AGENDA ITEM
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SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE TO STRUCTURE PLAN POLICY 25 : CAR PARKING

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1. Purpose of Paper

To consider and agree recommendations to the Structure Plan Panel relating to proposed changes to the currently adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on car parking provision at new development.

2. Background

The current SPG was proposed in the adopted Structure Plan (paragraph 305) and was adopted in December 2000. It sets out standards for the maximum parking provision that will be permitted for various types of development and provides a methodology, based on zones described by their degree of accessibility, for restraining parking provision to levels below the maximum standards in appropriate circumstances. District Council officers, who would be responsible for applying the standards, were involved in the development of the SPG through a working group that was also aided by external consultants.

The officer Working Group (CPSWG) have been reviewing the standards, set in the SPG, for residential development which are not in compliance with Government policy.

Since the adoption of the SPG, which has been accepted by all 10 district councils, some district councils have started to implement the guidance as part of the Local Plan review process. This has thrown up some anomalies and problems of interpretation in the detailed application of the scoring system for establishing the zones on which a hierarchy of parking restraint below the maximum standards is applied.

The recent consultation on the Alterations to Roll Forward the Structure Plan to 2016 has resulted on a number of representations relating to Car Parking Policy 25. Some of these reinforce the need to amend the SPG.

3. Proposed changes to SPG

3.1 Residential Parking Standards

The residential parking standards (maximum) in the current SPG were set at levels that were roughly equivalent to minimum standards that were previously to be met throughout the County. The SPG stated “residential standards are to be interpreted as maximums and significantly lower levels of parking provision may be acceptable where demand is likely to be less and any tendency for overspill on-street is or can be controlled e.g. high density housing in town centres, near railway stations or ‘housing over shops’ (nevertheless unless circumstances such as these apply, residential

development will generally be expected to accommodate all parking demand on site, hence minimum and maximum standards coincide)". That statement is contrary to government guidance set out in PPG13 and PPG3.

PPG3 Housing states " car parking standards for housing have become increasingly demanding and have been applied too rigidly, often as minimum standards. Developers should not be required to provide more car parking than they or potential occupiers might want, nor to provide off-street parking when there is no need, particularly in urban areas where public transport is available or where there is demand for car free housing. Parking policies should be framed with good design in mind, recognising that car ownership varies with income, age, household type and the type of housing and its location. They should not be expressed as minimum standards" and "Car parking standards that result, on average, in development with more than 1.5 off-street car 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."

PPG13 also states that local authorities should " not require developers to provide more spaces than they themselves wish, other than in exceptional circumstances which might include for example where there are significant implications for road safety which cannot be resolved through the introduction or enforcement of on-street parking controls".

Since the publication of PPG3 in March 2000 and PPG 13 in March 2001 it has been apparent that the Secretary of State and Planning Inspectors are interpreting the guidance to mean that the standard of 1.5 off-street spaces per dwelling is to be achieved across an authority area and not necessarily on a site by site or house by house basis.

The CPSWG have reviewed the residential element of the SPG in the light of the Government's' interpretation of PPG 3 with the objective of setting standards that will ultimately achieve an average of 1.5 spaces per dwelling across all new housing development in an authority area. The group has recognised that the following characteristics could affect car ownership levels:

- Lower income
- Occupation by the elderly or students
- Single person occupation
- High density, affordable and special needs housing
- Housing with high accessibility to shops, jobs and services
- Housing with high accessibility to a wide range of passenger transport services

There is a consensus within the group that a two-tier set of residential parking standards for new housing as set out below would meet the objective of compliance with PPG3 over authority areas over time.

Location	Number of bedrooms			
	1	2	3	4+
Zone 1 and 2*	0.75	1.00	1.50	2.00
Elsewhere	1.25	1.50	2.25	3.00
Current HCC parking standards (SPG)				
General needs	1.75	2.00	2.75	3.75

*As defined and established by the method in the current SPG

Note: One off-street space is defined as space for parking one car e.g. a single garage, driveway or hardstanding; provision of a garage does not automatically mean that there will also be a driveway (hence 2 or more spaces) as garages can be provided in blocks or may front onto the street where no front garden is provided.

