

Objection to:

Clock House Farm – PP-DC/26/1212

From Cowfold Parish Council. 19 Sept 2026

1. Principle of Development – Conflict with the Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan

The Cowfold parish council objects to the proposed redevelopment of Clock House Farm on the basis that it represents a **material change of use from agricultural to residential and commercial development outside the areas allocated for growth in the adopted Local Plan(referendum agree by 90% of residents in Sept 2025)**. The application confirms the site's current use as "**Stables and agricultural buildings**", and the proposal introduces **five market dwellings**, a **Class E commercial building**, and a **storage building**, none of which are supported by the plan or district rural development policies.

2. Unplanned Residential Growth Outside the Settlement Boundary

The site lies **outside the defined built-up area boundary**, where new residential development is strictly controlled. The conversion of stables into **five market dwellings** constitutes unplanned housing growth that is not allocated, not infill, not rural-exception housing, and does not meet any identified local housing need. The proposal therefore undermines the Neighbourhood Plan's strategy.

3. Erosion of Agricultural Character and Loss of Rural Land

The removal of **six agricultural buildings**, construction of new commercial floorspace, and creation of **28 parking spaces** represent a significant urbanisation of a rural holding. This would permanently alter the agricultural landscape and countryside character.

This comes at a time when agriculture is so important with an over reliance on importing food from abroad, adding to climate change pressure. Removing these useful building means they are lost forever with the cost to go back to the original state unpalatable

4. Highway Safety and Traffic Impact – Severe Concerns

4.1 Unsuitable Access via Stonehouse Lane

Access to the site is via **Stonehouse Lane**, a narrow rural lane with limited passing places, poor visibility, and sections where two vehicles cannot safely pass. The proposal introduces substantial additional vehicle movements from both residential and commercial uses, which the lane cannot safely accommodate.

4.2 Hazardous Junction with the A272

Stonehouse Lane connects directly to the **A272**, a heavily trafficked route serving **Haywards Heath, Horsham, Gatwick, and Brighton**. A right turn from Stonehouse Lane onto the A272 is **particularly hazardous** due to high traffic speeds, limited sightlines, and the need for vehicles to edge into the carriageway to see approaching traffic. Increased traffic from this development will materially worsen highway safety.

The accident statistics over the 5 years to 31/7/26 for both the exit onto A272 from Stonehouse Lane, and the exit via Littleworth Lane (which could be an alternative exit for the development).

Exit from Stonehouse Lane:

12/06/24 2 cars involved, 1 casualty

06/03/23 3 cars involved, 1 casualty

10/06/25 2 cars involved, 2 casualties

03/02/23 2 cars involved, 2 casualties

Exit from Littleworth Lane:

19/02/24 2 cars involved, 2 casualties

13/09/23 2 cars involved, 2 casualties

17/08/25 2 cars involved, 1 casualty

18/10/23 2 cars involved, 1 casualty

06/09/24 3 cars involved, 1 casualty

There have also been numerous other accidents along the A272 between the 2 exits, including an accident with 1 fatality and 2 serious injuries on 28/03/22.

4.3 No Safe or Sustainable Transport Alternatives

The site has no footways, no cycle routes, and no accessible public transport. All trips will be car-dependent, contrary to national and local policy.

5. Flooding and Drainage Concerns – Increased Risk to the Site and Surrounding area

5.1 Location South of the A272 – Known Flooding Area

Although the application states the site is not within a mapped flood-risk zone, the parish council notes that **land south of the A272 has experienced repeated flooding in recent years**, particularly during periods of **higher rainfall and extreme weather**. Localised flooding has affected:

- fields and low-lying land south of the A272,
- drainage ditches and culverts that frequently overtop,
- sections of Stonehouse Lane itself.

The proposed development lies directly within this area of known surface-water vulnerability.

5.2 Increased Hardstanding and Runoff

The proposal introduces:

- **five residential units**,
- **two new commercial buildings**,
- **28 parking spaces**,
- and associated hardstanding and infrastructure.

This represents a **significant increase in impermeable surfaces**, which will increase surface-water runoff. The parish council is concerned that the proposed Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) is **insufficiently evidenced** and may not cope with the volume of water generated during heavy rainfall events.

5.3 Risk of Flooding to Adjacent Land and Highways

Given the site's topography and proximity to known flood-affected areas, increased runoff could:

- exacerbate flooding on Stonehouse Lane,
- increase water flow toward the A272,
- impact agricultural land downslope,
- and worsen existing drainage issues.

The parish council considers that the applicant has **not adequately demonstrated** that the development will not increase flood risk elsewhere, contrary to national planning guidance.

6. Additional Cumulative Impacts from the Forthcoming Solar Farm

The parish council also highlights the cumulative impact of the new solar farm planned close to the application site. This development is expected to introduce construction traffic, maintenance vehicle movements, heavy plant and machinery, and changes to local drainage patterns.

The combination of the solar farm and the proposed Clock House Farm redevelopment will further intensify traffic congestion on Stonehouse Lane and at the hazardous A272 junction. The A272 already experiences high traffic volumes, and any additional construction or operational traffic will exacerbate existing safety concerns.

Large-scale solar installations typically involve ground compaction, new access tracks, and changes to surface-water flow. These alterations risk increasing runoff toward the same low-lying areas south of the A272 that already experience flooding. When combined with the impermeable surfaces proposed in this application, the cumulative effect may significantly worsen local flood risk.

The parish council considers that the combined impact of both developments has not been assessed and must be evaluated before determining the application.

7. Lack of Policy Justification for Commercial Floorspace

The proposed **525 m²** of commercial floorspace is not supported by any employment allocation or rural economic policy. Commercial development of this scale is inappropriate in open countryside unless directly tied to land-based industries, which this is not.

8. Biodiversity and Landscape Concerns

The application acknowledges protected species, important habitats, and the need for Biodiversity Net Gain. The scale of built form, hardstanding, and building removal risks harming local biodiversity and landscape character.

Conclusion

For the reasons above — including **conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan, unsustainable countryside development, harm to rural character, severe highway safety concerns, and increased flood-risk implications** — the parish council objects to application **PP-DC/26/1212** and requests that the Local Planning Authority **refuse planning permission**.

DECLARATION OF RESULT OF POLL

Horsham District Council

Neighbourhood Planning Referendum for Cowfold

I, Jane Eaton, being the Counting Officer at the above referendum held on Thursday 4 September 2025, do hereby give notice that the results of the votes cast is as follows:

Question		
Do you want Horsham District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Cowfold Parish to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?		
	Votes Recorded	Percentage
Number cast in favour of a Yes	307	90.56 %
Number cast in favour of a No	32	9.43 %