

On a quiet South Cambridgeshire village have met with strong opposition.

Residents of Steeple Morden are concerned the plan to re-open the White House as a private psychiatric centre could put people at risk.

The Hay Street property was a nursing home until government regulations on room sizes forced its closure several years ago.

About 50 villagers packed into a meeting of Steeple Morden Parish Council in the village hall on Monday to discuss the issue.

Beverley England, of Hay Street, told the meeting: "I am personally not reassured the patients to be admitted are low risk. It only takes one accident to happen, one incorrect diagnosis of a patient who should possibly be in a medium risk institution.

"If the safety of our children cannot be guaranteed, then this type of hospital should not be allowed to be sited in such close proximity of a school, recreation ground, a village hall used for playgroups and people's gardens where they play."

District councillor Cicely Murfitt told *the Crow* residents had three main concerns.

"One, that they didn't know

JEDDIE HAWKINS

what was happening. Two, there's a psychiatric unit in the middle of the village on a road where people walk to school and it might be dangerous to children, and three, that the value of property will go down."

"I think it's totally inappropriate for Steeple Morden. It's not just NIMBYism, it's whether the project can be run competently and how much it's going to effect the village, especially the people nearby."

County Councillor Linda Oliver said she had "major concerns" about the scheme.

"I have concerns about the lack of accurate information and the suitability of the site, so close to the centre of the village."

However, Dr Adel Mohsin-Abdullah, director of the White House Clinic, as it would be known, said he was happy to discuss the issue within anyone who had concerns.

"We're going to make it like a four-star hotel where people can be looked after with an extensive rehabilitation programme.

"It's for people with depression, psychosis, anorexia, bulimia, and manic depressives.

"People with the type of conditions we are talking about are not walk-in patients, they

professional, a clinical psychiatrist or similar, to check them before we accept them.

"Any patients with a previous history of highly disturbed or criminal behaviour we will say no to. The type of patient we are talking about are not dangerous.

"Mental patients are categorised and dangerous ones will not come here."

Dr Mohsin-Abdullah said his patients would be confined to the building and part of the garden as part of their rehabilitation programme.

"They're locked in for their own continuation of treatment. We're not going to allow them out, if someone gets out and something happens we will be forced to close.

"Mental patients are human beings, they're victims not criminals. They need somebody to take care of them.

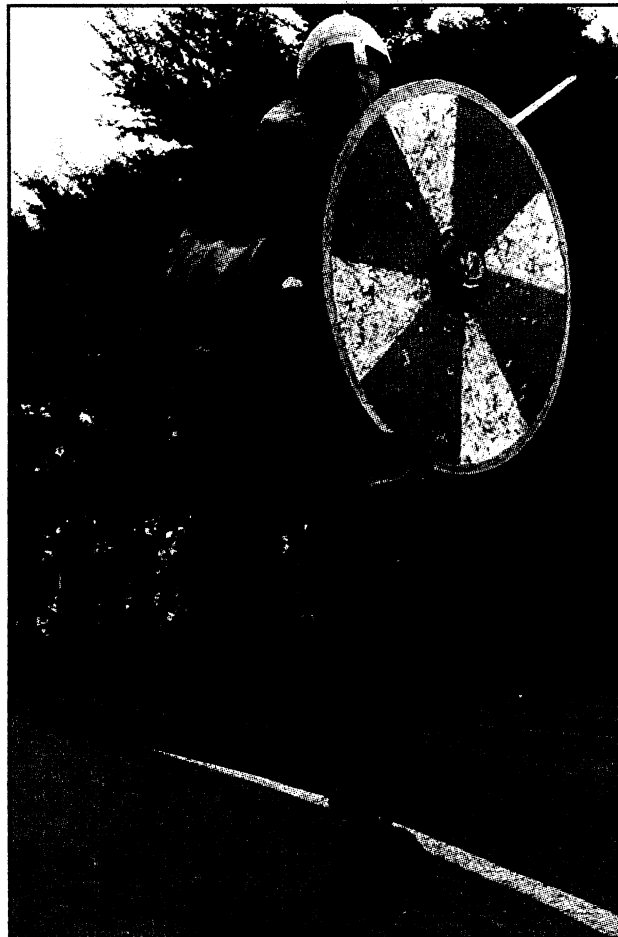
"These people are not going to be dangerous to anyone in the village."

The doctor said the unit did not plan to take its first residents for at least three months.

"At the moment we are doing building work which would have to be done if the house is to be a mental home or nursing home," he said.

And he made this offer to local residents: "If there's anything people are concerned about, even after we open, I am happy to sit down and talk about it."

It's the great Norse run!



SWORD FLIGHT: Paul Allen on a training run in the country lanes around Heydon. 169GS05.

A VIKING has been turning the heads of drivers as he pounds country lanes.

Paul Allen has been surprising people around Heydon as he trains for a road race on Sunday in full Viking armour.

"I have had some funny looks," said Mr Allen, of Chishill Road. "A lot of drivers stare or start laughing."

The 49-year-old is preparing to take part in the University of Birmingham 5k road race for the third time.

He raised more than £300 in 1999 and 2001, missing the 2000 event with a broken leg.

"In training I have done 37 minutes, the leaders in running kit do it in about half that time."

Mr Allen, leader of Viking and Anglo-Saxon re-enactment specialists The Gesithas Group, was invited to take part by a fellow Viking re-enactment fan.

"They were all going to do it in soft Viking costumes and take their weapons, I just thought I would make it a bigger challenge."

The money the supply teacher raises will go to the Acorn Children's Hospice in Birmingham and to Kenyan children orphaned by Aids.

■ Anyone interested in sponsoring Mr Allen should call 01763 838759.

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