

Chase Road Options Appraisal Consultation - Frequently Asked Questions

Why are changes being considered?

The purpose of the Options Appraisal is to consider whether changes to public motor vehicle access arrangements could help reduce pressures on some of the most environmentally sensitive parts of Cannock Chase while maintaining public access and enjoyment of the landscape.

Evidence gathered through ecological surveys, visitor monitoring and site assessments indicates that current patterns of vehicle access, parking and visitor movement are contributing to habitat disturbance and fragmentation in the Chase Road area.

The appraisal therefore explores a range of potential approaches and assesses their environmental, access, community and deliverability implications. No decision has been made at this stage and feedback from this consultation will help inform the final recommendations.

Was maintaining the current arrangements considered?

Yes. The appraisal considered maintaining the current arrangements as part of the assessment process and uses this as the baseline against which all other options have been compared.

However, evidence gathered through ecological surveys, visitor monitoring, parking surveys and site assessments indicates that existing patterns of public motor vehicle access, parking and visitor movement are contributing to habitat disturbance, fragmentation and pressure on sensitive wildlife in the Chase Road area.

While maintaining the current arrangements was considered, it was concluded that it would not adequately address the issues identified or support the long-term protection of the Special Area of Conservation. For this reason, it was not taken forward as a viable management option for detailed appraisal.

The purpose of the Options Appraisal is therefore to explore alternative approaches and assess whether they could provide a better balance

between protecting the environment and maintaining public access and enjoyment of Cannock Chase. No decision has been made at this stage, and consultation feedback will help inform the final recommendations.

Why are you doing this now?

The heathland on Cannock Chase is significant on a European scale, it is a habitat rarer than rainforest and is widely believed to be irreplaceable once lost.

The area around Chase Road is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is the highest legal environmental protection in the country. It is illegal to harm the SAC in any way; directly or indirectly. Cannock Chase SAC is experiencing a high level of unintentional harm caused by increasing visitor usage.

Staffordshire County Council as the landowner has a statutory (legal) obligation to ensure that the Special Area of Conservation is managed appropriately.

There will be a point when land managers will be unable to stop the decline in habitats and species so steps need to be taken now to ensure the Chase is here for future generations.

What evidence is there that the habitat around Chase Road is in decline?

A botanical survey carried out in 2024 demonstrated that the areas around car parks show significant disturbance and poor-quality habitats. Chase Road is 1.5 miles long and has 21 opportunities for parking which means the level of disturbance is high right along the length of the road. [Cannock-Chase-botanical-survey_C_Arvensis-Ecology_2025.pdf](#)

Natural England consider the condition of the habitat to be unfavourable (recovering). A key element to be able to aid this recovery is to reduce the pressure from sporadic parking and vehicle movement through multiple access routes within the protected landscape.

Are you trying to stop people visiting Cannock Chase?

There is no intention to prevent people visiting the Chase. It is expected that visitor numbers will rise in the future.

However, for the Chase to remain a special place for future generations there is a need to manage the increasing human pressure on the most sensitive habitats and species whilst still enabling people to visit the Chase. This appraisal of the options will look at the best ways to do this in the Chase Road area.

Why do you need to reduce vehicle movements on Chase Road?

The purpose of the appraisal is to consider whether changes to public motor vehicle access arrangements could help reduce disturbance to sensitive habitats and wildlife while maintaining public enjoyment of Cannock Chase.

Physical impact - cars are being parked in multiple locations and gateways along Chase Road causing damage to the habitats alongside the road from repeated compaction, litter and disturbance.

Disturbance to Wildlife - a botanical survey carried out in 2024 demonstrated the effect of disturbance on plant communities is greater close to car parks. With multiple parking places (both formal and informal) in the Chase Road area the amount of the protected landscape impacted by high levels of disturbance, resulting in poor quality habitat, is extensive. The disturbance to plants and the enriching of the soils from dog mess and urine changes the ecology of the site so the heathland species that should be living there cannot survive.

Tranquillity - the movement of vehicles along the road reduces the peace and tranquillity of the area as does the visual intrusion of vehicles parked in multiple locations throughout the Chase Road area.

Antisocial Behaviour - The secluded nature of Chase Road means it attracts behaviour that is problematic for other visitors, nearby communities and the wildlife. This includes, but is not limited to, the feeding of the wild deer population, letting off industrial fireworks, reckless driving and vandalism.

