

**REPORT FOR: Tenants', Leaseholders'
and Residents'
Consultative Forum**

Date of Meeting: 19 February 2014

**Subject: INFORMATION REPORT –
GARAGE STRATEGY PROGRESS
REPORT**

Responsible Officer: Lynne Pennington
Divisional Director of Housing

Exempt: No

Enclosures: None

Section 1 – Summary

This report gives an update on the progress of the Garage Strategy.

All garage sites in the borough have now been reviewed and categorised according to the proposed course of action, into broadly either those with development potential, those suitable for a pilot repair programme, those that are for consideration for future repair or those where alternative uses may be more appropriate. A programme of clearance of rubbish in void garages is being drawn up. There is still work to be done to define the final outcome, and individual sites may change category as work progresses.

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

2. Introduction

2.1 The Garage Strategy is being taken forward by the Garage Strategy Steering Group which is attended by council officers and tenant/resident representatives.

2.2 The Strategy aims to identify options to make better use of the garage sites, with the main objective of developing affordable housing. Secondary objectives are to determine which sites to invest in to provide rental income and to review garage rent levels and rental strategy. Consideration will also be given to alternative uses for garage sites that have neither development potential nor demand to be let as garages. We also seek to maximise usage of any garages we decide to retain, whether as garages or not, with a view to maximising income.

3. Background

3.1 At the moment, 426 of a total of 957 garages are let, generating income in the region of £330,500 per annum. We have 531 void garages of which only around a third are currently in lettable condition. The remaining garages are in need of either clearance or some level of repair before they can be let. This has led to problems with anti-social behaviour on garage sites, including fires being lit at Augustine Road and The Middle Way, and to a significant number of void garages having rubbish dumped in them. In addition some are boarded up or have had their doors removed to prevent anti-social behaviour.

3.2 Currently, the tenancy agreement states that garages must only be used to park vehicles. Garages are not allowed to be used for storage or commercial enterprises, although it is evident from viewing void garages that some garages are or have been used for storage purposes. From a Planning point of view, there may be conditions attached to the original planning approval for each individual estate that limits the use to which specific garage sites can be put. Depending on the wording of any condition, planning approval may be required for a change of use.

3.3 At the moment we do not have significant demand for garages. In total, 48 people are currently on the waiting list for specific garage sites but outstanding repairs or other clearance issues prevent the letting of their requested garage to them.

3.4 Resident Services are currently working up a clearance programme, to be completed by the end of March 2014, to enable additional garages to be let. Inspections are now underway to determine the extent of a clearance programme in order to assess costs of clearance by caretakers. Following clearance, garages will be fitted with new padlocks where necessary to prevent further fly tipping. Garages that are in good condition can be rented out again, or can be considered for future repair programmes. Some tenants have been issued with a Notice to Quit some time ago and have not presented themselves to claim the contents of the garages. Other Notices to Quit may need to be issued.

4. Progress of the Garage Strategy

4.1 Affordable housing development

4.1.1 Site visits to all garage sites, coupled with pre application advice from Planning, have identified garage blocks that could potentially be suitable for the development of affordable housing. Of these sites, the ones with the best potential (i.e. capable of delivering more than one unit and where no constraints to development have been visually identified) have been grouped into phase 1 of the development programme to deliver 50 units. (Note: some sites on vacant non garage sites on council estates are also included in the first development phase).

4.1.2 PRP Architects have now been engaged to carry out further feasibility studies on these infill garage sites to confirm which sites to take forward for financial feasibility appraisal and design options. To this end, site visits are currently being undertaken by the Architect and Project Manager (New Homes). Estate residents will then be consulted on the options for development.

