

10 September 2014

Housing & Health Committee

Garage Site Redevelopment

Report of: *Helen Gregory, Head of Housing Services*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council owns a range of garage sites around the Borough where some of the garages are not in use due to low demand. As garage sites are under Council ownership they present a potential opportunity for redevelopment, in full or part, for new housing.
- 1.2 Officers will review the usage of sites and identify sites with an immediate development potential. An Architect will be engaged to assess the potential of three or four sites to determine the possible form of development. These will be presented to the November Committee for consideration.
- 1.3 The Committee is requested to agree to further work being undertaken to develop the feasibility and further explore the size and tenure options for the three or four sites.

2. Recommendation(s)

That approval is given to

- a) **undertake feasibility assessments for affordable housing development on garage and car park sites**
- b) **incur fees up to £30,000 funded from this year's HRA capital budget to support (a) above**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 The Council wishes to improve the supply of affordable housing in the Borough and to build new homes to contribute to this supply. The Council has over 1200 garages and over 20% are vacant. This is partly due to lack of demand but also where garages are in poor condition and require significant investment to reinstate them. The investment significantly exceeds the medium term income. Several underused garage sites have been identified as options for potential development.
- 3.2 The current occupation of parking spaces and garages is by tenancy agreement and the right to use can be terminated at no more than one month's notice.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

4.1 Scheme Development - Officers will review existing sites to consider

- the number and proportion of vacant garages
- options for re provision of parking on other sites
- suitability of the site for new affordable housing

4.2 Where a site appears to have the potential to provide new housing, an architect will be employed to provide a headline feasibility of the new homes that could be built on the site, taking account of the existing surrounding residential developments and what is likely to be appropriate for the location.

4.3 The outline schemes will be developed and approval for the preferred options will be sought in November.

4.4 As there are no sites that are completely vacant, it is likely that in order for a site to be viable, garages currently in use will be recommended for demolition. Where this is recommended, the options for local re-provision will be included as part of the scheme development proposal. It is also likely that we will not be able to re-provide some spaces and the impact of this for users will be assessed.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

Members are asked to support the development of detailed options to provide affordable housing options on underused garage sites.

6. Consultation

6.1 No consultation has been undertaken to date. Officers will prioritise sites with the highest level of vacant garages; where there are options for

alternative provision. Detailed discussions will need to be undertaken with planning officers to develop the preferred solution for each site.

- 6.2 If the Committee agree that a site offers a viable opportunity for new affordable housing, Ward Members, local residents and garage users will be consulted.
- 6.3 Officers will appoint consultants from existing approved lists and seek competitive quotations/ tenders in line with current standing orders.

7. Reference to Corporate Plan

The provision of new homes will help to address the Council's aims to meet housing demand in the Borough.

8. Financial Implications

Name & Title: Jo-Anne Ireland, Director of Strategy and Corporate Services.

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- 8.1 Detailed costings for any site will be assessed as part of the appraisal process. As the sites are in the HRA there will be no land purchase costs.
- 8.2 As explained in the Affordable Housing Strategy report elsewhere on the agenda, the Council has some funding available from recycled grant and allocated reserves. Once specific proposals and cost estimates have been prepared for potential sites, the funding options will be reviewed and submitted with the scheme assessment to the November Committee.
- 8.3 Consultancy fees of approximately £30,000 will be incurred to develop the schemes in sufficient detail to submit outline planning applications. This can be funded from within the capital allocation for the HRA in 2014/15 as there is currently £740,000 not specifically allocated to schemes. This is provisionally being held for new affordable housing.

9. Legal Implications

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- 9.1 The Council has a legal duty to manage land for the 'benefit, improvement or development' of its area.
- 9.2 The exploration of the options is consistent with this duty.

10. Background Papers

None

11. Appendices to this report

None

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