

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 August 2026 09:28
To: Planning
Subject: Planning Objection DC/26/0913

Categories: Comments Received

Planning Objection – DC/26/0913

Site: Land East of Oaklands, Henfield Road, Cowfold, West Sussex

Proposal: Outline application for approximately 40 residential dwellings with associated access, parking and open space, with all matters reserved except access.

Dear Planning Officer,

I wish to register a strong objection to planning application DC/26/0913 and respectfully request that the application is refused.

This objection is based on conflict with the adopted Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan, the emerging Horsham District Local Plan, and the site's significant landscape, heritage, ecological, drainage, and infrastructure constraints.

1. Development plan conflict and prematurity The Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan, made on 8 October 2025, forms part of the statutory development plan.

Policies 9 and 10 restrict residential development to within the built-up area of Cowfold, except in very limited circumstances. The application site lies outside this boundary and therefore represents unjustified encroachment into open countryside, contrary to the Plan's objectives of preventing sprawl and protecting the village's rural setting. While the emerging Local Plan now proposes this site as CW3 (approximately 100 dwellings), this policy is not yet adopted. The current application for 40 dwellings risks establishing an unplanned first phase of development without the comprehensive framework required to properly plan the wider allocation.

The Council should not grant permission unless it is satisfied that the proposal is consistent with both the made Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging CW3 policy, and that the site can be delivered comprehensively without prejudicing future phases.

2. Landscape impact and urban sprawl

The Council's own assessment of SA366 – Land East of Cowfold identifies the site as highly visible from the A281 approach and at risk of creating the perception of urban sprawl into open countryside.

The introduction of approximately 40 dwellings, together with associated infrastructure, would permanently alter the rural character of the site and erode the visual separation between Cowfold and the surrounding countryside. This is not a minor visual change but a fundamental alteration of settlement form. The proposal should be refused unless it is demonstrated that landscape character can be preserved and that the development would not result in unacceptable urbanisation.

3. Heritage impacts

The application affects the setting of listed buildings, which is a matter of considerable weight.

The introduction of built form, lighting, domestic activity, and infrastructure into an open rural landscape would materially alter the contribution that the site makes to the significance of nearby heritage assets.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Any harm, including harm to setting, must be clearly justified and balanced against public benefits.

A detailed assessment from the Council's Conservation Officer is required before determination.

4. Ancient Woodland and ecological constraints The site adjoins Horse Wood Ancient Woodland, an irreplaceable habitat.

Both Natural England guidance and the emerging CW3 policy require a minimum 15-metre buffer, with no development, gardens, drainage, or lighting within it, and a wider buffer where impacts extend further.

The Council must be satisfied that the proposed 40-dwelling scheme can accommodate these requirements without indirect harm from construction activity, lighting, drainage, recreational pressure, or habitat fragmentation.

A robust ecological assessment is required, including full consideration of protected species, habitat connectivity, and long-term buffer management. Biodiversity Net Gain cannot justify harm to Ancient Woodland.

5. Drainage and flood risk

The site has previously been identified as having low drainage capacity and evidence of groundwater flooding.

The proposal would significantly increase impermeable surfacing, raising risks of:

- groundwater flooding
 - surface water runoff
 - downstream flooding
 - pressure on existing drainage infrastructure
- Policy 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan requires development to mitigate flood risk and be located in areas of lowest risk.

The Council must be satisfied, at outline stage, that 40 dwellings can be accommodated without worsening flood risk. This cannot be deferred to reserved matters.

6. Highways safety and cumulative traffic impact

Cowfold already experiences significant traffic pressure from the A272 and A281.

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies longstanding concerns regarding congestion, pedestrian safety, inadequate infrastructure, and road safety.

The proposed access must be demonstrated to safely accommodate development traffic, including visibility, junction design, pedestrian safety, and construction impacts.

In addition, the proposal must be assessed cumulatively alongside existing commitments and the emerging CW1, CW2 and CW3 allocations. A standalone assessment of 40 dwellings is insufficient.

If safe and suitable access cannot be demonstrated, the application should be refused.

7. Air quality

Although the former Cowfold Air Quality Management Area has been revoked, traffic-related air quality remains a material consideration.

The emerging CW3 policy requires an Air Quality Impact Assessment and Emissions Mitigation Strategy, reflecting ongoing concern about traffic levels on the A272 and A281.

The Council must require evidence of:

- traffic generation
- air quality impacts
- cumulative effects
- and enforceable mitigation measures

Without this, the environmental impact of the proposal cannot be properly assessed.

8. Water neutrality and Habitats Regulations

The Neighbourhood Plan requires development to achieve water neutrality (85 litres per person per day) and to ensure no net increase in mains water use.

Given the sensitivity of downstream protected sites, the Council must be satisfied that:

- water neutrality can be achieved
 - mitigation is secured
 - and the Habitats Regulations assessment confirms no adverse effect on site integrity
- Approval cannot be granted without this certainty.

9. Infrastructure capacity (health and education)

The Neighbourhood Plan evidence identifies existing pressure on both local healthcare provision and St Peter's C of E Primary School.

The addition of approximately 40 dwellings is likely to increase demand further.

The Council should obtain up-to-date confirmation from the relevant authorities regarding:

- GP capacity
- school capacity
- and required mitigation or contributions

10. Lack of comprehensive site planning

The application represents a partial development of a site now proposed for approximately 100 dwellings in the emerging Local Plan.

The Council must ensure that this proposal does not prejudice:

- overall site layout
- access strategy
- landscape buffers
- Ancient Woodland protection
- drainage strategy
- infrastructure provision
- and future development phases

Without a comprehensive masterplan approach, the proposal risks creating a fragmented and unsustainable form of development.

11. Biodiversity impacts

The site contains hedgerows, mature vegetation, and ecological connectivity with surrounding habitats.

A full ecological assessment is required covering protected species, habitat loss, lighting impacts, and long-term management.

Any Biodiversity Net Gain must be properly evidenced and secured, and must not be used to offset harm to irreplaceable habitats such as Ancient Woodland.

12. Planning balance

While housing delivery is a material consideration, it does not override the need to ensure that development is appropriate in location and impact.

The proposal conflicts with the Neighbourhood Plan and raises significant unresolved environmental, heritage, infrastructure, and cumulative impact concerns.

The fact that the site is proposed for allocation in the emerging Local Plan does not remove the requirement to assess these impacts rigorously.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, DC/26/0913 should be refused.

The proposal fails to demonstrate that 40 dwellings can be accommodated without unacceptable harm to landscape character, heritage assets, Ancient Woodland, drainage systems, highway safety, air quality, infrastructure capacity, and the integrity of the adopted development plan.

If the Council is minded to approve the application, I request that it first secures and publishes full technical assessments from Highways, Conservation, Landscape, Ecology, Drainage, and Water Neutrality consultees, and clearly demonstrates compliance with both the Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging CW3 policy.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted Signature]

3 South Leas Henfield Road Cowfold RH13 8GZ 19th August 2026

Sent from my iPhone