

Thurrock Council

Parking Standards Review Document

October 2010

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Background	4
3.0	Parking Standard Issues	5
4.0	Study Case.....	7
5.0	Conclusion	9

Appendix

APPENDIX 1: Parking Standards	10
APPENDIX 2: Parking Survey.....	11

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The availability and design of car parking are integral to a number of challenges in Thurrock. These include the need to promote alternatives to private car use (modal shift), make the best use of land given the high levels of growth being planned and the constraints of the green belt, and tackle high levels of vehicle crime. These challenges are particularly pressing in the Thurrock Urban Area. The Core Strategy policy *CSTP14: Transport in the Thurrock Urban Area* clearly states the importance of a policy approach to car parking and the need to link availability with levels of accessibility in order to support efforts to achieve a modal shift.
- 1.2 A challenge that has become increasingly evident in Thurrock is the need to address the issues in residential areas of degraded street scenes and impeded access for service and passenger transport vehicles that can happen where limited car parking availability has not discouraged car ownership and has instead displaced vehicle parking onto surrounding roads^[1]. Indeed, with only 1 in 5 households in Thurrock having no car or van, and an average of 1.2 cars or vans per household^[2], it is apparent that to avoid such displacement new development will need to provide sufficient residential car parking. Research^[3] has shown that, according to house buyers, attempts to restrict parking in order to curb car ownership had little or no impact on the number of cars a household would acquire.
- 1.3 National policy in *Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (PPG13)* aims to reduce the amount of parking and increase both cycle parking and disabled parking. *Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development* (2009) states that Local Planning Authorities should through their Local Development Frameworks set maximum parking standards for non-residential development in their area. *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing* simply states that local circumstances should be taken into account when setting residential car parking standards, and that a design-led approach should be used to ensure that the development functions well and meets the needs of people. Regional policy T14 of the former *East of England Plan* encourages Regional Transport Nodes and Key Centres for Development and Change (both of which include the Thurrock Urban Area) to adopt more rigorous maximum parking standards for non-residential development.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The *Thurrock Transport Strategy 2008 – 2021* recognises the need to manage the availability of car parking, especially non-residential, in order to promote modal shift and tackle congestion. In particular the strategy proposes applying maximum parking standards for new commercial development and that in the Thurrock Urban Area the Council may apply tighter restrictions. The *Sustainable Communities Strategy (Thurrock LSP 2009)* priority sets out that roads, public transport networks and housing will be enhanced so that local people have better access to employment opportunities, other amenities and affordable housing.
- 2.2 In considering new parking standards for Thurrock a wider view has been taken of the role that parking has to play in shaping as well as a possible tool for promoting travel choice.
- 2.3 The objective is to ensure a level of good quality and safe parking that is sufficient for the accessibility needs of development in Thurrock, taking into account the levels of accessibility by sustainable transport modes, the need to promote modal shift and the need to provide adequate access for service and public transport vehicles.
- 2.4 A fundamental change included in the revised parking standards is to retain minimum standards for trip origins (residential parking) and maximum standards for trip destinations (for example, commercial, leisure and retail parking), acknowledging the fact that limiting parking availability at trip origins does not necessarily discourage car ownership and can push vehicle parking onto the adjacent public highway, diminishing the streetscape and potentially obstructing emergency and passenger transport vehicles.
- 2.5 It is considered that this approach is entirely consistent with current Government guidance such as PPS3 and PPS4 in as much as residential parking should reflect the local circumstances of a development. The standards form a consistent basis for discussion between developers applying for planning permission and the appropriate LPA. It is intended that they should be applied throughout Thurrock.

3.0 Parking Standard Issues

- 3.1 It is acknowledged in Thurrock that parking is an issue, especially in residential areas and Thurrock Council identified some acute problems with recent high density residential development that are causing severe problems for pedestrian access and access for larger vehicles. In particular footways being obstructed and obstructing the passage of Refuse vehicles, emergency services and public transport.



- 3.2 These problem areas are primarily related to street design issues, poorly located off-street parking, inconsiderate driver behaviour and the inability of the Council to effectively introduce or enforce on-street controlled parking zones. Of particular concern are the more tortuous street layouts that use 4.8 metre wide carriageways, with little or no footway provision and those remote areas where regular parking enforcement is not practicable. Another significant factor in some areas is the inadequacy of the level of parking provision, particularly where there is poor access to public transport services.



- 3.3 The Council's Local Development Framework advocates a two tier residential standard based on a "minimum" and "reduced minimum". For the reasons set out below, these thresholds will not act as

prescriptive minimums, but are likely to result in a range of provision based on local circumstances and the ability of the developer to influence local circumstances (Appendix 1). The final details of these standards will be set out in SPG.

- 3.4 In recognition that national parking guidance has been causing some problems, Essex Planning Authorities convened the Parking Standards Review Group; Thurrock Council were part of this working group. The group generally reviewed all parking standards and in particular considered evidence from 24 residential developments. The group's conclusions informed Essex County Council's Parking Standards and Good Practice Guide September 2009. This includes guidance that residential parking be allocated as a minimum of 2 parking spaces per 2+ bedroom dwelling and 1 parking space per 1 bedroom dwelling and 0.25 visitor spaces per dwelling. The guidance also indicates that reductions of the vehicle parking standard may be considered if there is development within an urban area (including town centre locations).
- 3.5 Whilst Thurrock Council officers generally support the ECC parking guidance; it is recognised that Thurrock's circumstances are different, which allows a more tailored approach that reflects the local circumstances consistent with current Government guidance. In particular Thurrock is a fringe London Borough that has 7 Rail Station with good commuter links to East London and the city. The 2001 census data indicates average car ownership in Thurrock is 1.20 spaces per household with some Wards less than one car per household.

4.0 Study Case

- 4.1 In order to better understand the parking issues particular to Thurrock, the Council undertook an on-street parking survey to assess the highway problems at the Chafford Hundred residential development.



- 4.2 This development was chosen because it contained a range of development densities that pre-date and post date PPG13 and a mainline Rail Station. The conventional thinking is that on-street parking problems are primarily linked to high density developments with poor/narrow street design, poorly located off-street parking, lack of parking restrictions/enforcement and in some cases under provision of parking. In contrast, where there are low unit densities, wider carriageway widths and high levels of on-plot off-street parking, it was expected that there are little or no on-street parking problems. Therefore a direct correlation was expected between density of a development and levels of on-street parking nuisance.
- 4.3 Evidence obtained from the survey data of the Chafford Hundred development suggests that no precise correlation was found between density of a development, the availability of off-street parking and on-street parking.
- 4.4 The surveys were conducted during two consecutive weekday evenings and a plan locating the on-street parking for each land parcel within Chafford Hundred has been produced and can be viewed in appendix B. Chafford Hundred consists of approximately 5200 residential units built in 76 land parcels. The land parcel densities vary between 15 and 58 units per hectare.
- 4.5 The number of recorded vehicles parked on-street for each land parcel was plotted against the availability of off-street parking, this showed that there was no direct correlation between increasing off-street parking and decreasing on-street parking. The number of recorded vehicles parked on-street for each land parcel was plotted against the land parcel density. There was no direct correlation between decreasing density and decreasing on-street parking.

