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8 August 2025

Dear Mr Glover,

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

I am writing to object to the planning application for housing on land opposite Heath Farm, Briary Lane. I have reviewed the documents and considered the proposal's potential impacts carefully. I strongly believe that this development would be inappropriate for this location and would cause lasting harm to Royston and its surroundings.

Housing Supply and Local Plan

This site is not allocated for development in the adopted Local Plan and lies outside the Royston settlement boundary. Royston has already played a significant role in helping North Hertfordshire meet its housing targets. There is no planning justification for approving speculative development in this sensitive location, and doing so would undermine the strategic objectives of the Local Plan.

Landscape and Visual Impact

The site is part of the open rural setting of the town and is clearly visible from the surrounding area. Developing it would result in a major visual intrusion and harm the existing character of Briary Lane. Previous proposals on this land have been rejected for similar reasons, and those concerns remain unchanged.

Impact on Local Residents

This development would disrupt the peaceful setting of existing homes, reduce privacy for nearby residents, and increase noise during and after construction. The loss of green outlook would reduce the overall quality of life for those living nearby.

Highway and Transport Concerns

The site is not well connected. Briary Lane is already difficult to navigate, and the proposed access arrangements are unconvincing. The development would increase traffic on unsuitable roads and make it harder for residents, especially children, to travel safely on foot or by bike.

It is particularly important to stress the gradient of Echo Hill, which presents a significant barrier to sustainable travel. Echo Hill is extremely steep and poses a serious challenge for pedestrians and cyclists. Previous application consultations have recognised that the incline makes walking or cycling from the site into town impractical for most people, particularly for families or older residents. This steep access route undermines the sustainability of the location and increases reliance on cars, contrary to Local Plan policies and national planning principles.

Ecological Concerns

This site provides valuable habitat for species listed on the RSPB Red List and the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. There is a risk of permanent ecological damage if this development goes ahead, and no clear mitigation has been provided.

Flooding and Water Management

Given the site's pronounced slope and the steep topography of Echo Hill, the risk of surface water runoff is extremely high. The local drainage network, particularly on Echo Hill, is already known to struggle during periods of heavy rain. Introducing a large amount of hard surfacing without sufficient drainage would only exacerbate the problem. Overland flow from the access road and developed site could overwhelm the existing drainage infrastructure, increasing flood risk to neighbouring homes and the public highway. These concerns were raised in previous applications and remain unaddressed. With the effects of climate change intensifying, including more frequent and heavier rainfall, the likelihood and severity of surface water flooding will only increase over time, making it even more critical that high risk sites like this are avoided.

Lack of Environmental Impact Assessment

This is a major development in an environmentally sensitive location, but the application has not been accompanied by an Environmental Statement. It is not clear whether an Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out at all, which is concerning.

Health and Infrastructure Pressure

Local GP surgeries and health services are already stretched. This development would place additional demand on health infrastructure, with no evidence that capacity exists or can be increased to meet the need.

Loss of Agricultural Land

This site comprises productive farmland, which is a valuable and limited resource. Allowing its development for housing that is not allocated or required undermines long-term sustainability and food security.

Conclusion

In view of the many concerns outlined above, I respectfully ask that this planning application be refused. It is contrary to local and national policy and would bring long-term harm to the local environment, infrastructure, and community.

Yours faithfully,
David McMichael