

CABINET – 21 April 2026

UPDATES TO ‘PARKING STANDARDS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS’

Report by Director of Economy and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to

adopt the proposed updates to the ‘Parking Standards for New Developments’ document as set out in Annex 1.

Executive Summary

2. Oxfordshire County Council’s Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP), adopted July 2022, outlines a clear vision to deliver a net-zero Oxfordshire transport and travel system by 2040. One of the policies within the LTCP supporting this vision is Policy 33, which sets out how Oxfordshire County Council is seeking to reduce and restrict car parking availability while also creating more attractive places for residents to live and work in.
3. Policy 33 is supported by the Parking Standards for New Developments document, which stated that it would be reviewed every 12-18 months and updated when appropriate. These reviews have taken place and a need to update the document has been identified.
4. In December 2024 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated to include a requirement for developments to follow a vision-led approach to transport planning. Updates to the Parking Standards for New Developments document are required to reflect these changes. Innovative ways to improve parking provisions and revise the document have also been identified, informed by the experiences gained from its use since its adoption.
5. These proposed updates are recommended to be adopted by Cabinet in order to allow the relevant County Council officers to continue to require the implementation of the approach in practice, in line with national and local policy, through planning applications for new developments.

Background

6. The existing Parking Standards for New Developments document was adopted by Cabinet in October 2022 and revised in January 2023 as a formal supplementary document to Oxfordshire County Council’s LTCP. Since its adoption this document has begun to influence how new development sites are master planned / designed by reducing and restricting car parking availability at both source and destination. This approach has been recognised in the

construction industry and has incentivised developers to come forward with innovative design concepts to align with the County Council's LTCP ambitions.

7. Following internal review of the application methodology for the revised guidance, coupled with assessment against emerging evidence, this proposed revision of the guidance ensures that the standards are sufficiently rigorous, ambitious, clear and that they are fully aligned with the Council's wider objectives for reducing private car trips overall.

The document's purpose

8. The primary objective of this review is to align the parking standards more robustly with the Oxfordshire LTCP target to reduce car trips on the road network. The updated document serves as an essential tool to help deliver this objective by ensuring new developments continue to be designed to prioritise sustainable travel from the outset.
9. The changes are aimed to facilitate, where appropriate, a move towards 'Car Free' and / or 'Car Light' developments, thereby reducing the potential for car ownership and usage associated with new housing and commercial development sites.
10. The updated document has been externally tested to confirm that, in practice as well as in principle, the standards will reliably support the delivery of walkable, mixed-use and sustainable neighbourhoods. This additional scrutiny has helped sharpen key criteria and strengthen the document's enforceability.

Proposed updates

11. The key changes proposed for this updated document significantly strengthen the criteria under which 'Car Free' development can be supported, this includes:
 - Clarity on applicability: Providing clearer guidance on the specific locations and circumstances (e.g. highly accessible sites, locations with or without potential for excellent public transport links) where a full Car Free approach is appropriate and deliverable.

Introduction of Car Light Development Criteria

12. A new and crucial section within the document has been incorporated to formally introduce a criteria for 'Car Light' developments. This approach recognises that a full Car Free approach may not be feasible in all areas (e.g. some rural or less accessible suburban locations).
 - Definition: A Car Light development is defined by significantly reduced parking provision, coupled with substantial investment in sustainable travel infrastructure and incentives.
 - Criteria: The criteria sets out clear requirements for a development to be considered Car Light, including:

- Upper Limit (maximum) residential parking ratios that are demonstrably lower than standard.
- Mandatory implementation of Car Clubs and/or Shared Mobility Hubs.
- Provision of excellent pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and connections / links.

Changes to walking distance thresholds for Car Free Development

13. As part of the preparation of these updated parking standards, research has been conducted to inform and support the proposed changes to the walking distance thresholds used in the criteria for when car free development should be required. This research paper can be found at Annex 2.
14. These refinements reflect both officer learning from applying the existing standards and the findings of the independent external review, which tested the draft standards for clarity, practical deliverability and alignment with LTCP policy.
15. The **current** Parking Standards stipulate that where parts of a development are within the following walking distances and on the edge of Oxford, they are *required* to be car free (see paragraph 6.2 of the existing standards):

Car free development will be <i>required</i> where parts of a development are within...
400m of a... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transport service (15 to 30 minute)
800m of a... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP surgery • Supermarket or local grocery shop (selling fresh food) • Primary school • Secondary school • Employment area (such as a town centre, science park, business park, industrial estate, or other employment sites of a similar scale, e.g. major hospital, university, etc.)

