Lawful Development Certificate, Chirk Castle Car Park

Ymddiriedolaeth Genedlaethol
National Trust

National Trust, Chirk Castle, Chirk, Wrexham, LL14 5AF

PLANNING STATEMENT

Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for an Existing Use or Operation or Activity.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990: Section 191 as amended by Section 10 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991; Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012.

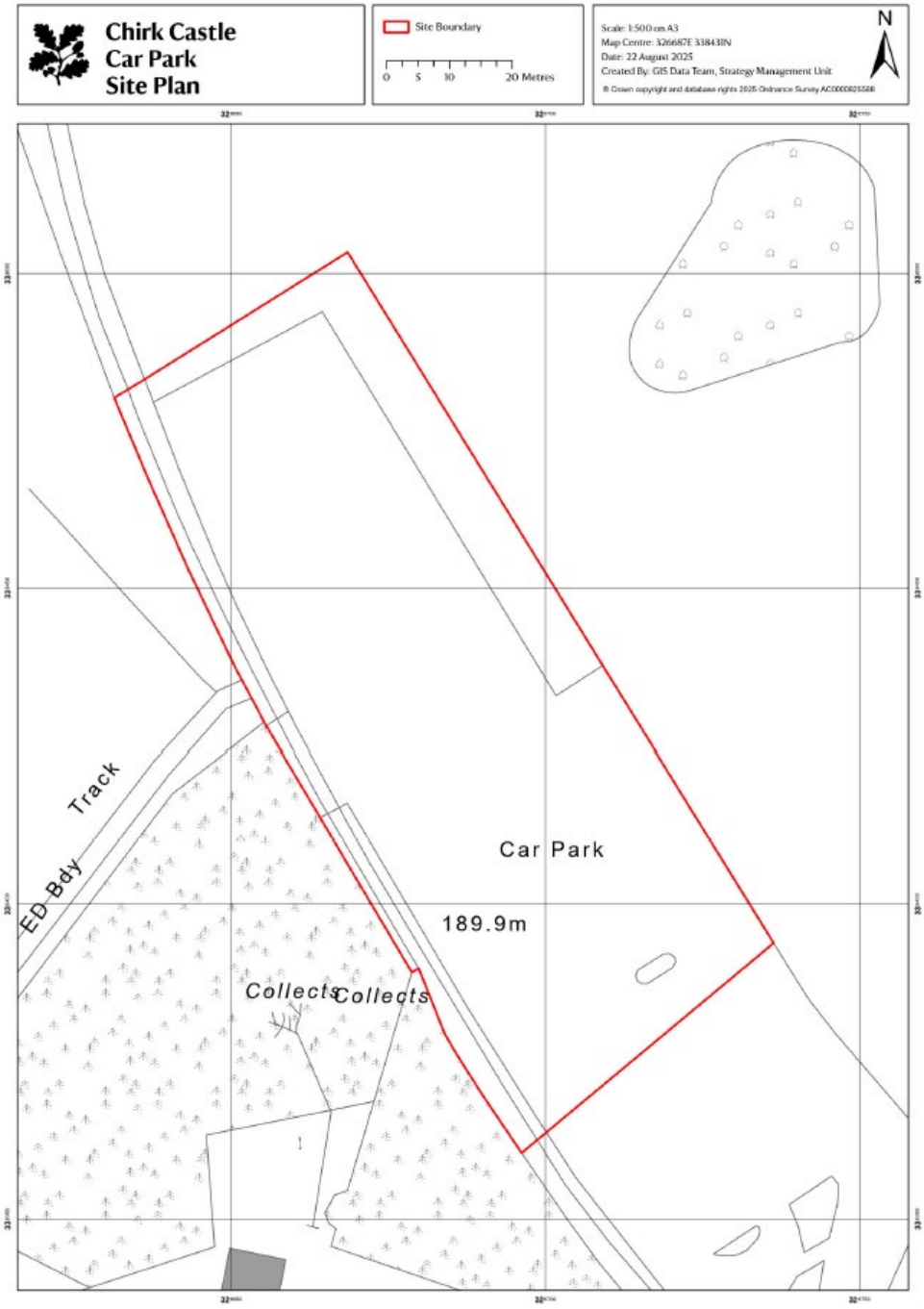




1. Introduction

This Planning Statement provides the Planning Authority with background and further detail on the application for a Certificate of Lawful Use for the existing car park at Chirk Castle.

