

W/23/01303/PRMA – Representations - Wilderness Festival

C Montague

Whilst we fully support the Wilderness festival, we object to the noise element of the license going on until 3am/4am.

If Glastonbury and all the other major music events finish at midnight, we believe this event has no special circumstances that would make it need to/have to extend beyond this time. Midnight is a reasonable compromise time for local residents to not have their sleep interrupted, especially as it is in the summer, windows are open and noise travels.

H Ratcliffe

Regarding application W/23/01303/PRMA, I would like to make a comment under the Prevention of Public Nuisance Licensing Objectives.

I am concerned about the creeping nature of the festival. It started as a three-day weekend but now it is a five-day event, how long before it is a full seven days? Glastonbury comes to mind but we don't have the infrastructure to cope as they do, this is going to be tough on the local area and the residents.

As for the music (I think there are two stages playing), Friday and Saturday until 3 in the morning and Sunday until 2am, this year there was a 4am and a 2am cut off and that was bad enough, sleep deprivation is not very pleasant.

C Tatton

I would like to write in support of the public entertainment license for the Wilderness Festival at Cornbury Park. West Oxfordshire is very fortunate to have this fantastic festival on its doorstep.

However, I would like to object on the grounds of public safety, disorder, public nuisance and protection of children to the use of the North Lodge entrance and exit to contractor traffic, buses, taxis and festival traffic.

Unfortunately this year, excessive traffic was being allowed into and out of the North Lodge entrance and exit, resulting at times in total grid lock from the the exit up to the Fiveways

junction, and turning left into Park St, Charlbury. It became so serious at times that it was very disorderly with tempers flaring and worse, and presented a public safety hazard, as there was no chance that any emergency vehicles would be able to get through the mayhem.

Can I suggest that the stretch from road coming out of North Lodge, and turning left through Park St, and up the Church St cross roads is totally blocked off to festival traffic in future years, allowing only very local resident access that is properly and totally policed in future years. This would also allow the considerable number of pedestrian and cyclists from the town and train station to access the festival safely and in an orderly way, including the large number of local children who use these means of transport to access the festival.

I feel that the South hill Lodge and Forest hill entrances and exits are much safer and less of a nuisance, if the traffic is directed by fixed signage away from nearby towns and villages, directly onto the A361 in the case of the Forest Hill exit and onto A44 in the case of the South Hill Lodge exit.

Such fixed signage and movement of traffic onto main Roads is used at the Big Feastival every year near Kingham avoiding local villages as much as possible, thus improving public safety, reducing possible disorder and public nuisance. Currently the signage is moveable and as a result is often moved or thrown around which results in chaos, nuisance, disorder and a threat to public safety for local residents and festival goers alike.

I hope that these comments are acted on and seen in a constructive and positive way, as I have absolutely no wish to see the Wilderness Festival stopped.

J Douglass

I attach comments on this licence application. I will also post a hard copy in at the council offices.

It is important to note (as I say in this document) that the notice of licence application was placed only on stakes or gates alongside remote footpaths leading into Cornbury Park. It was not put up on any parish notice boards, neither was any notice of the application published in local village newsletters. The vast majority of the residents of Ramsden and neighbouring villages such as Finstock and Leafield, do not walk regularly through the Cornbury estate. Therefore, siting the notices in such places, and only in such places, will inevitably miss at least 95% of people who might have a view on the disruption generated by the festival. Perhaps that was the intention.

Attached Document content:

Concerning licence application W/23/01303/PRMA (Mama Festivals relating to 2024 Wilderness Festival at Cornbury Park).

We wish to object to this application on the basis that the noise generated by the Wilderness

Festival is a public nuisance.

The problem of unwanted noise:

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) published a report in March 2022 which captured the results of their annual noise survey. In this survey they state that:

- According to the World Health Organisation, environmental noise comes second in burden of disease only to air pollution and is arguably responsible for more disturbance to quality of life.[1]
- Sleep disturbance is one of the most harmful effects of environmental noise exposure.
- Health issues associated with noise not only affect individuals' quality of life, but also generate significant social costs.

The time has come for a complete re-think of how much disruption local residents should be expected to put up with from the Wilderness Festival. There needs to be a re-balancing towards local residents which allows enjoyment for the festival goers but not at the expense of peaceful nights for neighbours.

Noise levels at Wilderness:

Although living at some distance in Ramsden, we have suffered many sleepless nights as a result of the excessive noise levels generated by the Wilderness Festival. It is also impossible to enjoy a peaceful evening in the garden at any point during the festival.

The noise this year was absolutely cacophonous in Mount Skippett and in the centre of the village (you will have received separate complaints from villagers there). Standing in my garden, I could not hear what a neighbour was saying to me from 3 feet away. The sky was absolutely ringing from all directions.

The sound is supposed to be no more than 65db, equivalent to a washing machine at "sensitive" buildings 2km away. First of all, I would like to invite you to try to get to sleep with a washing machine in your bedroom running continuously for four hours. In truth, the noise was much higher than 65db: it was as if someone had parked their car at the end of my garden and put their sound system on to top volume.

The noise now continues for four days, sometimes until 5am (although the licence specified only 4am). The noise can be heard even through closed triple-glazed windows, and even in rooms situated on the side of a house facing away from the festival. In hot weather it is impossible to have the windows open to cool the room, as the noise is so intrusive.

Ramsden is nearly 2km distant from the site and should not be subject to this annual onslaught. Chadlington is nearly 6km away but villagers there said that they could hear the noise. According to social media posts on I♥Witney, it was even audible in Witney.

