



Statement of Community Involvement

Issue 1.0

15 September 2025

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1 Introduction

This statement of community involvement is in support of a Planning Application by the Parish Council for the installation of an external ground mounted refrigeration condenser unit to the front elevation of Fieldfare, The Street, Swallowfield, RG7 1XW.

2 Background

Swallowfield has benefitted from a Parish Stores and Post Office for over sixty years. The Parish Council acquired the freehold of the site in 1994 to secure the future of the shop and Post Office in response to demand from residents. The shop premises is leased to tenants who operate the retail business and Post Office counter.

Some years ago, the Parish Council recognised the need to redevelop what had become a badly run-down site and took the opportunity to acquire the leasehold of the upstairs flat to give them full control of the site.

At this time in 2015 the Parish Council stated in its planning application that *“it had consulted widely with Parishioners and organised a public meeting in the Parish Hall to canvas ideas and opinions on a range of options for the site. The result was a strong desire to retain the Post Office and Parish Stores at this location. There was also a preference for residential over business use on the remainder of the site.”* The subsequent redevelopment took this on board and was completed in 2018 with the shop becoming what it is today.

In undertaking the redevelopment, the council acquired two second-hand chiller cabinets which were originally intended as a temporary measure to keep the store operational whilst temporarily relocated to allow the development to take place.

3 Plans

The council has now taken the overdue decision to replace these old and out-dated chiller cabinets with modern ones with doors that are more energy efficient. The intent being to help to address a problem of overheating of the shop in hot summer weather which leads to an unpleasant shopping experience and has caused perishable items and chocolate items to spoil driving away potential custom. The council considers that this is essential to maintain the viability of the shop and protect its investment. A necessary part of this plan

involves the siting of an external ground-mounted refrigeration condenser unit ideally to the front elevation of the building so that the heat extracted from the chiller cabinets is exhausted direct to the outside environment and does not overload the internal air conditioning units.

4 Engagement specific to this application

4.1 Neighbour Notification

On 16th September 2025 the council wrote separately to the occupiers of neighbouring properties briefly explaining its plans and inviting those residents to seek further information from the parish clerk and make comments should they wish. A copy of the letter is reproduced in Appendix A. The letter was delivered to the following properties:

- tenants of Woodpeckers and Flats 1 – 3 in Fieldfare House;
- tenants of the two bungalows, Chaffinch and Nuthatch, Fieldfare Court, at the rear;
- occupiers of Hollycroft and Willowbrook, neighbouring properties to either side.

No queries or comments have been received in response as at the date of submission of the planning application.

4.2 Shopper Survey

4.2.1 Method

A simple questionnaire was prepared explaining the council's plans and inviting shop customers to respond to three questions and comment on the proposals.

The questions were:

- Would you find it beneficial if the shop was cooler during hot weather?
- Do you (or would you) avoid buying certain perishable items such as milk or chocolate due to the effects of hot weather?
- Do you support the idea of investing in such energy efficiency improvements?

A copy of the questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix B. This survey was conducted over a period of 14 days.

4.2.2 Survey Results

Over the 7-day duration of the survey, 40 responses were received. Respondents were asked to provide their name and postcode to validate their response. All responses were from addresses in Swallowfield Parish.

The results were unanimously in support of the parish council's plans and many emphasised the importance of the parish stores and Post Office to the local community.

A sample of some of the comments received follow below and a full table of the responses (excluding names and postcodes) follows in Appendix C.

- "We need to keep the shop going because there are many aging residents who will be stuck if told not to drive. Last year I stopped buying chocolate for weeks and now I can't trust the milk. Purchasing these brings customers who then spend a bit more - needed by the shop.

Environmentally, we need a shop close by to reduce car journeys. It has to be viable."

- "The shop is an asset to the village and should be supported as much as possible."
- "Swallowfield is lucky to have a post office and shop and all efforts should be made to keep it viable."
- "I think this would be highly beneficial for our community shop as I would love to support locally rather than opting to buy certain foods elsewhere."
- "It is a long overdue and necessary improvement, let's get it done."

5 Conclusion

Residents remain very supportive of the Parish Stores and Post Office as a valued amenity and believe the council's plans are a sensible way to help protect the council's previous investment and ensure its continued viability.

Key considerations are the reliance otherwise on cars to visit alternative shops for everyday essentials and post office services, and the problems this would pose for our elderly age demographic who may be more reliant on the limited bus service or taxis.

Although the original consultation about the redevelopment is now some ten years old there is no reason why its findings should have changed. The continued patronage of the Parish Stores and Post Office and the responses from customers is testament to it continuing to be a valued amenity within the community.

