

The Bell Hotel (Chaos)

Application to vary licensable activities to 0400hrs Fri-Sat and to 0300hrs Sun. To remove standard conditions 1 to 48 under the heading "Conditions" on the licence, and to remove the occupancy limit (condition 7 -Crime & Disorder) as a condition of the licence.

In reply to the above application to vary the premises licence West Midlands Police are of the opinion that the licensing objectives in relation to the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety and the prevention of public nuisance will be undermined.

West Midlands Police intend to make representations based on those licensing objectives that the intended variation will undermine the Special Policy regarding Cumulative Impact in Stourbridge Town centre.

The current licensable hours for the premises were granted with the changes in the licensing law but to date, as far as research can show these hours have not been fully used. Until recently the premises was used as a public house and was rarely open in the evenings apart from occasional private functions. As it stood the premises had no impact on crime and disorder on Stourbridge Town.

The current "re-invention" of the premises as a late night venue maximising the current hours for licensable activities will have the same effect on crime and disorder statistics as would a new venue opening. It is intended by opposing the variation that the Cumulative Impact on Stourbridge Town will be limited.

Analysis of violent crime statistics within Stourbridge Town Centre shows Friday to Sunday as the peak days for offending within this area. Violent crime in Stourbridge used to account for 18.2% of all violence on the Dudley South policing area. Since the introduction of a Cumulative Impact Policy Stourbridge has seen a year on year reduction in violent crime since reaching a low of 12.8% last year and is on course to match, if not exceed that at the end of 2009. Statistics show that with any change with the night time economy such as a new premises opening or an old one closing has an effect with violent crime rising or falling accordingly. The alteration of the recent profile of the Bell Hotel is predicted to impact on violent crime, however a 2am licence is in place and it is only by keeping the

current opening hours in place that the impact on violent crime figures can be minimised.

It has been noted that there is great competition between the licensed traders in Stourbridge and there is close scrutiny of each others business. It is certain that should the requested variation be granted others will follow such is the need to compete with rival business's.

After 0100hrs taxi's form the main mode of transport from Stourbridge Town Centre. At present we have taxi marshals who assist in stopping unauthorised vehicles coming into the High Street and ease the flow of taxi's collecting revellers for their journey home. Prior to the implementation of taxi marshals traffic would come to a standstill with vehicles fighting for trade and roads becoming blocked, causing congestion, general confusion and a danger to pedestrians. Funding for this service is limited. Should the hours for licensable activities extend beyond that for which funding is available we would resort to the position described prior to taxi marshalling.

The later disorder, noise and traffic in the area must be considered. Stourbridge town is also a residential area with residents living side by side with the bars and late night refreshment houses. It is essential that the quality of life for those residents is maintained.

In respect of Conditions 1-48 under the heading "Conditions" on the licence, West Midlands Police is of the opinion that most of the conditions are covered by current health and safety legislation and have no objections to their being removed with the exception of conditions 40 and 45 which relate to the control of noise from the premises which could cause a nuisance to occupants of the neighbourhood.

In conclusion, I have been informed that the motivation from the applicants for the variation is to compete with similar premises in Wolverhampton and Birmingham. Stourbridge is a market town and the introduction of a metropolis style night time economy can only impact on the stability currently in place in maintaining lower crime and disorder figures. Maintaining public safety depends on keeping the current licensing hours in place, along with the joint policies that make Stourbridge Town Centre a reassuring place for the law abiding, and to deter those that seek to bring disorder and violence to the area.

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