

## Notice of Representation

Members of the public (where they can be considered to be interested parties) can submit representations in objection to or in support of these applications, within the 28 day consultation period. The Licensing Act 2003 defines an interested party as a person residing in the vicinity of the premises concerned, a person involved in the running of a business within the vicinity, or a body representing such persons or businesses. Elected Members of the licensing authority are also considered to be interested parties and may also submit representations.

Please be aware that for any objections to be considered, they should be submitted before the end of the consultation period and they should address the four licensing objectives of Prevention of crime and disorder, Prevention of public nuisance, Public safety and the Protection of children from harm.

Please be aware that where representations are considered relevant copies of the representation will be provided to the applicant and the Licensing Sub Committee.

**Please note: Objections will only be considered where a name and address are supplied.**

Name: MR & MRS T. STIENLET Address: THE OLD POLICE HOUSE, MILLFIELD ROAD,

RIDING MILL, NE44 6DL Licensing Objective: FULL VARIATION PREMISES LICENCE

Premises: RIDING MILL PARISH HALL, MILLFIELD ROAD, RIDING MILL, NE44 6DJ

### Reason for Representation:

We have lived next door to Riding Mill Village Hall for 13 years and have been very tolerant of the disruption caused by events over the years. We attend fundraisers and have even lent our fridge for community social evenings. Our driveway is sometimes blocked, cars are abandoned for the night (in contravention of the planning permission for the car park) and we are often awoken by car doors slamming and raised voices late at night but we put up with this because the village hall is here for all of our village to enjoy. However, worse problems occur when the venue is let as a commercial party venue and it is for this reason that we must object to this licence application:

About a decade ago the previous Management Committee began to promote the village hall commercially as a party and wedding venue, which led one night to a number of inebriated teenagers running over our and our neighbours' cars. Roofs and bonnets were caved in, with repair costs of thousands of pounds paid for by our own insurance policies and us having to suffer the increased premiums for years thereon, and our garden was littered with beer cans. We complained at the time and were told that it was 'kids from outside of the village ... we'll only hire the hall to residents of the parish from now on'.

Since then there have been changes to the Management Committee and the Parish Hall has continued to be advertised on various commercial websites (eg. Venues4hire.org and Bridebook.co.uk) as a 'Party Venue',

'Wedding Venue', 'Marquee Venue' with 'sound system supplied ... fireworks permitted'. There is no requirement for a member of the Management Committee to be present.

There have been wedding receptions where guests take alcoholic drinks into the play park next door and we have had to tell our children not to go in there on those afternoons. Later in the evenings inebriated guests have taken to using the play park as their own adventure playground because there is no on-site supervision by a member of the Committee. This never occurs when the hall is booked for residents' own weddings or parties.

According to Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council (the custodian trustee), *'The object of Riding Mill Village Hall Trust is the provision and maintenance of the two Village Halls to use for meetings, lectures and classes and for other forms of recreation and leisure-time occupation, with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants of Broomhaugh and Riding Mill'*. Granting a licence for the sale of alcohol will legitimise the use of the hall as a commercial party venue with no community benefit, which will dramatically worsen our own and our neighbours' conditions of life.

The licence application states that the intention would be to generate a profit from alcohol sales to help with the sustainability of the hall. Yet according to the latest accounts the Village Halls Trust has over £52,000 of retained surplus and has averaged almost £8,000 annual profit over the last 3 years, without a licence to sell alcohol.

The Management Committee have successfully secured grant funding for the hall on several occasions (including several thousands of pounds from the Northumberland County Council Community Chest, The National Lottery Community Fund, as well as thousands of pounds annually from our own precept via an annual donation from the Parish Council) on the premise that it is a not-for-profit community facility, not a commercial party venue. None of the charitable funds permit applications from for-profit commercial organisations so the application for a licence to sell alcohol for profit whilst letting the hall out to anyone outside of the community who wants to book it would be a misappropriation of that grant funding.

The need for village clubs to meet and socialise with the benefit of being able to purchase alcohol is already met by the village pub, as well as a new village café that has also recently been granted a licence to sell alcohol. The pub is directly opposite the hall, has a function room that can be booked free of charge, and is already regularly used by village clubs for meetings and social occasions. The pub and new café are very important assets to the village which must be supported. Yet another licensed establishment will only reduce their income, whilst bolstering the large surplus of the already financially sustainable Village Hall Trust. If extra funds are still required, then the hall could simply provide fridges and charge a corkage fee.

A quick peruse of the calendar of upcoming community events suggests that the use of TENs would easily suffice. 12 per year would more than cover the existing requirement, without denuding the custom gained by the pub from village club meetings. We're sure the current Management Committee have the best intentions for the community, but committees change and we have been let down before. The hall has been operated successfully as a community facility for 93 years, and has to our knowledge never had a licence to sell alcohol before. This application is unprecedented and we fear that if a licence is granted now it will be far more difficult to revoke once the damage has been done.

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If in spite of the above, if the Council is minded to approve the application then the following conditions should be a minimum requirement:

#### **Prevention of crime and disorder**

We have been the victims of crime previously when the venue has been let commercially. We have experienced littering and criminal damage first hand. The unprecedented granting of a licence would enable this and future committees to let the hall as a commercial wedding and party venue, in contravention of the wishes of the custodian trustee.

The only possible way to prevent this would be to stipulate that the hall is only ever let to community groups from the village or residents of Broomhaugh and Riding Mill (in accordance with the requirements of the custodian trustee), and that a member of the Committee is on site at all times.

#### **Prevention of public nuisance**

The outside space used by the hall is immediately adjacent to our bedroom window, and several of our neighbours have very young children. It is after all a residential street with no commercial premises other than the village hall.

In accordance with Appendix C of the Northumberland County Council Statement of Licencing Policy:

A sound test should be carried out to ascertain if there is sound leakage from the building.

Music played outside should be live acoustic only, with no amplifiers or recorded music permitted.

The hall should only be let to community groups from the village or residents of Broomhaugh and Riding Mill, to ensure considerate behaviour towards neighbours.

As per the application, hall users should be requested to leave the hall and vicinity quietly; and all bottles should be emptied at the end of every event or the following morning, disposed of in the local bottle bank.

#### **Public Safety**

The serving and consumption of alcoholic beverages should only take place inside the hall, and a member of the Committee must be on site at all times to prevent glass being broken on the public footpath immediately outside of the hall, and on lawned areas used by children for play.

#### **Protection of children from harm**

The bar must not be a permanent fixture to ensure it is not visible to children.

No alcoholic drinks are to be served at any event geared towards children.

No alcoholic drinks are to be taken to lawned areas or the play park and no adults unaccompanied by children are to use the play park. This will be policed by the member of the Committee on site at all times.

Signed .....

Date 4/9/19 .....

**Please send this notice to the address below:**

Licensing Section  
Northumberland County Council  
Stakeford Depot  
East View  
Stakeford  
Northumberland  
NE62 5TR

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