



CHASE ROAD ACCESS AND PARKING OPTIONS APPRAISAL

FOR CANNOCK CHASE SAC PARTNERSHIP

SEPTEMBER 2026







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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Study

Chase Road passes through one of the most environmentally sensitive parts of Cannock Chase and provides access to internationally important habitats within the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The route is also important for visitors and local communities, providing access to car parks, viewpoints and recreational routes, as well as being used for some local journeys.

Existing vehicle movements, dispersed parking and informal stopping along Chase Road contribute to recreational pressure on sensitive habitats and allow visitor activity to spread across a wide area. The purpose of this Options Appraisal has therefore been to identify how vehicle access and parking could be better managed to protect the SAC and wider Cannock Chase National Landscape, while recognising the importance of maintaining appropriate and inclusive access for visitors and local communities.

Options Considered

A broad range of potential interventions was initially considered before four packages were shortlisted for detailed assessment:

Option 1 – Full Closure: Permanent removal of public motor vehicle access along Chase Road from the junction with Camp Road in the south to Brocton Nurseries in the north.

Option 2 – Partial Closure: Permanent removal of through traffic from the environmentally sensitive central section, while retaining vehicular access to parking at Chase Road Corner, and Chase Vista car parks.

Option 3 – Standard Seasonal Closure: Restriction of public motor vehicle access during the principal ecologically sensitive period between March and September.

Option 3A – Extended Seasonal Closure: A longer seasonal restriction between February and October.

Each option was assessed against environmental, accessibility, landscape and heritage, community, financial, deliverability, public acceptability and strategic criteria.

What the Appraisal Found

The technical appraisal identified Full Closure as the highest scoring option (350), reflecting the scale and permanence of the ecological benefits that could be achieved. Partial Closure scored second highest (325), only modestly below Full Closure, while providing a different balance between environmental protection, accessibility, community impact, cost and deliverability.

The Partial Closure would permanently remove through traffic and dispersed parking from approximately 1.35km of the central Chase Road corridor, including the most environmentally sensitive section, while retaining vehicular access to Chase Road Corner from the south and Chase Vista from the north.

What the Public Consultation Told Us

Public consultation was an important part of the appraisal. A total of 1,777 completed questionnaires were received, supported by stakeholder engagement, online information and a programme of face-to-face consultation events.

The consultation demonstrated strong recognition of the importance of protecting the habitats and wildlife of Cannock Chase. It also showed that Chase Road has an important role in providing access to the landscape, particularly for older and disabled visitors, people with limited mobility and those who may be unable to travel significant distances from their vehicle.

Of the four defined options, Partial Closure was clearly the most strongly supported, receiving approximately 37% of first-choice responses compared with 8.8% for Full Closure and substantially lower support for either seasonal option. Support for Partial Closure was also relatively consistent between people living immediately around Chase Road, elsewhere within Cannock Chase and those travelling from further afield.

A significant proportion of respondents selected "None of the above" demonstrating that concerns remain about restricting vehicle access. However, the detailed feedback also identified opportunities to refine Partial Closure to better address accessibility, parking quality, traffic and parking displacement, signage, and visitor management.

Recommended Approach – Option 2+

Taking the technical appraisal and public consultation together, it is recommended that Option 2 – Partial Closure is progressed as an enhanced "Option 2+".

Option 2+ retains the principal environmental benefit of removing public motor vehicle through traffic and dispersed parking from the most sensitive central section of Chase Road, while maintaining vehicular access to two key parking locations. Importantly, it also responds directly to issues raised through consultation by improving the quality and accessibility of retained parking and introducing additional measures to support inclusive access and manage potential displacement.

Recommended Option 2+ Measure	What it would achieve
Partial closure of central Chase Road	Removes through traffic and dispersed vehicle access from the most environmentally sensitive section while retaining access from either end.
Improve Chase Road Corner & Chase Vista car parks	Provides better surfaced, clearly defined and more accessible parking at the two retained access points.
Remove and restore central parking areas, pull-ins and lay-bys	Reduces dispersed access and enables habitat restoration, including removal of hardstanding where appropriate, soil decompaction and revegetation.

Accessibility and inclusive access improvements	Provides opportunities for accessible parking and routes, seating, resting points and potential accessible viewing areas.
Signage and wayfinding	Directs drivers clearly to retained car parks and appropriate wider destinations and reduces unnecessary vehicle movements.
Parking and displacement mitigation	Helps manage potential displacement into Brocton and other locations, including consideration of parking controls and verge protection where necessary.
Visitor management and enforcement	Supports responsible visitor behaviour, protects restored areas and helps prevent inappropriate parking and other damaging activity.

The intention is therefore not simply to close part of Chase Road, but to create a better managed corridor that provides stronger protection for sensitive habitats while improving the quality, accessibility and clarity of the visitor experience.

Option 2+ should also be considered as part of the wider package of measures used to manage recreational pressure across the Cannock Chase SAC and National Landscape. Managing Chase Road alone will not address all visitor pressures, and the intervention should complement wider parking, access, habitat restoration, visitor information and management measures.

Next Steps

The Options Appraisal will be presented to the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership Board on 30 September 2026 for consideration. Subject to endorsement, the recommended Option 2+ approach will then be presented to Staffordshire County Council as landowner, with its agreement required before the scheme is progressed.

If agreed in principle, the next stage will develop Option 2+ in greater detail. This will include detailed design of the closure and retained car parks; an Accessibility and Inclusive Access Audit; targeted ecological, archaeological, drainage, traffic and parking surveys; assessment of potential parking displacement; development of signage and wayfinding; confirmation of legal and statutory requirements; and further refinement of costs and funding requirements.

Focused engagement with directly affected stakeholders and statutory consultees will accompany this work before the necessary approvals are secured and a final scheme is progressed towards delivery. Monitoring will subsequently be used to understand the effects of the intervention and enable measures to be refined where necessary.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Ethos Consultants (Ethos) has been commissioned by the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Partnership to undertake an options appraisal examining vehicle access and parking arrangements along Chase Road. Ethos is an independent transport and highways consultancy with extensive experience supporting local authorities and public bodies on access management, parking strategy, active travel and environmentally sensitive transport projects. The commission has been undertaken on behalf of the SAC Partnership to provide an objective, evidence-led assessment of potential approaches to managing access in a way that balances environmental protection, public access and local considerations.

The purpose of this report is to set out the findings of that appraisal. It establishes the context for intervention, summarises the evidence base, identifies and evaluates a range of potential options, and explains how those options have been assessed and refined. The report does not pre-determine outcomes, rather, it is intended to support informed decision making by the SAC Partnership and relevant stakeholders, and to provide a transparent basis for subsequent engagement and consultation.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Cannock Chase is a nationally and internationally important landscape. The core of the area is designated as both a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), reflecting the presence of sensitive lowland heathland habitats and associated protected species of European importance. The wider area is also designated as a National Landscape, recognising its natural beauty, character and recreational value. For the purposes of this report, these overlapping designations are collectively referred to as the "Designated Sites", reflecting the fact that the environmental and access issues associated with Chase Road sit across all three.

Cannock Chase is also a valued recreational resource, attracting a high volume of visitors from surrounding settlements and the wider region. Visitor numbers have increased over time, driven in part by population growth in adjacent settlements and the continued popularity of the Chase as an accessible outdoor destination.



Chase Road is a rural route running through some of the most environmentally sensitive parts of Cannock Chase. While it provides vehicular access to a number of formal and informal parking locations, it also functions as a shared route used by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. Its linear nature, combined with frequent opportunities to stop and park along its length, has contributed to dispersed access patterns and the spread of visitor activity into areas that are particularly vulnerable to disturbance, including direct damage to designated habitats.



Although Chase Road is surfaced and may appear similar to a conventional road, it is not an adopted public highway designed for general traffic use. Instead, it forms part of the wider rights of way network and includes sections recorded as a bridleway and private access route. As such, it was not intended to accommodate regular or high volumes of motor vehicle traffic.

In practice, however, vehicles routinely use the route to access parking areas along the corridor, particularly during peak visitor periods, and it is also used by some local traffic associated with nearby settlements such as Brocton. This has resulted in the route functioning as a vehicular access corridor despite its underlying status and environmental sensitivity.

Figure 1-1 illustrates the Cannock Chase National Landscape location, which illustrates routes and car parks including those associated with Chase Road.

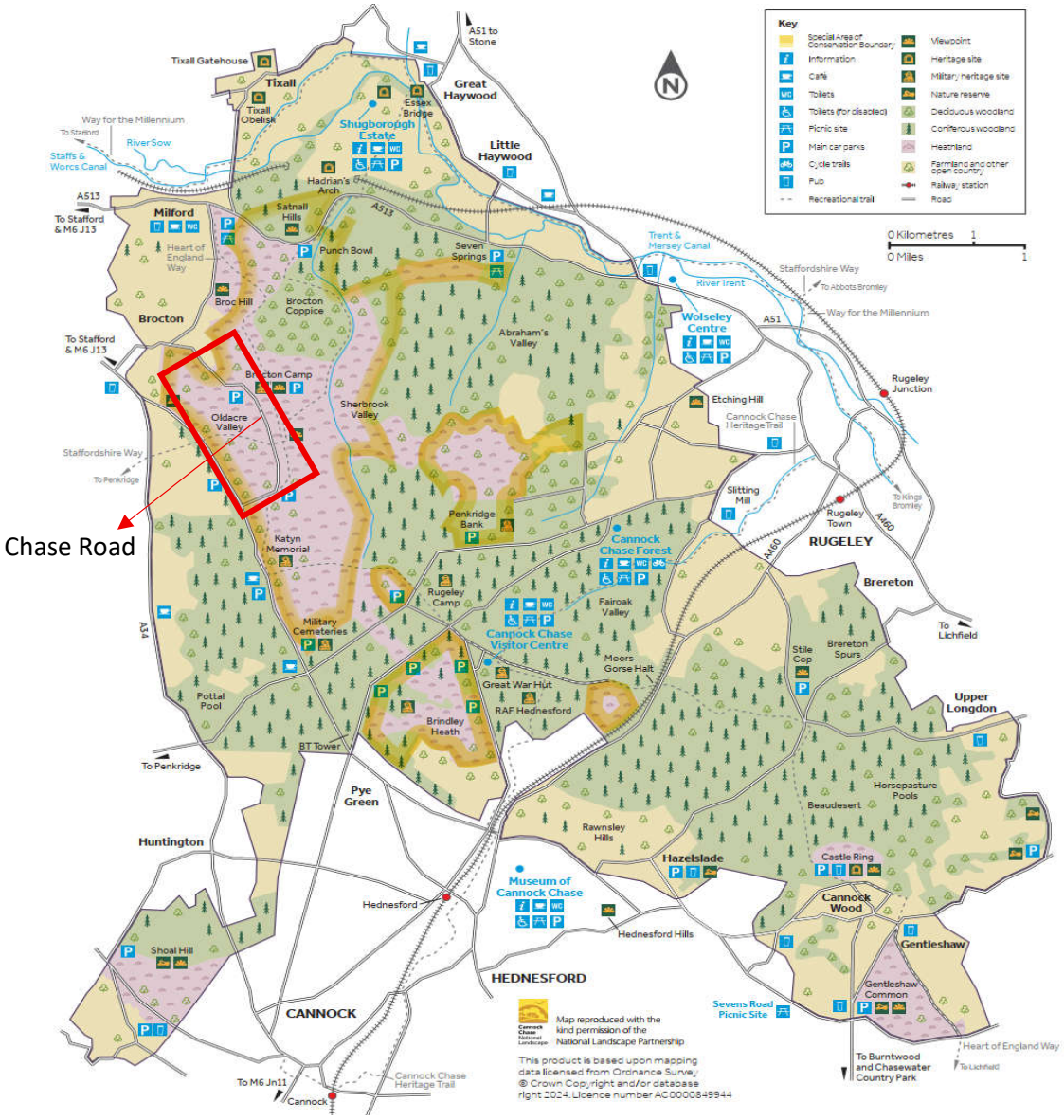


Figure 1-1 Cannock Chase National Landscape map

This study forms part of the wider programme of mitigation measures being progressed by the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership to address recreational pressure and ensure compliance with statutory duties under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The SAC Partnership has previously established a series of strategic actions through the SAC Detailed Implementation Plans, including a focus on car parking and access management as a means of influencing how, where and when visitors access the Chase. As part of this, a review of access and parking arrangements along Chase Road was identified as a specific recommendation.

The Chase Road Options Appraisal takes forward this recommendation, providing a structured and evidence-led assessment of potential approaches tailored to the particular characteristics and sensitivities of the corridor.

1.2 NEED FOR INTERVENTION

Visitor survey evidence demonstrates a strong reliance on car-based access to Cannock Chase, with a high proportion of visits originating from within the surrounding Zone of Influence (ZoI) and involving relatively short, frequent trips. The ZoI refers to the area within approximately 15km of the SAC from which the majority of visitors are drawn, as defined through visitor survey evidence and used to inform mitigation strategies under the Habitats Regulations.

Along Chase Road, the arrangement of multiple parking locations encourages dispersed access and repeated stopping behaviour, concentrating visitor activity in close proximity to and within sensitive habitats. In addition to influencing where visitors access the Chase, vehicular use of the corridor itself contributes to environmental pressure through noise, emissions, verge encroachment and physical disturbance associated with vehicle movements and informal parking.

The environmental sensitivity of the areas adjacent to Chase Road means that these access patterns and associated vehicle activity can have a disproportionate impact. The route passes through or alongside habitats that support the qualifying features of the Cannock Chase SAC and SSSI, including lowland heathland and areas used by Schedule 1 bird species. These habitats and species are vulnerable to disturbance, trampling and fragmentation, particularly where visitor activity extends beyond established formal paths. Evidence of path erosion, informal desire lines, verge damage and habitat degradation indicates that existing arrangements are not adequately managing the location, intensity or distribution of visitor use.



In addition, public bodies have clear policy and legal obligations to act. Under the Habitat Regulations, the SAC Partnership and its constituent authorities are required to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the SAC and to take proactive steps to prevent further deterioration. This requirement is reflected in existing strategic documents, including the SAC Detailed Implementation Plans and the Cannock Chase Visitor Management

Strategy, which identify access and parking management as key tools for reducing recreational pressure. In this context, maintaining the status quo along Chase Road would not address the identified impacts, establishing a clear need to consider alternative approaches through a structured options appraisal.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The purpose of this Options Appraisal is to provide a structured, transparent and evidence-led assessment of potential approaches to managing vehicle access and parking along Chase Road. Given the sensitivity of the surrounding environment and the established role of the corridor in shaping visitor access patterns, a systematic appraisal is required to ensure that any future interventions are suitable, justified and deliverable.

The appraisal considers a wide range of options, both individually and in combination, recognising that no single measure is likely to address the identified issues in isolation. Options are assessed against a consistent set of objectives and criteria to enable a clear understanding of what can realistically be delivered, the likely impacts of each approach, and how options perform relative to one another.

The assessment framework enables the comparative performance of options to be expressed through a structured scoring process, based on defined criteria including environmental benefit, access and inclusivity, landscape impact, resident considerations, deliverability and cost. This provides a transparent basis for understanding the strengths, limitations and trade-offs associated with each option or package of measures.

The Options Appraisal is intended to inform public consultation and support subsequent decision making. It does not constitute a final decision, detailed design or commitment to implementation. Matters such as detailed engineering, statutory approvals, funding arrangements and delivery programming would be subject to further work and separate approval processes following completion of the appraisal and consideration of consultation feedback.

1.4 STUDY AREA

The study area focuses on the Chase Road corridor within Cannock Chase and the immediately associated access and parking locations that influence how visitors enter and move through this part of the site. The extent of the study area has been defined to capture the sections of Chase Road where vehicle access, parking behaviour and visitor activity interact most directly with environmentally sensitive habitats, while remaining sufficiently focused to support a meaningful and proportionate appraisal.

Chase Road is a surfaced route running broadly north–south through a central part of Cannock Chase, passing through areas of heathland, woodland and open landscape that form part of the Special Area of Conservation. The corridor is characterised by its rural setting, limited formal infrastructure and shared use by pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and vehicles. Its alignment, surfacing and linear form mean that it provides

direct access to multiple points along its length, rather than concentrating arrivals at a small number of gateway locations. As a result, the corridor plays a significant role in shaping both the distribution and intensity of visitor activity within the surrounding area.

A number of formal and informal car parks, lay-bys and stopping locations are located along or immediately adjacent to Chase Road, providing parking opportunities at frequent intervals. These include both established car parks and areas where informal parking has developed over time. In addition to vehicular access points, the corridor connects with a wider network of public rights of way, informal paths and desire lines that extend into the surrounding landscape. Collectively, these access points influence where visitors arrive, the routes they use, and the areas of Cannock Chase that experience the greatest recreational pressure. The appraisal therefore considers Chase Road, its associated parking locations and access points as an interconnected system, rather than as isolated elements.



1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study has been defined to ensure that the Options Appraisal is focused on the issues most directly influencing visitor access, parking behaviour and environmental impacts along the Chase Road corridor, while remaining proportionate to the purpose of the commission.

The appraisal includes consideration of vehicle access arrangements along Chase Road and how these influence visitor movement and use of the surrounding area. This includes a range of potential measures relating to the management, restriction or control of vehicular access, as well as the configuration and management of both formal and informal parking locations associated with the corridor. The study also considers supporting measures that may influence visitor behaviour, such as signage, wayfinding, access management, and the promotion of alternative parking or access points, where these form part of an integrated option or package.

In addition, the appraisal considers the implications of different options for a range of users, including pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, people with limited mobility and local residents. Environmental, landscape, heritage, deliverability and cost considerations are included at a proportionate level to allow options to be compared on a consistent basis. The study also takes account of relevant legal, policy and land ownership constraints insofar as they affect the feasibility and appropriateness of different options.

The appraisal does not include the preparation of detailed engineering designs, construction drawings or specifications, nor does it constitute a final decision to implement any particular option. It does not seek to review or replace wider Cannock Chase-wide parking strategies, visitor management policies or transport strategies beyond their relevance to the Chase Road corridor. Matters such as detailed cost estimation, statutory approvals, Traffic Regulation Orders, planning consents, land agreements and long-term operational arrangements would be subject to further work and separate approval processes should a preferred option be taken forward following consultation and decision making.

1.6 PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING

The Options Appraisal has been commissioned by the Cannock Chase (SAC) Partnership, working collectively across its constituent authorities and organisations. The SAC Partnership has responsibility for coordinating mitigation measures required to address recreational pressure on Cannock Chase and to ensure compliance with statutory duties under the Habitat Regulations. The commission reflects an agreed priority within the SAC Partnership's wider programme of access and parking management interventions.

Ethos has been appointed by the SAC Partnership to undertake the Options Appraisal and prepare this report. Ethos' role has been to provide an independent, evidence-led assessment of potential options, drawing on available data, site observations and engagement with relevant officers and stakeholders. Ethos has not been involved in determining policy positions, but has supported the SAC Partnership by identifying, assessing and presenting options in a transparent and structured manner.

Strategic oversight of the project has been provided through the SAC Partnership governance arrangements, with input from officers representing relevant disciplines, including ecology, highways, rights of way, land management and visitor management. Engagement with elected Members has been undertaken to ensure awareness of the project and to support informed discussion ahead of public consultation.

Decisions relating to the selection of a preferred option, progression to consultation, and any subsequent implementation will rest with the SAC Partnership and the relevant decision-making bodies within the constituent authorities, informed by the findings of this appraisal and the outcomes of stakeholder and public engagement.

1.7 REPORT STRUCTURE

Chapter 2: Policy, Legal and Strategic Context – Sets out the statutory and policy framework within which access management along Chase Road must be considered, including the Special Area of Conservation and Site of Special Scientific Interest designations, Habitat Regulations duties, biodiversity duties, National Landscape policy and statutory requirements, common land considerations and relevant strategies.

Chapter 3: Baseline Conditions and Issues – Describes the existing physical, environmental and operational characteristics of the Chase Road corridor, including access arrangements, parking provision, visitor patterns, ecological sensitivities, heritage constraints and current pressures.

Chapter 4: Objectives, Constraints and Appraisal Framework – Defines the project vision, objectives and key constraints, and establishes the weighted appraisal framework used to assess options in a consistent and transparent manner.

Chapter 5: Option Development – Explains how potential interventions were generated and presents the long list of options considered prior to structured sifting and shortlisting.

Chapter 6: Option Sifting and Integration Process – Sets out the methodology used to narrow the long list, identifies options taken forward and those discounted, and explains the development of integrated shortlisted packages.

Chapter 7: Appraisal of Shortlisted Option Packages – Presents the structured qualitative and weighted appraisal of each shortlisted package against the agreed criteria, including comparative interpretation, relative performance and overall observations.

Chapter 8: Cost Estimates and Financial Considerations – Outlines indicative capital, professional, statutory and operational costs associated with each package, together with financial risks, sensitivities and comparative cost implications.

Chapter 9: Stakeholder Engagement (Pre-Consultation) – Summarises the early engagement undertaken with elected Members, the principal issues raised and how this feedback informed the development and framing of the shortlisted options.

Chapter 10: Public Consultation – Summarises the consultation approach, questionnaire and engagement findings, geographic differences, key qualitative themes and the implications of the feedback for the Options Appraisal.

Chapter 11: Recommendations and Next Steps – Brings together the technical appraisal and consultation evidence, identifies the recommended Option 2+ approach and sets out the further design, accessibility, parking, statutory, monitoring and delivery work required to progress the scheme.

2.0 POLICY, LEGAL AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 CANNOCK CHASE SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION

Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation is designated under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) due to the presence of internationally important European dry heaths and Northern Atlantic wet heaths and associated species. The SAC comprises a mosaic of dry and wet heath, acid grassland and woodland habitats, which support a range of flora and fauna that are sensitive to disturbance and habitat change. Of particular importance are the heathland habitats and the presence of Schedule I bird species (protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), including woodlark and Dartford warbler, which rely on large, undisturbed areas for breeding and foraging.

These species receive a high level of legal protection, with Schedule 1 birds protected against disturbance during the breeding season, particularly while at or near the nest. This protection extends to their eggs and dependent young, meaning that even relatively low levels of disturbance in key areas can have a significant impact on breeding success and habitat suitability.

In addition to its ecological importance, Cannock Chase is a major recreational resource, providing extensive opportunities for walking, dog walking, cycling and horse riding. Its accessibility from surrounding towns and settlements, together with population growth within the defined Zone of Influence, has led to sustained and increasing visitor pressure over time. Visitor survey evidence demonstrates a strong reliance on car-based access, with many visits being relatively short and frequent, placing repeated pressure on the same locations and routes.

Recreational activity, while a valued and integral function of Cannock Chase, can give rise to activities that are incompatible with the conservation objectives of the SAC if not appropriately managed. These pressures include disturbance to sensitive species, trampling and erosion of heathland vegetation, the creation of informal paths and desire lines, and fragmentation of habitats. The linear nature of some access routes and the availability of parking in close proximity to sensitive areas can exacerbate these effects by encouraging dispersed access and concentrated use in locations that are least resilient to disturbance. Managing how and where visitors access the SAC is therefore a critical component of ensuring that recreational use remains compatible with the long-term protection of its qualifying features.

2.2 ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS AND SENSITIVITIES

Cannock Chase is designated as a Special Area of Conservation, supported by its notification as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Together, these designations establish a strong statutory framework requiring the protection and appropriate management of the site's qualifying habitats and ecological features.

Under the Habitats Regulations, competent authorities must ensure that plans and projects, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, do not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC. This duty applies not only to new development proposals, but also to the ongoing management of activities and infrastructure where there is evidence of risk to the site. In parallel, the SSSI designation requires consultation with Natural England on operations likely to damage the notified features, reinforcing the need for careful management of land use and access.

In practice, this legal framework requires a proactive approach. Where evidence indicates that existing patterns of recreation or access are contributing to habitat degradation or disturbance, appropriate mitigation measures must be identified and implemented. At Cannock Chase, this is delivered through the SAC Partnership, which has identified access and parking management as key tools in influencing visitor behaviour and reducing pressure on sensitive areas. The Chase Road Options Appraisal forms part of this strategic response.

Alongside these statutory requirements, Cannock Chase supports a range of ecologically sensitive habitats and species associated with lowland heathland. This includes internationally important bird species such as nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler. While these species are not the primary reason for the SAC designation, they are an important component of the site's ecological interest and are protected through complementary designations and policy frameworks.



These species are particularly sensitive to disturbance, especially during the breeding season, which typically extends from early spring through to late summer. During this period, activities such as walking, dog exercise, cycling and vehicle movements can disrupt breeding behaviour, reduce reproductive success or lead to nest abandonment. Repeated disturbance, even at relatively low levels, can have cumulative effects where access is concentrated.

Ecological sensitivity is both seasonal and spatial. Areas in close proximity to access routes, car parks and informal stopping points are more likely to experience higher levels of disturbance. The Chase Road corridor is a key focus in this respect, as it provides direct access into sensitive heathland habitats and has historically facilitated dispersed parking and visitor pressure.

Understanding the relationship between designation, legal duty and ecological sensitivity is fundamental to the development of effective management measures. Interventions that influence where visitors arrive, how they move through the site, and when access occurs are critical to reducing disturbance and ensuring compliance with statutory obligations. The options considered within this report are therefore framed not only in terms of access management, but also in their ability to support the long-term protection and resilience of the SAC.

2.3 CANNOCK CHASE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE (AONB)

Cannock Chase is designated as a National Landscape (formerly an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), recognising its distinctive landscape character, natural beauty and cultural heritage. This designation carries statutory weight and is not simply contextual as it establishes a clear legal duty on relevant authorities when exercising their functions within the area. Under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended by Section 245 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, public bodies are required to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

This duty applies to all decisions affecting the area, including those relating to access management, infrastructure and visitor use. As such, any proposals for Chase Road must not only avoid harm to landscape character and visual amenity, but should actively contribute, where possible, to the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape's special qualities.

The purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty extends beyond visual considerations and includes landscape character, tranquillity, wildlife, cultural heritage and the experience of those who use and enjoy the landscape. Public bodies are therefore required to consider how decisions relating to access, infrastructure and visitor management may affect these qualities, particularly where changes in use or intensity of activity risk undermining the special characteristics of the area.

Access management is a key component of meeting these duties in practice. While public access and recreation are important functions of the National Landscape, unmanaged or concentrated access can erode landscape quality through increased traffic presence, noise, visual intrusion, informal parking and the proliferation of paths and desire lines. In sensitive locations, such as the Chase Road corridor, the way in which visitors arrive and move through the landscape can have a direct influence on tranquillity and landscape character.

In this context, the Options Appraisal for Chase Road is relevant not only to the statutory duties associated with the Special Area of Conservation, but also to the purposes of the Cannock Chase National Landscape. By considering how vehicle access and parking arrangements affect both environmental sensitivity and landscape qualities, the appraisal supports a balanced approach that recognises the importance of access while

ensuring that it is managed in a way that conserves and enhances the special qualities of the designated landscape.



2.4 COMMONS ACT 2006 AND COMMON LAND CONSIDERATIONS

Parts of Cannock Chase are registered as common land, and as such are subject to the provisions of the Commons Act 2006. The Act introduces a specific consent regime for certain activities classified as “restricted works” on common land. Restricted works can include the construction of permanent or semi-permanent structures, physical barriers, fencing, surfacing or other interventions that prevent or impede public access or interfere with the traditional use of the common.

In the context of Chase Road, the presence of common land places an important constraint on the type and extent of physical interventions that may be appropriate or achievable. Measures that involve permanent infrastructure, changes to surface treatments, or the installation of fixed access controls may require consent under the Commons Act, and in some cases may be difficult to justify where they materially restrict access or alter the character of the common.

These considerations do not preclude intervention, but they do require that options are developed with a clear understanding of the legal framework and the proportionality of any proposed works.

As a result, access management approaches that minimise permanent physical change, rely on reversible or seasonal measures, or use management and behavioural interventions may offer advantages in terms of deliverability on common land. The implications of the Commons Act are therefore a key factor in shaping the range of options considered through this appraisal and in assessing their feasibility and risk.

The Options Appraisal takes these constraints into account to ensure that any preferred approach is capable of being implemented within the applicable legal framework, without unnecessary reliance on complex or uncertain consent processes.

2.5 RIGHTS OF WAY AND HIGHWAY STATUS

Chase Road does not function as an adopted public highway in the conventional sense. Rather, it forms part of the rights of way network through Cannock Chase and includes sections recorded as a bridleway and private access route. As such, the legal rights associated with Chase Road differ from those that apply to a publicly adopted road maintained for general vehicular traffic.

