

Who Objects to Spearmint Rhino?



"The courts have said that you can respond to a body of feeling in the locality, merely the fact that a number of people are concerned about this justifies refusal"

Philip Kolvin, QC strip club licensing expert

A summary of the some of the 750 objections received to the licensing of
Spearmint Rhino Sheffield

Background

Close to 750 objections have been made to the licensing of Spearmint Rhino Sheffield between 2016 and 2020 (nearly 400 were received in 2019 alone). This is a compilation of objections over this time frame to highlight the wide range of objectors - from Sheffield's own MPs and councillors to the club's own former lap dancers.

Links to objections are given through out this document and the full council report packs they came from are:

- 2016 - Links not included as personal details have not been redacted by the council
- [2017](#)
- [2018](#)
- [2019](#)
- 2020 - Links not included as report pack not yet published. 2020 objections mentioned here are just those we are aware of, however there are likely to be many more.

Objections from Academics & Other Experts

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| • Alan Caton, OBE
Former Suffolk Police Chief who ended street prostitution in Ipswich | 2020 |
| • Dr Jacci Stoye
Secretariat for Cross Party group for Commercial Sexual Exploitation Scotland | 2020 |
| • Dr Gail Dines
Professor Emeritus, CEO of Culture Reframed | 2020 |
| • Anna Zobnina
Expert on women's rights in Europe | 2020 |
| • Professor Kathleen Richardson
Professor of Ethics and AI | 2020 |
| • Local/National Government Advisor on Violence against Women | 2019 p 554
2020 |
| • Member of Cross Party Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation | 2019 p 626 |

Objections from Public Bodies / Representatives

- Sheffield MPs [2018](#) p 424
- Sheffield Central MP [2017](#) p 146
2016 p 84
- Sheffield Heeley MP [2017](#) p 264
- Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough MP [2017](#) p 308
- Sheffield Council Office of the Director of Public Health [2019](#) p 112
- Sheffield Councillor [2019](#) p 686
[2018](#) p 419
[2017](#) p 94
- Sheffield Councillor 2019 p 726
- Sheffield Council Employee 2016 p 118
- Sheffield City Centre Development Team [2018](#) p311
- Sheffield Fairness Champion /Commissioner [2019](#) p 221
2018
2017
2016 p 92
- Councillor on Southend Licensing Cttee [2019](#) p152
- Senior Minister of Local Church 2016 p 96
Church meetings held in venue directly opposite the club

Objections from Educationalists

Spearmint Rhino Sheffield is in the middle of Sheffield Hallam University (freshers from Scotland may be as young as 17) and hosts 'students nights'. It is also close to schools and play areas even though council policy explicitly states it will not license strip clubs close to educational centres with children under the age of 16.

- Vice Chancellor Sheffield Hallam University [2019](#) p 398
[2018](#) p 459
- Sheffield Hallam University [2018](#) p 161
[2017](#) p 64
- Sheffield Hallam University representatives of Sheffield Hallam 2016 p 83
- Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam [2019](#) p 167
[2018](#) p 135
- Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam [2018](#) p 781
- Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam 2016 p 62
- Employee of Sheffield Hallam [2017](#) p 108
- Teacher at Sheffield Hallam [2016](#) p 57
- University staff member working in student well being [2019](#) p 640
- Development Education Centre South Yorkshire [2019](#) p 381
[2018](#) p 612
[2017](#) p 294
- Local Maths Tutor [2019](#) p 577
- Sheffield College Educationalist [2019](#) p 657
includes ages 16-18 and a campus close to Spearmint Rhino [2018](#) p 236
- Sheffield Institute of Arts [2018](#) p 185
- Shift Media [2017](#) p 245
Provides training for 16-18 year olds, 30 secs walk from the club 2016 p 125
- Local Theatrical Company working in education & health care [2017](#) p 143
- Award winning writer and academic 2016 p 73
- Educational organisation working with female university Students 2016 p 81

