

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

TRAVEL PLAN LUTON SUPPLEMENT

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PLAN

The University is short of space, and much of the current facilities are old and in need of up-grading. Better and more modern space for teaching is needed if the University is to continue to attract students. The University is therefore embarking on a major programme of re-development in Luton, with new build and refurbishment, and taking this as an opportunity to reduce the University's impact on the environment.

The University currently has very limited parking in central Luton, and is almost entirely reliant on spaces leased from NCP and Britannia Parking to meet its staff parking needs. Much of the University-owned land used until recently to provide car parks on campus is now ear-marked for re-development. This has left the University facing the choice of either almost no car parking at all, or a large bill for leasing space elsewhere.

The University currently provides very few facilities to support non-car using staff and students in Luton, although other campuses have individually developed better provision.

This Travel Plan has also been prepared in support of a planning application for development on the Luton Campus site. However, it is intended to be a working document and once adopted, will be reviewed on a regular basis as part of the University's commitment to ensuring that the transport impacts of its activities are minimised.

2 CURRENT SITE INFORMATION

2.1 UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE SITES

The University currently occupies eleven sites within Luton, namely:

The main campus, comprising buildings around Park Square and on Vicarage Street, immediately east of the town centre and half a mile from the train station. This area also includes two halls of residence, College House and University Hall. College House was mothballed in 2008, and the site is being reviewed for possible development as a new hall of residence.

Also in central Luton, within walking distance of the main campus, are eight sites with halls of residence and a new printing facility in Albert Road. The residences are in: Bute St; John St; Eaton Green; Guildford St; James Court; Manor Court; Rutland Hall; and Wellington Court. All are within two miles of campus.

2.2 LUTON CAMPUS

The main campus, between Park Street, Church Street, Vicarage Street and St Mary's Road, is the base for much of University's teaching and research and its main administrative centre.

Faculties and teaching departments based here include the undergraduate Business School; Creative Arts, Technology and Science; and Social Sciences. University departments based in Luton include Finance; Facilities and Estates; Communications and Marketing; Registry; Student Services; Learning Resources; and Information Services.

2.3 STAFF COMMUTING AND HOME LOCATIONS

Staff home locations have been plotted on local and regional maps, sorted by whether or not they use University car parks; these are shown in Appendix Eleven.

As can be seen, staff based at Luton live predominately in the Luton and Dunstable area, with further clusters in Bedford and Hitchin. There are also clear trends along the M1, the A6 and railway line into London. Locally, car park users live slightly further out than non car park users, with clusters around Leagrave and Stopsley.

2.4 STUDENT NUMBERS AND ORIGINS

Appendix Twelve shows students home postcodes. Students based at Luton are mostly local, with 33.9% having an LU postcode to their home address and 13.4% having an MK postcode.

The University also recruits international students, with noticeable numbers coming from India, China, Nigeria, and Eastern Europe. The University arranges transport to and from the airport for international students, and provides accommodation within walking distance of campus.

2.5 STUDENT RESIDENCES

Current student accommodation at the University is as follows:

- College House, adjacent to the main campus, is currently mothballed, and the site earmarked for redevelopment by Liberty Living.
- University Hall has 80 rooms, and is adjacent to the main campus.
- Bute Court is the largest site, with accommodation for 457 students, ten minutes walk from campus, five minutes walk from the town centre and adjacent to the railway station.
- John St has 120 rooms, and is five minutes walk from campus, and adjacent to the shopping centre.
- Eaton Green Court is the furthest away, being two miles or a thirty-five minute walk from campus. It has room for up to 48 students, but is currently mothballed.
- Guildford Hall has 46 rooms, and is ten minutes walk from campus.

- James Court also has 46 rooms, and is fifteen minutes walk from campus. It is reserved for post-graduate students
- Manor Court has 195 rooms, and is five minutes walk from campus. It was mothballed in October 2008, and is to be re-developed by Liberty Living.
- Rutland Hall has 54 rooms, and is fifteen minutes walk from campus.
- Wellington Court has 48 rooms, and is ten minutes walk from campus. It is reserved for mature and post-graduate students.
- Nursing students can arrange accommodation at any of the four University hospital sites.

