

PLANNING REF : 260774
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Cherry Tree Cottage
: Basingstoke Road, Riseley, Reading, Berkshire
: RG7 1QL
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Deborah Bergstrom
DATE SUBMITTED : 11/05/2026

COMMENTS:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I formally object to planning application 260774 (Land North of Sun Lane, Riseley) on the basis that it conflicts with key local and national planning policies, in particular those expressed in the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 Proposed Submission Plan. This application would have a demonstrably negative impact on residents who live close to the proposed site as well as on Riseley as a whole and the wider Swallowfield Parish.

Detailed reasons for my objection are as follows:

1. CONFLICT WITH DESIGNATION OF RISELEY AS A "MINOR SETTLEMENT"

Riseley is a small rural village within Swallowfield Parish, categorised by Wokingham Borough Council as a "minor settlement" and a limited-development location. The scale of development proposed is inappropriate for the size of the settlement and is not consistent with planning policy.

2. SITE IS NOT SUSTAINABLE AND CONTRADICTS WBC SPATIAL STRATEGY

New housing should be located where people have easy access to a wide range of local services and facilities, ideally without the need to use cars for most journeys. Wokingham Borough Council has already clearly stated that this part of Riseley is not a sustainable location (Objection to erection of a detached property in close proximity to Sun Lane, Hart District Council Planning Application 23/01069/FUL: "The site is within an unsustainable location with a lack of services and other amenities within walking distance from the site").

Riseley suffers from limited infrastructure, inadequate water and sewage systems and few local facilities. Swallowfield Medical Practice is massively over-subscribed, and there is often a wait of several weeks for an appointment. There are no mainstream schools within the parish, and children have to travel far and wide to access primary and secondary education. Residents require a car to access most services, and there are few local employment opportunities. There is currently an hourly bus service into Reading, but no bus to Basingstoke, Hook or Wokingham town centre.

Please note that several of the examples of local facilities cited in support of the application are factually incorrect or out of date. For example, Farley Hill School has been moved out of the parish to Arborfield, and it is not within walking or cycling distance. Riseley Green School is a recently-opened specialist school for children with autism. It is not a mainstream school. In terms of employment, Riseley Business Park was not able to retain any businesses, so the majority of the office blocks have been

converted to residential accommodation.

3. SITE PREVIOUSLY ASSESSED AS UNSUITABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT

The site itself is agricultural land, situated on the fringes of Riseley and within a setting of historic hedgerows, mature trees and country cottages set alongside a single-track rural lane. The area is bounded by ancient woodland.

Historically, the site has been assessed as outside of the village envelope and not suitable for development. Planning permission was sought for 20 houses in 1996/7, but the application and subsequent appeals were refused. The site was not included in the local plan at that time, and it is still excluded from the latest Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update.

Development of the site would have a harmful effect on the rural landscape. The fact that the nearby Duke's Meadow development was approved in recent years should not be used as an argument to support the current application. On the contrary: the removal of one large area of rural green space makes it all the more important to preserve those areas that are left.

Consideration should also be given to the fact that Swallowfield Parish has already been subjected to a level of development wholly disproportionate to its size. Planning precedents should not be used as a tool for leveraging further development. This would lead to uncontrolled development and loss of all green space, with demonstrably negative impacts on the environment and on the quality of life of residents.

4. HIGHWAY CHANGES WOULD BE DETRIMENTAL TO NATURAL LANDSCAPE

Both national and local policies require provision to be made for conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure. Woodlands, trees and hedgerows are key features within the rural and urban environment and provide a range of beneficial environmental services.

The site lies close to the "Riseley Woods", which have been specifically named as a valued landscape within the Borough, and the introduction of modern development would have a jarring and urbanising effect on this landscape.

Sun Lane is currently a narrow single-track rural lane that would require significant highway changes to form the access to the estate. The planning application attempts to downplay the level of intervention required by referring to "re-alignment" rather than "widening". The lane is currently around 3 metres wide. The "re-aligned" entrance to the site would involve widening the lane to 5.5 metres to allow for two-way traffic, plus adding a footway 2 metres wide. This would be achieved by extending the lane into a strip of grassed land situated between Sun Lane and Cherry Tree Cottage. The highway changes would more than double the current width of the lane and completely change its character.

The application also glosses over the amount of hedgerow that would need to be removed to form the access road (Design & Access Statement 2.5: "limited breaches required for access would not adversely affect their historic value"). The whole of the hedgerow running from the corner of Cherry Tree Cottage to a point opposite the side of Coldharbour Cottage would need to be removed to make way for the "realigned" road. As a very rough estimate, this would mean the loss of about 50 metres of hedgerow.

Proposed highway works could also cause damage to trees bordering the lane, such as a mature oak tree (designated as T29 in the plans). The Arboricultural Survey admits that there is likely to be some disturbance and loss of roots to the tree.

5. DEVELOPMENT WOULD CAUSE HARM TO WILDLIFE AND BIODIVERSITY

This area is an important habitat for wildlife, and forms a tranquil sanctuary for a wide variety of bats, birds, deer and other animals such as dormice nesting in the hedgerows. The clearance of vegetation and the removal of sections of the hedgerow would undoubtedly result in a significant loss of biodiversity in the area.

6. INCREASED RISK OF FLOODING

The Flood Risk Assessment largely ignores the history of surface water flooding in and around the site. In particular, there is no acknowledgement of the major flooding event in July 2007, which flooded the field, Sun Lane and several properties in the area. Ignoring this history and associated risk factors, such as runoff from the A33, means that proposed policies for surface water management are likely to be inadequate at best, and disastrous for lower-lying properties within Riseley at worst.

