

Individually submitted responses

1. **Who** – An advocacy or other group/organisation that promotes equality or other social issues/values (i.e. VAWG, gender equality etc.)
2. **Do you agree, or disagree, with the proposed changes to the "Designated Permitted Area"?**

Disagree

Despite the majority disagreeing with this proposal in the original consultation, **by 44 to 18**, the council are now proposing to extend the DPA even further than they initially suggested. In Cheltenham Borough Council's (CBC) [report to its Cabinet](#) on 16th September, it said *'In summary, other consultees were not in favour of increasing the area for permitted SEVs concerned that this would make the precedent permanent which will have an adverse impact on the area. Considering the strong consultation feedback not supporting this proposal, it is proposed that the authority does not proceed with this proposal.'*

What has changed between September 2025 and this consultation to warrant this? In the initial consultation, the reasoning seemed to be that an SEV has regularly been licensed outside of the DPA, so the council may as well acquiesce and alter the DPA – this seems tenuous at best. It appears it is now being justified on the basis that this will reflect the town's Purple Flag designated area. According to [The Association of Town and City Management](#) to attain and retain Purple Flag accreditation, there are **five** core standards that must be achieved and maintained for an accreditation:

THE POLICY ENVELOPE: An after-hours policy that shows a clear strategy based on sound research, integrated public policy and a successful multi sector partnership:

- We would question how CBC could retain their Purple Flag if it ignores the responses to its own consultation, their own Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) and local, national and international research, which confirms the negative impact of SEVs on the women and girls of Cheltenham (see also below under equality concerns).

WELLBEING: Successful destinations are all safe and welcoming with all sectors playing their part in delivering high standards of customer care.

- From [CBC's own EqIA](#): *'A 2023 survey conducted by the local VAWG partnership group, surveyed women and girls about their safety in Cheltenham... The biggest concerns from participants were feeling unsafe in areas such as Boots and during race week. There was also an alarming amount of people who experienced cat calling and wolf whistling. They emphasised that these acts felt extremely normalised and often women felt like there was no point in reporting incidents.'*

- Local women's group, **GlosWomen**, have consistently highlighted how unsafe women and girls in Cheltenham feel during Race Week. [Their surveys](#) reveal that *'more than three-quarters of females did not feel safe in Cheltenham during race week, with 85 per cent avoiding the town centre and more than half experienced sexual comments or catcalling, half said they had been stared at by men or been subject to suggestive looks, while a third had had unwanted physical contact.'*

MOVEMENT: Getting home safely after an evening out is crucial, as is the ability to move around the centre on foot with ease:

- As above, the body of research and the council's own consultation responses provide evidence that women and girls **do not feel safe** in the town centre during race week, and many will and do self-exclude. The fact that Gloucestershire Police have to [increase patrols each year](#) should indicate to the council that extending the DPA is the antithesis to a Purple Flag accreditation. Maggie Stewart, of Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre, said *'women she has spoken to avoid walking through the streets alone, take the week off work or don't go into town at all [during the festival](#) and during the Gold Cup festival'* in March 2024, the local SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre) had a team present on [Cheltenham High Street](#).

APPEAL: Successful destinations offer a vibrant choice of leisure and entertainment for a diversity of ages, groups, lifestyles and cultures

- As above, if the town is a dangerous and unwelcoming place for women, girls and other communities, how can the council be considering extending the DPA and think that this would still fit their Purple Flag accreditation?

PLACE: Successful areas are alive during the day, as well as in the evening. They contain a blend of overlapping activities that encourage people to mingle and enjoy the place. They reinforce the character and identity of the area as well as flair and imagination in urban design for the night:

- As above, if women and girls and other communities are self-excluding already, why would CBC consider extending the DPA, which would only worsen this situation?

3. Do you agree, or disagree, with the proposed changes to the relevant considerations?

We neither agree nor disagree with these changes – in that, we feel the proposal to 'consider the location of premises within the permitted area during opening hours against protected characteristics' fails to address a fundamental inconsistency within the Council's own policy framework and evidence base.

