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SPEEN PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Ruth Jones, 7 Horse Guards Way, Thatcham, Berkshire, RG19 4PE
E-mail: clerk@speen.gov.uk or Telephone: 07584435656

West Berkshire District Council
Property & Public Protection
Environmental Health (Licensing)
Faraday Road
Newbury
RG14 2AF



Thursday 21st July 2011

Re: Application 11/000973/LON The Starting Gate, 75 Brummell Road, Speen, Newbury, RG14 1SG

Variation to a premises licence under the Licensing Act 2003

Speen Parish Council wishes to make the following representation:

The Council objects to the application to extend the hours for the sale of alcohol, live music, recorded music, karaoke and the provision of late night refreshments, along with the application to permit the facilities for dancing on the grounds that it would have an adverse effect on crime and disorder, public safety and public nuisance.

The Starting Gate Public House is situated at the junction of Brummell Road and the A4. It backs onto a large residential area, which is referred to as Speen Estate, and is located directly opposite Robert Sandilands Primary School. Across the A4 is another residential area comprising Speen Lodge Court, Speen Lane, Speen Place, Speen Hill Court, Battle Close and Pound Lane. There are a large number of elderly residents within this community and the Parish Council is aware that the Licensing Authority should consider the social demographic characteristics of the community. Speen Parish Council does not think this is a suitable venue for an extension of hours or for the provision of a dance licence.

Alcohol related crime has a major impact on the quality of people's lives. There are already several areas within that part of the Parish of Speen and the neighbouring roads that come under Newbury Town Council, which have been highlighted as areas of concern by the Parish Council, Speen Shaw & Donnington Neighbourhood Action Group and the Neighbourhood Police Team:

1. The newly provided children's play area in Digby Road Recreation Ground (just the other side of Robert Sandilands School) has been subjected to several incidents of late night vandalism. Witnesses have seen young men in the park at around 11.30 p.m., which is the current closing time for the Starting Gate. Thames Valley Police have been unable to allocate more resources to monitoring the park late at night. Speen has one PCSO and one PC to cover the whole area of Speen, Shaw &

Donnington and our PC and PCSO often have to cover areas in Newbury Town further reducing our Police coverage.

2. Almost 30 cars have been vandalised late at night in Speen Lodge Court over the past 12 -18 months. The Neighbourhood Police Team is currently carrying out a police operation in the area. The vandalism has constituted damage to tyres with nails. The residents are thinking of trying to raise the money to pay for CCTV coverage.

3. Kersey Crescent is another priority area because of the high incidents of anti-social behaviour, public nuisance and crime. Requests by PCSO Adrian Coggins for the loan of CCTV have been turned down this year as this limited resource is already in use in other areas. This request followed a series of events of car windows being smashed, a car being overturned and two violent assaults taking place in Kersey Crescent late at night.

4. Speen Recreation Ground has recently suffered from fire damage to the artificial basketball surface.

5. There is a longstanding problem of late night ASB and noise in Goldwell Park. Residents have had fences damaged and items stolen and have considered CCTV which they would also need to fund themselves.

Speen Parish Council has become so concerned about anti-social behaviour and public nuisance within the Parish that, starting in April this year, it now funds through the precept a Neighbourhood Warden for 18 hours a week.

The introduction of a licence for dancing would only serve to aggravate the problems already being experienced by the local community. It is well known that music levels tend to increase as an event progresses. Dance and disco music in particular rely on a strong bass beat, which can create a booming noise in neighbouring premises. Loud music can be particularly problematic at night, as low frequency noise (bass) can often be heard some distance from the noise source. The original application for a licence under the Licensing Act 2003 includes details of the steps that the Starting Gate will take to promote the four licensing objectives but obviously does not include anything particularly pertaining to dance. What new steps would be put in place to address the four objectives in relation to dancing?

It is not only people and music that cause a disturbance. Vehicles can also create noise through stereos, slamming doors, revving engines, the horn or screeching tyres for example. Customers would be leaving the premises either very late at night or in the early hours of the morning, considerably increasing the disturbance and nuisance residents already suffer at present.

Within that original application it is stated that the public house is a detached property with no adjoining neighbours, which means that the noise transference is minimised. It may be a detached property, but as previously stated it is situated very close to a residential area. It also states that there is no other pub in the vicinity. The Hare & Hounds is only about 500 metres further west along the A4, resulting in a cumulative effect on noise, nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

About a hundred metres to the west of the Starting Gate and across the A4 is a Shell Garage. They have a sign up which states that they are situated in a residential area and therefore requesting that customers keep quiet!

When introducing the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Bill into the House of Commons the Home Secretary, Theresa May, stated that:

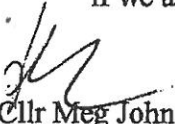
“The benefits promised by the 24 hour drinking “café culture” have failed to materialize and in its place we have seen an increase in the number of alcohol related incidents and drink-fuelled crime and disorder”. The present Government is committed to rebalancing the Licensing Act 2003 in favour of local communities.

Speen Parish Council consider that it is not unreasonable to request that the opening hours at the Starting Gate should be restricted to the current hours, and that dancing should not be permitted. The local residents should not have to suffer from the negative impact of noise, nuisance, crime and disorder even longer into the small hours of the morning than they do already.

We ask the Licensing Authority as well to bear in mind that when the Starting Gate was visited by myself and two other Councillors on the afternoon of 19th July there were no notices to be seen on the external perimeter of the premises abutting the highway, although there was a notice inside a window of the premises facing the car park. The guidance notes issued by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport states that notices must be placed every 50 metres on the external perimeter.

In conclusion, we would ask the Licensing Authority to bear in mind that Speen Parish Council only received notification of this application by e-mail timed and dated 16.46 on Thursday 14th July. It informed us that representations had to be received no later than 22nd July, giving us 8 days in which to respond. The Guidance for Interested Parties from the DCMS states that interested parties should have 28 consecutive days from the day after the day on which the application was given to make representations. This means that the Licensing Authority must have received the application on 24th June, 18 days before Speen Parish Council received the notification. As a result the Council has had a very limited time in which to respond or gather information. For instance:

- a) We understand that the land upon which the Starting Gate is situated is actually owned by West Berkshire Council and we would like to be able to ensure that this application to vary the licence does not contravene any of the terms and conditions of the lease agreement.
- b) The original application stated that regular noise monitoring is undertaken. We would like to know who has monitored this, when and how frequently and if we are permitted to view the results of the monitoring?


Cllr Meg John
Chair
Speen Parish Council