

## **CABINET – 16 NOVEMBER 2010**

# **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PARKING STANDARDS FOR NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS**

### **Report by Head of Highways & Transport**

#### **Introduction**

1. The current car parking standards for the County Council were approved by the Executive Committee in 2001. The parking standards of the District Councils are based on these standards. In recent years there continues to be feeling amongst the public and Local Authority Members of the various levels of local government that there is insufficient parking provided in new residential developments.
2. In response to these views the County Council and District Councils jointly commissioned consultants to look at the car ownership in new developments. This report showed distinctive habitual patterns of modern parking habits in residential developments. A draft proposal was created based on a matrix approach to parking provision.
3. This proposal was discussed with all of the District Councils in the County and refined into a form which was acceptable. The proposal is based on developing a series of parking provision regimes which is a mix of 'on-plot' and on street parking. It optimises the level of parking needed according to housing type and location within the built environment.
4. In the past year there has also been changes in the way new developments are assessed and designed from a Highway Authority point of view. Hence a review of the Councils Development Management design guidance and policies are needed. This document forms part of a future coherent suite of documents. Other documents within the suite of documents which are planned will deal with retail, commercial, and cycle parking.
5. The primary use of the document is to inform the shaping of new residential developments through the consultation process of planning applications. In its current form it has limited status within the wider planning process. The purpose of the County Council setting a car parking standard is to provide consistent advice to the Districts.
6. The document has been subjected to a consultation process with all of the District Councils. It requires to be adopted at a higher level within the Council.

#### **The Current Situation**

7. The current parking standards for the County Council were approved by Executive Committee in 2001 upon which the parking standards of the District

Councils are based. The standards are maximum standards in line with the Government guidance in Planning Policy Guidance 'Transport' 13 (PPG13).

8. The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2001-2006 (LTP) contains the approved guideline car parking standards which were significantly different from the previous standards that had been formulated in the late 1980s. These standards were based on the draft Government Planning Policy Guidance, which was available at the time, in line with the concept of sustainable development.
9. The current draft Local Transport Plan (LTP), which is going through the consultation stage, does not include car parking standards. Now it sets out the main objectives and transport policy goals on a wider more holistic basis. The LTP tends to exist for longer periods of time in which changes in trends and other Central Government guidance cannot be easily responded to in terms of quickly changing local policies. Hence policies such as this one can be written and maintained under the general umbrella of the LTP.
10. Planning Policy Guidance 'Transport' (PPG13) was published in March 2001 and contains the Government guidance on car parking provision for new development. PPG 13 sets out maximum parking standards for various land uses and a threshold gross floor area of developments above which the standards are intended to apply. For smaller developments, PPG 13 suggests more rigorous standards with no minimum requirement. It also states that 'reducing the amount of parking in new developments is essential as part of a package of planning and transport measures to promote sustainable travel choices'.
11. The general thrust of Government guidance is that car parking should be restricted as part of the overall initiative to reduce private vehicle mileage to minimise greenhouse gases. However it is not made clear where the car parking needs to be reduced i.e. the residential end or the work/ school/ commercial end. The result of current trends which is shown in the research is clear in that the restriction of car parking in residential areas does not affect car use. However the affect of car parking does have a local impact where there is not enough parking. It is also known that Central Government does not want to influence car ownership but to encourage the use of alternative means of transport.

### **The Issues around Parking in New Residential Developments**

12. The standards being considered in this report and the document to be endorsed looks at only part of the whole issue of parking.
13. Parking is also considered in terms of formal 'on street' and 'off-street' provision and control. Car Parking zones, on street parking controls and formal public car parks fall into this category. The Council has separate strategies and policies which deal with these aspects (e.g. Oxfordshire Parking Policy). This policy generally covers areas which already exist and inform other decisions on the location and level of car parking for public and non residential uses.

14. Tackling parking in new developments is not the only aspect of delivering effective, high quality and sustainable housing developments. This policy will sit alongside other policies and guidance which is used in development management in the planning process.
15. Moreover the level of off-street parking can have significant implications on on-street parking for which the County Council, as the Local Highway Authority, is likely to be responsible for, or at the least be expected to resolve.
16. The general assumption in the Government's advice on parking provision is that it is mainly related to the level of public transport available. However, the need for car parking, and hence car usage, not only depends on the level of public transport provision but also depends on what local facilities there are at a location. However, most probably, the largest effect comes from car ownership.

### **Purpose of the Parking Standards**

17. District Councils are the planning authorities for the majority of planning applications and ultimately decide on the parking provision for new developments under their powers in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The County Council as the Local Highway Authority provides advice to the District Councils on planning applications through the formal statutory consultation process.
18. The purpose of the County Council setting a car parking standard is to provide consistent advice which is applicable across the whole of the County to all Districts alike.
19. Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) allows District Councils to produce supplementary guidance of the content of this proposal in their respective core strategies. Hence through the process of delivering this document not only will it be a County wide document but it can then be used by District Councils for wider conformity by adding further to the strength of the policy in the planning process.
20. It is generally accepted that constraining parking provisions at journey destination does limit private vehicle trips, but it is not necessary the case at journey origins (residential properties). Residential will own cars and if necessary park on street where there are no parking controls. In doing so it often causes conflict and access problems. Central Government guidance does not explicitly seek to reduce car ownership.

