

From: Patel, Councillor Mili

Sent: Monday, June 10, 2024 9:42 PM

To: Business Licence

Cc: Kelcher, Councillor Matt; Chan, Councillor Jumbo; Chappell, Councillor Elliot; Rubin, Councillor Jake; Donnelly-Jackson, Councillor Fleur

Subject: Application Number: 31723

On behalf of the Harlesden and Kensal Green ward councillors, and also the Roundwood ward councillors, I am writing to lodge a joint objection to the application by Merkur Slots for a Bingo Club Premises Licence.

We object to this application because we believe it contravenes the Council's four licencing objections:

1) Preventing crime and disorder

Harlesden is a location that is already saturated with betting shops, bingo halls and adult gaming centres. On a six-hundred-meter stretch from Craven Park Road to Harlesden High Street there is currently a total of six gambling premises, with potential for more to come. An additional adult gaming centre is not needed and would further cluster the high street.

Evidence has demonstrated that the public health and community safety impacts of gambling are often exacerbated in areas in which clusters of betting shops are located. This means that vulnerable residents are often targeted, anti-social behaviour is increased, and the high street is further impacted.

Increasing the density of Harlesden's gambling cluster will only divert further resources from stretched policing budgets. This is why our dedicated Harlesden Police Force have objected to further gambling premises being opened whenever applications have come up.

2) Public Health

A stones-throw away from 67 High Street is a homeless shelter. The homeless charity, Crisis, have submitted objections against these types of applications. The negative social, economic, and public health impacts of gambling are well documented.

In the Council's Statement of Principles for Gambling, section 4.5 outlines the importance of protecting vulnerable adults. Within the guidance a persons 'situation' is highlighted as needing to be considered, this includes if the individual 'is experiencing financial difficulties, is homeless, is suffering from domestic or financial abuse, has caring responsibilities, experiences a life change or sudden change in circumstances.'

An additional adult gaming centre would, in our view as local representatives, put already vulnerable people at further risk. Moreover, in addition to the homeless shelter, Harlesden is an area with high levels of poverty and deprivation as identified by the Brent Poverty Commission. Granting this application would therefore undermine the Council's efforts to safeguard vulnerable adults.

3) Public Safety

The saturation of betting shops and gambling premises also increases the likelihood of crime within the area. Harlesden High Street already has high levels of anti-social behaviour, and an additional adult gaming centre could increase this level and attract further illicit and anti-social activities.

A study from nearby Ealing Council explored crime and disorder in relation to gambling premises and found that: 'as well as reported crime in betting premises being much higher than the controls, there was a clear and statistically significant increase in crime in the vicinity of betting shops, with the greatest correlations at the closest distances from the premises.'

We are clear that public safety in our two wards would be undermined if this application were to go through.

4) Protecting Children from Harm

Harlesden High Street is a known area for young people to congregate, particularly after school.

Whilst Merkur Slots outline that they operate a strict over-18 policy, the proliferation of gambling premises and the consistent visible exposure to them on the high street is likely to increase interest in them and potentially encourage young people to explore gambling opportunities either illegally or when they are of age.

We have a duty to ensure that young people are aware of the impacts of gambling. We should follow the principles of Brent's groundbreaking policy which prevents new fast food outlets opening in close proximity to schools and also prevent gambling sites clustering in these areas.

We believe that, for all these reasons the application is in contravention of Brent's licencing objectives and should be rejected by the committee.

Cllr Mili Patel

Deputy Leader of Brent Council

Labour Councillor for Harlesden and Kensal Green Ward