

PROPOSAL FOR APPLICATION OF ALCOHOL FREE ZONE IN SANDY

POLICE REPORT

This report is being made to identify the need for Sandy to have an Alcohol Free Zone (AFZ) and the areas that would need to be included.

The Police and members of the Town Council have discussed the idea of Sandy having an AFZ for many years. In the past the proposal has been rejected, as it was not perceived that Sandy had a large alcohol problem. However in recent months there has been an increase in Anti-Social Behaviour and minor crimes that can be linked to alcohol use. It would therefore be my recommendation that Sandy has an AFZ.

The problems to date have mainly involved young people who have obtained alcohol from the local licensed shops in the town or from home. These young people will then walk through the town to a number of meeting places.

The groups are of a mixed age with a number being over 18, but a larger number being under the age of 16.

Police and Police Community Support Officers would benefit from the powers assigned to the AFZ because it enables them to target those people that are in this group that are above the age of 18, but who are consuming alcohol with the younger members.

The areas that have been identified by the Neighbourhood Police Officer for Sandy are detailed as follows;

Bedford Road Recreation Ground

This area of Sandy has suffered from a high number of Anti-Social Behaviour for a number of years. This is due to it being a large open space with an array of seating areas from the children's playground to the town's memorial. A CCTV camera that is monitored at Stevenage also covers the area. There is some lighting at the front of the recreation ground that is supplied by the nearby street lamps. There have been issues in the past where litter has been left overnight including broken glass

bottles. These have sometimes been imbedded into the football pitches thereby having the ability to cause a nasty injury to anyone using the pitch. The recreation ground is surrounded by a number of residential streets, namely Bedford Road, Albion Court, Foster Grove, The Avenue, Cedar Gardens, Filland Court and Swansholme Gardens. A number of these residents have suffered from ASB including foul language and noise nuisance. On occasions vehicles have been parked up in Bedford Road playing loud music from their stereos. There is also an entrance at the rear of the park in Foster Grove and incidents have occurred here. The recreation ground is sometimes used as a 'short cut' from the Youth Club that is held in the building on the grounds of Sandye Place School. There have been incidents of damage to the children's play equipment at the location and also the public toilets, although these toilets are normally closed early evening before the youths congregate. In the past there have also been a few incidents involving youths coming down from the Putnoe area of Bedford and some assaults have taken place between the two groups.

'The Mushroom' – Cauldwell Court/Longfield Road.

'The Mushroom' is located on the outskirts of one of the housing estates in the town. It is used by the youths as a meeting place due to its geographical make up. It has a low-level wall that is used as an ideal seating area. A large street light covers it. It is located halfway between the estate and the town centre and there is a small convenience shop at the bottom of Longfield Road that can be used for supplies. 'The mushroom' is situated right in the middle of several residential streets, namely Longfield Road, Cauldwell Court, Glebe Road, Carlisle Close and East Road. Some of these houses are virtually on top of 'The mushroom' and as such suffer from noise nuisance, low level criminal damage and other ASB. Again broken glass and other litter is left behind causing an issue to members of the public who use the cycletrack that dissects the area. Last year an incident took place where a local resident went out to confront the youths at 'the mushroom' and was surrounded by a large number of youths. Some of the connecting roads leading up to 'the mushroom' have suffered from criminal damage, mainly in the form of wing mirrors being knocked or kicked off of vehicles.

Sunderland Road Skate Park.

The Skate Park is situated on the boundary of a housing estate and is within the large playing fields of Sunderland Road. You can gain access to the Skate Park from numerous residential streets, Engayne Avenue,

Wesley Road, Berwick way and the Village Hall car park. There is a childrens' play area situated next to the Skate Park and both are used by youths during the evening as meeting places. There has been evidence of alcohol being drunk at both locations and again broken bottles have been left behind. On one occasion there was a youth related assault reported from the location and youths were arrested and dealt with. These youths had been drinking at the time. Criminal damage has been reported in both Wesley Road and Berwick way that may be linked to youths making their way back from the Skate Park. This damage has been to vehicles and fences.

Market Square

In the Market Square there are numerous outlets that are licensed to sell alcohol. The police receive many reports that youths are congregating in the Market Square mainly outside one of these shops. There have been anonymous calls that these youths are approaching adults and asking them to purchase alcohol on their behalf. If alcohol is obtained the youths may remain around the Market Square area or seek nearby side streets to consume the alcohol. These areas are behind the shops of the Market Square and Sandy Health Centre, Northcroft and the rear of Budgens Supermarket and the parade of shops adjacent, which includes the Dental Practice. The Market Square has also suffered in the past from vehicles parking up and playing loud music to the annoyance of residents that live in the flats above the shops. These vehicles attract the youths that are in the Market Square. It is not known if these vehicles are linked to the distribution of alcohol amongst the youths. When the youths are in the Market Square there are reports of noise nuisance and ASB.

Conclusion

As you can see it is evident that the problems are not restricted to those persons under the age of 18 years. Adults are clearly responsible for their own share of the problems suffered within the town. The restrictions on consuming alcohol in the areas listed is necessary to help in tackling the ever growing problems related to alcohol, and is proportionate to those problems. The human rights of those that maybe subject to any restrictions are taken into account.

This report is submitted to the District Council for their consideration.

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