

To the planning officer/s in charge of application 260439,

I am writing as a local resident to formally object to the planning application for a gypsy/traveller pitch on Range Road. My objections are based on the following planning policy and safety concerns. This letter can/should be read alongside my letter for the adjacent site (260577).

1. Conflict with Local Development Plans

The site is situated within the countryside and sits outside the settlement boundaries defined in the 2010 Wokingham Local Plan, the 2024 draft Local Plan, and the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan. This application contradicts all three of these.

2. Sustainability and Accessibility

This location is unsustainable for residential use (especially for the movement of recreational vehicles). It lacks a paved surface, footpath and cycling infrastructure. Additionally to this, there are no essential services, such as shops, schools or medical facilities within walking distance, which would force an undesirable reliance on car usage.

3. Road Safety and Infrastructure

Range Road is a narrow, single-track rural road that is structurally unsuitable for large vehicles and caravans. This is already evidenced by the damage caused to the location by the addition of large caravans/static homes recently moved in onto the currently unauthorised (at the time of writing) application on the land opposite (260577). Evidence of such damage is available upon request. This proposal would increase the traffic at the junction of Range Road and B3430 Nine Mile Ride, which has previously been deemed substandard and a risk to road safety.

Additionally, the addition of large vehicles such as caravans would not allow for easy passing on the lane, requiring those pulling into Range Road to reverse dangerously back onto Nine Mile Ride.

4. Character and “Urban Creep”

Development of this site would have an urbanising effect on the local countryside and would encourage urban creep. As mentioned in the 2010 Wokingham local plan and 2024 Draft Local Plan, all development in the area should add value to the character of the streetscape, this proposal fails as it is totally and without question out of character with the existing neighbourhood.

5. Environmental Impact and Wildlife

The applicant has already felled many trees on the site, prior to the ecological survey. The installation of caravans would completely change the look and character of the road. The loss of this woodland and countryside, combined with the application of hardstanding, would have a notably detrimental impact on local wildlife.

6. Light Pollution and Utilities



Figures 1 and 2: What the woodland currently looks like every night from the land of application 260577. This light would only grow because of an additional pitch. *Images captured 9th of April 2026*

The addition of this site would introduce electric light and vehicular movements to a currently dark, rural wooded area where there is currently none. The addition of hardstanding to the land of application 260577 has already demonstrated extreme light pollution to the area, where light from the site can be seen visibly from afar (see **Figures 1 and 2**). Light levels such as this would have a severe impact on local wildlife.

7. Erosion of the Green Gap

Range Road serves as a key green gap between historic forest rides like Nine Mile Ride and Sandhurst Road. This development would erode this gap, as defined in the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan.

8. Inconsistency with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF, published in December 2024 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments “are sympathetic to local character and history” and should “establish and maintain a strong sense of place” (paragraph 135). This application fails to follow this framework and does not add overall quality of the area over its lifetime. Additionally, the introduction of a residential pitch in a high-quality wooded green gap fails to meet the national requirement under paragraph 187 to protect and enhance the natural environment.

9. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

As of early 2024, most planning applications in England must demonstrate a 10% BNG. Given that trees have already been felled (1st October 2025) and ecological survey taken place after this event, the application must prove how they will not only replace that loss but also improve the site’s biodiversity by 10%. The agent has already stated that there will be a negative 83.81% net change in biodiversity and loss of 3.06 habitat units, and such it is not possible to achieve this goal. Off-site credits are also an insufficient substitute for the immediate loss of local woodland character and wildlife habitat on Range Road.

10. Intentional Landscape Degradation

I wish to draw the Council’s attention to Schedule 14 of the Environment Act, 2021 (which amends Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). This provision states that if a site has been degraded since January 2020 (see prior points regarding the felling of trees) prior to a planning application, the biodiversity baseline must be taken as the state of the land *before* that degradation occurred. Given that significant tree felling took place on the 1st of October 2025, prior to the applicant’s ecological survey,

the admitted -83.81% biodiversity loss is likely a major underestimation. The applicant must not be permitted to benefit from this prior clearance to artificially lower their BNG obligations.