The Council's published January 2025 EqIA expressly acknowledges:

- A general body of national and international research linking sexual entertainment to the objectification of women and girls and to violence against women and girls;
- Local evidence that women and girls avoid parts of the town during race meetings and in locations where SEVs operate; and
- A recorded negative impact in relation to the protected characteristic of sex.

These findings are not neutral. They amount to a formal recognition that SEVs have adverse equality impacts on women in Cheltenham. In addition, the Cabinet report recognises that the authority must remain mindful of its Public Sector Equality Duty, and the risk of breach if it fails to do so.

Taken together, these documents establish that:

1. The Council has accepted evidence of harm linked to SEVs
2. It has recognised avoidance of public space by women
3. It has recorded a negative equality impact under the protected characteristic of sex.

In those circumstances, it is not sufficient to propose merely 'considering' location against protected characteristics. The Council already has a mandatory duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminating discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity. The EqIA demonstrates that this duty is actively engaged.

Where a public authority has identified a negative equality impact, continuing to license the activity giving rise to that impact requires robust and transparent justification. No such justification is provided in this consultation.

Allowing further SEV licensing within the Designated Permitted Area is inconsistent with:

- The Council's own Equality Impact Assessment findings
- The acknowledgment of research linking objectification and violence against women and girls
- Evidence that women avoid parts of the town where SEVs operate
- The Council's Corporate Plan commitment to ensuring residents and communities benefit from Cheltenham's growth in a way that promotes safety and wellbeing
- Its engagement with, and reliance upon, the local Violence Against Women and Girls partnership evidence base
- Its stated preference for regulation in order to mitigate safeguarding and public protection risks.

Avoidance of public space by women is not a marginal concern – it goes directly to equality of opportunity and participation in civic life. A licensing framework that perpetuates that exclusion cannot be reconciled with the Council's equality duties. If the Council accepts that SEVs contribute to an environment in which women feel unsafe or excluded, the logical policy response is not refinement of location criteria, but cessation of further licensing.

For these reasons, the appropriate course is:

- No further SEV licences to be granted
- A review of the Designated Permitted Area
- Alignment of SEV policy with the Council's equality findings and stated commitments regarding violence against women and girls

Anything less risks inconsistency between evidence and policy and exposes the Council to legitimate criticism that it has failed to give meaningful effect to its own equality analysis. Conclusion We note that CBC maintains that there is a high probability that SEVs would continue to operate, even if a 'nil cap' was set in their policy. However, despite licensing SEVs each year, unregulated and unlicensed SEVs continue to operate in Cheltenham. Therefore, this current licensing regime **has not prevented** unlicensed and unregulated SEVs and, like local campaigners, we do not believe that anything proposed as part of this consultation will prevent unlicensed and unregulated SEVs from continuing to operate in the future.

We therefore support the campaign to repeal the so-called 'frequency exemption' but would also endorse GlosWomen's response in the original consultation: *'It seems to be the authority's position that because race meets already make the town a hostile environment for many women, the presence of SEVs should be tolerated. Reducing and preventing men's violence against women and girls requires cultural and social change. Instead of regulating inequality between the sexes (in the form of licensed SEVs), the authority could show real*

leadership and refuse to endorse particularly acute manifestations of sex inequality. An authority that cared about the lives of women and girls would take all available opportunities to tackle and prevent sexual violence towards women.'

1. **Who** – An advocacy or other group/organisation that promotes equality or other social issues/values (i.e. VAWG, gender equality etc.)
2. **Do you agree, or disagree, with the proposed changes to the "Designated Permitted Area"?**

*** disagree with the proposed amendment to the SEV Policy to significantly extend the 'Designated Permitted Area' to mirror the extent of the Purple Flag accredited area.

We note that the majority of respondents to the original SEV policy consultation did not agree with the original proposal to extend the Designated Permitted Area to include parts of the Promenade (44 to 18).

Given this strong feedback against extending the Designated Permitted Area, it is puzzling that the Council have decided to launch a further SEV policy consultation regarding a significant increase in the size of the Designated Permitted Area. We assume that the proposal to extend the Designated Permitted Area in line with the Purple Flag accredited area has been made following representations made outside of the original SEV policy consultation and endorsed by the Council working group formed following the Cabinet meeting in September 2025. In the interests of transparency, it would be useful to understand the context and decision-making process that has led to this new consultation in respect of the extent of the 'Designated Permitted Area'.

