

THAMES VALLEY POLICE

Division/Station : Reading Police Station Licensing Dept

From : C2107 Declan Smyth

To : Reading Borough Council

Ref : Today's Express, 17 Duke Street, Reading, RG1 4SA Date : 6th January 2023

Subject :

Supportive review representation

To whom it may concern

I C2107 Declan Smyth on behalf of the Chief Officer of Police for Thames Valley wish to provide this representation in support of the review process relating to Today's Express (Daniel Convenience Store), 17 Duke Street, Reading, RG1 4SA

This representation gives due regard to the failure of this premises to support the licensing objective the prevention of public nuisance and the prevention of crime and disorder as well as impacting negatively on all other licensing objectives.

On 9th December 2022 @ 14:18 – (43220554262) – Thames Valley Police officers received information that a known shoplifter has entered into the premises known as Today's Express on Duke Street with a full bag, a short time later he has exited the store with an empty bag. Officers have gone to the store to review CCTV however upon reviewing the footage it would appear that that CCTV camera on the shop floor gets turned off when the male enters the store and goes back on again when he leaves. Due to this the CCTV system has been seized for further investigation. **(Appendix TVP DS1 22-12-09 MG11 Witness Statement Redacted)**

I have view the CCTV from the premises, the following observations have been made:

Today's Express, Duke Street – CCTV Scanning

- The CCTV System is only partial recording on 8th November to 9th December – 31 days recording but major gaps through the premises opening hours
- 10/11/22 @ 09:46 Known street drinkers - enter premises -purchasing K Cider 9%. Again @ 18:39 known street drinker purchasing super strength beer & cider
- 10/11/22 @ 22:57:25, splitting a pack of super strength cider for sale
- 12/11/22 @ 00:05 to 00:10, Smirnoff Ice & WKD Blue Sales, 1.5Ltr Captain Morgan Spice Rum – Sales of alcohol past permitted hours
- 12/11/22 @ 00:24, cans of Gordons & Tonic -Sales of alcohol past permitted hours - DPS
- 12/11/22 @00:26, Whisky Sales of alcohol past permitted hours - DPS
- 12/11/22 @ 00:32, Cans of super strength, Sales of alcohol past permitted hours - DPS
- 12/11/22 @ 00:40, Cans of super strength, Sales of alcohol past permitted hours –DPS

- 12/11/22 @ 00:42 Stella, Sales of alcohol past permitted hours – DPS
- 13/11/22 @ 00:07 Single sales of alcohol, sales of alcohol past permitted hours – DPS
- 13/11/22 @ 00:22 Small bottle of Vodka, Sales of alcohol past permitted hours –DPS
- 13/11/22 @ 00:31 Super strength cans, sales of alcohol past permitted hours – DPS
- 13/11/22 @ 00:33, Bottles of Bub, sales of alcohol past permitted hours - DPS
- 13/11/22 @ 00:48, Cans of Gin & Tonic, Sales of Alcohol – DPS
- 26/11/22 @ 00:01, Customer purchase a can of super strength beer and was drinking said can on the premises - Mr. Nasari
- 26/11/22 @ 00:05, Wine and cans of beer and Bud, Sales of alcohol outside permitted hours – Mr. Nasari
- 26/11/22 @ 00:07, Bottle of vodka, Sales of alcohol outside permitted hours – Mr. Nasari
- 26/11/22 @ 00:15, Bottle of whiskey, Sales of alcohol outside permitted hours – Mr. Nasari
- 26/11/22 @ 00:16, Cans of K cider & supper strength lager, Sales of alcohol outside permitted hours – Mr. Nasari
- 26/11/22 @ 00:21, Cans of lager, Sales of alcohol outside permitted hours - Mr. Nasari
- 26/11/22 @ 00:24, Cans of spirits and mixer, Sales of alcohol outside permitted hours - Mr. Nasari
- 26/11/22 @ 00:26, 2 x Cans of Lager/beer, Sales of alcohol outside permitted hours - Mr. Nasari
- 27/11/22 @ 00:08, Small bottle of spiced rum, sales of alcohol past permitted hours - DPS
- 27/11/22 @ 00:20, 2 x Cans of Beer/Lager, sales of alcohol past permitted hours - DPS
- 02/12/22 @ 00:06, Can of Beer/lager, sales of alcohol past permitted hours - DPS
- 02/12/22 @ 00:07, 1.5 Liter of Bacardi Spice Rum, sales of alcohol past permitted hours - DPS
- 03/12/22 @ 00:10, 2 x cans Super strength cider & 2 cans Lager/Beer, sales of alcohol past permitted hours – Mr. Nasari
- 03/12/22 @ 00:14, Small bottle of Jack Daniels whisky, sales of alcohol past permitted hours – Mr. Nasari
- 04/12/22 @ 00:15, 1.5 Liter white wine, small bottle brandy, can of JD & Cola, sales of alcohol past permitted hours – Mr. Nasari
- 04/12/22 @ 00:21, large bottle of fruit cider, sales of alcohol past permitted hours – Mr. Nasari
- 04/12/22 @ 00:23, Small bottle of spice rum, sales of alcohol past permitted hours – Mr. Nasari
- 09/12/22 @ 00:09, 1.5 Liter red wine, sales of alcohol past permitted hours – DPS
- 09/12/22 @ 00:18, 1.5 Liter red wine, sales of alcohol past permitted hours – DPS

I Declan Smyth have viewed hours of CCTV relating to the sale of alcohol at the premises and worryingly at no stage did the staff or management operate Challenge 25.

On 18th May 2022 @ 22:48 - (43220217776) – Thames Valley Police were made aware of a verbal altercation between a female and the DPS Mr. Quais Aziz at the premises resulting in an Assault.

