

Objection 1 & 2 not included as addresses not provided

Objection 3

I am writing to register my strong objection to granting of the above licence.

I believe that the granting of the licence would lead to a source of crime and disorder in what is a residential local shopping area and so totally unsuitable for such a venue.

I am also concerned that children and other vulnerable people could be harmed and exploited by such a largely unstaffed operation.

Objection 4

I am writing to present my objection to the proposed Merkur Slots gambling slot machine venue opening up on Sydenham Road. I do not believe that this is a good use of that space, as gambling is an unhealthy habit and can cause people to become addicted to slot machines, and to get in to debt, which can even lead to suicide. It can also be a temptation for young people to go into these places, and become addicted to gambling, while also being places where they might be vulnerable to being groomed.

I would like to ask that this proposal does not go ahead.

Objection 5

I am writing as a local resident to lodge my objection to the planned licensing of the above premises for gambling.

Sydenham Road already has far too many gambling shops which in my opinion are a blight on the local neighbourhood.

As a retired Probation Officer, I have witnessed at first hand the misery and damage gambling inflicts on individuals, families and the wider community.

Gambling premises tend to attract some individuals who behave in an anti-social manner; I have witnessed littering and violent altercations on many occasions by people using the betting shops on Sydenham Road and elsewhere. Yet another similar establishment will increase this type of anti-social behaviour to the detriment of our local community.

Gambling has become a serious problem in our society and granting ever more licences to the gambling industry exacerbates the problem it is responsible for. I do not believe that any local authority, elected to represent their constituents should be providing support to such a destructive industry.

Objection 6

I am a resident of Girton Road, Sydenham and have lived in SE London for most of my life. I am really concerned by the licensing application for a new gambling premises at 53 Sydenham Road by the company Merkur Slots.

There are already three betting shops on that stretch of the high street and a bingo hall behind the station. These premises are the primary source of public nuisance on the high street, where there is a growing problem with begging and anti-social behaviour.

The only winners from more high street gambling outlets are the owning companies and those receiving the rent. People that use these gambling shops are often those who don't have money to lose.

The presence of so many gambling shops in a High St is a sign of a struggling high street and that is an issue for the local MP.

It should be much harder to gamble than it is now. Gambling advertising on TV and phones is particularly pernicious and I wish the laws on this had never been liberalised. Gambling is a really harmful addiction that, unlike drug and alcohol addiction, can go unseen until addicts have lost everything. **Opening another gambling outlet is a big mistake.**

I don't appear to have any grounds to object according to the Council's licensing guidelines so I am asking if there's anything you can do to support local residents in improving our high street, rather than inviting more public nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

Thanks

Objection 7

> I am writing as I am most strongly opposed to the opening of Merkur Slots in Sydenham Road.

> As someone who has lived in Sydenham since birth I am very concerned about problems that will develop. I feel sure that crime and disorder will be caused by the opening of such an establishment and that children and vulnerable adults will be badly affected and sucked into the world of gambling with dire consequences.

>

I apologise for misspelling the name of the company which is Merkur Slots

Objection 7A

I would like to register my objection to the proposal to open a bingo gambling unit in the disused Santander site in Sydenham Road.

> As the unit will be largely unstaffed protection for children and vulnerable adults will be minimal leaving avenues open for coercion, unregulated gambling, theft and even violence. There is frequently a correlation between gambling and alcohol and the fact that this is proposed as a 24 hour venue will make it more accessible to persons who already have a gambling problem. Sydenham is a very residential area, and this proposal will have a negative impact on the lives of residents. It is very likely that it

will be a cause of noise and disturbances at unsociable hours. We do not need or want this facility in the heart of our community. I urge you to reject this proposal.

Objection 8

My objections are as follows:

1. This site is in the centre of a shopping high street ie retail business, thereby depriving possible retailers looking for premises. It is currently designated for retail and food outlets.
2. Gambling slot machine business will attract mainly males who will tend to hang around a slot machine business blocking the street and creating a threatening atmosphere where families are shopping daily
3. A gambling licence will attract males who can hang around all day and night if a 24 licence is permitted which would be very detrimental to local residents. A 12 hour licence would be equally detrimental.
4. A gambling outlet is against the ethos of Sydenham High Street which currently provides a diverse range of retail, gyms, food outlets all of which are for the good of the public as a whole.
5. Gambling encourages people to spend their money which they can ill afford and is a mindless occupation.

Objection 9

I wish to object in the strongest possible terms to the application for a largely unmanned slot machine / gambling shop at this premises.

Our community is working hard to support one another and develop our local area as one that is nurturing to all. Merkur Slots' proposal will provide opportunity for unmanned and therefore largely in practice unregulated gambling on the high street. This is not healthy for our children and young people, and it is also not healthy for the most financially vulnerable. Sydenham already has the Bingo hall, so there is provision for safe and fun gambling on Kirkdale, and we also have 2 other betting shops on the High St.

I do not think Merkur's business model will ensure that gambling is done in a safe way; and I would like the license application to be turned down to protect children and young people from being harmed and exploited by gambling on our high st. Shops like this normalise gambling. And we know from evidence that slot machines are some of the most addictive types of gambling there are: a (2021) [recent meta study](#) shows: "the most frequently assessed problem gambling risk factors with the highest effect sizes are associated with **continuous-play format gambling products.**"

Gambling is harmful - we know that. This [recent report from the LGA \(2023\)](#) suggests that "**Consequently, councils should seek to prevent exposure at a population level to harmful gambling products and practices.**" Gambling also harms the most vulnerable the most: "*However, some individuals may find certain circumstances, such as mental ill health or economic circumstances, are worsened*

by gambling, and this can widen inequalities as harmful products and practices are being targeted at those least able to withstand the harms."

Lewisham should also note that the LGA report argues that there are knock-on effects of harmful gambling, which impacts other council services "*Gambling may also be driving demand for other council service areas, including children's, family and adult social services, treatment and early intervention services, homelessness and wider housing services and financial inclusion and debt advice services.*"

The shop is not a shop that will employ many local people, and will not be a positive addition to the local community - whereas so many other of our local shops are helping the community to come together and support one another in really productive ways.

Please accept my strongest objections

Objection 10

As a business owner of **XXXXXXXXXXXX** I strongly object to the above premises being allowed to trade as a slot machine business. This will kill our high street, we are already suffering enough with mental health and addicts without more bad attraction to the area. Shop thief is a daily occurrence on this high street without inviting more.

This really is not a good idea we need retail shops attracting more customers not turning them away.

I await your final outcome.

Objection 11

I have become aware the above address has applied for a slot machine premises. This is absurd, the crime rate will go up on the high street and make it even more unsafe than what it is. The high street does not need this kind of business. I live in the area and work on the high street and see the amount of addicts go and steal and know if this is allowed it will attract more thief on the high street. Please do not allow this to happen and kill our high street.

Objection 12

Hello I wish to express my concern for another gambling place in Sydenham. There's already plenty of them. It will attract more crime which we already have plenty of street robberies etc. Also vulnerable people could access it without carer or family knowledge. Also we want the high street to be family friendly. Please do not allow the license.

I forgot to mention Apple Bingo at Kirkdale. It's less than a few hundred yards from the proposed new one. There are many many slot machines there already if people want to play.

Objection 13

I would like to strongly object to the licensing application by 'Mercur' at 53 Sydenham Road for a 'slot machine' installation at this address.

This would offer no benefit to the high street in fact it would have a detrimental affect to an area that already has a problem with social issues.

The location also is right next to Newlands Park bus stop where many school children use this stop and the high street in general suffers from drug use and begging.

It would be totally inappropriate to allow this application and I strongly object.

Objection 13A

I would like to object to a license being granted for Mercur Slots at 53 Sydenham Road. This would cause both additional crimes and attract children and young adults to gambling. Sydenham already has problems with drugs and thefts and this would be detrimental to the area.

Please do not allow this.

Kind regards

Objection 14

I am writing to express my concerns about and opposition to the application by Mercur Slots for a gambling licence to operate at 53 Sydenham Road.

