



Avon Street Car Park in Bath is due to be replaced with mixed-used development

Parking policies for Local Plans & Transport Strategies

Alice Roberts, CPRE London, March 2026



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Presentations and resources

<https://www.cprelondon.org.uk/news/car-parking-local-plans/>

Different urban forms create very different impacts and costs

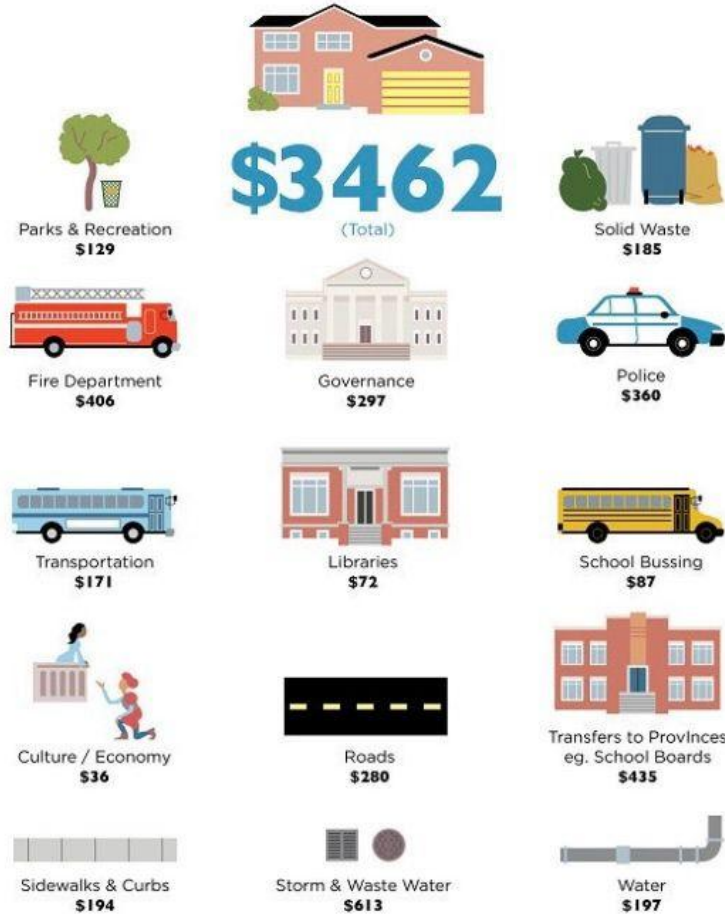
- For households
- For communities
- For governments

Low-density, out-of-town urban sprawl has particularly serious environmental, social and economic impacts

- **Buses** - loss of buses as people don't use them
- Local and regional **economy** suffers as poor public transport means people can't get to work or shops
- **Environment** suffers as more car trips mean more pollution, carbon and poor health
- **Town centres** lose out to out-of-town retail and become unpleasant car-dominated places
- **Social** impacts include isolation, independence, severance

Suburban

City's Annual Cost, per Household



Urban

City's Annual Cost, per Household



Housing, transport, infrastructure and urban form: part of the same system

- NOT an argument for high rise, high density or a singular urban form: towns and cities will have diverse forms
- But if we're to have 'meaningful planning', fundamentally
Transport Strategies and Local Plans need to be drafted together



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Integrated planning must include a parking plan...

... to deliver economic, social and environmental objectives

1. **Local Plan** (controls development including location and density and parking provision in new development)
2. **Transport Plan** (strategic plan for transport)
3. **Parking Plan** (controls availability and cost of residential parking and destination parking)



Parking is at the heart of land-use & transport planning

Compact cities (some with Green Belt)

Higher density (100+dph)

Fewer than 30 cars per 100 households

Car clubs for occasional car trips

Low carbon

Public transport financially viable

Active (healthy) lifestyles

'Low car' housing development

Limited destination parking

Urban Sprawl

Lower density (30-40dph)

Over 100 cars per 100 households

Everyday private-car-use

High carbon

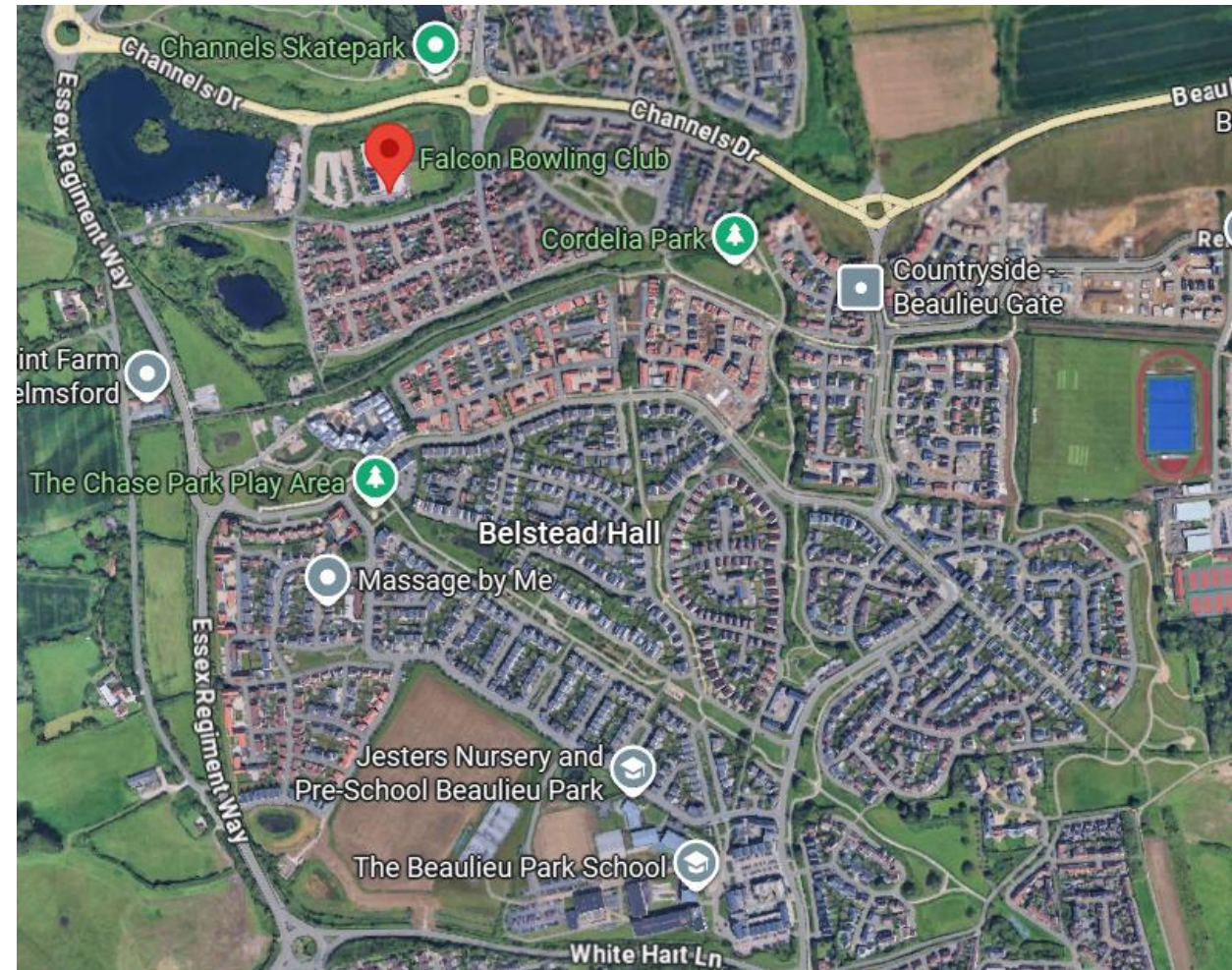
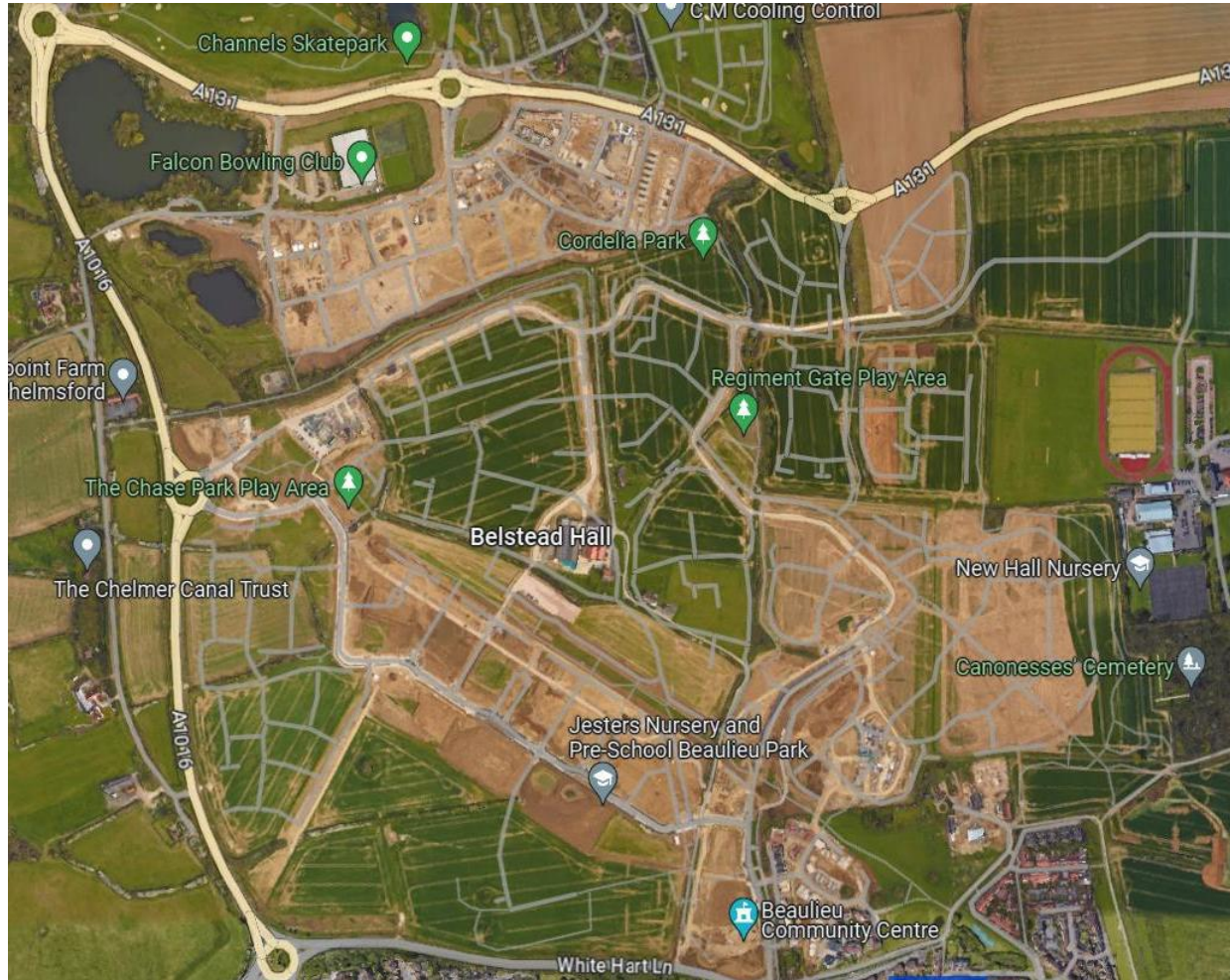
Car dependent

