

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Sunday, January 12, 2025 2:20 PM

To: Business Licence <business.licence@brent.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: Objection to Merkur Slots Application at 263-265 Neasden Lane application number 33757 for a Bingo Club Premises Licence/Gambling Premises Licence New Application.

Dear Sir / Madam,

This constitutes a formal objection to the proposed Merkur Slots application at 263-265 Neasden Lane. As an elected representative and a voice for deeply concerned residents, I vehemently oppose this application due to its detrimental impact on the community and the area. City Hall has provided significant funding to Neasden and allowing this application to proceed would work completely against the efforts that all partners are making to improve the Town Centre and the area.

A Plague of Gambling Establishments:

Brent already suffers from an oversaturation of gambling venues. With 81 licensed gambling establishments, our borough boasts a higher concentration than supermarkets, banks, or even schools – a truly alarming statistic. This over-proliferation, particularly in areas like Neasden, directly contradicts the principles of responsible community planning.

Fueling Addiction and Social Harm:

The Brent Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) paints a grim picture:

- **Epidemic of Problem Gambling:** 6.2% of Brent residents grapple with problem gambling, a staggering figure twice the national average.
- **Economic Devastation:** Gambling-related harm costs Brent a staggering £14.3 million annually.
- **Predatory Targeting:** Operators like Merkur Slots exploit vulnerable communities, with Neasden, Harlesden, and Willesden bearing the brunt of this exploitation.
- **The Deadliness of FOBTs:** Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) and online slots, despite being utilized by a mere 3% of the population, are the primary drivers of problem gambling. The addiction rate of FOBTs surpasses even heroin and tobacco, highlighting their devastating impact.

These stark realities underscore the urgent need to curb the proliferation of gambling establishments, especially in areas like Neasden Lane, to safeguard our community from the devastating consequences of gambling addiction.

Eroding the Vitality of Neasden Lane:

The proposed Merkur Slots development poses a grave threat to the vitality and viability of Neasden Lane as a thriving commercial centre.

- **Anti-Social Behavior Hotspots:** The existing concentration of betting shops within a mere 100 meters of Neasden Lane already contributes to significant anti-social behavior. Adding another gambling establishment will only exacerbate this problem.
- **Undermining Community Development:** This application directly undermines the substantial investments made by City Hall to revitalize Neasden Town Centre.
- **Deterring Diverse Businesses:** The oversaturation of gambling establishments discourages other businesses from establishing themselves, hindering the development of a diverse and vibrant commercial landscape.
- **Unsightly Development:** The proposed design lacks the vibrancy and aesthetic appeal necessary for a thriving town center. Instead of fostering a welcoming and engaging atmosphere, it will detract from the pedestrian experience.

Size, Location, and Nuisance:

The scale and location of this proposed development are entirely inappropriate:

- **Residential Intrusion:** The continuous operation of this gambling establishment will inevitably lead to increased noise, disturbance, and anti-social behavior, severely impacting the quality of life for nearby residents.
- **Ignoring Community Concerns:** This proposal blatantly disregards the Brent Local Plan's emphasis on protecting residents from the negative impacts of commercial activities.

Exacerbating Social Inequalities:

This application raises profound concerns about its impact on the most vulnerable members of our community:

- **Preying on Financial Desperation:** Many individuals, particularly during times of economic hardship, turn to gambling as a desperate coping mechanism.
- **Targeting Young People and Ethnic Minorities:** Young people and ethnic minorities are disproportionately impacted by gambling-related harm.

This development directly contradicts the principles of creating healthy and inclusive communities. Instead of fostering well-being, it will deepen existing inequalities and exacerbate social challenges.

Conclusion:

The proposed Merkur Slots development at 263-265 Neasden Lane is an affront to our community. It represents a threat to the health, safety, and well-being of our residents.

I urge the Licensing Authority to categorically reject this application and prioritize developments that contribute positively to the economic, social, and cultural fabric of Neasden.

Best wishes,

