

To Whom It May Concern:

The management of Bench Outreach objects to the above proposal. Bench Outreach is a charity working with vulnerable people in Lewisham, especially with residents of the Evelyn and New Cross wards, who will be immediately and adversely affected by this development. Our objections are raised on the following grounds:

- **It contravenes Lewisham Council's aim of preventing gambling being a source of crime or disorder.**

The proposed premises are in New Cross ward. This ward already suffers levels of anti-social behaviour that are almost twice the level recorded overall in Lewisham borough, and more than twice the national average. The applicant's risk assessment does not mention the hyperlocal issue of street drinking, nor does it address the existing levels of anti-social behaviour in the area.

<https://www.observatory.lewisham.gov.uk/crime-and-community-safety/report/view/30a1abb2a53f42fa87dea33c0c73c342/E05000449>

Recorded crimes of every type except shoplifting are consistently much higher in New Cross than the average across the borough, and it has the third highest level of crime of all the borough's wards.

Deptford High Street has existing high levels of anti-social behaviour and ongoing problems with street drinking. Anti-social behaviour and street drinking is such an issue for residents and traders that officers from the local Safer Neighbourhoods Team conduct monthly walkabouts on Deptford High Street with licensing officers from Lewisham Council to try and address the problem.

Street drinkers regularly congregate outside existing gambling premises (Paddy Power and Ladbrokes in particular) and this was also a problem outside 70 Deptford High Street when it was operating as a betting shop. The disorder and anti-social behaviour that this generated had a negative impact on nearby businesses and traders do not want to see this return.

Deptford High Street, with its regular market, has a reputation as a family-friendly shopping destination and our local business owners believe that the presence of an adult gaming centre will undermine this reputation and be a backward step for local businesses.

A petition has been signed by 36 high street businesses against this application.

- **It contravenes Lewisham Council's aim of protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.**

According to the council's own Joint Strategic needs Assessment, Lewisham has one of the highest proportion of working-age residents on out-of-work benefits at 9.1%. This contributes to extremely high levels of child poverty, estimated at over 35% in the Evelyn and New Cross wards. A business that exists solely to encourage gambling would not be a welcome addition in an area in which poverty is already highly visible.

- **It contravenes Lewisham Council's aim of protecting vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation.**

The premises are close to three local charities working with people with mental health issues, substance use issues and alcohol dependence – all of whom are vulnerable to exploitation. One, the 999 Club, operates a night shelter funded by Lewisham Council for people sleeping rough. The premises are also adjacent to a pawnbrokers shop, and across the road from CEX, another business that gives cash for goods. Approving a gambling licence for premises close to shops which provide

high-interest cash loans is inappropriate and will put those already in difficult circumstances at risk of increased debt.