

PLANNING REF : 252498
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 5 Wheatsheaf Close
: Wokingham, Berkshire
: RG415PT
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Kris Srithararajah
DATE SUBMITTED : 14/01/2026

COMMENTS:

Planning Objection: Proposed Gypsy and Traveller Pitches at Betty Grove Lane

Application Reference: 252498 (Hall Farm / Loddon Valley Garden Village)

Element Objected To: Proposed 20 Gypsy and Traveller pitches at Mole Road / Betty Grove Lane, Sindlesham

I am writing to object to the proposed 20 Gypsy and Traveller pitches that form part of Application 252498. While this objection focuses

specifically on the Traveller site element of the application, it is important to stress that this objection is based solely on legitimate planning grounds. My concerns relate to highway safety, flood risk, consultation failures, over-concentration and poor integration, not to the future occupants themselves.

The proposed location at Betty Grove Lane is unsuitable for this use, and better alternatives exist within the main development site that would provide safer access and genuine integration into the new community.

Inadequate Public Consultation

The inclusion of 20 Traveller pitches at this location was not clearly presented during the public consultation process. The site was not

shown on publicly available maps on the developer's website for a significant period, and many residents only became aware of this aspect of the scheme in November 2024, well after meaningful consultation opportunities had passed.

This lack of transparency prevented genuine community engagement.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that plans should be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and statutory consultees.

Residents were denied the opportunity to understand and comment on a significant element of the proposal. This undermines confidence in the planning process and calls into question whether this site location was properly considered at all.

Unsafe Highway Access

Betty Grove Lane is wholly unsuitable for access to a Traveller site. It is a narrow single-track byway, generally only 2.5 to 3.0 metres wide, with no formal passing places, no pavements, no street lighting, tight bends and poor visibility.

Wokingham Borough Council's own Highway Authority has previously described Betty Grove Lane as substandard in respect of width, alignment and construction. The lane does not allow two vehicles to pass safely, presenting a danger to other road users, particularly when larger vehicles such as caravans, motor homes, refuse vehicles and emergency service vehicles attempt to use it.

The visibility at the junction of Betty Grove Lane and Mole Road (B3030) is poor. Vehicles emerging onto the B3030 have restricted visibility in both directions. Increased use of this junction would

significantly increase the risk of accidents.

Critically, the application fails to provide the technical evidence required to demonstrate safe access. For a site of this nature, the Transport Assessment should contain:

A Road Safety Audit of the proposed access arrangements
Swept-path analysis for car and caravan combinations
Swept-path analysis for 11.5 metre fire appliances and refuse vehicles
Visibility splay analysis at the Mole Road and Betty Grove Lane junction

Without this core technical evidence, the Council cannot responsibly conclude that the proposed access is safe. This represents a failure to comply with NPPF paragraph 116, which requires development to be refused where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

It is understood that a previous planning application for a Traveller site in the Betty Grove Lane area was refused on appeal, with the

Planning Inspector finding that the carriageway could not satisfactorily accommodate any appreciable increase in residential traffic and that the junction with Mole Road involved a potentially dangerous manoeuvre due to restricted visibility. Nothing has changed to address those concerns. The same access constraints that led to refusal previously still apply today.

Flood Risk and Access During Flooding

In national planning guidance, permanent Traveller sites are classified as Highly Vulnerable uses. The Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework explicitly lists caravans, mobile homes and park homes intended for permanent residential use as Highly Vulnerable development. For such uses, the Sequential Test must steer them away from flood risk wherever possible, and reliable safe dry access and egress must be demonstrated for the lifetime of the development, including under climate change scenarios.

Mill Lane, which connects Lower Earley Way to Mole Road, has a well-documented history of flooding. It was closed by floodwater in November 2024 following Storm Bert, in January 2024, in January 2023, and in February 2020. This pattern demonstrates ongoing drainage

vulnerability in the area. Even if the pitches themselves are just outside mapped Flood Zones 2 or 3, the access routes including Mole Road, Betty Grove Lane and Mill Lane may become unsafe or impassable during flood events.

A Traveller site whose occupants could become cut off during floods does not meet national safety expectations for Highly Vulnerable uses. The Flood Risk Assessment relies on future flood relief works that have not yet been constructed and does not adequately demonstrate dry access and egress. This fails to comply with NPPF paragraphs 159 to 170.

The field proposed for the pitches also has a history of being waterlogged, which raises further questions about whether this location is suitable for permanent residential occupation.

Over-Concentration of Traveller Sites

There are already several authorised Traveller sites in the surrounding area. Adding 20 pitches at Betty Grove Lane would create a significant over-concentration in one small geography, with

existing sites at Belvedere Park in Winnersh and on Mole Road. Planning Policy for Traveller Sites makes clear at paragraph 14 that when assessing the suitability of sites in rural or semi-rural settings, local planning authorities should ensure that the scale of such sites does not dominate the nearest settled community.

Paragraph 26 further states that local planning authorities should ensure that sites in rural areas respect the scale of, and do not dominate, the nearest settled community, and avoid placing undue pressure on local infrastructure.

The application does not provide a cumulative assessment of existing provision in this area or explain how adding 20 pitches here aligns with the principle of balanced distribution across the borough. Concentrating a substantial proportion of the borough's Traveller pitch provision in one small location risks dominating the settled community and undermines integration, contrary to national policy.

Poor Integration with the Main Development

The proposed Traveller site is located far from the main development footprint and directly alongside an established residential area at Wheatsheaf Close. This positioning physically separates the site from the rest of the new community and limits access to the shared facilities and services that the Garden Village is intended to provide.

The pitches are proposed at the edge of the wider development rather than being integrated into it. This isolates Traveller families from schools, shops, health facilities and community spaces, making genuine integration very difficult.

Planning policy encourages inclusive layouts that support co-existence rather than physical separation. The application fails to demonstrate why the pitches cannot be located within the main development

footprint, where access, infrastructure and opportunities for integration could be properly designed in from the outset.

Placing Traveller families on a marginal site accessed via a substandard lane, while the rest of the new residents enjoy purpose-built streets and immediate access to services, does not represent good planning or fair treatment of either community.

Inadequate Infrastructure

Unlike the main housing areas of the development, the Traveller site does not benefit from a clearly designed access road built to adoptable standards. There are no detailed proposals for drainage, surface water management, pedestrian safety or utility connections. Betty Grove Lane is not within the developer's control, which limits the ability to deliver necessary improvements. There is insufficient evidence that the lane can safely accommodate the volume and type of traffic likely to be generated by 20 pitches.

The application also provides no binding guarantee that road, drainage and utility upgrades will be completed before occupation. Without such guarantees secured through planning conditions or legal agreements,

there is a real risk that Traveller families would be placed on a site without adequate infrastructure.

Local schools and GP surgeries are already under considerable strain. The application does not demonstrate how the additional residents at the Traveller site would be accommodated within existing services or what additional provision would be made.

Alternative Sites Should Be Properly Assessed

The application does not explain which alternative sites were considered, why locations with safer access or better infrastructure were discounted, or whether areas within the main development footprint were evaluated.

There are locations within the main Loddon Garden Village site that could provide proper road access, good pedestrian and cycle links, proximity to schools and services, and genuine integration into the new community. The application provides no evidence that these alternatives were properly assessed.

Without a transparent site selection assessment, it is impossible to conclude that the Betty Grove Lane location represents the most suitable option. The current proposal appears to have been added as an afterthought rather than planned as an integral part of the development.

Land Use Allocation Conflict

It is understood that land in this area may be allocated under Policy SS14 for standard residential dwellings rather than for Traveller pitches. Policy SS13 for Loddon Garden Village contemplated Traveller provision within the main Hall Farm site, not in this additional outlying location near Sindlesham.

Adding Traveller pitches to a site that may be allocated for a different use type raises questions about the soundness of the proposal and whether proper consideration has been given to the implications of departing from the adopted policy framework.

Conclusion

For all the reasons set out above, I ask that the Council refuse permission for the proposed 20 Traveller pitches at Betty Grove Lane. The site has unsafe access via a substandard lane, inadequate infrastructure, flood risk concerns affecting access routes, and would create an over-concentration of Traveller provision in one small area. The pitches are poorly integrated with the main development and the consultation process was inadequate.

Better alternatives exist within the main development site that would provide safer access, proper infrastructure, and genuine integration into the new community. The Council should require the applicant to identify and assess these alternatives properly before any Traveller provision is approved.