



The countryside charity
London

Grey2Green

Parking policy
time for change

Introduction

This publication is intended for local authorities or anyone with an interest in the role parking plays in promoting a better urban environment.

The 2023 Parking Action Tool – find it here:

<https://www.wearepossible.org/parking-action>

Contents

- Why parking matters
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- Keeping pavements clear
- Making space for green and active & sustainable travel infrastructure and alternative uses

Why parking matters


Why parking matters



- **Traffic.** Every car journey starts and ends in a parking space. If parking is unrestricted, people drive more leading to congestion, air pollution, road danger and noise.
- **Space.** Parking takes up much needed space: 10 Hyde Parks in London is given to kerbside parking alone (i.e. excluding all other parking).
- **Urban realm.** Residential streets, historic settings and town centres can all be dramatically improved by removing parking.

Why parking matters

Three quarters of car trips made in London could be made easily by walking, cycling or public transport. Also, only half of London's households have a car. We believe it is time re-think the space we give to car parking.

 **Parking in London takes up a huge 1,400 hectares of land – or 'greyspace'.**

That's the equivalent to 10 Hyde Parks. Parking for private cars is a particularly inefficient use of space which in London is at a premium and much needed for alternative, more useful purposes, such as new parks and housing, wider pavements and cycle lanes.

London has only half of the greenspace it needs for a population its size so we need to find more space for parks and playgrounds.

We also need sites for new homes. And since the coronavirus outbreak, it has emerged that only 36% of London's pavements are wide enough to observe social distancing – a statistic which highlights a bigger problem, namely that space for car parking is disproportionately allocated when compared to pavement space or space for cycle lanes.

 **Parking has a big impact on road safety.**

Parked vehicles can impact on safety because they make it hard to see oncoming traffic particularly at junctions. This is not just for pedestrians and cyclists: it is also for drivers. Parked vehicles can also block access for emergency services, utilities and other drivers – sometimes called nuisance or inconsiderate parking.



If parking is unrestricted, more people travel by car and fewer people walk, cycle or take public transport.

This means more congestion, air pollution, road danger and noise. But in many London boroughs parking is largely unrestricted and many more trips are made by car than need to be.

Depending on how much is available, where it is, and how much it costs, parking can either encourage or discourage people from making 'switchable' car journeys – those which could readily be made by walking, cycling or public transport.

There is a clear link between the amount of car parking available and resulting car-use so it can have a big impact on the amount of congestion, air pollution, road danger and traffic noise.

Why parking matters



A disproportionate amount of space is given to private cars when compared to the number of trips by public transport, walking or cycling.

In areas where the majority of people do not own a car, where street space is limited or the environment is poor, allocating too much space for parking, or providing car owners with private use of public space, particularly for no charge or at low cost, is unfair to residents who do not own a car.



Action on parking will be needed by the London Boroughs to meet three key targets in the Mayor's Transport Strategy:

- To increase the trips made by 'sustainable mode of transport' (walking, cycling, public transport) from 63% to 80% by 2041
- For everyone to undertake the daily 20 minutes of active travel they need to stay healthy by 2041
- Vision Zero for road danger: the elimination of all deaths and serious injuries on London's transport system by 2041

**HEALTHY
STREETS
SCORECARD**



CPRE London is part of the London Boroughs Healthy Streets Scorecard coalition, a group of transport and environment campaigners who are tracking the progress of London boroughs in making our streets healthier by increasing travel by public transport, walking and cycling. Action on parking is one of the key Scorecard metrics.

>> www.healthystreetsscorecard.london @HSScorecard

Why parking matters

Parking policy is key to

- reducing **traffic** (thereby also combatting the climate crisis, improving air quality, reducing noise and road danger)
- **health** – promoting active, shared and sustainable travel
- freeing up space to tackle deficiency of green space / **parks**
- delivering **green** infrastructure / SUDS (for climate adaptation)
- delivering **safe** streets
- delivering local **economic** recovery (shopping, visitor attractions)
- saving the **countryside** ([compact cities vs urban sprawl](#))

