

Application for Premises Licence– Supplementary Information in Support of Representation

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Premier, 12 Westover Road, Bournemouth

This report is to be considered alongside the formal representation submitted in respect of an Application for a Premises Licence submitted to the Licensing Authority. It is the intention of Dorset Police to avoid any repeat of information previously submitted and to provide both the applicant (or their representative) and members of the Licensing Sub-Committee with additional information, context and evidence in support of the representation. This report is being completed and submitted as soon as practicable for the benefit of all parties. Whilst all details are correct at the time of completion, Dorset Police reserve the right to amend / introduce additional information and evidence in advance of the hearing.

Background

This premises, which is currently vacant but was once a shoe retail space, is located along Westover Road, an area largely known as a road lined on the one side by a Victorian mews of mixed commercial premises on the ground floor and residential accommodation on the upper levels. The commercial premises are a variety of retail and hospitality premises which all face Bournemouth's Lower Gardens and the Bournemouth Pavilion Theatre.

This site has not previously been utilised as a convenience store. There is a public house offering alcohol and food nearby to one side of the premises and a Casino, Hotel and Restaurants amongst other commercial premises to the other side of the premises towards Bath Road.

At 56 Westover Road there is a well-established YMCA Hostel. This premises is an invaluable community hub, often supporting those that are most vulnerable in our communities. Their support services, including accommodation, are offered to a wide range of people, including the very young and those with dependencies and other medical and lifestyle challenges, including alcohol and drug dependencies.

There are also Student Halls located at 5-7 Westover Road which are occupied throughout the year.

Concerns

The area of Westover Road and Bournemouth's Lower Gardens, being located in the Town Centre, does unfortunately experience a significant amount of anti-social behaviour and low-level crime.

Throughout the Summer period in particular, Dorset Police work closely with our partners in the Youth service, BCP Council, and other organisations, such as the Street Pastors of Bournemouth, to tackle crime and disorder and to protect those most at risk of harm.

This risk is often complex and difficult to manage. Dorset Police, through *Operation Fireglow*, aim to target the youth-related crime and anti-social behaviour which is centred around the Lower Gardens. This youth-related crime will often be alcohol-related and serious in nature, leading to child sexual exploitation and strengthening of organised crime drug groups, known as County Lines. It is known that proxy-sales of alcohol from local off-licence premises increases the risk of young people being enticed into these groups.



The general Night-Time Economy environment is a further area of risk. Whilst Dorset Police continues to work with our partners in BCP Council to strengthen the Night-Time Economy through increased awareness of risks of violence targeted at women and girls, drink spiking and other concerns addressed through the Bournemouth Town Watch, one area of most concern is the availability of off-sales alcohol, promoting unsupervised consumption in public spaces that also experience vagrancy and street drinking.

This off-sales provision is often referred to as 'pre-loading', particularly amongst the student communities. The availability of more affordable alcohol from convenience stores encourages excess consumption in advance of attending conventional night time venues, increasing the vulnerability of customers and reducing the night time venues from managing consumption and welfare needs of individuals throughout the evening.

It is consistently the intention of Dorset Police and our partners to work with licence holders to improve the performance of licence premises and to ensure that they deliver provision which acts to the enhancement of the local community. There are already several outlets for off-sales alcohol available to the local community in this area.

To the West there is the Esso Service Station (10 minutes walk), Central Convenience Store (7 minutes walk) to the South-West and Tesco Express (5 minutes walk) to the North West of 14 Westover Road. To the North-East of Westover Road there is Old Christchurch Road with an array of premises open until late to provide convenience products, some of which offer alcohol as a provision.

Some of the premises above have been, and continue to be, associated with anti-social behaviour and crime due to their proximity to the Lower Gardens and the Night-Time Economy. Whilst Dorset Police and our partners work hard to reduce/resolve these concerns, the addition of a further alcohol provision in such a sensitive location is likely to significantly undermine our efforts, and investment, into reducing the crime and disorder in this area.

