
Lickey Hills Country Park – proposed parking charges informal consultation pack



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1. Introduction

In order to provide an income stream to both protect services and facilities within parks, as well as improving parks where we can, BCC is proposing the introduction of parking charges at selected parks.

The proposed scheme at Lickey Hills Country Park will result in a number of key benefits, namely:

- Visitors to the park will benefit from reinvestment of revenue from car park charging into the park for its ongoing upkeep and future works
- Longstanding traffic management issues can be effectively managed and resolved. e.g. traffic restrictions along Warren Lane which will prevent vehicles causing an obstruction
- Improve accessibility by addition of formal disabled bays in the car parks
- The presence of enforcement officers can act as a visual deterrent which may deter any anti-social behaviour
- Ability for the Parks Service to meet savings targets for 2019/20 and onwards.

The decision to introduce parking charges is not something the council has done lightly – in fact we've held off whilst many other councils throughout the country have introduced charging (see appendix B). As such, BCC is one of the last local authorities in the country to introduce charging on a daily basis and income generated will be reinvested into the respective park to improve infrastructure and maintaining the park to the standards visitors expect. Crucially, access to Lickey Hills Country Park remains free – the charges are not to use the park but only to park a vehicle.

The business case to strategically introduce car parking in 7 identified parks was approved in 2017 (see section 4). The selected parks are, Cannon Hill Park, Edgbaston Reservoir, Lickey Hills Country Park, Perry Park, Rectory Park, Sutton Park and Victoria Common.

The original business case set out the case for introducing a parking scheme across the identified parks.

- Generate income to invest in deteriorating car parking facilities
- Generate a sustainable income stream to support and invest in the park
- Benefit the people that use the parks' facilities
- Promote the use of green travel options
- Generate investment in city parks and facilities from users outside of the city boundary.

BCC is facing considerable budget pressures and the Parks Service has a rolling savings target of £200k (2018-19) and £400k (for 2019-20) with a further 180K to be found in 2019/20 following the Budget 2019+ consultation exercise.

Since 2010-11 when austerity measures first came into force, the Parks Service has already seen a 46.95% reduction in revenue funding resulting in the introduction of rank grass (i.e. grass that has overgrown as a result of a lack of cutting), removal of flower beds, reduction in staffing levels etc. however these saving measures are not enough.

Following a recent survey of LGA member councils, the LGA estimates that

“Between 2010 and 2016, local authorities will have lost 60p out of every £1 they received from central government. By next April the gap between council resources and demand will be £3bn, rising to £8bn by 2025, fuelled by wage inflation and the rising costs of adult and child social care.”

2. Why Lickey Hills Country Park?

Lickey Hills Country Park is a very popular leisure destination, with more than 500,000 visitors per year. The park attracts visitors from the whole of Birmingham and also further afield, with approx. 26% of visitors coming from Worcestershire and beyond. This level of use puts significant strain on the park infrastructure and especially the car parks.

The Country Park is served by 3 car parks which have a capacity of approx. 445 cars. Car parks are located at the Warren Lane site next to the Visitor Centre, Beacon Hill off Monument Lane and off Rose Hill serving the Rose & Crown Hotel and the Golf Course. Currently parking at each car park is free and each is heavily used. Although the car parks are popular they are in need of significant investment in order to keep them in a safe and fit for purpose. Both Beacon Hill and Rose Hill car parks have been identified as having safety concerns and are in need of major investment to address these concerns.

Implementation of parking charges will help generate essential income which can be invested in the infrastructure of the country park to improve the overall visitor experience and safeguard it for the future.

3. Lickey Hills – background

Lickey Hills Country Park is one of Birmingham City Council's most varied and treasured parks. It covers 524 acres and is located 10 miles south west of central Birmingham. Lickey Hills has a Green Flag Award and is designated a Country Park. It is important to note that the park is in Worcestershire within the area administered by Bromsgrove District Council.

