

To Whom It May Concern,

This email is in response to the letter you sent to me (dated 8 March 2024) regarding the Planning Application – SMD/2024/0076 – “Application for a Lawful Development re: use of a C3a dwelling as a children’s home for a maximum of four children, with up to three careers, two of whom will sleep overnight, working on a rota basis (C2)”.

These comments represent our views, and are in addition to those which we previously submitted on 1 March 2024; published on 7 March 2024.

Lawful Development Certificates

The Government Guidance on Lawful Development Certificates (available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lawful-development-certificates>) outlines that:

“Without sufficient or precise information, a local planning authority may be justified in refusing a certificate.”

In the Statements, submitted as part of this Application, there are inconsistencies in the information provided. These include the following examples:

- Discrepancies in the number of children to live at the residence (in one place it states two, and in another it states four).
- The ownership and running of the home (in one place it states Empower & Endeavour Care Ltd (E&E Care), and in another place it states Acorns to Oaks).
- The Statement details that parking will be on the premises, and not on the road. This will not be possible for the number of workers at the premises, and therefore is not precise (please refer to Car Parking and Traffic below).

Meeting at Cheadle Guild Hall – 4 March 2024

We recently attended a meeting at Cheadle Guild Hall on 4 March 2024 with the Police & Crime Commissioner. At this meeting, we learnt that the current occupier and several Councillors were under the impression that this home is to house children with disabilities. There is no mention of children with disabilities in the Statement; only children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD).

Secondly, we were told that the response time for a “101” Police call is extremely poor, and getting an officer to attend an incident in Cheadle can take up to 45 minutes.

In addition, we were advised at the meeting that there is currently an increase in reports of anti-social behaviour, which are being monitored by the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). As we have only seen PCSO’s once in the last six months, we can only assume that the problem is elsewhere in the town. Opening another Children’s Home would further stretch the PCSO resource, and lead to an additional hotspot within Cheadle.

Car Parking and Traffic

The application states that there are three parking spaces, and on-road parking will not be used. However, with three staff members present at any one time, plus a pool car, there would be a requirement for at least one car to park on the road. This is before any additional visitors (i.e. maintenance, social workers, etc.).

In a similar application – Harplow Farm (SMD/2023/0622) – reference is made to the SMD Local Plan Parking Standards, which outlines that six parking spaces must be provided for a home of three residents. Therefore the plan to have only three parking spaces at the residence does not comply with this Standard.

As part of the consideration of this application, there is a requirement for a Highways Survey to be completed. However, a one off Survey will not be reflective of parking at the address. This is due to variations in available on-road parking space; based upon time of day, and time of year.

Existing Problems – Car Parking and Traffic

Many of the houses around 50 Coleridge Drive only have single driveways, but house multiple vehicles. This has led to many cars being parked on the roads. Due to the narrow road, many of these cars partially block the pavement which leads to accessibility issues for disabled residents of the estate, and parents with prams. Whilst there is a public footpath running between Coleridge Drive and Austin Close, the barriers to this footpath prevent wheelchair users and pram pushing parents from using this. Therefore they have to walk up Coleridge Drive.

50 Coleridge Drive is situated on the approach to a bend in the road, and to the busy junction with Dryden Way. The bend is also partially obscured by a tall conifer hedge. Cars have to drive on the wrong side of the road, around a bend which is already a hazard. The addition of more cars parked on the road in this area will heighten the issue, leading to an increased risk of collision.

During the winter, Coleridge Drive is not gritted. As the property is situated on a slope, parked vehicles pose a risk of collision. Increased numbers of parked vehicles will mean that there is not a clear roadway to get off the Estate in icy conditions.

Aside from on-road parking availability on Coleridge Drive, there is also limited on-road parking capacity on nearby roads including Shelley Drive, Dryden Way and Austin Close.

Current Resident's Views

Through discussion with neighbours, and through reading the 50+ comments already made in respect of this Application, I have become aware that a lot of residents have / are employed by the Police, Prison Service, and Education Providers. Through their roles, these individuals are very much aware of the issues that this type of children's home brings to a local community. They are vehemently opposed to the Application, and their specialised experiences in this field should be heard. Some of these individuals are already aware of issues that are ongoing at more than one local children's home of the type mentioned in the Application, and the strain it has on local policing resources. These views have made us even more anxious about the problems that are going to commence.

Play Area

In the past the play area behind 50 Coleridge Drive has been vandalised, and has been a source of anti-social behaviour. Damaged play equipment has been removed and not replaced. We feel that this local amenity will be lost for the local resident's families, because mothers will not want their young children mixing with those with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties due to the influence they may have, and the intimidation that their children may feel.

OFSTED

OFSTED stipulates that there should be a separate room as a learning facility in children's homes such as the one proposed. This hasn't been considered as part of the overview of how different rooms within the house will be used (per the Application submitted).

In addition, in the case at Harplow Farm (as mentioned above) a Variation has been sought due to the requirement for the provision for three carers being present at night - under some circumstances. As 50 Coleridge Drive is only a six bedroom house, the presence of seven people, overnight, cannot be accommodated.

On the basis of the above comments, I would stress my strong opposition to the proposed Planning Application. The company that are involved in this application appears to be a startup a company with no previous history / proven record. As such, there is little confidence in their abilities to safeguard both the children in their care, and the local community.

Thank you for receiving these comments.

Kind Regards,

Bosworth