Available Outcomes to the Sub-Committee

To assist the members of the Sub-Committee, Dorset Police make the following submissions in relation to the available outcome options in respect of this Application for a Premises Licence -

Grant the Premises Licence as applied for

Dorset Police are of the view that taking no action is not a viable option. The Sub-Committee will hopefully agree that Dorset Police (and our partners) are currently engaged in a sustained effort to reduce the crime and disorder in this area through Operation Fireglow and are working closely with existing licensed premises to identify and reduce alcohol-related incidents which continue to have a significant demand on our valuable resources.

Modification of the Conditions of the Premises Licence it considers appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives

Dorset Police have received additional correspondence from the applicant's agent following the submission of the original application on the 26th September 2022 advising that they now intend to offer reduced hours and some additional conditions that they believe will mitigate the concerns of Dorset Police.

It is commendable that the applicant has offered conditions requiring CCTV, Incident Book, Staff Training, Reduced ABV products, implementation of Challenge 25 and other conditions to reduce the disturbance caused to local residents. Unfortunately, whilst these conditions are generally considered as 'good practice', they will not in this case mitigate sufficiently against the concerns that we have regarding the challenges being experienced by Dorset Police and our partners with crime and disorder in this area.

Dorset Police are unable to offer any conditions which we consider would sufficiently mitigate against these concerns.

Exclusion of a licensable activity from the scope of the Premises Licence

This licence applies for the following –

- Supply of Alcohol for consumption OFF the premises Monday – Sunday 0600 - 0300

Dorset Police have been advised that the applicant would be willing to reduce their operating hours to terminate at 0000hrs each day, however, this was during mediation and to our knowledge has not been formally amended to the application.

Dorset Police draw the attention of the Sub-Committee to the above concerns regarding the provision of alcohol. The exclusion of alcohol provision would effectively be equal to refusing the application.

Refuse to specify a person in the licence as the Designated Premises Supervisor

No concerns have been raised regarding the DPS proposed to justify any objection on these grounds.

Refuse the Application for a Premises Licence

Dorset Police support the view that this option should be a last resort for the Sub-Committee. Whilst fiscal issues are outside of the considerations of the Sub-Committee, Dorset Police consistently adopt a proportionate approach, wherever possible, to remain sensitive to commercial viability of businesses.

Dorset Police acknowledge the value that licensed premises add to communities as places of social and economic value, however, where the presence of a licensed premise is foreseen as being detrimental to a community, it is necessary to draw the attention of members of the Sub-Committee to this fact for their consideration.

Whilst Dorset Police are keen to support responsible and appropriate licensable activities, we remain of the view that this application for off-sales alcohol provision, given its location and the challenges faced in the area, should be refused for the reasons detailed above.

Response to further submission from the Applicant

In respect of the Letters of Support submitted by Mr Ramsay on behalf of his clients, Dorset Police respectfully ask that these letters are afforded extremely limited weighting by the Sub-Committee in determining the outcome of this matter.

Members of the Public, Businesses, Community Groups and Responsible Authorities are entitled to make representations in respect of any application submitted in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003. We are grateful for the time and effort taken by the Licensing Authority to manage valid and relevant representations, ensuring that they directly address the impact of the application against the Licensing Objectives.

These 'representations' do not tackle any of the concerns that have been raised in respect of the challenges that any licensee will face in Westover Road and furthermore, relate to the applicant's other premises in Poole, which has no relevance to this application.

Conclusion

Bournemouth Town Centre does not currently have a Cumulative Impact Area, however, despite the absence of such a policy, it remains of vital importance to ensure that new premises and those existing premises wishing to extend their licensable activities, do so whilst ensuring that they continue to promote the licensing objectives.

Dorset Police are firmly of the view, following a great deal of consideration, and some mediation with the applicant's agent, that the provision of off-sales alcohol, regardless of the time of day, is incompatible with this location. It will be extremely difficult, or indeed impossible, for the licence holder to support the objectives of several responsible authorities to reduce the crime and disorder currently associated with Bournemouth's Lower Gardens when they will be supplying alcohol for consumption to likely to take place in Bournemouth's Lower Gardens and other nearby crime hotspot areas.

Dorset Police do not intend to elaborate a great deal on the above during the Sub-Committee hearing, however, we will ensure our availability to answer and queries and provide any further clarification/support/advice to the Sub-Committee as required.