PROPOSAL TO RE-ROUTE EXISTING ZIP WIRE AT GO APE RIVINGTON

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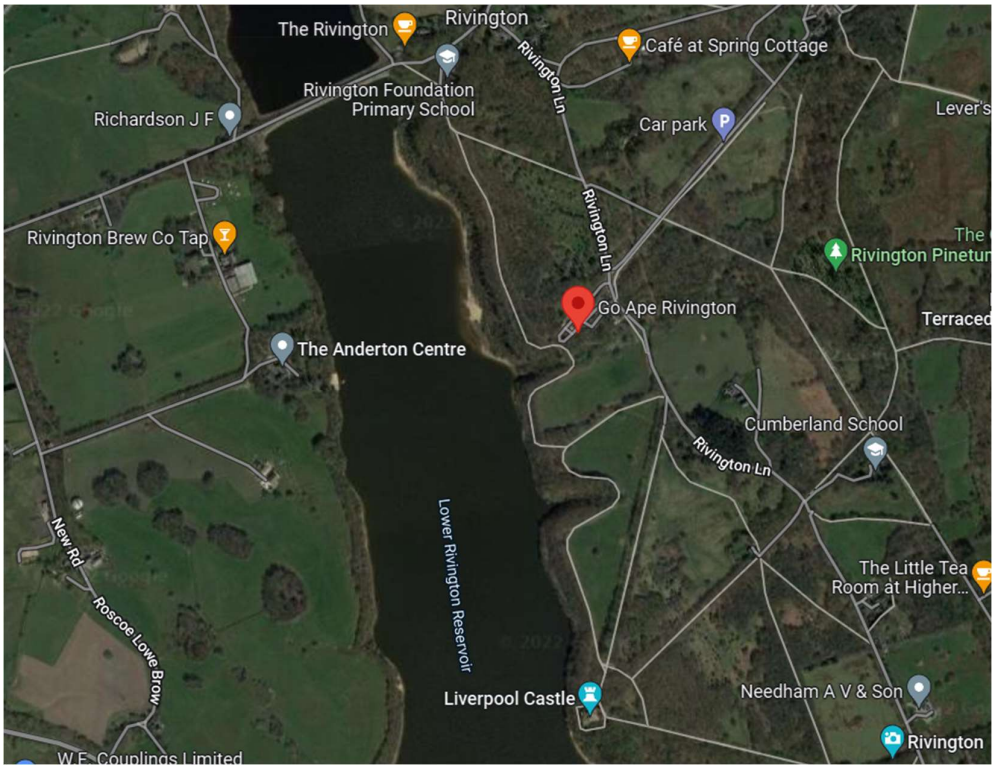
SUPPORTING STATEMENT

BACKGROUND TO GO APE

Go Ape (www.goape.co.uk) is the multi-award winning provider of high ropes adventure courses and Segway Activities. Go Ape activities are designed to offer an immersive experience for all ages.

LOCATION

Go Ape Rivington is located in Lever Park, in the woodland on the East side of Lower Rivington Reservoir. It has been operating in this location since March 2009.



The alterations that are being applied for in this application relate to tree T428 which forms the launch point for the final zip wire (Site 5) on the Tree Top Challenge high ropes course which is in poor health and is required to be felled. This will allow us to continue operating the high ropes course with a zip wire finale. Some alterations will need to be made to the landing site to accommodate a slight change in angle of the replaced zip wire. This would allow us to continue operating our high ropes course as it has been since it opened in 2009.

The site is in the Green Belt and as such, any alterations must preserve the "openness" of the area. The proposal set out below will be minimal and will seek to alter what is already there in order to ensure that openness is not compromised. The "density of development" of this change will be very minor. The type of development is for the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor recreation and is therefore not inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The footprint of the landing site will change minimally to accommodate the change in angle of the new zip wire as we would need to allow clearance of 2m either side of the zip wire to ensure participant safety. It is likely that this would require the landing site fence to be moved slightly. We will not be building anything new and therefore, there will be no impact on the openness of the Green Belt on the ground.

TREE INSPECTION AND PROPOSED WORKS

The attached tree report, compiled by Go Ape's Senior Tree Officer sets out in more detail why tree T428 needs to be felled. The tree is in poor health, and this has resulted in the need to alter the course to allow the removal of the tree. The pictures below illustrate the identified issues.


