



Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes



Approved by Cabinet Housing & Planning Panel
21 August 2014

Car Parking Standards

Government guidance no longer requires councils to set maximum car parking standards. Evidence indicates that such standards no longer meet current patterns and complexities of modern car ownership.

Hertfordshire has one of the highest rates of car ownership in the UK and the 2011 census reveals that 79% of households in Welwyn Hatfield have access to at least one car or van. Maximum standards can hamper the economic vitality of commercial activities, lead to parking problems in areas surrounding key destinations such as town centres, railway stations and employment areas and cause on-street parking and other problems in residential areas.

This change means that councils have the freedom to set standards based on the needs of their local community.

Current Government guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that *“If setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, local planning authorities should take into account: the accessibility of the development; the type, mix and use of development; the availability of and opportunities for public transport; local car ownership levels; and an overall need to reduce the use of high emission vehicles.”*

The current maximum car parking standards for the borough are authorised by Policy M14 of the *Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005* and set out in *Welwyn Hatfield Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance (2004)*. They set out detailed requirements based on the use class of the development (i.e. retail, business, leisure, residential, etc) and the amount of floorspace. The guidance also applies a zonal approach which allows developments in central and accessible locations to provide a lower level of parking.

The Council has therefore agreed to treat its existing car parking standards as guidelines rather than maximums. This means that higher or lower car parking standards than those set out in the SPG can be proposed (by landowners, developers, etc) and determined (by officers and elected councillors) on a case-by-case basis taking account of the relevant circumstances of the proposal, its size context and its wider surroundings, as well as the NPPF guidance set out above. The zonal approach will continue to apply but as guidelines rather than maximums. The onus is on developers to demonstrate through transport information submitted alongside their planning applications that a greater or lesser level of car parking provision is appropriate.

Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards

The Council will treat all car parking standards set out in the *Welwyn Hatfield Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance* as guidelines rather than maximums.

Planning applications will be determined on a case-by-case basis to achieve a sensible level of provision taking account of existing SPG standards, NPPF guidance, the relevant circumstances of the proposal, its site context and its wider surroundings.

Garage Sizes

It is also considered that many existing garages are too small for their intended purpose for parking/storing vehicles.

The Council does not currently have any specific guidance on the appropriate size for domestic garages. The closest guidance is set out in the Government's *Manual for Streets* (2007) which establishes dimensions of about 4.2 metres long by 2.4 metres wide for normal parking spaces and Hertfordshire County Council's *Roads in Hertfordshire* (2011) which recommends that councils should stipulate that in order to be an effective storage space for cars new garages should measure at least 6 metres long by 3 metres wide.

The Council has therefore agreed the following interim policy so that domestic garages are big enough to be used for their intended purpose of storing cars.

Interim Policy for Garage Sizes

The Council will work with applicants to achieve *Roads in Hertfordshire* guidance for new domestic garages to have a genuine ability to be used for their intended purpose by being at least 6 metres long by 3 metres wide and sufficiently tall to accommodate modern cars.

Policy Information

The interim policies set out above do not form part of the development plan but will be treated as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

A copy of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) can be viewed at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

A copy of the *Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005* can be viewed at:
<http://www.welhat.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=463>

A copy of the *Welwyn Hatfield Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance 2004* can be viewed at:
<http://www.welhat.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=467>

A copy of the Government's *Manual for Streets* can be viewed at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/manual-for-streets>

A copy of Hertfordshire County Council's *Roads in Hertfordshire* can be viewed at:
<http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/transtreets/devmanagment/roadsinherts/>