DALCOUR MACLAREN

Planning Supporting Statement

Sutton Bridge
Client: Cadent Gas Limited
Date: March 2024

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Project Details

Project Name	Sutton Bridge
Scheme Number	23002537
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Prepared by	
Name	Becky Anderson (Graduate Environmental Planner) and Lucy Drew White (Environmental Planner)

Approved by	
Name	Rebecca Lock (Associate Director)

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Introduction

1.1 Background to the Planning Application

1.1.1 Dalcour Maclaren (DM) has been commissioned by Cadent Gas Ltd (CG) to seek full planning permission for the construction of a new regulator building at their operational site at Sutton Bridge. This supporting statement to the application being made to South Holland District Council sets out the need and principle of development and appraises the proposal against both local and national planning policies.

1.1.2 The proposed development is located off Bridge Road, Sutton Bridge, Long Sutton, South Holland, Lincolnshire, PE12 9EG (National Grid Reference: TF 45556 22188).

1.1.3 The proposed development is required as part of the Metering Systems Upgrade project where CG is required to install new regulators which in turn require a new kiosk to house them with temporary laydown. The new building will allow sensitive gas infrastructure to be secured safely and ensure the apparatus meets the recently updated CG health and safety guidelines as well as meeting industry standards.

1.2 Site Location and Description

1.2.1 The proposed development is located at National Grid Reference: TF 45556 22188 off Bridge Road. This is shown in Figure 1. The site is accessed off Bridge Road which is an unclassified road according to the South Holland District Council website. The nearest residential building is situated 280m Northwest of the operational site.



Figure 1: Image showing the proposed site and the proposed compound location.

1.2.2 The site is currently accessed off to the South of Bridge Road via gated access and currently comprises of gas infrastructure which is situated on hard standing ground. The Site is bordered by perimeter fencing and mature planting. This provides adequate screening of the site from the roadside and from surrounding land users.

1.2.3 The site is bounded by:

- A series of agricultural fields extending far North and South of the site and further, scattered residential dwelling beyond.
- The nearest residential building is situated 280m Northwest of the operational site.
- To the West (273.4m) is Princes Ltd Sourcing and Production Long Sutton, the companies largest in the UK. Beyond this is another packing company (LC Packaging UK Ltd).

2 Proposed Development

2.1 Description of the Development

2.1.1 The proposed development can be seen in drawing 104524-MMD-STBR-XX-PLN-M-0002s2 and shows the location of the proposed regulator building as well as the area of land ownership.

2.1.2 The new regulator building will measure 6.9m x 3.9m x 2.2m (length x width x height) and will be of a similar appearance to the existing buildings and infrastructure on site.

2.1.3 The regulator building will be constructed on existing hard standing within the operational site and no further fencing or bollards are required. The new building will be constructed out of Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) and will be prefabricated, so it can be delivered and craned into position on Site.

2.2 Need for the Proposed Development

2.2.1 As part of the Metering Systems Upgrade project, CG are required to install new regulators, which in turn require a new kiosk to house them in. The installation of the new regulator building will be in accordance with the relevant industry standards and guidance from the Institution of Gas Engineers and Managers (IGEM). It also means that it will be able to support the current demand as well as the increased demand in the future. It is also necessary for the safeguarding and integrity of the gas network and the continued customer supply.

2.3 Permitted Development

2.3.1 CG is a regulated utility company which has a statutory responsibility for the provision of gas supply in accordance with Section 9(1) of the Gas Act 1986 and bound by duty to:

> *"Develop and maintain an efficient and economical pipe-line system for the conveyance of gas."*

2.3.2 Consequently, CG benefit from permitted development rights afforded to gas transporters under schedule 2, Part 15 Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 ("GPDO"), as amended, for the provision of certain apparatus in order to meet this statutory duty.

2.3.3 CG have Permitted Development rights to install the governor but are required to seek planning permission to install the regulator building to house the apparatus and protect it from the elements as well as flooding.

