



To: Executive Councillor for Housing: Councillor Kevin Price
Report by: Head of Estates & Facilities : Trevor Burdon
Relevant scrutiny committee: Housing 08/03/2016
Scrutiny Committee
Wards affected: Petersfield

Key Decision **ST MATTHEW'S STREET GARAGES**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report describes a deteriorating problem with an underused and increasingly vandalised two storey garage block, comprising 82 separate units, at St Matthews Street in Petersfield ward.
- 1.2 The report summarises existing problems at the site and includes a alternative options and a recommendation for demolition and replacement with a reduced number (38) of new ground floor garages which can be delivered within the budget available.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to approve proposals, as described in section 3.8.5 – 3.8.7 below, to
 - a) demolish the existing two storey garage structure and,
 - b) provide 38 new pre-cast concrete garages on the same site area
- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to review, if necessary, the decision to erect new garages(2.1 (b) above) on the cleared site should the final provisions of the 2015/16 Housing and Planning Bill, prove onerous, in respect of payments for “disposal of high value property”. In such circumstances, options for disposal, rather than the planned retention of garage site, may have to be re-considered.

3. Background

- 3.1. The existing two storey garage structure at St Matthews Street, which comprises ground and first floor levels each with 41 garages, was originally constructed approximately 50 years ago to provide parking

for the Council's residents of the adjoining terraced housing development locally known as the "Irish Quarter".

- 3.2. The garages are small by current standards. There is restricted access due to narrow circulation space and the garage dimensions are not fit for many larger modern cars.
- 3.3. Over the last 10 years or so, usage of the garages has progressively declined amongst all users and currently over 50% of the garages are vacant. Current occupation of the garages is:

Garages in use	37
Garages let to CCC tenants	3
Garages let to private tenants	34

It would seem clear that whilst this is an HRA financed property, there is low current demand from existing Council (HRA) tenants with the vast majority of interest from private residents.
- 3.4. The entire top floor of the garage block has been void for some time and, as overall occupancy levels have progressively declined, the site has become an increasing target for vandalism and low level crime. The police have attended on a number of occasions in response to local residents complaints about mis-use and break-ins to both occupied and vacant garage units and as this type of activity has escalated then usage has further declined. Security is clearly therefore a major concern and this is not helped by the general layout and enclosed nature of the structure.
- 3.5. In addition to the problems of under-occupancy and vandalism there are significant problems with the building itself. The majority of garage doors require replacement, garage roofs to the first floor require replacement, there are significant structural repairs required in much of the brickwork cladding and the entire reinforced concrete first floor deck has to be repaired to address longstanding water ingress and cracking problems before the application of a complete new waterproof coating.
- 3.6. In summary, the site has been a constant source of complaint from residents of all tenures for a number of years and the deteriorating condition and ongoing anti-social activities have increased pressure for the problems to be urgently addressed. Residents who attended the public meeting on 17th June, and all who have returned the option feedback forms, unanimously expressed strong views about community safety if the facility continues to be left in its present condition and a solution, therefore, has to be found.

3.7. The proposed 2015-16 Housing and Planning Bill, which is currently progressing through Parliament for enactment in 2016, includes provision for payments to the Secretary of State, by Local Housing Authorities, generated from the disposal of vacant high value local authority housing. Details of exactly how this provision will be enforced, the method of calculation for local authority payments and the definition of “housing” remain unclear at the date of this report. However, it is clear that the garage site does represent a significant potential development opportunity and re-consideration of an option for disposal may therefore be required to help satisfy payment demands dependant upon the final provisions of Housing and Planning Bill when enacted.

3.8 Options and recommendation

3.8.1. Four options for resolving the problems described have been considered on the basis of retaining a “resident” parking provision at the site:

Option 1 – Fully refurbish and retain the entire building & surrounding area.

This would include demolition of the derelict and vandalized top floor garages and replacement with new larger garages but reduced in number. There would be associated works to include waterproofing the concrete upper deck, drainage works, new improved lighting, automated security accesses and security perimeter fencing.

Total garages on completion approx. 75

ESTIMATED COST £570 - 670,000

Option 2 – Demolish the unused top floor garages & refurbish the ground floor garages only.

This again would include demolition of the derelict top floor garages, access ramp and side access stairs. This would address some of the vandalism issues but there would still need to be associated works to include waterproofing the retained upper floor concrete deck, provision of new doors to retained ground floor garages, new improved lighting, automated security accesses, landscaping to the side area where the ramp is removed and security perimeter fencing.

Total garages on completion approx. 41

ESTIMATED COST £470 - 520,000

Option 3 – Demolish the entire structure & create a Ground Level open car parking compound.

This would include demolition of the entire structure and creation of a larger open plan car park. There would be associated works to include new improved lighting, automated security accesses and security perimeter fencing.

Total parking on completion approx. 40

ESTIMATED COST £260 - 320,000

Option 4 - Demolish the entire structure & replacement with new pre-fabricated larger concrete garages

This again would include demolition of the entire structure and the erection of new larger pre-fabricated concrete garages in two blocks opposite each other on the retained site. There would also need to be associated works to include new improved lighting.

