



ET Planning

Planning Statement

Client:

George Reed

Land Adjacent to Warren Lodge Care Home

Finchampstead, RG40 4HR

*Material Change of Use of Land to allow the
stationing of two mobile home pitches for permanent
residential use; associated soft and hard landscaping*

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Appendix 1 – Personal Circumstances of Occupiers

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the change of use of land to allow for the stationing of two mobile homes for permanent residential use with associated works at 'land adjacent to Warren Lodge Care Home, Finchampstead RG40 4HR'.
- 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:
- 1:200 Existing Block Plan
 - 1:500 Proposed Block Plan
 - 1:200 Proposed Landscape Plan
 - 1:200 Tree Survey and Constraints Plan
 - Arboricultural Statement
- 1.4 The relevant application fee of will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The application site comprises a parcel of land sited on the junction Warren Lane and Finchampstead Road (B3016) (to the east of Warren Lodge Care Home).
- 2.2 The site has an existing access along Warren Lane and is overgrown and features a number of trees.
- 2.3 The application site is within the 5km Thames Basin Heath SPA Mitigation Zone and the countryside. There are no relevant planning designations.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Application Ref. 061434 'application for a non illuminated sign board (retrospective)' refused 11/01/2007.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The development comprises the formation of two separate pitches for the occupation of gypsies and travellers (each comprising a static and touring caravan).
- 4.2 The northern most pitch would utilise the existing site access from Warren Lane. The proposed development would provide a new vehicular access to the east of the site via Finchampstead Road.
- 4.3 The development proposes a scheme of soft and hard landscaping comprising replacement tree and native hedgerow planting.

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');
- Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2023) ('FNP').

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. 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 **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.

5.7 It should be noted the FNP is silent on the provision on the creation of new pitches and only seeks to resist the loss of or support the expansion on existing pitches. As such, Policy AHD3 is not relevant to this application.

5.8 The application site is found circa. 200m from the settlement boundary of Finchampstead and is adjacent to Warren Lodge Care Home and the B3106. This is adjacent to the settlement boundary of Finchampstead and maintains the separate identity of settlements. The proposed development would only propose two pitches and this would in no way be disproportionate to the settled community of Finchampstead nor that of adjacent Warren Lodge Care Home.

5.9 The fact the site is circa 200m from the settlement boundary also means the site also has access to a range of local services available in Finchampstead. It should be noted that 800m is considered to be 'walking distance' in national policy but is by no means an upper limit to access facilities. Regardless, it should be noted a pharmacy, restaurants, a co-operative food and petrol station are circa. 500m from the application site. There is walking infrastructure from the site

to allow pedestrian access to the settlement and as such the site can only be considered to have access to range of services and facilities. Therefore, the site complies with CP2 in the first instance.

- 5.10 The site does not feature any significant barriers to development, it is noted that R24 of the Borough Design Guide seeks for caravans to not be sited under overhanging trees the provided plans detail that no tree canopies overhang either pitch.
- 5.11 Whilst this is to be addressed as separate considerations, it is not considered the development would have an unacceptable landscape impact being adjacent to a settlement, a busy road and the large building of Warren Lodge Care Home. A landscape scheme has been provided to further assimilate the development. Likewise, owing to the sites contained nature and retention of screening there would be no impact to the amenity of neighbouring uses.
- 5.12 The proposed application does not comprise a mixed use and the applicant is willing to enter into a S106 Agreement to provide appropriate SANG/SAMM contributions to adverse any impacts to the Thames Basin Heath SPA.
- 5.13 As such, it is considered the proposed development complies with policies CP2 of the CS and TB10 of the MDD.
- 5.14 **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.
- 5.15 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.

- 5.16 It is acknowledged the application site does not comprise previously developed land and is absent from development, sited within the countryside. However, the site is not set within a Valued Landscape. The site itself is enclosed by low level timber boundary treatment and is visible from the main road however the appearance of the site is that of overgrown vegetation.
- 5.17 The proposed development would remove a number of trees along the eastern site boundary and within the site however, as per the supporting documentation the majority of these are category 'C' and 'U' trees. It is acknowledged trees T19, T20 and T21 are category 'B' trees, however, this value is attributed to the grouping of trees (not individually). The supporting documentation states that owing to being young their replacement would be acceptable in the short to medium term. All other trees are to be retained.
- 5.18 Regardless of the removal of existing trees, the proposal seeks to provide additional trees along the eastern, southern and western site boundaries. The proposal also seeks to introduce extensive native hedgerows to enclose the site (spanning 0.6m in height).
- 5.19 The remaining visual impact from the proposal would arise from the appearance of the mobile homes. The soft landscaping and replacement trees would assimilate the development into the site however, it would not entirely mitigate views of the development.
- 5.20 The mobile homes would only be able to be read from the main road and footpath to the east and partly from the north (when travelling south along Finchampstead Road). As such, views of the development would be fleeting and owing to their single storey nature would be minimal.
- 5.21 When travelling south out of Finchampstead the appearance of the residential use would not be incongruous nor out of character owing

to being only 200m beyond the settlement boundary and partly viewed against the view of the care home. Likewise, the appearance of the new access would be viewed in the context of being sited to the adjacent turning onto Warren Lane (leading to the residential care home).