Inactive (unhealthy) lifestyles

2 car parking spaces per new household

Lots of destination parking

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

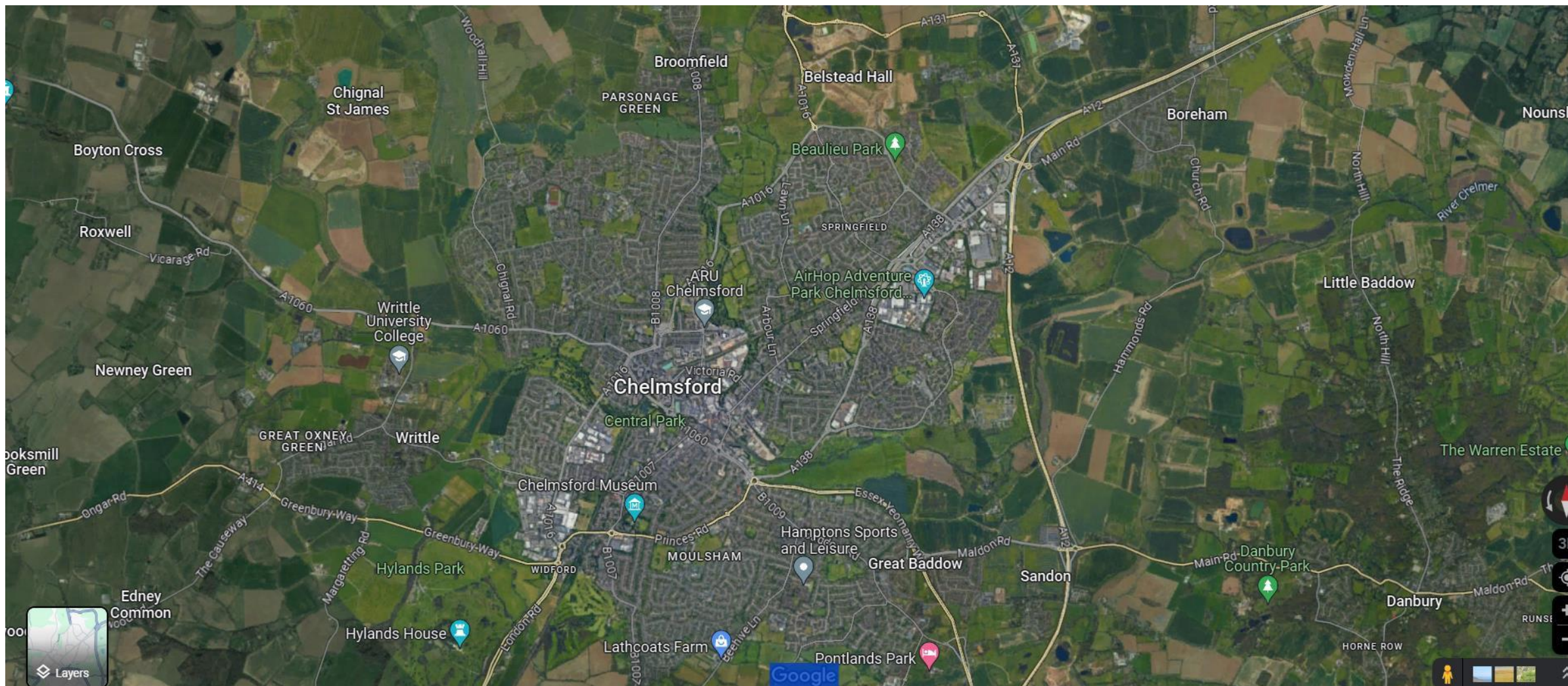


RTPI research

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/policy-and-research/practice-and-research/the-location-of-development/>



Chelmsford: should be easy to walk / cycle / bus



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



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The alternative: compact towns & cities

Location, location, location



MICHAËL

Countryside lost / urban sprawl introduced... despite available brownfield / under-utilised space



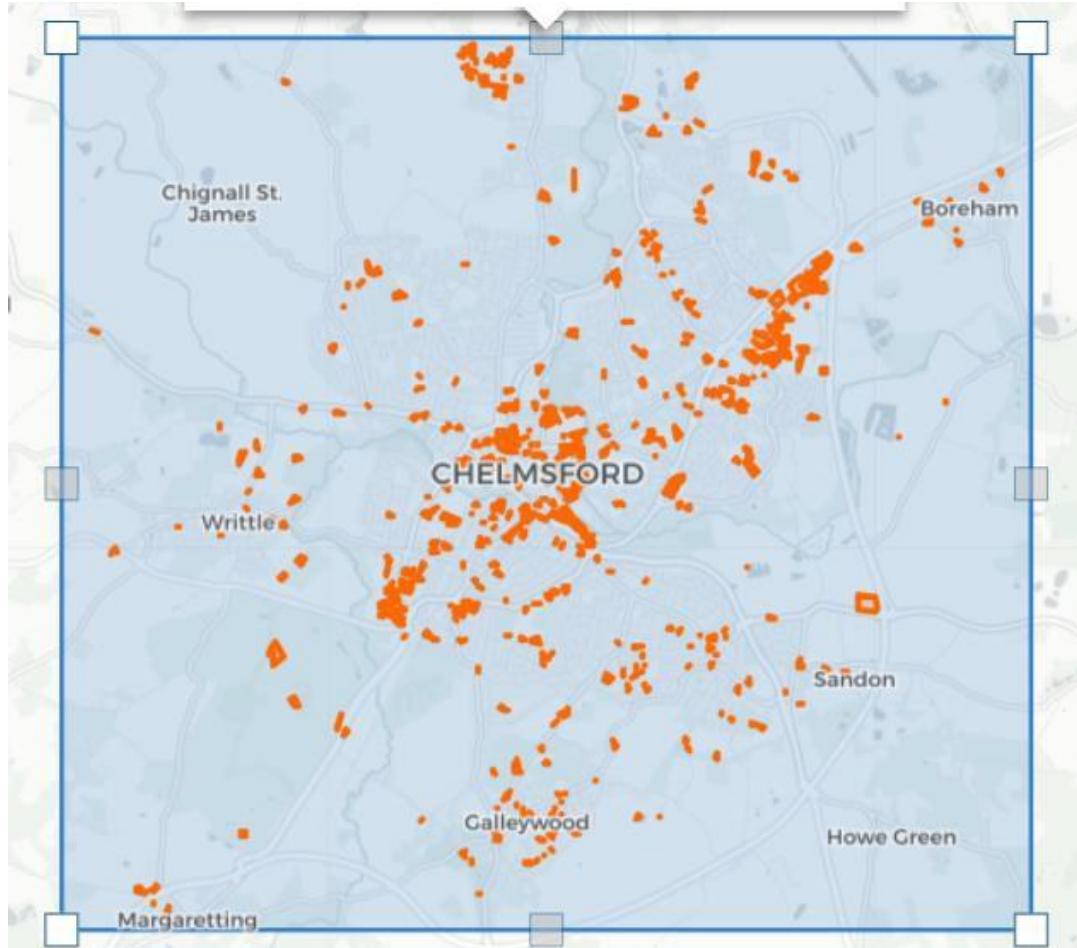
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Chelmsford car parks



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Identified by the [Parkulator tool](#)

