[2026] EWHC 1681 (KB)

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
HIGH COURT APPEAL CENTRE ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE
ON APPEAL FROM THE COUNTY COURT AT CENTRAL LONDON
ORDER OF HER HONOUR JUDGE BLOOM ON 5 DECEMBER 2025
COUNTY COURT CASE NUMBER: H26YZ017
APPEAL REF: KA-2026-000008

Royal Courts of Justice
Strand, London, WC2A 2LL

Date: 03/07/2026

Before :

MR JUSTICE GRIFFITHS

- -

Between :

IRAMA PTE LIMITED

Appellant

- and -

FORMARK SCAFFOLDING (HOLDINGS) LIMITED

Respondent

- -
- -

Parvinder Chopra (a director granted rights of audience for this hearing) on behalf of the **Appellant**
James Miller (instructed by Irwin Mitchell LLP) for the **Respondent**

Hearing date: 3 July 2026

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Judgment (Approved)

Mr Justice Griffiths directs that this shall be the definitive version
of the judgment delivered at the conclusion of the hearing.
It will be circulated to the parties or their representatives by e-mail
and released to the National Archives.

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MR JUSTICE GRIFFITHS

MR JUSTICE GRIFFITHS :

1. This is a renewed application for permission to appeal following refusal of permission on the papers by order of Martin Spencer J dated 2 June 2026 and sealed on 8 June 2026.

2. The appellant is a company and is not legally represented. An application has been made by a director, Mr Parvinder Chopra, in an email dated 5 February 2026, for rights of audience in the appeal. That application was renewed at the start of the hearing before me today.

3. By CPR 39.6:

> "39.6 A company or other corporation may be represented at trial by an employee if –
>
> (a) the employee has been authorised by the company or corporation to appear at trial on its behalf; and
>
> (b) the court gives permission."

4. This implements recommendation 153 by Lord Woolf MR in the *Access to Justice Final Report* that the court should normally exercise its discretion in favour of allowing a company "to take any steps on behalf of the company which a litigant in person could take in High Court or county court proceedings".

5. It had long been the case, even before Lord Woolf's recommendation, that companies might be represented, not only as of right by counsel or a solicitor, but also, provided the leave of the judge was given, by a director or some other person. Per Swinfen-Eady LJ in *Charles P Kinnell & Co Ltd v Harding, Wace & Co* [1918] 1 KB 405 at 413-414:

> "However true in Lord Coke's time that the corporations then known to the law could not do any act (except as to small matters) but by attorney, it is not true now with regard to joint-stock companies whose powers are regulated by statute.
>
> (…)
>
> There remains, however, the question how such a body may appear in Court, either as plaintiff or defendant. This is provided for by the County Courts Act, 1888, s. 72. As from its nature a company cannot appear in person, not having as a legal entity any visible person, it must appear by counsel or solicitor, or by leave of the judge some other person may be allowed to appear instead of the company to address the Court, which includes the examination of the witnesses and generally conducting the case. There is no limit or restriction imposed on the judge as to the persons whom he may allow, or as to the nature of the cases in which he may allow some other person to address him instead of counsel or solicitor for the company. It is left to his discretion, but except under special circumstances he would doubtless only

> sanction some director or officer or regular employee of the company so appearing instead of the company, and would limit his permission to cases which he thought could properly be disposed of before him, without the assistance of either counsel or solicitor."

6. This is always, however, a matter for the court in its discretion.

7. Mr Chopra is not well-suited to represent the appellant, although he is a director. He has no legal qualification or any other relevant qualification. Until yesterday, he failed to file the sealed order or the transcript of the judgment appealed against, which are essential documents required by Practice Direction 52B, paragraph 6. He has failed to provide an appeal bundle containing all the other documents he relies upon on the application. Instead, he has sent by email (and not always filed) multiple submissions and attachments, and some of the attachments proved impossible to open. A great deal of time has been wasted by this inefficient way of proceeding by Mr Chopra.

