

**National Guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003, December 2022**

## **2. Licensing Objectives**

### **Public Nuisance**

2.15 The 2003 Act enables licensing authorities and responsible authorities, through representations, to consider what constitutes public nuisance and what is appropriate to prevent it in terms of conditions attached to specific premises licences and club premises certificates. It is therefore important that in considering the promotion of this licensing objective, licensing authorities and responsible authorities focus on the effect of the licensable activities at the specific premises on persons living and working (including those carrying on business) in the area around the premises which may be disproportionate and unreasonable. The issues will mainly concern noise nuisance, light pollution, noxious smells and litter.

2.16 Public nuisance is given a statutory meaning in many pieces of legislation. It is however not narrowly defined in the 2003 Act and retains its broad common law meaning. It may include in appropriate circumstances the reduction of the living and working amenity and environment of other persons living and working in the area of the licensed premises. Public nuisance may also arise as a result of the adverse effects of artificial light, dust, odour and insects or where its effect is prejudicial to health.

2.17 Conditions relating to noise nuisance will usually concern steps appropriate to control the levels of noise emanating from premises. This might be achieved by a simple measure such as ensuring that doors and windows are kept closed after a particular time, or persons are not permitted in garden areas of the premises after a certain time. More sophisticated measures like the installation of acoustic curtains or rubber speaker mounts to mitigate sound escape from the premises may be appropriate. However, conditions in relation to live or recorded music may not be enforceable in circumstances where the entertainment activity itself is not licensable (see chapter 16). Any conditions appropriate to promote the prevention of public nuisance should be tailored to the type, nature and characteristics of the specific premises and its licensable activities. Licensing authorities should avoid inappropriate or disproportionate measures that could deter events that are valuable to the community, such as live music. Noise limiters, for example, are expensive to purchase and install and are likely to be a considerable burden for smaller venues.

2.18 As with all conditions, those relating to noise nuisance may not be appropriate in certain circumstances where provisions in other legislation adequately protect those living in the area of the premises. But as stated earlier in this Guidance, the approach of licensing authorities and responsible authorities should be one of prevention and when their powers are engaged, licensing authorities should be aware of the fact that other legislation may not adequately cover concerns raised in relevant representations and additional conditions may be appropriate.

2.19 Where applications have given rise to representations, any appropriate conditions should normally focus on the most sensitive periods. For example, the most sensitive period for people being disturbed by unreasonably loud music is at night and into the early morning when residents in adjacent properties may be attempting to go to sleep or are sleeping. This is why there is still a need for a licence for performances of live music between 11 pm and 8 am. In certain circumstances, conditions relating to noise emanating from the premises may also be appropriate to address any disturbance anticipated as customers enter and leave.

2.20 Measures to control light pollution will also require careful thought. Bright lighting outside premises which is considered appropriate to prevent crime and disorder may itself give rise to light pollution for some neighbours. Applicants, licensing authorities and responsible authorities will need to balance these issues.

2.21 Beyond the immediate area surrounding the premises, these are matters for the personal responsibility of individuals under the law. An individual who engages in anti-social behaviour is accountable in their own right. However, it would be perfectly reasonable for a licensing authority to impose a condition, following relevant representations, that requires the licence holder or club to place signs at the exits from the building encouraging patrons to be quiet until they leave the area, or that, if they wish to smoke, to do so at designated places on the premises instead of outside, and to respect the rights of people living nearby to a peaceful night.

### **3. Licensable activities**

3.1 A premises licence authorises the use of any premises (see Chapter 5) for licensable activities. Licensable activities are defined in section 1 of the 2003 Act, and a fuller description of certain activities is set out in Schedules 1 and 2 to the 2003 Act.

3.2 The licensable activities are:

- the sale by retail of alcohol;
- the supply of alcohol by or on behalf of a club to, or to the order of, a member of the club;
- the provision of regulated entertainment; and
- the provision of late night refreshment.

#### **Late Night Refreshment**

3.12 Schedule 2 to the 2003 Act provides a definition of what constitutes the provision of late night refreshment. It involves the supply of 'hot food or hot drink' between the hours of

23.00 and 05.00 to the public for consumption on or off the premises. It includes the supply of hot food or hot drink between those hours on premises

to which the public has access. Under Schedule 2, food or drink is considered to be 'hot' if, before it is supplied, it has been heated on the premises or elsewhere for the purpose of enabling it to be consumed at a temperature above the ambient air temperature and at the time of supply it is above that temperature; or after it is supplied, may be heated on the premises for the purpose of enabling it to be consumed at a temperature above the ambient air temperature.