- 5.22 In short, the site does not comprise a parcel of isolated countryside it is viewed within the context of travelling to and from Finchampstead where residential development is expected and present (on the approach to and leaving Finchampstead). Its development in conjunction with the proposed replacement planting and soft landscaping would be entirely appropriate to the area whilst introducing native species to the site.
- 5.23 As such, it is considered the development complies with policies CP1 and CP3 and is acceptable to the character of the area.
- 5.24 **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.
- 5.25 Paragraph R24 of the BDG provides key considerations for site layout to provide an acceptable standard of residential amenity including: a degree of privacy for individual households whilst maintaining a sense of community and maintaining a 6m separation distance between caravans.
- 5.26 The proposal for 2 pitches would have no visual or spatial impact to the amenities of the neighbouring Care Home owing to the site featuring substantial screening via trees and the siting and orientation of the proposed mobile homes. The mobile homes would not be directly adjacent to eastern elevation of the care home and in case this elevation would be sited circa 20m from the closest static

unit and its orientation would ensure no windows would have any direct overlooking into this elevation.

- 5.27 The southern most static caravan would be sited away from any of the built form of the care home and is sited so it is partly adjacent to the neighbouring agricultural field and not the amenity area of the care home.
- 5.28 In conjunction with the screening and single storey nature of the mobile homes it is considered there would be no impact to the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers.
- 5.29 The proposed pitches would comprise a static and mobile unit each providing adequate day to day facilities for potential future occupiers. Despite the retention of a number of trees and significant screening each unit would not be enclosed as to impinge upon its means of light and outlook.
- 5.30 Each pitch would be sited over 6m apart from one another and would feature areas of hardstanding to facilitate the access, egress and manoeuvring of private cars on to the site. However, it should be noted that areas adjacent to the respective touring caravans provides private amenity space for occupiers (in excess of 60m²).
- 5.31 The native hedgerow planting would ensure the occupiers would benefit from a means of privacy when occupying the site whilst still ensuring they have adequate outlook to the wider amenities.
- 5.32 It is not considered the proposal would conflict with policies CP3 of the CS nor TB10 of the MDD.
- 5.33 **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.

- 5.34 As per the submitted supporting documents the development would remove category 'U' and 'C' trees and retain all trees of value on site with the exception of T19, T20 and T21.
- 5.35 The report states T19-T21 are only of a value in a group and are young. As such, they are able to be replaced in the short-medium term. The proposal seeks to plant 15 new trees as part of the development. All trees of value have been retained as part of the proposal.
- 5.36 The proposal also seeks to introduce extensive soft landscaping comprising the planting of native hedges to enclose the site. The application is accompanied by maintenance and management to retain the soft landscaping throughout the lifetime of the development.
- 5.37 **Transport and Parking:** The proposed development would utilise the existing access from the north and propose a new access via the B3016. The proposed access is sited on a bend and the proposed soft landscaping ensures visibility when accessing/egressing the site would be acceptable.
- 5.38 The development proposes to provide a gravel driveway for the northern pitch which provides a single parking space. The proposed access and accompanying hardstanding allow for vehicles to be parked in the middle of the site for occupiers of both pitches. This hardstanding also provides the access and manoeuvrability for the stationing of the touring caravan for each pitch.

- 5.39 In terms of sustainable transport modes there is pedestrian infrastructure to allow occupiers to access Finchampstead where additional public transport services are provided.
- 5.40 As such, it is considered the site is in a sustainable location and provides appropriate and safe means of access and egress.
- 5.41 **Cycle Provision:** The application site does not provide any cycle storage facilities, should this be required a condition for details of design and siting can be provided.
- 5.42 **Refuse Provision:** It is anticipated that refuse provision can be provided adjacent to both site accesses, this is able to be secured by condition to require refuse to be stored here at all times and provide details of a collection point.
- 5.43 **Drainage and SuDS:** The proposed development would not provide any operational development beyond hardstanding. A planning condition can be attached to require this to be permeable and provide construction details if necessary.
- 5.44 **Ecology:** The submission is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which provides relevant information pertaining to flora and fauna assessment.
- 5.45 A BNG assessment has also been provided which demonstrates that there is an on-site shortfall in biodiversity units. The applicant is seeking to purchase credits to compensate for the shortfall should the LPA decide to grant planning permission.
- 5.46 **Special Protection Area:** The application site is within 5km of the Thames Basin Heath SPA. The applicant is willing to enter into a legal agreement to provide the appropriate financial contribution to mitigate the introduction of two residential pitches.

