

Development Management Ref No	No weeks on day of committee	Parish	Ward	Reason for listing
170570	9/8	Finchampstead	Finchampstead South	Approval of matter committee has resolved to consider

Applicant Mr G Lee
Location Land to west of Twin Oaks, Longwater Lane, **Postcode** RG40 4NX Finchampstead
Proposal Full application for the change of use of land for the siting of a single mobile home for residential purposes and parking space for 2no motor vehicles, removal of an existing timber stable block and a soft landscaping scheme
Type Full
PS Category 17
Officer Graham Vaughan

FOR CONSIDERATION BY Planning Committee on 26th April 2017
REPORT PREPARED BY Head of Development Management and Regulatory Services

SUMMARY

The application site is within designated countryside and outside of the settlement of Finchampstead. Currently the site comprises of a dilapidated timber stable and an area of grassland. It is also adjacent to a local wildlife site, Longwater Lane Meadow. To the east of the site is an existing gypsy pitch and to the west an alpaca farm.

The scheme is for full permission for the establishment of a gypsy pitch which would include a mobile home, parking and landscaping. Access is proposed off Longwater Lane although in this location it is a public right of way rather than a highway.

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) is required to have a five year housing land supply of gypsy and traveller pitches across the borough and currently has a shortfall of one pitch. It is acknowledged that the site is outside of settlement and it would have a detrimental impact on the character of the area. However, as there is a need to accommodate one additional pitch, and no other better alternative sites before the LPA for consideration, the application is recommended for conditional approval.

- PLANNING STATUS**
- Countryside
 - Local Wildlife sites
 - Special Protection Area – 5 and 7 km
 - South East Water supply area
 - Farnborough Aerodrome consultation zone
 - Mineral consultation zone
 - Sand and gravel extraction
 - Footpaths

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:

- A. The completion of a legal agreement to secure mitigation against the impact on the Special Protection Area.**
- B. Conditions and informatives:**

Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
2. This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered '2465/1' and '2465/2 Rev A' received by the local planning authority on 23rd February 2017 and 12th April 2017. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.
Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.
3. No part of any building(s) hereby permitted shall be occupied or used until vehicle parking and turning space has been provided in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The vehicle parking and turning space so-approved shall be retained in accordance with the approved details and the parking space remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times and the turning space shall not be used for any purpose other than vehicle turning.
Reason: To provide adequate off-street vehicle parking and turning space and to allow vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward gear in the interests of road safety and convenience and providing a functional, accessible and safe development and in the interests of amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.
4. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out unless in accordance with the submitted grassland mitigation strategy for part of Longwater Lane Meadow Local Wildlife Site as detailed in section 4 and table 2 of the submitted Twin Oaks Grassland Mitigation Strategy (The Ecology Consultancy, Ref: 110269, August 2011) received by the Local Planning Authority on 23rd February 2017. The details shall be implemented in full unless otherwise approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter maintained for a period of five years from the date of this permission.
Reason: To maintain favourable conservation status of the site for protected habitats of principal importance. Relevant Policy: Core Strategy policy CP7 and MDD policy TB23
5. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out unless in accordance with the submitted landscaping details (plan 2465/2 Rev A) received by the Local Planning Authority on 12th April 2017. Planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details in the first planting and seeding seasons following the

occupation of the site. Any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the date of the planting (or within a period of 5 years of the occupation of the buildings in the case of retained trees and shrubs) die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species or otherwise as approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure adequate planting in the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21 (and TB06 for garden development)

6. No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity value to the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

7. The hard surfacing hereby permitted shall be constructed from porous materials or provision shall be made to direct water run-off from the hard surface to a permeable or porous area within the curtilage of the development, and the hard surfacing shall thereafter be so-maintained.

Reason: To prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change) and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10

8. All waste on the site and all materials arising from the demolition of buildings shall be permanently removed from the site.

Reason: In the interests of the amenity of the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

9. The site shall not be occupied by any persons other than gypsies and travellers as defined in Annex 1 of Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (August 2015) (or any policy revoking and re-enacting that policy with or without modification).