4. Cabinet approved selected parks for the proposed introduction of parking charges

A business case to strategically introduce car parking in 7 identified parks was approved by:

- Commercialism Board (23 January 2017)
- Trusts and Charities Committee (1 March 2017)
- By Full Cabinet in June 2017 (following call-in by the Corporate Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2017) as part of Cabinet Member Report for the introduction of car parking charges to Cannon Hill

The Cabinet Member Decision report for the introduction of parking charges at Cannon Hill mentioned the overall programme of roll-out across the 7 identified city parks and was approved at Cabinet in June 2017 following call-in by the Corporate Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was agreed that any decision to introduce charging at other parks e.g. Lickey Hills Country Park, would be subject to future Cabinet Member approval and public consultation.

List of selected parks

Park	Completion
Cannon Hill Park	October 2017
Lickey Hills Country Park	
Victoria Common	
Sutton Park	
Edgbaston Reservoir	
Rectory Park	
Perry Park	Since original proposal, daily car park usage has decreased significantly, therefore site is no longer considered

Along with the above, Parks will also be exploring the option to introduce parking charges at other sites subject to full due process and consultation.

5. Stakeholder Consultation

The stakeholder consultation commenced in October 2018 and is still ongoing. Throughout the stakeholder consultation process we have endeavoured to address any issues and concerns that have been presented and indeed have taken on-board ideas to improve the proposals. For example, we have amended the proposed pricing structure to now include a 50 pence charge for the first hour of parking across all 3 car parks that serve the site (Monument Lane, Warren Lane and Rose Hill), as well as introduce a first hour of parking free (7am to 8am when the park opens). Below is the list of key stakeholders, businesses and groups within the park that the project team have consulted with as part of the stakeholder consultation.

- Worcestershire County Council
- Bromsgrove District Council
- Warren Lane residents
- Old Rose & Crown
- Friends of Lickey Hills
- Cofton Hackett Parish Council
- Lickey Hills advisory committee
- Mytime Active (Lickey Hills golf course)
- Visitors Centre
- Barnt Green Parish Council
- Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council

6. Public consultation around the proposals

The public consultation on the proposals will be split into two elements – informal and formal consultations. Feedback from both the informal and formal public consultations will feed the decision making process.

The **informal** public consultation is due to begin on 2nd September and will run for 4 weeks until 29th September. The project team will be hosting two consultation drop-in sessions where park users and residents can speak to members of the project team, discuss the proposals and have any queries answered. Engineers from Birmingham City Council Landscape Practice Group team are an integral part of the project team and will be present at the drop-in sessions to discuss the proposed car park designs (see appendix A).

In order to offer flexibility to park users and residents the drop-in sessions will take place at different times – one afternoon and one evening session (see details below).

It is within the **formal** consultation period that consultees can register their formal objections to the proposals – the formal objection period is yet to be determined but again drop-in sessions will be offered to park users and residents. As mentioned, the drop-in sessions will be the ideal opportunity for resident/park visitors to speak to a member of the project team and discuss the proposals for the park. We will be advertising the public consultations (both informal and formal) in the following ways:

- Posters in the park
- Social media
- Ongoing consultation with local ward members

Ways to register views around the proposals:

- BeHeard – the Council online survey system – <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/lickeyhillsparking>
- Face to face questionnaires – clipboard exercise within the park on random days throughout the consultation period
- Email lickeyhillsconsultation@birmingham.gov.uk
- Drop-in sessions (dates below)

Drop-in session 1

Thursday 12 September, 12:00-14:00

Venue: Old School Room, Adjacent to Lickey Hills Visitor Centre, Warren Lane, B45 8ER

Drop-in session 2

Thursday 19 September, 18:00-20:00

Venue: Lickey Hills Visitor Centre, Warren Lane, B45 8ER

7. Project Scope

The proposed car park scheme does not include any plans to increase car parking land. We will however, improve the existing car park surface by filling potholes and levelling (and resurfacing where needed) and through effective car park design, increase the number of spaces currently available. We will also improve accessibility through formal disabled parking spaces. All surface work completed will use approved materials sympathetic to the site i.e. crushed granite for the potholes and grasscrete (a low maintenance substitution for tarmacking and lining) or Bitmac for disabled bays.

8. Proposed pricing structure

The chargeable hours will be from 8am – 6pm, 365 days of the year. The park opens at 7am and so free parking will be available for the first hour of the day (until 8am).

Following feedback from the stakeholder consultation, we have amended the proposed pricing structure to include a 50 pence charge for the first hour of parking.

