

Bob,

I have considered the application by Swalcliffe Park Equestrian to vary condition 5 of application 14/01762/F.

The noise report submitted by iD!BRi dated 01 August 2016 proposes that for events with more than 50 competing horses the noise level of 45dB LAeq(15mins) be increased to a level of 55dB LAeq(15mins), in addition changes are also proposed to the existing Noise Management Plan. The reason put forward is that the existing limit is unreasonable and renders the proposed development unworkable.

In proposing a level of 55dB LAeq(15mins) iD!BRi have made reference to the World Health Organisation (WHO) 'Guidelines for Community Noise' and also the Noise Council 'Code of practice on environmental noise control from concerts.

The WHO guidelines state that 'To protect the majority of people from being seriously annoyed during the daytime, the sound pressure level on balconies, terraces and outdoor living areas should not exceed 55dB LAeq for a steady, continuous noise. To protect the majority of people from being moderately annoyed during the daytime, the outdoor sound pressure level should not exceed 50dB LAeq'.

These daytime levels are for steady, continuous noise such as road traffic and are given as 16hour LAeq's. It is not appropriate to apply the WHO guidelines to noise from the equestrian events which can be intermittent and variable, for example the operation of the PA system. In fact such acoustic characteristics can make the noise more noticeable and annoying increasing the significance of the impact.

The assessment criteria in the Noise Council 'Code of practice on environmental noise control from concerts is really for assessing music sound from concerts, however the principal of applying a level of +15dB to the background noise level (LA90 level) where there are between 4 and 12 concerts, in this case event days, has been applied. iD!BRi have stated that based on the background noise levels measured by them +15dB would approximately equate to the WHO guideline levels of 50 to 55dB. Background levels will vary day to day and lower levels have been measured by both iD!BRi and others, adding 15dB to these would give similar levels to that of the existing noise condition.

The existing Noise Management Plan addresses the control of noise from certain activities on the site. In the case of the PA system, which has been noted as a particular problem at times, this includes locating and orientating loudspeakers away from noise sensitive receptors, using a greater number of low powered speakers to provide sound coverage, and where necessary, providing screening by hay bales or similar to achieve additional reduction in sound levels.

The Environmental Protection Team monitored noise levels at the event over the weekend of the 5th to the 7th August 2016. The tannoy was audible but the sound was faint and not a problem; this was without any screening such as hay bales around the speakers. Noisier activities had been located away from noise sensitive properties with a buffer zone between the event and the properties. The measured noise levels as a result of activities on the site (other extraneous sounds were paused out of the measurements) during that event were at or within the level of 45dB LAeq(15mins) required by condition 5 on the planning consent.

With careful planning of the site such as locating noisy activities away from sensitive receptors, providing a buffer zone between the event and sensitive receptors, the proper setting up of the tannoy system as described in the Noise Management Plan it has been demonstrated that the events can be held and meet the requirements of the existing noise condition. The reason put forward that the existing limit is unreasonable and renders the proposed development unworkable is not justified. It is therefore recommended that this application be refused.

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