

PLANNING REF : 251310
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Shaw Cottage
: Bunces Shaw Road, Farley Hill, Reading, Berkshire
: RG7 1UU
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Lisa Scarlett
DATE SUBMITTED : 23/06/2025

COMMENTS:

I formally request that Wokingham Borough Council issue a positive Screening Opinion, confirming that a full and comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment is required for application 251310 before it can be lawfully determined.

Firstly, the title of the application is misleading in that it states that the land at Blackcroft Farm is in Arborfield. The proposed development site is, in fact, in the hamlet of Farley Hill. The address of Blackcroft Farm is Church Road, Farley Hill RG7 1UJ. Further, a retrospective planning application for development at Blackcroft Farm, which was refused in April last year (Planning Ref. 232315), listed the site address as Farley Hill.

The above application was for the change of use of Blackcroft Farm from Agricultural to vehicle and industrial storage and the subsequent appeal (ref APP/X0360/W/24/3351397) was dismissed on 17 March 2025. The current proposal for Blackcroft Farm seeks to not only expand Blackcroft Farm Industrial Estate, but to add a major urban development in a rural setting. The substantial increase in storage areas/businesses using the Blackcroft Farm site has already resulted in large uplift in vehicle movements in this unsustainable Countryside location that fails to maintain the high quality of the surrounding environment.

The environmental impact of this development includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Valued and Rural Landscape: The hamlet of Farley Hill is a designated Area of Special Character located within a rural landscape. Wokingham Borough Council's Landscape and Green Infrastructure Strategy references the 'Farley Hill Valued Landscape Assessment' and confirms the site lies within the 'Farley Hill Sand and Gravel Hills' Landscape Character Area, which is noted for its "secluded, remote character".

Ancient Woodland: the proposed site contains two areas of designated Ancient Woodland: Westwood Copse and Claypits Wood. These are also identified as Habitats of Principal Importance. Ancient Woodland is an irreplaceable habitat, and its presence alone means the site is environmentally sensitive.

Proximity to Nationally and Internationally Important Sites: The development site lies just 600m from the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) and is located within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for Bramshill SSSI.

Finally, construction is one of the most polluting industries. The proposed development will be in contravention of Wokingham Borough Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan.

A full EIA is the only appropriate mechanism to assess these risks.