

THE FUTURE IS ELECTRIC

As the nature of the UK car industry evolves, the demands on developers and planners to adapt to this environment will increase. We have seen in recent years that planning policy across the UK has begun to dictate that schemes provide for the future through electric car infrastructure.

This future now seems closer than ever and as transport and parking policy inevitably secures this transition PBA are considering how this may affect our existing and future clients and how we continue to offer support and assistance whether that be through initial appraisals, drop in workshops or liaising with local authorities to establish the best way to implement sustainable and future-proof developments across all sectors.

In recent years the onset of electric vehicles (EVs) has significantly increased with over 90,000 fully electric and plug-in hybrid cars now on UK roads. Across the EU as a whole 0.6% of registered vehicles last year were electric, no doubt a result of many EU countries setting ambitious plans to reduce carbon emissions.

France aim to ban all petrol and diesel vehicles by 2040 in a bid to make the nation carbon neutral by 2050. Additionally, Germany wants to do away with 100 per cent combustion-powered vehicles by 2030 whereas the Netherlands and Norway wish to do so by 2025. The UK joined the party in late July announcing that sales of all diesel and petrol cars and vans will be banned from 2040 onwards.

Car manufacturers are responding to tighter emissions standards coming into force from 2021. This summer Volvo stated all new models will have an electric motor from 2019 with plans to launch five fully electric models between 2019 and 2021 and a range of hybrid models. Whist surprising, this reflects the direction much of the auto industry is travelling.

In 2016 over 2 million electric cars were on the roads worldwide with over 750 000 EVs sold worldwide. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that there will be 140m electric cars by 2030 globally if countries meet the Paris Climate targets.

Sustainability and Air Quality are always important considerations when preparing planning applications for sustainable developments and we are increasingly seeing local authorities requiring developments to respond to these issues. So how might these trends affect your development proposals?

Local Authorities are likely to require parking standards to include an electric car provision along with the associated infrastructure such as active and dormant charging points. We have seen this kind of future planning on a number of schemes recently and the likelihood is that developers will be urged to incorporate these elements more heavily into schemes in the future.



Electric Charging Points at Service





Town Centre Charging Points

One of the key considerations with the rise of electric vehicles will be the impact on air quality, particularly in urban areas and air quality management zones across the UK. A recent study found that nearly 40 million people in the UK are living in areas where illegal levels of air pollution from diesel vehicles risk damaging their health.

Should electric and hybrid technologies come into use to the level anticipated the resultant improvement in air quality could lead to many of the existing restrictions in air quality management zones to be lifted. The London Lorry Ban established to protect Londoners against the disturbance caused by heavy vehicles is an example of the type of restrictions that could be altered should electric vehicles come into wider use across the UK.

The impact that the removal of such restrictions will have on development in these areas may lead to land becoming available for development in areas where it was previously restricted. A potential area where the most radical change could come would be in commercial and industrial property.

The benefits with regard to air and noise pollution could unlock new land for developers of commercial and industrial sites. This technology developed by large automobile companies such as Tesla who recently revealed plans to launch its first electric lorry this year, as it attempts to break into the commercial market. Tesla's 'Big-Rig Truck' is anticipated to have a working range of 200-300 miles according to reports making it suitable for inner-city transport, whilst the Tesla 'Semi-Truck' which is scheduled for unveiling later this year would be able to travel up to 1,000 miles on a single filling.

There is no doubt that the recent polices rolled out across Europe indicate a shift in the nature of travel which will have a knock-on impact to planning policy moving forward in the UK. PBA will be watching closely to ensure that we continue to offer our clients a forward thinking service in an evolving industry.

