Audi Q4 e-tron Sport 40 – Road Test

Published: September 8, 2021

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/audi-q4-e-tron-sport-40-road-test/



The Audi Q4 e-tron Sport 40 all-electric compact SUV…

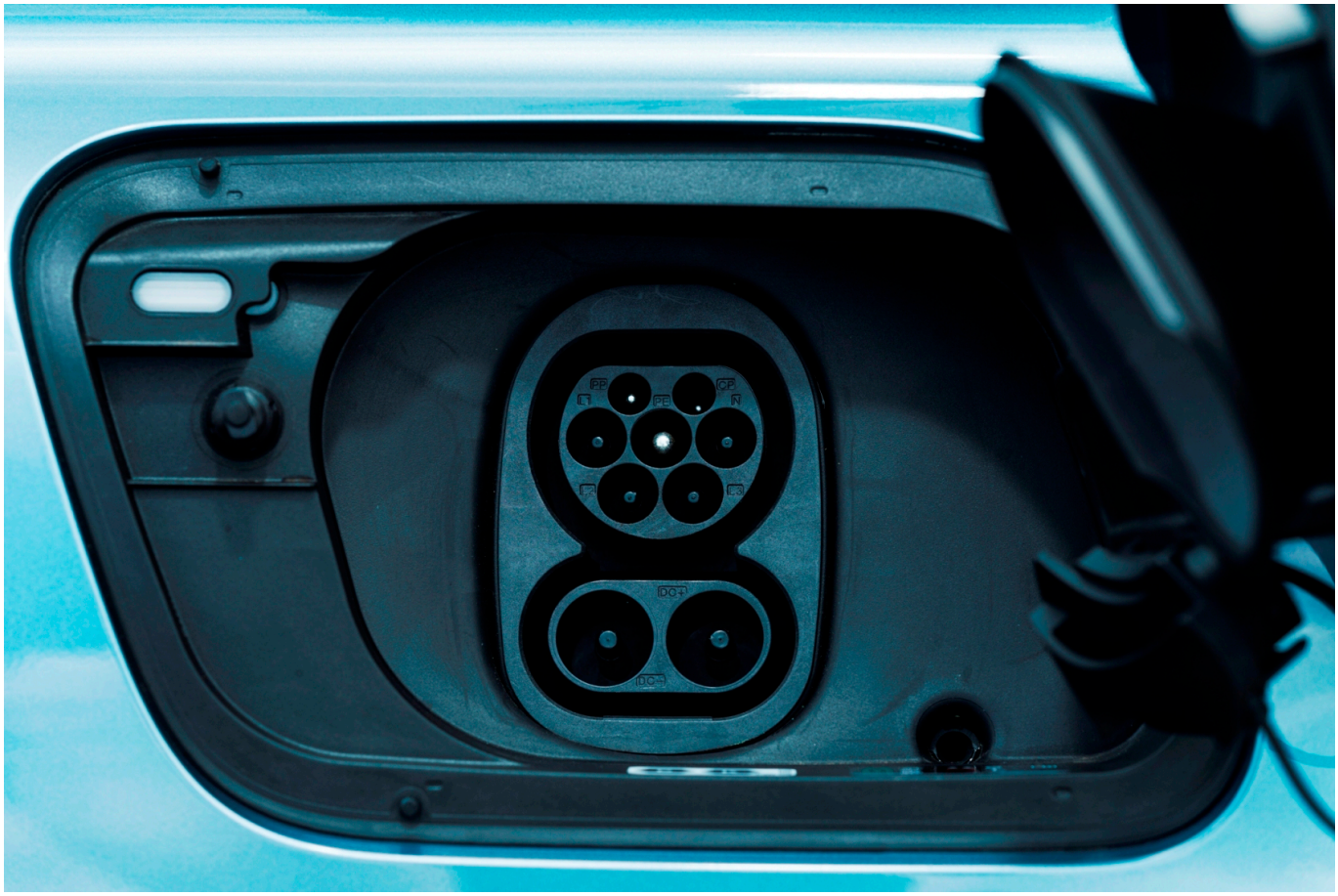
…plugged-in and tried by Robin Roberts (and Motoring Milestones)…

Form flows into function with the Audi Q4 e-tron as the German executive brand shapes up its first compact SUV in the pure battery battle.

