

PLANNING REF : 260577
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Nine Mile Ride
: Finchampstead, Berkshire
: RG40 3NL
SUBMITTED BY : Mr W Frewin
DATE SUBMITTED : 29/04/2026

COMMENTS:

Objection to Planning Application 260577

****Application:**** Full retrospective application for the change of use of land for the stationing of caravans to form 2 no. Gypsy and Traveller pitches, plus access and ancillary works.

****Site:**** Caravan Site, Land South of Valois, Range Road, Finchampstead, RG40 3NR

****Applicant:**** Sheridan

I write as a nearby resident to object to this application. The objection is based on the material planning grounds set out below. The retrospective status of the application is not, in itself, either a ground for refusal or a reason to grant permission; the proposal falls to be assessed on its planning merits as though the development had not yet been carried out. Where I refer below to works already undertaken on the land, I do so because those works are themselves evidence of the planning harms in issue.

1. Departure from the statutory development plan

The site sits outside every defined settlement boundary in the borough and is designated as countryside in:

- the adopted Wokingham Borough Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2010);
- the emerging Wokingham Local Plan Update (2024 consultation draft);
- and
- the made Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan.

None of these plans allocates the land for traveller accommodation or for any other form of development. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the determination to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The submitted documents disclose no such consideration of sufficient weight to displace the clear conflict with the plan.

2. Departure from the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS, December 2024)

Paragraph 26 of the PPTS requires local planning authorities to "very strictly limit new traveller site development in open countryside that is away from existing settlements or outside areas allocated in the development plan." The site here is in open countryside, is detached from any existing settlement, and is unallocated. It falls

squarely within the category of development that national policy directs the Council to strictly limit.

Paragraph 27 directs authorities to attach weight to the effective use of previously developed, untidy or derelict land. The application site is none of those: it is woodland and greenfield in character, and the loss of trees and introduction of hardstanding represent a degradation of that character rather than the rehabilitation of disturbed land.

3. Unsustainable location

The site fails the sustainability tests in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the PPTS:

- there are no shops, schools, GP surgeries or other day-to-day services within walking distance;
- Range Road has no footway and no surfaced pedestrian route to any settlement or service;
- there is no cycle infrastructure linking the site to nearby settlements; and

Occupants would be wholly dependent on private motor vehicles for every daily activity. That outcome conflicts with NPPF Chapter 9 (Promoting sustainable transport), with PPTS Policy B (which requires reasonable access to local services and facilities), and with adopted and emerging local plan policies directing development to sustainable locations.

4. Highway safety

The Council has previously refused development on land served by Range Road on highway safety grounds. The reasons given on that earlier refusal included:

- intensified use of the substandard junction of Range Road with the B3430 Nine Mile Ride, to the detriment of road safety and traffic flow; and
- additional traffic on Range Road itself, a road substandard in width and construction, increasing the risk of accidents.

Neither circumstance has changed. The Range Road / Nine Mile Ride junction is unaltered, and Range Road remains a single-track unsurfaced lane without passing places. Of particular note in this case, the applicant has carried out works to widen the carriageway of Range Road. Those works, undertaken by the applicant, are direct evidence that the existing highway is inadequate to accommodate the vehicle types associated with the proposed use. A road that has had to be widened by a private individual in order to be used by their vehicles is, by definition, not fit to serve a residential development as existing.

The previous refusal reasons remain material considerations in the determination of this application. They have not been overcome.

5. Harm to rural character and the green gap

Range Road is part of an undeveloped tract between established routes through the wider forest landscape, including Nine Mile Ride and Sandhurst Road, and is identified as part of a green gap in the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan. Demonstrable harm has already arisen, and would continue, through:

- the loss of trees from the site;
- the stationing of caravans, representing residential built form within a stretch of countryside that is currently otherwise undeveloped;
- the introduction of hardstanding and a vehicular access onto the road frontage;
- external lighting and associated vehicle movements, including at night, in an area where neither was previously present; and - the cumulative urbanising effect on a rural lane where no comparable residential development exists.

These effects are inconsistent with adopted and emerging local plan policies requiring development to respect the character of the surrounding area and the street scene, and with neighbourhood plan policies protecting the green gap.

6. Drainage and utilities

The site is not served by mains drainage, mains sewerage or mains utilities. The submitted application has not adequately demonstrated:

- how foul drainage is being managed without harm to groundwater or surface water quality;
- how the hardstanding now in place affects surface water runoff, and what mitigation is in place; or
- how utility provision has been or will be achieved without further disturbance to the rural setting.

Without that information, the Council cannot be satisfied that the development accords with NPPF Chapter 14 (climate change, flooding and coastal change) or Chapter 15 (conserving and enhancing the natural environment). The retrospective nature of the application is no answer to this point: harm that has already occurred is harm the Council is entitled to weigh, and the absence of supporting technical information does not become less material because the development is in place.

7. Biodiversity and the natural environment

The site comprises wooded countryside. The development entails the loss of trees, the introduction of hardstanding over what was previously permeable and vegetated ground, and the loss of woodland habitat. The application should demonstrate compliance with the statutory biodiversity net gain requirement and with NPPF Chapter 15. The combined effect of hardstanding, residential occupation, external lighting and vehicle movements amounts to a material adverse effect on the ecological value of the site and the surrounding woodland. None of that harm is mitigated by the development having already been undertaken.

8. Availability of more suitable sites

To the extent that there is an identified need for additional traveller pitches in the borough, PPTS paragraph 27 directs authorities to attach weight to the use of previously developed, untidy or derelict land. Other locations are better served by infrastructure, closer to services, and have safer highway access. Identified need should be met through the plan-making process and the allocation of suitable sites, not by the regularisation of an unallocated, unsustainable countryside site that has been brought forward outside that process.

Conclusion

The proposal conflicts with the statutory development plan and with national Planning Policy for Traveller Sites. The highway safety reasons that led to the previous refusal of development served by Range Road remain unaddressed, and the applicant's own widening of the carriageway is direct evidence that the highway is inadequate. The development causes material harm to highway safety, rural character, the designated green gap, biodiversity, and sustainable transport objectives. The retrospective character of the application does not lessen any of that harm, and there are no material considerations of sufficient weight to outweigh it.

The application should be refused.