



Ms V Radford
Leeds City Council
Entertainment Licensing Department
Civic Hall
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By email

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15 September 2014

Dear Ms Radford

APPLICATION FOR THE GRANT OF A PREMISES LICENCE FOR GROUND FLOOR & LOWER GROUND FLOOR, CORN EXCHANGE, CALL LANE, LEEDS, LS1 7BR. (REF: PREM/03510/001).

We act for Threadneedle Property Investment who manages the Leeds Corn Exchange on behalf of Zurich Assurance Ltd. We write in respect of our client's application for a premises licence in order to explain the planning and heritage benefits of issuing such a licence to the Corn Exchange and how these benefits will support the following licensing objectives:

- Prevention of crime and disorder;
- Public safety; and
- Prevention of public nuisance.

The application for the premises licence precedes planning and listed building consent applications for works to improve signage, lighting and access for all to this Grade I listed building which will be submitted to the planning department in the near future. The aim of these proposals is to enhance the profile and visibility of the building within the city centre. The proposed alterations and the increased use of the Corn Exchange following grant of a licence will also enhance the safety and security of this part of the city.

This letter highlights key relevant national and local planning policy, the background to uses within the building and sets out benefits and justification for issuing a premises licence to the Corn Exchange.

Licensing Policy

We refer to the Council's City Centre Cumulative Impact Policy. The Corn Exchange is located within the Red Area which has been designated on the basis of crime incidences. In summary, it is considered that the application for a premises licence should be approved as it is an exceptional case for the following reasons:

- The Corn Exchange is arguably the finest listed building in the city centre

and should be retained in active use – the building is designated Grade 1, putting it within the very select group of the most architecturally and historically important buildings within England;

- The Corn Exchange has proved popular for events and this is an excellent way of making best use of this key heritage asset in Leeds city centre;
- There has been a history of high quality food and drink uses in the building. A drinking establishment preceded the recent high-end restaurant use at piazza level.
- The proposed events operation at piazza level would not be “alcohol-led premises” as referred to in the Cumulative Impact Policy. The current licence application would facilitate the holding of events for more discerning customers and clientele than those establishments identified as being as crime generators within the Cumulative Impact Policy;
- The Corn Exchange is in a unique position to drive footfall to this part of the city. The more activity associated with the weddings, exhibitions and events in the building combined with the proposed listed building alterations should lead to less anti-social behaviour in the area around the building.
- This is of paramount importance as the location is on the fringe of the city centre and all opportunities to encourage daytime and evening activity will help lessen the likelihood of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Planning Context

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Throughout this section there is an emphasis on putting heritage assets, such as the Corn Exchange, to viable uses consistent with their conservation. This is referred to at paragraphs 131 and 134 in particular.

The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to set out a positive strategy for the conservation of the historic environment. In doing so, LPAs should take into account the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring.

National Planning Practice Guidance (2014)

This is reiterated in the recently published National Planning Practice Guidance. The Guidance states:

“Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets as diverse as listed buildings in every day use to as yet undiscovered, undesignated buried remains of archaeological interest.

In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time”. Indigo Planning emphasis added.

It goes in to state:

“The vast majority of heritage assets are in private hands. Thus, sustaining heritage assets in the long term often requires an incentive for their active conservation. Putting heritage assets to a viable use is likely to lead to the investment in their maintenance necessary for their long-term conservation”.

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Policy N15 of the adopted Unitary Development underlines the importance of keeping listed buildings in active use as it states that applications for change of use will be considered favourably provided the new use does not diminish the special interest of the building.

The supporting text to Policy P11 of the Core Strategy also acknowledges the role that a strong economy has in retaining listed buildings in viable use.

Justification for Premises Licence

The Corn Exchange has a unique place in Leeds City Centre. It is a Grade I listed building in the Leeds City Centre Conservation Area. It is one of three corn exchanges in the country which still operates in its traditional capacity as a centre for commerce.

The building was refurbished and converted into a retail centre with café and food outlets in the late 1990s. A £1.5 million refurbishment programme took place in 2007 / 2008 which helped improve the attractiveness of the retail centre.

The piazza has historically been used for drinking establishments and restaurant operators serving alcohol. Therefore, the Council's planning department has considered this is an appropriate location for drinking establishments and restaurants previously.

The Corn Exchange was anchored by Anthony's restaurant and associated uses within the lower (piazza) level of the Corn Exchange. However, Anthony's has ceased trading and vacated the Corn Exchange last year. They had operated on the piazza level since 2008. The premises licence lapsed when Anthony's vacated the building. The agents have been seeking replacement tenants but have been unsuccessful to date. The piazza level remains vacant and the number of visitors to the building has fallen as result of Anthony's departing the building.

The building occupies a unique place in Leeds Prime Shopping Quarter but faces increased competition from other shopping centres including Core, St Johns, Merrion and most notably the nearby Trinity Shopping Centre. Construction of the Victoria Gate development has also commenced recently.

The Corn Exchange generally tends to attract independent and niche retailers rather than high street retailers due to the limited floor plates of the individual units. Therefore, the centre requires an anchor use which will maintain footfall to the building and ensure these retailers and the food and drink outlets remain viable.

The issuing of a premises licence would facilitate the applicants to run events such as weddings and seminars in this currently vacant space. These events will create spin off benefits for the other retail and café operators in the centre as they will raise the profile of the building. The premises licence along with the other proposed signage, lighting and access works will help ensure this landmark building remains in viable use and contributes to the local economy as it has done so historically.

Increasing activity around the building associated with high quality events will increase passive surveillance and help to enhance public safety, reduce crime and disorder and public nuisance.

We trust the contents of this letter will be taken into consideration when the licensing application is assessed.

Please let me know if you have any queries or comments.

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of David Smith.

David Smith