

# Local Parking Policy benchmarking

1. Local Authority Parking Policy Benchmark
2. Controlled Parking Zones – comparison
3. Parking finances – comparing income, expenditure
4. Policy for Local Plans

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# Why parking matters



[**clue: PARKING PROMOTES DRIVING...**

**and takes up tonnes of space]**

- Saving the countryside ([compact cities vs urban sprawl](#))
- Gaining **benefits of density** (public transport needs 60 dwellings per hectare MINIMUM / support more amenities / shops viable)
- **Public transport** works better with less parking
- **Improved urban realm**: streets, historic settings, town centres
- **Economic recovery** (shopping, visitor attractions, labour markets)
- **Equity** - fair use of public space and ££ resources
- **Freeing up space** for play, greenery, bus & cycle, clear pavements
- Delivering **housing in a good location**, including **affordable**

# 1. PARKING POLICY BENCHMARK

The benchmark was developed in consultation with experts and local authorities then turned into an online benchmarking tool [here](#). This dates from 2022 but remains highly relevant. The aim is to update the benchmark from time to time.

More resources: [Why boroughs need to reassess parking policy, now!](#) “London boroughs failing to use their ‘most effective tool’ to reduce carbon emissions and pollution - and it's free.”

# 1. Principles and vision

## Do your council's parking policies:

- Acknowledge the need to reduce car use and ownership, and the role parking policy plays in this?
- Acknowledge **the role parking policy plays** in
  - A) improving **air quality and public health**
  - B) creating **safe and attractive streets?**
  - C) reducing **greenhouse gas emissions?**
- Commit to make parking policy fair for all residents, not just car owners?
- Include a hierarchy of kerbside use that places Blue Badge holders and sustainable uses above car parking?

## 2. Controlling parking

### Do your council's parking policies:

- Include on-street parking in a CPZ wherever it is practical to enforce it?
- Include numerous small CPZs rather than a few large ones, with no exemptions for residents of other CPZs?
- Levy a surcharge on any additional parking permits beyond one per household?
- Take steps to prevent conversion of front gardens to parking, including restricting new pavement crossovers?
- State that new housing developments should be car-free wherever possible, and subject to CPZs if not?

# 3. The cost of parking

## Do your council's parking policies:

- Charge a minimum of **£150** for a year's parking permit, regardless of fuel or car type?
- **Differentiate** parking charges by fuel type and/or size, with larger/dirtier vehicles paying more?
- Levy a **diesel surcharge** on parking permit prices to discourage diesel vehicles?
- Ensure that there is **no free parking** within their area of responsibility (except for Blue Badge holders where appropriate)?
- Charge no more than one-sixth the price of the cheapest car parking permit for **cycle storage** (e.g. in a cycle hangar)?

# 4. Electric Vehicles

## Do your council's parking policies:

- Acknowledge that EVs are still not a sustainable form of transport, and should come below active and sustainable travel in hierarchies of use?
- Acknowledge the social cost of EV parking, including use of public space and risk of increased congestion, with **EV parking costs** that reflect this?
- Acknowledge that electric vehicles are preferable to fossil fuel vehicles, and reflect this in policies such as parking permit prices?
- Include a commitment that new **EV charging infrastructure** will be put in the **roadway**, not on the pavement?

# 5. Accessibility and the pedestrian environment

## Do your council's parking policies:

- Provide adequate **Blue Badge** parking wherever there is need, to be removed only following a thorough audit?
- Commit to tackling Blue Badge **fraud and abuse?**
- Recognise that parking policy has an impact on disabled people who don't drive, as well as those who do?
- Use kerb space to maximise accessibility for disabled people who are non-drivers, for example with **wide, clutter-free pavements?**
- On longer side and residential roads, commit to removing parking to install **crossing points** with drop kerbs and clear sight lines, at minimum **every 100m?**

# 6. Short stay parking

## Do your council's parking policies:

- Acknowledge that **reducing the supply** of short-stay parking is a way to reduce car trips?
- Charge an amount for short-stay parking that is at least equal to the cost of a **return bus trip**?
- Commit to **removing short-stay parking** in high-access areas, such as town centres and high streets, to improve the **public realm**?
- Levy a charge for **workplace parking** on businesses above a certain size?

# 7. Reducing parking

## Do your council's parking policies:

- Employ an accurate and up-to-date **audit of kerbside** use as the basis for setting parking policy?
- Include **targets and incentives** for reduction in the amount of space dedicated to parking, within a fixed time frame?
- Include simple, well-publicised mechanisms whereby parking space can be **switched to sustainable uses** - such as parklets or cycle storage - in response to resident demand?
- Include an assessment of parking at all **council-run workplaces**, including schools, depots, etc, with steps set out to reduce it?

# 8. Pedestrian Environment

## Do your council's parking policies:

- Mandate the removal of parking to make way for installation of new **street infrastructure**, including street trees and EV charging?
- Requisition kerb space for planting, for example sustainable drainage systems **(SUDS)**?
- Allow for the use of kerb space to create places for people to relax and play, such as **pocket parks**?
- Include a commitment to **end pavement parking** wherever it is currently allowed?
- Require **no dips in the pavement** where drop kerbs are installed?
- Require the use of **double-yellow lines to prevent parking within 10 metres** of all junctions, improving visibility for pedestrians and other vulnerable road users?
- Indicate that your council has signed up to **Transport For All's Equal Pavements Pledge**?