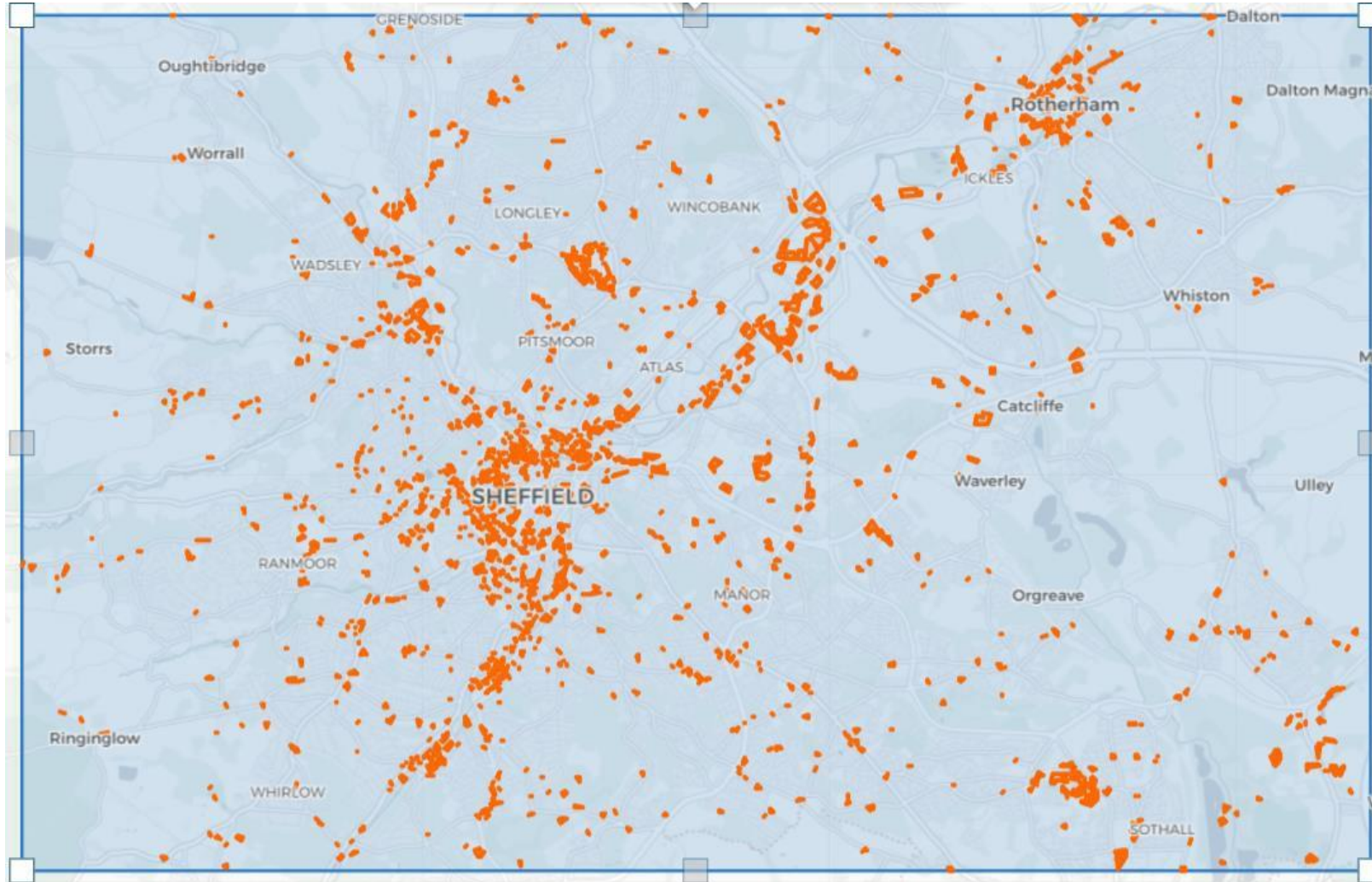
0.81% of this area (86.05 hectares) is occupied by car parks. On this we could build roughly:
8,600 homes at London density;
25,800 homes at Paris density;
43,000 homes at Barcelona density;
130 parks like Park Square, Leeds.
This area could generate as much as **43MW** (equivalent to 12,800 homes) from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

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

Parkulator e.g. Sheffield



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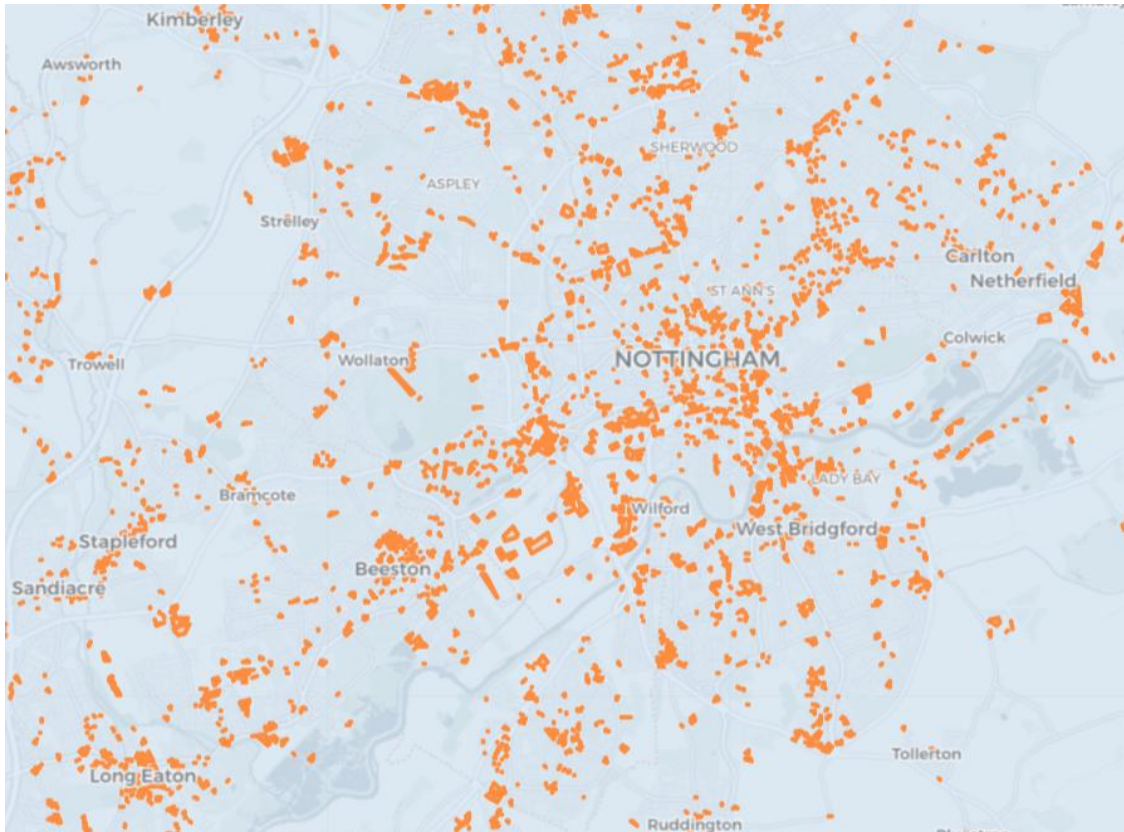
1.06% of this area (**250.37** hectares) is occupied by car parks. On this we could build roughly:
25,000 homes at London density;
75,100 homes at Paris density;
125,100 homes at Barcelona density;
380 parks like Park Square, Leeds.
This area could generate as much as **124MW** (equivalent to 37,100 homes) from solar power[†].

Note – this website assumes ‘London density’ is 100 dwellings per hectare

Nottingham



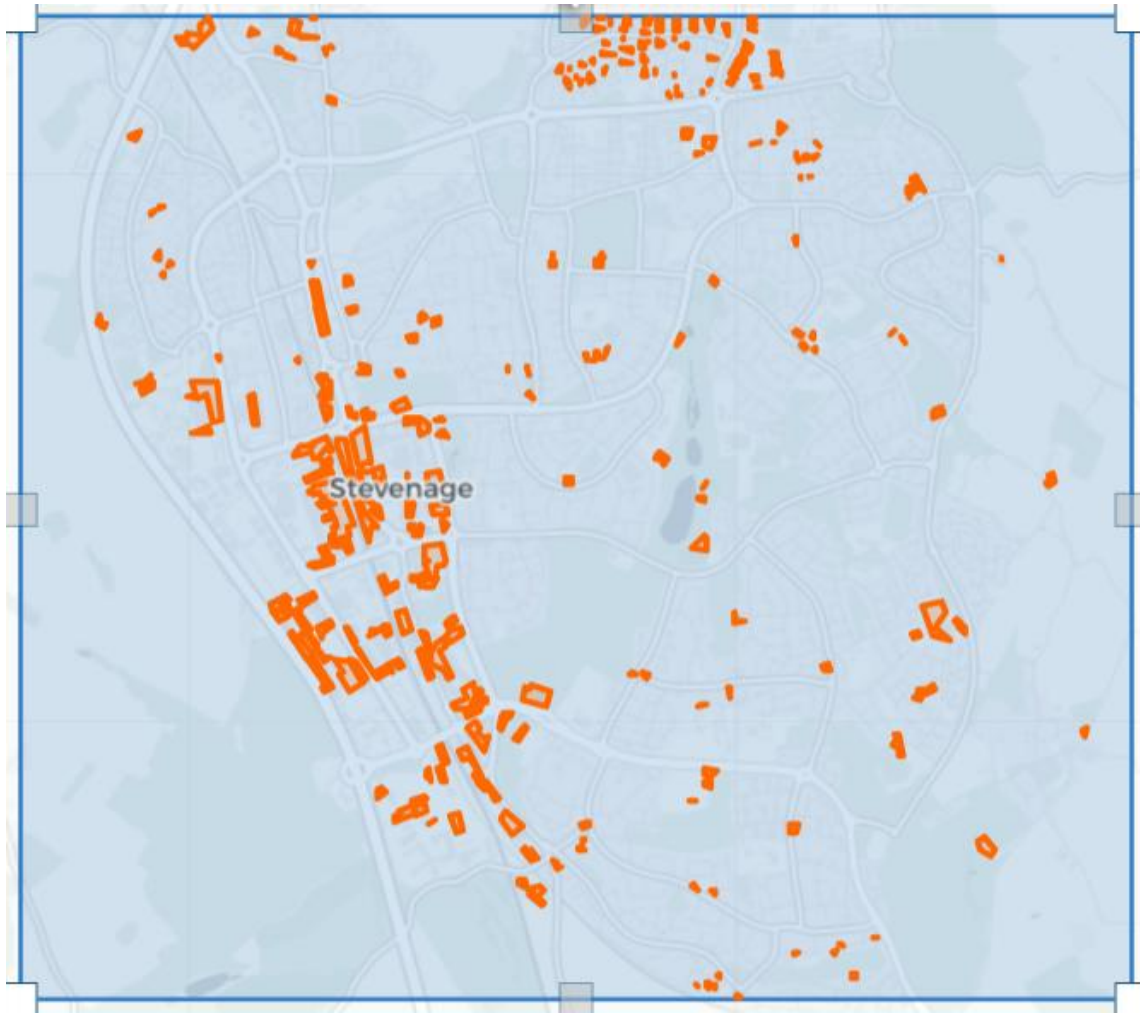
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1.29% of this area (336.15 hectares) is occupied by car parks. On this we could build roughly:
33,600 homes at London density;
100,800 homes at Paris density;
168,000 homes at Barcelona density;
510 parks like [Park Square, Leeds](#).
This area could generate as much as 166MW (equivalent to 49,800 homes) from solar power†.