Picture 1 and 2 – Poor crown health


Picture 3 and 4 – evidence of decay and ganoderma fungus

The Senior Tree Officer has given a deadline of 3 months for the alterations to the course and removal of the tree.

PROPOSED COURSE ALTERATIONS

We have identified another course tree (tree 0196) that is already in use as a support tree to elements of the high ropes course that is in line with the landing site and would be suitable for use as an alternate starting point to the zip wire. A platform would need to be installed on this tree at approximately 6.7m. It would also need an additional crossing at height (from T0817 to T0196) to allow participants to reach the new tree with the safety cable at approximately 8.1m. This option would require

some minor alignment changes to the landing area to accommodate the change in angle of the zip wire. We would need to ensure that the width of the landing area allows 2 metre either side of the wire to ensure participant safety. This option is within the existing footprint of the high ropes course and would preserve the openness of the area. There will be no impact to access to areas underneath the high ropes course.

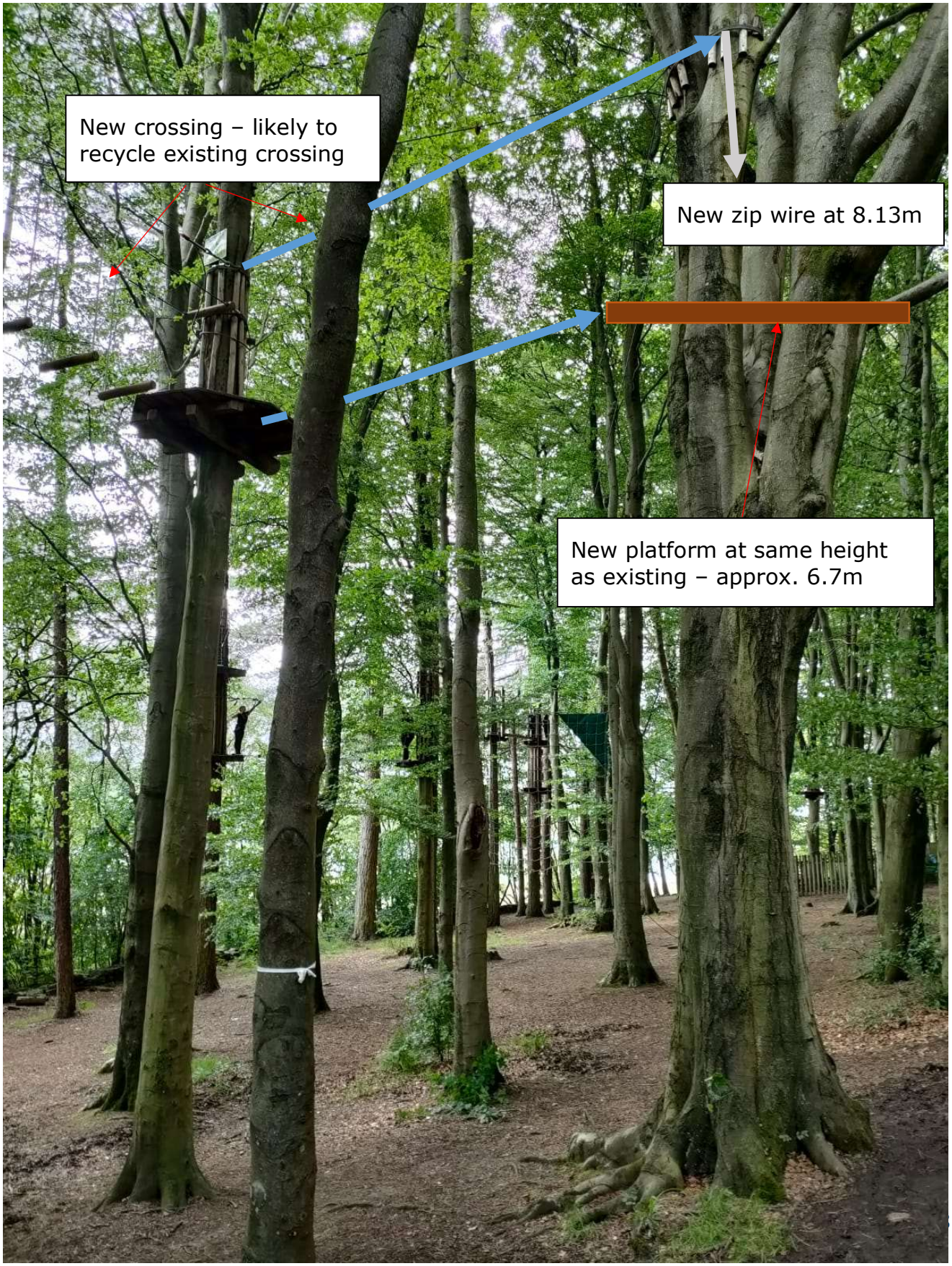
There are 2 trees approximately 4m in front of the proposed launch tree that would also need to be felled to make room for the zip wire as they would pose a collision hazard to participants. We would propose to replace these trees (and T428) with 2 new ones of a type to be recommended by Go Ape's Senior Tree Officer, most likely Beech as like for like replacements. We would also propose to plant 2 extra trees to provide a net gain.

