

Coastal Access – Isle of Wight – Wootton Bridge to the Medina



Representations on MR3 Bonchurch and Natural England's comments

January 2025

List of Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Background	1
3.	Record of 'full' representations and Natural England's comments on them	2
4.	Summary of 'other' representations making non-common points, and Natural England's comments on them	3
5.	Supporting documents	4
	• Annex 1: MCA/MR3/R/2/IOW3854- Ramblers Supporting Documents- Bonchurch Route Options	5
	• Annex 2: MCA/MR3/R/2/IOW3854- Ramblers Supporting Documents- A Review of Bonchurch Route Options	6
	• Annex 3: MCA/MR3/R/2/IOW3854- Map of new route at Bonchurch and revised attribute table	8

1. Introduction

This document details representations we have received on the stated coastal access modification report. These fall into two categories:

- Representations received from persons or bodies that must be sent in full to the Secretary of State ('full' representations, reproduced below); and
- Those which have not come from those persons or bodies whose representations we are required to send in full to the Secretary of State ('other' representations, summarised below).

It also sets out any comments that Natural England choose to make in response to these representations.

2. Background

Natural England submitted a [modification report](#) to the Secretary of State setting out revised proposals for the route of the England Coast Path on the Isle of Wight at Bonchurch (MR3) on Wednesday 18th September 2024. This change affects a section of the proposed stretch [IOW 3: Culver Down to Binnel Bay](#). The previously proposed route no longer exists following a massive

erosion event in November 2023. The modification report proposes realigning the affected section of trail to the landward side of the original. The period for making representations and objections about the reports closed at midnight on Wednesday 13th November 2024.

In relation to the modification report MR3, Natural England received two (2) representations, of which one (1) was made by an organisation or individual whose representation must be sent in full to the Secretary of State in accordance with paragraph 8(1)(a) of Schedule 1A to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. This 'full' representation is reproduced in Section 3 of this document together with Natural England's comments where relevant. As required by the legislation this document also summarises and, where relevant, comments on the one (1) representation submitted by other individuals or organisations, referred to here as 'other' representations.

Before making a determination in respect of a coastal access report, the Secretary of State must consider all 'full' representations and our summary of 'other' representations, together with Natural England's comments on each.

3. Record of 'full' representations and Natural England's comments on them

Representation number:	MCA/MR3/R/2/IOW3854
Organisation/ person making representation:	[redacted], Isle of Wight Area Ramblers Association
Route section(s) specific to this representation:	IOW-MR3-S006 to IOW-MR3-S023
Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates:	N/A
Representation in full	
<p>If the IOW MR3 route is implemented, all steep sections of the path along S007 and S009 need steps, or a zig zag up the 1 in 3 hillsides to provide a practical safe route. Currently it appears that steps are only being proposed at the bottom of Bonchurch Down and near the gate on Nansen Hill.</p> <p>The two documents listed below review options to provide two parallel routes to cater for this complex Bonchurch Area.</p>	
Natural England's comments	
<p>In response to the significant landslide in the area, Leeson Road was closed to all road traffic and to pedestrians. It reopened temporarily to one way, light-controlled traffic during the 2024 summer school holidays. This meant that a roadside alignment was not an option that could have been proposed by Modification Report MR3.</p> <p>Since Natural England's (NE's) proposals were first published, we have been informed by the Isle of Wight Council that Leeson Road has reopened fully (two lanes of traffic). As a result, we can't align the King Charles III England Coast Path along our proposed modification route as the road has been deemed unsafe for members of the public to cross at IOW-MR3-S006 by Island Roads because of insufficient sightlines. NE was not aware that the road would reopen this soon (if at all) and had we been informed, we would have considered the road alignment in our modification report.</p> <p>All available alternative routes landward of the road would involving crossing the road at IOW-MR3-S006. For the reasons set out above we couldn't consider the other options put forward by the Ramblers in their representation as they would all involve crossing the road at this point.</p>	

We therefore ask the Secretary of State to approve the amended modification route as set out on the map in annex 3. Accompanying this map, we have also included a revised attribute table. Although our new proposed route along the roadside pavement does not have the same spectacular sea views as the route detailed in MR3 which traverses the Downs, there are glimpses of the sea at times. Crucially, this roadside route avoids the need to cross the road at IOW-MR3-S006, as at all times it stays to the seaward side of the road. If at any point in the future the road is closed partially (one way traffic) or completely, NE will roll back the route along the first proposed modification route (through the Downs).

