

REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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PARKING STANDARDS REVIEW

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Summary

Parking standards used to assess the appropriate level of parking provision for new development are required to be revised following changes to national and regional guidance. In advance of a full review, Cabinet has agreed to undertake an interim review of the standards used for residential development. This will take account of standards developed by nearby local authorities. The proposals have been subject to detailed consultation.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 A change to the parking standards is a policy matter for Cabinet to decide. The final changes are being made in consultation with the Planning Committee and the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. Background

2.1 Parking Standards are used to assess the level of parking provision required for new developments when considering a planning application. The standards form a consistent basis for discussion between developers applying for planning permission and the Local Planning Authority.

2.2 The 1998 Transport White Paper saw a change in direction with parking provision, using reduced parking availability as one of the tools to achieve a change in travel behaviour to more sustainable modes such as public transport, cycling and walking. This approach was promoted in Regional Planning Guidance 9 (RPG9) and Planning Policy Guidance 13 (PPG13), both issued in March 2001. In response to these changes Medway's parking standards were reviewed in order to harmonize them with the guidance contained within PPG13. This required the standards to be reduced and expressed as a maximum rather than a minimum.

2.3 As part of the move to a new planning system in 2006 Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) indicated that local circumstances should be taken into account when setting standards. It gives further advice that proposed development should take a design-lead approach to the provision car-parking space that is “well integrated with a high quality public realm and streets that are pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly.” The recent Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) consultation document (January 2008) gives a further steer on Government thinking, proposing to cancel paragraphs 53, 54 and Annex D of PPG13 which refer to maximum parking levels.

2.4 The South East Plan (May 2009) states in Policy T4 (Parking):

Local development documents and local transport plans should, in combination:

- i) adopt restraint-based maximum levels of parking provision for non-residential developments, linked to an integrated programme of public transport and accessibility improvements
- ii) set maximum parking standards for Class B1 land uses within the range 1:30m² and 1:100m²
- iii) set maximum parking standards for other non-residential land uses in line with PPG13: *Transport*, reducing provision below this in locations with good public transport
- iv) include policies and proposals for the management of the total parking stock within regional hubs that are consistent with these limits
- v) apply guidance set out in PPS3: *Housing* on residential parking, reflecting local circumstances
- vi) support an increase in the provision of parking at rail stations where appropriate
- vii) ensure the provision of sufficient cycle parking at new developments, including secure cycle storage for new flats and houses which lack garages.

2.5 In response to these changes, and in recognition that maximum standards were giving rise to concern, several Highway and Planning Authorities have decided to review their current standards to ensure they were fit for purpose. Medway Council has recently appointed consultants to produce a Parking Strategy and part of this work will involve the review of our Parking Standards.

2.6 Essex County Council has produced draft revised parking standards, offering qualitative advice to the Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) in Essex. Case studies have been used in the Essex standards to assess the impact of current parking standards and their functional relationship to the development they serve. A fundamental change included in the revised Essex standards is a move to minimum standards for trip origins (residential parking) and maximum standards for trip destinations (for example, commercial, leisure and retail parking). This approach argues that limiting parking availability at trip origins does not necessarily discourage car ownership and can push vehicle parking onto the adjacent public highway, diminishing the streetscape and potentially obstructing emergency and passenger transport vehicles. Essex County Council consider this approach is consistent with current

Government guidance such as PPS3 and emerging PPS4, as residential parking should reflect the local circumstances of a development.

- 2.7 The Essex parking standards state that for main urban areas a reduction to the standard may be considered – these are areas defined as those having frequent and extensive public transport and cycling and walking links, accessing education, healthcare, food shopping and employment.
- 2.8 Kent County Council (KCC) has also produced revised draft parking standards which reflect the change of thinking around maximum and minimum standards for different land uses. However, their revised standards for residential development continue to recommend that maximum parking standards are appropriate for town centre and edge of centre locations. The advice in KCC standards is that reduced, or even nil provision is encouraged in town centre locations in support of demand management and the most efficient use of land.

