

PLANNING REF : 252430
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Meadowview
: Trowes Lane Swallowfield, Reading, Berkshire
: RG7 1RQ
SUBMITTED BY : Miss Imogen Davey
DATE SUBMITTED : 17/11/2025

COMMENTS:

79 homes on land south of Foxborough, east of Trowes Lane, Swallowfield (Ref: 252430).

I would like to confirm my objections to this planning application 252430 in it's entirety and any associated applications related to it.

I strongly object to the application concerning the proposed development on land south of Foxborough, east of Trowes Lane, Swallowfield. This development proposal appears to run completely contrary to a host of planning policies. The grounds for refusing this application are both overwhelming and incontrovertible.

I attach the reasons, objections and concerns and would ask these to be reviewed in detail please as they summarise key valid reasons to reject this application.

1) Insufficient space

The application proposes to develop too many houses on this site. This causes internal design issues with the new estate as well as having a negative impact on existing village adjacent to the site.

The current number of dwellings in the village is approximately 240, not including the approval to add a further 20 dwellings in Trowes Lane that this site borders plus an additional 81 approved in the Land West of Trowes Lane and North of Charlton Lane, despite their initial refusals.

With the above Swallowfield has already faced a 43% increase in dwellings another 79 homes is unsustainable without a major uplift in infrastructure.

There is a policy in the Core Strategy CP9 - 'Scale and Location of Development Proposals' which states 'The scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility.' This proposal does not.

Swallowfield is identified as a limited development location which means it contains a basic level of services and facilities thus limited development is acceptable. The above figures demonstrate that when considering recent/planned development an additional 79 homes does not constitute limited development.

In addition, there is a lack of accessibility presented in the application. The development has not adequately catered for the number of cars that 79 houses would generate. With insufficient parking designed. On street parking is not available around the village due to the narrow roads and limited paving.

2) Not sustainable and impact to the community

The development would 100% have a negative impact on the environment, such as noise pollution, air quality, and visual

amenity.

This development model is unsustainable and fails to meet the criteria for long-term viability. The local area lacks essential amenities such as retail stores, supermarkets, schools, sports facilities, and recreational facilities. Additionally, public transport options are limited, and the quality of walking and cycling routes is subpar. As a result, there would be an unacceptable reliance on cars for transportation.

School distance to primary and secondary schools and lack of school places locally are a concern. Schools are already vastly oversubscribed; the catchment primary school is now closed and has moved and Bohunt, the nearest secondary school is also now oversubscribed, where Swallowfield children (including me and my brother) are now unable to get in. No schools are accessible by foot or by cycle along a safe route putting more pressure on car travel and more pressure of the council having to fund the travel for all these new families.

We have to leave the house by 7:30 each morning to catch the bus to school in Yateley. Unfortunately, we do not return home until 4:15. We have limited ability to participate in extracurricular activities or receive additional tutoring at school as they cannot find our way home safely, and my working parents we cannot take them / pick them up. This situation will be replicated to all residents of the 79 new houses.

The local medical practice is oversubscribed and is extremely hard pushed to provide appointments in a timely manner. Such an increase in caseload (>300 new patients) that this development would drive on top of the ~300 that will be joining once the other developments have

completed. will bring greater suffering to residents which includes a high number of vulnerable, elderly patients.

We already have insufficient broadband network infrastructure in the village, with more people in the village who now work from home this has already put a huge pressure on the existing bandwidth. I am a key worker providing critical IT support serving many emergency services. The additional demand on this network and its' impact on my ability to perform my critical role concerns me greatly.

Public Transport and Travel Public transport provision is extremely limited and people are reliant on cars for almost all journeys. The village has an extremely high level of car ownership already. The sustainability of the proposal, with particular regard to the level of demand for car travel is of a concern. The bus service for Swallowfield is limited and inadequate with a highly uncertain future. It does not meet WBC Core Strategy guidelines for 'good public

transport' thereby necessitating further car journeys. The Basingstoke Road is extremely congested in the morning rush hour and the 3 mile journey to the M4 J11 can easily exceed 30 minutes. This will not provide sufficient coverage for journeys to work, school shopping etc resulting in higher than average road traffic and contract to WBC's core strategy.