Time for change

Time for change

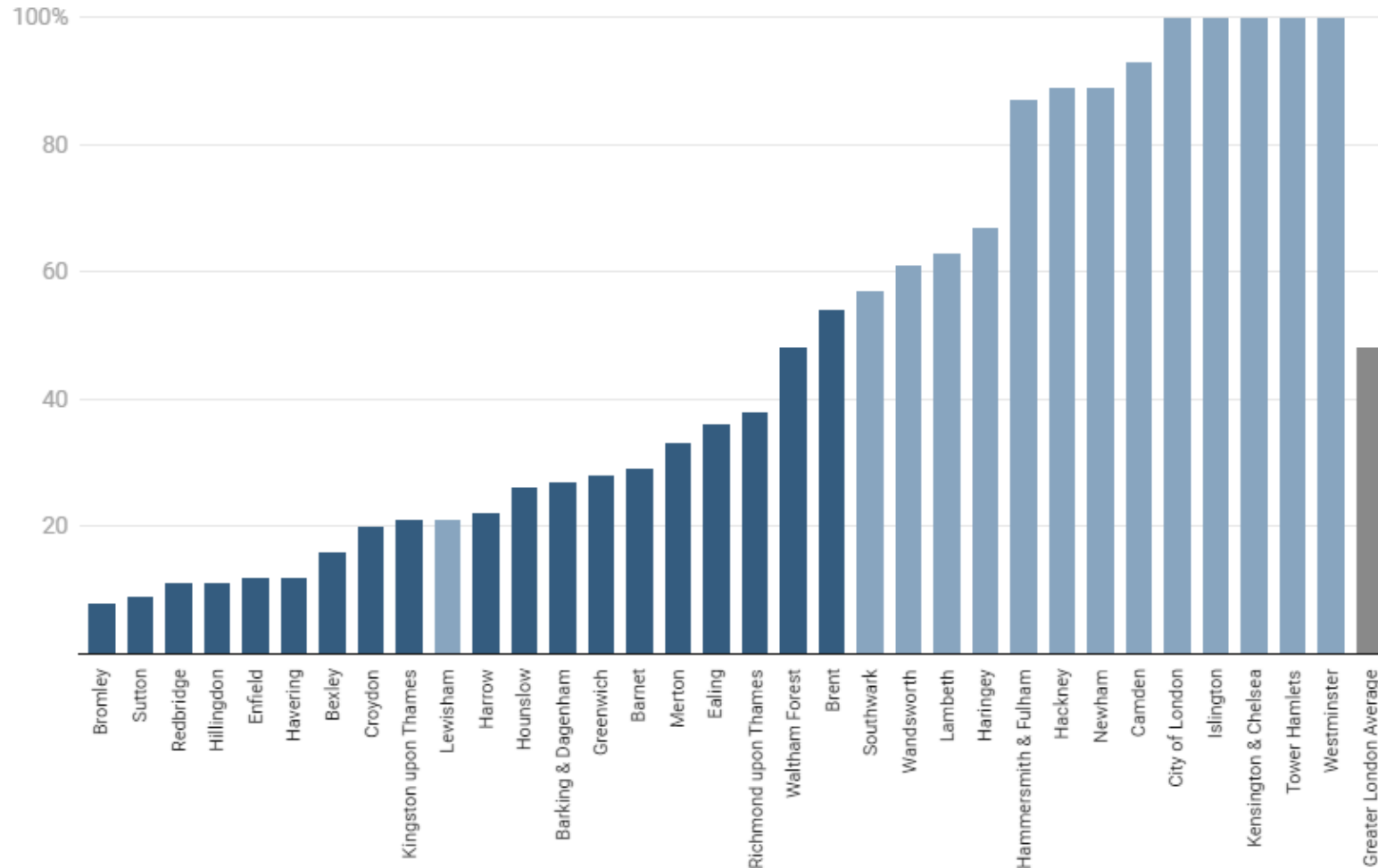
- Parking policy is key to combatting the climate crisis, improving air quality, promoting active, shared and sustainable travel, making transport more accessible, and delivering safe and attractive streets. ***It is one of the most effective tools local authorities can use*** to reduce car use and ownership and is about much more than just providing parking spaces.
- But after a preliminary assessment of a sample of borough policies, we noticed very ***low ambition in using parking policy to tackle serious issues*** like climate change and air pollution, so we decided to try to raise the bar by creating a benchmark, which we have done in consultation with sustainable travel organisations. The remainder of this powerpoint illustrates the issues – and the action we want to see.

Controlled Parking Zone coverage: Inner/Outer London boroughs, 2021

Scorecard data



Proportion of borough-managed roads under some form of Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) in % for London boroughs for 2021 Scorecard data. [View all results](#)



Time for change

One key indicator of whether a borough is taking action on parking is the proportion of streets in the borough where parking is controlled. (Data is from the 2021 Healthy Streets Scorecard.)

Dark blue: Outer London boroughs, Light blue: Inner London boroughs. [View CPZ results](#)

Chart: London Boroughs Healthy Streets Scorecard • Source: [AppyWay](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Local authority powers

- the **local highway and local traffic authority**, controlling parking on residential streets and at town centres and other destinations, responsible for good management of streets and pavements, and for permitting pavement crossovers (which enable front garden parking)
- **managers of housing estates**, able to control residential parking
- the **owner/operator of public car parks**
- the **local planning authority** which sets parking levels for new housing; and can enable development of surface car parks for housing or mixed-use
- the **local transport authority** with powers to plan for sustainable transport and introduce a local workplace parking levy
- **employer with workplace parking**, able to show leadership by restricting parking in council offices, schools etc.

Land-use planning and sustainable transport:

*“Sustainable patterns of
development”*

Appropriate Local Plan (planning) policies

- New housing must be planned at **appropriate density** to support public transport – in other words at or above around 100 dwellings per hectare and certainly not below 60
- **Parking standards:** Councils should adopt ‘car free’ housing development policies (see London Plan example below) which effectively mean no, or very few, parking spaces are made available (save for disabled parking)
- Councils should seek to promote the **redevelopment of surface car parks** and ‘big box’ retail to make better use of space (this will also promote more sustainable travel)

Parking is at the heart of urban land-use planning: if you plan for cars, you get cars

