

[REDACTED]

Dear License Committee, I am writing to formally respond to the Merkur Slots Application at 263–265 Neasden Lane application number 33757 for a Bingo Club Premises Licence/Gambling Premises Licence New Application. My constituency of Brent East has been disproportionately impacted by problem gambling with betting shops and adult gaming centres planted amidst our most vulnerable and deprived communities, impacting those who can least afford it. According to Brent Council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), the borough's problem gambling rate is 6.2%, which is over double the national average. Additionally, gambling-related harm costs the borough an estimated £14.3 million annually. Anti-social behaviour linked to loitering outside gambling shops is extremely problematic and I see this in casework I receive year-round. The liberalisation of gambling legislation as introduced in the Gambling Act 2005 has been a serious failure for communities and this application just highlights the serious problems and I implore the Planning Inspectorate to take serious action and refuse the application. There is already a proliferation of gambling shops and adult gaming centres in my constituency, with three betting shops already within 100 metres of the proposed site. We know already that they have a propensity to cluster in poorer communities, which are more susceptible to gambling harm due to the hope that a big win will help them out of their situation. It is deeply concerning that further details regarding the building have not been supplied. This is a strong community, and it is being blighted by these shops, whose owners hold the area in complete contempt and disregard. The fact that the application contains few details does not surprise me. I wrote to 7,000 households in Brent, to ask them for their own experiences of gambling and the betting shops in Brent. This was going to form a response to the Government's Gambling Review, the response to my call for evidence has been stark: • 97.5% were opposed to betting shops • 80% questioned why more shops were being given permission • 75% called for the number of stores to be limited • 62.5% detailed experiences of anti-social behaviour in the locale of these shops I have heard from families who've faced financial ruin because of gambling and from so many people for whom their daily lives are blighted by the associated anti-social behaviour, in particular street drinking and drugs, which circulate in close proximity to these gambling establishments. To conclude, I strongly urge the Licensing Authority to reject this application. The people of Neasden deserve a vibrant, diverse high street that supports the well-being of all residents, not another exploitative gambling venue that deepens existing harms. Thank you for taking the time to consider my response. Warm regards, [REDACTED]