

The Licensing Department
The London Borough of Merton
Merton Civic Centre,
London Road,
Morden
SM4 5DX

**VW - Merton Borough
VW - Wimbledon Police Station**

Wimbledon Police Station
15-23 Queens Road
London
SW19 8NN
Telephone: 020 8649 3074
Email: Russ.Stevens@met.police.uk

21st December 2016

Re:- Application for Premises Licence for Morden Park, London Road, Morden. SM4 5QU. (Eastern Electrics Festival)

Dear Sir/Madam,

On 2nd December 2016 an application was received from Mr Rob Dudley of 'We are The Fair Ltd', for a Premises Licence under Section 17 of the Licensing Act 2003.

The application can be summarised as follows:-

Mr Dudley applies for a single event Premises Licence to authorise the performance of regulated entertainment and the supply of alcohol.

The event will be called 'Eastern Electrics' and is planned to take place on Saturday 5th August 2017. The event will be a music festival with 9 stages for Live and Recorded Music in the Genres of House and Techno. Capacity has been set at 19,999 attendees.

The initial 28/02/2017 submission of the application was rejected by Merton Council due to the omission of detailed plans. A Safety Advisory Group meeting was scheduled for 4th April 2017.

I arranged a site meeting with the applicant and this took place on 10th March 2017, with colleagues from the MPS Central Licensing Team and MPS Event Planning also in attendance.

We have since received from Mr Dudley a revised Premises Licence Application, The Event Safety Management Plan, Event Risk Assessment and Fire Risk Assessment. As the revised application was submitted after our site visit, we note that several, but not all, concerns raised by us have been addressed in the new version.

We have contacted hosts for this event in 2014, 2015, and 2016, We have spoken to the events manager at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire for further background information. We have also received some reports from Herts Constabulary.

On 4th April 2017, a Safety Advisory Group (SAG) meeting took place with the event organisers and representatives from Local Authority departments, London Ambulance Service and Metropolitan Police. A number of serious concerns were raised at the SAG meeting and we have yet to see suitable plans to address them.

Police wish to make representations to this application on all four of the licensing objectives with the following grounds:

The Prevention Of Crime and Disorder

Previous History

The 'Eastern Electrics' Festival has been running for several years with the last three being held outside of London, in Hatfield House in Hertfordshire. Figures supplied to Police state that 12,000 people attended the event in 2014, 15,000 in 2015 and 17,000 last year. With a year on year increase and a London location, it is reasonable to expect the 2017 event to easily reach it's 19,999 capacity.

There were 15 arrests made at the 2016 event, mostly for Possession with Intent to Supply Psychoactive Substances. Other arrests for possession of controlled drugs and Public Order offences. 2 knife enabled robberies were reported along with several other thefts.

It was noted that the security search operation was non-existent, until challenged by the Bronze Commander. Bearing in mind that this was only a one-day event, people were seen walking in with large rucksacks unchallenged.

Staffing Lists were not supplied to Police in time for necessary checks.

Victims of Crime

The potential for crime in any large scale crowded event is well documented. It is reasonable to expect that sexual assaults will be committed within the festival site and many of these will go unreported. It is also highly likely that there will be thefts of personal property.

With all day drinking from the 6 bars listed on the site plan, the potential for sexual assault and alcohol related violence increases. Festivals can attract gang attention and violence can flare up very quickly.

There will be no private car parking facilities at the event. All attendees are advised to arrive by Public Transport. The nearest train and tube stations are 20 minute walks from the site. It is expected that criminal gangs from other areas of London will come to Morden to exploit the market of potential victims of crime that will be travelling to the site and to supply drugs.

Traffic congestion noise and ASB are likely to generate significant complaints.

Disorder

A confined area containing 20,000 people, drinking alcohol, and enjoying dance music will provide potential for disorder. Without knowing how many uniformed security staff will be present inside the site, it is impossible to assess the risk. The mention of Police assisting inside the site does raise potential concerns – although these officers are usually paid for in full by the organisers.

Assuming that the security operation is adequate, the biggest risk of disorder will come at the close of the event. Crowds of people leaving the site after 11pm into Morden town centre has very real potential for drunken violent clashes, taxi and fast food dispute issues. There are two large pubs in the centre of Morden, and one smaller bar. One of the pubs has a very late alcohol licence and may provide the facility for attendees to continue to drink through the night.

It is reasonable to expect many attendees to take the short trip into Wimbledon Town Centre where there are several venues with late alcohol licences. Unfortunately, the three Night

Clubs in Wimbledon town centre have small capacities (under 300) and will therefore be unable to cope with the influx of at least 1000 attendees from the event.

All this extra activity will likely impact heavily on already stretched weekend police resources. Experience nationally and locally shows it is likely that Unlicensed Music Events will carry on after the event closes and require policing.

