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Paula Davis Licensing Authority Lead Officer

Dear Ms Davis

I wish to OBJECT to the license being granted based on the current application.

Through my work with partners, I am aware of problems of street drinking in the City where alcohol is sold from the off trade to people who are often already drunk resulting in alcohol related anti social behaviour and crime and disorder. This also causes nuisance, alarm and distress to local businesses, members of the public and visitors to our City and has resulted in the Police having to seek Anti Social Behaviour Orders to try and alleviate the situation.

We have evidence to suggest that the application will increase the local threat of public nuisance, alcohol-related anti social behaviour and crime and disorder, and hence, not meet the Council's licensing objectives.

Newcastle has a scheme, known as Alcohol Watch, which traces discarded and seized alcohol containers back to retailers. A recent survey of the City Centre undertaken between 15 May and 6 July 2012 has shown that 209 alcohol containers were identified in the city centre area; 193 were found discarded in public areas, and 16 were seized by police officers from street drinkers. Of the 209 discarded and seized containers city-wide, 137 (66%) were found or seized in the Grainger Street area, either in the St. John's Churchyard (135) or elsewhere on Grainger Street (2). The majority of the containers located at St. John's Churchyard (123 of 135, 91%) have been traced back to a retailer on Grainger Street, within a minute's walk from the location where they were found. Hence, virtually all of the anti-social alcohol sales in the city during the latest monitoring period were obtained from the Grainger Street area in the vicinity of the proposed premises. This confirms that the Grainger Street area is a hot spot for street drinking in the City. The proposed premises is located in this area.

My concern is that the applicant has not provided any indication in their application as to how they will minimise the sale of alcohol to street drinkers such as how staff will be trained and supported to refuse alcohol sales of this nature (which can be intimidating) or what processes are in place to prevent the sale of alcohol to people who are drunk.

There is a wealth of research which shows that the factors which increase alcohol consumption are low cost alcohol, the proximity of premises selling alcohol and the length of opening times which combine to make alcohol more affordable, more available and therefore easier to consume. As the density of alcohol retailers increases in the Grainger Street area, this can lead to increased competition and a reduction in alcohol prices, making alcohol more affordable and resulting in increased consumption.

I hope I have outlined why I believe that the City Centre and in particular Grainger Street has an issue relating to alcohol and street drinking and why a further off-licence in this area will not serve to promote the Council's licensing objectives.

Yours sincerely

Dr Fu-Meng Khaw

Director of Public Health Newcastle Primary Care Trust and Newcastle City Council

