

PLANNING REF : 251310
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Farley Hill Farm
: Church Lane, Farley Hill, Reading
: RG7 1UP
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Hilary Cannon
DATE SUBMITTED : 19/06/2025

COMMENTS:

I object to the request for a negative Screening Opinion in relation to the proposed residential development at Blackcroft Farm. Given the scale, nature, and environmental context of the site, I believe that a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is not only warranted but essential.

The proposed development clearly meets the criteria for Schedule 2 development under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 - specifically Category 10(b), as it involves more than 150 dwellings and exceeds 5 hectares in area.

However, the applicant appears to underplay the likelihood of significant environmental effects, despite the following material considerations:

Proximity to Ancient Woodland - The site adjoins two designated Ancient Woodlands: Westwood Copse and Claypits Wood. These irreplaceable habitats are sensitive to changes in light, noise, hydrology and air quality, all of which could result from nearby development. The presence of Ancient Woodland significantly increases the potential for environmental harm and necessitates EIA consideration.

Ecological Sensitivity - The site lies within 600 metres of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and within a SSSI risk zone for Bramshill SSSI. These locations are environmentally sensitive and have specific legal protections. The impacts on protected species and habitats, especially considering incomplete ecological surveys, remain unknown and potentially significant. Preliminary ecological information indicates the likely presence of species and habitats of principal importance under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Incomplete Baseline Information - The current submission relies on preliminary assessments and does not provide the full scope of environmental baseline data required to evaluate the true impact of the proposed development. Important surveys for priority species and habitats are still outstanding, making any environmental judgement premature.

Potential Cumulative Effects - The development sits within an area already subject to significant housing growth and transport infrastructure changes. Without a full EIA, there is no reliable mechanism to assess cumulative effects on local biodiversity, heritage assets, and rural landscape.

Landscape and Visual Impact - The site includes Public Right of Way FINC FP1 and is situated in a prominent, open rural setting. The potential visual intrusion and loss of landscape character are

significant and need detailed assessment under EIA methodology. Over half the site also encroaches on the Farley Hill Valued Landscape Assessment, neither protecting nor enhancing it (NPPF para 180) and further impacting the rural setting of Farley Hill.

As I understand it, the EIA process is designed to ensure that all significant environmental effects are systematically identified, assessed, and made available to decision-makers and the public before planning permission is granted. A negative screening opinion at this stage would run contrary to the precautionary principle and could undermine the integrity of environmental safeguards in planning.

In view of the above, I strongly urge the Council to issue a positive Screening Opinion and require a full Environmental Impact Assessment for this proposal.