

North Somerset Council

Report to the Executive

Date of Meeting: 28 April 2021

Subject of Report: Pre-consultation sign off of North Somerset Parking Standards SPD, in preparation for public consultation

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Cllr James Tonkin – Executive Member for Planning and Transport (excluding Public Transport)

Key Decision: Yes

Reason: The Revised Parking Standards SPD will have policy implications in two or more wards

Recommendations

A. To approve the revised **Parking Standards SPD** for public consultation following internal officer consultation.

Summary of Report

1.1. North Somerset Council Officers have undertaken a comprehensive review of the existing Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The current standards date back to November 2013 and are in need of a thorough update, particularly in light of the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

1.2. The Parking Standards SPD sets out the Council's requirements for all types of parking provision (vehicle, cycle, motorcycle, etc) at new developments and is a material consideration in planning decisions. It is not itself a development plan document but provides further clarification and detail to Core Strategy Policy CS11: Parking.

1.3. The key objectives of the North Somerset Parking Standards SPD are to:

- Ensure an appropriate level of parking is provided at new developments.
- Promote highway safety through good design.
- Provide clarity for developers, officers and other stakeholders by providing clear and comprehensive guidance.

1.4. As part of this review, a variety of updates are proposed including:

- The introduction of 'Principle 19: Electric Vehicle Parking' which sets out minimum requirements for Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure at new development.
- The introduction of 'Principle 20: Car Club Schemes at New development' to ensure the provision of Car Clubs at suitable locations.
- The introduction of a 'Parking Needs Assessment' to assist officers in determining a suitable level of parking in areas well served by active and public modes of transport and where car ownership and use is lower.
- Increases to the minimum number of cycle parking spaces to be required at new development, including a minimum level of non-standard cycle parking spaces to accommodate people with mobility impairments and ensure cycling in North Somerset is accessible to as many individuals as possible.
- Updated and more comprehensive cycle parking guidance in line with the Department for Transport's Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design (July, 2020).
- Updates to Appendix A (Car and Cycle Parking Standards), including introducing standards for sports halls, swimming pools, gyms/health clubs, cinemas, theatres and Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs).
- Increase in parking bay dimensions from 2.4m x 4.8m to 2.5m x 5m to ensure spaces remain accessible and usable for modern vehicles.

1.5. As part of this review process, an internal officer consultation has already been undertaken with officers across Transport and Infrastructure, Planning, and Planning Policy. Following this, changes were made to ensure the revised document reflects the current and foreseeable issues prior to public consultation.

1.6. A decision is subsequently sought to approve the revised Parking Standards SPD for public consultation.

1.7. Following the public consultation, the revised SPD will require approval from Full Council.

Policy

2.1. A Supplementary Planning Document is used to provide further detail to existing development plan policies but is not itself a development plan document. In the case of the Parking Standards SPD, the document provides further clarification and interpretation of Core Strategy Policy CS11: Parking. Following its adoption, the revised Parking Standards SPD will be a material consideration in planning decisions. The Parking Standards SPD also interacts with and supports a range of other Council policies and priorities.

2.2. Core Strategy (2017)

The Parking Standards SPD provides further clarification and detail to Core Strategy Policy CS11: Parking. The aim of CS11 is to ensure that 'adequate

parking is provided and managed to meet the needs of anticipated users (residents, workers and visitors) in usable spaces'. Parking provision must ensure a balance between good urban design, residential amenity and promoting town centre attractiveness and vitality. The Parking Standards SPD contributes towards this aim by outlining in detail the standards expected by the Council regarding parking provision at new development.

2.3. Sites and Policies Plan: Part 1 Development Management Policies (2016)

DM28: Parking Standards of the Sites and Policies Plan Part 1, sets out that development proposals should meet the Council's standards for the parking of motor vehicles and bicycles. It states that planning applications must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council that the functional parking needs of developments can be accommodated on or close to the site without prejudicing Highway Safety or resulting in an unacceptable impact on on-street parking in the surrounding area. The Parking Standards SPD further clarifies this requirement by setting out the minimum required standards expected by the Council at new development.

2.4. North Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan (2019)

In 2019, North Somerset Council declared a Climate Emergency and announced its ambition to be Carbon Neutral by 2030.