3. Options

The need to revise the Parking Standards for Medway is an acknowledged priority due to changes in national and regional policy. Consultants have been recently appointed to undertake the review as part of the preparation of a Parking Strategy for Medway. However, in view of the concerns regarding parking arrangements in new housing developments in Medway, Cabinet has agreed that the fast tracking of the review of residential parking standards be considered. As a result, Cabinet considered other options for revising the residential parking standards, which involve either:

- Utilise parking standards developed by other Local Authorities. Whilst this approach would be quicker, it would not reflect local circumstances.
- As an interim measure, utilise key elements of residential parking standards developed by other Local Authorities.

- 3.1 Therefore, Cabinet considered the options for taking the Medway Parking Standard review forward were:
 - a) **Option 1:** New Parking Standards to be an outcome of the Parking Strategy consultancy work, taking into account approaches by nearby Local Authorities.
 - b) **Option 2:** Utilise the new standards developed by nearby Local Authorities, such as the Essex County Council standards to form the basis of Medway's new Parking Standards
 - c) **Option 3:** Pursue the Essex County Council approach of minimum standards for trip origins (residential parking) as an interim measure, whilst in parallel undertake the consultancy work for a comprehensive review of Parking Standards.

3.2 The advantages and disadvantages of each approach are set out in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Comparison of options		
	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes specific account of Medway issues – would reflect local circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time delay for any change to standards
Option 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortens timescale to adoption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards may not reflect local circumstances and limit design led development
Option 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortens timescale for change to residential standard • Addresses early concerns regarding current parking problems in new residential developments • Standards would reflect local circumstances in the final review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the short term, residential standards may not fully reflect local circumstances • Results in two periods of consultation

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1 The parking standards have a direct relationship with place-marking, design and site capacity, town centre viability, congestion and climate change. Concern has been expressed that a low maximum parking standard for residential development can have an adverse effect on the environment of new housing developments and the amenity of those who live in them. However, too rigid or onerous standards could result in poor quality, sterile design or prevent the development of difficult sites.
- 4.2 Dwellings are predominantly travel origins as opposed to destinations. Parking standards have previously attempted to reduce car use by restricting parking spaces at origin and destinations. The new draft Essex parking standards consider that providing a reduced number of parking spaces at a travel origin does not discourage people from owning a car.
- 4.3 A comparison of mainstream residential parking standards (excluding retirement developments) for Essex, Kent and Medway is detailed in tables 4.1 and 4.2. Draft vehicle parking standards for Kent are split between four categories: city/town centre, edge of centre, suburban and suburban edge/rural. For comparison purposes in table 4.1, city/town centre and edge of centre locations are defined as having high accessibility, the remainder being in the medium/low accessibility category.

Table 4.1 – Comparison of vehicle parking standards for mainstream residential developments					
No. of spaces per dwelling					
Standard	Draft Essex std	Draft Kent std		Existing Medway std	
		Level of accessibility			
		High	Med/ Low	High	Medium / Low
Standard type	Min	Max	Min	Max	Max
Dwelling size					
1 bedroom	1.0 ⁽¹⁾	1.0	1.0	1.5 ⁽²⁾	1.3 ⁽²⁾
2 bedrooms	2.0 ⁽¹⁾	1.0	1.0 ⁽⁴⁾	1.5 ⁽²⁾	2.0 ⁽²⁾
3 bedrooms	2.0 ⁽¹⁾	1.0	1.5 ⁽⁵⁾	1.5 ⁽²⁾	2.0 ⁽²⁾
4+ bedrooms	2.0 ⁽¹⁾	1.0 ⁽⁶⁾	2.0	1.5 ⁽²⁾	3.0 ⁽²⁾
Visitor parking	0.25 ⁽³⁾	Included above			
<i>See notes on table 4.1</i>					
Notes for table 4.1:					
<p>1 Reductions of the standard may be considered if there is development within an urban area that has good links to sustainable transport. Excludes garage if less than 7m x 3m internal dimension.</p> <p>2 Single garage with a GFA (Gross Floor Area) of less than 13.2m² not included in parking assessment. Double garage with GFA less than 26.4m² but greater than 13.2m² treated as a single garage.</p> <p>3 Visitor/unallocated vehicle parking can, subject to appropriate design, be located on or near the road frontage</p> <p>4 Minimum 1.5 space per unit in areas of low accessibility.</p> <p>5 Minimum of 2.0 spaces per unit in areas of low accessibility</p> <p>6 Maximum of 1.5 spaces per unit in edge of centre locations</p>					

