

We have been the direct neighbours of MAP for several years, living in a residential street as part of the Inkerman Conservation Area in Kentish Town with our young son. We want MAP's business to continue to flourish - we personally greatly value independent live music venues - however, our experience living next to MAP leaves us very concerned that the mitigations listed in their application are insufficient to counter the real harm currently caused by the venue. Should the proposal be granted in its current form, this disruption would be exacerbated.

Many of the suggestions in the application rely on management processes, such as: keeping doors and windows closed, dispersing people effectively, keeping a log of complaints etc - which over the years MAP's management have proven that they are unable to apply, leading to a Noise Abatement Notice given in Feb 2024. Even this has not resulted in any change.

In addition we believe that their infrastructure proposals are insufficient to mitigate these issues, since the building is not soundproofed as a music venue. For that reason we are left with no choice but to strongly oppose the application until further measures are suggested.

### **History and experience**

In the time we have lived next-door to MAP the volume and frequency of events has increased and it is now highly disruptive to us on a day-to-day basis, impacting our families' sleep and causing significant emotional distress. Throughout this time we have tried to discuss these issues with the manager on multiple occasions where we have offered many reasonable suggestions to try and limit the negative impact on us without causing any harm to MAP's business. We have even offered to share the cost of soundproofing and help with any manual labour. All offers have been ignored and any operational improvements that were promised have never materialised in practice. We are happy to share our log of attempts at cooperation with MAP with the Council. This lack of cooperation has eventually forced us and other residents to make complaints directly to the Council. Warnings from the Council have unfortunately not led to any changes. The manager continues to shirk his responsibilities as neighbour and business owner - whereby he ignores Camden's Planning, Noise and Licensing policies - undermining Council processes.

### **The types of events that MAP runs**

While it is true that MAP hosts live jazz and open-mic nights, they also host regular hip-hop, electronic and dance music events with loud DJs, as well as frequent private parties. Contrary to what is written in their Noise Impact Assessment, these events are amplified with loud bassy music playing on speakers both on the ground and first floors at the same time. These events are often not advertised in advance on their public channels. Events take place any day of the week, most days of the week.

### **Noise nuisance along our party-wall**

The Noise Impact Assessment is incredibly misleading when it says *"the room of the music venue does not directly share any separating elements with neighbouring properties, and that the nearest adjoining property (44 Grafton Road) is believed to be of separate building construction, it is thought that flanking- and structural- borne noise is unlikely to be a key issue in terms of noise impact"* (p27) as we do in-fact share a party-wall along the ground and first-floor where live music events take place. (see **Figures 1 & 2**)

Noise propagating internally is a key source of noise impact - this could be easily evidenced with an acoustic reading from *inside* our home. The Camden Local Plan specifies that Noise Impact Assessments accompanying planning permission for entertainment venues should include metrics taken from inside habitable rooms of noise-sensitive receptors - see Appendix 3, page 350. No-one asked to take any background or event acoustic readings from within our property. Therefore we can only conclude that MAP's Noise Impact Assessment is based on unrealistic assumptions.

The frequent, bassy amplified music events cause significant disturbance through the masonry as MAP's large speakers are fixed directly onto our party-wall on both the ground and first floors. They result in a significant change in our behaviour as we struggle to find somewhere to comfortably eat dinner, watch TV, relax and sleep. These events are one of the primary sources of regular noise issues: generating loud, bassy, vibrations through our wall that reverberate throughout our whole house. This is evidenced by the Noise Abatement Notice which was issued after independent noise assessors from Camden Council observed the noise *within* our property on multiple occasions. We have asked Environmental Health to make their own comment on this planning proposal including a log of their notes and visits. It is far from "*inaudible*" as MAP's Noise Impact Assessment claims on page 43.

We have regularly raised the issue of the loud bass in our house with the manager and have invited him into our home to witness the noise - he is aware of the issue. Nevertheless, in their application they currently have no mitigations for internally transmitted noise. Unfortunately, MAP has proven that we can't rely on management processes to reduce the impact from internal noise. As a converted terraced house, the building is not designed to be a music venue. If they are to change their use to a live music venue, a more robust, professional, noise-limiting infrastructure is crucial to reduce their negative impact. Some things we have suggested to them in the past include:

- Removing all speaker fixings from the party-wall. Put speakers on stands isolated from the structure of the building and carefully consider speaker placement to limit impact.
- Ask a professional sound-proofer to assess the ground and first-floors and suggest wall, ceiling & floor solutions to mitigate the impact of live/amplified music. Then have a professional implement these solutions.
- Add automatic noise limiting devices to regulate music to an agreed, calibrated volume

### **Noise from outdoor spaces**

All of our windows are double-glazed and we even got some acoustically treated. Despite this, the other significant source of disruption is from MAP's inappropriate use of outdoor spaces. We are personally impacted both by the use of seating at the front of the building and the terrace on the first floor at the back of the building. Noise from outdoor patrons wakes us and our son up regularly even with our windows closed - there is absolutely no question of us opening them on hot, summer evenings due to this noise.

