The Practical Problems Faced by the University of East London in Meeting the Parking Restraints within PPG13

Stephanie Sandland
Business School, University of East London, UK

Abstract

In increasing usage of its Docklands campus, the University of East London is subject to limits on Parking Provision, guidance for which is given in PPG13. Commuters balance opportunity costs when assessing their willingness to pay to commute. Staff display a range of views with respect to their reliance on the car often justifying their level of need in terms of the specifics of their home location. To facilitate a changing commuting regime, the university must consider alternative work arrangements including compressed working weeks or home working. The success of such policies depend primarily upon the nature of teaching staff duties but change must also be supported by a changing management culture and access to appropriate technology if change can be achieved that continues to provide a quality service for the students.

Keywords

Commuting; Parking Restraints; Public Transport Provision; Home Working; Managing Change.

PARKING POLICY AND PPG 13

Left to the individual, change is invariably slow and is overtly resisted if the proposal threatens to disturb familiar parameters of daily life. When imposed, change can be perceived to be threatening in that individuals have the right of choice taken away and with it, control of their actions. A core activity, influenced by both habit and available infrastructure, is the daily commute to work. The car provides the commuter with flexibility and security as well as, for many, psychological satisfaction in advertising status and wealth, (Marsh and Collet, 1986 cited in Welford, 1997) so much so that the Director of Transport 2000 likened people's attitude to their cars with drug dependency (Joseph, 1996 cited in Welford, 1997). However, growth in car use since the 1980s has caused it to become one of the major contributors to global warming and the government is taking steps to curtail its use, especially in areas of congestion where its polluting effects are magnified.

Congestion itself is indicative of a further environmental problem facing London and its suburbs; a shortage of land and competition for its use. Land used for roads and parking could be used for housing, industry or commerce. Thus controlling car use is of great environmental import especially in the London area, which has seen rapid growth that is expected to continue. Among the strategies adopted by government is that of controlling parking provision when approving new developments, allowing the resultant shortage to persuade the commuter to use alternative means. Guidance to comply with the Government's planning policy including that for Greater London is set out in PPG13.

THE SITUATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

The University of East London currently operates from four campuses, over a four mile radius in East London. It is consolidating many of its activities on its Docklands campus, which will eventually double in size to incorporate five schools, over 600 staff (Milroy, 2004) and 17,500 students on the one site (UEL, 2003). Apart from providing for disabled drivers and resident students, there is currently provision for 200 student parking spaces and sufficient for the 276 staff who were working at the site when the plans to merge campuses were initiated. As yet, the transport plan has not been drawn up but it is clear that when the transition is complete, able staff and non-resident students will be encouraged to commute by public transport. A significant focus of this research is to establish staff commuting practices, determine their attitude to change and establish whether the nature of the job will facilitate the necessary change without compromising standards

The willingness to change involves assessing the practical difficulties anticipated by staff in terms of the commute itself including the added demands created to facilitate home working such as the transport of bulky papers. Conversely attitudes with respect to moving closer to the campus or leaving the employment are investigated. Thus this paper seeks to explore a number of issues in order prove the hypothesis: "Complying with PPG13 and attitudes to change will create practical difficulties for the staff at the University of East London that will require careful management".

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE AND CAR USE

The level of emission from all forms of transport has risen by 3% from 1991's levels to 27% in 2001 (CPRE, 2004). Under the Kyoto agreement Britain is committed to cutting emissions of CO_2 so that by 2012 levels should be 8% less than those of 1990, (Select Committee, 2003) however these targets are still well above those believed to be required for sustainability. Europe has recognised that CO_2 emissions would have to be cut by 77% by the year 2050 if sustainable levels are to be achieved (Spangenberg et al, cited in Welford, 1997). Thus controls developed by the government could be viewed as the herald of much more stringent measures to come.

