

**OBJECTION TO APPLICATION TO RENEW A SEX ESTABLISHMENT LICENCE  
WHISKEY DOWN  
Reference: 242639**

**From:** [REDACTED]

We are writing to object to the renewal of the Sexual Entertainment Venue (SEV) licence for Whiskey Down on the following grounds:

1. The licensing of this and all other SEVs runs contrary to the Equality Act 2010. Under that Act all public bodies are required to consider their Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in S.149 of the Act. Under that Section, the Council must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between the sexes and
- Foster good relations between the sexes

We believe the renewal of this licence is in direct conflict with the City Council's stated commitment to equality. The very nature of this, and all other, SEVs is grounded in the commoditisation of women for the sexual pleasure of men. Such 'entertainment', where men pay women to dance fully nude in front of them often in a confined or restricted 'private' space, sits very uncomfortably alongside the Council's other positive work to promote equality between the sexes.

Manchester City Council's Licencing Policy (as updated in 2018) states that the Council will consider and apply the Equality Act 2010 when considering an application for such licences. The policy states that the Council 'will ensure that premises are licensed in a manner consistent with the responsibilities under the Act to deliver the best equality outcomes for the city that it can'.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission states in its guidelines that City Councils must: *"consciously consider the need to comply with the general equality duty, not only when a policy is developed, but also when it is implemented. It must thoroughly assess the impact on equality of their decision-making, both before and at the time of making the decision. This duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision and there should be evidence of a structured attempt to focus on the details of equality issues."*

We submit that the Council cannot abide by its PSED and at the same time legitimately issues licences to SEVs. We would urge the Council to re-consider its entire policy in this sector and introduce a 'nil cap' on all such venues.

We would like to bring to the Licensing Committee's attention the recent proposal by Camden Council to amend its policy and shift away from a presumption that, although no new SEVs would be licensed, the 7 existing SEVs would automatically have their licences renewed each year. Their new policy would now "presume" that SEVs would no longer have their licences renewed when they expire. This would finally enable them to implement their desired 'nil cap' on SEVs as they believe nowhere in their borough is a suitable location for an SEV.

2. The renewal of the licence would be inappropriate having regard to the changing character of the local area. The resident population of the locality is growing, evident by the splitting of the old city centre ward into the two separate wards of Piccadilly and Deansgate. The Council's 'State of the City Report 2019' demonstrates that the population in the city centre and surrounding wards is likely to keep on growing, with an estimated 65,200 residents by mid-2019 (5000 more than a year earlier) and potentially 100,000 residents by 2025.

The Council's policy states that sex establishments will not normally be licensed near to (amongst other things) housing, historic buildings or tourist attractions. Whiskey Down is, however, located right in the Civic area of Manchester – a focal point for many tourists with its historical town hall and Central library buildings.

Given this and the growing residential nature of the area, we submit that having any premises used as a SEV in this locality is not appropriate and that any equality impact assessment should be reviewed and updated in consultation with the local population.

3. Research (which has been repeated in several locations across England) has continuously shown that breaches to existing licence conditions is commonplace in SEVs, with the 'no-touching' rule being regularly breached. This is also shown to put pressure on other women performers to break the rules in order to be chosen/paid to perform and/or to receive higher payments.

Last year the Council received a report of an undercover investigation commissioned by the lobby group 'Not Buying It' which documented what happened when two private investigators posed as customers at two SEVs in Manchester earlier in the year. They discovered serious breaches of licensing conditions occurring in both SEVs, specifically related to the 'no touching' rules.

They found these were not one-off breaches by one performer, but systematic breaches repeated by performer after performer in both clubs. Although we acknowledge that these instances did not occur in Whiskey Down, this only adds to the substantial research already published nationally that the conditions attached to SEVs are virtually impossible to monitor and regulate.

We would suggest that the evidence in Manchester (as well as other cities across the country) shows a distinct lack of regard by SEVs for the licensing conditions which have been imposed by the Council and that this behaviour is endemic across this industry. We believe such behaviour continuously puts performers (and customers) at risk.

Given the above, we submit that Whiskey Down's application to have its licence renewed should be refused.