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NG7 1TN

North Tyneside Council  
Cobalt Business Park  
The Quadrant  
16 The Silverlink North  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE27 0BY

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023

Dear Ms Dawson

**Buzz Bingo, Wallsend: Planning Application Ref. 23/00469/FUL**

We are writing in relation to the above application, which is being taken to Planning Committee on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> July with a recommendation for approval.

We had wished to speak at the committee and are disappointed that we are unable to do so; we understand our right to appear is only available if we had confirmed this in writing at the time of submitting the original objection to the application.

We trust therefore that this letter will be presented to Members at or ahead of the committee for their consideration.

At the outset we reiterate that Buzz Group Ltd (t/a Buzz Bingo) holds a lease on this unit until August 2025 and has no intention to surrender this lease early. Indeed, this unit is operating successfully, and we currently have no aspiration to vacate this unit over the medium term. You will therefore appreciate why we are disappointed this application is coming forward by the landlord, and extremely frustrated to see the applicant refer to the building as being imminently vacant in its submission as justification in the Planning Assessment for its change of use.

We do not wish to reiterate the points in our original objection letter dated 27 April 2023, which we have appended for ease of reference, but by way of reminder this letter highlights the success and popularity of Buzz Bingo for a wide range of the local community. It has a customer base of c. 6,748 largely dominated by women. The club attracts customers from all age cohorts, but older people aged 55 plus account for almost two thirds of the number of admissions on an annual basis.

It is our firm view that Buzz Bingo should be considered a community use, and we are surprised this is not the view reached in your Officer's report. Fundamentally we disagree with the conclusions drawn in the report that Policy S7.10 does not apply.

We agree there is no clear definition of "community use" in either the NPPF or the North Tyneside Local Plan (2017). However, we draw your attention to Annex 2 of the NPPF, which under the definition of Main Town Centre uses specifically refers to Bingo Halls as a "recreational use".

The Local Plan para. 10.76, which is the supporting text to Policy S7.10, specifically refers to "recreational" uses in the paragraph which describes the uses which fall into community uses in relation to the Policy. Indeed, para. 10.77 continues by stating recreation uses are an important aspect of any society and cover a

wide variety of activities and industries, including a broad range of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities in the borough.

In both these supporting paragraphs the Council acknowledges that community uses are provided through a “wide range of venues” and cover a “wide variety of activities and industries”. The Bingo Hall is a recreational use which serves the community. When reading the Plan as a whole, and against the provisions of the NPPF, we consider it would be prudent to consider a Bingo Hall as a community use to ensure the lawful assessment of the planning application. Policy S7.10 is therefore relevant and the assessment of the loss of this facility against Policy S7.10 should be made and, in our view, the current officer’s report to Committee is unlawful in not doing so. This is regardless as to the position regarding Para. 93 of the NPPF which is not how Policy S7.10 is necessarily interpreted.

Policy S7.10 makes clear that planning permission for the re-use of buildings for community use will be permitted where the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs for services are not reduced (own emphasis added).

As noted in our objection, and above, almost two thirds of Buzz Bingo’s clientele are above the age of 55. The nearest Bingo Hall is almost 5 miles away, which does not make it accessible to all members of the community and there no current opportunity to re-provide this provision in the local area. Accordingly, we consider this proposal is a departure from policy and has not been considered in the appropriate manner. There has been just shy of 400 objections from local residents to the application, which demonstrates that popularity of this community asset and how valued it is. Indeed, many of these comments talk about how well used the facility is, and what a valuable communication tool it provides for those who are perhaps more isolated in other areas of life. It is clear that the majority are our customers and are extremely upset and worried about the loss of this facility. Across the country, the reliance of private community provision for communities has increased, and their role increasingly more valuable in maintaining social wellbeing. This is particularly the case as the role and function of local authority community provision has become constrained due to limited resources.

The local policy framework advocates the protection of social/ cultural infrastructure and outlines that loss of such facilities should be resisted. Particularly where there is a strong demand. Where loss of social infrastructure is proposed, it is reinforced that realistic proposals for re-provision or replacement is required. There is no evidence that this has been explored in respect of the proposed development and therefore this is contrary to policy. We note reference to other social venues such as pubs, café, a place of worship etc., but we do not consider this is directly comparable nor does it offer the type of community offer as provided by Buzz Bingo. The impact of this should be explored when making an assessment of the application.

We therefore urge Members to refuse planning permission, on the grounds of the loss of this much valued community asset which is delivering valuable social and economic benefits to the community of Wallsend.

Yours sincerely

Peter Willans

Property Director for and on behalf of Buzz Group Limited