

46 Briary Lane
Royston, Herts
SG8 9BU

12th August 2025

Ben Glover
Senior Planning Officer
NHDC
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Herts
SG6 3JF

Reference: **25/01708/OP**

Dear Mr Glover,

25/01708/OP: Land Opposite Heath Farm, Briary Lane, Royston, Hertfordshire

I am writing to object to the planning application for housing on land opposite Heath Farm, Briary Lane, Royston. I have viewed the plans and know the area well. I walk on Bridleway 13 often.

Housing on this land is not supported by the existing Local Plan for the area (NHDC Local Plan 2011-2031). The development site is outside the settlement boundary identified in this plan. Royston is already contributing significantly towards the NHDC 5-year housing land supply. The development of this site would present engineering challenges due to the constrained access, steep topography and the protective covenants in place (which are to be enforced). The site is therefore unable to contribute to the NHDC 5-year housing land supply.

Local facilities such as schools, doctors and dentists will be overwhelmed if further housing is built without expanding these. A recent response from the Cambridge and Peterborough Integrated Care System, Property Service for Land Off Barkway Road and North of Flint Hall, Barkway Road, Royston (Application reference 21/00765/OP) states “**GP practices show a significant health infrastructure deficit, and existing surgeries do not have capacity to absorb any additional residents**”. Therefore, the speculative development of this site is likely to significantly and adversely affect health services in the area. Whilst funding is mentioned as mitigation, the GP practices are space constrained so unable to provide the additional space and facilities needed. There is a significant risk to the health, care and wellbeing of existing residents of Royston. The site would therefore conflict with **Policy SP7 of the NHDC Local Plan and 55 to 58 of the NPPF**. Tannery Drift primary school has already been expanded and is unlikely to be able to expand further.

The housing will be too far from local primary schools, bus stops and shops to allow residents to walk, cycle or use public transport. This is made worse by the site location on a steep hill above Royston. The walking and cycling times suggested in the planning application are unrealistic. The proposed access via Echo Hill will lead to congestion on Briary Lane and Echo Hill. Traffic from the proposed development turning right onto Baldock Road will find this difficult. Housing developments already in built and progress along Baldock Road have increased traffic flows on Baldock Road. The local highway network is constrained. Briary Lane is becoming congested with parked cars as increased vehicle widths mean garages have been converted into rooms and driveways are used less. The parked cars mean Briary Lane is effectively a single-track road in places. The proposed development conflicts with paragraphs **108, 109 and 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Policy T1 of the Local Plan** and local planning guidance (**Roads in Hertfordshire A Design Guide**).

The Transport Assessment by gta (June 2025) depicts a supermarket on Baldock Road in Figure 3.3. This is also shown on their Travel Plan in Figure 3.1. This supermarket (Morrison) has in fact been demolished. The nearest supermarkets are a mile and a half away, so journeys to and from them are likely to be by car. The Transport Assessment suggests cycling to and from the site is feasible. However, on p 18, it states that no cyclist movements were observed during the site visit on Friday 30th May 2025. The steep gradient of the site means cycling is and would be difficult. The development is therefore not sustainable and will contribute to climate change.

The elevated site is visible from Therfield Heath, an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). Housing on this site will therefore have a significant negative visual impact. The site runs alongside Bridleways 13 and 14. These bridleways are well used by people to provide a pleasant country walk with views of green space and nature such as foxes, hares and yellowhammers. The physical and mental health benefits of this type of exercise are well known. I do this walk often and frequently encounter several other people on it. Walking on Bridleway 13 reduces human impact on Therfield Heath. If the development goes ahead, Bridleways 13 and 14 will be a less attractive walking route and so put further pressure on the SSSI. The residents are likely to own dogs and walk them on Therfield Heath. This makes grazing of the SSSI (which is preferred by Natural England) less feasible.

As well as the foxes, hares and yellowhammers mentioned above, I have heard a woodpecker in the mature trees on the boundary of the site and seen a woodcock in the field there. These will be lost if the land becomes housing. The root balls of mature trees lining Bridleway 13 will be disturbed; these are used by a song thrush. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal confirms that 10% Biodiversity Net Gain will not be possible on-site and that residential development has the potential to increase recreational pressure on the nearby SSSI. The proposals conflict with the **NPPF and Policy CGB1, SP5, SP12, NE1 and NE6 of the NHDC Local Plan. Paragraph 193b of the NPPF states “development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in**

the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest”

The site is adjacent to a major aquifer and is a source protection Zone 1. The steep site means there is a risk of flooding from its surface water. I have seen Briary Lane turn into a river during periods of heavy rain; this will be exacerbated by building on fields at the top of its hill.

The existing sewerage treatment for Royston is in South Cambridgeshire, operated and maintained by Anglian Water. The treatment works discharges into a local watercourse, which is associated with a chalk stream catchment, a nationally important and protected ecosystem. Residents have found evidence to show regular exceedance of the permit in place at the treatment works. There is little evidence provided by Anglian Water which shows they are competent, nationally, at determining the treatment works has sufficient capacity to accept additional flows and therefore significant concerns they are fit to approve any additional flows from development in the area.

Due to the negative impacts outlined above, I urge the council to reject this unsustainable planning proposal.

Yours sincerely

Dr Ann Keep