There is a section (C-D-E) of an option put forward by the Ramblers (annex 2) that doesn't involve crossing the road, NE will comment below.

Coastal Woodland Route C-D-E (Blue dots found in annex 1)

Public Footpaths V65, V65a and V65c were directly impacted by the landslip and are in the active landslip zone. Aerial (drone) imagery reveals that much of these paths have been completely lost to the landslip. V66, V65d, V65b and V67 have been closed since the landslip. As Leeson Road has now been reopened the proposal is for the IOW Rights of Way department to liaise with Coastal colleagues with a view to inspecting this area when safe to do so – this is expected when ground conditions have dried (late Spring, Summer 2025).

Relevant appended documents (see section 5):

Annex 1: Ramblers Supporting Documents- Bonchurch Route Options

Annex 2: Ramblers Supporting Documents- A Review of Bonchurch Route Options

Annex 3: Map of new route at Bonchurch and revised attribute table

4. Summary of 'other' representations making non-common points, and Natural England's comments on them

Representation ID:	MCA/MR3/R/1/IOW1023
Organisation/ person making representation:	[redacted]
Name of site:	Bonchurch
Report map reference:	Map MR3
Route sections on or adjacent to the land:	N/A
Other reports within stretch to which this representation also relates	N/A
Summary of representation:	
[redacted] makes several suggestions such as the route rolling forward, instead of back. Installing handrails to the new risers and installing signs to warn the public of livestock grazing in the field. Finally, if Leeson Road reopens it should be sign posted as an alternative route. If it doesn't, the lower route should also be improved.	

Natural England's comment:

As mentioned in our response to the Rambler's representation, we can no longer use the route proposed in the Modification Report MR3. Therefore, we are asking for the Secretary of State to approve the amended modification route as set out on the map included in annex 3.

