

Licensing Sub-Committee
5 August 2016 at 2.30 pm

Additional information submitted by
Cllr Geraldine Stanford
on 25 July 2016

LICENSING HEARING – Mitcham News

I am unable to attend the hearing, so submit the following to support my opposition to granting a license to Mitcham News, on the grounds that it is likely to contribute to Crime and Disorder, and Public Nuisance in the surrounding area.

Over the past few years the proliferation of outlets selling alcohol in Mitcham, particularly in the town centre, has risen significantly. This has caused a rise in the number of street drinkers, who gather in various public areas (Fair Green, Three Kings Pond in particular) and cause problems with antisocial behaviour, fighting, littering, urinating in public spaces and nearby residents gardens etc. For this reason, Merton Council instigated a Controlled Drinking Zone across the borough about 5 years ago, followed by a Cumulative Impact Zone in Mitcham to limit the amount of alcohol outlets.

My ward – Figges Marsh – includes the town centre area around the Fair Green, plus several shopping parades in the four main roads running through the centre. The Fair Green, where Mitcham News is, already has numerous outlets selling alcohol. This is exacerbated by 4 Betting Shops around the Fair Green alone – some of which remain open in the evenings, so users of the betting shops, which do not allow alcohol on the premises, pop into nearby shops to purchase drink and consume it outside on the Fair Green causing the problems mentioned above. This continues into the evening which residents returning to their homes at night find unpleasant and intimidating.

There are several primary schools in the vicinity of the Fair Green, so there are always many children passing through the centre on their way to and from school. So they regularly see what's going on with street drinkers, which is not very pleasant.

Over the past couple of years, the Council has spent a great deal of money regenerating Mitcham town centre for the benefit of residents and businesses alike, so don't want to see this investment wasted. I note there are no representations from residents, but this is because they direct their complaints through me and expect me to represent them. I also liaise with Neighbourhood Watch coordinators and local businesses have also approached me to complain about the street drinkers who make the area look unattractive so deters visitors from using their shops. So I do represent a wide body of people.

Apart from the change in drinking habits of the general public over the past few years, the proliferation of alcohol outlets has also impacted on local pubs over the years. We have lost 8 pubs within a quarter mile radius of the town centre over the past 10 years, and of the 4 left – one is in the process of selling up, also citing the proliferation of alcohol outlets nearby selling cheap drink, and the other 3 are struggling to survive.

I have no issue with the supermarket chains selling alcohol – these are generally well managed organisations with measures in place to ensure terms and conditions of licences are strictly controlled. Likewise with several reputable restaurants nearby. Of course, small retail outlets are trying to make a profit like anyone else

which is understandable. But it is also the case that some of these small outlets, often staffed by only one person, become targets for people obtaining alcohol by shoplifting or intimidation, and shopkeepers are loathe to report these incidents for fear of a brick through their window or something worse.

I have been working with the Police for many years now to tackle the problems caused by alcohol being more freely available, and the increase in street drinking, which is why they were supportive of a Cumulative Impact Zone being implemented in Mitcham. So I have nothing specifically against Mitcham News – I intend to oppose any new licensing applications to sell alcohol in Mitcham, as we have more than enough already.

Cllr Geraldine Stanford
Figges Marsh Ward.

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