The Q4 e-tron is available with a choice of power units, 125, 150 or 220 kW outputs from two battery capacities, rear or all-wheel-drive and four trim levels.



Depending on the battery pack chosen and charging facilities the Q4 e-tron can be boosted from low to 80 miles range in ten minutes and in under 40 minutes up to 80% energy is packed in for approximately 245 miles range.



Its body-shape follows the desire to use air-flow to maximise what happens underneath and on the ground.

Most prominent is an “active grille” which is shut to quicken warm up and opens to cool the engine if needed when the on-board computer decides. It also has clever aero features to enhance airflow and lower resistance around the wheel-arches, door mirrors and over the roofline.

Underneath, the transmission is optimised to extend economy and range with progressive

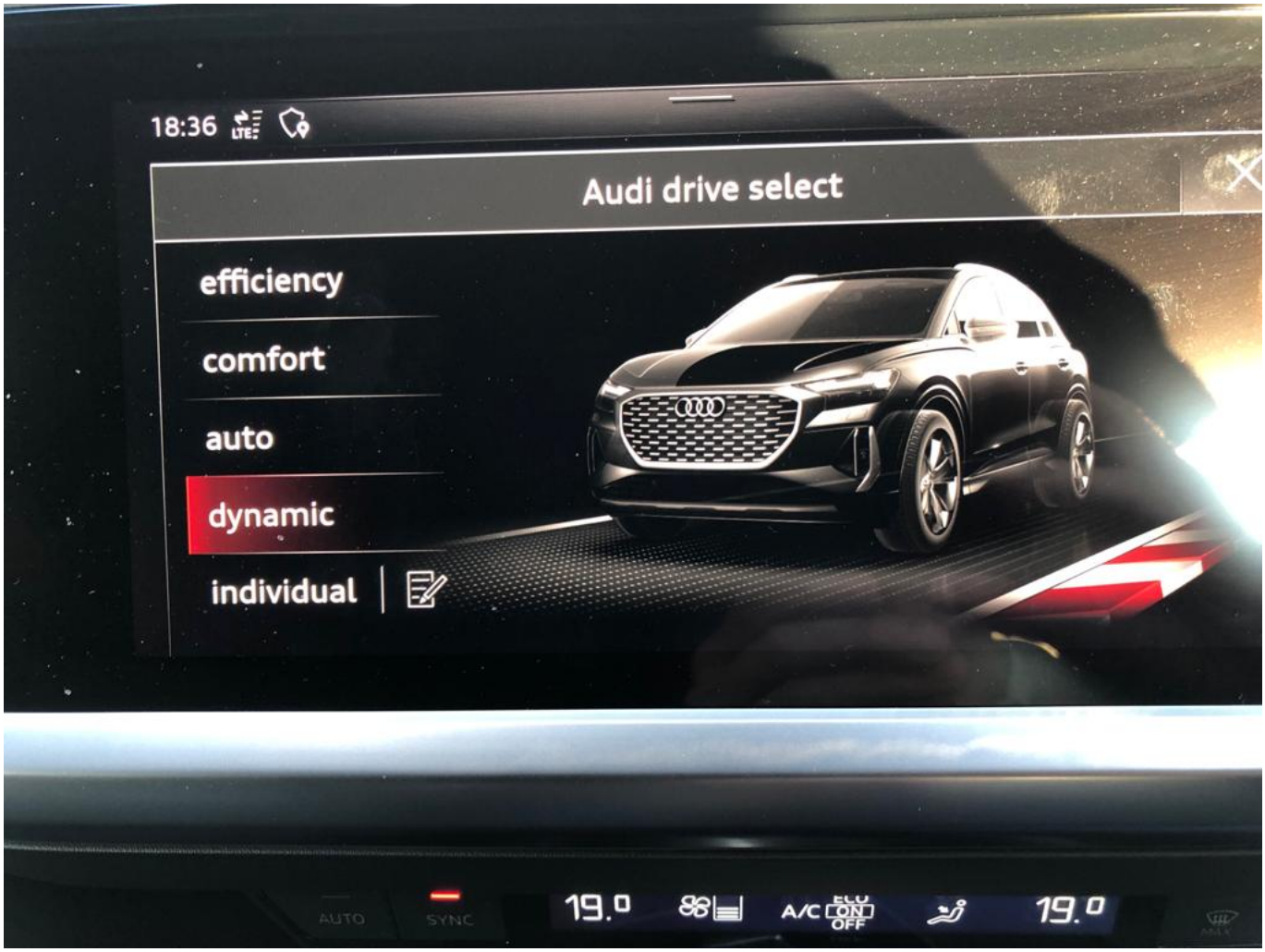
retardation selection on the paddles you normally see on a column in a car equipped with DSG drive.

