



Parking Standards Evidence Report

February 2013

'Parking Standards' Evidence Report

February 2013

Contents

Section	Page
1. Introduction and Policy Context	2
2. Fenland Context	3
3. Revised Parking Standards for Fenland	3
4. Comments on previous draft Parking Standards	4
5. Alternative Reasonable options	4
6. Conclusion	5

1.0 Introduction and Policy Context

Introduction

- 1.1 Fenland District Council is producing the Fenland Core Strategy which sets out the framework for how development will be considered across the district to 2031.
- 1.2 This Evidence report (which is one of a collection) provides background information and justification for the parking standards included in Appendix A of the Fenland Core Strategy. These parking standards will be used to calculate parking provision for development in Fenland.

Basis for the standards

- 1.3 The parking standards in the Core Strategy are based on those found in the Fenland District-Wide Local Plan (1993). Those standards are generally regarded as having worked well in Fenland, with generally very little opposition to their implementation. However, following changes in national policy and a general review of the standards, it is considered appropriate to refresh the standards for the new Core Strategy.

National Policy

- 1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012. With respect to the setting of parking standards, the NPPF replaced a raft of previous government advice (such as found in the now deleted PPS3, PPS4 and PPS13).
- 1.5 The NPPF (paragraph 39) does not require local planning authorities to set Parking Standards, instead it gives advice “if” standards are to be set (thus implying it is a local choice as to whether or not to have standards). The Council firmly believes that it is appropriate to continue to have a set of local Parking Standards, to ensure quality development is achieved and appropriate parking provision is delivered with new developments. The Council also believes that the planning system is speeded up by having standards, rather than no standards, as it gives clarity and consistency to both developers and decision makers.
- 1.6 NPPF paragraph 39 states in full that:

“If setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, local planning authorities should take into account:

 - the accessibility of the development;
 - the type, mix and use of development;
 - the availability of and opportunities for public transport;
 - local car ownership levels; and
 - an overall need to reduce the use of high-emission vehicles.
- 1.7 NPPF continues (paragraph 40) that “local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking in town centres so that it is convenient, safe and secure, including appropriate provision for motorcycles.”
- 1.8 The above NPPF guidance has been taken into account in reviewing the Fenland Parking Standards.

2. Fenland Context

2.1 The following bullet points offer a snapshot of some of the key parking issues in Fenland:

- Car ownership in Fenland is above national average with nearly 47% owning one car compared with nearly 44% in England, despite relatively low incomes.
- Villages in the district are dispersed, and services inadequate in many locations, thus leading to people needing to travel.
- Relatively poor public transport (compared with, say, major urban areas) and limited walking and cycling infrastructure etc., makes the option of owning a private car more attractive.

3. Revised Parking Standards for Fenland

3.1 The changes to the Parking Standards, compared with the 1993 Local Plan standards, are as follows:

- Clarification as to what are 'minimum' and what are 'maximum' standards.
- Further clarity on garages associated with a dwelling.
- Introduction of text on sharing spaces.
- Introduction of text on negotiating reduced standards in accessible locations.

3.2 The justification for each of these changes is taken in turn, as follows.

'Maximum' standards

3.3 The revised Fenland parking standards in the Core Strategy represent maintaining **minimum** standards for trip origins (i.e. broadly, residential parking) but introducing **maximum** standards for trip destinations (for example, commercial, leisure and retail parking). This acknowledges the fact that limiting parking availability at trip origins does not necessarily discourage car ownership (especially considering the Fenland context, described above) but can push vehicle parking onto the adjacent public highway, thus diminishing the quality of the streetscape and potentially obstructing emergency and passenger transport vehicles.

3.4 By introducing 'maximum' for all non-residential standards gives the opportunity for developers and the Council to negotiate a lower provision where it is appropriate to do so.

Clarity on Garages

3.5 Text has been introduced to give clarity that only garages of a certain size will qualify as a parking space for dwellings. This has been introduced to prevent abuse of the standards eg to prevent a very small 'garage' being provided which in reality will never be used as a parking space because it is so small that an ordinary family car could not be comfortably parked in it.

