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WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11TH FEBRUARY 2026

Report by the Executive Director of Growth and Place on recent developments affecting Car Club provision in the borough

SUMMARY

This paper summarises recent developments in the car club market, notably the withdrawal of the largest operator Zipcar, and describes actions taken to help maintain car club provision for use by residents and businesses.

The Executive Director for Finance comments that the estimated cost of reduction in car club permit income from the changes outlined within this paper is £214,000 per annum, £201,000 of which arises directly from Zipcar's withdrawal. Any unused car club spaces repurposed to be either EV charging points or resident permit and / or pay and display parking spaces will offset some of the reduced income. The financial impact of the changes will be monitored and it is anticipated that this can be met from within existing approved revenue budgets.

GLOSSARY

CoMoUK Sustainable transport charity promoting car clubs and the car club accreditation scheme

LIP Local Implementation Plan (transport plan), a programme of measures to improve transport in the borough in line with the Mayor's Transport Strategy

SLA Service Level Agreement

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This report is submitted to the Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information. No decisions are required on it by the Council, the Cabinet or regulatory or other committees. If the Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments, or recommendations on the report, these will be submitted to the Cabinet and/or the appropriate regulatory and other committees for their consideration.

INTRODUCTION

2. A car club is a service in which a car club operator provides cars for personal or business use to club members, mainly for periods of short-term hire on a pay-as-you-go basis. Car clubs give people access to a car without having to own a vehicle. They can reduce overall car use and thereby contribute to lower levels of local pollution and traffic congestion. A successful car club can also reduce parking pressure, as some members joining the club will give up car ownership.
3. Provision of car clubs is an objective of the Council's Third Local Implementation Plan (LIP), its overarching transport plan for the Borough. LIP Objective MTS3d states that the Council will promote and enable car-free or car-lite living through planning policies and the provision of car clubs. Promoting and enabling car clubs is Action 17 of the Wandsworth Climate Action Plan 2025.
4. Car clubs have operated from Wandsworth roads since 2007 and there are currently 133 dedicated car club parking bays provided on street in the Borough. This is under the “back-to-base” model of car club, in which a car club member books the car in advance for a fixed period, collects the car from its dedicated bay at the appointed time, and returns it to the same location at the end of the booking ready for another member to use the vehicle. Payment is usually by the hour. Under back-to-base operation, each car in the fleet has its own car club parking permit issued by the Council, which is currently priced at £1,152 per annum.
5. The operator Zipcar launched its “free-floating” car club Zipcar Flex in the Borough in 2017. This car club allows for A-to-B trips within a defined operating area which includes multiple boroughs. Instead of being required to pick up a car from and return it to a specified place, as in the back-to-base model, members can park anywhere in the operating area subject to local restrictions. The pro-rata per vehicle payment made to the council is £1,119 per annum for electric vehicles; a higher rate of £1,554 applies to petrol vehicles but in recent months there have been virtually none of these operating in the Flex zone within Wandsworth. Typically, around 70-100 Flex vehicles have been available each day.
6. Car clubs are also provided at some larger housing developments, in order to give incoming residents access to a car when needed while deterring personal car ownership.
7. Annual surveys of car club members conducted for CoMoUK, the charity promoting shared mobility services such as car clubs and cycle hire schemes, show that both back-to-base and free-floating car clubs result in a net decrease in vehicle ownership, mileage and transport emissions. All accredited car club fleets meet the London Ultra Low Emission Zone standards.
8. It is estimated that there are more than 60,000 car club members in Wandsworth, though only 10-15% are regular users and a significant proportion will only use the service occasionally.

Recent Developments in Provision

9. Since 2020 a number of factors have led to lower levels of car club provision than previously. These include the effects of the pandemic and the cost of living on travel habits, rising costs of operation due to inflation, global supply chain issues affecting the automotive sector, and availability of alternative options like Uber and e-bikes.
10. Of the 133 back-to-base bays, 87 spaces have been allocated to the operator Zipcar and 11 to Enterprise Car Club, with 35 vacant.
11. In December 2025 Zipcar announced its intention to withdraw from the UK, where it has been the dominant operator, not just in Wandsworth but across London. Zipcar has to date provided the vast majority of back-to-base car club vehicles and all of the free-floating model in the borough (no other car club operator currently uses the free-floating model). Zipcar's closure was confirmed in January 2026, meaning a further 87 bays will be left vacant on top of the 35 currently unoccupied, making 122 vacant bays in total, 92% of all designated car club bays.
12. Additionally, several development-related car club spaces will become vacant, at the following 24 locations. These vehicles are intended to serve residents of the development and the surrounding area.
 - a) Nine Elms - Riverlight
 - b) Battersea - Chelsea Bridge Wharf
 - c) Putney - Chartfield Ave
 - d) Wandsworth - Battersea Reach
 - e) Battersea - Kingsway Sq
 - f) Earlsfield - Westfield Waterside
 - g) East Putney - Putney Plaza
 - h) Putney - Tileman House
 - i) Tooting - Recovery St
 - j) Clapham Junction - Monarch Sq
 - k) Prince of Wales Drive
 - l) One Thames City
 - m) Royal Mail Centre
 - n) One Nine Elms
 - o) Battersea - Hyde Lane
 - p) Wandsworth - Chatfield Rd
 - q) Battersea - Sleaford Street
 - r) Clapham Junction - Winstanley Rd
 - s) Nine Elms - New Mill Lane
 - t) Roehampton - Emerald Sq
 - u) Roehampton - Queen Marys Pl
 - v) Wandsworth - Petergate
 - w) Wandsworth - Riverside Quarter
 - x) Wandsworth Town - Ram Street.
13. Zipcar has also been in discussion with developers about forthcoming car club obligations elsewhere. Car club obligations will remain with developers, but Zipcar will work with the Council, developers and other car clubs to help ensure provision continues where required via planning obligations.