The transport sector at 42%, including the M5, is the largest single source of carbon emissions in North Somerset ([figures from North Somerset Climate Emergency – Report on Baseline Evidence](#)). This is considerably higher than the regional (South West) average of 32% and the national average of 33% from transport (2018 figures, Gov.uk). For the West of England region, transport CO2 emissions will rise by a further 22% by 2036 if we don't act - increasing the risk of droughts, floods and extreme heat globally and extreme weather events in the South West region.

The North Somerset Climate Emergency Action Plan identifies reducing emissions from transport as a key action in achieving our commitment to be a carbon neutral council and a carbon neutral area by 2030. By providing adequate provision of EV charging infrastructure at new developments, increasing the number of cycling parking spaces at residential development, and promoting the provision of Car Clubs at new development, we will promote the use of low-carbon modes of transport.

2.5. NSC Corporate Plan 2020

The NSC Corporate Plan was approved by Full Council in 2020. The Plan sets out three key priorities: a thriving and sustainable place; a council which empowers and cares about people; an open and enabling organisation. The

Parking Standards SPD directly contributes to the following objectives within the thriving and sustainable place priority:

- To be a carbon neutral council area by 2030.
- A transport network which promotes active, accessible, and low carbon travel.

The introduction of minimum requirements for EV charging provision at new developments will promote the uptake of electric vehicles and contribute towards the decarbonisation of transport network. Improvements in cycling parking provision and the promotion of Car Clubs at new development will also encourage lower carbon modes of transport over private cars.

2.6. Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4) 2020

The JLTP4 sets out a 15-year vision for transport investment in the West of England.

It seeks to deliver a well-connected sustainable transport network that offers greater realistic travel choice and makes walking, cycling and public transport the preferred way to travel. It looks to implement measures that can manage private car use, parking availability and encourage individuals to change their travel habits, with sustainable modes becoming the preferred choice for journeys wherever possible.

2.7. North Somerset Local Plan 2038 (Emerging)

Going forward, the emerging North Somerset Local Plan will look to ensure that new developments contribute towards the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030. The revised parking Standards SPD will directly contribute to this aim by ensuring that parking provision at new development is conducive to the use of Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEVs).

2.8. Active Travel Strategy (Scheduled for adoption at Full Council 20/04)

The North Somerset Active Travel Strategy aims to make walking and cycling the natural choice for a cleaner, healthier and more active North Somerset. It sets out an ambitious programme of measures to promote modal shift away from private vehicle use and towards more active modes of travel. Increases in the number of cycle parking spaces to be provided at new developments, and the introduction of minimum requirements for non-standard cycle parking to accommodate people with mobility impairments, will ensure active modes of travel are accessible to as many individuals as possible. The strategy was consulted upon between November 2020 and January 2021 and the revised plan is on track to be taken to NSC Full Council to be adopted in April 2021.

Details

3.1. The Parking Standards SPD expands upon CS11: Parking of the adopted Core Strategy (2017) and sets out the level of parking provision required at new development.

3.2. The key objectives of the North Somerset Parking Standards SPD are to:

- Ensure an appropriate level of parking is provided at new developments.

- Promote highway safety through good design.
- Provide clarity for developers, officers and other stakeholders by providing clear and comprehensive guidance.

3.3. A thorough review of the existing Parking Standards SPD has been undertaken by officers, particularly in light of the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency, and, as such, a variety of updates are proposed.

3.4. The revised SPD includes the introduction of 'Principle 19: Electric Vehicle Charging' which sets out minimum requirements of Electric Vehicle charging provision at new developments. These standards are based on the 'minimum recommendations' made in the Systra/Cenex report 'Evidence Base: Introducing Planning Policy For Electric Vehicles in New Development' (May, 2019) commissioned by the West of England authorities and are proposed as follows:

- Minimum of 100% passive provision (cabling and Residual Current Device (RCD) sufficient to enable subsequent active provision) for allocated parking spaces at residential development
- For unallocated spaces at residential development, the council will expect 90% passive provision, as well as 10% active provision. Active provision should take the form of cabling, RCD and 7kw 32amp OLEV compliant wall or ground mounted charge point.
- Minimum of 10% active provision (cabling, RCD and 7kw 32amp Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) compliant wall or ground mounted charge point), and 10% passive provision at non-residential development.

The new standards are accompanied by guidance setting out appropriate design and dimensions for non-residential EV parking bays, including a suggested charge point layout diagram provided by the Energy Savings Trust.