Objections from Healthcare Professionals

- Sheffield GP [2017](#) p 334
- Sheffield GP [2017](#) p 335
- Psychotherapist [2019](#) p 660
- NHS Trauma Psychotherapist 2016 p 121
- Counsellor [2019](#) p728
- Healthcare Advocate (Freelance Healthcare writer) [2019](#) p 176
- Regional Eating Disorder Association 2016 p 67

Objections from National NGOs

- CEASE UK Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation 2020
- ICOSE International Centre On Sexual Exploitation 2020
- Anti Harassment Group [2019](#) p169
- Men at Work 2020
- Not Buying it 2020
[2019](#) p 709
[2018](#) p 681
- Object 2020
[2019](#) p 689
- WEP Representative [2019](#) p 273
- White Ribbon Campaign Representative 2020
[2019](#) p 387
[2018](#) p 119

Objections from Local NGOs

- Know the Line [2019](#) p 633
[2018](#) p 767
- Not Buying It Sheffield 2020
[2019](#) p 593
[2018](#) p 503
- Sheffield Feminist Network [2019](#) p 691
- Sheffield Women of Steel Resisters [2019](#) p 488
- WEP Sheffield [2019](#) p 569
[2018](#) p 455
[2017](#) p 179
[2016](#) p 36
- Zero Option [2018](#) p 485
[2017](#) p 218
2016 p 146

Objections from Local Service Providers/Advocates

The Council's policy explicitly states it *will not* license strip clubs close to venues that support the vulnerable yet there are centres for rape victims and other vulnerable groups close to the club

- Vida Sheffield, Service provider for victims of domestic violence [2019](#) p 340
[2018](#) p 658
[2017](#) p 274
- Service Provider for Sexually Abused [2019](#) p 224
- Service Provider for Sexually Abused Women [2018](#) p 705
- Advocate for Vulnerable Women 2016 p 123
- Counsellor at Sheffield Rape And Sexual Abuse and Centre (SRASAC) [2019](#) p 525
- Trustee of SRASAC [2017](#) p 291

- Survivor and Advocate for Sexual Violence Victims/at risk women and girls [2019](#) p 391
- Advocate for vulnerable women, who refers women on to SRASAC [2019](#) p 743
- Sexual Health worker [2018](#) p 479
- Domestic Violence Service Provider [2018](#) p 647
- Advocate for Survivors of Sexual Violence [2018](#) p 661
- Sheffield Centre for vulnerable youth and adults [2018](#) p 442
- Chair of Disability Sheffield [2019](#) p 732
[2018](#) p 826
- Advocate at Sheffield Asylum Seeker Health Centre [2017](#) p 336
9 mins walk from club, half the women registered there are victims of (sexual) trafficking
- Build A Girl, works with 'at risk' girls [2019](#) p 481
- Apna Haq, supports vulnerable BME women [2019](#) p 682
- Sexual Violence Expert [2019](#) p 592

Objections from Lap Dancers from this Club

3 women from this club have testified to the council of years of abuse at the club, spanning more than a decade. In 2019, it was testified that this abuse is ongoing. The council has not set up a whistle blower hotline (or similar confidential, independent service) despite this being the only means by which there is any genuine means for club workers to raise concerns.

- Former dancer with prior abuse: 'harassment/threat/abuse in club' [2019](#) p 706
[2018](#) p 603
- Former dancer forced to dance through domestic abuse: 'drugs in club' [2019](#) p 707
[2018](#) p 739

- Former dancer with prior abuse: 'assaults/ threat/intimidation in club' [2019](#) p 826
[2018](#) p 669
- Current dancer: sexual assault [2019](#) p 829
- Current dancer: 'Sexual assault prevalent .. by customers and management' [2019](#) p 490

Objections from Women from the Wider Strip Trade

The inherent harm of the strip trade on its lap dancers is well documented, through research and the testimony of numerous whistle blowers and survivors. Despite these having been given to the council for years, the council continues to license the club

