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NATURAL
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Coastal Access Modification Report MR3

Proposed changes to the submitted King Charles III England Coast Path proposals for Isle of Wight 3: Culver Down to Binnel Bay

Location affected: Bonchurch

Natural England's Modification Report to the Secretary of State

September 2024



Purpose of this report

1. Natural England has a statutory duty under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 to improve access to the English coast. The duty is in two parts: one relating to securing a long-distance walking route around the coast; the other to creating an associated “margin” of land for the public to enjoy, either in conjunction with their access along the route line, or otherwise.
2. On 18th March 2020, Natural England submitted a report to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, setting out proposals for improved access to the coast from Culver Down to Binnel Bay. The Secretary of State is considering the related representations before determining Natural England’s report. Public rights of access to this stretch therefore have yet to commence.
3. Since submission of its report, it has become clear to Natural England that because of altered circumstances a substantial change is necessary to the route proposed for the England Coast Path on this stretch.
4. The change needs to be proposed through a Modification Report (MR), so that it can be considered alongside the rest of Natural England’s original proposals. The proposed change is at the location shown on the Ordnance Survey base map below headed MR3 – Overview Map – Location of modification proposals on Isle of Wight coast:
 - Bonchurch, Isle of Wight
5. This changed proposal is set out below and is subject to a fresh objections and representations process; to advice by a person appointed by the Secretary of State about any objections that are received to the proposals; and then to determination by the Secretary of State alongside Natural England’s original proposals.
6. It is therefore recommended that for determination purposes, Natural England’s original report relating to this length, which can be viewed [here](#), should be read as proposed to be amended by this MR. The original stretch [Overview](#) provides vital context to many of the issues discussed within this MR.

MR3 - Overview map

Location of modification proposals on Isle of Wight coast

- 3 Bonchurch
- Proposed route



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Part A: Proposed modification at Bonchurch, Isle of Wight

Start Point:	Grid reference: SZ 58119 79095
End Point:	Grid reference: SZ 57836 78002
Relevant Map:	Map MR3
Section numbers from original proposals no longer being proposed: IOW-3-S050 to IOW-3-S069	

A.1 Introduction

Reason for and consequences of proposed modification:

A.1.1 Our original alignment of the King Charles III England Coast Path (KCIIIIECP) in this area, as proposed in Natural England’s [original report](#), followed the existing public right of way (PRoW) and Isle of Wight Coast Path along the cliff at Bonchurch.

A.1.2 OS Mapping refers to the area as the upper and lower landslips and is known locally as ‘Bonchurch landslip’. The area suffered a massive erosion event in November 2023. Residents had to evacuate properties and Leeson Road was closed. The previously proposed route no longer exists, and the extent of the slip spans a vast area. The only way to access it is via drones, therefore there are no alternative routes available seaward of Leeson Road.

A.2 Proposals Narrative

The Trail:

A.2.1 Our proposal (see map MR3 – Modification 3 - Bonchurch) is, from north to south, to re-route the path shown as IOW-3-S050 to IOW-3-S069 in our original report. The length of the realigned route will be 1992m, compared to the original route proposed of 1445m.

A.2.2 The proposed modification to the route:

- Goes around the back of Bonchurch landslip, through Bonchurch Down which has spectacular sea views
- Forms part of the Isle of Wight National Landscape (AONB)
- Follows the public footpath along sections IOW-MR3-S001 to IOW-MR3-S005, IOW-MR3-S007, IOW-MR3-S009 to IOW-MR3-S010, IOW-MR3-S013 to IOW-MR3-S017 and IOW-MR3-S023
- Follows the public footway (pavement) along sections IOW-MR3-S012, IOW-MR3-S019 and IOW-MR3-S021
- Follows the public highway along sections IOW-MR3-S006, IOW-MR3-S011, IOW-MR3-S018, IOW-MR3-S020 and IOW-MR3-S022
- Follows ‘other existing walked routes’ along section IOW-MR3-S008

- Rejoins the original trail at the start of section IOW-3-S070
- Is considered to be the best option, as Leeson Road will only be open between 6am to 8pm during the school summer holidays of 2024 ([Leeson Road to open for the summer \(iow.gov.uk\)](https://www.iow.gov.uk)). After which it will be closed to traffic and pedestrians for proposed geological assessment, with a view to determining longer term management. There are little to no sea views from the road.

Protection of the environment:

A.2.3 The following designated sites affect this length of coast:

- Isle of Wight Downs Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- South Wight Maritime SAC
- Ventnor Downs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Bonchurch Landslips SSSI

Map MR3 – Bonchurch – Key Statutory Environmental Designations – shows the extent of these designated sites in relation to the proposal.

