

Highgate model for parking surveys

Parking is a very sensitive issue in Highgate. In preparation of the Plan the community has conducted a number of surveys to bolster its understanding of the issues (See the reports in the evidence section). The short CPZ hours in Haringey mean the area already has extensive in-commuting pressures, in part reflecting major employers, such as the hospitals and school, in or near the area. People drive to Highgate to then take the tube or bus to the centre of London. It is clear that some neighbouring boroughs notably Camden and Islington are increasingly following more progressive policies than Haringey. As cars get squeezed out of the inner London area, there's added pressure on Highgate's parking.

Development in Highgate usually brings extra pressure on parking. The threat of that is often played down. There is a belief that Highgate has suffered from misleading results from poorly conducted surveys of parking that are used in planning applications. They often suggested that there was no parking stress when all locals knew that there was stress – residents were able to support their instinct with more accurate survey results. Hence, Highgate has a need for special guidelines for parking surveys. The setting of these requirements will deliver more accurate results and a better understanding of the reality. It will also remove any temptation that developers and the survey companies they commission might feel to deliver a survey that gives misleading results.

There are many different types of parking surveys¹. They provide very different degrees of accuracy and information – and come at very different costs. For the purposes of planning and assessing parking stress, comprehensive on-street parking beat surveys noting registration numbers at various times through the day² is accepted as a sound methodology and at the most economic cost.

The so-called Lambeth methodology³ is used in many places by all sorts of organisations, such as councils (many can be found by internet searching, for example in Mole Valley⁴) and consultants⁵ ⁶. This is sound basis for thinking about such surveys and all elements in it should be considered obligatory for surveys in Highgate even when they might be considered optional in the original Lambeth specification. That said, certain elements need to be updated and adapted for busy urban areas such as Highgate.

The key elements of a parking survey in Highgate will be:

1. Details to be agreed with the Council(s) prior to commencement of the survey.
2. The "Lambeth methodology" should be the foundation but adapted as described as it is insufficient in its most simple format.
3. Distance to be covered varies between 200m and 500m from the development depending on the perceived parking stress, circumstances of the development and the precise locality and will generally cover whole blocks and not stop part way along a road.
4. The survey should be conducted several times during the day not just once at night.

¹ <http://transportsurveyspecialists.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/parking-survey.pdf>

² <https://www.york.ac.uk/media/campusdevelopment/documents/heseast/condition10onstreetcarparkingsept08.pdf>

³ http://planning.croydon.gov.uk/DocOnline/47440_6.pdf

⁴ <http://www.molevalley.gov.uk/CausewayDocList/DocServlet?ref=M0/2013/1415&docid=486527>

⁵ <http://www.aparking.co.uk/parking-stress-surveys/>

⁶ <http://www.pma-traffic.co.uk/parking-surveys>

5. Number plate recording and photographs will form a key element of the evidence collected.
6. Surveys are to be conducted away from the holiday season and on several days of the week to make sure that all typical conditions will be covered. Local advice can be sought to ascertain particular pressures.
7. Actual spaces (of a minimum 6m in length) are to be counted in addition to any calculations of theoretical parking capacity.
8. In calculations of theoretical capacity, parking space sizes should be assumed to be a minimum of 6m.
9. Red route bays, pay and display zones, disabled bays and other parking which is not available to long-term residents should be noted but excluded from the headline figures.
10. Even after agreement of the survey parameters and after the survey has been completed, it might be necessary to return for further work if anomalies are discovered.

The following section develops and explains some of these features:

1. Survey times

The formal requirement is for one survey between the hours of 12.30am-5.30am to be undertaken on two separate weekday nights (ie. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday), avoiding Public Holidays and school holidays. In all cases in Highgate, where there are commercial uses and pressures from in-commuting, morning, afternoon and early evening surveys will also be required. This does often happen with responsible users but is not a requirement of the Lambeth method. For example, one south London study expected surveys to be taken “both on a neutral weekday and a Saturday from 06:00 to 21:00” as “these days generally have different travel and parking patterns and so provide a good variation of data to inform the study.” (Para 1.4, Parking Stress Assessment – London Borough of Southwark⁷) These are times of conflict when residents are returning home to find parking spaces occupied by visitors. Sunday surveys might be requested where there is for example an active and popular church, arts, retail or sports facility in the area.

Undertaking a survey on a date when an event is taking place locally will impact the results of the survey but can add useful information and better reflect what it is actually like in the area. The reason for selecting these times is to capture maximum demand for residential and visitor parking.

The importance of the timing of surveys is clearly made in government planning practice guidance⁸. “Transport data should be included that reflects the typical (neutral) flow conditions on the network (for example, non-school holiday periods, typical weather conditions etc.) in the area of the Plan, and should be valid for the intended purposes. It should also take account of holiday periods, where peaks could occur in periods that might normally be considered non-neutral. The recommended periods for data collection are spring and autumn, which include the neutral months of April, May, June, September and October.”

