

# **Central Bedfordshire Council The Birches Consultation**

**Response to Formal Consultation**

Consultation closed 18 May 2017

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Central Bedfordshire Council wants the best possible quality of life for all its residents and is committed to developing and improving accommodation with care for older people. The Council owns and operates five care homes which were built several decades ago and which currently no longer meet the expectations of customers and regulators in terms of facilities and accommodation.
- 1.2 When better options become available elsewhere, the Council will consult with residents and relatives about the future.
- 1.3 The Council is currently undertaking a consultation on the future of The Birches. Having reviewed a number of options for the future of the home, the Council's preferred option is to offer and arrange accommodation for the existing residents in good alternative care homes and then to close The Birches.
- 1.4 The Council has considered the following options in relation to the future of The Birches including:
  - Doing nothing - continue to run The Birches in its present form.
  - Relocating existing residents to better homes and closing The Birches.
  - Selling The Birches to another organisation to run as a going concern.
  - Rebuilding on a phased basis - building a new care home on the site whilst the current home remains open then transferring existing residents to the new home and demolishing the old one.
  - Rebuilding the home on a non-phased basis - moving residents to alternative homes, demolishing the old home and building a new one on the site.
  - Running the home down - stopping new admissions to the home but keeping it open for an agreed period of time or until it had no residents.
  - Refurbishing the home so that it meets modern standards
- 1.5 The Council's preferred option is to offer and arrange accommodation for the existing residents in good alternative care homes and then to close The Birches.
- 1.6 The formal consultation began on 17<sup>th</sup> February and ended on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017
- 1.7 Additional consultation meetings have taken place with residents and/or their family members/next of kin however the outcome from these meetings has not been included within this report.
- 1.8 This report includes an overview of the feedback received via the consultation questionnaires.

## 2 RESPONSE RECEIVED

- 2.1 The formal consultation was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data from respondents, with results summarised as follows (percentages are rounded to the nearest one decimal place).
- 2.2 In total the Council has received 28 responses to the formal consultation via the consultation questionnaire. A further 6 residents gave their opinions on the proposals but did not record these formally, appendix 3 summarises these.
- 2.3 54% of respondents are residents of The Birches, 32% are family members of residents, 4% are staff, at The Birches 4% are a charity or an organisation and 7% are 'other' people.
- 2.4 25% of respondents are male and 68% are female (7% did not answer when asked).
- 2.5 Respondents age:

Under 16	0%
16-19	0%
20-29	0%
30-44	7%
45-59	7%
60-64	14%
65-74	14%
75+	54%
No answer	4%

- 2.6 Appendix 1 provides a full demographical statistical profile of respondents.

## 3 RESULTS OF CONSULTATION: QUESTION RESPONSES

The formal consultation was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative data from respondents, with the results summarised below.

### Q1 What are your views on our preferred option?

- 3.1 The majority of respondents agreed with the preferred option to offer and arrange alternative accommodation for residents currently at The Birches and to then close the home. Eight respondents made comments acknowledging the benefits of moving to a home with more modern accommodation and extra facilities (e.g. en-suites). Five comments reflected how valued the staff and the quality of care they provide at The Birches are. There were also four responses made to this question expressing concerns about what would happen to the staff and whether they would be able to work at Oak Manor to provide continuity of care for residents.

*It is positive that a majority of the respondents were supportive of the Council's preferred option and recognised that the facilities offered by the Birches Older Persons Home do not meet modern standards.*

*It is reassuring that the quality of care delivered by staff at the Birches is so highly valued. If the decision is made to close the home staff will be properly supported to consider their future employment options.*

*In considering this scenario the Council is actively engaging with MHA, the operator of Oak Manor, to support their recruitment plans for the new home. All parties recognise that continuity of care and familiarity amongst staff and residents are contributors to the successful resettlement of residents (if the decision is made to close the Birches) and joint planning between the Council and MHA will ensure opportunities of employment with MHA are available to staff that wish to consider this career path.*

**Q2 Are there any options we have considered that you think we have not correctly evaluated?**

	Number	%
Yes	1	4%
No	26	93%
Don't know	0	0%
No answer	1	4%

3.2 93% of respondents agreed that the options had been evaluated correctly.

**Q2a If yes, please state which options and why you think they should be evaluated differently.**

3.3 Two respondents said that more consideration should be given to refurbishing The Birches but generally the majority that responded to this question felt that the options proposed by the Council had been correctly evaluated. One of these two respondents did however say that they agreed the Council had evaluated all options fairly in the previous question.

*The refurbishment of The Birches was one of the options in the consultation document and estimations of the cost were made. Given the feedback on this option we consider that it would not be appropriate to further investigate the cost of a refurbishment for the reasons set out in the consultation document..*

**Q3 Are there any options listed that you think the Council should investigate in more detail?**

	Number	%
Yes	2	7%
No	24	86%
Don't know	0	0%
No answer	2	7%

3.4 86% of respondents felt that the Council investigated all options fully.

**Q3a If yes, please state which options and say what further information or investigation is needed.**

3.5 Comments from respondents included:

- Refurbishing The Birches to try and maintain current staff.
- Support the staff in finding jobs at Oak Manor in order to give residents a sense of familiarity.

*Please refer to the response given above at paragraphs 3.2 and 3.1.*

**Q4 Are there any other option(s) that you think we should consider that are not in the document?**

	Number	%
Yes	1	4%
No	27	96%
Don't know	0	0%
No answer	0	0%

3.6 96% of respondents felt that all options had been considered.

**Q4a If yes, please explain what these options are.**

3.7 One respondent emphasised the importance of residents being familiar to the staff and their surroundings at The Birches.

*Please refer to the response given above at paragraph 3.1.*

**Q5 Do you have any further comments about the future of the home?**

3.8 A full list of responses to this question can be found in appendix 2 however comments included:

- A carefully planned transition process to relieve anxiety
- Concern for staff currently at The Birches if the home closes
- What will happen to the site if The Birches closes?

*The Council in closing and re-providing two care homes in the last two years has developed good practice in planning for and managing the process that has enabled in excess of 30 residents to successfully re-settle into a new home. If the decision is made to close the home, the project team will work with residents, relatives, staff from the Birches and staff from the new home to develop a personalised approach that takes into account the needs of the residents. We follow best practice for relocating residents and would coordinate the moves to ensure that everyone would receive the time and support they needed before, during*

*and after the move. The move timetable would be flexible to take into account changes in the health and needs of residents.*

*Scenario planning has enabled the respective Human Resources departments of the Council and MHA to agree a joined up approach to recruitment (if the decision is made to close the Birches)*

*If the Birches closes, the site will be evaluated by the Council's Corporate Assets Team to determine future options. This process will only commence if a decision to close the home is made and then will only proceed once all residents have moved to alternative facilities. The decision on the future of the home is a separate one from a decision about what would happen to the site in the event that the home closes. There are no proposals in the Executive report about the future of the building and the site as a whole. Any changes on the site may require planning permission and the usual planning permission process followed.*

**Q6 Throughout the process we will be conducting individual meetings with residents and their relatives, and providing advocates where necessary. Are there any other actions you think we should be taking to minimise the impact of the proposals on the residents at The Birches?**

3.9 A full list of responses to this question can be found in appendix 2 however comments included:

- Ongoing support and communication from the Transitions team
- Support the staff if a decision is made to close the home
- Request to view alternative accommodation

*As above we would work with residents and relatives and keep them informed throughout the process if there was a decision to close the Birches Older Persons Home. This would involve agreeing and sharing plans and timetables subject to any changes required that best meet the needs of residents.*

*As above, scenario plans (e.g. what if the home closes?) are being developed to ensure that staff have access to good quality information and support in planning future employment options and opportunities.*

*Part of the process would be to arrange visits to alternative homes for residents and relatives.*

**Q7 Please write any other comments here:**

3.10 A mixture of comments was given to this question, the majority of which reiterated respondent's appreciation of The Birches and the quality of care delivered by staff of The Birches. A full list of responses is provided at Appendix 2.

**4 SUMMARY**

- 4.1 The majority of those that have responded to the consultation are in favour of the Council's preferred option and felt that the Council has correctly evaluated all the options for The Birches.
- 4.2 Both in the consultation questionnaire and in individual meetings with residents and relatives, some respondents said that they like The Birches as it is and would be happy staying where they are; reasons for this included remaining with familiar staff and surroundings. Some concerns raised by relatives included how any change may impact on their family member.
- 4.3 Residents and relatives also raised concerns over the effect a decision to close The Birches would have on staff.
- 4.4 Other comments indicate that residents and relatives are happy with the communication and support from the project team so far and would like this to continue to ensure residents and relatives are fully informed of any developments.
- 4.5 The Council has followed, implemented and developed good practice in managing the successful resettlement of more than 30 residents of Council care homes for older persons in recent years and we welcome the active contributions of residents, relative and staff in helping facilitate the continuous improvement of our policy and practice.

## Appendix 1:

### Results of consultation: Demographic profile of respondents

#### Q8 Are you a:

	Number	%
Resident	15	54%
Relative of a resident	9	32%
Member of the public	0	0%
Member of staff	1	4%
Charity or organisation	1	4%
Other	2	7%
No answer	0	0%

#### Q9 Are you male or female?

	Number	%
Male	7	25%
Female	19	68%
No answer	2	7%

#### Q10 What is your age?

Under 16	0	0%
16-19	0	0%
20-29	0	0%
30-44	2	7%
45-59	2	7%
60-64	4	14%
65-74	4	14%
75+	15	54%
No answer	1	4%

**Q11 Do you consider yourself to be disabled?** (Under the Equality Act 2010 a person is considered to have a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which has a sustained and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities)

	Number	%
Yes	6	21%
No	21	75%
No answer	1	4%

#### Q12 To which of these groups do you consider you belong?

	Number	%
White British	27	96%

Black or Black British	1	4%
Asian or Asian British	0	0%
Mixed	0	0%
Other	0	0%
No answer	0	0%

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## Appendix 2: Results of consultation: Qualitative feedback

### Q1 What are your views on our preferred option?

- Why not just leave people where they are? It's so sad you put cost saving over care.
- We are happy with the location of the new home, as still near for family to visit.
- Like the idea of moving to a new home with modern accommodation which is near to The Birches, think Oak Manor is a good option.
- Very good.
- It sounds beautiful if everyone is going to have their own en-suite. I think this is the best option.
- Providing the residents go to Oak Manor it is important that some of the staff from The Birches have jobs in the new home so that it helps them settle better. So they have faces they recognise, this is very important as they are vulnerable. I agree the preferred home is good. I would agree The Birches is tired but has got potential it is a happy home and care is good.
- This is the best option for the residents as The Birches would need extensive renovation
- I agree with the Council's preferred option.
- I think the Council have thought about all the options. The preferred option seems to make sense for the residents' future comfort and from a practical point of view.
- I like the idea but I don't like the idea of the doors being unlocked. We'll see how it goes. It will be nearer to relatives.
- I agree it's best to move. It's handy being round the corner and that there's a guaranteed place.
- I'm worried about not having the same staff at the new place. I would like the same staff to work there. I like the idea of an en-suite
- I'd rather stay here. "I think it's lovely here". "I don't mind where they put me as long as I have a bed!" I would also like the same carers.
- I think The Birches is lovely. The staff are very nice. I think en-suite bathrooms would be very nice. I would like the staff to come with us if The Birches closes.
- Totally agree - residents should be able to enjoy modern accommodation and comforts. Cost effective solution.
- A new home that is modern for the residents is a better option.
- You must know by now which option as why would you build a new home? There is a shortage of homes.

- I'd prefer to stay here at The Birches. My first choice would be for the Council to refurbish The Birches. But if they can't do this, then I'm happy to move to a home in the area. The staff here are really good and there is good cooking.
- I don't mind where I am as long as I get looked after.
- The preferred option is fine, but even if you did nothing and kept The Birches as it is, my view is that the residents do not really need the private bathrooms as most residents struggle to wash independently anyway.
- I'm quite happy here and have no complaints. I'm quite content and like the carers. The food is very good and varied. I'm quite content here but don't mind trying the new place. I'd rather the Council leave things as they are.
- I think the Council should leave The Birches as it is. There is no reason to modernise it. Everything is fine.
- I think a new home would be nice, if I'm still here. It would be nearer to my Son. Although it's alright here.
- I agree with moving to a new home although the staff here are very good and very helpful.
- Yes I think it's a good idea to move into a modern home.
- I would prefer to stay at the Birches. It's a shame to knock it down. I think it just needs a lick of paint. I'm not bothered about having an ensuite bathroom although I know some people might prefer it. I would like to be able to go outside in the new place.
- I like it here but I don't mind moving if I have to. I want to be able to smoke my cigarettes in the new place.
- I think the Council should leave the Birches as it is. There is no reason to modernise it. Everything is fine.

**Q2a If yes, please state which options and why you think they should be evaluated differently.**

- Doing up The Birches should be considered, although this would be costly our residents don't want to lose the staff
- I agree that the Birches needs modernising. There needs to be better TV aerials, telephone points and bus timetables.
- I can't think of anything else.
- I think the Council have covered every base.
- If it's possible they can stay here that's fine, if not then providing alternative accommodation is the best option.
- No not really, it's been well laid out.
- None whatsoever. The idea you've chosen is fine by me.

**Q3a If yes, please state which options and say what further information or investigation is needed.**

- Again I think the Council should consider the residents transfer is as smooth as possible. the Council should ensure as far as is possible that come of the staff transfer with the residents as I feel they would settle better, they need faces they know.
- (As above) Doing up The Birches should be considered, although this would be costly our residents don't want to lose the staff

**Q4a If yes, please explain what these options are?**

- Just remember a lot of the residents do not have good memory's but they know the staff and their surroundings.

**Q5 Do you have any further comments about the future of the home?**

- How do we know what will happen and that the provider are good?
- We fully understand that the home does not meet the standards required i.e. en-suites in rooms. As long as during this transition period, care of the residents remains excellent, we and our Mum are happy.
- No - I think it has been fully explained at the meetings and in detail in the documentation provided.
- I haven't really thought about it. I would like a ground floor room please.
- It could be made into a day centre.
- I have no regrets since my Uncle has been at The Birches. He knows the staff and the staff know him. It is just a shame the home is not modern enough by todays standards. It will also be a shame as it is more than possible none of the staff will be moving to the new home as they have been great. They always keep in touch if anything goes wrong.
- I shall be sorry to leave as I've been very happy here.
- We appreciate that there will be support for the practicalities of moving and that we will be able to see the new place before the move. This will help to relieve anxiety.
- I imagine they will pull this building down and build new flats on [the site].
- No, I like it here. The staff are very kind.
- I'm not concerned about what happens to The Birches if it closes. The staff are really good here. The more staff that move to the new place, the better.
- In support of the move to a new home. Attractive to have your own space and it would be better to have your own bathroom.

- In my view The Birches is a substantial building, more substantial than Oak Manor will be, The Birches could easily be converted into something else e.g. office space, flats.
- It's very pleasant here.
- I like it here and the girls are good.
- 9 respondents answered "No"
- 4 respondents did not answer

**Q6 Throughout the process we will be conducting individual meetings with residents and their relatives, and providing advocates where necessary. Are there any other actions you think we should be taking to minimise the impact of the proposals on the residents at The Birches?**

- Leave us alone.
- As long as we are kept informed we will happily discuss with our Mother, so she is able to get used to another move.
- Support the staff in the hope that they will move to the new home with the residents. the staff at The Birches are very good.
- Ensure the existing 'Transfer Team' remain in place. These individuals have gained valuable knowledge and experience from the previous closures/transfers.
- I think they are doing the best to minimise any disruption for residents and relatives.
- Ongoing support from the Social Worker.
- Keeping us informed so we know what's happening. We have felt it has been well handled so far and explained well. This has reduced Dad's stress.
- I like to be told things before they happen. I want to be able to get exercise at the new place.
- Being shown the new home. Preparing to go there takes a lot of the stress out of it.
- Don't know.
- I can't think of anything that the Council could do.
- I can't think of anything. I'll do whatever they say. You can soon make friends anywhere.
- Movement and relocation should be done as a collective action and not drawn out/run down.
- Whatever you do it will upset the residents as they are all happy and love the staff as we do. Take staff with them that would help most of them.
- I'm not sure that there will be stress. Having my friends there when I move.

- Visit the new home before the move and see photos of it.
- There's no problem, it's only down the road, that's where I'd like my Wife to be.
- Nothing I can think of.
- It would be quite reasonable to get support from social services.
- I'd like a member of staff to go with me. I'd like to be nearer to my Son.
- Make sure it's not too sudden- a gentle move please.
- It would be less stressful if other residents from the Birches move to the new home together.
- I need to be able to smoke in the new place. I don't mind going outside to do this. I want to be able to choose my new home.
- It would be quite reasonable to get support from Social Services.
- Being able to have a ground floor room.
- Ensure some of the staff have jobs in the new home if they choose Oak Manor and make sure you listen to the residents above the relatives because although they are elderly they are the ones making the move not the relatives. Although families are concerned they are not the ones making the move
- 3 respondents did not answer

**Q7 Please write any other comments here:**

- No, we have been happy and more importantly our Mother has settled very well at The Birches.
- A good job is being done, keep up the good work. Thank you.
- No, other than I accept the facilities and the building are 'tired'.
- I go in to do their hair twice a week and have got complete understanding with the residents and whatever the outcome, they have asked if I will still do their hair. I realise that I cannot make that promise but I will be interested in going to the new home to do their hair as I think continuity for them is important.
- Dad has been happy and comfortable here. The staff retention has been very good. I have a few concerns about en-suite bathrooms. I'm concerned about my Dad falling and not being found. This would be less of a risk with a communal bathroom.
- I like it here. I don't want to move if it means I don't know anyone.
- Due to the location of Oak Manor I would assume all The Birches residents will have first choice in relocation.
- I shall be sorry to see The Birches close as the staff there work hard to keep the residents clean and happy. Also keep us informed if there are

any problems. I know most of them, I always feel comfortable when I visit my friend.

- Just pleased to be here. Make sure the new place has good cooking.
- I think that a new home that's bigger and with better facilities would make people more independent.
- I don't think so.
- It's a shame to knock it down.
- It's very pleasant here although there's not a lot of mixing between people.
- 10 respondents answered "no".
- 5 respondents did not answer

### **Appendix 3:**

#### **Comments from respondents who gave permission to share their views but did not wish to complete the formal questionnaire.**

- I think The Birches is not bad. I think modernising is a waste of money. I do not need an en-suite bathroom as this is a waste of money for most of these ideas.
- I think the staff at The Birches are very good. I think we've got no choice about moving so I will go with the flow. I would like to be on the ground floor and I don't want the staff to be too bossy.
- I don't mind, I'm not worried about moving at all. A new home would be lovely.
- I think it would be good to have a larger room and an en-suite bathroom is a good idea. I would like the staff to move to the new home.
- I like the idea of my own bathroom but one home is like another.
- I don't mind moving as I have moved many times in the past. I like the idea of moving to a new place and having an en-suite bathroom.