

To the planning officer/s in charge of application 260577. I am writing as a local resident to formally object to this planning application of a Caravan Site, Land South of Valois, Finchampstead, RG40 3NR. Full application for the change of use of land for the stationing of caravans to form 2 no. gypsy/traveller pitches plus access and ancillary works. (Retrospective) on Range Road.

My objections are based on the following planning policy and safety concerns:

Countryside Designation

The site is within the area designated as countryside and is outside the settlement boundary in the Wokingham plan of 2010, the draft Local Plan of 2024 and the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan. The fact that the site is within the 'countryside' supports the refusal of this planning application.

Council's Core Strategy – Limited Development

Finchampstead is classed as a settlement where it is felt limited development to support the vitality of existing local services is appropriate. In areas of countryside priority should be given to repurposing existing buildings. This application is not appropriate, and no existing buildings are present.

It is not a sustainable development.

The site is unsustainable for residential use. There will be total reliance on the use of private cars, 4WDs and vans to access shops, schools and medical facilities. It does not demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car in line with CP6. There is no provision for alternative transport use.

It does not maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment.

It will not minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment. There appears to be no plan to limit any adverse effects on water quality (including ground water). A soakaway is planned to deal with surface water, this could cause groundwater contamination. There is a toilet on the site however, it is unknown how Foul Sewage will be dealt with as there is no mention of connecting foul water drains to any existing drains if there are any present. Large Septic tank emptying vehicles cannot access the lane due to the width of the lane.

It does not ensure the provision of adequate drainage. The alteration of the natural woodland ground surface to accommodate the caravans (touring and static) will change the natural drainage properties of the area having a harmful effect.

It will not provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes.

It will not contribute in any way towards the goal of reaching zero-carbon developments as soon as possible. There are no provisions of appropriate on-site renewable energy features or forms of minimising energy and water consumption as required by other planning applications.

The plans do not incorporate areas to store and aid the collection of waste and no arrangements have been made for the separate storage and collection of recyclable waste.

CP2 – Inclusive Communities

According to Policy TB10: Travellers Sites, it states that planning permission may be granted to new gypsy and traveller pitches or travelling show people plots or extension to existing sites where it can be demonstrated that the site is located in the Borough's existing settlements or is adjacent to an existing settlement either within or adjacent to the Borough. This is not supported in this instance. This unauthorised site which has a retrospective planning application, an injunction in place and another court appearance due soon, is located opposite another site with a planning application for a traveller pitch (Application 260439). Applications 260577 and 260439 cannot be permitted by reason of adjacency as neither have planning approval. The emerging Local Plan update contains provisions for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches at High Barn Farm, Barkham which is a few miles from Range Road. This should be pursued rather than plots of land on an unsuitable lane in one of the few precious Green Gaps in the area.

CP3 – General Principles for development

This application does not support most of the general principles for development listed in the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy so should not be granted planning permission.

CP6 – Managing Travel Demand

This should sway the decision towards refusal. There will be no provision for a sustainable form of transport. Cars, vans and 4WDs will be used. All points listed in CP6 provide good grounds for opposing the application.

Range Road is a narrow single-track road. It is completely unsuitable for a development of this kind which would increase risks to road safety. The lane is currently in a very poor state and is much wider than it was a few weeks ago due to the unauthorised activity by the residents of this site. The current width of the lane should not be taken into consideration when deciding on this application. A touring caravan can be up to 2.55m wide, the lane is currently only just wide enough at its narrowest point (2.8m). It is already evident that a large static caravan is too wide to fit down the lane as proved by the instigator of this unauthorised development on Saturday 7th March and then again on the Tuesday 10th March 2026 when they failed for the second time to move their large

static caravan to the site. Machinery was used to remove trees and saplings from the verge to create extra width to the lane and in the process the integral concrete supports for the verges were damaged and removed. In some places the lane has been widened by a metre or more. Access was created to their field (formerly a grazing paddock rather than garden as described in their application documents) through the verge between two protected trees. The lane should be reinstated to its former width, the verges repaired and replanted at the applicant's expense.

A legacy application for stables was submitted in 2006 for the proposed site to the rear of 297 to 303 Nine Mile Ride. This was refused on the grounds that the proposed development would result in the increased use of the substandard road junction of Range Road with B4330 Nine Mile Ride, which would adversely affect road safety and the flow of traffic. Contrary to policies WOS3 and WT7 of the Wokingham District Local Plan (WDLP) and DP5 of the Berkshire Structure Plan (BSP). The proposal would generate additional traffic on Range Road which is substandard in respect of width and construction and this would result in the increased risk of accidents to road users. Contrary to policies WOS3 and WT7 of the WDLP and DP5 of the BSP.

