

'We feel we are being singled out'

by MIKE WRIGHT

A FORMER Watford FC player has claimed the Yellow and Red Lion pub is 'paying the price' for its connection with ex-Hornets owner Laurence Bassini, following a police closure.

Nell Price, who played in the 1984 FA Cup final, said he felt the pub was having its licence reviewed as certain police officers "had a problem" with the Stanmore businessman, who opened the pub last year.

His comments were made at a licence hearing on Monday where Watford borough councillors reviewed the Vicarage Road pub's licence after it was temporarily closed ahead of the Crystal Palace match.

Watford Chief Inspector Nick Caveney issued a closure notice on the morning of the match on Friday, February 8, after learning Mr Bassini was withdrawing as the pub's designated premises supervisor.

The closure automatically triggered a review of the pub's licence.

However, Mr Price, who runs the Yellow and Red Lion with his brother Josh, said he had been warned by someone senior at Watford FC that the police were going to review the pub's licence before the closure.

He said: "I think [the police officer] sits in that tower and has a problem with Mr Bassini from his time at the club and we are paying the price for that, as these scenarios don't stack up."

"I think complaints need to be made against certain members of the police. "Why we are upset is we feel we are being singled out."

Josh Price, the Yellow and Red Lion's landlord, said he also felt there was an "ulterior motive" behind the closure.

At the hearing he alleged one police officer had threatened to "make things difficult" for the pub weeks before the closure order.

He said: "Eight weeks previous he [the police officer] said he would make things



Former Hornets Neil Price: Had been warned pub faced review.

Laurence Bassini: Police encountered problems communicating with him.

In his report on the closure, Chief Inspector Caveney said he took the decision to shut the pub for the Crystal Palace match due to the lack of clarity as to who was responsible for the Yellow and Red Lion that day.

He also cited the heightened risk of disorder at the Crystal Palace fixture and previous issues at the pub as reasons for the temporary closure.

Josh Price said he was surprised when he learned police were shutting the pub as he said there had not been one arrest made at the pub since it opened.

He said: "I was quite agitated. I did not see it coming and I was a bit angry."

"Days before they [the police] were saying they were delighted with how we were running the pub and now we were co-operating with them."

"To say I was surprised is an understatement. I just felt it was really heavy-handed and unnecessary."

Mr Price is now training to become the DPS for the pub, a move the police said they are happy with.

The landlord also said he and the police had been trying to get Mr Bassini to quit as DPS for the pub some time before the closure.

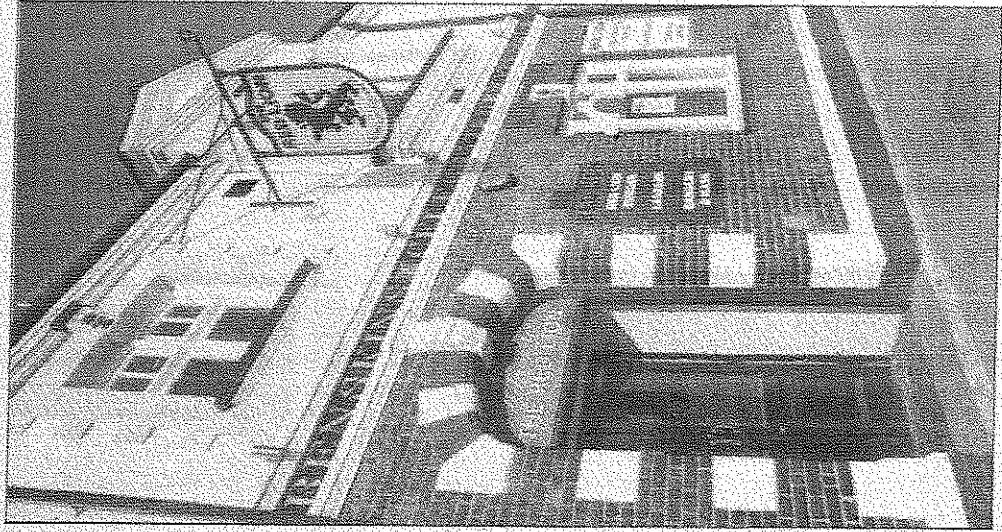
Mr Price added: "We could not remove him as DPS without him doing it."

"We said we wanted to work together to remove him as he is not there and he is not interested."

At the hearing the police asked councillors to add three conditions onto the pub's licence including always having a personal licence holder on site and the gates on the pub shut during Vicarage Road matches and to have additional security staff.

The three councillors on the panel - Liberal Democrat George Derbyshire and Derek Scudder with independent Malcolm Meerabux - added all the extra conditions except the one relating to security staff.

Mr Bassini agrees to pay damages - Page 54.



Yellow and Red Lion: conditions have been added to licence. Picture 09/03/13: PIPPA DOUGLAS

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