Routes out of the village are unsuitable for pedestrians and are only safe for experienced cyclists. Trowes Lane (between The Street and the site) fails to meet highway safety standards (NPPF 116),

endangering pedestrians, cyclists, and horses. The lane is not big enough for 2 cars safely without pulling over or driving very slow. Distance from Amenities, Retail Centres and Areas of Employment.

Swallowfield is a considerable distance from existing or planned town-based facilities such as: - retail centres and supermarkets - sports facilities such as swimming pool, gym or sports hall - entertainment facilities and meaningful areas of employment. These are located in Lower Earley, Wokingham and Reading. Travel to Lower Earley or Wokingham by bus is not an option so journeys to these locations involve car travel.

Opportunities for local employment are very poor with limited job opportunities locally. Riseley Business Park was in the process of converting their premises to 70+ flats which further reduces opportunities.

In contrast to a SDL, this is over exploitation of a rural area with no sustainable infrastructure.

In addition, as a resident directly affected by the approved Cove planning, I am witnessing firsthand the significant impact it is having. My bed often shakes with the work they are doing and new cracks are appearing in my bedroom. The construction work has already faced months/years of delays. The challenges arise from flooding, working with our aging infrastructure, including electricity lines and sewage systems. Unexpected issues keep cropping up, leading to extensive road and pavement excavation beyond the original plan. If a larger portion of Swallowfield were to be approved for development, these challenges would undoubtedly be exacerbated and delays to their plans inevitable as they meet the same issues.

3) Drainage concerns

The village has significant draining and flooding issues and have witnessed drainage issues on this particular land many times. The pits either side of the very narrow roads in this area are used to help manage the flood and if removed to increase the size of the roads we will have serious flooding issues in the village and surrounding areas and houses.

4) Urbanising Effect & permanently destroying the valued character of the village

The development design, density of housing, Layout and Siting, and impact to the site line proposals both in itself and in relation to adjoining buildings, spaces and views, is inappropriate and unsympathetic to the appearance and character of the local environment. The proposal by reason of the overall floor area created and in the absence of any very special circumstances would lead to an inappropriate form of development in the Green Belt, detrimental to its open, rural and undeveloped character. The proposed design of the houses is urbanising in nature. None of the themes from the village Design Statement and those adopted in the other newer developments in Swallowfield have been considered. Instead, the proposals look to create housing alien in design to the rest of the village and equally failing to create "consistency within a street, so it has an identifiable character and identity" (Borough Design Guide.)

The high density of the houses is too many compared to the village and surrounding houses which are much more spaced out. The development will look completely out of character and have a detrimental impact and adverse effect on the visual amenity of the area as a whole. A density far greater than both Swallowfield and even local SDL

developments represents a major character shift in the area. With Riseley Business Park having been granted permission for a conversion to flats, and the development of the Fieldfayre site in Swallowfield village centre, it is difficult to see the need for this volume of smaller-sized residential accommodation. The development would not maintain or enhance the countryside but instead extend the built-up area and permanently harm the appearance of the field which forms the rural landscape.

The development would be out of keeping with the village design and have an adverse impact on the character of the village and appearance of the local area and would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset, Wyvol's Court. The development will permanently harm the appearance of the field which forms the rural landscape. The introduction of yet more modern housing will permanently alter the character of a long-established village (mentioned in the Domesday Book) in a Conservation Area. This cul-de-sac development is out of character with the heart of the village. The proposed housing density is completely out of synch with the locality. The proposal would undermine the council's spatial development strategy and would harm the character of the local area. In addition, this site is outside of the village settlement and would represent a serious incursion into the countryside. This is against WBC's planning policy. The loss of hedgerow necessary to provide a sufficient visibility splay would be urbanising and harm the very rural character of the lane as well as killing many wildlife that inhabitants the hedgerow.

