

BLACKBUSHE AIRPORT ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Environmental Management Plan (“**EMP**”) forms part of the Section 16 Application (the “**Application**”) to deregister approximately 35.3 acres (14.285 ha) of Yateley Common (Common Land Unit 24) within the area of the operational Blackbushe Airport (the “**Release Land**”) and to provide approximately 35.3 acres (14.285 ha) of replacement land, in exchange, at Cottage Farm, situated approximately 2km to the east of the Airport (the “**Replacement Land**”).
- 1.2 The purpose of this EMP is to provide a document that describes measures that will be implemented on the enactment of the Application to establish the Replacement Land and enable the ecological and landscape interest in the area to develop in the most beneficial way, taking into account registered commons rights and the need to maintain access across the Replacement Land. This EMP therefore supports the Application in meeting the overarching objective in section 3.2 of the Common Land Consents Policy by ensuring that:
- A) the Replacement Land to be registered is of at least equal benefit to the Release Land to be deregistered; and
 - B) works take place on the Replacement Land only to maintain and improve the condition of the common.
- 1.3 These measures include proposals for a framework of regular monitoring of the Replacement Land and regular consultation with Hampshire County Council (“**HCC**”) as the relevant Commons Registration Authority and Natural England (“**NE**”) to discuss the findings of the monitoring and agree plans for detailed management measures to be implemented on the Replacement Land for the following year, over a management period of 15 years (the “**Management Period**”).
- 1.4 This EMP will be secured through the unilateral undertaking by the freehold owner of the Replacement Land, Cottage Farm Holding Ltd (“**CFHL**”), to HCC under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, which is being submitted in support of the Application (the “**Unilateral Undertaking**”). This will come into effect on the Approval Date (as defined in the Unilateral Undertaking) and will bind CFHL (and any successors in title) to carry out the actions laid out below over the Management Period.
- 1.5 At the end of the Management period, CFHL (and any successor in title) will remain, as the landowner, responsible for the general upkeep of the Replacement Land and for the maintenance of the desire paths established during the Management Period. CFHL also remains open to discussion with, and will consider future requests by, HCC, NE or other parties who wish to undertake further ecological work in relation to the Replacement Land.
- 1.6 CFHL are committed, throughout the Management Period and beyond, to the maintenance, by mowing and cutting of any overhanging vegetation of key access ways within the Replacement Land. Such access ways will be defined initially by the public use of the land and the creation of ‘desire’ paths, and subsequently will be defined within the management measures when reviewed annually according to the provisions of this EMP. It is not the intention of CFHL to create defined Public Rights of Way across the land. There is no intention to alter the vegetation at the boundary of the Replacement Land other than the removal of low scrub at the identified access points. This is to ensure the preservation of the boundary feature which is historical in nature, and to avoid the need to fell any mature trees.
- 1.7 For the avoidance of doubt, CFHL’s obligations within this EMP may be carried out by CFHL or on behalf of CFHL by an agent or suitably qualified contractor.

Ecological Context and Strategy

- 1.8 This EMP has been designed in consideration of the existing ecological context and objectives of the area surrounding the Release and Replacement Land.

