

APPLICATION NO: 13/01694/FUL	OFFICER: Miss Michelle Payne
DATE REGISTERED: 3rd October 2013	DATE OF EXPIRY : 2nd January 2014
WARD: Pittville	PARISH:
APPLICANT:	National Star Foundation
LOCATION:	Land adjacent to Dunalley Primary School, West Drive, Cheltenham
PROPOSAL:	Provision of residential accommodation for people with disabilities, with associated care learning and activity facilities (Use Class C2)

ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATION

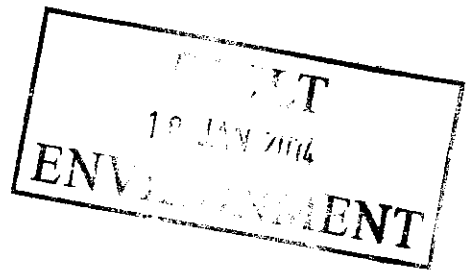
18 The Grove Hales Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL52 6SX	
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Comments: 13th January 2014
Letter attached.

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Councillor John Rawson
18 The Grove
Cheltenham
Glos. GL52 6SX

Telephone 01242 227955 Email cllr.john.rawson@cheltenham.gov.uk



8 January 2014

Michelle Payne
Planning Officer
Built Environment Division
Cheltenham Borough Council

Dear Michelle

13/01694/FUL Provision of residential accommodation ad associated facilities for people with disabilities on land adjacent to Dunalley Primary School, West Drive

As a former governor of Dunalley Primary School and a former long-serving councillor for the old St Paul's Ward which included this site, I would like to make a few comments to be considered by you as case officer and by the Planning Committee when it comes to determine the application at its next meeting.

The site is a former allotments site. When the County Council proposed to develop the site for housing around 1999, I persuaded the Council to hand the site over to the school as a wild garden. The arrangement was intended to last for two years, but in fact it lasted for more like ten. When St Vincent's secured permission for a day care centre on the site, the school was generously compensated by being given something like £40,000 to build a new linear wild garden on its own site, which is very well used and much appreciated by staff and pupils alike. The outcome for the school was therefore a happy one.

My view has been that some development is almost inevitable on the site, and that a development of relatively low-key buildings for disabled people is a more desirable outcome – both environmentally and socially – than a number of imposing and substantial detached houses of the kind that have been built along the north side of Wellesley Road on its boundary with the school.

A number of representations from members of the public have referred to the excellence of the education being offered to disabled students by the National Star College and the massive impact it can make on the life chances of disabled young people. The merits of the applicant are somewhat peripheral to the planning issues which the Committee will have to determine and so I will not repeat what has been said, though I agree with them. But I will make one comment, which is relevant to the suitability of the development for its location.

Today, the typical National Star College student is significantly more severely disabled than was the case a generation ago. This is partly because students with less severe disabilities tend to go into mainstream education these days, and partly because medical advances have ensured that more people with severe disabilities survive into adulthood. The idea that these students will somehow be 'nuisance neighbours' who should not be in a residential area is therefore far-fetched. Any such suggestion should be discounted as a fundamental misunderstanding of who the NSC students are and how they live.

There are clearly great advantages to these young people in being in an environment which is not only tranquil and picturesque but within reach of the town and its facilities. At a time in their lives when they are trying to develop independent living skills, it will be highly beneficial for them to be in a town rather than a relatively enclosed and isolated campus.

Turning to the issues which are narrowly planning matters, the principle of development on the site has already been accepted by the Planning Committee when it determined the St Vincent's application. Therefore a refusal would really only carry weight if it could be demonstrated that this proposed development is worse than the last one. I would contend that it is an improvement the St Vincent's scheme for the following reasons.

- The footprint of the buildings is reduced. One of the drawbacks of the St Vincent's scheme was that the footprint was very large. The National Star College has reduced it. Although this has been achieved making part of the development two-storey, this is only on the West Drive side where it mirrors the height of the buildings on the other side of the road.
- The design and layout of the development is a considerable improvement on the previous design, which was essentially two blocks. It is broken up more into smaller blocks which are more elegantly arranged with gardens around them.
- As this is a residential centre, it is likely to generate substantially less traffic than a day centre. Comments from some complainants about the inadequacy of parking seem to misunderstand the lifestyles of severely disabled students and also the way that this kind of facility is staffed.

If I had thought in 1999 that the outcome of the debate over the future of the allotments would be (a) a permanent and sustainable wild garden at the school (b) a low key development on the site rather than physically imposing up-market housing and (c) a valuable and life-enhancing facility for severely disabled young people, I would have been confident that the battle was worth fighting. With that thought in mind, I commend this application to the Planning Committee.

Yours sincerely

Councillor John Rawson