Accommodation is available for all students who want it. The remainder are housed in private accommodation or still live at home.

2.6 SURVEYS

Surveys of travel preferences were conducted in April 2007 and November 2008.

Both surveys were advertised to all members of the University, through notices and emails with links to the survey website.

Although both surveys were advertised to students as well as staff, student responses were in each case extremely low, and have therefore been excluded from this analysis.

The survey results are shown below in Figures One and Two.

In the 2007 survey, 103 responses were received from members of staff based in Luton, 95 of these based on the main campus. The survey found that of these, 47 respondents (just under 50%) drove, and that 31 of these used university car parks.

This compared well with known numbers of staff using University-controlled car parks. The University had at the time 342 spaces for staff, visitors and disabled students, comprising 160 leased from NCP and 182 at various sites on the main campus. This suggests that the survey, despite its low response rate, was reasonably representative.

The survey also found that 24% of respondents come on foot; 12% by bus, and 6% each as passengers in somebody else's car or by train. No respondents based on the main campus reported commuting by bicycle.

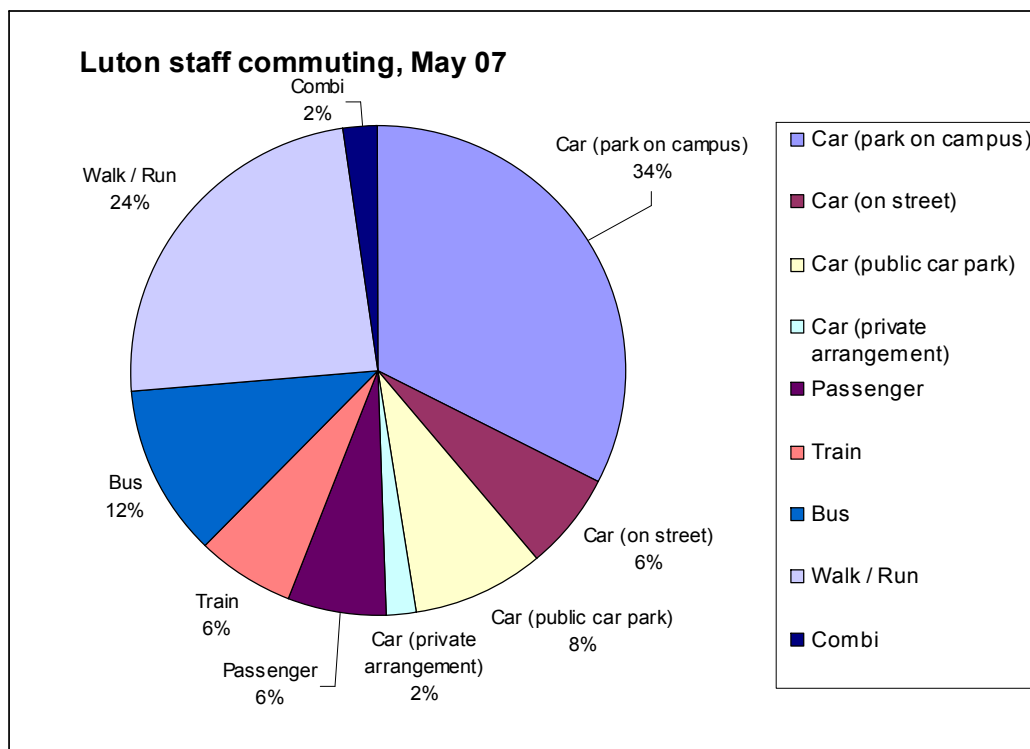


Figure 1: Staff commute patterns, May 07

The April 2007 one went out shortly after several other surveys, which may have depressed the response rate. Conversely, the November 2008 survey went out a month after a sharp increase in car parking prices was announced, and shortly after the closure of most of the University's on-campus car parks in Luton. This is likely to have increased the response rate, particularly amongst car park users, many of whom were (as was made clear by the entries in the comments fields) highly aggrieved by this. Therefore the apparent slight increase in car use between the two surveys may be a result of sampling error.

