

## **City Centre Commuter Car Parking Policy July 2011**

CCCCP1. To permit temporary car parks in the city centre core and fringe car parking areas to accommodate commuter car parking subject to:

- a) Physical improvements to the quality and appearance of the car park. Improvements may include the following: i) an attractive surface, making use of sustainable urban drainage solutions, ii) clear space markings, iii) appropriate landscaping, iv) security lighting, v) attractive means of enclosure and boundary treatment and vi) appropriate signage in terms of size and location. Physical improvement works and a maintenance programme should be agreed in writing with the City Council prior to planning permission being granted and implemented before commencement of operation of the car park,
- b) where the site is of a scale and location that pedestrian movement between different areas of the city is impeded and where security of pedestrians and vehicles would not be endangered, insertion of pedestrian linkages through the site,
- c) the total number of commuter car parking spaces permitted by this policy not exceeding 3200 for Leeds city centre Core and Fringe areas only,
- d) Permission being temporary for 5 years from the grant of planning permission.

On expiry of the 5 year temporary planning permissions, the City Council will consider whether the delivery of public transport improvements would justify the cessation of the car parking or the granting of further temporary extensions of permission.

Parts a) and b) of the policy will be informed by other planning policies and guidance notes adopted by Leeds City Council, for example on design and drainage.

### **Further Explanation**

#### *Policy Justification*

1. Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policy is the development plan for Leeds which has been subject to Examination so should be afforded considerable weight. Good reasons need to be advanced to justify any new informal policy which supersedes UDP policy. In this case, it should be noted that UDP policy on commuting into the city centre was conceived on the basis of West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan objectives. UDP paragraph 6.5.7 explains the overall objective is to reduce the rate of traffic growth, particularly into the city centre at peak periods, and this would include "...the promotion of all forms of public transport to provide an attractive alternative to the car, park and ride facilities in the suburbs..." Since the UDP was originally adopted in 2001 the delivery of new public transport infrastructure such as Supertram/NGT and the provision of park-and-ride schemes has been delayed. The effect of the government's spending cuts has further impacted on the ability of the Council to bring forward such schemes. Major

interventions of this nature are unlikely to be delivered in the short term. This new policy takes stock of non-delivery of public transport infrastructure and provides authority for an amount of commuter car parking to operate legitimately for a temporary 5 year period.

### *Physical Improvement Considerations*

2. In return for permitting use for commuter car parking Policy CCCCP1 Policy expects that car parks will be improved to a reasonable quality and appearance. This will be of benefit to the local environment, and will thus assist developers in these areas in marketing their developments to potential tenants. It will also improve security for users. The following points provide guidance on what the policy expects as a minimum:

- surfaces should be regular and unbroken and where possible include sustainable urban drainage solutions which protect against risks of water pollution;
- appropriate landscaping will be expected to help break up and hide from view the density of vehicles; on the basis that many sites will be subject to a requirement for public space as part of permanent development schemes, it would make sense for the same areas to be laid out as the landscaped areas in the temporary car parks
- security lighting should ensure that all parts of a car park are well lit during the hours of operation and hours of darkness
- boundary treatments should be tidy and presentable
- signage should be tidy and presentable and of an appropriate size and location on the site

The Council's other planning policies, for example on design and drainage, will ensure that the physical improvements are appropriate for the local context. If the number of spaces proposed in planning applications exceeds the "cap" (see below), the *quality* of physical improvements will be considered as a means of distinguishing between schemes.

### *Quantity of Car Parking Spaces*

3. Given the availability of unauthorised commuter car parking spaces in the centre of Leeds and potential for this policy to apply to newly cleared sites, an overall limit to the quantity of spaces that can be permitted is necessary. Otherwise road congestion will be exacerbated and the Council would be undermining the policies set out in the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan and its own targets to reduce CO2.

5. A cap of 3200 spaces that can be permitted through this policy is set in order to help maintain the overall amount of car commuting to the centre of Leeds at roughly the same level. It was calculated starting with the actual amount of parking on unauthorised spaces and followed by adjustments to account for greater use of lawful commuter car parking (on and off-street), enforceability of existing unauthorised spaces and recently agreed increases in seats on commuter trains.

