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**From:** planningcomments@staffs Moorlands.gov.uk  
**Sent:** 20 July 2026 22:21  
**To:** Planning Comments (SMDC)  
**Subject:** Comment Received from Public Access

**Categories:** [REDACTED]

Application Reference No. : SMD/2026/0250 Site Address: John Munroe Independent Hospital Reacliffe Road  
Rudyard Staffordshire ST13 8RU Leek Comments by: Mrs Rachel Finney  
From:

Greenfields farm  
Lask edge  
Leek

Phone:

Email: [REDACTED]

Submission: Objection

Comments: Dear Planning Officer,

I wish to formally object to Planning Application SMD/2026/0250 for the proposed change of use of the John Munroe Independent Hospital to a Class C2A hospital providing more secure accommodation.

My objection is not to the provision of mental health services, nor to those who require treatment and support. Mental health care is an essential service. My concern is that this particular location is fundamentally unsuitable for a more secure facility due to its immediate proximity to two primary schools, nearby residential properties and the rural nature of the surrounding community.

The hospital is situated on a narrow rural road used daily by families, school staff and children attending two nearby primary schools, one of which is a specialist school for children with additional needs. The safety and wellbeing of these children must be given the highest priority.

Many local residents also remember the previous operation of this hospital, during which patients absconded from the site on a number of occasions. These incidents resulted in nearby schools being placed into lockdown as a safeguarding measure. Whilst I acknowledge that this proposal involves a different operator and I am not suggesting the same events will inevitably occur again, this history demonstrates why parents' concerns are genuine and based on lived experience rather than speculation. Those lockdowns caused significant distress to very young children, disrupted education and left a lasting impact on many local families.

The planning application states that the purpose of this proposal is to provide 'more secure accommodation'. However, it does not provide sufficient information to enable local residents to fully understand the long-term implications of granting a Class C2A use at this location.

I therefore respectfully request that the Council addresses the following questions before determining this application:

- \* Why has this site been considered suitable for a more secure hospital when it is located so close to two primary schools?
- \* Has a formal safeguarding and child impact assessment been undertaken specifically because of the proximity to these schools? If so, will this assessment be made publicly available?
- \* Have the schools, Staffordshire County Council's education and safeguarding teams, and other relevant agencies been formally consulted regarding this proposal?
- \* What category of patients is the facility intended to accommodate, and what level of security is proposed?
- \* What security measures will be implemented to minimise any risk to neighbouring schools, residents and businesses?
- \* What emergency procedures are in place should a patient leave the site without authorisation or another serious incident occur?
- \* Will the increased staffing levels, visitor numbers, deliveries and emergency vehicle movements associated with a more secure facility have an adverse impact on highway safety, particularly during school drop-off and collection times?
- \* Once planning permission for a Class C2A use has been granted, what future changes to the operation of the facility could occur without further planning permission or public consultation?
- \* Can planning conditions be imposed to restrict the approved use, ensuring that the facility cannot become a materially different operation without a further planning application and full public consultation?

The proposal also raises concerns regarding the wider impact on the local economy. Rudyard is a popular rural destination with numerous bed and breakfasts, holiday accommodation providers and independent businesses that rely upon tourism. The area's reputation as a peaceful countryside destination is important to many local livelihoods. I ask the Council to carefully consider whether this proposal could adversely affect tourism and the confidence of visitors, with consequential impacts on local businesses and investment in the area.

Furthermore, this proposal has caused considerable anxiety amongst local families. Parents are now questioning whether they can continue to send their children to schools situated so close to a more secure hospital. No parent should be placed in the position of considering moving their child from a much-loved school because they have lost confidence in the suitability of the surrounding environment.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully request that Staffordshire Moorlands District Council refuses this application. Should the Council be minded to approve it, I ask that it first satisfies itself that all safeguarding, highway safety, operational and long-term planning implications have been fully assessed and that robust planning conditions are imposed to protect the local community.

This decision will have lasting consequences not only for local residents, but for the hundreds of children and families who use this area every single day. I therefore ask the Council to place the safety, wellbeing and confidence of the community at the forefront of its decision-making.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Rachel Finney

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