
Cycle Parking Levels at University Halls of Residence

Background

In response to a request from a local authority for guidance on the level of cycle parking that should be sought for a proposed university hall of residence sited 1 mile away from the university, comments made by Alex Sully of Transport Initiatives were as follows:

General

Cycling England's guidance on its website (<http://www.cyclingengland.co.uk/documents/C.04.pdf>) recommends that local authorities should draw up cycle parking standards with the level of parking determined by reference to a range of factors including the following:

- **Census data** Although only produced every ten years this data is a good guide to cycle use for journeys to work at the time of the survey. The figures should be adjusted to allow for the fact that the census returns record the principal means of travel and journeys such as those to rail stations by bicycle will not be included as bicycle trips.
- **Travel Plans** Workplace and school travel plans can provide an indication of cycle use where the plan includes a regular programme of monitoring. A travel plan which includes regular monitoring of modal split and occupancy of cycle parking spaces can be made a requirement for obtaining planning consent. If so, it can be used to enforce the condition that additional cycle parking must be provided to match growing demand.
- **Modal split data** Work done by an authority to establish modal share for different types of journey and trip lengths, such as household or travel surveys, can inform this process.
- **Traffic counts** An authority's regular traffic counts and surveys to establish levels of cycle use and trip lengths can be a valuable source of information on trends and the setting of targets. Cycle surveys should include parking levels, both on-street and at selected employment/educational establishments, as well as recording the numbers of cyclists passing a census point.
- **Demographic data** Data on patterns of commuting, both in and out of the area plus typical catchment areas for employment or education can be helpful in setting standards.
- **The authority's LTP targets for cycling for journey types/local areas** A local authority will have set a range of targets for transport activities such as increases in general cycling levels, plus increases in trips to schools and workplaces through their respective travel plan programmes, within its LTP. As a minimum, cycle parking provision should reflect these targets plus an allowance for growth.

Parking sought at university sites

Analysis of forty sets of local government standards for cycle parkingⁱ (ranges from a small unitary to a shire county) shows that 29 of them set standards for parking at Class D1 colleges/universities. These range from 1 parking space per student (Cambridge) to 1 per 25 students.

The two that set standards of 20 or more are considered to be either unrepresentative of an authority properly pursuing sustainable transport goals or the authority is constrained by local factors which mean that they cannot expect high levels of cycling. For these reasons they have been ignored. The remaining 27 authorities are all in the range one space per 1 – 10 students with an average figure of 1 place per 6.55 students.

Cycle parking at halls of residence

Of the same forty authorities, 18 set standards for parking at halls of residence and these range from 1 per 1.5 beds (Cambridge) to 1 per 20. Again the one unrepresentative sample of 1 per 20 (all the others are in the range 1.5 – 10) has been ignored giving an average of 1 per 4.7 students. It is interesting that of those 17 authorities, just over half set standards requiring a level of 1 per 3 or less and the overall figure has been skewed by the three that set standards in the range 1 per 8 – 10.

These results lead to the conclusion that an authority that is pro-active about its support for cycling, and is seeking travel plans from educational establishments that positively discourage car use by students, will be setting standards that require spaces for at least 25% of the residents (more will be needed for staff if there are on-site facilities such as canteens plus cleaning staff etc).

The actual number sought for an individual site will depend on local circumstances including the distance from the university, the attractiveness of walking and the availability of alternatives such as subsidised public transport. Of course not all journeys will be from a hall of residence to the university and the needs of residents to make trips to the town centre and other attractions should also be taken into account.

Recommendations for the university subject of this enquiry

Based on all of the above (but not knowing in detail the circumstances that prevail regarding cycle use in this case) it would seem reasonable to ask for at least 1 covered and secure parking space for every 3 - 4 residents as a minimum (plus others for staff). This figure could be increased if it is considered that the town is a cycle-friendly environment or there are local factors that suggest it should be higher, for example if students who walk to the campus because it is close are likely to want to cycle to facilities which are not so near.

The above is an attempt at establishing a minimum level. It is, however, strongly recommended that that the travel plan for the hall of residence (it is assumed that this is a requirement of planning approval) should require monitoring and re-assessment of demand within six months to determine whether a higher level of parking provision is needed and that space be set aside and a binding commitment made to meet any potential need.

If no travel plan has been required and it is felt that students will wish to use their bikes for trips to other destinations, then it is recommended that a higher figure, say 1 per 2 students (plus others for staff), is sought and only negotiated downwards if a firm commitment can be reached to provide extra parking should the need arise.

Given that there are likely to be a substantial number of bikes parked in one place, the final recommendations are that the nature of the parking should be secure as possible, perhaps using smart card controlled entry (if that is the security means of access for the hall) and that it be covered from the rain and subject to overt CCTV surveillance if security staff are not present /patrolling 24 hours a day.

ⁱ Originally based on 40 sets of cycle parking standards assembled by Transport Initiatives as part of a commission for Bedfordshire County Council; subsequent work for Hertfordshire County Councils has increased this number to 46. An analysis of this additional data confirms that more than half of local authorities ask for 1 cycle parking space per 3 beds or less.