Table 4.2 – Comparison of cycle parking standards for mainstream residential development			
Standard	Draft Essex std	Draft Kent std	Existing Medway std
Dwelling type			
All dwellings	1 space per dwelling ⁽¹⁾ .		One space per five dwellings ⁽²⁾
Houses		1 space per bedroom	
Flats & maisonettes		1 space per unit	
Notes:			
1. Not required if garage or secure area is provided within curtilage of dwelling			
2. Applicable only to high density developments sharing facilities			

- 4.4 The residential vehicle parking standards for Essex incorporate a flexible approach to allow exceptions to the minimum parking standard rule and there are likely to be locations in Medway where the applicant could argue that an exception is appropriate. However, minimum parking standards do bring opportunities for seeking S106 financial contributions to identified town centre parking schemes in lieu of on-site parking provision below the minimum standard.
- 4.5 Cabinet considered that the application of minimum residential parking standards operated within a flexible framework would address the environmental and amenity problems that have been identified in new residential developments. Cabinet therefore agreed that consultation be undertaken with the view to adopting on an interim basis the principles of the Essex County Council residential parking standards.

5. Risk Management

- 5.1 Risks associated with implementing interim changes to parking standards are detailed in the table below.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Need to change interim residential parking standards soon after adoption	Outcome of work by consultants indicates the need to diverge from the interim standard	Detailed consultation on interim standards prior to adoption

6. Consultation

- 6.1 On 13 October 2009 Cabinet agreed that consultation be undertaken with the view to adopting on an interim basis the Essex County Council residential parking standards detailed in tables 4.1 and 4.2.
- 6.2 As the interim standards will form a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), consultation followed processes detailed in the Local Development Framework (LDF) Statement of Community Involvement. This included a minimum six week consultation period with key stakeholders. Consultation commenced on Monday 26 October and closed on Monday 7 December 2009. Consultation involved sending over 400 letters to key stakeholders including agents involved in preparing planning applications. Details were also published on Medway Council's website.
- 6.3 The consultation process resulted in 12 responses being received, including responses from Government Office for the South East and the Highways Agency. Some important comments came out of the process and these are summarised below:
- a) Support of principle:
- Adequate off road parking is more essential than ever given the more narrow streets that are provided as part of new developments.
 - Rigid application of maximum standards to residential developments has been counterproductive, giving rise to insufficient parking which has resulted in a number of problems including obstruction to roads and footways and thus resulting in a poor quality public realm.
- b) Concern with principle:
- An increase in parking provision on constrained urban regeneration sites will have adverse consequences for overall design quality.
 - Sites may become unviable.
- c) Flexibility of approach:
- To encourage developers to support sustainable development it is suggested that in Note 1 in Table A1, the text be amended to: "Reductions of the standard will be considered where the development includes good links to sustainable travel...." rather than, may be considered.
 - The proposed standards should include flexibility to alter minimum provision to reflect local circumstances. This flexibility is envisaged to apply to highly sustainable locations that enjoy good access to non-car modes and where day-to-day facilities are within easy walking distance.

- At highly sustainable locations, there is a risk that minimum parking standards could result in over provision of parking.
 - Parking provision should be based on robust demand assessments based on 'Residential Car Parking Research-May 2007'.
 - The Note 1 caveat should be the rule rather than the exception in the context of urban sites.
 - Note 1 [reductions of the standard] is welcomed.
 - There needs to be an adopted assessment as to whether areas are defined as having good links to sustainable transport, e.g. a 10 minute walk from public transport with a frequency of every 10 minutes.
- d) There should be a minimum threshold where the proposed minimum standards for visitor spaces would apply, e.g. 4 or more dwellings.
- e) The potential provision of 2 spaces for a 2 bedroom house as a minimum seems high, especially when unallocated parking as part or all of the provision offers the most efficient use of land.
- f) Standards should also incorporate a minimum size for a double garage.
- g) Express as 'target amounts' of parking rather than minimum to avoid problems at appeals.
- h) Cycle parking:
- Support for the proposed increase in cycle parking provision.
 - Should be flexible approach.
 - Quantum seems onerous.
 - Start at one space and be increased for each additional bedroom.
 - One space per 5 dwellings is impractical [existing standard].
- i) There needs to be a pragmatic approach when applying to schemes with outline consent, with no blanket standards.
- j) Higher on-site parking levels should not be applied retrospectively to sites which have outline permissions in place.
- k) Calls for a second round of consultation prior to formal adoption of an SPD.

