



ISLINGTON

# Car-Free Housing

ISLINGTON COUNCIL  
**Planning Service**

Approved May 2001  
(Updated Aug 2002)

ISLINGTON'S UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**supplementary**planning**guidance**

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## 1.0 Introduction

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1.1 This document, which is a non-statutory supplement to Islington's Unitary Development Plan 2002 (UDP), provides guidance on standards which the Council will apply when considering applications for car-free housing developments. It should be read in conjunction with the Car Reduced and Car-Free Housing Background Paper which outlines the general philosophy and the benefits of car reduced and car-free housing. The document was agreed by the Council in May 2001, and re-published in August 2002 following the adoption of Islington's Revised UDP in June of that year.

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## 2.0 Background

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2.1 Car-free housing can be defined as residential development with no car parking facilities for residents or visitors other than as needed to meet the needs of disabled people. Car-free housing supports many of the objectives of the UDP, especially those related to sustainability. The principles of car-free housing are reinforced by the Council's sustainable transport objectives as well as central government guidance, which aim to lower car parking standards, as well as reducing the need to travel.

2.2 The car parking standards in UDP policy T22 allow a maximum of 0.5 parking spaces per dwelling. This will mean that all new housing development in the borough will be car reduced, with less than one parking space allocated to each dwelling. In some cases car-free housing will be appropriate, and this is detailed in policy T23. The purpose of this supplementary planning guidance (SPG) is to provide detailed information about the implementation of policy T23, which is documented below.

### **T23 Car-Free Housing**

**The Council will encourage an increase in the number of car-free areas in the borough - including car-free housing schemes in locations:**

- i) which are accessible by public transport;**
- ii) where there is a range of local amenities;**
- iii) within parking policy areas A or B and/or within a CPZ.**

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## 3.0 Development Standards for Car-free Housing

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### Location

3.1 Designated car-free developments must be located:

- a) within Parking Policy Area A or B as defined in Islington's UDP or in a controlled parking zone ( CPZ ) as shown on Map 1.

(It should be noted that Council is currently in the process of extending its CPZs and these standards will apply to all CPZs in place at the time any application is considered).

