

PLANNING REF : 251413
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 4 The Naylors
: Swallowfield, Berkshire
: RG7 1RZ
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Paul Alexander Schulz
DATE SUBMITTED : 12/08/2025

COMMENTS:

Ref :Planning Application Number 251413 Robin Lodge Nursery, Part Lane Swallowfield

Please note that I wish to make a formal objection to this application. My objections to this are as follows:
Floodplain. The land covered by the application is on a floodplain. I have lived in one of the properties overlooking the land for over 25 years and almost every year that land floods. (there is photographic evidence to support this).
Noise. The application shows car parking for 12 cars and 2 lorries and storage for heavy equipment. This, together with the possibility of the yard becoming a working timber yard or builders yard, would result in a huge increase in noise. As stated in Planning, Design & Access Statement the business on the site would now undertake: -
Logging
- Chopping
- Chipping
- Storage
- Parking forestry plant and machinery

These are activities that, if undertaken using commercial machinery (the application also includes a huge building to store this machinery), creates huge amounts of noise and waste.

Traffic. Vehicles moving in and out of the yard would greatly increase the amount of traffic on Part Lane; the lane is a single lane carriageway with limited passing places and would become dangerous with such an increase in traffic. As the application is for storage of very large forestry machinery that cannot be used onsite this will require the use of low loaders to get them in and out to every job.

Impact on Swallowfield Village: The statements in the application here do not fit with the statements made to Bruce Abbott and myself on 8th November 2021 by John Ayres, Managing Director and owner of Ex-Army Builders. In summary, the land covered by the planning application is owned by two separate entities and they may one day be joined up but there was no formal plan to do this at that point, the two sections can be seen clearly separated on the plan by a fence with a pedestrian and a vehicle gate in it between the two properties. Mr Ayers described this plot as "a commercial yard". The plan as drawn up is mainly hard standing, car parking, an office building and a large vehicle storage building. There is nothing that differentiates it as "Forestry" and could be used as any sort of commercial yard (Builders, Lumber, Storage etc). As such, the application for this part of the site should be for a commercial yard and this would require a change in usage on the application.

a) The land with Building Unit "B" is owned by Ex-Army Builders Ltd is simply a commercially saleable/leasable office and this would require a change in usage on the application. :

- 1500SqM
- Canteen
- Cloak room
- IT Comms room
- Stores
- 2 Office areas
- 12 designated car parking spaces
- o There will be serious impact on the residential community as having a commercial yard (or even a forestry heavy machinery) yard will greatly increase:
 - a) Volume of heavy traffic getting stuck in Part Lane
 - b) Heavy traffic through the village and through the village of Riseley
 - c) Noise, dust & air pollution caused by the stated:
 - Logging
 - Chopping
 - Chipping
 - The engines of the big machines and transporters
- o The transportation of large forestry machinery into and out of the site on Low Loaders will definitely impact the local highway network.
- o As over 1/2 of the entire site will have buildings, car parking or hard standing on them there will be a considerable loss of floodplain.

Previous Application 201233 2023

This was turned down and went to appeal, Appeal number 3339803 2024. The appeal was dismissed.

I have reviewed the plan/site layout documents for both applications 231233 (2023) and 251413 (2025) and the only change is the removal of the 2.0m high Earth Bund. The "new" site/plan is still actually dated November 2022 and shows that the application is in effect identical to the one that was refused on appeal.

I have reviewed the appeal decision document: I believe that the new application does not resolve the reasons for dismissing the appeal. I believe that the new application fails to resolve the following issues issues in the appeal Decision document dated 7/11/2024 I have used numbering convention from the Appeal Decision Document and retained items that remain unresolved; listed below in bold italic numbers

Main Issues

3. The main issues are: (i) whether the location of the proposed development would be appropriate, taking account of development plan policies and its effect on the character and appearance of the area; (ii) whether the proposed development would increase the likelihood of flooding in the area; and (iii) the effect of the proposed development on biodiversity, including protected species.

Reasons

Location

4. 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.

7. However, the overarching purpose of the policy is, in part, to maintain the quality of the environment. In addition, Part 2 of the policy requires that development proposals should not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings. The clear aim here is to preserve the character and appearance of the site and its surroundings, and this requirement is replicated within other LP policies.

8. 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.

9. 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 dancy and eroding the transition from urban to rural.

11. While public views into the site would be very limited, this does not mean that the hard standing and bund would not lead to harm. Indeed, it seems clear to me that the proposal would have a negative effect on the character and 1Council refs: 181365 and 173339 <https://www.gov.uk/planning-inspectorate> 2 Appeal Decision APP/X0360/W/24/3339803 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

13. However, the Framework does require the provision of a suitable site-specific flood risk assessment (FRA). An FRA, prepared by Odyssey in January 2023, was submitted as part of the planning application process. The Environment Agency (the EA) objected to the FRA on the basis that it does not adequately assess the flood risks posed by the development. The highlighted deficiencies are quite numerous and are mostly technical in nature. They include, among other things, a lack of information in relation to site levels, climate change allowances and mitigation for the loss of any floodplain storage.

14. I note that Odyssey has prepared a supplementary note to respond to the EA's comments. However, the EA has maintained its objection as part of a subsequent response for this appeal. Based on the information provided by the EA, I can find no reason to disagree with their assessment that the FRA is not sufficient.

15. 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.

Conclusion

19. I have found that the appeal proposal would cause harm in relation to character and appearance and flood risk. In combination, the harm would likely be quite considerable. Consequently, the proposal would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole, notwithstanding that I have not found harm in relation to biodiversity. Whilst the forestry business could provide some economic benefits for the local area, and there is potential for biodiversity enhancements on-site, any such benefits are likely to be moderate in nature. Accordingly, there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweigh the identified harm and associated development plan conflict. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

As the new application fails to resolve so many of the problems listed in the Appeal Decline document I believe that it essential that Wokingham Planning Departments refuses the "new" application.