Infill garage development sites – Phase 1 first 50 units

| Garage Nos. | Address | Estate name | Ward | Development stage |
|----------------------|---|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 12 - 17 | Allerford Court | Kingsfield | Headstone South | Feasibility |
| 1 - 22 | Buckingham Road | Berridge | Edgware | Feasibility |
| 1 - 11 | Grove Avenue | Grove | Pinner South | Feasibility |
| 1 - 10 | Binyon Crescent | Woodlands | Stanmore Park | Feasibility |
| 5 - 52 | Stuart Avenue | Eastcote Lane | Roxbourne | Feasibility |
| 1 - 4 | Stuart Avenue | Eastcote Lane | Roxbourne | Feasibility |
| 20 - 23 | The Heights | Northolt Park | Roxeth | Feasibility |
| 1 - 16 | Atherton Place garages | Harrow View | Headstone South | Feasibility |
| 1 - 23 | Chichester Court | Chichester Court | Queensbury | Feasibility |
| 1 - 14 DEMOLISHED | Chenduit Way | Cottesmore | Stanmore Park | Feasibility |
| 15 - 35 | Masefield Avenue Woodlands estate – possible replacement for Chenduit play area | Woodlands | Stanmore Park | Feasibility |
| 116 - 214 | Augustine Road | Headstone GLC | Hatch End | Feasibility |

The Mayor's Housing Covenant

4.1.3 Housing successfully secured £250,000 funding from the GLA under the Mayor's Housing Covenant – Homes for Working Londoners to contribute towards developing 10 x 3 bed low cost home ownership properties to be ring fenced for purchase by existing council tenants. The aim of this project is to enable existing tenants to move to home ownership, free up existing social properties for reallocation and to offer opportunities for the participating tenants to develop savings plans and contribute to the design and build process. These properties will be developed on the most appropriate sites in phase 1 of the programme.

4.1.4 In addition to the phase 1 garage infill sites, there are some council estates that have been identified as worthy of consideration for partial or full redevelopment to provide more or better quality homes. Initial resident consultation was carried out at the end of January 2014 to gather residents' views on their estate and what changes they would like to be made. The garage sites on these estates are listed below.

Garages sites included in potential estate regeneration

| Garage Nos. | Address | Estate name | Ward | Development Stage |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---|
| 114 - 123 | Howards Close | Pinner Hill | Pinner | Initial resident consultation carried out on a fact finding basis to gather residents' views about their estate and what changes they would like to see being made. |
| 102 - 113 | Deacons Close | Pinner Hill | Pinner | |
| 1 - 21 | Hazeldene Drive | Pinner Green | Pinner | |
| 16 - 26 | Brookside Close | Brookside Close | Roxbourne | Further consultation planned for March 2014 to feedback results of initial consultation and present options for the estates. |
| 1 - 6 | Grange Farm Close | Grange Farm | Harrow on the Hill | |
| 1 - 15 | Amy Johnson Court | Former Brent Houses | Edgware | |

4.1.5 Should estate redevelopment not be viable or necessary, all the above sites, with the exception of Grange Farm Close, are suitable for investigation as standalone infill sites

4.1.6 The list below details remaining garage sites that have been initially identified as having development potential, and which will be further investigated for phase 2 onwards of the infill site programme.

Remaining garage sites with development potential (to be taken forward in future development phases)

| Garage Nos. | Address | Estate name | Development stage |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| 6 - 10 | Antoneys Close | Antoneys Close | Sites identified No current action pending implementation of phase 1 |
| 11 - 16 | Antoneys Close | Antoneys Close | |
| 1 - 11 | Apsley Close | Kingsfield | |
| 1 - 14 | Bernays Close | Manor House | |
| 62 - 75 | Charles Crescent | Honeybun | |
| 53 - 61 | Charles Crescent | Honeybun | |
| 1 - 19 | Downing Close | Harrow View | |
| 1 - 4 | 339A/B/C Eastcote Lane | Eastcote Lane | |
| 2 - 17 | Eaton Close | Dennis Lane | |
| 11 - 1 2 | Ellement Close | Cannon Croft | |
| 1 - 10 | Ellement Close | Cannon Croft | |
| 30 - 83 | Hutton Lane | Headstone (ex GLC) | |
| 1 - 27 | Kenton Lane | Kenton Lane | |
| 1 - 6 | Latimer Close | Miscellaneous properties HRA | |
| 1 - 8 | Milman Close | Chigwellhurst | |
| tbc | Nelson Road | Glebe | |
| 1 - 16 | Pinewood Close | Oxhey Lane | |
| 1 - 13 | Sandymount Avenue | Canons Park | |
| 1 - 10 | Silverdale Close | Northolt Park | |
| 1 - 8 | Stonegrove Gardens | Stonegrove | |
| 9 - 27 | Westbere Drive | Edgware Golf Course | |
| 1 - 63 | Churchill Place (undercroft) | Churchill Place | |
| 1 - 32 | Northolt Road (garages under flats) | Northolt Road | |
| 1 - 7 | Marsh Road | Marsh Road | |

4.1.7 We will seek to provide suitable alternative garages where possible to decant those tenants of garages on sites we are intending to redevelop so as to maintain existing income levels,

4.2 Repairs

4.2.1 The Garage Strategy Steering Group identified a number of garage sites that are possible candidates for repair and letting, based on the following criteria:

- Sites with no development potential;
- Sites with voids which could attract additional income if repairs were to be carried out (i.e. repairs are not currently being considered for sites that are fully let already);
- Sites with a waiting list for letting, particularly where repairs issues are preventing letting;
- Sites where repair costs are likely to be reasonable and represent value for money.

- Any repairs to garages should pay back from additional income in years 1 – 5.

4.2.2 Waiting lists are normally only composed of 1 or 2 names per garage site but there are multiple void garages on some of the sites. The sites for potential repair have therefore been cross referenced against the following criteria to maximise letting potential following repair:

- Sites known to have been historically popular for letting;
- Sites where there is potential for demand for letting e.g. in areas where the streets are heavily parked, near stations, behind shops.

4.2.3 Of the identified garages, the Steering Group has chosen 4 sites to take forward for repair on a pilot basis in 2013/14:

Harrow View - behind shops

Overbrook Walk – residential area

Cowan Avenue – residential area but near to shops/businesses and South Harrow Station

Wood Close – residential area but heavily parked on estate roads

4.2.4. The companies carrying out the works are Slades and Wates. Costing reports have been received and the works total approximately £54,000 for the essential works required to bring these 42 garages up to lettable condition again. This is an average cost of £1,286 per garage. Assuming the 24 void garages on these sites were all let, this would bring in a further £18,720 income per annum, enabling payback of repair costs within 3 years. (Note: this does not include for the cost of clearance, which has yet to be established).

Once these garages have been cleared by Resident Services, the works should begin on 17th February and be completed by the end of March. Once tenanted, any further repairs would be dealt with under the responsive repairs budget.

4.2.5 These 4 pilot garage sites all have different locational characteristics and will serve as a pilot for assessing demand for garages in differing circumstances. They also differ in terms of Planning conditions attached to the original estate approval. Cowan Avenue will require Planning permission for any use other than parking. Harrow View, Wood Close and Overbrook Walk can be used for parking and domestic storage without needing Planning permission, but will need Planning permission for any form of commercial activity such as commercial storage (this is the case for all garages). Planning would not support a change of use to commercial activities for garages in residential areas, due to the impact on surrounding residents. (This may not be such a sensitive issue for use by the shop owners at Harrow View as this is in a commercial and residential area already).

4.2.6 Storage of flammable material in garages will always be contrary to the garage tenancy agreement. The liability of the council for storage of unauthorised flammable materials in garages remains a concern and is being investigated by Resident Services. No decision has yet been made as to storage use.