The front of the building includes several tables and chairs, including permanent benches which our bedroom overlooks. Patrons cluster and overflow into the pavement/street outside our house drinking, playing loud music on their phones, smoking and shouting throughout the evening. Despite us and others raising the issues with the manager, MAP does nothing to counter this behaviour. MAP currently has no wind-down period nor do they manage a staggered exit of patrons — which means

that everyone leaves the venue at the same time after an event. This leads to significant loitering outside during and after events which regularly wakes us up and is also intimidating (see **Figure 3**).

Noise issues at the front of the building are exacerbated further by doors and windows left open and speakers that face the street. In addition, the main floor-to-ceiling shopfront window was recently replaced by a sliding door that is also kept open during evening events in summer. No effort is currently made to contain the sound (see **Figure 4**).

The other outdoor area is the first floor terrace at the back of the building which our bedroom overlooks. Counter to MAP's Noise Impact Assessment suggesting it is only used by "6 patrons" at a time (see page 17), this area is usually rammed until 11pm with people drinking, shouting and smoking (despite the licensed hours of use being 8pm) - with sometimes upwards of 20 people (see **Figure 5**). The terrace doors are often propped open, which means that the music travels directly into our bedroom disturbing sleep.

We support MAP's proposition to create an internal lobbied space and the upgrading of doors and windows. These measures are necessary to reduce the leakage of sound if they are to operate as a live music venue in the night, however they will make no difference unless doors and windows remain closed when music is playing - even in summer. In order to achieve this MAP will need to install air-conditioning as the room can get very hot.

We have concerns about the proposed covering of the terrace, which would effectively act to extend the first-floor creating an internal room used all-year-round probably causing more disturbance overall. We also think the shop-front should be returned to fixed glass - not the sliding door recently installed.

If MAP are to change their use to a live music venue, it is their responsibility to ensure that nearby residents are not disturbed by noise leakage. Ultimately, we do not feel that outdoor spaces should be used in the evenings. This is a quiet residential area and any noise from patrons carries - especially as they have outdoor seating both at the front, side and back of the building impacting Grafton, Inkerman and Wiles Roads. Keeping these outdoor areas closed at a reasonable hour is ultimately the only way to address the impact on us and other residents. MAP are suggesting to close outdoor spaces at 22:45 to limit disturbance - this is still very late and will disturb neighbours greatly.

### **Primary cooking**

While we are mostly concerned with noise, we also have worries about the lack of detail in their application for primary cooking. More detail is needed about food preparation, extraction and managing waste to ensure that this will not cause an issue. Without further information we cannot accept the proposal as we have real concerns about smells, vermin and more sources of noise.

### **Conclusion**

As part of their application, MAP has regularly compared themselves to The Grafton pub. This is not a fair comparison for many reasons:

- **Nature of use:** the pub hosts far fewer and quieter nights: never bassy, electronic or DJ-nights. It is not primarily an event-space: patrons visit continuously throughout the day and

night to eat and drink. MAP wishes to operate primarily as a night-time live music event space: it is very rarely open in the daytime and patrons have little choice of food - it is not a "Cafe".

- **Location:** The Grafton is also in a very different location, on the corner of Grafton Road and Prince of Wales Road - a main arterial and much busier road. On Prince of Wales Road it is adjacent to an art gallery, whilst on Prince of Wales Road it sits next to a block of flats used for short-term AirB&B letting. Opposite The Grafton is a large leisure centre. In contrast, MAP is surrounded on all four sides by residents and families.
- **Infrastructure:** The Grafton is a purpose-built pub - a space designed to host patrons and their newer outdoor terrace includes high grade acoustic glass fencing for which they sought detailed planning permission. MAP started as a terraced house, then a bakery and then printing business. It is not designed to contain the noise of a live music event-space and therefore requires necessary mitigations. As it stands, MAP have installed no professional soundproofing on any inside or outside spaces. Not even simple, low-cost solutions have been installed such as: bass traps, acoustic fencing, foliage, door and window seals or the decoupling of speakers. This paired with poor management means that it is currently not suitable to operate late at night.

