

Chichester District Council

Executive Board

11th November 2003

Review of Martlet Homes Garage Sites

1. Contact(s)

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Board approve the proposed protocol as a guide to reviewing the suitability of Martlet Homes garage sites for redevelopment.**
- 2.2 **That the Board delegate to the Head of Community Services, following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder, authority to give the Council's consent pursuant to the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer agreement, to redevelopment of such of the garage sites as she considers satisfies the criteria in the Protocol.**

3. Main Report

- 3.1 The Council has pledged to facilitate the provision by Registered Social Landlords of new affordable housing for rent to meet housing need in the district. Areas of highest need are typically those areas where it is most difficult to find suitable sites.
- 3.2 Following on from stock transfer Martlet Homes have undertaken a strategic review of their assets. The recent Stock Condition Survey identified that there is considerable potential for development of additional social houses on their garage sites. Furthermore it was noted that a large proportion of garages are not rented by Martlet Homes tenants and many are used as storage space rather than garaging of private cars.
- 3.3 Martlet Homes have commissioned consultants to carry out a Constraints Analysis on 70 of their garage sites within the district and a working group has been set up to establish a protocol for considering the development potential of these garage sites for social housing and considering feasibility studies of individual sites. The working

group comprises officers from Martlet Homes, Chichester District Council (Planning and Housing) and Action in Rural Sussex.

- 3.4 When the stock was disposed of to Martlet Homes the Council imposed a condition that “The Company shall not in respect of any of the land forming part of the property which is at the date hereof used as amenity land or as garages or hard standing carry out or permit to be carried out any development without the consent in writing of the Council which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld or delayed in the case of any development the purpose of which is the provision of further Social Housing in the Chichester Area. In the event that social housing grant monies are being applied to the proposed development scheme, it is hereby agreed that a condition of the Council’s consent shall be that the Council be granted 100% nomination rights in respect of any initial lettings to the dwellings within any new development and any voids thereafter on terms satisfactory to the Council”.
- 3.5 A disposal where the land is to be used solely for the provision of further Social Housing by the Company whether for rent or sale on shared ownership terms is permitted under the terms of the transfer of the stock completed in March 2001.
- 3.6 The Garage Review Protocol sets out the conditions that must be met before a site will be considered for redevelopment as social housing, in terms of housing need, parking requirements, site suitability and resident consultation. In advance of individual planning submissions and in line with the stock transfer agreement Martlet Homes have requested that the Executive Board gives in principle support to developing those sites which meet the criteria set out in the Garage Review Protocol.
- 3.7 Regardless of the in principle support sought, the site will need to be assessed in the normal way before planning permission can be granted. It will be necessary to ensure that an identified need for social housing exists, that housing is the most appropriate reuse for the site, and that the site’s development is appropriate in planning terms. This will need to include a parking assessment to ensure that the development does not lead to under-provision of parking spaces. It may also be necessary to assess whether there is adequate provision of open space and play areas within the vicinity, and to consider the consequences of redeveloping the garages for storage of residents’ possessions.

4. Background Papers

Martlet Homes Garage Review Protocol, October 2003

5. Appendices

Working Group Protocol

Review of Martlet Homes Garage Sites

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Working Group Protocol

1. Working Group Membership

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Representative from Action in Rural Sussex

2. Background

Government guidance contained in PPG3: Housing (March 2000) places emphasis on making better use of under- used sites. Martlet Homes' recent Stock Condition Survey identified considerable potential for development of additional social housing on their garage sites. It was estimated that these areas could accommodate up to 200 much needed social housing units across the district, helping to replace some of those units lost under the Right to Buy.

When the stock was disposed of to Martlet Homes the Council imposed a condition that Martlet could not permit any development of garage or hard standing land without first obtaining the Council's written consent. Martlet Homes have requested that the Executive Board gives in principle consent to developing such sites, which meet the objectives and criteria set out in this protocol.

Martlet Homes recognise that there is much concern about the highway implications of parked cars displaced by such redevelopment and the relationship between new and existing properties. This protocol sets out the circumstances under which garage court redevelopment may be appropriate and the criteria to be used in evaluating individual proposals.

Redevelopment of under-used garage and parking courts can create a safer and more pleasant environment, whilst meeting local needs. A careful approach is required to respond to the unique characteristics and constraints of each site. It should be noted that in many cases redevelopment is neither appropriate nor desirable.

A working group has been set up, comprising officers from Martlet Homes, Chichester District Council (Planning and Housing) and Action in Rural Sussex to establish the major objectives involved and to ensure that the feasibility studies meet those objectives.