⁷ http://www.southwark.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/11987/parking_stress_survey_-_introduction

⁸ <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/transport-evidence-bases-in-plan-making/transport-evidence-bases-in-plan-making-guidance/>

2. Extent of survey

The minimum expectation is that the survey is to cover a two-minute walk-time from the application site, covering all roads within 200 metres (by foot or by road) of the site. This is based on consideration of how far a resident would reasonably leave their vehicle from their home. In all cases, the survey area is to be consistent with the local environment notably the extent of existing parking stress. Most of the area is under parking pressure but there are few streets in the north-western area where this is less of an issue. In this respect, the survey area may need to be extended in size – up to 500m – in the case of a development that might lead to many extra vehicle movements, including visitors or deliveries. The exact survey area should be agreed with the council in advance of it being conducted as the boundaries could be amended. Details need to be agreed, for example, if the 200m boundary occurs half-way along a street the survey area should be extended to the next junction. An area should be included even if it falls outside a borough or a given CPZ zone.

3. Car and space size

In Highgate, for the purposes of calculating parking stress, it is to be assumed that the space to park each vehicle is 6m in length. Often a shorter length (5m) has been used in surveys, and the official document advocates 5.5m. The use of smaller lengths has the effect of greatly exaggerating (by 20-25%) the number of cars that can be parked.

Surveys should count the number of actual parking spaces (lengths measured as being at least 6m in which a car could actually be parked) in addition to any desk-based calculation of theoretical space. Photographs of actual spaces should be taken and included in the survey results.

It is clear that the space allocated to each car needs to be large enough for the car to enter and exit. The government's own guidance (in the DfT "Manual for streets"⁹, para 8.3.48) says: "For parking parallel to the street, each vehicle will typically need an area of about 2 m wide and 6 m long". The Highway Code¹⁰ suggests that you look for a parking space "a few metres longer than your car" and says the examiner on the driving test "will expect you to reverse into a space of about two car lengths". A 5m allowance per car, which leaves less than a foot on either side of an average car is not reasonable for use in the survey. With an average car length of around 4.5m (a VW Beetle is 4.3m and a Volvo V70 estate is 4.8m), very few drivers would be able to get into a 5m space.

To confirm the extent of the impact of the failures in one such piece of research presented for a planning application in Highgate, we counted cars at a time of "stress". The consultant's estimates suggest that there are 121 parking spots in the 605m of residents' bays. We counted the number of cars parked at busy times when the area had no spaces, and the "real" capacity was always between 98 and 102 cars, with the average (mean and mode) being 99 cars. That amounts to a 22% exaggeration by consultant's methods, effectively an invention of 22 spaces that do not exist on the ground. If the theoretical capacity can never be reached on the ground there will never be stress! There will always, on paper, be places to park. It is this that accounts for their sanguine conclusion which is at odds with the reality experienced

⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/341513/pdfmanforstreets.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.2pass.co.uk/parallel.htm#.Vu3P7oyLTCS>

by those who have a car to park.

On the basis of our research all kerb-side space should be counted in units of a minimum of 6m. In other words a stretch of permit parking of 605m can only be estimated to park 100 cars. In Highgate, most parking bays tend to be modest in size, with room for just a few vehicles. This complicates the calculations of theoretical parking capacity. A parking bay of 8m can only be expected to park one car and should thus only be counted as 6m when calculating a theoretical maximum park limit. A space of, say, 28m will be counted for 4 cars ($4 \times 6\text{m} = 24$, leaving no space for part of a fifth car).

4. Other considerations

It needs to be emphasised that only kerb-side that can actually be parked in long term should be included. One survey presented in Highgate as part of an application included TfL red route spaces where parking is for a maximum of one hour. Such spaces are of no use for residents and are quite often not fully utilised, giving an inflated sense of spare capacity. In Highgate virtually all space will be CPZ controlled or pay as you go parking. These (and any other types of parking such as disabled bays) need to be identified in line with the Lambeth rules.

Photographs should be taken of the parking conditions in the survey area to back-up the results. The location of each photograph should be clearly marked on the image or on a map. Any unusual observations, e.g. suspended parking bays, spaces out of use because of road works or presence of skips should also be noted.

It should be noted that some factors may not become apparent until the survey has been submitted to the Council for consideration. For instance, the survey itself may reveal anomalies that require further investigation, or a subsequent officer site visit may reveal circumstances that require amendments, and perhaps additional surveying.

Until council records are proven to be robust and in the public domain, this instruction in the Lambeth specification should be ignored: "For sites within a CPZ there is no requirement for the applicant to record the parking capacity because the Council holds this information and will insert as appropriate into the table below."

To end, the Southwark report referred to above described good practice in beat survey: "A parking beat is a series of parking surveys of the same streets in an area, undertaken over the course of an extended period. The surveys are repeated hourly to ensure periods of high demand are captured and any parking patterns are identifiable. (The consultant) used hand-held surveying devices to record data from the walked parking beats at hourly intervals throughout each day. Surveys recorded partial vehicle registration marks (VRM) and parking space usage, along with any other unusual observations such as suspended Traffic Management Orders (TMOs), the presence of skips on the highway or temporary traffic management etc. The location of existing parking, waiting and loading restrictions were also noted in each area as these provide vital information when calculating parking stress. Where a parking space was not used correctly i.e. cars parked across driveways or vehicles causing an obstruction, the specific locations were recorded and are considered key to the surveys. Where contraventions to parking restrictions were noted, such as vehicles parking in loading bays, the specific location of the contravention was also recorded."