

Garage and Parking Site Strategy 2024-2029

Charnwood Borough Council

1. Introduction

The Council, like many other local authorities and registered social landlords, owns garage and parking sites, and the Council's 70 such sites are dispersed across the borough, typically near its social housing. Some sites have been re-developed over the years, however there are significant constraints which limit the development potential of those that remain.

The sites generate rental income from garages and parking spaces, however many of the garages and sites are old and require major investment. Some sites have been the location of crime and anti-social behaviour, complaints are regularly received around the condition of garages, and periodically enquiries are received from residents around plans for the sites.

Whilst there are generic site constraints, each of the sites is unique in some way. There is a need, therefore, to consider each site in a methodical way to determine their future. This strategy sets out the wider context, and the mechanism by which this assessment will take place.

The Strategy has regard to the Council's new Corporate Strategy 2024-2028 which sets out an aim to *look for opportunities to build or acquire new homes and help tackle homelessness* alongside broader objectives around delivering excellent services, achieving value for money through reviewing how we work, and exploring all options for service delivery to achieve the best results for our communities.

2. Strategic Aims

Over the life of the strategy, the Council will aim to achieve the following:

- Sustain and maximise garage and parking site rental income where economic to do so.
- Reduce the risk of harm and complaints arising because of garages and sites in poor condition.
- Make the best use of sites, considering both the financial and social aspect of the asset/s.
- An assessment of each site, considering its characteristics, and the available options, with specific consideration given to the potential for development of new social housing.

3. Background

The Council owns 64 garage sites dispersed across the Borough. Sites are typically located in proximity to Council owned housing stock. The Council's housing management system shows a stock of 818 single domestic garages. Garages are generally of panel construction, arranged in terraced blocks, and of various ages: many were built in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Generally, garages are small at 8ft x 12ft (2.43m x 3.65m) with some variation across sites.

478 garages are currently let out to Council tenants and other members of the public.

The Council also owns 6 former garage sites where residents can rent a plot to park a vehicle. Several one-off isolated garages, and smaller sites are also present.

A summary of garage sites and relevant data is at Appendix 1.

4. Garage Voids

As the age of garages and sites has increased, their condition has deteriorated, and garages have not been let, therefore. In February 2024 there were 340 garages not let, which is 41.56% of the total stock of 818 garages identified on the housing management system. The percentage of void loss has increased over the years. This is shown in the below table.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	April to December 2023
Total Void Loss %	29	30	33	37	38	39.61

Figure 1 - % Void loss associated with garages showing on the housing management system that are not let by year.

5. Garage Rental Income

Despite the increase in garages not let out, the level of charged rent has remained relatively buoyant because of rent increases over the years.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	April to December 2023
Total Charged Rent (Non-Void Garages)	233,150.78	240,577.75	227,035.05	213,454.26	265,407.28	193,250.64

Figure 2 - Total rent Charged at non-void garages by year.

The vast majority of garage rental income is collected. Rent arrears are currently around £1000 for the entire garage stock.

Garage rents are set based on an assessment undertaken by the Valuation Office Agency. For 2024/2025 it has been recommended to Cabinet that garage rents increase from £10.84 to £11.50 per week on a 48-week rent year.

It is desirable to sustain and maximise this level of rental income as far as is economically and practicably possible.

6. Parking Sites

In addition to garage sites, there are 6 former garage sites, now categorised as parking sites. There are also several isolated garages and small plots scattered across the borough.

Plots on parking sites are rented out at £72.00 per year. This amount charged is low, with income generated amounting to around £6,000 per annum.

A summary of larger parking sites is at Appendix 2.

7. Use and Demand for Garages

Given their small size, it is thought many garages are used for storage of items other than a modern vehicle. The garage tenancy agreement states tenants must:

Use the said garage only for the storage of a motor vehicle used by the tenant or for the storage of outside goods that are not dependant on a completely weatherproof environment.

Of the 478 people that currently rent a garage from the Council:

- 44 people have more than 1 garage.
- 42 people have 2 garages.
- 2 people have 3 garages.
- 22 garages are rented to people living outside of the borough.

The housing management system shows there are 279 current applications for a garage. The tables below which show that 115 applications were received last year, and most applications were from non-Council tenants.

