



Stevenage Borough Council

Garage Asset Management Plan 2025

1. Introduction

Stevenage has a residential and commercial garage stock of 6,093 garages across 664 blocks, generating £4Million annually, representing 8.5% of the General Fund income. Effective management of this portfolio is crucial for sustaining the General Fund, delivering core services, and fulfilling the objectives of the Corporate Plan. Due to aging infrastructure and ongoing underinvestment, this plan outlines a 10-year plan to manage, repair, redevelop, or repurpose the garage stock for long-term sustainability.

2. Key Objectives

The primary objectives of this plan are as follows:

2.1 **Protect and Maximise the Income Stream**

- Prioritise planned capital works over reactive repairs to reduce long-term costs and increase efficiency.
- Develop and enforce a financial protocol for garage repairs, ensuring that every decision delivers value for money.

2.2 **Improve Neighbourhoods**

- Enhance the condition of garages through periodic capital works to prevent dilapidation and deter antisocial behaviour, such as fly-tipping, graffiti, and drug activity, which are more prevalent in sites with high vacancy rates.

- This investment helps to improve the sense of place and pride citizens have in their local neighbourhood by improving visual amenity and functionality of traditional garage compounds.

2.3 Deliver Development Sites for Housing

Redevelop underutilised garage sites for Council housing or other types of affordable housing in collaboration with SBC’s Housing Team, the Wholly Owned Company, or private developers. This supports Stevenage’s broader housing development goals in terms of improving the quality of housing options open to residents, while generating capital receipts for reinvestment. The Council’s Housing team is working on several low demand and high investment need blocks to assess what mix of housing and tenure achieves the maximum benefit. As this work is at an early stage and requires consultation, future reports to Cabinet will seek the necessary consents for disposal.

2.4 Explore Alternative Uses for Garage Sites

Where garages or housing development are not viable, consider alternative uses such as:

- Surface parking or electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.
- Storage solutions for local businesses or residents.
- Commercial uses compatible with residential neighbourhoods.

3. Strategic Context

3.1 Corporate Plan: Making Stevenage Even better 2024 – 2027

Transforming our Town

The plan will endeavour to maintain the stock to a standard which supports the improvement to the areas they are in and improve the stock to a level that reflects the progressive image of the town.

More social, affordable, good quality homes

The production of a Garage Asset Management Plan will, on several sites, support the strategic aim of enabling access to affordable housing and increasing the provision of more social, affordable and good quality homes.

Thriving Neighbourhoods

The plan will support the improvement of neighbourhoods by reducing anti-social behaviour and creating a more pleasant environment for our residents.

Tackling Climate Change

Improving our assets and redeveloping the sites where investment is not viable will enhance the built environment within the borough. Ensuring that any new building is built to high energy performance standards is essential to ensure the Council delivers on its environmental commitments.

Balancing the budget

Investing in our garage sites, improving the assets themselves or redeveloping them for an alternative use will generate additional economic activity. If this is kept locally this will lead to additional jobs and expenditure within Stevenage.

4. Current Stock Condition

While approximately 20% of the garages have been refurbished, there are others in varying states of disrepair, with significant challenges in roofing, structural components, and general maintenance. Key issues include:

4.1 Roofing

- Around 1,000 garages have original asbestos roofs from the 1950s. These roofs have exceeded their expected lifespan of 40 years, and many are now delaminating, posing a risk to both tenants and council staff.
- The cost of renewing roofs is approximately £4,000 per garage, while failure to replace asbestos roofs may lead to additional costs for environmental cleaning, at £2,500 per garage.

4.2 Sprayed Asbestos

- 51 blocks contain sprayed asbestos, applied as insulation to metal roofs in the 1970s. The cost of removing this asbestos varies, but averages around £1,300 to £3,000 per garage, depending on site size.
- These garages are currently inaccessible, generating no income, and tenants have been temporarily displaced. The Council is liaising with licensees to terminate their licenses, after which the future of these sites will be assessed.

4.3 Other Structural Components

- Common maintenance issues include failing garage doors, gutters, and locks, which require periodic repair or replacement.

- Some garages need ground slab repairs, with broken concrete slabs posing health and safety risks.

