

PLANNING REF : 251310
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Shaw House
: Shaw House Bounces Shaw Road, Farley Hill, UK
: RG71UU
SUBMITTED BY : Mrs Catherine Fyfe
DATE SUBMITTED : 20/06/2025

COMMENTS:

I am writing to formally object to the proposed residential development at Blackcroft Farm, Arborfield, as submitted by Rubix Land Ltd.

This proposal raises a number of serious environmental, ecological, and community concerns which I outline below:

1. Threat to Birds of Prey and Biodiversity

Farley Hill is home to a significant number of birds of prey, including red kites and buzzards, whose presence reflects years of successful conservation. The proposed development would directly threaten their habitat:

Conservation Success: The resurgence of red kites is one of the UK's most celebrated conservation achievements. Farley Hill provides vital nesting and foraging grounds for these birds, supported by protected woodlands and open countryside.

Suitable Habitat: This area includes Ancient Woodlands (Westwood Copse and Claypits Wood), hedgerows, and open fields which are critical to sustaining local raptor and owl populations.

Food Availability: The local food chain, including populations of rodents and rabbits, supports birds of prey. Disruption to these ecosystems will have cascading ecological effects.

The development's scale across over 38 hectares of countryside poses a major threat to these established populations, directly contradicting national biodiversity goals.

2. Destruction of Wildlife Habitat

Farley Hill is a haven for diverse wildlife including great spotted woodpeckers, nuthatch, water voles, and even red squirrels. With much surrounding farmland already lost to development, this project would devastate the last remaining contiguous habitat:

Ancient woodlands and hedgerows, listed as Habitats of Principal Importance, would be impacted despite proposed "retention" measures. Loss of fields and meadows would reduce foraging grounds for mammals and birds.

Ecological surveys referenced by the developer themselves suggest the need for further assessments of breeding birds and other species highlighting the sensitivity of the site.

3. Unsustainable Development in a Hamlet Setting

Farley Hill is a rural hamlet. A development of 650 homes (including a retirement village and care home) would dramatically alter its

character, undermining its rural identity and overwhelming its infrastructure:

The proposed scale, density, and urban infrastructure are wholly out of character with the hamlet and countryside setting.

Increased traffic, noise, and light pollution would permanently damage the tranquility and rural value of the area.

The site is disconnected from safe walking or cycling links,

increasing car dependency a fact acknowledged by the Council in similar past refusals.

4. Unnecessary Duplication of Facilities

The proposal includes leisure and community facilities less than a mile from an existing leisure center next to Bohunt School. This duplication is unjustified, particularly when it involves sacrificing greenfield land.

5. Precedent for Refusal and Inconsistencies with Local Policy

There is clear precedent for refusing similar applications in Arborfield:

A recent proposal was refused (May 20, 2025) on grounds that the development site was a greenfield in open countryside, and the character and scale were "out of keeping."

The same refusal also cited unsustainable car reliance and flood risks due to river proximity concerns equally applicable to Blackcroft Farm.

The current proposal also contravenes local planning policies protecting agricultural land and rural settlement boundaries.