Sharing Spaces

3.6 In order to make efficient use of land in our market towns, and prevent unnecessarily large and often unattractive parking areas, text has been added to encourage the sharing of parking provision. This option could be used where two adjacent activities are likely to have different parking demand patterns (eg one use is likely to have peak parking demand during office hours, whereas another use is likely to have peak demand in the evening).

Reduced standards in accessible locations

3.7 This text has been added to reinforce the 'maximum' standards point referred to above, though it also applies to Part 1 (residential etc) of the Standards where minimum standards apply. This introduced text makes it clear that in accessible locations lower or nil parking may be appropriate. This should help prevent unnecessary loss of land to parking areas as well as encourage greater use of public transport and walking/cycling.

4. Comments on previous draft Parking Standards

4.1 In the 2011 Core Strategy draft consultation, we included the 1993 Standards and sought comments on them. Four comments were received on the revised parking standards as follows:

- 'Theatre' should be listed as a sui generis class. Response: This is not necessary, and could lead to other requests for examples
- D1 should read D2. Response: agreed, typo corrected
- Cycle Parking Standards / Design Guidance should be included. Response: not agreed, as this would be too detailed for a Core Strategy. Cycle parking provision is covered in general terms in policy CS13. If necessary, the Council could produce separate guidance on this, post adoption of the Core Strategy.
- The requirement for a garage to be set 6m back from the path edge should be reduced to 5m. Response: not appropriate. 6m is necessary to accommodate a family car (including a large family car) plus the ability to open a garage door. If the distance was too short, a car may have to wait on the highway whilst the garage door was opened, a scenario which should be avoided.

4.2 At the 2012 consultation stage, we received some further comments:

- Is there a need to include parking standards in a Core Strategy – may be easier to adopt without
- New developments should make provision for older and disabled people with mobility problems e.g. wider garages and cycle spaces
- Parking standards too complicated with minimums and maximums
- New standards too restrictive - no need for minimum dimensions
- Need to include sui generis uses e.g. theatres

4.3 A further review of the standards was therefore undertaken, and whilst the Council thinks it essential to have standards within the Core Strategy, further clarity has been introduced. The main changes, therefore, from the 2012 to the Proposed Submission 2013 version are:

- (i) Introduction of introductory text to the standards, most of which was previously included at the end of the standards. Moving to the start of the standards ensures clarity.
- (ii) Further clarification on which standards are 'minimum' and which are 'maximum'

5. Alternative Reasonable Options

5.1 Option 1: No Parking Standards: This option was rejected because the Council firmly believes that it is appropriate to continue to have a set of local Parking Standards, to ensure quality development is achieved and appropriate parking provision is delivered with new developments. The Council also believes that the planning system is speeded up by having standards, rather than no standards, as it gives clarity and consistency to both developers and decision makers

5.2 Option 2: Alternative numerical standards to the 1993 Local Plan: This option was rejected because the current standards have worked well, have received little opposition and were not objected to at the draft Core Strategy stage. There is no evidence to suggest changes.

5.3 Option 3: Not introduce clarity on 'maximum' and 'minimum' standards: This was rejected because the standards are considered appropriate and, for non-residential, any in excess of them could lead to poor urban design and encourage excessive car travel. There is flexibility to go lower than the standards in appropriate circumstances, rather than a more 'rigid' approach of the current 1993 standards.

- 5.4 Option 4: introduce cycle parking requirements. Option rejected as this would be too detailed for a Core Strategy. Cycle parking provision is covered in general terms in policy CS15. If necessary, the Council could produce separate guidance on this, post adoption of the Core Strategy.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This Evidence Report demonstrates that Fenland District Council's Parking Standards in its Core Strategy is an entirely reasonable and appropriate proposition, updating slightly the well respected 1993 standards. Alternative options have been consider, but rejected.
- 6.2 Overall, the Council considers its Parking Standards to be sound.