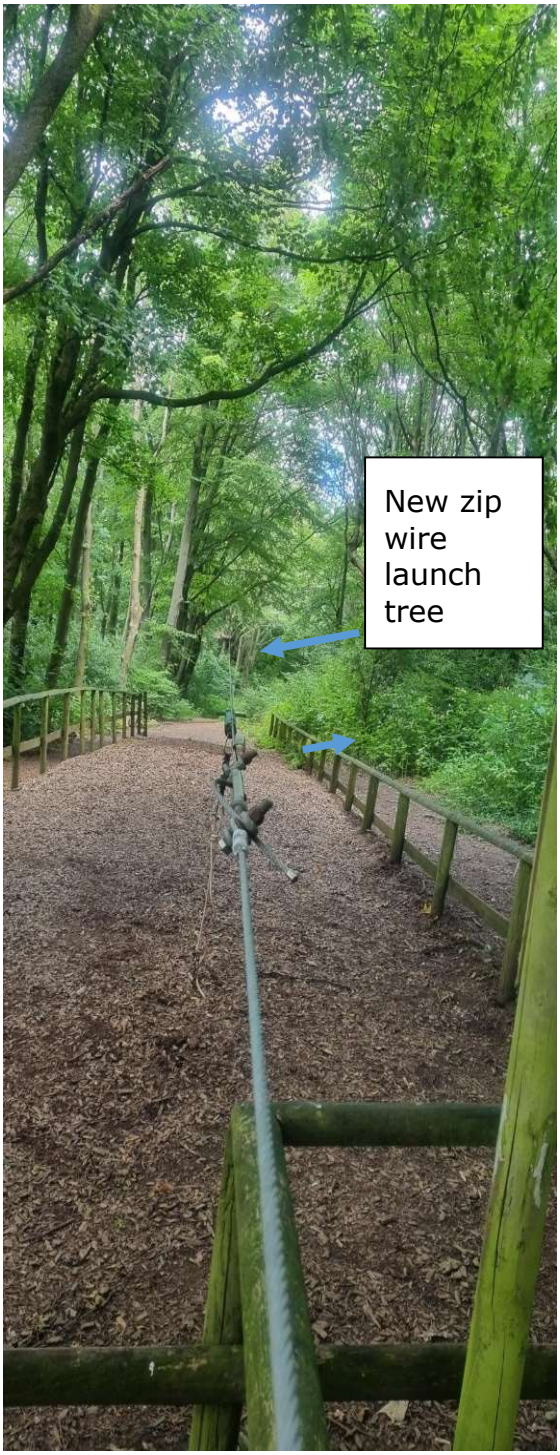
Trees marked with white bands would need to be felled as they pose a collision hazard to participants on the new zip wire.

