

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LOCAL COMMITTEE (WAVERLEY)****DATE: 11 DECEMBER 2015****LEAD OFFICER: DEBBIE PRISMALL, SENIOR COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS OFFICER****SUBJECT: ALLEGED PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY BETWEEN BRIDLEWAY No. 213 AND BRIDLEWAY No. 183A HAMBLEDON****DIVISION: WAVERLEY EASTERN VILLAGES****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The County Council has a duty under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA 1981) to modify the Definitive Map and Statement (DMS) if it discovers evidence which can be reasonably alleged to support a modification. An application has been received from Ms Audrey Monk for a Map Modification Order (MMO) to add a Public Footpath or Bridleway between Bridleway No. 213 and Bridleway No. 183A, Coleman's Copse, Hambledon to the Surrey County Council DMS as shown on the attached drawing of 3/1/11/H10 (**Annex A**).

It is considered the evidence is not sufficient to support Bridleway rights but that public footpath (FP) rights can reasonably be alleged to subsist. As such a legal order to modify the DMS should be made.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Local Committee (Waverley) is asked to agree that:

- (i) Public Footpath rights are recognised over the route shown A – B – C – D – E - F on Drg. No. 3/1/11/H10 and that a MMO under sections 53 and 57 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 be made to modify the Definitive Map and Statement. The route will be known as Public Footpath No. 578, Hambledon.
- (ii) If objections are maintained to such an order, it will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for confirmation.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The evidence submitted in support of the application is considered sufficient to establish that public footpath rights are reasonably alleged to subsist, having been acquired under both statutory presumed dedication (under s.31(6) of the Highways Act 1980) and common law. It is considered that action taken by landowners have not challenged users or taken sufficient actions to demonstrate their lack of intention to dedicate during the relevant period. A Map Modification Order to modify the Definitive Map and Statement by the addition of a public footpath as described above should be made under s. 53 of the WCA 1981.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 In September 2012, Ms Audrey Monk of 'Bryony Bank', Woodlands Road, Hambledon, submitted an application for a Map Modification Order (MMO) to add a Footpath or Bridleway between Bridleways Nos. 213 and 183a in Coleman's Copse, Hambledon. The claimed route runs between points A – B – C – D – E – F - G as shown on Drg. No. 3/1/11/H10 (**Annex A**). The application followed the granting of planning consent for the building of a large private mansion and estate cottages on the site of the old Nutbourne brickworks to the north of the site.
- 1.2 The application was accompanied by 26 user evidence forms (UEF) showing use of the route between 1950 and 2012 on foot, bicycle and horseback. A statement, maps and photographs in support of the application were also submitted. For the legal background for Map Modification Orders see **Annex B**. The relevant 20-year period for the claim is 1992 – 2012.
- 1.3 The claimed route runs from point 'A' on Public Bridleway No. 213 in a south-westerly then north-westerly direction through Coleman's Copse to point 'B', it then runs in a northerly direction over a ghyll to point 'C'. The path then continues in a westerly direction to point 'D' and then in a north-westerly direction to point 'E' where it turns in a generally westerly direction to point 'F' and then northerly direction to point 'G' at its junction with Public Bridleway No. 183a. The total distance A – B – C – D – E – F - G is 728 metres with an average width of 1.8m. The section F – G runs over registered common land. Officers surveyed the route being used on the ground, which differed between points D – F from the original application plan. The applicant has stated this was a drawing error on her part and has recently submitted an amended plan to more accurately reflect the route being used on the ground. This is the line shown on Annex A.
- 1.4 Coleman's Copse is ancient woodland. Ms Monk has stated that the area of copse is criss-crossed by many paths, substantial tracks and earlier bridleways and for at least seventy-five years they have been regularly used by walkers, horses and cyclists. She says that it is clearly not feasible to claim all paths shown on earlier Ordnance Survey maps but a single route has been claimed linking Bridleway 213 with 183a. The evidence for that path has been backed up by the submission of 26 public way evidence forms. Many of the claimants have also marked on their plan other routes they have been using in the area.

