

Committee: Environment

Agenda Item

Date: 19th January 2010

12

Title: Use of Essex County Council's "Parking Standards, Design and Good Practice" as District Council approved planning guidance

Author: Jeremy Pine, Planning Policy / DC Liaison Officer (01799 510460) Item for decision

Summary

- 1 This report explains why it would be appropriate for the Committee to approve new car parking standards for development control purposes. The report firstly sets out the history relating to the adoption of the current standards and current Government policy on parking, secondly explains the main change in thinking that has led to revised standards and finally compares the old and new standards where significant changes are proposed. The main change is that the new residential standards are now based on minimum criteria rather than maximum.

The report recommends that the new standards be used as District Council approved planning guidance. The standards have been prepared by Essex County Council (ECC) in partnership with the Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA).

Recommendations

That the Committee resolve that Essex County Council's "Parking Standards, Design and Good Practice" September 2009 document be used as District Council approved planning guidance, superseding Appendix 1 of the 2005 Adopted Uttlesford Local Plan (ULP).

Background Papers

ECC "Parking Standards, Design and Good Practice" September 2009, plus the associated Consultation Statement and Consultation Response Summary.

The parking standards document can be viewed on ECC's website at:
http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/vip8/ecc/ECCWebsite/content/binaries/documents/Parking_Standards_2009.pdf?channelOid=null

Impact

Communication/Consultation	ECC carried out extensive public consultation on the proposed new
----------------------------	---

New parking standards

Environment, 19/1/10, item12

	standards between May 2007 – April 2009. The report author sat on the Review Group representing the District Council.
Community Safety	The new standards take into account the safety of all highway users.
Equalities	The new standards make adequate provision for parking for people with disabilities.
Finance	None.
Health & Safety	The new standards take into account the health and safety of all highway users.
Legal implications/ Human Rights	None.
Sustainability	The new standards reconcile the need to promote sustainable development with making adequate provision for car parking in a rural area where car use will remain an integral part of day to day life.
Ward-specific impacts	The new standards would apply district wide.
Workforce/Workplace	None.

Background

- 2 In August 2001, the current “Vehicle Parking Standards” document was published on behalf of EPOA. The aims of the standards were to:
 - a) *assist local planning authorities in determining appropriate standards for their areas and advising members of the public in a readily comprehensive manner,*
 - b) *assist intended developers in preparing plans for the development of land, and*
 - c) *expedite the determination of planning applications by ensuring that applications submitted include an acceptable level of car parking provision.*
- 3 The 2001 document was prepared following the publication in 1998 of the Transport White Paper “A New Deal For Transport: Better For Everyone”, which promoted the adoption of maximum parking standards as a means of promoting sustainable development and encouraging modal shift to public transport, cycling and walking. This approach was further emphasised in other relevant Government policy guidance at that time, including the former

New parking standards

Environment, 19/1/10, item12

PPG3 Housing (March 2000) and the current PPG13 Transport (March 2001).

- 4 To meet the policy aims, the 2001 document set out maximum vehicle parking standards, but put forward minimum parking standards for bicycles and motorcycles to reflect the more sustainable nature of those travel modes. The document also set out standards for the provision for service vehicles where required and for parking for people with disabilities. With one or two minor variations, the 2001 standards were incorporated into the ULP which was adopted in 2005.
- 5 The Government's intention, through PPG13, as part of a package of planning and transport measures is to promote sustainable travel choices. Paragraph 49 states that reducing the amount of parking in new developments (and in the expansion and change of use in existing development) is essential. It states that policies in development plans should set maximum levels of parking for broad classes of development, and should be designed to be used as part of a package of measures to promote sustainable transport choices, reduce the land-take of development, enable schemes to fit into central urban sites, promote linked-trips and access to developments for those without use of a car and to tackle congestion.
- 6 The new PPS3 Housing (November 2006), which superseded PPG3, asks local planning authorities to develop residential parking policies for their areas *"taking account of expected levels of car ownership, the importance of promoting good design and the need to use land efficiently"* (Paragraph 51). This responsibility has been deliberately devolved to local authorities so they can make the right choices for their local area.
- 7 In an Email response to ECC on the subject of parking standards, Go East has recognised the need to prevent problems caused by under provision of car parking, but is concerned that the use of minimum parking standards can encourage more parking than may be necessary for a development, pull against a design-led approach to integrating parking into new development and may not contribute to managing traffic demand.
- 8 As a result of what is said in PPS3, Go East acknowledged in its response to ECC that *"there is therefore some discretion to reflect local circumstances when setting parking policies. This means there may be exceptional circumstances which would justify an approach which is different to that put forward in national policy but it is up to local authorities to make this case. In particular you will need to justify why a minimum standards approach is a better method of providing the right amount of provision over an approach that sets out varying standards as maximums.*