### *Process for dealing with Planning Applications*

6. On initial adoption of the policy it is anticipated that there may be more applications submitted, which together with applications held in abeyance, will propose more spaces than the “cap”. To help fairness, the City Council will consider together all applications submitted during an “application window” of 3 months from the date of adoption of the policy. To deal with oversubscription the following sequential preferences will be assessed:

- Preference to sites that will generate least localised congestion or junction problems in Transport Assessments (assuming a baseline that ignores traffic generated by unauthorised car parks) Most important
- Preference for sites that contribute the greatest enhancement in terms of visual appearance and biodiversity. Good quality landscaping including greenery will be a plus. It will be recognised that larger sites may have the opportunity to install landscaping in the same locations as approved on permanent schemes; as such investment will be longer term, the landscaping quality will be expected to be higher than would otherwise be the case.
- Preference for sites inside the city centre boundary
- Preference to sites that contribute other beneficial temporary uses such as allotments, sports pitches, public spaces, seating areas, electric charging points Least important  
It will be recognised that smaller sites will not be capable of delivering large temporary uses.

Those sites subject to enforcement action during 2010 which had been given an amnesty will be offered 3 months to submit planning applications following adoption of this policy. After this period, enforcement action will recommence on those sites that do not respond or do not secure temporary planning permission.

### *Geographic distribution*

7. To avoid local traffic impacts that are greater than the network can accommodate each planning application should submit a Transport Assessment. Permission may be refused if unacceptable local traffic impacts would be generated<sup>1</sup>. Guidance on what Transport Assessments should consist of will be provided by Leeds City Council.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that if future planning applications are submitted for permanent use of a site, Leeds City Council will expect the transport assessment to compare the impact of the proposed use with a situation where the temporary car park has, or is assumed to have ceased operation.

8. The new policy will apply equally to both Fringe and Core city centre car parking zones as defined in the UDP (see map at appendix 1). For commuter car parking policy generally, there are stricter standards for the Core area because of better public transport accessibility and the greater need for short-stay spaces close to the Prime Shopping and Entertainment Quarters; but in the case of cleared sites being used for commuter car parking there are only one or two sites within the Core Area (Whitehall Road), and these are in a peripheral location where short stay demand is limited. In addition, much of the existing commuter parking on cleared sites is used by people who work in the Core area, so applying further restrictions in the Core would not necessarily have any impact on overall levels of car use. On this basis it is unnecessary to have separate policy standards for both areas.

#### *Duration of permissions and cost*

10. Permissions should not be permanent or for such a long length of time that the City Council is unable to take stock of the impact of anticipated public transport infrastructure and park-and-ride schemes. On the other hand, permissions need to be long enough to justify the investment that site owners/operators will have to make in physical improvements. Officer calculations suggest that 5 years will be long enough for financial investment to be recouped. 5 years is also about the time when park-and-ride schemes might be realised.

11. The 5 year period should normally begin when permission is granted as this builds in an automatic incentive for the owner to carry out improvement works promptly. If there are exceptional circumstances why works cannot be implemented promptly, alternative arrangements can be agreed.

