

A Guide to Life Care Planning for Car Park Owners and Operators



Structural safety and integrity in car parks is paramount. Too many owners and operators do not have a life-care plan for their car parks and many do not even know what the term means or that it can apply to simple [retaining] structures in surface level car parks as well as large multi-story buildings.

This simple guide and checklist, prepared by the British Parking Association (BPA) Parking Structures Interest Group is intended to make it easier for everyone to get involved in proper and appropriate life-care planning.

Every car park owner/operator has a legal duty to maintain the parking facility in such a manner that it does not endanger the people using it. There are no exceptions! Whilst responsible owners and operators already do this, the reputation of our industry is only as good as the next catastrophic failure and the BPA Parking Structures Interest Group is at the forefront of promoting best practice and minimising the risk of another car park collapse in the UK.

The main purpose of a life-care plan is to identify the structural condition, the current level of safety, and how to maintain the car park throughout its service life. These requirements are defined in detail in the Institution of Civil Engineers', *Recommendations for the inspection, maintenance and management of car park structures*.

Remember, unchecked levels of safety can result in unexpected collapse or closure which, in the event of litigation, can be expensive and damaging to the owner/ operator's reputation and business!

In order to achieve and maintain Safer Parking Scheme Park Mark® status it is important to also consider the issue of structural safety of the parking structure and this can be achieved by having and implementing a life-care plan. It does not have to be an extensive document and its complexity will depend largely upon the age and condition of the car park.

Components of a life-care plan

1	Description of car park with age, photographs, as-built information, etc.
2	Record of previous investigations, repairs, accidental damage, winter maintenance, etc.
3	Records of daily surveillance and routine inspections
4	Condition survey and material testing
5	Structural appraisal* to assess the car park for increased loading from heavy electric vehicles
6	Priced repair/ maintenance options
7	Recommendations for future action
8	Records of works undertaken and costs involved

*Structural appraisals should only be undertaken by a Chartered Structural Engineer.

All structured car parks including new ones, should have a life-care plan which should be prepared by a competent and suitably experienced person. The name of their business or employer should be identified in the plan. A good life-care plan for the structure, its cladding and safety barriers, should be developed over the life of the structure in stages as shown in the components box (below left):

The various components are risk assessed for the minimum requirements for compliance with the Institution of Civil Engineers requirements. It is no longer a fixed interval assessment, but as a guide:

Age of Car Park or Structure	Requirement
Less than three years old	Components table 1 to 3 and 8
Between three and eight years old -	Components table 1 to 4 and 8
More than eight years old	All components table (1 to 8)

As part of the assessment there should be sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the owner/ operator has adequate knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the life-care plan and has provided sufficient resources to ensure that its recommendations are being properly implemented and monitored.

NOTE – Large battery powered executive cars and large SUVs have increased in weight dramatically and any assessment should take this into account to ensure that the car park is safe for these vehicles.

With the aid of this simple guide it should be possible for all owners/ operators to provide basic life-care plans for all car park structures. This will not only support the BPA in its mission to raise standards but also provide longer lasting and safer parking facilities.

The Safer Parking Scheme

For more information visit www.britishparking.co.uk or email saferparking@britishparking.co.uk