

## Appendix A

### Present position Heath Alibon and Eastbrook CHP area

There are 654 garages located in the 32 garage sites in the Heath, Alibon, and Eastbrook area.

12 of these sites already have a measure of security in as much as they have locking steel gates to the service /approach road. These security measures were funded from previous year's environmental improvements budgets in order to improve the viability of sites which were difficult to let due to vandalism and disrepair.

Whilst there has been a small increase in the take up of vacant garages on these sites, it is fair to say that each year at the time of the rent increase a number of garage tenancies are terminated by residents who no longer see the renting of a garage as good value for money.

Of the 654 garages in the area, 188 are currently empty, which represents 28% of the stock. 83 of these are ready for letting, but there are no applicants registered waiting for the areas in which the vacancies occur. The remaining 105 are not ready due to various reasons. A number of the garages require repair and whilst minor repairs are carried out to bring an individual garage back to a suitable standard for letting, if major repairs are required a decision has to be made whether it is worthwhile having the repairs completed if, on completion the garage cannot be re-let because there is a lack of registered applicants. Other garages have been subject to fly tipping of rubbish and again whilst small amounts of rubbish can be removed by the scavenger, due to the high cost of removing large quantities of garden or building waste and the possibility of further fly tipping, it is not always viable to have a garage cleared where there are no waiting applicants.

Where a site is on the margins of occupancy the decision is usually clear and demolition and subsequent clearance of the site is normally the course followed.

No action leads to a spiralling effect and the site tends to deteriorate further.

In particular there 5 sites in this area where most of the empty garages are situated, All 5 have security gates fitted and whilst all located in fairly high density areas continue not to have waiting lists.

- 1) **Stour Road**, This is a fairly secure site and is located on the Becontree Heath Estate where parking space is at a premium. There are 11 vacant garages on this site
- 2) **Stansgate Road**, This is located behind the shops on the Heath Park Estate and would appear to be ideally situated. There are 25 vacant garages on this site.

- 3) **Highland Avenue**, This is a large site which is secure but has been subject to high levels of vandalism. There are 29 vacant garages on this site.
- 4) **Hunters Hall Road**, This is a large site located in a fairly high density area. The site is secure but there is no demand from local residents .There are 12 vacant garages on this site.
- 5) **Trefgarne Road**, This is a fairly large garage site located on the\_Heath Park Estate. It is secure and well maintained but again there is no demand from local residents. There are 11 vacant garages on this site.

The options set out below are for discussion and consideration by Board Members.

### **Options for consideration**

#### **1 Better Publicity**

An article has already been drafted for inclusion in the Citizen.

A page on the Councils web site is currently under construction

A leaflet drop in specific areas of low demand could be organised including delivery to private households and other Social Landlords.

Advertising in local shops

Advertising in local free papers

Advertising in "speciality" press, e.g. Dalton's Weekly

#### **2 Consider relaxing the policy around garage usage and delegate the decisions around this to the Director of Housing and Health in consultation with local residents via the Community Housing Partnerships.**

At present garages are let on the basis that they are used for storing a private motor vehicle, which must be insured. This could be relaxed in the following ways:

##### **In areas of low demand**

Allow tenants to use the garage for storage generally on the understanding that they arrange their own insurance on the goods stored and indemnify the Council against loss or damage to the garage

Allow residents to store untaxed vehicles provided they are subject to SORN (Statutory Off road Notification).

Allow small businesses to use the garages for storage on the understanding that they do not cause a nuisance to other garage users or local residents and have adequate insurance to indemnify the Council

**3 Carry out security improvements to garage sites in order to prevent further deterioration of sites prior to any refurbishment programme.**

Many garage sites have already been provided with locking security gates. In some areas this will be sufficient to stimulate demand.

Security lighting could be installed in some locations subject to a suitable power supply being available, although there is only a budget of £200,000. Across all 6 CHP areas for this type of work

**4 Consider selective demolition of garage sites, bearing in mind the implication any future policies to deal with the problems of "on street parking" may have on the demand for garages.**

Demolition of individual garage sites is expensive and in order to get the best value for money it is beneficial to have a number of sites demolished at the same time.

Sites could be secured for a temporary period but as there is no time scale around dealing with the problems around "on street parking" this could lead to sites becoming derelict through vandalism and creating a health and safety risk to children. It is likely that the introduction of residents parking permits and subsequent wheel clamping of vehicles not displaying a permit may very well stimulate demand.

**5 Consider the disposal of garage sites either through sale or a leasing arrangement, putting the management of garage sites onto a contracted out basis. This may have implications for staffing in terms of redundancy, possible need for TUPE arrangements.**

This will need further investigation if it is considered to be a viable option.

**6 Rent Options**

The current rental for a garage is £6.84 for Council Housing tenants and this is increased by £1.19 for VAT when garages are let to other residents

In order to encourage take up of vacant garages, particularly in areas of low demand, the introduction of an incremental rent structure could be considered. An example of this would be to freeze the rental for 1 year of garages where the security improvements have been carried out and to reduce the rental by say £2.00 on the marginal sites.