

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

TRAVEL PLAN BEDFORD SUPPLEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The original Bedford Travel Plan was developed and inaugurated by De Montfort University in March 2003 to reduce reliance on car use and encourage sustainable forms of transport to the university. This was brought in partly due to increasing evidence of the damage that over-much car use causes to the environment, partly in response to heavy overcrowding in the University's own car parks, and partly in support of the planning application for the re-development of Polhill Campus.

To measure the effectiveness of the travel plan, car use and other forms of transport to the university are being monitored regularly, through the use of annual surveys, keeping records of permits issued, and monitoring the numbers of cars on the car parks.

1.2 UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE AND POLHILL CONSOLIDATION

When the Travel Plan was inaugurated, De Montfort University had two principle campuses in Bedford, at Polhill and Lansdowne, with smaller sites on Caves Lane and Sidney Road.

In August 2006, the De Montfort University Bedford campuses and faculty ceased to be part of De Montfort, and merged with the University of Luton to form the new University of Bedfordshire.

In August 2007, Lansdowne Campus and the Caves Lane hall of residence were closed. All activities on these two sites were moved to the re-developed Polhill Campus. Polhill Campus is therefore now the principal Bedford site of the University of Bedfordshire.

The re-developed Polhill Campus has had added to it new gyms, sports science laboratories, a Learning Resource Centre, and a Campus Centre building with theatre, studio and restaurant. In addition, Liberty Living have built a private hall of residence as part of the site. A plan of the new campus layout is shown in Appendix Sixteen.

1.3 SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS

Since launching the Green Travel Plan, the Universities of De Montfort and, later, Bedfordshire have:

- introduced incentives for car sharers comprising help with finding car share partners and free parking for multiple occupancy cars.
- improved the quality of bicycle stands on campus, and arranged events for cyclists including bikers' breakfasts and a bike safety check.
- In association with Sustrans, the University also now provides bike loans to students.

- More pay and display machines have been installed to encourage drivers to come less regularly,
- student permits have been greatly restricted, and
- the car parking policy is being enforced more rigorously.
- Polhill Campus now has a one-way system.
- The shuttle bus is still being provided free of charge to all members of the university.
- The University minibuses are now made available for hire by student groups
- The advantages of sustainable travel choices have been regularly promoted to all members of the University, through a variety of media including admissions packs, University newsletters, posters, plasma screen notice boards, computer notice boards, and student radio.

2.0 CURRENT SITE INFORMATION

2.1 STAFF NUMBERS

The University of Bedfordshire currently employs 227 members of staff in Bedford (as of 1st November 2008). De Montfort University employed 401 staff across all Bedford sites on 1st November 2004.

These figures are not directly comparable, because as well as the consolidation onto Polhill Campus, the DMU figures include staff in areas subsequently contracted out, including catering, security, and much of the provision of student accommodation.

2.2 STUDENT NUMBERS

In November 2008, 3406 students were registered at Polhill. This is increased since 2003; however in 2003 these students were split between Polhill and Lansdowne Campuses, whereas now they are all based in Polhill.

While students come from all over the country (with a substantial minority recruited from abroad), there is a heavy emphasis on local recruitment. Student home locations for the faculty of Education and Sport are mapped in appendix Seventeen.

2.3 ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is available on site for 517 students in the Liberty Living Hall of Residence and a further 167 in the residential blocks directly controlled by the University. Previous accommodation blocks at the Lansdowne Campus on Lansdowne Road, Bedford, or at Caves Lane, were closed when Liberty Living was opened and the refurbishment of Polhill Campus completed. All students in University accommodation are therefore now on site.

3.0 ACCESSIBILITY AND TRAVEL PLAN SINCE 2003

3.1 ON-CAMPUS FACILITIES

As a result of the consolidation, most students are no longer required to travel between campuses (though sports students still need to attend the Alexander Sports Centre for some facilities).

Facilities now include a small shop on campus, as well as increased dining facilities and a new café, thus reducing the need for off-campus travel.

3.2 CAR PARKS AND CAMPUS LAY-OUT

The re-developed campus has a new layout, with a one-way system. The new build has shifted the centre of gravity shifted north, and reception has been moved to reflect this.

As part of the redevelopment, the main drive around campus became a one-way system. The former main entrance / exit became the entrance to campus, and a new exit was built further back on Polhill Avenue.

Before the development works started, Polhill Campus had 212 car parking spaces. The current provision is for 300 spaces, with room for a further 20 as overflow on the tennis courts.

The new campus layout is shown in Appendix Sixteen.

