



Brent Licensing Team
Brent Council

Harlesden Town Centre Team
Harlesden Police station
76 Craven Park
Harlesden
NW10 8RJ

Telephone: 0208 733 3835

Email:

www.met.police.uk

Your ref: Palm Island Lounge -

Application: 27896

Our ref: Representation

02/05/2023

Dear Licensing,

Re, licensing application;

Palm Island Lounge
1 Craven Park Road
London
NW10 8SE

I am the police Inspector of Harlesden Town Centre Team. I have over 19 years' service. Prior to my appointment I was the Learning & Development Inspector for NW-BCU, this entailed training new Constables and delivering a new recruitment pathway, previous to this I worked as a Duty Officer on an Emergency Response Team in Hillingdon as well as being a Safer Neighbourhood Sergeant for three wards in Hammersmith and Fulham, previous to this St Margaret's Ward Sergeant in Richmond Borough, Safer Transport Command, MSC Volunteers and other specialist roles including firearms.

My team was newly created and launched on 14th February 2022 to help improve trust and confidence in the police, reduce violence, violence against women and girls and to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour in Harlesden town centre. During the first 8 weeks of operation the team had achieved a 9.2% reduction in overall crime in the town centre and ASB related calls to High Street, Harlesden which is the focal point of the town centre reduced by 90%.

We know from these results and our increased visibility in the town centre, the community are informing us of the difference they are seeing and the fact that they are feeling safer to walk the streets. The chair of Harlesden Safer Neighbourhood Panel has said much the same after speaking with many community members.

In my role as Town Centre Team Inspector I am expected to do everything in my power to help the residents and community of Harlesden in reducing ASB, violence, drug dealing, licensing issues and to use various problem solving tools and initiatives to do this.

As you may know, formerly Vybz Bar before being renamed to Palm Island Lounge was a persistent problem in the town centre for residents, businesses and the police. The issues had been taking place for several years and were increasing the levels of Anti-Social Behaviour, violence with injury and general disorder. After my teams intervention the venue was closed down for a total of 6 months and had its alcohol licence revoked.

After the closure of the premises we saw a decrease in violence with injury calls to the immediate area around the venue and complaints of ASB ceased. We received only positive comments about the closure and no one came forward supporting the re-opening of the venue.

There are still at least two main drug dealing areas on Craven Park Road and High Street, these straddle Palm Island Lounge. These groups have been causing a misery to residents and businesses for some time, and we are looking to make the environment as hostile as possible for them to operate in. Having Palm Island Lounge reopen will just continue to fuel this activity even further and give them a new supply of customers, especially if the premises was open until 4am, where there are limited police resources available and if any ASB/disorder takes place it would place pressure on the response teams to attend and deal.

The demand on Brent's police response team is already immense, with most days having 30-50 calls unanswered. If the venue were to reopen, there will be incidents of serious disorder and likely the same groups of people who previously attended will no doubt return to the venue. During several incidents of assaults causing GBH including a stabbing, officers often had to put crime scenes in place which had to be staffed by more officers and sometimes were in place for several days. This would put further pressure on the response teams and disrupt the local residents and businesses.

We received complaints from local residents living in close proximity to Vybz Bar and from business owners who are very close to the venue which is in-between a row of shops and not in an isolated area. The reopening of this venue would seriously impact the lives and wellbeing of the residents in the immediate vicinity of the venue, and regardless of any attempt to install sound proofing there will always be associated noise and disorder outside the venue.

We have had complaints from businesses that they fear any reopening of the venue will mean a return of the issues previously experienced with one business owner stating;

"It has been a bit a lot better on weekends without the broken bottles, empty cans and food boxes, not forgetting the urine/faeces in doorways, blood on the pavements, Police cordon at our busiest times i.e. weekends, plus loud music from vehicles and mobile DJs on scooters. The street fights were a regular feature"

Harlesden Town Centre is a hotspot for street drinking, with a current Public Spaces Protection Order in force. This is to combat the persistent ASB problem that is associated with this activity. Extensive work has gone into this order, as well as licence visits and conditions on local businesses selling alcohol but we still struggle to contain this issue. A further licenced premises open until 4am would only fuel this behaviour and go against all the work that has been completed to try and curb this important issue.

Due to the high levels of ASB in the town centre, the team have obtained and implemented over six open spaces Closure Orders. These orders were necessary due to the serious ongoing ASB in the street, at areas near to Palm Island Lounge. These orders gave officers powers to arrest if people were in a certain area and are designed to reduce ASB. Considering that Harlesden town centre has the highest congregation of approved open spaces Closure Orders in the whole of London and believed country, it would be completely irresponsible to allow Palm Island Lounge to reopen in the midst of this Anti-Social Behaviour Legislation being used and approved by Magistrates Courts to reduce and prevent ASB.

Harlesden Town Centre is just not equipped or suited to contain another nightclub, there is just not the infrastructure, police resources, community will to have one reopen. There is also concern over the new size of the venue, with a new purpose built wooden room filling the entire rear garden of the premises where "only smoking was previously allowed" means the venue's capacity has doubled or even tripled.

There are serious doubts about the new owner and manager, who we still believe have contact with the previous owner/manager and are not convinced that the plans and promises made by them will be upheld.

Considering that in breach of the then in force Closure Order, the owner/manager allowed builders to enter the closed venue to start building the rear structure when they were aware that only "maintenance work" was allowed as well as questions over their planning permission.

I am also concerned that the manager has mentioned in a response to a representation that they "will engage with a security firm", concerns me greatly, the fact that they have built an entire structure in the garden and have yet to consult with any security firms, to me shows that security of their venue is a second thought.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Andy Le Geyt', with a date '11/10/20' written below it.

Andy Le Geyt
Inspector
Harlesden Town Centre Team