

SMALL SITES, GARAGES AND DISPOSALS UPDATE

Summary

This is an update on the 2015 Committee decision to rationalise the council's garages and small sites. The priorities are to identify developable sites, sell surplus garages and land and raise capital receipts to support the council's New Homes and Regeneration Programme. Disposals are by auction give the widest opportunity to buyers. Ward Councillors, the Chair of Housing Committee and senior officers are consulted as part of the process and briefed on individual sites.

Progress

- Total capital receipts from the sale of garages and small sites are over £5,100,000.
- Since 2016 the council has sold more than 320 garages and 20 small sites.
- Planning permission has been secured for housing on small sites in Nailsworth, Ebley, Hardwicke, Upton St Leonards, Kings Stanley, Wotton-under-Edge and Cainscross. The majority of these have now been sold for new houses to be built by individuals and small builders.
- A decision has recently been made to appropriate a garage site in Berkeley town centre from the HRA into the General Fund, to demolish the thirteen garages and extend the public car park, subject to planning permission.
- It has been agreed with Housing Services to re-employ the block of garages behind the council's flats and shops in Cam to improve parking and access for local businesses and residents. Designs are being prepared that include demolishing the garages and creating improved outlooks for tenants, better access and circulation to the shops and operational benefits to site users.
- The webpage set up to advertise sales and give FAQ's about the Garage Project can be found at www.stroud.gov.uk/land-and-property-for-sale

New Homes Programme

Three garage sites have been developed as part of the council's New Homes and Regeneration programme to date, providing the following:

- 4 new homes at Fisher's Road, Berkeley (former garage site)
- 20 new homes at Ringfield Close, Nailsworth (former sheltered housing scheme and garage site comprising 16 garages)
- 7 new homes at Summersfield Road, Minchinhampton (former garage site and MUGA)

A further garage site is included within the current approved programme:

- Queens Drive, Cashes Green: Anticipated to deliver seven units subject to planning. Garages have been demolished in preparation for redevelopment.

Nick Stewart, Principal Estates Surveyor
nick.stewart@stroud.gov.uk

- Twenty-two sites are being considered for temporary housing or general needs units (Pods) across the district.

Sites which will deliver fewer than five homes are not now viable for the council to develop because of the lack of the necessary economies of scale and relatively high construction costs.

Community Land Trusts and Registered Providers

- Sites have previously been offered to other Registered Provider's (RP's) when they cannot be developed by the council but they are also too small for them to progress, even when multiple sites are grouped together, as other RP's will have similar challenges as the council in bringing sites forward.
- In 2018 the council successfully transferred a housing site to the Nailsworth Community Land Trust (CLT) for ten new homes
- This CLT subsequently investigated another of the council's small garage sites in Nailsworth but it was not viable for them to develop.

Outlook

Seventy garages are currently being marketed with more programmed for 2024-25. It is important to keep around 120 garages because they are integral parts of sites such as flats or they may be of use to the council in the future. In order to reduce the repairs liability to the HRA for these it is anticipated that they will be let for management commercially. It is expected that the programme has 2 to 3 more years to run before all the sites have been reviewed and sold or retained as appropriate.

Summary

The disposal programme is mature, having made substantial progress selling surplus property. The promotion of the sites and work to secure planning permission or overage maximises property values and capital receipts to the HRA, ensuring financial probity. The programme removes the management and maintenance burden to the HRA and brings sites and garages into more productive use.

The capital receipts are important to support the delivery of CW.2.1 of the Council Plan: Deliver new affordable homes across the District, through planning policy and work with partners including community-led housing groups, housing associations and via our own New Homes Programme, which will deliver EPC-A rated properties in line with our Strategy for New Council Homes 2020-2024

Nick Stewart, Principal Estates Surveyor
nick.stewart@stroud.gov.uk