

## TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

### Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) Advice Note 4 – Case study material on re-development of car parks

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A workplace parking levy (WPL) is a licensing scheme for active workplace parking places. It charges employers and education providers for the number of places they provide that are occupied by employees, students or other relevant persons. London boroughs can implement WPLs locally subject to approval by the Mayor of London. This note focuses on the spatial planning aspects of car park provision and redevelopment to demonstrate that parking restraint, redevelopment of existing parking and WPLs can be mutually supportive. Existing development trends and planning policies that favour the redevelopment of surplus car parking spaces are likely to be reinforced by the introduction of a WPL. Please note that the examples are given for illustration purposes and their inclusion does not indicate any support from the Mayor, TfL or the local planning authority.

#### Background to parking restraint policy

The first maximum parking standards for offices and shops were set in the Greater London Development Plan (1976) and expressed as 'normal maximum provision for parking to be allowed in certain areas' with different standards for the Central Area, the Inner Ring, more important suburban centres and remainder of outer London. Parking guidance prepared by the London Planning Advisory Committee was published by Government Office for London in 1996 and the first London Plan (2001) specified maximum London-wide parking standards for a wide range of uses including offices, shops and housing to be translated into Local Plans. The most recent Publication version of the London Plan (December 2020) strongly encourages car free development and sets maximum standards at levels that will be needed in order to achieve the Mayor's targets for traffic reduction and increased sustainable mode share.

#### Redevelopment and repurposing of car parks

In the last decade there has been increased interest and development activity in the repurposing or redevelopment of car parks. This reflects a number of factors:

- Long-term declines in car use to the Central Activities Zone including the West End and City of London
- Surplus or obsolete parking in town centres
- An uplift in value that can be realised through development
- The inclusion of car park sites as part of comprehensive redevelopments
- Changing retail trends that are stimulating redevelopment of retail parks and supermarket car parks



- The emergence of businesses seeking to promote redevelopment or alternative uses for car parks
- TfL's programme to use its landholdings including station car parks to provide new housing
- Planning policies that encourage redevelopment of underused car parks and improved public realm through a reduction in the dominance of vehicles whether stationary or moving

## Planning policies

The planning policy framework is supportive of redeveloping car parks at all levels including national, regional, local and neighbourhood.

**National** - The National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 118 d) encourages the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, **car parks**, lock-ups and railway infrastructure).

**Regional** – The Publication version of the London Plan encourages redevelopment of low-density retail sites and surface car parks particularly sites in or on the edge of town centres to boost housing supply. Policy SD7 sets out the principles for town centres. It states that sites suitable for mixed-use residential intensification should be identified in development plans with the first example being the comprehensive redevelopment of low-density supermarket sites, surface car parks, and edge of centre retail/leisure parks. This is further emphasised in Policy H1 which encourages mixed-use redevelopment of car parks and low-density retail parks and supermarkets to increase housing supply.

**Local** - A number of Local Plans include policies encouraging car park redevelopment. A typical example of a Local Plan policy for an inner London borough is in the Hackney Local Plan (LP 45) which states simply that: 'Proposals for the redevelopment of existing car parks for alternative uses will be supported'. A more specific example in outer London is Policy SP 8.16 in the Croydon Local Plan which states that: 'The Council and its partners will seek to limit parking spaces in the borough and aim to reduce the overall amount of surplus car parking spaces in the Croydon Opportunity Area in accordance with the Croydon Opportunity Area Planning Framework parking strategy'.

**Site Allocations** - Most Local Plan site allocations documents include a number of car park sites that have been proposed for housing or mixed-use development. For instance, thirteen sites in Waltham Forest's draft site allocations document are existing car parks, retail parks or stores with adjacent car parks that are proposed for residential development. A number of proposed housing sites currently contain substantial areas of car parking alongside commercial or community uses.

**Neighbourhood** - At the very local level in the Soho Neighbourhood Plan public car parks at Brewer Street and Poland Street are identified as being increasingly under-used and suitable for redevelopment as micro consolidation centres to allow onward transfer of parcels and local deliveries.

## Office redevelopments with reduced car parking

The indicative list of transport schemes in table 10.1 of the London Plan includes WPLs as part of Borough-led traffic reduction strategies. The planned introduction of a WPL may reinforce existing



development trends and planning policies and act as a further stimulus to reduce surplus car parking at workplaces.

Data collected by Nottingham City Council indicates that the stock of workplace parking spaces in the city, liable for the levy, was reduced by 18 per cent between 2010 and 2013 after 12 months of operation.

In a 2018 blog by the Centre for Cities to accompany a report investigating the potential of different methods of funding and financing growth in cities, it was pointed out that: 'Unlike the congestion charge, the workplace parking levy has a bonus effect of making more land available for other uses. Some employers will reduce the amount of car parking spaces they have, to reduce their total cost, in the short term creating empty space. In the long-term however, this frees up valuable city centre land for other uses, such as green space or new residential and commercial buildings.' They cite the example of the University of Nottingham which has expanded onto land that was previously used for university car parking before the levy was introduced.

