

Steve and Sue Cross
1 Nab Hill Court
Leek
Staffs
ST13 8BZ
24.06.21

Ref: Planning Objection SMD/2021/0290

We wish to object to Compass's application for planning permission to change the use of Nab Hill House from a dwelling house (Class C3), to a residential care home (Class C2) Ref: SMD/2021/0290.

The information provided in the application contains little detail of the type and nature of the youngsters Compass seeks to accommodate. This is unfortunate as this information is an important factor when gauging the likely impact on the local community. Further investigation reveals that Compass is a privately owned company which is run for profit. They take youngsters with a range of Emotional, Behavioural and Mental Health Issues, and Problematic Sexual Behaviours (PSB).

Whilst Compass have previously guaranteed elsewhere (Herefordshire for example) that youngsters with Problematic Sexual Behaviour will not be placed; no such guarantee has been submitted as part of their proposal for Nab Hill House. Given this, Nab Hill House could be used not only to house boys with PSB up to age 18, but also those displaced from elsewhere where such a guarantee has been given. I also understand that young people with PSB attract more funding for Compass than will those who do not.

This article in the Whitchurch Herald dated 13th January 2020 covers the unsuccessful attempt by Compass to open a similar home to the one proposed at Nab Hill House. It refers directly to the issue of PSB and guarantees to exclude youngsters with PSB from their rejected proposal.

<https://www.whitchurchherald.co.uk/news/18155887.childrens-home-director-answers-malpas-hampton-residents-questions/>

Even if Compass were prepared to issue such a guarantee whereby they don't place youngsters with PSB at Nab Hill House, the support needs of the remaining cohorts are extremely high. Compass has indicated elsewhere that they use their own schools to address these needs; the nearest one to Leek being at Cauldon Lowe. Ofsted's pre inspection report 22 July 2020 indicates that the 'day fees' amount to £41,600 per youngster.

Level of Activity

The level of daily activity associated with the proposed development would be much more intensive and constant than might reasonably be expected from a family home of similar size. The high levels of support the young people need would require a significant increase in the amount of traffic generated. The amount of refuse would also substantially increase from typical family use.

Loss Of Amenity

The substantive nature of the needs and associated behaviours of the youngsters will inevitably carry over into the wider community. Indeed, challenging behaviour often is anti-social behaviour when it occurs within a community setting. This is likely to significantly impact nearby residents' 'amenity' and overall quality of life. Our concerns are based on experience in this regard. We fostered a young man with behavioural difficulties until he was old enough to live semi independently. I have also worked as Head of School for discrete provision (Special Needs) and managed Additional Learning Support provision at several large colleges (Stoke and Gloucester).

Those living in the Nab Hill Avenue and Nab Hill Court are likely to be amongst those most affected as they are on the main route into town from Nab Hill House. Additional external lighting may be required on the drive of the property to ensure the safety of the residents. This is likely to be of a nature not consistent with that associated with a normal family dwelling. As the drive runs the length of our home and garden we are concerned about associated light pollution and sustainability issues and associated loss of amenity.

There is insufficient storage for refuse, making storage and collection very problematic. The drive to Nab Hill House is too narrow for larger vehicles to access, possibly resulting in such vehicles using Nab Hill Court (private land) to park and turn.

Sustainability

The proposal does not state whether Compass intends to meet local needs by accommodating youngsters from within the Staffordshire Moorlands District, or those from further afield. This is an important distinction as there may be a significant impact on the 'sustainability' aspect of the development. For Instance, if youngsters are to be accommodated from beyond our district, frequent travel to Leek would be required by. Social Workers, Family, Friends, Therapists and more, this could be required for each of the six residents..Moreover, public transport to Leek is impractical from many areas, so some young people could be deprived of seeing their families, friends and loved ones.

Significant travel will be required to and from school and to enrichment activities some distance away, there are few locally.

External lighting may be left on throughout the night giving rise to questions pertaining to sustainability. This far exceeds a pattern of use normally associated with a typical family dwelling.

There is also the issue of progression when the youngsters reach 18 and Compass ceases to accommodate them. If a young person from outside the area chooses to remain locally, their support needs and behaviours will not suddenly cease. The ongoing costs will have to be met by the district and the strain on local services will increase. This on-going legacy of cost and increased pressures on services will be unsustainable.

Poor Location

Nab Hill House is a very poor location for a facility of this nature. Kiln Lane to the West is a dark, narrow mud track. The house's own drive is accessed via a private driveway which is shared with the Residents of Nab Hill Court. The driveway is narrow, unlit and heavily planted with tall trees and shrubs. There is no separate pavement for pedestrians to walk on, meaning all who use it will be placed at greater risk from the increase in traffic outlined earlier. This raises serious concerns pertaining to personal safety. I am extremely concerned for the safety of the young lady who lives in the Court. There is no alternative access to her home. She would have to negotiate this dark driveway on a daily basis whilst sharing it with up to six young men up to 18 with problematic behaviour, some of which may be sexual in nature.

The drive leads directly on to Nab Hill Avenue, which is also relatively narrow. It is not unreasonable to assume that anti-social behaviour will extend into this quiet neighbourhood; not least as it forms the main access route to and from town. Parking is pressured on Nab Hill Avenue and access on foot can be difficult in the evenings when parking is in peak demand. Increased pedestrian traffic may result in an increased risk of damage to parked vehicles which may be perceived to be 'in the way'.

Loss of a Family Home

If the proposed development goes ahead the town will lose a significant family home from its housing stock. Family homes of this particular type and character are in short supply in the area and as such should be retained.

To conclude:

- The facility would house people with very high levels of needs and problematic behaviour, some of which may be sexual in nature. Such a high concentration of these difficulties and behaviours is not consistent with those of a normal family dwelling of similar size.
- The level of daily activity associated with the proposed development would be much more intensive and constant than might reasonably be expected from a family dwelling of similar size.
- The amenity of local residents will be significantly adversely affected though: increased activity; problematic behaviour; light and noise pollution; and traffic and parking issues.
- The range of sustainability issues highlighted above are significant and not consistent with those of a family dwelling house of similar size.
- Nab Hill House is a poor location for a facility of this type. Access is poor and unsuitable for the increased levels and types of use associated with the proposal.
- The district would lose a family dwelling from the housing stock.

