

Cllr Huw Thomas
Leader of Cardiff Council
Leaders Office
Room 525
County Hall, Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff, CF10 4UW

11th September 2025

Dear Cllr Thomas,

Carspreading in Cardiff

Cars are getting bigger - about 1cm wider every two years. The thing is, our streets aren't. More than half of new cars in the UK are too wide for urban parking spaces, leaving our cities crowded and congested.

This phenomenon of 'Carspreading' is exemplified by the surge in sports utility vehicles (SUVs). Over the past two decades, household SUV ownership in major urban areas like Cardiff has grown at an unprecedented rate from just 3% to 29%.

SUVs are not only larger and more polluting, but also more dangerous. Their greater size, weight, and raised bonnets make them far more hazardous to pedestrians and cyclists, particularly children. A child under 10 is three times more likely to be killed if struck by an SUV compared to a standard car.

Allowing unchecked growth of these vehicles in our city, especially the larger models, can only undermine the Welsh Government and Cardiff Council's efforts to reduce road deaths and serious injuries through the introduction of the groundbreaking default 20mph speed limit.

Your proposed City Parking Management Plan presents a unique opportunity to tackle Carspreading, which will be essential to achieve the critical aim to reduce congestion and free up road space for those who need it most.

Drivers of large SUVs in Paris already pay more to park in the city centre. This was not only shown to be an effective deterrent but it was popular with the public too. In the UK, polling has shown that a majority of car owners think SUVs take up too much space (61% agree vs 19% disagree) and they are not necessary in towns and cities (59% agree vs 20% disagree).

We urge you to follow Paris by introducing fairer parking charges in the city that are based on the weight or size of the car. This is an opportunity to lead the way in the UK and deliver a more equitable transport policy that reduces harmful emissions, creates more public space and supports the health and wellbeing of residents.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Lord, Head of UK and Strategy - Clean Cities Campaign

Chris Roberts, Chair - Cardiff Cycle City

Hannah Garcia, Director - Green Squirrel

Ruth Billingham, Head of Campaigns and Public Affairs - Living Streets Cymru

Rhian Nowell-Philips, Welsh Roads and Climate Campaigner - Transport Action Network

Joseph Carter, Chair - Healthy Air Cymru