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#### IN THE COUNTY COURT

Claim No.: xxxxxxx

Between

**XXXXXXX** 

(Claimant)

-and-

XXXXXX

(Defendant)

# WITNESS STATEMENT OF DEFENDANT FOR COURT HEARING ON XXXXXXX

- 1. I am xxxxxxxx and I am the defendant against whom this claim is made. The facts below are true to the best of my belief and my account has been prepared based upon my own knowledge.
- 2. In my statement I shall refer to exhibits within the evidence supplied with this statement, referring to page and reference numbers where appropriate. My defence is repeated and I will say as follows:

#### **Sequence of Events**

- 3. I attended the Three Spires car park on Backcester Lane, Lichfield on xxxxxxx (according to the ANPR image) with the intention of spending time and money in the shopping centre. As it had been some time since I visited this car park due to the covid pandemic. I was unaware the car park was under new management having previously been operated by the council and that there were different terms and conditions and means of payment.
- 4. At the time of the alleged contravention the claimant had been operator of this car park less than 8 months and due to the abnormality of the typical order of things due to the pandemic, I would therefore contend that it makes it even more important to display appropriate and sufficient signage at the entrance to and around the car park. The signage at the entrance was insufficient to form a contract. (Please refer to Exhibit AE-01)
- 5. I believe I paid via contactless card payment but was unaware that my payment had not been accepted or that the keypad failed to record the full VRN during the payment process. I left the car park assuming that my payment had been made and that I had complied with the terms and conditions. However no proof of payment was given automatically.
- 6. This is not an isolated incident and many other motorists have experienced similar problems with this car park and the car park opposite at Gresley Row also managed by the same operator. Even though there have been numerous similar issues at both car parks the claimant has done nothing to investigate these issues but has continued to issue Parking Charge Notices and aggressively chase motorists including very vulnerable people. As no tickets were issued there was no proof of payment and many people just paid these PCN's when they started receiving threatening letters from debt collection agents.

7. I disputed this claim via email explaining I made all the best attempts to pay for a parking ticket and CCTV would be able to show me at the machine performing payment. The claimant requested my card number to check their data, however, it was apparent on my bank account the payment was never taken by the card issuer and I did not feel comfortable providing my card number to an aggressive ex- clamper now operating as a private car parking operator. The claimant denied my dispute and proceeded to send another Parking Charge Notice now demanding the sum of £100 for failure to pay for a parking ticket.

8. There have been occurrences where motorists using these two car parks have also been under the impression that they have paid but their card payments do not appear to have been captured by the system. I am adamant that I made all the best attempts to pay the correct parking tariff but received no ticket as evidence that I have paid. (please refer to Exhibit AE-04 stating that no tickets are issued).

I also cite Jolley v Carmel Ltd [2000] 2 –EGLR -154, it was held that a party who makes reasonable endeavours to comply with contractual terms should not be penalised when unable to fully comply with those terms. I believe that I made reasonable endeavours to comply with the claimants terms and conditions.

9. I refused to accept liability as I don't believe I was in the wrong but continued to receive a Letter Before Claim demanding the sum of £170. Following this letter I again received further letters, from ELMS Legal under instruction from the claimant to recover an outstanding debt of £170 and again from Excel Parking Ltd. demanding the sum of £230.

10. I requested a Subject Access Request from the claimant to include all data recorded from the parking machines at the time of the alleged contravention. The PDF supplied (please refer

to exhibit AE-02) showed Machine D only recorded one VRN, machine C only showed 2 VRNs and my VRN was not on that list. This suggests some machines were not functioning correctly. The document is also unsigned, undated, there is no header, no provenance to make it a useful piece of evidence and no-one has stated it is a 'true copy' of all data from all machines during that time period. It was merely a saved PDF of an otherwise blank sheet word document that anyone could have altered as the claimant were found to have done in Excel v Ambler (please see exhibit AE-03).