The Council has stated that they prefer licensing of SEVs, rather than allowing operation under the 'frequency exemption'. In addition, we understand that the Council proposes to DRAFT continue to licence SEVs within the Designated Permitted Area on a case-by-case basis. Given the proposal to increase the size of the Designated Permitted Area, we are concerned that this will lead to a significant increase in the number of SEVs being licensed within the Designated Permitted Area.

Licensed vs Unlicensed

We are concerned about the risks posed both to women working in SEVs and women in the wider community when SEVs operate under the frequency exemption. However, whilst we recognise that the licensing regime allows for additional regulation and scrutiny, we do not believe that this regime sufficiently reduces the risks posed to women (both working in SEVs and in the wider community) or addresses the wider societal harms that SEVs (as part of the sex trade) contribute to.

Government Male Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

The Government have committed, as part of their VAWG Strategy, to review the licensing regime for Sexual Entertainment Venues; engaging with relevant individuals, communities and stakeholders, to consider how the regime should be changed 'with the protection of women and girls at the forefront' (p.21 [VAWG strategy](#)). We hope that the Council will engage in this process. *** are of the opinion that the 'frequency exemption' needs to be repealed, so that local communities can fully engage in decisions relating to SEV licensing and sex equality concerns can be properly considered, as part of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty.

3. Do you agree, or disagree, with the proposed changes to the relevant considerations?

Agree.

We welcome the inclusion of additional specific criteria for consideration, as part of SEV licensing decision making processes.

-
1. **Who** – A sexual entertainment venue operator/licensee
 2. **Do you agree, or disagree, with the proposed changes to the "Designated Permitted Area"?**

Agree.

It may be helpful on the map for the Designated Permitted Area to include more street names, so area is clear.

The additional area the Council has identified as being an area to incorporate into the Designated Permitted Area is within the established nighttime economy area of Cheltenham. The Licensing Committee has consistently granted a SEV licence in this location despite it falling outside the designated area and as such has set some precedence to justify the proposed change.

3. Do you agree, or disagree, with the proposed changes to the relevant considerations?

Agree.

History of complaints needs further clarification as it should be that history of complaints must only be in respect of SEV activities at any premises as sites can have one or more use that is separate and distinct to occasional SEV use.

Change in operational hours for any other premises would also need to be carefully considered and robust evidence provided by any party stating that they would be required to change operational hours and compelling evidence as to the reasons why this change is thought to be necessary.

Additional comments:

Proposed condition 26c "Such room (s) should provide separate and private sanitary provisions for performers. Where direct access to separate sanitary facilities for performers is not available or practical other arrangements ensuring restricted and protected access to performers only would be permissible subject to the approval of the authority."

Regarding separate and private sanitary provisions being exclusively available for performers, due to our premises being licensed for only a limited number of days in a year, and not purpose built SEV venues, it would not be possible for separate sanitary provisions for exclusive use by performers to be provided. We operate single sex sanitary provisions at this venue with female toilets being private cubicles.

The performers have used the current sanitary provisions at the SEV licensed venue with no issues or concerns raised to us as an operator by authorities or performers. No evidence has

been provided within the consultation document to suggest any issues or support the rationale for this change to the policy.

We refer to the Regulators Code: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code>

“Regulators should avoid imposing unnecessary regulatory burdens through their regulatory activities and should assess whether similar social, environmental and economic outcomes could be achieved by less burdensome means. Regulators should choose proportionate approaches to those they regulate, based on relevant factors including, for example, business size and capacity.

When designing and reviewing policies, operational procedures and practices, regulators should consider how they might support or enable economic growth for compliant businesses and other regulated entities , for example, by considering how they can best:

- understand and minimise negative economic impacts of their regulatory activities;
- minimising the costs of compliance for those they regulate;
- improve confidence in compliance for those they regulate, by providing greater certainty; and
- encourage and promote compliance.”

