

Estates Car Parking Strategy

Walton Hall

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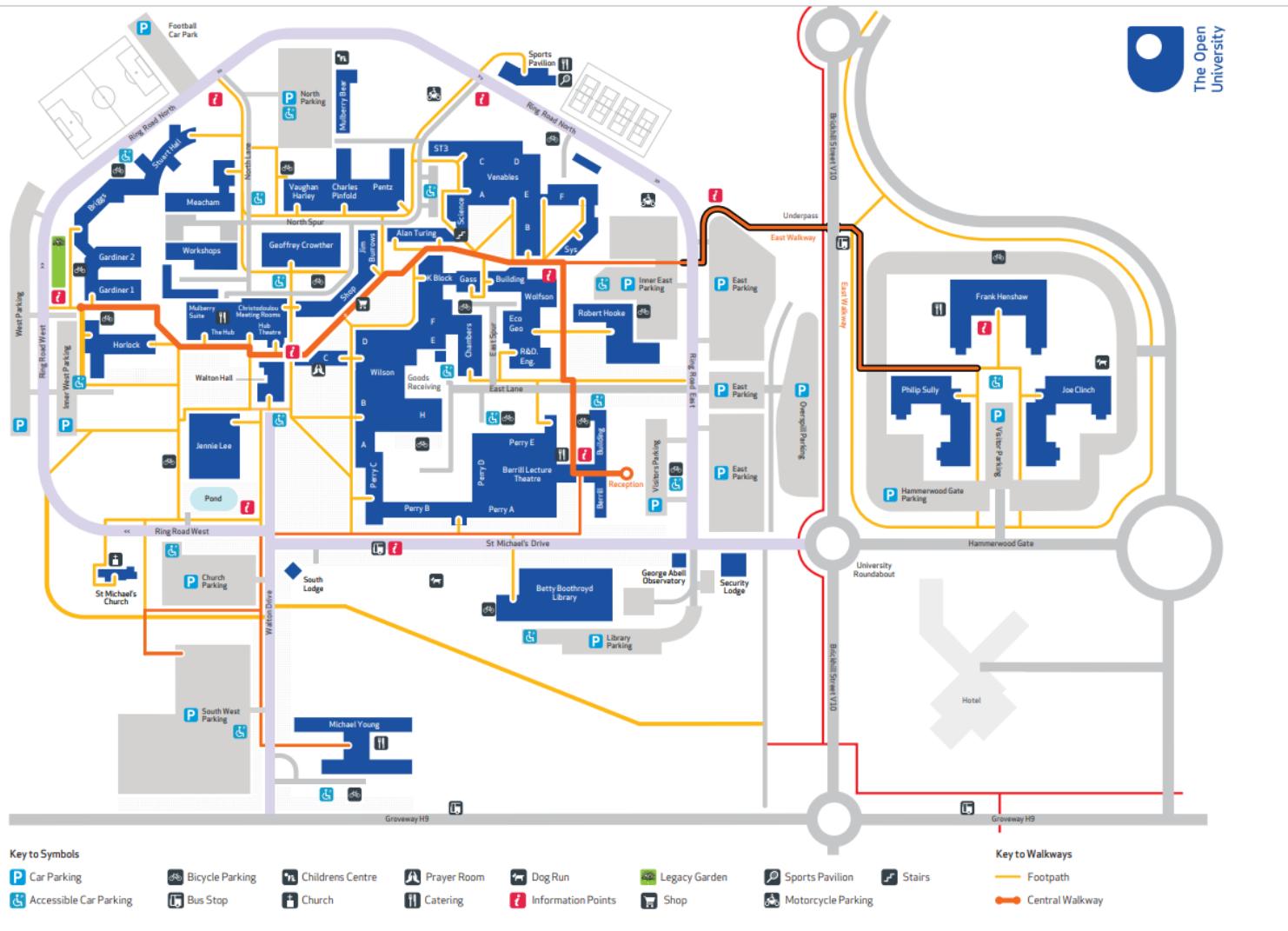
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Map of Car parking Areas at Walton Hall



1. Introduction

The car parking strategy was first published in October 2004 at a time the University was experiencing a car parking crisis. This arose from growing staff numbers coupled with loss of parking from a number of car parks being allocated as the site for new building

The original strategy sought to balance long term provision with demand by supporting the aspirations of the Travel Plan in driving down demand, supporting the management of car parking supply via enforcement, reserved spaces for sharers and providing some additional supply.

