

PLANNING REF : 252430
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Northcote
: Swallowfield Street, Swallowfield, Reading
: RG7 1QX
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Graham Stanley
DATE SUBMITTED : 10/11/2025

COMMENTS:

I wish to register some concerns regarding the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) submitted in support of this application. I chair the Swallowfield Flood Resilience Group, whose members have, since the group's formation in 2008, accumulated a substantial amount of local knowledge and experience of flooding and drainage issues in the parish of Swallowfield.

The proposed surface water drainage outfall into the existing ditch on the eastern site boundary comprises a headwall at a level of 43.34m AOD (assumed to be the invert level). As stated in Paragraph 3.14 of the FRA, this ditch turns north-west to form the Naylor's Ditch, which discharges into the Part Lane drainage system. Flows then enter the enmained Brookside Nursery Ditch and ultimately into the side channel of the Blackwater River.

Data from the Environment Agency gauging weir on the side channel shows a 'top of normal range' river depth of 0.73m, which equates to a level of 43.13m AOD. However, following periods of heavy and/or prolonged rainfall, the river often flows at a higher level, sometimes exceeding the level of the proposed headwall. In these circumstances, little or no surface water would drain from the site. As an illustration, in the period between 23 December 2022 and 18 January 2023 (27 days), there were 21 days where the river level was higher than 43.34. As the surface level of Part Lane at its intersection with the Naylor's Ditch is approximately 43.3m AOD, the road is flooded in these conditions, often up to a depth of about 500mm.

The example above is not an isolated instance - the river level has exceeded level of the proposed headwall, for a period of five days or more, at least twice in each of the past five years.

It would appear to be unlikely that there is sufficient on-site attenuation within the planned SuDS installation that will cope with these circumstances, and the problem is only likely to get worse because of climate change. An alternative drainage system should be considered.

Another concern is with the 'medium to high' level of surface water flooding at the site entrance on Trowes Lane, as described in Paragraph 7.11 of the FRA. In Paragraph 7.13 it is recommended that the existing drainage scheme north of the site access is reviewed to determine the alignment and condition of the watercourses and the potential culvert linking the watercourses beneath Trowes Lane.

Trowes Lane receives significant overland surface water flows from several directions during storm conditions and acts as a conduit, channelling floodwater into the heart of the village of Swallowfield. Our group has examined several possibilities for reducing surface water risk in this area, all of which require interventions on

privately owned land, introducing complexity and uncertainty.

In view of the foregoing, I urge the Local Planning Authority to question the suitability of this site for development and to apply the Sequential Test in respect of surface water risk.

I would also like to draw attention to groundwater levels which, as illustrated by the chart in Appendix D to the FRA, remain at a high level in and around the Swallowfield area and has apparently caused problems on other recent developments. The design and construction of the surface water drainage system will need to be robust to prevent floatation and infiltration.

Finally, I would like to highlight serious issues regarding the capacity and condition of the foul sewer system in Swallowfield and Riseley, which suffers from excessive surface and ground water ingress during heavy rainfall. The pumping station on Swallowfield Street and the associated rising mains often cannot cope with the volumes of storm water received and the wet wells frequently need to be pumped out into tankers. Many residents in Swallowfield regularly suffer from restricted toilet use and I am concerned that the connection of yet more housing to the foul sewer system, without addressing these serious issues, would be unacceptable. These problems have been raised with Thames Water, but there appears to be no budget available for system improvements.