The application is submitted by National Trust (NT) on land within the ownership of NT and seeks to demonstrate the car park has been in use for over ten years.



Location of the site at Chirk Castle.

2 National Trust and Chirk

National Trust is a leading conservation charity with nearly 5.3 million members. Established over 130 years ago, our primary statutory purpose is to promote the preservation of special places for the benefit of the nation. To achieve this aim we manage over a quarter of a million hectares of land, more than 700 miles of unspoilt coastline and estuary, several hundred historic houses, gardens and parks, and 6 World Heritage Sites. More than 100 million visits are made every year to the properties in our care.

Chirk Castle is set on an outcrop above where the Dee and Ceiriog valleys meet. It is surrounded by an Emes inspired landscape in an estate extending to some 480 acres. Chirk Castle is a grade I listed building, built 700 years ago between1295-1310. Strategically located on the border between Wales and England, Chirk was constructed in the aftermath of Edward I's conquest of Wales and located adjacent to the historic boundary of Offa's Dyke (a Scheduled Monument of international importance), on steep ground above the Ceiriog Valley.

In 1978 the castle and parts of the park were purchased from the Myddelton family by the Land Fund. Initially under the ownership of the former Welsh Office the property was transferred to the National Trust in 1981.

NT welcome visitors throughout the year with a considerable peak in visitor numbers during weekends, school holidays and Christmas celebrations.

The NT car park at Chirk is the start and end point for visitors experiencing the property and many of the estate walks that radiate from the car park. The car park adjoins Home Farm, the formal welcome point for NT visitors to the property.

3 Car Parking at Chirk Castle

NT acquired the Chirk Castle estate in 1981 including some infrastructure that had been established by the then Welsh Office.

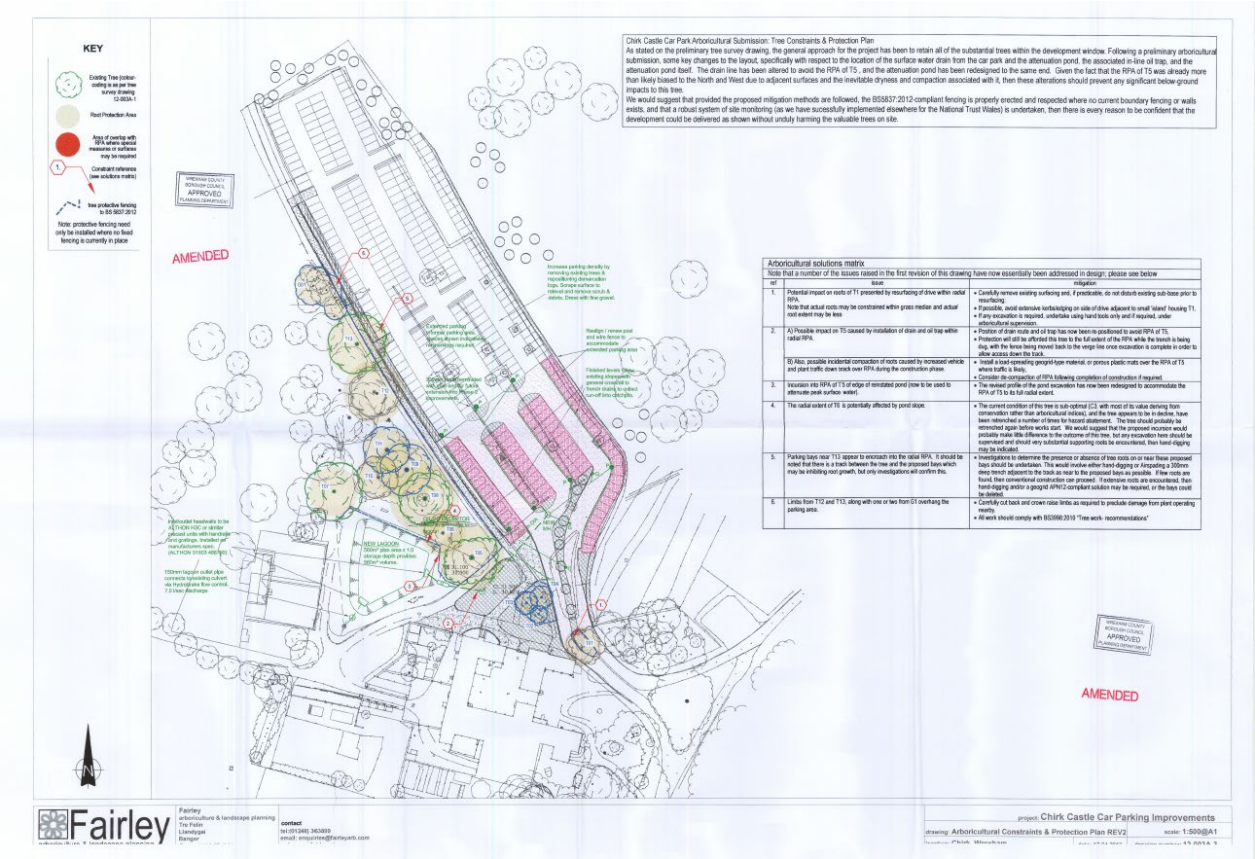
Visitor parking to the property was identified in the current area during these early operations by both Welsh Office and NT.