- 1.9 The Release Land is located very close to the heathland habitats of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (“**TBHSPA**”). The closest component of the TBHSPA is Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons Site of Special Scientific Interest (“**SSSI**”), which is located circa 10 metres to the south of the Release Land on the far side of the A30. The Replacement Land is adjacent to the TBHSPA and almost completely surrounded by it. The closest component of the TBHSPA to the Replacement Land is Yateley Common, part of the Castle Bottom to Yateley and Hawley Commons SSSI.
- 1.10 Neither the Release Land nor the Replacement Land currently has significant ecological value by virtue of existing land management. The EMP has therefore been developed with the goal of ensuring that, by the end of the Management Period, the Replacement Land will provide an extension to the habitats located within the TBHSPA, thereby increasing the total area of such habitats available for TBHSPA interest features.
- 1.11 The approach adopted within this EMP to achieving these gains focuses on the natural regeneration of the Replacement Land from grazed paddocks towards a matrix of heathland, gorse and grassland after the cessation of grazing.
- 1.12 The TBHSPA comprises a range of remnant heathland and associated habitats located across northern Hampshire, Berkshire and Surrey. It is designated under Article 4.1 of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive (the “**Interest Feature Birds**”):
- Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata*;
 - Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*; and
 - Woodlark *Lullula arborea*.
- 1.13 Dartford warblers are small, insectivorous birds, resident in Britain and associated exclusively with heathland, favouring gorse with heather understorey for nesting. Being dependant on invertebrates as prey, they are strongly associated with heathland areas that provide year-round sources of such food, i.e. where there is sufficient habitat variation to do so.
- 1.14 Nightjars are summer visitors to the UK, arriving to breed around May and typically departing around August. They are also insectivorous, feeding on flying insects such as moths. They breed in open heathland and typically forage across heathland and early-stage plantations but require such foraging to be close to their nesting territories.
- 1.15 Woodlarks are associated with short vegetation for foraging (feeding mainly on spiders and beetles), interspersed with taller, dense vegetation for nesting, frequently tall heather or grass (Mallord *et al.*, 2007) [1]. They also utilise recently-cleared areas of coniferous plantation woodland for nesting.
- 1.16 The Conservation Objectives for the TBHSPA (Natural England 2019) [2] set out the overarching objectives to enable the site to achieve favourable conservation status of the Interest Feature Birds. These are to, “*subject to natural change, ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring:*
- *The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features*
 - *The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features*
 - *The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely*
 - *The population of each of the qualifying features, and*
 - *The distribution of the qualifying features within the site”.*

- 1.17 The Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Natural England 2016) [3] sets out the attributes of the TBHSPA that are required to achieve the Conservation Objectives. This includes details of habitat characteristics necessary to maintain and enhance the populations of the Interest Feature Birds. Aspects of this advice regarding habitat type and structure inform EMP measures to be adopted within the Replacement Land to ensure that, as the habitat develops, it will provide optimum benefit for the TBHSPA Interest Feature Birds.
- 1.18 All three Interest Feature Bird species require a matrix of heathland and gorse/long grass habitats to feed and nest. The process of natural regeneration to be adopted within the Replacement Land under the EMP is considered the most appropriate approach from an ecological perspective as it prioritises the establishment of these habitat types from seed/regrowth originating from the enclosing existing heathland. Plants established in this manner will therefore be of local provenance, thereby helping to avoid the introduction of any invasive species (a key risk to the TBHSPA, Natural England 2014b)[4].
- 1.19 Over the Management Period, the Replacement Land will increase the extent of the habitats present within the TBHSPA that the Interest Feature Birds rely on, thereby supporting the attribute that relates to maintaining or restoring the extent, distribution and availability of suitable breeding habitat which supports nightjar, woodlark and Dartford Warbler for all necessary stages of its breeding cycle (courtship, nesting, feeding) as set out in the Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA (Natural England 2016) [3] .
- 1.20 As the heathland and associated habitats establish, the approach adopted in the EMP will allow for the TBHSPA attribute relating to vegetation characteristics of habitats necessary to support the Interest Feature Birds to be fully accounted for. This includes heathland and grass height (varying between 10-60cm) with some patches very short (<5cm), patches of scattered gorse scrub allowed to become larger and areas of bare or very sparsely-vegetated ground maintained. Achieving these characteristics will become a key objective of the EMP both during the establishment and subsequent management of the Replacement Land.
- 1.21 Another attribute of the TBHSPA relates to disturbance caused by human activity (another key issue for the site (Natural England 2014b) and supports measures which restrict and reduce the frequency, duration and/or intensity of disturbance affecting nesting, roosting and/or foraging birds so that the nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler feature is not significantly disturbed. Given the location of the Replacement Land and the absence of vehicle access, it is anticipated that EMP proposals will also support this attribute. This is because users of the Replacement Land are expected to comprise existing walkers within Yateley Common rather than any new users drawn to the area by the presence of the Replacement Land. As such, the proposals for the Replacement Land will provide an additional 14.285ha of land for existing users to move into, helping to reduce the frequency, duration and intensity of visitor pressure across the wider Yateley Common by diluting the existing visitor numbers over a wider area. The approach proposed by the EMP to establish the Replacement Land allows for the use of the land by humans to be controlled to ensure naturally-created desire lines across the area are reinforced, helping to avoid recreational pressure on the newly-established heathland habitats.
- 1.22 The creation of the proposed habitats within the Replacement Land as a result of the EMP measures will be a significant ecological gain. The measures will reinforce the ecological integrity of the TBHSPA and the resilience of the Interest Feature Species by supporting various attributes underpinning the Conservation Objectives for the site. This represents a significant ecological betterment of the status quo, as similar improvement measures could never be implemented on the Release Land while it functions as an airport.