16. The use of the 800m walking distance was based on the principle of a 20-minute walk (or liveable neighbourhood concept), which was deemed appropriate at the time. However, since the adoption of these standards, review of the evidence on walking distances (see Annex 2) has led to the view that these current stipulations are potentially overly restrictive, resulting in few locations meeting the criteria for car free development. As such, research has been conducted to establish whether there is evidence that would support adjusting these parameters.
17. The officers' interpretation of the further research identified scope to amend the walking distances set out in the existing standards document, which are now proposed to be amended as detailed in paragraph 18 of this report.

18. The proposed updates that are subject to this report are summarised below. For parts of a development that are within (or could reasonably be expected to be within on the completion of a development site) the following walking distances in Oxford, on the edge of Oxford (see paragraph 4.15 of the proposed standards), or within a town, a car free approach will be *required*.

Car Free development will be <i>required</i> where parts of a development are within...
600m of a... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus stop (served by 2 buses per hour)
800m of a... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supermarket or local grocery shop (selling fresh food)
1000 of a... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train station (served by 2 trains per hour)
1600m of a... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary school • Healthcare provision (such as a GP surgery or pharmacy)
3,200m of a... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary school • Employment area (such as a town centre, science park, business park, industrial estate, or other employment sites of a similar scale, e.g. major hospital, university, etc.)

19. For parts of a development that are within (or could reasonably be expected to be within on the completion of a development site) the following walking distances in Oxford, on the edge of Oxford, or within a town, (see paragraph 4.17 of the proposed standards), a car light approach will be *required*.

Car Light development will be <i>required</i> where parts of a development are within...
800m of a... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus stop (served by 2 buses per hour) or
1600m of a... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary school • Train station (served by 2 trains per hour) • Supermarket or local grocery shop (selling fresh food)
3,200m of a... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary school • Healthcare provision (such as a GP surgery or pharmacy) • Employment area (such as a town centre, science park, business park, industrial estate, or other employment sites of a similar scale, e.g. major hospital, university, etc.)

20. In some circumstances, depending on the location of a development site and the availability of local amenities and services, it may be required for a development proposal to provide both car-free and car-light approaches within different parts of a site. Such an approach would need to be supported with an evidence-based mapping exercise. Officers will work collaboratively with developers and site consultants to help develop such mapping examples.

Updated Residential Cycle Parking Standards (LTN 1/20 Alignment)

21. The residential cycle parking standards have been comprehensively revised to bring them into full alignment with the Department for Transport's (DfT) national guidance, Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20).
22. This revision has been brought forward from constructive feedback received from local planning authorities and the development industry. This feedback has identified that the existing residential cycle parking standards are significantly higher than the national guidance, resulting in over-provision of cycle parking. For example, the existing standards requires 2 spaces per bedroom, whereas LTN 1/20 requires 1 space per bedroom.
23. This update is not anticipated to reduce active travel behaviours as the current provision is beyond maximum demand.

Essential Policy Alignment and Implementation

24. To ensure the new criteria for Car Free and Car Light development is robust and legally defensible in planning terms, the reliance on the parking standards as guidance must be underpinned by a formal adopted policy.
25. The existing parking standards are a supplementary guidance document to the LTCP. Formal policy within the LTCP, which is a statutory, high level strategic transport plan, will provide the necessary strategic and legal justification to enforce these key sustainability aspirations.
26. It is recommended that if the revised parking standards are agreed and adopted by Cabinet, they shall be brought into immediate effect.

Policy Implications and Next Steps

27. These updates are essential for supporting the carbon reduction and air quality improvement targets across Oxfordshire. By strengthening the criteria for reduced-car development, Oxfordshire County Council is taking proactive steps to influence travel behaviour associated with new growth in the county.

Focus Area	Expected Outcome
Car Free / Light	Reduced car ownership/trips, especially for local journeys. Lower congestion and fewer emissions.
LTN 1/20 Cycle Standards	Increased use of cycling due to better and more secure facilities, supporting health and well-being.
LTCP Alignment	Delivery of strategic transport goals and a transition to a more sustainable, well-connected transport system.

