

6. Equally, the Working Group Members appreciate the obligations the County Council has, to look forward and consider future service provision from the perspectives of the sustainability of the HCC Care Service itself and in terms of the growing needs of prospective new clients both now and into the future.
7. Having given due consideration to all that has been analysed and evidenced over the past 5-6 months, including robustly reviewing the responses from the formal public consultation process, understanding more about the high quality and experience of HCC Care and Care Management in terms of sensitively meeting client needs, and seeking assurance and mitigations from officers, the report confirms the support of the Working Group for all the proposals consulted on, including support for the cessation of residential services at the homes highlighted in paragraph 5.
8. The Working Group are aware that recommendations in support of the individual site proposed closures will be submitted by officers to the Executive Lead Member for consideration and approval at her February Decision Day. The final decision report will also include the key elements of today's HASC scrutiny of the proposals and in addition, the HASC Chair will be able to write to the Executive Lead Member ahead of the Decision meeting and relay specific points of interest that HASC would ask the Executive Lead Member to consider prior to taking her decision(s).

Recommendations

9. The HCC Care Proposals Member Working Group ask HASC to:
 - a) Acknowledge that a robust cross party Working Group process, Chaired by Councillor Briggs, and consisting of 9 HASC Members, has been in operation since it was established at the end of July 2023.
 - b) Note that Member Working Group participation was strong, regular, and consistent throughout the 5-6 month period and that 8 Working Group meetings took place in total, including 4 meetings from early December following receipt of the findings from the public consultation.
 - c) Note that, in addition to the Working Group meetings, Members of the Working Group visited 4 HCC Care homes to better understand the operating conditions and variability of the current service offer, and to help 'bring to life' the drivers for the Cabinet approved investment plans and specifically the closure proposals that the public were being consulted on.
 - d) Note that the Working Group witnessed the limitations of existing HCC Care settings and approved a Care Homes video to be produced and to be shared with the wider HASC and public at today's meeting.
 - e) Note that the Working Group, having carefully considered and debated a wealth of information including from the public consultation findings, support the proposals being taken forward to the Executive Lead Member's February meeting, acknowledging that the final report will also include the main points that result from today's HASC meeting.

- f) Note, that in supporting the proposals on which the public consultation was based the Member Working Group back the HCC Care investment plans agreed to in principle by Cabinet, recognising that additional beds in more fit for the future homes will help the County Council to better meet the future requirements of Older Adults, especially those with complex needs.
- g) Note, that the 9 strong Member Working Group individually support:
1. the permanent closure of Copper Beeches and Cranleigh Paddock Residential Care Homes,
 2. the closure of Bishops Waltham House, Green Meadows, and Solent Mead (including the Day Service) Residential Care Homes,
 3. the cessation of residential care provision at Oakridge House, Ticehurst and Emsworth House as part of the plans to modernise and expand these Homes,
 4. the closure of Malmesbury Lawn and Westholme on the completion of the proposed new builds at Oak Park and Cornerways.
- h) Specifically recommend to the Executive Lead Member that if she does approve the HCC Care home closure proposals at her 8 February Decision Day, and to minimise future impact for the homes that will cease providing standard residential services, that the 6 homes in question (2 and 3) above, stop admitting new clients with immediate effect.

Contextual information

10. On 18 July 2023, Cabinet approved a set of service recommendations in relation to the proposed future service direction of HCC Care's Older Adults service portfolio, including a formal public consultation on proposed home closures and existing home modifications. At Cabinet, it was recommended that HASC be asked to set up a Working Group to oversee a formal public consultation exercise that commenced on 4 September 2023.
11. The Cabinet report recommended a capital investment of some £173m in the HCC Care Older Adults portfolio with the investment addressing high priority maintenance and health and safety issues as well as providing for a major suitability programme that would result in more modern, fit for the future homes and an increase in bed numbers from circa 900 as now to just more than 1,000 on completion of the proposed investment projects.
12. The proposed capital investment programme combines the building of three new homes, modifications/expansions to three existing homes and the proposed closure of seven homes, two of which have been temporarily closed since November 2021 and two of which would remain in service until they are able to be replaced by two of the proposed new builds. The investment business case is not dependent on the use of capital receipts should it be decided to sell any of the sites that are proposed to close.
13. It was acknowledged that the proposed service changes would result in a material change to the existing HCC Care service operation with impacts for existing residents/their families, staff, the overall service configuration, the

service focus, and for wider stakeholders. The proposed changes were thus agreed in principle by Cabinet but subject to a formal 10-week consultation process that ended on 12 November 2023.

14. The formal public consultation process was specifically in relation to the proposed home closures and the proposed existing home modifications and sought views on the following:
 - the proposed permanent closure of two residential homes currently temporarily closed for operational reasons: Copper Beeches and Cranleigh Paddock.
 - the proposed closure of three residential homes at Bishops Waltham House, Green Meadows, and Solent Mead (including the Day Service), within 6-12 months of the decision (timings to be confirmed) for service and financial reasons.
 - the proposed closure and relocation of the residential service at Malmesbury Lawn and the residential and nursing service at Westholme, mainly for service proximity and workforce reasons, at the time both proposed new-build facilities (at Oak Park and Cornerways), become operational (not until 2027 at the earliest).
 - the proposed cessation of residential services at Oakridge House, Ticehurst and Emsworth House (not before the end of 2025) as part of extensive modifications and expansions of the three homes.

The Working Group – Membership, Approach and Considerations

15. The HASC Member Working Group was agreed to at an end of July HASC meeting and was made up of a cross party group of 9 Members which included: Cllr Ann Briggs (Chair) Cllr Bill Withers, Cllr Phil North, Cllr Kim Taylor, Cllr Sarah Pankhurst, Cllr Lesley Meenaghan, Cllr Jackie Branson, Cllr Wayne Irish, and Cllr Alan Dowden.
16. At the initial meeting in August, the terms of reference and role of the Working Group were agreed (see Appendix 1). An overview of the public consultation documentation and approach was shared by officers, including proposed communications/engagement and a plan for HASC Member visits to a selection of HCC Care home settings. The approach and plans were agreed.
17. As an entity, the Working Group evolved well and operated strongly following our initial meeting. Attendance was strong throughout and engagement and dialogue with officers was always open, informative, and assuring. This enabled invaluable and informative two-way discussions.
18. The meetings allowed sufficient opportunity for Members to ask questions, to raise issues and to properly scrutinise the work of, and the approach taken by, officers. In turn, the officers answered questions openly and competently. The regularity of the meetings and the information taken from them also allowed helpful updates of progress to be provided to the formal HASC meetings in September and in November via Chairman's Announcements.