The Car and the Use of Resources

Pollution is not the only environmental problem caused by car use. An emerging problem, namely a shortage of finite resources, requires the same change of practice. This shortage involves two issues. Firstly, there is doubt regarding the quantity of oil reserves that remain viable to extract which, in Britain now accounts for 35% of fuel use (CPRE, 2004). The second, driving PPG13, is that of a shortage of land. Cars not only require road space, but also land for parking, which could alternatively be used for industry or housing (CPRE, 2000). In the South East of England, this competition for land is the greatest

COMMUTING CHOICES

The factors influencing commuting choices are complex. Historically, industrialisation spawned a move from rural to city dwelling but as transport became easier in the 1970's the flow reversed and relatively long distance commuting became a norm. It is only as congestion and environmental harm has become apparent that this trend has attracted attention (Renkow et al., 2000). The commuting experience in London and the suburbs is poor, with commuters tending to travel greater distances in more congested conditions than those in Europe (Reeves, 2002). Technically, people can choose to take work close to home, or at a distance from it. If working a distance from home they can relocate or commute (Renkow et al., 2000).

Financial Factors influencing the Willingness to Pay for Commuting

A number of methods are used to determine the willingness to pay for commuting. On a purely financial basis the factors to consider are housing & travel costs and wages. Considering the first two, house prices tend to increase in line with their proximity to urban developments whereas transport costs decrease. Thus, in a comparison of combined housing and transport in relation to the distance from a city, there is little difference (Echinique & Homewood, 2003). Another simple model would suggest the choice of commuting or working close to home depends upon the relative wage difference and the perceived cost of commuting (van Ommeren et al., 2000). Studies show that wages are lower outside cities (Kim et al., 2001). However in the university sector, there is a common pay scale throughout the country (Guardian, 2004) with compensation for the added expense of working in London provided through London Weighting (Utting, 2003). This has proved to be insufficient compensation and researchers have assessed a realistic figure for London Weighting to be £4,200 p.a. (Guardian, 2003). In the university sector it is currently less than £3,000 p.a.

Wage difference is not a true indicator of the marginal 'will to pay' for commuting (van Ommeren et al, 2000). The mere social interaction derived from the workplace itself is a significant motivating factor (Reeves, 2002). Non financial benefits also include flexibility of work hours, the environment within the workplace and factors that build self esteem. The promise of these might tempt a worker to add to their commuting time whereas non delivery is reflected in the staff turnover rate a company might experience rather than the wage rate itself. Additionally, an unemployed worker will need a much lower incentive to take on commuting than one seeking to change their place of employment (van Ommeren et al., 2000). Pertinent to flexibility of hours, the will to pay for commuting is also influenced by the ratio of time spent travelling in proportion to the time spent once at work (Schwanen, 2002).

Problems associated with a London Location

London is rated the world's second most expensive city in the world, the expense being largely accounted for by the cost of housing and transport (Mercer Consulting, 2004a). Mortgage brokers, who traditionally lend no more than three times the joint income of a household, provide an indicator of recognised acceptable housing costs. In many parts of London, the cost of housing is five times the average salary and thus out if reach of working couples (Utting, 2003). Key workers, including University staff, identified as

those dependent upon London Weighting for any wage differential are thus seen to be at a disadvantage with respect to finding housing within their means in many parts of the city, including areas at the lower end of the market (Utting, 2003).

In addressing housing, the Government is promoting 'affordable housing' schemes. These will be included in the development at Barking Reach, close to the Docklands Campus (English Partnerships, 2003). The intention is that it should consist of high density housing with all the amenities required to support the residents. The area is to be designed to be sustainable in that facilities for cars will be minimal (London Metropolitan University, 2003). The affordable housing initiative however is targeted at those seeking to gain a place in the housing market (Utting, 2003) and thus would not be available for more senior staff who are already well established in the suburbs.

