

LICENSING ACT 2003
PREMISES LICENCE NUMBER – 26955
ROYAL LOUNGE, 14 VICTORIA RD, ROMFORD, RM1

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 I am the Labour Ward Councillor for St Alban's Ward. I object to this application on the grounds set out below.

2.0 THE CURRENT LICENCE:

2.1 The current license provides for the following: -

The sale of alcohol from: -

Sunday to Thursday from 11:00 to 22:45
Friday & Saturday – 11:00-23:45
Late Night Refreshment: Friday & Saturday - 23:00-00:00

The opening hours are: -

Sunday to Thursday – 06:00 to 23:00
Friday & Saturday 06:00-00:00

3.0 THE APPLICATION:

3.1 The applicant requested the following changes: -

To add the provision of live music and recorded music to the ambit of the licence

To extend the hours during which late night refreshment and alcohol may be supplied

4.0 REVISED HOURS:

4.1 The applicant has offered to amend the application accordingly: -

The Sale of alcohol from

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday till 23:00
Thursday, Friday and Saturday Sale till 00:00
Sundays till 22:30

The Closing Hours

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday Closing hours 23:30
Thursday, Friday and Saturday Closing hours 00:30 on
Sundays Closing hour 23:00

Live Music – only Friday & Saturday till 00:00

5.0 MY OBJECTION: I object to this application on the following grounds: -

5.1 Firstly, I believe that the grant of extended hours for the sale of alcohol will lead to an increase in intoxication and alcohol-fuelled crime and disorder and therefore undermine the licensing objectives because patrons will be drinking in the venue for longer than they do now and this will mean more customers becoming inebriated. Additionally, other evening economy customers will be attracted from other premises and arrive already intoxicated at the venue. The extension of licensing hours will have a range of detrimental impacts not compatible with the objects of the licensing regime – these are set out below.

5.2 Secondly, if granted, the introduction of live and recorded music late into the night on Fridays and Saturdays, a new attraction at this venue, will lead to an increase in noise and intoxication and therefore undermine the licensing objectives because some patrons will stay on, and drink on the premises whilst listening to the music leading to even greater intoxication and rowdiness. Moreover, evening economy customers will be attracted to this venue, from other drinking establishments in and around the Town Centre, and arrive at the venue in a state of intoxication. The extent to which this might be the case will depend on the nature of the music attraction.

6.0 THE FOUR LICENSING OBJECTIVES

6.1 The four licensing objectives are: -

- 1.The prevention of crime and disorder
- 2.Public Safety
- 3.The prevention of public nuisance
- 4.The protection of children from harm

7.0 ROMFORD'S CUMULATIVE IMPACT ZONE:

7.1 Attached as Appendix One is a map of Romford's Cumulative Impact Zone. Royal Lounge is a licensed premises, within the Romford Cumulative Impact Zone. The Council's Statement of Licensing Policy 2021- 2026 states: -

"The Licensing Authority is of the view that the number, type and density of premises selling alcohol for consumption on and off the premises and the provision of late night refreshment within the ring road is having a cumulative impact and undermining the licensing objectives. It is likely that granting further licences would be inconsistent with the authority's duty to promote the licensing objectives and a cumulative impact policy has been adopted in this area."

7.2 Attention is drawn to the unique characteristics of Romford. It is a thriving metropolitan centre. It attracts visitors from London and Essex and whilst this is great for the regional economy Romford's evening economy already attracts too many unwelcome visitors who come to Romford attracted by the market for drugs, and with the drugs and the alcohol comes a much higher level of crime and disorder than is experienced almost anywhere in London. Hence the designation of much of its Town Centre within a CIZ.

- 7.3 The area around South Street and the Romford Station area already experiences high levels of serious violent crime, sexual crime, domestic abuse and disorder. The Council's most recent Strategic Needs Assessment provides incontrovertible evidence, put together by the Police and Council, for the purpose of consulting on the Council's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, that Romford Town still experiences some of the highest crime rates in all the London Wards. For example, in 2023 St Edward's Ward was ranked 7th out of 659 wards for Violence Against the Person and joint 4th for Sexual Offences.
- 7.4 It is my belief that this application, by virtue of extending drinking time and simultaneously introducing live and recorded music will result in an increase in drug and alcohol fuelled crime and disorder.
- 7.5 The Licensing Policy refers to there being a rebuttable presumption, whereby applications for new premises licenses would normally be refused. It also suggests that exceptions may be made. However, after taking account all of the circumstances, I would suggest that this is not one of those cases. After considering all the relevant circumstances, this application should be refused, because if the application to extend licensing hours is approved, coupled with the introduction of live and amplified music, this will result in more alcohol and drug fuelled criminal behaviour in the Town Centre; whilst the Police and enforcement team do an admirable job managing crime and disorder, it cannot be denied that Romford still has a significant crime problem.

8.0 THE PREVENTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER

- 8.1 Beyond the fact that this premises lies within the Romford cumulative impact zone and is already a magnet for high levels of crime, an application to allow more drinking and loud music in this particular geographical location is particularly concerning to me as a ward councillor.
- 8.2 Victoria Road presents as an attractive thoroughfare, with pretty seasonal planting. Many buildings along the road and this particular parade have character and charm. However, behind the façade of number 14 Victoria Road and to the hidden side of the property (out of public sight) is what some might describe as a modern rookery – a slum – a very small area with many very vulnerable women, men and children housed in appallingly poor conditions, above and amongst commercial premises. These homes are accessed through a warren of alleys with lots of recessed doorways, unsafe paving, fly-tipped furniture, unidentified and overflowing trade waste bins, the exit of the footpath is often blocked by overflowing trade and household bins, other waste and it suffers from poor lighting and no public CCTV.
- 8.3 This business is already making the lives of my residents, less safe and more miserable. Amongst the nuisances and harms are parked cars on the immediate frontage of the establishment, making it unsafe for pedestrians, there are additional unmarked trade waste bins believed to belong to the residents outside the entrances to flats where many families reside and a

reported increase in drug dealing in the immediate vicinity. Extending the drinking hours, combined with live music enhancing the venue's attraction to a different type of clientele will make it more unsafe for existing residents living above and immediately adjacent to the property and for staff.

