

To: NNDC Licensing

From: A S Dwyer (by email)

Dated: 16 August 2023

Sir,

**Objection to Premises Licence sought by Highview Properties (London) Ltd for the Pop Inn site NR23 1AS**

I have read the Application for a Premises License, dated 20 July 2023 (specifically, the unobscured version located inside the door of Pop Inn leisure). I note the reference to a Pop Inn *Restaurant*: I assume this relates to the planning application granted by NNDC. That application, as part of which substantive works have yet to commence, refers variously to a diner, B&B accommodation, restaurant and loft conversion. It suggests 160 diners plus casual drinkers. The Premises License lists a range of activities that seem incompatible with the previously stated aim of developing a family restaurant intended to blend into the family-friendly town of Wells. I am particularly concerned about a rooftop music venue with entertainment and dancing (a nightclub in all-but-name) and open-air cooking situated in the Wells Conservation Area, and immediately adjacent to the town's Historic Port. That the venue intends to serve alcohol and provide off-sales through the night, indeed, until 0100 in the morning, is not in keeping with the image of the safe and family-friendly town Wells goes to such lengths to sustain.

When this type of enterprise was last seen in Wells (The Captain's Table/Harley's – situated almost opposite the Pop Inn site, on Freeman Street), it was the source of significant well-documented public disorder, criminality and nuisance. Aside from the indifferent approach of its less than diligent management, many of the problems noted were attributable to having an alcohol-centric venue in the town that stayed open significantly later than all other family-orientated businesses; and one that played loud music late into the night. It drew drinkers and badly behaved elements from far beyond Wells: many arriving by car or motorcycle. This episode is recorded formally in the *NNDC Schedule 8 Review document* – dated 22 October 2015 – and, in particular the witness statement of Lara Toni CLARE, Licensing Enforcement Officer, NNDC (dated 8 September 2015). The findings resulted in stringent conditions being placed on the venue. These included limiting the opening hours, management constraints (mandatory door supervision) and limitations on the type and volume of entertainment that could be provided (see *NNDC Licensing and Appeals Committee agenda item 7*, dated 14 December 2015). This outcome was achieved after a notable delay and only after many months of significant anti-social behaviour and nuisance had been endured by the town.

Reading the Application made in the name of Highview Properties (London) Ltd, I am concerned that the granting of a License that allows purchase and consumption of alcohol on-and-off the premises, the playing of amplified live and recorded music, dancing, cooking at rooftop level and the range of other activities listed will:

- Contribute to a rise in late-night crime and disorder in a family-friendly town that currently quietens down considerably between 2200 and 2300 (most nights, even earlier). It is not clear whether the already stretched resources of the Constabulary could meet this threat to the town effectively: particularly when large numbers of inebriated people (especially of concern in relation to the venues use for *Stag* and *Hen* parties) spill into the conservation area and historic port at 1am or later.

- Adversely affect public safety by:
  - acting as a beacon for late night drinkers drawn from beyond the town and therefore with no investment in it, or incentive (or possibly capacity) to behave within normal limits;
  - disgorging numbers of loud and inebriated people into the conservation area and historic port of Wells environs late into the evening/early morning;
  - providing off-sales to already inebriated people to consume as they walk or 'settle' in the residential or business streets of the town;
  - Adding to late-night traffic.
- Cause a significant public nuisance through:
  - the playing of amplified music from an open space at roof-top level until the early hours;
  - the noise of inebriated people singing and dancing from an open space at rooftop level and as they spill out of the venue in the early hours of the morning;
  - the significant smell of cooking late into the night from the 'street food' produced in the cooking space at rooftop level;
  - excessive litter (street food, bottles and cans, etc.) across the conservation area and the historic port of Wells.
  - The proximity to the well-kept children's playground (immediately adjacent) is also a worry in relation to broken glass from discarded off-sales and stolen glasses, possible dugs paraphernalia and other detritus from nefarious behaviours noted in relation to inebriated people seeking a dark corner (note the NNDC observations made in relation to The Captain's Table/Harleys).

I do not object to a family restaurant, if run as such, and if in keeping with the spirit of the town. However, I object strongly to the granting of the License as set out in the application dated 20 July 2023. If any License is to be granted to allow this enterprise to function as a nightclub in all-but-name, it needs to address the concerns set out above (and be cognisant of the adverse experiences endured by the town when this type of enterprise was last in operation). Strict and enforceable conditions must be placed on a development that represents such a fundamental change and potential threat to the enjoyment of Wells by the many. **On balance, I object to the Licence Application as set out by Highview Properties (London) Ltd.**

Yours faithfully,



Dr. A S Dwyer OBE

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