Alternatives to using the Car

Technically, the choice to commute by car includes consideration of the availability of alternative methods of travel but critically, depends upon the perception of alternatives which can be far from accurate (Fujii et al., 2001). Opportunity costs with respect to the time involved and subjective issues including those of comfort, ease (van Ommeren et al., 2000) and reliability (van Vugt et al., 1996). The choice with respect to the mode used is also governed by habit and research has proved that changing transport patterns can prove difficult. A worker who commutes short distances would not expect to change their mode of transport when changing the distance travelled because it has become inextricably linked with the association with getting to work (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000).

Family Considerations

Finally, an individual must also consider the requirements of other members of their family (Renkow et al., 2000). This becomes more complex when children are involved being an incentive to live in more rural locations where the potential to purchase a larger house and enjoy a higher quality of life with respect to schooling, safety and ease of travel, are greater (Echinique & Homewood, 2003). Commuting however, especially in dual career families can add to the cost of childcare (Kim et al., 2001).

THE ROLE OF TRANSPORT PROVISION

Traditionally the government recognised that transport was an essential component of growth but their guidance produced jointly by DoE and DoT (1994) heralded a change of attitude, recognising that road provision itself stimulated growth that had not been previously envisaged. Thus it advised local planning authorities to integrate the use of land with that of transport provision. It considered this an area of critical importance because, although the annual development programme is not significant in size, its impact is both long lasting and cumulative.

London's Transport Infrastructure

London's transport system is a critical component required to facilitate this change. The Mayor has already made significant steps to encourage people on to public transport with

comprehensive web facilities to help plan journeys and better information systems about disrupted services (Booth, 2004). However, the Government's efforts to limit the use of the car have come under criticism from the Association of British Drivers. They claim that it has only delivered the mechanisms to make car use less attractive but have not matched these with the investment required in the public transport system to facilitate alternative modes of commuting (Gregory, 1999).

The Mayor's plans for London Transport entail lobbying government for finance estimated to amount to £1b p.a. (Booth, 2004). The CBI maintains funding for transport that will support the requirements of London in 2010 now stand at £100b for plans including the Cross rail main line and extensions to the Docklands Light Railway (Marston, 2004a). When it comes to such high cost transport investment, the Government has a history of discussing rather than delivering action (Binyon, 2004 & Hall, 2004). Thus although plans are in place to meet the growing demand, questions regarding funding threaten to delay the proposed improvements. Current investment in the underground system will not yield noticeable improvement in the next 5 – 15 years (Booth, 2004). In September 2001 the Docklands Light railway was considered to be running at full capacity yet the development of Canary Wharf was not complete and further development of public transport provision was called for (Hirst, 2001). It was not until 2004 that a proposal to extend the length of platforms to facilitate the use of longer trains was published (Keep, 2004). In the interim, Canary Wharf has continued to be developed and a growing number of commuters travelled in less than ideal conditions. In moving Schools to the Docklands Campus, the University will be increasing the demand on areas of the public transport system connected to those feeding Canary Wharf. London transport claims it has spare capacity, but this is during non peak periods (Booth, 2004).

Planning Criteria

Against this background, The Planning Guidance (PPG13) states that Planning decisions aim at reducing dependence on the car by providing alternatives, encouraging walking, the use of the bicycle or public transport (DoE/DTR, 1994). In choosing between developing its Barking or Docklands campus, regardless of other considerations, the Docklands campus fulfils the planning guidelines more closely than the one at Barking in that it is served by the Docklands Light Railway, with Cyprus station on its perimeter (UEL, 2004). Whilst the Barking campus is close to a number of facilities, it is not served as well by public transport, requiring a bus journey from Barking station or a 20 minute walk from the nearest mainline stations encouraging a high degree of commuting by private car.