Establishment of the Replacement Land

- 1.23 In accordance with the Unilateral Undertaking given by CFHL to Hampshire County Council dated [..... 2024], CFHL will remove the fencing from the perimeter of the Replacement Land and also internally, where individual horse grazing areas are currently delineated. The fences to be removed are shown on Figure 1 to Appendix 1.

- 1.24 CFHL will erect way markers at a number of locations around the perimeter (indicative locations shown on the plan included at Figure 2 to Appendix 1) to the Replacement Land to provide signage to assist recreational users wishing to cross the Replacement Land and connect to the network of surrounding Public Rights of Way. These are proposed in locations that would respect the boundary features within the existing common and are proposed where there are existing natural gaps in vegetation around the periphery of the Replacement Land. No works to the existing boundary banks (i.e earthworks) or disturbance to trees is proposed as part of the establishment works.
- 1.25 In addition, CFHL will arrange for topsoil samples to be taken by a suitably qualified soil scientist to determine baseline soil nutrient and pH levels.

Year 1

- 1.26 At least three months prior to the first anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will:
1. Review the vegetation growth across the Replacement Land and assess the suitability of the site for recreational access on foot.
 2. Procure a suitably qualified ecologist to survey and map the distribution of habitat types across the Replacement Land.
 3. Procure a suitably qualified ecologist to obtain and analyse topsoil samples at a minimum of 10 locations across the Replacement Land at approximately 100 metre intervals (such sample locations to be recorded via GPS for future reference) to determine pH and soil nutrient levels within the soil profiles to provide information on any depletion in nutrients and potential acidification within the profile.
- 1.27 Three months before the first anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will report to HCC:
- The distribution of ecological habitats across the Replacement Land and changes in composition during the period since the Approval Date.
 - An assessment of changes in soil characteristics, including nutrient levels and pH across the Replacement Land.
 - Availability of access across the entirety of the Replacement Land.
- 1.28 Based on the above site visits and reporting and at least three months before the first anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will propose management measures to HCC, including (but not limited to):
- Proposals to manage vegetation to limit emerging weed growth and begin to encourage the re-establishment of heathland type habitat within the Replacement Land. At this early stage the actions are likely to be limited to agreeing the proposed cutting regime to be adopted over the next EMP Year.
 - Mapped proposals for the location of mown paths for recreational users, if required at this stage, and timing of proposed cuts to maintain these routes.
 - Any requirements for additional signage/information to be provided within the Replacement Land.
 - Any general maintenance works required, for example to signage, or other measures identified within the Replacement Land.
- 1.29 CFHL will submit the reporting, together with written proposals for the following EMP Year, for NE and HCC to discuss, update and confirm within one month of submission of the documentation.
- 1.30 If requested by NE or HCC, CFHL will convene an on-site meeting to review the Replacement Land and to agree the management measures to be implemented for the following EMP Year, based on the information provided three months prior and any amendments to this agreed at the meeting.

