

Objection Statement – Planning Application DC/25/2079

1. Summary

Cowfold Parish Council objects to planning application DC/25/2079 and requests that planning permission is refused.

This objection is made solely on material planning considerations and against the adopted development plan, including the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), the Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024).

The application fails to demonstrate compliance with key local and national policy tests relating to development in the countryside, highway safety, drainage, ecology, heritage, residential amenity and site operation. In multiple areas the submitted evidence is missing, internally inconsistent, expired, or explicitly queried by statutory consultees, particularly Environmental Health.

On the evidence currently before the Local Planning Authority, it is not possible to reach a robust conclusion that the development would be acceptable. The correct and policy compliant outcome is therefore refusal.

2. Refusal Grounds at a Glance (Policy-Led)

Ground Policy		Issue	Why Refusal is Required
A	HDPF Policy 26; NPPF paras 187, 189	Countryside harm / unjustified intensification	No robust landscape or visual evidence to demonstrate acceptability
B	HDPF Policy 23(b); NPPF paras 110, 115	Unsafe vehicular and pedestrian access	No highway safety assessment to demonstrate safe access
C	HDPF Policy 38; Cowfold NP Policy 1; NPPF paras 173–174	Drainage and flood risk not demonstrated	No drainage or foul water strategy; Environmental Health supports refusal
D	HDPF Policy 23(e); NPPF paras 135, 187	Landscape, lighting, ecology and amenity impacts	No lighting scheme; noise evidence is screening-level and inadequate
E	HDPF Policy 23(c); Policy 37; NPPF para 140	Servicing and site operation	Practical operation, servicing and refuse arrangements not demonstrated
F	Statutory BNG; NPPF paras 187, 193	Biodiversity Net Gain reliability	Baseline inputs and validity periods are inconsistent or expired

Ground Policy		Issue	Why Refusal is Required
G	HDPF Policies 23, 32–34; NPPF paras 200–208	Heritage impacts	Harm to the setting of designated heritage assets not assessed or mitigated
H	HDPF Policies 25 & 31; NPPF paras 180, 186	Protected species and habitats	Ecological evidence incomplete, expired and misleading
I	Basis Planning; NPPF para 69	Inaccurate or missing information	True scale, layout and potential use not transparently presented
J	Enforcement context; NPPF paras 187, 193	Temporary Stop Notice	Baseline conditions uncertain and materially unresolved

3. Policy Framework and Decision-Making Basis

The application must be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Relevant policies include (non-exhaustive):

Horsham District Planning Framework (2015)

- Policy 23 – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation
- Policy 26 – Countryside Protection
- Policy 37 – Sustainable Construction
- Policy 38 – Flooding
- Policies 25 and 31 – Biodiversity and Habitats
- Policies 32, 33 and 34 – Cultural and Heritage Assets

Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan

- Policy 1 – Groundwater and Surface Water Flood Risk

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- Paragraphs 69, 110, 115, 135, 140, 173–174, 180, 186–189, 193 and 200–208

Cowfold Parish Council requests refusal. While any materially revised submissions would require re-consultation, on the evidence currently submitted, refusal is the correct decision.

4. Grounds of Objection

Ground A – Principle of Development in the Countryside

(HDPF Policy 26; NPPF paragraphs 187 and 189)

HDPF Policy 26 applies a strong test for development in the countryside, requiring protection of rural character and avoidance of unjustified intensification. The NPPF requires decisions to be based on proportionate and robust evidence.

The proposal introduces a permanent residential use comprising four pitches with day rooms, together with associated domestic activity, vehicle movements, lighting and servicing. On the evidence submitted, the application does not demonstrate that these impacts can be accommodated without unacceptable harm to countryside character.

The proposal therefore conflicts with HDPF Policy 26 and the NPPF and should be refused.

Ground B – Highway Safety and Access

(HDPF Policy 23(b); NPPF paragraphs 110 and 115)

HDPF Policy 23(b) requires Gypsy and Traveller sites to demonstrate safe and convenient vehicular and pedestrian access and to ensure that development does not result in a significant hazard to road users.

The site access is onto the A281 near Cotlands Paddock, a national speed limit road with restricted visibility in both directions, influenced by roadside vegetation outside highway control and by the vertical alignment of the carriageway. Vehicles accessing or leaving the site, including those towing caravans, would be required to cross double white lines on a bend, materially increasing risk to highway users.

Cowfold Parish Council notes that this section of the A281 forms part of a stretch of road with a documented history of personal injury collisions, including serious and fatal incidents, recorded along the A281 through Cowfold Parish between Crabtree and Shermanbury, including the area adjacent to Cotlands and Little Cotlands. While collision history is not determinative in isolation, it is a material consideration when assessing whether a new or intensified access would operate safely in practice.

In this context, the absence of any highway safety assessment is a fundamental deficiency. The only West Sussex County Council response on file relates solely to Public Rights of Way and does not assess:

- visibility standards,
- traffic speeds,
- swept paths for caravans and servicing vehicles,
- emergency access, or
- pedestrian safety along the A281.

The burden of proof rests with the applicant. In the absence of robust technical evidence demonstrating that the access would be safe and would not exacerbate existing highway safety risks, the Local Planning Authority cannot reasonably or lawfully conclude that the proposal complies with HDPF Policy 23(b). The proposal is therefore unacceptable in highway safety terms and planning permission should be refused.