19. Members were unanimous in their praise for how informative and helpful the home visits proved. They brought to life the range of considerations that clearly went into the forming of the service portfolio proposed changes that was the driver for the 10-week formal public consultation process.
20. We met 8 times in total, and each meeting gave Working Members the opportunity to question and scrutinise the approach being taken to the formal public consultation as well as to be informed of and comment on the progress, responses and matters arising from the consultation.
21. We met 3 times during the public consultation process allowing us to review progress in terms of received consultation responses and we discussed the take up and the headline output from the planned engagement with residents, their families/representatives and with staff which was understandably strongest at the 3 residential homes that would be subject to closure within 6-12 months should the change proposals be approved next month. The engagement offers to residents and their families extended to 1-1's and to additional private meetings with HCC Care staff, with Care Management (Social Worker) staff.
22. We were advised of the strong, supporting role that independent advocates played in terms of working with and assisting all clients to understand the process. This included supporting the clients through any questions that they had, supporting them to express and communicate their wishes and feelings about the proposed changes and to help them to feedback.
23. Positively, the issues raised in the informal resident and family conversations, including with advocates, were followed through in terms of the formal consultation route. Not surprisingly, the responses received mainly revolved around uncertainty about the future if the proposals are approved. This topic is returned to and covered in more detail in the Consultation Findings section later in this report.
24. For the other homes that were part of the consultation, and despite the offers of engagement being regularly made throughout the 10-week period, the Working Group were consistently advised that there was significantly less interest and take-up especially from residents and their family/representatives.
25. The Working Group were understanding of this outcome. The proposed changes at Oakridge House, Ticehurst and Emsworth House for example, are some years off if approved in February 2024 with work at the sites not commencing until the end of 2025. Working Group Members accepted that personal interest at this time both for residents, their families/representatives and for staff was always likely to be markedly lower than for the homes under more immediate threat of closure. For Malmesbury Lawn and Westholme, we were advised that there was less interest. Again, we were not surprised given that the proposed changes for these homes are between 4 and 5 years away.
26. During the consultation period, we received updates in relation to the staff engagement. We were advised that a formal HR consultation was undertaken in relation to the staff working at, or still connected to, the residential service homes that are proposed to be permanently closed. This included staff who

were previously employed at Copper Beeches and Cranleigh Paddock in addition to the 3 homes that much of the report is based on.

27. We understood that the formal HR process ensured that regular contact and engagement was enacted, and this extended to positive meetings with Trade Unions that took place every 2-3 weeks during the consultation process as well as prior to it starting. We were also made aware that engagement with the Trade Unions has positively continued beyond the end of the consultation.
28. The Working Group was regularly updated on the main points arising from the staff consultation and we were pleased to learn that 97% of staff potentially affected by the proposed changes engaged with the formal HR process on a 1-1 basis, as well as taking part in generic sessions. We were advised that the remaining 3% were either in the process of moving on or were on long-term sickness or maternity leave. In these latter cases, engagement and communication via written communication was organised.
29. We were also encouraged to learn that 70% of staff expressed a wish to continue to work for HCC Care in the future and where possible and practical this would be prioritised if the proposed changes are approved. For the remaining near 30%, these staff have expressed a wish to be considered for voluntary redundancy. Working Group Members support staff being treated in a dignified manner but hope ultimately that voluntary redundancy levels are at the lowest practical levels given the quality of staff inputs that we witnessed and given the workforce challenges being experienced across Health and Social Care.
30. Post the consultation closing, 4 further Working Group meetings took place following receipt of the findings/outcomes of the public consultation exercise from the report produced by the Corporate Insight and Engagement team. These 4 meetings allowed us to discuss and debate the consultation findings at length and to further engage with and ask questions of officers relating to the issues raised through the consultation. Details of the discussions that we had with officers on the consultation findings including understanding the mitigations, and of the conclusions we drew, are covered after the Care Homes Visits section of this report.

The Working Group Care Home Site Visits

31. The Member Working Group visited 4 different HCC Care sites as part of our work programme, aimed at helping us to better understand the context and the drivers for the investment proposals and the rationale for the proposed home closures upon which the public consultation was based.
32. Officers arranged for us (and all HASC Members) to visit Bishops Waltham House, Emsworth House, Hawthorn Court and the Clarence Unit, noting that proposals for the first 2 of these homes were included in the formal public consultation process. All bar 1 of the 9 Members of the Working Group attended all the 4 homes with the remaining Member able to visit 3. To avoid overwhelming residents or the running of the individual Care home services, no more than 3 Members were accommodated at any home at any time.

33. The visits were well organised and expertly hosted. Tours of each of the sites were conducted in a very open manner and we had time for unstructured and informal question and answer sessions led by the Members, often with the Registered Manager and a selection of available staff and residents.
34. The informal time spent with staff at Bishops Waltham House and at Emsworth House proved informative with those we engaged with clearly being in support of the proposals and recognising the benefits for them and all staff to be able to operate from 'fit for the future', modern facilities. Additionally, a Working Group Member also had the same experience when informally and separately visiting Green Meadows to help gauge staff opinion there.
35. The Working Group witnessed excellent care delivery during the organised visits, and we were each highly impressed by the commitment, dedication and skill of the staff delivering the care to residents. We were aware, prior to the visits, that HCC Care has a strong reputation for the high quality of the care it provides and pleasingly, the visits helped to confirm that position.
36. Reflecting on what we learnt from the visits, including from the informal discussions we had with staff, the Working Group unanimously agreed that the high quality of care being received by residents was testament to the values, the commitment and the skill of the staff, in the cases of Bishops Waltham House and Emsworth House, despite the limitations of the buildings and the conditions in which the staff are asked to operate in.
37. We couldn't help but notice cramped conditions, personal space that doesn't meet Care Quality Commission (CQC) standards (confirmed in the public consultation documentation) including rooms requiring commodes in the absence of personal toilets. Other limitations were also noticed including narrow/tight corridors and the struggles for staff to carry out their important duties including regularly having to move furniture and not being able to easily support residents who require moving or assistance with personal care needs.
38. The lack of personal dignity was of real concern to every Member, as are the conditions that staff are asked to operate in. We were all agreed that this can no longer be an acceptable way to operate and is not something the County Council can continue to endorse in this era let alone into the future.
39. In reaching this consensus, we agreed that the proposals to close homes where the buildings (and internal layout) are not fit for purpose, that are becoming less and less attractive to potential new clients and to staff and would not be able to be re-registered with CQC by an alternative provider without extensive modification, are valid and should be supported but only after due consideration of the consultation responses. We also acknowledged that supporting the proposals and in turn the capital investment strategy, would almost certainly provide the best opportunity for HCC Care to have a sustainable and successful future.
40. The Working Group Members were also encouraged by their visits to Hawthorn Court and to the Clarence Unit, noting positive examples of high-quality personal care space, building design, spacious corridors, good lighting, of visible Nursing stations, use of technology, individual resident medicine cabinets etc. It was explained that the proposed new builds and the proposed

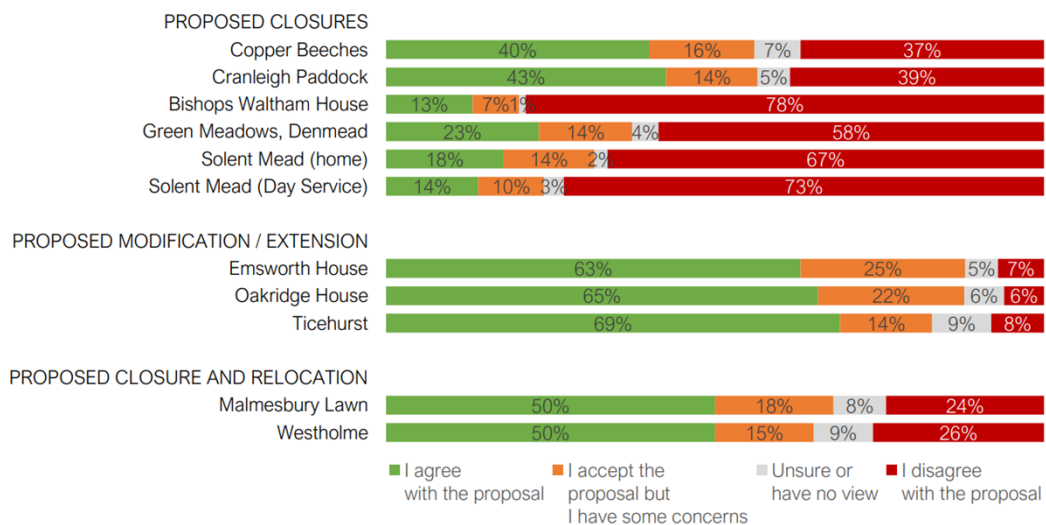
refurbishments/expansions would be predicated on taking the best of Hawthorn and Clarence and ensuring that these become the minimum standards on which the proposed investment projects are based on.

