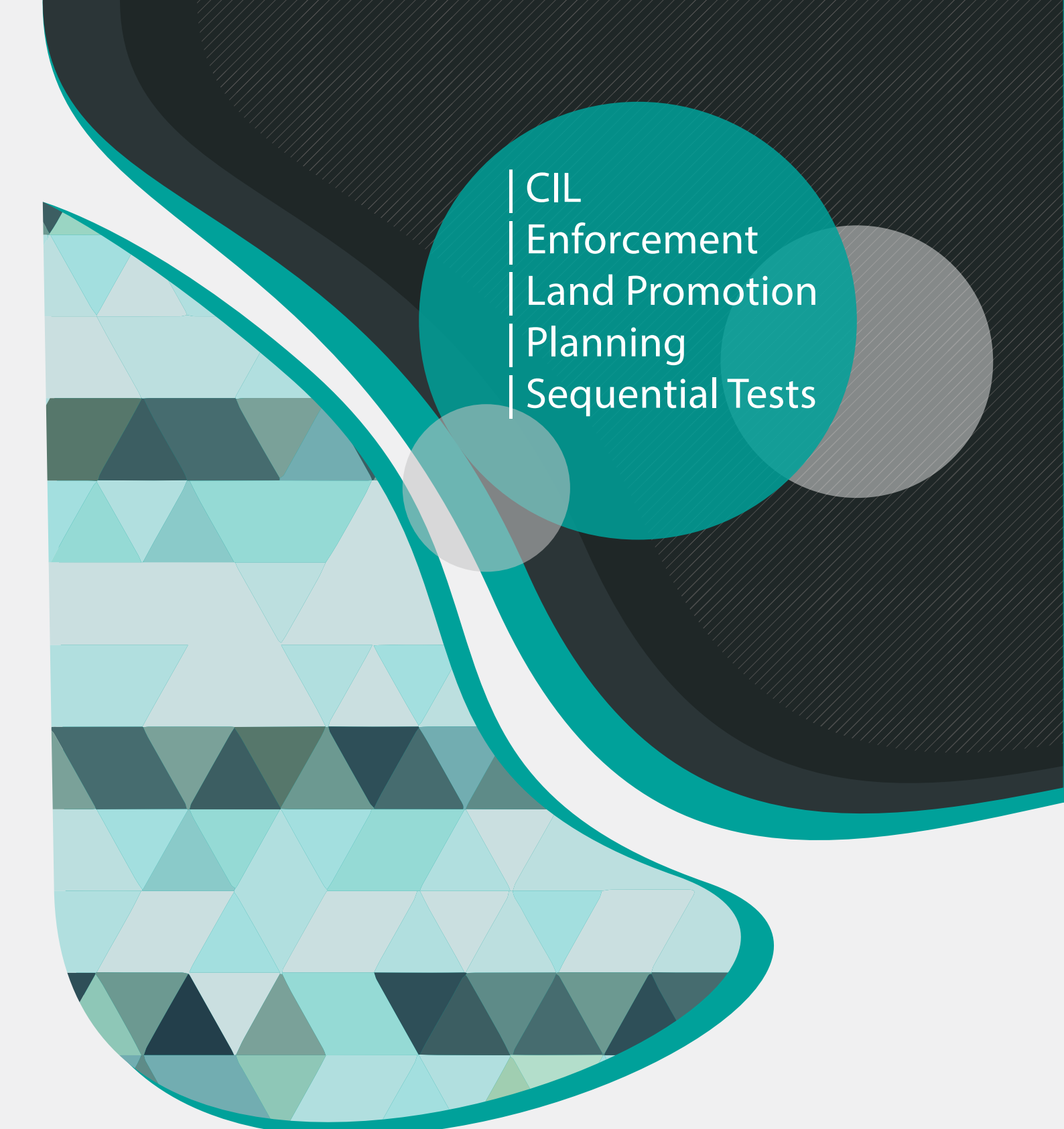
6.8 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance and other material considerations. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

Gareth Jones BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Principal Planner | ET Planning

200 Dukes Ride Crowthorne RG45 6DS

Gareth.jones@etplanning.co.uk 01344 508048



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Contact

Address

200 Dukes Ride RG45 6DS

Phone

01344 508048
01865 507265
01483 363950
01743 612043
01392 691384

Web & Mail

Email: office@etplanning.co.uk
ET Planning Ltd | 10646740

Web: www.etplanning.co.uk