- 4.6 However a cursory examination of the distribution of on-street parking on the plan in appendix B does highlight some patterns.
- 4.7 In those areas which are not in close proximity to the Rail Station and controlled parking zone, i.e. on the east of Chafford, there is a more conventional relationship between densities and on-street parking patterns.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The survey findings suggests that those areas which are nearer to the rail station and within controlled parking zones lend themselves to the application of very low maximum residential parking standard. Whereas in those areas where there is poor public transport accessibility and little or no prospect of regular parking enforcement, a minimum standard would be more appropriate.
- 5.2 In conclusion the LDF parking standards will seek to provide a range of parking ratios that reflect the level of Public Transport accessibility of an area based on high, medium and low, and which conform to the aims and spirit of PPG13.
- 5.3 In areas that fall within high accessibility, zero levels of parking will be supported and pursued. Notwithstanding national policy, the Council have encountered sites where developers have shown resistance to reducing parking to levels appropriate in the most accessible of town centre locations requiring zero parking. If repeated this would increase congestion and might prejudice the most satisfactory urban design solutions. It is now clear to the Council that there needs to be a mechanism to guard against such circumstances to include a maximum level in such accessible locations. In medium accessible areas the “reduced minimum” is likely to result in a range of between zero and 1.0 space per unit. Elsewhere a higher range will be permitted in line with ECC standards.
- 5.4 These will be flexible and act as a default standard rather than a minimum, as of course the LDF states that in these areas, *“.....where the Council considers the potential substantial modal shift is clearly demonstrated by the Transport Assessment/ Statement and Travel Plans, the reduced maximum standard for non-residential car parking and reduced minimum standards for residential car parking will be applied. Where the reduced standards are applied, the Council will require developer contributions to support the development of controlled parking zones, the enforcement of parking restrictions and car-free living, and other measures to reduce inappropriate on-street parking”*.

^[1] Essex County Council's Draft *Parking Standards, Design and Good Practice* document provides evidence to this effect

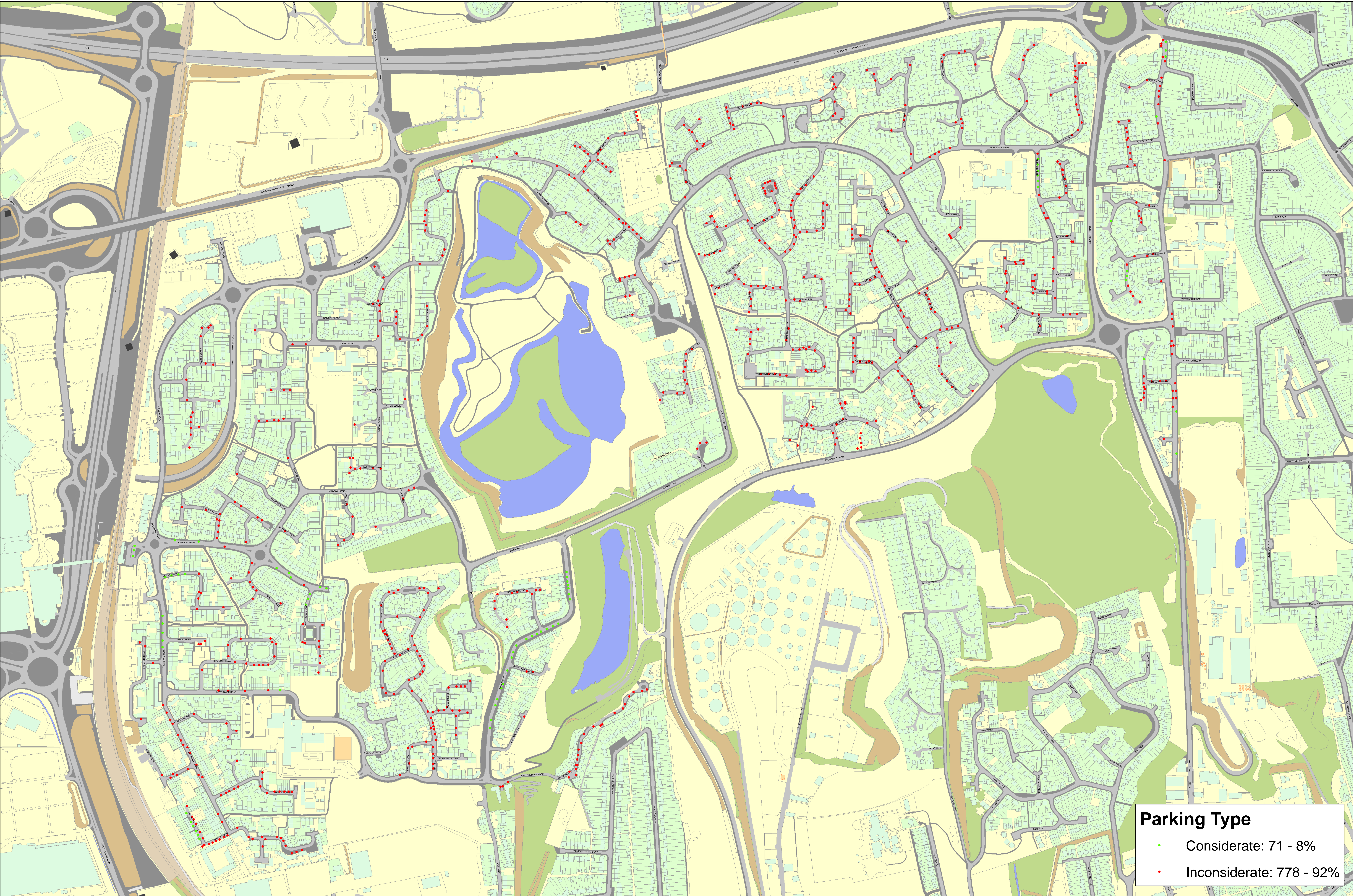
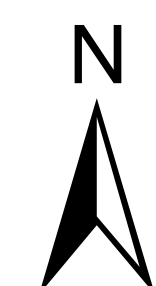
^[2] Office of National Statistics Census 2001. Given the trend for increasing car ownership, it is likely this will have become a greater issue since 2001