4.2.7 A number of factors affecting the repair and subsequent letting of garages have been identified and addressed:

- Size of garages (average 2.5m wide internally). Some garages are too small to accommodate large executive type cars, but can be used for smaller cars such as a Skodia Fabia, Toyota Yaris, Toyota Prius, Ford KA hatchback and so on. The ability use a garage to park a car will depend on the model and year of the car, the driving skill and the mobility of the driver. This confirms anecdotal evidence from residents of garages being used to park cars that are in regular use.
- A significant number of void garages have rubbish in them which would need to be cleared prior to repairs. A clearance programme is now being undertaken by Resident Services.
- Repaired garages would need to be properly marketed at an appropriate rent level and managed effectively. Resident Services are in dialogue with Communications to establish a marketing strategy for repaired and available garages and are in the process of reviewing rent levels and management arrangements, with the possibility of a differential rent policy being considered going forward, e.g. different rent levels for garages in particular locations or based on demand levels.
- Access to some garages is obstructed by cars being parked on the garage forecourt and in front of garage doors, effectively preventing letting. This is being investigated by Asset Management within the repairs programme as it is an issue at Harrow View garages, which are located behind shops.

4.2.8 Asset Management are preparing draft criteria for future repair programme decisions which will be discussed by the Steering Group in the light of the results of the pilot repair programme 2013/14.

4.3 Anti-social behaviour (ASB) – Augustine Way

4.3.1 Whilst a handful of garages have had incidents of anti-social behaviour in the past, the garages at Augustine Way and The Middle Way have suffered repeated ASB issues. Garages at The Middle Way have been gated and boarded off to prevent access to the garage site and are currently secure. However, there are 3 individual blocks of garages at Augustine Road which have suffered severe ASB in the past, leading to a number of garage doors being removed to prevent the garages being used as 'dens'. In addition the site backs immediately onto a railway line and so poses a health and safety risk. The condition of many of the garages does not merit repair and this will not resolve the ASB issue due to the location and characteristics of the site.

4.3.2 The first option for the Augustine Road garage sites is for the development of affordable housing and this is currently being investigated by the Architect and Project Manager (New Homes).

4.3.3. In order to address the ASB issues and the health and safety risk, Asset Management have confirmed that they are able to demolish some or all of the garages at Augustine Road. It is likely that up to 88 of the 97 garages

will require demolition as they are in the worst condition. The contract for demolition is currently out to tender on a provisional basis so that we can choose whether to implement it or not. The final cost will depend on the final decision as to which garages to demolish. However, the back wall of the garages forms a barrier to the railway line and there is no fencing behind the garages. Legal have advised against carrying out any demolition until Network Rail have fenced the boundary. If the council puts up a temporary fence, then it could assume a liability towards persons who penetrate the fence and are injured or killed on the railway (even though they would be trespassers). The risk would be reasonably foreseeable and therefore within the Council's duty of care. Network Rail has been contacted and has accepted responsibility for the fencing. They are currently surveying the site. Asset Management will co-ordinate with Network Rail to install the fence at the same time as potential demolition in early March.

4.3.4 Asset Management arranged a consultation event with residents at Augustine Road on 27 January 2014 to identify residents' views on the future use of the garage sites, should affordable housing not be a viable option. The majority of residents do want to see the garages removed. However they have multiple concerns about the site and how it will be used afterwards, including concerns over the lack of security and lighting in recent years, which has led to the garage areas and the alleyways behind gardens being used as rat runs and for drug dealing. The nearby garage site at Juxon Close has also been a target for ASB and suffers from fly-tipping. This site at Juxon Close has been identified as a decant site for tenants of the Augustine Road garages which will prevent loss of income if Augustine Road garages are demolished. It would be possible to add Juxon Close to a repairs scheme for early 2014/15, including the improvement of the local lighting and a barrier to prevent future fly tipping in the area.

4.3.5 Augustine Road residents have recently complained that the road is being used as free parking for commuters to Headstone Lane Station as the stairway at the end of the road leads directly to the station. This might tie in with potential parking provision on demolished garage sites. Use for resident parking would not require Planning permission but Planning permission would need to be obtained if the sites were to be used for commercial parking (Pay & Display) rather than just for residents. Resident Services are investigating the Pay & Display option.