The transition from Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles to ULEVS will be essential in tackling Climate Change and achieving our ambition to be Carbon Neutral by 2030. By requiring a level of EV charging infrastructure at all new developments, we will encourage the uptake of electric vehicles over ICE vehicles.

3.5. Also proposed is the introduction of 'Principle 20: Car Club Schemes at New development'. This sets out that car club schemes must be considered at new developments and that, where appropriate, the Council may secure provision via a planning condition or via Section 106 agreement.

Car clubs can offer residents an attractive and convenient alternative to private vehicle ownership and can encourage increased use of public transport, walking and cycling, whilst still providing access to a car when required. Research indicates that for each Car Club vehicle provided, up to 14 private cars are taken off the road. By ensuring that car clubs are provided at suitable locations, we can reduce residents' reliance on private vehicle use and encourage more public and active modes of travel.

3.6. The revised SPD also includes the introduction of a 'Parking Needs Assessment' to identify locations where a lower level of parking than the current standard may be appropriate. This seeks to recognise that different areas of North Somerset require different levels of parking provision and subsequently offers the opportunity for fewer spaces to be provided in accessible locations that are less reliant on private vehicles. Car ownership, for instance, varies greatly across the district. Central Weston, for example, has an average of only 0.65 vehicles per household, compared to up to 1.9 in places such as Winford and it's important that our parking standards reflect these differences.

At present, despite the wide variation in car ownership across our district, we have only one set of parking standards. This is in contrast to many authorities nationally which have different standards for urban and rural areas. By using a one-size-fits-all approach, our standards consequently offer a particularly generous level of parking compared to other authorities, particularly in our most accessible locations. Whilst our current standards do permit deviation from the required number of spaces in sustainable locations where car ownership and use may be lower, there is no consistent methodology for identifying where this may be appropriate, and how great a reduction should be applied.

3.7. The Parking Needs Assessment looks to address this by providing a clear and robust assessment to identify where in North Somerset we may permit reduced minimum parking standards. The assessment itself is a well-established method in determining parking requirements and has been adapted from similar assessments currently in place at various authorities nationally, including both B&NES and Wiltshire County Council. It aims to promote well-connected and accessible developments which provide a level of parking reflective of specific local circumstances.

3.8. As part of the assessment, development proposals can be scored against a variety of criteria and receive a reduction in parking provision depending on their level of accessibility. This includes criteria such as walking distance to the nearest bus stop, frequency of bus services, and walking/cycle distance to a variety of facilities such as railway stations, schools, and shopping facilities. There will be seven levels of discount available, depending on the assessment score. This will range from 'very low' (0-5% discount) to 'very high' (65-95%), although it should be noted that, at present, nowhere in North Somerset would fall within the 'very high' category. Developers can also score additional points by providing measures that reduce reliance on private vehicle ownership such as car clubs, shared e-bike schemes and resident bus passes. This will ensure parking provision is reflective of local circumstances, and accessible areas, less reliant on private vehicles, will not be required to provide unnecessary levels of vehicle parking.

3.9. The assessment has been tested on a wide variety of locations across North Somerset. The following table looks at the example of 10 2-bedroom dwellings across a variety of sites:

Location	Average car ownership per household	10 2 bed dwellings anticipated car ownership	Current parking requirement without reduction	Assessment score	Minimum parking requirement under Parking Needs Assessment
Winford	1.9	19	20	Very Low: 0-5% reduction	19 to 20
Wrighton	1.65	16 to 17	20	Low: 5-10% reduction	18 to 19
Yatton	1.6	16	20	Low-moderate: 10-15% reduction	17 to 18
Gordano School	1.55	15 to 16	20	Low-moderate: 10-15% reduction	17 to 18
Central Nailsea	1.4	14	20	Moderate: 15-25% reduction	15 - 17
Central Clevedon	1.15	11 to 12	20	Moderate: 15-25% reduction	15 - 17
Central Portishead (With Metrowest)	1.25	12 to 13	20	Moderate-high: 25-40%	12 to 15
Central Weston	0.65	6.5	20	High: 40-65% reduction	7 to 12

As demonstrated in the above table, the minimum parking requirement under the Parking Needs Assessment is more in line with the anticipated level of car ownership at each location. This will contribute towards delivering higher

density development in the right locations, less dominated by private vehicles and help facilitate more viable public transport.