A.2.4 The modified proposal is aligned along existing public footpaths, other existing walked routes, public footways (pavements) and public highways.

A.2.5 We considered a lower route on the Downs, following a PRoW (see table A.3.2 Other options considered: map MR3 – Modification 3 – Bonchurch), however, due to the path being along a narrow ledge in a steep bank, that option would have required a greater amount of infrastructure and maintenance in comparison to our proposal.

A.2.6 The proposed trail through the Downs is steep and it can be slippery when wet. To avoid this, the public have deviated from the PRoW alignment and the chalk grassland in this area has been eroded and degraded. The replacement and addition of timber risers on the Downs will help remediate this problem.

A.2.7 In order to maintain a separation of duties, a Natural England colleague with understanding of the key wildlife designation of the area, considered a Habitats Regulations Assessment screening. The proposals within this report offered no likely significant effect and no full assessment is required.

A.2.8 The Isle of Wight Council will review the need for SSSI assent before any infrastructure establishment has commenced.

A.2.9 Natural England is therefore satisfied that modifying its proposals in the way described in this report will not lead to an adverse effect on the site integrity of the Isle of Wight Downs SAC and the South Wight Maritime SAC and is fully compatible with the conservation of the notified interests of the Ventnor Downs and Bonchurch Landslips SSSIs.

Accessibility:

A.2.10 The proposed trail consists of a path with a mixture of natural (compacted earth and grass) and artificial (tarmac, steel, concrete, gravel and stone) surface. Like the original proposed route, the modified one is likely to be unsuitable for some people with reduced mobility because of the nature of the terrain (coastal slope) and the many steps present. The gradient of the modified route is steep on the ascent and descent of the Downs. We considered aligning the trail along the lower existing public footpath that runs

at the base of Nansen Hill and Bonchurch Down; however, the route would be too narrow for those with reduced mobility.

Where we have proposed exercising statutory discretions:

Landward boundary of the coastal margin:

A.2.11 We have used our discretion on some sections of the modified route to map the landward extent of the coastal margin to an adjacent physical boundary such as a hedgerow, pavement, or steps to make the extent of the new access rights clearer. Our proposals also include additional landward margin over the National Trust and Natural Enterprise (Gift to Nature) managed land. Both organisations have agreed for the existing access land to become coastal margin. See Table A.3.1 below for details of how we have applied this discretion.

See part 3 of the Overview to the original report - 'Understanding the proposals and accompanying maps', for an explanation of the default extent of the coastal margin and how we may use our discretion to adjust the margin, either to add land or to provide clarity.

Restrictions and/or exclusions:

A.2.12 Access rights to the seaward margin would be subject to the excepted land rules and the national restrictions on coastal access rights. We do not propose any additional local restrictions or exclusions.

Coastal erosion:

A.2.13 Part 7 of the Overview to the original stretch reports explains that Natural England can propose that the route of the trail should be able to change in the future, without further approval from the Secretary of State, in response to coastal change, and the proposals in this respect are then set out in that report/those reports.

A.2.14 Column 4 of table A.3.1 indicates where roll-back has been proposed in relation to a modified route section. Where this is the case, the route, as initially determined at the time the MR was prepared, is to be at the centre of the line shown on map MR3 as the proposed modified route of the trail.

A.2.15 If at any time in the future any part of a modified route section upon which roll-back has been specified needs, in Natural England's view, to change in order for the overall route to remain viable, the new route for the part in question will be determined by Natural England without further reference to the Secretary of State. This will be done in accordance with the criteria and procedures described under the title 'Roll-back' in part 7 of the Overview and section 4.10 of the Coastal Access Scheme. If this happens, the new route will become the approved route for that section for the purposes of the Order which determines where coastal access rights apply.

Establishment of the trail:

A.2.16 Below we summarise how our proposed route for the repositioned part of the trail would be physically established to make it ready for public use before any new rights come into force along it.

A.2.17 Our estimate of the capital costs for these works is £20,260. This is a decrease of around £15,020 compared to the original route set out in our report to the Secretary of State on 18th March 2020. This is mainly because there will be a reduction in the amount of aggregate surfacing needed.

A.2.18 Summary of cost implications:

- Original cost estimate for establishment of submitted route (sections IOW-3-S050 to IOW-3-S069) = £35,280
- Cost estimate for establishment of proposed modified route = £20,260
- Likely saving = £15,020

A.2.19 These estimates are informed by information already held by the access authority, but subject to formal quotations being secured at the establishment stage.