Compact cities with Green Belt

High density

Fewer than 30 cars per 100 households

Low carbon

Public transport financially viable

Active (healthy) lifestyles

Urban Sprawl

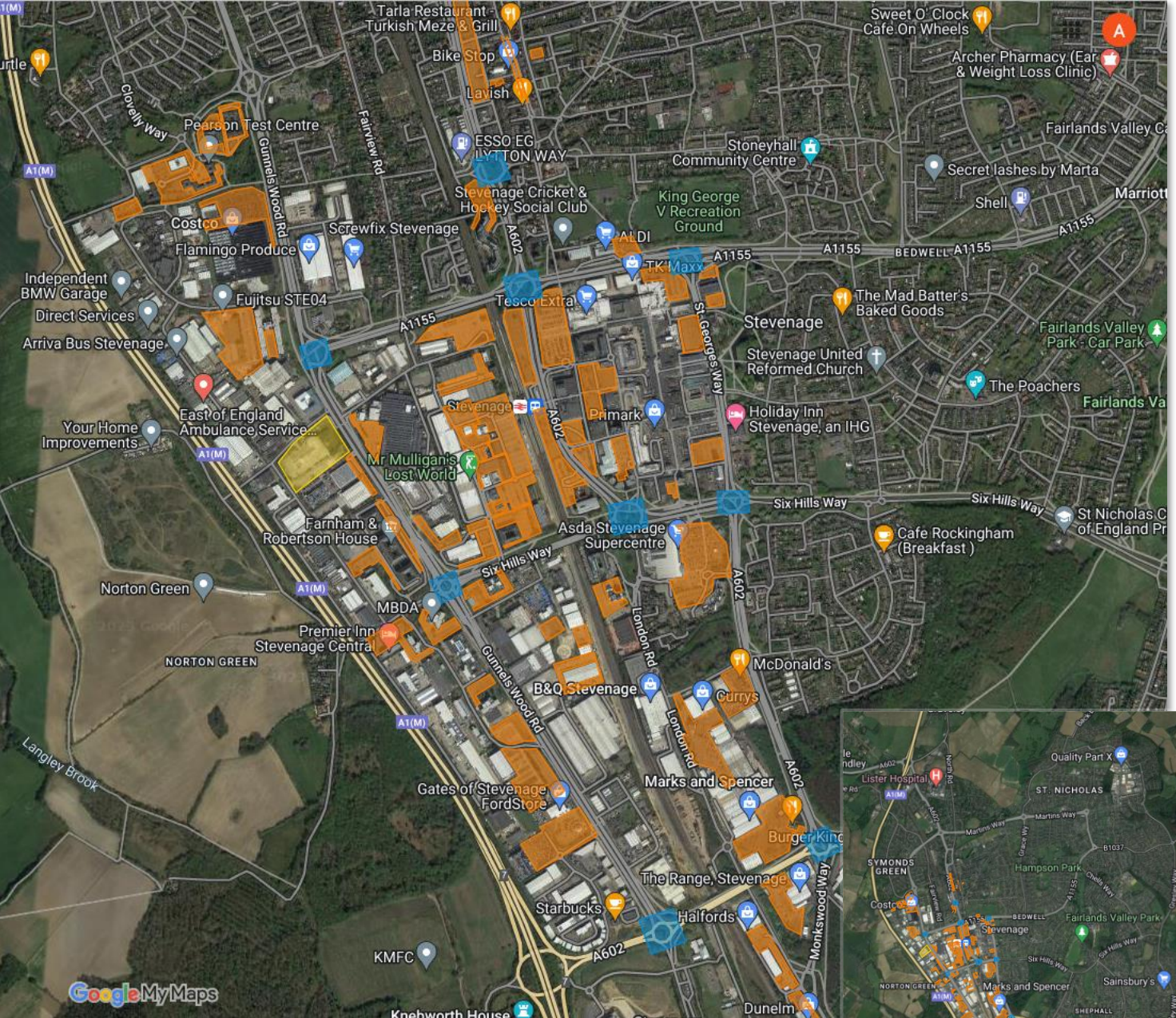
Low density

More than 50 cars per 100 households

High carbon

Car dependent

Inactive (less healthy) lifestyles



Stevenage's surface car parks (orange) and roundabouts (blue)

The town was built with cycle infrastructure and it takes 15 minutes to cycle from the centre to the outer edge. But active travel is discouraged by overprovision of parking. These spaces should accommodate car-free or car-lite housing or mixed-use development instead.

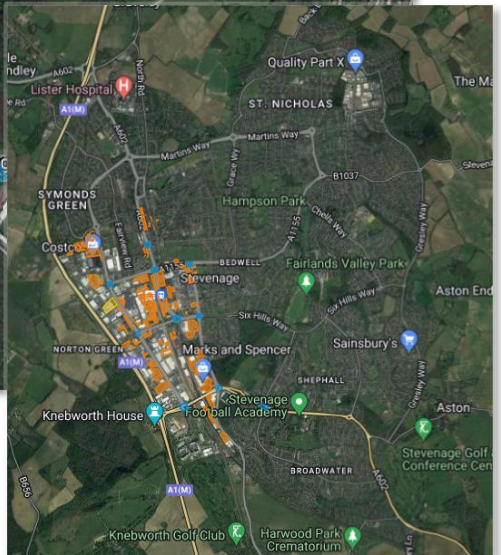


Image: Roads Were Not Built For Cars | Where driving is easy, Brits drive

Perpetuating 'unsustainable patterns of development'

Houghton Regis – the new 'urban fringe' development (shown in orange) is 30 to 40 dwellings per hectare, too low-density to sustain public transport. New roads are being built. At the same time there are several surface car parks (shown in pink) which are clearly 'underutilised land' and which, according to the National Planning Policy framework, should be developed before greenfield sites.



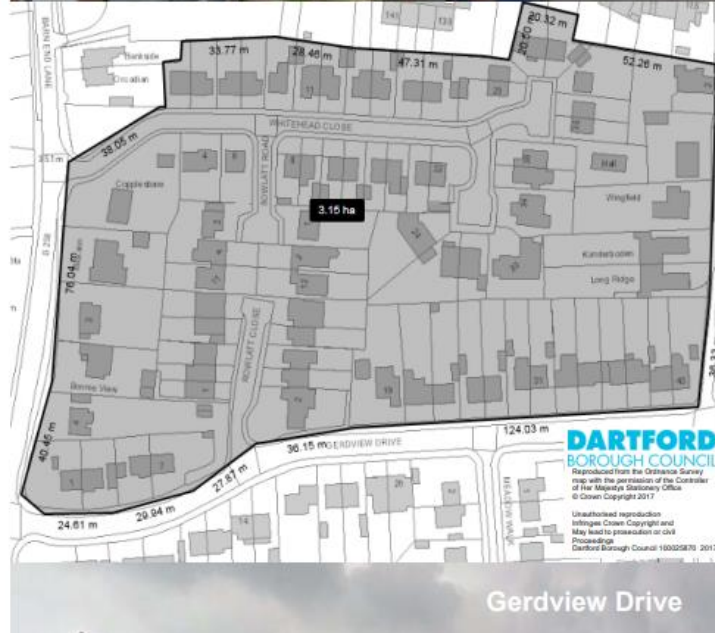
NPPF Paragraph 141

Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. This will be assessed through the examination of its strategic policies, which will take into account ... whether the strategy: a) makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and *underutilised land* [our emphasis]

Density is key e.g. bus services become financially viable with densities over 60 dwellings per hectare (dph) though good use of space would mean higher densities, upwards of 100dph.

These two examples show two areas: **25 dwellings per hectare** and **69 dwellings per hectare**

The final existing area is in Wilmington ward, with the first housing site example to the south of the A2 on Whitehead Close, Barn End Lane, Gerdview Drive, Rowlatt Road, Rowlatt Close and Stock Lane. Average house price value on Whitehead Close is £366,000.



