



Licensing Sub-Committee

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on Thursday 23 April 2026 at 10.00 am at Online/Virtual

PRESENT: Councillor Renata Hamvas (Chair)
Councillor Sunil Chopra
Councillor Margy Newens (Reserve)

OFFICER Debra Allday, legal officer
SUPPORT: Wesley McArthur, licensing officer
Andrew Weir, constitutional officer

1. APOLOGIES

This was a virtual licensing sub-committee meeting.

The chair explained to the participants and observers how the virtual meeting would run. Everyone then introduced themselves.

Apologies were received from Councillor Barrie Hargrove. Councillor Margy Newens was in attendance as the reserve member.

2. CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The voting members were confirmed verbally, one at a time.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

There were none.

4. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

5. LICENSING ACT 2003: FUNICULAR PRODUCTIONS, UNITS 3 & 4, CRUCIFIX LANE, LONDON SE1 3JW

The chair advised that the sub-committee had been advised that there was a request to postpone the meeting, by the other persons.

The sub-committee saw no reason to postpone the meeting and agreed to proceed.

The licensing officer presented their report. Members had questions for the licensing officer.

The applicant and their legal representative addressed the sub-committee. Members had questions for the applicant and their legal representative.

The chair allowed questions from one of the other persons.

The licensing sub-committee heard from six other persons, objecting to the application. Members had questions for the other persons.

The licensing sub-committee noted the written representations from five other persons, who were not present at the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 11.35am for a comfort break.

The meeting reconvened at 11.51am.

All parties were given up to five minutes for summing up.

The meeting adjourned at 12.00pm for the sub-committee to consider its decision.

The meeting reconvened at 12.40pm and the chair advised everyone present of the decision.

RESOLVED:

Decision

That the application made by Funicular Productions Ltd for a premises licence under Section 17 of the Licensing Act 2003 in respect of the premises known as Units 3 & 4, Crucifix Lane, London SE1 3JW is granted.

Hours

The sale of alcohol to be consumed on and off the premises:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sunday to Thursday: 10:00 to 23:00• Friday & Saturday: 10:00 to 00:00
Plays, films, live music, recorded music, and anything similar to live and recorded music:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sunday to Thursday: 10:00 to 23:00• Friday & Saturday: 10:00 to 00:00
Late night refreshment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friday & Saturday: 23:00 to 00:00
Opening hours:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sunday to Thursday: 08:00 to 23:30• Friday & Saturday: 08:00 to 00:30

Conditions

The operation of the premises under the licence shall be subject to relevant mandatory conditions, conditions derived from the operation schedule highlighted in section M of the application form and the following conditions:

1. That the last admission to the premises shall be 22:30.
2. That customers shall use no outside area other than those who temporarily leave the premises to smoke a cigarette with no more than 10 people permitted to smoke at one any time. The area shall be clearly marked by signage and there shall be a system in place to limit the number outside. After 22:00, the total number of smokers at any one time shall be reduced to 5.
3. That there shall be no vertical drinking at the premises.
4. That external waste handling (including recyclable materials and glass/bottles), collections of goods from the premises, deliveries of goods to the premises and the cleaning of external areas shall only occur between the 08:00 and 20:00.

The sub-committee also made the following additional recommendations:

- a. That the premises shall not use any single use plastics to serve food or drink.
- b. That any advertising, marketing or media relating to the premises (including websites and social media) shall advise customers that there is no readily available parking in the vicinity of the premises, shall list public transport options available in the vicinity and shall advise customers to refrain from driving to the premises.

Reasons

This was an application made by Funicular Productions Ltd for a premises licence in respect of the premises known as Units 3 & 4, Crucifix Lane, London SE1 3JW.

As a preliminary issue, residents had emailed officers in advance of the hearing requesting an adjournment due to the late service of the evidence bundle by the applicant's solicitors.

Members determined that the documents had been served in accordance the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2005 and Southwark's licensing sub-committee procedures and refused the adjournment, stating that the bundle of documents was not particularly large, and most related to another premises the applicant operated within Tower Hamlets, which included photographs and sample menus.

The licensing sub-committee heard from the author of the agenda report who confirmed that pre-application consultation resulted in conditions being agreed with the responsible authorities. The officer also confirmed pursuant to the Southwark's statement of licensing policy 2021-2026 (SoLP), the premises was located in the London Bridge District Town Centre area, an area which was not considered residential within the SoLP.

It was confirmed that the hours applied for in the application, for an event premises/space, where the sale of alcohol is included and ancillary to a range of activities, including meals, were within those recommended in the SoLP, namely, Sunday to Thursday 00:00 and Friday and Saturday 01:00.

