

Fourth Session: Outer London Commission

Minutes – Croydon Town Hall

10th March 2015

Attendance:

OLC Members

Will McKee	Chair	WM
Corrairie Swaine	Arup	CS
Alistair Parker	Cushman & Wakefield	AP

Non – OLC Members

John Lett	GLA	JL
Rachael Rooney	GLA	RR
Peter Heath	GLA	PH
Josephine Vos	TfL	JV
Peter Wright	TfL	PW
Ian Smith	South London Partnership	IS
Paul Drummand	Kingston	PD
Cllr David Cunningham	Kingston	DC
Nick Greenwood	Kingston	NG
Mary Manuel	Bromley	MM
Steve Heeley	Bromley	SH
Alexander Baldwin-Smith	Bromley	ABS
Peter Loveday	Sutton	PL
Andrew Rawlinton	Croydon	AR

1. Welcome and Introductions

WM welcomed everyone.

2. Process for Fourth round of OLC

WM explained that the fourth round would be split into 2 sessions, one initially focussing on residential parking which would immediately inform a Minor Alteration to the London Plan (MALP), and the second session exploring a range of other issues that JL would go through later in the meeting.

For the first session on parking, following on from the first Commission's meeting which was held in December 2014, there is now a series of meetings being held around London, which this is the first, to gain the views of wider outer London stakeholders. There will be a final Commission meeting in late March and report setting out the Commission's recommendations published in May to coincide with consultation on the MALP.

3. Specific Discussion Point: Parking Review

TfL presented the issues arising from the parking review – see attachment for slides.

The Chair explained that in discussions in the other sub regional meetings, it has become apparent that there were identifiable typologies beginning to emerge – one being PTALs. He then asked attendees if there are others.

One of the boroughs asked how the Commission was expecting comments from boroughs and the drivers were behind this policy review as they felt the standards were already generous and sufficiently flexible.

One view was: “if it isn’t broken why fix it?”

A borough then raised concerns about the speed of this review, mentioning its impact on the delivery of housing and traffic.

One of the boroughs said that Outer London wasn’t homogenous – many places in the borough don’t have access to the tube which has significant implications for development. They questioned the ability of one policy to adequately address all of outer London. They agreed with a suggestion put forward that maximum standards were toxic and unnecessarily restrictive in some cases. Local authorities need flexibility to make decisions. There are a whole range of other factors that influence parking – differences between how CPZ operate, etc. Need flexibility otherwise like saying localism goes out of the window.

The Chair confirmed that was why it was very important to get the views of outer London stakeholders. He explained that the Commission will formulate their view based on the opinions expressed. They would not simply try and find the lowest common denominator.

Clarification was offered on the “if it’s not broken then why fix it” comment: stakeholders were under the impression that parking policy already worked well and provided sufficient flexibility for local decisions to be made. Thought that the presentation quite clearly showed this; the example from Croydon demonstrates flexibility.

It is important to recognise that outer London is very varied. In areas of very low PTALs, whilst there is a need for flexibility, it is also important to encourage greater investment in public transport rather than simply encouraging more car use.

One borough reiterated that they thought there was insufficient flexibility at the moment.

One of the Commission members said wasn’t it better to understand the nature of the problem i.e. the Government’s view about on street parking and overspill and the boroughs’ experience of these issues before jumping straight into what the policy should be.

The Chair agreed and poised the question whether there are certain circumstances where there is a need for more flexibility and asked what the boroughs felt about overspill.

In response one of the boroughs said that their borough is mostly PTAL 2 and it still has issues with overspill. They have particular concerns that car free developments are a ‘house of cards’ waiting to fall down if planning agreements are challenged. There is also an issue that it is difficult to refuse a scheme on the basis of not meeting correct standards. There is not a lot of point /appetite either politically or in terms of resources in ‘taking on’ TfL/ inspectors over low provision of parking even though it causes problems.

Another borough said that 73% of their borough was in PTAL 2 or less and 3 out of the 4 town centres only had a PTAL of 3. They highlighted that PTALs are such a crude way of measuring public transport accessibility, which is not only outdated but really doesn't reflect reality. They stressed that they wanted to keep the reference to maximums in the policy as management is a balance between parking stress and street scape. It would be helpful however to have more guidance on provision and design for developments between car free and maximum provision. The borough expressed a wish to work with TfL.

A borough suggested that maximums should not apply and that standards should be set locally. This borough wishes to implement minimums at small units as well, and stated that people own cars in outer London town centres.

Another borough emphasized that PTALs don't reflect reality and differences between places as they don't take account of trip destinations – i.e where people want to go. They think that there should be much greater flexibility in the standards and that the flexibility should extend to PTAL 2. They also wanted to see the introduction of minimum standards.

One of the boroughs explained they often find themselves in discussions with developers in areas of low PTAL where there is a difference of opinion between TfL and themselves and how that 'flexibility' should be applied. TfL take a restraint based approach. It's therefore important that boroughs can set their own standards as local knowledge is key.

Another borough said that it was important that to 'enshrine' flexibility it should be raised in policy rather than just supporting text.

One of the boroughs said that the maximum standards gave them comfort in negotiating with developers as they keep a downward pressure on traffic generation. They also suggested that worrying about overspill issues risks missing the point and losing sight of the impact on the wider road network, especially in light of the growth London is experiencing and will continue to experience.

One of the Commission members then asked about the impact of viability and deliverability. If there is greater flexibility then the uncertainty for developers means that schemes are not as viable.

