

<b>WITNESS STATEMENT</b>		Form MG11T
(CJ Act 1967, s.9; MC Act 1980, ss.5A(3) (a) and 5B; MC Rules 1981, r.70)		
Statement of :	<b>Inspector 7293 Michael Robson</b>	
Age if under 18:	<b>Over 18</b>	(if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: <b>Police Inspector 7293</b>
This statement (consisting of _____ page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.		
Signature:	Date: <b>09/10/2020</b>	
Tick if witness is visually recorded <input type="checkbox"/> (supply witness details on rear)		

I am the Neighbourhood Police Inspector for Central Gateshead. Within my role, I am responsible for crime and disorder issues within Gateshead, including Neighbourhood Policing. I also have policing responsibility for licensing matters.

Further to my statement dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020, I wish to add the following.

The applicant Sajaad Ali submitted further information on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020, listing a number of premises he states he has been the licence holder and ran successfully.

The applicant states that he was involved in the running of Burnside Convenience Store, 18 The Burnside Newcastle. Sajaad Ali was the DPS for this shop between 07/02/11 and 24/10/11. During this time, the police visits history for the property records several issues involving youths drinking alcohol outside the shop, reports of underage sales. During the police visits, a Mr Gondal stated he was the manager and engaged with the officers. There was no sign of the DPS. Mr Ali was never seen by the Police at the shop.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2011, the Police attended at 9.50am following a report of trouble on the premises. Officers spoke to a Mr Bano Pari who stated he was in charge of the premises.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at 8.45pm, Police officers attended the premises. Mr Yaseen Ashraf stated he was in charge of the premises.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2011 a report was received from a member of the public (FWIN 1111) reporting alcohol being sold to children. Officers attended and spoke to Yaseen Ashraf who stated he was in charge of the premises. He denied any sale had taken place and claimed a male had bought alcohol which had then been passed to a child. He stated he had chased the male away.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2011 at 11.30am, Police attended and spoke to Mr Gondal who stated he was now in charge of the premises. He was advised of further reports of underage sales and agreed to put up posters to deter sales.

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On the 20<sup>th</sup> August 2011, Officers visited the premises and spoke again to Mr Gondal, He expressed concern about youths trying to buy alcohol. Officers promised patrols would call in to deter youths. During the conversation, Mr Gondal stated he owned the shop.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2011, officers attended at 3.35pm following reports of customers being approached by children to buy alcohol. Officers again spoke to Mr Gondal.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2011, Police officers carried out a licensing visit to the premises. It was discovered that the CCTV only recorded and retained the previous 72 hours of footage. Mr Gondal was also unable to provide a Refusals register.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2011, Police officers attended at 5.15pm following a complaint of Fireworks being sold to children at the shop. Officers spoke to Mr Yaseen Ashraf.

The Premises licence and DPS was transferred from Mr Sajaad Ali on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2011. During the 8 months he was the DPS and Premises licence holder, he was never seen in the shop and appeared to have no involvement or responsibility in any of the business despite the issues and his responsibilities as the licence holder.

The applicant Sajaad Ali was the DPS and premises licence holder for Benwell Bargains 107 Adelaide Terrace Newcastle between 18<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and 7<sup>th</sup> July 2012. The premises and business is owned by a Mr Ali Baz.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> August 2012 at 5.30pm, Police officers visited the premises and observed Sajaad Ali in the shop with Ali Baz. Issues of disorder were prevalent during the 10 months the applicant was apparently running this business. Specific visits have not been recorded.

197 High St Gateshead is a property above 195 High St and covers two floors. An application was made in 2011 for a licence including late night entertainment for this property which would allow a licenced Café until 1.30am. The application was granted to Sajaad Ali but the property has never opened and traded. The property is owned by Ali Baz.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011, the premises licence for Drinks Express 500 Elswick Rd Newcastle was revoked by Newcastle Council. Mr Ali Baz was the premises licence holder and DPS at this time. During the appeal period, Sajaad Ali made a successful application to transfer the licence from Ali Baz on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2011 and operated the shop until August 2012, a period of 11 months. No police records of visits to the premises exist during this period in relation to licence visits.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2011, there was an alarm activation at the premises at 4.44pm. Officers spoke to Mr Tariq who said he was the key holder and ran the business.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2012 Police attended the shop at 8.19pm and spoke to Mr Tariq regarding trouble he was experiencing with a customer.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2012, Mr Tariq contacted the Police to report theft of a bottle of Vodka

On the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015, the Premises licence at 313 High street Gateshead was revoked by Gateshead Licensing Committee following a sale of alcohol to a child on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2014. Other issues

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with CCTV were also found. Sajaad Ali was the DPS and premises licence holder at this time having been granted the licence on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

The transfer of the Premises licence to and appointment of Sajaad Ali as DPS for 313 High Street followed a revocation of the licence on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2010 when Ali Baz was the licence holder and DPS. Sajaad Ali made his application to transfer the licence whilst this matter was subject to appeal.

At the licensing hearing on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015, documentation was presented to the committee showing that Ali Baz was the owner of the building and had leased the property to Sajaad Ali. Sajaad Ali failed to turn up to the hearing and has subsequently stated he knew nothing about it as he had ceased, in his mind, to be the DPS and premises licence holder and had nothing to do with the business. He had in fact remained the premises licence holder and DPS until he transferred the licence on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2014, a month after the sale to the child. The applicant, Sajaad Ali claims he had forgot to transfer the licence when he sold the business some time before.

