

## Maximum parking standards

Maximum car parking standards are not new nor were they introduced for the first time in London 2001 (PPG13). They have operated in London for over 40 years. The Greater London Development Plan (1976) (paras 5.8.16 to 5.8.22 and Table 4) set “normal maximum permission for parking” for:

- offices and shops with different levels for the Central Area, Inner Ring, more important suburban centres and in the remainder of Outer London.
- residential developments it set 1 space per dwelling, except for dwellings for the elderly. Exceptionally it could be greater. Where car ownership is low, particularly in Central and Inner London lower provision should be made. Less can also be provided where there are difficulties in providing parking (eg conversions)

In the 1980s, London Borough plans used the standard of a minimum of one off-street parking space per dwelling. For non-residential uses, especially offices, the plans used maximum parking standards to discourage car commuting which fitted with the emphasis on the GLDP’s “preferred office locations” which tended to be in town centres or close to stations and fitted with a policy of trying to reduce car commuting.

By the 1990s London Boroughs’ Unitary Development Plans used maximum parking standards for offices, shops, hotels, leisure and various institutional uses, but still used minimum parking standards for residential uses. However, some Outer London Boroughs demanded more than one space per dwelling (in some cases as much as 5 spaces) resulting in increased land take per dwelling (ie lower densities) with a knock on effect on land and house prices, and increasing dependence on the car use and in the need for greater car ownership.

Following the demise of the Greater London Council in 1986, the London Boroughs worked collaboratively through the London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC). Research by LPAC developed parking standards based on public transport accessibility levels, which was then taken up by Government Office for London in RPG3: Strategic Guidance for London Local Authorities in 1996. Maximum parking standards for employment generating uses were set for Central, Inner and Outer London (Table 6.1), with Boroughs required to “convert these into specific standards for different land uses with reference to the Use Classes Order, having regard to the characteristics of different parts of their area” (para 6.52).

Following the creation of the GLA in 2000, the Mayor’s “Towards a London Plan” (2001) proposed maximum parking standards which are sensitive to the levels of public transport provision in different areas of London. New residential parking standards were developed as a by product of the Sustainable Residential Density Matrix.

The second PPG13 in 2001 gave further impetus to developing parking standards for London. This was then put into the 2002 Draft London Plan and finally, after further development, adopted in the 2004 London Plan and repeated in the 2008 London Plan

Since 2011 the Outer London Commission has sought to make the London Plan parking standards more sensitive to suburban conditions. Following a review by TfL new maximum residential standards were developed for Outer London.

The London Forum **strongly supports** the use of maximum parking standards for both

residential and non-residential developments, which are justified, supported by evidence and are essential for London.

This approach is entirely consistent with the NPPF in terms of:

- **being well-researched** – taking into account the factors listed in para 39 of the NPPF – in terms of accessibility; type, mix and use of development; public transport accessibility; car ownership levels; and the overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles;
- **supporting the right business in the right place** the policy objectives of ensuring that developments which generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised (NPPF para 34);
- protecting and exploiting opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes (para 35);
- recognising retail, leisure and office development as key town centre uses to be located in town centres wherever possible using a sequential approach (para 24). In the case of offices an alternative preferred location would be within 500m of public transport interchange (see NPPF Glossary: edge of centre).
- supporting these development decisions travel plans (para 36) should be used to reduce the need travel by car, minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure education and other activities (para 38) and maximise the use of

In summary, the London Plan parking standards, as currently proposed to be revised, are the best, most sophisticated, well-tested and locally-appropriate parking standards in England. As such they are well evidenced and have benefited from long-term experience of using maximum parking standards for both non-residential and residential development.

### **On-street parking**

Since 1966, on-street parking spaces have controlled through controlled parking zones (CPZs) where kerb space is allocated for residents' parking and pay-and-display parking. Most of Inner London is covered by CPZs which effectively manage the issue of parking stress through the limit of available space for parking on street. Elsewhere parking tends to be controlled in town centres and close to certain railway stations. This management regime manages the limited space in favour of residents, with visitors having to use pay-and-display/metered spaces.

#### **Question 2.16: Do you agree that parking policy should be strengthened to tackle on-street parking problems by restricting powers to set maximum parking standards?**

**NO:** The London Forum considers that the question is not relevant to London because:

- there is a major problem finding enough land for housing that people can afford – finding a house that a family can afford is more important than reverting to minimum parking standards that require more off-street parking than people either want or can afford, which even then may not be used for off-street parking;

- in areas of parking stress in Inner London, in town centres and close to stations, CPZs help manage the on-street parking. Car ownership and use tends to be lower in these areas as opportunities for off-street parking are limited. Additional off-street parking often results in the net loss of overall parking space due the removal of on-street parking spaces and can therefore be counterproductive; and
- maximum parking standards for non-residential uses are essential to encourage and reinforce the need for high trip-generating uses to locate in town centres or close to public transport interchanges. If developments, such as supermarkets, proposed seeking higher parking provision this means that they (deliberately?) cannot secure town centre sites and choose even more car-dependent locations. In London the lack of such sites and the high value of housing land generally precludes such development.

**London Forum considers that there is no demonstrable need to restrict the powers to set maximum parking standards. Local authorities should be able to adopt standards that match their local needs, as proposed in paragraph 39 of the NPPF. There should not be a national prescription, but a recognition that there are very different requirements in different parts of the country, especially in London and within different parts of London, and in cities and larger towns.**