

Mrs L J Collins
3 Nab Hill Court
Leek
Staffs
ST13 8BZ

24 June 2021

Mr Ben Hurst
Planning Officer
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Stockwell Street
Leek
Staffs

Dear Mr Hurst

OBJECTION TO: SMD/2021/0290 – Change of use from a dwelling house (class 3) to a residential care home (Class C2) for up to six residents (no external alterations proposed).

I live in Nab Hill Court, Leek and I am deeply concerned at the prospect of a dwelling facility for young people being established on our doorstep, at Nab Hill House. **I vehemently object to the proposals.** The Compass Children's Homes application is lacking transparency and glosses over the potential impact *any* business - and certainly one of this nature - could bring to a quiet residential neighbourhood like ours. There is only reference to 'six young people' that would be housed in this facility and contains no detail of their ages, if they are juvenile offenders or have unmanageable or even dangerous behaviours. From research, it appears this establishment will be for males aged 11-17, with emotional and behavioural issues and they will attend the nearest Compass school in Cauldon Lowe.

Safety and Disruption

We are a family of 5 adults and we've lived here in this peaceful and tranquil setting for almost 11 years. We have worked from home for 10 years and have never brought any clients or excess traffic or haphazard parking to our small communal and privately owned Court. We have been respectful to our neighbours, as have our children, as they have grown into young adults. The shared, single track driveway entrance to Nab Hill Court, that borders and provides access to the Nab Hill House driveway, is privately owned by one of the residents. It is unlit, has no surveillance and no pavement, hence could increase danger to pedestrians due to increased traffic and no lighting. In Winter, our son and daughter regularly come and go on foot to/from the gym, and my daughter from work, in the dark. Up until now, this has not been a problem, but with males of a certain age, the laneway could create a menacing environment and openings for crime and anti-social behaviour. Particularly concerning is that Compass provide care for people with **problematic sexualised behaviour**. It is a highly inappropriate location to house youngsters, who could prove a risk not only to our son and daughter, but also to other vulnerable residents in the area. Indeed, over the last few weeks, I have spoken to many residents in Nab Hill Avenue, on North Street and Kiln Lane - **many elderly and vulnerable people**. They are equally concerned and object to the proposal of a dwelling facility for young people being set up in our neighbourhood, due **to noise/disturbance, home and personal safety, increased traffic and parking issues**. Police cars have been an extremely rare sight in this area over the last decade.

As a family, we understand these young people have been raised in difficult circumstances and are not unsympathetic to them. We housed a troubled young 18 year old for two years, so are well aware of the problems one challenging young adult can bring, never mind 4 or 6. Despite a calm, nurturing, family environment, his often alarming and unpredictable behaviour didn't change, created discord within the family and, for the safety and mental health of our own, meant we had to part ways.

Care facilities for young people are better situated a little further out from towns, somewhat more scarcely populated than in this densely populated area. Less distractions and temptations would be a more prudent option for such dwellings. As an example, I cite The Oaklands* in Checkley, approved two years ago for use as an abode for 4 young people.

Impact on and Amenity of Surrounding Areas

The Planning Statement asserts that *"the amenity space will be used in no different a manner than if occupied by a large family, so will not give rise to any impacts on neighbours, beyond those that can already be generated under the existing lawful use"*. Six males, aged 11-17 with emotional and behavioural conditions is not the same as being occupied by a large family. For one, there will be no parents to unite everyone. These would be individuals with no connection to each other. To run a place like this *"similar to a child living in a family home"*, you would ordinarily have two parents who work hand in hand to enforce boundaries and a combination of discipline and nurture. *"Two members of staff on site at all times"* is not adequate to provide these young people a consistent level of support, without compromises and shortcomings and a resulting impact on existing residents' amenity. As with many of these facilities, police cars could become a regular feature due to anti-social behaviour or missing youths.

The Planning Statement says *"the proposed change of use will not harm the amenities of adjacent occupiers"*. There are 3 properties within extremely close proximity of Nab Hill House, the nearest being 22m. The prospect of noise and disturbance caused by a cluster of six males with social and behavioural difficulties is very real. It would be uncommon to have a group of challenging adolescents, pre or otherwise, in one private residence, whatever the size of property. I reference The Oaklands in Checkley where permission was granted to house 4 such individuals and, the closest neighbour was 40m away, with open fields on the other side. This at least minimises the effects on too many residents. Not the case in our neighbourhood, where many more would be affected.

Access, Traffic and Parking**

As already mentioned, a resident of Nab Hill Court owns the laneway to the point of Nab Hill House's unsurfaced driveway and all residents of Nab Hill Court are responsible for the upkeep of the private lane. I understand that Nab Hill House was never included in this set up when the land was purchased to build Nab Hill Court, but then the lane and driveway were never intended for commercial use, certainly not for comings and goings of a business, including carers, housekeeping and maintenance staff, social workers, emergency vehicles, laundry services, food delivery services and waste collection. This would bring significant and additional vehicular movements down a private driveway with two speed bumps, past 3 houses bordering the laneway. Vehicles crossing the speed bumps can be heard and felt as far as our residence and would be amplified for those houses closest to the laneway. All of these factors would be regarded as **significant disturbance to our amenity** and certainly do not correspond to the Planning Statement's reference that *"the small-scale and low key nature of the proposed care home means the vehicular movements at the site will not be significant"*.

