

Shaw House
Churnet Manor Close
Birchall Lane
Leek
ST13 5RY

4th January 2022

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Moorlands House
Stockwell Street
Leek
ST13 6HQ

Dear sir

Objection to Planning Application SMD/2021/0825

Thank you for your letter of 20th December concerning Wardle House. As one of the neighbours that would be adversely affected by the proposed change of use from a dwelling house to a Children's Home, I wish to put forward the following views and objections.

- Churnet Manor Close is a private road that adjoins another private road, Birchall Lane. Neither of these roads are adopted, meaning that they don't have pavements, streetlights or the usual Council services e.g. gritting in winter, road sweeping, etc. When it snows, we get snowed-in and it's left to the residents to dig their way out, if they need to go out. In an emergency, in bad conditions, it would be really difficult to gain access to Wardle House.
- The Application for Planning Permission incorrectly states (at Q22) that the property can be seen from a public area (road, footpath, etc.) Wardle House is at the end of a long private road with private woodland behind it and private gardens to either side. It cannot be seen from any public area. It is located in a private situation, isolated from public view and scrutiny.
- We don't have our waste collected by a standard bin-lorry (we use blue bags instead, with a maximum allowance of 4 bags per fortnight) and the commercial waste produced by a Children's Home would have to be collected in the same way (as SMDC have been refused permission to use the private roadway with their bin lorry and this would not change). This makes any commercial waste collection service untenable not only because of the lack of access but also because commercial waste can't be collected as domestic waste (because of what it may contain, such as medical items, and the charging regime that applies to commercial waste) and a business cannot operate without a waste collection service.
- Churnet Manor Close is a single-track road, with steep inclines and declines, with no passing places. Although this is manageable for the community it was designed and built for, the increase in traffic that would result from creating a Children's Home would cause congestion and noise disturbance – as the proposed development would involve the use of 11 full-time equivalent staff, visiting professional services, transport for travel to/from school and visitors for the children (all of whom would naturally arrive by car as the nearest main road and bus stop is some distance away, maybe 300m, and involves a challenging walk).
- The original planning application (some 15 years ago) to build the houses in Churnet Manor Close was rejected by SMDC Planning Committee as being undesirable for a rural setting that abuts Ancient

Woodland. Approval was only given on appeal. So, if houses are borderline unsuitable (as one authority was for and another was against) then a commercial operation must surely be unsuitable.

- The 4 houses that are closest to Wardle House are all occupied by either a single person or a couple - and all of them are over retirement age. There are no children in the Close. This creates a quiet retirement enclave where everyone keeps themselves to themselves. This setting is not suitable for a Children's Home, as such a home would be completely different to everything around it and it would not gain any benefit from its surroundings (contrary to paras 3.4 and 3.5 of the Planning, Design and Access statement which says that the location would provide a sense of normality and recreate a family setting).
- As you would expect from such a setting, it is quiet and peaceful. People don't go out to work and they don't create any noise disturbance from their comings and goings (as they don't go out that often). A Children's Home, on the other hand, is a 24/7 operation running a shift pattern of workers, probably requiring 2 or 3 people to be on duty at all times. Cars will be arriving and leaving frequently and people will be congregating outside at all hours – and this disturbance is totally out of character with the retirement setting of Churnet Manor Close.
- Contrary to the Planning, Design and Access statement (para 3.2) the property is not fenced at the front, with the full width of the plot being open to the garden and shared roadway above. The rear of the property faces woodland with an immediate drop from the boundary to a stream below. The land to the south of the property is steeply terraced. The rear of Wardle House has a first-floor balcony that runs the full width of the house, creating a 3-metre drop into the garden. These risk factors add to the unsuitability of the property when it comes to safeguarding children.
- The application for planning permission says that there are parking spaces for 6 vehicles. To park 6 vehicles at Wardle House, using the garage and the driveway (as they cannot park on the roadway, as all properties have rights of access over it at all times) would require some of the parked cars to be moved so that others could get out – as parking four vehicles on the driveway (with two in the garage, if that is not used as storage space) would absorb all of the turning space. This means that vehicles would have to drive up Churnet Manor Close to let other vehicles out before turning around and returning to Wardle House. This additional manoeuvring, on a 24/7 basis, will cause a disturbance and noise nuisance to the existing residents.

In summary, the location of a Children's Home in Churnet Manor Close would have an adverse impact on the existing properties/residents of that Close and Wardle House is an inappropriate location for such a development (as it is a private road, access is limited due to the road width/topography, there are waste disposal restrictions, etc. as detailed above).

In addition, the Restrictive Covenants that apply to Wardle House (and the other properties in Churnet Manor Close) prohibit any use other than as a private dwellinghouse – with the relevant words being “Not to carry on or permit to be carried on any trade or business at the property and not at any time to use the same other than as a private domestic dwellinghouse for the occupation by one family unit with a garage and the garden as the garden to a private dwellinghouse nor to permit anyone else to do so”. The restrictive covenants also go on to say “Not to park or place on the property or any part of the estate any lorry, van or other motor vehicle, caravan, house on wheels, trailer, boat or other vehicle or craft so as to be visible from or upon the driveway”. Both of these covenants would be breached if Wardle House were to be used as a Children's Home.

Yours faithfully

Francis and Susan Galton