- 11. It is believed that these meters are solar powered and work on a 3g or 4g network.
  Depending on signal or battery strength depends how good or bad they work. The solar power is backed up by a battery, however the solar power in the UK does not provide sufficient energy and the power of the machine drains the battery. This has proved to be a problem with this type of parking meter even in places like San Francisco. It is likely that this is the cause of the machine failure which has caused many motorists in Lichfield to receive a PCN and in some cases several PCN's. As no tickets are issued there is no proof of payment.
- 12. The claimant is put to strict proof to provide evidence of the strength of the signal at the time and day of the transgression and at the time of the parking event that the signage was evident, correct and clearly visible on the road and car park in question.

13. I refer to exhibit AE-01 - clearly showing insufficient signage on either side of the approach road to the car park and clearly showing insufficient signage once entering the car park to

form a contract.

- 14. I refer to exhibit AE-04 Clearly showing the solar-powered ticket machines and signage stating the machines are ticketless.
- 15. Such are the issues at Three Spires Shopping Centre Short Stay Car Park since the claimant has taken over this site, a petition has been set up calling for the site to be returned to the management of Lichfield District Council. I refer to exhibit AE-05 A screenshot and web address of the online petition, showing over 1000 people who have signed a petition to the landowner to have the claimant removed from the management of these car parks due to the harm being done to local and national businesses by actions of these unregulated parking companies. I have also provided a number of comments on 'reason for signing' by angry and upset customers.
- 16. In light of this issue I contacted my local Member of Parliament (MP) Amanda Milling explaining the situation to which I received a response.
- 17. I refer to exhibit AE-06 a letter from MP of Cannock Amanda Milling, informing me she had contacted the executive of the claimant regarding this issue stating "it is clear there is a lot of strength of feeling from other motorists who have had similar experiences" and has therefore written to the claimant highlighting how many people have been issued unfair and incorrect Parking Charge Notices as a result of faulty machines and has requested the claimant look into how they can ensure this does not happen going forward. The claimant failed to respond to the issue.

18. Since the claimant's contract has been terminated a new operator has taken over and similar issues are occurring which would indicate that there are some problems with the supply of power to the parking meters. They may have been sited where there was inadequate sunlight.

- 19. I refer to exhibits AE-07, AE-08 An article from Lichfield Live documenting on the removal of Excel Parking Ltd from management of Backcester Lane and Gresley Row car parks by Three Spires Shopping Centre, Lichfield.
- 20. Included in the above article, a guote from MP of Lichfield, Michael Fabricant.

were faulty, they have shown no interest in righting obvious wrongs.

"This is seriously good news – I have never before had to deal with a company that has so little interest in engaging with genuine concerns of the customers it is meant to serve. "Even when I have taken up miscarriages of justice with the company concerning constituents who have been served parking penalty notices by them because their machines

"Good riddance to a company that damaged the good name of Lichfield by their unwillingness to engage with the community. Their lack of engagement is a testimony to how a company should not be run.

"I feel sorry for other towns who have to endure them."

Michael Fabricant

21. It is for all of the reasons above, I contest the highly egregious sum of £230 the Claimant is attempting to recover, as well as the costs they are demanding and ask the Court to dismiss this claim without merit.

#### Abuse of process - the quantum

- 22. This Claimant continues to pursue a hugely disproportionate fixed sum (routinely added per PCN) despite knowing that this is now banned. It is denied that this is recoverable (authorities: two well- known ParkingEye cases where modern penalty law rationale was applied).
- 23. My stance regarding this punitive add-on is now underpinned by the Government, who have now stated that attempts to gild the lily by adding 'debt recovery costs' were 'extorting money'. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities ('DLUHC') published in February 2022, a statutory Code of Practice, found here:

  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/private-parking-code-of-practice.
- 24. Whilst it is known that the rogue parking industry have just filed Judicial Reviews and have delayed the new Code of Practice, the Government is pressing ahead and has conceded to undertake a final Public Consultation and Impact Assessment, as the latter was missing from their rationale. Going by the damning words of the Minister, and the fact that two consultations and an industry and consumer represented Steering Group have already informed the DLUHC's decision over the past two years, I believe there is no reason to think the Government's view will significantly change about adding unconscionable costs that were not incurred and which merely exist as a mechanism to enhance already-doubled parking charges, to fuel the roboclaim race to court and to side-step the £50 legal fees cap set in the Small Claims Track.
- 25. Adding debt recovery/costs/damages/fees (however described) onto a parking charge is now banned. In a section called 'Escalation of costs' the incoming statutory Code of Practice

says: "The parking operator must not levy additional costs over and above the level of a parking charge or parking tariff as originally issued."

