Report to Cabinet Item

11 July 2012

Report of Head of city development services

Subject Disposal of HRA land for affordable housing

KEY DECISION

Purpose

In light of recent public engagement, for cabinet to decide on which land within the council's housing revenue account should be disposed of to enable new affordable housing.

Recommendation

The cabinet is recommended to:

1 Approve disposal for the development of new affordable housing at the following sites:

a) Bland Road

c) Edward Street

e) Rosary Road

b) Bowers Avenue

d) Gamewell Close

f) Watling Road

2 Agree not to take forward the following sites for the development of new affordable housing as part of this initiative:

a) Armes Street

e) Ketts Hill

j) Vancouver Road

b) Bluebell Road

f) Northumberland Street

k) Waddington Street

c) Hanover Road

g) Palmer Road

I) West End Street

d) Gertrude Road

h) Quebec Road

e) Ivory Road

i) Rose Valley

3 Ask officers to invite members to identify other council owned sites that could be considered for inclusion in future development programmes.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority "Decent housing for all" and the service plan priority to enable new affordable homes, which achieve the highest standards in energy efficiency in places where people want to live.

11

Financial implications

In developing the 6 sites there would be an estimated loss of approximately £15,441 (gross) in revenue from the garages that are currently let on these sites.

The disposal of these sites will relieve pressure on the £150k repairs budget. Since repairs are carried out on an ad hoc basis, there is no definitive savings figure identifiable.

Ward/s: Bowthorpe, Catton Grove, Crome, Lakenham, Mancroft, Mile Cross, Nelson, Sewell, Thorpe Hamlet, Town Close, University, Wensum

Cabinet member: Councillor McDonald - Housing

Contact officers

Debbie Gould 01603 212851

Andrew Turnbull 01603 212778

Background documents

Public engagement feedback summary

Parking surveys

Red line drawings

Report

Background

- Since 2007/08, the council has worked in partnership with housing associations to develop council owned land to provide 415 new affordable homes. Housing development officers regularly identify potential new sites working with planning and property staff.
- 2. At the March meeting of the cabinet members considered options for the funding and delivery of affordable housing on council owned land. Specifically the cabinet agreed:
 - (2) ... that the mechanism to enable the development of affordable housing on council owned land will be the disposal of packages of sites to registered providers supplemented by the option for the council to build its own new stock; and
 - (3) [To] note that at a subsequent meeting cabinet will agree the development sites following local consultation.
- 3. Following the meeting a package of sites was identified consisting of 19 garage and car park sites across the city. The sites were determined in consultation with planning, NPS Norwich Ltd, transportation and housing management staff. Only sites which are under used (established through surveys) and/or where garages are void were put forward.
- 4. The Home and Communities Agency (HCA) is responsible for allocating government grant to developing housing associations, and has signed contracts with several locally active partners who wish to deliver affordable housing in the city. Developing housing associations, or Registered Providers (RPs), must commit to complete all new HCA funded housing by March 2015 in order to be eligible to receive the monies. As a result, sites must be allocated to RPs by October 2012 to give them enough time to carry out the development process, including procuring architects, acquiring planning and to complete the build of the new homes.
- 5. The sites recommended for approval in this report will be allocated via a competitive tendering process to take place during August and September, giving RPs sufficient time to complete the work before the deadline of March 2015. .

Public engagement

- 6. Previously, sites have been identified by the council and then allocated to housing associations for development, conducting public consultation once plans have been drawn up. On this occasion officers have engaged with local residents at a much earlier stage than usual and before any decisions on the future of the sites have been made. This allows decisions to be made on which sites to take forward also based on those who presently use the sites or may be affected by their possible development.
- 7. Following the list of 19 sites being proposed, the next step was to arrange public engagement events. The intention was to make those residents living in the immediate vicinity of each site aware that it was being considered for affordable

- housing development and to seek resident views on the principle of the site being developed. Where applicable, garage tenants were also written to. The events were held in May as set out in table 1.
- 8. Residents were asked to complete feedback forms on the day, or they could take them home and send them in at a later date. Residents could also contact officers direct via phone, email or in person, should they be unable to attend the relevant event. All of the feedback forms received are available from the housing development team.