Note – this website assumes ‘London density’ is 100 dwellings per hectare

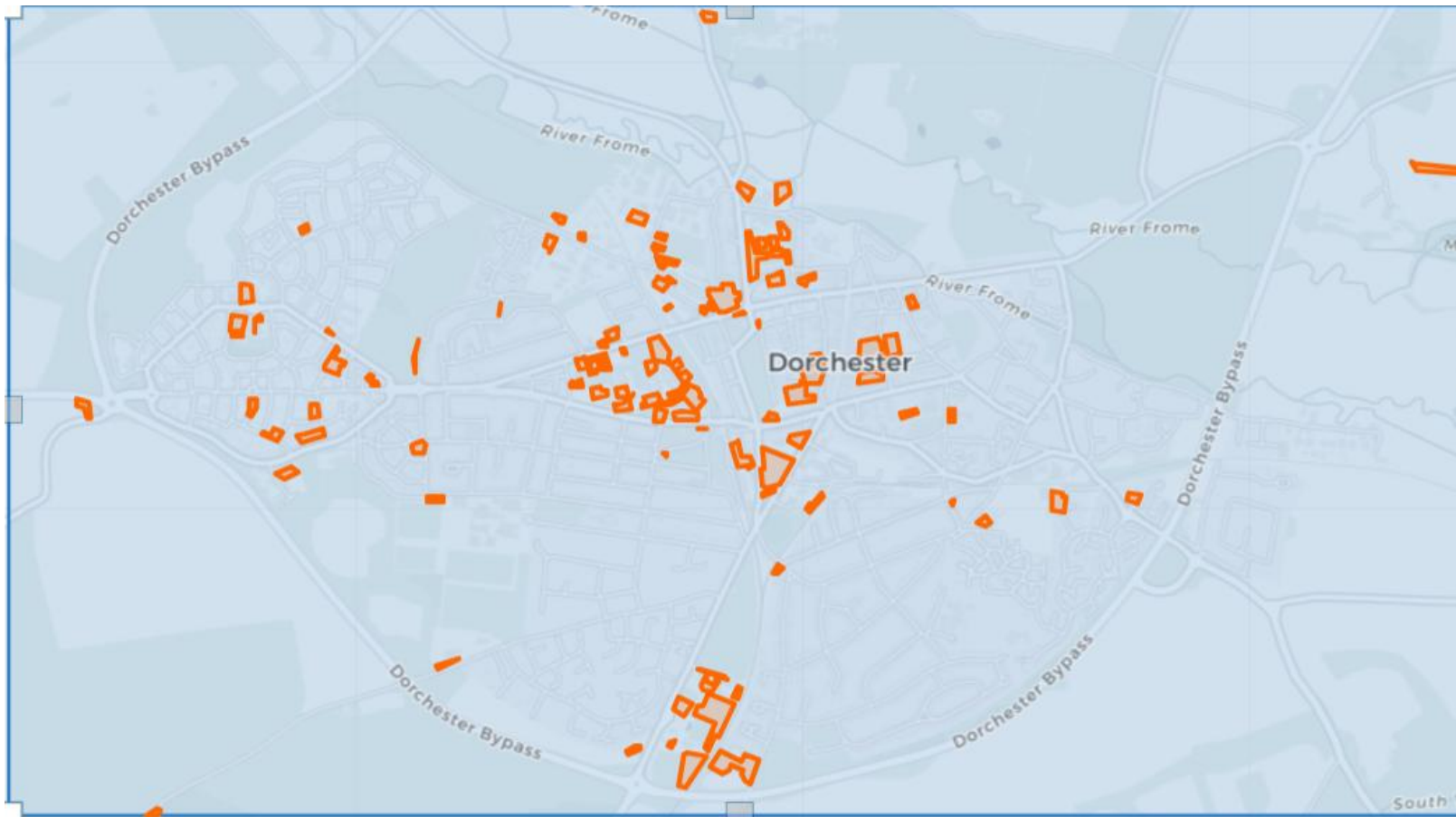
Stevenage, Hertfordshire



1.59% of this area (52.80 hectares) is occupied by car parks. On this we could build roughly:

- 5,200 homes** at London density;
- 15,800 homes** at Paris density;
- 26,400 homes** at Barcelona density;

Dorchester, Dorset



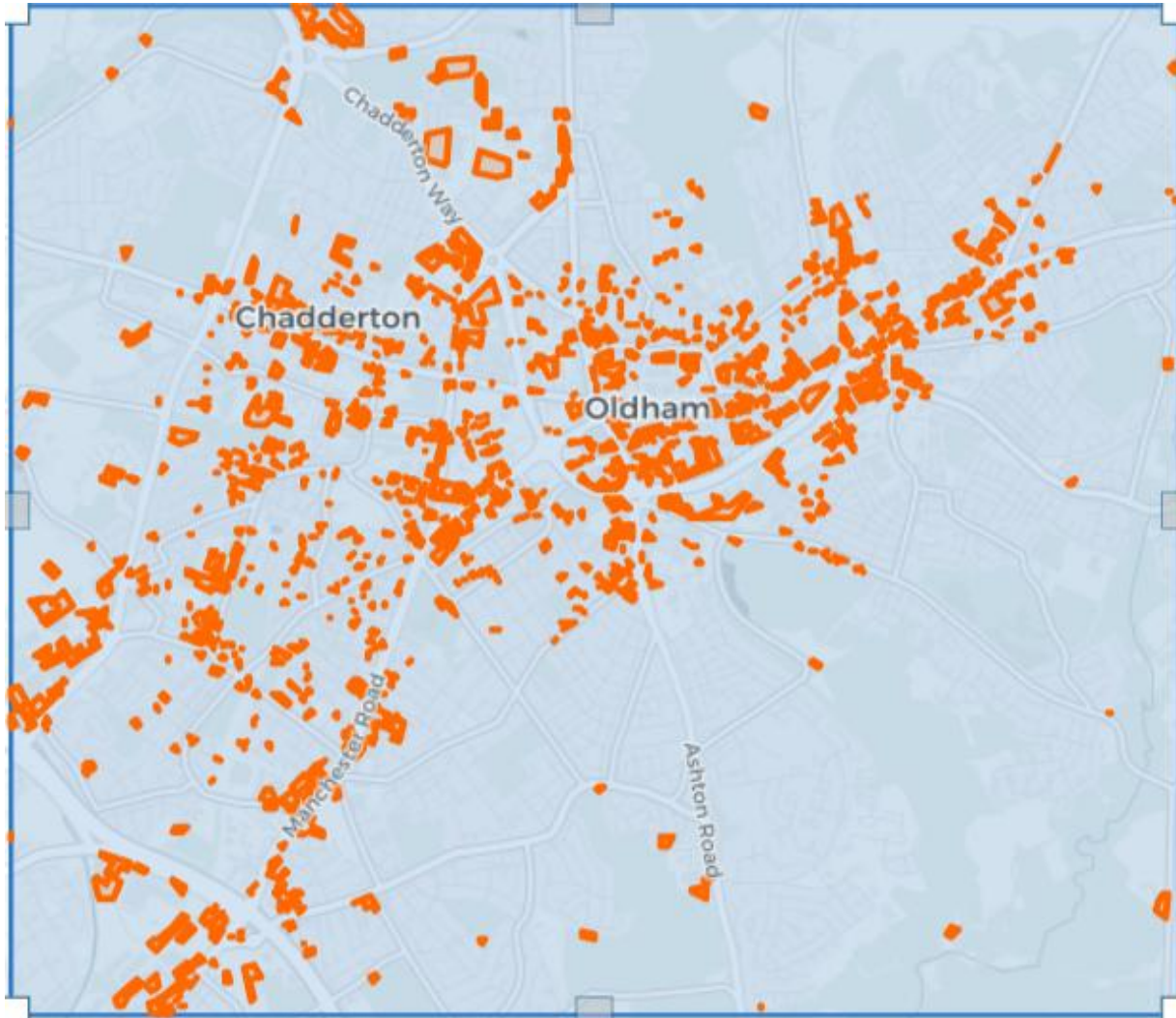
1.23% of this area (17.51 hectares) is occupied by carparks. On this we could build roughly:

1,750 homes at London density;

5,200 homes at Paris density;