Proposed pricing structure:

Pricing Structure	Cost
Up to 1 hour	50p
1 to 4 hours	£2.20
All day (4 hours +)	£3.30
Coach parking (Beacon Hill only)	£16.50
Season ticket (annual)	£52
Blue Badge holder **	Free

The proposed pricing structure will be captured as part of the public consultation so park users and residents can have their say.

**Parking for Blue Badge holders will remain free in line with the council's citywide policy on disabled parking.

9. Proposed payment methods

Pay and Display machines – In line with other BCC car parks across the city, the machines we propose to use are Parkeon Strada Rapides. In order to reduce the impact on the natural environment the machines will be solar powered. The machines will be a combination of coin and card and also contactless payments. They are supplied with additional manganese steel shielding around the vault area – this is to prevent drilling and break-in to the cash vault and provides additional armoured protection against mechanical or theft attacks. The shielding is especially hardened and is highly resistant to drilling, sawing and grinding.



Pay by Mobile (Ring Go) – There will also be an option to pay via your mobile phone. This is well used at other car parking sites citywide. Pay by Mobile is the preferred option for those individuals who do not have cash to hand.

There is also a user friendly Ring Go app that can be downloaded which is well used citywide. Once individuals have registered, the app will store your previous parking location details making future payments a few clicks of a button.

The app also has the added functionality of enabling vehicle owners to extend their parking session remotely rather than returning to their vehicle.



10. Traffic restriction orders (TROs)

As mentioned, the informal public consultation will run for 4 weeks and consist of questionnaires, face-to-face clipboard exercise, BeHeard survey, and email mailbox. We will ask for residents'/consultees' views on the proposals.

Throughout our discussions with the Highways Team from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) we have been made aware of WCC's preference to keep traffic restrictions on surrounding roads to a minimum. As such, we will establish traffic restrictions in line with WCC's determination of suitability.

11. Enforcement

Birmingham City Council has procured a citywide contract with NSL for parking enforcement. The Parks Service successfully uses NSL for enforcement at other sites and proposes to continue this arrangement as charges are rolled out to Lickey Hills Country Park. BCC has entered into an agreement with WCC for NSL to act as WCC's enforcement agents given the cross-boundary and partnership working in place. Income from Penalty Charge Notices is retained by BCC; BCC pay for the cost of the deployment of their officers. To be clear, Parks will receive the income from the car park charges and the net income from any Penalty Charge Notices will be retained by BCC Highways team as this helps to offset the cost of enforcement.



12. Investment wish list for the site

The Parks Service has an investment wish list for the site which will be funded by income from the charging scheme.

