

From:Winster, Frederick

Sent:25 Sep 2021 23:41:11 +0100

To:Nelson, Matthew;Entertainment Licensing

Subject:RE: Licensing Act 2003 - A New Application for the Review a Premises Licence - Mama Mia, 274 Harehills Lane, LS9

Sir / Madam,

I have been made aware of an application to review a licence relating to ☐Mamma Mia☐ store, 274 Harehills Lane, Leeds, LS9 7BD. I submitted a representation relating to a previous, recent application for review and this representation is near identical.

As the Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant for the Gipton and Harehills ward I strongly believe the licence should be revoked. I believe this licence is increasing crime and disorder, and public nuisance.

Background

I have a very broad remit, but in brief my role is to focus on local policing issues through community engagement, problem solving and early intervention. In practice this means myself and my team of officers deal with longer term problems affecting the community. I have worked in different roles as a police officer in Leeds for over 17 years and have been in my current post for around two and a half years. Over that time I have built up a good understanding of the local area through speaking with members of the public, partner agencies and organisations, my staff members, and reviews of information on police systems. I am also an operationally active police officer and have continued to have direct experience of working in the Harehills area.

It may be useful to outline my professional experience of problems created by alcohol use in the close vicinity of the proposed licence location.

When I took up my post in January of 2019 I was quickly apparent that ☐street drinking☐ was a genuine problem and had been for a significant length of time. Individuals would gather at the junction of Cowper Road and Harehills Lane with between 4 and 15 adults present at any given time. They would drink from cans and sit in the bus stop or to the rear of a local business at that junction on a daily basis.

This generated noise nuisance while the group shouted and argued amongst themselves, litter from discarded cans and bodily fluids left behind, and calls to the police and ambulance services due to intermittent violence. Members of the public reported being intimidated and dissuaded from using local businesses and a bus stop at that junction which drinkers regularly used. This information was received through PACT meetings (public meetings with members of the public), calls to the West Yorkshire Police call centre, emails to our Neighbourhood Policing Team, and direct observation by myself and my officers.

As a result I refreshed our problem solving occurrence which documents the actions we take to tackle local problems. Only the most pressing and complex issues result in the creation of such an occurrence, and for perspective there are currently three across the ward area ☐ one of which remains street drinking.

Despite the best efforts of my entire team of officers, and additional police resources targeting the area, this issue has persisted up until the present day. The group of drinkers have moved short distances in response to pressure from police officers, moving from the initial location to nearby Compton Road. Similar problems emerged there relating to the use of a nearby bus stop, intimidation of shoppers using local businesses, and the accumulation of very large quantities of discarded alcohol containers.

The group have now moved back onto Harehills Lane itself, often close to the junction with Strathmore View, with smaller numbers remaining on Compton Road. Again, similar problems persist.

Over my time in post the issue has fluctuated, for example reducing when officers used available legislation during pandemic related ☐lockdowns☐. Groups of drinkers have ranged in number from 3 or 4 up to 30 at its peak.

The crime and nuisance was caused, and continues to be caused, by adults with alcohol addiction. The difficulty in overcoming such addictions in part explains the extreme difficulty police have had in addressing the problems associated with street drinking.

We have worked with partners to educate off-licences and distribute literature encouraging responsible sales of alcohol. The council have funded, and continue to fund, outreach projects to address underlying

alcohol addiction issues. We have also successfully applied for and obtained Injunctions against some of the most problematic individuals.

All of these measures are intended to reduce the harm caused by alcohol consumption over time. However, it is clear to me that the problem remains very much an active one. I chair regular meetings between local residents and the police and understandably it is raised at every such event. Some residents report feeling unable to attend local shops as they have to weave between intoxicated individuals. My officers remove alcohol from individuals drinking in the street on a daily basis and I have often done so myself.

Police Figures

Police figures dated between 31/08/2020 and 31/08/2021 show that Gipton and Harehills ward area had 79 calls for service from the public relating to Alcohol Nuisance. Often calls relating to street drinking are recorded in the category of Adult Nuisance and there were 149 of these call types. Compared this with the 7 other ward areas across East Leeds this is by far the highest. The closest level of demand was in a neighbouring ward and was at 33 calls for alcohol nuisance less than half that of Gipton and Harehills. The figure for adult nuisance was 84 which is just over half the level of Gipton and Harehills. Average calls for adult nuisance across East Leeds per ward area were 70, and for alcohol nuisance this figure was 24.

It is clear there is a huge disparity between the number of calls received relating to Gipton and Harehills in relation to alcohol and adult nuisance, and those of other local ward areas. The consumption of alcohol in public is by no means the only factor behind this but in my experience it certainly contributes to it with numerous calls stemming from this issue.

Because the premises is on Harehills Lane, an extremely long and busy street, it is difficult to compare with other local streets, but it did generate the highest number of calls for service in the ward over the time period I reviewed in relation to both adult nuisance and alcohol nuisance calls.

Mamma Mia Store

All of the locations mentioned above where street drinkers congregate are within around 100 metres of the store this licence relates to.

Most drinkers do not live locally and travel to the area to consume alcohol. 59 adults have been linked to our problem solving occurrence related to street drinking (either as current or previous consumers of alcohol), and only 19 live within the ward area.

Official guidance to Police and Crime Commissioners highlights a study showing that drinkers will travel to locations with numerous off licences. They are motivated to get the cheapest possible alcohol available. They also tend to purchase small quantities at a time to avoid alcohol being confiscated by the police or stolen from them by criminals, so they remain in the immediate area of their favoured store, returning regularly throughout the day. Anecdotal information from the local drinkers suggests that the ready availability of cheap alcohol is one of the drivers for their use of Harehills Lane as a drinking location.

My assumption is that stores compete on alcohol pricing, so the high number of off-licences locally drives down costs. Clearly this is massively compounded when stores are not paying tax or selling illicit alcohol as tax makes up a very significant portion of the alcohol price. Illicit tobacco and illicit / untaxed alcohol are almost invariably sold side by side locally.

This is particularly true of □super strength□ lagers, the favoured alcohol by most local street drinkers based on the containers we seize from them and the discarded cans which accumulate. My understanding from police systems and conversations with officers involved is that when they searched the premises involved on 27/11/2020 they located very large quantities of strong lager which were suspected to be untaxed. The second most common drink I have observed are large bottles of vodka which I believe have also been seized from the premises as suspected counterfeit and untaxed.

Within the past six months officers from my team have directly observed individuals associated with street drinking purchasing alcohol from the relevant premises.

As recently as 2nd September 2021 officers observed there are no prices displayed in the store against alcohol sold there. While not illegal I suspect this is used to avoid officers and other officials noting the low prices which would clearly indicate a failure to pay tax. Local street drinkers I have spoken to report

paying 80p to £1 for a can of strong lager, which I am informed would be less than the tax owed on such a can.

In summary it is clear to me that this store specifically is contributing to crime, disorder, and public nuisance by selling alcohol to individuals who then consume it on the street and generate associated problems of disorder, intimidation, littering, and at times violence.

Thank You,

Fred

Sergeant 6344 Fred Winster

East Leeds Neighbourhood Policing Team (Inner East).

Team 1 (Gipton and Harehills).

Leeds District.

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To report a crime, please ring 101. Always dial 999 in an emergency.