Reason: To ensure continuing provision for the needs of the gypsy population. Relevant policy: Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (August 2015), Core Strategy policy CP2 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy TB10

10. No more than one caravan, as defined in the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and the Caravan Sites Act 1968 (or any Act revoking and re-enacting that Act with or without modification), shall be stationed on the site at any time.

Reason: In the interests of the amenity of the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

11. Any material change to the position of the caravan, or its replacement by another

caravan in a different location, shall only take place following the written agreement of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the amenity of the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

Informatives:

1. The applicant is advised of the following regarding the public right of way:
 - a. This planning permission does not in any way allow the public right of way to be obstructed at any time during the course of the development.
 - b. Nothing connected with either the development or the construction must adversely affect or encroach upon the Public Right of Way, which must remain available for public use at all times.
 - c. The applicant is advised that the Rights of Way Manager must be informed prior to the laying of any services beneath the Public Right of Way.
 - d. Where the ground levels adjacent to a Public Right of Way are to be raised above the existing ground levels, a suitable drainage system must be installed adjacent to the Public Right of Way, to a specification agreed with the Local Authority, prior to development commencing.
 - e. No alteration of the surface of the right of way must take place without the prior written consent of the Public Rights of Way Manager.
 - f. The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that private rights of vehicle access must be obtained before the use of the access hereby approved can be used to serve the development. Failure to do so will be an offence under the Road Traffic Act 1988 s.34.
 - g. No materials, plant, temporary structures or excavations of any kind should be deposited / undertaken on or adjacent to the Public Right of Way that may obstruct or dissuade the public from using the public right of way whilst development takes place.
 - h. No changes to the public right of way direction, width, surface, signing or structures shall be made without prior permission approved by the Rights of Way Manager or necessary legal process.
 - i. No construction / demolition vehicle access may be taken along or across a public right of way without prior permission and appropriate safety/mitigation measures approved by the Rights of Way Manager. Any damage to the surface of the public right of way caused by such use will be the responsibility of the applicants or their contractors to put right / make good to a standard required by the Rights of Way Manager.
2. The applicant is advised that the provision of a septic tank will require a permit to be sought from the Environment Agency prior to installation. If changes to the proposed septic tank are requested by the EA this may require further approval from the Local Planning Authority.

PLANNING HISTORY

- 22075 – Erection of barn **conditionally approved** on 23rd August 1984
- F/2012/2319 - Change of use of land to a dual pitch gypsy site including stationing of two mobile homes, two touring caravans and conversion of existing stable block to form utility block. **Non-determination appeal dismissed** on 18th June 2014
- (Adjacent site) F/2009/1964 - Use of land for the stationing of one long stay pitch for one gypsy family (1mobile home and 1 touring caravan). Retention of access and entrance gates. Retrospective **refused** on 30th November 2009. **Allowed at appeal** on 27th January 2011

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Site Area	0.06 hectares
Existing parking spaces	0
Proposed parking spaces	2

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Berks & Bucks Wildlife Trust	No comments received
South East Water	No comments received
Thames Water	No comments received
WBC Biodiversity	No objection subject to condition (4)
WBC Environmental Health	No objection subject to condition (8)
WBC Highways	No objection subject to condition (3)
WBC LUTT (Policy)	No objection subject to condition (9)
WBC Tree & Landscape	No objection subject to condition (5)
WBC Waste Services	No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Finchampstead Parish Council: Object to the application with regards to:

- WBC can demonstrate an adequate supply of Gypsy and Traveller sites
- Development in the countryside
- Outside settlement boundary
- Unsustainable site
- Thames Basin Heath
- Appeal Decision reference APP/X0360/A/13/2201525 dated June 2014 for a similar development on this site concluded 'the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the countryside'

Local Members: Letter from Councillor Weeks noting level of public response and concern regarding the application

Neighbours: 1 letter of support received stating that the land is currently an eyesore so the site would benefit from occupation.

