

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel

**DATE:** 7<sup>th</sup> September 2017

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I** **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

#### **NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES GARAGE LICENCES & REVIEW OF GARAGE SITES**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

This report updates the Panel about a range of garage issues which were requested at the Panel meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016:

- Confirmation of any licensee details passed to the National Fraud Initiative
- Review of the future of individual garage sites
- Management of community based parking schemes on Housing land

##### **2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

- a) That the Panel notes the contents of the report.
- b) That the Panel endorses the proposed programme of redevelopment and refurbishment of all council owned garage sites.
- c) That the Panel endorses the work to introduce controlled parking schemes on Housing land.

##### **3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

Good quality homes and a well managed environment are integral to supporting the wellbeing of Slough residents. Carrying out a comprehensive review of garage sites to ensure we have identified all possible sites for developing more social housing and other ways to ease housing pressure in the borough supports the delivery of the Joint Wellbeing Strategy, JSNA and Five Year Plan (outcome 4). In addition, the effective management of garage sites that aren't suitable for development help promote Slough as an attractive place (Five Year Plan outcome 3).

### **3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

#### *Priority 4: Housing*

Reviewing every garage site has allowed us to identify additional small sites that are suitable for new accommodation. Ensuring garages are well managed and well used increases the income received which can be used for the benefit of tenants.

### **3b. Five Year Plan Outcomes**

*Outcome 3: Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and visit*

Well managed garages which are not in a state of disrepair increase the attractiveness of the environment, reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour and encourage people to choose to use this valuable community resource.

Creating well designed parking facilities in communities will also improve the environment for our residents. Currently some areas in the borough suffer significant parking pressures and there are a number of opportunities to change underused garage locations to parking facilities.

*Outcome 4: Our residents will have access to good quality homes*

A site by site review of each garage location has enabled us to identify locations where new small-scale housing developments could take place and where it may be possible to use innovative measures to ease pressure on the provision of temporary housing.

## **4. Other Implications**

### **(a) Financial**

A key feature of the appraisal and consultation carried out about the future of each garage site will be the impact on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Current income from rented units is approximately £463,300 pa. The void garage units could generate a further £590,720 pa (approximately) but this is not achievable due to the condition and unpopularity of most of the void units. The overarching financial objective of this exercise is to identify the true potential income and remove liabilities so robust financial projections can be provided for the 30 year HRA Business Plan.

Initial costs for each site will include any legal costs to regularise or cancel rights of way that currently exist across the site.

### **(b) Risk Management**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
2a) That the Panel notes the contents of the report.	None	NA
2b) That the Panel	Poor level of information	Each site has been visited &

endorses the programme of redevelopment and refurbishment of all council owned garage sites.	about each garage site, including current condition & demand.	assessed by Neighbourhood Services and Savills. The waiting list has been refreshed and is now actively managed.
	Proposals for changes to individual sites would have an impact on other service areas such as Parking, Green Spaces etc.	Neighbourhood Managers will consult with internal stakeholders on plans for every garage site.  Ward councillors and local residents are engaged in consultation about site proposals.
2c) That the Panel endorses the work to introduce controlled parking schemes on Housing land	Proposals for changes to individual sites would have an impact on other service areas such as Parking, Green Spaces etc.	Neighbourhood Managers to consult with internal stakeholders on plans for every garage site.  Ward councillors and local residents are engaged in consultation about site proposals.
HRA Business Plan projected income from garage revenue is adjusted to reflect true operational context	The continuation of inaccurate projection of expected garage revenue adversely impacts upon long term HRA business planning	The identification of true demand and supply and subsequent rationalisation of garage stock to a sustainable level offers true income projection.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

No Human Rights Act implications identified. Project plans for each garage site will identify legal issues such as existing rights of way and any licences or easements that have been granted over the land in question. The implications of these on any site development will be included in the final individual site appraisal.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

Equalities Impact Assessments will be carried out for each garage site proposal.

(e) Workforce Implications

None identified

## **5. Supporting Information**

### **National Fraud Initiative**

- 5.1 The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) matches electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud. These bodies include police authorities, local probation boards, fire and rescue authorities as well as local councils and a number of private sector bodies.
- 5.2 None of the information received from people currently renting a garage from us, or who have applied to go on the waiting list has required any information being sent to the National Fraud Initiative by Neighbourhood Services.
- 5.3 During the process of site investigations there have been a small number of units identified as being used to store stolen goods, as sites for other criminal behaviour or ASB (e.g. prostitution or rough sleeping). Neighbourhood Services work with Thames Valley Police and the council's corporate Fraud Team to gather evidence, investigate and prosecute as necessary. If appropriate, Corporate Fraud team share details with NFI.