One participant said that they deal with development all over London and for example in Tower Hamlets where there are CPZs everywhere, it makes it much easier to bid for land and feel comfortable about the viability of schemes as the policy/standards have already been taken into account in the price of the land and bidders are all working on the same assumptions. Viability of schemes is affected if these types of issues are open to negotiation. Maximum standards provide security for developers and boroughs to meet housing demand.

TfL asked what the desirability was of using CPZs as part of policy in terms of issues of management.

One of the boroughs responded highlighting that if residents already feel developments are being pushed on them and then you say this development will only go ahead with a CPZ it causes even more opposition from residents. CPZs need to be a political decision otherwise seen as a revenue stream by the Council.

One borough said that they have one CPZ in their borough and have tried to implement 3 further CPZs; all have failed. However, once a CPZ is in place residents approve of it and limited ones can prevent commuter parking near stations.

Another borough explained that even in areas with PTAL 3 they want higher provision. They therefore, are looking at a zonal approach based on other criteria, which is an approach similar to that taken outside of London in some parts of the UK. They also reiterated that more guidance on design issues for parking would be helpful, particularly for road widths and streetscapes as complaints from residents is less about parking and more about satisfaction with the development itself. Visitor parking has also come up as an issue in this borough.

The borough also said that through a survey they'd undertaken of 400 units, only 18% used the garage they had for parking, it was used for other purposes and therefore another space was used for the car. They therefore questioned whether garages should be included in terms of parking provision.

The Chair then reconfirmed the importance of boroughs sending in their comments and any evidence they have to support/argue for higher provision as well as where the current policy has resulted in sufficient flexibility. He said that without evidence the importance of considering congestion, growth, quality of life, etc. win.

TfL asked about the typologies and if PTALs don't work, under the zonal approach – what was the criteria that was used to assess differences. The borough confirmed they would share their methodology.

Another borough then asked whether any studies had been done on what relaxation of the standards would be on density and ultimately numbers of homes delivered. Also would the relaxation of standards in low PTALs encourage development in these locations rather than in town centres where development is more sustainable? Development in these places can be to the detriment of town centres.

The GLA responded that they were undertaking some work to gain a better understanding of the implications of this. In their initial reckoning one space might be equivalent to at least 17 sqm. Preliminary findings suggest about 2,500 homes are built in PTALs 0-1 in outer London per year, although permission is granted for roughly double this figure each year. By adding an extra space per dwelling would be the equivalent around 4.6 ha across the whole of outer London equating to around 190 dwelling pa @ 45 dph. It was recognised that this is a very rough estimate and needs further work.

One of the Commissioners then said it was not necessarily true that you would lose land take as extra space can often be designed in if known upfront. Also the development industry work on the basis of 24 sqm per space – (this would make the loss more like 270 dwelling per annum on the basis of the calculation above). Also the development industry is more concerned about what happens in the places between areas of good PTAL like Islington / Hounslow and places like Hackbridge where there is very generous provision and viabilities are not impacted. Betting on the places in between is seen as risky.

As a final point, one of the boroughs wanted to stress that it is the highways department who have to deal with the issues of overspill into the road because of limited parking provision. Often they have to implement double yellow lines on unadopted highways as

soon as developments are complete to allow for emergency access, as people will park anywhere they can and the roads are too narrow for parking.

Developers also have to strike a balance between providing homes and making profit.

Finally, one of the boroughs ended by saying that it is not just about space which is at issue, it is about the need to encourage other modes of transport. It's difficult in low density development to support public transport provision.

4. Outline of other issues for discussion in 2015

JL explained that later in 2015 the OLC would meet again to discuss a range of other issues of importance to outer London – the outcome of which would feed into the full review of the London Plan. These are summarised as follows:

Removing Barriers to Housing Delivery

Distinct outer London dimension e.g

- Density
- Viability
- Affordable rent / intermediate housing
- New built forms, existing character
- PTAL
- Local policy constraints

Crossrail and Land Release

Crossrail 1

- What other station related development potential could be realised?
- Ongoing work to be made available to the Commission

Crossrail 2

- What are the alignment options?
- Where could the stations be?
- What is the land use / density patterns around the stations?
- What is the potential for capacity uplift in terms of housing, town centre uses, businesses?
- What are the negative implications for such changes?

Land use priorities: Economy versus Housing

Emerging “Big Issue” – what is the right balance for a post industrial city?

- Offices to Residential / Industrial to Residential /
- Town Centres to Residential
- Eg industrial release C3 times 37 ha per annum benchmark
- New supply research to inform the Commission / Demand side assessment to follow
- What are the implications for this in terms of services for the city, output, productivity, employment?

Release of land for town centre intensification

Building on previous recommendations eg FALP policy 2.15

- Are there “volunteers” for town centre renewal?

- Are these geographically representative?
- How can they be developed as exemplars for wider applications?
- What sort of projects are required for these?

New approaches to regional co-ordination

Major EiP issue for London and wider South East

- Wider South East perspective - regional summit, wider south east Commission?
- Initial thoughts – 2050 Infrastructure Plan
- MDAG – Design responses
- OLC – London perspective - cross border arrangements - eg industrial and retail provision, parking, logistics, waste, migration flows, SMHAs, Duty to Co-operate
- OLC, MDAG, Wider SE Commission all to report by end of 2015 on more effective arrangements for coordinating strategic policy and investment across the wider SE

It was noted that advance notice could usefully be provided of this challenging agenda.

5. Next steps

This was the last sub regional meeting to be held.

A final Commission meeting was scheduled for 25th March to discuss the sub regional meetings and prepare recommendations for the final report to the Mayor.

The final report would then be published alongside the consultation of any minor alteration of the London Plan post the general election.

6. Any Other Business

7. Date of next meeting

Commission meeting 25th March.