The November 2008 survey had 208 responses from staff based in Luton. Of these, 52% drove, with a further 9% coming in as passengers in another car. This does not reflect the drop in numbers of permits issued (discussed below: see section 3.2). Of the remainder, 10% come by train, 9% by bus, 2% by motorbike, 16% on foot and 1% by bicycle.

Unsurprisingly, the preferred mode of transport varied with distance, with foot and bike preferred over short distances, and most train users coming long distance (see Figure 3: this is supported by study of the postcode maps, which show that among non car park users, members of staff travelling longer distances tend to live in places with good public transport links). Support staff were more likely to walk, and academic staff to come by train – this probably reflects the fact that support staff were also likely to live closer to campus. The comments section of the survey also revealed high levels of dissatisfaction among car drivers with the University's new car parking arrangements.

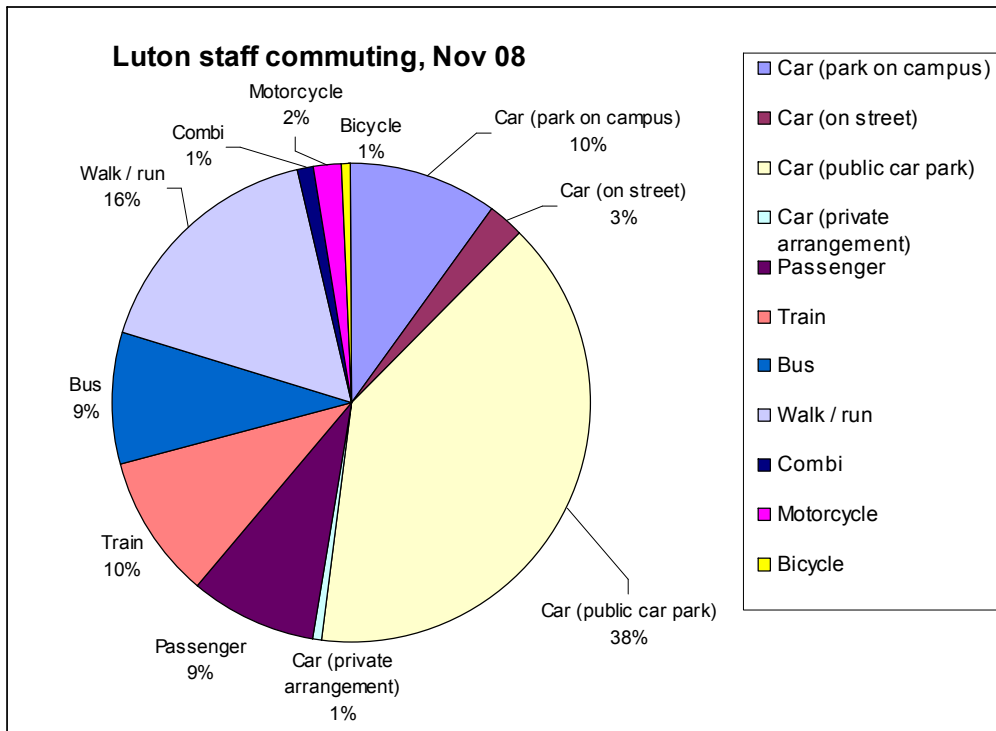


Figure 2: Staff commute patterns, Nov 08

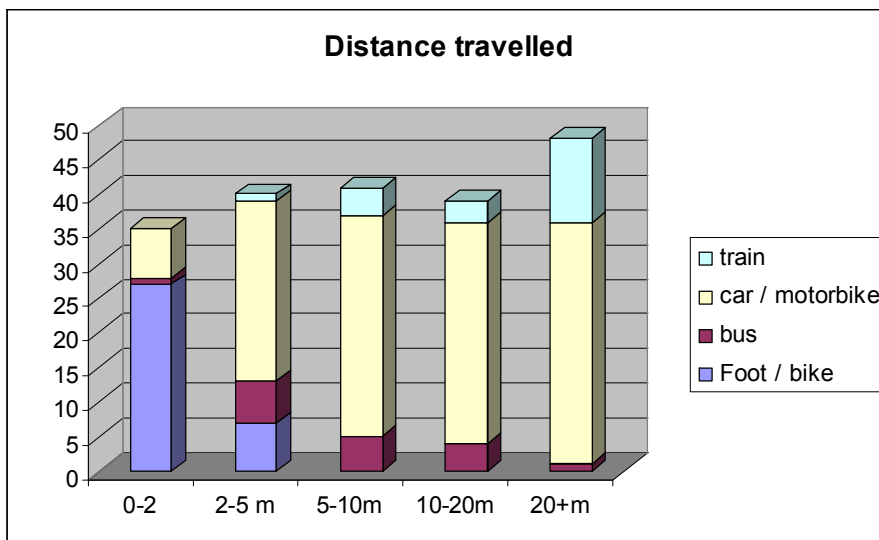


Figure 3: Distance travelled by mode

The 2008 survey questionnaire is included in Appendix Two.

More detailed analysis of the 2008 survey is given in Appendix Three.

3 ACCESSIBILITY

3.1 TRANSPORT LINKS TO PARK SQUARE

Park Square is located a short walk from the town centre, and is just off the A6. It is also on the National Cycle Network Route 6, and is surrounded by bus stops. It is a short walk from Luton railway station.

A map showing the location of Park Square and its relationship to Luton town centre and railway station is given in Appendix One.

3.2 CAR PARKING

In October 2008, the University closed most of its on-campus car parks in central Luton. Car parking on the main campus is now limited to only 20 staff (senior management and those assessed as having mobility difficulties) plus pre-booked visitors and spaces for blue badge holders. Most staff car parking is now provided on public car parks nearby, by arrangement with NCP and Britannia Parking. There are also 9 spaces at the printing facility at Albert Road.