The lane is still substandard in terms of the road junction with Nine Mile Ride, the lane width and the lane surface. This has not changed since 2006. The visibility is poor when looking to the right to pull on to Nine Mile Ride and the gradient is adverse too which will cause issues for larger vehicles. There are no passing places on the lane apart from resident's driveways. Movement of larger vehicles and an increase in traffic will further mitigate this problem. The Northern end of Range Road joins Sandhurst Road with a speed limit of 50 mph, so additional traffic pulling out onto there could cause issues too.

Traffic volumes have increased considerably since the declined planning application for stables in 2006 due to the housing developments in Arborfield, Buckler's Park etc. Further developments are being built on Nine Mile Ride so traffic volume will continue to increase. The sight lines for exiting and entering Range Road are poor. Sometimes traffic must reverse back out onto Nine Mile Ride if a vehicle is approaching on the lane. The sight lines for exiting properties on the lane itself mean that vehicles must be in the lane already to see if something is coming. There are no safe passing places for pedestrians, bikes or horses within the lane and this will become more dangerous with increased traffic.

Due to the distance from the site to facilities such as school, GP, dentist, shops etc. residents would more than likely drive. During the winter months the lane is extremely muddy so vehicular travel would be unavoidable.

Approval of this application WILL cause highway issues as the lane is not suitable for a heavy volume of traffic and heavy, large vehicles.

Further Issues with the Details of the Application –

- The application is listed as retrospective, yet it was submitted as the work was being carried out on the evening of the 6th March 2026. For this reason, Biodiversity Net Gain should be applicable as this is not a true retrospective planning application. The site was not complete when the application was made.
- There is no evidence that a fingertip search for Great Crested Newts actually took place despite Mr Caruthers saying it did in his Planning Statement and Report GCN. Where is eDNA evidence?
- The application is riddled with numerous mistakes and inaccuracies including how many actual pitches are being proposed. The description of the proposed development states - Retrospective change of use of the land to a Gypsy/Traveller site formed from two static mobile homes, two touring caravans works to access and ancillary works. Both the Arboricultural Impact Statement and information regarding Great Crested Newts state – Full planning application for the change of use of land to the stationing of caravans to form A Gypsy/Traveller pitch to include works to access and ancillary works (Retrospective). This implies one pitch.

The Block Plan shows two static caravans on site but the scale is inaccurate and not a true representation of the layout. Where are the two touring caravans to be located along with the car, 4WD and two or three vans which have been on site most days and any additional vehicles created by another pitch. The Block Plan does not show toilet and wash block that is currently on site. It is very misleading.

- With permission for two pitches, they are anticipating four vehicle movements per day. There is currently one pitch in place but they already far exceed that number of vehicle movements per day.
- They have documentation supporting sustainability and the fact that all amenities are within walking distance. I have not seen any evidence of the residents walking; all journeys have been by one of the multiple vehicles on site.
- The proposal is out of keeping with the established character of the area and fails to enhance the street scene, contrary to the FNDP Policy D3, 1b and Policy AHD3,3 which states that proposals should have appropriate landscaping to mitigate their impact on the surrounding landscape.
- The residents have shown a total disregard for the environment, wildlife, the local community and planning procedures. They have tapped into the electrical supply and it is thought that the water supply of a neighbouring has also been compromised. The electricity has now been disconnected by SSEN but until then the site was flood lit every night.

- The woodlands are home to numerous species including roe deer, tawny owls, badgers, slow worms, snakes, hedgehogs and bats. Local wildlife had been displaced and as a result of this we have had a deer die in our front garden as it was likely disturbed by the light pollution, land clearance and high fencing down the lane. The local tawny owls have not been heard since the 6th March when the land clearance and tarmac laying took place.
- There has been a noticeable increase in the amount of litter in the area since the 6th March. This is not helped by the contamination to the lane surface itself caused by using demolition waste (tiles, plastic, crushed tools etc.) to infill the turning circle to form access to the pitch. All of this is harmful to the environment and wildlife.
- How will protective plastic meshing help the roots of the trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders at the boundary? Is the protective mesh in place? The tarmac is already in place so is there any evidence of protective mesh in place? Is damage already occurring. There are numerous places on the lane where tree roots are visible at the surface, so it is evident how shallow roots can be.
- The proposed area is a “Green Gap” between the historic rides of Nine Mile Ride and Sandhurst Road as mentioned in the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan. Allowing this application to be permitted along with application 260439 would be detrimental to the green gap, damaging the rural woodland character of the lane.

Whilst I am fully aware that there is a shortage of suitable pitches for the travelling community in the wider borough, I feel the harm that would be caused by permitting this planning application would far outweigh the benefits. It would negatively impact road safety, the environment, the countryside, the community and a dangerous precedent would be set that any plot of land in any location is suitable for a traveller’s pitch.

I would respectfully ask that WBC decline this application.