

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	260439
Address:	Land at Range Road, Range House, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3NR.		
Proposal:	Full application for the change of use of land to provide one gypsy/traveller pitch, including the stationing of a mobile home and touring caravan, erection of a day room, formation of a new vehicular access and associated parking, landscaping and ancillary works		
Type of Development:	Minor Gypsy and traveller pitches (1-9)		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☐ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☒ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

The site is in the countryside, located set back from the north side of Nine Mile Ride (a non-designated Heritage Asset), deep within a woodland TPO Ref. 1083-2005. The protected woodland parcel is adjacent to the rear garden boundaries of a number of dwellings that front Nine Mile Ride. The woodland consists of Scots Pine, Oak, Silver Birch, Holly.

The protected woodland that surrounds the site and stretches beyond it is almost contiguous where only Range Road separating other woodland parcels to the east and west including; TPO 0555-1992 on the northern and eastern boundaries, TPO2013/2026 on the west side opposite the woodland in which the site is located.

The site is accessed via Range Road a Byway Open to all Traffic (BOAT) which stretches from Nine Mile Ride to the south and to Sandhurst Road in the north. Nine Mile Ride, Range Road and Sandhurst Road are historic rides and non-designated heritage assets. Range Road has the characteristics of a minor ride, being both straight and extending through a wooded landscape. Both Nine Mile Ride and Sandhurst Road are Green Routes – see Policy CC03 and the Policies Map.

It appears the entrance has been made fully accessible by felling on existing trees.

The drawing 'Site Layout as Proposed' – Ref. 2025-58/501 B – 8.12.25 does not show the actual boundary treatment - although a site boundary within which a permeable surface is shown is included. As observed in the Site Visit images a close board fence set back behind trees, although undoubtedly in the root protection areas of the boundary Oaks by the looks of it. The Arboricultural Method Statement includes a section on Boundary Treatments at paragraph 8.2 – which says new fence post installation must be done by hand after trial digs locate there are no major roots present. I cannot see any fencing to the site boundaries on any of the drawings.

Development is located within the site within a glade of open space and outside of tree root protection areas. New planting is shown on a key but I cannot identify any on the plan.

Landscape Character

The site is in the countryside, and located within Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment – Area M1 Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands a High quality landscape of high sensitivity with the lowest capacity for change. The site is also in the Forest and Rides Valued Landscape.

The site contains a number of the Valuable Landscape Attributes for the M1 LCA;

- Large expanse of woodland containing mature trees which provide a sense of place
- Distinctive pattern of interconnected woodland and forestry, interspersed with wet woodland
- Distinctive long straight historic roads following the route of rides through former Royal Forest of Windsor
- Localised areas of tranquillity and remoteness
- Continuous network of woodland and forestry which helps to provide physical and visual separation between settlements
- Settlement pattern of low density post war properties in large plots along straight rides and notably the occasional wooded gaps between areas of settlement

Key Issues affecting the M1 LCA include;

- Changes in deciduous woodland structure through loss of species diversity
- Continued pressure for expansion, infill and densification within existing settlements, leading to loss of woodland habitat
- Pressure for backland development at the rear of properties of Nine Mile Ride
- Increasing suburbanisation and use of close boarded fencing along the rides which is incongruous to the character of the area and also leads to tree losses which themselves harm the character of the area and the Green Route.

Underlined sentences are where issues are applicable to the site.

The landscape strategy is to **conserve and enhance** existing character of Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands. The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the characteristic forestry and woodland; rarer open landscapes of heath, mire, lakes and pasture, important wildlife habitats, historic landscape features associated with the Royal Forest and recreational use. In terms of development the aim is to conserve and enhance the rural setting and gaps between settlements and maintain the low density domestic character of development.

Landscape Guidelines applicable to the site include;

- Conserve distinctive wooded skyline
- Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape, continuing to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration
- Use appropriate tree planting to help integrate roads

Policy CC03/2d require that trees, hedges and other landscape features are protected and retained through development. Policy CC03/3 also states that 'Development proposals which would result in the loss, fragmentation or isolation of areas of green infrastructure will not be acceptable.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment report and drawing are submitted with the application.

The report states at paragraph 6.1;

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

It goes on to say;

The implementation of the proposal does not lead to the requirement to prune any of the retained trees. There is no part of the new structure which will have tree canopies (from trees to be retained) overhanging it and the building works can progress safely without the need for any facilitation pruning

The Tree Survey Schedule identifies many 'A' category Oaks and Scots Pine. Tree species within the site also include Willow and Birch.

As it stands the development is within an area of continuous protected woodland, where it has already had an adverse impact on both the woodland and the landscape character, including from the fenced boundaries and tree clearance. As a result of the impact and failure to comply with Policies TB21 and CC03 of the local plan, as the development fails to retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape. The proposals clearly do not address the key issues identified in the M1 landscape character area, or meet with the landscape strategy. The trees fail to protect and retain existing trees, and fail to integrate the scheme with the countryside.

The trees lost as a result of speculative development are to be replaced via a Tree Replacement Notice Tree Preservation Order 1083/2005 Land to the east of Range Road (rear of 297-301a Nine Mile Ride), Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3NP. These replacement trees and recommended species will need to be planted in accordance with the TRN.

Should the application be approved the location and species of tree used in the TRN will need to be carefully included on the Site Layout, and in a Landscape Enhancements Plan which will be a condition of planning approval if the scheme is granted permission.

As the scheme is contrary to Policies TB21 and CC03 I am unable to support it.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)			
Date:	7.5.26 + 14.7.26	Signed:	BRC