
From: Nicholas Cotton [REDACTED]
Sent: 11 March 2026 11:52
To: Licensing <licensing@westberks.gov.uk>
Subject: Representation in respect of the Licensing Application for Benham Park Estate -Ref No IC 29442

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Dear Sirs

I write, together with my wife, to make a formal Representation, objecting to this application. We strongly oppose the grant of a licence as applied for and respectfully ask that the application should be refused.

We are residents of [REDACTED] Marsh Benham, RG20 8[REDACTED]. Our home lies within what was historically the walled garden area of the Benham Park Estate. This is a small, private and secluded residential community of approximately ten homes. The character of the area is quiet (exceptionally so between the hours of 9pm and 8am), rural and tranquil. It is precisely that peace and seclusion which led us and other residents to choose to live here.

Our principal concern is that the application proposes a use of the Estate which is wholly incompatible with the quiet residential setting of Benham Gardens and the surrounding countryside. In particular, we understand that the application contemplates the use of marquees and external event spaces for weddings and other large functions, potentially involving bands, DJs, live and recorded amplified music and hundreds of guests. We further understand that the marquees are intended to be positioned on the western side of the main house, namely the side facing the residential properties within the Benham Park walled gardens. If that is correct, there is no meaningful natural barrier between the event area and our homes.

Our home is within approximately 500 metres of the main house (and much closer than that to the grounds), separated in substance only by the Estate perimeter and the former walled garden boundary. It is obvious that amplified music (particular bass frequencies), announcements, crowd noise, vehicle movements, guests arriving and leaving, doors slamming, engines idling, and late-night conversation and shouting will carry across the grounds and into our homes and gardens. We constructed a glass & wooden conservatory (as part of our kitchen /living space two years ago) to specifically enjoy the light and quietness of the surroundings. Our children and baby grand-daughter visit at weekends also to enjoy the peace & isolation of Benham Park. The noise will be most disturbing for our grand-daughter. This is particularly so in a quiet rural environment, where background noise levels are low and intrusive sound is therefore far more noticeable and harmful. The proposed activities would fundamentally alter the living conditions of those residents living nearby.

We therefore object on the basis that the application undermines, or is likely to undermine, the following licensing objectives:

The prevention of public nuisance

This is our primary concern.

The proposed use is likely to generate significant and recurring noise nuisance. Wedding and similar events are not quiet occasions. They commonly involve live or recorded music, speeches, guests congregating outside, vehicle movements, taxis, and guests dispersing late in the evening. Noise from such events does not remain confined within a building or marquee. It travels, especially in open parkland and across rural land. Where marquees are used, they are incapable of providing effective acoustic containment.

The application appears to contemplate events of a substantial scale, with indications that up over 600 attendees may be present. Events on that scale will inevitably generate considerable noise, both from the event itself and from associated arrival and departure movements. Even where music ceases at a stated hour, disturbance often continues well afterwards as guests leave, drivers wait, vehicles manoeuvre, and people gather outdoors.

The surrounding area is also a conservation area with notable wildlife, including a substantial lake inhabited by geese, ducks and other birdlife. Regular large-scale events, with amplified music and heavy footfall, are likely to disturb that wildlife and detract from the environmental character of the area. While wildlife impact is not itself a standalone licensing objective, the conservation character of the locality is highly relevant to the question whether this application is likely to create nuisance and whether the proposed activities are appropriate in this location.

Public safety

We are also concerned that the application raises serious public safety issues.

First, there is the issue of the lake within the Estate grounds. We understand that the lake contains a substantial accumulation of silt, several feet deep in places. If that is right, it may present a serious hazard to any guest who were to fall into it, enter it intentionally, or attempt to swim in it, particularly after consuming alcohol. Deep silt can impede movement and may create a grave risk of injury or drowning. Given that this application appears to involve large functions, potentially including alcohol and hundreds of guests, the existence of an open body of water close to the event area is a matter requiring serious attention. It is not apparent from the application what robust measures, if any, are proposed to mitigate that risk.

Secondly, we have significant concerns about access, ingress and egress, and the capacity of the local road network to accommodate events of the size envisaged. The Estate entrance lies just off the roundabout connecting to the A34, B4000 and the A4, which is already a busy and sensitive junction. If events are to attract several hundred guests, many of whom are likely to arrive by private car or taxi, there is a real risk of congestion, dangerous queuing, confusion at the entrance, and hazards associated with vehicles slowing, turning, waiting or stopping near the roundabout and its approaches.

This concern is not theoretical. There has already been local concern about additional traffic pressures in the area, including from nearby residential developments. Against that background, the prospect of large numbers of vehicles arriving within a relatively short period before an event, and then departing again at its conclusion, gives rise to legitimate road safety concerns. It is not clear from the application what traffic management measures, stewarding, parking controls, transport plan or dispersal arrangements are proposed to ensure public safety and prevent disruption on a road network that is already heavily used.

The prevention of crime and disorder

We are also concerned that the proposed scale and nature of the events may create risks of crime and disorder, particularly if alcohol is to be sold or supplied at large wedding and entertainment events. Large gatherings with music and alcohol can give rise to anti-social behaviour, shouting, altercations, trespass, nuisance from guests wandering beyond the intended event area, and difficulties at dispersal time. In a secluded rural setting with neighbouring homes close by, even a limited number of such incidents would have a disproportionate effect on residents.

Planning and the suitability of the proposed use

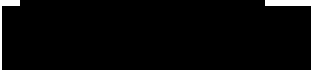
We are also concerned that the application appears to assume a form of commercial events use for which there is, so far as we can see, no clear planning permission or established lawful use. Benham Park is, quite correctly currently used as a private residence. Any change would bring obvious disruption. That may be why this application for a Premises Licence has not been preceded by a planning application for change of use.

The character of the locality

Residents have settled here with their families in the legitimate expectation of enjoying the ordinary peace and tranquillity of a rural residential community. The licensing regime is surely not intended to permit one landowner or operator to impose repeated substantial nuisance on surrounding households for commercial gain.

Kind regards

Nicholas & Sarah Cotton


Marsh Benham
RG20 8