

PRE-HEARING NOTE

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/25/3364902

Land East of Warren Lodge Warren Lane Finchampstead

Appellant: Mr Karl Richards

Local Planning Authority: Wokingham Borough Council

Development: 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

Background

1. A one day hearing relating to the above appeal will take place, commencing at **10:00am on 30 September 2025**. It will be conducted by Laura Cuthbert BA(Hons) MSc MRTPI, who is the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to determine this appeal.
2. The purpose of this pre-hearing note is to explain how the event will operate in a fair, open and transparent way and what should be done to ensure it runs smoothly. A number of actions are set out in this note for both main parties with relevant deadlines given.
3. A copy of this pre-hearing note, along with the responses from the main parties, which includes any supporting documentation submitted with the responses, should be made publicly available by the Council in advance of the Hearing.

Hearing Arrangements

4. The Hearing will run as an in person physical event hosted by the Council at **The Council Chambers, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN**. If the Council could please confirm what time the Council Offices opens so that the Inspector is able to get access beforehand and also the parking arrangements.
5. It would assist the Inspector if both main parties could submit a list of those representing them at the Hearing. This should include full name, job title / role in the appeal and professional qualifications.
6. The Inspector requests that, if possible, a separate room be made available to her for the duration of the event.

Information Technology (IT)

7. It would be helpful for the Inspector to have access to the internet, and electrical sockets, during the Hearing in order to access electronic documentation and evidence in relation to the appeals. Therefore, please can the Council ensure that a network connection (Wi-Fi or fixed cable) will be available at the venue for the Inspector and provide any associated security credentials/passwords to gain access.
8. A hard copy of all crucial documents should also be available for the Inspector should the IT not be working for any reason.

Format

9. The Hearing will commence promptly at 10:00am. The Inspector will start the event in the usual way by running through several preliminary matters. The Inspector will issue an agenda before the event and the content will be discussed at the Hearing.
10. The Hearing will be run as a structured discussion with the Inspector asking a series of questions in respect of the main issues. All parties who so wish, will be given an opportunity to speak. There is no need to simply repeat representations that have already been made in writing. The Inspector will take into consideration all written submissions that have been previously made by any party. There will be regular breaks.

Main Issues

11. From the evidence submitted so far, the Inspector considers that the main issues in this appeal are:
 1. whether the site is a suitable location for the development, in respect of the spatial strategy for the area and whether the site would have access to local services and facilities and sustainable forms of transport, having regard to the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS);
 2. the effect of the development on the landscape character and appearance of the area, having regard to the PPTS;
 3. the effect of the development on highway safety, with specific regard to parking, turning and vehicular access;
 4. whether the proposed development would provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers, in respect of external amenity space;
 5. the effect of the proposed development on trees, including the effect on Veteran Trees;
 6. the effect of the proposal on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA); and
 7. whether any harm arising from the development would be outweighed by other considerations.
12. If the parties disagree with the above, **then please let the Inspector know by 10am Friday 12 September 2025.**

Other Matters

13. Updated personal circumstances will need to be discussed. If the appellant does not wish to openly discuss these due to the sensitivity of the matters, the Inspector can accept these in writing in these circumstances. However, it would greatly assist the Inspector's consideration of the appeal if they could be discussed at the hearing.



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Requests for Information

14. It is noted that Appendix 1 of the Planning Statement provided personal circumstances in support of the proposal. However, this appendix has not been submitted. Therefore, the Inspector requests a copy of the personal circumstances, to be submitted **by 10am Friday 12 September 2025**.

Statement of Common Ground

15. Whilst a draft Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been submitted, this has not yet been finalised and signed. Therefore, a signed and agreed SoCG should be submitted **by 10am Friday 19 September 2025**.

Section 106 Agreement

16. A signed and completed Section 106 agreement in regard to securing SPA mitigation in regard to the Thames Basin Heath SPA should be submitted to the Inspectorate **no later than 10am Friday 19 September 2025**.

Late Evidence/Drawings

17. Aside from any requests made within this pre-hearing note, it is not anticipated that there will be any need for additional documents to be handed in during the Hearing. There will be very limited opportunities for the Inspector (or possibly the other parties) to read any late evidence submitted on the day of the Hearing. Therefore, the Inspector will not allow the introduction of new evidence by any of the parties and will only accept such evidence if there are exceptional circumstances.

Conditions

18. The Inspector has yet to be provided with any suggested conditions. Therefore, can the agreed SoCG requested above please include a list of agreed conditions, or where they are not agreed, provide clear reasons why they are not agreed. These conditions will then form the basis of the 'conditions discussion' at the Hearing.

Costs

19. If an application for costs is to be made, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) makes it clear that they should be made in writing to the Inspector *before* the Hearing. You are also reminded that in order to support an effective and timely planning system in which all parties are required to behave reasonably, the Inspector has the power to initiate an award of costs in line with the PPG.

Site Visit

20. The Inspector intends to undertake a site visit following the conclusion of the discussions at the Hearing. Currently it is the intention to close the



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Hearing at the venue with no further discussion taking place on site. The visit is likely to be an accompanied one and the main parties will need to be available on this basis, unless it is agreed that it can be carried out unaccompanied and access being allowed to the site in question and any third-party land.

Laura Cuthbert INSPECTOR 8 September 2025