11. Cumulative Impact

The council must consider the cumulative impact of this pitch alongside the neighbouring unauthorised (at the time of writing) development. Together, these applications represent a substantial and harmful encroachment into the “green gap”.

12. TPO Status

As mentioned in the agent’s Planning Statement, the site is covered by Area TPO-1083-2005. Whilst a “no-dig solution” has been suggested, this is practically unenforceable due to the weight of hardstanding and the machinery that will be required onsite during the development. As such, this point may be invalid as there is no guarantee to the long-term safety of these protected trees and their roots via compaction/run off from the proposed infrastructure.

13. Inconsistency with the “Planning Policy for Traveller Sites” (PPTS)

PPTS Policy H (Paragraph 26) states that “Local planning authorities should very strictly limit new traveller site development in open countryside that is away from existing settlements”. As the agent admits, this site falls within the countryside and as such, the ‘harm’ to the landscape and the ‘unsustainable’ nature of this location should outweigh the boroughs pitch shortfall.

14. The “Substandard Junction” Precedent

I wish to draw the officer’s attention to the planning history of this site (Ref: F/2006/8196), specifically regarding the substandard junction of Range Road and B3430 Nine Mile Ride – which remains entirely unresolved. Increased residential and vehicular activity will only exacerbate a safety issue already recognised by the council.

15. Windfall Classification

The agent describes this as a “suitable windfall site”. I entirely contest the agent’s assertion that this is the case. Under Wokingham Policy TB10, a site must be ‘adjacent to an existing settlement’ and ‘avoid impacting the separate identity of settlements’.

This proposal fails both, it encroaches into an established and recognised green gap and impacts the rural identity of Range Road as a woodland corridor.

16. “Invalid” Status of Cumulative Sites

The application agent mentions “changing character” of the local area due to “sporadic residential dwellings”. This attempt to use the ‘changing character’ of the site’s surrounding as a justification ignores the fact that much of this change is currently subject to unauthorised (at time of writing) planning applications (specifically application 260577). An unauthorised development should not and must not be used as a material baseline to justify further encroachment into the countryside.

17. Special Protection Area (SPA) Impact

The agent admits that this site is within the 5km Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zone. Under Wokingham Policy TB23 and MDD Policy TB10, the proposal must avoid adverse impacts on the SPA. Whilst the agent offers a financial contribution, the council must perform a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Given the cumulative impact of multiple unauthorised pitches on this green gap, a simple financial “offset” may not be sufficient to mitigate the increased recreational pressure on this protected habitat.

18. Practical Impossibility of the “No-Dig” Solution and Utility Access

The agent proposes a “no-dig” construction methodology to protect the TPO-covered trees on site. However, to the best of my knowledge, this location has no mains water, gas, or electricity connections. Any utility installation would require significant ground excavation through the root protection areas of these protected trees, directly contradicting the agent’s own assurances. The Council must therefore seek clarity from the applicant as to how essential services could be connected without breaching the arboricultural protections they themselves have cited.

19. Passing lanes

Range Road is a narrow, single-track unmade lane with no designated passing places. Vehicles can only pass one another by pulling into private driveways, which were not constructed with high traffic usage in mind. This has already been demonstrated as wholly inadequate - when the occupants of the unauthorised site opposite (260577) attempted to bring a full-sized static caravan down the lane, it became stuck,

necessitating a digger to widen the lane by felling trees and banking soil onto the verge, damaging both TPO-protected trees and the lane itself. Beyond the practical impossibility of manoeuvring large caravans, this lack of passing infrastructure poses a serious risk to emergency access. Should a fire appliance or ambulance need to reach the site whilst another vehicle is on the lane, there is no means for either to pass or turn, potentially delaying a life-critical response. The Council must satisfy itself that safe and adequate access, including for emergency services, can be achieved before granting consent.

Given the admitted -83.81% biodiversity loss, the site's location within a TPO, the demonstratable lack of safe pedestrian access to the local services and the abundance of other points outlined above, I feel the planning balance falls heavily against this planning application. I urge the Council to refuse this application and prevent irreversible harm to the Finchampstead countryside.

Yours faithfully,

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