
From:
Sent: 09 January 2022 16:53
To:
Subject: SMD/2021/0825 planning application concerns

Dear Sir/madam,

Re: Planning application SMD/2021/0825

While we understand and are sympathetic to the need for such housing, given our extensive professional experience with this area, we object to the location of this proposed site on a number of grounds as it is fundamentally unsuitable for this purpose. I am a teacher who has worked extensively with young people from backgrounds of care and my wife is a psychologist who has worked directly with young people living in children's care homes in a number of different companies.

This is a company new to children's social care, (an area common for such companies to turn a high profit who are not necessarily sufficiently experienced in children's care). Given the high cost of the house, profit will be a priority and this means taking on higher value children.

A rural location of this nature is chosen to house children with high absconsion risk, and will likely have significant mental health and behavioural needs. (This population is worth the most to care companies).

Backing onto an ancient woodland is considerable risk to the children - normal practice is for police to search for missing young person (this can happen frequently) via helicopter which will not be possible in the woodland, placing them at considerable risk. I would question if the police have been consulted about this as a considerable amount of police time is spent in tracking down missing children from care homes and they would have concerns about this location.

It is likely the house will be expanded from 3 to 5 bed as way to maximise profit and cover costs. (Common practice once a company is 'in').

There will be a considerable increase in traffic. The house will require a minimum of 3 care staff and a manager. At shift change this will double. There will be regular visits from professionals throughout the day. Traffic will continue at night and during the day equally. Where there are issues, most commonly at night, there will be a nocturnal flow of traffic.

This is a private single track road from the main road and will cause a lot of disruption for residents.

There will be limited access for emergency services due to narrow entrance, and the location is very difficult to find (visiting staff and professionals will be driving around the estate quite regularly looking for the property and creating further congestion).

Given recent snowfalls which can be from November to April in Leek, and the roads which are not serviced or gritted, access to the estate can become impossible. I would have concerns that children would be left understaffed, a real concern for the level of care needed by higher risk children, in the event of bad weather and would be concerned if the company has not provided a

plan for this (again we have concerns that their experience is far more limited than they would appear to let on). Again, this would place the children at considerable risk of harm.

Given the likely high needs of the residents, tutors will also be provided regularly for home schooling, for each child, several times a day, increasing the number of cars needed to park. There is no additional parking near the site and would result in residents being blocked in and emergency access being blocked. Visiting professionals are very busy on tight schedules and do not have time to be as considerate with their parking as might be expected.

If the number of bedrooms is increased in the future, this will exacerbate traffic and parking issues ever further placing both children and residents at risk.

Care staff, and residents, tend to spend a lot of time outside the care properties socialising out of the house, smoking and talking on phones. As care is 24 hours this does generate a lot of noise (this happens at all care homes) which on a quiet estate would have an impact on the residents. If the children have behavioural issues (which is also likely) this will add to the noise, as well visits from police and professionals over 24 hours.

I'm concerned that the choice of location shows a lack of experience of this company for reasons outlined above, but also the placement for distance to amenities is not a usual choice.

There is a long drive to A & E in Stoke (injuries can be unfortunately common).

The area is not a typical family area and there are no small children on the estate. Other very rural and non-child oriented placements often fail as children from very urban backgrounds (commonly London) struggle in such a quiet environment which inhibits their development.

There is no reasonable nearby access to a CAMHS unit, the nearest is in Hanley.

The location does not lend itself to promoting independence, (shopping, walking to school, using local amenities) which is vital to a young person's development.

As professionals experienced in this area we have concerns, and as residents we are also aware that, having recently had our council tax banding reviewed and reduced to 2 bands higher than other equivalent properties in Leek, residents here are paying a premium for their properties and to live in this quiet area. A children's home would certainly have an impact on this and resale prices in the area and would negatively change the aesthetic of the estate.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr and Mr Nixon

The Folly
Birchall Lane,
Leek
ST13 5RA