

From:Mudge, Peter
Sent:25 May 2021 14:36:00 +0100
To:Deighton, Charlotte
Subject:Amended

Hi Charlotte,

I realise one bit of my opposition to 15 Branch Rd is incorrect – where Alison Lowe mentions the 24 hr off licence has been closed. Here is a version with the erroneous bit removed. Can it still go without my phone number or email please.

“Regarding the sale of alcohol at 15 Branch Road Armley, I am writing to object and contest it should not be granted. A general store concentrating on Lietuvaite - which I understand is a rye bread - would be most welcome, but the off-licence aspect would be exacerbation of Armley’s already nationally advertised drink problems.

Crime & Disorder - The site is in one of the most problematic illegal drinking areas in Yorkshire and therefore the UK. Indeed in the national Phase 2 of the “UK Towns’ Fund”, the government is currently suggesting a combined project so they work with the public sector, businesses and community to find innovative solutions to problems faced in Armley town centre.

Independent of this government involvement, asb in Armley escalated as current lockdowns eased. Consequently West Yorkshire Police and Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour team are undertaking a series of projects to combat crime and fear of crime. In a letter they distributed at the start of May to every business and household in the vicinity of Armley town centre their opening lines are: *“Dear resident, business owner or proprietor,*

“We are aware of the history of high levels of anti-social behaviour in and around the Armley Town Street Area. We receive frequent reports of incidents of criminal and/or anti-social behaviour, which have a significant negative impact on the local community. Many of the incidents that occur are attributed and/or linked to the consumption of alcohol

“Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police have put measures in place to tackle this behaviour, and will continue to do so. As part of this work, it is proposed that we will

apply for a partial closure order in Armley, to prevent the consumption of alcohol in public places. This letter is to explain what this order is, and how you can give your views on these proposals....” Another part of this intensive work notes anyone the police find street drinking will have the alcohol removed by them and poured down a drain. It notes the police have the option to arrest people found street drinking.

The proliferation of off-licences in Armley centre, (the greatest concentration outside the city centre) has enabled the drink problems to escalate. No application for an Armley off licence in the Cumulative Impact Policy (CIP) area has been approved in recent years and it is vital this absolute ban remains.

The last off-licence application within Armley’s CIP area was from Heron Foods in 2019. Heron is one of the largest stores in Armley town centre and has long been a welcome addition to its high street. But despite this, its request to include an off-licence capacity immediately met with major opposition which led to them withdrawing their application at the Hearing. It would set a terrible precedent if the Lietuvaite application was to be anything but refused.

In addition to the CIP, the area is within the PSPO (Public Spaces Protection Orders area) banning certain types of antisocial behaviour. A recent review which confirmed the PSPO should remain notes: *“We only introduce PSPOs if behaviour happens often and harms residents’ quality of life. We’ve worked with partners including the police and local councillors to agree all of our proposals. “*

Public Nuisance – The fact Armley needs a Cumulative Impact Policy shows the tremendous drink problems over recent years. And these issues remain in abundance leading to the CIP being renewed in 2019 for the coming years. A comment from a leading supporter of the CIP noted: *“There is currently a Cumulative Impact Policy applied to Town Street which hundreds of local people have signed and contributed to being implemented. The council has agreed to retain the CIP for Armley as the problem of street drinking continues to predominate. Armley councillors and MP have worked with police and ASB to drive out these drinkers as the DPPO we fought so hard to get some years ago did not work. We successfully went to court to get injunctions for the 5 worst offenders but there are many more drinkers than this and the presence of yet more off licenses only exacerbates the misery for constituents and businesses on Town Street. Many men said their wives were too frightened to shop alone on Town Street.*

Older people spoke of their fear of shopping around drinkers and 2 people described crimes including robbery they had witnessed from their flats overlooking Town Street. One person said he saw men urinating and defecating on the streets and he said they slept at the back of Town Street. 600 people completed a survey about their experience of Town Street, in 2016 which universally blamed drinking and easy access to alcohol for much of the deterioration on Town Street.” This commentator is Alison Lowe, now West Yorkshire Deputy Mayor for Policing designate.

Public Safety - As has been noted above, off-licence sales cause many problems in Armley town centre. In addition to actual crimes, almost as damaging for the businesses and social capacity is fear of crime – highlighted through word of mouth and social media sites recording never ending examples of how street drinking from off licences is damaging people and Armley town centre.

A new off-licence would be opposed anywhere in the CIP area, no matter how wide its frontage. However the pavement in front of 15 Branch Road is one of the narrowest regularly used in the ward and is the only area of Armley requiring special barriers installed by Highways to allow one metre distancing during the pandemic. Looking at Google Maps I would estimate it is less than a metre across.”

ENDS

Kind regards

Pete Mudge,

Neighbourhood Centres Co-ordinator,