



South Bucks

District Council

Interim Interpretation Guidance on Residential Parking Standards

Introduction

1. The Government published a new Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 3: Housing in November 2006. It replaced Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 3: Housing, which was published in March 2000. PPS3 also cancelled paragraphs 12 to 17 of PPG13: Transport.
2. All policies in the Local Plan were automatically saved until 28th September 2007. The Council submitted, to the Government Office, its request to save certain policies in the Local Plan beyond September 2007, until they are replaced by policies in new Development Plan Documents. Policy TR7 (Parking Provision) and Appendix 6 (Parking Standards) were among the saved policies approved by the Government Office. Although TR7 is not in complete accord with PPG13, the Appendix includes reference to maximum standards and adds considerable detail to national guidance on parking.
3. The car parking policies and standards for residential and non-residential developments in South Bucks will be set out in the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) of the South Bucks Local Development Framework. Accordingly, this "Interim Interpretation Guidance" will be used to guide planning decisions in the interim period pending the preparation of the Development Control Policies DPD.

PPS 3 Housing

4. PPG 3, which has been cancelled, had an emphasis on reducing the amount of off street parking provision, particularly in town centres; and for housing for the elderly, students and single people; as well as in the case of housing conversions. It had indicated that parking standards that result, on average, of more than 1.5 parking spaces per dwelling are unlikely to reflect sustainability principles, and that policies that result in higher levels of off street parking, especially in urban areas, should not be adopted.
5. PPS 3 is much less prescriptive than its predecessor, and in particular it does not indicate that development which has an average of more

than 1.5 spaces per dwelling is unlikely to reflect sustainability principles. Rather, it states that Local Planning Authorities should, with stakeholders and communities, develop residential parking policies for their areas, taking account of expected levels of car ownership, the importance of promoting good design and the need to use land efficiently (para 51). It also emphasizes that a design led approach should be taken to the provision of car parking space, with this being well integrated with a high quality public realm and streets that are pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly (para16).

PPG13 Transport

6. PPG13 was published in April 2001 but still remains the current national guidance on transport. It is concerned with all types of development, not just residential development. It seeks to reduce the amount of parking in new development in order to promote more sustainable travel choices; states that developers should not be required to provide more parking than they themselves wish to, except in exceptional circumstances, such as where there are significant road safety implications. It specifically states that Development Plan policies should set maximum levels of parking for broad types of development, but that there should be no minimum standards other than for disabled spaces. It goes on to set out maximum standards for a number of non-residential uses in an Annex, but does not set any standards in relation to residential development.

Local Plan

7. Policy TR7 requires, inter alia, developments¹ to comply with the parking standards in Appendix 6. The parking standards set out in Appendix 6 are stated as being minimum standards, with the maximum standard being 10% above the minimum standard. Appendix 6 sets out more detailed guidance on the application of the standards; provision for those with special needs; and the design and layout of parking.

The Interim Interpretation Guidance

8. On one hand PPG13 specifically seeks to reduce the amount of parking in new development in order to promote more sustainable travel choices, and particularly to encourage the use of modes of transport other than the car, whilst on the other hand PPS3 indicates an approach that balances a number of factors. For example, the reference in PPS3 to taking account of expected levels of car ownership can be read as implying that developments should make sufficient provision for the amount of parking that is likely to be needed to serve the occupants of new properties; whereas the reference to promoting good design and the need to use land efficiently can be read

¹ This includes new development, redevelopments, extensions to existing development, conversion or changes of use.

as implying that parking may need to be limited to some extent to ensure that parking does not dominate developments and that the maximum amount of land is made available for development itself. Whilst national policy is seeking to promote sustainable transport and minimising car dependence, the Council's approach to parking also has to take account of the factors set out in PPS3, namely taking account of expected levels of car ownership, the importance of promoting good design and the need to use land efficiently.