41. We all strongly supported the visits being made available to all HASC Members and believe the strong overall attendance achieved, and the release of the Care Home video (produced to outline the main learnings from the Member visits), will mean that today's debate of the consultation outcomes and any considerations to be passed on to the Executive Lead Member for her February Decision Day, will be better informed.

The Consultation Findings/Outcomes

42. The findings from the consultation process produced by the Corporate Insight and Engagement team, were circulated to the Working Group at the end of November and were discussed in detail and fully debated during the 4 Working Group meetings from December 2023. The headline themes from the consultation including positive features, concerns and impacts and other key considerations/points raised are shown in Appendix 2. These are also summarised and commented on in this section of the report.
43. The Working Group were pleased to learn of the high overall response to the consultation with 724 responses recorded in total, with nearly 300 of these happening in the final 2 weeks of the 10-week consultation period. We were advised that almost 98% of the consultation responses fell into the following respondent groups:
 - residents, their families, others with a connection (32%),
 - staff (or volunteers), either working at the homes covered by the consultation, or who work, or have worked for the Directorate (13%),
 - people who live near to the homes covered by the consultation (24%),
 - people and/or organisations, such as the NHS, with an interest in the proposals (28%).
44. The overall response level reflected well on the regular promotion of the consultation to different stakeholders and on the approach taken by officers to offer opportunities throughout the 10-week consultation period for residents, their families, their representatives, and for staff to engage and be supported.
45. The Working Group noted that a good number of respondents wanted their response to cover more than one, or the entirety of the individual proposals, and to this end, every home covered by the consultation had at least 77 responses attributed to it.
46. We were particularly pleased to note (see table on the next page) that there were higher levels of support than disagreement for 3 of the 4 proposal categories: namely the immediate permanent closure of Copper Beeches and Cranleigh Paddock, the proposed modifications and expansions of Emsworth House, Ticehurst and Oakridge House from the end of 2025, and the proposed closure and replacement of Malmesbury Lawn and Westholme most likely in early 2027.

47. This left one category area, the proposed closures - within 6-12 months of the Executive Lead Member decision - of 3 existing residential homes (Bishops Waltham House, Green Meadows, and Solent Mead) that there was strong opposition to, with at least 2/3rds of the respondents disagreeing with the proposed closure.
48. This did not come as a surprise to the Working Group and reflected what we had learned regularly from Officers whilst the public consultation was in train. The level of disagreement regarding the home closures in this category varied as follows: Bishops Waltham House (78%), Green Meadows (68%), and Solent Mead, including the Day Service (67% and 73% respectively).



NB: Many of the 724 respondents shared their views on more than one proposal.

49. The strength of public feeling for the 3 current homes proposed to close, be that via the consultation responses or through separate petitions, was acknowledged by the Working Group. We noted that in the case of Bishops Waltham House, some 27,000 signatures had been secured for their petition against the home closure either through the online 'change.org' return or from paper signatures. 1,008 of the petition responses were from a validated Hampshire address or postcode which is a requirement of the County Council's petition process. Whilst the numbers secured for petitions in respect of Green Meadows (216) and Solent Mead (to be confirmed) were considerably lower, nonetheless they provided good evidence of support for the homes to remain operational.
50. Accepting that the Working Group task was to remain as objective as possible, we turned our attention to the consultation responses received from each of the groups outlined above, with a particular focus on the responses received in relation to Bishops Waltham House, Green Meadows and Solent Mead and we set about testing officers regarding mitigations and answers to the concerns raised.

Responses from Residents, their Families/Representatives or People with a connection to the Residents

51. The Working Group were advised that the responses received from this group of respondents mainly centred around the uncertainty for residents and their families if the closure proposals are approved next month. This included concerns about 'what is going to happen to me', what the alternative care choices will consist of and where, 'will I still be visited' and 'how might this affect me financially'. In addition, other concerns were raised including loss of relationships with other residents and with staff, and loss of routine.
52. We asked officers to provide information regarding alternative provision for the 3 sites that respondents were most concerned about and for the 3 refurbishment sites that would also result in the cessation of standard residential services, albeit not until late 2025. We were pleased to see that CQC rated good or better alternative provision exists in plentiful supply within 10 miles of the homes. The Working Group were advised of how 86% of all residential and nursing placements in 2022/23 had been organised with the independent sector and we were shown details of how many homes within the 10-mile radius cater for residents that the County Council is responsible for. We were also given details of overall vacancy levels and were comforted to learn that these were plentiful - see Appendix 3.
53. The information provided confidence to the Working Group of just what an important and competent role the independent sector plays in terms of meeting the needs of the County Council's care requirements. We were further assured that a new Care Home Framework arrangement with the market has also recently been approved and is aimed at improving and tightening relationships further, so that the availability of CQC good quality provision, at increasingly competitive and affordable prices, can be even better relied upon.
54. We were very encouraged by the level and quality of information held for each of the 77 residents across Bishops Waltham House, Green Meadows and Solent Mead - the 3 current homes that there was strong opposition to the closure proposals. It demonstrated deep knowledge and relentless work to ensure that the understanding of each resident and related family concerns, is thorough and robust. We agreed how important this is, especially if the proposals to close the homes are approved next month.
55. We were shown information regarding the level of self-funders (9 of the 77 current residents and none at Solent Mead) and officers confirmed that alternative provision prices for these residents will be competitive. We were also made aware that for those residents who make partial contributions to the costs of their care they will be unaffected financially by a move to alternative provision.
56. In terms of resident visits, we learnt both about frequency and about how family and other visitors get to the homes. We were advised and were sad to learn that 15 of the current 77 residents are never visited and that a further 7 residents are visited very infrequently. Of the 55 residents who are more

regularly visited by family and/or friends, at least 49 are visited by people who access the homes by driving.

57. We were also advised of the very dynamic nature of HCC Care service provision including seeing analysis regarding the reductions in occupancy at the 3 homes proposed to close since the Cabinet report was published in July 2023. Part of the overall position will be explained by a drop off in admissions since the proposals were announced but what the table below highlights is 18 of 95 residents who were at the homes in July now having moved on. This will be for different reasons including a change in care needs, family choice or regrettably end of life.

Home	Total Beds	Occupancy July 2023	Occupancy Dec 2023
Bishops Waltham House	35	27	26
Green Meadows	42	39	29
Solent Mead	35	29	22
Total	112	95 (85%)	77 (69%)

58. The above table helps to highlight the under occupancy (<85%) that has been a feature of service performance over the past few years, and this was part of the consideration for the portfolio proposals being developed. It shows how occupancy levels have reduced to less than 70% over the past 5 months and it should be noted that 2 residents at Bishops Waltham House have been admitted in this recent period as temporary, short-term admissions, pending their onward care needs being established and organised.
59. Continuing the dynamic nature of care provision theme, we were also advised that 31 of the 77 residents, are due to be re-assessed by the end of this quarter mainly due to deterioration/increased needs that will likely result in most needing to move on to more appropriate care settings. This includes necessary moves to Nursing Care homes and in a smaller number of cases, to homes better able to support people with complex dementia needs. The nature of long-term care provision is that some of the 46 remaining current residents are also likely to regress during 2024 and they too will be re-assessed as appropriate.
60. The Working Group are confident that HCC Care staff and Care Management (Social Workers) have the necessary skills and experience to sensitively plan and execute moves to alternative care homes. Aside from this being a task that is carried out daily, in the case of responding to changing needs of current clients and/or delivering on family requests for moves, HCC Care staff and Care Management staff successfully transitioned 39 residents from Copper Beeches and from Cranleigh Paddock when the two homes were closed for operational resilience reasons back in November 2021.
61. More recently, staff from HCC Care presided over the safe temporary moves from Westholme when 20 residents needed to be evacuated urgently in June this year following a sprinkler incident which led to flooding of rooms across 2

floors. Whilst different in nature and clearly temporary, the moves were expertly handled and, in some cases, those who were moved, requested to stay permanently in their new (temporary) accommodation.