28. Subject to Cabinet adoption, the revised standards will be communicated to district and city councils, developers and design teams to support consistent application. Officers will also update supporting guidance and templates where needed to ensure smooth implementation across planning processes.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

29. The County Council's 'Strategic Plan: 2025-28', sets out a vision for greener, fairer, and healthier county. By helping to put into practice policy within the Oxfordshire LTCP, the 'Parking Standards for New Developments' document will help to deliver aspects of this vision.
30. By ensuring that the revised Parking Standards for New Developments is implemented through proposed developments (alongside the updated Decide and Provide approach), thus prioritising reduced parking levels, active travel and public transport interventions, the document will contribute to delivering the following wider objectives identified in the Strategic Plan:
- We will continue to roll out our Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, which aims to cut carbon emissions from transport. This means encouraging people to use public transport, cycling and walking instead of driving.

Financial Implications

31. The implementation of this document's requirements is not expected to have implications for staff resource, as the assessment of parking provisions for development proposals is already undertaken by officers. The revised parking standards will not create any additional resource pressures to those that already exist. As such, it is not expected that there will be any revenue or capital resource implications.

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Legal Implications

32. The implementation of this document's requirements is not expected to have any legal implications as the assessment of parking provisions for development proposals is already undertaken by officers. The revised parking standards are not expected to create any additional resource pressures to those that already exist.
33. As local highway authority, Oxfordshire County Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications under the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. The production and adoption of statutory documents, such as the LTCP, and supporting guidance documents, including the Parking Standards for New Developments and revisions thereto, enable the highway authority to fulfil its role as statutory consultee and promote policy compliant development.

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Staff Implications

34. The implementation of this revised document is not expected to generate any implications for staff resource, as the assessment of parking provisions for development proposals is already undertaken by officers. Some training will be required for appropriate teams but is not anticipated to create any additional resource pressures that don't already exist. As such, it is not expected that there will be any staff implications.

