

Response to Objection from Cllr. Rachel Blake

Cllr. Rachel Blake has submitted an objection which comprises the following three claims:

1. The Milk Float is moored on an unfenced section of canal.
2. Off sales into this area will present an issue of public safety which we have failed to mitigate. Cllr. Blake does not indicate any specific areas where our application is lacking in this regard.
3. Off sales will create noise in this area that we will be unable to control.

We would like to address these points in turn:

1. The Milk Float barge is 70ft long and tightly moored to the towpath, leaving a gap of less than six inches between the towpath and the side of the vessel. The barge itself acts as a fence, making it physically impossible to fall into the canal whilst on the towpath in the vicinity of the premises. We also line out a double-stacked row of empty beer kegs whenever we are trading (see image **Fig.1** below) to form a soft visual barrier and to facilitate social distancing within our takeaway queue.

The towpath in this location is much wider, less constricted and thus less crowded than most other parts of the London canal network. We have experienced a very healthy takeaway trade in coffee, ice cream and soft drinks at this mooring since 2015 - this represents tens of thousands of takeaway transactions. In all this time we have never had a single issue arising due the lack of a fence.

2. We traded takeaway alcohol at this location from June 2020 until the start of the current lockdown under the temporary minor variation afforded by the Government's Covid-19 strategy for hospitality. We shall continue to do so under the same temporary minor variation as soon as the current lockdown is lifted. This alcohol takeaway service has been very popular amongst our regular customers from the local community.

In line with Police advice, all alcohol has been served in closed, biodegradable containers for consumption outside of the immediate vicinity. These containers are also branded for traceability and to assist us in the continual assessment of our environmental impact. This is exactly the same service system we have proposed going forwards in our full license variation application.

We have placed signage on the only viable informal seating area directly outside our premises to indicate that no alcohol is to be consumed there. This message is

reinforced by our staff team and we also have rapid recourse to SIA security support should it ever be required to enforce this. However, this has not been an issue to date.

Having consulted Mark Perry at the Met. Police prior to submitting this application, we have also specified that we will not serve takeaway alcohol for one hour either side of or during sporting events at the London Stadium. This license variation application has already received official approval from both the Met. Police and Tower Hamlets Environmental Health.

3. Our takeaway queue has not been the source of a single noise complaint in the five years that we have been trading from this site. In any case, we have front of house staff acting as queue marshals at busy times to keep things in check. This complaint-free track record held true over Summer 2020 when we traded takeaway alcohol under the temporary minor variation. It was the exceptionally smooth operation of this service that prompted us to apply for this full variation.

We hope the committee will take these points into account when assessing Rachel Blake's objection. Our business model is rooted in our local community and we have always made the greatest efforts to ensure that we act to further the interests of the residents and neighbouring businesses that surround us.

In partnership with The Canal and River Trust (CRT) and other stakeholders, we have officially adopted the whole Limehouse Cut Canal and the Regents Canal from Limehouse Basin up to Ben Johnson Lock. Our company Directors have donated hundreds of hours of their time, tens of thousands of pounds in staff hours and countless canoes, kayaks, paddle boards and other resources to the incredibly popular free monthly canal clean-up events we have been running for the last eight years through our parent company, Moo Canoes LTD. The Milk Float is the launch base for these events on alternate months.

In addition to this, we also support a great number of CRT's volunteer litter picks and deliver our own corporate social responsibility clean-up days. This ongoing effort has seen many thousands of bags of litter removed from the canals over the years. When a large oil spill caused a huge fish and invertebrate death and threatened the future health of the waterway back in 2018, our fleet of canoes was first on the scene, heading up the volunteer rescue effort. We also hosted the subsequent environmental taskforce meetings on The Milk Float free of charge.

Our clientele at this premises is incredibly varied, from families and couples grabbing ice creams and coffees through to corporate away days, touring the canal in our fleet of canoes and kayaks and stopping off on the boat afterwards for dinner and drinks. Alcohol has been a balanced part of our offering since we first obtained our license in 2018. We believe that takeaway alcohol is perfectly suited to this area and will be a welcome service enjoyed by many, ultimately enriching the unique atmosphere of Hackney Wick.

We have a long-standing relationship with our landlords LLDC and the Canal and River Trust and we maintain open lines of communication with them to diagnose and address any issues associated with our service from this mooring. We have delivered paddle sport activities in the Olympic Park for LLDC as part of its free summer programme for the last four years in a row. LLDC recently consulted us to assess the safety of Carpenters Rd. Lock for the passage of unpowered vessels. In light of our positive relationship with them, we provided this service free of charge.

We are members of both Newham and Tower Hamlets 'Pubwatch' groups, not to mention several local community forums. We also routinely defer to our contacts in the Police when making amendments to our operating procedures or to help us stay abreast of any emerging issues in the area.

We note Cllr. Blake's suggestion of a time-limited probationary period but we feel that we have already proven ourselves as a responsible and competent operator over the last five years of running a busy takeaway service from this site. Having successfully managed this fully licensed premises for over three years and traded takeaway alcohol under the minor variation for the last eight months, we feel more than prepared to seamlessly run this proposed takeaway service without the requirement for a probationary period. However, we defer to the board and its decision in this regard.

Fig.1 (indicating our vessel, keg barrier and takeaway hatch)