# 9. Active, shared and sustainable travel

## Do your council's parking policies...

- Mandate the use of kerb space to ensure demand is met for **cycle parking and storage**, including cargo bikes and adaptive cycles?
- Allocate kerb space exclusively for **car club vehicles/car sharing**?
- Allocate kerb space for **cycle/scooter hire**?
- Mandate the removal of parking in order to make space for **bus and cycle lanes**?

# 10. Parking in housing estates

## Do your council's parking policies:

- Require estate parking to be included in CPZs of the same standards applied to on-street parking?
- Require that estate parking permit prices are in line with on-street parking permits?
- Require adequate cycle storage on all estates?
- Demand that estate parking is subject to the same principles of conversion to sustainable uses as on-street parking?

## 2. CONTROLLED PARKING ZONES

Car parking is an ‘enabler’ – i.e. it enables people to make car trips. The other big enabler is road capacity: more capacity = more traffic.

To reduce traffic congestion and get people back on buses, controlling and limiting parking is extremely important.

In London, the [Healthy Streets Scorecard](#) coalition has [mapped controlled parking](#) in all 33 London boroughs, enabling boroughs to compare themselves with other boroughs.

# London Boroughs Healthy Streets Scorecard



London Boroughs

## HEALTHY STREETS SCORECARD



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# London's CPZs mapped (and scored)

## London Controlled Parking Zones by borough map - 2025

Borough Boundaries

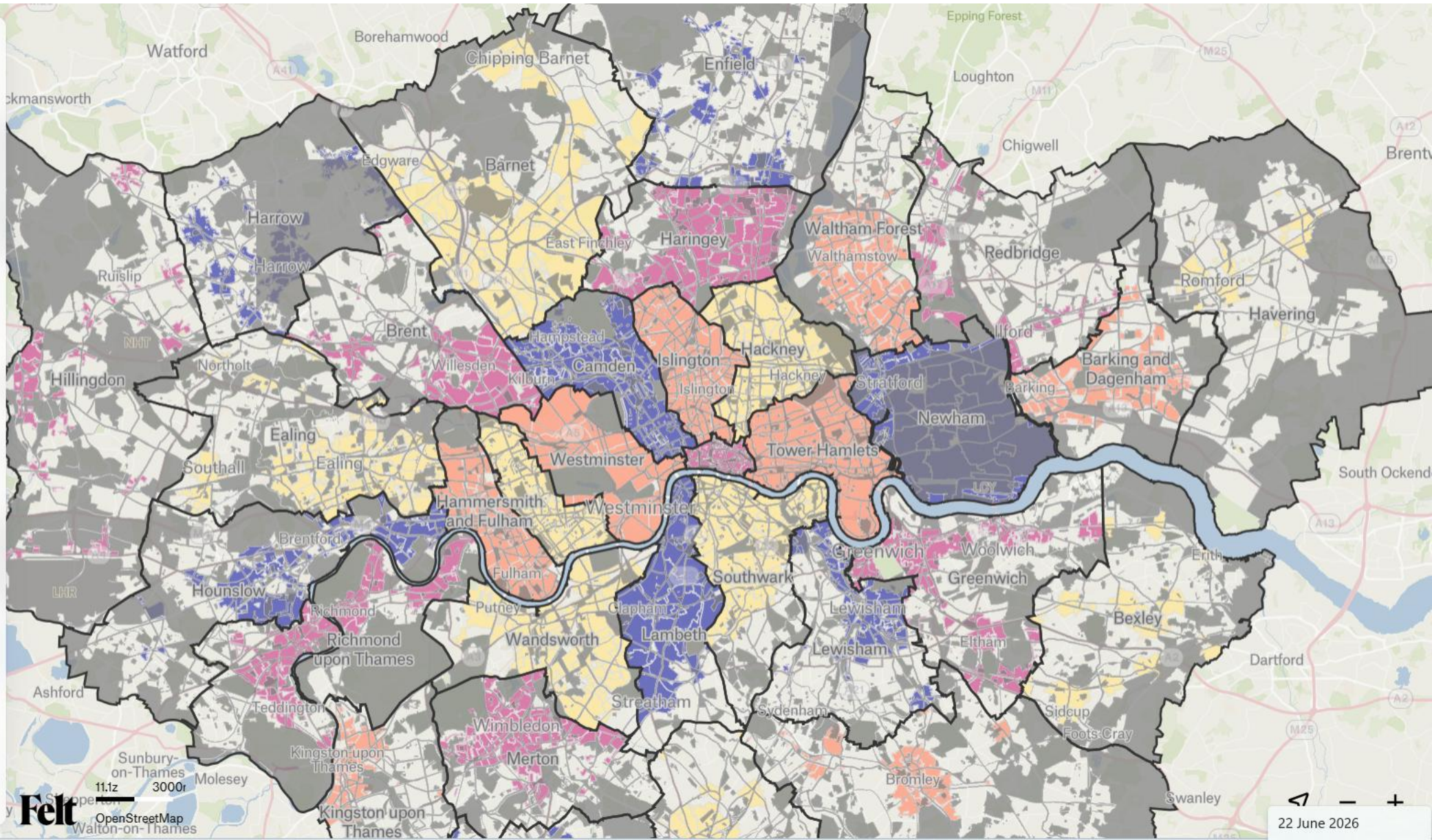
Area excluded from analysis

Open space, railway lines, industrial areas etc.