4.4 Remaining garage sites

4.4.1 There are 20 individual garage blocks that have no development potential and are not included in the pilot repair programme. Some may be appropriate for inclusion in future repairs programmes, whilst others could be considered for alternative uses such as community facilities or resident parking. Alternative uses will be considered in April – June 2014 to enable decision making to take account of the results of the pilot repair programme, particularly in relation to demand for repaired garages. The tables below list these remaining garages sites.

| Garage numbers | Address | Comments |
|----------------|----------------|---|
| 1 - 4 | Arundel Court | Merit further investigation for repair once results of repairs pilot is known. Some low level demand on waiting list or historically relatively popular for letting. Juxon Close has potential for repair early 2014 - 15 to decant existing tenants if Augustine Road garages are demolished. Long Elmes garages are behind shops which may be a source of demand. |
| 1 - 8 | Pool Road | |
| 1 - 8 | Tintage Drive | |
| 100 - 115 | Juxon Close | |
| 1 - 5 | Tregenna Court | |
| 1 -29 | Long Elmes | |
| 1 - 4 | Claire Gardens | |
| 1 - 5 | Antoneys Close | |
| 1 -15 | Lloyd Court | |

| Garage numbers | Address | Comments |
|----------------|------------------------------------|--|
| 1 - 6 | Beatty Road | Consider for repair (NB no current demand on waiting list) Potential for alternative uses. Options to be considered April – June 2014 once pilot repair results are known. Feasible options to be taken forward June 2014 onwards |
| 84 - 97 | Boniface Gardens | |
| 1 - 4 | Greenford Road | |
| 1 -8 | Honister Place | |
| 1 - 8 | Kenilworth House | |
| tbc | Nelson Road | |
| 1 - 8 | Park Gates | |
| 1 - 8 | Paulhan Road | |
| 1 - 4 | Rainsford Close | |
| 1 - 4 | Westfield Lane | |
| 1 - 10 | The Middle Way (closed due to ASB) | |

4.4.2 There are several factors to consider regarding alternative uses for garage sites:

- Planning permission may be required for a change of use and there may be issues to overcome relating to the loss of the garages / parking provision if an alternative use was proposed;
- External funding (e.g. lottery funding) may be available to provide community facilities;
- Any alternative use, such as community gardens, should not attract or encourage ASB;

- Management and maintenance costs will need to be considered for alternative uses;
- In some heavily parked areas, garage sites could be demolished to provide extra parking areas, although the cost of demolition can be increased if there is asbestos on the site. Use for resident parking would not require Planning permission, but use for commercial parking (pay & display) would.
- Full consultation would be undertaken on proposed future use of garage sites so that estate tenants, leaseholders and residents are fully informed and can assist in the decision making process.

Section 3 – Further Information

A further report will be submitted for information in the first meeting of the next municipal year, once the result of the pilot repair programme has been established (estimated to be June 2014).

Section 4 – Financial Implications

A £60,000 capital budget is set aside in 2013/14 for investment in garages, of which £54,000 is estimated to be spent on getting the 4 pilot garage sites up to a lettable standard by March 2014. It is estimated that the cost of repairs will pay back from additional rental income within 3 years, assuming all 24 void garages are let following repair. Capital funding is also available from within existing resources for the demolition of garages at Augustine Road. The cost of garage clearance has yet to be confirmed but will be revenue funded.

The review of rent levels is not yet concluded, and further work is being undertaken to determine whether it may be appropriate to introduce a policy of differential rents, depending on location/demand to maximise income from lettable garages. It is intended, as far as possible, to decant existing tenants from garages which are due for demolition or redevelopment to avoid loss of rental income.

Section 5 - Equalities implications

The Garage Strategy is concerned with making the best use of Council assets and we have not identified a need to do an Equalities Impact Assessment at this stage, as we are not changing the service to garage tenants. However, this will be reviewed as the project progresses.

Section 6 –Priorities

The Garage Strategy incorporates the administration's priority to deliver a cleaner, safer and fairer Harrow in that it seeks to make better use of garage sites that are currently in disrepair and subject to fly tipping and anti-social behavior.

Name: Dave Roberts



on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 5 February 2014

Section 7 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Elaine Slowe, Enabling Manager, Partnership and Strategy Team
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Background Papers: None