Table 1: consultation event details

Date/ venue	Sites discussed
14/05/12	Vancouver Road
Frere Road Community Centre	Watling Road
15/05/12	Gamewell Close
Ryrie Court	Hanover Road
	Rose Valley
16/05/12	Bowers Avenue
Norman Centre	Palmer Road
21/05/12	Edward Street
Don Pratt Court	Gertrude Road
	Ketts Hill
	Quebec Road
	Rosary Road
22/05/12	Bland Road
Motum Road	Bluebell Road
	Ivory Road
23/05/12	Armes Street
Waddington Court	Northumberland Street
	Waddington Street
	West End Street

Public engagement results

- 9. Local community feedback provided via the engagement events is summarised below for each of the 19 sites. In each case a recommended way forward is provided. The groups have been split into two groups, depending on which course of action is proposed, either: to approve disposal of the site to enable development now or to not take forward as part of this initiative. In addition to feedback forms the council has received a petition relating to the West End Street site and has been made aware of others relating to Palmer Road and Hannover Road.
- 10. Feedback forms continue to be received at the time of publication of this report and the cabinet will be updated at the meeting on this.

Sites recommended for disposal

11. Of the 19 sites that were taken to the public for comment this report recommends that a total of six be approved for disposal to enable new affordable housing at this stage. The sites are set out in the table below to show the number of units estimated to be achievable. Where there are two numbers shown, the number deliverable will either refer to houses (lower number) or flats (higher number).

Table 2: sites recommended for approval

Site	Estimated no. of units	Take forward now?		
Bland Road	5 – 7	Yes		
Bowers Avenue	4 – 6	Yes		
Edward Street	1 – 2	Yes		
Gamewell Close	4 – 6	Yes		
Rosary Road	2	Yes		
Watling Road	2	Yes		
Number of sites: 6	Nu	Number of units: 18 – 25		

Bland Road

- 12. This garage site has been subject to anti-social behaviour, resulting in damage to garage doors and brick work damaged, with a small number of bricks missing from one side of the structure. The garages are void and have been fenced off for approximately 12 months.
- 13.81 invitations were sent, with seven attendees and four feedback forms received, three opposing any development based on loss of view from the adjacent flats or impact on parking. One consultee supported development and welcomed new housing.
- 14. Therefore this report **recommends that this site be taken forward** allowing construction of five to seven new affordable homes.

Bowers Avenue

- 15. This small garage site sits opposite Markham Tower and houses a number of garage tenants who have used the facility for many years. There is an occupancy rate of 68%. Although alternatives can be offered within a five minute walk from this site, the garage tenants objected to this. 100 garage tenants and households were written to, with 14 people attending the engagement event. Five of the seven respondents were opposed to the plans and a more recent email echoes this, based on loss of parking, existing parking problems and concerns about new housing bringing more cars to the area. Two respondents supported the principle of housing being developed here.
- 16. There are 15 garages let to tenants and officers have identified 15 alternative garages within a five minute walk which could be offered as replacements. Whilst noting the concerns raised, given the proximity of alternative parking **this report**

recommends that this site be taken forward allowing construction of four to six new affordable homes

Edward Street

17. This is a small site on the corner of Edward Street and Magpie Road. A total of 46 households in the immediate vicinity of the site were written to, with one person attending the engagement event. The impact on local residents would be minimal and no strong objections were received. Therefore **this report recommends that this site be taken forward** allowing construction of one to two new affordable homes.

Gamewell Close

- 18. This is a garage site at the end of Gamewell Close. There is an occupancy rate of 27%.
- 19.68 households were written to with invitations to the engagement event. Of these, six attended, with four feedback forms received, two opposing any development on site and two had no objection to the principle of development on site.
- 20. There were concerns raised about emergency vehicles gaining access to any new build properties. Concerns were also raised at the level of parking availability for the area should the garages be redeveloped and complaints about the current damage to grassed areas where people park where they shouldn't. A suggestion was made that these areas be formalised as parking.
- 21. In recognition of the concerns raised, any RP developer will be asked to ensure that all options to include replacement surface parking on site will be considered.
- 22. With such relatively low use of the garages, **this report recommends that this site be taken forward** allowing construction of four to six new affordable homes.