Bridleway status confers public rights for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, but does not inherently provide a general right of passage for mechanically propelled vehicles.



The legal status of Chase Road is an important consideration when assessing options for access management, as it influences both the range of management tools available and the proportionality of different interventions. The route was not designed or designated to accommodate regular or high volumes of vehicular traffic, particularly within a sensitive environmental setting, and its status differs materially from that of surrounding adopted roads.

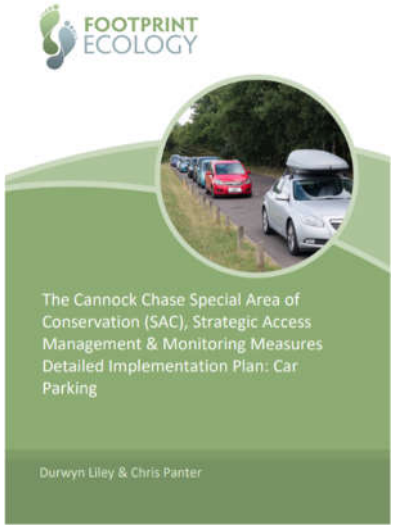
Despite this, Chase Road is used in practice by vehicles to access a series of formal and informal parking locations along its length, particularly during peak visitor periods. Vehicle movements associated with recreational visits, land management activities and local access have become an established feature of how the corridor functions on a day-to-day basis. This has resulted in Chase Road operating as a vehicular access route, even though this use does not arise from its designation as a public highway.

This divergence between legal status and actual use is central to the access management challenges addressed by this appraisal. It creates a situation in which vehicular access is neither clearly defined nor actively managed in a way that reflects the sensitivity of the surrounding environment. The Options Appraisal therefore considers a range of potential approaches to managing vehicle access and parking along Chase Road, informed by its legal status, current patterns of use and the wider statutory and policy context, rather than assuming continuation of existing arrangements.

2.6 RELEVANT PLANS, STRATEGIES AND STUDIES

The Chase Road Options Appraisal has been developed within the context of a number of existing plans, strategies and technical studies that collectively shape the approach to managing access, recreation and environmental impacts across Cannock Chase. These documents provide the strategic framework within which this appraisal sits and inform both the objectives of the study and the range of options considered.

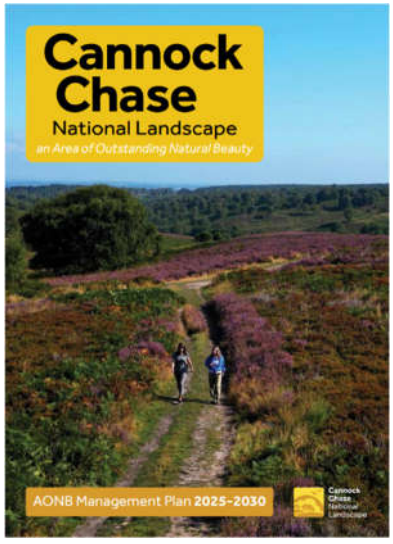
Cannock Chase SAC Detailed Implementation Plan Car Park Strategy



This document identifies parking and access management as a key mechanism for addressing recreational pressure on sensitive habitats. The plan recognises that the location, scale and configuration of parking can strongly influence visitor behaviour, including where visitors enter the SAC and the areas they subsequently use.

The Chase Road corridor is identified as a location where existing parking patterns contribute to dispersed access and associated environmental impacts, and where targeted intervention could deliver meaningful mitigation benefits. This Options Appraisal directly supports the implementation of those actions by assessing how different approaches to access and parking management along Chase Road could contribute to the objectives of the Implementation Plan.

Cannock Chase National Landscape (AONB) Management Plan 2025-2030



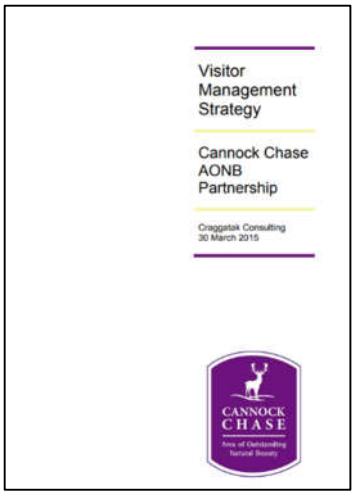
The Plan provides the strategic context for conserving and enhancing the landscape character, tranquillity and special qualities of the area. While not prescribing specific access interventions, the Plan highlights the need to manage visitor pressure and associated traffic impacts in a way that protects landscape character and the quality of the visitor experience. Importantly, the Plan also recognises that the demand for recreation should be met, so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other land uses. This establishes a clear requirement to balance access with environmental protection, ensuring that recreational use is managed in a way that does not undermine the defining qualities of the National Landscape.

The appraisal has regard to these principles by considering how vehicle access and parking arrangements along Chase Road affect landscape qualities and how alternative approaches may better align with the purposes of the National Landscape designation.

In addition to the statutory designations outlined above, a number of supporting documents provide further direction on how Cannock Chase SAC should be protected and managed. The SAC Conservation Objectives set out the requirement to maintain or restore the qualifying habitats and species to favourable condition, forming the primary benchmark against which potential impacts must be assessed. These are supported by the Cannock Chase SAC Site Improvement Plan, which identifies key pressures affecting the site, including recreational disturbance, and establishes priority actions for mitigation. Supplementary guidance, including that produced by the SAC Partnership, provides further detail on how these pressures should be addressed in practice, including through visitor management and access control measures. Together, these documents provide an important framework for informing proportionate and effective interventions along Chase Road.

Visitor Management Strategy Cannock Chase AONB Partnership

The Visitor Management Strategy for Cannock Chase sets out a coordinated approach to managing recreational use across the site, recognising that influencing visitor behaviour is central to reducing environmental impacts. The strategy emphasises the role of access management, parking provision, signage and information in shaping where visitors go and how long they stay. The Chase Road Options Appraisal builds on this strategy by focusing on a specific corridor where access patterns are particularly influential, and by testing how different combinations of measures could support wider visitor management objectives.



Additional Evidence

In addition to these strategic documents, the appraisal has drawn on a range of relevant studies and evidence sources, including historic and recent visitor surveys, parking and access data, environmental and heritage information, and previous assessments undertaken by the SAC Partnership and its constituent authorities. These studies provide an evidence base for understanding existing conditions and pressures, but this report does not seek to replicate or replace them. Instead, it draws together their key implications to inform a focused and proportionate assessment of options for Chase Road.

2.7 LEGAL MECHANISMS FOR VEHICULAR RESTRICTION

Chase Road comprises sections recorded as public bridleway (Brocton 13 and Brocton 32) together with private access elements and does not constitute an adopted highway maintained for general vehicular traffic. Public rights associated with bridleway status provide for pedestrian, equestrian and cycle access, but do not confer a general right for motor vehicles. The management of vehicular use along the corridor must therefore be

considered within the framework of highway law, rights of way legislation, land ownership, and environmental protection duties.

A range of legal mechanisms are available to regulate or restrict vehicular access, subject to detailed confirmation by the Highway Authority and legal advisers including:

- Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, which may prohibit or restrict motor vehicles either permanently or during defined periods where necessary for environmental protection, safety, or preserving the character of an area. Seasonal or time limited restrictions can be secured through appropriately drafted Orders.
- Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETROs), which allow restrictions to be introduced on a trial basis, typically for up to 18 months, enabling monitoring and review prior to confirmation of a permanent arrangement.
- Gating Orders under the Highways Act 1980, where appropriate, to control vehicular access on rights of way in circumstances where it is expedient for environmental protection or public safety.
- Landowner Management Powers, where the land is under public ownership and vehicular access is permissive rather than legally established, allowing for withdrawal or amendment of permission for motor vehicle use while retaining lawful rights for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

Any chosen mechanism must ensure that lawful route users retain their statutory rights of access. All packages assessed within this report maintain uninterrupted access for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians consistent with bridleway status. Provision for emergency services, land management access, and essential maintenance vehicles could be safeguarded through exemption clauses within any Order or management arrangement. However, for the purpose of the study, it has been assumed that any restriction to motor vehicles will include all users, due to the difficulties it would be to provide exemptions within a remote and rural location.

In addition to highway legislation, consideration must be given to the Commons Act 2006 where works fall within registered common land. Physical infrastructure such as permanent barriers may constitute “restricted works” and require consent unless designed to avoid classification as such. The proportionality and reversibility of infrastructure is therefore an important design consideration.

The suitability of each mechanism will depend on the final option selected, land ownership boundaries, and the scale of intervention proposed. From a legal perspective, permanent closure, partial closure and seasonal restriction models are all capable of being implemented through established statutory processes, subject to consultation, due procedure and evidential justification.

This Options Appraisal has been developed on the basis that legally compliant routes to vehicular restriction are available, and that any preferred option will be progressed in close coordination with the Highway Authority, Rights of Way team and legal advisers to ensure robustness and enforceability.

3.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS AND ISSUES

This chapter sets out the baseline conditions that inform the Options Appraisal for Chase Road. It draws on available data, site observations and existing studies to describe how the corridor currently functions, how it is used by different users, and the issues that arise from existing access and parking arrangements. Establishing a clear baseline is essential to understanding the scale and nature of the challenges along Chase Road and to providing a consistent reference point against which potential options can be assessed.

The chapter focuses on the physical characteristics of the corridor, existing access and parking provision, visitor use and travel patterns, environmental and heritage sensitivities, and the impacts and issues associated with current conditions.

3.1 PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHASE ROAD

Chase Road is a surfaced route running broadly north–south through a central area of Cannock Chase. The alignment follows the natural topography of the landscape, with sections that are gently curving and limited in forward visibility. The width of the carriageway varies along its length, reflecting its historic development and rural context, and is generally narrower than that of a typical adopted local road. The surfacing is predominantly bituminous, giving the appearance of a conventional road despite the route's underlying status within the rights of way network.



The physical characteristics of Chase Road contribute to its shared use environment. Pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and vehicles all use the corridor, often within a constrained width and without clear physical separation. In places, the limited carriageway width and absence of formal verges or footways results in users sharing space in close proximity, increasing the potential for conflict, particularly during periods of higher visitor activity.

The speed environment along Chase Road is influenced by its alignment, rural setting and physical features rather than by extensive formal traffic management measures. Vehicle speeds are moderated in some locations by traffic calming features, including speed humps, which have been installed to discourage excessive speeds and improve safety in a shared use context. However, the overall character of the route, combined with intermittent vehicle use and the absence of continuous frontage development, can lead to variable driver behaviour and inconsistent speeds along different sections of the corridor.



These physical characteristics are an important consideration in the Options Appraisal. The constrained width, shared use nature and rural alignment of Chase Road limit the suitability of some forms of traffic management and influence the practicality, safety and appropriateness of different access control measures. Understanding these baseline conditions provides essential context for assessing how potential options may affect both user experience and environmental outcomes.

3.2 EXISTING ACCESS AND PARKING PROVISION

3.2.1 FORMAL PARKING LOCATIONS

There are currently 22 parking locations along or immediately adjacent to the Chase Road corridor, providing access points into the Sherbrook and Oldacre Brook valleys. This provides approximately 130 spaces, include well used locations such as Coppice Hill (27 spaces) Chase Vista (21 spaces), Glacial Boulder (32 spaces) and Chase Road Corner (35 spaces). While these sites offer defined parking areas, their individual capacities are relatively limited and vary in layout and condition.



Parking count data indicates that the more established car parks regularly experience high levels of demand, particularly during weekends, school holidays and favourable weather conditions. On several survey days, occupancy at individual sites was observed to be at or near capacity, with vehicles spilling over into nearby informal locations once spaces in the car parks were filled. This suggests that while formal car parks play an important role in providing structured access, they are insufficient on their own to accommodate peak visitor demand along the corridor.

In terms of condition, the formal car parks generally benefit from clearer access arrangements and more robust surfacing than informal alternatives, but maintenance issues are evident in places, including poor surfaces, ponding, unclear bay definition and limited provision for accessible parking. These factors influence how efficiently spaces are used and how visitors move from parking areas into the surrounding landscape.

Figure 3-2 shows the location of the 22 parking locations along or immediately adjacent Chase Road, including the four more established car parks designed for vehicle use.

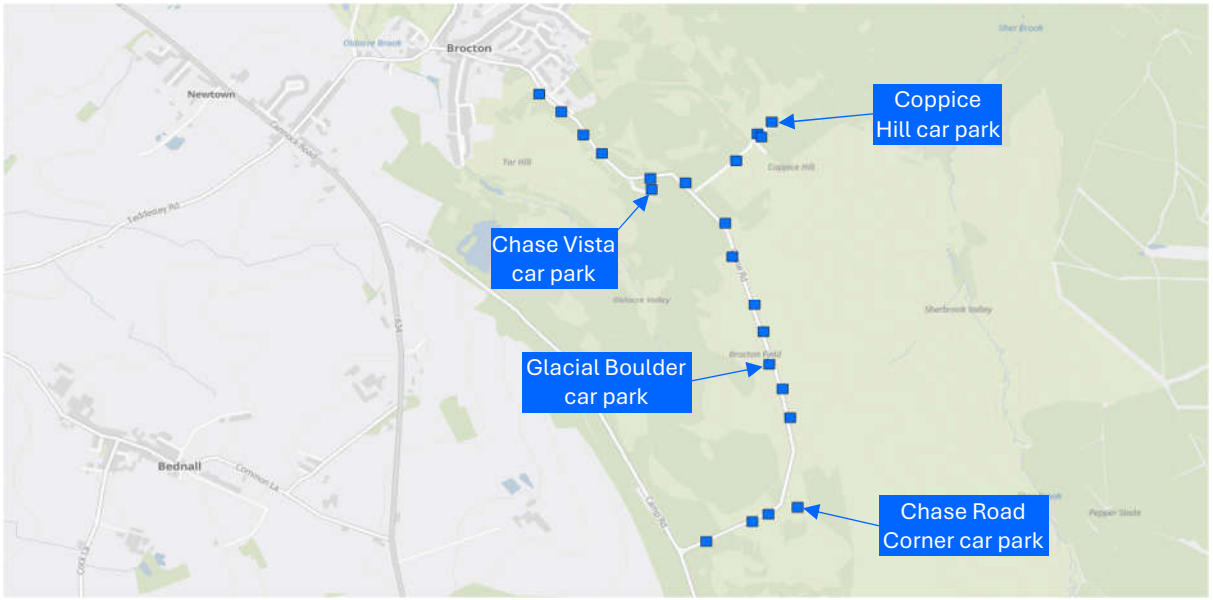


Figure 3-2 – Parking locations along Chase Road including 4 established car parks

3.2.2 INFORMAL LAYBYS AND ROADSIDE PARKING

In addition to formal car parks, a large number of informal laybys and roadside parking locations have developed along Chase Road over time. These include pull-ins located before and after traffic calming features, adjacent to junctions, and close to access points such as footpaths. Parking count data shows that these informal locations collectively accommodate a significant proportion of vehicles using the corridor, often exceeding the number parked in formal car parks during peak periods.

The dispersed nature of these laybys results in vehicles being parked at frequent intervals along Chase Road, encouraging multiple access points into the surrounding habitat. This pattern of use contributes to the spread of visitor activity across sensitive areas and increases the likelihood of informal path creation, verge damage and habitat fragmentation, and disturbance to sensitive species. In some locations, informal parking also takes place in areas not designed to accommodate vehicles, including narrow verges and areas with limited visibility.

The condition of informal laybys is variable and, in many cases, poor. Surfaces are often unsealed or degraded, with evidence of rutting, erosion and vegetation loss. The absence of clear physical boundaries or signage means that the extent of parking can fluctuate depending on demand, leading to incremental expansion over time and increasing pressure on adjacent habitats.



3.2.3 CAPACITY, DEMAND AND OVERALL PARKING PATTERN

Taken together, the limited capacity of formal car parks and the extensive availability of informal roadside parking have resulted in a parking system that is highly dispersed and largely unmanaged. Evidence indicates that car-based access dominates visits to Cannock Chase, and parking surveys along Chase Road show consistently high levels of vehicle presence during surveyed periods. Once formal car parks reach capacity, additional demand is routinely absorbed by informal laybys and roadside locations, reinforcing dispersed access patterns into sensitive areas.

This pattern of provision and use has several implications. It reduces the ability to control where visitors access the Chase, concentrates pressure in areas on and close to sensitive habitats, and makes it difficult to manage environmental impacts through targeted mitigation. It also creates inconsistencies in visitor experience and raises safety and maintenance concerns in locations where vehicles are parked close to the carriageway or on narrow verges.

Understanding the existing mix of formal and informal parking provision, and how demand is distributed across the corridor, is central to the Options Appraisal. It provides the baseline against which potential changes to access and parking arrangements can be assessed, including options that seek to consolidate parking, reduce informal provision, or influence visitor behaviour through more managed access points.

3.3 WAYFINDING, SIGNAGE AND ACCESS CONTROLS

Wayfinding and signage along the Chase Road corridor are generally limited and variable in nature. Existing signage primarily relates to traffic management and safety, including speed limit signs and warning signs associated with traffic calming features. There is relatively little signage specifically aimed at managing visitor behaviour, directing visitors to preferred parking locations, or explaining the environmental sensitivity of adjacent areas. As a result, visitors arriving by car are largely left to make individual decisions about where to park and how to access the surrounding landscape, often based on convenience rather than suitability.



Information relating to car parking is inconsistent across the corridor. Formal car parks are typically identified by basic signage at the point of entry, but there is limited advance signage to indicate capacity, alternative parking locations, or to discourage stopping in informal laybys once formal provision is full. There is also limited interpretive or advisory signage highlighting sensitive habitats, seasonal considerations or preferred routes, which reduces the ability of signage alone to influence patterns of use or concentrate access at more resilient locations.

Physical barriers and access controls along Chase Road are minimal. There are no continuous measures in place to prevent or restrict vehicle access along the corridor, and few physical features designed specifically to deter informal roadside parking. In some locations, traffic calming features such as speed humps, narrowings or changes in alignment have an indirect effect on driver behaviour, but these are not designed as access control measures and do not prevent vehicles from stopping or parking nearby.

In the absence of consistent physical controls, informal parking has developed in locations where verges, sightlines or local geometry allow vehicles to pull off the carriageway. The lack of clear physical demarcation between the carriageway, verges and adjacent habitat means that the extent of parking can expand incrementally during periods of high demand. This contributes to variable and dispersed access arrangements that are difficult to manage through signage or enforcement alone.

The existing approach to wayfinding, signage and access control therefore provides limited ability to actively manage where visitors park or how they access the surrounding landscape. These baseline conditions are an important consideration in the Options Appraisal, particularly when assessing the potential effectiveness of options that rely on behavioural change, physical controls, or a combination of both.

3.4 VISITOR USE AND TRAVEL PATTERNS

Visitor use and travel patterns at Cannock Chase are well evidenced through a series of visitor surveys undertaken between 2010 and 2024. Taken together, these surveys provide a consistent picture of how visitors access the site, how frequently they visit, and the nature of their trips, with limited variation in headline trends over time.

3.4.1 MODE OF TRAVEL

Across all survey years, car-based access has consistently been the dominant mode of travel to Cannock Chase. The most recent visitor survey undertaken in 2024 indicates that approximately 85–90% of visitors arrive by car, either as drivers or passengers. This proportion is consistent with earlier surveys undertaken in 2010/11 and 2018, which also recorded car use in excess of 80%. Use of other modes, including walking, cycling, public transport and horse riding, accounts for a relatively small proportion of visits, typically less than 10% combined.

This reliance on car access is particularly relevant to the Chase Road corridor, where multiple parking locations provide direct vehicular access into the heart of the SAC. The surveys indicate that visitors place a high value on convenience and proximity to their chosen walking or recreation route, which reinforces demand for parking close to access points rather than at more distant gateway locations.

3.4.2 VISIT FREQUENCY

Visitor surveys also demonstrate that Cannock Chase is primarily used by repeat visitors rather than one-off trips. The 2024 survey indicates that a significant proportion of

visitors, typically over 60%, visit the Chase at least once a month, with a substantial subset visiting weekly or more frequently. Earlier surveys show a similar pattern, with regular local use being a defining characteristic of visitor behaviour.

This high frequency of repeat visits is closely linked to the proximity of Cannock Chase to surrounding towns and villages within the Zone of Influence. For many visitors, trips to the Chase form part of regular leisure routines, such as dog walking or short recreational outings, rather than infrequent day trips. As a result, relatively small changes in access or parking arrangements can influence behaviour across a large number of visits over time.

3.4.3 VISIT DURATION

Survey evidence indicates that most visits to Cannock Chase are relatively short in duration. The 2024 survey reports that most visits typically last between one and two hours, with a smaller proportion of visitors staying for longer periods. This pattern has remained broadly consistent across survey years and reflects the predominance of local, repeat visits rather than longer destination trips.

Short visit durations, combined with high visit frequency and car-based access, contribute to concentrated and repeated pressure on the same locations, routes and habitats, particularly where parking is available close to sensitive areas. Along corridors such as Chase Road, this pattern reinforces the importance of access and parking management as a means of influencing where visitor activity is focused.

3.4.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The consistency of visitor travel patterns over time indicates that the pressures observed along Chase Road are not temporary or anomalous but reflect established behaviour. High reliance on car access, frequent repeat visits and relatively short dwell times combine to create sustained pressure at popular access points. These characteristics are a key consideration in the Options Appraisal, as they highlight the need for measures that influence access patterns in a way that is effective across large numbers of visits, while remaining proportionate and deliverable.

3.5 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

The Chase Road corridor passes through and alongside a range of habitats that form part of the Cannock Chase SAC and its wider ecological network. The dominant habitat types in the vicinity of the route include lowland heathland, acid grassland, gorse scrub and woodland, with transitional areas and edge habitats occurring where the road, parking areas and paths interface with the surrounding landscape. These habitats contribute to the ecological integrity of the SAC and support species that are sensitive to disturbance and habitat change.

Lowland heathland is the most environmentally sensitive habitat type adjacent to Chase Road. This habitat is characterised by open, sparsely vegetated areas interspersed with heather and gorse, and provides important breeding and foraging areas for protected

species. Heathland habitats are particularly vulnerable to trampling, vegetation loss and erosion, and once degraded can be slow to recover. Acid grassland and heath grassland mosaics, which also occur close to the corridor, are similarly sensitive to repeated footfall and informal access.



Woodland habitats, including areas of coniferous and mixed woodland, are generally more resilient to recreational pressure than open heathland, but remain sensitive where visitor activity becomes concentrated along edges, informal paths or stopping points. The transition zones between woodland and open heath are of particular ecological value and are often favoured by visitors seeking access points, increasing the risk of edge erosion and habitat fragmentation.

Environmental impacts are not evenly distributed along the Chase Road corridor. Areas immediately adjacent to parking locations, informal laybys and access points experience the highest levels of pressure, as visitors typically disperse into the surrounding landscape from these points. In contrast, areas set back from the road or accessed via established routes are generally less affected. The proximity of parking to sensitive habitats therefore plays a significant role in determining the location and intensity of environmental impacts.

Understanding the distribution of habitat types and their relative sensitivity is central to the Options Appraisal. It provides the baseline against which the potential environmental benefits of different access and parking management options can be assessed, particularly where options seek to reduce pressure on the most vulnerable habitats or redirect access towards more resilient areas.

3.6 HERITAGE AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS

Cannock Chase has a rich historic environment, with evidence of human activity spanning multiple periods. The Chase Road corridor lies within an area known to contain both designated and non-designated heritage assets, reflecting the long history of land use associated with the Chase, including settlement, forestry, military activity and historic routeways.

Known heritage assets in the wider area include scheduled monuments, historic landscape features and recorded archaeological sites, some of which lie in close proximity to Chase Road or associated access points. While not all assets are immediately visible on the ground, their presence places an important constraint on the nature and extent of potential physical interventions, particularly where ground disturbance may be required. In addition to designated assets, the area includes a range of undesignated features of local or regional significance, which contribute to the historic character of the landscape.



Large parts of Cannock Chase, including areas adjacent to Chase Road, are identified as being of archaeological sensitivity. This reflects the potential for below ground remains to be present even where no surface evidence exists. Activities such as excavation, resurfacing, installation of barriers or changes to drainage have the potential to affect buried archaeology and would require appropriate consideration and, where necessary, assessment or mitigation.

The presence of heritage and archaeological constraints does not preclude access management or parking interventions, but it does influence how such measures can be designed and delivered. Options that involve minimal ground disturbance, reversible features or changes to management rather than permanent infrastructure are generally more compatible with areas of archaeological sensitivity. These constraints therefore need to inform the Options Appraisal, and the assessment of deliverability, risk and the likely scope of further investigations required should a preferred option be taken forward.

3.7 CURRENT IMPACTS AND PRESSURES

The existing access and parking arrangements along the Chase Road corridor give rise to a range of environmental and management pressures, particularly in areas where visitor activity is concentrated close to sensitive habitats. These pressures are the result of cumulative and repeated use rather than isolated incidents and reflect the established patterns of access described earlier in this chapter.

3.7.1 HABITAT FRAGMENTATION

Dispersed parking and multiple informal access points along Chase Road have contributed to the fragmentation of adjacent habitats. Visitors frequently enter the surrounding landscape directly from roadside parking locations rather than from a small number of defined gateways, resulting in activity being spread across a wide area. Over time, this pattern reduces the continuity of habitat, particularly within lowland heathland areas that are sensitive to disturbance. Fragmentation can limit the effective size of undisturbed habitat blocks and increase edge effects, reducing the resilience of these areas to recreational pressure.

Figure 3-7 illustrates routes taken by visitors to Chase Road and the wider Cannock Chase area, which has been taken from the 2024 Visitor Survey Report.

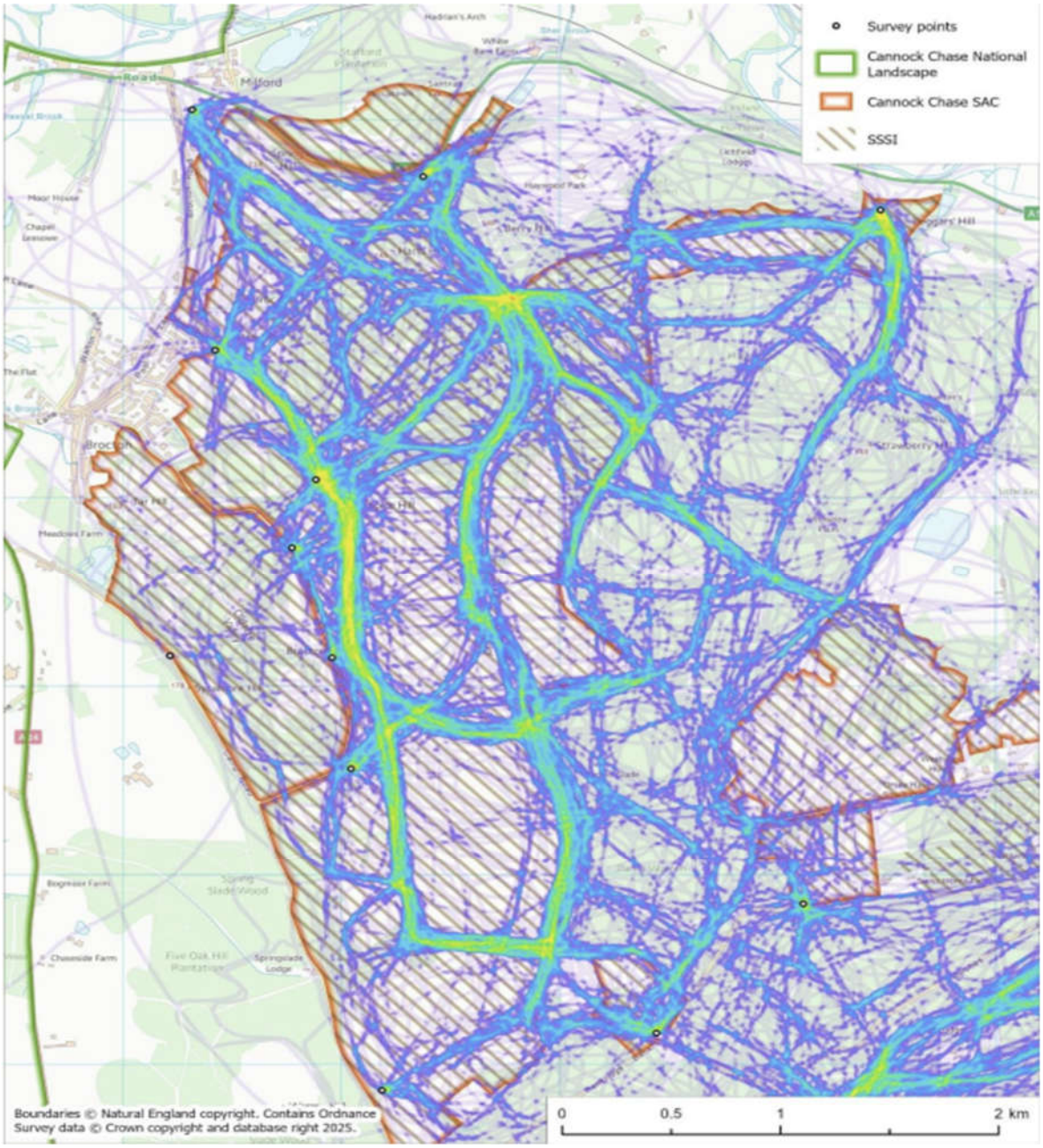


Figure 3-7 – Visitor routes along Chase Road and wider Cannock Chase area from 2024 visitor report

3.7.2 PATH EROSION AND DESIRE LINES

Evidence of path erosion and the formation of informal desire lines is apparent in the vicinity of Chase Road, particularly near parking locations and where visitors seek direct routes into open areas of the Chase. Informal paths often develop where repeated footfall occurs outside of established routes, leading to vegetation loss, soil compaction and surface erosion. Once established, these desire lines tend to attract further use, widening over time and increasing the extent of disturbed ground. In heathland environments, recovery from such erosion can be slow, and informal paths can persist even where use subsequently reduces.