3.3 CAR PARKING POLICY ENFORCEMENT

With car parking spaces a valuable and expensive asset, it has long been necessary to take steps to ensure that only authorised vehicles occupy University car parking spaces. Changes to the law in May 2005 meant that DMU Security were no longer able to use a system of clamping with release fees to deter unauthorised parkers. The car park attendants have therefore switched to issuing tickets. These are currently administered on behalf of the University by UK Parking Control. Appeals against tickets remained in house, with UK Parking Control forwarding all appeals to the University for consideration.

At the same time, the penalty charge for parking in breach of the policy was increased from £25 (which had proved to be insufficient as a deterrent) to £80 (reduced to £40 if paid within two weeks).

Before introducing the new system, there was a complete review of signage on campus car parks, to ensure that the rules were made clear to all users of the car parks.

The car parking policy for academic year 2008/09 is given in Appendix Eighteen.

3.4 CAR PARKING CHARGES / PERMIT RESTRICTIONS

The University has made a number of changes to the way permits are issued.

Until the consolidation in September 2007, parking was controlled through a combination of annual permits and pay and display tickets.

In academic year 2007/8, no student permits were issued at all, and students were instructed to use the pay & display machines, even if in residence. The logic behind this was to deter car use by making it more inconvenient than any alternative (among other things, it meant buying a ticket before 8:30am). This led to some reduction in car use, but also the appearance for the first time of cars parked on nearby streets overnight.

In academic year 2008/9, some residential permits have been restored, but only in very limited numbers and for students who are actually requested by the University to use a car – in most cases, this is for getting to placements that are not easily reachable by other means, and is also conditional on carrying fellow students as passengers.

Car park charges were introduced in March 2003. Charges remained constant for over five years, at £75 / £120 for annual staff permits (dependent on salary level), and £1 a day (50p for up to four hours) for pay and display tickets. In 2007, a new rate of 20p for up to one and a half hours was introduced, to encourage short-term users of the University to leave the car parks promptly.

Having been held at the same price for five years, the University increased the charges in December 2008. The new rates are £120 / £180 for annual permits, (with revised salary banding) and £1.20 per day (60p for up to four hours, and 25p for one and a half hours) for pay and display machine tickets.

3.5 ON-STREET PARKING

Following consultation with residents, the Highways Authority painted additional yellow lines around street corners in the Devon Park area.

The University continues to emphasize to staff and students the importance of parking legally and considerately.

3.6 DELIVERIES

The University's environmental purchasing policy emphasises the importance of working with suppliers to minimise deliveries.

3.7 VISITOR CAR PARKING

Visitor car parking is under constant review, and the policies have changes several times over the period under review. Initial distribution of visitor permits having been shown to be open to abuse, permits were withdrawn and all visitors asked to use the pay & display machines. Subsequently, a few VIP spaces were set aside next to the sports science laboratories (later moved to next to the Campus Centre Building). In 2008, visitor permits were re-instated but departments using them were charged for their provision.

3.8 CAR SHARE

The University has continued to promote car sharing as a viable alternative for staff for whom bicycles or public transport would be impractical.

Car share is strongly promoted to students, with car share permits available free of charge to groups of three or more.

Promotional material for the car share scheme is given in Appendix Nineteen.

3.9 MOTORBIKES

Facilities for motorcyclists have not altered. There is still no charge for motorbike parking on campus. There are 6 dedicated motorbike stands to the rear of the Londis shop.

3.10 PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Public transport links to Polhill Campus are poor, with no local services stopping directly by campus. However, long-distance bus links have improved, with the Stagecoach X5 Oxford – Cambridge bus now stopping on Goldington Road next to the junction with Polhill Avenue. This gives the University a direct bus link to Cambridge, St Neots and Milton Keynes every half hour (last buses leave 8pm towards Oxford and 9:30pm towards Cambridge).

Of nearby local services, the no. 4 bus between the town centre and Goldington stops at the Newnham Drive shops, about a five minute walk from campus. These run roughly every 15 minutes until 8pm. The no. 5 bus between the town centre and Elms Farm Industrial Estate stops about 100 metres from campus on Barnstaple Road, and runs roughly every 10 minutes until 8:30pm.

The University has continued to promote all forms of public transport to staff and students. Bus and train use have been particularly promoted to new students, with advice on public transport use in recruitment packs, in the Student Union welcome handbook, and at the Students' Union Freshers' fair in September with bus maps and other leaflets being handed out.

The University shuttle bus provides a direct link, free of charge, to the bus and railway stations.

3.11 POOL MINIBUSES

The University runs two seventeen-seat minibuses based in Bedford. These are available for use by student groups as well as for academic purposes. Both have tow bars and roof racks for luggage for longer / sporting trips.

