

Ben Glover
Senior Planning Officer
North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 3JF

Rebecca McMichael
41 Field Crescent
Royston
Herts
SG8 7JZ

8 August 2025

Dear Mr Glover,

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

I write to object in the strongest terms to the proposed development of housing on this site. I have reviewed the submitted documentation and know the location well. I believe this proposal is wholly unsuitable for a number of planning-related reasons.

Housing Supply and Local Plan

The site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and is not allocated for development in the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan. Royston has already significantly contributed to the district's housing needs, and speculative development of unallocated land is not necessary to meet the five-year housing land supply. Approving this application would undermine the spatial strategy set out in the Local Plan.

Landscape and Visual Impact

The proposed development would result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. The site is clearly visible from surrounding public vantage points and forms part of the rural setting of Briary Lane. Similar applications on this site have previously been refused due to their detrimental impact on landscape and visual amenity, and those same concerns remain valid.

Living Conditions and Amenity

The development would have a negative impact on the living conditions of existing residents through noise, disruption during construction, and permanent loss of rural outlook. These changes would significantly reduce local amenity and quality of life.

Highways and Traffic Impact

Access to the site is poor. Briary Lane is narrow, constrained, and unsuitable for increased traffic volumes. There is a lack of safe and practical pedestrian and cycle access to local facilities and schools. These factors make the location inherently unsustainable in transport terms.

Ecological Impact

The site supports a variety of habitats and species, including some on the RSPB Red List and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The ecological surveys submitted are inadequate, and the proposal risks irreparable harm to local wildlife and biodiversity.

Flood Risk and Water Quality

The sloping nature of the site increases the risk of surface water runoff, which would put additional strain on existing drainage systems, particularly around Echo Hill. The development could worsen existing flood issues and negatively affect water quality.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The application does not include an Environmental Statement, and it is unclear whether a screening opinion has been sought. Given the size and location of the proposal, an EIA is necessary to properly assess the full environmental impact.

Health Services and Infrastructure

Local health services are already under significant pressure. The proposal makes no provision for increasing healthcare capacity, and the resulting demand from new residents would add further strain to overstretched GP surgeries and facilities.

Loss of Agricultural Land

This development would result in the permanent loss of high-quality agricultural land. Such land is a finite resource and should be protected, especially when the need for development here has not been demonstrated.

Conclusion

In summary, this proposal conflicts with the Local Plan, causes unacceptable harm to landscape, infrastructure, and local services, and fails to demonstrate sustainable development. I urge the council to reject this application.

On a personal note, I want to express how distressing it is that this proposal, already rejected twice, has returned once again. It feels deeply unfair to the residents most directly affected, who have endured ongoing stress, financial uncertainty, and tangible losses for over four years now. This includes during the pandemic, when our homes and sense of stability were more important than ever. Royston already has several approved developments in progress, yet our local services are clearly struggling to keep up. We've even seen school sites reduced in recent years, rather than the careful expansion that a growing population should demand.

Yours faithfully,
Rebecca McMichael