2.3.4 The proposals here include for the installation of apparatus to control the pressure and flow of gas and a building in which to house this equipment.

Part 15A(b) of the Order states:

"Development by a gas transporter required for the purposes of its undertaking consisting of-

a) The Layering underground of mains, pipe, or other apparatus:

b) The installation in a gas distribution system of apparatus for measuring, recording, controlling, or varying the pressure, flow or volume of gas, and structures for housing such apparatus."

2.3.5 However, the installation of the regulator building is not permitted under Part 15 A.1(a) as the building exceeds the threshold of 29 cubic meters. Therefore, planning permission is required.

2.3.6 It should be noted that a temporary compound is to be sited adjacent to the operational site, and this constitutes Permitted Development under Part 4 Class A of the GPDO.

2.4 Construction Methodology

2.4.1 CG are proposing to commence construction in July 2024. Construction is expected to take up to 15-20 weeks.

2.4.2 Light goods vans, rigid flatbed trucks (required to deliver the regulator building) and cranes (to lift the building into position) will be used during construction.

2.4.3 During the construction, any vehicles will be parked within the operational site as well as the compound situated adjacent to the Site. All plant, vehicles and machinery will be maintained in good condition and will be switched off when not in use to minimise construction noise and pollution.

2.4.4 As aforementioned, the building will be prefabricated off-site and delivered to the operational site at Sutton Bridge, where it will be craned into place.

2.4.5 Aside from any unseen emergencies requiring special measures, CG's contractors will work within the standard working hours of 08:00-17:00 Monday to Friday with no works on weekends or bank holidays.

3 Environmental Considerations

3.1 Environmental and Landscape Constraints

3.1.1 The Site is not located within any statutory designations such as a National Landscape (formerly known as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)), Country Parks, National Parks, and Green Belt.

3.1.2 The proposed development is situated within The Fens National Landscape Character Area (NLCA). This area is a distinctive, historic, and human-influenced wetland landscape lying to the west of the Wash estuary, which formerly constituted the largest wetland in England. The area is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. Due to this not being a statutory designation, no consent or permissions are required and therefore not considered a constraint to the development.

3.2 Ecology and Arboriculture

3.2.1 The Site does not fall within any ecological designation, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar.

3.2.2 However, the proposed development does fall within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone for the Wash SSSI, SAC, Ramsar and SPA which are located 5.5km north. After reviewing the citation, the Wash is a site of outstanding international importance for passage birds, notable waders, and supports various breeding birds, an important shell fishery, and the largest breeding colony in Europe of the seal Phocavitulina. Adjoining land is used for intensive agriculture and includes several localized industrial and residential zones.

3.2.3 Given that the Site is operational and the distance between the Site and the SSSI, SAC, Ramsar and SPA there are no adverse impacts anticipated on these designated sites or to any others further afield. Furthermore, the application site is also considered to be of sub-optimal inhabitancy by the majority of migratory and overwinter birds and lacks habitats of potential value to wetland birds. Therefore, it is deemed that the proposed development will not have any impacts on these European Designated Sites.

3.2.4 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken in July 2023 of the Site to support the planning application. The report's findings are detailed below.

On Site Habitats

3.2.5 The site comprises of scattered broadleaved trees which occur along the peripheries of the site. However, due to the location of the proposed regulator building, these trees are not to be impacted.

3.2.6 Additionally, the site has neutral, semi-improved grassland that is regularly maintained. Due to the high level of management, this habitat was evaluated to have low nature conservation value on a site scale.

Amphibians

3.2.7 Based on the survey conducted, there are no waterbodies present on the application site that could support Great Crested Newts (GCN). Additionally, no suitable waterbodies were identified within significant proximity of the site. Therefore, the proposed works will not have the potential to disturb any GCN populations.

