

Response to Mr & Mrs Woods

Context

Following the community meeting that took place in December 2017, Keystone Entertainment Ltd have reflected on the points raised as well as the impact our proposal will have on local residents, businesses and the community as a whole. We concluded that there is a need for a facility that promotes art and entertainment, and there is a need for a different type of drinking establishment in Amesbury. This would provide an offer that is not currently available in the town whilst also encouraging people to make Amesbury a place of choice to visit and socialise.

We decided not to pursue a nightclub and instead scale this element of our proposal down, whilst not losing the intent to create choice for local patrons. Our planning application, and linked licence application seeks to use the site at weekends as a cocktail bar when there is no events taking place, open Thu-Sat evening. The intent is to increase social space and reduce music levels so that we can promote an environment where people can congregate, relax and socialise. Our floorplans emphasise this with lots of seating area throughout the building. Separately, we are working with a number of agencies to develop a programme of events for next year that include comedy, dance, opera and live music – all of which would be accessible by the whole community.

Local Business

Regrettably, we do not agree that our proposal will harm the revenue of existing businesses or that existing businesses will not require as many staff. Looking back, the George Hotel operated a popular sports bar until 2016. This had a late licence and was well used by the local community. It is understood it closed as part of a change to the business model where the owners were keen to focus on the hotel rather than night economy. Several years ago there was a nightclub on High Street that adjoined the Fairlawn Hotel. This operated for many years so we can make reasonable judgement that this did not negatively affect the hotel. Given the population of Amesbury and the planned growth, we consider that there is a need to a new venue that can complement existing establishments at weekends. For the remainder of the time, the proposed site will be used for events targeted at all age groups. This is something not currently available in the town and is likely to prompt an increase in visitors to the centre, particularly drinking establishments and restaurants.

Public Nuisance

Whilst there is no taxi rank on the High Street, taxi companies are present on the street Thursday-Saturday to transport many members of the public from the neighbouring pub. On closing, the taxis move to the Kings Arms to transport people from the nightclub that closes later. There is potential for us to invite Wiltshire Council to reconsider use of the loading bay space outside the proposed site, with potential to turn this into a taxi rank. This is out-with this application however.

We agree that the key issue around noise is outside the proposed venue. We do not consider however that we would create any additional noise than that which is currently experienced. Our noise assessment report submitted with the planning application gives readings of noise levels at various intervals, including late night and we commit to operate within those limits. The Pub Watch Scheme includes representation from the Police, Wiltshire Council, a security representative and representation from all drinking establishments in the area. Not being part of that scheme, it is difficult to comment on its effectiveness, although we are confident that it regularly reviews issues of noise and disturbance, and actively maintains a list of people banned from all drinking establishments.

Regrettably, we do not have any evidence to demonstrate the vomit or urine is an epidemic problem in the town centre although we do believe that there will be occasions where intoxication is present. Your frustration that establishments do not accept responsibility outside their curtilage is a challenge, mainly because they (and we) have no jurisdiction or legal liability for what happens off-site.

If other drinking establishments were willing, we will commit to contribute to the creation of a new scheme where we employ a small security registered team to work with the Police to oversee the town centre on a Friday and Saturday night to ensure the smooth exit at the end of the night. Salisbury and Southampton do something similar at the taxi ranks and this appears to be effective.

Our target audience is varied. Of course, there is a natural interest in the troops returning to the area, but there is equal interest in the continued growth in Boscombe Down and surrounding areas. Beyond this, we are targeting the whole community to make use of this diverse proposal.

Nightlife in Amesbury is already a mix of civilians and military, and there is little evidence to suggest that there are any issues between the two. We should not tarnish the positive and integrated nightlife Amesbury enjoys today.

Summary

In summary, we fully appreciate all the concerns raised by Mr & Mrs Woods, and whilst we do not agree with all the points, we are conscious of the potential issues that could arise on the streets after the venue closes. As such, we are willing to lead the development of a scheme to employ people to tackle this at weekends. We must not lose sight of the alternative use of the proposed site. The cocktail bar is but a part of a much more inclusive offer. We would be delighted to discuss any of these points in more detail, either in writing or at a meeting.

Response to Mr Madeley

Following the community meeting that took place in December 2017, Keystone Entertainment Ltd have reflected on the points raised as well as the impact our proposal will have on local residents, businesses and the community as a whole. We concluded that there is a need for a facility that promotes art and entertainment, and there is a need for a different type of drinking establishment in Amesbury. This would provide an offer that is not currently available in the town whilst also encouraging people to make Amesbury a place of choice to visit and socialise.