3. Existing Use

Garage courts are often secluded behind housing with nothing preventing access to them. There is often a security risk to properties whose gardens back onto these areas and the physical separation of dwellings and garage areas means there is no natural surveillance of these areas. It is clear that many garage courts are inconvenient, due to limited access points and frequently under used as residents prefer to park outside their homes on verges, open space or the highway because these are more convenient and overlooked.

4. Redevelopment objectives to be considered by the working group

(i) Making better use of under-used sites

(ii) Meeting local needs

The most obvious local need is the provision of new affordable accommodation, but the associated environmental improvements can also benefit existing residents, if the public areas are made safer and more attractive. Redevelopment can be an opportunity to re-examine both the local parking situation and the requirement for any additional open space or other land uses.

(iii) Creating a safer environment

Garage courts can attract anti-social behaviour. They can be a target for car crime, garage break-ins and vandalism. The gardens abutting secluded garage courts are often insecure and provide opportunities for burglars. Poor lighting also adds to the fear of crime. New developments should result in a safe, attractive and self-policing environment.

5. Garage redevelopment requirements/protocol

5.1 The potential redevelopment of these areas will be considered by the working group on an individual site-by-site basis and should ensure that the following criteria are met:

5.2 Housing Need

The working group must be satisfied that there is proven demonstrable local housing need for the proposed scheme.

5.3 Site Size and Shape

The working group must be satisfied that the size and shape of the site permits dwellings, gardens access, parking and turning to be accommodated in a manner that allows a logical layout, adequate privacy and integration with the surrounding and meets the housing need in terms of size, mix, number of units and tenure.

5.4 Constraints

Martlet Homes have already commissioned Professional Consultants to carry out a Constraints Analysis of 70 of their garage sites, throughout the Chichester District. This involves taking photos and drawing up site plans to map the constraints of each individual site, including rights of way, easements, way leaves, existing services, rights of neighbouring properties (e.g. access, right of light), boundaries and highway constraints. This will be used to establish the development potential of each site. The tenure of adjacent properties will also be noted.

A traffic light approach will be utilised to indicate whether the Constraints Analysis concludes that a site has the development potential:

- Green Light Schemes - sites which are considered to be more easily developable
- Amber Light Schemes – sites which are developable but have a number of constraints requiring further investigation
- Red Light Schemes – sites, which are considered less suitable for development, as they have significant constraints to be overcome.

5.5 Parking Requirements

A parking survey is to be undertaken by Martlet Homes to examine the parking in the local area, including parking courts, distributor roads, grass verges and open space. It is to be examined regularly between early morning and late evening on weekdays and at weekends over a period of two weeks to establish how many parking spaces and garages are in use. In this manner, underused sites suitable for redevelopment can be identified, and opportunities to redistribute parking provision can be examined. It can also be used to identify management issues such as abandoned cars and parking on open space and grass verges.

Resident parking provision must be retained within the local area. It may be possible to relocate parking provision for existing dwellings to their plots or it may be consolidated in more convenient and overlooked locations. The working group must be satisfied that any displaced parking can be integrated in the proposed redevelopment or adequate provision will be provided in the immediate surrounding area.

5.6 Open Space requirement

The working group will consult with Cultural Services to ensure that there is adequate provision of open space and play areas within the vicinity.

5.7 Secure by Design

All new developments would be expected to acquire Secure by Design certification. They should provide natural surveillance of public areas, generate a sense of ownership and secure private areas.

5.8 Consultation with Parish Council, Local District Councillors and Local Residents

Martlet Homes will invite comments from both Parish Councils and Local District Councillors and keep them fully updated in respect of redevelopment proposals, which affect their area.

Local Residents are to be consulted by Martlet Homes with support from Chichester District Council and Action in Rural Sussex and a reaction survey undertaken. This is to involve those who live next to the site and those who park there. The working group must be satisfied that there are no objections that might significantly affect the outcome of a planning application.

5.9 Planning

The above conditions must be met before a garage site will be considered for redevelopment as social housing. Regardless of the in principle support sought from the Council's Executive Board, the site will still need to be assessed in the normal way and the working party's views will not fetter the discretion of the Council as planning authority.

6. Progression of Schemes

All schemes will be assessed against the above criteria, those schemes which meet all requirements and are approved by the working group will be grouped into batches of sites, in priority order for submission to the Head of Community Services. They will then be progressed to planning stage by Martlet Homes in the normal way and bids will be submitted to the Regional Housing Board and/or Housing Corporation so that grant funding can be secured as early as possible.