

Lisa Howard,
Handling Officer, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council,
Moorlands House,
Stockwell Street,
Leek,
Staffordshire.
ST13 6HQ

3 MAR 2016

1st March 2016

Dear Madam,

Re : Planning Application SMD/2016/0052 John Muroe Hospital Group.

I write as the Chair of the Board of Governors of St. Michael's First School, Horton in order to oppose the above planning application.

As you will be aware from previous applications our school is in close proximity to the site and we continue to have safeguarding concerns for the safety of our pupils. Whilst we as a Governing body appreciate that this application consists of an extension to an existing facility within the applicants own grounds we are opposed to the application on the following grounds :

- The Applicant has shown a complete disregard for protocol in relation to this application by failing to engage with the local community as a whole and our School in particular. At the hearing of the Applicants previous proposed development (Reference SMD/2014/0542) a representative of our School raised concerns that we are not notified by The John Munroe Hospital in the event that a patient absconds from the facility, and it was then hoped that a better system of communication would be introduced to ensure the continued safety of the children at our School but unfortunately this has not been the case. In fact on the day of writing a patient has absconded from the facility and our Headteacher was today forced to put our School into lockdown to ensure the safety of our pupils since the whereabouts of the patient was not known. However, we would not have been aware of this incident if I had not personally witnessed staff running up the road and into the driveways of residents myself when leaving School premises. This potentially dangerous situation had not been brought to our attention by The John Munroe Hospital.

On 12th February there was a similar incident observed by parents bringing their children to School in which a female patient had absconded. A statement by a parent who witnessed this incident is attached to this letter. Furthermore, on this occasion the staff who were pursuing the patient were unable to detain her and requested the assistance of a parent from our School to bring the incident under control. Yet again we were only notified of the incident by a passer-by.

On other occasions patients who have absconded from the site have been found within our School grounds in areas where our children play.

The applicant themselves state that this extension is to be used by female patients with "severe challenging behaviours" and it appears that The John Munroe Hospital cannot guarantee the absence of any risk to our pupils, and since their last application have made no attempt to either improve their security or to improve communications with ourselves and we feel that their continued expansion only increases potential safeguarding issues.

- The plan shows a proposed balcony area which concerns us because screaming and foul language can be heard from the existing facility, and we would not wish our parents or children to see or hear anything which may cause them distress on their journey to or from School. Furthermore, it would appear that people on the balcony would have a clearer view of our School which we consider inappropriate.
- We would also reiterate our previous planning concerns that earlier planning conditions imposed upon the Applicant concerning fencing and buffer zones have not been complied with, and as such it concerns us that any planning conditions designed to protect our children may not be complied with.
- A significant planning consideration has to be that the application is within The Green Belt which in a previous precedent relating to this site was considered inappropriate (APP/B3438/A/06/2015635) and we do not consider that there are any "special circumstances" to outweigh the harm that this development could cause to the environment.
- We would also ask you to consider issues of highway safety, not only from increasing traffic to and from the site, but also the risks posed by patients running across the road without consideration for their own safety or the safety of others. The proposed extension clearly brings the facility ever closer to the main highway.
- The application further states that it is "unknown" how foul sewerage from the extension will be disposed of.
- We would finally once again draw your attention to The SMDC Core Strategy which states that "strict control [is] to be exercised over inappropriate development of The Green Belt", and further states that development should be resisted which would be detrimental to local character, and that development proposals should "reduce crime and the fear of crime" with the aim of building a healthy, safe and well-maintained environment. On the basis of your Core Strategy alone it appears that you should reject this application.

We sincerely hope that you will consider our objections to this application and in particular the safeguarding of our pupils, and we would strongly urge you to reject this continued expansion.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Stead

Chair of Governors of St.Michael's School, Horton.

Green Tree Farm

Green Lane

Rudyard

Nr Leek

REPORT DATE: 2nd March 2016

SUBJECT: Escape of female patient from John Monroe Hospital (JMH), Horton on 12th February 2016

The incident happened at approximately 8.50 am on Friday 12th February 2016, after dropping my 2 children off at Horton St Michael's First School, where I am also a Parent Governor.

I was stood outside school, next to the railings, talking to another parent when the gentleman who works for us part time pulled over to speak to me. He informed me that he had just driven past a female, who he believed to be a patient at the JMH (a hospital which he has knowledge of as his Sister-in-law used to work there). He informed me that the patient was running around between the hospital entrance and Heath House Lane and was being pursued by approximately 8 staff who were running around the area trying to catch up with the patient. He had stopped to tell me so that I could check that Horton School were aware of the situation.

I went back into school and informed the school secretary who informed me that they had not been informed about the incident and she promptly went to double check that doors into school were locked and that staff were aware.

I left the school shortly afterwards, got into my car and headed towards Rudyard to return home. As I drove past the hospital entrance I saw a female, who I assumed to be the patient, along with 8 staff walking along the road back towards the hospital entrance from the direction of Heath House Lane. The staff appeared to be surrounding the patient, who looked to be very upset, with two of the staff holding each of her arms.

I subsequently telephoned the school at 9.05am to inform the School Secretary that I had seen that the staff had the patient back in their care.

I found the incident to be rather alarming as this must have been deemed to be rather serious by JMH to have allowed 8 staff to leave the hospital to pursue the patient. I am very horrified that JMH do not inform the school of such incidents as I feel that the school should be made aware in order to maintain their duty of care to their children who are all aged between 4 and 9.

Angela Woodward