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From: planningcomments@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk
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Subject: Comment Received from Public Access

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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: Douglas Saunders

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Submission: Objection

Comments: Objection to Planning Application SMD/2026/0250

Material Change of Use from C2 to C2A with associated approximately 4.6-metre (15-foot) security fencing and
external floodlighting

John Munroe Independent Hospital, Reacliffe Road, Rudyard

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally object to planning application SMD/2026/0250.

As the parent of a six-year-old child who attends Horton St Michael's First School, I have serious concerns about this proposal and believe it is wholly unsuitable for this location. One of the reasons we chose the school was because of its peaceful rural setting and the strong sense of community in the area. I am concerned that this development would fundamentally change the character of the environment surrounding the school during the years my son will be educated there.

Having read the application, I do not believe it adequately addresses the impact the development would have on neighbouring schools, local residents or the surrounding countryside.

My reasons for objecting are as follows.

Lack of essential supporting information

The application has been submitted without a Lighting Impact Assessment or a Noise Assessment. These documents are essential in understanding the likely effects of the proposed external lighting and operational activity on nearby homes and, in particular, Horton St Michael's First School. Without this information, I do not believe the Council can make a fully informed decision, and I respectfully ask that the application is either refused or deferred until these assessments have been completed and made available for public scrutiny.

Impact on the Green Belt

The proposed approximately 4.6-metre (15-foot) security fencing would be a dominant and highly visible feature that would significantly harm the openness and rural character of the Green Belt. It would introduce an institutional appearance that is entirely out of keeping with its surroundings. In my view, the application has not demonstrated the very special circumstances normally required to justify this degree of development within the Green Belt.

Impact on the Conservation Area

The combination of high-security fencing and extensive external lighting would, in my opinion, have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Rather than preserving or enhancing the area, the proposal would introduce a visually intrusive development that conflicts with its historic and rural setting.

Effect on the local community

I fully recognise the importance of providing appropriate healthcare facilities and understand they have to be located somewhere. However, I do not believe this particular site is the right location. Placing a secure facility immediately adjacent to a primary school is likely to cause understandable concern amongst parents and local residents. Regardless of how professionally the facility is managed, I believe its presence would inevitably affect the sense of reassurance that families expect around a school environment.

Unsuitable location and transport concerns

This is a rural area with limited infrastructure. The surrounding roads are already heavily used and, in places, become extremely narrow, making them unsuitable for increased traffic associated with this type of development, including staff, visitors, deliveries and emergency vehicles. I am concerned that no Transport Assessment appears to have been submitted with the application, leaving these issues insufficiently addressed.

Light pollution and environmental impact

The proposed external floodlighting has the potential to create significant light pollution affecting nearby residents, wildlife and the area's valued rural dark skies. It could also affect children attending the neighbouring schools during the darker winter months and those taking part in after-school activities. I believe these impacts should have been properly assessed before the application was submitted.

Impact on local schools and the wider area

Horton St Michael's First School and Horton Lodge Special School are valued parts of our local community. I am concerned that locating this type of development in such close proximity could alter how families perceive the area and may have wider implications for the reputation of the local community and the tourism on which many local businesses rely.

Concerns about the operation of the facility

I note reports that there are links between the applicant and the previous operator of the site. Given the well-publicised regulatory concerns that resulted in the previous service closing in 2022, I believe this reinforces the need for the Council to scrutinise this application particularly carefully.

The application also provides very little information regarding staffing levels or how suitably qualified staff will be recruited in what is a relatively remote rural location. Without this information, it is difficult to understand how the facility would operate safely and effectively.

Finally, while I appreciate that secure facilities are carefully managed and operated under strict procedures, no environment is entirely without risk. Given the immediate proximity of both a primary school and a special school, I remain concerned that the choice of location has not been adequately justified.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully ask the Council to refuse planning application SMD/2026/0250.

As a parent, my priority is ensuring my son can continue to attend school in an environment that feels safe, welcoming and appropriate for young children. I believe there are more suitable locations for this proposal that would avoid the significant impact on neighbouring schools, local residents and the surrounding countryside.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my objection.

Yours faithfully,

Douglas Saunders.

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