- 8.4 The applicant has submitted no statement demonstrating that he understands the particularly sensitive location that this business is located in and this is worrisome.
- 8.5 Whilst I acknowledge that the licensee cannot be held responsible for what happens outside the licensed premises; and the licensing officers have recommended many conditions to help mitigate against an increase in crime and disorder and make this existing business more safe; I am however concerned that the business and its patrons have a growing history of non-compliance with the regulatory regimes that impose order in the Town Centre.
- 8.6 In my opinion this is evidence of either or a combination of ignorance, poor management, or blatant disrespect for the rules and regulations that pertain to a business of this sort, in an area of this sort. More conditions will not achieve the licensing objectives in this case.

9.0 PUBLIC SAFETY AND THE PREVENTION OF PUBLIC NUISANCE

- 9.1 Examples of poor compliance with different regulatory regimes causing my residents to be at greater risk of harm from hazards and nuisances include:-

- I. **Non-Compliant Planning**: The business has already erected a fixed canopy structure outside the front of the premises and two planning applications (P1860.23 and P0763.24) have thus far been refused being contrary to planning policy. The planning case officer's comments in respect of application P0763.24 are indicative of what I believe to be a lack of respect for business regulation and failure to work with council officers tasked with applying and enforcing them. This would not bode well for working with licence and enforcement officers attempting to manage future public safety concerns.

"The structure in-situ as shown by these photographs and videos does not correlate with the proposed plans in that there are no planters around the structure and the front door of the structure is located in a different place on the plans. Amended drawings were requested from the planning agent but no response was received. The case officer also suggested that the description of development be changed to reference the structure as retrospective, but no response was received from the planning agent. The application will therefore be determined based on the plans as originally received."

- II. **Unlawful Parking**: This business's customers appears to flout parking restrictions (possibly regularly) which are intended to keep traffic flowing in the town centre and the footpaths clear of obstructions. I have supplied evidence of several cars parking immediately outside the front

of the business, part on the footpath and partly on the carriageway with parking penalty charge notices on them early in the morning. It is likely that later hours of operation will be characterised by more non-compliant and noisy vehicles parking outside the business and the noise nuisance associated with the parking such as doors slamming shut, engines revving up, brakes being applied, chattering and arguing on the pavement. The failure to manage parking associated with this business will adversely impact on my residents' quality of life.

- III. **Refuse and Trade Waste**: The physical extension of the premises inevitably and demonstrably has resulted in an increase in trade waste emanating from the business, for which there are no safe and satisfactory arrangements in place for the storage of waste. An extension of the licensing hours will make this worse. I have recently had complaints from a neighbouring landlord about the positioning of unidentified trade waste bins outside the entrance doors of their property, believed to be from this restaurant business. This would be a fire hazard as well as poor waste management practice.

10.0 THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM HARM:

- 10.1 Granting a late night licence which extends drinking times and introduces live music into this area will harm the many children living in close proximity to the business in Portman House, in the units above the property, in Kingsmead Mansions behind Station Parade, in Kingsmead Avenue and Alexandra Road where older residents and families with young children live.
- 10.2 Shamefully some properties in the immediate vicinity have "rogue" landlords offering poorly managed units above the shops in Station Parade. This combination of circumstances, rogue landlords and non-compliant businesses means that it would be irresponsible to grant this application in an area where people are already least able to represent their own interests effectively. Many of these properties house some of our poorest men, women and children. English is not spoken as a first language in some of the households and therefore objections to applications (licensing or planning) are unlikely to come from the most vulnerable families. Nor will many female-led families feel confident bringing forward complaints about business operations when that business appears to be managed by men.
- 10.3 More intoxicated, rowdy customers coming in and out of the premises, taking breaks in the yard and footpath to the side of the property will mean children's sleep being disturbed during the night. They will suffer from tiredness and an inability to concentrate at school. This will be harmful to their health and prospects.
- 10.4 Children will be subjected to even more sights and sounds associated with drunkenness and crime than they currently are, including:-

- I. Noxious smoke from people smoking cigarettes, weed, and vaping near entrances to flats.
- II. Loud noise from live music within the venue, singing and shouting outside the premises when people are leave to smoke and vape.
- III. Swearing and verbally aggressive behaviour when customers are refused entry or leaving the premises intoxicated.
- IV. Breaking glass when bottles are being binned or broken.
- V. Malodour from people who have urinated in the alleyway and from waste not properly contained in the trade waste bins.

11.0 **Conclusion**

- 11.1 In summary, many laws, rules and conditions already govern this premises and some are not presently complied with. More conditions cannot adequately mitigate against an increase in crime and anti-social disorder fuelled by longer licensing hours and live music. I oppose rewarding this business additional time for the sale of alcohol on the premises until there is an established record of compliance, good premises management and the applicant has demonstrated sensitivity to the nature of the surroundings and type and level of crime experienced by local residents. I also think that the introduction of live and recorded music should not be consented to because of the very close proximity of residential homes containing many young families.



Non Compliant Car Parking Outside Royal Lounge.jpg



None Compliant Car Parking Outside Royal Lounge.jpg

