

Report to the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: CHB-009-2015/16
Date of meeting: 19 January 2016

Portfolio: Housing

Subject: Council House-Building Programme - Sites Unsuitable for
Development

Responsible Officer: P. Pledger (01992 564248)

Democratic Services: J. Leither (01992 564756)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- 1. That the garages at Springfields (Site B), Epping be demolished and the hardstandings be re-surfaced and marked out to leave the site as open car parking for local residents and a residents' parking scheme be introduced;**
- 2. That the land at Langley Meadow (Site A), Loughton be retained by the Council as open amenity land; and**
- 3. That the garages at Loughton Way, Buckhurst Hill be demolished and the hardstandings be re-surface and marked out to leave the site as open car parking for local residents and a residents' parking scheme be introduced.**

Executive Summary:

Each of the sites at Springfields (Site B) Epping, Langley Meadow, Loughton, and Loughton Way, Buckhurst Hill have been identified as being undevelopable, either because they did not, or are not likely to receive planning permission or they are not financially viable for the Council to develop. This report explores the future use of each of the sites and makes recommendations as appropriate to each site.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The Cabinet Committee is required to decide on the future use of garage sites unsuitable for development in line with the Council's Policy.

Other Options for Action:

To adopt any other of the options within the existing Policy on the future use of undevelopable sites, as set out in the body of the report.

Report:

1. Where any of the Council's development sites identified for Council house-building is not developable for any of the reasons below, then the Cabinet Committee must decide on its future use:

- they do not receive planning permission;
- they are not financially viable for the Council to develop based on a development appraisal; or
- the Cabinet Committee considers for whatever reason, the site should not be developed for Council housing.

2. The options already agreed by the Cabinet Committee are as follows:

- to sell the site for social housing to a Housing Association in return for a capital receipt to fund future Council house-building and to gain nomination rights for Council housing applicants;
- to sell the site for private development, either for residential or other use in return for a capital receipt to fund future Council house-building;
- to divide up the site and sell the land to local residents to extend their private gardens in return for a capital receipt to fund future Council house-building;
- to demolish the garages, re-surface and mark out the land and to leave the site as open car parking for local residents;
- to sell the site to a town or parish council for their own purposes (eg. public amenity space) in return for a capital receipt to fund future Council house-building; or
- to continue to market and rent the garages to local residents

2. Each of the sites at Springfields (Site B) Epping, Langley Meadow (Site A), Loughton, and Loughton Way, Buckhurst Hill have been identified as being undevelopable, either because they did not, or are not likely to receive planning permission or they are not financially viable for the Council to develop. The reasons are set out below:

Springfields (Site B), Epping

4. The site at Springfields (Site B) in Epping (see appendix A) has 15 x garages, of which seven (46.6%) are vacant, was approved by the Cabinet Committee in November 2014 to provide 2 x 1-bed bungalows has been referred back to the Cabinet Committee by the Area Planning Sub-Committee East as it felt that this development, if constructed in conjunction with other sites in the vicinity, would present too great a parking stress in the surrounding streets. Photographs of the existing site can be seen at appendix B.

5. Since there are a high percentage of vacant garages, and the likelihood that there are a number of others not used for parking it is recommended option d be adopted for this site to demolish the garages, re-surface and mark out the land and to leave the site as open car parking for local residents with a residents' parking scheme.

Langley Meadow (Site A), Loughton

6. The site at Langley Meadow (Site A), Loughton (see appendix C), which is currently laid out as amenity space, was approved by the Cabinet Committee in November 2014 to provide 2 x 1-bed flats. However, during Pre-app discussions with the Planning Officers the Council's Arboriculturist was consulted and it was felt the development would cause harm to the existing tree on the site and as such the development could not be supported. Photographs of the existing site can be seen at appendix D.

7. This site is laid out as grassed amenity space with trees. Whilst there is a perceived need for parking in the local vicinity, the Cabinet Committee has already agreed to retail the parking area to the opposite end of the block as open parking. Therefore, it is recommended that this space be retained as open amenity land.

Loughton Way, Buckhurst Hill

8. The site at Loughton Way, Buckhurst Hill (see appendix E) has 24 x garages, of which nine (37.5%) are vacant, was approved by the Cabinet Committee in October 2014 to provide 4 x 3-bed houses. However, during Pre-app discussions with the Planning Officers and following detailed topographical site investigations it was felt the unconventional design and more particularly the changes in level between the adjacent houses and the ground level to the new houses would present on-going structural maintenance issues associated with the retaining structures, which would bring into question the long term viability of the development. Photographs of the existing site can be seen at appendix F.

9. Since there are a high percentage of vacant garages, and the likelihood that there are a number of others not used for parking, it is recommended option d be adopted for this site to demolish the garages, re-surface and mark out the land and to leave the site as open car parking for local residents with a residents' parking scheme. This would assist the parking stresses on other nearby development in Kirby Close.

Resource Implications:

The demolition and removal of the garages at Springfields, Epping and Loughton Way, Buckhurst Hill will cost in the region of £40,000, which includes the removal of the asbestos cement roofs.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Within its Terms of Reference, the House-Building Cabinet Committee is expected to consider the future use of each garage site for the purpose of Council House-building, and where a site is found to be unsuitable then they are expected to decide on its future use.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The future use of under-utilised garage sites that do not have redevelopment potential, need to be considered so as to make the best possible use of the site and enhance the environment.

Consultation Undertaken:

Ward Councillors have been consulted on the initial feasibility study. Since then, Planning Officers have been consulted as part of the detailed design stages. The Area Planning Sub-Committee East has considered the application for Springfields, Epping.

Background Papers:

Previous feasibility study documents relating to each of the sites, along with minutes of the Cabinet Committee and the Area Planning Sub-Committee East.

Risk Management:

The only risks that apply are with unforeseen costs associated with the demolition of the existing garages and any land retaining structures that may be required once removed.

Due Regard Record

This page shows **which groups of people are affected** by the subject of this report. It sets out **how they are affected** and how any **unlawful discrimination** they experience can be eliminated. It also includes information about how **access to the service(s)** subject to this report can be improved for the different groups of people; and how they can be assisted to **understand each other better** as a result of the subject of this report.

S149 Equality Act 2010 requires that due regard must be paid to this information when considering the subject of this report.

Within the Housing Service Strategy, it has been identified that the target groups that are affected by the Council's house building programme are people in need of:

- Affordable Housing,
- Homelessness assistance,
- Supported housing for special needs groups,
- Owners and occupiers of poor condition housing
- Council and housing association tenants.

From that, it was identified that generally, there is an under provision of suitable accommodation for nearly all target groups. This has been reaffirmed in the most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

Decision making is affected by funding and other factors, such as the availability of building land suitable for particular groups e.g. the elderly or young families.

There is no evidence of unlawful discrimination in relation to the provision of affordable housing.

This report considers the future use of existing garages that have been earmarked for possible future redevelopment. There are a high percentage of vacant garages on each of the sites. Creating open parking creates a benefit for all local residents.