

STUDENT ACCESS DENIED

the state of student
car parking at UEA



CCTV

24 HOUR OPERATION

**UEA
TEMPORARY
CAR PARK**



Introduction

In April 2008, the University relocated student car parking to a temporary car park situated next to the Institute for Food Research. The decision was taken to respond to a loss of space from building projects and increased demand for parking on campus. In recent months those students with permits for the parking at the Edith Cavell Building have also been relocated. Where there are welfare needs students may submit an appeal to the Student Parking Appeals Panel.

Students are required to make use of this provision before 2pm, after which time they are expected to find space on the main car park for which they are charged a flat rate of £1. University staff permit holders are permitted to park on the main campus car parks and at the Edith Cavell Building (Appendix A).

Students that live within a mile, in the NR2 postcode or have ever lived on campus are denied a parking permit under this policy. Currently these same conditions are not needed to be met by University staff making the same application; it is only staff that live within a mile that are denied a permit.

Approximately one third of the student body need to commute from outside of Norwich locations, often from rural areas where public transport is inadequate and driving is the only real means of commuting. This figure is likely to increase, as growing numbers of applicants consider living at home and commuting to a local institution in order to avoid the rising costs of accommodation and utilities and tuition fees.

At the time of adoption the new policy was considered as being “simple to deliver”, being able to achieve “in a very short time” with little expense for the University. It was also considered to cause only “short term inconvenience”, as students from 2008 “will not have known any other arrangement than remote parking”¹.

However, this decision failed to take into account many potential impacts of the new policy. This document will explore the impact on commuting students and is supported by the experiences of 40 students that submitted their comments to the Union between October and December 2008.

1: Strategy for the management of Car Parking, Paper presented to Car Park Group circa January 2008

Impact upon the Student Experience

Evidence suggests that the new parking policy has a negative affect on the student experience for local commuting students. If the University is truly committed to providing the best student experience in the UK, then this impact upon the growing number of students who commute has to be considered.

The thirty minute walk students are now expected to undertake is one factor that can be seen to damage the student experience. On the most basic level the changes have interfered with students' studies;

"I turn up for lectures soaked, freezing and flustered."

"I am more often than not carrying as many as 10-12 books. Like most history students, I do not travel light and because of the distance between home and uni have to complete a lot of tasks (such as changing books) when I am there."

A number of students have spoken of the additional worry and stress the move has created for them, which may also have an effect on their studies;

"...people cannot even get onto campus without their stress levels going through the roof or their overdraft growing ever larger? Fees are climbing inexorably and universities must provide proper services in return."

"I feel I have enough to worry about without having to wonder every morning whether or not I will be able to get to lectures on time, and I certainly don't need to feel unsafe walking to and from my car."

Safety

Some students see the route from the car park to the main campus as treacherous;

"with the cold weather it has become even more of a challenge and takes even longer and not just in the past week when the weather has been exceptional. Whenever there is a frost the car park is not gritted making it dangerously slipping. This is also the case for the paths onto campus especially the tarmac areas which are slippery even when wet and not icy. The UEA obviously recognises the dangers of the frosty paths because as soon as I reach the campus paths these are all always gritted! The university has made us park further away and doesn't take precautions to make this route safe."

Students have also repeatedly expressed concerns about their personal safety on the pathway between the triangular site and the main campus.

"I have real safety concerns about the walk from the car park to the uni. It has made it impossible for me to bring in my laptop, in case I am mugged, plus I usually have heavy books to carry around, I feel like a sitting duck!"

"My last lesson finishes at 5pm so by the time I leave it is becoming dark. I do not feel safe walking the 30 minute walk and try to always walk with someone but this is not always possible. I don't feel like I should feel unsafe to walk to the university but due to the situation of the walk, I do."

"I feel very uncomfortable and vulnerable walking this route as even if it is daylight there is normally no-one around."

Although partially lit and partially covered by the University's CCTV systems, students still feel unsafe. While these safety measures may deter attackers, they cannot prevent their occurrence.