Searching

Mr Dudley has included in the application that there will be 3-stage searching upon entry to the event, including the use of passive drugs dogs and metal detector wands. It is hoped that this indicates a massive improvement on last year's search regime.

The use of electronic ID scanning equipment was strongly advised but this has not been included in the application. Electronic ID equipment will ensure that the organiser's "No ID, No Entry" policy will be strictly enforced thereby preventing under 18s from entry. The MPS will be able to supply details of specific violent criminals to add to the ID Scanning Database to ensure that these individuals are also turned away. Use of ID Scanning equipment can also provide a potential witness list to Police in the event of a serious crime investigation.

Details of security firms have yet to be confirmed. The applicant expects to use different firms for various roles, i.e entry, security, safety monitoring.

The organiser has not supplied information regarding how many security staff will be present, inside and outside the event site.

Of particular concern to Merton Police the Event Management Plan states, "The Police have their statutory role outside the perimeter and in addition are supporting the event security and management with various functions within the site".

The MPS will not be assisting with functions inside the site, unless resources are specifically asked and paid for, or in the event of a serious incident. Although Police will have a role outside of the event, we will expect the organisers to security and safety issues directly connected with the event, eg crowd marshalling. This is our major concern. Any policing operation on this scale would cost a significant amount – we estimate 60 officers before during and after the event would be required. There are also police control room and prisoner handling costs included. Police officer 8 hr shift at full cost recovery is £448 per hour.

The event policing would cost approximately 60 X 8 hrs = £ 26,880. There are then the significant management costs to add on.

CCTV

The Event Management plan mentions CCTV operation in the event but there is no such mention in the Premises Licence application. Police would like to see a condition that high quality digital CCTV is in operation covering the entire site, and entry and exit, with footage available to Police on request at the time of request.

Counter Terrorism

The current Threat Level from International Terrorism is SEVERE. The recent event in Westminster has reminded us that attacks are still highly likely and that crowded places are terrorist targets. The World Athletic Championships are also taking place in London on this date. The CT threat in addition to no available parking at this event will further increase Police and Council resources to deal with abandoned vehicles close to the event site.

The application and Event Management Plan does not address the CT threat sufficiently.

Public Safety

Vehicle Traffic

20,000 attendees travelling to the site via public transport and foot poses numerous risks to public safety. Morden town centre is subject to a busy one-way system. To walk to Morden Park from the tube station, pedestrians must cross dual-carriageways and walk along narrow pavements. The sheer numbers of people expected will most certainly force people to walk in the roads. Although Epsom Road has a 30mph speed limit, it is still a dual carriageway and known to be prone to speeding motorists.

There is only one entry/exit point to the event site. The route to the site from the main road will be via a narrow barriered route through a small car park. At the conclusion of the event, all 20,000 attendees will exit onto a narrow footpath that runs alongside a dual carriageway. Many of these people will be intoxicated, tired, and disorientated. The danger from passing traffic along the A24 is serious.

Extensive Road Closures will have to be put in place to ensure pedestrian safety.

Single Entrance/Exit

There is only one entrance and exit into the event site. The nature of the perimeter fencing is such that pedestrians will be able to escape into other areas of the park in the event of large scale evacuation, BUT, there is only one vehicular access route into Morden Park.

In the event of a serious incident, the first few emergency vehicles attending could immediately block access route and thus prevent further emergency vehicles from getting close to the site. Emergency vehicles will be forced to park on the actual escape route to be used by pedestrians in the event of evacuation. Organisers failed to address this issue during the SAG meeting.

Psychoactive Substances

Possession with Intent to Supply Nitrous Oxide (Laughing Gas) became an offence under the Psychoactive Substances Act in 2016 due to health risks associated with misuse. Misuse can cause displacement of oxygen and death. Combined with alcohol, the affects of both are dramatically increased eg impairment. The use of recreational use of Nitrous Oxide at festivals is huge, with **800 - 900kg of used and unused N2O canisters disposed of at last year's Eastern Electrics festival.**

Although not illegal to possess, the organisers have agreed to have a strict No N2O policy. Police would like to see clear communication to attendees of this in advance.

Crowd Safety

The Event Management Plan and Risk Assessments appear to show measures to ensure crowd safety inside the event, but specific numbers and ratios of security staff are not.

Crowd Safety outside the event site will require additional event security and MBC staff to work alongside Police resources.

Alcohol Consumption

Attendees will be given RFID wristbands to use as payment for alcohol in the site. The wristbands will be “charged” by credit card and remove the necessity to carry cash, and therefore reduce theft opportunity. BUT, the organisers will not be issuing automatic refunds of unspent money left on the wristbands. Customers will be expected to apply to have surplus funds returned to them. This will undoubtedly encourage drinking to excess towards the end of the event, as attendees will be keen to get value by spending the money that they have charged to their wristbands.