Rosary Road

- 23. This small garage site is adjacent to a row of six houses and attracted five attendees to the engagement event, from 39 invitees, three of whom completed feedback forms, with a range of opinions, one for, one against and one without a stated preference either way. The concerns raised relate to the loss of the garages which was echoed in an email subsequently received, the majority of which are used by residents in the immediate vicinity. There is an occupancy rate of 75%. A further correspondent objected to any of the sites in Thorpe Hamlet ward being taken forward.
- 24. The impact on local residents would be limited and no strong objections were received. Therefore **this report recommends that this site be taken forward** allowing construction of two new affordable homes.

Watling Road

25. The Watling Road site comprises ten garages, which back on to the playground accessed from Clancey Road. There is an occupancy rate of 30%. Two feedback forms were received, one for the development and one against. A further correspondent was disappointed that plans had not been included in the

consultation as they would be directly affected by any development. Such plans will be provided as part of the next phase if taken forward. The general comments expressed on the day of the event were supportive. A suggestion was made about formalising an area that was being used for parking by local residents.

26. Therefore, with no strong views this report recommends that this site be taken forward allowing construction of two new affordable homes.

Sites not to be taken forward as part of this package

27. Of the 19 sites that were taken to the public for comment this report recommends 13 not to be taken forward as part of this initiative.

Table 3: sites not to be taken forward

Site	Estimated no. of units
Armes Street	3
Bluebell Road	3 – 6
Gertrude Road	2
Hanover Road	5
Ketts Hill	5 – 10
Ivory Road	2-3
Northumberland Street	5 – 6
Palmer Road	2-6
Quebec Road	4
Rose Valley	2 – 4
Vancouver Road	3 – 6
Waddington Street	1 – 2
West End Street	2

Armes Street

- 28. The Ames Street site is a small car park adjacent to the Nelson School. The average occupancy rate of this car park according to the car park surveys carried out by officers is 30%.
- 29. Nine responded to the consultation opposing development of the site, although one stated that they did not object to the principle. The chief concern was the impact on loss of parking and the fear that new housing would exacerbate current parking issues. Also the new housings would generate traffic which would exacerbate existing problems of visibility at junctions and emergency/delivery vehicle access. A suggestion was made that the entrance to the school be used to provide alternative parking.

30. The site could provide up to three new homes. It may or may not be possible to provide off-street parking and in either case the new homes may lead to more onstreet parking. In addition the loss of parking could add to on-street demand potentially also exacerbating visibility and access difficulties in an area where onstreet parking demand is high due to many properties not having off-street parking. In light of these issues it is not proposed to take forward.

Bluebell Road

- 31. This car park is designated for use by local residents and there is a sign displayed on site notifying motorists that visitors to the nearby UEA should not be using it. The car park is well used, with an average occupancy rate of 61%. 74 letters of invitation to the engagement event were sent out in relation to this site but only three people attended on the day. One feedback form was received stating that the person had no objection to the principle of development taking place at this location.
- 32. The site is well used although it is not clear whether by local residents or visitors for example to UEA. Concerns have been raised that the engagement event at Motum Road was relatively distant from the site which may have lowered turnout. Given these uncertainties it is not recommended to take the site forward at the present time.

Gertrude Road

- 33. This garage site in the north of the city is situated under a telecoms mast. Concerns were raised about the suitability of a new housing site in close proximity to the telecommunications mast that is at the site. There is an occupancy rate of 60%. The event was fairly well attended, with nearly 30% of those written to attending the event. The majority of the feedback forms submitted raised objections to development going ahead, with one stating they had no objection on the principle of the site being developed. One person raised the issue of personal safety, as they live in close proximity to the garage site and had concerns about their and their neighbour's walk back at night on their own from any of the alternative garage sites available.
- 34. Providing a telephone mast meets levels of radiation set by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection there would not be health grounds for preventing development of the site.
- 35. However, whilst alternative garages are available at Pearcefield, this is approximately ten minutes walk away and therefore some distance in view of the concerns raised. It is not recommended to take forward the site accordingly.

