Annotations of relevant points relating to DMMO will be highlighted blue

7. Scope of Land within Application; STC confirmed "inaccessible" "limited use" "walking"

7.1 The **demarcated areas** within the application, exceed that of the 2015/2016 applications for ACV, in which Stroud District Council determined the **vast majority was not in use by the public, except for a footpath & a bench.**

Below is the plan attached with the 2016 ACV applications, it covers only 11 acres of Spring Valley
SDC planning portal attachment: 2016_0003_ASSETC-PLAN_B-1817923.pdf



Stonehouse Town Council ACV application map in 2016 only shows these footpaths

Below is the **officer's decision report**, in response to the application, noting the **majority of the land was not in public use.**
SDC planning portal attachment: 2016_0004_ASSETC-OFFICER_S_REPORT-2745659.pdf

The only footpath identified by Stroud in 2016, whilst appraising the site for possible ACV, was J-O (parallel to MST30 – which was overgrown, obstructed by fences & quarry)

The evidence submitted in support of the nomination demonstrates that recreational activities take place on specified footpaths on a regular basis. It is also noted that during the site visit 4 walkers were seen utilising the footpath running along the southern edge of the site. However, the topography of the site makes it apparent that large portions of the site, particularly sections in the middle, are not suitable for the recreation activities described to take place on site. Furthermore, large sections of the site are overgrown and inaccessible to the general public, this is acknowledged by the Town Council.

Only Footpath useage

Large portions of land inaccessible due to topography & overgrowth

Considering these facts the Council agrees with the land owner's contention that the nomination does not demonstrate that the whole of the area nominated has been or is currently used in a manner which furthers the social interests of the local community. Any recreational or sporting value of the land nominated is limited to specific areas, in particular the designated public footpath and the relatively flat and well marinated area surrounding the public bench.

The only areas in-use by the public
1 - a Footpath
2 - area surrounding a bench (less than 50sqm)

As regards to the land owners' claim that any recreation use of the site beyond designated footpaths is unconsented and occasional, Upper Tier Tribunals have previously ruled that the use need not be lawful unless there is some other way in which the law provides that it should be. However, the Council agrees that the nomination does not demonstrate that all areas beyond the designated footpaths are used in a manner which furthers the social interests of the local community on a regular basis.

In 2016, little use beyond the footpath J-O described by last owner as occasional (infrequent), following ACV refusal Stonehouse Town Council later founded the Walking Festival, Arboretum Project & Scouts movement, all to expand walking activities / guided walks over the site to prepare themselves to be in a better position to reapply at a later date.

7. Scope of Land within Application; STC openly admitted "inaccessible" "limited use" "walking" *(contd.)*

7.2 28th November 2016: Below, in Stonehouse Town Council minutes, in response to the third ACV refusal, STC considered re-applying with a **reduced area**, to include **only the suitable areas IN-USE by the public**. *(STC Full town council meeting minutes, 2016, November 28th).*

suggested. Plan is being re-drafted for consideration at the January Town Council meeting.

TC1803 UPDATE - NOMINATION OF VERNEY FIELDS AS A COMMUNITY ASSET.
There is no opportunity for appeal. Council to decide whether to make another application with amendment to the detail
Council debated the merits of making a fresh application excluding the land not obviously in public use. It was agreed that a draft application would be prepared for consideration by Town Council.

TC1804 FINANCE

7.3 No further ACV materialised. In 2016, after 3 failed ACV Applications (December 2015 to September 2016), **STC decided not to submit a 4th application** with further reduced land scope.

7.4 It is clear from STC's meeting minutes during that time, that STC were trying to obtain a number of sites & once they obtained a project, they lost interest in this.

7.5 Given that STC already considered substantially reducing the area applied-for, and SDC confirmed:

*"the Council agrees that the nomination **does not demonstrate** that all areas **beyond** the designated footpaths are used",*

it is now illogical that STC have increased the scope of land for their TVG application, to include further inaccessible, overgrown land, the majority of which is on topography of similar poor suitability & NOT currently, recently or previously in public use.

8. Limited Use: Walking / Dog-Walking along footpaths:

The attachments below further illustrate the lack of merit within this TVG application. Below, Stonehouse Town Council minutes in which STC first became aware of the ACV process; they considered their options with reasons / intended purpose. **STC's only mentioned purpose & use was 'dog - walking' (footpath use):**

22nd May 2015, STC Full town council meeting minutes:

TC1610 Adjournment for Public Participation
Mrs Ross enquired about the second Resolution in TC1617-what was the exact location of land off Bramble Lane?
Councillor Theresa Watt explained that this referred to land leading up to Doverow Hill from the top of Verney Road.

TC1617 Community Right to Bid
A response to the Council's Expression of Interest for Asset Transfer indicates that the County Council have not listed the Athletics Field for disposal. Following discussions with the Department for Communities and Local Government County Councillor Williams has been asked to ascertain how the County Council will manage the athletics field for public recreation and to request that the Council considers a lease or management agreement with the Town Council.
In the meantime the DCLG have advised the Town Council to make a community right to bid.
For Resolution
Councillor Powell proposed that the Town Council should make a community right to bid for the area of land currently used for athletic related sports. This was seconded by Councillor Gwen Atkinson and agreed by all Members present.

TC1617 Community Right to Bid (continued)
New rules allow Councils to bid for privately owned land which fulfils the purpose of dog walking.
With this is mind the Council may want to make a bid for land off Bramble Lane.
For Resolution.
Following discussion, Councillor Gwen Atkinson proposed that the Town Council should make a community right to bid on the land leading up to Doverow Hill, off Verney Road. This was seconded by Councillor Deborah Curtis and agreed by all Members present.

22nd May 2015, STC Full town council meeting minutes:

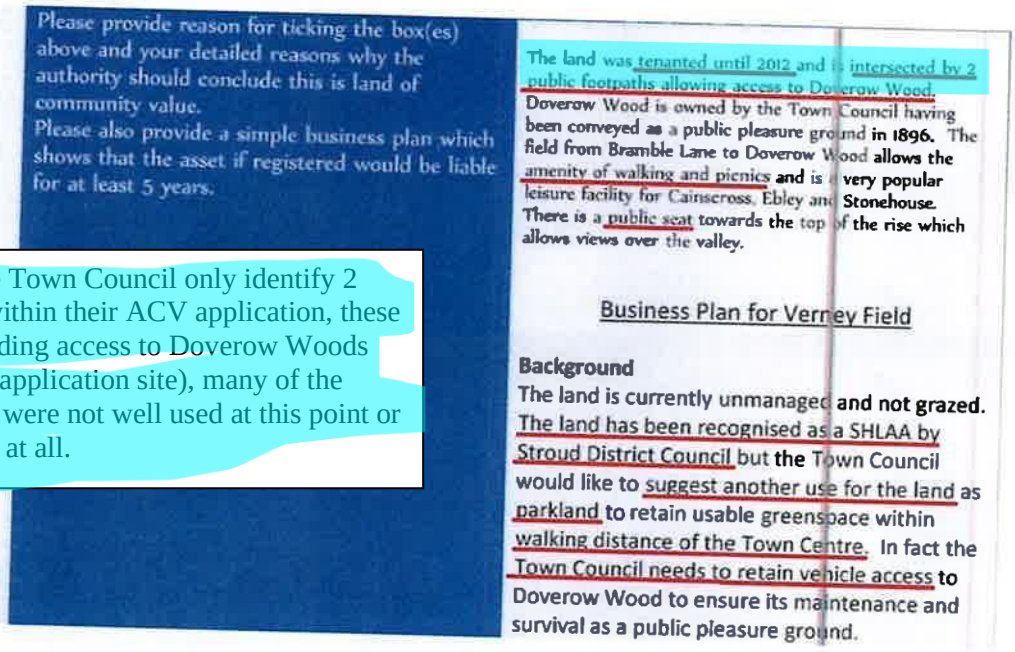
Below, Stonehouse Town Council minutes after 1st unsuccessful ACV application, the only stated recreational use mentioned was 'walking' (footpath use). The Stroud officer stated footpath use is Not enough evidence of public use, also the last grazing tenancy ended in 2012 (in 2015, this had only been 3 years of non-grazing use). They proceeded to reapply with their 2nd ACV. *(Source: STC Full town council meeting minutes, 2015, May 22nd.)*

TC1674 Community Assets
Verney Field
Stroud District Council have advised that they would refuse the nomination. The application was withdrawn and further advice sought from Locality. The advice is that there are no grounds for refusal. Agricultural land is permitted where it has had a recreational use i.e. walking. Council to decide whether to proceed with application. Councillor Watt asked the Clerk to explain. The Clerk explained that the District Council (Ricardo Rios) had advised that the reasons given in the application were not sufficient. Locality had confirmed that they were sufficient grounds. The officer has now said that there is not enough evidence of public use, or when it ceased to be grazed, and that he has to check whether the land is operational land for the County Council. The Clerk advised the Council to survey residents and obtain the support of Ward Councillors. Cllr Mattie Ross interjected that she had not been consulted so how was she expected to offer support. The Clerk responded that a consultation would follow whereupon the Councillor told the Clerk not to interrupt her and went back to her complaint about lack of consultation.
The Council agreed to proceed with an application following a period of consultation with the community to gather evidence.

Elm Road Former Youth Centre

8. STC Admitted Limited Use, Limited to Specific Areas; for Walking / Dog-Walking along footpaths *(contd.)*

Below, Stonehouse Town Council's ACV application, states their primary reasons for the application was 2 footpaths, one 'public' seat, primary walking use *(very few people claimed to have had picnics on the survey, picnics later disregarded by Stroud as being unsuitable anywhere other than on the bench; the majority of people find the steep route to the bench a huge physical exertion which they could not do regularly, unlike on many other more preferred benches in Stonehouse; when in-use it had primarily been used for rest & to catch their breath, rather than for snacks).* STC states the reason for application is their wish for vehicle access to their asset & it's close proximity to town, to **prevent planning** & propose alternative use (**convenience to STC & safeguard against planning**). SDC planning portal attachment: 2015_0018_ASSETC-NOMINATION_FORM-1711675



Please provide reason for ticking the box(es) above and your detailed reasons why the authority should conclude this is land of community value.
Please also provide a simple business plan which shows that the asset if registered would be liable for at least 5 years.

