

APPENDIX C

Stone, Derek

From: Edi Wright [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 February 2021 18:58
To: Licensing Shared Email
Subject: Objection to the licensing of Grand Hotel Excelsior international LTD Eastney

To whomsoever it may concern,

In reading the licensing application that has been submitted by The Grand Hotel Excelsior International Limited (henceforth referred to as the "hotel"), I regret to inform you that I have grave concerns over the planned licensing hours being put forward.

As background to my complaint, I reside in one of the apartments that forms part of the Marine Gate estate and which directly overlooks the front of the former Marine Museum that is proposed to be converted into this hotel and so I am familiar with the estate, the former museum and the local area.

My first concern is with noise; The former Eastney Barracks were converted into apartments in the mid-1990s, are grade II listed and retain a lot of their original features which preserves both their appeal and the heritage which they represent. One of these features are the original single-glazed sash windows which, sadly, offer little to no protection from external noise and which cannot be replaced. Personally, I live in Wilkinson House which is the block of six apartments which directly overlooks the entrance to the proposed hotel and whose master bedrooms also overlook the site of the proposed hotel. As such, it is Wilkinson House that will bear the brunt of the noise generated by the proposed hotel and, if you grant them licence to operate until 3am every morning, these apartments will become impossible to live in due to the inability of residents to sleep. More broadly, however, the former barrack blocks border a parade ground whose acoustics only serve to amplify noise since it acts as a chamber of echoes of sorts. Currently, it is possible to hear any small noise (such as a car's passing) with great clarity because of this effect and so having a significant noise source at one end of the parade ground will only serve to exacerbate this issue meaning that this noise issue will not be an issue that will be confined to our block alone, it will be an issue for all other residents of Marine Gate. Note that any activity that finishes at 3am (even if inside the hotel) does not result in an immediate abatement of noise; it is the subsequent arrival and departure of taxis, cleaning up, removal of sets, equipment, etc. that also generates noise. As such, I ask you to reject their licensing application for any noise-generating activities that extend past 11pm each day otherwise you are condemning every resident in the Marine Gate barrack blocks to a sleepless night, every night.

I also call into question how this proposed licence, if granted, would fit with the local ruling around noise abatement from 11pm until 7am? If you rejected this application and, instead, restricted all licensed activities such that they finished at 11pm then it would fit nicely into the local legal landscape and would prevent unnecessary effort on the part of local law enforcement in policing the overflow of noise from the venue into the local area at later hours. Please remember the current area is majority residential.

Beyond noise, I believe that granting such a licence would also put local businesses at a significant disadvantage. For example, hotels, restaurants, bars or pubs who cannot offer a similar level of service will find themselves on an uneven footing with such a venue and this may affect their ability to compete and, ultimately, to survive. In the post-pandemic era that we will eventually find ourselves in, small businesses will need all the help they can get in order to survive and provide employment. However, being pitted against a competitor who has an unfair advantage will only exacerbate the decline of small independent businesses that we are already seeing and for which all residents in the Southsea area take great pride in. With this also in mind, I ask you to reject their licensing application for activities that extend beyond 11pm.

Sadly, any of the activities listed on the application will also lead to the consumption of alcohol on the premises for those in attendance. Therefore, could I highlight the following issues that will arise:

- With a licence extending beyond that of most local drinking establishments, this will lead to the hotel being seen as a “drink of last resort” meaning there will be an increase in the numbers of inebriated people walking to and from the venue along the esplanade late at night and into the early hours. This then brings in serious safety issues due to the proximity of the sea and will, I have no doubt, lead to an increase in calls to emergency services.
- Southsea esplanade and the beach is a pleasant environment that many people, including families, like to enjoy well into the evening. An increase in “drinkers” in the area will have a proportionate increase in the number of anti-social incidents in the area which may include criminal acts, being a general nuisance to the public or simply providing an intimidating presence where previously one wasn’t present.

It should also be noted that the area immediately around the museum is delicate both culturally and environmentally. There are a number of dog foxes resident on the site whose habit will be disturbed. The Royal Marine’s memorial garden offers a place where loved ones can honour the deceased and should be preserved as a quiet and peaceful location at all hours of the day in order to pay respect to those who have given their lives in return for the freedoms that we are able to enjoy, such as being able to drink late into the night. The inevitable increase in litter will blow into the sea, as it already does, increasing plastic in the oceans. The listed earthen mounds at the site risk being trampled by revellers, as they already are by dog walkers. The fort area will be an enticing area for people to “go off piste” thus damaging historical structures. The list goes on but, for information, I plan to raise each with the respective authority.

This cultural component, especially the military aspect, cannot be understated. There are a huge number of retired ex-services personnel resident in Marine Gate who achieved much during their careers and who will now be forced to bear witness to the commercialisation of yet another military establishment. The least you can do as a council is to set parameters for its use that engender respect for its heritage, educate the general public and prevent it from simply becoming a picturesque backdrop as part of a high-end tourist destination.

I recognise that progress must be made and, whilst I am disappointed that it is to be a hotel, I am in some ways relieved that something is being done to preserve such as historic building. The owners, Grand Hotel Excelsior International, have said that they will transform the site whilst preserving its “historic attributes, appeal and timeless decor” - this is nice marketing but they do need to be held accountable to such a statement. Part of being held accountable will be for you to temper their enthusiasm in your response to their licensing application in order to ensure that they not only respect the building, but the area and the local community that they are moving into which will include how they are impacting local residents. If you grant licensing that extends beyond 11pm every day then you are not protecting your local residents since you will subject them to consistent and anti-social noise which would be totally unreasonable.

The hotel risks tarnishing it’s own prestige as well as it’s privileged location through it’s own presence whilst you risk failing your community in your duty of care if such a licence is granted - a five star hotel does not guarantee five star people or five star behaviour.

Please accept this letter as an objection to the proposed licensing to which I would appreciate your acknowledgement.

Edward Francis Wright

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