### Controlled parking zones

Map created by William Petty (@microlambert), overseen by the Healthy Streets Scorecard coalition, based on data provided by local authorities. Map used for calculating CPZ areas for the annual Healthy Streets Scorecard: <https://www.healthystreetscorecard.london/> Correct as of 16 May 2025.

- Barking and Dagenham
- Barnet
- Bexley
- Brent
- Bromley
- Camden
- City of London



Felt

OpenStreetMap  
Walton-on-Thames

# 3. PARKING FINANCES

Compare

- Councils' income, expenditure and surplus
- And commentary on what surplus is spent on  
... by checking the RAC's annual report.

# Using parking surplus

By law, councils must publish their parking account information

The surplus can be significant e.g. £6m in Dorset 2022/23

Councils must use surplus for specific purposes relating to transport

They can use it to support concessionary fares and many do



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## Financial Data

Income and expenditure statement 2022/2023

	2021/2022 (£)	2022/2023 (£)
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Internal Charges (Expenditure)	264,418	293,099
Pay Related Costs	1,224,147	1,132,510
Premises Related Costs	1,618,602	1,601,095
Transport Related Costs	43,811	39,623
Supplies and Services	606,605	770,220
Third Party (Contracted Out) Payments	14,485	18,347
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>3,772,068</b>	<b>3,854,896</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Parking Waivers & Permits	728,849	795,350
Pay & Display Charges	7,663,772	8,138,240
Penalty Charge Notices	742,712	610,510
Internal Charges (Income)	21,868	179,087
Government Grants	153,759	0
Other income	172,843	211,794
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>9,483,753</b>	<b>9,935,089</b>
Financial adjustments		
<b>Deficit/Surplus</b>	<b>5,711,685</b>	<b>6,080,193</b>

Surplus funds are used as per the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, section 55. To this effect surplus has been used to maintain Dorset Council car parks, this includes cyclical vegetation maintenance work, lighting inspections and improvements and surface and relining works. Surplus has also been used to support work carried out across the highways network.

# Council parking revenue in England 2024-25

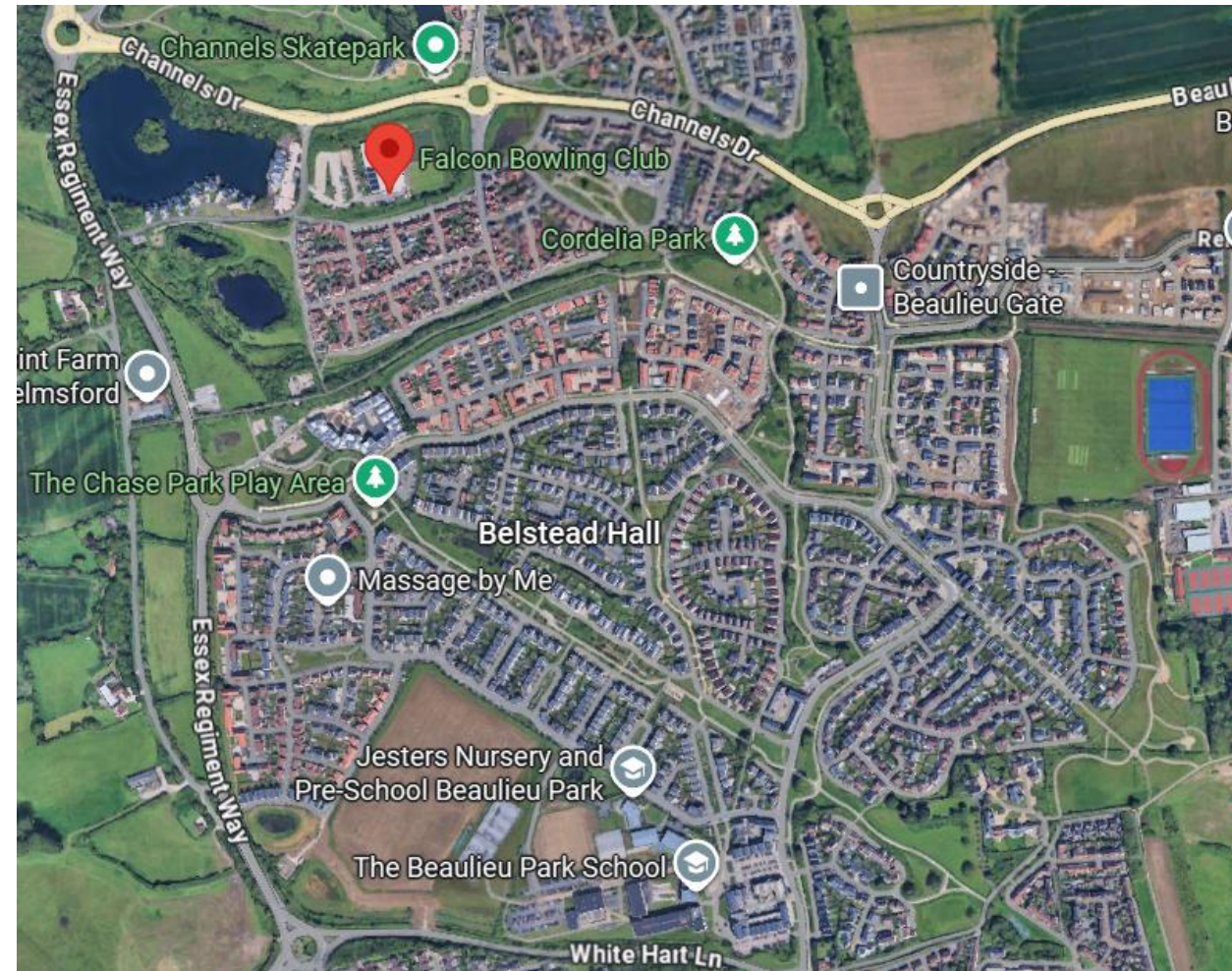
- Councils in England – combined surplus of almost £1.1 billion from their parking activities in 2024-25, RAC Foundation analysis concludes.
- Based on data from the 295 local authorities in England (out of a total of 317) that had reported data to MHCLG
- Total income from on- and off-street parking of £2.163 billion in 2024-25, and total expenditure of £1.07 billion
- <https://www.racfoundation.org/research/economy/council-parking-revenue-in-england-2024-25>

