

Licensing Panel Report

Shropshire Council – Environmental Protection Team

Premises: Bobby's Café/Bar

Officer: Louise Money, Environmental Protection Officer

Date: 07th May 2026

1. Introduction

This report sets out the representation of the Environmental Protection Team in relation to the above application to extend the permitted hours of use for the external terrace area.

The Environmental Protection Team has a statutory responsibility to consider the potential for public nuisance, particularly in relation to noise disturbance affecting nearby residential properties.

Based on site observations and professional assessment, an objection is raised to the proposed extension of hours.

2. Site Context

The premises rear external terrace area has an approximate capacity for approximately 65 patrons.

The terrace is situated to the rear of The Parade which is predominantly retail at ground and first floor level, with residential accommodation above and to the rear. The premises is directly overlooked by residential properties, including dwellings with balconies that provide a clear line-of-sight into the terrace area.

This part of the town centre transitions in character during the evening. The surrounding retail units typically cease trading at approximately 17:00 hours, after which the area becomes significantly quieter and more residential in nature. Existing residents therefore experience a relatively tranquil environment during the evening period.

The terrace environment is notably different from the busier surrounding streets, being acoustically shielded from general background noise sources, resulting in a quiet, enclosed setting.

The proposed extension of terrace use beyond 17:00 would, in the opinion of the Environmental Protection Team, introduce sustained commercial activity into a period when the character of the area becomes predominantly residential. This represents a material change in how the area is experienced by existing residents.

3. Site Visits and Observations

A series of site visits have been undertaken to assess the ambient noise environment and the likely impact of terrace use beyond 17:00:

Monday 27 April – 11:45

- Approach via Pride Hill showed typical daytime activity, including:
 - Traffic noise
 - Pedestrian activity
 - Buskers
 - General town centre noise
- However, upon reaching the rear terrace area:
 - These background noises were not audible
 - Traffic on English Bridge could be seen but not heard
 - Dominant sounds were limited to birds and natural ambient noise
 - No customers were present at the time

Conclusion:

The terrace area is acoustically quiet and enclosed, with minimal external masking noise.

Friday 1 May – 16:30 and 19:00

- Two visits were undertaken to capture both late afternoon and early evening conditions. Due to weather conditions, there were no patrons on the terrace.
 - Consistent findings:
 - Significant reduction in background noise compared to surrounding streets
 - The rear terrace environment remained notably quiet at both times
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Residential Receptor Visits

- Visits conducted to a nearby residential property overlooking the terrace:

- Friday 1 May @ 16:30
- Saturday 2 May @ 14:30
- Observations from the residence:
 - Very low background noise levels
 - No audible traffic noise from English Bridge
 - Train movements into the station were not audible, despite visibility of the line
 - During the Saturday visit:
 - A small number of customers were present
 - Noise associated with chairs moving, cutlery, and conversation was clearly audible from the balcony
 - A concert at St Mary's Church was taking place:
 - This was not audible from either the terrace or the residential property

Conclusion:

The residential receptors experience a highly tranquil environment, with minimal ambient noise intrusion and very little masking of external sound sources.

4. Assessment of Impact

The key issue in this case is not simply the presence of noise, but the contrast between existing background levels and potential imposed noise.

Given:

- The very low ambient/background noise levels
- The acoustic containment of the terrace area
- The proximity and direct overlooking by residential properties

It is reasonable to conclude that noise from the terrace would be:

- Clearly audible at nearby residential properties
- Difficult to effectively mitigate
- Likely to result in intrusive disturbance

Nature of Noise Impact

In assessing impact, particular attention must be given to the type and characteristics of the noise, not simply its volume.

Noise arising from terrace use is likely to include:

- Customer conversation
- Laughter and raised voices
- Movement of chairs and tables
- Clattering and clanking of plates, glasses, and cutlery
- General activity associated with social interaction

Such noise is typically:

- Intermittent and unpredictable in nature
- Occurring in sudden bursts (e.g. laughter or raised voices)
- Irregular rather than constant

This type of noise is particularly intrusive in quiet environments because:

- It draws attention and is difficult to ignore
- It cannot be screened by steady background noise
- Sudden peaks (e.g. loud laughter or dropped items) can cause disturbance even at relatively low overall sound levels

Given the very low background noise levels recorded during site visits, even moderate levels of such activity would be clearly perceptible within nearby residential properties and on balconies, especially during the evening period when residents are more likely to be at home and using these spaces.

5. Consideration of Extended Hours

The proposed extension to 20:00 hours is of particular concern because:

- The surrounding area transitions to a quieter, residential character after 17:00, as retail activity ceases
- Residents have a reasonable expectation of reduced noise levels during this period
- Noise becomes more noticeable and intrusive in the early evening as:
 - Residents return home

- Background noise levels further reduce

In addition:

- Alcohol consumption over a longer period can reasonably be expected to:
 - Increase vocal levels
 - Increase incidence of laughter, calling out, and general activity
 - Increase the likelihood of sudden and impulsive noise events

As such:

It is reasonable to anticipate an increase in both noise levels and overall impact as the evening progresses, resulting in a greater likelihood of disturbance to nearby residents.

6. Conclusion and Objection

Based on:

- Multiple site visits at varying times
- Observations from both the terrace and nearby residential properties
- The identified low background noise environment
- The residential character of the area during evening hours

The Environmental Protection Team concludes that:

The use of the external terrace area by up to 65 patrons into the early evening would give rise to noise (including customer conversation, laughter, and general activity) that would be readily audible at nearby residential properties. The intermittent and impulsive nature of such noise, including clattering of tableware and bursts of raised voices, would be likely to cause unreasonable disturbance.

Furthermore, the proposed extension would alter the established evening character of the area, introducing sustained commercial activity into what is otherwise a quiet, predominantly residential environment.

This is not simply a town centre location; it is a mixed-use environment with a distinctly quiet evening character. The proposal would shift that balance in a way that is likely to adversely affect residents who currently enjoy a reasonable expectation of peace in the evenings

7. Recommendation

For the reasons outlined above, the Environmental Protection Team objects to the proposed extension of hours for the external terrace area on the grounds of the prevention of public nuisance.