Fact File:

- Site area: 3.15ha
- Residual Site Area: 3.11ha
- Homes: 79
- Density: 25dph
- Main housing type: semi-detached and detached
- Community facility

This site area is primarily made up of 3/4 bed semi-detached and detached properties. Houses and gardens are larger in size than previous case studies and others in the rural area.

Examples from:

<https://windmz.dartford.gov.uk/media/20180606320100Housing%20Density%20Paper%202018.pdf>

Fact File:

- Site area: 3.269ha
- Employment/Community Space: 0.13ha
- Residual Site Area: 3.13ha
- Homes: 215
- Density: 69dph
- Main housing type: Terraced
- 16 Lock-up garages

This site is primarily made up of 2 and 3 bed terraced streets, with the average size of a 2 bed terrace on Church Road being 57m².

The site exceeds the CS guide of 35-55 dwellings/ha for other urban areas at 69dph.

Further terraces surround the area highlighted, along with Ebbsfleet Central site and station to the east, and a recreation ground and cemetery to the west.



Surface car parks



‘Big box retail’ needs to be allocated for mixed use development. Sites like this one, the A10 retail park in Enfield (which is mainly surface car park), are hugely inefficient of space and encourage car use. Some sites are so big that whole new towns can be created on them. The image opposite shows proposals for a part of the site which is due to be developed for mixed use (residential and commercial).

Parking standards

- Authorities can use ‘parking standards’ to promote ‘car free development’ where householders cannot apply for a parking permit
- **EXAMPLE POLICY** The London Plan promotes ‘car free development’ via parking standards in the London Plan. [T6 Car Parking](#) (p422) states: “Car-free development should be the starting point for all development proposals in places that are (or are planned to be) well-connected by public transport, with developments elsewhere designed to provide the minimum necessary parking (‘car-lite’). Car-free development has no general parking but should still provide disabled persons parking in line with Part E of this policy.”

What you will hear...

“Ah but....

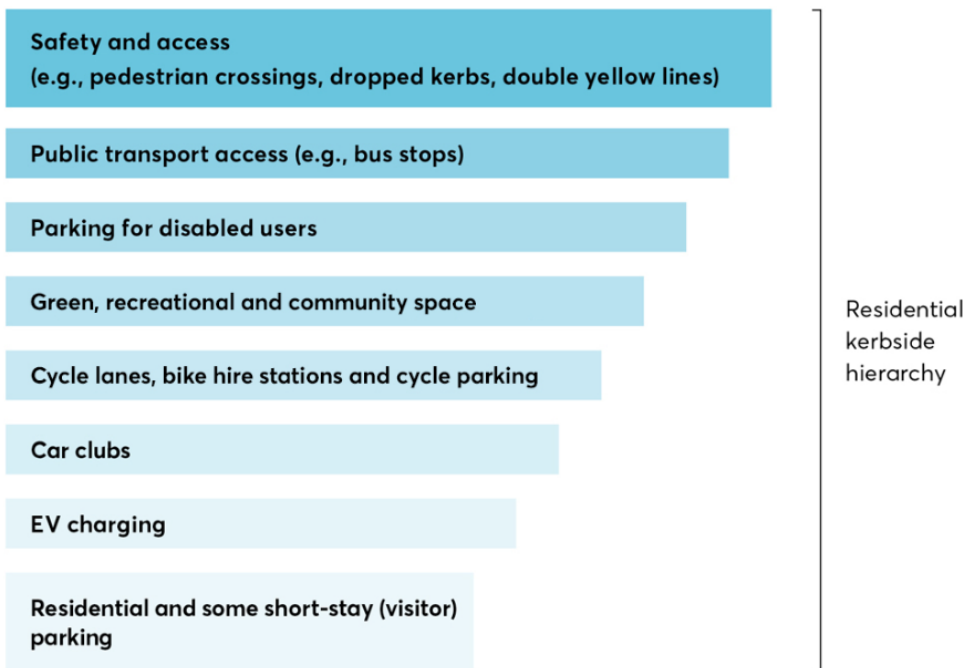
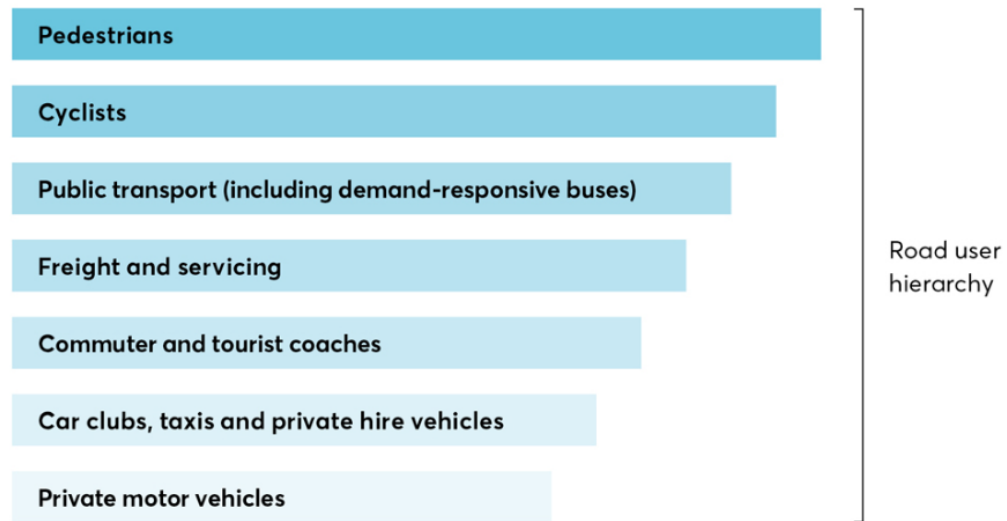
- local parking standards state a minimum 1.5 parking spaces per household*
- London is different. London has good public transport.”*

We need to eliminate minimum parking standards.