9. The 2001 Census shows that South Bucks has high levels of car ownership. Nationally, 29.5% of households have two or more cars, but in South Bucks District, some 52.9% of households have 2 or more cars. Conversely, 26.8% of households nationally have no car, but in South Bucks only 11.1% of households have no car. In South Bucks the average number of cars owned by each household is 1.62 cars.
10. The Council is seeking to ensure that development takes place in the more sustainable locations, and to assist this it has prepared an Accessibility and Infrastructure Study in 2006. However, in a District such as South Bucks, where many settlements have a more limited range of infrastructure than large urban areas, there will continue to be a degree of reliance on travelling to other centres for some needs. Given the level of public transport provision, it is inevitable that there will still remain a need for use of the car, at least for some journeys. With development taking place in more sustainable locations, residents would have greater choice of travel mode for some journeys, but even if more sustainable modes are used for some journeys, residents are still likely to want to retain the flexibility of retaining a car to use for those journeys where there is no reasonable alternative to the car. Accordingly, it is not considered that the level of car ownership is likely to fall, or to fall considerably. On this basis, if provision is not made within developments for the levels of car ownership that exist, then the likelihood is that cars may be parked in locations which are not designed for that purpose, resulting either in danger to users of the highway or to poor design where the car visually dominates the street scene, or to both.
11. An analysis of the level of car parking provision in residential developments completed in the District in 2005/06 showed that in most cases, the level of parking provision that had been made accords with the standards set out in the Local Plan; with one space for one-bedroom dwellings, two spaces for dwellings with two or three bedrooms, and three spaces for dwellings with four or more bedrooms.
12. The existing Local Plan includes different parking standards specifically for retirement and sheltered accommodation. Those standards are lower than the standards for other types of dwelling. The levels of car use in relation to sheltered and retirement accommodation is not considered to be significantly different from other residential accommodation as a general trend in recent years. Site visits have

been made to a number of recently completed developments of retirement / sheltered accommodations in the district and observation of parking conditions supported this assertion. Accordingly the Interim Guidance proposes the same parking standards for all types of housing including retirement and sheltered accommodation.

13. Good design is central to sustainable development. In accordance with PPS 1, the Council is, and will continue to promote good design in new developments. The Council also supports the principle of efficient use of land given that local characters would not be affected or the quality of life would not be compromised. Having taken into account Government policy and the local circumstances set out in PPS3, the Council seeks, in the interim period prior to the preparation of the Development Control Policies DPD, to interpret the guidance for parking standards for residential development as follows:-

Table 1: Parking standards for residential development for the interim period

Dwellings (Number of bedrooms)	Car Parking Spaces*
1 bedroom dwelling	1 space per dwelling
2 or 3 bedrooms dwelling	2 spaces per dwelling
4 or more bedrooms dwelling	3 spaces per dwelling
Houses in multiple occupation / bedsits	1 space per bedroom

* This includes parking spaces for occupants as well as space for visitors and people with special needs. The standard for special needs parking spaces are set out in 2.1-2.6 of Appendix 6 of the Local Plan.

14. Subject to the overall endeavour to reduce the reliance on the car in accordance with the wider sustainability agenda, particularly in those locations with good accessibility to a range of infrastructure and services, the actual level of provision made in connection with each proposal for residential development will depend upon a consideration of the following factors (in no particular order):-
- Expected levels of car ownership
 - The need to promote good design to ensure that the car does not dominate
 - The need to use land efficiently, thus ensuring that the maximum amount of land is made available for uses other than parking
 - The location of the site
 - The availability of alternative modes of transport
 - The availability of on street parking, and whether there are any on street parking problems in the immediate vicinity
 - The current use of the site
 - The type of dwellings proposed, in particular the split between houses and flats
 - Large scale development (with over 100 dwellings) may offer an opportunity to have a reduced level of parking provision as it may have the critical mass to include sustainable measures to provide alternative means of travel other than travel by car