Whilst Sajaad Ali was the DPS and premises licence holder at 313 High Street Gateshead, the following incidents were recorded by the Police.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013, Police officers attended the shop in company with Gateshead Licensing officer Paul Harris. A number of breaches of licensing conditions were found, namely no training records or Refusals register. Mr Ali Baz was in charge of the shop. Officers insisted that he contacted the DPS and after a short period of time, Sajaad Ali attended the shop and spoke to officers.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014, a Police officer stopped a 16 year old child on the High street who was carrying a bag containing alcohol. The child stated he had purchased it from 313 High Street. The officer took the child back to the store and the staff member refunded the child for the alcohol. Sajaad Ali was not in the shop at the time.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> December 2014, Officers attended the shop following a report of loose debris following a storm. Mr Sajaad Ali was not present.

At 6.02pm on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2014, staff at the shop reported trouble with a customer. Mr Sajaad Ali was not present.

At 5.13pm on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014, a report was received of a shoplifting in the shop. Mr Sajaad Ali was not present.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2014, Solicitors acting on behalf of Mr Ali Baz contacted the Police to report a fraud involving a supplier to the shop. They stated Mr Baz owned the business.

At 1.40pm on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2014, staff contacted the police following concern for a customer. Mr Sajaad Ali was not present.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014, Officers visited the shop in relation to an Immigration matter. Mr Sajaad Ali was not present. They had also been to the shop two days prior for the same issue and again Mr Sajaad Ali was not present.

At 7.35pm on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2014, officers attended the shop following a report of a disturbance. Mr Sajaad Ali was not present.

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On the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014, staff reported a theft and a male was arrested on the premises. Mr Sajaad Ali was not present.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013, Mr Ali Baz reported an identify fraud from the premises. Officers attended. Mr Sajaad Ali was not present.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012, members of the public reported trouble outside of the shop. Police Officers attended but Mr Sajaad Ali was not present.

The applicant states that the shop at 201A Coatsworth Rd Gateshead was under his management between 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018 and 11<sup>th</sup> August 2019. Ali Baz pays the rates on this property according to Council records.

An incident of violence occurred in the shop involving Sajaad Ali and his partner on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2019 (Fwin 880). He was arrested and later charged with criminal damage to a mobile phone which he had thrown in the shop and damaged. His partner accepted a caution for a common assault on him. Sajaad Ali is currently remanded on court bail until 28<sup>th</sup> October. He has pleaded not guilty stating the phone was his. Following his departure from the business, Alan Hindmarch continued as the DPS until the shop closed last year.

The use of violence on licensed premises is clearly unacceptable. Sajaad Ali was in a position of authority and there is an expectation that he behaves in a way which does not undermine crime and disorder. A violent act clearly demonstrates unsuitability for this role.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2015 an application by Sajaad Ali to transfer the premises licence for 195 High Street Gateshead to him was refused by the Licensing committee. The basis of the decision was his history as the licence holder and DPS at 313 High St Gateshead. This business is owned by Ali Baz. The premises remains closed.

The police objection is based around the lack of confidence we have in the applicant Sajaad Ali to uphold the licensing objectives and not undermine crime and disorder within the Town Centre. This lack of confidence is based on his past history of management of licensed premises in Gateshead and Newcastle. There is a pattern of short term periods of being a premises licence holder and DPS for a specific shop but never actually being there to take responsibility. There is a clear link between Ali Baz and Sajaad Ali with Sajaad Ali running shops for Baz for short periods of time. These premises are all subject to licensing issues and poor management. 313 High Street is a continuity of that business model and an attempt to reinstate it as licenced premises.

It's alarming that the business model apparent in this application places significant emphasis on delivering alcohol to a place away from the shop and the gaze of CCTV. This will significantly frustrate the attempts by the responsible authorities to check and ensure the applicant is not undermining the licensing objectives. Should the licensing committee decide to grant this application, Northumbria Police would request that sufficient conditions are placed on the licence to safeguard vulnerable residents by adding sufficient conditions to prevent immediate delivery of alcohol to persons who are already under the influence of alcohol or other substances and are seeking further supplies outside licensing restrictions.

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The application for this premises licence requests the sale of alcohol off the premises and by way of delivery service.

Whilst some 7 years ago and accepting the face of businesses has changed, not only with the passing of time but also due to COVID, we do ask the sub-committee is mindful of a decision made at a licensing hearing in respect of Mo's Pizza 324-326 High Street Gateshead in January 2013 and it's to refuse the application to vary the premises licence to allow the sale of alcohol via delivery service.

We understand that the government is making it possible for businesses to continue trading and thrive in the current climate by easing some aspects of the licensing regulations, however this is a temporary solution made in support of the economy and does not take in consideration that each individual case will need to be assessed on its own merits.

It is important that we remember the issues surrounded by alcohol deliveries are real and are still exist seven years on from the sub-committees' decision referred to above. We believe that should alcohol delivery be permitted under this new premises licence with the limited steps and conditions offered by the applicant, in line with the proposed business operation, the promotion of the four licensing objective will be undermined.

Gateshead Town Centre is subject to significant Anti-Social Behaviour and alcohol related crime. Street drinking is a significant issue and a Public Space Protection Order has just been renewed for the area. This Order specifically addresses issues associated to consuming alcohol in a public place and the subsequent disorder that follows. A number of support agencies are based in the Town Centre for people with significant mental health, substance misuse and homelessness. These vulnerable people are seen in the High Street and rear lanes of the Town Centre. They pose a significant challenge for the authorities and increase the fear of crime as a result of drunkenness. The readily available supply of cheap alcohol in the Town Centre fuels this. Any premises supplying alcohol in this setting must be able to demonstrate robust management and commitment to the licensing objectives. Sajaad Ali does not fit this profile.

It remains the case that Northumbria Police have no confidence in the applicant Sajaad Ali to uphold the licencing objectives and that he will undermine crime and disorder in the Town Centre of Gateshead should he be granted a licence to sell alcohol.

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