

[Motorways, pubs and nannies](#) [1]

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A new pub has opened in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. That's news in itself, given that around 1200 pubs closed down last year, thanks (or no thanks) to the weight of retail and employment regulation that makes pubs so darn expensive to run.

But the Hope & Champion is of doubt interest, because it is in the Extra Motorway Service Area at Junction 2 of the M40. So the people who go there are almost certain to get there by car. So naturally there have been plenty of critics complaining that this initiative sends out all the wrong signals about drinking and driving.

Well, pubs in the UK are licensed, precisely because we know the potential problems that can go with alcohol consumption. But the fact is that the local police did not object to the licence, nor did the local authority. And the local paper is giving the new pub splash coverage. So local people don't think there's a problem here.

The real problem is the message that the critics send out, yet again ? that the political class in Britain thinks the adult population of their country are completely incapable of making their own choices, and that their lives have to be micro-managed for them. This pub, like most others these days, is basically a restaurant that also serves alcohol. It opens at four in the morning and starts selling alcohol at nine - though apart from one stalwart getting stuck into a pint for the cameras, most people there this morning were getting stuck into nothing more life-threatening than a Full English Breakfast. And if a group of people want to stop off the M40 for lunch or dinner, why should the passengers be denied the pleasure of a small sherry just so that drivers are 'kept away from temptation'?

Weatherspoons, the pub owners, are a responsible chain. Their menus carry Drink Aware slogans and information. Their staff do not serve people who have already had enough. People know that there are legal limits on drinking and driving - and they know that even drinking below the legal limit can slow down your reactions. So most drivers who visit the pub, alone or with a group, would probably not have alcohol anyway, and their passengers would probably not want them to.

So as the police and local authority figure, there's no problem. The only problem is all those people who deem it their business to treat us like children.

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