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12/04/202

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Objections to Planning Application 260439: Land to rear of 297 to 303 NMR, Finchampstead

I object to this planning application and respectfully request that the Council refuses this application.

My objection is made with reference to the development plan and material considerations, including the policies of the Wokingham Borough Local Plan (Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery DPD).

More suitable location for Gypsy/Traveller pitches should be considered. The emerging Local Plan update contains provisions for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches, notably at High Barn Farm, Barkham, within a few miles of this location.

The proposed planning application does not meet Sustainability requirements. It will have a detrimental impact on Highways, the Countryside, is in a poor location and conflicts with local planning policies.

The proposal fails to meet the requirements set out in the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNDP) IRS1, IRS2 and IRS3.

Development of this site would have an urbanising effect on the countryside and encourage urban creep.

The site lies within designated countryside and is outside the settlement boundary, contrary to FNDP Policy AHD1, with no allocation for development in the 2010 Wokingham Local Plan, the 2024 draft Local Plan nor the FNDP.

The proposal contravenes the Managing Development Delivery Development Plan – Local Plan 2012 which states that planning permissions for a Gypsy/traveller site may be granted where it can be demonstrated that it avoids impacting on the separate identity of settlements.

I have lived at the above address for 44 years and during that time Range Road and surrounding countryside has not seen any development and maintained a rural green gap. Range Road is sparsely populated with only 5 dwellings

Highway Safety (CP3 / MDD DPD Policies)

Access to the application site is via an unpaved Byway with substandard road junctions and is not designed to accommodate the size or frequency of vehicles associated with caravans and additional traffic.

Policy CP3 requires development to provide safe and suitable access for users. The increased use of this road by large vehicles raises clear concerns about highway safety, congestion, and potential damage to the road infrastructure.

Range Road is a narrow single-track Byway (BOAT) which is completely unsuitable for large vehicles such as caravans. Allowing this development would create a risk to road safety (Section 66(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which defines a byway open to all traffic as: "a highway over which the public have a right of way for vehicular and all other kinds of traffic, but which is used by the public mainly for the purpose for which footpaths and bridleways are so used"). Additional traffic and use of caravans is contrary to the accepted use of this Byway.

An Application (F/2006/8196) for the site was refused on 10/6/2006.

"The Notification of Refusal of Permission states that the proposed development would result in the increased use of the substandard road junction of Range Road with B3430 Nine Mile Ride, which would adversely affect road safety and the flow of traffic. 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".

Since 2006 Traffic volumes on both Nine Mile Ride and Sandhurst Road (50MPH) have increased considerably in the last 20 years.

The proposed development would result in the increased use of substandard road junctions of Range Road with B3430 Nine Mile Ride and A321 Sandhurst Road, which would adversely affect road safety **and** the flow of traffic. As such it is contrary to policies CP3 and CP6.

The proposed planning application would generate additional traffic on Range Road, and this would result in an increased risk of accidents to users of the Byway.

Poor visibility when accessing/exiting Range Road from NMR & Sandhurst Road increasing risk of accidents. The sight lines for accessing and exiting Range Road are very poor. It is incredibly difficult to see what's coming from the right in NMR when exiting Range Road. Equally, you can't see what is coming up Range Road until you turn onto it from, resulting in cars having to reverse onto NMR as there are no passing places on Range Road into which to reverse. This is dangerous for pedestrians and motorists.

Additionally, there are no safe places for pedestrians, bikes or horse riders to get away from vehicular traffic, other than to clamber on verges, recently made precarious by Gypsy/Travellers illegally scraping Range Road to allow wide caravans access. (Picture below)



Picture 1 – Damage to Range Road near NMR

Development (Core Strategy CP3 / CP11)

The site lies within the countryside, where development is strictly controlled. Policies such as CP3 (General Principles for Development) and CP11 (Distribution of Development) seek to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of rural areas. The stationing of caravans for residential use represents an urbanising and intrusive form of development that is fundamentally at odds with the rural character of the area. It fails to respect the landscape and cannot be considered sustainable in this location. Access to the site is via a narrow Byway that is not designed to accommodate the size or frequency of vehicles associated with caravans and residential occupation. Policy CP3 requires development to provide safe and suitable access for all users. The increased use of this road by large vehicles raises clear concerns about highway safety, congestion, and potential damage to the road infrastructure.