Ground C – Drainage, Foul Drainage and Flood Risk

(HDPF Policy 38; Cowfold NP Policy 1; NPPF paragraphs 173–174)

Neither surface water nor foul drainage feasibility has been demonstrated. No drainage or SuDS strategy has been submitted, and there is no infiltration testing, exceedance routing or maintenance plan.

The site is adjacent to Cowfold Stream and drains into Little Brook, an environmentally sensitive watercourse connected to the River Adur. Environmental Health has advised that drainage feasibility has not been established and supports refusal until it is demonstrated.

The proposal is therefore contrary to HDPF Policy 38, Cowfold Neighbourhood Plan Policy 1 and the NPPF.

Environmental Health further confirms that Building Regulations do not apply to caravan sites, directly contradicting assertions within the Planning Statement. Drainage is identified as a critical component of infrastructure, and a comprehensive Drainage Strategy is required to demonstrate avoidance of flooding and pollution on and off site.

Environmental Health raises specific concern that no drainage field is shown on the block plan and that there may be insufficient land within the red line boundary to accommodate treated effluent disposal. No percolation testing has been undertaken, despite this being a prerequisite for any scheme involving discharge of effluent to ground.

In the absence of system specifications, discharge calculations, percolation testing and long-term maintenance arrangements, drainage feasibility has not been demonstrated. Environmental Health therefore supports refusal until adequate information is provided.

Ground D – Landscape, Lighting, Ecology and Amenity Impacts

(HDPF Policy 23(e); NPPF paragraphs 135 and 187)

Three public rights of way (1754, 1755 and 1756) pass immediately adjacent to the site. The scale of development, extent of hardstanding and residential activity would materially alter their rural character.

No robust landscape and visual impact assessment has been submitted, including assessment of winter (leaf off) conditions. While ecological sensitivity to lighting is acknowledged, no lighting scheme has been provided. Noise evidence is screening level only.

Environmental Health advises that the proximity of the site to existing dwellings gives rise to potential noise, lighting and general nuisance impacts. A Noise Impact Assessment is

recommended to determine whether impacts could be acceptably mitigated. No such assessment has been provided.

The proposal therefore fails to demonstrate acceptable impacts on landscape character and residential amenity and conflicts with HDPF Policy 23(e).

Ground E – Servicing and Practical Site Operation

(HDPF Policies 23(c) and 37; NPPF paragraph 140)

Policy 23(c) requires Gypsy and Traveller sites to be properly serviced and capable of practical operation. Environmental Health raises concerns regarding pitch spacing, parking provision and potential nuisance, noting that Building Regulations do not apply to caravan sites.

Environmental Health confirms that if the development proceeds, a caravan site licence would be required. Such licences mandate minimum distances between caravans, between caravans and boundaries, and between caravans and other structures, including touring caravans. The submitted plans do not demonstrate compliance with these requirements.

It is unclear whether static caravans are too close to day rooms, and insufficient information has been provided on day room construction, which directly affects spacing standards. Touring caravans must be located at least six metres from other caravans, yet the plans fail to demonstrate compliance.

The Planning Statement also makes no provision for recreational space. Caravan site licensing requires approximately one tenth of the site area to be allocated for children's play and/or recreation, sufficient to facilitate ball games. No such space is identified.

No evidence has been submitted addressing refuse storage and collection, vehicle turning, servicing arrangements or emergency access. Environmental Health further advises that conditions would be required to prevent waste storage or burning on site.

The proposal therefore fails to demonstrate lawful, safe and sustainable operation.

Ground F – Biodiversity Net Gain Compliance

(Statutory requirement; NPPF paragraphs 187 and 193)

The submitted BNG metric contains inconsistencies in site area and baseline data. Ecological survey validity periods have expired or will expire before determination.

Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain compliance has not been robustly demonstrated.

Ground G – Impact on Heritage Assets

(HDPF Policies 23, 32–34; NPPF paragraphs 200–208)

The proposal fails to conserve or enhance the setting of nearby designated heritage assets, including West Cotland (1074957), Cotlands (1193092) and Brook Place (1027087).

Impacts on setting, views and landscape context have not been adequately assessed.

Ground H – Protected Species and Habitats

(HDPF Policies 25 and 31; NPPF paragraphs 180 and 186)

The ecological report is expired, heavily redacted and lacking in scope. It incorrectly states that protected species are absent despite well-established presence of Great Crested Newts, bats, badgers and dormice in the area.

No appropriate impact assessments have been undertaken.

Ground I – Basis Planning and Inaccurate Application Information

(NPPF paragraph 69)

Material inaccuracies and omissions undermine the application, including relocation of the stable block without disclosure, absence of day room dimensions, incorrect references to market housing, misrepresentation of floorspace changes, lack of evidence of utility connections, and absence of Fire and Rescue consultation.

Environmental Health's consultation response further highlights reliance on non-applicable Building Regulations, omission of drainage infrastructure, failure to demonstrate spacing compliance and absence of required recreational provision.

There is concern that the scale of residential occupation could materially exceed that described.

Ground J – Enforcement Context (Material Consideration)

(NPPF paragraphs 187 and 193)

A Temporary Stop Notice relating to alleged unauthorised waste importation introduces baseline uncertainty regarding drainage, contamination, ecology and countryside character. Granting permission for permanent residential occupation in this context would be unsound.

5. Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, Cowfold Parish Council considers that planning application DC/25/2079 conflicts with the adopted development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework and fails to provide adequate, coherent and reliable evidence to demonstrate compliance with key policy tests.

Cowfold Parish Council therefore requests that planning permission is refused.