

East Herts Council Report

Executive

- Date of meeting:** Tuesday 7 October 2025
- Report by:** Councillor Tim Hoskin – Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability
- Report title:** Review of Resident Permit Zone Policy
- Wards affected:** All Wards

Summary

- This report seeks approval for targeted amendments to both East Herts District Council's (EHDC) Resident Permit Parking Schemes (RPZs) Operational Guidance and EHDC's Resident Permit Parking Policy.
- The proposed changes aim to enhance accessibility, reduce procedural barriers, and better align the guidance and policy with the Council's strategic priorities, including sustainability, air quality, community wellbeing, and economic growth.
- The recommendations are based on public feedback from the 2024 Parking Strategy engagement, independent review findings, and benchmarking against best practice from comparable local authorities.
- The following changes will also better align the Operational Guidance and the Parking Policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE

- (A) That the Council adopts the below changes to East Herts Resident's Permit Zone (RPZ) Operational Guidance policy:**
- **That the requirement that non-resident parking must exceed 40% occupancy at peak times, as a condition for**

implementing an RPZ, be reduced to 10% of occupancy at peak times;

- **That requirement for there to be sufficient kerb space to enable 75% of households in a proposed area to park one vehicle on-street as a condition for implementing an RPZ, be reduced to 50% from the guidance.**

1.0 Proposal

1.1 This report proposes targeted amendments to the East Herts District Council (EHDC) Resident Permit Parking Schemes (RPZs) Operational Guidance and the EHDC Resident Parking Policy. These amendments aim to:

- Reduce barriers to RPZ implementation, ensuring greater flexibility and responsiveness to local needs.
- Support the Council's strategic goals around sustainable transport, air quality, and town centre vitality.
- Reflect best practices from comparable councils, as identified in the independent review conducted by Citisense.
- Better reflect the lived experiences of residents in areas with high parking stress.
- Better align the requirements and language between the Operational Guidance and the Resident Parking Policy.

1.2 Specific changes recommended:

- Amendment of the requirement that non-resident parking must be considered in awarding an RPZ scheme, specifically that non-resident parking must exceed 40% occupancy at times of peak demand as a condition for implementing RPZs.
- Current Policy:
 - Operational Guidance: Requires non-resident parking to exceed 40% occupancy at peak times.

- Resident Permit Parking Policy: Requires that demand for parking exceed supply due to the presence of non-residents' vehicles.
 - Proposed Change: Amend this requirement by reducing the non-resident parking occupancy threshold from 40% to 10% to allow more holistic assessments based on local context, resident feedback, and officer observations.
- Rationale:
 - The current 40% threshold can prevent necessary schemes in areas with clear parking stress.
 - Other councils, such as Watford and Stevenage, have shifted in favour of more flexible, context-driven approaches.
 - Supports a more equitable distribution of parking resources, particularly in higher-density, mixed-use neighbourhoods.
 - Reduce to a minimum of 50%, the requirement that there be sufficient kerb space to enable 75% of households in a proposed area to park one vehicle on-street.
- Current Policy:
 - Requires that 75% of households in a proposed zone have on-street parking capacity for one vehicle.
 - Proposed Change: Reduce this requirement to a minimum of 50% to reflect practical constraints in historic, mixed use or high-density areas.
- Rationale:
 - Many zones struggle to meet the current 75% kerb space requirement due to constrained street layouts, pre-existing loading restrictions, and competing demands for limited road space (e.g. bus stops, cycle lanes, junction protection).
 - Reducing this requirement reflects the reality of historic, high-density or mixed-use areas where available kerb space does not correlate with the number of households.
 - It supports a context-sensitive approach to RPZ design, allowing zones to be tailored to local needs without being constrained by an unrealistic threshold.
 - This change enables the Council to better manage parking pressure and improve access for residents in areas most affected by congestion and competition for space.

- o It also recognises that not all parts of a zone need to provide parking to justify a permit scheme, especially where non-kerbside areas (e.g. shared surfaces, driveways or car-free developments) form part of a wider parking strategy.

