

Planning Inspectorate reference: ROW/ 3370751

HIGHWAYS ACT 1980 SECTION 119

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC PATH DIVERSION ORDER 2024

FOOTPATH 65 SIBLE HEDINGHAM

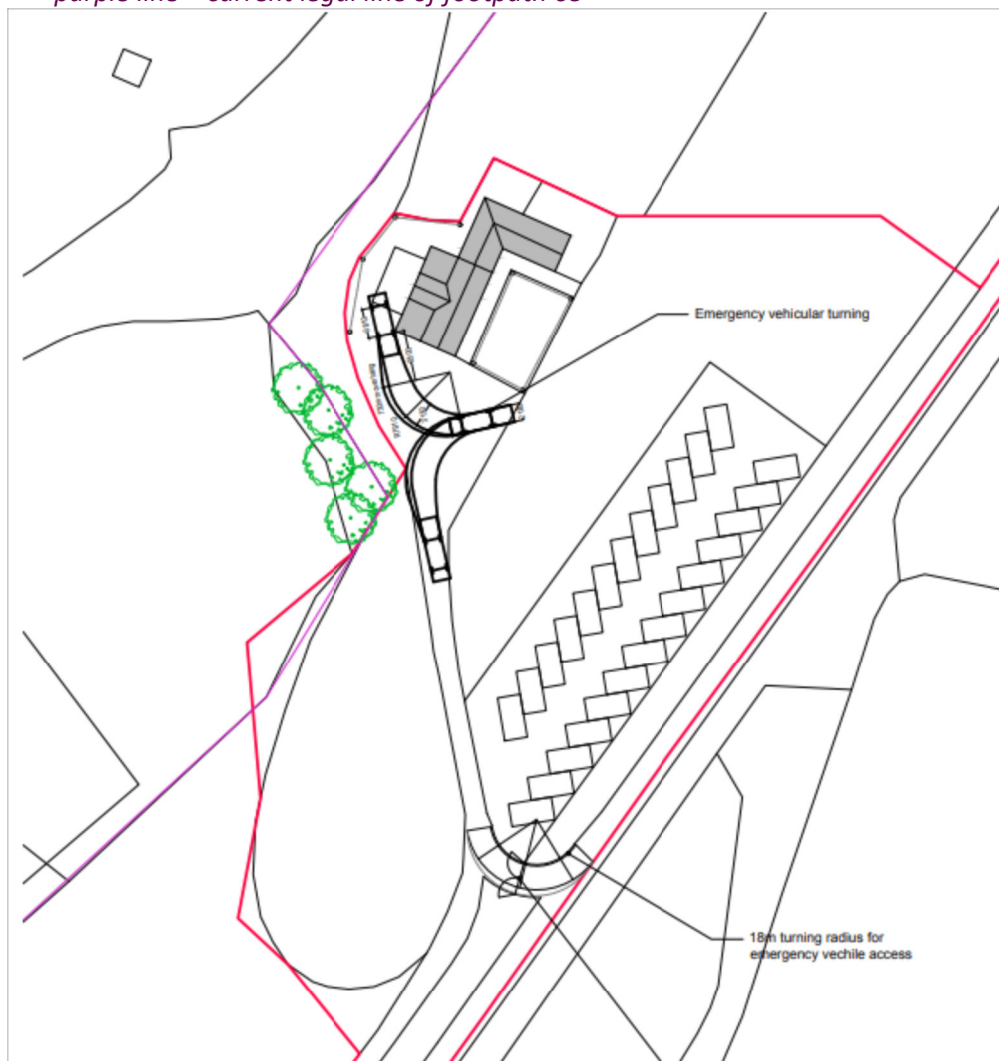
STATEMENT OF CASE BY THE RAMBLERS - REPRESENTATION

1. The Ramblers is a charity and company limited by guarantee which exists as a voluntary body founded in 1935. The Ramblers' charitable objectives include the promotion of walking, both for recreation and as a form of everyday sustainable transport, as well as for its health-benefits; the protection of the countryside; and the protection and extension of the nation's network of public footpaths and other routes used for walking.
2. This Statement of Case is by Katherine Evans, who is the duly appointed volunteer Braintree District Joint Footpath Secretary of the Essex Area of the Ramblers' Association ('the Ramblers'). Ramblers Essex Area has about 4,000 members.
3. The Ramblers are concerned that the diversion of Sible Hedingham footpath 65 will result in a loss of views and loss of enjoyment with the risk of walker-vehicle contact as the proposed diversion route is contiguous with the vehicular access route to Mount Nebo. The suggestion was and is made on behalf of the Ramblers, that section A-C should be on the grass verge alongside single-carriageway vehicular access route rather than contiguous with it.
4. The existing legal line of Sible Hedingham footpath 65 is through a wooded area with views of the lake. The lake and adjacent land are marketed as a natural rustic wedding /events venue. This use has occurred without any diversion of footpath 65 which is south of the lake in a wooded area then passing on the north side of the Mount Nebo building at the foot of the slope.
5. The proposed diversion route A-C is contiguous with the single carriageway tarmaced drive fenced on both sides that provides vehicular access to the building at Mount Nebo, which is in an elevated position. The building was used as a day nursery. The planning application 24/00548/FUL to Braintree Council for the alternative use as a wedding venue and occasional community use was granted in April 2024. This use would be an additional facility to the lakeside area.

There is no evidence that the land around the Mount Nebo building has an authorised use as "private gardens" as stated in the owner's "statement of grounds". The current legal line of footpath 65 is outside the red line planning area (24/00548/FUL & 25/02570/VAR) except for a small section at the north-west.

A. 25/02570/VAR Proposed Access and Landscaping plans – consented January 2026

purple line = current legal line of footpath 65



6. On behalf of the Ramblers, it was and is suggested that the proposed diverted route should be on the grass verge **alongside** the vehicular access drive rather than contiguous with it. This suggestion was made both in April 2024 in response to the informal consultation and again in September 2024 in response to the Made Order. The alongside footpath should be protected with bollards / a low rail. Together this would minimise the risk of vehicle- walker contact.

6(i) From point A, going up the vehicular access drive towards point C, there are fences close to and on both sides of the tarmaced drive. So pedestrians would have to walk on the drive without any points of refuge from passing vehicles. There is a grass strip on the field side of the fence between the fence and the line of trees - see photo B. It was suggested that the fence could be into the field / to the tree line to leave a grassy strip adjacent to the vehicular drive for a diverted footpath.

B. View of the vehicular access drive from point A uphill towards point C



6(ii) At the top of the drive, the fence is set back from the drive on the east side leaving a wide grass verge up to point C, sufficient to accommodate a 2 metre wide footpath – see photo C.

C. View downhill towards point A from near point C – showing the wide unfenced verge on the east side



- 6(iii) In the planning application 24/00548/FUL, point C was contiguous with the point where the vehicular access track turned north and uphill towards the Mount Nebo building. This was of concern. However, in the subsequent 25/02570/VAR application, consented in January 2026 after the Made Diversion Order, the vehicular turn north was pulled back to depart from the section of drive with the wide grass verge – see plan A above.
7. For the reasons given above, on behalf of the Ramblers the Inspector is asked NOT to confirm the Order as now but to MODIFY it such that section A-C is NOT contiguous with the single-carriageway vehicular access route but is alongside it on the grass verge with a width of 2metres, protected by bollards / a low rail. This would mitigate the risk of walker-vehicular contact.

Katherine & Paul Evans
Ramblers Braintree District Joint Footpath Secretary
23 June 2026