It is proposed that sheltered housing for the elderly should have provision in the range 0.5 to 1.0 spaces per unit, regardless of location.

Fractions of a parking space indicate the use of assigned and unassigned spaces. Unassigned spaces are primarily provided for visitors and may be incorporated into the streetscape (including the public realm), provided this is compatible with amenity considerations.

It is also proposed that car-free residential developments may be permitted in locations that are highly accessible by non-car modes of travel and are within easy walking distance of shops and services. Such developments should only be permitted where surrounding streets are subject to a resident's permit parking scheme. The occupiers of dwellings within the car-free development would not be allowed resident's parking permits.

It is proposed that out-turn provision, usage and the reaction of the housing market should be monitored and policies or standards modified as necessary.

3.2 Scoring for Zone Identification

A Best Practice Guide (BPG) has now been developed to assist district council officers in the use of the SPG. Extracts of the BPG are found at Appendix 1 to this report. These set out amendments to the scoring/interpretation of parameters used in relation to 'Economic Health of Town', 'Pedestrian and Cycle Accessibility' and 'Passenger Transport Accessibility' in the development of the zoning hierarchy over which restraint of parking provision is applied.

It is suggested that a revised SPG should include amendments to reflect the suggestions in the BPG.

4. Decision Making Process

It is proposed that this Panel endorses the proposed changes to the SPG and, if so, a recommendation on that basis is made to the Structure Plan Panel. If that Panel also endorses the proposed changes a revised SPG will be drawn up and used as the basis for public consultation in parallel with the deposit, for public comment, of the Structure Plan Roll Forward to 2016.

APPENDIX 1 EXTRACT FROM BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Economic health of town

4.8 The score for economic health should only be applied to the retail/leisure core. The retail/leisure core can achieve a score between 1 and 4, depending upon the retail hierarchy of the town (in accordance with Structure Plan and PPG 6 criteria):

- a score of 4 represents those towns at the top of the hierarchy (major sub-regional centres) and a score of 1 represents those towns lowest in the hierarchy (minor town centres); minor sub-regional centres will score 3 and town centres will score 2

- the retail/leisure core is the focus of attention because town centres are the preferred locations for new development in accordance with principles set out in PPG 6/13

- in certain circumstances (perhaps where employment is the predominant activity), inclusion of other parameters in addition to retail hierarchy may be considered to measure economic health e.g. unemployment levels, vacancy rates and specific regeneration policies.

4.9 Identification of zone types should be based on one set of cut-off points/ maximum scores, irrespective of the town's position in the retail hierarchy (see Table 4.1). Unless this modification to the SPG approach is made, zonal restraint may be too onerous for towns lower down the retail hierarchy. Authorities should use the score ranges given in Table 4.1 as this will help to ensure consistency across the County.

Proximity to shopping centre

4.10 Scores for proximity to a shopping centre should be applied to all zones as follows:

- in line with PPG 6 principles, the town centre is broadly assumed to be the retail/leisure core of the town, hence only the retail/leisure core can score a maximum 3

- edge-of-centre is assumed to be within about 300 metres easy walking distance of the edge of the retail/leisure core (town centre), hence all zones within this range score 2

- local centres score 1, tightly focused on the zone which includes the local centre

- other areas (described as suburbs) which do not meet the above criteria score zero.

Access by non-car modes

4.11 The criteria given in the SPG for non-car accessibility parameters were never intended to be definitive and could perhaps be better described as "typical characteristics" rather than "criteria". Although these typical characteristics were only offered as general guidance on which to base judgement, this Guide provides more detail (see below). It is considered that passenger transport scoring should be undertaken in a national context, with a score of 6 only being achieved in parts of London and the centres of some other large towns and cities. Within Hertfordshire, it is possible that only the centre of Watford might score a 6.

4.12 The scoring systems set out below could be easily up-dated if a comprehensive technical approach for quantifying accessibility is established.