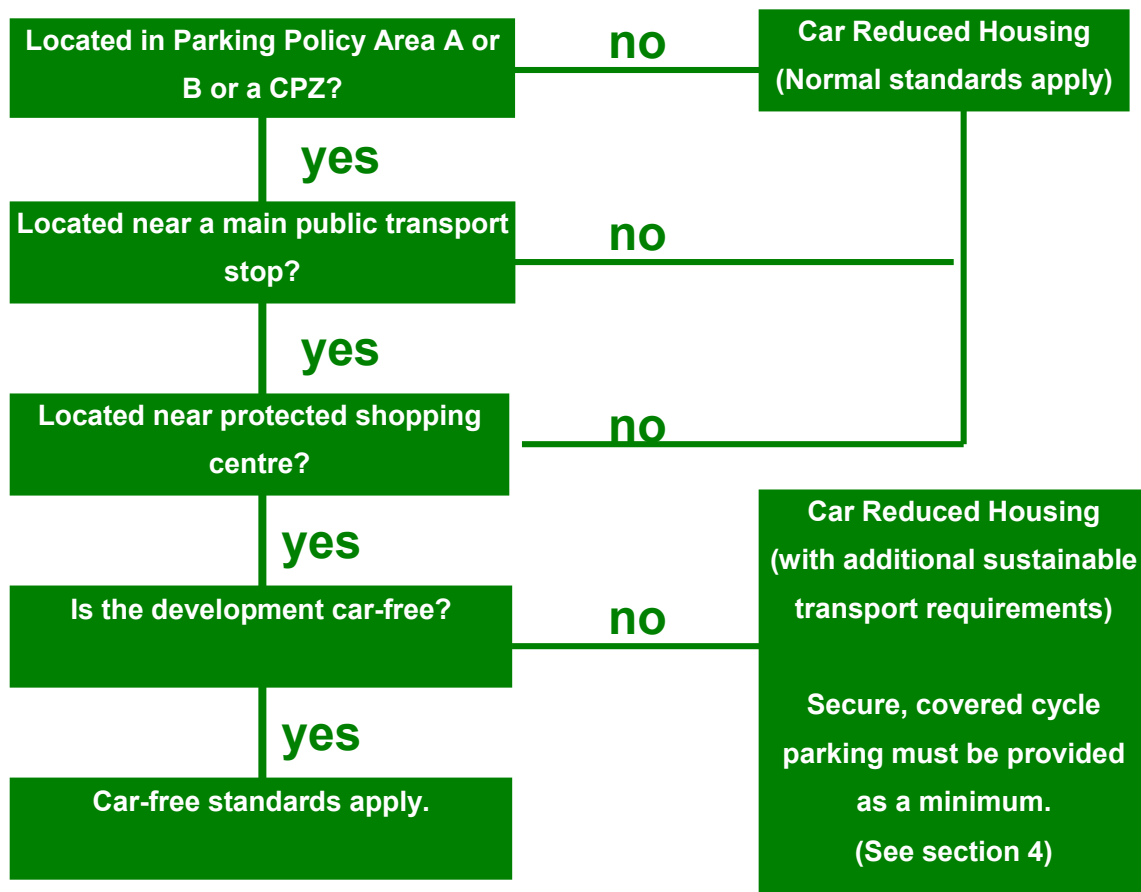
### AND

- b) within walking distance of 800m to an underground or train station or 400m of a major bus route providing a 7 day service, including evenings, with a minimum week day frequency of 8 buses / trains per hour.

### AND

- c) within 400m of a UDP protected shopping centre.

3.2 The general philosophy is that car-free housing should be provided in locations that can support it. If residential developments which are not car-free are provided in those locations, additional measures to encourage use of sustainable transport options should be taken. The flow chart below describes the process of determining if a particular location is appropriate for car-free housing.



## Design

3.3 All car-free developments must meet the following design criteria:

- a) Attractive cycle and pedestrian access and routes must be provided within the development as well as linking conveniently with external networks and local services including recreational facilities such as parks and playgrounds.
- b) Secure covered cycle parking must be provided using the cycle standards documented in the Planning Standards Guidelines.
- c) In larger developments, a pedestrian drop off point, especially catering for the elderly and people with disabilities must be provided. Access will also be required for emergency vehicles, services and major deliveries.
- d) On site parking may be provided for people with disabilities. In addition people with disabilities may also be eligible for a parking permit.

- e) Where vehicle access is provided, it should be strictly controlled so as not to conflict with or dominate pedestrian movement and access. Any access routes must be strongly integrated with the pedestrian space and appropriate design speeds should be implemented.

3.4 In addition developers in large schemes may be asked to contribute to:

- a) the provision or contribution towards the development of 'car club' facilities for residents;
- b) pedestrian, cycling or public transport infrastructure.

3.5 The Council also anticipates that some or all of the benefits of not providing for vehicles will be passed onto the occupiers of the scheme, eg better internal space standards, more amenity space and/or lower prices.

### **Management**

3.6 In terms of management the following should apply:

- a) Residents must be made aware that by living in a designated car-free development they do not qualify for a parking permit within any existing or any future controlled parking zone (CPZ). This information may need to be included as part of a sale or lease agreement.
- b) Residents must be required to provide an undertaking not to keep a car within the development or on-street within the borough.
- c) There must be a legal agreement between the developer and the Council confirming the car-free status of the development.

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## **4.0 Car Reduced Parking on Sites Appropriate for Car-Free Housing**

4.1 On sites where car-free housing is appropriate and the developer has chosen not to provide it, the developer will be required to provide additional measures to encourage the use of sustainable transport options.

- a) As a minimum, this would include provision of secure covered cycle parking, using the Council's cycle parking standards as an integral part of the design.
- b) In addition developers in large schemes may be asked to contribute to:
  - i) the provision or contribution towards the development of 'car club' facilities for residents;
  - ii) pedestrian, cycling or public transport infrastructure.