3.13 Shops, stores and supermarkets selling only cold food and cold drink, whether it is immediately consumable or not, from 23.00 are not licensable as providing late night refreshment. The 2003 Act affects premises such as night cafés and takeaway food outlets where people may gather to purchase hot food or hot drink at any time from

23.00 and until 05.00. In this case, supply takes place when the hot food or hot drink is given to the customer and not when payment is made. For example, supply takes place when a table meal is served in a restaurant or when a takeaway is handed to a customer over the counter.

3.14 Some premises provide hot food or hot drink between 23.00 and 05.00 by means of vending machines. The supply of hot drink by a vending machine is not a licensable activity and is exempt under the 2003 Act provided the public have access to and can operate the machine without any involvement of the staff.

3.15 However, this exemption does not apply to hot food. Premises supplying hot food for a charge by vending machine are licensable if the food has been heated on the premises, even though no staff on the premises may have been involved in the transaction.

3.16 It is not expected that the provision of late night refreshment as a secondary activity in licensed premises open for other purposes such as public houses, cinemas or nightclubs or casinos should give rise to a need for significant additional conditions.

3.17 The supply of hot drink which consists of or contains alcohol is exempt under the 2003 Act as late night refreshment because it is licensed by the provisions relating to the sale or supply of alcohol.

3.18 The supply of hot food or hot drink free of charge is not a licensable activity. However, where any charge is made for either admission to the premises or for some other item in order to obtain the hot food or hot drink, this will not be regarded as "free of charge". Supplies by a registered charity or anyone authorised by a registered charity are also exempt.

3.19 Supplies made on moving vehicles (for example boats, trains or coaches) are also exempt. However supplies made from a vehicle which is permanently or temporarily parked, such as from a mobile takeaway van, are

not exempt (see section 3.34 below for more detail on provisions for ‘Vessels, vehicles and moveable structures’).

3.20 Supplies of hot food or hot drink from 23.00 are exempt from the provisions of the 2003 Act if there is no admission to the public to the premises involved and they are supplies to:

- a member of a recognised club supplied by the club;
- persons staying overnight in a hotel, guest house, lodging house, hostel, a caravan or camping site or any other premises whose main purpose is providing overnight accommodation;
- an employee of a particular employer (for example in a staff canteen);
- a person who is engaged in a particular profession or who follows a particular vocation (for example, a tradesman carrying out work at particular premises);
- a guest of any of the above.

## **9. Determining Applications**

### **General**

9.1 When a licensing authority receives an application for a new premises licence or an application to vary an existing premises licence, it must determine whether the application has been made in accordance with section 17 of the 2003 Act, and in accordance with regulations made under sections 17(3) to (6), 34, 42, 54 and 55 of the 2003 Act. It must similarly determine applications for the grant of club premises certificates made in accordance with section 71 of the 2003 Act, and in accordance with regulations made under sections 71(4) to (7), 84, 91 and 92 of the 2003 Act. This means that the licensing authority must consider among other things whether the application has been properly advertised in accordance with those regulations

### **Where representations have been made**

9.3 Where a representation concerning the licensing objectives is made by a responsible authority about a proposed operating schedule and it is relevant (see paragraphs 9.4 to 9.10 below), the licensing authority’s discretion will be engaged. It will also be engaged if another person makes relevant representations to the licensing authority, which are also not frivolous or vexatious (see paragraphs 9.4 to 9.10 below). Relevant representations can be made in opposition to, or in support of, an application and can be made by any individual, body or business that has grounds to do so.

### **Relevant, vexatious and frivolous representations**

9.4 A representation is “relevant” if it relates to the likely effect of the grant of the licence on the promotion of at least one of the licensing objectives. For example, a representation from a local businessperson about the commercial damage caused by competition from new licensed premises would not be relevant. On the other hand, a representation by a businessperson that

nuisance caused by new premises would deter customers from entering the local area, and the steps proposed by the applicant to prevent that nuisance were inadequate, would be relevant. In other words, representations should relate to the impact of licensable activities carried on from premises on the objectives. For representations in relation to variations to be relevant, they should be confined to the subject matter of the variation. There is no requirement for a responsible authority or other person to produce a recorded history of problems at premises to support their representations, and in fact this would not be possible for new premises.

9.5 It is for the licensing authority to determine whether a representation (other than a representation from a responsible authority) is frivolous or vexatious on the basis of what might ordinarily be considered to be vexatious or frivolous. A representation may be considered to be vexatious if it appears to be intended to cause aggravation or annoyance, whether to a competitor or other person, without reasonable cause or justification. Vexatious circumstances may arise because of disputes between rival businesses and local knowledge will therefore be invaluable in considering such matters. Licensing authorities can consider the main effect of the representation, and whether any inconvenience or expense caused by it could reasonably be considered to be proportionate.