### **The Research**

21. In response to the emerging views and trends, the County Council and District Councils jointly commissioned consultants to look at the car ownership in new developments.

22. The starting point for the research into the car ownership levels was 2001 census data to establish how car ownership varied across the County depending on location, dwelling type, dwelling size and tenure. This was followed by a questionnaire survey of 23 recent (post 2000) developments and then later by a more comprehensive questionnaire survey. The car ownership data was extrapolated to 2026 using growth factors. This developed into to a matrix approach to parking provision. This follows a similar methodology used in national guidance published by the Department of Communities and Local Government in May 2007 as “Residential Parking Research.” It is also a similar approach adopted by some other Highway Authorities.
23. The research undertaken identified various levels of additional car parking which would be required if a development had a set number of allocated spaces per household. This recognises the fact that if each property is allocated two spaces (for example a garage and a space in front of the garage in the driveway) that those households with three cars will have to park the additional car on the street, but, those with two or less would be under using the spaces available. The parking provision may meet the total demand but those households with three and more cars cannot use the spare available spaces in households with one or no cars. The solution is to provide some unallocated car parking provision (on street or otherwise) which takes up this variation. These spaces could also be used by visitors.
24. This method of providing parking does optimise the parking levels to the demand but also uses less land. However this approach does bring some difficulties. It means that the parking which is occurs on the street needs to be carefully designed such that access for all other users specifically refuse trucks and emergency access is maintained.
25. The research also looked at the sizes of parking spaces, the location of and relationships of certain parking arrangements. As a result some changes and improvements were recommended. Also, it was noted that there was some tendencies for garages not to be used for parking. This has an effect of putting more cars on the street with the obvious effects being felt.
26. It was noticed in some circumstances that rear, remote parking courts and garage blocks were not used to full effect which thus pushed some cars back onto the street.

## **Sustainability**

27. The policy has been developed to reflect current trends but also to comply with current Government guidance and policies. It is guided to optimise the need for parking whilst still not prejudicing the many other aspects of planning for the impact and mitigation of transport effects of new residential developments.
28. The parking standards meet the aims of sustainability which are set down in the Councils Corporate policies and the underlying aims of the emerging Local Transport Plan.

## Application of the Parking Standards

29. The parking standards only apply to new residential developments.
30. The number of dwellings (and size) is known. A number of ranges are determined across the development according to the housing mix and the development's profile. For each of these ranges (blocks of small flats, larger houses, location to local facilities, ease of access to public transport etc) a primary need for parking is assessed. Where parking restraint is needed (e.g. centre of Oxford) or where public transport is excellent then the total number of spaces might be reduced a little. This is accounted for on the grounds of the tendency in lower car ownership in these sorts of situation. The number of 'on-plot' spaces is also determined. These are spaces which are within the curtilage of the dwelling and hence in private control. Then the number of additional spaces are determined which are needed. These spaces are placed either on the street or in groups in parking courts.
31. The street is then designed such that the parking can be accommodated whilst not prejudicing or causing dangers to other users (children, vehicle speed, service vehicles etc).
32. Where parking courts are being used which are not in highway, suitable checks must be applied. Whilst under the policy they are shared amongst several dwellings, the Council must try to ensure that they are accessible to those who use them, their use is understood, and suitable maintenance regimes are in place.
33. The opportunity has been taken to include provision for car parking for people with disabilities. Layouts will have to conform to appropriate requirements for those who require more space for mobility.
34. The policy includes requirements for the size of parking spaces and layouts. These are aimed at reducing conflict whilst optimising the overall developable space available. There is a need to encourage the use of cycles. Hence the minimum size of a garage is required both to encourage its actual use for a car but also to accommodate cycles.
35. There are some other aspects of the layout of new residential developments which dovetail into the application of these parking standards. The planning of the living environment and street design is covered by other guidance. However it is expected this policy will be sympathetically applied alongside the other elements e.g. road design, bus access, and housing layout.

## Timetable

36.

Action	From	To
Determination to consult from Cabinet	November 2010	
Formal Consultation	January 2011	March 2011
Deliberation of result of consultation	April 2011	
Final Determination by Cabinet	June 2011	

## Consultees

37. The following groups will be formally consulted:

District Councils
Parish Councils
Selected large developers in Oxfordshire
Police
Highways Agency
Emergency Services
Public availability on the Councils website

## Equality and Inclusion

38. The content and application of the parking standards which is set out in the policy document has been screened with respect of all aspects of equality and inclusion. It does not favour or discriminate any group based on age, disability, gender, race, religion, belief, social inclusion, or sexual orientation.

## RECOMMENDATION

39. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to endorse the principle of applying parking standards for new residential developments as set out in the draft document, and to agree to a formal consultation period. Allowing for minor amendments according to the consultation, Cabinet will meet again to fully endorse the use of the policy. Cabinet is also asked to empower officers to start using the principle of this emerging policy where the Planning Authority and the developer are in agreement.**

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Background papers: Oxfordshire Design Partnership, Residential Parking Research and Draft Guidance, Final Report, by WSP, dated May 2008

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