### My fixed witness costs - ref PD 27, 7.3(1) and CPR 27.14

- 26. As a litigant-in-person I have had to learn relevant law from the ground up and spent a considerable time researching the law online, processing and preparing my defence plus this witness statement. I ask for my fixed witness costs. I am advised that costs on the Small Claims track are governed by rule 27.14 of the CPR and (unless a finding of 'wholly unreasonable conduct' is made against the Claimant) the Court may not order a party to pay another party's costs, except fixed costs such as witness expenses which a party has reasonably incurred in travelling to and from the hearing (including fares and/or parking fees) plus the court may award a set amount allowable for loss of earnings or loss of leave.
- 27. The fixed sum for loss of earnings/loss of leave apply to any hearing format and are fixed costs at PD 27, 7.3(1) "The amounts which a party may be ordered to pay under rule 27.14(3)(c) (loss of earnings)... are: (1) for the loss of earnings or loss of leave of each party or witness due to attending a hearing ... a sum not exceeding £95 per day for each person."

**Statement of Truth:** 

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

**SIGNATURE** 

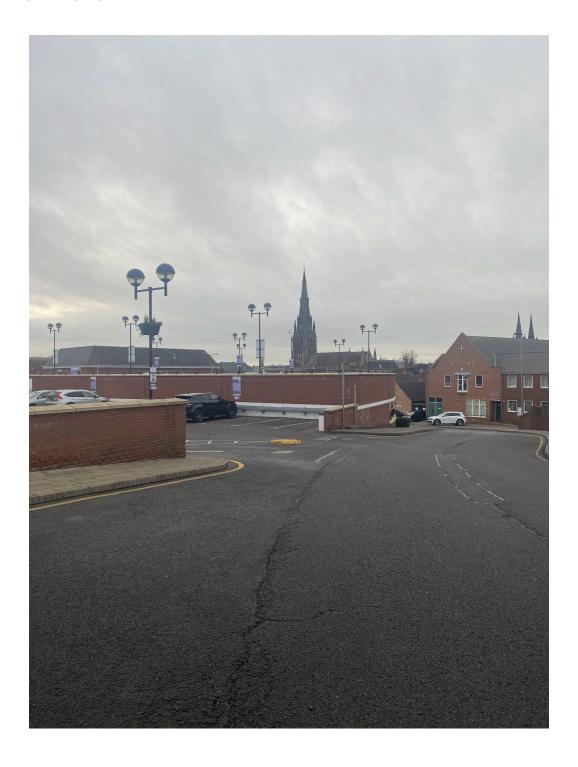
**NAME** 

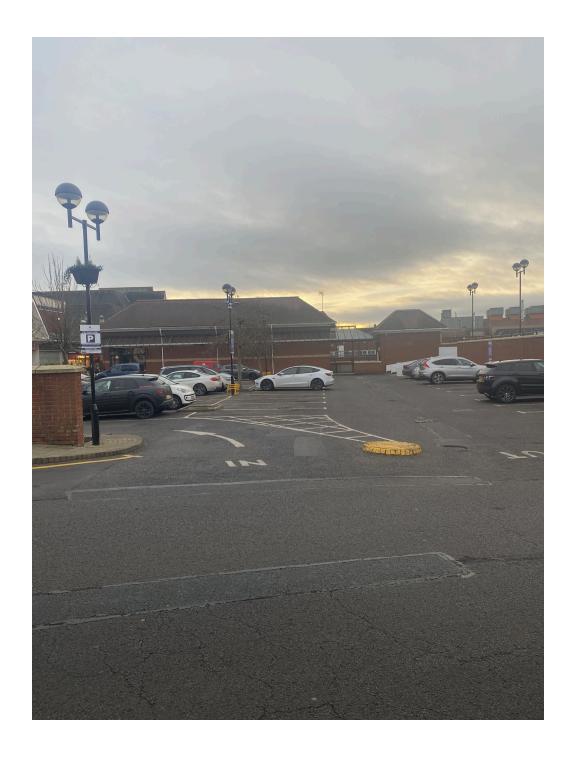
**DATE** 

(Exhibits on next pages)

