

Suffolk Guidance for Parking 2015 Update

Background

The 'Suffolk Guidance for Parking' technical guidance document was adopted by Suffolk County Council in November 2014. It is intended to:

- Assist the local planning authorities (LPAs) in determining appropriate standards guidance for their areas;
- Advise members of the public in a readily comprehensible manner; and
- Assist developers in preparing plans for the development of land.

Government Policy Variation

On 25 March 2015, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced that national planning policy would be amended to further support the provision of car parking spaces. The following text now needs to be read alongside paragraph 39 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): "Local planning authorities should only impose local parking standards for residential and non-residential development where there is clear and compelling justification that it is necessary to manage their local road network."

Impact on the Suffolk Guidance for Parking

It is considered that the residential parking guidance contained in the document conforms to Government policy as this is provided as *minimum* requirements and therefore supports the Government aim of securing adequate levels of car parking.

It is accepted that the direct imposition of maximum standards for employment, retail and leisure developments (destination parking) does not conform with the latest Government amendment to the NPPF. Therefore, it is considered necessary to update the document by further emphasising the advisory and contextual nature of the maximum figures.

However, the Highway Authority reserves the position to specify the proposed parking space requirement as a 'maximum' in locations where there is an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), or emerging AQMA, and in key strategic towns where the aim is to reduce the use of private vehicles and encourage more sustainable modes of travel. These exceptions are considered to fall under the "clear and compelling justification" to manage the local road network as specified in the statement.

Changes to the Suffolk Guidance for Parking document

- To bring the guidance in line with the latest Government position, references to 'standards' have been replaced with 'guidance' and new text has been added throughout to emphasise the advisory and contextual nature of the guidance.
- Additional technical specifications or amendments have also been made to improve the accuracy and broaden the coverage of the document e.g. specific advisory parking requirements have been added for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- In light of requests from the LPAs, new advice has been added on what LPAs should take into account when developing local parking policies and how the Highways Authority will flexibly respond to requests for reductions to residential parking guidance in urban areas.

The result of the update is a document that no longer imposes rigid standards but instead sets out an advisory framework characterised by a greater degree of flexibility and localised control. The changes bring the document in line with the latest government approach.

Full List of changes to the document

- *Addition of new sub-heading ('Second Edition - November 2015') on title page*
- *Addition of text explaining the change in national policy and how the guidance accords with this (see Section 2.1)*
- *Replacement of most references to 'standards' with 'guidance' and emphasised the advisory nature of the document throughout;*
- *Provision of further guidance for LPAs seeking to develop local criteria for reductions to the parking guidance within certain designated areas (see section 2.1 and the advisory notes to the standards for Use Class C3 / C4)*
- *Addition of references to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the Use Class sections for C3 / C4 and Sui Generis*
- *Provision of dimensions for a standard single powered two wheeler (PTW) parking bay*
- *Provision of some amendments to parking bay dimensions (Sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.4.2)*
- *Removal of references to the Lifetime Homes Standard following deletion by Government (Sections 3.4.1 and 4.1)*
- *Addition of reference to cycle 'parking' alongside 'storage' (Sections 3.4.2 and Use Class C3/C4)*
- *Replacement of references to 'bicycles' with 'cycles' to ensure uniformity of terminology*
- *Replacement of image of cycle bins (Section 3.2) changed due to potential copyright issues*