

Draft

Garages Strategy 2015 – 2020

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Section 1 – Introduction

The Council is in the process of carrying out wide-ranging and comprehensive reviews of its garage parking sites and stock.

The aim of this strategy is to establish processes for the management of the garages stock to ensure it provides a valued and well-managed facility for local residents and contributes towards the long-term sustainability of the council's estates and neighbourhoods.

Strategic objectives:

To:

- Assess the viability of garage sites and stock through systematic 'healthcheck' reviews carried out on a periodic basis.
- Identify proposals for remodelling, redeveloping or decommissioning sites of low demand, poor design or poor condition where capital investment would not provide a long-term solution.
- Survey the views of local residents to identify local priorities and aspirations for garage sites as part of the healthcheck process.
- In decommissioning sites, to consider a range of alternative uses, with priority given to using redundant sites for the provision of new social housing.

Delivery:

1. Stock audit and analysis

- Carry out a complete audit of the council's garages and other parking stock to ensure accuracy of assets within the Capita Housing system.
- Carry out an annual review, or healthcheck, of all sites to create a management plan, to include:
 - retaining and maintaining sites in high demand
 - promoting sites showing weakening demand
 - a profit and loss analysis of expenditure versus income to evidence financial viability
- Assessing the impacts on local residents through environmental and anti-social behaviour activities.

2. Justifying reinvestment

In principle, decisions to redevelop and refurbish existing stock should be supported by evidence of demand giving confidence in the potential of a site to generate an income surplus within 20 years.

To include garages within the 2016 stock condition survey to provide robust stock condition data that will scope the funding required to return sites and garages to acceptable standards of repair.

3. Appraising non-viable sites

- Giving priority to the use of redundant sites for new social housing development to meet ever-increasing local housing need.
- Creating an income through sale/transfer of sites where the provision of new council housing is not a viable option
- Disposal of redundant sites to remove ongoing maintenance and management responsibilities where no other potential uses exist

Section 2 – Garage stock overview

SBC currently has 2235 garage and parking assets across 161 garage sites. These are split as follows:

By type

Garages	1939
Large Garages	43
Garage bases	177
Car Port spaces	40
Parking spaces (rentable)	33
Disabled parking spaces (free of charge)	3
* these are the first recorded spaces provided on the three recently redeveloped sites	
Total	2235

By ward

Ward	Garages	Large Garages	Garage Bases	Car Port spaces	Parking Spaces	Disabled Spaces	Total
Baylis & Stoke	25						25
Britwell & Northborough	375						375
Central	27	14			24	2	67
Chalvey	199		2	40			241
Cippenham Green	50		33		4		87
Cippenham Meadows	24		28				52
Elliman	116						116
Farnham	1	12					13
Foxborough	148		3				151
Haymill & Lynch Hill	220		1				221
Langley Kederminster	425		29				454
Langley St Mary's	164	17			5	1	187
Upton	22						22
Wexham Lea	143		81				224
Total	1939	43	177	40	33	3	2235

Rental agreements

Garages and other parking facilities are let on weekly licence agreements.

A review of the standard licence agreement was undertaken in January 2015 and a new, clearer licence was introduced from April 2015. There remains a significant number of garage agreements on previous versions of licence agreements.

It is proposed that in February to March 2016, an exercise is undertaken to terminate and reissue agreements using the new licence agreement to ensure all renters are covered by the same licence terms and conditions.

Rents and income

Parking facility rents are reviewed annually at the same time as rents for council dwellings.

Historically, garage rents have been increased in line with the average percentage increase for all council dwellings. This does not take into account whether or not the income generated from garages (proposed income before void loss allowances) is sufficient to cover the cost of garages activity.

Consideration must given to increasing rents at a higher rate should income fail to cover the day-to-day management and repair costs.

Costs incurred in redevelopment of specific sites should only be approved if there is clear evidence that the site involved is very likely to achieve an operating surplus within 20 years.

The current 2015/16 rent structure for parking facilities is shown below:

Type of facility	Council tenant		Private Tenant		
	Charge	Total	Charge	VAT	Total
Garage	8.96	8.96	10.30	2.06	12.36
Garage base	3.26	3.26	4.60	0.92	5.52
Car port	5.19	5.19	6.53	1.31	7.84
New garage types	12.28	12.28	13.81	2.76	16.57

Rent arrears

Garage rent arrears are monitored by the Rent Recovery team. Garages are split over four arrears officer patches, meaning that the arrears patches are not co-terminus with the Housing Officer patches.

Garage rent arrears at the end of the 2014/15 financial year were £16,840.22. Rent arrears as at week 13 (w/c 27th July 2015) were £12,433.30.

This reduction was achieved despite there being an increase in occupancy and the annual increase in weekly rental charges.

Section 3 – The Annual Healthcheck

To support this strategy, decisions made regarding the future of individual garage sites must be evidence-based and show some consistency of approach.

The challenges garage sites face centre primarily around demand and condition. The two are inextricably linked in that poorly maintained and managed sites will be unpopular; however, without demand, reinvestment will struggle to be justified.

To ensure the RAG ratings remain current, each site will be reviewed annually by the relevant neighbourhood team to revisit the RAG rating and to confirm it remains appropriate.

As part of the review, Housing Officers will check the following indicators:

For a period of two financial years:

- Average occupancy levels
- Out-turn income and void loss against projected income at 100% occupancy
- Repairs expenditure
- Fly-tipping and incidents of anti-social behaviour
- Numbers of offers refused and reason for refusal

A review of the garage allocation codes will be carried out to ensure demand can be monitored by ward as at present demand can only be measured by management area and these pre-date the amendment of ward boundaries in 2014.

