

# H & Q Café

## AGENDA

14-08-2020

### **My Statement – Bekim Hyseni.**

As we have never met, I would like to introduce myself. I came to the UK and to LBB&D in 2002 when I was aged 13. Since my arrival all those years ago this borough has given me every opportunity to develop into a fully-rounded adult. I have had a successful life, an amazing and loving partner and two beautiful children aged 2 and 3 months old. I lived in foster care from the age of 13 until I reached adulthood. LBB&D supported me throughout my formative years.

I admire and I am grateful for every opportunity this borough has given me and it is my wish to be able to pay back as much as I can to the community in which I grew up and where my values were formed. I have never had any trouble with the Police and I have never been arrested.

I have a lot of trust in the good people of this borough. The help and guidance I have been given throughout my life from when I was young boy leads me to strongly believe that this borough will support me as a business owner looking to engage with the local community and to reach my full potential.

### Notes:

- I have heavily invested in the area. My aim is to become a focal point for the local community. A place where my neighbours can come to relax and to socialise in a welcoming environment. The size and location of our restaurant is such that it is not likely to attract people from outside the area. We see our customer base as local people only. Indeed, our staff will all be local people too which will strengthen our ties with the local community. As you can see, it is in our interests to get on with our neighbours because they will be our customers!
- We have been working hard here for the last few months trying to make the building presentable, clean and hygienic, a place where our neighbours will want to come to eat and meet friends and family. The feedback we have received from the locals has been entirely positive. The comments we have received reassure me 100% that our neighbours want a restaurant like this here and they are happy that we are nearing completion. I would like to reinforce that not one resident has submitted a representation against our application so that should be reasonable proof that our neighbours are very supportive of our application and our presence here.
- Unfortunately, the fact that our application has received only two representations has meant that we have missed out on the government's **Eat Out to Help Out** scheme. This has had a huge negative financial impact upon us.

- As we already know, the hospitality industry has been brought to its knees by the covid-19 pandemic. The government has given a life-line to cafés and restaurants, including myself, to aid each local business which will in turn aid the *local* economy which will in turn aid the *national* economy. This opportunity is, so far, not working for me as my application has yet to be granted, even though I applied on 22<sup>nd</sup> June.
- The pandemic is causing countless businesses to struggle to survive. I am already struggling before we have even opened our doors to the local community. The Licensing Authority wishes that our operating hours are reduced. The effect of this will mean that I will struggle to make the business survive going forward. The futures of my partner and our children depends upon the success of this business.
- I can confirm, that this is not a bar or a pub. We will be food led but we would also like to be able to allow our customers to sit and have a glass of wine or beer and watch the world go by, much like “café society” on the continent. It was the Labour government’s intention back in 2003 that the UK’s binge-drinking culture problem should be addressed by making premises which sell alcohol more like their European neighbours. We believe our application supports this aim.
- I would like to point out that, apart from the Licensing Authority, no other responsible authority had any concerns with this application. This includes the Police and LBB&D’s own Noise Team. Clearly, our application has satisfied the majority of the responsible authorities and, as already mentioned, no residents have opposed our application. Clearly, there are no crime and disorder concerns and there are no noise nuisance concerns. If there were, the appropriate responsible authorities would have opposed the application. These facts must speak for themselves.
- Becontree ward councillors have expressed concern with regard to the safety of care homes and their residents. The closest care home is over 200m away and the others are much further away. I am struggling to understand how activities at my small restaurant will affect them. Again, LBB&D’s health body responsible authority has made no representation on this matter.
- I am fully aware that the Becontree ward councillors are looking out for the residents who they represent, however, their concerns seem to be misplaced and of course we should remember that I am a part of this ward too and have an interest in matters occurring here. I am part of this same community so have no intention of causing anyone any problems.
- During the application process my agent, on my behalf, agreed to a number of changes to the operating schedule but each time we agreed to a new set of changes the licensing officer seemed to abandon the agreement and wanted further restrictions placed upon the licence. We felt unable to rely upon a set of mutually agreed terms because of the repeated changes so we felt it more appropriate to present our original application to the licensing sub-committee in order that you can see exactly what the Police and the Noise Team and all the other responsible authorities saw and agreed was perfectly acceptable and reasonable.
- The Licensing Officer expresses concern at covid-19 security and bases part of his representation on this matter; however, covid-19 regulations are outside the area on which a

premises licence application is able to be determined. Having said that, I can reassure you that we are fully aware of our duties regarding being covid-19 secure and will ensure we are fully compliant at all times.

- Our business is dependent upon being able to operate successfully and to allow our guests to dine in a relaxed atmosphere. That is why the hours of operation are vital to a restaurant. The current covid restrictions require a reduced number of guests to ensure social distancing. Reduced hours will make our survival even more difficult. While it may be the role of the Licensing Authority to consider issues further to the potential impact of licensed premises upon neighbours we should also recognise that none of our neighbours have expressed any reservations at all.
- The ward councillors' representation refers to Bennetts Castle Lane as a known accident hot-spot. Matters relating to traffic are outside a premises licence application. The presence or otherwise of our restaurant will have no impact upon whether cars drive too fast on Bennetts Castle Lane. We would suggest that this is a matter for LBB&D's Roads & Pavements department. As the representation itself mentions, traffic calming measures can be introduced to address speeding cars.
- We would ask that you consider that the language used in the ward councillors' representation is unnecessary, overly dramatic and appears designed to suggest a problem exists where there is none. The representation states that our customers "**are likely to be disorderly if purchasing alcohol.**" There is no evidence to support this opinion. The representation states that our restaurant "**will frighten the elderly residents living nearby.**" Frighten the elderly? We are a small restaurant with a limited number of covers. The representation states that our restaurant "**is likely to destroy the quality of life of some of the Borough's most vulnerable residents by disrupting their sleep, and creating fear.**" All of these comments are highly inflammatory and completely untrue. As I have already said, we are a small restaurant looking to get by and provide a much needed and beneficial facility for locals in the area.
- Finally, we most respectfully ask of the licensing sub-committee that the two representations against our application are given limited weight and that the application is granted in full as submitted.