

Our Ref: AX/ NJR/ Penny Black Stockton On Tees
Email: andrew.cochrane@flintbishop.co.uk

Licensing Section
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton on Tees
TS18 1LD

CONTACT
ANDREW COCHRANE

FAX NUMBER
08701918678

DIRECT DIAL
01332 226142

By email on licensing.administration@stockton.gov.uk

2 October 2020

Dear Sirs

Review of Premises Licence Penny Black, Langthorne Grove, Stockton On Tees

We act on behalf of Star Pubs & Bars Limited who are the leased and tenanted pubs division of Heineken (UK). They are in effect the “brewery” behind the Penny Black.

The Penny Black is let on an arms length commercial lease to Gary Alan Cooke who is the premises licence holder as well as the tenant of these premises.

Star Pubs & Bars Limited are disappointed to learn that the Police have felt it necessary to apply for a review of the premises licence of these premises.

Following the bringing of the review we have engaged with the Police to try and understand better their concerns with the operation of the premises and there has also been engagement with Mr Cooke.

Mr Cooke is an experienced licensee. He has spent a good part of the last twenty-five years working with the trade, we understand without incident or difficulty until now.



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Flint Bishop LLP
St. Michael's Court
St. Michael's Lane
Derby DE1 3HQ

Fax 01332 207 601
DX 729320 Derby 24

www.flintbishop.co.uk

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He has been the tenant of the Penny Black for 3 years and the premises appear to have operated without incident as far as Star are aware until the commencement of lockdown in March of this year. Star have been trying to understand why it may be that since this time there appears to have been a number of incidents at the premises when previously they are not aware of the premises causing any issue.

We are not the representatives for Mr Cooke and it would be for him to explain his actions to the committee however clearly as a responsible pub company, Star are concerned to ensure that the licensing objectives are being upheld.

Star have given careful consideration as to what action they should take at this time having regard to the views held by the Police, what they have been told by Mr Cooke, the apparently so far unblemished reputation Mr Cooke has in the trade and their understanding of what is required by the licensing objectives.

Since being made aware of the review and having discussed matters with the Police, Star understand their concerns and have emphasised strongly to Mr Cooke the need to comply with the licensing objectives as to do otherwise would place him in breach of the obligations of his lease and of course lead to actions such as a review being taken.

As a result Star do feel that it is necessary to take a much more active role in the running of these premises to ensure compliance with the licensing objectives and will give an undertaking at the licensing review hearing, if the licensing sub-committee are prepared to accept it, to immediately apply for a transfer of the premises licence to Star Pubs & Bars Limited. This will hopefully provide more assurance to the authorities and any local residents that if there are issues they have a point of contact other than Mr Cooke with whom they can liaise.

Further having regard to the existing conditions on the premises licence it does appear that there is a need for a CCTV condition to be imposed upon it. We would imagine that the Police and the licensing authority have the proposed wording for such a condition which we would be happy to consider.

Star are sorry that the premises have become a cause for concern this way and wish to work with every stakeholder going forward to ensure that they are a responsibility run pub serving the needs of the local community.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Flint Bishop". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Flint Bishop LLP