Investment wish list from District Parks Manager for Lickey Hills

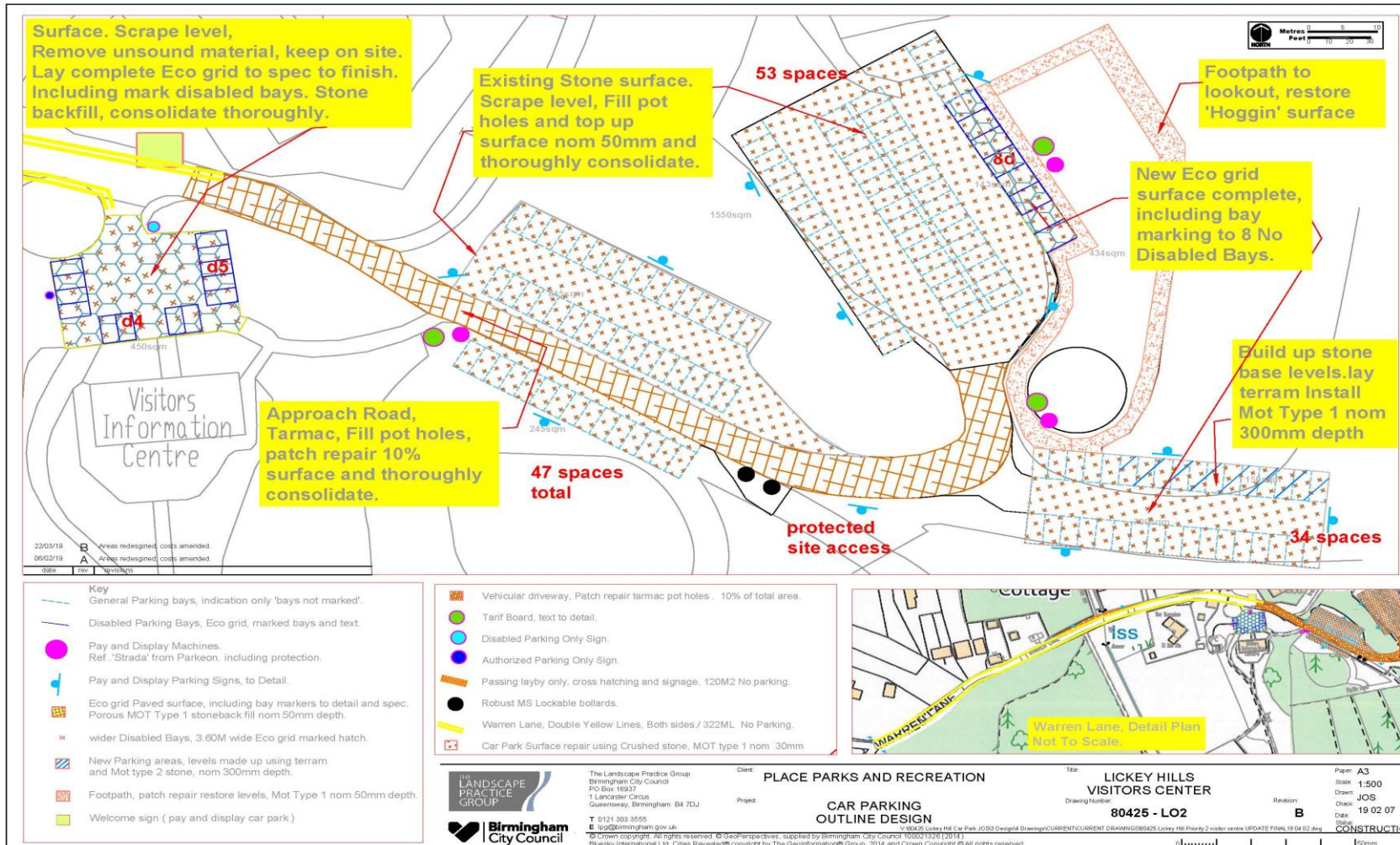
- Re-opening or ongoing repair of areas which the Park Rangers feel are essential but are struggling due to lack of funds, e.g. where we have had to remove bridges and steps due to lack of funds for ongoing maintenance.
- Conservation of heritage features which we do not have an existing revenue budget for.
- Improvements to land management practices, as recommended by the Park Rangers and as per the management plan.
- Future investment in maintaining key infrastructure assets – the building, the car parks, the play area, accesses and ways, fencing, litter bins etc.

The revenue needed to complete the above items would release resources currently expended on matters of this sort.

