

Public Consultation on Proposed Extension of the Peckham Saturation Area

Response by The Lane ward councillors

1. We generally support the proposed extension, most of which relates to The Lane ward. The existing saturation area has been helpful in containing many of the problems associated with the concentrations of licensed premises in and around Peckham Town Centre. But our experience indicates that the original boundaries were drawn too tightly. For example, the boundary excluded – for no obvious reason – the premises at 14 Peckham High Street formerly known as Mbalax. Before revocation of the Mbalax licence, those premises were associated with some extremely serious incidents of violence and disorder. The Licensing Authority was disadvantaged by being unable to apply the current saturation policy to the recent application by another operator to re-licence the premises.
2. Some of the areas of The Lane ward that would be included in the proposed extended boundary seem to us unlikely to be the subject of problematic licensing applications. For example, much of the westward extension towards Talfourd Road covers residential streets where there is little opportunity for potential new licensed premises to open. Indeed there is a risk of the policy catching innocuous applications for licences for community and similar events in some parts of the ward. So we are in no sense wedded to the precise boundary locations that are proposed, and if cogent objections are made to some of these we would encourage officers to consider them carefully before making recommendations to the Licensing Committee. For example, consideration might be given to retaining the proposed boundary to include Peckham Road itself as far west as Talfourd Road, but to exclude some of the network of streets to the south.
3. However, wherever the precise boundaries are drawn, we do think it is important in principle that the extended area should be generous enough to ensure that potentially troublesome applications are not displaced from the core Town Centre to the immediate surroundings without the protection of the saturation policy.
4. When the Licensing Authority consulted on the original saturation area proposals, the Planning Policy team objected on the basis that a saturation policy might discourage growth and investment in the area. We do not know whether the Policy team have made similar objections this time. We think objections along those lines would be mistaken. The proliferation of licensed premises, and the problems associated with

them, tend to discourage business and consumers from treating Peckham as a destination for social and economic activity. So long as it is sensitively implemented, a saturation policy over an extended area would strengthen the Council's ability to control the negative effects of a concentration of licensed premises, and so make the area more attractive as a venue for consumer and leisure activity. That will in turn encourage growth and help to further the aims of emerging planning policy for the area (the Peckham and Nunhead Area Action Plan).

5. We think the Licensing Sub-Committees are well able to distinguish between those applications that are more and less likely to be contrary to the aims of the saturation policy. For example, there is a shortage of high quality premises run as licensed restaurants or bar/cafés keeping reasonable hours; but such premises are less likely than nightclubs and the like to present the sort of problems that have prompted the creation and extension of the saturation policy. So the policy need not discourage applications for such premises. Rather, we expect it will be effective in controlling the proliferation of the more troublesome kinds of premises that risks deterring custom from the more welcome kinds of premises.
6. So, properly applied, we think the proposed extended saturation policy would strike the right balance between the interests of operators (and prospective operators) of licensed premises and the wider community.
7. It follows that the extended policy area should apply to the full range of classes of premises set out at para. 5 of the consultation document. We agree with our constituent Mrs. Irwin that it should also apply in principle to any café/restaurant or similar premises serving alcohol after midnight. But the actual application of the policy would be sensitive to the precise proposals made in each case.
8. We hope officers and members of the Licensing Committee find these comments helpful.

Councillors Gordon Nardell, Susan Jones and Mark Glover

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