The Control of Car Park Provision in PPG13

The Government has noted that a shortage of parking is an effective method of controlling car use, not disproportionately penalising the less well off. It has therefore written into the guidelines that there should be fewer spaces than there are workers, especially when there is good access to alternative means of transport (DoE/DTR, 1994). Their guidance notes (PPG13) states maximum parking allowances for education establishments should be one space for two members of staff or fifteen students. However, these figures relate to all of England and they state that establishments in the South East should seek to fall well below the figures (Bennett Urban Planning, 2001).

Thus the ability of London's public transport system to cope with the demand is a critical requirement for the University to be able to function at its Docklands campus as smoothly as it currently does at Barking.

Local authorities consider transport plans along with any proposed development (DoE/DTR, 1994) Planning approval decisions made by the Mayor of London show a consistent focus on transport. This includes that made by the University of East London for its buildings to accommodate the School of Architecture at the Docklands site (Application P/02/1223). Each application articulates consideration that ensures public transport can be utilised and added car use minimised (Livingstone, 2001) evidencing an overt monitoring of the creation of car parks.

The principal difficulty for commuters when faced with possibility of having their commuting habits disrupted stem from their initial choice with respect to their place of residence which did not accommodate this eventuality. In its advice to businesses, the Government suggests a number of measures that could be taken to help their staff accommodate the change. It is suggested that Businesses consider car sharing schemes or financial support in the form of subsidies or loans to finance season tickets.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND HOME WORKING

In promoting less travel, the guidance suggests promoting video conferencing, supporting home working, and encouraging home-working by instigating 'hot-desking', operating flexi-time or compressed weeks. This also facilitates the management of time in a manner that enables staff to remain at home, either through home working or by compressing the working week or fortnight to reduce it by one day. Achieving one fewer trip to work a week would reduce commuting costs by 20%. Car sharing can reduce car use by at least 50% (DoT).

In many sectors, information technologies are making the option of home working feasible. Predicted in the 1970's and 1980's the practice has only taken hold recently, since the advent of the internet and e-mail to aid communication (Reeves, 2002). It is estimated that in 2000, use of e-conferencing in North American industry resulted in a transport saving that would have created of 540,000 tonnes CO_2. It is recognised however that commuters released from their journey to work might use the car for other activities and thus reduce the benefit gained (Tuppen undated). A recent survey revealed that whilst only 2.5% of UK's working population, state their main place of work is their home, a further 25% work one day a week or less at home. 69.3% of the first group fulfil the general profile of the traditional home-worker. The Current trends show the employed sector rather than the self employed, being the fastest growing group of home-worker (Felstead, 2004), indicating a greater level of acceptance and trust of the practice. Preferred activities include reading and preparing presentations, with more managers than administrative staff adopting the practice. It is also becoming evident that home-workers are more productive (Reeves, 2002.)

The advantages of home-working

Apart from the saving of travel costs, the obvious advantages include flexibility of the hours 'at work', thus being able to integrate family and work obligations, and the higher

productivity could be accounted for by the lack of interruption (Reeves, 2002). Whilst home-workers can integrate their work with family life, it can prove difficult to find the necessary space within the home, especially with young children in the household. There is a preference for work to be carried out in a designated office rather than have it encroach into their private living space. However, this requires a spare room, which might prove beyond the means of many (Lacey, 2003).

The Upper Management Perspective

The University of East London needed to assess its use of resources. The Barking Campus is old, entailing high maintenance costs and in comparison with similar universities, the rooms were under-utilised. Thus, uneconomic use was being made of the land. In order to run efficiently it was considered expedient to develop the Docklands campus with new purpose built facilities and a 30% reduction of capacity to achieve closer to the norm of 75% room utilisation. There is a current preference to timetable classes in a manner that facilitates a long weekend and a short working day, a practice that must cease when the move is complete. This choice was not just for the convenience of staff, students prefer to buy a cheap day return and thus attendance at 9 o'clock lectures is notoriously poor.

The Vice Chancellor confirmed that there will be increased pressure on parking spaces and acknowledge that while it was not mandatory, the University would undoubtedly have to take the guidance into account (Thorne, 2004). However, while PPG13 would limit parking provision, it could not be used to reduce current provision The Pro Vice Chancellor (Estates), confirmed that in developing the transport plan, efforts would include encouraging condensed working days and home working.

Establishing Individual staff teaching time-tables

The current system of creating individual staff timetables is manual, and highly involved, the overriding need being to co-ordinate activities within different schools for combined honours students. Thus a central structure was established that allowed individual course tutors certain freedom in the exact timing of classes, allowing them to choose times that staff and students alike prefer. The system relies upon significant over provision of rooms which will not be enjoyed on the new campus, thus when the university finalises the process of consolidation it will move to an automated one, programmed with relevant data including constraints negotiated by individual members of staff. It will produce a timetable together with staff and room allocations. The system, currently used by other comparable universities, allows a degree of flexibility in enabling staff to limit their need to travel into campus but critically, requires extending both the working day and week. Not all staff will be able to enjoy their preferred working hours.

The need to be on Campus

Ninty nine percent of the academics surveyed currently undertake home-working, but few of the other roles were permitted to. This activity was investigated in order to determine the impact of permitted home working on the quality of service delivered. A six week period of non teaching time, focusing on the experience of one member of teaching staff, was observed in order to determine a framework to assess the necessity of being on

campus. Analysis informed a more detailed questionnaire and was the basis of determining the underlying issues.

During the period under observation, 107 activities were recorded of which 15% could have been conducted as efficiently from off campus. A notable outcome observed was that 25% of the activities arose because of absent staff, 2/3 of which were classified as collegial, undertaking their work or supporting those who felt isolated in the near empty campus and 1/3 benefiting students. On three days the description indicated it involved a steady stream and as such the '1/3' under represent the fact. It is generally recognised that students required a high level of tutor support during their first weeks. Twenty five percent of the questionnaire responses relating to the difficulties that arise when colleagues work from home referred to this issue while 35% respondents found distance from their students a difficulty when home-working. Technically, these students should have sought the support they were seeking from their personal tutor. There is no expectation for staff to be on campus outside teaching weeks on the off-chance that one of their students should seek support. However, students required immediate answers and it would not have served their interests or those of the university to redirect them to their personal tutors, who might be taking annual leave and thus unable to provide an immediate response. It should be noted that the majority of the students seen had been encouraged to use electronic means for at least a year but still prefer to make special trips to see tutors. Their perception of the quality of support will be diminished if staff are not available for face to face contact. Discussion with a number of staff reveals a common opinion that first year students have not developed sufficient skill to learn through distance teaching methods, although they appear to become more capable as they progress through their studies.

The principal requisite for a physical presence on campus for the remaining activities related to course management, ranging from meetings and classes to informal requests for help and brainstorming to assist module development. Classes naturally dominate a significant period of time during the teaching weeks. Blended learning schemes could be considered, especially for the higher level student. Formal meetings are dictated by management who are seeking to reduce their number. The latter activities expose the limitations of electronic communication, which can be perceived as a barrier to the more casual or delicate problem. The activities also involved the need to transfer materials, including scripts for marking, reports and materials that needed printing. Electronic submission of coursework would lessen but not eliminate script transfer, and e-technology could be developed to enable material transfer to the print shop, but reports include hard copies of teaching materials and must be delivered in person. Tougher to resolve is the need to share common materials when working on module development, which would require duplication of materials or the facilities of broadband and lengthy telephone calls to facilitate.

The efficacy of working from a distance also required a sophisticated culture. Nearly 20% of the activities included the need for a prompt response in order to meet university-wide deadlines or facilitate smooth progression of work. Whilst much can be achieved using e-mail, a culture of responding to messages promptly must be developed or advertising home working contact numbers potentially through the use of a dedicated mobile number to ensure efficient progress. The degree of this problem is evident in that

40% of those explaining the problems relating to absent colleagues referred to a reluctance to contact them in their homes.

