

# Haddington newsagent's drinks shelves twice the size allowed

A newsagent's shop sparked concern after it was found to be selling double the amount of alcohol allowed to 'cash in on the Euros' over the summer .

The Shoptmart store, on Haddington High Street, now operating as a Premier Store, was granted a licence to sell booze last October after arguing that the sale of newspapers was no longer a profitable business.

But a visit to the store on June 21 – two days before Scotland were beaten by Hungary – revealed it had almost doubled the amount of space it was allowed to give to alcohol displays.

And a report due to go to East Lothian Licensing Board next week says when the manager was asked why there was so much drink in the store they were told it was “to get more in for the football festivities and make more money”.

The board's licensing standards officer said the visit revealed several 'compliance issues' including the unapproved size of alcohol on display.

A member of staff when questioned gave a false name and even after admitting their true identity could not produce their personal licence.

And the report revealed further concerns on a follow up visit

just last month when another member of staff gave a false name and then had to be stopped from selling alcohol to two young men who came in while the officer was there.

The officer said: "I asked why he was about to put the sale through without asking for ID, at which point one of the young men immediately left the shop and the other became aggressive saying he had ID.

"He then left after being advised there were other ongoing issues. In my opinion it was clear that this was potentially a proxy sale and challenge 25 should have been conducted for both customers."

The shop owners have now applied for a change to the licence to increase the size of the area given to alcohol sales from 9.32 square metres to 17.1 square metres.

However the licensing standards officer raised concern over a lack of training records and has called for a condition to be added to any variation of the licence which means a personal licence holder must be on the premises at all times that alcohol is available for sale.

The board meets next Thursday to decide the application.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter