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For the attention of: Licensing Section

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To the Licensing Sub-Committee

**Licensing Act 2003: Application to Vary
Black Lion 293 High Street Epping CM16 4DA**

I act for Punch Taverns, the premises licence holders at the above premises.

I write this letter in anticipation of the hearing listed for 14 July in relation to the variation application and to give the Licensing Sub-Committee and the parties who have made representations a better idea of the application and reasons for it.

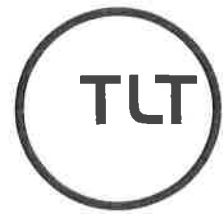
Applicants

Punch Taverns hold the premises licence but do not directly operate the premises. In this case, the premises is operated by Alan and Laura Willis, who took on the Black Lion a year ago. Laura is the DPS at the premises and both Laura and Alan have significant experience in managing licensed premises (over 15 and 20 years respectively). Both are members and contributors to various trade bodies and have brought their significant experience to the Black Lion.

The Black Lion

On taking on the black Lion, Alan and Laura have invested somewhere close to £150,000 in works at the premises.

In addition, Alan and Laura have invested a significant amount of time and energy in encouraging a family friendly environment and looking to make the Black Lion a hub for the community. The kitchen has been upgraded and currently has a five star hygiene rating from the Council and the food offer has significantly improved. Following a year of trading spent ensuring the premises is attracting the clientele they want, it has been decided that this is the right time to make the application to ensure that the premises can continue to develop.



The application

This application is to licence the rear barn to allow licensable activities to be undertaken within it. The application also seeks to licence the outside areas. It is not intended that the outside areas will be used for regulated entertainment (albeit technically the licence application would permit it). The reason for seeking to licence the outside space is to permit waiter and waitress service to customers for sales of alcohol as well as food.

In relation to regulated entertainment, the Live Music Act and recent deregulation of recorded music have, to a large extent, changed the ground rules for these activities being provided at licensed premises by deregulating them between 8am and 11pm. As stated above, however, all regulated entertainment will be restricted to the interior of the barn and the pub itself.

Use of barn

There is a real need for a small function facility in Epping, something that Alan and Laura have identified from their discussions with locals and regulars. The barn has a capacity of 70 persons, although for comfort and control reasons, function size is limited to a maximum of 60 persons. Any events held in the barn will be risk-assessed, including whether there is a need to provide door staff. As a matter of good practice, it has been decided that anyone booking the barn must provide a full guest list of those attending.

The barn itself has been sound-proofed, is fully air-conditioned and has no windows. As such, with the doors closed during regulated entertainment (except for access and egress), there is no noise escape, whilst still allowing for sufficient comfort for attendees.

To date, the barn has proved to be very popular for private functions. The current requirement for customers to go to the bar in the pub is more likely to cause potential for disturbance than having a bar in the barn, simply because of migration of customers back and forth.

During the day, the barn is used for training and other corporate functions and it is hoped that this will prove to be another useful revenue stream in the future.

It is also hoped that having a bar in the barn will assist with congestion at the main bar in the summer, particularly at times when there are no private functions. In particular it is anticipated that allowing customers in the garden, as well as staff providing waiter and waitress service to customers outside, to be able to get drinks and make food orders more quickly and efficiently will promote the licensing objectives. It is anticipated that this will help with the relaxed family friendly feel that Laura and Alan are trying to encourage. It goes without saying that an added benefit of having the bar in the barn is the additional supervision of the outside areas staffing the bar provides.

Representations

Punch, Laura and Alan would be delighted to show those parties who have made representations around the premises and explain more fully what they are looking to do with it going forward. It is hoped that in meeting, any concerns expressed can be alleviated.

I would be happy to organise any meeting if the residents would like to contact me directly, either by email or phone on the details above.

Hearing on 14 July

Please can you ensure that a copy of this letter is made available to the licensing sub-committee prior to the hearing. I will forward copies of this letter directly to the residents who have made representations.

We would like the opportunity to address the licensing committee at the hearing to provide further details and answer any questions they may have at that time.

Yours sincerely

Piers Warne
Associate
for TLT LLP