

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

14 August 2025

Dear Mr. Glover,

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

I am writing to you with fervent objections to the planning application which abuts the boundary of my property at 33 Echo Hill, Royston. I adore living on this road with my husband and our two young children, and it saddens me that this is the third time this application has come to us - I sincerely hope to never revisit this same set of insurmountable reasons why this planning application should not be enabled to progress.

Landscape, Visual Impact & Living Conditions

My house sits at the bottom of the far end of the cul-de-sac of Echo Hill, so our garden sits at the lowest point on the boundary of the space in question - the extreme gradient of the field means that houses built here will significantly dominate the skyline and create a constant sense of being overlooked. If the development goes ahead, our house will undoubtedly feel engulfed by housing with living spaces towering over our roof and harming our day-to-day quality of life.

Please see photos below which show the severity of the slope leading downwards towards my property.





The harm would not be limited to my home. Given the elevated and exposed location of the site, the development would also be highly visible from wider vantage points across Royston, including Therfield Heath SSSI. These impacts were central to the refusal of previous applications in 2018 and 2020/21, and nothing in this latest proposal meaningfully reduces them.

Highways & Access

Having previously lived at 13 Sun Hill, I can say with absolute confidence that the surrounding road network is already beyond capacity. Access to the proposed development would be via the top of Briary Lane turning onto Sun Hill – this is extremely tight and dangerous due to the number of parked cars making Briary Lane a single car track, and the adverse camber of the road. Sun Hill is also used heavily for parking and with a disabled bay and poor visibility at the turn, it is regularly too tight for vehicles to be forced to mount the curb onto Sun Hill Common—an area where children often play. I cannot imagine how any form of travel service could navigate this road route and turning safely.

Echo Hill's steep topography makes for a treacherous walk or drive in heavy rain, snow and ice, and would fail modern highway safety standards if built today. Adding construction traffic, plus hundreds of extra daily vehicle movements from 84 new homes, would sincerely make this road a nightmare. The developer's suggestion that the town centre and supermarkets are within easy walking distance ignores the reality of the gradient too — many residents, particularly older people or families with small children, will find the walk impractical, pushing them toward car use and increasing traffic pressure further.

Legal Covenant Affecting Access

The proposed access to the site requires the demolition of No. 24 Echo Hill. However, there is a legal covenant on the road stating that no houses can be demolished. We purchased our home on the strength of this covenant, as it guaranteed that Echo Hill would remain a quiet cul-de-sac suitable for raising our family.

While I recognise that covenants are not a material planning consideration, this one is enforceable, and I, along with other Echo Hill residents, would take legal action to uphold it. Such action could take years to resolve and would likely prevent the development from proceeding within the time frame needed to contribute to the district's five-year housing supply.

Housing Supply & Local Plan

This site is not allocated in the adopted Local Plan and lies outside Royston's settlement boundary. While North Hertfordshire currently has a housing land supply shortfall, the Local Plan sets out a clear spatial strategy to direct growth to sustainable, allocated sites. Granting permission here would represent unplanned, speculative development in conflict with that strategy and contrary to the NPPF's plan-led approach.

Ecology

The development threatens habitats for protected and priority species, including those on the RSPB Red List. The site contributes to an important wildlife corridor between Therfield Heath and surrounding countryside, which will be irreparably damaged.

Flood Risk, Drainage & Attenuation Basin

The steep slope of this field means rainwater runs directly downhill towards my home. On the current drawings, the proposed attenuation basin is positioned directly below my garden. In the previous application, we commissioned expert advice which concluded that, given the extreme topography and volume of surface water run-off, any basin capable of containing it would have to be enormous.

Flooding Risk – The proximity and scale of the basin would leave my property at direct risk if it overflowed or failed, particularly during intense rainfall when the existing drainage network already struggles.

Amenity & Public Health – A large water-holding feature immediately behind our home will inevitably result in standing water during summer months, creating a breeding ground for midges and other insects. This would severely impact our ability to use our garden and raises genuine health and nuisance concerns, especially for my young children.

No mitigation has been put forward to address these risks, and given the site's gradient, the basin's location so close to existing homes is wholly unacceptable.

Summary

Taken together—the unacceptable visual dominance, substandard road access and subsequent safety issues, ecological harm, flood risk, and lack of infrastructure—this proposal is unsustainable and unrealistic. The reasons for refusal in 2018 and 2020/21 remain entirely valid, and I urge the Council to reject this application for the final time.

Yours faithfully,

Abigail Smith
33 Echo Hill
Royston, Hertfordshire
SG8 9BB