5. Asbestos Management Strategy

Asbestos is present in a significant portion of the garage stock, requiring ongoing management and careful planning. The strategy for dealing with asbestos includes:

- **Surveys:** Approximately 65% of sites have been fully surveyed for asbestos. As each garage becomes void, an asbestos management report is produced.
- **Removal and Refurbishment:** All asbestos roofs should be replaced during refurbishment to minimize long-term risks and costs. This will also reduce the need for reactive repairs, which are more expensive and less effective in maintaining asset value.

6. Garage Rental Income, Voids and Demand Repair Costs

Demand for garages across the town remains high, both for storage and parking, as the availability of on-street parking is a particular challenge across the town. Service improvements since 2020 (such as the introduction of Digital Lettings, which allows residents to view and bid on available garages online) have led to a falling void rate, as seen below.

Figure 1. Trajectory of garage voids

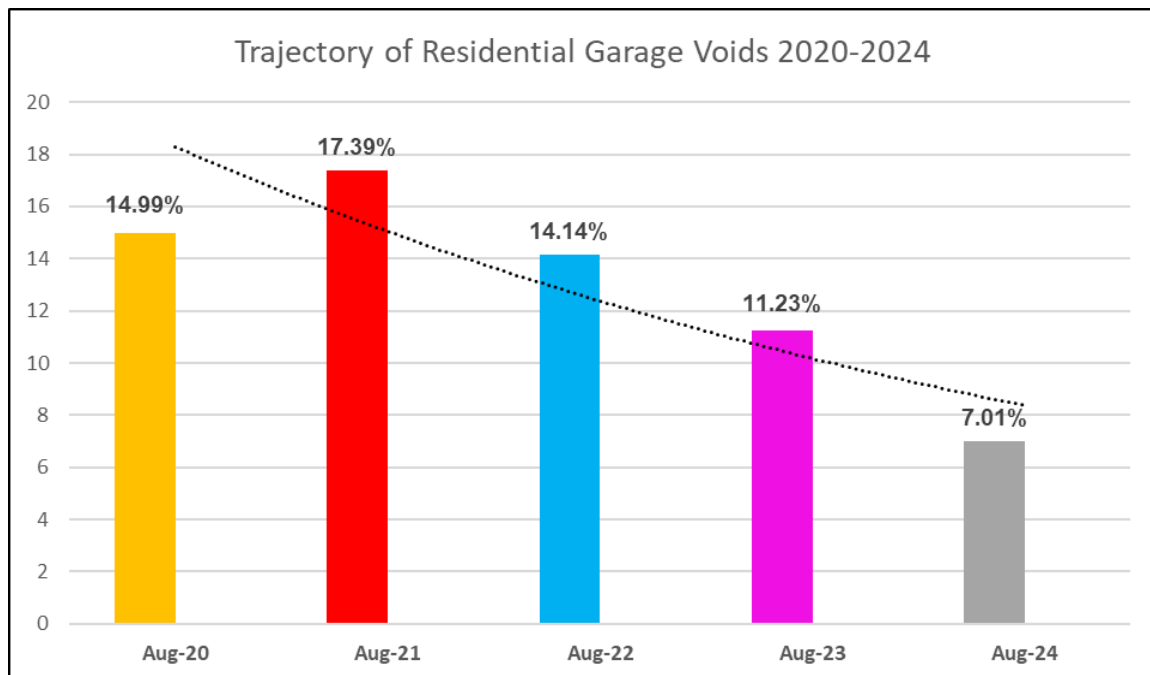
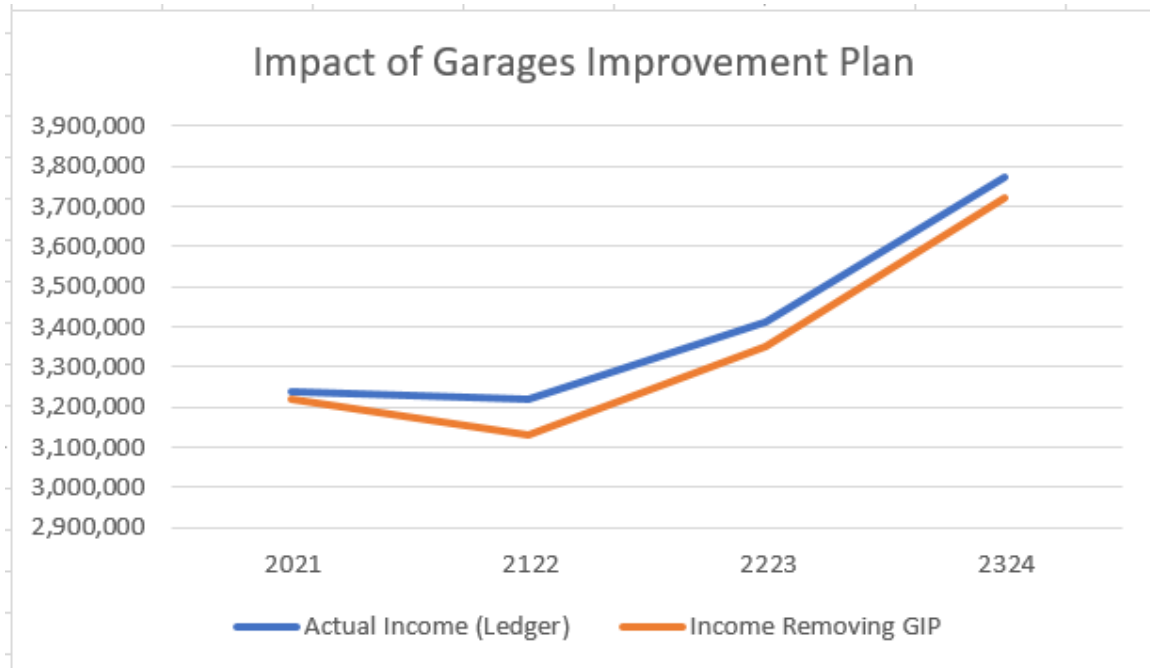


Figure 2. Financial Impact of Garages Improvement Plan



7. Garage Investment Program (GIP) 2018 - 2024

The GIP was launched to refurbish dilapidated garages, with an initial budget of £10.12Million based on a 2013 stock condition survey. However, cost overruns and delays increased the average refurbishment cost to £5,100 per garage. The program refurbished 1,233 garages by its completion in December 2024.

7.1 Key Outcomes of GIP:

- Void rates have decreased from 35% to under 5% in refurbished sites.
- Annual income from refurbished garages increased by £287,000, and antisocial behaviour in these areas has been significantly reduced.
- Refurbished garages command higher rents, from £13.90 to £17.25 per week, compared to £12.30 for non-refurbished garages, based on 2024/25 rental charges.
- Refurbished sites have been let quickly due to high demand, highlighting the strong market for well-maintained garage facilities.

8. Future Investment Strategy

Building on the success of GIP, the Council will implement a hybrid maintenance approach, combining targeted capital works with reactive repairs for high-priority sites. This approach includes:

8.1 Capital Expenditure

Previous capital expenditure has been through the GIP as described above in section 7.

To be as cost effective as possible the focus was to address defective items and thus keep as much of the stock in an acceptable and operational condition within annual budget constraints. The future and ongoing maintenance programmes will continue to address any defective components in a preventative manner so far as possible.

Seeking asset information through a stock condition survey post 2013 was not viable due to cost and time constraints. The key driver has been to address void assets with potential maximum revenue generation. From this, initial localised in-house surveys have been carried out to inform on the scope of works for the contractor.

Based on information obtained through the previous works undertaken we have been able to analyse the potential costs to cover a range of improvements that may be required to any single garage.

8.2 Asbestos Roof Replacement Program

There are circa 1,000 garages with asbestos contaminated rooves which are in varying states of degradation.

For health and Safety reasons this is now the focus of an exercise to replace with a suitable material to remove any potential further risks associated with asbestos and improve the life of the asset, whilst simultaneously seeking best value.

Replacing the said roofs with a profiled metal covering is the most cost-effective option, improving the life span up to 35 years.

Also factored in are the potential expenditure for other elements and components to be addressed. This is projected to be a total of just over £4 million pounds, circa £4K per garage, if everything needs to be addressed per garage This investment cost has been factored over a range of 3, 5,7 and 10 years with an allowance for inflation.

8.3 Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM)

Based on the information collated for both capital expenditure from the GIP and the asbestos roof replacements, we have amalgamated the available repair work costings and so potentially identifying the extent of future works that might be required.

Other roof types have been identified i.e. concrete with timber and felt, concrete with metal deck etc, This total range identifies a total of 3,500 garages, excluding the 1,000 asbestos roofs highlighted above, under Asbestos Roof Replacement Program.

As previously highlighted, whilst we have addressed requirements per garage under the GIP there will still be a need to return to these units to carry out future improvement works.

It is considered that the costs identified previously per garage will be used to project cost for the future.

9. Route to Strategic Delivery

9.1 Garage Investment Management Programme Board

A Garage Investment Management Programme Board will be created and meet regularly to set delivery targets and monitor progress. Representatives will include officers from Garage Management team, Estates, Building Surveying, Housing Development and Stevenage Direct Services.

9.2 Investment Programme

At the time of writing a total of 739 garages were void. 96 of these are held vacant for either Housing Development or are included in the original Garage Improvement Programme.

Of the remaining 643 void garages 368 are unlettable due to the presence of sprayed asbestos. The initial phase of the Asset Management programme will focus on the sprayed asbestos sites with the objective of either bringing the sites back into use or using them to generate a capital receipt to forward fund the remainder of the programme.

Figure3. Voids Snapshot

Reason for Void	Bedwell	Broadwater	Chells	Old Town	Pin Green	Shephall	St Nicholas	Symonds Green	Grand Total
Asbestos remedials	2		1	2	1		4	3	13
Asbestos survey						2			2
Boarded shut							1		1
Clearance			1	1		1	1	1	6
Damp			1			2	4		7
Decant			1			1			2
Door overhaul	3			1	2	3	1		11
Electrics to be removed			2						2
Fire protection work - Mulalley						1			1
GIP decant	9		6	9	1	2	28	1	59
Housing Development	2		55						57
In GIP programme	1		18		3		10		39
Lock change			2			1	4		7
Major repairs	1					1	23		25
New door			4				2		7
On digital letting							1		1
On digital lettings	5		3	15	2	6	21	1	54
Possibly in GIP Programme			2	2			2		6
Recon door							1		1
Repairs	3		3	2		3	1	1	14
Repairs gutters				1					1
Roof leaking	5		2	2	2	6	4		22
Sprayed Asbestos	164		63		50		90		368
Structural	1		2	5		1	12	3	25
Under offer			2			1	1		5
Unknown - bubble garage			3						3
Grand Total	196		171	40	61	31	211	10	739

9.3 Stock Condition

There isn't an up-to-date record of the condition of the garage portfolio. A rolling programme of inspections will be undertaken by the Council's Asbestos Surveyor and Maintenance Manager whilst undertaking their day-to-day duties. The aim will be to undertake visual inspections of 500 garages per year and hold an accurate condition record of the portfolio within nine years.

9.4 Funding Strategy

The following costs and funding options will be considered to ensure that the Council garages are maintained to a good standard and to allow the Council to maximise its revenue stream:

9.5 Asbestos Roof Replacement

This is estimated to cost circa £4M before consideration of inflation. Based on a five-year programme to complete the entire replacement of circa 200 garages per year, the cost would be approximately £4.344M, with a 3% increase for inflation each year. If this is extended to 7 or 10 years, depending on available resources the associated costs would be £4.479M and £4.690M respectively.

Figure 4. Estimated programme replacement costs for asbestos roofs

Items	Material	Cost per unit (inc removal of old material)	12% TA	Initial one off cost indicators	Total cost Per garage	No of Garages	Total Cost		Full Cost
ASBESTOS ROOF TO PROFILED METAL								3 Years (inflation 2025-2027)	
Door overhauls		£ 107.94	£ 120.89						
Facia/soffit	Plastic	£ 280.00	£ 313.60	£700.00					
Door locks		£ 107.25	£ 120.12						
Metal door and frame		£ 1,200.00	£ 1,344.00						
Hardstanding, entrance		£ 760.40	£ 851.65	£1,500.00					
Rooves	Metal profile	£ 1,400.00	£ 1,568.00		£4,091.37	1000	£ 4,091,370.00	7 years (inflation 2025-2031)	£ 4,478,566.84
Floor, walls, brickwork		£ 93.72	£ 104.97	£500.00					
Rafter replacement	Metal	£ 250.00	£ 280.00						
Gutter/rainwater goods	Plastic	£ 60.00	£ 67.20	£250.00					
Signage		£ 12.80	£ 14.34						
Scaffold		£ 200.00	£ 224.00						
								10 Years (inflation 2025-2034)	£ 4,690,297.19

9.6 Reactive Capital Maintenance

It is estimated that the Council will need to continue to spend £250,000 per annum on this work (which is in addition to the roof replacement programme above). This work will consist of reported failings by tenants such as roofs and doors and which would result in a termination if left, impacting the void rate. It is assumed that this budget will need to be increased each year by cost of inflation (based on 3%).

9.7 Reactive Revenue Maintenance

The current revenue budget is £91,000. Latest projections indicate that this amount is insufficient due to no increases in the budget over a number of years. It is estimated that £120,000 would be needed for year one and this budget should then be adjusted for inflation each year.

10 Funding Sources

The Council has explored multiple funding sources to identify how this can be funded. These sources include:

10.1 Remaining Resources from Existing Programme Reserves

Following the completion of the existing capital Garage Improvement Plan (GIP), it is estimated that £150,000 will not be needed. It is recommended that this funding be available for the new Garage Plan.

10.2 Contributions from Freeholders

The Council receives contributions from freeholders (garages holders that have bought their garage from the Council in the past) for works carried out through the previous GIP scheme and these, along with future contributions will be used to part fund the next iteration of the garage strategy. This is estimated to be around £151,000 over the next five years.

10.3 Capital Receipts

The Council commissioned a report in 2022 from the Beacon Partnership focusing on the garages blighted with sprayed asbestos. The report identified 26 sites suitable for development. It is anticipated that these sites will be utilised to support the Council's housing ambitions whilst providing the required capital receipt to support the Garage Plan.

Recommendation	Number of Sites
Retain as garage site and refurbish	3
Retain as garage site and build new garages	26
Consider site for development subject to constraints	11
Consider site for development	15

Early indications suggest that there are proposed capital receipts over the next five years, with some potential mitigation for delays in receipt and projected levels. It should be noted that the value of capital receipts each year may vary depending on opportunities, and therefore no specific receipts are allocated to any particular year. Estimated capital receipts over first six years to be £2.25Million. Business cases will be produced on a case-by-case basis, along with request for appropriate authority to dispose of sites to members.

10.4 Revenue Generation

Investment in the garage stock has resulted in increased income from tenants renting those garages. An exercise has determined that approximately £179,000 can be built into the revenue accounts to support either direct funding into costs or contribute towards servicing new debt.

10.5 Borrowing

Following the existing capital GIP scheme, where the Council borrowed to invest in the stock, it is proposed that the Council continue this approach for this phase. It is recommended that the servicing of any new debt be funded within the existing envelope i.e. within the £179K budget or any future additions to this.

10.6 Phased Implementation

To manage the financial impact, it is proposed to implement the latest Garage Plan in phases. This phased approach will allow the Council to spread the costs over multiple financial years and ensure that the most critical repairs are addressed first. The recommendation currently is to phase over five years, but there are options to extend this up to ten years depending on future capital receipts from disposal of sites.

10.7 Cost Management

The Council will establish a robust cost management framework to monitor and control expenses throughout the project. This will include regular financial reviews, cost-benefit analyses, and value engineering to ensure the best possible outcomes within the allocated budget. Although the projections incorporate a 3% inflation rate each year, this may not necessarily be sufficient.

10.7 Risk Management

The Council will identify and mitigate potential risks associated with the funding and implementation of the garage improvements. This will involve conducting risk assessments, developing contingency plans, and regularly reviewing and updating our risk management strategies.

By adopting this comprehensive funding strategy, the Council aim to secure the necessary funds and deliver a successful garage improvement project that enhances the quality and usability of the garage facilities.

10.8 Refurbishment

Larger refurbishments schemes will be considered on a case-by-case basis and capital will be requested annual as part of the Capital Growth Bid mechanism.