I am concerned that the presence of a slot machine business, particularly one that is largely unsupervised, will lead to increased crime and disorder in Sydenham. This would be exacerbated if allowed to operate 24 hours a day. I also object to it on the grounds that children and vulnerable adults could suffer harm or exploitation from gambling at the site.

I am copying this to the Councillors representing Sydenham on Lewisham Council with a request that they also oppose the licence application.

Objector 15

I am writing to express my strong objection to the granting of a gambling licence to Merkur Slots for the establishment of a shop in Sydenham High Street. As a concerned resident of the area, I believe that allowing such an establishment would have detrimental effects on our community.

First and foremost, the presence of a gambling shop in our neighbourhood could lead to an increase in gambling addiction and related social issues. Studies have shown that easy access to gambling facilities can exacerbate problem gambling behaviours, leading to financial hardship, family breakdowns, and mental health problems.

Furthermore, the opening of a gambling shop goes against the efforts to promote responsible and healthy lifestyles in our community. Sydenham High Street should be a place where families feel safe and welcome, not a location that facilitates addictive behaviours and preys on vulnerable individuals.

I urge the council to carefully consider the long-term consequences of granting a gambling licence to Merkur Slots. Instead of promoting activities that can harm our residents, we should focus on supporting businesses that contribute positively to the well-being of our community.

Thank you for considering my objections to this matter.

Objector 16

I strongly object to this gambling slot business being licensed in Sydenham Road. Gambling can be an addiction and it is important that we protect children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling. The location of the business would be just a few feet along from the main bus stop taking school children home in the direction of Lower Sydenham. The location has extremely busy footfall being located next to Boots and pedestrian lights in one direction and the route to Sydenham train station in the other. Under no circumstances, either 24 hour or shorter, should a license be issued.

Objector 17

As a resident of Sydenham, I am writing to object to the application submitted by Merkur Slots to open a venue at 53 Sydenham Road.

I object on the grounds of protecting children and vulnerable people from being harmed by or exposed to gambling and also on the grounds of preventing gambling from being a source of crime and disorder.

Objector 18

As a local Sydenham resident, voter and mother of a young child, I strongly oppose the proposed use of 53 Sydenham Road as a gambling venue.

Having lived opposite Paddy Power on Dartmouth Road in Forest Hill for two years, I have first hand experience of the awfulness of such places.

Sydenham is finally prospering and such venues will bring nothing good to the area and its residents.

Action must be taken to ensure we don't allow gambling venues such as this to open, acting as a source of crime and disorder. We already have more than enough. We also have a duty of care to protect children and vulnerable persons within our community from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

Objector 19

I'm writing to voice an objection to the application from Merkur Slots for a Bingo Premises Licence at 53 Sydenham Road.

It's my understanding that the proposal is for a largely unstaffed operation with press-button entry on the door. And that while this application may not be for a 24 hour premises, many existing Merkur Slot premises are 'open' 24 hours per day – such as in Bromley

Opening this type of business would be damaging and degrading for the community and risk increasing crime and disorder in the Sydenham area. You only have to do a quick search online to discover how many crimes are already associated with this same chain of gambling businesses in other areas across the UK.

This is especially more worrying since these establishments are known to be minimally staffed. This could not only lead to vulnerable people being put at risk and harmed by gambling, but it could mean that this premises becomes a hub for dangerous people.

While the licensing application may not be for a 24 hour premises right now, there is also the threat of this being changed in the future.

As a resident of Sydenham, the possibility of increasing chances of harmful behaviour makes me really worried for my own safety as well as that of other women and vulnerable people who walk down the high street every day, going to and from the station.

Objector 20

As local residents we have heard from social media that the old Santander bank site on Sydenham road is to become a 24 hour slot machine arcade.

We mainly wish to object on the grounds that young adults and vulnerable people will be attracted to this type of 24 hour establishment and in turn have a negative impact on their lives and on this part of south London. Furthermore the gambling addicts and petty criminals who will be rubbing shoulders with young people is a warning sign.

The betting shop addicts will also be using the arcade - there are many betting shops in Sydenham - is this why Merkur have designs on our high street?

Our many decades of experience working in education have seen how these kind of places are magnets to the young and impressionable and ,as school children from several secondary schools in the area flood the highstreet in the afternoons post school and lunch times ,to the chicken shops and Subway etc this would be another place for them to 'hang out'. In turn where the young gather, often then county lines groomers and drug dealers also target , thus developing a myriad of further issues in its wake.

On a simpler level we would not even be comfortable walking past this shop in the evening coming back from Sydenham station. It is a complete anomaly to our environment and to the high street.

Further evidence may be exemplified in this article in a national newspaper where drug dealers launder their money through slot machines.

<https://amp.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/nov/08/gambling-machines-drug-money-laundering-bookies>

We have lived here for over 20 years and we have some amazing original retailers and we need more of the vibrant variety of premises on the high street to balance out the overload of nail bars which seem to come in all the time. But a slot machine arcade is not one that is welcome to us and all the neighbours we have spoken to.

We believe it would be very short-sighted to allow a licence for this business ,not least for the reasons cited above and the resulting impact on council funds to sort out the crime it would inevitably attract by its very nature.

We would like some reassurance that Lewisham licensing are going to make us as residents continue to feel safe and that there is a wider acceptance of the impact such an establishment would have on the young and the vulnerable.

Objector 21

I am a resident of **XXXXX** and my young family and I enjoy Sydenham High Street and the shops and cafes that it has to offer. We are glad to see many new businesses opening that contribute greatly to the community like Leo's, Blackbird Bakery and Blossom & Threads. And also appreciate the longstanding shops that help the area retain its character. But we can't help but notice the 20m stretch of road that hosts three bookmakers. Given the issues the UK faces with gambling addiction I would personally be happy not to see any on our high streets, but to have three is certainly overkill and adds nothing to the area. I now understand the council is considering giving a license to a 24-hour slot machine shop in the same small

area. Gambling is a significant and pernicious problem for households across London and the UK. That we should dedicate so much of our public spaces to the promotion of these companies completely fails vulnerable people in our society that we should be protecting. Slot machines are a particular issue with their addictive gamification of gambling (at particularly bad odds) and bright lights that are particularly attractive to young children. The shop would not enhance our area, nor would it contribute meaningfully to local employment but would add another late night area for anti social behaviour and the exploitation of vulnerable members of our society and children. Our area is developing and we are building a really nice community of young families, I truly believe it would be a backwards step to give a license to Mekur Slots and turn our high street into a gambling strip.

Objector 22.

I am writing to object to the proposed slot machine business at 53 Sydenham Road. It is a business which will not add to the fabric of Sydenham road and its community but take away from it.

It is not a business which adds to the commmunity like a cafe, shop or even a bar would.

We already have multiple gambling shops in Sydenham road (which I also think detracts from the community). A slot machine is not what the community needs.

The council should be taking a hood hard look at what the people of the community want and need from their high street (more smaller independent shops) instead of grating licenses for places that will strip the road of a sense of community.

Objector 23

I am writing to object to the application to open a gambling premises at 53 Sydenham Road. There are already an excessive number of betting shops on this road and a bingo/gambling/slot machine shop would be detrimental to local residents.

This is a family area. I live around the corner with my 11-year-old and 14-year-old children. I am concerned that having this kind of shop in close proximity could be tempting to them on the way home from school, introducing them to gambling.

I am very alarmed to hear that it could even be open 24 hours, and worried by the idea of people who are out of pocket wandering around these streets at night, potentially with gambling addictions which may lead them to criminal activities and violence in what is a family area, to fuel their addiction.

I am also concerned to hear it could be unstaffed some of the time. Surely this is extremely unethical and irresponsible.

Please do not grant this license.

Objector 24

I have seen that German company Merkur Slots are proposing to use the premises at 53 Sydenham Road for a slot machine / gambling store.

I feel that this would not be a good addition to building a safe, sustainable and productive high street.