8. Mr Chopra has made at least three applications which have been certified by various judges to be totally without merit. There may be others of which I am not aware, but even on the papers that Mr Chopra has provided to me, I can see the following:

   i) He made an application on 7 May 2024 which Bourne J found to be totally without merit, and that was upheld by Whipple LJ.

   ii) He made an application on 29 January 2025 which Bourne J found to be totally without merit, and that was also upheld by Whipple LJ.

   iii) The order appealed from made by Her Honour Judge Bloom on 5 December 2025 and sealed on 16 January 2026 was marked totally without merit,

9. However, neither Mr Chopra nor the appellant company are at the moment, so far as I am aware, subject to any Civil Restraint Order.

10. With some hesitation, I decided to grant Mr Chopra a right of audience at today's hearing on behalf of the appellant. However, it should not be assumed that this will be repeated on a future occasion or by another judge. The appellant would be much better off with legal representation.

11. I turn, then, to the renewed application for permission to appeal.

12. The Appellant's Notice is in respect of a decision of Her Honour Judge Bloom in the County Court at Central London on 5 December 2025.

13. The appeal is (quoting section 5 of the Appellant's Notice) against:

> "(…) the whole of the order made by Her Honour Judge Bloom on 5 December 2025, including:
>
> The dismissal of the Claimant's application dated 19 December 2024 to set aside the Order of HHJ Saunders (18 December 2024) and the Default Costs Certificate dated 29 May 2024;

> The finding that the Claimant's application was "entirely without merit";
>
> The upholding of the Default Costs Certificate in the sum of £187,553.11;
>
> The award of further costs against the Claimant (£17,000 and £4,500), including on an indemnity basis;
>
> Any part of the order relying upon or drafted by Mr Darren Malone, who admitted during the hearing that he did not have authorisation to conduct litigation, rendering his involvement a material irregularity;
>
> Any part of the order affected by the court's failure to address the Appellant's submissions under the Legal Services Act 2007 and *Mazur v Charles Russell Speechleys LLP*."

14. As I have mentioned, no copy of a sealed order incorporating the decision made on 5 December 2025 was filed until yesterday afternoon, although it was sealed as long ago as 16 January 2026. Now that I have it, however, I can see that it was in the following terms:

> "UPON hearing Mr Chopra as a Litigant in Person on behalf of the Claimant and Mr Malone, Counsel, on behalf of the Defendant at an in person hearing at the Central London County Court
>
> AND UPON reading the papers upon the Court file
>
> IT IS ORDERED THAT:
>
> 1. The Claimant's Application dated 19 December 2024 is hereby dismissed. The application is marked Totally Without Merit.
>
> 2. The Claimant do further pay the Defendant's costs of the Application dated 19 December 2024 summarily assessed in the sum of £17,000.00, inclusive of VAT, within 21 days of the date of this Order.
>
> 3. The Claimant do further pay the Defendant's costs of the application dated 19 February 2025 summarily assessed in the sum of £4,500.00, inclusive of VAT, within 21 days of the date of this Order."

15. The background is as follows.

16. In 2021, the claimant (now appellant) brought proceedings against the defendant for alleged rent arrears. Just before the Pre Trial Review ("PTR") in January 2024, the claimant's solicitors applied to come off the record. At the PTR, the claimant did not attend and was not represented. HHJ Baucher struck out the claim and ordered the

claimant to pay the defendant's costs, subject to detailed assessment if not agreed. He also ordered an interim payment of £30,000 on account of costs.

17. The claimant (acting through Mr Chopra) sought to appeal that order but did not do so within the time limit. Bourne J refused to extend time. It is clear from reasons given by Whipple LJ in an order dated 16 February 2026 that this refusal was not overturned by the Court of Appeal if, indeed, it ever got as far as the Court of Appeal. Therefore, the order of HHJ Baucher is now final and not open to any challenge. Despite this, it seems that the appellant has refused to pay the respondent the £30,000 ordered by way of interim payment.