3.7.3 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND DISTURBANCE

The accessibility and dispersed nature of parking along Chase Road can also contribute to wider management issues, including anti-social behaviour and disturbance. Incidents such as littering, dog fouling, noise and, in some locations, inappropriate vehicle use have been reported within the corridor including excessive speed and swerving between speed bumps. While not universal, such behaviour can have disproportionate impacts in sensitive environments and can detract from the experience of other users. Disturbance associated with vehicles stopping at multiple informal locations, particularly during evenings or peak periods, can also affect the tranquillity of the area and increase pressure on locations that are otherwise difficult to monitor or manage.

3.8 SAFETY AND USER CONFLICT

Chase Road operates as a shared-use corridor accommodating pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and vehicles within a constrained and largely rural environment. The absence of formal segregation between user groups means that different modes frequently interact within the same space, particularly in locations where the carriageway narrows or where vehicles are parked close to the running surface. These interactions are an inherent characteristic of the corridor and give rise to the potential for conflict, particularly during periods of higher visitor activity.

The potential for interaction is greatest where vehicle movements coincide with higher levels of non-motorised use, such as weekends and peak visitor periods. Pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders may be required to share limited space with moving or manoeuvring vehicles, including those entering or leaving parking locations. In areas where informal parking occurs, parked vehicles can reduce available width, restrict visibility and displace non-motorised users closer to traffic, increasing both the likelihood of interaction and the perception of risk, even where vehicle speeds are relatively low.

In addition to user interaction, the presence of wildlife, particularly deer, introduces a further dimension of risk. Deer are frequently present along the corridor and may be disturbed by vehicle movements, pedestrians or cyclists, increasing the potential for sudden movements across the carriageway. This can give rise to unpredictable interactions between vehicles and wildlife, as well as secondary risks where animals are displaced towards adjacent routes such as Camp Road. The presence of deer also contributes to grazing pressure on acid grassland habitats, which may be exacerbated by disturbance and displacement associated with increased visitor and vehicle activity.

Traffic calming features, such as speed humps, contribute to moderating vehicle speeds along parts of the corridor and help reduce the severity of potential interactions. However, these measures do not eliminate shared use conditions, and their effectiveness can vary depending on driver behaviour and traffic volumes at different times. The combination of shared use, variable parking patterns, wildlife presence and constrained geometry means that opportunities for interaction remain a defining characteristic of the route.



There is no available evidence to indicate a high incidence of recorded injury collisions along Chase Road. However, the absence of recorded collisions does not remove the presence of interaction risk or perceived safety concerns. For some users, particularly equestrians and those with young children or limited mobility, the presence of vehicles and the potential for interaction may discourage use or influence route choice.

3.9 MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES

The physical condition of Chase Road and its associated parking areas reflects the cumulative effects of use within a sensitive rural and environmental context. While the route is surfaced and provides vehicular access to a number of locations, its construction and maintenance regime are not comparable to those of an adopted public highway designed for regular traffic flows.

The surfacing condition along Chase Road is variable. In some sections, the carriageway remains generally serviceable, while in others there is evidence of surface wear, localised deterioration and patching. These issues are particularly evident near parking locations, junctions and traffic calming features, where repeated vehicle manoeuvring and stopping place additional stress on the surface. Informal parking areas and laybys typically have unsealed or degraded surfaces, which are more susceptible to rutting and erosion, especially during wet conditions.



Verge damage is a recurring operational issue along the corridor. Where formal parking provision is limited, vehicles frequently encroach onto verges to park or to pass other vehicles, leading to compaction, vegetation loss and the gradual widening of disturbed areas. Over time, this can result in the incremental expansion of informal parking locations and increased pressure on adjacent habitats. Verge damage also reduces the visual quality of the landscape and can exacerbate other maintenance issues, such as drainage problems.

Drainage is closely linked to both surfacing condition and verge damage. The rural setting of Chase Road means that drainage is largely reliant on natural infiltration and informal drainage channels. Where surfacing deteriorates or verges are compacted by vehicle overrun, water can pond on the carriageway or flow onto adjacent land, accelerating erosion and further degrading surfaces. In informal parking areas, poor drainage can lead to muddy conditions that encourage vehicles to park more widely, extending the footprint of disturbed ground.

4.0 OBJECTIVES, CONSTRAINTS & APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

Key Points – Objectives and Appraisal Framework

- A clear project vision has been established to balance ecological protection, landscape quality and appropriate public access;
- Eight appraisal criteria have been defined, covering environmental, access, community, financial and deliverability considerations;
- Habitat & Species Benefit is given the highest weighting (25%) to reflect statutory obligations under the Habitats Regulations;
- A transparent five-point scoring system ensures consistent and comparable assessment across all options;
- The framework enables robust comparison of options, capturing both benefits and trade-offs in a structured manner.

This chapter sets out the strategic direction and decision-making framework for the Chase Road Options Appraisal. Building on the baseline conditions and policy context described in earlier sections, it defines the overarching vision for the project, the objectives that options are expected to support, and the constraints that shape what is realistically deliverable. It also explains the appraisal framework used to assess options in a transparent and consistent manner.

4.1 PROJECT VISION

The overarching vision for the Chase Road Options Appraisal is set out below and provides the strategic direction for the project.

Project Vision

To establish a sustainable and proportionate approach to managing vehicle access along Chase Road that:

- Protects and restores the ecological integrity of Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation;
- Conserves and enhances the natural beauty and special qualities of the Cannock Chase National Landscape;
- Supports appropriate and well-managed public access to Cannock Chase as a whole.

This vision reflects the need to balance environmental protection with continued public enjoyment of Cannock Chase. It recognises that the area functions both as an internationally designated ecological site and a nationally protected landscape, as well as a valued recreational resource. Long-term success depends on managing these functions in a coordinated and sustainable manner.

The emphasis on sustainable and proportionate vehicle access acknowledges that existing arrangements may require change, but that any intervention must be evidence-led, deliverable and justified in relation to the scale of identified impacts. The appraisal does not assume that access should be maintained in its current form, nor that it should be removed entirely; rather, it seeks to determine the form of access management most consistent with the statutory and policy framework set out in Chapter 2.

The reference to ecological integrity and natural beauty reflects the distinct but complementary statutory drivers associated with the SAC and the National Landscape. This includes the need to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the SAC and to seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape's special qualities. At the same time, the vision recognises the importance of appropriate public use, ensuring that Cannock Chase remains accessible in a way that is compatible with its environmental sensitivity and long-term resilience.

This vision provides the strategic direction for the Options Appraisal and underpins the specific objectives and criteria against which potential options are assessed.

4.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

In order to deliver the Project Vision, the Options Appraisal has been structured around a set of clear and measurable objectives. These objectives reflect the baseline issues identified in Chapter 3 and the statutory and strategic context outlined in Chapter 2, including the Conservation Objectives of the Cannock Chase SAC and the statutory purposes of the Cannock Chase National Landscape. All shortlisted options are assessed against these objectives through the appraisal framework set out later in this chapter.

Environmental Objectives

1. Protect and restore the ecological integrity of Cannock Chase SAC, in accordance with its Conservation Objectives, including maintaining or restoring the extent, structure and function of qualifying habitats and supporting the conservation of associated species.
2. Reduce recreational pressure on sensitive habitats and species, particularly in areas adjacent to Chase Road, including disturbance, trampling, verge damage and the formation of informal desire lines.
3. Reduce habitat fragmentation and improve habitat condition, including limiting the spread of informal access routes and supporting the recovery of heathland and associated habitats.

These objectives reflect the need to move from unmanaged and dispersed access patterns towards a more controlled and environmentally sustainable arrangement.

Access and Inclusivity Objectives

4. Ensure that public access to Cannock Chase remains appropriate, safe and proportionate, recognising the importance of the site as a recreational resource.
5. Improve clarity and coherence of access arrangements, reducing confusion and unmanaged stopping behaviour along the corridor.
6. Support inclusive access for a wide range of users, including pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and people with mobility impairments, in a manner consistent with environmental protection.

These objectives recognise that while environmental protection is paramount, access remains a core function of the Chase and must be considered carefully in any intervention.

Resident Considerations

7. Minimise adverse impacts on local residents and surrounding communities, including changes to traffic patterns, access to properties, parking displacement and overall amenity.
8. Ensure that any changes to access arrangements are proportionate and clearly justified, particularly where they may alter established travel behaviour.

This ensures that local considerations are explicitly recognised within the appraisal rather than treated as secondary issues.

Deliverability and Value for Money Objectives

9. Ensure that proposed options are legally compliant, practically deliverable and proportionate to the identified issues, taking into account constraints such as rights of way status, common land, heritage sensitivity and operational considerations.
10. Represent appropriate use of available resources, balancing environmental benefit against capital cost, ongoing maintenance requirements and long-term management implications.

These objectives ensure that the appraisal does not favour theoretically optimal but undeliverable solutions.

4.3 KEY CONSTRAINTS

The development and assessment of options for Chase Road is influenced by a number of legal, physical, environmental and practical constraints. These do not pre-determine outcomes, but they shape the range of feasible interventions and inform the assessment of deliverability and risk.

4.3.1 LEGAL AND REGULATORY CONSTRAINTS

Chase Road's status within the rights of way network, including sections recorded as a bridleway and private access route, places constraints on the types of access control measures that may be appropriate or permissible. Any proposal that materially alters public rights or restricts access would require careful consideration of the relevant legal processes.

In addition, parts of Cannock Chase are registered common land and are subject to the provisions of the Commons Act 2006. Works that constitute "restricted works", including certain permanent structures, barriers or surface changes, may require formal consent. The need for such consents can introduce additional complexity, timescales and uncertainty into delivery.

Figure 4-3 identifies the registered common land within Cannock Chase.

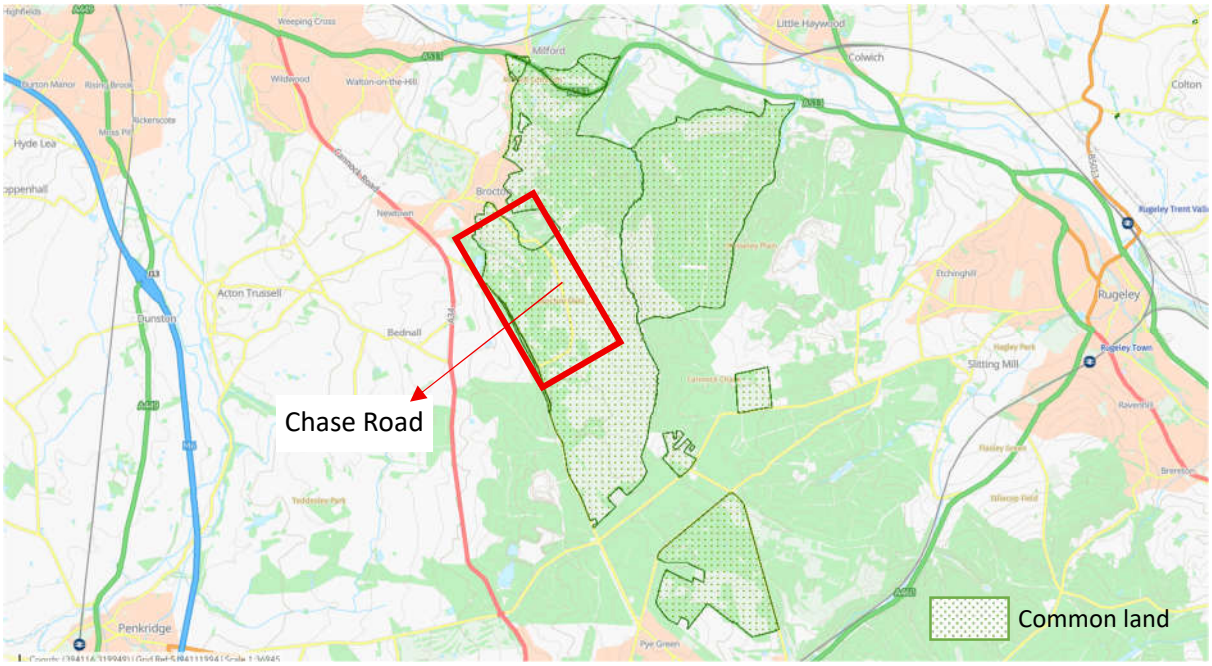


Figure 4-3 – Areas of registered common land within Cannock Chase

Interventions must also be compatible with statutory duties under the Habitat Regulations and other environmental legislation, as well as relevant highways, planning and traffic regulation processes where applicable.

4.3.2 PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS

The physical characteristics of Chase Road present practical limitations on the scope of potential interventions. The constrained carriageway width, variable alignment and shared use nature of the route limit the suitability of some traffic management or segregation measures.

The corridor passes through environmentally sensitive habitats and areas of archaeological potential, which constrain the extent of ground disturbance or permanent infrastructure that may be appropriate. Interventions that involve excavation, new

surfacing, or installation of fixed structures may require ecological assessment, archaeological evaluation or mitigation, adding to complexity and cost.

Seasonal ecological sensitivities, particularly during breeding periods for protected species, may also influence the timing of works and operational arrangements.

4.3.3 POLITICAL AND COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS

Chase Road is used by a range of stakeholders, including local residents, regular recreational users and visitors from across the wider area. Changes to access arrangements, particularly where they affect established travel behaviour, may generate differing views and levels of support.

There is a need to ensure that any proposed option is clearly justified, proportionate and informed by meaningful engagement. Perceptions of fairness, inclusivity and safety will be important considerations, particularly if options involve significant changes to vehicle access.

The appraisal must therefore balance environmental imperatives with the need to maintain community confidence and ensure that decisions are transparent and evidence led.

4.3.4 FUNDING AND DELIVERY CONSTRAINTS

Any intervention along Chase Road must be deliverable within realistic funding envelopes and operational capacity. Capital costs, ongoing maintenance implications and enforcement requirements vary significantly between options.

Some interventions may require external funding, partnership contributions or phased implementation. Others may involve ongoing management commitments that extend beyond initial capital works.

The appraisal therefore considers not only environmental and access benefits, but also proportionality in terms of cost, resource requirements and long-term manageability.

4.4 APPRAISAL CRITERIA

In order to assess options in a transparent and consistent manner, a set of appraisal criteria has been established. These criteria are derived directly from the Project Vision, the baseline conditions identified in Chapter 3, and the statutory and strategic context outlined in Chapter 2.

The criteria are designed to ensure that options are evaluated not only on environmental grounds, but also in relation to access, community impact, deliverability and long-term sustainability. Each shortlisted option is assessed against these criteria using a structured scoring framework set out in Section 4.5.

Figure 4-4 presents the appraisal criteria used to assess each option considered for Chase Road.



Figure 4-4 – Chase Road Options Appraisal Criteria

The appraisal criteria are summarised below.

4.4.1 HABITAT AND SPECIES BENEFIT (HAB)

This criterion assesses the extent to which an option would reduce recreational pressure on sensitive habitats and species, including the fragmentation of heathland, disturbance during breeding seasons, and the proliferation of informal access routes.

The criterion is included because the primary driver for intervention along Chase Road is the need to protect the ecological integrity of the SAC. Any option must demonstrate that it contributes meaningfully to reducing impacts to habitats and species in a way that is proportionate and evidence led.

4.4.2 VISITOR ACCESS AND INCLUSIVITY (ACC)

Assesses how an option affects overall access to Cannock Chase, including impacts on pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, people with mobility impairments and those who currently access the site by motor vehicle. It considers changes to physical access arrangements, traffic conditions, parking availability and the perceived accessibility and safety of the corridor for all user groups.

The criterion reflects the importance of Cannock Chase as a recreational resource and ensures that options are not assessed solely on environmental grounds. It recognises

that access, including vehicular access where appropriate, remains a core function of the site and must be managed in a way that is fair, proportionate and aligned with the environmental sensitivity of the surrounding area.

4.4.3 LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE IMPACT (LAN)

Assesses the extent to which an option conserves or enhances the landscape character, tranquillity and historic environment of the corridor, including potential impacts on archaeological assets and the National Landscape designation.

It is included to ensure that proposals are consistent with the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape and that any physical interventions are sensitive to the historic and landscape context of Chase Road.

4.4.4 IMPACT ON LOCAL RESIDENTS (RES)

Assesses the effects of an option on nearby communities, including changes to traffic patterns, displacement of parking, access to properties, and impacts on amenity.

It is included to ensure that local considerations are explicitly recognised within the appraisal framework. While environmental protection is central, options must also be proportionate and defensible in terms of their effects on those who live near and regularly use the corridor.

4.4.5 FINANCIAL COST AND SUSTAINABILITY (FIN)

Assesses the capital costs, ongoing maintenance requirements and long-term financial sustainability of each option.

It is included to ensure that preferred options represent an appropriate and proportionate use of resources. An option that delivers environmental benefit but is financially unsustainable or disproportionately costly may not represent a viable long-term solution.

4.4.6 DELIVERABILITY AND PRACTICALITY (DEL)

Assesses the legal, technical and operational feasibility of each option, including compliance with rights of way status, common land considerations, heritage constraints and the practicalities of enforcement and management.

It is included because the presence of legal and physical constraints along Chase Road means that not all theoretically beneficial options are realistically deliverable. This criterion ensures that feasibility is given appropriate weight in decision making.

4.4.7 STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC ACCEPTABILITY (SOC)

Assesses the likely level of support or opposition from key stakeholders, user groups and the wider public, informed by engagement and consultation findings.

It is included because successful implementation depends not only on environmental and legal compliance, but also on community confidence and transparency. Options that are technically sound but widely opposed may carry significant implementation risk.

4.4.8 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT (STR)

Assesses the extent to which an option aligns with existing plans and strategies, including the SAC Detailed Implementation Plan, the Visitor Management Strategy and the National Landscape Management Plan.

It is included to ensure that proposals are consistent with the wider mitigation programme and do not operate in isolation from agreed strategic objectives.

4.5 SCORING METHODOLOGY SUMMARY

Options have been assessed using a structured and weighted appraisal framework based on the criteria set out above. A five-point scoring scale has been applied to ensure consistency and comparability.

Full details of the scoring methodology, weightings, assumptions and evidence sources are provided in Appendix A.

5.0 OPTION DEVELOPMENT

Key Points – Option Generation

- A comprehensive long list of 16 options has been developed through workshops, site visits and best practice review;
- Options range from minimal intervention to full closure, ensuring all realistic approaches are considered;
- Measures include access restrictions, parking management, behavioural interventions and redistribution strategies;
- Initial review identifies that no single measure is likely to be effective in isolation;
- The long list forms the basis for structured sifting and development of integrated option packages.

This chapter explains how potential options for managing access and parking along Chase Road were identified, refined and prepared for appraisal. It demonstrates that a broad range of approaches was considered before progressing to shortlisting, and that option development was informed by evidence, professional expertise and stakeholder input.

5.1 APPROACH TO OPTION GENERATION

A structured and iterative approach was adopted to generate potential options for consideration. This ensured that the long list reflected a wide range of possible interventions, from minimal change through to more significant access management measures.

5.1.1 WORKSHOPS AND OFFICER INPUT

Option development was informed by collaborative discussions with officers and representatives of the SAC Partnership, including expertise in ecology, highways, rights of way, visitor management and land management. These discussions helped to identify practical opportunities and constraints, clarify the legal and operational context, and explore how different interventions might influence visitor behaviour and environmental outcomes.

Workshops provided a forum to test early ideas, combine related measures into coherent packages, and identify options that were unlikely to be deliverable or proportionate. This collaborative process ensured that options were focused on operational reality rather than developed in isolation.

5.1.2 SITE VISITS AND OBSERVATIONAL ANALYSIS

Site visits were undertaken to understand first-hand the physical characteristics of Chase Road, the distribution of parking, user behaviour and areas of environmental sensitivity. Observations during both typical and busier periods informed understanding of how vehicles and non-motorised users interact, where informal parking occurs, and how visitors disperse into adjacent habitats.

These site visits were critical in identifying practical intervention points, such as potential locations for access control measures, opportunities for consolidation of parking, and areas where environmental pressure is most pronounced. They also helped to distinguish between theoretical options and those that are feasible within the corridor's physical constraints.

5.1.3 BEST PRACTICE REVIEW

The generation of options was further informed by a review of relevant best practice in access management within protected landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites. This included consideration of approaches used in other Special Areas of Conservation, National Landscapes and rural visitor destinations, particularly where vehicle access has been managed to reduce ecological pressure.

Best practice examples highlighted a spectrum of potential measures, including full or partial vehicle closures, seasonal restrictions, parking consolidation, physical access controls, behavioural interventions and integrated packages combining multiple measures. These examples informed the long list and ensured that options considered for Chase Road were consistent with established approaches elsewhere, while remaining tailored to the specific local context.

5.1.4 OUTCOME OF OPTION GENERATION

Through this structured approach, a comprehensive long list of potential interventions has been developed. These range from maintaining the current arrangements with enhanced management, through to more significant restrictions on vehicular access. The long list forms the basis of the sifting process set out in Section 5.2.

5.2 LONG LIST OF OPTIONS

Following the approach described in Section 5.1, a comprehensive long list of 16 potential options has been developed. The long list reflects a wide spectrum of possible interventions, ranging from minimal change to more substantial restrictions on vehicular access. The purpose of this stage is to ensure that all realistic and proportionate approaches are identified before progressing to structured sifting and shortlisting.

Table 5-2 presents the 16 options that have been assessed as part of the initial long list.

Ref	Option	Description
1	Do Nothing (Baseline)	Retain existing access arrangements with no intervention.
2	Full Closure	Permanent restriction of public motor vehicle access along the full Chase Road corridor.
3	Partial Closure	Permanent closure of a defined central section of Chase Road to through vehicular traffic.
4	Seasonal Closure (Mar–Sep)	Restriction of vehicular access during the core breeding season.
5	Extended Seasonal Closure (Feb–Oct)	Restriction of vehicular access over an extended seasonal period.
6	Time-of-Day Restrictions	Limiting vehicular access to specific times of day.
7	Permit System	Access restricted to authorised users through a permit-based system.
8	Controlled Access Gates	Installation of physical infrastructure to regulate vehicle entry.
9	Verge Protection Measures	Physical measures to prevent informal roadside parking.
10	Parking Rationalisation	Consolidation or reconfiguration of existing parking provision.
11	New Parking Provision	Development of alternative parking locations away from sensitive areas.
12	Behavioural Measures	Signage, information and campaigns to influence visitor behaviour.
13	Traffic Calming	Measures to reduce vehicle speeds along the corridor.
14	One-Way System	Introduction of a one-way vehicular system.
15	Shuttle / Access Management	Managed access via controlled transport or shuttle systems.
16	Hybrid Approaches	Combination of spatial and temporal restrictions.

Table 5-2 – Initial long list of options to consider for Chase Road

Further detail on each option is provided in Appendix B.

5.3 INITIAL OBSERVATIONS ON BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

The long list highlights a clear distinction between options that maintain vehicular access and those that actively restrict it.

Options that retain general vehicular access, including behavioural measures, traffic management interventions and minor infrastructure changes, provide limited ability to address the underlying causes of ecological impact. While such measures may improve user experience or reduce specific issues such as vehicle speeds or informal parking, they do not materially reduce traffic volumes or prevent access to sensitive areas. As a result, their effectiveness in reducing habitat disturbance and fragmentation is inherently limited.

In contrast, options that restrict vehicular access, either spatially or temporally, directly address the primary driver of ecological pressure. These options reduce the extent, duration or intensity of disturbance and therefore offer a more effective means of supporting habitat protection and recovery.

Spatial interventions, such as full or partial closure, provide greater certainty of outcome by removing or reducing vehicle presence within defined sections of the corridor. However, their effectiveness depends on the scale and location of intervention, with more comprehensive closures delivering stronger ecological benefits.

Temporal interventions, including seasonal restrictions, align access management with periods of ecological sensitivity. While these approaches can deliver meaningful benefits during key periods, they allow the reintroduction of disturbance outside these times and therefore provide less certainty in achieving long-term ecological outcomes.

Options based on access control mechanisms, such as permit systems or time-of-day restrictions, present challenges in terms of enforceability and compliance. Without a robust and sustained management regime, there is a risk that such measures would not achieve consistent reductions in vehicular activity.

Parking-related measures play an important supporting role but are not sufficient in isolation. While rationalisation or relocation of parking can influence where visitors access the site, it does not fully address the ability of vehicles to travel along the corridor unless combined with restrictions on vehicular access.

Overall, the long list demonstrates that meaningful ecological benefit is most effectively achieved through interventions that restrict vehicular access, either across the full corridor or within the most sensitive areas. This insight forms the basis for the subsequent sifting process, through which options are refined into a smaller number of coherent and deliverable packages for detailed appraisal.

6.0 OPTION SIFTING AND INTEGRATION PROCESS

Key Points – Sifting and Shortlisting

- A structured sifting process has been applied to identify options that are feasible, proportionate and aligned with project objectives;
- Options with legal, operational or strategic limitations have been discounted at this stage;
- Remaining options have been combined into four coherent packages reflecting different approaches to access management;
- Packages are based on permanent, spatial and seasonal restriction models, supported by complementary measures;
- This approach ensures that shortlisted options are realistic, deliverable and suitable for detailed appraisal.

This chapter sets out how the long list of 16 options described in Chapter 5 was refined to a smaller number of realistic and proportionate options for detailed appraisal, and for inviting feedback from the public. The sifting process ensures that only options capable of meeting the project vision and objectives, and capable of being delivered within the legal and practical context of Chase Road, are taken forward.

6.1 SIFTING METHODOLOGY

The sifting process is qualitative in nature. It does not involve the application of the weighted scoring framework set out in Chapter 4, nor does it seek to rank options against one another. Instead, it provides a structured screening exercise designed to identify whether any option contains fundamental constraints or misalignments that would prevent it from being taken forward. In doing so, it creates a clear and transparent audit trail explaining how the long list has been reduced.

Each option was considered against a series of high-level screening principles. The first of these related to legal and regulatory feasibility. Given the rights of way status of Chase Road, the presence of common land, and the statutory duties under the Habitat Regulations, it was necessary to consider whether any option would be inherently incompatible with the applicable legal framework or would require powers that are unlikely to be secured. Options presenting clear legal barriers or disproportionate regulatory complexity were examined carefully at this stage.

Secondly, each option was reviewed for alignment with the Project Vision and Objectives. The overarching intent of the appraisal is to establish a sustainable and proportionate approach to managing vehicle access along Chase Road that protects and restores the ecological integrity of the Cannock Chase SAC and conserves and enhances the natural beauty and special qualities of the Cannock Chase National Landscape,

while supporting appropriate and well-managed public use. Options that did not materially contribute to addressing identified environmental pressures, or which were clearly inconsistent with this intent and the statutory framework set out in Chapter 2, were not considered to warrant progression to detailed appraisal.

Physical and operational practicality was also considered. Chase Road is constrained in width, alignment and setting, and sits within a sensitive landscape and ecological context. Options requiring unrealistic engineering interventions, extensive infrastructure, or operational regimes that would be difficult to manage in practice were assessed critically at this stage.

