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Up to £1 where sold

A boozy blow to Epsom's "gentrification"?

15 February 2024

Epsom's new B&M bargains store, formerly Wilko, can sell booze from 7am-11pm despite a resident's concerns it could "attract the wrong crowd". After entering administration last summer, the former Wilko branch was purchased by B&M in September 2023 in a re-brand.

Epsom and Ewell's licensing committee unanimously granted an alcohol licence for the new B&M store, due to open 1 March, at a meeting held 12 February.

One resident, Neil Gandhi had objected stating: "[It] goes against the local plan to gentrify Epsom. A B&M bargain will attract more crime, shoplifting, litter and the wrong crowds to our beautiful town Epsom."

Another resident from Hudson House, a nearby apartment building, said they already experience problems from people who buy alcohol late at night from Tesco and Co-op. They added people proceed to drink under their car park and walkway.

A statement from Keystone Law on behalf of B&M said: "The concept of gentrification and what is 'the wrong crowd' is somewhat subjective and, in any event, is not strictly relevant to the Licensing Objectives."

The national discount retailer sells a range of products including food, electricals, homeware, furniture, DIY and a limited range of alcohol.

The committee heard the main risk of crime out of B&M is shoplifting, according to the B&M representative. This danger is mitigated by a one-way system and the alcohol aisle placed at the centre of the premises, preventing potential shoplifters from rushing in and out of the store.

The application was granted despite Cllr **Phil Neale** (RA Cuddington) raising concerns on the effect of the "early" licensing hours on "teenagers and the school run at that time in the morning".

Although the licensing hours expand between 7am-11pm seven days a week, the applicant stated the store would "generally" operate from 8am-7pm Monday to Saturday and 10:30am to 4:30pm on Sundays.

During peak trading periods, such as Christmas celebrations in December, the applicant's trading hours are extended to 11pm closing time subject to customer demand.

While he was content with the 11pm cut-off, Cllr Neale said: "I would rather see the early hour one made a little bit tighter than 7am."

The B&M representative explained the 7am start catered towards customers who shop earlier due to shift work patterns. He added that the sale of alcohol is an important part of the store's offer because it "wants to ensure B&M is a one-stop shop."

Related report:

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Image: Credit: Google street view. Former Wilko store to open as B&M bargains applies for alcohol licence.

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