

From:
To: [Julie Quarmby](#)
Cc: [Woodward, Paul \(Councillor\)](#); [Stevens, David \(Councillor\)](#); [Mitchell, Clarence \(Councillor\)](#)
Subject: Re: URGENT REQUEST - (Licensing Applications Sub-Committee – Thursday, 26th June 2025, 9:30 AM)
Date: 26 June 2025 09:24:08

Warning!
For the attention of
RBC, BFC Staff and Councillors

This mail is from an external sender - please do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust this sender, and know the content is safe

DEFENSE STATEMENT: MR. SALIM ALAMI

RE: BROAD STREET STREET TRADING LICENSE REVIEW

Dear Licensing Sub-Committee,

My name is Salim Alami, and I have proudly traded on Broad Street for over 20 years, operating seven days a week prior to the pandemic, selling luggage and travel goods. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of Reading, and I wish to present my response to the proposal to revoke my street trading license due to reduced trading activity following the pandemic.

Background

Before COVID-19, I traded consistently, paid all fees on time, and, in over two decades, never received a single complaint from the public or fellow traders. I took pride in running my business with professionalism, reliability, and integrity.

Then the pandemic changed everything. My trade—selling luggage and bags—was severely impacted. With travel halted and holidays cancelled, demand for my products collapsed. Even today, travel habits have not fully recovered. Unlike food or flowers, luggage is not a regular or essential purchase—especially as fewer people now commute or travel abroad.

Footfall in the town centre also dropped significantly. The permanent loss of many office workers has affected all traders, but particularly those like myself who sell non-essential goods. Despite these challenges, I never gave up. I continued paying for my pitch—often at personal financial strain—not because I was inactive, but because I remained committed to returning and rebuilding.

Rebuilding After the Pandemic

Prior to COVID, I had even opened a physical shop alongside my pitch—a reflection of how well my business was doing. Post-pandemic, I explored new avenues to remain active. I experimented with selling drinks, and later, food—despite having no prior experience in either sector.

Not every attempt was successful—selling drinks alone was not viable year-round—but I learned from each experience. I observed that food vendors were among the few resilient traders on the high street, and I began developing a new catering concept.

On several occasions, I wanted to trial new products, but the system did not allow changes to hours, product types, or trading vehicles mid-license, restricting my ability to adapt and innovate when I needed it most.

I adapted my trailer to reduce costs, but soon realised that a purpose-built catering trailer would be essential for fast, efficient service. Just as I identified and secured a suitable second-hand trailer, I was informed that trailers of that type were being phased out. I sought clarification on what the acceptable standards were, but no clear guidance was provided. Faced with uncertainty and the risk of further financial loss, I could not proceed.

Instead of support or collaboration, I received a formal and discouraging email in February 2025. It made no mention of the efforts I had made or the broader challenges I was navigating. I felt it lacked empathy and recognition of the difficult path I have been walking.

Personal and Emotional Challenges

What I share next is deeply personal, but I believe it is important context. I am the sole provider for my family—married with three children, one of whom is now attending university thanks to my support. I also have close family in Gaza and Yemen, both experiencing severe humanitarian crises. The emotional toll of these ongoing tragedies weighs heavily on me and has affected my mental health. I have sought medical help to manage anxiety and depression.

This strain has been compounded by the fear of losing my livelihood. While I've observed some traders receiving supportive engagement from council officers, my own experience has often been the opposite—limited to warnings and enforcement. I have felt scrutinised and excluded, making my place of work feel less welcoming and more stressful.

Recent Efforts and Commitment

Since receiving the council's February email, I have resumed regular trading—averaging six days a week over the past six weeks—even though selling drinks alone is not financially sustainable. This recent commitment is not acknowledged in the officer's report, but I hope the Sub-Committee will view it as a clear sign of my intent to rebuild and remain a reliable trader.

If concerns persist regarding my attendance or intentions, I would gladly accept a trial period to demonstrate my ongoing reliability. I would also respectfully request clear and formal guidance on which types of trading trailers are acceptable and what specific standards apply, so I can plan accordingly and invest with confidence.

Sustainability and Risk of Vacancy

There are no guarantees that, if the Licensing Team is successful in persuading you to revoke my license, the council will not face extended periods of vacancy or disruption. The pitch on Queens Walk has remained mostly unoccupied since its creation. Until about a year ago, the second pitch at Reading Station North was mostly vacant until the arrival of the most recent trader. Similarly, the second pitch on Bridge Street was left vacant for a considerable amount of time following the closure of Charms and Flavours from Madeira, until Greece Foods eventually took it.

It is entirely possible that similar challenges would arise again in trying to secure reliable replacements for my pitch. Introducing new traders often comes with delays and uncertainty as they find their feet—or fail to. In contrast, I am an established trader with a long-standing presence in the town centre, and I am finally turning a corner after several difficult years. Surely, it makes more sense to continue working with someone who is committed, who has always paid pitch fees, and who understands the realities of the pitch—rather than risk instability and disruption to the street market.

Final Appeal

I am not asking for special treatment—only for fairness, and for the opportunity to be assessed based on the full context. I have never received a complaint and have continued paying my fees through the most challenging periods of my life. I have remained loyal to Broad Street, to Reading, and to my customers. I have worked hard to adapt in the face of enormous personal and professional obstacles.

To revoke my license now, just as I am finding my footing again, would be devastating. It would not reflect the full story, nor the genuine effort I have made over the past two decades.

I respectfully ask the Sub-Committee to allow me the chance to continue contributing to Broad Street and rebuilding my business with clarity, stability, and hope.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,

Salim Alami