And yes it's a chicken and egg problem but we have to start somewhere, otherwise we will simply perpetuate unsustainable (car-dependent, unhealthy, high-carbon) patterns of development.

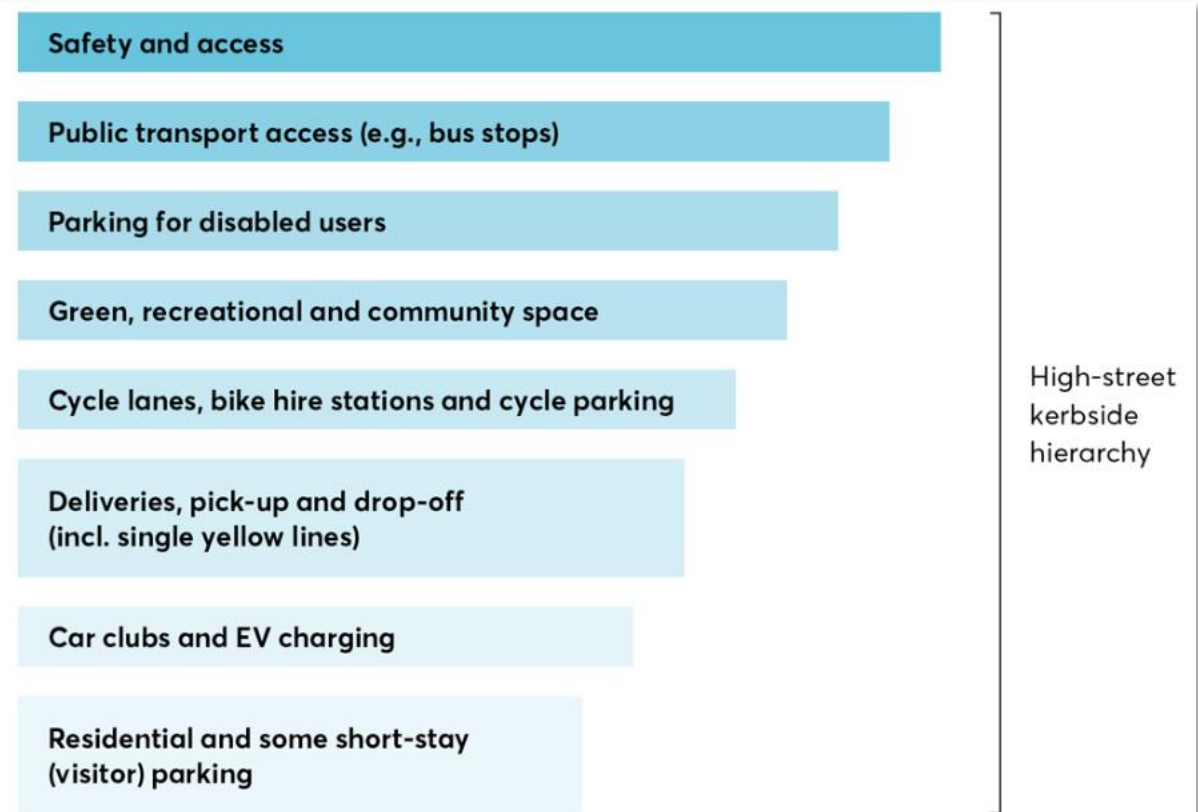
The starting point for parking policy:
road user / kerbside hierarches;
parking charges; audits; reports &
finances

Figure 8: Example road user and kerbside hierarchies



Parking policy should adhere to appropriate hierarchies.

These are taken from Centre for London's [Reclaim the Kerb](#) report.



Audits

- Developing a Parking Policy which supports environment, health and social goals will mean starting with good information. Local authorities should audit parking capacity and kerbside use.
- Every 4-5 years, Westminster Conducts an in-depth '[occupancy survey](#)' of how its supply of parking space relates to demand over a defined study period.
- Lambeth conducted a kerbside audit prior to developing its [Kerbside Strategy](#).

Charges

- Parking charges for roadside parking are in effect cheap rental of public land – often prime land in London. Charges should be appropriate and fair. Parking on public land should not be free (except for Blue Badge holders where appropriate).*
 - No vehicle permit should be less than £150 per year, regardless of fuel or car type (that includes Electric Vehicles).
 - Parking charges should be differentiated by fuel type and /or size, with larger/dirtier vehicles paying more.
 - No cycle hangar rental should be more than one sixth the cost of the cheapest car parking permit.
 - No short-stay parking should be less than the cost of a return bus ticket.
- Boroughs are required to publish parking reports which

Note that introducing charges can sometimes encourage a move to front-garden or off-street parking which may cause other problems and local authorities should seek to avoid these (see section on **Front garden parking and private land).*

Reports and finances

- Local authorities are required to produce parking reports which set out income and expenditure.
- Look for the finance section to see if there is a surplus. If there is, it can only be spent in certain ways – and it can support sustainable transport interventions (see 3 slides in green below).
- Boroughs can be concerned that removing parking might reduce income but this can be offset by even moderately higher charges.

Under s. 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, any surplus generated from the annual Parking account may be used for a specified number of purposes, including:

(a) the making good to the general fund of any amount charged to that fund to meet deficits in the account in the four years immediately preceding the financial year in question;

(b) meeting all or any part of the cost of the provision and maintenance by the local authority of off-street parking accommodation, whether in the open or under cover;

(c) contributions towards the cost of the provision and maintenance of off-street parking provision;

....

(d) if it appears to the local authority that the provision of further off-street parking accommodation in their area is unnecessary or undesirable the surplus may be applied to:

- (i) meeting costs relating to the provision or operation of, or of facilities for, public passenger transport services,
- (ii) the purposes of a highway or road improvement project in the local authority's area,
- (iii) meeting costs incurred by the Council in respect of the maintenance of roads maintained at the public expense by them,
- (iv) purposes of environmental improvement in the local authority's area,
- (v) in the case of such local authorities as may be prescribed, any other purposes for which the authority may lawfully incur expenditure;

...

