

## NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES

### HOUSING SERVICES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

#### REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF HOUSING OPERATIONS

17 FEBRUARY 2010

#### INTERIM GARAGE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL

#### 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Nottingham City Homes has recently conducted an interim review of the garage stock managed by them on behalf of Nottingham City Council. A report detailing the findings and recommended actions can be found at Appendix 1.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Housing Management Services Committee note the content of the Garage Management Proposal (Appendix 1) and make further recommendations and actions where applicable.

#### 3 REPORT

##### 3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 Nottingham City Homes manages garages on behalf of Nottingham City Council as part of its Tenancy and Estate Management Service. There are 408 garage sites which range from sites containing single garages to multi-garage sites with an overall total of 4369 garages.
- 3.1.2 Demand for garages has declined steadily since the early 1990's for a variety of reasons. Customer requirement has changed since garage sites were built.
- 3.1.3 As occupancy rates have dropped some garage sites on Nottingham housing estates have become the focal point for problems, many are subject to vandalism, fly tipping and anti-social behaviour which in turn has led to a low take up of garages. This all has a negative impact as well as a high cost in trying to improve the estates NCH manage.
- 3.2 Void rates continue to increase by approximately 10% per annum resulting in a total overall void rate of 41% as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, which equates to 1780 void garages. However, the void rate varies from site to site dependent upon demand. It is anticipated that the void rate on some sites will further increase without some intervention.
- 3.3 It should be noted that a number of garage sites have been cleared in the past and the land they were built upon is unused. There are approximately 20 such sites across the city. An assessment is currently being undertaken to identify all of the cleared sites which have the potential for redevelopment. For the remaining sites options such as community gardens/allotments

needs to be explored.

- 3.4 Further to the above, the interim review has so far identified a number of individual garages and sites that could be considered for decommission and re-development. A detailed appraisal of each of these sites is ongoing in order that recommendations for future use can be made to NCC. For some of the sites there are potential re-development opportunities through community and partnership working, for example, funding has been secured by the Aspley Partnership and a recommendation put forward to re-develop a former garage site in the Aspley area into a Community Educational Garden and Allotment. This option could be replicated in other areas of Nottingham. Other sites present potential development opportunities for new housing and could be cleared to ensure site availability and immediate access if funding becomes available.
- 3.5 Of the sites identified as having the potential to be retained, further analysis is required to ensure that the sites are; sustainable; that any investment and on-going revenue costs represent value for money; that they are free of anti-social behaviour; demand can be maximised; and that they are well maintained and managed.
- 3.6 NCH are looking to establish a dedicated garage team for a temporary period of 6 to 12 months. It is envisaged that this team would survey each garage site to pro-actively market and re-let the void garages through the development of a comprehensive marketing strategy. Garage standards would be developed with proactive quality assurance mechanisms in place, and allocation procedures would also be reviewed. This will help to maximise the overall garage rental income which in turn will assist to fund the team and some of the essential repairs and maintenance which are required to the garage sites. In addition, the team would undertake a review of the performance management framework to ensure effective monitoring of garage repairs, allocations, rental payments, rent loss and void turnover.

## **4 OTHER OPTIONS**

- 4.1 A number of garage sites have been assessed prior to this review and recommendation options approved as follows:

### **4.1.1 Stoneycroft Road, Basford**

Work has commenced to clear the site in preparation for sale to Leicester Housing Association for redevelopment. Current occupants will be offered decants to alternative garage sites in the locality.

### **4.1.2 Prospect Street, Radford**

This was a site originally identified to be retained. However, Nottingham City Council was subsequently approached by the Radford Care Group in September 2008, with a proposal to purchase this site and redevelop it to expand the services they provide to the local community. This proposal has been given outline permission and negotiations are currently ongoing.

#### 4.1.3 Stonebridge, St Anns

There are 6 sites in St Anns which are to be included in the Stonebridge redevelopment area as follows:

Dennett Close; Fairholme Court; Jersey Gardens; Leighton Street; Limmen Gardens; and Melville Gardens

#### 4.1.4 Widecombe Lane, Clifton

Confirmation has been received from NCC that the site between 122 & 124 Widecombe Lane, Clifton, has been identified for redevelopment.

Discussions have been held with NCH with a view to redeveloping the site for housing. There are 72 garages on this site, only 3 of which are currently let.

### **5 RISK ASSESSMENT**

5.1 In-action will lead to an increase in void garages resulting in further potential rental loss, which will minimise available investment to sustain existing garage sites.

5.2 Further deterioration in garage sites may lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour and have a negative impact on community safety.

5.3 An Asset Management Strategy for garages needs to be developed to determine investment needs. A critical ingredient of this will be a site by site risk assessment, to identify the ongoing costs associated with vandalism, fly tipping, and security, as well as on-going maintenance such as caretaking and grounds maintenance.

### **6 VALUE FOR MONEY & EFFICIENCY ISSUES**

6.1 From the interim review many of the garage sites need investment to increase their desirability and letability. There is no additional available funding at this present time to invest in a repairs and maintenance programme of the remaining garage sites. However more let garages would lead to increased income which could be utilised to fund the investment needs.

6.2 A programme of environmental works totalling £70,150 is planned during 2009/10 across a number of the retained garage sites, the environmental works have been itemised in Appendix 3 of the Interim Garage Management Proposal.

6.3 In addition to the repair issue are the ongoing costs of maintaining the sites, including ground maintenance and caretaking resources. An assessment of these costs needs to be undertaken so they can be factored in when looking at the sustainability and value for money of each site.

### **7 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 None.

**8 BACKGROUND MATERIAL AND PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT**

Interim Garage Management Proposal (Appendix 1)

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