- 5.47 **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.
- 5.48 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

- 5.49 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. It should be noted that the GTAA requires the Borough to deliver **86** pitches (cultural need) up to 2039/40 and required an immediate short term (over the next 5 years) need of **35 pitches**.
- 5.50 The Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of pitches, the granting of the permission for 2 pitches would contribute significantly to the Council's current shortfall which would weigh in favour of the development.

Efficient Use of Land

- 5.51 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.
- 5.52 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.
- 5.53 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.

Personal Circumstances

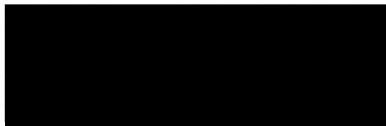
- 5.54 Notwithstanding, the fact it is considered the development complies with relevant Development Plan policies a number of personal circumstances have been provided for occupiers in Appendix 1.
- 5.55 It is requested that these circumstances are kept confidential and are only used if required to allow the grant of planning permission.

6. Conclusion

- 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. The development would also provide appropriate ecological and landscape mitigation and enhancement including providing a legal contribution to offset impacts to the SPA.

- 6.3 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.

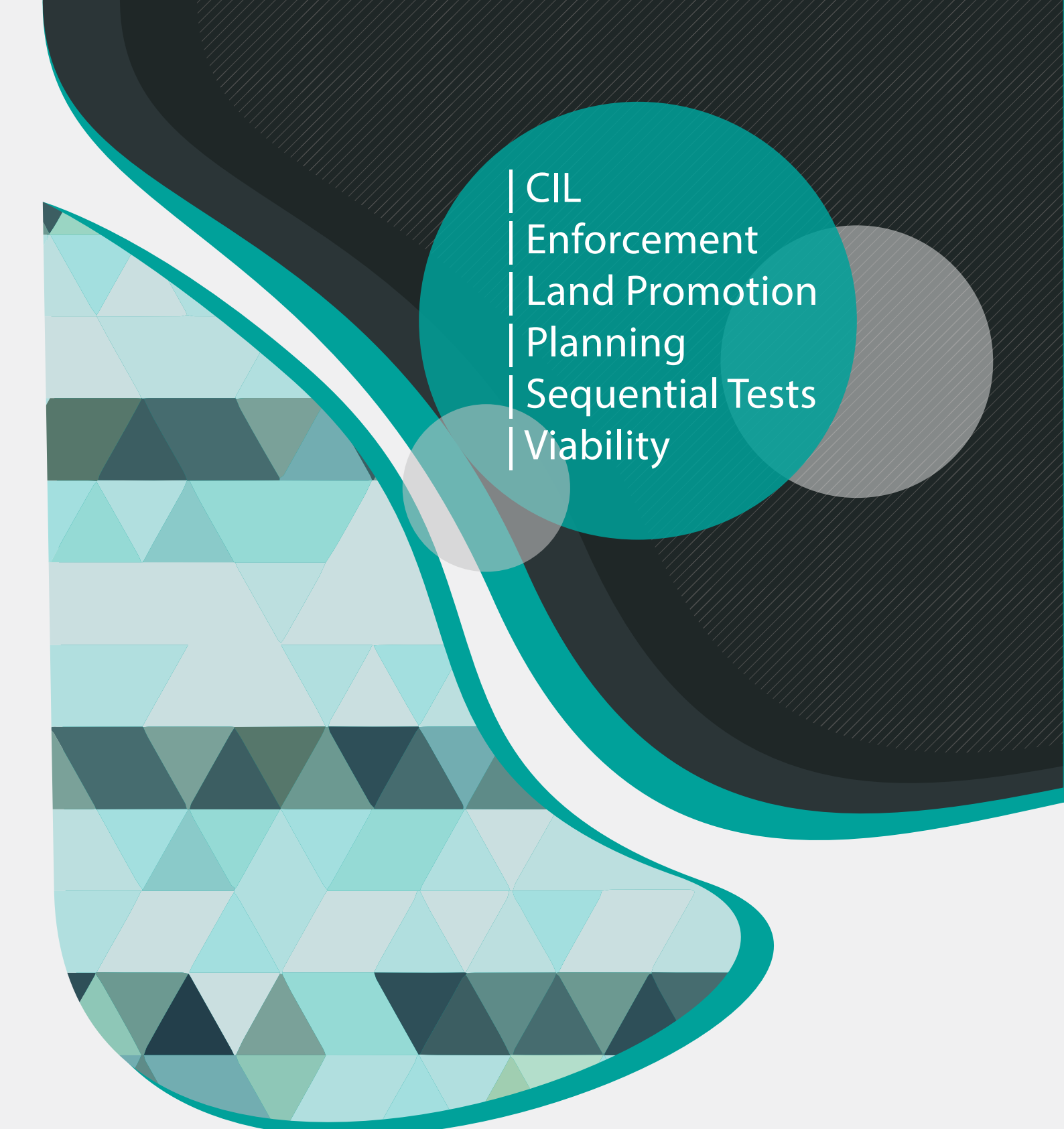


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