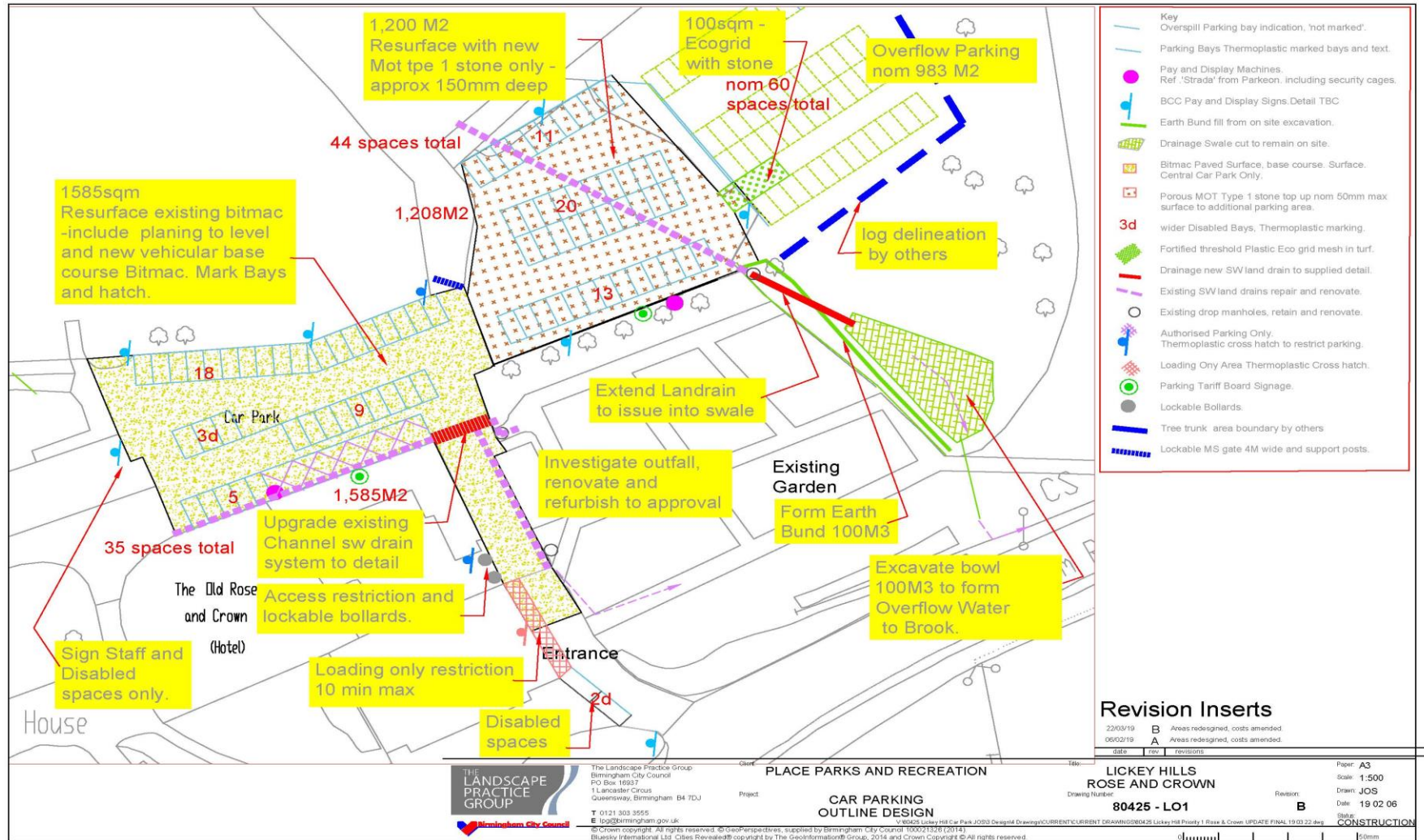
13. Next Steps

The findings from the informal public consultation will be presented in a report to senior management and both BCC and WCC councillors. The decision will then be made whether to proceed to a formal consultation.

