

# **Report to District Development Control Committee**

**Date of meeting: 2 February 2010**

**Subject:** Essex County Council Revised Parking Standards – Adoption as Supplementary Guidance



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**Committee Secretary: S Hill (Ext 4249)**

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## **Recommendation(s):**

**That, having considered the representations made by GO East, the Committee confirms its support of the new Parking Standards issued by Essex County Council, entitled “Parking Standards Design and Good Practice for Essex”, as supplementary guidance and requests that Council be asked to formally adopt the document.**

## **Report Detail**

1. At the last meeting, the committee received a version of this report which was to be passed for adoption by the Council. Subsequent to the meeting the Head of Planning Services received representations from GO East raising concern at elements of the document relating to minimum parking standards. The Committee are asked to give further consideration to the adoption of the Standards taking account of the representations made which are set out in paragraphs 11-14 of this report.
2. The first Parking Standards Document was produced in 1978 in consultation with the Essex Planning Officers Association (EPOA). The current version was prepared in 2001, and was a desk top exercise to bring the standards in line with PPG13: *Transport*. This sought to use parking restraint as a tool to reduce car usage. Changes in government policy from 2006 demonstrated that there was a need to review the standards to address a number of concerns being expressed about residential parking.
3. A working group of County and District officers via EPOA was set up to review standards. In considering new parking standards a wider view was taken of the role that parking has to play in place shaping as well as a tool for promoting travel choice. Case studies were used to assess the impact of current parking standards and their functional relationship to the development they serve. The outcome of these efforts was a draft revised parking standards document issued by Essex County Council (ECC) in conjunction with EPOA entitled “Parking Standards Design and Good Practice for Essex”. ECC carried out a public consultation on the draft document between 13<sup>th</sup> March and 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009.
4. This Council was consulted, with Members debating the draft document at District Development Control Committee (07 April 2009). One of the key changes made from the 2001 parking standards is the use of minimum parking

standards for trip origins (e.g. residential parking) rather than maximum standards as per the current policy. Members resolved:

- (i) That the revised car parking standards entitled, "Parking Standards and Good Practice for Essex" issued by Essex County Council be supported subject to provision being made for a minimum garage door width size; and
  - (ii) That the officers undertake further investigations into the possibility of the adopted standards becoming part of the Development Plan in advance of the core strategy.
5. Following the resolution of the DDCC a response was made to ECC stating that the Council supported the draft revised parking standards subject to further consideration of including a minimum garage door width size.
6. The consultation responses were considered by the Parking Standards Consultation Assessment board, consisting of members of the Strategic Development group within Essex County Council who are members of the Parking Standards Working Group. The review took place over 5 sessions throughout June 2009.
7. On 30 June 2009 ECC published their comments and actions taken on the responses received from the consultation. In relation to a minimum garage door width size, ECC commented that "off the shelf" garage doors are of a standard size and that provided the vehicle could pass through, the garage door did not need to be the width of a garage which allows for doors to open and walking around the vehicle. No further action was taken by ECC on this issue.
8. As a result of the consultation ECC did not significantly alter the overall intention and requirements of the draft revised parking standards. An amended parking standards document entitled "Parking Standards Design and Good Practice for Essex" was authorised for publication by Essex County Council as County Council Supplementary Guidance on 18 September 2009 (attached as a separate supplementary agenda item).
9. Officers have investigated how the new parking standards would be adopted as planning policy by this Council. The current Development Plan for Epping Forest District includes the "saved policies" of the Local Plan and Local Plan Alterations. Policy ST6 (Vehicle Parking) of the Local Plan Alterations states:  
***The Council will expect all development proposals to provide on-site parking in accordance with the adopted 2001 Standards or its successor documents.***  
The new parking standards of 2009 are "successor documents" and can be linked into the existing policy ST6.
10. Paragraph 6.3 of PPS12: *Local Spatial Planning* refers to supplementary guidance produced by a County Council (where the issue is not Minerals and Waste). PPS12 advises that such guidance would not be a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). However where appropriate consultation and sustainability appraisal have been carried out, the supplementary guidance might be afforded a weight commensurate with a SPD in decision making. This is more likely to be the case where the supplementary guidance is endorsed by the District Council. Officers are satisfied that:

- (i) ECC carried out consultation on the draft parking standards in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 as amended; and
  - (ii) ECC conducted a process of Strategic Environmental Assessment / Sustainability Appraisal that has influenced the final version of the document.
11. Before concluding this report it is necessary to cover concerns raised by Government Office for the East of England (GO East) regarding the Revised Parking Standards.
  12. The Head of Planning received an email from GO East on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009 raising concern over the use of minimum parking standards across Essex for residential areas. GO East also referred to PPS3: Housing which allows local planning authorities some discretion in setting parking standards for their area provided the approach can be justified. GO East were of the opinion that minimum parking standards may be justified for specific areas. However they had reservations about whether this approach should be applied to the whole of the County.
  13. Essex County Council carried out extensive survey work on current parking problems within residential developments in the County. Officers are satisfied that the evidence collected shows that the problem of under provision is common to all areas of the County including Epping Forest District. The survey work also highlighted other common problems for example changes to the minimum dimensions for garages required by increases in vehicle size.
  14. Notwithstanding GO East's reservations, Officers remain satisfied with the approach taken by Essex County Council. Therefore it is recommended that the Council adopts the new parking standards as supplementary guidance. In terms of decision making on planning applications the weight of the new parking standards could be considered to be equivalent to a SPD. Subject to the agreement of this Committee, a further report will be presented to Council to this effect.