

12th October, 2020.

20/01201/LAPRE

Proposed change of license for Woodies, St Pancras, Chichester.

Objection to the application.

I live at 23 New Park Road and the rear of the house faces the car park – close to the back entrance to Woodies.

During lockdown the premises has undergone a substantial internal alteration. Notice of the new licensing application was posted at the same time as another notice on premises recently refurbished and intended to be known as The Annex. This I believe will form part of the new layout for Woodies and as this notice suggests, will become Chichester's very own City centre nightclub. There appears to be no doubt as to the outcome of this application.

This is the 3rd licensing application - a 2nd one was recently withdrawn before being considered by the Planning Committee - made on behalf of Woodies, in approximately 12-18 months. At the previous hearing, only the applicant's representative attended and assured members of the Licensing Committee that the aim was to attract a wealthy, middle-aged clientele to eat and then end the evening with a drink and a bit of jazz. In reality ...

- There have been a number of occasions where the new or existing license conditions have not been complied with – notably, but not exclusively, the use of the rear exit, lack of security personnel and the constant use of the rear patio area after 10pm.
- Regularly, and with the knowledge of the designated responsible person, customers have been drinking at the rear of the premises outside the curtilage of the building and not in the patio area - essentially in the car park - in breach of licensing regulations.
- There has been frequent and sustained noise from the rear of the premises into the car park from customers smoking, chatting and drinking when the patio area was required to be vacated. Plus, a good deal of shouting, swearing and arguing and endless telephone conversations in the car park, during and after hours. At weekends, groups of people congregate in the car park, having exited at the front onto St Pancras, talking loudly, smoking and generally being anti-social in the early hours of the morning whilst waiting for taxis. At no time are customers encouraged to leave quickly and quietly to avoid disturbing residents.
- This irresponsibility, and lack of regard for the terms of the license, led to the police shutting down the premises on New Year's Eve.

Chichester District Council in its capacity as the Licensing Authority, must promote the four objectives detailed in the Licensing Act 2003. Of these four, the most problematic and frequent causes for concern in terms of how Woodies functions as licensed premises are:

- The prevention of crime and disorder - anti-social behaviour has already been mentioned as have the need for the police to shut down the premises on NY Eve. It is

not unusual to spot beer glasses outside the premises. A security presence was in place early into the operation of the existing licence last year, but that was not sustained and all subsequent events were not overseen by any security presence. Customers exiting at the front will always move to the rear of the premises to pick up taxis and it is unrealistic to expect them to do otherwise particularly if it is late and they have consumed alcohol. This nuisance is not going to be prevented by any mitigating measures proposed in this application.

- The prevention of public nuisance; para 8.1 of the Licensing Policy states that:

...The Licensing Authority wishes to maintain and protect the amenity of residents and businesses from the potential consequence of the operation of licensed premises whilst recognising the valuable cultural, social and business importance provided by such premises. Stricter conditions in respect of noise control will be imposed where for example premises are situated in denser residential areas or areas of mixed business and residential use.

As the applicant is proposing a late-night venue with recorded music being the draw alongside the sale of alcohol until 1am, I cannot see how this stated policy can be maintained where, without doubt, the impact of the extended hours and noise will severely impact on the amenity of residents within the Square and those living nearby in St Pancras. The applicant has already demonstrated an inability to adhere to the terms of the current license and cannot be relied upon to enforce all or any conditions that might be imposed in relation to this new application. Nor can it demonstrate that it has actively engaged with its own Operating Schedule.

All submitted objections identify that this proposed alteration or addition to the current license is incompatible with the residential nature of the area. There are many other residents the length of New Park Road and further along St Pancras and the Hornet, that will be impacted by customers leaving on foot late at night and under the influence of alcohol. This significant nuisance cannot be offset by any measure or condition.

I have one last comment, the Licensing Committee may, quite rightly, have specific questions for individuals associated with the business and the operation of the terms of the License. At the hearing last year, no one attended other than the applicant's representative. How can the Committee be satisfied that the operation of the License is taken seriously or with commitment without hearing from those responsible for its day to day implementation? The Committee must ensure, for the purposes of demonstrating that they have taken all things into consideration, that this is not repeated again. Where information requested by the Committee cannot be provided by the applicant's representative, then the hearing should be adjourned so it can be supplied by those who can.

Fiona Heard.