(e) **meeting all or any part of the cost of the doing by the authority in their area of anything which facilitates the implementation of the London transport strategy,** and which is for the time being specified in that strategy as a purpose for which a surplus may be applied by virtue of this paragraph; *[our emphasis]*

(f) contributing to the cost of another London authority in doing anything to which the Council itself would have been able to apply the surplus.

Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs)

Controlled Parking Zones

- Controlling parking (usually done through Controlled or Restricted Parking Zones) is a key way to promote 'mode shift'. Every car journey starts and ends in a parking space so restricting and charging for parking is one of the most effective ways to promote a shift to sustainable modes of transport, particularly for short and 'switchable' trips (trips which could easily be made by public transport, walking or cycling/wheeling).
- Councils should introduce CPZs wherever practical. There should be numerous small CPZs rather than a few large ones, with no exemptions for residents of other CPZs.
- There should be a surcharge on any additional parking permits beyond one per household.
- CPZs have more **benefits** than local residents often think and bring benefits for drivers as well as other road users. Here's a useful [summary](#).
- Resident parking controls should extend to housing estates.



Before controlled parking. Cars are double parked, on pavements and on a corner, restricting access for emergency and utility vehicles and reducing sight lines for pedestrians, making it unsafe to cross.



After introduction of controlled parking. A large number of empty spaces at all times indicates cars previously parked there did not belong to residents. Double yellow lines ensure emergency/utility vehicle access is now clear and pedestrians can cross safely.


Restricting parking #1

- Councils should publish an accurate and up-to-date audit of kerbside use as a basis for decision-making.
- They should adopt ambitious targets and incentives for reduction in the amount of space dedicated to parking, within a fixed time frame.
- They should have simple, well-publicised mechanisms whereby parking space can be switched to sustainable uses such as parklets in response to resident demand.
- They should publish an assessment of parking at all council-run workplaces, including schools, depots etc., and take steps set out to reduce it.

Restricting parking #2

- Councils should reduce the supply of short-stay parking as a way to reduce car trips.
- They should remove short-stay parking in high-access areas, such as town centres and high streets, to improve the public realm (see section on [Improving the public realm / supporting the local economy](#)).
- They should consider introducing a levy on workplace parking charged to businesses above a certain size.
- The minimum charge for short-stay parking should be at least equal to the cost of a return bus trip (see section on [Charges](#)).

- Estate parking should be included in CPZs with the same standards as applied to on-street parking.
- Estate parking permit prices should be in line with on-street parking permits.
- There should be adequate cycle storage on estates.



ESTATES PARKING – Housing estates are usually treated differently or excluded from parking policy entirely (and estates parking is often uncontrolled) which often leads to a car-dominated environment; poor use of space which could be used for greenery or play space; and nuisance parking e.g. blocking access or parking on pavements.

Pavement parking



Pavement parking on Fernbrook Road in Lewisham. In the 21st Century we simply cannot sanction the use of pavements to park cars: we need to be encouraging walking, not making it harder.



All councils should end pavement parking immediately. It clearly contradicts road user and kerbside hierarchies.

Parking and accessibility

Accessibility

- There should be adequate Blue Badge parking wherever there is need, to be removed only following a thorough audit.
- Councils must be committed to tackling Blue Badge fraud and abuse.
- They should recognise that parking policy has an impact on disabled people who don't drive, as well as those who do.
- Kerbside space should be used to maximise accessibility for disabled people who are non-drivers, for example with wide, clutter-free pavements. See the section below [Keeping pavements clear](#).
- Crossover policies (associated with parking in front gardens or on private land) should ensure pavements are level / not uneven.

Front garden parking & private land

Front garden parking is ‘permitted development’ but boroughs must give permission for a pavement crossover.

Problems with front garden parking (& associated footway crossovers)

- Pavement crossovers create an uneven pavement which is harder to negotiate for pedestrians and wheelchair or mobility aid users
- Pavement crossovers introduce road danger onto pavements
- Introducing CPZs becomes complex because crossovers can’t be blocked. Also, kerbside (public land) in front of a house cannot be used for other things like rain gardens, cycle hangars, protected cycle track etc.
- It’s an eyesore / degrades the local streetscene
- Drivers avoid parking controls and costs, so removing a key lever for discouraging car trips

Other problems are: front gardens are often paved, so can’t absorb rainwater (though this can be resolved by using a permeable surface); and, with bigger cars, it is now often causing pavement obstruction – see images (though this can and should be enforced).

“Pushing someone in a wheelchair for a couple of months this summer, I found conventional drive crossovers a real problem – it was a real effort to keep in a straight line.”
See this [thread](#) on Twitter.



Tackling front garden parking, crossovers and uneven pavements

- Councils are often concerned about the issues caused by front garden parking (see previous slide) but are limited in what they can do
- They are required to have a crossover policy and this can be used to specify what a council will need to take into consideration when deciding whether a **new crossover** will be permitted
- For **existing crossovers**, CPRE London is currently researching if there are ways to require the removal of crossovers (and associated front garden parking) where they are compromising safety, accessibility or wider sustainable transport goals. Watch this space.



Shopping parade forecourt parking. This is legal because it is private land, as long as there is an official 'crossover' for cars to drive over the pavement to access parking in front of shops etc. But it creates similar problems to front garden parking. Authorities should aim to retract permission to drive over pavements (removing 'crossovers') where possible and have stricter policies on where crossovers are permissible.



Public sector employers including schools like the one shown here (where part of the playground has over time become a car park) can lead the way by not allowing informal parking at a council run workplaces and actively restricting and controlling employer parking.

Improving the public realm /
supporting the local economy



Google

Nicer streets. Visually, streetscapes can be dramatically improved by restricting parking and adding greenery, like happened with this street.





Historic settings and visitor attractions can also be dramatically improved by removing and restricting parking, as happened with Somerset House

Supporting the local economy. Evidence shows that removing parking from shopping parades, and instead introducing pedestrianised space or parklets, benches, greening or other public realm improvements, has a positive impact on income for local businesses.



