

PLANNING REF : 261171

PROPERTY ADDRESS : The Croft

Wikipedia states that 'Swallowfield is a village and civil parish in the Wokingham district'. Wokingham Borough Council seems determined to turn Swallowfield from a village into a town as it appears to accept all planning applications for the village.

Highway safety

I have grave concerns regarding highway safety. The main access roads are Charlon Lane and Trowes Lane with a speed limit of 60 mph. They are narrow rural roads used frequently by local residents, agricultural vehicles, horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians. Visibility can be challenging in places and passing opportunities are limited. I currently walk my dogs along these roads and like many others am often forced into ditches or uncut verges by existing road traffic. They have few passing places and unsuitable for large vehicles. I wrote to the council last year asking for the speed limit to be reduced to 30mph but this was rejected.

Traffic along these roads is going to increase when 81 properties are built on land west of Trowes Lane (planning application 260069) and 79 on land east of Trowes Rd (planning application 252430 for which the target determination is due by 30th June 2026.

In addition this proposal would introduce five permanent residential pitches together with associated vehicle movements, visitors, service vehicles, including regular septic tank vehicles, deliveries and larger caravan-related traffic. The delivery and regular movement of large static accommodation units and heavy towing equipment cannot be physically accommodated within a single-track width. This would inevitably increase activity on roads that are not designed for significant levels of development.

The visibility, when exiting the proposed site, is poor with bends in either direction on Trowes Lane.

The narrow width of the single-track lanes serving this site also presents a severe operational hazard to emergency service vehicles, putting lives at risk.

Local amenities

Schooling - Swallowfield does not have an infant or junior school. Children are unable to gain places at the school in Spencers Wood as the population has increased in that area and children have to attend schools much further afield. They lack local playmates and parents have to transport them to school, increasing traffic on local roads.

Medical - The GP surgery is over capacity and there are long waits for appointments.

Shops - There is one small store with post office, which is insufficient for the village.

Traveller development within Wokingham Borough

The application does not adequately consider the cumulative impact of traveller development in the wider area. Existing traveller

sites already exist within the southern part of Wokingham Borough and additional provision is proposed through the emerging Local Plan process which is in advanced stages prior to being adopted.

The Council should carefully assess whether further traveller development in this locality would alter the character of the area and place additional pressure on local infrastructure. Whilst I recognise the need for traveller accommodation, this need should be met through appropriate locations identified through the plan-led process rather than through piecemeal development in sensitive countryside locations.

There also appears to be a recent trend on some new traveller sites for homes to be rented out to non-travellers, rather than occupied by the traveller community. If the application is approved, there should be a specific clause to say that only traveller communities are allowed to reside there. Otherwise it will be a traveller site in name only.

Traveller pitch provision

The planning application claims that the site is well distanced from any neighbouring land uses which is incorrect. It is sited immediately adjacent to a site planning application for 79 houses (planning application 252430).

The proposed development comprises five traveller pitches together with static caravans, touring caravans, day rooms, parking areas, hardstanding, boundary treatments and associated infrastructure. The applicant places significant reliance on the current shortfall in traveller pitch provision within the borough. However, this does not automatically make every countryside site suitable for development.

The Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, paragraph 26 states that traveller development in the open countryside should be "very strictly limited".

Site occupancy

The application lists 5 plots which include:

- 1 static mobile home with 2 bedrooms with potential for 4+ occupants
 - 1 touring caravan with potential for 4+ occupants
 - 1 day room which includes a bathroom and could be used as a separate dwelling with potential for 4+ occupants.
- This could mean that there could be 12 people living on each pitch, a total of 60 people on the small site. There are also 2 parking spaces per plot, but if there are multiple families living on the site there are going to be many more cars.

Cumulative development

The planning statement claims that the site is well distanced from any neighbouring land but the site is opposite the 81 properties to be built on land west of Trowes Lane (planning application 260069) and 79 properties on land east of Trowes Lane (planning application 252430 which is to be approved on 30th June 2026).

The application site occupies a prominent and highly visible position at the junction of Charlton Lane and Trowes Lane. As shown on the submitted location plan, the site has extensive frontage to both roads and forms an important part of the rural character of this area.

The Charlton Lane/Trowes Lane area is rural in nature and this development would erode the character. So, the Council should consider the cumulative effect of this proposal alongside other development pressures in the vicinity.

Flooding and drainage

The applicant's own Planning Statement identified a history of surface water flooding affecting the site. Whilst a Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted, the theoretical modelling may not reflect actual conditions experienced locally during wet winters which are increasing in frequency and severity. The fields along Charlton Lane frequently experience standing water and seasonal flooding during the winter months. Waterlogged ground conditions are common and drainage ditches regularly carry substantial volumes of surface water.

Raising the static caravans above ground level will not mitigate for flooding around the dwellings with possible flooding of residents' belongings, cars and sewer systems with potential for health and safety concerns.

The sewer system in the area is already overloaded. Recently sewer tankers had to remove waste in the village manually over a significant period-of-time as the system does not have the capacity to deal with even the existing network. This caused travel disruption for weeks and will happen more frequently when the new developments are built.

There is no direct access to services: Water, waste water, electricity and mains gas. As noted in the applications for the 81& 79 houses on Trowes Lane, the local amenities are already overstretched/ full prior to the building of these 160 dwellings.

The nearest water main is 320m away. The CIL form appears to have not been completed section 4 for CIL liability assessment due to superfluous answers to c and d in question 2, resulting in skipping to question 8, which seems to avoid the issue.

Vegetation and wildlife

The applicant also notes that existing vegetation will be disturbed to allow the development to be built, this, raises concerns that any screening of the development will be reduced or non-existent. This countryside area is outside the settlement boundary and should be subject to countryside protection policies.

Existing habitats for wildlife would be compromised; the deer and bird population has been greatly reduced in recent years. There are nesting owls, kestrels and bats in the area.

Recommendation

I would ask the council to seriously consider the cumulative effect

of the numerous planning applications on the residents of Swallowfield village and not approve this planning application. This should be discussed and voted on at a meeting of the Planning Committee open to the public, not by Planning Officers.

: Charlton Lane, Swallowfield, Berkshire
: S7 2AG

SUBMITTED BY : Dr Jane Helen Pailthorpe

DATE SUBMITTED : 14/06/2026

COMMENTS:

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