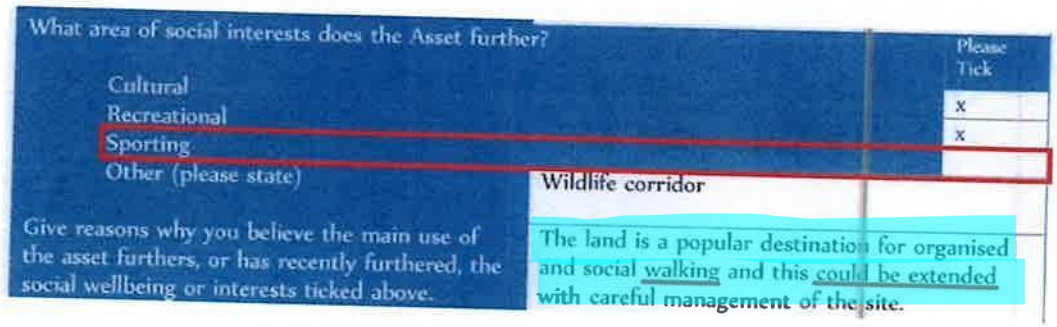
The land was tenanted until 2012 and is intersected by 2 public footpaths allowing access to Doverow Wood.
Doverow Wood is owned by the Town Council having been conveyed as a public pleasure ground in 1896. The field from Bramble Lane to Doverow Wood allows the amenity of walking and picnics and is a very popular leisure facility for Cainscross, Ebley and Stonehouse. There is a public seat towards the top of the rise which allows views over the valley.

Business Plan for Verney Field

Background
The land is currently unmanaged and not grazed. The land has been recognised as a SHLAA by Stroud District Council but the Town Council would like to suggest another use for the land as parkland to retain usable greenspace within walking distance of the Town Centre. In fact the Town Council needs to retain vehicle access to Doverow Wood to ensure its maintenance and survival as a public pleasure ground.

Stonehouse Town Council only identify 2 footpaths within their ACV application, these paths providing access to Doverow Woods (outside of application site), many of the other paths were not well used at this point or didn't exist at all.

Below, the application states the main reason is walking & it's Potential for further walking, with significant landscaping alterations (potential use, not current use), it also does Not tick box for sporting use, ie. it **does Not demonstrate the usage required for TVG**.



What area of social interests does the Asset further?

	Please Tick
Cultural	
Recreational	x
Sporting	x
Other (please state)	

Wildlife corridor

Give reasons why you believe the main use of the asset furthers, or has recently furthered, the social wellbeing or interests ticked above.

The land is a popular destination for organised and social walking and this could be extended with careful management of the site.

As above, this referred to walks to Doverow Woods, Stonehouse Town Council indicated their wish to expand the footpath network & promote further use of them, which they did after 2016 ACV was refused

9. 2016, STC Minutes, Oldends Field public activity (not suitable on our topography)

Below, STC meeting minutes with description of a picnic & activities, typical of a town green. There is nowhere on our fields which is suitable for a fete of this description; apart from the impractical logistics of carrying everything up the steep, slippery slope, nowhere is flat enough for marquees or tables/chairs for stalls, drink dispensers or games typically played on flat greens.

Music events are similarly unsuitable as our land has nowhere flat for stage or sound equipment setup (microphone/music stands/amplifiers...) or drum set.

No such similar event has taken place on our private land in view of the topography (which has been farm tenanted for decades).

TC1706 Celebration of the Queens 90th Birthday

To receive a report of the Working Group

Councillor Byrne reported that the Group were planning to hold a Big Picnic on Oldends field on the 12th June with stalls, refreshments, games and music provided by the Young Gloucestershire bus. On the 21st April the WI would be decorating the High Street trees with yarn bombing and shopkeepers being encouraged to hang bunting. 90 candles will be lit and a large birthday cake available to share on the Town Green. Stonehouse Rotary were reluctant to take responsibility for lighting the beacon. Councillors would look into this.

10. Specific Conditions Not Met, re: to s.15 of the Commons Act 2006

(a) a significant number of the inhabitants of any locality, or of any neighbourhood within a locality, have indulged as of right in lawful sports and pastimes on the land for a period of at least 20 years; and

'a significant number'

Population of Stonehouse is 8,450 persons, 118 people is 1.4% very insignificant
Population of Stonehouse & Stroud is 8,450 + 26,300 persons, 118 people is 0.34%

'indulged as of right'

There is abundant evidence of forced access, with vandalism & cut fences going back more than a decade prior to our purchase.

'sports & pastimes'

Both STC & SDC acknowledge there are none; as per council meeting minutes & ACV applications 2015/2016; the only usage was footpath.

'the land'

Both STC & SDC acknowledge the vast majority of the land is inaccessible to the public due to overgrowth & poor topography, the only parts in use by public had been footpath & bench.

'at least 20 years'

This land has been farm tenanted for cattle grazing for many decades, until 2012 (11 years ago), none of the described recreational activities happened amongst the cattle.

15 Registration of greens

(1) Any person may apply to the commons registration authority to register land to which this Part applies as a town or village green in a case where subsection (2), (3) or (4) applies.

This subsection applies where—

a significant number of the inhabitants of any locality, or of any neighbourhood within a locality, have indulged as of right in lawful sports and pastimes on the land for a period of at least 20 years; and

they continue to do so at the time of the application.

This subsection applies where—

a significant number of the inhabitants of any locality, or of any neighbourhood within a locality, indulged as of right in lawful sports and pastimes on the land for a period of at least 20 years;

(b) they ceased to do so before the time of the application but after the commencement of this section; and

(c) the application is made within [F1 the relevant period].

[F2 (3A) In subsection (3), " the relevant period " means—

(a) in the case of an application relating to land in England, the period of one year beginning with the cessation mentioned in subsection (3)(b);

(b) in the case of an application relating to land in Wales, the period of two years beginning with that cessation.]

This subsection applies (subject to subsection (5)) where—

a significant number of the inhabitants of any locality, or of any neighbourhood within a locality, indulged as of right in lawful sports and pastimes on the land for a period of at least 20 years;

(b) they ceased to do so before the commencement of this section; and

(c) the application is made within the period of five years beginning with the cessation referred to in paragraph (b).

In summary, it is apparent that the pending TVG application has no merit & appears unsubstantiated, in light of the previous decisions and open admissions of fact by the applicant, including:

(1) The fact that the land was used for agricultural purposes (**grazing**) for many years until 2012;

(2) The fact that the applicant, STC, openly admitted to SDC (as confirmed by SDC's Decisions and by STC) that large sections of the land were **inaccessible**;

(3) The fact that the applicant, STC, openly admitted **limited** use, specific to footpaths;

(4) The fact that SDC concluded that any potential recreational or sporting value of the land was limited to a footpath and a bench and not the whole of the land; therefore the conditions of s.15 of the Commons Act 2006 are not met;

(5) The fact that there were no sporting or other pastimes by the public amidst the cattle previously grazing upon the land for many years, or at all.

(6) The fact that the application is unsubstantiated as the applicants declared that this land was ***"Obviously" "Not... in public use".*** *(28-11-16).*

Should you require any further details, please do not hesitate to contact us; we have substantial, further representations should this be necessary.

Yours sincerely,

L. Maiik, *BSc Hons, MSc Eng. & K. Nagai (Horticulturist and Orchardist)*
Email: [redacted]
c/o John Copland & Son,
77 High Street
Sheerness, ME12 1TY

[redacted] information and in some cases to apply for services online.

This email is not secured, please be mindful of data security. If your response [redacted] email contains personal or confidential information, we suggest you reply using Egress Switch. [redacted] Gloucestershire County Council is one of many Councils using Egress Switch to protect personal and/or [redacted] in transit. You may already be a registered user of Egress Switch if you have been [redacted] securely with another organisation, if so, you will be able to use your existing Egress [redacted] communicate securely with Gloucestershire County Council. Registration is free and is a [redacted] time process that will take no longer than 5 minutes to complete. Details of how to [redacted] provided in the 'GCC Egress Switch Recipient Guide' provided as a download from [redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: Monday, April 8, 2024 3:39 PM
To: [redacted]
Subject: Town Green application JB77161

For the attention of the Assistant Director of Legal Services

I should like to register my objections to this proposal.

My reasoning:

Stonehouse has a population of over 8500 of which according to the application 129 actively support the proposal. A very small percentage of those that live here. The campaign has been spearheaded by a vocal and vociferous minority and whilst we do not know the opinions of the 8400 these have remained fairly silent.

The original survey which is being used to support the application (which I completed and am named on the list provided) was conducted without providing full information on the implications, the implication being it was about the rights to walk across the land. Had I been aware of the facts I would not have completed the survey.

I do not believe that the way the land has been used, and abused, by the public fits with the requirements of Town Green status. To my knowledge there have not been any organised sports or activities that have taken part on this piece of land. Walkers, dog walkers and runners have sporadically transited through this space to other areas of the hillside but I am not aware of any community led activity taking place here. Some of the supporting comments in documents supplied by STTC refer to areas outside of Verney Fields, e.g. Doverow Woods and The Quarry.

The Town Council have adopted a 'one sided' approach to their position seeking supportive comments rather than open feedback. They have given no information about the consequences of this being approved, e.g. any compensation to the land owner, costs to the public, what will actually be achieved. If there are costs that have been associated with this proposal and any future costs (land maintenance etc) there has been no mention of what these are/will be and the impact on local finances/financing. We as the public do not have a full picture on which to make a reasoned judgement.

The Land owners have taken steps to ensure that there are footpaths available.

As land owners, people who have invested capital to run a business, they should be allowed to pursue their legal business on their land and decide who is or is not allowed on it within the confines of maintains lawfully used footpaths. It would seem deeply unfair for this proposal to be passed to the financial detrement of the land owner without full compensation.

Actions taken by the council with Tree Preservation Orders (which if deemed necessary should have happened before) appear to be an attempt to hinder the land owners from progressing their business whilst progressing this application.

B14

BIS

[redacted]

From: Les Richards [redacted] on behalf of Les Richards
Sent: 17 April 2024 13:17
To: [redacted]k
Subject: Ref 77161/JB Doverow Hill or V erne's Fields or Windmill Farm.

My wife and I live on the perimeter of the above and we both regularly use it for walks for many years.
We both strongly object to the application as we consider it to be farmland and is totally unsuitable for a commons or towns green. You only have to visit site to reach that conclusion.
This application is an emotional one not a logical one and emanates from a few locals who ignored the irresponsible behaviour of some and the harm to the wildlife and environment. Indeed the previous owners of the land held similar views and I was delighted when the new owners decided to take control and limit what was being done by those in our community who feel it's ok.
The new footpaths are perfect as they still allow access to the areas useable by the public and much of it has been thankfully returned to nature. Indeed the whole area is totally inappropriate for use as a town green given the steep slopes. In the past I have seen signs erected by previous owners asking the public to stick to the footpaths and behave responsibly but they were ignored and it was common place to see dogs running wild, dog mess, dog mess in bags, drug paraphernalia, litter, cans, broken bottles, fires you name it. It became a ASB hotspot. My sympathies are with the new owners as they have been victimised for trying to run a farm, maintain footpaths whilst protecting wildlife and the environment. We are against the application and I hope it's rejected.
Kind regards,Les & Margaret Richards [redacted]e

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad

Reference to previous owners signs

B16

[redacted]

From: Victoria Dovey Spicer [redacted] on behalf of Victoria Dovey Spicer
Sent: 27 April 2024 19:43
To: [redacted]
Subject: Ref JB/77161

Access difficulty – right to deviate on varying paths to get across land.

