

Complete	GSC Class:	Reason:
If Req'd	Handling Conditions:	

MG11

Occurrence Ref:

## WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r. 16.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9

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Statement of: Derek Bausor

Age if under 18: 0/18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: Police Constable

I, Police Constable 4599 Derek Bausor, of Leicestershire Police, make this statement in relation to Victoria News & Booze, 81 Howard Road, Leicester. I am the dedicated Neighbourhood Police Officer for the Clarendon Park Ward, within which Howard Road and Victoria News & Booze are situated. In March 2025, Leicestershire Police began receiving numerous calls from residents

reporting persistent issues of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the vicinity of Victoria News & Booze. The reports described:

- Large groups of people congregating on Howard Road
- Loud noise and littering
- Cars driving at speed and in an inconsiderate manner
- General nuisance coinciding with break times of nearby WQE College

Initial enquiries strongly indicated that those involved were college students frequenting the area during lesson breaks. Given the volume and persistence of the complaints, the local beat team implemented a Problem Management Plan—a structured policing approach used to analyse the root causes of recurring crime and disorder and develop an appropriate multi-agency response. A key element of such plans involves partnership work with businesses whose practices may be contributing to the problem.

On Wednesday 9 April 2025, I attended Howard Road in plain clothes. At approximately midday I observed a high number of college-aged individuals congregating outside and around Victoria News & Booze. Groups were standing directly outside the premises, while others sat in parked cars playing music and socialising. The behaviour matched the reports received from residents. Once the crowd dispersed, I entered the store to speak with staff. While waiting, I observed a male of clear college age purchase a vape product without being challenged for proof of age. At no time did the staff member attempt to verify his age. When the shop became empty, I identified myself as a police officer. The member of staff provided his name as Sandeep THAKAR. I asked Mr THAKAR why no age verification had been requested. He stated that he was "not required to" and that he personally knew the age of all his customers. He appeared unaware of the "Challenge 25" policy, which, while not mandatory, is considered best practice and widely adopted within the licensing industry to prevent underage sales. Mr THAKAR stated he was not the owner but, from our conversation and his role in the premises, it was clear he was responsible for the day-to-day running of the store. My professional assessment was that Mr THAKAR had limited knowledge of relevant legislation, age-restriction duties, and licence conditions, and that this lack of compliance was actively contributing to the attraction of large numbers of students to the shop, generating the ASB reported by residents. During this visit I also observed a lighter hung on a string near the shop entrance. In my experience this is indicative of stores selling "singles"—individual cigarettes—which is an illegal practice.

Due to these concerns, I arranged a joint visit on Thursday 1 May 2025 at 11:00 hours with Leicester City Council Licensing and Trading Standards. During the inspection, Trading Standards officers seized over £11,000 worth of illegal and non-compliant tobacco and vape products. I was informed that these items did not meet UK regulatory standards and were significantly stronger than legal equivalents. The presence of such stock posed clear risks to public health and further demonstrated serious and systemic non-compliance within the premises.

On Saturday 24 May 2025, Leicestershire Police conducted further test purchasing in relation to underage sales. At 12:42 hours, a 16-year-old Police Cadet attended Victoria News & Booze and successfully

Signature: ..... Signature witnessed by: .....

Continuation of Statement of: DEREK BAUSOR

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purchased a strawberry-flavoured vape for £5.00, again without any form of age challenge. I subsequently entered the store with PC 1400 Richard Wagg, informed the staff of the failed test purchase, and obtained the name of the worker present: Gopiragu NUKATHOTI [REDACTED]

My interactions with the store have primarily been with Sandeep THAKAR. Despite not being the business owner, he appears to act in the capacity of manager with substantial operational responsibility. From my first conversation, I was open and transparent regarding the community complaints and our desire to work constructively with the premises. However, Mr THAKAR's attitude was consistently unhelpful, dismissive, and combative. He openly criticised police presence at the store, stating it would "affect their sales". This led me to believe that profit is being prioritised over community safety, legal compliance, and the prevention of underage sales. While police patrols and engagement have led to a reduction in student congregation, serious concerns remain regarding:

- Poor management oversight
- Lack of staff training and awareness
- Repeated failures to prevent underage sales
- Possession and sale of illegal vape and tobacco products
- An apparent disregard for licensing obligations and community impact

In my professional opinion, Victoria News & Booze has demonstrated a pattern of permissive, unsafe and unlawful practices, which contribute directly to ASB in the local area and present significant safeguarding risks to young people. I believe these issues are ongoing, systemic, and unlikely to improve without formal licensing intervention. I make this statement believing it to be true to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

Signature: [REDACTED]

Date: 18/12/2025

Signature: ..... Signature witnessed by: .....