<https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/workplace-parking-levy-answer-cities-transport-congestion-problems/>

Policy T6.2 in the London Plan requires new office development (including redevelopment of existing sites) in the Central Activities Zone and inner London to be car free while maximum parking standards apply in outer London. However, there is a legacy of past office developments that have included substantial areas of car parking which may have become surplus to requirements. A levy could incentivise the redevelopment of outdated office sites to remove redundant car parking and increase the amount of employment floorspace or to introduce a mix of uses.

### **Examples of office redevelopments that have reduced parking**

1-4 Francis Grove in Wimbledon was granted planning permission in October 2020. The proposal was for a car free office development comprising a new 9,024 sq. m building which provides an increase of 6,367 sq. m. in floorspace compared to the existing building. Twenty-three car parking spaces in the basement of the existing building will not be replaced.

Exchange Plaza on Uxbridge Road gained planning permission in 2017 for an increase in office floorspace of 16,618 sq. m. while reducing parking from an existing 60 spaces to just 48. Similarly, a proposed increase in office floorspace of 6,305 sq. m. for a site on Hammersmith Road was supported by a reduction in car parking from an existing 121 spaces to 94. On both sites this had the effect of substantially reducing the ratio of car parking to office floorspace.

A revised proposal for 124,734 sq. m. of office space at Bank Street on the Isle of Dogs granted planning permission in 2017 resulted in a reduction in car parking from 107 spaces in the previous consent to just 25 spaces.

More applications like these could be stimulated by the potential introduction of local workplace parking levies, reinforced by a need to meet more restrictive car parking standards.



## Strategic planning applications referred to the Mayor

As well as office redevelopments, a review of larger strategic planning applications that have been referred to the Mayor in the last five years reveals that there are a wide variety of proposals for sites containing existing car parks to be redeveloped for alternative uses with substantially reduced or zero car parking. These include:

- Public and private car parks in high value locations to be replaced by new or adapted structures providing niche offices and retail space, high end residential and hotels (Examples: Moxon Street (mixed use) and Welbeck Street (hotel) in Westminster)
- Town centre mixed use redevelopments involving closure of existing public car parks (Examples include Hounslow High Street Quarter and Westmoreland car park, Bromley)
- Residential led mixed-use redevelopments of retail space and their car parks, re-providing a smaller amount of retail space with reduced parking (Examples include Morrisons car park Honeypot Lane, Brent and Tesco Kennington Lane, Lambeth)
- Residential led mixed-use redevelopments of surplus retail car parking spaces adjacent to supermarkets (Examples include Morrisons car park, Honeypot Lane, Brent and Tesco car park, Conington Road, Lewisham)
- Relocation and rationalisation of local authority owned office space with reduced levels of parking (Examples include Hounslow civic centre and Harrow civic centre)

These are just some examples of larger strategic applications referred to the Mayor but an examination of applications below the threshold for referral would reveal a high level of development activity involving a reduction in parking or an intensification of use with no increase in parking. A number of surplus or obsolete car parks are also being adapted for a variety of innovative uses including hosting events, leisure and workspace involving minimal structural alteration. Examples include Peckham Levels, Brewer Street in Soho and the upper levels of Stratford Centre multi-storey car park.

## Recent trends

There has been an increase in the number of strategic applications referred to the Mayor for low density retail sites with large areas of surface parking where the potential land value can be maximised through redevelopment. This is being driven by partnerships between major retailers and residential developers as well as owners of retail parks. Some are vacant sites where the retail use is no longer viable, while others involve the replacement of large stores with more efficient use of retail space including 'Metro' or 'Local' food stores. These changes reflect retail behaviour which is shifting from occasional trips to big box retail to more regular shopping trips to smaller, neighbourhood stores, as well as a general decline in retail trips by car.



## Progress in implementation

Despite the large number of planning applications there has been slow progress in implementation. Many of the retail redevelopments are complex because there may be a requirement for the store to continue trading in a temporary form during redevelopment. Similarly, relocation of offices may require planning to be secured for the redevelopment of an existing site as well as the new site.

Some ambitious town centre projects have also been delayed or altered in scope. Projects with development partners and funding already in place are at an advantage but there is no guarantee that complex planning permissions involving multiple sites, owners or planned end uses will be fully implemented. The redevelopment of underused or surplus car parks on standalone sites is often less challenging and may proceed more rapidly.