Therefore while we accept the need for local discretion to meet specific local circumstances, we still - for the reasons set out above - have some

New parking standards

Environment, 19/1/10, item12

reservation about taking a minimum standards approach and particularly one which advocates such standards for an entire county area”.

The need for new parking standards

9 Due partly to the passage of time and also to the frequency of issues that arose from parking at new developments, in particular residential sites, EPOA decided that a review of the 2001 standards was required. The work commenced in 2007 by the setting up of a Review Group facilitated by ECC, and aided by other exercises such as site visits (including Oakwood Park, Little Dunmow/Fritch Green), a resident’s survey, a random sample of manufacturer’s specifications and a 6-week period of public consultation. The Consultation Statement is attached for Members’ information as an appendix to this report. This statement sets out the full extent of the review work that was undertaken. The Consultation Response Summary is 65 pages, but is available for Members to inspect.

10 Through the work of the Review Group, the following conclusions were drawn. The author’s comments are in italics.

1) 35% of all Essex wards have an average car ownership in excess of 1.5 / household (2001 census).

In Uttlesford, average car ownership is above 2 / household. This may partially be a reflection of disposable incomes, but also reflects the need to own a car to get around. It is relevant to take this level of car ownership into account under Paragraph 51 of PPS3.

2) 70% of Essex is rural, and for many areas public transport does not offer an attractive alternative to the private car (e.g. service frequency or destination).

Uttlesford has an average population density of about 1 person / hectare, half that of Braintree. Apart from where Stansted Airport uplifts local public transport provision, frequent services will often not be practical in such an area of dispersed population.

3) An acknowledgement that previously advised garage dimensions are too small for modern cars (random sample of manufacturer’s specification 2007). See 6) below.

4) 78% of garages are not used to store vehicles, but used for general storage / utility uses instead (resident’s study 2007).

This may reflect a general lack of storage space inside houses (recent CABA report “Resident satisfaction with space in the home”), which is a separate issue. In this instance, it is likely that a resident values the garage more as a storage area than a parking area. Increasing the minimum size of garages to allow for some storage as well as parking could therefore be a realistic measure.

5) Often, rear parking courts are used to facilitate the increase in the use of wheelie bins and recycling storage containers (site visits 2007).

See 8) below.

New parking standards

Environment, 19/1/10, item12

6) Parking bays are inadequately sized for modern cars (site visits 2007, random sample of manufacturer's specification 2007).

Simple comparisons can be made. The old Ford Escort Mk2 was about 4.1m x 1.6m whereas its modern equivalent (Ford Focus) is about 4.3m x 2m, a significant increase in width as most modern cars fit 3 people in the back seat.

7) Parking courts are often poorly located and designed, as well as unattractive and insecure (site visits 2007).

See 8) below.

8) Parking courts must have easy and direct access to dwellings.

If parking courts are perceived as inaccessible and insecure, it is understandable why they may not be used for their intended purpose.

9) Setbacks (typically 1.5m) from garages and gates lead to vehicles parking in front of garages and blocking footways (site visits 2007, random sample of manufacturer's specification 2007). *This type of parking is antisocial, and is one cause of neighbour disputes. There is anecdotal evidence of neighbour disputes occurring over on-street parking at Oakwood Park, and it is known that the local bus service does not enter the site because of the lack of manoeuvring room.*

- 11 The most significant conclusion (Paragraph 1.2.5 of the new standards document) is that Government advice to reduce car travel through reducing availability of parking at origin and destination has not worked at origins. There is no evidence locally that providing a reduced number of car parking spaces at a travel origin discourages people from owning a car. Problems of on-street parking and congestion have been caused throughout the day and in extreme cases bus services have been withdrawn to an area, removing the chance of modal shift.

The new standards

- 12 The main difference between the current and proposed parking standards is residential provision, both in terms of numbers of spaces and dimensions. The table below enables a comparison to be made of the main elements of the residential standards. In relation to parking standards for other uses (which remain based on maximum provision), there are few differences between current and proposed. As before, the standards are based on the Use Classes Order.