# 4. PARKING POLICY FOR LOCAL PLANS

These policies were developed in consultation with the Better Planning Coalition, Transport for New Homes, and others. They were published as part of a project which ran 2025 – 2026.

- The report [\*Urban sprawl in England 'forgotten disaster of last 50 years'\*](#) has more detail
- Also, lots of useful evidence here [Local Plans & Local Transport Plans: delivering better transport](#)

# Ubiquitous pattern of development = loss of productive land for low-density, car-dependent development



But we lock-in a high-carbon, car-dependent future



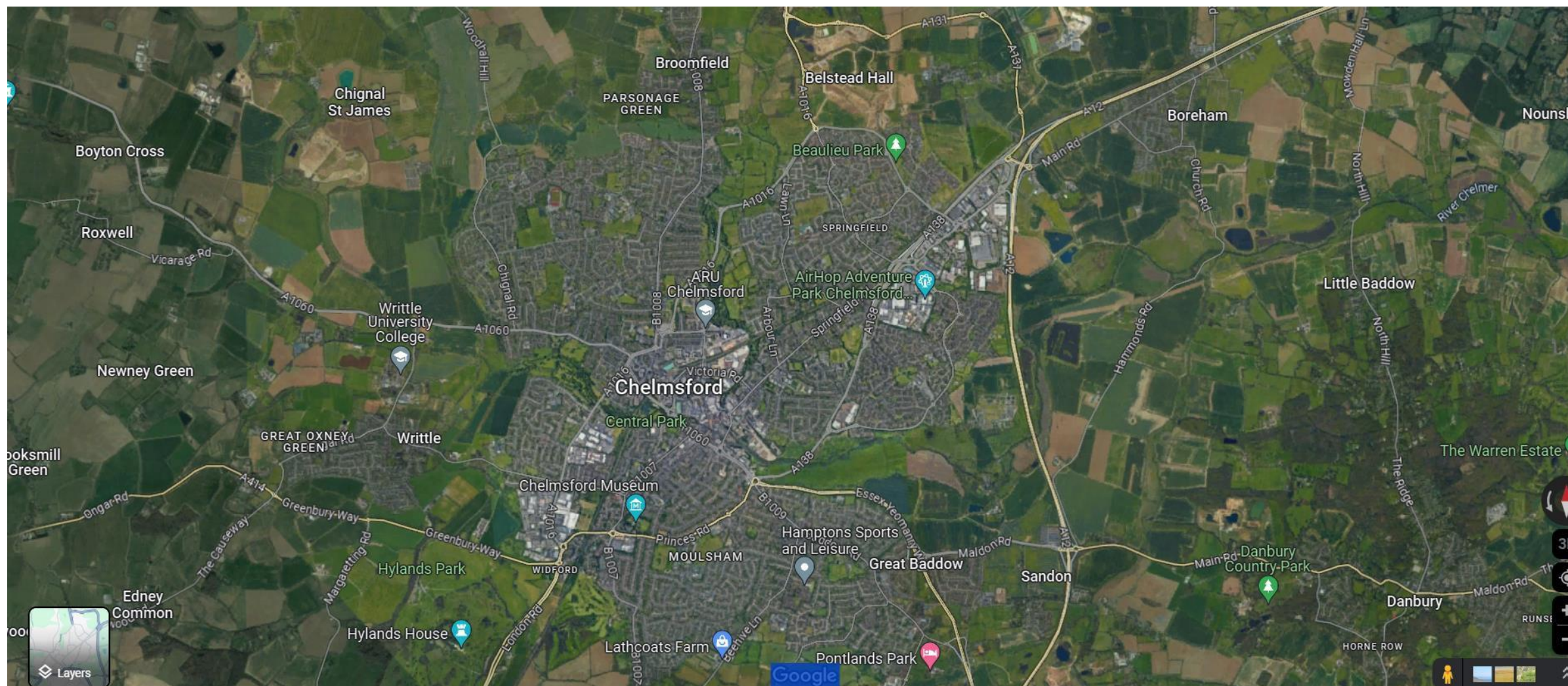
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‘Parking standards’ or ‘parking ratio’ e.g. @ 2:1 parking spaces is normal, assumption that cars will be needed and used