16 letters of objection received with regards to the following:

- A previous appeal on the site was dismissed (see paragraphs 31 – 32)
- Increased use of path by vehicles would be dangerous particularly as it is used by children (see paragraph 23)
- A septic tank may not work because the water table is close to the surface (see paragraph 28)
- Exterior lighting will harm the character of the area (see paragraphs 13 – 16)
- Noise and light pollution (see paragraph 21)
- Hard standing would impact on trees (see paragraph 29)
- The site is within the Longwater Lane Meadow wildlife site (see paragraph 17)
- Mobile home is not in keeping with the character of the area (see paragraphs 13 – 16)
- Erosion of the countryside and urbanising impact (see paragraphs 13 – 16)
- Outside the settlement area (see paragraphs 5 – 12)
- Additional strain on sewers (see paragraph 28)
- Need for gypsy pitches already met (see paragraphs 5 – 12)
- Unsustainable site with no transport links (see paragraph 26)

APPLICANTS POINTS

- The proposal would be occupied by a genuine gypsy/travelling family with strong local family connections
- Provision of a gypsy pitch would help meet demand
- Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site already exists

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
	PPTS	Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (August 2015)
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP2	Inclusive Communities
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP4	Infrastructure Requirements
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP8	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	CP11	Proposals outside development limits (including countryside)
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC02	Development Limits
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC04	Sustainable Design and Construction
	CC07	Parking
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB10	Traveller Sites
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	BDG	Borough Design Guide – Section 8
	GTAA	Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2015

PLANNING ISSUES**Description of Development:**

1. The proposal is for the change of use of the land for the siting of a mobile home for residential purposes, associated parking provision and landscaping following the demolition of an existing stable block in order to establish a gypsy pitch. The land is currently adjacent to an existing gypsy pitch, known as Twin Oaks, and an alpaca

stud known as Easterwood Farm. The site comprises of a dilapidated timber stable, associated post and rail fencing and grassland. The Longwater Lane meadow wildlife site is located to the south.

2. The submitted site layout indicates it would be located to the north of the site. An access from Longwater Lane would be provided with two parking spaces and a turning area. Hedgerows and timber post and rail fencing are also proposed to demarcate the boundary of the site.

Planning History:

3. The site has been subject to a previous application, F/2012/2319, which was for two gypsy pitches comprising of two mobile homes, two touring caravans and the conversion of the stable block to form a utility block. The application was appealed on the grounds of non-determination and the Inspector dismissed this appeal on 18th June 2014 and concluded:-
 - a. The applicant complied with the definition of a gypsy but the weight applied to their personal circumstances was limited. Given that the Wokingham Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment demonstrated there wasn't a need for additional pitches, the overall harm caused by the scheme was not outweighed by these points.
 - b. The scheme would not be disproportionate in relation to the settlement of Finchampstead however the caravans and associated paraphernalia would constitute stark and noticeable urban elements within the landscape. The development would be at odds with the semi-rural nature of its surroundings taking into account the limited public visibility and screening provided by the neighbouring sites.
 - c. The scheme required mitigation against its impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area which would need to be secured through a legal agreement. At the local level, harm would be caused to the local wildlife site.
 - d. Some infrastructure contributions would be required to mitigate the harm caused by the scheme. (Office note: This is now secured through CIL).
 - e. The size of the site and proposed layout would not detrimentally harm the amenity of future residents in terms of play areas or fire prevention.
 - f. No harm arises in highway terms with regards to sustainability, parking provision or access.
4. Adjacent to the site is Twin Oaks, a gypsy pitch which was allowed at appeal in 2011, reference F/2009/1964. The Inspector noted a potential shortfall in the provision of gypsy pitches across the Borough but also considered some harm would arise due to the countryside location. However, the educational need of the children of the family was afforded substantial weight which overcame the harm caused. The appeal was allowed on the basis of a personal permission on 27th January 2011.