2. ANALYSIS:

PUBLIC USER EVIDENCE FOR THE ROUTE:

- 2.1 Section 31 of the Highways Act 1980 provides that the claimant's evidence must show that the route has been enjoyed by the public for a 20-year period, calculated retrospectively from the point at which that use was first challenged. The use must have been without force, secrecy or permission. Public use can also lead to the acquisition of public rights at common law. In such cases the use must have been sufficient to raise a presumption that the landowner had intended to dedicate the route.

- 2.2 Section 31 provides no minimum level of user for the establishment of a public right of way. Instead a route must have been used by a “sufficient number of people who together may sensibly be taken to represent the people as a whole/the community in general”. The House of Lords has ruled that the amount of user must be such as might have been reasonably expected if the route in dispute was an undoubted public highway. The necessary level of use must therefore be considered on a case by case basis.
- 2.3 Twenty-six people have completed UEFs, showing use of the route between 1950 and 2012. Twenty-five of these have used the route for the full 20-year period i.e. 1992 - 2012. All of the use has been on foot, as well as UEFs 6, 8, 17 and 20 on bicycles and numbers 9 and 25 on horseback. The total number of journeys per year on foot ranges from 1 to 50 with an average of 10 times a year. Regarding bicycle use, claimant no. 6 used it outside of the relevant period and two of the claimants only used it twice a year and the other one 25 times a year. Of the 2 claimants who have used it on horseback, one (UEF 9) was most probably using it with permission and the other one only used it 3 times, all of which were outside of the relevant period.
- 2.4 Of the 26 UEFs, 19 of the forms show the claimed route in its entirety as well as other routes people have been using through the copse. The other forms show the majority of the route with slight variations mainly at the southern or northern end. One form (UEF 20) only shows the northern section of the claimed path, where they then cut across to Bridleway 213 to the East.
- 2.5 People state they have used the path for walking to Hambledon and Chiddingfold for recreation or shopping purposes, looking at wild flowers including bluebells in the Spring, looking for butterflies, looking at historical features such as ancient boundary banks, for dog walking, exploring the area and for visiting friends and family.
- 2.6 A summary of the user evidence can be found at **Annex C**.
- 2.7 Seven of the claimants have been interviewed (UEFs 2,4,5,7,9,24 & 25) as well as Mrs J Sewell who worked for Redland Bricks at the Nutbourne Brickworks as a Secretary from 1985 until it closed in 1990. She said that if it was a nice day at lunchtime she used to wander up there and first knew about the path from walking in the area. Mrs Sewell lived at Rockhill Farm with her family from 1972 – 2003 and walked the path a lot with her children and would see other people using it. She was not aware of any notices and was never told to get off the land. Mrs Sewell was also a Hambledon Parish Councillor from 1984 – 1992. She doesn't recall the footpath ever being discussed.
- 2.8 Mrs M E Caroe (UEF 2) has lived at Vann, Vann Lane, Hambledon for over 40 years and says her family has always used the path behind Nutbourne Cottages as part of a circular route from home. She has rarely seen anybody else using it and has never been stopped from using it. Mrs Caroe states she has always used the same route, jumping over the gully, which is a fairly well worn track. She says she has never seen any notices and that one of the conditions of the development of the Brickworks site was that all rights of way would be honoured. Mr and Mrs Coleman (UEFs 4 & 5) have

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lived in the area for 60 years. They stated that they “didn’t even know the brickwork company owned the woods and are sure they didn’t take any notice of people walking through. Our main use of the route was for dog walking and nobody ever asked us if we wanted permission to use it.” They said that “More recently we saw ‘private’ notices up on the edge of the main routes. We didn’t stop using the routes as there is a track around and nobody else has been stopped either.”

- 2.9 Mrs Waring (UEF 24) has lived in Hambledon for 50 years and has always walked through the woods. She says she always thought it was a bridleway in part and it was always a well trodden path. Nobody ever told her she couldn’t use it. Dr Williams (UEF 25) said his initial use was on the southern section on horseback. Although he hasn’t walked it for a few years previously he walked it 2 or 3 times a year and was never told by anybody he could not go through. None of the claimants, on their forms, say they have ever seen any gates, stiles or fences across the path or any other type of obstruction. With the exception of Miss Edwards, who lives in Nutbourne Cottages and has a permissive right, no-one has ever sought permission to use the path or has ever met the landowner when using it or been stopped from using it. Nobody refers to having seen any notices apart from a bridleway sign fixed to a tree near point ‘D’ (UEFs 7, 8, 15, 18, 21 & 24).