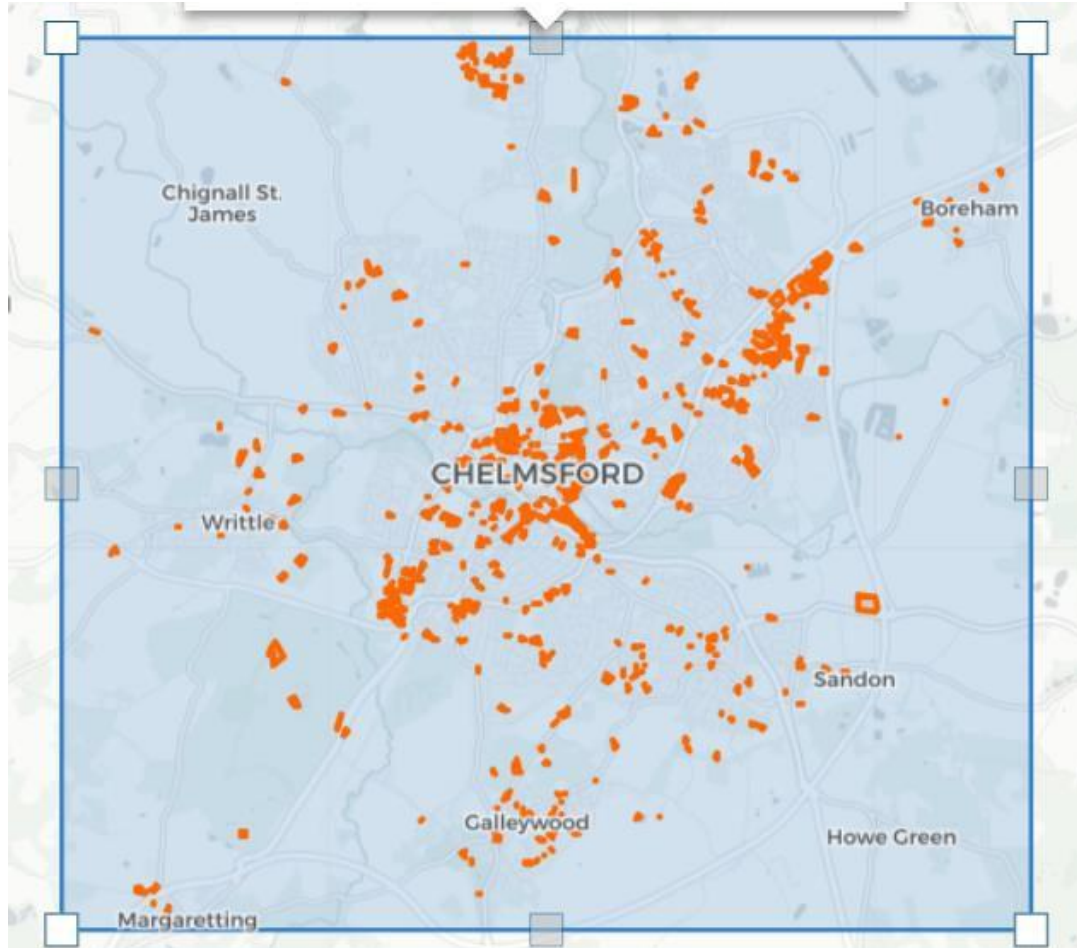
# Chelmsford: should be easy to walk / cycle / bus