Planning consent was granted for car park redevelopment during 2011 (P/2011/0821). This application subsequently lapsed due to the lack of submission of prior to commencement planning conditions.

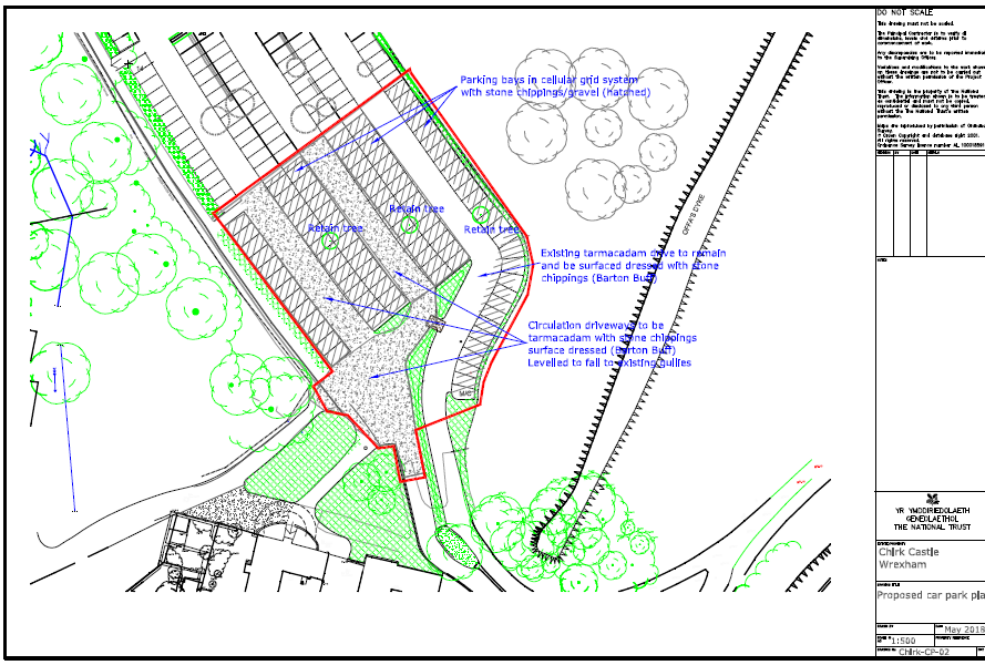
Part of the 2011 consented parking area was subject to a separate full planning application (P/2018/0442) which was subsequently approved and implemented during winter 2018/19. This southern area of parking is established as the core parking for the property, underlain by a sustainable drainage system and high-quality durable finish. NT intends to move forward a similar scheme to the northern area of parking which is subject to this current certificate.

