

PLANNING REF : 261171
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Springfields
: Trowes Lane, Swallowfield, Berkshire
: RG71RN
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Valerie Meakin
DATE SUBMITTED : 15/06/2026

COMMENTS:

I wish to formally object to planning application 261171 on the grounds that the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the rural character of the countryside, increase flood risk, place additional pressure on already inadequate infrastructure and services, and conflict with key planning policies intended to protect the local environment and residents.

1. Harm to the Rural Character and Appearance of the Countryside

The application site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and within open countryside. The applicant acknowledges that the site is located within the countryside and is therefore subject to countryside protection policies.

The development would introduce:

Five static caravans.
Five touring caravans.
Five day rooms.
Parking areas.

Extensive hardstanding.
Access roads.
Bin stores.
Associated domestic activity and infrastructure.

This would permanently urbanise what is currently an undeveloped rural field and fundamentally alter the character of the area.

Of particular significance is the fact that the applicant's own Planning Statement records that Wokingham Borough Council's pre-application advice concluded:

"The extent of residential development proposed in this sensitive rural landscape would disrupt its tranquil character, to the detriment of its visual amenities" and that compliance with Policy TB10(e) was "unlikely to be achieved".

This clearly demonstrates that the proposal would harm the rural landscape and conflicts with policies intended to protect the countryside and the character of Swallowfield.

2. Existing Flooding Problems and Increased Surface Water Run-Off

The applicant acknowledges that:

The site has a history of surface water flooding.
The site has a high risk of surface water flooding.
The site has a medium risk of groundwater flooding.

Residents are already aware that Part Lane, which backs onto this site, experiences severe flooding during the winter months and periods of prolonged rainfall. This is an existing and recurring issue that affects access and highway safety.

The proposal includes substantial areas of hardstanding, access roads, parking areas, caravan bases, pathways and other impermeable surfaces. Whilst drainage measures are proposed, the development will inevitably alter the natural drainage characteristics of the field.

The existing field currently absorbs and stores significant quantities of rainwater. Replacing permeable land with hardstanding creates a real risk that surface water will be displaced elsewhere, increasing runoff towards neighbouring land and roads, including Part Lane.

There is serious concern that the proposal could worsen existing flooding problems experienced on Part Lane and surrounding areas.

The Council should require clear and robust evidence that the development will not increase flood risk on neighbouring land or highways. In the absence of such evidence, the proposal should be refused.

3. Inadequate Assessment of Flood Risk to Touring Caravans and Day Rooms

The applicant proposes raising the static caravans approximately one metre above ground level in recognition of the site's flooding issues.

However, the application fails to adequately explain how the following elements of the development will be protected from flooding:

- Five touring caravans.
- Five single-storey day rooms.
- Parking areas.
- Access roads.
- Hardstanding.
- Bin storage facilities.

Whilst the static caravans may be elevated, there is no clear indication that the touring caravans or day rooms will receive similar protection.

This raises serious concerns regarding:

- The vulnerability of touring caravans during flood events.
- The flood resilience of the proposed day rooms.
- Safe movement of residents between caravans and day rooms during periods of flooding.
- Access and evacuation arrangements.

The overall safety of occupants.

Given that the applicant acknowledges a high surface water flood risk and medium groundwater flood risk, it has not been demonstrated that all parts of the development can remain safe and functional throughout the lifetime of the development.

4. Existing Sewerage and Drainage Infrastructure Cannot Cope

Residents have already experienced significant sewerage infrastructure failures within the village.

There have been prolonged periods where sewage tankers operated continuously in order to manage the local network. These issues were serious enough to attract local media attention and demonstrate that the existing infrastructure is already under considerable strain.

The proposal would introduce five additional residential pitches and increase demand on an already stressed system.

Whilst drainage reports have been submitted, there is no clear evidence within the application documents that sufficient foul sewer capacity exists or that Thames Water has confirmed that the network can accommodate the development without increasing the risk of sewer surcharge, pollution incidents or system failure.

Planning permission should not be granted until there is clear confirmation from Thames Water and all relevant statutory consultees that adequate capacity exists.

5. Cumulative Impact of Development

This application should not be considered in isolation.

The area is already subject to significant development pressure, including approved residential development and further proposed development nearby.

The cumulative effect of these developments will place additional pressure upon:

- Local roads.
- Drainage infrastructure.
- Sewerage systems.
- Medical services.
- Community facilities.
- The rural character of the area.

The cumulative impact has not been adequately assessed.

6. Highway Safety Concerns

Trowes Lane is a narrow rural road with limited passing opportunities and is already constrained.

The proposed site access is situated close to the junction with Charlton Lane and would generate additional vehicle movements associated with:

- Five residential pitches.

Visitors.
Service vehicles.
Delivery vehicles.
Refuse collection vehicles.
Vehicles towing touring caravans.

Whilst the applicant has submitted an access appraisal, the lived experience of local residents is that Trowes Lane is already difficult to navigate safely and is unsuitable for significant additional traffic.

The cumulative impact of this proposal together with other nearby developments has not been adequately addressed.

7. Loss of Biodiversity and Vegetation

The applicant acknowledges that vegetation will need to be removed to facilitate the development.

At the same time, the applicant relies upon the existing vegetation to argue that the development will be screened from public view.

This raises concerns regarding the true visual impact of the development, particularly during winter months when vegetation cover is reduced.

The application also confirms that the proposal does not achieve biodiversity net gain on-site and would result in a biodiversity deficit requiring off-site compensation.

This is particularly concerning on a greenfield countryside site which currently contributes to the area's biodiversity and ecological network.

8. Pressure on Local Services

The applicant refers to the proximity of Swallowfield Medical Centre as evidence of sustainability.

However, local residents are aware that the surgery is already operating under significant pressure and has limited capacity to accommodate additional patients.

The proposal would place further demands on healthcare and other local services without demonstrating that sufficient capacity exists.

9. Premature Development Ahead of the Local Plan Process

The applicant acknowledges that Wokingham Borough Council is progressing a strategic approach to Gypsy and Traveller accommodation through the emerging Local Plan.

Granting permission for an unallocated countryside site before the completion of this process risks undermining the plan-led system and

prejudicing the proper assessment of more suitable and sustainable sites.

10. Inaccurate Site Description

The application refers to Charlton Lane, whereas local residents understand the site to be located on and accessed from Trowes Lane.

The Council should ensure that all application documents accurately describe the site's location so that affected residents and consultees can properly assess the proposal.

Conclusion

Whilst I recognise the need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation within the Borough, the existence of need does not automatically make every site suitable for development.

The proposal would:

Cause unacceptable harm to the rural character of the countryside.
Conflict with Policy TB10(e) as identified in the Council's own pre-application advice.

Be located on land with acknowledged flooding problems.
Risk worsening existing flooding on Part Lane and surrounding areas.
Fail to demonstrate adequate protection for touring caravans and day rooms during flood events.
Place additional pressure on an already overstretched sewerage network.
Increase pressure on local infrastructure and services.
Result in biodiversity loss.
Contribute to the cumulative urbanisation of a rural area.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that Wokingham Borough Council refuses planning application 261171.