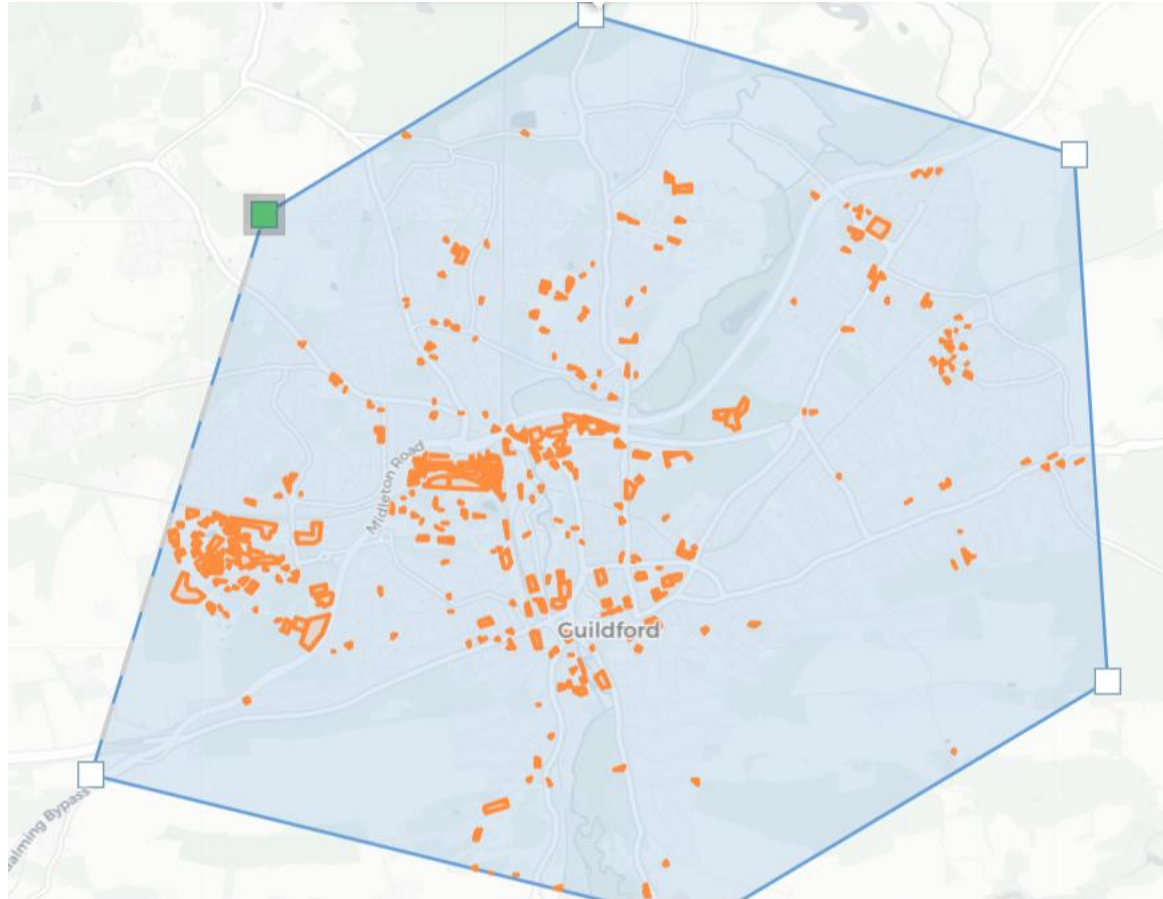
8,700 homes at Barcelona density;

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;

Guildford, Surrey



/ clicking of the map to define vertices or click-and-drag to obtain a rectangular shape. ...

1.64% of this area (56.25 hectares) is occupied by car parks. On this we could build roughly:

5,600 homes at London density;

16,800 homes at Paris density;

28,100 homes at Barcelona density;

85 parks like [Park Square, Leeds](#).

This area could generate as much as

28MW (equivalent to 8,300 homes)

from solar power[†].



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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Create 'low-car' housing

The Assembly, car-free development Hounslow Outer London.

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





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Density is important

More about **gaining the benefits of density:**

Double the density, halve the land used

10 reasons higher density living is good for communities



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

But what does 100 dwellings per hectare look like?

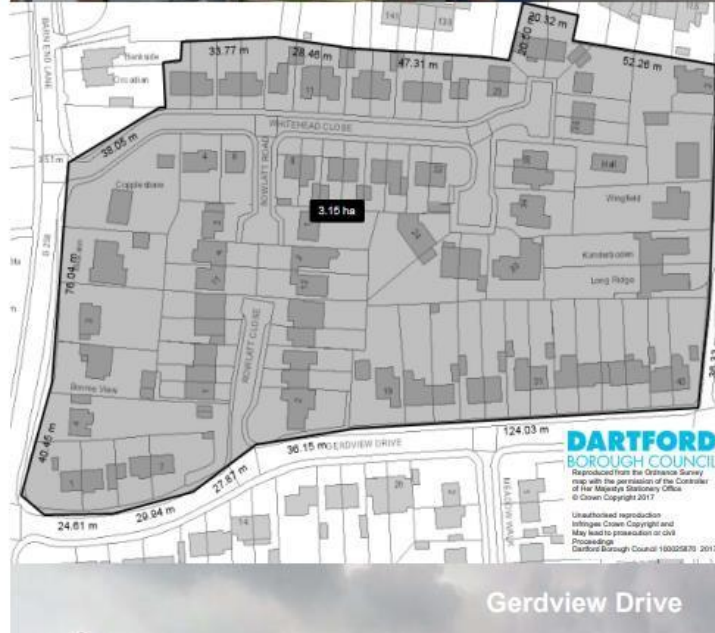


Density is key e.g. bus services become financially viable with densities over 60 dwellings per hectare (dph) though good use of space would mean higher densities, upwards of 100dph.

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.

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



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.

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.

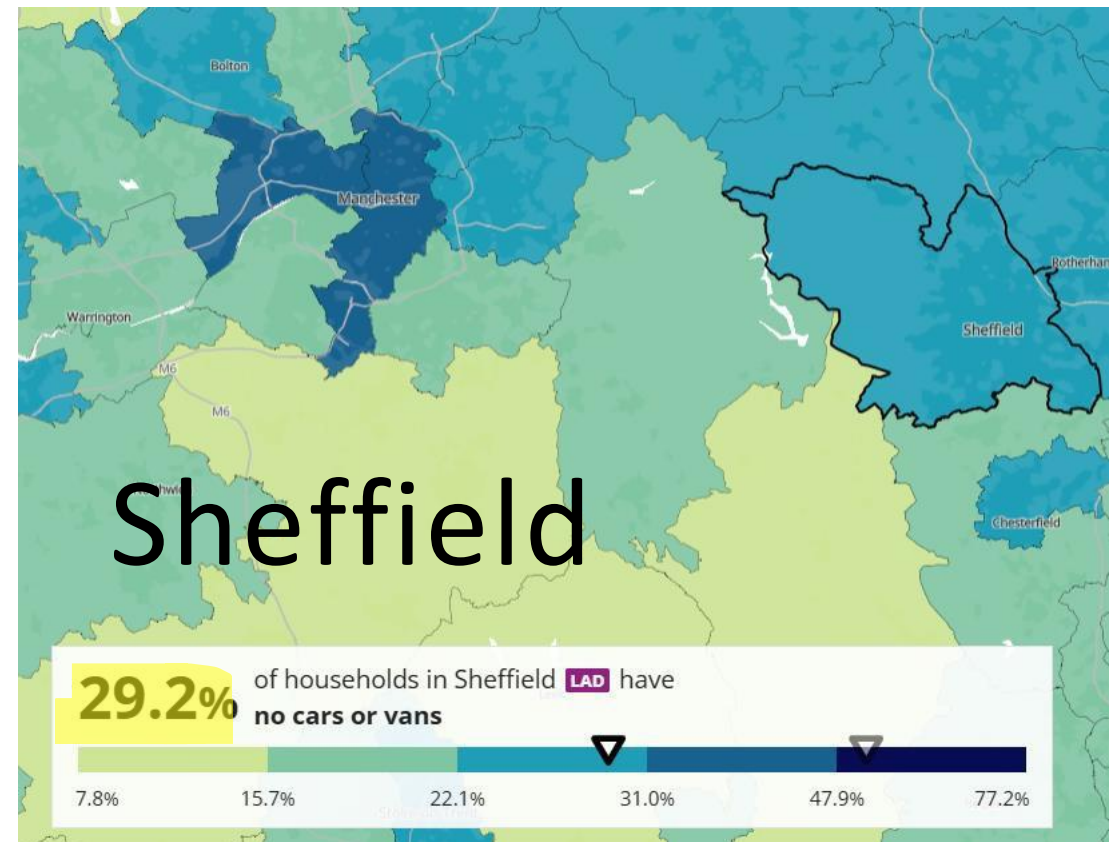
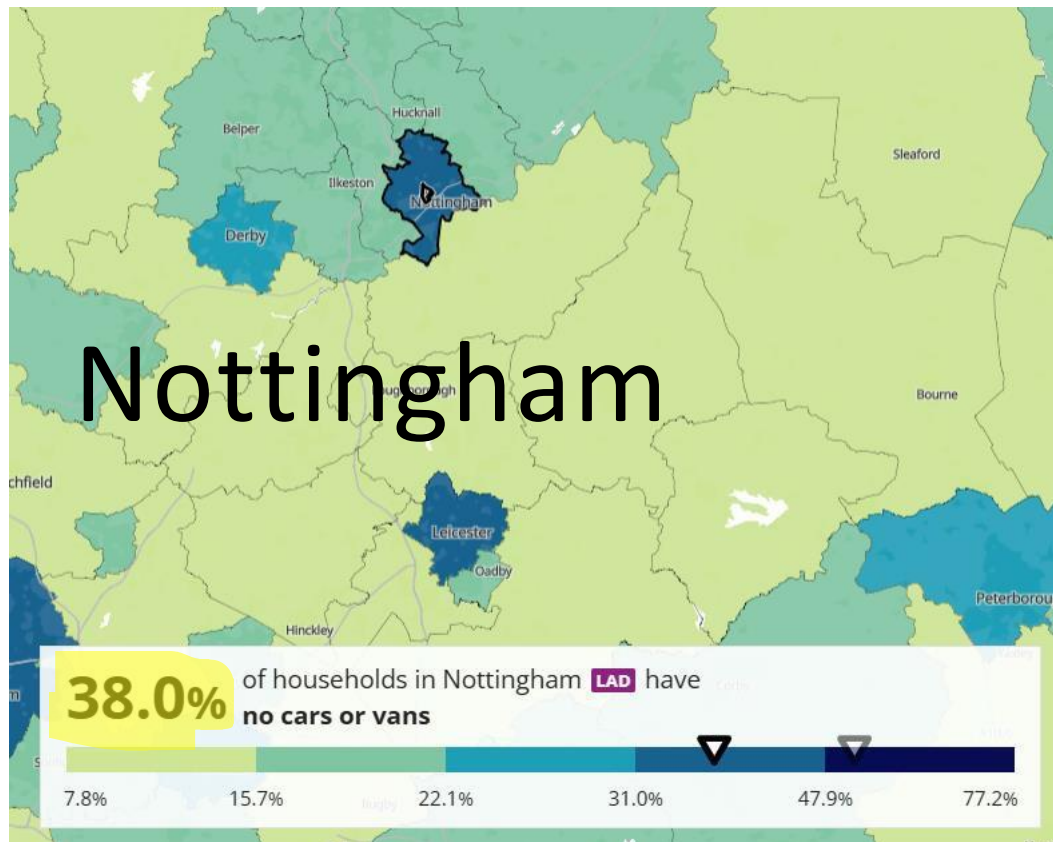