Reptiles

3.2.8 No records of reptiles were returned by the Local Ecological Records Centre (LERC) within 2km of the application Site. Due to the lack of reptile records locally and the low probability of the site sustaining notable populations of reptiles, it was considered that no further dedicated reptile surveys were required.

Birds

3.2.9 The LERC identified numerous records of bird species listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) within 2km of the application Site, including barn owl, red kite, and fieldfare. However, very low levels of general and passerine bird activity were recorded during the walkover with two redundant passerine nests recorded within scattered trees on Site.

3.2.10 Due to the location of the regulator building and that no trees are to be impacted, no impacts on nesting birds are anticipated.

Roosting and Foraging Bats

3.2.11 The Site features a number of mature trees which have the potential to support roosting bats with the rest of the trees occurring within the application Site being appraised as having 'negligible' Bat Roosting Potential (BRP).

3.2.12 The application Site was appraised as having a 'moderate' potential to support foraging and commuting activity in line with the (BCT) guidelines.

3.2.13 As no trees are to be removed or impacted during the construction of the proposed regulator building, it is deemed that no further bat surveys are required, and they will not be impacted.

Badger

3.2.14 The application area is topographically flat and is surrounded by arable land. No evidence of badger was recorded on the site.

Otter and Water Vole

3.2.15 No records of otter and water vole were returned by LERC within a 2km radius of the Site. The Site is disconnected from any prominent watercourses and therefore there is low potential to support otter and water voles and no evidence of otter or water vole activity was recorded during the walkover.

Invasive Non-Native Species

3.2.16 No evidence of invasive non-native species (INNS) was identified within the application Site and therefore they are not considered to be a constraint to the proposed development.

3.2.17 It is not expected that any vegetation clearance will be necessary as the proposed regulator building will be constructed on existing hard standing. However, if vegetation removal is required, it will be done by a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) no more than 48 hours before the clearance takes place, as the current scheduled works are planned for July 2024, which falls within the bird nesting period (March to August inclusive). The SQE will check for breeding birds to make sure there are no active nests present before the clearance.

3.2.18 Best practice measures will be in place during the works to mitigate against any potential impacts on the ecology and arboriculture on site. These include:

- No storage of materials, equipment, and machinery on the soft ground within the Root Protection Area of any trees.
- All works near to trees are to be carried out in accordance with guidance provided in the Streetworks UK (National Joint Utilities Group) Booklet 4:2007 Guidelines for the planning, installation and maintenance of utilities services in close proximity to trees (NJUG4)
- For any excavations required to complete the installation of the new kiosks and associated equipment, escape ramps will be provided to ensure that no animals become trapped overnight and any pipework capped. Each morning, the excavations will be inspected for the presence of animals before works are allowed to commence.
- All plant to be refueled on hard standing using drip trays with spill kits made available. Stationary plant or mobile plant left stationary for prolonged periods of time will have drip trays or plant nappies placed underneath.

3.3 Flood Risk

3.3.1 The proposed development is situation within Flood Zone 3 which is land assessed as having a 1% or greater probability of flooding from rivers.

3.3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework requires a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) for sites in Flood Zone 3.

3.3.3 According to the Government's Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) website the extent of flooding from surrounding surface water is likely to be minimal within a 250m radius of the site.

3.3.4 In March 2024, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) was carried out of the Site. The Site and the surrounding areas have a network of drainage channels which increase connectivity from the River Nene and ordinary watercourse within the area.

3.3.5 Due to the development being classed as essential infrastructure, it was recommended that flood resistant measures were put in place to reduce the risk from flooding to the proposed development.

3.3.6 Analysis of the modelled 1 in 200 year and 1 in 1,000-year present day (2006) breach events indicate that the Site is not affected by flood depths in these events. This is due to the higher elevated Bridge Road to the north of the Site, protecting the Site from flooding. However, the Site could experience flood depths of between 1m – 1.6m of flooding in the 1:1000-year (2115) breach event.

