

Report of the Chief Executive

GARAGE STRATEGY 2020 -20241. Purpose of report

To seek committee approval for a new Garage Strategy

2. Background

The Council owns 843 garages. Housing Committee has previously considered a number of reports regarding using underutilised garages sites for housing development. The Council was recently granted planning permission to build five flats on a garage site at Oakfield Road. The committee has also approved a modernisation programme for the Council's garage stock.

3. Detail

The new Garage Strategy confirms the Council's approach to the ongoing management and maintenance of garage sites.

'Build more houses, more quickly on under used or derelict land' is one of the priorities identified in the Corporate Plan it is therefore appropriate for the Council to consider whether garage site land could be used for housebuilding. At the end of June 2020, 30% of all Council garages were vacant due to lack of demand.

There are sites in the borough where there is demand and full occupancy. Some of these sites are in a poor state of repair and require improvements to ensure that they remain lettable and that high repairs and maintenance costs are not incurred.

4. Financial implications

The Council's Capital programme will fund both the development of new build sites and the garage improvement programme. Further reports will be brought to the relevant committees for approval.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that the Garage Strategy 2020-2024 be approved.

Background papers

Nil

Broxtowe Borough Council

Garage Strategy 2020-2024

Our Vision

The Council's Corporate Plan 2020 - 2024 sets out the vision of:

A greener, safer, healthier Borough, where everyone prospers.

In addition to this, the aim for Housing at Broxtowe is:

A good quality home for everyone

For this to be achieved the Corporate Plan has three priorities for housing:

- Build more houses, more quickly on under used or derelict land
- Invest to ensure our homes are safe and more energy efficient
- Prevent homelessness and help people to be financially secure and independent

The Council's garage stock has an impact on the achievement of these priorities. Under used land can be used for new housing; poor quality sites can be eye-sores and attract anti-social behaviour and therefore have an impact on the wider community.

Why have a Garage Strategy?

A Garage Strategy is required to ensure that garages and surrounding land are managed effectively and efficiently, maximising rental income for the Council and where they are no longer required providing development opportunities for affordable housing.

All of the Council's garage stock was constructed more than 40 years ago, with the majority having been built more than 60 years ago. When originally built the garages were not designed to last over 60 years. Methods of construction have changed considerably, for example precast concrete panels and asbestos sheets are no longer used.

The garages were designed for cars, which are smaller than the average car today. Garages were originally offered for vehicle storage, whereas now the majority are used for storing other items. Car usage has changed considerable over the last few decades with many families have two cars and also people requiring parking for company vehicles and vans. The current provision of garages is not always the best solution to resolve parking issues.

How has the Garage Strategy been developed?

A working group was established to consider all of the garage sites. The group contains representatives from Repairs, Capital Works, Allocations, Strategy and

Development. This allows all views and ideas for the future of the sites to be considered.

Each site was assessed against the following criteria:

- Initial assessment of suitability for development
- Repairs expenditure required
- Income from garages
- Current void levels
- Waiting list demand

How will the Garage Strategy will be delivered?

The Garage Strategy covers a four year period and will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the strategy continues to meet the Council's priorities. There are four key considerations in regards to the future management and maintenance of the Council's garage stock:

Deliver sites for development

'Build more houses, more quickly on under used or derelict land' is one of the priorities identified in the Corporate Plan it is therefore appropriate for the Council to consider whether garage site land could be used for housebuilding. As part of the working group assessment the potential for all sites was discussed. This initial assessment led to some sites being identified as possible sites for development and others being discounted.

Improve sites where demand is high

Some of the Council's garage sites are fully occupied and in demand. These sites need to be the priority for investment. It is important that the process followed by the working group ensures that investment is not wasted on sites that may be used for future development. Therefore these two considerations are discussed at the same time by the working group to identify which solution is preferable. As part of this consideration the group reviews sites in close proximity to each other.

Consider alternatives where the land is not suitable for development and the demand is low

A small number of sites will neither be suitable for development or have high enough demand to make them viable to invest money in improvement. For these sites the working group will consider alternatives, such as demolishing the garages to provide parking spaces

Involve communities in decision making

Early consultation and involvement of local residents is essential. Both garage tenants and local housing tenants will be given an opportunity to discuss proposals

at the earliest opportunity. The Housing Performance Group, which includes tenant representatives will monitor the outcomes of the Garage Strategy.

The strategy will be supported by an annual action plan:

Deliver sites for development	
Strategy Action	To be achieved in Year 1 of the Strategy
Housing Delivery Manager to fully assess each site identified as suitable for development after initial assessment	Housing Delivery Manager to confirm sites that are not suitable for development so that other options can be considered
Housing mix pro forma to be completed for all sites identified by Housing Delivery Manager as suitable to consider housing need	To be completed for all phase 1 sites, review process prior to commencing for phase 2 sites
Positive promotion of former garage sites used for affordable housing	Press release and information on website about Oakfield Road
Improve sites where the demand is high	
Strategy Action	To be achieved in Year 1 of the Strategy
Working group to complete assessment each year to identify sites for inclusion the improvement programme	Meet in January 2021 to identify sites for inclusion in the 2021/22 improvement programme
Review rent on an annual basis to ensure that it is in line with inflation but also remains competitive	Review of rents charged by other local authorities
Monitor level of void garages as a performance indicator	Reduction in the number of void garages
Targeted marketing in areas where sites have been improved to ensure that demand remains and sites are fully occupied	Produce a marketing plan
Consider alternatives where the land is not suitable for development and the demand is low	
Strategy Action	To be achieved in Year 1 of the Strategy
Consider if garages should be demolished and parking spaces offered if lack of parking is an issue	Complete research, including feedback from employees and tenants about the areas where lack of parking is an issue
Consider provision of communal space or community gardens	Complete research, including feedback from employees and tenants about the areas where this may be beneficial
Consider if sites can be sold to provide an income to fund other developments	Consider when other options are not viable
Involve communities in decision making	
Strategy Action	To be achieved in Year 1 of the Strategy
For sites where land is not suitable for development and demand is low consult with	Consultation to be completed for all sites within this category

local tenants about ideas for alternative uses	
Produce reports to Housing Performance Group to monitor progress and impact of decisions made	Report for Housing Performance Group in 2020/21 Q4 to review progress
Complete consultation as early as possible with garage tenants when site is identified for development	Review process followed for Oakfield Road to see if improvements can be made
Support garage tenants and local housing tenants to understand the planning process	Inform garage tenants and local housing tenants when planning applications are submitted
Support tenants who need to move to rent another garage due to development	Review process followed for Oakfield Road to see if improvements can be made