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# Chelmsford car parks

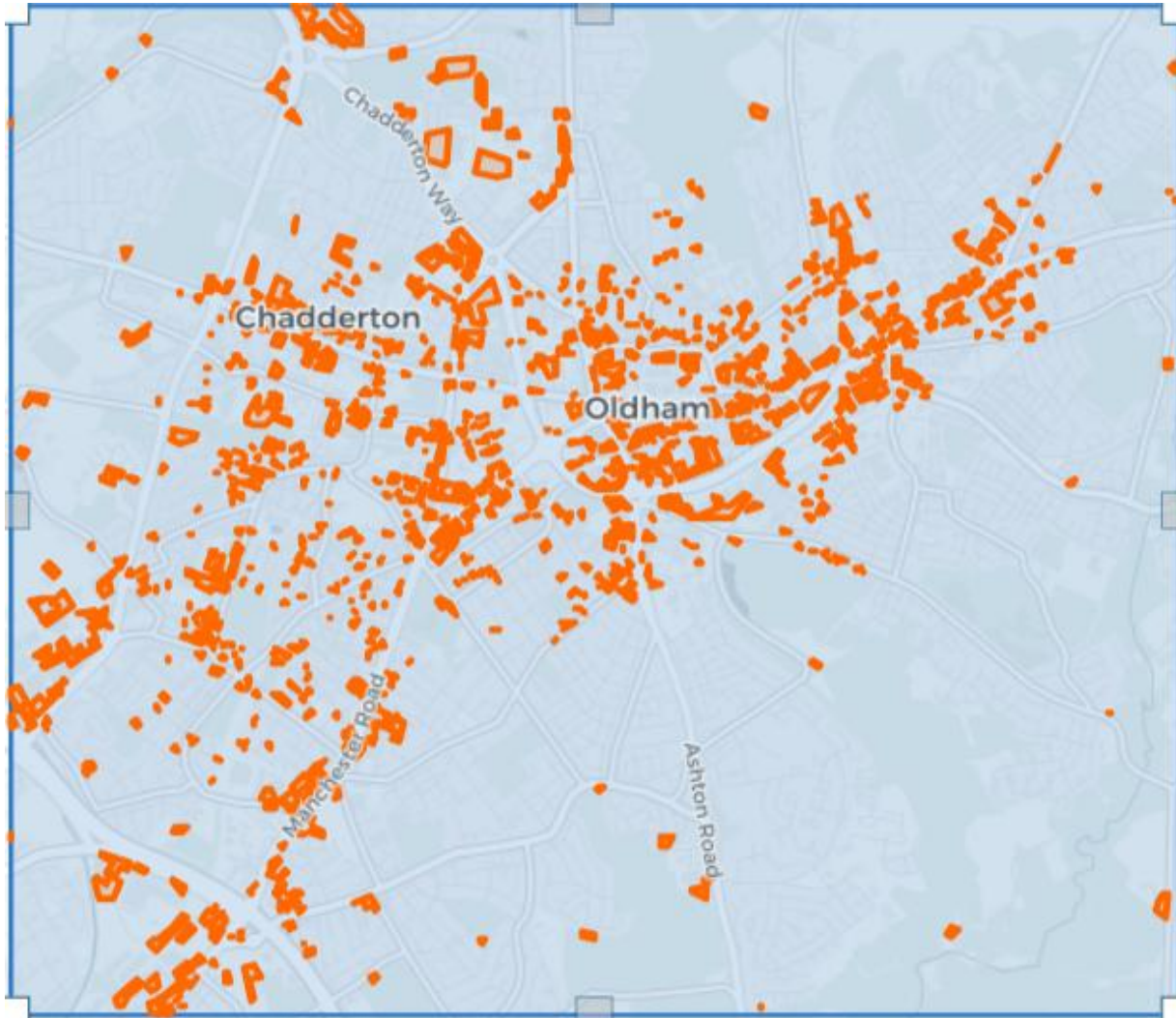


Identified by the [Parkulator tool](#)

**0.81% of this area** (86.05 hectares) is occupied by car parks. On this we could build roughly:  
**8,600 homes** at London density;  
**25,800 homes** at Paris density;  
**43,000 homes** at Barcelona density;  
**130 parks** like Park Square, Leeds.  
This area could generate as much as **43MW** (equivalent to 12,800 homes) from solar power<sup>†</sup>.

NOTE : 'London density' is assumed here to be 100 dwellings per hectare.

# Oldham



**3.06% of this area** (82.13 hectares) is occupied by carparks. On this we could build roughly:  
**8,200 homes** at London density;  
**24,600 homes** at Paris density;  
**41,000 homes** at Barcelona density;



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# Create 'low-car' housing

The Assembly, car-free development Hounslow Outer London.

No or very little parking provided (car club / Blue Badge provided)





Site currently in use as a 1.4 hectare, ~ 500 space car park

The car park is situated within Cheltenham's Central Conservation Area and Old Town Character Area, and borders several listed buildings - such as Grade II Listed St Margaret's Terrace (pictured above).



# Car parks: a missed opportunity?

- Knight Frank's 2020 study identified 103,000 public and private surface car parks across the country
- Land area of 20,000 hectares (7,555 hectares public sector)
- Could yield 2.1 million homes (modest density assumption)
- Often not well-used
- (CPRE branches have proposed development of under-used car parks for housing, with limited success)

<https://www.knightfrank.com/research/article/2020-07-15-government-owned-car-parks-could-hold-the-key-to-110000-new-homes>



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# Density is important

*We are consistently building at 30 to 40 dwellings per hectare (super low density)*