Prevention of Public Nuisance

Morden Park is situated in the middle of a dense residential area. The event site is clearly visible by residential streets on two sides. Local residents will be affected by both sound and light pollution. The sound levels anticipated we understand will exceed agreed Db levels in Merton.

With the prospect of at least a 20 minute walk to the nearest tube and train stations, it is highly likely that many from the 20,000 attendees will need to urinate en route. Public footpaths and residential gardens are likely to be used as toilets.

The noise generated by up to 20,000 people walking past houses and blocks of flats at around midnight will be considerable, especially as many will be intoxicated.

Clear up costs outside the immediate venue could be an issue.

There are 7 weddings booked for Morden Park House, adjacent to the site entrance. The presence of this festival will ruin the Wedding Celebrations of 7 couples and their friends and family. This may not have been adequately considered by the organisers or Local Authority who own both venues.

Protection of Children from Harm

The event will be mostly ticketed in advance, with the possibility of some availability on the door. Electronic wrist bands will be used as means of entry and can be charged to a credit card for food and drinks payments. The application and management plans clearly state that this is an over 18s only event, and u18s will not be granted entry. There is mention on the application of a “No ID, No Entry” policy and a Challenge 25 policy in relation to alcohol sales.

Police have advised the use of Electronic ID Scanning equipment at Point of Entry but this has not been adopted into the application or ESMP. The Police would like to see a condition that scanning equipment is used to verify age and identity of every attendee.

POLICE RESOURCING

This event is planned for Saturday 5th August 2017.

Merton Borough has a number of public open spaces that are used throughout the summer for events. Specific events have yet to be confirmed but is highly likely that there will be other events demanding local Police resourcing.

Wimbledon's Evening and Night Time Economy runs at peak throughout July and August. Alcohol related violence and Anti Social Behaviour traditionally increases through the summer period and puts strain on Police resources. The NTE is policed by Emergency Response Teams and Local Police Teams, both of which run to minimum strengths throughout the summer when demand for Annual Leave is Highest. It is likely Dedicated Ward Officers would be abstracted to police this event. It is unlikely other Boroughs will be able to provide staff to police this event.

There are two other major public order events in London scheduled for Saturday 5th August 2017. The Olympic Park will be hosting the World Athletic Championships, and The 'Brixton Wave' festival will also be taking place. Both of these events are already assigned to Central Event Planning for resourcing by Police from all London Boroughs. Early indication is that there will not be additional MPS resources available for our event.

Merton Police do not have the resources to Police an event on the scale of Eastern Electrics. Officers' Rest Days may need to be cancelled for any level of resourcing on that Saturday in August. Sufficient numbers to deal with anticipated arrests, along with an additional Prisoner Processing Team must be found before even considering the Policing and crowd control of the external environs of the event.

At the close of the event there will be a strain on Night Duty teams to deal with anticipated alcohol related crime and ASB.

5th August 2017 is the scheduled start date for the London Waterloo Station Upgrade. Platforms 1-9 will not be in use and all train travel between London and Wimbledon will be severely disrupted. This will cause additional problems with crowd dispersal from Wimbledon.

SUMMARY

The Premises Licence application appears to be of a reasonable standard but somewhat generic in most areas. Early suggestions from Police have clearly been taken on board, but some have not.

We Are The Fair Ltd appear to be a competent and responsible operator but it should be noted that contact with Police was instigated by the Police.

Home Office Guidance under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 expresses the importance of consulting with Police before and during the application process.

We have not been supplied specific information about event security. We will also require details of all staff employed at the event including third parties. Due to lack of specific information at this stage, Police cannot conduct an accurate Risk Assessment.

I have serious concerns over the proposed event on 5th August 2017.

We firmly believe that this event will:

1. Cause Crime & Disorder.
2. Pose a significant risk to Public Safety.
3. Create Public Nuisance.
4. Put children at risk of harm.

The Metropolitan Police strongly advise that this application is rejected.

If the Premises Licence is approved, we strongly recommend that the following conditions are included in addition to those mentioned in the application:

1. The Event Safety Management Plan must be signed off by the Safety Advisory Group earlier than 6 weeks prior to the event.
2. The Alcohol Management Plan must be signed off by the Safety Advisory Group earlier than 6 weeks prior to the event.
3. The Traffic Management Plan must be signed off by the Safety Advisory Group earlier than 6 weeks prior to the event.
- 4. The Capacity for the event is set at 10,000.**
5. Electronic ID Scanning equipment must be used to check Proof of Identity of all attendees on entry.
6. Licensable Activities will cease at **22:00hrs**
7. The event site will be clear of public by **23:00hrs**

Yours Faithfully

Russ Stevens PC 852VW 191701

Licensing Officer

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