

Ryan De Vooght-Johnson
10 Echo Hill
Royston
Hertfordshire
SG8 9BB

Reference: 25/01708/OP Outline planning for Land opposite Heath Farm, Briary Lane, Royston

Dear Mr Glover,

I am writing to formally object to the above planning application. Having examined the plans and supporting documents, and as a resident with intimate knowledge of the site, I believe that this is an unsuitable and unsustainable development that is contrary to local and national planning policies.

My objection is based on the following material planning considerations:

1. Housing Supply and Conflict with the Local Plan The development site is not identified for development in the adopted NHDC Local Plan (2011-2031) and lies outside the defined settlement boundary. Royston is already meeting its contribution to the 5-year housing land supply. Furthermore, due to significant engineering challenges, constrained access, and legally enforceable restrictive covenants, the site's deliverability is highly questionable. It therefore cannot be reliably considered as part of the 5-year housing supply. The proposal is in conflict with the adopted local plan and should be refused on this basis alone.

2. Landscape and Visual Impact The reasons for refusal of the 2018 and 2020 applications on grounds of landscape and visual impact remain valid. By reason of its prominent, elevated position, the development would have a significant adverse impact on the character of this valued landscape and key visual receptors, including views from Therfield Heath (SSSI). The proposals conflict with the NPPF (including Paragraph 135) and Policies CGB1, SP5, SP12, NE1, and NE6 of the NHDC Local Plan.

3. Highways, Access, and Transport Unsustainability The site is fundamentally unsustainable. The access roads (Echo Hill, Sun Hill, Briary Lane) are narrow, steep, and constrained, and the proposed access has been contrived with little regard for existing users or safety. The applicant's Transport Assessment and safety audit have not considered the proximity to existing junctions, blind bends, or the impact on existing residents' driveways. The steep topography makes walking and cycling unviable, ensuring heavy car dependency. The proposal is therefore contrary to paragraphs 108, 109 and 110 of the NPPF and Policy T1 of the Local Plan.

4. Adverse Impact on Residential Amenity The elevated position of the site relative to existing homes will lead to a direct loss of privacy and amenity, leaving residents feeling overlooked, overshadowed, and dominated by the new development. The neighbouring properties to the proposed access road will be detrimentally impacted by noise and disturbance. This is in direct conflict with Policy D3 of the adopted Local Plan.

5. Ecology and Impact on Therfield Heath (SSSI) The development poses a direct threat to the adjacent Therfield Heath SSSI and a designated Local Wildlife Site. The applicant's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculations already show a deficit and rely on off-site mitigation, which is unacceptable given the proximity to a protected SSSI. The development will increase recreational pressure on the Heath, and under Paragraph 193b of the NPPF, development that has an adverse effect on an SSSI should not be permitted unless the benefits clearly outweigh the harm. No such case has been made.

6. Flood Risk and Water Quality Due to the steep topography, overland flows from the site present a flood risk to the existing highway drainage network on Echo Hill. Furthermore, the site lies within a "Source Protection Zone 1" above a major aquifer, making it highly unsuitable for development due to the risk of groundwater contamination. There is also insufficient evidence that the local Anglian Water sewerage works has the capacity to handle additional flows without causing environmental damage to the local chalk stream catchment. The proposal conflicts with the NPPF and Policy NE7g of the Local Plan.

7. Lack of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Previous applications on this site were concluded to likely have a significant environmental impact. Given the acknowledged risk to the adjacent SSSI and the scale of the proposal, it is a serious omission that no Environmental Statement (ES) has been submitted, nor has it been made clear if a formal EIA Screening Opinion was obtained.

8. Overburdened Local Health Services There is no capacity within local health services. A recent response from the Cambridge and Peterborough Integrated Care System regarding another local application confirmed a "significant health infrastructure deficit" in Royston. Existing GP practices are land-locked and cannot expand. This proposal would place an unacceptable strain on the health and wellbeing of existing residents, conflicting with Policy SP7 of the NHDC Local Plan.

9. No Material Change from Previous Refusals It is important to note that this application is materially the same as those previously refused by the Council in 2018 and 2020. Nothing has materially changed to overcome the previous, well-reasoned grounds for refusal. Therefore, all previous objections remain valid and should be given significant weight in the determination of this latest application.

For all the reasons stated above, I strongly urge the Council to reject this planning proposal.

Yours faithfully,

Ryan De Vooght-Johnson