This certificate is seeking regularisation of the northern area of car park which had previously been granted consent but not implemented. The Conservation Management Plan for Chirk Castle includes the following related text "Overflow parking along the drive is a particular operational issue for the existing arrangement, and therefore it is proposed that the

existing car park should be upgraded to improve capacity, drainage, quality of finishes and screen planting around the boundary".



P 2011 0821 Approved scheme showing both northern and southern parking proposals (not implemented).



P/2018/0442 Approved and implemented scheme for the southern car parking area.

4 Certificate of Lawful Use.

This certificate is accompanied by a planning statement, a standard form and two Statements of Truth relating to the use of the land for car parking.

A statement of truth has been provided by Huw Beech (Estate Manager) and Jon Hignett (various visitor and management roles at Chirk Castle).

The Statement of Truth by Mr Beech confirms the following:

The Trust acquired the freehold land known as Chirk Castle, Chirk, Wrexham LL14 5AF ('the Estate') on 12 June 1981. The Property forms part of the Estate. The Estate is registered at HM Land Registry under Title number CYM454677 and is shown edged in red on Plan 1 attached to this statement. The Property is shown edged in red on Plan 2 attached to this statement.

The Property has been used by the Trust as an overflow car park adjacent to the main car park since December 2007. The two attached letters refer to the erection of a fence between adjoining land and the overflow car park: 09 October 2007 from the farm tenant David Myddelton of Myddelton Estate Office (Item 1); and letter in reply dated 29 October 2007 from Emma Hegarty, National Trust Property Manager 2nd paragraph (Item 2). By December

2007 the fence had been erected, and the Property was in use as an overflow car park.

The Property has remained in continuous use as an occasional overflow car park from December 2007 to the present day.

The Statement by Mr Hignett confirms the following:

The Property has been used by the Trust as an overflow car park adjacent to the main car park since at least 2014 as it was in common usage when I started working at Chirk Castle, used regularly during busy and peak days such as Easter weekend or the summer holidays. I also recall visiting Chirk Castle in 2011 before I worked for the National Trust and the car park and overflow car park were laid out and fenced as one contiguous area at that time. From records I have seen I believe that the overflow car park area was permanently fenced off from the surrounding fields in 2007.

To my knowledge the overflow car park is available for use every day of the year (except Christmas Day), although on quiet days it is not always utilised if there is space in the marked and car park area. However, with increasing visitor numbers the number of these quiet days is reducing, and the overflow area is used frequently and commonly as part of the

main car park without distinction.