If the existing sanitary provisions were to be demarcated for exclusive use of performers, then then the operators would be in a position of not being able to provide sufficient sanitary provision for female customers for example and this would create an equality issue in respect of female customers not being able to access our venues. There is no option for creating alternative separate sanitary provisions for exclusive use by performers due to the layout of the building and it is also a listed building, so any changes, even if temporary, would come at a huge cost burden.

Implementing this condition 26 (c) would effectively prevent the operator from being able to operate the venue as a licensed SEV venue as there is no ability to create a whole set of sanitary provisions for the limited SEV trade period within the building that is licensed.

As an alternative the council could consider requiring that operators have a policy in place for managing and monitoring the sanitary provisions for performers. This would be a less burdensome method of regulation.

-
1. **Who** – A sexual entertainment venue operator/licensee
 2. **Do you agree, or disagree, with the proposed changes to the "Designated Permitted Area"?**

Agree.

It may be helpful on the map for the Designated Permitted Area to include more street names, so area is clear.

The additional area the Council has identified as being an area to incorporate into the Designated Permitted Area is within the established nighttime economy area of Cheltenham. The Licensing Committee has consistently granted a SEV licence in this location despite it

falling outside the designated area and as such has set some precedence to justify the proposed change.

3. Do you agree, or disagree, with the proposed changes to the relevant considerations?

Agree.

History of complaints needs further clarification as it should be that history of complaints must only be in respect of SEV activities at any premises as sites can have one or more use that is separate and distinct to occasional SEV use.

Change in operational hours for any other premises would also need to be carefully considered and robust evidence provided by any party stating that they would be required to change operational hours and compelling evidence as to the reasons why this change is thought to be necessary.

Additional comments:

Proposed condition 26c "Such room (s) should provide separate and private sanitary provisions for performers. Where direct access to separate sanitary facilities for performers is not available or practical other arrangements ensuring restricted and protected access to performers only would be permissible subject to the approval of the authority."

Regarding separate and private sanitary provisions being exclusively available for performers, due to our premises being licensed for only a limited number of days in a year, and not purpose built SEV venues, it would not be possible for separate sanitary provisions for exclusive use by performers to be provided. We operate single sex sanitary provisions at this venue with female toilets being private cubicles.

The performers have used the current sanitary provisions at the SEV licensed venue with no issues or concerns raised to us as an operator by authorities or performers. No evidence has been provided within the consultation document to suggest any issues or support the rationale for this change to the policy.

We refer to the Regulators Code: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code>

"Regulators should avoid imposing unnecessary regulatory burdens through their regulatory activities and should assess whether similar social, environmental and economic outcomes could be achieved by less burdensome means. Regulators should choose proportionate approaches to those they regulate, based on relevant factors including, for example, business size and capacity.

When designing and reviewing policies, operational procedures and practices, regulators should consider how they might support or enable economic growth for compliant businesses and other regulated entities , for example, by considering how they can best:

- understand and minimise negative economic impacts of their regulatory activities;
- minimising the costs of compliance for those they regulate;
- improve confidence in compliance for those they regulate, by providing greater certainty; and
- encourage and promote compliance."

If the existing sanitary provisions were to be demarcated for exclusive use of performers, then the operators would be in a position of not being able to provide sufficient sanitary provision for female customers for example and this would create an equality issue in respect of female customers not being able to access our venues. There is no option for creating alternative separate sanitary provisions for exclusive use by performers due to the layout of the building and it is also a listed building, so any changes, even if temporary, would come at a huge cost burden.

Implementing this condition 26 (c) would effectively prevent the operator from being able to operate the venue as a licensed SEV venue as there is no ability to create a whole set of sanitary provisions for the limited SEV trade period within the building that is licensed.

As an alternative the council could consider requiring that operators have a policy in place for managing and monitoring the sanitary provisions for performers. This would be a less burdensome method of regulation.