Total garages on completion approx. 38

ESTIMATED COST £320 - 370,000

- 3.8.2. Of the four options presented above, option 1 has to be discounted on the basis of cost alone. The HRA budget is under severe pressure and there is insufficient funding currently available within planned maintenance budgets for such extensive and costly work at one site without diverting funds already allocated for work at other sites across the city. Based upon current usage with only 3 garages occupied by HRA tenants it is also difficult to justify such significant expenditure from the HRA budget when the overwhelming beneficiaries would be non-HRA residents, albeit paying an elevated rental level. Moreover, the Council is committed to reducing overall vehicle access to the already congested City Centre and the provision of “additional” parking spaces resulting from a full refurbishment would clearly provide additional parking space and would not be consistent with the Council’s aim.
- 3.8.3. Option 2 is also discounted on the basis of both cost and practicality. Whilst closure and demolition of the upper floor garages would remove a significant vandalism problem, the work would still not overcome the issue of undersized garages, poor circulation and security of the ground floor and major works would still be required to repair the overall structure and waterproof the concrete first floor deck.
- 3.8.4. Options 3 and 4 therefore represent the most practical and achievable solutions in that they both include for full demolition of the entire failing structure and all the associated problems of vandalism and security. Option 3, whilst less expensive, would nevertheless introduce issues about how to charge for available spaces and how to prevent problems with deliberate mis-use by the non-paying residents. Clearly the open site would also remove any option for any residents who use their garages for temporary storage of possessions other than their cars.
- 3.8.5. Overall therefore, **option 4 is the recommended outcome**. The scheme as described can be accommodated within existing Planned Works programme budgets for implementation in 2016/17 and

addresses all of the principal issues described. The new garages would be of a greater size than currently exists so would be fit for modern cars and would generate a secure and readily chargeable income stream. There would clearly be no requirement for any major structural repair works and as the refurbished site would be well lit and open then security issues would be no different to any other of the Council's many other garage sites.

- 3.8.6. The possibility of the City Council redeveloping the site has been considered but there are no funds available within existing HRA plans and the site is not seen as a high priority when considered alongside other more straightforward sites within the HRA portfolio. Any redevelopment project would almost certainly, therefore, rely on disposal for private development. This may become a more relevant possibility when the Government's requirements for disposal of vacant high value local authority housing, included in the 2015-16 Housing and Planning Bill, are finally confirmed as referred to in 3.7 above. Should the final provisions of the Housing and Planning Bill, prove onerous, in respect of payments for disposal of high value property, then options for disposal, rather than the planned retention of garage site, may have to be re-considered at that time
- 3.8.7. In this respect, Option 4 does still allow for some flexibility. A significant element of the cost of both options 3 and 4 (50%) is the cost of demolition of the existing reinforced concrete structure and if that work is completed as part of this project then the cost would have to be reflected in any future valuation of the site and recovered accordingly. Additionally the garages proposed for Option 4 would be of a pre-fabricated, concrete frame and panel construction and could be dismantled and re-located elsewhere for further use should priorities for the site change.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

Funding for options 3 and 4 is available within currently approved HRA Planned Works programmes for 2016/17. However, options 1 or 2 cannot be currently funded from allocated Programmes and if either option is preferred then this would require further budget re-prioritisation, re-profiling or diversion of funds from other planned work streams within the overall HRA Business Plan. It should be noted that the HRA Business Plan has already been revised to accommodate extended replacement lifecycles due to pressures arising from the 2015 HRA Review (reduced rental income and above inflation rise in construction costs). Any changes would, therefore, further affect

delivery of other competing, and potentially higher priority, work programmes.

A financial appraisal of Option 4 has been undertaken. The appraisal assumes that due to the escalating levels of crime and ongoing deterioration of the fabric of the garage block, the garage block is no longer fit for purpose without some form of capital investment. Based upon this assumption the project to provide 38 new garages, as outlined in option 4 above, would pay back within 31 years.

(b) **Staffing Implications**

None

(c) **Equality and Poverty Implications**

None

(d) **Environmental Implications**

The proposal has a low positive climate change impact.

(e) **Procurement**

The works will be procured via the Council's existing, EU compliant, partnered Planned Works contractors.

(f) **Consultation and communication**

Consultation with tenants and residents in the area surrounding St Matthews Street garages was undertaken in June 2015. Those attending a public meeting at the Cherry Trees Hall on 17th June 2015 expressed generally support for option 4 after some debate whereas the general response via returned questionnaire cards (20 in total) resulted in an even split of opinion between the options 3 and 4.

(g) **Community Safety**

The existing two storey garage structure has poor access, many enclosed and poorly lit areas and is a target for recurring vandalism and low level crime. The recommended scheme for full demolition of the structure and its replacement with an open and well lit ground level garage block site will significantly increase visibility of all areas and hence the overall security of the locality and its residents and garage users.

5. Background papers

None

6. Appendices

None

7. Inspection of papers

If you have queries on the report please contact:

Author's Name:	Trevor Burdon
Author's Phone Number:	01223 457831
Author's Email:	Trevor.burdon@cambridge.gov.uk