Principle of Development:

5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 forms a material consideration with a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The supporting document entitled Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) (2015) sets out guidance to ensure fair and equal treatment for gypsies and travellers and also requires due regard for the protection of local amenity and the local environment. These documents state that new traveller site development in the

open countryside away from existing settlements should be restricted and that sites in rural areas should respect the scale of, and not dominate, the nearest settled community as well as avoiding placing undue pressure on local infrastructure (paragraph 25 of PPTS).

6. Policy H of the PPTS sets out that when determining planning applications for traveller sites, LPA should consider the following issues amongst others, relevant matters when determining applications for traveller sites.
 - a. The existing level of local provision and need for sites;
 - b. The availability (or lack) of alternative accommodation for applicants;
 - c. Other personal circumstances of the applicant/occupants;
 - d. Locally specific criteria; and,
 - e. Authorities should determine applications for sites from any travellers and not just those with local connections’.
7. **Local Provision and Need for sites:** The NPPF and PPTS require that LPA have a five year supply of Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) sites. The Council’s current needs assessment is the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) March 2015. Although the Council has commissioned a new GTAA study, this is not yet complete.
8. The Council’s GTAA identifies a need for 52 pitches to be provided between 2014 and 2029. The need is broken down into five year periods and the need from the baseline to date this is 29 pitches. 28 pitches have been provided and there is therefore a shortfall of one pitch. The approval of the current application would ensure the Council has a five year supply of pitches.
9. The Council has a number of applications and appeals before it. Approval of this application would enable the Council to defend the refusal of other sites in the borough, many of which are located in significantly more harmful locations.
10. **Alternative Sites:** No alternatives sites have been put forward by the applicant and the Council is not aware of any other better alternatives that could accommodate the current need for one additional pitch.
11. **Personal Circumstances:** No information regarding the personal circumstances of the applicant has been put forward in favour of the proposal.
12. **Locally specific criteria:** Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy relates to proposals outside development limits designed to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. The current application is located outside of development limits, and does not comply with the criteria set out in the policy. While Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy supports proposals that address the requirements of ‘the specific identified needs of minority groups in the borough, including Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople’, policy TB10 of the MDD states that gypsy and traveller pitches should be located either within or close to the edge of settlements. As the site is located approximately 70 metres from the settlement boundary, this requirement is not met. However, this must be balanced against the other policies in the local plan and national guidance that requires local planning authorities to have a 5 year provision for GRT pitches.

Character of the Area:

13. Longwater Lane is a residential road with a few other commercial uses. Two storey properties occupy both sides of the road but are set back on a building line resulting in a more verdant street. Indeed the presence of trees, grass verges and a less formal road design contribute to the more rural appearance of the area. At the 'end' of Longwater Lane is a small cul-de-sac, Corfield Close, which comprises of two storey properties with a more set, suburban design. Beyond this cul-de-sac, Longwater Lane becomes a track road heavily lined by trees. The track effectively leads to a farm and a public footpath to the west. The lane at this point is much more rural in appearance although this has been altered by the introduction of a gypsy pitch at Twin Oaks. The erection of a close boarded fence and views of the roof of a mobile home and day room above this has had an urbanising impact on the area.
14. In both appeals relevant to this application, the Inspectors considered a harmful impact would occur on the character of the area. In particular, the introduction of fencing and a mobile home would have an urbanising impact. However, in relation to the Twin Oaks appeal, the Inspector afforded greater weight to the personal circumstances of the family at the time. With regards to the current application, the proposal would 'replace' the dilapidated stable with a mobile home. Hard standing would be placed for use by vehicles and a close boarded fence is proposed to the front and side boundaries, adding to the existing fence. Additional landscaping is proposed to the front and rear of the site and the tree line to the west would be retained.
15. Policy TB10 of the MDD states that proposals for gypsy and traveller pitches should not have unacceptable impacts on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape. Policies CP1 and CP3 also provide criteria to ensure proposals are sustainable and appropriate in terms of size and scale. Policy CP2 states that a proposed site should not be disproportionate to the scale of the existing settlement, either singularly or cumulatively. The proposal would undoubtedly have a further urbanising impact, compounding what has already occurred at Twin Oaks. The continuation of the close boarded fence, the views to the roof of a mobile home and potential external lighting would detrimentally harm the rural character and appearance. This is considered to be in line with the Inspector's decision which noted that even one mobile home would have a detrimental impact. As such, the proposal would not accord with policies CP1, CP3 or TB10. It is acknowledged however that the scheme would not be disproportionate to the scale of the existing settlement and therefore does not conflict with this aspect of policy CP2.
16. Mitigating this to a certain extent however is partly the fact the proposal would replace the existing built form on the site. The stable is dilapidated but nonetheless has walls and a roof and can be seen from outside of the site. Further to this, the existing pitch at Twin Oaks and the farm on the opposite side of the site do provide limited screening and reduce the visual impact of the scheme. It is also acknowledged that appropriate and native landscaping could be introduced and controlled by condition which would help in part to retain some of the rural characteristics of the site. Nevertheless, even cumulatively, this is not considered to overcome the harm caused to the rural character of the site.