This is completely unacceptable. If the music is audible to people who live such a distance away, it must be possible to reduce the volume substantially at the site without significantly reducing the enjoyment of festival visitors. I invite you to come and stand outside my house on Friday or Saturday night of the Festival and tell me if you would be happy to live with that racket. If the noise is within the permitted level, then that level needs to be reduced.

We would like to see the hours of live music restricted to no later than midnight: anything beyond that is having a significantly detrimental effect on neighbouring residents and it is time to redress the balance in favour of those who live close by.

We would also like to see a significant reduction in the permitted noise levels.

We suggest that any performances after midnight should use “silent disco” technology. This is now well established and widely accepted and liked by music fans. Multiple music channels can be made available through individual headphones and participants can choose the music they listen to. This is a perfect compromise between the desire of festival goers to hear loud music and the need for local residents to enjoy the peace and quiet they expected when they came to live here.

It would also be helpful to those who attend the festival. Some neighbours (Mr and Mrs Miller, Mount Skippett, Ramsden) who attended complained that they could not hear the theatrical production they went to, because of noise from adjacent music events. Clearly, the music is too loud even for people who attend the Festival.

We are also very concerned to see that Mama Festivals are hoping to acquire a three-year licence. We are completely opposed to this: given the level of disruption, the acceptability or otherwise of the licence conditions needs to be assessed every year.

Public consultation:

It should not be assumed that a lack of complaints means that there is no problem with the noise. I complained in the first year of the Festival and was pleased to find acoustic consultants came to measure the sound in the second year. They were shocked at the level of the noise they found at Mount Skippett and this was presumably fed back to the organisers. Since then, complaints (by me and others) have been met with the response that licensing conditions have been adhered to.

Many people, like myself, now simply leave the area during the festival and incur costs of hundreds of pounds to stay somewhere else. This year, personal circumstances meant that I could not leave as usual. If people go away – obviously – a complaint is not being registered. It appears to be the case that if there are no complaints, the application for the following year is for louder music over a longer period. Instead of assuming everything is fine, the organisers need to engage in widespread public consultation.

The Festival has consulted in the past, but on a totally inadequate scale, using simply one form of social media.

A website that provides guidance to festival organisers says that: “it is essential for music festival organisers to include as much public consultation as possible”. We do not believe that Mama Festivals have made any serious attempt to gather feedback from local residents and do not believe that the true level of dissatisfaction is being recorded. Some people have no idea that they can lodge a complaint with West Oxon DC and most have no knowledge of the complaints hotline.

Given the widespread disruption caused by the Wilderness Festival we suggest the following should be a mandatory part of the licence conditions:

- Notice to all local parish councils for publication in village newsletters, announcing a date for annual face-to-face public consultation in village halls.
- Publication of the complaints hotline number by the same method. We note that a

telephone number is set up each year, how is this currently advertised and made known to residents?

- Most local villages also have a website or a facebook page: this information should also be published on these sites.

Insufficient notification about the licence application:

A side issue, but one that is very important concerns the way in which the 2024 licence application was publicised.

The only place that the notice was placed was on stakes or gates alongside footpaths leading into Cornbury Park. It was not put up on any parish notice boards, neither was any notice of the application published in local village newsletters. The vast majority of the residents of Ramsden and neighbouring villages such as Finstock and Leafield, do not walk regularly through the Cornbury estate. Therefore, siting the notices in such places, and only in such places, will inevitably miss at least 95% of people who might be affected. Perhaps that was the intention.

In Ramsden, all local planning applications are listed in the newsletter. Given the scale of disruption caused by the Wilderness Festival, the organisers should be required to do the same in order to make sure that all local residents can see the licence application in good time.

We would like the festival organisers to be required to publish the licence application in every surrounding village newsletter, and to place a copy on every PC noticeboard, in sufficient time to allow for comment.

W Cherry

Dear WODC,

Re Planning application W/23/01303/PRMA

Having read through the detail of the Planning application, I would make the following comments/observations:

- In 2023 the noise disturbance was extremely evident well to the south of the site [at least 3 miles] with the bass frequencies not just too loud but also not able to be mitigated with earplugs. This is a characteristic of the 'thumping drum and bass' sound pressure level not just simple dB level. The noise is felt as well as heard.
- There is a history of non adherence from the Festival organisers to the sound level conditions of the Planning applications as granted. This is matched by a history of non-adherence to the time permitted [coupled with noise levels again].
- The audio consultants appointed as a condition of the planning should be fully independent. They appear not to be; nor is there a history of them doing their job properly.

It is simply unacceptable and anti social to have the Festival organisers oblivious apparently to the distress they can cause over a wide area. If they could adhere to acceptable noise

levels and cessation times then they would be wished well with the event. Otherwise they should not be granted planning.

P Katz

Music at higher and lower levels can easily be heard in Ramsden if the wind is blowing in that direction. Loud music from Wilderness is an annual nuisance in the early hours. Some residents leave the village for the weekend. I do not see why I should be driven from my home. Fridays and Mondays are working days. The proposed lower level on Thursday until 00.00 is tolerable. It is not fair on residents who work for a living that Sunday night should be any different.

It should be impermissible to have even minimal levels up to 02.00 on a Monday morning. On the other days, when the higher level ends at 23.00, there should be lower level only until 00.00 and then no lower level beyond 00.00 (as on Thursday). There should be no permitted noise at all after 02.00 on any morning.

Fawler Parish Meeting

Ref: W/23/01303/PRMA

Four residents of Fawler have asked me to reply to the Wilderness Application on their behalf. They will also write as individuals.

They consider that the continuance of noise till 3 am constitutes a public nuisance as is also the number of days the festival exists.

They would prefer that the festival closed earlier each night.