The University's own circumstances have since changed over the intervening period between the 2004 and the current strategy. Following a period of sustained growth in staff numbers, numbers have fluctuated since 2009 falling considerably due to changes to staff ways of working following the COVID epidemic. This fall in staff numbers helped alleviate the pressure on car parking. Staff are also being encouraged to use other modes of transport to get to and from work including cycling, walking and the use of public transport. Staff also have the option to take part in the car share scheme to limit their individual occupancy journeys.

The aim of this strategy remains to provide an appropriate balance between supply and demand and whilst it preserves the strong links with the Travel Plan, recommendations are tilted towards day-to-day management and possible future commercial options rather than large scale additional provision. Following the decrease in attendance onsite of the majority of staff and students, commercialisation now plays a large part in the allocation of parking bays and this will continue to rise following further rental of buildings and the arrangements to let car parks in their own right.

This review also considers general progress since the last strategy.

2. Strategy Process

This strategy review has included an assessment of current supply together with a review of demand as a result of changes to ways of working as derived via the Staff Travel Survey and Travel Plan.

3. Linked Strategies

Figures might change based on new travel plan results

The Travel Plan 2014 contains a target for reducing further single car occupation by 5% and Scope 3 carbon emissions from staff commuting by 5% both by 2020. Both of these aims were unattainable due to Covid restrictions and the workforce working from home as well as the decrease in available public transport. Since returning to site the aims have continued to be to promote car sharing, cycling, walking and use of public transport as a means of encouraging non car use. The Travel Plan is due for review and will consider the decrease in staff on site, the change in working patterns and the integration of tenants into our schemes while working onsite. The targets remain to encourage more sustainable travel. This car parking strategy will continue to support and drive the use of these alternative means of travel choices thereby reducing the need for car parking spaces. This will in turn supports commercialisation initiatives for car park rental.

The Estate's Strategic Plan of 2015-2025 identified the requirement for a separate Car Parking Strategy to provide "suitable and appropriate alternative facilities for staff, visitors and conferencing". Our strategy includes taking consideration of revised transport initiatives, EV utilisation and charging posts and general car parking

regulations and how they will influence the wider University sustainability scope 3 and carbon reduction objectives.

The strategy will also link into the Adaptive Plan with consideration being given to commercialisation opportunities and the influence that tenant occupation may have.

The Car Parking Strategy now concentrates on day to day management together with the preservation of options for further supply should that be required in the future.

Key recommendations in the Strategy include: -

- 1) Maintenance of the car parking regulations including regular review of the level of penalty charge notice.
- 2) Review of the numbers and location of car parking reserved for car sharers and electric vehicle users.
- 3) Determination of appropriate numbers and location of parking for commercial tenants in the event the numbers of commercial lettings (at Walton Hall in particular) increase.
- 4) Consider establishing lawful use of the former contractor's car park left but not removed after the last capital building programme. If lawful use were established then this would provide an instant reserve of car parking.

The Strategy reserves the right to make a monetary charge for car parking. This is already in the current strategy but there are no plans to introduce such a monetary charge presently.

4. Existing Supply of Car Parking

The University currently has 2497 marked spaces within permanent off-street car parks and designated on-street parking bays.

Table 1 details the total capacity compared with the 2004 Strategy. This illustrates the breakdown between designated on and off-street parking, unauthorised and non-designated spaces. The table includes the 427 spaces at East Campus.

Table 1 Current capacity

Area	2004	2014	2019	2025
Permanent off street parking (all car parks)	1779	1838	2079	2497
Unauthorised / Non designated parking (Non marked bays, cars parking along the curb, no yellow lines or parking marked bay but we allow them to park).	388	150	150	150
East Campus	350	352	427	353
Total capacity	2781	2583	2815	2647

Ring Road parking contributes to the non-designated car parking. Approximately 150 cars can park daily on the ring road. Part of the ring road is marked with double yellow lines but the majority is not and staff use this absence of designated restrictions to park on the road. Somewhat surprisingly many staff use the ring road ahead of the car parks. The fall in unauthorised/non designated parking between 2004 and 2014 arises from the enforcement of yellow lined areas previously used to park and new yellow lines in places including Walton Drive and car parks. There has been no plan to enforce more yellow lined areas across campus.

5. Demand – The 2024 Staff Travel Survey

The last 2024 Travel Survey achieved a substantial increase in responses 1210 and forms a useful measure of comparison against the 2014 results.

