

SWALLOWFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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27th July 2011

Wokingham Borough Council,
P.O. Box 157, Council Offices
Shute End
Wokingham
Berks RG40 1WR

For the attention of: Chris Lancaster
Development Management

Dear Sirs,

Consultation on Strategic Development Locations, Masterplan Supplementary Planning Documents for Arborfield Garrison & South of the M4

The Parish Council considers that it is more appropriate for the Council to comment on the possible consequences on the Parish of the above development rather than directly comment on specific paragraphs within the documents, as neither of the above developments fall within the Parish. Having said that the Parish Council is generally content with the above SPDs, and particularly trusts that when the actual planning applications for the housing are approved then there will be substantial variations in types of dwelling and a variation in materials used, not only over the whole development location, but within each developers' area as well. It would be very unfortunate if a Lower Earley look-a-like was created. The Parish Council accepts that many of its concerns listed below are considered by the documentation, but is nevertheless flagging them up in order to highlight their importance to the Parish, and to ensure that when construction commences the required agreed works are provided and their provision is carefully monitored. Many of the Parish Council's comments below have been stated before, but bear repetition.

1. Flooding (Applicable to both SDLs, but especially Arborfield Garrison)

Swallowfield Village is in part within the flood plain of the River Loddon and the River Blackwater, and has either flooded or been at risk of flooding several times in the last 20 years. In the last 10 years the following has occurred:-

- 2000 – Streets flooded, but no properties flooded (that we know of).
- 2002 – Streets flooded, but no properties flooded (that we know of).
- 2007 – Within Swallowfield village at least 18 houses flooded together with streets and 94 gardens and drives. (Note that not all areas that were flooded are shown on Wokingham's flood maps)
- 2009 - Both in February and November there was some flooding to isolated roads.

During this time the Parish Council has been told that flooding has been caused by both the lack of river capacity as well as drainage problems. It is accepted that the 2007 event was caused by flash flooding, and the river did not rise until the next day – luckily causing no further flooding. In addition various drainage works have been carried out by Wokingham Borough Council and others (although there is plenty more to do to prevent our village flooding from a similar occurrence) which should assist in enabling water to run off more rapidly in the future. As you may be aware, subsequent to the 2007 event, a Flood Resilience Group was formed in the Parish to clear local ditches and lead the pressure onto local authorities and local landowners to take flood relieving measures. Their work continues.

It should be noted that:-

- a) Over the last 20 years the risk of flooding is happening with an increased frequency.
- b) In the winter of 2009/10 there were circa 10 flood alerts issued by the Environment Agency, fortunately leading only to isolated flooding of roads.
- c) All surface water drainage from the whole Parish ends up in the River Loddon/Blackwater/Whitewater network, and thus any further run-offs into any of these Rivers from any point increases the risk of flooding in Swallowfield village, which is in a 'basin' in geographical terms.
- d) Water tables are often very high, which increases the amount of run-off.
- e) In the flood conditions the sewerage system often fails resulting in pollution.
- f) Thames Water has replaced the pumps at Swallowfield pumping station, but is not planning on upgrading or upsizing it any further. (We understand however that they would revisit this if necessary and we would request therefore that they are formally consulted in due course, to make sure that any potential knock-on effects from the extra 6000 houses on our boundaries will be addressed).

In spite of all the works carried out, the Parish Council considers that Swallowfield remains at great risk from flooding from the rivers. It is noted that 3,500 houses are to be built in Arborfield, and 2,500 houses in Shinfield south of the M4. The vast majority of this housing will be built on green field sites which currently can absorb a substantial amount of surface water. The run-off from all these houses, together with new roads, hard paving, community structures etc. will now all be into the Rivers Loddon/Blackwater. There is therefore a severe risk, in spite of the good intentions laid out in the above documents, that at high risk flood periods more water will flow than at present into the river system. This will obviously dramatically increase the flooding risk in Swallowfield, and further down stream at Winnersh.

The Parish Council therefore trusts:-

- i) That the Environment Agency will be heavily involved with the design and implementation of any measures required to ensure that flooding risks to Swallowfield village are not increased – and preferably reduced.
- ii) That any concerns Thames Water may have will be taken into account.
- iii) That when the actual planning applications for the housing etc. are submitted it will be ensured that there will be no more run-off at peak periods than currently exists.
- iv) That it will be ensured that the measures agreed to stop further run-off will be maintained into the future. Will it be the Borough Council, the Developer, the Environment Agency or even Thames Water who will be responsible for maintaining these flood relief measures? And who will monitor this? We raise this important item through suffering first hand from experiencing a total lack of maintenance on a flood relief system, due to

the original developer becoming bankrupt before the system was adopted by the water authority.

- v) That a Flood Risk Assessment has been or will be carried out and the results taken into account in the final Masterplan and each developer's proposals.
- vi) That the Borough Council is satisfied that the final accepted Masterplan and the Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD will be legally secure such that, for instance, when the MoD sells to developers the necessary requirements will be provided by the developers.

2. Highways

The Parish Council is pleased to note that it is not proposed to extend Nine Mile Ride across the site such that it would end up opposite the narrow road through Farley Hill and Swallowfield. The Parish Council believes that that would 'lead drivers' through the narrow country lanes that predominate in the Parish. Regardless of that it is self-evident that a further 6,000 houses on the door step of Swallowfield Parish will have a major effect on the residents and roads within the Parish, and beyond.