A.2.20 There are three main elements to the overall capital costs:

- Aggregate surfacing
- Timber risers and stone steps
- Signage (multi-fingerposts, simple waymarkers and roundels)

A.2.21 If the Secretary of State approves our report, the Isle of Wight Council will liaise with the affected landowners and occupiers about relevant aspects of the establishment works and installation of new signs that are needed on their land. Prior to works being carried out on the ground, all necessary permissions, authorisations and consents will be obtained. All such works would conform to the published standards for National Trails and the other criteria described in our Coastal Access Scheme.

Maintenance of the trail:

A.2.22 As for the previously proposed route, ongoing maintenance of the trail would be necessary from time to time. We anticipate that the overall annual cost to maintain the trail will decrease compared to the original route set out in our report to the Secretary of State on 18th March 2020.

Part A.3: Proposals Tables

See Part 3 of Overview for guidance on reading and understanding the tables below

Table A.3.1: Map MR3 – Modification 3 - Bonchurch

Key notes on table:

1. Column 4 – ‘Yes – see table A.3.3 means roll-back is proposed but refer to that table below about our likely approach to implementing it for this route section. This is because a more complex situation exists in this case and consideration must be given to how roll-back may happen in relation to excepted land, a protected site etc.
2. Column 5a - Certain coastal land types are included automatically in the coastal margin where they fall landward of the trail if they touch it at some point. The relevant land type (foreshore, cliff, bank, barrier, dune, beach, flat or section 15 land – see Glossary in Annex B to the 2017 Overview) is shown in this column where appropriate. “No” means none present on this route section.
3. Columns 5b and 5c – Any entry in these columns means we are proposing to align the landward boundary of the coastal margin on this route section with the physical feature(s) shown in 5b, for the reason in 5c. No text here means that for this route section the landward edge of the margin would be that of the trail itself - or if any default coastal land type is shown in 5a, that would be its landward boundary instead.

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	New route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See part 8 of 2017 report Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
MR3	IOW-MR3-S001 to IOW-MR3-S004	Public footpath	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Hedgerow	Clarity and cohesion	
	IOW-MR3-S005	Public footpath	Yes – see table A.3.3	No			
	IOW-MR3-S006	Public highway	Yes – see table A.3.3	No			
	IOW-MR3-S007	Public footpath	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Other- Edge of CRoW Access layer	Additional landward area	
	IOW-MR3-S008	Other existing walked route	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Other- Edge of CRoW Access layer	Additional landward area	

1	2	3	4	5a	5b	5c	6
Map(s)	New route section number(s)	Current status of route section(s)	Roll-back proposed? (See part 8 of 2017 report Overview)	Landward margin contains coastal land type?	Proposal to specify landward boundary of margin	Reason for landward boundary proposal	Explanatory notes
	IOW-MR3-S009	Public footpath	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Other- Edge of CRoW Access layer	Additional landward area	
	IOW-MR3-S010	Public footpath	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Fence line	Clarity and cohesion	
	IOW-MR3-S011	Public highway	Yes – see table A.3.3	No			
	IOW-MR3-S012	Public footway (pavement)	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
	IOW-MR3-S013 to IOW-MR3-S016	Public footpath	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Steps	Clarity and cohesion	
	IOW-MR3-S017	Public footpath	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Edge of path	Clarity and cohesion	
	IOW-MR3-S018	Public highway	Yes – see table A.3.3	No			
	IOW-MR3-S019	Public footway (pavement)	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
	IOW-MR3-S020	Public highway	Yes – see table A.3.3	No			
	IOW-MR3-S021	Public footway (pavement)	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
	IOW-MR3-S022	Public highway	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Road	Clarity and cohesion	
	IOW-MR3-S023	Public footpath	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Path	Clarity and cohesion	

