

## **Premises Licence: Betting: Adult Gaming Centre 519 Green Lanes N4 1AN**

I am writing as ward councillor for Harringay ward to object to this application for a gaming centre. I understand the Ladder Community Safety Partnership (LCSP) has submitted a representation on behalf of its members in the local community.

I am entirely opposed to having a second adult gaming centre on Green Lanes, and certainly to any establishment of this kind being open 24 hours a day, seven days per week. I believe this granting a licence for this would contravene key Licensing Objectives of the Gambling Act 2005:

1. Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder, or being used to support crime
2. Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed, or exploited by gambling

These are discussed below in the Green Lanes context.

The proposed AGC is located in the heart of Green Lanes, very close to all of the four existing betting shops, and the existing Adult Gaming Centre at 48 Grand Parade. Two are extremely close (at 507 Green Lanes and another opposite, at 12 Grand Parade, and contribute to a clustering of gambling premises. This seems to disregard the Council's concern about the proliferation and overconcentration of betting outlets, which has emerged as an important local issue (e.g. Development Management DPD p.77). Town Centres, such as Harringay Green Lanes, are particularly at risk because of this overconcentration. In the context of licensing, this application for a 24 hour/7 days a week centre could cause more criminal activity, greater risk for vulnerable adults, increased problem gambling – all relevant licensing issues.

In relation to crime and disorder, having premises with gaming machines provides an obvious target for irate punters who have lost money (criminal damage cases), while professional criminals or opportunist crime target both the machines and the cash in transit. Staff and innocent bystanders are also vulnerable. It should be remembered that many of the criminal damage cases are simply not reported. This is because betting outlets do not wish to be associated with too many such occurrences for fear that their licence may be called in for review. It is worth noting that criminal damage to machines is very common. A typical offence is committed out of anger and frustration when a punter loses his money: offenders are almost invariably male.

Links between crime and addiction are extremely well known and there is little doubt that some customers will be committing acquisitive crime in the local area to feed their addiction. Green Lanes area has for some time been the focus of a campaign to reduce burglary, including work by the Harringay Safer Neighbourhoods Team to improve security at vulnerable domestic properties throughout the Ladder roads in order to reduce the likelihood of burglary. I would be very concerned that having this gaming centre could encourage acquisitive crime. Harringay ward is already a well-known hot-spot for drug dealing, including Class A. As a result, all three of the Met police Ward priorities are based around drug dealing in conjunction with other criminal behaviour. There is a very legitimate concern that a 24/7 gambling outlet will act as a magnet for criminal activity, especially as this is already the case in similar locations e.g. near Turnpike Lane

Children and Vulnerable Persons. The Statement of Gambling Policy makes it clear that when determining an application to grant a Premises Licence the Council will have regard to the location of services for children and the need to protect vulnerable adults. All of these factors are relevant here.

The site of the proposed betting shop is between North and South Harringay Schools (Mattison and Falkland Roads respectively). There are also many other facilities for children nearby, for example in Cavendish Rd and Woodlands Park Rd. As they are local schools, most of the children will live in Harringay and St Ann's wards, in the residential streets of the Ladder and the Gardens. In addition, of course, there are many other children between the ages of 11 and 18 who live in the area. The LCSP has been told by many parents that they do not want their children to be over-exposed to ever-increasing numbers of gambling premises on their way to and from school, or to the shops in Green Lanes. Gambling premises, passed several times every day, mentally creates an impression that gambling is somehow only to be expected as a dominant presence in daily life. This is not the sort of environment in which parents should be forced to bring up their children.

There is an unusually high number of vulnerable adults in the area, because of the proximity to the extensive mental health care facilities at St Ann's Hospital; and the exceptional number of vulnerable adults living in care homes/supported living in the two wards adjacent to Green Lanes. Harringay ward in particular has one of the highest numbers of hostels of all 19 wards in the borough. In addition, there is also an unusually high number of vulnerable adults in the area because of the huge number of HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation). Harringay ward has the largest number of any ward in the Borough, with St Ann's not too far behind. The excessively high incidence of HMOs in the ward means it will be included in the Council's Selective Licensing Scheme planned for introduction later this year. The disproportionately high numbers of HMO/private sector dwellings is problematic in terms of: poor housing, environmental crime, Anti-Social Behaviour, and crime reported to the police.

Many former family houses have been sub-divided into large numbers of small units, which are frequently found to be homes for vulnerable adults who have nowhere else to go and who may be attracted by the 24 hour centre. It is well-documented that vulnerable adults can be harmed by addiction, and slot machines are recognised as highly addictive. This application, if successful increases the opportunity to attract vulnerable people by offering a gambling facility at very late hours when no such venue is currently open anywhere else in Green Lanes. GamCare's Annual Reports reveal that their callers seeking help were largely male, and that the key age-group was 18-35 years old - the very group which are above-average in numbers in the two wards either side of Green Lanes, often single, living in accommodation such as HMOs (see above). Thanks to the LCSP we know that this is based on latest census returns which, it is recognised, are an underestimate in this case, because many such vulnerable adults simply do not fill in their returns.

For these reasons I strongly oppose this application and urge the committee to reject it.

Zena Brabazon  
Cllr, Harringay ward