



Planning

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Client: **Levi Johnson**

Land at Range Road

Finchampstead, RG40 3NP

Change of use of land for one gypsy pitch

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the change of use of and to allow for the stationing of a mobile home for permanent residential use with associated works for the creation of one new gypsy pitch on Land at Range Road, Finchampstead, RG40 3NP.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents and plans:
- 2025-58 400 Rev. A – Location Plan
 - 2025-58 500 Rev. A – Site Layout as Existing
 - 2025-58 501 Rev. B – Site Layout as Proposed
 - Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
- 1.4 The relevant application fee of will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The application site comprises a parcel of land located on Range Road, located north of existing residential development along Nine Mile Ride.
- 2.2 The site is covered by Area TPO-1083-2005 confirmed in March 2006.
- 2.3 The site is located within the countryside in planning policy terms however it does sit directly adjacent to the modest development location of Finchampstead North.
- 2.4 The site is located within the 5km Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zone.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 The planning history for the site is set out below.
- 3.2 Application Ref: F/2006/8196 – Proposed change of use of land to equestrian and erection of stables, hardstanding, new access, fencing and gates. Refused 09/10/2006

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The development comprises the formation of a new pitch for the occupation of gypsies and travellers, comprising a mobile home, touring caravan, parking and amenity space and a day room.
- 4.2 The proposed development would provide a new vehicular access to the west of the site via Range Road.
- 4.3 The site will utilise existing landscaping features on site and will retain existing trees. All elements of the proposal will be single storey in nature.

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 In this instance the Development Plan comprises:
- Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2010) ('CS');
 - Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014) ('MDD');
 - Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2023) ('FNP').
- 5.3 The Government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are material considerations of significant weighting.
- 5.4 The PPTS sets out the Government's aim in respect of Gypsy and Traveller sites. This includes at paragraph 4 a requirement *"to ensure that local planning authorities, working collaboratively, develop fair and effective strategies to meet need through the identification of land for sites.....to promote more private traveller site provision while recognising that there will always be those travellers who cannot provide their own sites...and...to increase the number of traveller sites in appropriate locations with planning permission, to address under provision and maintain an appropriate level of supply"*.
- 5.5 Local Authorities should *"use a robust evidence base to establish accommodation needs to inform the preparation of local plans and make planning decisions"*. This should include a 5-year supply of deliverable sites.

- 5.6 The first pertains consideration pertains to the need for GRT pitches within the Borough. The 2023 Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (updated to support the Local Plan Update) requires the borough to deliver 86 pitches up to 2039/40 and require an immediate short term (5 year supply) need of 35 pitches.
- 5.7 The Inspector in a recent appeal decision in Wokingham (APP/X0360/W/25/3364902), dated 27 October 2025 stated, *"It was agreed that the supply position is 3.64 years with a shortfall of 12 pitches. I have adopted the same position. Therefore, there is currently an immediate unmet need in the district. Any current provision would need to be met through suitable windfall sites."*
- 5.8 The benefit of an additional pitch to the LPA's supply is considered to have substantial weight in favour of the development.
- 5.9 In any case, it should be noted that meeting the five-year supply is not a ceiling and additional windfall pitches should be welcomed.
- 5.10 Policy CP2 of the CS states in order to contribute to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities to meet long term needs, planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of (amongst other things) **the specific identified needs of minority groups in the borough, including Gypsies, Travellers** and Travelling Showpeople and black and minority ethnic groups [ET Planning emphasis added]. Proposals for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (including allocations in other Development Plan Documents) will demonstrate that:
- "i) The site is located either within or **close to the development limits of a settlement in policy CP9** in order to maximise the possibilities for social inclusion and sustainable patterns of living; and*

ii) The proposed site is not disproportionate to the scale of the existing settlement whether singly or cumulatively with any existing sites in the area".

5.11 In this case the site adjacent to the settlement boundary, with residential development directly located to the south and other sporadic residential dwellings along Range Road.

5.12 Policy TB10: Traveller Sites of the MDD is also relevant to this application. This policy states that planning permission may be granted for new gypsy and traveller pitches where it can be demonstrated that:

a) The site is located in the Borough's existing settlements or is adjacent to an existing settlement either within or adjacent to the Borough;

b) Avoids impacting on the separate identity of settlements;

c) The site has access to a range of local services such as shops health facilities including doctors, schools, and a range of amenities including play areas and other recreation facilities;

d) No significant barriers to development exist in terms of flooding, poor drainage, poor ground stability or proximity to other hazardous land or installations where conventional housing would not be suitable;

e) Unacceptable impacts on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape will be minimised through the sensitive and appropriate design of the scheme;

f) The proposals will not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity of neighbouring land uses;

g) Mixed use proposals (which are sites that include a business use) will only be considered if appropriate to the locality and such uses will not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity;

h) The scheme avoids any adverse impacts on the Special Protection area.