### Links to Mayor's reports for car park applications mentioned in the text:

1-4 Francis Grove, Wimbledon

<https://gla.force.com/pr/s/pr-search-results?search=eyJrZXI3b3Jkcyl6ImZyYW5jaXMgZ3JvdmUiLCJjYXRlZ29yeSI6IlBBcHBzliwidHlwZSI6InNvc2wiLCJlcmwiOiJodHRwczovL2dsYS5mb3JjZS5jb20vcHlvcy8ifQ>

Exchange Plaza, Uxbridge Road

<https://gla.force.com/pr/s/planning-application/a0i4J0000003UFCQA2/20173940s2>

68-72 Hammersmith Road

<https://gla.force.com/pr/s/planning-application/a0i4J0000003TUPQA2/20184372s2>

Bank Street, Isle of Dogs

<https://gla.force.com/pr/s/planning-application/a0i4J0000003U9ZQAU/20171995ds2>

Harrow civic centre relocation

A five level multi storey car park in Wealdstone town centre would be demolished and replaced with a new Harrow civic centre. This involves the removal of 193 public parking spaces. The proposed civic centre would have 34 parking spaces replacing 665 in the existing civic centre. Fifty-seven new surface public parking spaces would be provided on an adjacent site, but this is planned to be redeveloped for residential use in the long-term. The existing civic centre site would be redeveloped through a separate planning application.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/gladstone-way-including-peel-house-car-park-and-22-palmerston-road>



## Hounslow civic centre relocation

Two linked planning applications were submitted for relocation of Hounslow civic centre to a new site at Bath Road and redevelopment of the old site at Lampton Road. It included the removal of 120 public parking spaces at the new Bath Road site. The new civic centre named Hounslow House is now complete and has 43 parking spaces replacing 590 at the old Lampton Road site. The old civic centre site was the subject of a separate but linked application to provide a total 940 residential units (50% social housing) and the first phase of development by a housing association is now complete.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/bath-road>

## Hounslow High Street Quarter

Hounslow town centre mixed use redevelopment including 527 residential units, a cinema and 9,839 sq. m. of retail and restaurants on the site of a town centre surface level car park. A total of 427 existing public parking spaces would be replaced by 250 retail/cinema parking spaces, 160 new residential spaces and 100 retained spaces for existing residents so overall there would be an increase in parking although serving a diversity of uses

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/town-centre-key-site-1>

## Westmoreland Road car park, Bromley

Mixed use including cinema, restaurants, hotel and residential on the site of a multi storey car park

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/multistorey-car-park>

<http://www.stmarkssquare.co.uk/about/>

## Tesco, Kennington Lane, Lambeth

Planning permission was granted in 2018 for the Tesco store at Kennington Lane to be redeveloped into 571 residential units, a replacement Tesco store of 4,355 sq. m. as well as office and commercial floorspace. Sixty-two retail parking spaces will be provided and 24 residential parking spaces for disabled residents only. This is a substantial reduction on the existing 218 parking spaces on site but is above both the adopted and draft London Plan maximum standards.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/tesco-kennington-lane>

## Morrisons car park, Honey Pot Lane, Brent (Residential)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/morrisons-car-park-honey-pot-lane>



Moxon Street car park, Westminster (Mixed Use including Retail)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/moxon-street-car-park>

<http://www.moxonstreetcarpark.com/>

Welbeck Street car park, Westminster (Hotel)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/74-77-welbeck-street-and-28-40-marylebone-lane>

Tesco car park, Conington Road, Lewisham (Residential)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/conington-road-car-park>

**Links to Mayor's reports for other car park applications not mentioned above:**

Crown House and Linton Road car park, Barking town centre (Residential)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/crown-house-and-linton-road-car-park-0>

Cavendish Square (underground) car park, Westminster (Mixed Use Commercial)

<https://gla.force.com/pr/s/planning-application/a0i4J000002RymWQAS/20206216>

Hammersmith Grove, Hammersmith and Fulham (Mixed Use including Offices and Retail)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/ncp-car-park-site-hammersmith-grove-london-w6>

Blackhorse Road car park, Waltham Forest (Residential)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/blackhorse-road-car-park>

Wandle Road car park, Croydon (Residential led mixed use)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/wandle-road-car-park>

Layton Road car park, Brentford, Hounslow (Primary school and residential)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/layton-road-car-park>



Gayton Road car park and Sonia Court, Harrow (Residential)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/gayton-road-car-park-and-sonia-court>

Prestons Road and Yabsley Street, Tower Hamlets (Residential)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/car-park-south-east-junction-prestons-road-and-yabsley-street>

Lion Green Road, Coulsdon, Croydon (Residential)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/car-park-site-and-adjoining-land-lion-green-road>

Curtis Lane car park, Wembley (Residential led mixed use)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/wembley-west-end>

Belgrave Road and Grosvenor Road, South Norwood, Croydon (Residential)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/planning-applications-and-decisions/planning-application-search/land-and-car-park-between-belgrave-road-and-grosvenor-road>

