

Mr & Mrs Courcoux

Gordon Road

Blackwood

NP12 1DS

12/03/2024

Dear Caerphilly Council,

We are writing to you to raise our objections as neighbours in relation to Blackwood Town Cricket Club's license variation application submitted on 14th February 2024. These concerns will broadly fall under the guidance set out under the licensing objectives set by CCBC as the licensing authority – namely Prevention of Crime & Disorder, Public Safety, Prevention of Public Nuisance & Protection of Children from Harm.

Our concerns are being put forward as a direct result of the experience we've encountered as neighbours to the Cricket Club for nearly 4 years, with all issues outlined in this letter raised directly with the Club's Committee in real time with little to no sustainable improvement achieved. We feel obligated to feed into this process as parents to two young children as we have a duty of care to try to provide a safe environment, so they can at least enjoy the entirety of their own home.

In addition, we have sought out continued support from our local Town Councillor Kevin Etheridge who engaged CCBC licensing department in attempt to address some of the issues in 2023.

Overview of Concerns

1. Poor Management of Existing License – The Club have applied to extend the area they are able to sell & consume alcohol to include their entire boundary. It is known locally that the Club currently allow alcohol to be consumed across their whole boundary at present – this day to day and at larger events they hold (seemingly in odds of their existing license conditions as confirmed by Lee Morgan on email with Councillor Etheridge). Frequently, setting up seating across the car park and surrounding areas to allow patrons to consume alcohol in these locations. Example images attached to the email.
2. Litter Issues – In direct correlation to the above point we have experienced persistent problems with litter entering our property from the Cricket Club – this is in large part due to the Club allowing consumption of alcohol across the entire premises. Usually, in the form of empty plastic glasses, glasses, cigarettes and cans, with this being an increased problem during the weekends of summer months (albeit we have had issues during the 2024 rugby six nations period where the Club are not stopping patrons leaving with glasses) and thus the increased use of the outside seating areas

described above. We've had examples of patrons from the Club throwing glasses/cans directly into our property grounds from the carpark and scoreboard areas, leaving glasses on our boundary walls along with glasses finding their way down our driveway because of lack of oversight and poor cleaning by the Club when using outside areas to consume alcohol. Example images attached to this email. When raised with the Committee at the Club previously they've stated that they have added bins, increased bin collections and introduced a litter pick on weekends to try to improve the problems. None of these actions have made tangible improvements from our POV, as the increased bins located around the carpark area etc. aren't emptied and at no point have, we as neighbours witnessed anyone from the Club complete a litter pick over the weekends - particularly of the wider carpark area.

3. Foul / Offensive Language – Again, in direct correlation to Point 1 and the frequent consumption of alcohol across the Club's entire boundary we have had the enjoyment of our home limited by the volume of foul language coming from the Cricket Club, with us as a young family having to regularly retire indoors when the outside seating areas at the Club are in use and/or patrons are consuming alcohol while smoking at the function room entrance. This issue is significantly heightened during summer months when the outside areas as described above are in full use by patrons of the Club – no tangible improvement experienced following raising with the Club's committee, this also raised with Lee Morgan of CCBC via Kevin Etheridge on our behalf in H2 2023.
4. Further Antisocial Behaviour - We've experienced several incidents of anti-social behaviour regarding our property from the Cricket Club over a prolonged period as neighbours, the following will provide a flavour of the issues all related to the consumption of alcohol across the premises but is not an exhaustive list. 27/06/2021 – Cricket Club patron urinating against our front gate. 2 videos attached showing group leaving the Club and then individual urinating against our property. Unfortunately, this is a regular issue for us, Club patrons urinating against our boundary walls. Raised with police previously via Kevin Etheridge. 16/08/2022 – Balls hitting our property past 21:30. On walking up to the Club it was evident to be drunk adults consuming alcohol on the pitch and smashing balls around the ground with minors. Raised with the Club's committee via email and F2F with Bill C who confirmed the incident was as witnessed. 24/06/2023 – Numerous Cricket Club patrons accessing my property without consent, some with 'beers in hand' with further patrons leaning over our boundary walls with 'beers in hand' shouting into our grounds. This on the first day of our newborn returning home from hospital along with my wife Lisa recovering from surgery. This was raised with the Club's committee via email as unacceptable and intimidating behaviour – fuelled by alcohol (with young children at our address). 08/07/23 – Patrons of the Club consuming alcohol by the scoreboard area of the grounds and then urinating behind the scoreboard in full view of my kitchen. Raised with the Cricket Club F2F in person and via email with the wider committee. I have now had to erect a privacy screen to mitigate this in future following the Club's lack of ownership of the issue.

In summary, broadly we are supportive of Blackwood Town Cricket Club and the positive impact they provide for the community, being members, we have invested our own time and money to improve and/or attempt to support addressing some of the issues we've experienced

since moving to Gordon Road, along with others outside of the licensing departments remit. However, our concerns aren't appreciated by the Club's committee which is evident as no meaningful long lasting solutions have been put in place, with the committee being at best defensive and at worse dismissive with us having to re-raise these ongoing issues year on year (can be evidenced via email exchanges along with the numerous calls I've had with Eric R and F2F discussions with Bill C).