3.3.7 The nature of the proposed gas regulator building means that it contains pressurised gas pipework with vents piped to 3m above ground level. Due to this, the equipment within the building will operate under water and continue to supply gas as designed. The current equipment is located in a different building on site at ground level, therefore, CG are required to relocate it due to the sequence of equipment on Site. The other infrastructure that is situated on site is situated at ground level; if these became flooded, depending on the water height, they would cease to operate. However, the gas supply would not be affected.

3.3.8 Given that the gas regulator building can remain operational during a flood event, it is not proposed to raise the equipment or building. Furthermore, the proposed development is considered to have a negligible effect on the flood risk to the surrounding area.

3.3.9 To summarise, it will be ensured that the replacement equipment is set at a level no lower than in the existing building, and that the equipment is designed to fully operate during a flood event.

3.3.10 If a flood warning is issued, CG will carry out their flood protocol, which involves the shutdown of flood sensitive equipment, and this building would be incorporated into this plan.

3.4 Heritage and Archaeology

3.4.1 The site is not located within or near any statutory archaeological or heritage designations. The area is taken to have existed as open agricultural land until installation of the present structures.

3.4.2 There are a series of Historic Environment records (HER) within 500m of the site. Many of which are former farmsteads with modern additions. The nearest HER record is located 100m north and covers the line of the former Holbeach to Sutton Bridge Railway (MLI24894), operated by the Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway and ran between Holbeach and King's Lynn. The line opened in 1862 and was closed and dismantled in the late 1960s.

3.4.3 Given that the operational site has been subject to a significant amount of excavation in the past it is considered that there is a very low risk of encountering any significant, unknown archaeology during the proposed works and it is unlikely the affect the surrounding HER most of which consists of now modernized farmsteads.

3.4.4 Therefore, due to the nature and scope of the proposed development, it is suggested that there are no requirements to undertake any further archaeological or heritage works to inform the proposals.

3.5 Traffic

3.5.1 As previously mentioned, the proposed development is situated within a rural area and the roads are single track leading up to and beyond the site.

3.5.2 During the construction period, there will likely be a minor temporary increase in traffic to the Site due to the delivery of materials, plant, and equipment. This increase will only be required for the duration of the construction works, which are expected to take up to 15-20 weeks to complete.

3.5.3 During works, any vehicles will be parked within the operational site and the temporary compound situated adjacent to the Site.

3.5.4 Further to this, due to the low maintenance nature of the asset, the proposed development will not require any additional visits above the existing from Cadent Gas personnel and will only require periodic management and maintenance in line with the existing operational requirements.

3.6 Noise

3.6.1 During construction there is the potential for some additional noise source, however any increase will be temporary and short in nature and will be mitigated by noise within the existing operational site and from the surrounding road network.

3.6.2 All plant, vehicles, and machinery will be maintained in good condition and will be switched off when not in use to minimise construction noise and pollution.

3.6.3 As the proposed development comprises of a new regulator building to house essential gas infrastructure the new equipment is not expected to generate any new or increased noise levels (above current background noise). Furthermore, the proposed building will minimize any noise impact produced by the new gas equipment.

3.7 Dust

3.7.1 Best practice methods will be used to suppress construction dust which may be generated during the installation of the new regulator building and all plant and machinery will be maintained in good condition and will be switched off when not in use to minimize pollution.

3.7.2 During operation, there are not anticipated to be any dust emissions from the development, existing on-site infrastructure is also unlikely to cause further emissions. Therefore, there is not expected to be any long-term and adverse impact on air quality as result of the works.

4 Planning Policy Review

4.1 Environmental Impact Assessment Review

4.1.1 The proposed development is not considered to be a Schedule 1 or 2 development under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The proposed development does not match any of the descriptions in either Schedule 1 or 2 and is also not considered to be located within a 'sensitive area' as defined by these regulations.

