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## **VEHICLE PARKING STANDARDS - CONSULTATION DRAFT JANUARY 2001**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report outlines proposed revisions to the vehicle parking standards in Essex prepared by the Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA).

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The current version of vehicle parking standards for Essex was prepared in 1987 on the basis of a 'minimum requirement'. These standards are included in the Rochford District Local Plan (Appendices 1 & 2) and provide the basis against which provision for parking on all new development is assessed.
- 2.2 The publication of the transport white paper "A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone" in 1998 represented a significant change in transport policy and planning. Local Authorities are expected to promote sustainability and encourage a model shift from the car to public transport, cycling and walking.
- 2.3 One method of promoting sustainability is the adoption of maximum as opposed to minimum standards for parking, in accordance with the principles of PPG3 Housing (March 2000) and the emerging PPG13-Transport.
- 2.4 The new standards are intended to provide a consistent basis for discussion between applicants for planning permission and the Local Planning Authority. The intention is that all Planning Authorities in Essex would adopt the new standards as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). If Members did agree to the adoption of the new standards, there would be no requirement to continue to repeat the information currently included within the Local Plan and a cross referencing policy would be all that would be required.

### **3. THE PROPOSED STANDARDS**

- 3.1 Appendix 1 to this report summarises the key differences between the existing standards included in Appendix 2 of the Local Plan and those now proposed. The parking standards for residential dwellings are discussed below.
- 3.2 In the main, the new standards considerably simplify the existing and there would seem to be little reason to justify any objection to the changes. However, Members do need to bear in mind, as stated

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above, that the new standards would provide for a **maximum** rather than a **minimum** level of provision.

### 3.3 Residential Dwellings

The current standard for parking provision in new residential development schemes, again expressed as a minimum standard is as follows:-

- 3 bedrooms or less - 2 parking spaces or one garage or space for a garage plus one parking space per dwelling - this would normally be referred to as a 200% provision
- 4 bedrooms or more - 3 parking spaces - a 300% provision.

This standard is applied across the whole district, though there are occasions when a relaxation in the provision has been considered appropriate for development within the town centres.

- 3.4 However, the revised PPG3 published last year advocates a move to maximum provision and a clear reduction in the number of spaces within certain areas. The new standard proposed is:

*“A range of standards is given which should reflect the different nature of the plan area. Local Authorities would be expected to apply restraint in line with PPG3 when considering development proposals.*

*For main urban areas and locations where access to public transport is good, a maximum of 1 space per dwelling is appropriate. Where an urban location has poor off peak public transport, a maximum of 1.5 spaces per dwelling is appropriate.*

*In rural or suburban locations where services are poor, a maximum of 2 spaces for three bedroom properties and a maximum of 3 spaces for four bedroom properties is appropriate.”*

- 3.8 To summarise the new standards for comparison purposes:-

- Urban areas - with good public transport - 100% provision
- Urban - poor public transport - 150%
- Rural/suburban
  - 3 bedroom - 200%
  - 4 bed plus - 300%.

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**4. DISCUSSION**

- 4.1 As indicated, the key changes in the standards are a move from minimum to a maximum level of provision. Therefore, any developer proposing to include more spaces than required by the standard would be required to amend their proposals. The provision of additional spaces tends to be common practice for developers of larger residential properties within the district.
- 4.2 With regard to the majority of the standards, excluding residential dwellings, it is considered that the adoption of a maximum level of provision is not particularly controversial. The expression of the standards is now helpfully related, where possible, to the Use Classes Order, and it considered that they should be adopted as SPG.
- 4.3 However, the proposed residential standards require some further attention. In principle, it could be argued that significant parts of the built-up areas of the District are suburban in character. On that basis, the only key difference between the existing and proposed standard would be a maximum level of provision. Therefore, in future, applicants proposing 4 or 5 spaces would be asked to adjust their layout in such a way as to omit those additional spaces.
- 4.4 The difficulty will be to distinguish between the parts of the built-up areas that are considered to be urban in character and therefore would have a lower maximum standard, and the suburban areas, where the existing standard, albeit expressed as a maximum, would continue to apply.
- 4.5 Furthermore, there is no doubt that the proposed revised standards do not fully reflect the intentions of PPG3, which states that:-
- "Car parking standards that result, on average in development with more than 1.5 off street 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."
- 4.6 It is clear that the acceptance of a maximum average provision of 1.5 off-street car parking spaces is not a realistic proposition for 3 or 4 bedroom properties, and the identification of the urban versus suburban areas is likely to be problematic. For smaller dwellings, flats and new residential properties within or close to town centres, it is likely that a reduced maximum provision can be achieved.
- 4.7 If Members accept the new parking standards, it will be interesting over time to see these being tested, both through the Local Plan Review process and planning applications.

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**5. OTHER MATTERS**

- 5.1 In addition to car parking standards, the vehicle parking standards also include a requirement for the provision of convenient secure cycle parking facilities. The details are provided in Appendix 2 to this report.
- 5.2 A standard for motorcycle parking is also included in the document as follows:-
- One space plus an additional space for every 10 car parking spaces.
- 5.3 The document also includes advice on:-
- layout of parking areas
  - sizes of spaces and garages
  - disabled parking provision.
- 5.4 The parking standards do not appear to fully cover all possible planning application types; there does not seem to be clear guidance on provision for sheltered housing schemes. Given that most developments of this type tend to be within urban areas and close to town centres, there is a justification for an amendment to the current standards.
- 5.5 Therefore, it is suggested that a review of these standards be undertaken and the results brought forward for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee. Any revised standards for such development types could then also be adopted as SPG.
- 5.6 In the meantime, it is suggested that the EPOA be asked to consider adding these to the vehicle standards document.

**6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Car parking within residential areas has a significant impact on the appearance and character of an area. The adoption of maximum standards is intended to make a contribution to sustainability and the protection of the environment.

**7 RECOMMENDATION**

It is proposed that the Sub Committee **RECOMMENDS**

That the EPOA be advised that Rochford District Council supports the proposed vehicle parking standards and intends to adopt them as Supplementary Planning Guidance, subject to the inclusion of a suitable standard for sheltered housing for the elderly.(HPS)

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**Background Papers:**

Vehicle Parking Standards, EPOA, January 2001

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