

Our Reference: ETP200435
PINS Reference: INSERT
Date: 22 October 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Land Adjacent to Warren Lodge Care Home, Finchampstead, RG40 4HR

I am writing to you on behalf of the applicant with regard to the application reference 242011 at Land Adjacent to Warren Lodge Care Home, Finchampstead, RG40 4HR currently being considered by Wokingham Borough Council. The application seeks planning permission for the *"Full application for the proposed change of use of land for the siting of 2 no. Gypsy and Traveller pitches with creation of a second access off Finchampstead Road and associated installation of soft and hard landscaping"*.

The purpose of this letter is to provide constructive comments relative to the 3rd party objections received by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) with regard to this application.

Multiple 3rd party objections have been received by the LPA which object to the development on the following summary issues:

- 1 FNDP
- 2 PROVISION OF GYPSY PITCHES
- 3 OVERDEVELOPMENT ON SITE
- 4 SSSI
- 5 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN
- 6 VEHICULAR ACCESS
- 7 FUEL PIPELINES
- 8 NOISE
- 9 AESTHETICS

- 10 TREE PRESERVATION ORDER
- 11 GREENFIELD LOCATION
- 12 LOCATION IN RELATION TO NEARBY CARE HOME
- 13 OTHER MATTERS

I have separated this letter into sections to discuss the various planning matters, however the acceptability of this development is still supported by the matters denoted within the documents

FINCHAMPSTEAD NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Comments have been submitted to address that the statement submitted is not in line with a several policies within the plan. By way of response to raised policy AHD3 this seeks to protect existing gypsy and traveller sites and supports the expansion the of existing traveller sites. The policy is silent on the provision of new sites. Nevertheless, against the policy criteria, it is clear that there is need for further pitches in the Borough as a whole, which is inclusive of Finchampstead. The applicant and his family meet the definition of being gypsies and have local family connections. Landscaping is proposed and the site is within good proximity to local services and facilities.

In respect of policy D2 the proposal will be viewed against the existing built form of the warren lodge care home. Each pitch is spacious and includes landscaped areas with planting controllable by condition. No street trees are affected. Finally, the application site is not a designated local green space and therefore does not conflict with policy IRS1.

PROVISION OF GYPSY PITCHES

Comments have been submitted to address the current provision of gypsy/traveller sites with Finchampstead. At present the Council does not have a 5 year supply of Gypsy Pitches and the application site would deliver a modest development of two pitches toward this need. The scale of the application development, whether in isolation or cumulatively with other pitches in Finchampstead would not dominate the Finchampstead settled community.

NO. OF PITCHES ON SITE

Comments have been raised to address the number of units which the application has been made for and whether the presence of touring caravans on site should be treated as their own separate unit which would therefore raise the number of units on site from 2 to 4. Overdevelopment concerns are also raised.

The planning application clearly states that the permission only seeks 2 pitches. It is common for Gypsy and Traveller pitches to include one static caravan and one touring caravan to facilitate travelling. The touring caravans are therefore in association with their respective mobile home on each pitch and therefore do not need to be addressed as separate units in the application. This can be conditionally controlled. Each pitch has the required space for caravans, parking and amenity land. The site is therefore not considered to be an overdevelopment.

SSSI

Comments have been submitted addressing the sites close proximity (within 5km) to several sites of special scientific interest and local nature reserves.

The statement addresses that the site is located within 5km of the Thames Basin Thames SPA and confirms that the applicant is willing contribute to appropriate financial contribute to mitigate the introduction of the two residential pitches. This can be secured via section 106 legal agreement. Ecological reports accompany the planning application.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Comments have been submitted addressing the provision of biodiversity net gain (BNG) of the site and that the proposal of 25 new trees and shrubs to address loss of nature vegetation does not fit with the local council's climate action plan.

The submitted planning and ecology statements have addressed that the on-site shortfall will be addressed as the applicant is seeking to purchase off site credits to compensate. This is an accepted principle in the Biodiversity Net Gain provisions.

VEHICULAR ACCESS

Comments have been submitted to express concerns for potential safety issues which could arise due to the new vehicular access.

Visibility splays have been provided to the visibility for vehicles accessing and egressing the site.

NOISE

Comments have been submitted to address concerns of raised noise levels due to increased activity which will be present on site as the result of the application being granted. These concerns are particular to disruption to the residents of the nearby care home, Warren Lodge care home.

A form of residential character has already been established in the area from the presence of the care home. The addition of 2 caravan pitches is considered to be a modest development therefore it should not result in a substantial increase in noise levels. The activity levels would be of a residential nature and given the surrounding uses are residential in nature such as the care home and The Dittons residential clue-de-sac as such no undue noise concerns are considered to arise.

AESTETICS

Comments have been submitted to suggest that the development will be highly visible and not in keeping with the rural countryside look. The site has been described as a potential eyesore and to have a dramatic impact on the surrounding landscape. The layout has also been described as having no respect for the character of the location.

The planning statement addresses these issues in full detail in the '*Character and Appearance of the Area / Impact to Landscape*' section. The development is single storey with good separation from the care home. The statement mentions introduction of extensive native hedgerows and use of soft landscaping to minimise the visual impact of the site. The residential use of the site is not out of

character for the area considering it is only located 200m beyond the settlement boundary comprising of residential development.

TREE PRESERVATION ORDER

Comments have been submitted to address the concerns of loss of tree's and damage to existing TPO's.

In the planning statement it has been addressed that the proposed development will remove trees which have been categorised as 'C' and 'U'. Tree which are addressed as category 'B' to be removed have been confirmed by the Arboriculture Impact Assessment to be on the young side of the age spectrum and can be replaced within the short/medium term. No tree which has a TPO status will be removed. Nothing in the impact report has been commented to suggest that the boundary line and/or access to the site would put the existing TPOs at risk of damage.

GREENFIELD LOCATION

Comments have been submitted to address the location of the development being within a greenfield location and why a greenfield has been chosen over the likes of a brownfield site instead.

The site is located within close proximity to a settlement boundary and adjacent to Warren Lodge care home. Planning Policy for Traveller Sites accepts the principle of development in such locations. Furthermore, given the Council is unable to demonstrate a 5 year supply of sites, the provision of windfall development applications must be considered to realise a supply.

TRAFFIC

Various comment have been uploaded in relation increased traffic which will occur due to the proposed development and how this will impact the nearby care home. There is concern that the lack of parking provided on the proposed plan will lead to the Warren Lane entrance becoming an "overflow" area which potentially pose a major issue for emergency vehicles which require 24/7 access to the site.

The application has been made for a small caravan site with parking provided within the site itself. The nature and culture of the family located on the site means they are often away from the site for periods of time for travel and work. Furthermore, the application is made for a specific family where the parking needs are known. As on site parking is provided there shouldn't be a need to use the Warren Lane entrance as an overflow area. It should also be noted that the proposed development includes a new site entrance on Finchampstead Road therefore all vehicle traffic for the new development will not be solely using the joint entrance with Warren Lane, limiting such movements in this area.

OTHER MATTERS

A comment has been submitted addressing a nearby underground fuel pipeline however this is not a material planning consideration.

I trust the above is clear however if you require any further information regarding the above or this application in general please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

E. Temple

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