

PLANNING REF : 251310
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Shaw House
: Shaw House Bunces Shaw Rd, Farley Hill
: RG71UU
SUBMITTED BY : Mr Robert Fyfe
DATE SUBMITTED : 23/06/2025

COMMENTS:

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

This proposal is very close to / adjacent to the hamlet of Farley Hill and as such, it raises a number of significant environmental, ecological, and community concerns which I outline below:

1. Threat to Birds and Wildlife

Farley Hill is home to a significant number of birds, including red kites and buzzards, whose presence reflects years of successful conservation. The proposed development would directly threaten their 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, including ancient woodlands and hedgerows, listed as Habitats of Principal Importance (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.

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

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

Conclusion

This development is not suitable for Arborfield / Farley Hill. It poses irreversible risks to local biodiversity, undermines years of conservation work, and imposes urban sprawl onto a rural hamlet. I strongly urge Wokingham Borough Council to reject this planning application.