UEA security advises students to avoid walking alone in the dark when they can. The decision to move student parking away from the main campus appears to have been made in direct conflict with this advice. One student commented that this has displayed a

"total disregard for the welfare of 'home based' students"

Part Time Work and other Time Commitments

Increasingly students are forced to take on part-time work to fund their studies and some to gain additional skills to increase their employability and future career prospects. Many local commuting students retain the jobs they had prior to entering Higher Education. For some the job is in itself a reason to apply to a local institution, particularly in an economic climate in which part time employment is becoming increasingly difficult to come by. One student found that the recent changes affected his part time work;

"We live 30 miles away and getting into university is hard enough as it is. For some of us it means losing our job because of this extra half hour in the evening, some are really concerned about their safety, and I'm personally worried for my girlfriend who has to make the same walk each day."

For these students, these changes have added up to an extra hour of travelling time each day. These cause particular problems for students who need to work or care for their children.

Many major parts of the student experience are affected including the level of involvement in student clubs and societies, playing a role in the Union and representation, taking part in volunteering - in fact, many of the things that make time at UEA so special for so many students.

Mature Students and Students with Caring Responsibilities

The changes in policy have damaged efforts by the University to widen participation; the groups most harmed by the affects of this policy are mature students and those with caring responsibilities;

"Time constraints also make life difficult, I know some mature students who attend seminars during their working day, during lunch etc, a 30 minute walk each way is not really acceptable, many of us have children to sort out too & adding extra time to our already busy schedule is again not welcome."

"I do a 30 mile round trip to get to the university and have child care responsibilities that mean the extra 30 minute walk to the overflow car park lengthens the time before I can be with my children."

Students with school age children now find it difficult to attend early morning classes because of the added time pressures. Student parents are less likely to make use of the UEA Nursery because of the added journey times and use services either closer to home or those based closer to the overflow car park.

National Student Survey

Students' frustrations have been vented in the National Student Survey. Graduates from the schools of BIO, CMP, LAW, MED, MUS, NAM, NBS and SWK referred to the 'parking problem' in the 2008 survey;

"The university's lack of parking spaces and totally unhelpful transport policy has had detrimental effects on my studies and caused great worry. Some people have no choice but to drive (no public transport) and the university is making their attendance difficult and sometimes impossible. A very serious issue." CMP Student, National Student Survey 2008

The graduates of 2009 will have endured a full year of the new arrangements and will be a cohort that can directly compare parking provision in 2008/09 with the provision before the change in policy. One student has already spoken of her intention to do so;

"Students paying £3000+ per year cannot be expected to be treated as second class... [parking was] the biggest issue to sour my relations with the UEA. I for one will express this in my satisfaction survey and will urge others to do the same."

As long as the University maintains this policy it cannot provide a "student experience second to none" for all. Increasing numbers of local commuting students threaten this core objective. If not students will continue to make comments such as:

"Roll on 2010 when I leave, although I can't guarantee I'll make it."

Public Transport Solution

The changes in student parking provision was thought to encourage the use of public transport. For many students this is not a viable option;

"I realise of course that parking is a problem, but for many students like myself it is an unavoidable necessity. Yes, I could use public transport to

get to the UEA every day, but to do so I would have to leave home at 6am and I would probably miss the last bus home to Spixworth, as my university day ends at 5pm."

"There isn't a bus to the uni from where I live in Hainford. To get there by public transport I would have to get a bus into the city (that goes about once every 2 hours) then get a bus from the city to the UEA, this would take me about 2 hours when it takes me 30 minutes to drive. I would love it if there was a bus from my house to the uea, I'm paying so much in insurance, tax and petrol for my car but it's the only way I can get to university."

"I live off campus, in Buxton, which is a small village approximately 15 miles from campus...there are no viable means of public transport to and from my village, as the last return bus to Buxton leaves Castle Meadow, in the City centre, at 5:30 PM; and many of my lectures on campus do not finish until this time or later. Thus I currently drive to and from university."

