

# Disposal of Clover Field Garages



<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	13 June 2024
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor David Carter, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Richard Oliver, Assistant Director – Residential Housing Services (01279) 446422
<b>Contributing Officer:</b>	Nathan Kitteridge, Area Housing Manager (01279) 446295
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Forward Plan Number I017157
<b>Call In:</b>	This item is subject to call in procedures
<b>Corporate Mission:</b>	Renew our Neighbourhoods
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	Latton Bush and Stewards

## Executive Summary

- A** Authority is requested for the Assistant Director – Residential Housing Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to approve contract terms for the disposal of Nos. 1 to 20 Clover Field [garages].

## Recommended that:

- A** Harlow Council sell Nos. 1 to 20 Clover Field [garages] to a private management company who own and operate other garage sites across the District.

## Reason for decision

- A** Only 11 of the 20 garages at Clover Field are presently let.

- B** The current condition of the garages is very poor, with extensive investment required to bring the garages up to a lettable standard.
- C** The garage site resides within a private housing development in which the Council retains no housing assets.
- D** Further, overall demand for garages in this area is low.

### **Other Options**

- A** Four options have been explored.
  - i) Do nothing.
  - ii) Invest and refurbish the existing garages.
  - iii) Demolish the garages and convert into open parking.
  - iv) Sell the garages – preferred option.**

### **Background**

1. Nos. 1 to 20 Clover Field is a small block of garages located within the private housing development.
2. Demand for garages in Clover Field is particularly low, further compounded by high levels of property/garage disrepair.
3. The Council has received an offer for the Clover Field garage site from a private management company that owns and operates other private parking provisions across the District.

### **Issues**

4. Significant investment outside the scope of the current Business Plan is required to bring garages at Clover Field up to a suitable, lettable standard. Investment would be higher, and return considerable smaller, if larger garages are to be rebuilt on the site.
5. These garages generate a relatively low rental income; however, with only 55% of units let, and demand falling, income is not anticipated to meet ongoing management, repair and maintenance costs for the site.

6. An independent valuation has been undertaken on behalf of Harlow Council. The Council has received an offer for the site from the private management company. It should be noted that said private management company are undertaking a wider programme of investment across their garage estate; if included within their portfolio, this would represent a more general improvement in the public realm that could not, presently, be undertaken by Harlow Council.
7. Demolition of the garages, converting the site into open parking, has been considered. However, it has been identified that such investment would not improve overall parking within the District, nor would it have a positive impact on the Housing Revenue Account [HRA].

## **Proposals**

8. Harlow Council are to proceed with the sale of the Clover Fields garages to the identified private management company.
9. It is recommended for the income generated from the sale of the Clover Fields garages to be retained within the Housing Revenue Account to enable Harlow Council to meet urgent Fire Safety work obligations and/or other corporate Housing priorities.
10. Failure to secure a sale, Harlow Council will incur higher than average, ongoing repair demands until extensive investment of the site is undertaken.

## **Implications**

### **Equalities and Diversity**

The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires the Council to consider how to positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this is a decision pursuant to statutory powers no equality impact assessment has been conducted.

### **Climate Change**

None.

### **Finance**

Financial implications are included in the confidential report.

Author: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Deputy Section 151 Officer and Assistant Director – Finance

### **Governance**

The disposal of this land must meet the requirements of s.32 Housing Act 1985 and the general consents, requiring an up to date market value. The Council will need to impose appropriate covenants and or betterment provisions should the new owner wish to develop the site or vary its use.

Author: Julie Galvin, Legal Services Manager

**Appendices**

None

**Background Papers**

None.

**Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

None.