

Report of Chief Officer Property and Contracts

Report to Director of Resources and Housing

Date: 20th July 2017

Subject: Request to demolish 18 garages at Birch Drive, Kippax Leeds, LS25 7DX (G1-6 and G13 to 24) and declare land surplus to departmental requirements

Are specific electoral wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of ward(s): Kippax and Methley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. Birch Drive garage site consists of 18 permanent Council owned garages. 10 are currently empty and 8 tenanted.
2. The garages are in poor condition and would require significant investment to renovate with no potential of increased demand. Demand for Council garages has been decreasing over the last 10 years in many areas and there are costs to the council associated with keeping the empty garages secure.
3. The site potentially offers opportunity for housing development which is currently being investigated by the Council's Housing Growth Team. Any proposals would be subject to planning permission and further consultation in the area.
4. A delegated decision is required to suspend letting of the garages, remove from charge and demolish the permanent garages on this site and declare this site surplus to operational requirements.

Recommendations

1. The Director of Resources and Housing is requested to approve the suspension of lettings, removal from charge and full demolition of garages including removal of abandoned contents and general debris at G1 to G6 and G13 to 24 Birch Drive, Kippax. The Director is also asked to declare the site surplus to departmental

requirements and for the site to be taken forward by City Development for new affordable housing development.

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Director of Resources and Housing to suspend lettings, remove from charge and demolish garages including abandoned contents at Birch Drive (G1-6 and G13 to G24). The site to be then declared surplus to departmental requirements and for City Development Housing Growth Team to consider for redevelopment.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The garage site at Birch Drive is located between 40 and 42 Birch Drive. Appendix 1 shows the location.
- 2.2 The ten void garages have been empty for several years with the last becoming void in 2012. There has been no interest in renting these garages for over five years. Only one tenancy changed in the last five years.
- 2.3 The garages would require significant investment to bring them up to a reasonable standard. The site has suffered from vandalism and anti-social behaviour with ongoing associated costs for securing the empty garages.
- 2.4 The Housing Growth Team has indicated the site could have potential for new development and this is currently being investigated.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 There are 8 out of the 18 garages which are currently in use. To mitigate the loss of garages at this location tenants could be offered garages on a nearby site which would help to consolidate tenancies in that area.
- 3.2 Approval for demolition of the garages is being sought regardless of whether the Housing Growth Team is able to progress the site for development purposes. The garage site is in decline and would require significant investment to bring the structures up to a standard that would potentially encourage interest in renting them. Housing Management has no waiting list for this location. There are only two people on the garage waiting list who have specified Kippax as their area of choice and these have not chosen Birch Drive as a preference. Given existing patterns of low demand there is no guarantee that investing in renovating the garages would generate increased interest and therefore it is not considered to be spending money wisely by investing in this site.
- 3.3 The garages form part of the boundary to the garden of number 40 Birch Drive. On demolition and removal of the garages a new section of perimeter fence will be provided at this location to enable the defined boundary to be reinstated.

4 Corporate considerations

- 4.1 **Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 Ward members have been consulted by the local Housing Office on 6th June 2017. This was an e-mail which was sent informing them of potential plans, inviting them to make comment and the letter to tenants and residents was also included. Cllr Lewis has expressed his support for the recommendation to demolish the garages.
- 4.1.2 An initial consultation has been carried out with over 30 local residents and people who are currently renting one of the garages on 6th June 2017. There have been four responses, three of which are for demolition and one against. The one who is against the demolition is due to them currently renting a garage at this location. An offer will be made for them to rent an alternative garage nearby if this report is approved. Concern was expressed by one resident about redevelopment of the site for new homes and impact on their privacy. Issues such as this should be considered as part of the planning process if the site is taken forward for development and residents would be invited to comment on the planning application as and when that stage is reached.
- 4.1.3 The recommendation to carry out demolition and declare the site surplus to departmental requirements was supported by the Chief Officer of Property and Contracts and Chief Officer of Housing Management at the Housing Delegated Decision Panel held today, 20th July 2019.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 The tenants of the eight rented garages will be offered tenancies on a neighbouring garage site.
- 4.2.2 There is a wider impact on the community in terms the possibility of being able to use the site for the development.
- 4.2.3 An equality, diversity, cohesion and integration screening assessment has been completed, see Appendix 2.

4.3 Council policies and best council plan

- 4.3.1 Potential residential redevelopment of this site contributes to the Best Council Plan 2017/18 Outcomes of living in good quality affordable homes within clean and well cared for places. It contributes to the Council Priorities of meeting housing needs and new affordable housing is an integral part of the Housing Growth and High Standards in all Sectors breakthrough project.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The majority of the garages have been empty for some time and demand for garages at this location has been in decline for over five years. There are costs associated with keeping the empty garages secure and loss of rental income.
- 4.4.2 Demolition of the garages will remove the maintenance responsibility for the garages.
- 4.4.3 The demolition and clearance of the garages will be carried out by the Council's internal service provider (Leeds Building Services). The demolition costs will be

met by the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2017/18. The estimated cost for demolition (including removal of all structures, rubbish, and asbestos and the erecting of boundary fencing) is approximately £34,270.

- 4.4.4 The garages are currently earning a rental income of £5000 per annum minus any repairs and maintenance. However, because there is no evidence of new interest in the site and has not been for over five years this yearly income is predicted to decline as tenants cease to rent the garages. Investment in improving the site would cost in the region of £35-£40k which would take over eight years to achieve payback taking into consideration maintenance charges and current level of renting. Investment on this scale does not present value for money given the evidence of decline in any interest in the site.

4.5 Legal Implications, access to information and call In

- 4.5.1 The report does not contain any exempt or confidential information
- 4.5.2 City Development to agree terms of the disposal of the site.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 It is noted that there is some concern from local residents about redevelopment of the site. This will need to be considered as part of the planning process if the site is suitable for new houses.
- 4.6.2 The condition of the garages is in deterioration due some vandalism and the site periodically attracts anti-social behaviour.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The garages at Birch Drive are in a poor state of repair and unpopular with demand decreasing over the last 5 years. There are currently 10 empty and 8 occupied.
- 5.2 Demolition of the garages and clearance of the site will remove a blight from the local area and redevelopment of this location for affordable housing supports the Best Council plan outcomes and priorities.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Director of Resources and Housing is requested to approve the suspension of lettings, removal from charge and full demolition of garages including removal of abandoned contents and general debris at G1 to 6 and G13 to 24 Birch Drive, Kippax. The Director is also asked to declare the site surplus to departmental requirements and for the site to be taken forward by City Development for new affordable housing development.

7 Background documents¹

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – location plan
- 7.2 Equality Impact Assessment Form