

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

11 August 2025

Dear Mr Glover

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

I'm writing to object to the above planning application. I've looked through the plans, and have serious concerns about what's being proposed. This is the third time that this application has been made - after the first two attempts were rejected. This third attempt is laughable and a waste of your time, and tax payers' money. It must also be refused as none of the objections cited in the previous applications have been addressed nor are able to be addressed.

The site is not identified in the Local Plan for NHDC and is outside the settlement boundary identified. 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.

The location of the development site is sensitive. Building here would have a huge visual impact. Not to mention the adverse impact this will have on Therfield Heath (a SSSI) which is situated adjacent to the site. The proposals have not substantially changed since the previously rejected planning applications, which were refused on these grounds and therefore this application must also be refused.

The proposed access via Echo Hill and Briary Lane raises serious highway safety concerns given that Echo Hill, Sun Hill and Briary Lane are all extremely narrow and are very steep, which all contribute to being unsuitable and unsustainable for a significant increase in vehicular movements that are already over capacity especially at peak times. This will increase accidents with cars and pedestrians. No mitigation is included in the proposals.

There are several inconsistencies within the developers' documentations that fail to mention the steep slopes, supermarkets that have closed down, includes bus services that don't exist and include unrealistic travel times to the train station. Working in construction, I want to also point out the completely unrealistic ability of construction traffic to be able to navigate these streets without causing serious damage to cars, kerbs, pavements and potentially human lives. The proposed access to the site has also worsened since the previous application, following a boundary dispute between no23 and 24 Echo Hill, which means that the access is 1.19m narrower than before. From the developers own traffic plan, it is clear that two cars effectively cannot pass simultaneously without mounting the kerb or damaging wing mirrors, and refuse trucks/lorries/construction traffic etc cannot turn without mounting the pavement. This is unacceptable and shows the unsuitability of the proposals.

The proposed development will have an ecological impact to at-risk species, as specified in the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan and the RSPB Red list, and other protected species. This site supports wildlife, including bats, badgers, owls and hedgehogs, and I along with other residents have evidence of this. The proposals already show a deficit in biodiversity, let alone the 10% BNG that is required.

Royston is already experiencing pressure on school places, GP surgeries, public transport and station parking capacity. The development would introduce hundreds of additional residents, with no guaranteed investment in supporting infrastructure, of which the problems have recently be exacerbated by the recent Redrow and Linden Homes developments in the town. There is no clear indication of what S106, S278 or CIL contributions would be secured. Permission was refused on these grounds previously, and therefore must also be refused again.

While a SuDS system is proposed, there is no evidence it would be robust in the face of increasingly frequent extreme weather events including surface water run off due to the steep topography of the land. I would have serious concerns regarding flooding to my property and surface water run off down Echo Hill and Briary Lane based on the current plans.

The proposed development will adversely affect my living conditions both during construction due to the aforementioned additional people, car, construction traffic etc and once complete, including potential loss of light and overlooking into my property due to the steep topography of the site.

We would like to make you aware of restrictive covenants which are in place in Echo Hill and which we as a resident(s) 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 would 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 Number 24 Echo Hill during the previous application of 20/00744/OP, regarding the breach of the covenants and the intention for enforcement action, this remains the case for this latest application and Echo Hill residents will pursue this going forward for this latest application.

In addition, if the community is successful with enforcing the covenants and preventing the demolition of Number 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 bridleway 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 will 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 conclusion; this application must be refused as it is damaging and unsustainable. No changes to the site have been made since the previous refusal, including no provision for S106/S278 works/CIL. Access is not achievable. Traffic will worsen with no mitigation proposed. The SSSI will be damaged. Wildlife including protected species will be negatively impacted. Flood risk will increase. Loss of high quality agricultural land. The site is not in the local plan.

Yours sincerely,

Nicholas Farr MRICS, resident of 21 Echo Hill, Royston.