- 5.13 In this case, the site is adjacent to the settlement and close to local services and facilities. The site is located in an accessible location, particularly in regards to California Crossroads where there are a number of amenities, including a shop, garage, takeaways, GP Surgery, Nine Mile Ride Primary School and Dentist. These can all be accessed by foot from the application site, as such this is an extremely sustainable site for the proposed development.
- 5.14 It should be noted that the FNP is silent on the provision on the creation of new pitches and only seeks to resist the loss of or support the expansion on existing pitches. As such, Policy AHD3 is not relevant to this application.
- 5.15 For the reasons detailed above, the principle of development is considered acceptable. Other matters in the above policies are discussed below.
- 5.16 **Character and Appearance of the Area:** Policies CP1 and CP3 seek for development to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment and ensure development is of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height and materials and character to the area.
- 5.17 Paragraph R24 of the Borough Design Guide states: the layout and design of gypsy sites should provide a safe living environment that

meets the needs of residents, while respecting the character of the local area.

- 5.18 Due to the existing trees on and surrounding the site, this provides a natural barrier, with only glimpsed views of the proposed pitch likely to be visible. The character of the site will remain relatively unchanged with any harm localised to the centre of the site where the pitch is proposed.
- 5.19 Looking more widely at the site there is a large amount of residential development in close proximity and so in character terms, the proposed development will fit in with the changing character of the site's surrounding.
- 5.20 As such, it is considered the development complies with policies CP1 and CP3 and is acceptable to the character of the area.
- 5.21 **Residential Amenity:** Policy CP3 of the CS and TB10 of the MDD seeks for development to be without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users and occupiers.
- 5.22 In conjunction with the screening and single storey nature of the mobile home, it is considered there would be no impact to the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers.
- 5.23 Despite the retention of a number of trees and significant screening the unit would not be enclosed as to impinge upon its means of light and outlook.
- 5.24 The existing planting would ensure the occupiers would benefit from a means of privacy when occupying the site whilst still ensuring they have adequate outlook to the wider amenities.

- 5.25 It is not considered the proposal would conflict with policies CP3 of the CS nor TB10 of the MDD.
- 5.26 **Trees:** Policy CC03 of the CS states development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved a number of criteria into proposals including how they protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and incorporate native planting and landscaping as part of a scheme.
- 5.27 The proposed site layout and all of its associated structures allows for the healthy retention of all of the trees on the site itself, and within nearby adjacent sites; therefore, the arboricultural landscape character of the site will be retained.
- 5.28 The implementation of the proposal does not lead to the requirement to prune any of the retained trees.
- 5.29 Where sections of the new driveway are within the RPAs of retained trees, a no-dig construction will be necessary, to ensure that all existing ground levels are retained in their current form, as well as ensuring that satisfactory moisture and oxygen can be obtained from the underlying soil by any tree roots in this area.
- 5.30 The principal arboricultural features within the site can be retained and adequately protected during development activities.
- 5.31 The proposed development is therefore deemed acceptable in arboricultural terms.
- 5.32 **Ecology:** The submission is accompanied by Preliminary Ecological Appraisal including a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment.

- 5.33 The desk study (including a TVERC data search) revealed that the application site is not statutorily or non-statutorily designated for its wildlife interest and has no protected/notable species records.
- 5.34 The following recommendations have been made: habitat protection measures; a sensitive lighting strategy for commuting/foraging bats; precautions for amphibians, reptiles, small mammals and nesting birds; and biodiversity enhancement measures including the provision of bat and bird boxes. It is considered that these recommendations can be secured by condition.
- 5.35 The Biodiversity Metric calculation tool demonstrates that the feasibility of delivering a minimum of 10% onsite net gain for biodiversity is not possible within the scope of the proposals. The results taken from the tool show a total onsite net change of -83.81% and a loss of 3.06 habitat units. This translates to a deficit of 3.42 habitat units for achieving a 10% net gain for the site. To meet the mandatory requirement of a minimum of 10% net gain for biodiversity, offsite gains will need to be made by either purchasing units from a land manager or utilising land outside of the application site but under the applicant's ownership, which can be registered and secured for 30 years. The Applicant will seek to utilise land within their control within the blue line on the site location plan in the first instance.
- 5.36 For the reasons detailed above, the proposed development is considered to accord with Core Strategy Policy CP7: Biodiversity and MDD Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development.
- 5.37 **Transport and Parking:** The proposed development would utilise a new access point from Range Road. Two car parking spaces are

proposed as part of the development. There is ample space within the site for turning and this is shown on the proposed Site Plan.

- 5.38 Range Road is a very low traffic and low speed road and as such, the introduction of a new access for this type of development in this location is considered to be acceptable.
- 5.39 In terms of locational sustainability, the site is located adjacent to the Modest Development Location of Finchampstead North which is very sustainable with a wide array of services and amenities available for residents. As such, it is considered that the site is in a sustainable location and provides appropriate and safe means of access and egress.
- 5.40 **Refuse Provision:** A bin store has been proposed as part of the development.
- 5.41 **Cycle Provision:** The proposed development does not provide any cycle storage facilities, should this be required, a condition for details of design and siting can be provided.
- 5.42 **Special Protection Area:** The application site is within 5km of the Thames Basin Heath SPA. The applicant is willing to enter into a legal agreement to provide the appropriate financial contribution to mitigate the introduction of a residential pitch.