4.2 National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

4.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued in March 2012, most recently updated in December 2023. The NPPF sets out the planning policies for England and how they should be applied to planning decisions. Under this framework, the local development plan must be considered when making planning decisions. The NPPF supersedes all previous planning policy and guidelines. The planning policies within the NPPF relevant to this planning application are given below:

4.2.2 Paragraph 11 states that:

"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development…for decision taking this means; approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay."

4.2.3 Chapter 2, paragraph 8 states that: *'achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives:*

a) An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive, and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available and at the right time to support growth, innovation, and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.

b) A social objective – to support, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generation; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) An environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.'

4.2.4 Paragraph 38 goes on to indicate that:

"Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way…and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, special, and environmental conditions of the area. Decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible."

4.2.5 Paragraph 126 states that:

"Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps development acceptable in communities."

4.2.6 Therefore, this planning statement will demonstrate that the proposed development proposed is sustainable and as such the presumption in favour of sustainable development should apply.

4.3 Local Planning Policy

4.3.1 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 replicates the provisions of Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and requires that when making any determination, regard is held to the local statutory Development Plan, and that determination shall be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.3.2 In this case, the statutory development plan relevant to this planning application consists of the Southeast Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 which was adopted on the 8th of March 2019. The plan sets out an overall vision of how Southeast Lincolnshire and the settlements within it should develop and the strategic objectives that will ensure key spatial issues are addressed.

4.3.3 The key policies relevant to the proposed development from the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan are listed in Table 1 below, with a full planning policy appraisal provided in Section 5.

Table 1: Southeast Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-2036 Policies relevant to this application

Policy No	Policy Description
Policy 1	Spatial Strategy
Policy 2	Development Management
Policy 3	Design of New Development
Policy 4	Approach to Flood Risk
Policy 5	Meeting Physical Infrastructure and Service Needs
Policy 28	The Natural Environment
Policy 29	The Historic Environment
Policy 30	Pollution
Policy 31	Climate Change and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

5 Policy Review

Principle of Development

5.1.1 There is no one policy within the Southeast Lincolnshire Local plan that is specific to this proposal. Nonetheless, it is considered that the installation of the new regulator building is a requirement to ensure essential gas infrastructure is safely housed and accords with the wider visions and objectives of the local plan by promoting developments which manages and further facilitates sustainable growth for the area, particularly in the context of climate change.

Sustainable Development

5.1.2 As indicated by Policy 2 of the Southeast Lincolnshire Local Plan, development will only be permitted if it meets the sustainable development considerations. The proposed development aims to provide improved gas infrastructure for the benefit of the local community in line with CGs commitments, whilst having a minimal environmental impact. It can be argued that the proposed development will therefore improve the economic, social, and environmental conditions of the local area in accordance with National Planning Policy and the three key pillars of sustainable development. This is demonstrated below:

- Economic: The proposal has been assessed by CG to ensure that it is an economic design and that it ensures a long-term solution at the site. There will be some local benefits from the construction period, including local businesses benefitting from construction workers in the area.
- Social: The proposal will ensure that gas supply is maintained to local residential properties, which therefore ensures the longevity of amenity and quality of life, especially for residents.
- Environmental: The proposal will protect the wider environment in accordance with CG's key responsibilities under the Gas Act 1986 (as amended). The proposed development will not significantly visually impact the rural setting of the Site and the scale of the building has been minimised as far a. Furthermore, the materials and colour have been matched to the existing on site, such that the development will assimilate with the existing locale.

5.1.3 The proposal falls outside a defined settlement boundary and is designated as Countryside. Policy 1 states that Countryside development will be permitted in such a location and/or where it can be demonstrated that it meets the sustainable development needs of the area in terms of economic,

community or environmental benefits. This planning supporting statement has proved that the proposed development meets the sustainable development needs of the area in terms of economic, social, and environmental benefits.

5.1.4 Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development is in line with Policies 1 and 2 of the Southeast Lincolnshire Local Plan.