The site appearance is of open pasture, and therefore contributes to the rural landscape of Swallowfield and helps to make Berkshire the place it is. Hedgerow preserves the character of the lane, intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Many vantage points and views will be impacted by the application. The village thrives due to visitors, walkers, people riding their horses, they use the local amenities and keep our business alive (e.g. Local pub and shop). This site will hugely impact the character of the village and risks the attractiveness for visitors and walkers, especially during any construction activity. I can vouch that Trowes Lane (as I live here) is used frequently by walkers, runners, and horse riders. It is necessary to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. MDD Policy TB21 requires proposals to retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape. The Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide, which was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in 2012, sets out guidance for development at the edge of settlements. It indicates that new development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate, and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character of the area. Furthermore, the location and design of any new development should not harm the setting of the village in the landscape. Were this development to go ahead, Trowes Lane would have to accommodate a significantly greater amount of traffic and the character of this single width lane would be significantly altered which would have a detrimental impact on the rural character of the area.

5) Wildlife

The ecological impact on biodiversity of building on this land would be massive. It would remove one of the most significant wildlife areas that exist in the Swallowfield village.

Of particular ecological concern, the Great Crested newt population faces a real risk of extinction. The effects of this proposal could be significant in this respect.

The proposal would have a harmful impact on the wildlife which flourishes in this attractive field and surrounding area; deer, bats, hedgehogs, pheasants, lesser spotted wood peckers, Jays, hawfinches, rabbits, frogs, honey bees, house martins. As a resident in the village close to this site, our garden used to thrive with all this wildlife.

The loss of any hedgerow necessary to provide a sufficient visibility splay from Charlton Lane would be urbanising and harm the very rural character of the lane as well as killing many wildlife that

inhabitants the hedgerow. Significant removal of trees and hedgerow would be out of keeping with the village design and have an adverse impact on the character of the village and appearance of the local area.

The risk of contamination is high, which could impact human health, property, land, waters, pets, potential ancient monuments etc.

The proposal would have a harmful impact on the greenery, within the site are established pastures, hedgerow, trees etc - all of which make a positive difference to the village character and the wildlife that lives within it. I can confirm this is a valued landscape to us within the village and to the many visitors we get, whom all comment on the loveliness of the village, the quietness, beautiful sound of birds and scenic views. All of which would be gone, especially within the close vicinity.

6) Inappropriate Development

This is classed as unplanned residential development in open countryside outside settlement limits.

The site is not in the current draft Local Plan and lies outside the defined village boundaries.

The Borough has already over delivered; this development is targeting the wrong village. This current development is misaligned with the intended village. The proposed size and scale of the project are

disproportionate. It would potentially result in a ~43% increase in the number of houses a size mismatch for a small village.

This site is in open countryside outside the settlement boundary for Swallowfield and the site has not been allocated for development in the Managing Development Delivery DPD. The development would harm the character and open appearance of the field. Screening would not be sufficient to mitigate its effects. The development would be harmful to the gap between settlements because of its visual effect when viewed from the south. The site is on good quality agricultural land. While the site is relatively small, it forms part of a larger field that is perfectly viable for agriculture.

The site falls within Character Area 12: Riseley Farmed Clay Lowland (CA12) identified by Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment, 2004 (LCA).

Swallowfield is classified as a limited development location. Yet this site, together with the Cove Homes and Croudance development, would represent a >50% increase in properties in Swallowfield and urbanise our rural village, ignoring its countryside location.

The housing density of the proposal far exceeds that of the rest of

the village and the guidance, based on 63 houses in the HELAA report.

The plan and size of the plots, with a cramped layout and small gardens, do not transition into the countryside location or reflect the exiting development within Swallowfield.

The estate represents an isolated development with the minimal links to Swallowfield Village and local roads serving only as a conduit to the outside world.

The proposal represents unacceptable development outside of development limits, within the countryside and there are conflicts of spatial strategy in the application.

7) Highways - The site access would lead to potential safety hazards.

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The proposed access point is far from satisfactory into such a narrow lane. There may well be an average of 2.5 cars per dwelling, i.e. 200+ cars for the development generating 400+ more traffic movements per day, most at peak times. Feeding in to connected local routes with associated noise, pollution and safety for all road users, cyclists and pedestrians. The lane, nor village is not designed to cope with this number of additional traffic movements, which would come into conflict with traffic emerging from the Foxborough development. Sight lines are extremely poor especially for the dwellings already on

Trowes lane. In the past, Highways expressed concern about the additional traffic created because of an older development of just seven houses on Trowes Lane, imposing a planning restriction limiting the number of access points for reasons of safety. The access to a further 79 houses will create extreme safety concerns. Trowes lane has a national speed limit which turns directly into a 30 mph limit, just by the proposed site entrance. People tend to drive too fast down

Trowes lane already and this will cause further safety concerns. The development will add significantly to the amount of traffic passing through and out of the village. Over recent years there have been numerous incidents with buses and lorries being involved in collisions. Recent changes by WBC limiting access into Charlton Lane have resulted in The Street being used by a significant number of HGVs looking for an alternative route. Trowes Lane itself is narrow at points and proposed modifications to the pavement and adjacent trees (which will kill wildlife) will not resolve the problem.

Parking provision on any proposed development may not meet the need, especially if proposing a high housing and population density. Insufficient parking space will adversely affect the amenity of surrounding properties through roadside parking on this narrow lane, which reduces the available road width to the detriment of road safety. It is likely that vehicles will overhang the adopted highway road to the detriment of other road users which include the local vestry/horses. The formation of vehicles spaces is out of keeping with the established character of the surrounding area which mostly consists of traditional front gardens with grassed area.

Insufficient parking and such an increase in cars will mean more people will park on nearby roads causing disruption and issues of safety. There are a lot of young families in the village and not all areas have paths you can walk on or paths that are suitable for prams and pushchairs, meaning pedestrians need to use the road in some areas e.g. Trowes Lane and The Street.

Such an increase in vehicles also impacts the air quality in the village and will not support the net-zero carbon borough target by 2030.

Higher traffic volumes will lead to increased vehicle congestion and danger to pedestrians. The street and especially pavements in the conservation area, are very narrow and can't be widened.

The infrastructure in the village (and surrounding villages) is of poor quality. Numerous potholes mar our roads, causing damage to local vehicles. The surge in traffic movements, exceeding 400, will significantly impact the local council, necessitating costly repairs to the damaged roads and ensuring people's safety.

8) Flood Risk and Sewerage

The village has had severe flooding on many occasions, causing serious damage to property. Some of the ditches and culverts are not adequate to cope with flood conditions. Drainage is already an issue in the village.

Parts of the site are within Flood Zone 2. The field already floods across Part Lane, and this risk will increase due to run-off from the Cove and Croudace developments (a combined >100 new houses).

Sewers in Swallowfield frequently surcharge with flood water during heavy rainfall. Toilets backed up in properties bordering the site on Trowes Lane during the 2007 flood. Any scheme proposed by a developer would not overcome this serious problem. The pumping station next to the parish hall fails frequently, causing a constant stream of tankers for days on end and three-way traffic control at the mini roundabout by the war memorial. Increased pressure on already stretched sewage system in Swallowfield is unsustainable. In addition, change to the road required for such a proposal will eliminate the ditches used in Trowes Lane to manage the overflow of water and exacerbate Swallowfield flood issues.

Thames Water has categorised the nearby approved site as "Red", meaning:

- No adequate water supply,
- No surface water drainage, and

- No foul water disposal capacity.

- No funds are allocated up to 2030 for infrastructure upgrades in Swallowfield.

The adequacy of electricity supply for further development is uncertain.

All the above significantly impacts and risks us all in terms of provision of critical services.

9) Lighting concerns

The new dwellings will result in significant increase in noise, disturbance and nuisance as well as flooding an idyllic village setting with unnatural lighting (from the houses and streetlamps) to the detriment of neighbour's residential amenity, wildlife and village as a whole. This part of Swallowfield is dark with limited street lighting, the proposed lighting will eradicate this natural darkness and introduce unacceptable light pollution. The proposal looks to have an obtrusive approach to lighting, cannot ensure safety and sensitivity to both the environment and nearby ecological receptors (for example bats). We have a recognised bat habitat

in the village. The light over-spill from such a development would contravene this dark habitat for bats. Currently the upper end of Swallowfield has no street lights, or are of very low density along Trowes Lane with very low light levels. Any proposed for installation of street lights, along with the PIR lights on the back of new properties will without doubt increase light pollution by 100%. The boundaries have no street lighting so the field is intrinsically dark. It is not a "relatively dark outer suburban location", hence the more rigorous zone E1 should be applicable.