LANDOWNERS

- 2.10 There are two registered landowners; Millgate Developments Ltd for the section A – B – C – D – E, and Stephen N W Dean (UEF 7) for the section E – F.
- 2.11 Until 1932, all of the land involved was owned by the Lord of the Manor of Hambledon. At that time following the death of the then Lord of the Manor, the land was sold in 27 lots. Mr Dean’s great grandfather acquired the Manor of Hambledon (around 150 acres of common land). In his statement Mr Dean says “A brickworks company bought Lot 17 – ‘an important parcel of well timbered woodlands...interspersed by numerous rides’ according to the sales brochure. This included Coleman’s Copse, the land under the claimed path. Production at the brickworks stopped in the early 1980’s and the site was abandoned. Proposals to enlarge the works in 1980/81 came to nothing. Later the site including ancient woodland and pasture land, was sold by Lafarge Redland to developers Millgate Homes....I have walked for recreation on the claimed path and other routes since around 1960 and I still use it...No objection was ever made, as long as people kept out of the working brickworks site and the clay pits, which were fenced off....Mr Simpson of Millgate has recently put up Keep Out notices. The Pockford Brook provided access to water cattle in the 18th century. I have an estate map of the Manor of Hambledon dated 1763 that shows ancient boundary banks, which still exist on the ground. Some of the woodland at that time would have been pasture. I have no objection to the claimed footpath where it passes on to my land in Hambledon Hurst.” Millgate Developments Ltd bought the land from Redland Property Holdings Ltd on 19 September 2000.

OBJECTION

- 2.12 Millgate Developments Ltd have objected to the Map Modification Order application on the grounds that the alleged right of way does not meet the criteria for a prescriptive claim under the 20-year rule, as set out in Section 31 of the Highways Act 1980 or any relevant case law. Their solicitors say that the “evidence forms in support of the application show a propensity to wander and our client will be submitting evidence to show that there has been a clear lack of intention to dedicate any such public right of way throughout the period of the claim and also, that it was known to the claimant that there were no rights of way through the woods. Accordingly, we would respectfully submit that this application is ‘flawed’ and, as such, should be refused.”
- 2.13 David Fordham has submitted a Statutory Declaration dated 4 October 2013. He states that from May 1983 until 1988 he was employed as the Works Manager for Redland Bricks Ltd who operated the Nutbourne Brickworks. Production ceased in 1988 and after that date he was still responsible for overseeing the site until 31 December 1994 when he left the company. Mr Fordham said it was his duty to maintain the bridleways over the site. He states “There were many paths and tracks criss-crossing over the adjoining woodland, but I can categorically confirm there was no single well-defined route, as claimed in the Application.” He said that some of the paths were created by residents of Nutbourne Cottages and Redland employees, but most were just animal tracks. He does not recall seeing any other members of the public using the claimed route.
- 2.14 Graeme Simpson, the Chairman of Millgate Developments Ltd has submitted a Statutory Declaration dated 15 October 2013. He enclosed photos of the route, letters to residents with an accompanying plan, and a copy of a Statement and Map Deposit relating to the land. On 19 September 2000, Millgate purchased the land, totalling 220 acres, from Redland Property Holdings Limited. On 13 September 2011, they were granted planning permission for the change of use and redevelopment of the brickworks site to provide a new country house, stables and staff accommodation. At that time they gave an area of common land to Hambledon Parish Council, which is to the west of point ‘E’.
- 2.15 Mr Simpson states “I have visited the land on average every fortnight or so over the past 13 years and I can confirm that I have never seen a member of the public using the route claimed in the Application. On numerous occasions I have tried to trace the route, but without success, since the route is not a clearly defined way.” He says that most of the woodland is simply criss-crossed by paths and tracks lead off in different directions. Also that sections of the route are often difficult to pass and the banks of the gully steep and overgrown.
- 2.16 Mr Simpson’s Statement contests the MMO application under the following headings:

