

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Comment Received from Public Access  
**Sent:** 30/07/2026 19:35:42

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Application Reference No. : SMD/2026/0250

Site Address: John Munroe Independent Hospital Reacliffe Road Rudyard Staffordshire ST13 8RU Leek

Comments by: James Tatton

From:  
The Laurels  
Reacliffe Road  
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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: James Tatton, local resident in the Horton Conservation Area

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 planning policy conflict, harm to the Horton Conservation Area, traffic and emergency access constraints, environmental impact, risk to local tourism and businesses, and the incompatibility of a secure institutional use within a rural community and designated conservation zone.

The site lies within the Horton Conservation Area, where development must preserve or enhance the rural character, tranquillity, and visual amenity of the landscape. A C2a secure hospital, with its operational requirements, emergency vehicle activity, external lighting, noise, and security infrastructure, is fundamentally incompatible with the conservation objectives of the area. The introduction of floodlighting, security lighting, and illuminated access points would cause significant light pollution, affecting residents, wildlife, and the dark sky character of the conservation zone. No mitigation has been proposed to address this impact.

Noise pollution is also a major concern. Secure hospitals routinely experience episodes of distress, including shouting, swearing, screaming, and raised voices during crisis interventions. These noises would carry across the valley and affect nearby homes, the two schools, the forest school, and wildlife habitats. The tranquillity of the conservation area would be materially harmed, and the proposal conflicts with Local Plan policies protecting residential amenity and rural character.

Traffic and emergency access present serious planning issues. The surrounding roads are narrow country lanes with single carriage pinch points, limited passing places, and constrained visibility. These roads already experience congestion during school drop off and pick up times. A C2a facility typically requires frequent ambulance attendance, secure transport vehicles, and police involvement during incidents. Emergency vehicles attempting to access the site during peak school times would face delays and obstruction, creating safety risks for residents, schoolchildren, and road users. The rural road network is not designed to support the increased intensity of emergency traffic associated with a secure hospital.

There are several public footpaths running alongside and near the site, including routes used by walkers, families, and visitors to the lake. Increased emergency activity, vehicle movements, and institutional operations would negatively affect the safety and enjoyment of these public rights of way. The proposal is incompatible with the recreational and rural character of the area.

The site is also located near an open body of water that has experienced multiple fatalities, including accidental drownings and suicides. Housing mentally unwell patients in close proximity to the lake presents a significant safeguarding risk to both patients and the local community. The risk of absconding, self harm, or accidental harm is foreseeable and cannot be mitigated by the rural layout of the area. This raises serious questions about

the suitability of the site for a secure mental health facility.

Local tourism and businesses would be negatively affected. The nearby lake attracts visitors for walking, sailing, and leisure activities. Local establishments, including the sailing club cafe, the hotel, the forest school, and other lake side businesses, depend on a peaceful and welcoming environment. The presence of a secure hospital, with associated noise, emergency responses, and institutional activity, would deter visitors and reduce footfall. This would harm the local economy and undermine the area's role as a rural leisure destination.

The proposal may also affect school enrolment at Horton St Michael's Primary School and Horton Lodge Special School. Parents may be reluctant to send children to schools located beside a secure hospital, particularly given the rural setting, limited road access, and the nature of C2a accommodation. Reduced enrolment would have long term consequences for the viability and stability of both schools.

Operational feasibility is also a concern. The previous hospital on this site experienced significant difficulty recruiting and retaining staff because of the rural location, limited transport links, and lack of nearby amenities. A C2a secure hospital requires a larger, more specialised workforce, including clinical staff, security staff, and emergency response staff. The same recruitment challenges will likely recur, raising questions about the sustainability and safety of the proposed use.

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan requires the council to follow its own planning policies, including those relating to conservation areas, rural character, amenity, traffic impact, and land use compatibility. The proposal conflicts with multiple sections of the Local Plan and with national planning policy requiring safe, accessible, and appropriate development. Councils also rely heavily on precedent. Similar applications for secure facilities in close proximity to schools, rural communities, or conservation areas have been refused elsewhere because of incompatibility with local character, traffic constraints, and amenity impacts. Approving this application would set an undesirable precedent and expose the council to future challenges.

For these reasons, the proposed change of use to a C2a secure hospital is unsuitable for this location and conflicts with established planning policy, conservation objectives, rural character, and community wellbeing. I therefore request that the planning authority refuse the application.

Yours sincerely,

James Tatton

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