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Equitable places

% households with no car or van





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Affordable housing

- Knight Frank's 2020 study identified 103,000 public and private surface car parks across the country.
- Land area of 20,000 hectares of which 7,555 hectares are owned by the public sector
- Publicly owned car park: social housing financially viable
- Privately owned car park: if a council seeks to CPO to build affordable housing, LURA 2023 removes hope value from the calculation i.e. *purchase price should reflect existing-use value i.e. as a car park, only (any added value which would result from planning permission being in future granted should be ignored)*



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Affordable housing and LURA

- Levelling Up and Regen Act 2023 (LURA) addressed the removal of Hope Value when councils acquire sites for Affordable Housing
- Government legislated to remove Hope Value from certain Compulsory Purchase Order valuations via Section 190 [Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023](#) by inserting sub-sections into 1961 Land Compensation Act [new section 14(A)(3)] which specifies that the *prospect of planning permission is to be ignored*

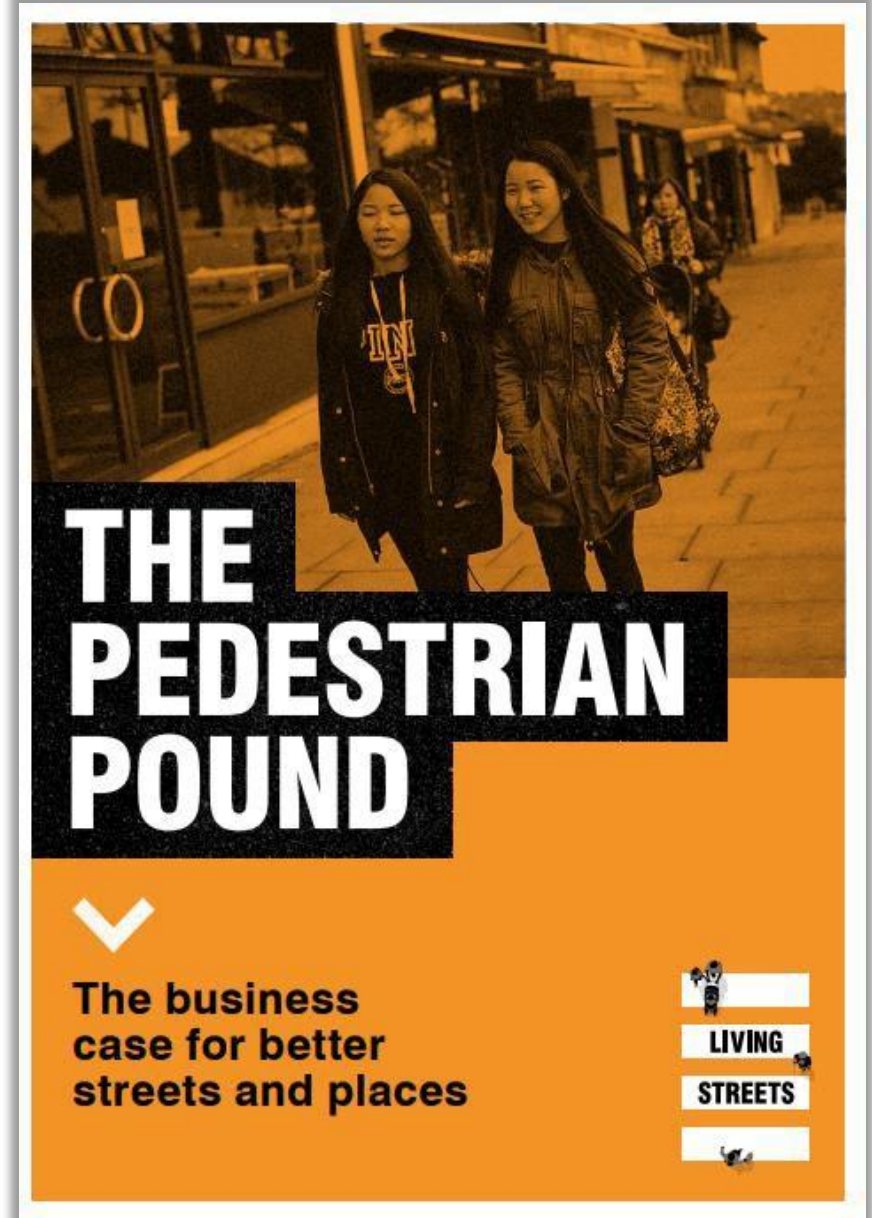
Supporting the local economy. Evidence shows that removing parking from shopping parades, and instead introducing pedestrianised space or parklets, benches, greening or other public realm improvements, has a positive impact on income for local businesses.

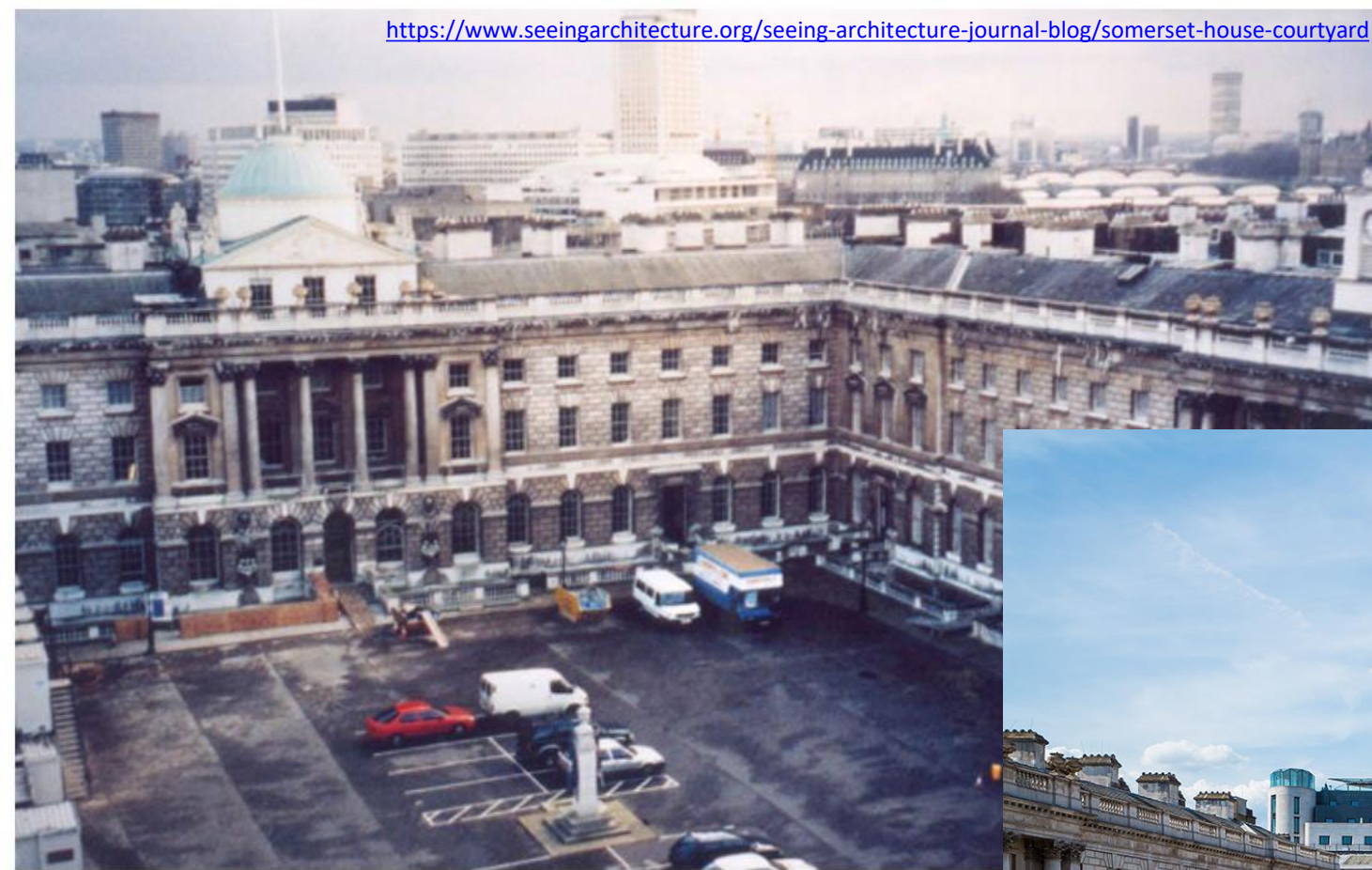
Often the most vociferous opposition to removal of parking is from local business, concerned shoppers won't be able to come to town anymore.

In reality, people are more likely to come, stay longer and spend more if the town centre is more pleasant.

And, of course, people can still come, but more would eventually arrive by public transport.

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/policy-reports-and-research/pedestrian-pound/>





Improving historic settings is just one example of the many benefits parking policy can bring. For more, see [CPRE London's page on parking](#) including the Parking Action Plan for Local Authorities created with climate charity Possible.