18. Pursuant to the order of HHJ Baucher, the defendant served detailed assessment proceedings on the claimant in April 2024. The points of dispute from the claimant were due within 21 days of service, and service was acknowledged. However, the claimant served no points of dispute. The defendants applied for a default costs order. That was issued on 29 May 2024 and served on the claimant.

19. The claimant, acting by Mr Chopra, applied to set it aside. But it did not serve any points of dispute.

20. The matter came before HHJ Saunders. The defendants attended and were represented but the claimant did not attend and was not represented. The judge refused an application by the claimant to adjourn. One of the judge's reasons was that the application was without merit, in circumstances where points of dispute, if any, were long overdue and had still not been served. The judge gave a reasoned judgment explaining both why there was no merit in the application for an adjournment and why there was no merit in the application to set aside the default costs certificate, relying particularly on the expired deadline for service of points of dispute, and the continuing absence of any points of dispute.

21. The next day, the claimant (acting by Mr Chopra) applied to set aside the order of HHJ Saunders. He filed evidence. But he still filed no points of dispute, which was essential if he was to show any merit in a challenge to the default costs order. The Points of Dispute which are before me are dated as recently as 23 January 2026.

22. The application to set aside came before Her Honour Judge Bloom at the hearing on 5 December 2025. I have a transcript of the hearing and, very belatedly, a transcript of the judgment. As I have mentioned, the transcript of the judgment was provided only yesterday, although it was delivered well over 6 months ago and is approved. The judge heard from Mr Chopra in person, acting with the judge's permission although not having any right of audience. She also heard from Mr Malone, a barrister who appeared as Counsel. He had previously been employed by Irwin Mitchell, solicitors for the defendant, as a costs draughtsman. The judge heard submissions from Mr Chopra (ironically, given that Mr Chopra himself had no rights of audience except by the permission of the judge) that Mr Malone had had no rights of audience before HHJ Saunders.

23. The judge noted in her judgment that Mr Chopra had made allegations about Mr Malone acting without right, and even accusing Mr Malone of a criminal offence in that respect, citing *Mazur v Charles Russell Speechlys LLP* [2025] EWHC 2341 (KB). These allegations had caused Irwin Mitchell to instruct Kennedys to act in the matter, who

said that in fact Mr Malone was always entitled to appear. Before becoming a practising barrister, he was a costs draughtsman attending only on costs matters and that was his right and was in no way contrary to the Legal Services Act.

24. No-one who represents another person with the permission of the court is in breach of the Legal Services Act. Paragraph 1 of Schedule 3 to the Legal Services Act 2007 applies to determine whether a person is an exempt person for the purpose of exercising a right of audience before a court in relation to any proceedings (subject to paragraph 7). A person is exempt if the person is not an authorised person in relation to that activity, but has a right of audience granted by that court in relation to those proceedings.

25. I also see from the transcript of the hearing before HHJ Bloom that Mr Chopra said to her that HHJ Saunders at a previous hearing had asked Mr Malone if he had rights of audience before a circuit judge and Mr Malone said he thought he did because of the Legal Services Act to which the judge said he was not sure. So HHJ Saunders, even if what Mr Chopra says is correct, was aware that there might be a question mark over that and agreed to hear Mr Malone anyway, which it is in any judge's power to do.

26. I see from the transcript of the hearing before HHJ Bloom that Mr Malone told her (and there is no reason to doubt this), that he was employed by Irwin Mitchell as a costs draughtsman at the time of the earlier hearing to which Mr Chopra took objection, with the title of technical costs specialist. He was employed to appear at costs and case management conferences, detailed assessment hearings and the like up and down the country for Irwin Mitchell and appeared regularly at the Senior Courts Costs Office.