Residents (other persons) disputed this claiming that the area was a high density residential area and residential hours of 23:00 should apply daily.

The licensing sub-committee heard from the representative for the applicant who advised that the applicant, Funicular Productions were a well known and respected operator who had been operating since 2018 with one premises within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

The application was essentially a relocation of the Tower Hamlets venue. The show and experience would be replicated at the new site on Crucifix Lane. The applicant had never received any enforcement action from any responsible authorities nor any complaints from any local residents regarding the operation, confirmed by an email from Tower Hamlets Licensing Unit (page 41 of the evidence bundle).

The premises would provide an immersive experience, a 1920s themed theatrical dining experience. Customers would purchase tickets available online only and these were priced at approximately £100 per person, which included a four course meal. On average customers spent approximately £125 per guest.

The high price point meant 92% of the customers were over the age of 25 years, and 65% of customers were female. The premises would not be raucous and would not cheap drinks. It would be a high quality and expensive venue aimed at special occasions for couples, groups and tourists.

The total capacity of the show was 60. Upon arrival, customers were transported back to a 1920s train station and directed to a small holding bar to enjoy a drink before the experience begun. The whole immersive experience was held within a full train carriage which sat within the premises. There would be three shows a day on Sunday to Friday, and four shows on Saturday.

Train windows would be replaced with TV screens that would animate the experience of a real life train journey. Customers would be served food and drink by actors whilst on the train carriage and enjoy a two hour murder mystery style theatrical experience during their meal. After the experience, customers would leave the train carriage and vacate the premises.

The only difference between the Tower Hamlets and Southwark premises was that the Southwark venue would have the train carriage and entertainment in Arch 4 and Arch 3 would operate as a 1920 speakeasy bar, which would act as a holding bar for guests to enjoy a drink before and after the show. Arch 3 would also operate as a standalone bar open to the public at the same time. The bar in Arch 3 would operate entirely ancillary to the entertainment in Arch 4, allowing the general public to experience the 1920 bar while show attendees were within the experience.

Arch 3 would be open to members of the public until 23:00. After this time, no new customers would be permitted to enter the premises, and the bar would serve only those customers already in the venue after their show, allowing a smoother, more gradual dispersal of guests.

Prior to the submission of the application, pre-consultation meetings had taken place with the licensing authority and the police, and a robust bank of 42 conditions had been agreed to ensure the licence promoted the licensing objectives. Following the end of the objection period, the application received no representations from any of the responsible authorities.

Although the premises did not fall within a cumulative impact area, it was accepted that the premises was located just outside it and the applicant recognised the residents' sensitivity of the premises location, requiring careful management of the premises which was addressed in the operating schedule.

Concerning the capacity of the bar area, a fire risk assessment had been carried out which allowed a maximum of 180 people in the premises. With a maximum 60 persons seated on the train carriage, there would be approximately 90 seats in Arch 3. A four course meal would be served in Arch 4; the Applicant did not intend providing a food offering in Arch 3 beyond snacks in keeping with a 1920s theme.

When asked by members about the proposed hours, it was confirmed the applicant was conscious of paragraphs 177 and 178 of the SoLP, so the last entry time would be after 23:00. After 23:00 hours, the bar would only supply alcohol to the theatre element of the venue.

In response to the residents' claims of anti-social behaviour, the representative for the applicant advised there was a greater number of residents in close proximity to the Tower Hamlets premises and the applicant had not been made aware of any complaints of noise or anti-social behaviour. The new premises had the added benefit of Arch 3, where customers would be directed to. In the unlikely event that residents of any anti-social behaviour, SIA approved door supervisors would be present to ensure guests enter and disperse the premises quickly.

The applicant's representative agreed to a recommendation that they would include a notice on their website and publicity advising that there was no parking and encouraging guests to attend the venue using public transport or active travel.

The applicant's representative also agreed that the premises would not use single use plastics for serving food or drink and was agreeable to a recommendation in relation to this.

With the chair's leave, other person 7 asked several questions of the applicant's representative. Other person 7 suggested the bar in Arch 3 was not ancillary to the overall operation of the premises. The bar was to cross subsidise the immersive theatre as it was not capable of being viable independently.

This was disputed. The applicant's representative advised the sole reason for application was to relocate the Tower Hamlets premises to Southwark and Arch 3 would house customers before and after a show. Entertainment would also be provided in the holding area as a warmup act for the show and for guests attending as members of the public.