Pedestrian and cycle accessibility

4.13 Scores for pedestrian and cycle accessibility from a zone's hinterland should be applied to all zones (not just the retail/leisure core as initially suggested in the SPG). Each zone can score zero to 2, depending upon the degree and quality of pedestrian and cycle provision. While the score is a combined score for pedestrian and cycle accessibility, the emphasis should be on pedestrian provision as this (rather than cycle provision) has the greatest potential to influence mode choice within local catchments. Scoring should take account of any relevant committed schemes to improve pedestrian and cycle accessibility.

4.14 Typical characteristics for scoring pedestrian and cycle accessibility on a zone-by-zone basis are given below in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Pedestrian and cycle accessibility

description	score	typical characteristics
best	2	footway links: ♦ pedestrianisation ♦ well lit and well used ("safe") pedestrian network including wide and well maintained pavements, pedestrian-friendly crossing facilities and traffic calming measures ♦ pedestrian routes avoid long detours, long waits, narrow alleyways or underpasses and are not generally segregated from the roadway or other activity **AND** cycle links (excluding leisure routes): ♦ highly developed (and likely to be well used) network of cycle lanes (direct and continuous) linking residential areas and public transport interchanges, likely to include cycle priority measures such as advanced stop lines and/ or toucan crossings
medium	1	footway links: ♦ no pedestrianisation ♦ reasonable pedestrian network: not convoluted, pavements of acceptable width and lighting standards, adequate pedestrian crossing facilities, possibly some speed reduction measures **AND POSSIBLY** cycle links (excluding leisure routes): ♦ some cycle linkage (cycle lanes and/ or advisory routes not likely to be well used) linking residential areas and/ or public transport interchanges
worst	0	footway links: ♦ no pedestrianisation ♦ poor pedestrian network not likely to be well used: convoluted with sub-standard pavements, poor lighting, inadequate pedestrian crossing facilities, no specific speed reduction measures **AND POSSIBLY** cycle links (excluding leisure routes): ♦ no specific cycle linkage

Passenger transport accessibility

4.15 All zones should be scored for passenger transport accessibility, with scores ranging from zero to 6 . Zones should be scored in terms of broad proximity to passenger transport facilities e.g. a zone located within 800 metres easy walking distance of a rail station and 400 metres of a bus stop could score 6 if service frequency, coverage and quality corresponded with all of the characteristics that typify excellent provision compatible with that in central London. Scoring should account for any relevant committed schemes to improve passenger transport accessibility

4.16 Typical characteristics for scoring passenger transport accessibility on a zone-by-zone basis are given below in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Passenger transport accessibility

Characteristics of "good" or better rail accessibility

- maximum walking distance to rail station to be no more than 800 m
- peak period service frequency (minimum) 1 train every 15 minutes each direction
- off peak service frequency (minimum) 1 train every 30 minutes each direction
- good geographical service coverage reflected by high levels of use
- rail station facilities are good and well used

Characteristics of "good" or better bus accessibility

- maximum walk distance to bus stop/interchange between 200 and 400 m
- peak period service frequency (minimum) 1 bus every 15 minutes each direction
- off peak service frequency of 1 bus every 30 minutes (0630 to 2200 hours) each direction
- good geographical service coverage reflected by high levels of use
- bus stop or interchange quality is good and well used

description	**score**	**typical characteristics**
excellent	6	within 800 m walk distance of a rail-based interchange (e.g. rail and tube/other transit system) with all the above characteristics and 400 m walk distance of a bus stop with all the above characteristics
good	5	within 800 m walk distance of a rail station with all the above characteristics and 400 m walk distance of a bus stop with all the above characteristics
medium to good	4	within 800 m walk distance of a rail station with some of the above characteristics but within 400 m walk distance of a bus stop with all the above characteristics
poor to medium	3	within 800 m walk distance of a rail station and/or 400m walk distance of a bus stop with good service coverage, peak period headway no greater than 30 minutes in each direction but probably an infrequent off peak service
poor	2	within 800 m walk distance of a rail station and/or 400 m walk distance of a bus stop with limited service coverage, peak period headway no greater than 30 minutes in each direction but probably no or infrequent off peak services
very poor	1	within 800 m walk distance of a rail station and/or 400 m walk distance of a bus stop with low frequency services and poor service coverage
non-existent	0	no bus or rail option within walk distance (800 m for rail, 400 m for bus)