A.3.2 Other options considered: Map MR3 – Modification 3 – Bonchurch

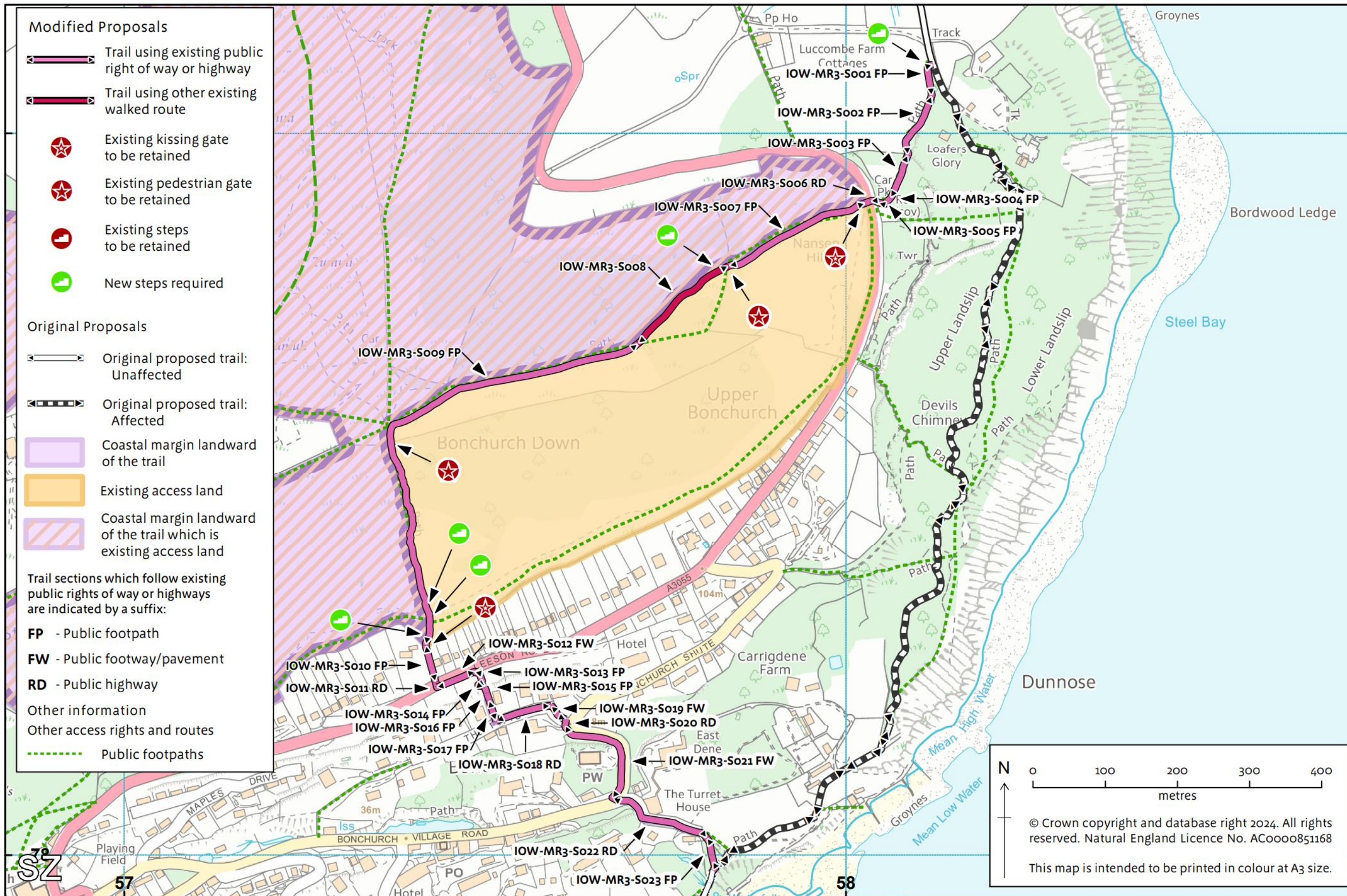
Map(s)	New route section numbers(s)	Other option(s) considered	Reasons for not proposing this option
MR3	IOW-MR3-S007 to IOW-MR3-S009	We considered aligning the trail along the lower existing public footpath that runs at the base of Nansen Hill and Bonchurch Down (V109)	<p>We opted for the proposed route because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ it provides extensive sea views due to the elevation- better amenity value ■ this proposal is made with the support of the landowner/land managers ■ it requires a lot less infrastructure works and ongoing maintenance liability. The other route is very narrow and would have required cutting a wider path into the hill ■ the other option considered route is a PRoW, therefore, it will still be accessible to walkers ■ we concluded that overall, the proposed route struck the best balance in terms of the criteria described in chapter 4 of the Coastal Access Scheme

Note: Any public rights of way not forming part of the proposed trail would remain available for people to use under their pre-existing rights.

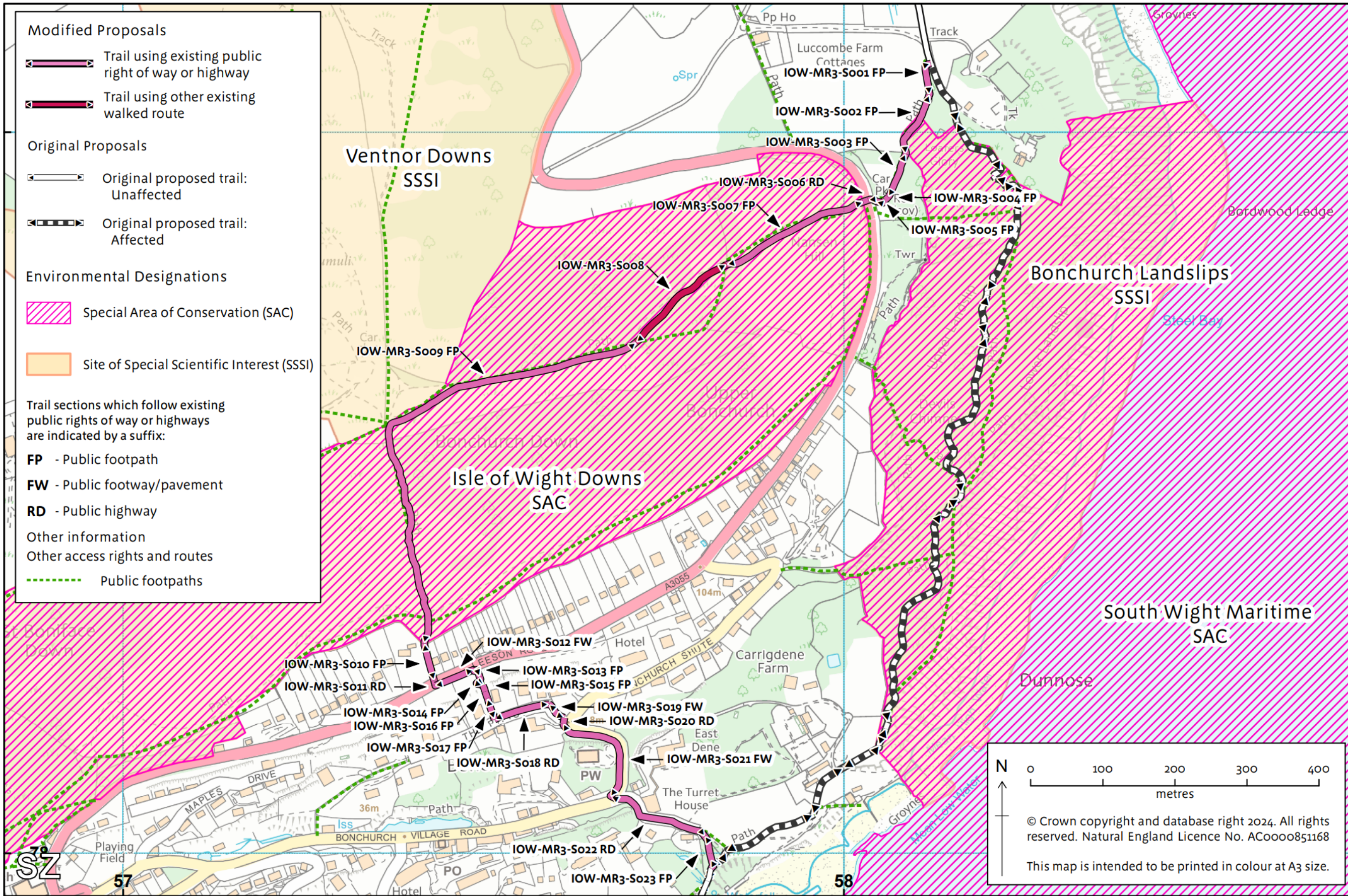
A.3.3 Roll-back implementation – more complex situations: Map MR3 – Modification 3 - Bonchurch

Map(s)	New route section number(s)	Feature(s) or site(s) potentially affected	Our likely approach to roll-back
MR3	IOW-MR3-S001 to IOW-MR3-S006	Buildings, curtilage and gardens	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the specified excepted land (e.g., buildings, curtilage, gardens etc), we will choose a route landward of it, following discussions with owners and occupiers.
MR3	IOW-MR3-S007 to IOW-MR3-S009	Ventnor Downs SSSI and Isle of Wight Downs SAC	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of a designated site whose designated features are sensitive to public access, or where the existing route already passing through such a site must be altered, we will choose a new route after detailed discussions with the relevant experts and with any potentially affected owners or occupiers, which will either (a) continue to pass through the site, if appropriate or (b) if necessary, be routed landward of it.
MR3	IOW-MR3-S010 to IOW-MR3-S023	Buildings, curtilage and gardens	If it is no longer possible to find a viable route seaward of the specified excepted land (e.g., buildings, curtilage, gardens etc), we will choose a route landward of it, following discussions with owners and occupiers.

Map MR3 - Modification 3 - Bonchurch



Map MR3 - Modification 3 - Bonchurch



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Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, **where wildlife is protected, and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded** for future generations.

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