

27-04-26

I am writing as a resident of Willesden Green, having lived in the area for more than ten years, to formally object to the application for a premises licence to operate an Adult Gaming Centre at 1 Walm Lane, the building most recently occupied by Lloyds Bank. I want to be clear that my objections are not simply moral ones. I am raising this because I believe the application conflicts with two of the three licensing objectives under the Gambling Act 2005: the protection of children and vulnerable persons from harm, and the prevention of gambling from being a source of crime and disorder.

1) Protection of children and vulnerable persons

One of the things that struck me when reading the applicant's own assessment was just how many schools and educational institutions are in the immediate area. Within one mile of 1 Walm Lane, the assessment itself lists:

- London Science College Ltd - 0.1 miles
- The Islamic College - 0.3 miles
- Brondesbury College - 0.7 miles

A further four secondary schools and colleges within 1 mile, as well as three primary schools within 1.3 - 1.8 miles. Walm Lane is a busy main road. I see it every day - there are large numbers of children and young people passing through, particularly around school hours. On top of that, there are three large parks and The London Play Den, a family-oriented indoor play space for children under seven, all within a mile of the premises. I am equally concerned about vulnerable adults. The applicant's own assessment identifies nine premises serving vulnerable people within one mile of the site - and the deprivation data for this area is stark. According to the 2021 Census, 60.4% of households in Willesden Green are deprived in at least one dimension, compared to 51.6% nationally. Nearly one in four households here (24.9%) is deprived in two or more dimensions, against a national figure of 14.4%. What brings this home for me is seeing food banks being set up in the area, one of them being Helping Hands Food Bank, that is set up every Saturday within roughly 100 yards of 1 Walm Lane. That is the reality of this neighbourhood. The people using that food bank - already under serious financial strain - are exactly the people most at risk from gambling harm. I find it very difficult to see how licensing a new gambling premises this close to that provision can be consistent with the objective of protecting vulnerable persons.

2) Prevention of crime and disorder

Willessden Green has, unfortunately, a significant and well-documented crime problem, and I think it is important the committee has the full picture. According to UK Police data, there were 9,567 crimes recorded in the area in the twelve months to February 2026. Anti-social behaviour was the single largest category, accounting for 2,683 incidents - 28% of all crime. A further 2,468 violent crimes were recorded in the same period. What I find particularly notable is that the applicant's own assessment cites CrimeRadar.co.uk, which gives Willessden Green a safety score of just 8 out of 100 and classifies it as a high crime area. The applicant is not unaware of this - they have referenced it themselves. Adding further gambling premises to an area with this profile - one that is likely to draw footfall into the late evening - seems likely to make things worse, not better. The same assessment

notes that there are already nine other licensed gambling premises within one mile of this site. That is a significant concentration, and I believe it is directly relevant to how the committee should weigh the crime and disorder risk here. I urge the committee to refuse this application. The case against it does not rest on speculation - much of the evidence I have cited comes from the applicant's own submission. Taken together, it paints a clear picture: an area of high deprivation, serious crime, heavy child footfall, and already substantial gambling provision. Granting this licence would, in my view, run contrary to the very objectives the Gambling Act 2005 is designed to uphold.