As mentioned, many of the nuisance mitigations suggested above are at low or zero-cost to MAP without causing any harm to their business, but significantly improving the lives of neighbours. We would expect any new music venue to implement them as a minimum. MAP has also shown that we cannot rely on management procedures to mitigate negative impact. Should you need any supplementary information, we have a detailed log of all attempts to meet with the manager and time-stamped videos of outdoor usage that we are happy to share, however Noise Officers have also taken detailed notes on their visits.

Given our experience with MAP, we have a serious concern that any agreement to follow planning conditions imposed by the Council will not be implemented. The Camden Plan states that *"Conditions may be imposed to require that suitable internal noise levels are achieved and where appropriate, post installation testing to demonstrate that the standards have been met"* - page 211. We would please ask Camden Planning to check that any mitigations have the desired effect before allowing them to operate as an evening live music venue - including a reading from inside our home this time.

Given the heavily residential nature of the area, even if all of the above proposals were in-place, we don't think they would mitigate the cumulative impact of live and amplified music until 11pm - which is significantly later than their current 6pm permission. Perhaps if MAP show that they can reduce their negative impact, they can be granted longer operating hours later down the line?

Appendix and figures

Figure 1: MAP layout with 44 Grafton Road Party wall

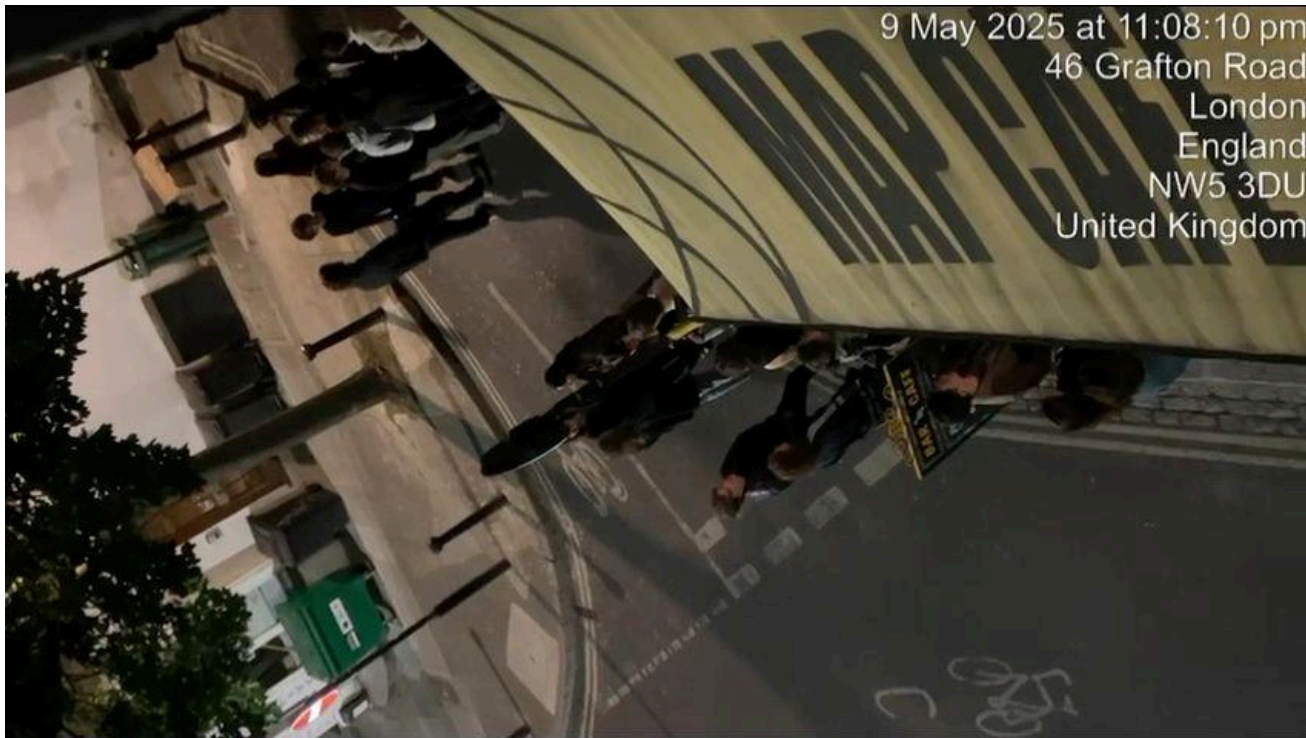


Figure 2: Google Earth view of our shared party-wall in green





**Figure 3:** A typical loud cluster of patrons forming after a recent event - noone dispersed them with people lingering until 11:30pm



**Figure 4:** Sliding door shopfront creating a large opening to allow music to escape



**Figure 5:** A recent, typical evening on the terrace - many more than 6 patrons directly below our son's bedroom window

