

London Borough of Hounslow

Great West Corridor Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) Consultation

Overview

We would like your views on the possible introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) in the 'Golden Mile' area of the Great West Road in Brentford, broadly between Gillette Corner and Boston Manor Road. Hounslow Council has an ambitious vision to transform the area into a modern 21st century business hub that combines employment with other uses, such as residential, cafes and restaurants, and local shops and facilities. Due to limited capacity on the road network, providing new transport infrastructure is critical to unlocking growth and improving air quality in the area.

A WPL is a charge made by a local authority on employers who provide workplace parking for their employees. The revenue collected is used to fund transport improvements in the local area providing economic and social benefits for employees and residents. The council is considering a range of improvements to transport in the area, including:

- A new passenger train service connecting the Great Western Mainline and Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) linking Southall with Brentford through provision of a new station adjacent to West Cross Industrial Park. This would also have the potential to extend to Brentford mainline at a later stage.
- A new train service between the existing train stations at Syon Lane and Brentford up to Old Oak Common (connecting to HS2) and onto Cricklewood known as the 'West London Orbital'.
- Improved bus services to and along the Great West Road, including a potential express service between Osterley and Gunnersbury stations.
- Improved walking and cycling access and better public realm along the corridor.

The cost of all these improvements is substantial, potentially over £100m. There is limited public sector funding available for these improvements and that which there is, generally takes the form of a loan which requires repaying. Through WPL the council is looking to secure an ongoing revenue income to service that financing.

As well as improved transport connections, we expect the scheme to have a significant positive impact on air quality in the area. By providing new sustainable transport infrastructure, the introduction of a WPL will decrease emissions of pollutants by enabling a shift away from the private car to public transport, walking and cycling. Fewer vehicles on the road at peak times will also ease congestion and reduce stationary traffic, both of which contribute to poor air quality. Higher levels of walking and cycling will also have a positive impact on employee's physical and mental health.

Your comments are welcomed using the survey at the bottom of this page. If you need this information in an alternative format please contact us.

Consultation feedback will be summarised and presented to the council's cabinet for consideration in 2019. If the decision is taken to proceed, then an application will be made to the Mayor of London, who must approve the scheme, with a view to starting the scheme from 2020/21.

What is a WPL?

A WPL is a charge made by a local authority on employers for the number of parking spaces ('workplace parking') provided for employees. Workplace parking spaces include only those parking spaces that are regularly occupied by an employee or business visitor and hence unused parking spaces and those used by customers or blue badge holders are not subject to the levy. There is currently only one active scheme in the UK run by Nottingham City Council (see <http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/wpl> for more information).

All money raised from a WPL must be ring-fenced for investment in local transport improvements. The Nottingham scheme has already generated income of £53m which has been used for transport improvements such as an extension to the tram network. As noted in the introduction, it is the ability of such a scheme to underwrite prudential borrowing which is particularly attractive as means of delivering transport improvements.

Why are we doing this?

The Great West Corridor is Hounslow's largest employment hub, supporting over 24,000 employees across a range of sectors. It is one of London's most important locations for media and broadcasting jobs and hosts several international company headquarters along with a vibrant mix of commercial and light industrial businesses.

The area has been identified as having significant growth potential in both Hounslow's Local Plan and the Mayor's London Plan, in which it is named as an 'Opportunity Area'. Current targets are for the introduction of over 14,000 new jobs and 7,500 new homes by 2031, however there is limited capacity to accommodate growth on the highway network and public transport connectivity, especially at the western end of the corridor, is poor. In addition, as a consequence of its reliance on the private car to access employment premises, air quality limits are often breached. If the area is to realise its growth potential the following issues must be addressed:

- Existing infrastructure networks such as strategic road networks and rail services are nearing capacity - a study carried out in 2015 concluded that the highway network can support only around 1,200 additional jobs and the rail network 4,200 jobs.
- Only one public bus service runs along the Golden Mile (the H91). Several employers run their own shuttle services which are not available to the general public. These cost private employers significant sums to maintain however they have little wider public benefit and contribute in some cases to congestion and residential concern, particularly where they use residential roads.
- Two planned new schools off Syon Lane, will place additional demands on the existing transport network from 2019.

- The Piccadilly and District line services skirt the Corridor rather than serve it directly. The nearest stations from the Golden Mile are more than a 20-minute walk away.
- Heavy reliance on car travel, accounting for around 50% of employment trips has resulted in severe traffic congestion, poor air quality and high-level of traffic noise creating a hostile pedestrian and cycling environment.
- Businesses have expressed concerns about accessibility and connectivity being a key barrier to recruitment and retention.