Simon Munk
@psimonk

When this scheme in Orford Road [#WFMiniHolland](#) 1st opened, folks marched a coffin here predicting death of trade on this street. Several businesses here said losing parking out front would end them. That was 8 years ago. This was a mild March Sunday. Change is hard but worth it.



THE PEDESTRIAN POUND



The business case for better streets and places





‘Streateries’ aka seating for cafes, pubs and restaurants. Boroughs are increasingly enabling local businesses to use space for seating, like this one outside an Islington pub. This has been an important way councils have been able to provide support for post-Covid economic recovery.



Town centre improvements

Here's an article with [30 'before & after' pictures of town centre improvements involving removal of parking](#)

Image taken from the article



Pedestrians and safety

Creating safe places to cross

- **Junctions** should be clear of parking (double yellow lines) for a minimum of 10m in all directions (inc where parking is not controlled)
- **Informal crossings every 50 metres.** Residential streets usually have parking the whole way along with no gaps, making crossing the road dangerous as people have to squeeze between cars. To make streets safer, every 50m there should be a 10m stretch of road on both sides clear from parking to create clear sight lines. There should be double yellow lines at a minimum, but preferably also build-outs (pavements extending into the road). Ideally there would also be some planting or trees on the build out and a 'rest point' (accessibility guidelines suggest there should be rest points i.e. benches every 50m).



Road danger

Before – cars are parked on both sides along the length of the narrow road creating danger for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians



After – parking is no longer an issue for residents and the school yellow zig-zags are visible

Keeping pavements clear



Street trees can block pavements. **NEW STREET TREES** should be placed on build-outs on the road (see centre image), taking space from parking, not on the Street pavement where they take space from pedestrians, wheelchairs etc.

Where **EXISTING STREET TREES** block the pavement, a pavement should be built out into the street around the tree – as seen in the image on the right.



PARKING SIGNPOSTS are often located **without thought to the barrier they will create.** As a result they often cause obstacles on the pavement and, as with much pavement clutter, also create an eyesore. They should be placed discretely and in such a way that leaves space for pedestrians and avoids pavement clutter, like in the example below.





Electric Vehicle CHARGING POINTS should be placed on the road, taking space from parking, not on the pavement where they take space from pedestrians, wheelchairs etc

Bins on the street, taking space from parking, not on the pavement where they take space from pedestrians. Where councils have introduced wheelie bins (like in Hackney below) but there is no space in front gardens to store them, they end up cluttering the pavement. Councils can instead put communal waste and recycling bins on the street, in parking spaces. See Brighton example opposite.



... though managing on-street communal rubbish and recycling bins does have its complexities ...



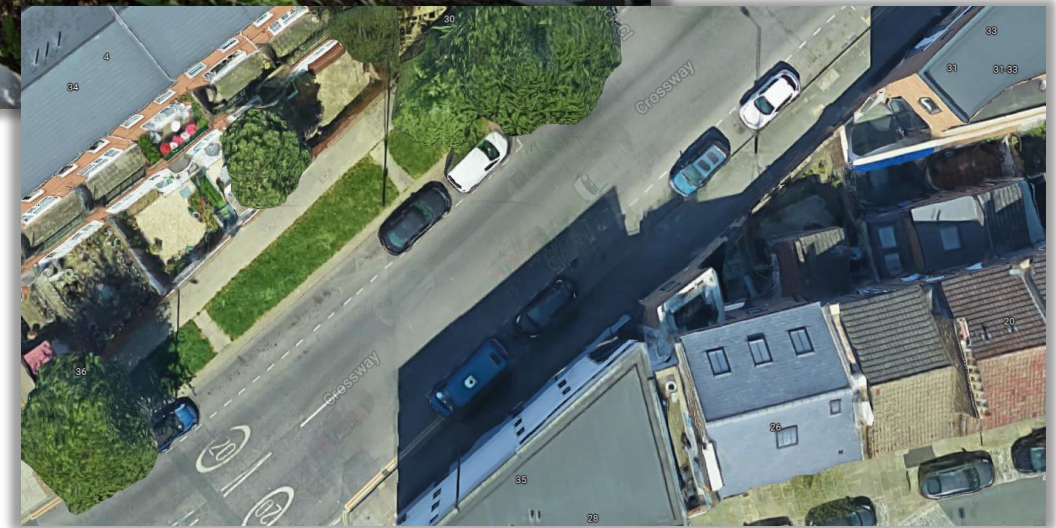
Making space for green and active & sustainable travel infrastructure and alternative uses