1.3 These proposals are grounded in public consultation findings, benchmarking of best practice. They aim to ensure the Council's RPZ approach is responsive, inclusive, and aligned with broader strategic objectives, including:

- Improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions by supporting sustainable travel.
- Enhancing local economic vitality by reducing commuter pressure on residential streets.
- Promoting fairness and accessibility for all residents, including those in higher-density areas.

2.0 Background

2.1 EHDC's Resident Permit Parking Schemes Operational Guidance and Resident Permit Parking Policy sets out the criteria for implementing new RPZs and their operational details.

2.2 RPZs are designed to support residents in areas where on-street parking demand exceeds supply, reducing commuter parking and improving the quality of life in residential areas.

2.3 The Council's Parking Strategy (2024) committed to a review of its RPZ approach in response to community concerns about parking availability and enforcement. Public engagement during the strategy's development revealed support for expanding resident parking and simplifying the process by which new zones are considered.

2.4 In early 2025, Citisense was appointed to independently assess the Council's RPZ Operational Guidance (East Herts RPZ Guidance Review Draft). The review concluded that certain requirements, particularly the 40% non-resident occupancy rule, may unnecessarily restrict the Council's ability to introduce schemes in areas of clear need and can be a barrier to effective parking management.

- 2.5 Citisense made several recommendations in their review, which were noted. Each recommendation was carefully considered in the context of practical revisions to the Operational Guidance and Policy, future design ideas, pricing, and in delivering sustainability objectives.
- 2.6 In relation to the two Citisense recommendations associated with the “engagement process”, these were not taken forward as they were not considered equitable, in the context of reducing the current requirement that a majority of residents - engaging in the informal consultation process (by household) - be in favour of the introduction of an RPZ in respective road, to provide the requisite democratic mandate.

Citisense “Engagement Process” Review recommendations not taken forward:

- “Review requirements for participation levels, with a recommendation to reduce the current response rate requirement. At present, the guidance requires that 51% of households must respond during the engagement process.”
 - “Consider removing or reducing the requirement that a majority be in favour of the scheme and take a broader approach that East Herts will consider criteria such as congestion, safety, air pollution along with resident and District Councillor feedback.”
- 2.7 The full list of Citisense recommendations, and East Herts Parking Service responses, may be found in Appendix B
- 2.8 There is a current road map to create RPZs based on previous requests from residents and supported by Members (see Appendix A). As the current policy refers to only being able to progress two schemes in any year, due to Parking Service staff resource constraints, the current programme will end in 2028.
- 2.9 It is possible to begin the process the implementing more RPZs, however that will be contingent on bringing additional resources to the Parking Service to enable public consultation and project management of multiple schemes simultaneously.

3.0 Reasons

3.1 The proposed amendments are driven by a combination of public demand, operational constraints, strategic alignment, and comparative best practice. Each of the specific changes responds to a clearly identified issue in the current guidance.

3.2 **Amendment of the Operational Guidance to Reduce the Non-Resident Parking Occupancy Threshold from 40% to 10% with Provision for Officer Discretion**

3.3 Current requirement:

- Operational Guidance: The kerb space occupied by non-residents should be greater than 40% at times when parking problems caused by non-residents occur.
- Resident Permit Parking Policy: East Herts Council will prioritise residents' parking needs in primarily residential areas where there is evidence derived from surveys that demand for on-street parking significantly exceeds supply, due to the presence of non-residents' vehicles.

3.4 Why this is a barrier:

- It limits the Council's flexibility to act proactively where residents are clearly affected, but the 40% threshold is not met.
- Parking stress is experienced differently across neighbourhoods and is not always captured by a single metric like non-resident occupancy.
- The requirement may overlook other drivers of parking difficulty, such as:
 - o Multi-car households competing for limited space.
 - o Business, school, or visitor traffic that does not register as "non-resident" under the survey methodology.
 - o Displacement from nearby RPZs or high-demand transport hubs (e.g. railway stations).

3.5 Rationale for change:

- Reducing this threshold and requirement empowers the Council to assess need using a more holistic and localised evidence base, including public feedback, officer observations, and strategic goals.
- It aligns with the approach taken by comparable local authorities who have moved away from rigid metrics in favour of broader parking management tools.
- It supports the principle of equitable treatment of residents, particularly in higher-density and mixed-use areas where competition for space is acute.