62. The Working Group also discussed the high number of concerns that were received in relation to the loss of the Day Service at Solent Mead if the closure of the home is approved.
63. We were advised that the service, that operates 3 days each week is highly valued even though currently there are just 13 clients that are supported. 8 of the clients attend just 1 of the 3 days each week. We were also informed that alternative Day Service provision exists in New Milton and in Dibden. HCC Care operates a service in New Milton that can cater for both Older and Younger Adults whilst Age Concern run Day Services in both locations. In all 3 examples, spaces are available for additional users. Whilst positive, it was acknowledged that the alternatives will not always be straightforward for the existing clients or their families to access.
64. We were also advised that demand for Day Services was in decline prior to the Covid pandemic and the situation has got worse in the past 2 years. This has prompted a Day Service review that is currently being undertaken by the Directorate. Engagement with service users and service providers is a key part of the review as is looking at alternative forms of support. Officers also confirmed that running a service for such a small number of 13 clients is not a viable option and that the point of the service review was to try to find a way forward that is helpful and sustainable for all.
65. Taking everything learned and/or witnessed into account in relation to the points raised by the consultation, the Working Group agreed that there was nothing material from this element of the consultation response that would prevent us from supporting the closure proposals.

Responses from Staff and/or Volunteers who work at the Homes or have worked at the homes.

66. The responses received from this group of respondents were the most positive of the 4 groups. There was stronger support for each of the 10 proposals than there was disagreement and even in the case of Bishops Waltham House the result was 60% in favour with 33% opposed. By comparison, the result for Green Meadows came out at 85% in favour and 10% opposed.
67. The general support for the proposals (very high support in some instances) is encouraging and is consistent with what we witnessed during our visits to homes and what was expressed to us in the informal discussions we had with staff. There is little doubt in the minds of the Members of the Working Group (and we have expressed this earlier in this report) that the high quality of the care provided by those employed by HCC Care is testament to the values, the commitment, and the skill of the staff, and is despite the conditions in which some of them are asked to operate in.

68. The Working Group acknowledges the strong caring nature of the staff and recognises that for some, they have worked loyally for many years at the care homes they operate at and that they care deeply about today's existing residents. In this regard, it is inevitable that some are finding the change proposals difficult to accept and this has undoubtedly contributed to some 30% of staff across the 3 homes, who will be directly impacted if the closure proposals are approved, applying for voluntary redundancy.
69. The Working Group unanimously agreed that the staff/volunteer responses were largely positive and there was nothing material from this element of the consultation response stopping us from supporting the closure proposals.

People who live close to a home that is proposed to close.

70. Most responders in this group, responded in relation to Bishops Waltham House, Green Meadows, or Solent Mead. Interestingly, views were mixed, with very strong opposition to the closures of Bishops Waltham House and Solent Mead, but with support (60:40) for the closure of Green Meadows.
71. Disagreement was expressed in relation to Copper Beeches and Cranleigh Paddock (the 2 homes that have been temporarily closed since November 2021), whilst at the other end of the spectrum, support for the proposed closures and relocations and the proposed modifications and expansions was strong or in the latter cases, unanimous.
72. Amongst the views received, concerns were expressed about the loss of valued community assets particularly in relation to Copper Beeches, Bishops Waltham House, and Solent Mead. Some respondents were concerned about the availability of public transport especially in rural areas and the New Forest, which could compromise family and friend visits to alternative care settings. Respondents also did not want to see the sites sold for private housing or flats and argued that alternative public service uses should be considered including for the elderly, for the homeless or indeed for children's homes.
73. The Working Group are aware that possible future alternative uses have not yet been considered and as such, understand that uncertainty will have helped fuel the number and type of responses received. Equally, the Working Group support that alternative use(s) can only be considered if the Executive Lead Member does approve the closure proposals at her February meeting.
74. We also acknowledged that as the investment business case is not predicated on using capital receipts from possible sales of the sites proposed for closure; this should open the door for meaningful future engagement with interested communities regarding the options for future uses of the sites. This could include third party interest in some form of continued Care Home operation but as referenced earlier it would not be possible to secure re-registration with CQC, without extensive modification.
75. In terms of the public transport concerns and the possible impacts on resident visits, evidence of community transport operations for Bishops Waltham, Denmead (Green Meadows) and Lymington (Solent Mead) were provided, and this was in addition to the 'driver' information. The Working Group are

assured that visits to alternative care sites should be able to largely or wholly replicate the frequency of visits that happen now and were reassured that the community transport options also offer additional means for the very limited number of family and/or friends who do not have access to their own car.

76. The Working Group concluded from their review of the responses received from people living close to the sites and from the mitigations and information supplied by officers, that there was nothing material from this element of the consultation response that prevents us from supporting the closure proposals.

Responses from Others with an interest in the proposals, including Democratically Elected Representatives and from Organisations.

77. As a Working Group, we dedicated a meeting to discuss and debating the responses received from this final category of respondents which included 13 responses from organisations and 16 responses from democratically elected representatives. A range of views were received including from those who wished to challenge the strategic direction that Cabinet approved back in July 2023, whilst other responses complemented comments received from those living near to the sites about the loss of community facilities and again, in respect of Solent Mead, the loss of the valued Day Service.
78. Concerns were expressed about the ability of HCC Care to attract the additional professional staff that would be required to support a bigger operation that is more geared to higher need clients. Officers articulated the recruitment and retention successes achieved by HCC Care over the past 12 months despite the well-known workforce challenges that exist across Health and Social Care. This has included a variety of positive initiatives including an internal Nurse conversion scheme.
79. Permanent staffing levels are at an all-time high and the gains made this past year is the equivalent of reducing vacant hours by more than 150 full time equivalent staff. With the first of the investment projects not set to be completed until early 2027, there is high confidence (not adversely impacted by the proposed changes to the Legal Migration Rules for Family and Work Visa - announced by Government recently) that staffing levels will be where they need to be, especially as HCC Care will be looking to recruit staff to modern, fit for the future homes.
80. A repeated point raised concerned the size of the proposed new or refurbished sites and the negative impact that residents will feel from not being able to reside in smaller facilities that have a more homely atmosphere. The Working Group saw for themselves the comfort and the sense of belonging to a friendly/welcoming/caring community that exists at both Hawthorn Court and at the Clarence Unit. These two homes operate at the c80 bed level that the investment proposals are based on. The homes operate very much as homes within an overall home, with groups of no more than 20 residents benefitting from their own facilities and from dedicated staff.
81. Another point that was expressed repeatedly was why can the 3 homes proposed for closure, not remain open until the investment projects are completed. We were advised that the homes are not viable to remain

operating and would also require significant repair and maintenance expenditure over the coming years to ensure that the homes are safe to operate in. Such expenditure cannot be justified given that it would run to many millions of pounds and would not address the attractiveness of the homes or increase bed numbers to improve viability. Officers also reminded us that the proposed new and/or upgraded facilities are being designed to cater for people with complex care needs including nursing or advanced dementia. Additionally, we were reminded of the dynamic and changing nature of resident stays in our care homes.

