

Denbighshire County Council

Parking Policy

1.0 Introduction

The management of parking is a key issue for local authorities. Whether in terms of providing parking spaces in town centres and at visitor attractions, or managing parking in residential streets and around schools, it is important that parking is managed effectively and in a consistent manner.

There is often a fine balance to be struck between parking supply and demand. Whilst maximising the number of available spaces may often be desirable, this has to be balanced against other considerations such as road safety, visual amenity, traffic flow and enabling access for emergency vehicles and service vehicles.

2.0 Scope of influence

The management of parking will have an influence on the majority of our residents, businesses and visitors which is why our parking policy is so important. It will never be possible to meet everybody's needs because there is only a finite amount of road space available, often with competing demands for this space. A summary of the issues that parking management can influence is listed below.

2.1 The local economy

- Parking spaces for shoppers including provision for those with mobility impairments
- Parking spaces for workers including provision for those with mobility impairments
- Parking spaces at visitor attractions
- Loading bays for shops
- Keeping traffic flowing by reducing congestion, improving travel times and enabling access by large vehicles such as delivery lorries and buses
- Provision of taxi ranks
- Provision of bus stops to enable access for workers, shoppers and visitors
- Visual amenity in town centres and at visitor attractions

2.2 Residents

- On-street parking for residents, especially for those who do not have suitable off-street parking available
- Reducing instances of obstruction caused by inconsiderate parking e.g. due to blocked driveways or insufficient room for vehicles to manoeuvre

2.3 Pedestrians

- Reducing instances of obstruction of the footway causing pedestrians to walk into the road
- Keeping dropped kerb crossings clear
- Maintaining visibility at crossing points i.e. so pedestrians aren't crossing blindly between parked cars

2.4 People with mobility impairments

- Provision of disabled parking spaces
- Reducing instances of obstruction of the footway causing pedestrians to walk into the road.
- Keeping bus stops clear so that buses can stop next to the raised kerbs which assist those with mobility impairments to access buses.

2.5 Motorists generally

- Keeping traffic flowing and reducing congestion
- Maintaining visibility at road junctions and on bends where visibility is reduced

2.6 Schools

- Safe access to schools for pupils, parents and teachers
- Minimising of disruption to residents

2.7 Employees

- Safe access by a choice of transport modes
- Reduced congestion and reduced travel times
- Provision of parking spaces for employees (much of this parking is provided on private land by employers themselves).

3.0 Detailed Policy

3.1 Parking in residential areas

On-street parking in residential areas has advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is that the presence of parked cars will narrow the effective road width and thus provide a traffic calming effect, especially on wide, straight roads. The disadvantages are that parked vehicles can restrict access for emergency vehicles; can cause obstruction of the road, footway or driveways; and can reduce visibility at junctions and crossing points.

It should also be recognised that, whilst many residential properties afford off-street parking, there are also locations around the County where it is not possible to provide parking off the highway, such as where properties have insufficient room to accommodate a driveway.

Policy 1 – In residential urban areas the Council will encourage motorists to use off-street parking where it is available. The Council will only introduce parking restrictions in such locations where there are overriding considerations of safety, amenity or the need to retain or improve the capacity of a road.

Parking demand in residential areas will often be especially high in locations in or around town centres. This is because some workers and shoppers may choose to park in residential areas to avoid paying parking fees. This is especially the case for workers who may otherwise have to purchase a permit or pay all day parking fees. In such circumstances a residents' parking scheme may be appropriate as a method to stop such practices and restrict parking to residents and their visitors.

Policy 2 – The Council will introduce residents' parking schemes upon request where there is sufficient support from residents and where schemes are feasible.

3.2 School parking issues

Parking around schools is a regular source of complaint, usually from residents who live in the immediate vicinity. These problems tend to be most severe in urban areas where more children live nearby and are thus not entitled to free school transport and thus travel to school by car. In most locations, these problems tend to occur only at school opening and closing times. There are, however, some locations where there are all day parking problems, although these are typically less acute. These problems tend to occur where schools have insufficient on-site parking capacity for staff or those with sixth formers who drive to school.

There are some measures available to control parking around schools such as "school keep clear" markings which are generally well complied with. Other conventional measures such as double yellow lines can be less effective around schools owing to the relatively short duration of the problem, and because of typically lower levels of enforcement in such locations.

School parking problems are common across the UK which has led to much research into the subject. This research has shown that the most effective way to reduce parking problems is to encourage more children to walk or cycle to school, thereby reducing parking demand. There are also obvious side benefits to this approach, such as the increased physical activity due to walking and cycling.

Policy 3 – The Council will continue to promote Safe Routes in the Community schemes to try and reduce parking demand around our schools.

3.3 Pedestrian routes

Footway parking can cause particular problems for people with restricted vision who are unable to see obstacles in their path. It can also pose problems for wheelchair users or people pushing baby buggies or prams who may have to enter the road to pass an obstruction, with obvious implications for road safety. This practice also causes damage to footways leading to significant repair costs and potential pedestrians trips. Footway parking, therefore, should be discouraged or accommodated in such a fashion that pedestrian routes are not obstructed and footways not damaged.

Policy 4 – The Council will review instances of footway parking and will use enforcement, publicity or engineering measures, as appropriate, to ensure that pedestrian routes are not obstructed and damage to footways is minimised.

3.4 Parking in town and village centres

“Developing the local economy” and having “clean and tidy streets” are both corporate priorities for the Council. Town centre parking provision clearly has a key role to play in supporting these aims. Town centres generate parking demand from shoppers, tourists and workers and providing adequate parking will assist the County’s town centres to compete effectively with other retail and business centres outside Denbighshire.