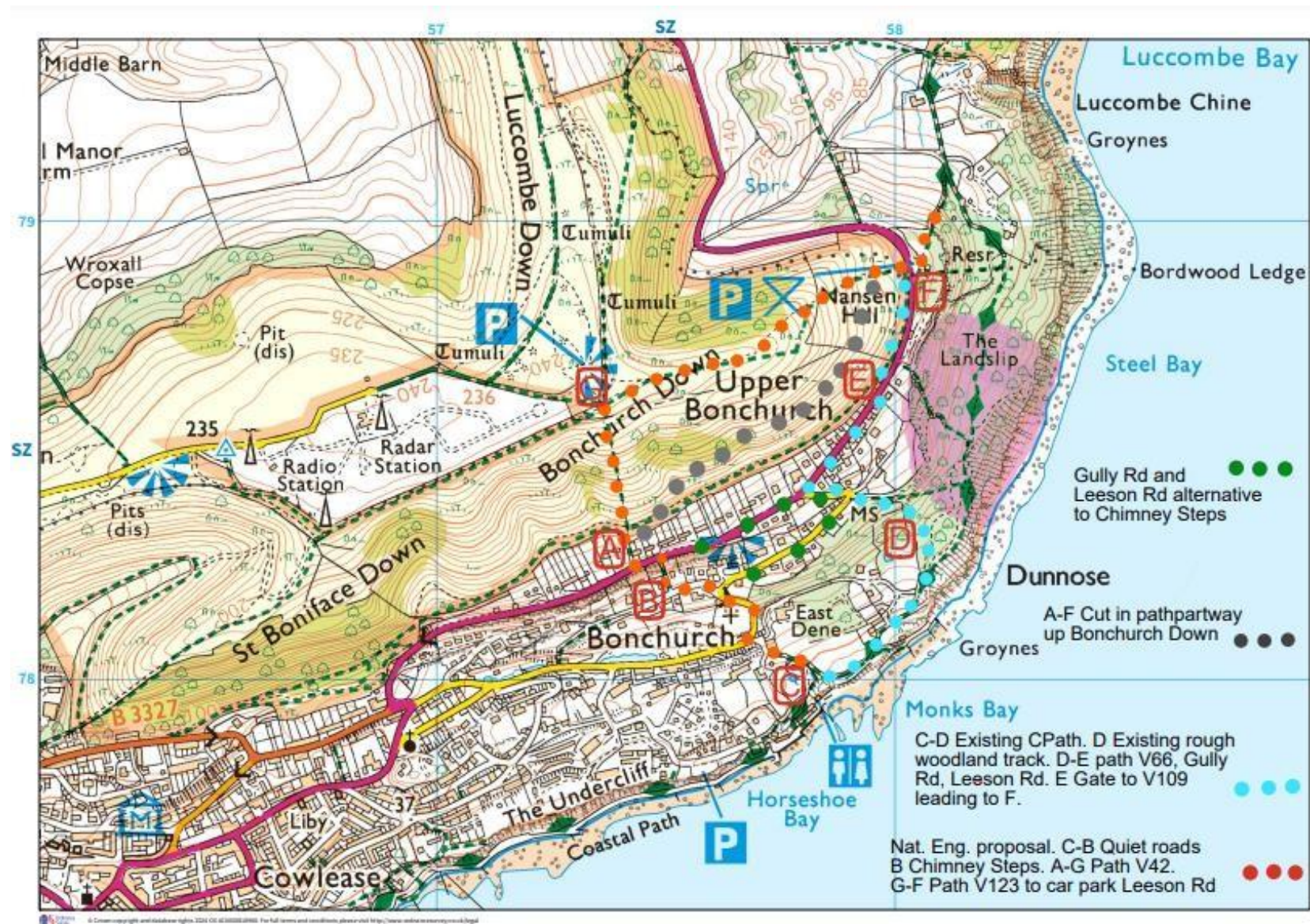
As a result of this amendment, NE can't consider some of the options put forward by [redacted] as they would involve crossing the road at IOW-MR3-S006. However, [redacted] does suggest an option of rolling the route forward in the landslip area. Please see our comment above in the Rambler's representation regarding a coastal woodland route.

[redacted] suggests that in the event of Leeson Road reopening, that it should be signposted as an alternative route, in conjunction with one of the other route options in the area which would operate as the ordinary route of the trail. This would not have been possible as for an alternative route to come into force, the ordinary route of the trail would have to have been unavailable for a period or periods of time.

5. Supporting documents

Supporting Document	Description and reference number
Annex 1	MCA/MR3/R/2/IOW3854 Rambler's Supporting Documents- Bonchurch Route Options
Annex 2	MCA/MR3/R/2/IOW3854 Rambler's Supporting Documents- A Review of Bonchurch Route Options
Annex 3	MCA/MR3/R/2/IOW3854 Map of new route at Bonchurch and revised attribute table

Ramblers Supporting Documents- Bonchurch Route Options



A Review of Bonchurch Coast Path Options - 8/11/2024

Following a major land slip in December 2023 a new route for the Coast Path needs to be determined for the Bonchurch area. These notes review several route options that are depicted on an accompanying OS map PDF. Based on a recent Google satellite picture the new area of landslip is shown by a purple wash. The background detail on this 1:25,000 map can readily be seen by using the PDF zoom tool.