A WPL could help with these issues in two ways. Firstly, it will provide funding for new public transport infrastructure, increasing its capacity and convenience, making it a more desirable alternative to the car. Secondly, by raising the cost of employee parking, the cost of driving will also increase for the business or its employees. This would support the Mayor's Transport Strategy objective of reducing personal car use, and enable growth in the Golden Mile without significantly adding to highway congestion and pollution. Since income generated will also be used for improvements to the cycle and walking network, increased levels of active travel are expected, bringing further improvements to congestion and health benefits for employees.

It is particularly important that action is taken to improve air quality in the area since some of the highest levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) in the borough have been recorded locally due to the influence of the M4-A4 corridor. Road emissions, particularly those from diesel vehicles, are the most significant source of nitrogen oxides and increase sharply as levels of congestion increase due to slow moving or stationary traffic.

It is now known that poor air quality shortens the lives of those living or working in the area and exacerbates existing respiratory health conditions. Children are one of the groups most at risk from poor air quality and the presence of several schools, including two new large secondary schools, increases the imperative for action. Whilst vehicles are getting cleaner and there are London-wide schemes such as the Ultra-Low Emission Zone expected to improve air quality in London, local measures in 'air quality hotspots' such as the Golden Mile will also be needed.

Other Business Benefits

There will be other benefits for businesses in the charging area too. To complement the new transport infrastructure, we aim to provide employers with support for staff travel planning in the form of a dedicated travel plan officer. Their role will include help and guidance in the following areas:

- Implementing promotional measures to encourage a mode shift to walking, cycling and public transport
- Improving car park management
- Technical advice and funding opportunities for the installation of cycle parking
- Conducting staff surveys and monitoring of staff travel habits and attitudes
- Setup of employee cycle and walking clubs

We are also planning to reserve a portion of the WPL income for grant funding of on-site Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure.

Proposed Area

We are proposing the introduction of a WPL in the Golden Mile area of The Great West Corridor (GWC), along the Great West Road (A4) broadly between Gillette Corner and Chiswick Business Park. The map below shows the boundary of the proposed WPL zone. The boundary has been set by using an approximate 1km walking perimeter around the proposed new train station – ‘Golden Mile Brentford’, this being the transport intervention which requires the lion’s share of any income WPL may deliver. Businesses within this area will see the most benefit from the new station since their employees will be able to walk to and from the station, which connects directly to the new Elisabeth Line, in less than 15 minutes.



What could it fund?

In order to realise the growth potential of the GWC, the following new transport infrastructure is being proposed:

A new Golden Mile Rail Link. A new station would be built in the centre of the proposed WPL zone, providing a fast link to Southall station which will be served by Crossrail (Elizabeth Line) from 2019 as well as main line trains to Reading and Paddington. This improvement is expected to cost approximately £90m based on network rail estimates. The scheme has the potential to be extended across the A4 to link to the existing Brentford mainline.

WPL could also contribute towards the **West London Orbital** – this is a proposed new train service between the existing train stations at Syon Lane and Brentford up to Old Oak Common (connecting to HS2) and onto Cricklewood on the midland mainline.

Improved walking and cycling links. The WPL could be used to improve the A4 cycle facilities and provide a network of new links connecting businesses to transport hubs and nearby services in Brentford. One example is the proposed ‘Boston Manor Boardwalk’, a link between the Sky Campus and Golden Mile station and Boston Manor tube station.

Improved bus services. Options for improved services include a new express service along the A4, new routes connecting the area to Ealing Common Station and Hounslow town centre.

In total, these improvements will cost in excess of £100m, therefore we are looking at a range of options for funding, such as:

- Contributions from developers through the planning process (known as the community infrastructure levy and s106 payments).
- Contributions from Government bodies (e.g. Department for Transport, Transport for London)
- Borrowing (from public or private sector) repaid through increased income from new employment
- Workplace Parking Levy (WPL)

We are currently at the stage of investigating the viability of each of these funding options however it is likely that income raised from a WPL will be used as match funding to allow us to apply for government grants or to reduce the amount of borrowing we need to do.

How much money would it raise?

In order to estimate the amount of income a WPL would generate, London Borough of Hounslow commissioned a parking survey of businesses in the affected area in 2017. It concluded that there were over 4200 workplace parking spaces in the zone by using visual inspections and information obtained directly from the businesses. The information was considered accurate or certain for 75% of spaces with the rest requiring estimates based on partial information.