In addition, the proposal considers surface water management within the proposed housing estate, but does not factor in the Sun Lane access road. Widening the carriageway and increasing the amount of hard surfacing would turn this lane into a more effective conduit for surface water flows into lower-lying areas. For example, Cherry Tree Cottage, adjoining Sun Lane, sits at a lower level than the surrounding land, and was flooded in 2007. Documentary evidence of the flooding can be provided if required.

Furthermore, the proposal states that surface water would be pumped to the western edge of the site, then conveyed off-site to the east, towards the watercourse adjacent to the Devil's Highway and then on to Long River. What mitigation is proposed to prevent these additional flows of water flooding areas down-stream of the development? I request that the proposal is not entertained until all relevant factors have been taken into consideration, and the proposed drainage strategy is tested to ensure that it does not negatively impact on existing properties within Riseley.

7. RISK OF WATER SUPPLY AND SEWAGE SYSTEMS BEING OVERWHELMED

Houses in the area already suffer with low water pressure, and there have been many instances of Thames Water having to shut off the water supply to make urgent repairs to supply pipes.

Swallowfield Parish also has a history of problems with an antiquated sewage system, and there is no evidence that the current infrastructure would be able to support 44 additional properties. The plans indicate that sewage would be piped down Sun Lane and discharged to a Thames Water foul sewer on Basingstoke Road.

Capacity testing

should be performed throughout the system before any such proposal is entertained. Otherwise, there is a risk of the sewage system failing, and sewage potentially backing up in other properties in Riseley.

8. POTENTIAL ADVERSE IMPACT ON DEVIL'S HIGHWAY ROMAN ROAD

The proposed site lies close to a portion of the Roman road that historically connected London to Silchester, known as the Devil's Highway. This road is of special archaeological significance and was one of the objections raised by Wokingham Borough Council to a recent planning application in the area (Hart District Council Planning

Application 23/01069/FUL). Equal weight should be given to archaeological significance when considering the proposed site.

9. TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY SAFETY ISSUES

Realistically, most journeys to work, schools and retail centres by new residents would be by car. The current bus service does not offer enough flexibility for commuters, as it takes almost an hour to get into Reading in the rush hour, and there is no service southwards to Hook or Basingstoke. Any expectation that children would be able to cycle to school, particularly at primary level, is farcical and shows no awareness of the winding and busy local roads.

Riseley already suffers from speeding traffic that ignores the 30-mph speed limit, and the B3349 between the Wellington Country Park

roundabout and the A33 roundabout is regularly grid-locked at peak hours. An additional 44 houses would mean around 90 more cars travelling down Sun Lane to a road junction that is unacceptably close to the T-junction at the end of Basingstoke Road and in an area outside the 30-mph zone.

When Hart District Council granted planning permission for the Duke's Meadow development, they expressly forbade any vehicular access into or out of the site from Basingstoke Road. The only exception is emergency vehicles and there are bollards blocking the entrance.

(Application 18/00242/REM; Condition 5). This condition was imposed in the interest of safety of highway users, and should equally be applied to Sun Lane, since the exit onto Basingstoke Road is almost directly opposite the entrance to Duke's Meadow.

10. NEGATIVE IMPACT ON NEAR NEIGHBOURS AND LOSS OF AMENITY

In addition to the negative impacts mentioned previously, houses located close to the site would suffer a demonstrable loss of

amenity. The following points are particularly applicable to our house (Cherry Tree Cottage):

Loss of privacy and security: Instead of having a strip of grassed land separating our house from Sun Lane, our garden would be directly next to the newly widened Sun Lane and its new footpath. Loss of this strip of land and its hedgerow would cause a marked loss of privacy and an increased risk of intrusions, as the only boundary between our garden and Sun Lane would be our deciduous beech hedge, which loses its leaves in the winter. There is insufficient detail in the plans to explain how these negative impacts would be mitigated by the pers.

Visual intrusion and overlooking: The indicative layout shows a house located close to the rear corner of our garden, in spite of the expressed intention of the developers to provide a green buffer between the estate and surrounding properties. This would impact negatively on our ability to use and enjoy our garden.

Increased noise and disturbance: We have already had direct experience of what it is like to live close to a major building site through being near neighbours of the Duke's Meadow development, where we were exposed to constant noise, vibrations, vehicular traffic and dust, and saw damage being done to road verges and road signs. If the proposed development goes ahead, we would be even more exposed during the construction of the highway access and the estate itself, as we are both closer to the works (directly bordering the site on two sides) and the access to the site is more constrained. Once the site has been developed, we would be exposed to increased noise and disturbance from increased traffic flows to and from the estate.

Increased air pollution: Cars and delivery vehicles travelling to and from the new estate would create extra air pollution. Pollution levels would be particularly high in the front corner of our garden where cars would be braking, idling and then accelerating away from the Sun Lane junction.

Increased light pollution: The potential introduction of artificial lighting would conflict with the current "dark skies" policy in Riseley.

In summary, I believe that this development is unsuitable for the location in which it is planned, and it would have an unacceptable impact on near neighbours and on Riseley as a whole. It would be yet another step towards destruction of the rural village character, and the transformation of Riseley into an urbanised dormitory suburb of Reading. I respectfully request that the application be refused.