Activities carried out were largely class preparation, research and marking but the staff do not consider it an ideal solution. 25% of the respondents found work encroached upon home life, in terms of both time and mess. The problems of damage by children or competition for use of the computer were typical. Eight percent were aware of the added costs of phone calls whilst the remainder found the technology slow, web access difficult and their university home-site unavailable, or materials left at work. Of those who do not work at home, one would not do so on principle, and the others did not have the facilities.

STAFF PRACTICES AND PERCEPTION OF CHANGE

Against the framework of management decisions and the demands of their role staff tailor their activities in a manner that balances their particular set of opportunity costs including deriving perks that compensate for commuting difficulties. Thus attitudes with respect to commuting choices and converting to public transport were sought through questionnaire.

Home Location and Travel Costs

Analysis of the 150 responses was carried out in terms of the time rather than distance of the commute thus incorporating the benefit gained by working non standard hours and avoiding rush hour conditions.145 respondents indicated the time of their homeward journey, the average taking 50 minutes. 71% travel by car, with an average journey time of 42 minutes whilst the average for those using public transport is 76 minutes. The distribution of time travelled by public transport displays some of the characteristics of a normal distribution. A large proportion of those using independent means, car, motor bike or bicycle, however, have a shorter than average travel time, taking between 16 - 45 minutes while a relatively small number take nearly three times that length of time. Those using independent means, travel for a shorter period of time than those using public transport. When assessing the average times against age and gender there appears to be a clear trend of men being prepared to take between 1/4 and 1/3 longer than the women, and the time of commute increasing with age.

The profiles of the respondents according to the roles undertaken within the university reveal that 3/5 of the youngest women comprising over one third of the administrators. The majority of the remaining female age groups are divided between academic and administrative roles, with the remainder in support and management. Seven percent of the men in the middle age bracket work in administration, roughly 2/3 are engaged in academic work and the remainder in Support Services where they comprise 2/3 of the respondents from that sector. Younger staff tended to be in administrative and support roles whereas the older age groups fulfilled more of the academic roles. In assessing the mode of transport according to role, it is notable that nearly half of the support staff and hardly any administrative staff use public transport.

The Quality of the Mode of Transport

69 respondents indicated the impact caused by rush hour on the time of their journey. This included 62% of the car users who on average experienced a 26 minute delay and

24% of the public transport users who averaged a 13 minute delay. The latter group however included journeys that were 10 - 15 minutes faster in rush hour. Of those using public transport, 37% reported potential delays averaging 28 minutes caused by missed connections. With respect to delays, the spread of reporting is similar to that of all usage suggesting that all modes and distances are equally vulnerable.

Respondents were asked to indicate their opinion using a Likert scale with respect to quality of their journey and in particular, its reliability, stressfulness, enjoyability and safety and the opinions assessed according to gender. A score of 1 indicated that each aspect had been considered very good and a score of 5, very poor. The cyclists were the most satisfied where, apart from one female respondent giving 'safety' a score of 2, a score of 1 was given for the remainder of the classifications. The motor bike riders were the least satisfied, providing a score of 12, however a score of 1 the 'reliability', might be an indication of why the mode is chosen. The car users scored each category more favourably than the public transport users, the difference being more marked for the females, especially in the areas of stressfulness, enjoyability and safety. 25 respondents provided more information with respect to the motivation behind choices the travel choices made. The reasons ranged from service provision to cost. One person wanted to cycle but needed secure locking facilities and the ability to shower and change.

Respondents were asked to identify the materials they transported to work. Eighty three members of support staff and management and academics reported carrying materials. By far the most common were paperwork and books which although are generally portable can be heavy. Student's work can involve portfolios and projects making them both bulky and of value in that they can be difficult to replace especially if the student has not considered copying evidence of primary research such as questionnaire responses. Other valuable equipment commonly transported includes lap top computers and printers, cameras and videos, as well as display equipment which is also far too bulky to consider transporting by public transport.