Reference to vandalising previous signs & fences

Reference to permissive paths being variations of the Public Right of Way, i.e. they evolved from them via Right to deviate around obstructions.

Hi Jemma,

I am writing in objection to the application to make Doverow/Verney fields a town green status.

I have been a resident of Stonehouse for years and my family for generations. I have enjoyed walking on Doverow since childhood, and have continued to do so even since ownership has transferred to Windmill Farm, on the public rights of way. In fact the transformation of these rights of way following a great deal of investment have made many parts of the hill more accessible, as any local will tell you, getting up the hill in the winter mud was never easy, but a lot easier now with handrails, steps and gravel!

I am appalled at how some residents have treated the owners. I am baffled by their entitlement to private land, as if they themselves would be happy for complete strangers to trespass in their gardens, and to assume liability when this happens. These selfish locals have publicly boasted vandalising signs and fences and have now taken their bullying to new heights with this application. And why? Because they are not allowed to now walk as they please on someone else's land? Even though they still can, just via public rights of way, which in most cases are ever so slight variations from the prior permissive paths. They can still access the same landmarks, the woods, the viewpoint. I suspect what they do not like is that they cannot let their feral dogs run riot and defecate on the land (I am a dog owner myself and have seen so much irresponsible ownership in the community, with lack of control or cleaning up after them). I suspect they do not like being told they cannot do something, even if their actions are hurting livelihoods and nature. I suspect they are very bitter people indeed.

What I see windmill farms try to do is to create a farm that lives in harmony with nature, which requires them to limit access to the general public, and I believe there's nothing immoral in this in the slightest. I have seen how their rewilding efforts have already benefitted the local ecology (so few grasslands are allowed to be long these days which is essential for many ecosystems), with more deer, fox, flowers, fauna and insects than ever. I know they have plans for wetlands too, no doubt which have been hampered by spending funds in this very objection. As a local resident who cares about nature, small sustainable businesses and the community, I would love to see them able to fulfill their vision.

I have no affiliation with the farm, I know this because of efforts from the farm to engage the community, efforts which I see be attacked time and time again by the same entitled minority who have pushed this application forward with selfish vigour. I have purchased and enjoyed their crop and would love to continue to support them, not run them out of town.

I know I am not alone in feeling this way, but I feel like my local governance is being allowed to be hijacked by these extremist thugs, who wish to seize land over what is frankly a blow out tantrum. If this is allowed to happen, I truly fear what could happen next for farmers, or indeed any one with private land.

So I plead to the county to please discount this ridiculous application, which has consumed the local community for too long already, and allow Windmill farm to finally establish themselves as the community benefactors I know them to be.

Sincerely,
Victoria Dovey
[redacted]

B18

[redacted]

From: Lar Dowding [redacted]
Sent: 14 May 2024 21:00
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Land 77161/jb

Dear Jemma Brown
I am writing to you on a matter close to my heart, the farm known as Windmill farm/verney fields.
Me and my family both feel the actions that are being taken to put said land in to a town green status morally unacceptable.
A person or person who buys a house,land or a farm should have the right with in reasonable reason to do as they wish, such be it to stop trespassing a valid reason.
I walk the footpath on a regular basis and see the changes that have been made by the owner
cceptable,
These folk who feel it is there right to free wander across private land are in the wrong,
We are very much a countryside family and have lived in stonehouse for over 50 years.
I have seen the reality of free roaming and what it has done to farm animal's, wildlife and our beautiful wild flowers.
If the person or persons feel they should have the right to wonder on private property, they should have bought the land them selves not to force it upon others! As to with stonehouse town council they should have bought it for the good of the town.
Good day to you
Mr laurie Dowding

Refers to wandering at will rather than consolidated footpaths

B20

[redacted]

From: H D[redacted]
Sent: 14 May 2024 21:30
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: 7716/JB - Land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields or Windmill Farm

Dear Jemma,

I am writing to formally express my objection to the application for the designation of Verney Fields as a commons or town green. As someone intimately familiar with this land, having visited it regularly for many years, I strongly oppose this proposed designation for several compelling reasons.

First and foremost, I adamantly believe that the land in question is farmland and is wholly unsuitable and inappropriate for registration to a commons or town green. Throughout the years, I have witnessed this land primarily used for agricultural purposes, consistent with its classification as farmland. To consider it otherwise is not only preposterous but also a gross misinterpretation of its historical and practical use.

Furthermore, I find the notion of registering this land into a commons to be nothing short of ridiculous. It seems to be a waste of time and resources, driven by misguided intentions rather than sound reasoning. This reactionary approach to new ownership disregards the longstanding history and character of the land, undermining the rights of those who own it.

Additionally, I can attest that the vast majority of the land, aside from the footpaths providing access to Verney Fields has remained largely untouched by public use. Its overgrown vegetation, steep topography, sharp drops, and hazardous conditions render it inaccessible unsafe and unfit for recreational activities typical of a town green. Never have I witnessed any market stalls, fêtes, or sporting events held on this land, nor has it been utilized for such purposes in any capacity, which would usually be expected should the field be suitable.

While occasional sledging has occurred, it has been infrequent and sporadic, with the surround fields being preferred due to their more suitable terrain. However, any sledging activities that did take place were with the permission of the farmers and were far from a regular occurrence.

Throughout the years, I recall seeing signage indicating that the land was private and urging visitors to keep to the footpaths. Unfortunately, there have been instances of fences being cut for unauthorized access, leading to conflicts with occasional public misuse, including dog fouling, littering, fires, vandalism, and other forms of disruption.

In light of these facts, I urge you to reconsider the proposed designation of Verney Fields as a commons or town green. Such a decision would not only be unjust but also detrimental to the integrity and functionality of the land. I trust that you will give careful consideration to my objections and make a decision that is fair and in the best interest of all parties involved.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Reference to signs & fence damage (forced access)

Sincerely,

Hazel Dowling

021

[redacted]

From: beccy [redacted]
Sent: 17 May 2024 17:03
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Ref 77161/JB land known as Doverow Hill/Verney Fields/Windmill Farm

Dear Jemma

My name is Rebecca, I am a secondary school teacher and live on Bramble Lane (no 20) with my husband and two young children. My mother in law lives on Cotswold Green in the house that belonged to her Mother and Father for 60 years. We fell in love with the area around 9 years ago and now that we're lucky to live here, spend at least one day per week walking around Doverow, past the vineyards and up to Westrip. My children absolutely love it, especially when we spot the deer! We spot the deer more often now since whoever has purchased the land has started taking care of it.

Before the land was purchased, we had awful problems with antisocial behaviour including evidence of drug use, condoms, dumped rubbish and fires that needed to be attended by the fire services multiple times. Not nice for us to look at and have to explain to our children, not to mention incredibly detrimental to the natural world that we love so dearly. We used to do weekly litter picks and come home with 2 bin bags full of broken glass, empty drinks cans/bottles, crisp packets etc

I completely **object** to this absurd application to turn it into a town green; unfortunately many humans that live around here have proved time and time again that they do not respect the environment and do not care about it at all. They clearly also haven't bothered to educate their children about the importance of looking after our environment.

We are very lucky to already have plenty of open green spaces, on a level, useable ground that can be used as a 'town green'. Not to mention the actual town green that we already have where the war memorial is situated and where we gather to commemorate Armistice Day amongst other events. We have absolutely no need for a town green and attempting to have one on the top of a steep incline is ludicrous. The ground is so uneven and there are some very dangerous sheer drops from the top.

I have been absolutely appalled by the actions of local residents, seemingly doing everything in their power to make things as difficult as possible for the new land owners, including vandalising their property. My children were absolutely heartbroken to find the beautiful new wooden tree swings to be stolen after only a few weeks of being installed. These people can't seem to see beyond the end of their own noses and are completely ignorant to the benefits that the new land owners are bringing to Doverow.

Wandering at will rather than on consolidated footpaths

The footpaths that the new landowners have installed are more than sufficient. Admittedly, in some places they could do with being a little wider. However, There is no need for people to go stomping all over the land, not to mention letting their dogs defecate all over the place and not picking up after them.

The new landowners keep the local community updated with their expert knowledge of all the different species of plants that are now thriving.
How wonderful to have homegrown maple syrup that we can purchase!

B22

Better for this land to be used how nature intended; for plants and trees to thrive and support our precious landscape and wildlife whilst we can benefit from the fruit, the healthy air and wonderful views on our walks. Rather than local people feeling like they have the right to tramp all over the place, leaving their rubbish and hurting the things that are so precious in this world.

I really hope the right decision is made and we can continue enjoying this beautiful area.

Yours Sincerely,

Rebecca Bevan

B23

[redacted]

From: Trevor Baker [redacted]
Sent: 19 May 2024 15:04
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Verney Fields Town Green Application Ref-JB/77161

Dear Sir/Madam.

I write to formally object to the Town Green application submitted by Mr Carlos Novoth on behalf of Stonehouse Town Council.

I have lived in Stonehouse all of my life (61 Years) and have represented the Town as both a Town and District Councillor. I have regularly walked Verney Fields and the surrounding environs. I consider myself to know the area and its uses well.

I have read through the evidence submissions deposited at Stonehouse Library and would make the following comments.

1. A significant number of the responses cannot confirm the uses claimed as they do not meet the 20 year minimum requirement.
2. A significant number of responses have stated they know of such uses in excess of 20 years in their answers to question 25, however they have failed to confirm the number in the declaration section of the evidence statement.
3. A significant number refer to use of the land by Wycliffe College as part of their cross country course but haven't stated whether this was "as of right" or with the permission of the land owner. As far as I am aware, Wycliffe College haven't commented on the application and therefore, it hasn't been established on what terms they made use of the land. I would have thought a cross country course would follow permissive or public footpaths in any case. I would be surprised if such a reputable organisation would use any land without permission.
4. Several responses refer to use of the land by the scout movement but again, as far as I am aware, the scout organisation haven't commented themselves. If the scouts have used the land (and I have never seen it) was it "as of right" or with permission. I know there are lots of badges to acquire in the scouts but I doubt there is one for trespass.

I have known this area for many years and am aware of its uses. I agree the land had been used for sledging on the few occasions weather permitted but it wasn't the preferred option. The run was short (even shorter after the development of bramble lane), the course was dangerous due to a cattle trough at the top end and a tree near the bottom and the camber directed you to these obstacles. The rear of Cotswold Green and the slopes down to Ebley is where sledging mainly took place. I have seen photos suggesting sledging in 2019 although it is hard to make out if it is on The Verney and they have the clarity of Loch Ness Monster/UFO photos.

I have never seen a picnic taking place on this land although I have seen a picnic/gathering on the quarry face. This was in the mid 1990s and was a contrived event in an attempt to hoodwink a planning inspector. One of the evidence providers for this application was a participant in the bogus picnic/gathering.

