

## **Objection to Licence Application – The Opens Arms in Finsbury Park**

Sent on 8 April 2021 by email to: [licensing@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@haringey.gov.uk)

On the 5 February I received an email from Haringey Council informing me that:

“The Open Arms is a performance-led pop-up occupying Finsbury Park for summer 2021. As a recipient of the Arts Council England’s ‘Culture Recovery Grant’, we will be looking to bring to life an activation that celebrates and supports the rich pool of talent living within the borough. Essentially we providing a stage for local performance in the midst of rapid venue closures. Benefit to local community: The Open arms will be made for the community and give back directly into that community through a mixture of employment opportunities, through a new inspiring environment and donations to various community groups and organisations within the borough. Summer apprentice in Event production. Summer Internship in Event Booking. % of revenue / proceeds of F&B to be donated to local organisations. Collection points for chosen charity. Provide a stage and environment for local performers.”

As you can see from above description of these events, there was no obvious mention of alcohol being sold and consumed at this event. If there had been, I would have made a representation to Haringey Council objecting to it.

So I am now making a representation on behalf of the Islington Finsbury Park Ward Cllrs to Haringey Council to object to the licence application for the sale and consumption of alcohol, etc. both on and off the premises, at The Open Arms events being held in Finsbury Park from 17 May to 17 September.

We are aware that quite a number of other local organisations and individuals have also made objections to Haringey Council about this licence application, so we would therefore request that the council’s licensing committee should hear and make the decision on this application, at which objectors should be allowed to make oral representations.

I can see that in relation to this licence application, that at the Haringey Council Cabinet Member Signing meeting held on 31 March:

“It was noted that there would be high demand for people to attend outdoor events and that any performances would not be ticketed. The Cabinet Member asked how the proposals would be managed. The Events and Partnerships Manager explained that officers did not object to having a flexible, non-ticketed event. It was added that, specifics as to how this would be managed would be determined through the Premises Licence application. The Events and Partnerships Manager highlighted that people were permitted to bring alcohol into the park from any location, provided this did not constitute a nuisance. Therefore, it was not considered that the ability to sell alcohol for consumption on site or off site would have a detrimental effect within the park.”

I really do think that the Haringey Council licensing committee should reflect very carefully on whether these type of events are conducive to the public good and can be

run safely. From the type of very loose management arrangements described above, I do not think they would be conducive to the public good as there is a strong possibility that they will be unsafe and would not therefore meet or satisfy the terms of Haringey Council's licensing objectives (see below for details). After all these events would be: non-ticketed and open to all the public regardless of age; in a park that is not locked in the evening when it is dark; with the sale of alcohol for consumption both on and off the premises; and with people allowed to bring their own alcohol into the park.

The Open Arms licence application would allow the sale and consumption of alcohol, accompanied by live amplified music, five days a week (Wednesday to Sunday) from 12 noon to 9pm each day. And this very high number of events would be held in the park from 17 May to 17 September 2021. This would be like having another pub in the park. Which is especially a concern given the area proposed for the events is very near Mackenzie Gardens, not far away from the children's play area in the park.

The summer period is when people want to enjoy peaceful outdoor green open spaces (especially given Covid-19 and the need for social distancing), and when children want and need to play in a clean and green outdoor environment. Finsbury Park is situated in a densely-populated, deprived inner-city area, and the park is therefore essential for the mental and physical well-being of people as has been proven during the Covid-19 lockdowns last year and this year. Both national and local government policy promotes physical activity in accessible green spaces as essential for good health and wellbeing. The use of the park here contradicts that policy objective.

Even in the areas of the park away from where these events are proposed, the noise and pollution from machinery being used for these events is not conducive to people trying to have some peace and quiet in the park. The negative impact on the park of 200 people using this area, and the potential for many others queuing up for the events, for such a long period of time leads to degradation of the environment in the park for long after the events cease. And the local people suffer from this degradation of the park.