3.12 SHUTTLE BUSES

The Bedford shuttle bus, launched in December 2002, continues to run, free of charge, every 30 minutes on weekdays in term time. In September 2006, owing to increased demand for early services and only slight demand for evening buses, the hours changed. A slightly earlier start was introduced at 8:00 am, and the evening service was withdrawn after 8pm.

However, this is being reviewed in line with the proposal to extend library opening hours, and the evening service may be restored. The route is also reviewed regularly in consultation with user representatives such as the Students' Union.

CCTV has been added on board the bus to improve security.

The shuttle bus has its own dedicated stopping bay in front of the Campus Centre building. The University is considering a plan to put a bus shelter by this stop.

Following the merger with University of Luton, a second shuttle bus was set up running between Polhill and Luton Campus. However, this was very little used, largely because it took longer and ran with lesser frequency than the trains, which can be reached easily with the Bedford shuttle bus. After three months the service was therefore discontinued.

The Bedford Shuttle Bus route map and timetable are given in Appendix Seven.

3.13 COACH PARKING

The new campus layout includes an area which can be used to park two coaches, and which also doubles as a loading bay area for the theatre.

There is no charge for minibus or coach parking, and permits are not required, though advance booking is necessary.

3.14 CYCLE ACCESS TO CAMPUS

As part of the extension of the cycle route network around Bedford, a toucan crossing was installed on Polhill Avenue directly in front of the University, making both cycle and pedestrian access safer and more attractive. This was part-funded with a contribution of £17,500 from the University, under the terms of the S106 agreement.

Off-road cycle lanes have been extended up Polhill Avenue.

3.15 PROVISION OF BICYCLES FOR STUDENTS

The University has worked with Sustrans Luton to make reconditioned second-hand bicycles available for short term loan or for extended loan to students unable to afford to take up cycling. This scheme has been extremely popular, with ten bicycles made available in September 2008, used to date by twelve people (the two returns have both since acquired bicycles of their own).

Terms and conditions for the offer are given in Appendix Six.

3.16 CYCLE STORAGE

The University maintains 51 Sheffield stands in the main quadrangle (of which 16 are covered), and has a further 7 front wheel grip stands behind the Student Union. There is further storage for 50 bikes in the Liberty Living hall of residence.

The University reviews cycle storage annually, and in response to changing patterns of usage is currently considering plans to install more stands in front of the new reception, opposite the Campus Centre building. Liberty Living are also presently considering adding more, in response to heavy demand for bicycle storage.

3.17 CYCLISTS' EVENTS

There have been a few attempts at running events for cyclists, including Bikers' breakfasts and safety checks. However, these were very poorly attended, and there have been none since 2005.

3.18 PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

The centre of gravity of the campus has shifted North, towards the new buildings. To reflect this, reception has moved, and is now in the main building opposite the Campus Centre building.

All signs were reviewed and revised following the merger.

The new lay-out includes clearly marked pedestrian crossings, more speed limit signs, and ramps to control speed.

3.19 DISABLED ACCESS

The University has regularly reviewed the provision, number and location, of parking bays for disabled drivers. There are presently 15, comprising 4 by the side of the Campus Centre building, 4 just behind the same building, 3 between the main building and the gyms and 4 by the sports science laboratories.

These bays can be used both by blue badge holders and by members of the University who have been assessed (by the staff nurse or student health centre) as needing a temporary University impaired mobility parking permit.

3.20 GENERAL PUBLICITY

The University continues to promote the green travel plan, and its component elements, regularly. Particular emphasis is made at the start of each academic year to the new intake, and towards the end of each academic year to students planning moves to private accommodation, with event-, feature-or problem-specific publicity throughout the year.

Advice to freshers included in the admissions pack is given in Appendix Twenty. Advice to freshers included in the Student Union Handbook is given in Appendix Ten.

3.21 SECURITY

Security, lighting and CCTV coverage have been regularly reviewed across campus.

4.0 RESULTS TO DATE OF TRAVEL PLAN

4.1 PERMIT NUMBERS ISSUED

In 2003/04, the first full year in which parking was charged for, the University issued 141 staff permits, of which 90 were full time, 51 part time.

In 2008/09, this number had dropped to a total of 70 staff permits issued.

Over the same interval, staff numbers have dropped from 401 to 227 (these figures are not directly comparable, as some previously in-house functions were outsourced during this period, including catering and security. The latter figure does not include outsourced staff).

Student permits have been subject to more revisions of policy. In 2003/04, 570 permits were issued across the two campuses. The following year, 2004/05, only 64 standard student permits were issued, plus 8 carshare permits, and remaining students used the pay and display machines. By 2007/08 no permits were issued other than to disabled students and 10 carshare permits. In 2008/09, the decision was made to revert to issuing student permits to students in residence who were unable to complete their studies, or meet the terms of their scholarships, without a car. This was more tightly controlled than in 2004/5, and only one student qualified.