B24

Unlike many (particularly those with a sense of entitlement), I have never considered the land to be anything other than private farmland. I am not aware of anything on the land that could be described as organised sport (other than Wycliffe cross country) or recreation.

I do recall a beacon being lit on the land to celebrate the late Queens silver Jubilee and a firework display that celebrated the new millennium. I assume these events would have sought permission.

Finally, I consider the application not to have met the threshold required to grant Town Green status or to be of merit. Although the criteria may have been slightly different, I recall a process to designate the land as a community asset was also rejected by Stroud District Council some years ago. I believe that decision was correct.

If this ends up at a public enquiry, I wish to speak at it so as to elaborate on some of the points I have made.

Yours Sincerely

Trevor Baker
Stonehouse Resident

Trevor Baker

B25

[redacted]

From: Debbie [redacted]
Sent: 19 May 2024 16:25
To: [redacted]uk
Subject: Land known as Verney fields ref.. JB/77161

Dear Jemma.
I am writing to object to the Town Green application on Verney Fields from Stonehouse town council.
I have used Verney Fields as a child and adult for over 55 years, to gain access to Doverow woods and the Quarry itself. I never used the Verney field part for play, because it was of little interest. The Quarry itself and the woods was vastly more interesting, I've always known the land to be private farmland and not in the ownership of a public body.
With regards to the sports and recreation claimed, I've never witnessed it in Verney Fields, but I have in adjoining Fields, Sledging was carried out primarily on what is now Godsell land at the rear of Cotswold Green.
I understand some evidence providers claim a use by Maidenhill School for cross country. I can confirm this wasn't the case during my and my sons time at Maidenhill school. I know this because I used the course weekly.
I object to the application due to the lack of evidence and merit in these claims.
Kind regards
Deborah Baker

[redacted]

BR

[redacted]

From: Helen Al Amily [redacted]
Sent: 19 May 2024 15:24
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields or Windmill Farm

Good morning Jemma

I wish to strongly object to the above application please.
I believe it to be PRIVATE farmland & unsuitable/inappropriate for a commons/towns green.
It's ridiculous waste of council money, ie, our money.
It has been used by a few locals over the years. Farmers stopped using it as people never cleared up their dog mess. They roamed wherever they liked with their dogs. All cattle had to be removed due to dog faeces, so the farmer sold up to the current owner. Some of the very opinionated locals started moaning creating a snowball effect in our town. The local GL10 fb group became a battlefield. Some locals were horrid and rude to the new owners. They set up private fb groups to spread misinformation to as many as they could. The new owners had constant damage and still do to their land.
Stonehouse Town Council have spent "our" money making huge banners, hanging them all around Stonehouse, weekly stalls at the market catching everyone that walks past to sign their petition or whatever they've called it.
The land is steep, uneven, with sharp drops so completely unsuitable for use as a Town Green, fetes, or sports clubs, utter nonsense to think otherwise. Unfortunately STC and a few "locals" think they own/have the right to do as they please.
As long as the owner keeps the public footpaths open and in a good state of repair that you be sufficient. We have 3 huge parks in Stonehouse. 1 is home to Stonehouse football club, 1 has the community center and another park. We don't need another area. If STC hold an event (very very rarely they do) they have it in Laburnum Park as its huge and flat, accessible to all. It has a car park with disabled parking etc.
Please come and visit Stonehouse, see the large green areas we have then go to see this piece of private land. The new owners want to plant trees, surely that's a better solution than another dog toilet.

Yours sincerely
Helen

Sent from Outlook for Android

BR

[redacted]

From: Helen Al Amily [redacted]
Sent: 19 May 2024 15:31
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields or Windmill Far

Hi
Sorry I meant to mention at the bottom of my email, I do not know and have never met the new owners of the land.

Thanks
Helen

Sent from Outlook for Android

BL8

[redacted]

From: Rachel Clements [redacted] on behalf of Rachel Clements
Sent: 19 May 2024 22:28
To: [redacted]k
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields or Windmill Farm

Dear Ms Brown,

I write to you to formally object to the application by Stonehouse Town Council regarding land belonging to Windmill Farm on Doverow Hill.

Having been born and raised in Stonehouse, I have very fond memories of Doverow Hill over my near 40 years living in the area. We used to visit regularly as a family, walking the footpaths with the dog and enjoying spending time exploring the paths through the woods and playing in the quarry.

The application for a town green on land owned by Windmill Farm is something I strongly object to for a number of reasons. Firstly, it's clearly an inappropriate reaction from Stonehouse Town Council to the land being purchased by new owners. It's farmland, it has always been farmland and is wholly unsuitable for a common / town green space as they are proposing. Stonehouse already has several areas which are far more suitable for use as a town green space, including land at Laburnum Walk and Oldends Lane (which have been used in the past as just that, town greens, for fetes, puic events and the like). There has never been any usage typical of a town green on Doverow Hill, it has never been used for markets, fêtes or for sporting use, the idea is ridiculous to say the least!

People have been wrongly claiming public access to Doverow Hill for many years. The public have never used, nor had access to, the majority of the land on the hill. Apart from footpaths which only provide access to Doverow woods, the public have never used the majority of the land on the hill as it is inaccessible due to the overgrowth, the steep topography and the sharp drops making it slippery, dangerous and generally unsuitable for all.

I am not aware of any non-footpath activities taking place on Doverow Hill, aside from occasional very rare sledging (with land owners permission), although the fields north or east of the application site were much preferred due to their more suitable even topography and longer sledging run; it has only snowed sufficiently to sledge once or twice a decade, not often enough to be considered used for regular sporting use.

Finally, the claim that we, the public, had free reign over the land is untrue. There have always been certain public footpaths to allow access to the woods and clearly signed private farm land. People may well have cut fences and torn down signs to give themselves unauthorised access, but this doesn't give us any claim over the land now.

I fully support the work being done by Windmill Farm, their plans for the land are excellent; it's nice to see the land being used for the good of the local ecosystem and wildlife.

I hope that the application is thrown out and the owners of Windmill Farm are left to farm their land as they see fit. The neighbouring vineyards are an excellent example of the positives that can come from fruit farms, it's about time Windmill Farm received the same support from the local and county Council.

Regards,

Mrs Rachel Clements
Local resident

Mentions only footpaths going to Doverow Woods

Mentions signs & fence cutting during previous ownership

B29

[redacted]

From: Fiona Lenore [redacted]
Sent: 19 May 2024 20:44
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields or Windmill Farm

Dear Ms Brown,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the current application by Stonehouse Town Council for Town Green (TVG) Status for land at Doverow Hill (Windmill Farm).

It is absolutely preposterous that this land even be considered for town green status, for it is not practical, or ever used (in my experience) for anything other than walking and perhaps the occasional picnic. The steep incline of the land would restrict any practical usage for gatherings or sports. Also, the best spots for picnics or small gatherings are up in the woods where a better view and more peaceful surroundings are to be had.

I am a local resident and often walk or run up to the woods at the top of Doverow Hill, it is a very pleasant walk, and very popular. I often see other walkers and there are multiple approaches to the top of the hill by public footpath. This does not mean however that this land should in some way belong to the town.

Only reference to paths towards Doverow Woods

Since Windmill Farm have purchased the land they have improved many of the footpaths, some of which were uneven, on a slant, or muddy and wet. I do not appreciate Stonehouse Council and a few local residents giving these poor farmers such a hard time. In fact, I think it is a reckless waste of Council money.

Prior to Windmill Farm putting up multiple signs regarding footpath usage, I recall seeing the remains of fires and litter at a couple of spots on the fields. What land owner would want to have to clean such things up, so I understand that they must restrict people to footpaths, which is much opposed by some local people. Furthermore, if they are trying to start an orchard and plant seedlings, these could be easily tampered with by people wandering through not aware of where or what they are stepping on. This is, and has always been farmland, and these new owners have every right to do what is needed to be done to make it profitable for them. So long as they maintain, and continue to allow access to the current public footpaths, which of course they have done more than enough.

I do hope this will be the last time that Stonehouse Council frivol away money into a cause not supported by many people living here, and we can start to enjoy this hill in harmony with the owners of Windmill farm. It would be lovely to see a working orchard on the banks of Doverow hill, much more picturesque than grazing land.

Kind Regards,
Fiona Wilson

BB1

[redacted]

From: Jon Tory [redacted]
Sent: 19 May 2024 20:51
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields or Windmill Farm

Mentions only footpaths leading to Doverow Woods + mentions fenced off footpaths not affecting access

Hi Jemma,

I understand there is a planning application in progress to confiscate 20 acres of Windmill Farm (on Doverow Hill in Stonehouse). I object to this application. If someone wants to be able to farm farmland and feels the need or desire to secure their private property against outside interference then they should have the right to do so.

My wife and I have walked across the land at various times as there are footpaths leading to the woods at the top. I sometimes go that way on my runs, I know the footpaths are now fenced off, but that hasn't changed our use of the land as there is still access across it. These footpaths are now being managed and have been improved in places.

I understand some people have been upset about the fences that have gone up, while this might be a bit unusual, I feel they have the right to do it if they feel the need to. When walking a footpath across a farmer's field the general rule is to stick to the footpath, not go wandering around someone else's property. How is this situation any different?

I have seen litter and remnants of fires up there, while I'm for people being able to enjoy themselves, if they are leaving a mess for someone else to clean up then that is not acceptable. I don't know how many council resources are used cleaning up the mess in the playing fields left by kids, but I imagine it is considerable. Why should the farm owners have to deal with other people's mess? Along with the potential damage and theft of property involved with people wandering through their business?

Much of the land was overgrown before the new owners took over, and was not really use-able by anyone in that state. As far as I can tell, the new owners have improved the property, and want to use the farm for its original purpose.

The land, as far as I'm aware, doesn't have a history of being used as a town green, for fetes or markets. This property is owned by someone, taking it off them without good cause and damaging their opportunity to farm the land successfully is basically communist.

This will now be going to court at the tax payer's expense, surely this money could be better used?

Unless I'm massively misunderstanding the situation, this is completely unjust, and not at all in fitting with the usual heart and ethics of the people of the Stroud/Stonehouse area. Please you could help me understand how the proposed land grab represents the fair and legal treatment of the land owner?

Regards,
Jon Tory

B32

[redacted]

[redacted]

From: Rose Sawyers [redacted]
Sent: 19 May 2024 21:18
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill

Dear Jemma,

I would like to log my objection to the future plans for Doverow Hill.

I have visited the Hill for many years on and off. Roughly 20 years plus and had never been disappointed. It is one of the beautiful and breathtaking parts of Gloucestershire and I have always been very proud of our local countryside and its amazing scenery and the wellbeing aspects it brings to one who appreciates what it natural beauty has to offer.

I am aware of some of the dangers of the land. There are steep areas, some snow sledging when there is enough snow to do such an exciting activity.All with permission of course.
I had noticed on some of the occasions when I had visited, fences had been cut I presume for access purposes.

I hope you will
Consider my comments.