9.6 Frivolous representations would be essentially categorised by a lack of seriousness. Frivolous representations would concern issues which, at most, are minor and in relation to which no remedial steps would be warranted or proportionate.

9.7 Any person who is aggrieved by a rejection of their representations on either of these grounds may lodge a complaint through the local authority's corporate complaints procedure. A person may also challenge the authority's decision by way of judicial review.

9.8 Licensing authorities should not take decisions about whether representations are frivolous, vexatious or relevant to the licensing objectives on the basis of any political judgement. This may be difficult for councillors who receive complaints from residents within their own wards. If consideration is not to be delegated, contrary to the recommendation in this Guidance, an assessment should be prepared by officials for consideration by the sub-committee before any decision is taken that necessitates a hearing. Any councillor who considers that their own interests are such that they are unable to consider the matter independently should disqualify themselves.

9.9 It is recommended that, in borderline cases, the benefit of the doubt about any aspect of a representation should be given to the person making that representation. The subsequent hearing would then provide an opportunity for the person or body making the representation to amplify and clarify it.

9.10 Licensing authorities should consider providing advice on their websites about how any person can make representations to them.

## Hearings

9.31 The Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2005 governing hearings may be found on the [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) website. If the licensing authority decides that representations are relevant, it must hold a hearing to consider them. The need for a hearing can only be avoided with the agreement of the licensing authority, where the applicant and all of the persons who made relevant representations have given notice to the authority that they consider a hearing to be unnecessary. Where this is the case and the authority agrees that a hearing is unnecessary, it must forthwith give notice to the parties that the hearing has been dispensed with. Notwithstanding those regulatory provisions, in cases where the licensing authority believes that a hearing is still necessary, it is recommended that the authority should, as soon as possible, provide the parties with reasons in writing for the need to hold the hearing. In cases where only 'positive' representations are received, without qualifications, the licensing authority should consider whether a hearing is required. To this end, it may wish to notify the persons who made representations and give them the opportunity to withdraw those representations. This would need to be done in sufficient time before the hearing to ensure that parties were not put to unnecessary inconvenience.

9.32 Responsible authorities should try to conclude any discussions with the applicant in good time before the hearing. The 2005 Hearings Regulations permit licensing authorities to extend a time limit provided for by those Regulations for a specified period where it considers this to be necessary in the public interest. For example, if the application is amended at the last moment, the licensing committee should consider giving other persons time to address the revised application before the hearing commences. Where the authority has extended a time limit it must forthwith give a notice to the parties involved stating the period of the extension and the reasons for it.

9.33 The 2005 Hearings Regulations require that representations must be withdrawn 24 hours before the first day of any hearing. If they are withdrawn after this time, the hearing must proceed and the representations may be withdrawn orally at that hearing. However, where discussions between an applicant and those making representations are taking place and it is likely that all parties are on the point of reaching agreement, the licensing authority may wish to use the power given within the hearings regulations to extend time limits, if it considers this to be in the public interest.

9.34 Applicants should be encouraged to contact responsible authorities and others, such as local residents, who may be affected by the application before formulating their applications so that the mediation process may begin before the statutory time limits come into effect after submission of an application. The hearing process must meet the requirements of regulations made under the 2003 Act. Where matters arise which are not covered by the regulations, licensing authorities may make arrangements as they see fit as long as they are lawful.

9.35 There is no requirement in the 2003 Act for responsible authorities that have made representations to attend, but it is generally good practice and assists committees in reaching more informed decisions. Where several responsible authorities within a local authority have made representations on an application, a single local authority officer may represent them at the hearing if the responsible authorities and the licensing authority agree. This local authority officer representing other responsible authorities may be a licensing officer, but only if this licensing officer is acting as a responsible authority on behalf of the licensing authority and has had no role in the licensing determination process. This is to ensure that the responsible authorities are represented by an independent officer separate from the licensing determination process.

9.36 As noted in paragraphs 9.13 to 9.19 above, where the licensing officer is acting as a responsible authority the relevant steps should be followed to ensure that this individual has no role in the decision making process regarding the licensing determination.

9.37 As a matter of practice, licensing authorities should seek to focus the hearing on the steps considered appropriate to promote the particular licensing objective or objectives that have given rise to the specific representation and avoid straying into undisputed areas. A responsible authority or other person may choose to rely on their written representation. They may not add further representations to those disclosed to the applicant prior to the hearing, but they may expand on their existing representation and should be allowed sufficient time to do so, within reasonable and practicable limits.

9.38 In determining the application with a view to promoting the licensing objectives in the overall interests of the local community, the licensing authority must give appropriate weight to:

- the steps that are appropriate to promote the licensing objectives;
- the representations (including supporting information) presented by all the parties;
- this Guidance;
- its own statement of licensing policy.

9.39 The licensing authority should give its decision within five working days of the conclusion of the hearing (or immediately in certain specified cases) and provide reasons to support it. This will be important if there is an appeal by any of the parties. Notification of a decision must be accompanied by information on the right of the party to appeal. After considering all the relevant issues, the licensing authority may grant the application subject to the relevant mandatory conditions and any conditions that are consistent with the operating schedule. Any additional conditions imposed must be appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives; there is no power for the licensing authority to attach a condition that is merely aspirational. For example, conditions may not be attached which relate solely to the health of customers rather than their direct physical safety. Any conditions added to the

licence must be those imposed at the hearing or those agreed when a hearing has not been necessary.

9.40 Alternatively, the licensing authority may refuse the application on the grounds that this is appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives. It may also refuse to specify a designated premises supervisor and/or only allow certain requested licensable activities. In the interests of transparency, the licensing authority should publish hearings procedures in full on its website to ensure that those involved have the most current information.

9.41 In the context of variations or minor variations, which may involve structural alteration to or change of use of a building, the decision of the licensing authority will not exempt an applicant from the need to apply for building control approval, planning permission or both of these where appropriate.

### **Determining actions that are appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives.**

9.42 Licensing authorities are best placed to determine what actions are appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives in their areas. All licensing determinations should be considered on a case-by-case basis. They should take into account any representations or objections that have been received from responsible authorities or other persons, and representations made by the applicant or premises user as the case may be.

9.43 The authority's determination should be evidence-based, justified as being appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives and proportionate to what it is intended to achieve.

9.44 Determination of whether an action or step is appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives requires an assessment of what action or step would be suitable to achieve that end. While this does not therefore require a licensing authority to decide that no lesser step will achieve the aim, the authority should aim to consider the potential burden that any condition would impose on the premises licence holder (such as the financial burden due to restrictions on licensable activities) as well as the potential benefit in terms of the promotion of the licensing objectives. However, it is imperative that the authority ensures that the factors which form the basis of its determination are limited to consideration of the promotion of the objectives and nothing outside those parameters. As with the consideration of licence variations, the licensing authority should consider wider issues such as other conditions already in place to mitigate potential negative impact on the promotion of the licensing objectives and the track record of the business. Further advice on determining what is appropriate when imposing conditions on a licence or certificate is provided in Chapter 10. The licensing authority is expected to come to its determination based on an assessment of the evidence on both the risks and benefits either for or against making the determination.



### **Hours of trading**

10.13 The Government acknowledges that different licensing strategies may be appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives in different areas. The 2003 Act gives the licensing authority power to make decisions about the hours during which premises can conduct licensable activities as part of the implementation of its licensing policy statement. Licensing authorities are best placed to make decisions about appropriate opening hours in their areas based on their local knowledge and in consultation with responsible authorities. However, licensing authorities must always consider each application and must not impose predetermined licensed opening hours, without giving individual consideration to the merits of each application.

10.14 Where there are objections to an application to extend the hours during which licensable activities are to be carried on and the licensing authority determines that this would undermine the licensing objectives, it may reject the application or grant it with appropriate conditions and/or different hours from those requested.

10.15 Shops, stores and supermarkets should normally be free to provide sales of alcohol for consumption off the premises at any times when the retail outlet is open for shopping unless there are good reasons, based on the licensing objectives, for restricting those hours.

### **Licensing Hours**

14.51 With regard to licensing hours, the Government acknowledges that different licensing approaches may be appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives in different areas. The 2003 Act gives the licensing authority power to make decisions regarding licensed opening hours as part of the implementation of its licensing policy statement and licensing authorities are best placed to make such decisions based on their local knowledge and in consultation with other responsible authorities. However, licensing authorities must always consider each application and must not impose predetermined licensed opening hours, without giving individual consideration to the merits of each application.

14.52 Statements of licensing policy should set out the licensing authority's approach regarding licensed opening hours and the strategy it considers appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives in its area. The statement of licensing policy should emphasise the consideration which will be given to the individual merits of an application. The Government recognises that licensed premises make an important contribution to our local communities, and has given councils a range of tools to effectively manage the different pressures that licensed premises can bring. In determining appropriate strategies around licensed opening hours, licensing authorities cannot seek to restrict the activities of licensed premises where it is not appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives to do so.