Other person 7 also suggested that the bar would be a late-night bar. This was also disputed; last entry would be 23:00 to the public.

The licensing sub-committee heard from other persons 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 11.

Other person 9 stated that they were initially delighted about the theatre, but objected to the late-night bar element, stating that it would have a huge impact upon residents. Reference was made to the Underdog Gallery (located at Arch 6) and advised that it opened as an alleged art gallery, but turned into a late-night drinking venue, which caused considerable anti-social behaviour and significant disruption to residents.

Regardless of what the SoLP stated, the area was residential and the other persons in attendance at the hearing were also residents of the area. Other person 5 also explained that their children's bedroom faced Crucifix Lane and they would be affected by the noise and people smoking on the street outside their windows.

Glasses would also be scattered along the street. Although there would be SIA door supervisors had been proposed by the applicant, they were also in place in the Underdog Gallery who were of little value.

Other person 9 concluded stating a late-night bar was neither needed, nor wanted. there was no need for a bar with the capacity of 180 people in a residential road. The applicant indicated that last entry would be at 23:00, but there had been no indication what time the premises would close and guests would disperse. 23:00 was very late, particularly in view of residents working and children going to school. The hours for Fridays and Saturdays would be even later, in addition to the many non-standard hours applied for.

The licensing sub-committee heard from other person 5 who lived opposite to the proposed venue. Reference was made to the Underdog Gallery and Jack's Nightclub who that previously operated in the arches. Both premises had operated in a disruptive manner, playing loud music and blocking the pavements all night. Residents feared there would be a return of similar anti-social behaviour which would have a detrimental effect on the residents' lives. Such disruption to residents outweighed the commercial needs of the applicant.

Other person 5 also suggested the bundle of evidence submitted by the applicant was an attempt to establish that the venue would be of cultural importance. Residents didn't see the premises as a cultural venue. The dining experience was acceptable, but it was not acceptable for a bar to be open late, especially on bank holidays. The proposed late-night venue was not in any way comparable to a genuine venue promoting arts and culture.

Other person 5 concluded that the hours of operation should be limited to 23:00, with all music and alcohol terminating by 22:00 during weekdays to ensure peaceful living for residents.

The licensing sub-committee heard from other person 6 who reiterated that Arch 3 was in fact a standalone bar, and this, residents objected to. If the final theatre performance finished at 22:30, there was no need for the bar to be open so late. It was apparent to other person 6 that the bar was to subsidise the theatre.

The premises should therefore be treated as a bar, which should be closed at 23:00 hours regardless of the area been classed as residential or not. The only reason why the Applicant argued late that the venue was attracted arts, culture and tourism was to contradict the area was to be treated as residential.

Reference was also made to the Beer Mile, which also promoted tourism and also located in a residential area. All the premises on the Beer Mile closed at 22:30. A bar with a 1920s theme, for a more affluent crowd, did not promote tourism and therefore should close no later than 23:00.

Other person 6 informed the sub-committee that the Tower Hamlets location had attracted many complaints. The resident had visited the location and spoke to residents, all of whom were allegedly overjoyed at the idea that the theatre would be moving away from their homes, with one of the Tower Hamlets residents emailing other person 11 allegedly stating the premises operated as a club that generated significant noise, including drunken pedestrians and noisy bottles smashing throughout the night, waking the families of local residents. The email allegedly concluded that "I'm glad to hear that they are moving but feel very sorry for you".

The licensing sub-committee then heard from other person 7 who stated it was abundantly clear the bar being ancillary to the immersive theatre was completely unsustainable. Arch 3 would be a late-night bar intended to attract late night drinkers with an objective to subsidize an inherently unviable business of the theatre element. Other person 7 recommended that Arch 3 be conditioned that it be used as a holding area only for bona fide ticket holders of the immersive theatre.

The licensing sub-committee then heard from other person 4 who echoed the point already raised by other residents, adding that the area was a cultural and strategic area and the bundle of late evidence was produced in an attempt to support the argument that enhanced hours was necessary to promote tourism.

The only way the four licensing objectives could be promoted was the closure of the premises at 23:00. Other person 4 also referred to the proposed condition permitting 20 patrons outside the premises to smoke, on a 1.5 metre wide footpath. This was extremely excessive that would considerable disturbance even if it were limited to 10 patrons. It was inevitable that patrons would be spill out into the road. Other person 4 also pointed out that the extra hour's operation for 48 days of the year as exceptional (non-standard) days. This amounted to 13% of the year.

The licensing sub-committee finally heard from other person 11 who agreed with the points raised by the other persons.