82. In terms of the organisation responses, these included both endorsement of the proposals and disagreement. Pleasingly, the two NHS Integrated Care Boards serving Hampshire residents (as well as University Hospital Southampton) expressed support for the proposals, both asking to work closely with the County Council if the proposals are approved. Both acknowledged the need to work closely with GP Practices who are situated in locations where investment projects are planned to be developed. The Working Group were also pleased to read the response from Hampshire UNISON which was openly welcoming of the planned significant investment being proposed.
83. We also noted a small number of positive comments received from Democratically Elected Representatives specifically in respect of the Oakridge House refurbishment proposals but also in relation to Solent Mead and Cranleigh Paddock albeit with requests to locate the, proposed new (but as yet, location unconfirmed) New Forest home in Lymington or as close to it as possible. The Working Group were advised that work to finalise a suitable New Forest location is on-going and that discussions regarding possible locations with New Forest District Council are being progressed.
84. Conversely, the Working Group also reviewed the responses Lymington and Pennington Town Council and from other Democratically Elected Representatives that were not supportive of the proposals for Solent Mead or for Bishops Waltham House. Within the comments received were concerns about the loss of the valued Day Service, concerns regarding accessibility to alternative locations, and requests that if the homes are closed then every effort should be for them to continue to serve the public wherever possible.
85. The Working Group concluded from their review of the responses received from other people, organisations, and Democratically Elected Representatives and from the mitigations and information supplied by officers, that there was nothing material from this element of the consultation response that prevents us from supporting the closure proposals.

Conclusions

86. Having debated at length and in some detail the consultation findings, the Working Group had to weigh up all that had been learnt from the 5 months of our work including from the extensive discussions with officers and from the site visits that we all actively took part in.

87. In respect of this latter area, and as outlined in the 'Care Homes Visits' section of the report, the Working Group couldn't help but notice from its visits to Bishops Waltham House and to Emsworth House, the cramped conditions for residents and staff, the tight corridors, and the wholly inadequate personal space limitations that are simply not fit for purpose, that do not meet Care Quality Commission (CQC) standards and that the County Council should no longer be prepared to operate from.
88. Whilst other limitations were also noticed, including challenging operating conditions for staff, the lack of personal dignity for residents was of real concern to every Member on the Working Group. We were all agreed that this can no longer be an acceptable way to operate and is not something the County Council can continue to endorse in this era let alone into the future.
89. We were impressed with the commitment, the skill, and the caring nature of the staff at the sites we visited. We also took comfort from the informal discussions we had with staff, who mainly expressed strong support for the different proposals that are due to be decided on.
90. Our discussions and debates with officers regarding the issues raised by the public consultation, were as described in this report, thorough. It was clear from the consultation responses submitted that uncertainty about what the future holds for our existing 77 residents (at Bishops Waltham House, Green Meadows, and Solent Mead) was the key concern. This uncertainty extends to what alternative care provision would be offered and where, what quality of care is available, how accessible it would be for visitors and what the financial impact might be for those who fund their care.
91. Each of the above points were robustly responded to by officers, and as part of the 2-way discussions the Working Group got a real sense of just how dynamic and complex the Older Adults care arrangements are. This included understanding the changing nature of in-house occupancy, the extent of annual residential and nursing service placements, the availability of CQC rated good (or above) care that exists in the open market and the constantly changing (increasing) care needs of residents being supported in our HCC Care homes.
92. We were impressed by the level of information held for each existing client. In summary form, this provided intelligence on a range of matters from funding arrangements, to visit information (those visited/those not), and intelligence about how families/friends access the current care homes. High level information about changing care needs and planned re-assessments was also debated.
93. Taking everything into account, we were unanimous in our view that the proposals to close homes where the buildings (and internal layout) are not fit for purpose and will become less and less attractive to potential new clients and to staff, in turn making them less and less viable, are valid and should be supported and that the mitigations and/or answers to the main concerns raised through the consultation are strong and are able to be relied upon. We thus recommend to HASC that this position is formalised and that HASC

recommend that the Executive Lead Member approves the proposals at her decision day in February.

94. It is important to stress that Working Group Members did not reach the above decision lightly and as Chair of the Group, and speaking on behalf of all 9 Members, I hope that the work and chronology of events and experiences described in this report, demonstrate to all those with a vested interest in the change proposals, to the consultation respondents and to HASC, of the thoroughness of the work that we have undertaken over the last 5 months.
95. Lastly, we recognise that the support of the Working Group for the closure proposals will be disappointing to those most impacted. The Working Group are confident that should the decision be made to close Bishops Waltham House, Green Meadows, and Solent Mead, that the Care Management support and the support from the staff at the specific homes, for the affected residents and their families will be of the highest order.

Consultation and Equalities

96. Robust Equality Impact Assessments detailing the impacts and mitigations for service users and separately for staff, have been completed and are included in the draft Executive Lead Member Decision Day report that is next on today's HASC agenda.

APPENDIX 1

HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SELECT (OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP ON HCC CARE SERVICE PROPOSALS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the HASC Working Group is to oversee a formal public consultation exercise that is due to commence 4th September 2023 following Cabinet approval of a set of service recommendations in relation to the HCC Care Older Adults portfolio that they considered in July.
- 1.2 The Cabinet report recommended a capital investment of some £173m in the HCC Care Older Adults portfolio with the investment addressing high priority maintenance and health and safety issues as well as providing for a major suitability programme that would result in more modern, fit for the future homes.
- 1.3 The proposed capital investment programme combines three new homes, modifications, and expansions to three existing homes and seven proposed home closures as detailed in paragraph 1.5.
- 1.4 It is acknowledged that these proposed service changes would result in a material change to the existing HCC Care service operation with impacts for existing clients, staff, the overall service focus, and configuration, and for wider stakeholders. The proposed changes will therefore be subject to a comprehensive formal consultation process that will commence at the beginning of September.
- 1.5 The formal public consultation process is specifically in relation to the proposed home closures and the proposed existing home modifications. The formal public consultation will therefore seek views on the following:
 - the proposed permanent closure of two homes currently temporarily closed for operational reasons: Copper Beeches in Andover and Cranleigh Paddock in Lyndhurst,
 - the proposed closures of Bishops Waltham House, Solent Mead (which also caters for Day Services), and Green Meadows in 2024 (exact timings to be confirmed) for service and financial reasons.
 - the proposed closure and relocation of Malmesbury Lawn and Westholme, for service proximity and workforce reasons, at the time both proposed new-build facilities (at Oak Park and Cornerways), become operational (not before the end of 2026).

- proposed existing site modifications and expansions of Oakridge House, Ticehurst and Emsworth House.

2. Role and Purpose of the Task and Finish Working Group

- 2.1 The Task and Finish Working Group is a working group of the Health and Adult Social Care Select (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee (HASC) and is appointed in accordance with the Constitution of Hampshire County Council.
- 2.2 The Task and Finish Working Group's purpose is to oversee and scrutinise the approach and outcomes of the HCC Care Service proposals formal public consultation.
- 2.3 The Task and Finish Working Group will provide a report to the HASC for consideration.

3. Scope of the Task and Finish Group

- 3.1 This working group is being formed to oversee and scrutinise the approach and outcomes of the HCC Care Service proposals formal public consultation, prior to an Executive Member decision.

4. Objectives

- 4.1 To review feedback from engagement and formal public consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including residents and family members in relation to the HCC Care Service proposals.
- 4.2 To consider and provide comment on impact assessments.