Permissive Paths

He states that “Many of the paths that can be seen today have been made by local residents who had an agreement with Redland to collect wood and to walk their dogs over the land.” In February 2013, he wrote to all the local

residents with a plan showing their land ownership; 1 – 11 Nutbourne Cottages, 'Roundals' and 'Placewood Farm'. The letter stated that ever since they acquired the land they had allowed "the owners of no's 1-11 Nutbourne Cottages and a number of other neighbouring properties to use the land at Coleman's Copse for recreational use.....If you wish to continue to use this land...please would you sign this copy and return it to us." Millgate Developments have supplied copies of the letters all duly signed by the residents.

Notices

In 2001, shortly after Millgate acquired the land Mr Simpson says he attached notices to trees saying "Private Land – No public right of way" along the southern boundary of Bridleway 183A and the western boundary of Bridleway 213. He says he did this to ensure that no members of the public could claim a right over the land. He said he replaced them several times but eventually they disappeared. In addition there is an old Bridleway sign in a tree at point 'D'. He claims it was erected by the highway authority to direct people back to the bridleway.

Deposit Statement

In December 2012, Millgate lodged a Deposit Statement under section 31(6) of the Highways Act 1980 confirming that the only rights of way were the 2 public bridleways – Nos. 183a and 213.

Additional Notices

In January 2013, Millgate reinstated the notices referred to above to continue to demonstrate that they did not intend to dedicate any public rights of way.

COMMENTS ON THE OBJECTION

2.17 Permissive Paths

Only one of the residents who signed the letter regarding use of the permissive routes has also completed a UEF (No. 9). Although her use of the paths may have been with agreement of the landowner, and therefore not used as 'of right', her comments relating to the path are useful when considering the evidence. Miss Edwards states that "The claimed route is still visible today and I use it approximately once a week.....I have never seen any fencing or notices across it....No one else has mentioned to me they have been stopped. I walk the route at odd times and do not see a lot of people using it although I have seen groups walking through." Even if Miss Edward's evidence is discounted there are still 24 people who have used the route without express permission.

Notices

The landowner's solicitor has supplied a plan showing five locations for the notices along the route of Bridleway No. 213. None of them were placed at locations relating to the alleged footpath. In addition, the applicant Ms Monk states she has never seen any notices at either points 'A' or 'G'. None of the other users say they have seen any notices there. The only notices on site

at a recent site visit on 26 October 2015 say 'Private Property No Public Right of Way' and are located at the junction of Bridleways Nos. 183a and 213 and on a fence north-west of point 'B'. With reference to the Bridleway sign in a tree near point 'D' there is no record that this was erected by the County Council and certainly its location and type suggests it was not. It is not known who placed it there and for what purpose.



Bridleway sign on tree

Deposit Statement

The Statement is outside of the claim period.

Additional Notices

See reference to notices above.

Propensity to wander and no single well-defined route

Although it is clear that a number of routes have been used through Coleman's Copse, all of the claimants state they have used the alleged footpath. Nineteen of them have used the whole route and the rest in part. The alleged route can be followed on the ground and has clearly been in use for many years as shown in part on the 1916 Ordnance Survey map. The Ordnance Survey records a route visible on the ground at the time of its survey. Photographs showing sections of the route are included below:

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From point 'B' looking north



The ghyll at Point 'C'



Between points 'D' and 'E'

MAP EVIDENCE

- 2.18 The route does not appear on the Definitive Map or in the Definitive Statement. It does not appear on any earlier versions of the Definitive Map dating back to 1952 nor has it ever been put forward previously for inclusion on any of these maps.
- 2.19 The route is not shown on the earlier Ordnance Survey County Series maps dated 1872 and 1897 but is depicted as a double pecked line in part on the 1916 map, apart from the first 44 metres from point 'A' and part of the route between 'E' and 'F'.
- 2.20 In the absence of any conclusive documentary evidence showing public rights the claim must rely on user evidence either by statute or common law.

