

PLANNING REF : 261171
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Bowyers Farm Cottage
: The Street, Swallowfield, Berkshire
: RG7 1RE
SUBMITTED BY : Mr P Cobbold
DATE SUBMITTED : 14/06/2026

COMMENTS:

Objection to Planning Application 261171

Land Opposite Charlton Lane, Trowes Lane, Swallowfield

Objection is made to planning application 261171, which seeks permission for the erection of five residential pitches on land opposite Charlton Lane, Trowes Lane, Swallowfield. The objection is based on conflict with the adopted Wokingham Borough development plan, including the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, as well as the applicant's own acknowledgement of harm in the submitted Planning, Design and Access Statement.

1. Harm to Rural Character and Landscape

- The site lies in open countryside within the Riseley Farmed Clay Lowland landscape area.
- The proposal would introduce residential accommodation units, day rooms, hardstanding and lighting, creating a suburban form of development in a rural setting.
- The applicant's own pre-application advice indicates that criterion TB10(e) is unlikely to be satisfied.
- The development would therefore conflict with Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11, and with MDD Policy TB10(e), because it would fail to maintain the high quality of the rural environment and would not minimise unacceptable impacts on the character and appearance of the surrounding landscape.
- The applicant's statement confirms that the site is in the countryside and within the Riseley Farmed Clay Lowland Landscape Character Area, and the pre-application advice records that compliance with TB10(e) is unlikely to be achieved because of harm to rural tranquillity and visual amenity.

2. Unsustainable Location

- The site is approximately 250 metres beyond Swallowfield's settlement boundary.
- Access is via unlit rural lanes without pavements, making walking and cycling unsafe and impractical.
- The applicant acknowledges that future residents would be reliant on private vehicles, contrary to the principles of sustainable development.
- The proposal therefore conflicts with Core Strategy Policy CP2 and MDD Policy TB10(a) to TB10(c), which seek residential pitch sites within or close to settlements with realistic access to services and sustainable patterns of living, rather than development that is functionally dependent on private car travel.
- Although the applicant describes Swallowfield services as nearby, the practical route from the site is along rural lanes with no continuous safe pedestrian infrastructure, which undermines the claimed sustainability of the location.

3. Flooding and Drainage Risks

- The applicant acknowledges a history of surface water flooding on the site.
- The proposed hardstanding would increase surface water runoff and

place additional pressure on local drainage infrastructure.

- Traveller sites are regarded as highly vulnerable development under national planning policy.
- The proposal therefore fails to demonstrate compliance with MDD Policy TB10(d), Policy CC09 on development and flood risk, and Policy CC10 on sustainable drainage, because significant flood and drainage risks remain unresolved and would be exacerbated by hardstanding and intensive residential use.

- The applicant's own assessment identifies high surface water flood risk and medium groundwater flood risk. Raising the accommodation units and relying on property-level resilience does not remove the underlying suitability concern for a residential pitch site in this location.

4. Foul Drainage and Cesspool Concerns

- The submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy confirms that there is no foul drainage within the site or in close proximity, and that all foul water would be collected by a gravity-fed network and discharged into a 50,000 litre cesspool.

- The same document calculates foul flows at approximately 3,000 litres per day, or 21,000 litres per week, and states that the cesspool would need to be emptied at least fortnightly. This would create a continuing operational dependency on tanker collections from a constrained rural lane.

- The proposal therefore does not demonstrate a robust, sustainable or low-risk foul drainage solution for a permanent residential use, particularly given the site's identified high surface water flood risk, medium groundwater flood risk and naturally high groundwater conditions.

- Reliance on a cesspool also raises concerns about maintenance, odour, accidental overflow, pollution risk and enforceability over the lifetime of the development, especially where the drainage strategy depends on regular emptying and annual cleaning rather than connection to mains foul drainage.

- For these reasons, the foul drainage strategy is inconsistent with the objectives of Core Strategy Policy CP1 and MDD Policy CC01, which require sustainable development, and it also reinforces conflict with MDD Policies TB10(d), CC09 and CC10 because the proposed wastewater arrangements have not been shown to adequately safeguard the site and surrounding area from drainage, pollution and flood-related risks.

5. Highway Safety Concerns

- Trowes Lane is narrow and unlit, has no footways, and is regularly used by walkers, cyclists and agricultural vehicles.
- Additional vehicle movements, including towing movements and service vehicles, would materially increase the risk to highway users.
- Safe and suitable access for all users has not been convincingly demonstrated, and the proposal is therefore inconsistent with the

objectives of Core Strategy Policy CP6 and MDD Policy CC07, insofar as they require development to be safely and appropriately served by the transport network.

- The access arrangements must also be considered in the context of the site's likely reliance on private vehicles, towing movements, delivery vehicles, refuse collection and emergency access, all on a constrained rural road network.

6. Prematurity of the Emerging Local Plan

- The emerging Local Plan is intended to allocate specific residential pitch sites.

- The application site does not form part of those proposed

allocations.

- Granting permission on an unallocated countryside site at this stage would risk undermining the plan-led approach required by Core Strategy Policy CP1 and the spatial strategy reflected in Policies CP2, CP3, CP11 and MDD Policy TB10. The emerging plan process is intended to identify suitable residential pitch provision through a borough-wide assessment of need, location, infrastructure and environmental constraints, rather than through ad hoc approval of an isolated countryside site.

7. Conflict with Countryside Protection Policies

- The site is outside the defined settlement limits and lies in the countryside. Core Strategy Policy CP11 only supports development in the countryside where it maintains the high quality of the rural environment and accords with relevant policy exceptions.
- The applicant accepts that the proposal does not fall within the listed exceptions in CP11, but seeks to rely on broader planning balance arguments. That does not remove the direct conflict with the adopted countryside policy.
- The proposal would introduce a permanent residential pitch site, day rooms, hardstanding, parking, domestic activity and associated infrastructure into an undeveloped rural parcel, materially changing the character and appearance of the countryside. This gives rise to direct conflict with Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11, and with MDD Policy TB10(e), because the development would not protect the rural environment or minimise harm to the surrounding landscape character.

8. The Tilted Balance Does Not Override Policy Conflicts

- Even if the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of residential pitches, that does not create an automatic presumption that any site is acceptable. The tilted balance remains a planning judgement and must still take account of conflict with the development plan and site-specific harms.
- The wording should be understood as referring to the proposed form of residential pitch development, not to the personal characteristics or background of future occupants.
- These harms include landscape harm, an unsustainable location, highway safety concerns, and conflict with policies TB10, CP11, CP1 and CP3.
- Taken together, the adverse impacts clearly and demonstrably outweigh the claimed benefits of five additional pitches, particularly where the proposal conflicts with the spatial strategy for countryside protection, sustainable development, landscape character, flood risk and safe access.

Conclusion

For these reasons, the proposal is in clear conflict with the adopted Wokingham Borough development plan, including Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6 and CP11, and Managing Development Delivery

Policies TB10, CC01, CC07, CC09 and CC10. It would result in unacceptable harm to the rural character and landscape setting of Swallowfield, would represent an unsustainable countryside location, and would raise unresolved concerns regarding drainage, flooding, foul wastewater disposal and highway safety.

The requirement should be met through appropriately selected, policy-compliant sites that are safe, sustainable, well related to services and capable of being accommodated without unacceptable harm to the countryside, landscape character, foul and surface water

drainage arrangements or highway safety.

It is therefore respectfully requested that planning application 261171 be refused.