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Ben Glover
Senior Planning Officer
North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
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17 August 2025

Dear Mr Glover,

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

I write in connection with the above planning application, I have examined the plans and I know the site well. I wish to object strongly to the development of houses in this location.

There is nothing of any tangible substance in this resubmitted application (this is now the third time) that addresses the issues that led to refusal on previous applications. Indeed there should be more reasons for refusal this time, not just visual impact but the appalling access issues.

This objection letter will detail some key reasons why this application should be rejected, but it should be noted there are many other reasons for rejection, including ecological impact, flood and water risk, the lack of a credible environmental impact assessment, and the impact on already overstretched public services and lack of infrastructure.

Housing Supply and Local Plan

The development site is not identified in the existing Local Plan for North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) and is outside the settlement boundary identified in the plan. Royston is already contributing a significant number of dwellings towards the NHDC 5-year housing land supply. The development of this site would present a significant engineering challenge 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. The application should also be refused for its problematic location; its negative impact and its failure to comply with the adopted local plan (NHDC Local Plan 2011-2031).

Landscape and Visual Impact

The reasons for refusal of the 2018 and 2020/21 planning applications, for landscape and visual impact still applies, as follows; the prominent position, the topography, the significant localised adverse impacts on the character of the area, the negative impact to visual receptors (which are unchanged), the marked change in the character of the immediate locality and wider valued landscape, such as Therfield Heath (SSSI). The same reason for refusal should therefore still apply to the current application. The proposals conflict with the ***NPPF and Policy CGB1, SP5, SP12, NE1 and NE6 of the NHDC Local Plan.***

There has not been any consideration to the direct effects of the access proposals on the character of Echo Hill which would be harmed by the proposed access arrangements. The proposals would therefore be contrary to the general landscape protection policies of the **NPPF (including Paragraph 135), Policies NE1 of the adopted Local Plan.**

Living Conditions

The neighbouring properties (Number 25 and 23) of the house to be demolished (Number 24) and the proposed access road, will have their living standards significantly and detrimentally impacted during both the construction and following habitation of the development. NHDC failed to appropriately assess and address this issue during the last planning application. The proposals conflict with **Policies D3 of the adopted Local Plan.**

The elevated location of the development site in relation to the existing surrounding properties, is likely to give rise to existing residents being left with a sense of being overlooked, overshadowed and dominated by new development. This would detrimentally impact on reasonable expectations of residential amenity and privacy. It should also be noted that since the last application, land Gladman stated they owned (via the property proposed to be demolished) has been proved, by land registry to not be the case. So the access proposed is even smaller than the previous application. In summary, the proposals would be contrary to the **NPPF and Policies D3 of the adopted Local Plan.**

Highways and Transport

The development site is fundamentally unsustainable due to the location of the site in relation to services, constrained access route to the local primary school, undeliverable proposed site access and constrained nature of the highway network including Echo Hill, Sun Hill, Coronation Avenue and Briary Lane. This conflicts with **paragraphs 108, 109 and 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy T1 of the Local Plan** and local planning guidance of the **Roads in Hertfordshire A Design Guide.**

The Transport Assessment by gta (June 2025) states the revised site access arrangement is supported by a safety audit by EC Road Safety. The safety audit however has not been consulted on with the approving authority of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Highways, prior to the final design. It is apparent the access has been contrived with little regard to existing users of Echo Hill, Sun Hill and Briary Lane.

No details have been submitted on gradients and proposed levels of the access road. The audit and the Transport Assessment concentrates on the safety of the presumed development "generated" pedestrians, without any consideration given to the following key existing users, the existing drop kerbs associated with the driveways of Numbers 25 and 23, the proximity to existing junctions, the blind/sharp bend leading directly from a steep gradient onto Echo Hill, the continued desire line of Echo Hill residents which could lead to a conflict with oncoming vehicles from the development, the existing blind bend on Sun Hill / Briary Lane, and the constrained single carriageway width along Sun Hill and Briary Lane. This should be considered for both during construction and future occupation.

The proposed access therefore conflicts with **paragraphs 108, 109 and 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy T1 of the Local Plan** and local planning guidance of the **Roads in Hertfordshire A Design Guide.**

The travel plan significantly underestimates the challenge associated with the steep topography of Echo Hill as the proposed cycle and pedestrian times have been determined using online route mapping software. The site will be heavily car reliant due to the lack of available public transport and the topographical challenges of the site. Based on these issues, the site must be judged to be contrary to **paragraphs 108, 109 and 110 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy T1 of the Local Plan.**

The proposal is also contrary to local planning guidance of the ***Roads in Hertfordshire A Design Guide***.

The access for proposed construction vehicles is wholly inadequate, which (if the speculative developer had bothered to do properly assess, rather than once again use out of date information) they would have concluded that the swept path for construction vehicles will not be feasible.

Planning Balance

This objection letter has set out clear reasons, using planning policies and procedures, as to why this application should be rejected.

Any application should always weigh the potential benefits of a proposed project against its potential negative impacts; utilising government policy and guidance, one can clearly see that the negative impacts far outweigh any positive ones.

It is not just the impact (including health and safety) regarding access (both during the construction phase and after) to Sun hill and Echo Hill. The impact on what effectively is a single track road (Briary Lane) is considerable, again both during the construction phase and after. Indeed it is interesting to note that the owners of the house to be demolished to give access previously strongly objected to Gladman's first application, including on safety grounds. As it is interesting that the owner of the farmland that will be used also objected to a proposed cemetery being built near their land, again on safety grounds due to increased traffic on Briary Lane. That plan was for 8 burials per year; I think it is safe to say that this development would create substantially more traffic (and risk) than that.

It should also be noted that a legal covenant is in place that restricts the demolition of the proposed house that would provide access. In the unlikely event that planning was granted, a collective legal challenge using that legal covenant will commence. Whilst recognising that this would be a civil matter, nonetheless this would, at worst stop the construction from ever happening (as, if successful, this legal challenge would dramatically restrict any profits from the land owner/seller, making it completely unviable to them) and at best dramatically delay any construction to the point of the site no longer being viable. This is also something that should also be considered if this site is lobbied to be included in the next local plan.

This application does not address the reasons cited for rejection by NHDC last time. Indeed it is worse than the previous one submitted and NHDC should reject this application not just on visual impact but also on access.

Therefore, in considering all the above points, I strongly urge the council to reject this damaging and unsustainable planning proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Charlotte Clarke