

Proposed Verdin Park car park – come see the plans

The public are invited to see and comment on the proposed plans to develop a new car park in a small section of Verdin Park in Northwich, which would result in more spaces being available for patients at the Victoria Infirmary (VIN).

The plans will be on display at the VIN on Thursday 23 October from 10am – 7pm.

Earlier this year, Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, which operates the VIN, and Northwich Town Council announced this medium-term solution to improve parking at the hospital.

The development would create 40 dedicated parking spaces for hospital staff during weekdays (Monday–Friday). At weekends, these spaces would be made available to the public free of charge.

This measure will help to ease parking pressures at the hospital, improve access to the site, and reduce parking in the surrounding residential areas.

The proposed new car park would be approximately 950sq m, which is less than 2% of the total park.

The drop-in engagement session will give people a detailed insight into the proposed location and layout of the car park, the anticipated impact on Verdin Park and surrounding green space, benefits to patients, staff, and the wider Northwich community, as well as measures to support accessibility and inclusivity for all users.

Russ Favager, the Trust's Board Senior Responsible Officer for the Leighton New Hospital Programme and Estates Redevelopment, said: "The Trust is committed to the long-term future of the Victoria Infirmary and to supporting our local community by continuing to improve and enhance the services available at the hospital.

"Parking has been a longstanding challenge at the site and whilst we have made improvements, such as installing Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), which allows us to establish designated parking areas for staff and patients/visitors, more needs to be done as demand still exceeds capacity. The total of parking spaces has now increased to 138.

"We believe the proposed Verdin Park car park represents a positive step forward, making a real difference for patients, staff, and reducing disruption for local residents. I look forward to meeting people at the event and discussing the plans in more detail."

Chris Shaw, Chief Officer of Northwich Town Council, said: “The decision to explore the use of Verdin Park for additional parking was not taken lightly by Northwich Town Council, we understand the concerns of our residents with any loss of green space within the town. This is why we asked that all possible alternatives were explored by the trust before Verdin Park was considered.

“The facilities and services that the VIN now provide are exceptional and mean that our residents will have access to treatment locally instead of the journey over to Leighton Hospital which also has its own parking problems.

“The car parking facility will be free of charge for all users of the park on a weekend meaning the park will be available for those with reduced mobility and accessible to all.

“Northwich Town Council has a commitment of making our parks and play areas more accessible with Verdin Park play area recently being refurbished with accessible play equipment.

“The car park would be leased to the trust generating an income which will be used to make further improvements to the park going forward.

“We look forward to speaking with our residents at the engagement day and discussing your concerns and observations.”

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why not build a multi-storey car park?

A multi-storey (decked) car was explored with a number of suppliers. However, building a multi-storey car park would require an investment of several million pounds, which was assessed as not being a cost-effective option when considering other service demands on the Trust. There would also be significant disruption to existing hospital parking during construction, particularly given the hospital’s seven-day operational model.

2. Why not use a shuttle bus or park-and-ride scheme?

These alternatives were considered, but present both logistical and sustainability challenges. Shuttle services require ongoing funding and coordination, and park-and-ride options are limited by available land and infrastructure. Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (MCHFT) will continue to explore transport improvements with Cheshire West and Chester Council.

3. Have alternative sites been considered by the Trust for either purchase or lease?

Yes, the Trust employed a commercial agent to explore potential opportunities within a reasonable walking distance from Victoria Infirmary. Ten sites were identified and explored, but only Verdin Park was deemed a feasible option in terms of location, building cost, and the timeframe for development.

4. Has the Trust maximised car parking at the current site?

Yes, the Trust has recently invested money into maximising the on-site car parking as part of the programme to create the new Cheshire and Merseyside Surgical Centre. Additionally, further investment has been made to separate staff and visitor parking by adding barriers and Automatic Number Plate Recognition to assist with the flow of the car park. This resulted in the increase of parking spaces to 130. The Trust appreciates concerns recently highlighted from patients with limited mobility when accessing tickets at the barriers. In response, we are working with the supplier to potentially convert this to a ticketless system.

5. How will the additional car parking on Verdin Park benefit Northwich and surrounding communities?

The Trust has enhanced services available at the Victoria Infirmary as part of a wider commitment to provide clinical care closer to where people live. With the introduction of these new clinical services, one area that has not kept pace with this growth is car parking. Improvements have been made, such as realigning the existing car park to create more spaces following an impact assessment and designating dedicated staff and patient bays closer to hospital entrances, but demand for urgent and planned care still exceeds supply.