### **Review of individual garage sites**

- 5.4 Each garage site not already in the Development Team's "Small Sites Programme" (for new social housing) has been audited by Neighbourhood Services officers and evaluated to identify if the units are fit for purpose, the level of sustainable demand and costs of managing each site. In addition, Savills have more recently carried out a supporting review of each site. The overarching conclusion reached by these reviews is that very few sites were popular and fit for purpose. The overwhelming majority of sites had one or more of the following problems:
- There is no demand for a particular location, and/or
  - The garages are in a very poor state of repair and/or
  - The garages are too small to fit a standard sized car and so are not fit for purpose and/or
  - The garage sites are in a run-down condition, are insecure and attract ASB.
- 5.5 The audit exercise has also identified a high number of garage sites where agreements are in place to allow people living adjacent to the garages access over forecourts. Some of these agreements are formal (i.e. licences or easements) and some are informal custom-and-practice. These agreements need regularising to ensure the correct level of income is achieved to support the on-going garage management costs. There will be a financial cost (legal costs and staff time) to completing this step in the process of redeveloping or retaining each site. In addition, depending on how complex this work is, this step may impact on the implementation of final agreed plans.
- 5.6 Our starting point is that "doing nothing" with any of the sites is not possible or desirable. Our overall objective is to bring these sites up to a standard where they are community assets, not community liabilities. All sites, therefore, have been considered against 6 future options:

1. Retain and invest in the garage site: As a minimum the garage site will be tidied, new clear numbering will be implemented and vacant garages emptied and cleared. However, this option could also include demolition of existing small garages and re-building of new large garages. These refurbished sites will be subject to a new marketing and communication campaign to increase occupancy rates.

We have obtained high level cost estimates for replacing doors and roofs which equates to approximately £5,150 plus VAT per unit. It should be noted that this figure should be used for guidance purposes only, and it is expected that costs will vary from site to site depending on the existing condition and nature of garage units.

Of 155 total garage sites it is proposed that 53 currently fall into this category.

2. Demolish existing garages and create new parking areas on site:

Negotiations have begun with the Parking Team to include any new parking areas in the upcoming Parking Enforcement contract to ensure that these areas are managed efficiently and effectively. Any final decision to create new parking areas will be taken in conjunction with internal stakeholders (including the Parking Team, but other relevant teams such as Parks, Open Spaces & Allotments) and following consultation with ward councillors and local residents.

We have obtained indicative costings that suggest that an appropriate range for demolishing existing garages and creating new parking spaces is £3,500 to £4,500 plus VAT per unit. It should be noted that this indicative range assumes each garage unit would be apportioned part of the cost for wider site surfacing. Therefore, overall costs per unit will vary from site to site, depending on the size of the garage forecourt area. This range should be used for guidance purposes only.

Of 155 total garage sites it is proposed that 48 currently fall into this category.

3. Demolish existing garages and use site for residential accommodation:

All sites have been categorised as red, amber or green in relation to whether any accommodation developments are possible (red showing where no development is possible, amber where development may be possible and green where development will be pursued). All sites that were initially rated as "green" in 2015 have been passed to the Strategic Housing Development Team to manage.

In 2016 all red and amber sites were reviewed by Neighbourhood Services and a small number of additional sites with development potential were identified. In 2017 Savills were commissioned by Neighbourhood Services to carry out a desk top review of all red and amber sites and a final list of sites where new accommodation could be considered has been developed.

The initial red, amber green development potential review (in 2015) identified 16 green sites that were suitable for development. The more recent review identified a further 34 development sites that together could provide an additional 100 – 110 residential units.

Of 155 total garage sites it is proposed that 44 currently fall into this category.

4. Demolish existing garages and use site for alternative use: Sites that could support new community facilities. In some cases this could be workshops to support local business and employment opportunities, in others it could be dedicated storage units. Some of the sites in this category do not have a single preferred option at this stage and further detailed consideration of the possible options is being undertaken.

Of 155 total garage sites it is proposed that 5 currently fall into this category.

5. Demolish existing garages and landscape site: Some sites are poorly used but form a natural link to existing open spaces. In these cases the sites will be used to enhance the existing green space provision. Development of these sites will be in partnership with Adult Social Care, Slough Council for Voluntary Service and other community groups.

Of 155 total garage sites it is proposed that 2 currently fall into this category.

6. Dispose of sites via private sale: Some very small sites with no other potential use will be offered for private sale. If these sites are not sold they will be refurbished as per option 1.

Of 155 total garage sites it is proposed that 3 currently fall into this category.

- 5.7 Proposals for each site against each option are included in Appendix A to this report. Sites are now being appraised in more detail and further consultation with ward councillors, residents and stakeholders will take place before final plans and detailed delivery programmes are agreed.
- 5.8 A summary of the current position in relation to garages per Neighbourhood is below:

	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total number of garage sites</b>	59	28	68	155
<b>Total number of garage units/bases</b>	521	395	996	1,912
<b>% occupied (n)</b>	47% (245)	42.5% (168)	37.6% (375)	41% (788)
<b>Proposed number of sites remaining as garages</b>	18	7	28	53
<b>Proposed number of garage units/bases remaining</b>	91	102	321	531
<b>Proposed number of new parking areas created</b>	20	10	19	49
<b>Proposed number of new accommodation sites</b>	16	7	21	44
<b>Proposed number of alternative use sites</b>	4	1	0	5
<b>Proposed number of landscape sites</b>	0	1	1	2
<b>Proposed number of garages offered for private sale</b>	1	2	0	3

5.9 A summary of the current demand by ward and Neighbourhood:

	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>East</b>
Haymill & Lynch Hill	16		
Britwell & Northborough	30		
Farnham	8		
Baylis & Stoke	7		
	<b>60</b>		
Cippenham Meadows		13	
Cippenham Green		10	
Chalvey		16	
Upton		25	
Central		25	
		<b>89</b>	
Wexham Lea			20
Elliman			3
Langley St Marys			31
Langley Kedderminster			32
Foxborough			5
			<b>91</b>

*Total waiting 120*

- 5.10 Most applicants have expressed a preference for at least 2 areas. All have confirmed within the last 12 months that they still want a garage in their preferred areas.
- 5.11 Work to most of the garage sites will be started within the first 12 months of the new RMI (Repairs, Maintenance and Investment) contract, which goes live from December 2017 with Osborne (new service partner). Within this general timescale we will prioritise work to sites which provide the best return on investment and/or will provide the greatest community asset.
- 5.12 Those sites that require basic refurbishment will be completed under the RMI program of works which will begin in December 2017.
- 5.13 Consultation with residents and members for final appraisal for future use and implementation of proposals for all sites will be completed between October 2017 and March 2018. Phased evaluation of appraisals will be undertaken to enable commencement of works in December 2017 and be scheduled in accordance with the option identified and level of resident & member engagement required to ensure a community based approach and coordination with the Councils forthcoming review of the Parking Strategy.
- Management of community based parking schemes on Housing land**
- 5.14 Discussions between Parking Services and Neighbourhood Services to improve the day-to-day management (including enforcement) of parking areas on

Housing land have already begun. These discussions have included the management of areas of land owned by Housing but not formally adopted as parking areas (however, residents do park their cars in these locations).

- 5.15 Wherever possible we have taken the view that residents are able to self manage parking areas. However, over the past 2 years it has become apparent through concerns raised directly by residents in addition to councillor casework that parking around our housing areas is becoming problematic and requires active management.
- 5.16 In terms of parking enforcement, land owned by Housing is categorised as private land. Management of this private land has been included in the tender documents issued by Parking Services to commission a new borough-wide parking enforcement contract to go-live in April 2018. From April 2018 final scheme design and formal consultations will take place. All costs for the introduction of these schemes on Housing land will be borne by the HRA. Updates about the new parking enforcement contract will be considered by Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel and Overview and Scrutiny Panel as appropriate.
- 5.17 Over the next 6 months appraisals of parking areas will continue between Neighbourhood Services, Parking Services and other internal and external stakeholders (including ward councillors and residents) to identify those areas which will require active management by the new contractor. The areas being considered will include:
  - Existing parking areas on Housing land
  - Informal/un-adopted parking locations on Housing land
  - Newly created parking areas (as a result of demolition of current garage sites)
  - Areas under the management of Parking Services which are close to Housing land and have an impact on the control and availability of parking on Housing areas.

Ward councillors will be regularly updated by Neighbourhood Services on the implementation of agreed management programme for each site.

## **6. Comments of Other Committees**

This report is not required by other committees.

## **7. Conclusion**

The council owned garage sites across the borough have been subject to audit and assessment in order to identify the most appropriate option for their use in the future.

Members, together with other community stakeholders and Osborne (RMI service partner) will be involved in developing detailed briefs for each site so implementation and delivery of the agreed future options can be the focus of the first 2 years of the new RMI contract.

8. **Appendices attached**

'A' – Review of Garage Sites

9. **Background Papers**

Garage Strategy 2015 - 2020