



Louis Krog  
Head of Licensing  
Cheltenham Borough Council  
Municipal Offices  
Cheltenham  
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By Email

29 July 2025

Licensing application reference: 25/01479/PRVM

Dear Louis

I write in to make the case for the council to take a compassionate and pro-business approach to bricks and mortar town centre hospitality businesses.

As the council is aware, the hospitality sector is struggling nationwide. This is due to national level policies pursued by the previous government and the new government. The council cannot influence that. There are, however, a number of ways that the council can support local hospitality businesses. Some of these begin with the approach to planning and licensing.

In the case of Japes, I believe the council could have done more, and can now do more, to help the business thrive. The owners of Japes have had a number of setbacks.

Firstly, I understand a planning application to repaint the front of the restaurant took the planning department several months to assess. This caused the business to miss a crucial Christmas trading period. Secondly, the licensing process has resulted a conflict between Japes and temporary markets on The Promenade. Rather than resolving this conflict itself, I understand the council suggested Japes negotiate directly with the market stall holders, leading to further conflict. Thirdly, I am told that the council asked the owners of Japes to submit an A-board license application at a significant cost, only to reject the application summarily, on the grounds of policy, within a matter of hours. The outcome of the application was presumably known before the council induced the owners to submit the application and pay a non-refundable fee. Fourthly, the council allows the presence of markets which regularly obscure the frontage of Japes. On a recent visit to the town centre, I noticed that one of the markets had positioned a pizza stall directly outside Japes. While I am sure it is not the case, I can understand why the owners of Japes might wonder if they are the subject of vindictive treatment.



**Max Wilkinson MP**  
Member of Parliament for Cheltenham  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

I know councillors are deeply concerned about the prosperity of our local hospitality industry. I would urge Councillors and officers of the Borough Council to step back from the policy picture and look at the broader economic issues, then consider how best our town can support independent hospitality businesses.

The council is aware of the rising problem of empty units and the potential for national taxation policies to cause a tsunami of closures. Local councils cannot undo the errors made by governments, but they can support local independent hospitality businesses like Japes, within existing policies. I trust this will begin with the current Japes licensing matter under consideration, alongside a deeper consideration of related issues.

Yours sincerely



Max Wilkinson MP

CC Paul Hunter – Japes