

PLANNING REF : 251413
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 6 The Naylor's
: Swallowfield
: RG7 1RZ
SUBMITTED BY : Mr James Cotton
DATE SUBMITTED : 17/08/2025

COMMENTS:

I wish to object to Planning Application 251413, Robin Lodge Nursery, Swallowfield, Wokingham. The reasons for my objection are shown below.

A similar planning application was refused and dismissed on appeal on 28th November 2024 (Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/24/3339803), where the inspectorate clearly referenced reasons for the dismissal that have not been resolved or indeed even addressed in this application. I would therefore use these comments as a reason for my objection.

Location -

1. "The appeal site is located outside of any defined settlement boundary and is therefore considered to be part of the countryside for planning purposes. Policy CP11 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy, 2010 (the LP) sets out that development outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where, among other things, it contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises."

2. "The Council has noted that the site is located within landscape area A2, the Loddon River Valley, and that the area is a rural landscape that is characterised by far reaching views, with blocks of woodland and houses and farms in between. The appeal site is situated between existing development to the north and south and is relatively well contained which means that it does not share some of the characteristics of the wider landscape in this area. However, as one travels south along Part Lane, away from the village of Swallowfield, the character of the area quickly transforms from urban to rural. The appeal site, being mostly open and quite verdant, forms an important part of this transition."

3. "The appellant has provided an updated layout plan which reduces the amount of hardstanding on site, and also clarifies that it would be gravel based. However, despite this, I am of the view that the amount of hard standing proposed would be quite excessive and would have the effect of urbanising the site, thereby reducing its openness and verdancy and eroding the transition from urban to rural."

4. "While public views into the site would be very limited, this does not mean that the hard standing and bunds would not lead to harm. Indeed, it seems clear to me that the proposal would have a negative effect on the character and appearance of the area. As such it would conflict with LP Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11, as well as Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, 2014 (the MDD). The relevant aspects of these policies seek to ensure that development maintains the quality of the environment while preserving character and appearance, including green infrastructure networks such as areas of countryside"

Flooding

"On that basis, it has not been demonstrated whether the proposed development would increase the likelihood of flooding. As such, it would conflict with LP Policy CP1 and MDD Policies CC09 and CC10, the relevant aspects of which seek to ensure that development does not increase flood risk."

In additions to these reasons I would also like to highlight the further reasons below:

Change of Use of the land -

The land and buildings are currently in an unused and dilapidated state, with Greenhouses collapsed and full with brambles. Application 251413 proposes the erection of two buildings and Log Store. With addition of parking spaces, hardstanding and Boundary Fence, the land can no longer be used for a Market Garden or for Forestry purposes or indeed any agricultural use. The application proposes to create an Industrial or Commercial "yard" or storage with no provision to grow trees or land for the growing of crops or pasture for animal grazing. This is clearly a change of use from Agricultural land to Office space, Storage of machinery and materials, and areas to process wood not grown within the boundary of the property for commercial gain. While the Industrial/Commercial Yard could be used to house a Forestry business, this would still be a change of use to an Industrial/Commercial operation from Agricultural land. It should be noted that the submitted plans for the application are entitled "Change of Use" by the applicant.

Flooding -

The land on which the application sits, is prone to frequent flooding along with Part Lane, Swallowfield, that would be the only access to the site. The land is currently not with hardstanding, so the addition of buildings, carparking and hardstanding will create an increased risk of flooding of the surrounding area and properties and reduction in floodplain area. The land is classed as a "Flood Zone 3a" and while Forestry (Woods and Trees) is classed as a less vulnerable development within these areas, again with the erection of Buildings, Car parking and Hardstanding these are not Forestry but again should be deemed as Industrial or commercial use. It should be noted in the FRA provided, the land is at significant risk of flooding and the report again does not address whether the development would increase flooding in the area. Buildings on the updated layouts have been moved 900mm above ground level to avoid being flooded, but this would mean the entire area would be under water and unusable.

Inappropriate development in the countryside

Due to the limited site area and no justification provided, there is no need for 2 buildings and hardstanding of this size and scale for forestry activities within the site boundaries. The excessive scale of development proposed and lack of sufficient area for forestry purposes within the site indicates that the proposal represents a

change of use of land to a commercial operation outside of any defined settlement boundary, which would be an unacceptable and unsustainable form of development that would result in harm to the character and appearance of the countryside, contrary to and inconsistent with paragraph 85 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 and policy CP11 of the Core Strategy 2010. It should be noted that the buildings due to the increase in base height (due to flood risk) are now 5 metres in height and will be clearly seen above the proposed 2 metre Boundary fence.

Harm to the landscape setting

The excessive height, mass, scale and siting of the buildings, excessive areas of hardstanding, introduction of a high boundary fence and intensification of activity within and to and from the site would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the landscape character and appearance of the area and would result in urbanisation and encroachment into the countryside, which would fail to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment, contrary to Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021, policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy 2010, and policies CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014

Noise and Environmental Impact -

Proposed activities that will be carried out on the site:

The use of the site by a forestry business will include the following activities:

Logging

Chopping

Chipping

- Storage

Parking forestry plant and machinery (e.g chipper).

Currently none of the activities are carried out on the land. The cutting and chipping of wood will create significant noise across the site and be highly intrusive for adjoining properties, along with associated dust and waste. Swallowfield currently has no such type of operations, and therefore this could be impactful to the wider area/community. Due to working from Home during office hours, the noise created could severely impact my ability to continue to work from home, and would create significant noise pollution for the area. In review of Planning Application 181365, your Planning Officer

advised on 24th July 2018 (Simon Taylor) "The commencement of any sawmill operations on the property would be defined as an industrial use (and fall within Class B2). Trees will be planted and cut on site with no intention to transport trees onto the site. Any contravention of the above would be contrary to the planning permission for the

site and enforcement action could be undertaken." As it would now be impossible to grow trees due to the proposed development, and chopping, chipping and storage seemingly a "sawmill operation", again I would reiterate that the proposal should be defined as Change of Use to Industrial/Commercial use (B2) and be refused.

Highway Safety and Traffic Impact -

Part Lane, Swallowfield onto which access and egress from the site is gained, is a single track road with passing places. It is a popular walking and cycling route, but is very prone to frequent

flooding due to its floodplain location. The application would provide car parking spaces and require that Heavy Machinery be transported frequently to and from the site. This would increase large and heavy vehicles to travel into the centre of Swallowfield. Part Lane does not allow access for vehicles greater than 7.5 Tonnes, which would highlight the unsuitability of the site from a traffic perspective. From the narrow and confined nature of the entrance and exits to the site, and the location of established mature trees, it may prove impossible to safely access and egress the site with larger vehicles than cars.