- Former Lap Dancer at another Spearmint Rhino branch [2019](#) p 370
- Former lap dancer: 'The industry is laced with trauma' 2020
- Former lap dancer: 'It's sexual exploitation plain and simple' 2020
- Former lap dancer: 'PTSD, depression, substance abuse, STDs' 2020
- Former lap dancer: 'What real choice is poverty or exploitation?' 2020
- Former lap dancer 'It's sexist, racist, homophobic' 2020
- Former lap dancer 'I would never have started if I knew what it really was' 2020
- Survivor of Sexual Exploitation, including lap dancing [2019](#) p 476
- Many survivors of the strip trade describe dissociation, trauma, denial [2018](#) p 151
- My daughter strips -all the girls drink. She doesn't have relationships any more [2017](#)

Objectors who've Experienced Criminality, Harassment, Assault

There have been 33 Police incident reports with words 'Spearminth Rhino' logged between 2012-2016. This was *not* included in licensing reports [[2017](#) p291]. According to police logs, the street that hosts the strip club has been one of the 10 most dangerous in Sheffield on more than one occasion, with 4 reports of violence and sexual offences in [March 2020](#) alone.

- Up to 10 pimps hang around outside at weekends, security friendly with them [2019](#) p 326
- Women given up her work studio partly due to harassment by punters/bouncers [2017](#) p 56
- Harassed/Assaulted outside this club and other strip clubs [2019](#) p 671
- Propositioned for sex outside venue [2018](#) p 629
- 'Breach of Licensing laws around child protection' [2018](#) p 613
- Harassed and feel unsafe [2019](#) p 657
- Vulnerable adults regularly verbally abused outside club [2019](#) p 210
- Harassed by punters when walking to work nearby [2019](#) p 407
- 'Bad reputation over punters who then harass and molest people' [2019](#) p 174

Objectors who Feel Unsafe /Uncomfortable because of the Club

'if a woman, whether objectively justified or not, fears to use part of the town centre characterised by sex establishments, this may be argued to amount to discrimination' Philip Kolvin, QC, strip club licensing expert

- 'I personally feel less safe when walking in the vicinity of this club' 2020
- 'Feel very uncomfortable & nervous for my personal safety around this venue' [2017](#) p 108
- 'I feel uncomfortable and unsafe walking past club especially at night' [2017](#) p 300
- It impacts on my social and cultural participation – even as a university lecturer 2016 p 62
- It impacts on students' social and cultural participation 2016 p 62
- 'Negatively impacts my sense of personal safety & freedom every time I work past' [2018](#) p 453
- Discomfort walking near club [2017](#) p 305

- Feels unsafe near club [2019](#) p286
- Sheffield Hallam students state on radio they do not like the club's presence [2017](#) p 194
- Students uncomfortable, unhappy, angry about presence of club [2018](#) p135
- University worker describes feeling uncomfortable due to club [2019](#) p 640
- Teenagers feel threatened by clubs presence & worried about its clientele [2017](#) p 286
- 'It creates an atmosphere that I find sexist' [2017](#) p 277
- 'Walking past it is difficult and challenging' [2018](#) p193
- Makes me feel mildly depressed 2016 p 91
- 'Make me feel Uneasy. It's off putting, like entering a red light district' 2016 p 124
- 'makes me feel very uncomfortable as a local female resident' 2016 p 145
- 'intimidated by club' - supporter of sexual abused women [2018](#) p 647
- Extremely uncomfortable as a disability right advocate and a mum near club [2019](#) p732

Objectors who Self Exclude from the Area because of the Club

In 2018, the Vice President of the chain, John Specht, took photos outside the club at regular interval. It showed the vicinity was essentially deserted despite it being next to busy student accommodation. This clearly suggests, some might say proves, that women are self excluding (ie avoiding) the area.

- The zone around the club is a no go area 2016 p 143
- Disabled woman who does not use nearby facilities because of club 'I don't' feel safe' 2016 p 44
- Under age teen so uncomfortable she self excludes from area [2019](#) p735
- Vulnerable teen girl excluded from using nearby support service due to club [2017](#) p 303
- I go out of my way to avoid walking near the club 2016 p 115
- 'Encourages me not to frequent the area' 2016 p 125
- 'I avoid the area – I do not feel safe' 2016 p 157
- Feel unsafe, vulnerable walking past leading to self exclusion from area [2019](#) p179
- 'I am self excluding from the city' [2018](#) p 128

- LGBT group self excludes - no longer holds events near venue now due to fear of abuse [2017](#) p 203
- Disabled Woman feels vulnerable and self excludes due to club [2016](#) p 44

Objections Regarding those with Multiple Vulnerabilities

It is concerning that currently both Sheffield Hallam Student Union and the University LGBT society support the club when several LGBT individuals and many students have stated they feel unsafe and even avoid the area altogether because of it.

