

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 05 May 2019 21:52  
**To:** Smith, Kristina  
**Cc:** Planning; Allott, Dawn; McDonald, Neil  
**Subject:** CGCA objection to application ref. 2019/1558/P - Change of use from a shop (Class A1) to an 'Escape Room' (Class D2)  
**Attachments:** Escape rooms frontage inbetween flats.jpg; Escape rooms job ad.jpg

Dear Kristina,

The revamped planning portal is still restricting comments, so we are unable to submit any but very short ones. I am copying Dawn Allott in on this as she is kindly liaising with Camden's IT team to try to rectify this. Please see our full comments on the planning application, below.

We are also quite worried that a shop can morph into a late night leisure business like this with no enforcement against it. They obviously feel pretty confident - I attach a photo of their window advertisement for a job.

With good wishes,  
- Amanda.

Amanda Rigby  
(Voluntary) Vice Chair and Exec. Member for Seven Dials  
Covent Garden Community Association  
My mobile: [REDACTED]

**CGCA full comments on application ref. 2019/1558/P:**

The Covent Garden Community Association (CGCA) OBJECTS to this application, on three grounds:

1. Disturbance to neighbouring residents if hours of operation are permitted beyond that usually associated with retail premises.
2. No safety features in the plans.
3. Retrospective application from an operation that has started with no proper consents and which is advertising for staff in a way that boldly assumes consent.

1. Disturbance

Drury Lane is quite densely residential in the area immediately surrounding 181 Drury Lane. There are 4 flats immediately adjoining it at 180 and 182 Drury Lane, as well as other neighbouring flats and 16 flats at Goldsmith Court overlooking. More family dwellings are very close, in Stuckley Street and Shorts Gardens, on the route to and from these premises.

The traditional retail uses of these premises have meant that there is no activity in the evening. However, this application is for a business operating between the hours of 10:00 - 23:45, Monday to Sunday. This is very late, meaning that groups of people 'in party mood' will still be coming and going to the premises via until almost Midnight. We do not believe that this is appropriate in this location.

We ask that, should planning consent be given for this plan to change use, then the hours of use of the premises should be restricted to 9am to 9pm Monday to Saturday, and 10am to 9pm on Sundays.

## 2. Safety

The applicant's Planning Statement states that the business is essentially an entertainment that involves "people working as a team to solve puzzles in order to escape from a locked room". However, it does not offer any safety measures that take account the change of use from a shop. In January 2019 a fire in an escape room in Poland killed 5 teenagers, after which more than 200 of Poland's escape room businesses were checked, revealing many safety flaws and 13 were closed down by the authorities. We understand that, under the Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998, the local authority is generally the enforcing authority for leisure activities. We urge you not to grant consent, even with the conditions upon hours requested above, unless safety features are added by your colleagues to protect both those involved in the entertainment and those living close by.

## 3. Retrospective application

It is always a worry when a business starts operating without the proper permissions, and when it continues to do so even when it has been made clear that permissions are required. In our experience such businesses do not take their responsibilities seriously, and make for very poor neighbours to nearby residents.

This is the case with this business, and we feel that it is inappropriate to reward them with any consent for a change of use in the circumstances.

ENDS



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# ROOMS