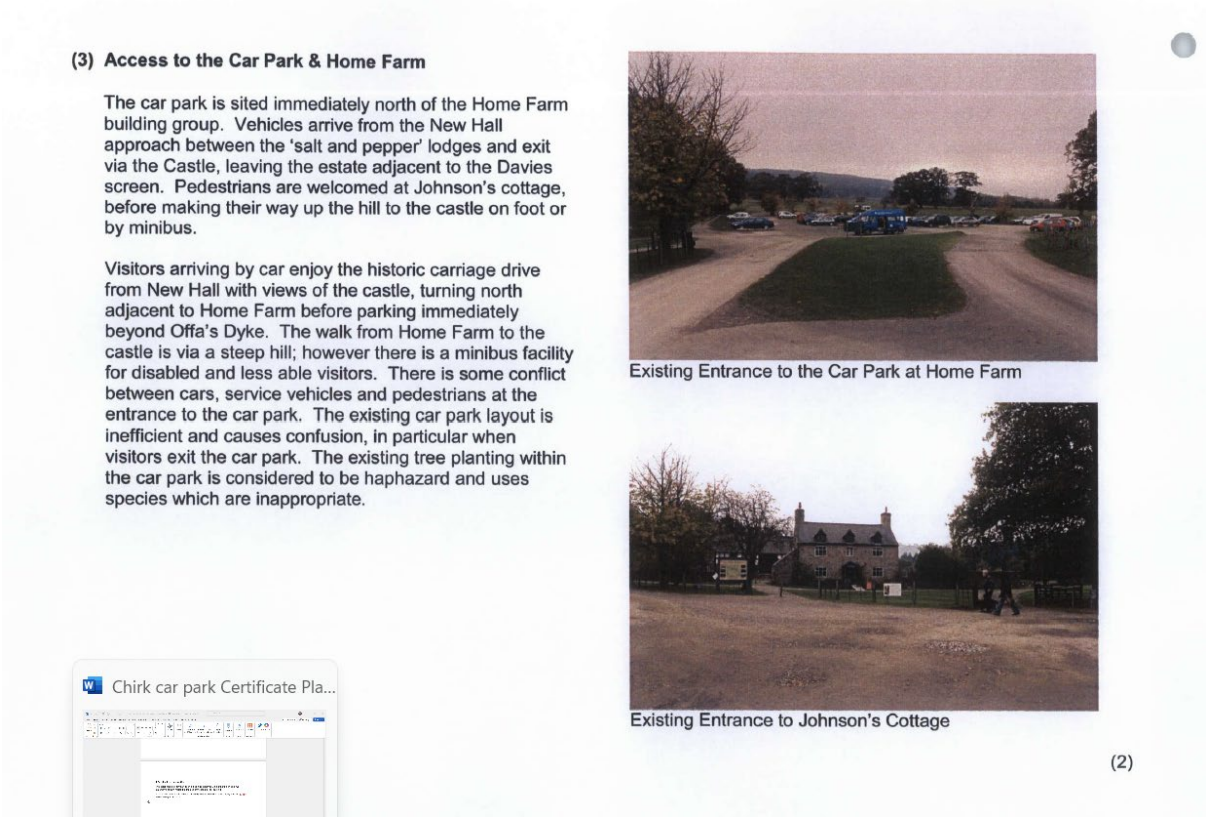
There is no payment collected from visitors for parking at present. Parking is free, payment is taken at the Welcome Building for visitors wanting to enter the pay for entry area which at present is primarily the castle and gardens.

During the time that I worked at Chirk Castle from 2014 to 2022, managing visitors using the car park was part of my role. Back in 2016 I recall making a parking plan for Chirk Castle showing how many cars could fit in the overflow parking area as a best methodology for maximising parking space.

In summary both Statements of Truth confirm the use of the application area for continuous use as a car park for longer than 10 years.

This should be sufficient for Wrexham to grant the certificate for use as a car park relating to the submitted red line.

The site has been in use for a period longer than the required 10 years. The 2011 planning application sought a proposed design for the area, subsequently consented and approved, but not implemented. Page 2 of the submitted Design Statement for the submission is provided below including photograph 1 in which the area can be seen in the background of the photo.



(3) Access to the Car Park & Home Farm

The car park is sited immediately north of the Home Farm building group. Vehicles arrive from the New Hall approach between the 'salt and pepper' lodges and exit via the Castle, leaving the estate adjacent to the Davies screen. Pedestrians are welcomed at Johnson's cottage, before making their way up the hill to the castle on foot or by minibus.

Visitors arriving by car enjoy the historic carriage drive from New Hall with views of the castle, turning north adjacent to Home Farm before parking immediately beyond Offa's Dyke. The walk from Home Farm to the castle is via a steep hill; however there is a minibus facility for disabled and less able visitors. There is some conflict between cars, service vehicles and pedestrians at the entrance to the car park. The existing car park layout is inefficient and causes confusion, in particular when visitors exit the car park. The existing tree planting within the car park is considered to be haphazard and uses species which are inappropriate.

Existing Entrance to the Car Park at Home Farm

Existing Entrance to Johnson's Cottage

(2)

Page 2 of the 2011 Design Statement illustrating the presence of the car park at that time.

The area is currently used as a fundamental part of its visitor arrival and for many events forms an essential part of the visitor infrastructure at the property, illustrated below.





Subject certificate car park area.

5 Conclusions

This Planning Statement supports the submission of the Certificate of Lawful Use for the existing car park at Chirk Castle. The PS provides background and context to the submission, summarises the accompanying two Statements of Trust and evidence of use. It is concluded that sufficient evidence for a continuous ten-year period is provided and the Certificate for use as a car park can be issed.

Please contact me should you require further information or details.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Pearson

Planning Adviser, National Trust.