6. Conclusion and Planning Balance

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would contribute an appropriate windfall site to the Borough's supply without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents. The development would also provide appropriate ecological and landscape mitigation and enhancement including providing a legal contribution to offset impacts to the SPA.
- 6.3 In regard to the planning balance, Significant weight should be given to the Council's lack of supply for Gypsy and Traveller pitches whilst it is clear that there is no conflict with the countryside designation of the site and the proposal is in a sustainable location.
- 6.4 The biodiversity net gain affords significant weight in favour.
- 6.5 The contribution toward the general need for sites should be afforded significant weight, as should the fact that the Council is simply not providing for the accommodation needs of the travelling community.
- 6.6 Landscape and general ecology matters are shown to be policy compliant and are attributed neutral weight, as are other policy compliant factors such as sustainability, highways and amenity.
- 6.7 Overall, the proposal provides a suitable pitch which supports the need for sites within the Borough in a suitable and available location

6.8 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

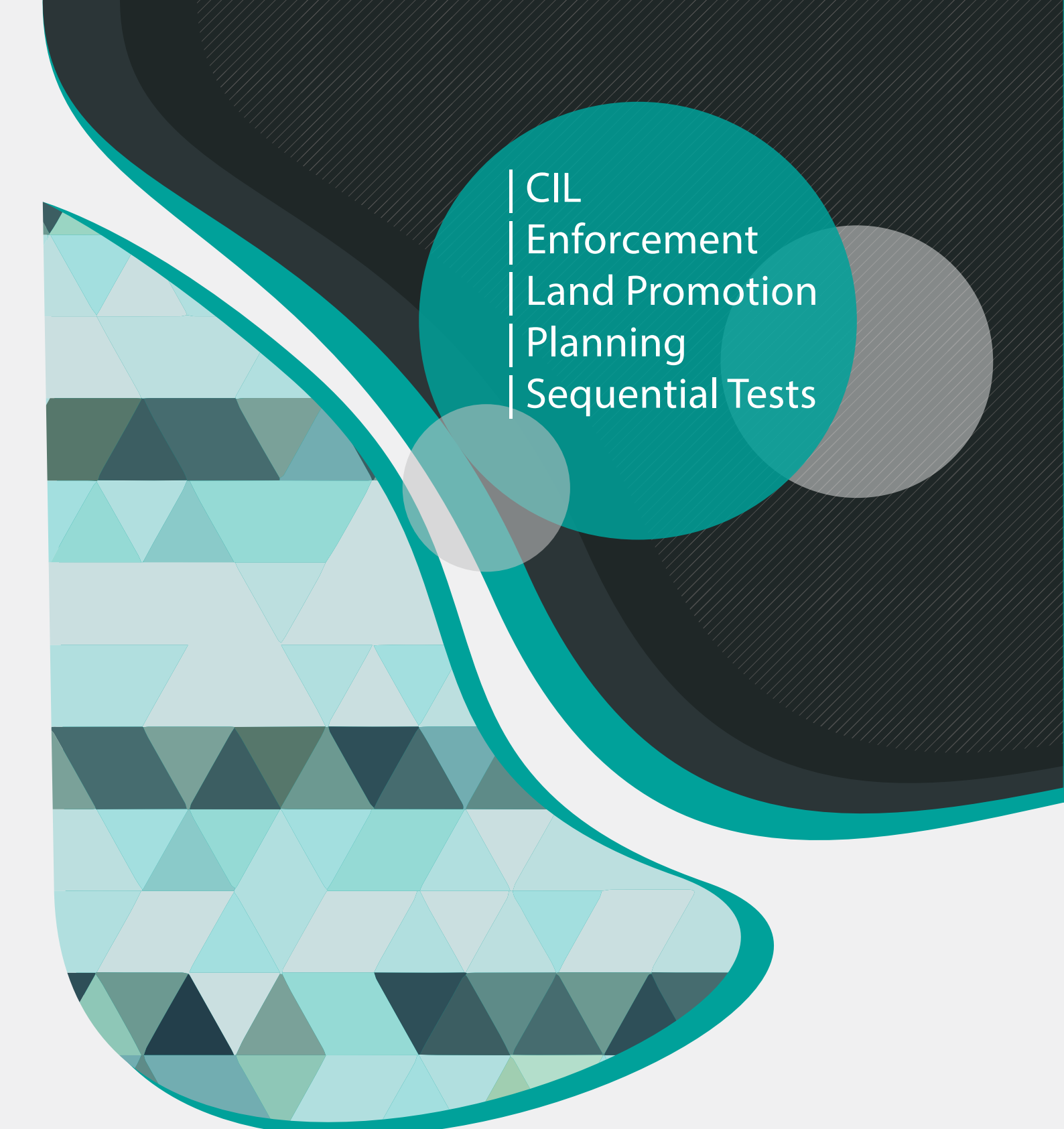


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