



BVRG NOVEMBER 2008 UPDATE

REPORT OF 2008 AGM

The 4th AGM of BVRG was held at the Old Bakehouse on 24 September 2008, and members heard a summary of BVRG's activities during the year. There were also with excellent presentations from two external speakers Cheryl Collins of the London Borough of Lewisham Licensing team and Sergeant Tim Bennett of the Safer Neighbourhoods team. A summary of the main issues covered at the meeting is included below.

LICENSING UPDATE

It has been another active year for BVRG. There were 8 licensing applications for various premises in the Village, and we objected to just 4 of these, although as you will see from the report on the Cumulative Impact Zone ("CIZ") below, this does not perhaps tell the whole story. We understand a further 9 applications did not reach us, being withdrawn prior to formal submission as a direct result of the existence of the CIZ.

Amongst the workload dealt with by BVRG, there was an application in relation to proposed layout changes at The Crown; an application for off sales at Handmade Foods and for an 8am licence at Chapters, as well as a reduction of the floor plan at the Cactus Pit and we raised no objections to any of these applications. BVRG did object to an extension of licensing hours at Khan's restaurant, who applied for an extension to closing time from 23.30 to 00.30 on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday; and 01.00 on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, with the sale of alcohol and late night refreshment until 30 minutes earlier in each case. This application was granted (surprisingly, in our view) by Lewisham in June. McColl's ("Booze Busters") applied for new hours of 08.00-21.00 in April. This application was subsequently withdrawn following various objections and LBL Licensing pointing out the existence of the CIZ. We also dealt with the MoMo Franks Deli Lounge applications (see below) and there was one application that fell under the Greenwich authorities, being Strada, who applied for an extension from 00.00 to 00.30 Mon-Sat, which was granted

As a reminder, grounds for objections to any licensing application under the Licensing Act 2003 are:

- i) *Prevention of crime & disorder*
- ii) *Public safety*
- iii) *Public nuisance*
- iv) *Protection of children from harm*

HOW IS THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT ZONE WORKING IN THE VILLAGE?

Following BVRG's efforts to help establish the CIZ in Blackheath Village, Cheryl Collins came to the AGM to tell us about how the CIZ is working in practice. The key issues are:

- Licences are live documents, which can be added to, or amended.
- Applications for material changes to a licence will normally be rejected.
- Lewisham Borough (LBL) is not able to set a limit on the number of pubs and other licensed premises within the CIZ, but has to consider each application on its merits.
- Variation of licence conditions: several applicants have withdrawn their applications either to gain a drinks licence or to vary the conditions of an existing licence – 9 in Blackheath village. This is as a result of the applications of the CIZ.
- A review of the licensing conditions may be called for by individuals, residents' groups or the police if premises are performing badly. Reviews have successfully taken place in other parts of the borough and 13 prosecutions have been brought so far.
- To complain about noisy drinking outside pubs, members should contact the Noise Team at Catford (**020 8314 6000**), and then send an email to the Enforcement team via the website (www.lewisham.gov.uk) to ensure the incident is logged.
- Although drinking outside pubs is not controlled by the pub's licence conditions, a review of the licence can be demanded if it causes a public nuisance.

BLACKHEATH WARD SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS

The Police's Safer Neighbourhoods team aims to make a real difference to the local community. If you have any concerns about day-to-day crime and disorder issues, you are encouraged to contact a member of the team. More information can be found on the website: www.met.police.uk/saferneighbourhoods. The team can be contacted on their mobile number: 020 8721 2741 or by email: Blackheath.SNT@met.police.uk. **For emergencies you should always call 999.**

A BVRG representative always attends the regular Safer Neighbourhoods Ward Panel Meetings. These meetings provide an opportunity for the police and local community members to meet and discuss areas of concern with regard to the policing of the ward. As a result of these discussions a 'priority list' is drawn-up to help the police tackle the most pressing issues.

The current list includes:

- Disorderly behaviour within Blackheath Village
- Ongoing watch on St. Matthew Academy pupils' behaviour.
- Disorder in and around Dacre Park.
- Motor Vehicle Crime which has seen a slight increase.

GREENWICH PARK AND THE OLYMPICS

There's been much concern and media coverage locally in the last few months about the proposals to use Greenwich Park in 2012 for the Olympic equestrian events, in particular the cross-country competition.

A number of concerns have been expressed about the park being damaged and established trees being uprooted to make way for the course and also the practicalities of having this number of horses racing on the ground; and indeed whether the park is simply too small for this event. Parts of the park will need to be closed before, during and after the event and, at this point, the organising committee, LOCOG, have not given specific details about how long these closures will be. The local amenity societies are, however, in dialogue with LOCOG to express these concerns and to press them for information. LOCOG (www.london-2012.co.uk) have now published a downloadable brochure outlining their plans, including an indicative route within the park. They have also undertaken to hold a series of local consultation meetings.