Public Transport Facilities

126 respondents described the route they would have to take to get to the Docklands campus using public transport. It is served by Cyprus station, on a branch of the Docklands Light Railway that only connects to one mainline station, Limehouse, on the C2C line, from Southend to Fenchurch Street. Thus few people using public transport can achieve the journey without changes. The local bus provision is better, but also requires the user to live very close to the campus.

The Perceived Change Time Costs

137 respondents provided both the current time to travel home and an estimate of the time it will take by public transport. The average time for a single journey rose from 50 to 88 minutes, but for current car users is predicted to double from 43 minutes to 95 minutes whereas that for the existing public transport users is predicted to fall from 79 to 75 minutes. Thus the average increase in the length of time away from the home for staff who work five days a week and convert from travelling by car to public transport is predicted to rise by over 8 hours a week, a cost that was overtly resented. This reflects both a change from car to public transport, and the change of campus, but the additional time is disproportionate to an increase of just 4 miles. It was however noted that there

appeared to be a strong tendency to round the travel time by public transport to the nearest hour or half-hour which in itself might be an indication of the negative view of non public transport users. The group predicting the greatest change involves those who currently enjoy the shortest journeys, with significantly fewer people managing to get to work in less than 30 minutes. Whilst the average time difference at the upper end is negligible, it does mask individual instances of significant increased journeys.

In the light of a possible negative bias suggested by Fujii et al (2001), the findings were confirmed through the use of journey planners for Network Rail, TFL Journey Planner and the A.A. A sample of locations was used and the difference in time and cost determined. In terms of time, those within a 15 mile radius and currently travelling for an average of 15 minutes suffer an average increase of 30 minutes, although from Romford, the increase in time was negligible. This spread is notable because it involves those who have actively made the choice of living close to their place of work. Subsequent analysis of the figures suggests that it would be the younger female and thus a high proportion of the administrative staff who are most likely to be the worst affected by this change. In contrast, over half of the current public transport users will enjoy time savings, the average time decreasing by four minutes. Locations further than 30 miles from the university were less sensitive to the time, but bore a higher increased cost. In terms of time however, it should be noted that no provision was made to include the time required to get to mainline stations which, especially in the more rural locations adds considerable time. Thus it was considered that the estimates provided by the staff were reliable.

Staff Opinion With respect to changing to Public Transport

Respondents were asked to express their opinions about commuting by public transport using the same Likert scale as that for their current transport. The differences between the two sets of answers are revealing. The male cyclists, who expect to continue to cycle, show no difference but the female respondents consider the route to be less satisfactory in all respects apart from safety which they considered to be improved. The female car users register a slightly greater change than the males, both groups considering that reliability will be compromised the most. Apart from the cyclists, the motor cyclists, who were least satisfied with their current mode of travel, register the smallest perceived change when compared with those travelling by independent means. Those using public transport barely registered a change, the female respondents considering the journey to be better than the one to Barking. The findings of Fujii et al (2001) should temper conclusions with respect to the reliability of the opinions of all but the current public transport users. Lack of familiarity is sufficient cause for respondents to predict an outcome that is worse than the fact, however, the similarity of responses from the relevant groups and confirmation of findings discussed above reflect a degree of accuracy.

Respondents were asked to indicate if they believed that they experience special circumstances excluding disability would enable them to claim a parking space. Seventy five percent of the car users would make a claim. This figure comprises 53% of the total respondents indicating the difficulty that will be experienced in seeking to satisfy staff within the government's planning restrictions. The spread of those claiming the right shows a higher concentration both close to the university and taking above 1 3/4 hours to drive. Thus 89% of those within 15 minutes of the campus compares with 63% at one hour and 45% at 1 1/2 hour. The decline halts at this point with 75% of the long distance

commuters claiming a right. Justification includes a lack of provision, the nature of the job, the need to integrate child-care arrangements and safety with respect to evening classes. Subsequent comment revealed those who did not feel they had a right for a claim were far from satisfied and some would consider leaving the university. There was a high level of resentment at the added costs that would be entailed, it being viewed as an erosion of perks.