3.10. Moreover, although the level of parking under the Parking Needs Assessment exceeds the anticipated demand at each location, measures are proposed to ensure parking issues are not created. Principally, garage spaces and rear parking court spaces, will not count towards the parking requirement where a reduced level of parking is permitted. This is on the basis that research shows less than 50% of garages are used for parking, and a similar percentage of rear parking court spaces are unused if on-street parking is available. This has caused issues previously at developments in both Locking Castle and Port Marine where high numbers of garage and parking court spaces were unused, pushing vehicles to park on-street in inappropriate locations. By not counting these spaces, we will ensure that where a reduction is permitted, spaces remain usable and vehicles are not pushed into parking in appropriate locations such as on footways or near junctions.

It should also be noted that the reductions permitted under the assessment will not be forced upon developers and they are able to provide the original requirement if they wish. It does, however, offer them the opportunity to build higher density, lower car developments in the right locations.

The assessment will therefore serve as a clear, evidenced, and consistent approach for both officers and developers in determining an appropriate level of parking at new development that is reflective of specific local circumstances. This will help facilitate higher density developments in areas that are well served by public and active modes of transport, have good local facilities, and are less reliant on private car ownership.

3.11. Other updates include:

- The introduction of a Coach Parking Principle, requiring developments likely to generate coach travel to provide adequate space to facilitate coach parking.
- Updates to Appendix A (Car and Cycle Parking Standards), introducing standards for sports halls, swimming pools, gyms/health clubs, cinemas, theatres and Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs), and an increase in the number of cycle parking spaces to be provided at residential development.
- Increase in parking bay dimensions from 2.4m x 4.8m to 2.5m x 5m, in line with national trends, to ensure spaces remain accessible and usable for modern vehicles. Current dimensions, dating from the 1970s, do not reflect the increase in standard vehicle sizes and parking related incidents now account for more than 30% (675,000) of all yearly accidents.
- Include minimum dimensions for Electric Vehicle Bays – 2.8m x 6.0m in line with recommendations from the Energy Savings Trust.
- Increases to the minimum number of cycle parking spaces to be provided at new development, including the introduction of a minimum level of non-standard cycle parking spaces to accommodate people

with mobility impairments and ensure cycling in North Somerset is accessible to as many individuals as possible.

- Replace 'Lifetime Homes' standards with Building Regulations 2010 Volume 1 requirements in line with the Council's Accessible Housing Needs Assessment SPD. This will ensure that a suitable number of parking spaces are capable of enlargement to a width of 3.3m to remain accessible to those with mobility impairments.
- Further good practice guidance regarding effective cycle parking in line with the Department for Transport's guidance for cycle parking set out in Local transport Note 1/20 Cycling Infrastructure Design (July 2020).

3.12. The various changes proposed will contribute towards the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030 by providing sufficient EV charging infrastructure at new developments, by promoting the use of car clubs, facilitating higher density development in accessible locations, and by ensuring adequate levels of cycle parking are provided.

Consultation

4.1. It is proposed that the public consultation runs for six weeks following Executive Committee approval. This will be undertaken using primarily digital means.

4.2. We will use NSC's online portal 'eConsult' as the host website for information and submission of responses. Local and regional stakeholders, including developers, local businesses and town and parish councils, will be notified automatically when consultations are added to this site, prompting their involvement. We will also look to notify relevant stakeholders directly to ensure they are consulted.

4.3. We will also publicise this consultation through the Council's website and social media and look to attract as much involvement from residents, businesses and stakeholders as possible.

4.4. Internally, to promote Local Member involvement, we consulted with the Strategic Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration policy and scrutiny panel (SPEDR) on March 10th who were supportive of the proposal to take the revised SPD to public consultation.

4.5. An internal officer consultation has also already been undertaken. This involved contacting 60 officers across Transport and Infrastructure, Planning, and Planning Policy. To encourage engagement, two 'drop in' sessions were held, where officers were able to discuss the SPD, ask questions and make suggestions.

4.6. Officers will also be encouraged to engage with the public consultation process to ensure officers have multiple opportunities to scrutinise the proposals and that engagement is maximised both internally and externally.

Financial Implications

5.1. The Revised Parking Standards SPD has no immediate financial implications, except for staff time.

5.2. The cost of preparing the Parking Standards SPD has been met from the existing Strategic Transport Policy and Development budget.