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We would love to develop something on the outskirts of Amesbury but unfortunately the nightlife is in the town centre and we need to be close to where that is so that potential customers do not need to travel out of town to continue their evening. In order to deliver a programme of events to the community, we anticipate needing to generate revenue from the cocktail bar to offset the potential losses of running events. We consider that both are needed and to be successful, need to be close to other amenities.

Regrettably, we do not have any evidence to demonstrate that vomit, urine, damage or assault is an epidemic problem in the town centre although we do believe that there will be occasions where intoxication is present. If other drinking establishments were willing, we will commit to contribute to the creation of a new scheme where we employ a small security registered team to work with the Police to oversee the town centre on a Friday and Saturday night to ensure the smooth exit at the end of the night. Salisbury and Southampton do something similar at the taxi ranks and this appears to be effective.

Nightlife in Amesbury attracts a mix of civilians and military, and there is little evidence to suggest that there are any existing issues between the two. The death of Paul Garland was a tragic and sad occasion for Amesbury. It is not an example we would wish to use to portray the night life in Amesbury or the risk that a nightclub would present – noting that our proposal no longer seeks to develop a nightclub.

In summary, we fully appreciate all the concerns raised by Mr Madeley, and whilst we do not agree with all the points, we are conscious of the potential issues that could arise on the streets after the venue closes. As such, we are willing to lead the development of a scheme to employ people to tackle this at weekends. We must not lose sight of the alternative use of the proposed site. The cocktail bar is but a part of a much more inclusive offer. We would be delighted to discuss any of these points in more detail, either in writing or at a meeting.

Response to Ms Redfurn

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We believe that the changes to our business model will change the dynamic of our target audience and their purpose for visiting the venue, leading to a reduction in the risk to noise and nuisance. Coupling this with our noise management plan we believe that we will have sufficient measures in place to minimise any risk to neighbouring residents.

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We would be delighted to discuss any of these points in more detail, either in writing or at a meeting.

Response to Mr & Mrs Pullen/Mr & Mrs Tennent/Mr & Mrs Carder/Mrs Witt/Mrs Perry/Susan King/Mr Eatwell/Mr Roadnight/Mr Smeaton/Mr Ward/Mrs Madeley

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We fully appreciate and understand the issues around noise and disturbance in the town centre, particularly after closing time, and we are absolutely committed to do all we can to support the local police, residents and other establishments to reduce concerns. We firmly believe that the change to our business model will remove much of the risk of anti-social behaviour and demonstrate that our proposal is targeting a different type of audience.

Whilst we do not think that it is necessary, we would be willing to contribute to any scheme that may offer some manpower in the town centre to ensure smooth and swift movement of customers at the end of the night.

We hope that this provides a little more clarity and assurance that our licence application is not for a nightclub, but for a multi-purpose community venue.

Response to the Amesbury Town Council

It is disappointing to read the letter from Amesbury Town Council objecting to our licence application. As we highlighted to the town council, their objection focusses wholly on what they perceive to be a nightclub despite us having presented a proposal at their last public meeting that set out a plan to provide entertainment, art and music services to the whole community. It is a huge shame that they have not considered 5 of the 7 day operation.

We do make the following challenges/observations:

- Taxi services in Amesbury do not tend to stop at 1.00am. They usually operate until after closing of the last venue, usually Ruby's nightclub. Having spoken with two taxi companies operating in Amesbury, both are supportive of the proposal and would further request that we create a taxi rank on the High Street so that they can support swift and quiet departure from the town centre.
- What evidence does the town council have to assume that there will be additional noise from patrons leaving the premise at late hours? Our noise management plan and independent sound assessment gives sufficient confidence that our venue is unlikely to attract any worse noise levels than that which currently exists.
- What evidence is there to suggest that patrons are likely to create disorder just because they are in groups?
- What evidence does the town council have to suggest that people waiting for taxis will urinate in the street? We would anticipate our customers using the toilets before departing or moving to another venue.
- We would welcome sight of the historical evidence that demonstrates fights occur often when people leave a licensed premise. We would welcome further explanation of how recent that evidence is and how relevant it is to base future predictions.