27. This case came to Mr Malone in relation to Mr Chopra's application to set aside the default costs certificate; therefore, Mr Malone had nothing to do with the default costs certificate itself. By the time of the hearing before HHJ Bloom, however, Mr Malone had been called to the Bar and was a practising barrister with rights of audience. He did not claim the right to conduct litigation but he would as a barrister in good standing have a right of audience, even without permission, unlike Mr Chopra. But, like Mr Chopra, he would have a right of audience in any event if the judge was willing to hear him. Barristers do not generally have a right to conduct litigation, such as filing or formally issuing court proceedings. That is usually done by solicitors, although some barristers do apply for and obtain that right. Not having a right to conduct litigation is quite separate from the right of audience. Barristers do have rights of audience if they have a practising certificate and are insured. Barristers do not have to prove that they have a practising certificate and are insured before exercising their rights of audience.

28. It follows that Mr Chopra's objections to Mr Malone being heard at any of the relevant hearings are totally without merit.

29. They are also irrelevant. HHJ Bloom herself observed that even if there were some procedural irregularity in a person being heard without a right to be heard, this would not render the decision of the court open to question. Appeals are against orders. Orders are in most cases accompanied by reasoned judgments, which may be short or long. If there is no basis for attacking the reasoned judgment, and no basis for challenging the substantive order, the audience rights of anyone present at the hearing beforehand are neither here nor there.

30. HHJ Bloom then turned to the merits of the application by Mr Chopra which was for permission to file a late costs certificate and to set aside the order of HHJ Saunders. She agreed to look at it on the basis of its underlying merit and not to decide only by reference to Mr Chopra's wholesale failure to comply with deadlines, which in the case of the Points of Dispute was 18 months overdue. That was generous of the judge.

31. However, since there were still no Points of Dispute, HHJ Bloom found that there was no merit in the applications. HHJ Bloom considered Mr Chopra's submission that he was a litigant in person (or, more correctly, a director acting without the benefit of any legal qualifications) and that he had dyslexia. However, the judge noted that Mr Chopra had filed many applications and appeals which had come before various judges, that it was clear from his filings and submissions that he was familiar with the Civil Procedure Rules, and that the necessity of him filing Points of Dispute had been made crystal clear to him by HHJ Saunders. There was no excuse.

32. The judge concluded: "There is no merit in this application before me today, and I mark it as totally without merit."

33. In his oral submissions today, Mr Chopra at one point suggested that HHJ Bloom did, in fact, have Points of Dispute before her. That is contrary to paragraph 3 of her judgment, in which she said:

> "In early May the defendant wrote to the claimant asking about the interim payment on account of costs, and the claimant received that email and said he was not going to pay. The points of dispute under the detailed assessment proceedings were due within 21 days of service of them on the claimant, and the claimant did not reply within that period of time. It is now nearly 18 months ago that the same were due. It is not in dispute before me today on 5 December 2025 there are still no points of dispute that have been raised by the claimant in respect of the bill of costs that the defendants have submitted."

34. I therefore invited Mr Chopra to look at the certified verbatim transcript of the hearing before HHJ Bloom on 5 December 2025 to see if he could make good his submission that this was wrong.

35. Upon examination of the transcript of the hearing, however, it is clear that HHJ Bloom was right. Mr Chopra admitted (at pp 9-10 of the transcript) that he had not done Points of Dispute in relation to the bill of costs in question. Mr Malone, for the defendant, told the judge that Points of Dispute had not been filed with the application to set aside, and remained outstanding (transcript pp 13-14). There were no Points of Dispute at the hearing in relation to the bill of costs to which the default costs certificate related, although there was some discussion of a document described as Points of Dispute which were neither proper Points of Dispute (since they gave only examples) nor dealing with the bill of costs in question at the hearing, as opposed to some other bill or bills of costs (see transcript pp 18-19). Mr Chopra was asked for his comments and said "I could give you something in three days for this, if you allow me" (transcript p 20).