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





Why parking matters

- Saving the countryside ([compact cities vs urban sprawl](#))
- Gaining **benefits of density** (transport/amenities/shops viable)
- **Healthy, equitable** transport, less **pollution/carbon**
- **Improved urban realm**: streets, historic settings, town centres
- **Economic recovery** (shopping, visitor attractions)
- **Fair** use of public space and resources
- **Freeing up space** for parks/play spaces, street trees and SUDS, bus lanes, cycle lanes, hangars, clear pavements etc
- Delivering **housing in a good location**, including **affordable**



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First the policy



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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 car 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 policies 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), 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

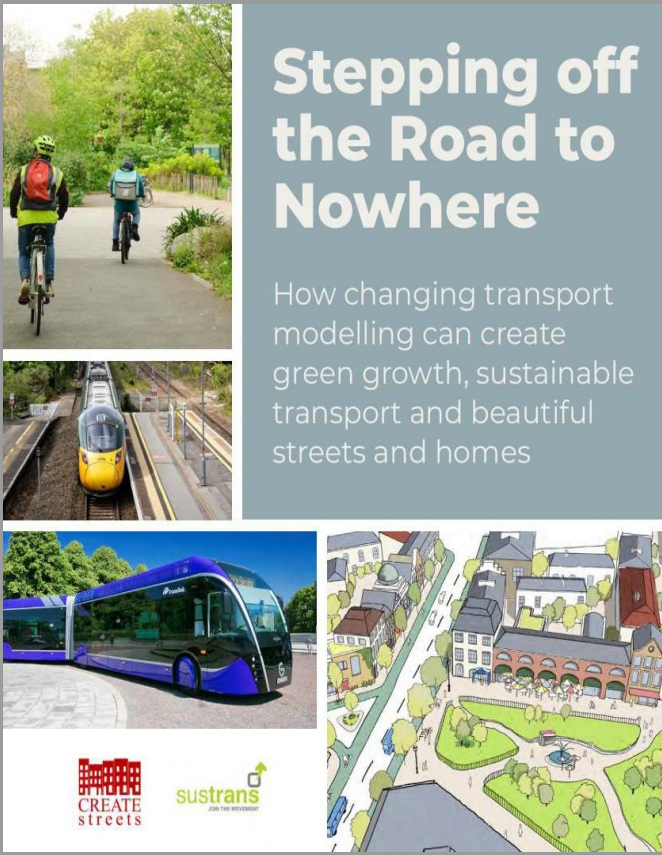
- **Clarity in Local Plan policies on expectations on how people will travel** are essential to gaining value from development
- *“The spend on roads was reduced to just £2m, freeing up £23m to be spent on facilities for the whole community”*



Stepping off the Road to Nowhere

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

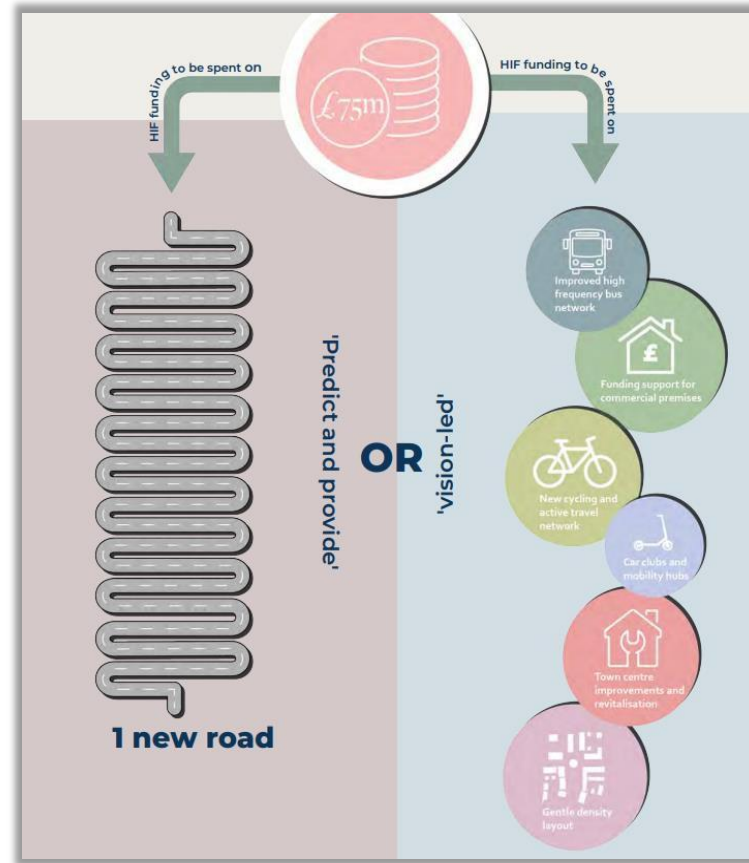
Predict and provide... OR ... 'vision-led'



Stepping off the Road to Nowhere

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

CREATE streets **sustrans** JOIN THE MOVEMENT



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 need strong residential and destination parking policies to deliver incremental mode shift i.e. from car trips to public transport, walking, wheeling and 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.

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 (£)
Expenditure		
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
Total Expenditure	3,772,068	3,854,896
Income		
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
Total Income	9,483,753	9,935,089
Financial adjustments		
Deficit/Surplus	5,711,685	6,080,193

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>



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Next the politics...



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1. Not unrealistic

It's not as unrealistic as you may think. Councils are already adopting these policies: show case studies of where councils are e.g.

- Allocating car parks for development
- Using low 'parking standards' for new development
- Using parking a/c surplus for e.g. bus concessions / infrastructure
- Adopting and delivering Kerbside Strategy

2. A good case



It may be a difficult ask, but there's a very good case...

... and many of the benefits will align with wider council goals. Detail the benefits. Use this for discussions and building support. Many people rely on buses; or are in need of affordable housing, etc. Align with them to gain support. Give supportive councillors the wherewithal to champion change.



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3. Present the positive

Talk about

- town centre regeneration (more people, stay longer, spend more £)
- supporting buses
- widening labour markets for local business
- building homes / affordable homes / homes which reflect need



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4. Voters support positive change

The media and vocal driver lobby will object, but voters are positive about good transport management.

And remember that more people than you think do not have access to a car (check [ONS data 'households with no car'](#)) or are in one-car households (often meaning one person relies on buses).

5. Have the inspector in mind



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If a Local Plan is being developed:

- Identify sites (surface car parks, particularly under-used ones) in a sustainable location which could be used for housing /mixed-use.
- Make a positive case for why these should be considered for development and show how they compare to any alternative countryside locations.
- Be ready to raise considerations with the inspector at Examination in Public stage. Point to in/consistency with wider policy as appropriate.
- Work with landowners and developers to proactively bring car park sites forward for development.
- Be ready to defend zero / low-car parking standards, showing links to wider Local Plan policies and evidence on impact.

6. Use opportunities



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Local government reorganisation and bus franchising are huge opportunities to align Local Plan / Transport strategy integration.

Don't miss them. Get in early. Don't wait for others. Lead the debate.

A note on supportive national policy

- Powers are already in place for local authorities
- NPPF policy in development – leans towards ‘vision-led’
- ‘Grey belt’ and other policies unhelpful, but not a deal breaker
- Proposal to remove parking maximum provisions where councils had to make a case to set parking maximums is positive



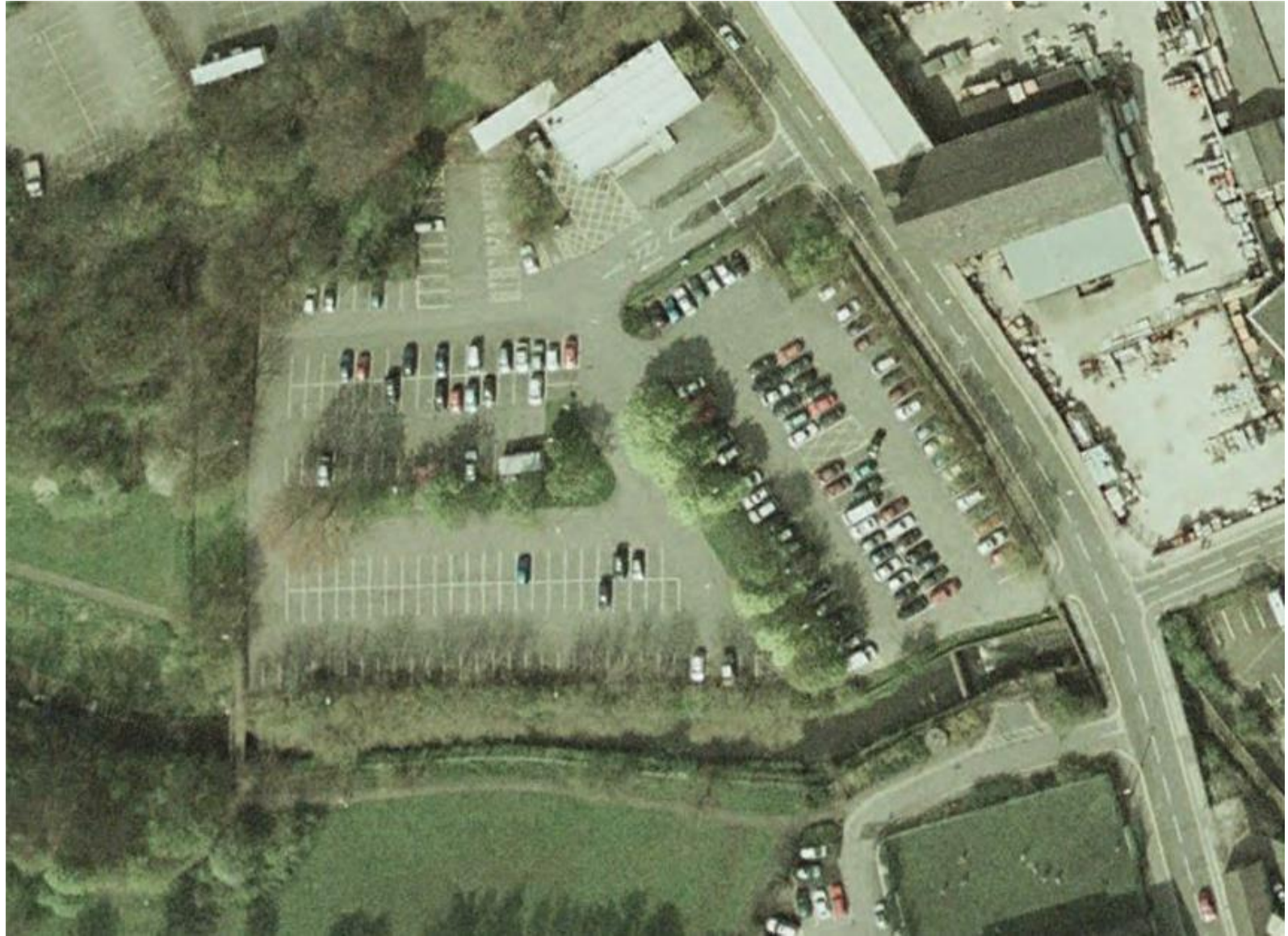
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PART 5:

Examples of car parks used for housing or mixed-use development



Bolton Chorley Street Car Park







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Key Stats

0.57 hectare site within 5 mins walk of Bolton town centre

In use as an NCP car park (93 spaces) until 2015

Redeveloped in 2021 as part of wider “urban village” regeneration project

118 new homes delivered with a focus on shared ownership, affordable rent and over 50s accommodation

‘Car-lite,’ transit oriented approach taken - explicit focus on sustainable transport (eg improved pedestrian / cycling links)

82 parking spaces ‘retained’ for use by residents; less than 1 car per household

Wider benefits include reduced flood risk thanks to incorporation of flood attenuation systems

According to ONS Census Data, **54%** of households in Central Bolton have no cars or vans

For further details, see: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/news/article/1332/residents-move-in-as-town-centre-masterplan-takes-shape>



Hornchurch Dorrington Gardens Car Park



According to [documents submitted](#) to Havering Borough Council, only 17 of the 196 spaces available on site are used per day - despite its proximity to the local high street.





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Key Stats

0.52 hectare site within 5 min walk of the local high street

Site remains in use as a 'surplus' / under-utilised 192 space car park

Hornchurch benefits from high public transport availability levels (PTALS)

Plans propose for the site to be redeveloped into 34 new homes (low to medium density)

In line with London Plan maximum standards, on site parking would be limited to less than 1 car per household

According to ONS Census Data, car / van ownership in the area remains high at around **70%**

For further details, see: <https://dorringtongardens.communityuk.site/>



Cheltenham North Place Car Park



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).



**WELCOME TO
NORTH PLACE CAR PARK
PARKING FROM £1.40
SEASON TICKETS AVAILABLE**

**WELCOME TO
NORTH PLACE CAR PARK
SEASON TICKETS AVAILABLE
DAY TO FRIDAY PERMIT
FROM
£ PER MONTH**

**BEWERY
QUARTER**



Plans for site to be redeveloped into 147 homes (75 three-bedroom townhouses and 72 one and two-bedroom apartments) have now been approved. None of the apartments will be afforded car parking spaces, while townhouses will be allocated a single parking space each.



Bradford on Avon Mill Lane Car Park



2009

- **0.12 hectare site**, located within the town's Conservation Area.
- Built as a walled garden in the late 1800s, the site later served an adjacent industrial site and remained in use as a 33 space car park until 2011. Planning permission for 6 townhouses to be built on the site was granted in 2012.
- Pictures of the site before and after its redevelopment:





Bournemouth Durley Road Car Park



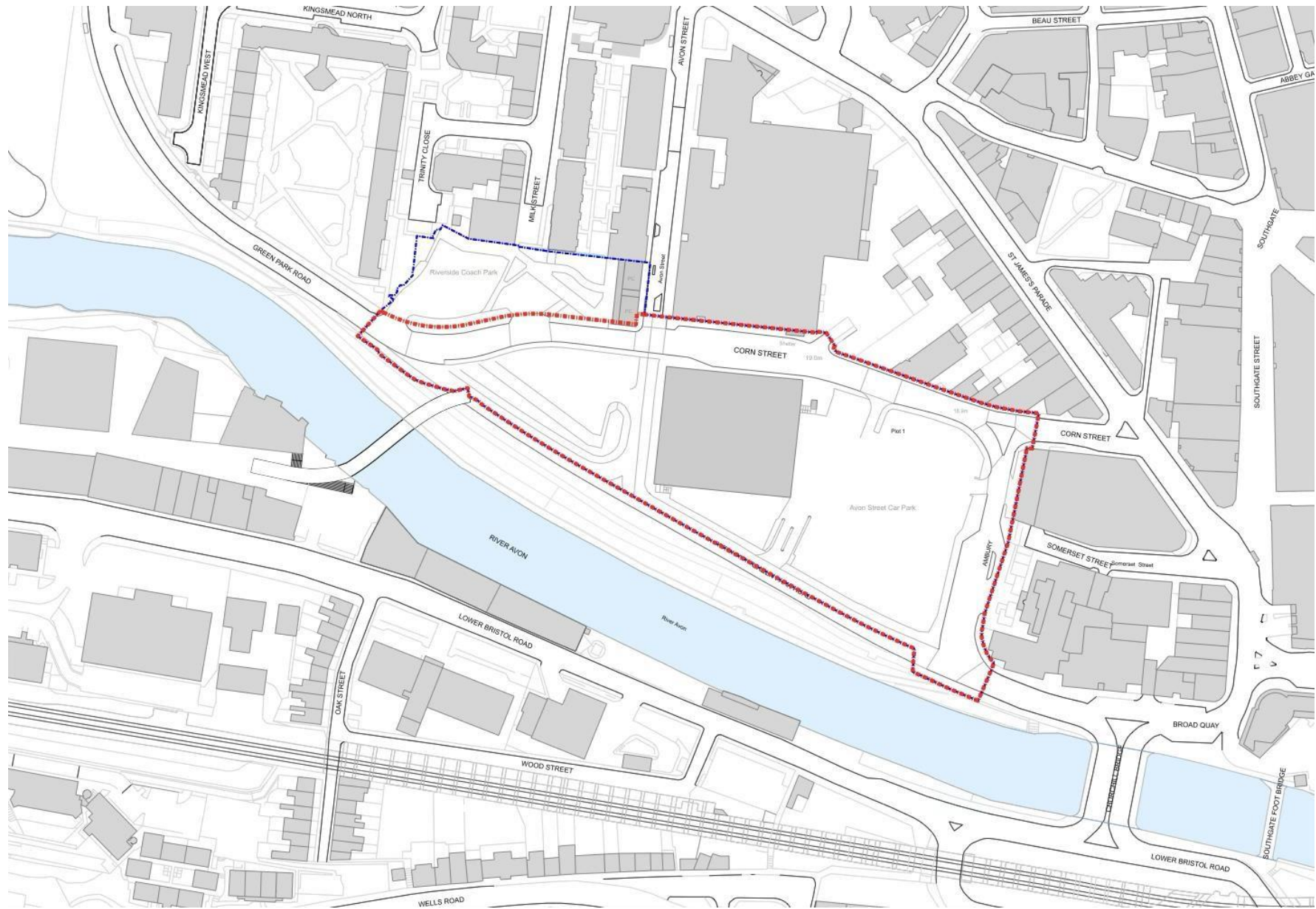
- **0.27 hectare site** located within 15 mins walk of Bournemouth Pier.
- In use as a **119 space, council owned car park** until January 2020 - when planning permission was granted (on appeal) for the site to be redeveloped into housing.
- 44 new homes have since been delivered on site:





Bath Avon Street Car Park / Quays North Development

- **0.86 hectare site**, located south-west of Bath city centre.
- Located within the World Heritage Sites and Bath Conservation Area & bounded by Avon river corridor - a designated Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI).
- Owned by B&NES Council; allocated as a development site in 2017.
- Remains in (partial) use as a surface car park, providing 140 spaces.
- Forms part of wider **Bath Quays North (BQN)** development project, which encompasses an additional three plots of land adjacent to the site.
- Planning permission for Phase 1 of the project was granted in Feb 2025; this is set to deliver **90 class C3 homes** as well as 20,000m² of mixed office, retail and hotel space.
- Car / van ownership in Central Bath & Lansdown is low, albeit increasing: 61.2% of households own 1 or more cars / vans – a 3.5pp increase since 2011.





BATH IN TIME
Images of Bath online

1935



Approved Plans





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Examples of 'low car' parking standards for new development

Oxford City Council – Policy M3: Motor Vehicle Parking

Local Plan 2036 (adopted June 2020). A PDF of the Local Plan is available [here](#); see pages 108 - 110 re parking. Relevant section: “Limiting the opportunities for parking within the city helps to reduce car use leading to reductions in air pollution, congestion and the creation of a more attractive environment for walking and cyclists. In reducing the availability of public and private parking there will be fewer car trips as people shift mode to a more sustainable form of transport. Furthermore, parking across the city is not an efficient use of land, a key consideration in Oxford, where land is so constrained.” (7.23)

Cont...

Residential Developments: “In Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) or employer-linked housing areas (where occupants do not have an operational need for a car) where development is located within a 400m walk to frequent (15 minute) public transport services and within 800m walk to a local supermarket or equivalent facilities (measured from the mid-point of the proposed development) planning permission will only be granted for residential development* that is car-free. In all other locations, planning permission will only be granted where the relevant maximum standards (see below) are complied with.”

Brighton & Hove City Council

- Supplementary Planning Document 14: 'Parking Standards' (adopted October 2016), Policy CP9 of the Brighton & Hove City Plan (Pt 1) states: "[Brighton & Hove City Council] will promote and provide measures that will help to manage and improve mobility and lead to a transfer of people and freight onto sustainable forms of transport to reduce the impact of traffic and congestion, increase physical activity and therefore improve people's health, safety and quality of life." These include the adoption of maximum car parking standards, the details of which are set out in SPD 14.

London – Policy T6 Car parking

- A Car parking should be restricted in line with levels of existing and future public transport accessibility and connectivity.
- B 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.
- C An absence of local on-street parking controls should not be a barrier to new development, and boroughs should look to implement these controls wherever necessary to allow existing residents to maintain safe and efficient use of their streets.



- [Stepping off the Road to Nowhere](#): How changing transport modelling can create green growth, sustainable transport and beautiful streets and homes
- CPRE London [page](#) – with lots more resources
- alice@cprelondon.org.uk