

## WITNESS STATEMENT

(Criminal Procedure Rules, r 16. 2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9)

Statement of: Mrs Janet MATTHEWS

URN

Age (if under 18): N/A

Occupation: Retired

I make this statement in relation to alcohol sales and anti social behaviour stemming from 'Ravi's' shop which is also known as the Premier Store on ROWLAND ROAD, BARNESLEY.

I live on [REDACTED] a street adjacent to the shop which leads down to HARRY ROAD PARK. The park is a large open grassed parkland with football pitches and play equipment. I have lived in this house for almost 39 years and the layout of the house is such that our kitchen where I spend a lot of time overlooks [REDACTED]

As we are the longest residents living on the street we know a lot of neighbours and often speak to them about what is happening in our community. I also know the age of a lot of the local youths as have seen them grow up from birth.

For around 4 years the shop has been run by a male and the family of a male called 'Ravi', or thats what we know him as.

Over the past three years I have been aware of the shop selling to under age youths, i.e. under 18 years old. On two occasions over the past year I have been in the shop and personally seen 'Ravi' sell to youths who i know are under 18 years old. I have challenged Ravi during these sales and he just 'shrugged his shoulders' on both occasions. I just feel that Ravi isn't bothered. I don't understand why he doesn't challenge them or ask them for ID. I do wonder if he is scared of not selling to them.

I must go into the shop at least a couple of times a week when i run out of things, but have never heard Ravi ask anyone for ID.

I have been personally asked over the past 3 years by different youths to buy alcohol and cigarettes for them and have always refused, as I know that those asking me are certainly under 15. I have seen groups of underage youths pass money to persons of age who have then come out with alcohol and pass it straight to them.

Once these youths have alcohol they generally make their way down onto HARRY ROAD PARK, currently going onto the field or younger children play area and shelter.

I have personally seen youths on a very regular occasion under the influence of alcohol on the park. It starts around 8pm mainly at weekends and continues into the evening. The shouting, abusive language, and music gets louder. The carrier bags used by Ravi's are very distinguishable, they are bright blue with no writing on. I often see the same youths that i witness later on drunk heading down earlier in the evening with cases of alcohol or blue carrier bags. There are no other shops that i am aware of in this area that uses these bags.

I have little doubt that the shop continues to sell to the same youths throughout the evening regardless of their state as its like a steady stream between the shop and

park with alcohol.

I used to walk on the park in an evening with my dog but we have stopped going, as there are a lot of other local residents because of the youths on the park. I find it intimidating when there are large groups, it's not the fact that they are a large group as much as it is that they are under the influence of alcohol which is very clear.

I do still walk down in the park during the daytime and often see disregarding alcohol bottles, crisp packets, takeaway boxes on the grass and in the play area. These are often accompanied by the blue plain carrier bags used by the shop. It's awful.

Previously we have had the shelter set on fire, fires and even BBQ's in the field.

I really would say the cause of these problems are as a direct result of the shop. I feel awful saying this as Ravi and the staff are friendly and wave to me at the door, but how nice are they really when they are selling to underage kids.

Ravi had enabled a problem which not only affects us but may affect these kids for years to come.

My feelings and concerns are not solely mine, from speaking to other residents they too are frustrated, fed up and sick of our park being taken over by drunken youths.

We really would appreciate and support any police action in relation to stopping this. It would make a massive difference to our community and let kids who want to play in the park on an evening to be able to do so.

This statement 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 in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature of Witness: 

Date: 23-07-2021