5. Areas out of scope

- 5.1 The approved strategic direction and associated capital programme and investment, as agreed by Cabinet on 18 July 2023.

6. Outcomes

- 6.1 To provide updates to the wider HASC on the progress of the HCC Care Service proposals formal public consultation.
- 6.2 To make recommendations regarding proposals to the wider HASC.
- 6.3 To submit a report to the wider HASC when recommendations appear before the Committee for pre-decision scrutiny.

7. Method

- 7.1 The working group will meet with Directorate officers to consider the proposals being consulted on and the approach being undertaken. At each meeting, the group will provide oversight, scrutiny and comment on progress towards the stated objectives of the review.
- 7.2 Where the working group requires further information in order to meet its role and purpose and meet the scope and objectives as set out in 2, 3 and 4 above, such information will be requested.

8. Membership

8.1 The working group shall be a cross party group made up of Members of the HASC (consisting of a total of 7 Members, x4 Conservative Group, x1 Liberal Democrat Group, x1 Labour Group, x1 Independent Group).

9. Meetings

9.1 The Working Group will hold an initial meeting to review the finalised consultation document and to also understand the timeline for reviewing and making recommendations on the outcomes of the planned formal public consultation.

9.2 It is anticipated that the Working Group would then meet a few weeks into the formal public consultation and as often as required to meet the working group objectives.

9.3 The Working Group will meet post the formal public consultation period to conclude its work and feed into a decision by the Executive Member in February 2024.

10. Code of Conduct

10.1 Elected Members of the Working Group shall comply with the Hampshire County Council Code of Conduct applicable to Members.

11. Reporting

11.1 The Working Group will make an update to the HASC on the progress of considerations when appropriate. It will provide comment to the wider HASC when recommendations appear before the Committee for pre-decision scrutiny.

11.2 The Working Group will cease to exist once its purpose has been fulfilled.

APPENDIX 2

Range of comments received

Across the public consultation responses, engagement sessions and other correspondence received, a range of views, questions, impacts and concerns were expressed.

On the public consultation response form specifically:

- **90% of respondents chose to include comments on the response form**
For each proposal, respondents were invited to provide comments on their reasons for their response and to identify impacts - they were also invited to provide any additional comments or suggested alternative approaches.
- **There were 778 comments where respondents explained their response to proposals and highlighted impacts** – Most were specific to individual proposals but 6% were general comments (where people chose to comment once to cover several proposals they had responded on).
- **There were 342 further comments in the question on “other comments and suggested alternative approaches”.**

Of all the written comments received, most of them related to the proposals on home closures (Bishops Waltham House 67%, Solent Mead Home 59%, Day Service 59% and Green Meadows 45%).

Set out on the right-hand side is the spectrum of themes which arose from the comments overall.

Comments supportive of the proposals:

- Opportunities for better facilities and better care for the future
- Provides improved accommodation in modern buildings
- A clear strategy to position HCC care more strongly within the market
- A clear aim to better meet the increasing complex needs of older persons
- Existing HCC care services are highly regarded and valued
- An improved environment that will better attract and provide opportunities for staff

Concerns and impacts:

- Uncertainty
 - What is going to happen to me, when, what are my care choices?
 - Where will my home be? What will it be like? What will change?
 - How will the process be managed and what support will I receive?
 - How might this affect me financially?
- Loss of treasured home, routine, lifestyle and relationships with residents/ staff
- Less regular contact with visitors, losing contact with my community
- Access for visitors especially in rural areas and for low incomes/ non car users
- Process of change can be unsettling/ traumatic
- Loss of local employment
- Development and land use resulting from sales

Key considerations emerging from the Response Form comments

A range of issues for consideration for HCC Care were drawn from the comments and suggestions received:

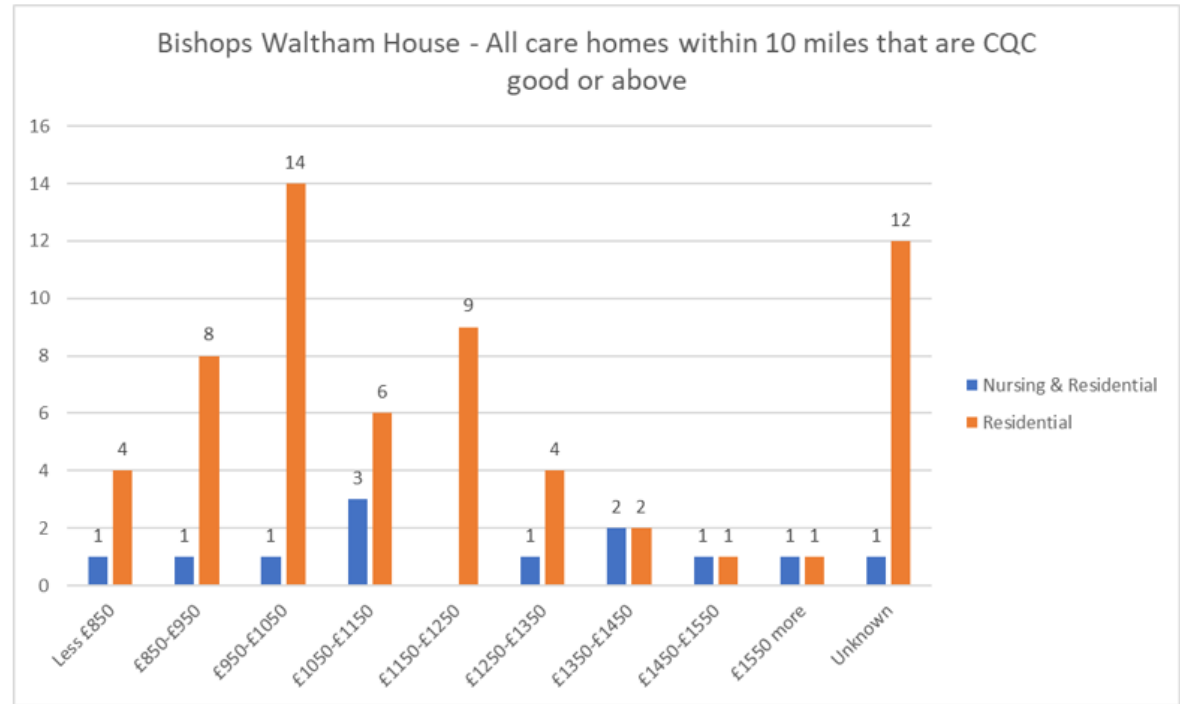
- Can new provision be available prior to homes being closed?
- Why can't some existing sites based in communities be redeveloped to achieve the same goal?
- Have we explored all options to refurbish existing facilities?
- If they cannot be refurbished or the land used for new facilities, can they be retained for other health and social care purposes?
- Are 80+ bed homes too big? Can quality of care and the creation of a "homely" atmosphere be achieved to match what many existing HCC already have?
- Can we overcome recruitment challenges to run large homes?
- Are we including provision for day services in new facilities, and could we do more to promote this service?
- Transitions between homes needs to be managed in a way that ensures a full understanding of residents' needs are transferred.
- Is this value for money for an extra 100 beds?
- Is there a risk of becoming overdependent on the private care market?
- Should we be more ambitious on the numbers we will aim to support directly given future demographics?
- Is this being done for financial savings or, conversely, is it too expensive?

