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Public Protection
Environment & Regeneration Department
LB Islington
222 Upper Street
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26th January 2012

Licence application:
The Flying Scotsman, 2-4 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DT

I write setting out my objections to this licence application. I have read the Borough's Sex Establishment Licensing Policy and consider that the application premises fall outside the parameters within which granting a license might be acceptable. Overall I consider that granting such a license would:

- be detrimental to the regeneration of the area;
- have an adverse effect on community safety;
- reduce residents' amenity due to closeness of new residential accommodation opposite and nearby;
- be unacceptable due to the proximity of Copenhagen, Winton and Blessed Sacrament primary schools and the access routes to these schools
- be unacceptable due to proximity to places of worship at the former Welsh Congregational Church adjacent to 245 Pentonville Road N1 9NJ and the Al Nehar Mosque 84 Caledonian Road N1 9DP and the access routes to these places.

It is the policy of LB Islington to reduce to zero the number of establishments licensed for sex entertainment. The policy recognises that existing sex entertainment venues may be allowed to continue trading if they meet stringent conditions, namely "high standards of management; a management structure and capacity to operate the venue; the ability to adhere to the standard conditions for sex establishments". The track record of the Flying Scotsman pub is not good at all. I have regularly spotted exotic dancers outside on the street smoking with very slight clothing barely covered by overcoats or other coverings. From the outside it appears to be quite a rowdy pub at times and at risk of disorder particularly on the pavement outside. The premises appear to be quite cramped and I do not think they are suited to effective management of sex entertainment.

From reviewing license applications for 6 and 8 Caledonian Rd it is my understanding that all the premises stretching from number 272-276 Pentonville Road (hostel-style accommodation on the corner of Caledonian Road) to 8 Caledonian Road (the Brill Bar) are a single inter-connected building. There are staircases and passages between 2-4, 6 and 8 Caledonian Rd and I strongly suspect that the applicants intend to use parts of these premises for sex entertainment.

I also consider there is an important over-riding reason to deny a license. In recent years it seems there is a residual perception that Kings Cross is a more acceptable place to locate premises offering sex entertainment. In my view, there is no justification for any type of sex entertainment venue in this neighbourhood. I believe the presence of such an establishment creates the impression that Kings Cross is an area where sexual services and associated products can be purchased. Within Camden's jurisdiction there are a number of "sauna" clubs, for example on Kings Cross Road, where it is evident that paid-for sex can be procured.

This reinforces an adverse perception that Kings Cross is an area characterised by sex, drugs, transient accommodation and a marginalised population. They attract people looking for some kind of sexual experience – and this encourages a range of unacceptable and illegal behaviour such as kerb crawling and solicitation which is regularly reported at locations further up Caledonian Road.

A key feature of regeneration of Kings Cross during the last decade has been a determination to stamp out the vice and sleaze that had blighted the area for several generations. This has been predominantly successful with LB Islington successfully closing-down unlicensed premises and restricting the scope of licensed premises.

The existence of any premises with a sex entertainment license will continue to reinforce the old image, stigmatise the area and damage existing retail or deter the arrival of more reputable traders and investors. It also undermines the aspiration of community and political leaders in this area to ensure we develop a balanced, sustainable community living here.

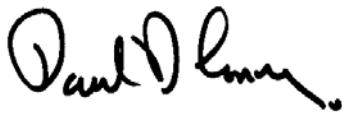
The simple fact is that, over the last few years, Kings Cross has changed considerably – and for the better. Scores of new businesses and hundreds of new jobs have arrived in the area alongside a slew of good quality entertainment and hospitality businesses.

We now have a substantial amount of residential accommodation in the area with new long-term residents including many more families with children. Within just a few metres of the applicant premises are new housing developments including a range of affordable family homes and we have a new, multi-cultural and multi ethnic population living in this neighbourhood.

One feature of this population is the high proportion of people who have a strong religious conviction and I have been contacted by constituents of Christian and Muslim faiths who find the presence of sex venues in their neighbourhood to be abhorrent to their faith. I have been lobbied by people of no faith who, like myself, simply have standards of decency that are neither illiberal nor prudish but just plain common sense. And I have been approached by parents who are appalled at the prospect of explaining to their children why this pub has blacked-out windows and why scarcely-dressed women are standing around outside smoking. As the vice chair of governors (and a parent) at one of the neighbourhood schools, I know that parents, governors and staff at these nearby schools do not view this establishment with any enthusiasm at all, as their children walk past the location on Caledonian Road.

I would urge members to reject renewal of the license for the reasons above.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Convery', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Convery
Councillor for Caledonian Ward (Labour)