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## 5.0 Implementation

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- 5.1 It is expected that car-free housing will be secured through the use of planning obligations and in particular agreements secured under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act. The section 106 agreement will ensure that designated car-free housing schemes will not provide any car parking, except in the instances where parking for people with disabilities is being provided. Nor will residents be eligible for residents parking permits, now or in the future, unless they are a holder of a Disabled Persons Badge. The section 106 agreement shall include successors in the property title and apply to all residents living within the property.
- 5.2 Car-free housing can also be applicable to conversions of existing buildings and changes of use.
- 5.3 The Planning Service will liaise with other relevant Council services to ensure that everyone who is involved in the design and implementation of CPZs is aware of the existence and location of car-free schemes.

TP/02/400, May 2001

# MAP 1

## AREAS WITHIN PARKING AREAS A OR B, AND/OR A CONTROLLED PARKING ZONE





ISLINGTON

# Car Reduced and Car-Free Housing

Background Paper

ISLINGTON COUNCIL  
Planning Service

May 2001 (updated Aug 2002)

ISLINGTON'S UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

**udp** background paper

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## 1.0 Introduction

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- 1.1. This document provides an overview of the benefits to developers, residents, and the wider community of car reduced and car-free housing. In addition it provides supporting information to the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Car-Free Housing.

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## 2.0 Background

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- 2.1 Car-free housing can be defined as residential development with no car parking facilities for residents or visitors other than as needed to meet the needs of disabled people. Ideally, car-free housing developments will be located within central urban areas, close to public transport facilities, schools, services and shops, so that residents do not need to rely on the car for everyday services.
- 2.2. There are a number of benefits to car-free housing. The developer does not have to use any land for car parking or access roads, and therefore, these schemes can have more living space and open space for residents to enjoy. In car-free housing schemes, residents do not own cars, and consequently, there are fewer cars in the area, helping to cut down on traffic and associated problems with accidents and pollution. As the cost of running a car continues to rise, residents are free from this financial responsibility, while being able to benefit from living in a location which is easily accessible to the public transport network, local shops and services.
- 2.3 The idea of car-free housing is not to ignore the role of the car in today's society, but to change the emphasis and encourage movement by more sustainable means. For many people, especially those living in central urban areas well served by public transport, a car is not a necessity, whilst living without one may also bring financial benefits. For some households, for example elderly people, car ownership may not be an option. In response to the increasing recognition that owning a car can be unnecessary or problematic but that the occasional use of a car is helpful, car clubs and specially tailored car hire or taxi schemes are emerging. Schemes have been running successfully for some time on the continent, but the idea is now beginning to take off in the UK.
- 2.4 The following table was produced by planning consultants, Llewelyn-Davies and illustrates how different levels of car-free housing can be identified, forming a continuum from adjustment within present standards, to genuine car-free schemes. At all levels, any parking provision would be communal, meaning that no spaces would be for the exclusive use of any one household.

No.	Level	Description
1	CAR EXCLUDED HOUSING	Better use of existing standards, designed to provide areas on site free of vehicles. Cars parked on periphery or underground.
2	CAR REDUCED HOUSING	Less than one car parking space per dwelling is provided. Parking provided on-site, or on-street or at other off-site facilities.
3	ZERO DEDICATED PARKING	No parking provided exclusively for the housing. Parking on-street or off-street is shared with other activities or developments. No legal restrictions on car ownership.
4	CAR-FREE HOUSING	Car ownership is neither provided for, nor allowed. This means zero general parking provision, and legal restrictions (voluntary or otherwise) on car ownership by residents. However, there may be provision for shared cars (for example vehicles belonging to a Neighbourhood Car Fleet), and disabled persons' vehicles.