The principle of proportionality was an additional consideration. Some options may offer environmental benefits but represent a level of intervention that is unlikely to be justified or supported in light of the scale of the identified issues. Conversely, other options may be too limited in scope to meaningfully influence visitor behaviour or habitat pressure. The sifting stage therefore considers whether each option represents a credible and balanced response.

Finally, deliverability and funding risk were considered at a high level. While detailed cost comparison forms part of the later appraisal stage, options that are clearly dependent on speculative funding mechanisms or operational arrangements that are unlikely to be sustainable were identified during this screening process.

Figure 6-1 illustrates the sifting process used for the study.

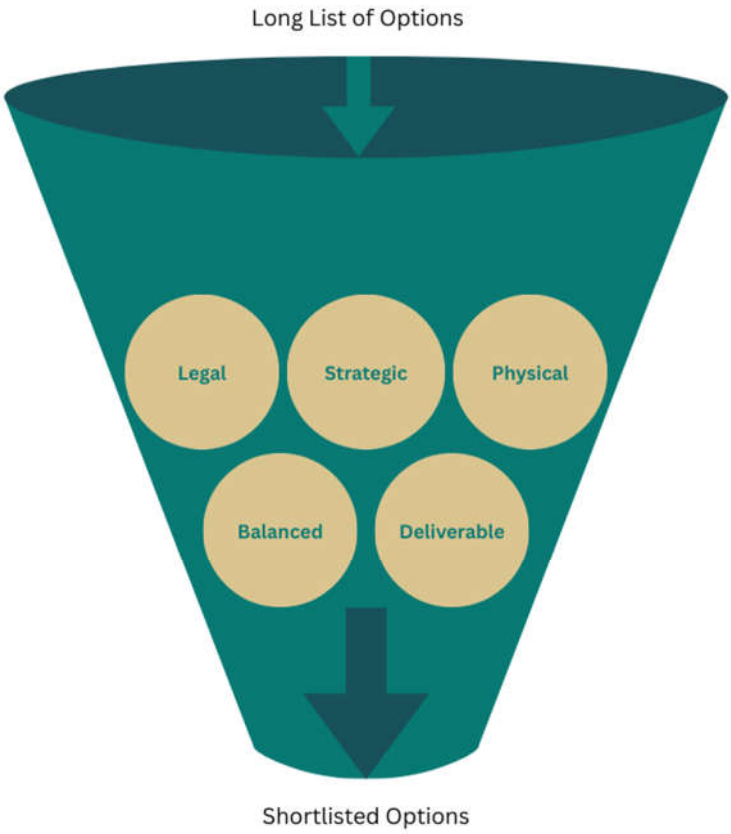


Figure 6-1 – Chase Road Options Appraisal sifting process for potential options

The outcome of the sifting stage is not the identification of a preferred option. Rather, it is the identification of those options, or combinations of options, that merit detailed assessment under the weighted appraisal framework. Where appropriate, elements of individual options may be combined to form coherent packages that better reflect how interventions would operate in practice.

The results of this screening exercise are set out in Section 6.2.

6.2 INITIAL SIFTING RESULTS

The application of the screening principles described in Section 6.1 has resulted in the refinement of the long list of 16 options into a smaller number of options suitable for detailed appraisal. This section summarises which options are taken forward, and which are not progressed at this stage, together with the principal reasons.

The purpose of this stage is not to determine a preferred option, but to identify those approaches that are legally feasible, strategically aligned and proportionate to the identified issues.

6.2.1 OPTIONS TAKEN FORWARD FOR DETAILED APPRAISAL

Following initial screening, the following options (either in their original form or capable of refinement into coherent packages) have been taken forward:

- Option 2 – Full Closure;
- Option 3 – Partial Closure;
- Option 4 – Seasonal Closure;
- Option 7 – Car Park Rationalisation / Verge Protection;
- Option 8 – Controlled Access Zones;
- Option 13 – Quiet Lane / Active Travel Priority;
- Option 16 – Park & Stroll Model.

These options have been progressed because they each offer a credible mechanism for influencing visitor behaviour and reducing environmental pressure, while remaining potentially deliverable within the legal and operational framework of Chase Road.

In several cases, options are not mutually exclusive and may be capable of being combined to form integrated packages. For example, car park rationalisation measures may complement partial or seasonal closure options, and quiet lane principles may support more restrictive access approaches. The integration of compatible measures is considered further in Section 6.3.

6.2.2 OPTIONS DISCOUNTED AT INITIAL SIFTING STAGE

The following options are not taken forward to detailed appraisal at this stage:

Option 1 – Do Nothing (Baseline): While retained as a comparator for assessment purposes, this option does not represent an intervention and does not address identified

environmental pressures. It therefore does not progress as a standalone deliverable option.

Option 5 – Blue Badge Only Access: Although offering significant traffic reduction, this option presents operational and enforcement complexity and risks being disproportionate when considered as a standalone measure. The principle of maintaining inclusive access is instead capable of being embedded within other access management options.

Option 6 – One-Way Operation: Reconfiguring the route as one-way would alter traffic flow but would not materially reduce overall vehicle presence or dispersed parking behaviour. Environmental benefits are therefore likely to be limited relative to the scale of intervention required. This option would also require a substantial capital investment to realign the road network to prevent vehicles travelling in the wrong direction, which introduces a significant safety risk, which is likely without intervention.

Option 9 – Time of Day Restrictions: While potentially beneficial during peak periods, this option introduces operational complexity and enforcement challenges. It is also likely to result in displacement of traffic to unrestricted periods, limiting overall effectiveness.

Option 10 – Permit Based Access: While a permit-based system would significantly restrict general vehicular access, it would introduce substantial administrative and enforcement complexity. The need to define eligibility criteria, manage applications, monitor compliance and address disputes presents ongoing operational burdens. There is also a risk that such a system could be perceived as exclusionary or inequitable, particularly in a publicly accessible landscape.

Option 11 – Parking Capacity Reduction Only: Reducing the footprint and capacity of existing car parks may moderate visitor numbers to some degree, however, without accompanying access control measures, there is a significant risk of displacement to informal verge parking or surrounding areas. This option does not directly address vehicle movement along the corridor or the dispersed access pattern that contributes to habitat fragmentation. As a standalone intervention, it is unlikely to achieve the scale of behavioural change required to materially reduce environmental pressure.

Option 12 – Behaviour Change and Support: Behavioural measures alone are unlikely to achieve the scale of change required to address identified habitat pressures without a significant investment and staff resource. However, such measures may form part of supporting packages alongside other options that are taken forward.

Option 14 – Traffic Calming Only: Additional traffic calming may improve safety conditions but is unlikely to significantly reduce vehicle volumes or address habitat fragmentation. As a standalone measure, it does not sufficiently respond to the environmental objectives of the project.

Option 15 – Access Fee / Conservation Charge: The legal feasibility of introducing an access charge within the common land and rights of way context is uncertain. The most

likely mechanism for this would be through car parking charges, which increases risks of displacement. Furthermore, demand management through charging alone may not achieve sufficient reduction in vehicular access to address the identified issues.

6.3 COMPATIBILITY AND INTERACTION OF OPTIONS

The long list options considered in Chapter 5 are not all mutually exclusive. Some measures are capable of being combined to enhance effectiveness, while others are inherently conflicting and cannot operate simultaneously. Before progressing to the development of shortlisted packages, it is therefore necessary to consider how options interact.

6.3.1 COMPLEMENTARY MEASURES

A number of options are capable of being combined to form integrated approaches that better reflect how access management would operate in practice.

Closure based options, whether full, partial or seasonal, may be complemented by car park rationalisation and verge protection measures (Option 7). Removing informal laybys and restoring verges would strengthen the environmental benefit of access restrictions and reduce the risk of informal parking displacement.

Similarly, Quiet Lane / Active Travel Priority measures (Option 13) may support partial or seasonal closure approaches by reinforcing the character of Chase Road as a shared, low speed environment. While such measures alone are unlikely to materially reduce traffic volumes, they may enhance user experience and safety within a broader access management framework.

The Park & Stroll model (Option 16) is also capable of integration with closure or access control measures. Redirecting visitors to more robust nearby car parks would help to mitigate displacement impacts arising from reduced parking availability along Chase Road itself. This option supports the strategic redistribution of visitor pressure rather than simple restriction.

Elements of parking capacity reduction (Option 11) may also be incorporated within broader packages, even though it is not progressed as a standalone option. Reducing and formalising parking provision can support either partial closure or controlled access approaches by limiting the opportunity for dispersed stopping.

Finally, behavioural and communication measures (Option 12) are not considered sufficient in isolation but would be expected to accompany any physical intervention to ensure clarity, compliance and public understanding.

6.3.2 CONFLICTING OR MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE MEASURES

Certain options are inherently incompatible and cannot operate concurrently.

Full closure (Option 2) cannot operate alongside one-way operation, traffic calming only measures, time of day restrictions or permit based access arrangements, as these

options all assume continued general vehicular access. Where full closure is implemented, these measures become redundant.

Similarly, seasonal closure (Option 4) and time of day restrictions (Option 9) represent alternative forms of temporal access control and would not normally be implemented simultaneously, as this would create operational complexity and confusion.

Controlled access zones (Option 8) and partial closure (Option 3) may overlap in function. While they share similar objectives in preventing through traffic, their physical configuration differs. Careful definition would be required to avoid duplication or over engineering.

An access fee or charging mechanism (Option 15), were it legally feasible, would also conflict with full closure or permit only access, as it relies on maintaining general vehicular entry.

6.4 DEVELOPMENT OF SHORTLISTED OPTION PACKAGES

The interaction analysis set out in Section 6.3 demonstrates that many of the long list options are not intended to operate in isolation. Effective access management along Chase Road is likely to require a coordinated set of measures rather than a single standalone intervention. For this reason, the shortlisted options have been developed as integrated packages.

6.4.1 RATIONALE FOR A PACKAGE BASED APPROACH

A package-based approach reflects the reality that access management is multi-dimensional. Restricting vehicular access alone may reduce traffic volumes but could also result in displacement effects unless supported by parking management and visitor redirection measures. Conversely, parking rationalisation without changes to access arrangements may not sufficiently alter visitor behaviour.

Developing coherent packages enables complementary measures to operate together in a way that is proportionate and strategically aligned with the project vision. It also allows for meaningful comparison between different levels of intervention, ranging from permanent spatial restriction through to seasonal control.

The shortlisted packages have therefore been structured around three principal approaches to vehicular access management:

- Permanent corridor closure;
- Spatially targeted (partial) closure;
- Temporally targeted (seasonal) closure.

Each package includes supporting interventions designed to enhance effectiveness, manage displacement risk and ensure deliverability.

6.5 PACKAGE 1 – FULL CLOSURE TO PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLES

Permanent closure of the full length of Chase Road to public motor vehicles, removing through traffic and associated parking while retaining access for walking, cycling, equestrian and authorised users.

6.5.1 PACKAGE OVERVIEW

Package 1 proposes the permanent closure of Chase Road to public motor vehicles along its full extent, from the point at which the public highway transitions to bridleway near Brocton Nurseries in the north, to the junction with Camp Road in the south. This represents a corridor of approximately 2.4km.

The intention is to remove routine vehicular movement from the corridor in its entirety, thereby addressing habitat fragmentation, verge degradation and traffic related disturbance in a comprehensive and enduring manner. Access would be retained for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, emergency services and authorised land management vehicles.

Under this package, Chase Road would cease to function as a vehicular access corridor and would instead operate as a continuous non-motorised route aligned with its environmental designation and sensitivity. This represents the most extensive intervention in both spatial and functional terms, removing the underlying mechanism that currently enables dispersed parking and unrestricted access into sensitive habitats.

6.5.2 SUPPORTING MEASURES AND OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION

Removal, Restoration and Redistribution of Parking Provision

The effectiveness of the full closure approach depends not only on preventing vehicular access along the corridor, but also on removing the parking provision that currently enables dispersed arrival patterns and addressing the associated patterns of informal access into surrounding habitats. Under this package, all formal and informal parking locations accessed directly from Chase Road would be removed.

This includes the established car parks at Chase Road Corner, Glacial Boulder, Dry Pits, Coppice Hill and Chase Vista, together with the numerous informal laybys distributed along the corridor. This would result in the loss of approximately 80 spaces across all car parks. With vehicular access no longer permitted, these facilities would cease to serve a functional purpose and would become redundant. Their removal provides a significant opportunity to restore these areas to the natural environment and improve habitat continuity across the corridor.

Restoration would involve the removal of hardstanding where present, soil decompaction where necessary, and reinstatement of heathland or woodland edge vegetation in line with site management objectives. Physical containment measures, such as low bunding, timber barriers or naturalistic features, would be introduced where required to prevent future encroachment and protect restored areas over the long term.

In parallel with these measures, targeted interventions would be required to address existing informal desire lines that extend from Chase Road into adjacent heathland. These routes have developed as a direct consequence of dispersed parking and unmanaged access and would continue to facilitate disturbance if left untreated. Measures may include path closure and re-naturalisation, installation of low-level barriers, strategic planting, and clear wayfinding to direct users towards more appropriate routes. These interventions would be implemented alongside physical access controls to ensure a coordinated approach to both access restriction and habitat recovery.

Without the removal of parking and the closure of informal access points, there is a risk that residual patterns of stopping and movement could persist at the margins of the corridor, undermining the effectiveness of the closure and limiting ecological benefits.

The removal of parking from within the corridor necessitates a clear and coordinated approach to accommodating displaced demand. Under this package, visitor parking would be redirected to existing car parks elsewhere within Cannock Chase that are capable of accommodating demand in a more controlled manner and where environmental sensitivity is lower. These locations would function as defined gateway points for accessing the wider landscape.

In addition, it is recommended that the feasibility of providing a new car park near the junction of Chase Road and Camp Road is investigated. This would create a strategically located access point, helping to offset the loss of parking within the corridor while maintaining accessibility to this part of the Chase in a more managed and sustainable way.

More broadly, there is potential to enhance existing off-corridor parking provision or introduce new facilities at appropriate locations, subject to feasibility, land ownership and environmental considerations. Concentrating parking away from the corridor removes the current linear arrival pattern and supports a more controlled and resilient visitor management approach across the wider site.

Park & Stroll Approach

The full closure package establishes a Park & Stroll model across the entirety of the Chase Road corridor. Visitors would arrive at designated car parks outside the corridor and access Chase Road and the surrounding landscape on foot, by cycle or on horseback.

This approach removes vehicular penetration into the SAC along this route while maintaining recreational access. It shifts the visitor arrival dynamic from dispersed roadside stopping to defined gateway entry points, improving the predictability of movement patterns and reducing pressure on the most sensitive habitats.

The corridor would function as a key recreational spine within the landscape, providing a quieter, safer and more environmentally appropriate route for non-motorised users.

Wayfinding and Communication

Clear and consistent signage would be required at all entry points to Chase Road and along the surrounding highway network to communicate the closure to motor vehicles and direct visitors to appropriate alternative parking locations.

Interpretation and messaging would explain the rationale for the closure, including the ecological sensitivity of the Sherbrook and Oldacre corridors, the statutory obligations associated with the SAC, and the long-term objectives of habitat protection and restoration. Effective communication is critical to ensuring compliance, minimising confusion and building public understanding of the need for intervention.

Spatial Extent and Functional Logic

The closure would apply continuously along the full length of Chase Road between Brocton Nurseries and the Camp Road junction, creating a complete break in vehicular access through the corridor.

Physical access control measures would be installed at key entry points at the northern and southern extents to prevent unauthorised vehicular access. These measures would be designed to allow continued access for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, while also accommodating emergency and authorised vehicles where required.

Turning arrangements would be provided at appropriate locations outside the restricted corridor to ensure vehicles do not enter the route inadvertently. The design and positioning of infrastructure would take into account archaeological sensitivities, landscape considerations and the need to minimise visual intrusion.

The result would be a continuous vehicle-free corridor across the full length of Chase Road, removing the current function of the route as a vehicular access corridor.

Intended Outcome of the Integrated Package

The full closure package functions as a coordinated system rather than a single intervention. Vehicular access is removed entirely, parking provision is eliminated from within the corridor, visitor access is redirected to defined locations, and the route is re-established as a non-motorised corridor.

The intended outcome is the permanent removal of vehicle related disturbance, restoration of habitat continuity along the full length of the corridor, and a significant reduction in the factors contributing to fragmentation and ecological pressure.

This package provides the highest level of certainty in terms of environmental outcome, as it removes the primary driver of impact rather than seeking to manage or moderate it. By clearly defining where vehicular access is no longer permitted, it also simplifies enforcement and supports long-term management of the site.

Unlike partial or seasonal approaches, this intervention does not rely on spatial or temporal exceptions. Its effectiveness derives from clarity, permanence and the integration of restoration and visitor management measures alongside the closure.

Figure 6-5 illustrates the proposed extent of the full closure along the entire length of Chase Road. As the corridor would be closed to public motor vehicles in its entirety, there would be no requirement for verge protection or parking prevention measures associated with retained vehicular access.

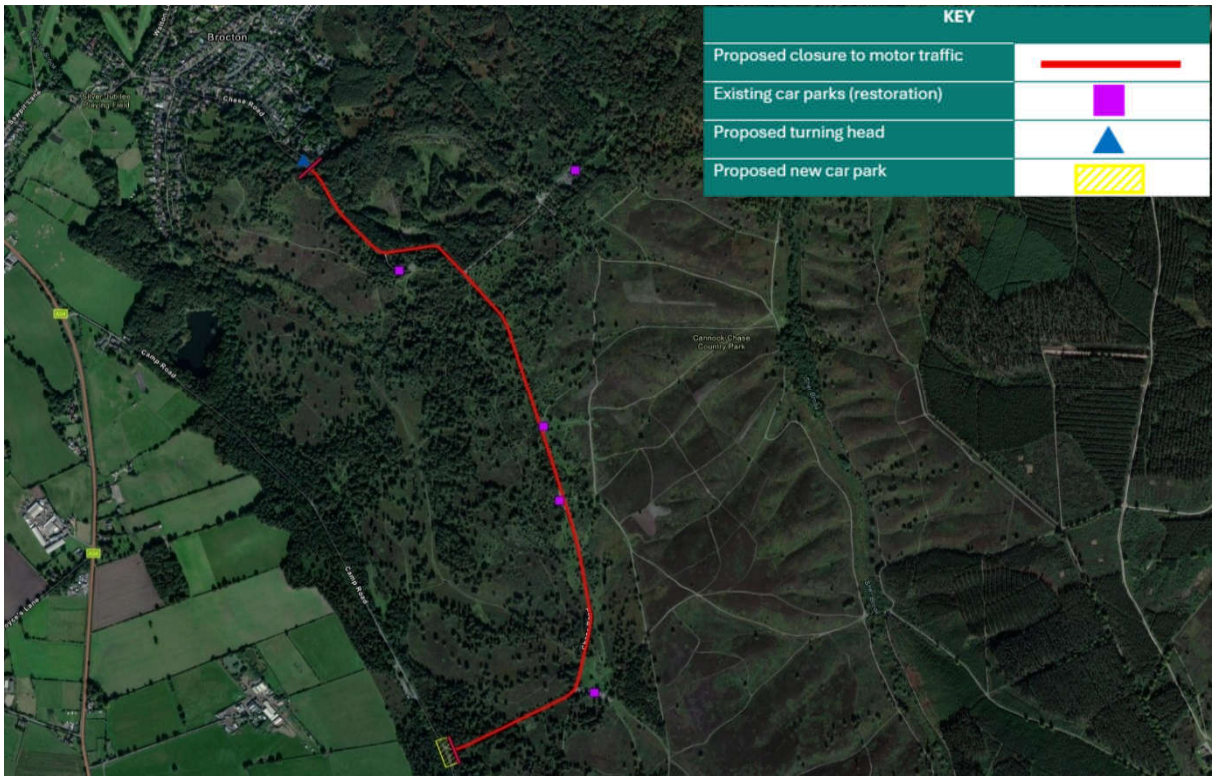


Figure 6-5 – Plan illustrating extents of motor vehicle closure for Package 1 Full Closure

To assist illustrate how a full closure may look along Chase Road, Figure 6-51 provides a visual representation of a closure using traffic filters, which is one of the more aesthetically pleasing types of closure that may work in the Cannock Chase setting. This shows the closure point by the junction with Camp Road to the south.



Figure 6-51 – Visualisation of a closure point along Chase Road using traffic filters

6.6 PACKAGE 2 – PARTIAL CLOSURE TO PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLES

Permanent closure of the central section of Chase Road to public motor vehicles, while retaining vehicular access from the north to Chase Vista and from the south to Chase Road Corner.

6.6.1 PACKAGE OVERVIEW

Package 2 proposes the permanent closure of Chase Road to public motor vehicles between the access to Chase Vista car park in the north and Chase Road Corner car park in the south, covering a corridor of approximately 1.35km.

The intention is to remove routine vehicular movement from this central section of the corridor, thereby addressing habitat fragmentation, verge degradation and traffic related disturbance within the most environmentally sensitive part of the Sherbrook and Oldacre corridor. Access would be retained for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, emergency services and authorised land management vehicles.

Vehicular access would remain available to the northern section of Chase Road up to Chase Vista car park, which would become the closest accessible parking location from the Brocton side. The closure point would be located just south of the car park access, preventing vehicles from travelling further into protected habitats while maintaining access to Chase Vista.

At the southern end, vehicular access would be retained to Chase Road Corner car park, with the closure point positioned immediately to the north of this location.

This approach removes vehicular through movement across the most sensitive central section while retaining access to the wider corridor. Unlike the Full Closure package, which removes vehicular access along the entire 2.4km corridor, this option represents a targeted intervention focused on the ecological core.

6.6.2 SUPPORTING MEASURES AND OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION

Removal, Restoration and Redistribution of Parking Provision

The effectiveness of the partial closure approach depends not only on preventing through traffic but also on removing parking provision within the closed section of the corridor that currently facilitates dispersed access into sensitive habitats.

Under this package, all formal and informal parking located between the northern and southern closure points would be removed. This includes the Coppice Hill, Glacial Boulder and Dry Pits car parks, as well as associated laybys and informal stopping areas. Coppice Hill is located deep within the most environmentally sensitive part of the corridor and is not considered appropriate to retain under this option.

The removal of these facilities represents a significant opportunity to return these areas to the natural environment, supporting habitat restoration and improving ecological connectivity across the Sherbrook and Oldacre corridor.

Restoration would involve the removal of hardstanding where present, soil decompaction where necessary, and reinstatement of heathland or woodland edge vegetation consistent with site management objectives. Physical containment measures, such as low bunding or naturalistic barriers, would be introduced where required to prevent future encroachment and ensure the long-term integrity of restored areas. Without these measures, there is a risk that informal stopping and access could persist at the margins of the restricted section, undermining the ecological benefits of the intervention.

The removal of parking from within the central corridor necessitates a clear and coordinated approach to accommodating displaced demand. Vehicular access would be retained to Chase Vista car park from the north and Chase Road Corner car park from the south, which would function as defined gateway locations for accessing the central corridor on foot, by cycle or on horseback.

Parking provision at these locations may be rationalised and enhanced to accommodate demand in a more controlled manner. Concentrating parking at clearly defined locations outside the most sensitive areas removes the existing linear arrival pattern and supports a more controlled and sustainable visitor management approach across the wider site.

Verge Protection Along Retained Sections of the Corridor

As vehicular access would be retained on the sections of Chase Road north of the closure point (just south of the access to Chase Vista car park) and south of Chase Road Corner car park (between the car park and Camp Road), verge protection measures would be required along these lengths to prevent informal parking and incremental habitat encroachment.

Physical containment measures, such as low bunding, timber barriers or sensitively designed post-and-rail fencing, would be introduced where necessary to discourage opportunistic stopping and protect verge habitats from continued degradation. These interventions would be targeted at locations where verge overrun, and informal parking currently occur or are likely to be displaced following implementation of the closure.

Within the closed section itself, verge protection would not be required to manage parking behaviour, as vehicular traffic would be removed entirely. Instead, the focus within this section would be on habitat restoration and the reinstatement of a continuous, vehicle free environment.

Verge protection along the retained sections is therefore a complementary measure to the partial closure, ensuring that parking pressure is not displaced beyond the closure points and that ecological benefits are realised consistently across the wider corridor.

Park & Stroll Approach

This package incorporates a Park & Stroll model across the central section of the corridor. Visitors would arrive at Chase Vista or Chase Road Corner and access the closed section via non-motorised modes.

This approach maintains recreational access while removing vehicular penetration into the most sensitive habitats. It also creates a clearer and more predictable pattern of visitor movement, reducing fragmentation and disturbance across the central corridor.

Wayfinding and Communication

Clear signage at closure points and along approach routes would communicate the restriction to motor vehicles and direct visitors towards Chase Vista, Chase Road Corner and other appropriate parking locations.

Interpretation would highlight the ecological sensitivity of the Sherbrook and Oldacre corridors and explain the rationale for the intervention. Effective communication is essential to minimise confusion, support compliance and reinforce the statutory context underpinning the access arrangements.

Spatial Extent and Functional Logic

The closure would apply between the junction of Chase Road and a point just south of the access to Chase Vista car park in the north and a point immediately north of Chase Road Corner car park in the south, creating a continuous vehicle-free section across the central corridor.

A key advantage of this configuration is that both closure points utilise existing junctions as turning heads. At the northern end, vehicles can turn at the Chase Vista car park access, while at the southern end, Chase Road Corner car park provides a natural turning facility. As a result, no additional turning infrastructure would be required, reducing both cost and physical intervention within the landscape.

Physical control measures would be installed at both closure points to prevent unauthorised vehicular access while maintaining permeability for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. Infrastructure would be carefully positioned to minimise landscape and archaeological impact.

The spatial logic of this package is targeted but efficient, focusing intervention where it delivers the greatest environmental benefit while limiting the need for new infrastructure.

Intended Outcome of the Integrated Package

The partial closure package functions as a coordinated system rather than a single intervention. Through traffic within the central section is eliminated, parking is removed from the most sensitive areas, and visitor access is concentrated at defined gateway locations.

The intended outcome is a sustained reduction in vehicular disturbance within sensitive habitats, improved ecological connectivity across the Sherbrook and Oldacre corridors, and enhanced tranquillity within the central landscape.

By clearly defining where vehicular access is retained and where it is restricted, the package provides a balanced and proportionate approach that is operationally efficient and cost-effective. Its effectiveness derives from the targeted removal of vehicular

pressure within the ecological core, supported by restoration and redistribution measures, rather than wholesale removal of access across the entire corridor.

Figure 6-6 illustrates the proposed extent of the partial closure to motor traffic along Chase Road, located between the access to Chase Vista car park in the north and Chase Road Corner car park in the south. This also identifies the sections of the corridor where verge protection and parking prevention measures would be required, namely between Brocton Nurseries and the northern closure point, and between Chase Road Corner car park and Camp Road, where vehicular access would remain.

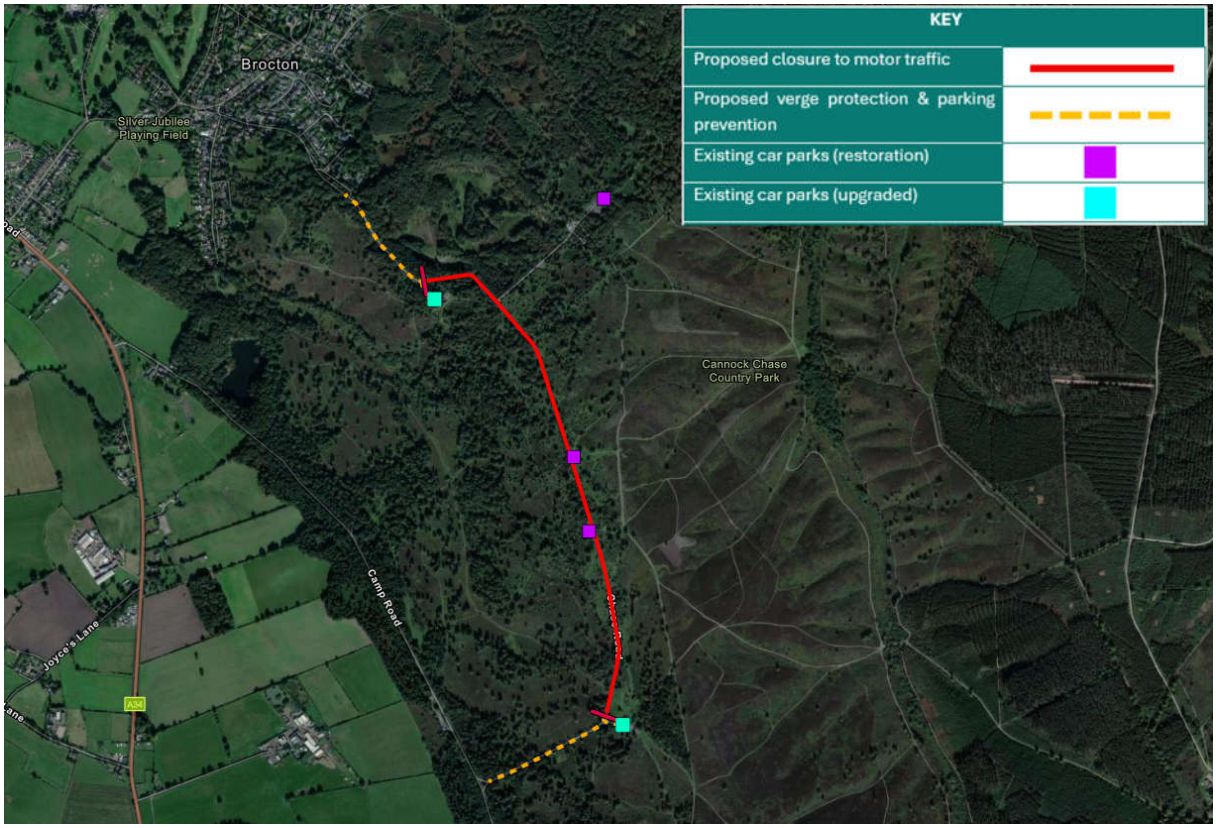


Figure 6-6 – Plan illustrating extents of motor vehicle closure for Package 2 Partial Closure

To assist in illustrating how the partial closure may appear along Chase Road, Figure 6-61 provides a visual representation of a closure using traffic filters, positioned immediately north of the junction with Chase Road Corner car park.