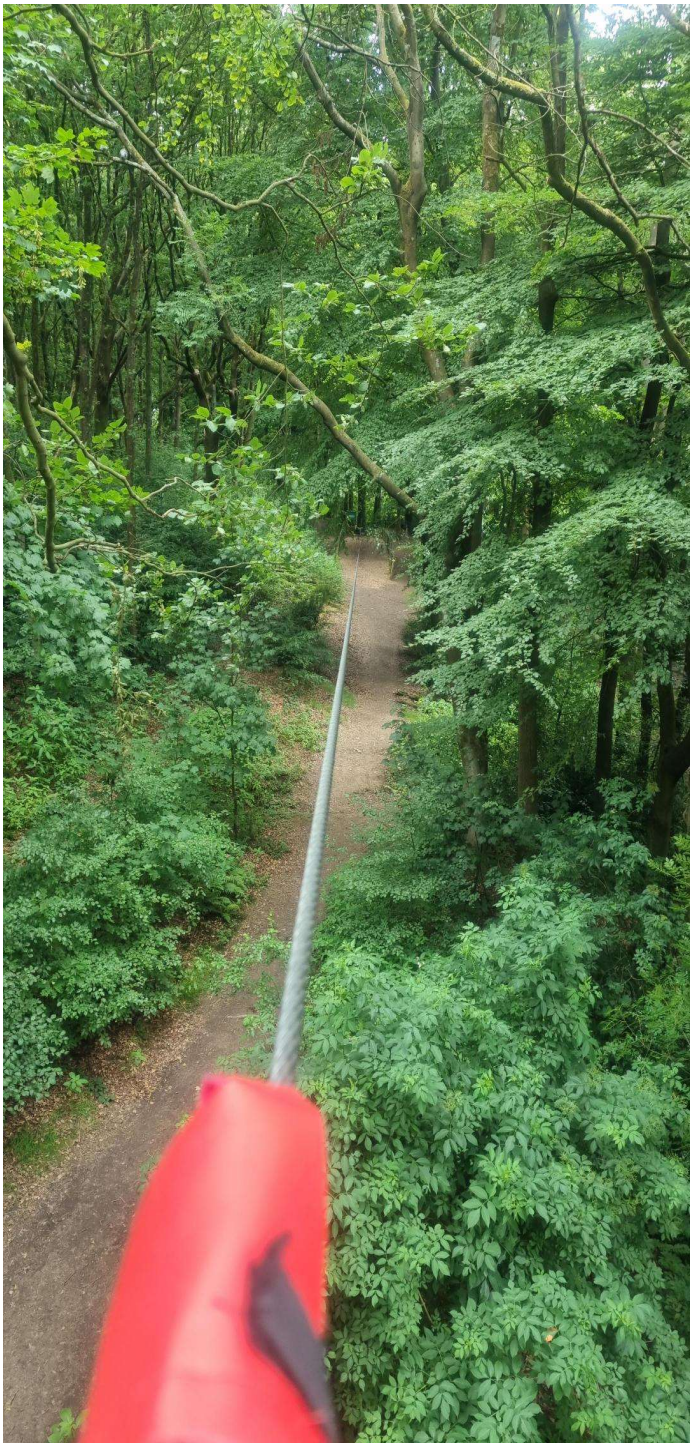
WHAT WILL THE ALTERATIONS LOOK LIKE?

The alterations will look the same as the existing high ropes course with a timber platform, wire rope safety line, rope and timber obstacles and sacrificial tree battens. More information is provided below.

Go Ape Rivington – Site 5


New crossing – likely to recycle existing crossing
New zip wire at 8.13m
New platform at same height as existing – approx. 6.7m





Go Ape Site 5 – Existing zip wire and landing site. Please note, the proposal would mean the movement/realignment of right-hand fence (on the photo) to accommodate the change in angle of the new zip wire. It would need to be 2m away from the new zip wire.

TREE TOP PLATFORMS AND WOODEN BRACES

The course is made up of wooden platforms between which the crossings are strung. These platforms sit upon a wooden brace that uses two long bolts positioned either side of the trunk to clamp the wood to the tree. A nail is used to help keep the wood in place whilst the bolts are put in position. During an annual tree inspection tree growth is noted. If a tree has grown significantly then the braces and platforms can be altered to give the tree more room.

CROSSINGS

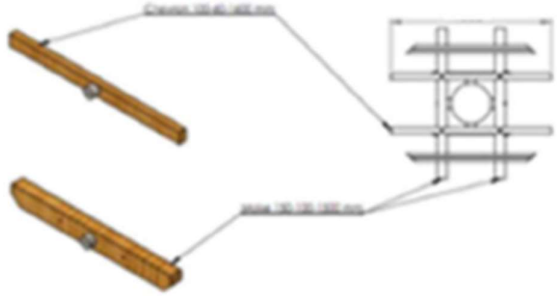
Various crossings of different lengths span the gaps between the tree top platforms and allow participants to make their way around the course. These crossings are constructed of timber, wire cable and/or rope, all materials that blend in with the natural surroundings of the course. Crossings are replaced and refreshed throughout the life of the course.

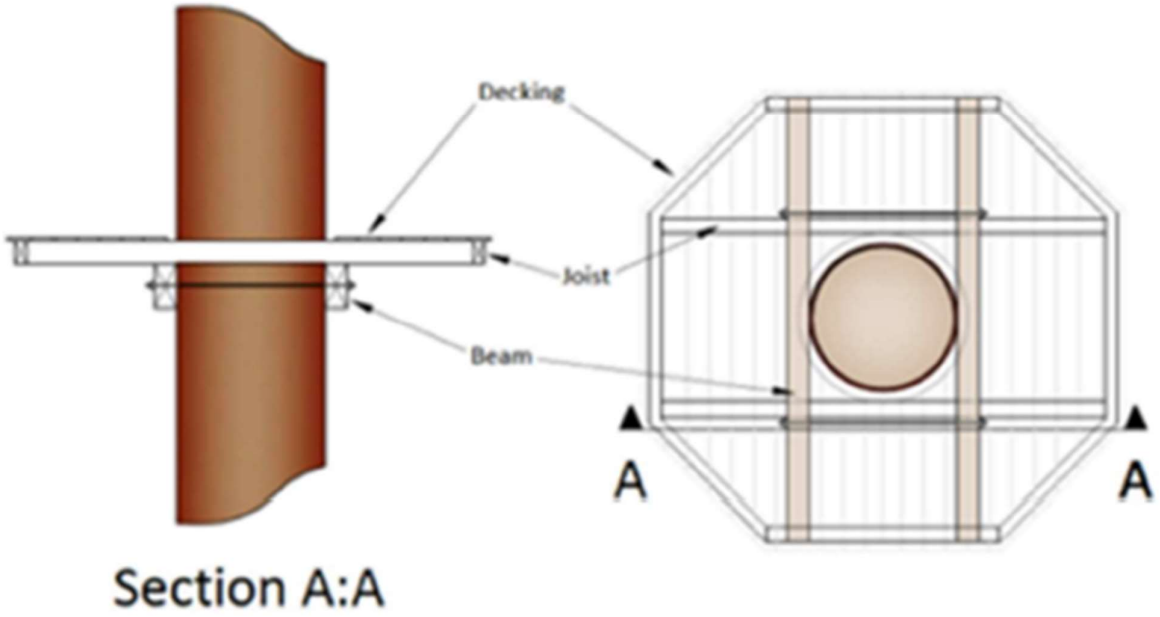
SACRIFICIAL BATTENS

Throughout the length of the course runs the safety cable. The Course operates on a continuous belay system. This cable has to be appropriately secured to each of the trees on the course. Various crossings also require cables and/or brace attachments to the trees. None of the cabling or braces come into contact with the trees but are held away from the bark by sacrificial wooden 'full round' battens. The battens are kept in place with nails in order to ensure the correct position during construction however no loading is placed on the nails and penetration is kept to a minimum. As the tree grows it pushes these battens out into the metal cables and braces, which eventually dig into and crush the battens instead of the tree. During annual tree inspections these battens are inspected and can be replaced if necessary.

TREE ATTACHMENT

The method of attachment to the tree, along with the sacrificial battens, is designed to have as minimal an impact as possible. The diagrams below show the way our platforms are attached to the trees.





Section A:A

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Lever Park is a registered park and garden, and Great Hall Barn is a grade 2 listed building

Planning approval was gained for a high ropes courses in 2009. It was judged that this would have no negative impact on the heritage assets of Lever Park.

A consultation response from Chorley's Conservation Officer at the time stated:

"The impact upon both the Great Hall Barn and Lever Park is, in my view, negligible and therefore acceptable. The new buildings are designed to have a minimal impact upon both the setting and on the environment (by the use of sustainable materials), both aims being achieved in my view."

The alterations we are requesting are minimal and will have as little impact as possible and will look the same as the existing infrastructure. Actual on the ground works are likely to include a slight realignment of the existing landing site to accommodate the change in angle of the zip wire. The capacity of the course will not be altered because of these amendments. Access to the existing path network will not be affected.

Material from the felled trees can be left in-situ if required. A log pile will support a wide range of wildlife, including moss, fungi and insects and other invertebrates. It will also attract a range of small mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds that will visit to prey on these insects. We will replace the 3 felled trees with 5 new ones to provide a net gain in tree stock.