



## REPRESENTATION – Licensing Act 2003

**Avon & Somerset Constabulary  
Express Park  
Bristol Road  
Bridgwater  
TA6 4RR**

**28th August 2024**

Your Name:	Sgt. Kat Forrest 4479
Job Title:	Neighbourhood Sergeant
Postal Address:	As above.
Contact Tel:	101
Applicant:	Kamalan Sathiyaseelan
Name of Premises you are making a representation about:	The Sweetbox
Address of Premises you are making a representation about:	30 Cornhill, Bridgwater TA6 3BY

On 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024 we received a new premises licence application for sale of alcohol between the hours of 0800-0100hrs Monday to Sunday at the above premises.

An operating schedule accompanied the application form which put forward measures including SIA doorstaff throughout the hours applied for. Our Licensing Officer, Nicola Cooper subsequently visited the premises and spoke to the applicant on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024 whereby she discussed some of the measures put forward and suitability of the premises. There was no reference on the application form to the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy which recommends consultation with the Police before submitting applications, points 2.1.1 & 4.1.3. The S.182 guidance of the Licensing Act 2003 1.15 also recommends that applicants contact responsible authorities when preparing their operating schedule and points 8.41 & 8.42 state that applicants should have regard to Licensing Policies for their area and should demonstrate local knowledge having undertaken their own enquiries regarding crime statistics and local initiatives. There was no consultation with us prior to the submission of this application.

Following our visit to the premises on 25<sup>th</sup> July, Mr Sathiyaseelan subsequently withdrew his application on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 but submitted it again the same day with a revised operating schedule, removing the offer of security and also measures for illegal drug use, ticketing and entrance systems which would not have been relevant. Miss Cooper telephoned the applicant and reiterated earlier advice that we did not feel the premises and location was suitable for the sale of alcohol but the applicant wanted to proceed with his application. There had been no further consultation with us before re-submitting the application.

There was no agent details on the re-submitted application form but later that day we received an email from Suresh Kanapathi of Arka Licensing stating that they would be acting for the applicant and then later on the 10<sup>th</sup> August we received a further email stating that Ian Rushton of JL Licensing is now acting for the applicant which appears to be the case.

The Plan attached to the licence application shows a premises building which is only 4M x 4M and with proposed alcohol being sited near to the entrance and also behind the counter which will be



## Appendix D

immediately adjacent to rows of shelving containing several jars of sweets. As the sweets are naturally an attraction to children it would be usual for alcohol not to be stored next to sweets and this would also be our expectation. We would also ask that alcohol is not stored immediately inside the entrance to the premises as this can be easily accessed and stolen by local shoplifters, street drinkers and may also be attractive to under 18's. Unfortunately, given the very small size of the premises, there is no ideal location for alcohol to be displayed that would promote the licensing objectives. We do not feel that this premises is suitable or practical for the sale of alcohol and is traditionally a very small sweet shop.

Avon & Somerset Constabulary licensing team scrutinise new applications to ensure that they fully promote the four licensing objectives. We require that premises are managed to a required standard in order to keep our communities safe. In this respect we are submitting our representations as we feel that to sell alcohol from these premises would undermine the four licensing objectives.

### **Background:**

It is our understanding that this premises has always been a traditional sweet shop for more than 40 years and has never sold alcohol. It sells other goods such as soft drinks, toys, gifts and tobacco. Due to its very small size it is not equipped to sell large quantities of any one product or comfortably accommodate more staff. It is primarily a sweet shop as is indicated by the premises name of Sweetbox. The premises will attract children and also adults who enjoy the novelty of the old style sweetshop which is an asset to the area and one of a kind.

The premises is situated on the Cornhill opposite the Blake Statue and this is a "hotspot" area for crime, street drinking and anti-social behaviour and has been for many years. It is immediately adjacent to Prezzo who often experience problems from anti-social behaviour which appears to be on the increase. Very recently the issues have been portrayed in the media and can be found on the following links:-

[Bridgwater traders say town is 'dying' because of anti-social behaviour - BBC News](#)

[Bridgwater begins town centre anti-social behaviour initiative | Bridgwater Mercury](#)

### **Supporting information:**

When considering all applications we consult with other teams and scrutinise our data systems around the premises and this particular premises falls within an area which is a "hotspot" for crime and anti-social behaviour in the centre of Bridgwater and members of the Licensing Authority and Sub-Committee will be aware of those problems. Various agencies and Police teams have regular meetings to try to tackle the issues which have been the subject of recent media coverage including on BBC Points West.

In the last 6 months Avon & Somerset Constabulary have recorded several crimes of violence & anti-social behaviour immediately outside the premises and also theft in the immediate locality. The following are some recorded incidents from our data system known as Webstorm which records all calls to the Constabulary. The following incidents have occurred immediately outside of the premises as follows:



## Appendix D

DATE:	TIME:	LOG/CRIME NO:	DETAILS:
11/08/24	21:08	5224210798	Person by statue on Cornhill shouting at passers by, threatening to smash bottles of alcohol very drunk, shouting racist abuse, thrown glass - Arrested
05/08/24	15:17	AS-20240805-0718	Drunk male shouting abuse/public order. No trace on police arrival.
27/07/24	00:51	AS-20240727-0054	Drunk male being helped by street drinkers, arrested drunk and incapable.
26/07/24	23:25	AS-20240726-1327	15 yr old very drunk taken to hospital by Police.
15/08/24	00:06	AS-20240518-0010	Teenagers causing issues, more than 10 fighting on Cornhill, indication under influence drink or drugs, earlier hitting people with sticks
25/05/24	14:55	AS-20240525-0635	Known street drinker on Cornhill o/s Prezzo drinking gesturing to public with fists, given s.35 to leave area.
09/05/24	23:29	5224119015	Victim assaulted, unconscious and in company of street drinkers, taken to hospital.
26/04/24	16:22	5224106865	Youths running in and out of shops stealing things, throwing rubbish, kicking it about, some wearing balaclavas,
05/04/24	00:17	AS-20240405-0015	Drunk female on bench corner of Cornhill, taken home
02/04/24	22:56	5224084128	20 youths fighting by Cornhill PH, 2 assaulted, one with broken nose, other street drinkers getting involved, dispersal zone issued 2320-0700hrs, scene secured from Pub to Prezzo, still escalating one male with rounders bat. 1 arrest
23/03/24	02:11	AS-20240323-0105	Drunken female advised alarm to sweet shop going off – hoax call
16/03/24	21:03	AS-20240316-0974	Alarm going off – possibly sweet shop, kids seen running off.
09/03/24	23:06	AS-20240309-0967	Drunk male banging on door and punching window of Prezzo, Police attended and took him home.

We are also attaching under Appendix A some further charts showing levels of anti-social behaviour by groups of people outside of the premises in the last 6 months.

Section 9.4 of the s.182 Guidance states that there is no requirement for a responsible authority to produce a recorded history of problems at premises to support representations as this would not be possible for new premises such as this. There has not been a previous history of incidents directly from the premises as it has always been a sweet shop which does not present us with problems. We feel that this will change if the premises are licensed to sell alcohol and will exacerbate the problems already present outside of the premises which is evidenced in the attached charts, above logs and recent media coverage.

Our neighbourhood teams are regularly on patrol in the Town Centre of Bridgwater and very recently this month, a known shoplifter has been seen inside of the Sweetbox and on the weekend of the 16-18<sup>th</sup> August a small group of males have been seen loitering outside of the premises for over an hour who appeared to be drunk but going in and out of the premises. For what purpose, we are unsure? We have continued concerns around activity around the premises and at this location.



## Appendix D

### Application:

During Miss Cooper's visit to the premises on the 25<sup>th</sup> July the applicant was present. He advised her that he came from Stoke on Trent with no connection to Bridgwater and took over the shop in November 2023. He said the Off Licence on the High Street has since opened and this has affected his business which was intended as a sweet shop and that sales had dropped and that he needed to sell alcohol to boost his income. At present he says he opens from 0800 – 2000hrs but intends to open later during Carnival. He was asked about his CCTV and he monitors this from his phone. Miss Cooper pointed out that his CCTV system needed to be registered with the ICO which is a legal requirement but it has still not been registered. We have concerns that the applicant has not listened to our advice and also that he has put forward measures on the application form solely to obtain a licence, and without carrying out any research. It would appear that what has been put forward on the original operating schedule and the re-submitted application form is not specific to the premises and has been cut and paste from elsewhere. He did not take any pre-application advice or gather information about the area.

The applicant has said that he only requires the later hours for Carnival but we have to assess the application by what is applied for which is 0100hrs daily. The Council's Statement of Licensing Policy point 2.6 also recommends consultation with the Police or Licensing Authority in relation to hours. Point 2.6.7 refers to reasons for restricting hours where the Police make representations that the premises are/could be a focus of disorder and disturbance such as in this case. If the applicant were to be open until 0100hrs, not only would this exacerbate the anti-social behaviour/street drinking/theft etc, intoxicated people leaving late night venues may target the premises and try to buy alcohol leading to increased crime and disorder. The measures for security at the premises has been withdrawn although we do not feel this would be practical given the size of the premises. It would be difficult to employ extra staff again given the size of the premises and also in proportion to the revenue. Although profit is not a consideration, the applicant has put forward on the application form "there will be sufficient numbers of staff to prevent crime & disorder" and we do not feel this is possible or proportionate.

At present the applicant does not employ other members of staff and thus no training has been put forward with the application as proposed.

The CCTV does not appear compliant with what has been put forward on the application form. On our visit there did not appear to be a monitor or a recording device in a secure area? We have asked the agent for the written specification for the CCTV installation but this has not been forthcoming. He has said that the system will/can be upgraded if the licence is granted.

The applicant currently sells tobacco products but there was no refusal register in place at the premises.

There are no other measures put forward on this application form to deal with street drinking, drunken behaviour, conflict management etc and we do not believe there are any conditions that could allay these concerns. Section 4.1 of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy would have given some guidance to the application in respect of preparation of Operating Schedules.

### Outcome:

We always look to try to support new businesses and submitting representations in respect of any application is very rare and we have not done so for some considerable time. However, as the Neighbourhood Sergeant for Bridgwater Town Centre, in view of the above information submitted,



## Appendix D

we feel that to grant a premises licence at this premises and location would undermine all four licensing objectives. This area is already suffering from significant anti-social behaviour and has been the subject of recent media attention around increasing problems that we are trying to address. Where licensing objectives are undermined, it consistently leads to an increase in disorder, anti-social behaviour and a risk to our communities.

We ask that the Licensing sub-committee carefully consider our representations and on behalf of the Chief Officer of Police we ask that this application is refused.

We do not feel that there are any conditions that would allay our concerns.

If any further information comes to light before the hearing, we will submit under the terms of the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2005.

**Sgt. Kat Forrest – Neighbourhood Sergeant**  
**28/8/24**