

23 May 2022

Dear Licensing Dept

Representation re Premises Licence, Sunflower Fields, St Peters Road, Hayling Island

After careful consideration and with some reluctance I am writing to object to the licensing application of Samuel Wilson 26/4/22 for a Bar in the Sunflower fields, St Peters Road on Hayling. I recognise the need farmers have to diversify in order to survive and the sunflower fields will no doubt have provided some welcome and additional revenue to the farm. Fields that were for many years purely agricultural, with little footfall other than the odd tractor working the ground and the harvesting of crops, have now become a well-known and busy tourist attraction. This brings many seasonal visitors and traffic from other areas to Northney.

My concern is that with a Bar licensed to sell and consume alcohol from 0900 – 2300hrs, the fields are likely to have additional visitors at unsociable hours which has nothing to do with agriculture or viewing sunflowers. It would effectively create the potential for a pub in a field which is entirely out of keeping in this quiet and peaceful setting

My objection is based on:-

1) Prevention of public nuisance. Northney is an extremely quiet area at night, I have been a resident here for 40 years there is very little traffic through the village come the evening. One of greatest pleasures is to sit in my garden at night listening to the owls and watching the bats and the stars, there is often nothing else to hear, the silence is beautiful. Having an outdoor venue licensed to serve alcohol until 2300hrs has the potential to change this setting dramatically with associated noise, lighting and traffic this would likely bring. Noise and voices travel a very long way across open fields and it is a well-known fact that when people drink alcohol they become louder. (After speaking with Sam Wilson, I now realise that noise I heard on some evenings last summer was coming from the fields was when temporary licenses were in operation). Whilst I understand that at this time, the intention is to only operate during the 'sunflower' season, there would be nothing to prevent the license being used at any time of year for other ventures.

The measure of nuisance caused by license premises changes dramatically according to the setting for example – a licensed premises in a busy city centre may have a very different impact on the community to an open-air Bar in a peaceful rural area. I firmly believe that a Bar licensed until 2300hrs would cause some amount of public nuisance in this area, with drinking-up time, people and vehicles leaving etc, this could easily go on until 2330hrs or later.

2) Public safety. The relationship between alcohol and public safety is a complex one. Regular consumption of alcohol has clear health implications and the ability to consume alcohol in every setting increases the potential for consumption. Alcohol related violence, especially interpersonal and domestic is always a potential wherever alcohol can be purchased and consumed. The concept of families enjoying a field of sunflowers, taking photos and having tea and cakes can be very different when alcohol is brought into the equation. I would question whether a family outing is really enhanced by the opportunity to consume alcohol until 2300hrs.

The roads in Northney village are narrow and there is no footpath, the majority of visitors to the sunflower fields will be arriving and leaving in vehicles, many perhaps with no concept of the risks of driving in rural areas and lacking consideration to pedestrians, cyclists etc (not to mention hedgehogs!) on these narrow roads. Ordinarily I take my dogs for a short walk around 10pm and feel quite safe to do so, cars are infrequent and can be heard coming from a distance so moving to a place of safety is easy should one come along. This situation would change completely with consumers driving away from the fields late at night, especially after a drink or two at the Bar.

3. The prevention of crime and disorder. There is a clear link between crime and disorder and alcohol consumption. In this setting one might assume that mostly it would be family groups taking advantage of the opportunity to have some alcoholic beverages whilst on an outing together. An alcohol licence until 2300hrs could well bring a different clientele and associated public order and drink driving offences could perhaps become a factor.

4. The protection of children from harm. Again, it is my understanding that the sunflower fields are mainly a family attraction. If parents are having a few drinks at the Bar I wonder how much attention will be given to the children who may well be free to roam and play in the fields without supervision. Also, I have previously mentioned the health implications and the relationship between alcohol consumption and violence, all of which can bring harm to children. It does seem a shame that alcohol needs to be an element in an otherwise safe and healthy outdoor experience.

I hope you will give some consideration to the points I have raised. I do not wish to be seen as a killjoy but my concerns are genuine. If the intention of the applicant is only to use the license on occasions and purely in association with the sunflowers, I would have thought that the use of temporary licences rather than a permanent Bar licence, 7 days a week all year round, would be more than adequate for this venue and with the hours restricted to 2000hrs to prevent public nuisance into the night.