2.5 **Level 1, car excluded housing** represents an improvement on standard housing layouts, because the development is designed to create living space which is free from the nuisance and danger caused by the presence of vehicles. It does not, however, contribute to the objectives of lower levels of car use. Meeting the full demand for car parking and access by on-site provision may be justified where residents' parking cannot be accommodated off-site, for example where on-street parking controls are difficult to enforce, or where on-street or other space is unavailable or unsuitable. Even so, it should be possible to reduce the number of parking spaces for a given development by the use of communal rather than individual parking spaces. Communal provision allows for variation in car ownership between households to be accommodated without having to provide for maximum demand.

2.6 **Level 2, car reduced housing** is where parking supply on site is less than one space allocated to each dwelling. This reduction will be consistent with sustainable transport objectives in locations where there are good alternatives to the car and a range of facilities and services within walking or cycling distance. In Islington, car parking standards in the 2002 UDP have been revised to 0-0.5 space per dwelling. In addition, the Council has produced a 'Traffic Reduction Strategy', in order to establish a programme of supporting measures through which traffic reduction targets will be achieved. 'Level 2: Car Reduced Housing' in the above table has particular relevance for Islington, as it will be the 'maximum' requirement for all new housing development.

- 2.7. **Level 3, zero dedicated parking** is where there is minimal parking provided on site, and no special provision off site. While residents would have no restrictions on car ownership, they would have to park their cars in whatever on-street or other space was available in the surrounding area. This could apply to in-fill schemes or conversions, or to larger schemes, especially where on-street residents' parking and other controls were in place on the surrounding streets. In essence there is no difference between new Level 3 housing, and the large tracts of pre-first world war housing in London, built before the age of car ownership.
- 2.8 **Level 4, car-free housing** is housing with no parking and residents do not have access to on-street parking. As residents are not entitled to park a car in the locality, the development would need to be located in areas with high public transport accessibility and close to essential services such as shops, schools and doctors surgeries. Ideally residents would have access to some sort of car fleet or hire service for the occasional trip that may require a vehicle. Minimal car parking may be allowed for people with disabilities and for neighbourhood fleet or car club hire cars.

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### 3.0 Overview: Why Have Car-free housing?

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- 3.1 Car reduced and car-free housing developments are not designed to ignore the place of the car within this society, but to emphasise that cars are not always a necessity for modern living.
- 3.2. Car reduced and car-free housing developments are commonplace in Holland and in Germany, but can these schemes really work in the UK? By adopting a car-free approach, local communities will benefit through reduced levels of pollution, potentially lower costs of housing and a safer, more sustainable approach to living. Housing schemes that have an absence of cars in the local or immediate neighbourhood in Germany and Holland have identified such benefits, claiming the following is provided:
- Safer 'people orientated' as opposed to 'car orientated' environments;
  - More green space instead of paved parking spaces and roads;
  - Creates more opportunity for children to play outside their front doors;
  - Improvements in air quality and a reduction of noise levels;
  - Encouragement of alternative forms of transport;
  - Saving in the cost of parking provision, use of energy and valuable resources;
  - The opportunity to develop smaller sites;
  - Scope for improved urban design/layout.

- 3.3. In Europe, the concept of car-free development does not intend to exclude cars entirely but is nevertheless designed to encourage and support a car-free lifestyle. The objective is to encourage the rational use of the car for personal transport, placing greater emphasis on living space, rather than compromising this space with high levels of vehicle provision.
- 3.4 Car-free housing should be an option for people who would choose not to own a car, and this should also include people with disabilities. Special provision should be made for a limited amount of disabled car parking spaces.
- 3.5 The financial benefits of car-free housing could include:
- Tenants/owners relieved of the burden of costs of creating car parking spaces and their access roads;
  - Paying lower tariffs on public transport (even taxis), in the sense of collective quantitative discounts and perhaps being given some relief from local taxation.
  - Advantages from car pooling/sharing, car hire as opposed to car ownership.
- 3.6 Adaptability in design, encouraged by car-free housing, allows for smaller sites to be developed. In the past these sites would not have been suitable for housing because they would have been subject to maximum parking standards, thus making the site financially not viable for housing development. The removal of the car parking requirements not only makes the development of smaller sites financially viable, but also increases the design options for the site.

