

Appendix C

Committee report to North Hertfordshire District Council's Licensing Authority

Re: Rhythms of the World, High Street + Market Square & St. Mary's Church and Gardens, Hitchin.

Subject: Application for a premises license by Rhythms of the World, 4 Robins Hill, Hitchin, Hertfordshire. SG4 9FE

Introduction

I am making a representation in respect of this premises license application under the licensing objective of "public safety".

The application for a premises license is to hold a music festival called **Rhythms of the World** at the above location on one Saturday on July or August each year.

Background information and layout

The area chosen for the Event consists of the cobbled market place, the road between this and Bancroft (High Street) and the grounds of St. Mary's Church and surrounding pavements. There is no proposal to use either Sun Street, Bucklersbury, or the road that links them to the side of the market place.

The Charity Rhythms of the World used to run a festival in Hitchin town centre from 2000 until 2007. In 2007 it was decided by Responsible Authorities and the Charity that it was no longer safe to run the Event in the town centre and it was moved to the grounds of Hitchin Priory. Whilst it is appreciated that this application is for no where near the footprint of the festival that used to operate in the town, and the duration of the entertainment is less, there are still the same concerns with the location of such an event.

The proposed operating hours are 11am until 8pm, and the Event is relying on the cooperation of the town centre pubs and Hitchin Market for welfare facilities and are encouraging the sale of Alcohol.

Organising and running a safe music event in a town centre needs careful planning by suitably qualified and experienced event management. Due to site constraints of the location it will be very difficult to plan a safe event.

Areas of concern

I am concerned that this site is not suitable for an event of this size, and my reasons are as follows;

1. It will be impossible to manage safe ingress and egress of up to 4999 people from the site due to multiple exits at the start and end of the Event,
2. It will be difficult to safely separate vehicles driving from Bucklersbury past the market place and into Sun Street and pedestrian customers, without a full road closure which has not been proposed,
3. It is not clear as to how you will control the total number of customers or identify them from shoppers and local residents,
4. It is not clear as to how you will be able to manage crowd safety, as the Event is in a public place and cannot restrict free access to the licensed area,
5. It is a free and non-ticketed Event and so has the potential to attract a significant audience, which has not been considered,
6. It is not possible to control what people may bring with them to the Event, and so folding chairs and similar could reduce the available circulation space and capacity,

7. The Event Organisers are relying on use of the existing car parks, that may already be near capacity on a busy Saturday in Hitchin,
8. There has been no consideration to the need for barriers for crowd safety, other than a rope barrier next to the river,
9. There has been no consideration for the welfare of the staff or contractors,
10. There has been no consideration for the need for a static location for Event Control,
11. There has been no consideration for the provision of water for the caterers and attendees,
12. There has been no consideration for the disposal of waste water from catering concessions
13. There has been no consideration for the safety management of structures such as stages during the Event,
14. There has been no consideration of the implications or following of the performers,
15. There has been no consideration of the risks of overcrowding / crowd surging / crush,
16. There has been no consideration of show stop procedure,
17. There has been no consideration of evacuation procedures or calculations,
18. There has been no identification of roles and responsibilities for staff and volunteers during the Event,
19. There has been no consideration for back up communications in case of mobile reception failure,
20. There has been no consideration for Electrical or Gas Safety management at the Event,
21. The risk of fire has not been correctly assessed, most if not all of the catering stalls will have some means of cooking and they are planning on using generators for power.

To run a safe Event of this size in a Town Centre Location, it requires an experienced team and a suitably qualified and experienced safety officer. Even with an experienced team it is not possible to fully mitigate all of the above concerns due to the inability to control access to the licensable area. The only effective control for overcrowding or crowd surging at free open access Events is to cease the entertainment on the basis that patrons should then disperse. As alcohol sales are being encouraged so the Event organisers can access the town centre Pub toilets, the ceasing of entertainment could give rise to disorder.

Recommendations

I would recommend to the Committee based upon the evidence above that this premises license application be **refused** in its entirety.

However, if the Committee are minded to grant this Premises License Application, I would recommend that the licensable area be restricted to either the Market Square, or the grounds of St. Mary's Church.



Alex Pender
Senior Environmental Health Officer
North Hertfordshire District Council

5th June 2018