

Brent Council Response to Q16 of DCMS Consultation

Q16. Are there any other relevant issues, supported by evidence, that you would like to raise as part of this consultation but that has not been covered by questions 1-15?

Brent's evidence submitted in response to question 16 of the consultation supports the council's answers given to question 1 on B2 gaming machines. In particular, the evidence shows the correlation between gambling premises, which frequently contain B2 gaming machines, with areas of deprivation and anti-social behaviour in the borough.

Figure 1: Gambling Premises and Areas of Deprivation in Brent

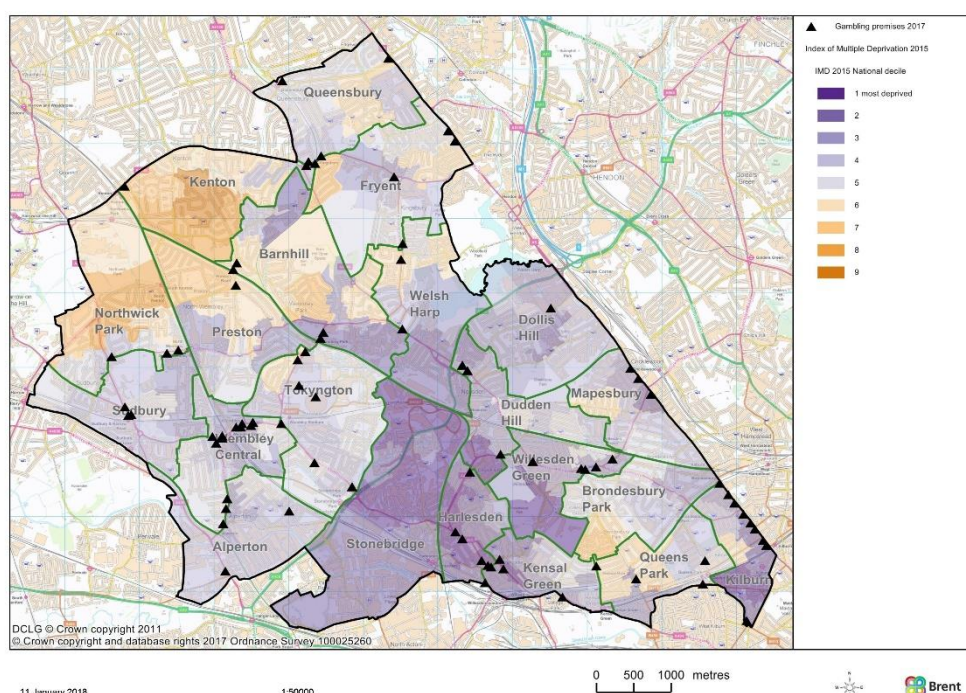


Figure 1 shows the clustering of gambling premises in particular areas of the borough which are often in, or close to, areas of high deprivation. The 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation for Brent has 14 out of 174 survey areas in the category of the most deprived. These are in areas such as Harlesden and Kilburn, which have concentrations of betting offices. Figure 1 also shows gambling premises close to areas of deprivation in Wembley and Willesden. Overall, Brent's national ranking is 30th out of 326 local authority areas in England for adults and children receiving out of work benefits and with a family income below 60% of the median income.

The result of this concentration of gambling premises is that people living in deprived areas could be considered to be at high-risk of problem-gambling. An estimate provided by the Campaign for Fairer Gambling suggests that £96,334,680 was spent in the borough's B2 machines in 2016.¹ It is therefore likely that much of this was by people living in highly deprived areas in Brent. A

¹ www.stopthefobts.org/ Based on estimate of 97 betting shops and 350 machines

reduction in the maximum stake to £2 could be expected to reduce this expenditure.

Brent Council has established that from 2007 to 2013 the number of betting shops in Brent's town centres increased by 41% from 43 to 61. This is likely due to the fact that B2 machines now account for a higher proportion of betting shop revenue than traditional over-the-counter betting², along with restrictions on the number of FOBTs in each betting shop, leading to bookmakers opening multiple shops in close proximity to each other.

Research has shown that there is an association between concentrations of licensed betting offices and problem gambling, and that deprived areas are also known to be associated with problem gambling.³ Given the above, Brent's residents living in deprived areas of concentrated gambling premises are a higher risk group in terms of developing problem gambling. The council's view is that reducing the maximum stake of B2 gaming machines would reduce the amount of gambling-related harm if leads to a reduction in the number of machines, as a result of falling revenues.