	2014 Survey data	2019 Survey data	2021 Survey data	2024 Survey data
Car on own	63%	69%	66%	62%
Car share including non-scheme	10%	9%	7%	5%
Cycle	10%	4%	5%	7%
Motorbike/Moped	0%	0%	0%	0%
Bus	4%	3%	5%	6%
Walk	5%	4%	3%	6%
Petrol	47%	51%	56%	61%
Diesel	25%	21%	17%	22%
Electric (Including Hybrid)	0%	4%	6%	9%

Percentage changes show a decrease in own car use; this is reflective of the decrease in onsite attendance numbers. Petrol and electric car usages have increased. Cycling numbers increased which was good to see. There was little change in car share numbers and those using a motorbike. 2024 also showed a slight increase in numbers walking to work and using the bus. There was a marked increase in respondents to the survey, this may have affected trends.

6. Milton Keynes Council Planning Policy and Parking Standards

The latest Parking Standards were adopted into the "Parking Standards - Supplementary Planning Document" (SPD) as presented by Milton Keynes Council (MKC) in January 2016 follow the link here: [Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document | Milton Keynes City Council](#). MKC continues to use a zonal approach as used in previous parking standards, to reflect the varying demand for travel, car use and resulting parking requirements. The Council has identified 4 zones, ranging from Zone 1 which has the highest level of access to facilities and consequently the lowest parking levels (more restraint), through to Zone 4 with the higher parking levels (less parking restraint).

The SPD places at the OU are classified as Zone 3, allowing 1 parking space per FTE staff member and 1 parking space per 15 students (although the student figure would not count as OU students are remote learners).

Table 2 MKC Parking standards applied to Walton Hall

Staff (as at August 2025)	Number	Current parking spaces	Difference
Permanent, research/ALs, students	4000	2647	1353 short

Aggregating all sources we have a total capacity 2647 (Table 1 above) therefore by MKC's parking standards our parking provisions are lower than MKC standards.

When applying previously for additional spaces there was considerable debate, it was never fully resolved, as to whether the OU Campus should reflect the parking standard for B1 offices or D1 education. The SPG defines the former as having 1 space per 30 sq. m of gross floor area. The argument is that the OU is predominantly an office occupier and therefore the office standard should be applied to those of our buildings that are physically indistinguishable from commercial offices. There is some correspondence and an officer's note that supports this argument. Applying the MKC parking standard for B1 to the floor space of 82969 sq. m a theoretical maximum provision of 2765 spaces could be calculated.

In practice any future applications would revolve around the 'hybrid' ways of working argument, i.e. that the OU was part HE, part office in planning terms and therefore its parking provisions should be considered separately. Whilst we have 4000 staff/ALs/students onsite a considerable proportion of these are based on working from home and the maximum number attending site is 1200.

7. Future Provisions

The University has consent to construct a further 136 car spaces south of the Michael Young Building. These were part of 144 spaces permitted as part of the building construction although only 8 were ever constructed. Having completed the building and discharged fully the conditions attached to the consent, this permission has been secured in perpetuity.

Similarly, a 208 car parking space extension to the library car park was consented in 2009. Some 27 spaces were built and the conditions attached to the consent fully discharged thus securing this consent in perpetuity also.

Therefore, the OU has a total of 317 spaces permitted but unbuilt. In addition, MKC rejected an offer from the OU to enter a unilateral undertaking to forego the unimplemented car spaces at Michael Young in return for the 208 car spaces at the library so both remain permitted.

Number of spaces permitted	Number of spaces built	Unbuilt spaces	Location	Building Status
144	8	136	Michael Young / South West	In perpetuity
208	27	181	Library extension	In perpetuity
77	0	77	South West	Application required
Total unbuilt spaces between these are 317				

In addition, the contractors' car parking area off the southern car park comprising of some 77 marked spaces on a tarmac area was never reinstated following the completion of the Framework Partnership for the then capital programme (2008-2011). Originally this provided contractor parking but it has been used since for ad hoc overspill and storage.

It may be prudent to establish if its non-reinstatement may be formalised in some manner (e.g. Certificate of lawful use) to preserve it in perpetuity as additional car parking.