Ecology:

17. Part of the site is within a local wildlife site, Longwater Lane Meadow, which comprises of wet and dry grassland. As noted in the previous appeal, there is some harm to this wildlife site through the increase in activity on the site. Nonetheless, it is also noted that in the appeal for the adjoining Twin Oaks site, the Inspector allowed the appeal on the basis that a grass mitigation strategy was put in place. This mitigation strategy has been submitted for the application and demonstrates that through on going management of the wildlife site, an appropriate balance can be achieved. The Ecology Officer has confirmed that subject to a condition (4) requiring the strategy to be adhered to, no objection is raised.

Amenity of Future Occupiers:

18. **Amenity Space:** The proposal includes the provision of one mobile home. Given this and the size of the site, it is considered that a sufficient area exists for amenity space that could be used for typical garden activities including children's play.
19. **Recycling:** Policy CC04 requires that all development should incorporate suitable waste management facilities including on-site recycling. It is considered that sufficient internal and external storage could be provided to accommodate this on the site. In addition, it is noted that the adjoining land uses have household waste/recycling collected and removed and therefore no issue is raised with regards to the proposal.
20. **Environmental Health Issues:** The Environmental Health Officer has stated that the site is of a suitable size to accommodate a single mobile home provided that a three metre separation between the mobile home and the boundaries of the site is maintained. An amended site plan showing this separation has been agreed. It is also noted that there is existing material on the site which, if removed, could cause potential health risks. The applicant has confirmed this would be removed from the site and in any case is controlled through by a condition (8).

Amenity of Neighbouring Occupiers:

21. The immediate context of the site consists of an established gypsy pitch to the east, which is surrounded by close boarded fencing, and a farm/alpaca stud to the west. Other residential properties are located to the east approximately 80 metres away. On this basis, the proposal is not considered to result in any harmful impact with regards to a loss of light, overlooking, overbearing, noise or external lighting glare.

Access and Movement:

22. **Public Right of Way:** The site is adjacent to a public right of way (PROW) and access to the site would require use of this right of way. The PROW Officer has stated that no specific objection is raised with regards to the use of the right of way with the main concern being any potential damage caused by use. However, details regarding this have been included in informative 1 to ensure the applicant is aware. In terms of using vehicles on the PROW, this would be a matter for the applicant to resolve outside of the planning system.
23. **Highway Safety:** Due to the nature of the PROW being muddy and uneven, any vehicles that do travel on it would be moving at low speeds. This includes domestic traffic in relation to the adjoining land uses and commercial traffic in relation to the adjoining farm. The lane ranges between three to four metres in width and as a result of this and the low speed of vehicles, it is considered suitable visibility splays

could be achieved from the proposed access. Moreover, despite concerns being raised regarding the use of the lane by vehicles and pedestrians, the low speed of vehicles would decrease any risk. This is in line with the Inspector's findings for the previous appeal on the site where the Inspector stated "I envisage no unacceptable conflict between the traffic associated with the development and the pedestrians using the lane as a footpath". On this basis, a reason for refusal cannot be substantiated.