Hanover Road

36. This site comprises a well used garage site and car park areas, with an occupancy rate of 88% for the garages and an average of 29% for the car park. The engagement event was very well attended with over 50% of invitees attending the engagement event. The primary concerns raise on the day and on subsequent feedback forms were; existing parking problems, loss of parking facilities and the impact of new housing on the nearby streets in terms of more vehicles being forced to park on Hanover Road, which only allows for parking along one side of it.

- 37. There were also concerns that not all the local residents that might be affected by the scheme going ahead had been invited. In addition to the 52 letters that were initially sent, a further 47 households were subsequently written to, inviting feedback on the principle of redevelopment at this location.
- 38. A residents' survey has been submitted, with 62 responses. They were asked the question, 'As it stands, do you agree with the proposal to build housing on the garage site in Hanover Road', with three possible responses: No (31); Yes (7); and Don't know (23). They were also asked to provide comments, and these were categorised into six areas: traffic; parking; emergency access; construction; effect on property and the consultation process.
- 39. The site could provide up to five new homes with off-street parking for each. As new build the homes would not be entitled to permit parking. Therefore the impact of the new homes is likely to be very limited.
- 40. However the loss of parking could add to on-street demand potentially also exacerbating visibility and access difficulties. Furthermore concerns were raised that consultation was too limited (excluding residents on the north side of Hanover Street from a formal invitation to the event). In light of this it is not proposed to take forward development as part of this package.

Ivory Road

41. This is a small, well- used garage site with an occupancy rate of 86%, to which 68 households, including garage tenants were written to inviting them to attend the engagement event. Six people attended the event, and five feedback forms were submitted, all opposing any development here. Of the objections stated, all were parking related, with comments that many households have more than one vehicle and alternative garages were not convenient or in suitable locations. The issue of UEA students was raised due to the amount of student properties there are in the vicinity and the parking demand this creates. Therefore it is not recommended to take the site forward.

Ketts Hill

42. This car park site lies adjacent to the Ketts Hill Tavern public house and has been leased to the pub's managers for use by patrons and for use by visitors to Mousehold Heath. Car park surveys showed that the car park has an average occupancy rate of 47%. The consultation event was poorly attended in relation to this site but there have been strong objections received since then. Due to the presence of the lease, this site is not appropriate to be taken forward.

Northumberland Street

- 43. The car park at Northumberland Street is adjacent to number 73 and has an average occupancy rate of 32%. 58 households were written to, with eight attendees and six feedback forms submitted. Concerns centred on parking; including raising current parking problems and the impact on the surrounding streets should any development go ahead.
- 44. The site could provide up to five or six new homes. It may or may not be possible to provide off-street parking and in either case the new homes may lead to more on-

street parking. In addition the loss of parking could add to on-street demand potentially also exacerbating visibility and access difficulties in an area where on-street parking demand is high due to many properties not having off-street parking. In light of these issues it is not proposed to take forward.

Palmer Road

- 45. This site comprises 29 garages close to the junction with Jewson Road, with an occupancy rate of 48%. 55 garage tenants and residents were written to advising them of the potential for development at the garage site on Palmer Road. Eight people attended the engagement event and the five people who filled in forms all opposed any development happening at this location. There were objections regarding issues of personal safety and mobility, should development go ahead. A suggestion was made that garage tenants with mobility problems be provided with vehicle crossovers so that they could park on the front of their property as a more suitable alternative.
- 46. In addition, the Catton Residents Association has written to the council to voice concerns over chalk mines in the area and to suggest that the site be used for surface parking as opposed to housing. The group has also submitted 37 questionnaires completed by local residents raising the following issues: fear of an increase in fly-tipping (68%); fear of increased congestion/ access for emergency vehicles (54%) and wish to see an alternative proposition for the site such as surface parking (49%).
- 47. The possibility of providing vehicle crossovers could help mitigate the impact of the loss of parking. However the feasibility of providing this will depend on a number of factors and even if provided may not overcome the many concerns raised sufficiently. It is therefore recommended not to take this site forward as part of this package.