Brent's analysis is that the concentration of gambling premises connected to B2 machines also threatens the diversity of retail outlets in town centres such as Wembley, Harlesden, Kilburn and Willesden. In areas such as Wembley, 7.6% of town centre frontage was betting shops in 2016. In addition, there is also concern betting shops can have the effect of increasing rents in an area, therefore pricing out smaller independent chains. An estimated 85% of all betting shops in Great Britain are now owned by four operators.

One of the objectives of the council's licensing policy is to prevent gambling from being a source of crime and anti-social behaviour or supporting crime. In the 2015 Brent Community Safety Strategic Assessment gambling premises were identified as a contributor to 11 out of 23 anti-social behaviour hotspots. Furthermore, just five gambling premises made 105 anti-social behaviour nuisance calls in the 12 month period from the 1 February 2014 to 31 January 2015. Between 1 April 2010 and 1 September 2014, just five gambling premises accounted for 116 recorded crimes, including 33 violent crimes.⁴

² Industry statistic. Available from: www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk

³ Gaynor Astbury & Heather Wardle, Secondary Analysis of Machines Data: Examining the effect of proximity and concentration of B2 machines to gambling play (Geofutures, 2016) p32

⁴ Statement of Gambling Principles 2016-2019, Brent Council

Figure 2: Anti-Social Behaviour Hotspots and Gambling Premises in Brent

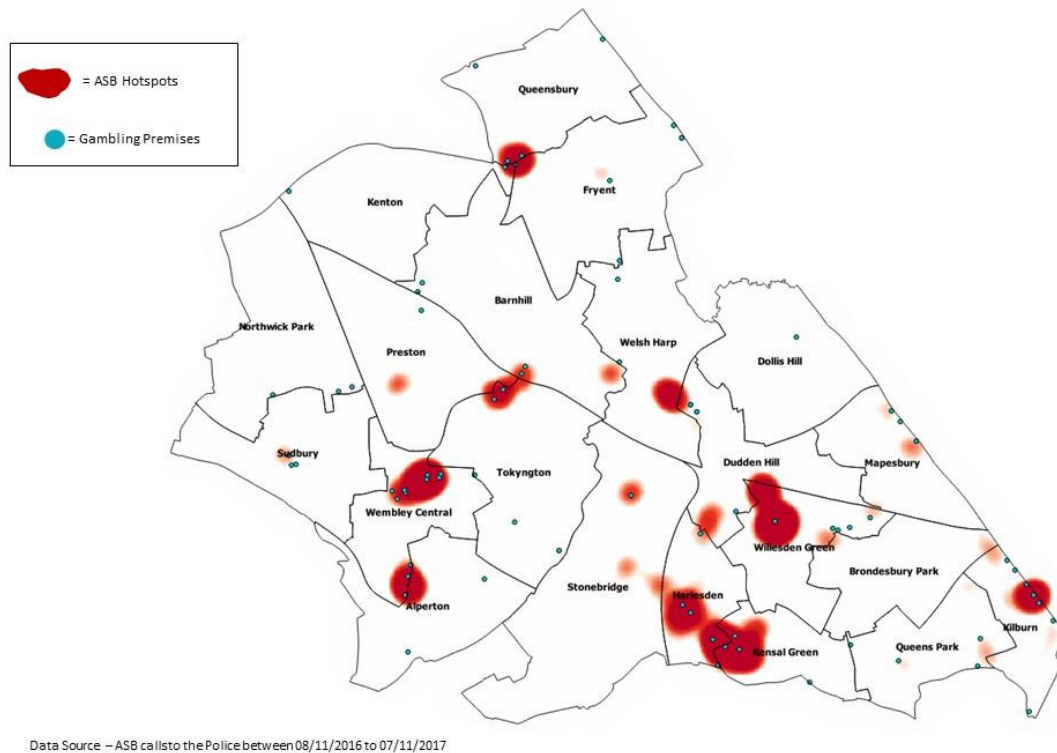


Figure 2 clearly shows the correlation between gambling premises and anti-social behaviour in the borough with particular hotspots at Harlesden, part of Kilburn and Wembley town centres where there is a concentration of gambling premises.

Given the likely link between B2 machines and the growth of gambling premises, then a reduction in stakes and prizes could be expected to make an increase in new gambling premises less likely. A expected corollary of that would be reduced anti-social behaviour.

Finally, as supporters of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on fixed odds betting terminals we believe this evidence supports the group's wider call for the stake to be reduced to £2.

We also believe that the DCMS should undertake further research regarding the time between re-playing a B2 gaming machine. There is anecdotal evidence which suggests that because a player can press the play and replay button within a few seconds it gives the player no time to register or think how much money they are gambling. Allowing a gap of a suggested 10 seconds or more between plays will allow the player to mentally register how much they are gambling away.