In terms of safety, visual amenity and allowing ease of movement for pedestrians, it is usual to locate a large proportion of town centre parking in off-street car parks. This is not always possible, however, because of the costs of acquiring sites and then constructing car parks. It should also be noted that on-street parking can be vital for businesses that depend upon passing trade.

It is, therefore, necessary to provide a quantity of on-street parking. Such parking should be restricted to short stay, usually between 30 minutes and 2 hours maximum duration. This ensures a high turn over of vehicles and provides for parking at close proximity to shops for shoppers and, where necessary, for vehicles delivering to shops. The exact time limit that is set for a bay will depend upon the nature of adjacent businesses.

Policy 5 – The Council will provide short stay on-street car parking in town centres to complement off-street car parking provision, subject to considerations of road safety, capacity and visual amenity.

The Council manages a number of car parks in the County's town centres. In managing these facilities, it is preferable to designate car parks near the main shopping streets for short stay use in order to encourage shoppers to visit the retail centres. Long-stay (all day) parking will be catered for in the more peripherally located car parks.

Policy 6 – The Council will manage the car parks in its ownership to provide short stay parking close to main shopping streets and long stay car parks located further from town centres for commuters and other longer stay uses.

3.5 Parking for those with mobility impairments

The Blue Badge scheme enables people with disabilities to obtain a Blue Badge which allows a vehicle driven by a driver with a disability or by an able bodied driver conveying a disabled passenger to park almost anywhere on-street where there is no loading or unloading restriction. The scheme was set up to permit people particularly with restricted walking ability to park close to locations they wish to visit.

The Department for Transport (DfT) has published a document called "Inclusive Mobility" which provides guidelines on parking provision for people with mobility handicaps and it is proposed that these guidelines will be referred to when providing parking spaces. An example of this is in the provision of on-street parking spaces where provision will be made to provide dropped kerbs adjacent to new disabled bays wherever possible.

The DfT guidelines also recommended reserving a minimum number of spaces in car parks for Blue Badge holders and it is suggested that the Council adopt these recommendations for use in its own car parks and in discussions with the managers or developers or privately owned car parks.

Policy 7 – Priority will be given to catering for the parking needs of disabled people. In car parks owned and managed by the Council, reserved spaces will be designated for Blue Badge holders as follows:-

- (i) for car parks associated with employment premises and provided for employees and visitors:
5% of the capacity should be designated
- (ii) for car parks associated with shopping areas, leisure or recreational facilities, and places open to the general public:
A minimum of one space for each employee who is a disabled motorist, plus 6% of the total capacity for visiting disabled motorists.

3.6 Parking in the Countryside

The car gives access to the countryside but parking at beauty spots can cause damage to vegetation and verges, can contribute towards erosion and be visually intrusive. It may also create a road safety hazard if vehicles are parked in a location that limits visibility for others. The Council will work with tourist attractions and bodies responsible for promoting countryside recreation to provide small lay-bys and car parks in the countryside where appropriate. Promoting the use of public transport and cycling can also help to reduce parking demand in rural areas by encouraging visitors to leave their cars at home.

Policy 8 – The Council will promote the provision of lay-bys and car parks to cater for demands for recreational parking in rural areas.

3.7 Enforcement

Enforcement of parking on-street and in Council managed car parks is carried out by the Council's Civil Parking Enforcement Officers. The Council has carried out on-street enforcement since 2004 when parking enforcement was decriminalised. It was previously the responsibility of North Wales Police through the employment of a traffic warden.

The parking enforcement service is self-financing i.e. the revenue raised covers the costs of providing the service.

Enforcement is carried out on a rota basis to ensure a good geographical spread of enforcement, whilst also ensuring that the amount of enforcement carried out is proportionate to the level of parking pressures that exist. It is also important to ensure that the system allows the flexibility to target enforcement in response to specific issues when required. Examples of such issues are problems around schools, road safety issues or complaints about motorists parking all day in parking bays outside shops.

It also should be noted that the Traffic Management Act 2004 gives local authorities the power to carry out enforcement of parking across dropped kerbs even if no parking restrictions are in place, such as at uncontrolled pedestrian crossing points. Historically, few authorities have made use of this power. It is, therefore, proposed that the Council will explore the possibility of using its Civil Parking Enforcement Officers to enforce parking on dropped kerbs.

Policy 9 – The Council will carry out routine enforcement patrols to provide a good geographic spread whilst also ensuring that enforcement frequency is proportionate to parking demand, whilst retaining the flexibility to respond to requests for enforcement in a specific location. Enforcement will be carried out at non-standard times (e.g. evening) when specific needs are identified.

3.8 Charging for Car Parking

The Council currently charges for parking in the majority of off street car parks across the whole of Denbighshire. There are some car parks, however, where there are local agreements in place where the town or community Council subsidises the car park to provide free parking, or parking that is free for a given period of time.

Charging for car parking generates income which is reinvested into improving the highway network, such as for resurfacing roads and pavements. The use of pay and display machines also simplifies enforcement as it allows Civil Parking Enforcement Officers to quickly look at pay and display tickets displayed in car windows to determine whether they have paid for the correct period of time. Charging also helps to discourage commuters from using short stay parking spaces that are intended for shoppers and visitors.

The underlying concern regarding charging is the impact it has on shopping habits. The smaller town centres are dependent on competing effectively with larger centres both within and outside the County and with out-of-town centre superstores and retail parks where free car parking is readily available.

Pricing will be designed to encourage short-term parking close to the town centres and to provide cheaper parking on the outskirts for long-term parking, including commuter provision.

Policy 10 – The Council will continue to develop a charging regime for car parking which takes account the needs of its residents, businesses and visitors and is reviewed on an annual basis.