Quebec Road

- 48. This garage site has an occupancy rate of 77%. From 69 invitations, there were 14 attendees. Concerns included over-looking, loss of light, loss of privacy due to development as well as concerns over parking including loss of garages, new housing exacerbating current problems and requests that additional parking be provided. Vehicle crossovers to enable parking on the front of their property as an alternative to other garages several minutes walk away were also requested, with a suggestion that these be offered for free by the council.
- 49. The possibility of providing vehicle crossovers could help mitigate the impact of the loss of parking. However the feasibility of providing this will depend on a number of factors and even if provided may not overcome concerns sufficiently. It is therefore recommended not to take this site forward as part of this package.

Rose Valley

50. This site comprises garages and car park areas, with an average occupancy rate of 69% for the car park areas and 100% for the garages. It is set back from Unthank Road and accessed via a narrow, sloped road. The residents have recently approached the council about utilising a small area of former play ground as a boules pit. The engagement event was very well attended by the residents of Rose

Valley, who raised current parking problems, impact of loss of parking, concerns about any new housing creating more problems and the change of character/concerns over social housing. There were also concerns about the narrow access road to the site, air quality and flood risk.

51. As a consequence of the engagement work, an adjacent land owner has come forward stating that they would be interested in organising a joint project to develop a larger site. This could include housing, parking and amenity space for the residents. Negotiations between land owners would need to take place before the site is considered for approval. Any future redevelopment of this site would be progressed by liaising with the local residents to ensure that the site benefits as many people as possible.

Vancouver Road

- 52. The site comprises 22 garages located at the end of the cul-de-sac, with an occupancy rate of 73%. From 47 invitations 25 attended the consultation event with 9 completing feedback forms. Those coming on the proposals raised concerns about the loss of garages and the impact of new housing on the current parking situation. A number of people suggested that they could park their vehicles on the front of their properties but that a vehicle crossover would be required and they felt that the council should meet the cost of providing these.
- 53. The possibility of providing vehicle crossovers could help mitigate the impact of the loss of parking. However the feasibility of providing this will depend on a number of factors and even if provided may not overcome concerns sufficiently. It is therefore recommended not to take this site forward.

Waddington Street

- 54. The Waddington Street site comprises nine garages located close to the Armes Street junction and has an occupancy rate of 67%. From 87 invitations 11 attended the consultation event with five completing feedback forms. A number of residents said they had applied for garages in recent months or years but had not been able to rent one. Several residents reported incidents of anti- social behaviour including vandalism to vehicles that had been left parked on the surrounding streets and were concerned about further incidents. Nearly half of those who submitted feedback forms raised concerns over personal safety and lack of suitable alternative provision for existing garage tenants.
- 55. The site could provide one or two new homes. It may or may not be possible to provide off-street parking and in either case the new homes may lead to more onstreet parking. In addition the loss of parking could add to on-street demand potentially also exacerbating visibility and access difficulties in an area where onstreet parking demand is high due to many properties not having off-street parking. In light of these issues it is not proposed to take forward development at present.

West End Street

56. This is a car park designated for use by residents but regularly used by staff and customers of the Fat Cat public house opposite. The car park surveys carried out by council officers indicates an average occupancy rate of 64%.

- 57. A petition stating 'Local residents against the proposed building on the West End Street car park (opposite The Fat Cat)' has been submitted by the pub manager and contains 60 signatures.
- 58.77% of those who submitted feedback forms were against any development going ahead, based on loss of amenity. Another business, a café, has now opened in the immediate vicinity and the proprietor has stated their objections to the loss of the car park based on the negative impact on their business. Despite this being a residential car park, it is now relied upon by local business and would therefore be detrimental to the local community if lost. It is not proposed to be taken forward.

Conclusion and next steps

59. Of the 19 sites that were taken to the public for comment this report recommends that a total of six be approved for disposal to enable new affordable housing at this stage.