With replies to our concerns from committee members saying quote *'we're a club run by volunteers we feel we are doing everything we can to address and resolve issues within the limited time and money we can devote to the club'* it only breeds further concerns regarding their ability to manage their updated license parameters if successful as they are unable to competently manage their existing license, seemingly choosing to ignore their current conditions i.e. area to sell/consume alcohol etc.

We've only seen any traction on issues raised after informing the Club that we were regrettably considering legal action via a private nuisance claim in H2 of 2023 against them to address the issues outlined in this letter. This is still on the table for us as a last resort, where we'd now reference CCBC as the licencing authority.

Our feeling is BTCC are moving further away from being a Club that prioritises and is centred around the cricket with the ability to have an occasional social drink as part of its core purpose to now becoming a Pub/Event premises which plays cricket.

We therefore object to the Club's license variation application to extend the area for sale/consumption of alcohol as this is highly likely to have a continued negative impact on the licensing objectives and neighbouring residents due to the history of public nuisance, further compounding already established issues. Simply, increasing the Club's drinking area, if approved, will only further affect the quality of life for us and our fellow residents.

We hope that you strongly consider our concerns set out along with the supporting evidence.

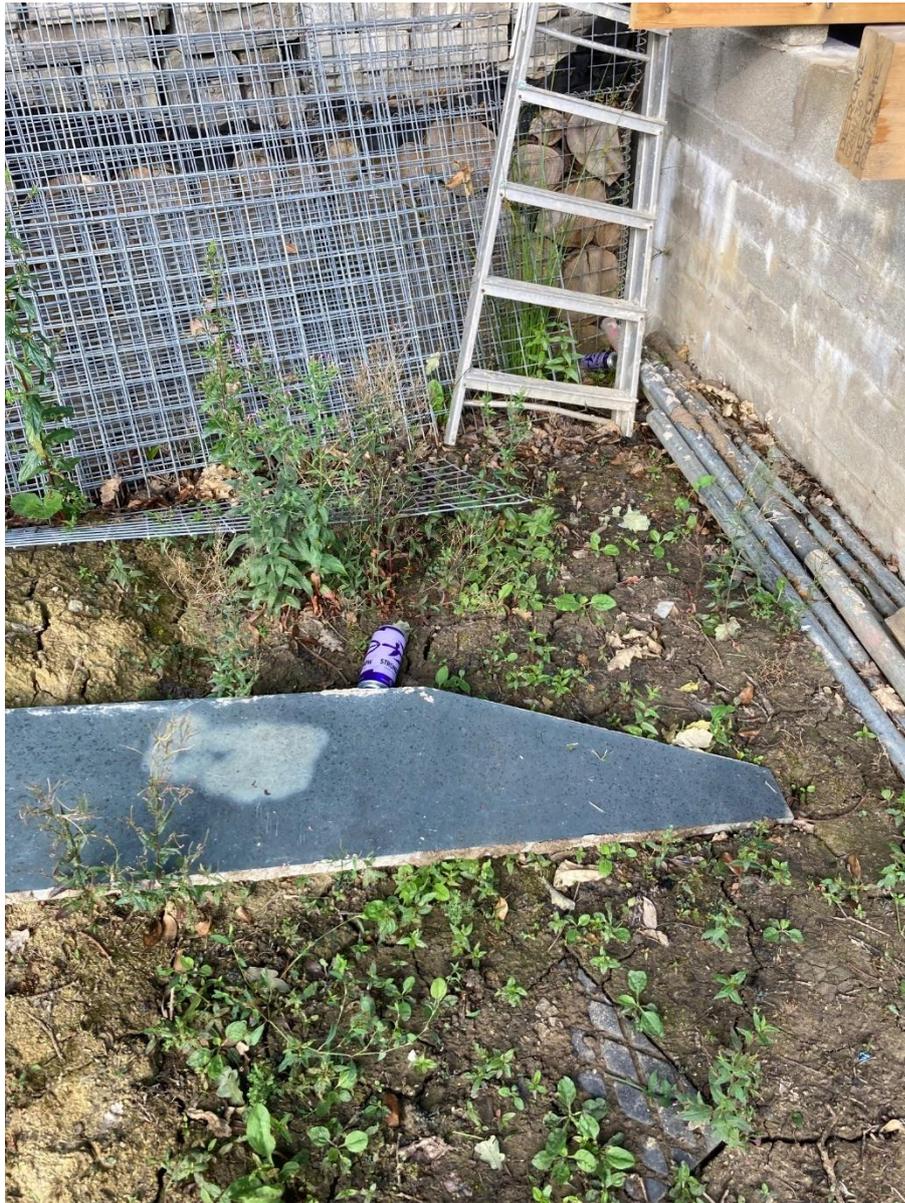
Yours faithfully

Kevin & Lisa Courcoux











From: Kevin Courcoux

To: Hopkins, Kathryn

Subject: Re: Blackwood Town Cricket Club - Variation

Date: 24 March 2024 14:50:31

Hi Kathryn,

Hope you're well and enjoyed the weekend.

After reviewing the information shared we are not supportive of the updated plan from BTCC; we are also not supportive of the recommendation from environment health (and subsequent agreement from licensing) for the carpark area to be used for licensed activity.

Either myself and/or my wife (Mrs Lisa Courcoux) will attend the hearing on the 12th in person or virtually, which we'll confirm prior.

What is the process and deadline for us to submit further evidence and comments for consideration at the hearing and prior report?

Thanks

Kev Courcoux