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## 4.0 Issues

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- 4.1 The ethos behind car-free housing is to encourage people to use modes of transport other than the car, which is increasingly recognised as a major source of pollution and damage to the environment. Car-free housing allows those who chose not to have a car to have a choice of living in a residential development that benefits in design and cost from not providing space for cars. The following paragraphs discuss some of the issues concerning car reduced and car-free residential developments.

### **Safety & Security**

- 4.2 As with all developments, the Council will require proposals to be designed in such a way as to help create a safe and secure environment (Policy D3, Islington's UDP). The most

appropriate location for car-free housing is in central areas, which are traditionally places with high levels of activity and consequently have higher levels of natural surveillance, improving feelings of safety and security. While many people consider that having a car contributes to personal safety, it is anticipated that having a more pedestrianised community will improve the sense of personal safety at a street level.

### **Quality in the Built Environment**

- 4.3 The Council has adopted design standards which provides guidance on how to implement the policies set out in the UDP, covering topics such as the design of new buildings, conversions, and access for people with disabilities. These standards are applied by the Council when considering planning applications. Without the restrictions of including space for cars and access roads, car-free developments can present opportunities for innovative design.
- 4.4 This is especially true for the development of smaller sites. It has been estimated that 40% of development sites are used for car parking and access roads (LPAC). In car-free developments, this 'extra' land can be used for increased living and open space. However in larger developments, some space may be required for passenger and goods drop off points, off street servicing and access / parking for people with disabilities.
- 4.5 The removal of the need to provide car parking spaces also has the potential to provide more appropriate design solutions within conservation areas. Within Islington, the prevailing urban context in conservation areas is that of traditional Georgian and Victorian Streets and Squares which pre-date the motor car. In such cases, new housing, particularly infill, may benefit from being freed of the need to meet parking standards.

### **Financial Implications**

- 4.6 The financial implications of car-free and car reduced housing developments are not well documented. The housing market appears to suggest that owner-occupiers want to buy homes which have car parking facilities, either on-street, or on-site spaces. It is sometimes asserted that car-free housing developments would not be acceptable in the private housing market. However, there are private sector developers who have developed car-free housing schemes which have enjoyed commercial success. In Camden there are currently 52 schemes with planning permission, that have very limited or no on-site car parking, in areas where there is limited or no on-street parking available. The car-free element of the schemes in Camden have been secured through Section 106 agreements. Already there are a number of schemes within Islington where there has

been no provision made for on-site residential car parking. These developments are all located in central areas, and despite private sector caution, they are selling well. In Edinburgh, the country's first car-free housing scheme was built by Canmore Housing Association, and the car-free element has been secured through the tenancy agreements signed by residents.

### **Forsaking the Car**

4.7 In Islington, car ownership is low by national standards. According to the 1991 Census, household car ownership in Islington was 40%, compared to the then national average of 60%. The Islington figure is low because people in Islington either choose not to own a car or cannot afford to. Either way, Islington is fortunate to enjoy relatively good public transport facilities, and the Council is committed to ensuring that further improvements are made to public transport, as well as to cycling and pedestrian facilities. In particular, cycle routes and pedestrian walkways are a priority, and a number of initiatives are underway to ensure that the needs of cyclists and pedestrians are being met. The fact that car ownership is below the national average in Islington, suggests that car-free housing would be well suited to this area, and that the Council should continue to aim to reduce car traffic in the borough by reducing the capacity for the parking of private cars. The Council's Interim Transport Plan 2001/02 outlines the Council's strategy for reducing traffic. The strategy also outlines where the Council's controlled parking zones are as well as where the Council is hoping to implement 'car-free' areas, bus lanes and other measures to reduce traffic in Islington.

