

APPENDIX D

Dear whom it may concern,

I am writing to you to submit my objections to The Northern Bar's application to vary premises licence to include the bowling green.

Before I address the four licencing objectives, I want to draw attention to the fact that, despite the licence not yet being granted, The Northern Bar has already placed beer garden tables on the bowling green. Meaning they have already varied the premises. I would also argue that by placing the garden tables on the bowling green, the premises is not being varied, but is in fact being made into something completely different. I have attached photographic evidence of the allegation.

The Prevention of Crime and Disorder

As per Section 17(1) of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, it is the duty of the authority to give due regard to the likely effect of the varying The Northern Bar's licence, and do all that it reasonably can to prevent: crime and disorder – which includes anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment, the misuse of drugs, alcohol, and other substances, and, serious violence in the area.

By permitting The Northern Bar to vary their licence to include the bowling green, it will increase their customer capacity tenfold. With the 24 tables, each seating 8 people that are currently on the green this brings the outdoor total to 192 (not including standing). This creates a hub of people, and statistically increases the risk of crime and disorder taking place.

Furthermore, it is a reasonable assumption that the application to vary the licence to include the bowling green to permit alcohol consumption outdoors. As per government studies¹, increased drug use is associated with alcohol. Creating a beer garden environment with the capacity to hold 200 people, in an otherwise residential area increases the risks of alcohol abuse, drug use, and nicotine abuse.

During the summer months, drinking establishment become busier if they have a beer garden. These beer gardens typically tend to attract young adults. The Northern Bar currently hosts older generations, due to the bowling green attracting their guests – they are there for the purpose of playing a sport. By converting the bowling green into a drinking area, the demographic of guests will alter. This creates a risk of crime and disorder, as where there was previously an older average age of guests with the purpose of playing bowls, there will now be younger people gathering with the purpose of binge drinking. Studies have shown that the peak age for criminal convictions is 21-30.² Comparatively, there is only a 0.6% chance of being a victim of violent crime if you are aged over 60 years. Taking this space away from the elderly and creating a hub of outdoor drinking could lead to an increase in crime in the area.

¹ Census 2022, Drug misuse in England and Wales: year ending June 2022
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/drugmisuseinenglandandwales/yearendingjune2022>

² BBC, National 5 Crime Statistics <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zqb2pv4/revision/5>

Public Safety

As per section 2 of the Anti-social and Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, anti-social behaviour is defined as:

- conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person,
- conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or
- conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

By creating a beer garden in such a heavily residential area, all aspects of the above definition can be met. The risk of witnessing drunk and disorderly behaviour daily can cause distress to any person. The noise from 192 people being in a small area, whilst drunk, with music playing can cause nuisance or annoyance to everyone whilst they are in their homes. Offences such as littering will likely increase with the introduction of a beer garden. Increased use of tobacco products in the area can lead to cigarette butts and disposable vapes being thrown over the wall of the bowling green and into residential areas. There is a reason many drinking-centric establishments are based in Runcorn Old Town rather than in Halton village. There is a recognised likelihood of antisocial behaviour taking place, so they are located away from residential estates.

The Northern Bar and bowls club has been a haven for those of a retiring age to socialise, exercise and spend time outdoors. By placing the tables on the bowling green, the sporting aspect has been removed from the premises, and encourages a rowdier demographic into the space. This places the mental health of our older residents at risk. They will no longer have a reason to leave the house to socialise or access the sport they enjoy. Further isolating an already very isolated cross-section of society.

The licence to vary the premises also threatens the health and mental health of residents. As per the aforementioned government study, tobacco usage increases with alcohol consumption. This increases the risks of second-hand smoke impacting all those who neighbour the green. They will also be exposed to loud music and drunken behaviour on a regular basis, which can take a dramatic toll on mental health.

Finally, people occasionally choose to stand in the residential close and watch the bowls matches over the wall. Although a minor inconvenience, it does not happen often and there are never any large groups. If the bowling green is now used to host drunken customers and musicians, there is an increased risk of injury as more people may congregate near the wall and consume alcohol. This could lead to injury or trespassing with the larger number of people.

The Prevention of Public Nuisance

As defined by Part 3, Section 78 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, public nuisance is an act that creates risk of, or causes serious harm to the public; or obstructs the public in the exercise or enjoyment of a right that may be exercised by the public at large.

Permitting potentially more than 192 people to gather on the bowling green arguably infringes on the neighbouring residents' human rights provided by Article 8, Human Rights Act 1998. A bill that the public has the right to enjoy. The right to respect for private and family life is of paramount importance. It is also reasonable to assume privacy in one's home. If there are 192 people with visibility into residents' homes, especially during weekends and evening when families tend to be at home, there will be no privacy available. This is a clear violation of Article 8, and therefore a public nuisance.

The Protection of Children from Harm

Child development is at the forefront of every parent's mind. Studies have shown that one of the most important things in a child's development is their sleep.³ Noise pollution from a neighbouring outdoor drinking area will significantly impact children's ability to get an adequate amount of sleep. In the event they can fall asleep, the noise pollution will impact the quality of the rest they achieve – which can have an equally big impact on child development. From growth, to health, and their ability to perform at school, sleep is vital and this licence to vary the premises threatens that.

Aforementioned, there is a likelihood that a multitude of behaviours will be exhibited if the bowling green area becomes a beer garden. From lewd sexual behaviours, excessive alcohol consumption, smoking and vaping, all of these will now be on display for children to witness. In this residential area, children often play together outside on the estate or in their gardens. They will now be exposed to extremely inappropriate behaviour and cigarette fumes if they continue to enjoy the freedom of play outdoors, which is paramount to their happiness and cognitive development. There is a reason most establishments dedicated to drinking do not permit the entrance of under 18s.

Teenagers in the area could be led astray due to the exposure to antisocial behaviour. With exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs, they could develop substance abuse problems. This subject has been proven to be a concern of the government due to their research into the subject.⁴ There is also an ongoing vaping epidemic in young people.⁵ More and more teenagers are picking up the habit. Seeing people take part in the activity in the beer garden will further expose young teenagers to the habit and encourage them to take part. There is also the likelihood that people may litter their disposable vapes, which children will then find and use – developing an addiction.

³ Sleep Foundation, Children and Sleep, 29 March 2023 <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/children-and-sleep>

⁴ Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, National Statistics: Young people's substance misuse treatment statistics 2020 to 2021: report, 27 January 2022 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/substance-misuse-treatment-for-young-people-statistics-2020-to-2021/young-peoples-substance-misuse-treatment-statistics-2020-to-2021-report#main-findings>

⁵ NHS Digital, National Statistics, Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use among Young People in England 2021, 6 September 2022 <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/smoking-drinking-and-drug-use-among-young-people-in-england/2021>

Additional Considerations

If The Northern Bar had converted the bowling green into a beer garden at the time of purchasing homes in the surrounding estate – many, if not all of the residents would have opted to purchase elsewhere. The potential for noise disturbances and anti-social behaviour that comes with an outdoor drinking area significantly decreases the value of homes in the area. The knock-on effect of residents becoming unhappy would be to sell their homes at a loss and move to a new location. This area of Runcorn has worked hard over many years to build a family friendly community, where people can settle down and start their lives. Varying The Northern Bar premises licence, to permit a beer garden threatens this environment and will significantly impact the resident's quality of life, as well as home valuation.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my concerns.

Best wishes,