

West Midlands Police

Objections to an application for a new licensed premises to be known as 'Chippers@ 41A-42 High Street Stourbridge, DY8 1DA

The application is made on behalf of Christopher Jeremy Watson and Stephen Peters and relates to a new premises licence to be issued for the above mentioned premises where the following Licensable Activities will be allowed to take place,

- 1) Supply of Alcohol**
- 2) Late Night refreshment**
- 3) Dancing**
- 4) Making Music**
- 5) Performance of dance**
- 6) Recorded music**
- 7) Live music**
- 8) Showing of Films**

The times requested for these activities are Monday to Sunday 1200hours till 0200hours each day with a 30 minutes period at the end of these activities resulting in the public being allowed to remain on the premises until 02.30 hours each morning.

The application makes reference to the fact that the proposed premises is situated within the cumulative impact area within Stourbridge Town Centre

Following this application West Midlands Police would like to make an objection to the application based upon upholding the licensing objectives as outlined in the licensing Act 2003, the main focus being on the prevention of Crime and Disorder, Public safety and the prevention of public nuisance.

The premises is located in a Cumulative Impact Policy area, the proposed operating schedule does recognise this fact however the conditions proposed are what would be expected to be reasonable conditions for any 'night club' type premises and does not show in any way how this premises would not have an adverse effect on the cumulative impact policy

Since 2004 Stourbridge Town Centre has developed into the most popular night time centre in Dudley Borough and one of the most popular for the Black Country. It houses about 60 pubs and bars within a 1 mile radius of the Town Centre, many on the outskirts act as feeder pubs which are utilised earlier in the evening before customers move into the centre. The main cluster of the bars are situated on the High Street, this is also where many of the ATM machines, and late night takeaways are situated, together with the Taxi rank, and access to the bus station.

A police study of Stourbridge Town at the beginning of 2006/7 revealed that violent crime had more than doubled over a 5 year period up to May 2005/2006. In 2006 Stourbridge Town Centre was identified as having the highest rate of violent crime in all of Dudley MBC's night time economy centres.

Due to the saturation of the late night bars, on 16th October 2006 a special policy regarding cumulative impact on Stourbridge Town centre was approved.

Since the introduction of the cumulative impact policy Stourbridge has seen a year on year reduction in violent crime reaching a low of 12% in the year 2008 to 2009

Chippers would be situated directly within this cluster and would be in close proximity to several; existing establishment that are able to operate until similar hours and provide similar activities. Examples being Lloyds Bar, Que Pasa, Heaven, The Mitre and The Bell.

The basis of these objections are made purely on the basis of the Cumulative Impact effect and not on any specific issues caused by the applicant individually. The proposed increase in licensed premises in an area where existing premises can expect to be working to capacity would increase significantly the cumulative impact on Stourbridge town Centre.

There is considerable competition between licensed traders within this area and it is inevitable that if this application was successful that there would be similar requests and in order for rivals to re gain their competitive edge. This would undermine the Cumulative Impact Policy and its current success.

The effect of this policy is to create a rebuttable presumption that applications for new premises licences or variations that are likely to add to the existing cumulative impact will normally be refused unless the applicant can demonstrate in their operating schedule that there will be no negative cumulative impact on one or more of the licensing objectives. (Section 13.29 `Amended Guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003)

The Police together with partners have adopted special measures to deal with crime, disorder and anti social behaviour within this area. This includes substantial additional resources particularly at weekends (Operation Flent), the introduction of CCTV, pub watch organisation, road closures, taxi marshalling and encouragement of premises to reduce the number of drinks promotions and happy hours. The aims of the plan are that customers and visitors to Stourbridge have a safe evening, the incidences of public disorder are reduced and thus violent crime and the adverse impact that the night time economy has on residents is minimised.

One of the significant strands of this is to ensure that people are able to leave the High Street area safely and in good time, to this end as many leave by taxis and private hire vehicles the plan involves the use of taxi marshals. The marshals assist in this process; this not only helps in getting persons away effectively and efficiently but reduces the arguments and disputes that inevitably occur between drunken people in queues for taxis.

It is not known for how much longer the taxi Marshalls will be able to continue to operate due to potential funding issues as this has been funded totally from money from The Police, Local Authority and Crime Prevention Partnerships but with the current financial climate there is a strong possibility that the continued funding will not be available

The effect upon approval of this application will be to;

1. Increase the quantity of people on the streets post 230am looking for places to obtain take away food, most of these will be in some state of inebriation and many will be very drunk.
2. Increase post 2.30am the number of people under the influence of alcohol on the streets waiting for taxis in a non controlled environment unless the taxi marshalling scheme was extended.
3. Disturbance to residents from persons making their way home would be later and increased if transport home could not be found. Many of the complaints we receive are from members of the public who live either in the immediate vicinity or on routes home who are disturbed by the noise and nuisance caused.
4. Pave the way for applications from other premises and potentially existing premises to extend their hours, so that they are able to maintain their competitive edge. (this would include both bar type premises and late night refreshment houses)
5. A detailed operation has been developed by the Police and partners to manage the Stourbridge night time economy, this operation has taken time and much work by the individuals involved to develop and is very resource intensive. The main aims to ensure that violent crime and disturbance to members of the public is reduced and public safety concerns are addressed. It works along side the CIP and has been extremely successful. If this application was successful this operation would need to be lengthened further into the morning and would put pressure on all the partners to maintain the effective management of the night time economy in Stourbridge that has been achieved.

It is the view of the Police that these factors would increase the Cumulative Impact on Stourbridge.

The applicant has not specifically indicated in their operating schedule that there will be no negative cumulative impact on one or more of the licensing objectives and have not suggested any ways in which they could counter any possible increase.

On that basis WMP would request that this application should be refused.

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