Parklets. Parking spaces can be used for community seating or flower beds



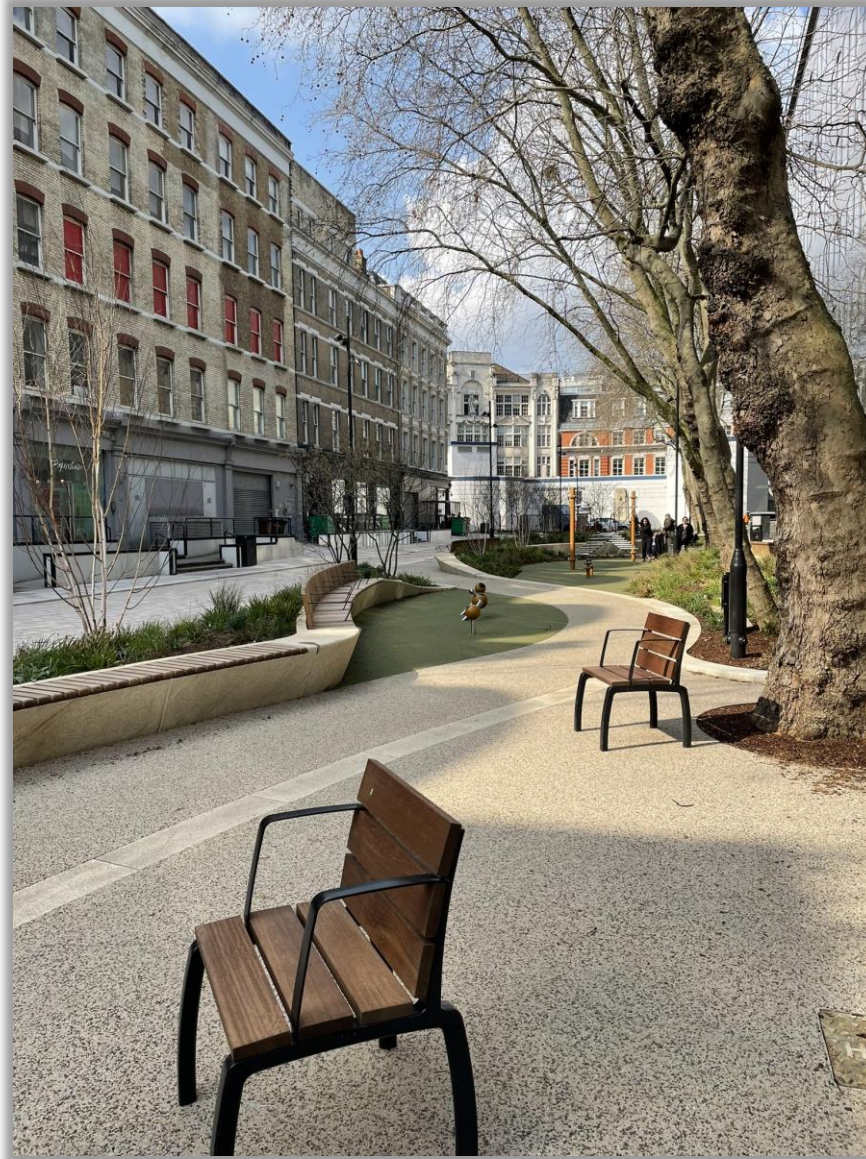
Green infrastructure / sustainable urban drainage. Parking spaces can be replaced with much-needed 'rain gardens' aka Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, like this one in Hackney (the image to the right shows the same space when it still had parking).



Streetparks.

Some boroughs have even removed parking and traffic from streets to create whole new parks, like this one in Camden.

Find out more about our work promoting [Streetparks](#).





Cycle hangars. Parking spaces can be used to accommodate secure cycle parking like these cycle hangars





Image: [We Rode And Ranked London's Cycle Hire Schemes](#) | Londonist

Cycle parking close to high street shops. And a tree on a build-out – nice!



.. and space for cycle hire

... including for dockless bikes, to avoid this situation.





Protected cycle lanes can be created where parking is removed, like in the road shown here, before and after.



Bus lanes. Often parking for private cars is given priority over buses.

The road in the image to the left (Hackney Road near to the junction with the A10) is in central London and hosts two high frequency buses, the 26 and 55.

The image to the right, Dalston Lane, also in Hackney, shows a section where parking has been removed in favour of a bus lane (though the single yellow lines indicate this is not 24/7 – which we would advocate it should be).



Removing parking for private cars can also create space for shared mobility like cycle, scooter and car share schemes.

Parking standards for new development: it should be possible to substitute private car parking spaces with many fewer car share spaces e.g. on a 10 to 1 basis.

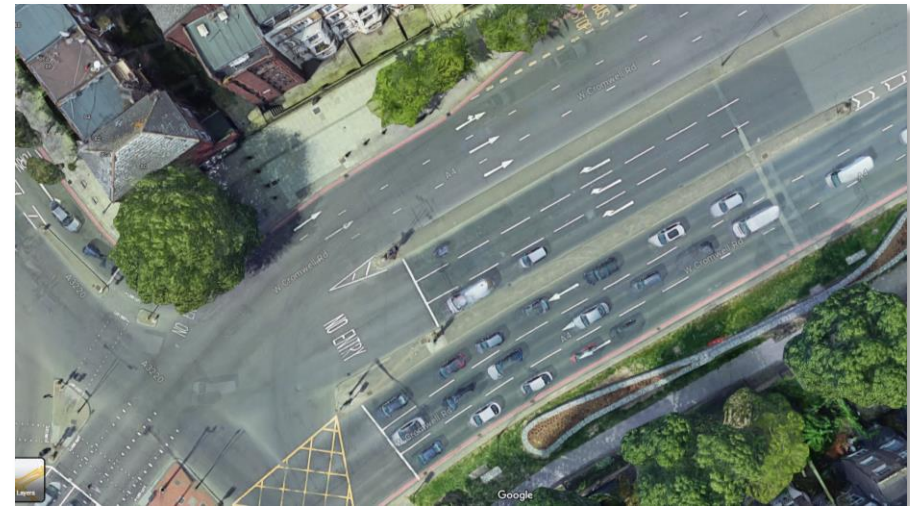


Not just parking...

Also need lots of other things... 20mph speed limits, bus lanes, LTNs, school streets, cycle infrastructure, reducing lanes (no place for multi-lane roads in town and city centres), safer crossings and junctions.



Adelaide Road, Camden – 6 lanes in one direction



West Cromwell Road, Kensington & Chelsea – 9 lanes

But parking is key! ... recap



- One of the most important tools available to local authorities
- Not being used enough
- Review policy – identify urgent action
- Use our Parking Policy Assessment Tool
- <https://www.cprelondon.org.uk/news/why-boroughs-need-to-re-assess-parking-policy-now/>
- <https://www.wearepossible.org/parking-action>

Time for change: what can councils do right now?



- Control parking (small-area CPZs + appropriate charging at destinations)
- Housing estates treated the same
- More double yellow lines for safety
- Reallocate space for parking: focus on positive impact e.g. town centres, historic settings, visitor attractions, greening, cycle/bus lanes, de-cluttering pavements and introducing greenery (trees, rain gardens, parklets)
- End pavement parking
- Control/reduce parking in council workplaces (including schools)
- Only permit new housing development if it is appropriately high density and has a low ratio of parking spaces to households or is 'car free'; and promote redevelopment of large surface car parks



Updated March 2023

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With thanks to volunteer Will Petty

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