Harm to Ecology and Biodiversity (CP7)

Over the last 40+ years I have observed an abundance of wildlife, e.g. Badgers, Deer, Foxes, Bats and a huge variety of birds.

Policy CP7 seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the borough.

The clearing of the site and tree felling in October 2025 prior to the submission of this planning application has already resulted in huge disturbance and loss to the land and habitat.

Trees contribute significantly to the rural character, visual amenity, and ecological value of the site. Their removal has already altered the landscape and may have caused irreversible environmental damage. This undermines the objectives of policies CP3 and CP7, which seek to protect and enhance the natural environment.

Development and use of the site will further increase pressure on local habitats through noise, activity, and potential pollution. Without proper ecological assessment and mitigation, the proposal is likely to result in unacceptable harm to biodiversity.

The loss of this woodland, countryside and application of hardstanding would have a notably detrimental effect on wildlife and birds.



Picture 2 Google view of site prior to clearance



Picture 3 After clearance of site

Sustainability – Access to Services and Facilities

The proposed site is unsustainable. It is accessed via a Byway with no paved surface. There are no local services (shop, schools, healthcare, etc) within walking distance or accessible by public transport. Future occupants would therefore rely heavily on private cars, adding traffic to busy highways. This conflicts with planning policies aiming for sustainable development.

Lack of Infrastructure and Unsustainable Development (CP1 / CP3)

No evidence that the site is served by appropriate utilities or infrastructure, including water supply, sewage disposal, and waste management. Policy CP1 promotes sustainable development, and CP3 requires adequate infrastructure provision. The absence of such services raises concerns about environmental pollution and public health, making the development unsuitable in this location.

Impact on Residential Amenity (CP3)

The proposal will have a detrimental impact on the amenity of nearby residents due to increased traffic, noise, visual intrusion, and general disturbance. This conflicts with CP3, which requires development to be appropriate, without detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining residents.

A Gypsy/Traveller site would add electric light and vehicle movements to an area where there are currently none and will change the rural wooded character of the area. Range Road is a key green gap between the historic rides in the forest such as Nine Mile Ride and Sandhurst Road – development of this site would erode this green gap (as defined in the Finchampstead Neighbourhood development plan) and would completely change the character of the area.

An unapproved development opposite the application site has very bright lights showing throughout the night, having an adverse effect on Neighbours and Wildlife.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, the proposal conflicts with multiple policies of the Wokingham Borough development plan and would result in significant harm to the countryside and environment, character and appearance of the landscape

The proposed development represents inappropriate unplanned development outside of and unconnected to any settlement boundary.

National Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) states that such developments should not dominate the nearest settled community.

17% of Gypsy/Traveller pitches in the Borough are in Finchampstead, while Finchampstead only accounts to 10% of the land mass of the Borough. Any further Gypsy/Traveller pitches in Finchampstead would be disproportionate to the scale of existing settlement in Finchampstead

Range Road is situated within a "Green Wedge" – a strategic gap re-assigned by Finchampstead Parish Council to separate Finchampstead settlements and prevent urban merging.

The area is part of the "Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands" which is officially recognised as a **Valued Landscape** by WBC.

"In summary, the proposal is in direct conflict with the Local Plan. For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request that the Council refuse this application"

Yours faithfully,



Peter Fraatz

NB.

Appeal Decisions made by Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Three gypsy/traveller site Appeals were unsuccessful and several of the reasons for rejections should also be considered relevant to the Range Road planning application.

The recent October 2025 (Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/25/3364902, Land East of Warren Lodge, Warren Lane, Finchampstead, RG40 4HR refusing the appeal for two gypsy/traveller pitches in Finchampstead Road adjacent to Warren Lane is

probably the most relevant as it is very recent. Of note are the Inspector's decisions in paragraphs 16, 23-24, 32-33, 56, 74-77.

The 2017/18 (APP/X0360/W/17/3173546) Land opposite Warren Lodge, Warren Lane, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 4HR), appeal for a gypsy site in Warren Lane is also relevant, particularly paragraphs 20, 22-23, 27.

The 2017 (APP/X0360/W/17/3169294) appeal at The Stables, Lower Sandhurst Road, paragraphs 18-19, 21, 38-44 are relevant.

Clearly, in all three cases the Inspector decided that the sites were unsuitable and there are distinct parallels with the Range Road Applications.