My family member can't walk far, where else can we go?

Please visit www.cannockchase.org.uk for information on accessible trails, parking and other facilities for those with access needs. There have been accessibility improvements at visitor centres around the Chase funded by the National Landscape Partnership.

Accessible Chase - Cannock Chase

Chase Road has always been public access; you can't stop people using it?

There is no proposal to restrict access for people walking, cycling, horse riding, using mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs. This work should lead to improved non-vehicular access, with the appraisal looking at the options of sustainable vehicle management and car park configuration.

Will the car parks on Chase Road be closed?

The current car parks associated with Chase Road are remnants of Brocton Camp and are not necessarily in the right places for visitor access or the ecological sensitivity of the Chase.

This appraisal will look at these issues.

Will I have to pay for parking?

This piece of work is not connected to introducing car parking charges. However, further car park charging may be introduced at some point on Cannock Chase. Charging for parking is the usual way for landowners to raise money towards the costs of managing land alongside other funding streams. All monies raised from car parking on the Chase will be used to manage the Chase, its special habitats and visitors.

Why are you shutting all the car parks on the Chase?

We are not, the SAC Partnership is planning to refurbish 9 car parks on the Chase in addition the visitor centres, which is expected to increase their capacity. The parking locations proposed for closure are mostly where vehicles are parking directly onto the protected landscape (at roadsides and not in car parks) or where the habitats we need to protect are most sensitive.

How has the shortlist of options been developed?

The options have been developed through site visits, ecological evidence, parking and visitor surveys, workshops with partner organisations, and a review of best practice from other protected landscapes. A long list of

potential options was considered before being refined into four shortlisted approaches for consultation.

Has a preferred option already been selected?

No. The consultation is seeking views on all four shortlisted options. Feedback from residents, visitors, stakeholders and user groups will be considered alongside the findings of the Options Appraisal before any recommendations are made.

Will emergency services and land management vehicles still be able to access Chase Road?

Yes. All options assume that emergency services and authorised land management vehicles would continue to have access where required.

Why is Chase Road being considered rather than other parts of Cannock Chase?

The appraisal includes consideration of current conditions and the challenges associated with existing access arrangements. Evidence indicates that habitat disturbance, verge damage and visitor pressure are continuing concerns. The purpose of the study is to understand whether alternative approaches could better support the long-term protection of the landscape while maintaining public enjoyment.

Why is Chase Road described as a bridleway?

Chase Road forms part of the public rights of way network and includes sections recorded as public bridleway. Public bridleway rights allow access for walking, cycling, horse riding and certain mobility users. The legal status of the route is an important consideration within the Options Appraisal.

Who are the SAC Partnership?

The SAC Partnership is made up of seven local authorities, with landowners and advisory bodies. It is responsible for reducing the impact of increasing recreation from new housing development on the protected landscape of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation through public engagement, education and awareness projects as well as capital improvement works.

For more information, please follow the web links: [About the SAC - Cannock Chase](#); [Its Only Heather - Cannock Chase](#)

Why is the Partnership involved in this?

This work is being funded by the Partnership to look at options for how the area around Chase Road can be better managed to allow the habitats and species of the Chase to thrive whilst managing visitors in a sustainable way.

Who owns the land around Chase Road?

Staffordshire County Council. It is managed by the Countryside Service team based on Cannock Chase.

Who is funding this work?

The appraisal of the options around Chase Road is being paid for by the Cannock Chase SAC Partnership, which is funded by developer contributions collected from new housing developments within 15km of Cannock Chase.

What else is SAC Partnership doing to improve the visitor experience on Cannock Chase?

The SAC Partnership has contributed funding towards the Shaping Shugborough Project which will increase parking capacity and improve the visitor welcome on the historic estate which affects the Milford Common area when it has reached capacity.

The SAC Partnership have contributed funding and monitoring information to the project looking at improvements to visitor offer at Cannock Chase Visitor Centre (Marquis Drive).

The SAC Partnership has contributed funding to the building of the education hub at Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's Wolseley Centre.

The SAC Partnership are planning a programme of works to improve the car parks and visitor welcome around the SAC.

More details on the work of the SAC can be found at

www.cannockchase.org.uk