

PLANNING REF : 252498
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Mole Road
: Wokingham
: RG41
SUBMITTED BY : Mr James Templeman
DATE SUBMITTED : 16/01/2026

COMMENTS:

I would like to object to elements of this development, particularly those which have not formed part of the consultation process

My biggest concern is regarding the location of the proposed traveller pitches located on the extreme edge of the development

These concerns relate to highway safety, flood risk, transport impacts, infrastructure capacity, heritage and archaeology, countryside loss, policy compliance, deliverability, and the transparency of the site-selection and consultation process.

My primary objection within this consultation response relates to the proposed 20-pitch Traveller site at Mole Road / Betty Grove Lane. In summary, I object to this element of the proposals for the following key reasons:

- The specific location of the Traveller site was not included in the original masterplan or early consultation, preventing meaningful public input at the appropriate stage.
- The site relies on unsafe and unsuitable highway access, via a narrow single-track rural lane and a constrained junction.
- Critical highway safety evidence is missing, including a Road Safety Audit and swept-path analysis for caravans and emergency vehicles.
- The site represents a highly vulnerable use affected by flood-prone access routes, risking occupants being cut off.
- The proposal would result in a significant over-concentration of Traveller provision in and around Sindlesham. The vast majority of provision for such sites within the borough is already concentrated within a 1 mile radius of Mole Road.
- Site selection does not appear to be policy-led, with alternatives reportedly dismissed on cost or development-value grounds. These have been voiced by the landowner's representatives at public meetings.

- The scale and intensity of the site would harm the rural edge of Sindlesham and local residential amenity.

These issues are addressed in detail in Section A below. Section B sets out wider concerns relating to the Garden Village proposals as a whole.

Lack of Transparency and Inadequate Consultation

At a meeting held on Friday 9 January 2026 with representatives of the University of Reading and Wokingham Borough Council, it was confirmed that while the principle of Gypsy and Traveller provision forms part of the Local Plan strategy, the specific location of the proposed Traveller pitches was not included in the original masterplan and was not presented during the initial public consultation.

As a local resident, this meant I was unable to comment meaningfully at an early stage on a fundamental planning issue.

The siting and scale of Traveller provision are central to considerations of settlement character, integration, cumulative impact and highway safety. The absence of this information significantly limited the effectiveness and fairness of the consultation process.

It was stated that the specific siting of the Traveller pitches arose either from consultation feedback or from direction by the Council. However, no documentary evidence has been provided to demonstrate that consultation responses required or supported locating the site at Mole Road / Betty Grove Lane. This raises concern that consultation is being relied upon retrospectively to justify a decision that was not transparently disclosed to residents.

Highway Safety and Access - Impact on Me as a Resident

Betty Grove Lane is a narrow, largely single-track rural lane with no pavements, no street lighting, tight bends and poor visibility. It is not designed to accommodate frequent movements by vehicles towing caravans, refuse vehicles or emergency services.

Mole Road is already heavily trafficked, particularly at peak times, and the junction with Betty Grove Lane is constrained. Introducing a permanent 20-pitch Traveller site here would significantly increase the risk of vehicle conflicts, vehicles reversing onto Mole Road,

and danger to pedestrians and cyclists.

The outline proposals contain no information on how the pitches would be accessed - this element of the proposals seem to have either not been considered, or are being withheld for commercial/resident sensitivity reasons.

It is clear that, were access to be via Mole Road/Betty Grove Lane emergency vehicles would struggle to access the site safely during darkness, poor weather or flooding.

There is no clearly presented Road Safety Audit, swept-path analysis for car-and-caravan movements, or robust evidence demonstrating that access via arrangement can operate safely. Without this information, it is not possible to conclude that the proposal would not result in unacceptable highway safety impacts.

Flood Risk and Highly Vulnerable Use

Permanent Traveller accommodation is classified as a highly vulnerable use in flood-risk policy.

Local roads in the Loddon Valley have flooded repeatedly in recent years. Even if the pitches themselves lie outside the highest mapped flood zones, access routes such as Mole Road and Betty Grove Lane are vulnerable to flooding.

If access routes become impassable, occupants could be cut off and emergency services unable to reach the site. I am not convinced that the information provided demonstrates safe, dry access and egress for the lifetime of the development, particularly given continuing climate change.

Site Selection, Policy Compliance and Commercial Influence

During the January meeting, it was stated that alternative locations for the Traveller pitches were considered but dismissed primarily due to infrastructure costs and concerns that locating pitches closer to housing could affect the value or marketability of the development.

This suggests that site selection may have been influenced by commercial considerations rather than by a transparent, policy-led assessment of reasonable alternatives. Local and national planning policy requires decisions to be based on planning merits, proportionality and settlement character, not on protecting development.

Over-Concentration and Impact on the Settled Community

There are already existing Traveller pitches in and around Sindlesham. Adding a further 20 pitches at this location would create a very high concentration of provision in one small area.

Furthermore, as the sites are located so far from the centre of the proposed University development, the Traveller families would not be integrated into or benefit from the community and community facilities on the rest of the development. This is a clear breach of the Equalities Act and also in breach of numerous elements of planning policy.

The cumulative scale and placement of the proposed site raise clear concerns about over-concentration, domination of the nearest settled community and lack of genuine integration, contrary to national Planning Policy for Traveller Sites.

Impacts on Traveller Families

Landscape, Character and Amenity Harm

The proposed Traveller site would introduce hardstanding, lighting, buildings and increased activity into an area that currently forms part of the rural edge of Sindlesham.

This would erode landscape character and harm residential amenity through increased noise, traffic and light pollution, undermining the transition between village and countryside.

A7. Deliverability and Timing

It was asserted that the Traveller site is required to contribute to targets for traveller pitches required by the Local Plan - the latest version of which has still not been adopted.

General comments:

Whilst I recognise the pressure on councils coming from Central Government to provide high numbers of new housing units in the area, the over-concentration of provision in and around the Arborfield area is a particular concern. There is a fairness argument (backed up by National planning policy), that development impacts should be shared across the borough area and not fall disproportionately on specific communities. The entire Loddon Garden scheme (including the other developments proposed by Gleeson and behind Nirvana Spa) is going to have a disproportionate impact on the local residents.

Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of a cohesive plan for the development when taken as a whole. Who is going to be responsible for ensuring the promised infrastructure is delivered at the earliest possible opportunity, particularly if there are multiple developers involved in its delivery.

Overall, I do not support the application in its current form and urge the University to revise its plans to better reflect the impact they are proposing on the local community.