There is evidence that such premises, often open late at night or in some cases for 24 hours, become sites for criminal activity and can contribute to issues of crime and disorder.

There is also evidence of how gambling is affecting many young people and having a store open in the high street is bound to encourage young people to gamble. See the Gambling Commissions report;

<https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/publication/young-people-and-gambling-2023>

“Over half of young people had seen or heard gambling advertising via online or offline platforms (Online: 53 percent; Offline: 55 percent). This represents a significant decline in exposure to gambling advertisements since last year (2022 findings: Online: 63 percent; Offline: 66 percent). Young people were most likely to report seeing gambling advertising on television (47 percent) or on an app (45 percent).

Most (80 percent) young people who spent their own money gambling in the last 12 months, did so because they regard it as a fun thing to do. Less than one in five (17 percent) agree that gambling makes them feel happy, more (29 percent) disagreed that it made them happy, and a similar proportion (28 percent) were unsure either way.”

I very much hope that Lewisham will not approve the license request.

Objector 25

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> I am aware that LB Lewisham are considering granting a licence for Merkur Slots to take up a shop space on Sydenham Road. This is an atrocious idea and will lead to increased anti-social behaviour in the area. As a responsible borough, you should be finding ways to prevent gambling from being a source of Crime and Disorder, which this will be, and ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way, so as to protect children and other vulnerable people from being harmed and exploited by gambling and criminal gangs.

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> I object to this, and urge you to not grant the licence.

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Objector 26

House of carpets and curtains
57 Sydenham Road Sydenham SE26 5E

I am sending this email regarding the plans to open Merkur slots at 23 Sydenham Road SE26. I strongly object to this business opening. I am a local resident of Sydenham and working 2 doors away from its location. What with it being unmannd it will create problems and entice criminality to the area example alcohol, drugs, and burglary. It will affect the customer flow into the shop I work in and will cause the small business to close which has been in Sydenham for over 35 years.

Objector 27

I am a local resident (XXXXXX) and I object to the proposed 24 hour gambling shop/slot machine site proposed for 53 Sydenham Road. I think this will be harmful to society and that Lewisham Council should seek to protect its residents/local population from gambling. I have a young family and am not comfortable with this sort of establishment and the potential problems/harm it may cause.

Objector 28

I am writing to lodge my objection to this site being turned into 24 hour slot machine premises.

During these times of austerity this site could become addictive to vulnerable persons and children leading them to be harmed or exploited by gambling.

As a 24 hour site this could become a source of crime and disorder, Sydenham High Street is delicate balance of residents and businesses, having this type of business operating will change the fabric of the local area.

There is already a gambling establishment on Sydenham High Street we do no need any more.

Objector 29

I would like to object to this application. I am a local resident in SE26 with 3 teenage children and we all frequent Sydenham High Street on a regular basis.

The grounds of my objection are as follows

1. The operation of such a store would encourage crime and disorder on the high street. I understand it will be open 24 hours a day and will be largely unstaffed
2. The operation of such a store would not protect children and other vulnerable people from being harmed or exploited by gambling. In fact it would do the opposite. The high street is a busy route for school children travelling to and from school. Such a store will simply draw these children in.

3. I also note that as a council you have an obligation to seek to prevent exposure to harmful gambling products and practices:



Tackling gambling related harm: A whole council approach

local.gov.uk

The opening of this store would be wholly at odds with this obligation.

Objector 30

We object to this application.

Merkur Slots has applied under the Gambling Act 2005 for a Bingo Premises Licence at **53 Sydenham Road** (the shop previously run by Santander).

The site will be owned by German company Merkur and operated by Eyas Gaming Limited, a company based in Malta.

The proposal is for a largely unstaffed operation with press-button entry on the door. Many Merkur Slot premises are 'open' 24 hours per day. If there are objections by the licensing committee to granting a 24 hour licence, Merkur may run the business for a number of months and then re-apply, challenging the committee to produce evidence of 'harm'.

The Sydenham Society has received a number of objections from local Sydenham Road retailers and Sydenham residents and intends to object strongly to this application.

We think it is bad news for the area and our objections are as follows

- * To prevent gambling from being a source of Crime & Disorder
- * To ensure that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way
- * To protect children & other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling

Objector 31

I am writing to object to the application for a Bingo Premises Licence for the above premises. I am a local resident living at Westbourne Road and I am worried that if the licence is granted the premises may become a source of crime and disorder. This is all the more likely as I understand the premises will be largely unstaffed. I am also concerned that children and other vulnerable people may be harmed or exploited by gambling.

Objector 32 address not provided

Objector 33

I would like in the strongest terms to register my objection to Merkur Slots application to open a slot machine business at 53 Sydenham Road.

This is a decent high street, with businesses seeking to up the quality of what is on offer to the people of Sydenham. The Council are doing their best to raise standards in the street with expensive planting and pedestrianising projects.

The very last thing that is wanted is a business that would frustrate these endeavours. A slot machine business would attract crime in its environs. The people who would seek to play the machines should be helped in their dangerous path to gambling addiction by NOT having such a premises.

Nor should children and vulnerable people be exposed to low-level gambling.

At present Sydenham Road does not have alcoholics and beggars as in other parts of Lewisham Borough. I could see that changing rapidly if Lewisham Council passes this application.

Please do your bit for us, and speak out in Council AGAINST this application.

Objector 34

I am writing to formally lodge a complaint / objection to the proposal of a slot machine business opening up on Sydenham High Street. I have a number of reasons...

1. The implementation of such an institution in the area - particularly an unmanned one - opens up the risk of crime and disorder in relation to gambling in our community.
2. There are many children and young people in the area who would be negatively impacted and/or influenced by the presence of such a "business".
3. In keeping with the development of the area, promoting gambling is a huge step backwards. Using the retail space for a more productive and healthy business that

actually provides needed goods or services to local residents would be a better use of the space, especially one that could provide local jobs.

Please keep me updated on any further developments.

Objector 35

I am a resident of Bishopsthorpe Road, approximately half a mile from the intended location. Number 53 Sydenham Road is sited within the Thorpes Conservation Area, designated in 2000 and extended to include various parts of Sydenham Road in 2007.

I understand that there are very narrow grounds on which an application of this type can be refused. However I would point out that Ground 3 - **protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling** - is particularly relevant in this case.

The core shopping area of Sydenham Road is situated within a compact network of residential streets full of family housing. Girton, Tannsfeld, Newlands Park and Homecroft Roads are all situated immediately to the south; Mayow, Earlsthorpe, Dukesthorpe, Princethorpe, Kingsthorpe, Queensthorpe, Bishopsthorpe and Silverdale are to the north. These roads are tightly packed with family homes of all types and tenures, with a large number of children and young people in the area.

Other Merkur Slots locations tend to be in major town centres away from residential streets, eg the branches in both Lewisham and Bromley High Streets. The provision of an adult gambling centre in Sydenham Road will expose young people to the possibility of harm and exploitation from gambling as set out in Ground 3. The premises are within a few feet of a bus stop used by school students travelling to and from local secondary schools, namely Sydenham School, Sydenham High and Forest Hill Boys.

I therefore respectfully request that this application is refused; the example copied below from Enfield provides a precedent for refusal.

Enfield Council precedent

Enfield Council recently refused an application for a similar operation, this time to go into a former betting shop not a bank (Santander) as is the case in Sydenham.

Of note are the comments in point 4 – I consider the case for rejection of this application is stronger given the former Santander premises were not used for gambling and the application might bring problems that previously did not exist.

"Last year under public pressure the Licensing Sub-committee was due to reconsider its decision, but the threat of legal action led it to back down. However, several months later it rejected Future Leisure Ltd's application for a games arcade in another part of Enfield. Its decision states:

'1 The licensing sub-committee [LSC] was not persuaded that the risk assessment undertaken by the applicant was sufficient to protect children, young people & vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by

gambling, especially as the premises are close to many local schools & the train station meaning that many people would pass it regularly.

2 Following all representations by the interested parties, especially IP1 & IP2, the LSC were persuaded that these premises will add to/ increase the existing problems of crime & anti-social disorder within this ward.