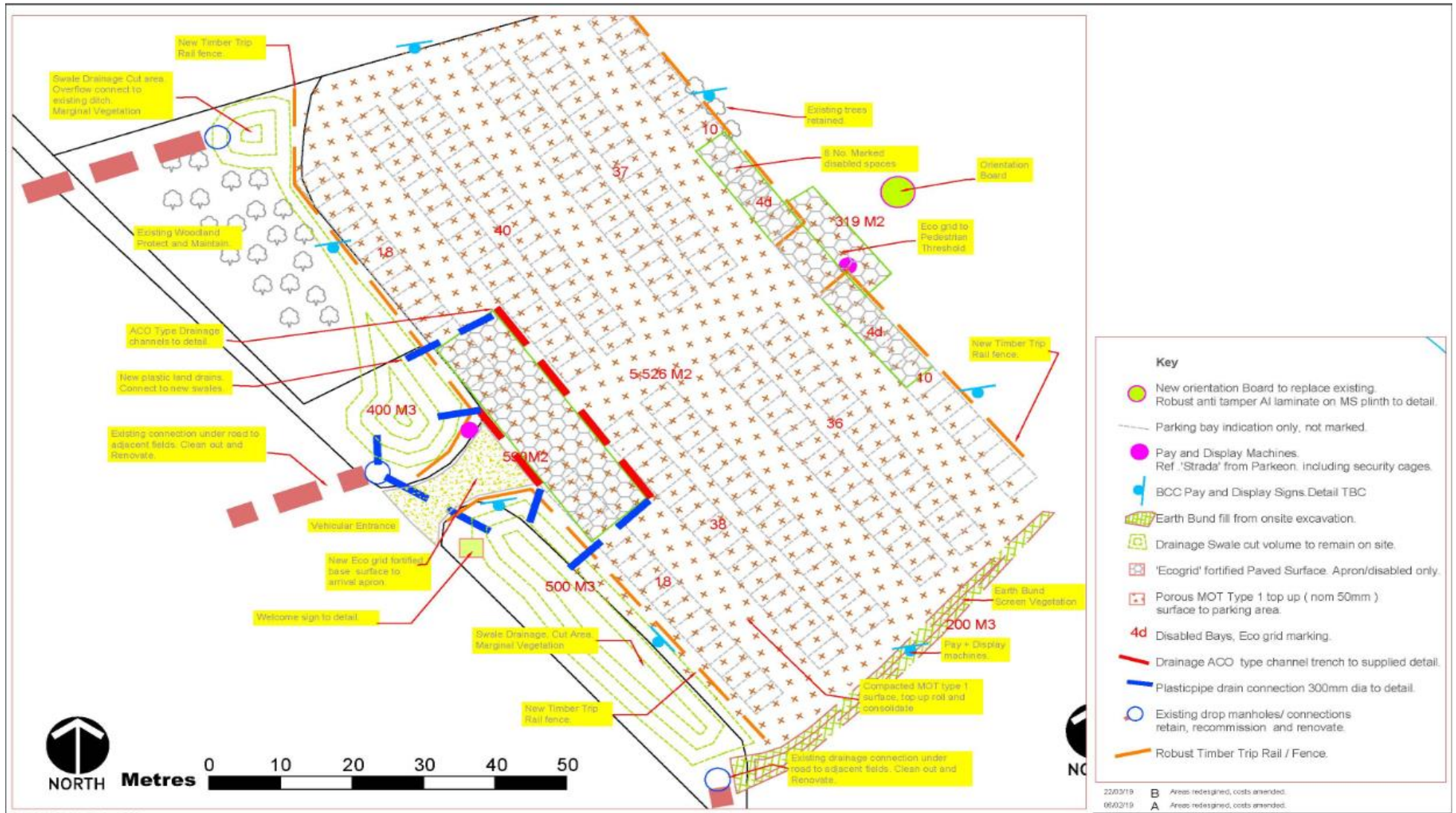
Appendix A – Visitors Centre



Appendix A – Rose Hill Car Park



Appendix A – Beacon Hill



Appendix B – Other local authorities that charge

Nearby authorities

Worcester City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fort Royal Park 	£3.60 all day
Worcestershire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waseley Hills 	£2.50 all day
Lichfield District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beacon Park 	£10 all day
Staffordshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannock Chase Country Park 	£2 all day

West Midlands Combined Authority:

Warwickshire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burton Dassett Hills Country Park 	£2.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hartshill Hayes Country Park 	£2.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kingsbury Water Park 	£3 or £4.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pooley Country Park 	£2.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ryton Pools Country Park 	£6 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stratford Greenway 	£3 all day
Coventry City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coombe Country Park 	£5 all day
Dudley MBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Himley Hall and Park 	£1.90 all day
Sandwell MBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lodge Hill Road 	£2 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandwell Valley Country Park 	£2 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swan Pool 	£2 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forge Mill Farm Visitor Centre 	£2 all day
Shropshire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severn Valley Country Park 	£2.20 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snailbeach Mine 	Donation requested
Stratford on Avon DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreation Ground 	£6 all day

Other core cities:

Nottingham City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colwick Country Park 	£1.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wollaton Park 	£3 all day
Bristol City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashton Court Estate 	£1.20 all day
Manchester City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heaton Park 	£3 all day
Newcastle City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paddy Freeman's Park 	£0.40 per hour

Sheffield	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graves Park	£2.50 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Millhouses Park	£2.00 all day
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hillsborough Park	£2.50 all day

Prices correct as of July 2019