14. Following Zipcar's news CoMoUK ran a survey of car club members, and although not a scientific sample, up to 80% of respondents said they would now consider buying their own car. An increase in car ownership would lead to additional parking pressure and vehicular trips.
15. Around 175,000 trips are made in Zipcars in the borough each year, with around 7-8,000 members using the service each quarter. The majority of trips are via the Flex free-floating scheme (130,000), with at least 45,000 made under the round-trip model. Average bookings are longer for round trip (270 mins) than for Flex (50 mins).
16. Due to the benefits of car clubs as an alternative to private car ownership, it is considered that action is required to maintain as much provision in Wandsworth as possible. Officers have met other car club operators to ascertain potential for occupying the vacant bays, and in what timescale, and have advised those operators that they intended to recommend more favourable terms for operators which are discussed in the following paragraphs.
17. To reduce barriers to entry, rather than run a full procurement or require detailed contracts with operators, a simplified Service Level Agreement is proposed, covering three main areas:
 - a) Agreement to pay an annual parking permit fee for each space - although this will be waived for the first year (see paragraph 20 below)
 - b) Agreement to maintain membership of CoMoUK's car club accreditation scheme, to ensure certain standards are met (e.g. vehicle age, safety, customer service, etc)
 - c) Agreement to provide data to the council on a six-monthly basis to help monitor how car clubs are performing and meeting transport objectives (membership numbers, utilisation by location, etc).
18. To provide certainty of tenure and therefore help justify the car club operator's investment, it is proposed that the SLA should be for a five-year term, renewable for recurring periods of up to five years.
19. Car club permit fees are only one part of a car club operator's overall costs, but they are the part within direct council control. The current permit price of £1,152 per annum is understood to be a deterrent to car club operators who might otherwise be interested in taking up vacant bays.
20. To encourage early occupation of bays by other car club operators, all new car club permit fees are to be waived until April 2027. Fees will be reviewed periodically thereafter.
21. The annual impact on permit revenue of these proposed changes and Zipcar's withdrawal is summarised in Table 1 below. Actual reductions in revenue would be offset to some degree by alternative uses (see below) or in some cases residents choosing to buy their own car and needing a resident parking permit.

Table 1: Car Club Parking Revenue

	No. of Vehs	Permit revenue – current prices	Permit revenue – current prices, Zipcar withdrawal	Permit revenue while fees are waived, Zipcar withdrawal
Zipcar Flex	90*	£100,710	£0	£0
Zipcar (bay)	87	£100,224	£0	£0
Enterprise (bay)	11	£12,672	£12,672	£0
Total	188	£213,606	£12,672	£0

*average daily vehicles, varies by day

22. Given Zipcar's dominance and scale of operation, it is unlikely that other operators will be able to occupy all the vacant spaces in Wandsworth. Operators are also looking at other boroughs where Zipcar's withdrawal provides opportunities. As a result, some vacant bays in Wandsworth are likely to become available for alternative uses.
23. The Council is looking to expand parking for other sustainable transport uses, including bikehangar parking and bays for e-bikes/e-scooters. There can be difficulty finding suitable locations for these uses, as complaints sometimes arise about loss of residential car parking for such uses.
24. There is scope for replacing vacant car club bays with these alternative uses without the same risk of concern about loss of existing residential parking.
25. Accordingly, it is proposed to repurpose car club bays that remain unoccupied by car club operators after a reasonable period to other uses, dependent on location, but with the general order of preference being:
 1. E-bike/e-scooter bays
 2. Bikehangars
 3. EV charging (subject to integration with EV chargepoint contracts)
 4. Resident permit parking.
26. Appendix 1 to this paper summarises the current status of bays.

COMMENTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

27. The Executive Director of Finance comments that the estimated cost of reduction in car club permit income from the changes outlined within this paper is £214,000 per annum, £201,000 of which arises directly from Zipcar's withdrawal. Any unused car club spaces repurposed to be either EV charging points or resident permit and / or

pay and display parking spaces will offset some of the reduced income. The financial impact of the changes will be monitored and it is anticipated that this can be met from within existing approved revenue budgets.

CONCLUSION

28. The withdrawal of the biggest car club operator from the UK market risks some existing or potential car club members reverting to private car ownership. Actions described in this paper seek to minimise loss of car club provision and reduce risk of growth in car ownership and use.

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3rd February 2026

Background papers

There are no background papers to this report.

Appendix 1**Car Club Bay Locations Summary**

Ward	No. of Car Club Bays	No. Occupied (Enterprise)	No. Vacant (following Zipcar's withdrawal)
Balham	11	1	10
Battersea Park	8	1	7
East Putney	9	1	8
Falconbrook	3	1	2
Furzedown	3		3
Lavender	6	1	5
Nine Elms	2	1	1
Northcote	9	1	8
Roehampton	1		1
Shaftesbury & Queenstown	9	1	8
South Balham	6	1	5
Southfields	7		7
St Mary's	5	1	4
Thamesfield	15		15
Tooting Bec	7		7
Tooting Broadway	5		5
Trinity	4		4
Wandle	2		2
Wandsworth Common	3		3
Wandsworth Town	9	1	8
West Hill	4		4
West Putney	5		5
Grand Total	133	11	122