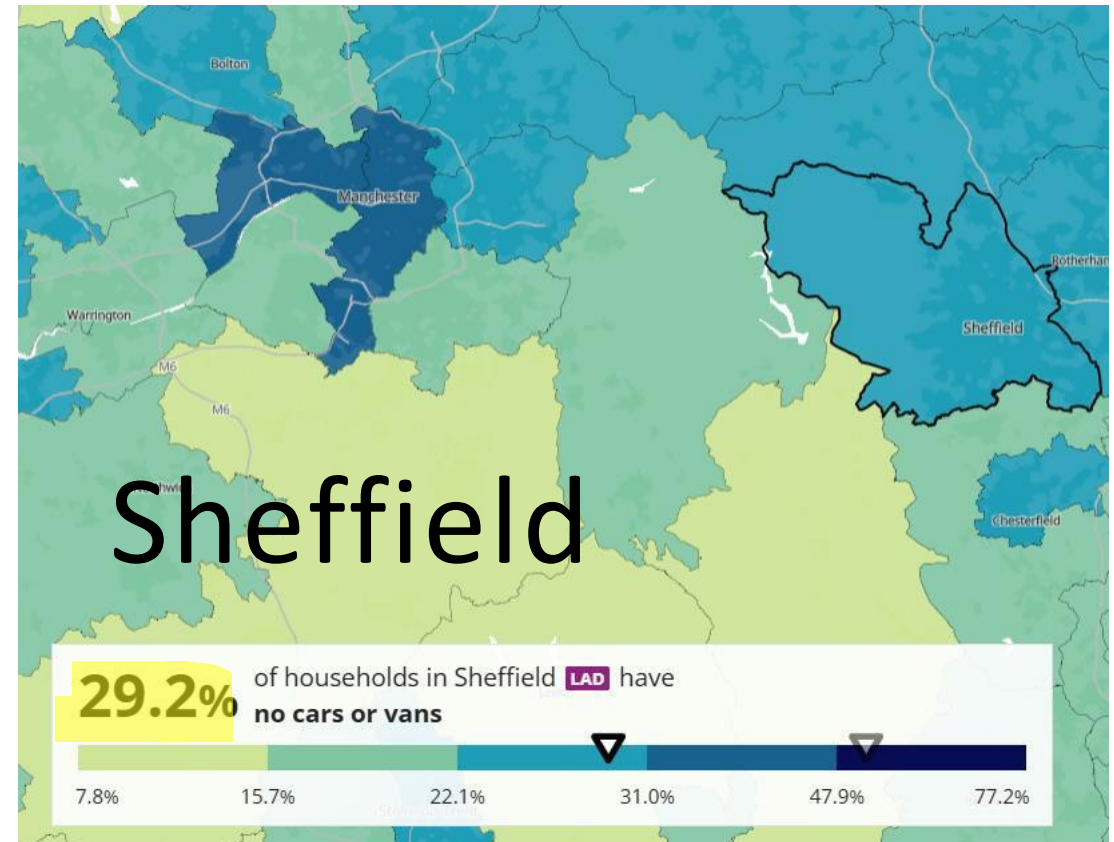
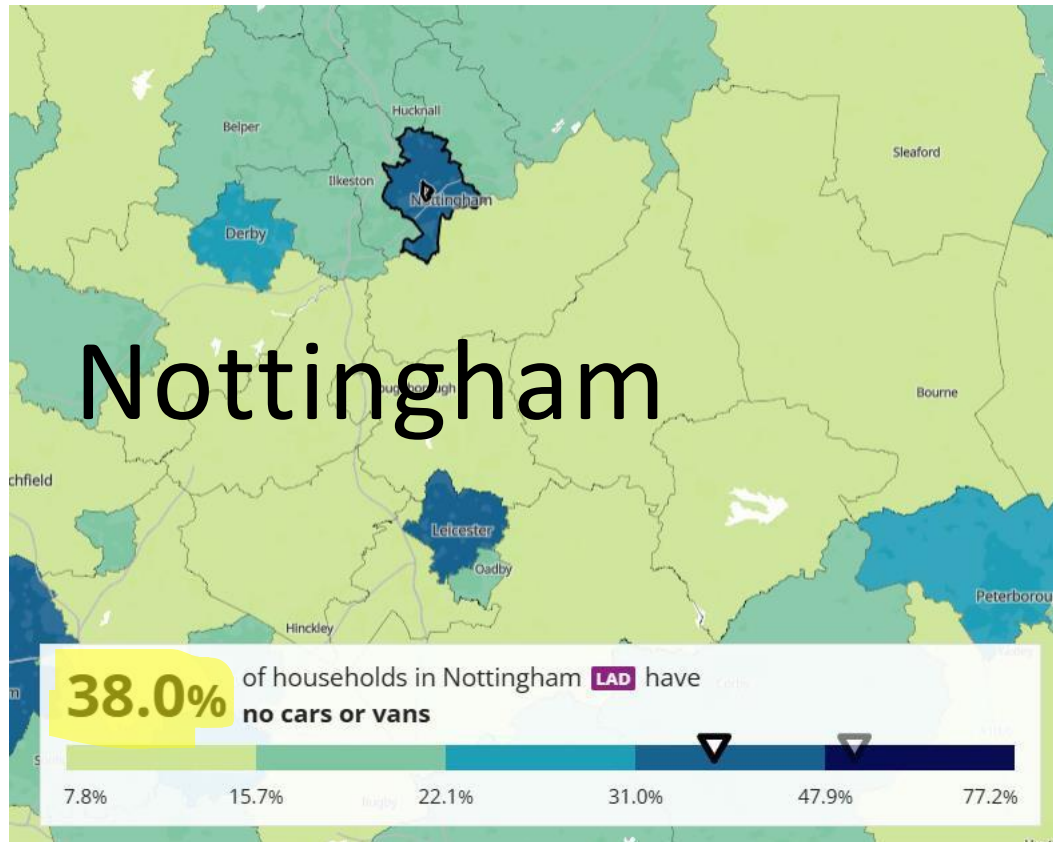
But what does 100 dwellings per hectare look like?





