

ENVIRONMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

8 NOVEMBER 2006

PARKING STANDARDS REVIEW GROUP

RECENT REVIEW AND SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE (SPG)

Need for Review

In conjunction with the preparation of the new Local Plan and in response to other policy documents and advice from central government, it was recognised that the Council's 1988 parking standards required a significant review and update.

A Parking Standards Review Group (PSRG) was established with a remit to revise the standards to accord with current policy and to publish them as new Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The PSRG quickly established that since 1988 a good deal of guidance had been issued relating to the provision of car parking. The main two documents (issued by government departments) were;

- Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 – Transport (PPG13), and
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 – Housing (PPG3)

Together, these two documents form the foundation of national parking policy.

PPG13

This guidance note was revised and reissued in March 2001. It included guidance on car parking provision within the body of the document and in Annex D it also quoted maximum levels of parking that should be applied to certain types of development.

PPG13 States;

“52. Policies in development plans should set maximum levels of parking for broad classes of development. Maximum standards 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 development for those without use of a car and to tackle congestion. There should be no minimum standards for development, other than parking for disabled people.”

53. There is a need for a consistent approach to maximum parking standards for a range of major developments, above the relevant thresholds. The levels

set out in Annex D should be applied as a maximum throughout England, but RPBs and local planning authorities may adopt more rigorous standards, where appropriate, subject to the advice in this guidance. The maximum parking standards set out in annex D do not apply to small developments, that is, those below the relevant thresholds. Local authorities should use their discretion in setting the levels of parking appropriate for small developments so as to reflect local circumstances. By virtue of the thresholds, this locally based approach will cover most development in rural areas.”

The table reproduced below was included in Annex D of the document;

USE	NATIONAL MAXIMUM PARKING STANDARD	THRESHOLD FROM AND ABOVE WHICH STANDARD APPLIES
Food retail	1 space per 14m ²	1000m ²
Non food retail	1 space per 20m ²	1000m ²
Cinemas and conference facilities	1 space per 5 seats	1000m ²
D2 (other than cinemas, conference facilities and stadia)	1 space per 22m ²	1000m ²
B1 including offices	1 space per 30m ²	2500m ²
Higher and further Education	1 space per 2 staff + 1 space per 15 students	2500m ²
Stadia	1 space per 15 seats	1500 seats

PPG3

The most fundamental shift in policy affecting residential parking provision is contained in PPG3. The relevant paragraphs state;

“59. Local authority requirements for car parking, especially off-street car parking, are also a significant determinant of the amount of land required for new housing.

60. Car parking standards for housing have become increasingly demanding and have been applied too rigidly, often as minimum standards. Developers should not be required to provide more car parking than they or potential occupiers might want, nor to provide off-street parking when there is no need, particularly in urban areas where public transport is available or where there is a demand for car-free housing. Parking policies should be framed with good design in mind, recognising that car ownership varies with income, age, household type, and the type of housing and its location. They should not be expressed as minimum standards.

61. Local authorities should revise their parking standards to allow for significantly lower levels of off-street parking provision, particularly for developments:

- *in locations, such as town centres, where services are readily accessible by walking, cycling or public transport;*
- *which provide housing for elderly people, students and single people where the demand for car parking is likely to be less than for family housing; and*
- *involving the conversion of housing or non-residential buildings where off-street parking is less likely to be successfully designed into the scheme.*

62. Car parking standards that result, on average, in development with more than 1.5 off-street car parking spaces per dwelling are unlikely to reflect the Government's emphasis on securing sustainable residential environments. Policies which would result in higher levels of off-street parking, especially in urban areas, should not be adopted."

The often-quoted (and equally as often misquoted) sentence that is of most importance is contained in paragraph 61. This requires that new residential development is restricted to; on average 1.5 spaces per dwelling off-street. The misquoting usually excludes the off-street reference.

Review of Findings

The guidance in PPG3 left the Review Group with somewhat of a dilemma. The emphasis was clearly to reduce off-street provision to an average of 1.5 spaces per unit, but there remained an obvious need to ensure sufficient spaces are provided to avoid indiscriminate parking on streets, verges and footways etc.

In order to find a way of meeting national policy objectives whilst not under-providing parking, discussion focussed on two key areas;

- The exclusion of garages from the provision, and
- The provision of minimum levels of on-street parking

The exclusion of garages from the standards recognised the decreasing use of garages – even those provided with more generous dimensions. It also meant that when developers did choose to provide them, they were in addition to the 1.5 spaces limit in PPG3.

The requirement for minimum levels of on-street parking was to ensure that parking in excess of the 1.5 spaces was not lost, but was transferred from the private curtilage into the street. This had the advantage of it being available to all potential users and meant that 'duplication' of spaces was reduced.

New Standards

The proposed new standards incorporated the following changes to reflect current policy and best practice;

- Switch from minimum to maximum standards
- PPG13 levels for non-residential development
- 1.5 off-street spaces (on average) for residential development
- Zonal standards based on accessibility
- Cycle parking standards
- Powered Two-Wheeler parking standards
- Provision for People with Disabilities

These standards were adopted in December 2004.

A Review of the 2005 Parking Standards

A motion, relating to parking standards, was taken by Councillor Williams to the 10 October Council meeting. This motion asked for three actions from officers;

- a) Writing to the responsible ministers and local MPs.
- b) Investigate revising the current standards
- c) Prepare a report for Development Control Committee and this Committee.

It was subsequently agreed with Councillor Williams that the Review Group would be reformed in order to deal with actions b and c above. It was also agreed that the group should include officers and members, although the precise composition has not yet been determined.

PPS3

Planning Policy Statement number 3 (PPS3), which was issued earlier this year for consultation, will supersede PPG3. PPS3 does not propose a level of parking for residential development. The relevant text in PPS3 states;

“Local Planning Authorities should develop parking policies for their plan area with local stakeholders and local communities having regard to expected car ownership for planned housing in different locations, the efficient use of land and the importance of promoting good design.”

Further Work

Work to establish the precise nature of the problems and an evaluation of parking issues in recently built developments needs to take place. The first developments conforming fully to the new standards have only recently begun to be occupied.

Liaison is also required with English Partnerships and Milton Keynes Partnerships. The guidance issued locally by those organisations is to the effect that the minimum amount of parking acceptable to the Council is the maximum they are prepared to accept. In other words there is pressure on developers to provide as little parking as possible and below the Council's standards where possible.

Looking at PPS3 it seems appropriate to review car ownership and to consider local circumstances as part of any review. Accessibility was taken into account in the zonal approach adopted in the 2005 standards but this could also be reviewed.