Supplementary Papers for Licensing Sub-Committee

Date: Friday, 13 March 2026

5.	**Application for a Premises Licence at 24 Church Street, Christchurch, BH23 1BW** Supplementary information submitted by Objector 2 is enclosed.	3 - 6

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Good morning Chair and members of the Licensing Committee.

I apologise that I am not able to attend this hearing today, unfortunately personal circumstances prevent me from doing so. Thank you for allowing me to therefore have my statement read out today.

I want to begin by making it clear that my objection is not directed at the applicant personally, nor at responsible businesses that operate in Christchurch. Our pubs, restaurants, and shops are an important part of the character and life of this town, and many of them operate responsibly and contribute positively to the community.

You will have seen my representation already. In addition, I acknowledge that the applicant has safety measures in place and has incorporated the Dorset Police conditions. The fact is that despite responsible business owners and measures in place, the impacts are often felt away from the actual premises. Recording incidents does not reflect the multitude of incidents happening in public spaces, homes and hospitals.

My concern today is something broader than this single application.

It is about the **overall availability of alcohol in Christchurch town centre**, and the impact that continued expansion of alcohol outlets can have on the community, given the UK has a culture of drinking. There is also the burden on Emergency Departments and the Police resulting from intoxication. The NHS and Social Services have to treat and care for people and families who suffer the health and social impact of alcohol use. This also has a financial cost for these organisations.

When we look at the immediate area around this proposed premises, it becomes clear that alcohol is already **extremely easy to obtain**. Within a very small distance there are numerous pubs, bars and restaurants serving alcohol, alongside supermarkets, convenience stores, and specialist wine retailers selling alcohol for consumption elsewhere.

There are already multiple places where residents and visitors can buy alcohol at almost any time of day. There is no shortage of options.

In addition to this application, there is also **another licence application for a convenience store only metres away.**

Taken together, this means we are not simply considering one new premises. We are potentially looking at **yet another increase in the concentration of alcohol outlets in an area that is already heavily supplied**.

This is where the principle of **cumulative impact under the Licensing Act 2003** becomes important.

The Licensing Act recognises that even when individual premises appear responsible, the **combined effect of many licensed premises in a concentrated area can undermine the licensing objectives**.

In other words, problems often arise **not from one premises alone, but from the overall density of alcohol outlets in a particular location**.

There is a significant body of research supporting this concern.

Public health and policing studies consistently show that areas with a **higher density of alcohol outlets experience greater levels of alcohol-related harm**.

These harms include increased levels of violent crime and disorder, higher rates of alcohol-related hospital admissions and long-term health conditions, greater levels of binge drinking, and increased public nuisance such as noise, litter, and public intoxication.

This relationship is often explained through what researchers call **availability theory**.

Quite simply, when alcohol becomes more available and more visible in everyday spaces, consumption increases — and with that increase come higher levels of harm.

Another factor linked to high outlet density is **price competition**, particularly among off-licence retailers. When many shops sell alcohol in close proximity, prices are often driven down. Cheaper alcohol tends to encourage higher consumption and heavier drinking.

Off-sales alcohol is also frequently associated with **pre-loading**, where individuals purchase cheaper alcohol from shops before going on to pubs and bars. By the time they reach licensed venues later in the evening they may already be heavily intoxicated, which increases the likelihood of disorder and anti-social behaviour in the town centre.

There is also the issue of alcohol purchased from convenience stores being consumed in nearby streets, parks, or other public areas. This pattern is widely recognised in areas with a high concentration of off-licence outlets and can lead to noise nuisance, littering, broken glass, and behaviour that residents may find intimidating.

Again, these issues do not necessarily arise because a single retailer is irresponsible. They arise because **the overall availability of alcohol within a small area becomes too high**.

And that is precisely why **Cumulative Impact Policies exist within the licensing framework**.

They recognise that there comes a point where an area may already have **sufficient, or even excessive, provision of alcohol**, and where granting further licences risks undermining the licensing objectives.

Christchurch town centre is a relatively small area, yet it already contains **a very high number of licensed premises** of different types for residents and visitors to purchase alcohol.

It is therefore difficult to argue that there is any **unmet need** for additional alcohol provision.

Instead, granting another licence would simply make alcohol **even more widely available in an area where it is already abundant**.

There is also an important consideration relating to **children and young people**.

The proposed premises is located in an area regularly used by families and young people and in relatively close proximity to schools and everyday community spaces.

Convenience stores are places that young people visit frequently as part of normal daily life. Increasing the number of outlets selling alcohol in those environments inevitably increases young people's exposure to alcohol and the opportunities for proxy purchasing.

Research has shown that areas with higher densities of alcohol outlets are associated with **higher levels of alcohol consumption among young people**, as well as earlier exposure to alcohol within their communities.

While conditions and age-verification policies are important safeguards, they cannot fully address the wider impact of **increasing the visibility and accessibility of alcohol within the everyday environment**.

Ultimately, the Licensing Committee must weigh the benefits of granting another licence against the potential risks to the licensing objectives.

In this case, I believe the broader context is crucial.

The real question before the committee is therefore not simply whether this individual premises could operate responsibly.

The more important question is whether **Christchurch town centre actually needs another place selling alcohol**.

From the perspective of residents, community wellbeing, and the long-term health of the town centre, I believe the answer is **no**.

At some point a town moves from having **choice**… to having **saturation**. My concern is that Christchurch town centre may already be at that point.

Christchurch is a historic town with a strong sense of community, and decisions like this shape the kind of town it will continue to be.

The issue before the committee is not whether one more shop could sell alcohol responsibly, but whether adding another outlet to an already concentrated area is in the best interests of the wider community.

When alcohol is already widely available, increasing that availability further risks undermining the licensing objectives through cumulative impact.

For those reasons, I respectfully ask the committee to refuse this application.

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