

PLANNING REF : 250517
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Suvikuja
: Basingstoke Rd, Spencers Wood
: RG7 1PH
SUBMITTED BY : Cllr Catherine Glover
DATE SUBMITTED : 21/04/2025

COMMENTS:

As ward councillor for Spencers Wood and Swallowfield I feel that permission should be refused for this application because:

1. It's a substantial development which increases the number of houses in Spencers Wood by 16%, and is counter to Policy SS5 of the emerging Local Plan, Development in the Countryside.

2. The development is counter to Policy SS7 of the emerging Local Plan, Development in the vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishments (AWE). It would lead to an increase of about 950 in the residential population, the SANG and multi-functional open space, Doctors Surgery and 'Employment Zone' would both increase visitors, and the care home in particular would introduce a vulnerable group of 80 to the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ), as well as all the staff needed to care for them.

As the instruction is to 'Shelter in Place', it is not clear how a school can be used as an emergency shelter [as described on p. 118 of the Design and Access Statement] except for the staff and students at the school. It might even attract people from elsewhere when they should be sheltering in place in their own homes. I understand that sheltering in place is only likely to last for two days, after which evacuation is required. Temporary structures such as tents would not be suitable protection against radiation.

In the event of an emergency, both vehicle access points would take residents in the direction of AWE rather than away from it. 3. The main access point to the development is a proposed roundabout at the junction of Basingstoke Road and Back Lane, sited just after a series of blind bends on the B3349, when approaching from the south.

4. There is no indication of any type of pedestrian crossing at either of the main access points, or indeed near Benham Drive, to allow

children from that estate and the Norman Rise estate to cross the road safely on the way to school.

5. The main access point will lead traffic directly along Back Lane, Lambs Lane and Whitehouse Lane to the A33, taking it past Lambs Lane Primary School, across an already dangerous junction with Beech Hill Road, and along Whitehouse Lane, which is not much more than single track, to an 'unmarked' junction with the A33. To go north from there will involve driving 2.5 miles south to the roundabout junction with the B3349 and then 2.5 miles north again. (Barge Lane via Lambs Lane and Kingsbridge Hill is another problematic rat run which would see more use if there are no other improvements to the road system.)

6. Lorry movements from the 'Employment zone' will similarly head for the Back Lane route or, if they obey the weight restriction, will either take the twisty B3349 through Swallowfield and Riseley village or the B3349 north through Spencers Wood village towards the M4

Junction 11.

7. The 'Larchwood' public right of way is a Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT), and it would not be acceptable to allow motorized vehicles on it. Similarly, motorized access should not be allowed onto Hunters

Way.

8. The 'Larchwood' public right of way will need improving and maintaining, as it is unmetalled, muddy and often overgrown with vegetation.

9. Even the primary avenue is designated as 'No' for bus access, precluding a bus 'turning route', in the event that a bus service terminates here, or coach travel to the sports pitches.

10. There is no pedestrian or cycle access to/from Sussex Lane. The only access at the eastern end of the development is through a children's playground in Century Drive and it's not clear whether this is suitable for general pedestrian (and cycle) access.

11. All pedestrian and cycle access to/from Swallowfield is via Basingstoke Road with blind bends and a narrow pavement, which make it dangerous for children from Swallowfield to access the school.

12. The nearest viable railway station is Green Park, as there is insufficient parking at Mortimer Station.

13. The bus service is only hourly, weekdays and Saturdays only, and only runs from Riseley to Reading, via Mere Oak Park and Ride. This is not sufficient to deter car drivers from using their car for most trips and the developers should fund an hourly service to/from the development to supplement the hourly service to/from Riseley, and a service on Sunday.

14. No provider has been mentioned for the Care Home and there is no evidence that a Care Home in this area is required.

15. Another one-form entry primary school is not viable, so the presumption is that a Lambs Lane School would relocate to the proposed school, to make it two-form entry, but there is no indication as to how this would be funded. Primary school places are already under

pressure in this area: Lambs Lane catchment area is so small that no children from Swallowfield are currently attending it. Perhaps the school needs to have the potential to become a three-form school, otherwise we'll have the same problem the next time a development is proposed in southern Spencers Wood/Swallowfield.

16. Oakbank Secondary School requires considerable investment, which should be specified in a S106 agreement, to attract children from this development; otherwise the development will add to the existing pressure on transporting children to secondary schools elsewhere within and outside the Borough.

17. No land has been allocated for allotments, of which there are none in southern Spencers Wood.

18. As it's unlikely that Swallowfield Medical Centre will relocate here in its entirety, the GP Surgery space allocated is probably too large, but it is essential that one or two consulting rooms and a waiting room be provided.

19. There are already two convenience stores within half a mile of the proposed village centre and it is not clear whether there would be enough new custom for another. Convenience stores prefer to be on the main road where they benefit from passing traffic.

20. On the other hand, perhaps there is an argument for a more comprehensive retail facility such as a small supermarket, of which there are none in Three Mile Cross/Spencers Wood/Swallowfield/Riseley.

21. The employment zone/industrial site seems undesirable in a predominantly residential development, and it would create a gateway of 'sheds' up to 12m high [p. 77 of the Design and Access Statement] at the entrance to Spencers Wood. It is not clear that there is any demand for more business parks in this area, which already has three

within about half a mile.

22. There is no indication as to how 'no parking' is going to be enforced on the Primary Avenue.

23. Spencers Wood has few three-storey residential buildings [p. 87 of the Design and Access Statement] but the Building Heights Parameter Plan designates a large area to 'up to 3 storey' buildings and much of the rest of the residential area to 'up to 2.5 storey'. These heights seem out of place in any rural location and are most likely to contribute to a massed appearance.

24. There appears to be a lack of sufficient green space between the new development and the existing houses to the north, west and east.

25. There does not appear to be any parking for the SANG, which will attract dog walkers and others from elsewhere.

26. There is likely to be evidence of Iron Age/Roman settlement at the western end of the site: I understand from a lady who lived at Body's Farmhouse in the 1940s, when her father was tenant of Body's Farm, that there is a Roman mosaic pavement possibly now concealed by hard standing behind Body's Farmhouse. We have found verified Roman potsherds in the garden of Suvikuja on the other side of Basingstoke Road.

I feel that, if planning approval is granted for this development, it is essential for the developer to commit funding to secure the infrastructure to mitigate the above issues -before development begins - so that mistakes made in the South of the M4 SDL are not repeated. Appropriate arrangements must also be made to secure the future management and maintenance of the on-site infrastructure, and utilities should be designed from the outside to minimise future disruption [Policy SS15 of the Emerging Local Plan].