It is not suitable to use prescriptive percentages or formulas for determining the outcome of reviews and whether sites should increase or decrease in the level of intervention. Sites vary in size, so the above indicators will help to evidence the sustainability of sites and contribute towards the decision making process.

Promotion of garages

With the finalising of the initial RAG rating review and identification of Red, Amber and Green sites, promotion of sites to be retained by the council will be possible.

Various methods of marketing will be used to publicise the location and availability of garage sites across the borough. These will include:

- Mail shots or promotion in local newsletters
- Advertising in local press
- Advertising on the Council's website
- Articles in Streets Ahead
- Leaflets in sign-up packs or inserts in other regular mailshot material

Section 4 – Remodelling, redevelopment, sale or re-use

Each garage site and parking facility has been subject to an initial review of suitability for potential use for developing new social housing. This analysis will be used as a starting point of a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status for each garage site.

The RAG ratings are listed according to the following criteria:

- Red**
- A site with no development or other re-use potential as a result of its size, location or inability to meet current planning regulations.
 - A site that remains popular with evidenced demand, and where the removal of the site would exacerbate parking congestion in the local area or removed a valuable community resource.
- Amber**
- A site with development potential but with the need to resolve access, right of way/easement or previous garage sales issues.
 - A site with medium/long term development potential but current with acceptable levels of occupancy and/or with minimal intermittent demand. Additionally, where expenditure required to bring the assets back to a satisfactory condition would not be financially viable.
- Green**
- A site with immediate or short-term development potential with acceptable size, location and ability to meet planning regulations for new social housing.
 - As above, but with additional evidence of low/no demand and where the decommissioning and redevelopment of a site would remove an anti-social behaviour/enviro-crime hotspot affecting the local community.

Sites for new social housing

Sites that have been assessed as potentially suitable for new social housing will continue to be let pending a further feasibility study of the site for new housing. These will initially be flagged as 'Green' sites. The Housing Development team will undertake all feasibility assessments.

This will include holding informal discussions with Planning to ascertain the likelihood of planning approval for each site leading to a fully developed proposal by the Housing Supply team.

Sites that have potential but with initial obstacles to overcome, e.g.: existing wayleaves and rights of way; electricity substations; or developable if other neighbouring land was included, would be marked as 'Amber' sites and any barriers to development must be resolved satisfactorily by Housing Development in conjunction with Asset Management before a site can move to 'Green'.

Red sites will be the remaining sites that have been assessed and have either no development possibility or are valuable parking sites that should be retained.

In the event of a red site being identified that warrants decommissioning, there are a number of options that will be considered in the following priority order:

- Re-use of site for another community project or space. Remodelling or environmental improvement for the site as an important community resource for the benefit of local residents.
- Sale of the site to a third party subject to covenants upon the sale to prevent future unsatisfactory use of the site, which would no longer be under the council's primary control.
- Subsuming of garage sites into surrounding gardens by extending fence lines and boundaries and transferring ownership of the land. For non-council tenants, this would potentially be transferred for a fee.

Sales

Historically, there have been individual garage sales to residents across the Borough. Sales to individuals will only be considered where a site has no long term development potential to the council and is likely to be retained.

Each site being considered for sale is individually valued by Asset Management, who handle the negotiations and legal aspects of the sale on behalf of Neighbourhood Services.

Redevelopment – completed sites

Three sites have undergone significant demolition and redevelopment in the 2014/15 financial year:

Winvale (Chalvey Ward)

- Demolition of 28 single garages and the construction of 14 low maintenance, double-width garages for rent
- 24 lined and numbered parking spaces for rent
- 3 free to use disabled parking spaces
- Resurfaced compound
- Improved compound lighting
- Galvanised security fencing with electronically controlled pedestrian and vehicle access gates

Franklin Avenue (Farnham Ward)

- Demolition of 24 single garages and the construction of 12 low-maintenance, double width garages for rent
- Bollard controlled vehicle access to compound

Maryside (Langley - St Mary's Ward)

- Demolition of 35 single garages and the construction of 17 low-maintenance, double width garages for rent
- 5 lined and numbered parking spaces for rent
- 1 free to use disabled parking space
- Resurfaced compound

Redevelopment – proposed sites

Coniston Crescent (Haymill & Lynch Hill Ward)

- Demolition of 48 single garages
- Split of 1600m² site into two halves: half for provision of new parking facilities, half for new social housing
- Provision of 8/9 new low-maintenance, wide garages for rent.
- 18 free to use lined parking spaces
- 3 free to use disabled parking spaces
- Resurfaced compound
- Improved compound lighting

Eden Close (Foxborough Ward)

- Demolition of 12 single garages
- Provision of lined free to use parking spaces
- Installation of lighting columns

Section 5 – Resident involvement

The Residents Board will be consulted on the level of performance information they wish to receive on garage activity.

Local residents, not just council-tenants, who are affected by the potential redevelopment of a scheme (limited to refurbishment and retaining garages and alternative use) will be consulted by means of a consultation survey.

Schemes that are being considered for new social housing development will undergo the normal public consultation processes attached to a Planning Application. The severe need for new social housing across the borough will primarily outweigh any objections to the re-use of a garage site as the value of the site to the local community will already have been considered.