It has been suggested by some parties that this temporary event would be much more suitable in an existing UK equestrian venue rather than in a historic royal park which is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Some local groups including the Friends of Greenwich Park (www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk) and The Blackheath Society (www.blackheath.org.uk) have consulted with their members and decided to oppose the proposals while continuing a dialogue with the authorities. A pressure group has also been set up, NOGOE (No to Greenwich Park Equestrian Events). Their website is <http://www.nogoe2012.com/> and there is also a petition that you can sign <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/GreenwichOlympic/>. Local people can also lobby their MPs to make their views known.

UPDATE ON MOMO FRANKS

Cosa Nostra Enterprises Ltd applied in 2006 for a change of use from A1 (retail) to A3 (restaurant). There were 17 objections from immediate neighbours, i.e. those most affected, and none in favour. The Council refused on the following grounds:

“The proposed change of use would result in an over-concentration of non-retail uses within the shopping frontage in this part of the Core Shopping Frontage of the Blackheath District Shopping Centre and would undermine the vitality and viability of the centre contrary to Policy STC 4: Major & District Centres - Core Shopping Areas of the adopted Unitary Development Plan”.

The premises nonetheless began trading in the summer of 2007 as a restaurant - as the applicant admitted at the licensing hearing.

The licensing application to sell alcohol was subsequently granted despite strong opposition from BVRG, the Blackheath Society and a number of individuals. (The licensing committee is not allowed to take planning issues into account when deciding on applications.)

In February 2008, a planning enforcement notice was served by Lewisham Council, to take effect in May 2008, on the basis that the premises did not have the appropriate planning use for its operation. The premises have been closed since then.

The operators of the business appealed to the Planning Inspectorate and the matter is due to be heard at 10am on Tuesday 25 November in Committee Room 2 in the Civic Suite at Lewisham Town Hall, Catford Road, SE6. The Blackheath Society will be represented.

Meanwhile, there are estate agents' boards outside the premises referring to “shop to let”.

BUT.... WHY DID BVRG OBJECT TO MOMO FRANKS?

We have received a number of emails from BVRG members and non-members who were concerned about the change of use with these premises. We also received some emails raising the following queries, which we think are worth responding to publicly.

- MoMo Franks is a nice place, why don't you leave it alone?
- why do you object to all licensing applications in Blackheath Village indiscriminately?

To answer the first point: BVRG is an organisation which seeks to help and support members who experience problems with their quality of life in Blackheath Village. When members raise issues to BVRG, the committee considers how best to help members, if the issues are within BVRG's remit. In the case of MoMo Franks, the issues (noise, disturbance) are definitely within BVRG's remit, as is the fact that the premises are a retail shop being operated as a restaurant.

BVRG supports Lewisham Council which seeks to maintain a balanced environment in Blackheath Village, and which it does by allocating different planning uses to different premises, to maintain a balance between retail shops, pubs, restaurants, and other establishments.

If MoMo Franks were sited in a building with the appropriate planning use, BVRG would not and could not object to its opening, although BVRG would still act if members reported noise and disturbance from it.

In answer to the second point, BVRG does not object to all licensing applications in the village; in fact there have been a number of licence applications over the last few years which BVRG has reviewed and decided not to object to because the committee believed that members' quality of life would not be affected if they were granted. Most applications which BVRG has not objected to were made by restaurants and cafes.

BVRG recognises that it has become an influential organisation in the local area, so it always considers the village community as well as members. We look at the potential impact on both, before deciding to take action on issues such as licensing applications.

BVRG feels it has acted fairly, both in the interests of members whose quality of life was being affected, and in the interests of the wider Village community in supporting Lewisham Council's Planning Department in its management of planning uses for commercial premises in Blackheath.

BVRG NEWS

Have you looked at our new **website** www.bvrg.org.uk ? Please do so and let us have any feedback. You can post messages and catch up with all our news.

Donations – a plea for help. BVRG is a membership organisation for neighbours in and around Blackheath Village It's free to join and run completely by volunteers.. Whilst we have no need for a significant amount of money at the moment, we do need to keep our funds topped up at a modest level to cover printing and administration costs. Any donations are very gratefully received – please make cheques payable to the Blackheath Village Residents' Group Limited and send to the address below.

Email – if you have received a hard copy of this update and you have an email address please do let us know so that we can reduce our printing costs and time it takes to deliver to you by hand. Many thanks!

And finally last year some members asked about the Blackheath Society Christmas Cards. The 2008 cards are now available and can be seen on the publications pages of www.blackheath.org where there is a downloadable order form and details of how to buy them.

Blackheath Village Residents' Group Limited

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