

From: Simon Jones – Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Neil Baker – Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Subject: Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards

Key Decision 24/00110

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: Countywide

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: The currently adopted Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards are outdated. These standards are used as guidance and in recommendations on planning application consultation responses issued by KCC as local highway authority. A new policy document has been developed based on surveys, data, best practice and Government policy changes and is recommended for adoption.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to agree to

- (i) ADOPT the Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards 2024 as an approved policy; and
 - (ii) To DELEGATE authority to the Director of Highways and Transportation to take necessary actions including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts, or other legal agreements to implement this decision as shown at Appendix A.
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1. Introduction and Background

1.1 The Kent Vehicle Parking Standards provide guidance on parking provision and layout for new developments in the county. Parking for all types of vehicle are considered, seeking a balance between the need to provide an appropriate parking provision to ensure the safe operation of the public highway and to encourage travel by sustainable modes. The standards represent a starting point for engagement between prospective developers and the local planning authorities and KCC as local highway authority on parking and layout matters in the context of site-specific considerations.

1.2 Parking standards are not new and were first introduced in Kent over 50 years ago. However, the approach to parking at local and national level has changed considerably in recent years and parking standards have evolved accordingly. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the concept of maximum parking standards was introduced with the aim of significantly lowering levels of off-street parking as a means of reducing car use. More recently, national government parking policy has sought to end 'unrealistic' restrictions on parking provision. At the

same time travel patterns, car ownership and transport technologies have all been evolving and need to be taken into account.

2. Policy Framework and Applications

- 2.1 As local highway authority, Kent County Council provides statutory recommendations to local planning authorities in their consideration of planning applications. Officers refer to a range of policy and guidance documents in their responses including vehicle parking standards, and recommend that developments be required to meet these standards or provide evidence to justify variations. Having a formally adopted parking standards document encourages developers to align their proposed parking provision with the standards and it also 'adds weight' to the County Council's evidence base in the event of an appeal situation.
- 2.2 Some districts have adopted their own parking standards as local plans have been updated (this is the case for Ashford, Dartford, Gravesham and Tunbridge Wells) with some variations to KCC standards and some new survey information and officers refer to these in responses. Other districts have adopted KCC's parking standards and have been requesting that KCC develop and adopt updated parking standards rather than progressing their own. Given the close interactions between Kent districts, it is considered sensible for KCC as highway authority to produce an updated policy incorporating the latest best practice and to promote a consistent approach in line with Framing Kent's Future 2022-2026.
- 2.3 If adopted this guidance will supersede all previous KCC parking standards, including the Kent and Medway Structure Plan: Supplementary Planning Guidance 4 (2006) in respect of non-residential developments, and the Kent Design Guide: Interim Guidance Note 3 (2008) in respect of residential developments.
- 2.4 Good design in new development is an essential prerequisite for the effective application of parking provision. The current residential parking standards are part of the Kent Design Guide (KDG) and it is intended that the new combined standards will be hosted within the planned 'web-based' update to the Kent Design Guide which is under development.
- 2.5 KCC is leading the work to produce an updated KDG with support from *Design South East* (a not-for-profit organisation providing design advice and training to local government and the development sector). Workshops have been held with key stakeholders including officers from the Kent district councils and attendees have been very supportive.

3. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 3.1 Do nothing. Currently there is a mix of some districts and boroughs with their own adopted parking standards as local plans have been updated whilst others have adopted KCC's parking standards leading to an inconsistent approach across Kent. Given the close interactions between Kent districts, it is considered sensible for KCC as highway authority to produce an updated

policy incorporating the latest best practice and to promote a consistent approach in line with Framing Kent's Future 2022-2026.

4. Key Updates

- 4.1 The updated parking standards included at **Appendix B** to this report are largely an evolution of the existing standards, benefiting from surveys of new sites, local and national best practice and Government policy updates. Updates include:
- Policy context from the latest National Planning Policy Framework (2023). For example 'maximum' standards have been removed and any meaningful reduction needs a suitable evidence base demonstrating a sustainable location and quality provision for non car travel choices.
 - Increase in minimum parking bay and garage dimensions to reflect the growth in car size.
 - Electric vehicle parking best practice and requirements in line with Building Regulations.
 - Guidance on sustainable travel initiatives including car clubs and travel plans
 - Information on the TRICS (Trip Rate Information Computer System) database which provides estimates of trip generation.
 - Accessible vehicle and cycle parking layouts in line with Department for Transport Inclusive Mobility Guidance (2021)
 - Good practice in design from national research and policy such as Building for a Healthy Life (2020)
 - Examples from Kent experience of good (and bad) practice to inform parking layouts.
 - Rear parking courts are only now promoted as part of a through route or if they are overlooked by surrounding properties and any 'allocated' parking needs to be well related to the associated property.
 - The standards align with the reclassification of land-use classes introduced by Government in September 2020

5. Consultation

- 5.1 At the beginning of the process the proposal to update the parking standards was reported to the Kent Planning Officers Group and a draft document was published as part of the consultation on the updated Kent Design Guide (KDG) which occurred during 2020. The consultation web site, including the parking standards, was still on line and able to be referred to as 'emerging' until May 2023.
- 5.2 Feedback on the consultation was positive regarding the format, the layout, the relation to National Guidance and the various technical appendices, including the draft parking standards, which were generally welcomed by the districts and developers. However, it was noted that significant gaps remained in the content before it could be considered for full launch, and the inclusion of some elements of the guide as separate downloadable pdf documents also raised some criticism.
- 5.3 Due to resourcing pressures, the KDG update was subsequently put on hold and, whilst it is now being taken forward again, rather than seek adoption for the

KDG and all of its associated documents, it is intended that KDG becomes an on-line guide in order to be kept more up to date with evolving best practice and that associated policy documents relating to specific standards would be adopted separately.

5.4 Since the consultation the land use classes appendix has been updated to reflect its re-categorisation by Government and further examples of good practice in terms of design and layout have been included.

5.5 At a KDG engagement event held with district council officers in November 2024 the intention to move forward with the adoption of the parking standards was reported and welcomed by the district representatives.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications of adopting the updated parking standards.

7. Equalities Implications

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and confirms there are no negative equalities implications.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications.

9. Data Implications

9.1 There are no implications in terms of use of personal data.

10. Conclusions

10.1 The Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards are used as guidance and in recommendations on planning application consultation responses issued by KCC as local highway authority. The current standards were adopted some 20 years ago and, whilst generally still useful as a starting point, they do not include the latest best practice or align with Government guidance and can be discredited simply due to their age. Whilst some districts have adopted their own parking standards, others have not and it is considered sensible for KCC as highway authority to produce an updated policy and promote a consistent approach. A new policy document has therefore been developed based on surveys, data, best practice and Government policy changes. It has been consulted on with stakeholders and is now recommended for adoption.

11. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport is asked to agree to:

(i) ADOPT the Kent County Council Vehicle Parking Standards 2024 as an approved policy; and

(ii) To DELEGATE authority to the Director of Highways and Transportation to take necessary actions including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts, or other legal agreements to implement this decision as shown at Appendix A.

12. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision

Appendix B – Vehicle Parking Standards

Equality Impact Assessment

13. Contact details

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