3 The LSC were also very anxious that the pavement outside the premises is very narrow making it difficult if not impossible to patrol, as the applicant has suggested they will.

4 The LSC acknowledges that prior to this application there was a betting shop on the premises, which operated without problems. **However the LSC believe that these premises as an adult gaming centre with longer hours would bring problems that did not previously exist."**

Objector 36

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> I am writing to you to communicate my strong objection to Merkur Slots' application for a Bingo Premises Licence at 53 Sydenham Road.

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> The arrival of this business would be seriously detrimental to our high street, and will put children and other vulnerable persons at risk of being harmed or exploited by gambling. I am also concerned that slot machines in our neighbourhood would lead to gambling being a source of crime and disorder in the area.

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> I strongly urge you to reject this application for the good of the community.

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Objector 37

Merkur Slots has applied under the Gambling Act 2005 for a Bingo Premises Licence at 53 Sydenham Road (the shop previously run by Santander)

I wish to object.

There are already betting shops on Sydenham Road and slot machines in pubs so those who wish to gamble can already. The more gambling opportunities there are, the more likely it is that those who struggle to control their gambling will not be able to (more temptation and somewhere new to gamble if they are barred elsewhere or have voluntarily banned themselves). Also, if this outlet is operated 24 hours with minimal staff as other sites operated by this company are, there is even less supervision and even more likelihood of vulnerable adults (addicts or people prone to addiction) and underage children gambling. Even if it isn't open 24 hours they are still at risk by the mere presence of gambling premises: these operations are designed to

be attractive and lure people in (Bingo in particular is positioned as 'harmless fun') but we know that staff (just as in off licenses) will not always be scrupulous in checking customers ages. Many people in Sydenham, which is a poor area despite a few nice streets, are particularly vulnerable to being lured into gambling because of poverty, which only exacerbates their poverty and in many cases debt. Gambling is a predatory industry with a cavalier approach to safe-guarding. I therefore object on the grounds of the need to protect children & other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling

Gambling is inherently a source of crime and disorder - not necessarily at the gambling premises itself but because it creates debt and fuels poor mental health linked to violent crime and domestic abuse. People in debt are more likely to commit crime due to lack of money or to suffer violence at the hands of their creditors. If there is any late night opening, whether or not 24 hours, then there is a good chance customers will also have been drinking, increasing the risk of violence and other crime at the actual premises and also in Sydenham Road. A report by the Howard League (<https://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Holding-it-all-together-and-picking-up-the-pieces-Womens-experiences-of-gambling-and-crime.pdf>) has shown that aside from links to financial crimes, there is growing evidence that gambling can be linked to other types of offending including domestic abuse. I therefore also object on the grounds of prevent gambling from being a source of Crime & Disorder.

Objector 38

I am urging the rejection an application for a Bingo Premises Licence submitted by Merkur Slots UK Ltd for the premises at 53 Sydenham Road, SE26 5EY. I propose we follow the precedent set by Enfield Council, where a similar application was rejected due to concerns about crime, anti-social behaviour, and potential harm to children.

I support the reasons outlined by the Sydenham Society but would like to highlight:

1. The venue is situated in an area regularly visited by families and vulnerable adults, potentially exposing children to gambling activities with the neon lights and their intentionally enticing shop front. Merkur Slots locations typically operate in major town centre sites away from residential streets. This local and more residential high street location is unsuitable for an adult gambling centre that could harm young people. The premises are close to a bus stop used by school children traveling to and from local secondary schools, increasing the risk of children's exposure to gambling.
2. The potential broader impact on the community, including the exacerbation of financial struggles during the current cost of living crisis.
3. The possibility for the establishment to become a hub for crime and disorder. The transformation of a bank into an adult 24 hour gaming centre could introduce anti-social behaviour to the area.

Councillor Jack Lavery

Labour and Co-operative Party Councillor for Sydenham

Objector 39

I object to the proposed open slot machine business at 53 Sydenham Road.

I object for the following reasons:

Given that there is a busy bus stop close by it will encourage anti-social behaviour and encourage young and vulnerable people to gamble.

An open slot machine business is not compatible with the type of business that exist and should be encouraged in the High Street. Only recently a number of betting shops closed in the High Street and the proposal would reverse the trend of discouraging gambling premises on the High Street.

A 24hour business would encourage crime on the high street especially at night putting local people and customers at risk.

Please refuse the application.

Objector 41

Could i please register my objection to the above application which I understand is for a 24 hour slot / gambling premises on the former site of - ironically - Santander bank.

Speaking as someone who has previously lost everything to a gambling addiction, I strongly object to this sort of premises going up in the local high street. This will be a magnet of crime, despair and misery. I've dealt with my issues but this will cause untold problems for others. In addition to blighting the streetscene. Of all the businesses that could trade from here, a 24hr slot machine palace, really ? You can do better guys

Please refuse this proposal

Objector 42

Please let me know if there is anything else we can do to prevent this disastrous proposal.

>

I have just heard of the scary proposal for a slot machine business to occupy 53 Sydenham Road . This is a dreadful idea and frankly the last thing Sydenham needs.

> Gambling attracts crime and disorder and We(society) need to protect children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

> Local people will have strong feelings against this proposal.

> Please tell me going forward how else our voices may be heard ?

Please let me know if there is anything else we can do to prevent this disastrous proposal.

Objector 43

I wish to object to the application to open a slot machine business at 53 Sydenham Road. I believe that such a business might harm or exploit children and other vulnerable people. Forest Hill School, a boys' secondary school, is just a 15-minute walk from the premises. I fear that a gambling venue would attract some of its pupils.

Objector 44

I am writing to object to the proposed gambling licence on Sydenham high street by Merkur Slots.

I believe that this proposed business would bring crime into our neighborhood and encourage disorderly behaviour late into the night by people who may have been drinking. This will create an extremely unpleasant atmosphere for our neighbourhood both day and night.

It will contribute to making both our high street and community an unsafe place for children for two reasons:

- 1- sending out a powerful and dangerous message to children and other vulnerable people that gambling is easily accessible who may be exploited, and
- 2- by attracting disorderly behaved individuals who will be a dangerous influence on children and the rest of our community.

Thank you for taking my objections onboard.

Objector 45

I'd like to object to the application by Merkur Slots for a Bingo Premises Licence at 53 Sydenham Road.

I have been a Sydenham resident for 4 years now and I have seen an improvement in the amenities offered to us locals during this time. Another gambling venue certainly isn't appealing and doesn't do any good to the many young families living in Sydenham.

Also, Sydenham Road at night is not the safest place and I am worried that a 24/7 gambling venue may become a focal point of people in a heightened state of mind. Adding to that, the presence of licenced shops selling alcohol practically all night in the area would exacerbate the problem of street drinking on Sydenham Road and adjacent streets, as well as possible loitering and unsociable behaviour.

My family is unfortunately well acquainted with these behaviours due to living across a betting shop for a few years... and that's not even a 24/7 operation.

Furthermore, I witness drug exchanges on a regular basis and I fear that a business like Merkur Slots would encourage illicit drug dealing and consumption, due to its addictive nature and the highs and lows driven by gambling outcomes.

While the standard of what a good high street looks like are not objective, but I feel strongly that a gambling establishment has nothing valuable to offer to our community, nor can serve as a healthy example for younger and more impressionable minds.

Objector 47

To prevent gambling from being a source of crime and disorder

53 Sydenham Road is very close to a busy bus stop which is outside my shop, the House of Carpets and Curtains at 57 Sydenham Road. The pavement is narrow and often crowded with waiting passengers. I am very concerned that there is a safety risk because of the larger footfall outside and potential for overcrowding and spillage onto the road. The pavement here is in constant use and is an already busy route to Sydenham railway station. It is already quite noisy and we do not want any more noise from the shop trading 24 hours a day.

