

PLANNING REF : 260386
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Grange Cottage
: The Street, Swallowfield, Berks
: RG7 1RE
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Sian Allen
DATE SUBMITTED : 26/03/2026

COMMENTS:

I am writing as a resident of Swallowfield to strongly object to this planning application (Ref: 260386). This proposal represents an over-intensive, large-scale industrial expansion onto open greenfield countryside that would cause significant and irreversible harm to the rural character of the area, residential amenity, landscape, and highway safety. It conflicts with both the adopted Development Plan and national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024).

The harms demonstrably outweigh the limited economic benefits claimed, and the application should therefore be refused for the following reasons.

1. Inappropriate development in the open countryside and conflict with spatial strategy

The site lies outside the defined development limits of Swallowfield (a rural parish with "limited development status") and is not within a Core Employment Area. The proposal involves new-build industrial units on previously undeveloped greenfield land, extending development westward and southward away from the existing clustered buildings at Wyvols Court Farm.

This directly conflicts with:

- Core Strategy Policy CP11 (Proposals outside Development Limits), which adopts a restrictive approach and only permits countryside

development where it does not lead to "excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings" and contributes to "diverse and sustainable rural enterprises". Large B2/B8 units are not typical farm diversification; they represent intensification of general industrial activity.

- MDD Policy CC02 (Development Limits), which seeks to resist inappropriate development beyond settlement limits to protect countryside character.

- Core Strategy Policy CP15 (Employment Development), which directs the majority of employment growth to Core Employment Areas and limits rural employment to small-scale or redevelopment within existing sites.

- Emerging Local Plan Policy ER3 (Supporting the rural economy) and SS5 (Development in the countryside), which require proposals to be of a scale and nature "appropriate to its rural location", incorporate re-use of existing buildings where possible, and avoid significant amenity or environmental impacts. The applicant's own Planning

Statement acknowledges the site is in the countryside and not a Core Employment Area, yet the scheme fails these tests.

- NPPF Paragraph 89, which states that sites beyond existing settlements must be "sensitive to [their] surroundings", must not have an "unacceptable impact on local roads", and should use previously developed land where possible.

The pre-application response (LPA Ref: 251002) explicitly flagged concerns about scale, siting, and landscape impact, advising reductions and a more "enveloped courtyard" layout. While the units

have been reduced in size, the principle of new large industrial buildings on open land remains unchanged and still constitutes excessive encroachment.

2. Harm to landscape character and visual amenity

The site is elevated and open to views across the Loddon Valley, including from public footpaths along the River Loddon. The 10m-high buildings (with associated bunds, parking, and HGV areas) would be widely visible and would dominate the rural skyline. The applicant's Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment downplays this, but the existing deciduous vegetation on the Basingstoke Road does not fully screen the western and southern aspects.

This conflicts with:

- MDD Policy TB21 (Landscape Character) and Core Strategy CP3 (General Principles for Development), which require development to retain or enhance landscape character and avoid unacceptable impacts.

- NPPF Paragraph 88, which supports rural business growth only where it respects the character of the countryside.

A recent Valued Landscape Character Assessment by the Council identified the site as inappropriate in terms of settlement form, pattern, and landscape character. The proposal would erode the rural openness that currently separates the farm from the village.

3. Harm to the setting of the Grade II listed Wyvols Court

The applicant's Heritage Setting Assessment concludes "negligible (at worst)" harm, but this understates the impact. The new units would extend commercial development closer to the listed building and its grounds. A previous appeal for residential development at the adjacent Wyvols Field (Ref: 162360) was dismissed, with the Inspector placing significant weight on preserving the significance and setting of Wyvols Court. The current proposal would compound that harm through further industrialisation of the immediate setting. This conflicts with Core Strategy CP3 and MDD Policy TB24 (Heritage Assets), and the NPPF's requirement to conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets.

4. Unacceptable impacts on residential amenity (noise, light, and air quality)

The existing site already generates noise, vibration, HGV movements, and floodlighting that affect nearby homes (including Handpost House and properties on The Street and Basingstoke Road).

Reclassifying to B2 (General Industrial) would materially intensify these impacts, as B2 uses by definition involve processes that generate noise, vibration, dust, fumes, and disturbance unsuitable for residential areas. Additional floodlighting would worsen existing light pollution in an otherwise unlit rural/suburban location.

This is contrary to Core Strategy CP3, MDD Policy CC06 (Noise), and the NPPF's requirement for healthy, safe places that do not undermine quality of life.

5. Highway safety and traffic impacts

The B3349 is a narrow, winding "B" road with blind bends, already carrying high volumes of traffic (average 37 mph, 496 movements per hour at peak). Additional HGV movements from B2/B8 uses would exacerbate safety risks, particularly at the site access on a bend. The Transport Statement claims compliance, but it fails to address real-world conditions: narrow/overgrown footways, the need for pedestrians to cross the road to reach the bus stop, and the unsuitability of this rural route for increased heavy traffic (as evidenced by recent restrictions on Charlton Lane and the historic need for the Swallowfield bypass).

This conflicts with Core Strategy CP6 (Managing Travel Demand) and NPPF Paragraph 89 (no unacceptable impact on local roads).

6. Drainage and flood risk concerns

Although the site is in Flood Zone 1, surface water from the elevated land drains toward the village and the River Loddon/Blackwater system. The village sewerage network is already fragile (as demonstrated by recent complete failures requiring tankers). The applicant's strategy relies on existing infrastructure and SuDS, but does not convincingly demonstrate no increased risk to downstream residents. This engages MDD Policies CC09 (Development and Flood Risk) and CC10 (Sustainable Drainage).

Planning balance and conclusion

The applicant correctly identifies a borough-wide shortfall in B2/B8 floorspace and claims economic benefits. However, national and local policy (NPPF para 11 and Core Strategy CP1) require that adverse impacts are weighed against benefits. Here, the significant harms to landscape, heritage, amenity, highways, and the intrinsic character of the countryside significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The scheme does not represent sustainable development. I therefore respectfully request that the application is refused.