# Equitable places

## % households with no car or van





# Appropriate Local Plan policies (a)

- **Local Plan underpinned by Sustainable Transport Plan** (integrated transport and land-use planning) with mode shift targets to reduce car use in favour of public transport, walking & cycling
- New housing must be planned in a **sustainable location**, recognising that making better use of space within existing towns, particularly surface cars parks, is demonstrably the most socially, environmentally and economically sustainable option
- New housing must be planned at **appropriate density** to support public transport and local amenities – in other words at or above around 100 dwellings per hectare and certainly not below 60



# Appropriate Local Plan policies (b)

- **Parking standards:** Councils should adopt 'car free' or 'car lite' housing development policy restricting parking for private vehicles. Car club parking OK. Blue Badge parking YES.
- 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), especially in town centres
- FUNDAMENTAL: **sustainable location** i.e. in a location where residents do not have to use a car for the majority of trips
- Less car-centric **town centres:** make them nicer!

# Appropriate Local Plan policies (c)

- **Town centres** Place-based, town-centre policies in Local Plans should be linked to reduction in car-parking and traffic, and a shift away from car-dependent retail on the town periphery.
- Local Plans should support public transport, walking, cycling and wheeling by allocating space for bus transit, delivery hubs and walking and cycling infrastructure
- Local Plans should provide clarity for developers, particularly on low car-parking standards, to ensure local authorities can lever investment into public transport, walking and cycling.

# Clarity for developers

- **Clarity in Local Plan policies on expectations on how people will travel** are essential to gaining value from development
- *“The spend on roads was reduced to just £2m, freeing up £23m to be spent on facilities for the whole community”*




## Stepping off the Road to Nowhere

How changing transport modelling can create green growth, sustainable transport and beautiful streets and homes

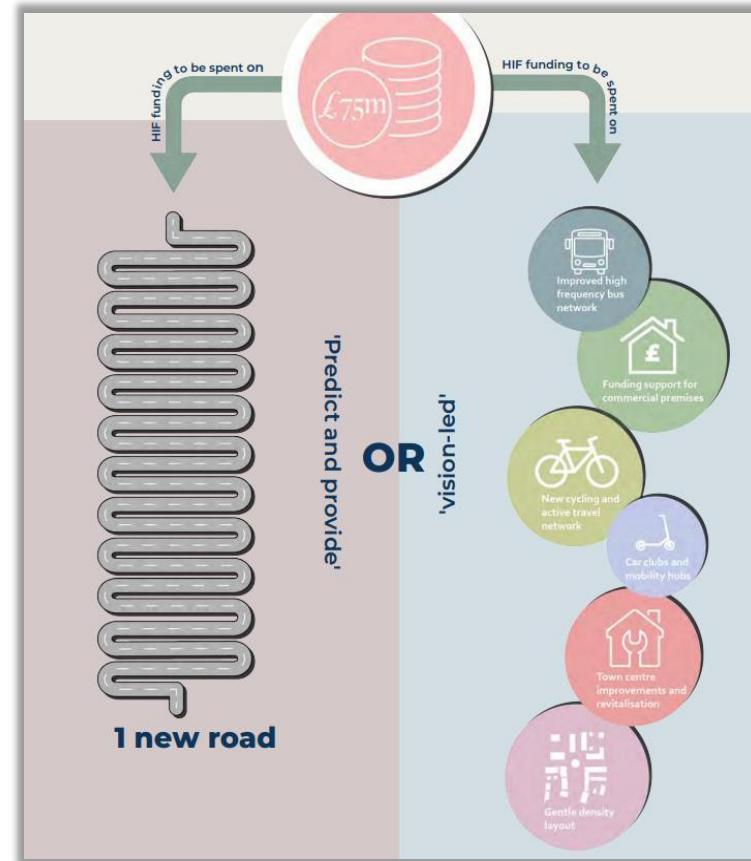




# Predict and provide... OR ... 'vision-led'



**Stepping off the Road to Nowhere**

How changing transport modelling can create green growth, sustainable transport and beautiful streets and homes



An important read...

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/media/13431/stepping-off-the-road-to-nowhere-report-sustrans-create-streets.pdf>

# Transport Strategy policies

Local Transport Plans MUST include strong residential and destination parking policy with the aim of delivering incremental mode shift i.e. from car trips to public transport/walking/wheeling/cycling. Backed up by **mode shift targets**.

- Transport planners should work with planning, highways and parking teams to **control availability and cost of car parking**, including reducing and increasing charges / introducing a Workplace Parking Levy. Surplus income can be allocated to improve people's travel choices e.g. funding concessionary fares.
- Transport authorities should **adopt bus franchising powers** with a view to cross-subsidising profitable and non-profitable routes. They should consider using parking account surplus to fund bus infrastructure and concessions.
- Transport, highways and parking teams should also work together to allocate a minimum of 25% of urban **kerbside** space, as well as excess road space and road lanes, for active travel, public transport and green infrastructure.