Aspect	2001 Standards	Proposed new standards
Domestic parking	<u>Maximum.</u> 1-3 bed dwellings – 2 spaces each. 4-bed dwellings and larger – 3 spaces each.	<u>Minimum.</u> 1-bed dwellings - 1 space each. 2-bed dwellings or larger - 2 spaces each.

New parking standards

Environment, 19/1/10, item12

		Garages do not count if they are below 7m x 3m internally. Visitor / unallocated spaces to be at 0.25 spaces / dwelling
Garages	5 x 2.5m minimum	7 x 3m minimum (internal dimensions)
Preferred parking bay size	5.5 x 2.4m	5.5 x 2.9m
Minimum parking bay size	4.8 x 2.4m	5 x 2.5m (only used in exceptional circumstances)
Parallel parking bay size ("end to end")	6 x 2.4m	6 x 2.9m

Besides specifying parking bay sizes, Section 3 of the new standards also deals with general design and layout issues. These are summarised below, with a commentary in italics:

- Pedestrian access, including within car parks – *promotes the use of segregated or shared surfaces to avoid relying on vehicular routes*
- Layout of car parking areas – *includes alignment of spaces, widths of aisles and circulation routes*
- Blue Badge parking design – *deals with space location and dimensions*
- Residential parking design – *looks at shared surfaces, on-street parking, parking squares, parking courts, in-curtilage parking, garage provision and size, mixed use streets, underground / underdeck / undercroft parking, tandem parking, set backs and retirement / warden controlled development.*
Shared surfaces - appropriate at very low densities to avoid blocking footways and narrowing road widths
On-street parking – can be designed-in to schemes to retain adequate road widths for buses, emergency and service vehicles, as well as catering for people with disabilities
Parking squares – these are shared pedestrian / vehicle areas that can be provided in areas not occupied by the carriageway or footway. Parking can be managed by street furniture or trees.
Parking courts – need careful design to be overlooked, to have direct access to / from surrounding dwellings and to have energy efficient dawn – dusk lighting.
In-curtilage parking – need to avoid car-dominated street scenes by avoiding frontage parking and building facades with large expanses of garage doors.
Garage provision and size – need to be large enough to accommodate a car, cycles and some storage. Providing extra depth for storage is preferable to extra width, as that is easier to accommodate within existing average plot widths.
Mixed use streets – deals with residential parking provision where other uses dominate at ground floor level.
Underground / underdeck / undercroft parking – can improve development quality, but needs to be safe and secure and retained for parking.
Tandem parking – is acceptable on-plot, but should be discouraged in parking

New parking standards

Environment, 19/1/10, item12

courts, as it can discourage the uptake of spaces.

Set backs – These should either be no more than 0.5m from the edge of the highway to allow for the opening of garage doors, or more than 6m to allow parking in front of the garage. The previous 1.5m set back has allowed residents to park in front of garages using the adjacent footpath / cycleway / verge, causing obstructions.

Retirement / warden controlled developments – need to also consider safe storage / charging areas for mobility scooters.

- Powered two-wheeler parking design, and
- Cycle parking design – *the standards set out specifications for safe and secure parking, and the need for lockers etc.*

- 13 Officers do not consider that the change to specifying minimum residential standards should necessarily result in more parking spaces being provided. The reason for this is that the new standards specify quality just as much as quantity to increase usability. A prime example of this is the increase in garage sizes, allowing their dual use for parking of a modern car and for storage.

Conclusions

- 14 Go East's concerns about specifying minimum residential standards have been considered, but officers consider that the "Parking Standards, Design and Good Practice" document is an appropriate response to the need in a rural area such as Uttlesford to continue to provide for the motorist whilst encouraging modal shift where possible. The new residential standards have resulted from a lengthy period of countywide research, including site visits and residents' own personal experience of living conditions.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That the change in emphasis towards minimum residential parking standards might be viewed as being contrary to Government advice in PPG13, especially at appeal.	2. Evidence may be needed at appeal to show an Inspector that the new standards are the right choice for the local area.	2. Failure to implement the new standards could encourage more on-street parking.	Periodic review of the new standards is proposed, taking on board Government guidance at that time, listening to feedback and following a programme of monitoring on the ground. UDC will take part in any review.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.