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Sent: 21 July 2026 13:52
To: Planning Comments (SMDC)
Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

Categories:

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

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Submission: Objection

Comments: Planning Application Reference: SMD/2026/0250.

Proposal: Change of use from C2 (Residential Institution) to C2a (Secure Hospital).

Site: John Munroe Independent Hospital.

Objector: Stacey Tatton, local resident and parent of children attending Horton St Michael's Primary School.

I wish to object to the proposed change of use of John Munroe Independent Hospital from C2 to C2a secure hospital on the grounds of child safeguarding, public safety, and the wholly unsuitable proximity to three separate child-centred sites: Horton St Michael's Primary School, Horton Lodge Special School, and the Greenwood Growth Forest School. The proposed hospital sits directly opposite the Greenwood Growth Forest School site and the grounds of Horton St Michael's Primary School. It is immediately adjacent to Horton Lodge Special School, which boards disabled children 24 hours a day.

The main entrance to the hospital is directly across the road from the Greenwood Growth Forest School entrance, which is used for daily outdoor learning, toddler playgroups, holiday clubs including SEN provision, community sessions, and is intersected by a public footpath. This represents an extraordinary concentration of vulnerable children in one location.

The forest school operated by Greenwood Growth is an open-access, lightly fenced area with a public right of way running through it. It is used by toddlers, early-years pupils, and SEN children. Outdoor learning environments are intentionally less structured, with children moving freely, exploring independently, and often out of direct line-of-sight. Staff cannot control who enters the area due to the public footpath, and toddlers and SEN children cannot recognise danger. Placing a C2a hospital in such close proximity to three educational settings introduces foreseeable and unmanaged risks including absconding incidents into the forest school and school grounds, unsupervised

contact with children on public footpaths, and emergency interventions that would be both visible and audible to very young and vulnerable children.

The children's play areas at Horton St Michael's, Horton Lodge, and the Greenwood Growth Forest School are all within clear audible range of the proposed secure hospital. Episodes of distress associated with secure mental health settings, including shouting, screaming, crying, foul or aggressive language, and raised voices during crisis interventions, would be heard directly by children during lessons, outdoor play, therapy sessions, and forest school activities. This would be particularly harmful for toddlers, early-years pupils, and SEN children, who may not understand the source of the distress, may become frightened or dysregulated, and may experience lasting anxiety as a result.

Individuals detained in C2a secure hospitals may include people who have committed violent offences, sexual offences, or offences involving risk to children, and who are placed in secure mental health accommodation under the Mental Health Act. While there is no single statutory minimum distance between secure hospitals and schools, such facilities are ordinarily located away from child-centred sites because safeguarding guidance requires the minimisation of foreseeable environmental risks. Placing a secure hospital directly opposite a primary school, next to a residential special school, and across from an open-access forest school used by toddlers and SEN children is wholly inconsistent with accepted safeguarding practice and exposes children to unacceptable and avoidable risk.

A C2a designation is reserved for secure accommodation for individuals detained under the Mental Health Act who require controlled access and supervision, may present behavioural or risk-related challenges, and cannot safely reside in open residential settings. Positioning such a facility between two schools and directly opposite an open forest school creates unacceptable safeguarding risks including loitering, observation of children, disruption of established safeguarding boundaries, and heightened anxiety for pupils, parents, and staff. Horton Lodge Special School houses children overnight who have severe physical disabilities, complex medical needs, cannot move independently, cannot recognise danger, and cannot seek help without adult intervention. Any incident involving a secure hospital patient, even minor, could have disproportionate and traumatic consequences for pupils who cannot protect themselves.

A C2a facility typically requires frequent ambulance attendance, police involvement during incidents, secure transport vehicles, and controlled access and egress. These activities would occur directly opposite where parents park when dropping off and collecting children attending Horton St Michael's, next to Horton Lodge's entrance, and adjacent to the Greenwood Growth forest school. The surrounding roads are narrow country roads and used by children, prams, wheelchairs, and mobility aids. This increases congestion, collision risk, distress caused by visible emergency interventions, and disruption to outdoor learning and therapy sessions.

The application does not include an explicit safeguarding impact assessment, a risk analysis for Horton St Michael's, a risk analysis for Horton Lodge's residential pupils, a risk analysis for the Greenwood Growth forest school, a thorough secure-perimeter plan, consultation with either school or Greenwood Growth, or evidence of community safety planning. Given the nature of C2a accommodation, these omissions are serious and unacceptable.

This proposal conflicts with NPPF Section 8 (safe, healthy communities), NPPF Section 95 (safe and accessible environments), Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan policies on amenity, safety, and community impact, statutory

safeguarding duties under Department for Education guidance, and Equality Act 2010 obligations to protect disabled children from foreseeable harm.

A secure hospital positioned between two schools and directly opposite an open forest school cannot be considered sustainable development. The proposed change of use to a C2a secure hospital introduces significant safeguarding, safety, and amenity risks to children attending Horton St Michael's Primary School, highly vulnerable residential pupils at Horton Lodge Special School, toddlers and SEN children using the Greenwood Growth forest school, staff, families, and the wider community.

The location is wholly unsuitable for secure accommodation of this nature. I therefore request that the planning authority refuse the application outright. Children's safety must be the primary consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Stacey Tatton

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