

COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 8 th February 2023
Report Subject	Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Garage Sites and Plot Sites update
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the Council's continued investment works towards maintaining the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), the garage sites across the County have been assessed in terms of their condition, investment requirements and revenue generation / income.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Council's garage demolition programme along with providing an insight into how the Council assesses the land for future use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Community, Housing & Assets Overview and Scrutiny Committee to support the garage demolition programme proposals for addressing those sites and assets in a poor condition.
2	Community, Housing & Assets Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the decision matrix, outlined in the report, on the criteria for assessing the garage sites for demolition.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	HRA COUNCIL GARAGE SITES AND GARAGE PLOT SITES
1.01	<p>The Council have approximately 100 garage sites across the county and 25 garage plot sites.</p> <p>The garages, circa 1,500, vary in condition and desirability in terms of their location (close to renters home) and their usefulness (size etc.).</p> <p>The Council plot sites, where there are various privately owned garage structures, can all be found in a range of condition, size and construction type.</p>
1.02	<p>As part of the Councils continued investment plans and compliance with the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS), which the Council continues to maintain, there is a requirement to ensure that our tenants live in attractive and safe environments (WHQS Guidance (Part 6, section 7 - section heading 'Located in attractive and safe environments').</p> <p>There are a number of garage sites that require major investment and continued maintenance (repairs etc.) in order for them to be available for use as many are in a state of disrepair.</p> <p>Many cars on the road today are larger in size when compared to the garages due to the date most of the Councils garages were constructed, many of these garages are no longer fit the purpose in terms of storing a vehicle (car).</p> <p>It is also a requirement that the Council provide suitable parking solutions and make best use of the Councils land where feasible.</p>
1.03	<p>In the context of all of the elements within part 6 of the WHQS standard, all garages are considered to be secondary elements and broadly fall into the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Roads and footpaths;● Soft and hard landscaping with planting;● Street lighting (adequate);● Adequate and safe play space;● Adequate and practical and maintainable communal areas;● Dwellings clearly identifiable with definable boundaries;● Utility services practically located and well identified;● Adequate and practically located parking clearly visible;
1.04	<p>The Council have developed a scoring matrix to allow an objective assessment of each Garage Site.</p> <p>Each of the categories below are scored and re-scored during any new surveys / assessment. The total score assists with the prioritisation of the demolition programme.</p> <p>Those scoring the highest are those garages in the poorest condition, those least rented or a combination of both.</p>

- **PC1) Condition**
 - 0 = New/ Already Refurbished/ Already Demolished
 - 1 = Good Condition
 - 2 = Work needed
 - 3 = Poor Condition
 - 4 = Extremely Poor
 - 5 = Dangerous structure

- **PC2) Presence of Asbestos**
 - No presence of asbestos = 0 points
 - Presence of asbestos = +5 points

- **PC3) Feasibility study and cost estimate completed:**
 - No plans or cost estimates completed = 0 points
 - Plan & up to date cost estimate = +5 points

- **PC4) Percentage of occupied garages**
 - 0 points – 100%
 - 1 point - 90% to 99%
 - 2 points- 80% to 89%
 - 3 points- 70% to 79%
 - 4 points- 60% to 69%
 - 5 points- 50% to 59%
 - 6 points- 40% to 49%
 - 7 points- 30% to 39%
 - 8 points- 20% to 29%
 - 9 points- 10% to 19%
 - 10 points- 0% to 9%

- **PC5) Documented consultation with positive feedback**
 - No = 0 points
 - Yes = +10 points

- **PC6) Scheme improves parking facilities for council tenants**
 - No impact = 0 points
 - Positive impact: +10 points

- **PC7) Expenditure over the last 5 years (Repairs & Maintenance)**
 - 0= £0-£100
 - 1= £101-£1000
 - 2= £1001-£2000
 - 3=£2001-£3000
 - 4=£3001-£4000
 - 5= £4000+

- **PC8) SHARP Development suitable?**
 - No = 0 points
 - Suitable = 5 points
 - Approved = 10 points