Figure 6-61 – Visualisation of a closure point along Chase Road using traffic filters

6.7 PACKAGE 3 – SEASONAL CLOSURE (MARCH–SEPTEMBER) TO PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLES

Seasonal closure of Chase Road to public motor vehicles between March and September, with vehicular access reinstated outside this period.

6.7.1 PACKAGE OVERVIEW

Package 3 proposes a seasonal restriction on public motor vehicle access along the full length of Chase Road, from the point at which the public highway transitions to bridleway near Brocton Nurseries in the north, to the junction with Camp Road in the south. This represents a corridor of approximately 2.4km.

During the defined ecological sensitivity window of March to September, vehicular access would be restricted along the entire corridor. Outside this period, vehicular access would be reinstated.

When in operation, this package functions in the same way as the Full Closure option, removing vehicular access entirely and establishing Chase Road as a continuous non-motorised route. The distinction lies in its temporal application, with access restrictions applied only during the period of greatest ecological sensitivity, particularly the bird breeding season.

This approach seeks to align access management with ecological need while retaining a degree of flexibility during lower sensitivity months.

6.7.2 SUPPORTING MEASURES AND OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION

Seasonal Access Control

Physical access controls would be installed at the northern and southern extents of Chase Road to enable seasonal restriction of the full corridor. These controls would

require secure and robust locking arrangements, with clear demarcation to ensure that the extent of the restriction is unambiguous during the defined closure period.

Operational arrangements would need to ensure reliable activation and deactivation at the start and end of the seasonal window, supported by clear communication to minimise confusion during transition periods. Over time, it is anticipated that regular users would adapt their travel behaviour to reflect the seasonal restriction, potentially reducing reliance on vehicular access even outside the closure period.

Verge Protection Along the Corridor

Although vehicular access would be removed entirely during the closure period, verge protection and habitat management measures would be implemented on a permanent basis rather than installed and removed seasonally. This reflects the need to manage informal parking behaviour and protect verge habitats throughout the year.

During the closure period, the absence of vehicles would allow for the restoration of verge and edge habitats across the full corridor. Outside the closure period, retained verge protection measures would help prevent the re-establishment of informal parking and limit incremental habitat degradation.

Closure infrastructure would be designed to prevent circumvention of the seasonal restriction, while integrated habitat management would ensure that ecological benefits are not undermined by seasonal variations in access.

Redistribution of Parking and Park & Stroll

During the restricted period, all parking along Chase Road would be unavailable. Visitor access would therefore be redirected to car parks located elsewhere within Cannock Chase, which would function as gateway locations.

A Park & Stroll approach would be established across the corridor, with visitors accessing Chase Road and the surrounding landscape on foot, by cycle or on horseback. This approach mirrors the Full Closure package during the operational period, removing vehicular penetration while maintaining recreational access.

Clear wayfinding would direct visitors to appropriate parking locations and discourage attempts to access the corridor by vehicle.

Communication and Ecological Messaging

A seasonal closure relies heavily on clarity, legitimacy and public understanding. Unlike a permanent restriction, this approach introduces a change in access arrangements at defined points in the year, requiring strong and consistent communication.

Messaging would clearly explain the ecological basis for the closure window, linking the restriction period to habitat sensitivity, ground nesting bird breeding cycles, and the vulnerability of heathland habitats to disturbance. Interpretation at access points and parking locations would set out the purpose of the intervention, emphasising the statutory duties associated with the SAC.

Advance signage, digital communications via the SAC Partnership, and seasonal reminders would support awareness prior to each activation period. This reduces the risk of non-compliance arising from misunderstanding and reinforces the intervention as an evidence-led management measure.

Spatial Extent and Functional Logic

The seasonal restriction would apply continuously along the full length of Chase Road between Brocton Nurseries and the Camp Road junction, matching the spatial extent of the Full Closure option during the operational period.

For approximately seven months of the year, the corridor would function as a vehicle free environment. For the remaining months, it would revert to its current vehicular role.

The logic of this package is therefore temporally targeted rather than spatially selective. The ecological benefit derives from removing vehicular disturbance during peak sensitivity, rather than permanently redefining the function of the corridor.

Intended Outcome of the Integrated Package

The Seasonal Closure package aims to reduce disturbance during the period of greatest ecological vulnerability while retaining vehicular access during lower sensitivity months.

By removing vehicular access along the full corridor during spring and summer, disturbance associated with traffic, parking and visitor dispersal would be significantly reduced during peak ecological risk. However, as vehicular access would resume outside the restricted period, ecological benefits would be periodic rather than continuous.

This package represents a time-based intervention that balances environmental protection with access flexibility, but with less certainty of long-term habitat recovery compared to permanent closure.

Figure 6-7 illustrates the full extent of the seasonal closure, which mirrors the Full Closure option during its operational period, along with the verge protection along the full length of the corridor due to the periods of the year vehicles can travel along the route.

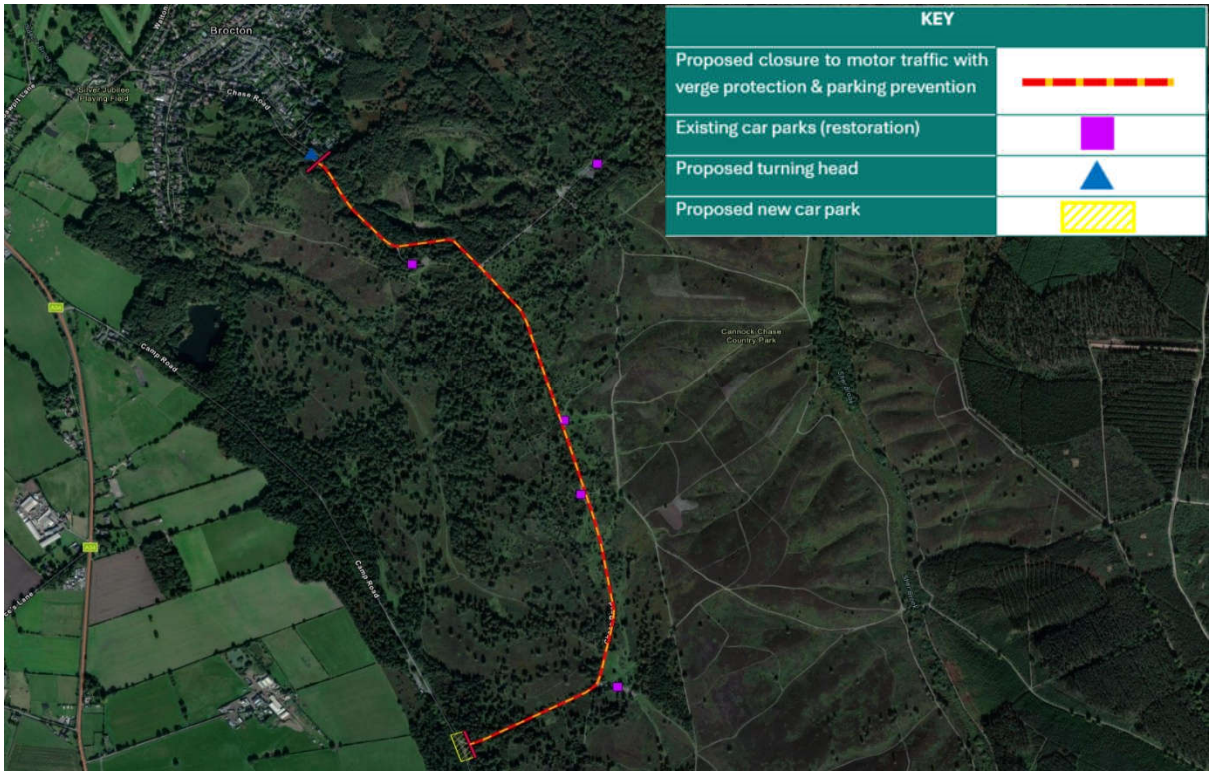


Figure 6-7 – Plan illustrating extents of motor vehicle closure for Package 3 Seasonal Closure (Mar-Sep)

Similarly to the full closure option, a seasonal closure (both the standard March–September period and the extended February–October option) can incorporate the provision of a new car park at the junction of Camp Road and Chase Road. This would be particularly important given that peak visitor demand coincides with the closure period, resulting in the loss of up to five car parks along the Chase Road corridor during these months.

The proposed facility would therefore play a key role in accommodating displaced demand in a more controlled and less environmentally sensitive location, ensuring continued accessibility to the area during peak periods. In addition, subject to feasibility, its delivery may enable the closure of Chase Road Corner car park and its restoration to the natural environment, further supporting habitat recovery along the corridor.

6.8 PACKAGE 3A – EXTENDED SEASONAL CLOSURE (FEBRUARY–OCTOBER) TO PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLES

Extended seasonal closure of Chase Road to public motor vehicles between February and October, providing a longer period of protection while retaining vehicular access during the winter months.

6.8.1 PACKAGE OVERVIEW

Package 3A proposes an extended seasonal restriction on public motor vehicle access along the full length of Chase Road, from the point at which the public highway transitions to bridleway near Brocton Nurseries in the north, to the junction with Camp Road in the south. This represents a corridor of approximately 2.4km.

Vehicular access would be restricted along the entire corridor between February and October, covering much of the active visitor season. Outside this period, vehicular access would be reinstated.

When in operation, this package functions in the same way as the Full Closure option, removing vehicular access entirely and establishing Chase Road as a continuous non-motorised route. The extended duration reflects a precautionary approach, recognising both ecological sensitivity and evolving visitor patterns, including early season activity and sustained autumn visitor pressure beyond the traditional breeding season.

6.8.2 SUPPORTING MEASURES AND OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION

Extended Seasonal Access Control

Physical access controls would be installed at the northern and southern extents of Chase Road to enable reliable restriction of the full corridor during the February–October period. Secure locking mechanisms, clear physical demarcation and advance signage would ensure that the limits of vehicular access are unambiguous.

Operational arrangements would require consistent annual activation and deactivation, supported by proactive communication ahead of each restriction period. Given that the corridor would be closed for approximately nine months of the year, it is anticipated that users would increasingly adapt their travel behaviour to reflect the predominant access arrangement. Over time, this may moderate traffic levels even during the shorter unrestricted winter window.

Verge Protection and Corridor Management

Verge protection and habitat management measures would be implemented on a permanent basis rather than seasonally installed and removed. While vehicular access would resume during the limited winter period (November–January), the extended duration of closure would provide longer uninterrupted periods for habitat recovery and reduce cumulative verge pressure.

During the closure period, the absence of vehicles would allow for restoration of verge and edge habitats across the full corridor. Outside the closure period, retained containment measures would discourage the re-establishment of informal parking and limit incremental habitat degradation.

Closure infrastructure would be designed to prevent circumvention, while permanent verge management would ensure that ecological benefits are maintained consistently across both restricted and unrestricted periods.

Removal and Redistribution of Parking Provision

During the closure period, all parking along Chase Road would be unavailable, reflecting the full corridor restriction. This would result in the temporary loss of up to five car parks during the peak visitor season, including Coppice Hill, Glacial Boulder, Dry Pits, Chase Vista and Chase Road Corner.

To accommodate displaced demand, visitor parking would be redirected to existing car parks elsewhere within Cannock Chase, supported by a clearly defined Park & Stroll approach.

Given that peak visitor demand coincides with the extended closure period, it is recommended that the feasibility of providing a new car park near the junction of Chase Road and Camp Road is investigated. This would provide a strategically located gateway, helping to offset the seasonal loss of parking capacity and maintain accessibility to this part of the Chase in a more controlled and sustainable manner.

Subject to delivery, this facility may also enable the closure of Chase Road Corner car park and its restoration to natural habitat, further contributing to environmental enhancement along the corridor.

Park & Stroll Approach

The extended seasonal closure reinforces a Park & Stroll model across the full corridor for most of the year. Visitors would arrive at designated car parks outside the corridor and access Chase Road and the surrounding landscape on foot, by cycle or on horseback.

This approach removes vehicular penetration during the period of greatest ecological sensitivity and highest visitor demand, while maintaining recreational access. Over time, this is expected to establish a clearer and more consistent pattern of visitor movement, reducing fragmentation and disturbance across the site.

Communication and Ecological Messaging

Given the extended duration of restriction, communication becomes central to the effectiveness and legitimacy of the package. Messaging would clearly explain the ecological basis for the February–October window, linking it to breeding cycles, habitat sensitivity and cumulative visitor pressure across both peak and transitional seasons.

Interpretation at access points and parking locations would articulate the statutory context and the rationale for the extended restriction. Advance notice via digital platforms, signage and seasonal reminders would support awareness and reduce confusion during transition periods.

By maintaining a consistent vehicle free condition for most of the year, this approach seeks to normalise non-motorised use of the corridor and encourage long-term behavioural change.

Spatial Extent and Functional Logic

The seasonal restriction would apply continuously along the full length of Chase Road between Brocton Nurseries and the Camp Road junction, matching the spatial extent of the Full Closure option during its operational period.

For approximately nine months of the year, the corridor would function as a vehicle free environment. During the remaining winter months, it would revert to its current vehicular role.

The functional logic is therefore both temporal and cumulative. By extending the restriction window, the corridor operates as a predominantly non-motorised environment for much of the year, reducing the intensity and frequency of disturbance across sensitive habitats.

Intended Outcome of the Integrated Package

The Extended Seasonal Closure package seeks to maximise ecological benefit through longer periods of reduced vehicular disturbance while retaining limited seasonal flexibility.

By removing vehicular access along the full corridor for most of the active visitor season, cumulative impacts associated with traffic, parking and dispersed access would be significantly reduced. Habitat recovery opportunities would be enhanced through longer uninterrupted vehicle-free periods.

While vehicular access would resume during winter months, the extended restriction window shifts the overall function of the corridor towards a predominantly non-motorised landscape. Unlike the Full Closure package, this change is not permanent, but it represents a substantial rebalancing of access in favour of environmental protection.

This package therefore provides a stronger and more precautionary temporal intervention than the standard seasonal option, while remaining distinct from the permanent structural change proposed under Full Closure.

Figure 6-7 illustrates the full extent of the closure, which mirrors both the Full Closure and standard Seasonal Closure options during their operational periods.

6.9 OVERVIEW OF SHORTLISTED PACKAGES

The four shortlisted packages represent distinct strategic approaches to managing vehicular access along Chase Road:

- **Package 1 – Full Closure:** Permanent closure of Chase Road to public motor vehicles along its full extent, from Brocton Nurseries in the north to the junction with Camp Road in the south (approximately 2.4km);
- **Package 2 – Targeted Partial Closure:** Permanent closure of a defined central section between the access to Chase Vista car park and Chase Road Corner car park (approximately 1.35km), removing through traffic while retaining vehicular access to either side;
- **Package 3 – Standard Seasonal Closure:** Temporary closure of the full length of Chase Road (approximately 2.4km) during the core ecological sensitivity period (March–September), with vehicular access reinstated outside this window;

- **Package 3A – Extended Seasonal Closure:** Temporary closure of the full length of Chase Road (approximately 2.4km) over an extended February–October period, reflecting a more precautionary approach to ecological protection.

Each package combines a primary access intervention with a range of supporting measures, including parking removal and redistribution, verge protection, habitat restoration, and visitor management strategies, to ensure that environmental benefits are realised and that displacement effects are effectively managed.

Table 6-9 provides a concise, at-a-glance comparison of the shortlisted packages, summarising how each option differs in terms of vehicular access, parking approach, spatial extent, and the key benefits and trade-offs associated with each intervention.

Package	Vehicle Access	Parking Approach	Spatial Extent	Key Benefit	Key Trade-Off
Package 1 – Full Closure	No public motor vehicle access along full corridor	All parking removed and relocated	Full 2.4km	Maximum ecological recovery	Loss of vehicular access
Package 2 – Partial Closure	Central section closed to vehicles	Parking retained at corridor ends	1.35km central section	Targets most sensitive areas	Less comprehensive impact
Package 3 – Seasonal	Vehicle access restricted (Mar–Sep)	All parking removed and relocated	Full corridor (seasonal)	Protects during breeding season	Reduced certainty
Package 3A – Extended Seasonal	Vehicle access restricted (Feb–Oct)	All parking removed and relocated	Full corridor (extended)	Strong seasonal benefit	Temporary intervention

Table 6-9 – Comparison of shortlisted packages

KEY FINDING – SHORTLISTED OPTIONS

The long list has been refined into four deliverable packages representing different approaches to managing vehicle access: Full Closure, Partial Closure, Standard Seasonal Closure and Extended Seasonal Closure. These packages provide a suitable range of permanent, spatial and seasonal interventions for detailed appraisal.

7.0 APPRAISAL OF SHORTLISTED OPTION PACKAGES

Key Points – Option Appraisal

- Four shortlisted packages have been assessed using the weighted multi-criteria framework;
- Full Closure performs strongest overall, driven by permanent removal of vehicular disturbance;
- Extended Seasonal and Standard Seasonal closures provide corridor wide benefit but with time limited effectiveness;
- Partial Closure offers a more balanced outcome but delivers reduced ecological benefit compared to corridor wide options;
- All options involve trade-offs, particularly between ecological protection, visitor access and community impact.

This chapter presents the structured comparative assessment of the shortlisted option packages identified in Chapter 6. Each package has been evaluated against the weighted appraisal criteria, using the scoring methodology described in Section 4.5.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a transparent and evidence-led comparison of how each package performs against environmental, access, community, deliverability and strategic objectives. The assessment compares the relative strengths, weaknesses and trade-offs associated with each package to be clearly understood.

The packages assessed are:

- **Package 1 –** Full Closure to Public Motor Vehicles;
- **Package 2 –** Partial Closure to Public Motor Vehicles;
- **Package 3 –** Seasonal Closure (March–September) to Public Motor Vehicles;
- **Package 3A –** Extended Seasonal Closure (February–October) to Public Motor Vehicles.

Each package is assessed under consistent thematic headings aligned to the appraisal criteria.

Table 7-0 provides a summary comparison of the four shortlisted packages against the appraisal criteria. It brings together the scoring presented in the following sections to enable a clear and immediate comparison of overall performance and key trade-offs.

Appraisal Criterion	Package 1 Full Closure	Package 2 Partial Closure	Package 3 Seasonal (Mar–Sep)	Package 3A Extended Seasonal (Feb–Oct)
Habitat & Species	5	3	3	4
Visitor Access & Inclusivity	1	3	3	2
Landscape & Heritage	5	3	3	4
Impact on Residents	1	2	2	2
Financial Cost & Sustainability	2	3	1	1
Deliverability & Practicality	3	3	3	3
Stakeholder Acceptability	2	3	2	2
Strategic Alignment	5	4	4	4
Overall Position	**Strongest Ecological Outcome**	**Balanced but Limited Benefit**	**Time-Limited Ecological Benefit**	**Strong Ecological Benefit**

Table 7-0 - Comparative assessment of shortlisted packages

7.1 PACKAGE 1 – FULL CLOSURE TO PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLES

This package achieves the strongest overall performance within the appraisal, reflecting its ability to comprehensively address the primary drivers of ecological impact along the Chase Road corridor.

From an ecological perspective, the permanent removal of public motor vehicle access along the full 2.4km length between Brocton Nurseries and the Camp Road junction would result in a substantial and sustained reduction in traffic related disturbance. Noise, emissions, verge encroachment and informal roadside parking pressure would be eliminated across the entire corridor, enabling large-scale habitat restoration and recovery. Critically, this approach addresses the underlying mechanism of habitat fragmentation, namely dispersed parking and unrestricted vehicular movement through the Sherbrook and Oldacre corridors. The removal of both through traffic and

destination-based access eliminates the linear disturbance effect associated with vehicle movement, providing the highest level of certainty in achieving long-term ecological benefit **(Score: 5)**.

These ecological and landscape benefits are reinforced by a significant enhancement in landscape character and tranquillity. The absence of parked vehicles, verge damage and informal encroachment would reduce visual clutter and allow the landscape to return to a more natural and cohesive condition. Restoration of former car parks, laybys and verge areas would further improve ecological connectivity and strengthen landscape continuity. While physical closure infrastructure would be required at key access points, this can be designed sensitively to minimise visual and heritage impacts, resulting in an overall strongly positive outcome **(Score: 5)**.

However, these benefits are balanced by substantial implications for access and residents. The removal of all vehicular access along the corridor represents a fundamental change to established access patterns, requiring visitors to access the area via alternative car parks within the wider Cannock Chase area. While pedestrian, cycling and equestrian access would be retained and enhanced through the removal of vehicle conflict, the loss of corridor based parking and direct vehicular access would increase walking distances and reduce convenience, particularly for those with limited mobility **(Score: 1)**.

The redistribution of traffic and parking demand also introduces potential impacts for local residents. Traffic would be displaced onto the surrounding highway network, potentially increasing journey lengths and concentrating vehicle movements elsewhere. There is also a risk of parking displacement to nearby roads and access points, which could affect residential amenity during peak periods. While the removal of traffic within the corridor may provide localised benefits, the wider redistribution of demand is likely to be perceived as adverse **(Score: 1)**.

In financial terms, this option represents a high capital cost intervention due to the scale of works required. This includes the installation of access control infrastructure, the removal and restoration of five established car parks and numerous informal parking areas, and the construction of replacement parking provision near the Camp Road junction. While long-term maintenance requirements would reduce as a result of removing vehicular wear and verge damage, the extent of restoration and new infrastructure results in a significant upfront cost **(Score: 2)**.

From a deliverability perspective, the intervention is technically straightforward, with limited engineering complexity and minimal ongoing operational requirements. However, the scale and permanence of change introduce delivery risks associated with stakeholder opposition and statutory processes, including potential objections related to access rights and common land considerations. These factors may affect programme certainty but are not considered insurmountable **(Score: 3)**.

In terms of stakeholder acceptability, the package is likely to generate contrasting responses. Environmental and statutory stakeholders are likely to support the approach

as the most effective means of addressing ecological pressures and meeting statutory requirements. Conversely, user groups reliant on vehicular access may consider the intervention disproportionate, particularly in relation to accessibility and convenience, resulting in a higher likelihood of opposition **(Score: 2)**.

Overall, this package demonstrates strong alignment with the objectives of the Cannock Chase SAC mitigation programme and relevant statutory duties. It directly addresses recreational pressure and habitat fragmentation, supports compliance with the Habitats Regulations, and contributes positively to the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape. As such, it represents a high-impact, high-certainty intervention, prioritising long-term ecological protection over the retention of vehicular access **(Score: 5)**.

7.2 PACKAGE 2 – PARTIAL CLOSURE TO PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLES

This package delivers a moderate level of overall performance, reflecting a targeted intervention that reduces vehicular disturbance within the most sensitive section of the corridor while retaining access elsewhere.

From an ecological perspective, the removal of through traffic within the central section of Chase Road provides a meaningful reduction in disturbance within the Sherbrook and Oldacre corridors, where ecological sensitivity is greatest. This reduces habitat fragmentation and limits the intensity of vehicular intrusion within the most affected areas. However, the continued presence of vehicular access at the northern and southern extents of the corridor means that disturbance is not removed at a corridor wide scale. Parking and vehicle activity would persist in these areas, limiting the overall extent of ecological recovery and reducing the certainty of long-term outcomes **(Score: 3)**.

Landscape benefits are similarly localised. Within the restricted section, the removal of traffic and roadside parking would reduce visual intrusion, improve tranquillity and enable restoration of verges and former parking areas. However, the continuation of vehicular activity outside this section results in a more fragmented landscape outcome, with improvements confined to part of the corridor rather than delivering a cohesive, corridor wide enhancement **(Score: 3)**.

In contrast to more comprehensive restrictions, this package performs more favourably in terms of access and inclusivity. Retaining vehicular access to both ends of the corridor allows continued use of key areas and maintains a degree of flexibility for visitors. While through movement is prevented, the ability to access parts of the corridor by vehicle reduces the overall impact on accessibility compared to full closure **(Score: 3)**.

The impact on local residents is correspondingly more moderate. While changes to movement patterns would occur within the central section, access to surrounding areas is maintained, limiting the extent of disruption. Traffic redistribution is expected to be less pronounced than under full closure, although some displacement of parking demand may still occur at the ends of the corridor **(Score: 2)**.

From a financial perspective, this option represents a moderate level of capital cost. Works would include the installation of access control infrastructure at the limits of the restricted section, the removal and restoration of informal parking within that area, and potential localised verge protection measures. As parking provision is largely retained, there is less need for significant new infrastructure compared to full closure, resulting in a more proportionate cost profile **(Score: 3)**.

In terms of deliverability, the intervention is technically straightforward and can be implemented with standard access control measures. As the scale of restriction is more limited, the level of stakeholder opposition is likely to be reduced compared to full closure, supporting a more manageable delivery process. However, some objections may still arise in relation to access changes within the restricted section **(Score: 3)**.

Stakeholder acceptability is expected to be moderate. The retention of access to parts of the corridor is likely to be viewed positively by some users, although others may question the effectiveness of a partial approach in addressing ecological pressures. Environmental stakeholders may consider that the level of intervention does not go far enough to fully address habitat impacts **(Score: 3)**.

In terms of strategic alignment, the package provides a degree of alignment with the objectives of the SAC mitigation programme by targeting the most sensitive areas. However, as vehicular access is not removed across the full corridor, it does not fully address the underlying drivers of ecological impact and therefore represents a partial rather than comprehensive solution **(Score: 4)**.

Overall, this package represents a targeted intervention, delivering localised ecological benefits while retaining vehicular access across parts of the corridor, but with reduced certainty in achieving corridor-wide outcomes.

7.3 PACKAGE 3 – SEASONAL CLOSURE (MARCH–SEPTEMBER) TO PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLES

This package provides a moderate level of performance, reflecting a time-based approach that aligns vehicular access restrictions with the core ecological sensitivity period.

Ecologically, the restriction of vehicular access during the breeding season results in a reduction in disturbance at the time when habitats and species are most vulnerable. This provides meaningful benefit by limiting traffic related impacts during key periods, including reductions in noise, emissions and informal parking pressure. However, the reintroduction of vehicular activity outside this period means that disturbance is not permanently removed. This cyclical pattern of impact and recovery limits the extent of long-term ecological gain and reduces certainty compared to permanent interventions **(Score: 3)**.

Landscape benefits follow a similar pattern. During the closure period, the absence of vehicular traffic and roadside parking enhances tranquillity and reduces visual intrusion.

However, these benefits are temporary, with the landscape returning to its existing condition during winter months when vehicular access is reinstated **(Score: 3)**.

This package performs more favourably in terms of access and inclusivity than permanent options, as vehicular access is retained for part of the year. This allows continued use of the corridor outside the restriction period, maintaining flexibility for visitors and reducing the overall impact on accessibility. However, access is still restricted during a significant portion of the year, which may affect users during peak periods **(Score: 3)**.

The impact on local residents is similarly moderated. While access restrictions during the closure period may result in some displacement of traffic and parking demand, these effects are limited to part of the year. Outside the restriction period, existing access arrangements are restored, reducing the overall level of disruption **(Score: 2)**.