24. **Traffic Impact:** Whilst it is acknowledged the proposal would increase traffic movements associated with the site, the overall impact on the highway network would be negligible. As such, the Highways Officer does not object on this basis.
25. **Parking:** The proposal includes two parking spaces for the mobile home. This is considered acceptable and in accordance with parking standards. Both spaces are accessible and have a suitable turning area.
26. **Sustainability:** The site is located approximately 500 metres from a public house, school, bus stop, petrol station and shop. However, the bus service is once a week and the petrol station and stop are accessed on unlit roads. Nonetheless, these facilities do provide some access to day-to-day services and it should be noted there is an existing gypsy pitch adjacent to the site. Additionally, in determining the previous appeal on the site, the Inspector concluded "the effect on the aims of sustainability would not be unacceptable". On this basis, it is considered a reason for refusal could not be substantiated.

Flooding and Drainage:

27. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding) and is historically not known to have a significant flooding issue. Additionally, it is below a hectare in size and therefore a Flood Risk Assessment is not automatically required. However, to ensure that surface run-off would not be negatively impacted, any hard surfacing would need to be permeable. Subject to a condition (7) requiring this, no harmful impact is considered to occur.
28. It is proposed to connect to a septic tank as there is no sewer system near the site. This would need to comply with relevant environmental permits which would be obtained from the Environment Agency. Whilst the provision of services is a planning matter, the environmental impacts of a septic tank are considered by the EA when deciding whether to issue a permit. As such, from a planning perspective, no objection is raised with regards to the use of a septic tank in this instance. Any environmental impacts from this would be resolved through the permit from the EA and informative 2 refers. For information, the applicant has confirmed that a local contractor is satisfied with the location of the site in terms of emptying the septic tank.

Landscape and Trees:

29. The site is at beyond the main built up residential area of Longwater Lane and is outside of development limits. It is also adjacent to the Longwater Lane Meadow wildlife site. The front of the site is currently open but the eastern boundary is delineated with a close boarded fence and the western boundary an established line of mature oaks. Although there are trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders in the area, none of these are on the site and therefore no harm would occur in this respect. The application proposes additional landscaping to be placed in front of a

close boarded fencing facing Longwater Lane and additional landscaping in conjunction with a post and rail fence to the rear of the site. The Tree and Landscape Officer has stated that subject to further landscaping provided beneath the line of Oak trees, no objection is raised. This landscaping has been secured and would be controlled through a condition (5). Additionally, no objection is raised with regards to the impact on existing trees.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA):

30. Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy sets out the thresholds for mitigation against the impact of new residential units on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. As the site is within 5km of the SPA and the proposal would result in the net gain of one residential unit, mitigation is required. A legal agreement securing contributions towards the Council’s mitigation strategy has been requested and is ongoing. Following the signing of this agreement, the scheme would be in accordance with policy CP8.

Planning Balance:

31. There is policy support for the provision of gypsy pitches at both national and local level. There is also a requirement for the Council to have a five year supply of GRT pitches and at present, in line with the current GTAA, the Council has a shortfall of one pitch. This carries significant weight in favour of the proposal.

32. Approval of the current application would enable the Council to meet its GRT land supply requirement and resist other more harmful proposals. However, this proposal does have some harmful impacts in respect of the harm to the character of the area which was identified by a previous planning Inspector. Nonetheless, there are no objections on the basis of detriment to trees, highway impact, flood risk, residential amenity, or on the basis of local and national ecology.

CONCLUSION

It is acknowledged that there are some negative impacts of the scheme including the impact on the character of the area. Nonetheless, this has to be balanced against the requirement of LPA to provide gypsy and traveller pitches. Given that there is a recognised need at this stage, significant weight is placed on this to the extent that it outweighs the negative harm caused. As such, the scheme is recommended for conditional approval.

CONTACT DETAILS

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