

PLANNING REF : 261171  
PROPERTY ADDRESS : The Garage  
: Back Lane, Spencers Wood, Reading  
: RG71YG  
SUBMITTED BY : Miss Steph Meakin  
DATE SUBMITTED : 15/06/2026

#### COMMENTS:

I am writing to object to planning application 261171. Having lived in the local area and experienced the existing issues affecting Trowes Lane and the surrounding countryside, I believe this proposal represents an unsuitable form of development in this location.

#### Impact on the Countryside and Rural Character

The proposed development would permanently change the nature of this open countryside site. Although the applicant describes the development as modest, the proposal includes five static caravans, five touring caravans, five day rooms, parking areas, hardstanding, access arrangements, bin stores and associated residential activity.

The site currently contributes to the open rural setting of Trowes Lane. Introducing this level of built development would erode the countryside character and create a suburban appearance in an area that is presently agricultural and undeveloped.

The applicant's own documents acknowledge that the site lies outside the settlement boundary and within the countryside. The re-application advice referred to within the planning statement also identified concerns that the development would disrupt the tranquil character of the landscape and may not comply with Policy TB10(e) relating to landscape impact.

#### Flooding and Surface Water Concerns

Flooding is a well-known issue in this part of Swallowfield. Part Lane, which borders the rear of the application site, regularly experiences serious flooding during winter months and after prolonged periods of rainfall.

The application itself acknowledges that the site has a high risk of surface water flooding and a medium risk of groundwater flooding.

A significant concern is that a large proportion of this currently absorbent field will be covered by hardstanding, parking areas, caravan bases and access routes. While drainage measures are proposed, there remains a genuine concern that reducing the amount of natural ground available to absorb rainfall will displace water and worsen existing flooding issues on neighbouring land and Part Lane.

The Council should require convincing evidence that this development will not increase surface water flooding elsewhere, particularly given the existing flooding history in the immediate area.

#### Inadequate Consideration of Flood Safety for All Occupants

The applicant proposes raising the static caravans by approximately one metre because of the known flood risk. This in itself demonstrates that flooding is a serious constraint affecting the site.

However, the application does not clearly explain how the five touring caravans, five day rooms, access areas, parking spaces and other facilities will remain safe during flood events. There is no clear information demonstrating that residents will be able to safely access day rooms, move around the site, or leave the site during periods of severe flooding.

I therefore do not believe it has been adequately demonstrated that this site is suitable for permanent residential use.

#### Existing Sewer Capacity Problems

The village has already suffered from serious sewer capacity problems. Residents have witnessed periods where sewage tankers operated continuously to manage the network, highlighting that the existing infrastructure is already under considerable pressure.

Adding further permanent residential pitches will inevitably increase demand on this system. Before any permission is considered, clear evidence should be provided by Thames Water confirming that sufficient foul sewer capacity exists and that the development will not increase the risk of future sewage incidents.

#### Highway and Access Safety

Trowes Lane is a narrow rural lane with limited opportunities for vehicles to pass. Local residents experience these difficulties on a daily basis.

The proposed access is close to the junction with Charlton Lane, and additional vehicle movements from residents, visitors, deliveries, refuse vehicles and vehicles towing touring caravans will add further pressure to a road network that already experiences constraints.

The highway assessment should not only consider this development in isolation but should also take into account other existing and proposed developments in the surrounding area and the cumulative increase in traffic.

#### Impact on Wildlife and Vegetation

The applicant states that existing vegetation helps screen the development from surrounding viewpoints, yet also acknowledges that some vegetation will need to be removed to facilitate the proposal.

This raises questions over whether the true visual impact has been fully assessed, especially during winter when vegetation is less effective at providing screening.

The application also acknowledges that the development would not achieve biodiversity net gain within the site itself and would rely on off-site compensation. This represents a loss of biodiversity value from a currently undeveloped countryside site.

## Pressure on Local Services

Although the application refers to nearby facilities, the reality for existing residents is that local services are already stretched. Swallowfield Medical Centre in particular is under significant pressure, and additional residential development will create further demand.

The availability of facilities should be judged not simply by distance, but by whether those facilities have the capacity to accommodate additional residents.

## Cumulative Impact of Development

There are existing and proposed developments in the immediate area, including further housing proposals. The combined effect of these developments will result in greater pressure on roads, drainage systems, sewer infrastructure, medical services and the overall rural character of the village.

This application should therefore be considered as part of the wider cumulative impact on Swallowfield rather than as a standalone proposal.

## Conclusion

I appreciate that there is a recognised need for additional Gypsy and Traveller accommodation within Wokingham Borough. However, the need for additional pitches should not override genuine concerns regarding the suitability of this particular location.

In my opinion, the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the countryside, increase the risk of flooding to neighbouring areas including Part Lane, place additional strain on already inadequate infrastructure, and introduce an inappropriate level of development onto a constrained rural site.