

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: MOP - Representation 8
Date: 01 October 2022 12:40:27

THIS IS AN EXTERNAL EMAIL

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to comment on the licence application for Sisi's, 7-9 St Brides Street, EC4A 4AS (the "premises"), as submitted on 13 September and as amended on 22 September 2022.

I believe that the licence application should be rejected in its entirety, for the reasons set out below. If the licence application is not rejected, then I believe that a significant number of conditions should be applied to protect the position of residents of the building immediately above the premises.

Background

I live immediately above the premises (i.e. their ceiling is my floor) with my young family. I have lived in this building for 20 years. When we moved into the building, the premises was occupied by Pizza Express. Pizza Express played no music, was closed by 10pm Monday - Friday, and did not open at weekends. They were good neighbours that did not disturb the peaceful enjoyment of our flat. They also caused no public nuisance.

The position materially worsened when Omnino began to occupy the premises. Omnino was a restaurant, not a bar that served food. Their terminal hour was supposed to be 10pm. However:

- they played music reasonably loudly, which quickly revealed the poor soundproofing that currently exists in the building due to its age and structure;
- whilst their terminal hour was in theory 10pm, the staff generally stayed until well after 11pm, and often after midnight, to clear up. They played music even louder during these times, and drank whilst they were clearing up.
- We complained regularly to the owner and all complaints followed the same pattern. He would speak to the staff, who would then follow the rules for a period of time, and then either forget about the rules or decide they didnt care or a new staff member would join who didnt know the rules, and the music / late night noise would start up again.

This made living in our flat during Omnino's occupation of the premises pretty miserable for significant periods, particularly from Wednesday - Saturday as the restaurant got busier. The one saving grace was that they were not open on a Sunday, so we were at least guaranteed some peace on a Sunday (although they also caused significant public nuisance

on a Sunday, as they left their rubbish outside after clearing up on a Saturday night and this wasn't picked up until Monday, by which time it had generally been shredded by pigeons (and on a couple of occasions, rats) and waste scattered across Poppins Court).

Sisi proposal

Based on our experience with Omnino, I am extremely concerned that Sisi's proposed licensing application will make our lives even more miserable than Omnino. The building is old, and, as stated above, the soundproofing is extremely poor. The mezzanine level of the premises is literally right under our bedroom and the bedroom of my young children, and sound travels through the ceiling / floor very easily.

The proposed terminal hour of midnight is completely ridiculous in the context of the premises being a largely residential building. Fundamentally, and notwithstanding the vague assurances in the licence application about "substantial food being available", this is a bar. No one is eating substantial food after 10pm at night - every restaurant in the City is empty by then save for people who are drinking. This is clearly just a fig leaf to attempt to disguise what is a bar. And it is clearly not appropriate to allow a bar to open directly underneath residential premises. Leaving aside the (very material) impact on the residents of the building, the public nuisance will inevitably also be very material. Outside the front of the premises there are seats / benches which have been put there by the City of London to improve the aspect of St Bride's Street. These will inevitably be occupied by patrons upon leaving Sisi to continue their conversations, smoke and generally make a public nuisance of themselves. It is entirely unrealistic to think that Sisi can have any control over that - they would no longer be on Sisi's premises - and people who are leaving a bar after 11pm are generally inclined to behave as they wish rather than following the instructions of bouncers etc. The area outside the restaurant will inevitably turn from the clean and pleasant environment it is today to a vomit and urine stained area littered with cigarette butts.

Objections

As you can see from the above, I am very very concerned about the proposal, and so I would urge the City of London to reject the application entirely. The premises is suitable for a restaurant subject to fixing the noise issues, but is not suitable for a bar that wishes to operate well into the hours in which City residents are entitled to reasonably expect their sleep not be unduly disturbed.

If, notwithstanding the above, the City is moved to grant the application (which, on this occasion, I really think would be the wrong thing to do - bars should not be allowed to open under residential flats), then I would urge you to add the following conditions to the licence:

The premises must be cleared and closed by 11pm - i.e. the staff must be out by then and the premises must be shut for the evening. Not including a condition to this effect will lead to exactly the same state of affairs that we had to suffer with Omnino, where staff are hanging around drinking / clearing up / playing music until well after midnight

- To the extent that recorded music is to be played, it must be limited to a level which does not cause a nuisance to us, i.e. we should not be able to hear it through the floors. My kids go to bed before 9pm - they shouldn't have to lie awake for 2 hours listening to music before they can go to sleep. No live music or any other form of entertainment should be permitted.
- Linked to this, the premises needs to be properly soundproofed, to deal not just with the music but also the noise from rowdy customers, clearing up etc. I assume this is possible but expensive, and I do not know how it can be achieved given the state of the building - e.g. I assume its not just the ceiling, but also the walls and windows. Again based on my Omnino experience, it cannot be left to staff to monitor noise levels / moderate their own behaviour - it just doesnt happen - and so there needs to be a technology solution to this.
- The licence should not allow the premises to be open on a Saturday or a Sunday. Weekend opening is entirely out of keeping with the other units in the building / area. Sunday opening in particular is extremely concerning.

Walking round the City, there are plenty of empty premises that are not under residential accommodation that would be suitable for a business like Sisi's. 7-9 St Bride's Street is just not one of them.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the above.

Yours faithfully,

Darren Oswick