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PC9) HRA Development suitable? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No = 0 points ○ Suitable = 5 points ○ Approved = 10 points ● PC10) Rent loss per annum if demolished <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1 points- £4501+ ○ 2 points- £4001 - £4500 ○ 3 points- £3501 - £4000 ○ 4 points- £3001 - £3500 ○ 5 points- £2501 - £3000 ○ 6 points- £2001 - £2500 ○ 7 points- £1501 - £2000 ○ 8 points- £1001 - £1500 ○ 9 points- £501 - £1000 ○ 10 points- £0 - £500 <p>Programmes are developed using information flowing from stock condition surveys, in addition to feedback from our tenants, Members and officers. Condition survey data is regularly reviewed and adjusted to reflect the revised, improved condition of properties following refurbishment.</p>
1.05	<p>When undertaking an evaluation of environmental work in a specific area there needs to be an objective base and criteria with which to make decisions. The matrix used by officers when assessing schemes has been used successfully for a number of years in other investment programmes, however, Members may consider that it does not fully reflect requirements, and if so, feedback would be helpful so that officers can consider further.</p>
1.06	<p>During the assessment stage, the Capital Works Surveyor will identify what the possible options / future use options there are for the garage sites / plot sites.</p> <p>These can vary from creating additional car parking for Council owned properties, creating green open spaces, development in terms of new build or disposal of the land.</p> <p>The Council Surveyor will assess the size of the garage site, the number of Council owned properties which would benefit from additional car parking and the number of privately owned properties that would also benefit.</p> <p>If the size is suitable for creating additional car parking for Council owned properties, the scheme is passed to another Surveyor for introduction into the Council's WHQS Environmental Works Programme.</p> <p>If the size and location of the garage site is suitable for development (new build), the scheme is passed over to the SHARP Team for their consideration before the Housing Assets Service progress with any further plans.</p>

	<p>We plan to demolish approximately 150 - 200 garages each financial year over the next 5 years with over 200 garages previously demolished due to condition or new build requirements.</p> <p>The matrix will assist with prioritising those garages that need to be demolished sooner, and the programme will remain flexible so that any garages that require urgent demolition can be scheduled.</p> <p>There will be some garages that are unable to be demolished as they form part of another structure, such as a block of flats or multi-storey car park. These garages will be assessed for alternative uses.</p>
1.07	<p>To date, there have been several garage sites that have been passed over to the SHARP Team for their consideration with some of those sites progressing to the next phase of further options appraisals and some already developed providing new homes (Leeswood & Mostyn).</p>
1.08	<p>The Council have a five year demotion programme which focuses on those garages which score the highest through the scoring matrix.</p> <p>Any garages deemed dangerous in terms of their condition can be introduced into the programme at any time, with investment / regeneration works planned when budget / funding can be secured and made available.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>The HRA Business Plan covers the period of the garage demolition programme and beyond. It sets out the Council's investment strategy for its social housing stock, associated assets (i.e. garages) and land.</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>Informal discussions with tenants, housing officers, local Members often highlight the environmental issues within a community.</p> <p>Before any scheme commences, our proposals are shared with tenants via letter or consultation days through our local Connects Centres.</p> <p>The Capital Works Team held Tenant Consultation Workshops in late 2014 and sent over 7,000 questionnaires to the tenants of Flintshire to understand their priorities for their home and community with regards to the WHQS upgrade works. Most tenants asked for their internal upgrade works to be completed first, followed by external works and then finally the environmental works to tackle the community wide issues such as car parking. The Capital Works Team organised Member consultation workshops for all Councillors to attend, to ensure they could be part of the decision-making process.</p>

	The garage demolition programme continues with the Council's investment programme to ensure it continues to maintain the Welsh Housing Quality Standards.
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4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
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4.01	<p>Risk Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) is only guaranteed year on year so the risk is that MRA funding ceases.</p> <p>Mitigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure delivery of the investment programme of work continues as originally planned. ○ Maintain WHQS Compliance. ○ Complete MRA returns to Welsh Government. ○ Lobby Welsh Government on the need for MRA to continue so as to invest in the Housing stock. ○ Continue to monitor at HRA Programme Board.
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5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	None.
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6.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
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6.01	<p>Contact Officers: Sean O'Donnell - Service Manager - Housing Assets Sean.O'Donnell@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
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7.01	<p>Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) – A capital grant which must be used to meet the WHQS by December 2020 and maintain it thereafter.</p> <p>Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) – Is a standard Welsh Government expects all Social housing to meet. It addresses the physical conditions of the property and also integrates social, environmental and economic concerns. The standard ensures that dwellings are of a good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future residents.</p>
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