

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

14 August 2025

Dear Mr. Glover,

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

I am writing to strongly object to this genuinely impracticable, undeliverable and unwanted development. This is the third incarnation of this planning application and, having reviewed the documents, I can see only minor changes that do not meaningfully address the reasons for past refusals.

Landscape, Visual Impact & Living Conditions

I live at number 33 Echo Hill, right at the bottom of the steeply sloping field in question. Our garden sits at the lowest point, and the extreme gradient means the proposed houses would be positioned far higher than our home.

Because of this topography, the new buildings would tower over us, removing the open sky we currently enjoy, and creating a constant sense of being overlooked. If the development goes ahead, it is likely we will lose all view of the skyline from our kitchen window, replacing it with a looming wall of buildings.

This oppressive presence would make our garden feel enclosed and dominated, directly harming our day-to-day quality of life. The scale of the height difference between our property and the proposed plots is stark and would result in an overwhelming change to our living environment. **Please see pictures below:**





The harm would not be limited to my home. Given the elevated and exposed location of the site, the development would also be highly visible from wider vantage points across Royston, including Therfield Heath SSSI. These impacts were central to the refusal of previous applications in 2018 and 2020/21, and nothing in this latest proposal meaningfully reduces them.

Highways & Access

As someone who has lived both on Sun Hill and now at the top of Echo Hill, I can say with confidence that the surrounding road network is already at capacity. Access to the proposed development would be through Briary Lane, which, due to residents parking outside their homes, often narrows to single-lane traffic.

At the top of Briary Lane, the left turn onto Sun Hill is extremely tight, with parked cars, a disabled bay, and poor visibility. It is not uncommon for two vehicles to meet mid-turn, with larger vehicles such as bin lorries or delivery trucks forced to mount the curb onto Sun Hill Common—an area where children often play.

Echo Hill itself is a steep, winding road with poor visibility and significant on-street parking. It is treacherous in winter and would fail modern highway safety standards if submitted today. Adding construction traffic, then hundreds of extra daily vehicle movements from 84 new homes, would make these roads unsafe for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.

The developer's suggestion that the town centre and supermarkets are within easy walking distance ignores the reality of the gradient—many residents, particularly older people or families with small children, will find the walk impractical, pushing them toward car use and increasing traffic pressure further.

Not to mention this would fundamentally change the nature of the road, which is currently a quiet cul-de-sac, into a major through road. This will completely change the character and feeling of the road, in an extremely negative way. Residents currently enjoy the relative safety of allowing their children to play in the street. This would stop that happening and dampen the community feeling of the road.

Legal Covenant Affecting Access

The proposed access to the site requires the demolition of No. 24 Echo Hill. However, there is a legal covenant on the road stating that no houses can be demolished. We purchased our home on the strength of this covenant, as it guaranteed that Echo Hill would remain a quiet cul-de-sac suitable for raising our family.

While I recognise that covenants are not a material planning consideration, this one is enforceable, and I, along with other Echo Hill residents, would take legal action to uphold it. Such action could take years to resolve and would likely prevent the development from proceeding within the time frame needed to contribute to the district's five-year housing supply.

Housing Supply & Local Plan

This site is not allocated in the adopted Local Plan and lies outside Royston's settlement boundary. While North Hertfordshire currently has a housing land supply shortfall, the Local Plan sets out a clear spatial strategy to direct growth to sustainable, allocated sites. Granting permission here would represent unplanned, speculative development in conflict with that strategy and contrary to the NPPF's plan-led approach.

Ecology

The development threatens habitats for protected and priority species, including those on the RSPB Red List. The site contributes to an important wildlife corridor between Therfield Heath and surrounding countryside, which will be irreparably damaged.

Flood Risk, Drainage & Attenuation Basin

The steep slope of this field means rainwater runs directly downhill towards my home. On the current drawings, the proposed attenuation basin is positioned directly below my garden. In the previous application, we commissioned expert advice which concluded that, given the extreme topography and volume of surface water run-off, any basin capable of containing it would have to be enormous.

Flooding Risk – The proximity and scale of the basin would leave my property at direct risk if it overflowed or failed, particularly during intense rainfall when the existing drainage network already struggles.

Amenity & Public Health – A large water-holding feature immediately behind our home will inevitably result in standing water during summer months, creating a breeding ground for midges and other insects. This would severely impact our ability to use our garden and raises genuine health and nuisance concerns, especially for my young children.

No mitigation has been put forward to address these risks, and given the site's gradient, the basin's location so close to existing homes is wholly unacceptable.

Summary

Taken together—the unacceptable visual dominance, loss of privacy, substandard road access, ecological harm, flood risk, and lack of infrastructure—this proposal is unsustainable and unsuitable. The reasons for refusal in 2018 and 2020/21 remain entirely valid, and I urge the Council to reject this damaging application once again.

Yours faithfully,

Ben Smith
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