

LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

14 JUNE 2021

LATE MATERIAL

The following material has been received since the publication of the agenda for this meeting:



RBK Licensing <licensing@kingston.gov.uk>

Lidl, London Road, Kingston upon Thames

1 message

Amanda Pillinger <amanda@pillingerandassociates.co.uk>

21 May 2021 at 11:44

To: [REDACTED]
Cc: "licensing@kingston.gov.uk" <licensing@kingston.gov.uk>

Dear [REDACTED]

I am instructed by Lidl Great Britain Limited in relation to the application for a new premises licence at London Road, Kingston upon Thames. I have therefore been provided with a copy of your email to the licensing authority dated 29th April 2021 in which you raised a number of concerns about the application.

As you may be aware, the licensing process encourages communication between applicants and any objectors. The purpose of this email is therefore to refer to specific matters not included in the application that I believe will address your concerns.

At the outset, I would like to assure you that Lidl take their responsibilities in relation to the sale of alcohol extremely seriously. They are experienced in operating stores in a variety of locations including city centres, retail parks and towns. As such, they have robust policies and procedures in place that seek to address a variety of issues.

You will appreciate that suitable staff training is a vital tool in relation to the responsible sale of alcohol. Lidl have a comprehensive training programme in place. All staff are required to complete the training at the commencement of their employment and undertake refresher training at least every 6 months thereafter. The training covers a variety of issues including underage sales, sales to persons under the influence of alcohol and proxy sales. On completion of the training programme all staff are required to sign a register confirming that they have completed and understood the training. It is made clear to all staff that disciplinary action will be taken in the event that they fail to comply with the training programme. The purpose of this training is to ensure that all staff comply with the legal and moral obligations in relation to the sale of alcohol. In particular, staff are trained not to sell alcohol to any person who is, or appears to be, under the influence of alcohol, any street drinker or any person that they suspect is making a proxy purchase. In addition, all Lidl stores operate a Challenge 25 policy where alcohol is not sold to any person appearing to be under the age of 25, unless they can provide proof that they are over 18.

Within your representation, you have referred to concerns about street drinkers. In that regard, Lidl are also experienced in operating in areas where street drinkers congregate. In such circumstances Lidl work with the local police to operate a zero-tolerance approach by refusing to sell alcohol to known street drinkers. They also train staff to spot proxy sales to ensure that the street drinkers cannot obtain alcohol by this method. In our experience, it soon becomes clear to street drinkers in the vicinity of a new Lidl that they will not be able to obtain alcohol from the store.

In order to back up the training that is provided to all staff, and in order to emphasise the zero-tolerance approach in relation to the sale of alcohol, Lidl have a special procedure that they follow that has proven to be extremely effective. If a cashier believes that a customer is attempting to purchase alcohol in breach of the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003 (for example they may be underage, under the influence of alcohol or attempting a proxy purchase), that cashier is not required to challenge the customer themselves. Instead, they use a bell that calls a shift manager to the checkout. The shift manager then challenges the customer by asking for appropriate identification or by assessing the particular situation. The shift manager then determines whether the sale will proceed or not.

This procedure is particularly effective for a number of reasons. Firstly, the pressure of refusing a sale is removed from the cashier. This ensures that they cannot be bullied or pressured into allowing a sale. Secondly, the decision on whether to allow the sale to take place is made by a member of the management team and, as such, will be seen to be made by a person in a position of authority. Finally, in Lidl's experience, this approach quickly sends a message to customers that Lidl will not sell alcohol to any customer when it is inappropriate to do so.

Notwithstanding the anti-social behaviour and crime related concerns about street drinkers, it is also not in Lidl's interest to have street drinkers congregating outside their store, as it deters other customers. As such, Lidl actively discourage street drinkers from congregating in the vicinity of their stores. There have been a number of examples where police initially objected to the grant of a new Lidl licence due to concern that it would increase issues with street drinkers. After experiencing the high standards operated at the Lidl store, these same police officers have subsequently acknowledged that the presence of a Lidl is positive for their area. We are therefore confident that the proposed Lidl will not add to any issues being experienced in the area. Indeed, we believe that presence of a high quality, well managed premises will in fact improve the area.

In that regard, you have also referred to concerns about the area being run down. In particular you have referred to Orchard Walk and concerns about increased littering.

I am able to confirm that Lidl will be spending in excess of £2m on the refurbishment of this building which includes both the internal and external areas. The intention is to significantly improve the area. To give you an idea of where the money will be spent, I confirm that the following work is included in the plans:-

- Car park to be planed off and re-surfaced
- Trees within the car park to be replanted
- Timber rail around the external area to be replaced
- Any damaged kerb line around this boundary planting area will be completely replaced
- New ornamental planting to be installed
- Feature of public art to be provided at the front of the site along with public seating
- Car park will be illuminated with new and extensive lighting during hours of trade, as this is proven to reduce crime rates

All Lidl stores also have a comprehensive CCTV system that is capable of recording images of evidential quality. The CCTV cameras cover a number of areas in the store but will always cover the entrance/exit, the alcohol display aisle and the checkout area. This acts as an additional deterrent for customers attempting to purchase alcohol inappropriately and also deters potential shop lifters.

Another security feature of a Lidl store is that the main alcohol display is located on the wall that is furthest from the entrance. This is a deliberate design feature as it ensures that any person looking to purchase alcohol must walk through the entire store. This clearly discourages shoplifting. Other than special promotions, alcohol is only displayed in the one aisle in the store. The vast majority of the store will therefore be used to display groceries and general household goods.

We discussed the application with the police and, as a result of these discussions, they confirmed that they had no objection to the grant of the licence. In addition, objections have not been received from any of the other responsible bodies, such as trading standards, environmental health, public health etc. We believe that this is a testament to the high standards applied at all Lidl stores.

I hope that these assurances allay any concerns that you may have had about the proposed premises. I would therefore be grateful if you would confirm whether you are now willing to withdraw your representation. You will note that I have copied the licensing authority into my email so they have a record of all correspondence between us.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Amanda Pillinger

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