The CCTV of this incident appears to show that the male and female have attended the premises and engaged in a conversation with the store manager/owner/DPS. Both the male and female then leave and come back to the shop. The female's male partner has grabbed 3 bottles of Gin and has then ran from the store without making payment for the goods. The female tried to walk out of the store, the store keeper/DPS has slapped her across the face, grabbed her around her neck and has then literally thrown her out onto the street.

(Appendix TVP DS2 22-05-18 Disorder Redacted)

Thames Valley Police seized the hard drive containing the CCTV footage of the incident so as to aid in the investigation. It has been noted that the CCTV system/hard-drive did not record continuously.

The current CCTV condition on the premises licence reads: *“The Premises Licence Holder shall ensure that the premises operates a digitally recorded CCTV system. **Cameras shall continually record** whilst the premises are open to the public and recordings kept for a minimum of 31 days with accurate time and date stamping. Data recordings shall be made available without undue delay and no later than 24 hours from initial request to an authorised officer of Reading Borough Council or Thames Valley Police. Facilities for viewing the CCTV recordings shall be made available in the event a request is made for the purpose of the prevention or detection of crime or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders or to check that the CCTV system complies with the requirement of this condition”*

The premises has not complied with this condition, which is the main condition on its licence to aid in the prevention of crime and disorder.

Thames Valley Police suggests that the management and staff power off the hard-drive/cameras so as to prevent full and continuous coverage. In viewing the CCTV footage, Declan Smyth witnessed, that on numerous days the system fails to record for extended periods of time. Having viewed the premises CCTV footage, it also reveals that alcohol was sold on this premises beyond the licensed hours. These incidents occurred on 1st, 7th, 13th and 14th May 2022 and this was viewed by Declan Smyth. Unfortunately, this footage is no longer available.

On 28th June 2021 @ 17:41 – (43210284976) – Thames Valley Police were made aware of an incident that occurred at the premises resulting in Public Disorder.

A Known male entered the premises and requested beers without having to make a payment, stating he would pay tomorrow - Staff refused, leading to an argument between the male and the staff member – The male has armed himself with a metal item from his rucksack, the staff member has armed himself with a hammer that was located and retrieved from behind the till. No complaint has been made by either, passers-by were distressed by the incident.

(Appendix TVP DS3 21-06-28 Disorder Redacted)

On 28th January 2022 @ 21:29 – (43220042096) - Thames Valley Police were made aware of a Shoplifting incident that occurred at the premises resulting in an Assault Without Injury to a staff member.

Four IC3 youths have gone into the shop and have stolen some crisps from the shelf nearest to the entrance/exit of the premises. The victim has challenged these youths and retrieved his stock back, the victim has then attempted to remove these youths from the shop by going hands on with them. It is unknown which but one of the youths has then punched the victim in the face and kicked his hand to aid their escape. The youths have then made off into town and the victim has called 999.

After reviewing the CCTV it is not clear enough to identify any of the youths. The victim does not have any injuries. The OIC has given the aggrieved safety advice around not challenging anyone and calling 999 if a crime is in progress and to update the location of his CCTV in order to capture an image of the suspects face.

On 23rd August 2018 @ 15:20 – (43180266018) – Thames Valley Police recorder the sale of alcohol to a person under the age of 18, during test purchase operation.

During a test purchasing operation a young 15 year old male member of staff served two children (YP01 and YP02) under the age of 18 with alcohol having not asked to see or checked any identification.

During the sale an adult male member of staff identified as the deputy manager was stood next to the child (his son), and on one occasion the adult member of staff asked the test purchaser "Would you like a bag" to carry the alcohol!

The 15 year old staff member served YP02 1 x bottle of Bulmers (abv 4.0%), and YP01 with 4 x cans of high strength Mocne Debowe (abv 7.0%).

Street drinkers also seen purchasing alcohol throughout the process.

(Appendix TVP DS4 18-08-23 TVP TP Operation Redacted)

In conclusion we at Thames Valley Police have a host of issues relating to this premises including the day to day management of the premises, security of the premises, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the prevention of crime and disorder. The premises licence holder has failed to adhere to the recommendations from both Thames Valley Police and Reading Borough Council. The premises continual dependence on the sale of alcohol to nominals & street drinkers has led to disorder, handling of stolen goods and public nuisance.

We suspect the premises representatives will say that they have implemented all conditions placed upon them and that these are having a positive influence.

You may also be told in their defence that these are isolated incidents and the venue has not provided many other incidents of crime and disorder. Unfortunately we suggest that this is far more a consequence of the fact the venue regularly suffers incidents but that the staff and management fail to report to the police and local authority.

Unfortunately it appears that the poor performance of the store as a business is leading them to continue to sell alcohol to “higher risk” individuals which leads to attracting a demographic of customer with a propensity for extreme and repeat violence.

If this premise licence is allowed to remain in force we have a strong belief that the management/ownership and staff of Today's Express, will;

- Continue to undermine the four licence objectives by continuing to pursue a policy of “high risk” sales leading to yet further incidents of crime and disorder. This will continue to put members of the public, staff and Police officers safety at risk.
- Continue to operate in a manner that suggest that the handling of stolen goods is an integral part of the business. This will continue to contribute to the exploitation of vulnerable people in the town centre and fuel the practice of handling of stolen goods.
- Continue to open, operate and sell alcohol beyond their permitted hours. This is a continuation of the ownership/management and staffs bad practices and poor due dilligance resulting in regular breaches of the premises licence

Thames Valley Police would like to recommend revocation as the only guarantee available to safeguard members of the public whilst this business is operating in its current format and ownership.