



## CABINET REPORT

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Council garage sites and the allocation and management of council garages</b>
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**AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC**

<b>Cabinet Meeting Date:</b>	19 July 2017
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Within Policy:</b>	Yes
<b>Policy Document:</b>	Yes
<b>Directorate:</b>	Chief Executive's
<b>Accountable Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Stephen Hibbert
<b>Ward(s)</b>	All

### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The Council owns 2,772 garages on 187 sites throughout the borough and these garages are managed, on the Council's behalf, by Northampton Partnership Homes.
- 1.2 Although there have been a number of garage reviews in recent years, these have been site specific and have not involved a systematic review of every garage site.
- 1.3 Half of the council garages are empty, due to the low demand for parking, residents' concerns about the condition and location of the garages, and the lack of active marketing. The problem is compounded by a lack of transparency in the way in which applications are prioritised and garages are allocated.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to ask Cabinet to approve a Council Garage Sites Strategy that will ensure that optimum use is made of the garage sites, and a Council Garages Policy that will improve the allocation and management of the garages.

## 2. Recommendations

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- 2.1 It is **recommended** that Cabinet approves:
- (a) The Council Garage Sites Strategy (**Appendix A**)
  - (b) The Council Garages Policy (**Appendix B**)

## 3. Issues and Choices

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### 3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 Northampton Borough Council owns 2,772 garages on 187 sites in various locations throughout the borough (see **Appendix A**) and these garages are managed, on the Council's behalf, by Northampton Partnership Homes.
- 3.1.2 Most of the garages are situated in blocks of garages on designated garage sites, or underneath blocks of flats. Some are situated on their own or in pairs. The annual rental income received from the council garages is £650,000.
- 3.1.3 Although there are approximately 1,000 applicants on the Garage Register, 1,423 of the garages are currently empty due to a low demand for parking, residents' concerns about the condition and location of the garages, and the lack of active marketing.
- 3.1.4 In recent years, the Council has carried out a number of garage reviews, but these have been site specific and not involved a systematic review of every garage site. They have also done nothing to address the lack of transparency in the way in which applications are being prioritised and garages are being allocated.
- 3.1.5 To deliver value for money, it is essential that the Council understands the financial rate of return that is received from the garages and that it ensures that all stock investment decisions take into account the financial performance of the garages, the level of demand for the garages and the long-term sustainability of the garages.
- 3.1.6 Consideration also needs to be given to Northampton's need for affordable housing, and the opportunities that some of the garage sites may offer to help meet that need.
- 3.1.7 In order to address these issues, Northampton Partnership Homes has developed a Council Garage Sites Strategy and produced a new Council Garages Policy.

### 3.2 Issues

#### Reasons for the garages being empty

- 3.2.1 The main reasons for so many council garages being empty are the low demand for garages in the area, and garages not being fit for purpose.
- 3.2.2 The low demand for garages is generally due to one or more of the following:
- Sufficient on-street parking in the area
  - Alternative garage sites in the area (oversupply)
  - Residents have their own garage, drive or parking space

3.2.3 Some of the garages are not fit for purpose due to one or more reasons:

- The garages are in a poor state of repair
- The garages are too small for modern day motor vehicles
- Access to the garage site is difficult
- Concerns about the security of the garages and the risk of damage, theft or anti-social behaviour (lack of surveillance)

#### Making the best use of each garage site

3.2.4 In order to make best use of each garage site, Northampton Partnership Homes requires a framework within which it can review the garage sites, make recommendations about their future use and provide the Council with the information it needs to make informed stock investment decisions.

3.2.5 It is proposed, in the Council Garage Sites Strategy (see **Appendix A**), that the garage sites will be reviewed on a neighbourhood basis and take into account the interdependencies between demand, stock condition, housing need and the local environmental and parking issues.

3.2.6 The neighbourhood reviews will comprise 3 elements: a desktop review, a condition survey and development appraisal, and consultation and intelligence gathering.

3.2.7 At the end of each review, Northampton Partnership Homes will produce a business case, recommending the best option for the garage sites in the neighbourhood.

3.2.8 These options will include the following:

- Retain the garages and bring them up to a lettable standard
- Demolish the garages and build new garages on the site
- Demolish the garages and retain the site as level car parking
- Demolish the garages and build new affordable housing
- Demolish the garages and redevelop the site for alternative use (open space, commercial use, etc)
- Dispose of the garage site

#### Opportunities for redevelopment

3.2.9 In order to assess a garage site's potential for redevelopment, Northampton Partnership Homes is planning to undertake a feasibility study for each garage site.

3.2.10 With some garage sites, it will immediately be clear that, due to the size and location of the garage site, redevelopment of the site is not possible. However, in other instances, the feasibility study may reveal that the garage site has development potential and, in such cases, feasibility plans will be produced, pre-application advice will be sought from Planning and the Highways Authority, and consideration will be given to the development constraints, such as services, trees and access, etc.

### Concerns about garage allocations

- 3.2.11 Applicants, Councillors and some Northampton Partnership Homes staff have said they are unclear about who is eligible to apply to join the Council Garage Register, how garage applicants are being prioritised and how garages are being allocated.
- 3.2.12 These concerns have been addressed in the proposed new Council Garages Policy (see **Appendix B**), designed to ensure that the garages are allocated fairly and efficiently, are well managed, and are kept fully occupied and in good repair.