The Town Council are so far detached from the reality of nightlife in Amesbury, we have lost confidence in their ability to assess our licence or planning application fairly. In our opinion, the Town Council are only representing a small minority of the community – the minority least likely to access our venue at the weekend. The town council has not considered our application fully, and the views of the people of Amesbury have not be represented.

13th January 2018

To Keystone Entertainment,

Thank you for providing a response to our objection.

To be clear, we have no objection to a town centre venue that provides entertainment of any sort up to a reasonable hour. However, your application for such late licensing hours seems to be at odds with the type of venue you are now proposing.

Before re-locating to Amesbury we ran two a very successful comedy clubs in Surrey and worked with a reputable comedy agency and many up and coming acts who have now found considerable levels of fame – e.g; Russell Howard, Rufus Hound, Joe Lycett, Sarah Millican, Micky Flanagan, Joel Dommett – to name just a few. In our experience, most comedy venues – even in central London – close at 11pm or around midnight at the latest.

We also have connections in the music industry, with a successful singer-song-writer in the family who performs live gigs all around the world. Most live music concerts finish around 11 p.m. - especially those in town and city centre venues similar to that which you are proposing due to the concerns over noise and disruption in built-up areas as people leave. It would be very rare for a headline act to be performing past 11/11.30 p.m.

You have said that you want to encourage people to socialise in Amesbury rather than in Salisbury which is a great idea. Your proposed venue seems to combine a comparable offering such as that provided by City Hall and Qudos. Qudos closes at 12.30 a.m. on Friday and Saturdays and at 11.30 p.m on weekdays. It is difficult to understand why a venue offering a similar experience in Amesbury would need to operate any later than this. Concerts and comedy events at City Hall usually start at 7.30 p.m. or 8 p.m. with the assumption that patrons would leave after the show has finished (running times would be approximately 2-2.5 hours) Therefore, we are a little confused as to why there would be a need for an entertainment venue in Amesbury to have such late licensed operating hours.

We appreciate you have listened to the feedback about noise and disruption. However, no matter what time you close, there will inevitably be noise as people leave, even of the non-aggressive kind. Our experience over the past seven and a half years, living and operating our business in Amesbury High Street, is of varying levels of anti-social behaviour when the pubs close ranging from noisy shouting and laughing – to fighting, foul language and damage to property. Even with the actions you propose, there are no guarantees that they would make a real difference. However, with a closing time of 11 p.m. it would at least be more bearable.

Amesbury town centre has become increasingly residential over the time we have lived here with the McCarthy and Stone retirement development, Seymour Gardens and Sloane Court. The town centre residents would, we are sure, welcome a classy, sophisticated bar with live entertainment for a night out in Amesbury – it would be great if there was somewhere like that we could recommend for our paying guests to spend an evening. It just needs to operate at sensible hours.

We would also urge you to fully research the building regulations for sound-proofing the building. Our recent experience of sound-proofing our new guest rooms in our converted coach house (the building which had operated as Sticky's nightclub in the past) has been very costly – we fear that sound-proofing a building the size of the HSBC building may need to go beyond installing secondary doors and insulating the windows in order to be fully effective.

We hope this has helped to clarify the nature of our concerns. Overall, the fact that you are steadfastly sticking to such late operating hours even though you have said that you are not pursuing the nightclub idea just seems a bit of a contradiction and, if we are being cynical, it does beg the question as to whether a cocktail bar with live or recorded music operating until 2 a.m. at weekends could be considered a night club under any other name.

We would certainly be more supportive of your plans if an earlier closing time were to be considered.

Kind regards,

Keith & Tracey Pullen

Proprietors: Fairlawn House

Thanks Hannah.

I welcome the response and constructive feedback.

We have researched the sound proofing thoroughly, and had an independent noise consultant undertake an assessment. The walls are over 12 inches thick and the sound is currently only escaping through the windows, hence our mitigation measures.

Our proposed licensing hours to 2am are there for flexibility above all. It is our intent to close at the end of any performances taking place. We would seek to stay open later on Friday and Saturday, in keeping with similar style cocktail bars such as YoYo, All Bar One and Revolution. Similar to The New Inn, they shut at 0100 although have flexibility to stay open until 0200 should there be demand from customers. We seek this flexibility too.

We can assure that there will not be 200 people on a dance floor with heavy bass music. We are looking at sofas, tables and breakout spaces where people can hear themselves talk.

I would be grateful if you could pass this info on to Mr and Mrs Pullen.

Best wishes

Nathan

Nathan Muirhead
Keystone Entertainment Ltd