

PLANNING REF : 251310  
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Featherlarks  
: 1 Council Houses, Church Road, Farley Hill, Berkshire  
: RG7 1TX  
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Timothy Robert Jones  
DATE SUBMITTED : 16/06/2025

COMMENTS:

Subject: Objection to Proposed Development at Land at Blackcroft Farm, West of Reading Road, Arborfield

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to register my objection to the proposed residential development by Rubix Land Ltd at Blackcroft Farm, west of Reading Road, Arborfield.

I am a resident of Farley Hill living on Church Road within 1200 metres of the site.

My objection, and I what I believe should be Wokingham BC's refusal, is based on:

1. Major Development in a Rural and Infrastructurally Fragile Area  
The proposed development represents a major urban extension into open countryside, comprising over 650 residential units, a care home, leisure complex, industrial estate expansion and significant road infrastructure. Farley Hill is a small rural hamlet, lacks much infrastructure and is not connected to:

- Mains sewerage,
- Mains gas,
- Adequate public transport, and
- Relies on a water tower at Castle Hill for supply.

Connecting a development of this scale to utility infrastructure (especially sewerage and water) would involve substantial engineering works, crossing sensitive rural terrain, and causing disruption to the entire area.

In this context, the proposal clearly contradicts the NPPF's definition of "deliverable" sites, as cited in Wokingham Borough Council's Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement (January 2025). Paragraph (a) of the NPPF definition explicitly states:

"Deliverable sites" are "sites which do not involve major development and have planning permission "

The current proposal not only involves major development, but is also entirely speculative, without outline permission, and in a locality that lacks the baseline infrastructure to support it. It is thus

wholly inappropriate to treat this site as deliverable within the current land supply strategy.

2. Impact on Rural Character and Community

This development threatens the distinct rural identity of Farley Hill.

For almost 800 years, since Farley Hill and nearby Swallowfield

became part of the Wiltshire Hundred of Amesbury, the village has had a distinct separation from the communities surrounding it. Our modern road network and the hill rising to 80m above the landscape surrounding it has maintained this separation and distinct difference from its neighboring communities.

Farley Hill's distinct rural identity is also an accident of its possession of three great houses and associated estates, Farley Hall, Farley Castle and Farley Hill Place. From the 18th century Farley Hill has been a community based on open arable land and managed estate landscapes.

The introduction of dense residential, commercial, and road infrastructure into 38+ hectares of agricultural land will urbanise a deeply rural community with no capacity social, environmental or infrastructural to absorb such change. This runs contrary to Paragraph 174 of the NPPF, which states:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside "

Church Road, Farley Hill already suffers from "rat run" status at the peak periods of the day. The recent re-launch of the George & Dragon pub, the re-opening of the school - now Addington Early Years Centre and traffic to local farms continue to maintain persistently busy traffic levels on this road.

A development of this scale would irrevocably change the settlement pattern and visual character of Farley Hill and the landscape west of the A327.

### 3. Archaeology and Heritage Significance

It is of grave concern that the developer downplays the archaeological sensitivity of the site, despite the presence of a significant section of "The Devil's Highway" Roman road (MWK1733, MWK1742, MWK1743), a nationally recognised asset linking London and Silchester.

While this feature is referenced incorporation into the "development framework" is no substitute for preservation. The NPPF (para. 205) requires that:

"Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets and make this evidence publicly accessible."

In the case of the Devil's Highway a rare linear Roman infrastructure asset the Council should exercise extreme caution. The road's alignment, integrity and landscape context could be irreversibly lost through ground disturbance from foundations, drainage trenches, service roads, or utilities.

Moreover, the site lies adjacent to two areas of Ancient Woodland (Westwood Copse and Claypits Wood) a highly sensitive landscape setting that enhances the heritage value of the area and contributes to its pre-industrial character. The proximity of development to these protected habitats risks undermining the historic landscape matrix in which such archaeological features are embedded.

#### 4. Environmental Sensitivity & EIA Thresholds

I believe that this proposal meets multiple Schedule 2 thresholds under the EIA Regulations 2017:

- The development exceeds 5 hectares (site area ~38.7 ha),
- It includes over 150 dwellings,
- It adjoins Ancient Woodland,
- It lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone (Bramshill SSSI), and
- Is within 600m of the Thames Basin Heath SPA.

These factors strongly indicate "significant environmental effects", triggering the requirement for a full Environmental Statement. The cumulative impacts of this development in combination with Arborfield Green and other A327 corridor developments are already placing unsustainable pressure on infrastructure, biodiversity corridors, and the setting of heritage assets.

It is my conclusion that this speculative proposal constitutes unsustainable, inappropriate major development in a rural context, without infrastructure or community justification. It threatens: - A significant Roman archaeological alignment,

- Two adjacent Ancient Woodlands,
- The character and fabric of an historically rural community, and
- The fragile ecology of an already pressurised landscape.

I respectfully request that Wokingham Borough Council:

1. Require a full Environmental Impact Assessment,
2. Refuse this development - should it proceed, based on heritage, environmental and rural character grounds.

Yours faithfully,

T R Jones