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**BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL**

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Draft Parking Standards for New Developments

Central Bedfordshire Council Consultation to 5 January 2023

Dear Team,

The Town Council at its meeting 13th December discussed this consultation. The Town Council resolved to formally reply to the Draft Parking Standards for New Developments as follows:

* The recognition by the Consultation Document that ‘reducing the number of parking spaces for new residential developments is unlikely to see a reduction in car ownership’ is not followed through in many of the policies.
* It is fundamentally unsound to set a parking policy the same for each town in Central Bedfordshire without any regard to the particular circumstances of individual towns. This applies particularly to the town centre and car-free development proposals.
* The Draft Standards themselves quote that ‘Local authorities are required to set parking standards for their areas but they should do so having regard for local circumstances and without trying to control car ownership’.
* The Draft Standards do not properly reflect the fact that, due to their circumstances, some people will have difficulty walking, cycling or often using public transport, particularly given the poor bus services in Biggleswade.
* The Draft Standards for larger residential properties encourage paving of garden space which will affect the amenity of the area and also rainwater run-off and drainage.
* Visitor parking for residential developments is minimal. Without properly managed visitor parking, difficulties are experienced by emergency vehicles and waste freighters.
* The paucity of visitor spaces for older people’s accommodation does not recognise the need for frequent visits from medical and other carers, as well as family.
* For employment sites, employee parking is not covered. Also, note the requirement of BEM1 in the Neighbourhood Plan about facilities for the drivers of commercial vehicles.
* The Draft Standards propose 500m radius circles from the centres of towns in Central Bedfordshire and also from railway stations. This means two interlocking circles for Biggleswade. Appendix 6 (station) appears to show the same diagram as Appendix 5 (town centre) so it is not clear whether the lists of streets are accurate or include more residential areas.
* It is noted that the definition of town centre used here differs from that in the Local Plan.
* The circles encompass roads which are NOT town centre and which have no nearby public parking – for example, Bunyan Road; Apple Tree Close; Dilley Croft; The Grove.
* The proposed policies within these circles encourage on-street parking. It should be noted that, because of the proximity of the station, many of these roads have restrictions to stop commuter parking which would also hamper residents parking if there were no off-street provision. Other roads have commercial premises with limited or no parking.
* The proposals for car-free developments will only exacerbate the situation in Biggleswade town centre. Please note Policy BTC1 in the Neighbourhood Plan re development in the town centre.
* All the proposals for residential development encourage denser development and do not acknowledge the requirements for amenity space in the Neighbourhood Plan (BRD1). These policies require external green amenity space within curtilage or nearby or at least a balcony of sufficient size to accommodate planting. There is also a requirement for dwellings to have front courts or gardens to separate the highway, in the interests of both amenity and safety. These gardens should not become parking spaces. The consultation document itself says: ‘Providing sufficient parking for all types of vehicles will be necessary so that parked vehicles do not dominate the street scene’.
* The proposals both for car-free developments and infill developments in the town centre (as defined by the 500m circles which is not the definition in the Local Plan) are unrealistic and, if implemented in Biggleswade, will cause many difficulties for the town. It has to be recognised that Biggleswade is an historic market town and traffic flow in the town centre area is difficult already. The town centre is on the west of the town, whereas most of the development is to the east of the railway line. This already makes access to the town centre difficult – two of the railway bridges have had to be made one way and only one of the remaining two is really adequate for the volume of traffic.
* Anything which makes access to the town centre more difficult will affect the viability of town centre businesses and has to be resisted.
* Relevant policies of the Neighbourhood Plan are set out below. These were developed for Biggleswade noting the particular issues the town faces.

The Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan, already Supplementary Planning Guidance, gives guidance on aspects of parking and cycle storage, as follows:

BTC1 Development in the Town Centre

* To ensure the efficient use of land, parking provision with redevelopment schemes should be accommodated within the building footprint of the scheme or through multi-storey provision, where possible and where the scheme complements the character of the area, meeting the requirements of BPD1 and BH1.

BTM1 Sustainable Transport

* Development must provide safe and convenient links for pedestrians, with differing levels of mobility, and cyclists, meeting the requirements of BPD1 (4 & 5)
* Where development requires parking it should include a mix of provision so that streets and spaces are not dominated by parking.
* Parking provision should be within the curtilage of the housing it serves, rather than being provided remotely.
* Development must include conveniently-located, secure, covered storage for cycles and scooters, including for all new housing.
* Electric vehicle charging points must be provided as part of new parking provision within development.

BRD1 Residential Development

* All new residential development must have access to external green amenity space in the form of private gardens or shared private space or public space in close proximity to the scheme or, where this is not possible and where practical, balconies of sufficient size to accommodate planting.
* The layout of new housing estates should have front courts or gardens to separate the highway, in the interests of residential amenity and safety.
* All new dwellings must have screened storage space for bins and recycling.
* All new dwellings must include secure, covered cycle and scooter storage, as required by Policy BTM1.

BEM1 Employment

* General industrial and distribution uses will be supported in principle in appropriate locations, consistent with Policy EMP3 of the Local Plan, subject to:
  + there being adequate supporting parking, amenities and other facilities for drivers of commercial vehicles.

Yours faithfully

Karim Hosseini

Head of Governance & Strategic Partnerships