

Frequently Asked Questions on the Suffolk Guidance for Parking

Q. Who will be affected by the parking guidance?

A. As with the previous version, the revised guidance aims to provide advice to planners, members of the public, developers and architects.

Anyone considering applying for a new development will need to consult the parking standards to determine the levels of parking expected for their particular type of development. Planners will use the document as a source of guidance when making a final judgement on appropriate parking for their areas.

Q. What development is affected by the parking guidance?

A. The revised guidance covers a wide and varied range of development that is new, extended or has had its use changed. This includes everything from schools to cinemas.

However, there will inevitably be some developments that will not fall neatly into any of the assigned categories. In such cases, parking provision will be considered on the developments' own merit. The onus will fall to the developer to demonstrate that the level of parking provided is appropriate and will not lead to problems. This will usually be demonstrated through the detailed transport assessment process.

Q. Does the new guidance only apply to cars?

A. No. The guidance provides advice and standards for bicycles, motorcycles, mopeds and mobility vehicles.

Q. How will the guidance be implemented?

A. This guidance will form Suffolk County Council's recommended approach for planning authorities to use when determining planning applications. The document will be used as a guide by planning officers in determining appropriate parking for their areas.

Q. Will the new guidance apply to development that has already been approved?

A. No, the standards are not retrospective. They will apply to new development or that which is extended or has its use changed.

Q. How will the parking guidance be enforced?

A. Planning applications must be brought forward according to the conditions under which they have been granted, but this document isn't about monitoring how people are parking, important as that is, it is about how standards are applied to new development.

Q. What is the planning status of the revised parking guidance?

A. It is 'technical guidance'. This guidance will form Suffolk County Council's recommended approach for planning authorities to use when determining planning applications.

Q. Does the revised guidance help meet the County Council's 'Greenest County' ambitions?

A. The standards within this guidance seek to provide a balance between reasonable expectations of car ownership, efficient use of land and the need to encourage a more sustainable approach to meeting all future transport needs. The need to promote sustainable transport outcomes is considered extremely important.

The previous national policy of limiting the number of parking spaces in new residential developments didn't make cars disappear. Cars are a lifeline for many people, and it is recognised that people may wish to own a car whilst still making sustainable transport choices. For instance, the need for a car ownership may be sustained by the need to drive to railway stations for work trips, longer trips or leisure use. This is especially pertinent in a rural county such as Suffolk.

As a result, the emphasis of sustainable transport is now placed on locating residential development where car use is less likely and/or necessary for many trips, without assuming that car ownership will be less as a result.

For main urban areas, with good public transport links and close proximity to services, a reduction to the parking standard may be considered.

The guidance has been revised to now support the next generation of green transport by providing for a potential increase in the use of electric vehicles by advising that developments provide and maintain electric vehicle recharging points. There is also support for priority parking spaces for Car Club cars as part of employment, retail and leisure developments.

Q. Will the lead to demands for more roads, more in-town parking and undermine our relatively poor public transport network?

A. The guidance is not a case of encouraging car use; it is rather an attempt to address the problems that have arisen from parking provision failing to meet existing demand.

The guidance continues to seek to reduce the need for car travel. For example, where possible, the guidance encourages the potential for sharing parking between different land uses, such as evening uses, such as theatres and cinemas, sharing the same parking spaces as a daytime use, such as offices. Also, the guidance strongly promotes the use of measures such as effective travel planning and positively designing the site and building layout of a development in favour of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and car sharers.

For main urban areas, with good public transport links and close proximity to services, a reduction to the parking standard may be considered.

The new guidance encourages the use of more sustainable modes of travel, such as cycling and mopeds, by advising that the parking needs of these forms of travel should be incorporated into the design of all developments and setting out a range of required numbers of spaces for different uses.

Q. Will vulnerable groups be adversely affected by the revised guidance?

A. We have given careful consideration to the impacts on vulnerable people, and it is not anticipated that the new guidance will have any adverse impact.

The guidance seeks to protect the needs of people with disabilities by providing an recommended amount of minimum disabled parking spaces based on the DfT's Traffic Advisory Leaflet 5/95: 'Parking for Disabled People'¹, promoting residential parking layouts that accommodate the safe passage of highway users including mobility vehicles and calling for consideration for safe storage and charging point locations for mobility vehicles when designing Retirement / Warden Controlled Developments.

Q. What evidence has been used when drawing up the revised guidance?

A. The guidance has been devised with reference to a broad array of national and local information, including:

- national policy and technical guidance information;
- an extensive study of the opinions of Suffolk residents (including a survey of approximately 9000 dwellings); and

¹ Department for Transport (April 1995) Traffic Advisory Leaflet 5/95: 'Parking for Disabled People'

- analysis of the 2001 and 2011 Census data for Suffolk car ownership.

Q. What is the guidance for residential garages?

A. In the past, a garage has counted towards a parking space allocation, even if the garage is too small for a car and is used for storage, resulting in increased pressure for on-street parking. For a garage (or car port) to be counted as an allocated space, it must now meet the minimum dimensions which are considered large enough for the average-sized family car and cycles, as well as some storage space.

There should be sufficient manoeuvring space/access doors around the parked car to access any stored items, such as bicycles. Facilities should be provided for charging electric cars, mobility vehicles and other similar vehicles (where appropriate) and mains power and lighting provided.

Q. What about visitor parking to a residential property?

A. Provision of 0.25 car parking spaces per dwelling (unallocated) is recommended as the standard for visitor parking.

Visitor parking can, subject to appropriate design, be located on the street.

Q. What is the national context for revising the Suffolk parking standards?

A. In 2011, the Government removed national planning restrictions² which required councils to limit the number of parking spaces permitted in new residential developments.

This change in policy reflects the Government's view that local authorities are best placed to make decisions on parking standards and that previous restrictions on residential parking led to problems such as on-street parking congestion.

Q. What is the difference from the previous parking guidance?

A. The guidance expands and amends the previous parking standards and introduces greater detail in terms of design and the application of the standards.

² Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (first published March 2001)

The key difference from the previous guidance is a shift towards minimum standards for residential parking, in line with national policy. The emphasis of sustainable transport is now placed on locating residential development where car use is less likely and/or necessary for many trips, without necessarily assuming that car ownership will be less as a result.

The revised guidance provides for an increased minimum width of bay parking space and outlines a new set of minimum dimensions for parking associated with heavy goods vehicles and vans.

The revised guidance provides a more nuanced approach by allocating car parking minimums according to the number of bedrooms associated with each dwelling rather than a blunt space-per-dwelling figure.