Sydenham high street is a problem area with street begging, street drinkers, homeless people who regularly meet in Queensthorpe Square which is next to 59 Sydenham Road and I do not want any more anti-social behaviour in the area from gamblers hanging around outside 53 Sydenham Road 24 hours a day.

The Sydenham Neighbourhood Policing team regularly patrol the high street but are short of resources and work on a shift pattern. When the team are not on duty there is limited support for anti-social behaviour, violence and public disorder.

To protect children and other vulnerable persons being harmed or exploited by gambling

The high street is used every day by many school children from the local schools. I have concerns that children and other vulnerable residents should not be harmed or exploited by gambling in public commercial premises by having this activity on the high street. I am concerned that students under 18, vulnerable people and those with mental health and/or addiction problems could be encouraged to use the premises to gamble by the fact that the slot machines will be on the high street.

This type of venue is totally unsuitable in this location in a busy high street with people families and vulnerable people living in flats above the shops. The high street is mainly retail meeting the needs of residents and there are no other shops along this parade that open 24 hours a day. The three bookmakers further down the road close at reasonable times and there is a bingo hall at Cobbs Corner.

The Sydenham Centre is opposite at 44 Sydenham Road with Ignition Brewery on the ground floor that provides employment and training for people with learning disabilities. Upstairs are the offices of Sydenham Arts and Montage Theatre Arts who use the hall and stage for theatre productions. Sydenham Arts provide classes for vulnerable residents as well as a programme of Warm Welcomes which benefit

residents in difficult financial circumstances whether because of high energy bills, unemployment, low incomes, or debt, and people with mental health problems. It is in the interests of all these vulnerable people and children that the town centre is a safe, sustainable public place.

I think a 24 hour Adult Gaming Centre will damage the economic and commercial life of the high street. I know customers who struggle on low incomes and in difficult economic circumstances vulnerable people are prone to gamble to try to ease their financial difficulties. Please do not allow this centre to open.

Also over the last few years being a shop owner and talking to other businesses in Sydenham road, we have all noticed the decrease in people using the high street, and I just feel a business like this would harm the area even more, maybe forcing businesses' to close or relocating making the high even worse.

Objector 48

> I would like to submit my objection to the siting of a 24 hour generally unmanned slot machine shop at 53 Sydenham High street. Reasons for my objection are as follows:

>

> - 24 hour opening, and at times unmanned, would encourage misuse of the premises (drug use etc) and as a consequence, attraction to the area of associated, unwelcome activities (crime and disorder).

>

> - Gambling on slot machines can introduce persons to other types of addictive gambling and lead to all the harms associated with gambling (see below).

>

> - Gambling in any form can be addictive and can harm a persons individual mental health. Finances, etc. This can lead to other problems in life (relationships, housing, work). It also affects other people connected to the gambler (colleagues, family, etc). This can lead to pressure on other services in the area (NHS. Social Services).

>

> - The high street fights hard to maintain a friendly demeanour and its use as a thriving high street with cafes, grocers, butchers, etc. We already have betting shops on the high street. An additional 24 hour slot machine shop in a prominent busy part of the street does not: help to promote the high street; encourage people to use the high street; or to attract other trading shops to the area. A lot of the local population, including young families, would be deterred from using the high street and lead them to shop elsewhere. That in turn, would lead people to travelling to other high streets/amenities which encourages more traffic etc. We need to promote the local high street and make it attractive to use.

>

> - The high street has a lot of foot traffic from local secondary school students. There is also a number of 'care in the community' residences in the area who house vulnerable people who use the high street. Easy access for these young and vulnerable people to gambling is not a good idea due to all the problems associated with gambling. There is a need to protect such people from being harmed or exploited by such gambling.

>

> - The Local Government Association (LGA) Report published in October 2023 indicates that councils should seek to prevent exposure at a population level to harmful gambling products and practices. The siting of an unmanned, 24 hour open, unmanned slot machine shop would be harmful for all the reasons detailed above.
>

Objector 49

I am writing to you to express my strong objection to a proposed Adult Gaming Centre on [53 Sydenham Road, London SE26 4AF](#).

I am worried that this gambling shop will become a source of crime, anti-social behaviour and public disorder, especially as it will be open 24 hours and only have minimal staff.

As the father of a young child, I worry that this betting shop risks children being drawn into, exploited and harmed by gambling, and also pose a greater risk to those who are more vulnerable in our community because of their socio-economic status: "People at the greatest risk of harm are more likely to be unemployed and living in more deprived areas, have poor health, low life satisfaction and wellbeing, and have an indication of probable psychological health problems."

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review-summary--2#:~:text=Prevalence%20of%20gambling%20and%20harms,by%20an%20others%20people's%20gambling>.

Speaking to my neighbours, I know they are worried, too. There are many other ways this space can be used to benefit our community.

Objector 50

I have been a resident of Girton Road, Sydenham for 37 years and I strongly oppose the opening of the amusement centre in Sydenham High Street.

I believe that the opening of this establishment will increase the likelihood of anti social behaviour in the area and problems with parking, which has already been an issue for a long period of time.

Furthermore, it will not help those who already have an issue with gambling addiction.

I hope my concerns are taken not consideration.

Objector 51

I am writing to object to the licensing of Merkur Slots at 53 Sydenham Road on the following grounds:

- To prevent gambling from being a source of crime and disorder
- To protect children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed by our exposed to exposed to gambling

There are already a number of gambling establishments on the high street that make it feel less safe - not least because people drink alcohol outside of them, blocking the pavement and arguing and/or shouting.

Any more of these businesses would make Sydenham feel saturated by gambling and unfriendly towards families. As the mother of young children this is not the direction I want my community to be moving in.

Objector 52

> I strongly object to the licence application for a slot machine shop in Sydenham High street. This will drive up crime related incidents and is harmful for young people in the local area.

>

> Please ensure that this application is denied.

>

Objector 53

> I write to express my objection to the granting of a licence to Mekur Slots to open a gaming / slot machine business at 53 Sydenham Road.

> Sydenham Road already has three betting shop premises on this stretch of the High St and there appears to be no requirement for another outlet to encourage gambling. I believe this may also be operated on a push button entry facility enabling users to access on a 24 hour basis.

> As a resident of Sydenham and living very close Sydenham Road, I believe granting a licence to a premises that promotes easy access to slot machines is an inappropriate and detrimental use of a property situated on a high street surrounded by residential properties. The premises is adjacent to a very busy bus stop, frequented by children from local secondary schools who are potentially likely to use the facilities.

> Sydenham Rd businesses are slowly returning after the effect of the pandemic, with more independent shops and outlets in place to create a community and pleasant environment . The opening of a gaming facility would not be in keeping nor add any interest or footfall for other businesses.

> I hope you will consider these points and look forward to hearing from you.

Objector 54

I am writing to express my profound objection to the proposed establishment of a 24-hour slot machine shop on Sydenham high street. I believe that such an establishment poses significant risks to the community, its residents, and the overall well-being of our neighbourhood.

First and foremost, the extended operating hours of a slot machine shop create an environment that encourages excessive gambling, potentially leading to addiction-related issues among vulnerable individuals. The accessibility and constant availability of such establishments can contribute to a rise in gambling-related problems, adversely affecting the mental health and financial stability of our community members.

Furthermore, the introduction of a 24-hour slot machine shop may attract an undesirable clientele, increasing the likelihood of criminal activities in the vicinity. Research has shown a correlation between gambling establishments and an upsurge in criminal incidents, including theft, fraud, and disorderly conduct. Our local high street should be a safe space for families, residents, and businesses, and introducing a facility that may compromise this safety is unacceptable.

In addition to the social concerns, the potential negative impact on property values cannot be overlooked. The presence of a 24-hour slot machine shop may deter potential homebuyers and negatively influence the perception of our community. This, in turn, could result in a decline in property values and hinder the growth and development of the local real estate market.

Moreover, there is a moral obligation to protect the most vulnerable members of our community, such as minors and individuals struggling with addiction. The establishment of a 24-hour slot machine shop contradicts our responsibility to create an environment that fosters the well-being of all residents, including those who may be more susceptible to the harmful effects of gambling.