APPENDIX 3

Homes within HCC Care - Bandings

Bishops Waltham House

Bandings	Nursing & Dual registered	Residential	Grand Total
Less £850	1	4	5
£850-£950	1	8	9
£950-£1050	1	14	15
£1050-£1150	3	6	9
£1150-£1250		9	9
£1250-£1350	1	4	5
£1350-£1450	2	2	4
£1450-£1550	1	1	2
£1550 more	1	1	2
Unknown	1	12	13
Grand Total	12	61	73

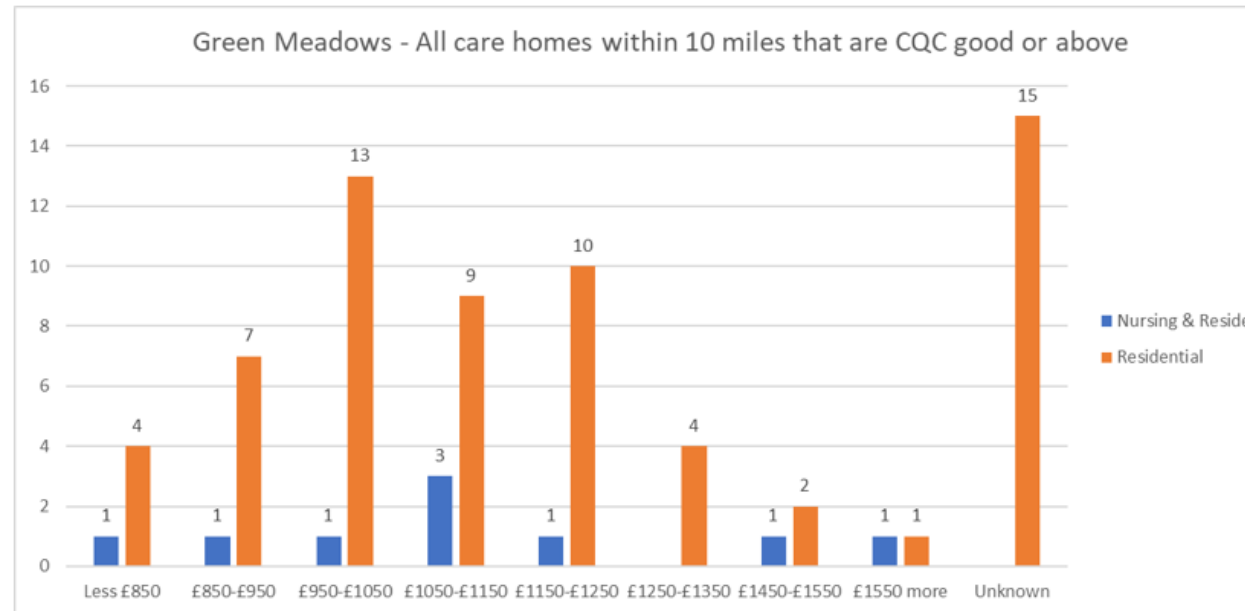


No. of homes within a 10-mile radius where the CQC is Good or above – Vacancies snapshot as at 02/01/2024 is 196.

Homes within HCC Care - Bandings

Green Meadows

Bandings	Nursing & Dual registered	Residential	Grand Total
Less £850	1	4	5
£850-£950	1	7	8
£950-£1050	1	13	14
£1050-£1150	3	9	12
£1150-£1250	1	10	11
£1250-£1350		4	4
£1450-£1550	1	2	3
£1550 more	1	1	2
Unknown		15	15
Grand Total	9	65	74

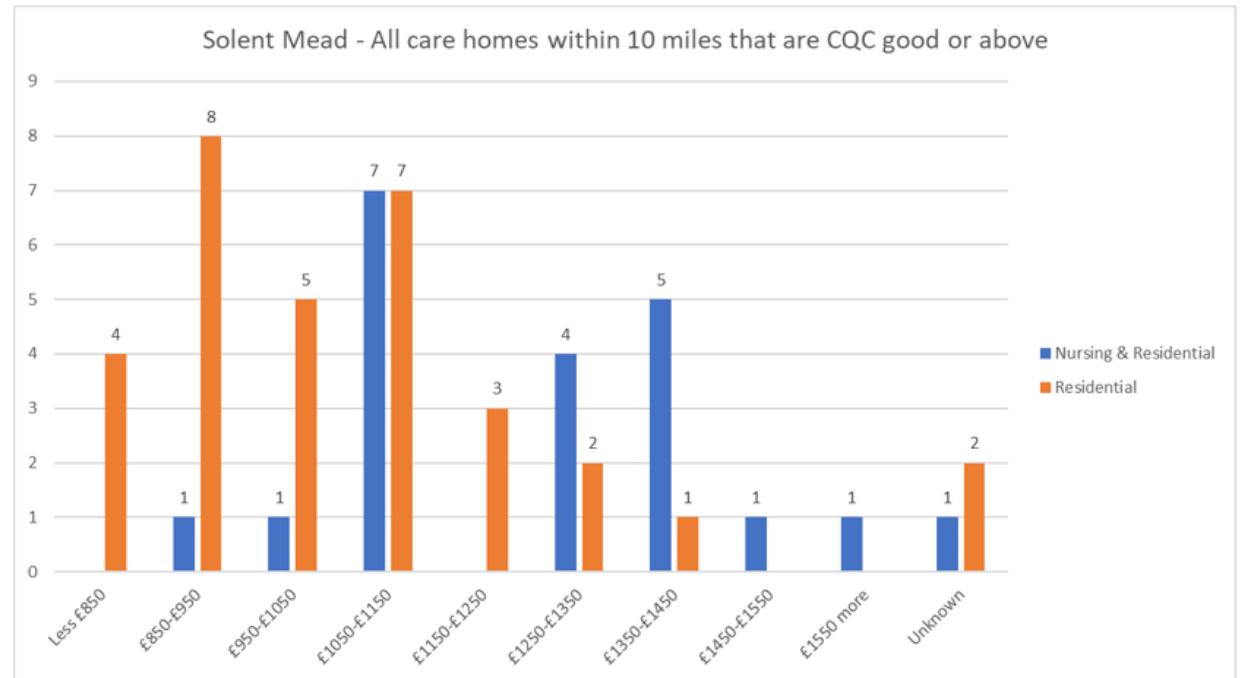


No. of homes within a 10-mile radius where the CQC is Good or above – Vacancies snapshot as at 02/01/2024 is 190.

Homes within HCC Care - Bandings

Solent Mead

Bandings	Nursing & Dual registered	Residential	Grand Total
Less £850		4	4
£850-£950	1	8	9
£950-£1050	1	5	6
£1050-£1150	7	7	14
£1150-£1250		3	3
£1250-£1350	4	2	6
£1350-£1450	5	1	6
£1450-£1550	1		1
£1550 more	1		1
Unknown	1	2	3
Grand Total	21	32	53

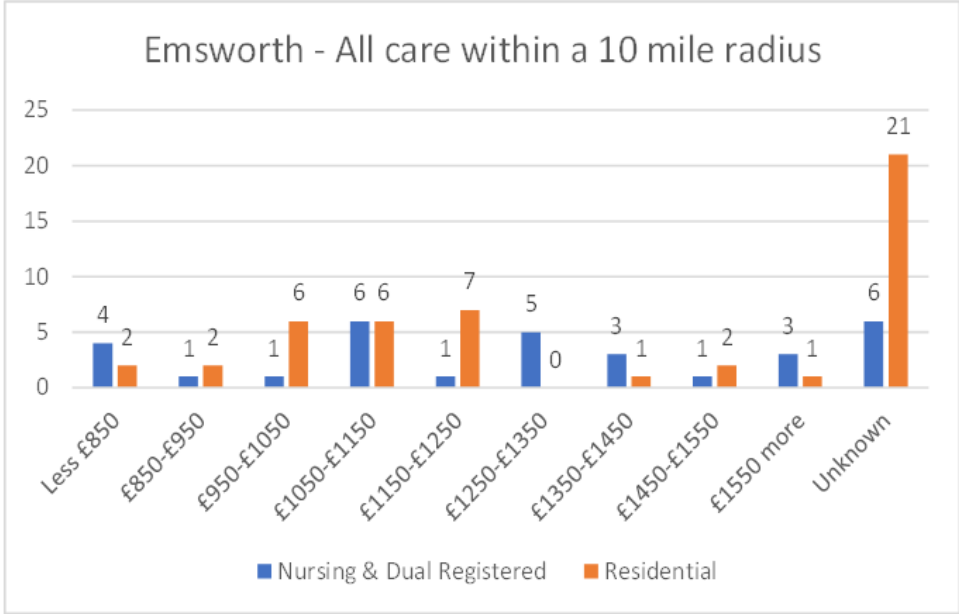


No. of homes within a 10-mile radius where the CQC is Good or above – Vacancies snapshot as at 02/01/2024 is 179.