Design and Impact on Natural Environment

5.1.5 Policy 3 of the Southeast Lincolnshire Local Plan places significant emphasis on the incorporation of good quality design in new developments. The policy requires that such designs should aim to provide a development that fits harmoniously into its surroundings, while respecting the character of the place it is located in and carefully integrating necessary infrastructure.

5.1.6 The proposed development is the minimum size required to house necessary equipment and has been sited and designed to appear in keeping with existing assets on-site in terms of scale, appearance, and functionality. Colours and materials for the new regulator building have also been chosen to be sympathetic to the local landscape and correspond with existing assets to better mitigate against any additional visual impact that may result from the proposed development.

5.1.7 The development will be contained within the boundary of the existing operational site and will not result in the removal or loss of vegetation. This ensures that the existing vegetation surrounding the site will continue to provide screening of the existing site and proposed development from the wider landscape. Therefore, the development meets the requirements of Policy 3 and has ensured good quality design.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

5.1.7 Due to the proposal's location within an existing operational site and the managed nature of the Site, there are no impacts to trees or ecology because of the works. Nonetheless, best practice measures will be employed by contractors and personnel during the works to ensure no harm comes to any protected species or notable habitats. It is therefore considered that the proposed development accords with Policy 28 of the Southeast Lincolnshire Local Plan.

Flood Risk

5.1.8 As aforementioned, the regulator building on site contains pressurised gas pipework with vents piped to 3 meters above ground level. Due to this design, the equipment within the building will be able to operate underwater and continue to supply gas as intended. Currently, the

equipment is situated in a different building on the ground level, and Cadent Gas needs to relocate it to a new building due to the equipment's sequence on site.

5.1.9 The other infrastructure on site (such as a boiler house for pre heat and telemetry /metering room to provide data back to their control centre) could become flooded, depending on the water height, and therefore cease to operate. However, the gas supply would not be affected during periods of flooding due to the design of the equipment.

5.1.10 Furthermore, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) was conducted in March 2024. Therefore, it is clear that the proposed development complies with Policy 4 of the Southeast Lincolnshire Local Plan, as it is supported by a site-specific flood risk assessment.

5.1.11 The proposed development is also 'resilient to flood risk from all forms of flooding,' and it does not pose any risk to existing land or buildings. The development will be safe during its lifetime, taking into account the impacts of climate change, and will be able to withstand flood risk from all forms of flooding. In the event of a flood, the development could be quickly brought back into use without significant refurbishment.

Conclusion

5.1.12 The proposed development comprises of the installation of one regulator building to house gas infrastructure within the limits to Cadent gas's existing operational site at near Sutton Bridge, Lincolnshire. The new regulator building will house CG equipment required to operate in concurrence with the existing CG infrastructure on-site and will support sustainable development and growth by reinforcing the gas network and ensuring the longevity and steady supply to the local area.

5.1.13 This statement and supporting information supplied within this application have demonstrated that the proposed development accords with both national and local planning policy and guidance and can demonstrate sustainable development principles as set out by the NPPF.

5.1.14 The location of the proposed regulator building is within the limits of the operational site and its sensitive design and screening will ensure that the new development will not be prominent within the landscape and will have a minimal impact on surrounding receptors, biodiversity, and the natural environment.

5.1.15 As the gas regulator building can remain operational during a flood event, it is not proposed to raise the building or equipment. Furthermore, the proposed development has a negligible effect on the flood risk to the surrounding area. The replacement equipment will be set at a level no lower than the existing building and will fully operate during a flood event. In case of a flood warning, Cadent Gas will carry out their flood protocol, which involves the shutdown of flood-sensitive equipment, including this building.

5.1.16 In view of this information provided within this statement, it is considered that there are no material reasons why planning permission should not be granted.

DALCOUR MACLAREN



Midlands
4 Bredon Court
Brockeridge Park
Twyning
Gloucestershire GL20 6FF

T: 01684 217 703
E: info@dalcourmaclaren.com
E: EPTeam@dalcourmaclaren.com

dalcourmaclaren.com