36. Permission to appeal will be granted only if there is a real prospect of success or if there is some other compelling reason for the appeal to be heard (CPR 52.6). Mr Chopra said

that his case was based on the overriding objective in CPR 1.1 and I recognise that the court must seek to give effect to the overriding objective when it exercises any power given to it by the CPR or interprets any rule (CPR 1.2). Mr Chopra did not point to any specific provision of the overriding objective but no doubt the overriding objective of dealing with cases justly and at proportionate cost is important in this as in other cases, and so is ensuring that parties are on an equal footing and can participate fully in proceedings. I have had regard to that throughout the hearing today.

37. I have examined all the Grounds of Appeal. Most if not all of them are irrelevant to the decision and reasoning of the judge and none of them has a real prospect of success.

38. Grounds 1 – 7 challenge the earlier orders and proceedings, rather than the hearing before HHJ Bloom and her order of 5 December 2025. However, the appellant is out of time to appeal those earlier orders and has been refused by the High Court (Bourne J) and the Court of Appeal (Whipple LJ) permission to proceed in that respect.

39. The basis of HHJ Bloom's decision was, as I have said, to look at the challenge to costs on its merits as it stood at the date of the hearing before her on 5 December 2025. Mr Chopra therefore cannot undermine that decision in any way by referring to earlier matters. The decision of HHJ Bloom was a fresh decision on the merits and no basis for challenging that has been proposed. In circumstances where the most basic requirement of any challenge to the default costs certificate was lacking - namely that there should be Points of Dispute showing why (if one ignored the expiry of time limits, which perhaps one should not) there was merit in resurrecting a dispute about costs – the decision was not only unchallengeable; it was inevitable.

40. Grounds 8 and 9, likewise, are irrelevant to the order appealed against. Ground 8 accuses the defendant's solicitors of a conflict of interest and Ground 9 claims a defect in the default costs certificate which is not articulated in a comprehensible manner but which seems to involve some issue about signatures. These were not points made to HHJ Bloom and they therefore have no bearing on her decision and provide no basis for an appeal against her decision.

41. Mr Chopra challenges the "totally without merit" finding. It is however clearly well founded for the reasons I have given.

42. He raises in his skeleton argument an issue about Denton. I assume he means *Denton v TH White Ltd* [2014] EWCA Civ 906 which is a case about relief from sanctions. However, the judgment of HHJ Bloom was not based on *Denton* at all because of her generous willingness to consider the appellant's case on its merits, which is the best anyone in breach of a rule can hope for under *Denton.*

43. He challenges what he describes as disproportionate and punitive costs orders and says they were what he describes as "indemnity level". In fact, the costs order is a summary assessment of costs in specific amounts, and is not stated to be on the indemnity basis. The judge was correct to assess the costs summarily after a hearing which did not last more than a day and no evidence has been produced which might sustain a claim that the sums assessed were disproportionate or punitive. In any event, the costs discretion is broad and there is no real prospect of succeeding in an appeal against the quantum of costs assessed in this case.

44. Permission to appeal is refused. Not only is there no real prospect of success, the proposed appeal is totally without merit.

45. Under CPR 52.20(6), when the Court refuses an application for permission to appeal and considers that it is totally without merit, the order must record that fact. It also provides that the Court must consider whether it is appropriate to make a civil restraint order.

46. Mr Chopra and the appellant now have a very regrettable history of persistently making applications which are totally without merit and, indeed, the underlying proceedings, although launched by the appellant as claimant, appear to have had no merit given that they were effectively abandoned before the Pre Trial Review at which there was no attendance or representation, and they were struck out.

47. Whipple LJ in her order of 16 February 2026 warned the appellant and Mr Chopra personally at para 9 of her reasons that "If Mr Chopra presents further applications in the litigation, despite this order refusing him permission to appeal, then consideration will have to be given to the respondent's application", i.e. an application by the respondent for a limited Civil Restraint Order.

48. Having regard to PD3C, and CPR 2.3(1)(a), I will make a limited Civil Restraint Order against the appellant as a company and against Mr Chopra personally which will limit their ability to make any further applications in these proceedings. They will be able to do so only after scrutiny by the court and with the permission of the court. This will be explained fully in the order itself.