Mentions fence cutting on occasion over 20 years

Kindest regards

Rose

B33

[redacted]

information and in some cases to apply for services online.

This email is not secured, please be mindful of data security. If your [redacted] email contains personal or confidential information, we suggest you reply using Egress S[redacted]estershire County Council is one of many Councils using Egress Switch to protect person[redacted]tive data in transit. You may already be a registered user of Egress Switch if you h[redacted]nicating securely with another organisation, if so, you will be able to use your existing Egre[redacted]entials to communicate securely with Gloucestershire County Council. Registration is free and i[redacted]ple, one-time process that will take no longer than 5 minutes to complete. Details of how to [redacted]t Guide' provided as a download from [redacted].gov.uk/egress-switch

-----Original Message-----
From: mary wakefield [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, May 19, 2024 8:43 PM
[redacted]
Subject: For the attention of the Assistant Director of Legal Services

Re Town Green Application JB77161

I would like to register my objections to this proposal

I am 73 years of age and all my life I have lived in Stonehouse.
Residents have in the past been able walk as they wished on Verney Fields.
However, the land has been sold and quite legally the new owners have decided to farm the field with fruit trees.
The new owners have improved the right of way footpaths thus allowing walkers to use the fields in a correct manner.
The land it's self is not suitable the organisation of sports or village fetes etc and has not been used for this in the past. The council has not tried to arrange any local functions on the land when they were able to. In Stonehouse they are three other large playing areas, one in Oldends Lane, one in Laburnum Walk and one in Bridgend these could easily be used.

Stonehouse Town council, even though the application has been turned down in the past, have pressed for this application to go through. The council have asked people to support their bid but have not given any information as how to object to it. This does not seem very democratic.
Such a shame the local council is not supporting a new business which will take care of the land. Instead they are trying to make this land unworkable for the new owners.

Mary Wakefield

Sent from my iPad

B35

Subject Land known as Doverow Hill Ref:-77161/JB

From Anne Burns [redacted]

To: [redacted]

Date Today at 12:21

Use of cut through field because it was easier than using quarried away path MST30

I wish to object to the application to change the use of the above land to a Town Green by I believe Stonehouse Town Council.
I have on occasions over the last 40 years walked this area and have never found it to be anything more than an access to other places, Cotswold Green, Ebley, Randwick, Cashes Green etc. I was aware of a public footpath but as with most walkers it was easier to 'cut through' the field.
I am of the opinion that this is a waste of time and precious financial resources funded by myself and other council tax payers in Stonehouse.
Over the many years of using the unofficial paths, the only time that I can recall the field having any other use by the public has been on the VERY RARE occasion when there has been snow and the steep slope has been used as for sledging, probably about one day every 2/3 years. I would not consider this by any stretch of the imagination to be classed as regular public usage.
I hope that my comments and observations will go some way to helping you treat this application with the contempt that it deserves.

Thank you in anticipation of a common sense decision on this greatly overrated piece of land that someone has finally found an agricultural use for .

Mrs. A. Burns.
Stonehouse resident and tax payer.

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad

B36

[redacted]

From: [redacted]
Sent: 20 May 2024 12:37
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB

Dear Jemma.

Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields, Windmill Farm

I wish to object against the proposed Town Green Status.

Having lived in the area for over 20 years I admit that we have enjoyed the field immensely, my children grew up playing in the woodland; however we all appreciated that it was never our land, not to run through crops or mess with the cows, who would frequently hang their heads over our hedges. Our children were taught to pick up after themselves, never damage the trees and to enjoy the outdoors. However, there are many that do not have the same outlook; having walked these fields for more than two decades, I have seen the mess left by irresponsible people lighting fires in the woods, glass bottles smashed and beer cans lying about.... Even the original benches that were years old, were vandalised and young trees snapped.

I am disgusted by ignorant people who leave their dog poos literally everywhere, or hang their pleasant-smelling dog poo bags, like baubles from bushes and trees, with no thought or consideration for wildlife or other walkers; who which I add are not content to stick to pathways and run amuck. Recreationally, this land would be totally unsuitable for a Town Green space; the land is far too hilly; with exceptions to the rare occasions it has snowed and the local kids go sledging – to which I add the rubbish left, because no one wants to carry their mess away with them. It has been used for years for cross country running by students...I add Cross Country Running and not egg and spoon races or sack racing!! This land is NOT a community space, it has always been agriculture and farming land with some rough paths to navigate during certain months of the year.

Windmill Farm is a FARM! And todays society are under the miss-understanding that they can do what they like, when they like and how they like and forget that this land does not belong to them. There is a war against farmers going on daily; with people and councils all trying to undermine the fundamental aspects of farming life. It doesn't matter if you raise cows, sheep or in this case fruit trees, the fact remains that this land was bought and paid for by the current owners and now serial objectors, whose opinions seem to mean more than the land owners themselves are now preventing the owners living their best lives possible! The owners of Windmill Farm are not intending to build housing estates, they want to plant fruit trees and make a living from the land and this I find highly commendable.

B38

Many Farms nowadays are forced to diversify to survive; only to be hit with serial objectors and councils regarding how they diverse, which is shocking! I personally cant wait to see their fruit and syrups for sale locally, and I wish them much success in their plans to move forward and as a local business should be helped to succeed, not trampled and forced to allow THEIR land to become a public Green Space for self entitled people to roam as and when they please.

I raise this point – If lots of people trampled over your land, your garden, your back yard, left poo bags hanging from your trees, broke your trees, started fires, smashed bottles, left their rubbish and moaned constantly about what you did with your land or complained that you put up a shed or a conservatory or about the types of plants you planted, How Would You Feel and how would you react! And for those who say, "well its not the same" they are wrong, very wrong as this is how MANY land owners feel, when crops are ruined, their sheep are mauled by dogs off leads, gates left open for animals to escape and not a single dog owner are held accountable; leaving farmers to feel the pocket pinch, to destroy their animals or face massive vets bills.... THIS NEEDS TO STOP!!!

If this green space plans is allowed, it would be nothing short of criminal land grabbing - I therefore support Windmill Farm and reject the application of turning privately owned land into a Green Space and suggest instead the promotion of the current green spaces that are available to the general public or using the money that has been Ill spent regarding this matter, to buy other land, instead of stealing someone elses!!

With Regards

Suzie Blades.

B39

[redacted]

From: Pauline Pye [redacted]
Sent: 20 May 2024 16:17
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Verney Field/Doverow Hill Town Green Application - land owned by Windmill Farm

Dear Jemma,

JB/77161

Mentions people wanting to be able to Roam Free, rather than be confined to Footpaths – wandering at will

I would like to register my objection to this application.

I have no links or relationship with Windmill Farm, but I strongly feel that they are being badly treated by Stonehouse Town Council and a small number of residents, who believe they should have the right to roam free over the land in question, despite it being privately owned.

Those residents can still walk up to Doverow Hill, using the public rights of way. They are not being denied access, just being asked to use the correct paths. However, instead of accepting this, they want to prevent the farmer from using the land for the purpose it was purchased, ie apple and pear orchards and produce of maple syrup. STC have already prevented the farmer from maintaining his trees by putting a TPO on them.

I cannot believe that a small Town Council can do this, with only the backing of a small number of residents. I believe there are approx 7000 Stonehouse residents and most have not had a say in this.

STC have spent council money on this campaign, and some of the local shops have been flooded with leaflets which are referred to as a 'survey' but it does not give a fair and honest assessment of the issue. It does not give any information from the farmer's point of view, or the fact that he would not be able to use the land if the area becomes a Town Green.

Stonehouse is lucky to already have various parks and greens - on flat land, ie Laburnum Park, Meadow Park, Oldends Lane, Stagholt, Park Road Estate, War Memorial Green.

Verney/Doverow Hill is steep and accessible only to fit mobile people - certainly not a suitable site for a Town Green.

Three previous applications to Stroud Planning concerning this land failed, this current one has now been lodged with GCC. Sadly it looks like STC are not willing to accept defeat, and are now victimising this farm. I understand the previous owner of the land refused to sell the land to STC. They now appear to be unfairly hounding the current owner in revenge.

Windmill Farm bought the land to use as an orchard and I believe they should be allowed to do so. The residents can still use the public rights of way for their walks.

Regards
P Pye

B40

[redacted]

From: Neil Clements [redacted]
Sent: 20 May 2024 17:09
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: 77161/JB Doverow

Mentions previous farmer challenging trespassers straying from path.

Mentions previous fence vandalism.

Mentions public use by trespass was against prior owners wishes

Good afternoon,

I am emailing with regard to the application by the local council to turn this farmland into a green space.

I have lived in the area for my whole life, 43 years. In that time, I have witnessed the various challenges faced by the landowners to control littering, anti social behaviour, and all kinds of mess left by people who feel that it is their right to wander around wherever they please. I strongly object to the proposal - the land is a working farm and always has been.

I have watched with great admiration as the current landowner has provided upgraded access routes to the woods, whilst also trying to keep people safe and maintain a viable business on the land. Having lived a stones throw from the hill for a large part of my life, I've witnessed many issues - my cousin broke his arm whilst sledging for example, and a good friend slipped and broke his leg on one of the muddy banks. If we strayed from the paths we were told off by the farmer, and now as an adult I understand why. The signs asking us to keep to the footpaths were clear to see. Sadly they, along with the fences, were often vandalised by a few individuals who felt entitled to use the land.

What I don't understand is what this application hopes to achieve? The land has been largely inaccessible for many years due to bramble growth or the sheer unsuitability of the ground for walking, especially during the winter months. To my knowledge, and I don't miss much, the land has never had any kind of village/town event held on it. The limited public use by a small number of trespassers has been completely against the wishes of the owners. We already have a number of green areas in Stonehouse for people to enjoy or allow their children to play. They're flat, safe, and if people simply want to walk in the countryside then the access footpaths to the woods are perfectly suitable.

If this application is approved it will seriously hinder the owner and their business. They will be unable to use the land for it's appropriate use - farming. I think it's an appalling grab for more ground which is not needed by the town, yet will have serious implications for the business running on it. How is that fair?! If this business fails it will have much greater implications for the whole of the hill - who will maintain it? I have enjoyed walking in the area on the permitted paths for nearly four decades and will be incredibly upset if it is turned into a glorified play area! I think the work being carried out by the owners is fantastic and I hope to see another small business do well on an area that has already had so much invested in it. To take that away from them would be shameful.

Kind regards,
Neil Clements

B41

[redacted]

From: Stephanie Devcich [redacted]>
Sent: 20 May 2024 22:18
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: 77161/JB - Land known as Doverow Hill

Reference to wandering at will, people objecting to using set route footpaths

Dear Ms Brown

Please take this as my **objection** to Stonehouse Town Council's desire to claim the above land as a town green.