"As a mature student living in Dereham I have no option but to drive into uni everyday. My journey here already means leaving my home at 7.30 each morning. If I had to add extra time to allow for the walk from the John Inness I would be encountering approximately 3 hours of travelling time every day which I consider unacceptable."

"I travel in from Lowestoft some 70 mile round trip everyday....to do this I have to get up approx 6.30 am to arrive on time for a 9.00 am lecture.....parking in the overflow car park I have to allow another 20 minutes to get to campus....as you can imagine I am not best pleased with the extra 40 minutes added to my travelling each day"

Investigations into the public transport options facing these students show that their statements are not exaggerated. Appendix B displays the services, journey duration and the cost a student undertaking public transport would incur with classes starting 9am and finishing at 5pm.

These students, in deciding to study at UEA and live locally, have already committed to spending large amounts of time travelling. However, this choice does not justify an additional hour of travelling, and these students are frustrated at the extra time on their already difficult journeys.

The time taken to travel between UEA and these locations by public transport is substantially longer, sometimes by a considerable distance, than the time it takes to make the same journey by car. The expense is also incredible for those students that can't take advantage of the First Zones 1-5 Travel Pass (£148) because they live outside the area covered by the pass or are served by alternative public transport providers.

The journey times and expense displayed in Appendix B are not isolated or extreme instances. Appendix C displays the services, journey duration and the cost a student undertaking public transport would incur with classes starting at 9am and finishing at 5pm if they live in some of the places named in the University's recent marketing strategy, "Born in... Made at the University of East Anglia."

These tables reveal even the greater journey times and the extensive cost students travelling from these locations would incur. A student travelling from Heacham would be completely unable to attend a 9am class due to the inadequacies of the public transport network.

In promoting the University to the local population, there must be thought given to the practical, prosaic considerations that shape the student experience of the University – considerations that have the same impact as the academic experience on a students' perception of their time at UEA.

It is no surprise that faced with such vast costs, journey times and an inadequate transport infrastructure, students choose to drive.

"I have (more than once) looked into travelling by train and bus, but the journey takes about 2.5 hours each way and would cost even more than the petrol and car parking fees!"

"with the rail prices and bus charges this is not a viable option as it would cost more than driving"

Faced with the high costs of public transport it is not surprising some students would rather pay visitor rates on the main car park;

"I live in rural Suffolk and cannot possibly get to UEA without a car I am also part time. However because of the difficulty of getting a parking space I often have to take much more time off and pay much more in parking fees just to park the car to ensure I can get to the seminar/meeting etc on time."

For some public transport truly isn't an option. The new policy has forced students with no viable alternative to using their car into the reported situation. We, as a University community, must acknowledge the inadequacy of the Norfolk's rural transport network and plan solutions based upon this unfortunate reality.

Community Impact

Since the implementation of the new parking policy the Police and Norwich City Council had reported high numbers of complaints from local residents of 'visitors to UEA' using residential areas to park (Appendix D).

Between 12th and 21st January 2009, the Union undertook a survey of car registrations in the Cunningham Road area, near the UEA Village. This was chosen as one of the areas where a number of the reported complaints had been received, as well as anecdotal evidence suggesting this was where students were parking (Appendix E). Recordings were made each morning, early afternoon and evening over the two weeks.

A total of 99 registrations were recorded. 41 can be identified as being in the area only in the daytime on more than one occasion. 5 registrations are thought to belong to residents, having been recorded in the area most evenings. Although it cannot be proved these 41 registrations belong to UEA students, staff or visitors, it can be certain they do not belong to local residents and provide numbers of recurring visitors to the area.

It is clear some students have rejected the parking provision granted for them at the triangular site in favour of non-permitted residential areas that are closer to the university.

"I park in a residential area, which is working fine now, although for how long?"

By choosing to park in residential areas, students have chosen to expose their property to greater risks of theft and vandalism. The parking has already caused complaints amongst local residents and will help to fuel the already existing tensions between the University and the local community.

Discussions are already taking place within Norwich City Council to turn the areas with the highest number of complaints into permit zones. Such an outcome will only displace the problem to other areas of the community and further damage the University's relationship with nearby residents.

