

Dear Licensing Committee,

We are writing in response to the representations made concerning our application for a Premises Licence. We acknowledge the concerns raised regarding the "Strood Stress Area" and the potential for crime and disorder.

For prevention of crime and disorder:

As a responsible operator, we have carried out a risk assessment of the business and we are committed to ensuring that our business does not negatively impact the four Licensing Objectives. To address the specific concerns raised, we propose the following clarifications and robust operating conditions:

1. Business Model and "Nightclub" Concerns

The reasons for late opening of the lounge is below:

- Cater for late workers, tourists and entertainment seekers.
- Support local business and create jobs.
- Unique selling point which differentiates the lounge, attracting a loyal customer base.
- Meet customers demand for late night entertainment and relaxation.

We wish to clarify that the premises is a premium Restaurant and Lounge. Our target demographic is a mature clientele seeking a seated, high-quality social environment. To ensure the venue does not operate as a high-volume drinking establishment.

We are prepared to accept the following conditions:

- Seated Service: Waiter/waitress service will be available throughout the premises. Alcohol will be served primarily to patrons who are seated.
- Substantial Food: Substantial food will be available until 02:30 to ensure the venue remains food-led.

Sale of alcohol will be stopped at 02:00 to discourage binge drinking late in the night.

2. Management of the Strood Stress Area

We are fully aware of the issues regarding alcohol-related crime and the proximity to Rochester. We will implement a Strict Dispersal Policy to prevent "migration" issues across Rochester Bridge:

- SIA Security: We will employ 4 Number SIA-licensed door supervisors on Fridays and Saturdays from 21:00 until 30 minutes after the premises closes. They will be tasked with monitoring the frontage and ensuring customers do not loiter.
- Last Entry: To prevent "circuit drinkers" from arriving late from other areas, no new entry or re-entry (except for smokers) will be permitted after 01:00.

Staff will be trained to monitor customers behaviours and will refuse alcohol sale / service anyone who appears intoxicated. There will also be no entry to anyone who appears intoxicated at the point of entry.

Our staff will be trained to ensure and with the help of our SIA Licensed Door Security Officers that no customer is allowed to take drinks and alcohol out of the premises at any time.

- CCTV: A high-definition CCTV system will be maintained, covering all internal and external areas, with 31-day retention and immediate availability to Police or Council officers upon request.

Challenge 25:

Staff training and Support:

We will implement Challenge 25 policy in the premises. We will implement the following in the premises:

We will train all staff (including part-time and temporary) during induction and provide regular refreshers on identifying valid ID and spotting fakes.

We will support staff to confidently refuse sales, ensuring they know they have manager backing to avoid confrontations.

We will have procedure in place that if a customer appears under 25, ask for ID. If they cannot produce one, do not complete the sale (no ID, no sale).

Advertising and Signage:

We will display posters at the entrance, near the till, and by the alcohol/age-restricted products to inform customers of the policy.

We will use signage to deter potential underage customers and back up staff challenges.

Record Keeping and Procedures:

We will record all refused attempts at buying alcohol, including the date, time, reason, and description of the person, as this helps with police or trading standards audits.

We will install or activate till prompts for age-restricted items as a reminder to check ID.

Defining Accepted ID:

We will accept only valid passports, UK photographic driving licenses, or PASS-accredited proof-of-age cards.

We will check the photo, date of birth, and look for signs of tampering.

Online/Delivery Procedures:

We will apply the same standards to deliveries. Check ID upon delivery and return the goods to the store if the customer cannot prove they are over 18.

Monitoring and Review:

We will conduct internal audits to ensure staff are consistently applying the policy.

We will regularly check that our policy aligns with updated laws

3. Late Night Refreshment and Takeaway

To address concerns regarding anti-social behaviour linked to late-night food:

- No Takeaway Service late in night from 23:00: Late-night refreshment (food and hot drink) after 23:00 will be for on-site consumption only. There will be no external "walk-up" takeaway service, which prevents crowds from gathering outside the premises.

4. Protection of Residents and Noise Control:

The venue is located in a predominantly commercial area. But we will take the following steps to minimize disturbance to neighbours:

Noise limiter will be installed on the premises to monitor the noise level from live and recorded music and to ensure there is no disturbance to the neighbours.

- Quiet Dispersal: Clear signage will be posted at all exits requesting customers to leave quietly. Staff and security will actively manage the exit of patrons.

- Taxi Management: We will partner with a local taxi firm to provide a "callback" service, allowing customers to wait inside the premises until their vehicle arrives, to avoid noise on the street.

Further Clarification:

CCTV recordings will be retained for a minimum of 31 days and made available to the police or authorised officers upon request.

Staff training in responsible alcohol retailing.

An incident log will be maintained to record any incidents of crime, disorder or anti-social behaviour.

Implementation of a written dispersal.

Operation of Challenge 25 age verification policy will be implemented on the premises.

Management will cooperate fully well with the police and licensing authority.

Operation of Restaurant and Prevention of Public nuisance.

Takeaway service will be stopped at 23:00 to be able to prevent loitering or disturbance outside the premises.

Substantial Food: Substantial food will be available until 02:30 to ensure the venue remains food-led.

Sale of alcohol will be stopped at 02:00 to discourage binge drinking late in the night.

A written Customer Dispersal policy to ensure customers leave the premises quietly and safely.

Additional measures will include Staff monitoring the exist area during closing times.

Door supervision assisting with customers dispersal during busy periods.

Monitoring of noise levels both inside and outside the premises.

Clear signage requesting customers to respect local residents and leave quietly.

Waste disposal and deliveries service will be managed to minimise disturbance.

Protection of Children:

Acceptable forms of identification will include passport, driving licence or PASS approved card.

Staff will receive training in age verification procedures.

Children will be accompanied by a responsible adult while on the premises between 19:00 to 21:00. No children will be allowed in the premises after 21:00.

Alcohol will not be sold to anyone under the age of 18.

No customers shall be admitted to the premises after 1am as this will prevent people leaving bars to our venue after been drunk.

5. Conclusion

The 04:00 terminal hour is sought to help provide a staggered dispersal, avoiding a "mass exodus" of people at 01:00 or 02:00 when other local venues close. By offering a calm, seated environment until later, we believe we can reduce the pressure on local streets.

We invite the Licensing Authority and the representor to consider these conditions as a significant step toward upholding the Licensing Objectives. We are happy to discuss these further or enter a formal mediation.

Finally, I want to reassure the Committee that our intention is to operate a responsible restaurant and lounge venue that contributes positively to the local area.

I fully understand the concerns relating to the Stress Area and I am willing to work with the Licensing Authority and accept reasonable conditions to ensure the premises operates safely and responsibly.