

ADRIAN AND ELAINE WAITE

8th February 2017

Dear Sir,

Letters to the Editor

The closure of the Edenside Residential Care Home in Appleby by Cumbria County Council has caused much concern in the town and has been covered comprehensively in your newspaper. Most recently, it has been reported that a local campaign group is exploring options for the replacement of the home with an extra care elderly housing scheme. However, Appleby is not the only town where residential care homes are closing.

Cumbria County Council, in common with most local authorities, is keen to encourage new extra care elderly housing schemes as a way of ensuring that elderly people receive the care that they need while retaining their independence and (it should be said) in a way that provides value for money for public budgets.

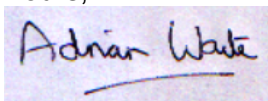
Local Housing Associations are keen to provide Extra Care Elderly housing but there is a financial problem. When Housing Associations build new schemes, they fund them mainly by borrowing that they finance from rents. However, rents in extra care elderly schemes are not sufficient to fund enough borrowing to pay for a whole scheme. They need a contribution from elsewhere.

For example, Impact Housing Association recently completed an extra care elderly scheme with 38 homes at Brampton at a cost of £5.2 million. To do this they required contributions from local authorities and the Homes & Communities Agency of £2.0million. Unfortunately, the government has drastically reduced the budgets of the Homes & Communities Agency and of most local authorities so we are seeing smaller budgets and fewer of these schemes being developed.

I recently responded to Eden District Council's public consultation on their budget and as part of this studied their accounts. The Council is in an unusual position in that it has received more generous financial settlements than most local authorities and this has left it with a significant level of unused resources. For example, the Council has £8.2million in its reserves whereas it calculates that it only needs between £1.5million and £2.0million. It is planning to reduce its reserves to £6.6million so it has at least £4.6million unallocated. It also has £9.7million in cash and short-term investments and £21.0million in investment property and long-term investments. To set this in context their annual Council Tax income is £3.9million.

Surely an opportunity exists for Eden District Council to provide a grant to a local Housing Association to enable them to develop an extra care elderly housing scheme in Appleby to replace in part the service that was previously provided by the Edenside Residential Care Home. In fact, the opportunity surely exists for the Council to provide grants to support a lot of extra care elderly units and other social housing across the district. This would provide much-needed housing and significant investment in the local economy. The Council has already said that providing affordable housing is one of their biggest priorities – perhaps the time has come for them to provide action rather than words.

Yours,



Adrian Waite
Sent by e-mail.