In light of these concerns, I respectfully request that the relevant authorities conduct a thorough review of the potential consequences and consider the long-term impact on our community.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and trust that you will prioritize the well-being and interests of our community and deny this application.

Objector 55

I have been made aware of an application for a 24 hour slot machine business on our high street (next to the huge vape store you have allowed to be newly opened).

I am not sure why Sydenham Council is taking such an active part in the degradation of its own high street, residents and children who travel past these places, but I would like to lodge an objection to this business application and plead with you to take a better interest and care in what is happening on Sydenham's high street.

I object for the following reasons:

To prevent gambling from being a source of Crime & Disorder

To ensure that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way

To protect children & other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling

Objector 56

I'm writing to object to the granting of a bingo premises licence at 53 Sydenham Road. I am a resident on connecting Girton Road and am a daily user of the high street by foot.

I am already concerned at the anti-social behaviour that the existing gambling establishments on Sydenham Road (William Hill, Paddypower, Ladbrokes) attract, and I am concerned that a further gambling premises - especially one with a 24 licence - is only going to make this situation worse.

As it stands, in the past two weeks alone I have been harassed while walking along the high street by inebriated individuals loitering outside the above gambling establishments, including being shouted at across the street by a man stood outside the William Hill betting shop. It's threatening and it does not contribute to a positive environment for users of the high street.

I strongly urge you to not grant a licence to a further gambling establishment, or at the very least severely restrict its hours of operation.

Objector 57

I have been made aware of an application by "Merkur Slots" to open a slot machine shop at 53 Sydenham road. This operation is apparently mostly going to be an unstaffed slot machine shop running 24 hours a day.

I object on the basis that we have three care homes for people with mental health issues within a short walk of the proposed site - Apex Lodge, Lawrie Park Lodge and Woodham Care Home. We also have three staffed gaming shops already on Sydenham high street - Ladbrokes, William Hill and Paddy Power. This ensures adequate supply of gaming options which are open until 10pm and they are all staffed to ensure that vulnerable people are kept safe.

Objector 58.

> I would like to object to the above application for the following reasons:

>

> 1. I am concerned that having such a premises in the middle of a busy high street is a potential source of crime and disorder.

>

> 2. That having an unsupervised and long hours operation, again in a busy high street area is a risk to children and other vulnerable persons being exploited or harmed by gambling.

>

> 3. That allowing such a premises is contrary to the principles stated in the Local Government Association report "Tackling Gambling related harms" that "councils should seek to prevent exposure at a population level to harmful gambling products and practices."

>

> For these reasons I would ask that this application be rejected.

>

Objector 59

> I'm a resident in Sydenham and live very close to the high street (Sydenham Road).

> I would like to strongly object to the application by Merkur Slots to install gambling machine at 53 Sydenham Road. Sydenham Road is a busy high street visited by a lot of kids. Children take buses to / from schools and I can see them going to the shops after they get out of buses. Introducing a gambling outlet in such a prominent place will just increase the risk of children (and vulnerable adults) being drawn into the world of gambling. In addition, gambling can lead to increased crime and disturbances, which is already high in the area.

>

> Thank you for your consideration.

Objector 60

I wish to make my objections known the gambling license application by Merkur Slots for the premises at 53 Sydenham Road, SE26.

My grounds for objection are as follows...

- To prevent gambling from being a source of Crime & Disorder - I believe a business of this nature will lead to an increase in crime and disorder in the local area & due to the 24 hour nature of the business it will make the area feel unsafe, especially at night.
 - To ensure that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way - I believe this will be compromised due to the largely unmanned nature of the business.
 - To protect children & other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling - it is generally accepted that gambling impacts the most vulnerable members of society and funding to help combat this is at an all time low. There is already a glut of bookmakers etc. in the local area and having access to this establishment 24 hours a day will only increase the damage done. If the premises are largely unmanned, what safeguards are there from stopping under 18's accessing the site?
-

Objector 61

> I am writing to express my strong objection to Merkur Slots' application for a Bingo Premises Licence at 53 Sydenham Road.

>

> This business would be detrimental to our high street, and puts children and other vulnerable persons at risk of being harmed or exploited by gambling. I am also concerned that slot machines in our neighbourhood would lead to gambling being a source of crime and disorder in the area.

>

> I urge you to reject this application for the good of the community.

Objector 62

I'm objecting to the application for a licence for Merkur Slots to be given a property on Sydenham Road and be given permission for the change of use of the ground floor of 53 Sydenham Road. I will send objections to Planning on similar grounds.

I object on these grounds:

1. CRIME AND DISORDER

Gambling is almost always a potential or actual source of crime and disorder due to the fact that users are vulnerable and affected by poverty and the need for money to gamble. Gambling is an addictive pass-time as has been well documented.

24/7 trading doesn't exist on the rise and would be an unwelcome presence. It will cause noise and potential disorder and the street drinkers who are around will be drawn in not least when it is cold or wet. There have been instances where empty properties have been broken into due the need for shelter.

2. GAMBLING IS CONDUCTED IN A FAIR AND OPEN WAY. I don't accept that this premises is ensuring that Gambling is conducted in a 'fair - and open way nor see how it can. The point of the place us to make a profit. If people are vulnerable what safeguarding is there? What are the rules and how will they be applied? Most gamblers are already addicted or prone to Gambling.

If Merkur is the only place open it has an unfair advantage. Other established Gambling establishment close in the evenings and keep regular hours.

Crowding and congregating on the street will cause affray and conflicts. Other closed properties will be at risk. Other residents using the road to get home or continue journeys could be adversely affected.

There are houses on the road that are lived in by residents - i. e none commercial properties. Going home late at night could be more unsafe. Noise and disruption could affect their sleep.

3. TO PROTECT CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE. Young People should not be tempted to use such facilities and not face situations where they can be pressurised by other adults into taking part, lending or borrowing money. The enticement of winning will encourage more use. The likelihood of winning is extremely low. Gambling is addictive. There have been instances of violence to young people in Sydenham. This is a potential hotspot for trouble. Many YP don't have official ID. There may be fraud taking place and trading other counterfeit goods in order to gain fake ID.

The premises have smoked glass which is out of keeping with the other shops on the road. Most shoppers use the shops for regular purposes - food, cafes, chemists, provisions, medicines etc. The look of Merkur implies membership and is unwelcoming and unfriendly. It isn't accessible to all.

Increased poverty and insecurity for those affected by cost of living difficulties will not be helped by such a facility and will only deplete their limited income.

I think their application(s) should be turned down. There is no place for them here, in my judgement.

Objector 63

Objection to Merkur Slots application to open slot machine business at 53 Sydenham Rd

Gambling is a major public health issue; it is a serious problem that is worsening in the UK and locally. Gambling affects not only the individual but families and the wider community.

In 2019 the Department of Health and Social Care commissioned Public Health England to undertake a review of the evidence of gambling harms. The evidence is clear, why are Lewisham Council considering this application.

I object to this proposal and hope that Lewisham Council will prioritise and protect the health and well-being of their community in turning down this application.

To Protect Children and Other Vulnerable Persons from Being Harmed or Exploited by Gambling

Gambling organisations are preying on people's addictions and encouraging gambling addiction. A slot machine gambling set up appears to target vulnerable members of our community and may well be the beginning of addiction that will lead to serious gambling harm.

Harms from gambling include financial harm, debt, employment risks, and can lead to bankruptcy. Gambling can impact directly on children and families when Gambling can cause relationship breakdowns, social isolation, desperation, and suicide.

The burden of gambling harms impact those already facing disadvantage and will serve to widen existing health inequalities.

Gambling impacts and puts additional stress on children and vulnerable families, when money needed to provide basic food, warmth and clothing is spent on gambling. When gambling causes relationship breakdowns, it adversely affects children's mental and emotional health as well as physical health. Rent money gambled away may lead to homelessness and families split up.

