

Disposal of Church Leys Garages



Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	12 June 2025
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor David Carter, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing
Lead Officer:	Boe Williams, Assistant Director – Housing Operations (Property)
Contributing Officer:	Nathan Kitteridge, Area Housing Manager (Property)
Key Decision:	No
Forward Plan:	Forward Plan Number I018511
Call In:	This item is subject to call in procedures
Corporate Mission:	Renew our Neighbourhoods
Wards Affected:	Bush Fair

Executive Summary

A In respect of the council’s corporate mission to ‘renew our neighbourhoods’, the Building Harlow’s Future Plan states that this year, the council will “*deliver a programme of improvements to neighbourhood car parks across Harlow*”. This proposal will revitalise garages that require significant investment in order that they can be let to local residents.

Recommended that:

- A** Cabinet authorise the sale of the freehold of garages Nos.76 to 107 Church Leys.
- B** Cabinet delegate authority to the Assistant Director – Housing Operations, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to finalise the terms of the disposal.

Reason for decision

- A** Only 10 of the 35 garages 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 is in a position on the housing estate where there is no real opportunity for redevelopment.
- 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 and site – preferred option.**

Background

1. Nos. 76 to 107 Church Leys is a block of garages located on the edge of the Church Leys housing estate.
2. Demand for garages in Church Leys is particularly low, further compounded by high levels of property/garage disrepair.
3. The Council has received an offer for the Church Leys 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 Church Leys up to a suitable, lettable standard. Investment would be high and the return would be considerably smaller as demolition and rebuilding would be required to make them suitable for the vehicles of today to be able to use them as they are small in size. If larger garages are to be rebuilt on the site this reduces the potential income as there are less garages to let and there is already low demand in the area.

5. These garages generate a relatively low rental income and coupled with the fact that less than 50% of the units are let with 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. That Harlow Council proceed with the sale of the Church Leys garages to the identified private management company.
9. It is recommended that the income generated from the sale of the Church Leys garages to be retained within the Housing Revenue Account to assist Harlow Council meet urgent Housing priorities such as compliance activities (including fire safety) and other improvements to the condition of its retained assets.
10. If the Council fails to secure a sale it 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

The offer referred to in paragraph 3 of the report is included within the Exempt Appendix A. If the sale was to be successful, the council would receive a capital receipt for the garages and would need to write out the Net book value of the asset within the accounts.

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Governance

The Council is obliged to achieve “best consideration” for the disposal which is assured by achieving the figure set out in the valuation report.

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Appendices

Exempt Appendix A – Financial Information

Background Papers

None

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None