

30 ECHO HILL
ROYSTON, HERTS,
SG8 9BB

5 August 2025

Ben Glover
Senior Planning Officer
NHDC Council Offices
Gernon Road
LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY
Herts, SG6 3JF

Dear Mr Glover

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

I wish to object to the planning application above in the strongest possible terms. I have examined the plans and know the site well as I have lived in Echo Hill since 1983. The application has no merits over the ones submitted in 2018 and 2020/21 which were unanimously opposed by NHDC. In fact, this new proposal has even less to recommend it than the last and, in my opinion, should be rejected once and for all.

My objections are as follows, points 3 - 4 being specific to my property, 30 Echo Hill:

1. The development site is not identified in the existing Local Plan for NHDC and is outside the settlement boundary identified in the plan and Royston already has significant ongoing and planned housing developments. The application should be refused for its problematic location and its failure to comply with the adopted and emerging local plan.

2. Access to Echo Hill is already difficult as the only route is via Briary Lane and Sun Hill. Both of these are essentially single lane because of the many parked cars. Also the junctions Briary Lane/Sun Hill and Sun Hill into Echo Hill are quite tight. Echo Hill itself is a narrow, twisting residential road on quite a steep gradient. It has many cars parked by the side of the road as most of the properties only have drive space for one vehicle and, being at least 4-bedroomed houses, the majority have at least 2 cars per household.

Taking all these factors into consideration, it is hard to imagine how the road system could cope with all the construction traffic, leave alone the extra cars and service vehicles attendant on the new properties. Access for emergency vehicles would also be extremely difficult. Having parking restrictions on the hill to ease traffic flow would cause much hardship for the existing residents.

Echo Hill is even more difficult to negotiate in icy conditions and has often been quite treacherous, especially on the two tight bends. Extra traffic would undoubtedly exacerbate the situation.

3. **Specifically affecting my property**, there is quite a steep incline in my garden. From my house up to the fence, which borders the field where development is being proposed, there is a rise of approximately 2.5m over the short distance of 13m (approx 20%). As my garden is relatively short, the new housing would mean that I would be overlooked, overshadowed and

dominated and it would detrimentally impact on my reasonable expectations of residential amenity and privacy. See photograph in Appendix.

4. In addition, **my property immediately borders the northern edge of the proposed development and lies at the point immediately below where an attenuation basin would be**. This, together with the 20% gradient of my garden, mentioned above, and the fact it is so short (only 13 metres deep) gives me grave concerns about the possibility of the basins overflowing and flooding my property, due to the additional volume of surface water runoff generated by the proposed development. Apart from the devastation this would cause, I don't know where I would stand with an insurance claim. Are there plans in place for exceeding the basin's capacity?

5. I understand the North Herts Landscape Study ref:228 says the area has "high landscape value" and "avoid the location of new development in visually intrusive locations, particularly where they would be visible on the skyline". The area forms part of the Scarp Slopes South of Royston which "is a rare landscape type in the region". It recommends "maintaining the general open character of the area and in particular the long distance views over the low landscape to the north." I believe this was one of the reasons for refusal of the 2018 and 2020/21 planning applications. I am advised that the highest point of the new proposed housing would make it the highest point in the whole of Royston, which clearly is unacceptable. The same reason for refusal should therefore still apply to the current application.

6. The proposed site lies above a major aquifer, supplying water to much of the town. Pollution of this aquifer either by products used during building or by the incoming residents could constitute a major health hazard. This area is also classified as a "Source Protection Zone 1" due to the high risk to groundwater contamination, again clearly making the site far less suitable for development.

7. The site has diverse and plentiful flora and fauna; housing development would have a severe ecological impact to a number of at-risk species as specified in the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan and the RSPB's Red List. Not only would the habitats on the site be destroyed, but it would also adversely affect those on adjacent Therfield Heath.

8. I would like to make you aware of restrictive covenants which are in place in Echo Hill and which we as residents of Echo Hill have the benefit of, and we reserve the right to take enforcement action if these covenants are breached. The covenants were wrongly dismissed by NHDC planning during the previous determination of planning application 20/00744/OP. The enforcement of the covenants could be a lengthy legal process, possibly taking several years to be resolved. A tribunal action would therefore significantly delay the deliverability of the development. This factor therefore means that the possibility of a lengthy delay to implementation will become a material planning consideration in the decision making process.

You are aware from the previously refused applications for this site the strength of feeling against this development from the community of Royston and the significant impact this development will have directly to the residents of Echo Hill. A letter from an appointed solicitor was issued to both Gladman and no.24 Echo Hill, during the previous application 20/00744/OP, regarding the breach of the covenants and the intention of enforcement action. This remains the case for this latest application and Echo Hill residents could pursue this going forward. In addition, if the community is successful with enforcing the covenants and preventing the demolition of no.24, both the construction traffic and main site access would not be able to

enter the site via Echo Hill, the alternative would be to use the bridle way and therefore the reasons for refusal in the 2018 application associated with the negative impact to the neighbouring SSSI would still stand. Therefore, due to the protective covenants in place, which residents of Echo Hill could enforce, it cannot be guaranteed that Gladman will be able to deliver this site and therefore this site cannot contribute towards the 5-year NHDC housing supply.

In summary, there are overwhelming reasons why the proposed development should not go ahead and I strongly urge the council to reject this completely unsuitable, detrimental application

Yours sincerely,

Marian Williams

Appendix



Photo taken from my house, showing 20% gradient of my garden, situated immediately below the proposed attenuation basins .