

Additional Comments 2 On Objection to Application 2022/00010/LAPR | Licensing Act - Premises Licence | Open for Consultation | Tea Rooms Bishop's Park Bishop's Avenue London SW6 6EA

Correspondence to the Parks and Leisure Department pertaining to our objection as a residents' group to this application.

Dear Stephen,

Thanks for your email. I'm afraid its content and approach left me very concerned and with a worrying sense of déjà vu.

The tenants or private contractors of a facility in any publicly owned space would rarely bother to submit serious plans and applications for something new without the support or acquiescence of the managers of that space, who in the case of Bishops Park are the Parks and Leisure Department of LBHF.

The last time your team negotiated with a private company, who were tenants and managers of a public facility in Bishops Park, the results were disastrous. In that case, your team were cajoled and misled into allowing a private company to construct three padel tennis courts, gain sponsorship for these courts and bank the profits with no planning consent given or applied for and without any public consultation.

The private company in that instance were very quick to tell your team that padel tennis worked in other London parks with 'no issues'. Your team seemed to accept this at face value. As the managers of Bishops Park, the question that your department should have considered in the first instance was this; would playing padel tennis in Bishops Park, a narrow and relatively small park with residential dwellings directly adjacent, cause an issue, not did playing padel tennis in Hyde Park cause no issues?

As the managers of Bishops Park, the Parks and Leisure Department apparently made no assessment as to the specific suitability of this park for this activity, and did not intervene when padel courts were erected and became operational. Local residents were subjected to an unacceptable and completely predictable noise nuisance in their homes for a year and a half and a portion of the public tennis amenity just disappeared.

Despite dealing with the padel company throughout, it was not your department as managers of Bishops Park, that eventually reported the company to the planning department for erecting a structure with no planning permission. It was however your department that, despite the obvious nuisance being caused to local residents, joined the padel company in staging an opening ceremony for the 'London Padel Centre' in Bishops Park and invited unwitting elected borough officials to cut the ribbon.

It was a local resident whose daily life at home had been badly impacted that reported the company to the planning department. The planning department and then elected officials from the current administration on the planning committee were left to turn things around and protect local residents.

In this new planning application, you have noted that you are aware that the 'operator has two licenced cafes in Wandsworth Parks i.e. the Sky Lark Café on Wandsworth Common, and the Rookery Café on Stretton Common with no issues'.

Have your team looked at those other cafes in any detail? Wandsworth Common is over 5 times bigger than Bishops Park and Streatham Common is over 4 times bigger than Bishops Park. The two cafes that you mention that have '*no issues*', are much further away from young children's play equipment than is the case in Bishops Park, are nowhere near as

close to residential dwellings as the case in Bishops Park, and are on open public commons, with both café's closing at 5pm.

Whilst the company may be the same, this application covers a completely different location and environs, and of course goes so much further than introducing the sale of alcohol into a park cafe during the day (which many people believe would have a different impact in this location). As a result of discussions with your team, the applicants have thought it appropriate and sensible to apply to extend the license to turn the park café into a venue for private hire for events and parties until 11pm at night, 7 days a week with indoor and outdoor seating, drinking alcohol and amplified music.

You have stated, 'it will up to the licencing committee to consider any objections'. This is obviously the case, but it is not the point. This is about the Parks Department's assessment of the application as the managers of Bishops Park, i.e. the department's written comments that will form part of the documentation for the licensing committee to consider and concerned parties to view and read.

Your department cannot be allowed to do what it did with regard to the padel courts, which was to be approached by a private business and then simply go along with their ideas to increase profit, abdicating your responsibility as park managers to properly assess the impact of an activity on park users in Bishops Park and local residents in the immediate vicinity of Bishops Park.

It is your team, along with the police and noise and nuisance departments, that are required to comment on the application in a considered and detailed manner as part of the licensing process. The idea that the Parks Department would comment on this application in a generic or brief way would be totally wrong and the victims would be local residents and park users.

Comparing to and conflating a situation where cafes close at 5pm in other boroughs on public commons, with a cafe in a historic gated park in a conservation area, surrounded by residential dwellings, hired out as a party venue until late at night would be totally unacceptable. Furthermore, to omit to comment on the issues that this application obviously raises would, I believe, be a negation of the duty of care of the managers of Bishops Park to adequately and professionally respond in this instance.

In light of the above and as the managers of Bishops Park, I would ask your department to consider the following when formulating your comments to the licencing committee about this application.

The planning consent objection that I have forwarded to you. Whilst taking into account the applicant's attempt to meet the four licencing objectives, this objection details the main issues that many local residents and park users are very concerned and angry about.

The Licensing officer in charge of this application has confirmed that they have received a lot of resident-representations which due to the big number are going to be acknowledged in bulk. As you say, these representations will be considered by the licensing committee. In formulating their own comments to the licencing committee, can the Parks Department, as managers of Bishops Park, stop and think about why so many people, not just Bishops Mansions residents have taken the time and energy to say that this wrong for Bishops Park?

As managers and custodians of Bishops Park, can your team comment on how hiring out the park cafe as a private venue will impact upon the covenants under which the park was given to the residents of the borough?

As the managers of Bishops Park, can your team think about whose interests are being served and what needs are being anticipated by turning the park cafe into a private night

time event venue? It is not any group of park users, it is not any local residents, and it is not any borough residents, who can access night time licensed venues for private hire, that are far more suitably located, throughout the whole borough. It does of course serve the interests of a private company and their need to drive revenue and increase profits. To be honest, many local residents can't think of a more inappropriate location for a licensed late night party venue than the park cafe in Bishops Park.

Before commenting on this application as the managers of Bishops Park, I would encourage you or a member of your team, to go to the park cafe and stand in the back seating area and look at the nearby mansion flats on Bishops Park Road and stand in the large outdoor seating space between the park cafe and the public toilets at the front of the building and look at the nearby mansion flats and houses on Stevenage Road. Envisage a night time event with guests sitting outside, socialising drinking and partying and amplified music being played inside, with windows open and doors opening and closing constantly, until 11pm at night on work/school nights as well as weekends. How could a venue like this, however well run, be anything but a public nuisance in this specific location? It would immediately and unacceptably affect the ability of local residents to open windows and balcony doors, sit on their balconies, watch TV and go to sleep on school/ work nights as well as weekends. Then also imagine the aftermath as guests leave the park into local streets. Do the managers of Bishops Park really want to inflict that on their neighbours and if so why and in the service of what?

I sincerely hope that the comments that the Parks and Leisure department submit to the licensing committee on this application are thoughtful, comprehensive and appropriate and as such may go some way to restoring the confidence of many people in this part of the borough who have become understandably disillusioned with your department's apparent lack of thought and care about how local residents' lives could be adversely affected when considering new initiatives in Bishops Park.

Yours sincerely

Marc Medina
Chairman Bishops Mansions Ltd