

## **We want action not apologist**

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The remarkable thing about Eric Neal's letter (Star letters, June 5) is that instead of fighting for the needs of Aldershot, he spends his time and energy looking for reasons to justify not doing so.

Eric, you are supposed to be Aldershot's representative in Winchester, not Winchester's apologist in Aldershot. If Aldershot's representative will not stand up for the town, no wonder we've lost Christmas Lodge, and nearly lost The Westy too!

Labour's Mike Roberts (Star letters, June 5) asserts that Lib Dems have no policy regarding Christmas Lodge apart from being against closure and against selling the land for development. Well we're not going to apologise for opposing either of these moves.

Christmas Lodge should never have closed. It should have been refurbished and brought up to modern standards.

Alternatively, the site could have been converted to Extra Care housing, where vulnerable elderly residents could have lived in their own homes, knowing that care was available on site 24 hours a day.

With the elderly population rising fast, Hampshire should be expanding its care homes, not closing them.

Yet Christmas Lodge is one of seven care homes closed by the Conservatives so far.

They should hang their heads in shame that they can find £40m to refurbish their Winchester ivory tower, yet they can't find much smaller sums to give our care homes the new lease of life they so clearly need.

No one would disagree that offices must be properly maintained, but if it's housing for vulnerable people versus comfort in the Tory Council's offices, I know which should come first!

But Eric Neal's letter really does take the biscuit!

Eric, for someone in your position it's really time you learnt the difference between "care" homes and "nursing" homes!

Several times you have implied that Ticehurst Nursing Home is a replacement for Christmas Lodge. But you need to be careful with your claims.

The NHS ploughed tens of millions into new nursing homes, including Ticehurst.

They did this to help provide places for people stuck in hospital "bed blocking" after finishing medical treatment.

There's no way the NHS can spend their money on "care" homes, so they might want their cash back!

Also, building new "nursing" homes should not be used as an excuse to close "care" homes, but that's what's now happening, and, Eric, you are supporting it!

Finally, what a coincidence! Both Tories and Labour attacking me in the same week on the same issue. Just a coincidence, of course. I'd better not suggest it could be a coordinated attack, because that might be an Aldershot urban myth!

Still, it's encouraging to see both other parties worried now that the Lib Dems are back on the scene in

Aldershot following Paul Bowers' historic win in Heron Wood on May 1!

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