I have watched this whole debacle play out on Facebook which to be honest at times made for some very uncomfortable reading. From what I understand, fairly unproductive land has been purchased by Windmill Farm to develop into a Maple Syrup enterprise. The legal footpaths were resurrected (for want of a better word) and all hell broke loose because a landowner dared fence some of them in. Some of the fencing, may have been over zealous, probably because of the Facebook bullying, but legally the landowner was well within their rights.

Landowners, a few year ago, to the West of the site 'reinstated' the legal line of the footpaths, due to the public wandering about wherever they wished and not a dickybird was heard with regards to this. So why all the local fuss with regards to Doverow Hill?

I negotiated with my partner, a Nupend dairy farmer, to allow a permissive bridleway that would connect the one and only Eastington Bridleway (of one mile and three road crossings, courtesy of the Great Oldbury housing estate) to the Standish Bridleway. Providing local horse riders with approximately four and ahalf miles of safe off-road riding, in the countryside. It has taken me EIGHT years to get him to agree to this, as Sarah Macaulay-Low, the Public Rights of Way Officer (West Stroud Area) can confirm.

Unfortunately, he got wind of how the local town of Stonehouse wanted to exercise their rights to continue to walk wherever they wanted across private farmland, that is Doverow Hill, (which by the way already has numerous footpaths) and decided that allowing the permissive bridleway might cause grief in the future and has now refused to allow me to go ahead with the application.

So, the local horse riders of Nupend, Nastend, Westend and Eastington have to continue riding around a housing estate for pleasure for eternity. I cannot tell you how angry I am that all those years of negotiation were totally wasted, because it seems that the numerous footpaths and three green spaces in Stonehouse are not enough for the locals.

We've had to fix wire fences cut down by the residents of Great Oldbury because they don't wish to use the already existing footpaths. Signs we put up showing the PROW being ripped down so people continue to walk where they want, damaging crops and putting our cows at risk.

The UK has lost one-fifth of its farms over the last 10 years, farmers have a hard enough time as it is without now worrying that if they do chose to protect their crops or livestock by fencing in footpaths that the locals are going to turn around and claim town green rights.

Let's face it, if it was owned by the Council, it would have been built on by now, surely a Maple Syrup farming enterprise that may employ a few locals is a better option than yet another town green that has to be maintained at the tax payers expense?

B42

If the town green status is honoured, I can guarantee, the farmers in the area will be exercising their rights to protect their land and will not be so tolerant of people walking where they want. The general public may have to start getting used to more fenced in footpaths, and that really would be a blot on the landscape.

Yours sincerely,

Stephanie Devcich
of Nupend

B43

JOHN COPLAND & SON

SOLICITORS
EST'D 1867

77 HIGH STREET,
SHEERNESS,
KENT, ME12 1TY.

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OUR REF: SAM/879
YOUR REF: JB/77161

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Westgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 2TG

Advance by Email: [redacted]

21st May 2024

Dear Sirs,

Verney Fields, Doverow Hill, Stonehouse, Stroud (referred to by our client as Spring Valley Orchard Field, Windmill Field and Cays Hill)
77161

We are instructed by Linda Maiik, the freehold owner of most of the land the subject of the 27 February 2023 application by Stonehouse Town Council ("STC") for registration of "Verney Fields" as a town or village green ("TVG").

Our client objects to the application.

Our client has also instructed expert Counsel, Stephen Whale of Landmark Chambers, to draft this objection and to advise/represent her as this matter unfolds.

Our client's land

Our client purchased her land, which extends to c19.2 acres, in March 2023. It can be described as sharply sloping pasture land with areas of scrub, dense brambles and young woodland. The topography is steep in places. The land is traversed by three public rights of way.

Basis of application

STC relies upon subsections 15(1)-(2) of the Commons Act 2006: see section 4 of its application form.

STC relies upon Stonehouse civil parish: see section 6 of its application form. However, it does not make clear if it relies upon Stonehouse civil parish as a "locality" or as a "neighbourhood within a locality". It follows that its application is insufficiently particularised.

Trigger event

Our client reserves the right to submit that there is one or more trigger event, within the meaning of Commons Act 2006 Schedule 1A, precluding this application.

The balance of this objection letter is without prejudice to the proposition that the application is insufficiently particularised and/or precluded.

Insufficient qualifying user

Our client denies that there has been sufficient qualifying user.

In other words, our client denies that a significant number of the inhabitants of any locality or of any neighbourhood within a locality (whichever STC relies upon) have indulged in lawful sports and pastimes on the application land for a period of at least 20 years ending with the application date.

Our client's land was used for decades by tenant farmers for cattle grazing, ending in 2012. It was not mere low-level agricultural activity. Rather, it was of an intensity inconsistent with qualifying user of the application land. On any view, lawful sports and pastimes were not indulged in amidst the cattle.

Part of the application land has been the subject of three failed nominations by STC for inclusion in Stroud District Council's register of assets of community value ("ACV"): references 2015/0018/ASSETC, 2016/0003/ASSETC and 2016/0004/ASSETC. The nomination form was identical in all three cases. None of the nominations claimed sporting use. The first nomination was withdrawn. The last two nominations were refused.

The officer report into the most recent nomination included this passage (emphasis added): "The site was described by the Town Council as "Open pasture leading to pleasure ground". However, the site is currently vacant and overgrown. It rises steeply to the east, with irregular sharp slopes forming a valley in the middle. The southern edge of the site is relatively well maintained and the route of the footway running east west is clearly discernible. The eastern section of the site forms a plateau around a large tree with a public bench underneath."

The fact that the application land was (and is) in large measure overgrown contradicts the current claims of qualifying user, as does the existence of the "footway" [*sic*]. The bench described, which is no longer in situ, was not a "public bench". A previous tenant farmer installed it as a place for him to sit whilst eating his lunch.

The officer report records STC's response to the then owner's objection. Thus: "We acknowledge that access is restricted over the land except on the designated footpaths…"

This acknowledgement of access restriction and user on the designated footpaths also contradicts the current claims of qualifying user.

The Assessment section of the officer report included these passages: "The evidence submitted in support of the nomination demonstrates that recreational activities take place on specified footpaths on a regular basis. It is also noted that during the site visit 4 walkers were seen utilising the footpath running along the southern edge of the site. However, the topography of the site makes it apparent that large portions of the site, particularly sections in the middle, are not suitable for the recreation activities described to take place on site. Furthermore, large

sections of the site are overgrown and inaccessible to the general public, this is acknowledged by the Town Council. Considering these facts the Council agrees with the land owner's contention that the nomination does not demonstrate that the whole of the area nominated has been or is currently used in a manner which furthers the social interests of the local community. Any recreational or sporting value of the land nominated is limited to specific areas, in particular the designated public footpath and the relatively flat and well marinated area surrounding the public bench."

These findings, and the ultimate reasons for refusing the nomination, likewise contradict the current claims of qualifying user. User of the application land over the relevant period, such as there has been, has been largely if not entirely confined to pedestrian user of footpaths or else it has been passing and re-passing in a manner inimical to TVG user. Moreover, the physical condition of the application land during the relevant period (topography, scrub, brambles and trees) means that, adopting the approach indicated by the case-law, it cannot be said that the whole of the application land was used as required for the relevant period.

On 28 November 2016, as recorded in its Minutes at TC1803, STC debated the merits of making a fresh ACV nomination "excluding the land not obviously in public use." This is another clear indication that most of the application land was not in public use. Although STC resolved to prepare a draft ACV application, no fourth nomination was forthcoming. This is yet another indication that the TVG application should be refused.

The fact that the TVG application land is larger in area than the failed ACV land, incorporating inaccessible and overgrown land which has not been used by the public, is a further indication that the TVG application should be refused.

The photograph on page 17 of the application bundle shows pedestrian user with permission on a former permissive footpath which ran parallel to public footpath MST30. It is not qualifying user. The photograph on page 18 shows permissive user, which is not qualifying user. Three of the five photographs on page 19 are not of our client's land. Five of the six photographs on page 20 are not of our client's land. The photographs on pages 21-28 show, amongst other things, non-qualifying pedestrian user on what was a permissive path, non-qualifying pedestrian user on public footpath MST30, rare sledging user on what was a permissive path, user (whether permissive or otherwise) long before the relevant period and land (owned by STC) outside the application land.

The number of people submitting Evidence Questionnaires does not represent "a significant number of the inhabitants" of the locality or neighbourhood within a locality (as the case may be). The claims within the Evidence Questionnaires will be tested at the public inquiry, which, presumably, will result from this objection and the other objections. Our client's position is that the claims are, by turns, exaggerated, misplaced, vague or false. On any view, they are contradicted by the ACV nominations and outcomes. It is also to be observed that a significant proportion of those who have submitted Evidence Questionnaires claim user for less than 20 years or else they do not indicate their claimed period of user. Our client also draws attention to the way in which STC has encouraged the completion of Evidence Questionnaires, and the way in which they should be completed to support registration, with false or misleading claims that our client intended to obstruct public rights of way and develop her land. Our client also draws attention to STC's resolution to bid to purchase the application land, and to its resolution to submit this TVG application (which is an attempt to prevent future development of the application land).

As of right

As canvassed above, user on the public rights of way was non-qualifying user by right and must be discounted.
Permissive user, including use of the former rope swing, sledging, walking on the former permissive paths and use of the former stiles (installed as an alternative to repeated fencing repairs), must also be discounted as non-qualifying user.

The application land, or part of it, was fenced during the decades of cattle grazing. Fencing was installed to prevent pedestrians on public footpath MST30 accessing other parts of the application land. The erection of fencing is a clear indication that the landowner denied local inhabitants access to, and use of, the application land. Moreover, unknown members of the public periodically cut that fencing in order to gain access to the application land or part of it. That cutting of the fencing rendered subsequent user as user by force (*vi*), which is non-qualifying user to be discounted.

Members of the public straying off the public footpaths have been verbally challenged to the effect that they must stick to the public footpaths, which is additional evidence that the application should be refused.

The periodic erection of signage (including Private Road, Private and permissive path signs) is further evidence that the application should be refused. The fact that those signs have been routinely torn down by persons unknown does not alter the position.

Conclusion

Insofar as the application is valid, it should be refused.

Yours faithfully,

John Copland and Son
Solicitors

[redacted]

From: Garrick Webster [redacted]
Sent: 21 May 2024 12:34
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields or Windmill Farm

Mentions walking up to Doverow Woods & beyond, not walking around 'field' itself

Dear Jemma, and to whom it may otherwise concern

I wish to object to Stonehouse Town Council's plan to turn Windmill Farm into a green space.

I have lived in Stonehouse for five years and enjoy walking all around the area including up to Doverow Hill / Verney Fields, with my son, who is 10.
We've been up and through the woods as well as around the neighbouring vineyard and across to the Cotswold Way. We've entered/exited the 'fields' and woods from three different locations.
The field section couldn't really be called a field. When I've visited it, it has been overgrown with bramble, wild, uncared for and more or less impassable in many places. It has not been a field at all, really, and could not be considered a town green or anything even approaching that.

