

Options Considered for the Future of The Birches Older Persons' Home

This document provides detailed information about the options currently being considered in relation to the future of The Birches care home. It aims to support people who wish to participate in the consultation process about the future of the care home and should help people make an informed response to the consultation questionnaire.

For more information about what consultation is, how it works and how you can contribute please read the factsheet 'Have your say on the Future of The Birches Care Home'.

Reasons for Review

Nationally and locally, people are living longer. Quite rightly the expectations of older people and their relatives have got higher, and as a council, our ambitions for the care and support of older people have also increased.

Central Bedfordshire Council wants the best possible quality of life for its residents and has been looking at how it can secure this both now and for future generations.

In this context we have been reviewing the Council's own residential care homes. These were built some decades ago and no longer meet the higher standards and expectations of our residents.

So, when better options become available elsewhere, the Council will consider consulting with residents and relatives about the future. This is now the case with The Birches.

There are now good quality care home places in close proximity to The Birches, including places at a new residential care home, Oak Manor that is under construction in Shefford and due to open September/October 2017.

Options Considered

When considering the future of The Birches the Council has considered and evaluated a number of options.

The outcome of our consideration to date is set out below.

1. Doing nothing

What would this mean in practice?	The Council would continue to own and operate The Birches. No changes would be made to the building or the arrangement for the delivery of care.
Cost	Estimated annual running cost (including staffing, utilities, day- to-day repairs and maintenance and supplies) are £784k. These are the direct costs incurred in the home and

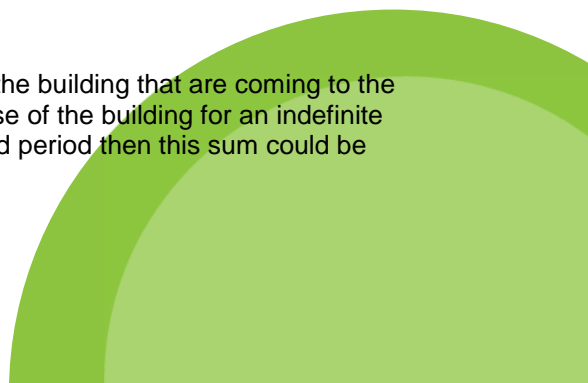


	<p>do not include management or corporate overheads.</p> <p>Estimated future capital repairs and maintenance £500k¹.</p> <p>These running costs for The Birches equate to an estimated £553.34 per place per week.</p> <p>The current fee for 'full cost' payers for The Birches is £504.57 per week</p>
Approximate timescales	Immediate, as it would be a continuation of the existing arrangement.
Assumptions	None
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be no disruption to residents as they would remain where they are. • The residents care would continue to be delivered by staff with whom they are familiar. • The staff in the home would not be affected.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing and future residents will not live in accommodation that meets modern expectations which could lead to a reduced quality of life. • The Council will not have fulfilled its commitment to deliver a better offer to residents and replace its own care homes with capacity in homes that meet modern expectations. • The existing building would need significant investment and disruptive works to extend its useful life. • In the Council's role of managing the market it may be problematic for the Council to seek to improve standards elsewhere in the market if it had taken the decision not to improve its own services. • This option does not take the opportunity to move residents to a nearby new care home that meets modern standards. Experience shows that new homes generally become fully occupied quickly and the Council will have missed this opportunity. Whilst new care homes may be built in the wider area in the future this is by no means certain.

Initial assessment:

Doing nothing is not considered to be a desirable option as it does not deliver an improved service for existing and future residents.

¹ This is an estimate based on the amount required to renew aspects of the building that are coming to the end of their useful life and assuming that there is a need to extend the use of the building for an indefinite period. If there is a need only to extend the life of the building for a limited period then this sum could be reduced.





2. Offer and arrange alternative accommodation to existing permanent residents in homes that meet current standards and then close The Birches

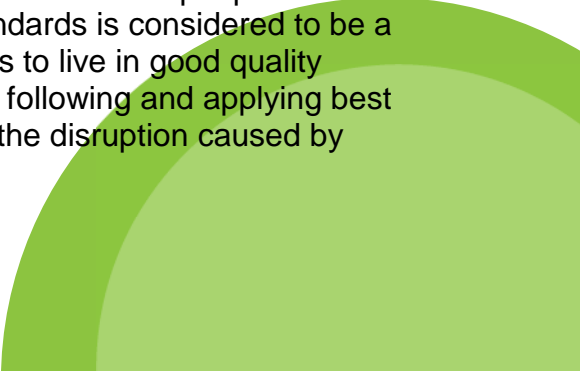
<p>What would this mean in practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop new admissions to the home. • Engage with residents and their representatives to gain an understanding of their needs and preferences. • Undertake assessments as necessary for each resident. • Provide residents with a choice of alternative accommodation that meets their needs and preferences and are within a reasonable distance. The home(s) suggested would offer good quality care, modern physical and environmental standards and fee rates that are in line with the Council’s fee structure or the host Local Authority rates. • Prepare for relocation, including logistical arrangements and having care staff from the new home coming to meet residents and learn their routines, likes and dislikes. • Manage the moves to alternative accommodation, following accepted best practice. • Undertake staff consultation and determine the outcome for the individuals concerned. • Formally close The Birches.
<p>Cost</p>	<p>The costs will not be confirmed until residents have chosen where they would like to move to. However, residents would be relocated to homes where the fee rates are in line with the Council’s fee structure or the host Local Authority rates (if the home is out of area).</p> <p>The Council’s fee structure only applies to care homes in Central Bedfordshire and is based on the following quality bands. The fees are reviewed each year:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Adequate - £492.23 a week Good - £504.57 a week Excellent - £516.97 a week</p> <p>If a home has attained the Council’s dementia accreditation then an additional £15.00 a week will be paid for residents with a diagnosis of dementia.</p> <p>The running costs for The Birches equate to an estimated £553.34 per place per week.</p> <p>The Council would no longer have to pay to run, repair and maintain the home.</p>
<p>Approximate timescales</p>	<p>Undertake assessments and discuss options with residents and their representatives – 6 weeks</p>



	<p>Make choices about a future home, prepare for relocation and make moves at appropriate times – up to 4 months</p> <p>Staff consultation period – 3 months</p> <p>Formal closure of The Birches – 3 weeks</p>
Assumptions	<p>The Council is able to secure sufficient places in new homes to meet the needs of The Birches residents.</p>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing and future residents will live in a home that meets modern standards. • Some residents could use this opportunity to move to a home that is nearer to family and friends. • The approach supports the independent care home market because the Council will no longer be competing with them for customers. • The approach is fair and open to the care home market, as all homes that meet modern standards and deliver good care will be considered as relocation options for residents. • The Council will no longer have to invest significant funds to maintain and repair an old building that does not meet standards. • The Council would have a surplus site which could be disposed of or given an alternative use.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents' health and wellbeing may be negatively impacted by the disruption of a move and, in mitigation, active measures would be taken to minimise these risks. The Council has experience and developed best practice to help residents prepare for any move and familiarise themselves with their new home and care staff (for example, using photos, visits and short videos). The Council would also follow best practice in a thorough handover process with the new home. • Friends and relatives of a small number of residents may have to travel further to the new home. • Although it is not possible to be specific about what would happen to the staff at The Birches, it appears unlikely that staff would transfer to the homes with the residents as TUPE regulations (Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment) would not apply.

Initial assessment

Relocating existing residents at The Birches to care homes that meet people's expectation in respect of physical and environmental standards is considered to be a favourable option as it allows existing and future residents to live in good quality accommodation as well as receive good quality care. By following and applying best practice, the Council would seek to minimise the risks of the disruption caused by





moving residents, and for some, this could prove to be a positive experience. This option represents good value for money to the Council as it requires no additional capital investment. It also supports care home operators that provide modern accommodation and good care.

3. Sell The Birches as a 'going concern' to another care home provider

<p>What would this mean in practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise The Birches on the open market. • If an acceptable offer is made, enter into negotiations and secure the sale of the site with the care home business as a going concern. • The Council will cease owning and operating The Birches. • A new care home provider will operate The Birches as a care home. • Residents would remain in the home and new residents would continue to be admitted • The staff in the home would have the right to transfer under TUPE regulations. It is most likely that the new company would retain the staff at The Birches but they could be required to work anywhere within the new organisation. • The Council would not enter into any specific contractual arrangement with the new provider other than for existing residents.
<p>Cost</p>	<p>The Council to oversee disposal which would necessarily include the procurement of specialist external support in marketing care provision. The estimated fees are c. 2% plus legal costs).</p> <p>Estimated advertising cost, including a full information pack, promotion and direct approach to care home operators, estimated at £5k.</p> <p>In 2012 Bidwells valued the site at around £900k if the existing use of The Birches continued with no block contract arrangement in place.</p>
<p>Approximate timescales</p>	<p>Appoint external marketing consultant – 2 weeks</p> <p>Create information pack – 3 weeks</p> <p>Advertise The Birches for sale – 3 months</p> <p>Execution of sale – 2 months</p>
<p>Assumptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An operator is willing to purchase a home that does not meet modern standards and is able to get the home registered by CQC (Care Quality Commission). • An operator is willing to purchase an old building that is in need of significant investment and is considered to be



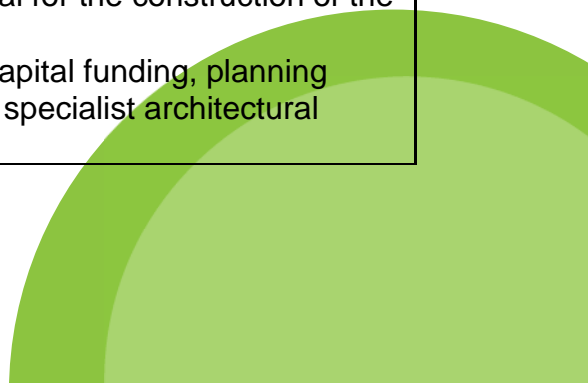
	<p>smaller than what most operators require to be economically viable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An operator is willing to take on the financial commitments that a TUPE transfer would entail (notably pension liabilities).
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The residents can remain in the home. However, a change of care home operator may lead to changes in the way care is delivered and how the home is managed. • Existing staff would transfer to the new provider and are likely to remain working at the home. • The Council would no longer have to invest significant funds to maintain and repair an old building that does not meet standards. • The Council would receive some income from the sale of The Birches.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is unlikely to find an operator to purchase The Birches as it does not meet modern standards, the building is old so requires considerable investment and it is smaller than what most operators are looking for. • The existing and future residents of the home will not live in accommodation that meets modern standards. • The new operator may change the fee rates. This could have a significant impact on the fees charged to self funders. • An incoming operator may change care practices within the home. • It would be very difficult to guarantee the future of the home under a new operator. • The fact that TUPE regulations would apply would affect the operating costs and will deter some operators and/or impact the sale value.

Initial assessment

This option would be acceptable to the Council. However, our understanding is that it is very unlikely that an operator would purchase The Birches for reasons of scale, facilities, condition and the TUPE implications.

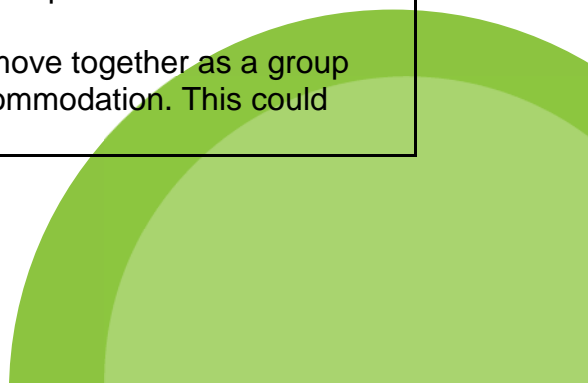
4. Build a new care home on the site after demolition of the existing building

What would this mean in practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council would analyse options, prepare feasibility studies and develop a proposal for the construction of the new care home. • This would include securing capital funding, planning consents and procurement of specialist architectural advice
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move residents into alternative care home accommodation either on a temporary or permanent basis depending on customer choice. • Demolish the existing building. • Construct new home. • Staff the new home. • Move the residents who wish it back to the new home.
Cost	<p>Building a new 60 bed care home would cost in the region of £6-8m.</p> <p>If the alternative accommodation is made available at the Council's rates the fees would be between £492.23 and £516.97 a week.</p> <p>The new home would not be available for 12-18 months so the Council would incur additional staff related costs.</p>
Approximate timescales	<p>Write Business Case and Executive Report to request approval to invest in constructing a new home on the The Birches site – 3 months.</p> <p>Tender for architect – 2 months</p> <p>Produce concept design – 3 months</p> <p>Obtain Planning Permission – 3 months</p> <p>Tender design and build contract – 8 months</p> <p>Move residents to other homes – 6 weeks</p> <p>Construction – 12 months</p> <p>Commissioning and occupation of new home – 3 months</p>
Assumptions	<p>Planning Permission will be granted for a new home of sufficient size to be viable.</p>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new home that meets modern standards will be available at The Birches for existing and future residents.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option would require residents to move more than once if they wished to return to the replacement home. Their health and wellbeing may be negatively impacted by this disruption and active measures would need to be taken to minimise these risks. Best practice would be followed to help residents to prepare for any move and familiarise themselves with their new home. For these reasons, in practice, a relatively small proportion of existing residents are likely to move to a replacement home when it is completed. • Residents may not be able to move together as a group into alternative care home accommodation. This could break up friendship groups.





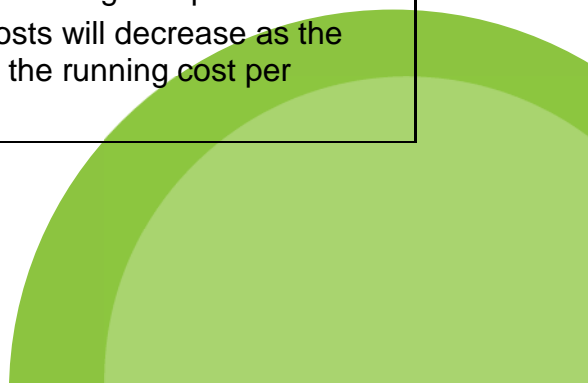
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consequences of this option for staff are complicated as they would not be required at The Birches until the new home is complete, which could be roughly a year. The Council would incur additional staff-related costs and it may not be possible to retain staff. • Building a new 60 bed care home would cost in the region of £6-8m. The Council have not made provisions for this in the budget and may need to stop or delay other projects in order to fund this. • There is currently a sufficient number of care home places available to meet the demand in the Ivel Valley. The Council has a duty to the care market and would not want to take active steps to directly deliver services in an area where the market is able to meet the demand. • It would be difficult for the Council to justify why it has chosen to invest in a new care home when the market is building new homes and is able to meet the demand without The Birches. • The existing site is somewhat constrained which would restrict its scale and layout. This in turn could impact on the economic viability of the home and its ability to operate successfully.
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Initial assessment

Building a new care home on the site after the existing building is demolished is not currently considered to be a desirable option because it would cause considerable disruption to residents as they would all have to move once and those that wanted to return would move twice. In addition, investing in a new-build care home in an area that has enough modern care home places to meet demand would not be a good use of the scarce public resources.

5. Stop new admissions and close after a set period of time – run down the home

<p>What would this mean in practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council agrees to stop admissions to the home. • Council continues to own and operate the home. • Over time, beds will become vacant but these will not be offered to new residents. • The number of staff will be reduced gradually as the number of residents decrease. • The home will close when the number of residents drops below an agreed number or after an agreed period of time.
<p>Cost</p>	<p>The staffing, supplies and utility costs will decrease as the number of residents decrease but the running cost per resident will increase.</p>





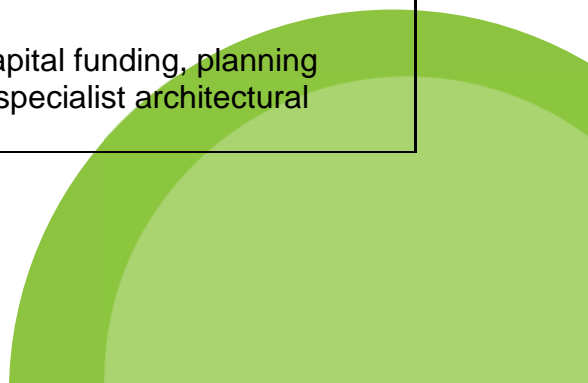
Approximate timescales	The duration that the home will remain open for is unknown.
Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CQC would find this approach acceptable. • This can be delivered without risking the safety, health and well being of residents.
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of the existing residents will not have to move. • The Council would eventually have a surplus site which could be disposed of or given an alternative use.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing residents will not live in accommodation that meets modern standards which could lead to a reduced quality of life. • It may become difficult to maintain an active, vibrant atmosphere in the building as vacancy levels increase. It could become very isolating for the last remaining residents. • Operating a home that has a diminishing number of residents can lead to safety and management issues. • It would be difficult to maintain staffing over a long period of time. • It may be difficult to retain good quality staff, especially at a senior level. • Any residents that are left after the agreed period of time would have to move to an alternative care home. • The running cost per resident will increase as the number of residents decreases.

Initial assessment

Stopping admissions to the home and closing after a set period of time is not currently considered to be a desirable option. The home will have the feeling of being wound down, which is likely to affect the mental wellbeing of residents, as the home will become less occupied and less vibrant. Staff will leave and changes will need to be made to enable the home to continue operating safely with fewer residents. It may prove difficult to retain sufficient staff and this could affect the quality of care. Those residents that remain in the home at the end of the agreed period would have to move.

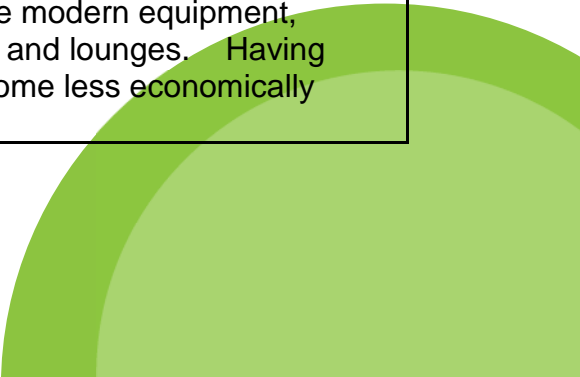
6. Refurbish the existing building so that it meets modern standards

What would this mean in practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council would analyse options, prepare feasibility studies and develop a proposal for the refurbishment of the home. • This would include securing capital funding, planning consents and procurement of specialist architectural advice.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out building works to refurbish the existing building to meet current standards. Residents will remain in the home.
Cost	Refurbishment costs would not be known until the design specification is finalised and the build contract is let, but it is estimated to be in the range between £500k and £2M.
Approximate timescales	<p>Write Business Case and Executive Report to request approval to invest in constructing a new home on The Birches site – 3 months.</p> <p>Tender for architect – 2 months.</p> <p>Develop refurbishment design – 3 months.</p> <p>Tender for building contractor – 8 months.</p> <p>Obtain Planning Permission – 3 months (may not be required).</p> <p>Refurbishment works take place – 6-12 months.</p>
Assumptions	<p>Planning Permission would be forthcoming if required.</p> <p>A refurbishment whilst the home remained open would be technically and operationally feasible.</p>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents could remain in the home. The existing staff would remain in the home. Existing and future residents would live in accommodation that meets modern standards.
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The adaptations required to bring the home up to current standards would generate noise and mess which would be disruptive to residents over a long period of time. Residents may have to move within the home to enable the building work to take place. It would be difficult for the Council to justify why it has chosen to invest in refurbishing this care home when there are enough care home places to meet demand without The Birches. The work required would be extensive and would require a significant amount of funding. The Council has not made provisions for fully refurbishing The Birches so may have to stop other projects or put them on hold to fund this refurbishment. The number of bedrooms is likely to reduce because of the space required for en-suite bathrooms, larger rooms and wider corridors to accommodate modern equipment, activity rooms, relaxation areas and lounges. Having fewer rooms would make the home less economically viable.





Initial assessment

Refurbishing the home is not currently considered to be an acceptable option because the work required would be disruptive to residents over a long period of time and is likely to result in a home that has considerably fewer places than the current home, adversely affecting its economic viability. In addition, investing in a refurbishment in an area that has enough modern care home places to meet demand would not be a good use of the Council's resources.

Options Summary

The options are summarised against three key outcomes in the table below.

Outcomes	Options					
	Do nothing	Re-locate to better homes	Sell as going concern	Rebuild	Run down	Re-furbish
Improved quality of accommodation	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓
Minimal disruption for existing residents	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x
Value for money	x	✓	x	x	x	x

Having reviewed the options for the future of The Birches the Council's preferred option at this stage is to offer and arrange accommodation in alternative care homes for all existing residents. The Council would then close The Birches.

This is the preferred option at this stage because:

- **Improved quality of accommodation:** it enables existing residents to live in care homes that meet increasing expectations with respect to physical and environmental standards and improved delivery of good quality care.
- **Minimal disruption for existing residents:** any move would mean some disruption for existing residents, which could have a negative impact on their health and wellbeing. Whilst the preferred option would require existing residents to move, this would only happen once as a result of the Council's action and measures would be put in place to mitigate any risks to their health and wellbeing.
- **Value for money:** because the independent care home market is delivering good quality residential care homes in Ivel Valley, significant investment in a care home in this area would not represent value for money to the Council and council tax payers.

