



Thursday, 19 September 2024

Report of Councillor Virginia Moran  
Cabinet Member for Housing

## Garage Site Update Report

This report provides an update to the Committee on South Kesteven District Council's garage sites and seeks support for the development of a Garage Site Action Plan.

### Report Author

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### Recommendations

**That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee note this report and support the next steps proposed.**

### Decision Information

Does the report contain any  
exempt or confidential  
information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate  
priorities?

High Performing Council

Which wards are impacted?

All

## 1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

### ***Finance and Procurement***

- 1.1 The financial implications arising from the development of the Garage Strategy will require careful consideration. The financial implications will need to consider the rental loss from the removal of garages that are available to let and will need to be offset against the costs of maintaining the garages. Any proposal to develop surplus sites will need to be undertaken taking into consideration the development costs, ongoing management and maintenance costs alongside the projected rental income in order to ensure a positive return.

**Completed by:** Paul Sutton Interim Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer

### ***Legal and Governance***

- 1.2 The Council does have a HRA Acquisition and Disposal Policy but there would need to be consultation with the tenants where sites have garages that have been licensed, leased or sold to ensure that the legalities are resolved.

**Completed by:** Mandy Braithwaite, Legal Executive

### ***Risk and Mitigation***

- 1.3 No significant risks have been identified.

### ***Climate Change***

- 1.4 The contents of this report do not have a direct impact on the Council's carbon emissions or the carbon emissions of the wider district. More detailed information on carbon impact of individual projects is outlined within the relevant project documentation.

## **2. Background to the Report**

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding the ongoing review of garage sites.
- 2.2 The approved Corporate Plan 2024-27 clearly sets out how South Kesteven District Council intends to meet the mission *“to ensure that all residents can access housing which is safe, good quality, sustainable and suitable for their needs and future generations.”*
- 2.3 The Corporate Plan, Priority 4 identifies *‘Housing’* as a key priority with high quality housing essential for all, and the council is committed to working with partners to provide this by:
  - Facilitating a range of appropriate and sustainable housing and community facilities for future generations and the emerging needs of all our communities.
  - Delivering exemplary and high-quality services for housing and homelessness.
  - Increasing the supply of sustainable and high-quality Council-provided housing.
  - Working with developers and private landlords to ensure sustainable, affordable, and high-quality housing is facilitated.
- 2.4 The variety of garage buildings present a number of challenges and opportunities to the Council in terms of repair, maintenance and management through to possible site redevelopment or land sale.
- 2.5 A number of interventions have been actioned by the Council since March 2024 to better utilise the garage stock, including conducting high level feasibility and developing option appraisals on the garage sites identified for potential development in the report presented to the committee in March.

### **2.6 Garage Stock Overview**

The district contains a total of 830 individual garage units, of which 455 have been assessed with regard to their suitability for development.

### **2.7 Outstanding Repairs**

Currently, there are 71 garage units across the district that have been reported by residents as needing repairs which will be completed by the Repairs team to ensure safety and usability.

### **2.8 Impact on Council Priorities**

The Council’s garage stock plays a crucial role in achieving broader community goals. Underutilised garage sites represent potential opportunities for new housing developments, addressing the need for affordable housing in the district. Conversely, sites in poor condition can attract anti-social behavior, and negatively

impact the surrounding areas. Effective management of these sites is essential to maintain community standards and support the Council's housing strategy.

## 2.9 Garage Site Action Plan

A Garage Site Action Plan is necessary to ensure that the management of garages and surrounding land is both effective and efficient. This plan will aim to maximise rental income for the Council and identify development opportunities for affordable housing on land where garages are no longer needed.

The Council's garage stock was constructed more than 35 years ago. Changes in construction methods mean that materials like precast concrete panels and asbestos sheets, which were once common, are no longer in use. The garages were built to accommodate smaller vehicles and the need for storage has shifted. Most garages are now used for storing items other than vehicles, and the current provision does not always address modern parking needs, including the increased number of vehicles per household.

## 2.10 How Will the Action Plan Be Developed?

If supported by the Committee the development of the Action Plan will begin with an internal stock condition survey conducted over the coming months. A working group comprising representatives from Repairs, Technical Services, Housing & Economic Development will be established to evaluate all garage sites. This group will consider a range of factors to ensure that all perspectives on the future use of these sites are considered.

Each site will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Initial assessment of suitability for development
- Repairs expenditure required
- Income generated from garages
- Current void levels
- Waiting list demand

## 2.11 How Will the Action Plan Be Delivered?

If supported by the Committee the Action Plan will be implemented over a four-year period, with annual reviews to ensure alignment with the Council's priorities. The plan will focus on four key considerations:

- Deliver Sites for Development

The Corporate Plan identifies the need to "Build more houses, on derelict land." The Council will assess whether garage site land can be repurposed for housing development. Initial assessments have already identified certain sites as potential development opportunities, while others have been discounted.

- Improve Sites Where Demand Is High

Some garage sites within the district are fully occupied and in high demand. These sites will be prioritised for investment. However, the working group must carefully evaluate these investments alongside potential development opportunities to avoid unnecessary expenditures on sites that may later be repurposed.

- Consider Alternatives Where Development Is Not Viable and Demand Is Low  
For sites that are neither suitable for development nor have sufficient demand to justify investment, the working group will explore alternative uses. Options may include demolishing garages to create parking spaces.

2.12 If supported the Action Plan will be added to the work programme of the Committee with an update included on the forward plan for March 2025.

### **3. Key Considerations**

3.1 It is recommended that Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive this report for information and support the development of the Garage Site Action plan and the formation of the working group to keep the momentum of the project.

### **4. Reasons for the Recommendations**

4.1 The garage stock requires improvements therefore a strategy for redevelopment, refurbishment or demolition is required to reduce the Councils ongoing liability.