Homes within HCC Care - Bandings

Emsworth House

Bandings	Nursing & Dual Registered	Residential	Grand Total
Less £850	4	2	6
£850-£950	1	2	3
£950-£1050	1	6	7
£1050-£1150	6	6	12
£1150-£1250	1	7	8
£1250-£1350	5	0	5
£1350-£1450	3	1	4
£1450-£1550	1	2	3
£1550 more	3	1	4
Unknown	6	21	27
Grand Total	31	48	79

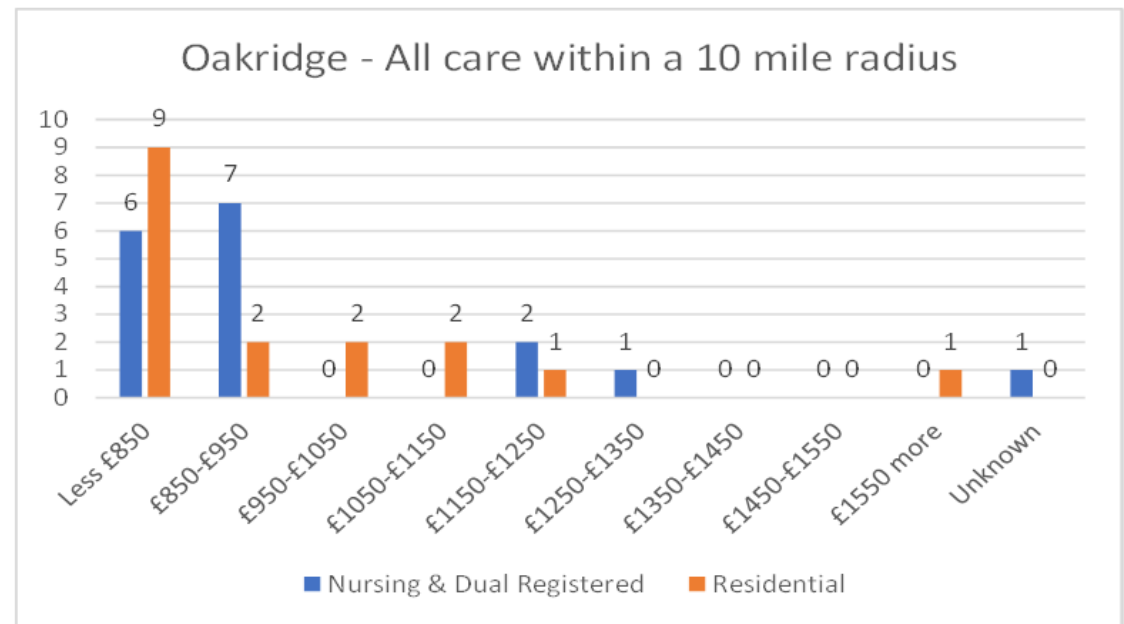


No. of homes within a 10-mile radius where the CQC is Good or above –
Vacancies snapshot as at 02/01/2024 is 100.

Homes within HCC Care - Bandings

Oakridge House

Bandings	Nursing & Dual Registered	Residential	Grand Total
Less £850	6	9	15
£850-£950	7	2	9
£950-£1050	0	2	2
£1050-£1150	0	2	2
£1150-£1250	2	1	3
£1250-£1350	1	0	1
£1350-£1450	0	0	0
£1450-£1550	0	0	0
£1550 more	0	1	1
Unknown	1	0	1
Grand Total	17	17	34

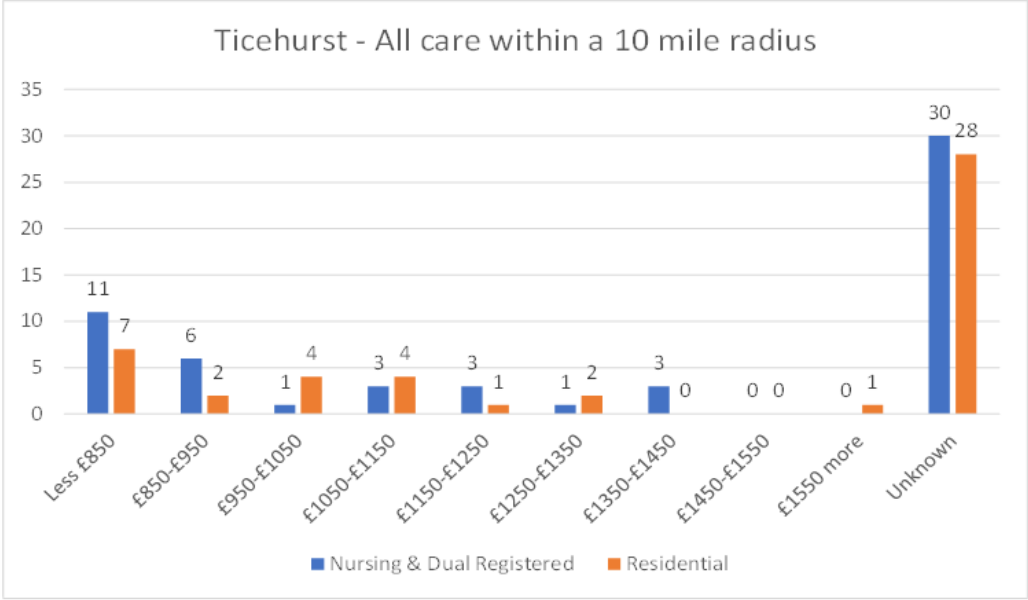


No. of homes within a 10-mile radius where the CQC is Good or above –
Vacancies snapshot as at 02/01/2024 is 132.

Homes within HCC Care - Bandings

Ticehurst

Bandings	Nursing & Dual Registered	Residential	Grand Total
Less £850	11	7	18
£850-£950	6	2	8
£950-£1050	1	4	5
£1050-£1150	3	4	7
£1150-£1250	3	1	4
£1250-£1350	1	2	3
£1350-£1450	3	0	3
£1450-£1550	0	0	0
£1550 more	0	1	1
Unknown	30	28	58
Grand Total	58	49	107



No. of homes within a 10-mile radius where the CQC is Good or above – Vacancies snapshot as at 02/01/2024 is 200.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u> HCC Care Service and Capital Strategy Cabinet report 2023-07-18 HCC Care Service and Capital Strategy Cabinet report	<u>Date</u> 18 July 2023
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

1.1 The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

2.1 Robust Equality Impact Assessments detailing the impacts and mitigations for service users and separately for staff, have been completed and are included in the draft Executive Lead Member Decision Day report.