This proposed gambling facility is on the High Street, next door to Boots the Chemist and a family run curtain shop right by a busy bus stop used by children and young people travelling to and from school and college, it could therefore normalise gambling and make it seem respectable and part of community life making it something young people would want to join in as soon as old enough. Supporting the drawing in of young and/or vulnerable people into the world of gambling and addiction.

To Prevent Gambling from Being a Source of Crime and Disorder

This part of Sydenham High Street with the pocket park end to Queensthorpe Road tends to get vulnerable people and people with substance misuse addictions congregating. This is not going to help but is in fact likely to worsen the issue and make it feel even less safe for women in particular travelling at home late at night.

To Ensure Gambling Is Conducted in a Fair and Open Way

This venue seems to be mainly unsupervised or staffed, I am unsure how it will be possible in such a venue to ensure gambling is conducted in a fair and open or safe way.

Retired Public Health Specialist Practitioner

Objector 64

As a Sydenham resident for over 30 years I am writing to you to register my opposition to the application for Bingo premises at the above. I can see no justifiable reason for allowing this to be granted in an area where there is significant issues relating to poverty as this seems to me to be only viable if it successfully encourages those with little to squander what they have. Minimum manning will not lead to any positive outcomes and makes it all that easier to avail those struggling with addiction to succumb. There is also the effect it will have on the area's young population as button entry will not be a difficult security feature for them to overcome and indeed may encourage more to again spend and fall into addiction. There is a reason why betting shops were criticised for having slot machines but at least they were always manned and not 24 hours. Please do not permit this license in any form.

Objector 65.

I hereby object to the application by Merkur/Eyas Gambling to open a premises at 53 Sydenham Road on the grounds of the need to protect children and vulnerable adults.

I live locally and walk down this street many times a week. The location is far from suitable not least as there is a bus stop just outside where many, many children

congregate or pass through daily, over many hours. This presents a clear risk to these children and other vulnerable people who cannot afford to be sucked in by unaffordable and repeat gambling.

With a single staff member it is also implausible that age restrictions and other restrictions on vulnerable people under legislation can be adequately policed/enforced.

Objector 66

I know that moral standing and personal opinion unfortunately won't hold much sway on decisions like this so I will place to one side the fact that gambling preys on those lesser fortunate in society and creates more societal problems rather than adds to the well-being of a community.

That being said, I am not opposed to different/new businesses to the high street (especially in place of a potential long-standing empty unit) as long as they provide something different, useful and contribute to the wider community.

In the case of Merkur slots this is CLEARLY not the case.:

- It is stated that it is largely unpersonneled meaning the community will not hugely benefit from employment opportunity compared to the vast majorities of other possible businesses
- Being 24 hour, this may cause issues with the residents in the immediate vicinity re: noise pollution/other
- Although this could be seen as a "different" type of gambling premises. There are THREE bookmakers - William Hill, Ladbrokes and Paddy Power - all within a 2 minute walk of this premise, each of which are places people are able to gamble and typically have one or more gambling/slot machines in.
- As this is a specific/niche business both in terms of age restrictions and in terms of use by a very narrow specific group of the community, it does not benefit a large amount of the greater community. Those below gambling age (18) can not access it and it is not something that people might generally use - such as a cafe, food shop, general store or many many others.

I sincerely hope my comments and all others, are taken seriously when making decisions for the high street which is generally an independent, well used community resource for all that improves people's daily lives, not detracts from it as I believe this business unfortunately would.

Objector 67

Please do not make my address public; I am purposefully not on the public version of the electoral roll

I wish to raise an objection to a new premises licence under the Gambling Act 2005 being issued at 53 Sydenham Road, London SE26 5EY.

I note the following grounds for objection -

- 1.To prevent gambling from being a source of Crime and Disorder
- 2.To ensure that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way
- 3.To protect children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling

I wish to raise concerns under points 1 and 3 above.

I live on one of the roads just off Sydenham High Street and was very concerned to learn of this proposed development. My husband and I have two young children; we love living in Sydenham because the area feels safe for families. In particular, we enjoy taking our young children to shop on the high street, and feel a responsibility to do so in these challenging times so that we can support the local businesses that make our community so great.

Put simply, we will be less likely to spend time (and money) on the high street if this application is allowed to proceed. I believe that it will negatively alter the dynamic of the high street and make it less family-friendly; it is a fundamentally different proposition to the "traditional" bookmakers already on the high street. In addition to making our local high street far less welcoming for families, you will be aware of the high concentration of schools in Sydenham, and the high street being on the route to or from school for lots of local children, including unaccompanied teenagers. I can see a clear risk that this development will create an opportunity for underage gambling, particularly given the low level of staffing proposed by the developer. With increasing awareness of the long-term risks to both the individual and wider society caused by gambling, I hope the Committee will agree that a bustling high street in an area full of families is an inappropriate location for such a business.

I am concerned that the developer has not properly acknowledged nor mitigated the likely crime and public safety implications of such a development. As a woman, I feel safe and able to walk home from the station at night but I would have to rethink this if this application were allowed to go ahead. Having looked at the application, I am worried that this venue is likely to lead to increased antisocial behaviour, particularly late at night, given this is proposed to be a 24/7 venue. To me, it feels completely different to the rest of the late nighttime economy on the high street, which is made up of a 24/7 gym and a few takeaways. I'm personally worried about what this will mean for me if I need to get home safely from the station at night, and hope that the Council will agree that we need to keep the high street safe for everyone living in the area.

Objector 68

To whom it may concern

I am writing to object to converting 53 Sydenham rd in to a slot machine business. I feel that 24 hour gambling could lead to an increase in crime in the area. I also feel it is unfair on anyone in the area who may have a gambling addiction to have that available. Sydenham is a family area. As a parent I do not want my teenage son to be exposed to it.

Please reject this application.

Objector 69

> I'm writing in objection to the application for gambling license at 53 Sydenham Road. Gambling is a source of, or slippery slope to, crime and disorder. There are many vulnerable people in our community whos livelihoods would be easily threatened by taking up gambling. Additionally we have many young people, young parents, children and other vulnerable persons who could be harmed or exploited by gambling. Parts of Sydenham have been really improving in the last ten years and this feels like a real setback to our high street. Please don't let it go ahead!!!!

>

Objector 70

I am writing to express my strong objection to the proposed opening of a (largely unsupervised) 24-hour gambling establishment at 53 Sydenham Road, SE26. As a local resident, I believe that such a venture poses significant risks to the well-being and safety of our neighbourhood.

Firstly, the extended operating hours of the gambling business raise serious concerns regarding the potential for crime and antisocial behaviour within our area, particularly during the late night and early morning hours. It is widely acknowledged that gambling establishments, especially those operating during unsociable hours, can attract criminal elements and exacerbate antisocial behaviour, including theft, vandalism, and violence. Allowing such a business to operate round the clock would undoubtedly heighten these risks, placing an undue burden on local police and compromising the safety of residents.

Furthermore, the proposal to operate the premises without staff supervision presents a cause for concern. The absence of on-site personnel would create an environment ripe for exploitation, where customers could engage in unsupervised and potentially harmful gambling practices without oversight. No one needs to be in a betting shop at 3am in the morning. This not only undermines the integrity of gambling activities but also exposes vulnerable individuals and their families to exploitation and financial harm. There are numerous studies detailing the serious addictive nature of gambling and the huge burden it places on addicts, their families, the NHS and society at large.

Moreover, the lack of staffing raises significant concerns regarding the protection of children and other vulnerable persons from the harmful effects of gambling. Without adequate supervision, there is a heightened risk of under-18s gaining access to the premises, leading to potential addiction and long-term psychological damage. For young people, gambling is already normalised to a worrying extent - creating easier access to gambling will only worsen this. Additionally, individuals struggling with gambling addiction or other vulnerabilities may find it challenging to seek assistance or support in an unstaffed environment, exacerbating their plight and perpetuating cycles of harm.

Given the low staffing levels, there are also very few job opportunities to be created for the local community.

