

To the Licensing Committee, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

From Habib Altun, Manager, Virginia Supermarket, Virginia Road, London E2

I, Habib Altun, am the manager of Virginia Supermarket on Virginia Road, London E2. I am normally responsible for the purchase of alcoholic beverages for sale from these premises.

Between 16th January 2010 and 5th February 2010 I was on holiday in Osmaniye, Turkey. Whilst I was on holiday, an alcoholic drinks supplier with whom I have done business in the past came in to the shop and made an offer to one of the staff on some wine which seemed a very good offer. The staff member took up the offer and the wine was then retailed on special offer from Virginia Supermarket.

Unfortunately, it later emerged that the offer was based on a failure to pay duty on the wine. The wine was seized by the HM Revenue and Customs in what I understand to be an intelligence-led operation which involved a number of retailers.

Pernod was also seized at the same time. However this was not part of a cut price deal with that supplier. I believe HMRC believed duty had not been paid on this Pernod because it did not carry the sticker that certain alcoholic beverages, ie spirits, now carry by law showing UK duty paid. This was because we bought this Pernod before the new arrangements came. It is a very slow mover and it had been on our shelves for a very long time.

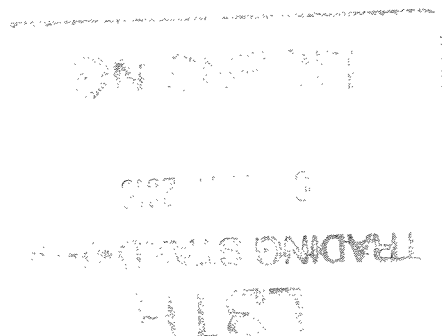
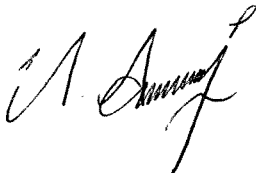
The purchase of the wine was done in good faith, but because I was not present at the time no invoice was secured against the purchase. Had I been there, this would not have been the case. Nonetheless even if I had been present, I do not think I would have necessarily been aware that the wine had not had duty paid. Wine does not require the stickers that are now mandatory on spirits.

We are a small corner shop providing a valuable and some would say vital service to the local community, from early in the morning to late at night seven days a week. We sell a wide range of goods, including food, kitchen and other supplies as well as alcohol. We do not sell alcohol or tobacco products to those who are under age. There is no problem we have been made aware of involving nuisance drinking in the vicinity of our shop and caused by sales from our shop.

This is the first time an aberration of this kind has occurred with us. It clearly demonstrates our management systems were not sufficiently robust, especially in my absence. We will not be doing business with this supplier again.

I would appeal to the Licensing Committee to be lenient with this with regard to this first offence. We are dependent for our survival on the sale of alcoholic drinks to the local community on a responsible basis. To remove our licence to sell alcohol, even for a period of three months, would place our business in jeopardy and thereby threaten a service we are committed to providing to our community.

Habib Altun





9th April 2010

To whom this may concern,

Virginia Supermarket, Virginia Road, London E2

I am familiar with the Virginia Supermarket which is on Virginia Road and is near my surgery. I can confirm from talking to many constituents who use the store that it serves a valuable role in the local community. The shop is open from early in the morning until late at night and provides a variety of essential goods.

The store does sell both alcohol and cigarettes but constituents tell me there is no anti-social behaviour specifically associated with sales from this shop. It is my strong impression from those who manage and staff the shop that they have a very positive relationship with their customers and they act responsibly in their sales. There is, to my knowledge, no history, for example, of them selling either tobacco products or alcohol to those who are under-age.

I hope they will be able to continue in their role of serving the local community and that the information above is of help in your deliberations.

Yours faithfully,



Councillor Fazlul Haque, Weavers Ward