4.2 CARS ON CAR PARKS

Records have been kept of numbers of cars parked on Polhill Campus car parks at twice-daily counts (excepting days when there was no car park attendant on duty, due to leave or sickness).

These show that since the start of September 2008, there have been an average of 306 cars parked on campus every weekday, of which on average 85 are parked overnight.

4.3 ON-STREET PARKING SURVEYS

Streets in the Devon Park area have been surveyed regularly (roughly once a week in term time, once a month during the vacation) since the adoption of the travel plan.

These show a clear increase in car parking since the introduction of car parking charges, particularly in term-time. The term-time increase is likely to be chiefly attributable to University activities. It should be noted that there was a 6% rise in car ownership between 2003 and 2006 (Transport Statistics Great Britain 2007, Department of Transport); it is therefore likely that there has been some increase in non-University parking in the area over the same time.

The most intense pressure has generally been on roads immediately opposite campus, although in 2007//08, a reduction in pressure on the nearest roads was matched by an increase in on-street parking further away. It is not clear whether that is due to appeals to students to park considerately taking effect, or whether lower student on-street parking and more members of the general public working in central Bedford spilling outwards are responsible for the shift. Surveys show that the average number of cars parked on Dawlish Drive has increased from 18 in Spring 2003 to 22 in Spring 2008 (the average in the vacation has increased from 10 to 17). Thurlstone Close rose from 13 to 18 in 2006, dropping to 16 by 2008 (vacation average of 7, rising to 15). The most recent figures, for Autumn term 2008, show a slight decline from the previous year (an average of 116 cars parked on all streets surveyed, down from 122 the previous autumn).

4.4 SHUTTLE BUS FIGURES

Shuttle bus figures have remained largely steady since the service was established.

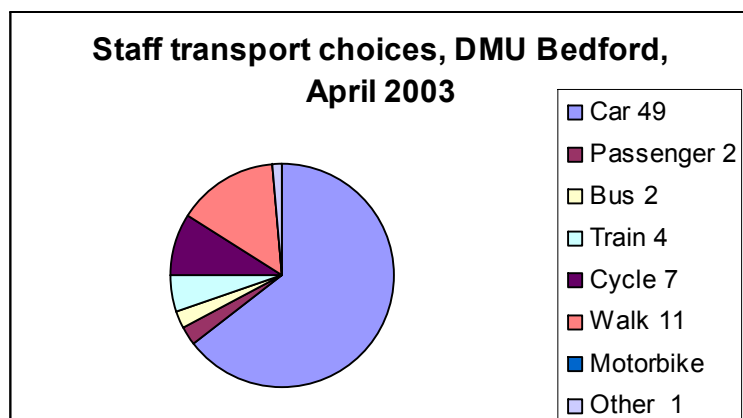
A survey of shuttle bus users in February 2006 showed that the shuttle bus carried an average of 24 passengers per trip before 8pm, and 10 per trip thereafter.

Another survey in October 2007 found an average of 25 passengers per trip, with no late night service. This was the first post consolidation.

The survey of October 2008 found that passenger numbers were unchanged, with an average of 25 passengers per trip.

4.5 TRANSPORT SURVEY

Surveys have been carried out annually since 2003, with very varied response rates. Student response rates have been particularly poor, making the survey results highly unreliable.



In the original survey, in April 2003, staff car drivers were 64% of the total responding (49 car drivers out of 76 respondents). In the November 2008 survey, 50 car drivers responded out of a total of 75, or 66% of the total based entirely at Bedford. A further three out of four staff who split their time between two or more campuses drove. These changes are not large enough to indicate any underlying trend.

5.0 PARTNERSHIPS

The University continues to work with external organisations to co-ordinate its efforts with theirs. The University continues to meet four times a year with the local residents liaison committee to discuss matters of mutual interest including on-street car parking. The University liaises regularly with the Borough & County Councils. The University is also represented on the Bedfordshire Climate Change Forum and Local Area Agreement Carbon Reduction Working Group.

6.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

Provision of parking spaces is being reviewed annually.

The University will conduct a site audit and survey into travel choices annually.

In addition to the university-wide transport survey conducted each year, the University will monitor levels of usage of the car parks, numbers of permits issued annually, and numbers of carshare permits issued annually, and on-street parking in the vicinity of Polhill Campus. Records will also be kept of the numbers of members of the University using the University shuttle bus service.

Car parking, cyclists' and other facilities will be inspected annually to ensure that they are in good condition and to see if further improvements are needed.