Year 2

- 1.31 At least three months in advance of the second anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will:
1. Review the vegetation growth across the Replacement Land and the suitability of the site for recreational access on foot.
 2. Procure a suitably qualified ecologist to survey and map the vegetation growth across the Replacement Land.
 3. Procure a suitably qualified soil scientist to obtain and analyse topsoil samples at a minimum of 10 locations at the GPS points recorded across the Replacement Land during EMP Year 1 to determine pH and soil nutrient levels within the soil profiles to provide information on any depletion in nutrients and potential acidification within the profile.
- 1.32 Three months before the second anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will report to HCC:
- The distribution of ecological habitats across the Replacement Land and changes in composition during the period since the first anniversary of the Approval Date.
 - An assessment of changes in soil characteristics, including nutrient levels and pH across the Replacement Land.
 - Any general maintenance works required for example to signage, or other measures identified as required within the Replacement Land.
 - Availability of access across the entirety of the Replacement Land.
- 1.33 Based on the above site visits and reporting and at least three months before the second anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will propose management measures to HCC, including (but not limited to):
- Works to limit emerging weed growth.
 - The frequency of vegetation cuts during the year in areas of the Replacement Land.
 - Based on the botanical and soils information, requirements for potential over sowing within areas of the Replacement Land to promote development of species diversity (noting that this may not be appropriate at this early stage).
 - Proposals for the location of mown paths for recreational users, if required at this stage, and the timing of proposed cuts to maintain these routes.
 - Implementation of any additional signage or information boards that may be required within the Replacement Land.
 - Any general maintenance works required, for example to signage, or other measures identified within the Replacement Land.
- 1.34 CFHL will submit the reporting, together with written proposals for the following EMP Year, for NE and HCC to discuss, update and confirm within one month of submission of the documentation.
- 1.35 If requested by NE or HCC, CFHL will convene an on-site meeting to review the Replacement Land and to agree the management measures to be implemented for the following EMP Year, based on the information provided three months prior and any amendments to this agreed at the meeting.

Years 3 – 5

- 1.36 CFHL will implement the annual collection of information; preparation of detailed reporting; preparation of a draft detailed annual management plan; submission and agreement of a plan with NE and HCC for the years following the second, third and fourth anniversaries of the Approval Dates (being EMP Years 3 to 5) as required for EMP Year 2, above.

End of Year 5

- 1.37 At least three months in advance of the fifth anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will:
1. Review the vegetation growth across the Replacement Land and the suitability of the site for recreational access on foot.
 2. Procure a suitably qualified ecologist to survey and map the vegetation growth across the Replacement Land.
 3. Procure a suitably qualified soil scientist to obtain and analyse topsoil samples at a minimum of 10 locations at the GPS points recorded across the Replacement Land during EMP Year 1 to determine pH and soil nutrient levels within the soil profiles to provide information on any depletion in nutrients and potential acidification within the profile.
- 1.38 It is anticipated that, by the fifth anniversary of the Approval Date, the mosaic of habitat regeneration and habitat establishment across the Replacement Land will be emerging and desire lines for people accessing and traversing the Replacement Land will be well established. The anticipated desire lines and way markers required are shown on Figure 16 of the Exchange Land Report.
- 1.39 On this basis and three months before the fifth anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will produce a detailed management plan to cover Years 6 – 10 of the EMP, based on knowledge gained from the previous five years of monitoring data, management measures and consultation inputs (the “**Years 6-10 Management Plan**”).
- 1.40 If requested by NE or HCC, CFHL will convene an on-site meeting to review the Replacement Land and to agree the management measures to be implemented for the EMP years 6-10.

Years 6 - 8

- 1.41 CFHL will implement the Years 6–10 Management Plan throughout the years following the fifth, sixth and seventh anniversaries of the Approval Date (being EMP Years 6 to 8).

End of Year 8

- 1.42 Three months in advance of the eighth anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will procure a suitably qualified ecologist to draft a report to include the mapping of the mosaic of developing habitats across the Replacement Land and supporting descriptions of the species composition.
- 1.43 CFHL will submit the reporting, together with written proposals for the following EMP Year, for NE and HCC to discuss and confirm any amendments that need to be made to the Years 6-10 Management Plan.
- 1.44 If requested by NE or HCC, CFHL will convene an on-site meeting to review the Replacement Land and to agree the management measures to be implemented for the following EMP Year including any addition or variation to the Years 6-10 Management Plan, based on the information provided three months prior and any amendments to this agreed at the meeting.

Years 9 - 10

- 1.45 CFHL will implement the Years 6-10 Management Plan (as reviewed at the end of EMP Year 8) throughout the years following the eighth and ninth anniversaries of the Approval Date (being EMP Years 9 and 10).

