

Report of Chief Officer Property and Contracts

Report to Director of Resources and Housing

Date: 20th September 2017

Subject: Request to demolish 32 Council garages at Parkwood Close (G1-32), Beeston, Leeds 11, and declare land surplus to departmental requirements

Are specific electoral wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of ward(s): Beeston and Holbeck	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input 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. Parkwood Close garage site consists of 32 permanent Council owned garages. 30 are currently empty and 2 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. There have been reports that the garage site is attracting anti-social behaviour and there is visible evidence of a serious fly tipping issue. Ward Members in the area are aware of these issues and are keen to see the garages demolished
4. The site potentially offers opportunity for housing development which is currently being investigated by the Council's Housing Growth Team. Unity Housing Association have built a number of houses within the previous two years and are currently looking into utilising this site for development subject to investigation into a retaining wall. Any proposals would be subject to planning permission and further consultation in the area.
5. 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 G1-32 Parkwood Close, Beeston, Leeds 11. 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 the 32 garages including abandoned contents at Parkwood Close. 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 is located at Parkwood Close in Beeston. Appendix 1 shows the location.
- 2.2 The majority of the 32 garages have been empty since 1985 with only a small number becoming void in more recent years. There has been no interest in renting these garages for almost 10 years. The two tenanted garages have been tenanted since 2007 and 2008.
- 2.3 The garages would require significant investment to bring them up to a reasonable standard. The site has suffered from vandalism, anti-social behaviour and serious fly tipping. All but seven of the garages have been blocked up with breeze blocks although there is evidence that some breeze blocks have been removed to dump rubbish inside the garage structures.
- 2.4 The Housing Growth Team has indicated the site may have potential for new development and this is currently being investigated.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 There are 2 out of the 32 garages which are currently in use. To mitigate the loss of garages at this location tenants could be offered garages on another site in the Beeston area 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 major 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. 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 a retaining wall which appears to support the footpath which provides access to the back gardens of 108-128 Parkwood Road. A

structural assessment has taken place and findings have confirmed that the garages can be demolished without damaging the retaining wall or footpath.

4 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Ward members have been consulted on 6th September 2017 and have visited the site personally. Councillor Ogilvie has expressed concerns about the safety and condition of the site and would like the garages to be demolished as a matter of urgency to help reduce the anti-social behaviour and serious fly tipping.
- 4.1.2 An initial consultation has been carried out with over 20 local residents and people who are currently renting one of the garages on 6th September 2017. There was no response to this consultation apart from one garage tenant who supports the decision to demolish the garages
- 4.1.3 The proposal has been discussed at Housing Leeds Delegated Decision Panel on 20th September 2017. The Chief Officer of Property and Contracts and Chief Officer of Housing Management are both in support of the recommendation to carry out demolition and declare the site surplus to departmental requirements with a view to the site being used for new housing development if possible.

4.1.4 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.1.1 The tenants of the two rented garages will be offered tenancies on a garage site within the Beeston area.
- 4.1.2 There is a wider impact on the community in terms the possibility of being able to use the site for the development.
- 4.1.3 An equality, diversity, cohesion and integration screening assessment has been completed, see Appendix 2.

4.2 Council policies and best council plan

- 4.2.1 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.

4.3 Resources and value for money

- 4.3.1 The majority of the garages have been empty since 1985 and demand for garages at this location has been in decline for over 10 years. There are costs associated with keeping the empty garages secure and frequent removal of fly tipping along with the loss of rental income.
- 4.3.2 Demolition of the garages will remove the maintenance responsibility for the garages and costs associated with fly tipping removal.

- 4.3.3 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 £43,968.
- 4.3.4 The garages are currently earning a rental income of £847.60 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 10 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 £91k which would take over ten years to achieve payback if all the garages were rented. Investment on this scale does not present value for money given the evidence of decline in any interest in the site.

4.4 Legal Implications, access to information and call In

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

4.5 Risk management

- 4.5.1 There is no concern at this stage from residents about the demolition or future uses of the site
- 4.5.2 The condition of the garages is in deterioration due some vandalism and the site periodically attracts anti-social behaviour and serious fly tipping.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The garages at Parkwood Close are in a poor state of repair and unpopular with demand decreasing over the last 10 years. There are currently 30 empty and 2 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 G1-32 Parkwood Close, Beeston, Leeds 11. 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

7.1 Appendix 1 – location plan

7.2 Appendix 2 – Appendix 2 – Equality Diversity Cohesion and Integration Screening Form