When asked to rate safety at night as a separate issue on a scale of 1 - 5 with 5 representing a totally safe route, the average score was 2, with only the men between 20 and 35 rating it 3. 1/5 of the staff went on to place a limit on the time they would be prepared to travel precluding the ability to teach or support evening classes until 9.00.

The option of relocation

Staff generally displayed a reluctance to move closer to Docklands. Only 10% considered that they lived sufficiently close, but their comments revealed a realisation that distance was not the issue. They had to live in the right place if they were to get to the campus without difficulty, and were not prepared to make the slight alteration to their place of residence. A third of the respondents cited cost as the reason for not moving and marginally fewer felt that they and their families were too settled, 21% referring to schools or their partner's workplace. Twenty five percent of the respondents described the locality as being unpleasant or unsafe for a residence while 17% have no intention to move, preferring to commute rather than live within London. Five percent of the staff stated they would rather leave than move, some clearly stating that using public transport would cause the fringe benefits of working at the University to be eroded.

Managing Parking Spaces

It is thus clear that staff are not prepared to move in order to avoid using the car, and 53% consider they have good cause to continue driving to the university. This figure is outside the national average allowed under PPG13 and which is more lenient than that expected for the location. Thus the liberty to park must be managed. The greatest apparent difficulty is suffered by those closest to the university and half of those affected are administrative staff who work regular hours. Providing this group with a right to park, or allowing the car parks to be used on a first come first served basis, will be detrimental to those concerned about safety, who arrive later at the campus to teach on the evening classes. However the characteristics of this group offer the potential for car share or some form of park and ride, a facility requested by some of the respondents. Rationing car parking spaces through charging and Park and Ride facilities would undermine the principles within PPG 13of not penalising the poorer worker and reducing road use respectively.

THE PERCEIVED PROBLEMS RAISED BY RESTRICTING PARKING

The pressure on parking imposed by PPG13 will cause some staff to change their mode of travel. The reduced room capacity and associated requirement to work a 9-5 day poses two potential problems. Firstly, student attendance and thus student success and published ranking could potentially suffer and secondly more staff will be required to

travel on public transport during the rush hour, when London Transport stated their spare capacity was during off peak hours (Booth, 2004). Management of the university should be aware of the strong feelings held by many staff, who consider they are paying a high price to keep their jobs and satisfaction is being eroded. Whilst some respondents articulate that they are unaware of the full implications of the change, the majority of those living closest to the university, who tend to be the younger women in administrative roles, are hit the hardest. For this group who are required to work a standard 9 - 5 day, efforts to facilitate car sharing or a minibus service would prove the most fruitful.

Conversely the new time-tabling system raises the scope to provide staff with a full day of teaching, compensating for the time spent commuting (Schwanen, 2002) and assisting in clumping teaching hours that will facilitate home-working. This however is an activity that must be carefully managed both at an institutional and personal level to ensure that it does not impede the smooth running of the University or place undue pressure on those who remain on campus. Of critical importance, staff should attend to communication. Firstly, their availability including notification of absence and contact details should be published to both students and their colleagues and secondly, e-mails require prompt responses. Thirdly, efforts should be made to help students learn to trust e-mail communication, partly achieved through the prompt responses. This approach could assist in training students to cope with blended learning at the higher levels of study. Timetables and assessment should be planned in a manner that enables forward planning of the activities required to meet deadlines. Finally, technology must be improved to minimise material transfer and allow lecturers to access their home sites and student databases from off campus, whilst maintaining the integrity of the system. Staff concern about safety however restricts the length of day some would be prepared to work precluding the possibility of structuring a compressed working week and potentially making staffing evening classes a problem.

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