

(redacted),
Beenham,
Berks RG7 5

9th November 2023

Public Protection Partnership (Licensing),
West Berkshire District Council,
Market Street,
Newbury RG14 5LD

Dear Sirs,

Re : New Premises Licence Application LA 22873 (Awberry Farm, Beenham)

I am writing to you because I would be affected by this licence, if granted, and wish to voice my objections to it on the grounds that it doesn't meet the licencing objectives of the Preservation of Public Nuisance (particularly as regards noise and light nuisance) and the Protection of Children from Harm.

Firstly, for clarification : despite the application stating that the application site is surrounded by undeveloped agricultural land, Awberry Farm is in fact an integral part of the tranquil village of Beenham : it is not in open country. Indeed, there are some 40 or so domestic dwellings abutting the farm's fields, all within between about 100m and 300m or so of the application site. The site is also barely 50m from a public footpath across the fields, and the car park associated with planning permission 23/00376/FULMAJ, which is associated with this application, is only around 50m from the nearest property.

The applicant has acknowledged in the documents which supported planning applications, 23/00376/FULMAJ and 23/01016/LBC, that without major remedial works the noise generated by the venue would be completely unacceptable – to the point of suggesting that *local residents would receive respite from the noise* (his words) on days when no events are held. He made several proposals which he claimed would reduce the noise emanating from the venue to acceptable levels but the potential noise reductions which they might produce haven't even been quantified – the best that his consultants could come up with was that they would 'significantly reduce' the impact on neighbouring properties. Neither I, nor my neighbours, believe that these measures can possibly keep the noise level below an acceptable level. This, on its own, would appear to fail the Preservation of Public Nuisance requirement and should justify rejection of the licence application.

I am also concerned about the noise which will undoubtedly be generated on warm Summer evenings when up to 120 guests spill over from the premises which is the subject of this application into the courtyard/garden area, noise which will easily carry over the open fields to the neighbouring properties, and will not only fail the Preservation of Public Nuisance requirement but, together with any lighting which may be necessary on health and safety grounds (for which the applicant doesn't seem to have provided any plans) will make it very difficult for young children to get the rest and sleep which they need, violating also the requirement for the Protection of Children from Harm.

The council's AONB officer has previously observed that the venue would fail to conserve or enhance the natural scenic beauty of the AONB, and has highlighted both the unacceptable levels of noise and lighting which would particularly affect users of the public footpath which passes about 50m from the barn, and guests at the venue would likely spill over into the field between the barn and the footpath. She specifically stated that "The noise report which is based on modelling and not actual readings at an event demonstrates that harm will be caused but considers that mitigation measures can be taken to minimise the impact. Setting noise levels cannot be easily controlled or enforced particularly with live DJs and Bands, or guests coming and going between buildings, their focus is on giving people a great time and not minimising the potential impact on local residents,

users of the PROW or local wildlife". This is also, I feel, grounds for rejection of the application on Preservation of Public Nuisance grounds.

I am also very concerned that the application fails to meet the Public Safety criteria. The road through Beenham through which users of the site must perforce use, there being no other access, is at points very narrow, being limited in places to about 2.5m in width. At the point where users will leave the application site there will always on Saturday evenings be parked cars which limit the carriageway to one-way working, and there is a pinch point some 200m to the east of that point which extends for about 100m where despite a passing point midway it is too narrow to allow HGVs and cars to pass each other even there. This situation isn't shown on OS maps, but would be obvious to anyone approaching the village from the A4, and I would ask you to do so in order to see for yourselves. In the events of an emergency arising on the site itself, or elsewhere in the village, during the mass egress from the site at the end of a wedding/major event, then emergency vehicles would inevitably be delayed, possibly with fatal outcomes.

Nevertheless, if you are minded to grant the application, I would make four further observations :

- The applicant sought, and was granted, listed building consent to modify the barn by means of a "double door entrance system to be installed in the eastern façade of the barn to avoid noise egress whilst people are entering and exiting the barn", and the planning officer in his report confirmed that this was only acceptable if such works served a valid planning purpose (which is the case here). It follows that the main barn doors are now no longer required to be opened for any reason, so I would urge you, if permission is granted, to impose a condition that these barn doors remain closed at all times during events except in case of emergency.
- I am concerned that the applicant is applying for a licence for 11 full hours – from 12 noon to 11pm. While this might be acceptable where the clientele is transient, as for a public house, it seems somewhat excessive when there is no passing trade but is solely for attendees at a wedding or major event, and I would urge you to restrict the hours so that excessive drinking of alcohol, particularly when children are on the premises or nearby, cannot take place, otherwise the requirements for both the Protection of Children from Harm and the Prevention of Crime and Disorder won't be met. Given the proximity of the public footpath, I would suggest that it might also fail the Public Safety requirement.
- There appears to be no need for an 'off' licence if, as the application implies, the application is only related to the use of the barn for a wedding/major events venue. Indeed, being only some 50m or so from a public footpath which is regularly used by children, and with the access to the site being immediately opposite the village's recreation ground on which children are accustomed to play unsupervised, it also fails to meet the licencing objective regarding Protection of Children from Harm. Even if you are minded to grant an alcohol licence for 'on' sales, I would urge you not to grant it for 'off' sales.
- I also note that the applicant has applied for a licence for Saturdays without limitation (ie, 52 days each year) rather than the 28 for which he has planning permission for a wedding/events venue. For the avoidance of doubt I would suggest that, if permission is granted, you apply a condition which limits the licenced days to those on which events are actually being held in accordance with Condition 3 of Planning Application 23/00376/FULMAJ, and restrict alcohol sales to attendees at such weddings/events.

I would also respectfully draw your attention to the fact that no planning permission appears to exist for the bar area itself. The previous owners restored the historic open cart lodge attached to the barn as part of the renovation works they undertook, but although the applicant sought (and received) retrospective listed building consent for those works (23/01016/LBC), and various other changes which he made subsequently without first seeking consent, he has not applied for listed building consent to replace the cart lodge with the enclosed structure which he is proposing to use as the bar.

Yours faithfully,
Graham Bragg