

PLANNING REF : 250517
PROPERTY ADDRESS : The Croft
: Charlton Lane, Swallowfield, Berkshire
: RG7 1RT
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Jane Helen Pailthorpe
DATE SUBMITTED : 09/04/2025

COMMENTS:

There is pressure from the Labour government to build 1.5 million more homes. So, as a pessimist, I am fairly certain that nothing we say will lead to Wokingham District Council refusing the application for the development of 420 homes in Spencers Wood. However, as an optimist, I have a small hope that we can influence some of the decisions regarding the development. Some of the considerations should be:

Infrastructure

Firstly, it is essential that the road infrastructure, all facilities and amenities are built before or at the same time as the houses not many years after.

The section 106 money from the developers should be used for this development and in time for when residents start to move in.

Otherwise, children will have to go by car to far flung schools, people will have to wait longer for GP appointments and without local shops, sporting facilities and a community centre there will be little sense of community spirit.

Housing

The housing built should reflect the general population with over 50% affordable housing and accessible homes for the elderly and those with disabilities.

There should be sufficient off road parking that pavements are not blocked and inaccessible for those in wheelchairs or with prams or pushchairs.

The housing should be energy-efficient with solar panels with storage batteries.

They should all have EV charging points as the government as petrol and diesel cars will not be sold after 2030.

There also needs to be on-street EV charging spaces for those people living in the affordable housing flats. Is there sufficient capacity to supply these requirements from the local sub-station.

Education

I am very concerned at the wording on the plan of Potential 2 FE primary school. **POTENTIAL - IT IS ESSENTIAL!!!**

At present there is one primary school with a one form entry in Spencers Wood and none in Swallowfield.

Children living nearer the school or those with SEN are given priority. This means that only one child from Swallowfield has a place at Lambs Lane School and the rest have to travel by car to other schools at a distance.

Building of 20 homes in Trowes Lane, Swallowfield is underway and planning permission has been given for 84 homes on Land West of Trowes Lane. This will further increase demand for places in pre-school, primary and secondary schools.

Is the potential planned school in addition to Lambs Lane or instead?

The school needs to be built early in the development with one class entry to each year from the beginning of the build otherwise

children will have to travel to other schools.

Also part of Section 106 funding should contribute to the improvement to Oakbank School. Transport to the 2ndry schools and colleges should also be considered.

Entry to the estate

Basingstoke Road is very busy already. There are already high levels of traffic from the south through Spencers Wood with long queues both towards the M4 and along Hyde End Rd towards Shinfield during the morning rush hour. I know from personal experience whilst commuting to work from Swallowfield that I could queue for 20 minutes to get to junction 11 of the M4. It is naive to think that an increase in public transport would alleviate this.

The Wokingham Strategic Transport Model forecasts that the proposed development 'would exacerbate existing congestion experienced at the B3349 Basingstoke Road/Hyde End Road Junction and the B3349 Basingstoke Road/Beech Hill Road Junction'.

The only road access points are both on Basingstoke Rd. This will cause severe congestion for both residents of the development and other locals travelling to school or work. There should be access onto Hyde End Rd also.

The major entrance to the estate will be the proposed roundabout at the junction of Basingstoke Rd and Back Lane. Visibility to Back Lane from the south travelling to the M4 is limited and could cause accidents.

Lambs Lane School is a short distance up Back Lane from the roundabout. The increase traffic will increase risk of accidents at drop off and pick up times. There should be a Pelican crossing by the school.

With morning peak traffic coming from the south, traffic from the development will have priority at the roundabout causing backlogs down the Basingstoke Rd. This already happens already at the round at Three Mile Cross when traffic backs up to Spencers Wood Church. With engines running as cars queue pollution will increase. A better solution would be traffic lights.

There is a 'rat run' along Back Lane and White House Lane to A33: this either needs to be closed or it needs substantial investment to improve the road, including new junction with the A33. White House Lane at the A33 end past Lister Wilder is a single lane rural road without curbs.

Other modes of transport

Buses

The Traffic Assessment document states that an aim is to reduce reliance on single occupancy car trips and prioritize and increase the use of sustainable transport modes.

The proposed schedule of buses every 30 minutes during peak times will not encourage people to use them particularly if the buses do not pass through the development. It needs to be more frequent or people will continue to preferentially use their cars.

Cycling

Basingstoke Rd is too dangerous for most cyclists and not wide enough to allow 1.5 metres distance for cars when passing a cycle.

The Traffic Assessment also states proposals to 'maintain and enhance the quality of cycle routes as appropriate'. As there are no current cycle routes, this is sheer speculation. Considering that it is likely that a high proportion of the residents will be young with families, it is most unlikely that a mother with 2 children will go on a bicycle to the shops.

Facilities within the estate

A new GP surgery is planned. This is essential as the current GP practice is at capacity.

However thought needs to be given to a pharmacy, possibly within the practice both to reduce travel and because there is limited parking at the pharmacy in Spencers Wood.

Provision is also needed for dental care.

I applaud the consideration of a care home.

Whilst I approve of the proposed Sports centre, there is insufficient car parking. It is unrealistic to think that a local team using the facility will all be from the estate and walk to the sports centre. The visiting team will also need parking and when the car park is full cars will overspill onto the residents parking. There should be a Community Centre for local activities and meetings.

Utilities

Electricity

Is there sufficient capacity to supply these requirements for the housing, EV charging and industrial units from the local sub-station.

Water and sewage

Can Thames Water manage both the water requirements as well as the sewage?

Will there be increasing amounts entering the river Loddon causing severe biohazard?

Business Park

It is naive to think that this will provide jobs for local residents. So there will be an increase in cars, vans and lorries to site. There are already light industrial units which are not fully occupied so there is no need.