8. Future Trends

University staff numbers continue to steadily decrease. New patterns of working have had an impact on the overall daily attendances. This has had a lower demand for parking. Along with the possibility of new patterns of work our future strategy will be to continue with a car parking strategy which encourages significant changes to our modes of traveling to and from work. To achieve this strategy, the Estates department (Travel Team) will be promoting a change to our culture of daily driving to and from work. Our goals are to encourage and increase alternate modes of travel through the use of the following initiatives and activities:

- Improved CycleScheme benefits
- Publicising regular Cycle to Work events
- Promoting walking to work initiatives
- Informing staff on the benefits of electric vehicle schemes and modes of transport
- Prompting the Salary Sacrifice Electric Vehicle Scheme
- Advising the benefits of and increasing the popularity of the use of the Journey share scheme

- Keeping staff up to date on new bus “Loop” service, MK Connect services and the changes which have recently been introduced in the region.
- Working with local Councils and Suppliers to find improved transport services saving staff money but also contributing to carbon reduction initiatives being undertaken across the University

Net Zero Commitment

The University is committed to achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050. This target includes two key milestones:
Scopes 1 and 2: Net Zero by 2030
Scope 3: Net Zero by 2050

Fleet Vehicle – Emissions from University fleet vehicles fall under Scope 1. The University has a plan to reduce and decarbonise its fleet by 2030, where feasible and appropriate.

Commuting and Business Travel – Emissions from commuting and business travel are classified as Scope 3. The University is currently collecting data and developing a baseline for Scope 3 emissions, with reduction targets to follow.

Sustainable Travel

Our future car park strategy envisages a significant reduction in the utilisation of car parking spaces through the implementation of the strategic initiatives. The University promotes a culture of sustainability and encourages staff, students, and visitors to make informed, environmentally conscious choices for commuting and business travel.

9. Car Parking Management

Under the existing car park management regime all staff are encouraged to register their vehicle with Security, park only in designated areas and not obstruct or use the allocated visitor only parking bays.

Previously we had considerable problems with unauthorised and at times dangerous parking but the introduction initially of vehicle clamping followed by parking charge notices has largely eliminated this. This strategy proposes no change to this regime of parking charge notices. A multitude of offences attract parking charge notices, these include causing an obstruction, parking on double yellow lines, obstructing fire accesses, parking on fire assembly points, parking on pavements and landscaping, parking in car share or electric vehicle bays (without the relevant permits) and parking in "Keep Clear" areas. Maintenance and review of the car parking regulations is undertaken by Security as part of Estates.

The ring road is a source of non-designated parking. For most of its length it is wide enough to permit parking along one side with one lane free to allow one way traffic movement. We have no plans to remove this ring road parking.

The designated visitor parking comprises 41 spaces to the front of the Berrill Building. This is marked as "Visitors Only" and is not currently barrier controlled. Two spaces are designated for Electric Vehicle charging with one waiting bay. We have no plans to increase or reduce visitor parking.

The parking regulations require contractors' vehicles to display a temporary permit to park. This is to assist in the identification of inappropriately parked vehicles. These are available from Estates Liaison Line Reception. The system works well so we have no plans to amend this.

The parking regulations also reserve the right to remove completely any vehicle for failure to comply with the regulations. Again, we have no plans to amend this.

Regular reviews will take place of car parking numbers and the utilisation of the car share and electric vehicle bays. The utilisation of these latter two uses will assist in deciding if further provision is required and where these will be located. Electric Vehicle charge bays should continue to be used by EV registered members. The booking scheme is managed by the Travel Advice Team; any queries should be addressed directly to them. The EV charge scheme rules and regulations are available from the Estates Business Services Team. EV scheme rules of net zero costs to the OU will remain as is and there are no plans to change them.

The Business Services Team, in consultation with staff, conducts regular reviews of Car Share and electric vehicle parking. In 2025, several Car Share bays were temporarily reallocated as standard parking spaces in response to decreased utilisation of the Car Share Scheme. At present 543 parking bays have been rented out to external companies generating a good income for the University. These rental agreements are date specific and will end when convenient for our tenants or the University. Allocation of parking bays to tenants is overseen by the Director of Estates.

At present the day-to-day car parking management is dealt with by the Estates Security Team. We have no plans to change this.

10. Charging

The Director of Estates reserves the right to introduce car park charging. This is included in the Car Parking Regulations but has not been implemented and we have no plans to do so.

11. Review criteria

This strategy is weighted towards ongoing management of our parking and any recommendations relating to day to day issues, to this end we recommend the following actions:

- Maintain and update as required the car parking regulations including periodic review of the parking charge notice fee.
- Review numbers and locations of reserved spaces for car sharers.
- Review numbers and location of spaces for electric vehicle charging purposes.
- Co-ordinate Parking Scheme Management practices with other relevant policies including the University Travel Plan Team.
- Consider suitable numbers and locations of parking for commercial tenants (in the event of greater numbers of commercial lettings at Walton Hall).
- Consider establishing our lawful use of the contractors' car park (i.e. certificate of lawful use) as and when required.