End of Year 10

- 1.46 At least three months in advance of the tenth anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will:
1. Review the vegetation growth across the Replacement Land and assess the suitability of the site for recreational access on foot.
 2. Procure a suitably qualified ecologist to survey and map the vegetation growth across the Replacement Land.
 3. Procure a suitably qualified soil scientist to obtain and analyse topsoil samples at a minimum of 10 locations at the GPS points recorded across the Replacement Land during EMP Year 1 to determine pH and soil nutrient levels within the soil profiles to provide information on any depletion in nutrients and potential acidification within the profile.
- 1.47 Based on this and three months before the tenth anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will produce a detailed management plan to cover Years 11-15 of the EMP, based on knowledge gained from the previous five years of monitoring data, management measures and consultation inputs (the “**Years 11-15 Management Plan**”).
- 1.48 If requested by NE or HCC, CFHL will convene an on-site meeting to review the Replacement Land and to agree the management measures to be implemented for the Years 11 – 15 EMP.

Years 11 - 12

- 1.49 CFHL will implement the Years 11-15 Management Plan throughout the years following the tenth and eleventh anniversaries of the Approval Date (being EMP Years 11 and 12).

End of Year 12

- 1.50 Three months in advance of the twelfth anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will procure a suitably qualified ecologist to produce a report to include the mapping of the mosaic of developing habitats across the Replacement Land and supporting descriptions of the species composition.
- 1.51 CFHL will submit the reporting, together with written proposals for the year following the twelfth anniversary of the Approval Date, for NE and HCC to discuss and confirm any amendments that need to be made to the Years 11-15 Management Plan.
- 1.52 If requested by NE or HCC, CFHL will convene an on-site meeting to review the Replacement Land and to agree the management measures to be implemented for the following EMP Year including any addition or variation to the Years 11-15 Management Plan, based on the information provided three months prior and any amendments to this agreed at the meeting.

Years 13 - 14

- 1.53 CFHL will implement the Years 11-15 Management Plan (as reviewed at the end of EMP Year 12) throughout the years following the twelfth and thirteenth anniversaries of the Approval Date (being EMP Years 13 and 14).

End of Year 15

- 1.54 Three months in advance of the fifteenth anniversary of the Approval Date, CFHL will procure a suitably qualified ecologist to prepare a report to be provided to HCC and NE which includes the mapping of the mosaic of developing habitats across the Replacement Land and supporting descriptions of the species composition at the end of the Management Period.
- 1.55 Following the end of the Management Period, CFHL will remain responsible, as the landowner, for the general upkeep of the Replacement Land and for the maintenance of the desire paths established during the Management Period.

Yateley Common Management Committee (YCMC)

- 1.56 Throughout the Management Period, CFHL will send a representative to the YCMC, which meets three times a year, to provide an update on management measures and to allow local councillors and the public to ask questions or raise issues that have arisen on the Replacement Land which may require attention by CFHL.
- 1.57 CFHL will provide copies of all reports produced on the anniversary of the Approval Date as described above to the YCMC at the meeting immediately following the production of each report.
- 1.58 CFHL will maintain a website within the public domain on which a copy of this EMP as well as all reports produced with respect to this EMP are placed following their production and agreement.

References

- [1] Mallord J.W, Dolman P.M., Brown A. & Sutherland W.J. (2007) Nest-site characteristics of Woodlarks *Lullula arborea* breeding on heathlands in southern England: are there consequences for nest survival and productivity?, *Bird Study*, 54:3, 307-314.
- [2] Natural England (2019 version 3) European Site Conservation Objectives for Thames Basin Heaths SPA (UK9012141) [online] Available at: [UK9012141-Thames-Basin-Heaths-SPA-V2019.pdf](#)
- [3] Natural England (May 2016 version 2) European Site Conservation Objectives: Supplementary Advice on Conserving and Restoring Site Features - Thames Basin Heaths SPA [UK9012141 - Thames Basin Heaths SPA - COSA Final - 9 May 2016 v2.pdf](#)
- [4] Natural England (2014b) Thames Basin Heaths SPA (UK9012141) Site Improvement Plan [online] Available at:
<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6249258780983296>