# Exhibit AE-01 - Entrance to Three Spires car park, Backcester Lane, Lichfield.

Showing the signage at the entrance was insufficient to form a contract.





# Exhibit AE-02 - Screenshot of provided VRN list from the date of the alleged contravention

	Time	Sub Area		License Plate	Parking End Time	
		Three Spires Short Stay		AK***ZD	25/10/2021 16:02	
		Three Spires Short Stay		FN***KB	25/10/2021 16:03	
		Three Spires Short Stay		BJ***TK	25/10/2021 16:07	
		Three Spires Short Stay		YD***EK	25/10/2021 16:08	
		Three Spires Short Stay		BV***RX	25/10/2021 18:31	
		Three Spires Short Stay		DC***WK	25/10/2021 16:12	
		Three Spires Short Stay		W2***MY	25/10/2021 16:16	
		Three Spires Short Stay		BV***WW	25/10/2021 16:24	
		Three Spires Short Stay		BJ***XA	25/10/2021 17:24	
		Three Spires Short Stay		L2***OL	25/10/2021 16:25	
		Three Spires Short Stay		VE***02	25/10/2021 16:30	
		Three Spires Short Stay		BT***ZC	25/10/2021 16:31	
		Three Spires Short Stay		CF***HW	25/10/2021 16:32	
		Three Spires Short Stay		D6***JG	25/10/2021 16:35	
		Three Spires Short Stay		FE***UT	25/10/2021 16:39	
		Three Spires Short Stay		T6***YR	25/10/2021 17:40	
		Three Spires Short Stay		MP***JP	25/10/2021 16:42	
		Three Spires Short Stay		MT***TN	25/10/2021 16:43	
		Three Spires Long Stay		MV***70	25/10/2021 18:30	
		Three Spires Short Stay		YB***YR	25/10/2021 16:49	
		Three Spires Short Stay		YP***EZ	25/10/2021 16:50	
		Three Spires Short Stay		GU***XD	25/10/2021 16:51	
		Three Spires Short Stay		FL***LY	25/10/2021 17:56	
		Three Spires Short Stay		BG***TE	25/10/2021 16:56	
		Three Spires Short Stay		R7***LP	25/10/2021 17:01	
		Three Spires Short Stay		MK***FJ	25/10/2021 17:01	
		Three Spires Short Stay		RO***OT	25/10/2021 17:04	
		Three Spires Short Stay		BD***UJ	25/10/2021 17:18	
		Three Spires Short Stay		J4***XN CP***UY	25/10/2021 17:20 25/10/2021 18:20	
		Three Spires Short Stay			25/10/2021 18:20 25/10/2021 17:21	
		Three Spires Short Stay Three Spires Short Stay		LP***KG T9***DS	25/10/2021 17:21 25/10/2021 17:25	
		Three Spires Short Stay		KO***KV	25/10/2021 17:25	
		Three Spires Short Stay		E1***DU	25/10/2021 17:28	
		Three Spires Short Stay		CE***DK	25/10/2021 17:36	
		Three Spires Short Stay		EE***KE	25/10/2021 17:30	
		Three Spires Short Stay		MV***OX	25/10/2021 17:46	
		Three Spires Short Stay		BV***HH	25/10/2021 17:40	
23/10/2021	17.00.41	Three spires short stay	3/30	DV IIII	23/10/2021 18.00	

#### Exhibit AE-03 - Excel v Ambler case

#### General Form of Judgment or Order

In the County Court at Claim Number 18 September 2018 Date

EXCEL PARKING SERVICES LTD	1st Claimant
	Ref T0121092
	1st Defendant
	Ref

Before His Honour Judge Gosnell sitting at the County Court Bradford on the 14 September 2018

#### IT IS ORDERED THAT

Appellant's application for permission to appeal is refused.

