Car parking management strategies (PDF)

The management of car parking as a resource can play a pivotal role in the development of incentives for walking, cycling, public transport use and for car sharing.

Why manage parking facilities?

Parking provision represents a major financial overhead, in terms of the additional land required, construction as well as its on-going maintenance and management.

This cost can be particularly high in densely developed areas of high commercial value such as business or retail centres. Meanwhile, subsidised parking favours car-based commuting and makes it difficult for alternative forms of transport to compete.

Where on-site parking is restricted, off-site parking by employees and visitors must be taken into consideration, including the impact of off-site parking on neighbouring organisations and residents.

The aims of parking management

The objectives of car park management should be to prioritise usage on the basis of specific functions or requirements, such as parking for mobility-impaired employees, visitor parking for clients or customers, specific car sharing spaces and other essential users.

Provide priority parking spaces for car sharers

Reserving prime spots near the building entrance and clearly labelling them 'car share only' will help reward Responsible Car Users and help publicise the possibility of car sharing to everyone who visits your premises.

Meeting the needs of all users

A car-parking strategy with a needs-based approach is often well received and entails a thorough examination of issues, such as what defines an essential car user.

Car parking strategies must not discriminate against any particular group and must be balanced with the availability of alternatives. The key to an effective parking management strategy is often to couple it with a well-organised car sharing scheme and the provision of alternatives.

The parking strategy must also take account of the layout and design of the car parks to ensure efficiency of operation and the maintenance of good Health & Safety.

The need for consultation

Any options considered must be carefully evaluated and you must consult with everyone who will be affected.

The introduction of a new car parking regime must also be managed sensitively and the reasons behind any changes clearly communicated along with the benefits they will bring.
Resolving issues around off-site parking

With the introduction of parking management, use of free on-street parking in the surrounding area needs to be avoided. Discussions with Local Authorities are often required in order to identify a satisfactory strategy in this regard.

Successfully tackling the issue of off-site parking will be welcomed by your commercial and residential neighbours.

Parking permits and spaces

Reviewing the allocation of permits, priority parking provision and the overall availability of parking spaces can have a major impact on the decision about whether to drive to your site or not.

Parking Permits

Allocate permits using criteria e.g. disability, car sharers, essential users, no alternatives, distance from site, hybrid and low emission vehicles. Develop a pro-forma for allocating permits.

Criteria for permit allocation should be transparent and equitable. It must not be done on a hierarchical basis (i.e. senior managers should not be given first priority for allocation).

The relationship between the holding of a parking permit and car use also suggests that one way of achieving reductions is to limit car parking permits to certain days of the week.

This will encourage the use of alternative travel methods on non-permit days - such as car-sharing, walking and cycling - and reduce parking congestion.

Restricting parking-space availability

Workplace car parking is one of the most important factors influencing whether or not staff drive to work.

Reducing the number of spaces available to staff has the potential to act as a disincentive to car use.

Priority Parking

Practicality benefits to the user are powerful incentives for maintaining or changing behaviour.

Special parking facilities could be introduced, providing better usability (e.g. better availability, or a location closer to the entrance) for those who car share.

At the same time, you could remove priority parking spaces for senior management to avoid giving the impression that your organisation favours some car users over others.
Parking charges

Consider introducing or increasing parking charges as a tool in managing your car park. The introduction of parking charges can provide valuable revenue stream and help to encourage people to choose other ways to travel, but must be handled sensitively. If possible, parking charges should be accompanied by improvements to parking and other facilities and the promotion of alternatives to car use.

Using parking revenue to improve facilities

The revenue raised can be used to subsidise benefits or incentives that encourage people to choose alternatives to driving.

As employers have discovered previously, there is a prevailing feeling that there needs to be some perceived benefit introduced before parking charges can be justified.

Car parking charges can be made more acceptable by improving the car park by installing CCTV and barriers with the first tranche of income.

Combining incentives and disincentives

Together, financial incentives and disincentives offer strong encouragements to shift away from single occupancy vehicle usage but must be implemented in the right combination. Car park charging should therefore always be supported by the provision of an alternative, such as a car share scheme.

Charging patterns that encourage alternative choices

You should also consider how and when you charge. Charging on an annual basis highlights the total charge, but once they have paid, drivers may not be deterred from bringing their vehicles to site. A daily charge will constantly remind drivers of the costs but can be expensive to administer.