- Survivor of sexual violence using nearby service, SRASAC [2019](#) p740
- Vulnerable adults regularly verbally abused outside club [2019](#) p 210
- Disabled women feels vulnerable near the club [2016](#) p 107
- Disabled woman who does not use nearby facilities because of club 'I don't' feel safe' [2016](#) p 44
- LGBT Fear of Harassment [2019](#) p 662
- LGBT group self excludes - no longer holds events near venue now due to fear of abuse [2017](#) p 203
- Concerned for my LGBT friends [2018](#) p 788

Objectors who Witness an Effect on Attitudes

The effect of mere objectification, let alone the sex trade, on social attitudes is documented in research spanning decades. The council has conceded two High Court cases for breaching equality law – in part due to their lack of consideration for the effect on wider attitudes strip clubs promote.

- I've seen the detrimental effect of strip clubs on attitudes of my male friends [2017](#)
- 'Appalling attitudes in boys of 16-18 that I teach due to club' [2018](#) p 237
- Helps prevent women entering non-stereotyped professions [2018](#) p 237

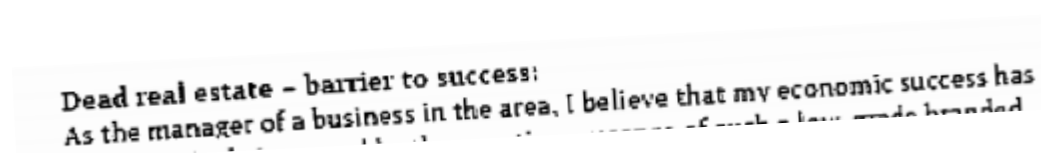
Objectors Abused by Strip Industry Supporters

Abuse by supporters of the club against objectors reached a peak in 2019, buoyed by countless, often incendiary articles in local media in support of the club – making many people fearful to speak out or even object. This was not helped when the council leaked over 700 email addresses of objectors and others and did not fully redact personal details from objections published online.

- 'I've been Subjected to rape and death threats' [2017](#)
- Many people state too frightened to even object [2017](#)
- Ongoing campaign of harassment and intimidation by press and club advocates [2019](#) p 724
- 'Significant number of young women scared to speak out or even object' [2019](#) p 266
- 'People scared to object'; 'I'm too scared to speak out publicly' [2019](#) p 674
- Former Lap Dancers afraid to speak out [2019](#) p 826
- 'A lot of abuse and harassment against those who object' [2019](#) p 533
- 'Too dangerous to speak out publicly' [2019](#) p 674
- False, incendiary information being published in press and by club supporters [2019](#) p 570
- Fears details being made public due to club links with organised crime [2019](#) p 557
- 'I have been targetted on social media' 2020

Bad for Business

It is often argued that Spearmint Rhino contributes to the economy. However it has not paid tax for years due to operating at ever increasing loss (over £3million by 2018). The club has only a handful of customers. In addition, many lap dancers do not pay tax. After being told to relocate, Spearmint Rhino now appears to have bought the premises from which it currently operates.



- 'in the past the council has not taken on board objections of local businesses' 2016 p 139
- Local Business manager: it's 'dead real estate' and impacted my success [2017](#) p 279

- 'Poor image to my business clients' [2017](#) p 135
- Local Social Enterprise [2018](#) p 664
[2017](#) p 90
- Worker at local business work space 2016 p 98
- Works near club [2019](#) p 257
- Local Business 2016 p 131
- Local Business at the Artspace
A few seconds walk away 2016 p 143
- Patron of Showroom Cinema
This is opposite the club 2016 p 124