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Cc: [Redacted]

Subject: Response to the Draft parking standards for new developments

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To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment, and make representations on, the Draft Parking Standards for New Developments Supplementary Planning Document. The Planning Improvement Working Group at Flitwick Town Council has reviewed this document, and has the following comments to make.

Overall, while the Planning Improvement Working Group understands the rationale behind the specified standards (attempting to balance encouraging sustainable travel while recognising that Central Bedfordshire is a high car ownership area), the group is concerned that there appears to be a lack of a joined up strategy in relation to transport improvements to encourage sustainable travel in Flitwick.

The current [Local Area Transport Plan](#) was reviewed in March 2022 (which appears to have not been referenced in the SPD), but the Local Transport Plan itself has [not been reviewed since 2011](#). Without a clear link with an updated strategy, what the SPD seeks to achieve can only be partial. For example, while delivering additional cycle parking is broadly welcomed, without safe, attractive cycle routes encouraging people to cycle for everyday trips, this will not achieve much.

Ultimately, Central Bedfordshire Council, working closely with local communities, needs to **decide** what the local transport vision for areas is, and **provide** for it through sustained transport improvements that deliver the change necessary. In the context of this document, the logic underpinning the proposed standards, and how it relates to wider improvements being delivered, needs to be made crystal clear. As this document currently reads, this is an SPD that has been written because CBC requires it to be written, as opposed to there being a clear strategy for transport improvements.

A good example of how planning is being linked to transport improvements is that of [Oxfordshire](#), which is requiring developments, through non-statutory guidance, and against which new developments are assessed.

Overall, on the standards themselves the group has no strong opinion, save for two related matters. The first relates to allowing less parking in the vicinity of Flitwick railway station. The group has several concerns relating to adopting such an approach in Flitwick. These are, in no particular order:

- There is a significant likelihood that, with car ownership levels being high in Flitwick, that this will lead to a worsening of the current on-street parking situation around the town centre. It is notable that no evidence is presented in the SPD on the number of parking fines and level of enforcement within Flitwick and other similar areas, which is likely to have an impact on any person's willingness to park in the area;
- Whilst the centre of Flitwick is the most accessible area in terms of public transport provision, any parking standards need to reflect the quality of the available public transport links in the area. Whilst the rail service is generally good, local buses are in need of significant improvement. So while the service offering in the area may be good in comparison to other areas of Central Bedfordshire, this does not mean that it is of a quality that encourages low car ownership;
- The area covered by the 500m radius around Flitwick railway station should more accurately reflect the experience of potential users. Evidence shows that people will, on average, walk up to 400 metres to the nearest bus stop, and up to 800 metres to railway stations, so 500 metres is a reasonable compromise. We would recommend, however, that the boundaries of the zone be determined by walking distance mapped to local roads and walking routes, which can be done by any GIS system.

The Group is of the view that should lower standards be sought in areas of higher accessibility by non-car modes of transport, then the following must be secured by way of planning condition for any residential development within the area:

- A financial contribution to the establishment of, extension of existing, and enhanced enforcement of local parking restrictions for a minimum period of 5 years, as a result of likely increases in demand for car trips to and from these developments;
- A Travel Plan with targets for increasing the number of people using public transport and cycling, enforceable by condition, with enhanced contributions to public transport and cycling provision should the targets not be met;
- A corresponding ban on residents of the development from being part of any on-street residential parking zones, with the bans associated with the addresses on the development to ensure that they are consistently applied.

Without such measures, we recommend that the proposed standards currently identified as being outside such zones are applied.

Secondly, the Group is of the view that for residential developments, there should be a minimum of one space provided for each residential unit regardless of location, and that there be a minimum of one space per bedroom up to two bedroom dwellings. Wherever feasible, such parking should be provided off-street.

The Group has no comments to make regarding car parking standards for non-residential uses.

The Group generally supports the approach to designing parking locations in a manner that discourage on-street, pavement, and inconsiderate parking. It is the Group's view that each development will need to be considered on its merits on this matter, but the general approach set out in the SPD is sound. The approach to cycle parking in the SPD is also considered to be reasonable.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.



Please note that in addition to my Councillor duties, I also work full time. So I may be a little delayed in responding to you.

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