

Symington Community Council Meeting – 16th September 2025 at 7pm
PUBLIC DISCUSSION CONCERNING PROPOSED CHANGES TO CLIENTS AT
TOWNEND HOUSE, SYMINGTON

Background:

The change of purpose of Townend House was brought to the attention of Symington Community Council at its public meeting on 19th August 2025 by a concerned resident.

On 28th August the Community Council's chair contacted Enhance Healthcare (service providers at Townend House) expressing concern about the lack of information, transparency and engagement with the residents of Symington. This was leading to the circulation of information which may not be accurate, and also a lack of knowledge and understanding of what and how services would be provided. Enhance Healthcare was invited to the Community Council's September meeting, but declined. The outline of the plans for the future use of Townend House was received from Enhance Healthcare on the evening of 15th September. This information had been posted onto Symington Community Council's website and Facebook page and copies were provided at the meeting.

Summary of Residents' Online Petition Comments:

The main concerns expressed in an online petition raised by local residents were that there would be a lasting and significant impact on the village regarding safety, privacy, well-being, and character of the village. This had been signed by over 500 people, whose addresses or postcodes are not stated.

Objections stated included:-

- The unsuitability of the location within a small rural village with limited infrastructure and services.
- Road safety – narrow, unlit access road, and increased traffic from staff, visitors, ambulances and taxis.
- Impact on residential amenity for houses within 3 metres of the site, and on the wider heritage and character of the conservation village.
- The availability of more appropriate urban or purpose- built locations, with access to transport, medical facilities and specialist services.

Attendees' Comments regarding Townend Care Home:

Comments from those present at the meeting are as follows:

- Enhance refer to Calderglen, but that facility is set in 10 acres of land and separated from neighbouring homes. (Blantyre is a town of 17,000 residents with the infrastructure to support it).

- People coming to rehab are very vulnerable. Townend House is close to the Co-op and other licensed stores, and village pub. Calderglen has no easy access to such facilities.
- Worry that local drug dealers will look to deal in the vicinity of the care home with concerns particularly for the safety of children living close to Townend House.
- Residents at the care home would have the freedom to roam the village
- From the Enhance paper, there is concern that prisoners still serving their jail term could be sent here, but just the “good criminals”
- Is there information on where these clients are coming from? Are they being referred? Are they coming from prison? Are they self-referred?
- Andy Jamieson of Enhance had mentioned the prison to rehab programme to one of the local residents. When asked if this was part of their release, Enhance didn’t respond.
- There is a likelihood that the facility will attract dealers.
- It’s a great notion, but unpleasant for occupants in a dark unlit corner of the village
- Who benefits? Weekly payment for drug and alcohol rehabilitation is 3x as much as general care. The financial consideration to the company is massive
- Forestry and now change in care home means even more traffic in village and the infrastructure can’t cope.
- Turnover of clients will be constant, including increased traffic. Currently Townend has 17 beds, that is due to increase to 24. Also there will be lots more staff to support the rehabilitation, compared to the existing use of the care home.
- Unpredictability of occupants.
- Methadone is used as a substitute, and patients are likely not to be regulated when they first arrive i.e not coming in on a stable dose, so still element of withdrawal until dosage is adjusted.
- Fear of substantial change in social fabric and structure of the village.
- People have a right to rehab but this is not a suitable location for such a facility. This is not a sealed off premises. A private firm can change the nature of a care home without planning – this is an operational change. Significant funding is available from the Scottish Government to provide residential rehab. Public Health Scotland providing £100m of funding to March 2026. Enhance may have received or be expecting to receive £500,000.
- Calderglen facility is set in acres of land.
- Auchincruive has a facility – is there capacity there in respect of facilities in South Ayrshire? More land availability.
- No change of use required - this is all to do with the clients’ needs, not the community concerns, so community’s voice is hard to be heard. Attendees have come to meeting to seek help and support from the Community Council.

- Someone had contacted the Police on a FoI request re how many callouts for Calderglen – there had been a significant amount.
- Police are not sufficiently resourced in the area.
- Auchincruive is nowhere near houses or shops
- Recommendation that we can all act together as one voice
 - o Traffic not suitable
 - o Location not suitable
- Enhance seem only want to offer on-line meeting to Community Council, not to the local residents. Elena Witham MSP willing to chair an online meeting with Enhance and Symington Community Council
- Car park to be extended (threefold), and outside gym to be built and lit.
- £500K worth of funding already received
- Concerns about damage to the exterior of the house which is a listed building. SAC Planning to attend to investigate.
- Does the change in occupant require planning permission? (*This is not a secure unit, so remains Class 8 use so no planning permission is required for change of focus.*)
- Enhance have 11 care homes – they are not interested in the community, just profit.
- Generally agree a need for rehab facilities but this is in the wrong location.
- What is proportion of drug addicts vs alcoholics?
- Noted that employees and contractors have been told not to talk about the change to anyone.
- This change affects the health and wellbeing of existing local residents.
- Can we protest legally?
- What is the process for petition? Original residents have been rehomed to another care home in Ayr and are finding the change difficult.
- Timeline is thought to be first patients in December once the works to ensuites to each bedroom, and a rear extension have been completed.
- How much crime needs to happen before there is a recognition that there is a material change?
- There are no physical boundaries for the grounds of Townend House and, adjacent houses do not have secure gardens. An issue with clients wandering around the estate, and being encouraged to spend time outside, for example using the proposed outdoor gym.
- Privacy, safety, and security risks for residents, particularly with respect to clients transferred from prison.

Next steps:

By a show of hands, there was a clear majority that those present opposed the facility. At this stage, unless material changes are identified then there is limited requirement for planning permission.

This has been an exceptionally well attended meeting, so it is clear that this is a big community issue and currently over 500 people have signed an on-line petition.

The unanimous decision of those present at the Community Council meeting was that an online meeting between Symington Community Council and Enhance Healthcare (proposed and chaired by Elena Witham MSP) was not an acceptable means of engaging with the community, and that a Public meeting was essential. This should be organised quickly and include:

- Police
- Community Council
- Local Councillors
- MSP's – Elena Witham (former alcohol and drug minister) and Siobhan Brown (Minister for Community Safety)
- Residents
- Representatives from Enhance

It was commented that this is a “worthwhile project but in the wrong place”. Residents have a right to feel safe and secure in their own homes, and there are currently real concerns about this with the proposed change of focus of Townend House.