What was possibly more surprising, was the use of drum-brakes at the rear on the test car as the system's normal electric retardation works well and a lightly used pair of rear discs would be prone to deteriorating sooner than a drum system.

With the mid-range power output the Q4 e-tron test car had a sharp getaway from standstill, briskly dispatched overtaking, comfortably maintained motorway speed and kept up with traffic. In speed terms it was every bit as good as a petrol equivalent.

The matter of range depends on how you drive it, with selectable modes for efficiency, comfort, auto, dynamic or through individual settings – and then you can eat at different rates into the 294 miles we saw from two full charges. With retardation settings maximised we consistently saw the range extend despite covering ground, which sort of goes against what seems logical and it was definitely at its most miserly off motorways.

The individual settings adjust steering weight, transmission responses and ride/ handling so a driver can vary them to personal taste, just as with other Audi models.



It is a technical tour de force and needs some time to familiarise but learn how they work and a range of benefits is there to be enjoyed.

The sporting feel to the powertrain was matched by a nicely weighted steering system with a good turning circle and no kick-back while the electric motor’s retardation is immediately felt when lifting off and before applying the footbrake so the Q4 e-tron slows and stops under control and quickly.

An intelligent parking brake held the car in traffic or on a slope and instantly released as the throttle was brushed.

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With struts at the front and links to the rear, the Q4 e-tron rides well over most surfaces and put down power very well without any vices showing up. It felt slightly nose heavy in tight turns but that retardation really pulled it back on line after easing off. Some bumps did find their way into the cabin with the big wheels and tyres fitted.

You could hear the suspension and engine spinning but otherwise it was a quiet car with extremely low wind generated sound.

The cabin was roomy for five with good access and excellent seats for long journeys, an offset split dramatically raised the luggage space and it had a good shape to the loadbed. Oddments space was good.







Visibility was generally clear to front and sides, slightly compromised by the C-pillar over the shoulder and narrow rear glass but there were sensors and reversing camera to assist. High performance lights on the test car and big wipers were very effective.

For the driver the main controls were simple and straightforward, work well and were sensibly placed with, thankfully a row of climate control switches under the very big central infotainment screen, which I did find using a bit distracting and not as easy as it could be with progressive menu selections for features.

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The climate control did an excellent job and was also optimised to save energy as it pushed out huge air volume at selected temperatures and into all corners of the cabin.

VERDICT

The Audi Q4 e-tron is a technical masterpiece but its price means it does not qualify for HM Government plug-in grant assistance and you pay a higher road tax duty for five years.

It was also good to see it came with both three-pin and fast charger connections to maximise refuelling opportunities and even with disc and drum brakes at this price to make you smile.

For: Good range and charging choices, sharp handling, pleasant ride, comfortable seats, roomy cabin, very well equipped, very low company car tax cost.

Against: Road noise intrusion, fiddly distracting touchscreen controls, some blind spots, expensive 5-year Standard rate VED costs – and it misses out on the Government purchase grant due to its high price, average warranty.



Mini Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Audi Q4 e-tron Sport 40 204 PS

Price: £52,685

Mechanical: 204 PS 310 Nm electric motor with lithium-ion 82 kWh battery, automatic single speed, rear wheel drive

Performance: 99 mph, 0 – 62 mph 8.5 seconds, all-electric driving range 294 miles, zero CO2 emissions

Tax costs: BiK company car tax rating 1%, VED First Year road tax £0 then £480 standard rate paid annually for 5-years due to its over £40k purchase cost

Insurance Group: 31

Warranty: 3-years/60,000 miles

Size: L 4.59 m (15.06 ft), W 2.11 m (6.92 ft), H 1.63 m (5.35 ft)

Boot space: 520 to 1490 litres (18.36 to 52.62 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 2,050 kg (4,519 lb)