

Proposal to dispose by lease an area of Common Good land adjacent to Royal Observatory, 21 Observatory Road, Blackford, Edinburgh, EH9 3HJ to United Kingdom Research & Innovation

What is proposed?

A disposal by lease of 260.5 m² or thereby of Common Good land located at Royal Observatory, 21 Observatory Road, Blackford, Edinburgh, EH9 3HJ to United Kingdom Research & Innovation. The extent of property included in the proposal is shown shaded in purple on the below plan. The area is currently irregular shaped parcels of rough ground overgrown with grass. It is also proposed to improve the public car parking at the site by creating new parking spaces, clearly defining the parking spaces and improving vehicle circulation in out of the car park. As part of the new car parking spaces created, two (2) Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points will be installed for public use.

Background to the proposal

Blackford Hill forms part of the Common Good Assets of the City. Section 104 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires the Council to undertake a public consultation when considering disposing or changing the use of Common Good assets.

The car parking at the site currently fails to meet the level of demand posed by users of the public park and staff of the Royal Observatory.

Over the years, the area currently leased out to the Royal Observatory has proved insufficient to meet staff car parking needs. As part of a programme of refurbishment works planned for the Royal Observatory, it has been identified that if additional staff car parking was provided, it would free up more car parking spaces for the public to use.

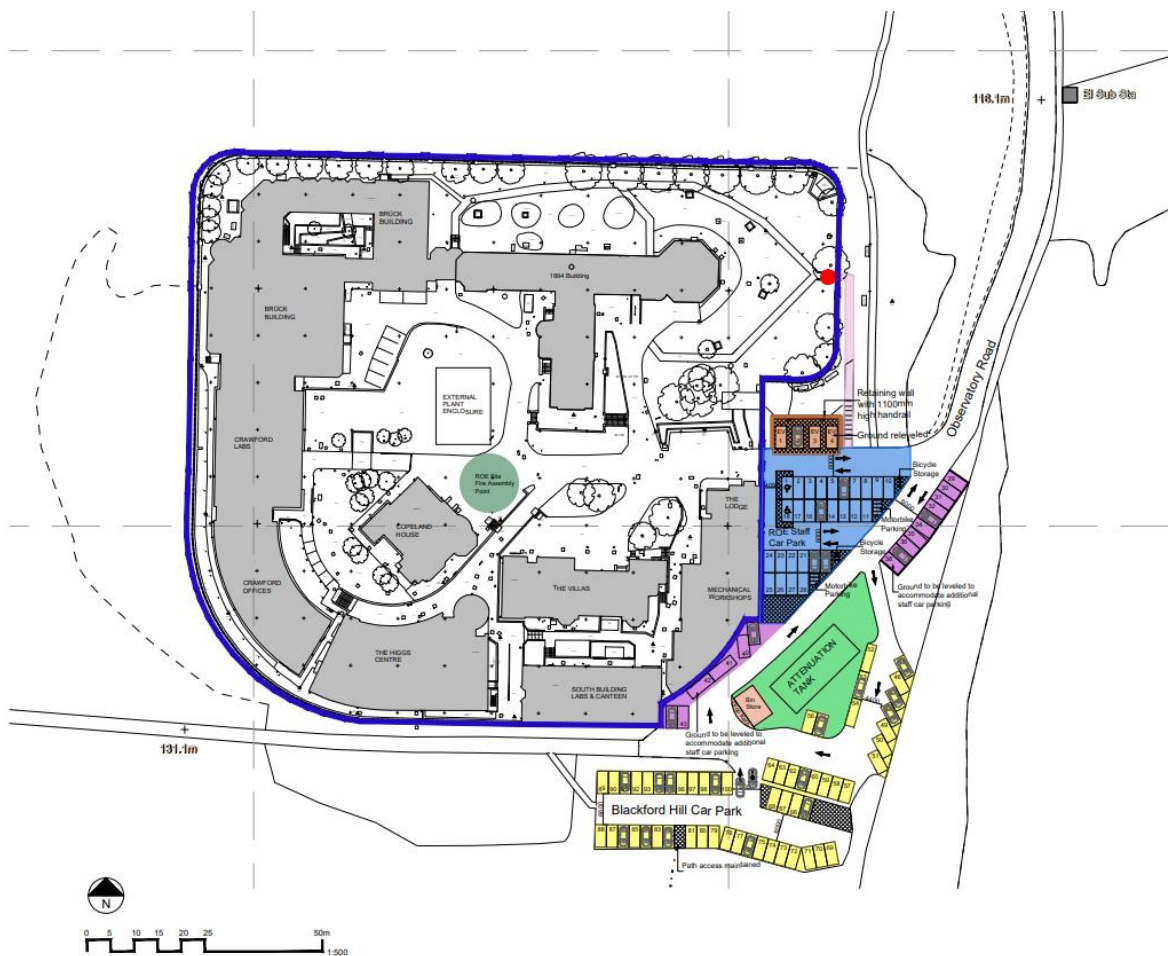
It is proposed that the area outlined red on the plans below will be leased out to the United Kingdom Research & Innovation, the overarching body which oversees the Royal Observatory for additional car parking. As part of their planned refurbishment works, the Royal Observatory will fill, develop, and resurface this area of land as appropriate to create additional car parking exclusively for their staff use.

The Royal Observatory have asked that the Council consider a lease of at least 17 years which would provide them with security of tenure and would be consistent with the existing lease originally granted in 2011.

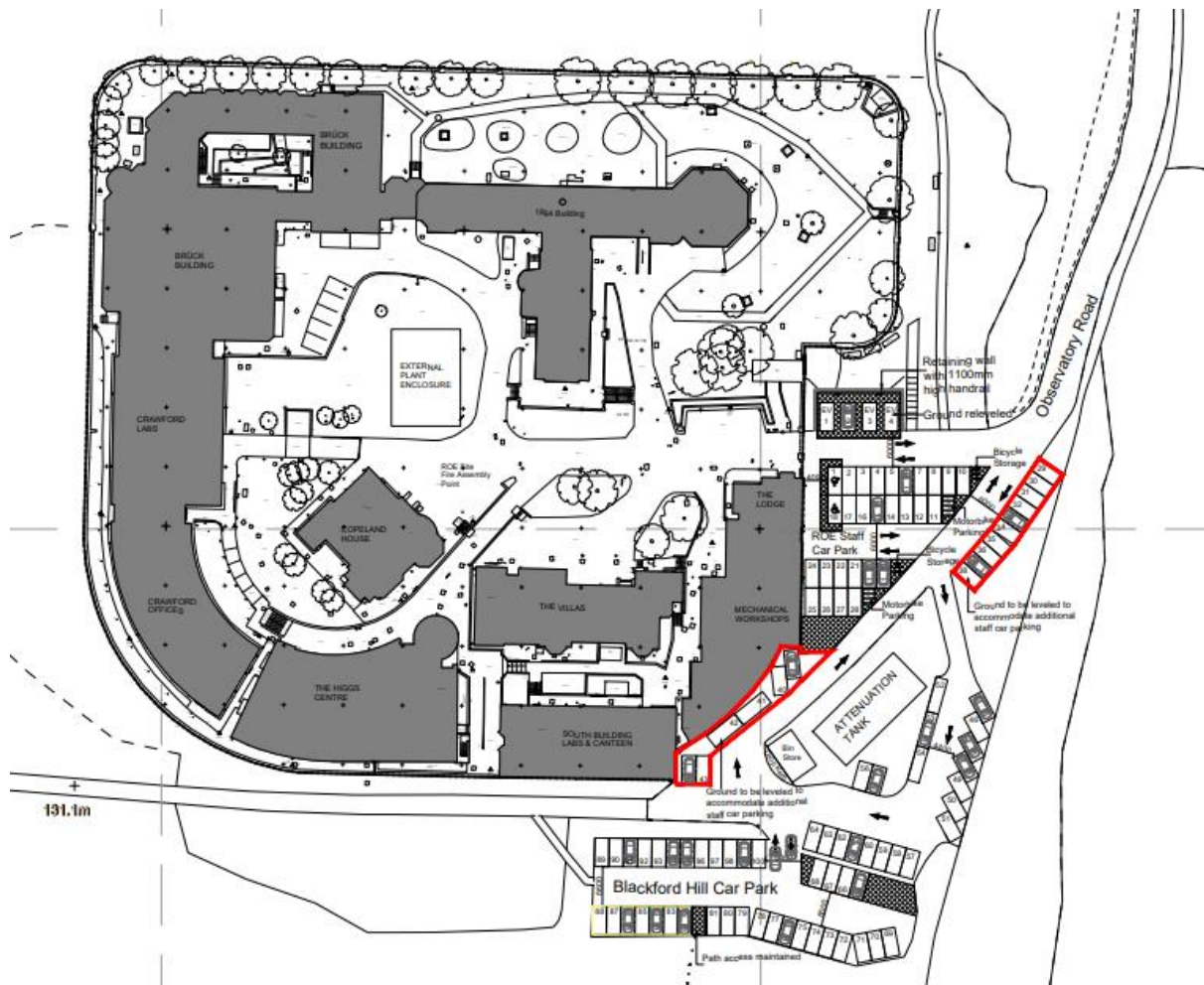
Proposed terms for a lease have not yet been finalised. However, if this proposal is supported. It would be proposed that the lease should be of 17 years duration at an annual rental to be agreed. The rental figure reflects the ongoing maintenance requirements, the fact that the ground will be developed by the Royal Observatory and the continuing restriction that it be for staff car parking use only.

As part of this proposal, it was also identified that the current provision of car parking is also insufficient. Consideration was given to ways to improve the public car parking within the constraints of the site, while still ensuring safe vehicular and pedestrian access. The car park will be reconfigured and new spaces and walking routes provided.

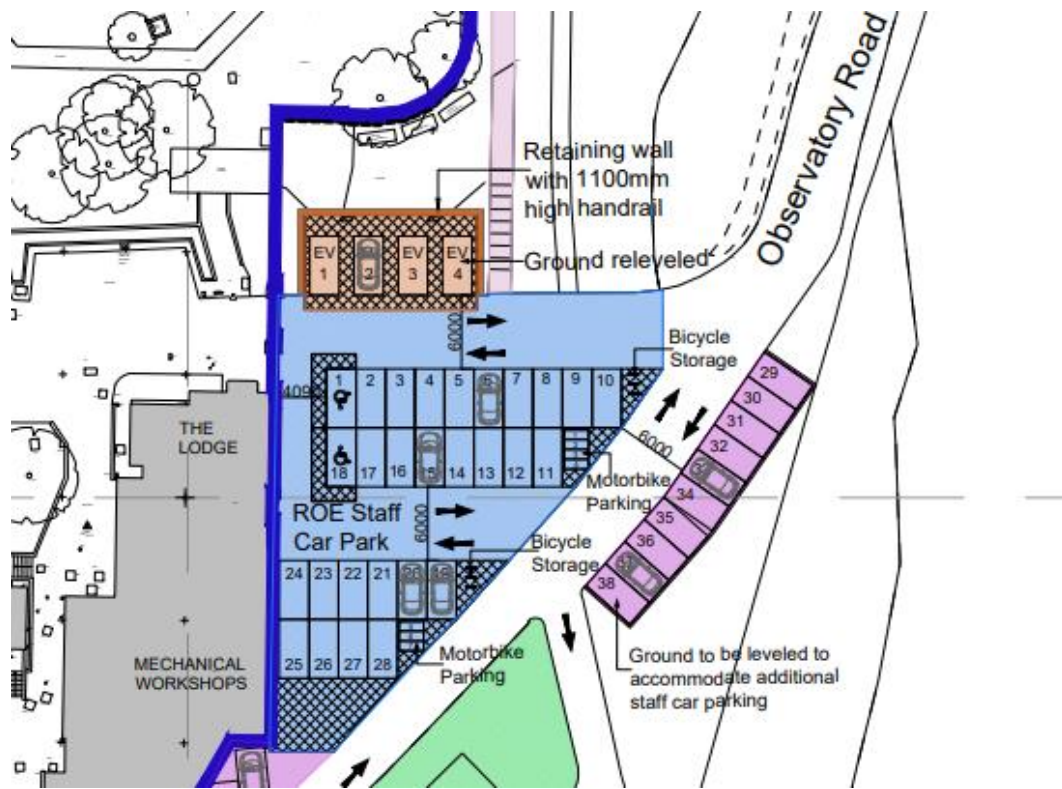
The area of land close to the Royal Observatory gates will be developed into four (4) public EV charging bays with EV charge points available for the public use. There will be a tariff for the use of these EV charge points which will be set by the operator.



Wider design proposal showing the new car parking layout



Area of ground to be leased out



Proposed EV charging bays

Consultation

As the larger area of Blackford Hill, including the areas of land shown as car parking spaces are Common Good asset, it must be subject to the requirement in section 104 of the Act to undertake a public consultation when considering disposing or changing the use of Common Good assets. This includes where the proposal is to grant a lease of over 10 years. Therefore, before taking any decision, and to inform the decision-making process, we are keen to hear the views of the community, in particular:

- What are your views on the proposed disposal by lease of this piece of Common Good land?
- Do you have any views on potential benefits of the proposal?
- Do you have any issues or concerns arising from the proposal?
- Do you have any additional comments?

The Council will take all representations into account in reaching a decision.

Depending on the representations received the possible outcomes are:

- The proposal goes ahead
- The proposal is amended significantly, and a fresh consultation takes place
- The proposal does not go ahead

Representations

You can feedback your views:

- online at <https://consultationhub.edinburgh.gov.uk/cg/royal-observatory/>
- by filling in a paper questionnaire that you can pick up at Morningside Library
- sending comments by email to commongood@edinburgh.gov.uk
- writing to Kyeremateng Boateng, The City of Edinburgh Council, 1:5 Waverley Court, 4 East Market Street, Edinburgh EH8 8BG

We must receive your comments by 26th October 2026.