

Dear Licensing Officers,

I should like to submit a late objection to the Monkey Suit's application to open a SEV on their current premises and should be very grateful if you could contact the Chair to ask if they would consider this late submission. I was unaware of the application despite knowing that it was their intention to submit and was watching the press and the venue for the application to appear. Unfortunately the venue apparently did not advertise the license application on their premises, as I checked every time I walked past into town (Sidwell Street being my regular route). This was entirely my error though and I apologise wholeheartedly to you and the councillors for the inconvenience of this late correspondence.

Should the committee accept this late submission, I should be grateful for the opportunity to speak at the meeting. I think that I can add quite a lot having been Chair of Licensing at the time when we adopted the current SEV policy.

My objection is simple: although the applicant states that there is currently one SEV licence this is not the case, as we have a nil policy in place. The policy states that there is no location in Exeter considered suitable for an SEV venue. Although the applicant states that they believe Sidwell Street is an ideal location, this was considered at the time of adoption of the policy and rejected. The applicant states that there is no residential accommodation nearby which is simply not true - there are many flats on Sidwell Street itself, behind the venue, and more planned. They also omit that they are situated directly opposite an important community hub (St Sidwell's Centre), a church and very close to Exeter Mosque, as well as a primary school. This was the case when we wrote the policy, and if it has changed now, Sidwell Street has only become less suitable for an SEV venue due to the increase in residential property and the increase in thriving businesses, particularly restaurants, which target custom from families.

I would also draw the committee's attention to the increased number of police incidents on Sidwell Street and in particular those involving alcohol, violence and harassment of women, including a very recent tragic murder of a young woman who was first accosted on Sidwell Street. Sidwell Street can feel unsafe at times, as a woman who regularly uses that route at all times of day and night, and this is not going to be helped by the applicant's stated aim, to draw in larger crowds of male groups looking to drink large quantities of alcohol and leer at women.

As there is a nil policy in place, the committee should only consider this application if the applicant makes a successful case as to why there are special circumstances for considering this particular location as sitting outside the current policy, ie, it is supposed, it was not considered at the time of adopting the policy, or the area has substantially changed. The applicant has not even set out to do this, and so there is no reason to consider the application further. However even if they had tried to make this case it should fall very easily for the reasons I have given above - Sidwell Street is still an entirely unsuitable location for an SEV venue, possibly one of the most unsuitable locations in the city, and there remains nowhere suitable in Exeter for such a venture.

Finally, I would draw the committee's attention to the fact that this genre of entertainment does not lack a venue - the Phoenix and Cavern both host burlesque and drag nights which draw a diverse crowd. There is no need to add a permanent venue for the kind of outdated sexist entertainment limited to heterosexual males which is outlined in the application. Times have moved on, and as a forward looking city Exeter should not be supporting exploitative, seedy entertainment that would drag down an area that is beginning to thrive, and belongs in the last millennium.

Many thanks for considering this objection. I should be grateful if you could let me know the outcome once you have communicated with the Chair, and my sincere apologies again for my late submission.

With kind regards,

