

To whom it may concern

Objection to Licensing Application iro **Sisi's - City of London** (7-9 St Bride Street)

Having reviewed the Licensing Application and built up a picture of the kind of establishment that Sisi's is likely to be, I wish to register my **objection** to this application.

I have been resident in Sovereign House for 20 wonderful years (co-owner). In this time the residents (both owners and renters) have bonded over common issues and coalesced into an impressive unit. A real community has developed and we work together well. Many of us have also maintained good relationships with the various businesses that operate in both our building and the surrounding area and I feel, therefore, that we have a good idea of what will and will not work here.

The late-night venue being proposed fills us with (warranted) dread. Opening, as it will, onto the St Bride Street Piazza further adds to the likelihood that this will become a very disruptive addition to this part of the City if allowed to go ahead. This application differs, materially, from what has previously been allowed in our neck of the woods.

Material Change

The proposed hours of operation are much longer than those that have been granted to previous restaurants in this location. This marks it as a material change. In a mixed-use building, such as ours, I believe a very robust conversation needs to be had if such a material change of use is being considered. Even the current state of affairs is suboptimal in my opinion. One could even say that an optimal business for these premises (given both the proximity and the ratio of residents to business) would be a retail unit that operates until say 20:00 for 6 days a week.

[Possibly we should be having a conversation around what the best mixed-use arrangement would actually be.]

I have looked at the Applicant's existing business (Yours, 54-46 Scrutton Street, EC2A 4PH) to help me form a picture of what is being envisioned. The website, social media and menus all look impressive and will clearly appeal to a young, enthusiastic and party-loving clientele. To what extent is the Applicant wanting to replicate this in St Bride Street? I have had to make various assumptions. I believe that the menus alone paint a picture.

- **Food menu - 1 page, no illustrations**
- **Drinks menu - 3 pages, enticing illustrations**
- **Shisha menu - 5 pages, enticing illustrations**

Applying for such lengthy hours of operation (from 10am to 5am the following day) leaves me in little doubt that we are looking at what I would classify as a nightclub lite rather than a restaurant per se. What is being proposed is less a place where patrons enjoy a leisurely meal with a side of music and alcohol than an offering that places cocktails, drinks plus music and dance performance at the forefront of the experience. The terminal hour for the supply of alcohol may have been amended to midnight, but what will patrons do between midnight and 5:00am? Late night refreshments will still be available, Shishas too? Lingering will be both encouraged and quite natural. Noise disturbance and an increase in anti-social behaviour is likely.

Any tipsy (or worse) revellers will have to negotiate the challenging Ludgate circus traffic setup.

A maximum of 5 hours has been allowed between close of business and reopening again. Factoring in clean up time (a notoriously noisy part of any restaurant, bar, nightclub's operations) and allow for setup we are looking at very little actual quiet time. Would the application of Non-standard timings push this out even further, so even less downtime?

The Non-standard timings provisions are elucidating too. The New Year's Eve and New Year's Day provision, in particular, provides a clear statement of intent viz. "From the end of the permitted hours on New Year's Eve to the start of permitted hours on New Year's Day". This will maximise earnings and profit and any proprietor worth his salt would capitalise on special days like NY, Bank Holidays etc. This is exactly when people are more likely to be in a more celebratory mood. Good for Sisi's but bad for any residents looking to enjoy their added downtime in peace and quiet.

Another tool in the entrepreneur's toolbox is applying for Temporary Events Notices (TENS). These are easily applied for (and relatively easily granted in our experience.) Bearing in mind that Live music and Performance of Dance is part of the mix here, this will allow the Applicant to boost earnings and attract fresh clientele through promoted events. Can we look forward to numerous applications? Once again, good for the business' bottom line but a negative impact on residents' lives. Any promoted events are likely to add to our woes. Becoming a popular destination and attracting late night revellers may even see light queuing on the Piazza as patrons wait to gain access (cover limit is 100). Noise disturbance, increased likelihood of anti-social behaviour would be expected.

The Applicant has combined all the ingredients for a very good night out; and his clients will get that. Residents will bear the cost of others' celebration.

Disturbance

I am surprised that more businesses in our area have not lodged their objections. The detritus from a good night out will be evident when they open up shop. Will they be happy clearing away cigarette butts, vomit, urine, litter? The Poppins Court thoroughfare (pedestrianised) and various recessed doorways have long attracted certain anti-social behaviours. We do not want to be adding to this burden. The current hoarding surrounding the old Goldman Sachs site already attracts much urine, vomit and littering for some reason; and it is temporary.

Practical, real-world implementation

I acknowledge and appreciate the amendments already offered (Table service condition, clearing external areas by 23:00, no alcohol provision after midnight). I fail to see how this will be made to work in practise. Human nature being what it is, the patrons will try to get away with as much alcohol and as little food as they can. Food being available whilst alcohol is served is not the same as substantial food having to be served and consumed alongside any alcohol served.

How exactly the extent of the external area is defined will be open to interpretation. How far up or down the Piazza will be deemed out of the area of responsibility? How many personnel will be employed to enforce this? Surely these personnel will themselves congregate and chat, smoke when the going is slow.

Clearing this area (and keeping it clear) by 23:00 will be a challenge in itself. What is being proposed for the other 6+ hours that patrons will be leaving Sisi's and congregate or linger nearby? I believe human nature will prevail and noise and disturbance will be experienced by Sovereign House residents. The very act of trying to encourage and enforce quiet egress often requires additional conversations. These will be conducted under our windows and with patrons who have had quite a few drinks and are still in party mode.

What exactly constitutes Late Night Refreshments? These are being offered all the way through to 5:00am and are accompanied by entertainment for much of that time.

Practical limitations

From what I know about the building's construction (it's a really old industrial structure, 1830's if memory serves) I do not believe that sufficient insulation can be installed to protect the first floor from noise disturbance emanating from within the premises (sound as well as vibrations). We have also not had much success with extractor fans and filters when it comes to keeping smells from wafting out and up. Yet another downside to having eating and drinking establishments beneath us in what I consider a suboptimal mixed-use arrangement.

The residential mix at Sovereign House includes students (school and professional). They benefit from peace and quiet in order to study and sleep well. We should not deny them this. All of us have a reasonable expectation of peace and quiet between 23:00 and 07:00 and the City of London's own policies support this - thankfully.

Conclusion

I realise that by continually looking after residents' best interests we run the risk of reducing the earning potential of the proposed business. At some stage it is no longer a viable proposition and the business fails. This benefits no one. We want a viable, thriving business that operates for many long years and is a suitable addition to the community.

This is a unique little corner of the City, a healthy community of residents in the midst of office blocks. We're part of the Fleet Street Quarter, we're within a Conservation area and we have recently been accorded BID status (Business Improvement District). Let's preserve what we already have and only look to build on this. Let's not risk all we've built up since the old printing works were refurbished to provide residences.

I am forever amazed at what the entrepreneurial spirit has given us and so it is with a very heavy heart that I oppose this Licensing application. Sisi's looks like a wonderful business, but it simply won't work well in this location.

Yours faithfully

Heidi Hartmann



Sovereign House