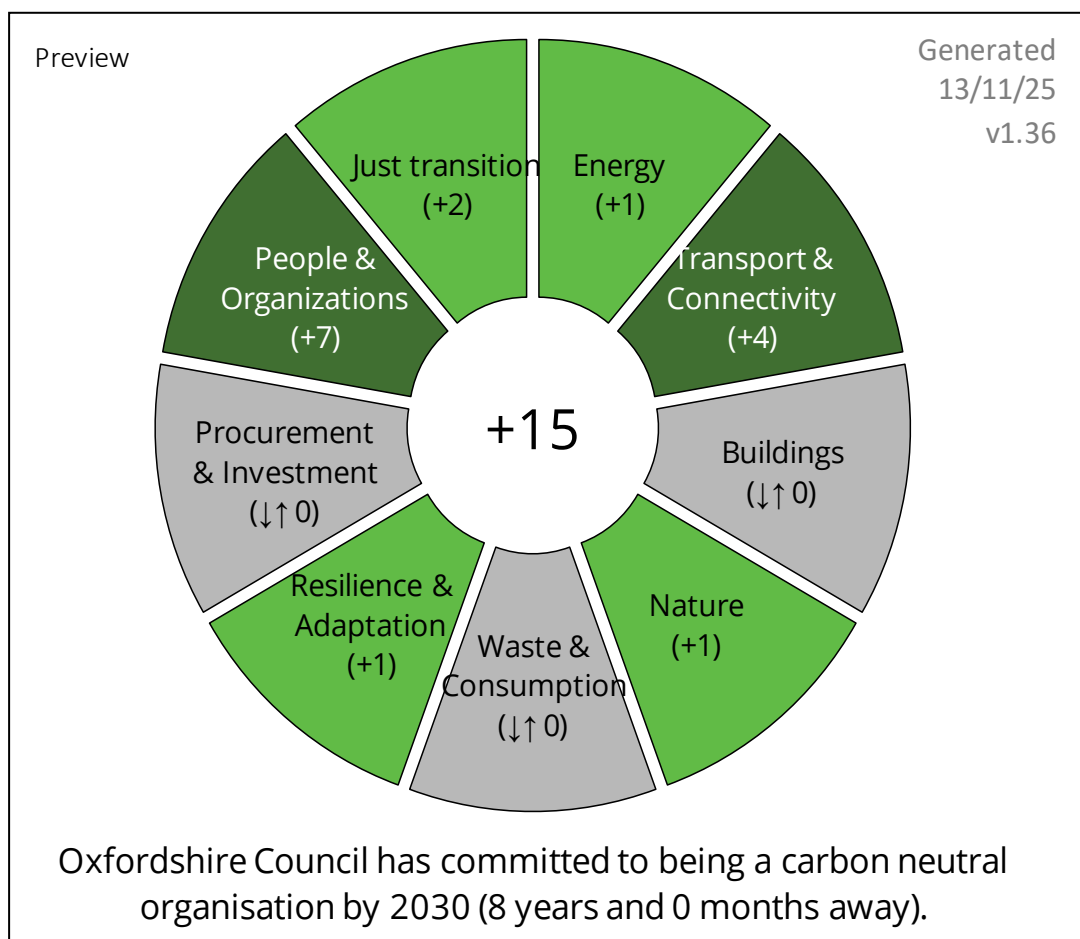
Equality & Inclusion Implications

35. The Implementing of the revised 'Parking Standards for New Developments' document will help towards ensuring that new developments will be provided with an appropriate level of parking provision for all users of the highway network. One of the objectives of this document is to ensure development proposals, whilst provided with appropriate parking provision, do not detract from the character of a place to live, or work that is sought through the planning process.
36. The Equalities Impact Assessment, which can be found at Annex 3, shows that there is likely to be a benefit to various individuals, groups, and communities as a result of this document being implemented as it should make a positive contribution to ensuring that a wider range of travel choices are available to all.

Sustainability Implications

37. As one of the key means of implementing the aims of the LTCP, the 'Parking Standards for New Developments' document will play an important role in helping to deliver the aims of Oxfordshire County Council's Climate Action Framework and realising the goal of decarbonising the transport and travel system.

38. A Climate Impact Assessment has been undertaken, and the resultant report can be found in Annex 4. As illustrated in the scoring summary wheel below, the document has been identified as making a positive contribution to climate action across various categories.



Risk Management

39. With this revised document there remains a potential risk through implementing reduced levels of car parking for new developments (and redevelopments) in that this may lead to indiscriminate car parking taking place on the public highway, causing highway safety implications. This risk is considered within the document and can be minimised with quality development master planning, including appropriate design / mitigation measures and through other transport mode choices being made available.
40. Another potential risk is that the local planning authorities within Oxfordshire do not embed the requirements of this document appropriately in their respective Local Plans. This may cause issues with the implementation of the document as it may hold less weight in planning decisions if it remains only a requirement of the LTCP.

41. However, engagement has taken place with officers at each of the four district councils and the city council to ensure that they understand the proposed changes. Responses have been positive. Additionally, engagement with members of these councils is also planned so that they might also understand the intent of the document. It is hoped that the revised document will receive support from the district councils and city council as its aims broadly accord with the strategic policies of all Oxfordshire councils.
42. In addition, to reduce this risk further it is proposed that an additional, dedicated policy supporting Car Free and Car Light development is written, consulted upon, and formally adopted within the LTCP.

Consultations

43. Parking Standards for New Developments is a technical document intended to implement policy in the Oxfordshire LTCP and as such the comprehensive consultation exercise for the Oxfordshire LTCP encompasses the intent of this document.
44. However, as part of the process of developing the original version of the document (adopted in October 2022), significant engagement took place with internal colleagues, officers at the district and city councils, industry professionals, relevant Oxfordshire County Council cabinet members (i.e. those with transport-related portfolios), National Highways, and the authors of the guidance upon which the document is based. The comments derived from that engagement process were then used to inform the final version of the document.
45. Additional technical assurance was sought through external consultancy for the current revision to ensure that the proposed standards were sufficiently rigorous, ambitious, and capable of delivering the County Council's aims for car-free and car-light developments and the wider objectives of the LTCP. This review applied a structured and evidence-led assessment of the draft standards, examining whether they were genuinely vision-led, clear and enforceable, and aligned with the delivery of walkable, mixed-use neighbourhoods. The reviewers also examined whether the draft standards supported the LTCP's wider principles of proximity, mixed use, and the need for development to address any missing local services. The outcome of this analysis has been incorporated into the proposed revised standards.

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Annex 1: Parking Standards for New Developments document (final draft)

Annex 2: Parking Standards for New Developments: Walking Distances Review
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Annex 3: Equalities Impact Assessment

Annex 4: Climate Impact Assessment

Background papers: Nil

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