The Planning Statement says *"the site was selected in part because it has a large area for parking off road"*. The Site Plan indicates parking of 8 cars. Here I question whether anyone has undertaken a physical assessment at all. 3 parked cars would fit adequately, but the rest of the driveway would need to be available for turning space of other larger vehicles, eg delivery or ambulances. We have observed many times, larger vehicles coming into our Court to turn around, in order to back down the driveway to Nab Hill House. Residual parking in our private Court would also not be acceptable. Nab Hill Avenue is already congested with vehicles (photos attached). I have visited a neighbour of The Oaklands in Checkley and understand there could be 6-8 vehicles parked on site each day or on the roadside, and that's without deliveries. Therefore, there is not adequate parking for staff, visitors and deliveries.

* <https://democracy.staffs Moorlands.gov.uk/documents/s13584/ITEM%206%20SMD-2019-00136%20-%20The%20Oaklands%20CLOP.pdf>

<https://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/news/stoke-on-trent-news/childrens-home-plans-residents-oppose-3108774>

** See photos attached

The planning statement indicates *“Two members of staff will be on duty at all times ... there could be another two or three on site at various times during the day”*. That means 5 car park spaces and no turning space for delivery vehicles. This plan is not realistic - it's a narrow laneway, shrouded in beautiful foliage that suits the character of Nab Hill House. Drastically cutting back foliage on the driveway then becomes a **privacy issue** for the houses below on North Street, who are considerably exposed to any noise and disturbance from above. The unsurfaced nature of the track with frequent comings and goings would create more noise for them, but tarmacking the driveway would likely cause drain-off issues in wet weather and impact those houses in such a way too. Indeed, there is no indication of exterior works in the Planning Statement. Another issue would be security systems and lighting that would need to be installed. This again would intrude on the privacy of North Street residents and also our neighbours nearest to the Nab Hill House driveway. One of the residents I spoke to at Checkley commented on the brightness and intrusiveness of The Oaklands' security lights and they lived quite some distance away, across the fields.

Waste Removal, Social and Environmental factors

As a business of such a size and with in excess of 8 occupiers at any given time, they would require commercial waste. To have such bins collected from the end of the private driveway would not be possible without blocking it for existing residents. As is often the case with such large waste containers, litter is often left behind, causing further nuisance to residents.

As per the Planning Statement, the young people *“will be educated at one of the applicant's schools, where suitable education and training can be provided”*. According to research, this will be at the Compass school in Cauldon Lowe, which is 9 miles away. Given the lack of public transport in the Staffordshire Moorlands, this assumes travel by taxi, with numerous trips back and forth. This is not a sustainable level of transport at a time when climate change issues are at the forefront of government mindset.

Again, according to the Planning Statement, *“At weekends they will engage in activities both at home and away from home (e.g. sports, visiting the cinema, shopping)”*. Given there is no cinema in Leek and many entertainment/shopping facilities are lacking in the area for young people, this would also involve travel by private car or taxi to larger nearby towns.

Health and Safety

Notwithstanding, Nab Hill House and its grounds has many hazards, including numerous stepped areas, very little border protection on the steep perimeter on Kiln Lane, a pond and a balcony on the second floor of the house. Kiln Lane is also an unadopted single track road, poorly lit and has most recently had an incident of an individual exposing himself, allegedly with a knife. It could pose predatory danger to young people, given the pedestrian access to Kiln Lane from the property. The adult staff to young person ratio also seems very low. Thus, the suitability from a health and safety perspective should also be a strong consideration in this decision.

Conclusion

There are many reasons why this and any business proposal of this nature is highly inappropriate for this area: safety concerns for residents, noise/disturbance, commercial traffic, unrealistic access and parking. Above all, it is a clean and quiet residential environment and has been for many years and thus should remain as such to maintain its wonderful amenity. A business detracts from the character of this area and would spoil the overall enjoyment for existing residents. I would recommend a member of the Council carry out a proper site visit to make a physical assessment to fully appreciate what the Site Plan and Planning Statement fail to demonstrate.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Collins (Mrs)

This is the entrance to Nab Hill House and depicts how narrow an entrance it is. The tarmacked driveway is owned by one of Nab Hill Court's residents. Note the cobbled speed bump (one of two). Business traffic to and from Nab Hill House would increase noise levels for neighbours here.



Note the single track unsurfaced, foliage covered driveway to Nab Hill House. Beautiful character and unsuited to increased business traffic.



Nab Hill Court is privately owned. Residual parking from a business operating out of Nab Hill House would not be acceptable.



This is the Nab Hill Court laneway entrance, privately owned and unlit at night. As a small female, I would not want to be met by even 2 young males lurking in this area. The same goes for my daughter and son.



Nab Hill Avenue is already congested with parked cars; the spaces you see are openings to driveways. There is not enough room for two cars to pass at the same time. Increased vehicular movements to Nab Hill House as a business would affect these residents.

This, and parallel Hillswood Avenue, is the direct route into the town centre, which the young people would use to walk into town. At night it is quiet and traversed by many dog walkers. Anti-social behaviour from youths would be deemed threatening and have a serious impact on the feeling of safety and amenity of this neighbourhood.

