Herefordshire Council has given itself planning permission to open the Little Marcle Road waste site for a full 10 hours on Sundays. This means the tip will be open for 3 full days a week. The statement made on the application includes:
Refurbishment of existing household waste site, including extension into adjacent land, for the importation, handling, sorting, screening and temporary storage of waste materials
. One might ask into which land any extension might be made. The Town Trail runs along one boundary: the area beyond that is a wildlife haven for many animals and birds, including green woodpeckers.

Update 2nd May: This came into effect today. Although opening time on Sundays remains 09:30, the site will stay open until 18:00 on future Sundays. The revised hours are:
08:00 to 18:00 on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and 09:30 to 18:00 on Sundays
. The site will remain closed on other days.

Whilst this is a welcome move, this merely brings the Ledbury site in line with those at Bromyard and Kington: smaller towns whose sites are already open three full days a week (though they shut 2 hours earlier from October to March inclusive). Sites in Hereford and Leominster are open 7 days a week - as is that at Malvern, which also takes contentious waste such as antifreeze: this is probably more convenient from Ledbury for those who need to dispose of such items. All sites in Herefordshire and Worcestershire are available to residents of both counties (but not those of Bromsberrow and Dymock [Gloucestershire] - the booking system [qv.] has made sure of that).

One does wonder if just extending Sunday hours will be sufficient when the extra 1200 houses that have been forced onto Ledbury are all occupied. The inconvenient booking system has significantly reduced availability of the site, especially now the gardening season has started.

Enquiries have been made to Herefordshire Council, to which a council spokesperson has replied (shown in *italics*, followed by my further comments):

1. When will the revised opening hours take place?
   Any changes to opening times at household recycling centres will be published on the website as soon as they have been confirmed.
   - Not very helpful. Hours are listed here .
   Update: the website has been updated to show these new hours.

- Is it the council's intention to make the booking system permanent?

No decision has been made as to whether the booking system will become permanent or not.

- Why do cyclists and pedestrians have to book?

1. If queuing cars were deemed to be the problem (which they seldom were at Ledbury, though apparently queues were a problem at other sites), then cyclists and pedestrians are not part of that problem. Indeed, they are part of the solution;
2. They make up a very small proportion of users;
3. Owing to limited carrying capacity, these users will nearly always spend less time unloading than a motorist, hence will be on-site for a shorter time.

The booking system was put in place to ensure that social distancing measures could be maintained. Whilst I appreciate it is not always convenient, all visitors, including cyclists and pedestrians are required to book as we can only allow a certain number of visitors onto the site at any one time.

- Queuing cars (and traffic problems they might cause outside the site) is a separate issue from social distancing. Thus, when there is no need for the latter, cyclists and pedestrians should not be included in any booking system that the council might decide to make permanent;

- Since assistance is no longer given for transferring waste from a vehicle to a skip, some drivers will have a passenger to render such assistance. If numbers on site must be limited, the booking system has no control over this;
- All waste sites are outdoors, where it has been shown the risk from infectious diseases (including Covid) is about 5% of the risk indoors: yet (eg.) supermarkets do not have booking systems. Some (eg. Aldi and Tesco) operate a 'traffic light' system to control maximum numbers, but all allow a much higher 'customer density'.

These bulletted points have been put to the council, who so far have failed to reply.

- Some users (motorised or not) do not have internet facilities. Obviously, the booking system causes even greater inconvenience to them. Is there a telephone alternative and, if so, what hours is it open?

Booking slots can be made by calling customer services on 01432-260051. The opening times are 9am-4:15pm on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and 9am-4pm on Thursday.

For those who are not electronically challenged, it remains possible to bypass Herefordshire Council's website by going direct to:
https://capublic.worcestershire.gov.uk/WasteSiteBookingPublic/ .