

OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE [when complete]

MG11

## WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r 16. 2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5B

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Statement of: Lewis Smith P229714

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: Police Sergeant

This statement (consisting of 2 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Witness Signature: *L. Smith* Date: 23/11/2022

This statement is in relation to the proposed event called the CAGO Festival which the organisers are hoping to host in Barking Park in the summer of 2023.

I am the Safer Neighbourhood Team Sergeant covering three teams in Barking including Eastbury, Gascoigne and Longbridge Wards. I am a Police Sergeant and have been employed by the Metropolitan Police Service since February 2009 and have worked in Barking and Dagenham for approximately 2-3 years since I was promoted.

The proposed venue for this festival is Barking Park and this is off Longbridge Road, Barking and this falls on Longbridge ward. Barking Park is approximately 30 hectares in size and is controlled and maintained by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Inside the park there is a miniature railway, a children's water park, a café, tennis courts, Skate Park and a lake that spans the length of the park. Additionally there is also a war memorial and flower gardens.

As the Ward Police Sergeant I am aware that this park has been a hot spot for both drug use and dealing and has been known as an area where a large number of robberies occur. These offences generally spike in the summer months when the weather is warmer.

I have recently been made aware of this proposed festival and have serious concerns about its proposed location. In my professional opinion Barking Park is not a suitable venue for this festival or any festival whereby there will be large numbers of people and alcohol/drug consumption.

I have been informed that there is likely to be 15,000 revellers at this festival. I am concerned that due to the size of the park and the actually available space there is a high chance that crushing and trampling could occur if 15,000 people were to be packed in this location.

I am also concerned regarding the lake in the Park. This spans the entire length of the park and there are no railings to the lake. If there are intoxicated members of the public at this location at night when it is dark, there is a high chance people could either fall or jump into the lake. There are many underwater hazards and poor lighting and ultimately this could lead to drowning.

Witness Signature: *L. Smith*

Signature Witnessed by Signature: .....

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Continuation of Statement of:

In summary I would rate the proposals as extremely dangerous and I wholeheartedly object to Barking Park being used as the venue for this festival. In my opinion there are other locations in the area that would be better suited to hosting this and if this were to be agreed I have concerns this could lead to serious injuries or deaths.

*[Handwritten signature]*

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Witness Signature: *[Handwritten signature]* .....

Signature Witnessed by Signature: .....