

Licensing

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 17 February 2024 12:44
To: Licensing
Subject: Objection to Smoke on the Water license application, Swanage
Categories: Gail

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a long-term Swanage resident writing to object to the licence application that has been made for "Smoke on the Water" on the town's waterfront - and not least to its request to play live and recorded music both outside and inside the premises from 9am to 11pm every day of the week, and the plan to create a designated smoking area for the venue.

This would create a big increase in noise pollution at an otherwise quieter part of town, affecting peace in the surrounding areas - most especially the beach, pier and park/amphitheatre beside it. With a new "sanctuary garden" currently under construction right behind the venue, and the green areas there often used as a place of respite for locals and visitors throughout the year, I can't see how this licence application is at all congruous with the current character of the area. I also have concerns about the public nuisance likely to be caused by the venue's opening hours, constantly playing external music, and selling of takeaway alcohol.

Moreover, the town and sea already struggle with an abundance of cigarette butt waste and food/drinks packaging that does not decompose. To encourage further smoking here, as well as the handing out of takeaway alcohol containers, will surely aggravate the situation even further, with severe consequences for the environment. In turn this would negatively affect the appeal of Swanage to the people who come here (and sometimes even relocate here) to enjoy some tranquility, natural beauty and clean air by the sea.

The town already has a large number of venues offering live music and alcohol and I see no sustainable argument that could be made to support the addition of another in this way, particularly in this area.

I am objecting in the strongest possible terms to what is being proposed.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Resident of Ilminster Road

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me - and for forwarding Mr [REDACTED] response to my initial objection. I appreciated his considerate wording. However, many of my original concerns remain.

As discussed in our phone conversation, I still have concerns regarding the noise pollution that could be caused throughout the day by the long daily opening hours the applicant is requesting to have enshrined in the license, by the environmental impact of the proposed outdoor area (including and especially the smoking area) in an otherwise quiet part of town, and by the disruption that this will likely have on people seeking peace/fresh air in the natural green area behind the premises - as well as on the beach area in front of it.

I remain concerned about the premises' impact on nature and wildlife in this area. I understand, as per our call, that there is no scope to object to the playing of music specifically, and that this right comes as part and parcel of any license to sell alcohol. I do note, however, that the license request itself does specifically state that recorded music will be played outdoors as well as indoors, despite Mr [REDACTED] statement to the contrary. Moreover, irrespective of the music issue, the noise of drinkers and diners outside the premises will inevitably have an impact on residents nearby, as well as visitors seeking a quiet place of reflection - such as that which is soon to be provided by the forthcoming sanctuary garden, sited within 50 metres of the venue in question.

While some efforts might well be made by the applicant to encourage responsible use of a smoking area, or compostable packaging for takeaway drinks, I challenge the notion that the applicant can control these elements to the extent that would be needed to ensure full protection of the local environment. Giving any encouragement, however minimal, to customers to take drinks away (I note that the license itself requests the right to sell takeaway "beer... spirits, cider" although Mr [REDACTED] solely references wine in his response), or any encouragement to smoke outside the premises, gives a green light to littering behaviour that we already see causing problems in the town all year round - including and especially during the carnival week that Mr [REDACTED] mentions as a model and inspiration.

Swanage bins on the beachfront - where the bulk of carnival takes place - are often overflowing when tourist activity is high. It is impossible to walk in these areas without finding significant amounts of discarded cigarette butts and food/drinks packaging all year round; and during carnival time especially, despite extra waste removal support being provided specifically for that event. Compostable food/drinks packaging may be an improvement on plastic packaging, but it does not disappear when thrown into the sea, on to the sand or in the grass. Instead it is as much of an eyesore as all discarded packaging, and still very much able to cause damage to wildlife, while disrupting an area's natural beauty. As a side note, I have found a number of the discarded reusable carnival cups that Mr [REDACTED] mentions as wanting to use for *Smoke on the Water*, both during and after carnival week, left on the beach and fields.

In terms of compostable packaging in particular, a quick internet search will tell anyone that these are no solution to the litter crisis. For example: "only 3% of compostable packaging in the U.K. ends up in a proper composting facility... a lack of composting infrastructure means 54% goes to landfill and the remaining 43% gets incinerated". ([Research from Sourceful as quoted in Forbes](#)). Cigarette butts, meanwhile, never fully degrade. (See [this page on the Keep Britain Tidy website](#) for details.) In Swanage, so much of customer waste from existing venues already ends up discarded in the sand and floating in the sea, causing immense damage to fish, sea mammals, birds, etc - whether that waste is compostable or not.

In his response to my initial letter, Mr [REDACTED] suggests that bottles of wine, in particular, will be offered as a takeaway option. This is another concern. I do not know of anything that the applicant could put in place to prevent customers taking bottles of wine (or indeed of spirits/cider/beer) to the beach or fields either side of the venue, should such an option be offered by his staff. I imagine the beach will be a particular draw to some customers, this being just a few steps over the road from the venue. I would like to draw the council's attention to the likelihood of glass bottles being left in these public areas - with clear risk of shattering - and feel I should highlight that these areas are frequented by children all year round. A number of those children play there without shoes, and/or on hands & knees, especially on the beach, where shards of glass can be very hard to spot. To my mind, this risk is a possible contravention of the licensing objective to "[protect] children from harm."

Giving permission to customers to take glass bottles of alcohol off the premises may also lead to contraventions of "the prevention of crime and disorder" objective. I was unable to find the latest statistics online - they seem to be unavailable - but one parliamentary speaker in 2012 described how: "According to the Home Office, there are about 87,000 violent incidents involving glass every year in the UK... Glass can cause considerable physical damage, and glasses and bottles used as weapons can intimidate victims, bar staff or bystanders and cause serious injuries. Intact glass can cause significant damage. However, when used as a sharp weapon, the damage can be horrific." ([Full debate recorded here.](#)) Some towns and cities have taken action to prevent the distribution of glassware to customers specifically to reduce this sort of crime - though the use of plastic as a replacement can further exacerbate the problem of littering. There seems to be no straightforward fix - except, perhaps, for discouraging customers from taking drinking containers of any sort off the premises.

To summarise, given how close the applicant's venue is to the waterfront and fields, it is my particular concern that future customers there will degrade the air and water quality through smoking, drinking, litter, etc. This remains, to my mind, a strong reason for objecting to the takeaway element of the license, as well as that of the proposed smoking area.

The area in which the premises is opening is environmentally vulnerable. While the applicant's intentions at this stage are no doubt good and honorable, the reality is that responsible behaviour from customers towards the environment can never be guaranteed - most especially when alcohol is part of the equation. This is especially true for Swanage, where safeguarding support from law enforcement is already limited.

Should the council fully approve the options this license application proposes, the applicant's plans will have consequences that spread way beyond the boundary of the premises. It is for these reasons that I wish to sustain my objection, and I am more than willing to hear/discuss solutions at the planning committee stage.

With thanks and best wishes,

[REDACTED]