



Wimbledon And Putney Commons

Licensing
London Borough of Merton
1st Floor Annexe
Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
SM4 5DX

Chief Executive
Simon Lee BSc (Hons)

26th September 2018

BY E-MAIL: licensing@merton.gov.uk

Dear Sir,

Objection to the Premises Licence WK/201806044 – London Scottish Golf Club, Windmill Road, Wimbledon, SW19 5NQ

I respond to your formal consultation on behalf of Wimbledon and Putney Commons Conservators (WPCC) to register our objection to the proposed new Premises Licence for the clubhouse of the London Scottish Golf Club.

Wimbledon and Putney Commons are identified in Merton's adopted plan as a Publicly Accessible Open Space, Site of Metropolitan Importance, Metropolitan Open Land, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation. The London Scottish clubhouse is part of an enclave of buildings that includes the Grade II* Listed Windmill that are located within the heart of the Common.

WPCC fully supports the provision and retention of golf on the Commons it is an important and historic recreational activity that pre-dates the formation of the Commons as a publicly available open space. In addition to their statutory duties to make the Commons available for purposes of recreation and exercise, the Conservators also have duties to protect the site its amenity and wildlife. Conservation of the Commons is a fundamental concern to the Conservators who are wholly committed to preserving this important public open space.

WPCC own the freehold of the London Scottish clubhouse and has a lease with the London Scottish Golf Club for the use of the building.

The Conservators strongly object to the hours that are being proposed within the Premises Licence for the use of the clubhouse. The Club currently has a Club Premises Certificate to sell alcohol on the premises to a member of the Club or their guests between 10:00hrs to 23:00hrs Monday to Saturday and 12:00hrs to 22:30hrs Sundays. This is commensurate with the terms of the Clubs current lease and has worked well for many years.

A meeting was held with the officials of the Club regarding the proposed Premises Licence and concerns were expressed about the implications for the Commons if the proposals within this application were approved. It has the potential over time to change the use of the building to one that is incompatible with the charitable objects of WPCC.

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There are several environmental and security considerations that have not been properly assessed in terms of operational arrangements if the proposals were approved.

Around this enclave of buildings in the middle of the Common there are five residential properties (excluding the residential premise that forms part of the clubhouse). The potential noise nuisance arising from the late night use of the golf clubhouse into the early hours would be unacceptable. There have already been a couple of occasions when late night revellers have woken local residents.

The car park that serves the clubhouse is managed by the Conservators and under a Byelaw is locked from sunset to sunrise. The Conservators recently had to deal with an illegal incursion of trespassers at another location on the Common. If the gates to this main car park were left insecure this presents a very real security risk to the Commons. The costs to the charity in removing those who had illegally trespassed was £18,000. On Saturday the 22nd September 2018 there was a further threat of an illegal incursion and the gate at the bottom of Windmill Road was closed and locked to secure the site. The tenants of the clubhouse appear to have given no consideration on how such matters affect the operational use of clubhouse the wider security of the Commons.

If cars are expected to park along Windmill Road or off the Common this presents other issues, not only for the health and safety of visitors as the main access road to the clubhouse and car park are unlit, but also potentially blocking access along this narrow roadway onto the Common for emergency vehicles and residents. Given the Commons are a sanctuary for wildlife increased traffic movements onto the Commons, particularly at night would be detrimental.

As the location of the clubhouse is secluded concerns are raised for individuals who may become intoxicated with alcohol and wander off into the Commons. There are large bodies of open water, ditches and other natural features presenting hazards. The Common is not like a formal laid out park, it is a remnant of the countryside and it is easy for members of the public who are unfamiliar with the landscape to become quickly disorientated and lost, particularly at night time. Given the terrain it would be difficult for the emergency services to effectively search the area.

Being located in the heart of the Common, light pollution is a particular concern. It is known that there is a significant bat populations within and around the buildings that form this enclave within the Common. Bats are particularly susceptible to light pollution and are a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The Conservators have duties to minimise light pollution to protect all the wildlife that lives and currently thrives on the Commons.

Over the summer there was an event at the clubhouse that involved drumming and loud music, immediately adjacent to the clubhouse are stables that house the horses used for patrolling the Commons. If these animals were "spooked" as a result of excessive noise they could be injured if they tried to bolt from their stables.

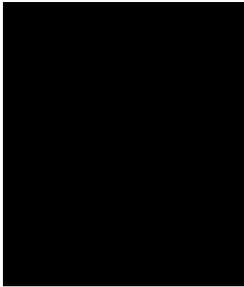
Research has indicated that no licenced premises within Wimbledon Village are permitted to operate past 23:00hrs, to set a precedent for a golf clubhouse to be licenced until 01:00hrs located in the middle of a Common would set a dangerous precedent for the licencing authority.

The Board of Conservators considered this matter at its meeting on the 18th September 2018 and agreed that the proposals were unacceptable and would create too much intrusion and disturbance to the Commons, its wildlife and the residents who live within the enclave of buildings in which the clubhouse is located.

Concern is expressed, that if permitted, the proposals would contribute to an unnecessary erosion of the unique semi-rural quality of the Commons which the Conservators have a statutory duty to preserve and protect. They seek to commercialise the use of a building, which primary purpose is to serve the golfers and for social activities and amenities as are normally ancillary to the use of a golf clubhouse.

The Conservators urge that this current proposal be rejected, the ability to sell alcohol off the premises are removed and ability to operate into the early hours of the mornings at weekends are curtailed to at least 23:00hrs that are commensurate with the current operating hours.

Yours sincerely



Simon Lee
Chief Executive of Wimbledon and Putney Commons

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