### Improvements to the garage licence agreement

- 3.2.13 Applicants, Councillors and some Northampton Partnership Homes staff have said that it is unclear what the garages can be used for, how many garages someone can rent and how much notice needs to be given to terminate the licence agreement.
- 3.2.14 These concerns have been addressed in the proposed new Council Garages Policy (see **Appendix B**) and in the new Garage Licence Agreement that Northampton Partnership Homes will introduce when the new Garages Policy comes into effect.
- 3.2.15 The Garage Licence Agreement will mirror the Council Garages Policy and provide clarity in relation to the licensee's responsibilities. It will also allow garages to be used, when permission is given, to store personal property and possessions.
- 3.2.16 Increased efficiency will be achieved through on-line applications, shorter turnaround times and a move towards all licensees paying monthly in advance by direct debit. Active marketing of the council garages will resume, with applicants being encouraged to look online regularly for details of the garages available to rent.

## **3.3 Choices (Options)**

- 3.3.1 Officers of the Council and Northampton Partnership Homes have considered the various options and have concluded, for the reasons set out below, that it is in the Council's best interests to approve and implement the Council Garage Sites Strategy (see **Appendix A**) and the Council Garages Policy (see **Appendix B**).

### COUNCIL GARAGE SITES STRATEGY

#### Option 1 (Recommended)

- 3.3.2 The preferred option is for Cabinet to approve a borough-wide Council Garage Sites Strategy that sets out the Council's strategic priorities and objectives in relation to its 187 garage sites and provides a framework within which Northampton Partnership Homes can review the garage sites, make recommendations about their future use, provide the Council with the information it needs to make informed stock investment decisions and identify the best use for each garage site.
- 3.3.3 This represents an equitable, efficient and cost-effective way of determining the best use of the council garage sites in the future, based on an assessment of the garages in each neighbourhood, the condition and investment needs of the garages, any imbalance between demand and supply, and the opportunities to make better use of the sites for other purposes. This evidence-based strategic approach to all future investments in the Council's garages and garage sites will also ensure that best use is made of the funding available and that it delivers Value for Money.

### Option 2 (Not recommended)

- 3.3.4 Another option that was considered was for Officers to continue with the existing, ad hoc arrangements, with decisions on the future of each site being made, on a site-by-site basis, without the benefit of a Council Garage Sites Strategy.
- 3.3.5 Although this option would enable Northampton Partnership Homes to continue dealing with the garage sites that are the most problematic and/or offer the best opportunity for redevelopment or disposal, it was rejected.
- 3.3.6 In the absence of a Council Garage Sites Strategy that sets out very clearly the Council's key strategic priorities and objectives in relation to the garage sites, Northampton Partnership Homes may find it much more difficult and time consuming to engage with local stakeholders (including local residents, Councillors and existing/prospective garage licensees) to determine what should happen to the sites in their neighbourhoods. This could result in unintended consequences, inconsistent decision making, poor Value for Money and a much higher level of investment than is realistic. If this happens, there is a real risk that the planned programme of reviews designed to inform future stock investment and decisions and help the Council identify the best use for each garage site will lose momentum and fail.

### Option 3 (Not recommended)

- 3.3.7 Another option that was considered was for Officers to carry out a borough-wide survey of all 2,772 garages to establish their condition and how much it will cost to bring each garage up to the Lettable Standard. On completion of the survey, a decision would then be made on which garages are economic to repair and which garages should be left empty and made secure. A rolling programme of repairs would then be developed and funded to ensure that all garages are brought up to the required standard within an agreed period of time.
- 3.3.8 Although this option would ensure that a borough-wide survey is carried out to confirm the condition of the 2,772 council garages and how much it will cost to bring each garage up to the Lettable Standard – and this will enable Northampton Partnership Homes to quantify the total cost of repairs and, taking into account the funding available, confirm how long it will take to complete them – it was rejected.
- 3.3.9 In the absence of a Council Garage Sites Strategy that underpins and drives the planned programme of reviews, there is a very real risk that this option will result in the pepper-potting of repairs to garages on sites that are in low demand, are not fit for purpose and could be used for a better, alternative purpose. Not only will this waste money, but it will also waste the opportunity to consider alternative uses that might make a significant difference in relation to parking, open space, crime and anti-social behaviour, housing need and social and physical regeneration.

## COUNCIL GARAGE POLICY

### Option 1 (Preferred)

- 3.3.10 The preferred option is for Cabinet to approve a borough-wide Council Garages Policy that sets out who is eligible to rent a council garage, how people can apply and what criteria is used to determine which applicants should be offered a garage.
- 3.3.11 The Council Garages Policy and the revised Garage Licence Agreement will set out what the council garages can and cannot be used for, who is responsible for repairs and maintenance and the consequences of any breach in the licence conditions and what a licensee needs to do if they no longer want to rent a garage.
- 3.3.12 With more than 1000 applicants on the Council Garage Register and more than 1,423 council garages currently empty, it is essential that the Council is very clear about what the council garages can and cannot be used for, who is eligible to rent a council garage, how people can apply and what criteria is used to determine which of the applicants on the Garage Register should be offered a garage. The Council Garages Policy (and the revised Garage Licence Agreement) will also help Northampton Partnership Homes to market, let and manage the 2,772 garages.

### Option 2 (Not recommended)

Another option that Cabinet can consider is to do nothing.

However, this option is not recommended because doing nothing will simply compound the problems that have been caused by the current lack of clarity in relation to the allocation and management of garages. Northampton Partnership Homes will continue to have problems marketing and letting vacant garages and, as a result, this will continue to limit the income generated in rent.

## **4. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **4.1 Policy**

- 4.1.1 The action that the Council is proposing to take is in line with Council policy and reflects the priorities in the Corporate Plan 2016-20.

### **4.2 Resources and Risk**

- 4.2.1 At this stage, Cabinet is only being asked to approve the Council Garage Sites Strategy and Council Garages Policy. Further reports will be submitted to Cabinet.
- 4.2.2 Northampton Partnership Homes has confirmed that it is able to complete the programme of reviews (to inform future stock investment decisions and help the Council identify the best use for each site) from its existing resources.
- 4.2.3 Finance Officers will have an input into the evaluation of the business case that Northampton Partnership Homes will produce for each neighbourhood. The funding arrangements required to enable Northampton Partnership Home to implement the recommendations will need to be considered when the reviews are completed.
- 4.2.4 Consideration will need to be given to how any recommendations will affect the annual rental income that the Council receives from its garages and any new homes that are built on the garage sites. Consideration will also need to be given to whether or not the garages' annual planned maintenance budget of £350,000 will be sufficient to meet the future investment needs of the garages.

4.2.5 The funding arrangements for any new homes planned for the garage sites will be the subject of separate Cabinet reports.

### **4.3 Legal**

4.3.1 Legal Services have reviewed the contents of the Cabinet report, the Council Garage Sites Strategy and the Council Garages Policy and have no further comments to add.

### **4.4 Equality and Health**

4.4.1 A full Community Impact Assessment has been completed.

4.4.2 This will improve the wellbeing and life chances of people with protected characteristics, including older people and people with disabilities, and it will, therefore, have a positive impact on Equality and Diversity.

4.4.3 The anticipated improvements that will be delivered as a result of the Council Garage Sites Strategy and the Council Garages Policy are part of the Council's commitment to improving communities and our town as a place to live. During all stages of this project, the Council will work closely with Northampton Partnership Homes, have due regard to its Public Sector Duty and continue to work to tackle discrimination and inequality and contribute to developing a fairer society.

### **4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)**

4.5.1 Northampton Partnership Homes will be consulting with Ward Councillors, Housing Officers and other stakeholders in the wards in which the council garages are located. When the business case and garage site recommendations are agreed, there will be further consultation with residents, Councillors and other stakeholders.

### **4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes**

4.6.1 The action proposed will help meet 2 of the priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- **Housing for Everyone.** A likely outcome of the Council Garage Sites Strategy will be the creation of development opportunities for much needed new affordable housing.
- **Working Hard and Spending your Money Wisely:** It will enable the Council and Northampton Partnership Homes to provide a solution to the high number of empty garages.

## **Appendices**

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Appendix A – Council Garage Sites Strategy

Appendix B – Council Garages Policy

## **Background Papers**

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Community Impact Assessment

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# **Council Garage Sites Strategy**

**1 August 2017**



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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Northampton Borough Council owns approximately 2,800 garages in various locations throughout the borough (see **Appendix 1 and Appendix 2**) and these garages are managed, on the Council's behalf, by Northampton Partnership Homes.
- 1.2 Most of the garages are situated in blocks of garages on designated garage sites, or underneath blocks of flats. Some are situated on their own or in pairs.
- 1.3 Although the Council's garages generate an annual income of around £650,000 and there are approximately 1,000 applicants on the Garage Register, just under half of the garages are empty and it has been a while since they were actively marketed.
- 1.4 In recent years, the Council has carried out a number of garage reviews, but these have been site specific and not involved a systematic review of every garage site.
- 1.5 To deliver value for money, it is essential that the Council understands the financial rate of return received from the garages and ensures that all stock investment decisions take into account the garages' financial performance, the level of demand for garages and the long-term sustainability of the garages.
- 1.6 Consideration also needs to be given to Northampton's need for affordable housing, and the opportunities that some of the garage sites may offer to help meet that need.

## 2. Reasons for garages being empty

- 2.1 The main reasons for council garages being empty are the low demand for garages in the area, and garages not being fit for purpose.

### Low demand for garages in the area

This is generally due to one or more of the following:

- Sufficient on-street parking in the area
- Alternative garage sites in the area (oversupply)
- Residents have their own garage, drive or parking space

### Garages not being fit for purpose

This is generally due to one or more of the following:

- The garages are in a poor state of repair
- The garages are too small for modern day motor vehicles
- Access to the garage site is difficult
- Concerns about the security of the garages and the risk of damage, theft or anti-social behaviour (lack of surveillance)

### **3. Overall aim of this Strategy**

3.1 The overall aim of the Council Garage Sites Strategy is to provide a framework within which Northampton Partnership Homes can review the garage sites, make recommendations about their future use, provide the Council with the information it needs to make informed stock investment decisions and, in conjunction with the new Council Garages Policy, deliver the following positive outcomes:

- Garages that are in a better condition and fit for purpose
- Improved garage occupancy rates
- Maximum rental income (from garages and homes)
- Improved Housing Revenue Account position
- Improved customer satisfaction
- New affordable rented housing
- More attractive neighbourhoods
- Less anti-social behaviour

### **4. Options for the future use of the sites**

4.1 The primary objective of the Council Garage Sites Strategy is to ensure that a comprehensive review is undertaken of each garage site and that, on the basis of those reviews, the most appropriate option is chosen for the future use of each site.

4.2 The following options will be considered:

- Retain the garages and bring them up to a lettable standard
- Demolish the garages and build new garages on the site
- Demolish the garages and retain the site as level car parking
- Demolish the garages and build new affordable housing
- Demolish the garages and redevelop the site for alternative use (open space, commercial use, etc.)
- Dispose of the garage site

### **5. Neighbourhood reviews of the sites**

5.1 In order to achieve the best outcomes and understand the impacts of decisions and the interdependencies between demand, stock condition, housing need and the local environmental and parking issues, the garage sites will be reviewed on a neighbourhood basis and, at the end of each review, a business case will be produced, recommending the best option for garage sites in the neighbourhood.

- 5.2 The neighbourhood reviews will comprise 3 elements: a desktop review, a condition survey and development appraisal, and consultation and intelligence gathering.

#### Desktop review

- 5.3 The purpose of the desktop review is to assess:

- The garages' letting history
- The garages' repairs history
- The garages' management history (crime, anti-social behaviour, etc)
- Title and boundary issues
- The parking issues in the area
- The housing need in the area

#### Condition survey and development appraisal

- 5.4 For each garage site, a survey will be carried out to establish the condition of the garages and the likely cost of bringing them up to the lettable standard and maintaining them at that standard in the future.
- 5.5 In order to inform the stock investment decisions, a schedule of works will be drawn up for each garage site and estimates then produced, on the basis of the schedule of works, using the National Housing Federation's Schedule of Rates.
- 5.6 An initial appraisal will also be made of each site's potential for redevelopment, taking into account anything that might constrain redevelopment such as:
- Access to the site
  - Topography and the layout of the site
  - Ownership of adjoining properties and land (including Party Wall issues)
  - Planning and Highways concerns (including density, overlooking, car parking, etc.)
- 5.7 Where the initial appraisal suggests that redevelopment of the garage site is possible and it is considered that redevelopment of the site will offer a good option for the future use of the site, feasibility drawings and demolition quotations will be obtained.
- 5.8 The feasibility drawings will enable Northampton Partnership Homes to obtain an early indication from Planning and Highways of any likely issues for consideration.

#### Consultation and intelligence-gathering

- 5.9 In addition to the desktop review and surveys, each garage site review will involve consultation with a wide range of stakeholders – including local residents and ward councillors, housing officers, neighbourhood wardens, environmental health officers, the Anti-Social Behaviour Team and the Police – to gather intelligence about how the site is being used and what impact it is having on the local neighbourhood.

## **6. Consultation and decision making**

- 6.1 As the garages and garage sites are owned by the Council but managed and maintained by Northampton Partnership Homes, it is essential that a robust and efficient process is put in place to consider, determine and approve the way in which each garage site is to be used in the future.
- 6.2 When Northampton Partnership Homes has completed its review of the garage sites within a neighbourhood and consulted with the local Ward Councillors, it will produce a business case that includes a set of recommendations in relation to the proposed future use of the neighbourhood's garage sites.
- 6.3 The business case will be submitted to the Council for consideration and scrutiny by Officers from Housing, Planning and Regeneration, Finance and Legal Services. If the Council Officers are satisfied with the business case and recommendations, Northampton Partnership Homes will consult formally with the local Ward Councillors and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing to obtain their views.
- 6.4 If the business case recommends a garage site's change of use – to commercial use, for example, or for new affordable housing – the business case and recommendations will need to be submitted to the Council's Cabinet for approval.
- 6.5 If the business case does not recommend a garage site's change of use, Northampton Partnership Homes will be permitted to implement the recommendations after the Council's Officers have scrutinised and approved the business case and recommendations (see Paragraph 6.3 above).
- 6.6 Where it is decided that the garages will be demolished, Northampton Partnership Homes will consult with the garage licensees as soon as possible. The licensees will be given at least 4 weeks' notice to vacate their garages and, if they are local, they will be offered another garage in the area if one is available. If the garages are to be rebuilt, the existing licensees will be awarded priority when the new garages are let.
- 6.7 Where the wall of a garage serves as a boundary wall and is due to be demolished, Northampton Partnership Homes will provide a new fence in order to ensure that the security of the adjoining property is not compromised.

## **7. Retaining and repairing the garages**

- 7.1 Where it is decided that the garages will be retained and brought up to the Lettable Standard, licensees will be advised of the programme in order that they can make alternative arrangements while the works are taking place.
- 7.2 For each garage that is to be retained, a conditions survey will be carried out and a schedule of works produced. These will identify the works that are needed to bring the garage up to the Lettable Standard.
- 7.3 Northampton Partnership Homes is putting in place a cyclical maintenance programme to ensure that the garages do not fall into a state of disrepair again.

## **8. Demolition and the construction of new garages**

- 8.1 The demolition and construction of new garages is a costly option, so it is only likely to be recommended if the garage site is situated in an area where there is a high demand for garages (fuelled, perhaps, by local parking issues) and the existing garages are too small and/or uneconomic to repair.

## **9. Demolition and the provision of replacement parking**

- 9.1 The demolition of the existing garages and the provision of replacement parking may offer a good and cost-effective option where the garages are in an area where, despite the low demand for garages, there is not enough available parking and the existing council garages are unsightly and/or uneconomic to repair.
- 9.2 In such instances – especially where it involves the loss of an income stream – the business case will need to demonstrate the community benefits of such an option, such as the removal of an eyesore, the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour and/or the savings that will be achieved on repairs and maintenance.

## **10. Demolition and the provision of new housing**

- 10.1 Given the high demand for affordable housing in Northampton and the Council's commitment to re-investing its Right to Buy receipts in the provision of new council homes, every garage site will be assessed to establish whether or not it has the potential to be redeveloped to provide additional affordable housing.
- 10.2 In such instances, the business case will need to demonstrate not only that this is the best option but also how the construction of the new homes will be funded.

## **11. Demolition and redevelopment for an alternative use**

- 11.1 The demolition of the existing garages and the redevelopment of the garage site for an alternative, non-housing use – commercial or recreational, for example – may offer a good and cost-effective option.
- 11.2 In such instances, the business case will need to demonstrate not only that this is the best option but also how the demolition and construction costs will be funded.

## **12. Disposal of garage sites**

- 12.1 Although careful consideration will need to be given to all available options, disposal of a garage site may be appropriate, for example, where there is low demand and the site is unsuitable for new housing development but is adjacent to the home or business of someone who is interested in purchasing more land.
- 12.2 In such instances, the business case needs to demonstrate this is the best option.

## **13. Monitoring implementation of this Strategy**

- 13.1 Implementation of this Strategy will be monitored through the Quarterly Performance Meetings that take place between the Council and Northampton Partnership Homes.

## APPENDIX 2 – Garage numbers by neighbourhood

Area	Number of Garages
Abington	52
Bellinge	8
Blackthorn	170
Briar Hill	105
Dallington	48
Delapre	111
Duston	133
Eastfield	174
Exeter Road	9
Goldings	49
Great Houghton	15
Hardingstone	12
Hunsbury Heath	1
Kings Heath	125
Kingsley	8
Kingsthorpe	183
Lakeview	96
Lings	244
Little Billing	26
Lumbertubs	122
Obelisk Rise	20
Overstone Lodge	54
Semilong	64
Spencer	10
Spring Boroughs	114
St Crispin	19
St James	129
Standerns Barn	129
Sunnyside	59
Thorplands	302
Town Centre	103
Weston Favell	18
Wootton	44
Total	2756



# **Council Garages Policy**

**1 August 2017**



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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Northampton Borough Council owns approximately 2,800 garages in various locations throughout the borough (see **Appendix 1**) and these garages are managed, on the Council's behalf, by Northampton Partnership Homes.
- 1.2 Most of the garages are situated in blocks of garages on designated garage sites, or underneath blocks of flats. Some are situated on their own or in pairs.
- 1.3 When a garage becomes available, it will be let to an applicant on Northampton's Garage Register in accordance with this Council Garages Policy.

## **2. Overall aim of this policy**

- 2.1 The overall aim of the Council Garages Policy is to ensure that Northampton Borough Council's garages are allocated fairly and efficiently and that they are kept in a good state of repair, are well managed and are fully occupied.

## **3. Eligibility for a garage**

- 3.1 In order to be considered for a council garage, applicants must first join Northampton's Garage Register. The Garage Register is administered, on the Council's behalf, by Northampton Partnership Homes.
- 3.2 Anyone who is aged 18 or over and residing in the Northampton Borough is entitled to apply to join the Garage Register. However, an application will be refused (and the applicant will be considered not eligible to join the Garage Register) if:
  - They are renting their home and/or garage from Northampton Borough Council and they are currently in arrears with their rent;
  - They have previously rented their home and/or garage from Northampton Borough Council and have failed to pay off their arrears;
  - They are residing in the Borough and are liable for a council tax debt, or other debt, to Northampton Borough Council; and/or
  - They are residing in the Borough and have a history of poor behaviour. (This may include, for example, criminal or anti-social behaviour, vehicle nuisance and/or previous breaches of tenancy conditions and/or garage licence conditions).
- 3.3 No applicant will be able to let more than two garages.
- 3.4 If Northampton Partnership Homes decides that an applicant is not eligible to join the Garage Register, it will inform them in writing, setting out its reasons.

## **4. Use of the garage**

- 4.1 A garage must normally be used for the garaging of a privately-owned motor vehicle (a car, a van, a motorised scooter, a motorbike, an off-road bike, a trailer or a boat) that is owned by the applicant or someone living in the applicant's home.
- 4.2 If a garage is not going to be used for the garaging of a privately-owned motor vehicle, Northampton Partnership Homes (on behalf of the Council) will need to provide its written consent before the applicant / licensee is permitted to use the garage to store personal belongings in line with the terms and conditions of the Garage Licence Agreement.
- 4.3 At its discretion, Northampton Partnership Homes may withdraw its consent for the garage to be used for personal storage by giving 4 weeks' written notice.
- 4.4 The licensee shall not be permitted to use the garage or the land surrounding the garage for the following purposes including, but not limited to:
- The operation of a business or charity (including the storage of materials);
  - Displays or advertising;
  - Residential use (including temporary overnight / daytime accommodation);
  - Accommodation for animals or reptiles;
  - Repairs, servicing, modifying or re-spraying any vehicle. (Minor, routine maintenance of the nominated motor vehicle may be carried out);
  - The use of power tools and/or any equipment requiring a flame (whether protected or not);
  - The storage of gas bottles;
  - The storage of combustible or volatile substances other than those within the fuel tank or mechanisms of the motor vehicle kept in the garage;
  - Any criminal, immoral or illegal purpose, including selling or using illegal drugs, or storing or handling stolen goods.
- 4.5 The licensee shall not be permitted to make any structural alterations to the garage or to assign, sub-let or part with the possession of the garage.
- 4.6 The Council and Northampton Partnership Homes shall not be held responsible for the loss or damage of any property brought into the garage. Licensees are expected to take out adequate insurance to cover their property and belongings.
- 4.7 If a licensee moves home and it is no longer feasible for them to continue using the garage for their privately-owned motor vehicle, they will be required to relinquish their garage licence by providing one week's notice.

## 5. How to apply for a garage

- 5.1 To apply for a council garage, applicants must complete a Garage Application Form, identify the neighbourhood(s) in which they would be willing to rent a garage, and provide Northampton Partnership Homes with all of the information that it needs in order to assess their application and its level of priority.
- 5.2 Applicants will be required to provide proof of their identity and home address and, where appropriate, proof of ownership of the motor vehicle they are intending to park in the garage. If the applicant has been issued with a 'Blue Badge' parking permit, they must provide Northampton Partnership Homes with sight of this.
- 5.3 The registration of a garage application may be delayed or cancelled if Northampton Partnership Homes is not provided with all of the information it has requested.

## 6. Prioritising applications

- 6.1 Council garages are allocated on the basis of applicants' 'Band' and 'effective date'.
- 6.2 Applicants are placed in the 'Band' that best reflects their circumstances. Their 'effective date' is the date that their application has been assessed and registered.
- 6.3 Priority will be given to applicants who are on the Garage Register and are currently renting their home from Northampton Borough Council. However, if none of the tenants on the Garage Register express an interest in renting a particular garage, the garage will be offered to other applicants on the Garage Register.
- 6.4 Applications will be prioritised on the basis of their circumstances – Band A1 being the highest and Band B9 being the lowest – and their 'effective date':

<b>BAND A – Tenants who are currently renting their home from Northampton Borough Council</b>	
<b>1</b>	Applicants who are considered by Northampton Partnership Homes (in consultation with the Council's Head of Housing and Wellbeing) to have an urgent need for a council garage or already have a council garage and require an emergency transfer to another garage.
<b>2</b>	Applicants who have a disability (or reside with someone who has a disability) and are in possession of a valid 'Blue Badge' permit, own a motor vehicle that they wish to park in a garage and live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is situated.
<b>3</b>	Applicants who have a disability (or reside with someone who has a disability) and are in possession of a valid 'Blue Badge' permit, own a motor vehicle that they wish to park in a garage and live in another neighbourhood where there are no other available garages.
<b>4</b>	Applicants who own a motor vehicle that they want to park in a garage and live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is situated.
<b>5</b>	Applicants who own a motor vehicle that they want to park in a garage and live in another neighbourhood where there are no available garages.
<b>6</b>	Applicants who require a second garage because they own at least two motor vehicles that they want to park in a garage.
<b>7</b>	Applicants who do not own a motor vehicle but live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is located and wish to use the garage for personal storage.
<b>8</b>	Other applicants who do not fall into any of the above categories but, at the discretion of Northampton Partnership Homes, merit consideration.

**BAND B – Residents of Northampton Borough who are currently not renting their home from Northampton Borough Council**

1	Applicants who are considered by Northampton Partnership Homes (in consultation with the Council's Head of Housing and Wellbeing) to have an urgent need for a council garage or already have a council garage and require an emergency transfer to another garage.
2	Applicants who have a disability (or reside with someone who has a disability) and are in possession of a valid 'Blue Badge' permit, own a motor vehicle that they wish to park in a garage and live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is situated.
3	Applicants who have a disability (or reside with someone who has a disability) and are in possession of a valid 'Blue Badge' permit, own a motor vehicle that they wish to park in a garage and live in another neighbourhood where there are no other available garages.
4	Applicants who own a motor vehicle that they want to park in a garage and live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is situated.
5	Applicants who own a motor vehicle that they want to park in a garage and live in another neighbourhood where there are no available garages.
6	Applicants who require a second garage because they own at least two motor vehicles that they want to park in a garage.
7	Applicants who do not own a motor vehicle but live in the neighbourhood in which the garage is located and wish to use the garage for personal storage.
8	Local businesses that are operating in the neighbourhood in which the garage is located and wish to use the garage for staff car parking.
9	Other applicants who do not fall into any of the above categories but, at the discretion of Northampton Partnership Homes, merit consideration.

6.5 The 'banding system' cannot cover every eventuality. Where Northampton Partnership Homes considers that an applicant's circumstances are so exceptional as to merit them being awarded additional priority and offered a garage that they would not normally be offered under the garage allocations scheme, it should consult the Council's Head of Housing and Wellbeing who has the discretionary power, under this Policy, to award additional priority where this is justified.

6.6 When the applicant has been accepted onto the Garage Register, Northampton Partnership Homes will write to the applicant, confirming the 'Band' in which they have been placed, their 'effective date' and their application reference number.

## **7. Allocation of garages**

7.1 When a garage becomes available, Northampton Partnership Homes will review the Garage Register and offer the garage to the applicant who has the highest priority. This will be determined by the 'Band' they are in and, where there is more than one suitable applicant within a particular Band, determining the earliest 'effective date'.

7.2 If the applicant with the highest priority does not respond to the offer within 7 days of being made the offer, the garage will be reallocated.

7.3 Applicants who accept an offer of a garage must sign and return a Garage Licence Agreement within 7 days of accepting the offer. If they fail to do so, the offer will be withdrawn and the garage will be reallocated.

7.4 Garage licensees who wish to apply for a transfer to a different garage must complete a Garage Application Form and, if they are offered a transfer to another garage, they must complete a Termination of Garage Licence form.

## **8. Repairs, maintenance and cleaning**

8.1 It is the licensee's responsibility to:

- Keep the garage (including the door, gutters, fixtures and fittings and hardstanding) in a clean and tidy condition, and to make good any damage that can be attributed to them;
- Notify Northampton Partnership Homes immediately of any defect or repair needed to the garage or compound area, including the drains and other services;
- Permit Northampton Partnership Homes and its agents and contractors – upon giving reasonable notice of 7 days, except in an emergency – to enter the garage and inspect the state of repair, cleanliness and/or use of the garages, and do any repairs that are required to the garage and/or adjoining garages;
- Keep the garage door closed and locked when not in use, and keep the gate to the garage compound (where one exists) closed and locked, and not provide anyone with the keys or copies of keys.

8.2 It is Northampton Partnership Homes' responsibility to:

- Undertake urgent repairs when these are needed for health and safety reasons or to protect the integrity of a garage's structure; and
- Undertake planned maintenance to garages on a cyclical basis.

8.3 If a garage requires substantial repairs, Northampton Partnership Homes will endeavour to offer the licensee a suitable alternative garage.

## **9. Rent charge arrangements**

9.1 Garage licences are weekly and can be terminated by giving a week's written notice.

9.2 All garage rents are charged weekly, but must be paid monthly in advance. Unless otherwise agreed with Northampton Partnership Homes, the licensee must pay their garage rent by direct debit.

9.3 Licensees who are not tenants of Northampton Borough Council are charged more for a garage than tenants of Northampton Borough Council. Licensees who are not living in the town centre are charged more for a town centre garage than someone who is living in the town centre.

- 9.4 Although garage rents are liable to increase in April each year (subject to 4 weeks' notice being given), the rents for the year commencing 3 April 2017 are as follows:

<b>GARAGES OUTSIDE THE TOWN CENTRE</b>	
Council tenant living in the Borough	£8.99 per week
Non-council tenant living in the Borough	£10.79 per week (£8.99 + £1.80 VAT)

- 9.5 Where a town centre garage is let to someone who is living outside of the town centre, a 'surcharge' is applied to the weekly garage rent:

<b>GARAGES IN THE TOWN CENTRE</b>	
Council tenant living in town centre	£8.99 per week
Council tenant living outside town centre	£23.27 per week (£8.99 + £14.28 surcharge)
Non-council tenant living in town centre	£10.79 per week (£8.99 + £1.80 VAT)
Non-council tenant living outside town centre	£27.93 per week (£8.99 + £14.28 surcharge + £4.66 VAT)

- 9.6 Northampton Partnership Homes will pursue the recovery of any garage rent arrears and this may involve the repossession of the garage if the licensee owes rent on the garage and/or they are a council tenant and owe rent on their home.

## **10. Ending a garage licence**

- 10.1 Licensees who wish to end the licence of a garage must do so by giving Northampton Borough Council one week's written notice by completing and submitting a Termination of Garage Licence form.
- 10.2 If the licensee fails to return the garage keys to Northampton Partnership Homes by 12.00 Noon on the Monday after they have submitted a Termination of Garage Licence form, a week's rent will be payable and will be charged to the rent account.
- 10.3 If the garage keys have still not been returned by the end of the week in which they were due to be returned, a lock change will be arranged. Northampton Partnership Homes will send a letter to the licensee, advising them that a lock change has been ordered and the cost of the lock change will be recharged to them.
- 10.4 The licensee must leave the garage in a clean and tidy condition and, when it is handed back, all of the rubbish and items that are no longer required must have been removed from the garage. Failure to clear the property of rubbish and/or personal possessions will result in the licensee being charged for their removal.
- 10.5 If the licensee dies, the next of kin will be given a maximum of 4 weeks to return the keys. The licence will then be terminated on the first Monday following the return of the keys. Where no keys are returned, a lock change will be arranged.

- 10.6 Northampton Partnership Homes will serve one week's notice on garage licensees who are in breach of the terms of the Garage Licence Agreement.
- 10.7 Northampton Partnership Homes may also serve notice on a garage licensee if major works are required to the licensee's garage or garage site, or it is decided to redevelop, dispose of, or change the use of the site. In such instances, Northampton Partnership Homes will provide the licensee with at least 4 weeks' notice and try to offer them an alternative garage if there is one available.

## **11. Complaints**

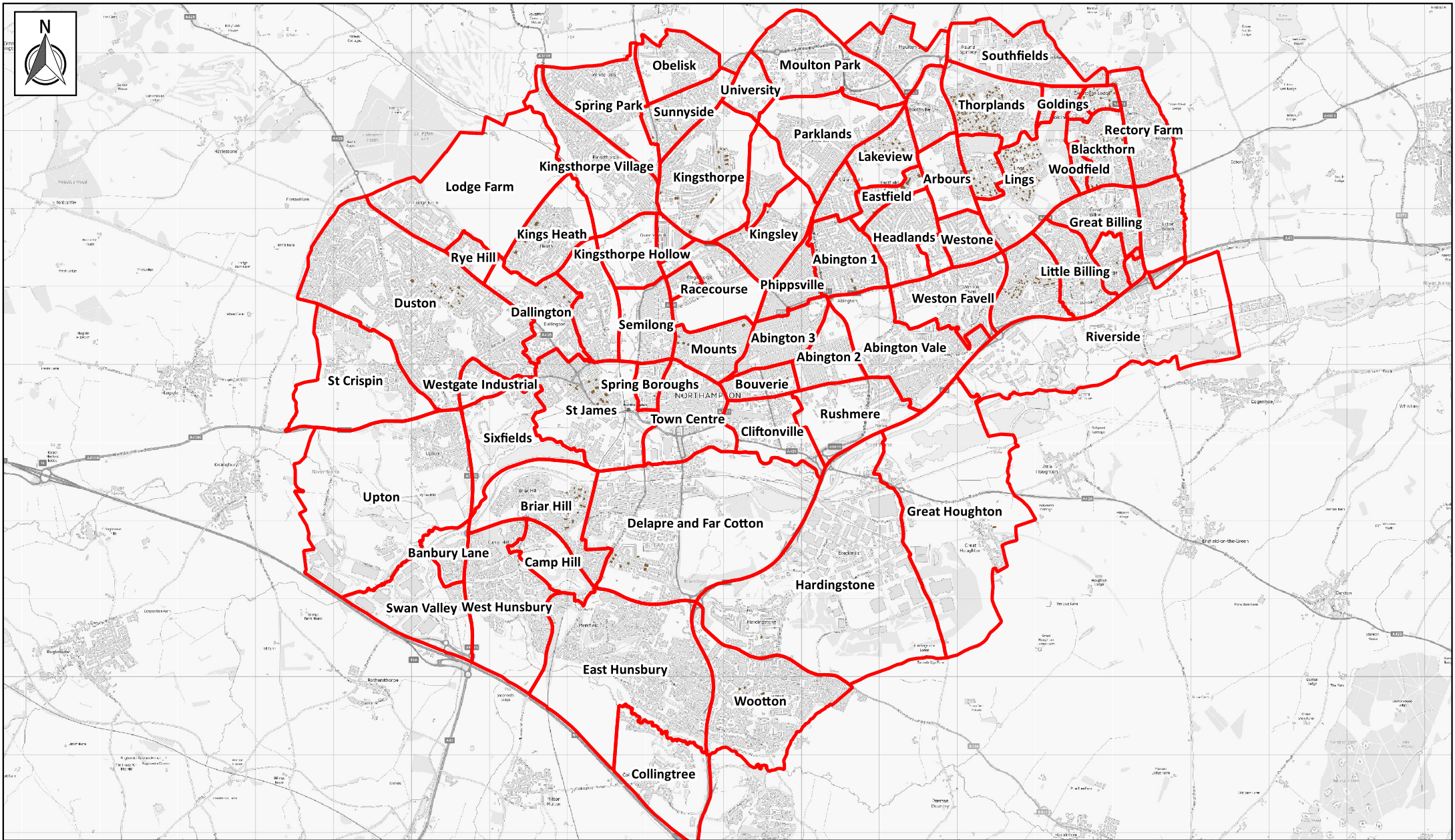
- 11.1 If an applicant or licensee is dissatisfied with the way in which Northampton Partnership Homes has dealt with them in relation to a garage application and/or the allocation or management of a council garage, they should follow Northampton Partnership Homes' complaints process, as set out on its website:

<https://selfserve.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/customer-feedback/>

## **13. Review of this Policy**

- 12.1 The Council Garages Policy will be reviewed jointly by the Council and Northampton Partnership Homes at least once every two years, or as circumstances arise.





**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Title: **Northampton's Neighbourhoods**

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