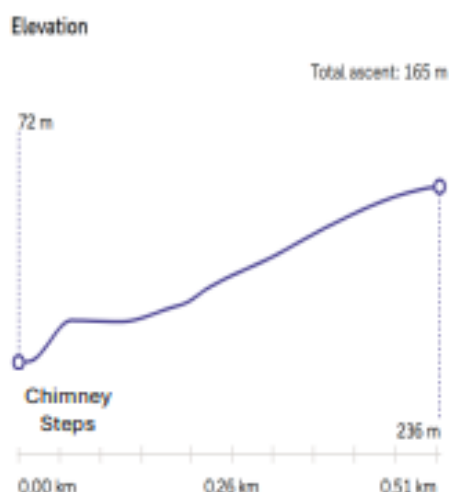
Coastal Woodland Route C-D-E-F (Blue dots)

From St Boniface Old Church (C) this route follows the existing coast path northeast to reach point (D) in sloping woodland circa 60m from the edge of the recent landslip. An existing rough path runs northwest up the slop to join PROW V66 which then emerges at a bend on Bonchurch Shute. The route then follows Bonchurch Shute and Leeson Rd pavement to a gate (E) to join PROW V109 running parallel with Leeson Rd to the car park at (F).

- This is the easiest and lowest cost route to implement.
- It retains an attractive coastal and woodland section with sea views.
- If Leeson Rd remains closed to through motorised traffic the C Path could remain on the road up to the car park.
- This route has a similar level of physical and technical walking challenge as the rest of the IOW Coast Path
- Following the landslip, there has been a 12-month stabilisation period. Now three monitor bore holes are providing IOW Council with information about the risk of further slippage around Upper Bonchurch. Hopefully this will soon enable these woodland paths to be reopened.
- It is worth noting that many sections of our coast path around the Island have unpredictable risk of land slippage with a currently acceptable very low probability of harm to users.

Ridge Challenge Route C-B-A-G-F (Orange dots) Natural England Sept 2024 Proposal

From St Boniface Old Church (C) this route climbs 72m along quiet town roads to reach the Chimney Steps (B). It crosses Leeson Rd then the path climbs straight up V42 Bonchurch Down to the ridge top at (G). A total additional climb of 165m in 500m (a 1in3 slope).



The V123 descends east along the ridge and then steeply down Nansen Hill to the car park on Leeson Rd (F).

- Chimney steps are an interesting challenge, with a semi spiral section through a rock cleft formed by extra high narrow steps. Many walkers would avoid descending these slippery smooth stone steps in wet weather preferring a road detour loop.
- The combination of increased footfall as a national trail plus wet or icy conditions will make the steep slopes of Bonchurch Down and parts of Nasen Hill very slippery with a high risk of falls.
- Natural England's proposal indicates a limited number of wooden risers at the bottom of Bonchurch Down and by the gate on Nasen Hill.
- A combination of a zig zag path cut into the slope and wooden risers will be required most of the way up Bonchurch down and on the steeper parts of Nasen Hill to provide a practical safe route.
- With this provision the route could provide an interesting and challenging addition to the Island's Coast Path, with the benefits of wonderful coastal and inland views.

Bonchurch Down Cross Slope Route A-F (Grey dots)

In the event of further landslip loss of part of Leeson Rd a graded path cut into the side of Bonchurch Down could provide a replacement easy to use mostly level route.

Road Detour Route (Green dots)

Stretches of Leeson Rd and Bonchurch Shute providing detours as necessary.