The results of this survey were then used in an income model based on the Nottingham scheme. The model was built by consultants Project Centre specifically for this project and allows full control over charge levels, exemptions, employee growth, running costs and inflation. More detail on the modelling that was carried out can be found on Aug 17 [Cabinet decision web page](#). The majority of inputs were based on the Nottingham scheme with adjustments made for the Hounslow context.

Table 1 shows the results that were obtained for an operational period of 25 years and three potential levels of charge at £500, £750 and £1000 per space per annum. A charge of £750

equates to approximately £3 per working day which would be broadly equivalent to a return bus journey to the site, the benchmark used to inform the original Nottingham charge. All results were obtained using a mid-growth scenario where most of the development predicted for the area occurs.

Table1: Golden Mile WPL Model Results for mid-growth scenario

Charge Level (£ per space per annum)	Estimated total Net Income over 25 years* (£ million)	This would fund...
500	44	This level of charge means that WPL would make a contribution towards the cost of delivering improved bus services and public realm in the area. It would be unlikely to be enough to secure the delivery of the proposed link to the new Elizabeth Line service at Southall without substantial additional public funding.
750	70	This would likely secure delivery of the link to the new Elizabeth Line service, and some modest improvements to the wider public realm, bus services and limited grant assistance with EV charging and cycle facilities for businesses.
1000	95	This would allow significant investment in public realm; new and improved bus routes including a potential express service along the A4. It would ensure delivery of the link to the new Elizabeth Line at Southall. It may also allow a contribution to be made to the West London Orbital, expediting the delivery of this scheme to benefit the area. Also included would be comprehensive travel planning assistance for businesses as well as grants for EV charging and cycle parking facilities.

*Based on the Nottingham scheme, we have estimated costs of operation to be in the range of £200,000 per annum plus first year setup of £400,000.

Who Pays?

The charge is made to the employer on all workplace parking spaces they provide including those that are leased away from the main site (for example in a public multi-storey car park). It will be their decision as to whether the charge is passed on to staff. In Nottingham, 8 out of 10 of the biggest employers have passed the charge on to their employees (around 50% of the total spaces in the scheme).

Exemptions to the Charge

We are proposing that the following categories of businesses or spaces would be exempt from the charge:

- Businesses with 10 or fewer workplace parking spaces
- NHS premises

- Parking spaces solely for the use of customers and occasional business visitors (defined as fewer than 4 visits per month)
- Parking spaces reserved for official fire and police vehicles and ambulances
- Parking spaces used primarily by fleet or delivery vehicles
- Parking spaces used solely by blue-badge holders
- Permanently unoccupied/unused parking spaces
- We are also considering whether active electric vehicle charging point spaces should be entitled to a discount on the rate. This would help incentivise lower emission vehicles which is in line with council policy, however it may add significant volatility to the financing scenario given unknowns about potential take up of EVs in future. Whilst EVs produce very little pollution at point of use, they still take up highway space which causes congestion.

These exemptions are broadly in line with the Nottingham scheme however are subject to agreement by the Mayor of London.

How will the scheme be enforced?

At the start of the scheme, businesses will be asked to count and self-report the number of workplace parking spaces that are eligible for the charge. These figures will be checked against the results of our parking survey and if discrepancies are found, a visual inspection will be made by Hounslow enforcement officers.

During the running of the scheme, spot enforcement checks would take place from time to time to verify self-reported information. This may involve visits to the site or automatic number plate recognition cameras.

When could it be introduced?

This is the first stage in a longer process and no decision has yet been taken on whether to introduce a WPL in Hounslow. The council will consider results of this consultation, alongside ongoing technical and financial analyses and a decision will then be taken as to whether to proceed to the next stage.

If the decision is made to proceed with the scheme, we will then work with Transport for London (TfL) to develop a detailed Business Case and undertake impact assessments. These will consider the likely impacts of a scheme: on businesses, equalities and the environment. We would continue to engage with businesses in the area throughout this process.

Subject to the result of this work, we could commence a final, statutory consultation in 2019/2020 in which we would present a draft 'Scheme Order' which is a set of regulations setting out the details of the WPL – what its charge would be, any discounts and exemptions, and its date of commencement. It would also set out exactly how the revenue would be used and over what time period.

To introduce a WPL in London requires approval by both the local council and the Mayor of London. The Secretary of State must also approve the use of revenue in the shape of 4 and 10-year revenue plans. This process could potentially take place in 2020. If approved, there would need to be a period prior to implementation where businesses are licensed, back office processes are set up and information about the scheme is communicated to employers and their employees to allow them to plan accordingly.

The WPL could then be introduced for a trial 6-month period during 2020/21 in which it is likely that no charges will be made to businesses, but they will be asked to report on their levels of employee parking. The scheme could then go live in 2021/22.