

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE ARTHUR NEAL HOUSE RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME

1 Background

In July 2008 Council Cabinet decided to consult on a proposal to close Arthur Neal House and replace it with an extra care housing scheme. From the outset we wanted to try and consult with as many people who had an interest in this proposal as possible. We were particularly keen to consult with those directly affected – residents and their families, users of day care and their families and staff working at the home - but also consult with the wider community on Mackworth Estate and city wide groups who have an interest in housing and care for older people. The consultation started on 22 September 2008 and ended on 22 December 2008.

2 How we consulted

2.1 Preparation

Before we started the consultation we produced a consultation paper which clearly set out:-

- The background to this proposal
- How it relates to other plans across the City including the review of other Council care homes
- The features of extra care housing generally and the outline proposals for this site
- What would happen to existing residents and day care users if the closure went ahead.
- Details of the consultation process and the timescale.

We also attached a copy of the outline plans submitted by our development partner, Sanctuary Housing Group. Although they had not been approved at that stage and were subject to a formal planning application, it was helpful for people to visualise what the new scheme might look like.

2.2 Consultation with those directly affected

We arranged a series of 3 meetings at Arthur Neal House on 18 September 2008 to explain to residents and their families, day care users and their families and staff what was being proposed. We also distributed a copy of the consultation document.

We also offered everyone an individual appointment at the home. These were well taken up and 27 individual meetings took place. A standard format was used.

Staff were encouraged to respond to the proposals but were also seen individually by Human Resources and had access to the Council's redeployment procedure.

A follow up meeting was arranged at the home for 24 November 2008, which was attended by Sheila Downey, Senior Assistant Director for Corporate and Adult Services. At that meeting there was a specific request that a councillor attend a meeting at the home. This was arranged and Councillor Ruth Skelton, Cabinet Member for Adult Services and Health led a meeting on 11 December 2008.

There was an option of seeing an independent advocate from Age Concern. Promotional literature was distributed at Arthur Neal House with an offer that staff would arrange an appointment at the home. All residents who had no direct family involvement were specifically asked if they wanted to see an advocate. However, this was not taken up.

2.3 Consultation with Derby Homes tenants

The proposed site includes four bungalows on Greenwich Drive North, so if the scheme were to be built as planned, these four bungalows would be demolished and the residents re-housed by Derby Homes. Each of the tenants had a joint visit from a Derby City Council officer and an employee of Derby Homes. The process for reallocating another property and the assistance available including a home loss payment were explained.

2.4 Residents of Hanwell Way

All the houses that are immediate neighbours of the site received a letter including the offer of a visit and a copy of the consultation paper. Two visits were carried out and two written responses were received.

2.5 Mailings to community groups

We identified as many interested parties as possible that had a connection with the estate and sent out a copy of the consultation document and a letter. They were sent predominantly to voluntary and community sector organisations, but also schools, doctors and others. We also wrote to city wide organisations who have an interest in housing and care for older people.

2.6 Community meetings

This proposal was considered and discussed at Mackworth Community Link on 24 November 2008 at Mackworth Neighbourhood forum on 9 December 2008. At both meetings a presentation was made and the consultation document was distributed.

2.7 Other consultation activity

- A meeting was held with the Chair and Secretary of Mackworth Estate Community Association on 8 October 2008
- A drop in event was held at Mackworth Community Centre on 18 December 2008
- A briefing for ward councillors took place on 19th September 2008

- There was a visit to an Extra Care scheme in Glossop on 11 December 2008 attended by Councillor Tuplin and the Chair and Secretary of Mackworth Estate Community Association
- The consultation was on the 'Your City Your Say' section of the Derby City Council website.

2.8 Notes were taken at each individual meeting and at group meetings held at Arthur Neal House. These have been analysed and this report tries to present a fair and balanced summary of the responses we received.

3 Who responded to the Consultation

3.1 Total responses were:

- 13 letters and e-mails as written responses.
- 27 individual meetings attended by 44 people
- Around 80 attended the 5 meetings at the home in total – many more than once
- Around 40 attended the 2 community meetings
- 3 people attended the drop in event
- 1 complaint was received using the Derby City Council complaints procedure

4 What people told us

What follows is a summary of what people said during the consultation period. We have tried to pick out recurring themes – the information is qualitative rather than quantitative though where we could discern that a view was unanimous or confidently say how many people had expressed it we have included that to make it clearer. We have included some anonymous direct quotes where this helps to illustrate the point being made and have included which category of respondent they came from. Some are from written responses and others are from hand written notes taken at individual interviews. Though we did collect demographic information during individual meetings, many of the responses do not have that information so it has not been analysed and has not been presented in this document.

4.1 General comments in response to the proposal to close Arthur Neal House

This elicited some strong feelings, especially from residents, day care users and their families who were very happy at Arthur Neal House and were opposed to any plan to close the home. Only one resident said they were not worried about the potential closure and would happily move. All family members who were interviewed were opposed to closing the home. A majority did comment that they understood the motivation for proposing closure but that it was wrong for them or their relative and that was their primary consideration. A theme which was prevalent was that other options had not been explored particularly the prospect of building on part of the site or a phased build which would allow the home to remain open. Amongst the wider community who were consulted, there was much support for closing the home. All respondents who expressed a view wanted to ensure that current residents and day care users were well treated during the closure process but there was much more of a focus on the new extra care development.

Questions at public meetings were very much about the development plans rather than the decision to close. Three respondents from community groups made it clear they would not want to live in the home in its current form. The other community response is a petition which was submitted and this is dealt with at 4.9 below.

'If the Arthur Neal closes I know you will do your best to help us choose a new home but if it is reprieved we shall be very happy'
Family of Arthur Neal resident

'It works. People are happy and settled. Why change it?'
Family of Arthur Neal resident

'The Arthur Neal community is like one big happy family.'
Staff member

'We don't want to go there (Arthur Neal) as it is. We want our own front door and rooms available for guests.'
Community group representative

'I strongly oppose the plan to close Arthur Neal.....If the Arthur Neal is in a desperate state of repair why not inject the funds into repairing and modernising the building where necessary?'
Family of day care user

'I was horrified when I heard'
Family of Arthur Neal resident

'I don't want the place closed, I don't want the staff to go and I don't want my Mum to move.'
Family of Arthur Neal resident

4.2 Concerns about having to move

All residents – except one - and their families had some level of worry about the effect of a move. The starting point was that they felt happy and settled and simply did not want to move at all. The level of concern was more varied. Some felt a move would have profound effects and could lead to deterioration in health and quality of life whilst others felt they would settle in time. There were a lot of comments that residents would 'get used to' another home and would 'make the best of it.' All those who commented about moving wanted reassurance and more information about the help that could be offered to deal with a move. In particular comments related to assistance to choose somewhere new, the possibility of moving with other residents, help to settle into a new home and a lot of comments about how a new home would be funded.

'Whether it is liked or not by the people sitting round the tables holding these discussions and coming up with these nebulous ideas the vulnerable, elderly and rather frail residents of Arthur Neal House would not cope with a move'
Family of Arthur Neal resident

'If I move somewhere else how will the money work? Will it cost me more?'

Arthur Neal resident

'My Mum is 'programmed'. She is in a routine and feels safe here. Any move will disorientate her.'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

'I have been happy and settled here. I don't want to move but if I have to I will make the best of things. I don't want to move too far. I had to move once before and it wasn't too bad.'

Arthur Neal resident

'I like the company and the flats wouldn't suit me. I don't want to be on my own again. People get dependant on being looked after'

Arthur Neal resident

'Mum would be upset if she had to move but she would settle in time. The care here has been good.'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

'If I have to move I want the financial side investigating.'

Arthur Neal resident

4.3 Views about day care provision

Users of day care and their families and carers who responded were without exception very worried about the prospect of them losing the service. Many viewed it as a 'lifeline' and very much valued the service offered. Interestingly, some residents expressed concern for day care users if the home closed. There were fears about whether they would continue to receive a service at all and the problems that would result in. There was a strong view that service should be reprovided on Mackworth Estate if possible.

'He likes it here and enjoys it. Would day care be available if it closes? Would we get as many days?'

Family of day care user

'My main concern is the day care.....and we don't want to lose it'

Family of day care user

'It really is a lifeline for people who come here for daycare'

Family of day care user

'My Dad knows some of the day care people from years back and that really helps'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

'Day care means I can go to work with peace of mind. Is an alternative available? If not he would need to go into care'

Family of day care user

4.4 Comments on the current condition of the home

There was almost unanimous agreement from respondents that the current state of Arthur Neal House is unacceptable. Views varied more on the extent of the problem and whether it was cosmetic or whether there were fundamental, structural problems and whether the design was simply not fit for purpose any longer. Many people felt the home had been allowed to decline because of the uncertainty over its future. Those who currently lived in or used the home were more inclined to play down the extent of the problem and suggest it could be remedied. There were also repeated comments about the fabric of the building being less important than the quality of care and the atmosphere. Comments from neighbours and the wider community were more negative and identified that the home appeared run down and poorly maintained.

'Why haven't the gardens been done? Have you seen the windows? The whole place needs decorating. Why has the Council ignored it and allowed it to decline?'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

'I'm not surprised. The building is in a poor state of repair.'

Arthur Neal resident

'The decor might be scruffy but it's the care that matters.'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

'The exterior and grounds have been badly neglected. The exterior has not seen paint in 25 years!!'

Mackworth resident

4.5 Comments relating to staff

There was very strong praise for staff from everyone who responded to the consultation. This was a particularly notable theme and there were literally no criticisms at all of the staff team. Families of residents were particularly impressed by the standard of care and the general approach of the staff team. They were viewed as competent, dedicated and caring and were welcoming to people visiting the home.

Employees who responded to the consultation were all opposed to the closure to some extent though tended to comment they had expected this. Unsurprisingly, they were concerned for their own jobs and the prospect of being redeployed, although many were actually more concerned about residents rather than themselves. All employees have been seen individually by Human Resources and the feedback from that process is consistent with the views expressed during the consultation. The only notable addition was that many staff said they would choose to stay at the home until it closed.

'The Council must seriously consider the real cost of potentially closing the services of the experienced, dedicated and capable staff who run the Arthur Neal House.'

Family of day care user

'Staff here are simply excellent.'

Arthur Neal resident

'The staff welcomed her in her fragile state, cared for her and encouraged her into better health and a happy frame of mind.'

Family of resident

'It would be a shame if staff were split up as we are a good team. The quality of care is high. We had one resident in bed for five years without one bed sore.'

Staff member

'I have been a loyal and dedicated employee of Derby City Council for many years so not only are you proposing to cause disruption to the elderly and their families, you are causing unnecessary upset to me and many other employees'

Staff member

'Staff are 100%'

Arthur Neal resident

4.6 Comments on the extra care proposals

There was support for the principle of extra care and for the details of the development proposed by Sanctuary. Amongst the wider community the response was particularly favourable. People commented that there would be a number of positive effects for the local area and could result in jobs and trade for local businesses both during the building phase and when complete. At the two community meetings it was notable that questions were very perceptive and showed an understanding of how the scheme would work. Questions and comments did tend to focus on the new development rather than the decision to close Arthur Neal. There was some scepticism and the motives for the plans and some of the detail were questioned but overall it would be accurate to say the development was supported. Both people from community organisations and individual residents of the local area commented on how they could see themselves or their relatives living in the extra care complex in future. Existing residents could see the merits of the proposals for future generations of older people but understandably that was not their major concern.

Immediate neighbours and owners of the site were worried about the disruption whilst the build took place and raised a host of planning questions about drainage, parking, trees with preservation orders on the site, light etc. These would be addressed as part of any planning application. Excepting those considerations again there was a largely positive view and all neighbours who commented that it was overdue and there had been uncertainty for too long.

'The number of car parking spaces is not adequate.'
Mackworth resident

'Will these flats be for people with more needs, especially those with dementia? They seem more suitable for people with mobility problems. People who might wander at night can't be left alone.'
Staff member

'Can I put my name down? It is the sort of thing we might all need in future and we need something that can cope with the next 50 years.'
Community group representative

'The proposals look good. I hope the prices are affordable.'
Arthur Neal resident

'There were some anti feelings at the public meeting but it looks like a good thing. Possibly not for people here now but for the future.'
Family of Arthur Neal resident

'The general feeling was that Extra Care Housing was a good idea.'
Community group after document discussed at a meeting

'I believe it is what is needed not only in Mackworth but throughout the city in general.'
Community group representative

'I would like to express my support for the development. Such a facility would be of great benefit to residents. The redevelopment would generate jobs and could be supported by local businesses such as mine.'
Owner of local business

'My wife and I are pleased to see that some plans are being considered to replace the home which has been sadly neglected over the years. The initial small plans look quite attractive but we will not pass judgement until we see larger scale copies.'
Mackworth resident

'There is an attraction in moving from a house you own to somewhere else you own. It can free up my current house to be a family home again.'
Community group representative

4.7 Comments about what people would like to see in a new extra care development

People who were directly involved with Arthur Neal now routinely commented on the existing and well established links to the local community and how they would like that to be retained. In particular, there was a strong drive to have continued day care for local people on the site and a hope that communal areas and activities would not be lost. Other comments included retaining communal areas and communal activities, having attractive gardens and outdoor space and having a shop and facilities on site.

'He has settled here and always wants to come. Would day care be provided for in the proposed scheme?'

Family of day service user

'It would need enough room for lounge/restaurant facilities for the number of residents. Also an area needs to be set aside for hairdressing and shopping.'
Mackworth resident

'The communal areas are a plus. But will it match the proposals in reality?'
Staff member

4.8 Comments from residents of Greenwich Drive North affected by this proposal

Tenants of the four bungalows on the site of the proposed new development all stated that they would prefer to remain in their current home. Two said that a combination of the Lois Ellis site remaining unchanged combined with the deteriorating state of Arthur Neal House had affected them negatively. All respondents were keen that if they had to move they were given some choice over selecting a new property and that the standard was at least equivalent to where they are now. Three said they would very much like a garden if possible. There were no clear objections to the package of assistance that Derby Homes will offer including the home loss payment.

4.9 Petition against closure

A petition was submitted to the Council during the consultation period which contained 1147 signatures. There was no other detail about how or over what period the signatures were collected. Local media coverage suggests they were mostly collected outside local shops on the estate and over a short period of '12 hours.' (Derby Evening Telegraph 23/12/08) The petition is headed 'Petition to Keep the Arthur Neal House Open.' It does not have other background information or anything about the proposal for Extra Care housing. The majority of signatures are from people who live locally though some are not.

Clearly this is a considerable number of people expressing a view that Arthur Neal should remain open though there must be a question about how much weight can be attributed to this as given that signatories were not given full information including the potential future use of the site.

4.10 Comments about a lack of alternative proposals

Particularly amongst family of residents there was a view articulated at group meetings at the home and reinforced during individual meetings that the consultation only presented one option and that alternatives had not been explored. It was suggested that there could be ways of building around the existing home using part of the site or build the new development in phases. There were a smaller number of questions about why the new development should be extra care housing rather than a new care home.

'Why can't people stay here while the rest of the site is developed? Can you not build round it'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

'Why is there just one option? Why isn't there a plan to modernise the home instead?'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

'Why should it be flats? Why not build another care home instead?'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

4.11 Comments about how care would be provided in the new development

There were questions about how a new provider of care services would be identified. This happened at meetings at the home and one of the community meetings. There were a considerable number of comments about the comparison between Derby City Council as providers of care and the private sector. These came mostly from existing staff and from relatives of residents. All comments indicated a strong preference for Council run care and identified a variety of reasons for this view.

'Don't get rid of Council homes.'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

'I chose Council care deliberately. They have the experience and expertise and the staff are looked after. I don't agree with private care for the elderly.'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

'I have worked in both and Council homes are better than private ones.'

Staff member

'I want to stay in a Council run home'

Arthur Neal resident

'Private providers are appalling'

Family of Arthur Neal resident

4.12 Comments about the consultation

During individual meetings a majority of people expressed their thanks for being given the opportunity to have a private meeting early in the process. Many used it as an opportunity to seek additional information and reassurance about their own circumstances as well as respond to the proposals. Views on the consultation document were also generally favourable. There were some critical comments from those directly affected that there was too much detail about extra care rather than about the specific implications for them. Conversely some neighbours and community respondents would have like more information about the proposed new scheme.

There was more criticism of the group meetings. Some voiced disagreement with the short notice for the first meeting . There was also a specific request to see a Councillor rather than Council officers and an additional meeting was arranged to provide that.

Throughout the consultation respondents from all groups argued that this was a 'done deal' and that the decision to close had already been made regardless of the consultation outcome. This view came across most strongly from family of current residents.

'Has the Council really considered all the alternatives?'
Family of day care user

'Many people are of the opinion if the Council want to do it they will do it regardless of what you think so prove them wrong and seriously consider people's views and feelings.'
Staff member

'I know this is a consultation meeting but be honest, is this a done deal?'
Family of Arthur Neal resident

'I must ask (though not with confidence that you will give an honest answer) how much weight do you attach to this consultation process and to individual consultation submissions'
Family of day care user

5 Next Steps

This report of the consultation process and findings of the consultation will help inform the recommendations that will be considered by Council Cabinet on 17 March 2009. A summary of this document will be an appendix to the report considered by Cabinet and the full text will be made available as a background paper.

For further information about the consultation process and findings please contact David Brewin on 01332 255854 or david.brewin@derby.gov.uk