#### REASONS:

- a) The appeal has no real prospects of success;
- b) This was a small claim hearing with £154 at stake. The Claimant was claiming for parking charges allegedly due in contract, the Defendant contended that she had complied with the terms of the contract by swiping her details on a terminal in the gym but this was not mechanically recorded. The Judge found as a fact that she accepted the Claimant's account as truthful. This was a finding open to her on the evidence and one that cannot be successfully challenged on appeal whatever her findings were about the terminal records;
- It transpires that the Claimant filed at court two conflicting schedules both purportedly recording the PDT log for the car park for the relevant period. In her witness statement Ms Brook exhibits the PDT log for the car park "on and around the times the vehicle was present on the contravention date". She does not explain that she has limited this disclosure to the time the Defendant's vehicle was in the car park. Had she done so clearly some of the discrepancies could have been explained. What remained unexplained was the fact that all the gym terminal entries save for one timed at 0625 were deleted from the PDT log attached to the witness statement.
- d) The various discrepancies were pointed out by the Judge to the advocate for the Claimant at the hearing but she was unable to explain it;
- The Claimant chose not to call Ms Brooks at the hearing when perhaps she could have explained the discrepancies ( although this seems doubtful as she obviously did not notice them before attaching the schedule to her witness statement)
- The Judge clearly felt the second schedule had been tampered with in some way and there was material to support that assumption in that computers do not normally selectively delete all entries but one from a previous schedule of entries (from the gym terminal). This was a finding which was open to her on the evidence:

The court office at the County Court at Skipton, The Court House, Otley Street, Skipton, BD23 1RH. When corresponding with the court, please address forms or letters to the Court Manager and quote the claim number. Tel: 01756 692650 Fax: 01264 347921. Check if you can issue your claim online. It will save you time and money. Go to www.moneyclaim.gov.uk to find out more.

Produced by:Helen Pickles

N24 General Form of Judgment or Order

- g) The decision to find that the claimant was guilty of unreasonable conduct was one open to the Judge on the evidence before her on the day. If the Claimant had produced accurate schedules or a witness who could explain the discrepancy and show it was innocent then such an order may not have been made but it does not mean the Judge was wrong on the evidence before her.
- This decision has been taken without a hearing. The Appellant may apply for an oral reconsideration of the decision by making a request to the court to that effect within seven days of service of this order on it.

Dated 14 September 2018

#### Exhibit AE-04 - Solar powered machines with signage stating ticketless machines.

Image 1 showing Gresley Row machine with solar panel
Image 2 showing Backcester Lane signage explaining machine are ticketless





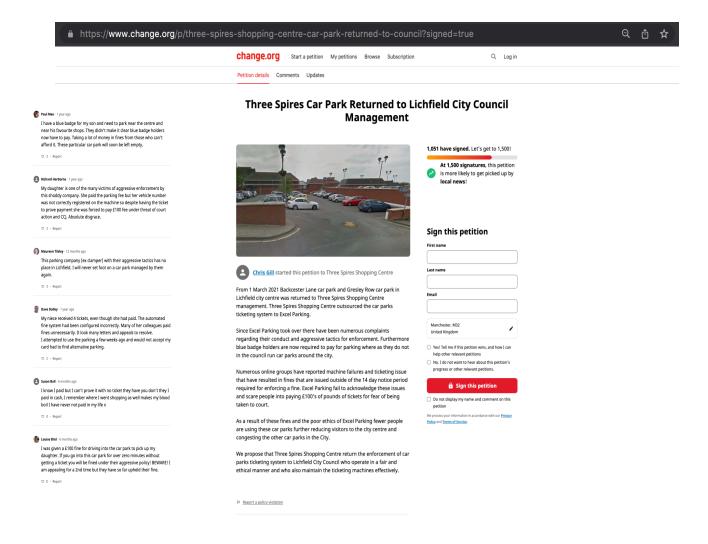
# Exhibit AE-05 - Petition on Change.org with over 1000 signature for Three Spires Car Park to be Returned to Lichfield City Council Management

(website -

https://www.change.org/p/three-spires-shopping-centre-car-park-returned-to-council?signed=true)

In the article it clearly states Excel Parking Ltd. are in management at the time of the petition.