The licensing sub-committee then considered the written representations of the five other persons, who were not in attendance at the hearing.

This was an application in respect of the premises known as Units 3 & 4, Crucifix Lane, London SE1 3JW made by made by Funicular Productions Ltd. The premises would be a 1920s themed theatrical dining experience (Arch 4) with an ancillary "holding" bar (Arch 3).

In summary, this application was to relocate its premises currently based in Tower Hamlets, to Crucifix Lane, SE1.

Residents also asserted the sub-committee that the area bounded by Bermondsey Street, Tower Bridge Road and the railway although an area of cultural importance, it was classed as an area with a high density residential. It is possible that residents may have incorrectly referred to Southwark's planning policy. The licensing sub-committee is bound by the SoLP which details the council's approach when making of licensing decisions.

Paragraphs 172-176 of SoLP and the map at:

<https://geomap.southwark.gov.uk/connect/analyst/mobile/#/main?mapcfg=%2FAnalyst%2FNamedProjects%2FSouthwark%20licencing%20areas> confirm the premises being located in Bankside, Borough, London Bridge Strategic Cultural and London Bridge District Town Centre and not in a cumulative impact area (CIA).

In the SoLP, premises with the sale of alcohol included as ancillary to a range of activities have recommended closing hours of: Sunday to Thursday: 00:00 and Friday and Saturday: 01:00. This licensing sub-committee is satisfied that the area located in the SoLP, and the recommended hours are correct. Notwithstanding this, the application was considered upon its individual merits (Paragraph 1.17 of the Home Office Section 182 Guidance (February 2025)).

Being able to operate a small bar alongside a theatrical show would allow the applicant's business to grow and will provide economic benefit to the local community by enhancing the provision of arts, culture and tourism in the area. This was further evidenced from the evidence bundle (pages 49-56).

The National Licensing Policy Framework (November 2025) speaks of Supporting a Changing Hospitality and Leisure Landscape (page 5) which echoes Paragraph 1.18 of the Section 182 Guidance: "When making licensing decisions, all licensing authorities should consider the need to promote growth and deliver economic benefits".

During the hearing there had been much discussion about the capacity of the premises, particularly Arch 3. Residents sought a capacity of 180 persons, based on the fire risk assessment.

The sub-committee felt it premature to specify any capacity limit, as the numbers provided by the Applicant were an indication based on the drawings/plans submitted (with the application). The premises were essentially a shell and once the fixtures and tables had been installed, the figures could easily reduce.

Furthermore, the sub-committee are mindful of Paragraph 1.21 the Section 182 Guidance that licence conditions should not duplicate other statutory provisions such as the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which provides for the fire risk assessment requirement. As a compromise, a licence condition is imposed that there be no vertical drinking in the premises, which was offered by the applicant's representative.

This licensing sub-committee considered residents' fears of an increase in anti-social behaviour. Other person 6 read an email from a Tower Hamlets resident contradicted that the Tower Hamlets premises operated successfully and without complaint, for 8 years. This email was not submitted by the other person, whereas, the applicant had provided an email dated 8 April 2026 from Tower Hamlets' Public Protection and Integrated Enforcement Division (page 41 additional evidence bundle) that suggested otherwise.

The sub-committee preferred the applicant's evidence and attached greater weight to it. It is also of note that none of the responsible authorities had any concerns with the application, having carried out pre-application consultation.

In reaching its decision, the licensing sub-committee had regard to all the relevant considerations, including the Licensing Act 2003, the Section 182 Guidance and National Licensing Policy Framework (November 2025), its equality duties and four licensing objectives and considered that this decision was appropriate and proportionate.

Appeal rights

The applicant may appeal against any decision:

- a. To impose conditions on the licence
- b. To exclude a licensable activity or refuse to specify a person as premises supervisor.

Any person who made relevant representations in relation to the application who desires to contend:

- a. That the licence ought not to have been granted; or
- b. That, on granting the licence, the licensing authority ought not to have imposed different or additional conditions to the licence, or ought to have modified them in a different way

may appeal against the decision.

Any appeal must be made to the Magistrates' Court for the area in which the premises are situated. Any appeal must be commenced by notice of appeal given by the appellant to the Magistrates' Court within the period of 21 days beginning with the day on which the appellant was notified by the licensing authority of the decision appealed against.

6. LICENSING ACT 2003: SOTTO, 4 TANNER STREET, LONDON SE1 3LD

It was noted that this item had been postponed to 18 June 2026, at the request of the applicant.

The meeting ended at 12.44pm.

CHAIR:

DATED: