

Proposed closure of The Abbey Residential Care Home and options for the future

Consultation Report

1. Overview

Cumbria County Council carried out a public consultation on proposals to close The Abbey Residential Care Home and options for the future between 23 September and 1 November 2019.

The consultation involved publication and promotion of a consultation document and questionnaire on the council's website and a community drop-in meeting held on 8 October. Paper copies of the consultation document and questionnaire were also made available locally in the Post Office, Pharmacy and in The Abbey.

Staff of The Abbey were informed of the consultation on 20 September at a meeting held at The Abbey.

Residents and their families were officially informed by letter on the 21 September. Advocacy support has been made available from People First to support families and residents to engage.

The Parish Council was informed of the consultation by letter on the 21st September as part of the wider area planning approach following an earlier community drop in session in Staveley on the 4th June 2019.

2. Response

At the consultation's close 122 people had completed the consultation questionnaire and 97 people attended the community drop-in event.

Of those that completed the questionnaire:

Respondent	% of responses
A relative or friend of The Abbey	0%
A member of staff currently working in The Abbey	9%
A member of the public (Cumbria resident)	78%
A member of the public (non-resident of Cumbria)	1%
A representative of an organisation	3%
Other	1%

Responses were also received from the following organisations:

- Staveley and Ings Parish Council
- Sustainable Staveley
- Staveley Community Land Trust
- Staveley Mill Yard
- Staveley Women's Institute
- St Anne's Church, Ings

3. Findings – consultation questionnaire

A large majority of those who completed the consultation questionnaire (83%) were opposed to the closure of the home.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to close The Abbey?	Response
Strongly Agree	6%
Agree	3%
Neither/nor	8%
Disagree	11%
Strongly disagree	72%
TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO RESPONDED TO THE QUESTION	119

A consistent range of reasons were given for opposition to closure:

- The importance of retaining a local service to meet local need, allowing people now and in the future to maintain social connections with local friends and family.
- Belief that demand for residential care is higher than is claimed in the consultation document, and likely to grow in future, meaning the proposal to close is misguided.
- Claims that The Abbey has had a policy of refusing new residents over the past 2 or 3 years and belief that this was a deliberate attempt to reduce resident numbers in order to justify closure.
- The negative impact closure would have on the health and well-being of current residents.
- Concerns that a focus on providing care at home leads to isolation for older people.
- The quality of care at the home is good.
- Lack of joined up thinking with other Parish Planning activity underway in Staveley, in particular The Conversation.

Of those who supported closure the reasons given related to the condition and suitability of the home.

Asked what other care services would benefit their local community, respondents identified a range of service types and needs:

- Dementia care
- Extra Care or sheltered housing
- Additional nursing care
- Using The Abbey as a base for home care or day services
- Meals on wheels
- Respite care services
- Residential rehabilitation for older people leaving hospital
- Additional integration of and with other community based services

Respondents were asked, if The Abbey were to close, which of three possible future uses of the site would be their preference. Just under 20% of respondents declined to answer this question, with

these respondents frequently stating that this was because they did not agree with any of the three options.

The level of support for each option is shown below:

Option	% respondents in support
Mixture of Extra Care Housing (which includes a dedicated care team onsite to provide support where needed) combined with a small 10 bed Residential Care unit.	88%
Affordable residential homes plus a number of 'care ready' Elderly Persons homes (design features to support people to live independently). There would be access to 24 hour care support when required. This could also include a potential Care Hub facility as part of the development allowing care and support staff to be located, trained and available to provide that 24 hour support.	11%
Sale of the site for mixed provision residential homes with local occupancy (developer opportunity) with the capital income being utilised for other Council services.	1%
TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO RESPONDED TO THE QUESTION	101

There was almost no support for the sale of the site for housing, several respondents stated strongly that the site should remain in public ownership or that any proceeds from a sale should be ring-fenced for Staveley.

Responses from the organisations listed in Section 2 argued that there were alternative options for the future, in terms of ownership and use of the building or site, that could and should be considered and that community groups wished to engage constructively with the council to explore these. There was a strong view that the community should take a lead role in any future development and that any decision should be delayed to allow further engagement and discussion to take place to find a way forward that met community aspirations.

4. Community drop-in event – 8TH October 2019

- 97 people attended the community drop-in event
- 6 direct comments for feedback were received at the event
- 17 people completed the consultation questionnaire at the event (and are included in the analysis above)
- The majority of people chose to take a questionnaire home to complete separately

The majority of the direct comments received were opposed to the closure of the home (5 out of 6) and included these consistent messages:

- The importance of a local services being available and that elderly people stay in their known environment in the village.
- Belief that demand for residential care is higher than presented in the consultation document
- Concerns about the lack of investment in the home with recognition that there is a need to review and update residential care services in Staveley as The Abbey is no longer fit for purpose

- Proposal that retirement flats with daily care are provided, purpose built provision for seriously ill older adults and a proposal for nursing care provision

5. Petition

264 people signed the following petition:

“The council say the demand for residential care in our area has decreased significantly and they have begun a 6 week consultation for the proposed closure of The Abbey residential home.

“We believe there is demand for residential care in our area.

Please sign this petition if you too believe the village needs The Abbey and would not want to see it turned into anything other than a care facility.”