I have also added numerous comments from the 'reason for signing' section of the angry and upset customers using these car parks.



### Exhibit AE-06 - Letter from MP of Cannock, Amanda Milling

Thank you for your email regarding Excel Parking and your experience at Three Spires Shopping Centre car park in Lichfield.

I was very sorry to hear that you received a Parking Charge Notice (PCN) from Excel Parking despite believing that you had paid for your ticket. I can certainly imagine the frustration this must have caused you. It is also clear from the petition you linked that there is a lot of strength of feeling on this issue from other motorists who have had similar experiences. I very much look forward to the Parking Code of Practice being reintroduced as soon as possible as I believe it is right to ensure that private parking companies apply fair practices.

Despite the area in question being in Lichfield, I am more than happy to look into this matter on your behalf. There is a strict parliamentary protocol which dictates that MPs must only represent their own constituents, and as you live in my constituency, this means it is for me to make enquiries on your behalf.

I have therefore written to Simon Renshaw-Smith, Managing Director of Excel Parking, to highlight how many people have been issued unfair and incorrect PCNs as a result of faulty machines and lack of payment confirmation. I have requested that Excel Parking look into how they can ensure that this does not happen going forward. I will of course let you know as and when I have any update.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything further I can do to assist you with this, or any other matter.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Hon Amanda Milling MP

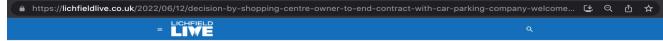
constituency office: 11a Market Street, Hednesford, Cannock, WS12 1AY tel: 01543 877142 email: amanda.milling.mp@parliament.uk website: www.amandamilling.com

## Exhibit AE-07 - Lichfield Live article on Three Spires Shopping Centre to end management of car park contract with Excel Parking Ltd.

(website -

https://lichfieldlive.co.uk/2022/06/12/decision-by-shopping-centre-owner-to-end-contract-with-ca r-parking-company-welcomed-by-lichfield-mp/)





Lichfield MP Michael Fabricant said he was pleased to see the change of operator.

"This is seriously good news - I have never before had to deal with a company that has so little interest in engaging with genuine concerns of the customers it is meant to

"Even when I have taken up miscarriages of justice with the company concerning constituents who have been served parking penalty notices by them because their machines were faulty, they have shown no interest in righting obvious wrongs.

"Good riddance to a company that damaged the good name of Lichfield by their unwillingness to engage with the community. Their lack of engagement is a testimon to how a company should not be run.

"I feel sorry for other towns who have to endure them."

Evolve Estates were <u>confirmed as the new owners</u> of the shopping centre last month.

As well as the change to the parking provision, they have already begun work with the council in a bid to convert the vacant former Debenhams unit into a cinen

Cllr Doug Pullen, leader of Lichfield District Council, said he was looking forward to seeing a better experience for drivers using the car parks at the Three Spires Shopping

"The new owners have confirmed that they have given the required 30 days notice to terminate the contract with Excel Parking following review and feedback, and they are now in consultation with new suppliers.

"They've committed to upgrading the parking machines, ensuring that visitors get either a paper or e-mail receipt, and retaining the ability to pay by cash or card.

"I am really pleased that we have such a community-focused organisation now owning Three Spires Shopping Centre and we look forward to our continu engagement with them.'

Cllr Doug Pullen, Lichfield District Council

# Exhibit AE-08 - Quote from MP of Lichfield, Michael Fabricant on removal of Excel Parking Ltd. from management of car parks.

Noting the comment - "Good riddance to a company that damaged the good name of Lichfield by their unwillingness to engage with the community."

Demonstrates the total lack of care or willingness to correct a clear issue that has affected the community of Lichfield as a whole.