6.4 In summary, the proposed new parking standards are considered generally to be acceptable in principle, subject to minor amendment. The salient point arising from the consultation is the need for flexibility to allow reduction in parking spaces at sites that are situated in highly sustainable locations and sites that have excellent access to local facilities and services.

- 6.5 For mainstream residential developments, Table 6.1 compares the existing vehicle parking standards to the pre-consultation draft standards. Table 6.1 also incorporates suggested amendments to the draft standards that have arisen through the consultation process. It is recommended that Planning Committee support these changes, which are detailed and underlined in the column headed 'Proposed standards (post-consultation)' and in the notes.
- 6.6 Table 6.2 compares the draft cycle parking standard to Medway's existing standard. No significant amendments to the draft cycle parking standards have been suggested through the consultation process and as a result, no amendments are proposed to the draft cycle parking standard. It is recommended that Planning Committee support the draft cycle parking standards.

Table 6.1 – Medway's vehicle parking standards for mainstream residential developments				
Comparison between existing standards, pre-consultation draft standards and proposed standards post-consultation				
	Existing Medway standards		Draft standards (pre-consultation)	Proposed standards (post consultation)
	No. of parking spaces per dwelling			
Standard type	Maximum		Minimum	
Level of accessibility	High	Medium/ low	See note 1	
Dwelling size				
1 bedroom	1.5 ⁽⁴⁾	1.3 ⁽⁴⁾	1.0 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	1.0 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾
2 bedrooms	1.5 ⁽⁴⁾	2.0 ⁽⁴⁾	2.0 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	<u>1.5</u> ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾⁽⁴⁾
3 bedrooms & above	1.5 ⁽⁴⁾	2.0 ⁽⁴⁾	2.0 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	2.0 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾
4 bedrooms & above	1.5 ⁽⁴⁾	3.0 ⁽⁴⁾	2.0 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾	2.0 ⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾
Visitor parking			0.25 ⁽³⁾	0.25 ⁽³⁾

Notes for table 6.1:

- 1 Reductions of the standard will be considered if the development is within an urban area that has good links to sustainable transport and where day-to-day facilities are within easy walking distance.
- 2 Excludes garage if less than 7m x 3m internal dimension.
- 3 Applies to a minimum threshold of 4 residential units. Requirement for provision is rounded down, i.e 5 to 7 units require 1 visitor space, 8 to 11 units require 2 spaces, etc. Visitor or unallocated vehicle parking can, subject to appropriate design, be located on or near the road frontage.
- 4 Excludes garage if less than 5.5m x 2.4m internal dimension

Table 6.2 – Medway’s Cycle parking standards for mainstream residential developments

Comparison between existing and draft standards

Standard	Minimum requirement	
	Existing standard	Draft standard
Dwelling type	Existing standard	Draft standard
All dwellings		One space per dwelling ⁽¹⁾
Only applicable to high density developments sharing facilities	One space per five dwellings	

Notes for table 6.2:

1. Not required if garage or secure area is provided within curtilage of dwelling

7. Programme

- 7.1 Following obtaining the views of Planning Committee on 6 January 2010, and the Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet will consider the issue on 26 January 2010.

8. Financial and legal implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications associated with any of the recommendations, with the exception of the minimal costs associated with re-printing the parking standards, which can be funded through existing revenue budgets.
- 8.2 The new standards would be used in decision making and the coordination of development. The interim residential parking standards will become a Supplementary Planning Document linked to policy T13 (Vehicle Parking Standards) of the Medway Local Plan (May 2003) and policy T4 of the South East Plan (May 2009).

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Regeneration, Community and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
- (a) recommend to Cabinet the adoption, on an interim basis, of the amended draft residential parking standards detailed in tables 6.1 and 6.2, which take into account consultation comments;
 - b) endorse that the amended draft residential parking standards is used for pre-application advice with immediate effect.

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Background papers

- Cabinet report 'Parking Standards Interim Review' (13 October 2009)
- South East Plan (May 2009)
- Essex Parking Standards – consultation draft (March 2009)
- Planning Policy Guidance 13