

Runnymede Borough Council Garage Strategy

Synopsis of report:

The Housing Business Centre Plan 2022/23 commits the service to developing a Garage Strategy

The draft strategy was discussed at the Housing Member Working Party meeting in February 2022 and presented to the Housing Committee in June.

The consultation results are included in appendix A.

The results of the appraisals of the initial sites in appendix B.

Recommendation(s):

- I. Housing Committee members note the consultation results and the outcome of the appraisal of the 14 lowest demand garage sites**
- II. Housing Committee members approve the Runnymede Garage Strategy**

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 The Housing Business Centre Plan 2022/23 commits the service to establishing a Garage Strategy.
- 1.2 The draft strategy has been discussed at the Housing Member Working Party in February 2022. The draft strategy was also presented to the June 2022 Housing Committee meeting where agreement was given to consult on the content of the strategy and undertake an initial appraisal of the first fourteen lowest demand sites.

2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended

- 2.1 Appendix A summarises the results of the public consultation exercise. Consultation took place from 1st September to 27th October and generated 31 individual pieces of feedback. These included concerns over: -
 - The need for increased security at garage sites
 - The lack of alternative parking
 - The lack of alternative storage facilities available
 - Concern around the garage tenancy agreement and the clause on storage
 - Concerns over safety and anti-social behaviour in car parks
 - The need for any redevelopment that would meet existing needs, such as storage units and parking.
- 2.2 Appendix B summarises the results of the appraisal of the 14 initial sites. These sites are in a poor condition with low levels of demand.
- 2.3 The sites at Fernlands Close and Little Green Road are in a very poor condition.

- 2.4 Other sites at Franklands Drive, Broomfield Road, Coopers Close, Field View, Frithwald Road, Kings Road, South Grove are of non-traditional build.
- 2.5 Some sites may have development potential, although this would need exploring further and legal due diligence. Furthermore, financial feasibility will need to be undertaken to ascertain viability.
- 2.6 A business case proposing a future direction for the remaining sites will be brought to Housing Committee/Corporate Management Committee shortly.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The Garage Allocation Policy is due for review – this will be taken to Housing Committee shortly.
- 3.2 The Housing Business Centre Plan 2022/23 commits the service to developing a Garage Strategy

4. Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 There are no resource implications through approval of the Runnymede Garage Strategy.
- 4.2 There may be resource implications as the future of each garage site is appraised and a strategy for each site is devised.
- 4.3 The current condition of the garages is of concern particularly with regard to their age, obsolescence and the possibility of them having harmful materials. The cost of maintaining and upkeeping these garages may well exceed any potential revenue received.
- 4.4 Whilst the garage land sits within the HRA, the rents that are received for the garages come into the General Fund. Any development proposals would have to account for the loss of revenue to the Fund but also reflect if potential development or other uses are financially viable

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Under the provisions of section 12 Housing Act 1985 a local housing authority may provide and maintain in connection with housing accommodation provided by them (a) buildings adapted for use as shops, (b) recreation grounds, and (c) other buildings or land which will serve a beneficial purpose in connection with the requirements of the persons for whom the housing accommodation is provided.
- 5.2 The provision of garages by the Council is permitted under category (c) mentioned above. The rise in car ownership historically meant that there was a need to meet the needs of persons in housing accommodation who owned cars. The construction of garage sites arose to address situations where residents were unable for practical reasons to park their cars by their properties or the design of estates meant that it was desirable to avoid motor vehicles being parked on streets.
- 5.3 Clearly the provision of garages carries with it an ongoing financial exposure and it is only prudent, in respect of the ongoing management of any asset, that a periodic review is undertaken of the asset and a strategy for the management of the asset is developed.

6. **Equality implications**

- 6.1 Reviewing the use of Council owned garage sites has no equality implications

7. **Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

- 7.1 A number of the garage sites are under-utilised spaces.
- 7.2 These areas are not designed to encourage biodiversity and could be designed in a better way to promote biodiversity

8. **Other implications (where applicable)**

- 8.1 The consultation undertaken with residents on this strategy was undertaken in line with the Council's Consultation Strategy principles.
- A. Consultations should have a clear purpose and start at an appropriate stage
 - B. Consultations should take account of the groups being consulted
 - C. Consultations should be clear and concise
 - D. Consultations should last for a proportionate amount of time
 - E. Responses to consultations should be published in a timely fashion and facilitate scrutiny

- 8.2 Consultation commenced on 1st September 2022 and ended on 27th October 2022

9. **Timetable for Implementation**

- 9.1 This strategy will be implemented immediately following Housing Committee approval.
- 9.2 An annual update on the delivery of the actions contained within the strategy will be reported to November Housing Committee.

10. **Conclusions**

- 10.1 Residents understand the reason why Runnymede Borough Council are developing a garage strategy.
- 10.2 Residents have articulated some issues for the authority to consider when implementing the strategy
- 10.3 The Housing Service following the consultation are not proposing any changes to the draft Garage Strategy as presented to Housing Committee in June 2022 (appendix C). Approval is being sought for the strategy in its June 2022 form.

(To resolve)

Background papers

None