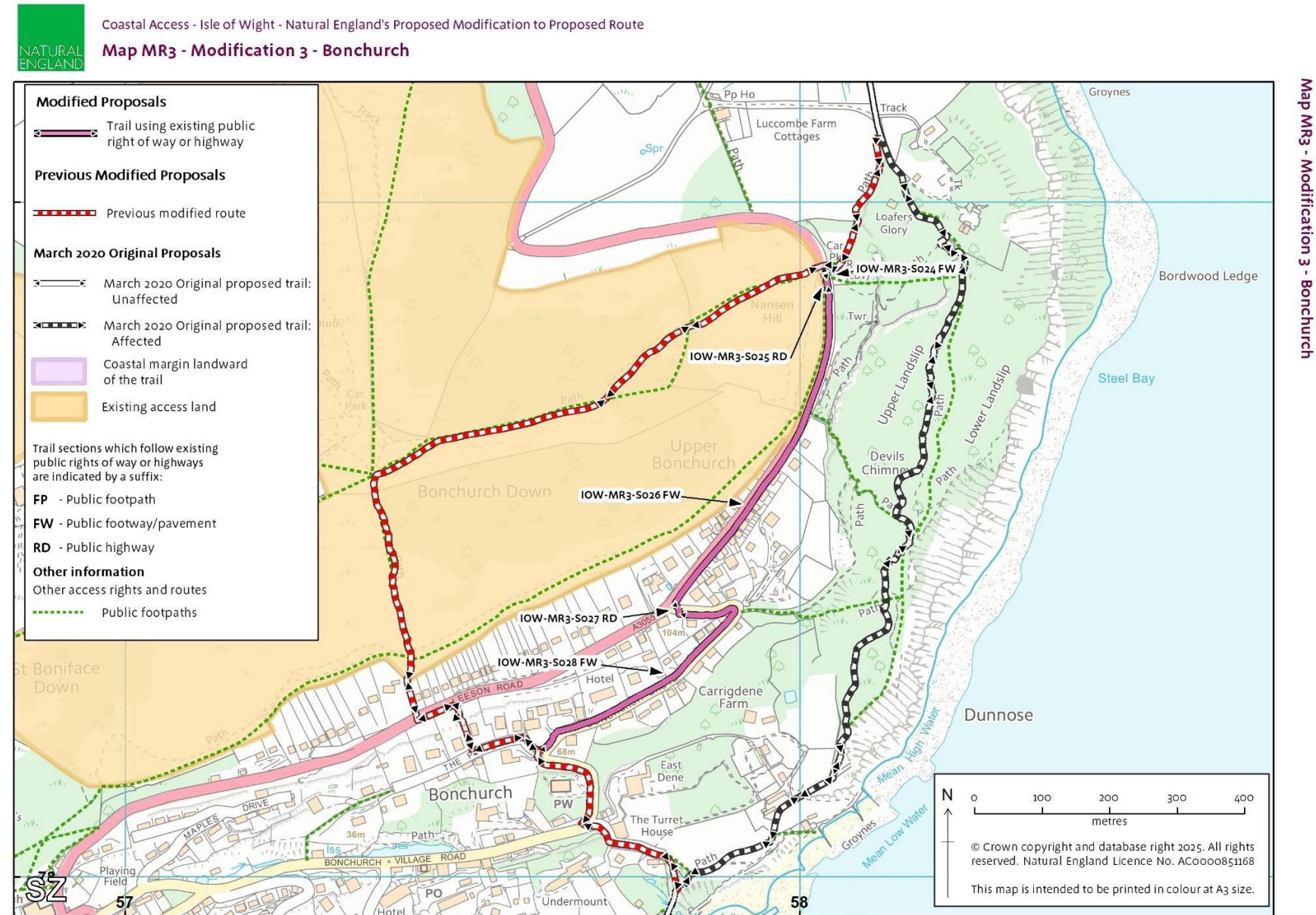
Alternative Route Provision

Many people would comment that Natural England's proposed inland detour to climb 240m up and down steep slopes to see the views from the highest point on the Island, should not be the only identified CP route option. At several locations around the Island Natural England are already proposing two parallel alternative routes. The complexity of the Bonchurch area mean that this approach is needed to meet the range of user requirements.

The KCIII CP could usefully depict both the 'Coastal Woodland' and the 'Ridge Challenge' routes as options for a walker to choose between.

Local walkers will soon identify the route option that suits them best. Visiting walkers will rely on the recommended National Trail.

Map of new route at Bonchurch and revised attribute table



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-S024	Public footway (pavement)	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
	IOW-MR3-S025	Public highway	Yes – see table A.3.3	No			
	IOW-MR3-S026	Public footway (pavement)	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	
	IOW-MR3-S027	Public highway	Yes – see table A.3.3	No			
	IOW-MR3-S028	Public footway (pavement)	Yes – see table A.3.3	No	Pavement edge	Clarity and cohesion	