In June 2008, before the review of car parking charges, 304 permits were issued for use at car parks in central Luton (on or off campus), and 38 in Putteridge Bury. By the end of November 2008, following the re-issue of permits, this had dropped to 269 in central Luton and 23 in Putteridge Bury. Most of the 34 staff who park at Butterfield were unaffected by the price rises as, having been re-located there in September 2007, their car parking charges were still protected under TUPE.

Permits for car parking spaces are issued to staff by the Estates Department. All permits other than those issued to blue badge holders are charged for, the revenue being used to meet the costs of leasing the external car parking spaces. Rates vary between £7 and £30 per month according to pay scale, rising to between £6 and £37 per month from 1st December 2008.

A few car parking spaces are available for student use at some Halls of Residence (permits for which are sold on a first-come, first-served basis). A small car park is available at Butterfield and there is car parking at Putteridge Bury for students and conference delegates. There is no further provision for student car parking.

A car park patrolling company has been appointed to ensure adherence to the car parking policy. Cars parked in the wrong places or without permits may be ticketed, with a penalty charge applied of £80.

There are also several public car parks within a short walk of campus. There is very little on-street parking available nearby, as most streets in the town centre are controlled. A map of the campus showing the locations of nearby public car parks is included in Appendix Thirteen.

3.3 MOTORCYCLE PARKING

There is currently very little specific provision for motorcycle parking. There are two stands in a corner of the car park at the front of Park Square. A site audit in June 2008 found that other motorcycles use convenient corners, with or without railings as available.

There are no charges for motorcycle parking, and permits are not required.

3.4 BICYCLE PARKING

There is currently very little provision for safe bicycle parking. The University has 18 Sheffield stands, with room for 36 bicycles, at the front of Park Square, and 12 further wheel grip stands on St Anne's Lane. The site audit in June 2008 found that at other locations on the main campus, bicycles are left attached to railings.

3.5 CYCLE ROUTES

There are no off-road cycle routes connecting with Park Square. However, advisory on-road routes are signed. Some nearby routes are closed to general traffic but shared between bicycles, taxis and buses.

National Cycle Network Route 6 goes past Park Square.