^[3] CABA research What Home Buyers Want: Attitudes and Decision Making amongst Consumers

APPENDIX 1: PARKING STANDARDS

PMD8 – PARKING STANDARDS
<p>All development will be required to comply with the car parking standards set out in the Layout and Standards SPD. For residential developments the standards comprise of ranges within maximum and minimum levels of provision dependant on defined circumstances. For non-residential uses maximum standards apply.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In those parts of Thurrock which have good levels of parking enforcement available coupled with high levels of accessibility, reduced standards for residential and non-residential car parking will be applied.2. Additionally, in other parts of the Thurrock Urban Area where the Council considers the potential substantial modal shift is clearly demonstrated by the Transport Assessment/ Statement and Travel Plans, reduced standards for non-residential and residential car parking will be applied. Where the reduced standards are applied, the Council will require developer contributions to support the development of controlled parking zones, the enforcement of parking restrictions and car-free living, the provision of public transport and other measures to reduce inappropriate on-street parking.3. The Council will require developers to use the relevant residential car-parking standard in conjunction with suitable physical design to reduce the risk of inappropriate on-street parking, thereby avoiding a street scene dominated by cars while maintaining access for service and emergency vehicles.4. Development will be required to facilitate more equitable access and sustainable transport modes through the provision of at least the minimum levels of parking, as specified in the Layout and Standards SPD, for:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Cyclesii. Powered two-wheelersiii. Disabled car usersiv. Electric and other low emission vehicles5. Subject to the above framework, vehicle parking provision will only be permitted where it is safe and of a high design quality, including where it is either:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Overlooked from within dwellingsii. Managed and monitored from commercial premisesiii. Openly visible from the public highway, oriv. Planned on-street provision <p>Refer to policy PMD11 on Freight Movement for the Council's policy approach to HGV parking provision.</p>
Key Diagrams and Maps
Not Applicable

APPENDIX 2: PARKING SURVEY



Parking Type

- Considerate: 71 - 8%
- Inconsiderate: 778 - 92%