From a financial perspective, this option introduces both capital and ongoing operational costs. Infrastructure such as gates or barriers would be required to enable seasonal closure, alongside a management regime to open, close and monitor access. These ongoing requirements increase the lifecycle cost compared to permanent physical closures **(Score: 1)**.

In terms of deliverability, the option is technically feasible but introduces additional complexity associated with seasonal operation and enforcement. Ensuring compliance with closure periods may require ongoing management and monitoring, increasing operational demands **(Score: 3)**.

Stakeholder acceptability is expected to be moderate, as the retention of access outside the closure period may be viewed positively by some users. However, others may perceive the seasonal restriction as inconvenient or inconsistent, particularly where access is limited during popular times of year **(Score: 2)**.

Strategically, the package aligns with the objectives of the SAC mitigation programme by reducing disturbance during key ecological periods. However, as it does not provide a permanent solution, it offers a lower level of certainty in addressing long-term ecological pressures compared to more comprehensive interventions **(Score: 4)**.

7.4 PACKAGE 3A – EXTENDED SEASONAL CLOSURE (FEBRUARY–OCTOBER) TO PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLES

This package performs strongly overall, reflecting a longer duration of vehicular restriction that extends beyond the core breeding season to encompass a wider ecological and visitor pressure window.

From an ecological perspective, the extended closure period delivers a substantial reduction in disturbance across the majority of the year, covering both peak ecological sensitivity and peak visitor activity. This provides a higher level of benefit than the standard seasonal approach by reducing the frequency and duration of disturbance events. However, as vehicular access is still reinstated during winter months, the

intervention does not achieve the same level of permanence or certainty as full closure, and some cyclical disturbance remains **(Score: 4)**.

Landscape benefits are correspondingly more sustained than under shorter seasonal restrictions. For most of the year, the absence of vehicular activity enhances tranquillity, reduces visual intrusion and allows for recovery of verge and roadside areas. While these benefits are not permanent, they represent a significant improvement over existing conditions for an extended period **(Score: 4)**.

In terms of access and inclusivity, the longer restriction period results in greater impact than the standard seasonal option. Vehicular access is unavailable for a substantial proportion of the year, reducing flexibility for visitors and increasing reliance on alternative access points. However, access is still retained during winter months, meaning the option remains less restrictive than full closure **(Score: 2)**.

The impact on residents reflects this extended restriction. While access is not permanently removed, the longer closure period increases the duration over which traffic redistribution and parking displacement may occur. However, the retention of winter access provides some mitigation and reduces the overall level of impact compared to permanent closure **(Score: 2)**.

From a financial perspective, this option involves both capital and ongoing operational costs like the standard seasonal approach, but with increased operational requirements due to the longer duration of closure. This results in a moderate to high-cost profile over the lifecycle of the intervention **(Score: 1)**.

In terms of deliverability, the option is technically feasible but requires ongoing management to operate and enforce closure periods. The extended duration increases the importance of effective monitoring and compliance but does not introduce fundamentally different delivery challenges **(Score: 3)**.

Stakeholder acceptability is likely to be mixed. While some users may support the stronger ecological focus, others may consider the extended restriction period to be disproportionate, particularly in relation to access and convenience. As with other seasonal options, perceptions are likely to vary depending on user needs **(Score: 2)**.

Strategically, this package demonstrates strong alignment with the objectives of the SAC mitigation programme, providing a substantial reduction in disturbance across key periods while supporting the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape. However, the absence of a permanent restriction means that it does not fully eliminate the underlying drivers of ecological impact **(Score: 4)**.

7.5 COMPARATIVE SUMMARY AND WEIGHTED ASSESSMENT

7.5.1 WEIGHTED SCORING SUMMARY

The weighted appraisal has been calculated using the criteria and weightings set out in Section 4.5. Scores are out of 5 and multiplied by weighting. Table 7-5 provides the weighted results for Package 1 – Full Closure.

Criterion	Score	Weight	Weighted
Habitat & Species Benefit (HAB)	5	25	125
Visitor Access & Inclusivity (ACC)	1	15	15
Landscape & Heritage Impact (LAN)	5	15	75
Impact on Residents (RES)	1	15	15
Financial Cost & Sustainability (FIN)	2	10	20
Deliverability & Practicality (DEL)	3	10	30
Stakeholder & Public Acceptability (SOC)	2	10	20
Strategic Alignment (STR)	5	10	50
Total			**350**

Table 7-5 – Weighted Scores for Package 1 Full Closure

Table 7-51 provides the weighted results for Package 2 – Partial Closure.

Criterion	Score	Weight	Weighted
Habitat & Species Benefit (HAB)	3	25	75
Visitor Access & Inclusivity (ACC)	3	15	45
Landscape & Heritage Impact (LAN)	3	15	45
Impact on Residents (RES)	2	15	30
Financial Cost & Sustainability (FIN)	3	10	30
Deliverability & Practicality (DEL)	3	10	30
Stakeholder & Public Acceptability (SOC)	3	10	30
Strategic Alignment (STR)	4	10	40
Total			**325**

Table 7-51 – Weighted Scores for Package 2 Partial Closure

Table 7-52 provides the weighted results for Package 3 – Seasonal Closure (Mar–Sep).

Criterion	Score	Weight	Weighted
Habitat & Species Benefit (HAB)	3	25	75
Visitor Access & Inclusivity (ACC)	3	15	45
Landscape & Heritage Impact (LAN)	3	15	45
Impact on Residents (RES)	2	15	30
Financial Cost & Sustainability (FIN)	1	10	10
Deliverability & Practicality (DEL)	3	10	30
Stakeholder & Public Acceptability (SOC)	2	10	20
Strategic Alignment (STR)	4	10	40
Total			**295**

Table 7-52 – Weighted Scores for Package 3 Seasonal Closure (Mar–Sep)

Table 7-53 provides the weighted results for Package 3A – Extended Seasonal Closure (Feb–Oct).

Criterion	Score	Weight	Weighted
Habitat & Species Benefit (HAB)	4	25	100
Visitor Access & Inclusivity (ACC)	2	15	30
Landscape & Heritage Impact (LAN)	4	15	60
Impact on Residents (RES)	2	15	30
Financial Cost & Sustainability (FIN)	1	10	10
Deliverability & Practicality (DEL)	3	10	30
Stakeholder & Public Acceptability (SOC)	2	10	20
Strategic Alignment (STR)	4	10	40
Total			**320**

Table 7-53 – Weighted Scores for Package 3A Extended Seasonal Closure (Feb–Oct)

7.5.2 COMPARATIVE INTERPRETATION

The weighted results indicate the following ranking:

1. **Package 1 –** Full Closure (350)
2. **Package 2 –** Partial Closure (325)
3. **Package 3A –** Extended Seasonal Closure (320)
4. **Package 3 –** Seasonal (295).

The separation between packages reflects differences in ecological strength, duration of disturbance removal, and the cumulative influence of weighted criteria, particularly Habitat & Species Benefit, which carries the highest weighting (25%).

Full Closure achieves the highest score as it removes vehicular disturbance permanently along the full 2.4km corridor between Brocton Nurseries and the Camp Road junction. This provides continuous ecological benefit, removes the primary driver of habitat fragmentation, and enables long-term recovery without interruption.

Partial Closure performs next strongest, providing a targeted intervention between the Chase Road Vista car park junction and Chase Road Corner car park. This would remove through traffic from the most sensitive section of the corridor while retaining vehicular access elsewhere, delivering a meaningful reduction in disturbance with fewer access and community impacts than Full Closure. Extended Seasonal Closure follows, providing corridor-wide disturbance reduction for the majority of the year (February–October), while Standard Seasonal Closure provides a more time limited intervention aligned principally with the core breeding season.

Given the weighting applied to ecological performance, the scale and duration of disturbance removal are key differentiators. Corridor wide and longer-duration interventions perform more strongly.

The scoring framework also captures trade-offs. Full Closure performs strongly in ecological and landscape terms but scores lower for Visitor Access & Inclusivity and Impact on Residents due to the permanent removal of vehicular access. Seasonal and partial options moderate these effects to varying degrees, offering greater flexibility but reduced ecological certainty.

The distinction between Full Closure and Extended Seasonal Closure is primarily one of permanence. While both reduce disturbance across the full corridor, the seasonal option allows reintroduction of vehicle activity during winter months, creating a cyclical pattern of impact and recovery that limits long-term ecological gain.

By contrast, permanent closure enables sustained habitat recovery and represents a fundamental change in corridor function rather than a time limited management measure. The difference in weighted scoring reflects this distinction in certainty and resilience of outcome.

Overall, the results demonstrate a clear hierarchy, with Full Closure achieving the strongest overall performance, followed by Extended Seasonal Closure. Partial Closure performs slightly better than Standard Seasonal Closure, indicating that a more targeted permanent restriction can outperform a shorter duration corridor wide seasonal measure when assessed across the full range of criteria.

7.6 OVERALL OBSERVATIONS

The appraisal confirms that the principal distinction between packages lies in the scale, duration and permanence of intervention.

- Full Closure represents a structural redefinition of the corridor, removing vehicular access along the full 2.4km length on a permanent basis. This delivers the highest level of ecological certainty but introduces the most significant change to established access patterns.
- Extended Seasonal Closure (February–October) provides a corridor wide intervention for most of the year, delivering substantial ecological benefit while retaining limited winter access.
- Partial Closure focuses on a defined central section, removing through movement within the most sensitive area while retaining vehicular access elsewhere.
- Standard Seasonal Closure (March–September) aligns restrictions to the core breeding season, balancing ecological protection with greater seasonal flexibility.

The analysis demonstrates a clear relationship between ecological performance and the degree of access restriction. Options that remove vehicular access across the full corridor deliver stronger ecological outcomes but have greater implications for accessibility and community impact. More targeted or time-limited interventions moderate these effects but provide reduced ecological certainty.

The choice between packages therefore turns on the relative importance placed on long-term ecological protection versus the retention of vehicular access.

In addition to ecological and access considerations, delivery risks have been reviewed at a strategic level. Cannock Chase is an area of recognised archaeological sensitivity, with both designated and non-designated heritage assets present within the wider landscape. While the shortlisted packages focus on access management, certain elements such as access control infrastructure, verge stabilisation, habitat restoration and any new or enhanced parking provision may require limited ground disturbance.

Any preferred option would require early engagement with the County Archaeologist and proportionate assessment where necessary. Options involving more extensive physical intervention may present a higher level of archaeological exposure; however, all packages are considered deliverable subject to appropriate mitigation and adherence to established heritage management processes.

Archaeological considerations are therefore regarded as a manageable delivery risk rather than a constraint on feasibility.

KEY FINDING – TECHNICAL APPRAISAL

Full Closure achieves the highest weighted appraisal score (350), reflecting the scale and permanence of its ecological benefits. Partial Closure ranks second (325), providing a more balanced intervention that delivers permanent environmental benefit within the most sensitive central section while retaining vehicular access from either end of Chase Road. Extended Seasonal Closure scores 320, followed by Standard Seasonal Closure at 295.

8.0 COST ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Key Points – Financial Overview

- All packages require significant capital investment, reflecting the need for access control, parking changes and habitat restoration;
- Full Closure and Seasonal options have the highest cost profiles due to corridor-wide intervention and car park reconfiguration;
- Partial Closure presents the lowest capital cost but delivers more limited environmental benefit;
- Seasonal options introduce additional operational and maintenance requirements due to ongoing management;
- Cost differences between packages should be considered alongside the scale and certainty of ecological benefit delivered.

8.1 INTRODUCTION AND COSTING APPROACH

This chapter sets out indicative cost estimates associated with each shortlisted Option Package. As the appraisal remains at a strategic stage, detailed design has not yet been undertaken, and no statutory processes have been initiated. Accordingly, all figures are presented as broad cost ranges reflecting the current level of information and typical benchmark rates for rural access management schemes of comparable scale.

The estimates distinguish between capital delivery costs, professional and statutory costs, and ongoing operational expenditure. This approach ensures that stakeholders understand not only the cost of physical infrastructure but also the associated expenditure required to lawfully and robustly implement any intervention.

All figures exclude VAT and are presented in current price terms.

8.2 COST COMPONENTS COMMON TO ALL PACKAGES

While the scale of physical intervention differs between packages, several cost elements would apply across all options to varying degrees. These reflect the statutory, ecological and governance context of Cannock Chase.

8.2.1 DETAILED DESIGN AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT

Before any works could proceed, technical development would be required to translate the preferred package into a deliverable scheme. This would typically include:

- Assessment of landscape impacts;
- Topographical surveys;
- Detailed engineering design;

- Rights of Way and legal mapping review;
- Traffic Regulation Order preparation (if required);
- Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (where applicable);
- Archaeological desk-based assessment;
- Accessibility and Inclusive Access Audit.

These activities are necessary to ensure that any intervention is legally robust, technically sound and environmentally compliant.

Indicative range: £50,000 – £100,000

The upper end of this range reflects scenarios where additional survey seasons or iterative design amendments are required following consultation or objection.

8.2.2 LEGAL AND STATUTORY PROCESSES

Given the rights of way status and common land context of Chase Road, statutory processes may be triggered depending on the final form of intervention, including:

- Traffic Regulation Orders;
- Public consultation administration;
- Commons Act Section 38 consent (if restricted works are engaged);
- Rights of Way orders or legal modifications;
- Legal drafting and objection handling.

The cost of statutory processes is inherently uncertain and increases if formal objections lead to extended determination procedures.

Indicative range: £25,000 – £50,000

Costs would escalate if Public Inquiry procedures were required.

8.2.3 ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEYS

Given the SAC designation and presence of Schedule 1 bird species, robust ecological evidence would be required to support implementation. This would typically include:

- Extended Phase 1 habitat update;
- Breeding bird survey programme;
- Protected species checks (as required);
- Habitats Regulations Assessment support;
- Ecological clerk of works during construction.

These surveys are not discretionary, they form part of the statutory duty to avoid adverse effects on integrity.

Indicative range: £20,000 – £60,000

The upper range reflects multi-season survey requirements.

8.2.4 MONITORING AND POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

All shortlisted packages would require post implementation monitoring to demonstrate effectiveness and manage adaptive response. Monitoring may include:

- Visitor and parking counts;
- Habitat condition surveys;
- Displacement assessment;
- Compliance monitoring.

Indicative annual monitoring cost: £10,000 – £25,000

Monitoring costs would be ongoing and should be factored into medium-term financial planning.

8.3 PACKAGE SPECIFIC DELIVERY COSTS

The principal cost variation between packages arises from the scale, permanence and spatial extent of physical intervention. Packages that involve corridor wide structural change, permanent infrastructure installation and habitat restoration across a larger footprint naturally attract higher capital costs. Conversely, more targeted or time bound interventions reduce the extent of civil works but may introduce operational and management expenditure.

In addition to physical works, cost differences are influenced by the degree of restoration required, the complexity of access control infrastructure, and the potential need for associated parking reconfiguration at gateway locations. The following sections outline the primary delivery cost drivers for each package.

8.3.1 PACKAGE 1 – FULL CLOSURE (2.4KM CORRIDOR)

The intervention represents a fundamental redefinition of the 2.4km corridor from a vehicular route to a predominantly non-motorised recreational environment.

Delivery costs are driven primarily by the extent of restoration required following the removal of vehicular access. This includes the closure and reinstatement of five established car parks, together with numerous informal laybys and areas of verge encroachment along the corridor. These areas would be returned to natural habitat through hardstanding removal, soil decompaction and re-vegetation.

In addition, the redistribution of parking demand necessitates the provision of a new car park at the junction of Chase Road and Camp Road. This would serve as a key gateway location during peak periods and is a critical component of the overall access strategy. A turning head would also be required at the northern closure point near Brocton Nurseries to enable safe vehicle manoeuvring.

Unlike other options, verge protection measures are not required, as vehicular access would be removed along the full corridor.

Capital works would typically include:

- Permanent gates or bollards at closure points: **£10,000 – £20,000**
- Removal and habitat restoration of five existing car parks (approx £50,000 each): **£250,000**
- Removal of informal laybys and edge encroachment: **£20,000 – £40,000**
- Habitat restoration and soil decompaction across the corridor: **£20,000 – £50,000**
- Construction of new car park at Chase Road / Camp Road junction: **£150,000 – £200,000**
- Turning head at Brocton Nurseries: **£25,000 – £50,000**
- Signage and interpretation: **£5,000 – £10,000**

The scale of restoration and new infrastructure requirements results in a significantly higher capital cost than other options.

Indicative capital range: £480,000 – £620,000

Including professional fees, ecological surveys, legal processes and contingency:

Total estimated range: £550,000 – £750,000

The upper range reflects uncertainty associated with detailed restoration requirements, potential archaeological constraints, drainage considerations and any statutory processes required to implement permanent closure.

8.3.2 PACKAGE 2 – PARTIAL CLOSURE

Delivery costs are driven by a combination of targeted restoration within the closed section, upgrades to retained gateway parking locations, and the implementation of verge protection along sections of the corridor that remain open to traffic.

The package includes the removal and reinstatement of three car park locations within the closed section (Coppice Hill, Glacial Boulder and Dry Pits), together with associated informal parking areas. These sites would be restored to natural habitat through hardstanding removal, soil decompaction and re-vegetation.

To accommodate displaced demand and provide suitable gateway access, improvements to Chase Road Corner car park (assumed £180,000) and Chase Vista car park (assumed £90,000) are required. These upgrades form a key component of the package, ensuring that retained access points operate effectively and minimise unmanaged parking pressure.

Verge protection measures would also be required along retained sections of Chase Road (north of the closure point and south towards Camp Road) to prevent displacement of informal parking and protect verge habitats from further degradation.

Capital works would include:

- Closure infrastructure at northern and southern extents: **£10,000 – £20,000**
- Removal and habitat restoration of three existing car parks (approx £50,000 each): **£150,000**
- Removal of informal laybys and edge encroachment: **£10,000 – £25,000**
- Habitat restoration and soil decompaction within closed section: **£10,000 – £30,000**
- Improvements to Chase Road Corner car park: **£180,000**
- Improvements to Chase Vista car park: **£90,000**
- Verge protection along retained sections: **£25,000 – £50,000**
- Signage and wayfinding: **£5,000 – £10,000**

While more spatially targeted than the full closure option, the need for car park upgrades and verge protection results in a moderate capital cost profile.

Indicative capital range: £480,000 – £555,000

Including professional fees, surveys, legal processes and contingency:

Total estimated range: £510,000 – £600,000

This represents a proportionate level of investment relative to the scale of intervention, while remaining materially lower than the full corridor closure.

8.3.3 PACKAGE 3 – SEASONAL CLOSURE (MARCH–SEPTEMBER)

When operational, the corridor functions in the same way as the Full Closure option, requiring equivalent supporting infrastructure and restoration measures. As such, capital costs are largely consistent with the Full Closure package. This includes the removal and reinstatement of the five established car parks, together with informal laybys and areas of verge encroachment. These areas would be restored to natural habitat through hardstanding removal, soil decompaction and re-vegetation.

Provision of a new car park at the junction of Chase Road and Camp Road would also be required to accommodate displaced demand during the closure period, alongside the construction of a turning head at the northern closure point near Brocton Nurseries.

In addition to these elements, seasonal operation introduces further requirements. Verge protection measures would need to be implemented along the full length of the corridor to prevent informal parking and habitat degradation during periods when vehicular access is reinstated. This represents a significant additional cost compared to the Full Closure option.

Furthermore, access control infrastructure must be designed for repeated annual operation, requiring durable, secure and maintainable systems capable of regular locking and unlocking.

Capital works would typically include:

- Permanent gates or bollards at corridor extents: **£10,000 – £20,000**
- Removal and habitat restoration of five existing car park (approx £50,000 each): **£250,000**
- Removal of informal laybys and edge encroachment: **£20,000 – £40,000**
- Habitat restoration and soil decompaction: **£20,000 – £50,000**
- Construction of new car park at Chase Road / Camp Road junction: **£150,000 – £200,000**
- Turning head at Brocton Nurseries: **£25,000 – £50,000**
- Verge protection along full corridor: **Circa £100,000**
- Signage and seasonal communication infrastructure: **£5,000 – £10,000**

While similar in capital scope to the Full Closure option, the addition of verge protection and the requirement for operational infrastructure increases overall cost.

Indicative capital range: £580,000 – £720,000

Including professional fees, ecological surveys, legal processes, operational setup and contingency:

Total estimated range: £650,000 – £850,000

In addition to capital costs, this option introduces ongoing operational expenditure associated with annual activation, enforcement and communication, making it one of the more resource intensive options over the longer term.

8.3.4 PACKAGE 3A – EXTENDED SEASONAL CLOSURE (FEBRUARY–OCTOBER)

Capital costs for this package are broadly comparable to Package 3, as infrastructure requirements remain similar.

The extended restriction window may increase operational coordination and communication costs, though not significantly alter civil engineering scope.

Indicative capital range: £580,000 – £720,000

Total estimated range: £650,000 – £850,000

8.4 COMPARATIVE COST SUMMARY

Table 8-4 below presents an indicative comparison of total anticipated costs for each shortlisted package, combining capital delivery costs with associated enabling expenditure. Ranges reflect the early-stage nature of the appraisal and account for

variability in design specification, ground conditions, statutory process requirements, ecological mitigation scope and contingency allowances.

Package	Indicative Total Range
Package 1 – Full Closure	£550,000 – £750,000
Package 3A – Extended Seasonal	£650,000 – £850,000
Package 3 – Standard Seasonal	£650,000 – £850,000
Package 2 – Partial Closure	£510,000 – £600,000

Table 8-4 – Indicative cost comparison between each shortlisted package

The financial hierarchy broadly mirrors intervention scale, with corridor wide structural change attracting higher capital exposure.

8.5 ONGOING MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONAL COSTS

All shortlisted packages introduce ongoing management and maintenance responsibilities. While capital costs represent the primary upfront investment, the long-term effectiveness of any access management intervention will depend on consistent inspection, enforcement, habitat management and monitoring. These recurring commitments should be factored into medium and long-term budget planning.

Likely annual costs include:

Barrier and gate inspection (£500 – £1,000): Routine inspection, minor repairs, lubrication of moving components, lock replacement and response to vandalism or misuse.

Signage maintenance (£250 – £500): Cleaning, repair or replacement of regulatory and interpretation signage, and updates where seasonal restrictions apply.

Verge and habitat management (£5,000 – £10,000): Ongoing vegetation management, monitoring of reinstated areas, minor remedial works to bunding or containment measures, and ecological aftercare to support habitat establishment.

Monitoring programme (£1,000 – £2,000): Periodic ecological surveys, visitor monitoring, parking behaviour surveys and data analysis to assess the effectiveness of the intervention and inform adaptive management.

8.6 FINANCIAL RISK AND SENSITIVITY

At this stage of development, cost estimates remain indicative and are subject to a number of potential risk factors that could influence overall expenditure. The principal financial risks include:

- Objection triggered statutory escalation;

- Archaeological discovery during works;
- Construction inflation;
- Vandalism or barrier damage;
- Requirement for additional mitigation measures following consultation.

Given the early-stage nature of the appraisal and the combination of technical, statutory and stakeholder risks, a prudent contingency allowance of 15–25% should be applied to capital cost estimates. At the lower end, this would reflect a well-defined scope with minimal objection risk, at the upper end, it would provide resilience against statutory process extension, design development and unforeseen ground conditions.

As the project progresses to detailed design, contingency allowances should be refined based on improved survey data, confirmed statutory routes and clearer stakeholder feedback.

8.7 FINANCIAL INTERPRETATION

The comparative cost assessment demonstrates that, while there are differences in capital outlay between the four packages, all options fall within a broadly similar order of magnitude. The variation in cost should therefore be interpreted in the context of the scale, duration and certainty of environmental benefit delivered.

The two seasonal options (Package 3 and Package 3A) represent the highest cost range (£650,000 – £850,000). This reflects the need to deliver the same core infrastructure and restoration measures as the Full Closure option, alongside additional requirements associated with seasonal operation, including full length verge protection and ongoing management of access control. The extension from the standard (March–September) to extended (February–October) seasonal window does not materially change the capital cost profile, as both options require the same physical infrastructure. The distinction between these options is therefore driven by ecological performance rather than cost.

Package 1 (Full Closure) has a slightly lower overall cost range (£550,000 – £750,000), as it avoids the need for corridor wide verge protection and ongoing seasonal operation. While it includes substantial upfront costs associated with restoring five car parks and providing a new gateway facility at Camp Road, it benefits from a simpler long-term management model and reduced operational burden.

Package 2 (Partial Closure) represents the lowest cost option (£450,000 – £550,000), reflecting its more spatially targeted intervention. However, this lower cost must be considered alongside the reduced scale of ecological benefit, as vehicular access is retained across significant portions of the corridor and supporting measures, including car park upgrades and verge protection, are still required.

When considered against the statutory requirement to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the SAC, the financial differences between packages are relatively modest in

comparison to the variation in ecological certainty. Options that deliver corridor wide and longer duration disturbance reduction carry higher costs but also provide a more robust and reliable mitigation outcome.

Overall, the appraisal indicates that cost is not the primary differentiator between options. Rather, the choice of preferred approach should be informed by the balance between capital investment, ongoing operational requirements, and the level of ecological protection required to meet statutory obligations.

KEY FINDING – COST

Partial Closure has the lowest indicative overall cost of the four shortlisted packages at £510,000–£600,000. Full Closure is estimated at £550,000–£750,000, while both seasonal packages are estimated at £650,000–£850,000, reflecting their greater infrastructure and ongoing operational requirements.

9.0 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT (PRE-CONSULTATION)

This chapter summarises the stakeholder engagement undertaken prior to public consultation, including engagement with elected Members and relevant officers. It identifies the principal issues raised and explains how this early feedback informed the development, refinement and presentation of the shortlisted options.

9.1 STAKEHOLDERS IDENTIFIED

Given the sensitivity of Chase Road and its relationship to Cannock Chase SAC mitigation, early engagement was undertaken with elected Members at both District and County level. This ensured that those with democratic accountability for the area were briefed prior to the refinement of options and in advance of public consultation.

Two workshops were held in January 2026. The first involved relevant District Councillors and the second involved Staffordshire County Councillors. The purpose of these sessions was to introduce the project, clarify its scope and context, present the longlist of options, and explain the proposed methodology for appraisal and scoring. The workshops were structured as strategic briefings, allowing Members to test assumptions, raise concerns and provide early direction before options were shortlisted.

A further joint Member workshop was held in May 2026, prior to the launch of public consultation. The session presented the outcome of the Options Appraisal and provided Members with an opportunity to review the shortlisted options and proposed consultation approach. Feedback from the session was subsequently reflected in the development of the consultation materials.

9.2 STRUCTURE OF THE JANUARY MEMBERS WORKSHOP

The January workshops were designed to ensure a common understanding of the project context across both tiers of local government. The presentation set out the rationale for the study, including its link to SAC mitigation requirements and planning obligations, and explained the environmental objectives underpinning the work.

Emphasis was placed on clarifying the extent and legal status of Chase Road. It was explained that what is commonly referred to as “Chase Road” is not an adopted public highway throughout its length but includes a private road and tarmac bridleway section. The private section begins beyond the residential properties and nursery at Brocton and extends through to Camp Road, forming the core study area.

Members also sought clarification on the status of the spur leading to Brocton Coppice car park, which will be confirmed with County highways and legal officers. This discussion highlighted the importance of clear and consistent explanation of the study boundary and legal context in all subsequent communications.

The longlist of options was then presented, alongside the proposed appraisal framework. Members were briefed on the scoring methodology, criteria weighting and the intention to move from a broad longlist to a smaller number of structured option packages. The

workshops provided an opportunity for open discussion on the strategic direction of the project before further refinement.

Members were advised that the project team would return prior to public consultation to present the outcome of the appraisal and test the preferred approach.

9.3 KEY ISSUES RAISED

Across both workshops, several consistent themes emerged.

Firstly, there was strong emphasis on ensuring that the project is framed primarily around environmental improvement and habitat protection rather than solely traffic management. Members were clear that the rationale for intervention must relate to the condition of the SAC and the need to reduce harmful impacts. This strategic positioning was considered critical to public understanding and acceptability.

Within that context, differing views were expressed regarding the extent of intervention. Some Members, particularly at District level, indicated that full closure of Chase Road to motor vehicles should be treated as a serious and potentially primary option. The view expressed was that, given the inherent controversy surrounding any change, it may be more effective to begin from a clear environmental baseline and consider compromise from that position if required.