3.6 PUBLIC BUS SERVICES

The site audit showed that the main campus is served by 15 bus stops, mostly on Church Street (adjacent to Park Square), though with a few on Park Street, Vicarage Street and St Mary's Road. These provide services to local destinations and to other towns.

The main campus is also within reasonable walking distance of the bus station.

Regional and long distance services from stops adjacent to Park Square, Luton include

- Aylesbury
- Dunstable
- Hatfield
- Hemel Hempstead
- Hitchin
- Leighton Buzzard
- London
- Milton Keynes
- Stevenage
- Watford
- Welwyn Garden City

Services are provided locally and regionally by Arriva, Centrebus, and Uno (University of Hertfordshire).

3.7 RAIL

Luton station is served by the Midland Main Line that runs between Sheffield and London, with trains to Bedford, Leicester or London St Pancras at least hourly. It is also on the Thameslink line, which provides a quarter-hourly service to Bedford, St. Albans, London and Brighton.

3.8 WALKING

Park Square Campus is within easy walking distance (about half a mile) from the town centre. It is directly across Church Street from the Arndale Centre.

Roads surrounding the campus are well lit and have pedestrian (zebra or traffic-light controlled) crossings.

3.9 VISITOR ACCESS

Advice to visitors to the University emphasises the accessibility of the main campus by public transport. This is quoted in Appendix Eleven.

The University has a few car spaces available for use by visitors. These can be booked by members of staff on a first-come, first-served basis.

3.10 CAR SHARING

There are currently no measures provided in support of car sharing.

3.11 TAXIS AND HIRE CARS

There is a public taxi rank on Park Square, opposite the University's main entrance.

3.12 PUBLICITY & TRAVEL DIRECTIONS

The University helps to promote public transport to campus, with bus timetables available in the Park Square entrance lobby.

4 PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR REDUCING CAR USE

4.1 CAR PARKING AND ROAD TRANSPORT

The University will continue to provide some car parking for the foreseeable future, but given the limited supply, will discourage car use. The extent of provision of car parking, the level of charges and any direct form of rationing will be reviewed annually.

The University is working with Luton Borough Council and the Highways Authority to review road access to the University. With the redevelopment of the campus, an opportunity exists to revise the status of Vicarage Street, possibly closing it to general traffic and limiting its use to buses, cycles and pedestrians only.

4.2 CAR SHARING

Analysis of the postcodes of car park users suggests that the encouragement of car sharing would be constructive in reducing single-occupancy car use. The postcode maps (given in Appendix Eleven) show that there are a number of clusters of car park users, for instance in Hitchin, Letchworth, and along the A6.

4.3 PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY

Analysis of the postcode maps (given in Appendix Eleven) suggest that there is room for considerable increase in pedestrian activity amongst staff.

The layout of the redeveloped Campus will be designed to maximise pedestrian activity both on and off site. Good signage and lighting will be provided throughout the Campus and adjacent area.

The University is working with Sustrans to find other ways to promote walking as a mode of transport. Sustrans are running a weekly lunchtime leisure walk which the University promote to staff, and have also arranged walks aimed at students and tying in with other student events and activities.

The University is also working with Luton Borough Council and the Highways Authority to improve pedestrian access; the proposed partial closure of Vicarage Street will have a dramatic impact on the perceived safety of pedestrians on campus.

4.4 MOTOR CYCLES

Sufficient motorcycle parking spaces will be provided for motorcycle users. The motorcycle spaces will be designed so that cars will not illegally park on them.

4.5 PUBLIC TRANSPORT USAGE

A key element of the transport strategy is to increase the use of public transport. Postcode analysis (shown in Appendix Eleven) suggests that up to 20 car users currently live close to stations in towns with direct train links to Luton. While this does not indicate what other factors influence their commuting choices (antisocial hours, childcare commitments, etc) some could be persuaded to switch to public transport. The 2008 transport survey (described in Appendices Two and Three) found that 30 present car users expressed willingness to switch to public transport if financial incentives such as discounted season tickets were available.

5 MONITORING AND REVIEW

Provision of parking spaces will be reviewed annually.

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

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.