Conclusion

Since the changes, students have consistently raised the question:

"How come we have to make arrangements for alternative travel to uni when staff don't?"

"what is the justification for the staff and elite only car park?"

The inequality that exists between staff and students with the same need is an issue of particular grievance, with the arrangements perceived as unfair. Before the changes took effect, there was support from students for a review of the policy, especially to resolve the issues relating to demand.

There are other, more favourable, options the University could have chosen to adopt. The example favoured by the Union and would address many of the issues raised in this report is a policy based upon need, not prioritising staff over students.

The University of Sheffield possesses such a policy. Having considered a similar ban on student parking, Sheffield opted for a policy of parity between staff and students based upon need. A set of eligibility criteria is used to determine the success of a permit application including

- Distance between home and the University
- A lack of a public transport alternative
- Hours of work/study
- Family circumstances including caring responsibilities
- Health and disability

The policy was a success and has encouraged students and staff without real need to drive to consider public transport alternatives.

It must be asked whether similar measures, if undertaken at UEA, would resolve some of the demand placed upon the main car park by withdrawing those permits allocated to those without a genuine need.

One such measure could include the extension of the area in which students and staff cannot live and apply for permit to be extended to areas where direct public transport to UEA is easily accessible. As well as alleviate demand, such a measure, much more than the current policy, would contribute to the University's aim of becoming a "low carbon campus".

The University needs to engage in the realities of the situation. An extra hour to a students' day affects things such as childcare arrangements, time spent at work the level students can participate in volunteering, clubs and societies. Students do not enjoy a 30 minute walk in the cold and rain across an often secluded unsafe rural track in exactly the same way that member of University staff would not enjoy it either. Where an alternative to driving exists, students and staff should be encouraged to use alternative methods of transport and parking should be allocated to students and staff on an equal basis.

For as long as this policy remains in place, the experience of hundreds of students will be adversely affected and further damage will be imposed upon the already fragile relationship the University has with the local community.

Appendix A Parking Provision at UEA



1. 'Overflow' Car Park
2. Parking at the Edith Cavell Building
3. Parking behind the School of Medicine
4. Parking in front of Estates and Management and Visitors Car Park
5. Main Car Park
6. The pathways between the 'Overflow' Car Park and teaching space.

Appendix B Spixworth, Hainford, Buxton, Dereham and Lowestoft

Route	Journey 1	Journey 2	Duration
Spixworth	7.45-8.15 First Service 10	8.23-8.37 First Service 25	52 minutes
Hainford	7.57-8.20 Sanders Service 44	8.23-8.37 First Service 25	40 minutes
Buxton	7.32-8.09 Sanders Service 210	8.18-8.37 First service 25	65 minutes
Dereham	7.38-8.28 First Service X1	8.35-8.49 First Service 35	71 minutes
Lowestoft	7.40-8.25 National Express	8.33-8.58 First Service 35	78 minutes

Route	Journey 1	Journey 2	Duration
Spixworth	5.12-5.36 First Service 35	5.44-6.13 First Service 10	61 minutes
Hainford	5.12-5.36 First Service 35	6.19-6.45 Sanders Service 44	93 minutes
Buxton	4.57-5.26 First Service 35	5.33-6.06* Sanders Service 210	69 minutes
Dereham	5.12-5.36 First Service 35	5.47-6.29 First Service X1	77 minutes
Lowestoft	5.12-5.45 First Service 35	5.57-6.44 National Express	92 minutes

*Last service from Norwich, would mean the student could not attend seminars/lectures beyond 5pm to catch the last service home.