Table 5: list of sites with recommendations

Site	Estimated no. of units	Recommendation
Bland Road	5 – 7	
Bowers Avenue	4 6	
Edward Street	1 – 2	Approve disposal of 6 sites
Gamewell Close	4 – 6	to enable 18 – 25 homes
Rosary Road	2	
Watling Road	2	
Armes Street	3	
Bluebell Road	3 – 6	
Gertrude Road	2	
Hanover Road	5	Not to progress
Ivory Road	2-3	
Ketts Hill	5 – 10	
Northumberland Street	5 – 6	
Palmer Road	2 – 6	
Quebec Road	4	
Rose Valley	2 – 4	
Vancouver Road	3 – 6	
Waddington Street	1 – 2	
West End Street	2	

60. The sites that are approved will be allocated via competitive tender to RPs to develop. An estimated 18 to 25 new homes will be built on the sites. These six sites will be allocated in the autumn, to allow the RPs time to design and build the new homes prior to their funding deadline of March 2015.

Lessons learnt

- 61. A number of lessons have been learned as a result of the engagement process that was carried out. For example engagement could be improved by conducting events closer to the site (thereby also reducing the number of sites discussed at each event). Also the correspondence was too generic and, in some cases, a wider area of households could be contacted. These lessons will be followed up in future public engagement and consultation. Also communication with ward members will be improved.
- 62. Development officers regularly 'reserve' vacant garages near to garage sites that are being considered for redevelopment, in order to be able to offer these to garage tenants whose garages are disposed of/ demolished. In some cases, when a decision is pending on a site, the reserved, vacant garages are unavailable to rent via the council's website for several months. In future, officers will ensure that garages are only 'held' in this way immediately prior to the first round of public engagement events.
- 63. The recent public consultation was telescoped to take advantage of HCA funding to RPs, where as a condition of the grant they must complete the new units by March 2015. It is intended to follow a more measured approach with future work, to ensure an ongoing pipeline of possible sites for new affordable housing.

Integrated impact assessment



The IIA should assess the impact of the recommendation being made by the report

Report author to complete	
Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	11/07/12
Head of service:	Andy Watt
Report subject:	Disposal of HRA land for affordable housing
Date assessed:	19/06/12
Description:	Assessment of council owned sites with development potential

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)				Loss of income from garages, estimated to be in the region of £15,441 (gross figure) per annum.
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact				The disposal of these sites will relieve pressure on the £150k repairs budget. Since repairs are carried out on an ad hoc basis, there is no definitive savings figure identifiable.
ICT services				
Economic development		\boxtimes		There will be new jobs created as a result of the building work.
Financial inclusion		\boxtimes		In creating new, affordable housing, there will be a positive impact on financial inclusion within the city.
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults				
S17 crime and disorder act 1998				
Human Rights Act 1998				
Health and well being		\boxtimes		Provision of high quality, affordable housing will have a positive impact on health and well being for people in housing need.

	Impact			
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	\boxtimes			
Eliminating discrimination & harassment				
Advancing equality of opportunity				
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation				The sites are small and therefore any transport impact is likely to be limited. However there is potential for parking displacement which may add to existing problem on-street parking and access problems.
Natural and built environment				Development of new affordable housing will provide improvements to the areas identified. In many cases, garages in poor condition will be replaced with new housing, parking and landscaped areas.
Waste minimisation & resource use		\boxtimes		Registered Provider contractors will have to recycle as much of the building materials as possible, during the demolition process.
Pollution				
Sustainable procurement				
Energy and climate change				
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments

	Impact				
Risk management				Reducing the council's liability in terms of car park and garage maintenance. Providing new, affordable housing to those in need.	
Recommendations from impact ass	essment				
Positive					
Negative					
Neutral					
Issues					
The most significant issues raised across the programme of sites was that of parking and concerns over increased levels of vehicles needing to be parked on the streets surrounding the proposed development sites. On each site that goes forward, replacement parking opportunities must be fully investigated by the Registered Provider.					