From a resident

Dear Elected Councillors of Cheltenham, and especially Angie Boyes, Dr.Helen Pemberton , Julie Sankey. Simon Wheeler, Dr.David Willingham, Dr. Steve Steinhardt and all those past and present who have had to spend precious Council time on the consideration, exploration, investigation, study, scrutiny and issuing of the relevant documentation, implementation and inspection of all things relating to SEVs,

I am writing, as a resident of Cheltenham town centre, who daily walks through the Purple Flag Zone and am a member of an extended family covering four generations who live and work in Cheltenham. Speaking on behalf of all of them and other families, I wish to point out that they include those who are under 18 years old. Therefore it is totally inappropriate for them to have to walk past any SEV when they are in town visiting a restaurant, cinema, gym or sports venue. Birthdays , anniversaries, Christmas and weekend gatherings, sometimes into the late evening, are part of normal family life.

Over three days I have spent hours going into all the information available to me concerning CBC's work on SEVs.

From what I have read and observed I want to make known my objections to the decisions regarding the issuing of SEVs to

Cheltenham Borough Council's obligation to PSED(Public Sector Equality Duty)

I see that there is by far a bias to the rights of men and a few women against women and girls' rights relating to discrimination and objectification. I include girls which is normally those under 18 years old. Unfortunately your inspections cannot be everywhere all of the time so there is a real risk not worth taking, that girls will be involved. Women and girls, half of the population, are more than their bodies, but I am sure you appreciate that. Therefore let us consider the situation in that light.

SEVs exist to provide a space for men and a few women to be sexually aroused but not gratified. 'Is it safe?' I ask myself, and you, to create this situation where men and a few women leaving SEVs and walking our streets are in this state of sexual arousal. Even one incident of sexual misbehaviour is one too many. There is also the likelihood that alcohol will add to the dangerous mix.

Cheltenham is a small town, known as a place of education, culture, architectural interest, beautiful parks with many amazing Festivals and Sporting events. To be seen as a place where young women are brought in to provide sexual titillation for a relatively small minority of racegoers is uncomfortable and distasteful .

Many more think as I do, but haven't been aware of or had the time to wade through all the information needed to make a meaningful and acceptable objection to the decisions made by our elected Councillors.

Though not a town of dreaming spires like others we do nonetheless have many buildings devoted to many faiths for worship. These are uncomfortable neighbours within or close to the Purple Flag Zone. Unfortunately discomfort can lead to dissatisfaction and a feeling of betrayal when their sensitivities are ignored.

In Cheltenham residents live in close proximity to businesses and commercial activity. The streets are populated from very early morning with those who are preparing for the day ahead: shopkeepers, office cleaners, postal employees, travellers making for the station or Royal Well to catch a coach.

I live above Honeybourne Way and believe me there is always someone walking or cycling into or out of the town centre. Then of course there are those unfortunately having to sleep in doorways. I have spoken to Diane and Mihaela recently, one sleeping in the unoccupied Star bucks entrance and the other in the Primark entrance. We cannot guarantee there will not be others similarly at risk during horse racing events. All of these mentioned are at risk from those visiting our town who may be in a state of heightened sexual tension.

The character of Cheltenham matters. Are you, our Borough Councillars, representing us and caring about the future of this town. Perhaps you live nowhere near the town centre? We are they who live here, pay our taxes, bring up our families, work, enjoy and love this town.

Though visitors have the right to give an opinion they shouldn't be the ones who shape our home town. They leave and go back to the place they have chosen to live and I hope protect from unwelcome decisions which undermine reputation, atmosphere and safety in their village, town or city.

These are my objections and I hope they will be suitably considered.

From an elected Councillor

I didn't complete the online form as I only wanted to comment on the following proposal and couldn't skip giving a view on the first proposal in the online consultation form:

- To consider the location of premises within the permitted area during opening hours against protected characteristics as set out by Equalities Act 2010 e.g. disability, age, religion etc.

This might be pedantic but the name of the legislation is the Equality Act 2010 not the Equalities Act 2010. I think getting the name correct gives any assessment of compliance a bit more credibility.

My comment is that my understanding is that all public bodies in discharging their functions must have “due regard” to the Public Sector Equality Duty. There are three main aims:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people; and
- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low.

Therefore, consulting on the location of SEV premises against protected characteristics appears to be redundant, as the Council has had an existing longstanding duty to do this when assessing SEV licence applications? This is an existing legal obligation and is not something that the Council can choose to include or exclude from its consideration of SEV premises licences. Therefore, it's not clear to me why this is something the Council considers necessary to include in the consultation?