Rising urgent care demand means additional parking is needed to accommodate increased usage across these services.

The proposed additional parking at Verdin Park will:

- Support the continued development of services at VIN
- Enable a wider breadth of clinics and urgent care provision
- Improve access for patients, staff and visitors

6. Could the proposed car park benefit public access to Verdin park?

While the proposed car park will be used by VIN staff during the week, the proposal ensures free public access at weekends. This will allow better access to Verdin Park facilities and improve accessibility for all, supporting inclusivity for all users.

7. Will the entire park be turned into a car park?

No. Only a small portion of Verdin Park is proposed for development of the car park and it will be accessed by an existing entry/exit point which would be enhanced as part of the scheme. Visual materials, including drone imagery and design drawings, will be shared to clarify the limited scope and preserve green space. Verdin Park is approximately 52,279sq m. The proposed new car park would be approximately 950 sq m, which is less than 2% of the total park.

8. How will the car park be funded?

The car park build would be funded by MCHFT. Northwich Town Council would put a ground lease in place for this small parcel of land. The ongoing lease income would be invested into Verdin Park.

9. What about the trees and environmental impact?

Tree preservation and biodiversity are central to the planning process. Surveys have been conducted, and mitigation measures will be implemented. The proposed

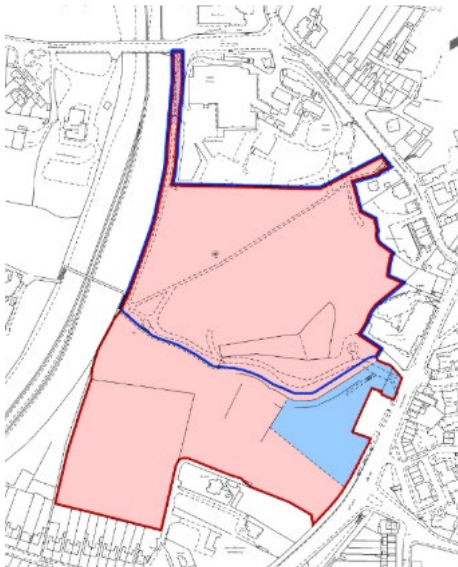
changes are sympathetic to the existing environment, with a commitment to achieving a Biodiversity Net Gain target of 10%.

10. Is it envisaged that this proposed hospital car park would be extended in future?

No. Northwich Town Council has made it clear that this will not be extended in the future.

11. Who owns the land, and can the development proceed legally?

Northwich Town Council own the absolute freehold of the land under title number CH583585 shown below.



Following review of all the documents held by the Council by a specialist legal advisor, there does not appear to be any material issues which would prevent the construction and subsequent letting of the car park.

12. Why does MCHFT charge for car parking?

Like all NHS Trusts, MCHFT is responsible for maintaining safe, accessible, and well-managed car parking facilities across its sites. Charging for parking helps us cover the costs of:

- Maintaining and improving car park infrastructure such as resurfacing, signage & lighting
- Operating security and access systems
- Supporting fair access for patients, visitors, and staff through designated zones and permit systems

These charges are reinvested into the Trust's estates and facilities to ensure our parking provision remains safe, efficient, and fit for purpose

13. Is MCHFT in line with other NHS Trusts when it comes to parking charges?

Yes. MCHFT's approach to car parking charges aligns with national NHS guidance and practices across other Trusts. We regularly benchmark our policies and pricing structures to ensure fairness and consistency.

14. Are there parking concessions for visitors to site with certain conditions

Yes. The MCHFT Car Parking Policy that includes Victoria Infirmary details a range of mandated and Trust-agreed concessions for staff, patients, and visitors

- Disabled people (Blue Badge holders): free parking for patients, visitors, and disabled staff
- Frequent outpatient attenders: free parking for those attending at least three appointments in a month over three months

In addition, to support short visits such as patient drop-offs and collections, MCHFT offers the first 20 minutes of parking free of charge. This concession is designed to reduce congestion and support accessibility for patients with mobility needs or short appointments.

Patients visiting the hospital may reclaim their parking charges / travel expenses providing they are in receipt of one/any of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Pension Credit
- Jobseekers Allowance

Charges can only be reclaimed for hospital appointments, and each patient must have valid proof of their benefit.