Conversely, some County Members expressed reservations about a permanent full closure of the entire route. Concerns were raised regarding its long-standing use, the emotional and historical attachment associated with access along the road, and the need to balance environmental protection with continued recreational use. However, there was broader consensus around the removal of informal verge parking and the rationalisation of smaller internal parking areas extending into the heathland, which were seen as causing clear and visible environmental harm. There was also strong support for retaining access to the principal car parks at either end of the route as a minimum requirement under most scenarios.

A further theme concerned the design of the forthcoming public consultation. Members recognised the importance of digital engagement but expressed concern that responses could be dominated by individuals with limited direct connection to Chase Road. Questions were raised about whether and how the views of local residents might be distinguished from those of wider visitors. The project team confirmed that postcode data will be collected as part of the consultation process, enabling segmented analysis of responses from local communities compared with those from further afield.

While no formal weighting system will be applied, the reporting will clearly identify differences in response patterns and interpret them transparently. There was a clear expectation that the lived experience of local residents should be carefully understood and reflected in decision making.

County Members in particular highlighted the history of strong public reaction to previous proposals affecting Chase Road. Reference was made to protests and

misunderstandings around earlier discussions of parking removal. This reinforced the need for proactive, coordinated and transparent communications. Members stressed that all partner organisations must present consistent messaging, particularly in relation to the purpose of the project, its funding sources and the wider SAC mitigation context. The importance of education and behaviour change was also raised, alongside physical or regulatory measures.

Questions were also raised regarding costs and funding. Members sought reassurance that the wider mitigation budget for Cannock Chase SAC relates to a long-term, site wide strategy rather than being focused solely on Chase Road. It was recognised that Chase Road represents one of the more complex and potentially contentious elements of the overall mitigation programme.

9.4 INFLUENCE ON OPTION DEVELOPMENT

The Member workshops have directly influenced the development and framing of options within this appraisal.

The environmental objective will be clearly articulated as the primary driver for intervention, with the Options Appraisal structured to demonstrate how each package performs against habitat protection and environmental improvement criteria. This reflects the clear steer that the project must not be perceived as a traffic management exercise in isolation.

The permanent closure of Chase Road to motor vehicles has been retained as a credible and fully appraised option, reflecting the view that it should be considered seriously within the assessment framework. At the same time, alternative packages have been developed to reflect Member concerns regarding long standing use, emotional attachment and access to principal car parks.

Greater emphasis has been placed on addressing informal verge parking and environmentally damaging behaviours as distinct components of the intervention, recognising the broader consensus around these issues.

The public consultation incorporated postcode based analysis to distinguish between Immediately Local, Local Cannock Chase Area and Wider Area respondents. This enabled geographic differences in views to be identified and considered in the interpretation of the consultation findings.

A further joint Member workshop was held in May 2026 prior to public consultation. Members were provided with an update on the Options Appraisal and the proposed approach to consultation, including how the environmental rationale, legal context and funding position would be communicated. Feedback from the session informed the finalisation of the consultation materials and approach.

10.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Key Points – Public Consultation

- A comprehensive public consultation was undertaken, generating 1,777 completed questionnaires alongside approximately 150 face-to-face responses;
- Respondents demonstrated strong awareness of the environmental sensitivity of Cannock Chase and the importance of protecting its habitats and wildlife;
- While views on restricting vehicle access were mixed, Option 2 – Partial Closure was clearly the most strongly supported of the four defined interventions;
- A significant proportion of respondents selected "None of the above", highlighting continuing concerns around access and the potential impacts of change;
- Key issues raised included accessibility and inclusive access, retained parking provision, potential parking displacement, signage and wayfinding, enforcement and visitor management;
- Consultation findings have informed the development of an enhanced Option 2+, combining Partial Closure with supporting measures that respond directly to the principal issues raised.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Public and stakeholder consultation formed an important component of the Options Appraisal. Existing vehicle movements, formal and informal parking and associated visitor activity have the potential to contribute to pressures on sensitive habitats and species. However, the road is also valued by a wide range of users and performs important recreational, accessibility and local movement functions.

The purpose of the consultation was therefore to ensure that the technical appraisal was informed by local knowledge and user experience. It sought to understand how Chase Road is currently used, attitudes towards managing vehicular access, preferences between the four shortlisted options, the potential implications of changing access arrangements, and the mitigation or alternative management measures stakeholders considered necessary. The consultation represents one component of the overall evidence base and is not intended to operate as a standalone referendum on the future of Chase Road. Its findings have been considered alongside the ecological, highways, legal, archaeological, financial and other technical evidence within the Options Appraisal.

Importantly, all four shortlisted options were presented through the consultation without identifying a preferred option, allowing respondents to consider their relative advantages and disadvantages before providing feedback.

A separate Chase Road Public Consultation Feedback Report provides the full record and detailed analysis of the engagement undertaken. This chapter summarises the

findings most relevant to the Options Appraisal and the identification and refinement of the preferred approach.

10.2 CONSULTATION APPROACH

A single phase of public consultation was undertaken using a combination of digital, targeted and face-to-face engagement. This was designed to provide different ways for residents, visitors, businesses, recreational users and other stakeholders to understand the proposals and contribute their views.

A dedicated landing page was established on the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership website, supported by a consultation hub hosted on the GoVocal platform. These provided information on the project background, environmental context, Options Appraisal process and the four shortlisted options. Supporting material included Frequently Asked Questions, a consultation leaflet, consultation boards and roller banners, together with a short video featuring key District and County Councillors. A live Microsoft Teams webinar was also held, providing further explanation of the appraisal and an opportunity for participants to raise questions directly with the project team.

The consultation was supported by a coordinated communications campaign incorporating press releases, social media and direct engagement with potentially affected Parish Councils. Social media activity achieved particularly significant reach, with 17 posts published between 8 June and 18 July 2026 generating approximately 135,800 views and 17,300 engagements.

The principal mechanism for formally recording public feedback was an online questionnaire. This combined structured questions with opportunities for free text responses, enabling both quantitative assessment of preferences and qualitative understanding of the reasons behind them. Targeted engagement was also undertaken with organisations representing local communities, walking and public rights of way, cycling, horse riding, nature conservation, businesses and other interests associated with Cannock Chase.

A week-long programme of face-to-face engagement was undertaken between 29 June and 5 July 2026. Informal drop-in events were held at Brocton Village Hall, Cannock Chase Visitor Centre and Pye Green Community Centre, supplemented by two sessions directly on Chase Road and two guided walks along the corridor. Approximately 150 people participated in the face-to-face programme. These discussions were particularly valuable in exploring accessibility, parking displacement, environmental protection, local journey patterns and potential impacts on surrounding communities in greater detail.

Overall, the consultation generated a substantial response. A total of 1,777 completed questionnaires were received, providing a significant dataset from which to understand both overall views and differences between geographic groups.

10.3 PROFILE AND EXISTING USE OF CHASE ROAD

The consultation attracted particularly strong participation from people with an established relationship with Cannock Chase. 83% of respondents identified themselves as local residents living within the Cannock Chase area or nearby communities, while 53% described themselves as regular visitors. The consultation was therefore predominantly informed by people with direct experience of the area rather than occasional visitors from further afield.

This is reinforced by the frequency with which respondents visit Cannock Chase. Approximately 88% visit at least several times per month, including 20% who visit daily and 35% several times per week. The questionnaire therefore captured the views of a population with a high degree of familiarity with existing access arrangements.

Environmental awareness was similarly high. 86% were already aware before the consultation that the Chase Road area lies within the Cannock Chase SAC and contains environmentally sensitive habitats. Furthermore, 88% considered protecting sensitive habitats and wildlife to be important or very important. The consultation therefore demonstrates broad agreement on the importance of the environmental objective underpinning the Options Appraisal.

However, Chase Road also performs a significant movement and access function. 41% of respondents frequently use Chase Road as part of a route between different parts of Cannock Chase or nearby communities and a further 36% do so occasionally. Overall, 77% therefore use Chase Road as a connecting route at least occasionally. This demonstrates that the corridor is not solely used to reach adjacent parking areas or recreational destinations but forms part of established wider journey patterns.

The multifunctional nature of the corridor is also evident from how respondents use it. 76% use Chase Road to access parking or viewpoints, 73% to enjoy the natural environment and 70% for walking. Dog walking and accessing nearby paths or recreational areas were each identified by approximately 44%, while 43% reported driving through Chase Road as part of a local journey. Cycling and horse riding were also represented.

These findings are important to the Options Appraisal because they demonstrate that changes to vehicle access have the potential to affect several overlapping functions: recreational access, inclusive access to the landscape, local journeys, parking and access to surrounding paths and destinations.

10.4 ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND VEHICLE MANAGEMENT

One of the clearest findings from the consultation is the distinction respondents made between the objective of environmental protection and the use of vehicle restrictions as the mechanism for achieving it.

While 88% considered protection of sensitive habitats and wildlife important or very important, only 33% supported or strongly supported the principle of managing vehicle access along Chase Road to help protect the natural environment. By comparison, 56% opposed or strongly opposed the principle, including 35% who strongly opposed it.

The qualitative comments provide important context. Many respondents opposing restrictions nevertheless explicitly recognised the importance of protecting Cannock Chase. Their concern was more commonly whether restrictions were necessary, proportionate and likely to be effective, rather than disagreement with conservation objectives. Some respondents requested clearer evidence demonstrating the relationship between vehicle activity and ecological harm.

Conversely, there was a clearly identifiable body of respondents supporting stronger vehicle management. These participants emphasised the protected status of the SAC and raised concerns regarding traffic, verge damage, informal parking, noise, litter, wildlife disturbance, speeding and deer collisions. Some also considered that reducing motor traffic would improve the environment for walking, cycling and horse riding.

The consultation should therefore not be characterised as a simple conflict between environmental protection and continued access. There is broad agreement on the need to protect Cannock Chase, but considerably greater disagreement over the scale and form of intervention required.

10.5 POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGING ACCESS

The questionnaire indicates that changes to Chase Road could have material implications for a significant proportion of existing users. 37% considered that changes would significantly affect their journeys and a further 25% anticipated a noticeable change, meaning that approximately 62% expected at least a noticeable effect. Only 15% considered their journeys would be unaffected.

However, the qualitative feedback demonstrates that respondents interpreted “journey impact” more broadly than additional driving distance. For many, the principal issue was potential loss of convenient access to specific parts of Cannock Chase. Older people, disabled people and people with limited mobility particularly emphasised the importance of being able to park close to walking routes, viewpoints and natural areas. Some considered that relocating parking to more distant locations could prevent them from accessing particular areas altogether.

Traffic redistribution was another significant concern. Respondents anticipated that closure or restriction could result in longer journeys and increased use of alternative routes, including surrounding local roads and the A34. Particular concern was expressed regarding Brocton and the potential for both traffic and parking to be displaced into nearby communities.

Parking consolidation consequently attracted mixed views. 31% supported concentrating parking within a smaller number of well-managed car parks, compared

with 48% who opposed the approach and 22% who were unsure. The relatively high level of uncertainty indicates that acceptability is likely to depend considerably upon the location, capacity, accessibility and management of alternative parking provision.

Should changes be progressed, respondents identified several measures that could help mitigate their effects. 54% supported improved parking at nearby locations, 49% clearer signage to appropriate parking and 43% accessible routes for people with mobility needs. Around 31% supported improved walking and cycling routes and 28% information about alternative driving routes.

These findings indicate that parking, accessibility and wayfinding should be integral to the development of any preferred access-management option rather than treated as secondary considerations.

10.6 PREFERENCE BETWEEN THE SHORTLISTED OPTIONS

Question 13 asked respondents which of the four shortlisted approaches they considered most suitable for future management of public motor vehicle access along Chase Road.

The largest response was 'None of the above', selected by 48% (839 respondents). This is an important finding, although it should not be interpreted as a single coherent preference for retaining the existing arrangements. The accompanying comments demonstrate that the category includes respondents favouring the status quo, those seeking greater enforcement and management without access restriction, and those who could potentially support a modified version of one of the shortlisted approaches.

Among the four defined options, Option 2 – Partial Closure was clearly the most strongly supported, receiving 37% (645 respondents). Option 1 – Full Closure received 8.8%, while Option 3 – Extended Seasonal Closure received 3.3% and Option 4 – Standard Seasonal Closure only 0.6%. Of respondents selecting one of the four defined access management packages, approximately 74% selected Option 2.

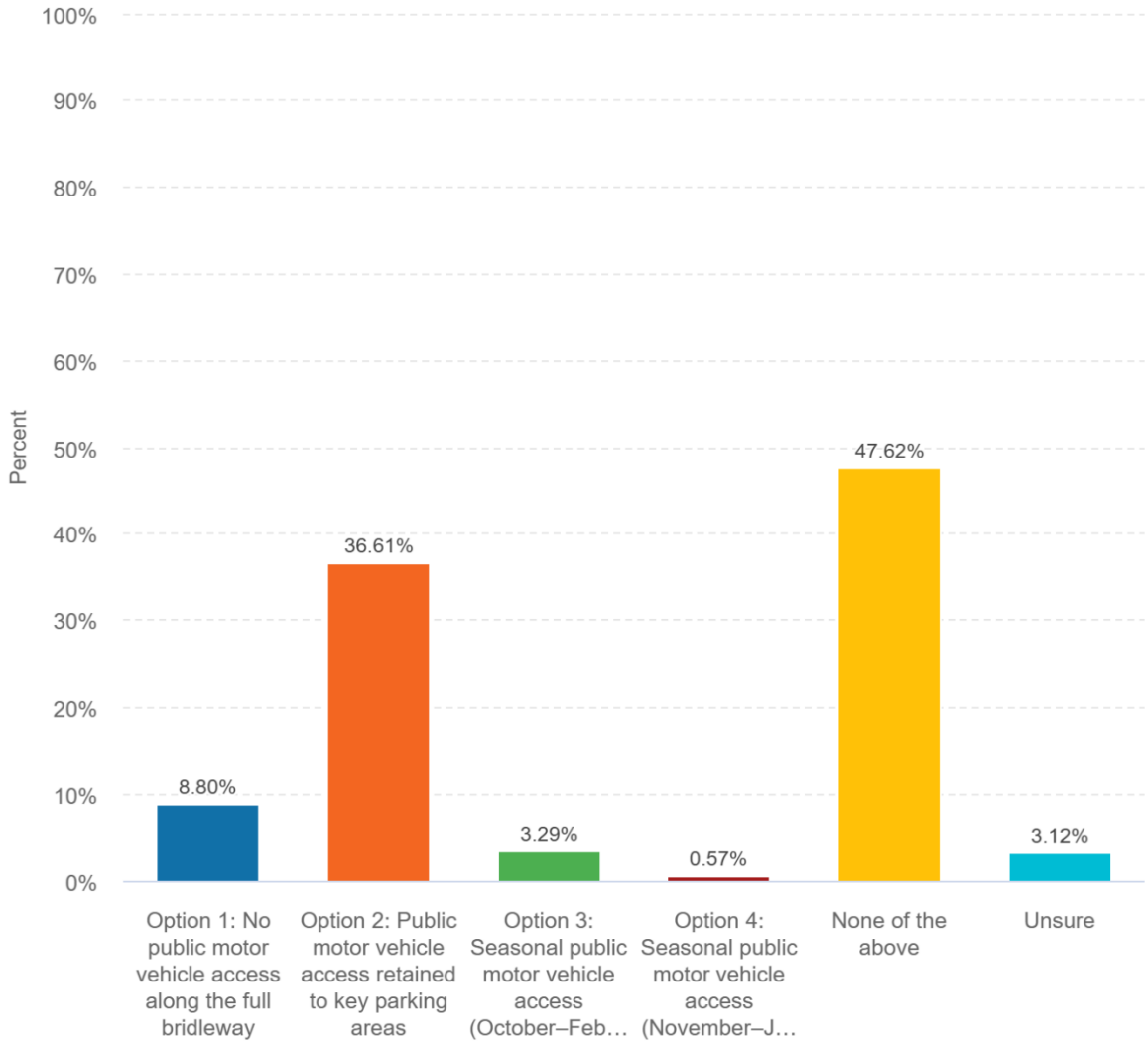


Figure 10-6 – Breakdown of support for each option included in the consultation

The result provides a clear indication that, where respondents accepted one of the shortlisted interventions, there was a strong preference for the spatially targeted approach retaining vehicular access to key locations, rather than complete or seasonal corridor closure. The seasonal approaches collectively attracted only around 3.9% as first choices.

Qualitative feedback provides further explanation for the performance of Option 2. Respondents supporting it frequently described the approach as a compromise, potentially reducing through traffic and environmental disturbance while maintaining access to important locations. Some suggested an arrangement effectively comprising two access spurs from either end of Chase Road, with through motor traffic prevented across the environmentally sensitive central section. Accessibility was also a significant reason for preferring Partial Closure over more extensive restrictions.

When respondents were asked for an alternative option if their first choice could not be progressed, Option 2 again performed most strongly of the defined interventions, receiving 32%. Option 3 increased to 18% as a secondary choice and Option 4 to 7.5%,

suggesting greater willingness to consider seasonal arrangements as compromise positions. Full Closure received only 5.3% as a secondary choice.

Taken together, the results establish Partial Closure as the most broadly acceptable of the four shortlisted interventions from a consultation perspective. It was the highest performing defined option both as a first preference and as an alternative choice. However, the substantial 'None of the above' response remains important and reinforces the need to consider whether elements of the preferred option can be refined and supported by targeted management measures.

10.7 GEOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

Postcode data was analysed to understand whether attitudes differed according to proximity to Chase Road. Of 1,746 respondents providing postcode information, 1,679 supplied sufficiently complete information for classification. Respondents were grouped into Immediately Local, Local Cannock Chase Area and Wider Area categories. The geographic analysis was not used to assign greater weight to particular responses, but to identify whether the communities potentially most directly affected expressed materially different views.

A particularly important finding is that opposition to intervention was not greatest among respondents living closest to Chase Road. Within the Immediately Local group, approximately 40% supported the principle of managing vehicle access compared with 33% within the Local Cannock Chase Area and 32% within the Wider Area. Combined opposition was approximately 52%, 57% and 53% respectively.

Use of Chase Road as a connecting route was consistently high across all geographic groups. Frequent or occasional use accounted for approximately 75% of Immediately Local respondents, 78% of Local Cannock Chase respondents and 76% of Wider Area respondents. This demonstrates that the movement function of Chase Road extends considerably beyond its immediate surroundings.

Interestingly, anticipated journey impacts increased with distance from Chase Road. A noticeable or significant impact was anticipated by 53% of Immediately Local respondents, 61% within the Local Cannock Chase Area and 67% within the Wider Area. This suggests that perceived journey impacts are not concentrated among the communities immediately adjacent to the corridor.

Immediately Local respondents were also more receptive to concentrating parking, with 39% support compared with 31% within the Local Cannock Chase Area and 29% within the Wider Area. Opposition increased correspondingly from 40% to 47% and 51%.

The geographic comparison of option preferences is particularly relevant. Option 2 achieved a consistently strong position, receiving 35% support among Immediately Local respondents, 36% within the Local Cannock Chase Area and 39% within the Wider Area. "None of the above" remained high across all three groups at 43%, 48% and 47% respectively.

Full Closure demonstrates a more distinctive geographic pattern. Support was 14% among Immediately Local respondents, falling to 8.8% within the Local Cannock Chase Area and 6.5% within the Wider Area. Those living closest to Chase Road therefore expressed more than twice the level of support for Full Closure compared with Wider Area respondents.

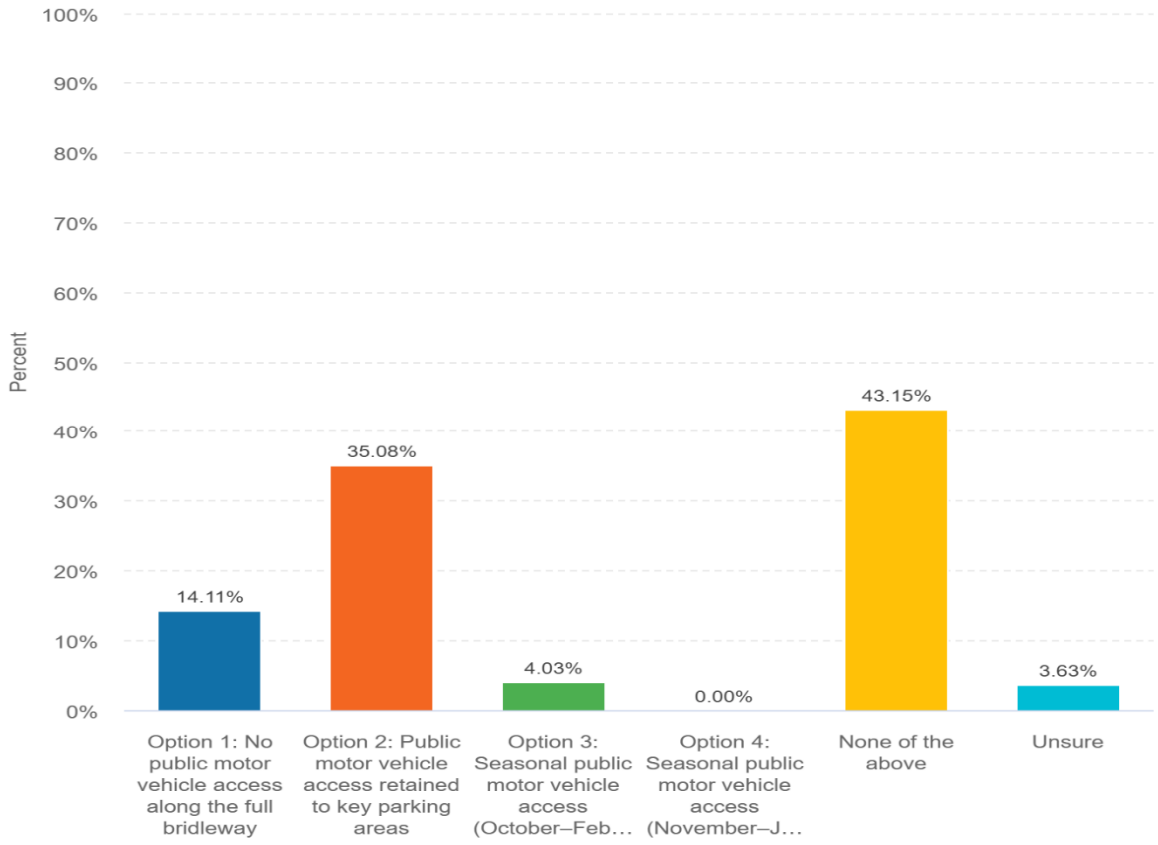


Figure 10-7 – Immediately local analysis support for each option

This is an important finding for the Options Appraisal. It demonstrates that the overall opposition to more extensive intervention cannot be attributed to residents immediately surrounding Chase Road being disproportionately resistant to change. Indeed, the closest respondents show somewhat greater acceptance of intervention, although opinion remains divided.

10.8 KEY QUALITATIVE THEMES

The open-ended questionnaire responses and discussions undertaken during the face-to-face programme provide important context for interpreting the quantitative results. The principal themes are summarised below.

Access and accessibility was one of the strongest themes. Respondents repeatedly emphasised the importance of vehicular access for older people, disabled people and those with limited mobility, including the ability to park close to recreational routes and experience the landscape without undertaking substantial walking distances. Conversely, some participants considered that reducing motor traffic could improve the environment and safety for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Suggested mitigation

included retained access to selected parking areas, accessible parking, exemptions and controlled access arrangements.

Environmental protection was widely recognised as important, but there was disagreement regarding the contribution made by vehicle use and the proportionality of restrictions. Supporters highlighted traffic, verge parking, noise, disturbance, litter and wildlife collisions, while other respondents argued that vehicle use is only one of several recreational pressures affecting the SAC.

Alternative access management measures were frequently proposed. These included lower speed limits and improved enforcement, nighttime or time limited closures, one-way operation, controlled access, barriers or ANPR, formalisation of parking, increased ranger presence, visitor education and permit or exemption arrangements. This demonstrates an identifiable appetite among some stakeholders for a targeted package that manages problematic behaviours while retaining a degree of vehicular access.

Parking and displacement was a significant concern, particularly in relation to Brocton and surrounding communities. Respondents questioned whether restricting parking on Chase Road would reduce demand or simply transfer it elsewhere, potentially affecting residential streets, verges and other Cannock Chase car parks. At the same time, some respondents recognised that better-managed formal parking could reduce verge damage and inappropriate parking within environmentally sensitive areas.

Impacts on local residents and businesses were also raised. Concerns included additional journey distances, traffic redistribution, residential amenity and access to properties. Potential effects on passing trade and customer access were identified for businesses close to Chase Road, including Brocton Nursery. The consultation therefore reinforces the importance of ensuring that impacts removed from Chase Road are not simply transferred into surrounding communities.

Maintenance, enforcement and visitor management emerged repeatedly. Respondents identified speeding, verge parking, littering and antisocial behaviour and called for greater ranger presence and enforcement, alongside improved maintenance of the road, parking areas and verges. Clearer visitor information and education regarding the environmental sensitivity of Cannock Chase were also advocated.

Respondents also highlighted wider environmental pressures, including dog walking, cycling and mountain biking, horse riding, littering, fires, antisocial behaviour, erosion and informal paths. A recurring view was that vehicle management should form part of a broader visitor and habitat management strategy rather than being treated as the sole response to recreational pressure.

Finally, some respondents raised concerns regarding the consultation process and confidence in the evidence base. These included perceptions that intervention had already been determined, questions over whether alternative management approaches had been sufficiently explored and requests for greater clarity on environmental benefits, costs and practical implications. These concerns reinforce the importance of clearly

demonstrating how consultation feedback and technical evidence have informed the final recommendation.

10.9 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The consultation provides a substantial body of evidence that should inform, but not independently determine, the final appraisal.

There is strong common ground around the importance of protecting Cannock Chase, with 88% of respondents considering protection of sensitive habitats and wildlife important or very important. The principal disagreement concerns the mechanism and scale of intervention rather than the environmental objective itself.

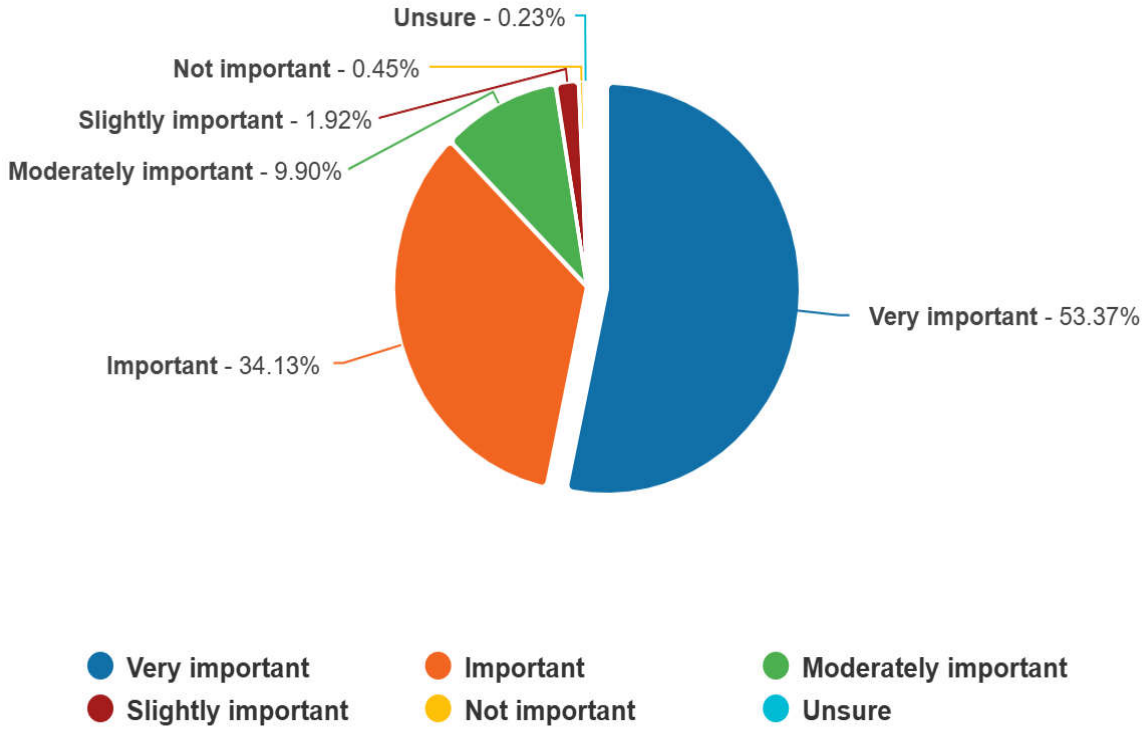


Figure 10-9 – Results of question 7, protecting sensitive habitats and wildlife

There is also clear evidence that Chase Road performs a multifunctional role. It provides recreational and inclusive access to the landscape, access to parking and viewpoints, links into the wider path network and functions as part of established journey patterns. Any intervention therefore needs to balance ecological benefit against these access and movement functions.