Sum Duration	Car Travel Time	Differential	Total Fare
113 minutes	46 minutes	67 minutes	£148
133 minutes	50 minutes	83 minutes	£722
140 minutes	54 minutes	86 minutes	£892
148 minutes	50 minutes	98 minutes	£830
170 minutes	114 minutes	56 minutes	£2,768

Appendix C Spixworth, Hainford, Buxton, Dereham and Lowestoft

From	Journey 1	Journey 2	Journey 3	Total Duration
Cromer	7.20-8.20 Sanders Service 44	8.24-8.43 First Service 35		83 minutes
	6.59-8.00 First Service 50	8.06-8.25 First Service 35		86 minutes
	7.28-8.14 National Express	8.18-8.43 First Service 35		75 minutes
Heacham	6.38-7.16 First Service 41	7.29-9.18 First Service X1	9.26-9.40* First Service 25	182 minutes
Bradwell	7.00-7.14 First Service 7	7.27-8.07 First Service X1	8.17-8.37 First Service 35	97 minutes
Thetford	7.29-8.10 National Express	8.18-8.49 First Service 25		80 minutes
Gorleston	7.23-8.22 First Service X1	8.30-8.49 First Service 25		86 minutes

*There is no public transport that can arrive at UEA before 9am

To	Journey 1	Journey 2	Journey 3	Total Duration
Cromer	5.12-5.41 First Service 35	6.19-7.22 Sanders Service 44		86 minutes
	5.12-5.41 First Service 35	5.50-6.54 First Service 50		102 minutes
	5.12-5.45 First Service 35	6.47-7.33 National Express		141 minutes
Heacham	5.12-5.36 First Service 35	6.17-7.54 First service X1	8.00-8.33 First Service 40	201 minutes
Bradwell	5.12-5.36 First Service 35	5.53-6.33 First service X1	7.15-7.30 First Service 7	94 minutes
Thetford	5.12-5.45 First Service 35	5.54-6.27 National Express		75 minutes
Gorleston	5.12-5.36 First Service 35	5.53-6.43 First Service X1		91 minutes

Sum Duration	Car Travel Time	Differential	Total Fare
169 minutes	90 minutes	79 minutes	£892
188 minutes		98 minutes	£830
216 minutes		126 minutes	£1,308
417 minutes	154 minutes	263 minutes	£830
191 minutes	84 minutes	107 minutes	£830
155 minutes	74 minutes	81 minutes	£1,528
177 minutes	86 minutes	91 minutes	£830

Appendix D Notification from Norwich City Council of complaints

Neighbourhood Housing
Services
Neighbourhood Office
168A Motum Road
Norwich
NR5 8EG

17 November 2008

Tom Sutton
Welfare Officer
Union of UEA Students
Union House
University of East Anglia
Norwich
NR4 7TJ

Dear Tom Sutton

Parking within the local area

With reference to our conversation on the 20 October 2008, I am still continuing to receive complaints with regards to the parking in the local community by users of the UEA.

Since the beginning of this academic year, I have received a number of complaints and have observed an increase in visitors to the UEA using local roads and Norwich City Council residential car parks to park in.

This greatly impacting on the local community, not only is there safety element because of the precarious places that the cars are being parked but it is also restricting local residents to park their own vehicles.

I understand that this mainly due to parking being reduced on the UEA site. As part of the development programme is there going to be additional parking created to accommodate for the increase in the number of users of the UEA?

I welcome your response to this matter and hope that a solution can be reached to reduce this problem.

Yours Sincerely

Jo Thomson
Neighbourhood Housing Officer.

[illegible]

Registrations	9.15am 12/01/2009	1.10pm 12/01/2009	6.30pm 12/01/2009	9.15am 14/01/2009	12.30pm 14/01/2009	6.50pm 14/01/2009	9.20am 15/01/2009	1.20pm 15/01/2009	7pm 15/01/2009	9.10am 16/01/2009	1.15pm 16/01/2009	7.00pm 16/01/2008	8.55am 19/01/2009	1.20pm 19/01/2009		9.20am 21/01/2009	1.45pm 21/01/2009		9.25am 21/01/2009	1.45pm 21/01/2009	
W668																					
Y5S																					
LEH																					
L135																					
DG51																					
AF04																					
LB54																					
S194																					
P5																					
P765																					
R935																					
R932																					
P71																					
RD02																					
R532																					

	Recorded Registration
	Recurring Visitor
	Resident