10) Insufficient screening

The development would be harmful to the gap between settlements because of its visual effect.

The development design appearance and layout would have an unacceptably adverse impact and intrusive element on the amenities of the properties immediately adjacent to the site and the surrounding area by reason of overlooking, loss of privacy and visually overbearing impact.

Screening of any sort would not be sufficient to mitigate its effects and from the documents attached to this application the screening is far from adequate and acceptable.

The development would be harmful to the gap between settlements because of its visual effect.

There is insufficient green space within the site and proposals are not in keeping with the current open green space and rural location.

11) Other concerns including wildlife and safety

I believe this site is not allocated and not on the reserve list for housing development.

Other sites have been refused before based on the following, which I believe are all relevant here:

a) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of this part of Swallowfield and the surrounding rural area, including the openness of the gap between the village and Riseley

b) the sustainability of the proposal, with particular regard to the level of demand for car travel

c) the weight to be attached to any other material consideration, such as agricultural land classification, positive contributions to policy objectives and housing land availability.

d) the site proposed was too small for the availability of land supply to be a determining factor.

Having opportunistic and geographically scattered sites such as this being put forward for development means that Wokingham Borough Council, the Environment Agency and Thames Water are unable to plan coordinated infrastructure enhancement that will provide any mitigation whatsoever to their effects. This results in real harm to local communities that just have to put up with the considerable effects that such a development will bring about.

I believe the proposal conflicts with CS Policy CP1, which seeks to avoid the use of such land.

The noise, disturbance, traffic and dust created when such a site would be built would be hugely detrimental to the village and in particular the neighbouring houses.

I believe every potential development has to pass a suitability assessment, the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

(HELAA) criteria. Has this site passed the HELAA criteria as plans proposed looks to be that they do not? Some of the HELAA questions and standards that are not met with this proposal are copied below and align to the objections I have outlined above:

1. Is the development appropriate in the context of the existing character of the landscape?

No, it is surrounded by trees, farmland, woodland and rural roads lined with ditches. Please see points 1) insufficient space 4) Urbanising Effect, 7) Lighting concerns, 10) Insufficient screening, above for more details

2. Is the development appropriate in the context of the existing development form?

No, Swallowfield has been classified as a limited development location yet this site would represent ~43% increase in size of village, not including the already >100 houses approved already and not yet completed / started.

3. What are the sources of flood risk?

The majority of the site (over half) has potential for groundwater flooding to occur. Please see point 3) Drainage concerns, and 8) Flood Risk and Sewerage above for more details.

4. Would development result in loss of best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV)9

Yes, I believe the site is BMV grade 2 and grade 3a.

5. Does development have accessibility to services and facilities?

No, few services and facilities are available within a 20 minute walk. Farley Hill School has moved further away to Arborfield. All journeys would require dependency on private vehicles, which is contrary to Local Plan objectives. Please see point 2) Not sustainable, safety concerns above for more details

6. Is the standard of vehicular highway and access sufficient?

No, the site is surrounded by narrow unlit lanes and would require the removal of hedgerows. Please see point 2) Not sustainable, safety concerns above for more details

7. Is the standard of public transport and active travel sufficient?

No, there are no footpaths and very limited pedestrian access. Please see point 2) Not sustainable, safety concerns above for more details 8. Would development provide acceptable and achievable level of accessibility?

No, the site is reliant on rural, single track roads. Works to widen the road would change the character of the area and would not be achievable plus impact flood risks. Please see point 2) Not sustainable, safety concerns for more details

In summary the proposal is unsuitable, and the development would be disproportionate, unsustainable, and contrary to WBC's own planning guidelines.

When we already have a proposal including a new garden village of about 4,500 homes on the land south of the M4 nearby and another 800 houses in a development in South Wokingham I question why more houses are being built in such a precious and loved village.

If allowed to proceed incorrectly this could open the flood gates for many more sites in and around the parish of Swallowfield, Riseley and Farley Hill, a potential development of 25 other sites in the area making the situation even worse and the village subject to excessive development and further urbanisation the entire area and irrevocably change the character of this quiet, rural community.

In conclusion there are many reasons why the planning documents supplied should not be accepted and objected.