Date of Application	Number of Applications on the Waiting List
2019 or older	16
2020	11
2021	54
2022	83
2023	115
Total	279

Figure 3 - Number of garage applications per year

Tenure of Applicant	Number of Applications on the Waiting List
Not a Council Tenant	250
Council Tenant	29
Total	279

Figure 4 - Tenure of Garage Applicants

The data above and at Appendix 1 indicates there is a general demand for garages across the borough.

8. Development Potential of Garage / Parking Sites

In developing this strategy officers have reviewed the strategies of other local authorities, and have met with representatives from a large, registered provider of social housing dealing with the same issue but on a larger scale.

In the context of already high construction costs, experience from other developers indicates that development is more expensive at garage sites, due to their constraints, which include the following (but not exclusively).

- Sites are small, with limited development potential as isolated sites.
- Illegal accesses have developed over the years.
- Land has been encroached upon.
- Accesses to sites are often narrow and difficult.
- Sites are overlooked.
- Trees, including those with preservation orders on, may be present.
- Some garage sites have become unofficial parking sites.
- Development may be unpopular with residents.
- Rights of way may exist.
- Substations may be present.

Many sites are contained behind domestic dwellings, such as the example at Manor Road, below, which is adjacent to a Council owned shrubbed area.



Figure 5 - Site at Manor Road, Loughborough, with adjoining shrubbed area to the Southeast.

NB. Image not to be reproduced.

A desktop review considering the potential for building 4 or more properties on sites has been completed. An indication of the development potential at sites can be found in the data set at Appendix 1. An initial appraisal has indicated Manor Road as holding the potential for 6-8 x 3

bed houses. Further detailed consideration will be needed around issues such as site topography, constraints, and viability.



Figure 6 - Site at Manor Road, Loughborough

NB. Image not to be reproduced.

Potentially sites in close geographical proximity to each other could be grouped together to make them more attractive for development or sale.

9. Repairs

Door repairs and replacements are regularly undertaken following them being, for example, broken in to, damaged by vehicles, or the locking mechanism failing.

Many garages contain asbestos, and whilst the material risk is generally low or very low, the presence of asbestos adds cost on to works. This year £41k has been spent on demolishing garages that cannot be repaired and removing asbestos.

Roof replacements at some garages, where there is thought to be limited scope for redevelopment, are currently being undertaken. In addition to the relatively high cost, this work is challenging to co-ordinate as the contents of garages must be removed by all tenants in the block for works to take place.

Complaints about the condition of garages are frequently received.

10. Options, Review Mechanism, and Capacity

A range of options for garage and parking sites exist, including (not exclusively):

- Retain and invest in a site where economically feasible, taking in to account the condition of sites, repair costs, demand, and options.
- Disposal of a site (or package of sites) to enable re-investment in other sites or capital works elsewhere.
- Council led redevelopment of a site/s to provide new social housing where viable.
- Work with a registered provider or private developer to redevelop a site/s where viable.
- Alternative use, e.g. parking site, or lease arrangement to a third party.

Each site, or group of sites will need to be assessed on an individual basis. It is likely appropriate for schemes to be prioritised for assessment based on size and logical geography, with larger sites near one another prioritised first.

Some sites are adjacent to sheltered schemes, which combine to create a larger land package. It is appropriate for these to also be considered though the review of sheltered accommodation, which will take place in parallel over the period this strategy covers.



Figure 7 - Garages adjacent to at Fielding Court sheltered accommodation, Loughborough.

Where existing garage tenants are displaced, the Council will make efforts to assist tenants to be relocated to another available garage nearby where possible.

An organisational Garage and Parking Site Review Group will be established to consider the future of sites, producing an action plan to deliver the aims of this strategy.

The Council does not currently have a dedicated housing development function. An organisational change process is in progress to provide capacity to take this work forward.

Appendix 2 - Summary of Large Parking Sites

Parking Sites	Indicative Development Potential
Bramley Road, Birstall	2 to 4 x 1 bed bungalows
Grey Crescent, Newtown Linford	1 to 4 x 1 bed bungalows
Burgin Road, Anstey	2 to 4 1 bed bungalows
The Stiles, Syston	2 x 2 bed houses
Churchgate, Loughborough	
Hawcliffe Road, Mountsorrel	