However, I think the space would be suitable for an orchard / fruit farm and welcome plans to grow healthy food that we can eat there. If the main footpaths are maintained as the owners of the farm are proposing, we'll still be able to walk through the space and enjoy the views, and that will be a fair compromise.
It seems others in the town feel entitled to the space and resistant to its change from an unkempt, steep hillside to an orchard, but England isn't and shouldn't be treated as a museum. A productive farm seems a much better idea.
The fruit trees should sequester a significant amount of carbon as they grow as well, which is a healthy green outcome. Hopefully natural farming methods will be used.

Something that concerns me on this land and elsewhere around Stonehouse is dog mess and litter (cigarette ends, drink cans, vapes, wine bottles, plastic bags, food packaging etc). Other residents of the area, while they don't own the land, do feel as though they can treat it as their own. I'd welcome clean and tidy paths there, dogs on leads (or no dogs at all) and an orchard would sit beautifully alongside the vineyard.

I feel Stonehouse Town Council is wasting time and, more importantly, taxpayers' money, on a project that sometimes feels like a vendetta against the land owners. Members of the campaign for the green space have made xenophobic comments on social media towards the farm's owners. Vandalism has occurred.

I know a number of other people here feel the way I do about this project. I wasn't able to complete the town's survey on the space but I have emailed two town councillors about the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Garrick Webster
Copywriting | Content marketing | Editing | Journalism
[redacted]

B4

TO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
of
Legal Services

Shire Hall
Westgate Street
GLOUCESTER
GL1 2TG.

FROM
MRS. ALEXANDRINA JONES
[redacted]

Mentions fence cutting & demanding access to field as a whole, rather than footpath routes

Reference JB/77161

Dear Sir/Madam.

I realise I have joined this debate late in the day, so I probably have not heard all the arguments for each side. However what I have heard and seen leads me to think that this is an example of lack of public support for our local food growers.

Why do so many people continue to insist on buying food from thousands of miles away because they have to have it out of season and cheaper. Instead of vandelising fences and complaining to authorities and expecting them to demand access to private land.

I feel we should be encouraging the production of food locally.

40 years ago children played in the woods, without adult supervision, but not now. There are plenty of open green spaces in Stonehouse where children can play. Maybe there could be more allocated areas for Dogs to be let off the lead, (but that

PTO.

is a separate debate).

I do not support the application for town green Status for verney fields.

It is not easily accessible to the vast majority of the population and is not a particularly safe place for walkers, children, or dogs.

It could however become a source of food for the nation and a haven for wildlife.

It would be nice if the barbed wire were not needed, however the fact that some of the path side wires have been cut, lead me to think that it was deemed necessary.

I repeat. I DO NOT support the application and object to it on the grounds stated above.

Yours Sincerely



A.M. JONES.

821

[redacted]

From: lesley Carlisle [redacted]
Sent: 21 May 2024 23:02
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Subject – Ref 77161/JB land known as Doverow Hill/Verney fields or Windmill Farm

Subject – Ref 77161/JB land known as Doverow Hill/Verney fields or Windmill Farm

Dear Jemma,

I would like to lodge my concerns with regards to Stonehouse District Councils (SDC) proposal to claim the area mentioned above for a 'village green'.
I have resided in the Stonehouse for over 10 years, in this time I have accessed the area on and around Doverow hill for leisure purposes and to walk some of the designated footpaths. During this time, I have never seen or been aware of the land being used for any community events. The topography does not lend itself to community activities other than to access the footpaths to Doverow woods I appreciate others in the area have more sentimental attachment to the land of possible childhood memories, but I feel this is short sighted.

The resources that SDC and individuals involved with the above campaign is wasteful and has been observed to be emotionally lead. I understand this has been reject previously, it feels like a small group of locals/SDC are attempting to bully the proposal through again now there is new owner of the land. I use the term bullying from a personal perspective as the individual who was calling house to house to gain support for the online survey to support the proposal of a village green, became quite irate whist on my door step when I offered a different opinion.

The individuals that have spoken to myself have cited personal attachment to the afore mentioned area, and felt that although this land was not owned by themselves that they should have the right to dictate what happens to the land due to their personal memories. Much of the conversations were centred around sentiment and dismay that they could not dictate the management of the land owned now by Windmill farm. I find it interesting that the vineyard on adjacent land is locally celebrated and brings pride to the local area, I would question why Windmill farm is being targeted and persecuted locally and on social media, and a proposal that had previously been rejected has been resurrected?

As an Occupational Therapist working within Mental Health, I understand the value and importance of access to green spaces. Locally we are fortunate in Stonehouse to have access to many footpaths, canal towpaths, and green spaces in the local area. The value of local sustainable businesses and farms and the local employment and produce that these businesses afford the local communities is far more valuable than that of an area of green space that hasn't consistently been used by the local community for community use.

If village green status is granted, I would be interested in who would be required to ensure that litter and appropriate use of the area is maintained? As locally litter and misuse of areas such as inappropriate fire setting is a blight in many of the green spaces that we have. Will this be yet another draw on SDC resources or would the expectation be that the land owner take responsibility for maintaining the land and ensuring the safe use? The former would be yet another draw on scares resources the latter feels very inappropriate.

I will be interested in the outcome of this proposal and the justification the results.

Yours sincerely,

Lesley Carlisle

Sent from Outlook for iOS

B52

B52

[redacted]

From: Kay Nagai [redacted]
Sent: 21 May 2024 20:43
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land referred to by some as Doverow Hill / Verney Fields, owned by Windmill Farm

Dear Jemma Brown, Legal Services, GCC

My name is Kay Nagai, I am a farmer, specialism in Horticulture & Orcharding.
I am the son of the owner of Windmill Farm, Spring Valley Field & Cays Hill, the application site, private farmland I have known extremely well since around 2018/9 around when it was initially advertised for tenancy, although have known it since 2012.

I am writing to you to object independently of the owner, who's representations have been provided to you by instructed counsel.

These private parcels are very special to me, they are truly wonderful, although quite probably most people appreciate the view from the footpath, more so than the fields themselves. And I do agree it's beautiful, I too love that view. This is why I've worked tirelessly, spending over 450 hours personally working on & improving the registered Rights of Way as part of my promise to improve them, made to walkers when we purchased it, so that they wouldn't slip & become covered in mud; there's also been private contractors helping improve paths with 250 meters of gravel & handrails; I asked for assistance from GCC & Cotswold Wardens when needed. We did all this to make our PROWs more accessible in all weather, so that the public can enjoy the view from excellent safe footpath routes. I have also hand-made & positioned benches along these PROWs, for people to rest on & enjoy the view, positioned two swings for many children to enjoy (for which I've had many lovely messages from parents about, how their children love these swings & the treasured childhood memories they're creating), I have plans for a further 2 benches this year.

The hill is quite challenging to walk up & most people appreciate the hard work & effort we've put in, to help make it easier for people to walk up & enjoy the view.
A number of the withdrawn permissive paths, were very slippery, dangerous and exhaustingly steep; I have dug over 130 steps on the Right of Way help take this steepness away & gravel + drainage, has helped reduce or eliminate slippery, muddy/marshy areas.
Last week, Thursday, I was there again with the Cotswold Wardens, doing further path improvements (30m of poor-draining, muddy path attended to, soakaway drain pipe laid, overlayed with grid matting, geo-fabric & surface finished with gravel), the works are ongoing.
This much work was needed for two footpath alone, imagine how much work would be needed to make the entirety of the land safe for the public, potentially how many thousands man hours & how much this might cost.

Then there's the land itself, which to me is more special, it comprises of two sharp valleys, south & west, each with steep inclines either side which cannot be easily traversed. There are more than 120 mature Maple trees there which are very special to us, they are irreplaceable for expanding our seasonal Maple season production; there's also the scattered remains of previous Orchards. I know every tree that grows there & have mapped out, issued ref. no for each of them, documenting it's species, age, health, works required/needed & planned use. I have also documented hundreds of other trees of interest there, I have expended incomprehensible amounts of time mapping &

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surveying our land, it's layout, contours, vistas & made recommendations for its agricultural use & planting layout. It has become a sizable part of my life & my work.

This land has become especially very overgrown over the last 12 years or longer, large parts have become coated in a dense, impassable layers of bramble, scrub & head-high nettle (most of this overgrowth documented as already dense & present in the 2016 ACV application); I can state quite confidently, the vast majority of it has never been traversed by any number of the public & that any public use or activity did NOT extend beyond registered Rights of Way & former Permissive Paths.

Over the last 6 years, I have seen the footpaths crossing the land abused, fly-tipped, excessive littered, excessive dog foul (which has deterred all grazing tenants since 2012), trees set on fire, drug abuse, graffiti, debarking damage done to trees... the list is very long. I would like to see this reduce & return to what it once was, Orchard land, graced by the wildlife benefiters that cohabit orcharding. We've taken measures to reduce this public abuse. Unfortunately signage even with the basic countryside code has been slashed with knives, axes & hammers. I would have thought most parish councils would support our efforts to reduce these kinds of issues & uplift the image of the local area with wonderfully cultivated orchards, but unfortunately this parish council seems to be very short ighted. Since our ownership, we've experienced a long line of: abuse, shouting, assaults to us & our workers, vandalism, fence cutting, tree damage, ASB, graffiti & a long list of other crime; a great deal of time which we'd like to spend tending to the land, has to instead be incurred dealing the damage & presenting evidence for police to attend to, only because less than a dozen discontent mindless persons would rather see the world burn than simply respect our wishes.

We've also received an overwhelmingly positive response from a larger number of locals, who support our efforts, are grateful for improved pathways which they no longer slip & slide down becoming covered in mud, these people love our intentions, support our plans & wish to see us succeed here (many of whom I understand have also objected); a number of these lovely people have also bought & tried our Maple Syrup & strongly recommend it.

In the last 12 years, I have never seen any organised sporting use or any recreational past times other than those which would be done ordinarily on footpaths, footpath activities which aren't specific to our farmland. The evidence provided by STC, questionnaires, photos, TC meeting minutes, SDC decision notices from 2015/16 ACV... etc do NOT demonstrate much usage other that footpath usage & taking their dog to use my land as a public dog toilet. Any other activities claimed, do Not qualify, are Not done by any number of people & are NOT unique to our farmland, they have been done with equal or far less regularity than on all farmland surrounding the town, with a PROW crossing it. Sledging, with Permission of Sibley wasn't even done on our land more than once a decade (perhaps twice if lucky) & most of the sledging photos the community posted in response to Stonehouse history group's request for photos, aren't even taking place on our farmland, they are with Permission on the fields north of us, where the slope is more even, gentler & the run is far longer (a few hundred meters instead of 60m).

Our farmland has never been used for markets, fêtes, organised sporting use or any other organised community activities (walking festival on footpaths does Not count & does Not qualify, it uses PROWs on hundreds of acres of farmland which aren't considered Town Greens). I do NOT believe the evident little usage by a very small percentage of the local community, warrants this designation, which I strongly believe to be unmerited.

