

Members of Royston Town Council raise a STRONG OBJECTION to the Outline Planning Application 21/00765/OP – Land Off Barkway Road, North of Flint Hall, Royston, Herts, on the following grounds:

Local Plan

The application site is not allocated for development in either the current or the emerging Local Plan and lies within the countryside, beyond defined settlement boundaries. Councillors were very disappointed to even have to discuss this application, as there is good reason why this is not included in any Local Plan. NHDC must not agree to this application. If this aggressive type of application from developers was to be allowed it would set a precedent for further inappropriate development threats. It shows how important it is for our emerging local plan to be finalised and it is regrettable that this has been so delayed. The COVID pandemic has had a huge effect on our town centre and it is probable that retail and office space will be increasingly used for housing, as we are already seeing in the town. There is no further need for additional dwellings on this site.

Traffic

Traffic surveys were carried out during lockdown when many people were working from home or furloughed. The data in the application therefore cannot be valid. This development could potentially add five hundred extra cars. This is an unacceptable increase in traffic to the narrow and busy pinch-point on Barkway Road – where permanently parked cars make the road into an already dangerous single carriageway. There would be further congestion on the town's one-way system, which regularly becomes gridlocked. Queuing will cause further pollution for nearby houses. The proposed development has no provision for sustainable travel measures in order to achieve a significant switch to walking, cycling and public transport. We must avoid a car-centric development on the edge of town.

Walking and cycling

The proposed development has no provision for sustainable travel measures in order to achieve a significant switch to walking, cycling and public transport. Facilities such as the town centre, schools and medical centres would realistically be too far to walk to – this will further impact on traffic levels. The indicated walk circles, in the Design and Access statement, do not take into consideration walking with small children or the elderly, or the fact that it is uphill from Royston. Cycling along Barkway Road would be dangerous, especially for school children.

Environment

The proposed development would have a negative impact on the character of the area, the natural geography and the skyline. The proposed development would be a destruction of good arable land and local wildlife habitats; it would lead to the inevitable destruction of more trees. Busy internal roads would cut through the existing bridleway and footpath. The UK needs to be more self-sufficient and produce more food locally; this proposal would result in the permanent loss of agricultural land. Once there are bricks and mortar on our countryside it will be lost forever. The additional footfall would also increase the harm to the nearby and already fragile Therfield Heath, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Existing residents will be subjected to a lengthy period of construction noise and inconvenience, especially those on the north boundary of the land.

Drainage

We have already seen the consequences of building on steeply sloping chalk land in Royston, which caused flooding issues for neighbouring properties.

Infrastructure

There is insufficient infrastructure in the town. Doctors, dentists and schools are already under pressure from numerous recent developments.

In conclusion, the negative impacts of the development would significantly outweigh the benefits in the area.

Royston Town Council Planning Committee

12 April 2021