Consequently the Parish Council would like to know:-

- i) What measures will be taken to ensure traffic from Arborfield heading towards Basingstoke and the South West does not use the narrow roads through Farley Hill, which is the shortest route?
- ii) Traffic using this route will have to negotiate the bridge by Swallowfield Church, where it has already been necessary to use signage to advise large vehicles to use an alternative route because of repeated damage to the bridge.
- iii) It should also be noted that the obvious alternative route along the A327 towards the M3/A30 will have to negotiate pinch point by the Tally Ho public house at Eversley Bridge and through Eversley Street which currently can cause delays at peak periods.
- iv) Will the Borough look to the state of bridges in this Parish that will be used by the rat-runners, and ensure they are capable of withstanding any possible traffic increase?
- v) Has the Borough considered the implications of the Masterplan on Farley Hill School? Traffic is a nightmare at opening/closing times – and there have been many instances of 'Parking Rage'. Any additional traffic at peak periods will cause unmanageable chaos.
- vi) Can the Parish Council assume that all new schools in the SPD's for which any property within Swallowfield Parish will be in their catchment area will be serviced by public transport accessible by Parishioners?
- vii) How will the Borough ensure that residents from Swallowfield Parish will be able to access the M4 via the B3349 without any additional delays caused by the increased traffic emanating from the new housing South of the M4?
- viii) What improved public transport is envisaged for the area, and will it include direct bus services to Wokingham and Basingstoke – both currently non-existent in this Parish?
- ix) The Parish Council understands that Eversley Parish Council is concerned that the increased traffic along the A327 as a consequence of the Arborfield Garrison SDL will cause problems to them. Was Hampshire fully informed of this possibility, and if so, did they make any suggestions? Indeed were Hampshire CC and West Berks consulted over these major developments so that an assessment could be made on the impact to villages near the SDLs on the WBC boundaries?

Furthermore the Parish Council would like the Borough Council to note and consider the following:-

- The Parish Council assumes that when construction on the SDL's commence, particularly with reference to the Arborfield Garrison site, that construction traffic will be prevented from using minor roads through local villages, and instead will be provided with specific routes. The road between Swallowfield and Arborfield/Farley Hill with its narrow bridge and bend is totally unsuitable for such traffic.
- That any local gravel extraction and earth works should be done with careful consideration to the local environment and with the minimum disruption to the quality of life of those living in the vicinity.
- That Farley Hill in particular, but also Swallowfield and Riseley, are given extra protection to prevent the villages becoming rat runs as a consequence of the SDLs. The Parish Council considers that consideration should be given to installing 'gateways' to all these villages, and a speed limit through Farley Hill (ideally 20 mph as there is a school on the road); and a 30mph through Riseley. In addition, the Basingstoke Road has long been of concern to the Parish Council and residents alike in relation to the volume and speed of the traffic which currently uses it so further protection should also be given to this road, not least of all by making it 40mph along its length between Spencers Wood and Riseley. Again, there has been a long running campaign to reduce the speed of traffic in the Odiham Road, Riseley, so with more traffic in the area, this part of Riseley village, which is adjacent to the recreation ground, village hall and tennis clubhouse, should also be afforded some protection, for a start by reducing the speed limit in that area to 30mph.

3. Arborfield By Pass

The Parish Council finds it incomprehensible that plans for 3,500 houses in Arborfield Garrison have reached such an advanced stage without knowing where the proposed by-pass will be built.

The Parish Council considers that this attractive rural Parish provides a 'countryside lung' for the south west part of the Borough, which with the additional 6,000 houses on its perimeter makes it even more important. The Parish Council is therefore concerned as to the impact that the proposed by pass will have on Farley Hill, particularly as Farley Hill is on higher ground and will look down on the by-pass.

The Parish Council wishes to protect in particular our Farley Hill residents by proposing that sound protection measures are undertaken; such as reducing the speed limit on the road from unrestricted and installing acoustic bunds/fences.

The Parish Council understands that the developer will design the road rather than the Borough, as this will save the Borough the cost of designing the road. Whilst this philosophy is understandable the risk must be that the route of the road will not be the best in environmental terms. How will the Borough ensure that this is not the case?

The Parish Council therefore wishes to know when the proposed route(s) will be decided upon, and when it will go out to public consultation.

4. Sewerage

Both Swallowfield and Riseley villages have pumping stations which pump sewage underground directly to Wargrave. The Parish Council has on record a continuing dialogue with Thames Water, for many years, in connection with problems at the pumping station in Swallowfield. In spite of many works undertaken, there continues to be problems with the pumping station and its ability to pump sewerage adequately, especially during times of heavy rain. Anything which might make the situation worse needs to be considered and in this connection, major development in Shinfield and Arborfield may well do this, either because of more water run-off coming into the "Swallowfield Basin", or through increased pressure on the sewage systems in general. The Parish Council would like some assurance that Thames water will be required to undertake a study to provide the reassurances the Parish Council is seeking.

5. Lighting

Lighting for the Arborfield development should be kept to a minimum and, where essential, light pollution should be kept to a minimum in the surrounding countryside. In particular, the proposed relief road should not be lit as it would have an adverse impact on the rural nature of the areas in and around Farley Hill, most of which is in an elevated position and is an ASLI.

6. Separation of Settlements

Care must be taken to ensure that Farley Hill is distinctly separated from the Arborfield Garrison development. The current plans appear to show that this will be the case. However, it should be reinforced by stating that there will be no development to the West of the A327. The existing development at the old Poperinghe barracks was unfortunate, as it broke this ideal rule.

7. Senior Schools

The Parish Council wishes to receive confirmation that the catchment area of the proposed senior school in the Arborfield Garrison will include this Parish. We see this as an opportunity to gain some benefit to our residents from this proposed development.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs. C. Adams, Clerk