APPENDIX 1 FIGURE 1



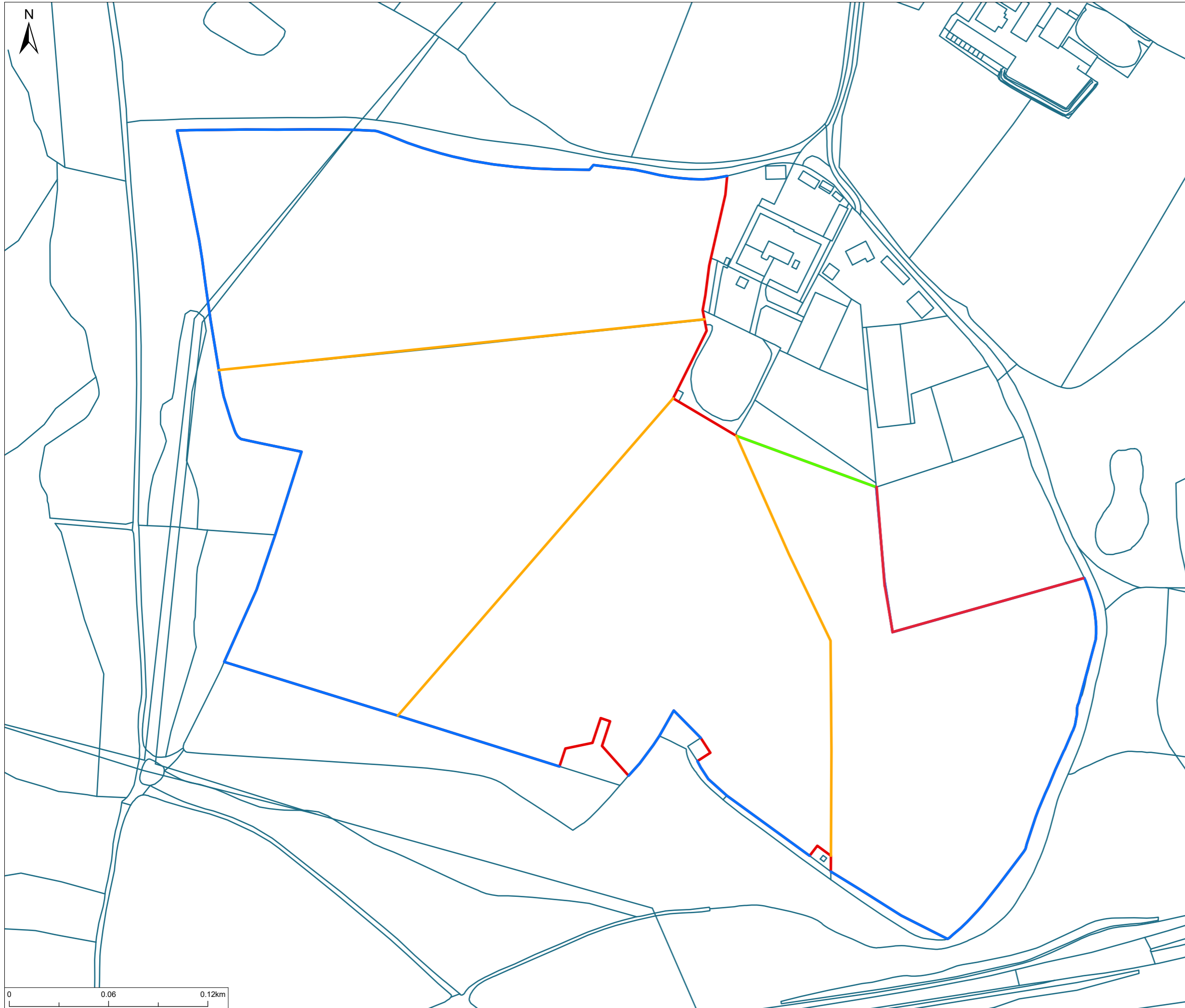
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Notes

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Legend

- ▭ Replacement Land
- ▭ Internal Fences to be Removed
- ▭ New Fence to be Erected
- ▭ Perimeter Fences to be Removed



Rev	Description	By	CB	Date



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Client -

Project **Blackbushe Airfield Commons**

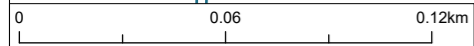
Title **Fence Removal Plan**

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
FINAL	SHB	JT
Project Number	Scale @ A3	Date Created
12354	1:2,200	AUG 2023