### **Walking, Cycling, Public Transport and Local Services**

4.8 Car-free housing should be located in areas where there is good access to public transport facilities, local shops and services. Islington has many areas that meet this criteria. In support of car-free housing the Council's Interim Transport Plan for 2001/02, the following objectives to encourage walking and cycling initiatives have been adopted:

- *The Council, as part of its Sustainable Transport Strategy, is committed to developing and implementing land use policies and transport programmes in ways which help to reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys. The Council also seeks to encourage alternative means of travel which have less environmental impact and hence reduce reliance on the private car. Within Islington there is increasing concern about air quality and traffic congestion as highlighted in the Local Agenda 21 consultations and it is therefore important to promote means of transport which are less environmentally damaging.*

- *The Council is fully committed to a policy based on demand restraint and the promotion of non-car based travel. Work is under way to set traffic reduction targets and promoting walking and cycling is an integral part of the Council's traffic reduction strategy. Walking and cycling offer substantial benefits in social, health and economic terms and the Council is committed to increasing walking and cycling as a means of travel within Islington.*

4.9 The measures that are being implemented to meet the objectives listed above include the following:

- Walking Strategy
- Safe Routes to School
- Pedestrian Crossing Programme
- Walkable Neighbourhoods
- Islington's Cycle Strategy
- London Cycle Network
- Buses Priority
- 'Quality Commitments' Agreement with London Buses
- Rail line extensions and station improvements.

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## 5.0 Policy Context

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5.1 There are a number of local and national policy initiatives that are relevant to the context of car-free housing. On a local level, Islington's UDP 2002 contains policies which relate to the reduction of car use and the encouragement of car-free housing schemes. Policy T23 reads as follows:

### **Policy T23**

***The Council will encourage an increase in the number of car-free areas in the borough - including car-free housing schemes in locations:***

- i) which are accessible by public transport***
- ii) where there is a range of local amenities***
- iii) within parking policy areas A or B and/or within a CPZ.***

5.2 The Council has one of the most stringent parking standards in the country and is committed to reducing pollution caused by traffic congestion - a major concern for those who live and work in the borough.

- 5.3 In addition to UDP policies, the Council has produced an Interim Transport Plan (2001/02) which outlines the Council's strategy for reducing and managing traffic in Islington.
- 5.4 On a national level, following the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the Government has introduced a number of initiatives at national and local levels to reduce car usage in the UK, and to reduce the need for people to have cars. The Government has produced a number of policy documents including the Integrated Transport White Paper, 'A New Deal for Transport: Better For Everyone' and subsequent 'daughter' papers which outline the Government's proposals for new initiatives to reduce dependency on car use. Such initiatives include road pricing in central urban areas, introducing tax on workplace car parks and using the monies from this to finance public transport improvements. The Road Traffic Reduction Acts of 1997 and 1998 also place greater emphasis on reducing traffic and encouraging other modes of transport, particularly cycling and public transport. Planning policy has also evolved, and the emphasis is now on 'mixed use developments', especially in urban areas. Mixed-use developments are developments which contain a variety of uses. The 'sequential' test is also being applied to major new developments. This involves sites which are close to town centres and public transport nodes being the preferred location for new development. These initiatives are aimed at reducing the need to travel by car, because developments are more centrally located, close to the public transport network.

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## 6.0 Summary

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- 6.1 There are many benefits to car-free housing for the residents and the wider community. Car-free housing can take varying forms but the underlying principle is the belief that car use can be minimised in favour of a more sustainable 'car-free' approach to living with many social, environmental and financial benefits.
- 6.2 Car-free housing developments have the potential to provide high quality housing for people who do not need to rely on a car for their mobility. However, there are a number of issues which need to be taken into account if car-free developments are to be successful. These issues include the following:
- Suitable sites will be those located in central urban areas close to public transport and good local facilities in close proximity such as schools, shops, banks and post office.

- Appropriate sites will be located within controlled parking zones, so that residents will not be able to park any vehicles on-street.
- Where possible, developers should consider options to provide for a 'car club' or similar, so that in necessary circumstances, residents will have access to a car.
- As with all development proposals, the Council will require high design standards.

6.3 Islington Council considers that the necessary public transport and local services infrastructure already exists in order for car-free housing to be successful (both commercially and socially) in the borough.