### Public Safety

Are these events in the park fenced off? We note the events are non-ticked, open to the general public regardless of age. If the space is unsecured, with free access to the alcohol bar/s, how will the Licensing Authority check that there is no sale to minors? Also, how will crowd control be managed in such a lightly regulated environment? Who will police access to the events to ensure people's behaviour is conducive to public safety?

The events provide the potential for hundreds of extra people roaming around the park during the day-time and into the evening. Many of whom will be likely to have consumed alcohol, increasing the risks of crime and anti-social behaviour both inside and outside the park in the surrounding area.

Finsbury Park is unfortunately already a crime and ASB hotspot, with a long and persistent history for drug dealing and violence (including a murder) towards people,

including harassment and sexual assault of women and girls, which despite police and local authority interventions, still persists. There is a need to continue efforts to reduce crime and ASB in the park, not add to it by holding events such as these which encourage excessive consumption of alcohol. In relation to this, I would point out that Islington Council has designated the Finsbury Park Ward area that abuts the park as a Cumulative Impact Area. Within this area the high level of alcohol outlets that already exist mean that licence applicants are expected to “comprehensively demonstrate why a new or varied licence will not add to the cumulative impact” in the area. I do wonder what Haringey Council’s position is on cumulative impacts of alcohol licence sales and consumption in and around Finsbury Park?

To my knowledge the park is not locked at night, and therefore given its large size this means there is a risk of crime and ASB in secluded spaces within the park during the hours of darkness; but equally this is also a risk during the daytime hours; and both will likely be exacerbated by alcohol consumption in the park

I am informed that there are currently discussions around whether to close the park at night for safety reasons. And therefore allowing such events as these fly in the face of existing public concerns expressed, including in the Islington Tribune local paper recently.

Given the licence application for alcohol sales at these events in the park, including alcohol sales for off-site consumption, we are very concerned that this could result in intoxicated individuals spilling out onto surrounding streets and transport hubs, including Seven Sisters Road and Blackstock Road with the latter already suffering from its own ASB and crime problems. It is also the case that previous events in the park resulted in thefts at local shops.

### Prevention of Public Nuisance

The local infrastructure in the park will be negatively impacted, to the detriment of the general public. This was the case following previous events held in the park, with damage to plants, the grass and the park infrastructure.

There would be extra pressure placed upon already limited public transport, as many more people come and go in the park. And litter in and around the park is likely to be increased by these events.

The duration of these events will wipe out a quiet summer in this park for local families, a park in Haringey but built for the general public, a rightly and much-lauded claim by Haringey Council in its anniversary booklet.

### Prevention of Crime and Disorder

Please see comments and objections on prevention of crime and disorder under Public Safety heading above.

## Protection of Children from Harm

The proposed site is separated from the children's playground by little more than the length of the Mackenzie Garden. This in itself is disturbing, given the likelihood of children experiencing the behaviours of intoxicated individuals in their close vicinity. But also, how will the Licensing Authority ensure that there is no sale of alcohol to minors at these events?

This licence application is for events covering a period when many young people have exams. There will be a real risk of noise pollution, from loudspeakers and people, as has happened during previous events in the park. The details published are sparse, and we have yet to see the terms and conditions about noise from any live amplified music planned for the events; and what impact they will have on people in the park and in the surrounding area.

It is a concern that there will be ASB and crime from drunken revellers over a long period each afternoon and evening, separated from children playing by only a short distance. This is wholly unacceptable in an area of deprivation, where many local children do not have gardens to relax in, and the park is so popular with local families. Many families cannot afford to go away for holidays to relax: the park is key for their well-being.

## Summary

In summary we urge that Haringey Council to reject this licence application in the interests of the health, safety, peace and well-being of the general public who rely on the accessibility of the park for safe and peaceful recreation. Our objections as laid out above are on the grounds of: Public Safety, Prevention of Public Nuisance, Prevention of Crime and Disorder and Protection of Children from Harm.

Regards,

Cllr Gary Heather, Finsbury Park Ward, Islington