I have made huge efforts to inform the public of our intentions, defending & interjecting in facebook community group dialogues & chinese whispers, rumour spreading; I have updated Windmill Farm

B54

facebook page regularly & many members of the public find it interesting. https://www.facebook.com/people/Windmill-Farm/100092384720566/

Most of the few people discontent with our changes have expressed in comments & writing, that the previous owners / tenant farmers, gave them Permission / Allowed them / Said they could to do xyz, thus no previous activity was 'as of Right'. I have been told by many people what troubles the previous farmer had, with excessive dog foul negatively affecting the cattle health, fence cutting, sign destruction & why Permissive stiles were put in place instead of repeated fence repairs; this demonstrates Force & Permission.

Many members of the public have also informed me that the support by the public is Not due to genuine usage, but primarily due to STC councillors falsely telling the public "its a campaign against a big shot developer & that if they don't support this application some 400 hundred houses might concrete over Doverow, they need this application as it's the best protection against more houses" or "no they they're not fruit farmers, they don't make Maple syrup, they're developers", although to be quite blunt, if we were going to lie, I'm sure something simple like cattle grazing, would have been the obvious choice, Not something unusual like Maple farming (which is very specific, not something one would mention if they didn't have anything to show for it).

As part of the restrictions a Town Green status would impose, it would prohibit the planting of trees or shrubs that form a continuous line, which would be considered to form a barrier. This would completely prohibit our intended use, planting rows of Orchard trees; if similar had been imposed on the neighbouring vineyard, they'd not have been able to plant Grapevine on rows of trellis fencing (similarly forming a barrier).

I strongly object to this application, I do Not believe any part of it has been used as required for TVG, the majority of the site has Not been accessed by the public (with exception to footpaths), many areas are difficult to traverse due to topography or overgrowth, there are many areas also potentially dangerous to the public. There is ample reasoning for this application Not to succeed. I request GCC review the evidence against this application & confirm to the applicant it's poor merit.

I know many local farmers & landowners are now weary because of this application & have been considering or already doing: revoking Permissions, Permissive Paths & locking down their lands, to defend & protect their position from similar applications.

Thank you for your consideration!

Kay Nagai - Farmer, Orchardist, Horticultural specialist

[redacted]

B35

Mentions right to deviate around obstruction, MST30 (woodland path) became overgrown & unmaintained.
Centre of field refers to J-M-O.
Spring line is reference to M-O.
Suggests some paths consolidated because wider field became too overgrown for 'wandering at will', which reverted to wander ~~when~~ topped in 2019

Dear Jemma

I understand that you are collating views on the proposal to make the land known as Verney Fields into a village green. My husband and I do not believe that this land should be designated a Village Green.

My husband and myself have known this field for many years. It was farmed by Martin Fletcher for about 30 years and he grazed cattle out there. The centre of the field became used as a path as the woodland path had become overgrown and not suitable for walkers. To the side of the area used by walkers is a spring line and the land has been consistently wet and not suitable for walking on.

Since that time the brambles have grown up and much of the land has become inaccessible. At no time have either of us seen the land being used as a village green. It was so overgrown that this would not be practical. It was just used for walkers passing through mostly with dogs. There have never been sports played on that field, it was too rough for any running activities and the overgrowth too dense for straying off the well trodden routes.

The field was mechanically topped before offered for sale which made it more accessible but this was only for a short period before the purchase was made by Windmill farm.

We understand that Windmill farm wish to plant and grow Orchard fruit on this land. That would increase the biodiversity of the field and be environmentally positive with more trees.

Stonehouse Town council wished to purchase this field and when they were unsuccessful they have spent much time trying to prevent the legal use of the land by the current owners. They have put TPOs in place, are attempting to create many new footpaths in the field, have spent much of the Town Council resources in campaigning against the new owners and now trying to get the field designated as a village green. In our opinion this is not the intended use of the village green legislation and is effectively a council trying to gain control of a field they did not purchase at the expense of a private owner.

We trust that you will consider our impartial contribution.

Thankyou

Kind regards

B56

[redacted]

From: BROWN, Jemma
Sent: 04 June 2024 20:08
To: WOOD, Ami (Legal)
Subject: FW: Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields or Windmill Farm

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Please print this one too, I have added it to the folder for you to print

From: Lorna-Marie Jones [redacted]
Sent: Sunday, June 2, 2024 11:34 PM
[redacted]
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields or Windmill Farm

You don't often get email f[redacted]arn why this is important

Dear all whom it may concern,

I am writing to inform you that my late Grandfather farmed the land in question for decades, these fields and surrounding areas are are well known to myself and family who have been local farmers for several generations past.

In addition to being tenants, I was born at Grove Farm (1996) therefore my connection and knowledge of the land is much more than the average Stonehouse resident. Myself and all immediate family worked with our livestock across these areas, and I can attest to the challenges they faced in their time farming there even prior to my own personal experiences.

I'd like our objections of this application known.

The land is unsuitable and inappropriate for a commons/town green. It is FARM LAND ONLY. The recent public dismay is simply a reaction to the new ownership of said land. Ridiculous at best and an embarrassing waste of time/ resources, all I have read thus far is complete nonsense with zero grounds and should not be taken seriously. The fact that the claims made to date have even been considered is a complete insult to those who own/ work agriculture land.

Within the many years my family worked this land I recall them facing countless issues with regards to public wandering, trespass with intent to vandalise, verbal abuse (mostly stemming from telling public and their often out of control dogs to get back on the FOOTPATH after blatantly ignoring signage) dog & human fouling, fires, littering & more serious fly tipping, fencing wire cut weekly by walkers to gain new access to PRIVATE LAND, wooden fencing steaks pulled out/ burnt/snapped. Dog attacks to young calves had been witnessed as well as arson to cattle sheds. Cattle were often escaping from their grazing site due to fence vandalism, gates being left open and even taken off hinges.

Aside from PROW footpaths which only provide access to Doverow wood the public have NEVER

[redacted]

used the majority of the land. Overgrowth alone makes it inaccessible, along with being very banky and steep, slippery in a lot of areas and also dangerous drops due to the topography.

With regards to uses typical of a town green.. that is laughable! It has never been used for markets, fêtes or sporting use within my 27 years in the vicinity NOR prior to.

Zero non footpath activity occurred there aside from extremely rare sledging, fields north or east of the application site were favoured due to their more suitable layout & longer sledging run (with farmers permission). This however still would not be considered as sporting use as blatantly our lack of snow means this has occurred just a few times in over a decade.

I hope these facts are noted and that no further time of yourselves or land owner is wasted on this matter.

Lorna-Marie Jones

Sent from writi iPhone

Martin Fletcher – Grandfather
Rachel Jones – Mother
Lorna-Marie Jones & David Jones
Farmers across 3 generations farming the land

B58

[redacted]

From: Dave jones [redacted] on behalf of Dave jones
Sent: 04 June 2024 11:14
To: [redacted]k
Subject: Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land known as Doverow Hill or Verney Fields or Windmill Farm

You don't often get email fro[redacted]com. Learn why this is important

Good Morning Jemma

I'm of the understanding my sister Lorna Marie jones has sent over a statement regarding this land in subject.

I would like to support all statements made by her in relation to this land. In support of the current owners.
I am 5 years older than her and have been closely been involved with the land over the years whilst my late grand father was legal tenant of this land and no other activities aside from farming/agriculture have been carried out here.
Some of the statements being made by public are very far fetched and simply untrue.

Can we please have a confirmation that these statements are being submitted.

Many thank David

B 59

B59

BROWN, Jemma

Mentions footpath only from Verney Road to Doverow Woods.
(J-O) Mentions walking up to Gate (possibly O-Q) but that this gate was always locked & there was no footpath there.
Mentions J-O/J-M-O was used because MST30 was inaccessible until reinstated (right to deviate around obstructions)
Mentions southern fields were always closed off & believed there was no public footpath going south.

From: Don Stewart [redacted]
Sent: 05 June 2024 [redacted]
To: BROWN, Jemma
Subject: Ref: 77161/JB - land [redacted]

You don't often get email fr[redacted]n. Learn why this is important

Dear Jemma Brown,

I have observed the situation involving the land known as Verney fields for some time. I feel I need to object to the application.
In the first instance this is private land and has been purchased, therefore the land owner has rights to the land and the use of this in accordance with applications to the council where required.
The objection of the use of the land is not even covered under right to roam as most of the land is and has always been inaccessible and footpaths are still accessible across the land.
I have grown up in stonehouse and have frequented the land for may years before I moved away in 2001 for a period of 20 years.
From the age of about 10, around 1993, I have accessed and crossed this land. This was mostly to use the footpaths to get to Doverow woods or the fields there after. I have never used it anything else.
For the most part the land comprising Verney fields was inaccessible, it was possible to walk up from the oak tree view point to a gate but there was no foot path, and down from the oak tree to the top of Verney road on the footpath. The rest of the land was scrub and what wasnt sloped from the footpath to the stream. We would use Verney fields to sledge on if and when it had snowed but again this was infrequent and only possible on the areas above the oak tree and down from it as described previously. I am unaware of the land ever being used for anything else.
I have never heard of the land being used or associated with activities befitting a town common or green, it would also be difficult if not impossible to use the land for such usages due to the contour and lack of any flat or even ground. The footpath was through the field itself as the footpath through the wood was inaccessible, until recently when it was reinstated.
The fields below Verney fields towards Browns lane and the footpath from Browns lane to the railway station as far as I am aware were never accessed as they were always fenced or gated of, I grew up under the impresion these were unaccessible private land. They often had livestock in them.
It can be seen that there are only specific footpaths designated on OS maps.
If the application was to be granted it would concern me as to who would maintain the land designated as verney field. Stonehouse already has a plethora of town greens, and verney fields is a very important green space for birds and wildlife. If this were to be cleared and maintained as a green, i worry who or where the resources would come from, it could lead to a decline or loss of wildlife species and biodiversity. If the land owners intentions are true and they intend to plant fruit tress and allow rewilding of the area this could in fact increase wildlife and biodiversity to the area due to the fruit trees. I believe if the application were successful the land would remain as scrub and become even more overgrown scrub with the only access the footpath across it, I havnt even seen the stream since I moved back 2 and a half years ago.
I believe the application to be a response to certain peoples unaccepting attitude of the land being private and akin to a child who sees another child with a ball and wants it because they dont have it, I dont believe anybody supporting this application has used the land for anything other than footpath access and to sit at the bench.
I have also found significant damage caused to the fences that have been erected to protect the land and enable the land owner to work without risk of injury to the public while crossing the land. A

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footpath has been provided to access Doverow wood and Far Weststrip from Browns lane and Verney road, however I believe that either those supporting this application or associates of them have caused this damaged in a petulant response to being restricted from wondering across private land. The last occasion the damage was extensive and I have no doubt incurred significant cost to the land owner.

Regards

Don Stewart

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