5.3. The Parking SPD will be implemented by officers within Development Management and met by applicants proposing new development. The Financial costs of delivering the SPD are therefore minimal.

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

6.1. The proposed updates will contribute towards the decarbonisation of our transport network and help achieve the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

6.2. The promotion of car clubs in accessible locations will help provide alternatives to private vehicle ownership in accessible locations.

6.3. Minimum requirements for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure at new development will ensure that our developments are future proofed and ready for the ban on new petrol and diesel cars by 2030.

6.4. The Parking Needs Assessment will help facilitate higher density, lower car developments in accessible locations well served by public modes of transport that are less reliant on private vehicle ownership.

6.4. Increases in the minimum number of cycle parking spaces required at new developments, as well as more extensive good practice guidance will ensure that active travel is an attractive first choice for short and medium journeys for as many users as possible.

Risk Management

7.1 The key risks of the revised SPD are:

- Providing too few parking spaces at new development can cause a variety of problems including cars parking on the highway, causing obstructions for service and emergency vehicles, reduced visibility at junctions and vehicles parking on the footway. To avoid these issues, the Parking Needs Assessment avoids a universal reduction of parking standards, and instead only permits reductions based on a robust assessment of the local circumstances. This will deliver a level of parking reflective of the specific demand at each development. This approach has been widely tested on locations across North Somerset to ensure parking levels are sufficient to serve the varying levels of car ownership across the district. Moreover, the assessment is a well-established method for determining parking levels and has been used successfully by a variety of authorities. Furthermore, where a reduction in the parking standard is to be permitted, garage spaces and rear parking court spaces will not count towards the standard to ensure parking provision remains usable for residents.

- Whilst providing generous EV charging provision at new development may increase the uptake of EVs over petrol/diesel vehicles, it may discourage modal shift to more active modes of travel. However, the alternative of not providing sufficient EV infrastructure at new development would significantly hinder North Somerset's ability to decarbonise our transport network and is therefore not considered a realistic alternative.
- There is a need to ensure that any revised parking standard does not conflict with the emphasis, in light of Covid-19, on measures that promote walking and cycling such as reallocating street space and parking bays to pedestrians and cyclists.

Equality Implications

8.1 A draft Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the review process.

8.2. A reduction in the number of vehicle parking spaces at new development may have a low impact on disabled people. Disabled people often have a great reliance on the private car due to specific access needs and a widespread reduction in the availability of parking at new development may limit their ability to easily reside in, access and use proposed developments. This has been mitigated by ensuring that new developments are still required to provide a minimum number of disabled-only parking bays to ensure they remain accessible to those with disabilities. These spaces will be required to meet larger specific dimensions and be located as close to the destination's entrance point as possible.

8.3. As the proposal may result in reduced parking provision at some new developments, it is possible that all groups will be impacted in their ability to access vehicle parking spaces at new developments. However, this will be mitigated by ensuring that, in line with the Parking Needs Assessment, parking is only reduced in suitable locations well served by public and active modes of travel and less reliant on private vehicle ownership.

8.4. The Equalities Impact Assessment will be reviewed as the document progresses through its statutory stages.

Corporate Implications

9.1. The revised SPD will have implications within Place, specifically for the Transport and Infrastructure service, Planning Policy and Development Management as the SPD will form a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and the planning of new developments across North Somerset.

9.2. This will have positive implications for the aforementioned service areas by providing greater clarity regarding reductions to parking provision and contribute towards our climate objectives.

9.3. The revised SPD will also support the various NSC policies outlined in section 2.

Options Considered

10.1. The alternative would be to retain the existing Parking Standards SPD which dates to 2013. Given the Climate Emergency and the need to quickly and comprehensively review our policies in light of this, retaining our current Parking Standards SPD is not considered a viable option.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Draft North Somerset Parking Standards SPD

Appendix B: Parking Needs Assessment

Background Papers:

Evidence Base: Introducing Planning Policy For Electric Vehicles in New Development (May, 2019)

North Somerset Council Core Strategy (2017)

Joint Local Transport Plan 4 2020-2036 (2020)

North Somerset Corporate Plan 2020-24 (2020)

North Somerset Council Development Management Policies: Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 (2016)

North Somerset Climate Emergency Strategic Action Plan (2019)

North Somerset Draft Active Travel Strategy (2020)

North Somerset Council Climate Emergency – Report on Area Baseline Evidence (July 2020)