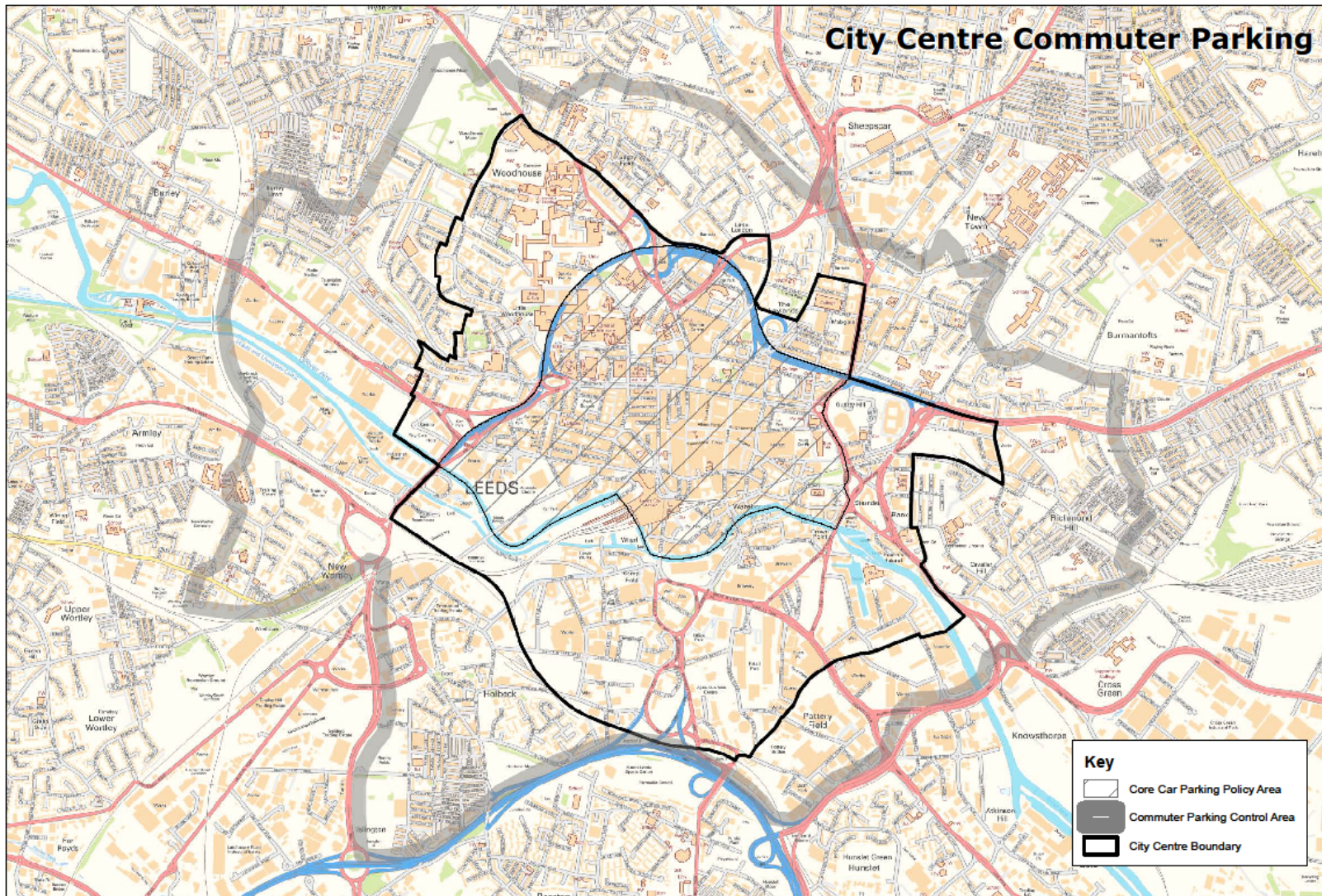
12. The physical improvement works should normally be completed within a reasonable period after temporary planning permission is granted. A condition should make clear that the use for commuter car parking is not sanctioned until the physical improvements are completed. A maximum of 3 months from date of planning permission is considered reasonable, but individual site circumstances might justify a longer period (for example, to take account of planting seasons)

#### *Flood Risk*

13. Some parts of Leeds city centre and fringe areas are classified as areas of high flood risk. Even though the planning permissions achievable through this policy would only be for temporary periods, it is still necessary for the impact of flooding to be taken into account. Therefore, in accordance with Leeds' standard practice, all applications for car parking under this policy should submit Flood Risk Assessments. Guidance on what they should consist of will be provided by Leeds City Council. It should also be noted that applications under this policy which concern land that is within 8 metres of the top of the bank of the river will require the prior consent of the Environment Agency.

Useful website link:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/land-in-limbo.pdf>



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