

APPENDIX I

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Your contact is: **Clare Bradley, Licensing and Environmental Protection**

Dear Sir/Madam

Licensing Act 2003 - Consultation exercise in connection with Cumulative Impact Policy affecting premises licensed to sell alcohol in Reading town centre

Reading Borough is currently undertaking a consultation exercise to seek views on whether a cumulative impact policy ought to be adopted in Reading Town Centre. In connection with that decision I am now writing to seek your views on this issue.

What is a cumulative impact policy?

The Licensing Act gives local authorities powers to licence premises for the sale of alcohol and the provision of entertainment. Premises such as pubs, clubs, restaurants, hotels and grocers/newsagents selling alcohol require licensing under this legislation. The Licensing Act, in connection with the licensing of these premises, requires Local Authorities to develop and adopt a Licensing Policy Statement. Within this policy the Council may adopt a Cumulative Impact Policy. Cumulative impact policies are usually adopted in areas where, due to a large number of venues selling alcohol in close proximity to one another, the licensing objectives are being compromised.

The Licensing Objectives, as set out in the Licensing Act, are the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm. Many local authorities across the country have adopted cumulative impact policies in order that they can positively shape the future development of their towns and cities. Oxford is one authority that has had a policy in place for sometime now.

Cumulative Impact policies are likely to be adopted where serious problems of crime and disorder may be arising. Although levels of crime and disorder in Reading are falling, which is certainly good news, these levels do remain very high in the Town Centre. The Town Centre Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) is a group that meets regularly and is attended by Police and Council officers and members of the business community and

residents. The NAG has identified alcohol related crime, disorder and antisocial behaviour as it's main priority requiring action. It may be that a cumulative impact policy could assist in addressing the concerns of the NAG.

What is the effect of a cumulative impact policy?

Where adopted, cumulative impact policies result in applications for new licences/certificates or variations that are likely to add to the existing negative cumulative impact on the licensing objectives normally being refused. The effect of this is that, operators wanting to open new venues in Reading would need to focus on the effects of their proposed operation and the positive impact that they could have. For example, large venues concentrating on alcohol sales and little else, appealing to very limited age ranges would be unlikely to be granted licences, unless they could demonstrate that their operation would not result in an increase in crime and disorder and nuisance. Whereas, venues appealing to wide age ranges, offering more than simply a place to drink, that can demonstrate they would be safe and well run would be much more likely to be accepted.

What happens next?

Further information about the proposed policy including a copy of a report considered by the Council's Licensing Committee, the proposed boundary of the cumulative impact area, the Council's current licensing policy statement and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's guidance related to this issue can be found at www.reading.gov.uk/consultations/2009consultations. If you would like copies of the further information set out on the Council's website, but do not have access to the Internet, please telephone the licensing section on 0118 9390678 and we will arrange for copies to be sent to you.

The Council has written to the Police, the Fire Authority for the area, representatives of premises and personal licence holders, businesses and residents of the area and other interested parties seeking views on this subject. If you would like to contribute to this consultation exercise please let us have your views on whether or not a cumulative impact policy is appropriate and whether the proposed boundary of the area is the right one. You can give us your views by writing to Reading Borough Council Licensing Section, Level 15, Civic Centre, Reading, RG1 7EA or by e-mailing licensing@reading.gov.uk. The consultation exercise will close on Friday 18 December, so if you do wish to contribute please ensure your views are received by us on or before that date.

If you or someone you know would like to be involved in this process and has access difficulties or does not speak English as a first language please contact us, again on 0118 939 0678 and we will be happy to arrange facilities for you to be involved.

Yours sincerely

Clare Bradley
Environmental Health Manager
(Licensing and Environmental Protection)