From a public acceptability perspective, Partial Closure is clearly the strongest of the four shortlisted interventions. It received substantially greater first-choice support than Full Closure or either seasonal option and was also the most strongly supported defined alternative. Its support is notably consistent geographically, at approximately 35–39% across all three geographic groups. This suggests that an approach which removes through traffic from the most sensitive section while retaining vehicular access to key

parking locations provides the strongest basis for balancing environmental objectives with accessibility and existing use.

However, the 48% selecting 'None of the above' cannot be disregarded. Qualitative feedback demonstrates that this encompasses several positions rather than a single preference. While many favour retaining existing access, others support stronger enforcement, parking management, speed reduction, nighttime controls or other targeted interventions, and some indicated potential support for a refined Partial Closure arrangement.

The consultation also identifies a series of matters that should be integral to development of the preferred option. These include provision and capacity of alternative parking; accessible provision for disabled and less mobile visitors; management of parking and traffic displacement, particularly around Brocton; access to local businesses; appropriate signage and wayfinding; enforcement of inappropriate parking and behaviour; maintenance and restoration of verges and parking areas; and integration with wider visitor and habitat management measures.

Importantly, the geographic analysis does not indicate that those living closest to Chase Road are disproportionately opposed to intervention. Immediately Local respondents demonstrate the highest support for the principle of managing vehicle access, the highest support for Full Closure and the greatest receptiveness to parking consolidation. This provides useful evidence when considering the balance between environmental benefit and local community impact.

KEY FINDING – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The consultation demonstrates strong recognition of the need to protect Cannock Chase, alongside significant concern about the implications of restricting established vehicle access. While 48% selected "None of the above", Partial Closure was clearly the most strongly supported of the four defined interventions and attracted substantially greater support than Full Closure or either seasonal option. The feedback also identifies accessibility, parking provision, displacement, signage and enforcement as important considerations in developing the preferred approach.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

This chapter brings together the technical appraisal and public consultation findings to identify the recommended approach for Chase Road. It sets out the enhanced Option 2+, the supporting measures required, indicative cost implications and the further design, assessment, engagement and approvals needed to progress a scheme towards delivery.

It is recommended that Option 2 – Partial Closure is progressed as an enhanced Option 2+, combining permanent closure of the central section of Chase Road with improvements to Chase Vista and Chase Road Corner car parks, habitat restoration, enhanced accessibility, improved signage and wayfinding, and measures to manage parking displacement and visitor impacts.

11.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED APPROACH

The Options Appraisal has considered a broad range of potential interventions for the future management of vehicle access and parking along Chase Road, progressing four integrated packages through a detailed assessment against the agreed weighted appraisal framework. The assessment has considered habitat and species benefit, visitor access and inclusivity, landscape and heritage impacts, effects on local residents, financial sustainability, deliverability and practicality, stakeholder and public acceptability, and strategic alignment.

The technical appraisal demonstrates that there is no option that performs strongest against every criterion. Package 1 – Full Closure achieves the highest weighted technical score, principally because it provides the greatest extent and permanence of ecological benefit. Package 2 – Partial Closure performs second strongest, providing a permanent intervention across the most environmentally sensitive central section while retaining vehicular access from either end of Chase Road and therefore reducing some of the accessibility and community impacts associated with Full Closure.

The subsequent public consultation provides an important additional layer of evidence. A total of 1,777 completed questionnaires were received, supported by a substantial programme of in-person and stakeholder engagement. The consultation demonstrated strong recognition of the importance of protecting Cannock Chase but also highlighted the significance of vehicular access for recreation, accessibility and established journeys.

Of the four defined interventions, Option 2 – Partial Closure was clearly the most strongly supported by respondents. It received approximately 37% of first-choice responses, compared with 8.8% for Full Closure and considerably lower levels for the two seasonal options. Its support was also geographically consistent, at approximately 35% amongst Immediately Local respondents, 36% within the Local Cannock Chase Area and 39% within the Wider Area.

This is particularly important when considered alongside the technical appraisal. Although Full Closure achieves the highest technical score, Partial Closure performs

only modestly below it while providing a materially different balance between ecological benefit, accessibility, community impact, deliverability and public acceptability. It permanently removes through traffic from approximately 1.35km of the central corridor, including the most environmentally sensitive section, while retaining vehicular access to parking at either end.

The consultation also demonstrates that Package 2 should not simply be progressed in the form assessed within this Options Appraisal. A number of issues raised through the engagement can be addressed through refinement of the package, improving its accessibility, public acceptability and overall effectiveness. The recommended Option 2+ therefore retains the central Partial Closure while incorporating a comprehensive package of parking, accessibility, wayfinding, visitor management and local mitigation measures, as set out in Section 11.2.

11.2 DEVELOPMENT OF OPTION 2+

The central principle of Option 2+ would remain consistent with Package 2 assessed through this report: Permanent closure of the central section of Chase Road to public motor vehicles, while retaining vehicular access to Chase Vista from the north and Chase Road Corner from the south. Option 2+ would enhance this core intervention through a coordinated package of parking, habitat restoration, accessibility, signage, displacement mitigation and visitor management measures. The principal components are summarised in Table 11-1.

Measure	Option 2+ Proposal
Central Partial Closure	Permanently remove public motor vehicle through access from the central section of Chase Road, while maintaining access for walking, cycling, equestrian and authorised users.
Chase Road Corner and Chase Vista car parks	Improve surfacing, drainage and bay definition; provide appropriately located accessible bays; optimise capacity within the existing footprint and consider minor expansion only where environmentally acceptable.
Removal and habitat restoration of parking areas, pull-ins and lay-bys	Remove redundant parking opportunities within the closed section, including hardstanding where required; de-compact affected ground and undertake appropriate revegetation and habitat restoration.
Chase Road surface	Review the retained carriageway and remove unnecessary highway features, including speed humps where appropriate, reflecting its future function as a predominantly traffic free recreational corridor.
Signage and wayfinding	Provide clear advance signage directing drivers to Chase Vista, Chase Road Corner and appropriate wider

	destinations, together with pedestrian wayfinding from retained parking.
Accessibility and inclusive access	Introduce accessible parking and routes together with seating, resting opportunities and potential accessible viewing areas/platforms, informed by an Inclusive Access Audit.
Parking and displacement mitigation	Monitor and manage displacement at surrounding car parks and within Brocton, investigate potential resident parking controls with Staffordshire County Council, and provide verge protection where necessary.
Visitor management and enforcement	Strengthen visitor information, enforcement and management to address inappropriate parking, antisocial behaviour and other recreational pressures.

Table 11-1 – Principal Components of Option 2+

The detailed form of the improvements to Chase Vista and Chase Road Corner should be determined through the next design stage, informed by topographical, drainage, ecological and accessibility considerations. The objective should be to make the retained gateway parking locations safe, legible and inclusive while maximising use of their existing footprints and avoiding unnecessary environmental impact. An Inclusive Access Audit should inform the detailed provision of accessible parking, routes, seating, resting opportunities and any accessible viewing facilities.

Parking displacement will require particular attention as the scheme is developed. Baseline parking surveys should be undertaken within Brocton and other potentially affected locations before implementation, providing a basis for subsequent monitoring. Option 2+ should not prescribe a particular resident parking or permit scheme at this stage. If monitoring identifies a material displacement problem, the need for additional controls should be considered with Staffordshire County Council and, where appropriate, be subject to separate engagement and statutory consultation.

Signage and wayfinding should be developed as a coordinated strategy extending beyond Chase Road itself. Advance directional signing should enable drivers to make informed route and parking choices before entering the corridor, reducing unnecessary movements towards the closure points. Pedestrian wayfinding should also connect retained parking with key routes and destinations. All signage should be proportionate and sensitively designed to avoid unnecessary visual clutter within the National Landscape.

Habitat restoration and visitor management should be integrated with the physical access changes rather than treated as separate interventions. Redundant parking areas, pull-ins and lay-bys within the closed section should be restored appropriately, while

enforcement and visitor information should support the new access arrangements and discourage inappropriate parking, vehicle access and other recreational pressures.

11.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR COST

The current Options Appraisal identifies an indicative total cost range of approximately £510,000–£600,000 for Package 2 – Partial Closure. Importantly, this estimate already incorporates the principal infrastructure associated with the proposed Option 2+, including closure infrastructure, removal and habitat restoration of parking areas, pull-ins and lay-bys, improvements to Chase Road Corner and Chase Vista car parks, verge protection, and an allowance for signage and wayfinding.

The development of Package 2 into Option 2+ does, however, introduce the potential for some additional expenditure beyond the current estimate. This would principally relate to enhanced accessibility measures identified through the proposed Inclusive Access Audit, additional seating and resting facilities, potential accessible viewing areas, any signage and wayfinding requirements beyond the existing allowance, and any additional parking or displacement mitigation measures subsequently identified through detailed assessment and monitoring.

The scope and cost of these additional measures cannot be reliably quantified at this stage. They should therefore be defined through the next stage of scheme development, following which the existing cost estimate should be reviewed and updated to reflect the agreed specification for Option 2+. No additional allowance has been included at this stage for measures that have yet to be defined.

11.4 DECISION MAKING AND IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

The first formal next step will be presentation of the completed Options Appraisal and its recommendation to the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership Board on 30 September 2026.

The Board will be asked to consider the appraisal findings, public consultation evidence and recommendation to progress Option 2+ as the preferred approach.

Subject to the Board's endorsement, the proposal should then be presented to Staffordshire County Council, reflecting its role as landowner and its wider responsibilities relevant to highways, rights of way, parking and access management. Agreement in principle from the County Council will be necessary before significant further design and statutory work is undertaken.

The Options Appraisal itself does not constitute detailed design or authority to implement the scheme. As recognised elsewhere within the report, detailed engineering, statutory approvals, funding arrangements and delivery programming remain subsequent activities.

Subject to agreement to proceed, Option 2+ should therefore move into a more detailed scheme development stage.

11.5 DETAILED SCHEME DEVELOPMENT

The next stage should translate the strategic Option 2+ concept into a defined and deliverable scheme. This should include, as a minimum:

- Confirmation of the precise northern and southern closure points, including turning arrangements and emergency/operational access;
- Topographical surveys and detailed site measurements;
- Concept and detailed designs for Chase Vista and Chase Road Corner car parks;
- An inclusive access audit and development of accessible parking, routes, seating, viewing opportunities and supporting facilities;
- Assessment of existing and potential parking capacity and the implications of removing parking from the central section;
- Baseline traffic and parking surveys, including affected roads within Brocton;
- Development of a coordinated signage and wayfinding strategy;
- Ecological surveys targeted to the locations potentially affected by construction, parking improvements, vegetation management and habitat restoration;
- Arboricultural assessment where vegetation removal is being considered;
- Archaeological and heritage assessment where ground disturbance may occur;
- Drainage and ground condition assessment for the retained parking areas;
- Development of the physical closure infrastructure, ensuring that it is appropriate to the National Landscape and common land setting;
- Refinement of maintenance, enforcement and operational arrangements;
- Confirmation of the statutory and legal mechanism required;
- Consultation with Staffordshire County Council regarding potential resident parking or other displacement management measures;
- Preparation of an updated cost estimate, funding requirement and delivery programme.

The legal work will be particularly important. The appraisal identifies potential mechanisms for restricting vehicles and confirms that Partial Closure is capable of implementation through established statutory processes, subject to consultation, due process and evidential justification. The preferred mechanism should therefore be confirmed in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council's highways, Rights of Way and legal teams. Any infrastructure affecting registered common land will also need to be checked against the relevant requirements and consent regime.

11.6 MONITORING AND REVIEW

A defined monitoring and evaluation framework should be prepared before implementation so that the effects of Option 2+ can be objectively assessed.

Baseline information should be collected before works commence, enabling comparison following implementation. Monitoring should consider vehicle volumes and movements; occupancy of Chase Vista and Chase Road Corner car parks; parking within Brocton and other locations potentially affected by displacement; informal parking and verge encroachment; use of the closed section by walkers, cyclists and equestrians;

condition and recovery of restored habitat; visitor behaviour; use of accessible facilities; and any recorded operational or enforcement issues.

An initial post implementation review should be undertaken after the scheme has had sufficient time to establish, followed by further review over an appropriate longer period to assess environmental outcomes. This will be particularly important because the environmental benefits of reduced disturbance and habitat restoration may take considerably longer to become apparent than changes in traffic and parking behaviour.

The monitoring process should allow adaptive management where unforeseen effects arise. For example, if parking displacement is greater than predicted, additional controls could be considered; if particular access arrangements create difficulties for disabled users, further accessibility measures could be introduced; and if redundant parking areas continue to attract informal vehicle access, additional physical protection or enforcement may be required.

11.7 OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

Taking the Options Appraisal and public consultation evidence together, Option 2 – Partial Closure provides the strongest overall basis for progression.

Full Closure remains the strongest option when considered purely against the weighted technical appraisal, reflecting the scale and permanence of its ecological benefits. However, Partial Closure performs second strongest technically and substantially better in terms of public support. It provides an opportunity to permanently remove vehicle through movement and dispersed parking from the most environmentally sensitive part of Chase Road while retaining a degree of vehicular access that responds more effectively to the accessibility, inclusivity and community considerations identified through the study.

The recommendation is therefore not simply to implement Package 2 as currently defined, but to develop it into Option 2+: an integrated package comprising the central permanent Partial Closure, removal and restoration of parking within the closed section, significant improvement of Chase Vista and Chase Road Corner car parks, enhanced accessible and inclusive facilities, improved signage and wayfinding, measures to manage parking displacement within Brocton, and strengthened visitor management, enforcement and habitat restoration.

This approach directly responds to the evidence gathered through both the technical appraisal and the extensive public consultation. It retains the environmental purpose of the project while recognising that the long-term success of the intervention will depend on providing credible, accessible and well-managed alternatives to the existing pattern of dispersed vehicle access.

Option 2+ should not be viewed as a standalone response to recreational pressure across Cannock Chase. The interventions proposed for Chase Road form part of a wider package of measures required to manage visitor impacts across the SAC and Cannock

Chase National Landscape, including parking and access management, habitat restoration, visitor information and education, enforcement and the management of recreational activity. Progressing Option 2+ alongside these wider measures will help ensure that environmental pressures are addressed strategically rather than simply displaced to other locations.

Subject to endorsement by the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership Board and agreement in principle from Staffordshire County Council, Option 2+ should therefore progress to detailed feasibility and design, targeted surveys, focused engagement with directly affected stakeholders and statutory consultees, statutory approvals, updated costing and development of a funded delivery programme, with implementation supported by a clear monitoring and adaptive-management framework.

APPENDIX A – APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY

Each shortlisted option has been assessed against the appraisal criteria set out in Section 4.4 using a five-point scoring scale. The scale provides a consistent and transparent framework for evaluating the relative performance of each option.

The scoring scale is defined in Table A below:

Score	Definition
5	Strongly positive impact
4	Positive impact
3	Neutral or mixed impact
2	Negative impact
1	Strongly negative impact

Table A – Scoring scale for appraisal criteria

In order to reflect the relative importance of different objectives within the context of this commission, each appraisal criterion has been assigned a weighting. Weightings ensure that criteria most closely aligned with the statutory drivers and project vision carry appropriate influence within the overall assessment.

The agreed weightings are presented in Table A1 below:

Criterion	Weighting
HAB – Habitat & Species Benefit	25%
ACC – Visitor Access & Inclusivity	15%
LAN – Landscape & Heritage Impact	15%
RES – Impact on Residents	15%
FIN – Financial Cost & Sustainability	10%
DEL – Deliverability & Practicality	10%
SOC – Stakeholder & Public Acceptability	10%
STR – Strategic Alignment	10%

Table A1 – Appraisal criteria weightings

Justification for Weightings

Habitat & Species Benefit (25%): This criterion carries the highest weighting because the primary purpose of the commission is to address recreational pressure affecting the

integrity of the Special Area of Conservation. The Project Vision explicitly prioritises protection of ecological integrity, and statutory duties under the Habitats Regulations require that environmental considerations are central to decision making. Assigning the highest weighting to habitat and species benefit reflects this legal and strategic imperative.

Visitor Access & Inclusivity (15%): Access is a core function of Cannock Chase and remains central to the Project Vision. This weighting recognises the importance of maintaining appropriate, safe and inclusive public use, including vehicular access where justified, while ensuring that environmental objectives are not undermined.

Landscape & Heritage Impact (15%): Cannock Chase is also designated as a National Landscape, and interventions must conserve and enhance its special qualities. The weighting reflects the importance of landscape character, tranquillity and heritage assets in shaping deliverable and context sensitive solutions.

Impact on Residents (15%): Local impacts, including changes to traffic patterns and amenity, are material considerations in determining whether an option is proportionate and defensible. Assigning a meaningful weighting ensures that resident impacts are neither overlooked nor secondary to environmental considerations.

Financial Cost & Sustainability (10%): While cost is important, it is not the primary driver of the commission. A 10% weighting ensures that options must represent appropriate use of resources and long-term sustainability, without allowing short-term cost considerations to override environmental obligations.

Deliverability & Practicality (10%): Given the presence of legal, common land, heritage and physical constraints, deliverability is a key factor. This weighting ensures that options are realistically achievable within the regulatory framework and operational context.

Stakeholder & Public Acceptability (10%): Successful implementation depends on public confidence and stakeholder support. This weighting recognises implementation risk and ensures that options are assessed in light of likely reaction and practical enforceability.

Strategic Alignment (10%): Options must align with the SAC Detailed Implementation Plan, Visitor Management Strategy and National Landscape Management Plan. While alignment is essential, it is weighted proportionately to reflect that alignment alone does not determine environmental or practical success.

Evidence Sources

Scoring has been informed by a combination of quantitative data, qualitative assessment and professional judgement. Evidence sources include:

- Visitor survey data (2010-2024)
- Parking count surveys and access observations

- Habitat and ecological sensitivity mapping
- Heritage and archaeological datasets
- GIS land ownership information
- Policy and strategy documents
- Stakeholder engagement feedback
- Site visits and professional transport, environmental and access expertise

Where evidence is uncertain or assumptions are required, this is clearly stated within the option appraisal narrative.

Appraisal Assumptions and Limitations

The Options Appraisal has been undertaken using the best available information at the time of writing and in accordance with the methodology set out in this chapter. As with any strategic appraisal of this nature, a number of assumptions have been applied and certain limitations should be recognised.

The appraisal assumes that current patterns of visitor behaviour, including high reliance on car-based access and frequent short visits, are broadly representative of typical conditions. While demand may fluctuate seasonally and annually, the assessment is based on established trends evidenced through visitor surveys and parking counts rather than on anomalous peak or low use periods.

It is also assumed that any option taken forward would be implemented in a manner consistent with relevant legal and regulatory requirements, including rights of way legislation, common land provisions and environmental assessment processes. The appraisal therefore considers deliverability in principle, but does not assume that detailed design, statutory approvals or funding arrangements have yet been secured.

Financial considerations are assessed at a proportionate and high-level stage. Cost comparisons are indicative and intended to inform relative value rather than provide definitive budget figures. More detailed cost estimation would be required should a preferred option progress to design and implementation stages.

Where options rely on changes in visitor behaviour, it is assumed that accompanying communication, signage or management measures would be introduced as appropriate to support compliance and clarity.

The appraisal is strategic in nature and does not constitute a detailed engineering, ecological or legal design exercise. It does not include detailed modelling of traffic redistribution, formal ecological impact assessments, archaeological investigations or engineering feasibility studies. Such assessments may be required at a later stage depending on the option selected.

The assessment of stakeholder and public acceptability is informed by engagement to date and professional judgement. However, views may evolve during formal public consultation, and findings at that stage may influence final recommendations.

The appraisal compares options against the existing baseline and against each other, but it does not seek to predict precise quantitative outcomes for habitat recovery, visitor displacement or traffic redistribution. These outcomes are influenced by a range of behavioural and external factors beyond the scope of this report.

Finally, this report supports decision making by the SAC Partnership but does not in itself constitute a formal decision or approval to implement any option. Further statutory processes, funding approvals and detailed design work would be required before any physical changes are made.

APPENDIX B – LONG LIST OF OPTION DESCRIPTIONS

Following the approach described in Section 5.1, a comprehensive long list of 16 potential options has been developed. The long list reflects a wide spectrum of possible interventions, ranging from minimal change to more substantial restrictions on vehicular access. The purpose of this stage is to ensure that all realistic and proportionate approaches are identified before progressing to structured sifting and shortlisting.

Table B presents the 16 options that have been assessed as part of the initial long list.

Ref	Option
1	Do Nothing (Baseline)
2	Full Closure
3	Partial Closure
4	Seasonal Closure
5	Blue Badge Only Access
6	One-Way Operation
7	Car Park Rationalisation / Verge Protection
8	Controlled Access Zones
9	Time of Day Restrictions
10	Permit-Based Access
11	Parking Capacity Reduction Only
12	Behaviour Change and Support
13	Quiet Lane / Active Travel Priority
14	Traffic Calming Only Option
15	Access Fee / Conservation Charge
16	Park & Stroll Model

Table B – Initial long list of options to consider for Chase Road

Each of the 16 options are summarised further below.

Option 1 – Do Nothing (Baseline): This option retains all existing arrangements along Chase Road, with no changes to vehicle access, parking provision, surfacing, signage or management. Informal verge parking would continue, and existing traffic patterns and visitor behaviour would remain unmanaged beyond current practices. This option provides the statutory baseline against which the environmental, access, safety and operational implications of alternative interventions are assessed. It does not seek to address the identified recreational pressures or habitat fragmentation issues.

Option 2 – Full Closure: Under this option, Chase Road would be closed to public motor vehicles throughout the year. Physical measures such as gates, bollards or barriers would prevent general vehicular access, while retaining access for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, emergency services and authorised site management. All formal and informal car parking along the corridor would be removed, allowing for verge reinstatement, habitat restoration and reduction of vehicular disturbance. This option represents the most comprehensive intervention in terms of traffic reduction and environmental recovery.

Figure B provides an example of a road closure using physical measures to ensure compliance with the Traffic Regulation Order that would be required.



Figure B – Example of a permanent road closure

Option 3 – Partial Closure: This option would close the most environmentally sensitive sections of Chase Road to vehicles, particularly within the Sherbrook and Oldacre corridors, while retaining access to selected car parks at either end of the corridor. Controlled turning areas or physical access restrictions would be required at closure points. The approach seeks to remove traffic from the areas of highest ecological sensitivity while maintaining some vehicular access and limiting displacement to surrounding areas. This represents a targeted intervention rather than a corridor wide solution.

Figure B-1 provides an example of how a partial closure could look along Chase Road/



Figure B-1 – Example of a partial road closure

Option 4 – Seasonal Closure: Chase Road would be closed to public motor vehicles during ecologically sensitive periods, such as the bird breeding season (potentially March–September, or February–October depending on ecological advice) and/or peak summer months. Outside these periods, vehicular access would remain available. Implementation could involve seasonal gating or enforceable temporary restrictions. This option aims to align access management with periods of greatest ecological vulnerability while maintaining flexibility outside those windows.

Figure B-2 illustrates the type of infrastructure that would enable a road to be closed for specific times of the year, alongside a TRO.



Figure B-2 – Example of a seasonal road closure

Option 5 – Blue Badge Only Access: Vehicular access would be restricted to Blue Badge holders, emergency vehicles and authorised site management. Enforcement mechanisms would be required to ensure compliance. This option significantly reduces general traffic volumes while maintaining access for users with the greatest mobility needs. It provides an inclusivity-focused intervention but may require administrative and enforcement infrastructure.

Figure B-3 demonstrates the type of sign that would need to be in place to restrict vehicular traffic along Chase Road, proving an exemption for blue badge holders. This would require a TRO in place, along with an effective enforcement mechanism, which might traffic the highway authority to gain moving traffic enforcement powers.



Figure B-3 – Example of a road restriction sign with blue badge exemption

Option 6 – One-Way Operation: Chase Road would be reconfigured as a one-way route, potentially with defined entry and exit points. The objective would be to reduce vehicle conflict, discourage unnecessary through trips and simplify traffic movement. Car parks would remain accessible, but traffic flow patterns would change. This option may require signage, road markings and possible physical works to ensure compliance and safety.

Option 7 – Car Park Rationalisation / Verge Protection: Informal laybys and ad hoc stopping areas would be removed, and verge habitats restored through physical measures such as bunding, timber barriers or low post-and-rail fencing. Remaining parking would be consolidated into fewer, clearly defined locations with improved layout and containment. The objective is to reduce dispersed access points, limit habitat encroachment and improve the overall management of parking activity along the corridor.



Figure B-4 – Example of a verge protection post that would be needed to support option 7

Option 8 – Controlled Access Zones: Controlled access points would be introduced at one or more mid-route locations to prevent through traffic while allowing access to designated car parks at either end of Chase Road. This could involve lockable gates, rising bollards or turning heads. The intention is to limit vehicle movement along the full corridor length while retaining access to selected parking areas. This option focuses on breaking the linear traffic function of the route.

Figure B-5 illustrates the type of arrangement that could be in place to provide controlled access.



Figure B-5 – Example of a controlled access system

Option 9 – Time of Day Restrictions: Vehicle access would be limited during specific hours, for example restricting evening or peak daytime access. Automated gates or ranger-managed opening and closing regimes could be used. The aim is to reduce disturbance during peak ecological or visitor periods while retaining flexibility during quieter times. This option introduces temporal management rather than spatial restriction.



Figure B-6 – Example of a time of day road restriction sign

Option 10 – Permit-Based Access: Motor vehicle access would be restricted to authorised permit holders, such as local residents, education groups, mobility users, volunteers or land managers. General public access by car would be removed. A permit administration and enforcement system would be required. This approach allows controlled and defined vehicular use while significantly reducing casual or recreational through traffic.



Figure B-7 – Example of an advanced warning sign highlighting road restriction except permit holders

Option 11 – Parking Capacity Reduction Only: Existing formal car parks would remain open but be redesigned to reduce their footprint and total number of spaces. Informal verge parking may be removed or restricted. Chase Road would remain open to vehicles, but overall visitor carrying capacity associated with roadside parking would be reduced. This option targets visitor numbers indirectly through supply management rather than access control.



Figure B-8 – Example of a Chase Road car park that would remain open to vehicular traffic

Option 12 – Behaviour Change and Support: This option would focus on enhanced signage, interpretation boards, visitor information campaigns, digital messaging and increased ranger presence to influence behaviour. Infrastructure would remain largely unchanged. The objective would be to reduce informal parking, encourage use of designated areas and promote responsible visitor behaviour through education and soft management techniques.

Figure B-9 provides an example of an interpretation sign in place to discourage vehicular traffic due to sensitive environments.



Figure B-9 – Example of an interpretation sign to support behaviour change measures

Option 13 – Quiet Lane / Active Travel Priority: Chase Road would be re-designated as a quiet lane or low-speed shared-use route, with signage and road markings emphasising priority for walkers, cyclists and equestrians. Additional traffic calming features would reinforce this character. This option seeks to rebalance the perceived function of the corridor without fully removing vehicular access.



Figure B-10 – Example of a quiet lane where all road users have equal hierarchy

Option 14 – Traffic Calming Only Option: Additional physical traffic calming features, such as humps, chicanes or narrowed sections, would be introduced to reduce vehicle speeds and discourage unnecessary or convenience-based trips. Car parks would remain accessible. This option focuses on moderating vehicle behaviour rather than restricting access.



Figure B-11 – Example of traffic calming along a rural road to discourage traffic and excessive speed

Option 15 – Access Fee / Conservation Charge: A paid parking model or voluntary conservation contribution scheme would be introduced to manage demand and generate funding for habitat restoration and site management. This could involve pay-and-display systems, digital payment or voluntary donation mechanisms. Legal feasibility may be constrained by the common land context and rights of way status. This option aims to influence behaviour through economic signals rather than physical restriction.

Figure B-12 provides an example of an existing toll along a rural road (bridge toll).



Figure B-12 – Example of a toll in place within a rural location

Option 16 – Park & Stroll Model: Visitors would be redirected to more robust and less environmentally sensitive nearby car parks, with Chase Road functioning primarily as a walking and cycling corridor. Wayfinding improvements, improved footways or accessible paths may be required to support displacement. This option reduces vehicle pressure within the most sensitive areas while maintaining overall access to Cannock Chase.

APPENDIX C – PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK REPORT

Please see separate document titled ***"Chase Road Consultation Summary Feedback Report"***.

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