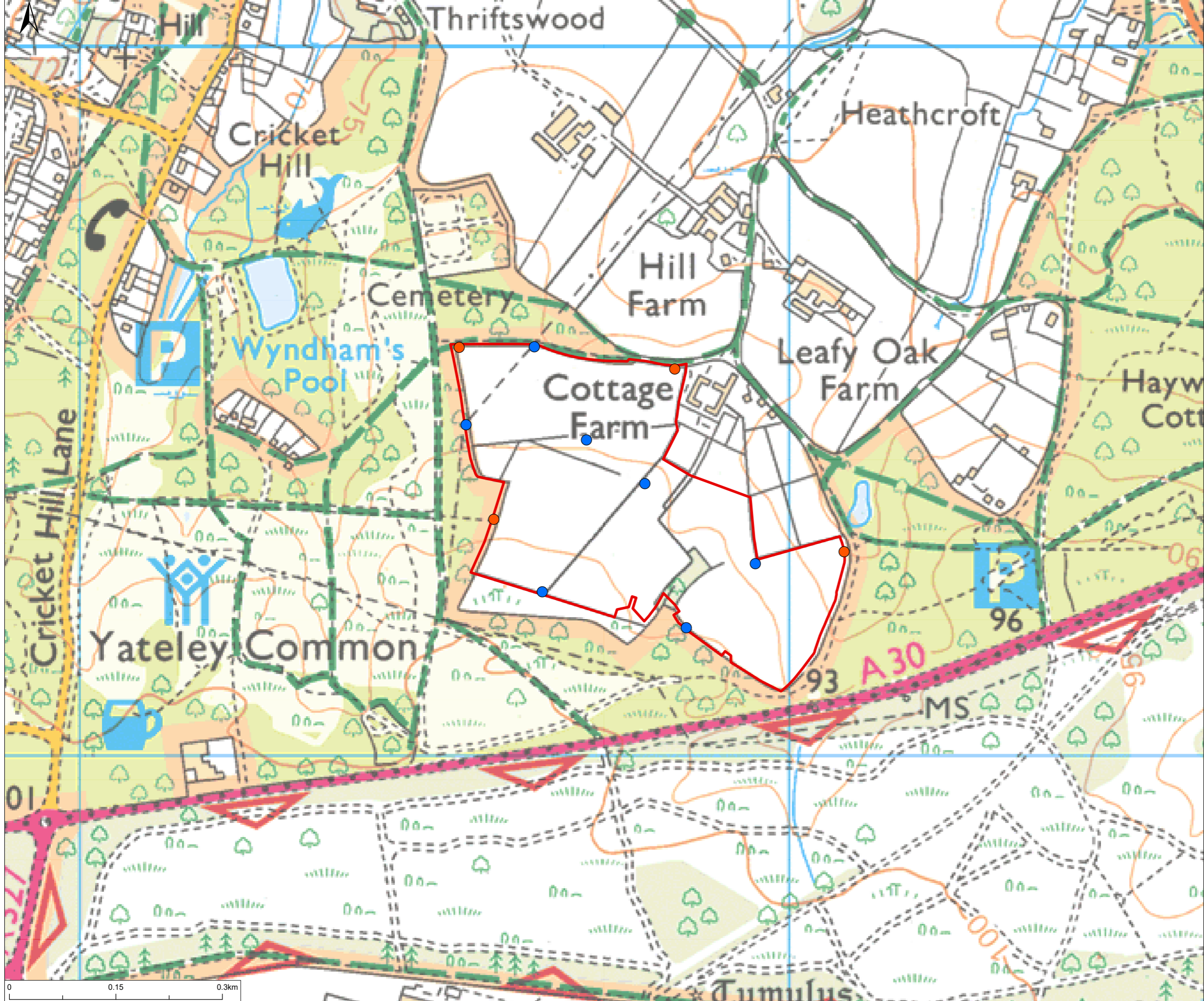
Figure Number	Rev
Appendix 1 Figure 1	-

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APPENDIX 1 FIGURE 2



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Legend

- Replacement Land
- Information Board / Waymarking
- Waymarking Post

Rev	Description	By	CB	Date



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Client -
 Project Blackbushe Airfield Commons
 Title Works to Replacement Land – Placemarkers

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
FINAL	JP	JT
Project Number	Scale @ A3	Date Created
12354	1:5,200	AUG 2023

Figure Number	Rev
Appendix 1 Figure 2	-

O:\12354 Blackbushe Airfield Commons\TechDrawings\12354-0003-04.aprx - 12354-0003-01 Placemarkers