3. OPTIONS:

- 3.1 The Committee may agree or disagree with the officer's recommendation that footpath rights have been acquired. Alternatively, they may decide that the evidence submitted shows that the routes should be of a different status to that recommended. Decisions can only be made on the basis of the evidence available. The recommendation is based upon the evidence

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submitted and interpreted under the current legislation. Matters such as convenience, amenity, security or safety are irrelevant (see **Annex B**)

- 3.2 Where the County Council decides not to make an order, the decision can be appealed to the Secretary of State. If such an appeal resulted in a Public Inquiry the County Council would normally take a neutral stance.

4. CONSULTATIONS:

- 4.1 Waverley Borough Council, Hambledon Parish Council, The Open Spaces Society, The Ramblers, British Horse Society, Cyclists Touring Club, Mrs Victoria Young County Councillor, Mrs Pat Frost County Councillor and Legal Services.
- 4.2 Hambledon Parish Council responded by saying that they formally endorsed the proposal to establish statutory status for a footpath linking existing footpaths, tracks and old bridleways from Bridleway 213 via Coleman's Copse to Bridleway 183a. They say there has been unrestricted access to Coleman's Copse for over sixty years, if not longer, as evidenced by the Ordnance Survey maps. The Parish Council say the route also has the added advantage of providing easy access to the area of common land acquired by them from Millgate Homes as part of the agreement to support the development of the brickworks.

5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The cost of advertising a Map Modification Order would be approximately £1200, which would be met from the County Council's Countryside Access budget. If objections are received and a Public Inquiry held, additional costs of around £4000 will also be met from the same budget. Most costs are fixed by our duties under Schedule 15 of the WCA 1981.

6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 6.1 There are no equalities and diversity implications. In any event these are irrelevant factors under the current legislation.

7. LOCALISM:

- 7.1 The recording of public footpath rights on the DMS would safeguard the routes for the future.

8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	None of these are relevant considerations under the current legislation
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	

Public Health	
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9. HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1988:

- 9.1 Local Authorities are required to act to uphold European Convention rights which are now enforceable in British courts as a result of the Human Rights Act 1988. Primary legislation, of which the WCA 1981 is an example, may require the County Council to act in a different way. While the Council must interpret primary legislation in a way that is compatible with Convention rights that duty does not apply if the County Council could not have acted differently. In this instance it is first necessary to consider whether the action recommended to members touches on a Convention right. The making of this order may affect the rights of the landowner/ occupier under Article 8 of the Convention, the right to a peaceful enjoyment of one's possessions. The Act makes it clear that such rights may only be interfered with in a way that is in accordance with the law. Here the action by the County Council as surveying authority is prescribed by law as described in **Annex B** of this report. As such the recommendation to Members is not considered to be in breach of the Act.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 10.1 Any decision must be made on the legal basis set out in **Annex B** to this report. The only relevant consideration is whether the evidence is sufficient to raise a presumption that a public right of way exists. Other issues such as security, privacy, safety or convenience are irrelevant.
- 10.2 Under Section 53 of the WCA 1981, "the authority shall make such modifications to the Definitive Map and Statement as appear to them to be requisite in consequence of the discovery of evidence which (when considered with all other relevant evidence available to them) shows that a right of way not shown on the DMS subsists or is reasonably alleged to subsist over land in the area to which the map relates".

STATUTORY TEST

- 10.3 Section 31 of the Highways Act 1980 states that:

1) "Where a way over any land other than a way of such character that use of it by the public could not give rise at common law to any presumption of dedication has actually been enjoyed by the public as of right and without interruption for a full period of 20 years, the way is deemed to have been dedicated as a highway unless there is sufficient evidence that there was no intention during that period to dedicate it.

2) The period of 20 years referred to in sub-section (1) above is to be calculated retrospectively from the date when the right of the public to use the way is brought into question whether by a notice...or otherwise."

Calling into question

- 10.4 It is necessary to establish under Section 31 when the public's use was first brought into question and whether sufficient time has passed (20 years) since any previous challenge. Section 31(7A) of the HA 1980 provides that an application made under Schedule 14 of the WCA 1981 can be taken as a 'calling into question'. In this instance the 20-year period must rely on the making of the Schedule 14 application by Mrs Monk on 18 September 2012. The period in question therefore is 1992 – 2012.
- 10.5 Mr Simpson states that in 2001 when Millgate Homes purchased the land he erected notices on site to prevent public use. He says that the notices disappeared and were replaced several times before disappearing. None of the claimants interviewed recall/ have put on their forms that they saw any notices at that time other than the bridleway one high up in the tree. It appears there have not been any other attempts by landowners during the relevant 20-year period to prevent public footpath use.

Public use

- 10.6 Section 31 provides no minimum level of user for the establishment of a public right of way. Instead a route must have been used by a sufficient "number of people who together may sensibly be taken to represent the people as a whole/ the community in general"¹. It is not necessary for all, or indeed any, of the claimants to have used the route for the whole 20 year period but the cumulative effect must be considered. In this instance all of the 6 claimants used the route for the whole of the 20 year period. This level of use during this 20 year period meets the statutory test, therefore raising the presumption that the routes had been dedicated as public footpaths.

Common law

- 10.7 An inference that a way has been dedicated for public use may also be drawn at common law where the actions (or lack of) by the landowner indicate they intended a way to be dedicated as a highway and where the public have accepted it. Dedication may be express or implied from evidence of use by the public and of acquiescence to that use by the landowner. The period of use required to give rise to dedication at common law has never been defined and will depend upon its own facts.
- 10.8 There has been historical use of the tracks by the claimants since at least 1950. No evidence has been provided that there has been any action by the landowner to prevent public use. Therefore, notwithstanding the view that rights have been acquired under section 31 of the Highways Act 1980, officers would also submit that, taken together, the facts imply that the landowners have been willing to dedicate the route as a public right of way.

Use 'As of Right' or 'By Right'

- 10.9 Under the legislation use of the way must have been 'as of right', which means without force, secrecy or licence. It is not necessary for the user to have a belief that their use is 'as of right'

¹ Paragraph 5.12 Planning Inspectorate's Definitive Map Orders: Consistency Guidelines. April 2003.

10.10 Although some local residents have been using the general area with permission, only one of the claimants (UEF 9) has use of the alleged route between sections 'A' – 'E' with permission from the landowner. All of the other claimants have either sought or received permission and are therefore using the route 'as of right'.

10.11 It has been concluded that there is insufficient evidence for use on bicycles or on horseback to give rise to the acquisition of public bridleway or byway rights. However, it is considered that public footpath rights have been acquired by virtue of section 31 of the HA 1980 and at common law. A legal order should be made to add the routes shown on drawing no. 3/1/11/H10 to the DMS.

Lack of intention to dedicate

10.12 There is no evidence that any landowner prevented pedestrian access during the relevant period 1992 – 2012.

CONCLUSIONS

10.13 In light of the above, it is the Officer's view that pedestrian rights have been acquired over the route under section 31 of the Highways Act 1980. Notwithstanding this it is also argued that rights have also been acquired at common law.

10.14 This being the case the Officer would submit that it can be reasonably alleged that rights have been acquired and that the route should be recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement for Surrey as a public footpath.

11. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

11.1 If Committee decide that an order should be made and objections are maintained to that order, it will be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation.

11.2 If Committee decides that no order be made, the applicant will have opportunity to appeal to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs against this decision.

11.3 If the Committee resolution is different to the officer's recommendation the reasons and evidence for the decision should be recorded. This will explain the Council's actions should the matter proceed to Public Inquiry or appeal.

11.4 All interested parties will be informed about the decision.

Lead & Contact Officer:

Debbie Prismall, Senior Countryside Access Officer Tel. 020 8541 9343

Consulted:

See Section 4.

Annexes:

A Drawing No. 3/1/11/H10

B Legal background

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C User evidence summary

Sources/background papers:

File CP553 including all relevant correspondence and documents can be viewed by appointment at our Merrow Offices.