The council believes the continued existence of a local store and Post Office is becoming ever more important due to the dramatic increases in the population of Swallowfield now anticipated as a result of dwellings built since the original Fieldfare redevelopment decision in 2015 and now on the way. This includes:

- 38 dwellings in the existing development at The Pippins off Swallowfield Street;
- 20 dwellings in the Cove Homes development west of Trowes Lane currently in development;
- 81 dwellings in the Croudace Homes development also west of Trowes Lane and North of Charlton Lane consented on appeal and awaiting development;
- a further outline application expected from the developer City & Country for up to 80 dwellings east of Trowes Lane.

Appendix A Letter to neighbours



Parish Office, Swallowfield Street, Swallowfield
Reading, Berks
RG7 1QX

Tel: 0118 988 5929 Email: clerk@swallowfieldpc.gov.uk

To the occupier

The Parish Council is writing to inform you of its intention to submit a planning application for the siting of a ground mounted refrigeration condenser unit on the front elevation of Fieldfare to the left of the entrance to the village shop. The unit will be housed in an acoustic enclosure.

Currently the shop gets uncomfortably hot during hot weather. It causes perishable stock to spoil – milk, chocolate items, etc. – and is unpleasant for customers. The existing chiller cabinets are old, inefficient and exhaust hot air into the shop imposing an additional load on the existing air-conditioning units in the shop which are unable to cope.

The Parish Council owns the existing chiller cabinets in the shop and, in order to address the problem, proposes to replace these with modern energy-efficient chiller cabinets with doors and an external ground mounted refrigeration condenser unit to the front elevation so that the hot air exhausts directly to the outside.

If you wish to comment or need further information, please contact the clerk, Liz Halson, using the details above.

Yours faithfully

Appendix B Shopper questionnaire

Swallowfield Parish Council



Shop User Consultation

August 2025

The Parish Council invites you to complete this short questionnaire to support its planning application for the project as detailed below.

Currently the shop gets uncomfortably hot during hot weather. It causes perishable stock to spoil – milk, chocolate items, etc. – and is unpleasant for customers. The existing chiller cabinets are old, inefficient and exhaust hot air into the shop imposing an additional load on the existing air-conditioning units in the shop which are unable to cope.

The Parish Council owns the existing chiller cabinets in the shop and, in order to address the problem, proposes to replace these with modern energy-efficient chiller cabinets with doors and an external ground mounted refrigeration condenser unit to the front elevation so that the hot air exhausts directly to the outside.

An anonymised summary of the responses will form part of a Statement of Community Involvement to accompany the planning application. Once this is completed, the responses will be destroyed to comply with GDPR requirements.

Name

Postcode

circle your answer

Would you find it beneficial if the shop was cooler during hot weather?

Yes

No

Do you (or would you) avoid buying certain perishable items such as milk or chocolate due to the effects of hot weather?

Yes

No

Do you support the idea of investing in such energy efficiency improvements?

Yes

No

Any other comments?

Thank you for participating in this consultation.

Appendix C Full shopper survey responses

Swallowfield Parish Council

Q1	Q2	Q3	Other Comments
Would you find it beneficial if the shop was cooler during hot weather?	Do you (or would you) avoid buying certain perishable items such as milk or chocolate due to the effects of hot weather?	Do you support the idea of investing in such energy efficiency improvements?	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	I have had occasions when the milk has "gone off" I've stopped buying choc due to condition
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	When it's hot you want to buy cold drink but they are all warm and the milk as well. I want to be able to buy from out local shop
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	The shop is an asset to the village and should be supported as much as possible.
Y	Y	Y	I have had to throw away a whole packet of chocolate biscuits. The chocolate had melted and fused them into a solid mass.
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	I have had to return items I have bought due to them being affected by the heat
Y	Y	Y	The shop needs better chiller cabinets a lot of the items I would buy I don't as the heat affects the quality and taste
Y	Y	Y	The quicker it is done, the better!
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	I think this would be highly beneficial for our community shop as I would love to support locally rather than opting to buy certain foods elsewhere
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	Rikki and Vicki are doing an excellent job. Their shop and post office are a much needed asset here.
Y	Y	Y	Always helpful - the Post Office is a major asset to the village.
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	Any improvement to make the village shop a thriving and popular village resource is a good idea
Y	Y	Y	We need to keep the shop going because there are many aging residents who will be stuck if told not to drive. Last year I stopped buying chocolate for weeks and now I can't trust the milk. Purchasing these brings customers who then spend a bit more - needed by the shop. Environmentally, we need a shop close by to reduce car journeys. It has to be viable.
Y	Y	Y	Swallowfield is lucky to have a post office and shop and all efforts should be made to keep it viable.
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	The investment would enhance the service provided by the village shop.
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	N	Y	
Y	N	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	It is a long overdue and necessary improvement, let's get it done.
Y	Y	Y	The shop does need new chiller cabinets
Y	Y	Y	This proposition is well overdue.
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	
Y	Y	Y	I am not confident about buying chilled products or anything with chocolate from the shop, it needs new chillers or will become unviable.