

Cowfold Parish Council – Formal Objection to Planning Application DC/26/0934

Demolition of existing storage buildings and erection of 9 residential units, provision of open space and retention of pond

To: Planning Management, Horsham District Council

From: Cowfold Parish Council **Date:** 18 September 2026

1. Introduction

Cowfold Parish Council submits this formal objection to planning application **DC/26/0934**. After reviewing the application documents, ecological assessments, resident submissions, the Council concludes that the proposal would cause **significant and irreversible harm** to Cowfold's rural character, landscape, ecology, amenity, and highway safety.

The Council therefore requests that Horsham District Council **refuse planning permission**.

2. Harm to Village Character and Residential Amenity

Cowfold's Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), agreed by over 90% of our referendum, was produced with strong community support and emphasises:

- preserving rural character,
- protecting tranquillity,
- ensuring development respects historic settlement patterns,
- avoiding building in areas not allocated for growth.

The proposed development conflicts with these principles.

Properties adjoining the site are particularly impacted — **Bakery Cottage, Granary Cottage**, and **Old Bakery** — have unusually narrow, offset gardens and rely heavily on borrowed rural landscape for amenity. Eg Old Bakery has no rear garden at all – merely an 8-foot patio and a view out onto a rural woodland setting.

The proposal would replace this outlook with **brick walls, windows overlooking private gardens**, and increased noise and light pollution. This represents a clear and unacceptable **loss of tranquillity and rural character**.

3. Cumulative Over-Development

Four developments are proposed or recently completed in the southern part of Cowfold:

- DC/26/0934 (this application)
- DC/26/0913 (40 houses)

- DC/26/0472
- Additional houses adjacent to Watermead

The NPPF proposed **no new housing allocations** in this part of the village. The resident evidence states:

“All of these developments have access via unsuitably narrow access ‘roads’... within 20–50m of each other.”

The cumulative impact on landscape, traffic, drainage, and amenity is substantial and must be considered holistically.

4. Loss of Viable Light-Industrial Units

The application describes the existing buildings as “vacant storage buildings”. However they are not vacant storage buildings. They are fully facilitated SINGLE STOREY light industrial or agricultural unit, the only reason they are currently vacant was because the occupant chose to move.”

Cowfold has a shortage of small business premises. Removing viable employment space undermines rural economic sustainability and contradicts the principle of supporting local enterprise.

5. Highway Safety and Access

The entrance to the site is **dangerously narrow**, with:

- no pedestrian pavement,
- poor sight lines,
- an awkward offset opposite Eastman’s Lane,
- insufficient width for two-way vehicle movement.

The A281 already experiences hazardous conditions, with vehicles mounting the narrow pavement at speed. Increasing traffic will materially worsen pedestrian risk and other road users.

6. Landscape Character, Woodland Loss & Ecological Harm

The site lies within the **Cowfold & Shermanbury Farmlands Landscape Character Area**, defined by its **undeveloped rural character**, hedgerows, shaws, and small woodland parcels.

6.1 Quantified Woodland Loss

- **Only ~33–40% of existing woodland is being retained.**
- The **north-west woodland** is reduced to roughly one-third of its former size.
- The **south-east woodland** is almost entirely removed except for **one small retained tree**.
- The **north-east corner** loses *all* woodland and scrub, replaced by roadway and two bungalows.
- At least **nine mature trees** are being removed.
- The **only oak tree** on the site was cut down around the time of sale.
- A large deadwood habitat pile was removed, eliminating valuable invertebrate and small-mammal habitat.

6.2 Veteran Tree Guidance

Horsham's own guidance states:

"Any development that results in the deterioration of veteran trees should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons."

The proposal includes multiple direct and indirect impacts listed in that guidance, including:

- soil compaction,
- root damage, and threat to veteran trees
- increased light/noise pollution,
- fragmentation of habitat.

6.3 Landscape Character Harm

The proposal introduces urbanising features — hardstanding, garages, cars, lighting — into an area currently defined by tranquillity and rural woodland. The Parish Council concludes that the applicant has **not** demonstrated protection, conservation, or enhancement of landscape character.

7. Drainage & Flooding Risk

The site sits on heavy clay soil with poor infiltration. The applicant acknowledges increased run-off but proposes connecting to drainage infrastructure already known to overflow.

The existing drainage infrastructure is frequently at a maximum and cannot cope with our current annual storm conditions

Climate change is increasing extreme rainfall events. Adding impermeable surfaces without robust downstream drainage planning is unacceptable.

8. Conclusion

Cowfold Parish Council concludes that planning application **DC/26/0934** should be **refused** because:

- It causes unacceptable harm to village character and amenity.
- It contributes to cumulative over-development in an area not allocated for growth.
- It removes viable light-industrial employment space.
- It introduces unsafe access and worsens pedestrian risk.
- It results in **major loss of woodland, hedgerows, and mature trees**
- It fails to provide adequate drainage solutions in a flood-sensitive area.

The Parish Council therefore requests that Horsham District Council **refuse planning permission** for DC/26/0934.