3.6 Reduction, to a minimum of 50%, of the 75% Kerb Space Provision Requirement from the Operational Guidance

3.7 Current policy issue:

The Operational Guidance currently requires that: There should be sufficient kerb space to enable a minimum of 75% of all households within the proposed scheme area to park at least one vehicle on-street.

3.8 Why this is a barrier:

- This standard is difficult to achieve in historic towns, flats, and areas with narrow roads or existing parking restrictions (e.g. loading bays, bus stops).
- It disadvantages higher-density housing areas, where space is inherently constrained and where the benefits of RPZs may be greatest.
- It implies a guarantee of parking availability, which may not be realistic or necessary for the effective functioning of a permit scheme.

3.9 Rationale for change:

- Relaxing this requirement allows schemes to be judged on practical need, rather than theoretical capacity.

- RPZs are not intended to guarantee a space for every household, but to manage demand and prioritise residential access in high-pressure areas, such as streets near town centres and transport hubs.
- Flexibility on this point will make it easier to support smaller or irregularly shaped zones that meet local demand but fall short of the 75% target.

4.0 Options

Option	Description	Assessment
A. Do nothing	Retain current RPZ thresholds and procedures	Maintains consistency but continues to limit RPZ delivery and does not support the delivery of the council's wider environmental and transport goals.
B. Amend only the 40% threshold	Reduce the occupancy requirement of non-residents' from 40% to 10%, retains consultation thresholds and kerb space criteria	Partial improvement; some community-supported schemes may still be blocked.
C. Implement all proposed amendments	Reduce the 40% threshold to 10% and relaxation of the kerb space criteria	Supports wider uptake, enables greater flexibility, and better aligns with local needs and national best practice.

5.0 Risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Increase in RPZ scheme requests post-amendment	Medium	Medium	Phased implementation and capacity planning

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 There are no community safety implications arising from this report.
- 6.2 Carer permits remain available for peripatetic carers linked to businesses, to enable delivery of care services to East Herts residents living in RPZs. The cost a carer permit is currently set at £45.00 There are no proposals to alter the criteria on which these are offered. “Special permits” are also available on a discretionary basis to individuals, not living in RPZs, with caring responsibilities.

Community Safety

Yes

Data Protection

No

Equalities

There are no direct equality, diversity, or inclusion implications in this report, however, where schemes are implemented in certain areas this could have a disproportionate impact on individuals or communities. For example, people who have regular carers/ members of their family undertaking caring responsibilities visit their property, who could previously park for free, would now have to acquire visitors permits at a cost to do so. This could have a disproportionate impact on those with disabilities (for example). In such circumstances we would seek to gather information on the households within the permit area, seek to understand the impact and mitigate where possible (e.g. extending concessions such as the current carers permit scheme). An individual equalities impact assessment needs to be undertaken for every area in which a new scheme is implemented.

Environmental Sustainability

Yes, supports reduced car use and improved air quality – Improved management of kerb space will encourage sustainable travel modes and discourage excessive vehicle ownership, contributing positively to the Council’s environmental targets.

Financial

Changing the threshold for implementing new schemes could lead to increased costs of implementation, as more areas are keen to investigate them. However, there is no specific budget available to support this and therefore funding for new schemes

must be identified and approved (e.g. through section 106 contributions). No schemes progress unless this is the case. The cost of operating RPZs is funded through the sale of permits and vouchers in accordance with the council's full cost recovery policy.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes, parking polices form part of the council's Policy Framework at Section 3.2.1 of the Constitution. As such the decision to modify the Operational Guidance is reserved to Council.

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

- East Herts Parking Strategy 2024 - [Parking Strategy](#)
- Resident Permit Parking Schemes Operational Guidance - [Appendix A Revised EH RPZ Operational Guidance Nov 2020](#)
- Resident Permit Parking Policy - [Appendix A Revised RPZ Policy Nov 2020](#)
- Independent Review of East Herts' Resident Permit Zone (RPZ) Schemes Operational Guidance by Citisense - [Appendix G East Herts RPZ Guidance Review Draft.pdf](#)
- Appendix A - Historical record of RPZ requests
- Appendix B - East Herts assessment and responses to Citisense RPZ review recommendations

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