Local Sydenham residents do not stand to benefit from these proposals. In light of these concerns, I urge the council to reconsider the proposal for a 24-hour gambling business and instead prioritise the well-being and safety of our community. It is imperative that measures be taken to safeguard against the proliferation of crime, ensure the fair and regulated conduct of gambling activities, and protect vulnerable individuals from exploitation and harm.

Thank you for considering my objections to this matter. I trust that the council will act responsibly in the best interests of the community.

Objector 71

>

> To whom it may concern

> I write to express my huge disapproval of allowing a slot machine business in Sydenham. The area is struggling with cost of living issues and this would seriously hinder improvements in the area and lead to further debt.

> Sydenham long term resident

Objector 72

Member of the Sydenham Society

I am writing to object to a license for anytime gambling including 24 hour access to gambling in the previous premises occupied by Santander.

I feel that granting permission for gambling would attract vulnerable and undesirable people into a safe community driven area.

Sydenham has built up a very community friendly town over many years for all ages and we have a duty to all people especially the younger generation to protect them from excessive access to gambling!

We already have sufficient outlets for betting without imported European owners

taking over properties in our High Street for gambling.

I have been brought up and have lived in the Sydenham and surrounding area all my life and I would like to see better use of empty properties other than gambling to add to the best that Sydenham can give to all our residents.

Please do not grant this misguided licensing to owners that add to the vast swindling of money out of new and already hardened gamblers to bring our area down that may cause undesirable crimes in the area that will cause extra expenditure to policing.

It would be far better to give a license to something like a mental/psychology health educational facility, dentist, or even a bank or restaurant take over the premises. Please don't grant this license.

I would like to know what research has been done on this type of access to property use in areas that have it? Has it been profitable for the area? Has it cost more for policing crime? Has it enhanced community? Has it made areas unsafe late at night for robbery?

What are the benefits to the areas?

Objector 73

I wish to object to the application by Merkur/Eyas Gambling to open a premises at 53 Sydenham Road on the grounds of the need to protect children and vulnerable adults.

The site is extremely unsuitable as a busy high street location where it is likely to draw in children and vulnerable people who cannot afford to lose money to gambling. As a site that will operate at times with a single staff member, it will be difficult to police the age restrictions on gambling.

The site is located with a bus stop just outside where large groups of school children congregate daily - there is a huge risk that they will be tempted into the premises.

Objector 74

Having lived in Sydenham for over 30 years and very near the High St, I'm very concerned about the application submitted by Merkur Slots to open a 24/7 Slot Machine business at 53 Sydenham Road and wish to object to it.

Whilst this may provide much need business rates for Lewisham Council, it will certainly do nothing for the local community which already has 3 betting shops - a lot for a very small High St.

Why is it deemed necessary to give permission to another gambling facility?

How many jobs will it actually create?

Who will police that the gambling laws are not being broken and are being administered fairly and legitimately?

Why does it need to open 24/7?

There are a lot of vulnerable people on the High Street - what will be in place to protect them and young people who may be tempted to use such a facility?

Undoubtedly, the High Street as we know has changed, but rather than filling it with all the same shops and businesses, the Council should be making sure it's for everyone.

They should make sure that the facilities proposed will not only enhance the High St, but that they are legitimate and necessary.

A High St. filled with barber shops, nail bars and gambling facilities are not reflective of the needs of the community and the Council should therefore consider rejecting this application.

Objector 75

I wish to register my objection to the proposed opening of a slot machine gambling site at the above location - it is highly likely to attract disorderly and/or criminal behaviour in a residential area, and children and other vulnerable people are at risk of exploitation and harm from ease of access to this site.

The area is frequented by many children of school age and the presence of this site so easily accessible to them, cannot be seen in anyway as beneficial to them or their families, rather to their detriment. There is evidence in an increase in gambling addiction and its harm in children and this does not need to be further encouraged by opening this site. Children frequently use convincing fake ID to buy alcohol or enter other sites and there is no reason to think they will not do so in Merkur as well.

Objector 76

I appreciate you are very busy - so I'll keep this as short as I can.

I'm writing to object to the application regarding the opening a gaming centre at 53 Sydenham Road for the following reasons:

It is right at a bus stop where many schoolchildren, many teenagers, wait for buses (Stop G, Newlands Park).

In the middle of a cost of living crisis adding to the gambling options on the high street is unjustifiable. It can only add to the risk of people being left completely destitute.

As these establishments do not present themselves as conventional bookmakers or casinos, vulnerable members of our community in Lewisham will be drawn to an establishment like this.

Objector 77

I would like to object in the strongest terms to the granting of a license to Merkur to run an unstaffed entry gambling shop at 53 Sydenham Road, a former bank/building Society premises. It is completely unsuitable for a high street in a residential area, and near to a bus stop used by school children, and by returning commuters

This site is also very near Queensthorpe Square, which has already been plagued by drug dealing. Even if the gambling hours are limited when the shop opens, Merkur will use these as a lever to extend them to 24 hour gambling, as they did in Palmers Green and other areas. Gambling is enormously profitable for its facilitators, and imposes heavy costs on the rest of society, it acts as a source of crime and disorder, contributes to mental ill health, and exploits children and vulnerable people. Research shows that gambling can be strongly addictive, and that adolescents are highly vulnerable to psychological distress (1), and that gambling addiction is linked to other psychiatric problems (2). Seeing family members gamble normalises gambling and other risky behaviours for children (3).

Gambling machines offer an addictive and de-personalised experience of gambling. Both Italy and Finland have introduced policies to reduce their numbers and so limit their effects on public health. (4)

Even their users don't think much of Merkur - 71% of reviews on Trustpilot give them 1 out of 5. There are lengthy litanies of complaint from unhappy players on Trustpilot about the excessive demands for documentation to set up an account, and the way odds are stacked against players. Of course, the company needs to make a profit, but it is making it at the expense of the naive and over-optimistic, and apparently, not offering them a satisfactory experience. Merkur do not offer a harmless flutter, just for fun - they offer a sterile, addictive, and harmful experience. We do not want or need them here.

I.J. Towler, BSc, MRSC, PhD

(1) "Understanding the odds" McCreary Centre Society 2021

(2) Potenza, M. N. et al *Nature Reviews Disease Primers*, Vol 5, no. 51, 2019

(3) Rahman, A.S. et al *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, vol. 46, No. 5, 2012

(4) Marionneau, V., Mandolesi, G., Rolando, S., and Nikkinen, J., "Addressing gambling harms by reducing the supply of electronic gambling machines: a comparative study of Italy and Finland" *BMC Public Health*, 22, article no. 1016 (2022)

Objector 78

I write to object to the granting of a licence to Merkur Slots in respect of their application to open a slot machine business in the old Santander shop on Sydenham Road.

These premises are in a particularly heavily used part of Sydenham Road, having a Boots, a butchers and a much used fruit and veg shop close by. It is also an area which has, in the past, had problems caused by drunken behaviour.

Whilst I object generally to an application for a business of this type on Sydenham Road, I would point out that 53 Sydenham Road is particularly close to a bus stop which serves 3 buses. The area is very busy and the pavement around this bus stop often heavily congested. The stop is also used by pupils from the local secondary school. To offer this enticement to youths at this impressionable age is appalling and totally unacceptable. We have a duty to protect children and other vulnerable people from being harmed or exploited, the very position makes this impossible if this application is to be granted.

My wider point is that any gambling, alone on a main thoroughfare such as Sydenham Road, encourages crime and disorder. Given the paucity of police cover in this neighbourhood, this alone should be a cause to refuse this application

In addition, it is well established that slot machines can and often do lead to problem gambling. In a time of crisis in the cost of living we should not allow anything which may tempt people with little to gamble in the hope of making some money. That, as we know, can and often does lead to marriage breakup and even suicide.

This application should be refused on many grounds, it is entirely inappropriate to have a business of this type in the heart of Sydenham.

Objector 79

I think this is a terrible idea. There are other places that people can play slots already eg the bookies at Kirkdale / Dartmouth Road but to encourage gambling in this borough, where the slots always win in the end, is irresponsible at best.

a worker in the area
