

Hazelton, Laura

From: secretary <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 22 April 2020 15:52
To: Hazelton, Laura
Cc: Bond, Catherine; [REDACTED] Callaghan, Patricia (Councillor);
Cotton, Richard (Councillor); Pietragnoli, Lazzaro (Councillor)
Subject: Planning Application Ref: 2020/1537/P

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Laura Hazelton
Development Management
Regeneration and Planning
London Borough of Camden

Dear Laura Hazelton,

Planning Application Ref: 2020/1537/P
Installation of 34 wall mounted speakers to the railway arches (retrospective) – **OBJECT**

This application may be listed in the application details as a ‘minor commercial alteration’, however it has major consequences.

The issue is the use of external speakers broadcasting into an open area used by the public, which is a new planning issue that would be most unwelcome. In the application documentation the use of external speakers is described as ‘noise’ and ‘music noise, with ‘emissions to neighbouring and sensitive areas’. I thought noise was something unwelcome and to be avoided.

Maybe, at first sight, this issue does not seem to be too serious, but think of the way ‘outside music’ could proliferate, and there would be no way of controlling it if this application is given consent. For example, external speakers could appear around Camden Town and along the High Street and there would be nothing that could be done about it. You may consider the risk would be low and that there would be no call for speakers in the High Street – just so. There is no benefit or requirement for external speakers in public and accessible locations.

No case has been made by the applicant. There is no meaning to ‘animating’ an area with music and making it a ‘vibrant and interesting place to visit’, let alone ‘supporting the function (?) of the area for retail, food and beverage’. It is unsubstantiated nonsense, and cannot be relied upon.

The public in a public area should be at liberty to choose if they wanted some music (even if they are tourists), and of course they could have their own iPod with some music if really necessary, rather than someone else’s choice.

Piped music is all too common inside shops, supermarkets, pubs and even banks, much to the annoyance of many customers. However, the sound (or music noise) emitted from external speakers (34 of them!) in the market on Hawley Wharf is spread into a public use area so it is designated as ‘broadcasting’ and therefore requires particular conditions and a licence. The applicant for the market speakers does not have such a licence, and is unlikely to succeed in applying for one.

Doubtful reassurance

It is intimated by the applicant that the noise emissions from the speakers are in line with Camden’s guidance, which of course is untrue as there is no such legislation to that effect.

In the application documents there is a very doubtful assumption conveyed by the consultants who (selectively) quote the Conditions to the Planning Consents 2017 and 2018 about noise levels. In a 'feasibility study' to support the speaker application it is stated that it is ensured that the music noise would "have no adverse impact" on the local amenity, and will protect the local occupiers and neighbours. However, what they are obliquely referring to is Planning Condition 54 for sound insulation measures for the nearby residences and not directly the noise level and effects of open broadcast music in the locality.

There is no guarantee of the volume of the music, and it may well be cranked up as the day and evening progress (like in pubs). Also the application states that "along the row of shops there will be different zones so the speakers can transmit different music noise at different volumes" (underlining added). What a unpleasant and unbearable prospect. Anyway, we only have the reassurance of low level music noise from a consultant, Scotch Partners whoever they may be, and not from the market 'Landlord', whoever that may refer to. Trust may be seriously lacking.

Regent's Canal Conservation Area

It is very worrying that there would also be an adverse effect and disturbance on the Regent's Canal and the towpath, in the highly valued conservation area, the border of which runs along the railway viaduct where the speakers are to be installed. The applicant does not seem to be concerned about the 'noise' impact in the sensitive canal corridor. A big mistake. The market development itself will have a noticeable negative and unjustifiable effect on the Regent's Canal, and the addition of broadcast music will only increase the disturbance to the canal.

Like so many developments along our canals, the developers gain a great deal of benefit from the canal, but give little or nothing back. In fact, this speakers application demonstrates a lack of regard for the Regent's Canal and a lack of respect, and in the Bicentenary Year of the canal that they should be celebrating in some way.

Enforcement

It transpires that the speakers are already being installed at risk without planning consent. This puts unwarranted pressure on Camden Council that they are facing a fait accompli, which is a very presumptuous device and not recommended.

It will be essential that the speakers are removed completely if (or when) the planning consent is refused. If the speakers remain as fixtures it will be inevitable that in a period of time they will be made use of, and the public (and the canal) would get the music noise broadcast by default. There is no way any successive management can be relied upon, and removal should be enforced.

Ward Councillors

This planning response is copied to the Ward Councillors as this application could have serious repercussions, and it needs to be given much more attention. Noise is a very emotive subject and has very wide connotations.

Noise gets some serious, detailed attention in Camden's Local Plan, but the particular issue of broadcast music is not directly dealt with in the legislation, although its negative noise effect is covered.

Yours sincerely,

DEL BRENNER
Regents Network and
associate of London Forum and Just Space and
member of the Regents Canal Conservation Area Advisory Committee